

DISSECTING URBAN FRAGMENTS

ASSEMBLING THE CITY



2978300

17/06/2025

TU DELFT

URBAN ARCHITECTURE

GRADUATION STUDIO AR3UA100

CATALOGUE BOOK

***FABIAN WACHTER
CATALOGUE BOOK***





„[...] the art is in the picking up,
turning over and putting with.“

Alison and Peter Smithson

in *As Found: The Discovery of the Ordinary* (1990)

INTRODUCTION

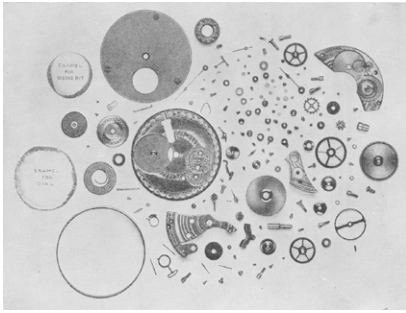
01

The human experience is based on the highly subjective process of perception. As cultural and social beings we are subject to a constant flood of impressions from our peers and surroundings which get detected by our sensory organs, processed in relation to our morals and ideas and then combined with existing memories and past experiences. The result of this combination process lies in everyone's individualistic view on the world and their resulting actions taken.

Even when confronted with identical stimuli, perception still varies in between individuals due to differences in the focus of the senses we choose to apply and the given, uncontrollable frame of reference existing in one's mind. Input of information thus enables the process of perception but not before being filtered through one's unique existing thought construct subconsciously developed throughout life. This process starts by dissecting what is sensed as relevant from the input, taking in these individual fragments of information and then assembling them to form a coherent assessment.

When starting my research project I asked myself how this process of fragmentation during perception can help me understand the complex and intricate site we were given to conceive our project. How can I capture its identity to inform my design while accepting the fact that the tools for gathering information are biased by my personal angle?





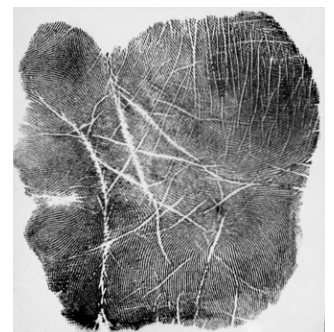
no. 1



no. 117



no. 122



no. 54

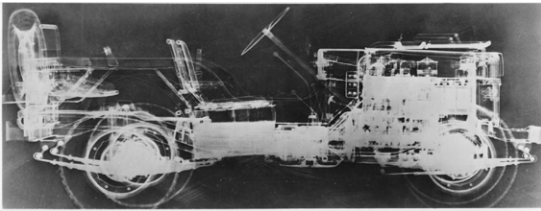


Nigel Henderson (1953)
Parallel of Life and Art - Installation View

N. Henderson, E. Paolozzi, A. Smithson, P. Smithson (1953)
excerpts from the catalogue „Parallel of Life and Art“



no. 81



no. 14

Perceiving, understanding and arranging external impressions was at the core of Alison and Peter Smithons work during the time of the *as found* movement and their involvement with the independent group. They heavily focused on the external, the found, mostly uncontrollable input they sought to inform their projects. Working with an objective mass of information combined with their subjective perception of it is key to their artistic endeavors of the time.

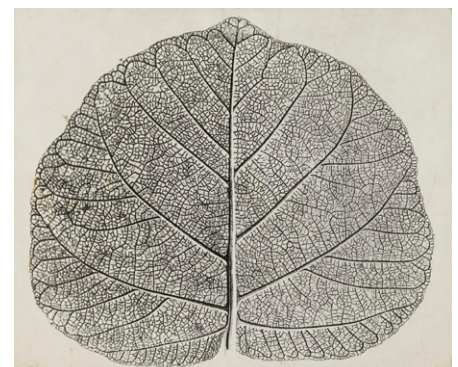
In their essay „The *As found* and the *Found*“ as part of their 1990 publication „*As Found: The Discovery of the Ordinary*“ they describe their creative process based on perceiving by way of picking up what presents itself, turning it over at your own will and then putting it with where you think it fits. They use this rather simple three step methodology to concisely describe their ventures in literature, art and architecture during this period of their career. This sufficient process was born from necessity during the post-war period their school of thought stemmed from and developed further into an approach still applied and taught in modern, globalized times in which the constant availability of cultural and physical goods is often wrongfully taken for granted. They claimed that their creative doing is about „wanting what you got, rather than going out and getting what you wanted“. As such the *as found* seems not only to look for something to find but also accept the fact that what you already have will be taken literally *as found*. Thus the input is not what you go and get but what you already got.

A major milestone while developing the concept was their 1953 exhibition „Parallel of life and art“ curated in collaboration with their independent group colleagues Nigel Henderson and Eduardo Paolozzi at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London.

It consisted of a rather loose and seemingly random collection of images reproduced in a comparable fashion via screenprint. All of them existing somewhere on the vast spectrum between life and art. Through the assemblage of formerly unrelated pieces the foursome puts images into context that were never supposed to interact thus creating a whole they were never meant to form.

In the opening speech Henderson used the term *imaginary museum* to describe the aspired impact of their exhibition. A phrase taken from André Malraux who coined the concept of the *musée imaginaire* as a figurative attempt in explaining the process of perception. In his words the individual and imaginary museum in everyones mind is constantly being filled with input, some random encounters others externally curated like their exhibition, but the final perceived result can not be predicted nor controlled due to the subjective nature of perception and everyone being the main curator of their own imaginary museum.

The literal gaps in between the artwork shown in London in 1953 represent the space given to the internal processes of perception and the idea that the frame of reference that every visitor brings to the exhibition is as much a part of their experience as the artwork that is currently on display. The personal lens through which they choose to perceive the project, in this case decided by dividing their focus between the 122 different images, has a profound impact on the experience.



no. 107

Similar to the methods of the *as found* movement I started to dive into my research without superimposing external visions of my project but instead keeping an open mind. Staying hungry for input of any kind and ready for whatever comes my way. The border between what is feasible input to the project and what becomes a restriction in design is sometimes hard to perceive but the more I get to know the site including its intricacies and surroundings, the more quality I can find in what at first seemed like a restriction. When looking for something to *find*, essentially stimuli informing the project, there are many ways of gathering. The sources of input for our projects in the studio are plentiful. Some on site, some from afar. Some in conversation, some in writing. Some direct references, some more abstract concepts. Some given with purpose, some taken out of context. Some found by me, some found by others. My initial angle taken for exploration was guided by the broad structure of the studio. Before anything it started with visiting Antwerp for the first time in my life.

Spending time on site and experiencing it first hand turned to my main research method very quickly. By now I lost count of how many times I visited Antwerp since starting the studio. I guess the joint excursion after our P3 presentations must have been the 9th or 10th time. With every visit, be it organized or spontaneous, alone, with classmates from the studio or with friends and family, overnight or daytrip, my image of the situation at hand gets a little more clear. While attempting to grasp the spatial condition I combine research of the currently existing situation I encountered on site with historical data and existing ideas for transformation. Understanding the sites past on the way to imagining its future.

Finding usable input for my project also goes beyond the site itself. During this graduation year there have been many sources for inspiration. Some of them intentionally sought out, some of them curated by others and some just encountered while living life with my eyes opened.

Whether its learning about urban development processes in lectures by Aurélie Hachez, Paul Vermeulen or Nicole van Roij. Christophe Van Gerrewy telling us about all the peculiarities of Belgium and its architecture. Watching architects proudly present their work in front of a crowd eager to see how others fulfilled their dream of manifesting ideas as buildings. I specifically remember Juliane Greb and Anne Femmer explaining their joint ventures in separate lectures, a good example of how subjective perception of identical stimuli really can be and Sam Chermayeff telling us about all the groundbreaking projects he keeps blessing the world with. Studying the syllabus cowritten by the teaching staff gave a first outline of the way the chair of Urban Architecture likes to work. Visiting urban sites of varying scale in Ghent, Marseille, Lyon and beyond guided and sometimes created by the same people provided an even more clear image of the style and scope of projects they are aiming for. Consulting literature about urbanity like Rossis *Architecture of the City* which Leeke handed me in our first tutoring along with the request not to read it. Obsessing about the boundary pushing endeavors happening in and around the collective of ARCH+. Hoping for a better future in support of organizations like the petition houseeurope.eu. Perceiving life in different cities entirely separate from the studio while observing the way humans behave in these urban environments, always relating to my personal vision of the city. Filling up my own imaginary museum with memo-

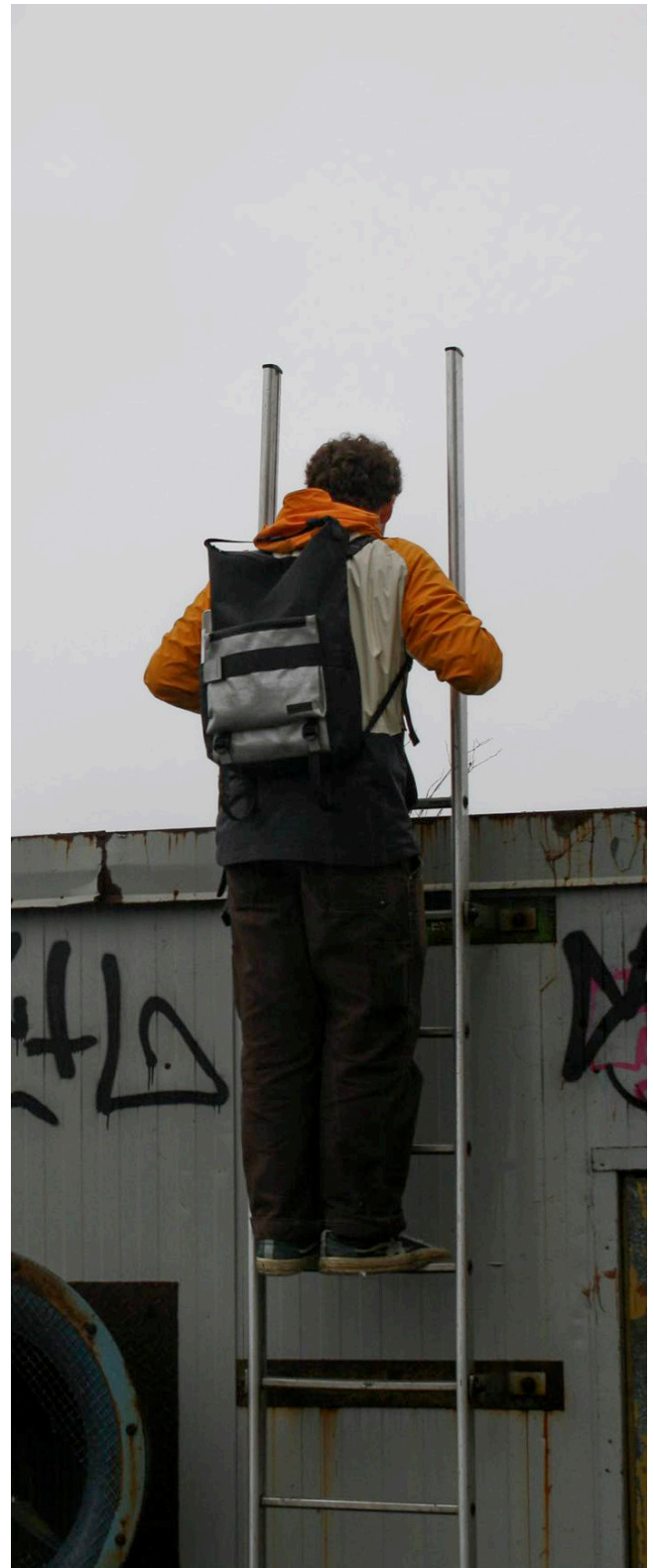
ries and experiences stemming from a never ending flood of impressions that urban life throws at me. Picking up anything that strikes an interest, turning it over to analyze and understand and putting it with my personal frame of reference. Dissecting from the found, collecting the resulting fragments and assembling them to form my personal narrative.

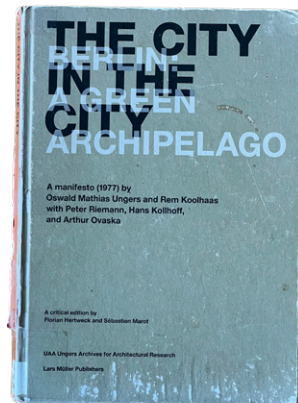
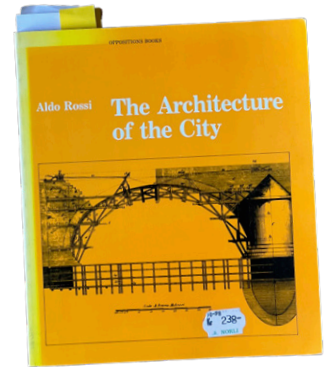
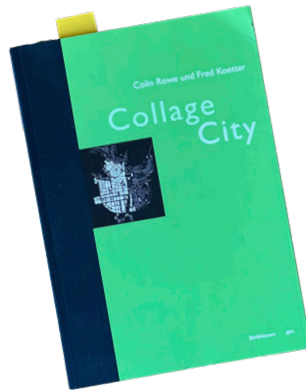
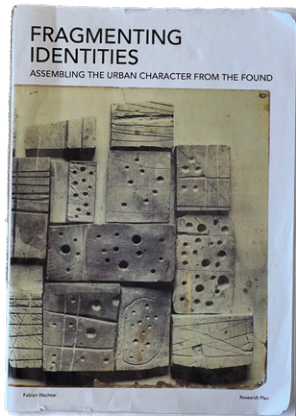
With this catalogue book I wish to take you along the way of this project I worked on during my graduation year. In essence it contains the results of a year long exploration of a small piece of land in Antwerp and a resulting proposal for an architectural intervention. It also entails the process of me assembling my own architectural identity, shaped by what I was taught, what I created and what I found.

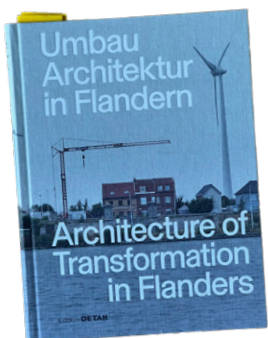
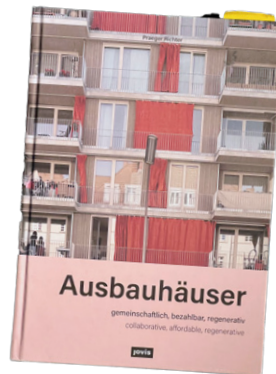
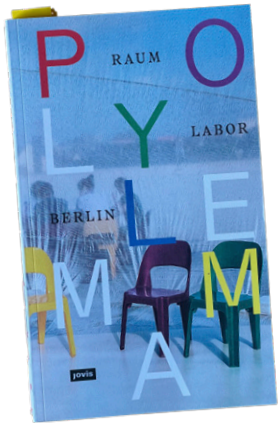
I aspire to create an offering of fragmented input which the reader can assemble somewhere in your own musée imaginaire.

Feel free to pick it up, turn it over and put it with.

Thank you for your consideration







p. 8

p. 42

p. 62

p. 82

p. 98

p. 108

p. 122

p. 138

p. 148

p. 176

01 INTRODUCTION

02 EXPLORING THE SITE

03 THE WALLED GARDEN

04 POKING THROUGH

05 THE NEW EXISTING

06 COMPLEMENTING THE FOUND

07 PERFORATING THE ENCLOSURE

08 A NEW PUBLIC SQUARE

09 ASSEMBLING THE PROJECT

10 LOW TOWN DOWN TOWN

EXPLORATION ALONG SCALES

ANTWERPEN

HOBOKEN

FACTORY

BLIKFABRIEK

SITE

BUILDINGS

SPACES

DETAILS





The exploration started with a first visit to Antwerp. We did a bike tour guided by Rosie and saw some more or less well known architectural highlights all throughout the city. The old abandoned police head-quarter stuck out to me. A beautiful structure more than ready to become part of the city again but held back by bureaucratic hurdles and profit oriented developers.





We headed south through Kiel and towards Hoboken, the district our site is set in. The areas south of the 20th century highway ring are characterized by a diverse landscape of mostly residential areas. Often times clashing in style and scale as they were constructed at different points in time.









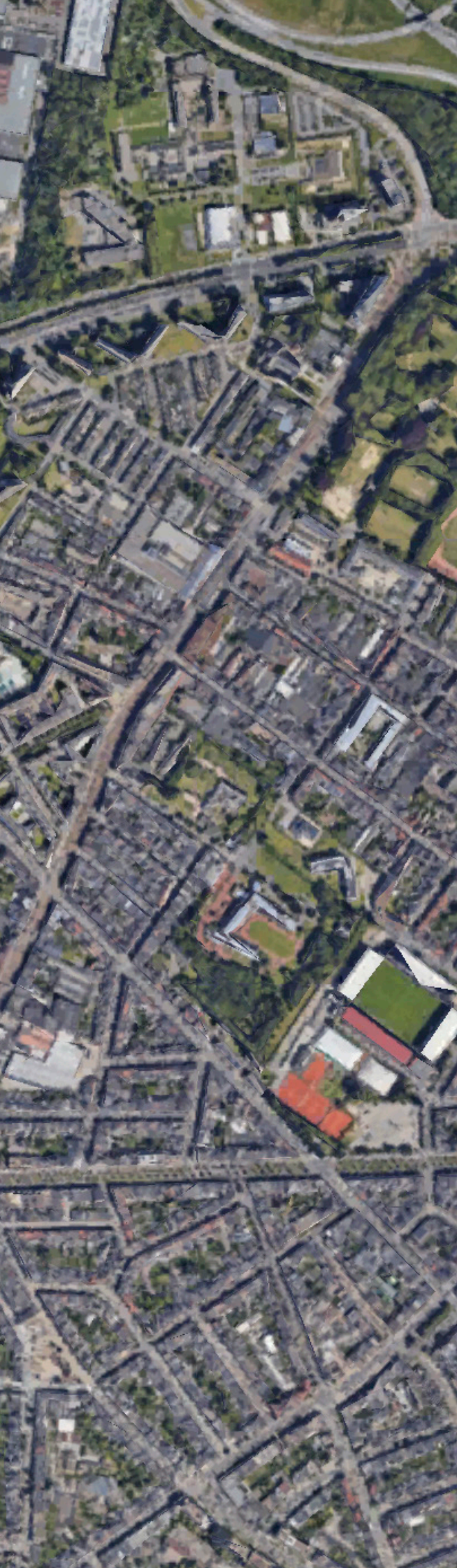
The urban fabric of Antwerps south clearly shows the dividing nature of the 20th century city belt. The given site is visible as the largest amassing of built up area in the south western district of Hoboken.





The immediate context of the site conforms to the usual structure of residential suburbs in Belgium. The old factory building immediately neighbors housing of different scales, from rowhouse to highrise. There is also multiple educational institutions on site and still operating industrial facilities nowadays more focused on logistics rather than production.





After the biketour concluded, we made it to our site, the abandoned factory halls of several former metal-working facilities. Parts of it are currently utilized by an autonomous group of urban pioneers who gave us a warm welcome and enabled us to camp in the halls of *Blikfabriek*. It was a very memorable trip as we got to know the site and most importantly each other at the start of our joint graduation year.





The act of exploring stayed an important part of my graduation project and I went back to Antwerp many times. Sometimes with friends and family, sometimes with groupmates from the studio, sometimes alone. During these trips mainly intended for research on site in Hoboken I also tried to take the time and get to know the city beyond just the south.











EXPLORING THE SITE

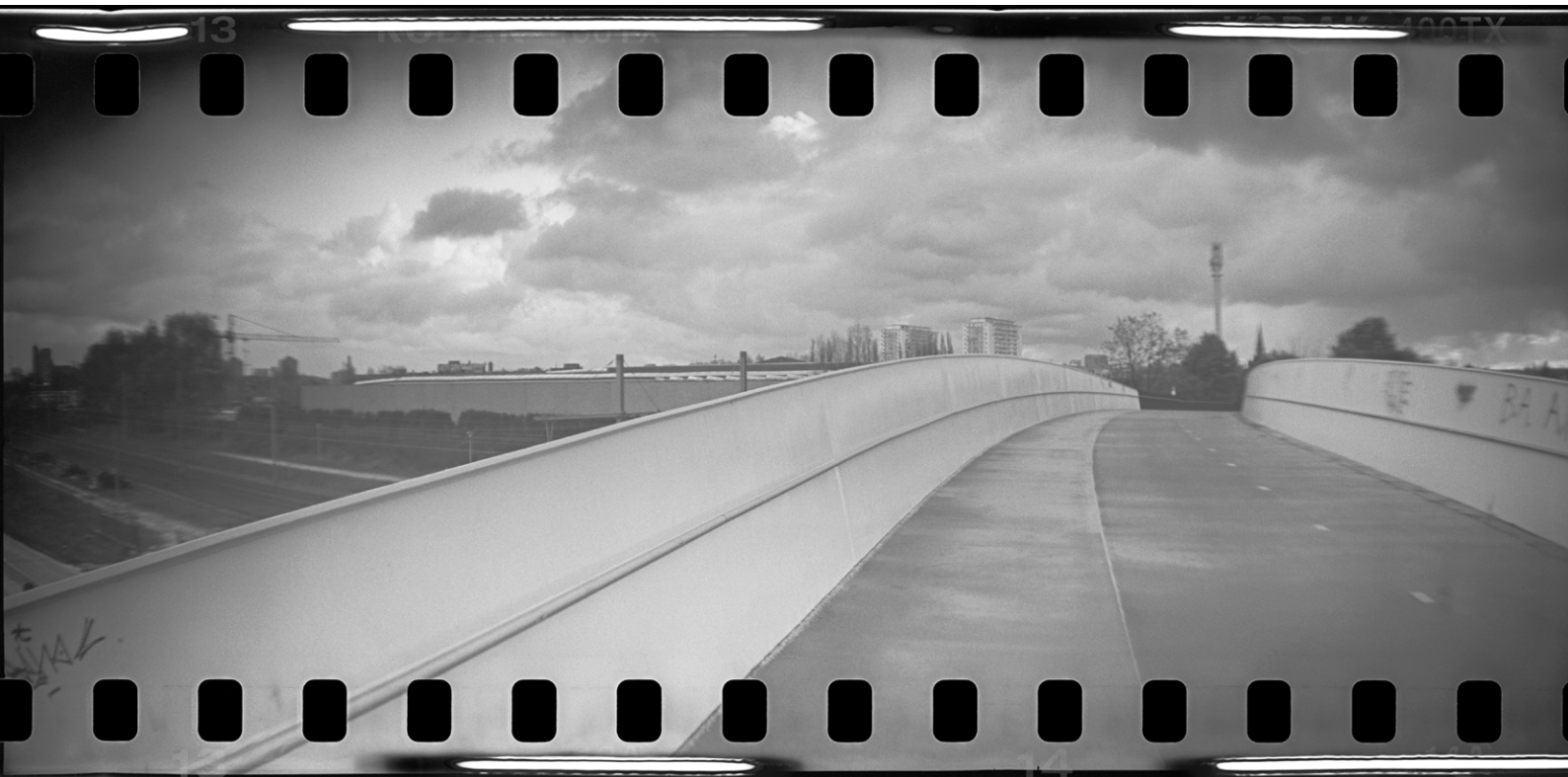


felixArchief (2006)
Aerial Photo of the site



I observed the site and its surroundings through the literal lense of my analogue panoramic camera. With its wide angle and the neutrality of black and white film I attempted to capture the sites diversity by way of objective display of the found streetscapes.





