

Reimagining the Institution: The North Seattle Police Precinct

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Abstract

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Seattle Police Precincts are typical of 19th century institutional building types that are no longer representative of the policies and population they are required to support. While official practices of law and order have begun to change to adapt to current public needs, the buildings that house these institutions have not. This thesis argues that architecture can play a role in creating a new identity for the Seattle Police Department that reflects current policing model by promoting transparency and accessibility in the design of police precincts. The intent of this investigation is to raise awareness of the complexity in the issue facing contemporary society.

**Reimagining
the Institution:**
The North Seattle Police Precinct

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Seattle Police Precincts are typical of 19th century institutional building types that are no longer representative of the policies and population they are required to support. While official practices of law and order have begun to change to adapt to current public needs, the buildings that house these institutions have not. The static condition of this architectural typology is telling of the inherent tension between the need of institutional architecture to act as beacon of authority, while at the same time offering accessibility and transparency. The original police station that houses those who enforce the law is obsolete, negating the goal of providing a universal solution to the exceedingly diverse use and context of this architectural typology.

This thesis argues that architecture can play a role in creating a new identity for the Seattle Police Department that reflects current policing model by promoting transparency and accessibility in the design of police precincts. While the Seattle Police Department has implemented new practices and methodologies in response

to the Department of Justice’s findings of unconstitutional policing in 2011, there is an increasing public perception of a “lack of police capacity and presence” in the city. (Helfgott & Parkin) This perception is a product of this civic body that is defined by the physical presence of authority. Both through the police officers themselves in their direct interaction with the public as well as the extensions of their image in physical facilities in the city.

Although updates have been made to police practices and systems in the city, the architectural design of SPD’s precincts have remained frozen in time. The antiquated condition of police precincts is apparent in all of the five precincts responsible for housing the Seattle Police Department. This thesis will look to reimagine the outdated police precinct in North Seattle in a way that reflects contemporary policing practices. The architecture of the police precincts are as instrumental to policing as the uniforms officers wear in identifying themselves as a unique civic institution.



Figure 1 Seattle Police Officer Badge and Officer Drawing

“Our investigation finds a pattern or practice of constitutional violations regarding the use of force.”

- US Department of Justice Civil Rights Division

Chapter 2.

Framework

The architectural character of the Seattle Police Department precincts fails to suggest transparency and community engagement. Rather the architectural language is more representative of sterile antiquated institutional design. (See Figure 2) This is partially a product of the historical evolution of police departments in America and more specifically in Seattle. This chapter will explain how national trends in police methodology have historically been represented by the architectural typology of police precincts.

Furthermore, a brief summary will be given of the current architectural condition of SPD's

police precincts and explanation provided for the current design approach. The **research used** to support this thesis can be grouped into two major categories: the first, focuses on the practical programmatic requirements of existing police precincts and the current architectural typology in Seattle and nationally. The second looks to identify the larger architectural conceptual ideologies and theories behind institutional architecture and how it has influenced the contemporary condition of police precincts in Seattle.



Figure 2 Current North Seattle Police Precinct

The Current Condition

The current condition of the Seattle Police department requires a unique architectural response to help facilitate policing in the City of Seattle. In an interview with SRG Partnership, explanation was given for the dire need for improved resources, specifically for the North precinct. The North precinct covers the largest area of any precinct in Washington state and one that is rapidly growing in population. However, the physical facility dates back to 1984 when it was designed to accommodate 154 police officers (See Figure 3-5). Today the same Police precinct attempts to house 250 police officers. In 2016 a proposal for a new North precinct was approved, only then to be eventually suspended by Mayor Ed Murray following public controversy. During several city council meetings, members of the

public, as well as Seattle City Council members, stated that the city had more immediate needs than the new North precinct, such as affordable housing and homelessness. (Seattle Times) Furthermore, in a city council meeting in September 2016 the proposed design of the precinct was criticized and referred to as “a bunker,” suggesting that the new design would worsen public perception of the Seattle Police Department. Protests took place in 2016 with a campaign entitled, “Block the Bunker.” (Seattle Times) In order to understand the controversy over the design of the North Seattle Police Precinct, the current state of the architectural typology was examined in relation to its historical influences.



Figures 3-5 Images Taken During a Tour of the North Seattle Police Precinct

Historical Influences on the Current Condition

In Community Policing: A Policing Strategy for the 21st Century, Dr Michael Palmiotto traces the history of the police in the United States back to 1845 when Boston and New York City officials were inspired by England's early models of police departments. (Palmiotto 51) Palmiotto goes on to explain that unlike London's Metropolitan Police, American police departments began as unpaid civilians operating in decentralized neighborhood units. These units were often tasked primarily with other activities besides keeping public order. They assisted the homeless, cleaned streets and

distributed supplies to the poor. These police units were typically unarmed and were forced to live in the wards they patrolled. Historian Radley Balko further describes these early police departments as running soup kitchens and shelters out of some of the very first police stations. Balko further states, "this democratic style of policing also gave police discretion to enforce laws in ways reflecting the priorities of the communities they patrolled." (Balko 57) As a result, law enforcement were fully integrated and representational of the neighborhoods

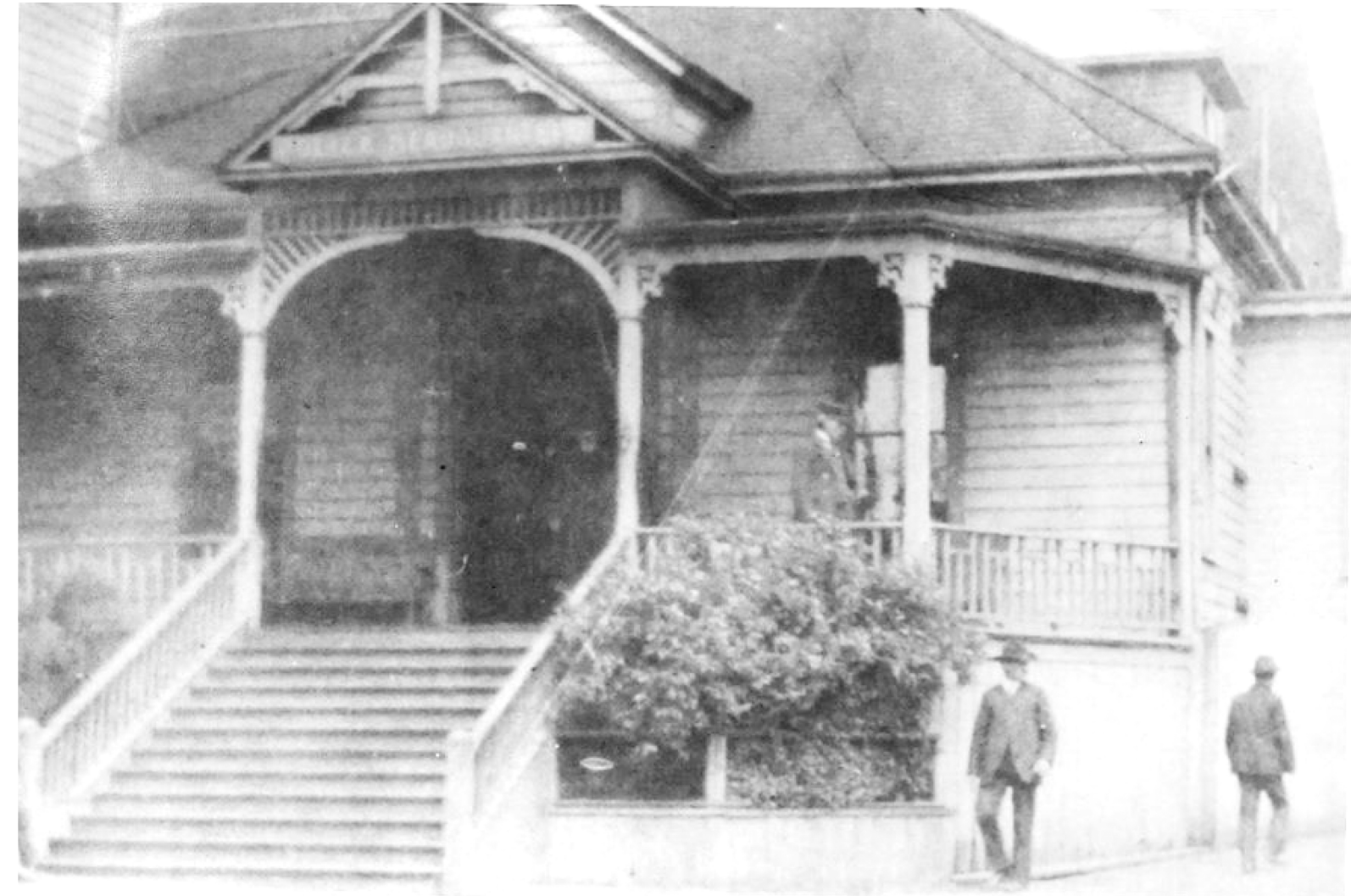


Figure 6 Seattle Police Headquarters 1893

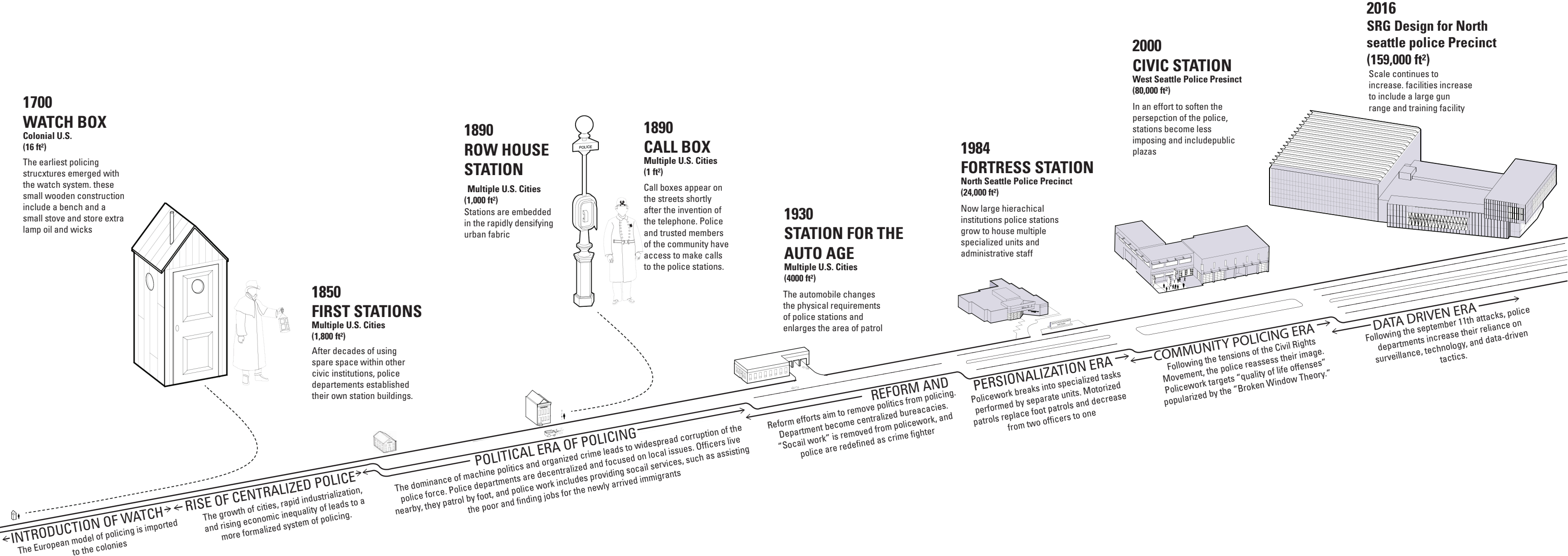


Figure 7 Historical Evolution of the Police Stations in U.S. by Studio Gange Polis Project

they policed. However, according to Kelling and Moore in *The Evolving Strategy of Policing* this approach to policing did not last long.

Tracing the early formation of policing George Kelling and Michael Moore describe the history of police departments in the United States according to three primary eras. They identify the first era in the history of American police departments as the Political Era. Between 1840 and early 1900s police departments in America had strong relationships with their local governments. Police

and politicians worked closely together to patrol the local populations. This policing strategy gained the support of citizens by allowing for the self-governing of many of the neighborhoods. The associated architecture of these early police departments were typically small in scale. Some of the earliest structures during this era were what were called watch boxes. These were small boxes located in neighborhoods that provided a visual marker of the presence of the police and a place for the officer to sit between patrols. Later in this same era as technology advanced

**2018
TODAY'S STATION
North Precinct, Seattle**

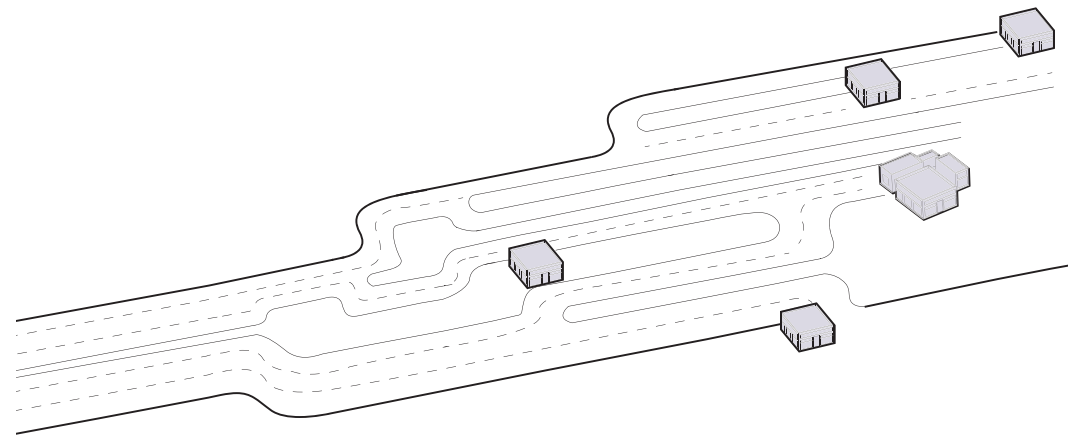


Figure 8 The Contemporary Police Station

these call boxes transformed with the invention of the hard wire phone (See figure 7). However, Michael Palmiotto observes, “intimacy with the community, closeness to political leaders and a decentralized organizational structure, with its inability to provide supervision of officers gave rise to political corruption.” (Palmiotto 67)

The Reform Era followed, starting from early 1900s to around 1970 as described by Kelling and Moore. (Kelling and Moore, page) In an effort to reduce corruption, police departments insulated themselves from the public, introducing new

standards and formalities to their policies. “The goal of police administration was to distance the police from citizens, because during the Political Era police citizen closeness had led to corruption and favoritism among neighborhood groups.” (Palmiotto, Page 73) Policing took on a more of a universal approach, rather than the previous individualized policing of communities on a case by case basis. This was reflected in a polarized architecture with very different objectives. The once smaller scale call boxes dispersed throughout towns were replaced with fewer, larger and more centralized precincts.

