FIFTH WARD RENAISSANCE
Design Advocacy through Neighborhood-Based Collaboration and Social Engagement

ACSA DIVERSITY ACHIEVEMENT SUBMISSION
Fifth Ward Renaissance is a collaborative framework of curriculum-based endeavors developed by our team of educators in the College of Architecture and Design. Our endeavors have been carefully assembled into the second-, third- and fourth-year studios and support courses. Through these efforts, we have committed ourselves, our curriculum, and our students to a position of social advocacy by means of architectural research and practice. More specifically, our pedagogies have been tuned to serve the most socio-economically disadvantaged neighborhoods in Houston.

The Fifth Ward is a predominantly African American neighborhood that has witnessed a profound level of disinvestment and socio-economic hardship. Over the course of the last three years, Fifth Ward Renaissance has been structured as a flexible ecosystem of ongoing strategies between our program and the neighborhood. Several semesters of continual, on-the-ground engagement have provided phenomenal opportunities for our students and faculty to directly work with and learn from the citizens of the Fifth Ward. Their generosity and support have allowed us to explore and respond to architecture through adaptive reuse.

It is our intent to serve diversity and to celebrate an inherently humanist call to action. Fifth Ward Renaissance has initiated a dialogue that cuts across boundaries to engage historically underrepresented stakeholders. Our efforts are leveraged through curriculum-based strategies, and mobilized by small grants and pro bono activities drawing awareness and activation to the Fifth Ward. Neighborhood stakeholders including the CDRC (Community Design Resource Center), UH Small Grants Fund, RDA Initiatives for Houston Grant Fund, Olevia Community Development Corporation, Olivet Missionary Baptist Church, JW Peavy Senior Center, and Neighborhood Centers Inc. have provided our faculty and students with encouragement and resources. Our collaborative group has pursued various opportunities for competitive funding and strategic partnerships with these institutions and the citizens of the Fifth Ward.

This submission to the ACSA Diversity Achievement Award highlights multi-faceted aspects of the program framework including studio curriculum, small grants, collaboration with the CDRC, historical documentation of the African American community in the Fifth Ward, Inside/Out design-build, social advocacy speculative studios, and partnership with two primary stakeholders—Olivet Missionary Baptist Church and Neighborhood Centers.

Through Fifth Ward Renaissance, our predominantly minority students have been exposed to the potential for social advocacy existing within architecture, while they acquire leadership experience in the real world. The program serves the interests of diversity achievement in a complementary manner, developing diverse leaders while enabling diverse needs in an underserved neighborhood.

Our College of Architecture and Design is among the most diverse in the United States. We believe that our greatest resource is the students, of whom, a disproportionate number represent minority communities. Fifth Ward Renaissance has allowed us to critically reconsider our role as architecture educators and to more actively develop design leadership through our enviably diverse talent base. We believe that an exceptional opportunity exists to shift and mobilize significant demographic change in architecture—within academia as well as practice. Bringing together the diversity of our students with the diversity of the Fifth Ward proposes a new model for incremental and ongoing interchange.
Established in 2005 at the University of Houston by Susan Rogers, the Community Design Resource Center’s mission is to serve the public interest through design, research, education, and practice focused on enhancing livability in Houston.

Over the last ten years, the Community Design Resource Center has partnered with twenty-nine community-based and non-profit organizations to complete twenty-two funded design projects. The projects range in scale from community visioning—Collaborative Community Design Initiative—to the implementation of small scale design projects such as the “Zona de Juego” in Magnolia Park, a 600’ long public art project celebrating the history of the neighborhood and encouraging active play for children. CDRC projects illustrate the capacity to work creatively and collaboratively at different scales and with multiple partners and diverse communities.

CDRC partnerships have significantly contributed to the public debate on the role of architecture and good design in catalyzing community change. As the organization moves forward, it is designing new ways to engage community partners, and new ways to enhance the mutuality, reciprocity and impact of its activities. The CDRC was the catalyst for Fifth Ward Renaissance, providing the ‘connective tissue’ and acting as a neighborhood liason linking UH faculty and students with communities in need.
The Olivet Missionary Baptist Church (OMBC) is located in the historic Fifth Ward Community of Houston. Its mission is faith-based and systemic; responsible citizens cannot simply take resources and leave the community bare. The church is taking an active role in its community by developing people, property, and resources so that the Fifth Ward becomes a supportive and revitalized ‘village’ in the city.

