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# Know the Hands that Feed You:

## A Marketplace and Knowledge Co-Op in the Skagit Valley for Farmworkers, Locals, and Consumers

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Figure 1. Craft night at a seasonal farmworker camp outside of Burlington, Washington, sponsored by a local church.

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## Introduction: Farmworkers and Modern Society

Figure 2. Farmworkers Planting Celery in Clewiston, Florida.
Source: National Geographic, Luis M. Alvarez/AP

*"Few Americans know much about the world of farmworkers--their struggles, their travels, the key role they play in our lives. Farmworkers provide the hand labor necessary to produce and harvest the fruits and vegetables we eat, and in this sense, they are bound to every consumer in a direct, almost visceral manner. Every orange, peach, tomato, or watermelon we purchase was handpicked by a farmworker. Every pepper, apple, head of lettuce, or bunch of grapes--pulled from the earth, plucked from a bush, or picked from a tree--was harvested by a farm laborer, a member of the poorest and most disadvantaged class of American workers."*[1]

*- Daniel Rothenberg from With These Hands: The Hidden World of Migrant Farmworkers Today*

For the majority of the twentieth century, the agricultural system within the United States has relied on a steady flow of immigrant farmworkers. Though the details of their circumstances have changed over time, the reality is that every fruit and vegetable grown in the U.S. is handpicked by farmworkers. This fact may be a surprise to most Americans who are either unaware of the existence of the farmworker community or the extent of their daily hardships. This project is largely motivated by a personal amazement at the challenges facing farmworkers and the collective ignorance, apathy, and cynicism that surround their situation in contemporary society.

Historically, architecture has often tried and failed to solve social problems. This track record has thus gained the architectural profession a particular stigma

Figure 3. Farmworkers Harvesting Tulips in the Skagit Valley, Washington.

Source: Oksana Perkins

that generally disqualifies it from addressing a social issue. Though it is clear that architecture and the built environment cannot literally solve social problems, this fact does not preclude the possibility that architecture has a role in them. In the context of immigrant farmworkers in Washington, this thesis explores the potential that architecture has to address the well-being of this community in a meaningful way.

**Problem Statement**

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the potential that architecture has to address the well-being of the immigrant farmworker community in Washington. Farmworkers represent a population that is systematically taken advantage of on a daily basis. Agricultural corporations, politicians, consumers, and local citizens contribute directly and indirectly to their hardships. Poor living and working conditions compounded with racism and anti-immigration sentiment result in a severely degraded state of well-being.

This thesis asserts that the cycle of poverty experienced by the farmworker community is largely perpetuated by a negative relationship with their local community and a nonexistent relationship with the greater consumer community. It seeks to create a marketplace and knowledge co-op that fosters interaction between farmworkers, locals, and consumers to generate understanding and awareness. Ultimately, it utilizes culturally contextual tectonics as a design methodology for creating a comfortable and familiar sense of place.

## Chapter 1: History and Background

*Historical Evolution of Farmworker Migration to Washington*

There are many reasons that immigrants come to Washington State for farm labor. Historically, a series of events unfolded throughout the twentieth century that solidified the presence of Hispanic communities in the agricultural areas of Washington. This chapter will illustrate the historical and contemporary forces behind these patterns of immigration.

The manner in which farmworkers first came to Washington in significant numbers was related to the completion of the Northern Transcontinental Railroad in 1893. The completion of the railroad, coupled with numerous irrigation projects stemming from the expansive rivers of the Columbia Plateau were the impetus for major agricultural production and consequently, immigrant farm labor. Between the late nineteenth century and the Great Depression in 1929, the immigration of people from Mexico to the United States was also fueled by unrest in Mexico. Worsening rural poverty, a revolution in 1910, and a decade of internal conflicts resulted in a continuous flow of immigration to the United Sates. Leading up to the Great Depression, immigration to the U.S. and Washington for farm work steadily increased. After the American economy collapsed, millions of U.S. citizens were put out of work and thrust into a state of destitution. The resulting high supply of

Figure 4. Braceros in California.
Source: Associated Press

laborers in relation to the low demand for work resulted in the removal of immigrant farmworkers from Washington's agricultural scene. During the depression, border enforcement increased to prevent immigration, and farmworkers began to leave willingly after others had been deported or repatriated by authorities.

As World War II began, the U.S. became an important source of food for the allied troops, farmers joined the armed forces, and a sudden labor shortage swept across agricultural areas in the U.S. In order to avoid losing crops during harvest season, some rural towns employed prisoners and school children. Recognizing the shortage, Congress established the Bracero Program in 1943. The Bracero Program was a major source of immigrant farm labor in Washington, causing tens of thousands of farmworkers to immigrate to the Pacific Northwest. Despite the characteristically backbreaking work that Braceros were forced to do, they excelled and made a "vital and measurable contribution to the total war effort."[2] Though the Bracero program continued until 1964 in other parts of the country, it ended in Washington in 1947 due to the employment of Mexican-American farmworkers in place of their immigrant counterparts.[3] In 1952, several years after the end of the Bracero program in Washington, the U.S. Federal Government initiated the H-2A Guestworker Program. In a similar fashion to the Bracero Program, the H-2A program is a method for farmers to legally acquire temporary, contracted agricultural laborers and is still in use today.

Following the end of the Bracero Program and the initiation of the H-2A

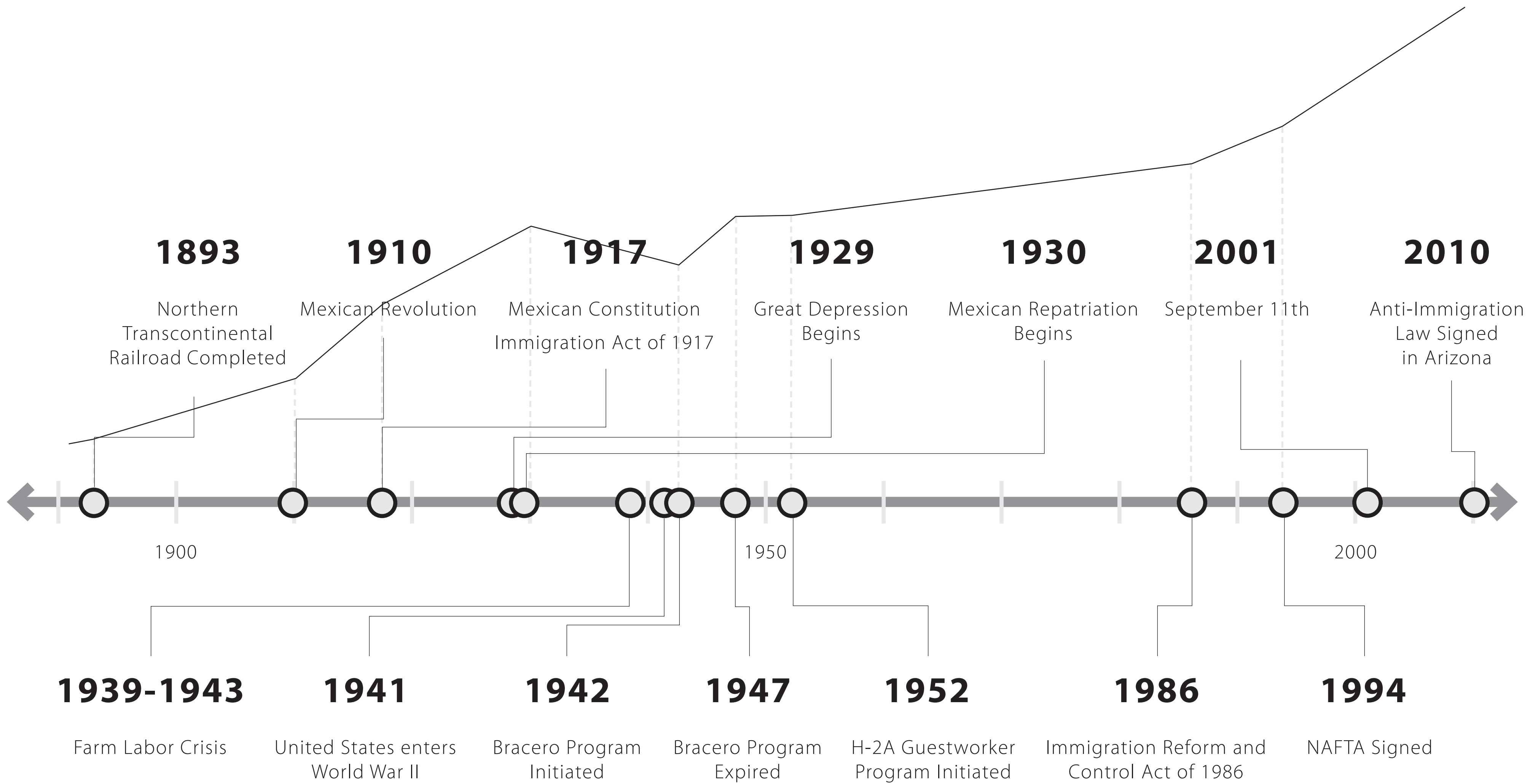



Figure 5. Change in Farmworker Population in Washington through History.

program, the history of farmworker immigration was largely uneventful until the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. This law granted amnesty to several million agricultural workers that were living and working in the U.S. Despite its intentions to slow the flow of people from Mexico to the United States, immigration continued unabated. In the 1990s, the United States, Mexico, and Canada signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). This trade agreement was expected to bring great wealth to the Mexican economy but only further homogenized it. As a result of the agreement, many small Mexican farmers were put in direct competition with agricultural corporations from the United States and Mexico. Naturally, the competition put the small Mexican farmers out of business and forced them to travel to the United States to look for profitable agricultural work.

More recently, the tragic events of September 11$^{th}$ have had a lasting impact on the manner in which people immigrate to the United States from Mexico. Where borders were once less controlled and easier to traverse, the newly created Department of Homeland Security has been increasing law enforcement on the border. Also, a law in Arizona was recently passed that allows local authorities to publicly request documentation of a person's legal status on demand and under the circumstances of "reasonable suspicion." Though these events do not have quantifiable impacts, they ultimately affect immigrants in the U.S., immigration to the U.S., and thus the farmworker community in Washington.

*Contemporary Motivations for Farmworker Migration to Washington*

In addition to the historical events that have established immigration flows of farmworkers to Washington, there are many contemporary social, cultural, and economic conditions that perpetuate this immigration pattern. The promise of educational opportunities for children is a strong draw for the immigration of farmworkers to the United States. If parents can provide enough stability and financial support for their children to attend school regularly, the likelihood of the next generation settling into more profitable career paths increases dramatically. For many farmworker families, these educational opportunities represent a path leading away from the migrant existence towards a stable, healthy, and secure way of life.[4] In addition to the educational potential that the United States represents, the "American Dream" is a goal for which many immigrants strive. This image of hard work paying off in the form of a nice house, a green lawn, and a white picket fence is an image that is common in the United States. Unfortunately, television and the media have the tendency to portray the American Dream in a manner that suggests that it is a guaranteed part of living in the U.S.

Besides these social and cultural influences on immigration to the U.S., there is also a significant economic component that contributes to farmworker immigration. For instance, agricultural employment opportunities in Mexico do not always offer financially lucrative circumstances. The average farmworker may

make a certain wage throughout the course of several weeks in Mexico, whereas they would likely make that same amount over the course of several days in the United States.[5] Many immigrant farmworkers are adult men that travel to the United States in order to support themselves and their families that are still residing in Mexico. This phenomenon of sending remittance to families in Mexico is a common condition, but it is slightly less common in Washington State due to the prevalence of whole families living together.

A further economic influence on immigration of farmworkers to the United States is the continuing legacy of the North American Free Trade Agreement. As mentioned previously, this agreement had, and continues to have a large impact on small farmers in Mexico. The circumstances of NAFTA often lead farmers to seek related employment in the United States, where the prospect for higher wages exists. Furthermore, the economic developments that pushed NAFTA forward in the first place include the dissolution of the small, American family farm, the subsequent spread of agricultural corporations, and the resulting globalization of the world's food market. In other words, the signing of NAFTA and subsequent increase in farmworker immigration to the U.S. was originally influenced by a cultural shift away from the agrarian lifestyle of early America.[6]

Environmental problems, government policy, and population increase have also contributed to the evolution of the United States from a rural population to an urban and suburban population. Ultimately, these factors have combined to put the

small farmer out of business and increase the presence of large corporations in the modern agricultural system. These corporations rely heavily on the inexpensive labor provided by immigrant farmworkers. This reliance creates an established process for bringing farmworkers to the United States illegally. Though there are institutionalized systems through which farmworkers may legally and contractually enter the country for agricultural work, growers are generally opposed to these systems because of the extra cost involved with paperwork and logistics. Ultimately, these inefficiencies result in agricultural businesses maintaining the status quo through the encouragement of continued illegal immigration.

*Characteristics of Immigrant Farmworkers in Washington*

In order to propose a relationship between architecture and the immigrant farmworker community in Washington, it is important to understand the complex characteristics of the community. Though the statistical information regarding farmworkers is entirely based on surveys, anecdotal interviews, and estimations, the aggregation of this information provides a relatively clear illustration. The Washington State Farmworker Housing Trust conducted a survey in 2008 in which over 2,800 farmworkers from 95% of the agricultural counties in Washington were interviewed. According to this survey, the overwhelming majority, 98%, of immigrant farmworkers in Washington are of Mexican origin. Of that majority, 3% considered

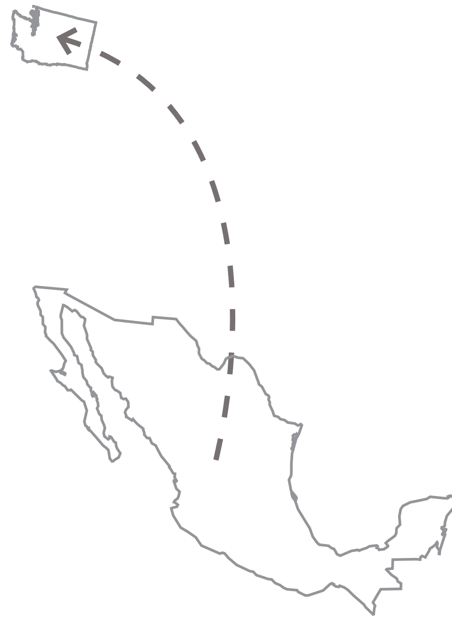


Figure 6. Most farmworkers in Washington are from Mexico.

themselves of indigenous Mexican origin. The remaining 2% of immigrant farmworkers in Washington were surveyed as being Central American with an even smaller percentage of farmworkers being African American, Pacific Islander, or Caucasian.[7]

Despite the complex cultural diversity within Mexico, reliable information regarding what specific areas Washington's farmworkers come from is nonexistent. However, other states in which the farmworker population is better documented can provide insight into specific areas of origin. According to several distinct sources, Washington's farmworkers have come from Michoacán, Guanajuato, and Oaxaca.[8] Though Washington State's indigenous farmworker population is small, 23% of farmworkers in Western Washington are from rural parts of Mexico such as Oaxaca and Guerrero.[9] Oaxaca was anecdotally described as the state in Mexico from which many farmworkers immigrate and thus was chosen as a more specific, representative culture for the purposes of this thesis.

Though the general perception of farmworkers is that they are an entirely migrant population, the opposite is the case in the state of Washington. According to the survey from the Housing Trust, nearly 80% of farmworkers in Washington live permanently in the state. Of the remaining farmworker community not living permanently in Washington about, 15% live in Oregon or California and the remaining 5% live in Mexico.[10] Not only are farmworkers in Washington generally settling and living permanently in Washington, but about 70% of farmworkers

work locally within driving distance of their home.[11] This data contradicts widely accepted notions that farmworkers are a transient population that draws resources from a community instead of contributing to it. Instead, farmworkers in Washington State represent a settling population that is becoming a permanent part of their local communities.

The permanence of the farmworker community in Washington is also reflected in the typical family profile. According to the survey, just over half of farmworkers are married and 77% of those surveyed were living with family members.[12] This number corresponds to the number of farmworkers who reported working locally within a certain distance of their home. Thus, the remaining minority of farmworkers represents a migrating community of single individuals.

A final component to these complexities is the quality of being an authorized or unauthorized farmworker. The typical assumption is that farmworkers come to the United States illegally. The reality is that there are many anecdotes, sources, and statistics that report 50% to 90% of farmworkers are illegal.[13][14][15] A reliable synthesis of these varying reports is to assert that the majority of farmworkers are unauthorized.