The physical appearance of these precincts also changed. Wooden shacks gave way to imposing buildings with heavier material facades of stone and brick including a reduction in transparency. Law enforcement began utilizing the automobile as a means to patrol larger precincts during this era, further altering the station to improve patrol car access. As result, the precinct was less approachable by foot, causing further separation between police officer and the citizens. Police no longer had to live in the community which they served. Instead, law enforcement officials could commute to a foreign distant neighborhood, patrol by car and leave at the end of their shift. This created a more detached relationship between the police and the public.

Following the civil rights movement and its negative effects on public perception of police, law professor Herman Goldstein published an article in 1979 titled “Improving Policing: A Problem Orientated Approach”. This marked the beginning of the last and most contemporary era in United States police history. (Goldstein 12) Kelling and Moore describe the Community Problem Solving Era as having the objective to

establishing a improved partnership between police and community by familiarizing the officer with the neighborhood they patrol. However, many scholars, including V.G. Stretcher in the article, “Histories and Futures of Policing: Readings and Misreadings of A Pivotal Present,” articulated the challenges associated with this new objective. (Stretcher Page 18) This type of policing required a different approach depending on the place and people being served. Stretcher writes that the policing strategy is defined too broadly and therefore differently with many police departments still falling back on the former reform approach. The strong association in the past between the architecture of police precincts and policing approaches is also less apparent. While this latest strategy attempts to police on a community scale, the architectural language of current precincts are immensely out of scale and fortified. In fact, in their Studio Commons Project, the architecture firm Studio Gang determined that the general size of police precincts in the United States have steadily increased over the past 100 years. (Studio 10)

“There are many examples of drive-by shootings at almost every precinct in Seattle and when a police officer is at the precinct they should feel safe, not on edge.”

-Architect with SRG Partnership

Policing Specific to Seattle

While the history of policing in the United States provides broad insight into the current conditions of police precincts, the history of the Seattle Police Department (SPD) provided a more specific explanation of the present condition of Seattle's precincts and the public's perception of them. In 1977 the Seattle police department published a comprehensive history of their institution. The SPD 1880-1977, distinctive report describes Seattle's law enforcement as broadly following national trends, but also facing challenges brought on by the city's unique character. (SPD Review Page 12) The first example of law enforcement in Seattle is noted to have occurred in 1861 in the form of a single peace officer who patrolled the city alone. Seattle's growing economy from logging in the 1860s and 1870s brought a disproportionate population of single men to the Pacific Northwest, resulting in a demand

for brothels and taverns downtown. The one-man police department soon became insufficient and in 1876 a police chief was elected. In 1891 the department received their first “call boxes,” allowing the individual patrolman one-way communication with headquarters. (SPD Review Page 6) By 1906 the police department had increased to over 60 police officers and had replaced the horse and buggy with automobile. By 1920s the department had installed radios in patrol cars, lessening the need for physical call boxes in Seattle neighborhoods. (SPD Review Page 8) The depression of the 1930s brought budget cuts and attempts to close three of the five precincts, leaving only the Wallingford and Georgetown precincts. Public criticism persuaded city officials to reopen the Ballard, Columbia City and West Seattle precincts shortly after. In the 1960s a “tolerance policy” was

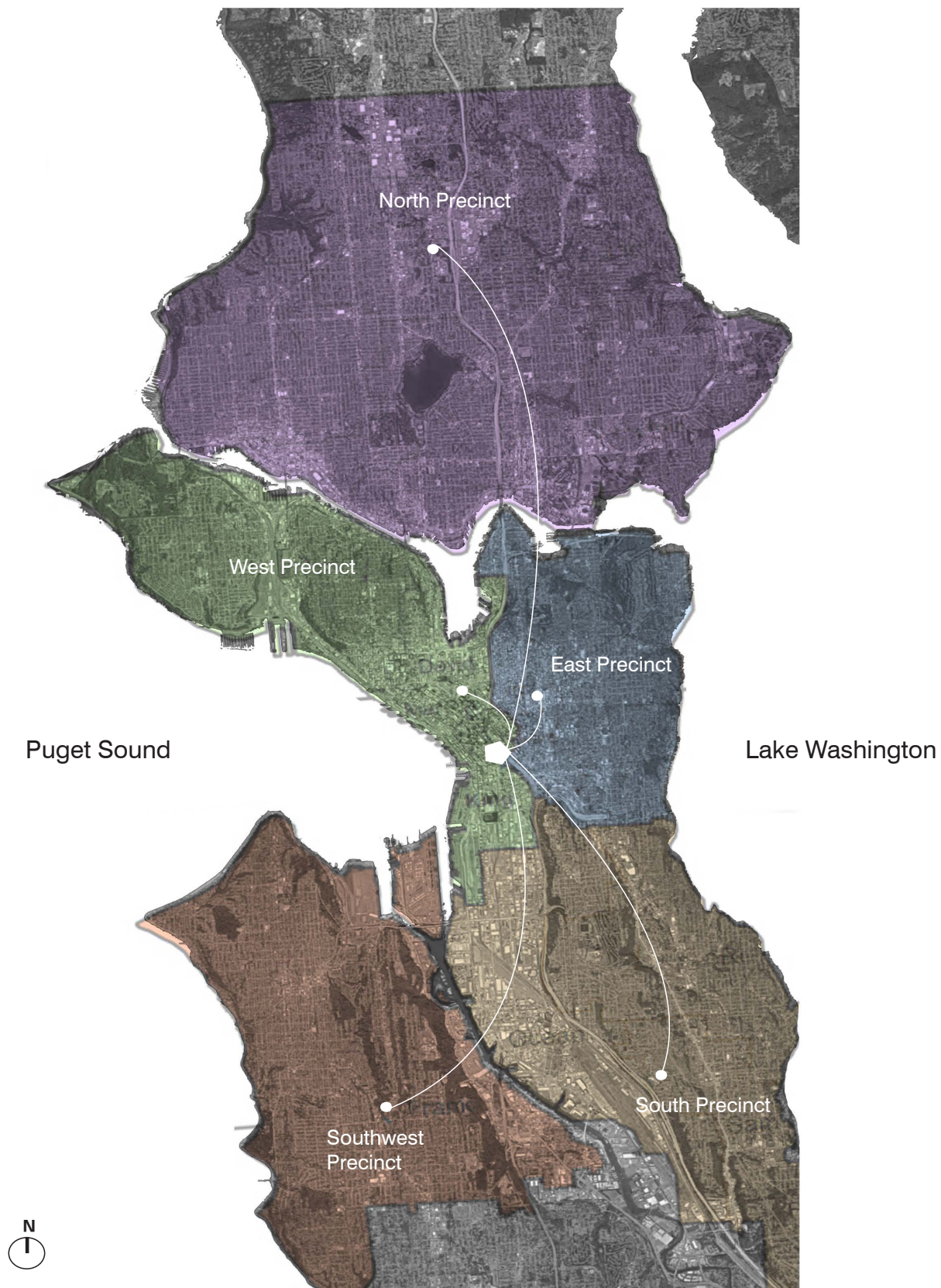


Figure 9 Seattle's Precinct map

implemented, acting as an unwritten position of leniency in relation to state prohibition of gambling. (SPD Review Page 10) This caused the public perception of SPD to decline as officers began to be perceived as requiring payoffs from the different operations. In efforts to improve its public image and relations within the Seattle community, the department made major alterations to police standards during 1973. At the same time SPD brought back mounted patrols and invested in the construction of updated police stations.

More recently public perception has again declined. In 2011, the SPD underwent investigation for allegations of unconstitutional policing. In 2012 the Seattle Police Department

entered into a settlement agreement following findings by the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice or the DOJ. The investigation found that the: “SPD engaged in a pattern or practice of using unnecessary or excessive force” (DOJ’s Report). The impact of this ruling is still felt in the city today. Dr. Jacqueline B. Helfgott and DR. William Parkin completed a two-year study of the SPD titled, “Survey for the City of Seattle and Seattle Police Department’s Five Precincts and Micro-Communities” in 2017. The study stated that although crime rates and rates of “use of force” among SPD officers are falling, there is a growing public perception of a “lack of police capacity and presence.” (Jacqueline & Helfgott 16)



Figure 10 King County Administration Building



Figure 11 King County Correctional Facility



Figure 12 Federal Court House in Seattle

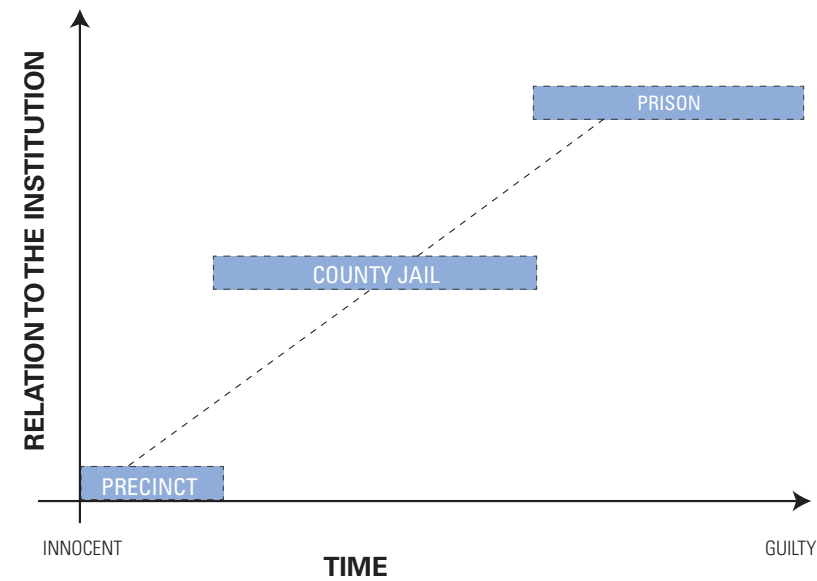


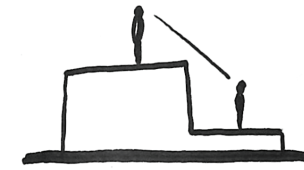
Figure 13 The Contemporary Police Station

Institutional Architecture: Law and Order

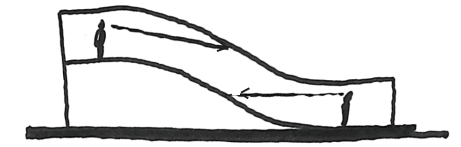
Architecturally, the five police precincts do not share a common architectural language with each other or the broader network of institutional architecture in the city. Therefore this thesis argues that these buildings are unintentionally contributing to the negative perception of SPD both within the organization and to the residents of the city. In "Space and the Social Order," Murry Edelman argues that institutional buildings "catalyze the common search for clarity, order and predictability in a threatening world." (Edelman Page 53) Alternatively he notes, "Buildings themselves can appear to be

part of that threat. The scale of the structures reminds the mass of political spectators that they enter the precincts of power as clients or as supplicants, susceptible to arbitrary rebuffs and favors, and that they are subject to remote authorities they only dimly know or understand." (Edelman Page 64)

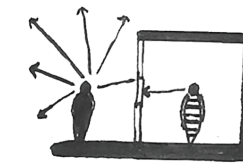
Thus architecture of the police precinct provides the opportunity to strengthen the contemporary policy and identity of SPD. The current architectural expression of the North



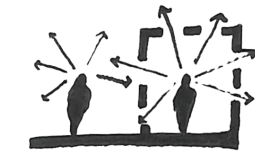
Relationship of spaces that leaves one party overly exposed from another create hierarchy between the observer and the observed



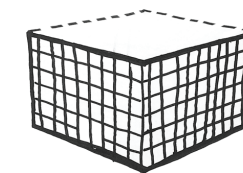
Forms that obscure sightlines can create a sense of refuge and prospect creating a more symbiotic relationship between users



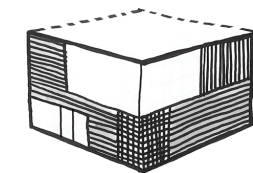
A lack of uniqueness in spaces prevent a understanding of the users relationship to the institution.



Spaces that are more representative of the users relationship the institution facilitate a more transparent relationship.



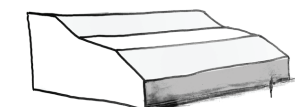
Rigid homogeneous facades create a disconnect between occupant and the architecture



Relief and manipulation to a building's facade can reduce sense of scale



Heavy volumes and harsh shadows reduce approachability and a sense of power



Stepping back the volume as the form increases in height reduces impact and harsh shadows

Figure 14 Institutional Building Characteristics,

precinct building in Seattle does not support a community policing methodology. In fact, Edelman argues that monumentality within institutional architecture has the opportunity to change perception not just amongst the public but internally as well. He suggests institutional architecture has the opportunity to, “reciprocally reinforce the self-perceptions of those government officials and bureaucrats who identify this exalted territory as their own. In this way, existing hierarchies can be legitimized at all levels, and extremes of power and impotence intensified” (Elderman 72). This would suggest that if architecture can influence how government officials perceive their power, then it also has the ability to alter the public’s perception of power of authorities.