With this focus, the OMBC is working across denominations, socio-economic boundaries, and racial lines to teach credit repair, homeownership (PrimeWay FCU), individual development accounts, (Covenant Community Capital), financial literacy, and G.E.D curriculum (Houston CC) in the community.

The OMBC is committed to neighborhood nutrition through a discounted fresh fruit and vegetable program. The church is located in a food desert and is attempting to fund the construction of a mobile grocery store within a refurbished city bus. The OMBC is an agent of positive change in the Fifth Ward.

Led by Pastor Robert Thomas, the OMBC serves as a primary partner and supportive mentor for UH faculty and students in Fifth Ward Renaissance. Their guidance has allowed us to contribute to the neighborhood by establishing citizen connections with the church and larger Fifth Ward leveraged through architecture and design-build opportunities such as Inside-Out and the JW Peavy Senior Center project.
Neighborhood Centers Inc. has a rich history in building communities that work since the early days when it was part of the Settlement House. When Alice Graham Baker founded the agency in 1907, the main intention was to help socio-economically disadvantaged residents in Houston access opportunities for education, health, and work while learning how to become actively engaged in participatory democracy.

One hundred years later, the purpose of Neighborhood Centers has not changed. The organization connects low-income families and individuals to opportunities so they can achieve their goals. This principle frames the core attributes of Neighborhood Centers since its origin—that neighborhoods offer bridges to opportunity and that citizens can transform their own communities.

Our partnership with Neighborhood Centers is a critical, long-term commitment that offers the potential for our curriculum to be continually energized through social advocacy, speculative thinking, and design-build opportunities throughout Houston. Our current collaboration with Neighborhood Centers connects Fifth Ward Renaissance faculty and students with senior citizens in a multi-phased renovation and improvement project in the JW Peavy Senior Center. This project is improving the functional, performative, and aesthetic qualities of the facility through small-scale design interventions.
The JW Peavy Senior Center provides a safe place for the elder population of the Fifth Ward to visit during the day for social activities. Programs include educational opportunities, a noon-time meal, fitness, health and nutrition counseling, and recreation. The center assists fixed-income residents with completion of an application for payment of their city water bill. The center provides space for public meetings, receptions, workshops, banquets, and seminars. It serves a predominantly African American and Hispanic population with a significant number of recently settled non-English-speaking immigrants.

Through our initial efforts with the Olivet Missionary Baptist Church, the **Fifth Ward Renaissance** team established this ongoing partnership with the JW Peavy Senior Center to address an even larger organization and citizen group through better design. The JW Peavy Senior Center serves many members of the OMBC and Fifth Ward neighborhood.

Our current initiative, facilitated through a collaborative effort of Meggin Lorino, Director of Neighborhood-based Services; and faculty members Ziad Qureshi and Gregory Marinic, has established a collaborative framework to work with the seniors and pursue ongoing building renovations and improvements to the JW Peavy Senior Center. By mobilizing social advocacy through architecture, speculative design proposals produced by UH students act as a catalyst for the center.
ORIGINS: A Prominent Past

After the Civil War, newly freed slaves began settling in the sparsely populated areas of northeast Houston. In 1866, this district was designated as the Fifth Ward, and by the 1880s, the neighborhood became home to a substantial African-American working-class community whose livelihood was primarily based on work found in Ship Channel industries and homes of wealthy Houstonians. Although the Fifth Ward was always predominantly African-American, immigrants from Italy, the Philippines, Latin America, and South Asia have also called the neighborhood home.

Before desegregation, the neighborhood housed African-Americans of all occupations and income levels in a socially and economically diverse community. In the 1930s, the Fifth Ward was one of the proudest, most influential, and prosperous black neighborhoods in the United States, as evidenced in more than forty African-American businesses along Lyons Avenue.

