## WITHIN OUT THE WALL

decoding the image of incarceration

A non-degree-required thesis submitted to the

Master of Architecture Program

Department of Architecture

bу

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## OUT

THE WALL

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#### INTRODUCTION

HISTORY OF INCARCERATION
CURRENT STATE
DESIGN SOLUTION

#### **EXISTING CONDITION**

SITE ANALYSIS WITHIN THE WALL

#### PROPOSED CONDITION

DESIGN STRATEGY
TRANSITIONS
TIME.SCHEDULE.USE.
THE IMAGE

#### CONCLUSION

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#### ABOUT

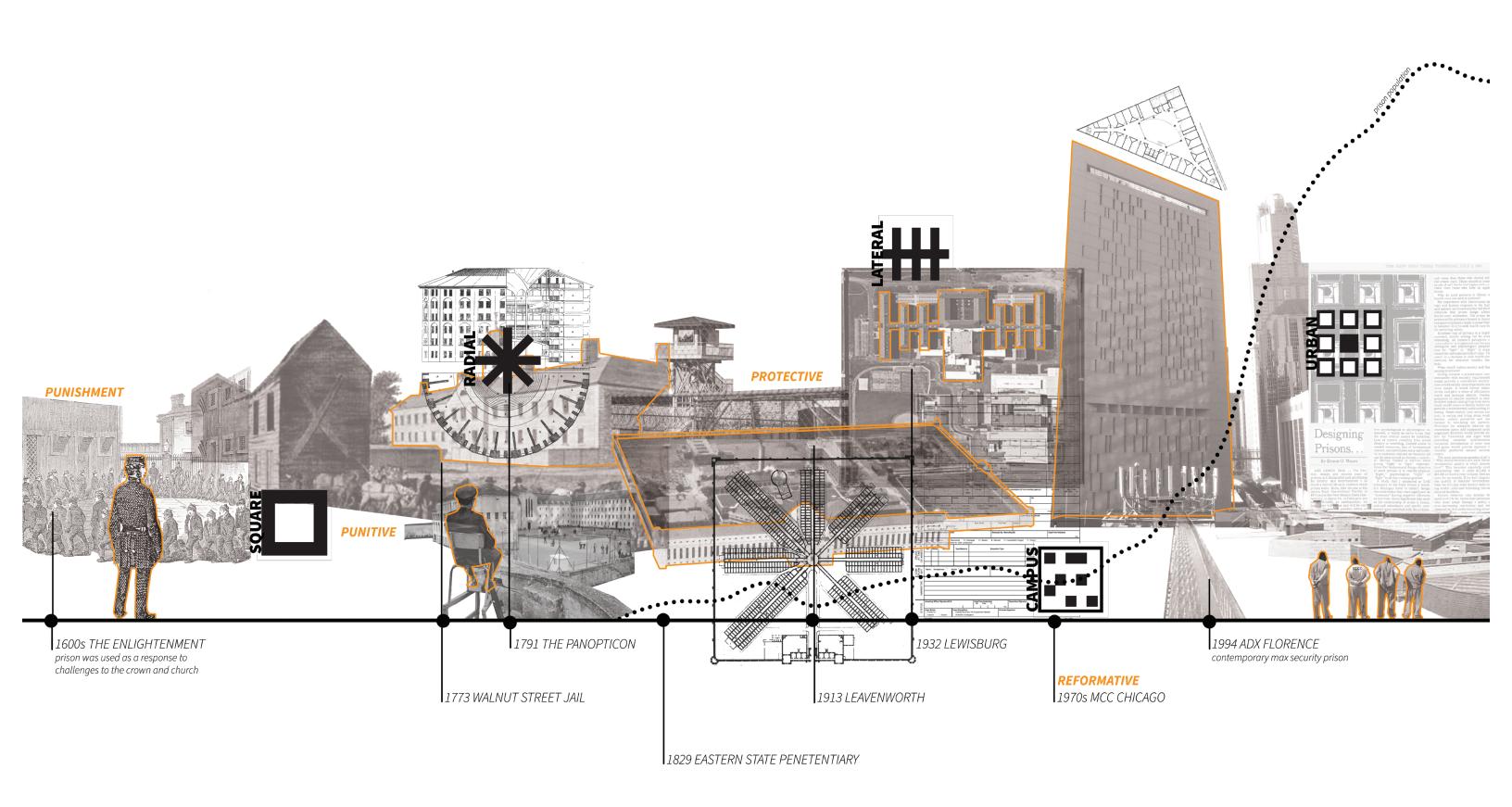
This thesis is titled Within (or without) the Wall and aims to decode the image of imprisonment. Prison has long been understood as a wall. Perception varies depending on what side of the wall you are standing on; from within, it represents surveillance and isolation, while from the outside, it signifies security and exile. Historically, United States prison aesthetics have isolated and antagonized offenders, commended authority, and gave rise to misunderstanding in the outsider. My proposition offers a synthetic view of the prison, reimagining an urban institution's interface with society through designing a mediation of barriers, weaving the inside and out by lessening the extent of isolation and fostering a range of social interactions. Today, prison architecture reinforces mass incarceration by breaking social systems, increasing recidivism, and degrading identity. Architecture has a role to play in creating a reimagined prison: a place that heals, invests in human dignity, and restores communities.

MASS INCARCERATION IN THE UNITED STATES IS A SOCIAL, POLITICAL, RACIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEM. HOWEVER, IT IS ALSO A SPATIAL ONE.

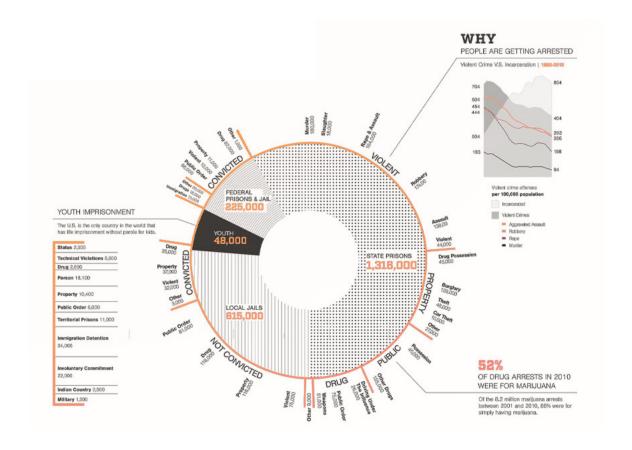
Historically, United States prison aesthetics have isolated and antagonized offenders, commended authority, and gave rise to misunderstanding in the outsider. The concept of the prison was conceived during the Enlightenment in Europe, however the first US penitentiary, Walnut Street Jail, was built in 1773. It wasn't until 1829 that the Eastern State Penitentiary would emerge as a new typology designed to create repentance through solitude and separation. As prison populations continued to rise in the first half of the 20th century and design proved failure in creating inhumane conditions, insufficient surveillance, and riots, a new model of prison was needed. In the 1960s, institutions were organized into pods and surveillance shifted to the use of CCTV, further isolating and dehumanizing inmates. In 1973, the Federal Bureau of Prisons proposed a shift from remote surveillance to direct supervision, placing guards directly in units, improving communication and feelings of isolation through interaction.

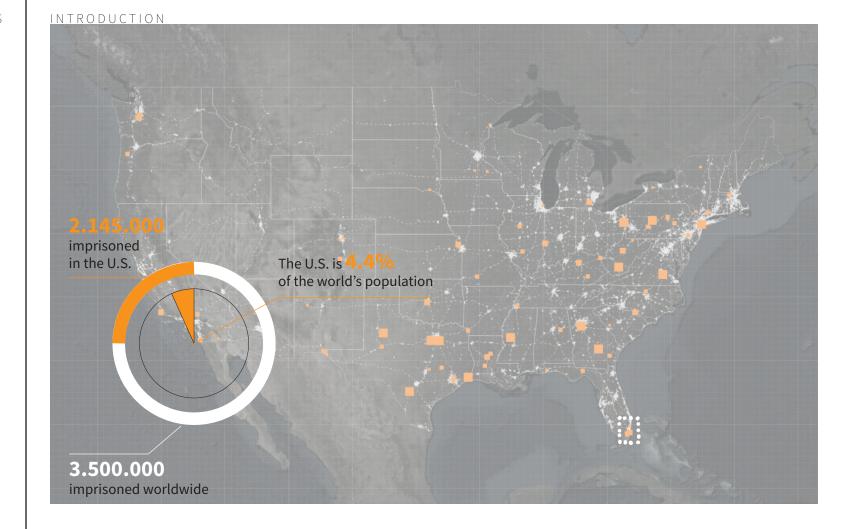
The resolution and design challenge would then be focused on the concept of rehabilitation and social-reintegration. To put simply, rehabilitation helps a person to be as independent as possible in everyday activities and enables participation in education, work, recreation, and meaningful life roles. Other nations across the world have adopted these strategies and introduced a new prison typology along these terms, reaping the multitude of benefits of lower recidivism rates. In order to make our communities safer, future prison architecture in the US must be restorative, rehabilitative, and transitional.

### INTRODUCTION



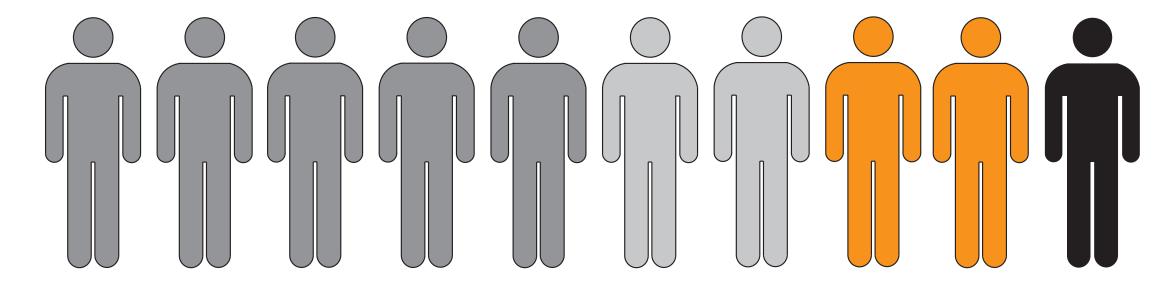




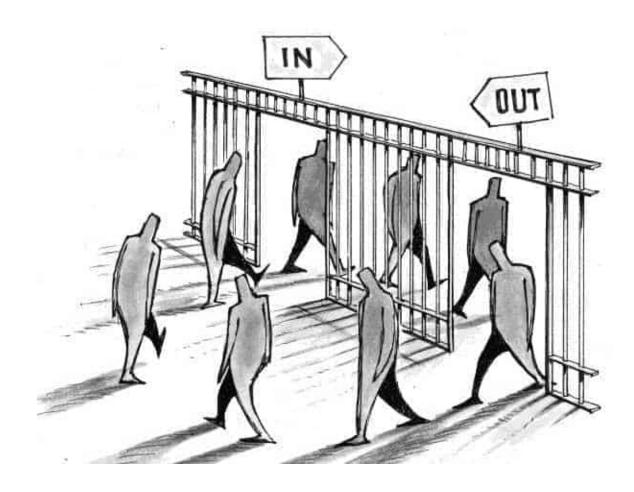


#### CURRENT STATE

Today, the United States houses over 2 million people in prisons, comprising 22% of the world prison population, the largest portion in the world. The US is home to a vast network of 1,821 state and federal prisons, costing over \$80 billion per year. A disproportionate number of those inside come from very few neighborhoods in the country's largest cities. In some cases, this concentration is so dense, the country is spending an excess of \$1 million per year to incarcerate residents within a single city block. Every dollar spent on criminal justice subtracts from other civic institutions vital to community development and aims of rehabilitation.



