



SANKOFA MOBILE MARKET

A Collaboration With

Sankofa Community Development Corporation

And

The Albert Jr. and Tina SMALL CENTER for
Collaborative Design at Tulane School of Architecture

With Support From

Johnson Controls, Inc.

FOOD ACCESS
Our city is known for great food, but we are doing in ensuring everyone has access to it? From expanding urban
insig- our part- experiences, together.

casual conversations. I
and rice from Café Recon
work, study, and have uni
New Orleans. We ask



Sankofa: Look to the past to build for the future

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Volunteering, Building, Testing, Designing



Sharing, Educating, Placemaking



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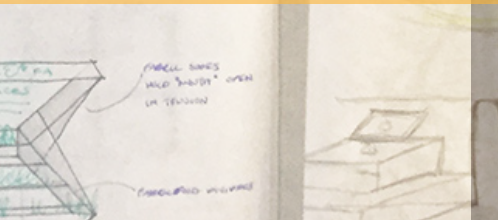
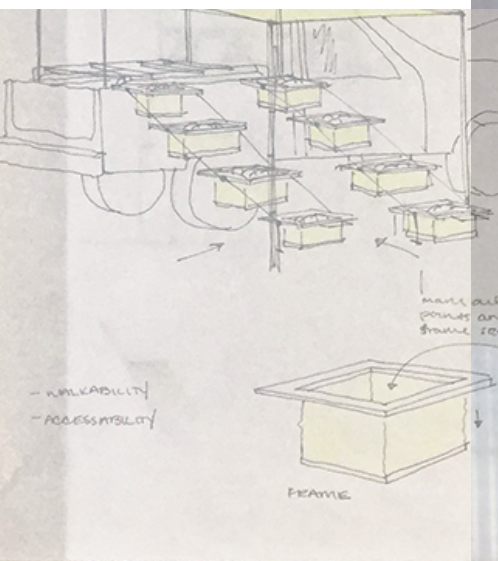
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BACKGROUND

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HEALTH AS THE CORNERSTONE OF A THRIVING COMMUNITY

THE FOCUS OF SANKOFA IS ON A FEW IMPORTANT IDEAS: JUSTICE, EQUITY, AND ACCESS. With the concept of looking back to the past to inform the future, Sankofa relies on legacy, connections, and collaborations within the African American community to continually move forward. Sankofa is concerned with revitalization and economic development in New Orleans, especially the Lower 9th Ward, which has led to several community driven initiatives. Increasing food access and justice are a key focus of their work, beginning as a monthly marketplace and growing to include the Mobile and Fresh Stop Markets. Sankofa has several gardens, evolving out of the desire to grow their own food. The gardens are a means towards sustainable land use and improving neighborhoods. Additionally, Sankofa runs the HEAL Project, health and nutritional education, as well as a nature trail. All of these projects are connected by concerns surrounding health issues, sustainability, and education. Awareness of the built environment in a community is key.

The mission of Sankofa is to support the formation of local environments that emphasize positive health initiatives and long-lasting, sustainable community prosperity. This is done through youth empowerment, nature education, and accessibility of healthy food.

“ We believe that the power for true transformation lies within the community.”

The program for the Sankofa Mobile Market was to create an efficient and moving system to simplify the market process. The semester long project was concerned with branding and detailing: a recognizable object and space maker that would draw in customers and build community.

Nostalgic
Authentic
Familiar
Welcoming
Friendly
Warm
Fresh

FOOD IN NEW ORLEANS

“WE WANT TO SPUR SOME TYPE OF MEMORY IN PEOPLE,” said Rashida Ferdinand, Sankofa’s Executive Director when describing the program of the mobile market. The typology of the mobile market has existed in New Orleans for decades and Sankofa is reviving this tradition. Sankofa is bringing something back, something the people of New Orleans used to have. Nostalgia and familiarity are the emotions the Sankofa Mobile Market is designed to evoke.

Sankofa is not a farmer’s market; the market sells produce they grow as well as food purchased from wholesalers and farmers. To Sankofa, local food is important but they do not just sell local and seasonal produce. They sell food that people want and need every week.

Markets in New Orleans have always been an important fixture in the city’s relationship with and access to food. From the famous French Market in the French Quarter to neighborhood seafood markets and strolling vendors, fresh and accessible food have been a major part of New Orleans. With disinvestment creating food deserts and the closing of many markets around the city, this is no longer the case. Sankofa is action-oriented: creating interventions in the built environment, engaging with those that can influence policy, and emphasizing education as a means to make a difference concerning food.





