

Program Summary:

An outdoor classroom, event space, and community facility for a New Orleans- based non profit.

Program Statement:

This project is a new home for a non-profit organization dedicated to educating local students about environmental conservation, water management, and urban agriculture. The project goals included enhancing the site's visibility and accessibility, providing functional spaces for educational programming, and creating a distinctive, vibrant, colorful environment befitting the work of the organization's students and staff.

Anchoring the project is a 410 square foot outdoor classroom and gathering space, which is framed by two 16-foot gable-profile concrete walls and paved with custom concrete tiles. The concrete walls and pavers are dyed blue with concrete pigment applied in varying ratios, to create patterns and gradients of color. The outdoor classroom connects the site's landscaped spaces and serves as a gateway to the environmentally focused program's space, opening to the street by means of an operable wood slat slide-gate. In addition to the outdoor classroom, the project scope also included landscape design, water infrastructure, perimeter fencing, signage, gardening stations, and storage facilities. Throughout, the project combined advanced digital fabrication technologies with sustainable, vernacular construction methods. The project was developed in partnership with Groundwork leadership, staff, and students.

SP05.01

Building Area: (sf)
5,830 SF (site total)
410 SF (built structure)

Cost per Square Foot:
\$2.57 (site total)
\$36.58 (built structure)

Construction Cost
\$15,000

Date of Completion:
Spring 2019

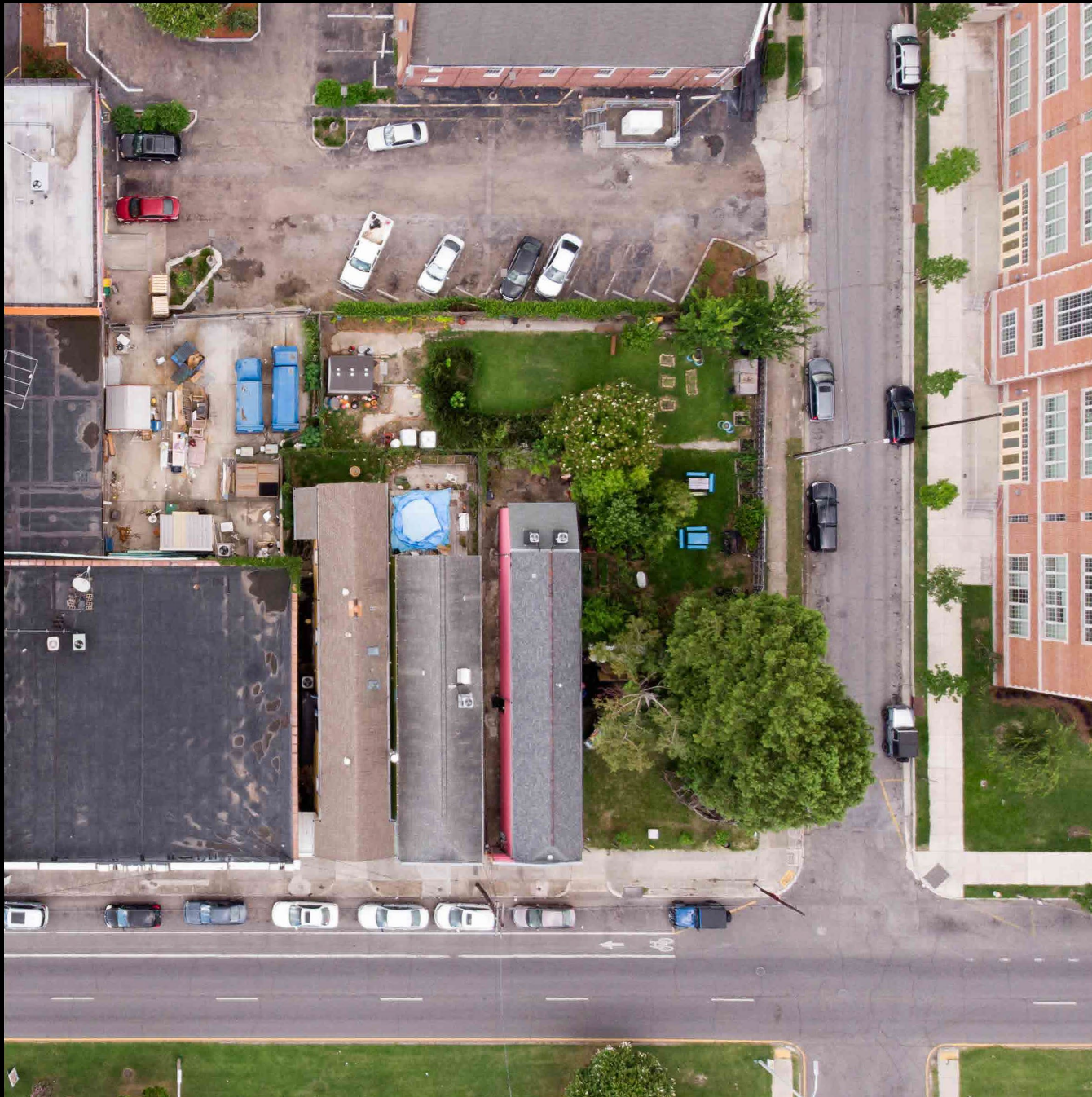


SP05.02

Primary Goals

The project team worked with a New Orleans non-profit to design and build an outdoor classroom, entryway, and event space to enhance the organization's visibility and functionality for its educational programming.

The location was visually inaccessible due to high fencing, which did not allow a welcoming presence for neighbors and visitors. The built intervention is intended to open up the site and give a bold visual identity to the organization's programming area, allowing the site to more effectively host school and volunteer groups for hands-on field trips and other activities.



SP05.03

Site Context

The Project is located amid an urban fabric consisting primarily of single and double-family housing. Shotgun houses are the most common typology. In the immediate and surrounding areas, houses are painted in diverse, bright, vibrant color schemes. Houses are predominately symmetrical around the axis of a roof pitch. Concrete stoops and porches mediate between entry and street.



SP05.04

Project Site

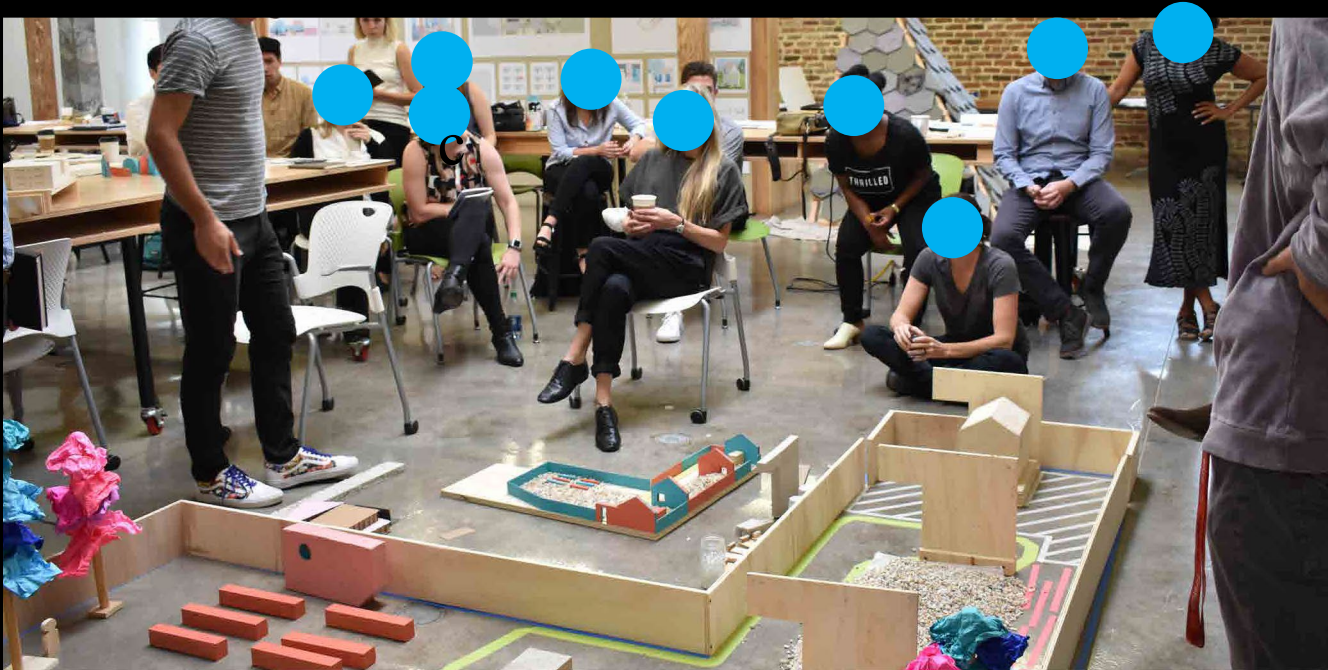
The site was an overgrown green lot, cluttered with debris, vines, weeds, and dilapidated equipment. A black perimeter fence enveloped the site and prevented any visible connection to the street. Many local residents were unaware the fenced-off green space existed. A bioswale wrapped around one end of the site, and a variety of trees were scattered around the perimeter. Several mounds occupied another end of the site.



