

Studio 2

Benton Harbor, Michigan

Spring 2008

This studio grappled with a classic tension in urban redevelopment: find ways to increase the attractiveness and tax base of a small city, in such a way that benefits will accrue both to newcomers and to those who live there now. For the second time, we worked with graphic design students. For the first time, we married modular construction with precast concrete panels.

BENTON HARBOR IS A SMALL (population 11,000) majority-black Michigan town with a median income below the state average. Its prosperous history is still visible in its wide downtown streets and the remaining urban-scale buildings. A rough local consensus might be that the place is in better shape than ten years ago, but still has a long way to go, especially in terms of generating a tax base.

Benton Harbor is well-located: on Lake Michigan, in the western Michigan “fruit belt,” and convenient to Chicago, other large midwestern cities, and various wineries. Arts-related renovations and enterprises, including the foundry of renowned sculptor Richard Hunt, have made a mark on downtown. A Jack Nicklaus signature golf course is projected for former industrial land north of the railroad tracks that run just north of downtown. Reasonably priced downtown housing might help area employers keep young single and married employees.

The challenges are easy to see. The good buildings downtown are scattered—“like a kid that lost a lot of his teeth.” Downtown shopping is scarce. Some call Benton Harbor a “food desert”; others put a more positive spin on it: “I’m just a grocery store away from being able to live without a car.” As now designed and managed, the wide streets intimidate pedestrians and cater to speeding cars. More downtown green spaces would be welcome, as would some kind of entryway signifying that you’re entering a special place.

The Whirlpool Corporation maintains its headquarters in Benton Harbor and gives substantial support to the nonprofit Cornerstone Alliance, which asked the studio for ideas that will help diversify Benton Harbor without gentrification. Twelve Notre Dame students participated in this studio, directed by Ron Sakal and Sallie Hood, in collaboration with Visiting Associate

TOP
Crosswalk paving Proposal
A. Marier

BOTTOM LEFT
Billboard Advertising Proposal
M. Jourdan

BOTTOM RIGHT
Directional Signage
A. Marier, L. Rose

Professional Specialist Paula Bodnar and her graphic design students in the Department of Art, Art History, and Design.

Graphic design students focused on the Arts District, recognizing it as “a unique area and an opportunity to be involved in the revitalization of an amazing community.” They proposed a new and more unified way for it to present itself. This new identity would involve a color palette (drawn from existing buildings); the Trade Gothic typeface; a new name, “The Quarter”; and a capital “Q” as a visible insignia that can also serve as nickname, easily recognized symbol, and frame in which to feature examples of artists' work. Using these components, they went on to propose designs for local-brew beer bottles, banners, the destination hotel sign, business papers, directional maps, brochures, street banners, murals, street signage, and manhole covers (see p. 47).

Architecture students proposed using the Quarter as a catalyst to spark changes in the rest of downtown. They proposed a series of public green spaces downtown connected by pedestrian-dominated and tree-lined streets and boulevards, including Main and Pipestone. Streets would be redesigned in four different ways based on their curb-to-curb width. Two of these bicycle-intensive boulevards would connect a new farmers market on the north edge of downtown with neighborhoods immediately to its south.



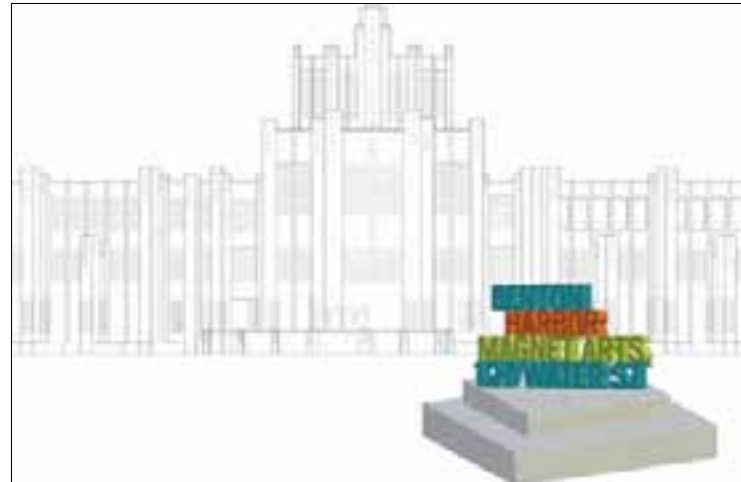
Many of the street changes would use the extra right-of-way for bicycles, pedestrians, and greenery, while continuing ample accommodation for car traffic (see p. 52).

Within this context and emphasizing modular building systems, students designed a variety of building types with both wood and steel frames, grouped into four residential projects and three large public projects.





