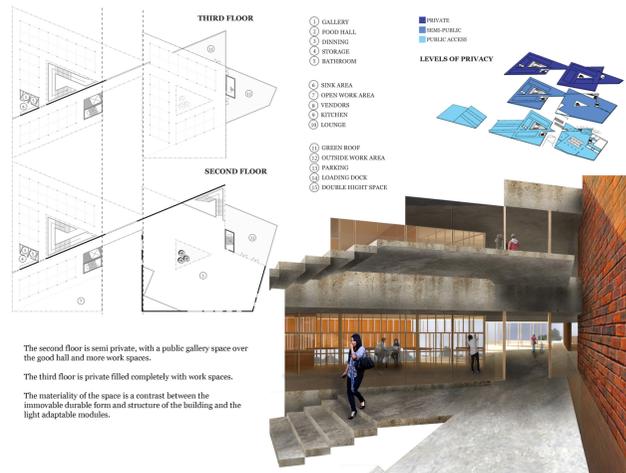
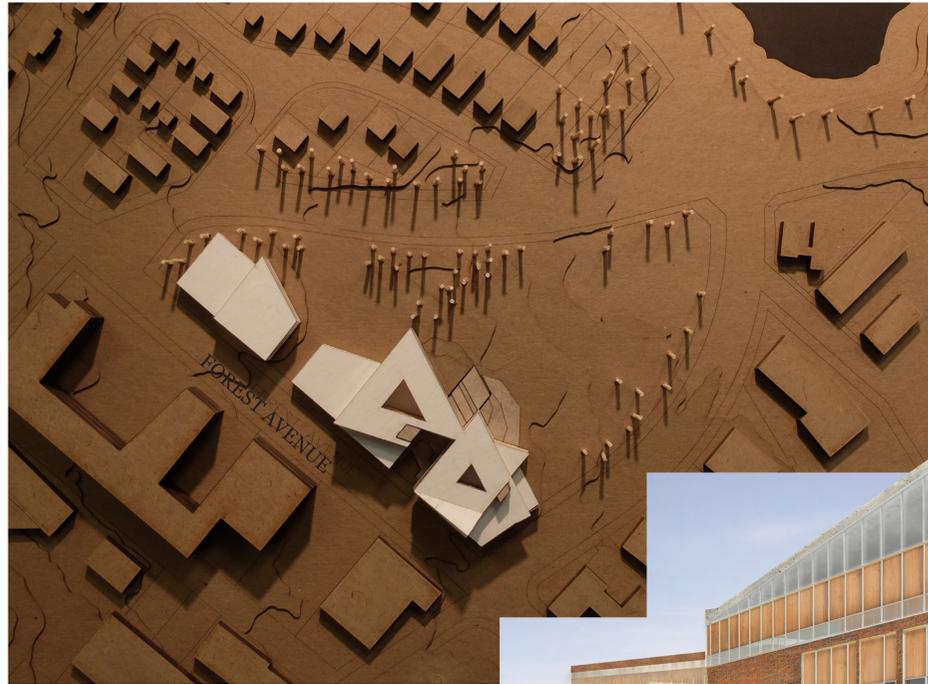
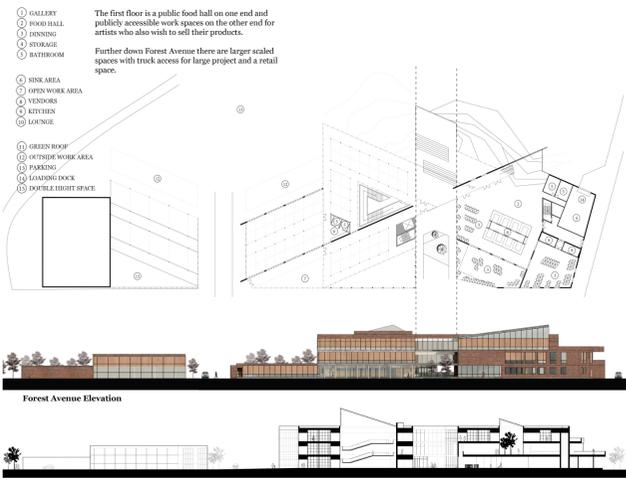




# AIA Maine

## An Exploration of the Role of Architect and User Lydia Mather



The location of the thesis project was Forest Avenue in Portland Maine. I chose a block in the area of USM and Back Cove where retail, residential, education and recreation all come together.



**Project Location:** Forest Avenue, Portland Maine

**Project Narrative:** From Cecil Balmond from "New Structure and the Informal" (1998)

"We make cages out of our structures. We want our buildings to have frameworks but out of a Cartesian compulsion we compartmentalize space into strict horizontals and verticals." ... "The imagination is immobilized. We trap movement."

This made me stop and think. As a student of architecture a design is the product of my imagination, but I had never thought about it the other way. That I was imposing my imagination on others, what about their imagination? Where did the occupant come in?

Balmond goes on to say:

"We want to understand, make linear relays and logical chains out of the complex, but in trying to remove uncertainty we remove the invisible glue that holds things together. Inevitable something gets lost." ... "There is a richness out there – we should delight in it. We should explore it."

The environments that we inhabit define us and shape how we interact within a space and with other people within that space. Generally, buildings are designed with a static function and people must conform their actions to fit into the created environment. My thesis proposes to change this. To create architecture that allows and encourages people to not passively adapt to the space but to actively adapt the space to themselves. My thesis will explore how architecture can respond to its users on a larger social scale, to give people a sense of ownership and belonging in an estranged urban environment.

Adaptive spaces have been tested and used in housing for a single family with success. These types of homes allow people to add or transform the building themselves giving the occupants a sense of ownership and investment in the space.

I want to explore how these same results of ownership and investment could happen at the community level. My thesis will explore how a single space could be temporarily transformed to fit the needs of multiple occupants as well as individual activities for a continuously fluctuating group of people.

The program for this project is primarily an Artist Studio and secondarily a Food Hall to create a community hub on Forest Avenue that is adaptable at multiple scales to both the larger community and to the individual. The space should encourage social interaction and collaboration between the different users.

**Category:** Student Project

