

Block Island Life Saving Station

UM-Public Design Corps

2023



Previous pages: Block Island Life-Saving Station, Sandy Point, 1880s, featuring International Code of Signal flags used in service practice; from “Lighthouses and Life Saving along the Connecticut and Rhode Island Coast”, by James Claflin.

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The proposal to integrate police and fire services on Block Island demands both attention and precision, touching on essential questions of safety and security, while embedding them within the routines of the community.

At UM Public Design Corps, we approach this task with measured intent, aware of the tension between the demands of design and the imperatives of function, material, and execution. Our role is not merely to design but to calibrate—ensuring that what emerges is not just operational but also accessible and equitable.

The work begins with context. Block Island’s geographic, social, and ecological specificities are not background elements but central to the task. Our engagement with the community in May 2023 yielded insights that anchor our approach. These moments of discovery—rooted in the island’s material realities—are both guideposts and constraints, shaping the boundaries of what can and should be achieved.

This report consolidates those findings and presents a framework for moving forward. It reflects a systematic engagement with the program’s challenges and the site’s demands, offering an account of the methods and considerations that inform our work. It is not a conclusion but a point of departure for what may follow.

Our efforts, while varied and methodical, represent only an initial step toward the comprehensive strategy this project demands. At its core, this undertaking challenges New Shoreham’s leaders and residents to reconsider entrenched paradigms. The task is not merely to address the future of policing and its integration with fire and rescue services but to do so within a framework that anticipates broader challenges—those of conservation, development, and climate adaptation.

This requires more than operational alignment; it calls for a deliberate approach to construction and planning that foregrounds environmental stewardship. The ecological richness and fragile beauty of Block Island, rare along the Eastern Seaboard, necessitate a focus on sustainability that is not ancillary but central. The preservation and reinforcement of the island’s natural resilience must inform every aspect of the project’s development.

This report, then, is less a conclusion than an argument: for a vision of Block Island’s future that integrates essential services without compromising its character or ecological integrity. It reflects our commitment to advancing solutions that honor both the island’s practical needs and its enduring sense of place.



The Block Island Police Station, constructed in the early 1960s, was followed shortly thereafter by the Fire Station in 1965. Built using conventional brick-and-mortar techniques, both structures have long since fallen short of meeting the evolving needs of their respective departments and the broader community. The police station encompasses 10,300 square feet, including a 1,500-square-foot basement, a 7,300-square-foot first floor housing primary police operations, and a 1,500-square-foot second floor, largely used for storage. These facilities no longer provide adequate space for personnel, equipment, or the expanding scope of departmental programs.

The Police Department, in particular, faces a range of critical challenges:

- Establishing a secure dispatch area compliant with all relevant codes and standards.
- Ensuring clear separation between spaces intended for community programming and those used to detain or process crime suspects.
- Improving privacy measures for individuals in custody.
- Creating distinct areas to separate juvenile and adult suspects.
- Addressing evidence storage and archival needs with secure, modernized solutions.
- Redesigning office and community spaces to encourage more positive and interactive engagement.
- Incorporating affordable housing options to support recruitment and retention of both temporary and permanent staff.
- Upgrading technological infrastructure to meet current operational standards.

Similarly, the Block Island Volunteer Fire Department contends with its own set of pressing concerns:

- Providing garage storage to accommodate six new trucks, each measuring 30 feet by 10 feet, alongside the existing equipment.
- Improving access and entry points for fire trucks and other essential equipment.
- Upgrading facilities for gear decontamination, including dedicated spaces for doffing, transport, and cleaning.
- Creating adequate training spaces to support both volunteer staff and new recruits.
- Expanding and enhancing housing and social spaces to better meet the needs of the department.

In partnership with the Block Island Chamber of Commerce, the Block Island Police Department, the Block Island Volunteer Fire Department, and Block Island Facilities Management, the UM Public Design Corps has undertaken a comprehensive effort to address these challenges. Simultaneously, the project has focused on identifying and evaluating key opportunities for improvement and innovation.

Efficiency Model: A strategy designed to integrate shared programming between the Police and Fire Departments, aimed at reducing the overall architectural footprint. This model prioritizes a flexible and expansive spatial configuration capable of accommodating the distinct and overlapping needs of both departments.

Civic Support Programming: The development of new initiatives to reinforce the civic role of a unified safety and security center. These programs are intended to enhance operational functionality while cultivating stronger community engagement and trust in public safety institutions.

Environmental Considerations: Acknowledging the environmental impact of construction, the project emphasizes minimizing harm through sustainable design practices. The approach seeks to preserve and respect the local ecosystem, embedding environmental

responsibility into every phase of planning and development.practices that respect and preserve the local environment, integrating them throughout the planning and construction process.

Cost Management: A detailed examination of strategies to reduce construction costs specific to Block Island, with a focus on prefabrication and modular assembly. These methods allow for efficient resource allocation, lowering expenses without compromising the quality or functionality of the facilities.

Contextual Complementarity: TA design approach grounded in sensitivity to the surrounding environment, cultural context, and historical significance, as well as the specific needs of the community. The objective is to create architecture that integrates seamlessly into its setting, avoiding abrupt contrasts. This entails deliberate attention to site conditions, cultural and historical relevance, scale and proportion, material choices, and overall aesthetics.





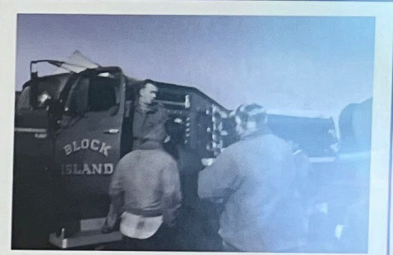


"Block Island's New Fire Engine Arrives at the Dock" January 1962

Providence Sunday Journal
STATE NEWS
AND FEATURES
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND, JANUARY 21, 1962
Pages 19-22

Block Island to Get \$18,000 Fire Truck

Block Island's new fire engine, a 1961 GMC model, was delivered to the island by the Block Island Fire Department. The truck, which cost \$18,000, was purchased with funds raised by the islanders. The new engine will replace the old one, which was built in 1935. The new engine is a 1961 GMC model, and it is the first new engine the island has had in many years. The new engine is a 1961 GMC model, and it is the first new engine the island has had in many years.



"Block Island's New Fire Engine is Delivered" January 1962



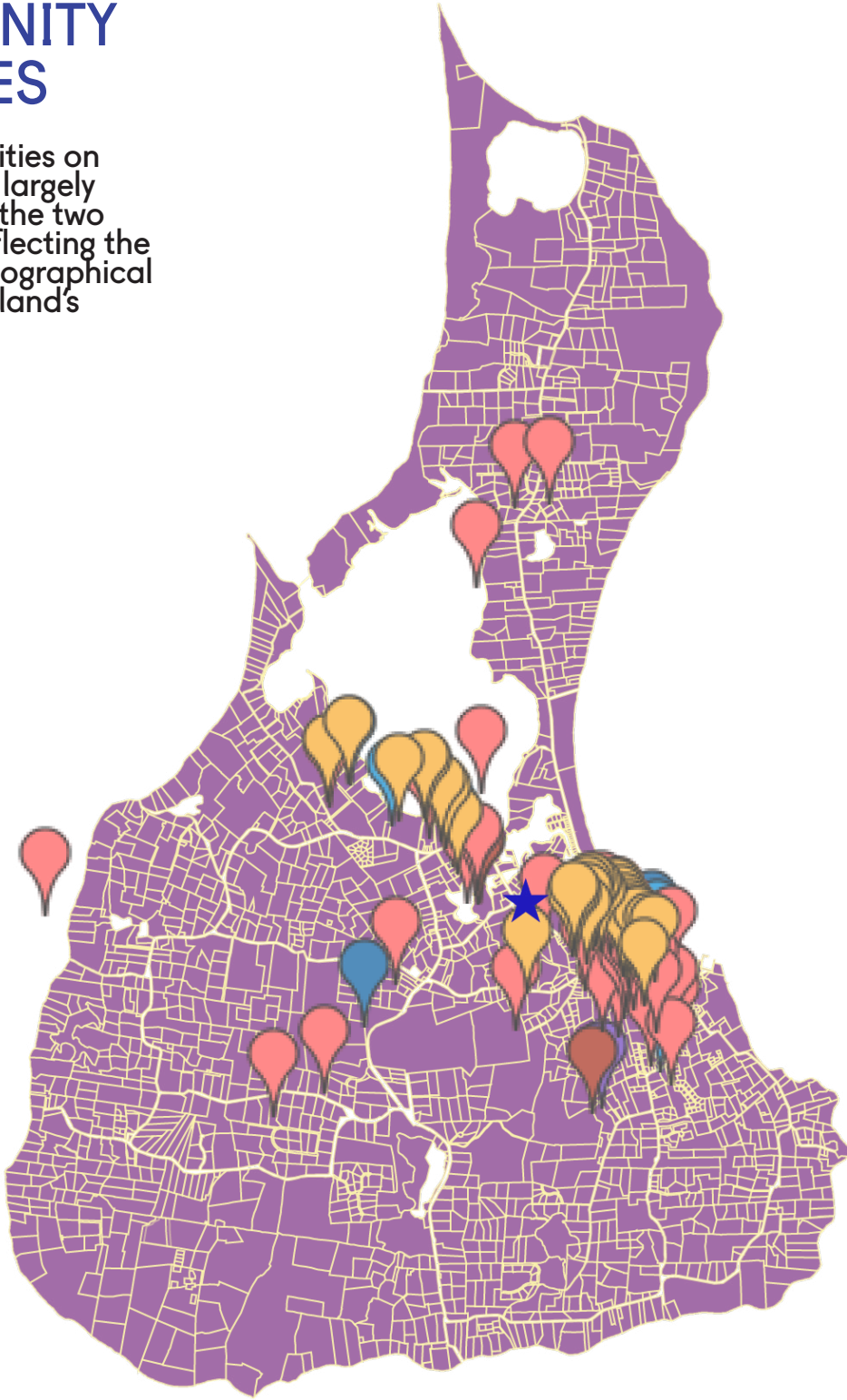


3.	Welcome to Block Island	p. 19
The Seasonal Surge		
<p>Block Island, 12 miles off the coast of Rhode Island, operates with limited public resources for much of the year. With a permanent population of 1,000, the island maintains modest infrastructure during the Fall, Winter, and Spring. However, as Memorial Day approaches, its population swells to over 30,000 daily, driven by an influx of visitors. This dramatic surge demands expanded services and infrastructure, requiring a significant temporary workforce.</p> <p>The influx also brings increased illicit activity, public disturbances, and other risks. First responders have adapted operations to prioritize safety, but housing for temporary staff remains scarce and prohibitively expensive. Efforts to address affordable housing have stalled, creating challenges for employers and workers, and threatening continuity of essential services.</p> <p>Despite these pressures, Block Island’s isolation fosters a strong sense of safety among residents, who often leave homes and vehicles unlocked. Its rural landscape, dotted with residences and preserves, is marked by warm interactions and mutual care, providing comfort and pride for year-round residents.</p> <p>This sense of security weakens during the summer surge. Thousands of tourists arrive daily by ferry, with no security checks, intent on enjoying beaches and festivities. Serious violence is rare, but global events have prompted a reassessment of vulnerabilities. Balancing vigilance with the island’s openness has become increasingly important.</p> <p>Law enforcement presence increases in summer to meet intensified needs, but disaster response remains the responsibility of the U.S. Coast Guard. With an average response time of one hour, this arrangement highlights the island’s vulnerability during crises, where immediacy is critical.</p>		
Block Island	Public Design Corps	Spring 2023



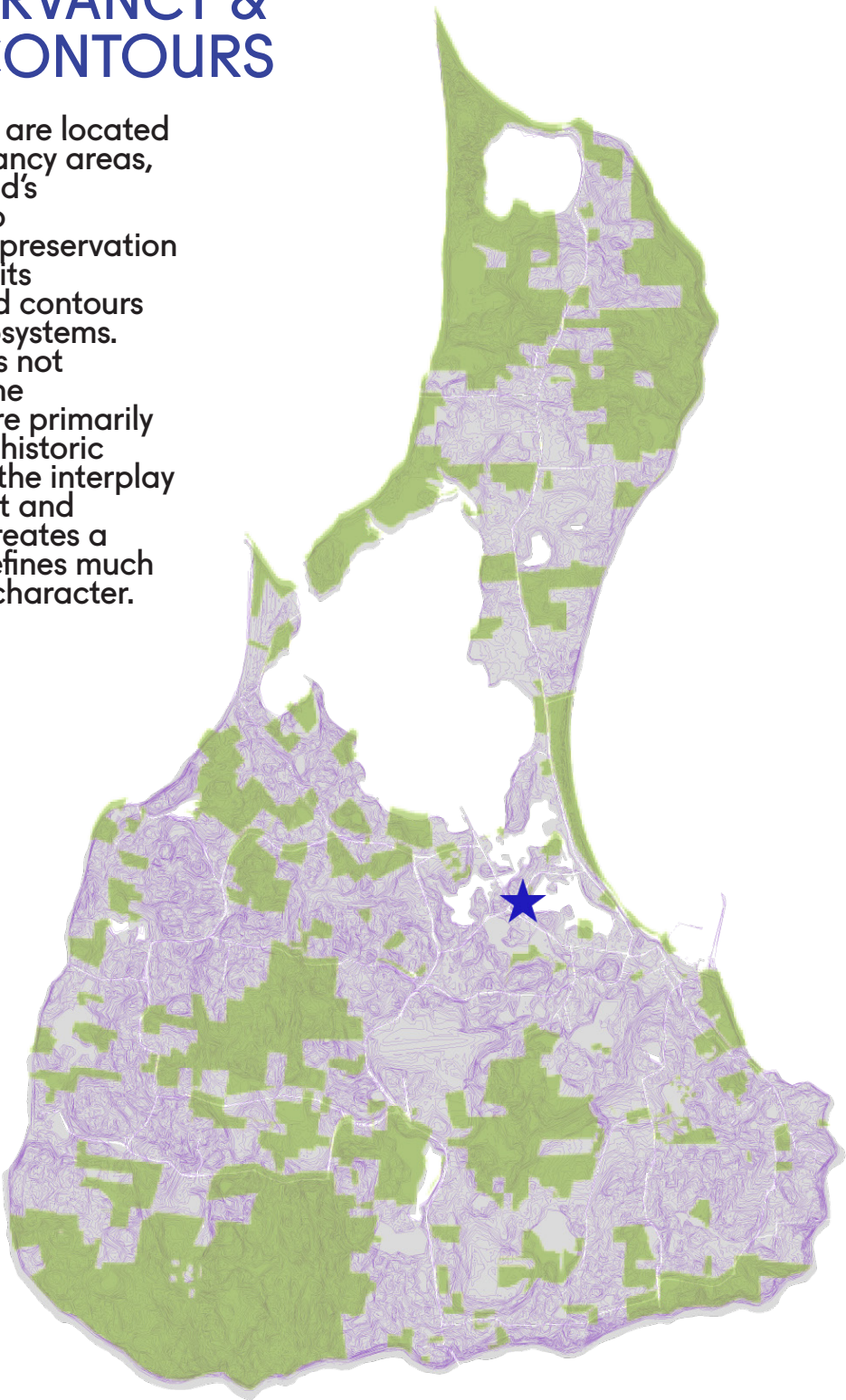
COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Community facilities on Block Island are largely concentrated in the two harbor areas, reflecting the historical and geographical anchors of the island's public life.



