

Project Description/Narrative

In a maximum of 300 words, describe the basic program requirements, special site problems and how the design process and solution satisfies these. Please also state any technical, environmental or social advancements regarding your project. **(The minimum font size should be 10pt/Arial.) DO NOT change the background of this slide.**

The name of the project can be mentioned generically. For example entrants can say “The education center was designed for the university.” Instead of “the John Johnson Educational Research Center was designed for the university.”

reNEW

Context matters. In this radical rethinking of a rural retreat, the site speaks... and we listen.

‘Site’ was not just a deliciously southeast-sloping, pond-punctuated meadow transitioning to woodland and terminating at Cazenovia Creek.

‘Site’ was also the existing home, a two-story construct MacGyvered together over 40 years, in denial of its relationship to the land.

For us, reinventing “retreat” while navigating the constraints of the existing house was both a strategic and economic imperative. The result is new, and not new.

This re-newed house aims to accomplish three big things.

1. **A PATH BACK TO NATURE.** The existing house turned away from nature, its living room isolated in a former garage in the NW corner. A stair bisected and blocked any easterly connection to the meadow and woodland. We slid support spaces to the north, bumped vertical circulation out of the way, and opened up the volume. The result? An elongated, airy, shared living space linking arrival and forest.
2. **ENGAGING EARTH AND SKY.** Section is critical. The double-height living space permits southern light to filter in through high windows above an outdoor screened porch. At its east end, tall windows capture sky, forest and meadow. To its west, a mezzanine holds individual spaces for the couple - personal perches for refuge and work. At its heart, a wood stove anchors the gathering space and punctuates the tall space. It will be fed for years by the fallen trees on site, compliments of a recent tornado.
3. **A DIALOGUE BETWEEN DWELLING AND PLACE.** Perhaps the biggest challenge was reinventing the form. The owner nudged us towards this “jaunty-angled hat” as a solution to reinforce the dominant east-west axis while also opening it to the south. To achieve that form we pressed down the entry-side roof to its north. Then we reconfigured, re-clad, and reduced the remaining 2-story north-side sleeping volume. The resultant form achieves legibility and directionality: a house that reaches up, and out.

In this extreme renovation, re-newed architecture - linking occupant and site - renews the spirit.

AIA's Framework for Design Excellence

As we are less than a decade away from the [AIA 2030 Commitment](#), AIA Rochester continues to include a focus on sustainability in our annual Design Awards this year and into the future.

Please choose a minimum of **three** of the ten measures of the [AIA's Framework for Design Excellence](#). In 300-500 words, please explain how your project addresses these three measures. You may duplicate this slide to accommodate your responses. **(The minimum font size should be 10pt/Arial.) DO NOT change the background of this slide.**

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The ten measures in the Framework for Design Excellence are:

1. Design for Integration: What is the big idea behind this project and how did sustainability inform the design concept?
2. Design for Economy: How does the project efficiently meet the program and design challenges and provide “more with less”?
3. Design for Energy: Is the project energy-efficient and sustainable while improving building performance, function, comfort, and enjoyment?

In an extreme renovation, these three framework questions are interwoven. Principles of sustainability can be boiled down to the basic principle of Not-Knocking-Down-The-House. That posture ensures work is executed with an eye to Economy, while the extensiveness of the intervention permits high energy-efficiency and comfort.

Architects know that constraints are good! In this submission, titled reNEW, the challenge was to save resources - and cost - by embracing the bones of what came before. Such a redesigned home becomes a palimpsest of its predecessor. It is new, and not new. To clients assuming a complete tear-down, it represents a third way.

The result? Reduced waste, and reduced new materials by working with the existing foundation, structure and framing. After all, extreme renovation is another way of saying “doing more with less.”