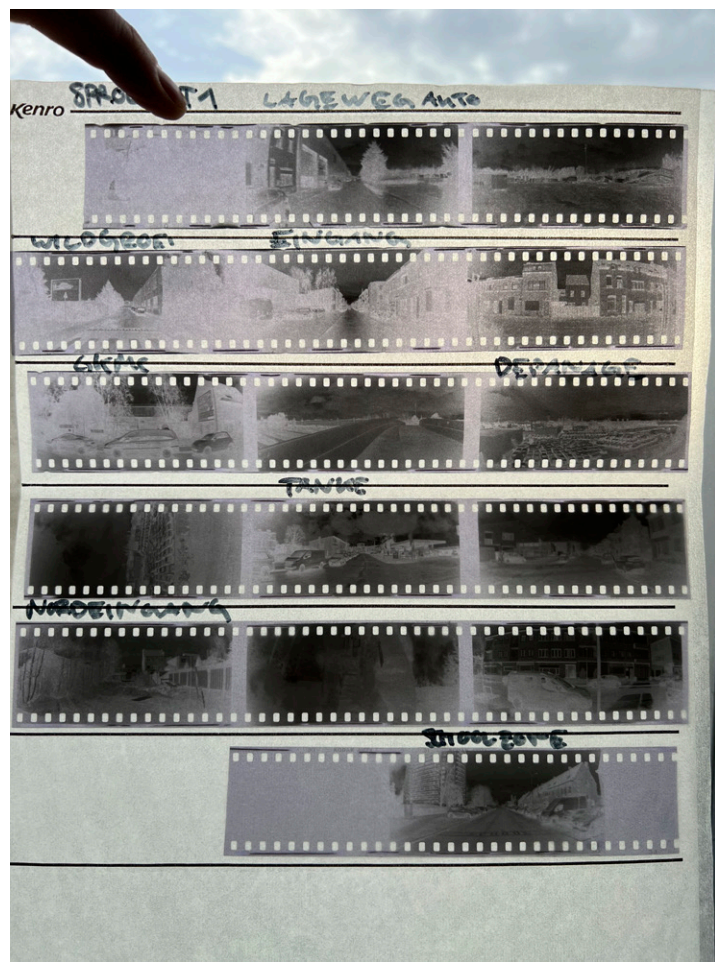
Through central perspectives along the edge of the site I captured differences in scale and density of the existing structure. Since the border of our given site ran along major streets surrounding it, the images display an immediate juxtaposition of what was presented as inside and outside.



Fabian Wachter

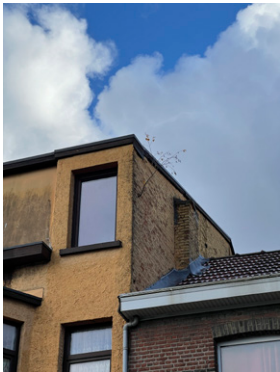
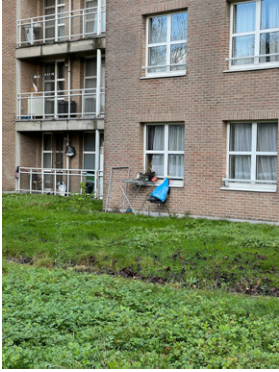


The tedious process of shooting, developing and printing the photos myself gave me a great appreciation for the images themselves and helps in finding a more mindful approach to photography.

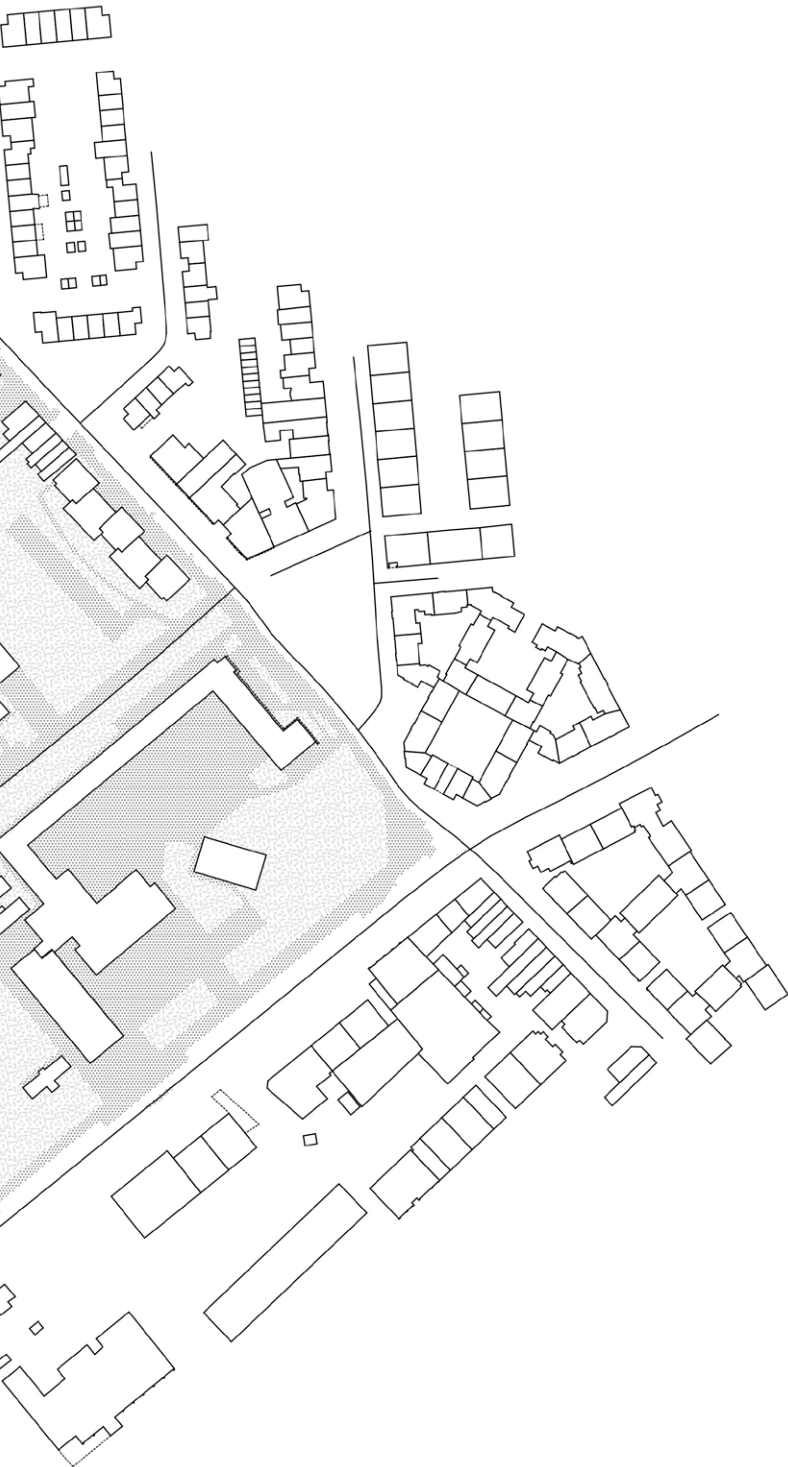












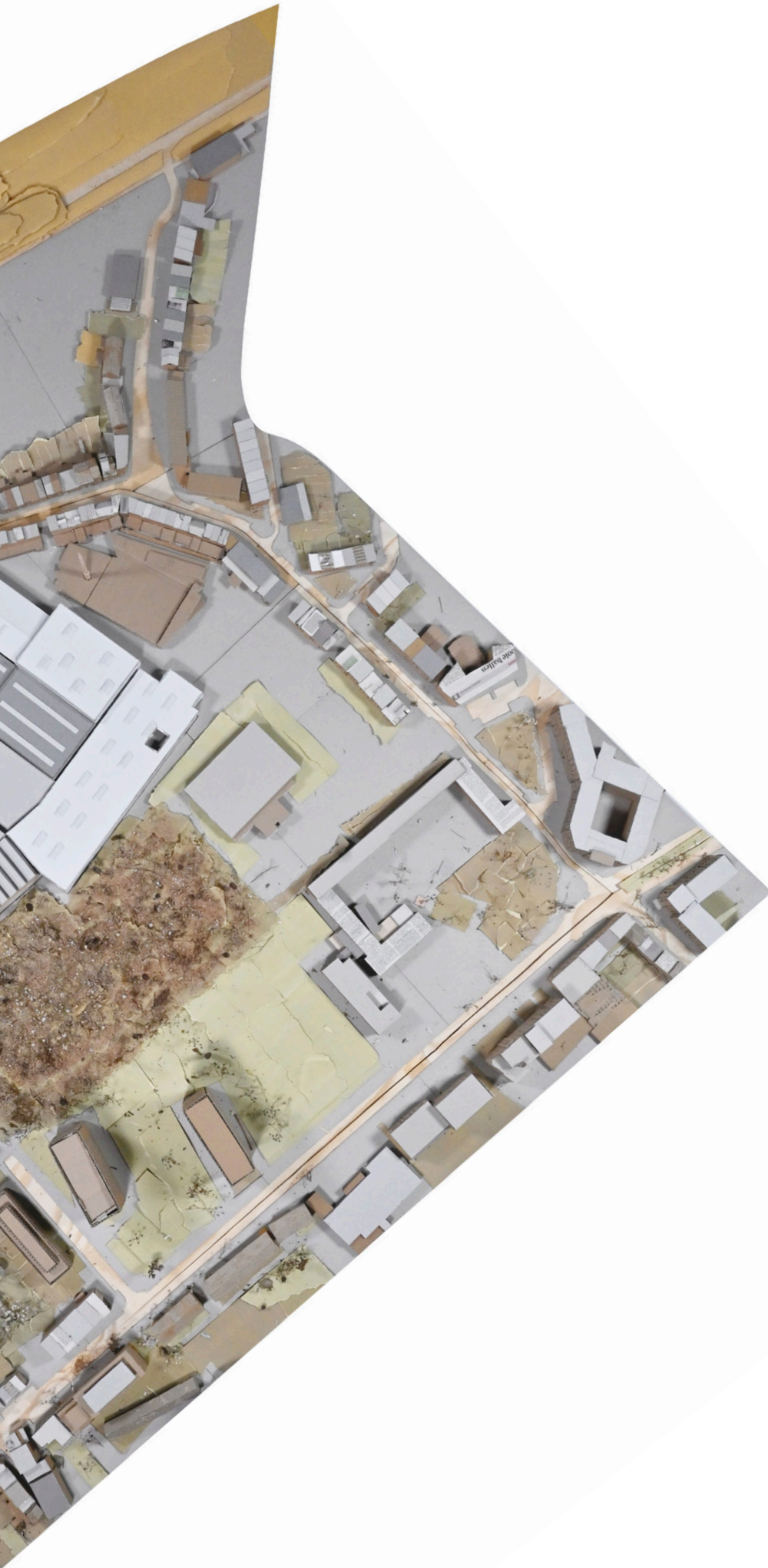
During this period of getting to know the site I created a first digital clone of the situation at hand by way of redrawing. This scalable drawing helped in understanding the dimension of what we were working with and the basis provided by the chair indicated potential ownership of space by including plotlines otherwise unperceivable.



In collaboration with the entire studio we started to work on a physical model of the entire site in 1:333. We split into teams responsible for different parts of the model and assembled it in the studio. Working with so many people on a joint product was new to me but turned out to give a lot of depth to the model. Working with different mediums, with varying degrees of abstraction, in recreating the observed site helped in gaining an overview over the situation on site.

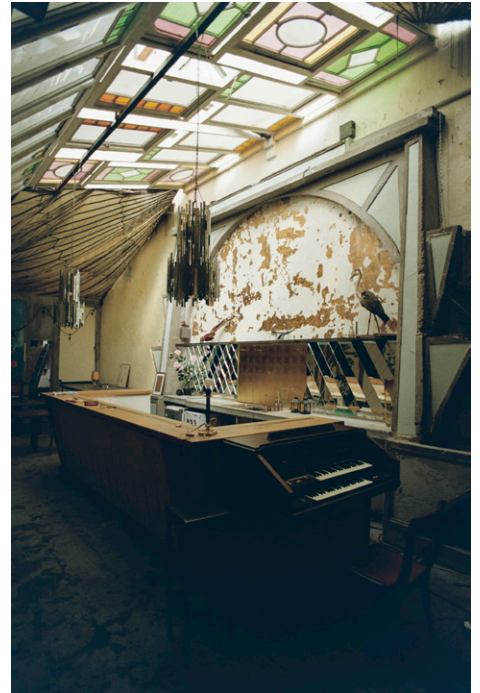






THE WALLED GARDEN







During this initial phase of getting to know the site and its intricacies on our own we were also tasked with a given theme to research in groups of 5. Intended to form a coherent image of the given situation we curated a joint exhibition for the P1 moment early in the academic year.

The theme of my group was titled The Material Garden of Gift and Waste. It focused solely on *Blikfabriek*, the temporary occupation currently inhabiting the southern part of the factory complex which used to host a can factory.

We uncovered key similarities between the found site and a garden and structured our narrative along them.

The SEASONALITY of the garden throughout a year represented by the material flow in and out of the complex.

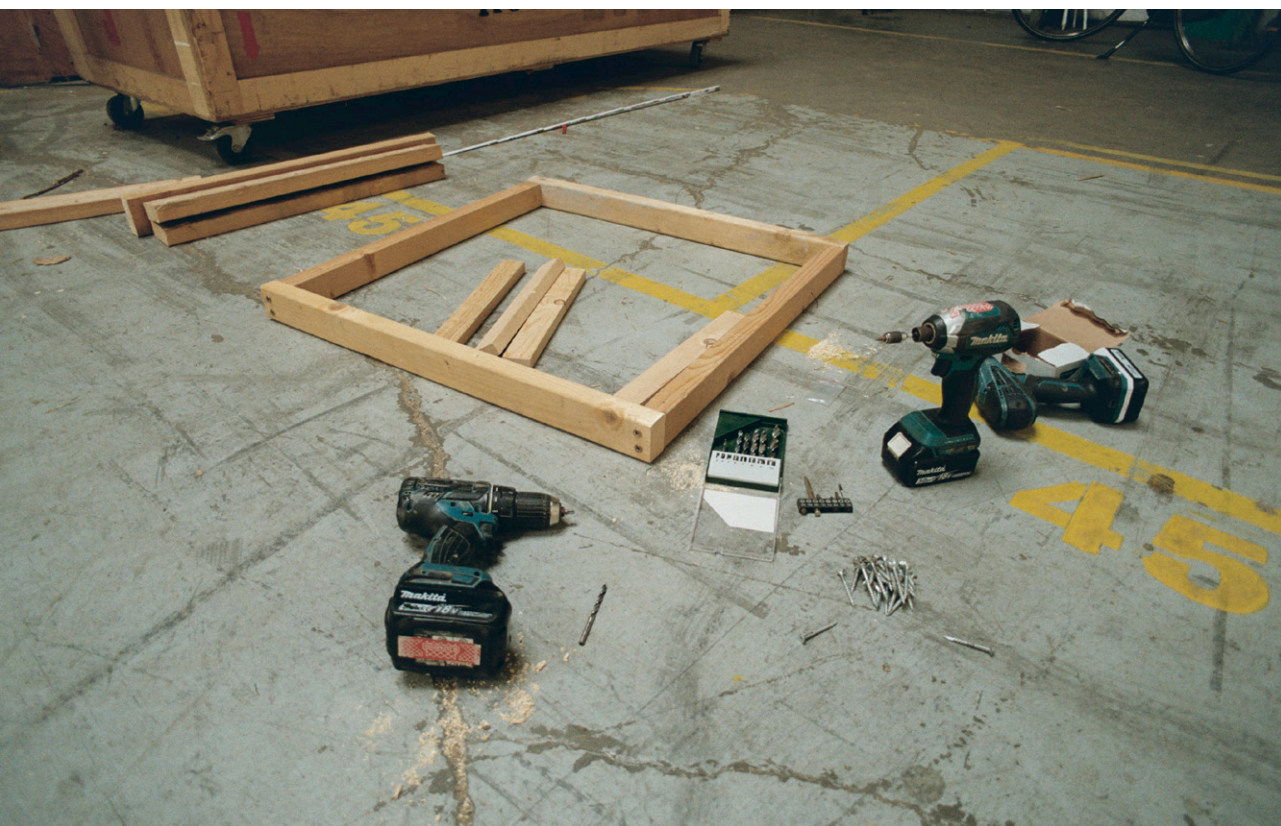
The aspect of CARE taken by the metaphorical gardeners who serve the garden.

The wall to the garden as the ENCLOSURE surrounding it. Separating the garden from the landscape it's embedded in.



SEASONALITY







CARE





ENCLOSURE







We assembled our findings through a multilayered mapping exercise mimicking the cartographic work of a landscape architect. Through fragmenting the piece and hiding the different lenses we applied during research underneath individual tiles the visitor to the exhibition can assemble their own narrative based on what we found on site.









POKING THROUGH

04



My next goal was to extend the scope of this meticulous exploration beyond the currently occupied parts of the factory halls and unravel more specifics of the site and its identity.

We started to trace the edge of the site more and try and poke through the inherent enclosure. Finding old discontinued pathways which were once entrances to the factory complex, most of them now barricaded to keep out intruders like us.

By mapping these past entrypoints and capturing the view while trying to traverse the site as far as possible I understood the former connection to the urban fabric the site used to have. A great potential for a future development aspiring to intergrate itself into rather than embed itself atop the existing tissue.







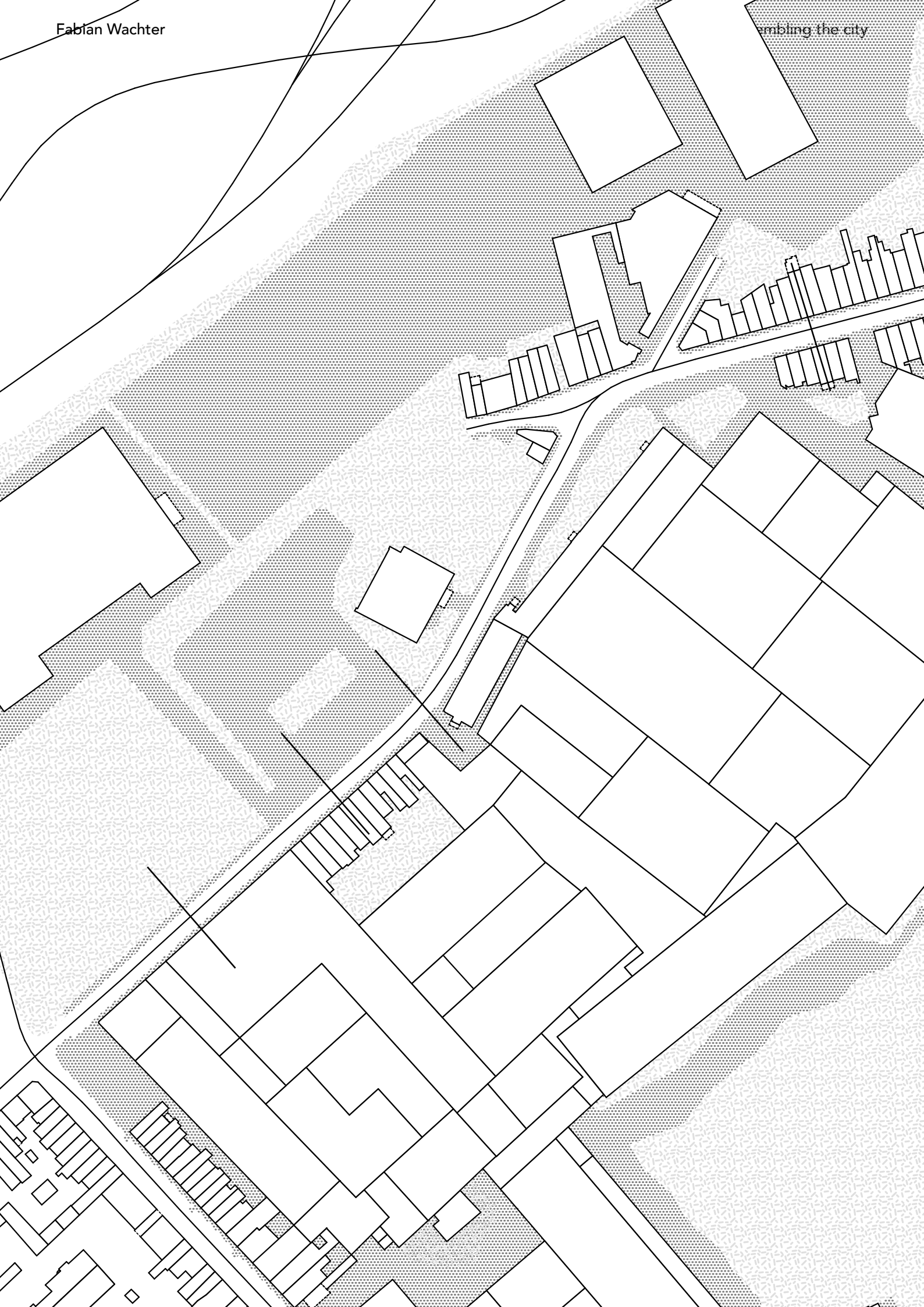


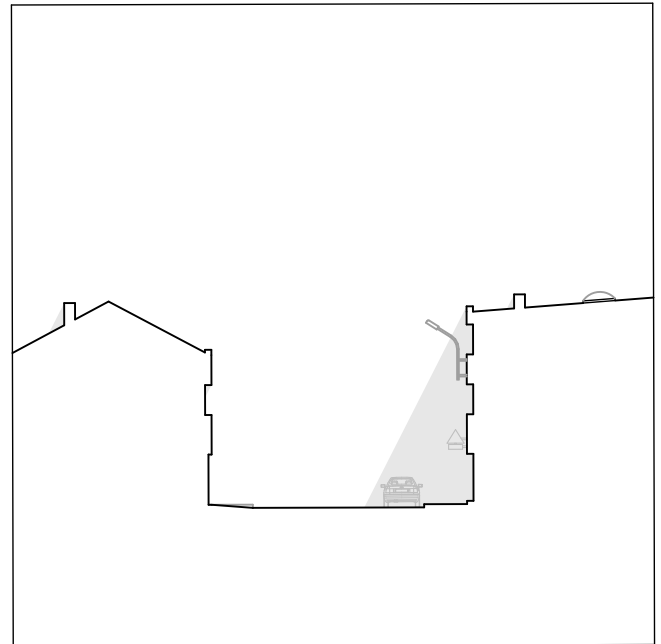
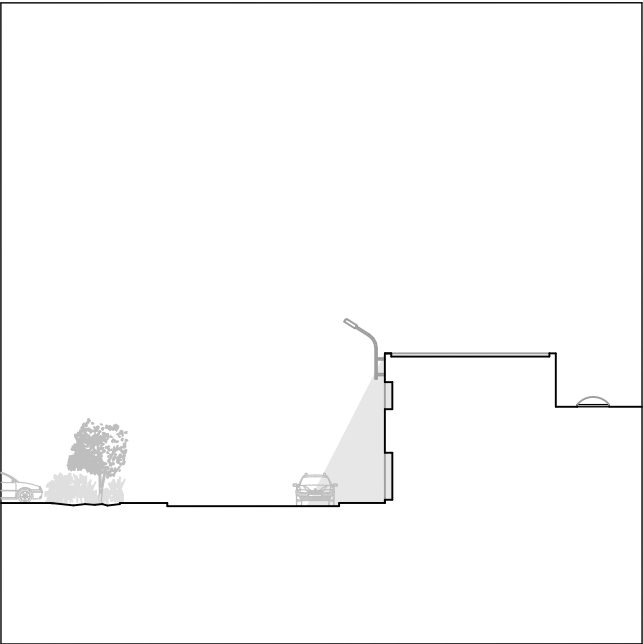
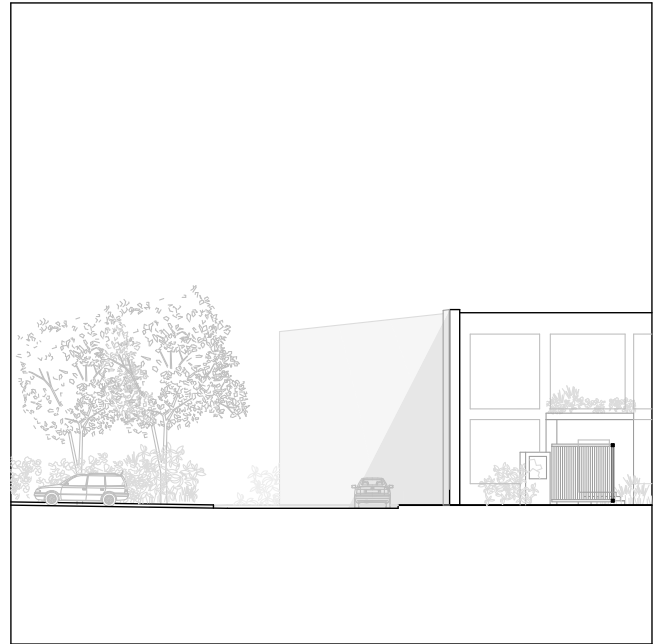
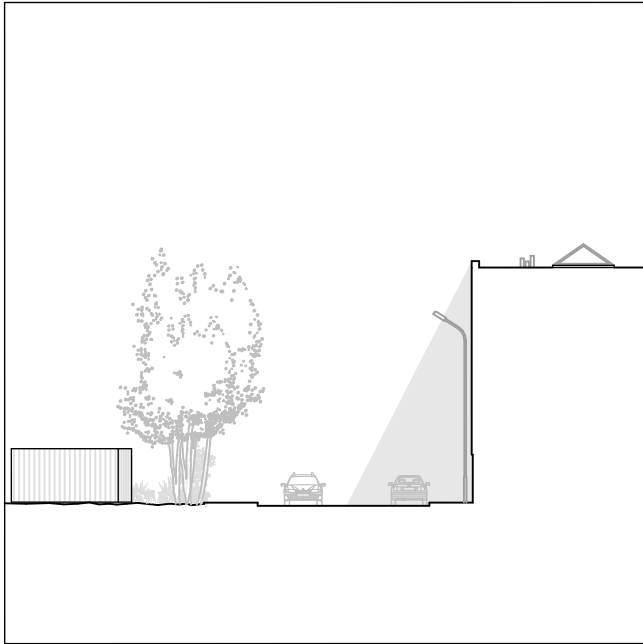