The potential of architecture to alter the perception of power is further noted by Nelson Goodman who states, “A building may mean in

ways unrelated to being an architectural work—may become through association a symbol for sanctuary, or for a reign of terror” (Goodman 3) This statement suggests that regardless of the architectural language, institutional buildings have the opportunity to influence perception of the organization they represent. If the existing North precinct is housed in an outdated building, this can influence the public’s perception of practices conducted there. The outdated architectural representation would also have the opportunity to be associated with public perception of the past.

This thesis argues that a new response to the North Precinct must express the changes being implemented by SPD in contrast to the existing architectural language of past precincts.



Figure 15 SRG Partnership’s Proposal for the North Seattle Police Precinct, View from Northwest Corner



Figure 16 SRG Partnership’s Proposal for the North Seattle Police Precinct, View from Southeast corner

Analysis of Precedents

Seattle is not alone in its strained relationship between police and the public. Although the situation is unique to each major city in the United States, other architectural attempts to improve this condition can provide insight into how architecture can support a community and its interaction between the city and its police force. Jeanne Gang and her firm Studio Gang Architects have investigated how the design of police stations could improve the image of the Chicago Police Department, following the “deteriorating relations between communities

and the police across the country” (Gang). The 2016 project entitled Polis Station, examines the potential of police stations to, “become sites of social connection where police officers and neighborhood residents can find many opportunities to interact in non-enforcement situations” (Gang). Their project, “Polis Station” is sited in Chicago’s North Lawndale neighborhood said to be one of Chicago’s roughest neighborhoods. The design of a new police station Polis Station looks to integrate public program space with traditional policing

functions to begin to create opportunities for new interactions within the police precincts to change the perception of the Chicago Police Department.

The second case study investigates the design by SRG partnership who were given the task of designing a new North precinct in 2016. The project was scheduled to start construction this year but after public outrage at the over 160-million-dollar price tag, the project was suspended by mayor Ed Murry. While labeled a “police bunker” by the protesting public, the architects claimed that the proposed complex aimed to facilitate and heighten the interaction between law enforcement and the community. SRG’s design provides insight into the local context of public perception, architecture of police precincts and the complexity in designing architecture that attempts to bridge them. The proposed building was almost 160,00 square feet in area which included a 5-story parking car garage. (Design Review Board Presentation) The design requirements for the precinct put the building’s volume out of scale with the surrounding context. (See Fig. 5) The oversized volume was

coupled with a sterile façade on three of the four elevations of the complex. Metal siding, that spanned the height of these elevations, were broken up with small narrow windows that provided little transparency. The overall massing was defined by a large heavy volume cantilevered over the entrance that was to serve as the main public interface. This overhanging form and the scale of the complex created an intimidating and imposing architectural language that is more consistent with police precincts of the past. SRG’s design for the North precinct referred back to institutionally symbolic architectural language of the past rather than explore a language consistent with new community-based policing methodologies.

The literature review led to a series of conclusions that have informed the design direction of this thesis. The research suggests an immense need for decentralizing the precincts to better facilitate the community approach to policing. In addition, the research suggests that although the SPD policy is responding to changes in needs of the city, the design of the precincts are not representative of this change. Furthermore, it is evident that while



Figure 17 Logroño Police Headquarters by Matos-Castillo Arquitectos

Chapter 3. Methodology

the geographical defined precincts are diverse in population and their needs, the design approach of the architectural facilities is too generic and is not representative of the contemporary identity of SPD. Lastly, the literature review identified the inadequate understanding of the potential opportunity of the architectural language of the precincts in defining identity and improving public perception.

The objective of this thesis is to suggest architectural alternatives to the existing typology of police precinct in Seattle. The architecture will look to meet the need for SPD Precincts to remain secure and communicate their institutional role, while reflecting contemporary police practices and improving public perception. The design will look to create transparency and accessibility in the design of the Seattle Police Department’s precincts.

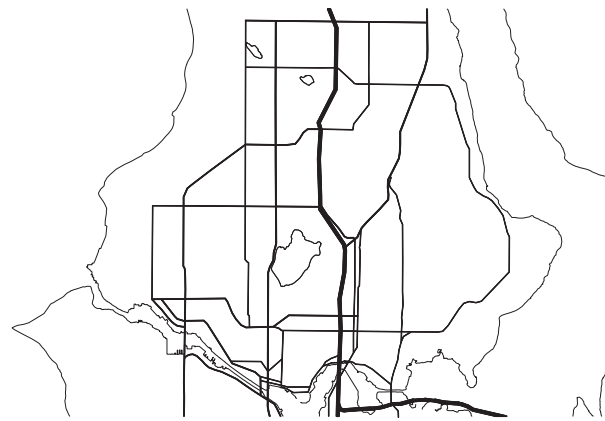


Figure 18 Map of Major Arterial Roads in North Seattle

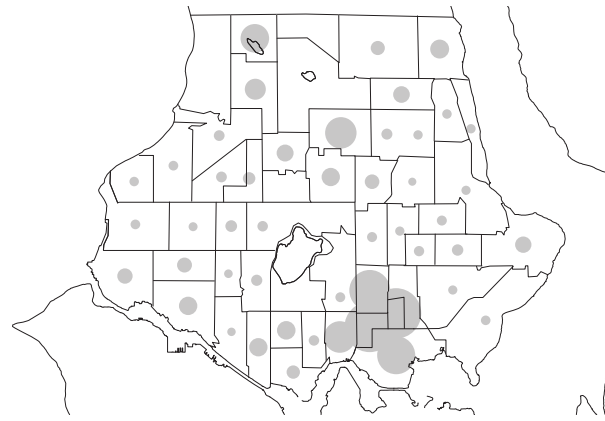


Figure 21 Map of Census Tracts With Largest Number of Families Without a Vehicle Available.



Figure 19 Map of Police Beats in the North Precinct

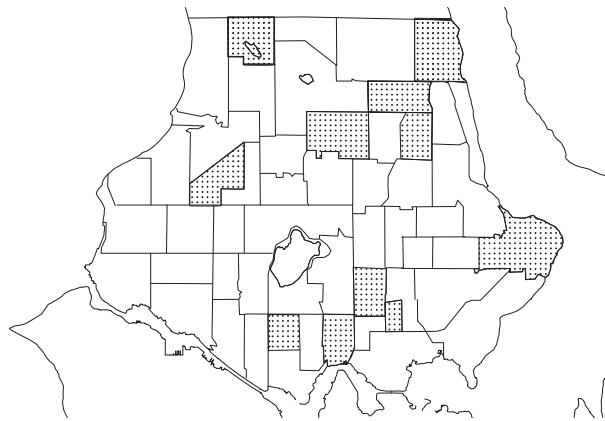


Figure 22 Map of Census Tracts With the Highest Pop. of Families Below the Poverty Line

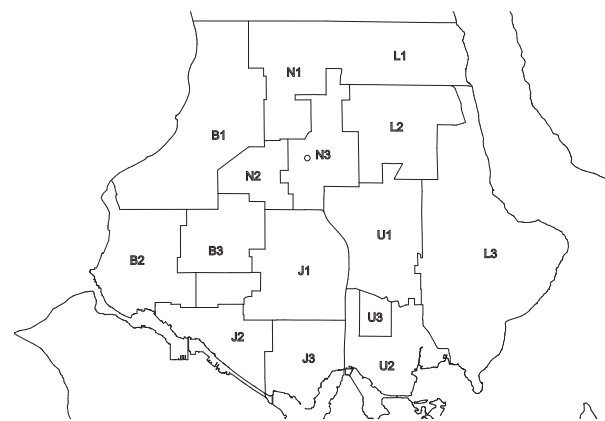


Figure 20 Map of Police Beats in the North Precinct

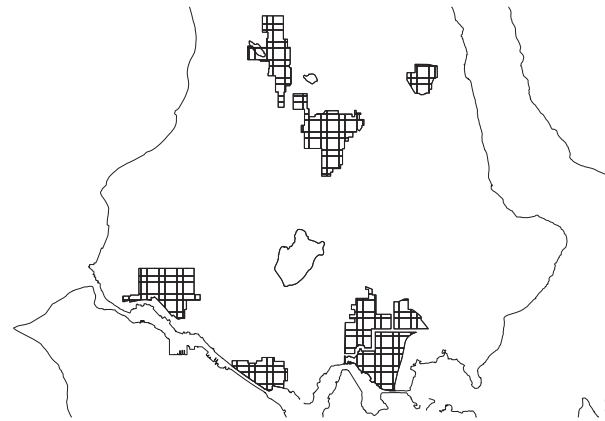


Figure 23 Map of Urban Village Locations in North Seattle

Site Selection

The literature review and field research with the Seattle Police Department lead to the conclusion that existing institutional architecture is not currently meeting the needs of modern policing. Thus this thesis purposes redefining the scale of the geographical areas that are covered by a single station, introducing more than one facility for the north precinct. As a result, this will reduce the scale of the physical architectural facility for

the individual precincts and better integrate the station into the residential neighborhoods it serves. In addition, this enables the design of the precincts to better respond to the unique communities distinctive within the North Seattle precinct.

The design will split the existing North precinct into 6 smaller territories, identified by the existing



Figure 24 Compilation of the Six Individual Data Set

five sectors, with an additional training facility. The Sectors L,B,U,N, and J are currently defined by the SPD as neighborhood regions that contain three to four beat paths. The site selection and number of precincts were found using six major data sets from the City of Seattle GIS Mapping Data Base. Individual maps were made based on this GIS data which included major arterial roads, city crime data, existing police beats in the North precinct, Seattle Urban Village locations, Census Tract data on areas with the highest population of families below the poverty line, and areas with largest number of families without a vehicle available. The six data sets were chosen based on interviews with the City of Seattle Capital Development and Construction Management department. Interviews included those with architects and senior staff on the Public Safety Facilities Portfolio. Their experience with police precinct projects within the city and their work on the 2016 North Seattle Police Precinct site selection established the sitting constraints for the proposed project. Additional findings from meetings with Seattle's Capital Development Department uncovered additional concerns that impacted the site selection for the police precincts. These concerns included, response time to

incidents from the police precinct, evidence contamination from extended transportation times to the precinct, and public's opinion on site selection.

The first layer of data as seen in Fig. 16 identifies major thoroughfare in the North precinct. Although Seattle has multiple North to South arteries including Highway 99, Interstate 5, Sand Point Way Northeast, and 15th avenue Northwest, the city street grid does not include many major arterial roads in the East to West direction. Site selection sought to locate the precincts along major arterial on both axis of the city. Thus the site seeks to have a physical connection with the transportation infrastructure of suspects and victims, as well as that for the exchange of information throughout the city. The six sites are located in proximity to transportation nodes in the city.

The second of these data sets describe crime data and locations in the North precinct. The data set identified crime incidents in North Seattle and treated types of incidents similarly. This assumption of the data was required given time constraints and a prioritization of understanding sites according to a series



Figure 25 North Precinct Site Location Analysis Model Top View

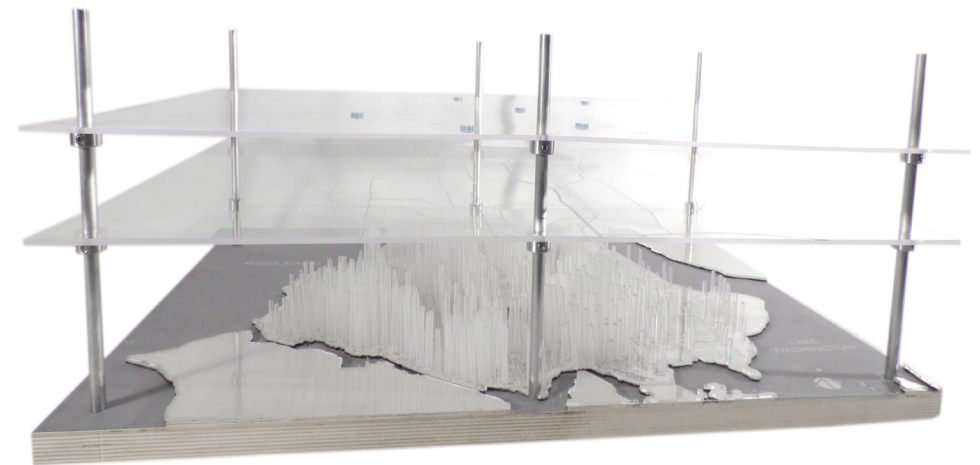


Figure 26 North Precinct Site Location Analysis Model Side View



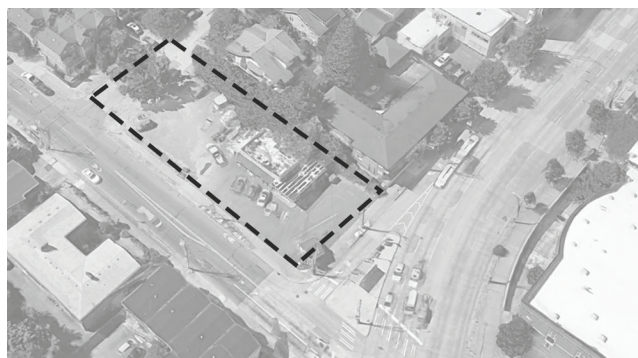
T TRAINING FACILITY

Location **1155 N 130th St**
 Lot Size **31,800**



L SECTOR PRECINCT

Location **3500 NE 125th St**
 Lot Size **46,625**



B SECTOR PRECINCT

Location **6501 15th Ave NW**
 Lot Size **15,618**



U SECTOR PRECINCT

Location **4500 15th Ave NE**
 Lot Size **18,851**



N SECTOR PRECINCT

Location **Northgate Light Rail Station**
 Lot Size **83,099 (Only Partial Use of Total Lot)**



J SECTOR PRECINCT

Location **3838 Aurora Ave N**
 Lot Size **12,392**

Figure 27 Locations of Purposed Precinct Sites

of characteristics. Crime incidents included serious crimes including burglary and rape to property damage and disorderly conduct. The investigation understood crime as anything that could affect or disrupt a given community. A study entitled, “Exploratory Spatial data Analysis Techniques for Examine Urban Crime,” found a strong correlation between an areas proximity to a police station and crime rates. (Murry Page 311) The study found crime rates were reduced as distance to the nearest police station were reduced. Sites were investigated in those areas with the highest level of crime

The next data set mapped the current policing practices of the North precinct. It identifies the geographical extents of the North precinct, the subdivision of the North precinct referred to as sectors, and individual beats. Beats are defined by the geographical location an officer is responsible for policing during a shift. Site selection was impacted by SPD’s existing geographical boundaries that are derived from extensive analysis of response times, physical boundaries, personal requirements and police methodologies.

