

Rotch Traveling Scholarship Preliminary Competition Brief 2023

Memory and Continuance

This year's competition will ask participants to explore how design creates a dialogue between the history of a place and the new imaginaries that shape its future. Place is a shared territory that persists in collective memory and identity, and yet it is also a contested territory where the sense of a shared history is polemicized or rewritten. In responding to present challenges and envisioning future possibilities, proposals will need to examine the processes of preserving, erasing and even replacing artifacts and ideas in the process of making place.

Embodied

Architecture embodies energy. The production of buildings sets in motion global flows of material from extraction, processing, manufacturing, shipping, assembly and, eventually, demolition. But buildings are not finished at construction, their evolution continuously transform places, economies, and ecologies. As long-lived cultural artifacts, buildings are vessels for collective memories, depositories of materials, and banks for the flows of disinvestment and reinvestment of global capital. The current global crisis of climate change demands that architects reconsider all forms of energy embodied in existing buildings, understanding their past to extend and transform their future. Historic preservation has many allies, but not all old buildings are loved and protected. Yet in those unprotected buildings may lie the opportunity and freedom to explore how to harvest embodied energy and channel new energy into sites. Architects can challenge a culture of devaluation, waste and obsolescence through new imaginaries that transform how a community sees its own past in order to reshape its future.

Anticipation

The site of Leon Electric in Dorchester, a 7-story vacant warehouse built in 1915, is a remnant of a time when Uphams Corner was shifting away from residential use towards becoming an industrial hub. This historic center of activity in Boston now looks to recapture its past significance, recalling an era of prosperity as a commercial district and an arts and culture destination. The plans for the Uphams Corner Station Area on the Fairmont Indigo Line describes the station adjacent to the Leon Electric site as a gateway—an opportunity for transit-oriented development within minutes of South Station in downtown Boston. The station area plan celebrates the city-owned Strand Theater as a cultural and historic asset of the station area. In contrast, it highlighted the need to “address negative impact of Leon Building—short and long term.” Politicians and journalists describe the Leon Electric site as “blight... a behemoth... and of Boston's nastiest eyesores.”

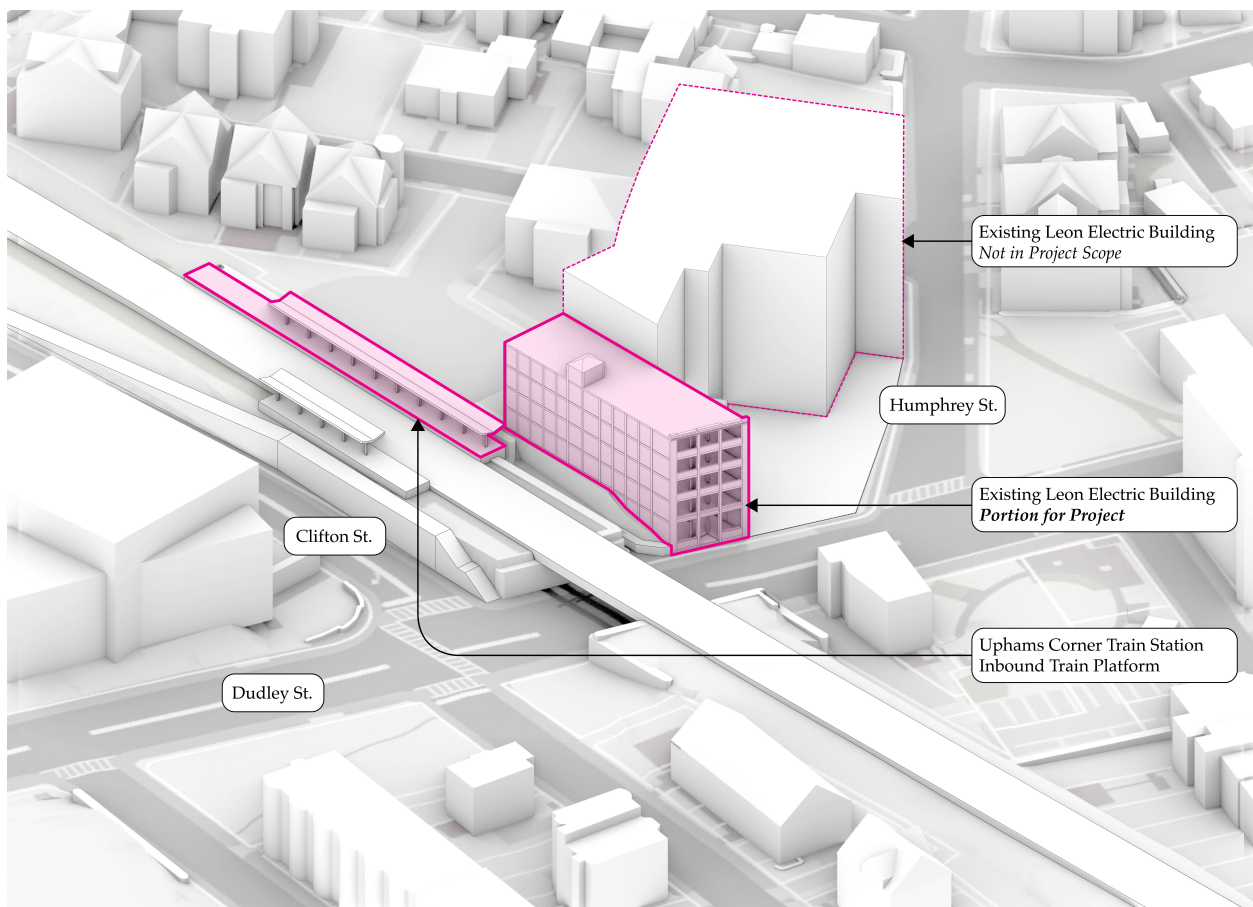
Historic photographs of the site show that the part of the building adjacent to the commuter rail station is the oldest construction of the industrial complex. This part of the Dorchester Fireproof Storage Building has a robust concrete frame with concrete infill walls that are not load-bearing, with tall structural bays at the ground floor, and regular fenestration on its narrow side facing the main street. A taller volume is set back from the main street. Later additions replaced the Humphry House with a taller concrete frame with brick infill and some fenestration. As an industrial storage use, the building has a high structural capacity but low ceilings. The site has been the target for redevelopment for at least two Mayors of Boston in the last 10 years, without success. The community waits in anticipation of something promising, something “new.” With so much capacity and energy, and no signs of change in the near future, the building sits in anticipation of new imaginaries that can revisit the past and reshape its future.

