



# PORTFOLIO

Spatial Narratives from Local Roots to Global Reach

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GSAPP, Columbia University



# CONTENTS

## Spatial Narratives from Local Roots to Global Reach

### Architectures

1.

Memory Scape

Design Studio: The City Island, Speculative Islands of the City

Design | AAD Studio | David Eugin Moon

P.1 - P.7
2.

From Garden to Table

Research of Children’s Spaces and Section-Perspective Drawing

Design | Design Spaces for Children | Ralph Bagley and James von Klemperer

P.8
3.

Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture

Final Case Study and Analysis of Transscalarities

Essay | Transscalarities | Andres Jaque Ovejero and Malcolm John Rio

P.9
4.

Gansevoort Square Mixed

Income Housing Proposal

Real Estate Proposal | International Design and Development | Ralph Bagley and James von Klemperer

P.10 - P.11

### Territories

5.

From Monument to Mediator: Rethinking Tracey Towers

Design Studio: Layered Urbanism

Design | Studio VI | Galia Solomonoff

P.12 - P.18
6.

Vällingby

Symbol of Swedish Prosperity

Essay | New Towns to Smart Cities| David Smiley

P.19 - P.24
7.

Between Construction and Collapse

Unfinished Public Architecture as a Site of Urban Memory in Lebanon

Essay | The Arab City | Amale Andraos

P.25 - P.28

### Systems

8.

Ice, Sea, Salt

Design Studio: Melting Archive

Design | Studio V | Leslie Gill and Khoi Nguyen

P.29 - P.35
9.

Rethinking Architectural Behaviorology

Balancing Tradition and Innovation in a Changing Society

Essay | Arguments | Oscar Oliver-Didier and Guest Speakers

P.36 - P.37
10.

Reflection

Research and Artwork Inspired by Lina Bo Bardi

Artwork | Architecture Apropos Art | Steven Holl and Dimitra Tsachrelia

P.38 - P.39
11.

APPENDIX

Kinne Week Trip

Photography

P.40



# 1.

## Memory Scape

Alzheimer Caring Space with  
Community Leisure Center for Students

**Completed,** 06/2024 - 08/2024

**Instructor:** David Eugene Moon, Principal, NHDM

**Working Type:** Academic Design Project,  
Advanced Architecture Tutorial

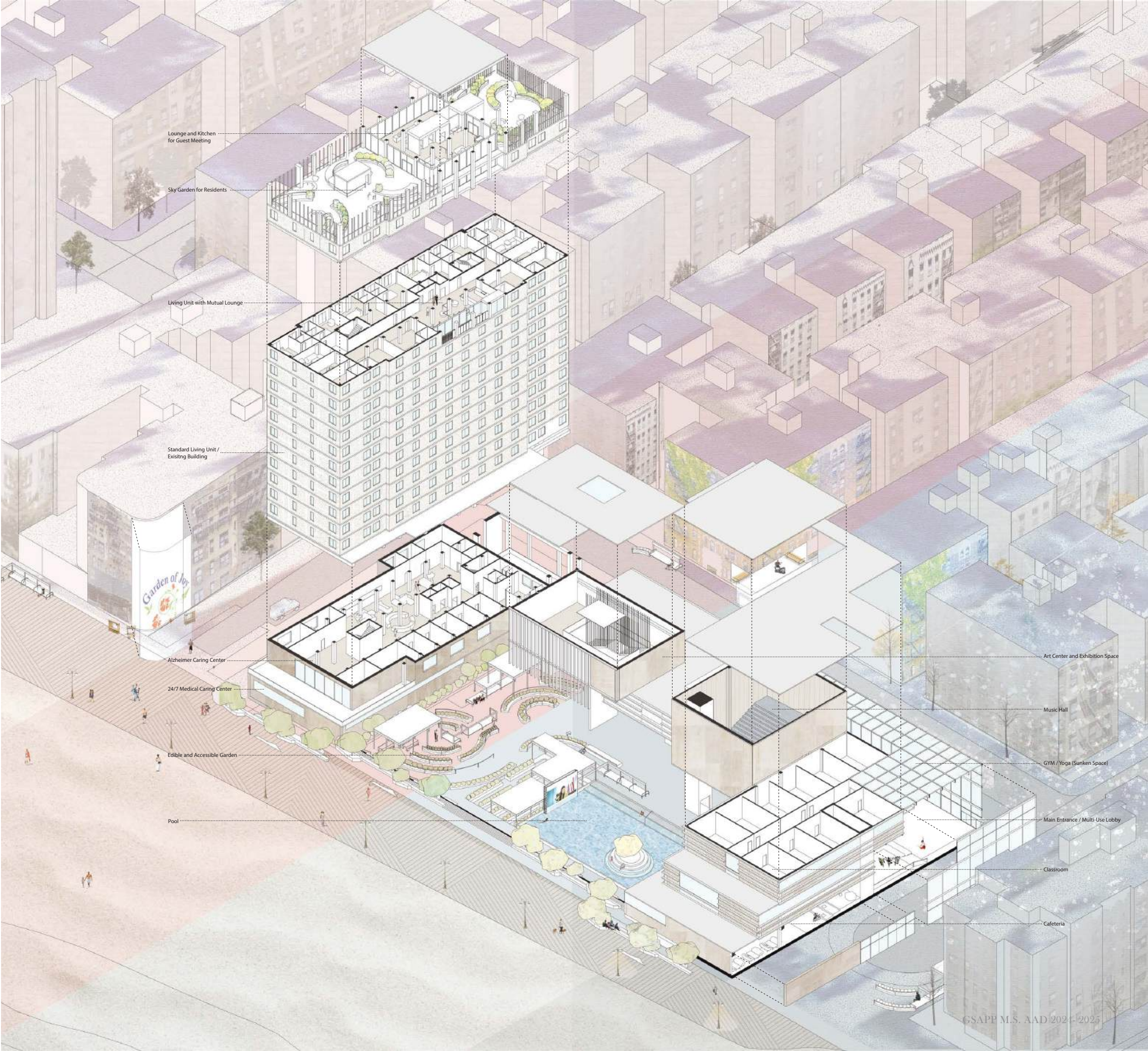
**Collaborator:** Ka Heun Hyun (MSAAD)

### Introduction

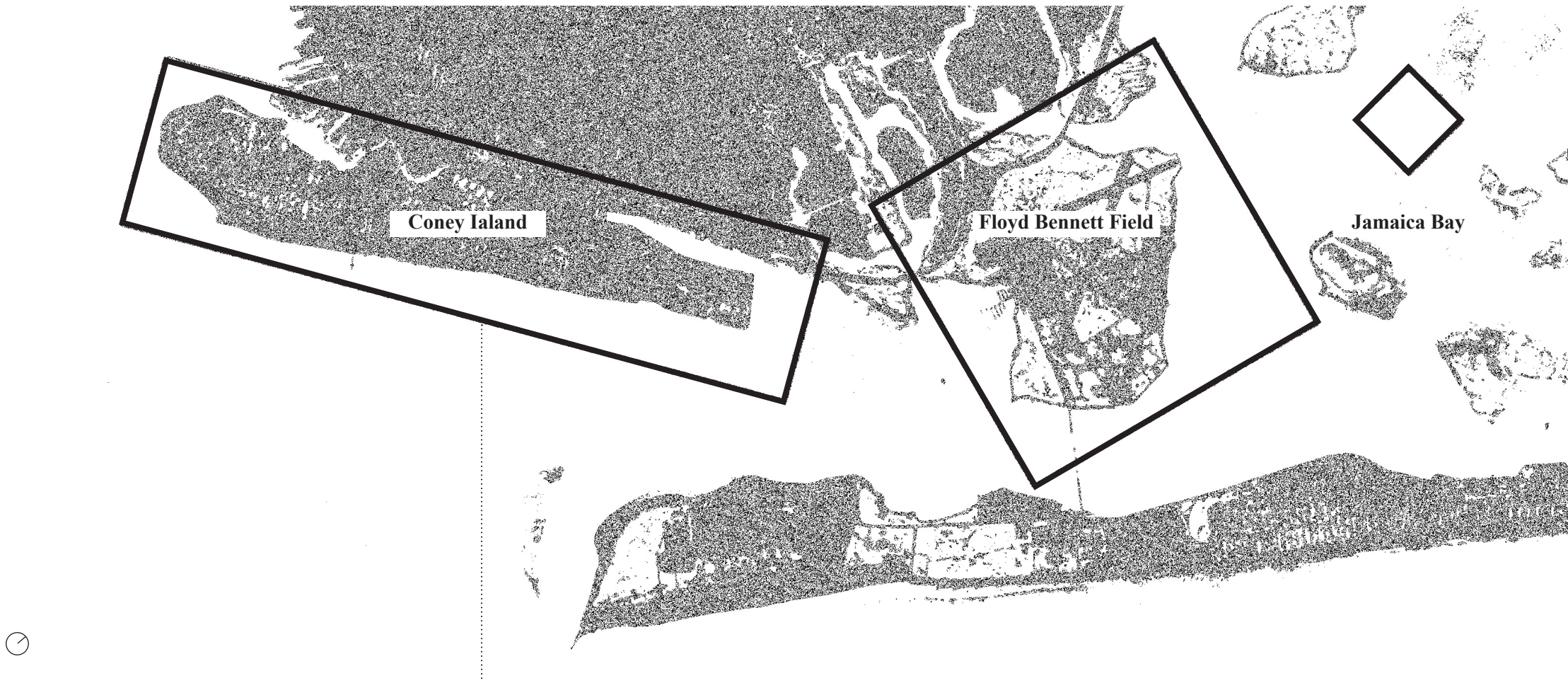
Our design integrates existing facilities with new programs to create a vibrant, inclusive environment that caters to the needs of an aging society while fostering community connections. We explore the challenges of transitioning from familiar living spaces to care centers, emphasizing the impact on patients’ memories and identities.

### Programs and Analysis

The design incorporates spaces that stimulate and engage Alzheimer’s patients, transforming the physical environment into one that promotes well-being and social integration. Additionally, we address educational inequality by providing spaces that support diverse learning opportunities. By introducing multi-generational programs, including art therapy, physical care, and educational activities, we aim to bridge the gap between different age groups, encouraging interaction and mutual support.





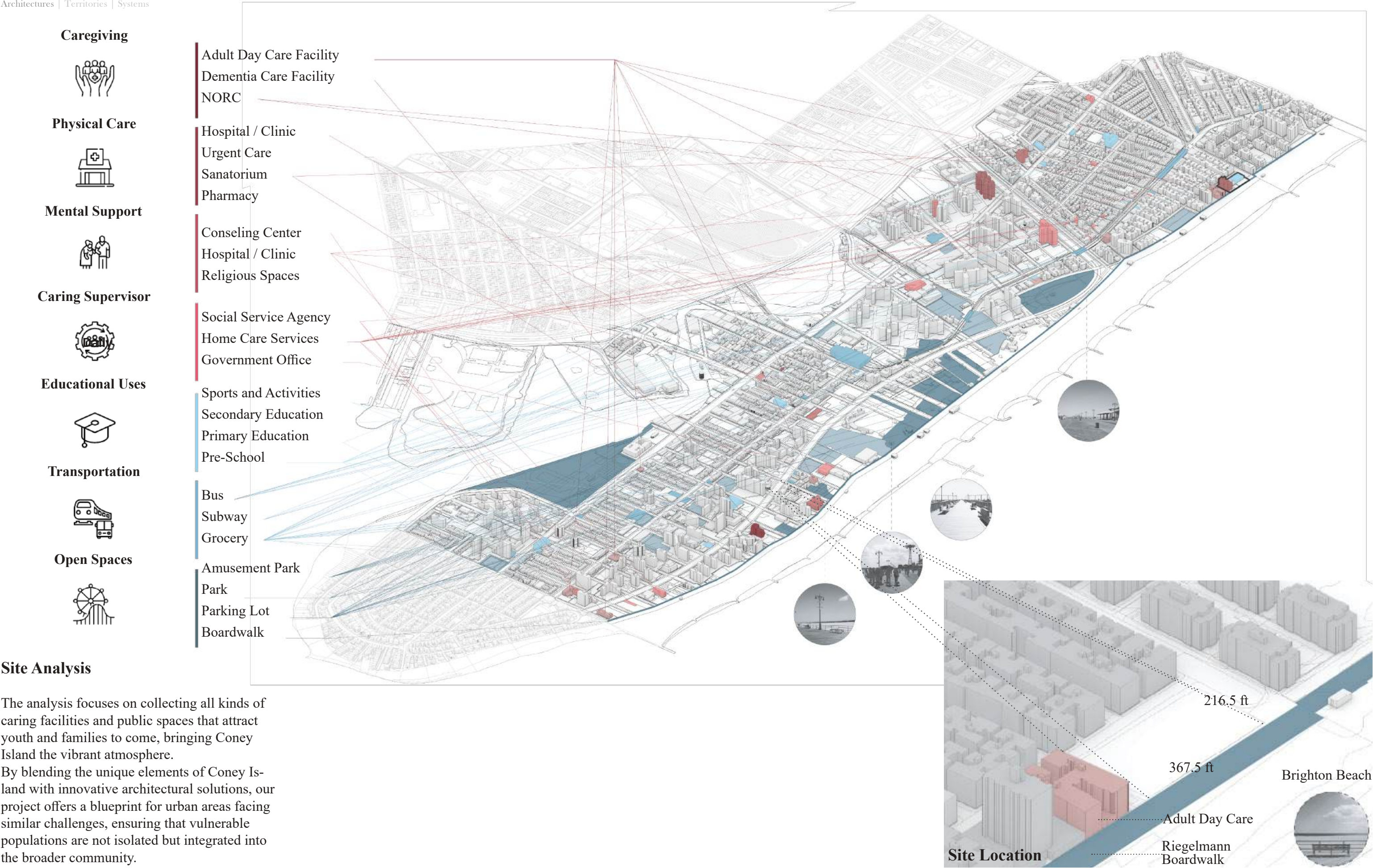


Site Visiting

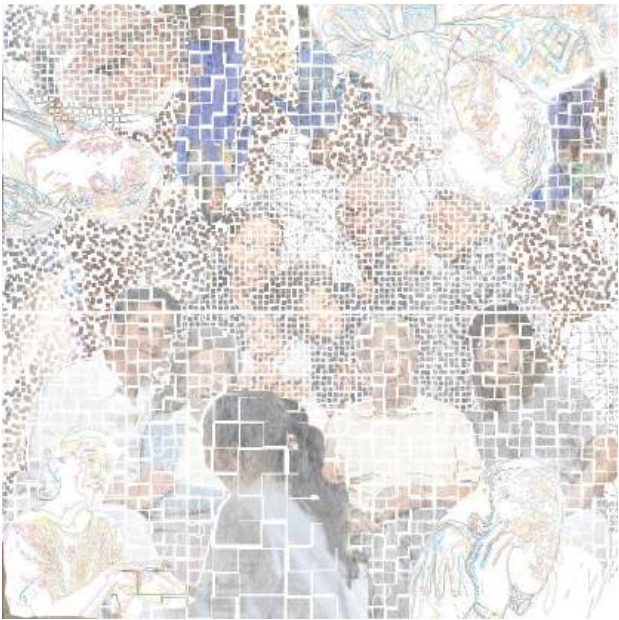
Among the three islands available for selection, we chose Coney Island for its striking contrasts—between silence and noise, the new and the old—as well as its significantly larger population base compared to the other two options, Floyd Bennett Field and Jamaica Bay.