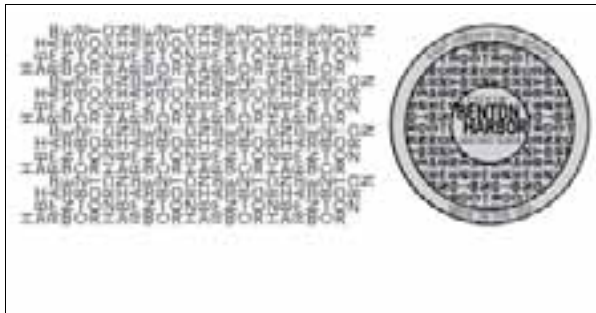
Crosswalk paving Proposal
A. Marier



Signage
K. Napelton



The Quarter Logo
A. Marier



Manhole Cover
A. Wechter



Map Proposal
L. Rose



Downtown Benton Harbor Proposal
Studio



Downtown Benton Harbor Aerial Photo
Google Maps



Proposal for Future Development
Studio



Main Street Existing Condition
L. Bresnahan



Main Street Mixed-Use
L. Bresnahan



Proposal for Future Development
Studio



Street Section Proposals, A, B, C, D
Studio

Main Street Mixed Use

At Main and Water streets, students proposed three buildings with mixed uses that would fill empty lots and create a new streetscape along Main, while preserving the view of the landmark mural at the corner. The area to the northwest would be raised six feet, bringing it to the level of Main Street, so that parking for these buildings can be provided underground with less excavation. (Residential parking outside of the buildings will encourage street life.) Vendors at the back of this area could be part of the new farmers market. Apartments in the buildings would range from very small to two bedrooms. Broader sidewalks would be introduced, again taking advantage of the wide street, and the largest building would have an upper-level open-air interior courtyard (see pp. 50–51).

Third Street Mixed-Use Development

This proposed development would include 20 apartments in two L-shaped buildings, two showroom-sized commercial spaces, and 14 townhouses along Main Street—creating a solid urban anchor at Third and Main. The courtyard covers below-grade parking shared by the buildings, and would open out into the city park to the east (see p. 44).



Existing Condition
C. DeChiaro



Mixed-Use Building
C. DeChiaro



3rd Street Residential Courtyard
M. Grisales, R. Herr, & S. Starshak



3rd Street Existing Condition
M. Grisales, R. Herr, & S. Starshak



3rd Street Residential Courtyard
M. Grisales, R. Herr, & S. Starshak



3rd Street Residential
and Commercial Building
M. Grisales,
R. Herr, & S. Starshak



Summit Townhouses
T. Bertke, K. Dumkrieger, & K. O'Brien



Harbor Shores Townhouses
L. Casas, G. Hansen, R. Sigman

Summit Street Townhouses

On the block between Fourth, Wall, Summit, and Jefferson, students proposed townhouses with two, three, and four bedrooms, each with an extra room that could serve as a garage or an additional bedroom as needed. They would adapt to the site's varying natural topography (see p. 53).

The Townhouses at Harbor Shores

These upscale Shingle Style three-bedroom townhouses (ranging in size from 3,200 to 6,400 square feet) would be marketed mainly as second homes and entertainment venues for Chicagoans. They would have two front faces, one facing the street and the other facing the new golf course (see p. 46).



Recreation Center Existing Condition
E. Murphy, R. Sigman



Benton Harbor Recreation Building
E. Murphy, R. Sigman

YWCA of Berrien County and Community Recreation Center

This project, on the block between Colfax, Market, Boughton, and 8th, would accommodate the YWCA, which is moving its administration building from St. Joseph. Since the Y locates its daycare in neighborhoods, the first phase of building would be simply an office core for its administrative functions. Commercial space could be added on each side of the office core to occupy and define the corners of the block. A potential second phase would be a small convention center built alongside. A third phase would build over the office space, adding up to ten units of transitional housing for women in recovery and a similar number of market-rate units, with access to a roof garden. A city-owned recreation center is already planned for next door (see p. 52).



Arts Magnet High School
M. Grisales

Benton Harbor Arts Magnet High School

This school would serve students of both performing and figurative arts, as well as provide continuing education for the wider community—partial compensation for the loss of arts instruction in the local high school. It would also fit the guidelines for Governor Granholm's proposed 21st Century Schools Fund for small schools should that become law. The building would be adjacent to the YWCA complex and a new park. It would have an octagonal entry at the corner of 8th and Boughton. Its first floor would be built up 4-5 feet, allowing windows and light wells into the lower level. All classrooms would have outside light. Students proposed four options for the school's appearance: Art Deco, Prairie Style, a modified 19th-century-factory style, and a more contemporary combination of stone, brick, and aluminum containing the insignia of various arts (see pp. 45–46).