Although 95% of inmates will return to their communities, 45-73% will be re-arrested within 5 years of release.



## rehabilitation

[ri-huh-bil-uh-tay-shuhn]

the action of restoring someone to health or normal life through training and therapy after imprisonment, addiction, or illness The research specifically focuses on an urban federal institution, in which the advantages lie in a multitude of adjacencies and connections to transportation, services and support infrastructure. Here, separation is most obvious but least visually obstructed. The project is situated in Miami, Florida, specifically dealing with a Federal Detention Center located in the heart of the downtown government district. The prison sits within a larger municipal complex, however, has a unique site condition in relation to its proximity with a transportation center to the west as well as the waterfront to the east. FDC Miami houses approximately 1500 inmates, costing about \$50 million dollars per year. This place has a long history of violence and disruption, with an average one correction officer per five inmates.

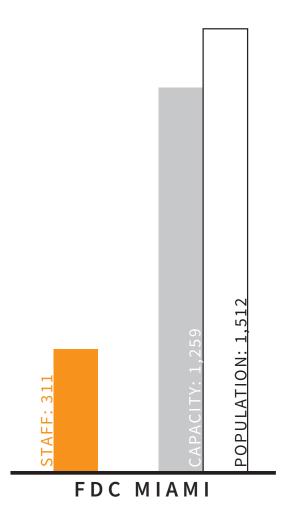
What drew me to this site is the unique street front along N Miami Blvd, which once contained various office spaces and commercial points of sale but has since been vacant and left to decay. This front suggests a certain level of mitigation between bustling urban life and the perception of the prison wall behind.

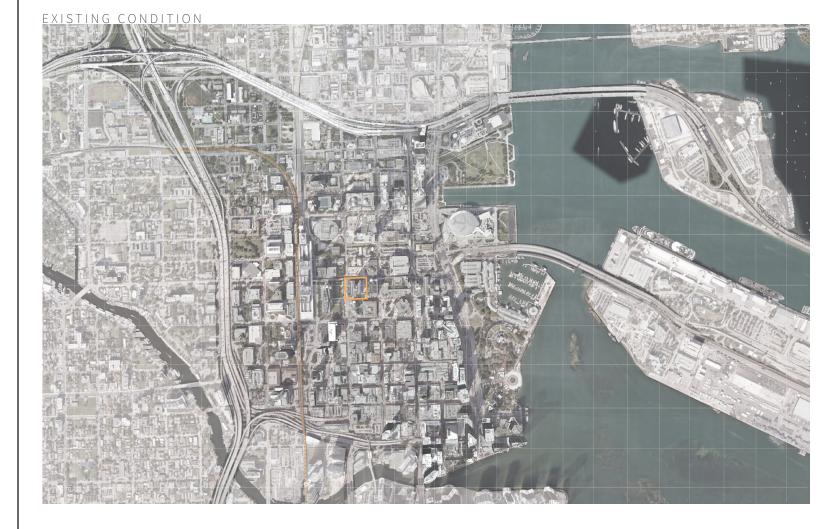
## **EXISTING CONDITION**



**AVG ANNUAL COST** 

\$31.3K PER INMATE

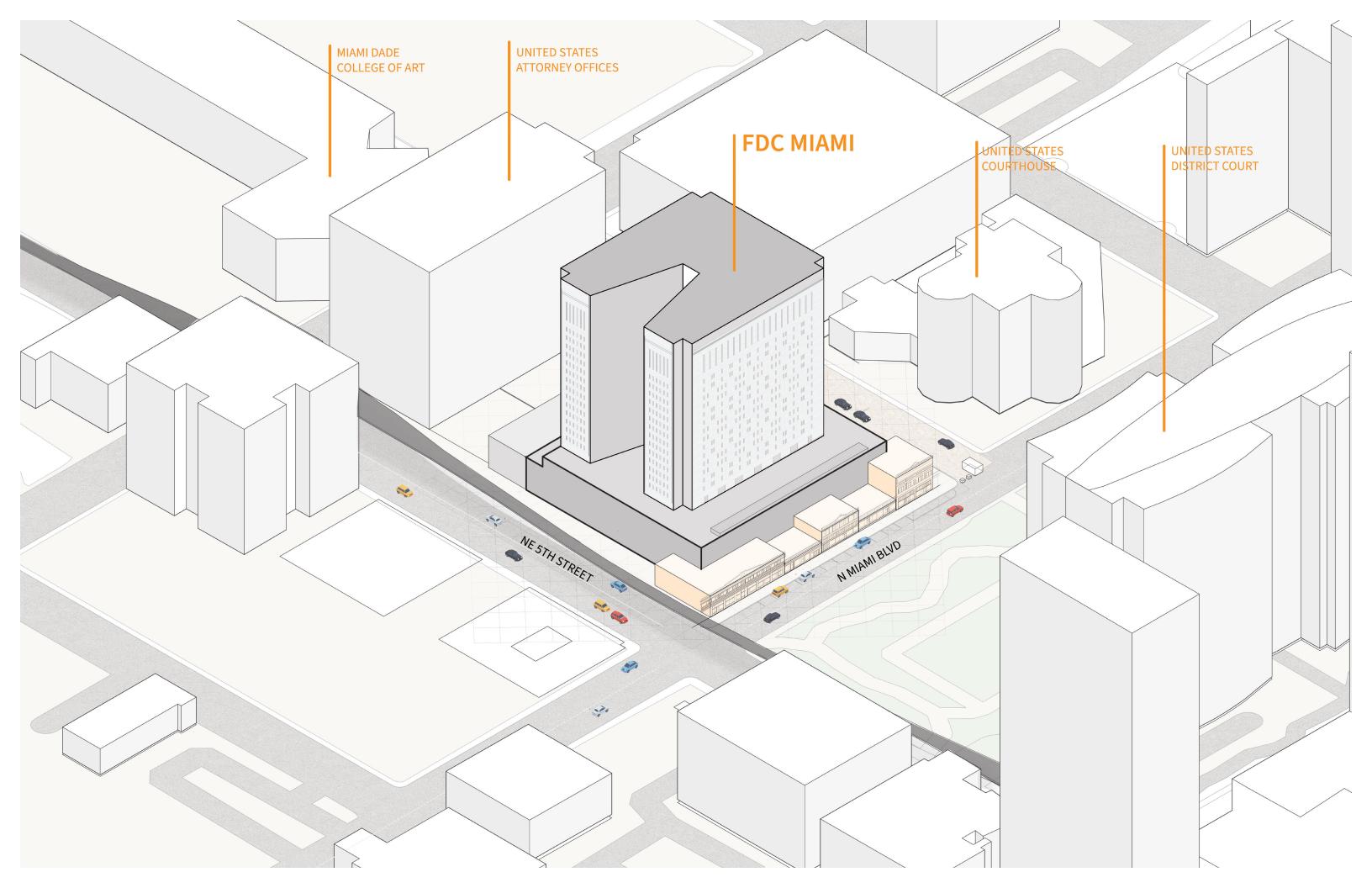




#### SITE ANALYSIS

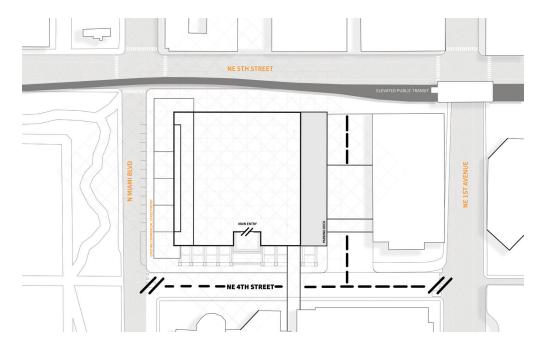
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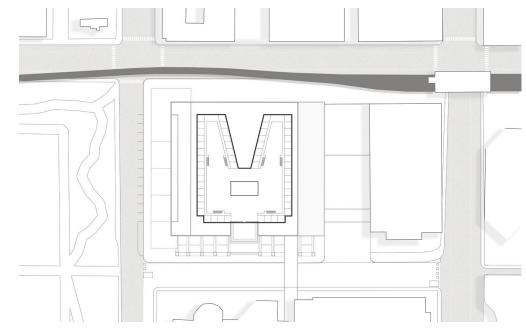


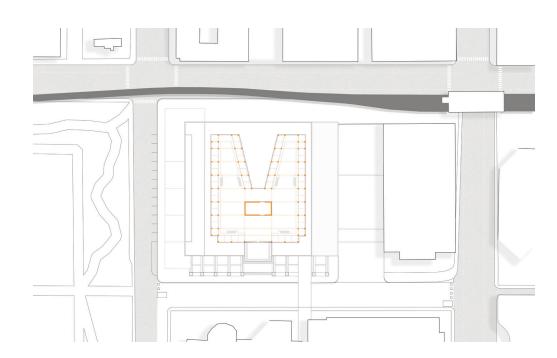


**NE 4TH ST** 

# **NE 5TH ST**







#### PEDESTAL

The first 3-4 levels of the prison, with the existing vacant offices shown on the left and the administrative functions of the prison in the center. Here we can also read means of access in which the west and north facades face the city, while the east and south facades are inaccessible to the public and face the larger municipal complex.

#### TOWER

The cells are located in the 14-story tower above, organized around the exterior of the floor plate. The units are all double height with about 100 dualoccupancy cells per unit.