Desegregation opened the suburbs of Houston to middle-class African-Americans. In the 1970s, the Fifth Ward had lost a significant part of its population and many houses were abandoned as residents followed prosperity toward the periphery. The Lyons Avenue retail district became increasingly vacant and several buildings fell into disrepair or were demolished. By the 1980s, the Fifth Ward had become notorious throughout Houston for violence and disinvestment.

FUTURES: A Renaissance Awaits

This proposal offers a two-fold agency—one that blends history with design-build community advocacy. Using the archives of various African-American churches in the Fifth Ward, this proposal will result in the development of an exhibition that chronicles the historical rise, fall, and projected rebirth of the Fifth Ward in its most extensive form to date. The proposed e-Reading Room will be housed in a building of historical significance to the African-American community in the neighborhood. A diminutive and poetically crumbling shotgun storehouse will offer an opportunity for students of the newly formed Interior Architecture program at the University of Houston to serve as community advocates, designers, and re-builders of the Fifth Ward. This shotgun storehouse represents a quintessential vernacular building type that is unique to our region. Time-worn yet beloved, the structure is in critical need of stabilization and offers an opportunity to support resilience in the neighborhood. The new e-Reading Room will establish a permanent shared environment that encourages learning in the Fifth Ward. One of the primary intentions of this project is to illustrate how Architecture can promote social advocacy to serve and support underrepresented communities.
Rice Design Alliance Grant: Initiatives for Houston 2014
Grant Proposal: ‘Fifth Ward Renaissance: From History, A Future’ (continued)

The shotgun storehouse will be transformed through modest means of interior reconstruction using high-technology digital fabrication equipment in the Keeland Center and resources of the University of Houston Community Design Resource Center. Archival research will foster a way for students to activate scholarship through technology and community service. Furthermore, Fifth Ward Renaissance provides a chance for the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture—and more specifically the new Interior Architecture program—to support the stabilization of historically significant structures in our city and to advance community advocacy.

The University of Houston is located in similarly impoverished district, and it is my hope that Fifth Ward Renaissance will serve as a bottom-up exemplar of hybridized archive-design-research scholarship in the discipline. Such forms of engagement are quite rare, yet particularly well-suited to the fledgling Interior Architecture program since our work is contingent upon existing structures. Modest structures are often very poorly documented, so this approach to neighborhood research fosters a way in which the program may incrementally steward our city’s material culture—and to become a model for the nation.

The new Interior Architecture program at the University of Houston investigates the discipline by positioning our program in the reuse, adaptation, and transformation of existing buildings. Poised at the intersection of architecture, conservation, spatial design, and ecological performance—the trans-disciplinary nature of Fifth Ward Renaissance will allow archival scholarship, technology, and the art of making to converge. Focusing on the technological, material, ecological, and social promise of Interior Architecture as a specialization within Architecture, this endeavor will allow our students to critically address contemporary challenges in Houston—and to translate those lessons to cities across the globe.

RESEARCH PAIRED WITH COMMUNITY OUTREACH
Fifth Ward Renaissance is a research initiative that will be paired with on-going course development of the INAR 3501 Interior Architecture Design-Build Studio Interior at the University of Houston Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture. Parallel to faculty-led research, course participants will research and visualize the narrative of Houston vernacular architecture in the Fifth Ward.

INTENT
• Support resilience in the Fifth Ward through building stabilization and adaptation
• Expand understanding of the complexities of Interior Architecture in a Houston context
• Reveal social issues relative to urban regeneration at an interior scale
• Rebuild a modest building of significant neighborhood interest as an e-Reading Room.

BUDGET
FIFTH WARD RENAISSANCE proposes an operating budget of $5,000 that builds upon a Phase I grant awarded to Gregory Marinic by the University of Houston in Spring 2014. The RDA grant will be used to stabilize the structure and build an on-site interior transformation. erate research/visualizations in-studio and independently

DISSEMINATION PLAN
This proposal will stabilize an existing structure rebuilt through a digital fabrication interior transformation. A permanent e-Reading Room will support on-going intergenerational learning in the Fifth Ward.