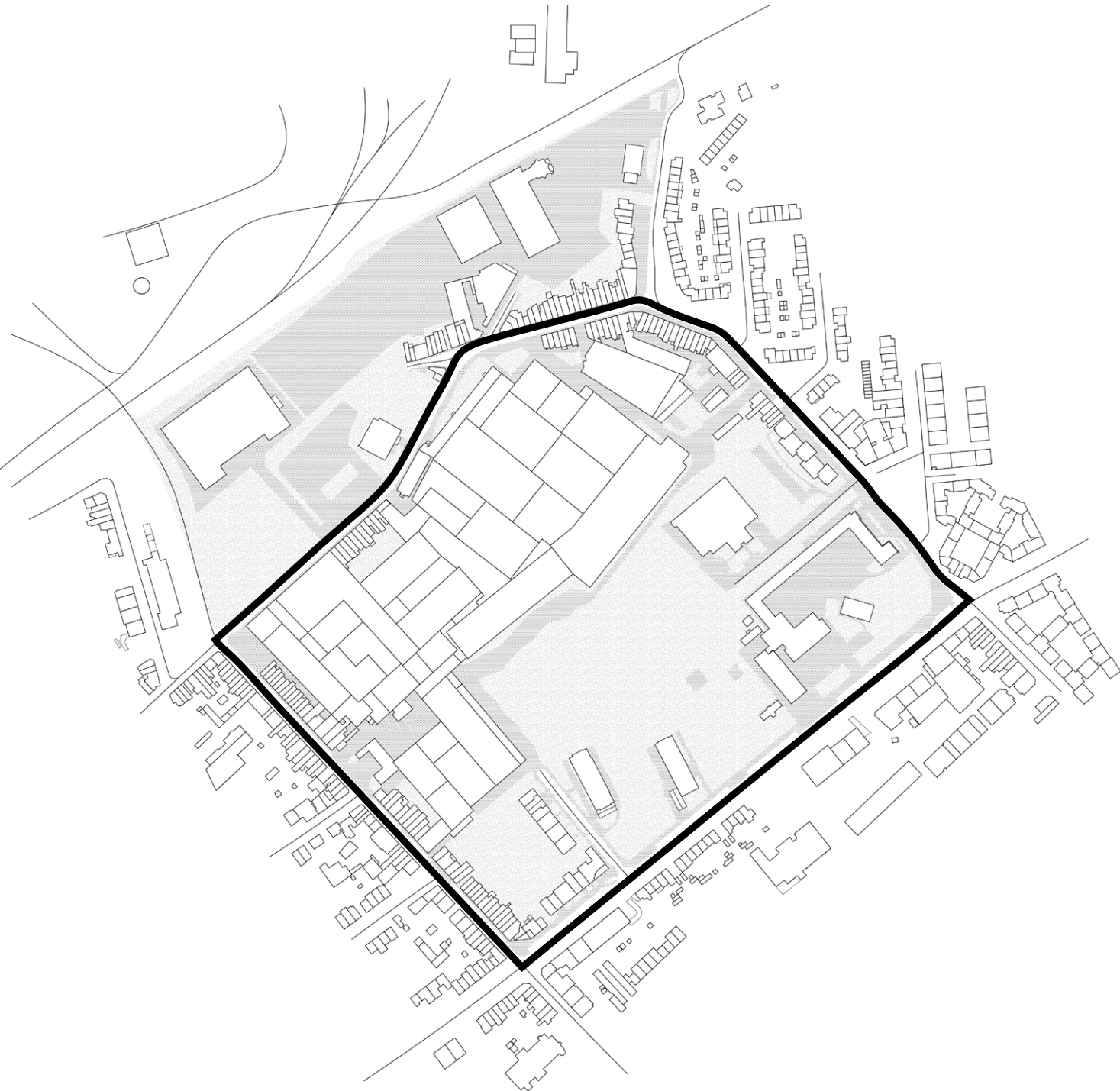






Similar to the neutral photography of the streetscapes all around the site I used analytical sections to understand the condition around the edge of the factory complex. Lageweg stuck out to me during the earliest stages of research. Its the only street traversing the entire site and still represents the harsh border forming its enclosure. I mapped its diversity in bordering qualities and typologies along its edge.

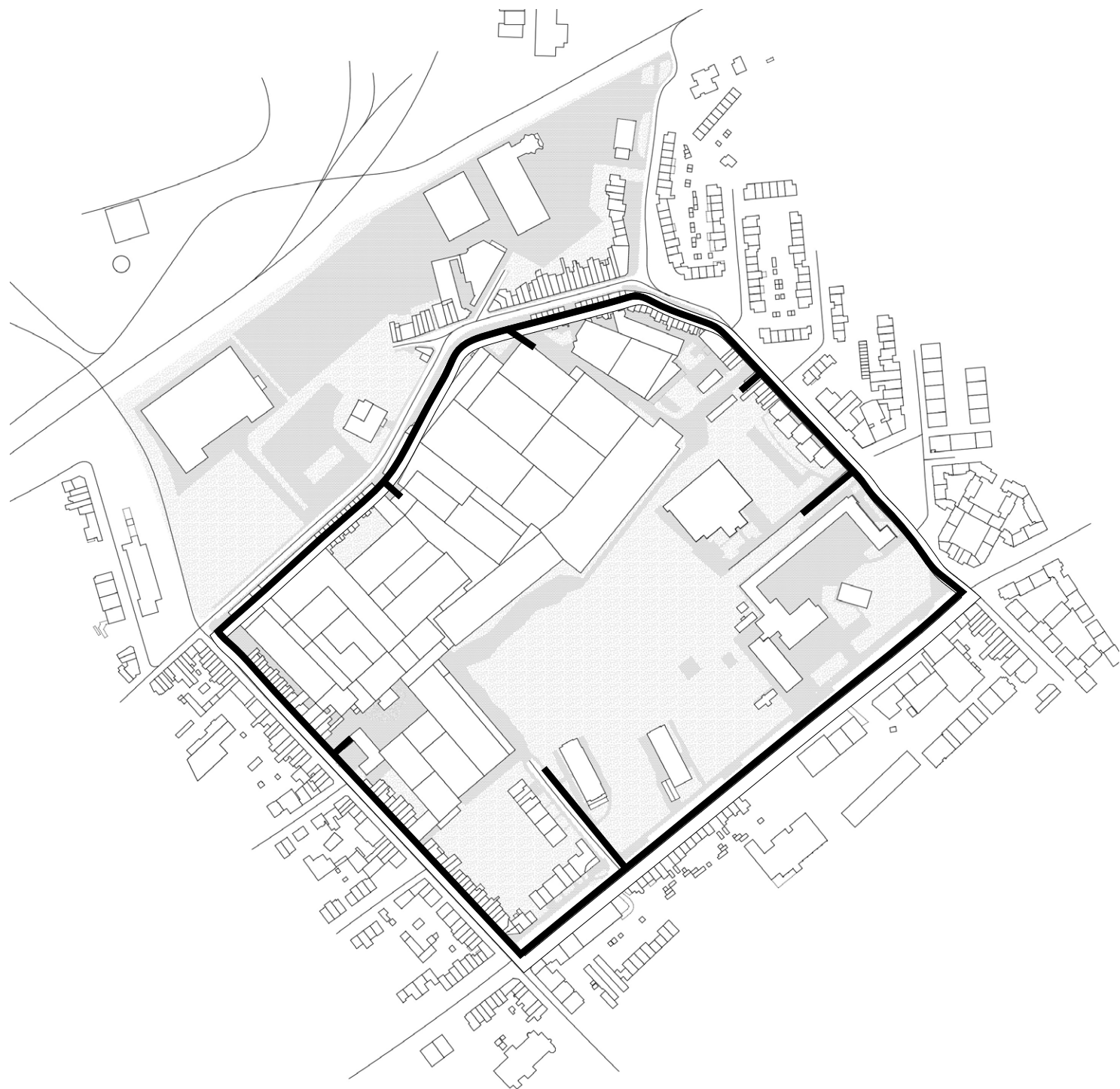
ENCLOSURE



THE NEW EXISTING

05

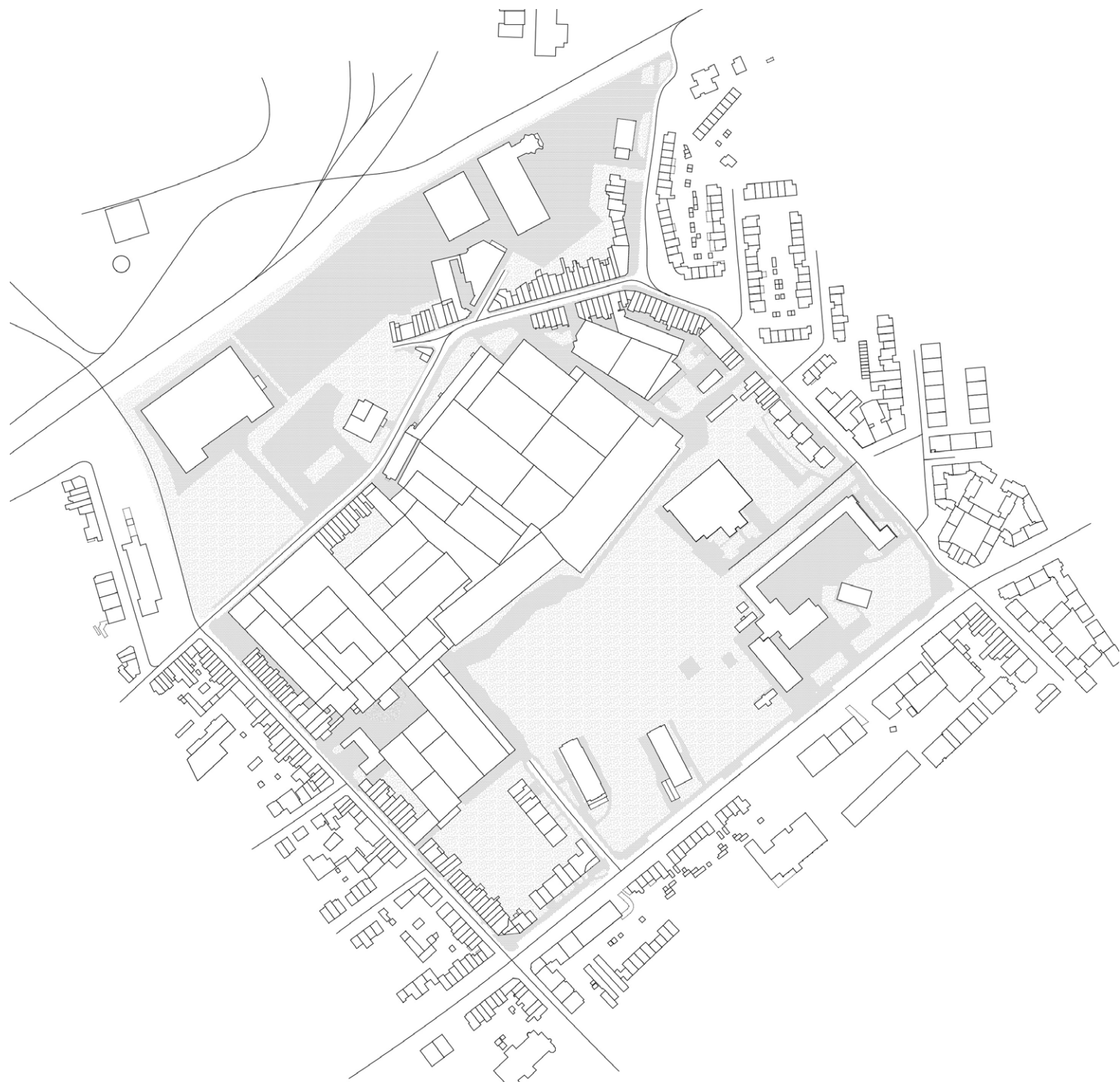
FORMER ENTRYPOINTS



EXISTING

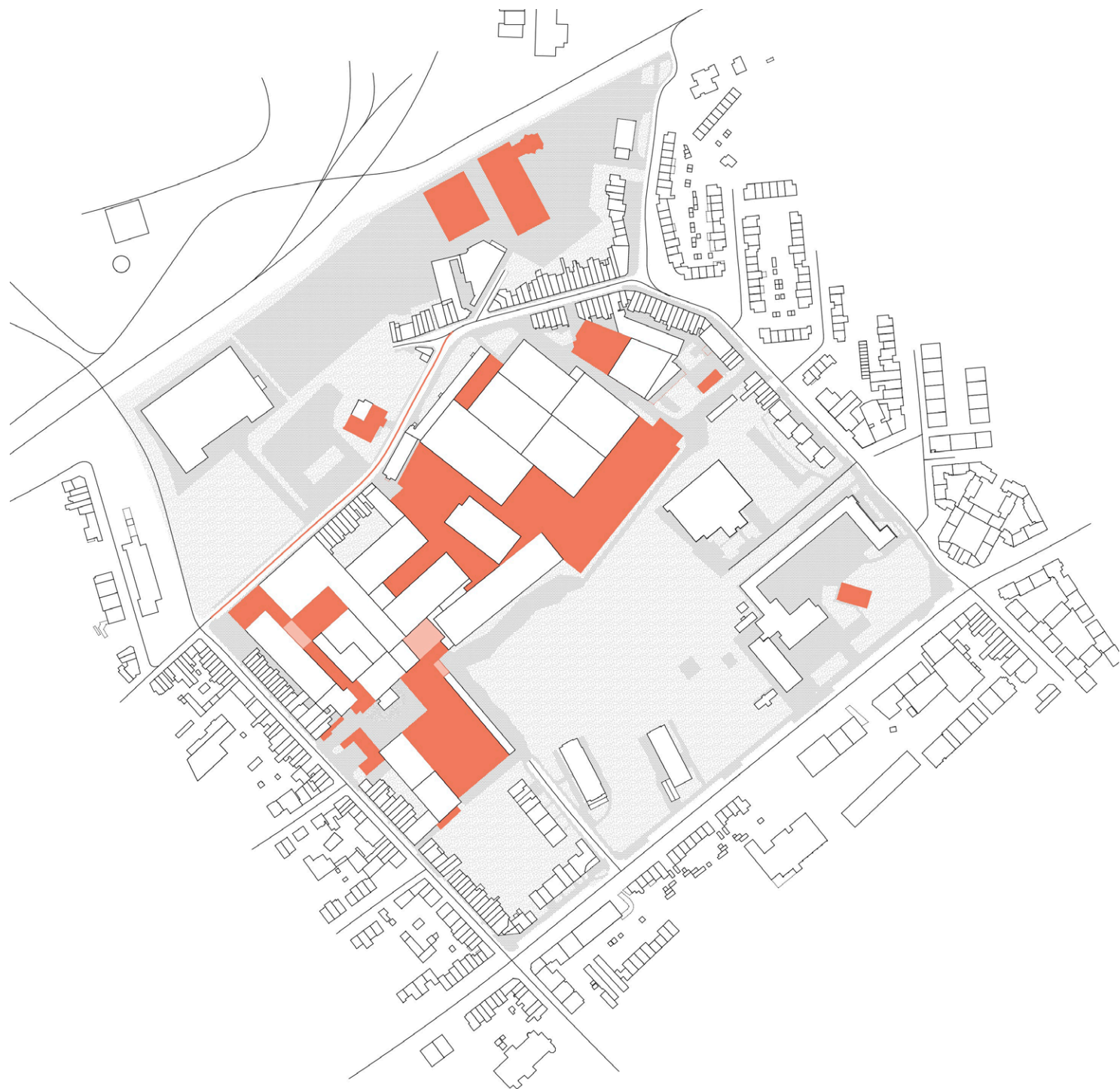
We started the design process by developing an urban masterplan for the entire site in groups of three. We were handed a brief with a predetermined program but felt encouraged to challenge the cities proposal with ideas seemingly more appropriate to us. We combined our individual research interests and first findings and visited the site multiple times trying to imagine how a new center inside the old factory complex could look.

We quickly agreed on a shared appreciation for the existing found on site and tried to refrain from superimposing an architectural idea on the site and rather working with whats given to us. Utilizing existing halls for program that allows it while also forcefully removing some which in our design give way for the benefit of outside spaces.



DEMOLITION PLAN

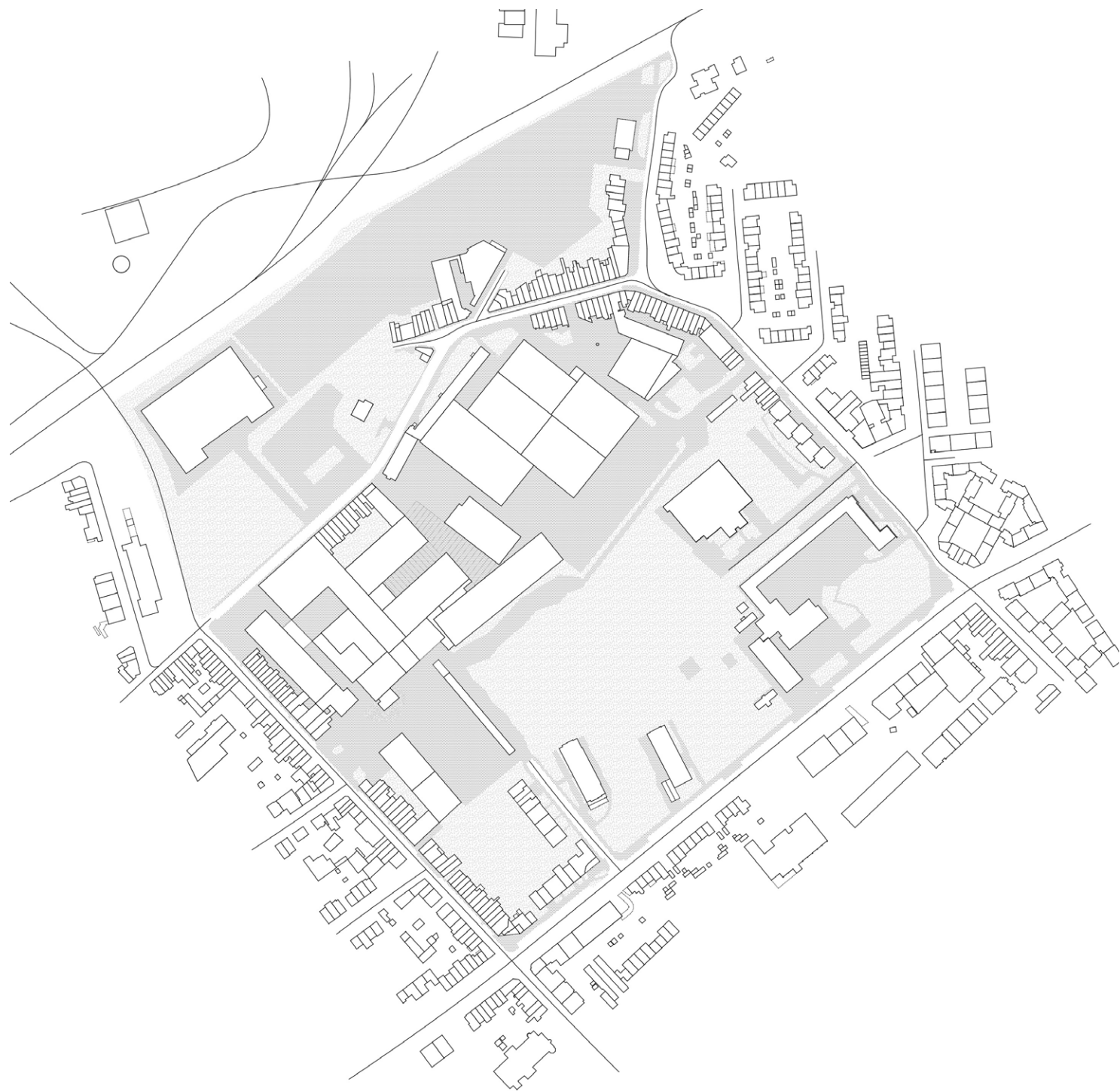
The base for our urban proposal was developed with the demolition plan. Opening up axes throughout the site, lead by the former entrances to the factory we uncovered earlier and thus increasing the sites porosity.