Arts Magnet High School
R. Herr



Arts Magnet High School
L. Casas



Arts Magnet High School
L. Bresnahan



Main Street Hotel

At the foot of the West Main Street bridge to St. Joseph, students proposed a double-wing 13-story hotel with a landmark central circular tower. The hotel's southern wing would have banquet halls on the first floor, overlooking the river. The first two floors would be site-built, the upper floors would be of modular construction. The hotel would occupy the northwest corner of the roughly triangular 12-acre block bounded by West Main, River, and Riverview streets. Hotel floors five and up would offer a view of the golf course; floors seven and up would have a view of Lake Michigan. On the rest of the block, commercial uses would cluster at and near the corner of West Main and Riverview. Offices with apartments above would line Riverview running south to the southern point of the block (at Riverview and River), where town houses with green space and 500 parking spaces below ground would be constructed. Pedestrian pathways would invite people to stroll through the block. At its center would be a destination indoor water park (see pp. 48–49).

Main Street Hotel

T. Bertke, K. Dumkrieger, G. Hansen, & K. O'Brien



Harbor Hotel Block Proposal
T. Bertke, K. Dumkrieger, G. Hansen, & K. O'Brien

Benton Harbor's reputation and reality won't turn around overnight, but it was a thriving small urban center 50 years ago and it can become one again over a similar span of time, if a well-thought-out plan is adopted and held to. The key to any such plan is not to squeeze out poor people, but to provide pleasant and beautiful public facilities that are available to all, whether they travel by car, bus, bicycle, or foot.

Benton Harbor Studio Participants

Clients

Tony McGhee

Vice President Physical Development and Business Attraction, Cornerstone Alliance, Benton Harbor

Citizens of Benton Harbor

4th-year Architecture Students, School of Architecture

Tricia Bertke

Laura Bresnahan

Laura Casas

Christopher DeChiaro

Krista Dumkrieger

Melissa Grisales

Gregory Hansen

Ronald Herr

Eileen Murphy

Kaitlin O'Brien

Rebecca Sigman

Sarah Starshak

4th-year Graphic Design Students, Department of Art, Art History, and Design

Mary-Catherine Flaherty

Maria Jourdan

Audrey Marier

Kate Napleton

Laura Rose

Georgia Steenberge

Austin Wechter

Notre Dame Faculty

Paula Bodnar

Visiting Associate Professional Specialist, Department of Art, Art History, and Design

Sallie Hood

Director of Design, CBC Associate Professor, School of Architecture;

Ron Sakal

Executive Director, CBC; Professional Specialist, School of Architecture

Professional Consultants and Studio Reviewers

Wes Dees

Midwest Regional Sales Manager, High Concrete Group LLC

Kevin Flaherty

Vice President of Sales and Marketing, Genesis Homes, A Division of Champion Enterprises, Inc.

Bradford C. Grant, AIA, NOMA

Associate Dean and Director, School of Architecture and Design, Howard University

Kenton McAndrew, P.E.

Group Director, Construction Services, Abonmarche Engineers, Architects, Planners, Surveyors

Members of the Champion Enterprises team at the Topeka, Indiana, plant

Members of the School of Architecture Faculty, University of Notre Dame

Dear Ron and Sallie,

On behalf of Cornerstone Alliance, I wanted to take the time to thank you for all the assistance the University of Notre Dame's Center for Building Communities has provided to our organization's efforts in Benton Harbor, Michigan. ¶ As you know, Cornerstone Alliance is a nonprofit community and economic development organization that has been working in northern Berrien County for 20 years with a special emphasis on the Benton Harbor community. The scope of services offered by the organization range from entrepreneurial and micro-lending activities, a women's business center, as well as the development of industrial parks, a HOPE VI public housing initiative, mixed-use buildings, and homeownership via both market rate and quality affordable single family homes. These activities have resulted in Cornerstone Alliance in conjunction with our many partners investing over \$20 million in the community over the last five years. The quality and impact of these investments will increase as a result of the work performed by the University's Center for Building Communities. ¶ The work performed by the students was beyond anything that could have been expected. The passion, professionalism, and technical skill with which they approached the project was exceptional. The comments we received from community leaders and residents attending the presentation of the project were extremely positive and many people were excited by what they saw. ¶ The work undertaken by the Center has already resulted in several potential projects being evaluated by Cornerstone Alliance. Notre Dame's Center for Building Communities and the support it has received from Champion Homes have been an invaluable resource to us and our work in the community. Again, I would like to thank you for all of the resources and support you have provided.