CONSERVANCY & LAND CONTOURS

Most wetlands are located within conservancy areas, where the island's commitment to environmental preservation intersects with its undulating land contours and fragile ecosystems. Those wetlands not protected by the conservancy are primarily situated in the historic district, where the interplay of development and preservation creates a tension that defines much of the island's character.



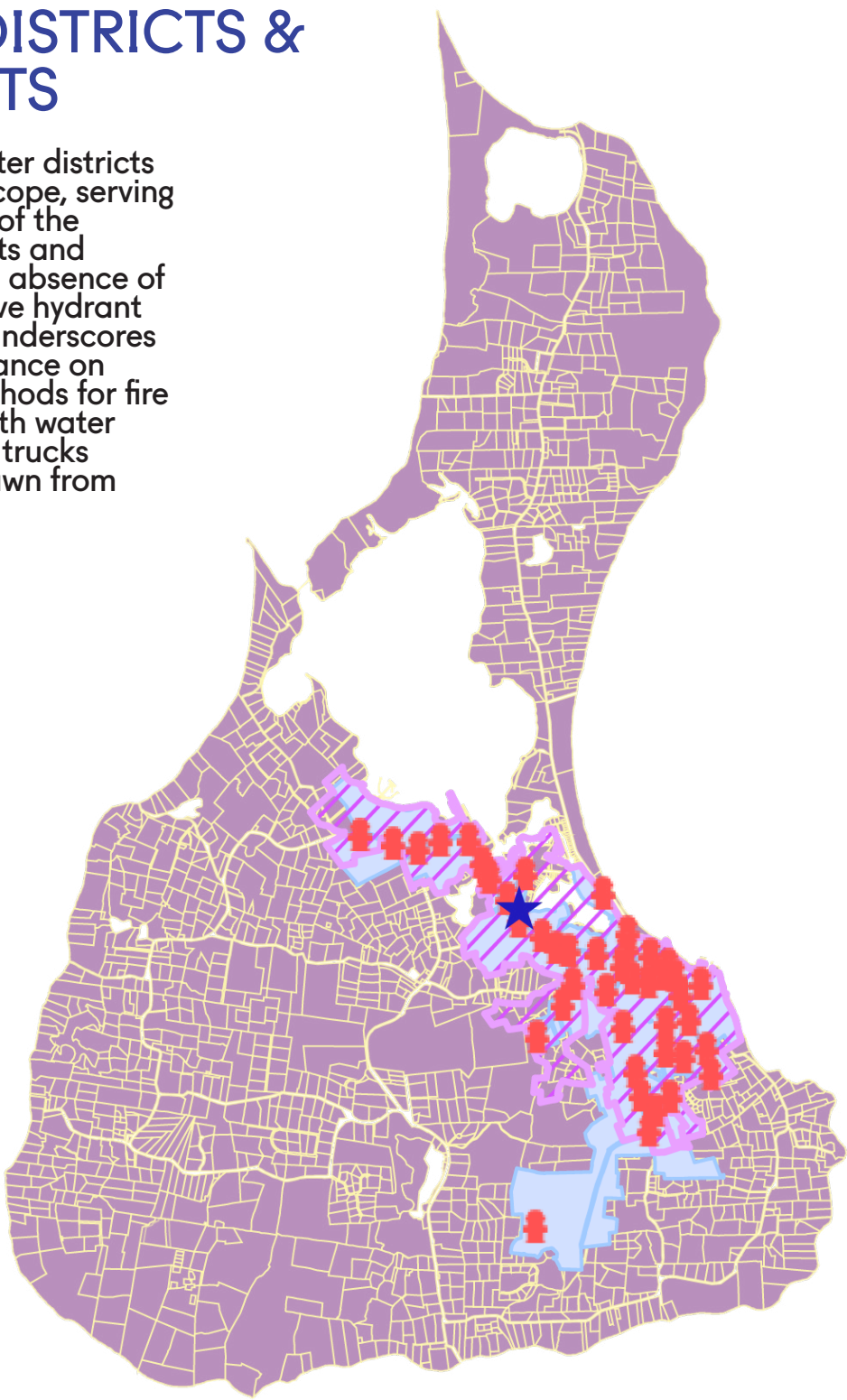
FLOOD PLAINS

The island's floodplains trace the contours of its low-lying coastal areas, shaped by centuries of tidal activity and storm surges. These zones, vulnerable to rising sea levels and extreme weather, underscore the island's precarious relationship with the forces that define its geography. Preservation and development within these areas remain a balance, one that reflects the broader challenges of inhabiting a changing coastline.



WATER DISTRICTS & HYDRANTS

The island's water districts are limited in scope, serving only a fraction of the island's residents and businesses. The absence of a comprehensive hydrant infrastructure underscores the island's reliance on alternative methods for fire suppression, with water transported by trucks rather than drawn from fixed points.



The Site

The New Shoreham Fire and Rescue Building is situated at the intersection of Beach Avenue and Ocean Avenue. The property includes two primary structures: a combined police office and fire garage, which serves as the public entry point for rescue services, and an auxiliary building closer to Ocean Avenue, used as a firefighter rest area and for additional storage. The site is located in a mixed-use zone and positioned above the flood line. It also contains storage facilities, power lines, vegetation, and hardscape elements typical of such a location.

Historically, this land, like much of Block Island, was open farmland. In the early 20th century, it operated as a horse farm before being re-purposed as a fire and rescue station in the 1960s. During this era, Block Island’s economy was largely driven by peat harvesting, and agricultural land dominated the landscape. Horses were central to the site’s function and the island’s culture, serving as primary grazers, lifeguard transport, and attractions for visitors.

This history offers a unique opportunity to reconnect with the island’s agricultural roots by thoughtfully incorporating animals into the site. Their presence could serve as a nod to the past while creating a welcoming and engaging environment.

One potential approach is the introduction of goats. Beyond their appeal to visitors, goats could contribute to sustainable landscape management by reducing the need for fossil fuels to maintain the grounds. This initiative would not only honor the island’s heritage but also demonstrate an environmentally mindful use of resources, reinforcing the connection between the community and its history.



The Future of Policing:
A Community Centric Model

As the role of policing evolves, a shift toward community-centered operations is becoming increasingly evident across the country. Policing is no longer confined to maintaining order and enforcing laws; it now involves actively collaborating with residents to create a safe, secure, and cohesive community rooted in shared responsibility.

To achieve this vision, a flexible model of policing is essential—one that can adapt to the diverse and shifting needs of the community it serves. This requires a nuanced understanding of the specific concerns of residents, spanning issues such as public safety, elder care, mental health, and substance abuse. Infrastructure must reflect these realities, offering not only functionality but also responsiveness to the human and social complexities of the island.

Central to this effort is trust. Building and maintaining trust between the police department and the community is paramount. This demands open communication, inclusive decision-making, and steadfast accountability. The Block Island Police Department has already made strides in fostering this relationship, demonstrating a commitment that goes beyond rhetoric.

For example, Officer Doug Borden’s direct engagement with residents strengthens community connections. Practical initiatives, such as the hunter safety orange vest/mailbox program, address specific safety concerns, while regular public service announcements provide critical updates on scams, weather events, utility disruptions, and drug overdose prevention, along with reminders about Good Samaritan law protections. The department’s #keepblockislandsafe social media campaign extends its outreach, encouraging public participation in maintaining safety. Moreover, its proactive support in managing lost items and pets further underscores a commitment to service that is rooted in care and attentiveness.

This approach signals a future where policing is not merely reactive but integrated into the fabric of the community—flexible, responsive, and grounded in mutual trust and cooperation.

Policing on Block Island has the potential to address the community’s unique dynamics in ways that differ fundamentally from the needs of a typical residential neighborhood. The island’s small, tightly-knit population, its seasonal surge of tourists, and its geographic isolation shape distinct requirements. These conditions demand an approach that allows the community to influence its governing structures and actively participate in the shared spaces that sustain its identity.

The future of policing on Block Island—and beyond—depends on its ability to evolve into a deeply community-focused institution. By collaborating closely with residents, implementing proactive safety measures, and engaging meaningfully with the island’s specific needs, the police department can become more than an enforcement body. It can serve as a vital pillar of the community, fostering trust and facilitating a resilient social fabric.

This vision recognizes policing as uniquely positioned to address the complexities of Block Island’s environment. The interplay between its permanent residents, seasonal visitors, and geographic isolation creates challenges that require adaptability and local sensitivity. A policing model that prioritizes community influence and participation strengthens the foundations of the island’s identity, ensuring that its governance and public spaces reflect shared values and collective responsibility. By embracing these principles, the police department can sustain and reinforce the island’s social cohesion, offering a model for other communities navigating similar pressures.

BI Volunteer Fire & Rescue Department

The Block Island Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department holds an unparalleled position of trust and respect within the New Shoreham community. Over the decades, it has become an institution deeply embedded in the island’s social fabric, a source of reliability and pride that connects generations. Its legacy reflects unwavering dedication, efficiency, and a camaraderie that resonates throughout the community.

Looking to the future, the Department’s mission remains steadfast: to protect and serve the island’s residents with the same commitment it has always shown, while adapting to the evolving needs of the community. Its strength lies not only in its capacity to respond to emergencies but in its ability to anticipate and prepare for emerging challenges. The Department is well-positioned to lead efforts that combine innovation with community engagement, ensuring that it remains both a trusted safeguard and a proactive force in preventing potential disasters.

Block Island’s unique geography and vulnerabilities necessitate a focus on several key areas to enhance preparedness and resilience:

Fire Safety Education and Prevention: Prevention begins with education. The Department could host regular workshops for residents, businesses, and tourists, emphasizing the importance of measures such as smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, and emergency preparedness. Public engagement in fire safety would strengthen the community’s collective ability to mitigate risks.

Climate Change Adaptation: With rising threats from wildfires, floods, and severe storms driven by climate change, the Department must expand its capacity to respond to these challenges. This could involve specialized training for rescue operations, strategies to address wildfires, and advanced systems to monitor and predict weather patterns.

Hazardous Materials Handling: As modern life brings increased risks from hazardous materials, the Department should invest in training personnel to manage, store, and dispose of these substances safely. Establishing robust response protocols for spills or leaks is essential to minimizing risks.

Disaster Response and Recovery: Preparing for the unexpected requires regular disaster simulations and drills, encompassing scenarios such as large-scale fires, building collapses, or even potential acts of terrorism. Recovery efforts,

including damage assessment and effective public communication, should also be integral to the Department’s planning.

As the Block Island Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department continues its work, it does so with a commitment not only to meet immediate needs but to position itself as a forward-thinking, integral part of the community’s resilience. By blending tradition with innovation, it will remain a vital pillar of safety and solidarity for generations to come.

Emergency Medical Training: The role of fire department personnel as first responders necessitates comprehensive emergency medical training. This includes managing trauma, performing CPR, and responding to a range of medical emergencies they are likely to encounter. Such training is not ancillary but essential, equipping the department to address critical situations in an isolated setting where immediate medical assistance can be a matter of life and death.

Collaboration with Other Agencies: Effective disaster response requires strong relationships with other emergency services on the island and the mainland. Coordination is key, particularly for large-scale emergencies where resources and expertise must be pooled. Regular joint training exercises and drills can foster these connections, ensuring that all agencies work seamlessly together when the need arises.

By integrating rigorous medical training, preventive strategies, and robust inter-agency collaboration, the Block Island Volunteer Fire Department can prepare itself to meet an array of potential threats. This multifaceted approach not only enhances its capacity to respond effectively but also



The Block Island Volunteer Fire & Rescue Department owns and operates an important fleet of safety vehicles:

Engine 1: 1000-gal water / 1750 gal per minute pump

*Engine 2: 1000-gal water / 1750 gal per minute pump,
1000 gal drop tank*

Engine 4: 500-gal water / 1250 gal per minute pump

*Tanker 1: 3000-gal water / 2000 gal per minute pump,
3000 gal drop tank*

Ladder 1: 500-gal water / 2000 gal + per minute pump

Ladder 2: 500-gal water / 2000 gal per minute pump

The following pages document the aftermath of the Harbor Inn Fire.

The Harbor Side Inn fire on Block Island, on August 18, 2023, highlighted both the vulnerabilities and the interdependence inherent in remote, self-reliant communities. As flames consumed the historic structure, the island's volunteer fire department was reinforced by fire departments from across the region. Ferries transported personnel and equipment from the mainland, exemplifying the mutual aid networks essential to emergency response in isolated locations. The fire underscored the fragility of Block Island's infrastructure while demonstrating the resilience and solidarity of the extended community that rallied to support it.







Conservation and Hidden Histories

With a footprint of just under 10 square miles, Block Island offers more than enough space for its 1,000 year-round residents. Most of this space is occupied by residential plots and farmland, with a small section of town devoted to restaurants, shops, and hotels—most of which close during the off-season. In the quiet of winter, the island feels vast; residents often report going days without encountering another person.