GRANT RECIPIENT / PROGRAM DIRECTOR
Gregory Marinic, Director of Interior Architecture & Assistant Professor, University of Houston

TEAM
Neighborhood Liasons: Susan Rogers/CDRC, Pastor Robert Thomas/OMBC; Studio Instructors: Jason Logan, Josh Robbins; Currriculum-Archival Research-Grants: Gregory Marinic; Guest Critic & Consultant: Ziad Qureshi
UH New Faculty Grant 2014
Grant Proposal: ‘Fifth Ward Renaissance: From History, A Future’

In Fall 2013, Gregory Marinic submitted a grant proposal to the UH New Faculty Grant Program. The proposal, ‘Fifth Ward Renaissance: From History, A Future’, was awarded a $6,000 grant in Spring 2014.

A primary component of the research was to engage in archival documentation of the African American community in the Fifth Ward. Archival studio research was collaboratively led by Jason Logan and Gregory Mainic in Spring 2014. Students engaged in a studio-wide research effort collecting information on various contextual, ecological, material, social, and cultural conditions in the Fifth Ward. A smaller team of students formed the core archival research group.

More specifically, this research was focused on the interface of the African American community with the built environment of Fifth Ward, alongside larger socio-political influences in African and African American culture throughout the United States and around the world.

A graphic compilation of this archival research is shown at right. The original printed size of this illustrative visualization was 20'-0" x 6'-0".
A $6,000 UH New Faculty Grant awarded to Gregory Marinic incorporated archival research documentation of the African American community in the Fifth Ward, as well as a final built intervention. Students worked in the design studio, fabrication lab, and on-site under the guidance of studio instructors Jason Logan and Josh Robbins. Collaborators Susan Rogers/CDRC, Pastor Robert Thomas/OMBC, Ziad Qureshi, and Gregory Marinic served as consultants and design critics. As part of the UH grant deliverables, the following visualization represents a small portion of our historical documentation of the African American community in the Fifth Ward. This research was performed by students under the guidance of Jason Logan and Gregory Marinic—in consultation with local archives and the Olivet Missionary Baptist Church.
Fifth Ward Renaissance mobilized grant funding, social advocacy design-research, archival documentation, digital fabrication, and building to rethink an obsolete and abandoned structure in the Fifth Ward. Working with the Olivet Missionary Baptist Church, neighborhood advocates, faculty, and students collaboratively delivered ‘Inside-Out’ an e-reading room for residents in an underserved African American community. This studio was directed by Jason Logan and Josh Robbins.

Students: Christopher Al-Jumah, Beatriz Arellano, Maricela Calderon, Jessica Garrett, Grace Kim, Kana Kim, Kevin Pham, Tania Rodriguez, Priscila Rivera, Martin Rodriguez, Sara Skinner; Neighborhood Liaison: Susan Rogers/CDRC; Advocate/Client: Pastor Robert Thomas/OMBC; Grants/Curriculum: Gregory Marinic; Supporting Grants: Rice Design Alliance & University of Houston
Inside/Out
Adapting a Shotgun Storehouse for the Greater Fifth Ward

Inside/Out is simultaneously an exhibition about Houston’s Fifth Ward community and a structure in making. The titles reflect both the way in which the design research is engaged and the way in which the built structure will function once it is completed. During the first three weeks of the spring semester, students were introduced to the project site and examined the history of the neighborhood. The overall research process included a focus on the evolution of the shotgun house type, the historical evolution of Fifth Ward architectural and landscape typologies, and the political and social implications of each.

Over the course of the spring 2015 semester, students were tasked with developing a structure that would simultaneously stabilize the existing building and provide a new context for the neighborhood. The design research, which included a study of the evolution of the shotgun house type, the historical evolution of Fifth Ward architectural and landscape typologies, and the political and social implications of each, informed the development of a design that would both stabilize the existing structure and provide a new context for the neighborhood.

The exhibition is a cross-disciplinary effort between the Interior Architecture program (INAR) and the Community Design Resource Center (CDRC) at the University of Houston, in collaboration with numerous community partners, in order to create a new collective design project. The exhibition showcases research developed during the Community Design Resource Center, an initiative organized by the University of Houston’s CDRC in 2013-2014. The project presents a cross-disciplinary studio investigating the potential of design across scales for the Fifth Ward neighborhood. Aligning with community partners, Insight Structures is the Fifth Ward facade and building envelope for the INAR Project Collaborators of the CDRC’s project, which explores how design can respond to the unique challenges of the Fifth Ward neighborhood.