#### STRUCTURE

The column grid follows the form of the tower, with the central circulation core highlighted in the center of the floor plate.







concrete: walls + structure, cold + harsh metal: furniture adn doors, sterile + controlling color: dull fabric: clothing + bedding, standard

SPACE

cell: 7'Wx15'Lx10'H unit: double height, 50 cells

(Q) USER

inmate: shared cell, shared un

(L) TIME

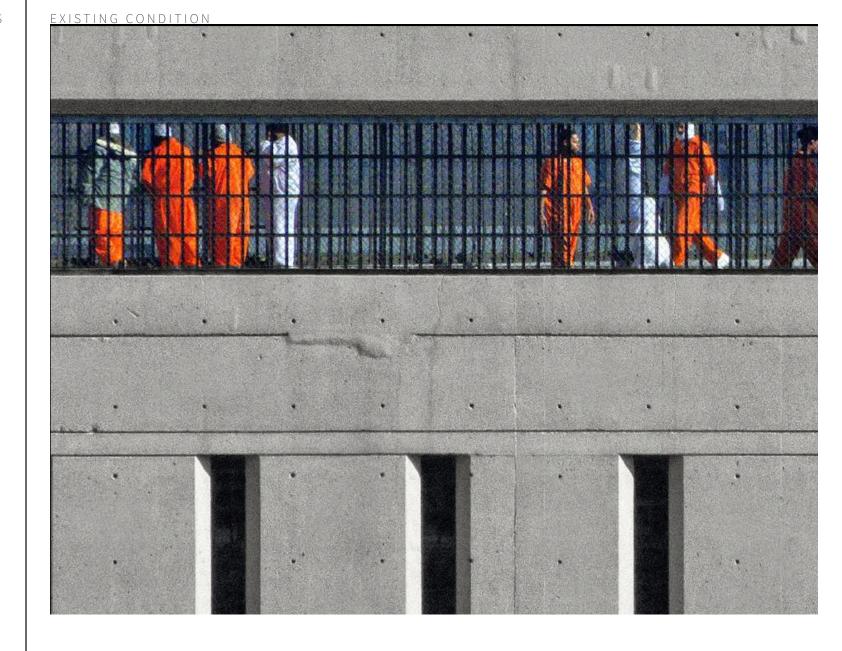
all security levels: 6:00AM wake-up in-unit until 1:00PM dayroom + recreation 2:00PM-6:00PN 9:00PM lights-out

SOUND

high: materials lead to high levels of violence and disruption causing high levels of noise throughout the shared unit and dayroom spaces

VIEWS

inside: only other inmates/officers in shared unit outside: small window in cell, large glass wall in shared univiews constricted by form



#### WITHIN THE WALLS

On the left we see some images of the current state inside FDC Miami, with small, shared cells and minimal natural lighting. The materials are harsh and cold, with concrete walls and metal furniture. Communal areas are desolate and impersonal. Prisoners spend most of their day in these spaces with only 4 hours given to recreation and educational activities. These spaces hold inmates of all securities levels that are awaiting trial and/or sentencing and have a long history of high levels of violence and disruption.

MASS INCARCERATION WILL NOT ONLY REQUIRE CHANGES TO THE CURRENT SYSTEM, BUT ALSO THE DESIGN OF A NEW ONE.

THIS BEGINS WITH THE PRISON ITSELF.

## REDEFINING...



**CONTROL** 

as...

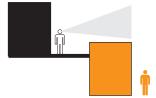
circulation / access

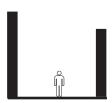


**SURVEILLANCE** 

as...

transparency



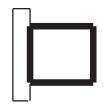


**SECURITY** 

as...

material / interaction





**WALL** 

as...

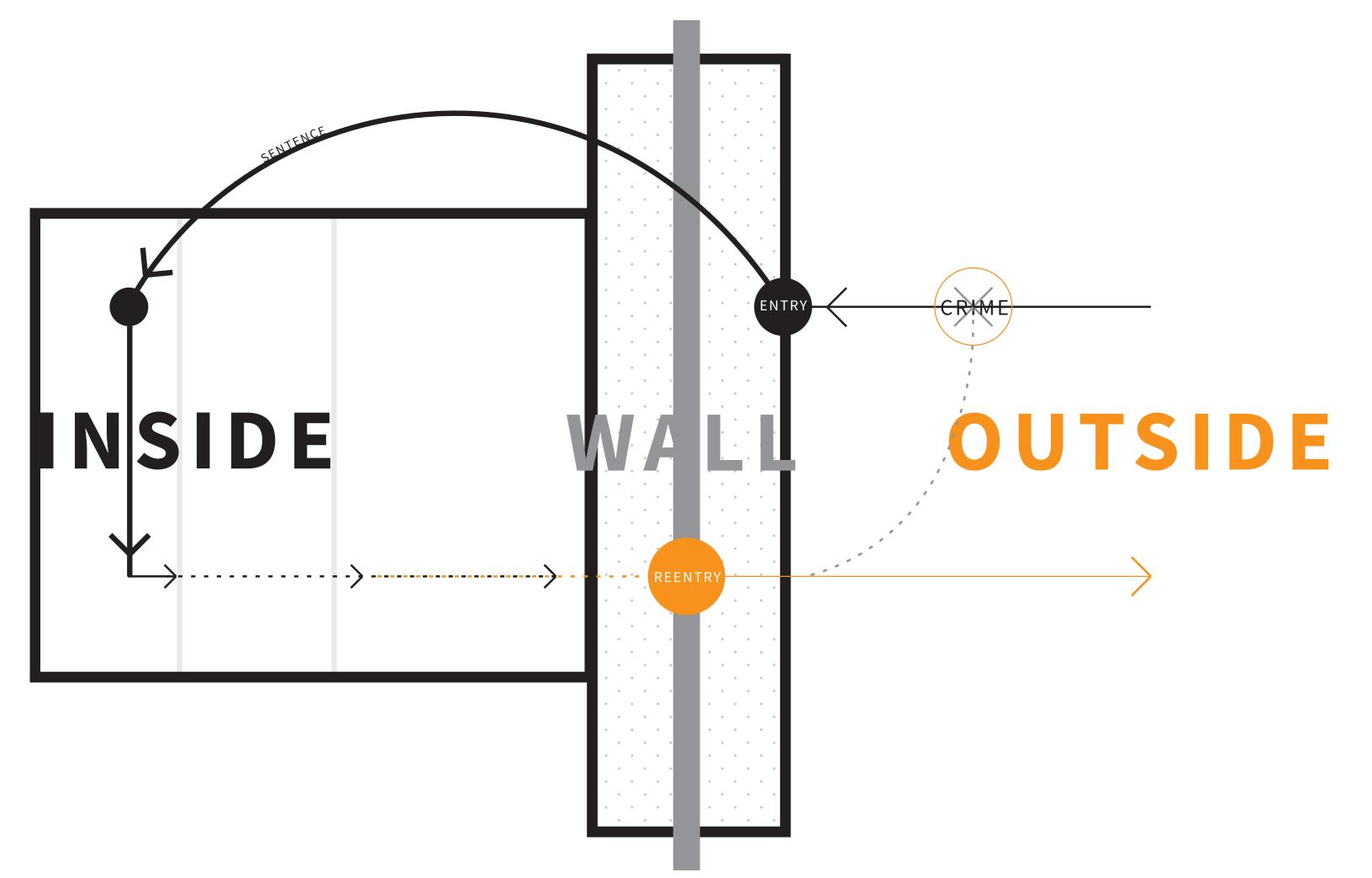
form / transition

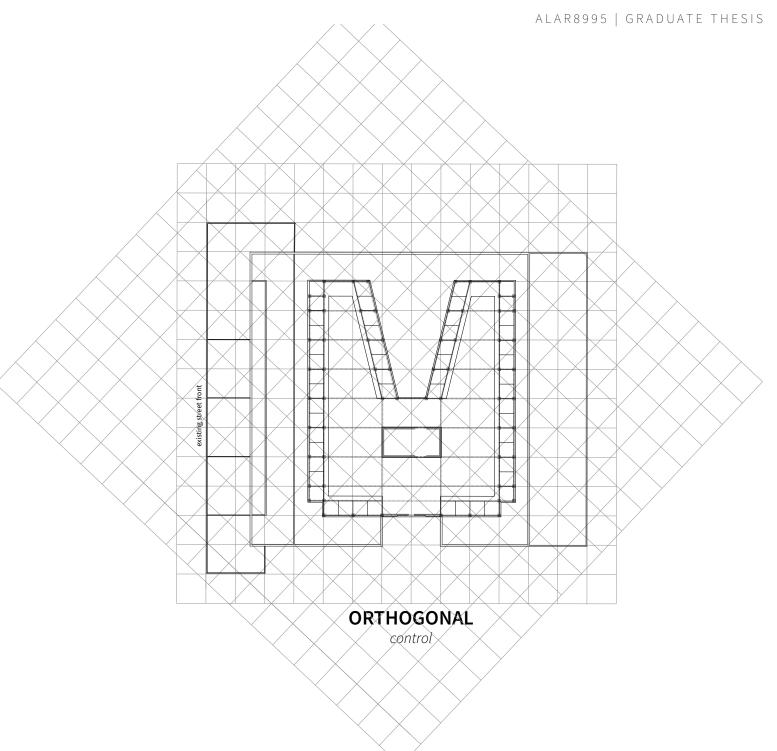


The research specifically focuses on an urban federal institution, in which the advantages lie in a multitude of adjacencies and connections to transportation, services and support infrastructure. Here, separation is most obvious but least visually obstructed. My proposition offers a synthetic view of the prison, reimagining an institution's interface with society through designing a mediation of barriers, weaving the inside and out by lessening the extent of isolation and fostering a range of social interactions. As a parti, my idea lies in this mitigation of barriers, particularly in breaking down the perception of the wall or the image of separation.

By puncturing the boundaries, both visual and physical, through scalable social programming like recreation, production and education, the goal is to disintegrate the perception of separation on both sides of the wall. The ideological shift of viewing imprisonment as a secondary social dynamic as opposed to the primary dynamic of outside life will make way for the positive development and rehabilitation of prisoners preparing for release. The research presents a direct challenge the current image of the prison arguing that "as long as we are separated or selectively harmed by space, justice is not possible."