What this reNEWed house doesn't sacrifice is the energy efficiency benefits of new construction:

- First, the passive principles - we open up living space from east to west and floor to roof—including an open mezzanine — for natural ventilation.
- Next, a true, tight envelope and a ground-source heat pump to condition inside.
- Finally, the totemic wood stove with a lifetime supply of renewable fuel sourced from the property, compliments of a 2024 tornado, with the owner planting 40 trees/year to re-establish the biomass (and character) of the property.

AIA Rochester Community Impact Award

As architects and designers our focus and priority are the pure aesthetics and functionality of the buildings and spaces we design. The color, materials, scale, and functionality of the client's needs drive the projects. After the pencils are put down and the construction dust has cleared, there sits a building/structure/space that now impacts the community where it has been placed. While the design may be added to, subtracted from, and ultimately give way to another, its impact is a permanent part of the community and site's history.

In that spirit, as part of the 2023 Design Awards, we are requesting that you include with each submission a brief summary explaining its "community-impact goals". Projects can affect communities in many ways: improving the housing stock, rejuvenating a neighborhood, adding a pedestrian or biking route, filling a gapped-tooth "street smile" with a parklet, steering the life of a business district in a previously unforeseen path, adding beauty and functionality, and more.

This information is intended to be used during and following the Design Awards event in promotion of the Design Awards via AIA Rochester's social, news outlets, and in promotion of AIA Rochester.

Community Impact Award summary (500 words or less):

West Falls is a hamlet that values its rural character, its 'not-suburban'ness. Neighbors value each other, from a distance. And everyone values the trees, creeks and critters that surround and intertwine the occasional homes.

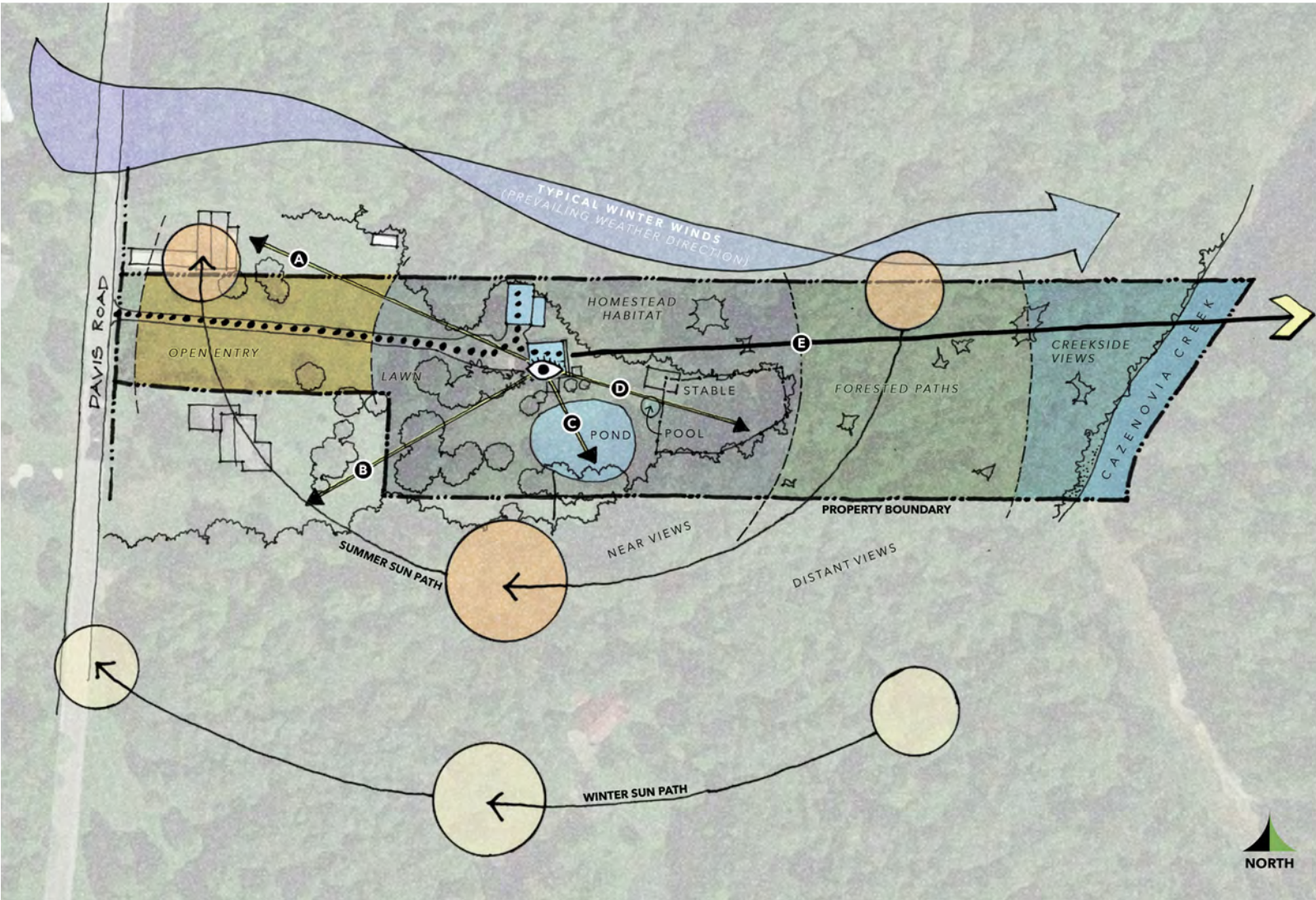
In this context, we posit that re-newing a house means not cutting down trees to build a new house on a new site. It models a kind of compromise, or rather the possibility that renovation doesn't have to be a compromise. Instead, new owners can re-occupy a mature site in a mature neighborhood, pleasing the neighbors and pleasing the forested lot that does not need to bear the scars of new construction.