SANKOFA SITES

THE SITES ARE CONNECTED TO SANKOFA'S HEALTH EDUCATION MISSION.

Currently Sankofa frequents multiple health clinics, senior centers, and hospitals around the city. Their intentions are to be as accessible and visible as possible, going to places where people already gather.

Building relationships are key. By having a reliable and set time for sites, Sankofa becomes a part of the routine of the place. The Mobile Market needed to foster this sense of community, inviting patrons to linger, converse, and pause.

With plans to expanding the Mobile Market route into different places including various neighborhoods throughout the city and playing a larger role in schools, the Sankofa Mobile Market is meant to create a temporal community based on education and health issues.

The Sankofa Mobile Market is a collaborative project with community-based organizations, health centers, schools, and faith-based groups to improve access to fresh local food in low socioeconomic areas of New Orleans.



39% of children in New Orleans live below the poverty line



60% of low-income Orleans Parish residents drive more than 3 miles to a supermarket



20.3% of residents living in the New Orleans area reported consuming the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables



PROCESS

- Engagement
- Concept
- Experimentation
- Proposed Schemes
- Construction



ENGAGEMENT



City-Wide Engagement

ENGAGEMENT AT VARIOUS SCALES WAS A LARGE PART OF THE DESIGN PROCESS. From volunteering in Sankofa's gardens to talking with elderly customers at reviews, all interactions and engagements helped guide the process of creation. These opportunities provided insights into the larger ideas of food access and justice as well as understanding the process of a functional business operation.

Community Engagement

Engagement took place at three different scales: city-wide, community, and company levels. There were volunteering opportunities to work with Sankofa, including during the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. Students also had the chance to help run a mobile market, interview customers, and help sell produce. These activities and encounters were helpful and insightful for the design of the Sankofa Mobile Market.

Partner Org Engagement

A large part of the students' engagement was based in the classroom, drawing from sociology and anthropology including research on food justice and food access as well as critical analysis of past Small Center projects. Weekly meetings with Small Center staff kept the design process focused and conscious of larger themes and issues at play. This sort of engagement was a guiding force for the Sankofa Mobile Market, providing perception and depth into its creation.

The 10th Anniversary of Hurricane Katrina

Tulane architecture students and Small Center spent the 10th anniversary of Katrina volunteering for Sankofa. Students worked at various sites around the city including the Frederick Douglass Garden in the Bywater and the Fresh Stop in the Lower 9th Ward.

This was a very important, meaningful, and potent opportunity for engagement. The students worked side by side with volunteers from all over the city and even around the country.

