

# HYBRID NOHAM

A HYBRID CULTURE THROUGH CONTEXTUAL  
NEIGHBORHOOD BUILDING

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*This proposal centers on the "NoHam" neighborhood in Detroit, Michigan. This neighborhood has been largely overlooked by Detroit city leaders; however, current residents have created a strong community where residents care for their homes and neighbors to their greatest ability. We seek to enhance the existing community while encouraging growth centered on the Detroit City Football Club. This project identifies existing bungalows for rehabilitation and proposes construction of new contextually appropriate bungalows along a neighborhood corridor. This corridor would anchor a newly developed community center and new soccer training grounds. These interventions seek not only to repopulate vacant lots with housing, but also to strengthen two communities by creating hybrid culture and place.*

This proposal centers on the “NoHam” neighborhood in Detroit, Michigan, which has been largely overlooked by Detroit city leaders. Despite this, current residents have created a strong community where residents care for their homes and neighbors to their greatest ability. Through our proposal, we seek to enhance the existing community while encouraging growth centered on the Detroit City Football Club (DCFC). Founded in 2012, the DCFC operates under the motto, “Passion for Our City, Passion for the Game,” which represents the organization’s desire to build community and positively impact the city. In 2015, DCFC announced a community investment campaign to rehabilitate Hamtramck’s 79-year-old Keyworth Stadium. The stadium is currently the property of Hamtramck Public Schools (HPS) and is located two miles from our project’s site (DCFC, 2015). Although HPS will retain ownership of the property, DCFC will host games and community events under a lease.

The rehabilitation of Keyworth Stadium and the partnership between DCFC and HPS will offer the surrounding communities in Detroit and Hamtramck a place to gather, as well as an opportunity to encourage neighborhood growth. The stadium will provide visitors and surrounding residents the opportunity to experience DCFC games and engage with the community. In addition, the space will offer a place for the community to interact outside of DCFC events. This space will be used by the community and HPS at large for recreation programs, welcoming all nearby residents.

This project seeks to encourage a diverse range of family types. Site visits, interviews with residents, housing stock analysis, and demographic research revealed that current

residents are both diverse and involved in the community. The community, referred to as “Banglatown” or “NoHam,” is a small and dynamic Detroit neighborhood adjacent to the northern tip of the City of Hamtramck. It is bounded by Interstate 75 to the east, the Davison Freeway to the north, Conant Street to the west, and Carpenter Avenue and Hamtramck to the south. Almost 70 percent of the neighborhood is under 45 years old, with 22 percent of the population between ages 18-34, and 36 percent between ages 34-64 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). The neighborhood has a median household income of \$18,163, which is in line with the neighborhood’s high level of housing vacancy, at over 30 percent. The neighborhood is also a vibrant immigrant community; almost half of the neighborhood residents were born outside the U.S., and 63 percent identify as Asian, 66 percent of whom identify as Bangladeshi and 28 percent as Asian Indian. The second-largest racial group in the neighborhood is African American, who comprise 25 percent of the neighborhood’s residents. The neighborhood as a whole is composed of long-term residents, as 65 percent of immigrated residents came to the neighborhood between 1990 and 2009. Lastly, about 41 percent of residents work in an occupation that is considered the creative class, such as information technology, arts, education, healthcare, and professional services (Creative, 2015).

The neighborhood is a tale of two halves. The western half has fewer residents, higher vacancy, and more empty lots, while the eastern half has more residents, less vacancy, and fewer empty lots, and is enclosed by two commercial corridors. The challenge then becomes a matter of developing methods for attracting new residents to the western half of NoHam.