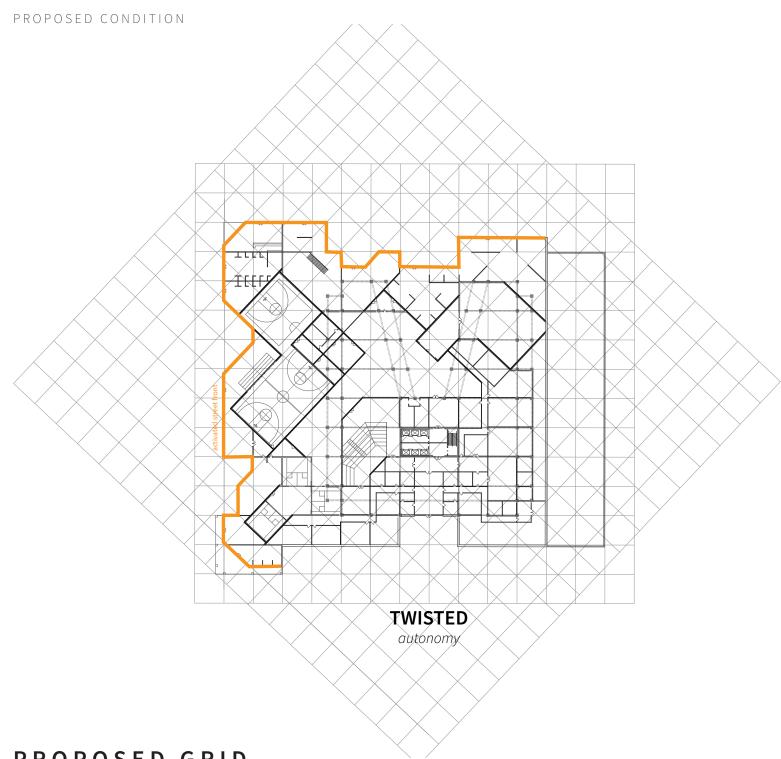
## PROPOSED CONDITION





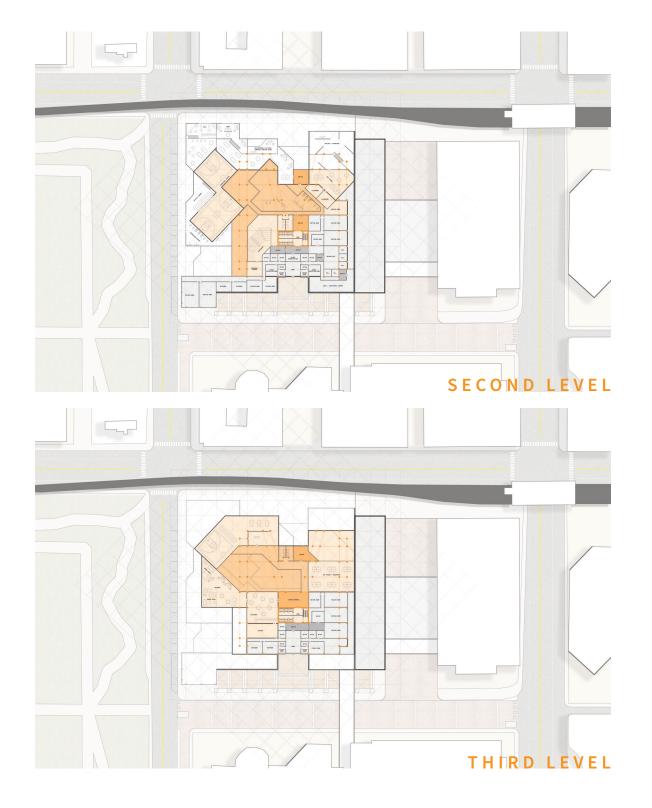
#### **EXISTING GRID**

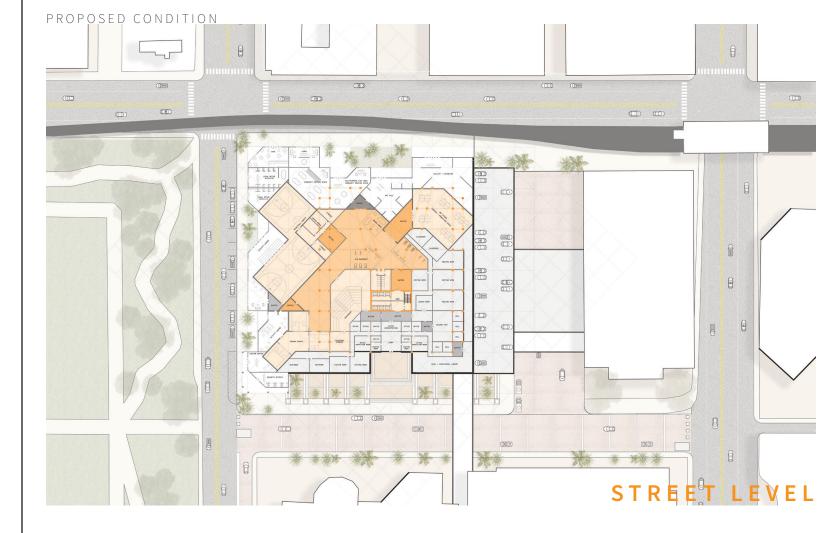
The existing orthogonal grid is reminiscent of many prisons across the US, one that emulates control and order through architectural organization and form.



#### PROPOSED GRID

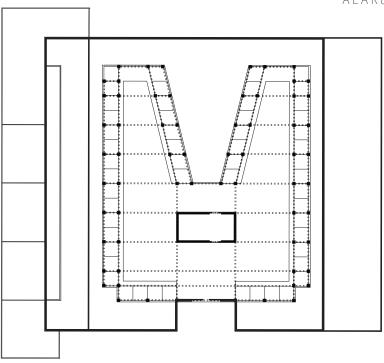
The idea of the proposed twist in organization is to create a different perspective on the space inside, creating a dynamic interior with a sense of liveliness and activity, framing views of others and the outside as a means of generating a sense of autonomy and self-dignity.

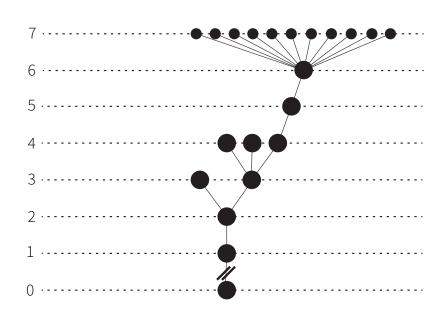




#### FLOOR PLANS

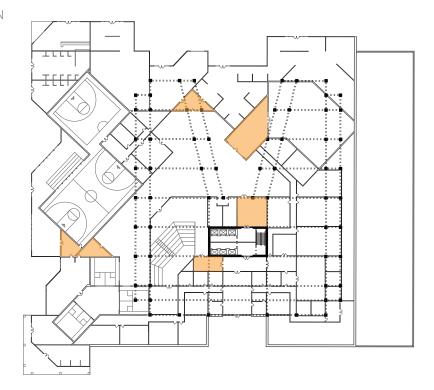
The proposed street level plan respects the existing prison functions facing larger government complex to the south and east, while situating the more dynamic, active public fronts along the two more urban elevations to the west and north. The spaces along the street front are meant to serve the surrounding community and visiting families, allowing for more ease of access and points of interaction. The orange highlighted spaces are all considered internal to the prison. The most saturated areas represent these transitional zones in which inmates can pass through to participate in recreation and education in which those from the outside also may access at designated periods of time. The space in the middle takes on the idea of the courtyard but with that shifted grid, moving inmates from place to place and giving space for positive chance interactions.

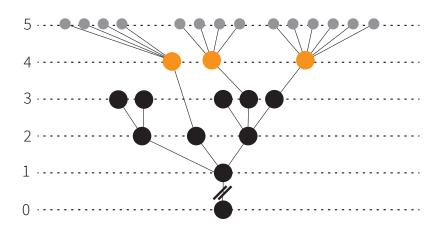




#### EXISTING SPATIAL STRUCTURE

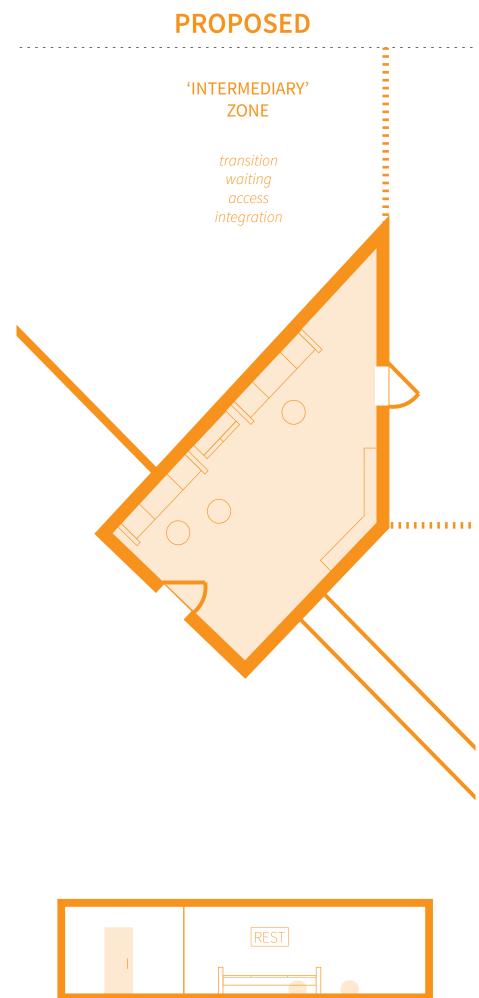
This plan/diagram represents the traditional spatial sequencing in US prisons in which the entrance is through a secured gate (0), a series of corridors, doors and checkpoints (1-4), leading to a courtyard like space (5), then a cell unit (6), and finally the cells (7). Communication is at a minimum and control and surveillance is at the forefront.





#### PROPOSED SPATIAL STRUCTURE

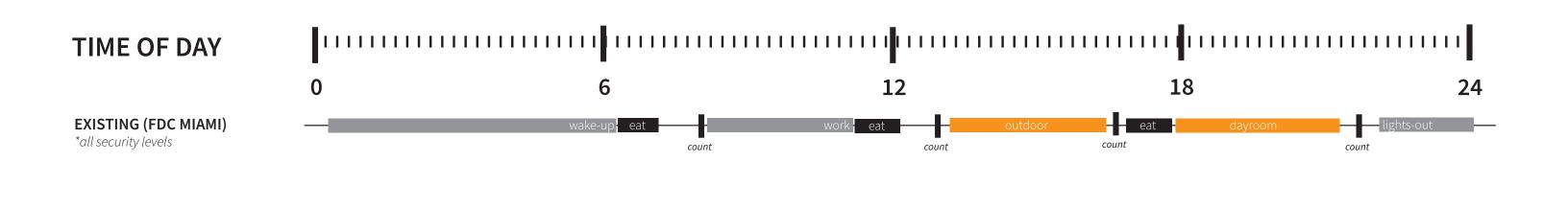
This plan/diagram represents the proposed spatial sequencing, in which the entrance remains through a secure gate (0) and a series of intake spaces (1+2). However, then these spaces open to a large atrium (3), feeding to transition zones (4) controlling access to "public" fronts (5). These transition zones serve as a redefinition of control, movement, and security, allowing for inmates to transition through a sequence of space rather than a series of walls, doors and barriers.