AFTER DEMOLITION aka THE NEW EXISITING

Before conceiving our own additions we attempted to create a coherent urban plan just by dissecting from the mass of structures already there.

We titled the plan as seen after demolition as „the new existing“ representing the basis for our additive design of architectural interventions.

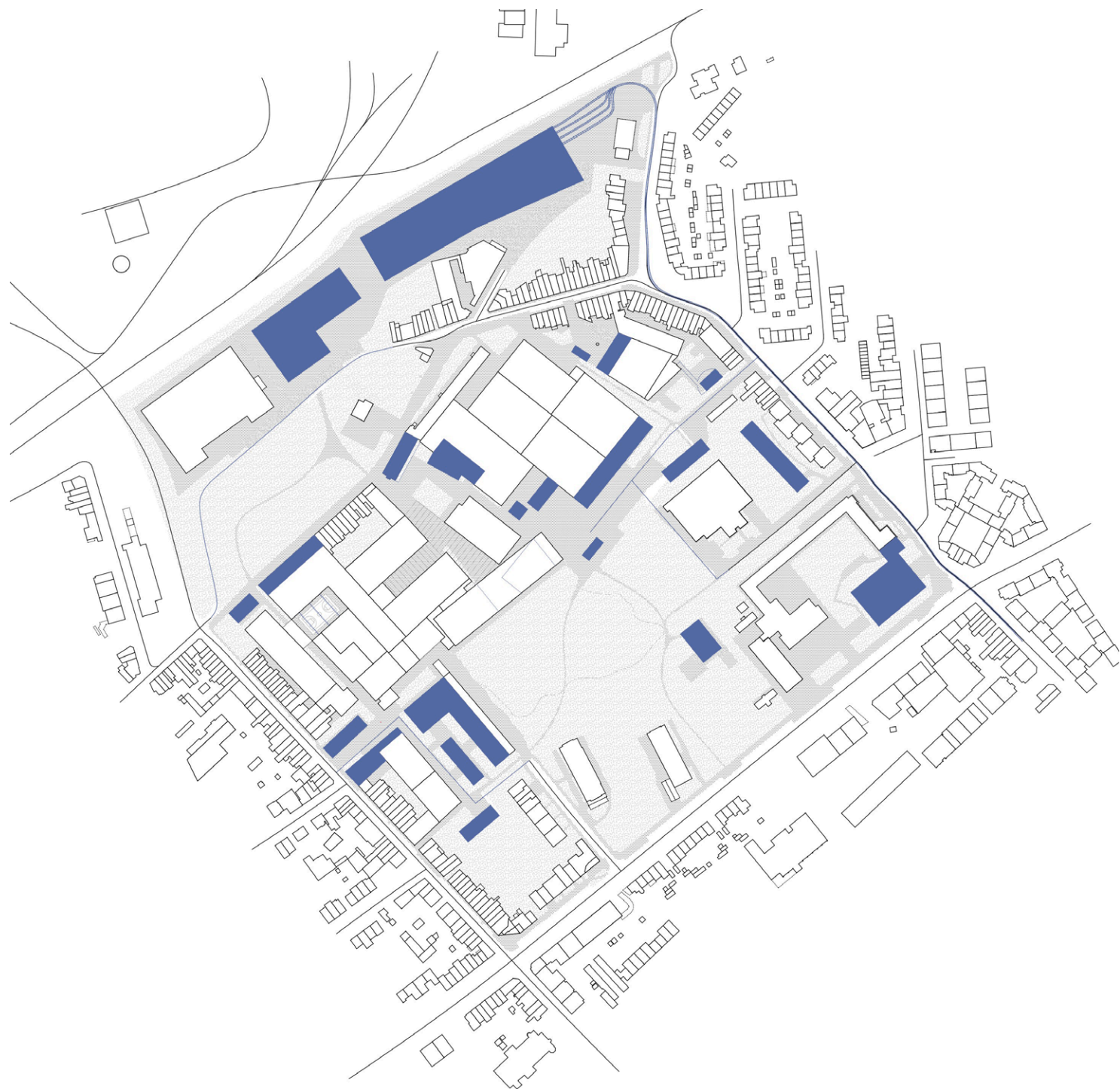


COMPLEMENTING THE FOUND

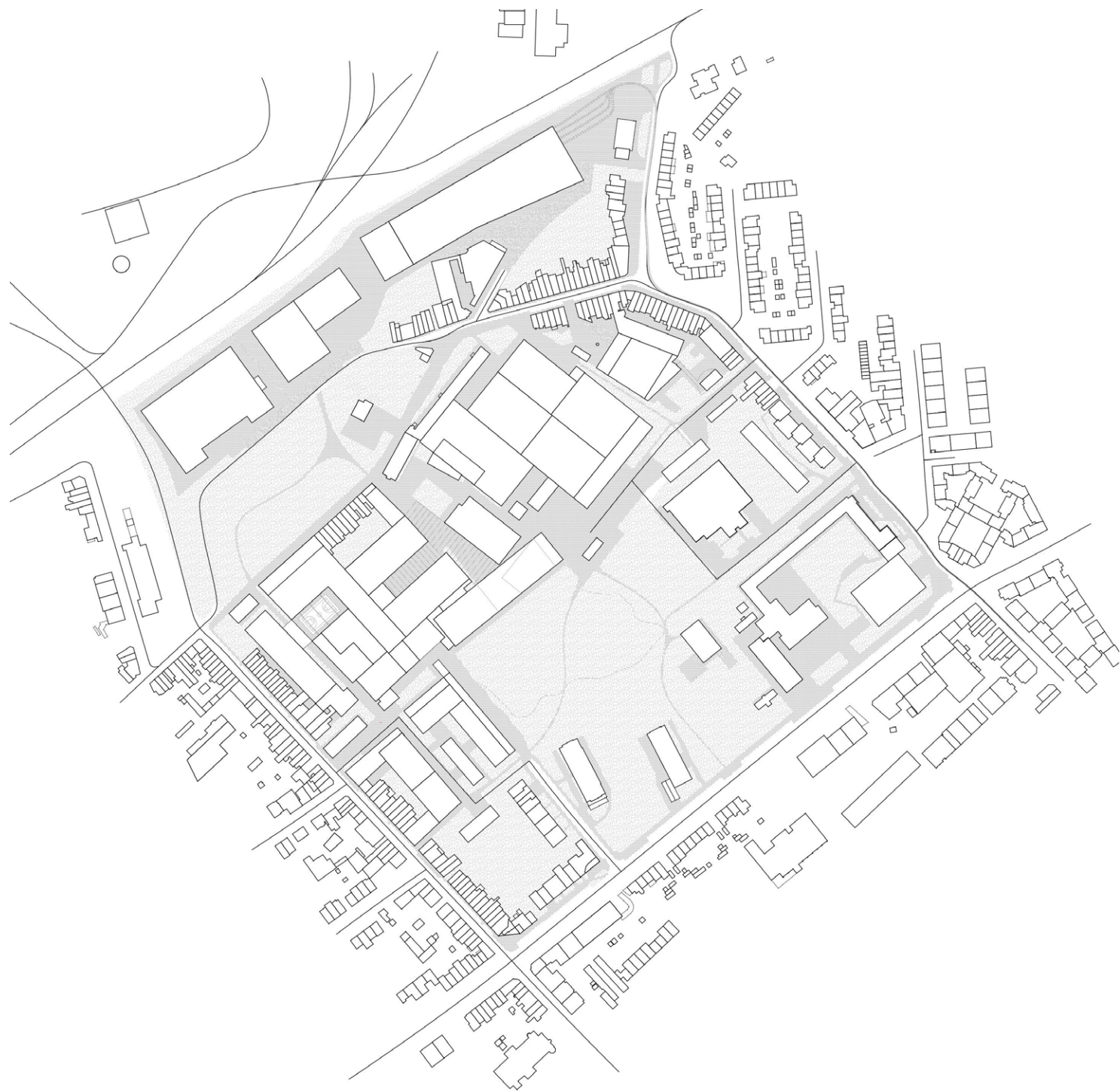
06

ADDITION

This chosen fragmented approach to urban development leads to a diverse site created by a multitude of newly conceived situations and relationships between structures. The resulting minimal need for additions leads to many small design interventions that could each be their own individual project to develop further.

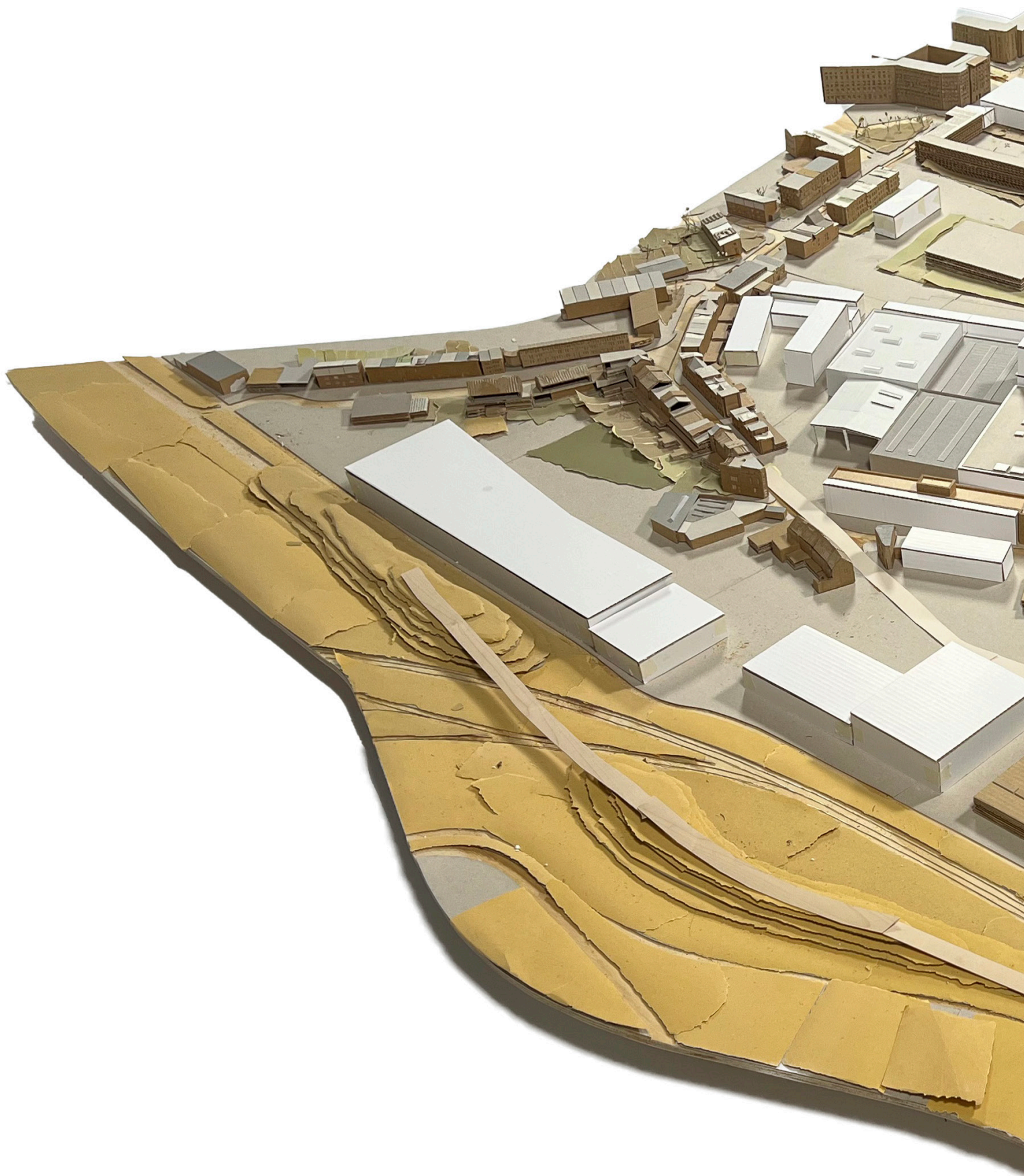


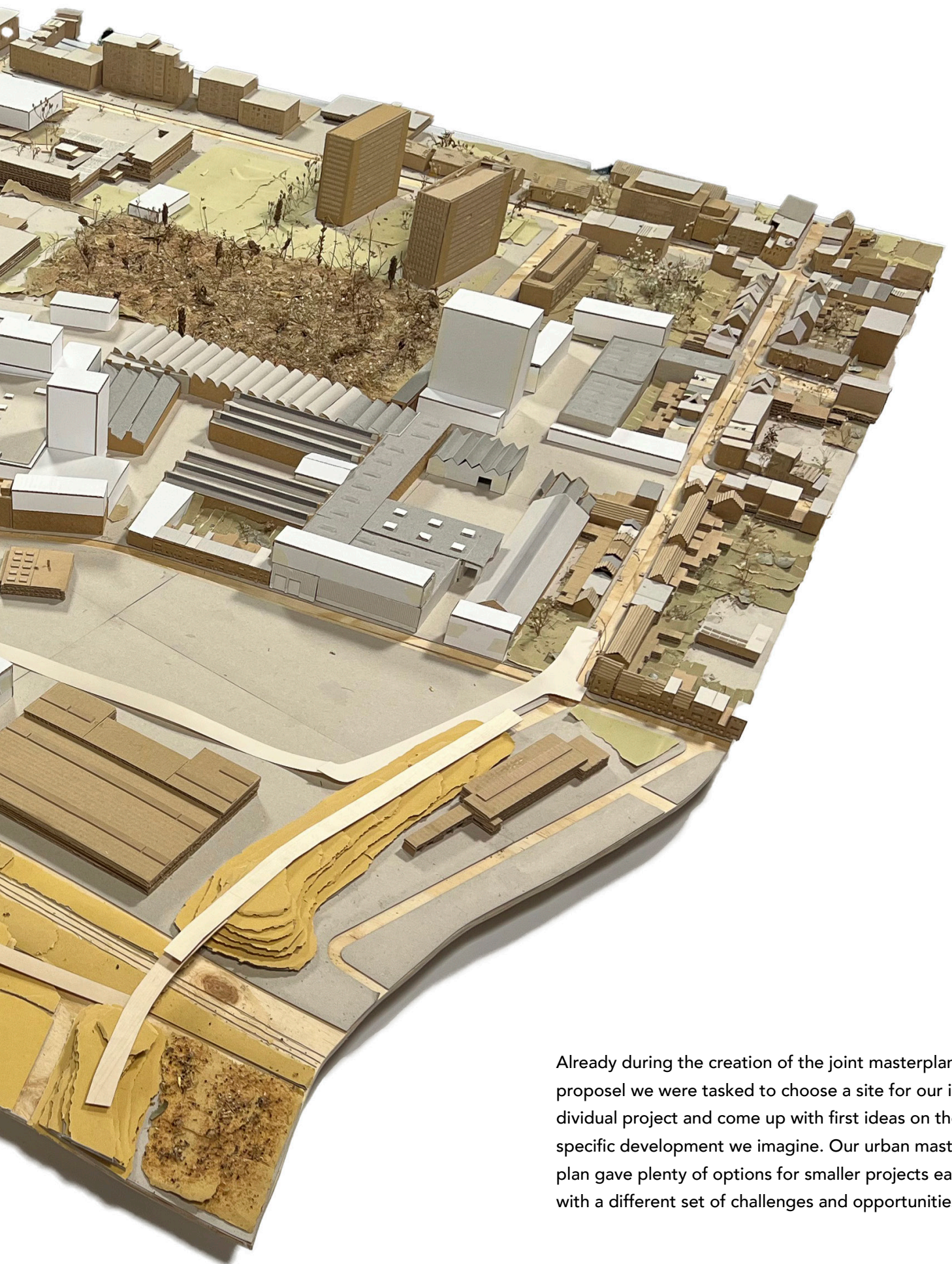
FINAL STATE











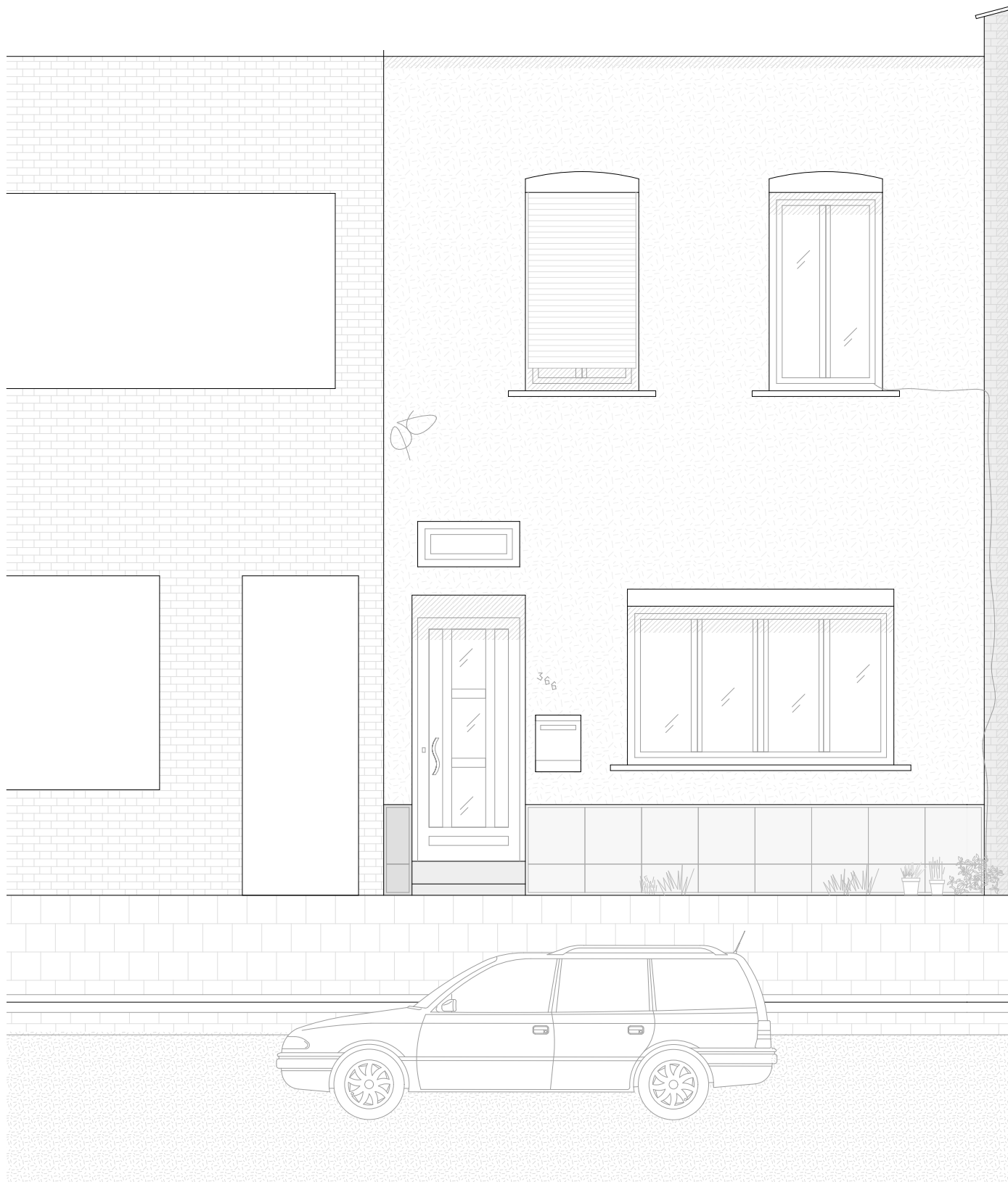
Already during the creation of the joint masterplan proposal we were tasked to choose a site for our individual project and come up with first ideas on the specific development we imagine. Our urban masterplan gave plenty of options for smaller projects each with a different set of challenges and opportunities.

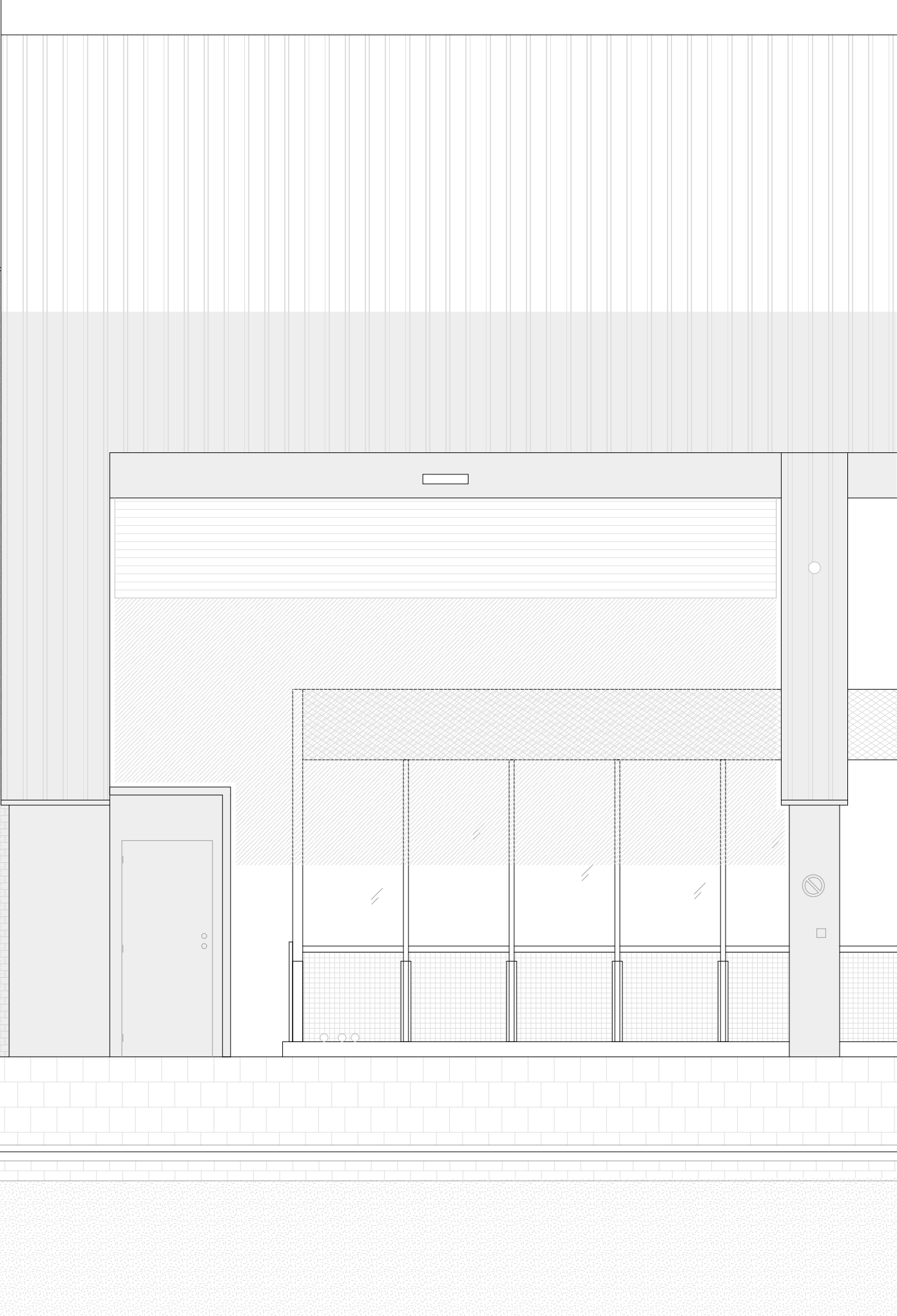


As a final step to the creation of our masterplan we modeled a fragment of the sites current state which represents the idea of our approach.

