Niagara Falls
New York

Urban Land Institute
Advisory Services Program

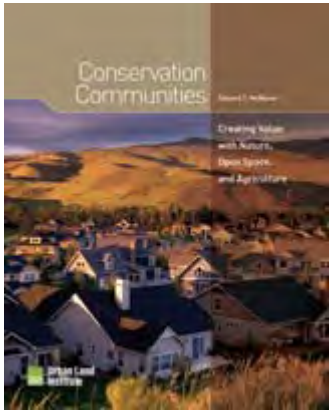
An Urban Land Institute
Advisory Services Panel
September 2012

About the Urban Land Institute

- The mission of the Urban Land Institute is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide.

- ULI is a membership organization with nearly 30,000 members, worldwide representing the spectrum of real estate development, land use planning and financial disciplines, working in private enterprise and public service.

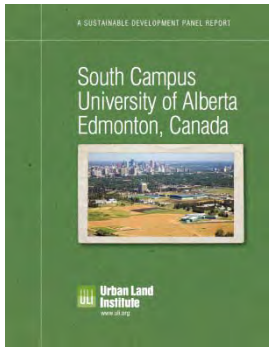
- What the Urban Land Institute does:
  - Conducts Research
  - Provides a forum for sharing of best practices
  - Writes, edits and publishes books and magazines
  - Organizes and conducts meetings
  - Directs outreach programs
  - Conduct Advisory Services Panels

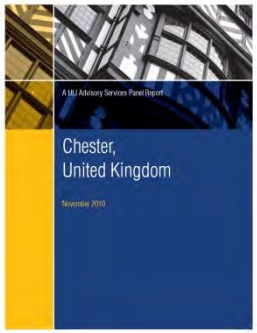


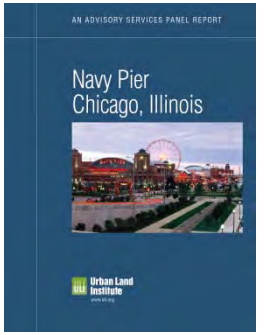
Urban Land Institute
Advisory Services Program

The ULI Advisory Services Program

- Since 1947
- 15 - 20 panels a year on a variety of land use subjects
- Provides independent, objective candid advice on important land use and real estate issues
- Process
  - Review background materials
  - Receive a sponsor presentation & tour
  - Conduct stakeholder interviews
  - Consider data, frame issues and write recommendations
  - Make presentation
  - Produce a final report







Urban Land Institute
Advisory Services Program

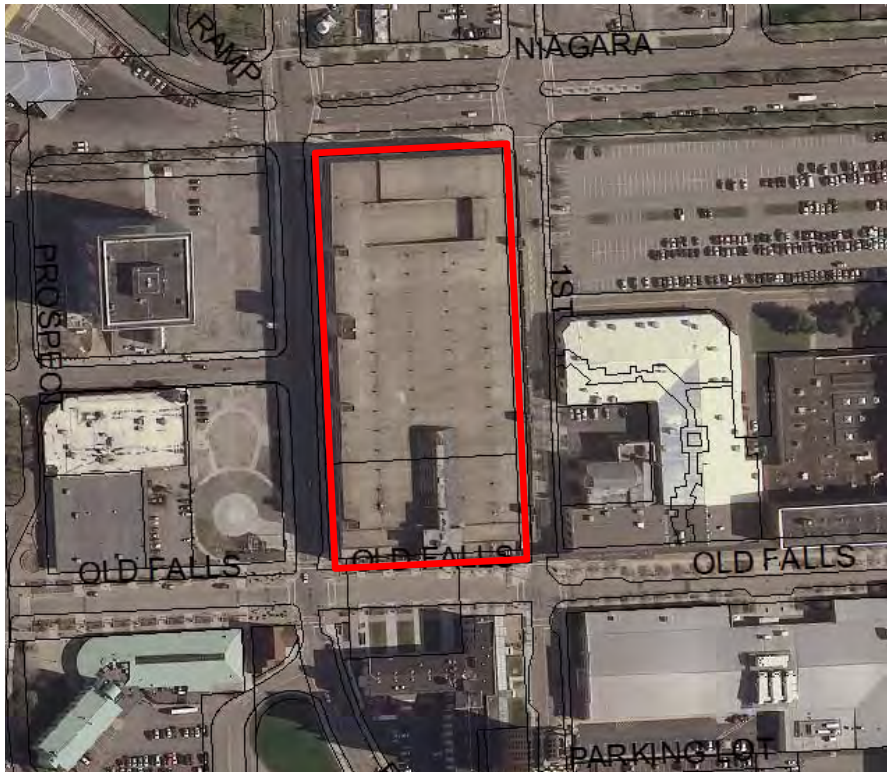
Sponsors and Primary Stakeholders

- Empire State Development Corporation / USA Niagara Development Corporation
- National Grid

- City of Niagara Falls
- Niagara County Community College

The Assignment

- The ULI Panel was asked to consider and evaluate potential development scenarios for the reuse of the remaining 200,000 SF of space within the former Rainbow Centre Mall
  - Market and Economics
  - Design and Planning
  - Implementation



The Panel

Chair

Hon. Glenda Hood

Panelists

Monte Richey

Nancy Cappola

Kathleen Rose

Charles Johnson

Bill Clarke

David Hancock

John Orfield

Staff

Tom Eitler

Caroline Dietrich

Student Intern

Julia Triman

- Nature and Heritage
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Culinary and Artisanal Foods

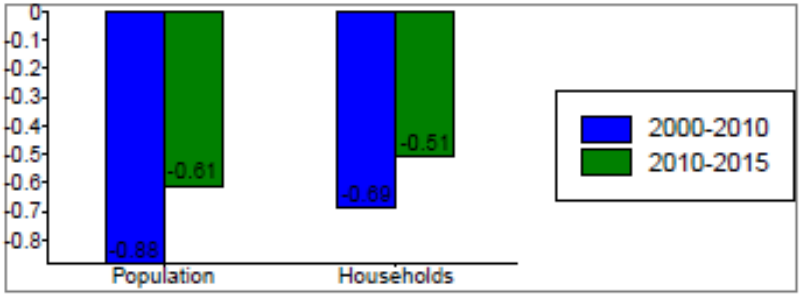
Market & Economic Analysis

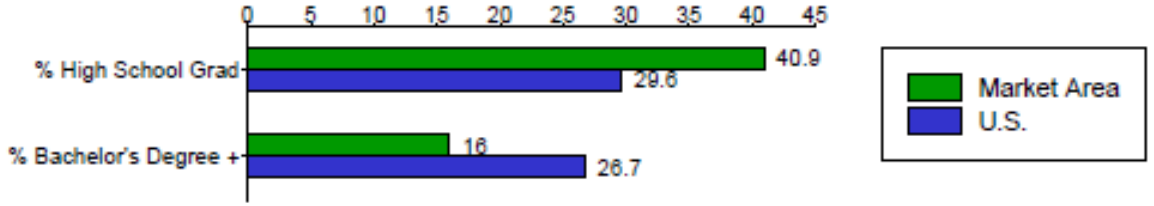
Legacy

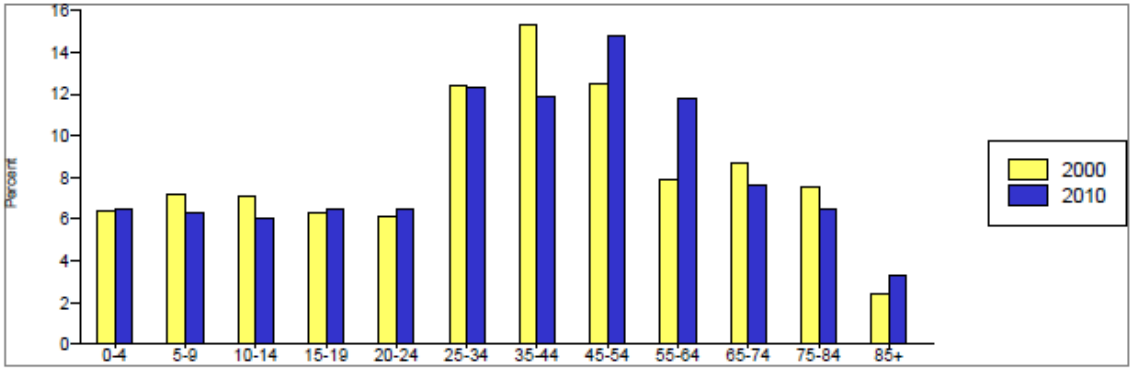
- Power of the River
- Industry
- Urban Renewal
- Reputation
- Well Studied

Market & Economic Analysis

Market Reality – Demographic Snapshot







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Market & Economic Analysis

Key Themes – Place & People

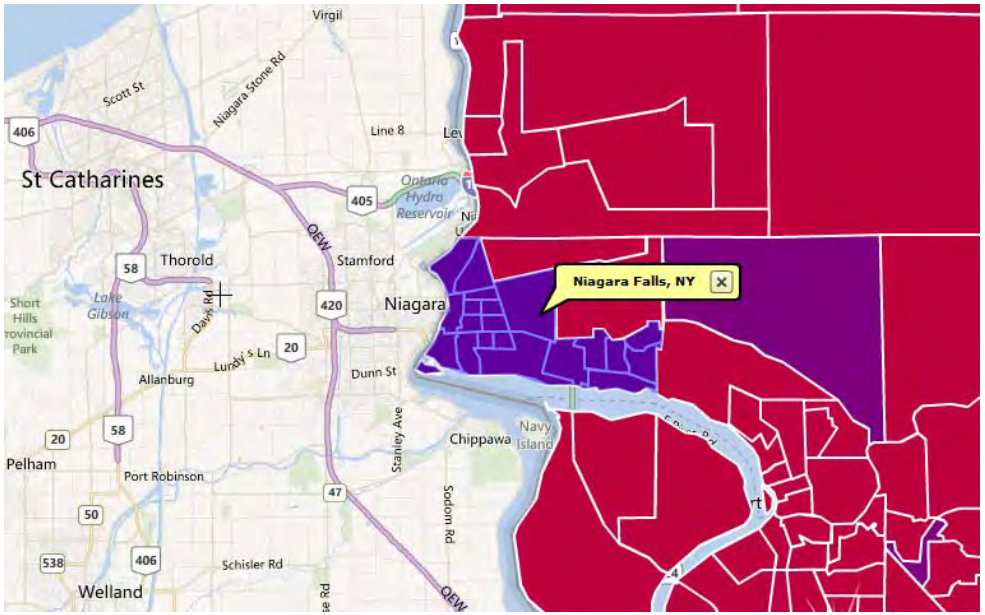
- Natural assets
- Agriculture/food
- History
- Industrial history
- Integrate & reconnect…
  - People
  - Place
  - Assets