The remaining three sets of data consisted of Seattle’s Urban Villages data, tracts with both the highest percentage of families below the poverty line and families without a vehicle for transportation. In an interview, Andy Ishizaki an architect from Seattle’s Capital Projects Department explained how changes in society any the way people report crimes informed designs for the 2016 proposal of a new North Seattle precinct. SPD had identified a trend in victims wanting to report crimes in person at facilities. Ishizaki explained that victims feel most comfortable in this process as it most closely resembles a retail experience where people are most familiar with walking up to a front desk. In addition, tracts in the city of Seattle with the lowest percentage of families with a vehicle were identified. The intention for this investigation was to choose locations which minimize the distance required to travel to a site from areas with the highest percentage of families without a vehicle. This would increase accessibility for those who would otherwise have to rely on public transportation in order to get to one of the six sites.



Figure 28 North Elevation of Site



Figure 29 East Elevation of Site



Figure 30 West Elevation of Site



Figure 31 South Elevation of Site

The six data sets were then cross referenced and began to suggest correlations between neighborhood demographics and policing statistics. The data sets suggested a correlation between Seattle Urban Villages, major arterial road and crime rates. This correlation showed crime rates adjacent to major roads and the city's Urban villages were the highest. The data sets also suggest a correlation between crime and tracts with the highest percentage of families below the poverty line. When the six individual graphical representations were overlaid on each other, density in data points suggested the quantity and location of the 6 sites. The training facility

location is central to the other five precinct sites. This site happens to be located on the partial site of the 2016 proposal for the North Precinct.

This thesis chooses to propose a design on one of these sites in order to provide an in depth examination of the architecture. Sector L Precinct was chosen for the design exercise as it sits in the nexus between a residential neighborhood consisting primarily of single family homes and one of Seattle's Urban Village

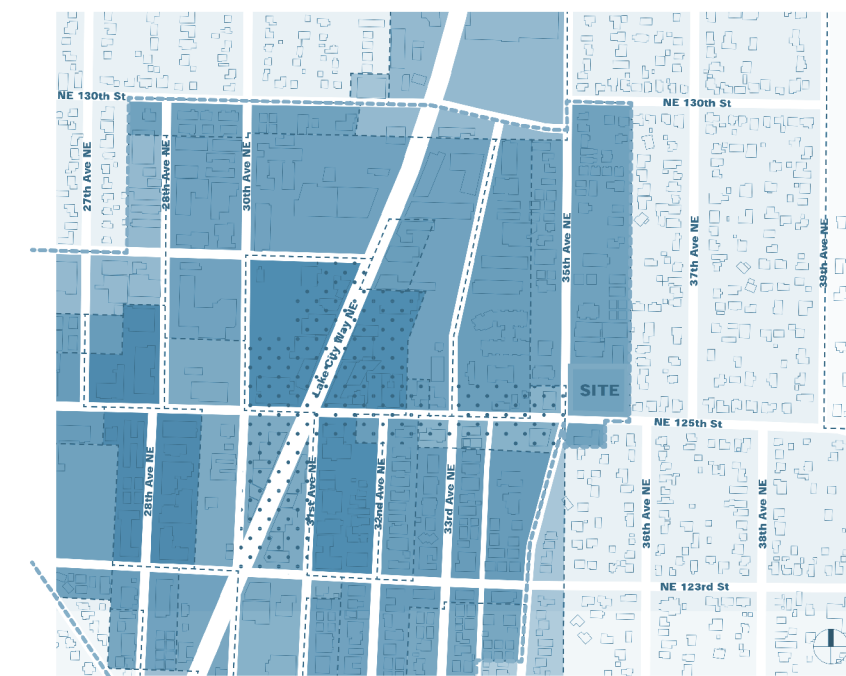
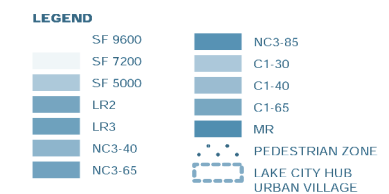


Figure 32 Zone Map of Surrounding Context



LAKE CITY WAY NE

33RD AVE NE

35TH AVE NE

125TH AVE NORTH EAST

APPROACH FROM URBAN VILLAGE

APPROACH FROM NEIGHBORHOOD

32ND AVE NE

34RD AVE NE

BUS ROUTE



31

32

Figure 33 Site Map

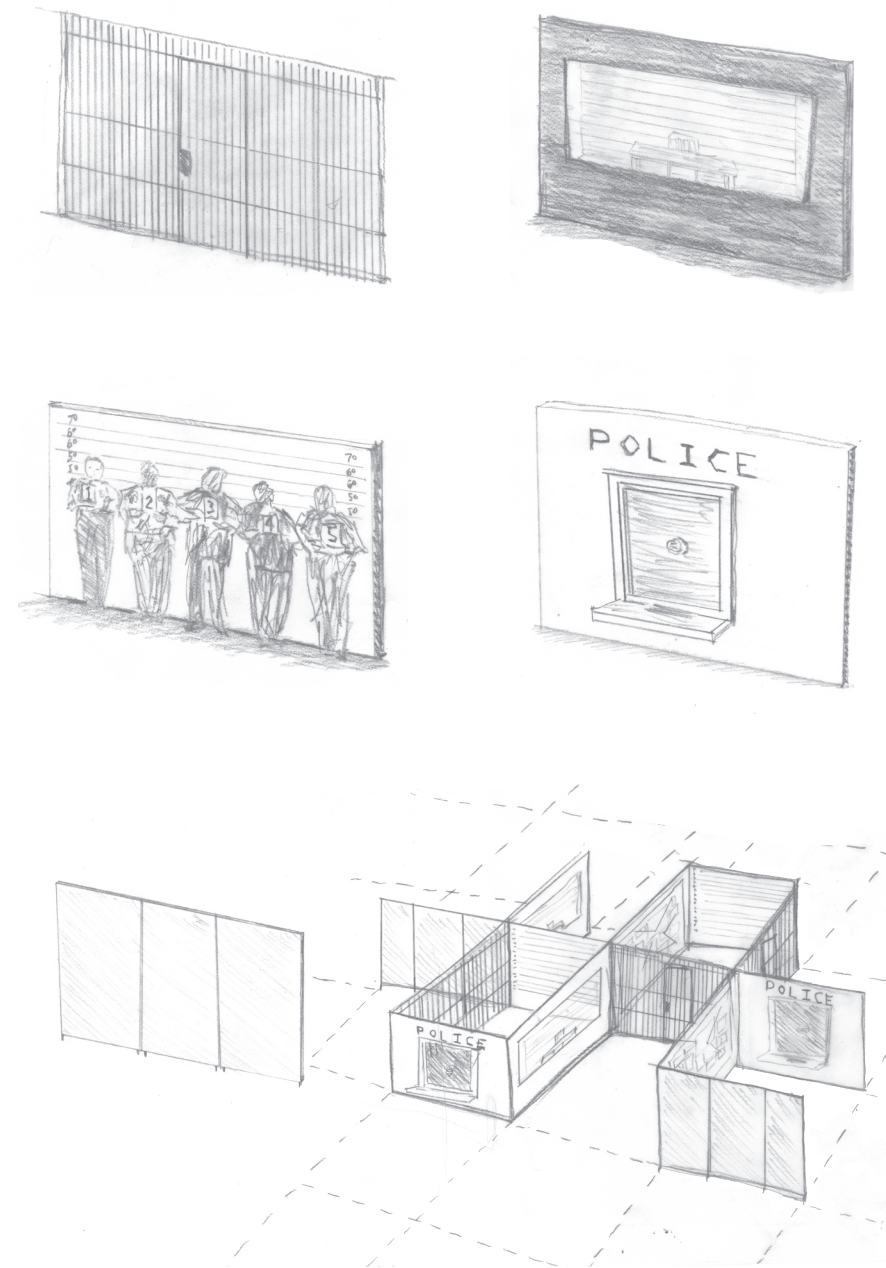


Figure 34 Existing condition of Police Station Typology

consisting of commercial and higher density multifamily typologies. The site for the L-Sector Precinct sits on the corner of 35th Ave NE and NE 125th Street. The site will also provide a proof of concept for the opportunity for the contemporary police station to be understood as a civic asset highly embedded and unique to the surrounding neighborhood and community.

The site sits adjacent to a transportation hub along a major Seattle Metro Bus Route connecting the University of Washington and the high school to the South with the rest of North Seattle. Changes in the design seeks to take advantage of the natural topography change to reduce the sense of scale of the building and to better relate to context with single-family homes to the north and east of the site. The buildings facade design takes inspiration from five large Acer Macrophyllum (Big Leaf Maple) existing trees that line the street edge to the East. The trees are highly valued by the community and help define the neighborhood. The design celebrates

the unique context by taking inspiration from the dappling of light band vertical nature of the large mature trees on site.

Chapter 4. Design Process

The typical police station consists of an assortment of vertical partitions that prescribes an interaction between two parties on either side of the vertical surface. The bars of a jail cell identify a specific relationship between the officer and suspect. The vertical surface suggests a hierarchical relationship of power between both parties. The person on one side of the bars adopts a sense of authority while those on the other side are made aware of their relationship to the authority figure and institution. This relationship between the authority and subordinate is enforced by the spatial identifiers of a holding cell. Another example of vertical surfaces within the police station as prescriptive of identity and behavior is the two-way mirror interview room. This space can be seen as a

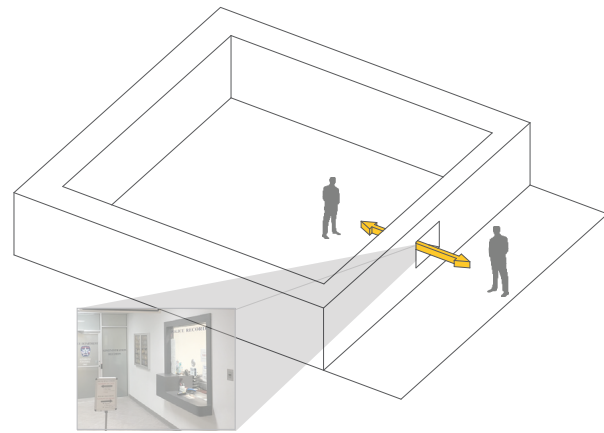


Figure 35 Current condition of the Public Interface Threshold

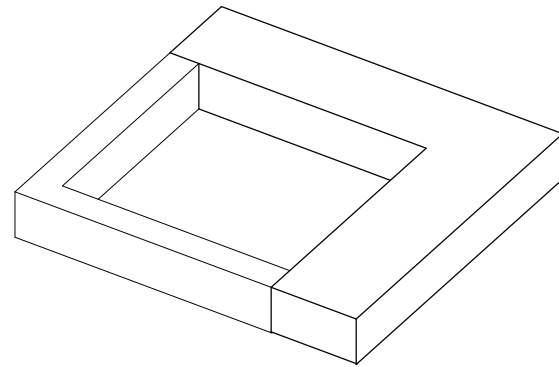


Figure 36 Differentiate the Current Threshold

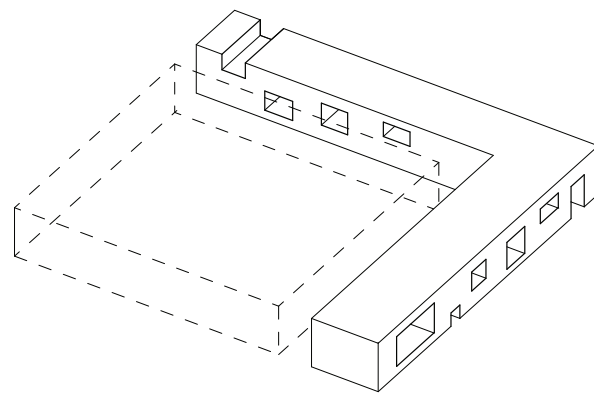


Figure 37 Increase the numbers thresholds and the opportunities to interact

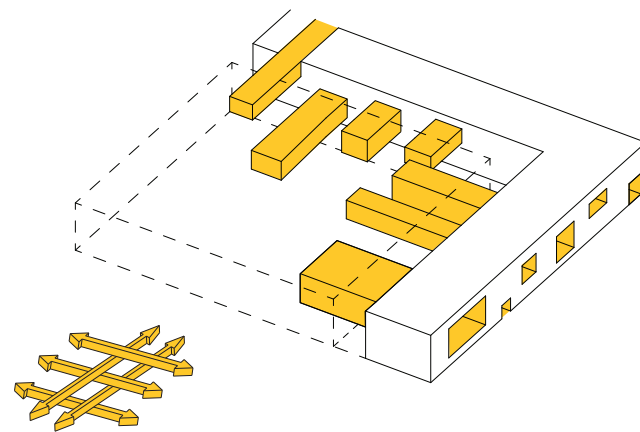


Figure 38 Threshold As New Public Interface

contemporary application of Jeremy Bentham, Panopticon. The Panopticon uses architecture to prescribe a relationship between the guard and prisoner. The architectural design creates a sense skewed power where the guard can see the illuminated prison cell, while the inmate is unable to see within the control tower. This prescribes obedient behavior of the inmate in fear of always being watched. The two-way mirror creates a sense of authority with the hierarchy of transparency between either side of the partition.

In a similar way, a ballistic proof glass booth reduces the public interface of the typical police station to a singular, highly formalized interaction between the officer and public. An elevated desk sits behind the partition with an intercom mitigating a sterile interaction between parties. This is the location used for all interactions with the public including those who are victims to a crime. While the ballistic proof partition increases the sense of safety of the police officer

it ignores the public as victim or concerned neighbor. The goal of the design is to create a platform for interaction that adequately support SPD in their interactions with the community.