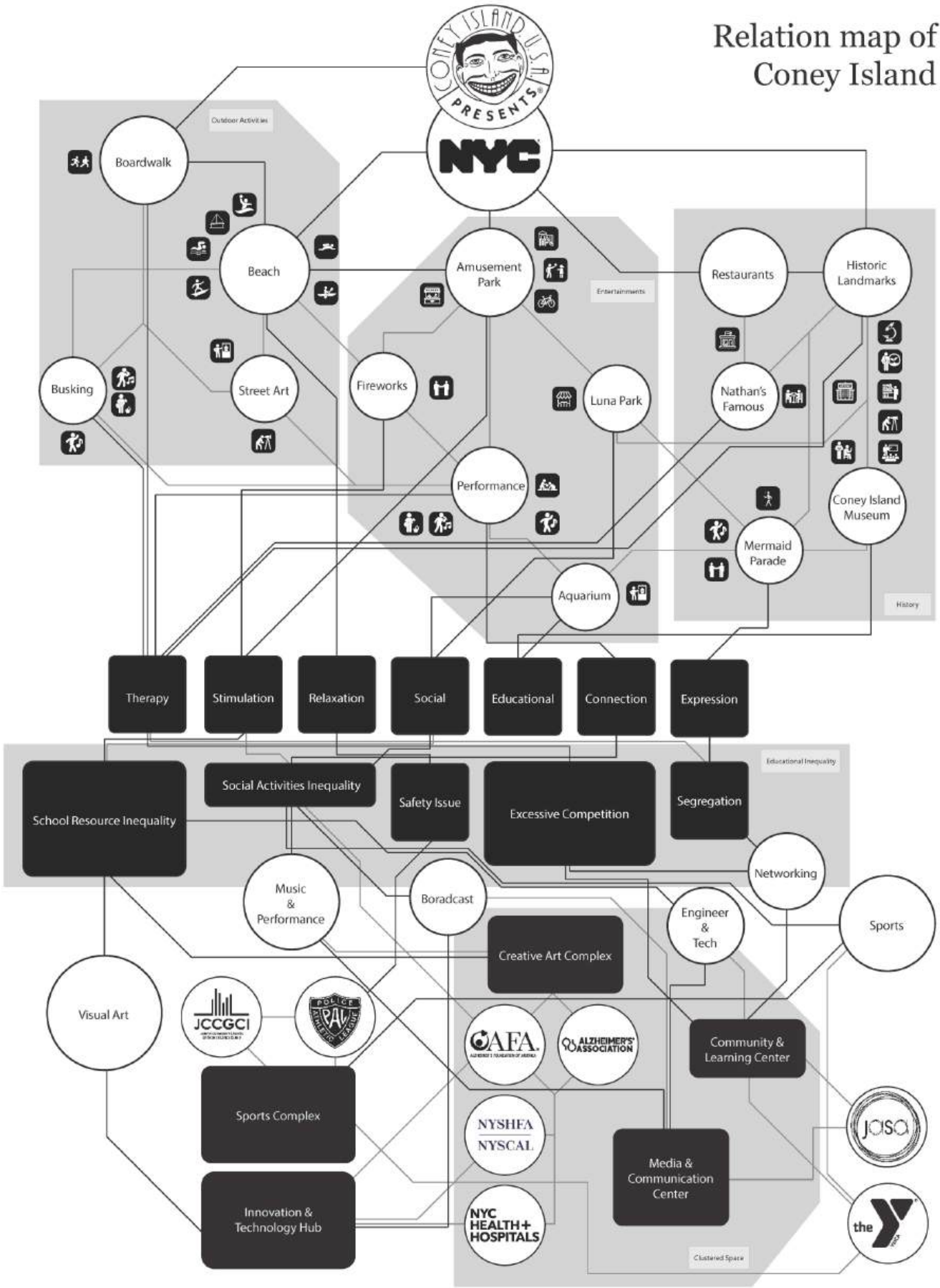




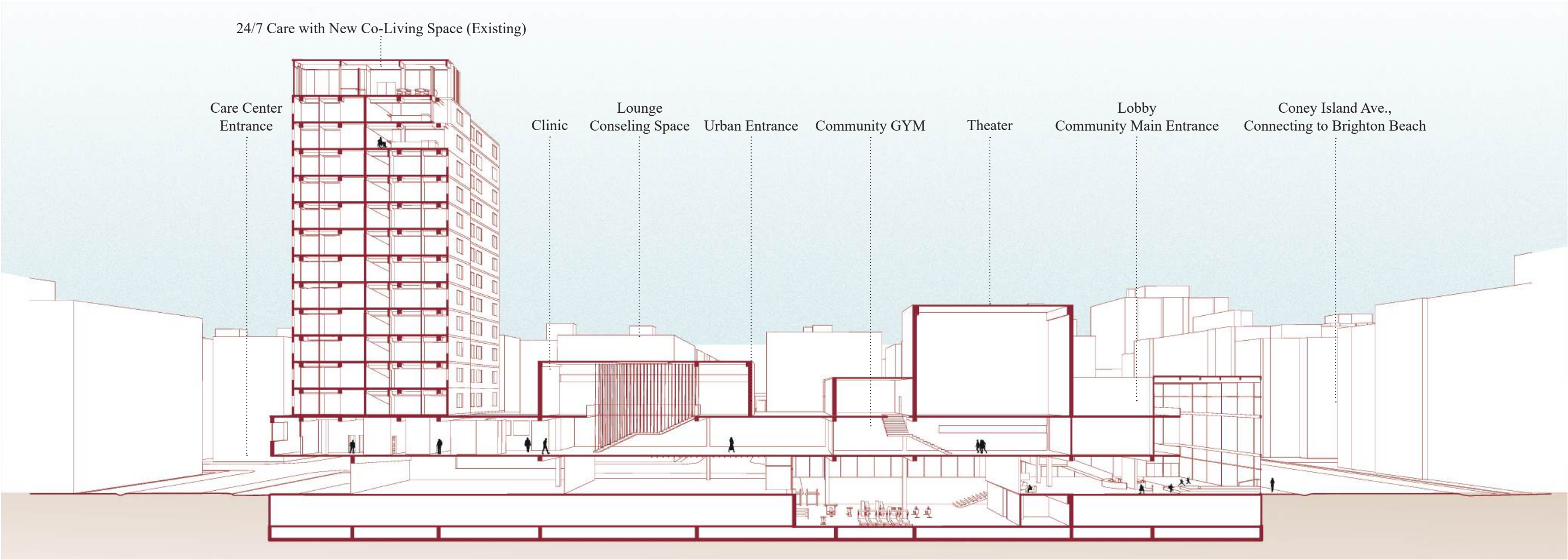


Program and Relationship Analysis

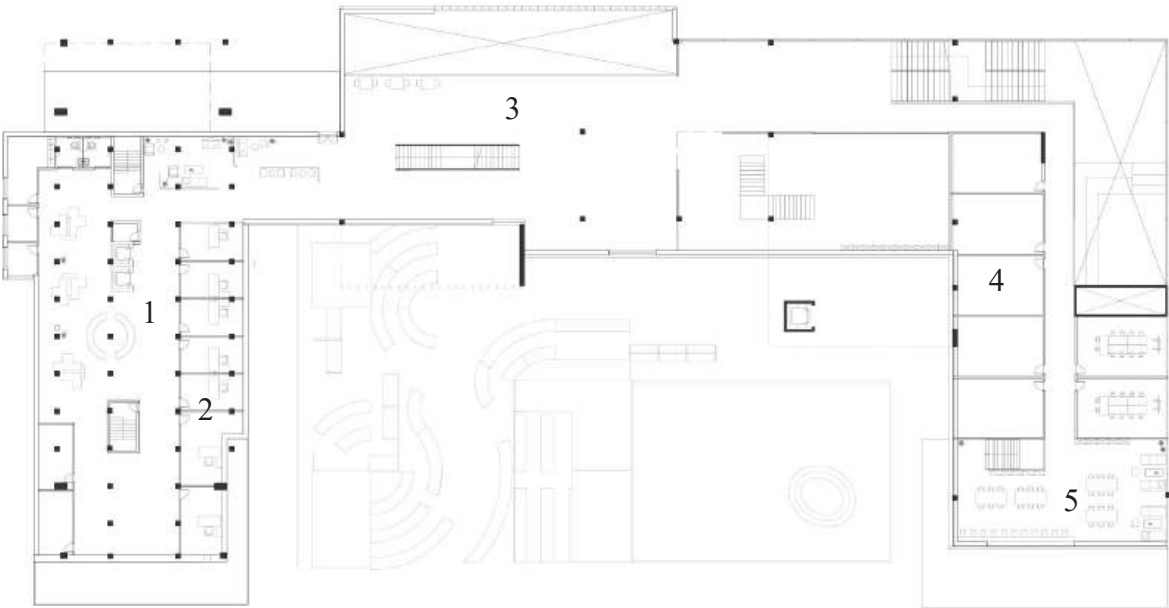
In addition to gathering various care facilities, we focused heavily on organizing their spatial relationships. Ultimately, we integrated our design with the existing government-supported senior care initiative—Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORC). By blending care spaces with areas for student activities, our approach fosters intergenerational interaction, allowing different groups to meet, energize one another, and contribute to a vibrant, inclusive environment—one that builds a truly friendly community, not a “jail” for the elderly.





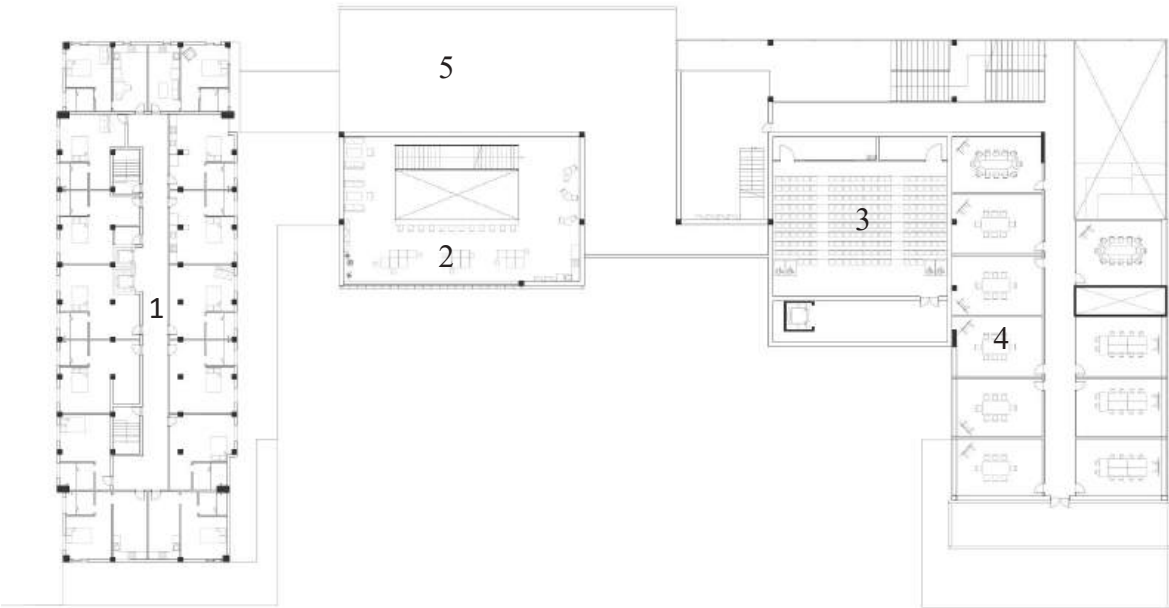


South Section



2F Plan

- 1. Reception and Lounge
- 2. Consultation room
- 3. Lounge
- 4. Classroom
- 5. Cafe



3F Plan

- 1. Senior Living Unit
- 2. Lounge
- 3. Auditorium
- 4. Classroom
- 5. Balcony



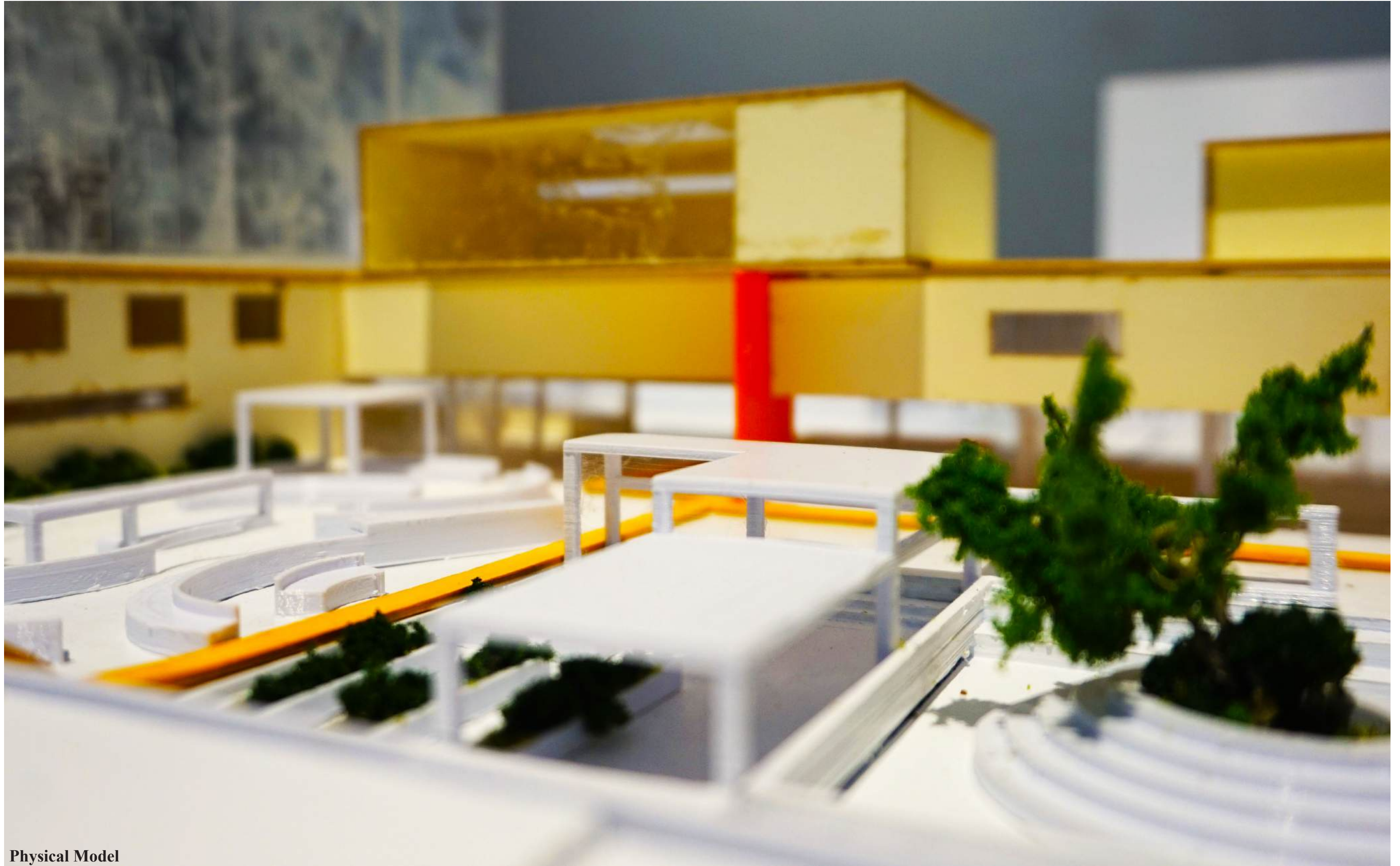
**Lobby for Students  
and Neighborhood Engagement**



**Renovated Rooftop  
of Adjacent Senior Housing**







**Physical Model**



## 2. From Garden to Table

Research of Children's Spaces and  
Section-Perspective Drawing

**Completed,** 02/2025 - 04/2025

**Instructor:** Anna Knoell, Senior Associate, LTL

**Working Type:** Academic Design Project,  
Spring Semester Elective

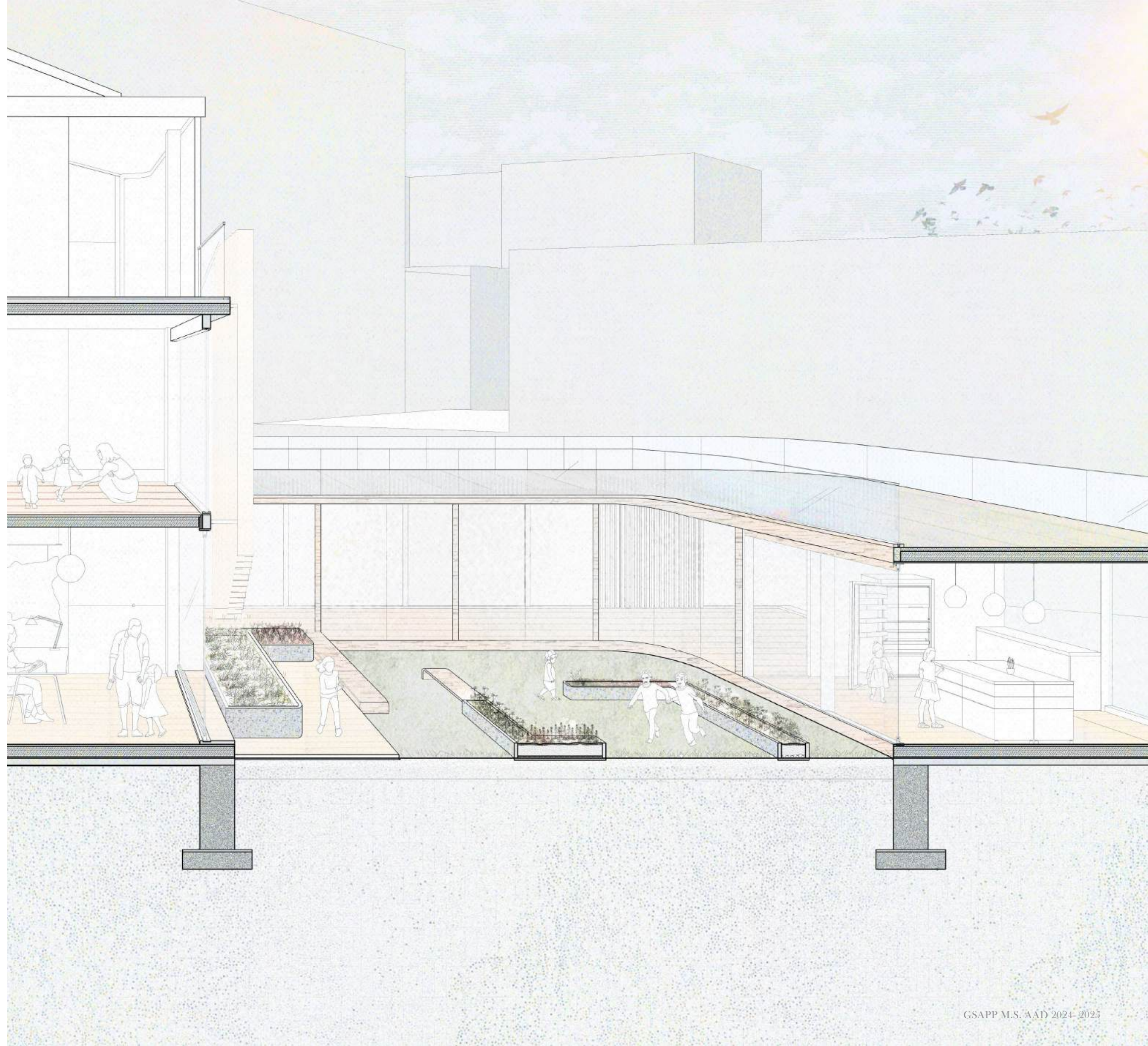
**Collaborator:** Yung-Ju (Lulu) Chung (MSAAD)

### Introduction

This course explores how material choices shape the environments where children learn and grow—from childcare facilities and play-grounds to public spaces within the city. A key question we addressed was how healthier, more sustainable materials can influence a child's spatial experience, as well as their cognitive and physical development.

For our final section drawing, we focused on the theme "From Farm to Cook," emphasizing the importance of teaching children not only how to eat but also where their food comes from. We believe this process nurtures a wide range of developmental values—such as re-sponsibility, collaboration, appreciation of resources, and respect for life.

In terms of material strategy, we selected a CLT (Cross-Laminated Timber) structure combined with select concrete elements to meet both the structural and programmatic needs of the design, while maintaining a warm, healthy, and durable environment for children.





# 3.

## Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture

Final Case Study and Analysis of Transscalarities

**Completed,** 06/2024 - 08/2024

**Instructor:** Andres Jaque and Malcolm John Rio  
**Working Type:** Academic Writing Project,  
Summer Workshop & Assembly

### Abstract

This essay examines how the National Museum of African American History and Culture embodies cultural values through design. Its Yoruban-inspired facade blends sustainability with heritage, while its prominent location on the National Mall invites reflection on national memory and representation. Though its modern form contrasts with surrounding classical monuments, the museum asserts a powerful cultural presence. The essay argues that meaningful architecture must reflect diverse narratives and navigate tensions between tradition, innovation, and inclusivity in shaping both buildings and broader urban contexts.



Museums play a vital role in embodying and communicating values, whether they focus on broad themes like modern art, as seen at MoMA, or more specific topics such as regional culture, history, or design, exemplified by the Jewish Museum Berlin and the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum. These institutions highlight important issues, standing out among other architectural forms. In today’s era, where diverse groups advocate for their interests, museums must reflect a plurality of perspectives rather than a singular narrative, with every material and architectural element carrying meaningful significance.

To begin with, the facade of the National Museum of African American History and Culture exemplifies a balance between sustainability and cultural preservation, blending passive design architecture with a strong sense of heritage. The unique “corona” shape of the facade, inspired by Yoruban art from West Africa, symbolizes the broader narrative that “all Americans’ stories, histories, and cultures are shaped by global influences.” According to David Adjaye, one of the main architects behind the museum’s design, this choice respects African culture while incorporating natural ventilation and daylighting. The facade’s layered structure creates shaded outdoor spaces, reducing heat gain and enhancing visitor comfort. While sustainability and memorial design are often discussed separately, this project successfully integrates them, adding depth and complexity to the architecture.

Secondly, the museum’s location a subject of debate. This historically significant site, representing U.S. values, houses several iconic memorials, including the Vietnam War Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Washington Monument. The presence of the African American History and Culture Museum here prompts visitors to reflect on what values and memories should be preserved in a place marked by trauma. The facade’s design, particularly the corona shape, also sparks discussion. Supporters argue that this bold architectural statement symbolizes the resilience, creativity, and cultural significance of African Americans. However, the term “African culture” is broad, encompassing various countries, cultures, and historical periods, such as Slavery, Reconstruction, and the Harlem Renaissance. This diversity can lead to differing narrative perspectives when a-

ddressing the topic of “African American Culture.” A parallel issue can be seen in Taiwan, where the question of who best represents indigenous people remains contentious. Thus, selecting a specific design to represent a broad culture is inherently controversial.

Furthermore, critics of the museum’s design argue that its modern aesthetic clashes with the classical architecture of other monuments on the National Mall, such as the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument. They believe the museum should conform to the existing architectural language to maintain visual harmony. However, the museum’s bronze-toned color and thoughtful integration into the National Mall context, particularly at a site where Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech, make a powerful statement. Rather than blending into the cityscape, the museum’s design asserts its values. By innovatively using traditional elements, the museum bridges the past, present, and future, harmonizing historical significance with contemporary society.

In conclusion, perspectives on architecture vary across different scales, and each material holds meaning. The challenges across these scales are worth discussing, as architects must navigate different ideas and clients. Only with a sense of organization in design can we truly care not only for the main users but also for the entire cityscape.