- **Eco-Tourism**
- **Agri-Tourism**
- **Heritage Tourism**

Market & Economic Analysis

Regional Job Growth/Decline

- + Educational & health
- + Manufacturing
- + Natural resources, mining
- - Professional & business
- - Leisure & hospitality
- - Financial



Key Drivers & Employers

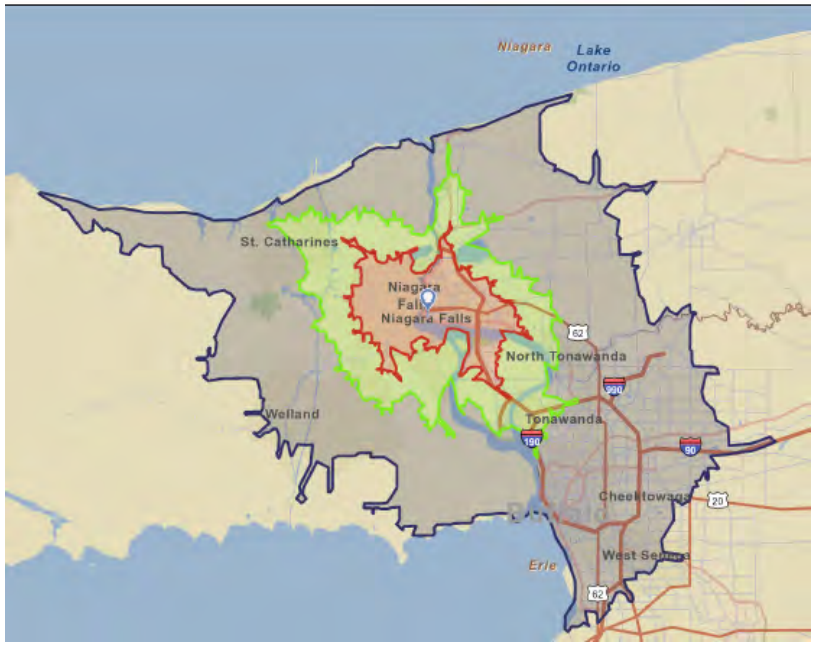
- Tourism
- Food & Beverage
- Medical/Healthcare

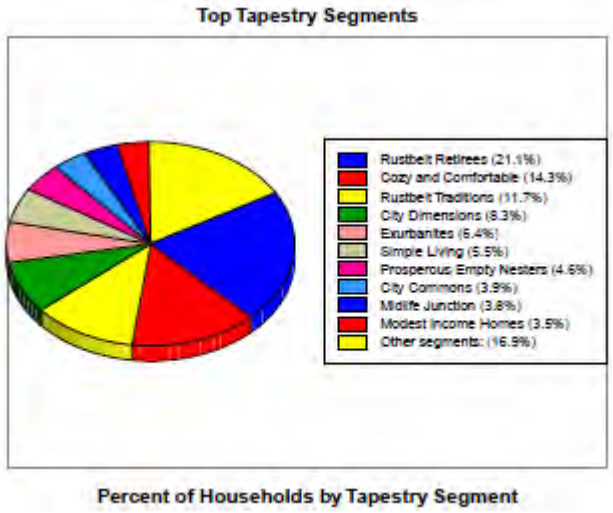
Urban Land Institute
Advisory Services Program

Market & Economic Analysis

The Customers

- Residents
  - Trade areas: 10, 15 & 30 Minute Drive Times
  - 15 Minutes: 2015 estimated population 109,638
  - 30 Minutes: 2015 estimated population 754,809
  - Tapestry Characteristics





Market & Economic Analysis

Sports & Leisure Potential

- Bowling
- Fishing (fresh water)
- Walking for exercise
- Participated in weightlifting/exercise class
- Attended movies
- Attended a music performance
- Went to a bar/night club
- Read/purchased a book
- Purchased a children's toy/game

Market & Economic Analysis

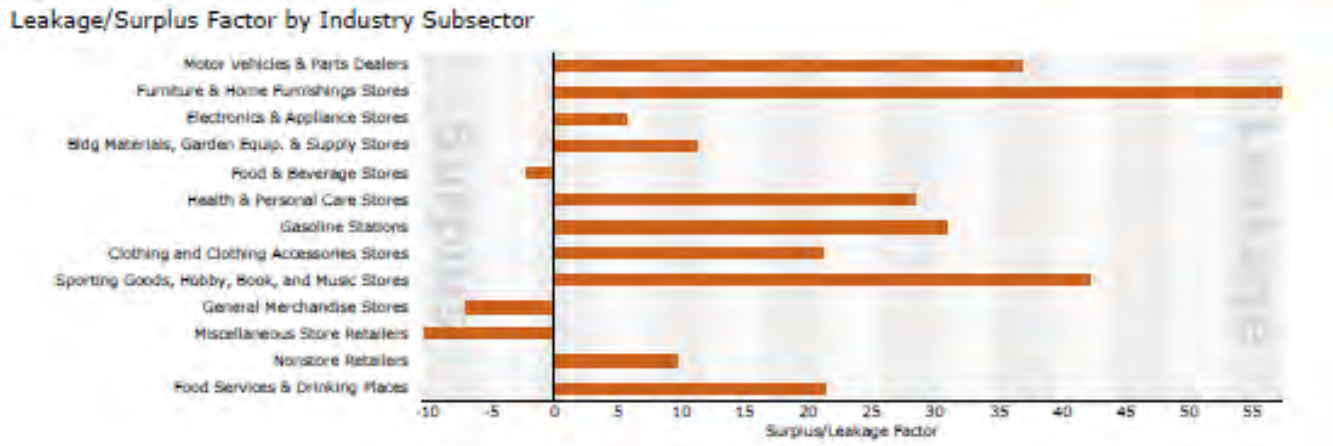
Industry Sectors

- Education
- Health Services
- Natural Resources (parks)
- Scenic & Sightseeing
- Ground Transportation
- Clothing & Accessories

Market & Economic Analysis

Market Opportunity

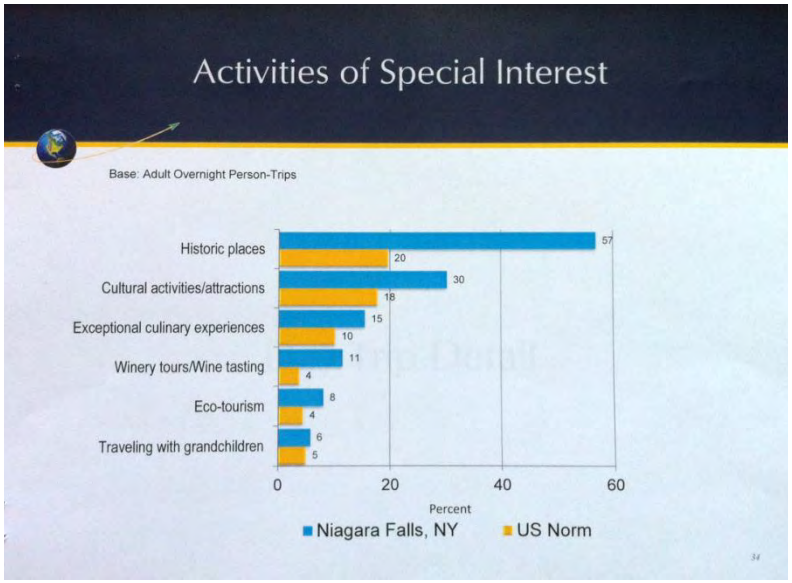
- Retail - up to 200,000 s.f.
- $30 million annual food/beverage
- Specialty Foods & Culinary
- Drinking Places
- Music & Books
- Sporting Goods
- Fitness
- Personal Service (spa/salon)



Market & Economic Analysis

The Customers

- Visitors
  - Day Trips
  - Overnight Stays



Market & Economic Analysis

Recommended Program - 1st Floor – 74,500 +/- s.f.

- Retail & Entertainment
  - Destination, anchor
  - Food as Art
  - Recreation – bowling/theatre
- Place-Making
  - Attraction/public realm
  - Movement of people

Market & Economic Analysis

Recommended Program – 2nd Floor – 74,500 +/- s.f.

- Educational/Cultural
  - Education expansion
  - Education/cultural addition
- Health & Fitness
  - Spa
  - Yoga
  - Exercise

Market & Economic Analysis

Returning to Economic Prosperity

- Come Back to Niagara! – a new experience…
- Attract residents & visitors to downtown…
- Recruit local innovators & entrepreneurs…
- Local workforce become your greeters…
- Visitors become your global ambassadors…

Recommended Development Product

A mix of Educational, Cultural and Entertainment Uses

- Criteria
  - Matches market potential
  - Multi-seasonal
  - Attractive to visitors and residents
- Market Potential “downtown area”- 200,000 square feet
- Already available- Up to 66,000 sf
- Amount of space in Rainbow Centre Mall after aesthetic and functional improvements- 74,500 sf on each level
- Recommend use of lower level for retail and culture, and upper level for educational uses
- If 66,000 square feet already available + 74,500 leaves 59,500 square feet of space to go elsewhere in the market
- A productive lower level Rainbow Centre Mall serves as the anchor for the rest of the retail surrounding the Mall

How Does The Space Layout?