If the architecture of the contemporary police precinct is to support SPD's contemporary policing practices, the architecture must facilitate interactions that vary from the highly constrained and prescribed exchanges the current typology can only support. The design concept for Sector L precinct purposes utilizing the threshold to vary interactions between the various parties. the concept first multiples the number of typical threshold conditions found in the current typology. It then manipulates these thresholds to create a diversity of interaction and experiences that concentrate on a duality between the ability to feel a sense of prospect and refuge at the same time. The building concept lastly identifies and celebrates these thresholds announcing their presence to the exterior of the building.

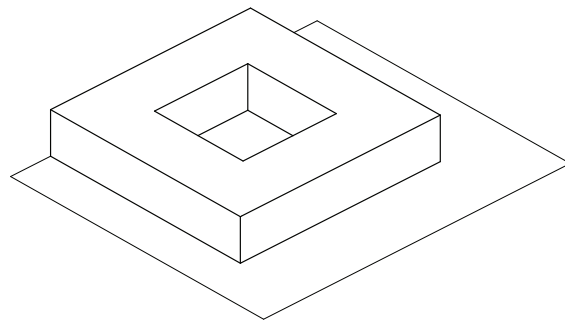


Figure 39 The Form Begins as a with the Generic Institutional Typology

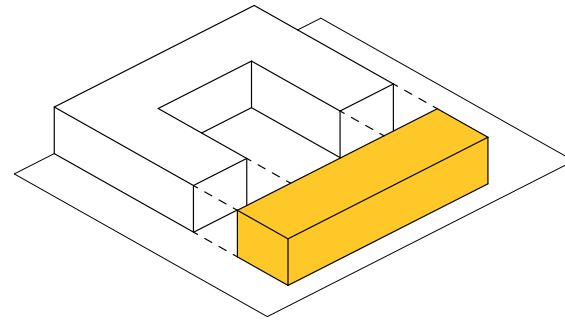


Figure 40 Design Isolates One Leg of the Existing Form

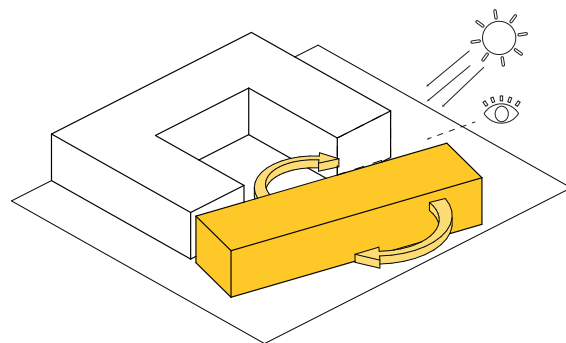


Figure 41 Rotating the Isolated form to Allow Sun Penetration Into Courtyard and Increase Sightlines

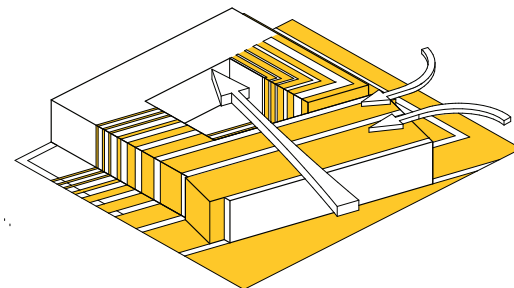


Figure 42 Gradation of Thresholds Create a Diversity of Interactions from Interior to Exterior spaces

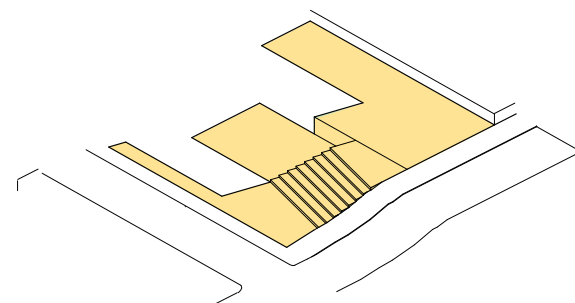


Figure 43 The Form is Informed by Site Context

Form

The design for the Sector L Police precinct in North Seattle originates from the typical institutional form of a what is referred to by the University of Washington architecture professor Kathryn Merlino as, “letter shaped institutional form building typology. The institutional form is derived from the need to isolate specific portions of the building as use or security changes. Typical forms include L or C shaped buildings where thresholds separate two or three wings of the building. In this case, a four-sided, O shaped building with an internal courtyard was used for its internally focused nature and secured exterior space. One side of the O-shaped form is identified as public in its variable program and its form. The leg is then rotated off axis from the remaining form to optimize solar penetration into the courtyard. The angle of rotation acknowledges and compliments the most public corner of the site while marking the public entrance and community room. Additionally, the rotation of the form element provides sightlines

to the internal court yard and other parts of the building.

The rotation of the most public volume of the building is then creating smaller scaled design element furthering opportunities for interaction and public interface. These elements not only take the form of windows and vertical circulation but also thresholds, identifying interstitial space between two conditions or a change in security level. These elements reduce in size and quantity as one moves from the most public southwest corner of the site to the most private northwest portion of the site. This creates a gradation of barriers with apertures that suggest a procession that begins to suggest the relationship of the larger institution to the user. Lastly, the design acknowledges the unique characteristics of the site. To further create a sense of embedment within the neighborhood, the architectural response takes advantage of the change in elevation and surrounding contextual scale.

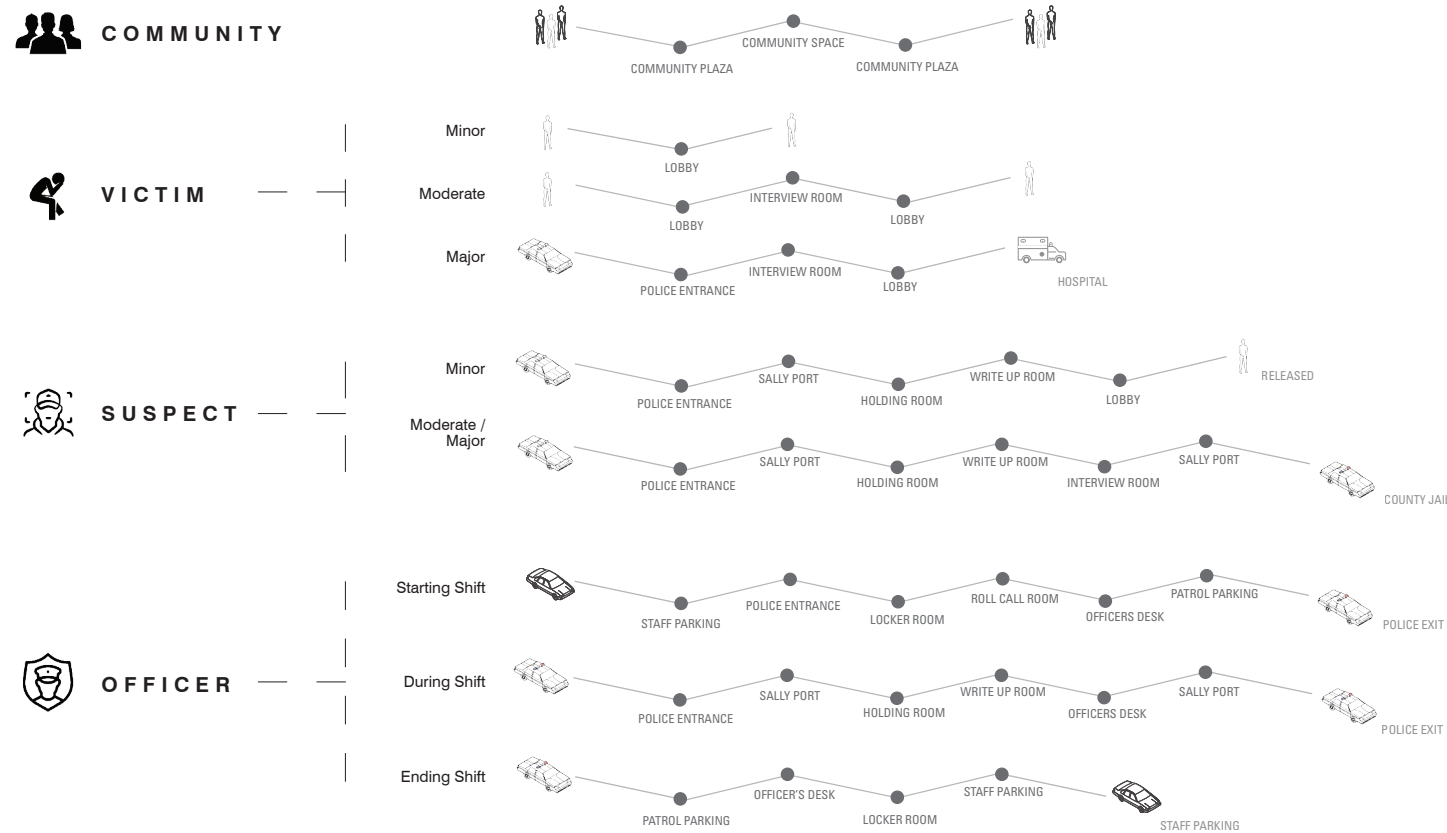


Figure 44 User Group's Interaction With Programmatic Elements

User Groups

If the architecture of the contemporary police precinct is to support contemporary policing practices, the architecture must also acknowledge the complexity of the relationships between user groups. The User groups are identified by four major categories. The first of these categories describes the general public, who will use the precinct outside of a traumatic event. This user group consists of surrounding community members from their neighborhood. Their interaction with the precinct would be

varied from block watch parties, community meetings and small classes led by members of the community to less formal events such as a morning exercise destination or a safe place for e-commerce exchange. This would also span times throughout most of the day suggesting the building as a constant node for public activity. It is important that the design provide opportunity for people from the surrounding community to build a sense of familiarity with the space. In the event of a traumatic event the victim who is also

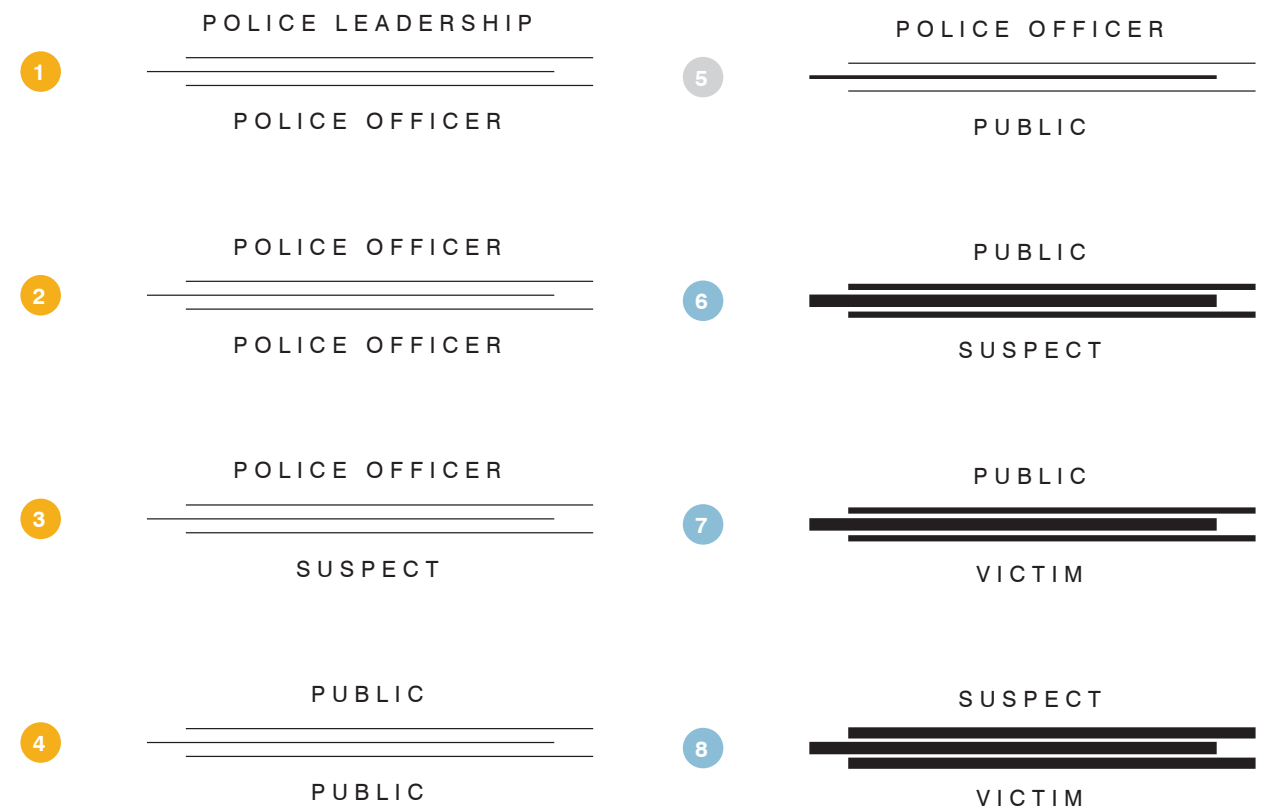


Figure 45 User Group's Interactions

a community member may find comfort in the fact that this would not be their first visit to the station.

The second user group consists of those who are victims of a crime whether major or minor. Their time spent at the precinct would vary depending on the crime, from a abbreviated stay while reporting a minor crime to a more extended time spent requiring an interview and report with investigators. Priority is given to creating a comforting and safe experience for the

victim regardless of the crime with architecture used to help facilitate a sense of security.

The third describes the uniformed officer, police leadership and civil employees working at the Station. The uniformed officer's interaction at the precinct is limited to the start and end of their shift primarily with additional visits to the precinct during their shift for delivery of evidence, suspect booking or report writing. Police leadership on the other had spends most of their time at the precinct along with detectives

conducting roll call once a shift and facilitating the operations of the various uniformed officers. A team of civilian employees also work within the precinct as administrative staff, quarter master, and social workers or community outreach specialists.

The final user group consists of the suspect brought in the back of the police cruiser or called in for questioning after a crime is committed. This user groups requires very specific prescribed interactions at the police station. The Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003 or PREA consists of mandates that include the design of facilities and the time an inmate is allowed to be detained at a Police precinct. Consideration was given to these mandates in the design of the building to acknowledge the complexity of user groups and their varied needs. These mandates informed the circulation and adjacencies of spaces in the design.

