

Little Building Café

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This is not the first restaurant venture to aspire to a value system rather than just a business. But it is unique in that the design laid the ground work for

a democratic enterprise and a far reaching design dialogue. Alice Waters, Judy Wicks and Frank Stitt are all restaurateurs involved in the farm to table



Café in context – view from northwest

movement (Waters having inventing the genre). This movement establishes a business venture as an activist mechanism. Michael Pollen and Barbara Kingsolver have written extensively about food and the food industry. The project seeks to examine the café as an example of entrepreneur as community activist that is potentially more successful than the role of the community designer.

The café is seated in the notion of the local, and operates with this concept at a number of scales. Food is sourced regionally with a 100 mile goal. The location is in the downtown district, avoiding the automobile-centric and ubiquitous "strip." The architecture is framed by an existing mixed-use building (commercial and residential), which was completely renovated using sustainable design principles and local craftsmen. Fixed single-pane windows were replaced with operable double insulated low e windows. The ceiling is insulated to R-50. The roof has a venting skylight with solar hot water panels on the south side. Back-up hot water is via a natural gas tankless water heater. Heating and cooling is supplied by high efficiency heat pumps. Chairs were either found in local thrift shops for under 20 dollars or in the trash. Most had a weakness that needed to be reinforced before putting back into service engendering a southern vernacular meets Surrealist aesthetic. Tables were constructed on-site. Cups, plates, bowls, etc. are a mismatched collection from local thrift shops.

The goal of the café was not to design all the activity inside the four walls of the building but to extend the influence of the farm-to-table movement throughout the community. An unconventional

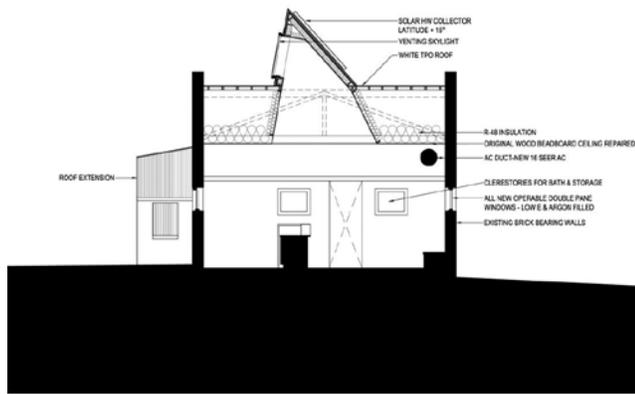
space that is used is the Little Building Blog that, along with the sandwich board out front, serves as a town crier for the ever-changing daily menu. The virtual space has led to quite an intimate relationship with the customers: daily face book critiques of spring greens soup and chocolate chip muffins make the café feel very democratic.

The space is used for public events. Partnering with the local artist's co-op has lead to a constant flow of artist and designer community events that promote the creative capital of Starkville.

This project examines how a building can be a critique of current urban development patterns and the entire US food industry, as well as form an anchor for the revitalization of a walkable downtown community.



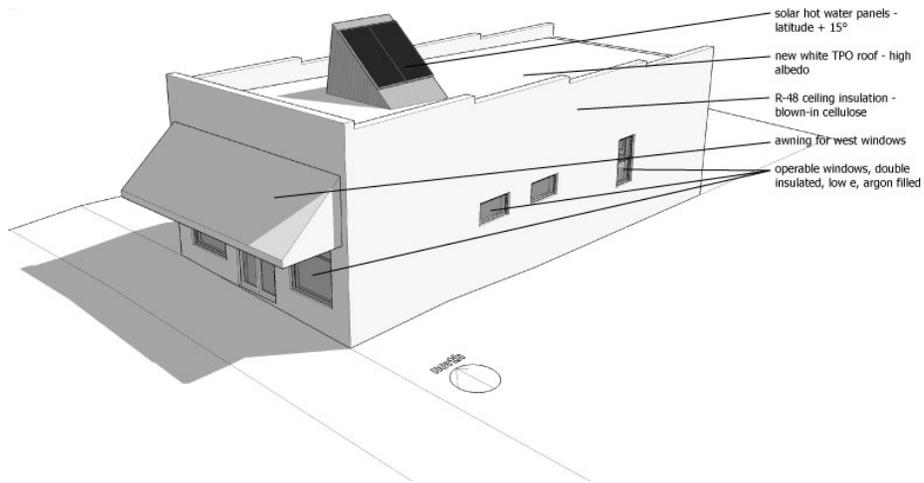
Café front



SECTION



FLOOR PLAN



Local produce and café products



Custom cabinet



Chairs



Café interior



Café interior



Venting skylight



Café interior