Sincerely,

TONY MCGHEE
Vice President,
Physical Development and Business Attraction

Student Reflections

This semester 12 of us had the chance to be a part of the CBC studio with Ron Sakal and Sallie Hood as professors. It was a completely unique experience, different from any other class we have taken so far in Notre Dame's School of Architecture. In the beginning of the semester we were immersed in the city of Benton Harbor. Visiting the city on numerous occasions enabled us to learn not only the facts and statistics, but also the culture and atmosphere of the downtown area. Working with the Cornerstone Alliance, a nonprofit development organization, made this project really come to life for us.

One of the most difficult things about this semester was learning about and utilizing both steel and wood modular construction in our designs. At first it seemed completely alien to us. At first, before designing anything many of us would first ask Ron or Sallie, "Can I even do this with modular housing?" After realizing the answer was almost always "Yes," we began to recognize the design possibilities with modular construction were practically limitless.

The working environment Ron Sakal and Sallie Hood promoted felt more like an architecture firm than a classroom. We would confer regularly, and had to learn to work together harmoniously in order to put together one coherent project. As Ron often said, he would just be a "fly on the wall" during these meetings. Even so, we would need his advice on most issues. At the end of the semester, it was a great feeling to know that our professors were every bit as committed to the work being done as we were.

The most important lesson we all learned from the CBC studio is the importance of creating a livable environment. There is no cookie-cutter solution for building and rebuilding communities. Each city and town has its own specific needs to be addressed in order for growth. We would recommend this studio to any student, because it really opened our eyes to issues we had not previously considered.

3rd Street



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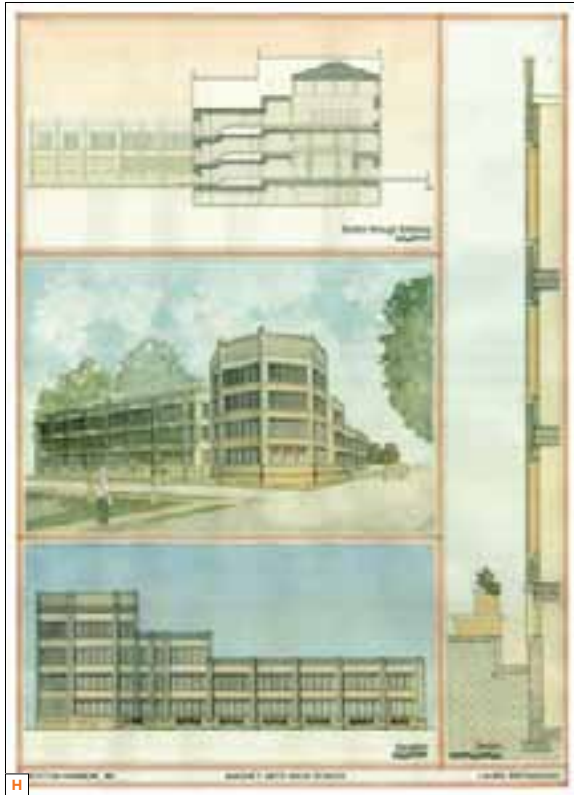
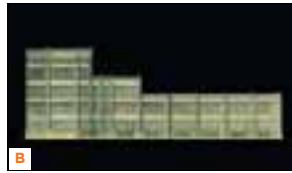
K



L

A 3rd Street Residential Courtyard, M. Grisales, R. Herr, S. Starshak; B 3rd Street Townhouses, S. Starshak; C 3rd Street Development Location, Studio; D 3rd Street Townhouses, S. Starshak; E 3rd Street Residential and Commercial Building, M. Grisales, R. Herr, S. Starshak; F 3rd Street Development Location, M. Grisales, R. Herr, S. Starshak; G 3rd Street Existing Condition, M. Grisales, R. Herr, S. Starshak; H 3rd Street Mixed-Use, M. Grisales, R. Herr, S. Starshak; I 3rd Street Existing Condition, Unknown; J-K 3rd Street Townhouses, S. Starshak; L 3rd Street Apartments, M. Grisales, R. Herr