Educational Upstairs and Entertainment Retail Downstairs

Rainbow Centre Mall Program		
First Floor (retail/ entertainment/ culture)	Fresh Food Market/Showcase	42,000
	Small Format Bowling Alley & Restaurant	20,000
	Drafthouse Theatre (4 screens)	12,500
	Subtotal	**74,500**
Second Floor (educational / health)	Educational - expansion	20,000
	Educational - new	34,000
	Exercise/Fitness	12,000
	Spa/Yoga	8,500
	Subtotal	**74,500**
	Total	**149,000**

Recommended Development Product

A mix of Educational, Cultural and Entertainment Uses

- Retail + Entertainment + Culture - What retail offers that and fits with the adjacent Culinary Institute and its small incubator?

"Farmers/Artisan Foods/Organics Marketplace"

- High volume visitor activity
- Draw for the regional US and Canadian resident base
- Alternative market for the local resident population
- Entrepreneur / incubator opportunities

42,000 square feet, which provides sufficient space for community kitchen and communal tables

Recommended Development Product

A mix of Educational, Cultural and Entertainment Uses

- Retail + Entertainment + Culture - What retail offers that and fits with the adjacent Culinary Institute and its small incubator?

Entertainment Retail

- Small format bowling alley and restaurant/lounge
- Four screen Drafthouse Theater
  - Serves visitors while in the market- limited options now on US side
  - Matches local demographics
  - Adds depth of activity for downtown area residents
  - Theater has multiple roles
    1. Daytime- Niagara area themed movies
    2. Night time- first and second run movies
    3. Broadcast opportunities
    4. Venue for folk and storytelling programming

- Bowling alley and restaurant/lounge- 20,000 square feet
- Theater- 12,500 square feet

Recommended Development Product

Expanding Education Jobs and Student Activity

Expansion potential- a good plan must allow for expansion of existing and future users

New, consistent educational opportunities that fit

- Hospitality curriculum
- Film and communications education
- Art education
  - Brings more people to downtown on 24/7 basis
  - Adds critical mass to downtown education cluster
  - Adds youth activity in area
  - Can serve as resource to training Seneca Casino and other hospitality employees
  - Lower retail level provides programming opportunities for all these educational categories
- Upper level educational uses- 54,000 square feet

Recommended Development Product

Support Students, Area Employees and Residents

A combined Teaching Spa, Yoga Studio and Fitness Center

- Has commercial potential
- Serves student and employee population in the building
- Would be booked by area hotels for visitor use
- Palm Springs zoning allows local residents to use hotel exercise rooms- Similar model could be considered for residents that live in a defined area

- Educational Spa and Yoga Studio- 8,500 square feet
- Fitness Center and support areas- 12,000 square feet

Development

History of Greyfield Malls

Development

Greyfield Malls: A Common Urban Nuisance

Development

Good Urban Development

- Historic city grid of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

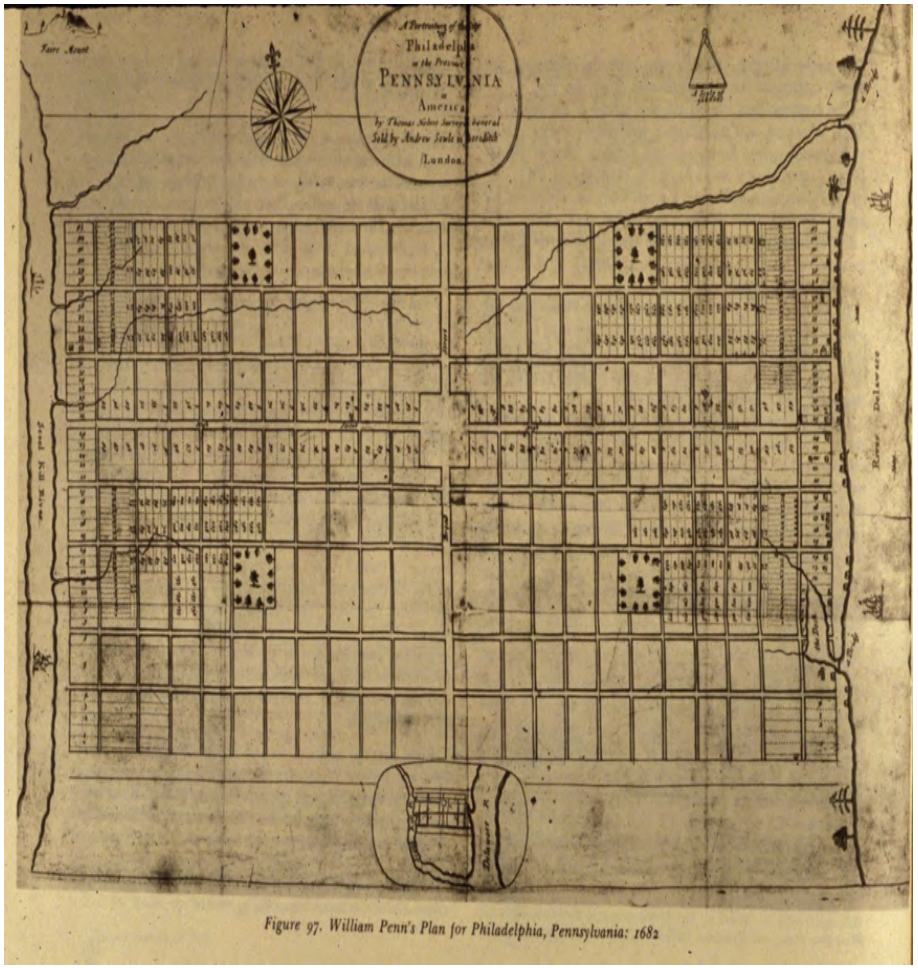


Figure 97. William Penn's Plan for Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: 1682

Development

Welcome to the USA!

Development

Adaptive Re-use – The Opportunity

Development

Adaptive Re-use – The Opportunity

- Break up the Super Block
- Return to a Human Scale
- Soften the Building
- Introduce more Light
- Smaller tenant spaces
- Preserve parking
- Leverage other design elements of the deck
  - Flexible structure
  - Natural lighted atrium

Development

Place-making

- New Street extensions
- Pedestrian elements
- Public spaces/plazas
- Improved view corridors

Development

- Honor existing parking
  - Maximize its potential

Parking Matrix				
Use		Requirements	Units	Total
Bowling	(parked at restaurant ratios)	1 per 75 sf	20,000 sf	267
Movie	(parked at restaurant ratios)	1 per 75 sf	12,800 sf	63
Market	(parked as "neighborhood grocery")	1 per 200 sf	41,400 sf	207
Educational/Cultural		1 per 2 students	600 students	300
	Subtotal of parking generated by new demand			837
Existing Deck Commitments				
	An Approximation from Interviews			700
	Total projected parking requirements			**1537**
Projected available parking after deck modifications				1450 *

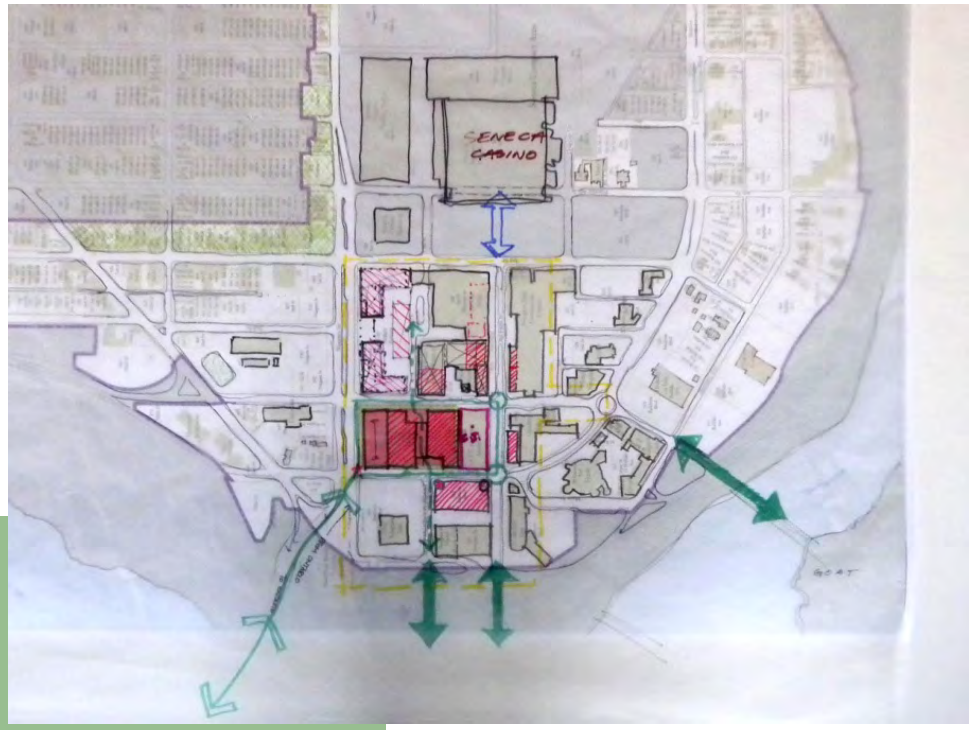
* There is a small delta which exists between the available and projected needs, but the parking assumptions used in the table are conservative, putting serious demand on spaces not otherwise committed through existing agreements. The panel believes that the actual loads will bring the deck into equilibrium and that many visitors will use alternate parking when more easily available (e.g., street parking).

