

# North Sumatera Cultural Center with Neo Vernacular Approach

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## ABSTRACT

The interest of young generation towards traditional arts especially in North Sumatera is fairly low. This is affected by the globalization of medias and the lack of attention the government give for arts and culture despite the fact that this sector can bring more visitors to North Sumatera since the area are famous for their multi-cultural nature. Therefore it is required for North Sumatera to have a proper platform for the youth to better and prosper North Sumatera's culture such as a Cultural Center. This cultural center can help to accommodate people needs for Art and Cultural platform. The location for this project is located at the old building of "Taman Budaya Sumatera Utara". Qualitative methods are used in this research including collecting literature studies and buildings as a reference. Located in North Sumatera, a multi-ethnic province, the design of this building will focus on aspects of culture that can be applied in the design using the approach of Neo Vernacular Architecture. Having multi-cultural citizens, using neo vernacular architecture can be a way for architect to connect new art and old art. This building will be a new landmark for North Sumatera to describe it's beautiful and rich cultures while also providing any needed facilities for arts and culture activities.

**Keywords:** art, cultural center, multi cultural, neo vernacular



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## 1. Introduction

North Sumatera is a province that have a wide range of ethnicity including local ethnicity. Those local ethnicity are Melayu, Simalungun, Toba, Mandailing, Angkola, Pakpak, Karo, and Nias. People settled in North Sumatera, as recorded by Marsden (2008) and Anderson (1971), long before the colonialism period. In addition to local ethnicities, another immigrant race settled in North Sumatera for a long time. Some examples are Javanese, Chinese, Indian, Arab, Acehnese, and Minangnese. With various ethnic groups living side by side over the years, North Sumatera now are rich in Cultural Practice and art. Both indigenous and assimilated [1].

An example being the culture of celebrating the holidays, Hindus in North Sumatera have their ways of celebrating as a minority religion in North Sumatera. Also, Javanese, even though they are not the local ethnicity, have a large population in North Sumatera that makes them have their own culture. However, the lack of space for expression and appreciation of art and culture in North Sumatera makes the impression of Multi-Cultural in the area dimmed and replaced by the image of 'Metropolitan City'. The lack of appearance of Multi-Cultural in North Sumatera is due to the thought that Art and Culture is just entertainment and culture in the past. This gives them the stigma that causes the younger generation not to preserve and maintain their culture [2].

However having diverse and wide range of culture collected by Multi-cultural way of living in North Sumatera it also faces some challenges such as racism, discrimination and several cases of violation of human rights from small to some serious cases such as violence and murder. Despite the country's concept of Bhineka Tunggal Ika, people needed to be constantly reminded to unite no matter what race and ethnicity one came from [3]. This issue can also be avoided by teaching locals about each other culture as people will actually communicate instead of instigating any fight between ethnic groups. Cultural Center (Cultural Center) can be a new forum and the main space for preserving culture and multicultural arts in North Sumatera. The function of the cultural Center itself is to expand cultural values within the community. The area where culture is enriched revives the cultural activities of the local community [4]. Which, in this case, is to restore and preserve Multicultural culture in North Sumatera.

### 1.1. Cultural Centre

Cultural Centre generally described as a building or an institution that can facilitate and promotes several activities surrounding arts and culture. Cultural Centers can either be run by the people of said culture or by the hands of established organization. But with the lack of research around what a good cultural centers should look like as in what policies should cultural centers follow in order to be a good cultural centers Dita Pfeifere did a literature review about researches definition around cultural centers. According to Pfeirere on summarizing researches definition on cultural centers it can be concluded that cultural centers has to have appropriate equipment to accommodate cultural activities, Multidisciplinarity of a cultural centre and focusing towards local communities as a prioritized target audience [5].

To build an excellent cultural center, we must first know what facilities this Building provides for the locals or tourists we can look at Sobbokarti on figure 1. We can take example from the old Building had Art Gallery (Multi-Function Room), Stage (Outdoor), and Studio. We will elaborate on some works with similar functions to design an excellent cultural center. Volsteather Sobokartti is a Cultural Centre for Javanese art and performances in which the interaction structure between the artist and audience interacts closely with the building design as Pendopo (traditional stage for Javanese culture) and combined with the Amphitheater technology in Semarang, which was designed by Thomas Kartsen [6].