# 4.

## Gansevoort Square Mixed

Income Housing Proposal

**Completed,** 02/2025 - 03/2025

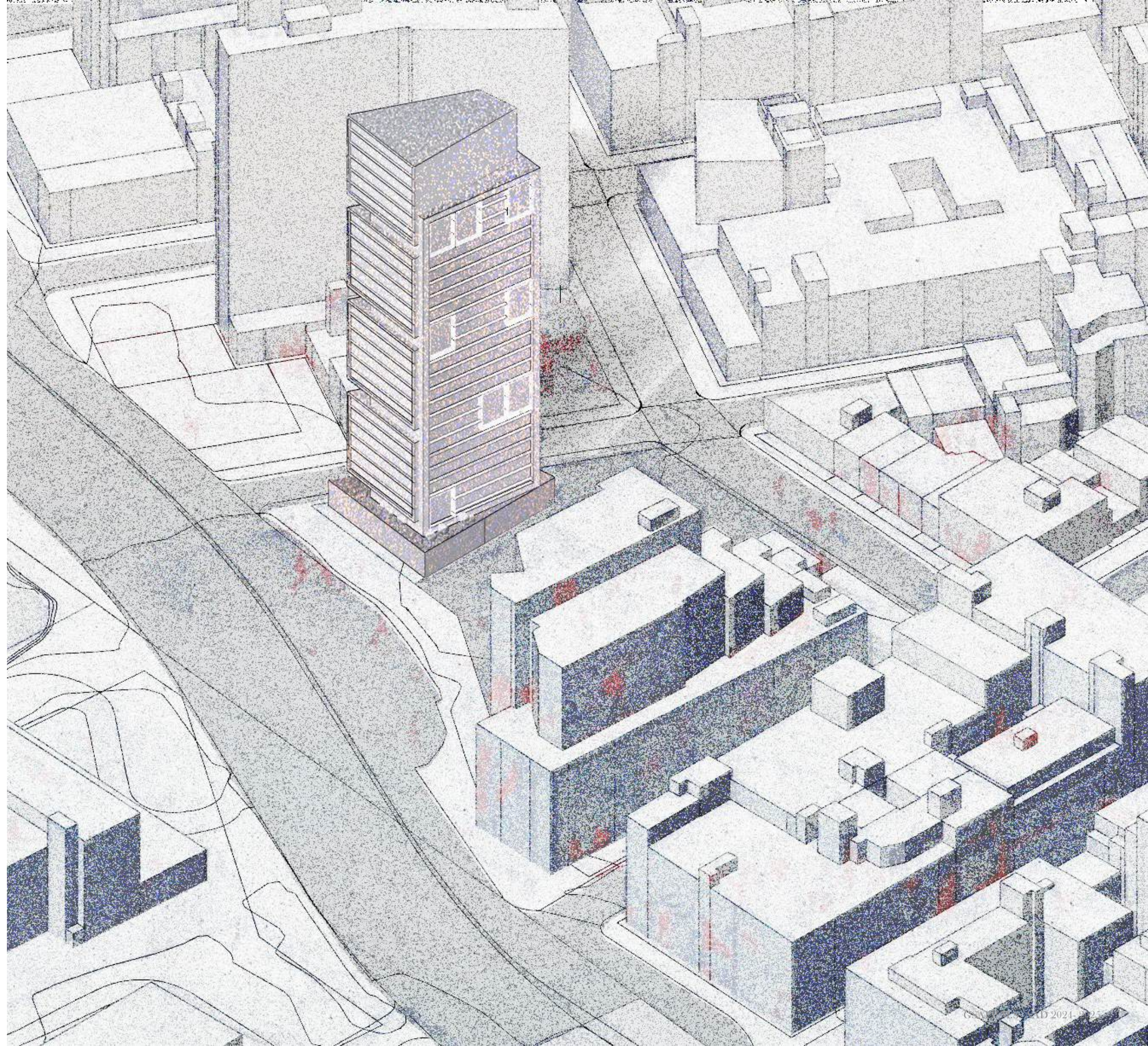
**Instructor:** Ralph Bagley and James von Klemperer, KPF

**Working Type:** Academic Design Project,  
Spring Semester Elective

**Collaborator:** Junze Xu (MSRED), Jia Liu (MSRED)

### Introduction

This development establishes a sustainable, inclusive, and economically viable urban hub in one of New York City’s most dynamic cultural districts, adjacent to the Whitney Museum and the High Line. The 18-story, 185-foot-tall building offers 164 residential units—50% of which are designated as affordable housing—promoting economic diversity and long-term community inclusion. Spanning 100,000 square feet, the project includes 93,500 square feet of residential space and 6,500 square feet of commercial area, fostering a vibrant street-level experience and local retail engagement. The design prioritizes walkability, connectivity, and cultural integration, enhancing access to nearby public spaces and arts institutions. Sustainable strategies are embedded throughout the development, supporting a resilient future and reinforcing the project’s role as a responsible urban model. By thoughtfully integrating housing, retail, and public life, the project aims to strengthen the neighborhood’s social fabric and contribute positively to the evolving character of Manhattan’s West Side.





Strategy

This mixed-use residential building responds to New York’s urban fabric through thoughtful massing and climate-aware design. A subtractive design approach sculpts the volume to optimize light, air, and spatial quality while enhancing the pedestrian experience.

- **Façade Design:** Recessed windows reduce solar gain and respond to strong coastal winds, while ensuring ample daylight.

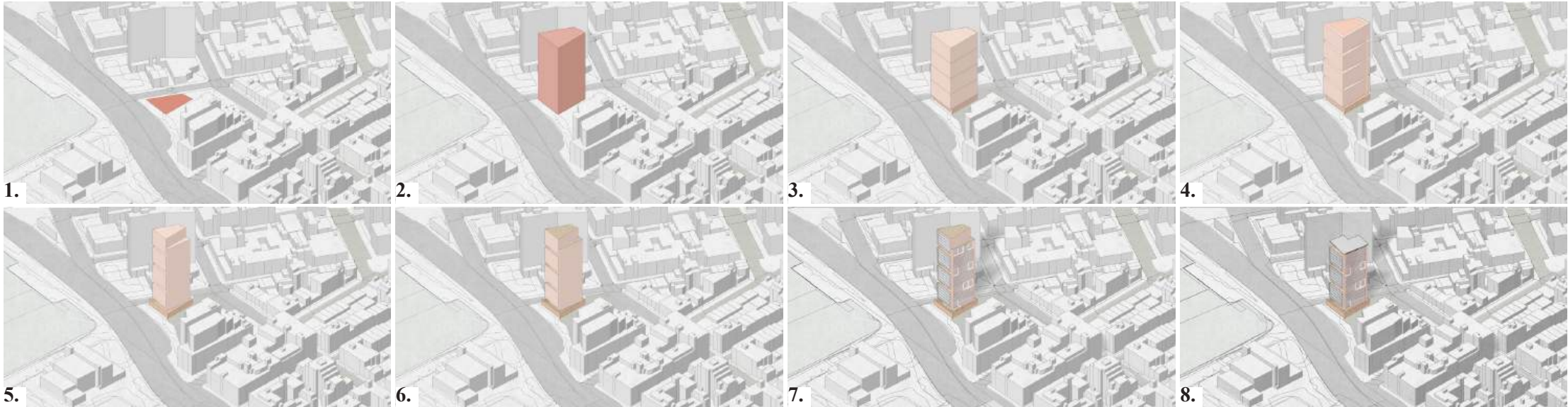
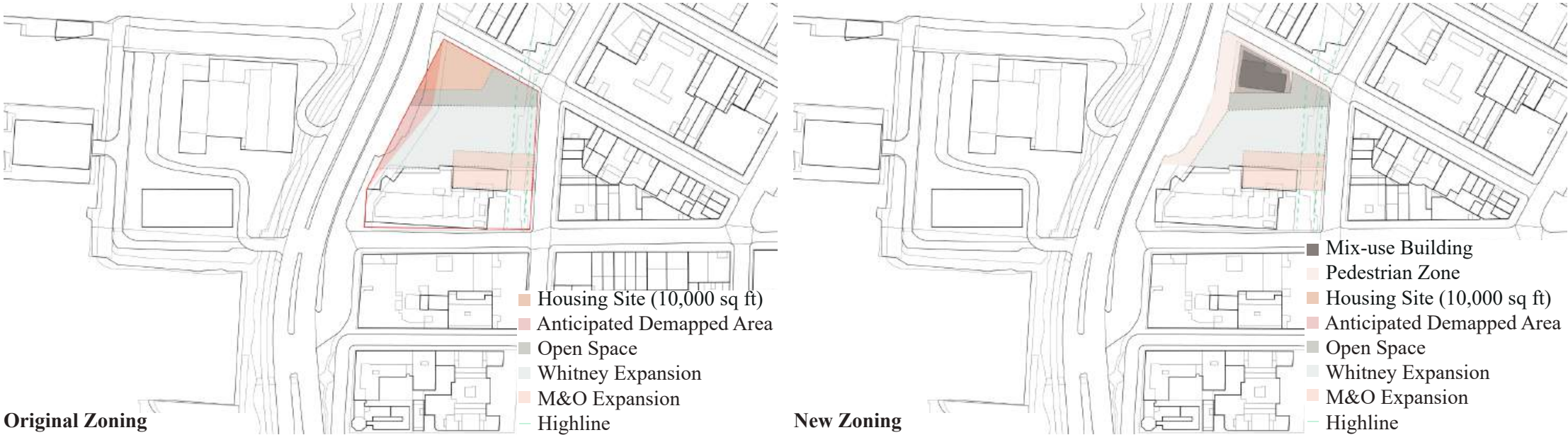
- **Balconies:** Three communal balconies are carved into the volume to improve livability and encourage social interaction.

- **Massing Strategy:** Starting from a full block volume, the building is shaped through twisting, shrinking, and subtracting to integrate with its surroundings.

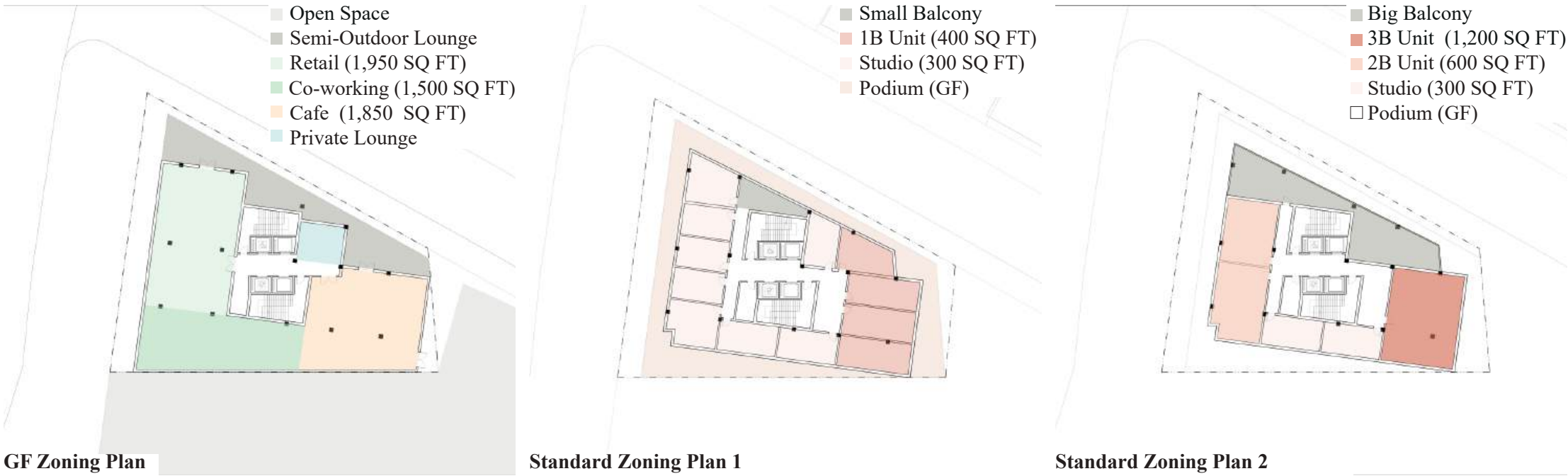
- **Green Integration:** Strategic openings introduce greenery and material contrast for environmental and visual relief.

- **FAR Consideration:** Floor count is optimized to maintain FAR = 10, balancing density with livability.

- **Site Plan Redesign:** The demapped area is transformed into a pedestrian-friendly zone with expanded streetscape, weekend market potential, and flexible public space.



Massing Development





# 5.

## From Monument to Mediator

Rethinking Tracey Towers

**Completed,** 02/2025 - 05/2025

**Instructor:** Galia Solomonoff, Principal, SAS

**Working Type:** Academic Design Project,  
Studio VI, Layered Urbanism

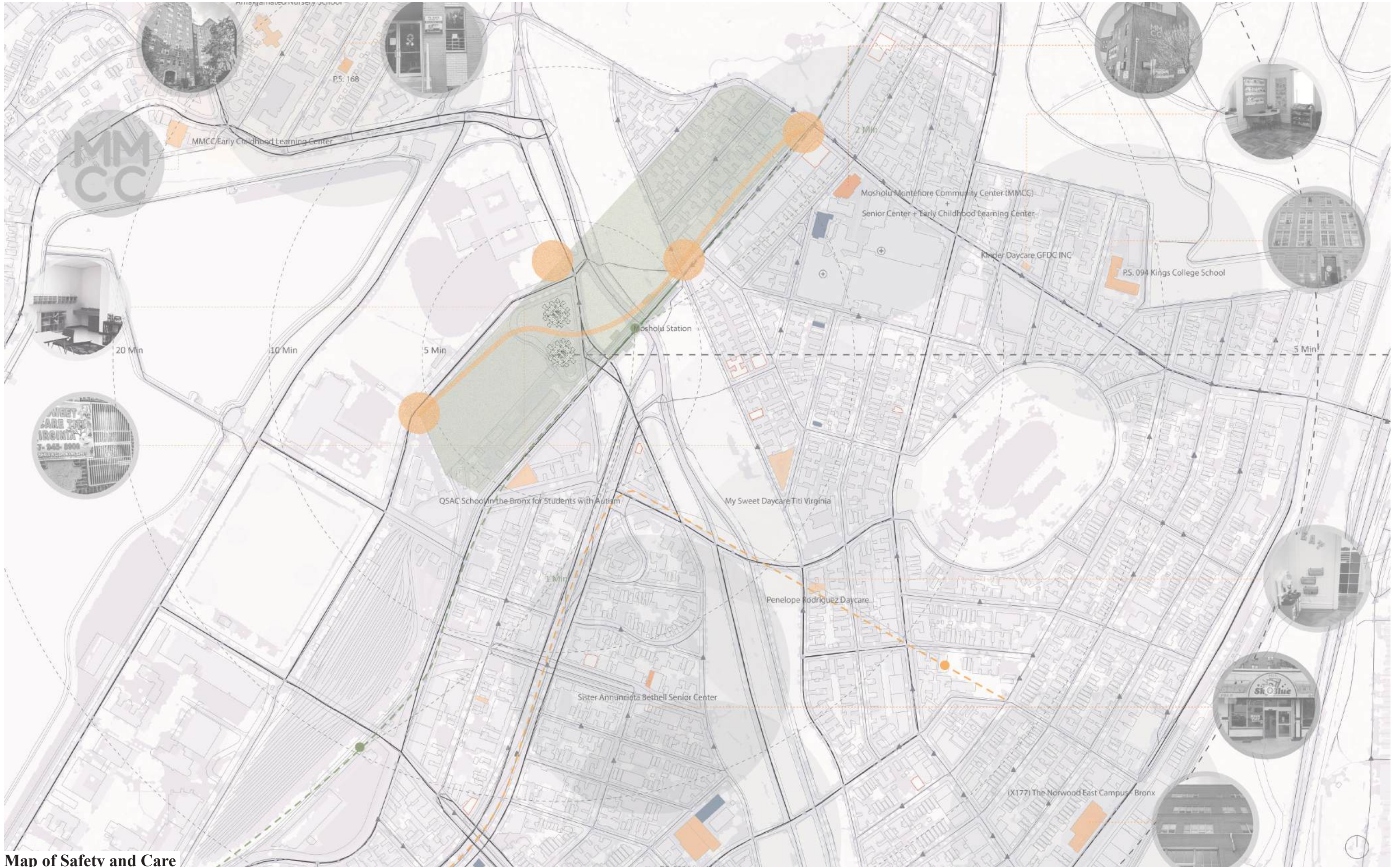
**Collaborator:** Yoon Hae Choi (MSAAD)

### Introduction

This project reimagines the Tracey Towers site in the Bronx—originally designed by Paul Rudolph under the Mitchell-Lama Program—as a layered, community-oriented infrastructure. Respecting the historical and architectural significance of the towers, many existing elements are preserved, while new interventions prioritize safety, accessibility, and engagement across generations. Through a series of spatial strategies—including a Community Wellness Park, Integrated Transportation Hub, and Roof-top Revitalization—the design transforms the elongated site into a vibrant urban sequence. By integrating daycares, senior living, public plazas, and recreational zones, the project fosters everyday interactions and highlights the importance of designing for life’s transitional moments.

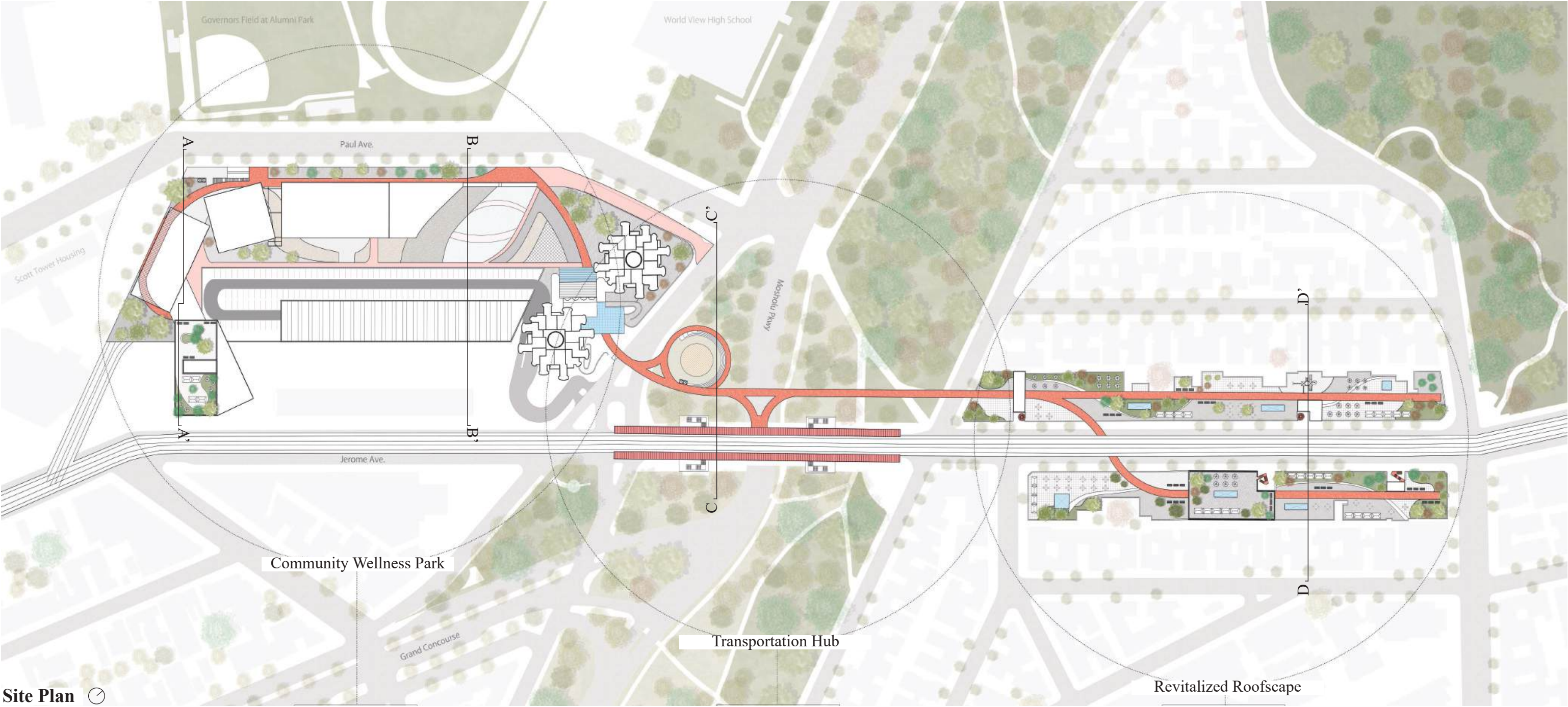






## Map of Safety and Care



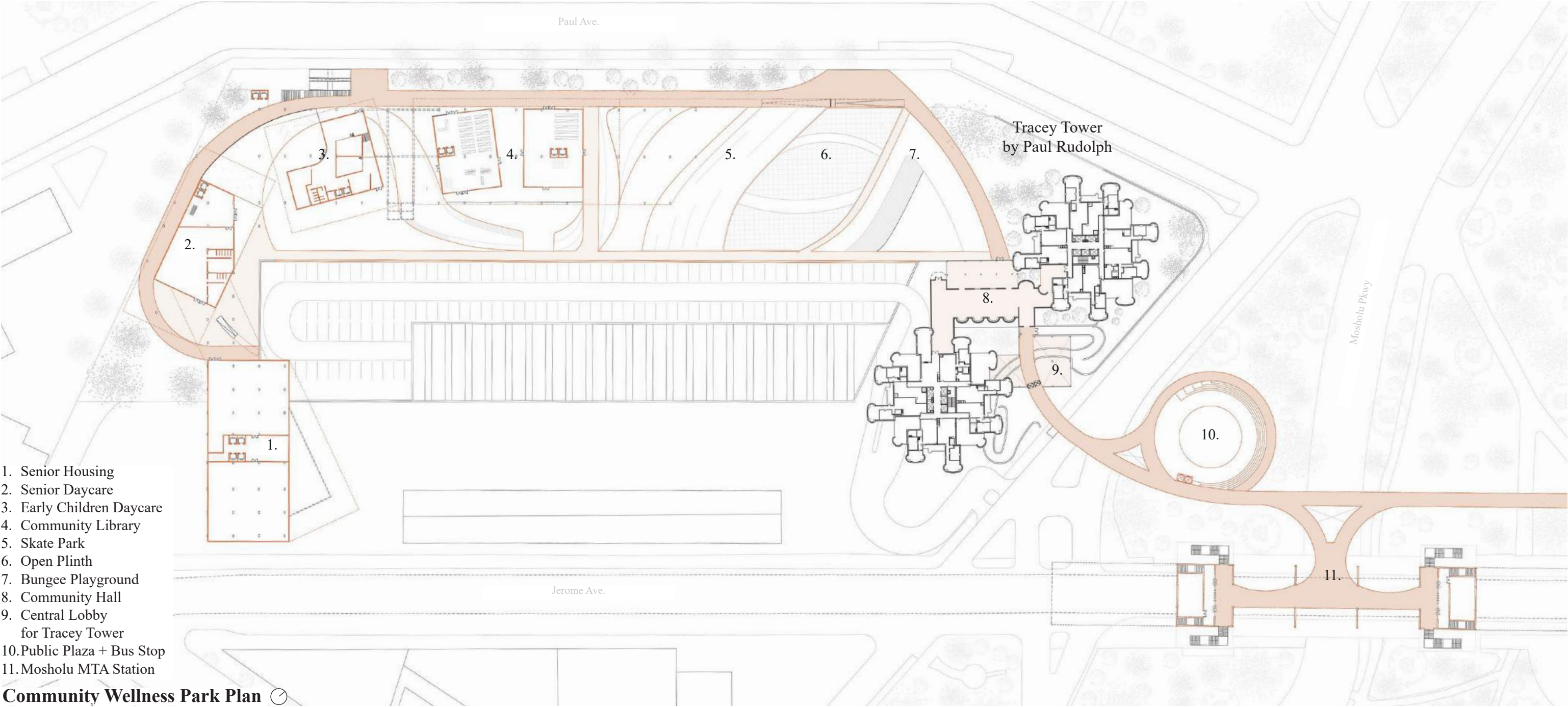


**Site Plan** ○

We envision the route as not only a safe and functional piece of infrastructure, but also as an opportunity to reshape the urban experience—enhancing daily life for residents, children, the elderly, and commuters alike.

