

PROXY is a new model for urban development – a more flexible urbanism – temporarily transforming underused but high-value urban areas into a thriving cultural experience.

PROXY is a content machine tied to the pace of contemporary culture, where content constantly changes on our computers, televisions and mobile devices. Here events, retail spaces, art and even food offerings will rotate through PROXY's open framework of temporary structures, invoking a flexibility between people, architecture, and the city. PROXY embraces the vast diversity of the city and encourages the rotation of new ideas, start-up business, and innovative art installations, which come and go like new visitors to the site.

PROXY is a space for thoughtful experimentation to occur: changing public perception of what is possible, allowing the city to become a more open and playful construct. Conceived with the knowledge of its short lifespan on the site and operating under the motto HERE FOR NOW, PROXY is an investigation into the potentials of impermanence: stressing the importance of presence, heightened engagement and of seizing the moment in our lives.

AN EXPERIMENT
IN FLEXIBLE URBANISM

PROXY

HERE FOR

FOR NOW

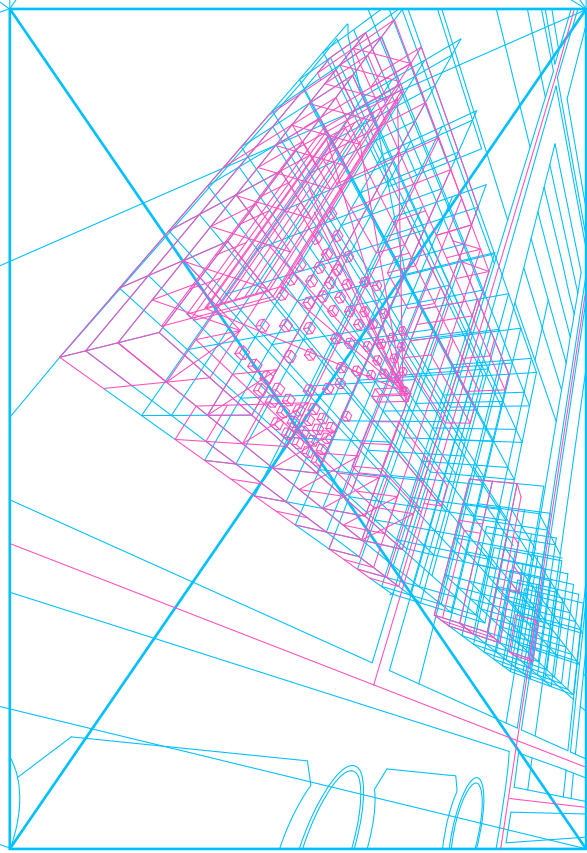
A project by ENVELOPE A+D

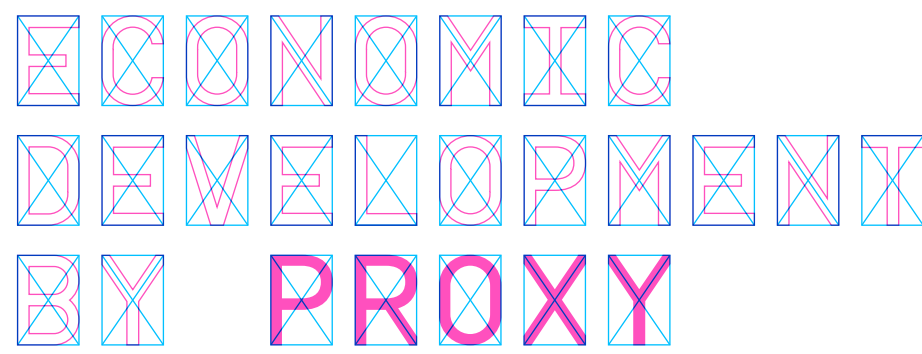
Envelope Architecture + Design is a collaborative design firm whose work recontextualizes modes of living and building in ways that advance new models of public/private space and craft compelling visions of the emerging urban condition. Envelope is inclusive of diverse disciplines and individuals who see architecture as a framework for transformation rather than as an object of consumption. Deep listeners, critical thinkers and prolific generators of ideas, Envelope creates an immersive architecture that seeks to alter people's relationships to each other and heightens awareness by intelligently disrupting the normative condition. Envelope A+D was founded by Douglas Burnham in 2002.

