The typology of the Presidential Library is fraught with formality. Through the building analysis of twelve precedent libraries, we find in each structure several architectural and operational commonalities. Privately erected, yet federally maintained, these building systems are motivated by a double purpose of ensuring the preservation of historic materials, while also making them available to the public.

At their core, these projects maintain a deeply embedded and well-packed archive. These areas typically have separate temperature controls, lighting conditions, and security clearance from the front-of-house galleries. Civic function, then, is typified through a process of “inflating” the archive walls with styled galleries and historisms. The artifacts chosen to display in this “public realm” are often meant to enshrine and commercialize the president’s life.

As the production of architectural narrative intervenes and conditions the visitor’s experience, we have chosen to liberate the archival core from its vernacular wrapper—reworking it as a naked and autonomous urban figure.

The new Archive Building acts as an architectural crate within the city, providing visual connections to the artifacts and document stacks within. Taking cues from neighboring infrastructure and distribution centers, the taut storage volume hovers above an expansive ground plane, allowing for through-axes and staking of mobile galleries: the archive’s New Strategy for community outreach.

Every morning electrically-powered pop-up trucks exit the hub, combing the city with content and media sourced from the archival core. Each truck is branded to typify one of President Obama’s core positions, maintaining a schedule of value-specific destinations.

Fit out with interactive touch-screens and immersive web applications, the mobile archives are meant to redefine the way people “visit” the museum; from a static, historic expression of the president’s legacy, to a responsive piece of infrastructure, redefining itself alongside the city.
This taxonomy of Presidential Libraries is meant to visualize the embedded space operated by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). All archival materials studied in library galleries are sourced from this research vault. The surrounding architecture functions as exhibition space, auditoria, cafe, retail, and support program; typical of the commercial museum typology.

Given the density of the selected sites, and the opportunity for the visitor to participate in a larger urban function, the archive volume of BOPL is extracted and externalised to make physical contact with the city. Rather than embed the archive within an architectural style meant to condition its occupants, BOPL expresses it as a direct source of information. Treating the ground floor as a garage condition, gallery trucks are mobilized daily with exhibition materials, returning in the evening to restock. The city’s problems and successes become the context for the galleries, rather than historical duplication and pastiche.

**PRECEDE ANALYSIS**

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Each morning, after trucks depart, the garage-space is transformed into an urban living room (above) where visitors may enjoy coffee, attend public lectures, and participate in media installations. In the evening, trucks return to the Archive Building for recharging and restocking. City dwellers are made a part of this nightly spectacle (below), with clear views into the glowing hub floor: curators and archivists weaving in and out of trucks, adjusting content for the next route.

Treated as a garage condition, the ground floor is sized to provide gallery trucks with ample turn radius for multi-directional entry and exiting.

The efficient building footprint maximizes available park space along the river plaza.
More than a container of exhibits, the Mobile Archive is a forum of social-urban interaction. The electrically-powered pop-up trucks broadcast content indiscriminately across Chicago's 77 community areas: from engaging tourists within the Loop, to serving the underserviced neighborhoods of South Side, and recently closed public schools and libraries. Through demonstrations of sustainable practices, campaigns for medical awareness, and the promotion of smart consumption, a matrix of knowledge and participation is built.

Given Obama’s storied record as a community organizer, this New Mobile Strategy puts access ahead of social class, change above permanence, and communication above the proclamations of a singular voice.

Once stationed, the 8' wide trailer bed folds out to a 24’ x 40’ gallery floor (~1000sf). Moveable partitions offer a variety of curatorial possibilities, and can accommodate a classroom of 60 students. Fit out with interactive touch-screens and immersive web applications, the Mobile Archives are meant to create new dialogues and subjectivities.