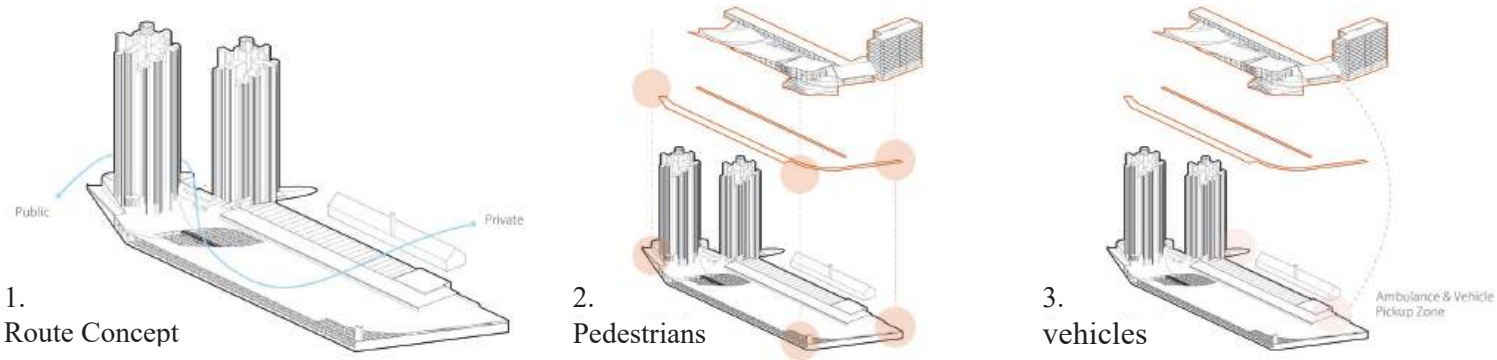
Grounded in our research, we identified three distinct user groups and spatial conditions, leading to the division of the elongated site into three key zones: a Community Wellness Park that promotes health and gathering, a Transportation Hub that improves urban mobility, and a Revitalized Rooftops that reclaims underutilized rooftops for communal use.





For the pedestrians, the separate entrances of the two towers are unified. The original entrance of the west tower is reprogrammed as a community hall, integrated with an expanded lobby space to serve both residents and the broader public.

For vehicles, the entrance and exit are currently located along the same route and opening. Additionally, a pick-up area has been created to enhance accessibility—particularly for elderly users and children—ensuring smooth and inclusive circulation throughout the site.

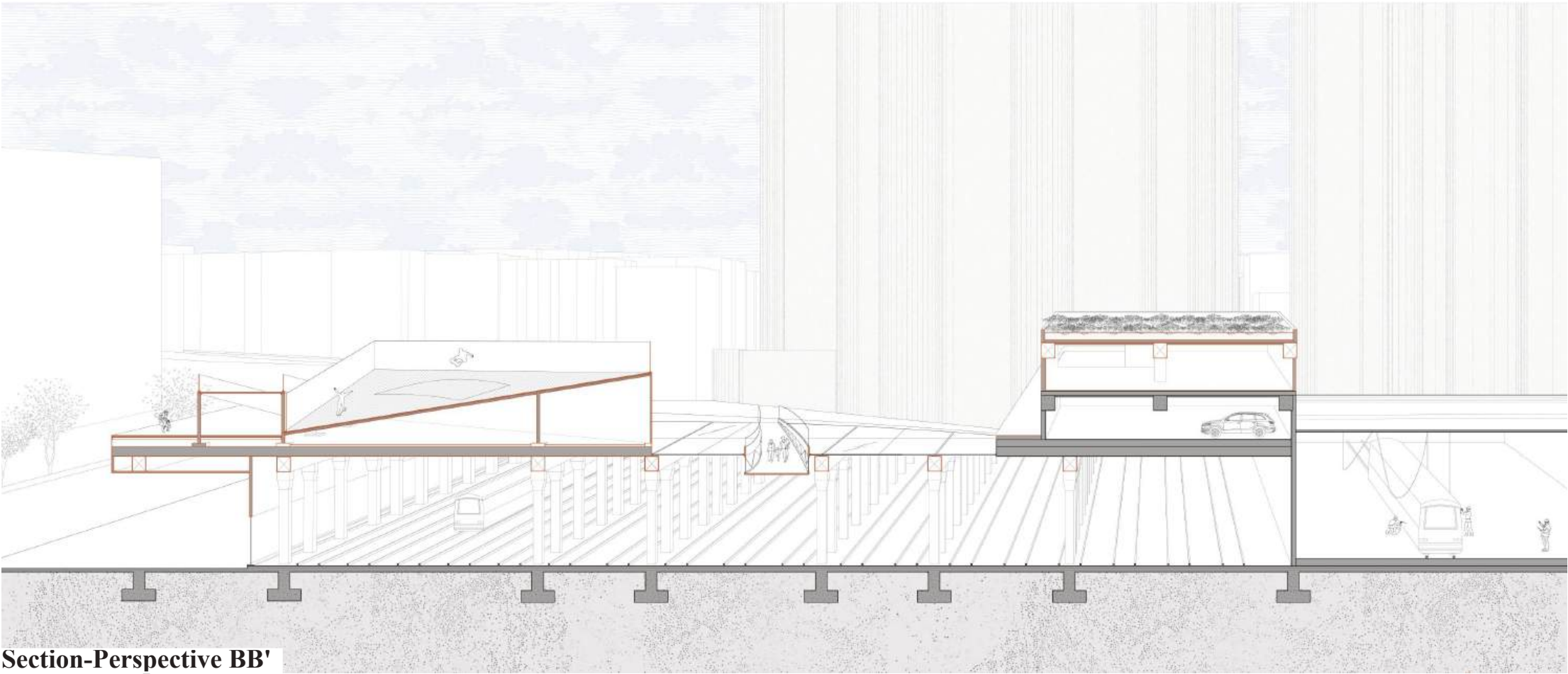
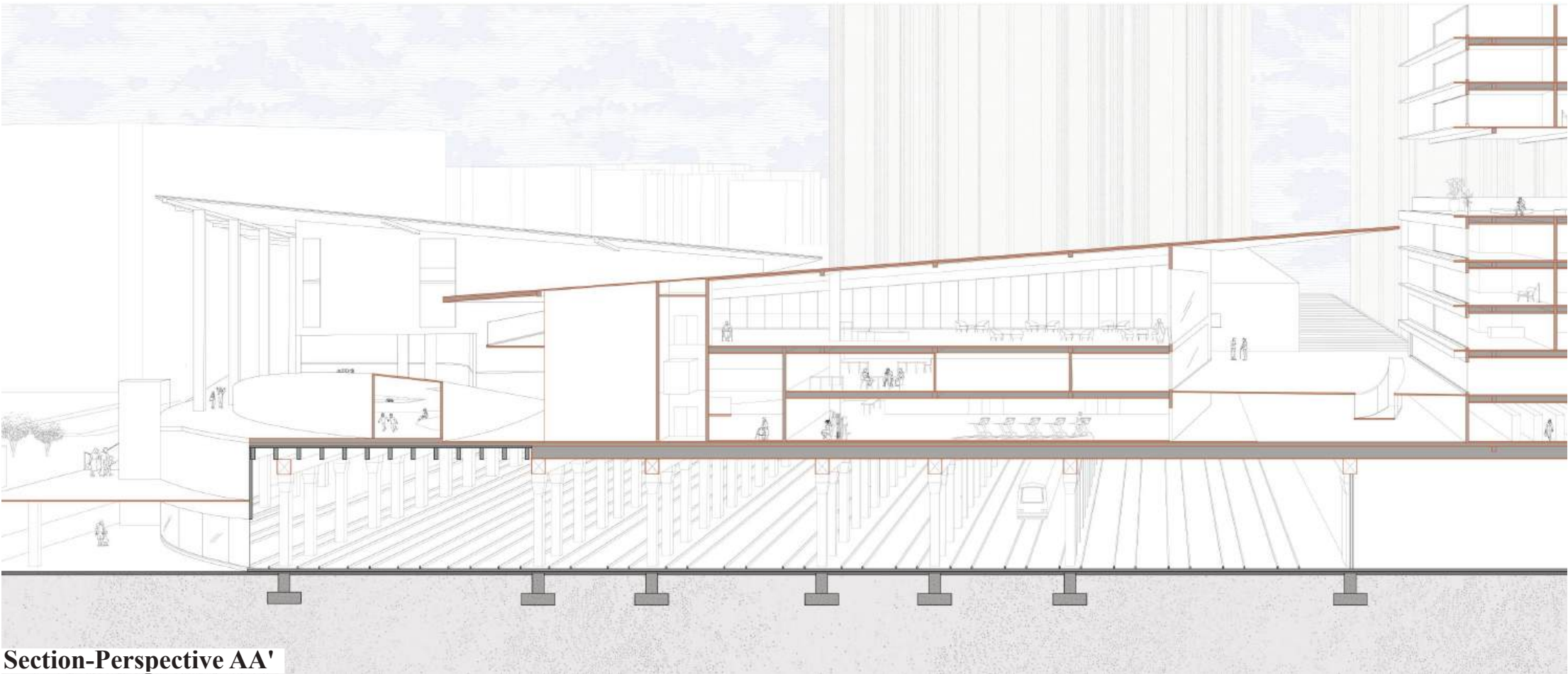




**Intergenerational Living  
and Shared Amenities**

This drawing illustrates the spatial sequence and relationship between the daycare center and senior living complex. Shared amenities such as an accessible gym and children’s play-ground are thoughtfully integrated to encourage intergenerational interaction. A new entrance improves connectivity to the plinth, enhancing overall accessibility.

The senior housing features a private gym at the lower level, while the street-facing ground floor accommodates a supermarket and a flexible open space for a weekend farmers’ market. Existing infrastructure is efficiently reorganized into the basement to streamline functionality and free up surface-level space.



**Plinth Activation  
and Public Engagement**

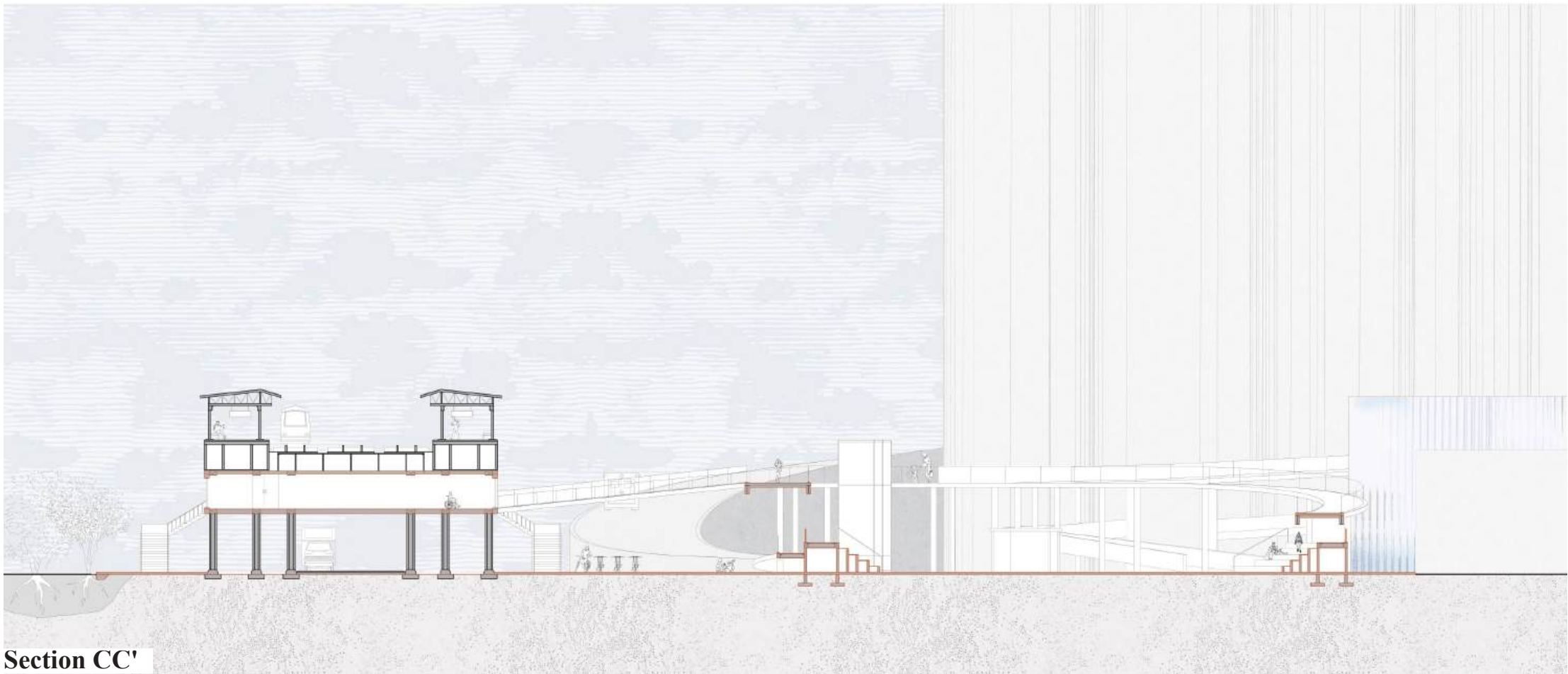
This drawing highlights the opening of the plinth, reinforcing our approach to the project as a sensitive renovation. By introducing a skatepark and dynamic circulation paths, the design aims to create a renewed urban viewing experience that engages the public while responding thoughtfully to the surrounding context.



Transit Meets Community

This section illustrates how transit infrastructure can be interwoven with small-scale public programs to enrich the daily experience of commuters. At the heart of the proposal is a public plaza where people can pause, connect, and engage with local culture—transforming a space of movement into a place of gathering.

Vertically layered, the plaza links the pedestrian bridge above with the subway station on the upper level and seamlessly connects to the bus stop, bike share station, and other amenities below. By integrating these systems into a cohesive, multi-level public hub, the design fosters interaction, accessibility, and a more vibrant urban life. A commuter grabbing coffee on the way to work or a parent waiting with their child becomes part of a shared, active public realm.

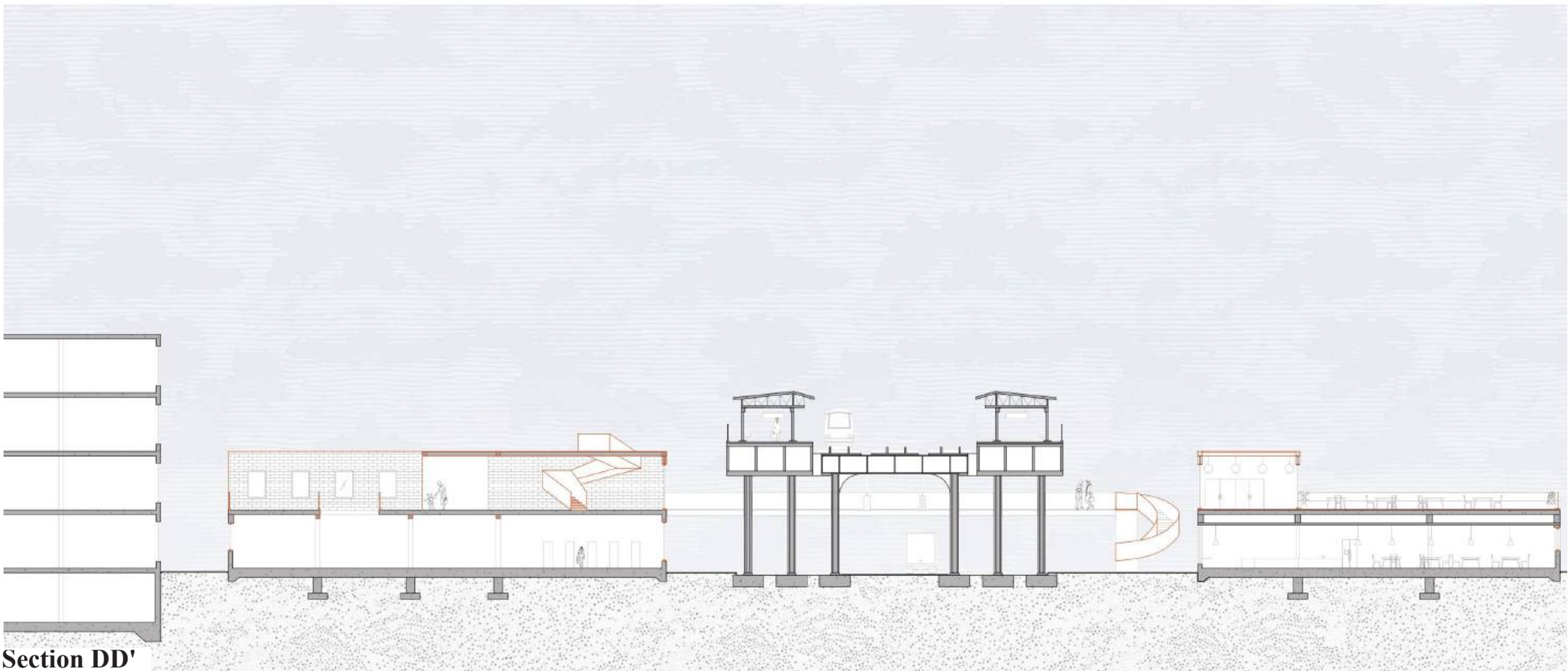


Section CC'

Activated Rooftop Circulation

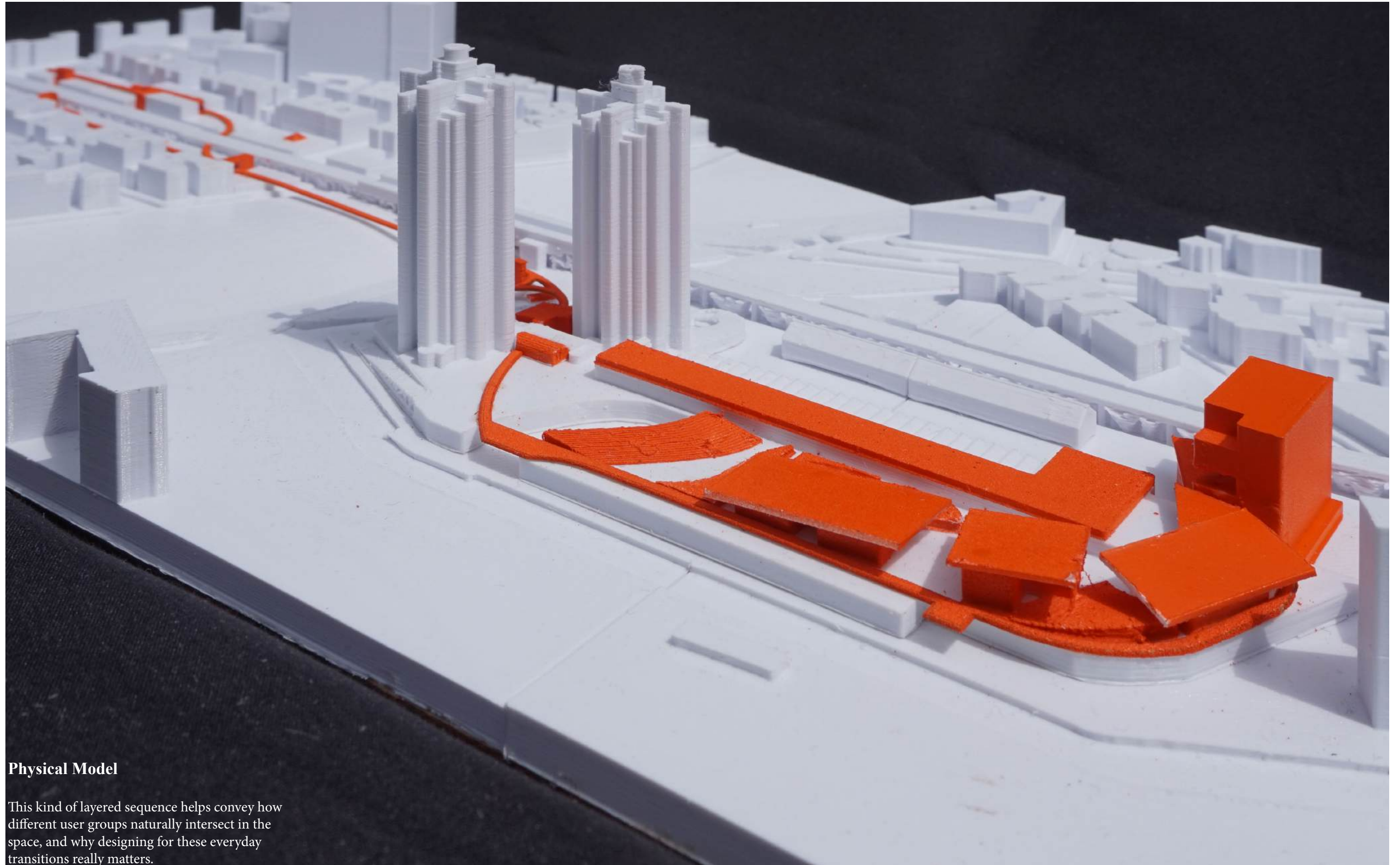
This section highlights the project’s rooftop strategy, envisioned as an extension of the city’s pedestrian network and made visible from adjacent housing to enhance safety through passive surveillance.