Efficient
Simple
Accessible
Clean
Impactful
Coherent

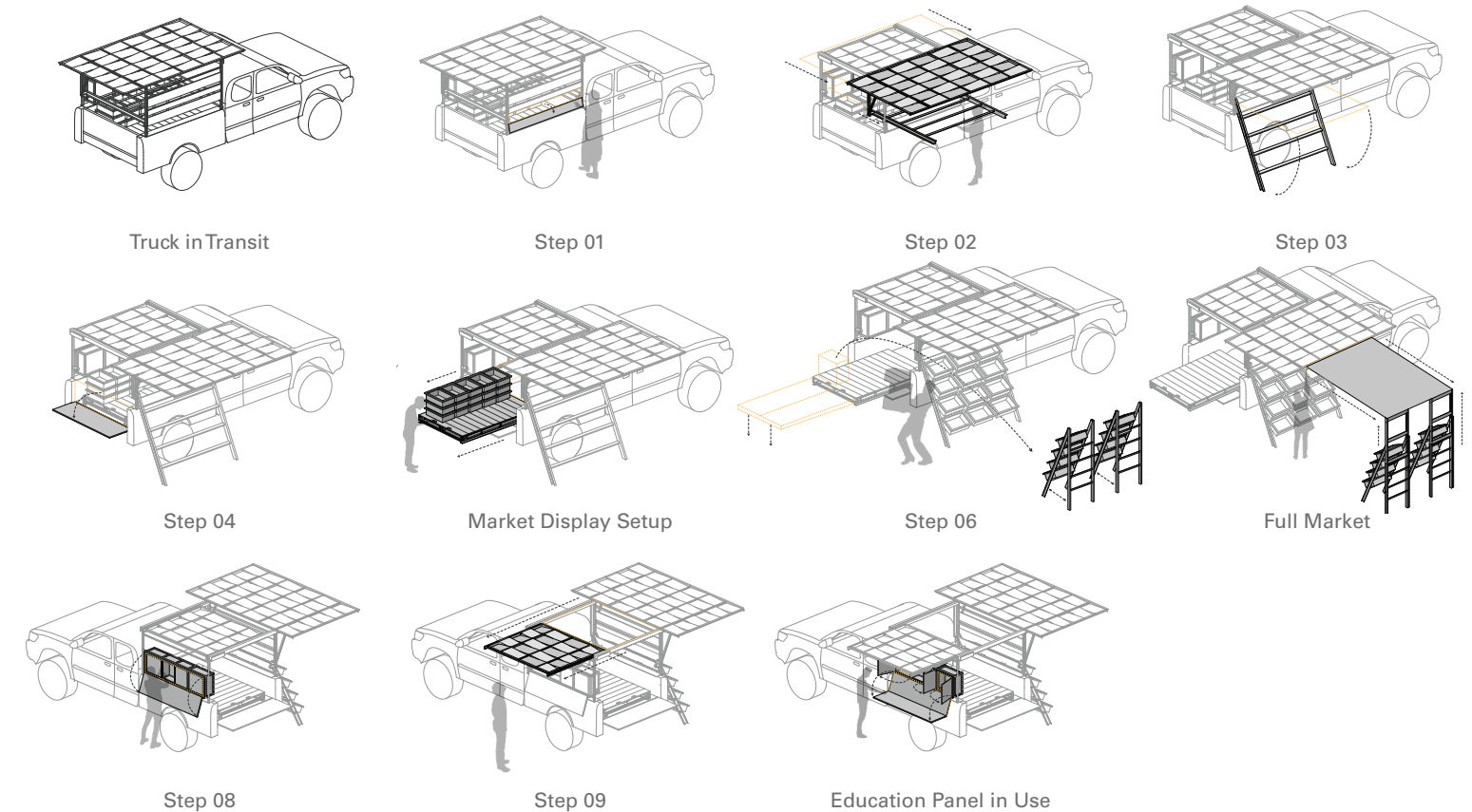
CONCEPT

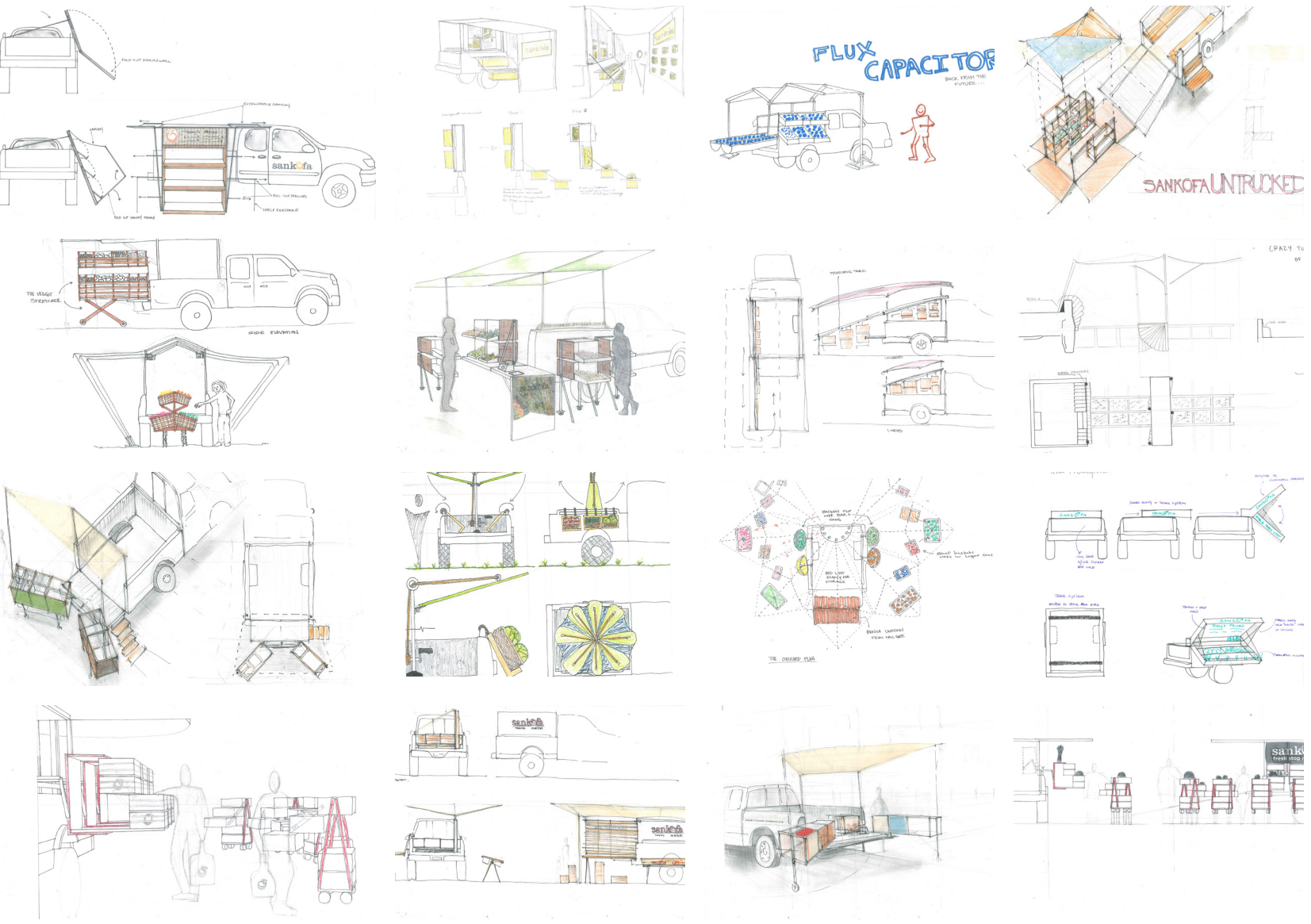
TRANSFORMATION

The main objective for the project was to create an accessible, easy, and eye-catching market occupying the back of a pickup truck. The mobile market had to be unique and fresh yet evoke a sense of nostalgia for traditional produce trucks of New Orleans. With concerns of speed, both in setting up the market as well as on the road, the market needed to accommodate the needs of the Sankofa staff at the market as well as transforming into a marketable object that travels the city.

The “site” of the design-build project is in the bed of a Toyota Tundra pickup truck: a challenging and new set of circumstances unfamiliar to all of those participating. Emphasizing material exploration, new knowledge bases, and engagement, students were able to explore varied ways of creating a moving placemaker, responsible for distributing healthy food around New Orleans.

The main verb to describe the market became “expansion,” a word that illustrates the movement of the project, its replicability, and the motion of knowledge dispersal surrounding health topics important to Sankofa. “Expansion” describes the ability of the market to grow for varied sites and numbers of customers but also to address future needs of the company. Whether it was the expansion of canopies, shelf space supplemented by rolling ladders, or the opening of the classroom, the mobile market has the ability to both move and grow.





EXPERIMENTATION: DRAWINGS

The idea of “transformation” guided the design of the Mobile Market. As the mobile market would be transitioning between a range of states - in motion, modifying, static - the notion of transformation was an important guiding principle.

The semester began with various studies concerning transformational processes. Both imagery and constructed models were considered. Understanding how something can change, what affect that has on its surroundings, and the multiple temporary states that it can pass through were crucial to discover and explore.

Various rounds of sketching, researching, and pinups occurred on a weekly basis allowing for the ideas of the students to be shared and developed. Always reverting back to the program details and paired with different sets of partners, students were able to explore concepts, structures, and details.

“To Mars and Back”

To begin the design process, students were encouraged to go “to mars and back,” a phrase used to encourage unconventional and eccentric ideas.

This first step allowed for creative expression and thinking without the restrictions of exactitude. From an entirely mobile market that gets detached and wheeled off the truck to a mechanism that unfolds and springs out hanging baskets as a mean of food distribution and display, students came up with many unusual proposals. This scale of experimentation was an excellent introduction to designing and maintaining the “wow-factor” in the market.

As a part of the studio, students took an advanced fabrication seminar. Techniques, detailing, and material experimentation were emphasized and explored. Opportunities for construction and model making were able to play a larger role in the initial design process due to this seminar.