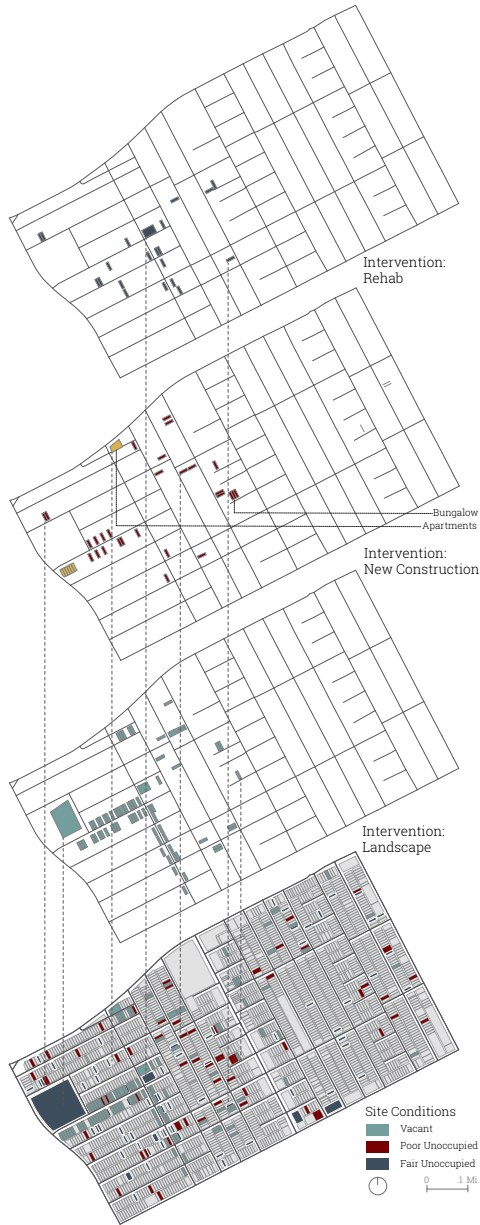


FIGURE 1  
 LESLEY RIVERA AND MIKE DAVIS, JR. | EXPLODED SITE CONDITIONS AND INTERVENTIONS

Connecting the project to the growing DCFC offers an opportunity to attract new residents to NoHam. This minor league soccer team has a passionate fan base that has continued to grow since the club's inception in 2012 (Seidel, 2015). According to Nielson Media Research, soccer fans are among the most upwardly mobile fans of any domestic sports league besides the National Football League (NFL). Sixty percent of soccer fans are between the ages of 18 and 54 (Nielsen, 2014). Almost 40 percent of fans earn less than \$40,000 per year, and the proportion of fans earning over \$100,000 is growing quickly (Nielsen, 2014). Additionally, Nielson's research shows that around nine percent of soccer fans identify as African American, which is only eclipsed by the National Basketball Association and NFL. Lastly, although Bangladesh's most popular sport is cricket, soccer fandom has greatly increased since the 2010 World Cup according to anecdotal news reports (Nielsen, 2014).

The project connects with this new energy coming to Hamtramck by repurposing an old school as the proposed community land trust's community center, and creating a training field on that site. We propose anchoring this development with two container apartment buildings that would appeal to younger fans and soccer players themselves—two types of people that are highly mobile and could see the city as their true home. This led to focusing on the corridor around the community center as an intensive site of development efforts. This new corridor will serve as the site of new activity based on the football club. A new training field could be used by players for practice, neighborhood kids' pickup games, and new recreation league games. The corridor can also be the site of the game-day fan march from the training field to the stadium.

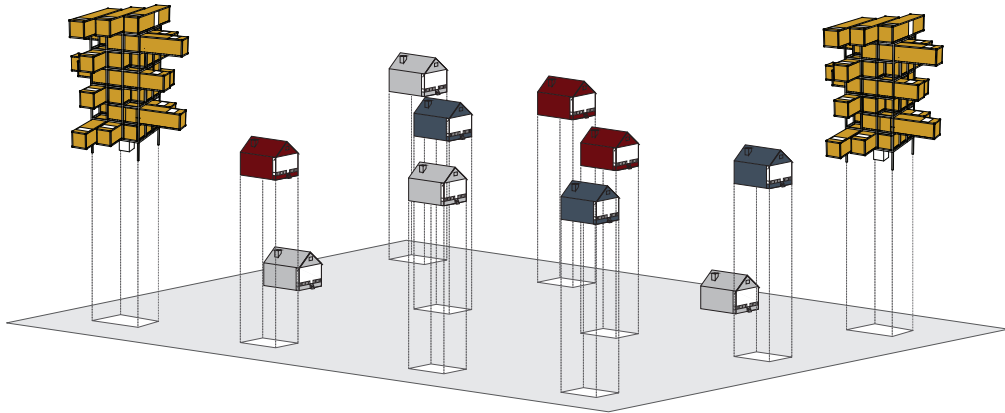


FIGURE 2  
LESLEY RIVERA AND MIKE DAVIS, JR. | PROPOSED COMMUNITY LAND TRUST  
LAND IS OWNED BY THE COMMUNITY WHILE THE STRUCTURES ARE OWNED BY INDIVIDUALS