Previously a purely commercial zone with high foot traffic, the site is reimagined with new stair access and a strategically placed mass that intuitively guides movement toward the rooftop. What was once a missed opportunity becomes an active, elevated space for rest, gathering, and open-air experiences. Skylights provide daylight and visual connection between rooftop and retail below, turning everyday routines—like lunch breaks or children’s play—into moments of shared public life.



Section DD'





## Physical Model

This kind of layered sequence helps convey how different user groups naturally intersect in the space, and why designing for these everyday transitions really matters.



# 6.

## Vällingby

Symbol of Swedish Prosperity

**Completed,** 09/2024 - 11/2024

**Instructor:** David Smiley, GSAPP

**Working Type:** Academic Writing Project,  
Fall Semester Elective

**Collaborator:** Seung Hu Kim (MSAUD)

### Abstract

The design of a town undoubtedly influences how people gather, and in turn, the people shape the atmosphere of the town. As designers focusing on spatial issues, we are particularly curious about the relationship and balance between the varieties of human nature and the wisdom and knowledge of designers. Vällingby, a new town in Sweden, a country known for its social democracy and, more specifically for an historically generous welfare system, intrigues us greatly. In our project, we want to analyze Vällingby through a multifaceted lens, focusing on its formation, evolution, and the broader implications of its design.



### Prologue

To begin with, we explore whether Vällingby plays a role model of urban and regional development in Sweden. While some critics suggest compromises in its implementation, it is essential to define the metrics and perspectives used to evaluate its performance. Was its decline partial, contextual, or influenced by global comparisons?

Our analysis begins by situating Vällingby within the context of Sweden’s history and the ABC (Arbete, Bostad, Centrum) urban planning model. This approach allows us to understand how global trends and local cultural factors shaped its development and subsequent challenges.

Second, we examine the role of the subway system in Vällingby’s suburban growth. The linear nature of rail networks inherently influences urban planning, creating distinct spatial dynamics based on proximity to transit hubs. In Vällingby, the rail system’s impact extends beyond mere connectivity, influencing residential patterns, social interactions, and the integration of the town into the broader Stockholm region. Comparing Vällingby to other towns along the same line provides insight into the uniqueness of Sweden’s suburbanization process and how it perhaps follows neighborhood unit principle but also differs from other countries.

Lastly, we investigate how the natural landscape of northern Europe influenced Vällingby’s development. Sweden’s cultural and aesthetic relationship with its landscapes has historically shaped its urban planning. In Vällingby, the architects and planners sought to harmonize the built environment with its surroundings, emphasizing or shaping a specific connection to nature. This perspective reflects broader trends in Swedish culture and raises questions about how effectively these goals were realized in practice. Through this analysis, we also consider the social life of Vällingby, particularly its neighborhoods and civic/commercial center. Did these spaces achieve their intended purpose? How did they reflect the planners’ original intentions, and how have they evolved? By focusing on the early days of Vällingby’s formation while addressing its longer-term implications, we aim to provide a nuanced understanding of its successes, compromises, and lessons for contemporary urban design.

Vällingby contributes to our discussions about the role of New Towns in the 20th century in several ways. We would like to use three scales to explain the town’s importance in our discussion: daily life in the town, relationship with the country and the relationship with the natural environment in North Europe, also comparing it to other planned cities and restriction through these lenses.



Relationship with the Country

In this section, we examine the relationship between Vällingby as a new town and Sweden’s broader socio-political context in the 20th century. Vällingby serves as a compelling example of how government policies can profoundly shape people’s lives and influence spatial organization. Sweden, renowned for its robust social welfare system, managed to avoid the physical devastation of the world wars, sparing it from the massive rebuilding efforts faced by many other nations. However, the post-war era brought new challenges. Rapid population growth, rising urbanization, and increasing economic prosperity placed immense pressure on the Swedish government to address housing shortages and urban development.

The Swedish government responded to these challenges by implementing a series of progressive social policies, which aimed to create a more equitable society. The table outlines key developments in Sweden’s social welfare policies, emphasizing the period between 1950 and 1960 as a golden era. During this time, the income gap between blue-collar and white-collar workers was significantly smaller than today, reflecting a society built on principles of egalitarianism. This equitable economic environment provided a solid foundation for innovative urban planning initiatives to thrive, enabling the creation of new towns like Vällingby. Within this socio-economic context, the General Plan for Stockholm, introduced in 1952, emerged as a groundbreaking framework for modern urban development. Vällingby, the most prominent realization of this plan, was designed as an “ABC city,” integrating Jobs (Arbete), Housing (Bostad), and Center (Centrum) within a single urban area. This concept reflected a holistic vision of urban living, where residents could access workplaces, homes, and essential amenities within a walkable and well-connected community. Public transportation improvements, a hallmark of this plan, symbolized Sweden’s commitment to creating inclusive and efficient urban spaces.

Notably, Vällingby was the first—and ultimately the only city to fully embody the ABC city concept, which makes this town so unique. Its design captured the attention of planners and policymakers, offering a model of how social equity and innovative urban design could coexist. By integrating job opportunities, affordable housing, and a central shopping hub, the town provided a blueprint for meeting the diverse needs of its residents.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Vällingby’s success lies in its ability to balance affordability with accessibility. The town’s comprehensive public transportation system was a crucial component in achieving this balance. With its dense network of bus-routes and the opening of its first subway station in 1952, Vällingby became a place where residents could easily commute without relying on private vehicles. This accessibility not only reduced transportation costs for individuals but also contributed to the broader goal of sustainability.

Furthermore, Vällingby’s integration of social welfare policies and urban planning innovations ensured that it catered to residents from all socio-economic backgrounds. The town exemplified a vision of urban living where convenience, affordability, and inclusivity were prioritized. This alignment of economic stability, social welfare, and forward-thinking planning highlights Sweden’s approach during this period, setting a benchmark for urban development. By fostering a sense of equality and community, Vällingby demonstrated how policies rooted in social care could transform urban living, making it accessible to everyone.

Period	Key Features & Focus	Policy Examples
1900-1910	Early Stages: Welfare policies begin to emerge, focusing on labor protection and the establishment of a social safety net.	- 1901: Introduction of compulsory military service, laying the foundation for national equality. - 1913: Introduction of national pension scheme (old-age insurance), one of the first in Europe.
1910-1920	Impact of War: World War I accelerates state involvement in economic and social matters, focusing on poverty and labor rights.	- Expansion of wage protection to mitigate the impact of the war on the working class. - Public housing initiatives to address urban poverty.
1920-1930	Economic Depression and Transition: The Great Depression leads to a focus on employment and poverty relief.	- Early 1930s: Introduction of unemployment insurance schemes. - Increased financial support for rural and urban poor families.
1930-1940	Swedish Model Begins: The welfare state concept takes shape, particularly with industrialization and economic recovery.	- 1938: The Saltsjöbaden Agreement, strengthening cooperation between trade unions and employers. - Introduction of child health and education allowances.
1940-1950	World War II and Postwar Period: Further expansion of public spending, focusing on welfare services for all sectors of society.	- 1944: Implementation of universal health insurance. - 1948: Introduction of family allowances for children.
1950-1960	Golden Era: The welfare state expands fully, with high levels of public services and income redistribution supported by strong economic growth.	- 1955: Nationwide health insurance system comes into effect. - Free education and paid parental leave introduced.
1960-1970	Deepening of Modern Welfare: Equality and social justice become central to policies, with a focus on reducing income inequality and supporting the elderly and vulnerable groups.	- Increase in progressive income tax to fund welfare programs. - Introduction of public pension system (ATP, 1960).
1970-1980	Economic Challenges and Adjustment: Economic pressures from the oil crisis and financial strain lead to structural adjustments in welfare policy.	- Expansion of unemployment insurance coverage but reduction in some welfare programs. - Introduction of flexible work schemes to boost employment.
1980-1990	Neoliberal Influence: Global economic shifts lead to cuts in welfare spending and a focus on individual responsibility.	- 1985: Reform of the health insurance system, encouraging private insurance participation. - Reduction in public housing investment.
1990-2000	Financial Crisis and Recovery: After the early 1990s financial crisis, welfare policies are restructured for sustainability.	- 1994: Pension reform introducing partial capitalization. - Expansion of educational and vocational training to improve workforce skills.
2000-2010	Welfare Diversification: Globalization and immigration push policies to focus on inclusion and innovation in welfare programs.	- Strengthened integration policies for immigrants, providing language courses and employment support. - Introduction of flexible working and shared parental leave.
2010-2020	Addressing Population Aging: With an aging population, Sweden strengthens healthcare and long-term care systems.	- Increased public investment in elder care facilities. - Raising retirement age and encouraging delayed retirement.
2020-Present	Digitization and Sustainability: Focus on digital public services and green welfare policies, emphasizing environmental protection and equitable distribution.	- Development of electronic healthcare platforms and remote care technologies. - Introduction of renewable energy subsidies, integrating welfare with environmental policies.

Table of Social Policies



The New Vällingby Centre, 2003





Relationships among People in the Town

In the beginning we want to craft a public town space that fosters feelings of bliss and delight is one of the most challenging tasks in urban design, despite “happy” being one of the simplest words in our vocabulary. Beginning at the smallest scale, Vällingby serves as an exemplary model of a town designed around residents’ needs. It seamlessly integrates necessity-driven retail, diverse community services, and a balanced blend of cultural, commercial, and social elements.

The most significant design we have to mention first is the shopping mall as the heart of Vällingby’s town center lies in its focus on residents as the main characters of the community. The shopping center here didn’t aim to make advantage and profit from residents, it was the icon that the planner viewed residents’ daily needs as the first priority. Historically, the centers of cities and towns were dominated by government buildings and public squares designed for gatherings, serving as symbols of authority and power. While these spaces often provided great public amenities, they ultimately centered around the influence of rulers and governments.

In contrast, Vällingby’s decision to place a shopping mall at its core represents a paradigm shift—one where the central space is dedicated to fulfilling the needs and daily lives of the people. This marks a significant difference from many other new towns, which often allocate areas for business and commercial activities but rarely position them at the very heart of the community. By prioritizing a space that directly serves its residents, Vällingby underscores the importance of placing people’s needs at the forefront of urban planning.

Next, we delve into the details of life around the shopping mall in Vällingby’s downtown area. The central shopping mall serves as a centerpiece of modern life, boasting air-conditioned interiors and pedestrian-friendly zones that foster social interaction. A BBC video from 1956 captures the elegance of this space,

portraying well-dressed individuals shopping and socializing in an environment of comfort and convenience (BBC, Modern Life in Sweden, July 1956).

The layout also reimagines the circulation of goods, with products transported underground before reaching the stores. This streamlined logistics system enhances the shopping experience, offering a stark contrast to the bustling yet chaotic atmosphere of traditional markets. In doing so, Vällingby introduces a novel urban landscape to Europe, one that reflects a commitment to efficiency and social sustainability.

Additionally, numerous “automatic” services add to the mall’s charm. While these services may appear slow compared to today’s standards, they were groundbreaking at the time. For instance, the method of selling flowers resembled an early prototype of modern vending machines. Similarly, ordering food at the mall’s restaurant was remarkably straightforward—customers simply placed a card with the dish’s name on the counter, and their meal was served without the need for waitstaff. Beyond the shopping mall, the newly designed town integrated playgrounds alongside apartment buildings, fostering a sense of community and providing spaces for families and children to thrive.

Last but not the least, the design of the public transportation system significantly enhances the quality of life by promoting accessibility and sustainability. By reducing the space allocated for private cars and increasing the density of the transportation network—marked by the opening of the first subway station in 1952—residents of all ages, including students and the elderly, gained greater freedom to travel throughout the town. This system also integrates an extensive network of bus routes, connecting Vällingby to neighboring cities and providing residents with a seamless commuting experience. The well-coordinated transit options make it possible for people to access workplaces, schools, and recreational areas without relying on private vehicles. Additionally, reducing car usage not only decreases traffic accidents but also lowers the need for large parking spaces, opening up more areas for public use. These changes con-

tribute to a more pedestrian-friendly environment where walking and cycling are encouraged, enhancing community interaction and promoting a healthier lifestyle. By prioritizing public transit and reducing car dependency, Vällingby sets a precedent for sustainable and inclusive urban living, fostering a vibrant and connected community for all its residents.



Vällingby Block Plan



## Idea of the Neighborhood Unit

Although the designer of Vällingby, Sven Markelius argued that Vällingby was not a conventional of New Town, arguing that “I have no feeling that Vällingby is copied from the New Towns” (Cook 17), its characteristics follows the description of neighborhood units. Around time when Vällingby was designed, Harlow, UK and Lelystad, Netherland were also designed based on the idea of neighborhood unit to decentralize and disperse major city growth pressure and provide sufficient housing. Then-current major cities in Europe and elsewhere experienced population growth, especially from rural regions, from people seeking employment densifying and then overwhelming services, infrastructure and housing.

Alongside urban improvement, ‘satelite cities’ emerged as a suitable response, similar to the Garden Cities of Ebenezer Howard. One Observer later wrote, “The New Towns were based on a range of planning precepts including the management of traffic flows, the pedestrianization of town centres... the residential areas combined the theoretical ideas of each of three concepts and bound them up in what became known as neighborhood units... emanating from America in the 1910s and 1920s, the neighborhood unit concept was mooted as a way to resolve the problems associated with the decentralization of populations from major urban centres during the early years of the twentieth century. (Llewellyn 157). However, Lelystad, and Harlow, along with Vällingby offer lessons about new town planning.

Harlow, initial target population of 60,000 within 2,500 hectares, began to decentralize post war London in massive scale with rail and road link. Such new towns would solve problems like housing and sanitation in the central city. Frederick Gibberd, who designed the masterplan of Harlow describes its idea as follows, Gibberd conceived of Harlow being constituted by four key units, each of which was made up of several residential areas. Each of these units was focused on a ‘major neighbourhood centre’ and would be self-

supporting, with a range of shops and schools provided. Within each of these major neighbourhood centre were created ‘sub-centres’, with a small range of local shops” (Llewellyn 159). Its focus was more towards neighbourhood being a center than a commercial space.

The problems in Harlow however, was the constraints in housing type that resulted in restriction of internal plans, “The inflexibility of the internal plan of the homes was the most frustrating aspect of their development.” (Llewellyn 164). Although they thought of social focus of the neighbourhood units where people would meet, these were the physical constraints due to variety of housings.

At Vällingby, the planners more successfully provided varied types of housing in order to incorporate different types of families and economic levels, not merely a middle-class population. In addition, high rise apartment buildings were located at the City center and contained two-bedroom apartment to ensure density within the core. The center was surrounded by blocks of three-story houses and, farther away from the Center yet only 800 meters away were districts of row housing which were mostly rentals and owned detached cottages for professionals, “With rental apartments largely allocated to workers and mid-range professionals, while row housing and detached cottages went to the families of higher professionals and academics.” (Creagh 20). For the planners, various types of housing in Vällingby would foster a more diverse community and more varied social relation.

Lelystad, initially designed by Cornelis Van Eesteren but substantially revised by the local planning agency, sought to decentralize the population of Amsterdam. The project was much bigger than Vällingby as its target population was 100,000 people within 5,000 hectares. It was a grided orthogonal new town. A key goal of the design of Lelystad was to create urban complexity for social mixing and with centers for social gathering. Like Vällingby, main commercial center zone was established along the main railroad line that connects people from Amsterdam.

One might say that Lelystad was more dense than Välling-

by, and did not include as much landscape considerations, mostly because it was planned for many more people. It is much more urban than Vällingby. The distance between housings and primary services like shops, schools, and social facilities were 100 meters away at maximum, “Each of these neighbourhoods, Boswijk, Waterwijk, and De Landert, has shops, schools, social facilities, and other primary services at a maximum distance of 100 meters from all homes” (Spoormans 112).

Looking at Vällingby, commercial center was with 800 meters from anywhere in town. One of the central features of Vällingby, and at other new towns, was the separation between the pedestrian and vehicular way. From the underground subway system and cargo design, Markelius designed Vällingby with a focus on safe pedestrian pathways, “The centre can be reached from most parts of the development without having to cross a single street” (Cook 14). This allowed all people throughout community to conveniently gather in city commercial center, creating sense of place. Vällingby’s planner separated movement on different levels, from separating trains and trucks to arrive under the commercial center, to pedestrian and vehicle separation, all key elements of this, and many other new town communities.



Vällingby Centrum, 1957







## Social Life in a Planned City

Though it might sound wonderful to live in a thoroughly planned out new towns, there are some drawbacks that Vällingby raises. A BBC video from 1956 as we mentioned above, also shows interviewers asking how this planned city is perhaps planned too much and it starts to take away people’s own decision and ownership, “But don’t you feel that this is a matter for the individual? Don’t you feel that this is the state including too much, that you are taking away the power of decision from people” (BBC, Modern Life in Sweden, July 1956). As we also seen from Harlow and Lelystad, the planned city entails provisions as well as constraints, that is why design can be difficult and even contentious. In the name of providing quality housing and social nodes, planned communities may limit choices, of fixate on particular rationalities of efficiencies.

This ideal planned city development by the government, providing quality housing and even central heating system, provides basic needs of people, yet one could also argue, that government starts to take in charge of many aspects of individuals’ lives. Do inhabitants knowingly give their co sent to these arrangement? In Sweden, what may be or have been a choice of an individual shift, in Vallingby, towards the hand of government, where civic life is overshadowed by the government. The shifting ideas of private or individualistic life and public or collective life changes the social relations in the Swedish welfare state.

Your apartment becomes a privatized place where you can express yourself through interior design and furniture choices, and collectivism public spaces become a space of efficiency and convenience. This top-down design of government planning gives illusion of freedom and quality living, as this could be a carefully orchestrated life.