A priority of the design was to attempt to mediate the various user groups and their complex relationships in a new and innovative way that could begin to support successful interactions. This is different from the way the typology prioritizes individual's safety. The academic setting for this thesis allowed for a exploratory

investigation into the ability of architectures to facilitate a wide range of interactions among user groups in effort to improve the current relationship between SPD and the public.

Program

The thesis challenged program and programmatic adjacencies of the traditional precinct typology in a similar way user group interactions were redefined in order to improve opportunities for interaction. This required a extensive program study into the existing condition of Seattle Police precincts. Interviews with SPD and case studies supplied the essential program requirements with the understanding that multiple facilities in the North precinct would provide opportunity for facilities to have programmatic elements more specific to the needs of the neighborhood they are located within. Furthermore, certain programmatic elements could be shared between multiple facilities within the North Precinct reducing the total required sqft of individual facilities. The redefining of the current program is essential in acknowledging the police precinct as a community asset rather than a symbolic representation of power.

The program for the police station is initially redefined by categorizing a typical police

“Public are the Police and the Police are the Public”

- Lesley Cordner
Assistant Chief SPD



Figure 46 Historic Image of the Seattle Police Department

precinct program into three major categories of publicize, visible, and conceal. The categorizing of program was used as a catalyst to rethink the rigid program of the typology. The design also acknowledges the unique differences and requirements of programs within a category

While this thesis attempts to increase accessibility and transparency, the program study into the standard relationships of spaces illustrated that certain programmatic elements justifiably demand high security and little opportunity for public interaction. These program spaces are categorized as conceal. This describes the design definition of these spaces not only as visually concealing but also figuratively suppressing their importance and impact on the design.

In contrast the most public program spaces are categorized as publicize. The design look to celebrate neighborhood activity at the precinct. Program elements in this category provide opportunity for interactions at the precinct amongst the public outside a traumatic event. These programmatic elements include a community room that would be shared by the police for demonstrations and education

The last category of program describes spaces

PUBLICIZE	
Public Entrance and Lobby	1500
Public Restrooms	300
Public Meeting Room, Training Room	1600
Additional Public Program	2500

VISIBLE	
Safe Injection Site	1500
Precinct Captain's Office	450
Lieutenant's Office	225
Sergeant's Office	500
Detectives' Office	1000
Operations Center	250
Patrol Officers Write Up Area	600
Lunchroom / Lounge	800
Exercise Room	750
Pistol Range	950
Sally Port	600

CONCEAL	
Interview Rooms	270
Prisoners' Holding Room	250
Prisoner Restrooms	50
Quartermaster / Records and Supply	500
Evidence Storage	150
Found Property	1100
Breathalyzer Room	200
Locker Room	2100
Showers	800
Maintenance Shop	300
Additional Storage	350
Mechanical Space	1100
Parking Garage	17,500

Total Net Area	37,595
Circulation — 25%	9,161

TOTAL GROSS AREA REQUIRED	46,756
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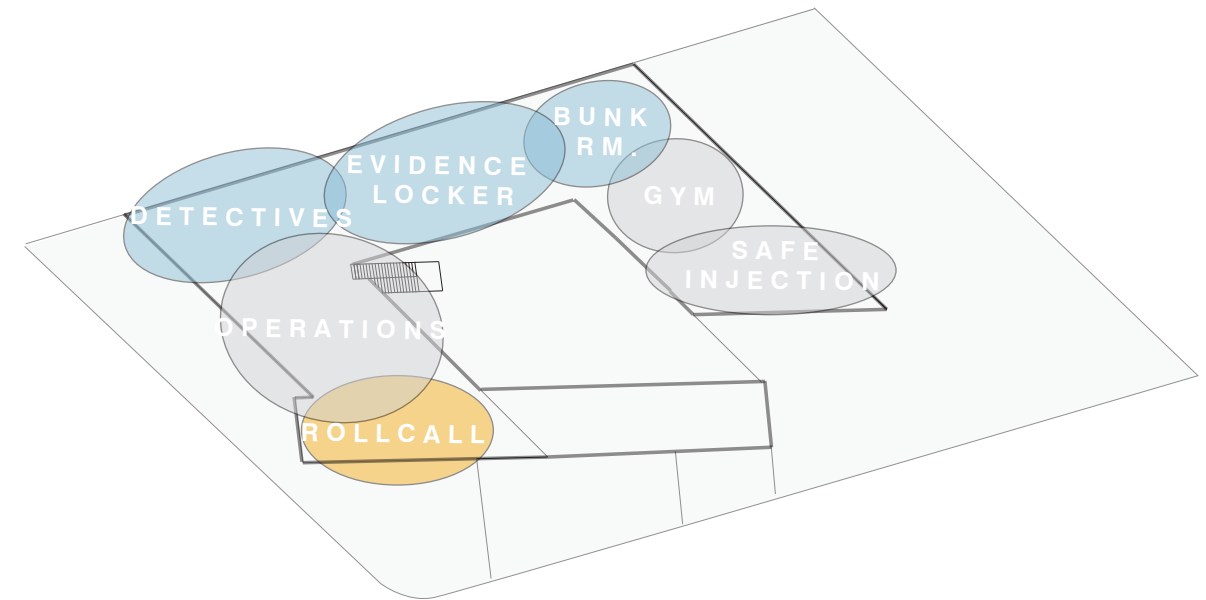


Figure 47 Second Floor Programmatic Floor Plan

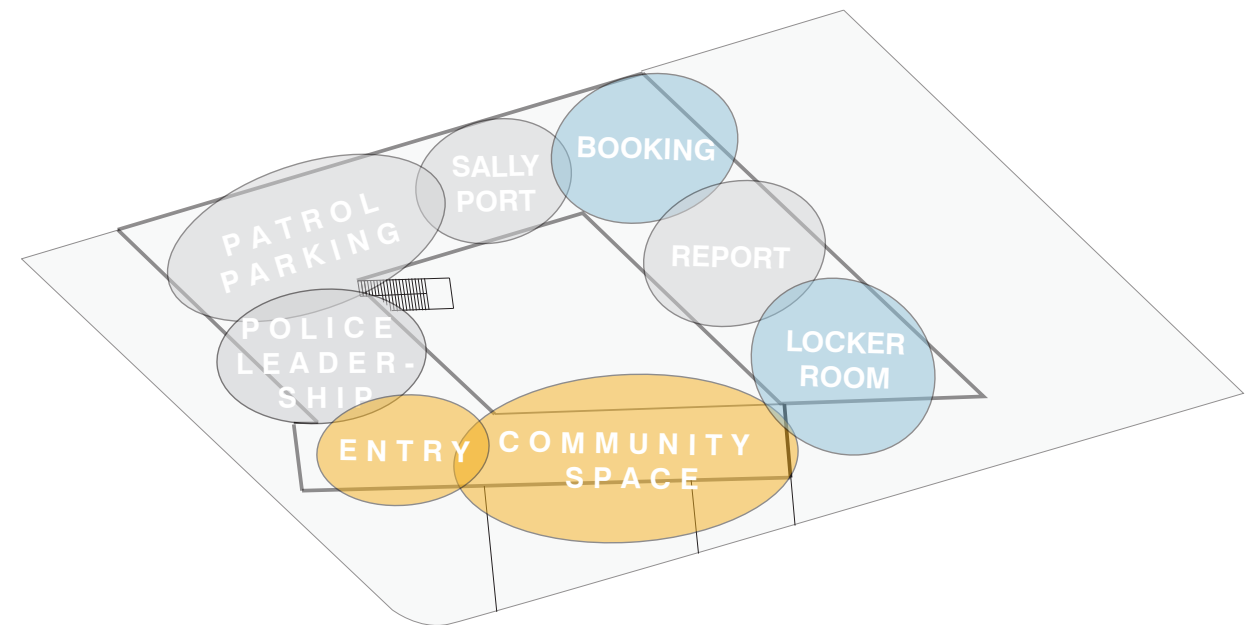


Figure 48 First Floor Programmatic Floor Plan

that are a hybrid condition between the previous two. These spaces that are categorized as visible have the greatest opportunity in challenging the current typology and improving the architectural interface between the police and public. They also require the greatest architectural intervention to mediate highly charged interactions. An example of this is the nontraditional program of a safe injection site. The thesis acknowledges an existing societal epidemic and the required sense of institutional authority of the police. Architecture is relied on to isolate the program from operations of the police through clear barriers and strict control points. However program adjacencies support an interaction among officers and users of the safe injection site. This could possibly lead to an improved sense of accessibility to resources for addiction recovery and a improved sense of control of a dangerous activity that would otherwise take place in other locations within the community.

Circulation

The circulation path between all user groups of the facility is shared, allowing for the greatest opportunity for informal interactions. In order to maintain security and safety thresholds are

positioned along the main circulation path. The first of these threshold conditions exist at the main public entry where the louvered façade gradually dissolves, identifying and framing a glass entrance. Once inside the louvered façade is continued to the interior mediating sightlines of the sensitive interactions occurring at the reception desk. Adjacent to the reception desk the louvers stop from proceeding deeper into interior spaces where the porousness of the louvers transform into translucent solid glass surfaces. This creates a threshold that marks a change in condition and separates the public and open access spaces from the more controlled programmatic elements. The secured elements limits access from the sensitive operations of the police station while allowing partial glimpses into the general workings. This threshold identifies the biggest change in condition and replaces the front police counter of the current typology.

The circulation path moves past the lobby threshold and is then shared by Police precinct leadership, uniformed officers, detectives and civilian precinct staff. The path wraps around the courtyard with private programmatic elements pulled of the circulation path. These elements include suspect booking, the armory, pistol

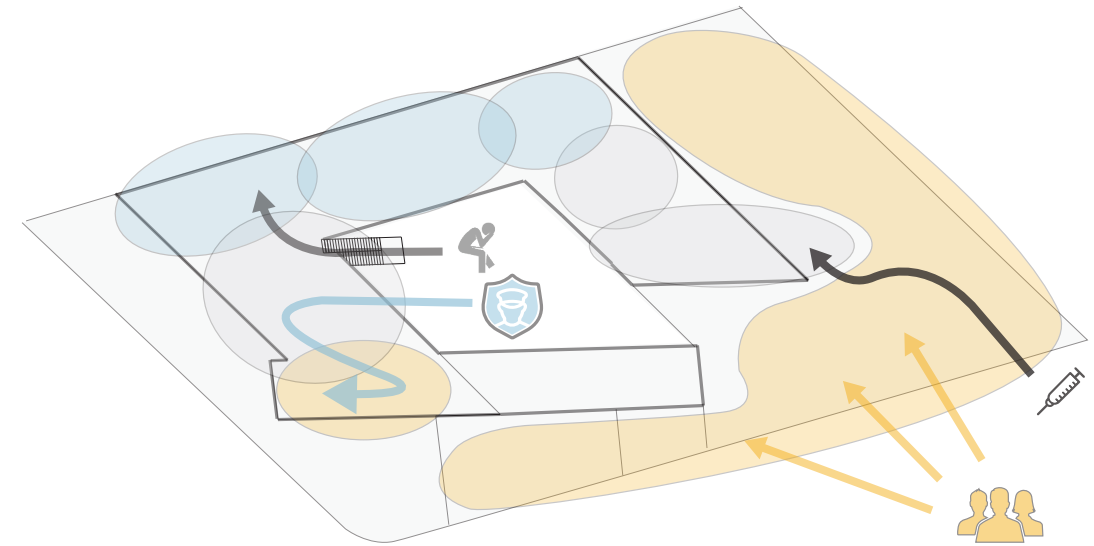


Figure 49 User Group Circulation Second Floor

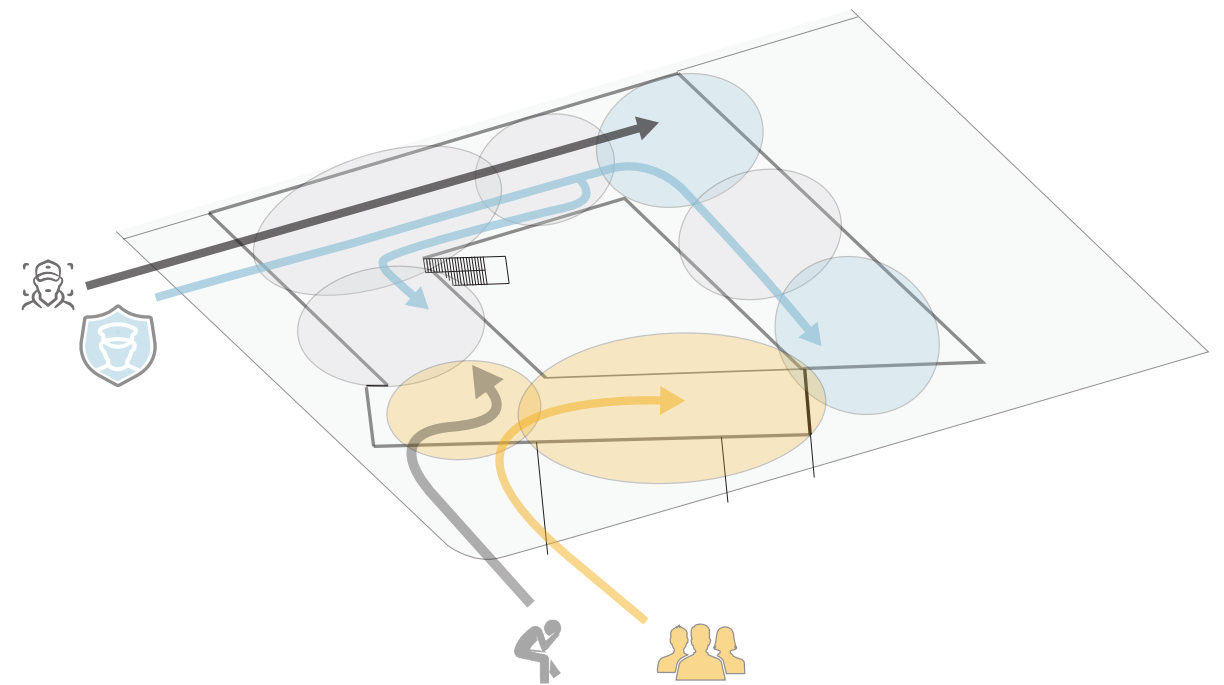


Figure 50 User Group Circulation 1st Floor

range, evidence storage, officer's locker room/restrooms, bunk room and interview rooms. Sight lines into these spaces are completely interrupted and opaque. All other programmatic spaces in the precinct are give some form of transparency. The main circulation route is framed by an archway of louvers providing screening on both sides of the path. This creates a level of screening from the exterior and screening from interior work spaces. The dual layer of louvers create a gradation of transparency, reducing sightlines in spaces where tasks would take place. The design acknowledges the need for officers to feel a sense of security and shelter while working. In addition the layered facade allows flexibility if the police officer or civilian precinct employee chooses to increase their exposure and visibility to the exterior.