In summary, the majority of the immigrant farmworker population in Washington has illegally come to the United States from the southern-central region of Mexico near and including Oaxaca. They are living and working permanently in Washington and thus are largely made up of families.

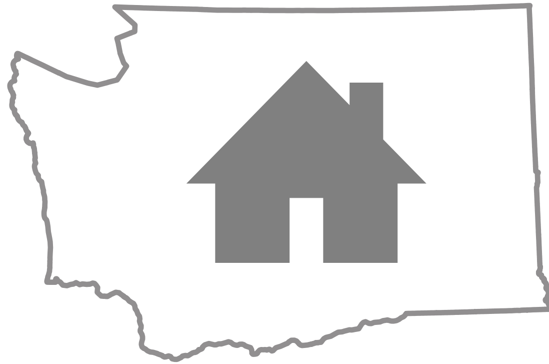


Figure 7. Many farmworkers in Washington live permanently in the state with family members.

Source: Symbols from The Noun Project

*Obstacles to Farmworker Well-Being*

Well-being can be defined as the human right to good mental and physical health, a safe and comfortable home, positive social and professional relationships, sufficient food resources, and access to basic life services such as healthcare and education.[16] On any given day, farmworkers in Washington and across the country encounter numerous hardships, also known as obstacles to well-being. These obstacles can be categorized to be institutional, cultural, and physical in nature.

Obstacles to farmworker well-being that are institutional in nature are mostly applicable to farmworkers that are illegal immigrants to the United States. For example, the status of being an illegal immigrant, or unauthorized farmworker, severely decreases a farmworker's ability to access health care services. Furthermore, the condition of being unauthorized results in a general fear of deportation and thus a tendency to avoid the public realm. Consequently, many farmworkers avoid medical attention for their health issues. This lack of access to health care is a component of farmworker life that perpetuates poor mental and physical health. An absence of adequate health care opportunities is one of several social services that are negatively affected by the condition of being an illegal immigrant. This condition further prevents a farmworker from accessing government-funded housing. In the case of farmworker housing, it is always at least

Figure 8. The majority of farmworkers in Washington have problems with income, English literacy, and health care.

Source: Symbols from The Noun Project

partially funded by the federal government.[17] Without the living wage to rent or buy market-rate housing, many farmworkers are forced to live in grower provided or makeshift housing. These forms of shelter are often unlivable and further contribute to a negative state of well-being. In addition to the complications with accessing basic social services, the education of farmworkers and their children presents an additional challenge. Obstacles to education are particularly frustrating for the farmworker community, as those opportunities are often part of the original impetus for migrating to the United States. This lack of access to education contributes to the inability for future farmworker generations to settle out of agricultural work into more financially stable lifestyles.

In addition to the obstacles to well-being that arise from the condition of being an unauthorized farmworker, other institutional obstacles that are political in nature also have negative effects on the well-being of the farmworker community in Washington. These obstacles first arose in the 1930s with the implementation of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal and Agricultural Exceptionalism. The New Deal was known for numerous accomplishments, one of them being the creation of legislation that protects industrial labor occupations. Such protections include the right to organize, minimum wage, overtime pay, and child labor laws. Though this legislation was a turning point for labor in many industries, the agricultural sector was specifically excluded from this legislation. Without the right to organize, farmworkers cannot fight for better wages or living and working conditions. Without

a decent living wage, farmworkers are forced to live in a state of poverty and must make their children work for more financial security. Today, this exclusion continues to have a negative effect on farmworker well-being.

A further political institution that has historically affected farmworkers is the federally-regulated guest worker programs. Though the H-2A temporary agricultural worker program is not often used due to its inefficiencies, the very nature of temporary work has a negative influence on the sustainable well-being of the farmworker community across the country. Due to the temporary nature of these work contracts, the ability of the farmworker community to effectively integrate into a local community is greatly reduced. This process is an act that has powerful effects over the mental well-being of farmworkers. Without the ability to become a part of a community, depression and anxiety can result as effects of social isolation. More recently, the United States Government has developed a program called “E-Verify” which is intended to reduce the amount of illegal workers in the United States. This program negatively impacts the agricultural economy as most businesses rely on unauthorized farmworkers for their labor. In addition to limiting employment opportunities, this program contributes to the fear that farmworkers have of living in the public realm.

An absence of access to social services and educational opportunities combined with the anti-immigrant political force of the United States Government ultimately contributes to an insurmountable cycle of poverty for the farmworker

community. These obstacles prevent farmworkers from moving beyond agricultural work, finding more lucrative employment, and becoming highly contributing members of society.

Members of the farmworker community also face complex cultural obstacles to well-being. These obstacles exist between farmworkers and non-farmworkers in addition to within the farmworker community itself. The obstacles to well-being that are cultural in nature begin with the basic dissimilarity between Hispanic culture and American culture. The fact that these cultures are simply dissimilar results in the farmworker community being subject to severe racial discrimination. Racial discrimination may fundamentally be a result of two very different cultures attempting to coexist, but there are several specific reasons it exists and ways in which it is manifest. One of the possible reasons people express racial discrimination towards the farmworker community is because they see immigrant farmworkers as competition for employment, especially in the context of a slow national economy.[18] Additionally, the general increase of the Hispanic population in small communities represents a significant change. In turn, this change may represent a threat to longtime residents and ultimately result in fear and resentment towards the farmworker community.[19] Another cultural obstacle to the well-being of farmworkers is the language barrier between locals and immigrants. The absence of English proficiency in the farmworker community in Washington becomes a source of anxiety and has a negative effect on their mental and behavioral health.

Additionally, this condition creates a barrier of communication between farmworkers and locals, which can result in a barrier to cultural understanding.

The cultural obstacles to well-being in the farmworker community are not limited to the differences between farmworkers and non-farmworkers. The farmworker community itself consists of numerous nationalities and cultures. The most basic cultural divide within this community is the difference between the migrant and permanent lifestyle. Permanent farmworkers are commonly referred to as "seasonal" farmworkers but they are defined by the fact that they are able to return to a permanent home after their day of work.[20] Permanent farmworkers are more likely to have a fixed home and live with family members. Migrant farmworkers on the other hand, are defined by the fact that they are unable to return to a permanent home after their day of work.[21] Without a fixed place of residence within reasonable distance, migrant farmworkers are often characterized as individual, male adults that have a permanent home in a nearby state or in Mexico. Thus, the major cultural difference between permanent and migrant farmworkers is in their priorities. Permanent farmworkers are family oriented and are attempting to become a part of the community in which they live, whereas migrant farmworkers are independent and more interested in making a living for themselves or their families living out-of-state. Ultimately, these two groups have the potential to clash because of their opposing values.

Though reports indicate that the overwhelming majority of farmworkers

in Washington are “Mexican” there is little, published information regarding the cultural complexities within Mexico. According to immigration statistics, the majority of Mexican immigrants in the U.S. come from several different Mexican states: Jalisco, Chiapas, Guanajuato, Oaxaca, Sonora, and Michoacán. No different than the U.S., each one of these states has its own historical and cultural identity. For instance, some states have large urban centers whereas others are more rural in nature, as is the case with Jalisco and Michoacán, respectively. Also, some states have much larger indigenous populations than others, as is the case with Oaxaca and Guanajuato. Though the information is incomplete, several sources have indicated that many farmworkers in Washington come from Oaxaca. Oaxaca has a substantial indigenous, rural population, but it also has a large urban population in Oaxaca City. This dichotomy between rural and urban immigrants in the United States presents another layer of cultural complexity within the farmworker community. In many cases, farmworkers of urban origins in Mexico consider the rural or indigenous farmworkers to be of a lower class.[22] Indigenous farmworkers are also even more isolated than their urban counterparts due to the fact that they speak only indigenous languages instead of Spanish. Naturally, this prejudice and language barrier creates tensions within groups of farmworkers and further degrades the state of well-being for indigenous farmworkers. A further cultural difference within the farmworker community is manifest between different generations of immigrants. Between World War II and the Immigration Reform

Figure 9. Exterior of temporary farmworker housing in the Skagit Valley.

Figure 10. Interior of temporary farmworker housing in the Skagit Valley.

and Control Act of 1986, a large group of farmworkers migrated to Washington and is considered the older generation within the existing farmworker community. Following IRCA, another group of farmworkers have migrated to Washington and is considered the new generation of farmworkers. At times, due to generational and experiential differences, the interests of these two groups do not coincide, causing conflict and eventually, negative effects on the well-being of the community as a whole.[23]

In addition to these institutional and cultural obstacles, the farmworker community is also challenged daily by obstacles that are physical in nature. Images of housing conditions for farmworkers are generally well-documented and often serve as the public's main visual indication of the numerous hardships that the farmworker community encounters. Unfortunately, thorough and systematic documentation of farmworker housing does not exist. When images are exposed to the public eye through the mainstream media, they gain only the temporary attention of the public and ultimately are ineffective images for creating long term support for the farmworker cause.[24] According to a report from 2005, the reality of the farmworker housing situation in Washington is that there remains a need for safe, clean, and affordable housing for around 158,000 farmworkers and their families.[25] This figure reflects farmworkers that do not have access to housing and those who are living in substandard housing. Employer housing is in many cases unregulated, resulting in living conditions that negatively affect the well-being

of farmworkers. Other large components to a lack of adequate farmworker housing in Washington are, Not-In-My-Backyardism and affordability.

The working conditions of farmworkers are equally as bad as their living conditions. Despite the good intentions of farmworkers to come to the United States to improve their quality of life, they often work in environments characterized as unsanitary, dangerous, and inhumane. The modern agricultural system perpetuates this pattern of poor living and working conditions by paying farmworkers low wages, forcing them to work overtime, and keeping them from organizing. Changing these working conditions would require a challenge to Agricultural Exceptionalism and would eventually result in a conflict with agricultural businesses and their political allies.

### *The Status Quo and the Pyramid of Influence*

Though the circumstances of the farmworker community in Washington are complex, there are multiple reasons that the farmworker situation exists as it does today. One of the major reasons for this situation is Agricultural Exceptionalism. As mentioned previously, this concept refers to the set of labor rights laws that apply to many industries except for agriculture. Most notable amongst these exceptions are those concerning wages, overtime, child labor, and labor organization. These exceptions have significant effects on the ability for farmworkers to improve the

quality of life for themselves and their families. With laws that prevent the right of farmworkers to organize into a labor union, farmworkers are unable to negotiate components of their contracts such as wages and overtime. Without the ability to earn a sustainable wage, farmworkers are burdened with poor housing conditions and the struggle to maintain consistent, healthy lifestyles. Without the ability to negotiate overtime regulations, farmworkers are unable to make time for activities that could improve their quality of life such as English classes or leisure activities. Finally, by providing such low wages and allowing child labor, children in farmworker families are required to work in order for the family to achieve a minimum level of financial security. This child labor makes attending schools especially difficult and ultimately prevents children from becoming educated enough for them to settle out of agricultural work.

Despite the need to change the status quo for themselves, many farmworkers deal with the fear of the potential consequences of their resistance. In the case of unauthorized farmworkers, the fear of resistance is based in the fear of deportation. In the case of legal, authorized farmworkers, the fear of resistance is based in the fear of unemployment. Fear also contributes significantly to the hidden and isolated quality of the farmworker community. This intentional isolation results in infrequent participation in public activities and an inability to integrate into an existing community.

In the 1960s and 70s, a farmworker rights activist named Cesar Chavez helped to create the United Farm Workers of America union and gain national attention for the struggle of the farmworker community. This collective rise in exposure gave many farmworkers the courage and confidence to resist the oppression imposed by their employers. Unfortunately, the membership levels, popularity, and exposure of the

United Farm Workers of America have decreased significantly in the contemporary era.[26] The reduced exposure of the United Farm Workers union is a major reason for the general public's lack of awareness regarding the hardships of the farmworker community. Without public knowledge of these hardships or the efforts of the union, the United Farm Workers becomes largely ineffective in its negotiations with growers.

The general public's minimal knowledge regarding the farmworker condition is not only due to the moderate effectiveness of the United Farm Workers union, but it is also due to the effects of urbanization and suburbanization of the American geography. As America shifted from a rural economy to an industrialized economy and the growth in urban areas started to overcome the growth in rural areas, people shifted their focus from farms to cities. Still, even as the general population has migrated to suburban areas and more recently back to urban areas, the rural parts of the country remain inconspicuous. Through these fluctuations in density, farmworkers have become increasingly hidden. These geographic changes in America have only contributed to further physical isolation of farmworkers. With more concentrated centers of population, the distribution of food through modern grocery stores increases efficiency and profits. As a result, food that comes through the grocery store appears harmless, healthy, and delicious but displays no indication of the labor that was required to produce it.

As previously indicated, many groups of people consciously and

unconsciously affect the well-being of the farmworker community. Despite the complexities of the farmworker situation it is possible to simplify the issues into primary systems of influential relationships. For instance, agricultural businesses and politicians clearly have a negative influence over the well-being of the farmworker community. However, the motivations for their actions are largely based on external influences. The concept of Agricultural Exceptionalism exists in the modern era because legislators have perpetuated its existence since it was created in the 1930s. A large reason for the maintenance of these legislative exceptions is caused by the influence that agricultural corporations and their representative lobbying groups have on politicians. Agricultural corporations have an interest in these laws due to the fact that they are a business interested in making a profit off of the consumption of their product. The consumption of their product is reliant on demand created by the consumer community. If agricultural corporations charge too much money for their product, consumer demand will decrease. Thus, these corporations must reduce costs as much as possible in order to maintain desired levels of profit. Unfortunately, the act of reducing costs translates directly to paying farmworkers low wages, making them work overtime, and preventing them from unionizing. Despite these complicated relationships, it is clear that the consumer community ultimately has the most influence over the current agricultural system. If consumers were more aware of the consequences of their actions, demand could be created for food products that involve fair labor practices.

Politicians have a major effect on the well-being of the farmworker community through legislation involving labor practices and immigration. Though agricultural corporations heavily influence politicians, they are also externally influenced by groups of local citizens. Local communities that live in close proximity to a farmworker community express fear or ignorance of farmworkers through racial discrimination and prejudice. Thus, these local community members express their fear and ignorance through electing like-minded public officials. Ultimately, these officials, empowered by their discriminating constituents, continue to legislate at the local, state, and federal levels in a manner that disadvantages farmworkers.

Overall, the larger consumer community in the United States that buys products harvested by farmworkers and the local communities that live within close proximity to farmworkers have the most influence over the well-being of this community. These relationships create a pyramid of influence where the cycle of poverty in which farmworkers are trapped is perpetuated by a non-existent relationship with the consumer community and a negative relationship with their local community.

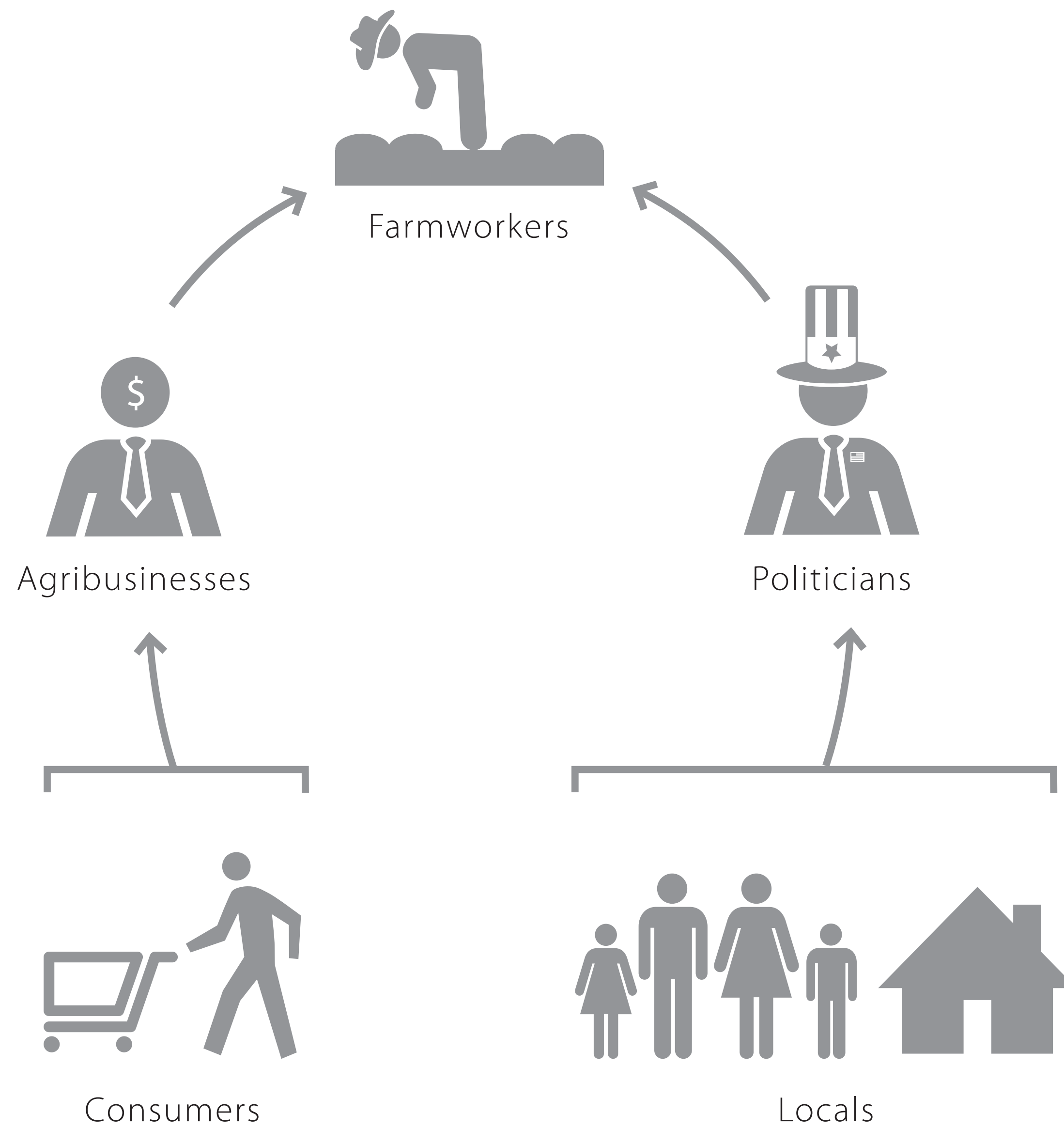



Figure 11. The Pyramid of Influence.