Creagh comments on the problem of choice and control by writing that “Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co’s description of Vällingby is a place where

‘urban space mimes itself and becomes a sort of permanent theatre, open to all sorts of pleasant urban distractions’, yet this was a comment not only on the construction of urbanity ex novo, but the illusion of a freedom of choice in a place where everyday life was in fact carefully orchestrated. (Creagh 20). Thus, Creagh goes on, in Sweden, “unlike Britain, neighborhood planning was not about reconstruction, but as Henrik Widmark has noted, a ‘mental reconstruction’, about the shaping of citizens who would identify themselves with the project of the welfare state through their membership of the group at a range of scales.” (Creagh 20).

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# 7.

## Between Construction and Collapse

Unfinished Public Architecture as a Site of  
Urban Memory in Lebanon

**Completed,** 02/2025 - 05/2025

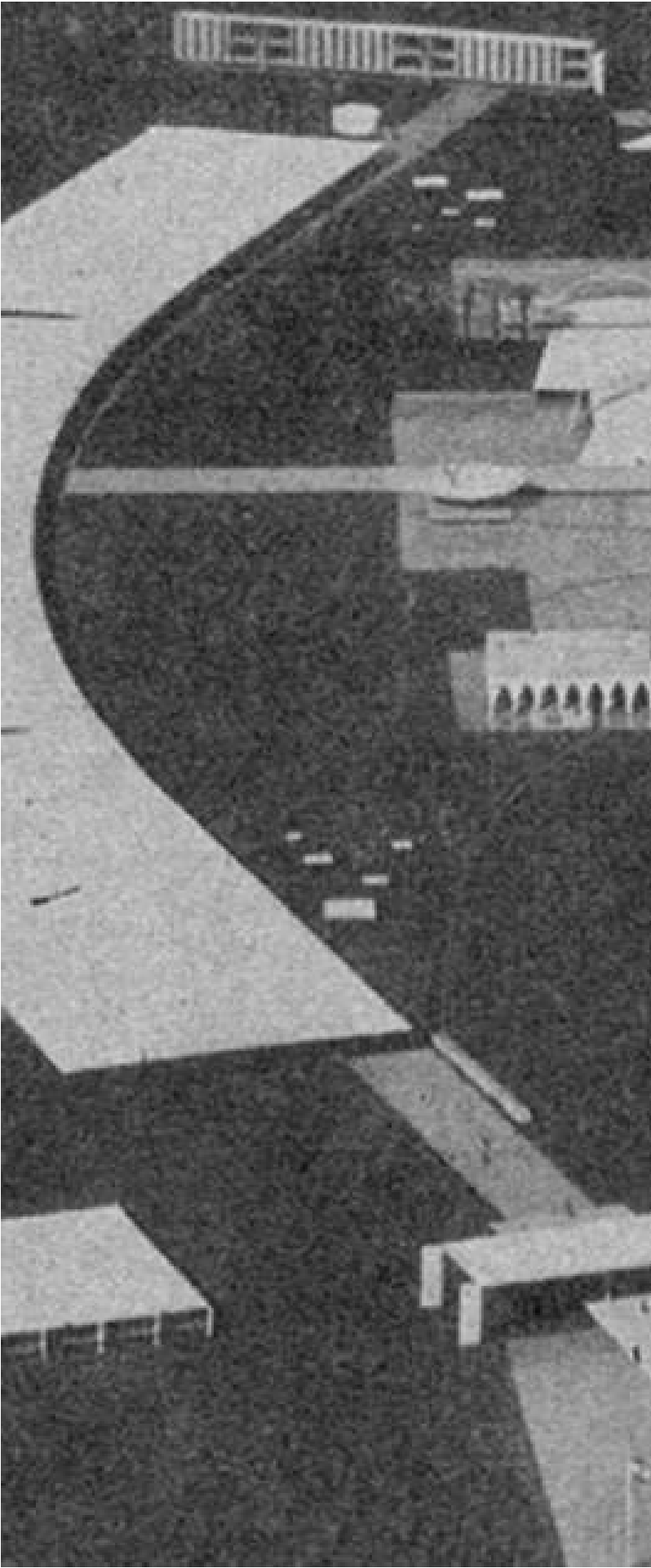
**Instructor:** Amale Andraos, Principal, WORKac

**Working Type:** Academic Writing Project,  
Spring Semester Elective

### Abstract

In this article, I would like to explore architecture preservation from an alternative perspective—focusing not on completed heritage sites, but on unfinished or abandoned buildings that continue to shape urban memory and identity. I will examine the Rachid Karami International Fair and El Murr Tower—two monumental yet incomplete structures in Lebanon.

Drawing on Destructions/Reconstructions and other recent readings, particularly those analyzing the postwar urban fabric of Beirut, I am interested in the layered debates over what deserves to be preserved, rebuilt, or erased. These structures—once symbols of modernity and ambition—now stand as architectural voids. Their ambiguous status invites critical questions: What does it mean to preserve an unfinished building? Can abandonment itself be a form of preservation? And in a city repeatedly torn between reconstruction and rupture, how do such “failed” monuments embody the political and historical tensions of Lebanon’s urban landscape?



### Prologue

In Destruction Layered Event, I am persuaded by the argument that all ruins emerge from acts of destruction, and that our interpretations of them reveal ongoing power struggles over history, memory, and identity. Ruins are thus worth preserving—not only as broken remnants that evoke memory and serve as monuments, but also as markers that compel collective remembrance of the past. Similarly, in the article Gaza’s Great Omari Mosque, Now in Ruins, ruins are presented not merely as relics of history, but as integral, lived components of daily life. Unlike traditional notions of “historical value,” this perspective emphasizes that ruins are worth preserving because they embody local identity and culture, contributing to the ethical image and self-conception of a nation.

On the other hand, preserving existing buildings is often more straightforward and widely accepted by both architects and the public, as these structures clearly embody recognizable cultural, historical, or political values. For instance, the Taj Mahal reflects the aesthetic richness of Indian culture, the Palace of Versailles symbolizes the grandeur of 18th-century France, and the Hagia Sophia bears the layered beauty and visible scars of its complex religious history. These iconic works are complete in form and convey powerful, unambiguous messages to the world—whether about political authority, historical legacy, or religious significance.

However, a piece of news from UNESCO in January 2023 sparked my interest in so-called “unfinished” projects. It was announced that the Rachid Karami International Fair, despite its incomplete state, had been added to the World Heritage List. This decision suggests a turning point in how people define and assign value to architectural preservation. Such structures remain embedded in the urban fabric—and to me, they serve as powerful manifestos or arguments about the city itself. They represent not only halted construction but also interrupted aspirations, revealing unresolved tensions in urban development. In short, I believe that unfinished projects expand the meaning of preservation and open up more possibilities for future urban development, prompting us to consider incompleteness as a generative condition.

### Rethinking the Criteria for Preservation

Drawing on the readings from the semester—especially my own session on development, reconstruction, and preservation in Lebanon—and through a deeper exploration of the relationship between preservation and urban development, I aim to examine this dynamic through the lens of unfinished projects. Specifically, I focus on three key questions: What does it mean to preserve an unfinished building? Can abandonment itself be considered a form of preservation? And how do incomplete structures reflect the political, social, and historical tensions embedded in the urban fabric?

The first perspective explores the significance of preserving unfinished buildings. These structures, suspended in an in-between state, often lack the commercial appeal of new developments and may fail to immediately communicate a clear narrative to the public. They are unlikely to serve as iconic landmarks or symbols of collective identity, prompting the question: why preserve them at all? Can such preservation offer meaningful value or convey ideas worth passing on to future generations?

Secondly, I aim to question the value of turning abandoned spaces into preservation sites. Is it truly worthwhile doing so? What potential benefits can emerge from preserving them? As mentioned earlier, unfinished structures often fail to reveal their value at first glance for most people, making their preservation a more complex and nuanced decision.

Finally, I question whether these structures or spaces truly carry historical value comparable to the monuments we typically preserve—or if they are merely remnants of unfulfilled political promises. This perspective challenges us to reconsider how we define historical significance and who gets to decide what is worth remembering.



Case Studies

I chose two cases to examine the questions raised above: the Rachid Karami International Fair and the El Murr Tower. Both are large-scale unfinished projects whose construction was halted due to the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990). Despite their different programs, each was originally intended to symbolize the power and progress of its era.

Case 1: Rachid Karami International Fair

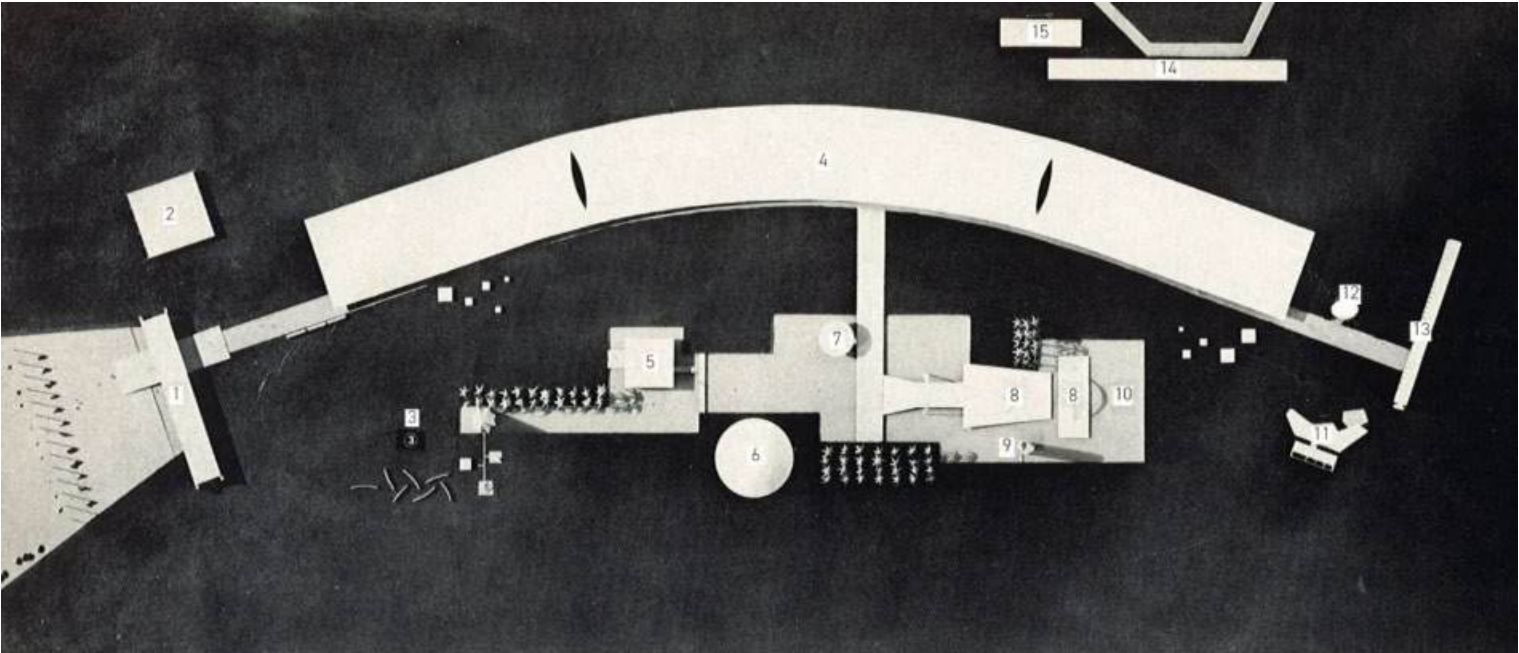
To begin with, the project that first inspired me to explore this topic is the Rachid Karami International Fair, which, to me, resembles scattered playground toys—playful yet frozen in time. Designed by Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer between 1962 and 1967, construction began in earnest in 1967 but was abruptly halted in 1975 due to the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War.

The fairground was part of a national development plan aimed at narrowing the urban gap between Beirut and other cities in Lebanon, contributing to a broader vision of economic growth and modernization. One key aspect I want to emphasize is the decision to commission Oscar Niemeyer—already internationally acclaimed for projects such as the Pampulha Modern Ensemble (1942), Ibirapuera Park (1954), and the urban planning of Brasília (1956–1961). This choice reflected Lebanon’s ambition to engage in international collaboration and to present itself as a modernizing nation on the global stage.

I had the opportunity to visit Ibirapuera Park myself in March 2025. Walking through the park felt like moving through a vast theater, where pavilions and buildings emerged dramatically, their bold volumes and structural systems creating a layered spatial experience. That visit helped me understand why Niemeyer, though undoubtedly building upon the legacy of other architectural giants back to that time, earned such a distinct and lasting reputation in the field of architecture.

Zooming in on the story of the Rachid Karami International Fair: by the time construction was halted due to the outbreak of the civil war in 1975, several key structures had already taken form, including the boomerang-shaped main pavilion, the sweeping curved façade of the Lebanon Pavilion, and the concrete-domed experimental theater. However, the end of the war did not signal a renewed hope for completing the project. Although the Lebanese Civil War officially ended in 1990 with the signing of the Taif Agreement in Saudi Arabia, ongoing internal conflicts and instability meant that the country was far from ready to resume a project intended to symbolize “progress” and international collaboration. Post-war efforts were instead directed toward emergency relief, reconstruction, and medical aid. Moreover, the conclusion of the war marked a period of political reorganization and realignment of power and resources. In this context, the Rachid Karami International Fair was left abandoned—ironically embodying the unfulfilled promise of regional cooperation and global engagement it was meant to represent.

Despite its incomplete state, the site remains an iconic example of 20th-century modernist architecture in the Near East. In 2018, it was nominated for UNESCO World Heritage status and was officially inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger in January 2023, highlighting both its cultural significance and its vulnerability. What caught my attention, however, is that the inclusion on the endangered list was not solely due to the site’s cultural value. The project was inscribed on the World Heritage List for meeting the following criteria: (1) It exhibits an important interchange of human values over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture, technology, monumental arts, town planning, or landscape design. (2) It is an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble, or landscape which illustrates a significant stage in human history. Rather, it also serves as a strategic move to attract funding and international support for its preservation—a perspective I had not previously considered.



Site Plan of Rachid Karami International Fair



Main Exhibiting Pavilion



Unfinished Experimental Theater



Case 2: El Murr Tower

Another notable unfinished building project is the El Murr Tower. Construction of the El Murr Tower began in the early 1970s. Originally intended as a government and commercial office building, its form and use of exposed concrete symbolized the ambitions of a modern state infrastructure back to that time. Unfortunately, like the Rachid Karami International Fair, construction was halted due to the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War. Owing to its strategic height—rising 40 stories—and central location in Beirut, the tower was later repurposed as a military sniper post during the conflict.

Since the end of the civil war, the El Murr Tower has remained in a state of neither repaired, complete, nor demolished. The major reason for this ambiguity lies in its ownership by the Murr family. Firstly, the development company, Société Libérale SAL, is 62% owned by Michel Murr and 38% by his brother, Gabriel Murr. Although they are siblings, major decisions require mutual agreement, often leading to prolonged and politically sensitive negotiations. In addition, the Murr family’s deep involvement in Lebanese politics has turned the tower into a high stake bargaining chip. Whether the building is redeveloped or removed, it becomes entangled in broader power dynamics, benefit exchanges, and party rivalries.

In 1994, SOLIDERE—a private company responsible for postwar urban reconstruction in Beirut—proposed rehabilitating the tower as the Beirut Trade Center or as the future headquarters of the United Nations ESCWA. This plan initially offered hope for the structure’s revival. However, after a structural assessment, SOLIDERE’s commissioned architects deemed the building defective and recommended demolition by implosion. This presented yet another obstacle: demolishing the tower would require renewed negotiations over ownership rights and benefit distribution. Furthermore, the involvement of a private company in managing public redevelopment has sparked controversy, especially given the scandals and criticisms surr-

ounding SOLIDERE . Entrusting a symbolically and politically loaded structure like the El Murr Tower to private hands only adds to the complexity of its future.

What interests me is that, despite the tower’s awkward and unresolved architectural state, some artists have brought new interpretations to space. In 2018, artist Jad El Khoury transformed the structure with his project Tower of the Wind, hanging colorful curtains that fluttered with the breeze. Through this vibrant installation, he sought to convey a message of hope and future possibilities. Although the work was forcibly removed by SOLIDERE for unclear reasons—perhaps due to the tower’s history as a sniper post, making the joyful intervention appear as a critique or mockery of past political conflicts—it nonetheless opened a new chapter for this long-abandoned structure within the urban fabric. Besides, in 2019, the Lebanon-based firm JPAG created a short architectural film titled Coming Back to Life , reimagining the El Murr Tower as a fantastical space imbued with emotion and sensitive narrative. The film offers a new interpretation of architectural meaning, transforming the unfinished structure into a site of reflection and creative possibility. While the concrete surfaces and visible scars of the building remain, preserving its somber past, the carefully selected furnishings and cinematic language introduce a quiet yet powerful presence, making the space feel alive and inhabited once more.



Tower of Wind, Beirut, 2018



Coming Back to Life, 2019



## Profit or Preservation: Whose City Is It?

Both cases share a defining characteristic: their construction was halted by the Lebanese Civil War, leaving them as lasting symbols of conflict and making it difficult to secure support for their redevelopment in the politically unstable aftermath. In the case of the Rachid Karami International Fair, the push for preservation appears largely driven by the committee’s desire for additional funding. However, in my opinion, it remains uncertain how such funds would actually be allocated if secured. In contrast, the El Murr Tower does not benefit from any formal preservation effort—it has simply been left standing, with no clear plan for its future.

While it is difficult to say whether either site has received what could be considered “proper preservation,” both have had a visible impact on the city, especially in the eyes of its citizens. The Rachid Karami International Fair continues to showcase a unique architectural fusion of Arab motifs, South American structural approaches, and modernist techniques on architectural materials. This hybrid language invites both architects and locals to reflect on what elements truly belong to their cultural heritage, fostering a deeper sense of identity. I find this particularly resonant, as someone from a formerly colonized country, where colonial-era buildings and infrastructure still shape the urban landscape. These structures continually prompt questions about which aspects are indigenous and which are foreign. While the Fair was originally conceived with positive intentions as part of an international collaboration, the ongoing negotiation of mixed architectural identities feels deeply familiar—and, in some ways, mirrors my own experience.

Furthermore, the artistic interventions at the El Murr Tower demonstrate that transformation of abandoned urban spaces can come not only from governmental efforts but also from public and creative engagement. These artworks have already shifted the public perception of the tower, revealing the potential for art to prompt dialogue and even policy reconsideration. Art-

istic interpretations are inherently softer and more flexible than formal redevelopment—they function like a form of “acupuncture” for the city, gently stimulating neglected areas back to life.

If it were still the 1970s, I might not have seen these temporary installations as meaningful expressions of hope or opportunity. But in today’s rapidly changing world, permanent structures are no longer always the most effective way to convey evolving ideas. Artworks, especially those shared across diverse media platforms, can travel quickly and widely—reaching audiences not only in Lebanon but also internationally. In this way, such creative acts may serve as catalysts for broader public awareness and, ultimately, change. Thus, when I revisit the questions I posed at the beginning of this article, I now find that I have arrived at meaningful answers:

(1) Preserving an unfinished building is a way of witnessing and freezing the process of change.

From my perspective, I see preservation—whether through government funding, institutional support, or even modest private efforts—as a way of safeguarding change itself. From my perspective, the only constant in life is change. In this light, unfinished structures become powerful expressions of transformation in progress. They embody not a final product, but the ongoing evolution of events, time, and meaning.

(2) Abandonment can serve as a form of preservation, but it should not become the norm.

Still, while these unfinished projects may inspire meaningful interpretations and spark occasional moments of creativity, I do not believe they should be considered a formal model for preservation in the context of urban development. Their significance often arises by coincidence, not by design. Ultimately, architecture and public spaces should serve the people—spaces become truly livable and welcoming only when they are actively used and inhabited by the public.

(3) Incomplete structures reflect political, social, and historical tensions—their very existence reveals the conflicts within the city and among those in power.

Last but not the least, I believe that even in their unfinished state, these structures offer a powerful lens through which to reflect on the irony and complexity of political conflict. As I mentioned in my initial question, the very notion of change embodies these layered issues—and in doing so, becomes a compelling force capable of provoking thought and sparking meaningful debate.

## Epilogue

To reinforce my argument, I believe that—unlike ruins or fully completed buildings, which often symbolize political authority or religious significance, unfinished spaces do not embody such definitive values. Instead, their incomplete state carries a sense of irony, precisely because they remain unresolved. Yet it is this very incompleteness that allows them to uniquely capture the concept of change—an inherently fluid and elusive process that is difficult to preserve. Change is not a final outcome but an ongoing transformation, and unfinished structures freeze that process midstream, preserving a moment of transition. In doing so, they offer a powerful reflection not only for ordinary citizens but also for those in positions of authority.