**Figure 1.** Volsteather Sobokartti [7]

Another example for cultural center in Indonesia is Taman Budaya Raden Saleh as seen on figure 2. Taman Budaya Raden Saleh is a cultural centre in Semarang. This Building has four buildings: Art Building, Office, Multi-Function Building, Head Office, and joglo (outdoor stage). Art Building Ki Narto Sabdho is a place for wayang shows (Indonesian traditional puppet shows) and music. Besides that this Building is also used for Theatrical shows [8].



**Figure 2.** Taman Budaya Raden Saleh [9].

## 1.2. Neo Vernacular

The theme used to approach this design is Neo Vernacular. Neo Vernacular Architecture is an architectural concept developed in the Post Modern era. Post Modern is a type of architecture that existed in the mid-1960s arose due to the movement of several architects. One of which was Charles Jencks, who criticized modern architecture. According to Budi A Sukada Neo Vernacular has these 10 characteristics that can be seen in table 1 [10].

**Table 1** Characteristics of Neo Vernacular Buildings.

No	Characteristics
1	Communicative to locals or in other words, popular
2	Reliving the memories of history
3	Giving Urban Context
4	Applying ornaments to building again
5	Become a representation of a certain group
6	Have a metaphorical meaning
7	Comes from people's participation
8	The result of public aspiration
9	Plural
10	Eclectic

One of the most famous example of local's Neo Vernacular building is Mesjid Raya Sumatera Barat as seen on figure 3. Mesjid Raya Sumatera Barat is one of Indonesia's most iconic Neo-Vernacular themed Buildings. The precise shape of Minangkabau's traditional house is evident in the Building's mass. This building was designed by architect named Rizal Muslim. Rizal Muslim collected several inspiration from the history of Islam such as the shape of fabric that was used to carry 'Hajar Aswad' the stone that is located beside the Ka'bah. This important history on justice brought to the design by making the shape of the roof to mimic weighted fabric [11].



**Figure 3.** Mesjid Raya Sumatera Barat [12]

However beside using history of Islam in the design concept Rizal Muslim also used West Sumatera famous vernacular design, Rumah Gadang. The shape of Rumah Gadang (Translated as Big House in English) as seen in figure 4 inspired the design of this mosque's shape [11]. The shape of Rumah Gadang's roof is very distinctive and it resembles buffalo's horn that has significance on West Sumatera's folklore.



**Figure 4.** Rumah Gadang [13]

## 2. Methodology

The research design's type is qualitative research. Subjective research uses analysis, and the results are descriptive data from words of people, opinions, and observations. By surveying, we can collect required data for building design, landscapes, needs, and regulations. Study literature is used to compare existing buildings, collect data, and compile any rules. At the same time, a Location survey is used to collect data about conditions, potential, and other data that is crucial for the design process. These data could be collected by reading journals, news, books, and other trusted media forms.

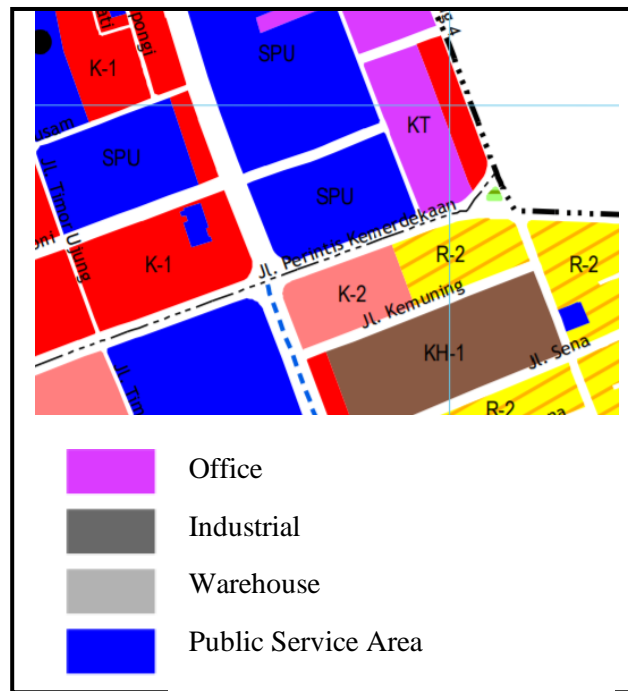
## 3. Result and Discussion

Based on personal survey that has been done on the site we collected the data that can be seen on table 2.

