UIA2020RIO
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Project Name: Online / On-site

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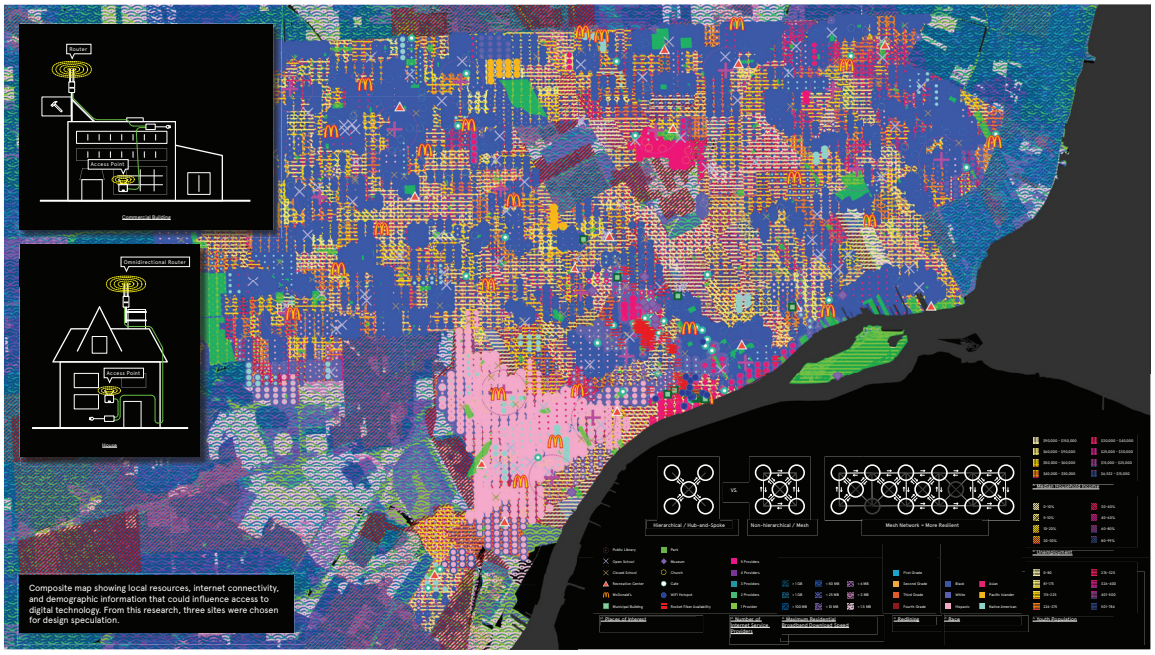
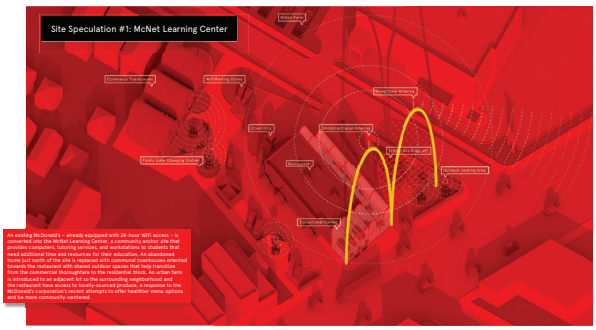
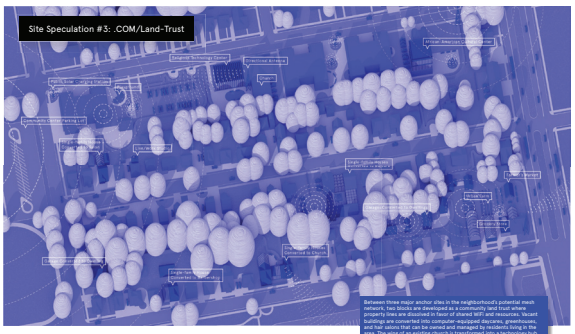
Country: United States of America



Composite map showing local resources, internet connectivity, and demographic information that could influence access to digital technology. From this research, three sites were chosen for design speculation.

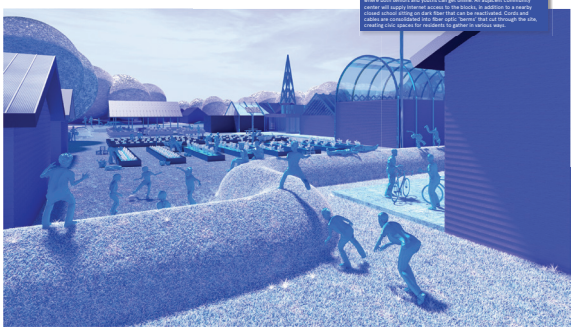


An existing McDonald's – already equipped with 24-hour WiFi access – is converted into the McNet Learning Center, a community anchor site that provides computers, tutoring services, and workstations to students that need additional time and resources for their education. An abandoned home just north of the site is replaced with communal townhouses oriented towards the restaurant with shared outdoor spaces that help transition from the commercial thoroughfare to the residential block. An urban farm is introduced to an adjacent lot so the surrounding neighborhood and the restaurant have access to locally-sourced produce, a response to the food desert and attempts to offer healthier menu options and be more community-centered.



Between three major anchor sites in the neighborhood's potential mesh network, two blocks are developed as a community land trust where property lines are dissolved in favor of shared WiFi and resources. Vacant buildings are converted into computer-equipped daycares, greenhouses, and, the building that can be owned and managed by residents living in the site. The remaining lot is left as a public park with a community garden where both seniors and youths can get online. An adjacent community center will supply Internet access to the blocks, in addition to a nearby closed school sitting on dark fiber that can be reactivated. Cords and cables are consolidated into fiber optic 'teems' that cut through the site, creating civic spaces for residents to gather in various ways.

The neighborhood, which has a significant amount of vacant land and housing, is re-envisioned as a network defined by social and cultural programs. Unoccupied houses and industrial buildings are converted into religious institutions; community centers, banks, and businesses are redistributed into residential blocks; and new housing typologies are developed with shared space and Internet access in mind. As trees are cleared to maintain sight lines and reduce WiFi interference, the nearby golf course – in need of major repairs as it faces closure – is transformed into an urban forest.



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