PROXY

PROXY is a temporary two-block project which creates a centralized, ever-changing experience in the heart of one of San Francisco's most popular neighborhoods.

Transforming vacant lots on Octavia Boulevard, PROXY is a placeholder for a more permanent development designed to generate a four-year progression of food, art, retail and cultural activity in San Francisco's Hayes Valley.





Realizing the Value of Spontaneous Interventions
by Douglas Burnham, envelope A+D

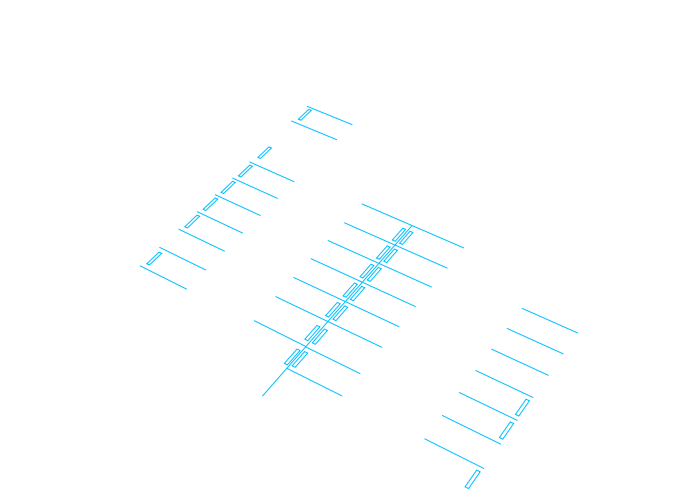
In 2010, amidst the severe economic downturn, San Francisco's Mayor's Office requested proposals for temporary uses on city-owned vacant lots as a way to spur economic development within a neighborhood marred by a ten-block long linear void created when the earthquake-damaged Central Freeway was removed. In an early discussion with city officials I remember thinking, "OK, they're asking for free design work and we have to fund the implementation... What can possibly come from that?" Not only would we need to put forward a compelling idea, but we would also have to realize it financially, as undercapitalized young architects in the middle of a recession.

Yet, we still bit, motivated by the possibilities of transforming under-imagined territory. We hypothesized compelling temporary uses, sought-out prospective vendors, developed design strategies that utilized low-cost easily-deployable modules, and built coalitions with neighborhood groups, local business owners, and city officials. Within nine months our first vendor, who uses liquid nitrogen to make ice cream and until then had operated out of a red Radio Flyer wagon, opened for business on a formerly derelict parking lot.

In many ways, our efforts were driven by sheer will and risk-taking. Banks weren't loaning money, so we took out a six-figure personal loan from a supportive client to fund the sites' required infrastructure. Inventing as we went, we used our skills as architects to rethink the rules of development. We phased the project, rolling out successive elements (ice cream and coffee vendors, an arts institution, a beer garden, bike rental, and, currently, retail components) as each became feasible, over the course of our five-year lease. Each phase has its own business model and each model has to grapple with the cold reality of an ever-diminishing timeline for recouping improvement costs for ourselves and our vendors.

We named our project "PROXY" because it is intended to be a placeholder for a more permanent development. Like other spontaneous interventions, PROXY adopts an implementation model of lighter-faster-cheaper, but it also builds value and transforms the neighborhood by changing the perception of place-creating compelling content where there was none before. The project shows how incremental, place-based change can encourage entrepreneurial activity and community participation - despite economic obstacles - by establishing a framework to promote local micro-enterprises. This model lowers the economic barriers to entry, making it possible for new small businesses to participate in these temporary uses and demonstrating that economic and cultural development goals need not be mutually exclusive, but powerful catalysts for urban revitalization.

Octavia Boulevard between Hayes and Fell. Vacant/underutilized lots are left after the removal of the central freeway.