We decided on these two buidlings along Lageweg. The contrast in scale, function, age and accessibility between the pair highlights the diversity in the found condition and the multifaceted appearance of the sites enclosure which it helps to form.







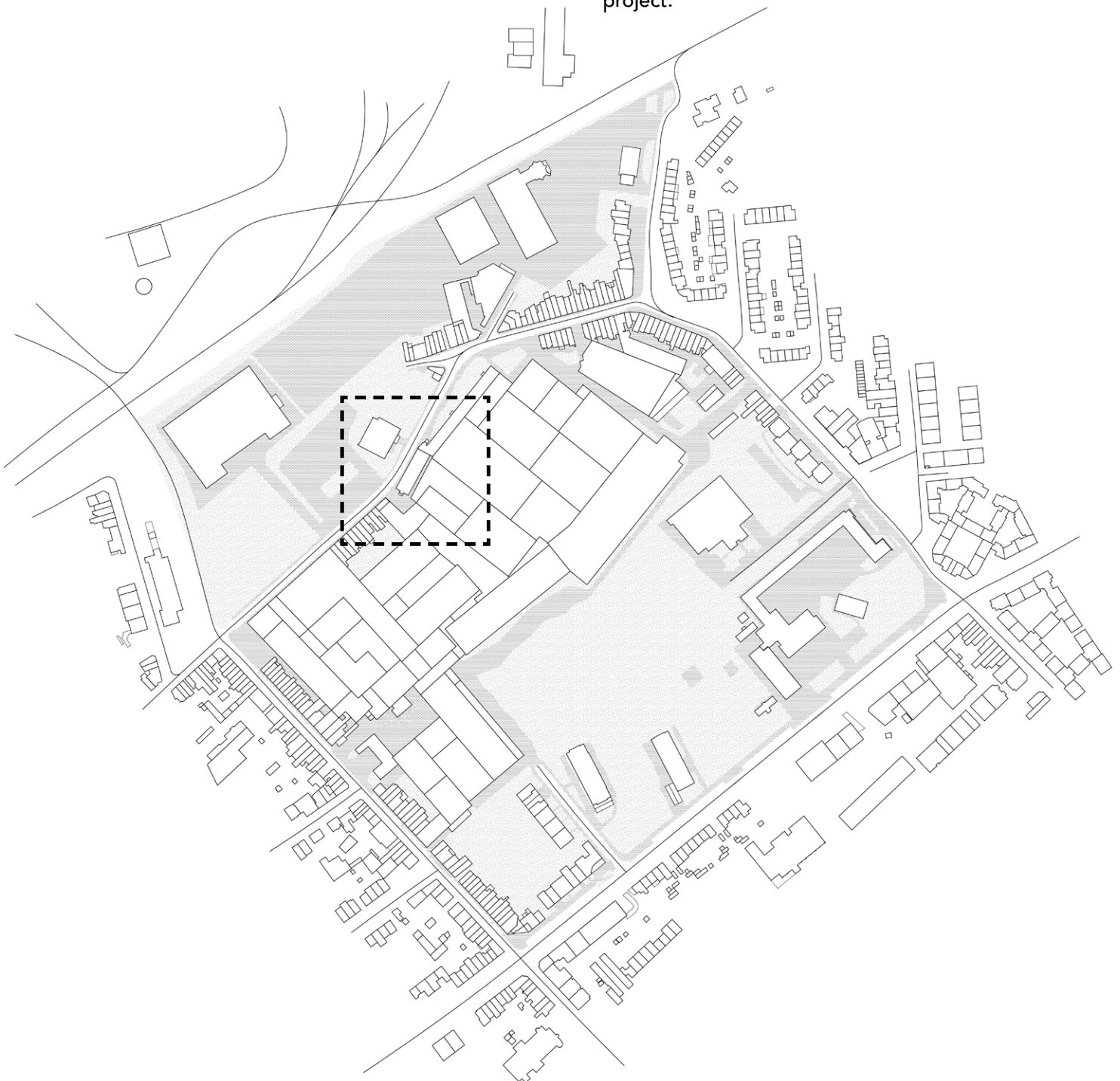
PERFORATING THE ENCLOSURE

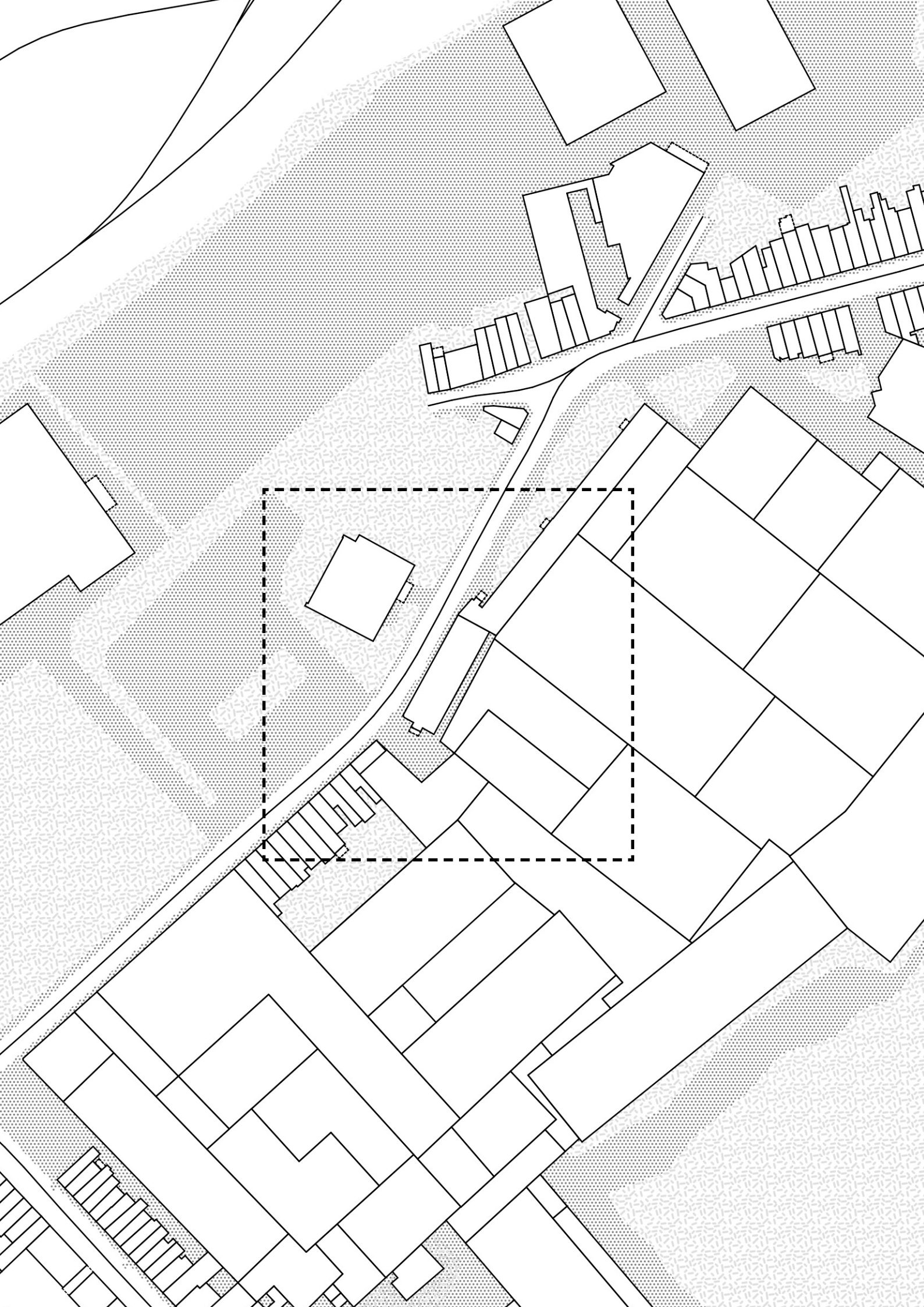


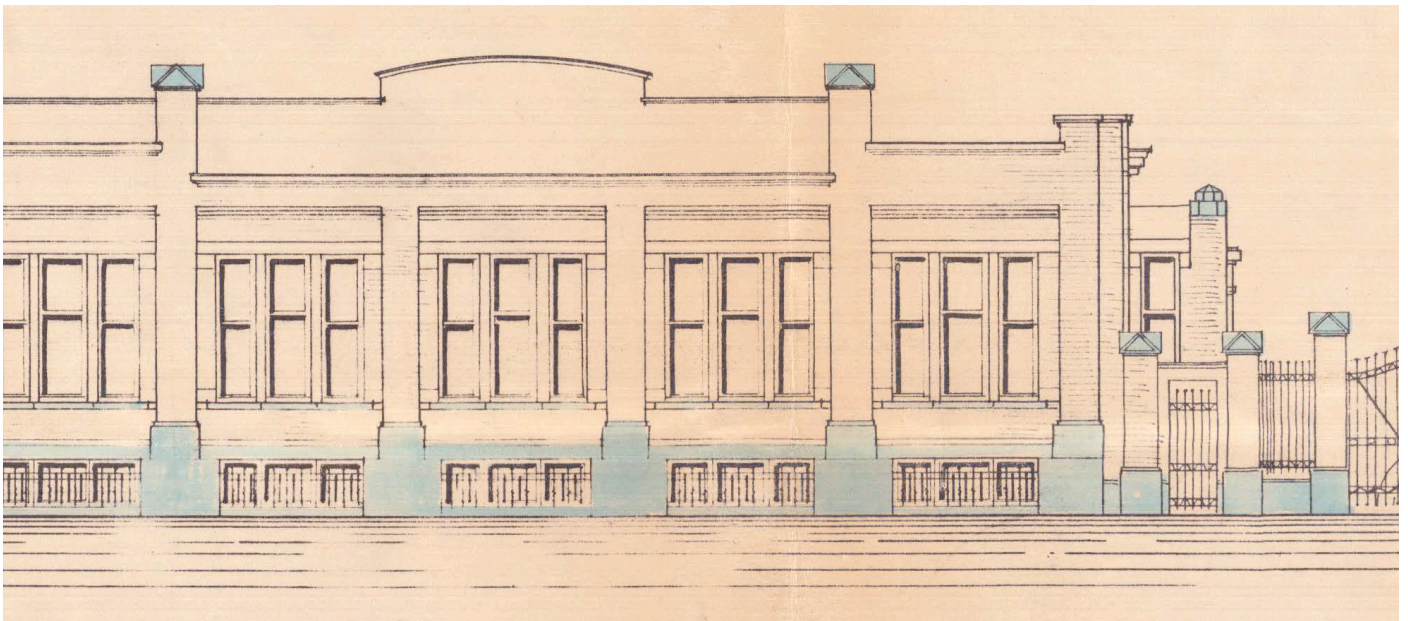


Due to my increased interest in Lageweg as a paradoxical, dividing but connecting element in the sites fabric and my focus on the former entrypoints my choice of site fell towards the old main entrance along the executive office building of the complex.

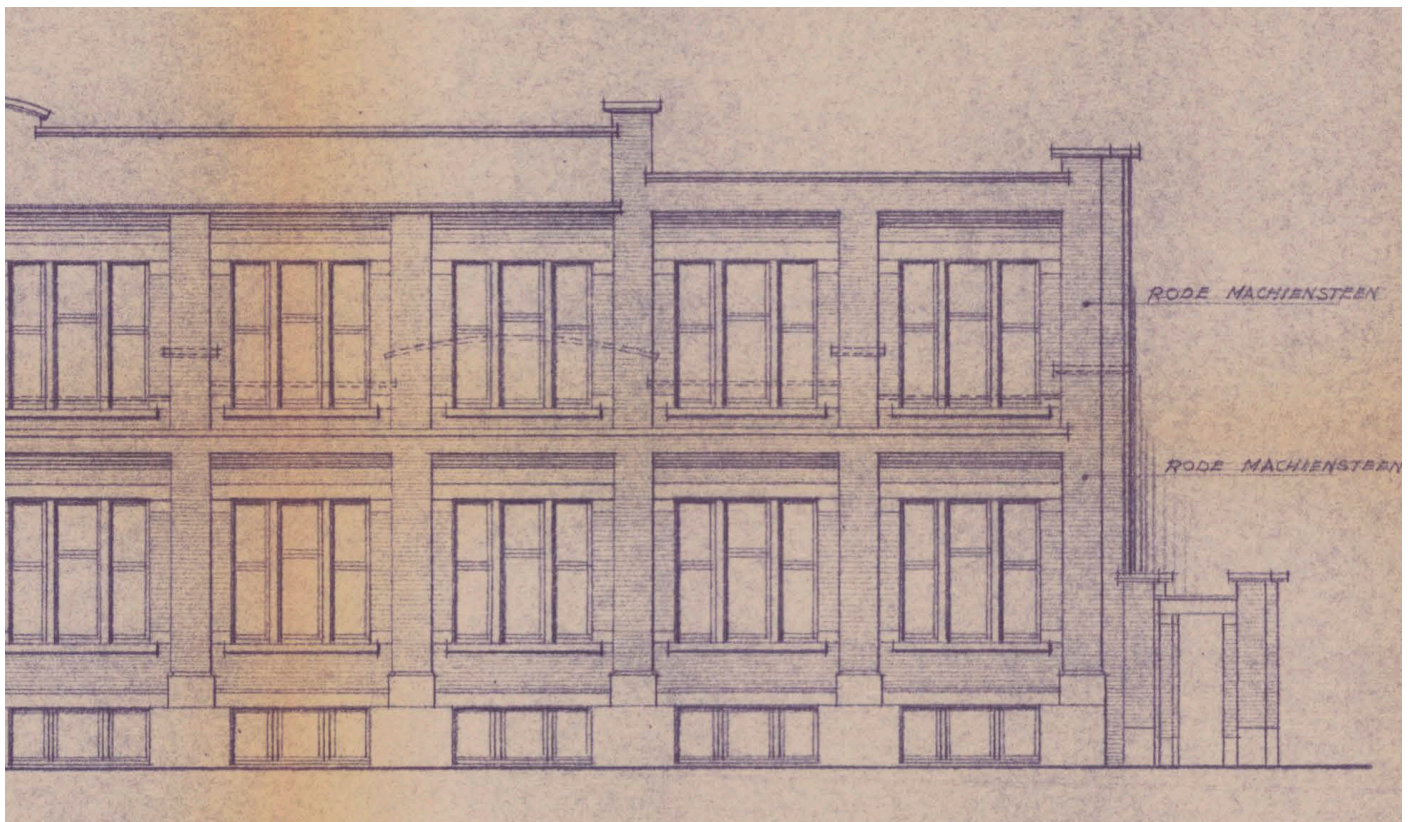
A site characterized by its immediate connection (or lack thereof) towards the outside of the site and a rich stock of existing buildings to include in the project.







1924



1954

While researching the sites history through Antwerps city archives I found out that a vertical extension to the building already took place in the 50s fitting the narrative of the vertical extension we already envisioned in the masterplan.

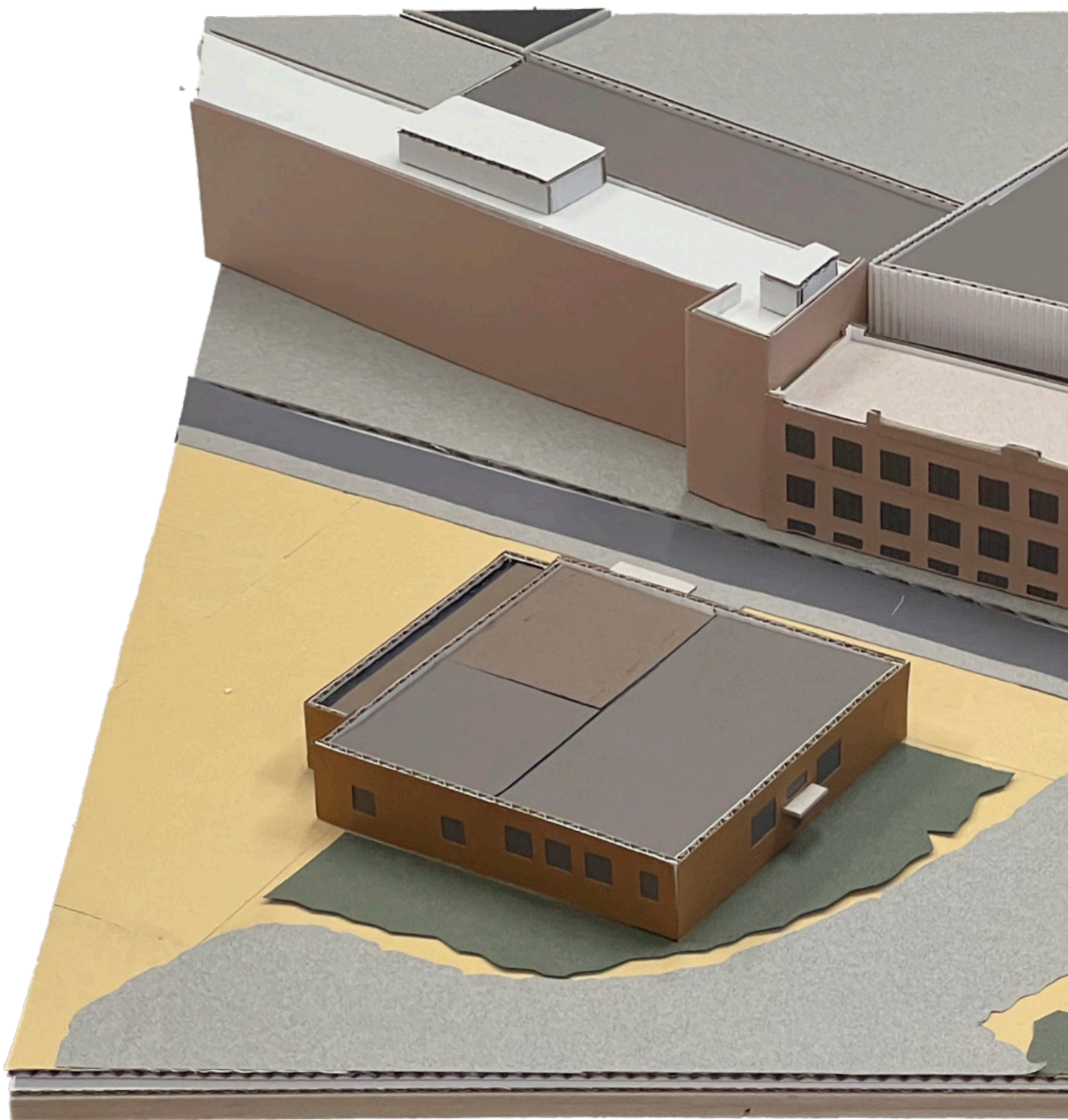




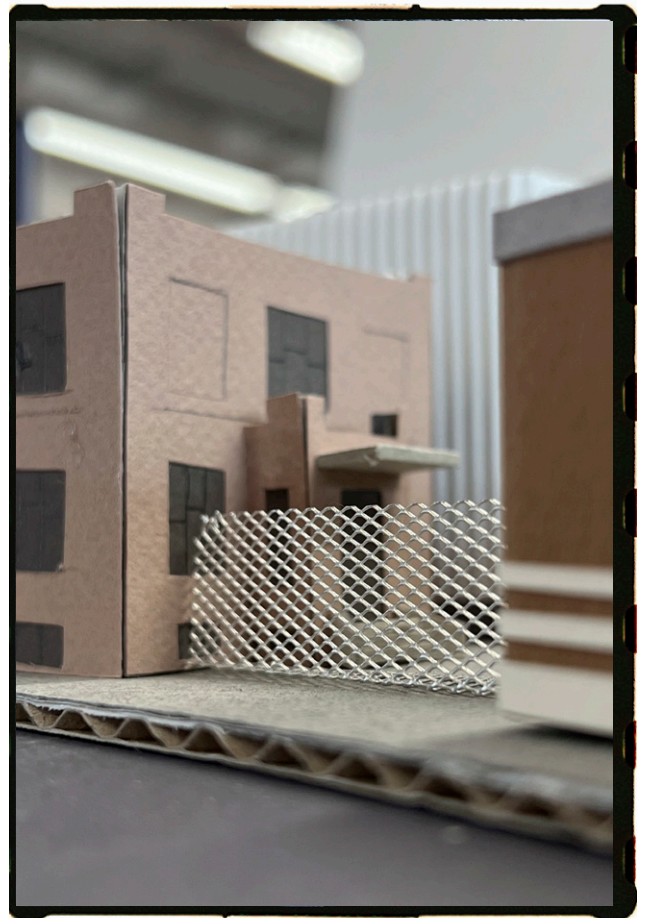










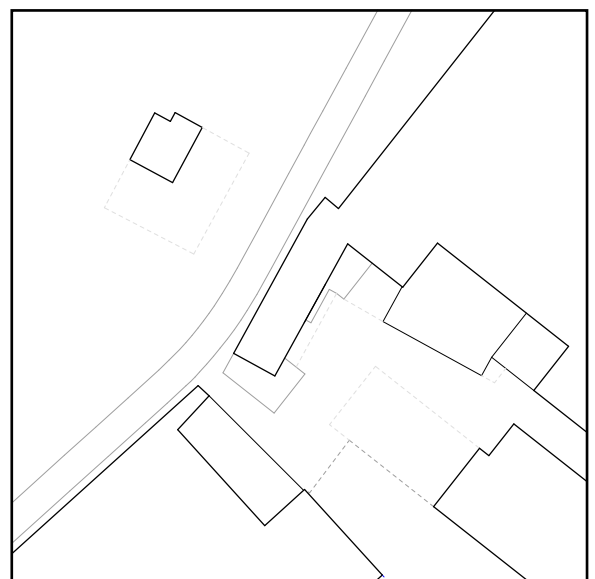
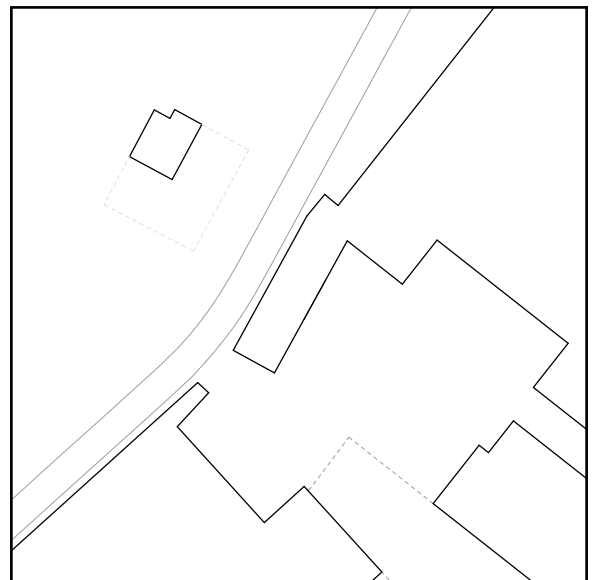
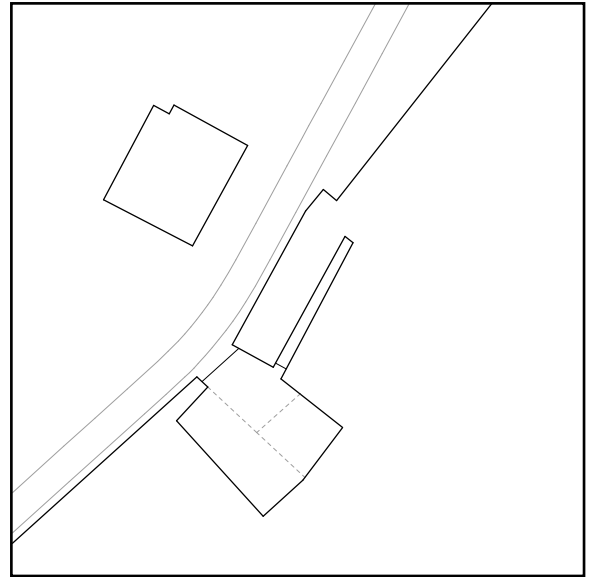


I modeled the entire site in 1:200 to have a physical clone in the studio as a basis for my design explorations. The process of physically recreating the sheer mass of existing halls helped greatly in understanding the found structures.