The exhibition is an evolving process that will document the evolution of the design project and its impact on the neighborhood. It is a living process that will evolve as the project progresses and as the neighborhood changes. The exhibition will be a dynamic, living process that will document the evolution of the design project and its impact on the neighborhood. It is a living process that will evolve as the project progresses and as the neighborhood changes.

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Inside/Out
Adapting a Shotgun Storehouse for the Greater Fifth Ward

WEDNESDAY 2
SEPT
LECTURE: 6-7pm in the theater
RECEPTION: 7-8pm in the atrium (food and drinks will be served)

SPEAKERS
JASON LOGAN  Adjunct Professor
JOSH ROBBINS  Adjunct Professor
SUSAN ROGERS  Associate Professor, Director of the CDRC

LOCATION
The University of Houston, College of Architecture and Design
122 Hines College of Architecture and Design, Houston, TX 77204-4000

EXHIBITION: August 3rd - September 4th, in the atrium of the College of Architecture and Design
HOURS: M-F 9am - 6pm
For more information, please call: 713-743-2400 or visit www.arch

Wednesday Sept 2 Lecture: 6-7pm in the theater
Reception: 7-8pm in the atrium

For more information, please call: 713-743-2400 or visit www.arch

Inside/Out would not have been possible without the generous support of two grants: A University of Houston New Faculty Research Grant and a Rice Design Alliance Initiatives for Houston Grant, awarded to Gregory Marinic, former director of the Interior Architecture program.

We would also like to thank Dean Patricia Oliver for her support of the exhibition, lecture and reception. This project would not have been possible without the support and guidance of Gregory Marinic, former director of the Interior Architecture program; Susan Rogers, the Director of the Design Exploration Center; Insight Structures; and all of our invited critics who offered essential comments and suggestions during the development of the project.

Additionally, we thank Olivet Missionary Baptist Church, Pastor Robert Thomas, and the Thomas family for their support and trust. The spring 2015 INAR 3501 students, the CDRC student researchers, and the Fifth Ward seminar/workshop team, whose hard work, patience, and creativity have made this project possible.

Faculty
Jason Logan
Josh Robbins
Susan Rogers

Project Collaborators
Gregory Marinic
Susan Rogers
Alfredo Tiznado

Students
Christopher Al-Jumah
Beatriz Arellano
Maricela Calderon
Jessica Garrett
Grace Kim
Kana Kim
Kevin Pham
Tania Rodriguez
Priscila Rivera
Martin Rodriguez
Sara Skinner

Fifth Ward Seminar/Workshop Team
John Gardosik
Kathleen Roosen
Natalia Sanchez
Alfredo Tiznado

Photograph: Luis Ayala

Inside OUT | FIFTH WARD RENAISSANCE
In our global, complex, and continually evolving society, architecture and spatial design are undergoing profound transformations. This alternatively framed convergence of perspectives relates, connects, and blends trans-disciplinary thinking within a new blurred territory. Critical and theoretical investigations, design-research, and didactic explorations shape a rich terrain of emerging architectural practices.

A sequenced, three-semester studio curriculum supports the social advocacy goals of Fifth Ward Renaissance. Our curriculum seeks to embrace the full potential of social advocacy, community building, critical practice, and technological innovation in architecture.

INAR 2501: ‘Social Intervention’ Design Studio
INSTRUCTORS: Ziad Qureshi, Gregory Marinic
INAR 2501 engages with the potential for community building in architecture. The semester is currently sequenced in two projects. The first project rethinks an underused skybridge as a performative space for social engagement. The second project intervenes within an abandoned building to determine alternative futures for socio-economically disadvantaged urban communities. Projects call specific attention to the health and wellness of migrant groups and displaced persons.

INAR 3500: ‘Urban Regeneration’ Design Studio
INSTRUCTORS: Ziad Qureshi, Gregory Marinic
INAR 3500 considers architecture as a participant in urban regeneration. The semester is sequenced as a single-duration program focused on social advocacy, spatial complexities, and contemporary issues. Students explore themes of obsolescence, abandonment, durability, and re-use by rethinking futures for existing buildings in downtown Houston and the Fifth Ward. Framed through ecological awareness and densification, students reimagine structures into high-density residential environs.