SP05.05

Design & Stakeholder Engagement

The non-profit client that runs programs educating local school kids on environmental conservation, water management, and urban agriculture. The non-profit organization has a long history of operating in the city, and helped provide a robust stakeholder engagement process. Design reviews increasingly interwove academic, disciplinary discussions with lively stakeholder debates. Large-scale models that could be played with and played in became instrumental tools for engaging stakeholders and developing architectural ideas.



SP05.06

Prototyping

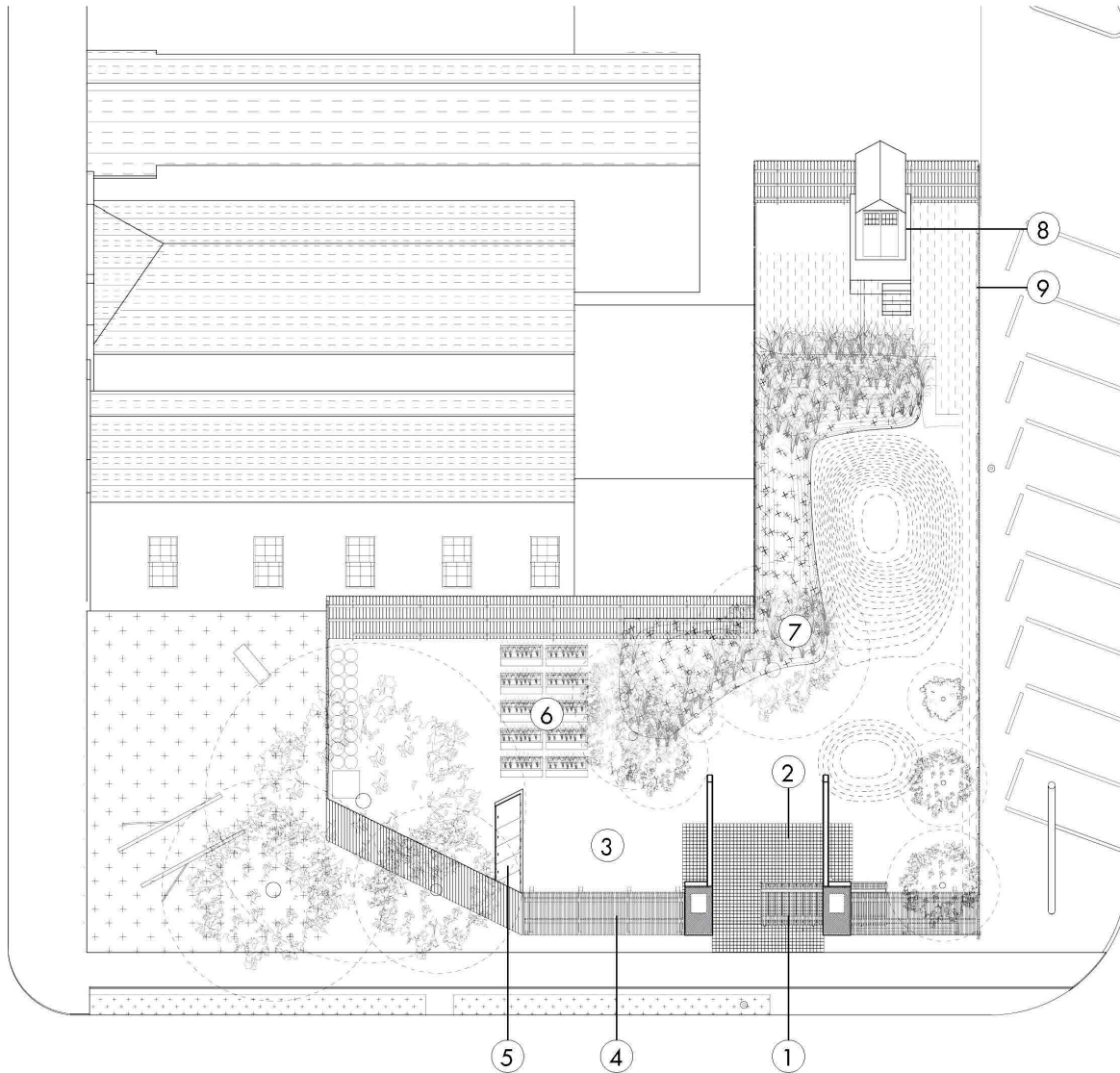
Vibrant color prototype explorations quickly emerged as a central research tenet, motivated both by the local vernacular and the client's express wish for an enlivened site. Small scale prototypes offered opportunity to test a diverse range of pigmentation and material techniques without significant expenditure of money or time.