Source: Symbols from The Noun Project

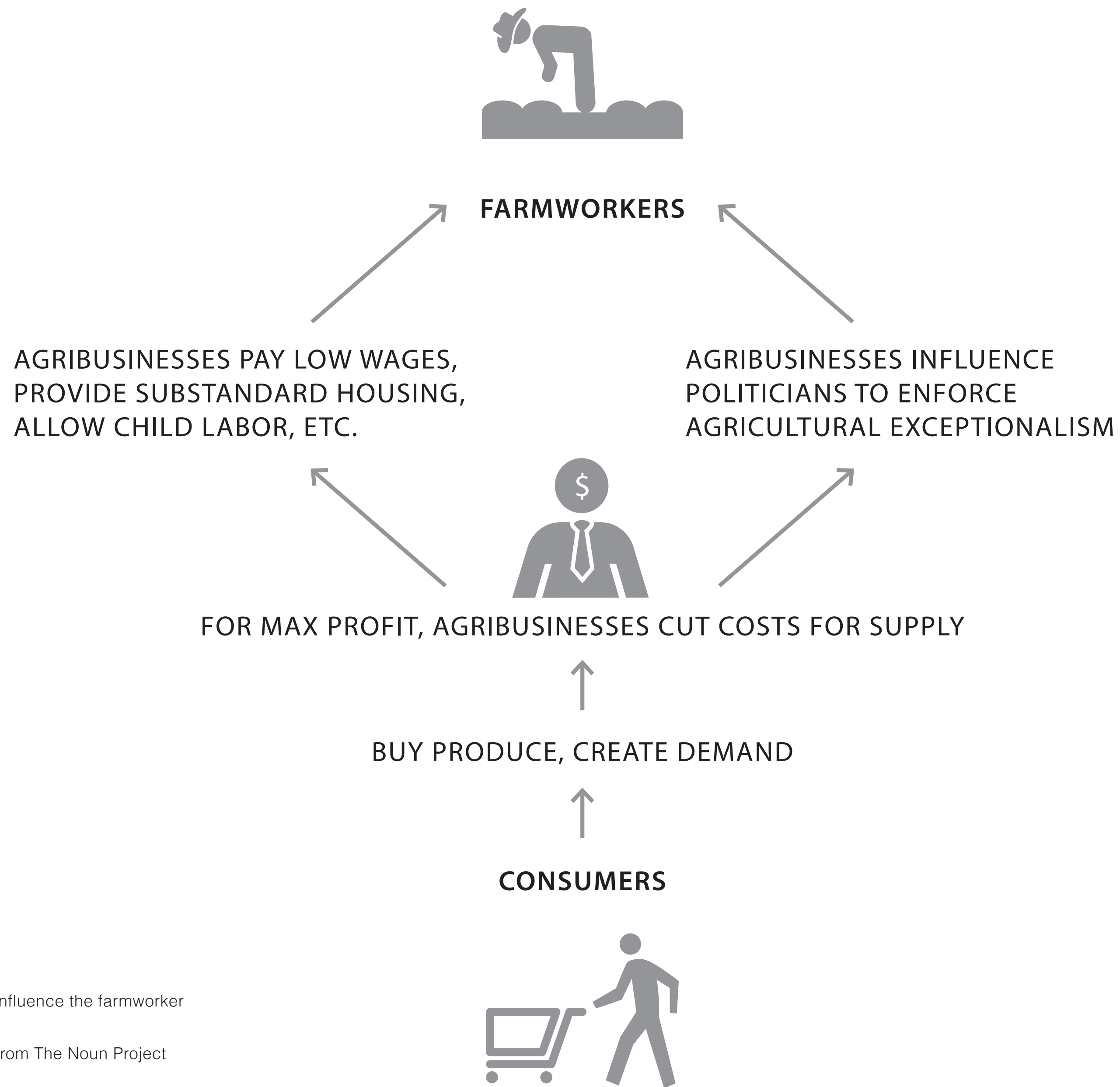



Figure 12. How consumers influence the farmworker community.

Source: Symbols from The Noun Project

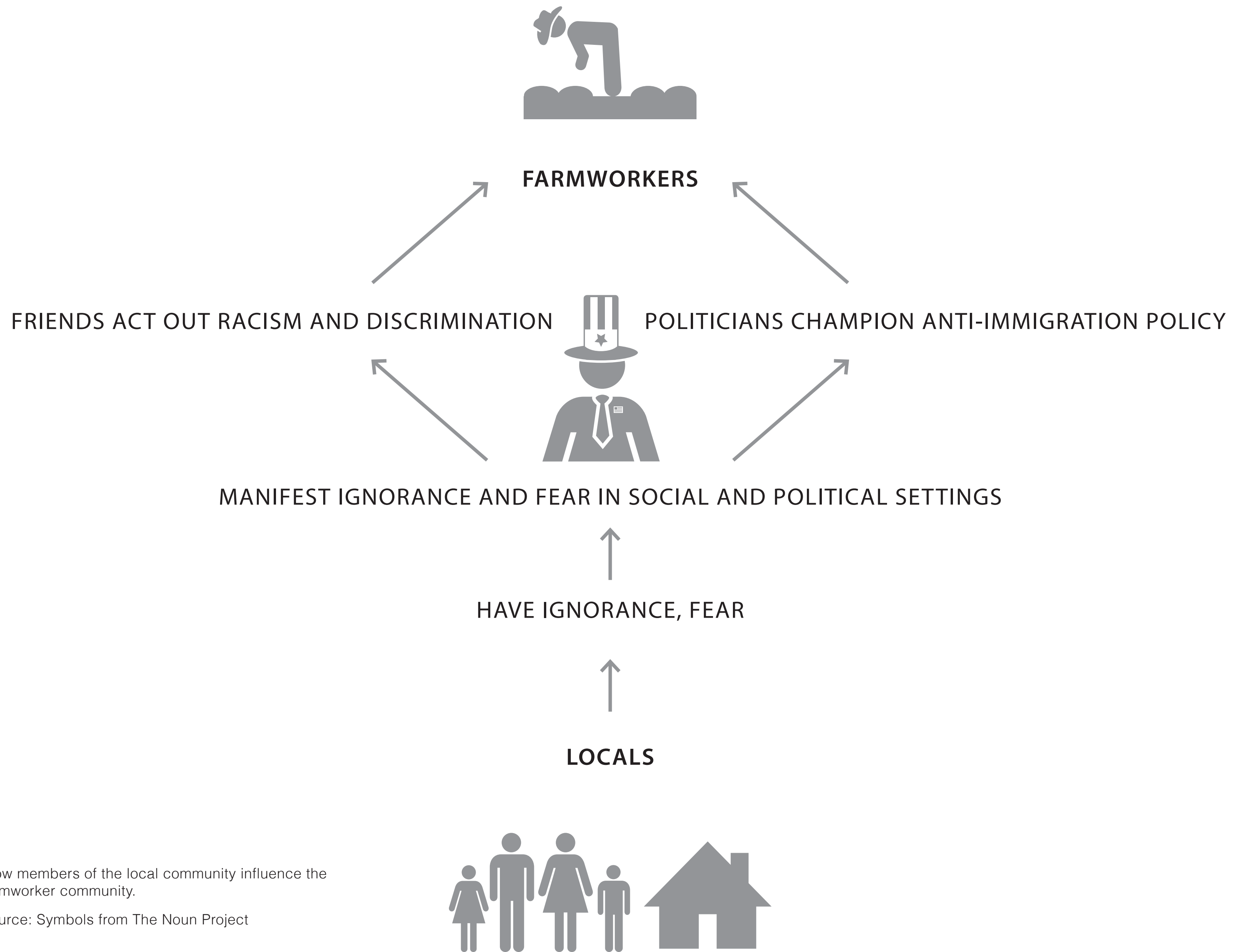



Figure 13. How members of the local community influence the farmworker community.

Source: Symbols from The Noun Project

## Chapter 2: The Existing Role of Architecture

*Addressing the One-Dimensional Built Environment*

The influence that locals and consumers have over the well-being of farmworkers is not an issue that has been previously addressed by the built environment. Typically, housing and medical facilities are the focus of the built environment's response to farmworker well-being. As articulated previously, housing is a constant issue that negatively affects the well-being of farmworkers. Though the majority of farmworker housing is non-existent or substandard, many rural or religious development organizations contribute to the development of farmworker housing. These developments provide safe, clean, and stable affordable housing for farmworkers. The Gonzaga Townhomes in Toppenish, Washington serve as a typical example of these types of developments. The project was designed by Zeck Butler Architects PS for the Office of Rural and Farmworker Housing. It includes 26 two, three, and four bedroom units in the form of two-story townhomes. Additionally, the development has a community center that houses laundry facilities, office space, meeting space, a computer lab, and a playground. Overall, this development serves the immediate housing and community needs of the farmworkers that live there. However, as is the case for many farmworker housing developments in the Yakima Valley, it is located in a small rural community, a far

Figure 14. Clockwise from Upper-left: Townhomes, Community Center, Playground, and Townhomes.

Figure 15. Location of Gonzaga Townhomes in relation to the Yakima Valley.

Source: Map from Google Maps

Figure 16. Location of Gonzaga Townhomes in relation to the geography of Toppenish.

Source: Map from Google Maps

distance from Interstate 82 and the central, more populous city of Yakima. Not only is this development isolated at the scale of the valley, but it is also isolated within the town of Toppenish itself. The development is located far from the local access road, on the edge of town, between a residential area and the expansive agricultural landscape of the Yakima Valley. Without a connection to a large local or consumer community, developments similar to the Gonzaga Townhomes function primarily as temporary alleviation of a complex and long-term problem of physical and cultural isolation.

Housing for permanent farmworkers is not the only type of housing that is proposed, designed, and built for this community. Mobile or temporary housing solutions are often suggested for the migrant farmworker community due to their inherently nomadic lifestyle. Migrant farmworker housing typically is characterized as especially poor due to the temporary nature of its use. Because of this quality, the academic realm of architecture often analyzes and suggests solutions to the problem of migrant farmworker housing. An example of these solutions is a Master of Architecture thesis project conducted by Chelsea Rose Gorkiewicz at the University of Washington called “Temporary Nomads: A Mobile Interim Option for Affordable Migrant Farmworker Housing.” This thesis is exceptionally thorough at analyzing and proposing a solution for the typically horrible migrant farmworker housing options in Washington. It considers the history of farmworkers in the United States, current housing options, and different mobile housing typologies.

Additionally, the project outlines the details of a business plan that would support farmworkers in seeking ownership of a mobile housing unit. It also involves the design of a mobile housing system and a permanent infrastructure with which the mobile housing units can integrate. Overall, this thesis project formulates a thoughtful, long-term solution to the issue of temporary, migrant farmworker housing. On the other hand, the site for the project is located in the corner of a piece of land that is pivot-irrigated for agricultural purposes outside of Wapato, Washington. The miniature migrant farmworker community that is created through this project is in complete isolation from a substantial farmworker, local, or consumer community. Without opportunities for interaction, it would be severely difficult for this group of farmworkers to forge sustainable, constructive relationships with other groups of people.

The built environment also has approached the issue of mental and physical health in the farmworker community in Washington. One example of this approach is a Master of Architecture thesis project conducted by Aaron Hodgin at the University of Washington called “Mobility and permanence: the design of a medical facility for the farmworker population in Yakima.” This project proposes a prefabricated construction system for a medical health network in Eastern Washington. However, it addresses the hardships encountered by farmworkers in a manner that is focused only on the physical health of farmworkers. One merit of this project is that the prefabricated health clinics are not sited on farm but

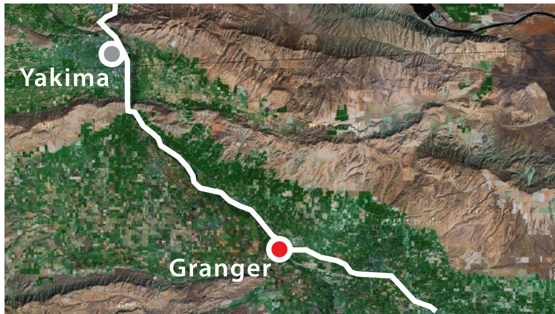



Figure 19. Location of the Northwest Communities Education Center in relation to the Yakima Valley.

Source: Map from Google Maps

Figure 17. Exterior of NW.C.E.C.

Figure 18. Community meeting inside NW.C.E.C.

rather in central commercial areas of towns in Eastern Washington. Overall, this project acknowledges the need for medical facilities for farmworkers but does not comprehensively address the foundational issues that limit farmworker access to social services.

One of the most effective methods used thus far to address farmworker well-being in the built environment is to provide space in which to build community and break down obstacles to well-being. In particular, English literacy for farmworkers is a considerable obstacle to disseminating useful information to the community. Due to this significant obstacle a group of people formed Radio Cadena in Granger, Washington in 1979 in order to distribute easily understood information related to health and citizenship via the radio. As the first all-Spanish speaking radio station in the United States, Radio Cadena has earned multiple broadcasting awards. Their recently completed facility, as part of the Northwest Communities Education Center (NWCEC), serves as an example of how the built environment has become an important part of the farmworker community in Washington. The NWCEC serves as a community center with meeting rooms, a computer lab, social services offices, and Radio Cadena's headquarters. Despite providing access to gathering spaces, technology, social services, and educational information, this project does so in an isolated manner. Located in rural Granger, Washington and beyond the visibility of the interstate, it does not have a significant regional presence. Furthermore, this facility is only focused on serving farmworkers and thus does not exist as an asset

to the whole community. This example of the built environment further illustrates how isolationist tendencies meet the immediate needs of farmworkers but do not address the need for farmworkers to forge stronger relationships with their local community.

## Chapter 3: The Potential Role of Architecture

*The Power of Interaction*

The absence and negative quality of the relationships between farmworkers, locals, and consumers are the foundation for the manner in which the well-being of the farmworker community is negatively affected. In consideration of this notion, it is very difficult to construct a positive relationship between two groups of people without these two groups having any interaction. Though architecture and the built environment are infamous for short-sighted approaches to social issues, architecture has a powerful effect on the manner in which people interact with space, place, and each other. In the case of these three typically disparate communities, architecture can exist as a bridge between them. Ultimately, the built environment has the most potential to sustainably and positively affect the well-being of the farmworker community in Washington by creating and concentrating opportunities for positive interaction between members of the farmworker, local, and consumer communities. As a result of this interaction, members of the local and consumer community could increase their understanding, awareness, and appreciation of farmworkers and the numerous challenges they face.

