

# Grand Center

## STUDIO WORKS

in collaboration with

**Trivers Associates**

**Mary Miss**

**James Turrell**

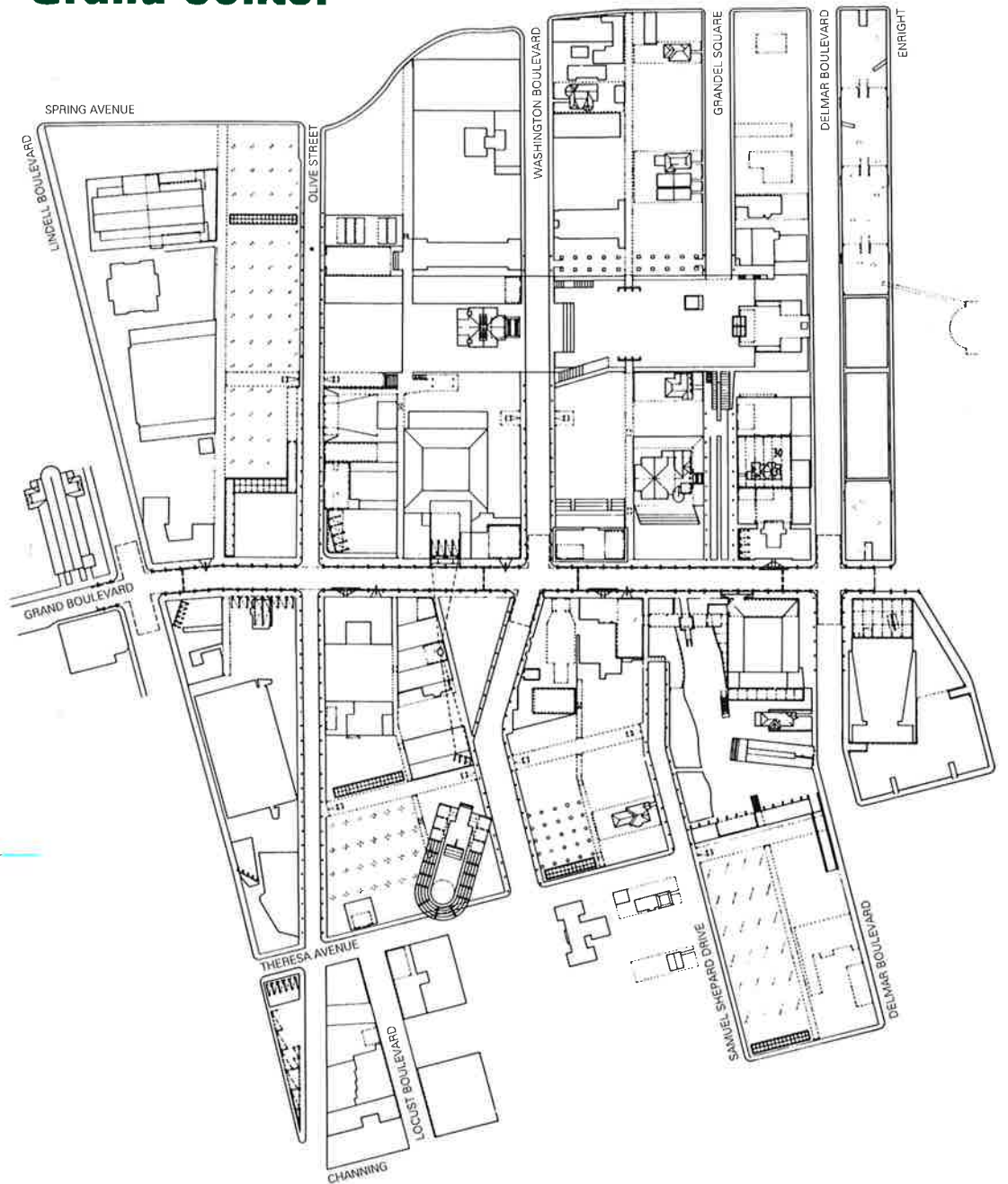
**Project:** Grand Center, St. Louis, Missouri.

**Site:** A five-block section of Grand Boulevard, a former downtown theater district that is now partially deserted.

**Program:** A master plan to create a performing and visual arts center for the city that "includes the complexities and optimism necessary for the 21st Century."