**Table 2.** Data from Site Survey.

	<b>Data</b>
Project Title	Cultural Centre of North Sumatera
Project Status:	Fiction
Location:	Perintis Street, No 3 , Medan , North Sumatera
Site Boundary:	North: IAIN St South: Adinegoro St East : Perintis Kemerdekaan St West: SMK 11, Sutomo St
Land Area:	11,961 m <sup>2</sup>
Land Contour:	Flat
Existing Building	Old Building of Taman Budaya Sumatera Utara

Beside the data from site survey, According to the RTRW of Medan in 2011-2031 on the Directions for City Areas Utilization on North Medan (figure 5 [14]). This project area is located in the category of Public Service Utility which indicate that this area can be used by the government to facilitate health, knowledge, and other public service that can be beneficial for the city.



**Figure 5.** Peta RDTR Medan Timur.

### 3.1 Analyzing Activities in The Building

The main users of the building will be divided by Managers/ Staff, Studio Users and Visitors which will be taken into consideration for designing building's facility such as parking lot, offices, studios and others. For the Staff there are Directors, Cultural Experts, Administration, Cleaning Staff, and Service. Managers/Staffs are assumed to do activities between 08.00 a.m. to 05.00 p.m. as that is working hours in north Sumatera. While Studio Users will have a different activity hours. On average dancers / singers will need two hours or more per sessions while also need longer hours near the day of showcase. For visitors it is divided by visitors of the convention hall and visitors of the exhibition hall. From analyzing the difference of needs and activities it can be concluded in table 3.

**Table 3.** Table of Facilities.

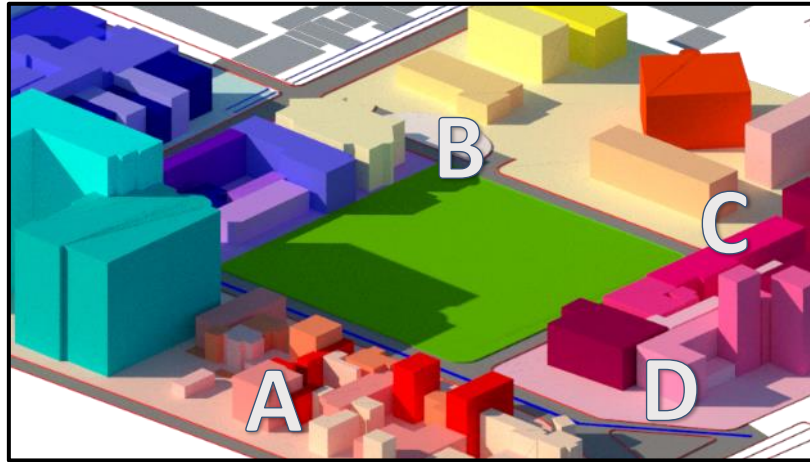
Building	User	Facility
Office	Staff/Managers	Office
Art Studio	-Art Students	-Music Studio
	-Artists	-Art Studio
	-Bands, etc.	-Dance studio
Exhibition	-Visitors	-Exhibition Room
	-Curator	-Curator Office
Convention Hall	-Visitors	-Convention Hall
	-Artists	
	-Staffs	

### 3.2 Site Potential

Based from the RTRW Medan this location is in the Public Service Utility category which means it is meant to be used for public needs. This building was used to be a cultural center called Taman Budaya Sumatera Utara. In other words making a new Cultural Center in this area wont confuse the public's eye because the function of this building will still be the same as the old one with a better execution. This site also has several other potential as example: 1) The location is near from the public service 2) The location is near the center of Medan 3) The location is near by the hotels and rail station.

