

**The American Institute of Architects  
Small Project Awards  
2023 Recipient**

**Mini Mart City Park**

**Architecture firm:** GO'C

**Owner:** Mini Mart City Park

**Location:** Seattle

**Category:** Two

**Project site:** Brownfield

**Building program type(s):** Public assembly - entertainment/culture

Additional information

Project attributes

Year of substantial project completion: 2022

Gross conditioned floor area: 1100 sq. ft.

Project team

Architect: GO'C

Artists: SuttonBeresCuller

Structural Engineer: J Welch Engineering

Civil Engineer: J Welch Engineering

Kinetic Window: Chris McMullen Productions

Lighting Design: Fixture Studio

Landscape Consultant: Wittman Estes

Envelope Consultant: RDH Building Science

General Contractor: Métis Construction

“This transformation of a brownfield site is a strong project. It integrated a significant number of sustainable strategies in such a small space.” – Jury comment

# AIA Small Project Awards

## 2023 Recipient

*Information from online submission form*

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<b>Project Name</b>	Mini Mart City Park
<b>Project Category</b>	Up to \$2.5 million in construction cost
<b>Completion Date</b>	7/1/2022

### Project Statement

Mini Mart City Park is a community-focused cultural center and park in Seattle's Georgetown neighborhood that has transformed a former brownfield gas station site into a vibrant hub for the arts. The project was a unique collaboration between the architects and the artist group who originally purchased the land.

The design focuses on creating flexible spaces, both interior and exterior for art, learning, and community engagement. A large portion of the site is given over to native landscaping and public space at ground level. Hidden beneath is the air-sparging system which carries forward the concept of 'cleaning the earth with art' - remediating this contaminated site on an ongoing basis.

With over 700 derelict gas stations in the region and over 200,000 nationwide, the project explores the potential of architecture and art as a way to heal an urban problem while simultaneously creating a shared, multi-use park and community space.

### Project Overview

Mini Mart City Park (MMCP) is a new arts-oriented community center in Georgetown. The project, which sits directly across from Boeing Field, has transformed a former gas station site into a Seattle hub for art events and community gatherings. The mission of MMCP is rooted in the belief that it is vital to create community hubs for people to build power and a voice in decisions being made to develop their neighborhoods. MMCP serves as a community-led space advocating for creativity and public health through art exhibits, residencies, environmental action and locally focused programming in the Lower Duwamish Valley.

#### 01. CLEAN - Cleaning earth with art & architecture

The Duwamish River is one of the most important industrial ports in Puget Sound. Due to heavy historical industrial usage, this waterway and surrounding land is heavily polluted. So much so, that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) declared the 5-mile section flowing past Georgetown and Southpark a Superfund site. The long history of the project site as a heavily polluted location required careful consideration of how any development of the site could work to improve the polluted soils that a building would sit on.

#### 02. BUILD - A structure where people come together to strengthen their community ties

MMCP comprises two built structures bridged with a central courtyard. The courtyard enables the building and park to work together, merging built space and the landscape areas in between. The

courtyard also serves as a multi-functional exterior space for large-scale art installations, movie night gatherings, and loading access for the main gallery. A 1,000-square-foot rooftop level provides an elevated space for small gatherings surrounded by areas of green roof planted with drought tolerant sedums and grasses and solar panels. All areas of the site and building are designed to be occupied; the park, courtyard, interior spaces and roof; resulting in a fully activated site.

### 03. EDUCATE - A place to learn about art, architecture, & healthy urban environments

A primary objective of the programming of MMCP is to encourage the local community to learn and provide opportunities and space for them to do so. MMCP opens its doors regularly for workshops and exhibitions. The build of the project was also harnessed as a learning and volunteering opportunity for local youth groups who toured the site at various phases, learned about the air sparging system and environmental impact and history of the site and also volunteered on many elements of the project.