Development

- Urban Design Guidelines
- Wayfinding
- Streetscaping
- Second Level Strategies

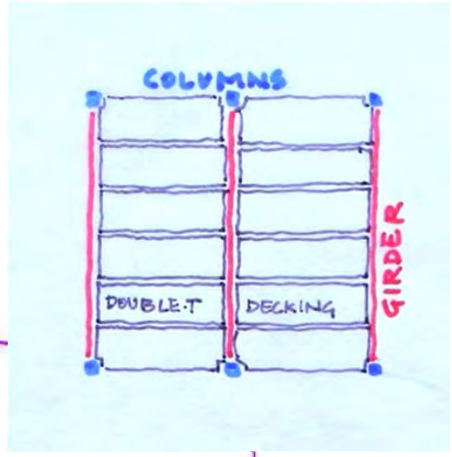
Design

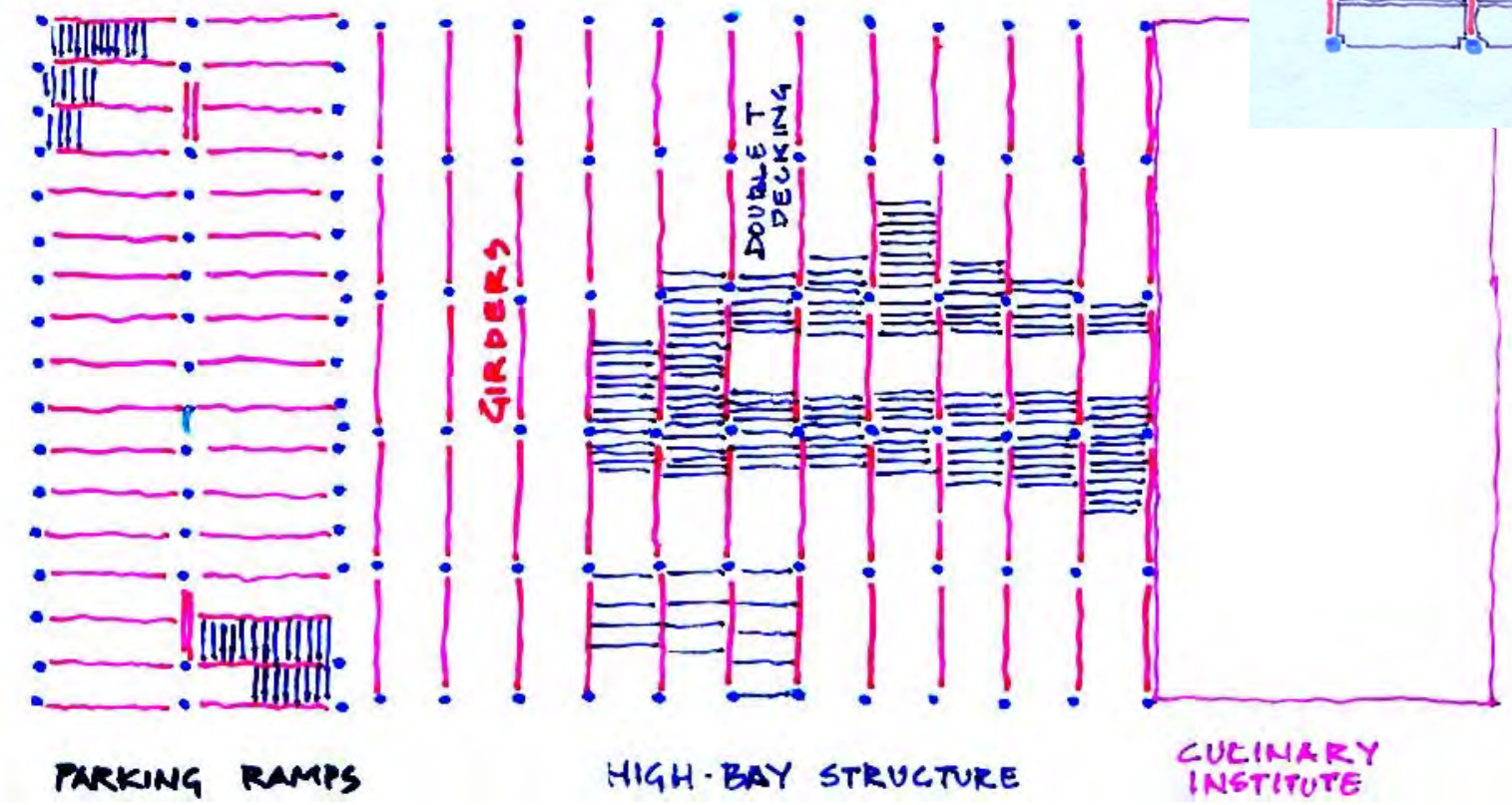
Falls District Diagram



Design

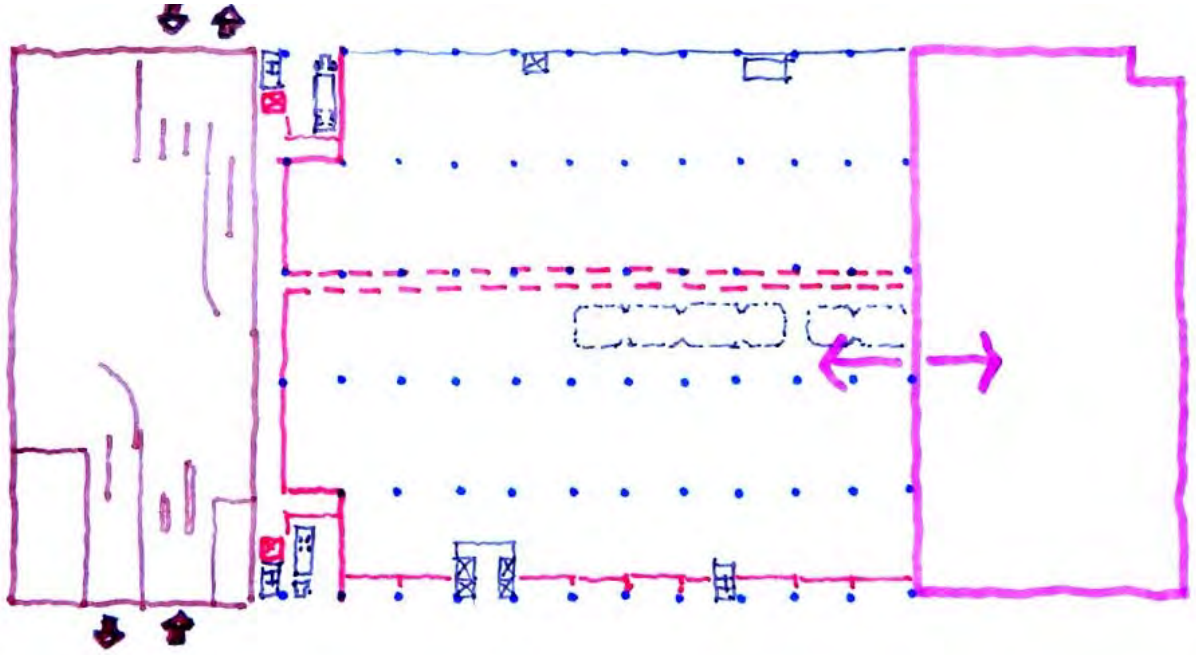
Overall Structure

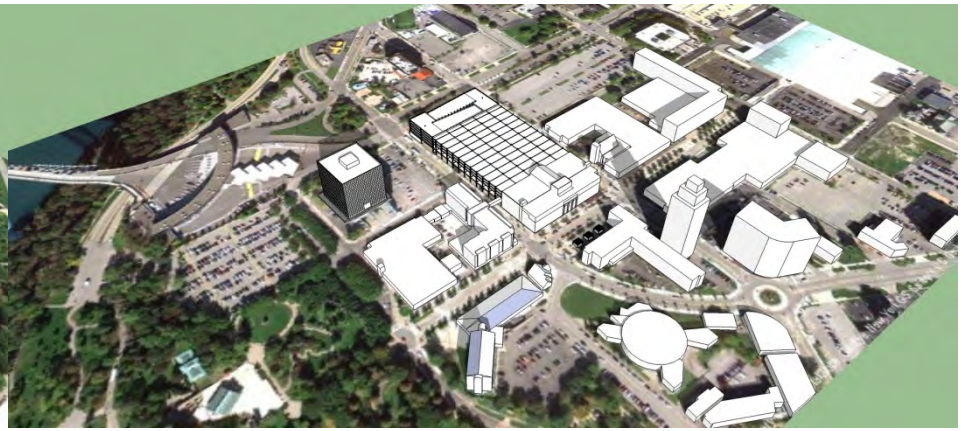




Design