Site Background:

The development of the Leon Electric building site has long been a goal of the City of Boston. The property was targeted for redevelopment by then-Major Thomas Menino in 2013. A planning initiative study (<http://www.bostonplans.org/getattachment/5bda3162-0391-4f1e-beb7-c8e4b42c0780>) of the Uphams Corner district, which included the Leon Electric building and the Uphams Corner train station, was published in 2014. After a decade of no progress, there is a renewed interest in developing the site as a transit-oriented mixed-use gateway into the Uphams Corner community.

Site Location:

The site includes a portion of the currently vacant Leon Electric building parcel (55 Humphreys St, Dorchester, MA 02125), and the Uphams Corner train station (see Site Axon and Site Plan diagrams). For purposes of this brief, you are asked to engage with the inbound side of the train platform and the portion of the existing building/structure adjacent to it. Three dimensional model documentation is provided in .dwg and .3dm formats. If you have not received this information, please contact: polshan@architects.org



Site Axon

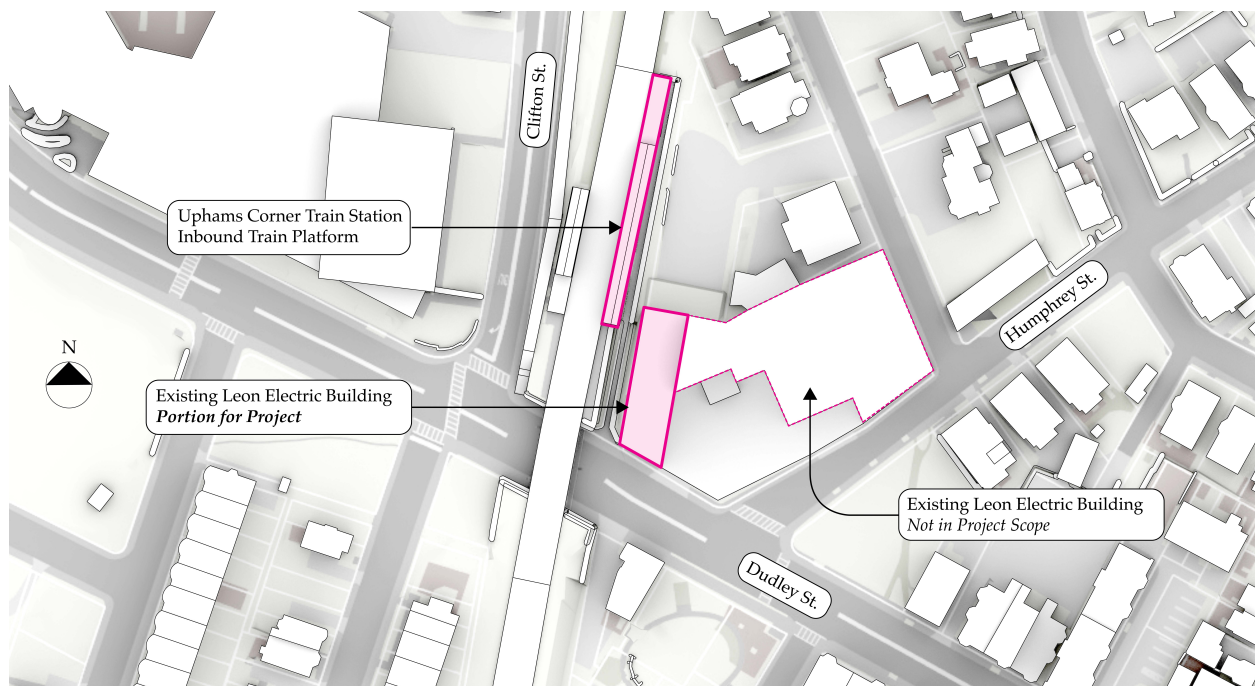
Program:

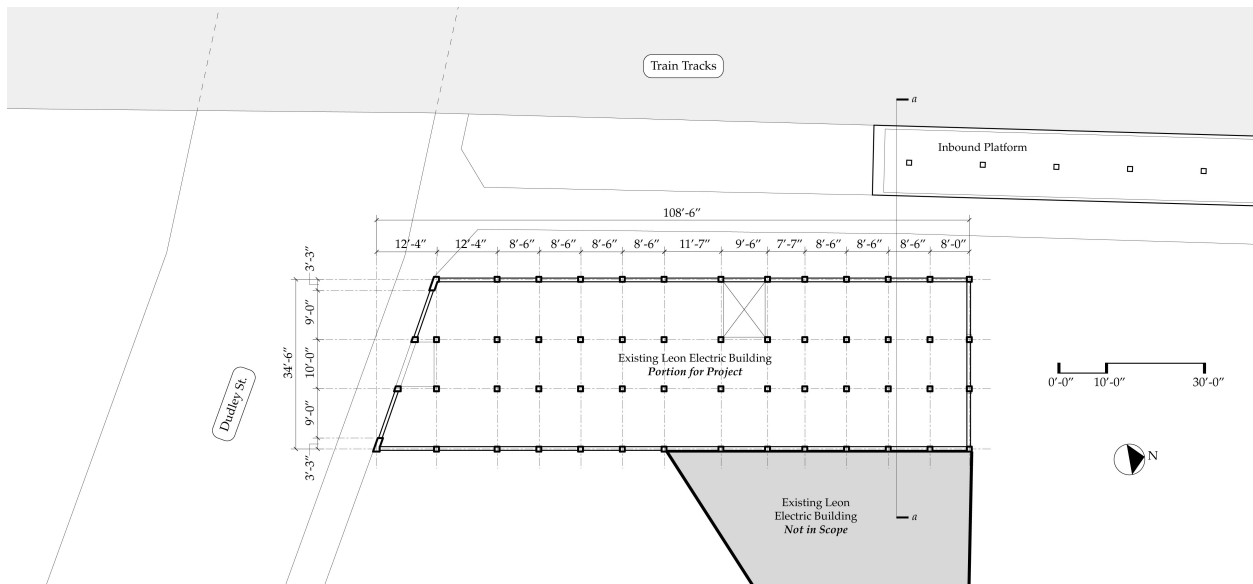
This project aims to redevelop a portion of the Leon Electric building (see Site Axon and Site Plan diagrams). Within this existing structure, you are asked to address the following programmatic requirements:

- Create a direct connection to Uphams Corner Train Station Inbound platform.
- Develop a universal access design solution allowing users to transverse from the inbound train platform to street level through the existing Leon Electric building.
- Provide a visual 'Gateway' presence along the Western side.
- Program Elements:
 - Flexible community public gathering/performance space — 4,000 SF
 - Commercial retail space — 3,500 SF
 - Flexible Work/Office Spaces — 2,000 SF
 - One (1) Elevator
 - Public Restrooms
- Each of the program elements can either be grouped together or split up and distributed throughout based on your overall organizational design concept approach.