Ultimately, I believe the essence of preservation lies in the idea that the city belongs to the public—not to politicians or designers. Preservation should serve as a catalyst for progress, whether by remembering past failures or fostering the convergence of diverse ideas for future generations. In this light, unfinished projects offer a unique and meaningful form of preservation—one that stands apart from the ruins and complete structures we are more familiar with.

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# 8.

## Ice, Sea, Salt

Field Station Design and Research of Salt

**Completed,** 09/2024 - 12/2024

**Instructor:** Leslie Gill, Principal, Leslie Gill Architect  
Khoi Nguyen, Principal, Future Projects Architecture

**Working Type:** Academic Design Project,  
Studio V, Melting Archive

### Introduction

This project envisions a global salinity detection network, featuring iconic stations in extreme environments, showcasing salt’s ecological and societal significance.

Salt, though modest, has profoundly shaped ecosystems, cultures, and human civilization. Its influence spans from microscopic interactions to global systems, making it a vital subject for design exploration.

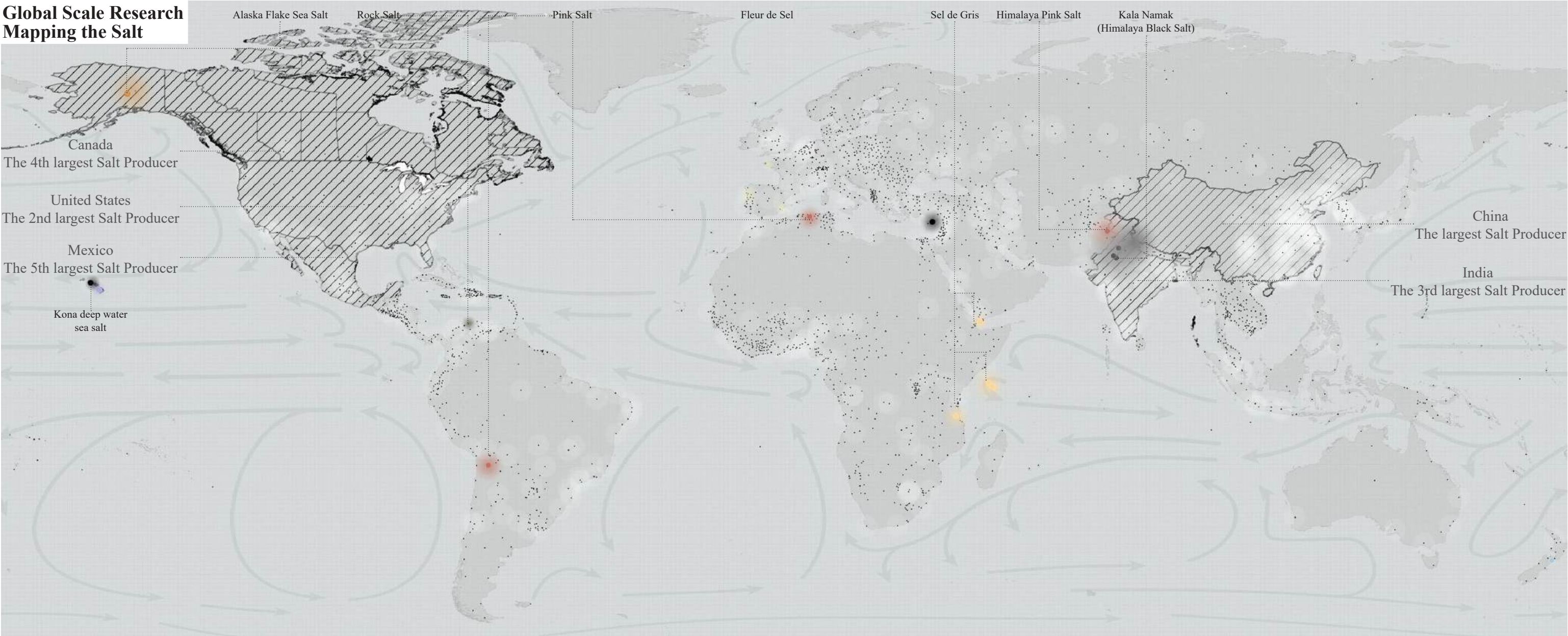
Inspired by a photograph in Discovery Magazine (2019), where an Inuit girl drinks seawater, the project examines salt’s dynamic role in natural processes, such as aged sea ice producing drinkable water. While the Inuit historically avoided salt for preservation, its necessity for bodily functions highlights its universal importance.

Salt also regulates ocean currents, with Arctic ice melt altering salinity and disrupting ecosystems and climate patterns, threatening food security. Beyond ecology, salt is integral in food preservation, therapy, and industry, such as dyeing textiles.





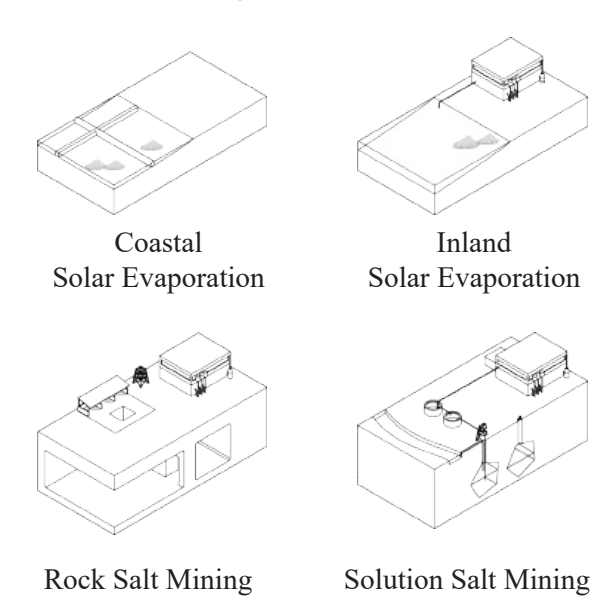
Global Scale Research  
Mapping the Salt



Salt Types



Salt Harvesting



Salt Applications

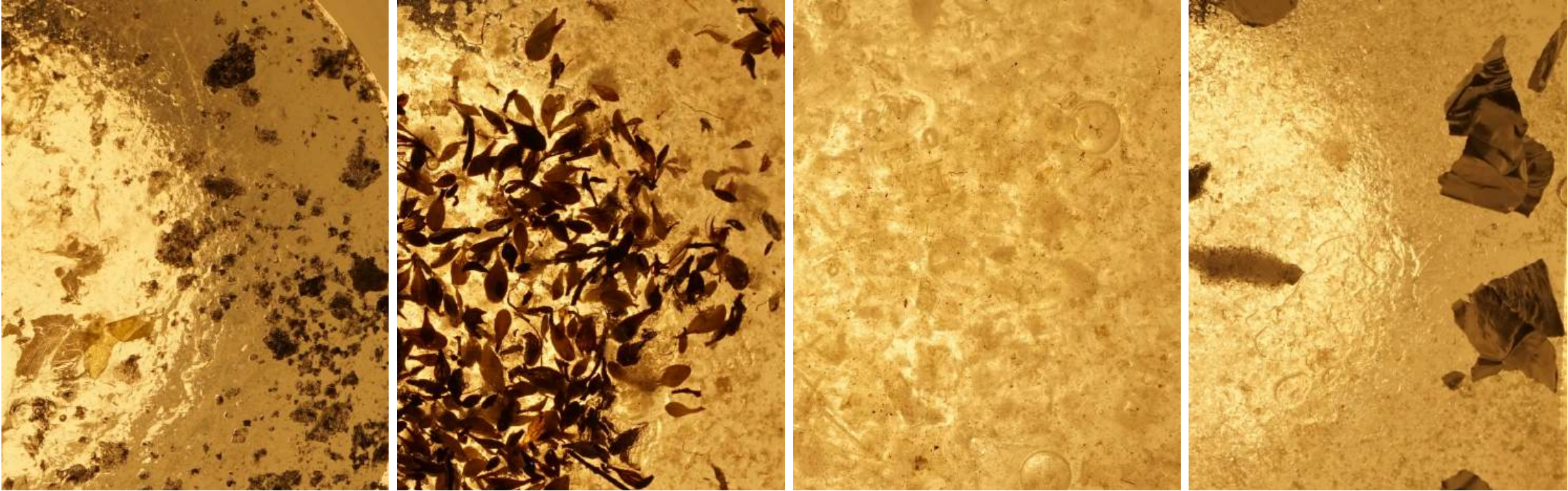






**Experiment- Salt, Light, Archive**

In the early stages of the studio, I experimented with various types of salt merged with resin, observing how light interacts with the differing crystals and colors. This material exploration served not only as a study of translucency and texture, but also as a direct, tactile metaphor for the idea of “archiving”—to preserve, to freeze a moment in time. By embedding salt in resin, I began to question what it means to archive in the context of architecture: is it about recording form, material, or the ephemeral experiences tied to space? These experiments became a reflective process, prompting me to consider how materiality can embody memory, emotion, and narrative.





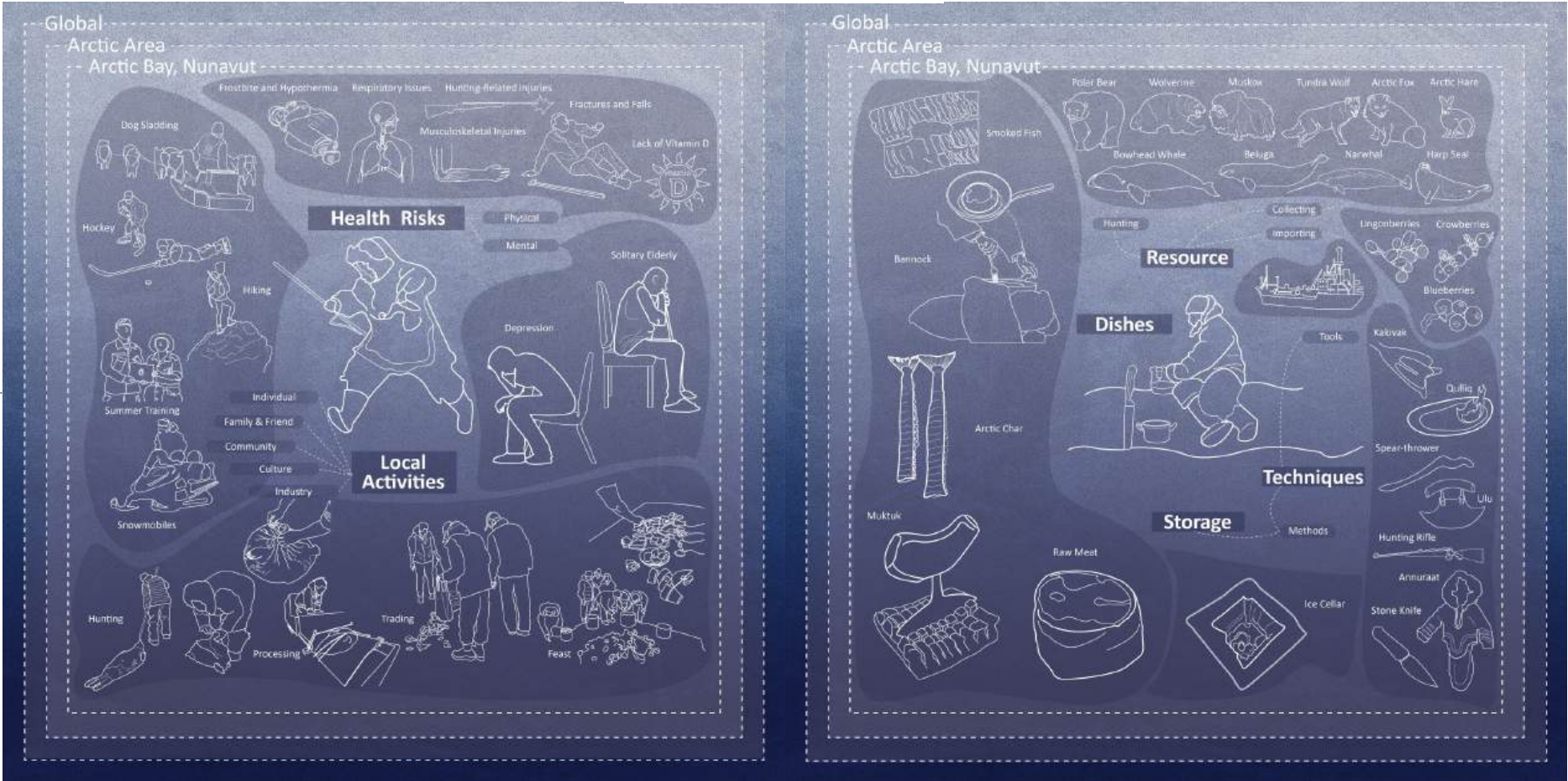
Local Scale Research  
Program Analysis

Arctic Bay, Nunavut, Canada

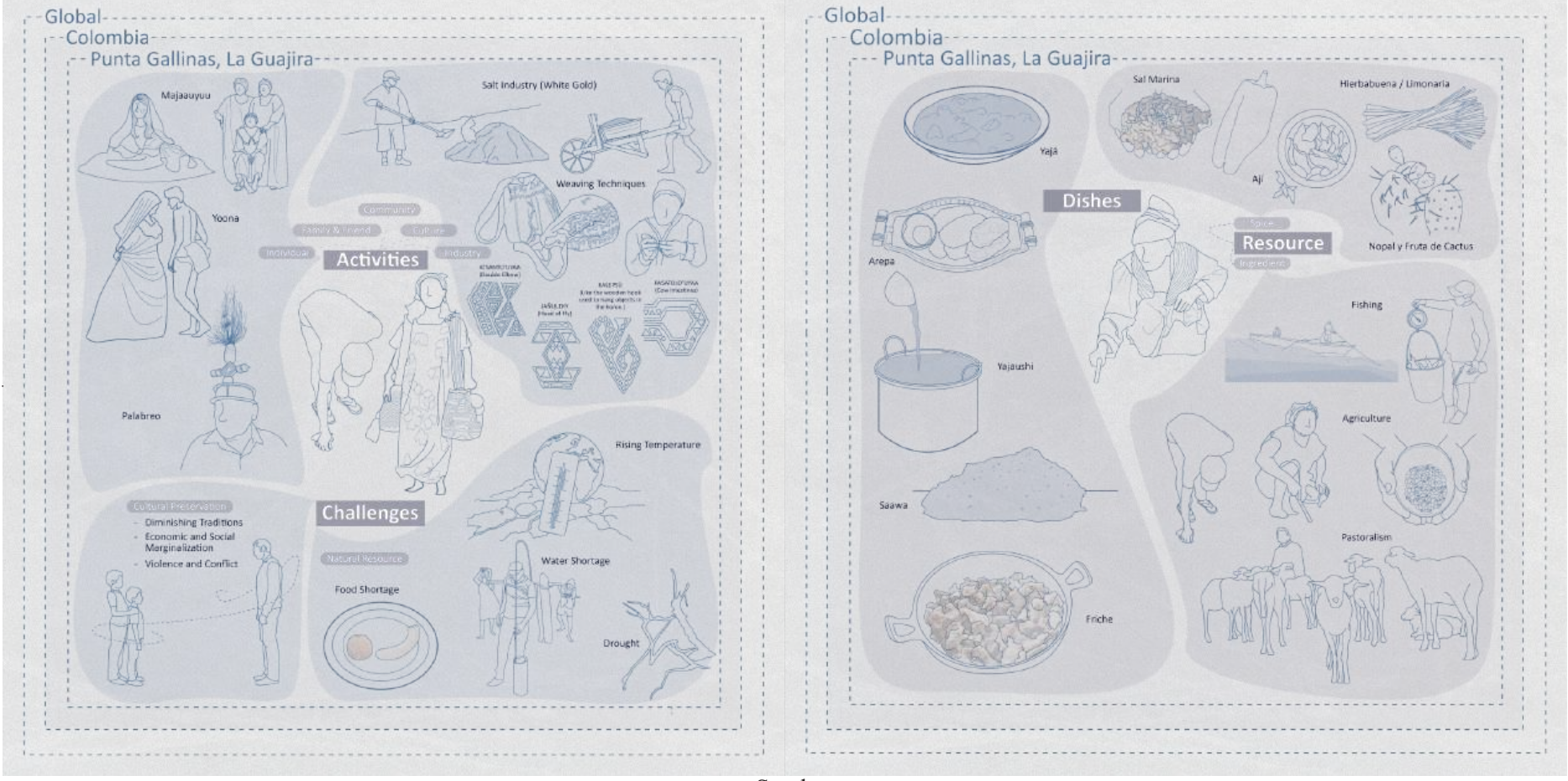
Traditions and Activities

Punta Gallinas, La Guajira, Colombia

North

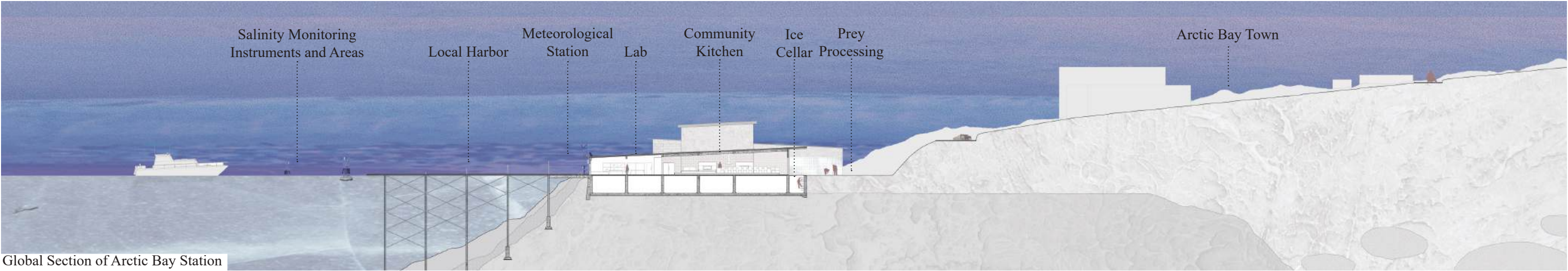


Resource and Food



South

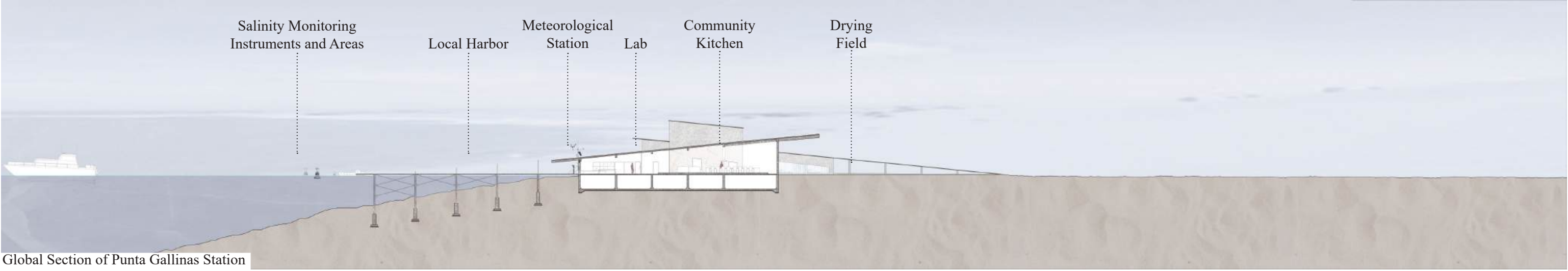




Global Section of Arctic Bay Station

Arctic Bay Salinity Station

Global salinity shifts are deeply interconnected, with even slight changes leading to significant impacts. The first station, Arctic Bay, symbolizes the absence of salt and reflects the Melting Archive Studio concept. This section explores how salinity is detected, recorded, and experienced by local communities, with salt as the medium linking people and environment.