The distinction between the “design” phase and the “construction” phase became blurred as work in the shop was integrated the very first week of the semester.

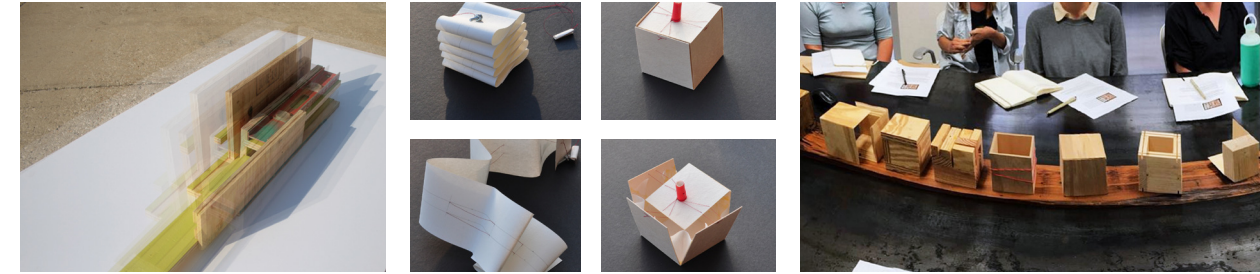
EXPERIMENTATION: MODELS

Model building and woodshop experimentation was a large part of the design-build project. Students were encouraged to take advantage of the opportunities available at Small Center’s facility. A balance between 2D and 3D work was established as students moved seamlessly between sketches and computer software to modeled details and construction.

At the beginning of the semester, students created models at a smaller scale, mostly relating to the transformation exercises and initial project concepts. Words like “unfurl,” “spin,” and “release” described the movements of these models, trying to discover an interesting way for the mobile market to evolve. Basic woodshop skills were introduced and practiced during these initial models.

As the semester progressed, the scale of models increased. The models became a way to work out a difficult detail, experiment with weight distribution and capacity, and to investigate a new material. The models were a way to supplement research and provide evidence for a desired conceptual direction. And by the end of the semester, models became a way to work out project problems or practice a construction detail at full scale. The models were a testing ground for the semester: a way to experiment with details, ideas, and methods.

Transformation



Small

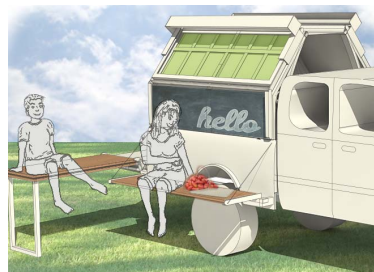


Medium



Full-Scale





"Offering in Motion"



"Offering in Motion"



"Familiar and Fresh"

PROPOSED SCHEMES

Project Proposal

By mid-semester, the students were separated into three groups working towards a final project proposal. Emphasis was placed on designing around a meaningful concept as a way to add further thoughtfulness and depth to the project. The "wow-factor" of the project was also an encouraged component, whether it was an unusual unfolded canopy or a large sliding table, surprise and joy were the sought-after responses from critics.

The result of the midterm review and further discussion among students led to the decision to move forward with a single proposal but incorporate aspects from the other proposals as well. The expanded canopy, the moveable supplemental tables (later ladders), and the lightweight shelves with attachable bins became the defining components of the final proposal.

Other Proposals



Mercy Endeavors Review

The midterm review was held at Mercy Endeavors Senior Center, one of Sankofa's current market sites. Regular customers provided feedback on the three schemes presented. They, along with marketing and branding professionals, were primarily concerned with shade, ease of setup, and the ability for one person to transform the market. During the review, one woman commented that "you should be able to press a button" and the market would be set up. This comment was profound and very helpful.

Experimentation was a large part of the design process for the mobile market. Aluminum was the material selected for the canopy, ladders, and shelves for the market: a lightweight option but a material many students were not familiar with.

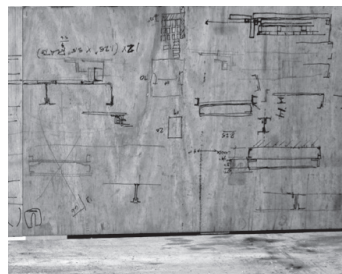
During an aluminum welding tutorial hosted by Andrew Schrock, students were able to test the material. By the end, a few students had a grasp on the techniques and were able to execute the necessary welding.