**Solution:** Instead of proposing infill to gentrify the downtown district, the design team analyzed existing buildings and urban configurations to "uncover the inherent underlying qualities that are somewhat hidden, to describe and inform those qualities through physical and programmatic meaning, and to transform and heighten these qualities through clever and economical intervention." The resulting master plan consists of "seven layers" of design solutions, each featuring a distinctive lighting device designed by artists working in collaboration with the architects.

The seven layers are: On Stage Off Stage, Street and Green, Discrete Elements, Acropolis, Clusters, Overlaid Patterns, and Patchwork Quilt. Each layer represents a different urban strategy that "intensifies" functional, physical, and/or conceptual qualities the designers found in their analysis. For instance, the first layer, On Stage Off Stage, recognizes Grand Boulevard as the formal "on stage" (both programmatically and aesthetically) of the arts center, while the areas behind Grand are "off-stage." As a result of this analogy, specific proposals for On Stage include active nighttime uses, theatrical lighting, and marquees. Off Stage, on the other hand, emphasizes a more informal area that would use elements like fire stairs and parking booths as exposed backstage infrastructure or "props." The accompanying lighting



SITE PLAN

proposal suggests attaching mounted banks of lights to buildings and operating them from a district "control room" to light buildings across and down the street.

Other layers include the Acropolis, which augments a natural hill at the core of the district by building parking underneath, and by providing a place of arrival and expansive views. The experience of "stepping and ramping up" to this core will announce entry into the theater district; lights at the top of the hilltop buildings will signal its presence from a distance.

Lighting proposals include a "laser lid," a nighttime ceiling of criss-

crossing beams (already implemented); the "big glass," a proposal to sheathe two abandoned billboards with sheets of glass to reflect the daytime sky and nighttime beams of electrical light; and "centerline," the installation along Grand Avenue of red airport lights that can be programmed to flash or dim to coincide with particular events.

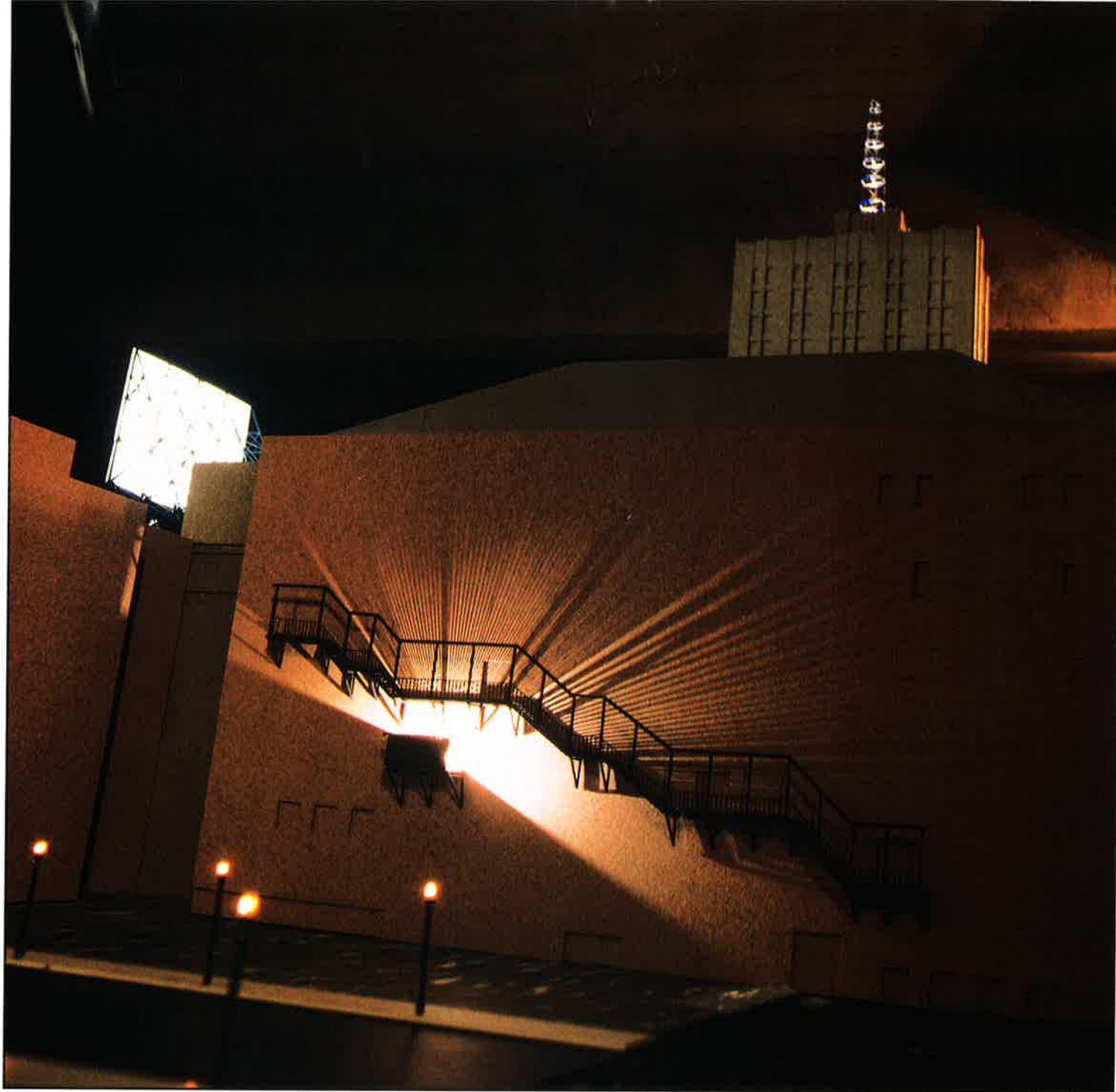
**Architects:** STUDIO WORKS, Venice, California (Robert Mangurian and Mary-Ann Ray, principals; David Gregor, Michael Gruber, Kent Hodgetts, Irene Keil, Kathleen Lindstrom, Nicholas Louie, design team).