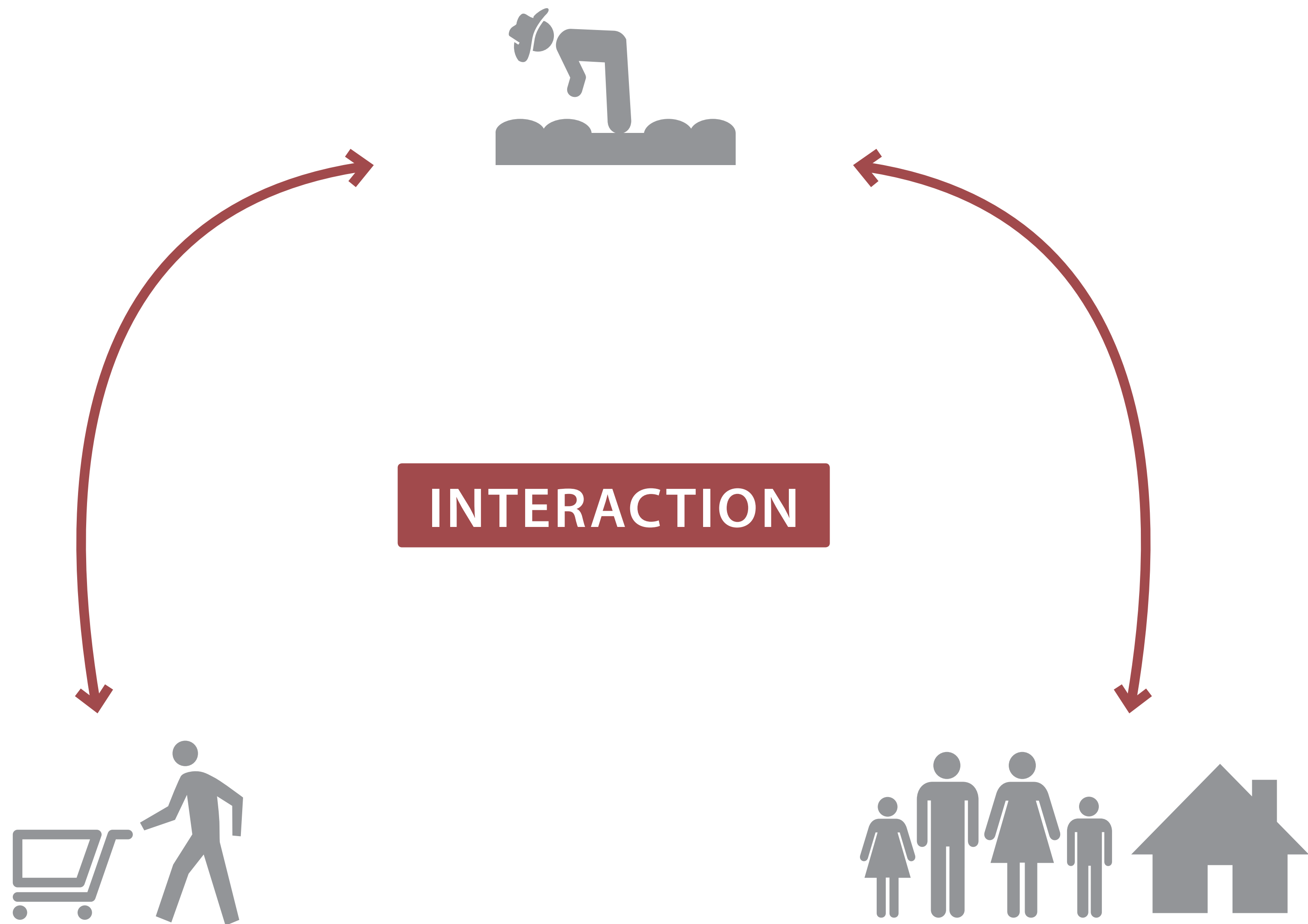



Figure 20. The role of the built environment is to create opportunities for interaction between farmworkers, locals, and consumers.

Source: Symbols from The Noun Project

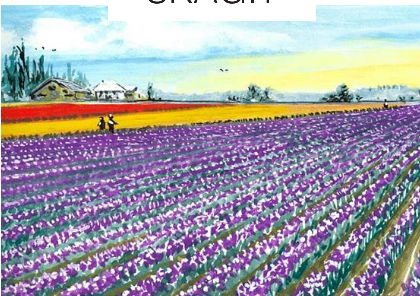


Figure 21. Common food and craft culture from Oaxaca and the Skagit Valley

Source: Seattle,gov, Bob Patterson

*Common Ground*

*"The tragedy of our nation's farmworkers lies not in their difference from other Americans but rather in their great and overwhelming similarity."*[27]

*- Daniel Rothenberg from With These Hands: The Hidden World of Migrant Farmworkers Today*

In order to suggest a place that fosters positive interaction between typically disparate communities, it is important to reflect on the common ground that these groups share. Due to the Hispanic background of many farmworkers, food takes on an especially important role for the immigrant farmworker community in Washington. In many farmworker camps, there is a strong tendency for workers to prepare their traditional cuisine. In Oaxaca specifically, moles, chocolate, cheese, and various traditional dishes reflect the importance of food to Oaxacan cultural heritage. The culture of the Pacific Northwest also has a strong commitment to food that is based in the physical geography of the region. With abundant bodies of saltwater and fertile river valleys, food culture in the Northwest prides itself on fresh fish and produce. The prevalence of these fresh foods has created an environment that places significant cultural value in local food.

A further similarity that is shared between Oaxaca and the Pacific Northwest is the popularity of craft culture. Several craft traditions that have been passed down from Oaxaca's indigenous roots are important sources of culture and

economy in the modern era. Tourists from around the world visit Oaxaca to see the various traditions, such as black pottery, carved wooden animals, and textiles. In small villages outside of Oaxaca City, Oaxaca, the household income of small families is based in crafts, thus reflecting the importance that this tradition has in modern Oaxacan culture. Similar to Oaxaca, the local craft tradition in the Pacific Northwest has gradually evolved alongside the development of the region's cultures, resulting in a widespread respect for the art of making. Between the Native American and Nordic roots of the Northwest, crafts are an inseparable component of the region's culture. In recent years, this tradition has also heavily influenced the practice of architecture to be more rooted in construction and material.

Figure 22. Ocotlan Market. Oaxaca, Mexico.

*Marketplace*

The context of a marketplace is one place in which farmworkers, locals, and consumers could mutually share their common ground. For farmworkers of Mexican origin, the marketplace is part of one's daily experience and is a cultural reflection of the region in which they operate. There are countless precedents of marketplaces in cultures around the world, especially in Mexico and Central America. In Mexico, there are traditionally fixed, covered, and permanent marketplaces that are prominently located within any given municipality (Figures 22, 23). Additionally, there are also temporary street markets in Mexico that are called

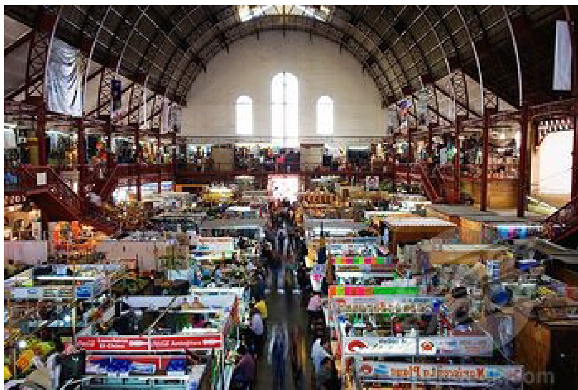


Figure 23. Hidalgo Market. Guanajuato, Mexico.
Source: Christian Kober

Figure 24. Tiangui. Oaxaca, Oaxaca, Mexico.

tianguis. These markets occur on particular days of the week and often act as an extension of the permanent market hall (Figure 24). The history of the marketplace is a tradition strongly rooted in indigenous Central American culture. Many early villages and cities in Mexico were founded around a central marketplace. After the Spanish conquest of this region, the marketplace maintained its popularity.[28]

Historically across the world, the marketplace was consistently located within close proximity to important civic and public spaces. This close physical relationship between government and trade was important for the regulation and fairness of exchange amongst individuals.[29] Today, markets, government buildings, churches, and plazas all hold a level of civic importance in the lives of local citizens. For farmworkers that are migrant, and thus more likely to avoid public places for fear of law enforcement, the marketplace offers an informal environment for social and cultural interaction. As the farmworker community in Washington State seeks to find familiarity and comfort in a foreign place, a temporary or fixed marketplace represents an arena for public cultural expression.

The prominence of marketplaces, food, and crafts in the culture of the Pacific Northwest is equally as strong as it is in Oaxaca and other parts of Central America. In early American history, large marketplaces serving fresh produce played a significant part in the social and economic activity of metropolitan areas of the United States. As the population of the United States began to sprawl out towards the suburbs following World War II, the popularity of marketplaces declined

Figure 25. Pike Place Market. Seattle, WA, USA.
Source: Destination360.com

Figure 26. Farmers Market. Mt. Vernon, WA, USA.

with the concurrent rise in the popularity of grocery stores and industrial food production.[30] More recently, with the rise of the food consciousness movement and interest in organic and local food products, marketplaces and food culture have regained mass popularity.[31]

The popularity of fixed marketplaces, fresh produce, and local crafts in the Pacific Northwest is evident in the tourist destination of the Pike Place Market in Seattle, Washington. Approximately 10 million people a year visit the market's hundreds of food and craft vendors making Pike Place one of the most popular destinations in Washington (Figure 25).[32] Other fixed markets in the Pacific Northwest such as the Depot Market in Bellingham, Washington and the Granville Island Market in Vancouver, British Columbia demonstrate the popularity of market, food, and craft culture in this region. In addition to fixed marketplaces, temporary farmers' markets have also surged in popularity. With nearly 120 farmers markets in Washington State alone, these variations of the Mexican tianguis are further illustration of the importance of market, food, and craft culture in the Northwest (Figure 26). For both the local and consumer communities in Washington, the public marketplace and its associated values act as a place of social, cultural, and civic importance.

*Knowledge Co-Op*

An additional opportunity for fostering interaction on the basis of common ground is to provide the means for farmworkers, locals, and consumers to engage in a mutual exchange of knowledge and experience in the context of a classroom. In this project, a collection of classrooms in which there is mutual, cultural exchange is referred to as a “knowledge co-op.” The International Co-Operative Alliance (ICA) defines a co-operative as, “an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations…” Thus, by utilizing the term cooperative, this project further recognizes the similarities that exist between farmworkers, locals, and consumers.

For the farmworker community that is more permanent or seasonal, and thus more likely to be open to public interaction, a knowledge co-op offers a more formal, structured environment than the marketplace. This formal interaction provides the permanent farmworker community with an arena to become more directly involved with locals and consumers. Within this context, a traditional classroom offers many possibilities for sharing knowledge. For instance, farmworkers may teach Spanish classes to the local community while locals may teach English classes to the farmworker community. The classroom also has the potential to hold classes on culture, history, and access to social services.

Figure 27. Chartwell School, Seaside, CA, USA.
Source: Adv. Bldgs. Daylighting Pattern Guide

The realm of cooking also illustrates an area of expertise in which both

Figure 28. Example of an instructional kitchen.
Source: campusrec.illinois.edu

Figure 29. P-Patch Garden. Seattle, WA, USA.
Source: Flickr, Cascadeguy

Figure 30. Example of an art studio.
Source: Curvestudiosnc.com

communities can share their respective cultural knowledge in a cooking classroom. Similarly, gardening and agriculture are further areas of expertise that can be shared between communities in instructional gardens. The importance of food and agriculture in both Oaxacan and Northwest culture represents a clear opportunity in which farmworkers, locals, and consumers can share a common interest.

Due to the presence of a language barrier that typically prevents interaction between farmworkers and other members of the community, the sharing of knowledge through the visual arts represents another method of exchange. By providing space for art studios, farmworkers and locals can exchange experience with painting, ceramics, textiles, or any other small craft. Finally, a daycare space that allows farmworkers and locals to drop off their kids while they shop in the marketplace or attend and teach classes within the knowledge co-op provides an additional environment for these communities to interact. Though the daycare is not a formal classroom, the adolescent exchange between future generations of these communities is crucially important to forging a more inclusive, collective community.

The manner in which the built environment has approached the farmworker community is often focused on providing individual, discrete, and isolated places for this population. Unfortunately, this intention often excludes locals and consumers and thus prevents any form of interaction. As previously indicated, the creation of environments for interaction that are both formal and informal is crucially important to the involvement of the entire farmworker community. One of the primary

intents of this thesis is to create a place that primarily includes the farmworker community while simultaneously including the local and greater consumer communities. For this purpose, it is imperative to consider the common ground that these communities share. Ultimately, with these considerations and intentions in mind, this thesis proposes a marketplace and knowledge co-op that provides a place that is universally appealing and inclusive to Washington State's farmworkers, locals, and consumers.

*The Site*

In the process of selecting a site for this project the decision to focus on Eastern or Western Washington was an important distinction to make. The Cascade mountain range was used as the division between Western and Eastern Washington. For the purposes of characterizing each region, Mt. Vernon was used to be representative of Western Washington while Yakima was used to be representative of Eastern Washington. Initially, the first and most significant consideration was the scale of the farmworker community in each area. According to an enumeration study done to estimate the farmworker population in each county in Washington, Mt. Vernon's Skagit County has approximately 5,000 farmworkers throughout the year. On the other hand, Yakima County has an estimated 50,000 farmworkers annually. Despite Yakima's larger farmworker population, the scale

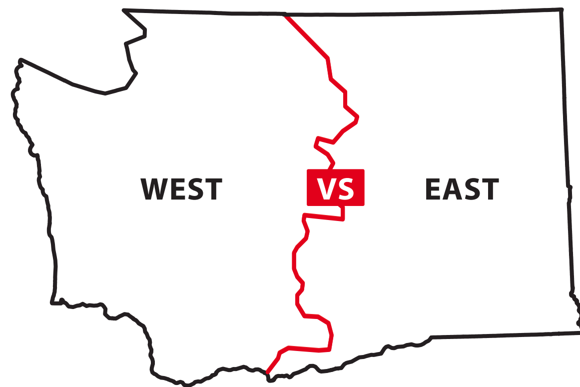



Figure 31. Comparing Western vs. Eastern Washington.

of the farmworker community in each region was not a significant factor in the site selection process. Furthermore, it is very difficult to determine the number of immigrant farmworkers living in a certain place since the population changes based on season, climate, year, economy, and politics. Ultimately, both Mt. Vernon and Yakima demonstrate the presence of a significant farmworker population and thus are in need of a place that creates the opportunity for interaction between disparate communities.

An additional consideration taken into account was the agricultural reputation of each region. The Yakima Valley in Eastern Washington is particularly well known for its cherries, apples, and wineries. The Skagit Valley in Western Washington is well known for its flowers and berries. The major differences between the Mt. Vernon and Yakima areas are their scale of production and their climate types. The Skagit Valley generally does not generate as much produce as the Yakima Valley does due to its smaller physical size and shorter growing season.

A further consideration was the connectedness of each region to the larger consumer community. Specifically, this quality was determined by the degree of access to regional transit and tourism opportunities. In terms of access to regional transit, Mt. Vernon is more connected to a large consumer community than Yakima. Though Yakima is located adjacent to a major interstate, I-82, the closest metropolitan area on this Interstate is Boise, Idaho, over 350 miles away. On the other hand, Mt. Vernon is located adjacent to a major interstate as well, I-5.

Following I-5 north and south from Mt. Vernon one would encounter Vancouver, British Columbia and Seattle, Washington within 80 miles. Additionally, Amtrak, Greyhound, and other regional bus lines operate out of the Skagit Transportation Center located in downtown Mt. Vernon. In terms of tourism, the Yakima Valley is widely known for its wine and thus attracts people to its numerous vineyards. Though the agricultural production of the Yakima area is strong, this quality does not necessarily attract proportionate amounts of tourism. On the other hand, the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival based out of Mt. Vernon attracts several hundred thousand people annually from across the country.[33] In addition to the Tulip Festival and its location midway between Seattle and Vancouver, Mt. Vernon also acts as a stop between Seattle and the San Juan Islands. Ultimately, Mt. Vernon and the Skagit Valley were chosen as a place for further site exploration, as they exist at the most concentrated crossroads of the farmworker, local, and consumer communities in Washington State.

In further consideration of Mt. Vernon, there are several components of the city's context, which are important to acknowledge given the programmatic diagram that has been established. Due to the strength of the agricultural reputation of the Skagit Valley, Mt. Vernon has a series of food-related points of interest that are directly related to this overall project. Directly north of the city, less than one-mile exists a series of big-box chain grocery stores such as Wal-Mart, Safeway, Haggen Foods, and Grocery Outlet. On the other side of the food spectrum, Mt. Vernon also

Figure 32. Mt. Vernon, Washington, USA.