Architecture in this context is an act of atonement. We will build. Can we build in a way that makes up for the act of destruction, the scarring of a natural place, the using of resources? To consider the community impact of a single home in the rural landscape is to propose a way of building that balances our need to build with the imperative to atone through work that resonates, preserves, fits and endures.



reNEW

CONTEXT MATTERS



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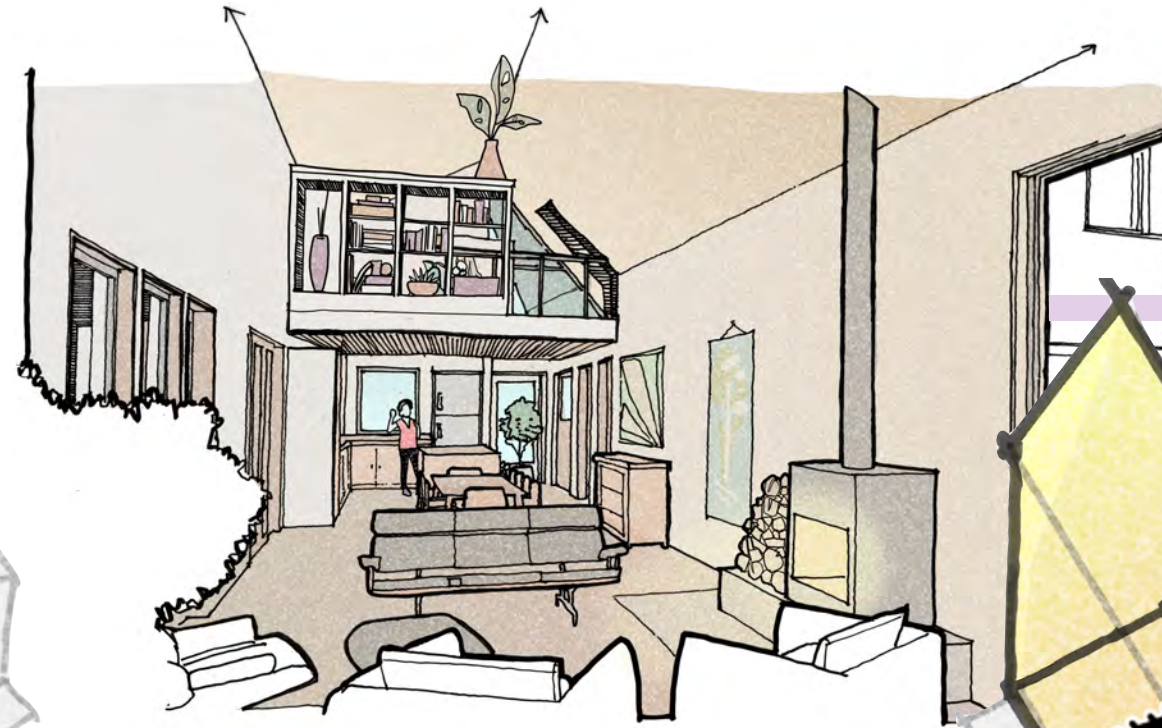
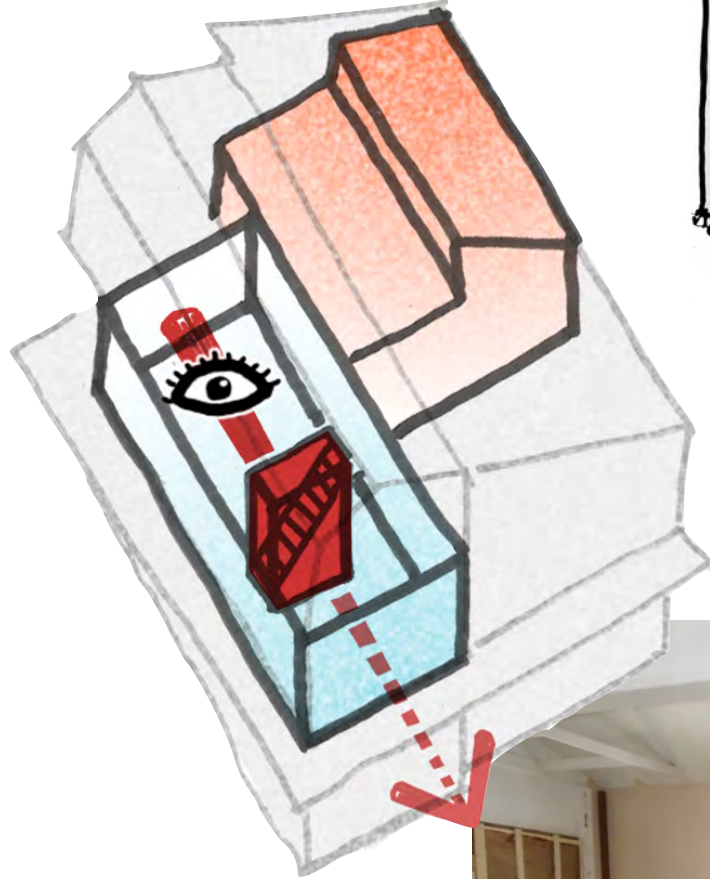