Throughout the facility louvers are angled depending on the level of transparency required by the adjacent space. In order to create a sense of internal transparency between the police leadership and uniformed officer's interactions with suspects, the louvers are parallel to the adjacent spaces. This allows the precinct Captain

to watch sally port activity, report writing and suspect booking process. When privacy is needed, louvers become perpendicular to the spaces. The angle and depth of the Louvers limit transparency of activity to shadows between the community room and sally port. This enables the public using the community room to acknowledge some activity in spaces while protecting the identity of suspects or victims.

The circulation path on the second floor mimics that of the first while mediating different relationships of spaces and user groups. This facilitates opportunity for interaction among the public from the plaza and police officers in the area designated for roll call. Louvers sit parallel to the two spaces granting mediated sightlines. As the public change their position relative to the louvers, the gradation of transparency to the interior of spaces changes. By mediating sightlines and physical access to portions of the building, the design allows a glimpse into the workings of the police station. This reduces a sense of mystery and an opportunity to improve the general publics perception of SPD.

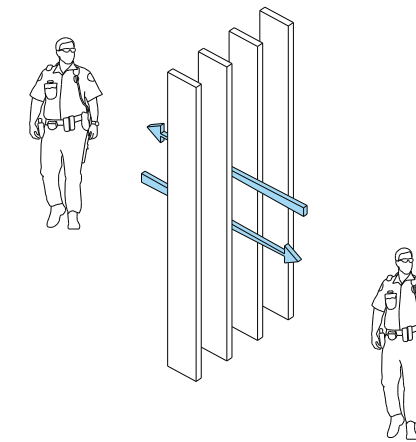


Figure 51 Facade Facilitates Internal Transparency Between Police Leadership and Uniformed Officer

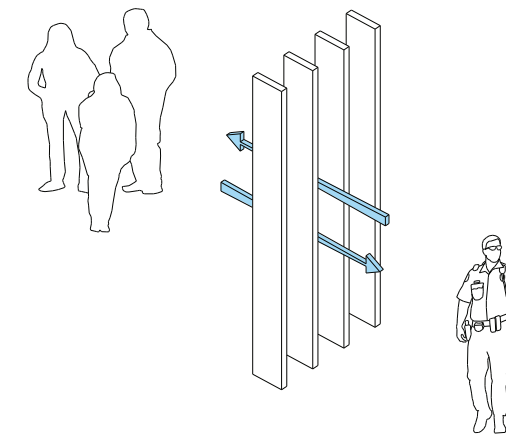


Figure 52 Facade Permits Transparency Between Public and Police Officer

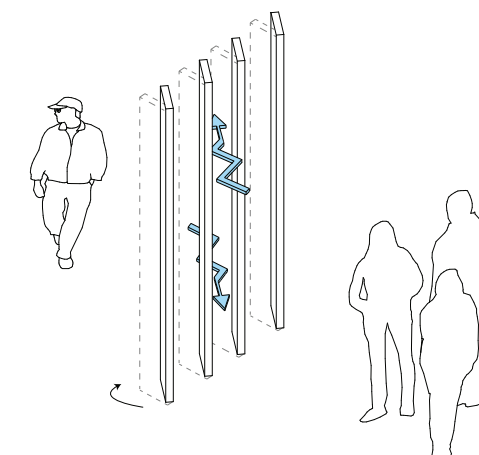


Figure 53 Facade Mediates Sightlines Between Suspect and Public

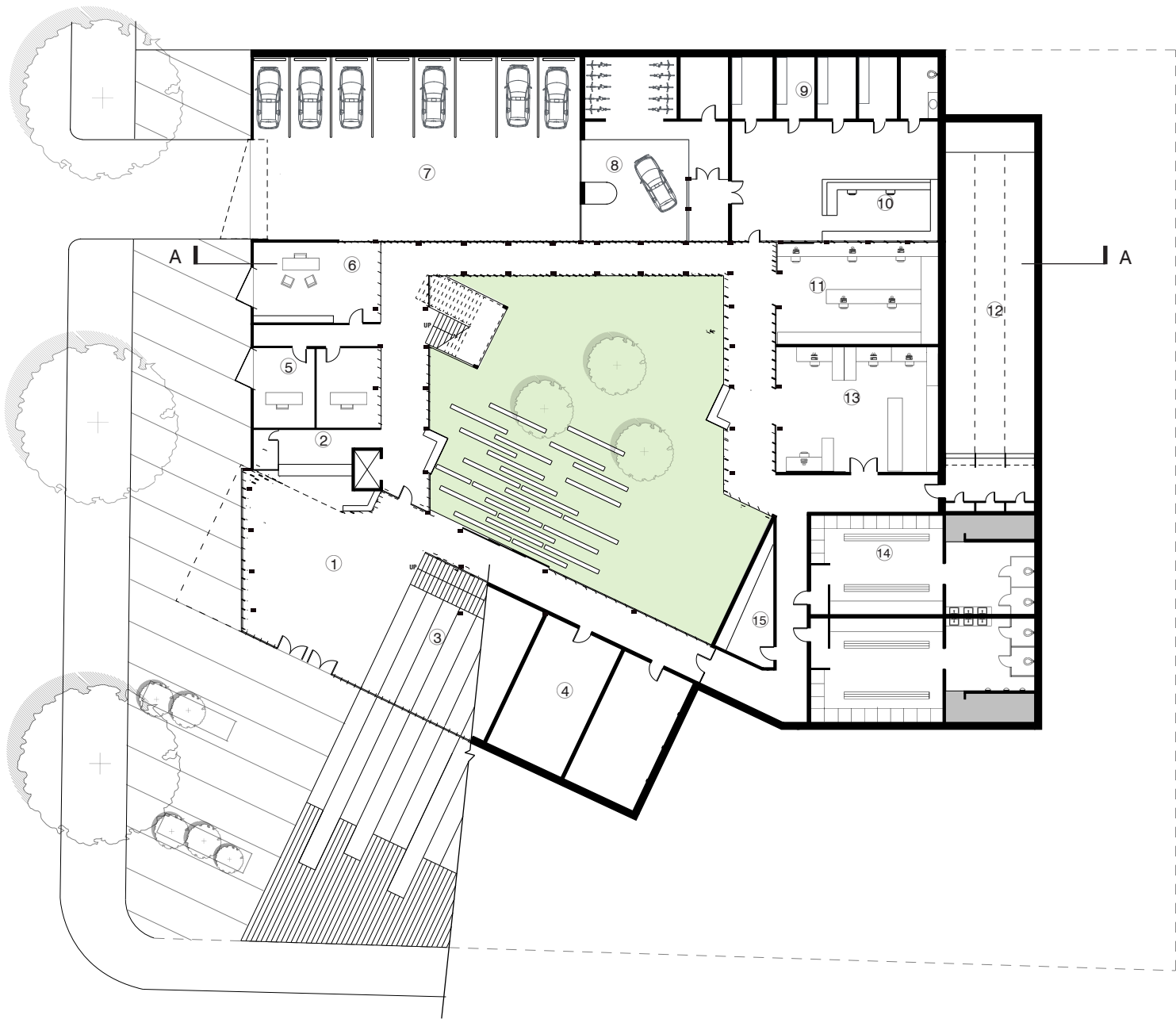


Figure 54 First Floor Plan

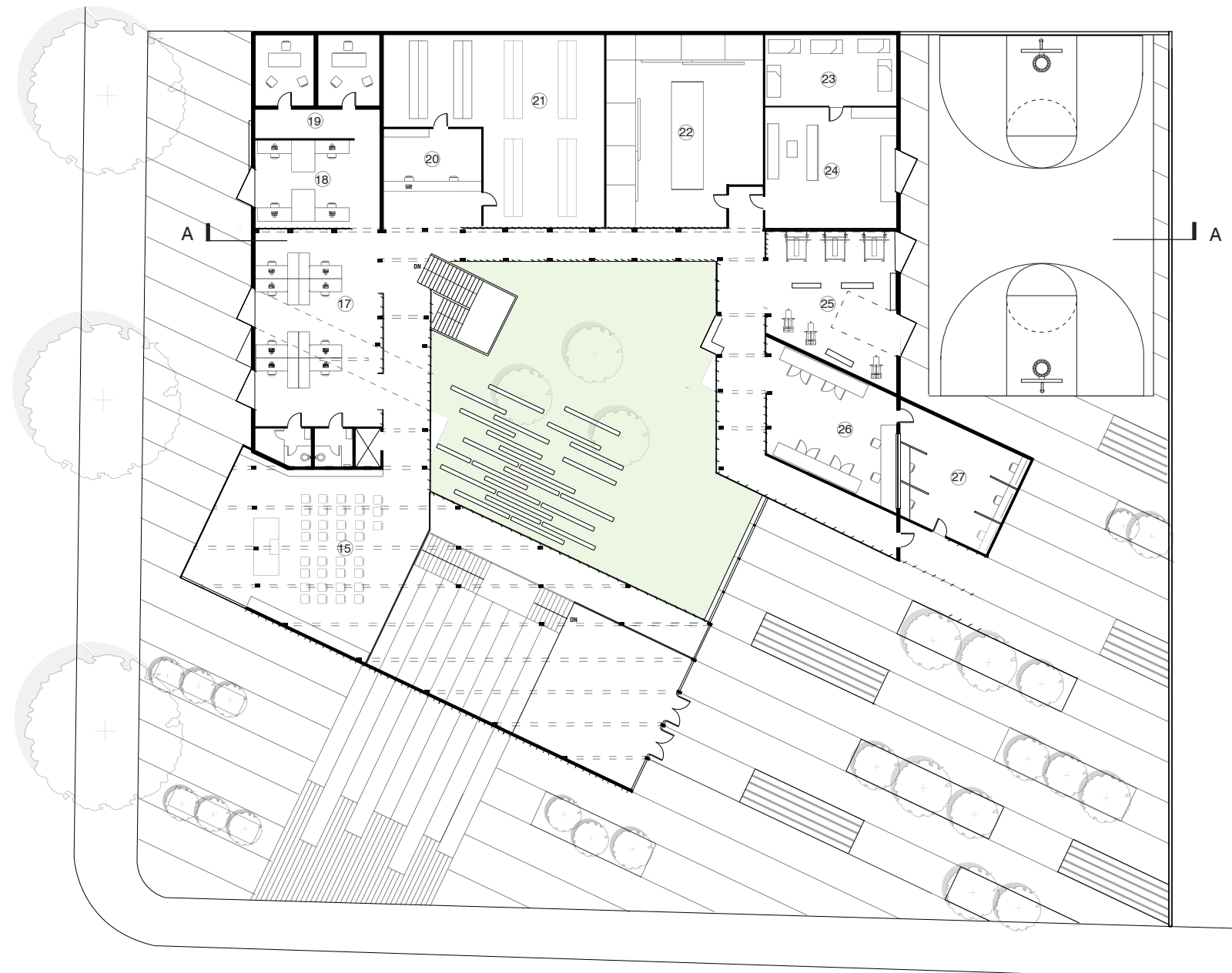


Figure 55 Second Floor Plan

- 1. Public Entrance
- 2. Front Desk
- 3. Community Room, Training Room
- 4. Public Restrooms
- 5. Lieutenant's Office
- 6. Capt. Office
- 7. Patrol Parking
- 8. Sally Port

- 9. Holding Cells
- 10. Booking
- 11. Report Write Up Area
- 12. Pistol Range
- 13. Evidence Processing
- 14. Officers Locker Rooms
- 15. Armory



- 16. Roll Call Area
- 17. Operations Center
- 18. Detective's office
- 19. Interview Rooms
- 20. Quarter Master's Office
- 21. Evidence locker

- 22. Found Property
- 23. Bunk Room
- 24. Officer's Lounge
- 25. Officer's Gym
- 26. Nurses Station
- 27. Safe injection Site