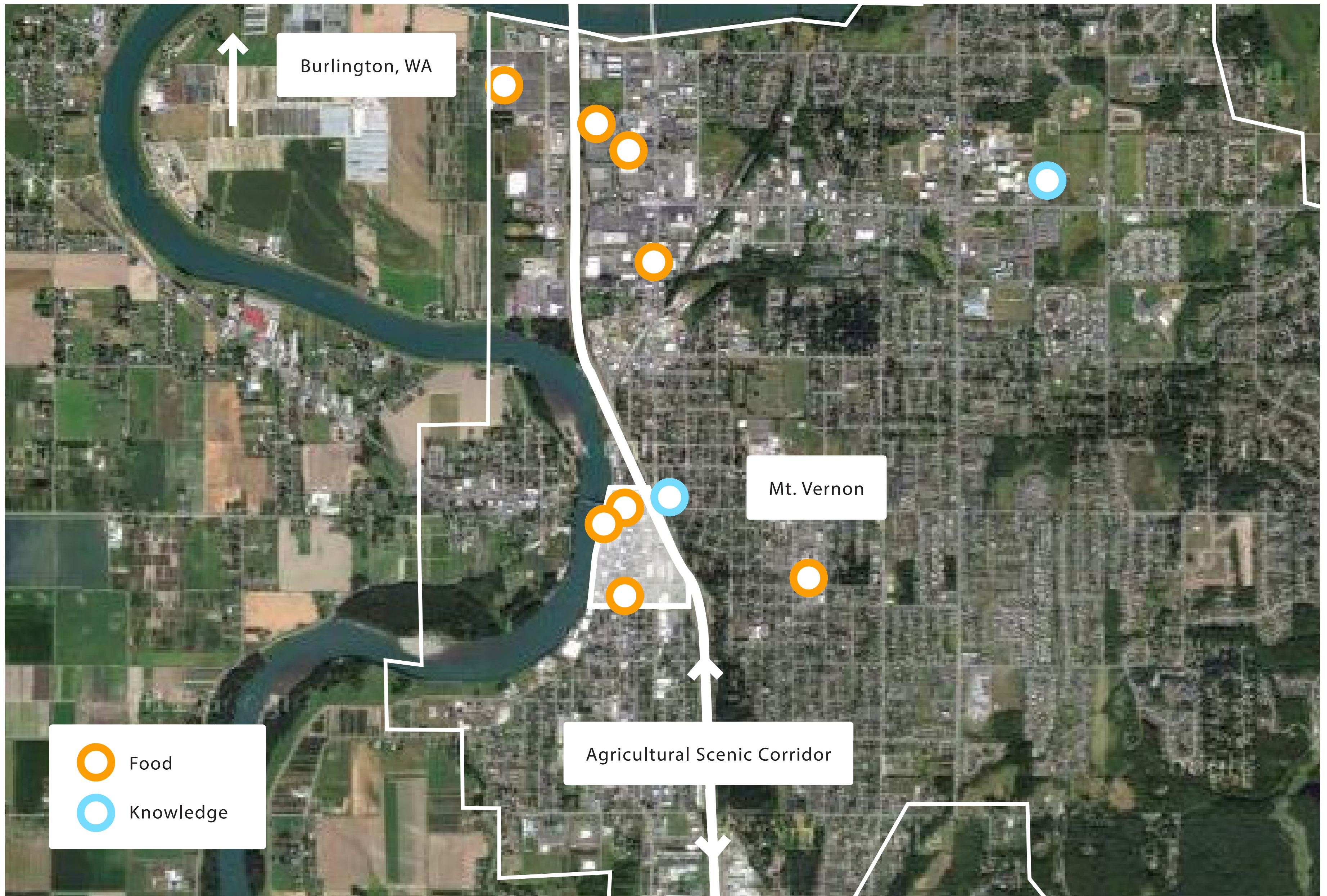



Figure 33. Points of contextual relevance in the Mt. Vernon area

Source: Map from Google Maps

houses a popular food cooperative, the Skagit Valley Food Co-op. Furthermore, Mt. Vernon features two farmers markets. One market is held on Saturdays along the Skagit River and another is held on Wednesdays in the parking lot of the Skagit Valley Hospital. In addition to these food-related points of interest, Mt. Vernon also features a community college, Skagit Valley College, which relates directly to the knowledge co-op component of this project. Within the college, they teach a wide variety of courses and academic programs. The proximity of the site to these contextual elements is an important consideration for the site selection process in determining what the relationship will be between these elements and the project itself.

A further consideration in the selection of a site is the visible connection between site and context. The component of visibility and its inherent considerations are fundamentally a large part of this thesis. Considering the invisibility and isolation of farmworkers in modern society, it is crucially important to create a built environment that amplifies the presence of this community. On the other hand, this enhanced visibility must be approached in a way that does not repel farmworkers altogether and is sensitive to this community's fear of public surveillance. The visibility of the site from major regional transit corridors such as the railroad and the Interstate is crucial to achieving a high level of awareness for the farmworker community. Additionally, given Mt. Vernon's position as the headquarters for the county offices, visibility between the site and this civic context

Figure 34. Downtown Mt. Vernon

Source: Map from Google Maps

Figure 35. Downtown Mt. Vernon during flood of 1995
Source: skagitriverhistory.com

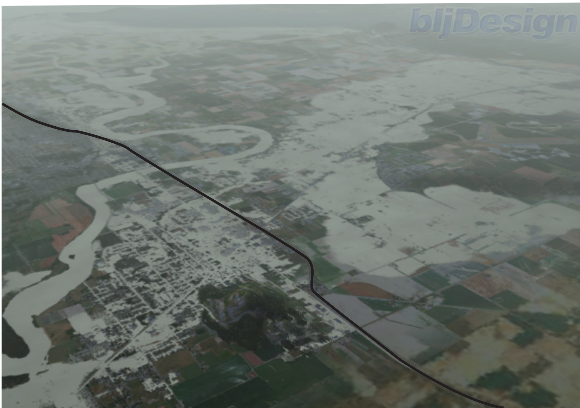



Figure 36. Skagit Valley - 100 Year Flood Simulation
Source: skagitriverhistory.com

is an important opportunity to reflect the traditional Mexican Zocalo and the overall importance of this project. On the other hand, the presence of major civic institutions may be a natural repellent to the farmworker community due to their consistent fear of surveillance. Finally, the relationship between the site and residential areas, commerce areas, and tourist destinations represents a significant consideration for the inclusion of the local and consumer communities in this design.

Additionally, Mt. Vernon's major waterfront redevelopment project is a major consideration for this thesis. Due to the presence of downtown Mt. Vernon on the shores of the Skagit River, there is regular flooding that causes costly damage to the commercial and historical heart of the city. Because of this flooding, the insurance rates for businesses are prohibitively expensive, resulting in vacant storefronts and a lackluster downtown commercial scene. When combined with the severing of the city by Interstate 5, the river's flooding has crippled the ability of downtown Mt. Vernon to attract significant economic activity at a local or regional scale. As a result of this problem, the City of Mt. Vernon recently began a waterfront redevelopment project in order to provide protection for the city from the Skagit River, and thus create public and private investment opportunities in the downtown area. The plan includes a 24-foot wide, 1,650-foot long waterfront promenade that includes a 4-foot tall flood wall along its entire length, intended to protect against a 100-year flood event. The plan also includes redevelopment of all of the properties along the waterfront in order to create 125,000 square feet of retail space, 55,000 square feet of office space, 200 units of high-density residential, and a centrally located waterfront plaza. Overall, this project is focused on protecting the city from flooding, enhancing public access to the

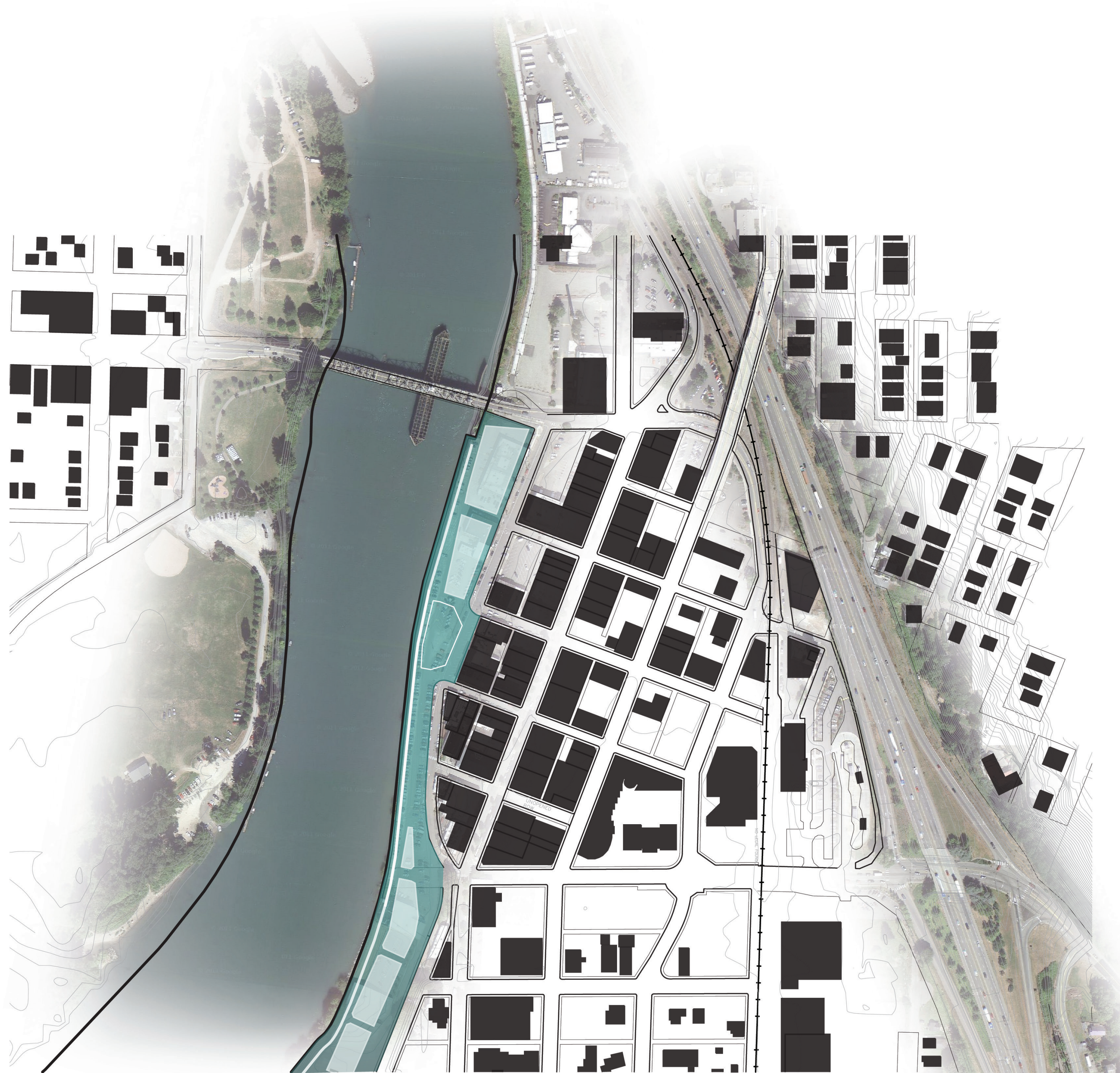


Figure 37. Waterfront Redevelopment Plan

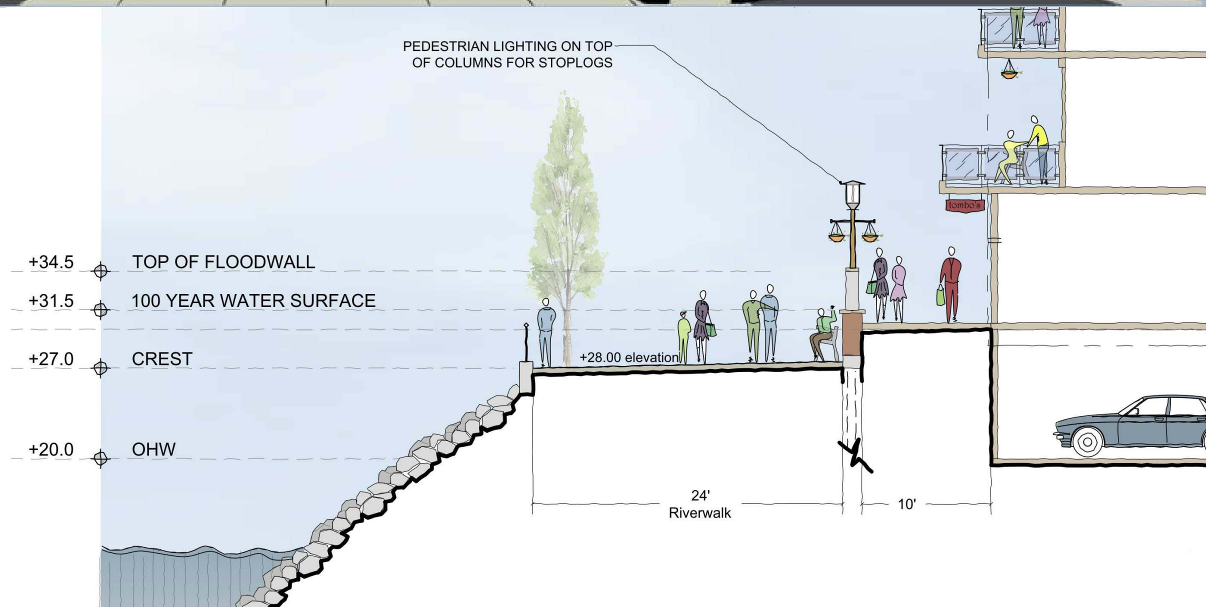



Figure 38. Perspective of waterfront redevelopment looking north

Source: City of Mt. Vernon

Figure 39. Section through waterfront redevelopment

Source: City of Mt. Vernon

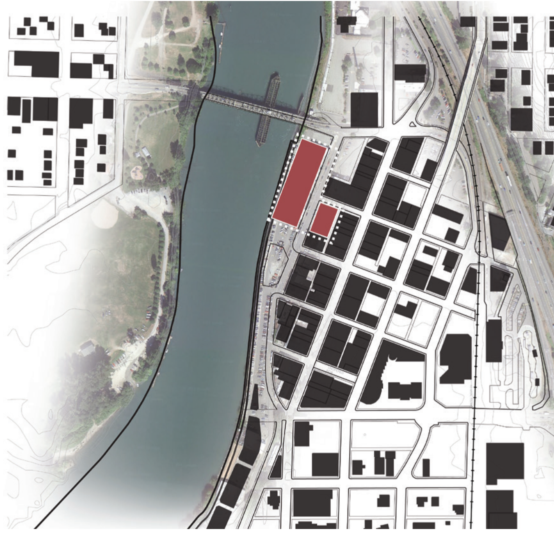


Figure 40. Chosen site on north end of Skagit River waterfront

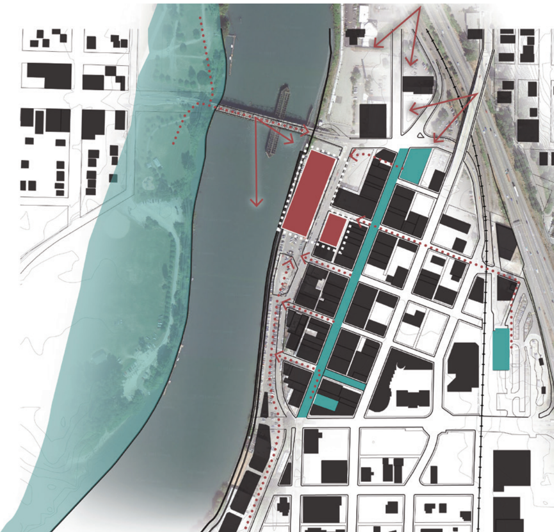


Figure 41. Chosen site with nearby landmarks and visibility

waterfront, and reinvigorating the vibrancy of downtown Mt. Vernon.