### 04. ART & ARCHITECTURE - A permanent cultural center

This labor of love was initiated by an artist group who purchased the land and had the vision for the project in 2008. The project has always been a collaboration between artists and architect since the design process started. Arts spaces within the city have only been possible with the support of the local community and patrons of the arts. Hundreds of personal donations, fundraising, and grants enabled this important arts-oriented community center to be built.

## Project History

Arguably Seattle's oldest neighborhood located in the Duwamish basin, Georgetown became an economic hub originally as a lumber based settlement. With the transition toward a rail-centered economy, the arrival of transcontinental service to Georgetown and an abundance of flat land, Georgetown became a freight hub which fostered the development of many industries in the area. By the 1930's following the boom in industry and the arrival of Boeing Field, Georgetown saw a decline in its residential neighborhood with the worst air and noise pollution in the city, it rapidly became an unattractive place to live.

More recently Georgetown has seen a recent revival with empty spaces left by industry converted back to usable space, and an increase in housing stock. However, much of the area remains heavily contaminated brownfield land. Much work still needs to be done to remediate the environment to create healthy living spaces for its residents and visitors. Mini Mart City Park is no exception, sitting on a physical boundary between industrial and residential neighborhoods, the site suffered from a long history of industrial use and contamination. The key to developing these abandoned post industrial sites lies in their sustainable development and environmental remediation.

In 2005 the artist group, SuttonBeresCuller, had a vision to identify and purchase a property in King County and rehabilitate it, proving the potential of art to propel a project that simultaneously repairs damaged land while providing shared, multi-use community space.

In 2008, they identified the Mini Mart City Park site and began environmental assessment work. In 2013, SuttonBeresCuller formed the Mini Mart City Park 501(c)3, which purchased the site. With the support and engagement of the Georgetown community, Mini Mart City Park is under construction. In 2014, goCstudio joined the team to design the new building, donating the Schematic Design Phase to the project, joining the ranks of the many donors that made this pocket park and arts-oriented community center possible. After years of planning and environmental work, Mini Mart City Park broke ground in July

2018, completed construction in 2021, and opened to the public in 2022.

Incorporating operable window walls and a green roof to create a porous, modular space that blends indoor and outdoor activities such as gallery shows, movies in the park, potlucks, community meetings, readings and live music, Mini Mart City Park will embrace the site's history, bring communities together to dream up their futures, and literally clean earth with art.

## **Framework for Design Excellence**

### **Design for Integration**

The original concept for the building and site was 'cleaning the earth with art'. The building and site had to support and integrate in a way to remediate the toxicities that are found in the soil after many decades of industrial use. This was done via an air sparging system which runs throughout the site and below the building itself. The system can be easily monitored throughout the lifespan of the building via monitoring wells in the landscape and at the rooftop access point. The project will serve as an educational site and case study for how small brownfield sites may be revitalized in the Duwamish Valley and beyond.

### **Design for Equitable Communities**

One of the main goals of the project was to create a place to learn about art, architecture and healthy urban environments. To encourage the local community to learn and provide opportunities and space for them to do so. MMCP opens its doors regularly for workshops and exhibitions. The build of the project was also harnessed as a learning and volunteering opportunity for local youth groups who toured the site at various phases, learned about the air sparging system and environmental impact and history of the site and also volunteered on many elements of the project. The project itself sits on the edge of a residential community with easy walkable access, bike routes and a bus stop right outside. When the building itself is closed, the park remains open as an amenity for the local community.

### **Design for Ecosystem**

MMCP stands on a site that was once used as a fuel-storage facility. Ongoing testing has found petroleum contaminants in the subsurface at concentrations greater than Washington's cleanup levels, which MMCP has worked hard to assess and remediate over the past decade. An air-sparge and soil vapor extraction remediation system was installed as an integral component of the new facility which will allow us to effectively clean the remaining residual contaminants in the soil and groundwater passing under the site. The control station for this system is on display in the utility room for visitors to learn more about ways to improve and rebuild on similar brownfield sites. MMCP will serve as an educational site and case study for how small brownfields may be revitalized in the Duwamish Valley and beyond. Moreover, only 20% of the site is built on which allows as much space as possible for nature to thrive on the site. Meanwhile, the building creates a space for local residents and visitors to gather, learn about, and participate in environmental action taking place in the Duwamish Valley.