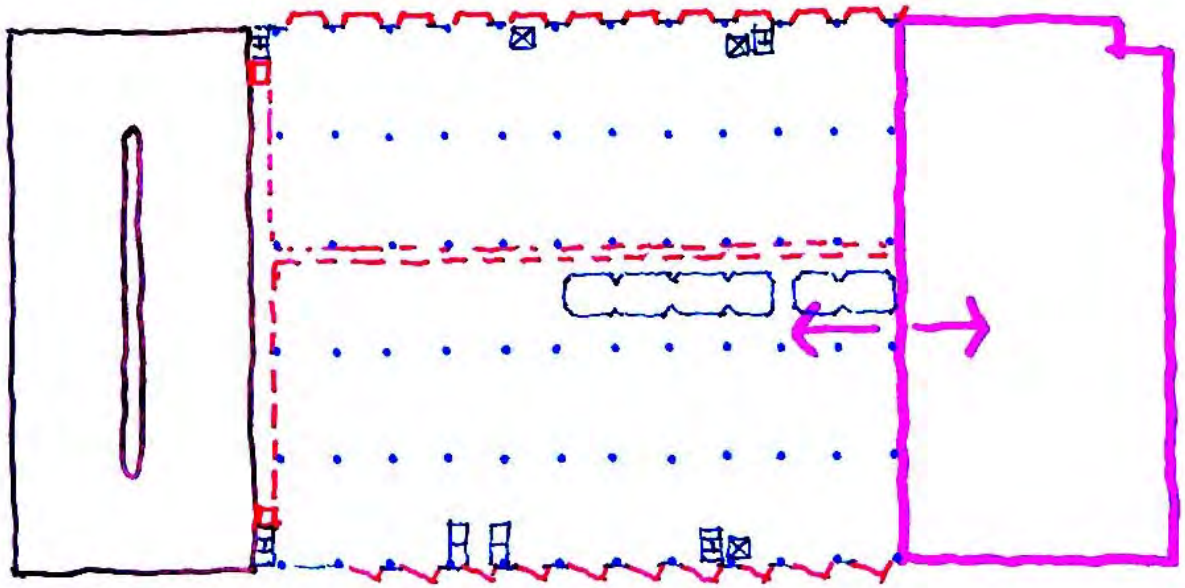
Option One Ground

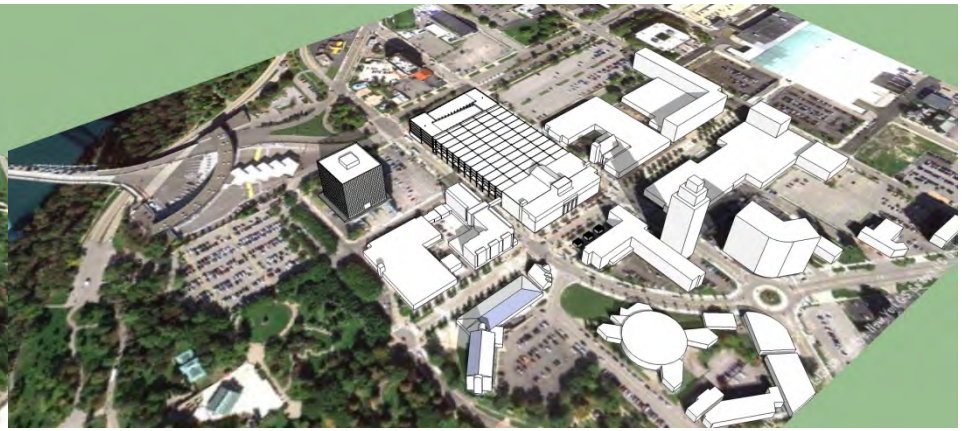




Design

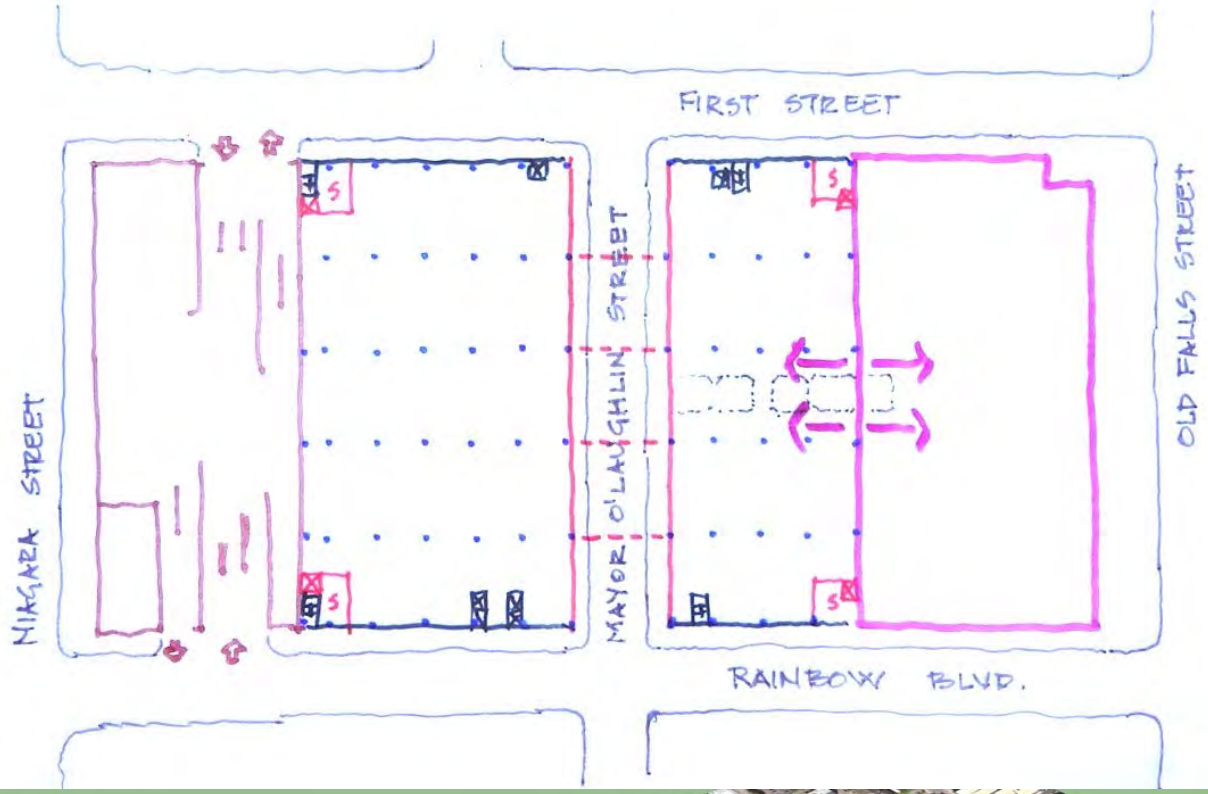
Option One Second





Design

Option Two Ground



Design

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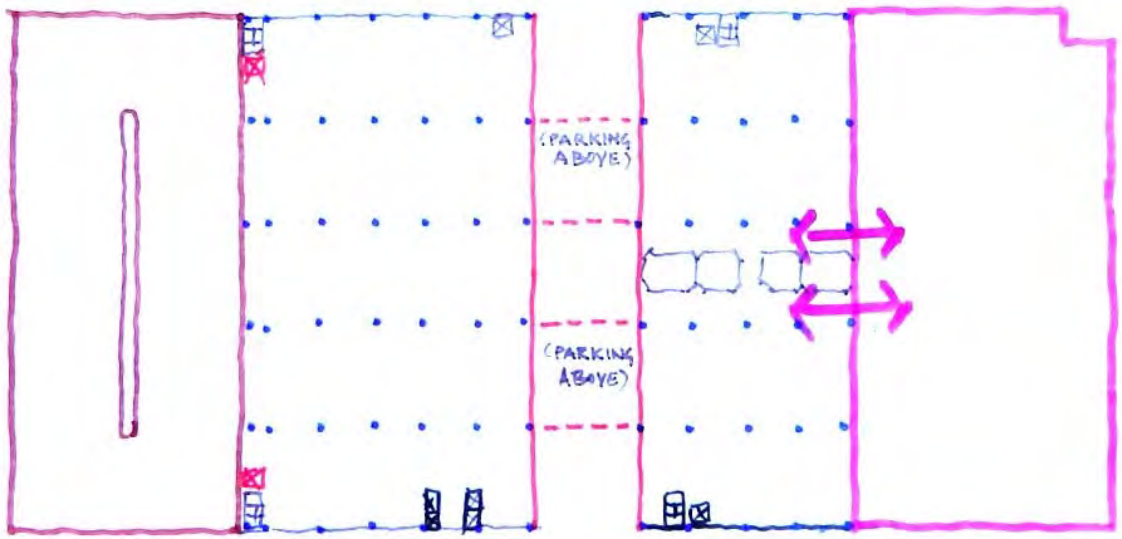
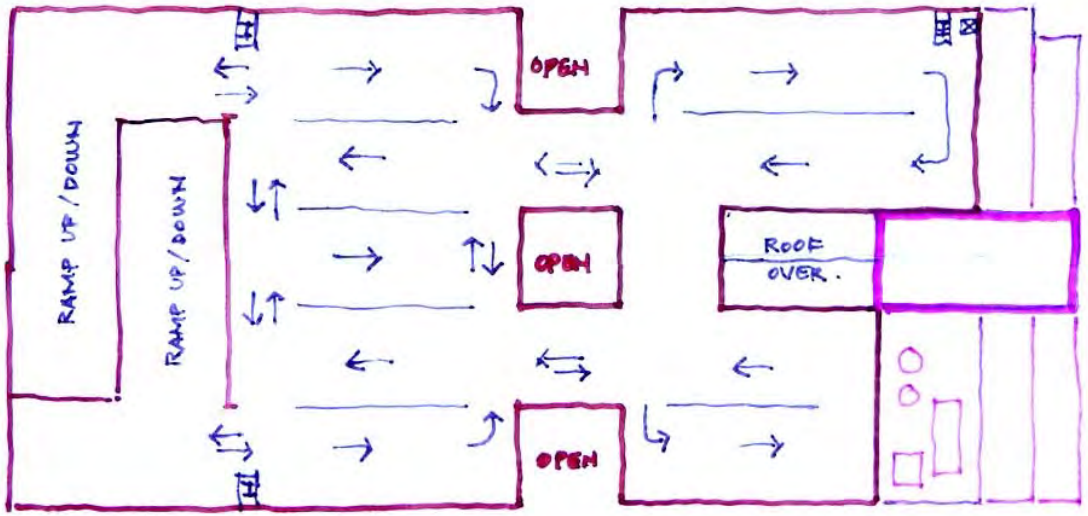