Block Island’s landscape is defined by rolling hills, scattered houses, and miles of stone walls. These walls, built by enslaved Indigenous people, serve as a reminder of the island’s darker history. Like much of the Americas, Block Island’s past is deeply rooted in settler colonialism and slavery. The legacy of these histories remains largely unacknowledged.

A monument on the way to Beacon Hill, the island’s highest point and site of the Gobern family homestead, names the “original settlers” who arrived in 1661. The term “original settlers,” etched in stone, refers to European colonizers and legacy families, erasing the Manisseans, the Indigenous people of Block Island who remain its true first inhabitants. Discussion of slavery on the island is scarce and limited to references to death, notably within the Indian Cemetery.

Today, 47% of the island’s land belongs to the Block Island Conservancy, a number that has grown significantly since its founding in 1972. Much of this expansion is due to wealthy residents endowing their properties to the conservancy, enabling reforestation efforts and the reintroduction of indigenous species. These efforts have played a key role in preserving the island’s natural character.

However, the tension between conservation and tourism continues to shape the island’s future. Alongside reforested lands and indigenous species, the island hosts a strange menagerie of camels, llamas, pygmy and fainting goats, black swans, a yak, a zebu, lemurs, and red kangaroos—exotic animals that reflect its growing tourism industry. Conservation efforts have successfully resisted the encroachment of large-scale rental developments, but the shrinking pool of unconserved land has driven up demand—and prices—for residential plots.

While the conservancy protects the island’s identity and history, it also contributes to the housing crisis faced by many residents. By removing land from the market, it exacerbates the scarcity of affordable housing, highlighting the complexities of balancing preservation with the needs of a small, year-round community.



West Side Road





Learning from Horseshoe Crabs

On one of our first nights on Block Island, the UM Public Design Corps joined Kim Gaffett to document and tag horseshoe crabs, introducing us to a key element of the island’s identity. In spring and summer, the shores host mating horseshoe crabs, arthropods unchanged for 300 million years and vital to human medical advances. Their resilience reflects the island’s broader story: survival through change. While businesses, buildings, and residents shift, Block Island retains a collective memory and enduring sense of community.

Our brief encounter with the crabs mirrors the intention of this report—to create something temporary yet impactful. Just as the crabs returned to their habitat, we hope our contributions will leave a lasting legacy for the island.

Block Island’s commitment to conservation is evident in the work of its three land management organizations, which since the 1970s have preserved land and protected ecosystems. Supported by a community attuned to the impacts of tourism, the island demonstrates a rare preparedness, linking environmental and social sustainability. Programs like the “Adaptive Reuse of Existing Structures” reflect this mindset, repurposing buildings otherwise destined for demolition and achieving a landfill diversion rate of 50%.

Energy progress further underscores this resilience. The transition from diesel generators to the National Grid, paired with cable installation and voltage upgrades, has reduced emissions and secured reliable power for at least a generation. These advancements, alongside its ecological stewardship, highlight Block Island’s ability to balance preservation with modern demands, shaping a future that honors its past.

Left: Kim Gaffett, a resident of Block Island, focuses on the preservation of the island’s ecosystems. A naturalist and licensed bird bander, she conducts nature walks and educational programs to foster awareness of the local environment. Her work includes tracking horseshoe crabs, a project aimed at documenting and understanding the island’s biodiversity.



Historical Style & Meaning

Block Island’s architecture reflects a distinct and carefully preserved style, rooted in its history and subtly reinterpreted in modern construction. Any new project must navigate the tension between maintaining this architectural continuity and incorporating the benefits of contemporary technology.

The notion of “picturesque informality” shaped early suburban and rural American domestic architecture, including the island’s first Gothic-inspired cottages of the early 19th century. These homes, celebrated for their simplicity and connection to unspoiled natural surroundings, stood as an antidote to the complexity of urban life. More recent buildings echo these qualities in their scale and materials, though they forgo the historicizing details of earlier designs. The evolution of Block Island’s architecture—from the boarding houses and hotels that reshaped its landscape to the summer cottages that introduced new forms—reveals a layered history of adaptation and influence.

By the late 1800s, the Victorian style, with its intricate wood-carved ornaments, began to dominate. The mansard roof, a hallmark of this period, became a defining feature of Block Island’s architecture during its development as a summer resort. Initially found in hotels, it was soon adapted for residential use. Yet the mansard roof carries a darker history: in Victorian homes, the cramped top-floor rooms beneath these roofs were often used as slave quarters, embedding a grim social legacy into the architectural form. Over time, the roof’s aesthetic appeal overshadowed its origins, but its associations with colonial hierarchies and social stratification remain ingrained in the style.

While traces of the Victorian era and its mansard roofs persist across Block Island, the Life Saving Station—intended as a space of inclusivity—will consciously reject these dissonant influences. Instead, its design will draw from the original Life Saving Station, emphasizing openness and accessibility, both in its physical form and its purpose. Through open-door events and a reimagining of architectural tradition, the building will signal a break from exclusionary histories, offering a space that reflects and reinforces the island’s commitment to community and shared memory.

Block Island’s construction identity is inseparable from its history of deforestation. By the late 18th century, European settlers had stripped the island of its trees, using the wood for construction. In 1661, Thomas Faxon surveyed the land and divided it into over sixty lots, imposing a grid that disregarded the natural contours of hills and ponds.

As tourism expanded in the 19th and 20th centuries, the island’s landscape underwent another transformation. Rapid construction of hotels took precedence over preserving the dwindling forests, further altering the terrain. The push to accommodate visitors left its mark, prioritizing infrastructure for economic activity over ecological preservation.

Today, efforts to counterbalance this legacy fall to the island’s conservancy, which works to maintain the 47% green cover that remains. This initiative represents both a recognition of past losses and a commitment to preserving what is left of Block Island’s natural landscape.

Construction Today

Block Island’s construction practices straddle the tension between tradition and convenience. While many yearly and seasonal residents prefer traditional materials and architectural typologies, advancements in construction technology have driven a shift toward cheaper and more durable alternatives. For instance, PVC board and batten siding has increasingly replaced classic cedar siding in homes and businesses. Its low maintenance requirements and ability to maintain a pristine white finish have made it highly popular. Yet, its petroleum-based composition and the particulate pollution generated during installation contribute to the contamination of the island’s delicate environment.

The construction permitting process on Block Island is equally fraught. According to some residents interviewed, obtaining approval to begin construction involves navigating multiple rigorous reviews by the Town Planning Board. These processes can be lengthy and burdensome. The island remains caught in a struggle to balance preserving its architectural identity and integrity with the realities of limited budgets and and escalating costs of labor and materials.



diagram above: Block Island Historical Society



Island Free Library

The Sea Air Cure

Block Island, once a favored retreat for Victorians seeking solace from the industrial mainland, has long been a sanctuary for mental and physical rejuvenation. Its quiet shores and pastoral landscape have offered escape and respite. Yet, as the understanding of mental health has grown more complex, the island faces increasing challenges in addressing these evolving needs.

Recent years have seen efforts to foster open dialogue about mental health on Block Island. Initiatives to destigmatize mental illness have gained traction, with a growing consensus on the need for expanded services, better education, and robust support systems for families affected by mental health challenges. Organizations like NAMI BI (National Alliance on Mental Illness Block Island) have been instrumental in advancing this work. However, the island’s resources remain limited. Mental health counselors are typically based off-island, requiring either travel to the mainland or infrequent visits from practitioners. The absence of in-house services underscores the need for a comprehensive civic framework prioritizing the well-being of residents.

The strain on health services is not limited to mental health. The Block Island Medical Center faces a delicate balancing act between serving the local community and accommodating the seasonal influx of tourists. In 2020, the center recorded 817 urgent care visits, 81% of which were from non-residents. With its limited capacity, the center often had to transfer patients to the mainland for treatment. This dual burden highlights the need for a sustainable approach to healthcare on the island—one that ensures the local population is not sidelined by the demands of seasonal tourism.

As Block Island continues to grapple with these challenges, it must reconcile its historical role as a place of retreat with the modern realities of health and mental health care. A comprehensive, localized approach could transform the island into a model for small, isolated communities navigating similar pressures.

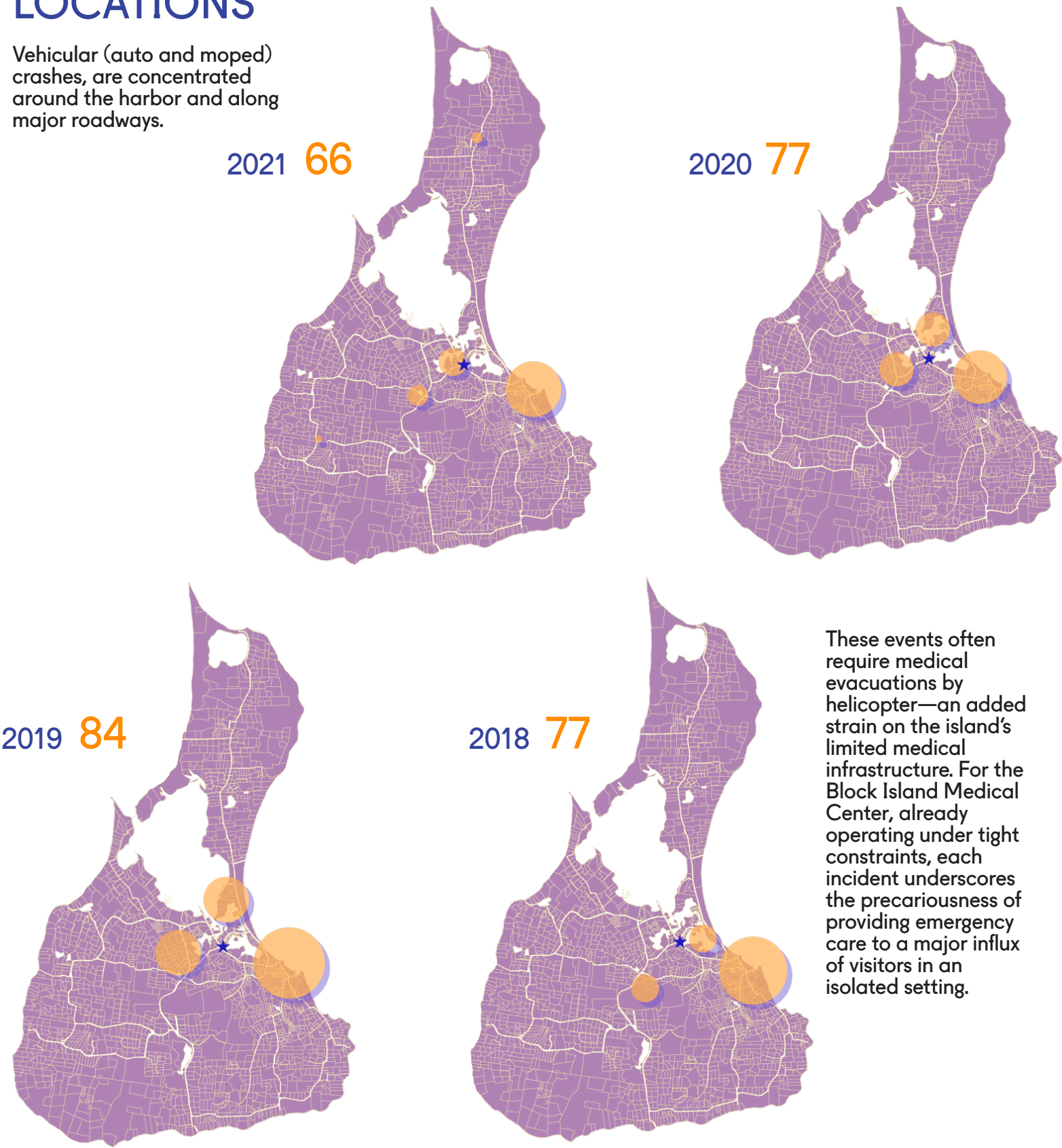
Urgent care visits on Block Island surge in May and taper off by September, reflecting the seasonal impact of tourism on the island’s limited medical resources. In 2021, the average number of visits during the summer months was 86.4% higher than in the winter. The year also saw 66 vehicle collisions, 55% of which resulted in injuries, including one fatality. Notably, 58% of these incidents involved mopeds, most frequently rented by tourists unfamiliar with the island’s roads.

This pattern echoes the broader history of tourism’s influence on Block Island. As visitor numbers grew in the 19th and 20th centuries, the island’s landscape was reshaped to accommodate them. Rapid construction of hotels was prioritized over the preservation of forests, leaving a legacy of dwindling green spaces. Today, efforts to retain the island’s 47% green cover are central to the conservancy’s mission, which includes initiatives such as adaptive reuse of buildings and a waste diversion rate of approximately 50% to limit landfill use.

Block Island has also made notable progress in addressing its energy needs. The transition from diesel generators to the National Grid, combined with cable installation and voltage upgrades, has improved the reliability and capacity of the power supply. Stakeholders estimate that these advancements will sustain the island’s energy needs for at least a generation, even with rising tourism. The shift has also significantly reduced greenhouse gas emissions and pollution, marking a meaningful step toward sustainability.

VEHICLE CRASH LOCATIONS

Vehicular (auto and moped) crashes, are concentrated around the harbor and along major roadways.





Value in Redux

The maritime history of Block Island, like much of the New England coast, is inseparable from the legacy of the Life-Saving Stations. These outposts were more than just functional facilities for safeguarding maritime life and property; they were vibrant hubs of activity and community engagement.

Life-Saving Stations served a variety of roles: watchtowers for shipwrecks, deterrents to crime, and homes for station keepers. Each station was designed to house eight personnel—seven sailors and one captain—providing them with the tools and amenities required for their work. On Block Island, two stations, located at Cooneymus and the Harbor, employed a total of fifteen men. Their responsibilities extended beyond rescue operations to include community interaction and outreach.

These stations, particularly during off-duty hours, became interactive spaces where tourists could explore the facilities and engage with the life-saving equipment. Open-door events allowed visitors to witness firsthand the rigors and dedication of the work, fostering both admiration and connection. Through these activities, the Life-Saving Stations became part of the island’s social fabric, seamlessly integrating maritime safety with community life.