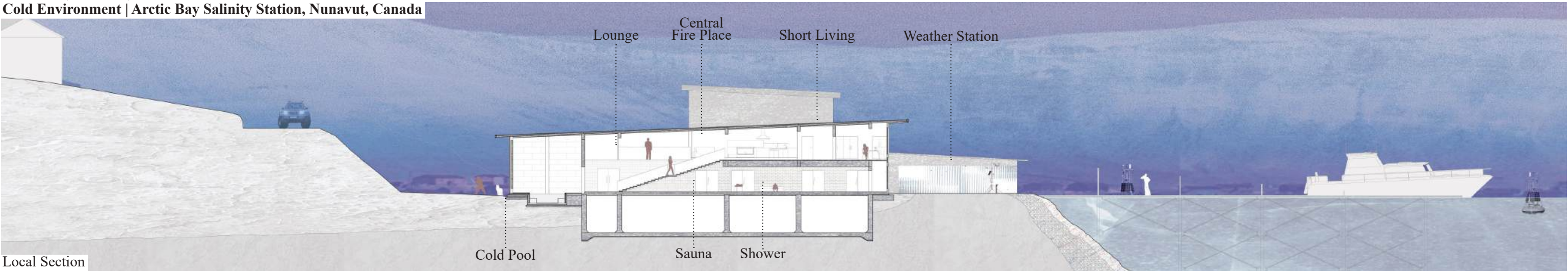


Global Section of Punta Gallinas Station

Punta Gallinas Salinity Station

On the other hand, the second station, Punta Gallinas—home to one of the largest evaporation pools in Colombia and the world—marks the project’s strongest contrast due to its tropical setting. As part of a broader “salinity detecting system,” it explores how detection and recording facilities interact with the local Wayuu people and engage with salt as a medium connecting community and environment.

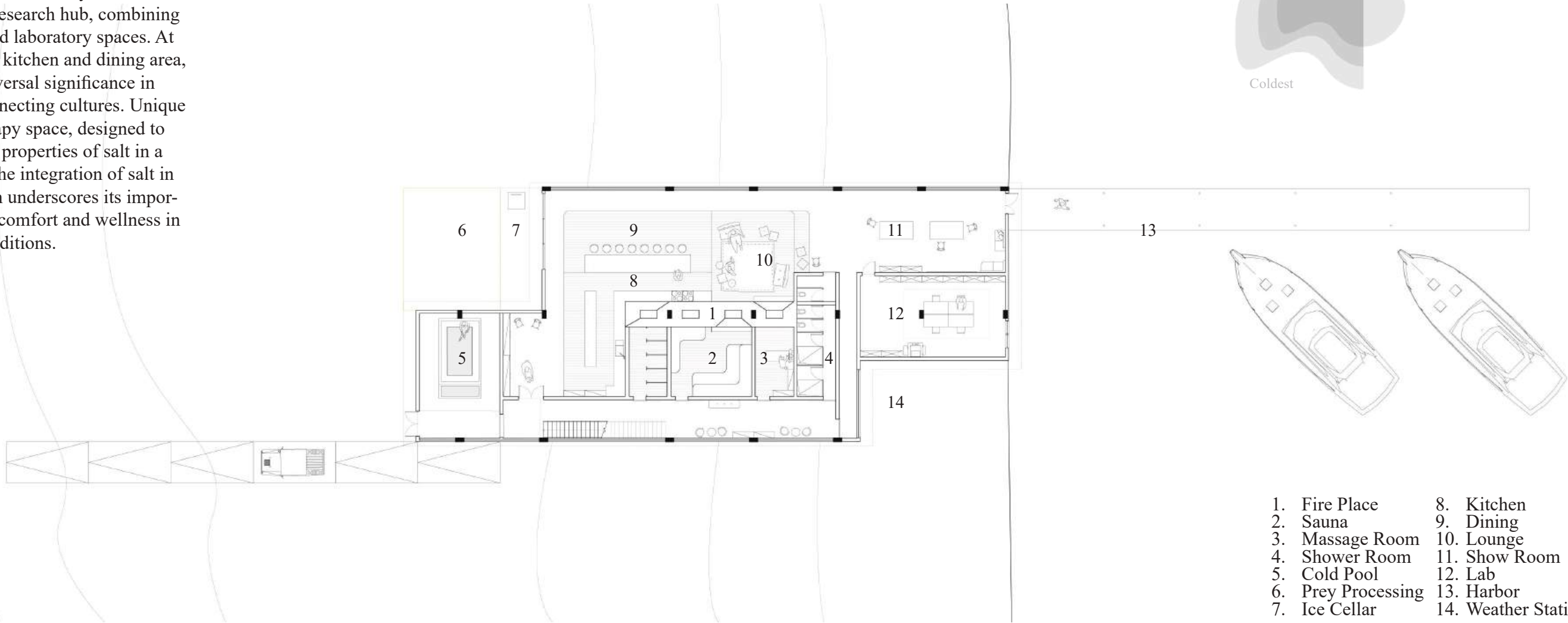
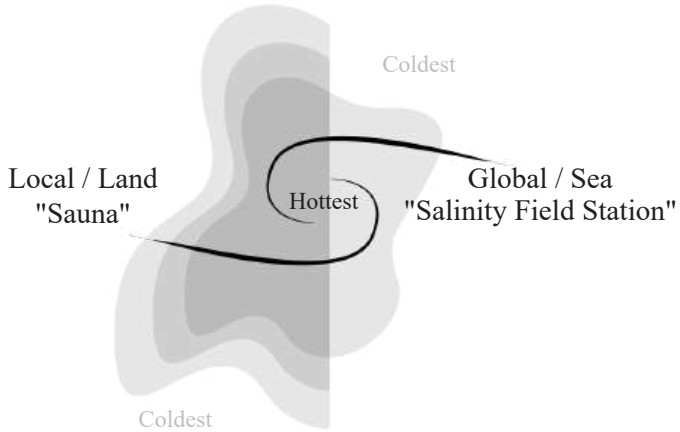




Local Section

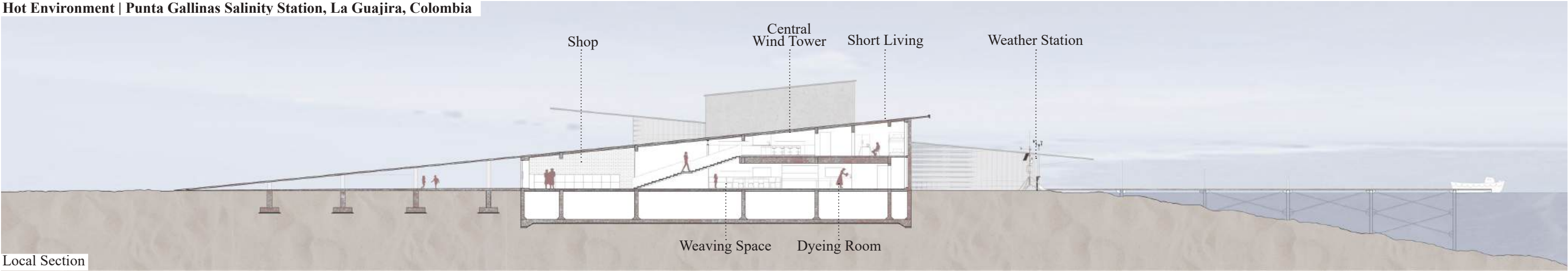
**Local Program: Sauna**

The Arctic Bay station embodies the theme of absence, symbolizing the stark salinity-free environment of the Arctic. A Trombe wall forms the station’s focal point, its interior clad in salt panels to reflect the global salinity theme. This station functions as a research hub, combining salinity observation and laboratory spaces. At its core is a communal kitchen and dining area, representing salt’s universal significance in sustaining life and connecting cultures. Unique to Arctic Bay is a therapy space, designed to harness the restorative properties of salt in a serene environment. The integration of salt in both form and function underscores its importance while providing comfort and wellness in the extreme Arctic conditions.



- |                    |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Fire Place      | 8. Kitchen          |
| 2. Sauna           | 9. Dining           |
| 3. Massage Room    | 10. Lounge          |
| 4. Shower Room     | 11. Show Room       |
| 5. Cold Pool       | 12. Lab             |
| 6. Prey Processing | 13. Harbor          |
| 7. Ice Cellar      | 14. Weather Station |

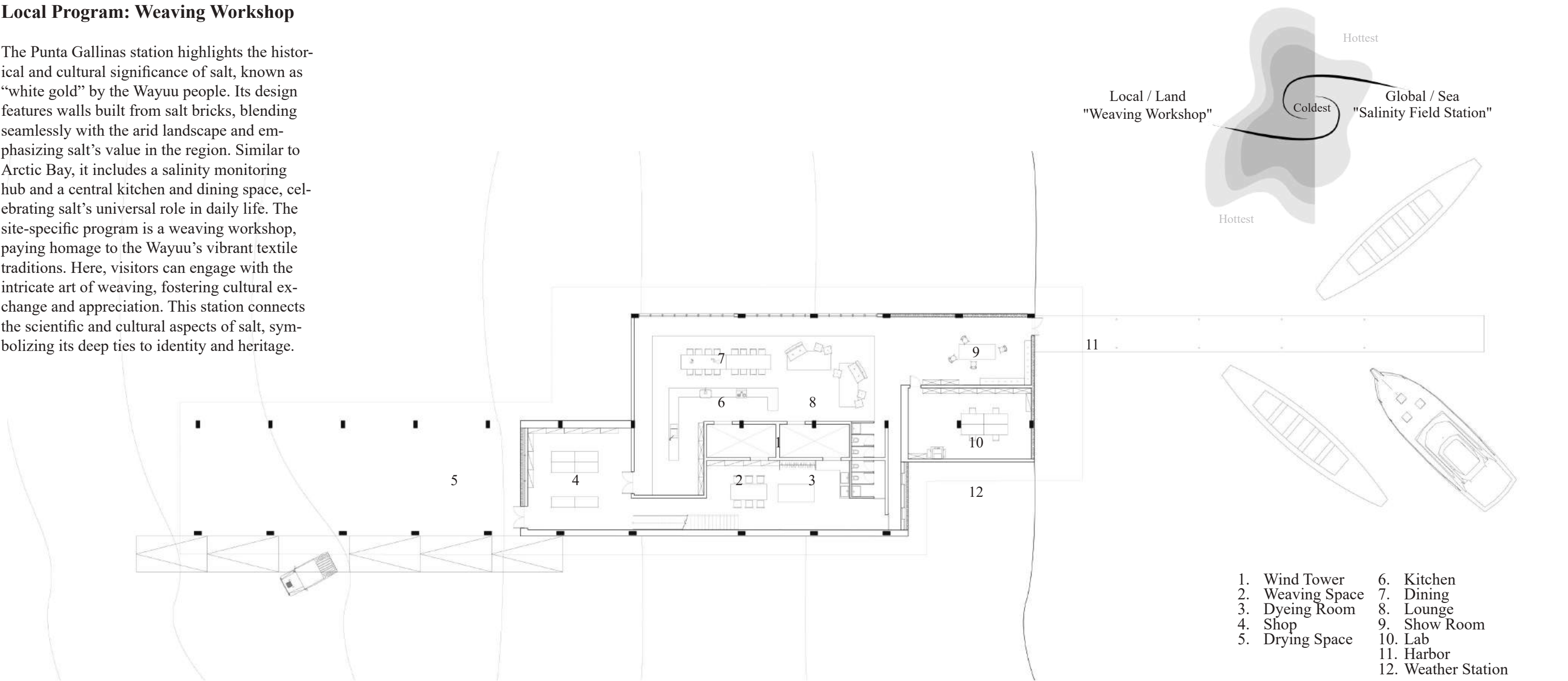




Local Section

**Local Program: Weaving Workshop**

The Punta Gallinas station highlights the historical and cultural significance of salt, known as “white gold” by the Wayuu people. Its design features walls built from salt bricks, blending seamlessly with the arid landscape and emphasizing salt’s value in the region. Similar to Arctic Bay, it includes a salinity monitoring hub and a central kitchen and dining space, celebrating salt’s universal role in daily life. The site-specific program is a weaving workshop, paying homage to the Wayuu’s vibrant textile traditions. Here, visitors can engage with the intricate art of weaving, fostering cultural exchange and appreciation. This station connects the scientific and cultural aspects of salt, symbolizing its deep ties to identity and heritage.





# 9.

## Rethinking Architectural Behaviorology

Balancing Tradition and Innovation in a Changing Society

**Completed,** 05/2024 - 08/2024

**Instructor:** Oscar Oliver-Didier

**Working Type:** Academic Writing Project  
Summer Workshop & Assembly

### Abstract

This essay reflects on the relevance and limitations of Architectural Behaviorology, a theory developed by Yoshiharu Tsukamoto that emphasizes the relationship between human behavior, buildings, and nature. While it offers a human-centered alternative to post-war Japanese architectural approaches like Metabolism, its applicability to today’s large-scale urban and demographic challenges—such as aging populations and low birth rates in East Asia—is questioned. The essay argues that although Behaviorology’s localized and time-intensive methods may not suit rapid urban transformation, its core principle—centering design on everyday behaviors—remains valuable. The author illustrates this through a personal design studio project focused on Alzheimer’s care in Coney Island, which seeks to integrate care spaces into the broader community. Ultimately, the text suggests that while Behaviorology may not be a universally scalable method, its emphasis on locality and lived experience offers meaningful insights for future design strategies that prioritize cultural and human sensitivity over abstract form-making.



“There is nothing permanent except change,” said the Greek philosopher Heraclitus over 2,500 years ago. This sentiment resonates deeply with the essence of ‘Architectural Behaviorology,’ a theory developed by Yoshiharu Tsukamoto 15 years ago that explores the relationship between people, buildings, and nature. However, this notion also raises a question for me: “Given the limitations and lessons learned from the Metabolist approach, can Behaviorology be applied as a practical strategy by architects and designers to address modern societal challenges in East Asian countries, such as the super-aging population and declining birth rates?”

To begin with, Architectural Behaviorology offers a modern, humanized approach to defining ‘space,’ sharply contrasting with the theories of previous generations of Japanese architects like Kenzo Tange and Kazuo Shinohara. Tange’s ‘Metabolism’ aimed to rebuild Japan’s urban areas by focusing on the relationship between form and function, while Shinohara emphasized the contradictions between interior, exterior, and traditional spaces, particularly in housing typology. Both architects, along with their contemporaries, often prioritized architectural form and interaction at the expense of everyday human needs. In contrast, ‘Behaviorology,’ introduced in 2010, centers on three main components: human behavior, buildings, and nature, with ‘time’ also playing a crucial role. Yoshiharu Tsukamoto, a proponent of this theory, argues that the definition of ‘space’ should be rooted in the behaviors that occur within it, rather than solely in materials, form, or location. This approach rejects the mass-produced concepts that emerged post-World War I and II, advocating instead for a more nuanced understanding of space that is inherently connected to the lived experiences of its inhabitants. In my opinion, this focus on the present and the individual over a generalized or uniform perspective fosters cultural diversity in a globalized world, resisting the impulse to label individuals with a broad, homogenizing image

However, reflecting on my initial question, I now believe that Architectural Behaviorology may not be a practical method for application in most urban areas worldwide, including Japan itself. First, defining an entire community based on the observation of a few individuals’ daily routines is inherently limited, and conversely, recording the behav-

iors of all community members is unfeasible. Additionally, the issue of representativeness arises—how many people’s routines can genuinely reflect the needs of an entire community? It’s not just about the number of people, but also the proportion and ratio that must be considered. Secondly, the research and documentation processes are time-consuming, especially if designers intend to base their concepts on this data, which would require the recordings to be highly accurate and reliable. If the design scale encompasses an entire district or city, it’s conceivable that the pace of renewal might lag behind the rapidly evolving needs of society. Furthermore, in East Asia, specific challenges such as an aging population and low birth rates are particularly pressing. Designing to assist seniors in living comfortable and accessible lives while helping the country maintain a sustainable population for ongoing development should be a key responsibility for designers. While Architectural Behaviorology may have been valuable in its time for raising awareness of local cultural preservation, today’s fast-changing society demands that architectural methods—including design concepts and construction techniques—keep pace with contemporary trends rather than focus on micro-level recording. These doubts have lingered in my mind as I approached the assembly session, and they have also become a source of inspiration for my design studio topic this semester.



Although I didn’t have the opportunity to ask questions in person during the assembly session, I still want to address the issue of aging and long-term care, which I have been focusing on in my design studio—City Island, led by David Eugene Moon—since the very first week of this semester. Throughout the semester, I have concentrated on Alzheimer’s disease, leveraging Coney Island’s vibrant atmosphere and the opportunities it provides for various groups of people to gather. To briefly explain the project, my design aims to create a block that serves as a model for future care spaces. In this design, I seek to challenge the prevailing notion that care facilities are isolated, resembling islands within the broader community—where patients are often restricted from engaging with the outside world. The project includes redesigning an existing care facility, where my partner and I connected the living units with newly designed spaces for mutual sports and arts activities on the ground and second floors. This design aims to connect the elderly, young students, and visitors on different layers while still maintaining each group’s privacy. Throughout the design process, I found myself investing significant effort in understanding the different groups’ networks and circulations, which are essentially composed of their daily behaviors. This experience led me to consider how a single block can impact the broader community, and perhaps in the future, the entire district or city.

After completing the design studio and reflecting on Architectural Behaviorology, I believe this theory could serve as a foundational approach to addressing future crises. Recalling the cases mentioned in the speech, such as Japan’s earthquake response, the fisherman school, and the wood industry, all draw upon existing traditions, industries, and cultures. These projects clearly incorporate local perspectives and thoroughly consider the needs and thoughts of the community, demonstrating a practical application of behaviorology principles deeply rooted in the unique contexts of these villages. I still think that Architectural Behaviorology, as presented now, including the application design cases and the theory itself, is too

localized to be widely applied in other areas and countries outside of Japan. However, the essence of the concept—to focus more on local people—holds potential for designers to explore further.

In conclusion, Architectural Behaviorology indeed breaks boundaries from diverse perspectives, whether it’s challenging dominant theories that focus on form and Japanese philosophy in Japan, or global architectural trends like white boxes and parametric design. Yoshiharu Tsukamoto and Momoyo Kaijima have redirected some focus back to basic human needs, which is also the direction I am interested in. There is no definitive answer on the exact method to address the problems I’ve mentioned, but it is a starting point for architects and designers to refocus attention on the different people and users involved—a sensitivity that I believe many in the field currently lack.

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# 10.

## Reflection

Research and Artwork Inspired by Lina Bo Bardi

**Completed,** 09/2024 - 12/2024

**Instructor:** Steven Holl, Principal, Steven Holl Architects  
Dimitra Tsachrelia, Partner, Steven Holl Architects

**Working Type:** Academic Art Project,  
Fall Semester Seminar

### Introduction

In this class, we were asked to select an architect and create an artwork that reflects their core ideas and design philosophy. I chose Lina Bo Bardi, whose work consistently reveals a deep sensitivity to social context, human behavior, and material culture. Her belief that architecture is not static form but something activated by human experience is central to her thinking. As she wrote, “Architecture is created, ‘invented anew,’ by each man who attempts her, who roams her space, climbs a stair, rests on a balustrade, lifts his head to look, open, close a door, who sits down or gets up and makes intimate contact with, and at the same time create ‘forms’ in, the space.” From her early illustrations to iconic projects like the Glass House, São Paulo Museum of Art, and SESC Pompeia, Bo Bardi emphasized the relationship between people and space, often drawing inspiration from vernacular practices, political realities, and the mundane moments of daily life. Through this project, I aimed to trace how her vision—rooted in phenomenology, inclusivity, and the power of drawing—can be transformed into a new form of spatial narrative, using visual language not only as representation but also as a tool for social engagement.





Creation

Three key concepts I draw from Lina Bo Bardi’s work are:  
# Mundane Moments  
# Chromatic and Detailed Expression  
# Reflection

Inspired by Bo Bardi’s approach—especially her childlike, vibrant sketches that served as the starting point for many of her projects—I chose to work through both drawing and modeling. My illustrations record the abstract ideas and emotional impressions that emerged over the course of a month, capturing the subtle, every-day experiences often overlooked. The model, in contrast, explores material contradictions and acts as a means of freezing and reflecting on specific moments from my daily life. Together, these media form a dialogue between fleeting sensation and spatial permanence, echoing Bo Bardi’s belief in architecture as a living, experiential process.





# 11.

## Appendix

Kinne Trip

- Montevideo, Uruguay
- Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- São Paulo, Brazil

**Date:** From 03/07/2025 to 03/18/2025

### Kinne Trip

The main destination for our studio was Montevideo, Uruguay, where we visited several examples of collective housing. In many cases, public programs are integrated into the community as architectural extensions—physically connected to the housing but still distinct and noticeable.

After the Montevideo trip concluded early, I extended my journey to Brazil, where I explored Brutalist architecture and experienced the local landscapes and urban environments. Although I also come from a hot and humid climate, the cultural context and architectural philosophies were remarkably different—far beyond what I had imagined.

### Epilogue

Architecture captures the experiences and illusions of everyday life, transforming them into physical spaces. I believe that everything I have explored and encountered—whether through photography, art creation, culinary arts training, language studies, or professional tour guide experiences—serves as essential nourishment for my architectural creations.

#### Montevideo, Uruguay



#### Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



#### São Paulo, Brazil