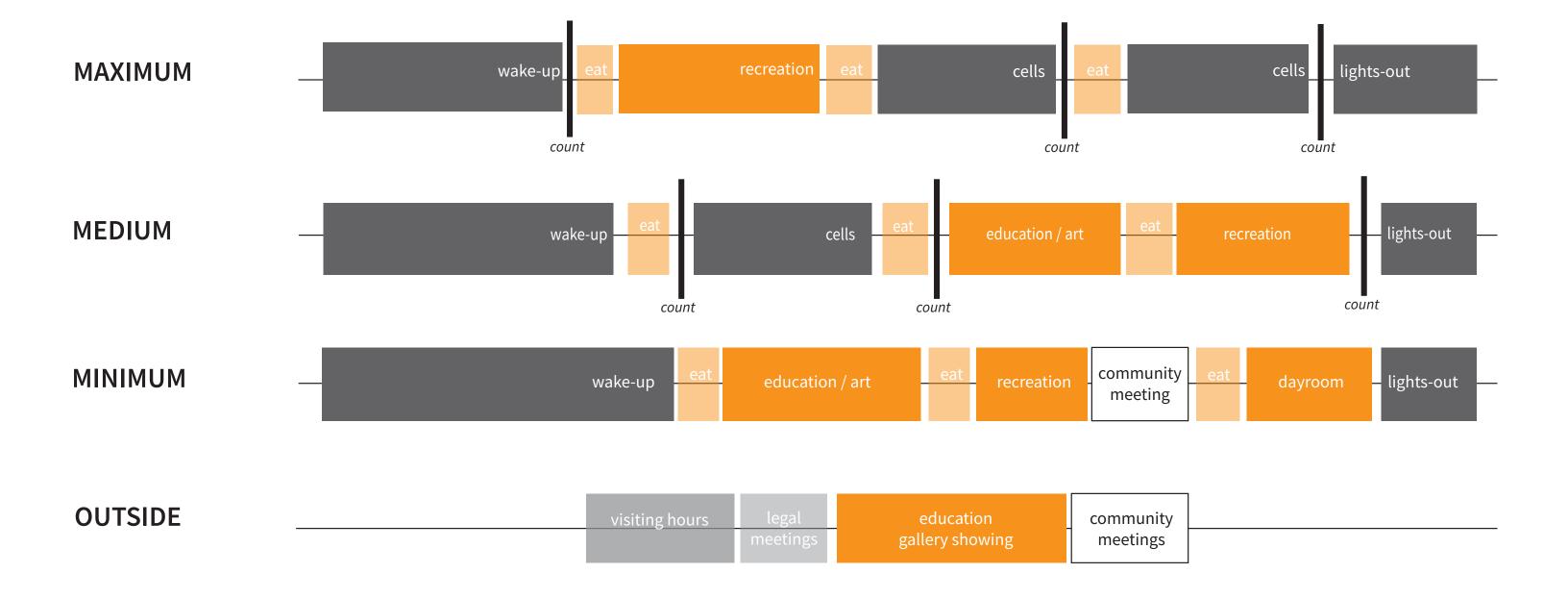


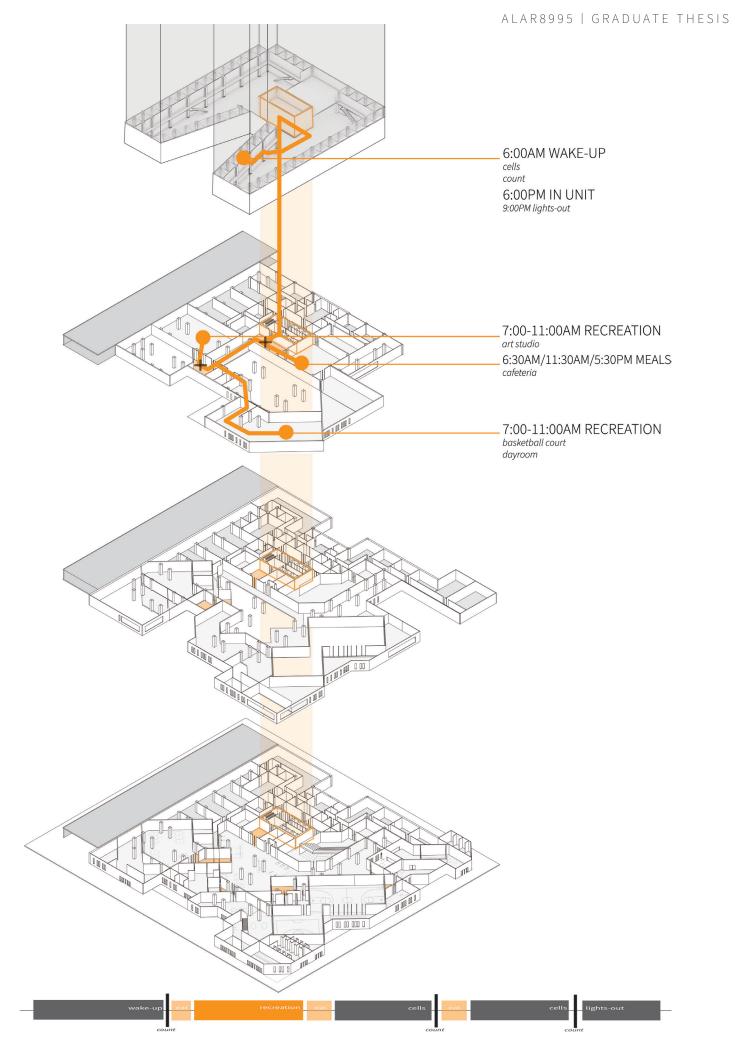
_	BARRIER TYPE	PLAN	SECTION	PURPOSE
	SECURITY CHECKPOINT			control authority power security access
-	CORRIDOR			circulation access
	DOOR			control access barrier
	BARS			control security surveillance
	WALL			control authority security seperation barrier

#### TRANSITION ZONES

On the right we see a catalog of the existing typologies of barriers representative of maximum control and loss of dignity in prisons, spaces like security checkpoints, corridors, doors, bars and walls. On the left is the proposed redesign of these spaces into an intermediary or transitional zone meant for waiting, resting and reintegration.

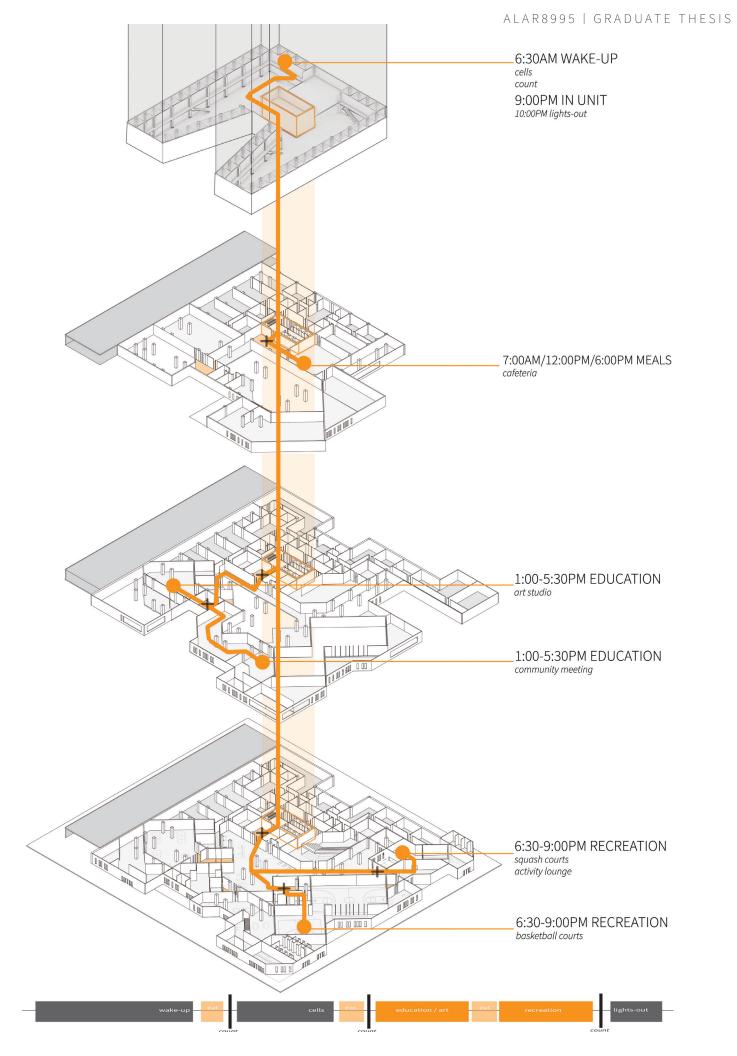






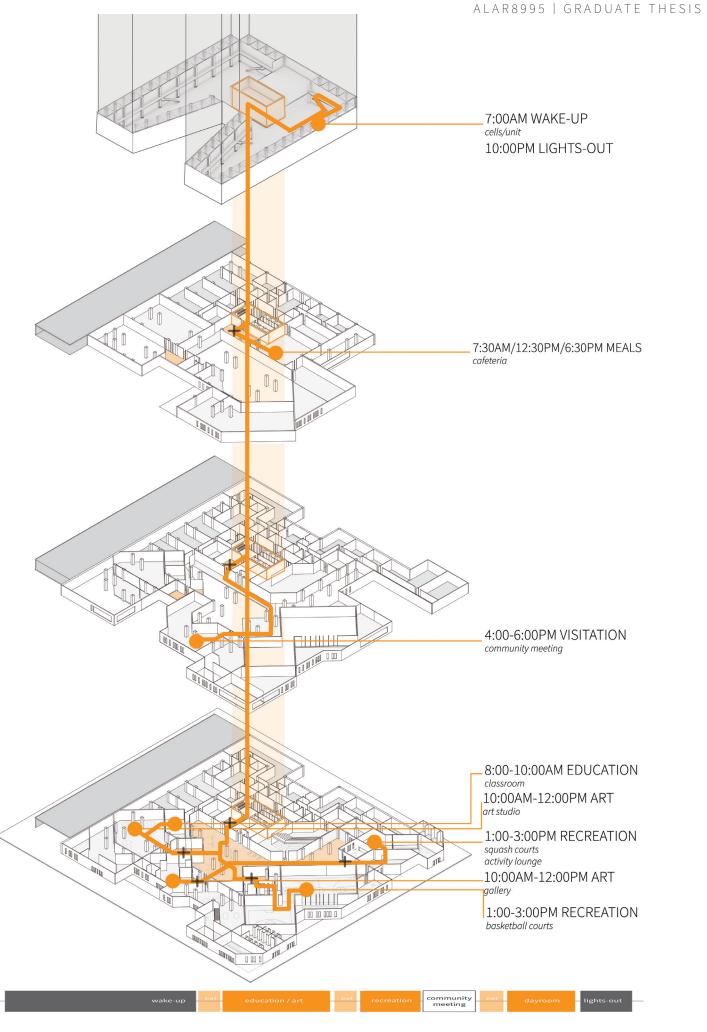
#### MAXIMUM SECURITY

The maximum security population is permitted access to facilities located on the third level of the pedestal, where things like a large cafeteria and dining room, dayroom and recreational spaces, and small scale art studios and maker spaces are located. These spaces offer moments of views to the main atrium and outside to begin to ignite a sense of dignity and community.