Arts Magnet High School



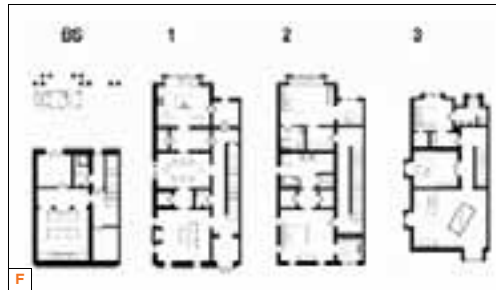
A Arts Magnet High School, L. Casas; **B** Arts Magnet High School, L. Bresnahan; **C** Arts Magnet High School, L. Casas; **D** Arts Magnet High School, L. Bresnahan; **E** Arts Magnet High School, R. Herr; **F** Arts Magnet High School Elevation, M. Grisales; **G** Arts Magnet High School Elevation, R. Herr; **H** Arts Magnet High School Plan, L. Bresnahan; **I-L** Arts Magnet High School Plan, L. Bresnahan, L. Casas, M. Grisales, R. Herr

Arts Magnet High School



M-N Arts Magnet High School, L. Casas; **O** Arts Magnet High School, M. Grisales; **P** Arts Magnet High School Elevation Detail, L. Casas

Harbor Shores Golf Course Houses



A Harbor Shores Golf Course Houses, L. Casas, G. Hansen, R. Sigman; **B** Golf Course Townhouses, L. Casas, G. Hansen, R. Sigman; **C-E** Harbor Shores Golf Course Houses, L. Casas, G. Hansen, R. Sigman; **G** Harbor Shores Location, L. Casas, G. Hansen, R. Sigman

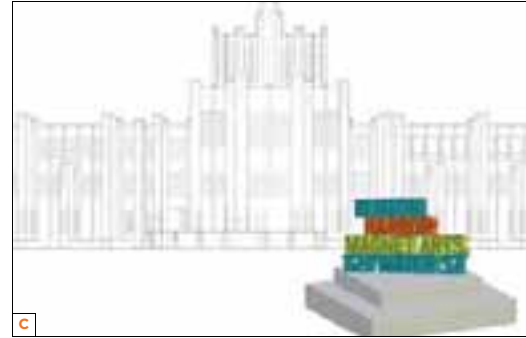
Graphics



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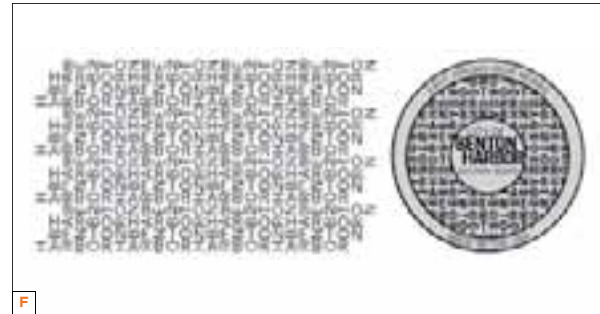
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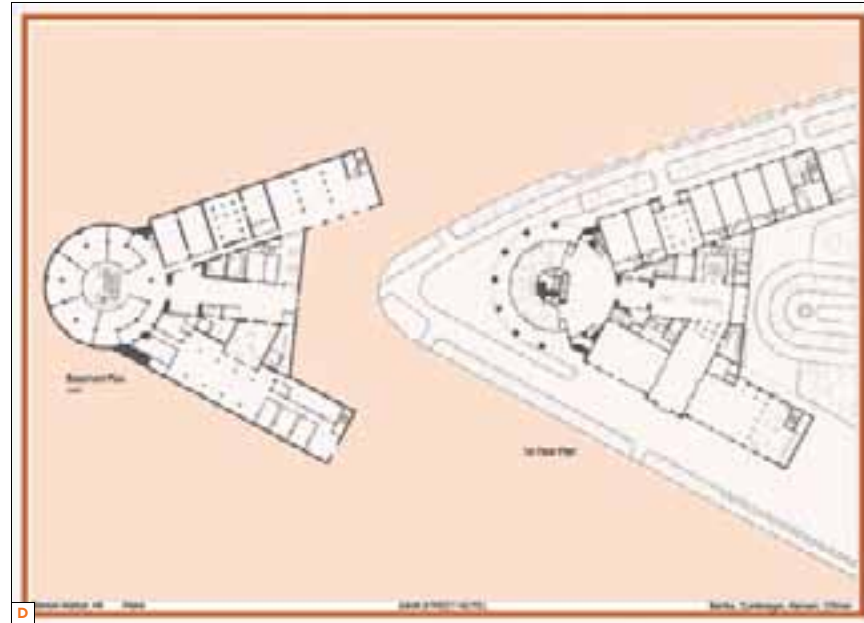