### **Design for Water**

Water is an integrated part of the system, all stormwater from the roof of the building is directed into

the bioretention planters that flank the north side of the building. The stormwater is filtered by the planters whilst they increase the available green area and biodiversity on the site.

### **Design for Economy**

The project was entirely grant/donor funded, so cost was a huge consideration from the beginning. The building process is an activation of community awareness towards an urban issue, and serves as a center for community gatherings and exploration. Compact multi functional spaces and large operable windows and outdoor rooms allow the space to feel larger and activities to spread beyond the interior walls

### **Design for Energy**

The green roof increases the overall thermal mass for comfort in the space below. The building is solar ready and panels will be installed as funding becomes available. Radiant heating is zoned and used throughout the space, while passive ventilation is employed via windows and an operable skylight, so no mechanical cooling is installed.

### **Design for Well-being**

A healthy lifestyle encourages connections with nature and the local community and the concept for Mini Mart City Park was born from these connections. The structure serves as a welcoming space for local events and can be reserved for use by the local Georgetown community. MMCP is surrounded by green park space on all sides and invites this landscape into the building. The structure was intentionally located and sized to give more space to the park programming of the site. The open courtyard in the center provides access to the outdoors while a large pivoting window along the south gallery wall that opens to provide a strong connection to the park and serves as a cafe window during events.

During the construction, a local team made up of Dirt Corps and Duwamish Youth volunteers donated many hours to the project planting both the green roof and extensive landscaping throughout the site as well as constructing the gabion retaining walls. Local artist-designed green wall panels were installed by the MMCP board and Dirt Corps - these reference the history of contamination at the site and support the new growth of native plantings.

### **Design for Resources**

Materially, the project began with a solid concrete base that is built to last. The concrete slab serves as finish floor as well as heat source with its integrated hydronic radiant piping system. The siding uses locally-sourced pre-primed lapped cedar siding that is known to last over 100 years in this region and references the history of the site and structures in the area. Wood rafters, wood sheathing, and cabinets are expressed honestly in the interior providing a warm counterpoint to the white art walls. The expression of the wood materials and craftsmanship highlights the pride that the construction team took in assembling the structure. We believe that this craft and care taken during the construction is a harbinger of a building that will be protected and preserved for years to come.

### **Design for Change**

MMCP is a small, high impact building, designed for flexibility of use. Despite only 20% of the lot area being given over to built form, the whole site is occupiable. Outdoor rooms are created via the courtyard and forecourt, an accessible rooftop is used for plantings and future solar. Large operable windows allow a continued relationship between interior and exterior space. Users are actively encouraged to spill out beyond the confines of the interior space.

### **Design for Discovery**

Mini Mart City Park is a collaboration between local artists, architects, and the local community. This project is rooted in the belief that it is vital to create community hubs for people to build power and a voice in decisions being made to develop their neighborhoods. MMCP will serve as an artist-designed, community-led space advocating for creativity and public health through art exhibits, residencies, environmental action, and locally-focused programming in the Lower Duwamish Valley for decades to come.