The decline in coastal sea disasters, aided by the advent of steam navigation, gradually reduced the demand for such services. In 1915, the Life-Saving Service was absorbed into the newly formed U.S. Coast Guard. Yet, the stations remained operational for a time, with their presence enduring through World War II. The construction of a modern Coast Guard station at Cormorant Point in 1935 signaled the end of active use for the old Life-Saving Stations. Positioned on the New Harbor channel, the new station allowed for monitoring harbor traffic and provided a still-water launching site for rescue boats. Today, the Coast Guard continues to operate from this location, though its role has evolved.

The legacy of the Life-Saving Stations underscores the importance of hybrid spaces—facilities that integrate safety and security measures with community engagement. These stations were not isolated outposts but dynamic elements of the community, blending operational necessity with social connection. This historical model offers a compelling precedent for modern approaches to public safety, demonstrating how such spaces can foster understanding, resilience, and a stronger sense of belonging.

Appearance: Civic and Welcoming

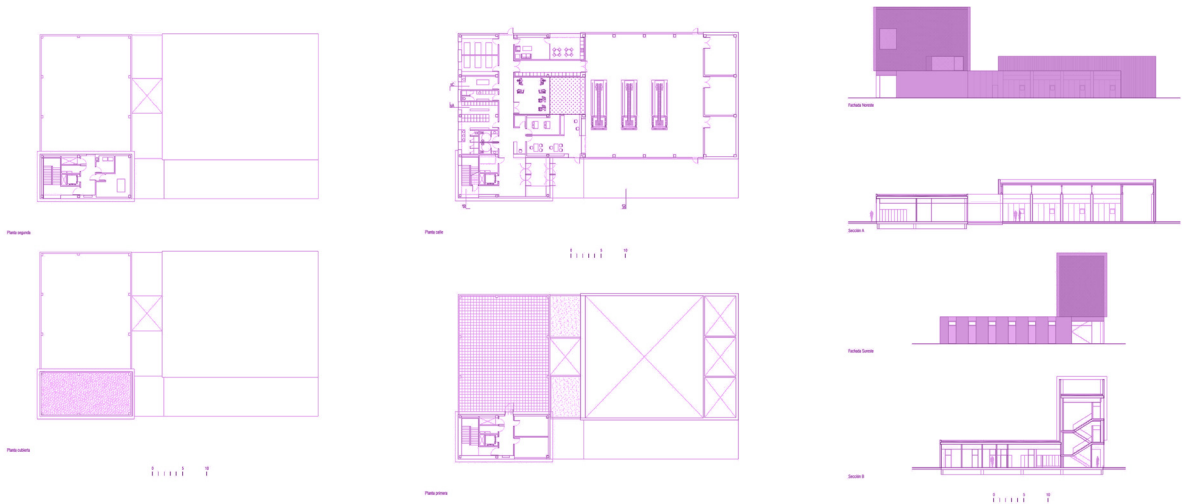
The envisioned space extends beyond its functions of surveillance and policing, redefining the role of civic infrastructure. By transforming traditional police buildings into multi-purpose centers, the design integrates essential services like fire and health facilities alongside spaces for community engagement. This consolidation fosters collaboration, boosts morale, and creates informal, shared environments crucial for building public trust and community cohesion.

The new center is also a response to the acute pressures of Block Island’s summer season. While the police station operates with just a handful of officers in the off-season, the influx of tourists during the summer brings a sharp increase in demands: managing ferry traffic, responding to moped accidents, and controlling disorderly visitors. Facing the need for structural renovations, the police and fire station staff identified an opportunity not just to improve their facilities but to introduce new programs aimed at benefiting both workers and the broader community. Among these proposals is on-site housing for temporary police officers—a practical solution to the island’s seasonal challenges. By providing comfortable accommodations, the aim is to attract officers who will return for multiple summers, creating continuity in staffing.

Affordable housing adjacent to the civic station challenges traditional notions of bureaucratic policing. Although Block Island is small—under 10 square miles with a population of around 1,000 year-round residents—it grapples with the same housing pressures facing municipalities across the United States. Expanding access to affordable housing for both seasonal workers and year-round residents would promote equity and support the community’s long-term stability. By aligning infrastructure with broader social needs, the design reflects a more inclusive vision of civic responsibility.

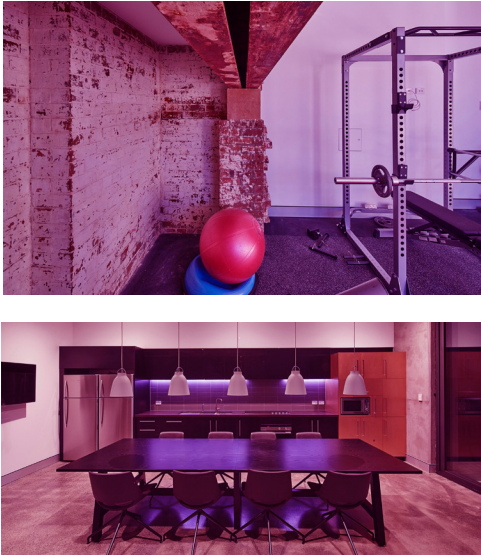
Fire Station no. 4 / IDOM
Casetas, Zaragoza, ESP 2018

- Neighborhood of 7,500 people
- Design Language:
 - “The Building is made up of three volumes of different heights, which allow different uses depending on their typology. Each one has different accesses for pedestrians or for vehicles and they are interconnected through the courtyard and the Tower staircase.
- Volumetrically, the building can be explained as a plinth that gathers all the circulations and services, on which two volumes rest”
- The program is designed based on recommendations from the fire brigade and the Fire Rescue and Civil Protection Service. The spaces are split up into groups based on function, all arranged around a central courtyard which provides light and ventilation and acts as the “lung” of the building.
- 13,500 SF, 1-story (main), 4-story (tower)



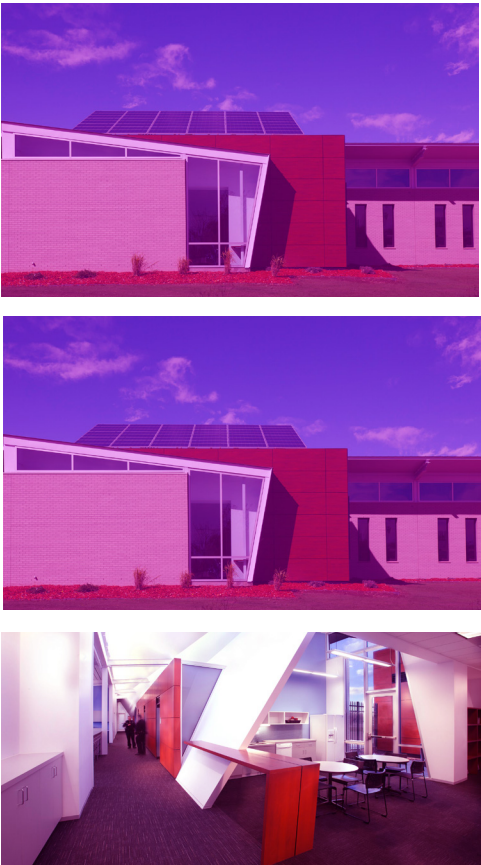
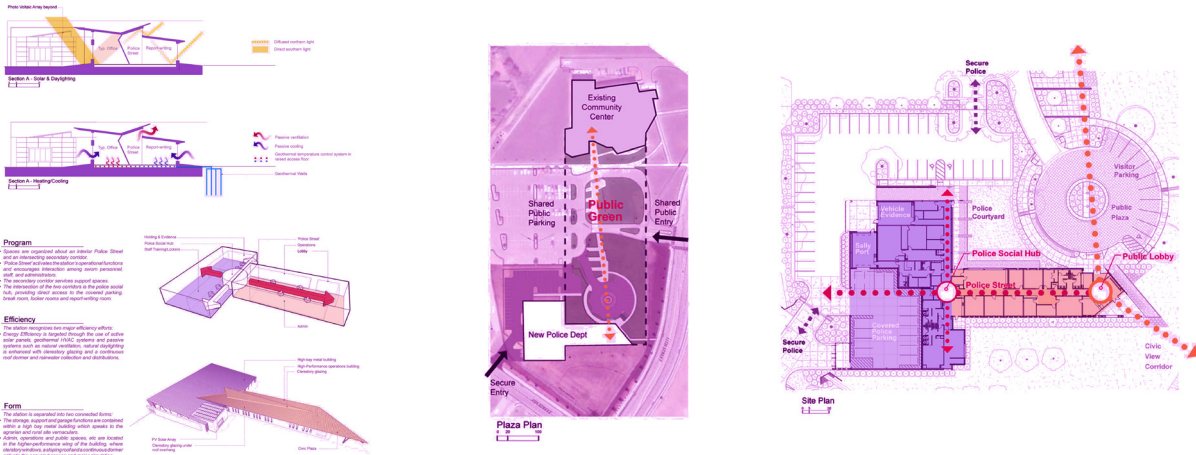
Pyrmont Fire Station
Renovation / GroupGSA

- Community of 13,000 people
- The project consists of a restoration and addition to a previously abandoned fire station constructed in 1906. The brief consisted of extending the original fire station, improving conditions for fire fighters, and providing additional office space for Fire NSW staff as part of their expansion.
 - Major works consisted of improving the structural integrity and bringing the building up to modern standards, while still preserving the historical envelope of the building.
 - The lower levels consist of equipment storage, office space and community areas. The upper levels are mostly comprised of apartments, offices and associated communal areas.
 - 12,300 SF (1,150 SM), 3-story



Windsor Police Department /
Roth Sheppard Architects

- Community of 20,000 people
- Part of a new civic campus vision
- broken into “essential” and “non-essential” program
- near commercial and residential centers, rec center, and high school



Environmental certifications like LEED and the Living Building Challenge aim to create efficient buildings, but their rigid frameworks often constrain innovation. These systems quantify sustainability in metrics and benchmarks, yet they leave little room for grappling with the complexities that extend beyond numbers. At its core, sustainability is about care—for the planet and for people. It is as much about ensuring equitable access to resources and livable spaces as it is about reducing carbon footprints or optimizing energy use.

For a place like Block Island, with its distinct architectural identity, sustainability must also include preserving the community’s connection to its history. Celebrating the past is not antithetical to progress; it is integral to it. While environmental design is often associated with contemporary architecture in the public imagination, the Block Island Life Saving Station reimagines this relationship. It honors the past while incorporating modern technologies to improve efficiency and longevity.

Rather than pursuing external certifications, the proposal adopts a more localized and holistic approach to environmental impact. We have defined our own set of priorities to guide this project, ensuring that the design reflects not only sustainability in the technical sense but also a broader commitment to the community and its values. Our considerations are as follows:

Energy

On an island already powered by wind, it might appear that little more is required to create an environmentally conscious building. Yet, the reliance on propane for heating in most structures reveals a gap—an opportunity to transition to cleaner, more sustainable methods. Similarly, improving energy efficiency is not merely an environmental gesture but a practical strategy to reduce operational costs and ensure the building’s long-term viability. Furthermore, while wind energy powers the island, a reliable backup system is essential to ensure uninterrupted energy supply during periods of low wind or system maintenance.

Materials

The environmental impact of a building is not defined solely by the energy it consumes during its operation but also by the embodied energy—the energy expended in constructing it and harvesting its materials. Understanding the implications of embodied energy is fundamental to truly sustainable design, as it confronts the often-overlooked environmental costs embedded in the very act of building.

Water

Without hydrant infrastructure, the island depends entirely on the fire station to transport water in its trucks for firefighting efforts. This reliance underscores the critical demand for water while simultaneously presenting an opportunity: to conserve water more effectively and to rethink the methods by which it is collected and managed.

History

Block Island’s architectural style, carefully preserved in its historic buildings and echoed in new construction, reflects a deep connection to the island’s identity. Any new project must integrate seamlessly with this built landscape while taking advantage of modern technologies to enhance functionality and sustainability. Similarly, the island’s reliance on transported water for firefighting highlights not just the pressing demand for water but also the opportunity to rethink how water is conserved and collected, aligning tradition with innovation.

Community

Environmental and social sustainability are inseparable. Drawing from the principles of the Living Building Challenge, it is essential to view human well-being as part of a larger ecosystem. This project seeks to create a space that goes beyond reducing harm; it aims to actively foster community engagement and generate meaningful, widespread benefits. By prioritizing the integration of people and place, the design becomes a catalyst for collective progress rather than simply a mitigation of impact.



Dodge Street

The material selection process for the Public Safety and Wellness Center included four major considerations:

Harm

Avoid materials containing ingredients harmful to humans or the environment.

The widespread use of harmful building materials, such as vinyl siding, has already contributed to the pollution of Block Island’s water and air. The Living Building Challenge’s “Red List” identifies materials containing chemicals that pose significant risks to human and environmental health. While the Red List is a valuable starting point for selecting safer materials, it is far from comprehensive. Choosing the right materials requires weighing multiple factors, including their impact, availability, and suitability for the island’s specific needs.

Embodied Carbon

Reduce the embodied carbon of materials while ensuring that operational performance is not compromised.

Embodied carbon refers to the carbon dioxide emitted during the production, transportation, and construction of building materials. On Block Island, the transportation of materials from the mainland significantly increases carbon emissions. Reusing materials from the previous structure, wherever possible, presents the most effective strategy for minimizing unnecessary emissions, aligning environmental considerations with the island’s logistical realities.

Vernacularity

Vernacular building practices on Block Island are more than a nod to tradition; they are a pragmatic response to the island’s unique conditions. Shaped by local materials, knowledge, and climate, these methods create structures that are intrinsically tied to the land and its history. In an era of rapid change, retaining these practices is not just about preservation—it is about ensuring that new construction remains rooted in the identity of the island while adapting to the demands of sustainability and modernity.

Recyclability

Recycling materials for the new building reduces its embodied energy, but the design also looks forward—creating the potential for the building itself to be recycled in the future. A campus approach, with multiple small structures, not only separates programs in the present but also ensures flexibility for the future. These buildings can one day be relocated elsewhere on the island, repurposed to meet new needs, and integrated into the evolving life of the community.