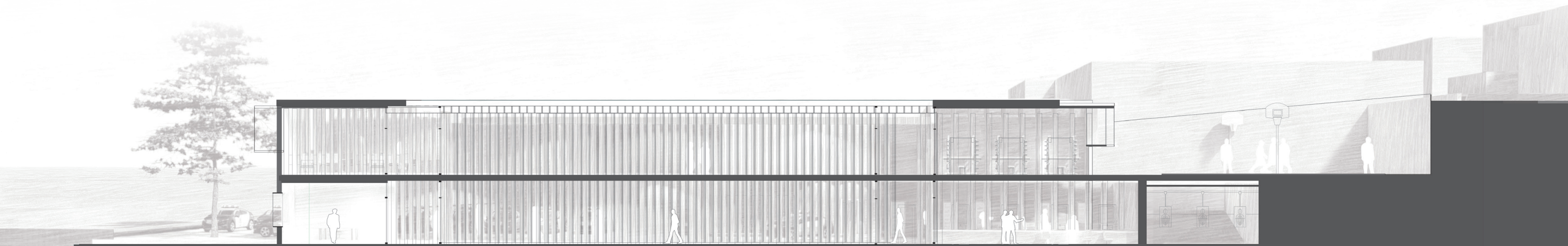


Figure 56 Building Section

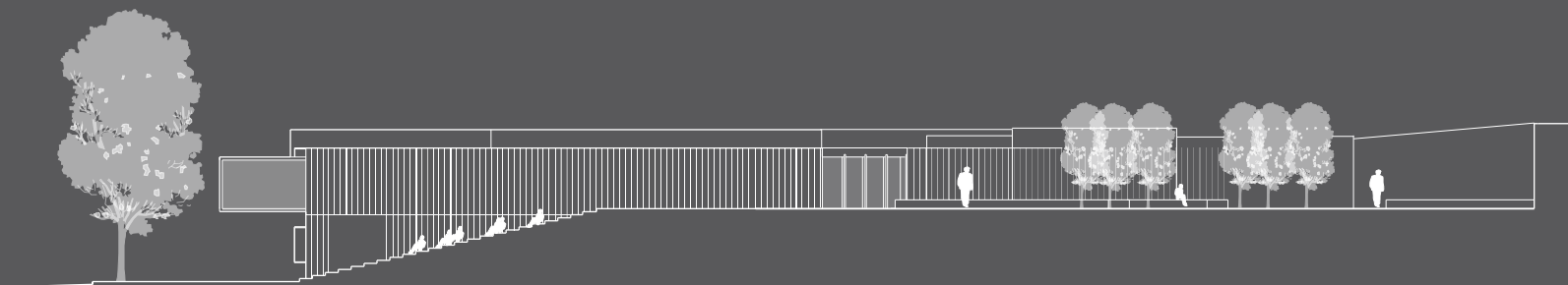


Figure 57 North Elevation

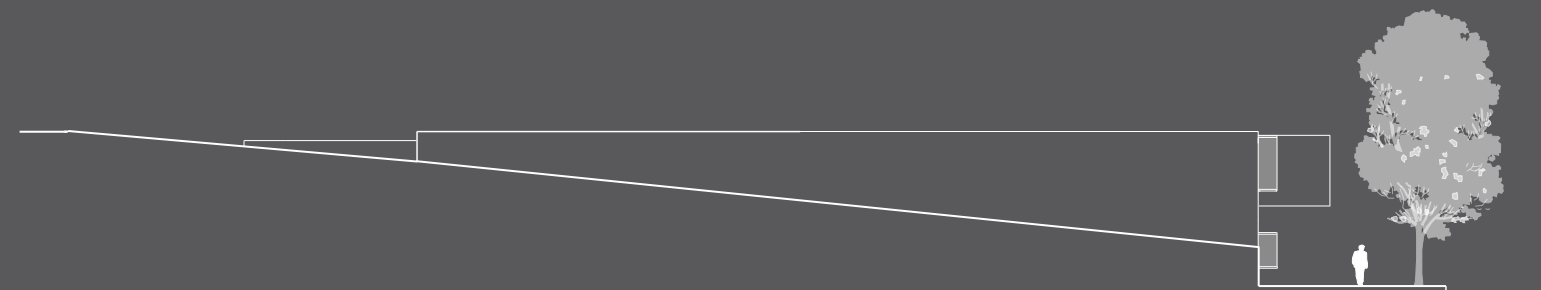


Figure 59 South Elevation

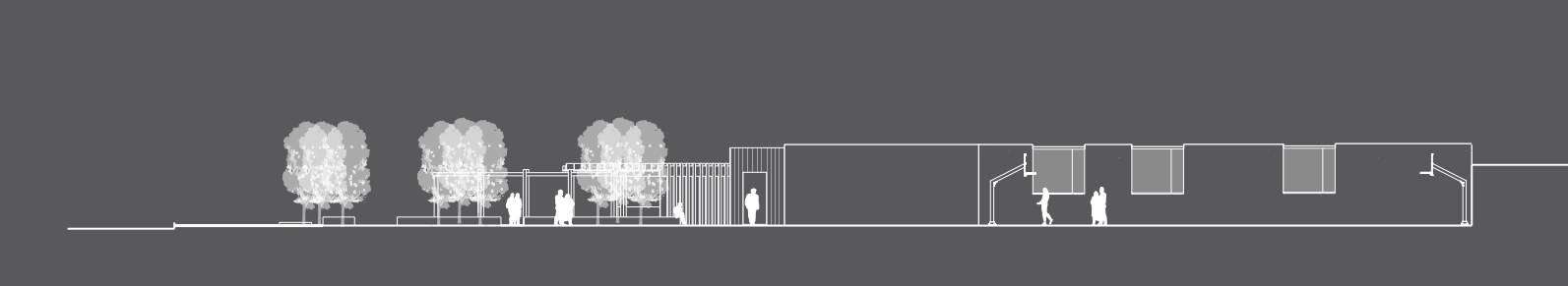


Figure 58 West Elevation



Figure 60 East Elevation

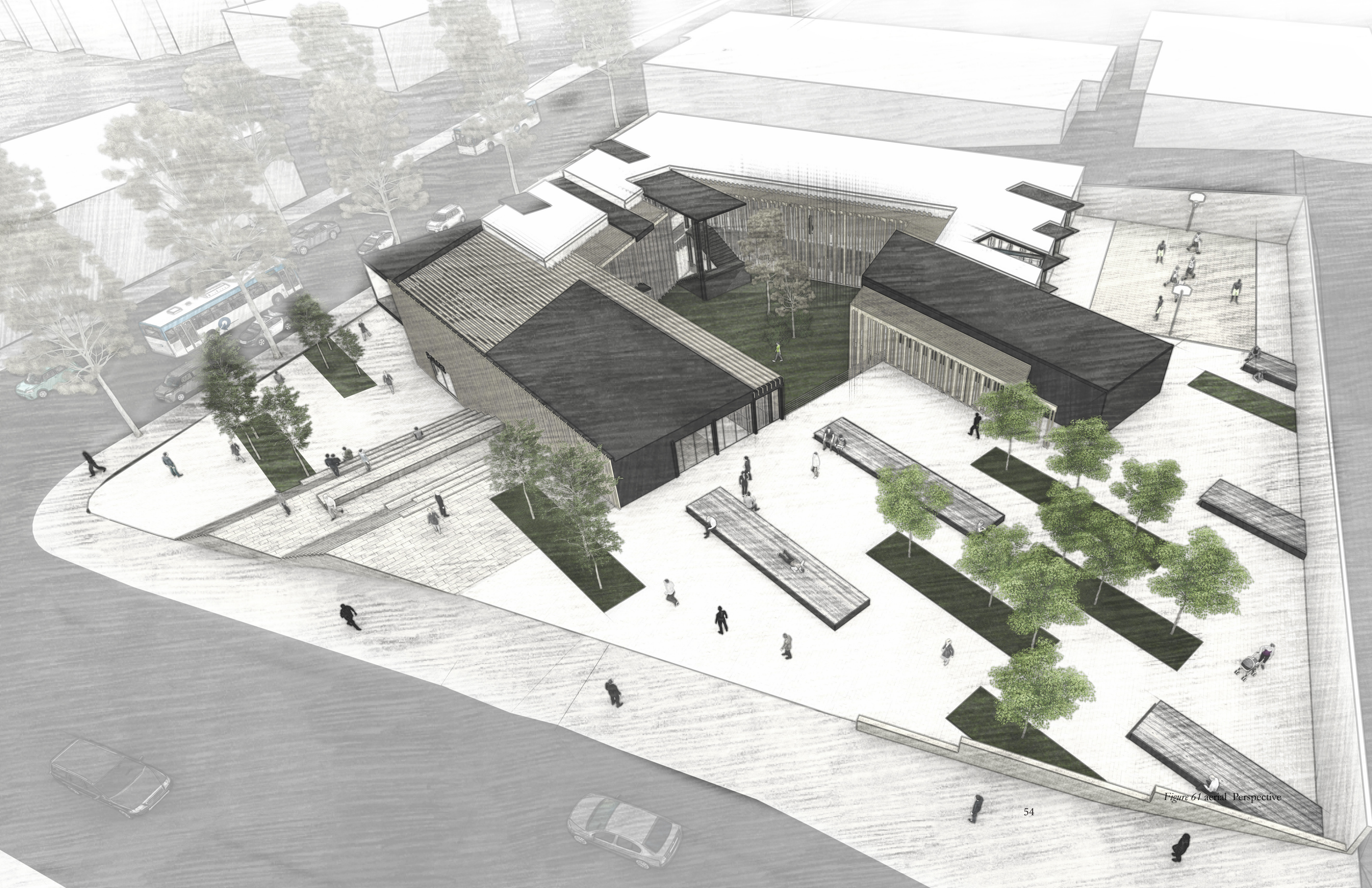


Figure 61 aerial Perspective



Figure 62 Entry Perspective

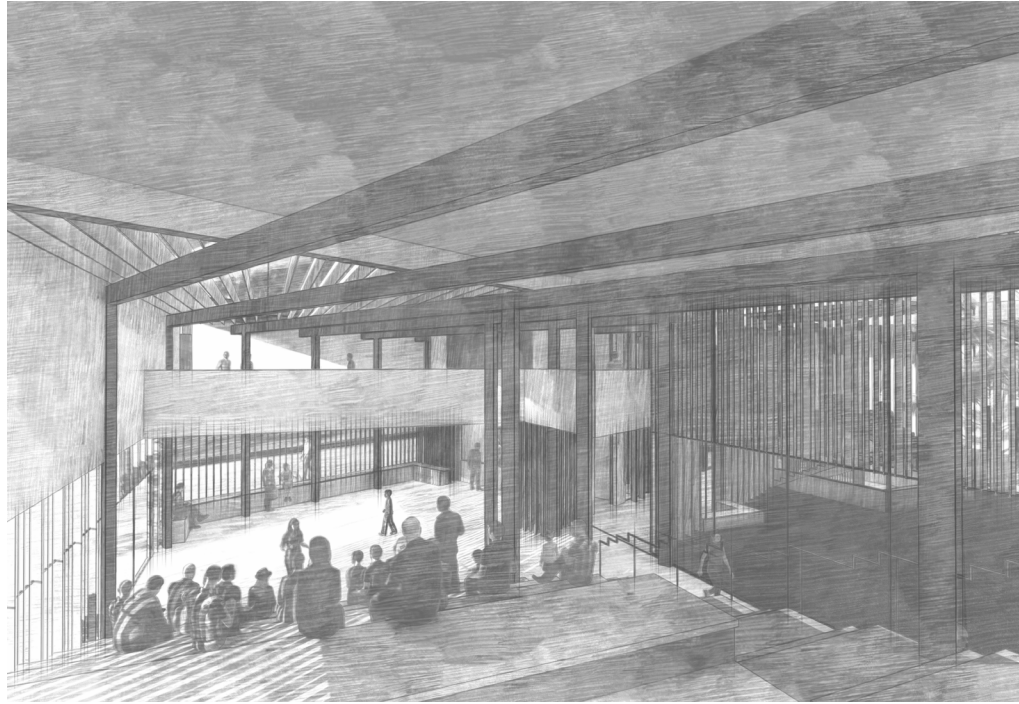


Figure 63 Community Room Perspective

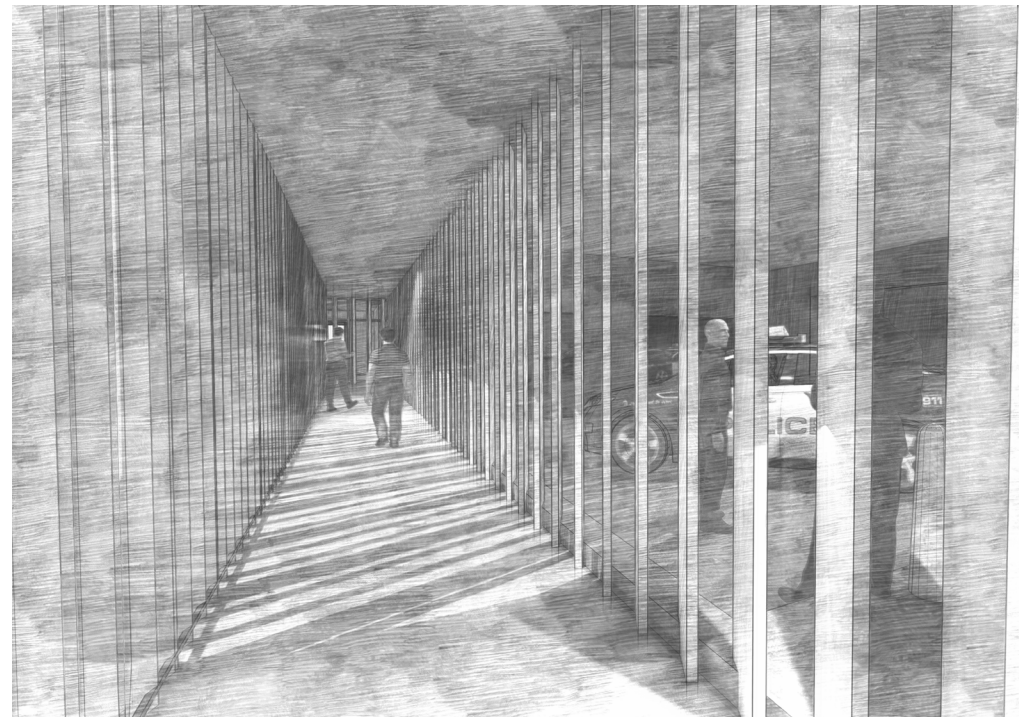


Figure 64 Corridor Between Sally Port and Courtyard

Conclusion

This thesis argues that architecture can play a role in creating a new identity for the Seattle Police Department, improving the relationship between SPD and the city. This thesis does not attempt to argue that a building design can resolve the complex and often problematic relationship between the institutional authority and society. The intent is to raise awareness of the complexity in the issue facing contemporary society.

The opportunities for improving the relationship between the Seattle Police Department and the city requires a unique solution. The current condition of the police station typology is representative of past policing methodologies.

If data suggest that use of force, crime rate and other measures of the quality of police practices are improving then the architecture should be representative and supportive of these contemporary practices. The current condition of the North Police precinct is typical of the typology by overly restricting and prescribing interactions among the police and public.

By increasing the approachability of the institution and the flexibility of its uses, architecture has the opportunity for a higher diversity of interactions among the different parties, architecture can not only mediate but facilitate a better relationship among SPD and the city of Seattle.



Figure 65 Perspective from Public Plaza

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