For more information about the project, go to: proxyf.net
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**with Douglas Burnham,
envelope A+D
by Jennie Nunn,
San Francisco Magazine**

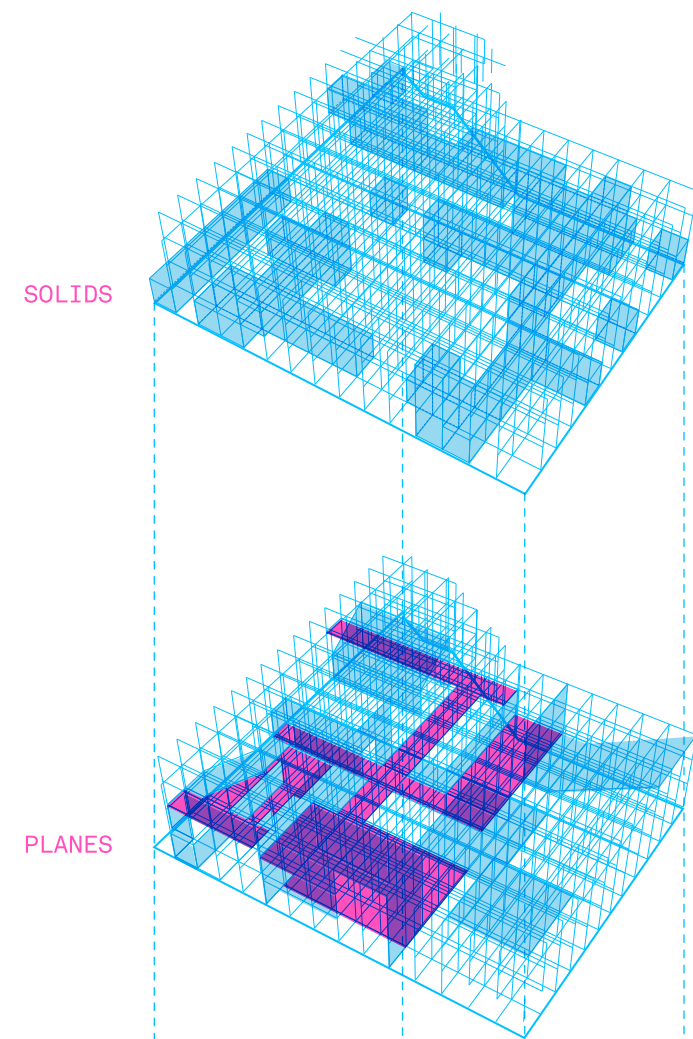
Jennie: Can you tell me how envelope A+D first got involved with the project? And, why you decided to take it on?

Douglas: We responded to a request for proposals from the SF Mayor's Office for temporary uses on the vacant/underused lots left over from the removal of the 101 Central Freeway structure. When Octavia Boulevard was created as a surface street extension of the freeway there were several lots created that CalTrans deeded to the City, under the control of the Mayor's Office. They were looking for a range of options depending on the specificity of each site. Many of these lots have become urban farms, which is a fantastic use. Yet, we were interested in the public presence of the two underused lots along Patricia's Green, on the east side of Octavia between Hayes and Fell. We felt that the location of these lots would allow us to create a temporary construct that could contribute a vibrant place for both commerce and culture to the heart of Hayes Valley. The project is conceived with the understanding of its temporary nature - that it is just a placeholder until a more permanent structure takes its place. That's why we gave it the name "PROXY."

We took on the project because we got excited about the possibility for creating a new model for urban development - a "flexible urbanism" - which can temporarily transform underused but high-value urban areas into thriving cultural spaces that bring an economic vitality to otherwise fallow sites. As a model, it could be applied to other sites in San Francisco, or to other cities. This larger sense of the potential of the project beyond these two sites makes PROXY a thoughtfully conceived full-scale urban experiment.

J: Where are the containers from? Can you explain the design concept?

D: The shipping containers can come from any one of the many ports along the West Coast, but so far all of ours have come from Southern California. We're using containers because they are easily transportable, durable and re-usable. In the process of becoming.