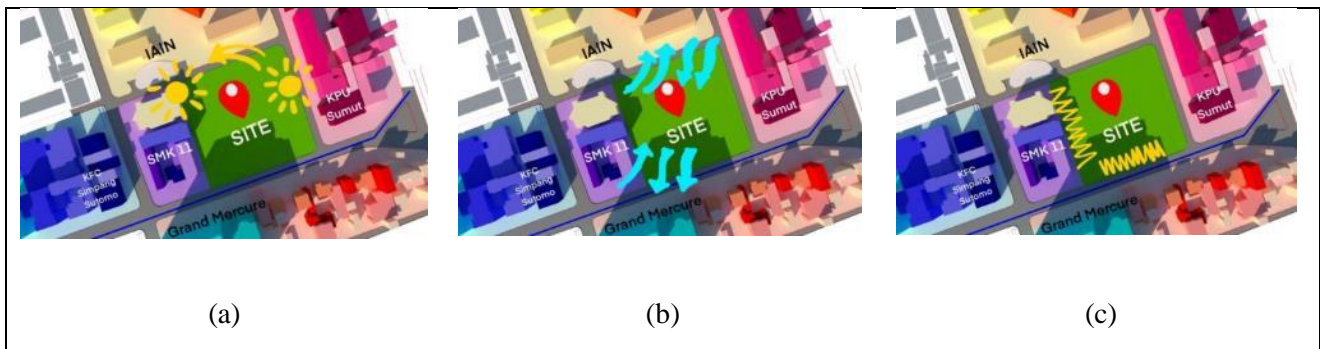


For the view of the building that can be seen on figure 6, Buildings around area A are good. There are many big road and facing Grand Mercure Hotel right away and will be the main orientation of the building. And the same way with view from the location facing D is quite good and it can be considered to be the second orientation and exit area. While Area B and C doesn't have a good view so around that are will be covered with walls or other kinds of partition.



**Figure 6.** View Analysis.

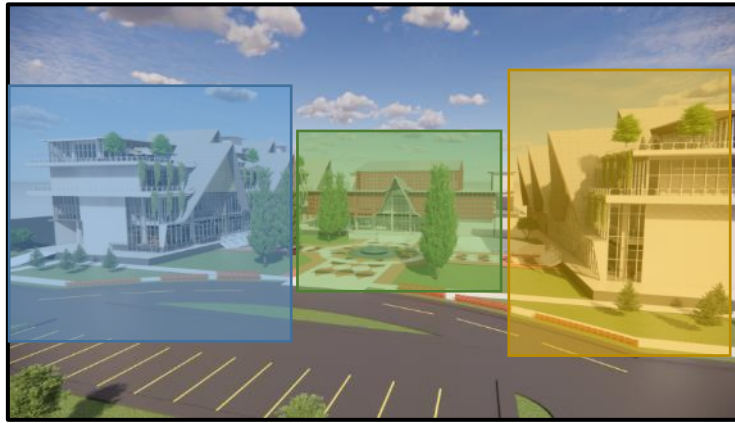
Based on figure 7 Sun analysis, and wind analysis we can gather that the wind blows from southwest to northeast and the sun from the east to the west that resulted certain times where the area is way hotter than other. Incorporating sun and wind analysis on early stage of design is crucial for achieving the best comfort and efficiency for the visitors [15]. Especially for a tropical country where it is hotter than other weather. However this can be used as an advantage for the building lighting. To overcome the pros and cons of the analysis, the design will be considered back and forth carefully to the best outcome possible.



**Figure 7.** (a) Sun Analysis, (b) Wind Analysis, (c) Noise Analysis

### 3.3 Mass Concept

Based on the picture of figure 8, the building mass is divided into 3 area. Blue area is studio building for singing, dancing, theater and other activities provided by the cultural center. Green area is for Convention hall, this hall can be used as a place for showcase, concert, theater play and so on. While the Yellow area is for the exhibition hall. Temporary and permanent exhibition will be held in this area. The reason why these three function has different building mass is: 1) The building has different privacy policy. 2) As the result of site analysis. 3) The buildings will have a better access for pedestrian and vehicle users.