Modeling the interlocking layers of history while grasping it through research in the archives made me more and more familiar with my site, even in weeks in which I did not visit it myself.

Comparative photography between the real life situations I encountered and my model in the studio highlighted the possibilities and shortcomings of it. Realizing the uncontrollable nature of an urban environment in which actors inflict impressions on your perception whether you like it or not.

A NEW PUBLIC SQUARE



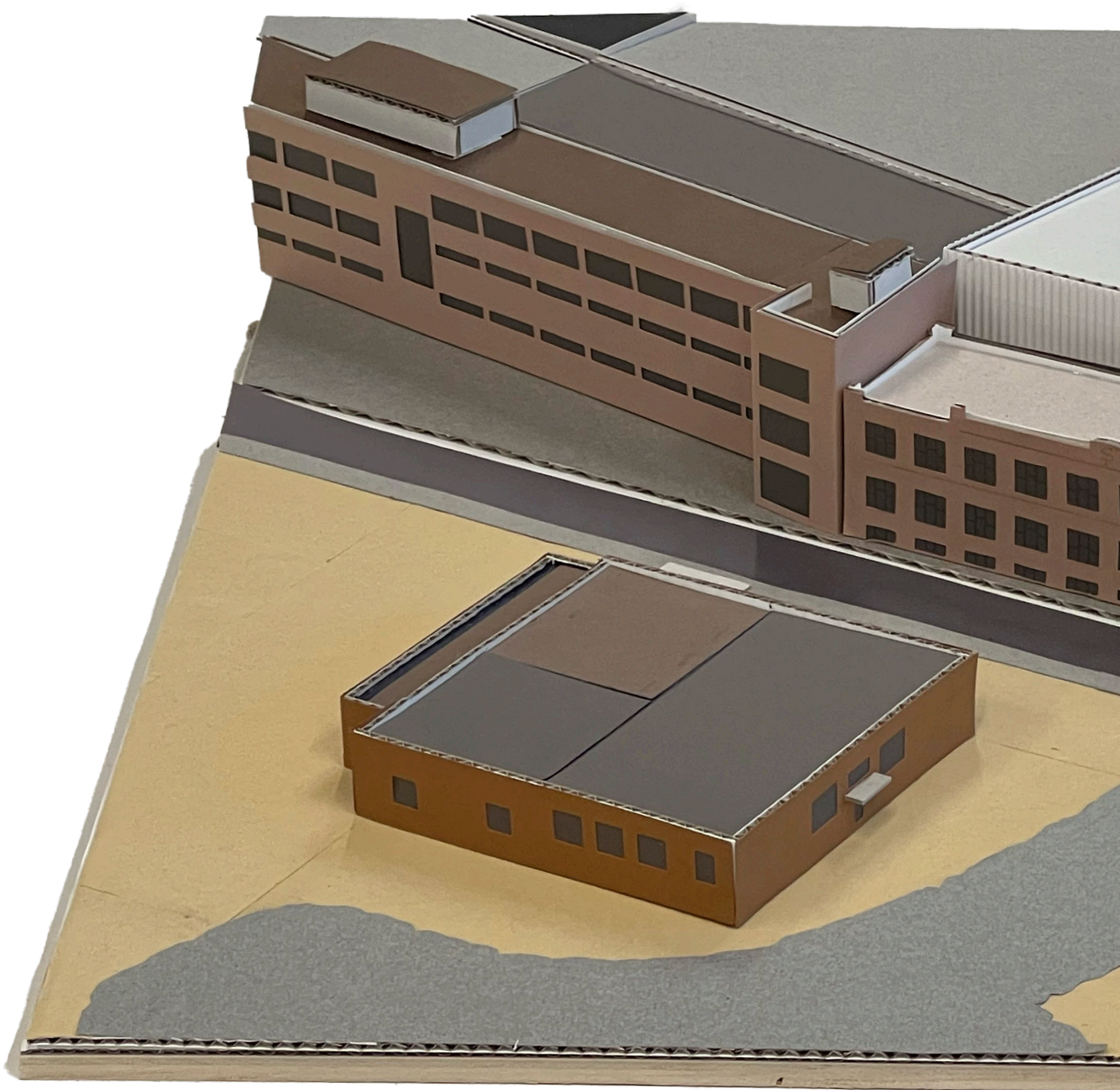
While conceiving my personal design project I quickly realized that the idea of creating a low town down town is more important to me than designing a highly specific typology of building or function.

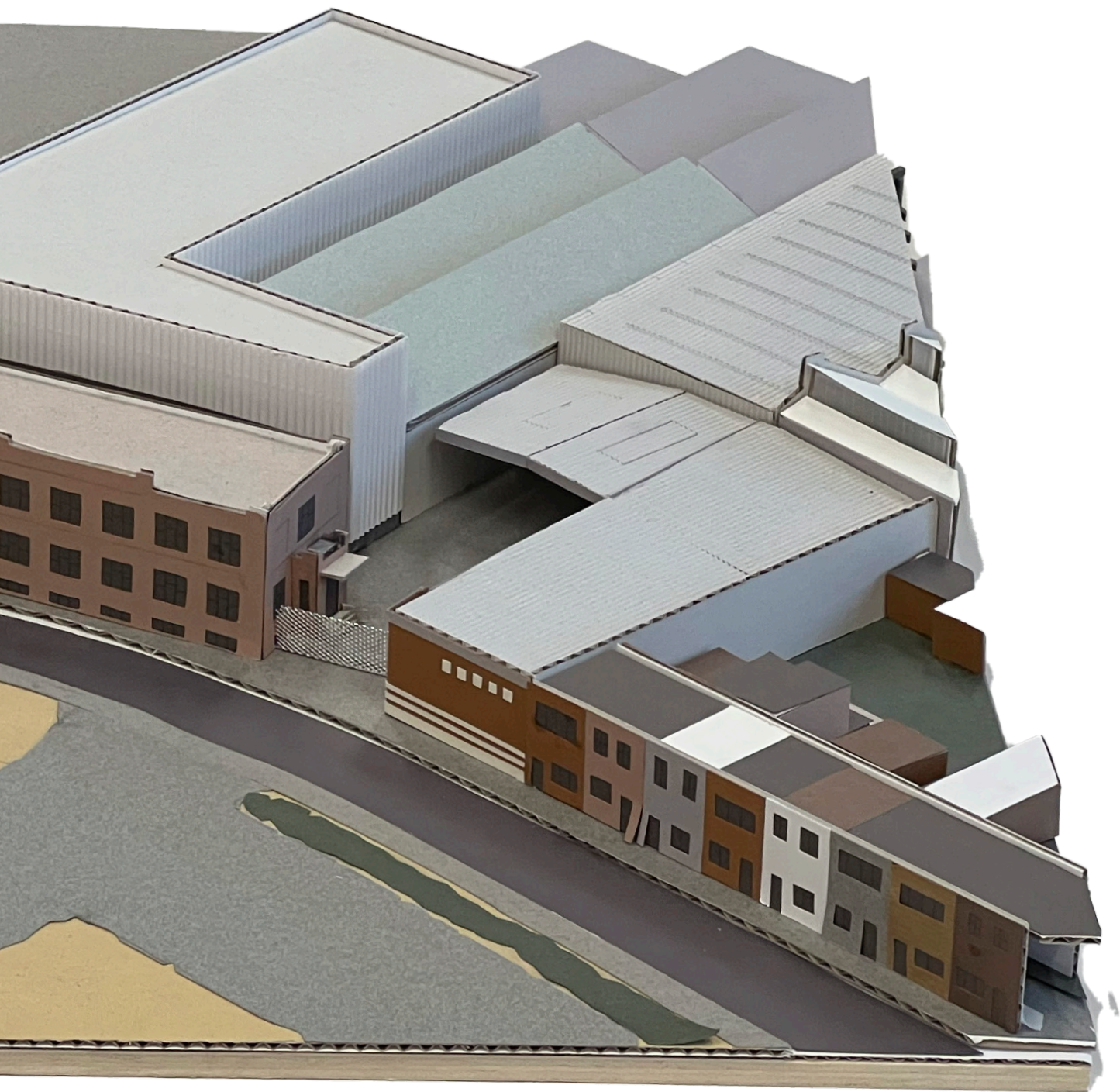
I chose the open public square resulting from the demolition of two former production and logistic halls as my starting point. Designing its urban qualities and the buildings forming its outer edge

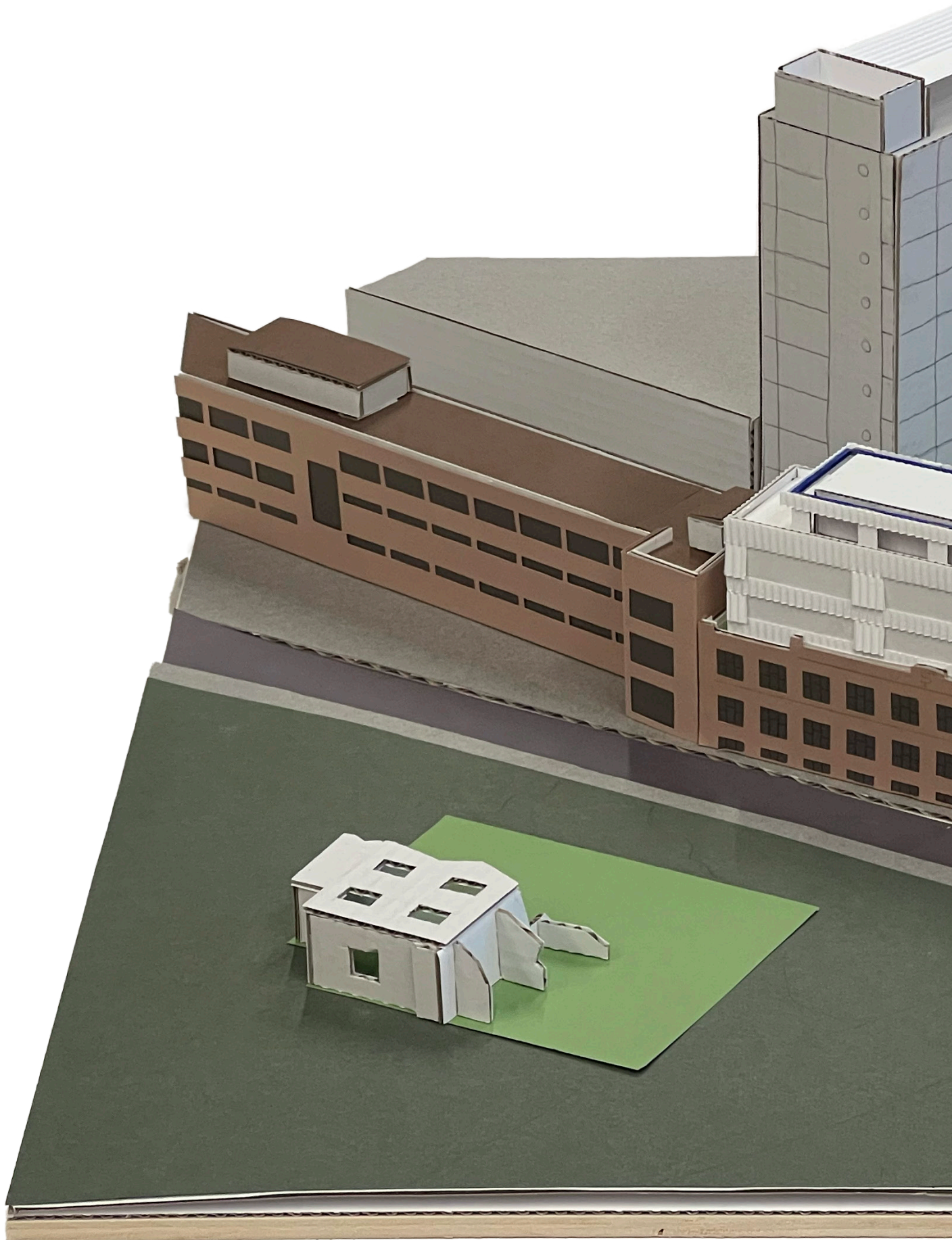
In reference to the ancient greek agora I developed a diverse program encapsulating the entirety of urban life around said central public square.

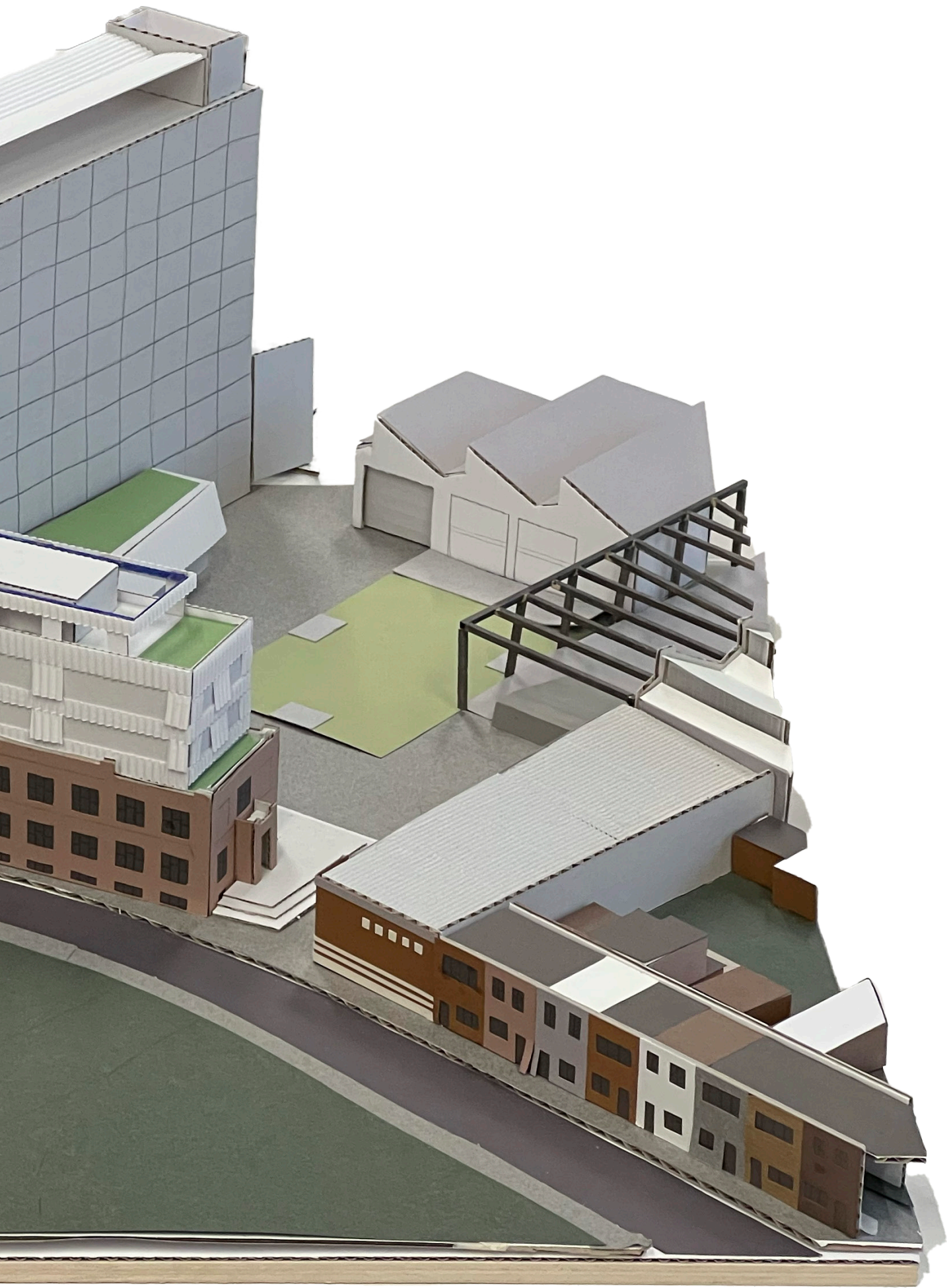
Living, working, trade, prayer, discussion, politics, craft, leisure...

I relied heavily on my model to experiment with design options regarding open and built up space alike.







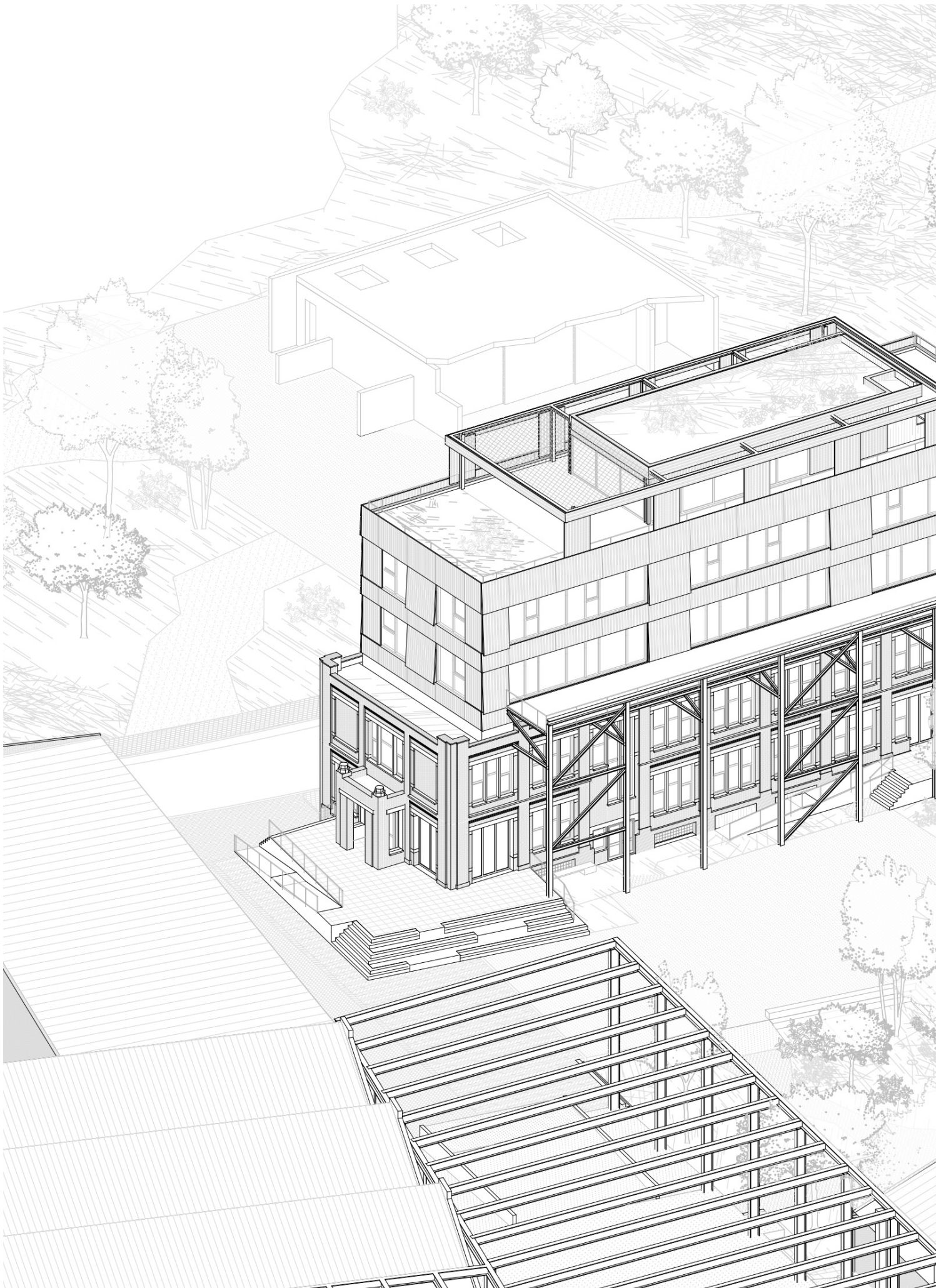




When approaching the site from Lageweg one can see the layering of the newly created urban ensemble. An inviting gesture through the former logistical entrance of the factory leads towards the inside of the site and the main entrance of the former offices lining the street. The facades towards the park we created beyond Lageweg remain more neutral and raise questions about the life beyond the threshold of the enclosure, perceivable when using the recently opened up entrypoint.