Cost Effectiveness

Sustainable building materials are often dismissed for their high cost. While this is true for many new materials, the philosophy of reuse—a principle long embraced on Block Island—offers a more practical approach. Reuse reduces environmental impact and aligns with the island’s values. Equally important is the consideration of longevity; investing in durable materials ensures that structures endure, making the initial expense a pragmatic decision rather than an extravagance.

Vernacular design is not only about aesthetic consistency; it carries an inherent ecological intelligence that ensures longevity. On Block Island, materials like cedar siding—ubiquitous in the island’s architecture—exemplify this principle, blending durability with environmental suitability. With this in mind, the team began by examining the materials commonly used on the island. From there, a broader palette was refined by screening material “ingredients” through the International Living Future Institute’s Red List, a detailed index of materials, chemicals, and elements that pose risks to human and ecological health, with particular attention to those with airborne potential. This approach balances tradition with an awareness of modern environmental challenges.

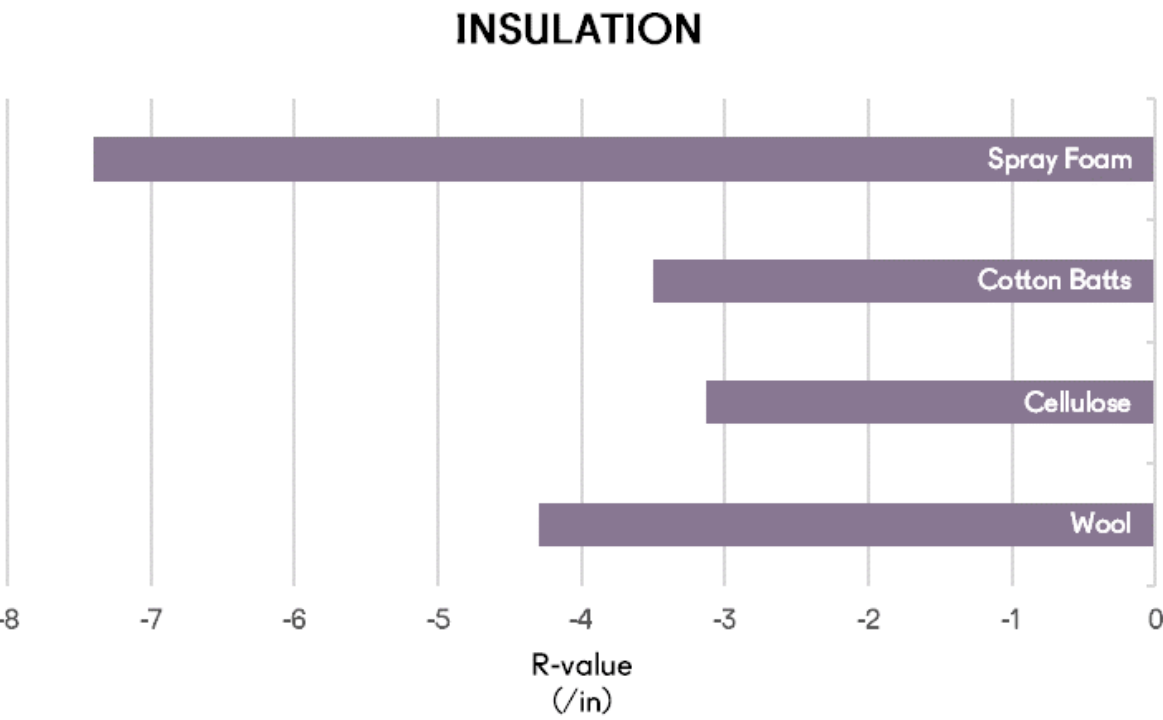
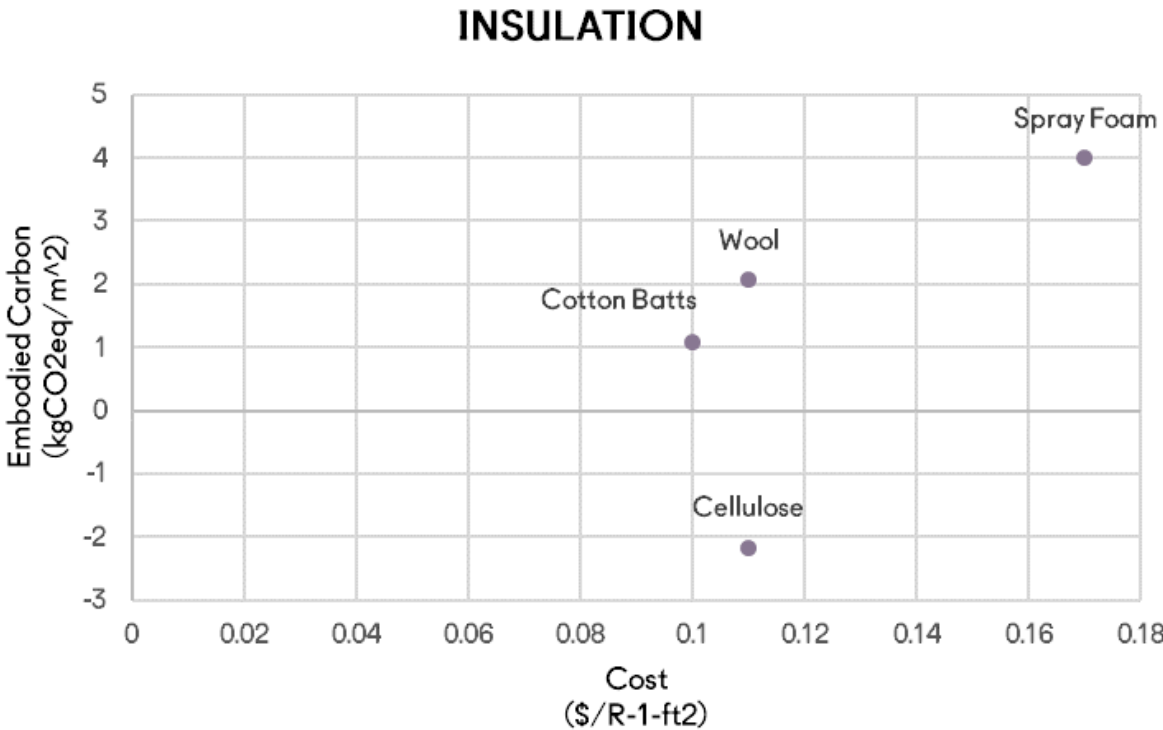
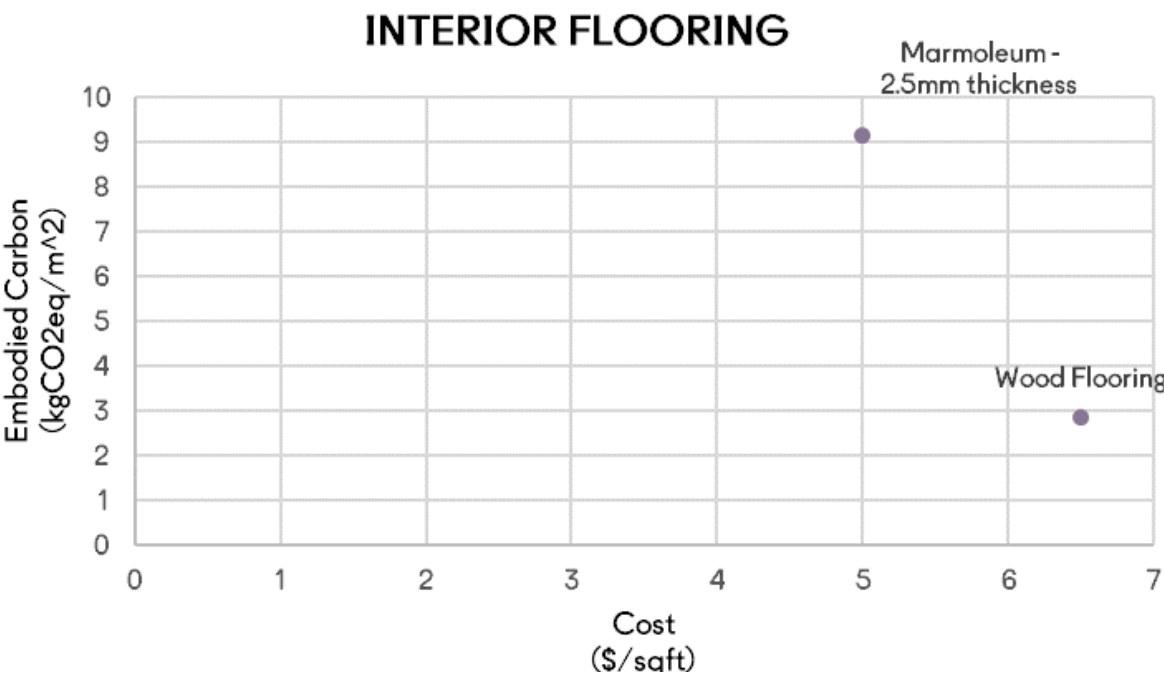
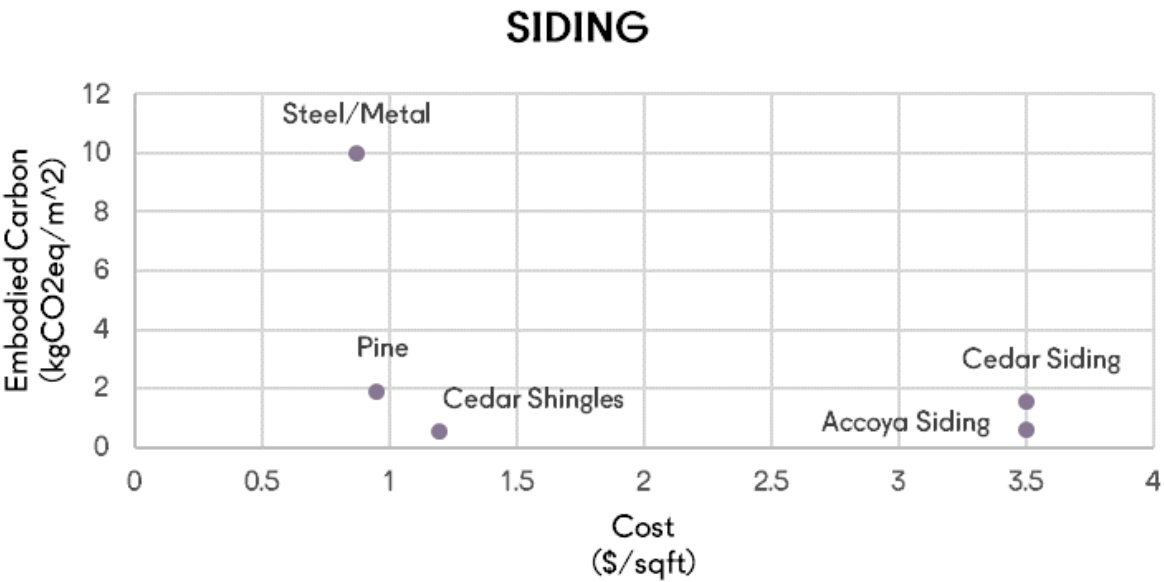
The embodied carbon of materials, which captures an estimate of the greenhouse gas emitted during the manufacturing, transportation, installation, maintenance, demolition, and disposal of materials, was used to assess the environmental costs and sourced, when possible, through each product’s Environmental Product Declarations.

Block Island has already demonstrated its commitment to the sustainable use of materials through the “Adaptive Reuse of Existing Structures” program that encourages the use of structures that are otherwise slated for demolition to be relocated, re-used, or retrofitted when possible. With a “diversion rate” of approximately 50% of all waste from landfills, the fourth highest rate in the state of Rhode Island, the island’s commitment to minimizing material waste has both economic and environmental benefits (283). The reuse of the existing firehouse structure will be implemented by moving the structure to the adjacent lot.

The life cycle stages that contribute to each material’s “Global Warming Potential”

Module	A1-A3			A4-A5		B1-B7							C1-C4				D
Life cycle stages	Product Stage			Construction process stage		Use stage							End-of-life stage				Benefits and loads beyond the system boundary stage
Processes	Raw material supply	Transport	Manufacturing	Transport	Construction-installation process	Use	Maintenance	Repair	Replacement	Refurbishment	Operational energy use	Operational water use	Deconstruction/demolition	Transport	Wasteprocessing	Disposal	Reuse, recovery, and recycling potential
	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	C1	C2	C3	C4	D

Source: European Standard EN 15978



Energy Systems

Block Island’s reliance on renewable energy ensures that the electricity consumption of the public safety complex will largely be carbon neutral from the outset. However, given the essential nature of the services housed within the complex, a reliable backup power source is critical to ensure continued operation during an island-wide outage. While the installation of a small-scale wind turbine is likely impractical due to cost and space requirements, solar panels present a more feasible alternative. Already used in various applications across the island, solar panels are cost-effective, space-efficient, and well-suited to the project’s scope.

University of Michigan professor Lars Junghans recommends utilizing all available roof space for solar panel installation. Excess energy generated beyond the complex’s needs could be sold back to the grid through Net Metering, a program supported by both the State of Rhode Island and New Shoreham. On-site solar production would not only reduce the complex’s dependence on the grid but also contribute to the island’s overall energy resilience. Additionally, state rebates and grants for municipal-scale solar installations could significantly offset initial installation costs.