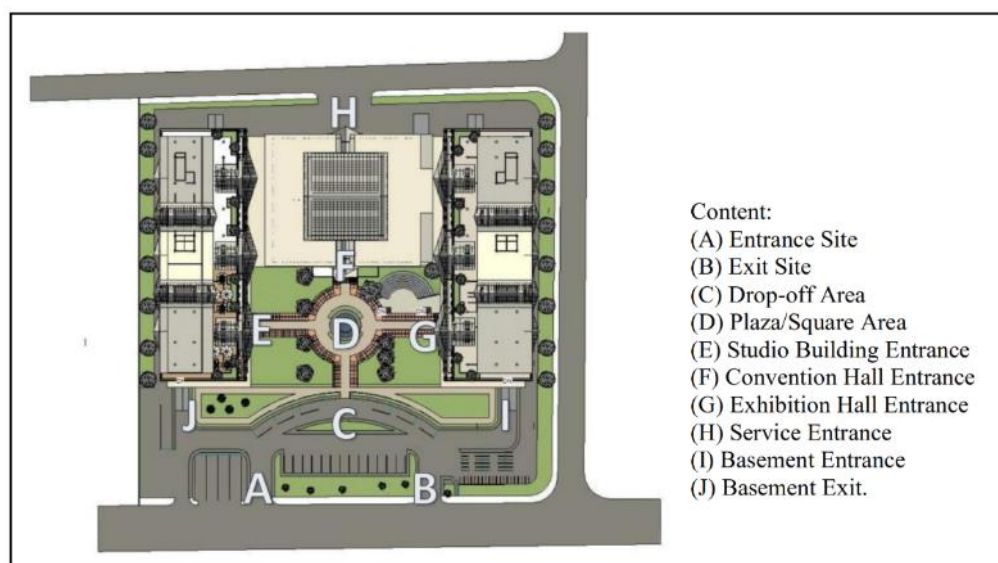


**Figure 8.** 3D Modelling and the building area.

### 3.4 Outdoor Concept

Having three different masses for the design, it comes with an obstacle to connect these three buildings for the visitors. However, by using a square where three different buildings can be connected in one landscape design makes a big difference. Public squares are open spaces that surrounded by the buildings and other structures in the city [16] and using the concept of open spaces that connecting between buildings but in a smaller and private size we can incorporate public square design as a plaza design for center meeting point of the buildings. Based on Figure 9 at C, that is the drop-off place for vehicles and entrance for pedestrians as well and moving to D is where the plaza at, designed with a fountain indicates that is the center of the area. The entrance for Studio building is at E, Convention hall at F and for the Exhibition hall at G.

For the vehicles circulation this establishment provide circulations for cars, buses and motorcycle as well as the parking space. There are some parking space at the outdoor area but there are also 2 story basement parking to provide all users in the buildings. Based on figure 9, we can see at A that is where the vehicles can enter the area and C for dropping off passengers/visitors, and B for the exit. However when drivers decide to go parking at the basement area they can go right to area pointed I and J for basement exit. Besides entrance for the visitors this area will also provide entrance for services as example for deliveries or other stuff relating to the building's equipment at the back of the building noted as H. In this way the visitors wont be seeing big trucks carrying stuff inside the building,