#### MEDIUM SECURITY

The medium security population is given slightly more autonomy in access to spaces in the first and second level of the pedestal, however still has controlled movement and hard adherence to scheduling. These first two levels contain larger spaces for recreation and sport games, art studios and classrooms. This population does, however, gain access to things like education and interaction with people from the outside. The views and movement throughout the pedestal offers a sense or perception of community without participating in any dialogue.

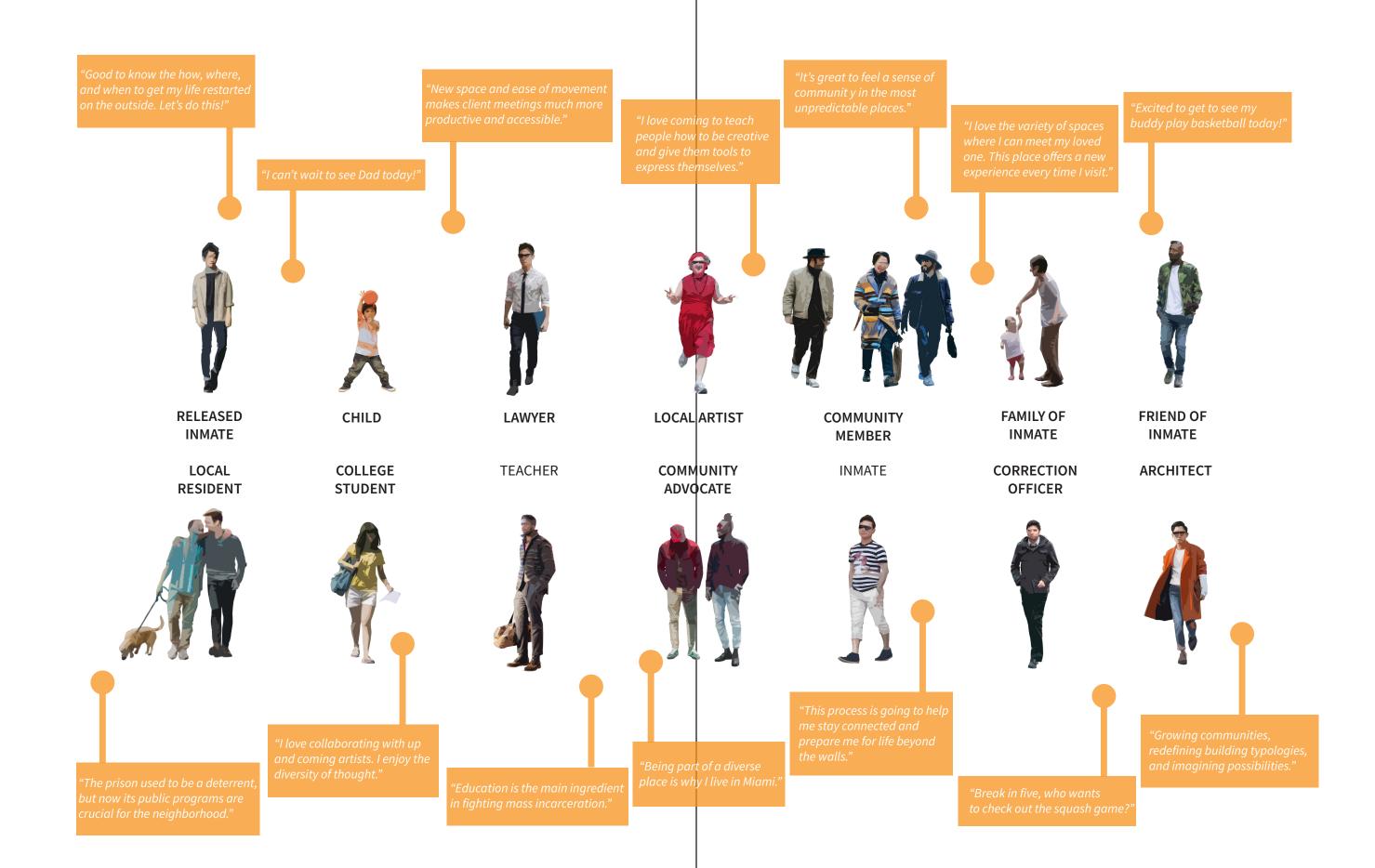


#### MINIMUM SECURITY

The minimum security population is given the most autonomy in both movement and access. The main atrium is seen as a space for positive chance interaction and potential collaboration. Inmates can access visitation spaces, community meeting rooms, legal offices, classrooms, large sport courts, etc. Their daily scheduling is less strict but still ensure safety among all security level populations. In this phase, life is most reminiscent of the outside, preparing and rehabilitating inmates upon release.

#### OUTSIDE

This diagram represents how the outside population will begin to eat away at the prison wall, enabling access to places like legal satellite offices, visitation rooms, art studios and the gallery, as well as the activity lounge which offers a space for family members and friends to view sport games and other activities. In this way I am beginning to foster a sense of community and belongingness with the idea that social interaction may lessen the perception of separation.



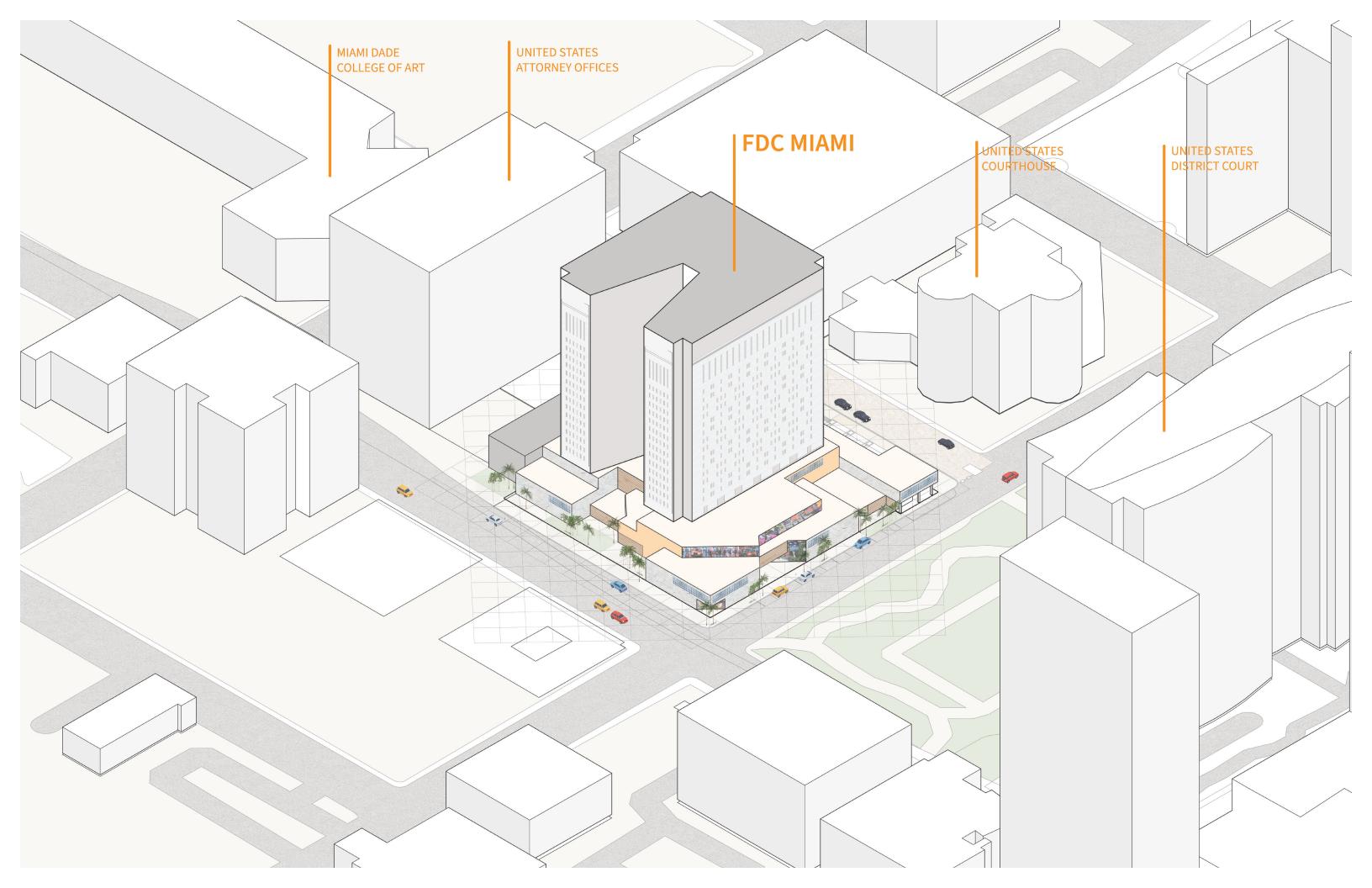
The image of imprisonment exists as one of distance and fear. My proposition suggests a new image; one of inclusion and restoration by translating the existing harsh, orthogonal, and inaccessible front to this lively, dynamic public street front. These views begin to show how these outside and inside spaces become interwoven and the image is shifted from isolation and exile toward inclusion and individuality.

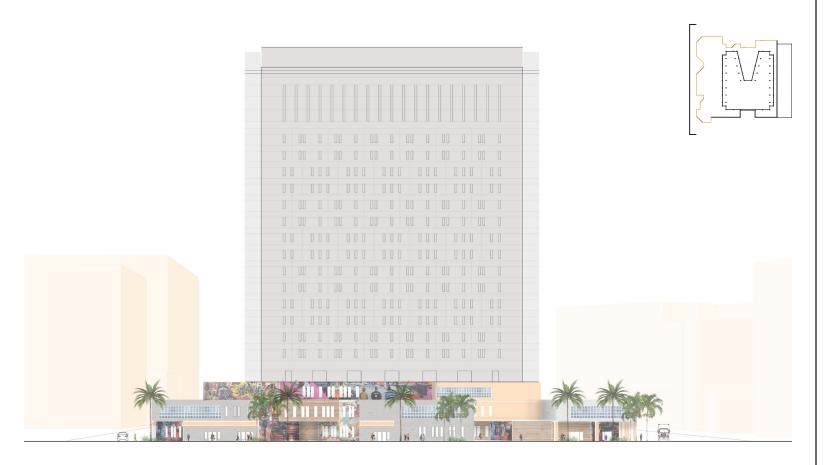
Ending with some perspective images of the interior spaces beginning with the cell where Individualized accommodations help to restore identity and agency. Moving to the main atrium in which these communal spaces foster positive social engagement. Views/windows into other spaces create ideas of community without actual participation in any dialogue. Then the art studio where artists and community members begin to have access to interaction with inmates through the act of making. More private classrooms that offer views into spaces like the art studio but in a more secure and sedentary space. The activity lounge which is meant for visitors to view family members or friends participating in sport games seen on the left. And finally, the auditorium which is meant as a larger gathering space for education or performance, allowing individuals to showcase talents and support individuality.