With numerous considerations in mind, an existing parking lot and space along the north end of the waterfront was selected as a site to develop this project. One major advantage of this site selection is the site's presence along the Skagit River. Currently, the city has turned it's back on the river with most commercial activity along 1st street. The waterfront redevelopment will expand the reach of that activity and put a newfound, city-wide focus on the river. The project's presence along the waterfront is thus an appropriate siting based on the need for this place to be a visible and central component of civic, cultural, and social life for the farmworker, local, and consumer communities. This prominent site location not only supports the characteristic of the marketplace as a major, civic landmark, but also provides an opportunity for the project to address the invisibility of the farmworker community. Furthermore, the site's adjacency to the Division Street Bridge and Highway 536, a major regional thoroughfare, make it a geographically and visually prominent location. Also, the site provides plenty of space for classrooms, a full-sized public marketplace, and open space that is appropriate with a civic project of this nature. The sites are bordered by small-scale retail and office spaces in addition to a large parking lot and are located within a couple blocks of the landmark Mt. Vernon Smokestack and Skagit Valley Food Co-Op. Finally, the site includes the current location of the Mt. Vernon Farmer's Market in which many farmworkers, locals, and consumers shop for fresh food, thus making this location a

proven place for social and cultural exchange.

Overall, the site selection process for this project has been primarily concerned with engaging a local context, integrating the proposal into the existing and proposed environment of downtown Mt. Vernon, and enhancing the visibility of the farmworker community in the public realm.

## Chapter 4: Process

*First Impressions*

Early in the design process, intentions for this project were focused on fitting into one of the prescribed sites as outlined within the Mt. Vernon Waterfront Redevelopment plan. A quick charrette design was executed based on fitting within an individual site from the plan, creating visibility between the two programmatic types, and responding to the context of the Skagit Valley. The program was reduced in order to fit within the confines of the approximately 13,000 square foot site. The design was largely characterized by a masonry shell that was punctured for circulation openings and outward projecting classrooms (Figure 42). The roof was an entirely transparent gable roof form, reflecting the agricultural context of the valley, allowing for plenty of natural light, and extending over a portion of the site to create covered outdoor space (Figure 43).

This iteration was intended to put ideas on the table and it raised helpful, critical questions. How does the project relate to the ground plane, the street, and the urban context? How do people and goods flow throughout the project? Why is it so small for being the only permanent marketplace in all of Skagit County?

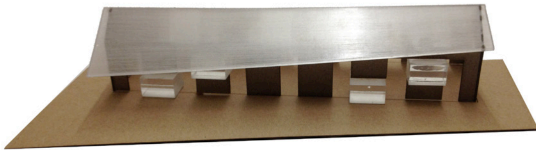


Figure 42. Model of first iteration

Figure 43. Vignette of first iteration

All of these questions were critical in developing stronger and more deliberate architectural intentions in addressing the issues that were framed at the outset of this project. Through anecdotal evidence it was clear that farmworkers and locals were already interacting at a micro scale in and around Mt. Vernon, but it would take a much larger intervention to create more sustainable, consistent, and positive opportunities for exchange.

*Case Studies*

After spending time in Oaxaca, the neighborhood and central markets of that area acted as helpful precedents for architectural expression. In particular, the smaller scale, neighborhood markets of Oaxaca City and their consistent, north-facing clerestory presented a powerful method for introducing light and air to a large, open indoor environment (Figure 44). The central markets of Oaxaca City and surrounding districts provide good precedent for creating a civic landmark within an urban fabric. Through large formal facades and European aesthetics, the identities of these markets are defined by their grand entryways (Figure 45). Later, several characteristics of other case studies began to inform the process. Ancient Greek stoas were initially thought about as a means of creating a colonnade edge along the waterfront (Figure 46). The covered outdoor quality of the colonnade was of particular appeal, as it would allow the market to be used year-round instead of

Figure 44. North-facing sawtooths of Mercado 20 de Noviembre

Figure 45. Landmark entry to Mercado de Benito Juarez

Figure 46. Ancient Greek Stoa

Source: Adam Carr

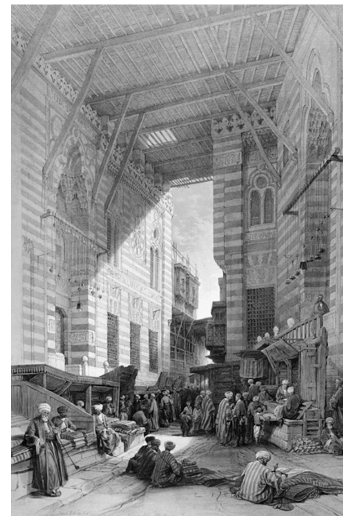


Figure 47. Covered Street Market in Cairo, Egypt.

Source: Public Markets

Figure 48. Covered Street Market in Damascus, Syria.

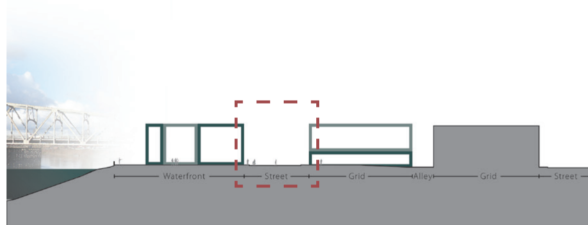
Source: Public Markets

during the few dry months of the year in the Pacific Northwest. With a similar intent, several market precedents that demonstrated covered streets were of particular interest to increase the area that would be protected by the consistent rains of the Skagit Valley (Figures 47, 48). Though the climatic context of these precedents are different than that of the Puget Sound, covered street markets in Italy and the Middle East were utilized with the same intentions of protection from the weather.

*Concept Review*

The design presented at the first review was intended to communicate general program and site intentions in addition to the basic architectural ideas of responding to marketplace precedents from Oaxaca and around the world. The design was characterized by tall masonry walls that supported an expansive north-facing sawtooth roof form. Vendor spaces were defined by secondary masonry walls that were oriented East-West in order to promote visibility and movement from the city to the waterfront. Several moments throughout the project were represented graphically based on their particular connection to the case studies (Figure 49).

Ultimately, the feedback from this review provided strong direction for the architectural expression of this project. Criticism focused on the absence of tectonics, the enormous scale of the project, and focusing on precedents in the Northwest and Mexico. From this review onwards, greater attention was given to the culturally contextual tectonics of the farmworker, local, and consumer communities.



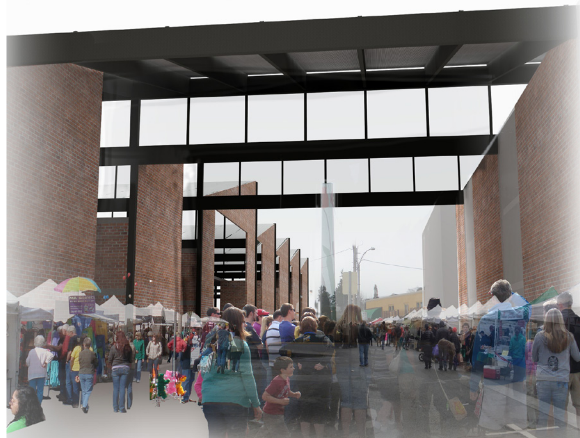
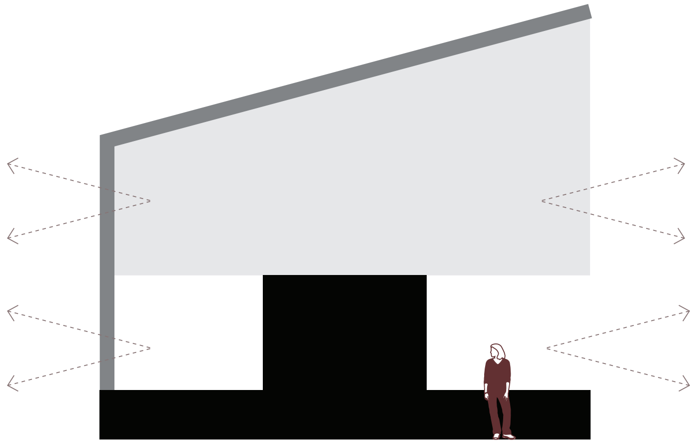



Figure 49. Early covered street vignette

*Midterm Review*

The design presented at the midterm review had a particular focus on the tectonic diagram that was a synthesis of tectonics from the Northwest and the markets of Oaxaca (Figure 50). This diagram helped to instill a more refined, scaled architectural expression that reflected the cultures of the different communities involved in this project. This diagram was translated into a typical structural bay that was organized in a manner that would create the strong sense of place that is typically associated with a large public market (Figures 51, 52). The program was organized more clearly so that the entire market program was on the ground level where it would consistently activate the street. The knowledge co-op program was then located on the second level where it was still visible but not occupying valuable ground floor commercial space.

The feedback received from this review focused on the specific expression of the tectonic diagram. Comments focused on the design process for the vendor spaces, the tectonic expression of the roof, and the closed-off nature of the classrooms. With feedback from this review, it was important to be more critical of each component of the tectonic diagram in order to begin making the project more closely reflect the overall intentions of creating a place of familiarity and comfort for these different communities.



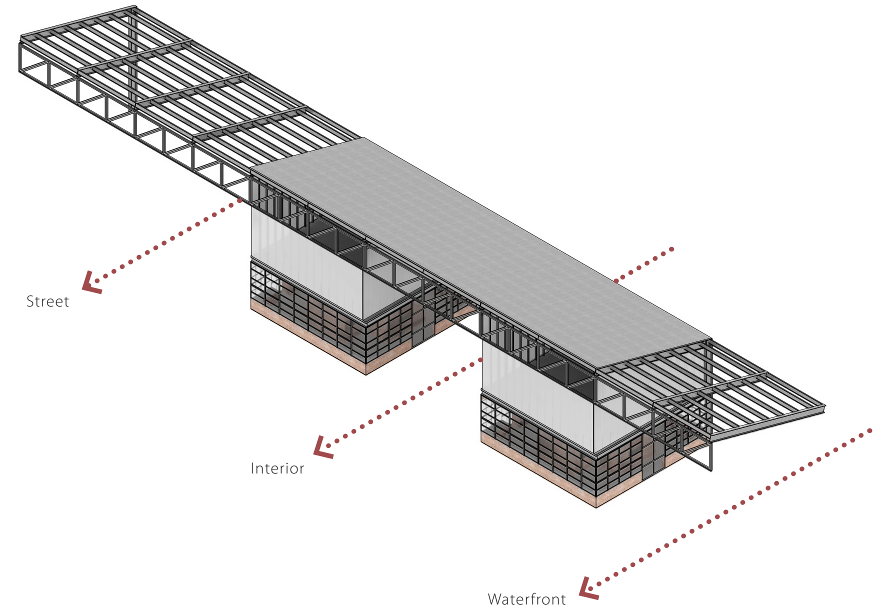



Figure 50. Midterm tectonic diagram

Figure 51. Midterm typical structural bay

Figure 52. Midterm interior perspective

Figure 53. Existing site parking lot cuts city off from water

## Chapter 5: Design

*Site and Program Intent*

Due to the current site's use as a large parking lot for businesses in the downtown core, the city of Mount Vernon is effectively cut off from the waterfront (Figure 53). In an effort to continue the intentions of the Waterfront Redevelopment plan to reconnect the city with the Skagit River, Montgomery Street is extended through the selected site area to the water's edge. This avenue provides the opportunity to create an axial approach to a major civic landmark for the city and the valley. An additional benefit that is gained from pulling Montgomery Street through to the water is that the large size of the site is broken down to a scale that is more appropriate to that of downtown Mt. Vernon. Additionally, the building edges are pushed back from the main landmarks near the site, the new waterfront park

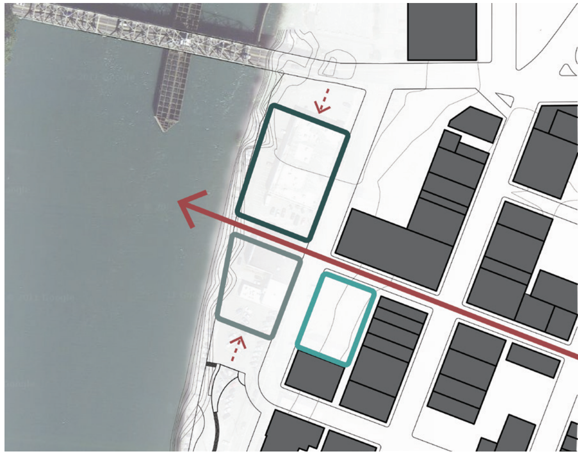


Figure 54. Site design intentions

Figure 55. Resultant program diagram from site design intentions

and the Division Street Bridge. Setting back the project from these landmarks gives them visual space and allows space on the site for activities associated with the marketplace and knowledge co-op to expand as needed (Figure 54).

The result of these intentions is the creation of a three-part diagram on the site (Figure 55). In consideration of the common ground that exists between farmworkers, locals, and consumers, the two main parts of the building that border the waterfront are devoted to food and the arts. The food component would include prepared food vendors, produce vendors, cooking classrooms, and instructional greenhouses. The art component would include craft and art based vendors in addition to art studios. The final component that occupies the former parking lot embedded in an otherwise built out city block would be characteristic of a sanitary market and would include vendors that may require more infrastructure to support their business. These vendors include butchers, cheese vendors, and delicatessens. The sanitary component would also include more general educational program such as a basic classroom, daycare space, and offices.

*Tectonics*

The tectonic expression of the marketplace and knowledge co-op is where the architecture of this project can relate to the larger intention of creating opportunities for farmworkers, locals, and consumers to participate in a mutual

exchange of experiences, ideas, and interactions. At a basic level, it is a considerable challenge to include the farmworker community in this project while addressing the farmworker community's widespread fear of public exposure. Additionally, an associated challenge is not excluding the local and consumer communities in the process of focusing on the needs of farmworkers. By creating a tectonic language that meets the cultural expectations of these different communities, the marketplace and knowledge co-op can be a place that is comfortable and familiar for all.

Figure 56. Tectonic diagram of marketplaces in Oaxaca.

The marketplaces of Oaxaca were selected to be representative of the built environment expectations of farmworkers in Washington. In general, the architecture of Oaxaca is characteristically heavy and made of earth-focused materials such as adobe, earth, and masonry. However, the marketplaces of Oaxaca are characterized by heavy, masonry or adobe vendor stalls and an expansive, lightweight, industrialized steel roof. This juxtaposition of mass and frame in Mexican architecture introduces a noticeable dichotomy between the handcraft associated with the tradition of masonry and adobe and the machine aesthetic of prefabricated steel (Figure 56).[34]

The marketplaces of the Northwest do not present a clear and unified tectonic tradition when compared to those of Oaxaca. Thus, the traditional tectonics of the Pacific Northwest was used to characterize the built environment expectations of the local and consumer communities. As is appropriate for the

climate in the Northwest, single-sloping shed roofs with deep overhangs help to direct the frequent rain and keep water as far away from the building envelope as possible. Furthermore, post and beam structures allow for open views of the picturesque Northwest landscape while providing opportunities to invite in as much natural light and ventilation as possible (Figure 57).[35]

Ultimately, a synthesis of these two tectonic languages was created. The mass or masonry base of this diagram houses the marketplace vendors and their associated infrastructure such as storage, cooking, washing, or making. The brick material of the base reflects the handcraft tradition of masonry in Mexico while also reflecting the material context of historic downtown Mt. Vernon. The knowledge co-op program is intended to float above the marketplace program as a transparent element allowing visibility and openness for people to observe the cultural and social exchange occurring within the classroom. The frame takes its form from the single-sloping shed roofs of the Pacific Northwest and the sawtooth roof forms of the marketplaces in Oaxaca. The wrapping language of the frame is further intended to communicate that it acts as an infrastructure within which the program and activities of the marketplace and knowledge co-op exist (Figure 58).