MINI MART

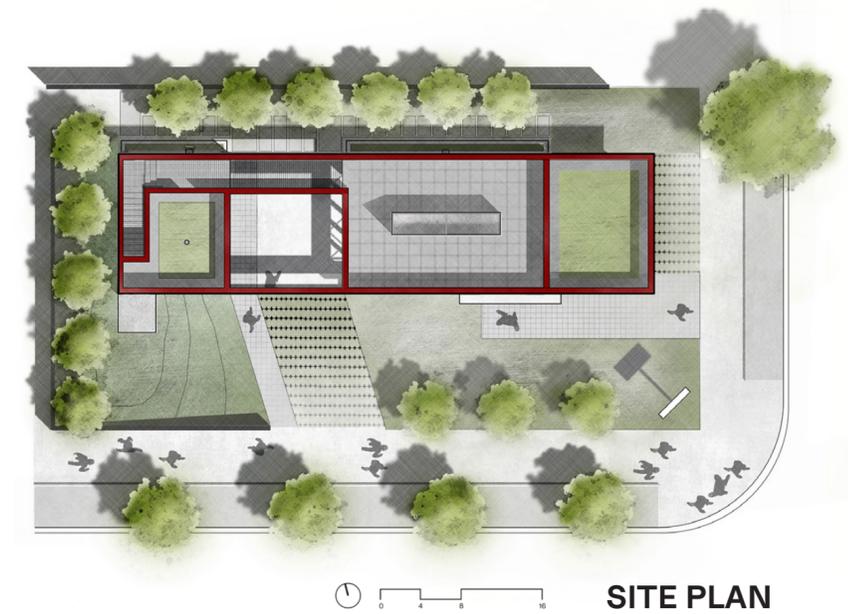
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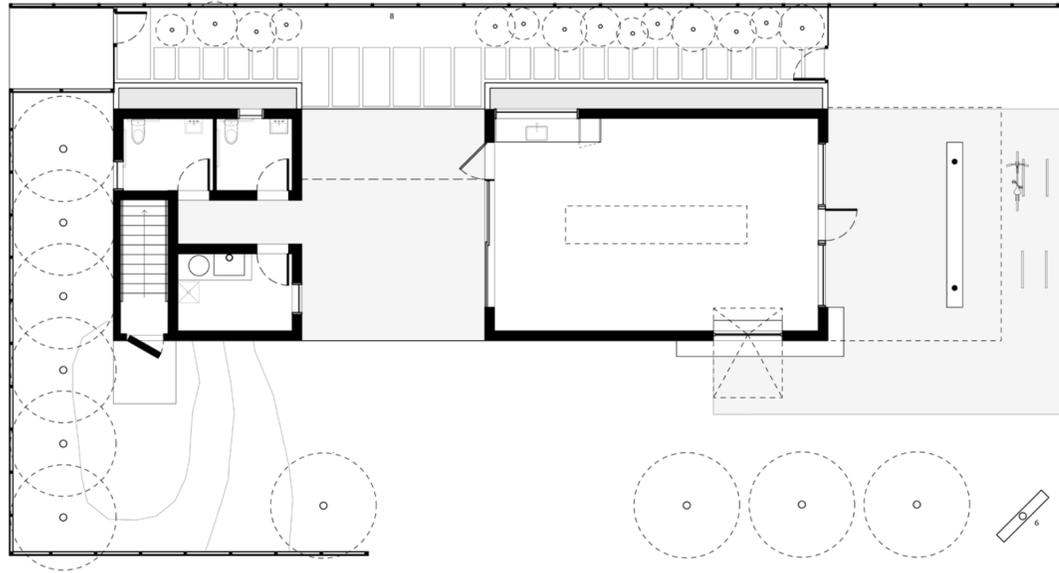