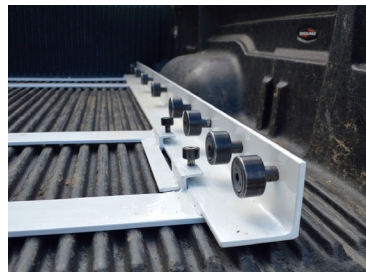
CONSTRUCTION

While still finalizing the final design proposal, construction was underway. A full scale mock-up of the truck bed was built to work from as Sankofa would have the truck until the final installation. Teams were created and the tasks were divided. From woodworking and welding to painting and drilling, a variety of activities took place at the same time. Materials were bought, distributors and suppliers contacted, and components took shape.

The construction phase was the time to flex shop skills or to continue developing confidence around tools. It was the time for material exploration, learning new skills, and expanding communication abilities. Students, Small Center staff members, and leaders of Sankofa realized the importance of collaboration, connection, and communication.



CONSTRUCTION





WHAT ARE THE UNIQUE CHALLENGES OF A MOBILE SITE? HOW DO WE RE-FRAME THESE AS OPPORTUNITIES?

SOLUTION

Sankofa Mobile Market
Fresh Stop
Acknowledgments

The final review took place at Small Center where our community partner and Tulane architecture faculty took part in the unveiling of the project. The entire process from initial scribbles and sketches, to prototypes and full scale mock-ups were shared. The review culminated with a dramatic unveiling of the mobile market, the garage door lifted up to show the parked market.

The review itself became a market, Sankofa customers and people passing by were welcomed to take some produce and talk about the project. From its beginning, the project has been centered on inclusion and community.

SANKOFA MOBILE MARKET

The Mobile Market is comprised of an expanding display rack where custom bins are attached, a sliding canopy capable of further enlargement, and bed-slide that is able to store and hold the ladders and produce. On the other side is a classroom complete with cabinets, a countertop, and even a chalkboard. The Mobile Market is able to expand to high demand or even simplify for small events or impromptu gatherings. The market is based on growth, accommodation, and efficiency.

The Mobile Market came together with the work of Tulane architecture students, Small Center staff, and leaders of Sankofa. Collaboration and communication were key to fulfill the necessary requirements for Sankofa's vision. The market has become a place for the community to learn about and purchase healthy food, a moving anchor that begins a conversation and brings people together.



Final Review



SANKOFA MOBILE MARKET



SANKOFA MOBILE MARKET



Mobile Market in use
photos by Michael Wong and SC



SANKOFA FRESH STOP

In addition to the Mobile Market, the Fresh Stop is a permanent market run by Sankofa, located in the Lower 9th Ward. With needs of simplicity, efficiency, and potential expansion, similar needs to the Mobile Market, the stands for the Fresh Stop were created as an expansion of the semester project. Drawing on the design of the ladders for the mobile market, the stands of shelves for the Fresh Stop are able to expand and fold back into place whether the market is open or closed.

The design for the Fresh Stop becomes a continuation and exploration of design language and company branding, beginning to tie together the constructed environments of Sankofa. Milled tops of the shelving stands match the facade of the mobile market and the similar gesture for setup links the two projects.



Though a permanent site, the established systems and language created by the Mobile Market allows for the Fresh Stop to become an important place within the community: an eye-catching and multi-purpose space addressing issues of food access and healthy lifestyle choices.

“Sankofa seeks to rebuild our community from the inside-out.”

TEAM

SANKOFA

Rashida Ferdinand, **Founder & Executive Director**
Rosamar Torres, **Programs Manager**
Grace Williams, **Food Access Coordinator**

SMALL CENTER

Doug Harmon, **Design Lead + Studio Instructor**
Calla Bardwell, Ruben Contreras, Jenny Renn Key, Eric Lynn, Michael Meline, Shelby Mills, Sarah Morasso, Gianna Morelli, Joseph Newman, Catherine Nguyen, Allison Price, John (JD) Scott, Laura Stokley, & Megan Van Artsdalen, **Student Designers**
Sue Mobley, **Engagement Coordinator**, Emilie Taylor Welty, **Project Manager**
Maggie Hansen, Nick Jenisch, Dozenia Marshall, Donn Peabody

REVIEWERS

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