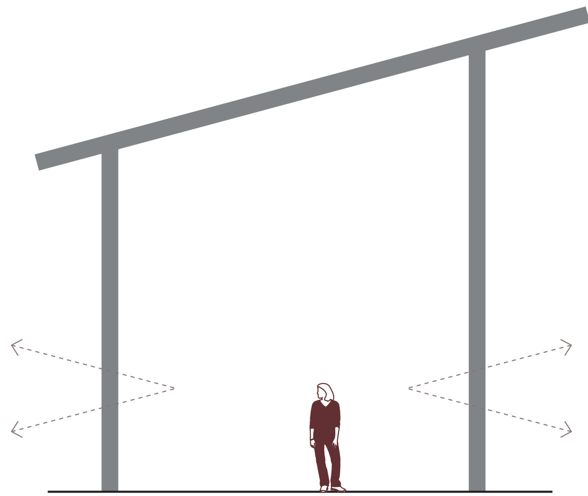


Figure 57. Tectonic diagram of Pacific Northwest Architecture

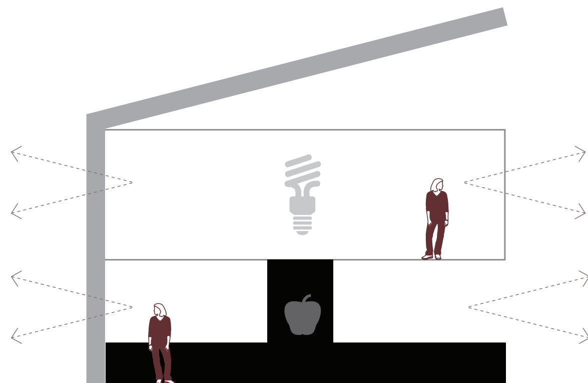


Figure 58. Tectonic diagram demonstrating synthesis of Oaxacan and Northwest tectonic traditions

*Building Design*

The tectonic language that was established as a synthesis of tectonic traditions from Oaxacan marketplaces and the Pacific Northwest acts as a sectional diagram of a typical structural bay for the marketplace and knowledge co-op. The bay is laid out in plan in order to create a series of experiences that are critical to the site and programmatic context of this project (Figures 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65). In consideration of the site context of this project in downtown Mt. Vernon, it was important to create a covered street atmosphere. The covered street would allow a more year-round opportunity for street life in the core of Mt. Vernon by sheltering businesses and pedestrians from the elements. With the site located along the Skagit River, it was also important to engage the river's edge with a waterfront promenade; vendors on one side and the river on the other. In consideration of the programmatic context of this project being a major civic marketplace it was important to create a landmark approach to the market that gives a distinct visual identity to the market the frames a view West to the river. Furthermore, an axial internal promenade with vendors on both sides of the pathway reinforces the civic presence of the market. Finally, an internal sanitary market atrium defines that space as distinct but experientially and aesthetically connected to the rest of the project.

This typical structural bay creates a repeatable system that expands

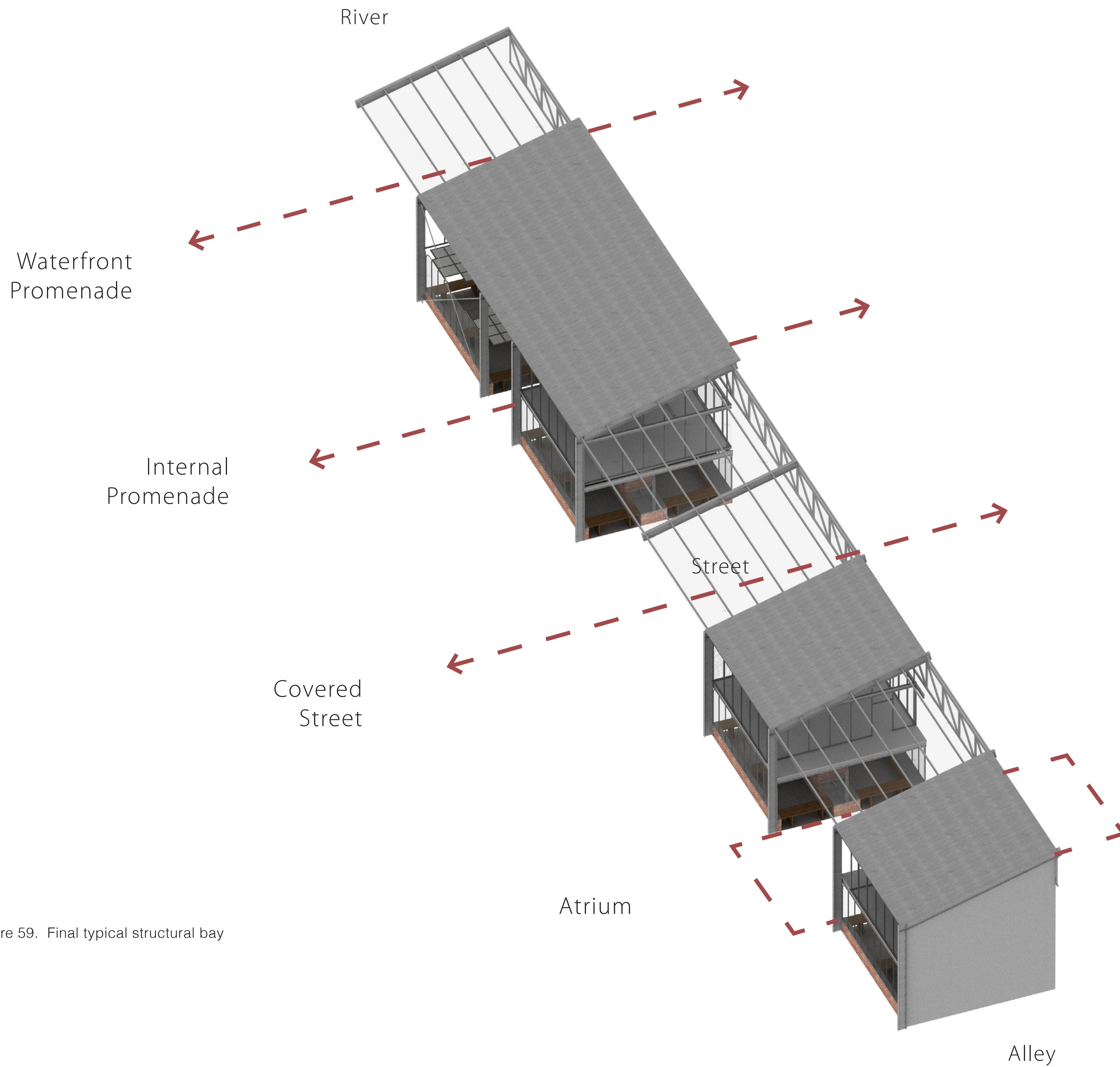



Figure 59. Final typical structural bay

Figure 60. Sanitary market atrium

Figure 61. Montgomery Street Landmark

Figure 62. Internal Promenade

Figure 63.  Covered Main Street

Figure 64.  Waterfront promenade

Figure 65.  Section Perspective looking North

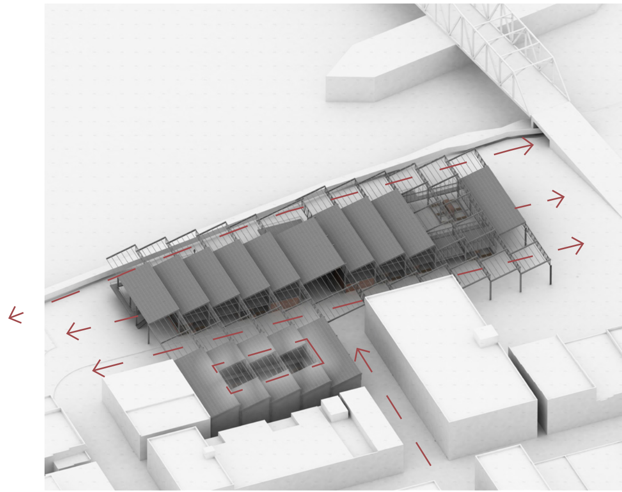
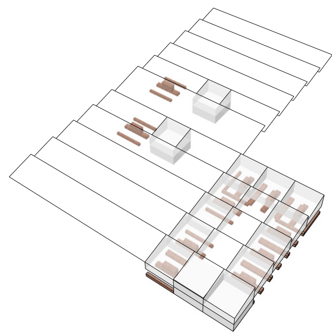


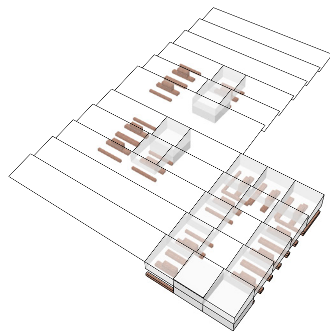
Figure 66. Final building layout based on structural bay and site intentions

in coordination with the intentions of the site design (Figure 66). Part of the consideration of this project was thinking about the design and application of these bays in a series of phases. In this possible mode of development, the entire steel framework in addition to the program of the sanitary market, the central market bay, and the two adjacent market bays would be constructed first. In each subsequent phase, the program of adjacent bays on the north and south ends of the market would be added until the framework was filled to capacity (Figure 67). The choice to develop the project outwards from the center was based on the intention of preserving a landmark gateway to the project from Montgomery Street and using the central bay to include critical market infrastructure such as bathrooms, storage space, and offices.

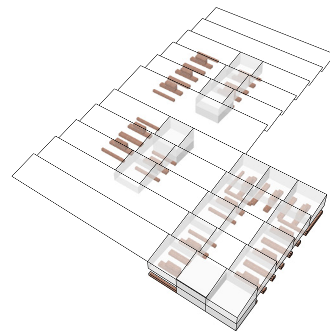
Part of the justification for the phased development was for the market to expand in coordination with the growth of the market's popularity and the population of the Skagit Valley. Ultimately, the phasing of the project was not a critical element of the design as it diluted the intentions of creating a major civic landmark and would restrict the number of permanent vendors that would be critical to the growth of vitality in downtown Mt. Vernon.



PHASE 1



PHASE 2



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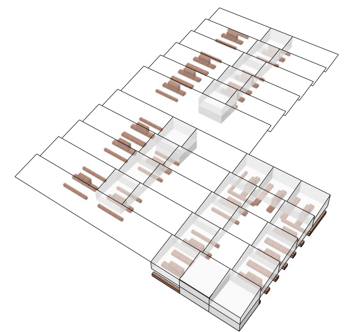

PHASE 4

Figure 67. Phasing Diagram

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

*Final Public Defense*

During the final public defense of this project, the jury was particularly critical of the large design decisions that drove the form of the project. Initially, the question was asked of why the structural bay was applied over the length of the site with very little variation in how it dealt with various edges, such as the waterfront and the street. In more words, the jury member did not see the moments where interactions between farmworker, local, or consumer could occur because of the universal nature of the market's edges. In response, the explanation for not creating those moments was in order to create a simple, straightforward infrastructure for those moments to occur. Rather than socially-engineer moments of interaction into the plan, the intent was to create an ordered architecture that could easily accommodate the disorder that is typically associated with a marketplace. On the other hand, this project focused on larger experiences of space and if it were to be developed further, more focus would have been dedicated to the small-scale individual interactions between farmworkers, locals, and consumers.

Several jury members expressed a concern over the scale of the project. The project was presented in full development and there was no indication of the

possibility for a phased development of the project. Once these concerns were raised, the intentions of phasing, the reasons for excluding phasing from the presentation, and a reiteration of the intention of creating a major landmark were articulated. Despite this explanation, members of the jury maintained concern over the size of the marketplace in relation to the size of Mt. Vernon. In reflection of this discussion, square-foot comparisons from other major marketplaces could have been used to better explain the scale of this project to a jury.

In relation to the size of the marketplace, the jury also raised concern over the amount of mixed-use square footage it was offsetting. Part of the presentation was taking a stance that the mixed-use program that was part of the waterfront redevelopment plan could be relocated to other parts of the downtown core. One jury member suggested that mixed uses be incorporated in the project at a smaller scale than what the redevelopment plan was suggesting. In the case of this specific project, mixed-use is undesirable on the basis that providing any form of housing would de-neutralize the project. If farmworker housing were provided within the project, the farmworker community would hold a higher level of ownership within the marketplace that could potentially exclude the local and consumer communities. This project is meant to address the need for farmworkers, locals, and consumers to have the opportunity to interact in neutral territory, a place that does not belong to anyone, but rather exists for everyone.

*Conclusion*

This project was originally motivated by amazement at the situation immigrant farmworkers face on a daily basis. The fact that farmworkers are faced with low wages, horrible living and working conditions, racism, child labor, migration, and an assortment of other major challenges in order to provide people in the United States and abroad with the food they need is an incredible and unacceptable reality. At the outset of this project, raising awareness of farmworkers and their situation was a primary motivation for pursuing this topic as a thesis subject.

One of the primary challenges that was carried through this project was being realistic about the role that architecture could play in the world of farmworkers. Clearly, not one person or discipline is capable of solving the problems that face this community. Thus, this project became more about using the built environment to address these problems while suggesting that some major obstacles facing farmworkers could begin to be broken down through the creation of architecture.

The development of the program as a marketplace and knowledge co-op was a crucial component to the relevance of this project. Rather than fall back on the design of a mixed-use housing project or mobile farmworker housing, this project sought to address larger issues of isolation. Siting this project in the heart

of Mt. Vernon, at the intersection of farmworker, local, and consumer communities, was also a critical component of suggesting how this project sought to address the well-being of farmworkers and their families. By analyzing farmworkers and the factors that have the most influence over the well-being of their community, this project took a holistic approach to understanding who farmworkers are, what their situation is, and what would be needed to challenge their status quo.

Finally, the challenge that this project presented at the end of the research phase was how could architecture create a place that invites farmworkers, locals, and consumers in to mutually exchange interactions at a social and cultural level. By focusing on creating a landmark that represents the agricultural heritage of the Skagit Valley and the tectonic traditions of the Pacific Northwest and Oaxaca, this project was able to create a sense of place that is familiar to farmworkers, locals, and consumers alike.

# Endnotes

1 Rothenberg, 1.
2 Gamboa, 57.
3 Gamboa, 130.
4 The Harvest/La Cosecha. Film.
5 Lopez, 99.
6 Thompson, 55.
7 Washington State Farmworker Housing Trust Survey, 14.
8 “The Agricultural Workforce.” The Hunger Report.
9 Washington State Farmworker Housing Trust Survey, 13.
10 Washington State Farmworker Housing Trust Survey, 16.
11 Washington State Farmworker Housing Trust Survey, 3.
12 Washington State Farmworker Housing Trust Survey, 11.
13 Hertz, Thomas. “Rural Labor and Education: Farm Labor.”
14 Thane, E-mail.
15 Poel, E-mail.
16 Alcamo, Bennett, 3.
17 Miller, Marty. Personal Interview. 26 Aug. 2011.
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19 Sulzberger, Web.
20 “Who Are Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers?” Web.
21 “Who Are Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers?” Web.
22 Mines, 5.
23 Gamboa, Personal Interview.
24 Thompson, 169.

25 Abbett, 8.

26 Pawel, Web.

27 Rothenberg, xviii.

28 Conrad, Web.

29 Tangires, 9.

30 Tangires, 30.

31 Cross, Morales 1-2.

32 Pike Place Market, Web.

33 Dean Runyan, 2.

34 Burian, 94.

35 Miller.

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# Appendix A:

# Drawings

Figure 68. Final Ground Floor Plan

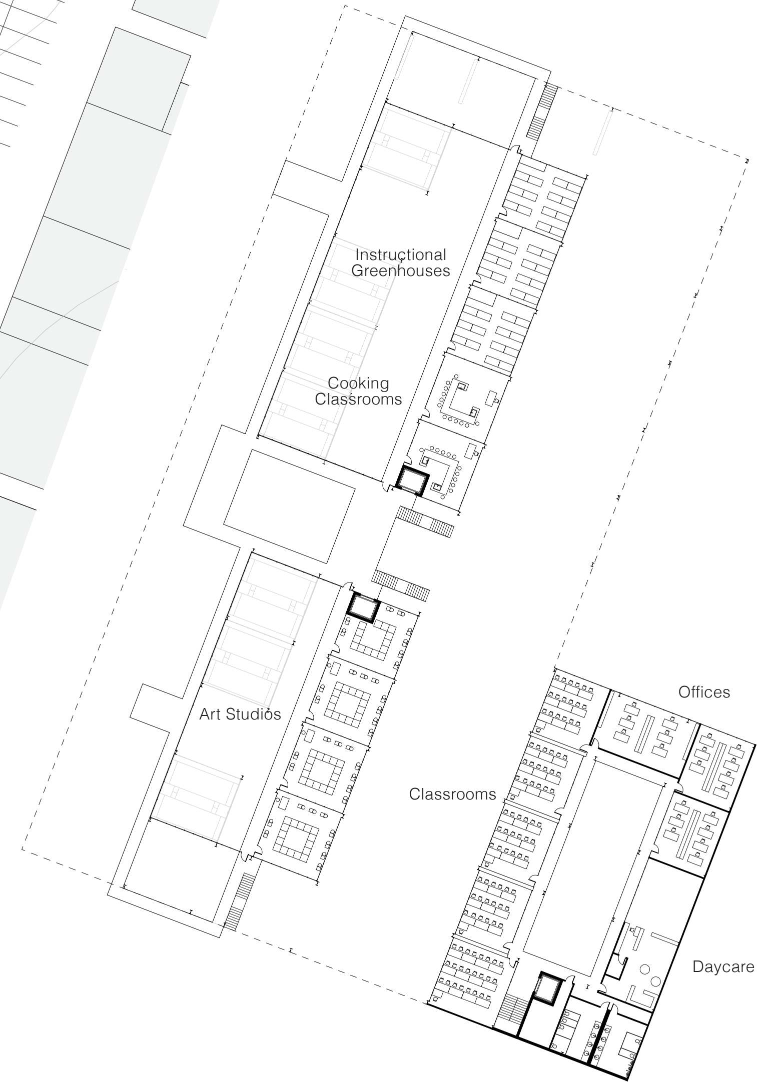


Figure 69. Final Second Floor Plan

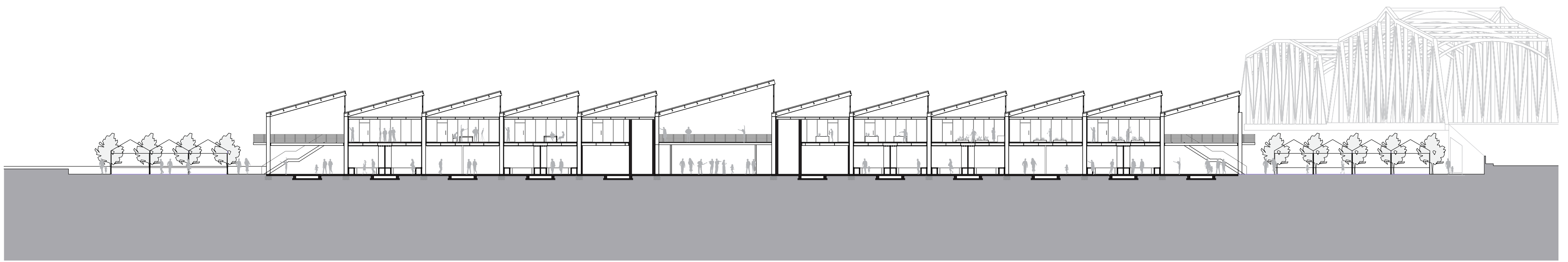

Figure 70.  Final Section Facing West

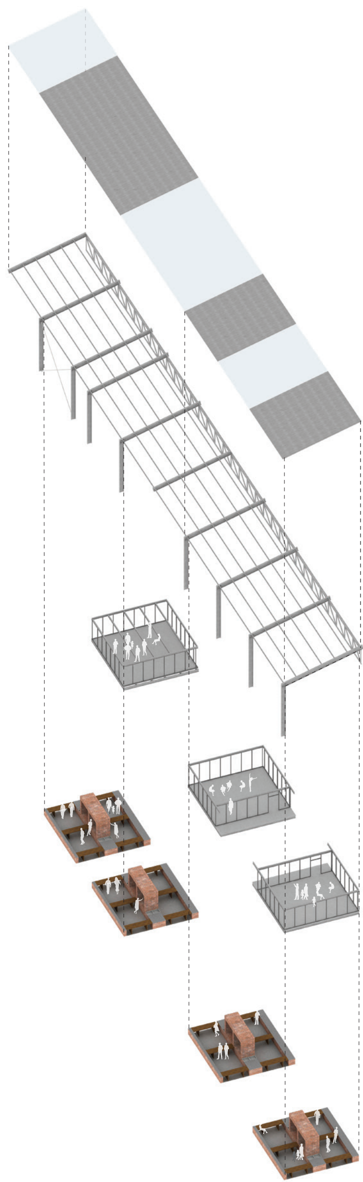

Figure 71.  Exploded Axonometric

Figure 72.  Final City Plan

# Appendix B:

## Model Photos

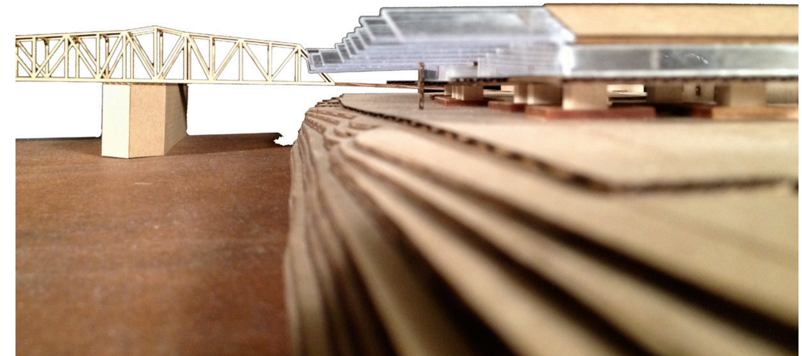

Figure 73.  Massing Model

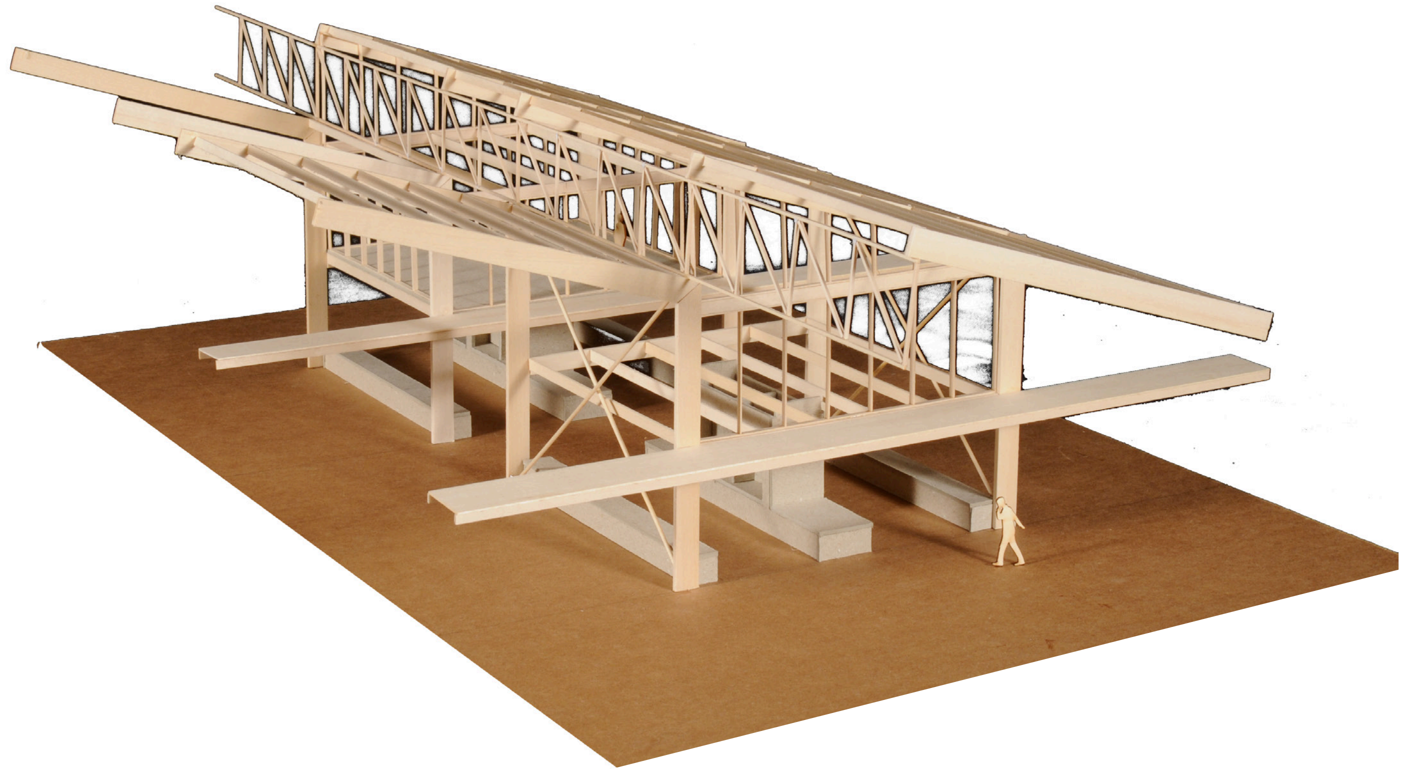

Figure 74. Tectonic Bay Model

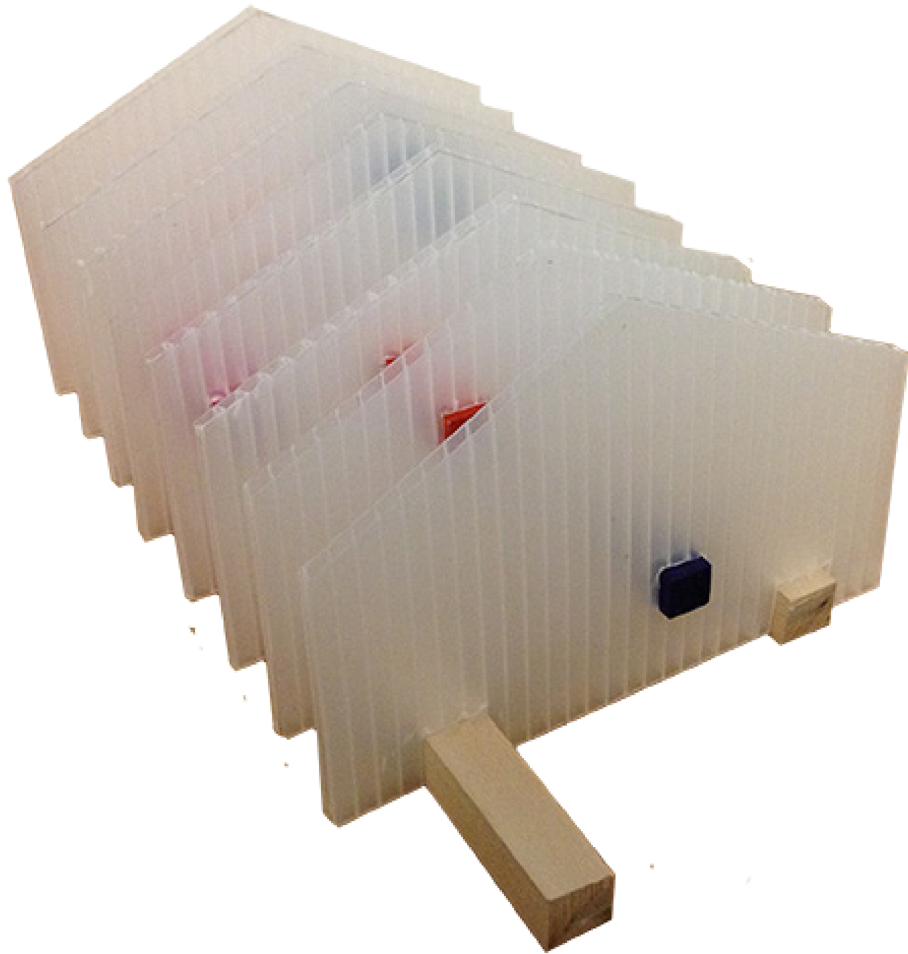

Figure 75.  Concept Model - Openness

Figure 76.  Concept Model - Openness

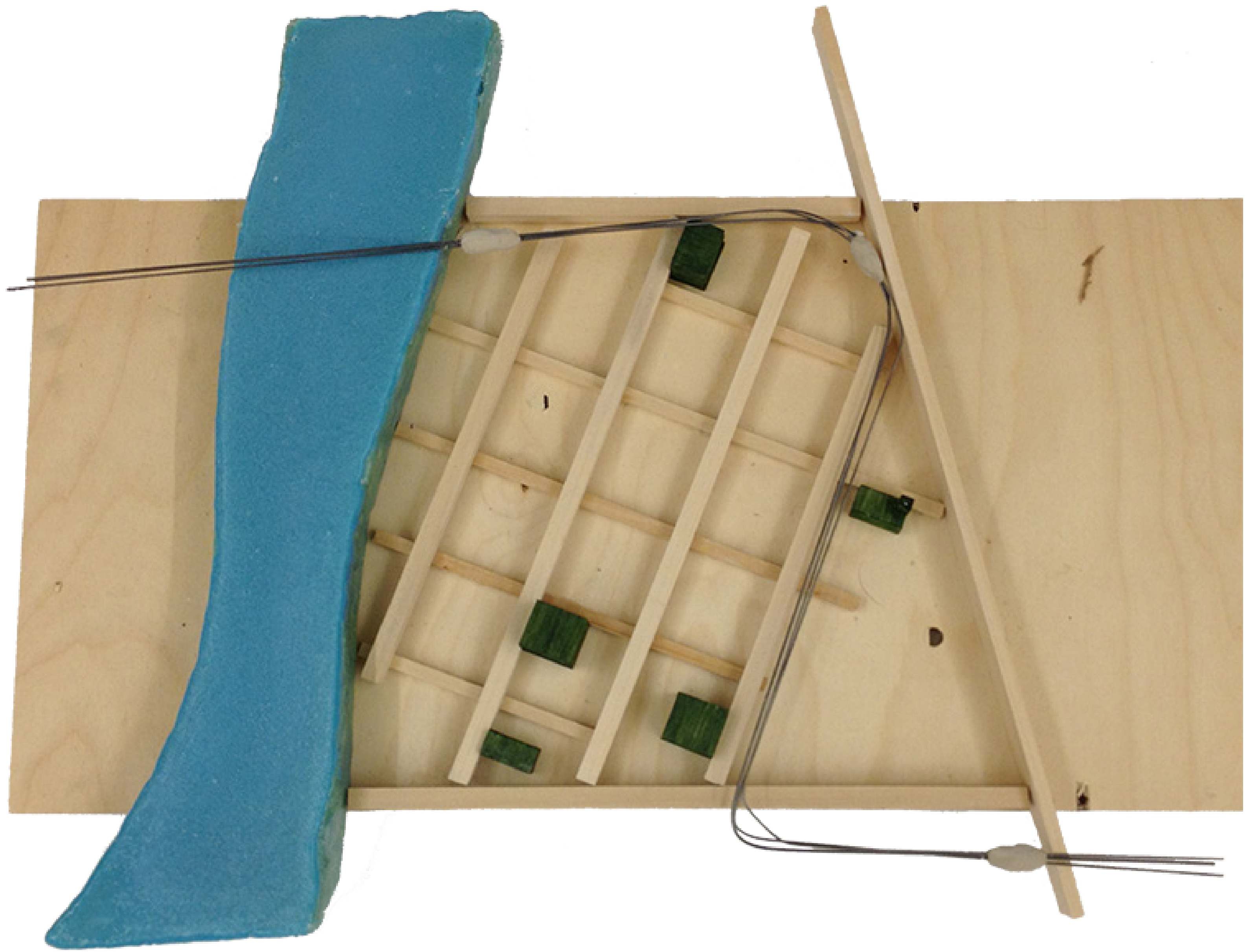

Figure 77. Mt. Vernon Site Analysis Model

# Appendix C:

# Program List

| Space Type | Dimensions | # | Net Subtotal |
|---|---|---|---|
| Market Stall | 15' x 15' - 225 sq.ft. | 72 | 16,200 sq.ft. |
| Market Offices | 15' x 20' - 300 sq. ft. | 2 | 600 sq.ft. |
| Market Bathrooms | 15' x 20' - 300 sq.ft. | 2 | 600 sq.ft. |
| Market Storage | 15' x 15' - 225 sq.ft. | 2 | 450 sq.ft. |
| Classroom | 30' x 30' - 900 sq. ft. | 5 | 4,500 sq.ft. |
| Cooking Classroom | 30' x 30' - 900 sq. ft. | 2 | 1,800 sq.ft. |
| Instructional Greenhouse | 30' x 30' - 900 sq. ft. | 2 | 1,800 sq.ft. |
| Art Studio | 30' x 30' - 900 sq. ft. | 4 | 3,600 sq.ft. |
| Daycare | 30' x 60' - 1,800 sq. ft. | 1 | 1,800 sq.ft. |
| Knowledge Co-Op Offices | 15' x 20' - 300 sq. ft. | 8 | 2,400 sq.ft. |
| Knowledge Co-Op Bathrooms | 15' x 20' - 300 sq. ft. | 4 | 1,200 sq.ft. |
| Knowledge Co-Op Storage | 15' x 15' - 225 sq. ft. | 2 | 450 sq.ft. |
| | | Total Net | 35,400 sq. ft. |
| | | **Total Gross (w/ efficiency of 65%)** | **54,460 sq.ft.** |

Figure 78. Program List

## Appendix D:

## List of Figures


Figure 1. Craft night at a seasonal farmworker camp outside of Burlington, Washington, sponsored by a local church.

Figure 2. Farmworkers Planting Celery in Clewiston, Florida.

Figure 3. Farmworkers Harvesting Tulips in the Skagit Valley, Washington.

Figure 4. Braceros in California.

Figure 5. Change in Farmworker Population in Washington through History.

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