INAR 3501: ‘Advanced Fabrication’ Design Studio
INSTRUCTORS: Jason Logan, Josh Robbins
INAR 3501 explores the material and fabrication opportunities of advanced computation and digital fabrication in architecture. This studio is framed through a scalar lens of “1:1”. The 1:1 studio examines the particularities of interior space—material, light, surface, etc.—which it may be argued, are best understood at full-scale. The studio locates itself in the gap between drawing (representation) and building (fabrication), leveraging the digital tools of the Keeland Design Center and the generative potentials of advanced software for their perceptual, spatial, and formal effect. Oscillating between the virtual and the physical, whereby the digital techniques and methods of making inform each other in a continuous space of mutual feedback, the 1:1 studio acts as a form of applied research in which material, form, space, and technique are all categories to be designed and re-imagined. This studio critically examines and questions the graphic technique of describing the separation of space—inside/inside/outside or inside/inside—as an inert and inaccessible boundary.
Fifth Ward Renaissance reconsiders neglected neighborhoods in Houston to rethink social problems through the lens of architecture. The third-year fall studio INAR 3500 offers a speculative forum for students to contemplate their role as critically-engaged design advocates for disadvantaged people and their communities. This example of student work re-considered abandoned and obsolete buildings as higher-density residential environments serving displaced persons. INAR 3500 offers a speculative forum for social advocacy prior to the spring semester design-build studio. In the spring semester, INAR 3501 students engage directly with socially-lensed built interventions leveraged at full-scale. Studio Instructor: Ziad Qureshi; Curriculum: Gregory Marinic; Liaison: Susan Rogers/CDRC
**Fifth Ward Renaissance** reconsiders neglected neighborhoods in Houston to rethink social problems through the lens of architecture. The third-year fall studio **INAR 3500** offers a speculative forum for students to contemplate their role as critically-engaged design advocates for disadvantaged people and their communities. This example of student work reconsidered abandoned and obsolete buildings as higher-density residential environments serving displaced persons. INAR 3500 offers a speculative forum for social advocacy prior to the spring semester design-build studio. In the spring semester, INAR 3501 students engage directly with socially-lensed built interventions leveraged at full-scale. Studio Instructor: Ziad Qureshi; Curriculum: Gregory Marinic; Liaison: Susan Rogers/CDRC
Fifth Ward Renaissance is currently working with Neighborhood Centers to rethink the spatial configuration and performance of its existing buildings. Speculative proposals have been produced for the JW Peavy Senior Center. Students, faculty, and stakeholders are working together to find cost-effective ways to improve the architectural and functional potentialities of the center. Students and faculty are working hand-in-hand, on-site directly with the seniors in this underrepresented minority community. JW Peavy Senior Center has been provided with several speculative proposals with an example shown herein. Prototypes and full-scale interventions are being developed. Studio Instructor: Ziad Qureshi; Curriculum/Liaison: Gregory Marinic; Client: Meggin Lorino/NCI
2014 Initiatives for Houston Grant Winners

LH Students Explore Sydney Model in Fifth Ward with Professor Jason Logan

This $5,000 Rice Design Alliance (RDA) Initiative for Houston program will be awarded to the student projects proposed by a faculty member and an undergraduate student at the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture at the University of Houston. For 15 years, JASON LOGAN has helped our students and faculty at UH, the Rice School of Architecture, the School of Architecture at Prairie View A&M University, and the Department of Urban Planning and Environmental Policy at Texas Southern University to develop and implement projects shaping Houston’s built environment and our understanding of it.

Guest jurors awarded this year’s grants to Gregory V. Mirel, Assistant Professor and Director of Practice, Architecture, and Claire Kerbs, a fourth-year student in environmental design.

Mirel’s proposal, “Fifth Ward Renaissance,” focuses on the reactivation of a “politicized community” through the transformation of a building and an adjacent lot into a community-renovated building. The project will involve the renovation of a building and an adjacent lot into a community-renovated building. The design will include the addition of a new building to accommodate the needs of the community. The project will be led by Mirel, working with students at Rice University who will collaborate with the Fifth Ward Renaissance Center to create a community design center.