**MINI MART**

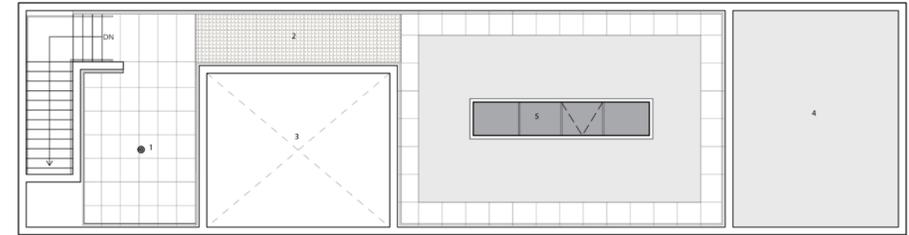


**MINI MART CITY PARK TIME LINE & HISTORY**

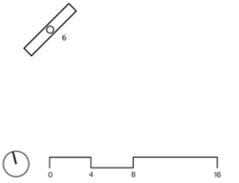


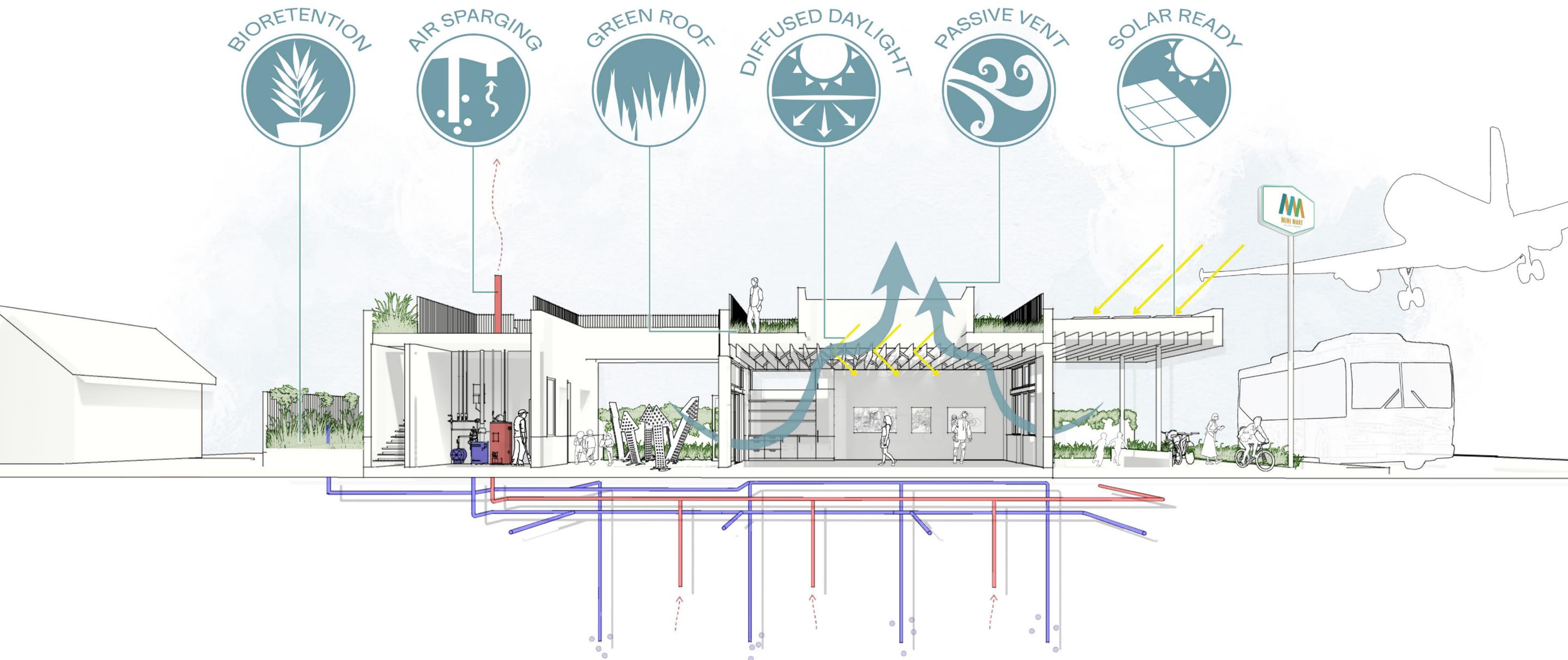


- 1. FORECOURT
- 2. GALLERY
- 3. COURTYARD
- 4. SITE MONITORING ROOM
- 5. BATHROOM
- 6. FUTURE CORNER SIGN
- 7. ROOF STAIR
- 8. MURAL WALL



- 1. AIR SPARGING EXHAUST PIPE
- 2. BRIDGE
- 3. OPEN TO COURTYARD
- 4. GREEN ROOF
- 5. SKYLIGHT
- 6. FUTURE CORNER SIGN





**BIORETENTION:**

All stormwater from the roof of the building is directed into the bioretention planters that flank the north side of the building. The stormwater is filtered by the planters whilst they increase the available green area and biodiversity on the site.

