Like so many outlying Chicago wards, the 15th Ward’s commercial corridors have suffered enormous loss. Empty lots between still-standing structures fracture the sense of place, triggering feelings of emptiness and loss rather than strength and vitality.

This design scheme fills these gaps over, around and through buildings that still remain, rebuilding some of the structure and history and identity. This type of urban infill can be flexible in its material use and how it relates to the surrounding buildings. A modular approach to growth and development, driven by a standard Chicago lot size, allows flexible modification and responsiveness to the ever-changing needs of the surrounding community.

Lively programs will inhabit the spaces: adult job training, after-school sessions and childcare. If these infill projects succeed in providing education and enrichment for all ages, the community will only grow stronger.
On Seattle’s northwest side, in the industrial neighborhood of Ballard, stands a sterling example of adaptive reuse. The Kolstrand Building (1910), a former marine supply building, is now home to modern retail and restaurant spaces. The designers’ seemingly effortless ability to maintain the historic building’s vernacular style while enriching it with modern details creates a place that evokes the past, present, and future all at once. Transparent storefronts inserted into the existing building open the interior to the street-scape and encourage pedestrian activity. Sidewalk cafes create outdoor “living rooms.” The scale of the building is successfully broken down from its industrial past to its pedestrian-friendly future.