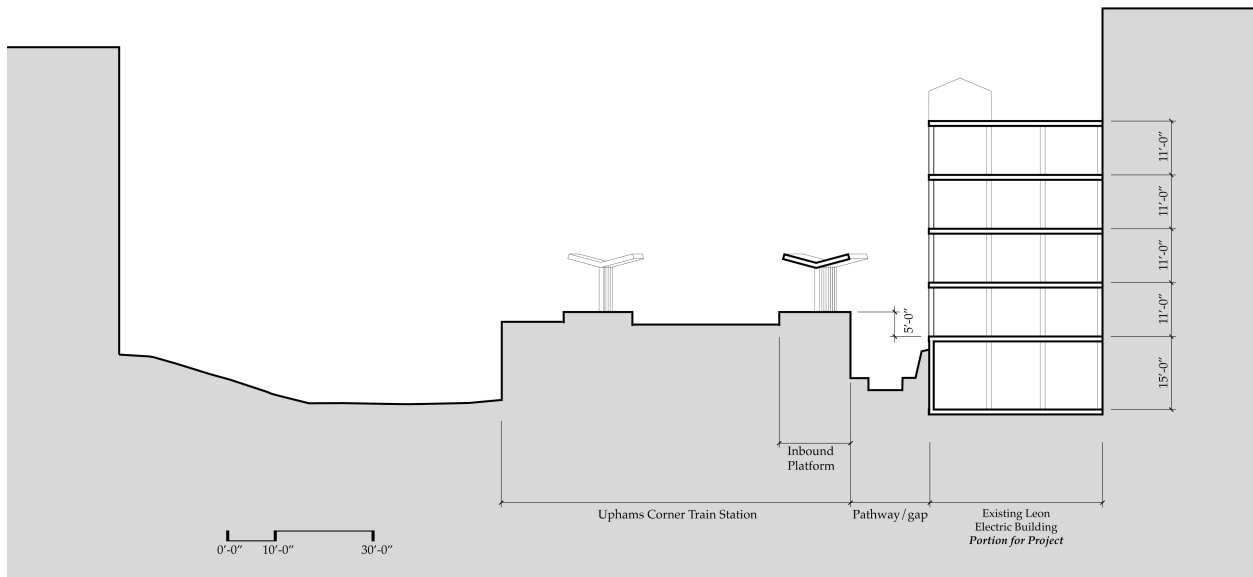
Considerations within the existing Leon Electric building structure*:

- For purposes of this competition, the only existing building elements you need to consider are the structural columns, floor plates, and exterior walls. Assume other existing building elements are not a significant impediment on your proposal.
- You are allowed to modify up to 50% of the existing structure.
- Existing walls and floor slabs can be kept or removed as needed.
- The provided program elements will only fill part of the existing building square-footage. How you utilize the remaining space is up to you and should be evident within your overall design concept/strategy.
- Adequate means of egress must be provided.





Site Plan



*Typical Floor Plan**
*Section a-a**

**for purposes of this competition brief, the existing structure had been constructed based on available information. The provided documentation is what you will use for your proposal. However, it does not represent an actual or accurate version of the existing building/structure. Any specific additional information needed is the competition participants responsibility to research and discover through available public documents.*

Deliverables:

- Project Statement (250 words or less)
- One (1) Plan
- One (1) Section (Can be Sectional Axonometric)
- One (1) Interior Perspective
- One (1) Exterior Perspective

All entries will be submitted digitally in a single, multi-page PDF in a 16:9 ratio (landscape format). A convened jury will review submitted work digitally. The submission file may be no larger than 15MB. PDFs may be no more than four (4) pages.

This submission must remain anonymous. Do not include your name anywhere on the submission documents. If your name is visible, the entry will be disqualified.

- Competition entries must be submitted electronically to: polshan@architects.org
- You are welcome to use an FTP service such as 'dropbox.com' or 'wettransfer.com' if necessary.
- Files must be named as follows: Your first initial, your last name, underscore, '2023RotchPrelim' (for example RKoolhaas_2023RotchPrelim.pdf). Once submitted, a third party will rename each entry a random number to ensure anonymity before the jury views them.
- You will receive a reply email confirming receipt of your entry.
- By submitting your entry, you hereby assure the Rotch Scholarship Committee that you are the sole author of your submission for the 2023 Rotch Competition and have not received criticism, suggestions, or help of any sort other than through the use of books and other published literature.
- The Rotch Scholarship reserves the right to use any submitted material in print publications and / or on websites.
- **Electronic submissions must be received by Monday, February 27, 2023, 12:00PM**

Evaluation Criteria

The jury will evaluate submissions according to the following criteria:

- Clarity and intellectual premise of the overall project, as articulated in the project statement and graphic representation.
- Overall project design and scope - demonstrated by ambition and / or constraint.
- Capacity to analyze, transform, and utilize an existing building / structure within the premise of adaptive reuse, sustainable practices, and / or resource utilization to meet the contemporary needs described in the project brief.