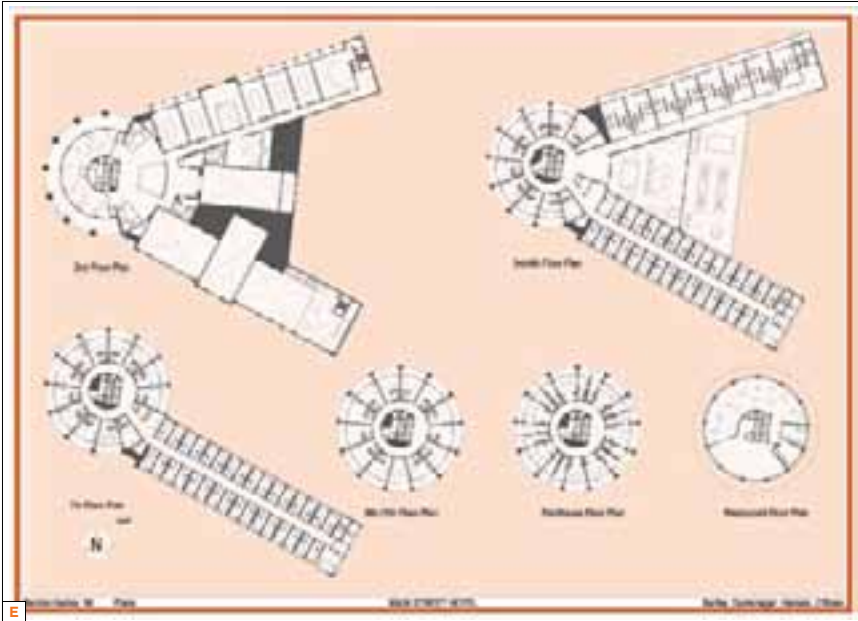
N

A The Quarter Logo, A. Marier; B Crosswalk Paving Proposal, A. Marier; C Signage, K. Napelton; D Quarter Welcome Sign, A. Marier, L. Rose; E Billboard Advertising Proposal, M. Jourdan; F Manhole Cover, A. Wechter; G-H Map Proposal, L. Rose; I Billboard Advertising Proposal, M. Jourdan; J-K Quarter Welcome Sign, A. Marier, L. Rose; L-M Directional Sign, A. Marier, L. Rose; N Crosswalk Paving Proposal, A. Marier

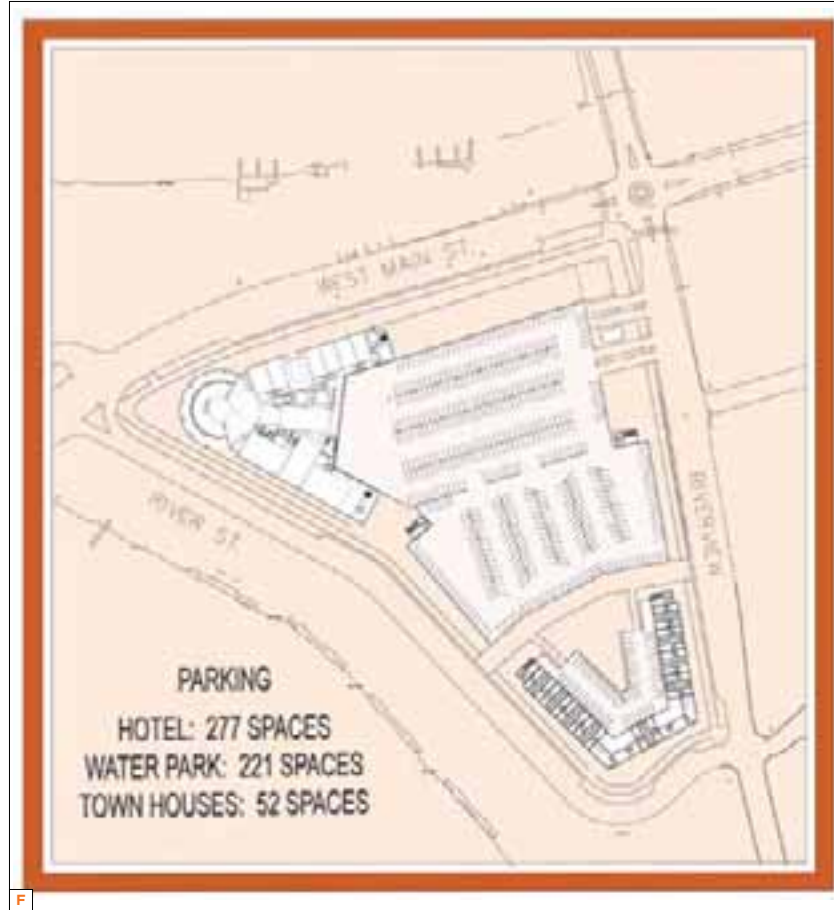


A-B Harbor Hotel, T. Bertke, K. Dumkrieger, G. Hansen, K. O'Brien; C-D Harbor Hotel Block Proposal Plan, T. Bertke, K. Dumkrieger, G. Hansen, K. O'Brien;