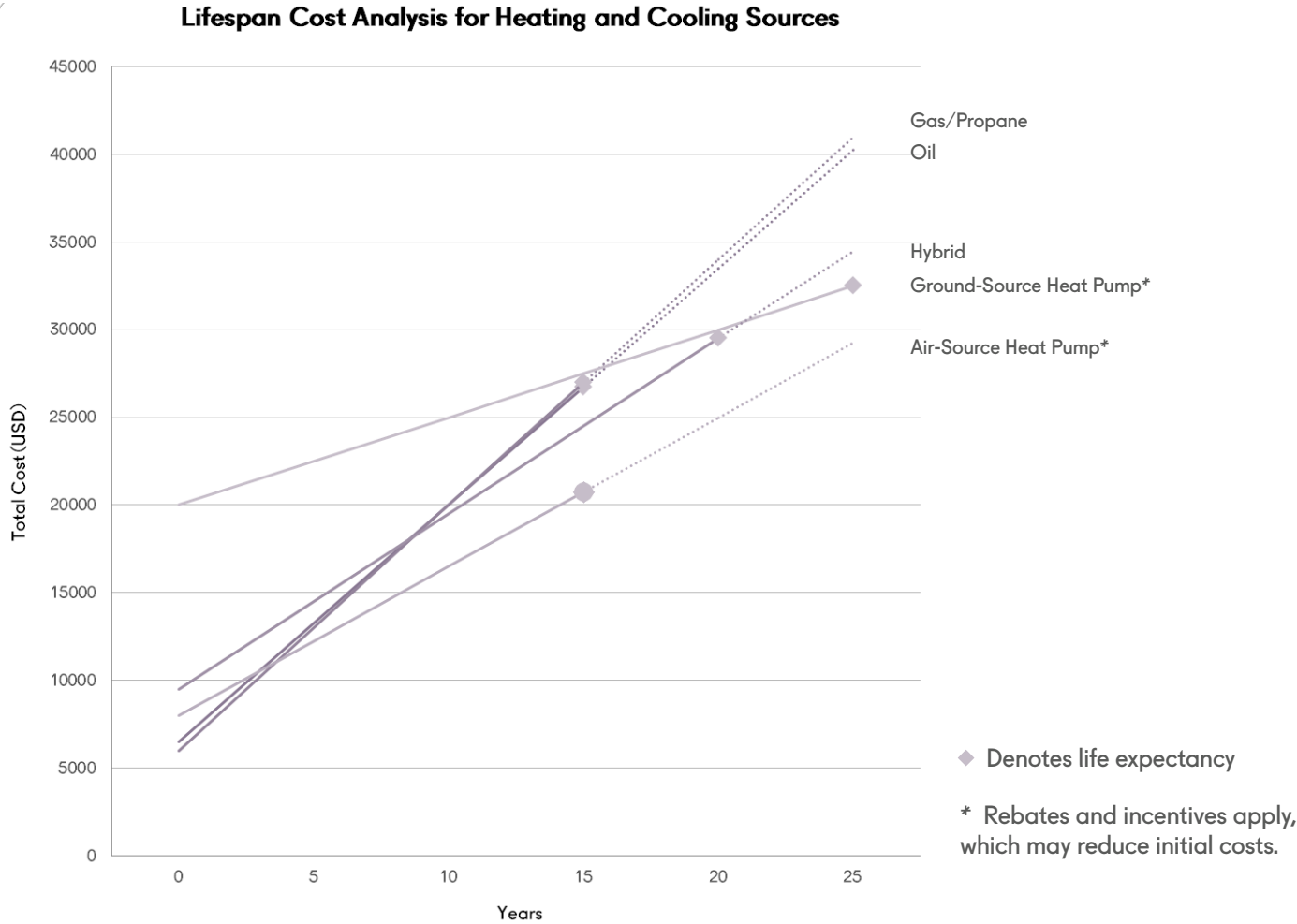
Currently, heating on the island is predominantly provided by oil and propane boilers, while cooling relies on separate electric air conditioning units—a system that the existing police and fire station mirrors. For the new public safety complex, a more sustainable approach would involve the adoption of heat pumps, which offer both heating and cooling capabilities. Though heat pumps have higher upfront installation costs compared to traditional systems, they are significantly more cost-effective in the long term and become effectively carbon neutral when powered by renewable electricity, as is the case on Block Island.

Among heat pump options, ground-source or geothermal systems stand out for their efficiency and longevity. By harnessing the relatively constant temperatures below ground, these systems can heat air in the winter and cool it in the summer. However, their high initial cost stems from the labor-intensive installation process, which involves extensive excavation to install below-grade coils. Despite this, geothermal systems often last 25 years or more, outlasting other types of heat pumps and offering substantial long-term savings.

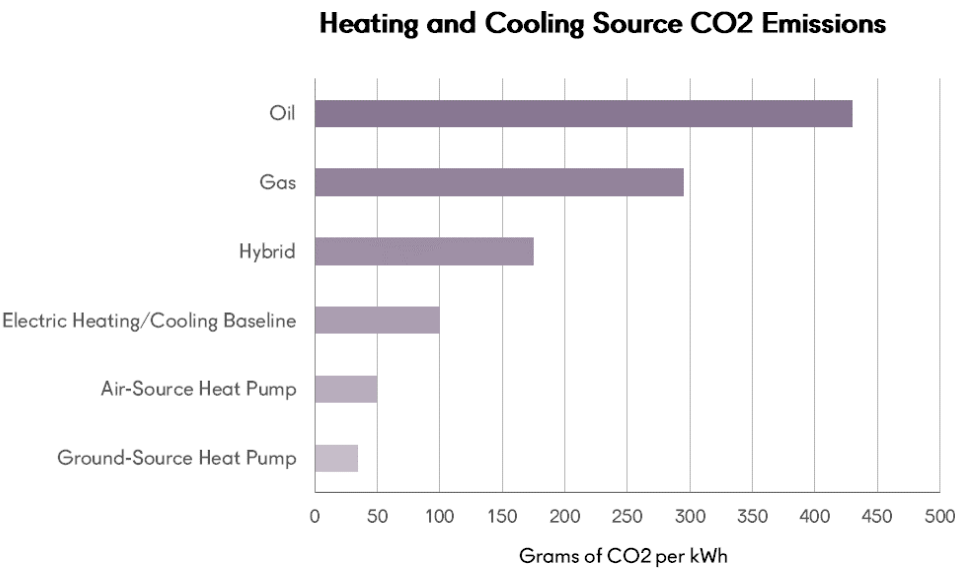
This integrated approach to energy—solar panels for on-site power generation and heat pumps for efficient heating and cooling—aligns with the island’s commitment to sustainability while ensuring the reliability and functionality of the public safety complex.

Air-source, or air-to-water, heat pumps operate by passing outdoor air over a liquid refrigerant, which either absorbs or releases energy depending on whether the system is heating or cooling. The liquid circulates through indoor coils, transferring heat indoors during the winter or drawing it out in the summer. These systems have a lower upfront cost than ground-source heat pumps, requiring only wall-mounted indoor and outdoor units, along with ductwork and coils, without the need for costly excavation or below-ground installation. However, air-source heat pumps typically have shorter lifespans, lasting 10 to 15 years, but still offer significant savings compared to traditional heating systems over their lifetime.

Both ground-source and air-source heat pumps can also be used to heat water, eliminating the need for oil or gas water heaters and further reducing both environmental and financial costs. Tax credits and rebates offered by the State of Rhode Island and the Block Island Power Company can help offset the upfront cost of installing air-source heat pumps, making them a more accessible option for sustainable energy on the island.



US national averages, per 2,000 sq ft Source: <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/POST-PN-0523/POST-PN-0523.pdf>



Based on data from 2016 UK Study Source: <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/POST-PN-0523/POST-PN-0523.pdf>

Water Systems

A cornerstone of Block Island’s environmental stewardship is the protection of its natural freshwater resources. In 1984, the island secured sole-source aquifer status from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, affirming that its water is safe to drink without manual filtration. Today, more than 90% of residents rely on private wells for their water supply. To align with this existing infrastructure, the new building will continue to rely on well water.

Sustaining these freshwater sources depends on maintaining a balance between consumption and the replenishment of the water table. With a recharge rate of 2.6 to 3.6 billion gallons annually, Block Island is rich in water resources, but conservation remains critical. Upgrading the building’s plumbing to include water-efficient fixtures—such as low-flow faucets, showerheads, and toilets, as well as motion-detecting faucets in community bathrooms—will significantly reduce water consumption over time. Although these fixtures have a higher upfront cost, they are cost-effective in the long term. Additional measures, such as installing water meters and leak detection systems, will help monitor usage and prevent unnecessary water loss.

Outdoor water management is equally important. The current building is surrounded by grass, a high-maintenance plant that requires frequent watering, fertilizer, and mowing. Replacing the grass with low-maintenance ground cover, such as white (Dutch) clover or micro clover, offers a more sustainable alternative. These plants require less water, eliminate the need for chemical fertilizers, and enhance soil health by retaining moisture, preventing erosion, and suppressing weeds. Clover also promotes biodiversity by attracting pollinators like bees and butterflies.

The new landscape should also include a native plant garden on the hillside near the building to prevent erosion and support the local ecosystem. Native plants, adapted to the island’s climate, thrive with minimal manual watering or fertilization, reducing maintenance while preserving water quality. Together, these measures create a thoughtful approach to water conservation that honors Block Island’s commitment to its natural resources

Stormwater management is essential to protecting Block Island’s freshwater sources from pollution. While rain itself is clean, as it falls it collects pollutants from the ground and carries them into nearby bodies of water. Effective management strategies, such as permeable pavements and rain gardens, can be integrated into the new building’s design to capture and filter runoff before it reaches these vulnerable areas.

The driveways for fire trucks and emergency vehicles will require impervious surfaces to support their weight. However, all other walkways can use permeable materials to allow water to pass through. Options include pervious concrete, interlocking concrete pavers, or flat stones with small gaps to facilitate drainage. A more natural approach, using gravel or compacted dirt with rocks, could also be considered. These materials reduce runoff by enabling stormwater to infiltrate the ground.

A rain garden will be installed at the base of the hill to maximize its effectiveness. Positioned to capture runoff, the garden will prevent erosion, minimize localized flooding, and filter stormwater as it seeps into the soil. This natural filtration process improves water quality by removing pollutants before the water can enter nearby ponds or other bodies of water. Rain gardens also support biodiversity by incorporating native plants and vegetation, which provide habitats for local wildlife.

By addressing stormwater management through thoughtful design, the project not only safeguards Block Island’s freshwater resources but also enhances the ecological health and resilience of the surrounding landscape.

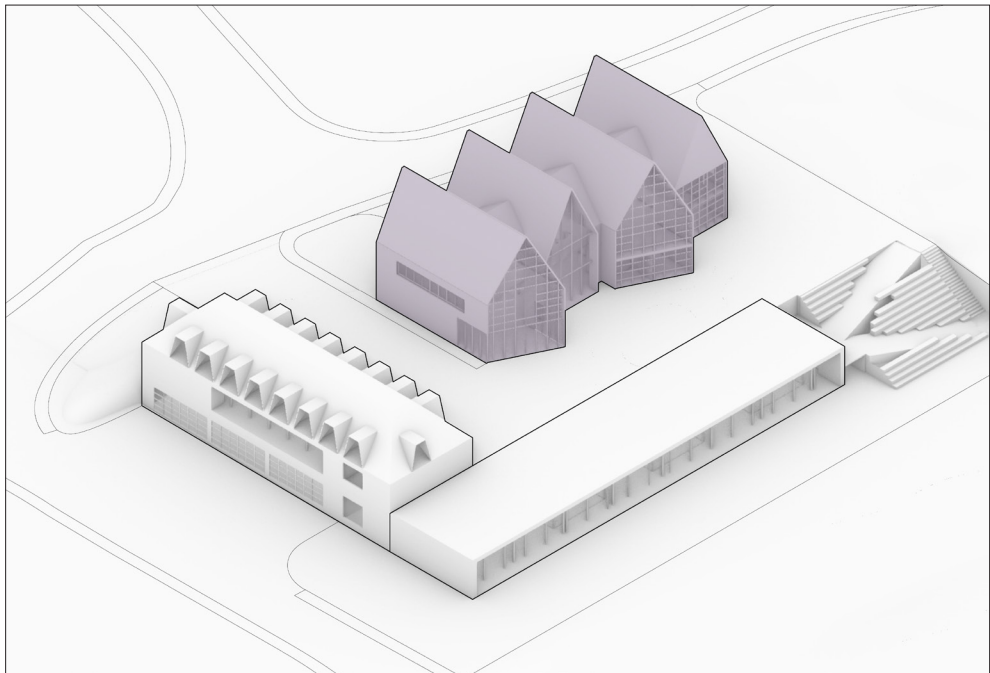
Police

To redefine policing is to strip away its imposing qualities and replace them with structures that prioritize empathy. While much of this shift depends on policy and training, there is also an opportunity to embed these principles in the physical design of the building itself. Architecture, in this context, becomes a tool for shaping a more considerate and humane framework.

The reception area is a key component of a police station, serving as the first point of contact for residents and visitors. Former Block Island Police Chief John Lynch emphasized the importance of designing this space to balance privacy with a sense of welcome. Simultaneously, the processing center requires a separate, discreet entry. In a community as small as Block Island, being seen at the police station can quickly harm a person’s reputation. Shielded parking and a private entrance mitigate this risk, ensuring confidentiality and reducing unnecessary harm.

Another critical issue is the current lack of separation between adults and minors in the facility. Legal requirements mandate that they remain completely separated—not only physically but also in sight and sound—throughout all stages of processing and detention. Addressing this deficiency is not merely a matter of compliance; it is a step toward minimizing harm to vulnerable individuals.

To maintain a human scale, the building is divided into four interconnected sections: two for administrative functions, one for public interaction, and another for detention and legal processing. This arrangement reflects a deliberate effort to create a space that is functional, approachable, and aligned with the needs of the community it serves.