**AIR SPARGING & MONITORING:**

Ongoing testing has found petroleum contaminants in the subsurface at concentrations greater than Washington's cleanup levels. An air-sparge and soil vapor extraction remediation system was installed as an integral component of the new facility which will allow us to effectively clean the remaining residual contaminates in the soil and groundwater passing under the site.

**GREEN ROOF:**

The green roof increases the overall thermal mass of the roof and provides additional wildlife habitat. The roof is planted with durable native plantings. The green roof is used as a teaching tool for visiting groups as part of the education goals of the project.

**VENTING & PERFORMANCE:**

Natural ventilation paths are harnessed within the gallery space via operable windows and doors and an operable skylight. The building utilizes a warm roof design, with exposed framing and all insulation above the sheathing line. Radiant floors are an efficient means to heat the building and are zoned to draw heat only where it is needed.

**SOLAR READY:**

The building was designed and built with a future solar array in mind. This addition is part of future phases which will take place as more funding is achieved. Once solar panels are installed they will help minimize operation costs across the lifespan of the building. Like the building, all operation costs are part of the long term fundraising plan for MMCP.

***CLEANING EARTH WITH ART***



Gabion Walls - constructed by DirtCorps



Local craftsmen



Community Performance



Dance Installation



Art Gallery



Volunteer work

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & VOLUNTEERING**

Local volunteer groups helped with many stages of the MMCP construction. The community was engaged in the project from concept (with community outreach) to completion. The building now regularly hosts community events, gatherings and workshops as well as art installations and exhibitions.



**THE BRIDGE**

A connector between the service structure and the main roof terrace. This lightweight bridge allows natural light to penetrate into the courtyard below.



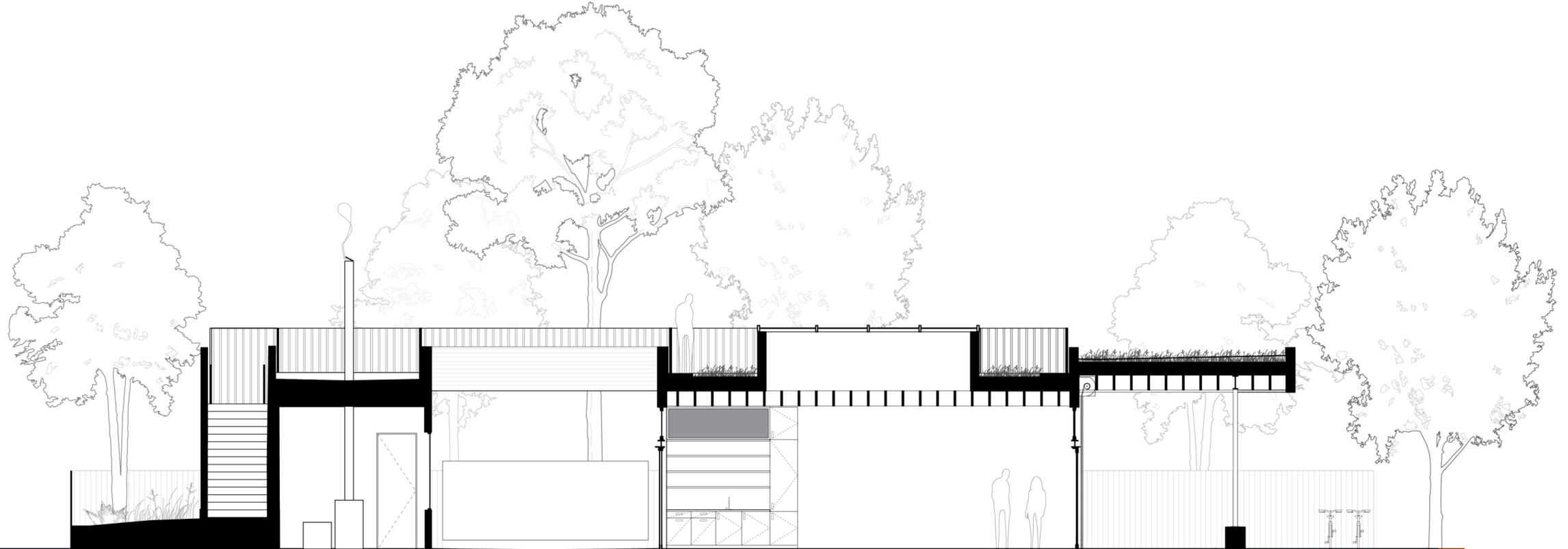
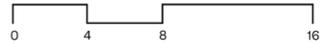
**THE COURTYARD**