**Associated Firms:** Trivers Associates, St.

Louis (Andrew Trivers, principal; Jeff Morrissey, project architect); James Turrell, Flagstaff, Arizona.

**Client:** Grand Center, Inc., St. Louis.  
**Consultants:** Mary Miss, art; Kent Hodgetts, special projects; Kiku Obata & Co., graphics; EDAA, Inc., management/landscape; Crawford, Bunte, Brammeier, transportation; Emily Pulitzer, art management; Vivian Watt, dance.

**Modelmaker:** STUDIO WORKS  
**Model Photographer:** STUDIO WORKS  
**Renderer:** STUDIO WORKS



MODEL OF LIGHTING PROPOSALS

### Jury Comments

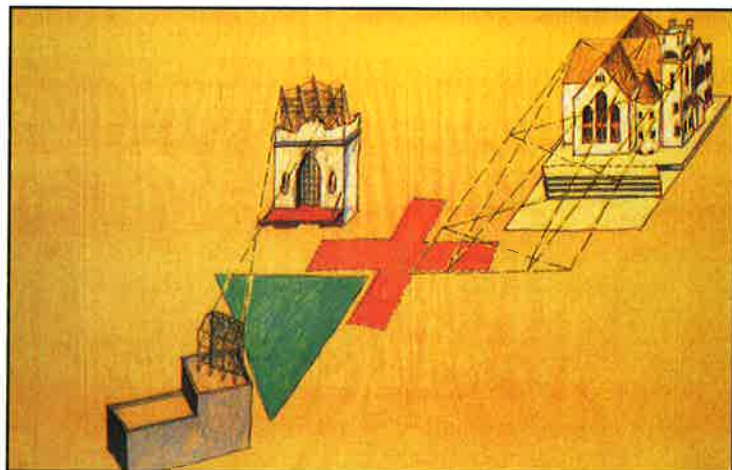
**Silvetti:** The project is convincing because it articulates all kinds of physical, social, and aesthetic layers of meaning that it interprets from its condition. I find the most appealing part of this is that it finds a new term of analysis. [The architects] know how to look at something that seems negative and transform it into something positive without doing much. The analysis is almost inseparable from the design.

**Baldwin:** It is a minimal intervention, and that is what makes it so elegant.

**Silvetti:** It is very urbane too. It is very genuine, local, and American. It is

not about infilling; it is about the intensification of things as they exist. It is making the main street more Main Street.

**Baldwin:** It is also philosophically American. It reconciles the American penchant for independence and pastoral ideals with the potentials of urban interdependence. The project proposes individual, independent acts that can be undertaken by different people at different places and times, and yet in the aggregate, those individuals will create a plan of interdependent components. While it might be the most inspired of the projects we have seen, it is also probably the most pragmatic.



SKETCH: OVERLAID PATTERNS