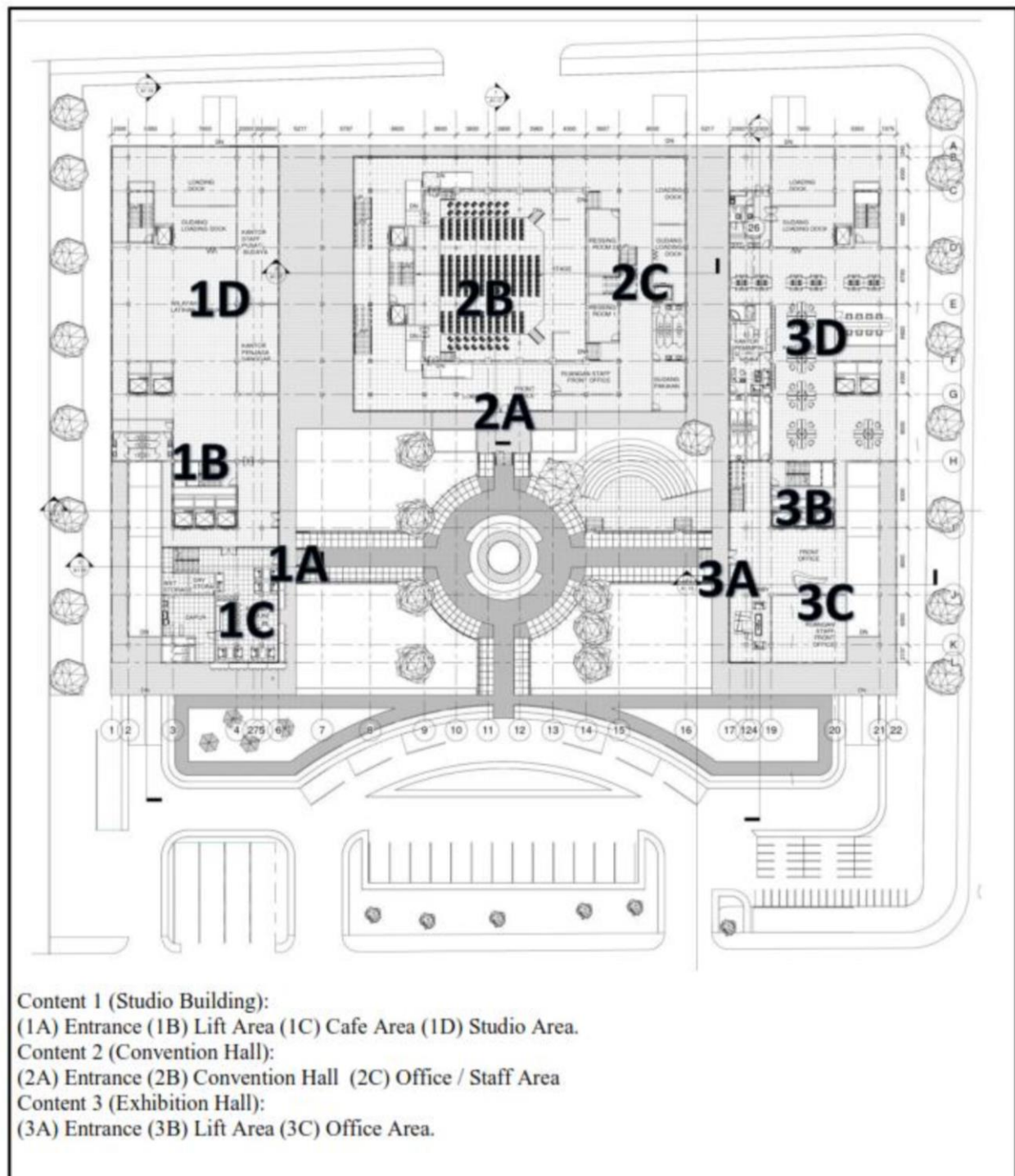


**Figure 9.** Outdoor Zoning Concept

### 3.5 Indoor Concept

Buildings with different masses and function will have it easier to design the indoor zoning since each building will have different privacy and public rules. The Studio Building, Convention Hall and Exhibition Hall can have their own set of rules within private and public area.

For the Studio building, only students, artists and studio users that can access the studio area as seen on Figure 10 marked 1D. While public visitors can visit the cafe and food hall area at 1C. having a clear division between public and private area between the buildings can provide comfort for both visitors and studio users. Studios that are provided are 1) Music Studio 2) Dance Studio 3) Art Studio which both studios and cafe designs can be seen on figure 11.



**Figure 10.** Groundplan.





**Figure 11.** (a) Music Studio (b) Dance Studio (c) Art Studio (c) Cafe Area.

Based on Figure 10, Convention Hall have much more public area setting where Exhibition Hall is at 2B and separated from the more private area at 2C that includes backstage room and office. For the exhibition area, exhibition hall is on 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> floor so area 3C is the lobby area / waiting room and you can go to 3B to reach the exhibition hall floor, however staff and office users can reach the office at 3D from another entrance. This can ensure privacy and division between public and private area. The interior design examples can be seen at figure 12.