This outdoor room is a flexible space to extend the gallery space into the park and allow for art exhibits and performances to engage the landscape and roof level.



**THE FORECOURT**

As iconic as the original gas station forecourt, the large sheltering roof creates another outdoor room below and serves as street signage visible from afar.





### **MATERIALITY & CONTEXT**

From the earliest stages of the design process, references to old filling stations (painted clapboard siding, a large overhanging roof protecting the forecourt, hand-painted signage, and divided metal windows typical of old storefronts), were an important part of the design. These are a nod to the past, albeit a transformed past: a new type of filling station—one dedicated to serving art, community, and civic engagement.



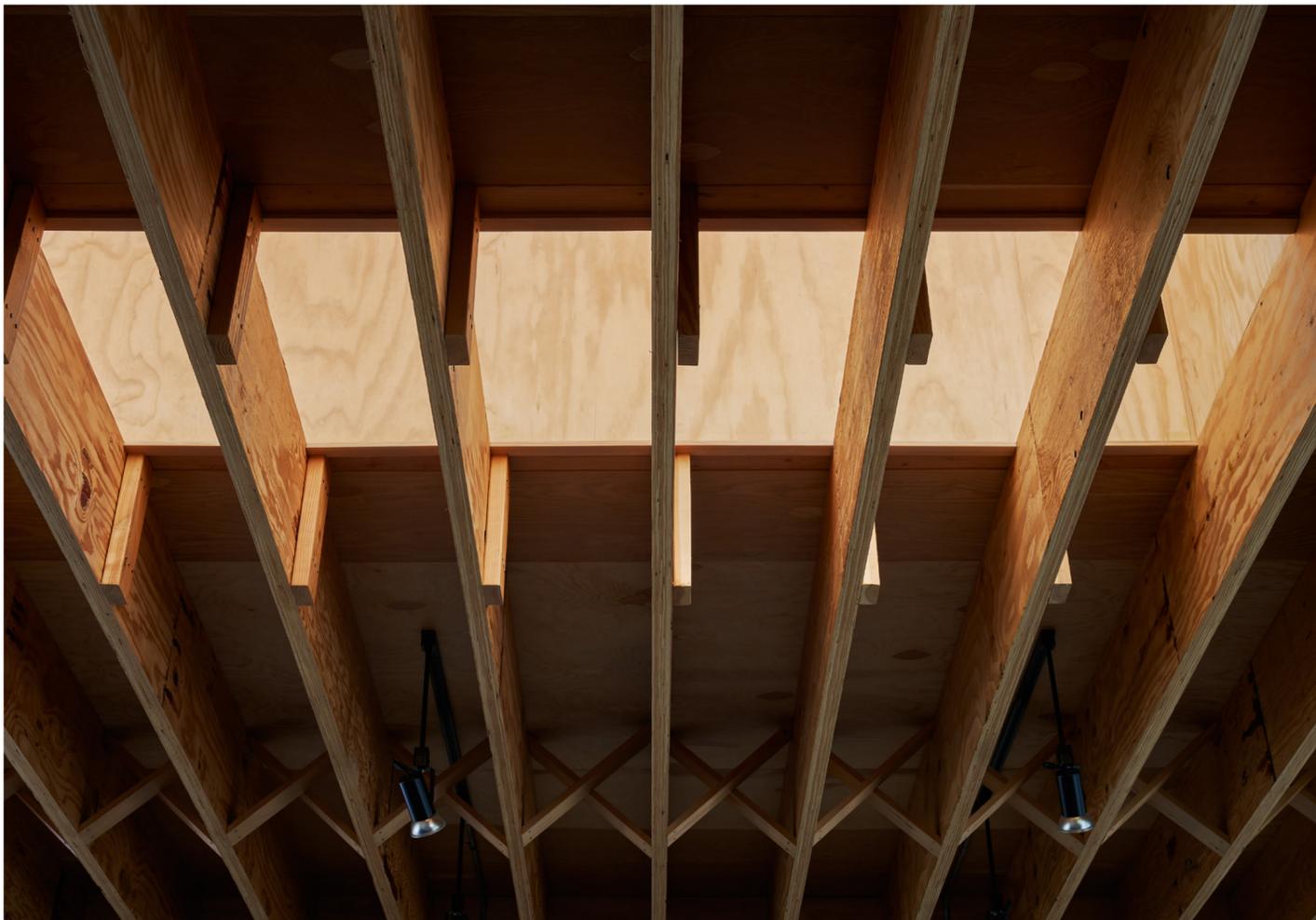