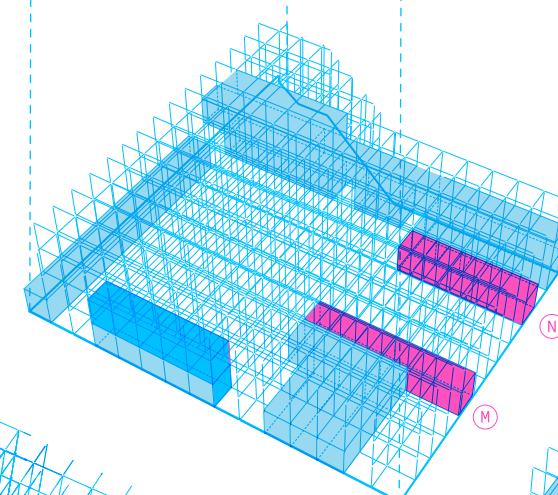
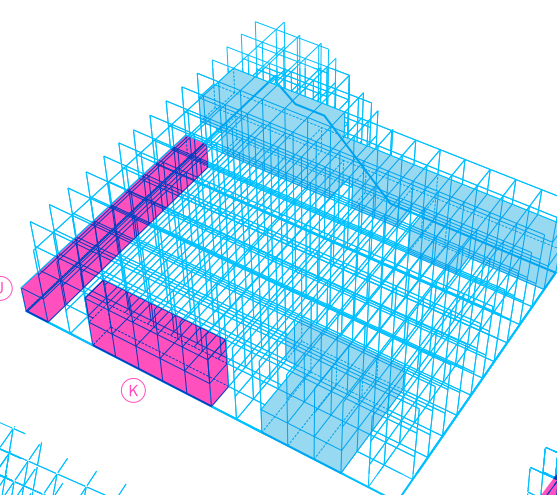
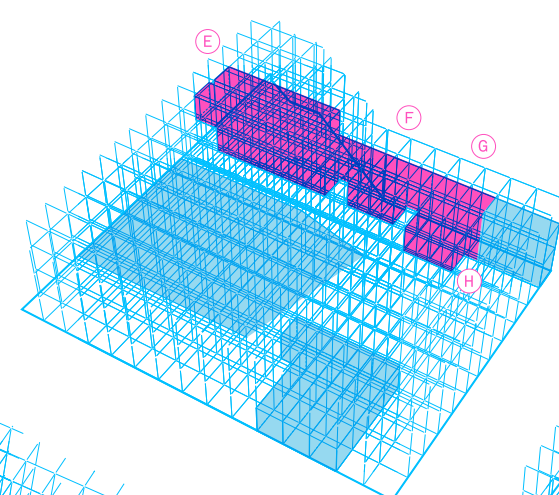


A. Zip • City Carshare
B. Ritual Coffee
C. Smitten Ice Cream
D. Main Power/Utility

E. Anther Apparel
F. Envelope A+D Satellite Office
G. Site Storage
H. Restrooms
I. Biergarten

J. Rotating Storefront
K. Rotating Storefront with Gallery above
L. Gallery

M. Food Vendor
N. Retail Vendor



When our lease with the City is up, we need to remove all of the above ground improvements. The containers can be craned in and craned out easily and most of them are owned by our vendors, so they will continue to be used (on other sites) long after our occupation of these two sites is over. This ethic of re-use is an important sustainable element of the project.

I should say here that the project is not about shipping containers: just like a brick building isn't about the bricks. They are one component of the project, which is using a range of temporary structures, from tents, to scaffolding and panelized, tilt-up structures. The containers just happen to be the first things on the site.

The project is really about the potential of impermanence. PROXY is, at its core, a content machine. The project is tied to the pace of contemporary culture, where content is constantly changing on our computers, televisions and mobile devices. Here events, retail spaces, art and food offerings will be in a constant state of change, with content being curated and occupying the multiple frames (or spaces) that the temporary structures create.

J: How many containers are there? When will it be totally complete?

D: Over the two sites, there are twenty-six containers, two tent structures, one panelized tilt-up structure for an art gallery and a range of temporary scaffold volumes that will come and go over time. It will constantly be in a process of becoming and then, it will be gone. We have three food vendors operating now. The Museum of Craft and Design had an exterior installation space and retail store that was on site July through October 2011. Our goal is to have the majority of the food and retail components up and running by the spring (2013). Other structures will follow. As the nature of the project is a temporary habitation that focuses on change, it will be complete when the lease runs out-currently set for Fall 2015.

J: What specific chefs and vendors are involved?