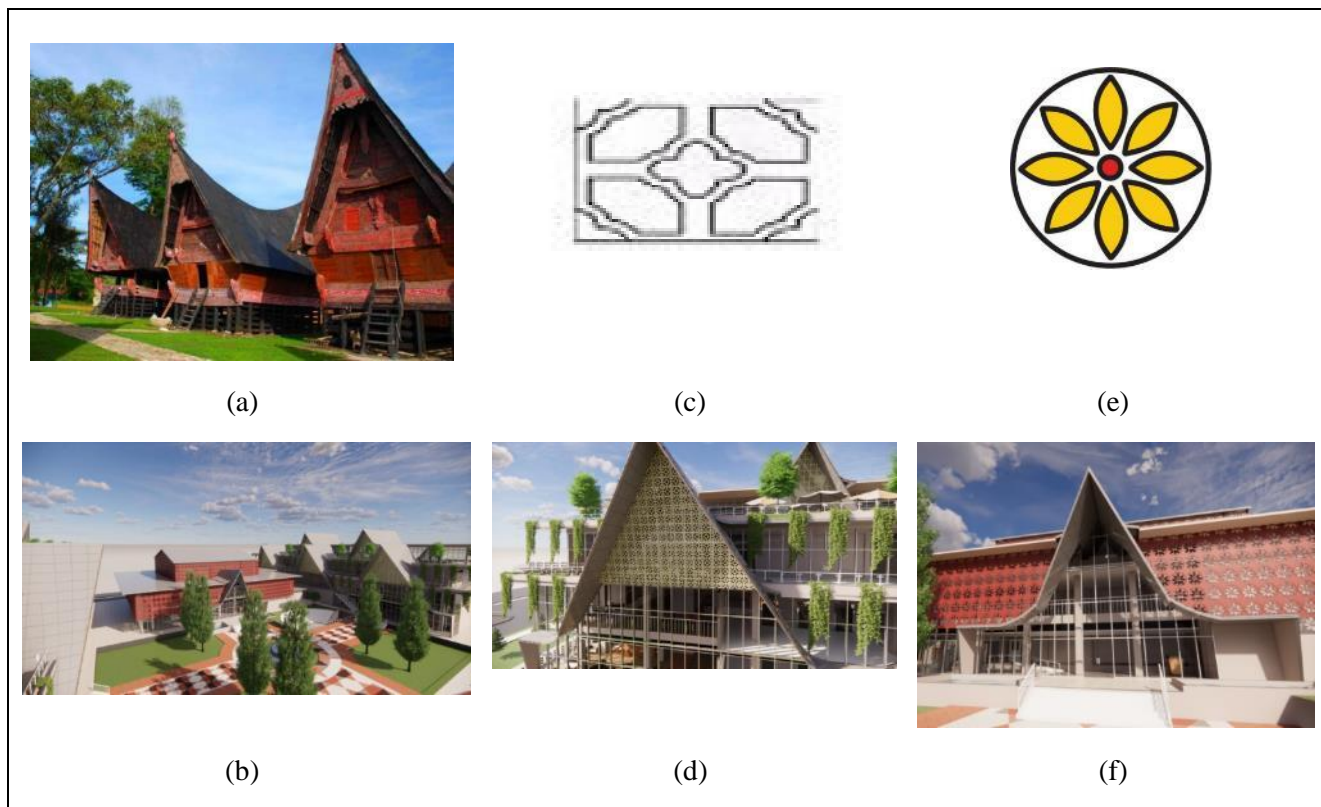
**Figure 12.** (a) Convention Hall (b) Exhibition Hall (c) Office.

### 3.6 Neo Vernacular Application

Neo Vernacular approach that is used for the building design are the shape of the roof and double facade as the ornaments.

Based on figure 13 picture (a) and (b), Building's roof shape is inspired by Batakese traditional house, Bolon House. The shape of the roof become an inspiration for the design. While for picture (c) and (d) the ornament for building's facade took the pattern of Bungo Cino, one of Melayu's pattern. And for picture (e) and (f) Convention Hall's facade took the pattern of NI'OGOLILIMO which is the pattern of Nias' people

that represents a fruit that sliced by half which symbolize harmony. All three native ethnic group becomes the main inspiration for the Vernacular design, that is 1) Batak 2) Melayu 3) Nias.



**Figure 13.** (a) Bolon House [17] (b) Building's Shape inspired by Bolon's House Roof (c) Bungo Cino Pattern (d) Facade Ornaments Inspired by Bungo Cino Pattern (e) NI'OGOLILIMO Pattern (f) Facade Ornaments Inspired by NI'OGOLILIMO Pattern.

#### 4. Conclusion

This Cultural Centre of North Sumatera's design with the approach of Neo Vernacular Design derived from the lack of a suitable facility for the locals to participate in art and culture-based activities. This should be a concern by the government since North Sumatera is a Multicultural Province that must maintain and continue the practice.

The Neo Vernacular approach shows that even though North Sumatera is already in the Modern Era, applying some cultural context or element will bring character to the Building. Besides meeting the needs for people to have a proper facility to do art and cultural activities, in this case for art shows, exhibitions, and art studios, the Building needs its character to gain people's attention and attract visitors to participate in art and culture activities. Therefore, it is hoped that this Cultural Centre will become a center for locals or tourists to do activities related to art and culture that might positively impact new young artists of the future.

#### 5. Acknowledgment

The Authors would like to thank Taman Budaya Sumatera Utara's staff that was willing to provide some interviews and granting permission for data survey on Taman Budaya Sumatera Utara.

#### 6. Conflict of Interest

The authors whose name are listed below certify that the manuscript do not have conflict of interest.

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