Design

Option Two Roof

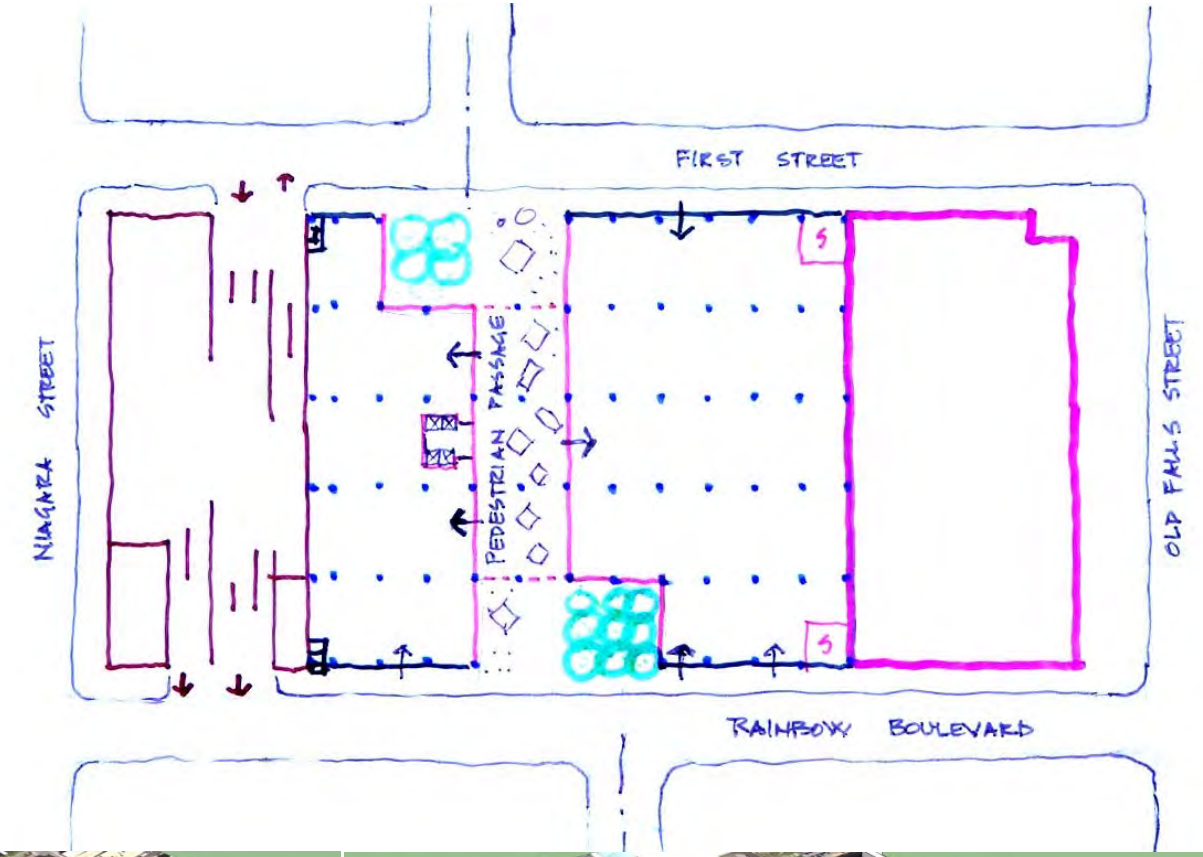


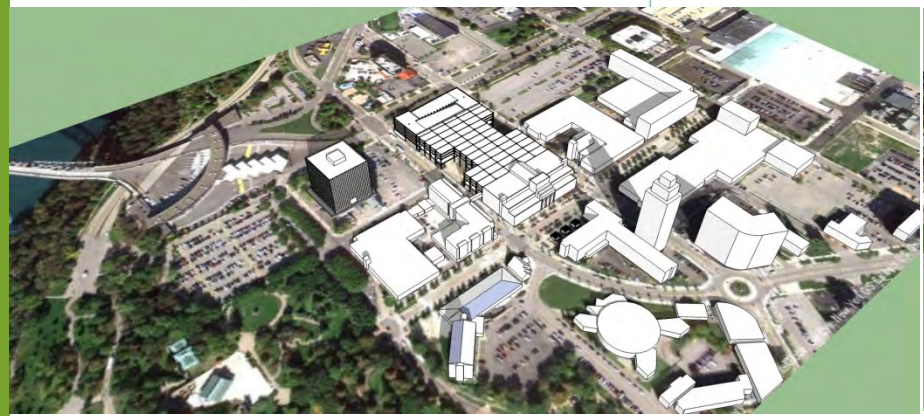
Design

Option Three Circulation Diagram

Design

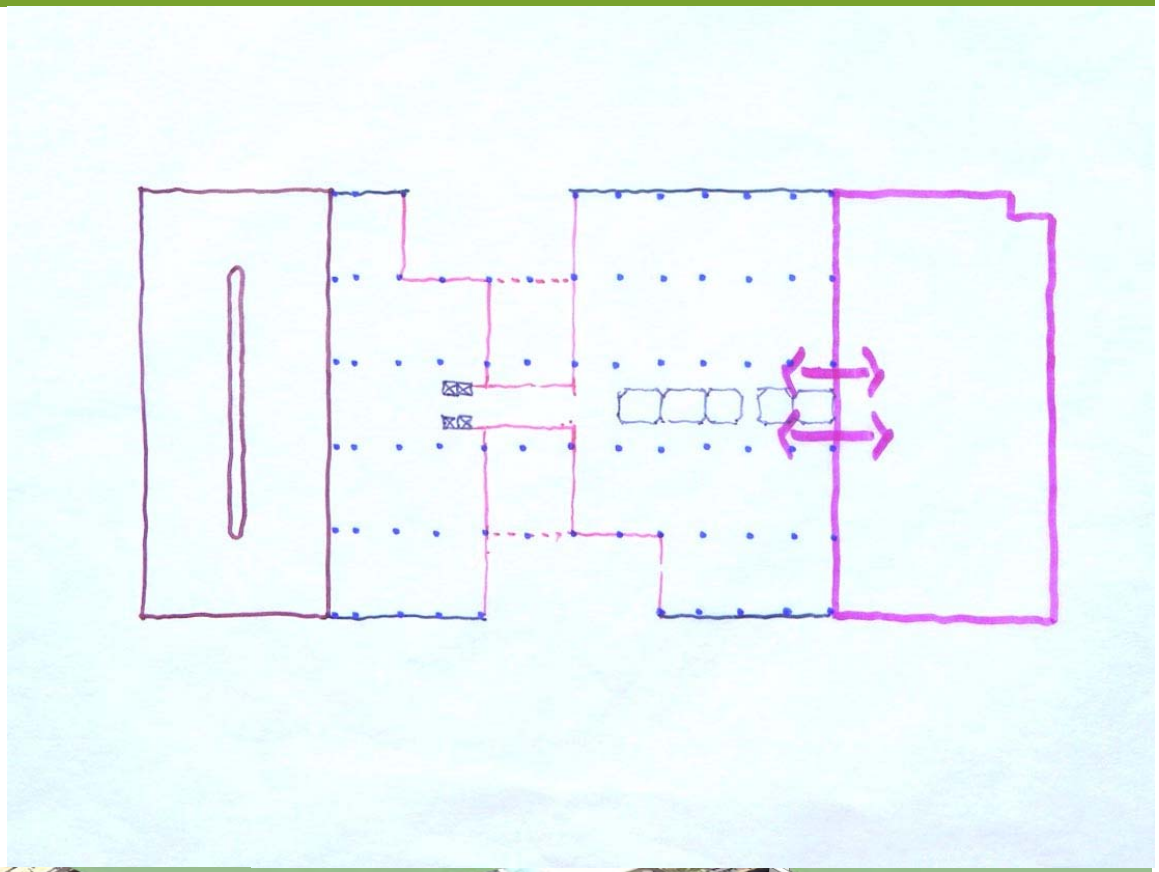
Option Three Ground

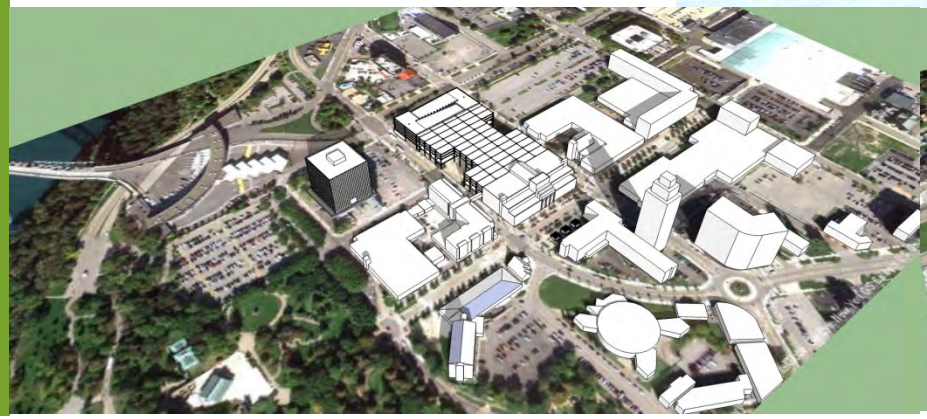




Design

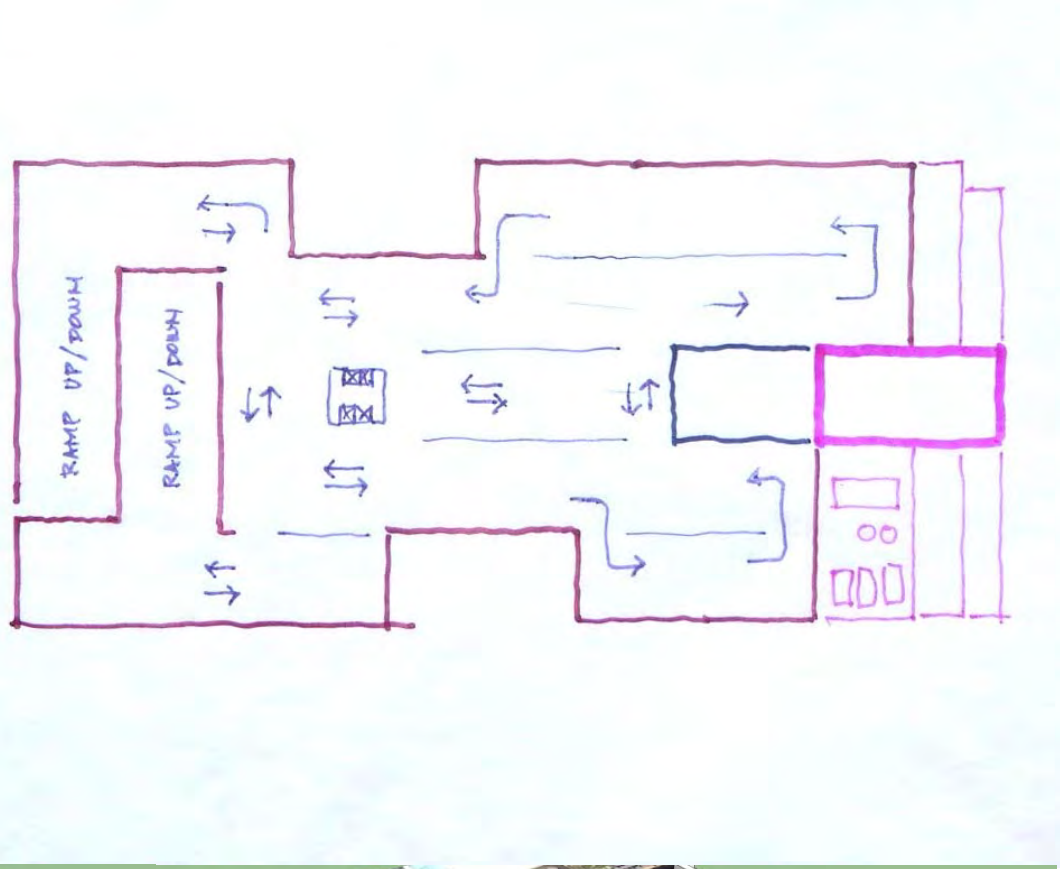
Option Three Second

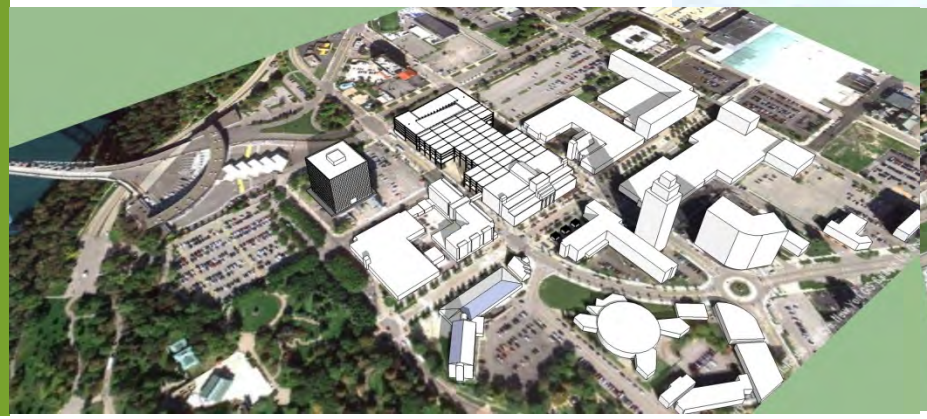




Design

Option Three Roof



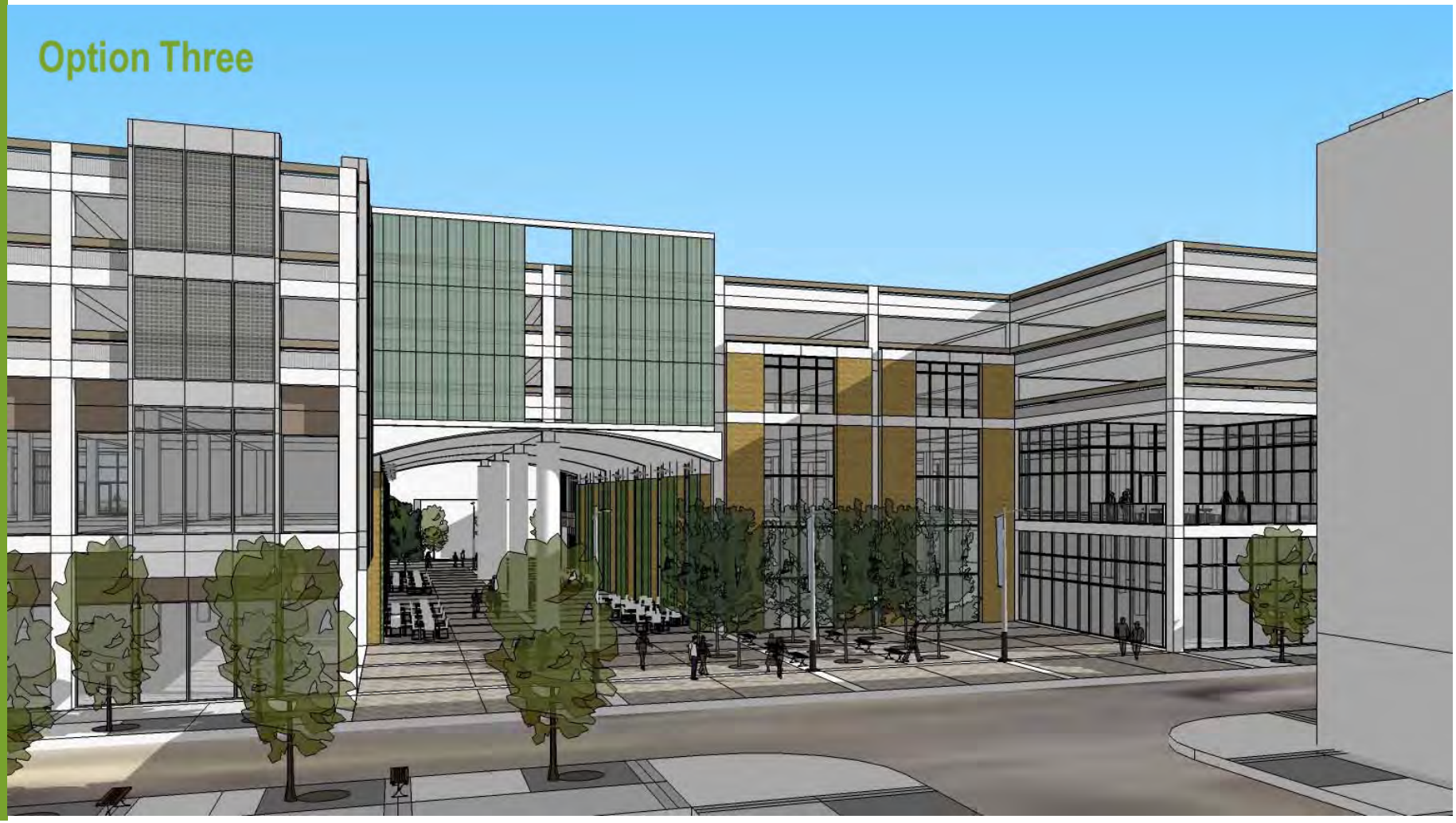


Design

Option Three

Design

Design



Design

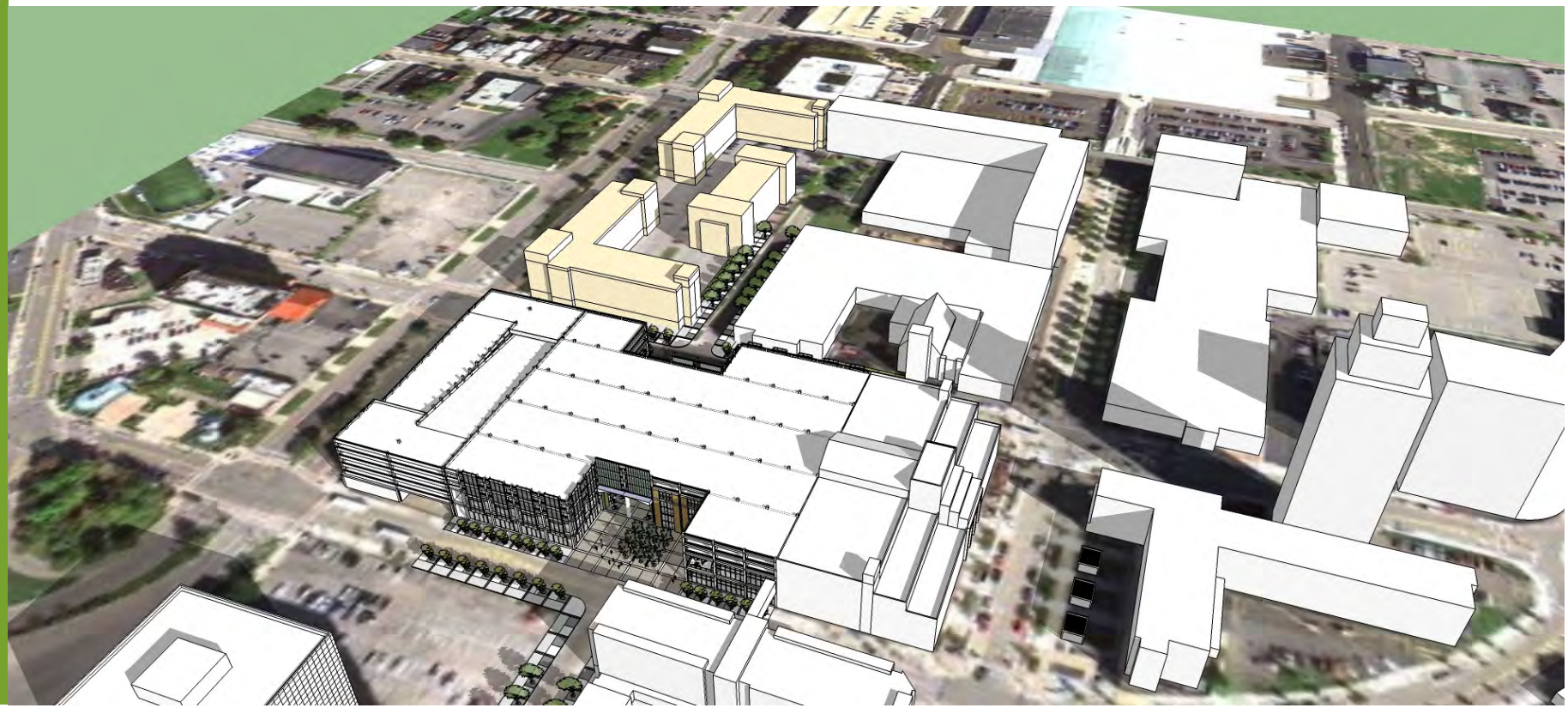
Option Three

Design

Option Three

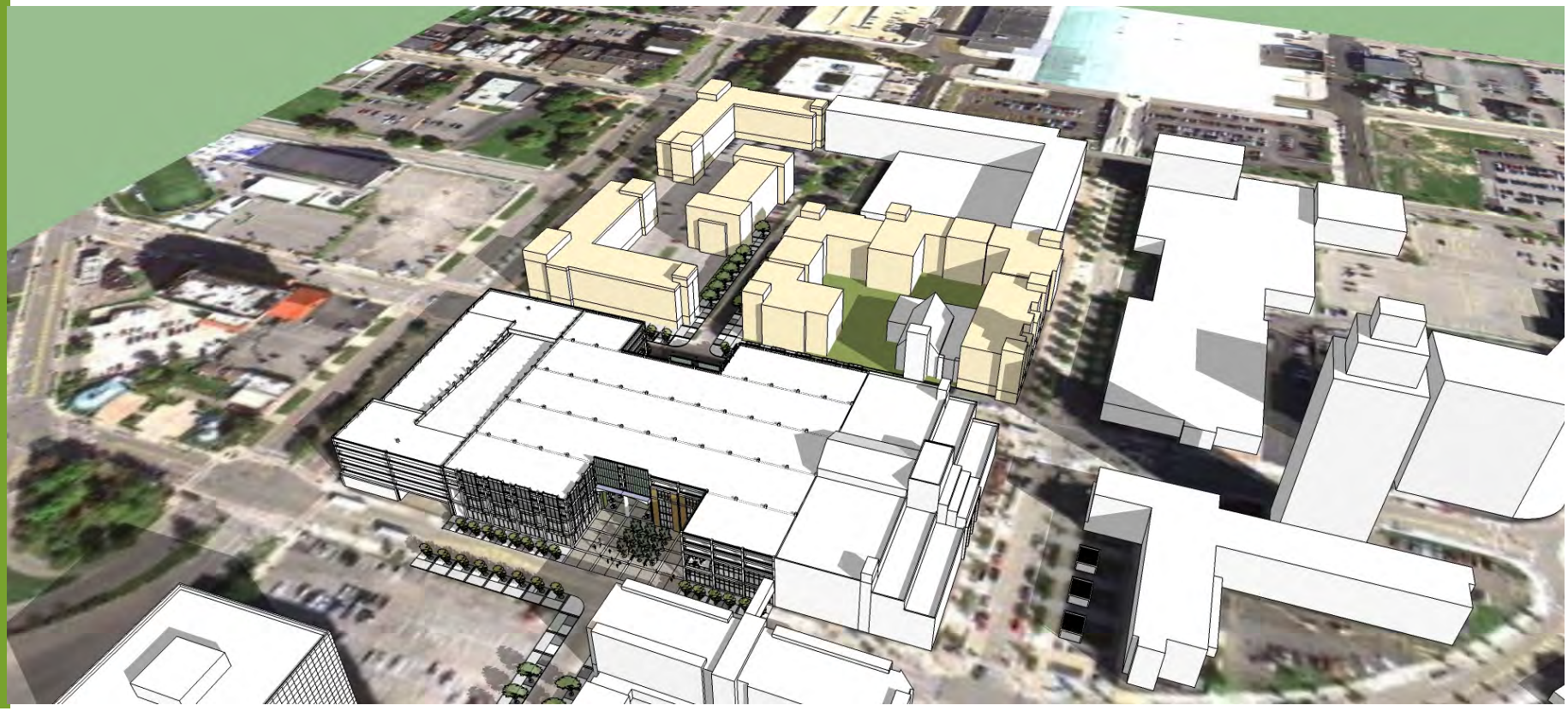
Design

Future Development



Design

Future Development



Design

Future Development

Design

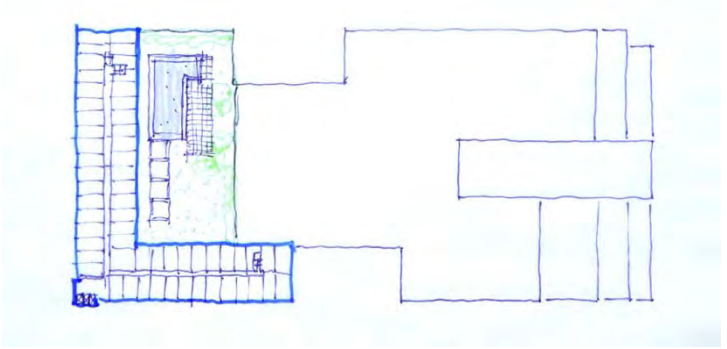
Garage Options

Design

Garage Options

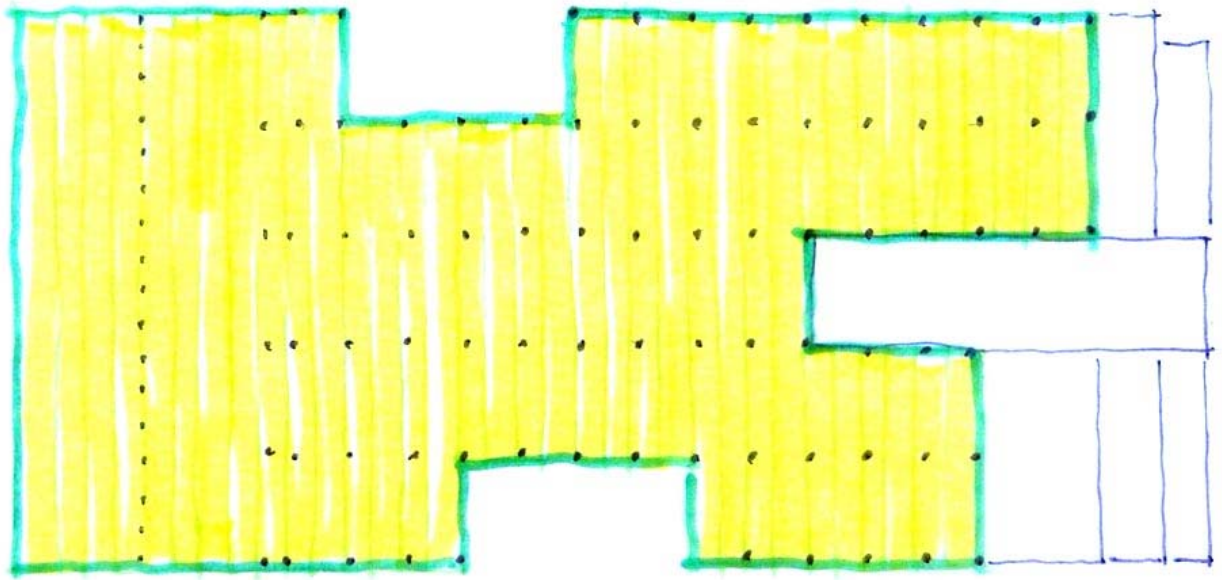
Design

Alternative Hotel



Design

Alternative Solar Panels



Implementation

- Beyond the walls of the building – urban design
- Resident serving commercial uses
  - Serve current and future residents of Old Falls, Rainbow Blvd / Buffalo Ave, Main Street
  - Food, personal services, recreational opportunities
- Mayor O'Laughlin Street
  - Importance of Renovated Mall Façade and Foreground
  - Urban improvements on Mayor O'Laughlin frontages

Implementation

- First Right Turn in the USA
  - Visual importance of corner of Renovated Mall at Niagara Street
  - Possible visitor contact point –
  - Need for façade improvements and signage
- Wayfinding
  - Culinary Institute = New Visitors
  - Renovation of mall will bring attractions and a need for wayfinding