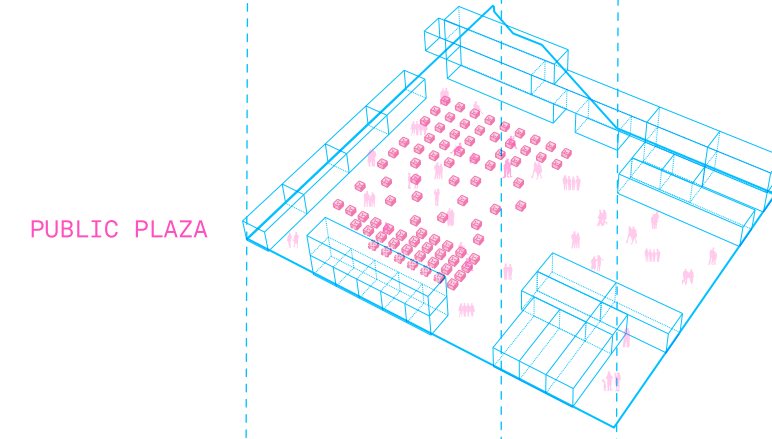
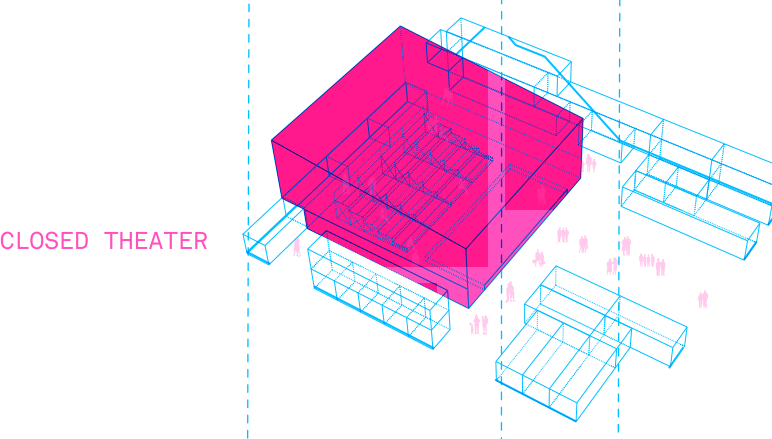
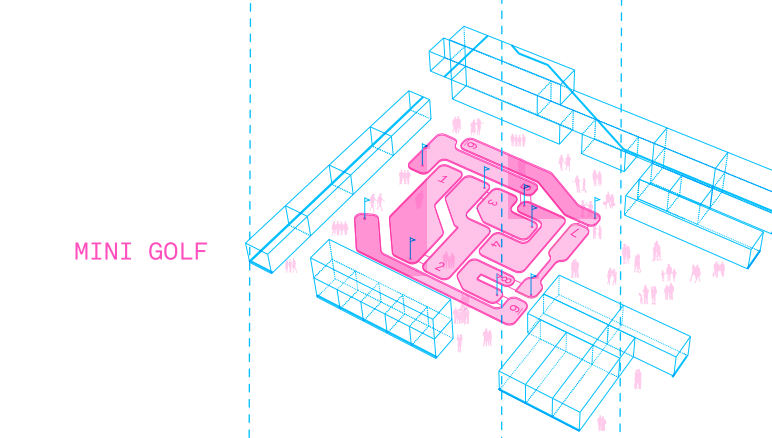
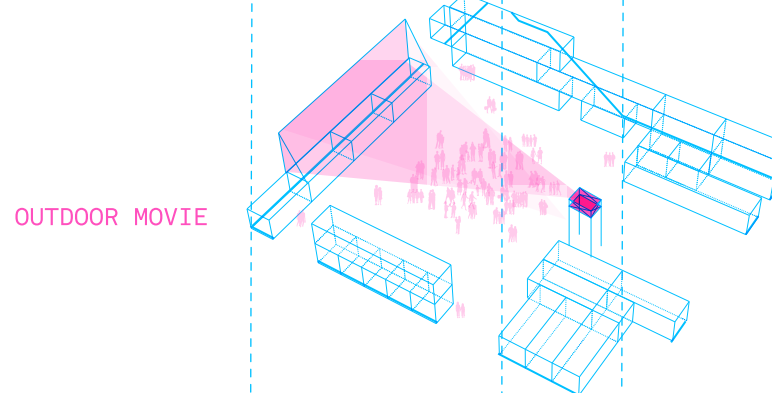
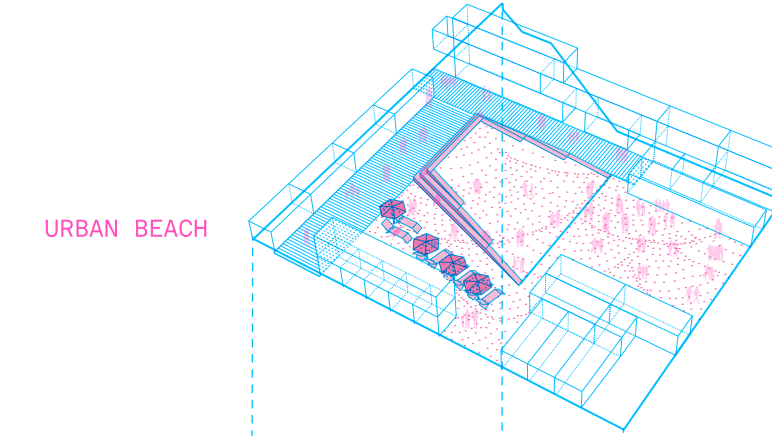
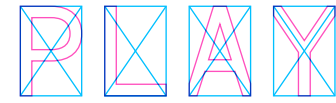
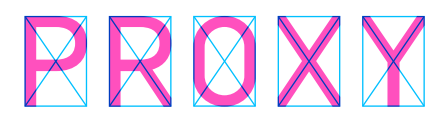
D: For the food component, Smitten Ice Cream and Ritual Coffee and Suppenkuche's Biergarten are up and running on site. We are hoping to have a rotating series of chefs through a partnership with La Cocina.

