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## University of Detroit Mercy: Detroit Collaborative Design Center

Editorial Board

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Firebreak - Veiled House



Playhouse



Firebreak - Hay House



The Alley Project



## University of Detroit Mercy | Detroit Collaborative Design Center

There are tens of thousands of vacant houses in Detroit. If they are not renovated, most will be demolished. There appears to be no middle ground. Any left standing in limbo will slowly deteriorate, blighting the physical and psychological landscape. **PlayHouse** provides an alternative, a long-term strategy between full renovation and demolition. The project removed the two-story sidewall of an abandoned house to make the interior visible to the side yard, a half block of vacant and abandon properties. Three adjacent properties will be designed as exterior seating facing the house, making it a two-story stage. A new exterior “skin” of rotating and sliding panels will open to reveal all or only a portion of the stage. These panels will use original material from the removed sidewall. Fabricated by community residents, artists, and young people, PlayHouse will be an artistic and cultural centerpiece in an area of Detroit that has been listed as one of the three poorest zip codes by the U.S. Census Bureau.

PlayHouse was born of a series of temporary installations titled **FireBreak**, a unique example of community organizing through architecture and design. The Design Center, alongside community artists and residents, has transformed the blight of the abandoned burned house into a public asset. FireBreak believes that everyone can shape one’s world. It has fostered a series of artistic and architectural installations. With local resources, it has already completed twelve houses.

The **Alley Project Gallery** has three focal points: (1) a garage adapted as a studio, classroom, and gallery for youth; (2) two adjacent vacant lots that provide an art park for neighbors and artists; (3) a walking gallery along an alley, where garages become the canvas for high-quality murals with signage to explain the pieces. This place for viewing art is thus an interactive space where community members create, show, and engage street art legally and safely, which supports learning and builds community.