  - Build on initial signage efforts with key locations signed at larger sizes
  - Coordinate efforts with State Park signage
- Consistent Streetscapes
  - Ensure all urban furniture on Old Falls meets standards of recent improvements

Implementation

- Expand Visitors' Knowledge of Regional Attractions/Opportunities

- Encourage longer stays in the Niagara Falls Region
  - Most visitors leave unaware of other opportunities
    - Fort Niagara, Lewiston
    - Lower River watersports, birding
  - Start to change this with action in Old Falls area
    - Small intercept space with regional materials
    - Could have historical exhibits
    - Appropriate spaces in revitalized mall or other underutilized building

Implementation

- The Niagara Falls State Park
  - Connections
    - Important there be a clear connection between Old Falls St and State Park
    - Currently access from Old Falls St is confusing
    - Work with State Park in its planned renovations to improve this situation
  - Wayfinding
    - Opportunities with removal/downgrade of R. Moses Parkway
    - Facilitate connections from town to nature
    - Possibly utilize park wayfinding into town and vice versa

Implementation

- Strategies Regarding Nearby Buildings
- Using the Culinary Institute as a “Trigger Event”
  - Momentum of opening
  - Now focus efforts on underutilized buildings
  - Remediation, renovation, signage
  - A façade improvement program
- Programming
  - 66,000 square feet of remaining demand
- Upper Falls Street
  - Falls Street Station, 10,000 sf
  - Conference Center Frontage, 8,000 sf