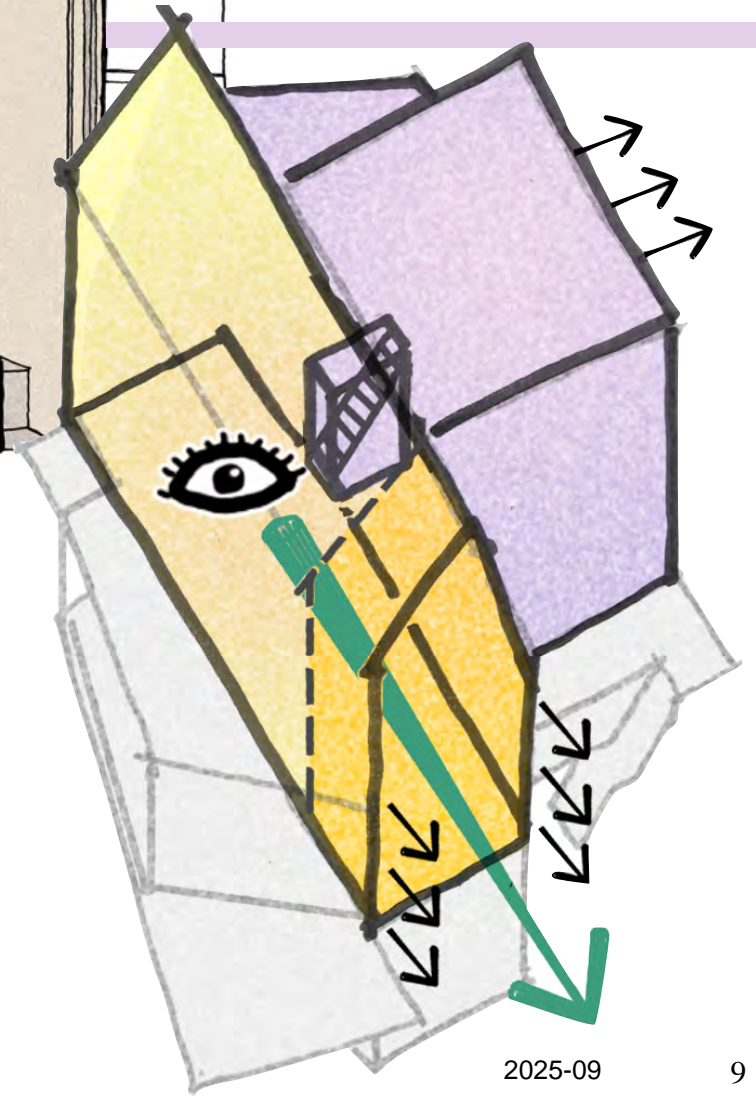
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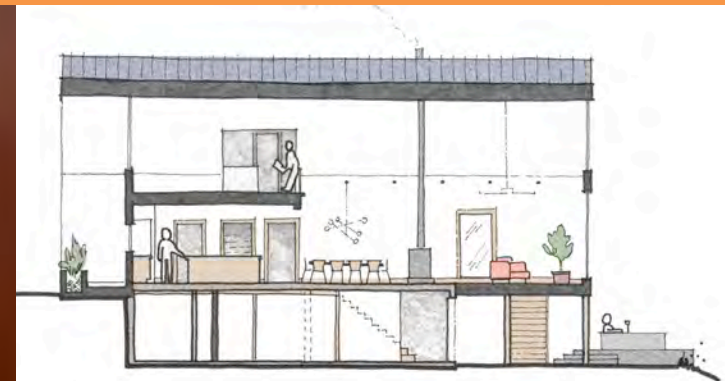
A PATH BACK TO NATURE
The existing house turned away from nature, its living room isolated in a former garage in the NW corner. A stair bisected and blocked any easterly connection to the meadow.






ENGAGING EARTH AND SKY.

Section is critical. The double-height living space permits southern light to filter in through high windows above an outdoor screened porch.



A wide-angle photograph of a modern, open-plan living and kitchen area. The kitchen features warm-toned wooden cabinetry, a stainless steel range hood, and a countertop with a sink and dishwasher. A large island with a dark, textured countertop and wooden base is in the foreground, with two black bar stools tucked under it. In the background, a dining table with wooden chairs and a patterned rug are visible. Large windows on the left side of the room offer a view of a forest and a meadow. The ceiling is white with recessed lighting and a few pendant lights. The floor is made of light-colored wood.

At its east end, tall
windows capture sky,
forest and meadow.

To its west, a mezzanine holds individual spaces for the couple - personal perches for refuge and work.



At its heart, a wood stove anchors the gathering space and punctuates the tall space.





A DIALOGUE BETWEEN DWELLING AND PLACE.

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