Look across Virginia and you will see it, the abandoned big box store. These large, vacant former retail warehouses usually sit in weed-infested, crumbling parking lots. They often lack architectural inspiration. They are monuments to suburban sprawl and mass consumerism. The act of abandonment can bring disastrous consequences, especially in small towns. As architects, designers, and concerned citizens it is critical that we intervene and bring forward real solutions.

Our Virginia Tech design studio, consisting of an international team of nine architecture graduate students under the leadership of Architecture Professor Kay Edge, began with a plain vacant big-box building, a former K-Mart. Our challenge is to initiate change through design. Our charge is to show communities the untapped potential in our surroundings. Our desire is to act as stewards of the environment, not only in the sense of sustainability but also in the sense of beauty. This exhibition, a collaboration between the design studio participants and The Branch, showcases how thoughtful architecture and design approaches lead to solutions that help elevate communities.

Design Studio Participants

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Exhibition made possible by Center for Instructional Development and Educational Research.