In the "storefront" retail structures along Hayes and Octavia, we will curate a diverse set of designers, brands and services. As these are very short-term inhabitations, we are creating a matrix of compelling people, products, services and organizations and will be focusing on showcasing things not normally offered in brick-and-mortar stores.

We are also reaching out to artists to create temporary public-scaled art pieces that will be incorporated into the project. In time, we plan to have events, outdoor movies and an art/design gallery.

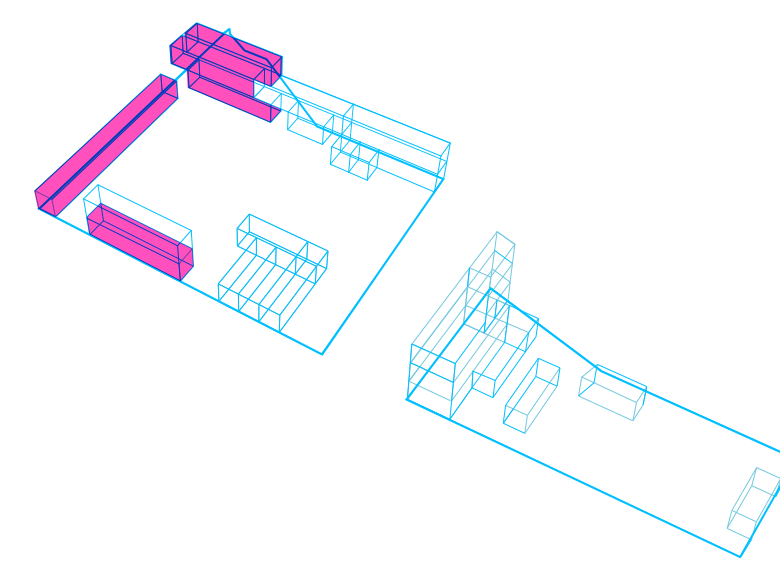
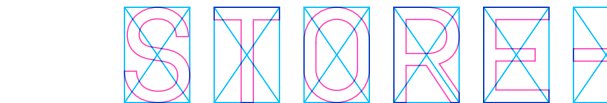
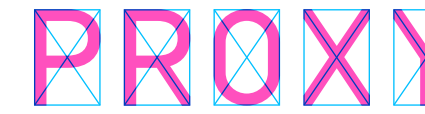
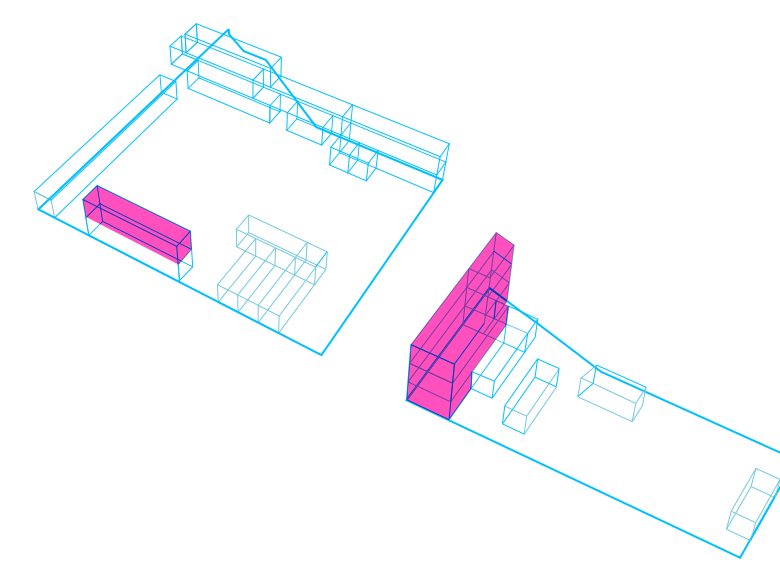
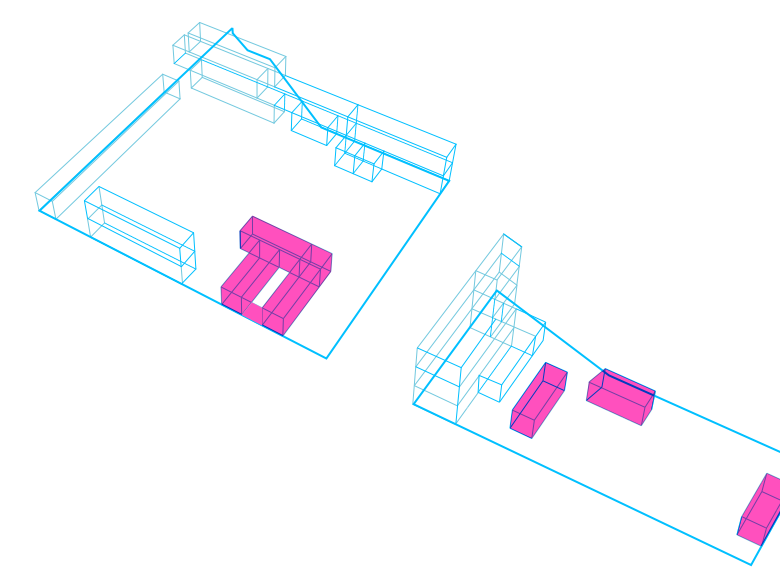
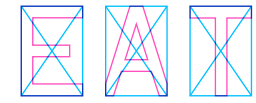
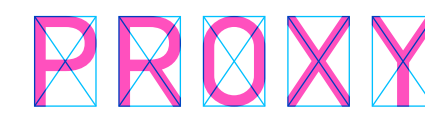
J: What do you love about this project? What do you hope it does for the city, or what do you hope will see happen as a result?

D: PROXY is a celebration of our connected culture. The project creates a centralized ever-changing experience in the heart of one of San Francisco's most popular neighborhoods. Our hope is that the project can change both public and bureaucratic perceptions of what's possible in San Francisco. We feel that this city - and perhaps all cities - can benefit from the ability to re-interpret its underutilized spaces with vital temporary inhabitations. Urban design doesn't just have to operate at the 100-year interval of time, but can be more responsive to the possibilities of the present through short-term uses. Our goal would be to effect positive change on the planning, building and health codes to allow thoughtful proposals for temporary uses to be more easily implemented.