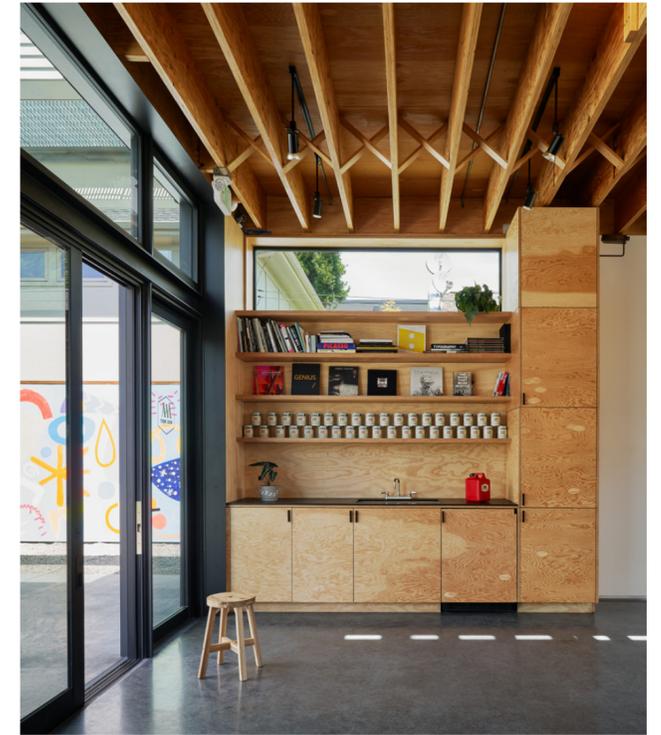
### **GALLERY**

The main gallery space uses a few key design elements to increase the flexibility of the compact space. It includes a large pivoting window (6'-6"W X 8'-0"H) along the south gallery wall that opens to provide a strong connection to the park and serves as a café window during events.



### FLEXIBILITY & USE

Interior and exterior spaces are designed to allow for maximum flexibility. The resulting compact building needed to be able to adjust to the varied demands of the programming and use of the building.



### INTERIORS

The gallery has exposed wood rafters throughout that filter light down into the space via a 15-foot-long skylight. Having large operable windows and doors along three sides allows the courtyard and park to become an extension of the gallery beyond.