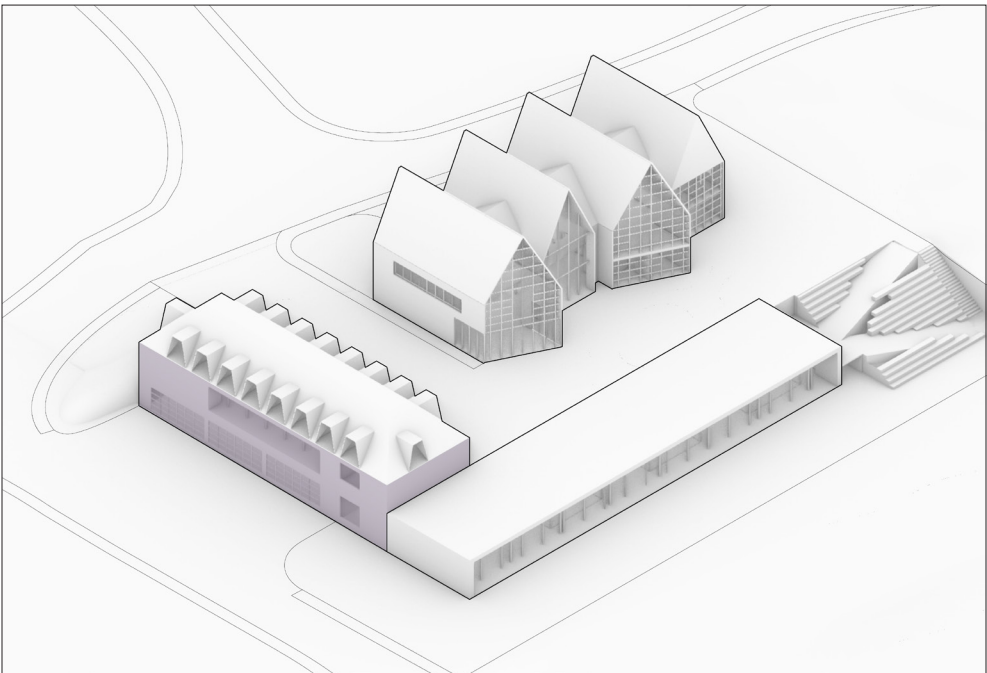


Fire Rescue

The fire station, built in 1965, faces structural failures rooted in its age. These shortcomings now actively undermine the station’s ability to perform life-saving operations. The garage doors for fire trucks cannot be opened in winds exceeding 30 miles per hour, as doing so risks the roof detaching entirely. On an island where winds exceeding 130 miles per hour are not uncommon, this poses a dire threat to the station’s capacity to respond during emergencies.

The police station, too, reveals critical safety deficiencies. Firefighters returning from calls often carry carcinogenic compounds on their uniforms, which require proper decontamination and storage to prevent harm. Currently, the station lacks essential safety features such as a decontamination room and an HVAC system for ventilating equipment closets—improvements that volunteers have identified as urgent priorities.

The planned fire garage will address another major inefficiency. Unlike the current two-row layout, which limits access, the new design will allow each of the six vehicles direct access to a garage door. This improvement will significantly increase the station’s response time, enabling faster dispatch and quicker fire suppression—changes that could mean the difference between saving or losing lives.

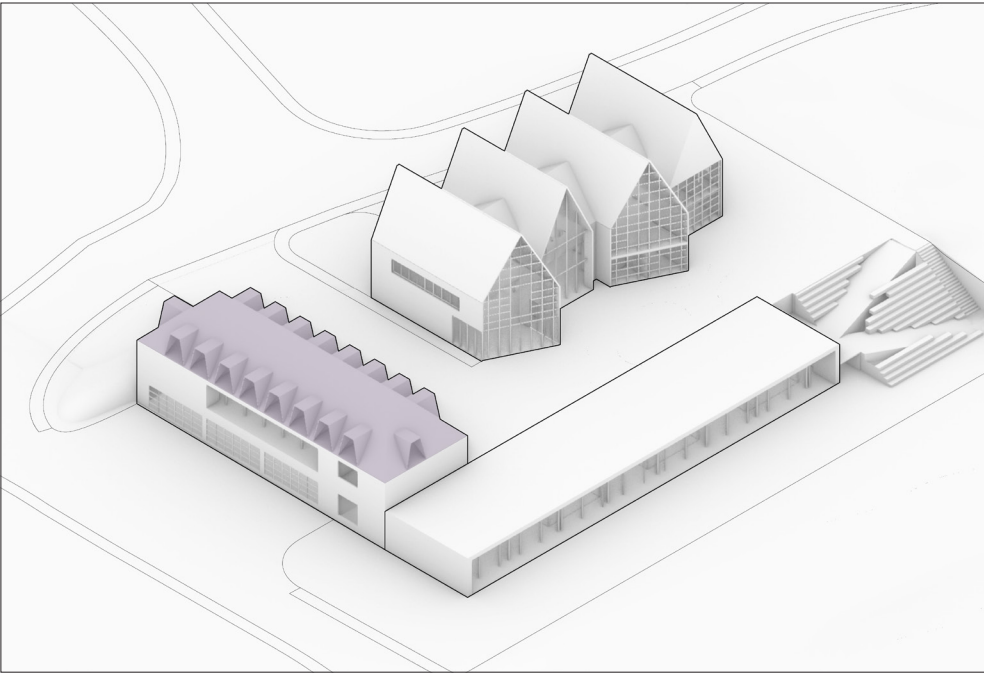


Accessible Housing

Accessible housing adjacent to the Civic Station challenges traditional notions of bureaucratic policing and introduces a model rooted in equity and practicality. On Block Island, where the tourism economy dominates, providing affordable housing for year-round workers and seasonal employees is not just a matter of logistics but of justice. Summer service workers, many of whom are international, often in difficult conditions overcrowded apartments, sometime vehicles, forced to choose between untenable options in a housing market that offers little relief.

In this context, employers frequently step in to secure housing for staff simply to maintain operations. The station presents a unique opportunity to address this issue directly by incorporating temporary staff housing on-site. This arrangement would offer seasonal workers the stability they need to live and work on the island, while also setting a precedent for integrating affordable housing into public infrastructure—a response that reflects both compassion and necessity in a community strained by economic disparity.

Such housing already exists above the fire station and this proposal seeks to increase its square footage and comfort.



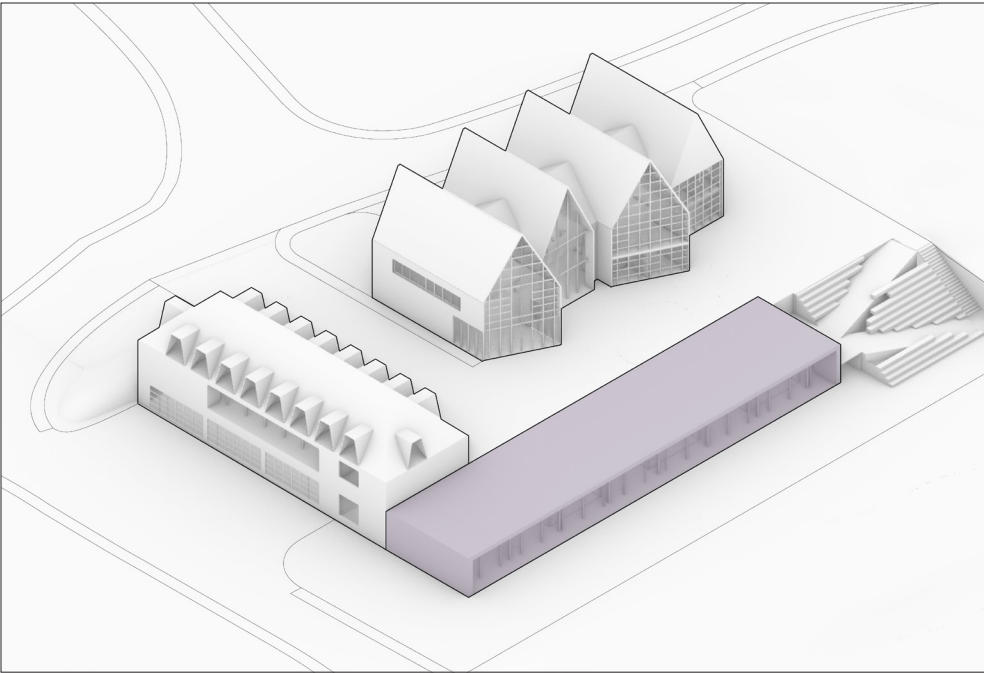
Community Nexus

The police and fire station currently functions solely as a site for safety and emergency response, disconnected from the community it serves. Redefining safety opens opportunities to engage the public and address broader needs, particularly during Block Island’s isolating winter months.

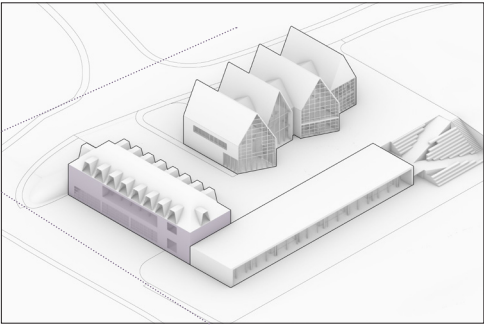
Mental health struggles are common, driven by job and housing insecurity and seasonal loneliness. While the Island Free Library serves as a crucial community center, it cannot meet all needs. Residents, particularly youth, have expressed a desire for a gym for weight training—a space for exercise and social connection to combat winter depression. Similarly, the station’s outdoor courtyard could be re-purposed as a public area for communal meals and gatherings.

Opening the station’s grounds to the public breaks down the barriers of traditional policing. By inviting the community into the space, the station could foster trust, connection, and resilience, transforming it from an isolated institution into an integral part of Block Island’s social fabric -- making a community resilient and whole.

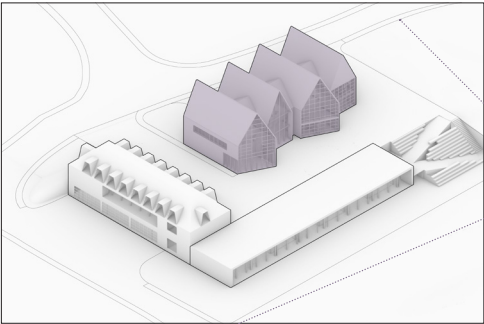
On site, the community center programming works as a retaining wall that negotiates between the safety complex and public park on Ocean Avenue below.