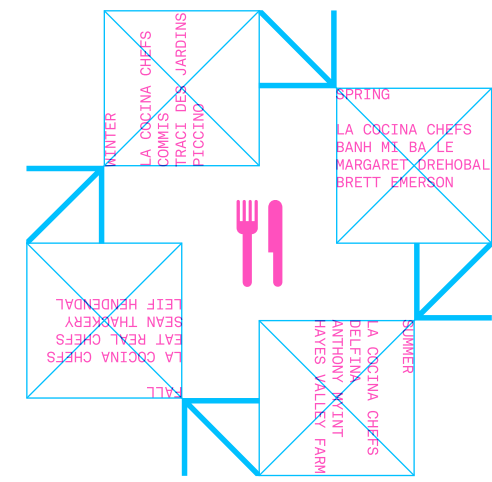


POSSIBLE SCENARIOS

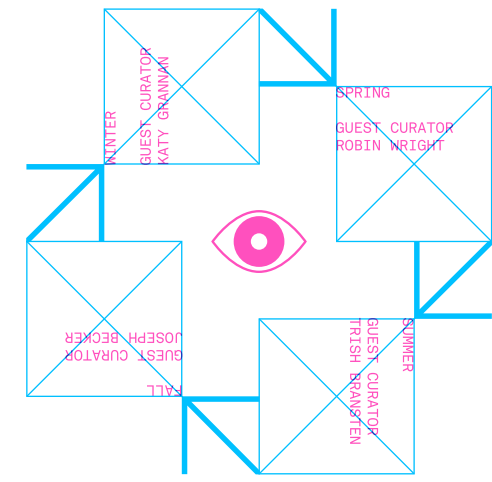
A space for both community and commerce, PROXY PLAY is a covered, semi-interior space with flexibility to house a range of events from (semi) outdoor movies, to community meetings, runway shows, an urban beach, art openings, makers' fairs or even large scale pop-up stores. PROXY PLAY exists at the heart of PROXY, surrounded by PROXY STOREFRONT and PROXY EAT, and programmatically connected to PROXY ART, extending and expanding the interrelationships between and flexibility of PROXY's component parts.



Conceived out of San Francisco's vibrant food culture, PROXY EAT is a series of fixed and rotating vendors that seek to present a diverse range food offerings. proxy's inhabitation of the site began with PROXY EAT to build both excitement and community through the sharing of food. Rooted long-term vendors, rotating chefs, carts and trucks cycle through PROXY creating constantly changing gastronomic experiences. Today, PROXY EAT is Smitten Ice Cream, Ritual Coffee, Suppenkuche's Biergarten and a several food carts, trucks and trailers a day.

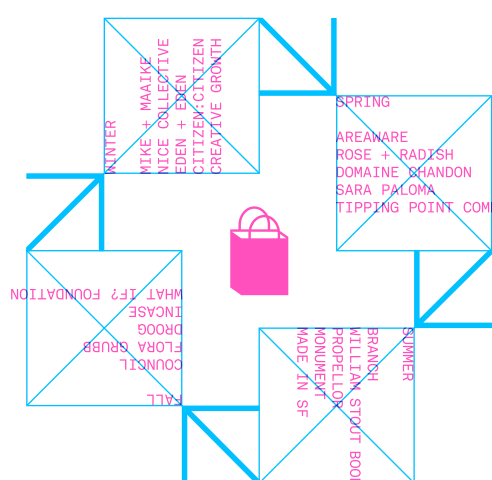


PROXY ART seeks to bring art to the public realm, where people can engage with it in their daily lives. Art is both held within a gallery structure and installed throughout the PROXY site. Guest curated by SF curators and artist-curators around the notion of HERE FOR NOW, the work extends the conceptual framework of PROXY, focusing on impermanence, the ephemeral, of presence and direct experience. The PROXY ART gallery structure is designed to be demountable - a re-deployable gallery - with the intention that it can and should be located elsewhere after the physical construct of PROXY ceases to exist. The mission of PROXY ART is also designed to eventually extend beyond the Hayes Valley site, bringing art to the public realm on and within undervalued sites anywhere.



PROXY STOREFRONT is a series of small-scale pop-ups of curated vendors that contain new and unique offerings in design, retail, brand and services. Specific vendors are asked to participate in PROXY STOREFRONT and the content within the storefront frames is curated as intentional groupings that rotate through PROXY on a rapid three-month cycle. Glazed steel frames of either 64 square feet (8x8 ft) or 160 sf (8x20 ft), these spaces are really a "storefront without the store." Some PROXY STOREFRONT spaces will, in fact, be used as tiny stores, but others are used solely for the exhibition of wares, ideas and products.

PROXY STOREFRONT includes local designers (of all kinds), unique retail offerings (perhaps not available elsewhere), didactic venues for local non-profits, major brand pop-up experiences, and even novel-but-necessary professional services.



Vendors listed above are hypothetical examples.
For more information on upcoming vendors, visit proxyf.net