Implementation

- Lower Falls Street
  - 310 Rainbow Street, 8,000 sf
  - Retail planned for Old Falls frontage
  - Design Rainbow frontage with active spaces
- Comfort Inn Building, 20,000 sf
  - Mostly empty now
  - Remodel portion fronting street; perhaps restaurant
- Wax Museum Building, 20,000 sf
  - A longer term proposition
  - Street fronting retail

Implementation

Implementation

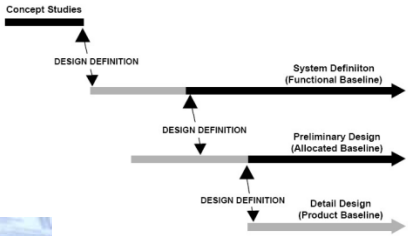
FIRST STEPS:

- Community Meeting to Establish a Collaborative Vision
- Enforcement of Codes and Ordinances
- Request for Qualifications (RFQ)

Implementation

Request for Qualifications Process

- Evidence of Experience
- Successful Public Private Partnership (PPP)
- Experience with Desired Project Elements
- Financial Capacity
- Endure Phasing



Implementation

Ideas for Quick Wins

- Enforcement of Existing Ordinances
- Set Up Meetings to Develop a Community Vision for Redevelopment
- Announce Strategy for Rainbow Centre Mall
- Rebrand Rainbow Mall & Downtown
- Wayfinding & Signage
- Design Consistency – Branding – Color Scheme – Lighting – Benches – Banners – Trash Cans
- Upgrade Existing Street Banners
- Reclad Parking Ramps
- Develop Greeter and Ambassador Volunteer Program for Community
- Façade Improvements Along Falls Street

- Blend the Falls and Park with Good Urban Design Concepts Downtown
- Connect Residents
- Cooperation, Collaboration, Partnerships
- Strong Return on Investment

Add to the City's Seven "Big Moves"

8. Reimagine Former Rainbow Centre Mall Site
9. Rework Old Falls Street Retail
10. Rethink and Fix the Process

HAPPY COOKING