Petra’s project, “Shaping the Urban Landscape,” proposes to create a network of public spaces within the Fifth Ward. The project will consist of the creation of a series of public spaces that will connect different neighborhoods within the Fifth Ward. The project will be led by Petra, working with students at Rice University who will collaborate with the Fifth Ward Renaissance Center to create a community design center.

Gonzalez-Jones’s project, “The Future of Food,” proposes to create a series of public spaces that will connect different neighborhoods within the Fifth Ward. The project will be led by Gonzalez-Jones, working with students at Rice University who will collaborate with the Fifth Ward Renaissance Center to create a community design center.

In addition to the initiatives awarded through this program, the Fifth Ward Renaissance Center has also been working on the development of a community design center that will serve as a hub for community design and planning. The center will provide a space for community members to come together to discuss issues related to the Fifth Ward and to work on projects that will benefit the community. The center will be open to the public and will be staffed by volunteers who will work with community members to develop projects that will improve the quality of life in the Fifth Ward.

The Fifth Ward Renaissance program is a collaborative effort between the Fifth Ward Renaissance Center and the Rice Design Alliance. The program was founded by Gregory V. Mirel, Assistant Professor and Director of Practice, Architecture, at Rice University. The program is designed to provide a space for community members to come together to discuss issues related to the Fifth Ward and to work on projects that will benefit the community. The program is open to the public and is supported by a range of partners, including the Fifth Ward Renaissance Center, the Rice Design Alliance, and the City of Houston. The program is designed to provide a space for community members to come together to discuss issues related to the Fifth Ward and to work on projects that will benefit the community. The program is open to the public and is supported by a range of partners, including the Fifth Ward Renaissance Center, the Rice Design Alliance, and the City of Houston.
The interior architecture program is brand new. This project is the program’s first and an ambitious start, for sure. It was led by Gregory Martin, who was awarded a Riche Design Alliance fellowship for lecture grants to launch the project. Martin has since taken a teaching job elsewhere.

From the beginning, it was clear that this was not going to be a typical interior program. “There was a desire to push the limits of the curriculum,” says Jason Logan, professor and director of architecture firm, “We had a conviction that interior architecture could shape space in ways and at a scale that would be traditionally validated by more traditionally conventional architectural projects.”

When given the challenge to design a new space, Logan and his faculty partner, Jordan Robbins, were set out to find an opportunity for the students to test these new convictions. Critical to this endeavor was the ability to build at a one-to-one scale.

The studio, known as the fifth ward renovation, was the first in a series of projects designed to help students to bring the community into the studio. The fifth ward renovation, led by Pastor Robert Thomas, was a vision for improvement, willingness to involve a student project, and several vacant properties, including the plumbing supply store.

“We asked, what could we do to transform the building for young and old — to make it safe and available for people to come in and read with this technology as a driving factor?” explains Pastor Thomas. “So we came up with an idea for a pop-up library and that eventually led to this idea of an e-library.”

Logan and Robbins turned to digital fabrication tools to streamline what would otherwise be a very labor-intensive process. Using the 3D modeling program Rhino and its parametric modeling interface Grasshopper, the students created a custom algorithm to identify the specific connection points at every joint. These connection points were then mapped to a two-dimensional file that could be computer-cut on a large router table at the Riche Design Exploration Center at UM. In a fraction of the time a traditional method would have required, the students had designed and produced the precise piece that connects to the straight lines of the framing gin into their sweeping curves, keeping the project on budget and on schedule.

This was the result for yourself. The structure stands completed, awaiting installation is its permanent home, in the atrium space of the College of Architecture.

“The scale of the structure gives you so many angles and viewpoints,” says Pastor Thomas. “Depending on where you stand, it’s like a cathedral. Then you move a few feet and it’s like a warehouse. Then it’s like a pavilion. It’s amazing how moving inside the structure puts in a different mind frame at nearly every step. But really, it just takes your vocabulary away.”

He also stresses the building’s intended use: “As we take spaces back and make them usable, it’s important that we not only improve them but that they become resources for the next generation. It’s not just a repurposing of the building but adding a value to the community.”