SP05.07

Site Plan

1. Slide gate & main entrance
2. Outdoor classroom
3. Workspace / Playspace
4. Visually permeable fencing
5. Compost bins
6. Raised bed planters
7. Bioswale
8. Storage
9. Secondary entrance



SP05.08

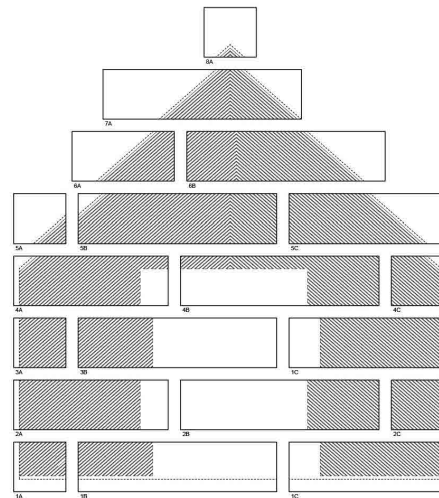
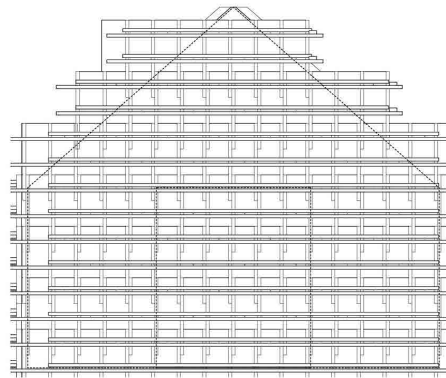
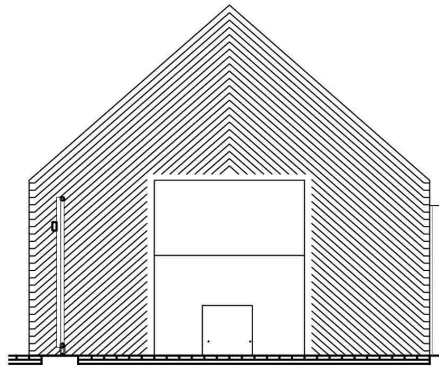
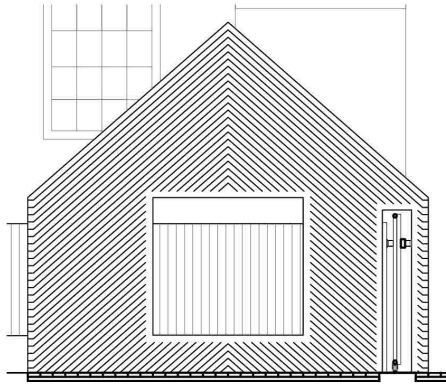
Construction Documents