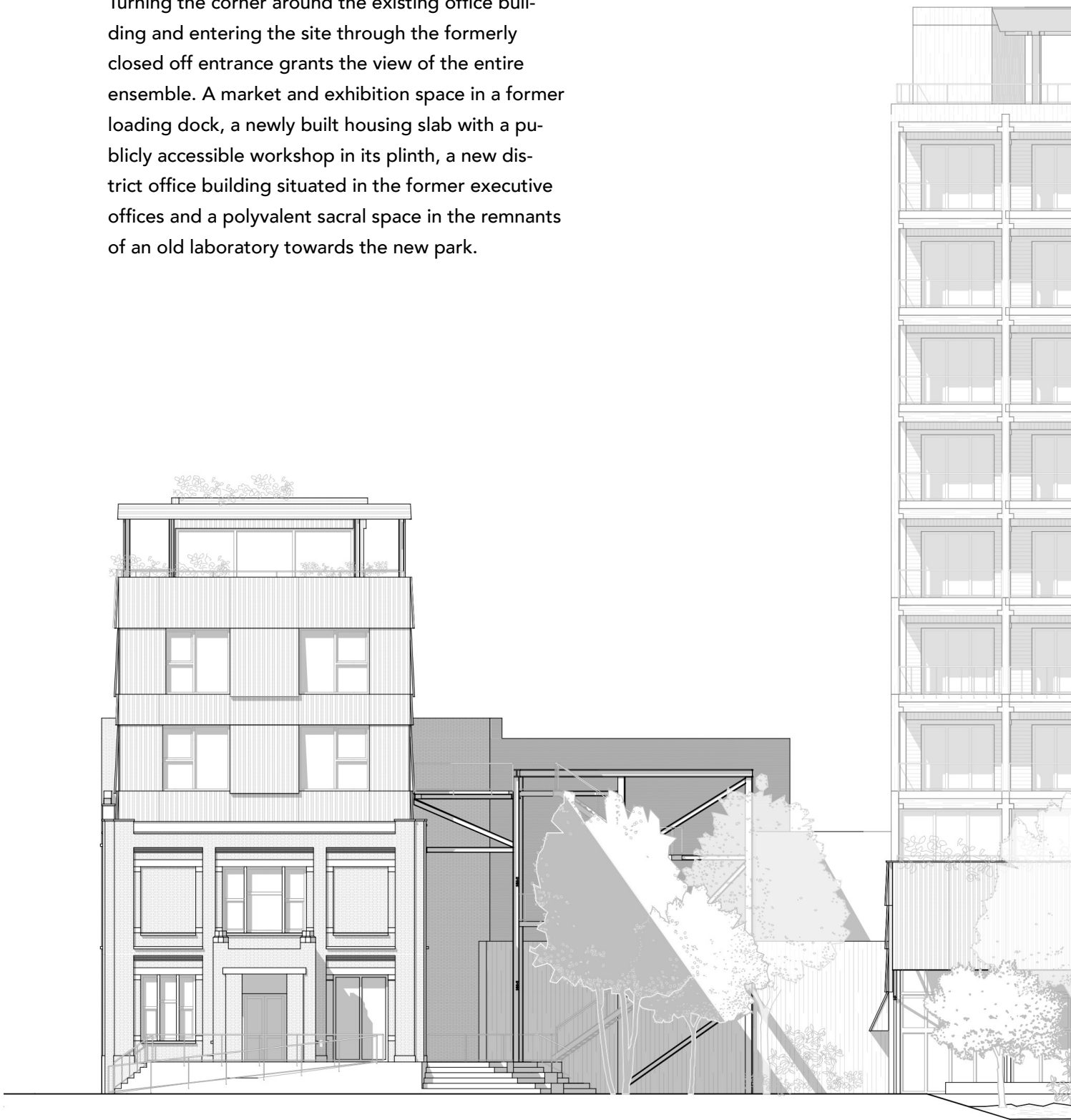


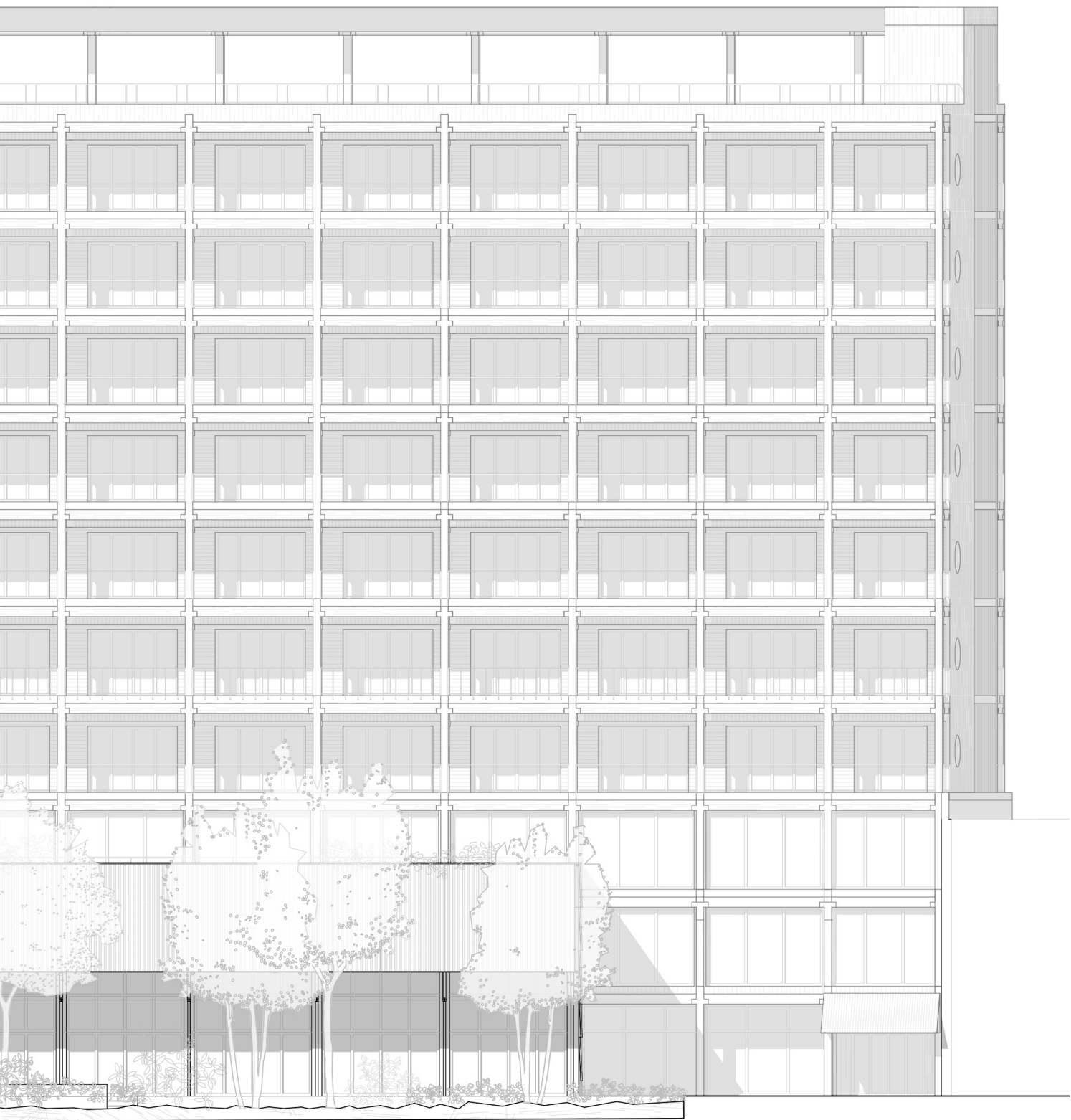
ASSEMBLING THE PROJECT



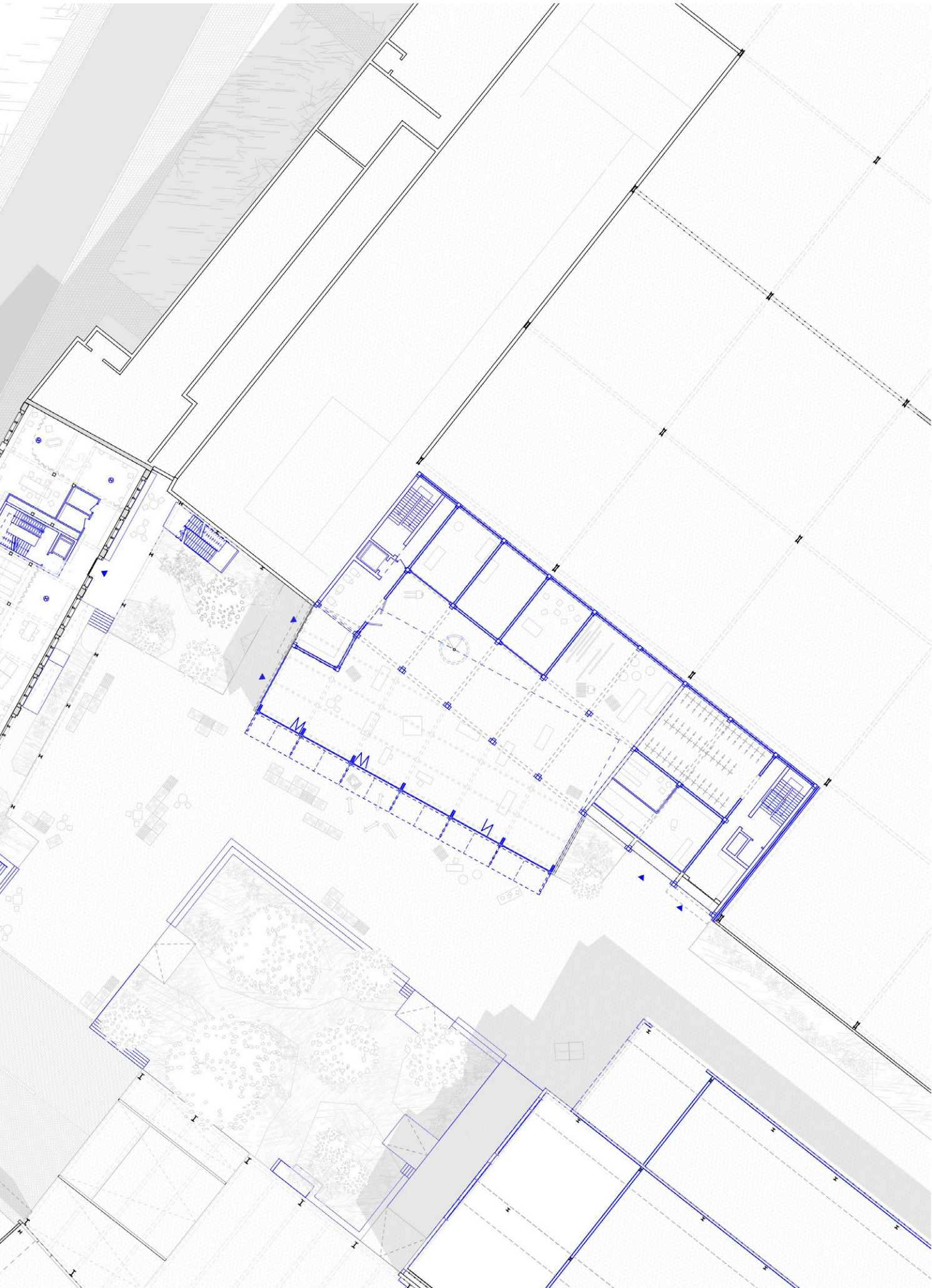


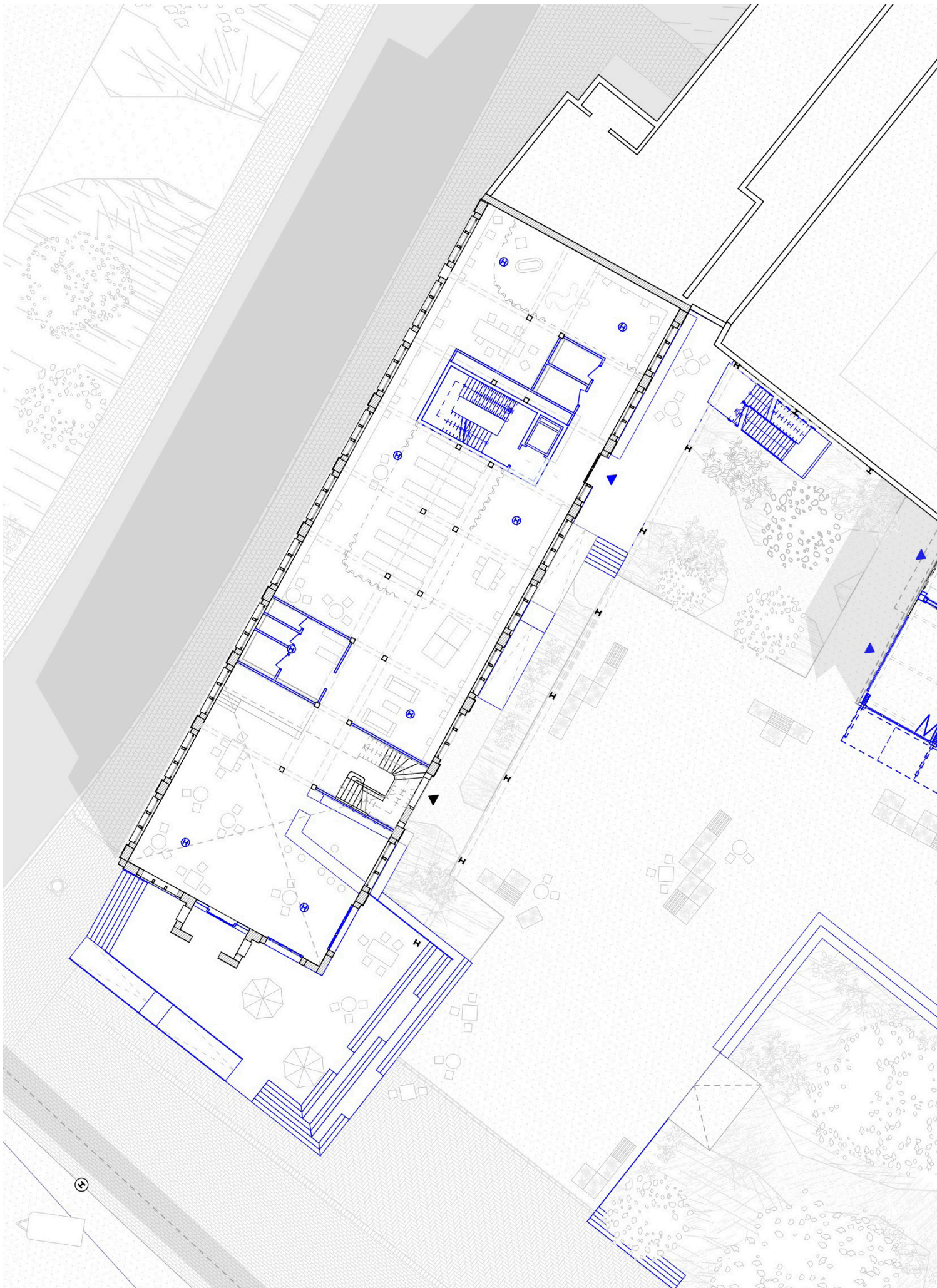
Turning the corner around the existing office building and entering the site through the formerly closed off entrance grants the view of the entire ensemble. A market and exhibition space in a former loading dock, a newly built housing slab with a publicly accessible workshop in its plinth, a new district office building situated in the former executive offices and a polyvalent sacral space in the remnants of an old laboratory towards the new park.