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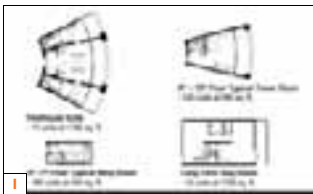
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E-I Harbor Hotel, T. Bertke, K. Dumkrieger, G. Hansen, K. O'Brien; J Harbor Hotel Existing Condition, T. Bertke, K. Dumkrieger, G. Hansen, K. O'Brien; K Harbor Hotel From Bridge, T. Bertke, K. Dumkrieger, G. Hansen, K. O'Brien; L Harbor Hotel Location, T. Bertke, K. Dumkrieger, G. Hansen, K. O'Brien;

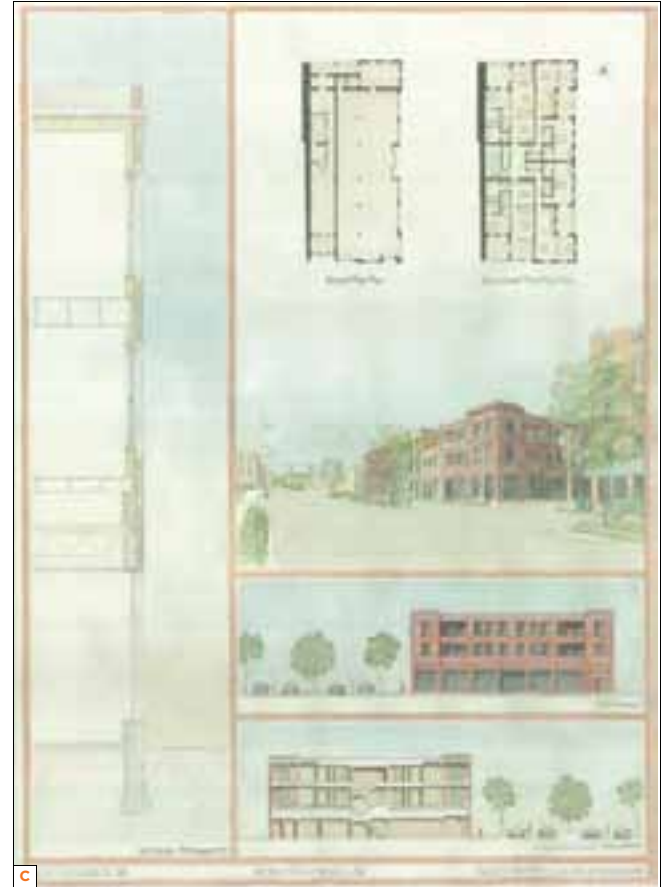
Main Street



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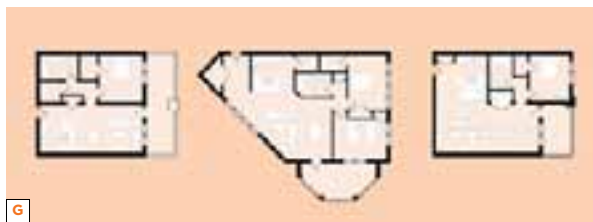
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A-B Main and Water Infill Mixed-Use Building, C. DeChiaro;
 C Main Street Infill Mixed-Use Building, E. Murphy; D Existing Condition, C. DeChiaro; E Mixed-Use Building, C. DeChiaro;
 F Main Street Residential Location, Studio; G Main and Water Infill Mixed-Use Building, C. DeChiaro;