## THE IMAGE

THE IMAGE OF THE PRISON WILL SEND OUT DIFFERENT MESSAGES DEPENDING ON WHICH SIDE OF THE WALL THE OBSERVER HAPPENS TO RESIDE. THERE HAS TO BE AN APPROPRIATE BALANCE BETWEEN THE REQUIREMENTS OF SECURITY AND THE ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES OF AN OVER-OPPRESSIVE ATMOSPHERE, WHICH CAN LEAD TO A HOSTILE REACTION FROM THE INMATES AND A NEGATIVE REACTION FROM THE PUBLIC.







#### N MIAMI BLVD ELEVATION

The proposed elevation in which murals are done in partnership between local artists and inmates on the shifted walls, horizontal wood paneling represents places of entry, offering an inviting and warm space for visitors to view. And the plaster facades as a reminiscent piece of the old street front/wall.



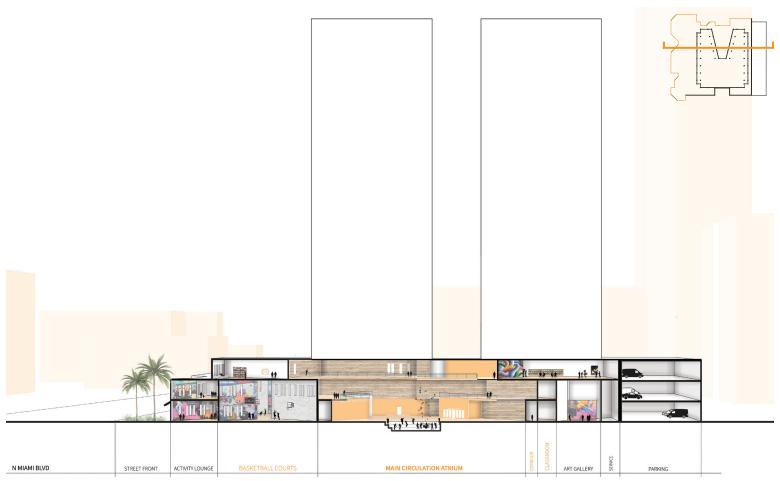
#### INTERIOR SECTION

The section translates these same principles on the interior, with wood paneling in the large main atrium to bring a sense of calmness and community, and murals as both a program and pop of color to bring energy to recreational spaces. The transition zones, again, highlighted in orange.



### NE 5TH STREET ELEVATION

These views begin to show how these outside and inside spaces become interwoven and the image is shifted from isolation and exile toward inclusion and individuality.



## INTERIOR SECTION



## TIME

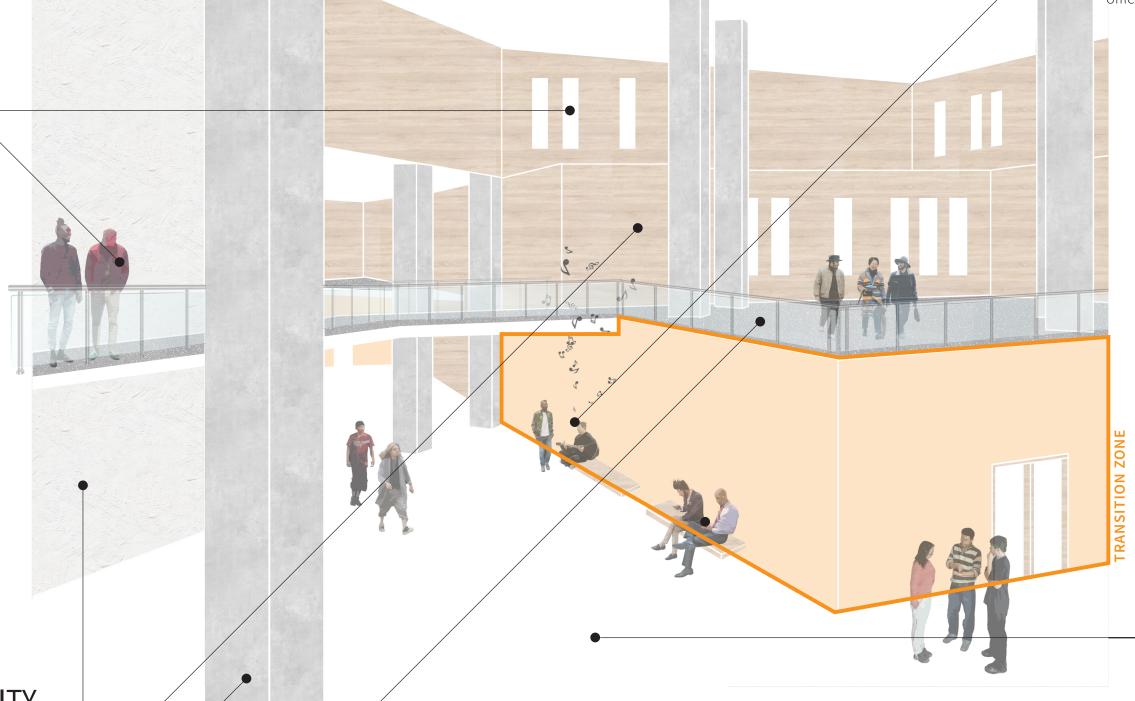
min: ALL HOURS med: 1:00-9:00PM max: 7:00-11:00AM



inmate: interactive activity and circulation atrium officer: positive interaction and surveillance



twisted grid: emulates dynamic social interaction and perception of outside experience, the prison as a city