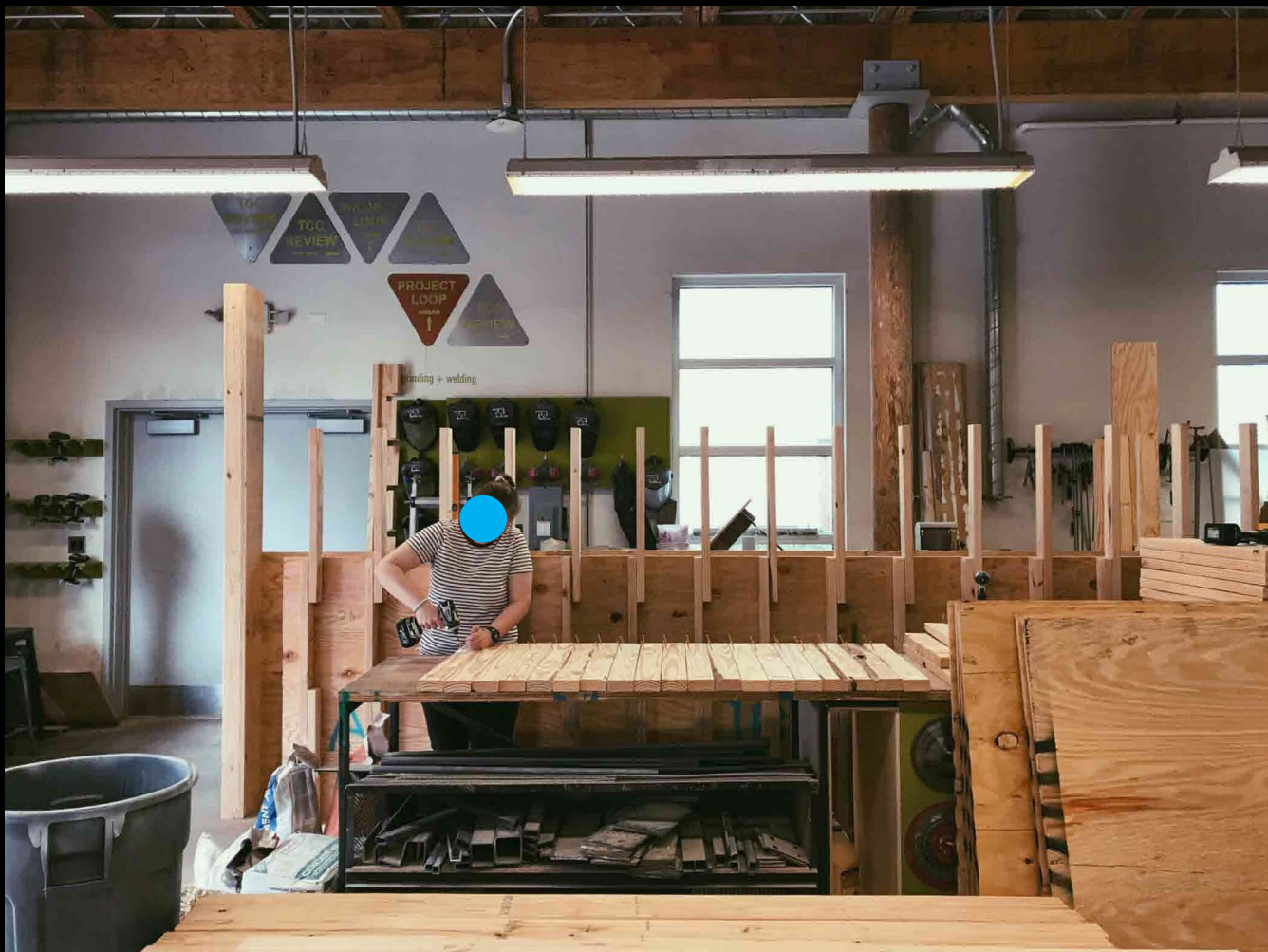
(Top Left) Elevation of south concrete wall, with slot for slide gate at the right.