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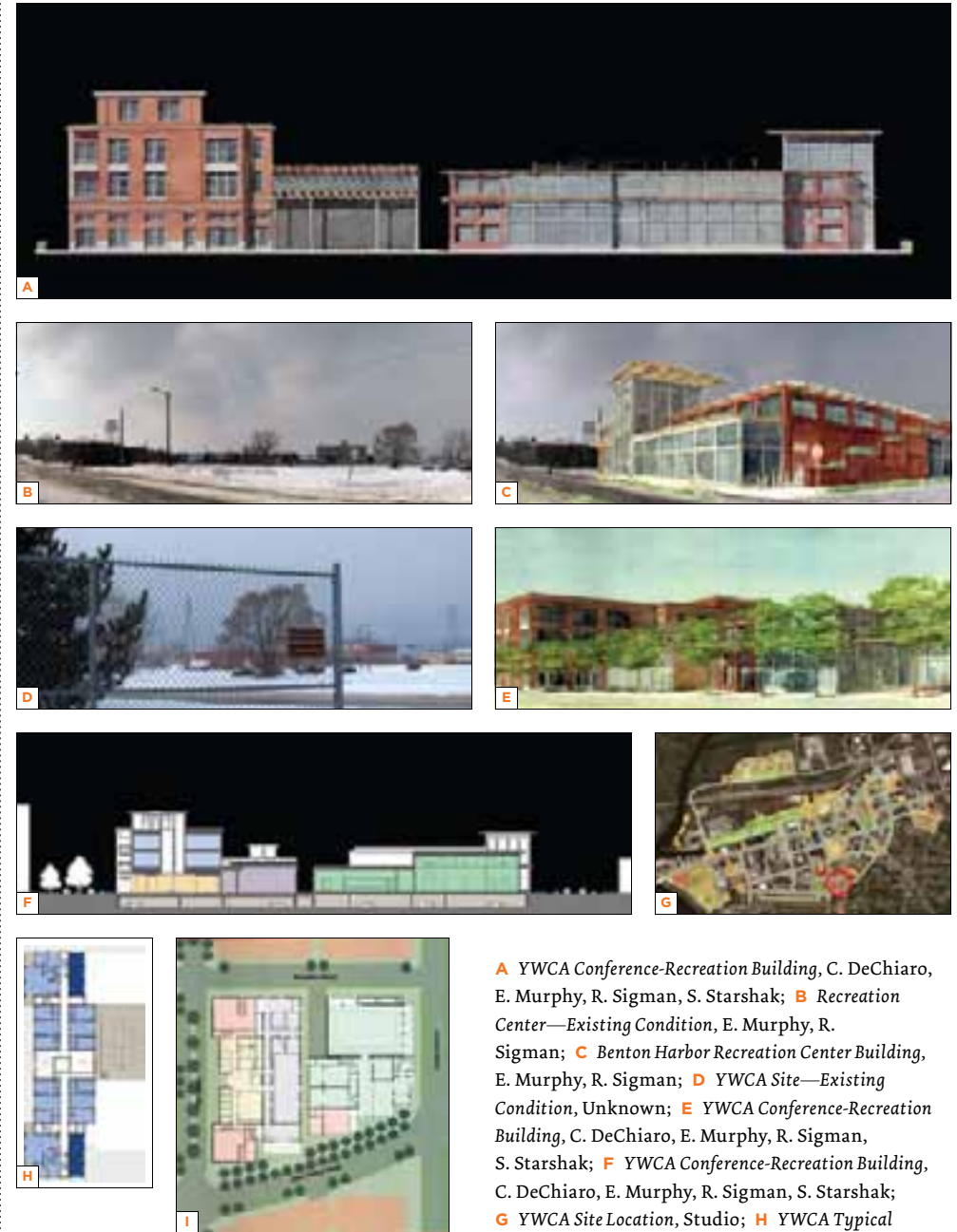
H Main Street Infill Mixed-Use Building, L. Bresnahan, E. Murphy;
 I-K Main Street Infill Mixed-Use Building, L. Bresnahan, E. Murphy;
 L Main Mixed-Use Building, L. Bresnahan; M Main Street Infill Mixed-Use Building, E. Murphy; N Main Existing Condition, L. Bresnahan;
 O Main Existing Condition, Unknown; P Main Street Infill Buildings Site Plan, Studio; Q Main Street Elevation, L. Bresnahan, E. Murphy

Master Plan



A-D Street Section Proposals, Studio; **E** Downtown Benton Harbor Proposal, Studio; **F-I** Master Plan Quarter Location, Studio; **J** Master Plan Parks and Streets, Studio; **K** Master Plan Bike Paths, Studio; **L** Master Plan Street Section, Studio; **M-O** Proposal for Future Development, Studio;

YWCA



A YWCA Conference-Recreation Building, C. DeChiaro, E. Murphy, R. Sigman, S. Starshak; **B** Recreation Center—Existing Condition, E. Murphy, R. Sigman; **C** Benton Harbor Recreation Center Building, E. Murphy, R. Sigman; **D** YWCA Site—Existing Condition, Unknown; **E** YWCA Conference-Recreation Building, C. DeChiaro, E. Murphy, R. Sigman, S. Starshak; **F** YWCA Conference-Recreation Building, C. DeChiaro, E. Murphy, R. Sigman, S. Starshak; **G** YWCA Site Location, Studio; **H** YWCA Typical Residential Floor, C. DeChiaro, S. Starshak; **I** YWCA Conference-Recreation Building, C. DeChiaro, E. Murphy

Summit Street Townhouses



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A-F Summit Street Townhouses, T. Bertke, K. Dumkrieger, K. O'Brien; G Summit Street Locations, Studio