## ANTI-GENTRIFICATION

We propose that NoHam create a land trust board consisting of current residents both outside and inside the land trust. Community land trusts acquire land and maintain its ownership permanently, and are commonly used to combat gentrification. A typical land trust will lease the land a house sits on to the homeowner while the resident owns the house. These leases are usually long-term and renewable, and any sale of the home on the land is contingent on the new buyer continuing the lease and the home remaining in the land trust. Separating the house from the land prevents market speculation that can lead to resident displacement when property taxes rise quickly by eliminating land speculation, needless housing flips, and other negative practices. Some community land trusts work with municipalities to reduce tax assessments for their properties, thus further lowering the prospect of displacement. However, our proposal does not require this to occur for the land trust to be effective. Board members would be elected by the land trust members and would lead development efforts while

serving as a liaison between residents and the government. Creating a community land trust will help residents maintain and grow their neighborhood, while resisting gentrification.

## HOUSING TYPOLOGIES

The project values the bungalow as a housing form and proposes interventions that stabilize and enhance the existing bungalow form found throughout the corridor and neighborhood. Using Motor City Mapping's criteria, our project seeks to rehabilitate homes classified as in "fair" condition and construct new homes classified as in "poor" condition (Motor City Mapping, 2015). By both rehabilitating existing bungalows and constructing new bungalows in the neighborhood, this project would preserve neighborhood character. In contrast to the contextual bungalow approach, introducing the shipping container apartment serves several purposes. First, it creates a new housing typology distinct from the bungalow that can appeal to a variety of people. Secondly, its distinct form, situated among the neighborhood bungalows, signals to both residents and non-



FIGURE 3  
LESLEY RIVERA AND MIKE DAVIS, JR. | FIELD RENDERING

residents that there is activity and reinvestment into the community. Lastly, the bold form is an opportunity to connect the new activity and investment in the neighborhood with non-residents, encouraging them to engage with the project and relocate within the community.

## HOUSING CHOICE

In addition to the existing diversity of housing forms, there is a diversity of family types in the neighborhood. The project addresses this fact by creating multiple floor plan choices for residents. The bungalows will consist of three floor plan choices: a smaller one-floor (roughly 400 square feet) duplex, a medium two-story (roughly 700 square feet) duplex, and a larger (roughly 900 square feet) one-family home. The apartment will consist of two choices: a one-container micro-unit (roughly 300 square feet) and a larger two-container unit (roughly 600 square feet). These apartments will remain under the supervision of the land trust to help ensure that rents remain affordable and they receive proper maintenance. The apartments would be rented at either market rate or an affordable rate as determined by the land trust board. These floor plan options should serve

both existing neighborhood families and new individuals and families.

## CONCLUSION

Through these strategies of anti-gentrification, housing typologies, and housing choice, this proposal seeks to promote and grow the “NoHam” neighborhood by way of connecting the community with the DCFC and its commitment to Keyworth Stadium. This proposal promotes community engagement within the existing neighborhood, and encourages new residents to move into the area. The area would remain affordable through the creation of a community land trust. A variety of housing options in terms of price and size would be offered through the multitude of housing typologies. By encouraging rehabilitation of existing bungalows, as well as newly constructed bungalows and shipping container apartments, new residents can find a housing option that best suits their lifestyle. These strategies, in conjunction with the rehabilitation of Keyworth Stadium, will serve as a signaling beacon of positive change occurring in the neighborhood, thus creating a hybrid culture and place. ■



FIGURE 4

LESLEY RIVERA AND MIKE DAVIS, JR. | RENDERING OF LANDSCAPE INTERVENTION SURROUNDED BY REHABILITATED BUNGALOWS

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The entire NoHam neighborhood is within the single Census tract 5105.

<sup>2</sup> Motor City Mapping has photographed and coded parcel information into an online mapping system. Our selection criteria filtered out all parcels that were occupied. Then we

selected parcels that were either vacant or had structures in "fair" or "poor" condition. "Fair" condition houses had minimal structural damage and were undamaged by fire. "Poor" condition houses had severe structural damage and may have been damaged by fire.

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