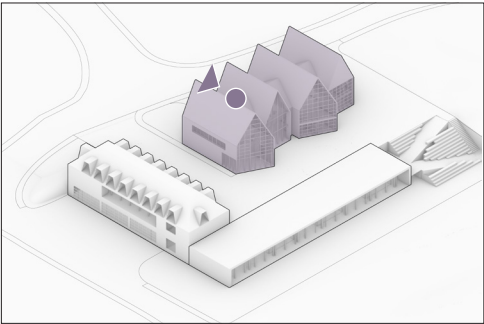
Perspectival Views
Pages 80-87



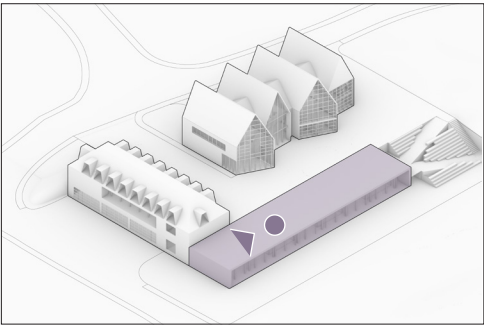
A



B

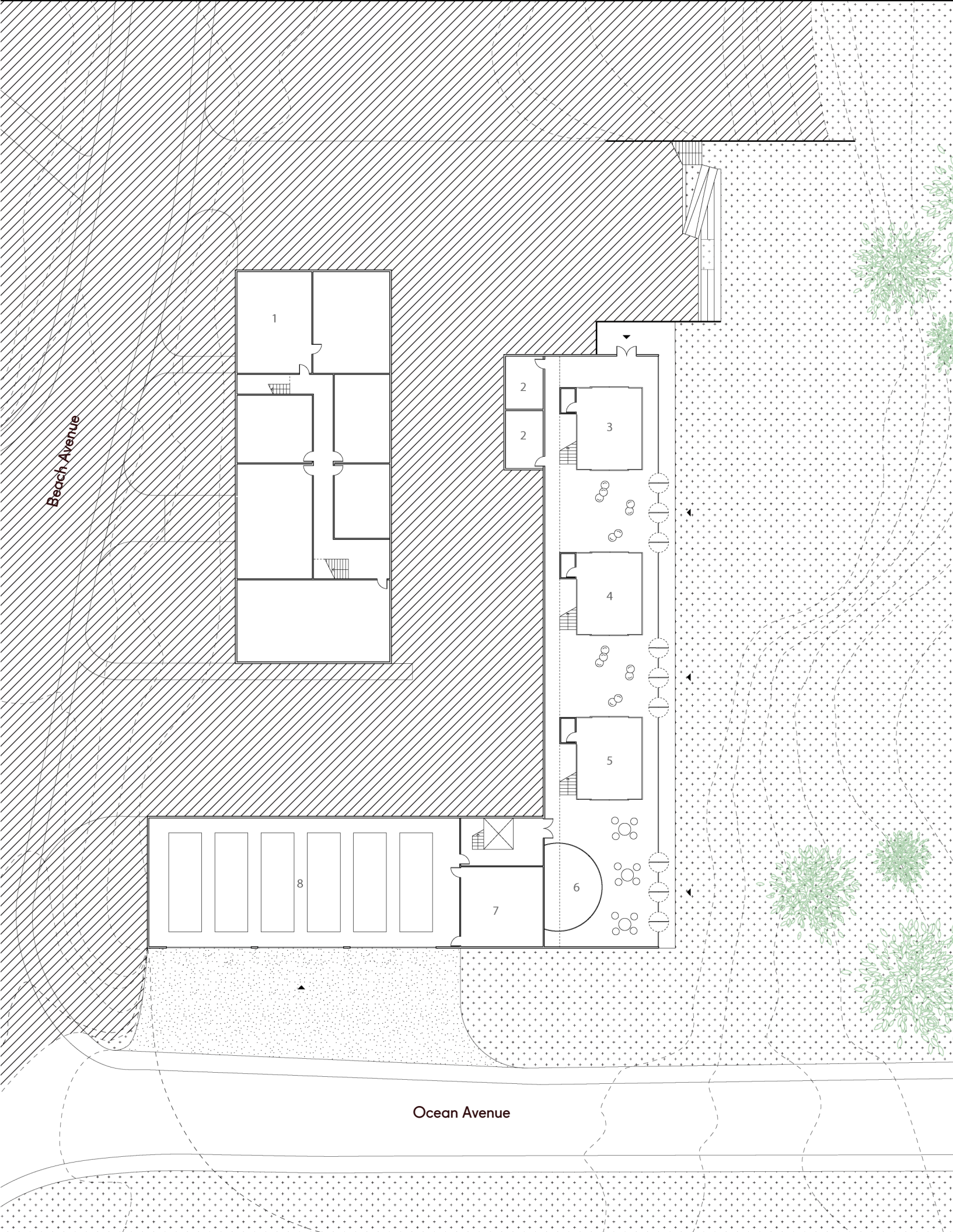


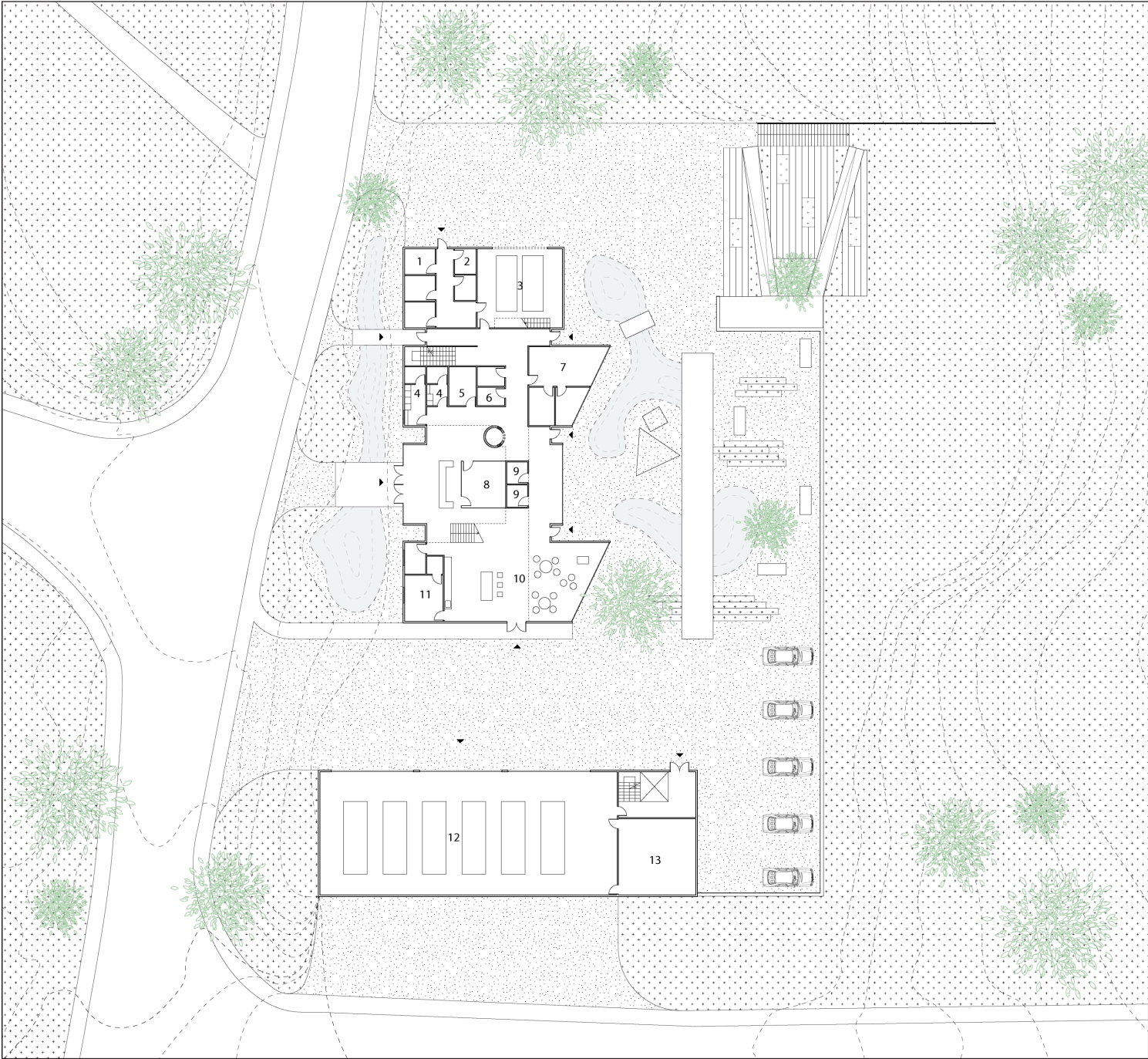
C



D

- LEVEL 0
- 1. Storage
 - 2. Bathroom
 - 3. Mental Health
 - 4. Fitness
 - 5. Reading
 - 6. Cafe
 - 7. Maintenance
 - 8. Fire Rescue Garage





- LEVEL +01
1. Adult Cell

2. Interview

3. Sally Port

4. Locker

5. Armor

6. IT Room

7. Evidence Archive

8. Dispatch

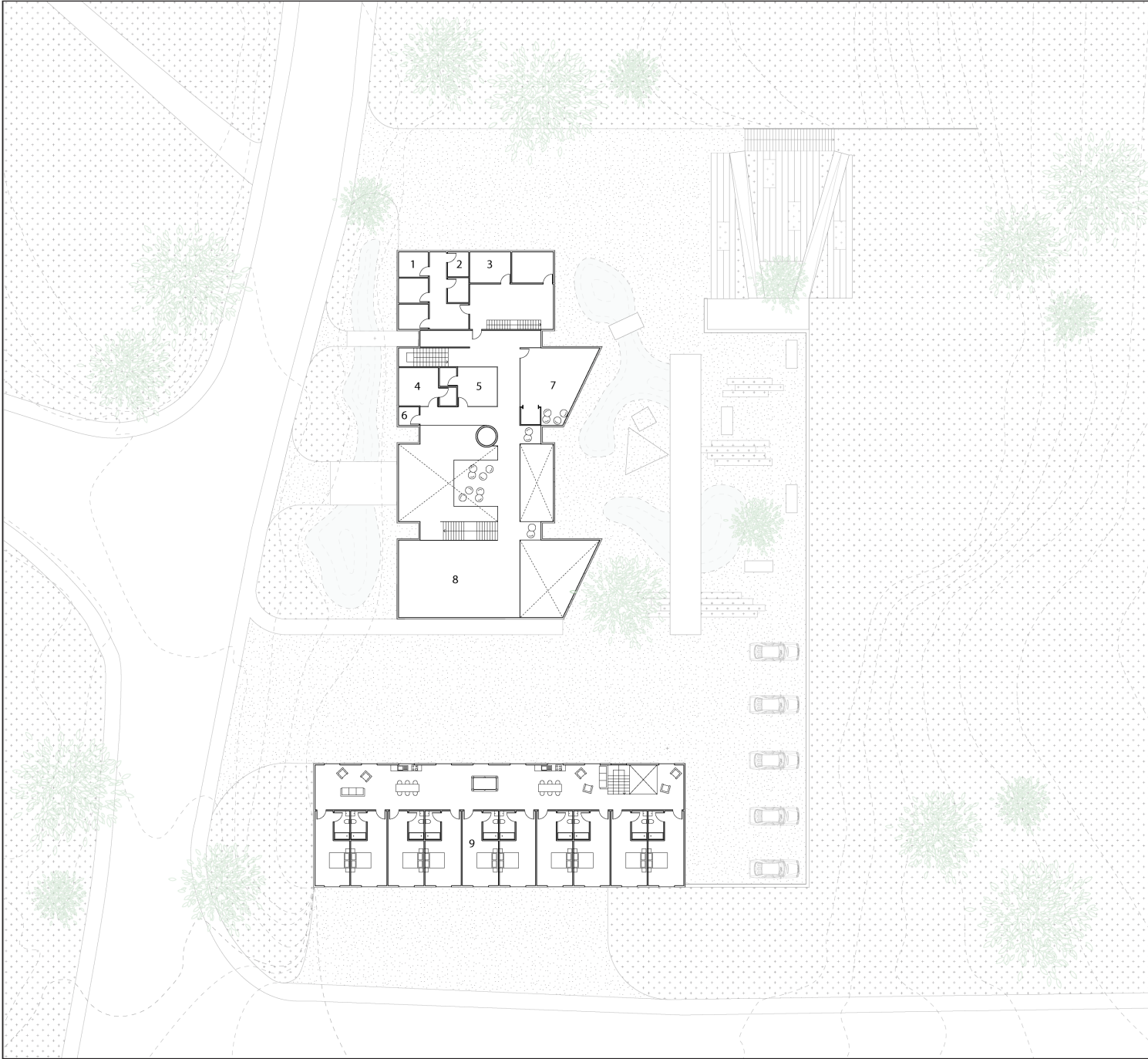
9. Bathroom

10. Recreational Area

11. Storage

12. Garage

13. Maintenance



- LEVEL +02
1. Juvenile Cell

2. Interview

3. Consulting

4. Fire Rescue Chief

5. Police Chief

6. Bathroom

7. Admin Area

8. Multi-function Room

9. (unlabeled)



A. The four-part police safety and security building faces Beach Avenue, while the fire station negotiates the slope of Ocean Avenue, with fire trucks housed on the lower level and administrative offices and seasonal police housing above.

A community center completes the campus, doubling as a retaining wall and access point to a public park below. A central public plaza separates emergency vehicle functions from public areas, ensuring safety while fostering community

interaction with the landscape. The design balances functionality and openness, re-imagining a traditionally closed-off space as one integrated with the year-long and seasonal communities.



B. The southern facade of the police station combines translucent and transparent polycarbonate panels, layered with a wiring system to support climbing vines. In summer, the vegetation offers natural

shading, reducing solar heat gain. In winter, as the vines shed their foliage, the facade permits greater solar exposure, enhancing passive heating and light. This approach intertwines energy efficiency

with seasonal responsiveness, integrating architecture with the natural environment.



C. The central lobby of the safety and security center occupies one of four distinct sections of the building, designed as the most transparent, with a clearly defined threshold. Within this double-height space are the information

desk and dispatch, serving as the core from which other administrative functions are oriented. The transparency of the lobby stands in deliberate contrast to the opaque, often unwelcoming entries of traditional police stations. Instead, it

creates an unbroken line of visibility from the front of the building to the landscaped public space at the back, fostering openness and accessibility.



D. The community center building serves as a shared space, housing a collective kitchen and café area for police and volunteer firefighter staff. It also includes workout equipment, meeting spaces for

the community, and a mental health clinic. The interior is divided by translucent partitions and movable curtains, allowing for adjustable levels of privacy and transparency. Sliding doors on the southern

side open onto the garden, creating a dynamic connection between indoor spaces and the outdoors, enabling community programs to extend into the landscape.

Grants, Subsidies &
Tax Incentive

To fund this project, the town might explore a variety of funding sources across federal, state, and local programs, each tailored to different aspects of law enforcement, public safety, energy efficiency, and community development.

- Department of Justice (DOJ):**
 - Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS)
 - Community Policing Development (CPD) Program & Microgrants: Funding for innovative community policing initiatives.
 - Preparing for Active Shooter Situations (PASS) Program: Training and preparedness resources.
 - Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act (LEMHWA) Program: Supporting the mental health of law enforcement personnel.
 - COPS Hiring Program (CHP): Funding to hire law enforcement officers.
 - Specialized Programs: Anti-Methamphetamine (CAMP), Anti-Heroin Task Force (AHTF), and School Violence Prevention (SVPP).
- Office of Justice Programs (OJP):**
 - Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program (JAG): General funding for public safety and law enforcement.
 - Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA): Support for school safety and crime reduction initiatives.
 - National Institute of Justice (NIJ): Funds for research and training in crime prevention.
 - Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP): Grants for youth-focused programs.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS):**
 - Opioid Crisis Grants: Support for communities addressing opioid addiction and related public health challenges.
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS):**
 - Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP): Training and programs for terrorism response, accessed through state agencies.
- Energy and Sustainability Grants/ Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources:**
 - Clean Energy Tax Credits & Net-Metering: Incentives for renewable energy use.
 - Renewable Energy Fund (REF) Commercial Solar Program: Funding for solar installations.
 - Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE): Financing for energy-efficient upgrades.
- Rhode Island Energy:**
 - Rebate Programs and Heat Pump Incentives: Financial support for adopting energy-efficient technologies.





14.	Acknowledgments	p. 91
	Thank you.	
	We extend our gratitude to the residents, public servants, business owners, community leaders, and researchers who generously engaged with our team, offering insights, provocations, and knowledge that shaped our understanding of this project and the broader role of design as an agent in the world.	
	Chris Crawford, Executive Director Block Island Chamber of Commerce	Sandra Kelly, Co-Chair Senior Advisory Committee
	John Lynch, Chief of Police New Shoreham Police Department	Sarah Barkley, Teacher Block Island School
	Beth Rousseau, Executive Assistant New Shoreham Police Department	Carolyn Collins, Member Police Advisory Committee
	Tom Risom, Facilities Manager Block Island Building Department	Austin Morin, Founder Queer Block Island
	Kim Gaffett, Lead Naturalist Block Island Conservancy	Judy Clark, Owner Clarks Cab
	Kristin J. Baumann, Director Island Free Library	Lars Junghans, Associate Professor of Architecture University of Michigan Taubman College
	Susana Gardner, Technical Services/Archivist Librarian Island Free Library	Shauna Beland, Director of Energy Programs and Policy Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources
	Judy Mitchell, Interlibrary Loan/Circulation Clerk Island Free Library	Austin Morin, Founder Queer Block Island
	Renee Meyer, Editor The Block Island Times	Judy Clark, Taxi Driver Clarks Cab
	Moukhtar Kocache Consultant	Lars Junghans, Associate Professor of Architecture University of Michigan Taubman College
	Neal Murphy, Owner Old Town Inn	Shauna Beland, Director of Energy Programs and Policy Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources
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Block IslandPublic Design CorpsSpring 2023



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The UM Public Design Corps operates at the intersection of design and public service, grounded in the belief that design has a critical role to play in addressing social and environmental challenges. Based at the University of Michigan’s Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning, it brings together students, faculty, and community stakeholders to confront pressing issues. Through collaborative projects, the Corps explores how design can create more equitable and sustainable futures, bridging the gap between academic inquiry and real-