SPACE

atrium: 10,000 SF



wood: walls, furniture, warm + calming

concrete: structure, grounding plaster: walls, existing

rubber: flooring, absorption + playful



medium: movement + social interaction, materials used to absorb sound



# **O** VIEWS

inside: studio work space outside: downtown miami, gallery



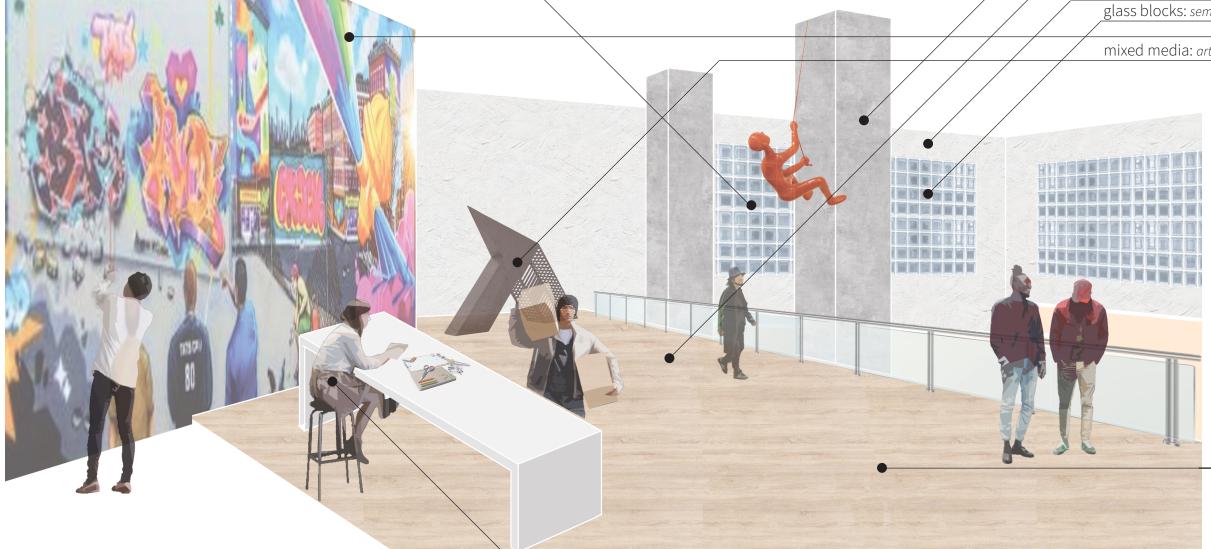
plaster: wall, containment

glass blocks: semi-treansparent, extention mural: walls, creative

mixed media: art + sculpture, individuality



min: 8:00AM-12:00PM med: 1:00-5:00PM max: NONE



SPACE (

art studios: 3,000 SF gallery: 500 SF

SOUND

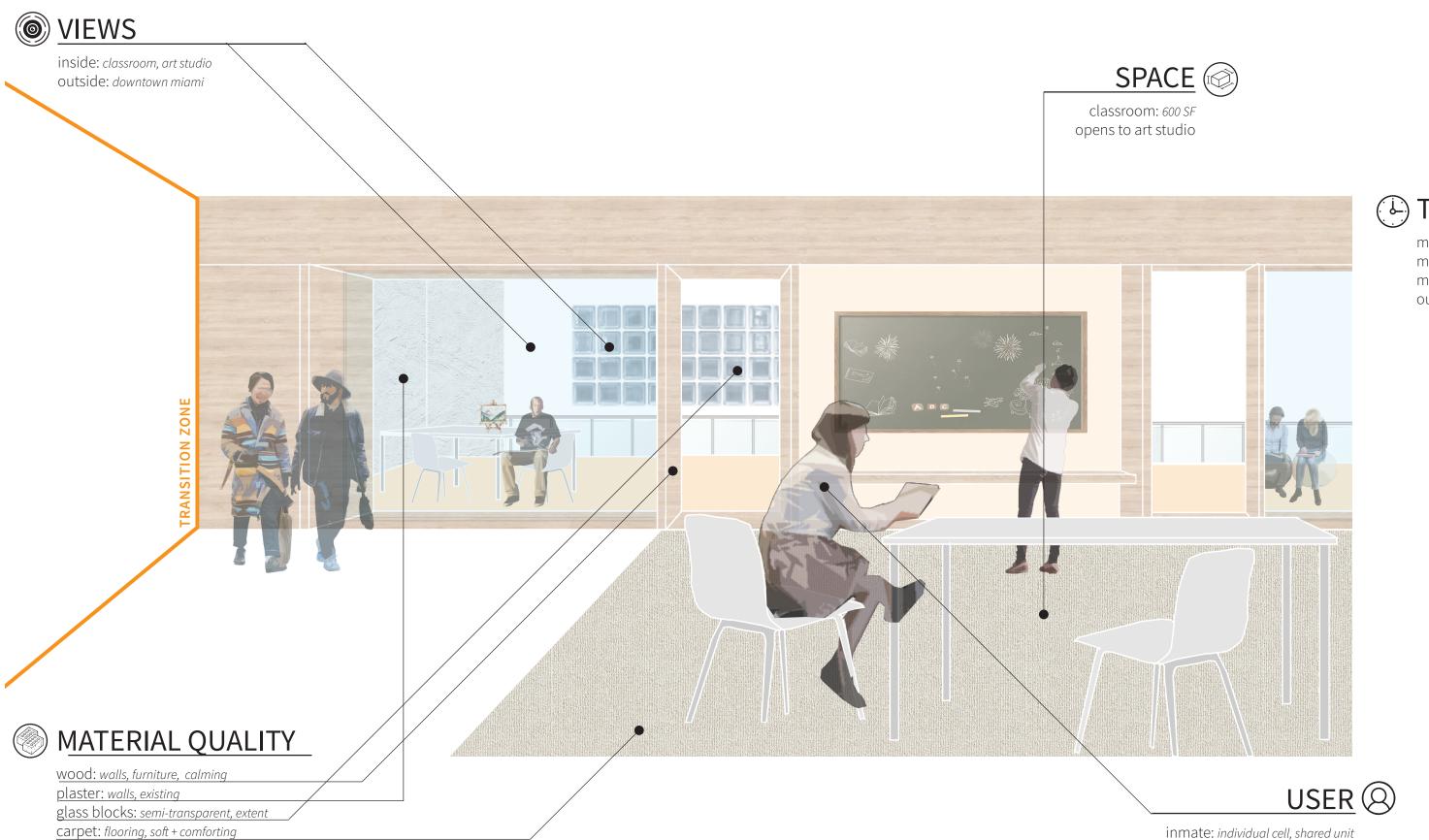
medium: mix public/private working studio spaces, inmate/instructor interatction, art gallery quiet for reflection



inmate: art studio, learning community member: instructor, gallery viewer

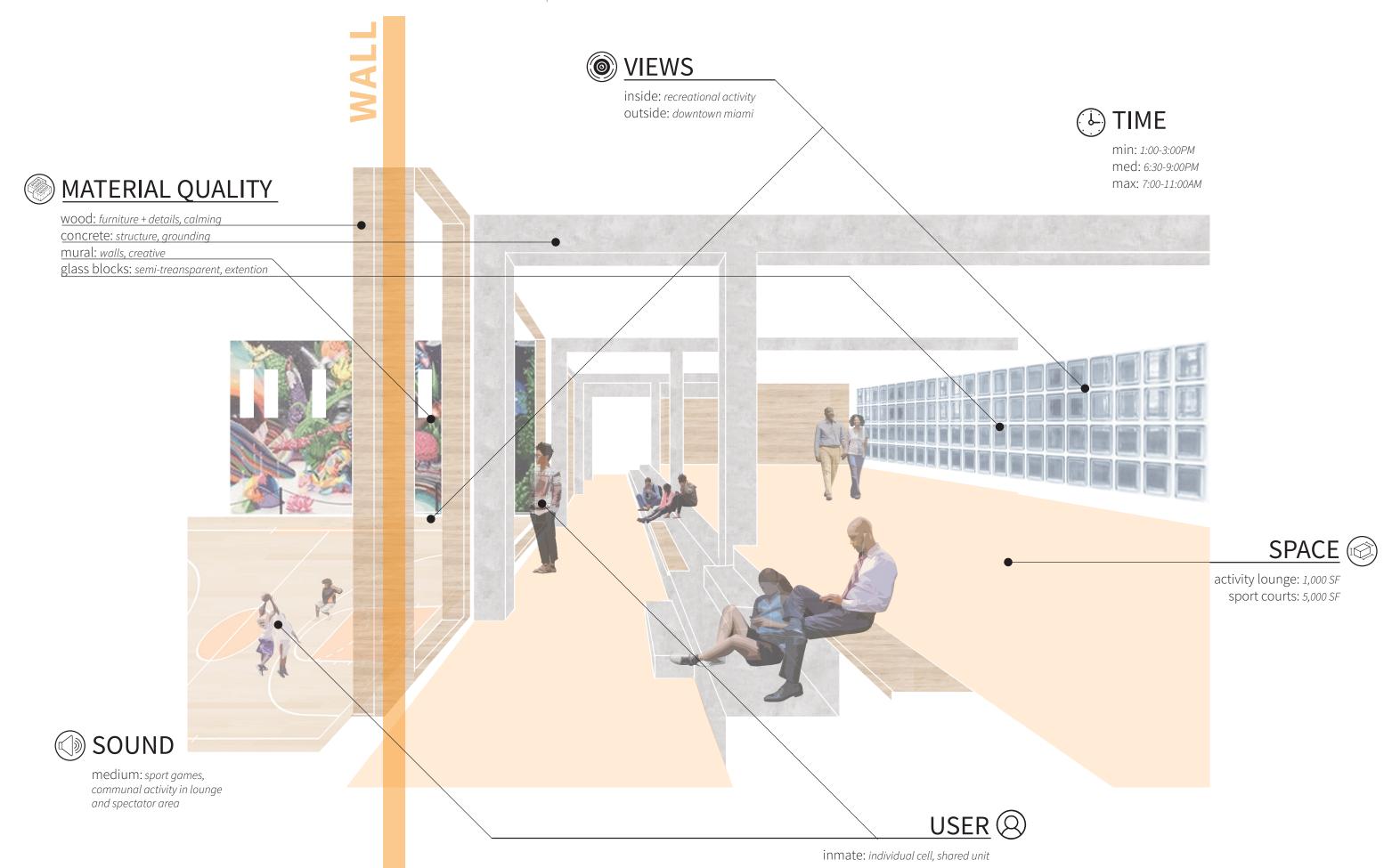


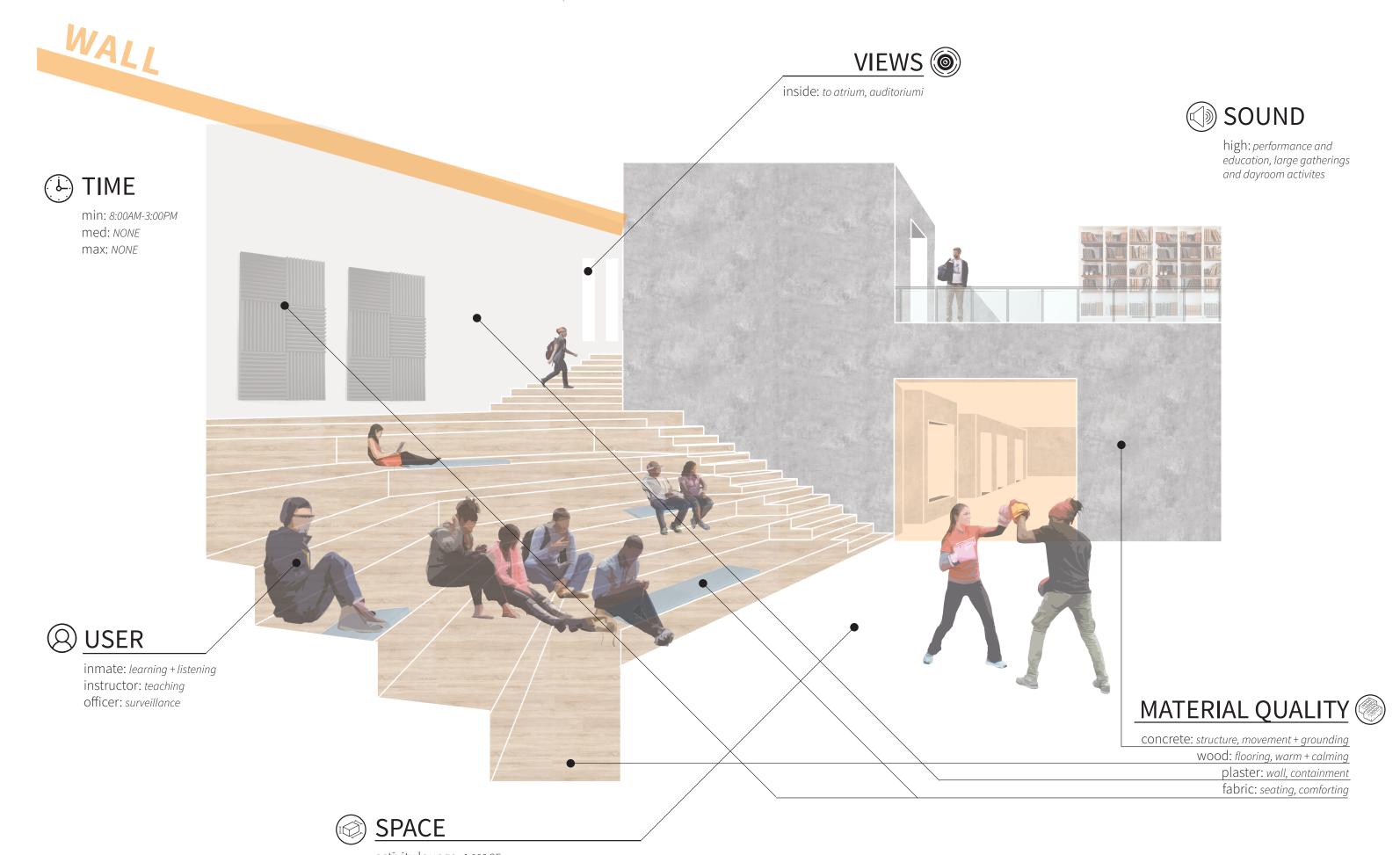
low: learning, individual to small group work and listening space, material absorbs loud activity



**U** TIME

min: 8:00-10:00AM med: 2:00-4:00PM max: 11:00AM-1:00PM out: 11:00AM-4:00PM





activity lounge: 1,000 SF sport courts: 5,000 SF

ARCHITECTURE HAS A ROLE TO PLAY IN CREATING A REIMAGINED PRISON: A PLACE THAT HEALS, INVESTS IN HUMAN DIGNITY, AND RESTORES COMMUNITIES.



#### CONCLUSION

This thesis is titled Within (or without) the Wall and aims to decode the image of imprisonment. My proposition offers a synthetic view of the prison, reimagining an urban institution's interface with society through designing a mediation of barriers, weaving the inside and out by lessening the extent of isolation and fostering a range of social interactions. Today, prison architecture reinforces mass incarceration by breaking social systems, increasing recidivism, and degrading identity. Architecture has a role to play in creating a reimagined prison: a place that heals, invests in human dignity, and restores communities.

THANK YOU.

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