(Top Right) Elevation of north concrete wall, with compost and planters beyond

(Bottom Left) Elevation of custom, modular formwork system; formwork was designed to be reusable and quickly placed during pours

(Bottom Right) Exploded elevation of formliner panels showing surface pattern cut by CNC machine and fabricated out of extruded polystyrene

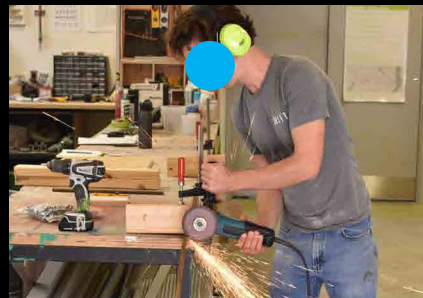




SP05.09

Prefabrication

All construction was designed for prefabrication to the full extent possible. A short onsite construction window combined with regular inclement weather motivated prefabrication. Additionally, CNC (computer numerically controlled) formwork elements could be integrated and preassembled offsite for rapid deployment.



SP05.10

Construction

(Top) Assembled wall formwork; formwork was reused and later up-cycled for planters and furniture

(Bottom Left) Laying pavers atop an extensive drainage system

(Bottom Center) Ongoing concrete work and the outdoor classroom beginning to take shape; many things turned blue

(Bottom Right) Despite the "messiness" of working with concrete, the pigmentation process required high precision



SP05.11





SP05.12

Partner Engagement

The non-profit client engages local residents, businesses and government officials to revitalize neighborhoods and transform community liabilities into community assets. At the core of its programming is Youth Development through job and life skills training, hiring youth and young adults to build and maintain its projects. Since 2006, they has focused on neighborhood-based best management practices, implementing projects that mitigate stormwater threats while improving quality of life, restoring ecosystems, and contributing to a healthier watershed that includes surrounding wetlands and delta estuaries. These projects include installing rain gardens and bioswales, beautifying communities and improving urban drainage infrastructure.



SP05.13

Thank you!

Project Name:
Groundwork EarthLab

Project Location:
1027 Spain St.
New Orleans, LA 70117

Owner/Client:
Groundwork New Orleans

Architect(s) of Record:
Emilie Taylor-Welty
Albert & Tina Small Center for
Collaborative Design
1725 Baronne St.
New Orleans, LA 70113

Project Team:
Adam Modesitt – Design Lead
Nick Jenisch – Project Manager
Emilie Taylor-Welty
Ann Yoachim
Suzanne Mobley
Donn Peabody
Rashidah Williams
Michelle Barrett
Kay Curtis
Dana Elliot
Jacqueline Esmay
Jared Faske
Dylan Goldweit-Denton
Clayton Hakes
Emily Kanner
Bryn Koeppel
Riley Lacalli
Caroline LaFleche
Collin Moosbrugger
Margaret Swinford
Max Warshaw

Landscape Architect:
n/a

Consultants:
Batture, LLC (engineer)

General Contractor:
Albert & Tina Small Center for Collaborative
Design

Photographer(s):
Alex Marks Photography – 2,11
Albert & Tina Small Center for Collaborative
Design – 3-6, 9-10, 12-13

SP05.14