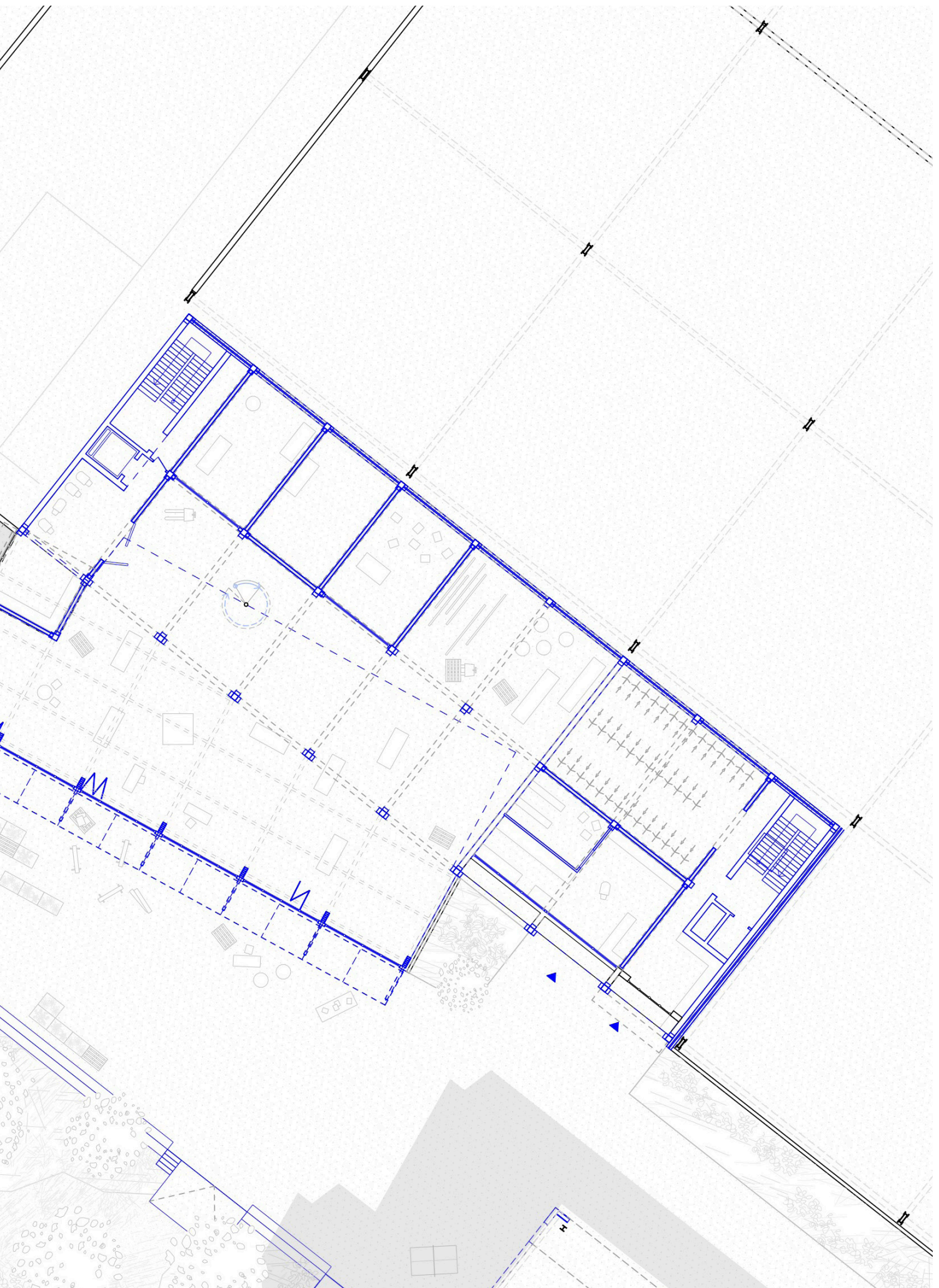


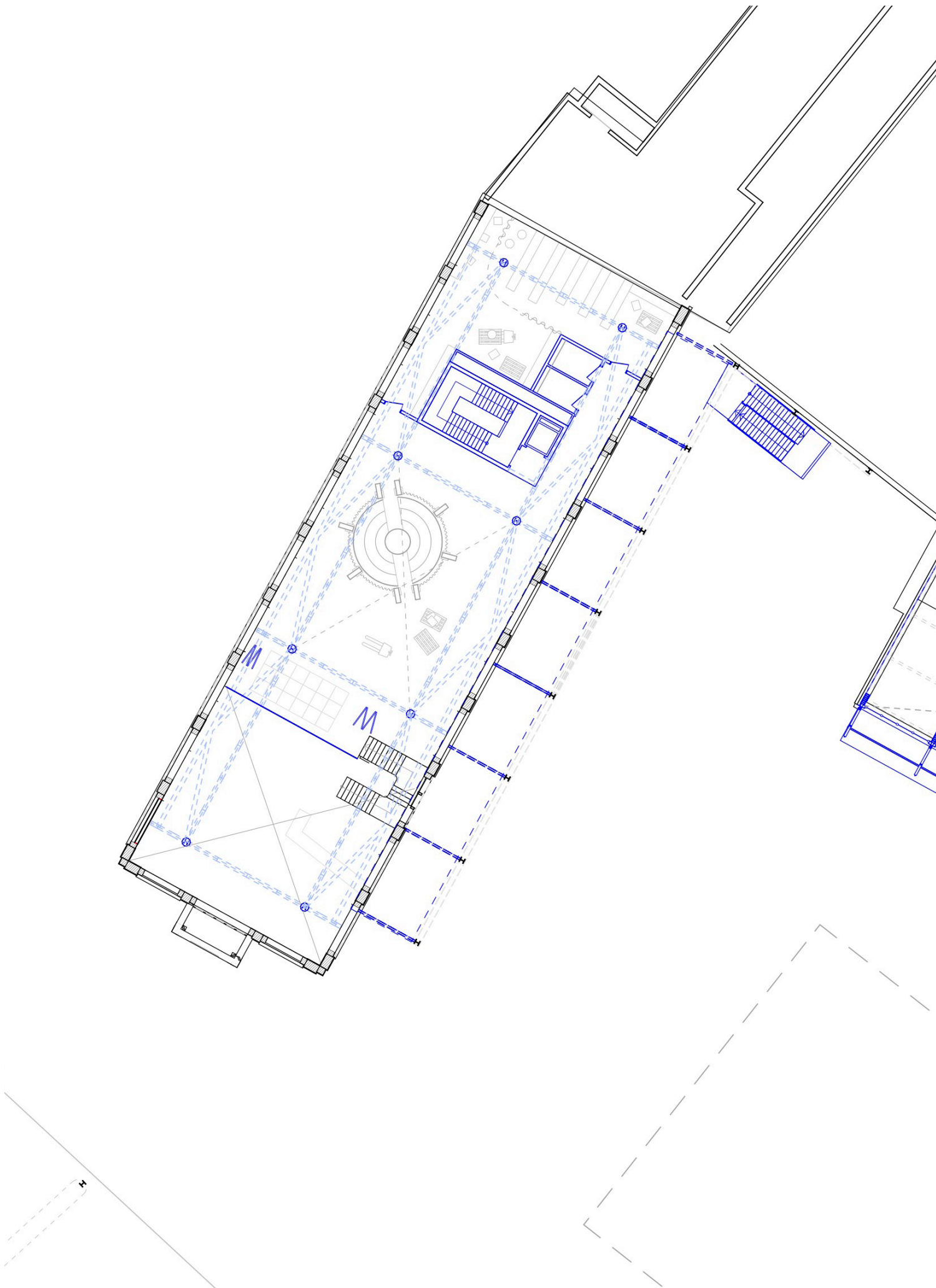




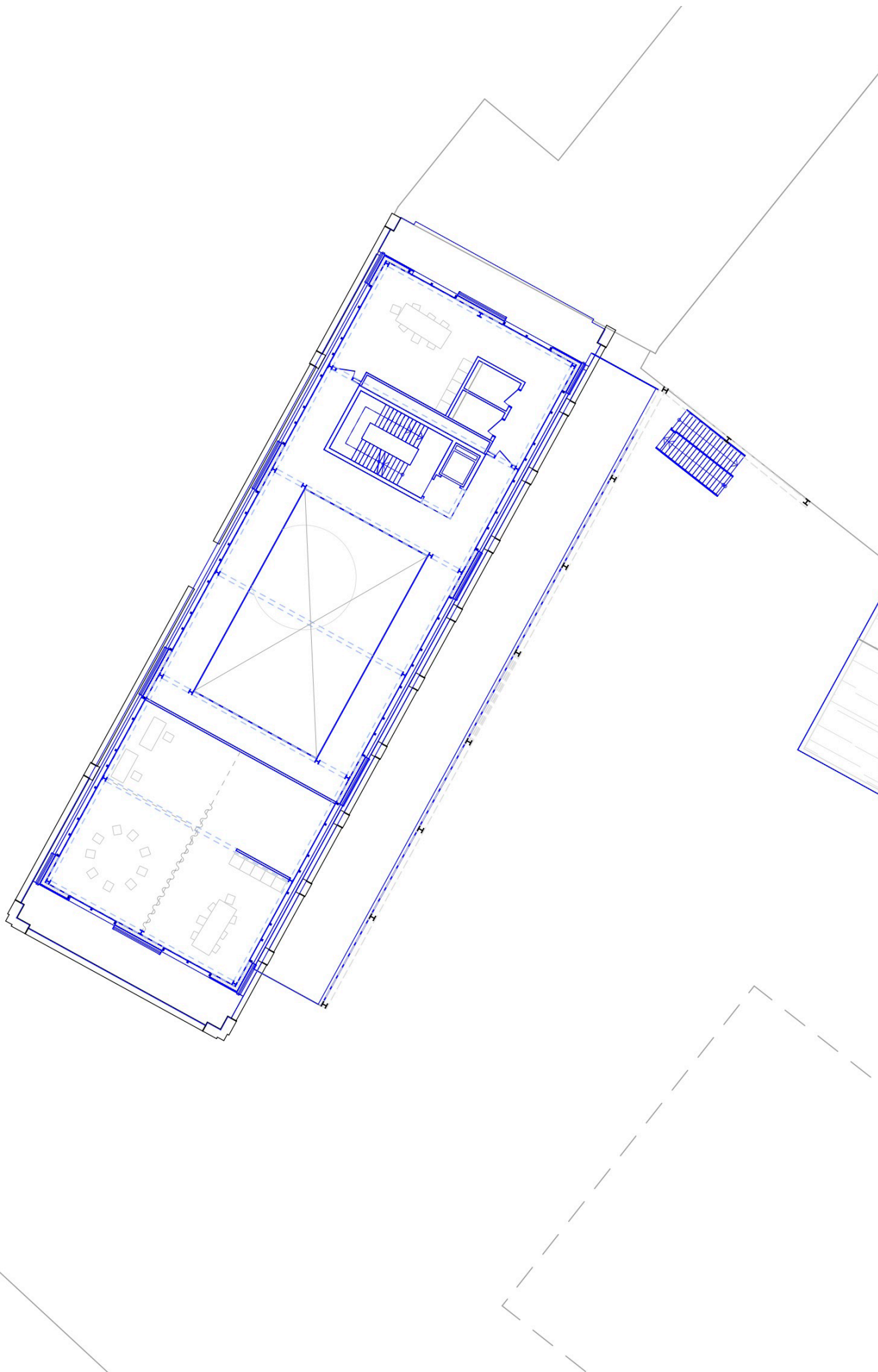


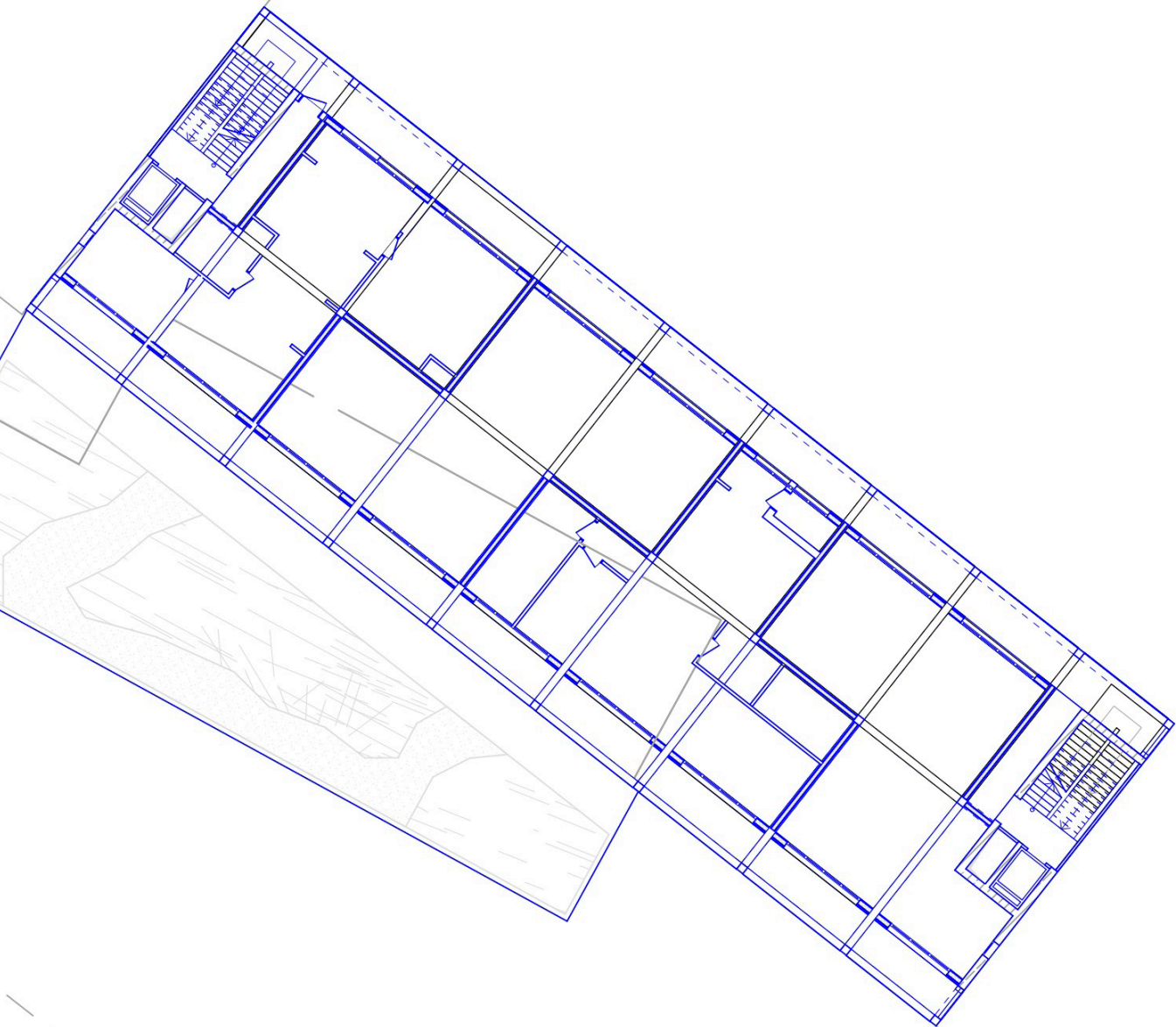




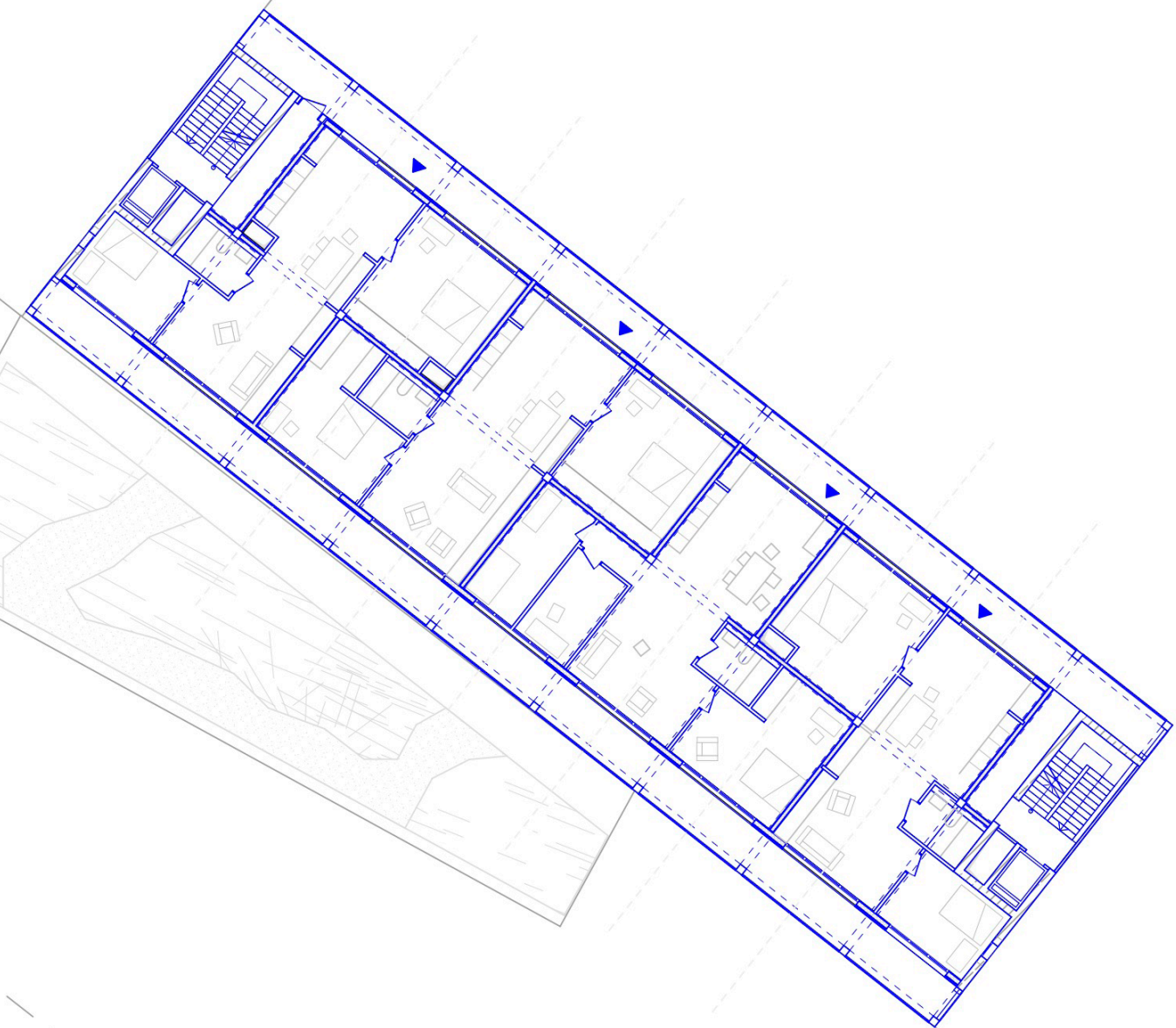


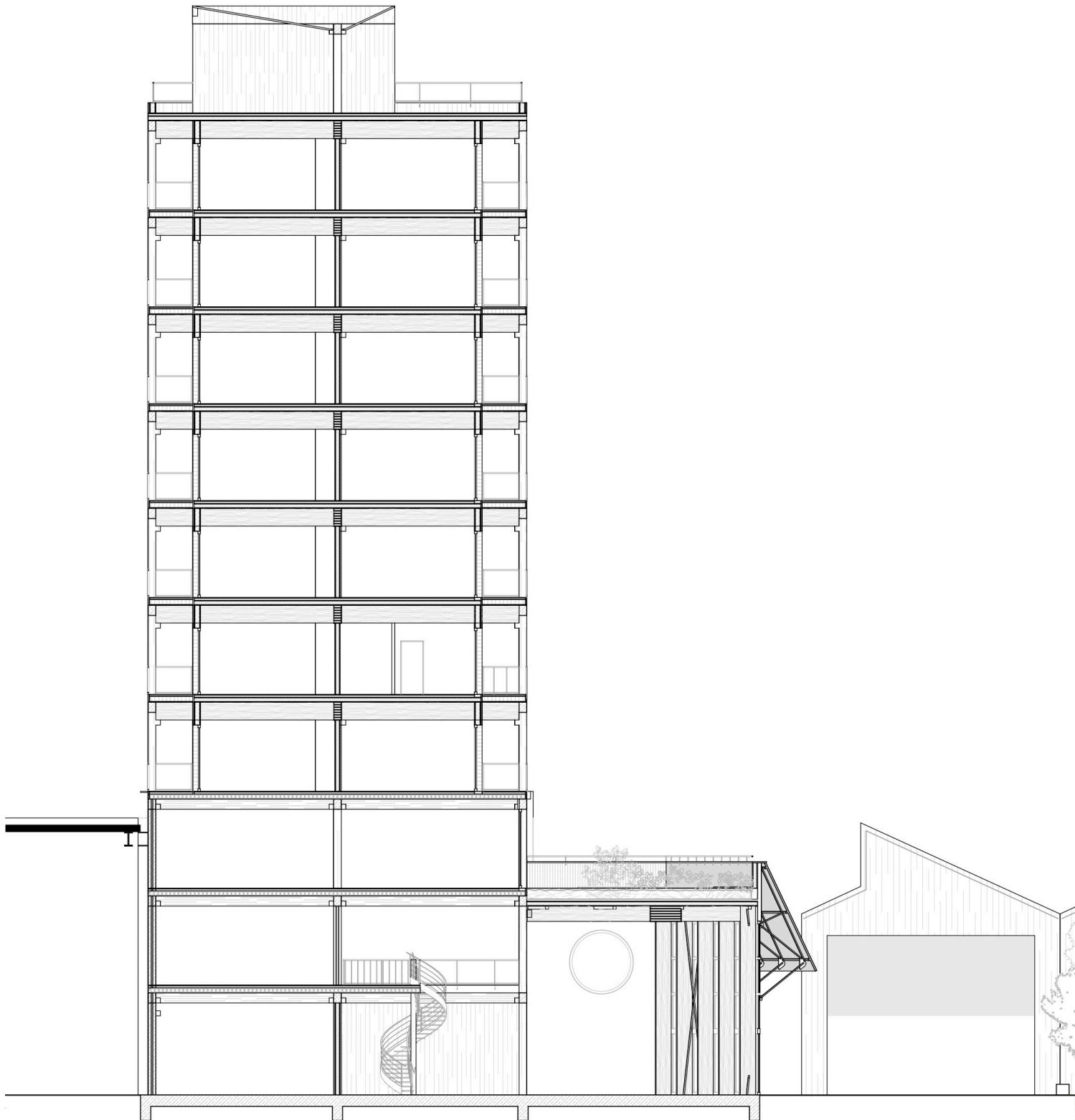


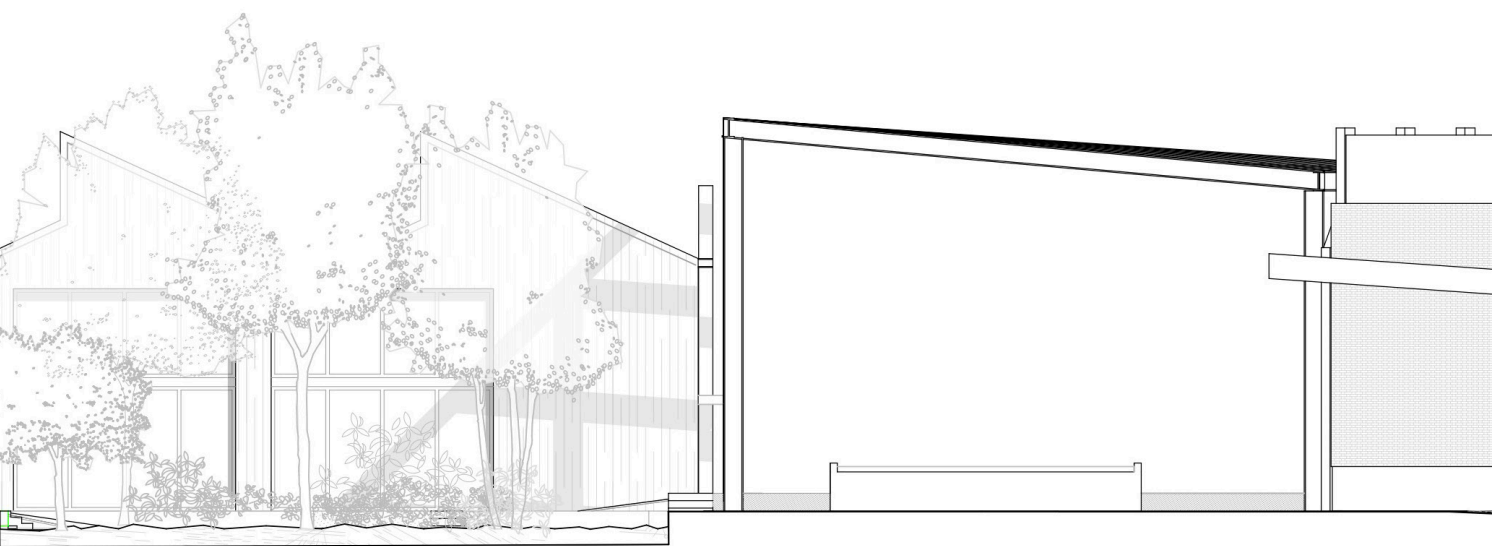


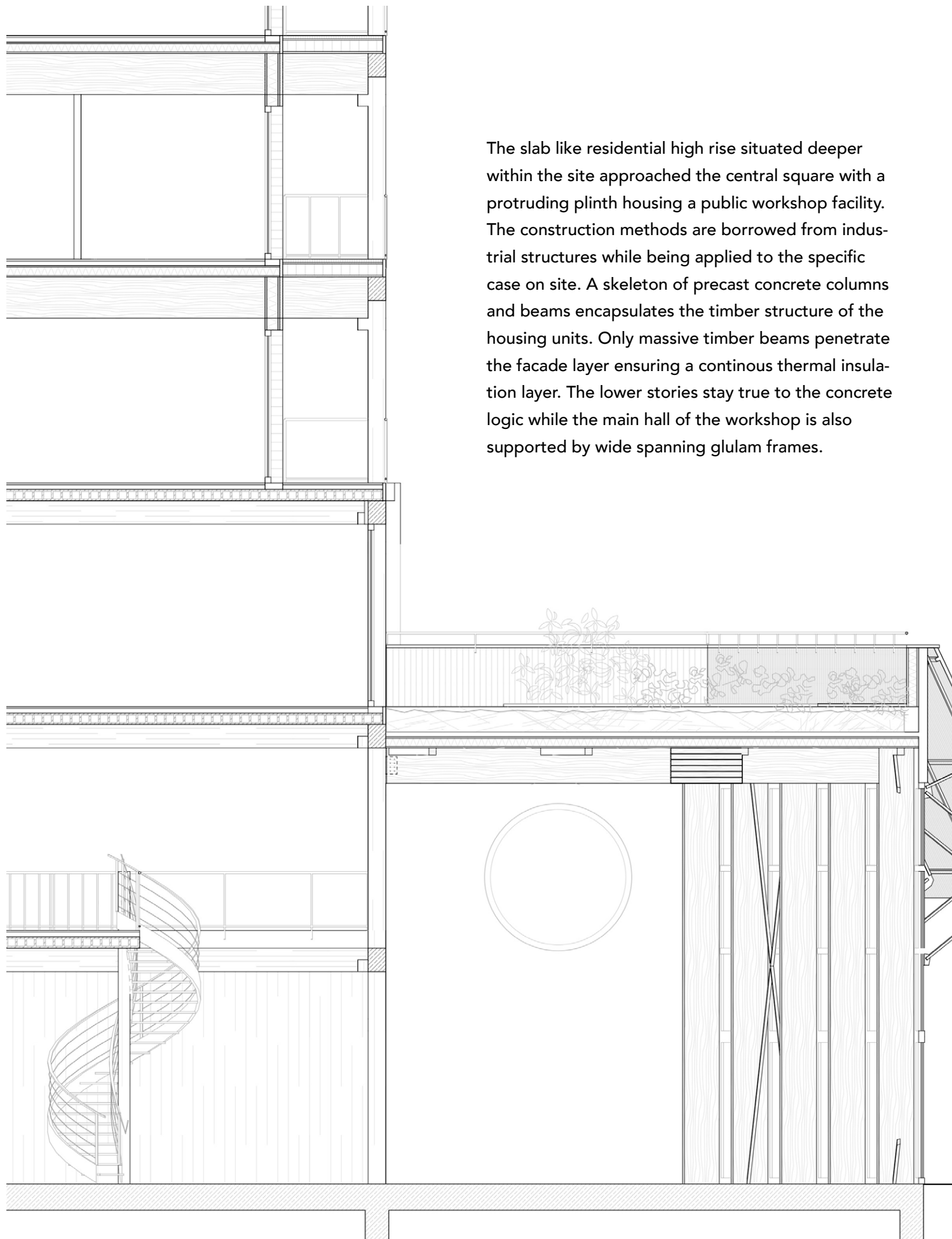




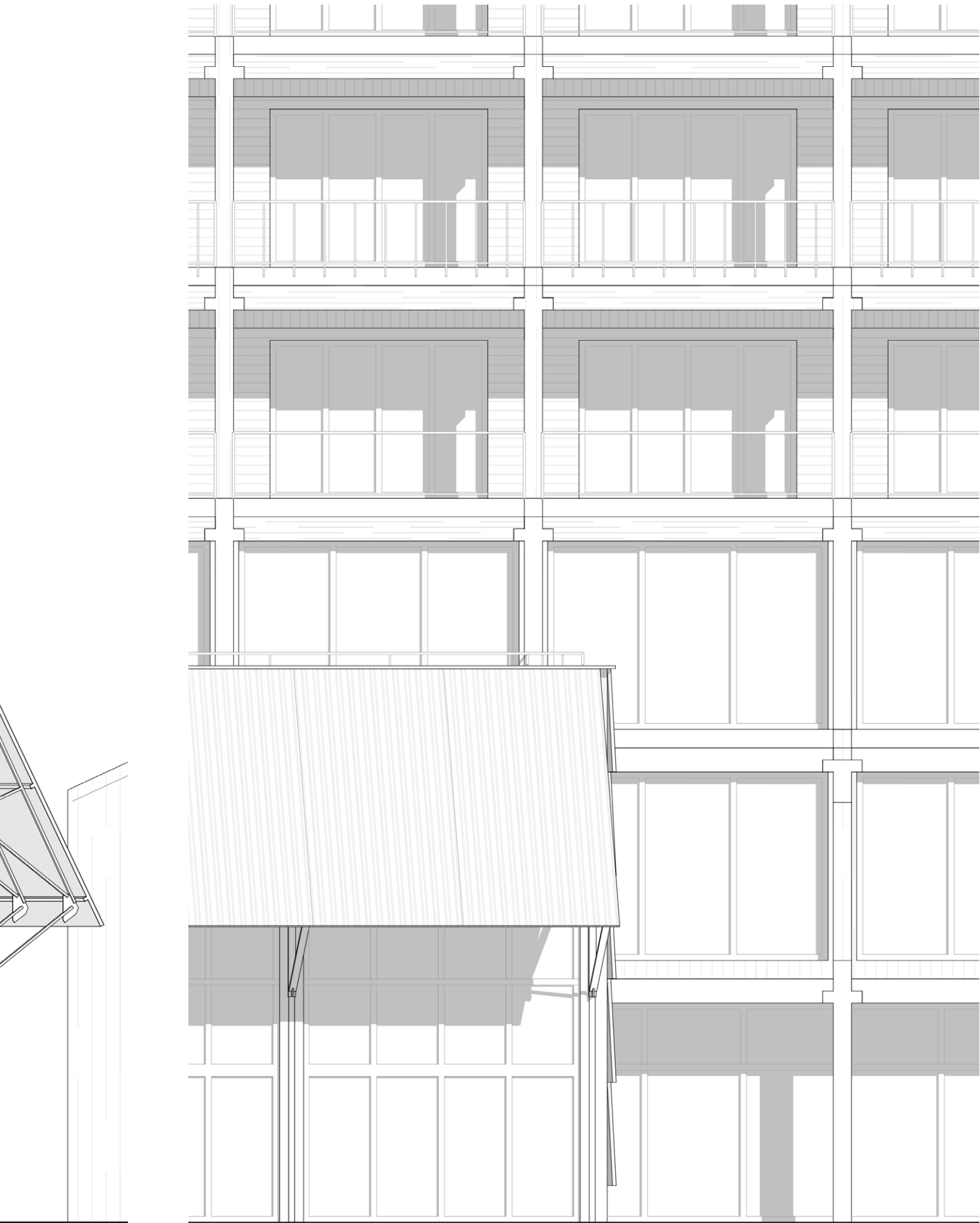


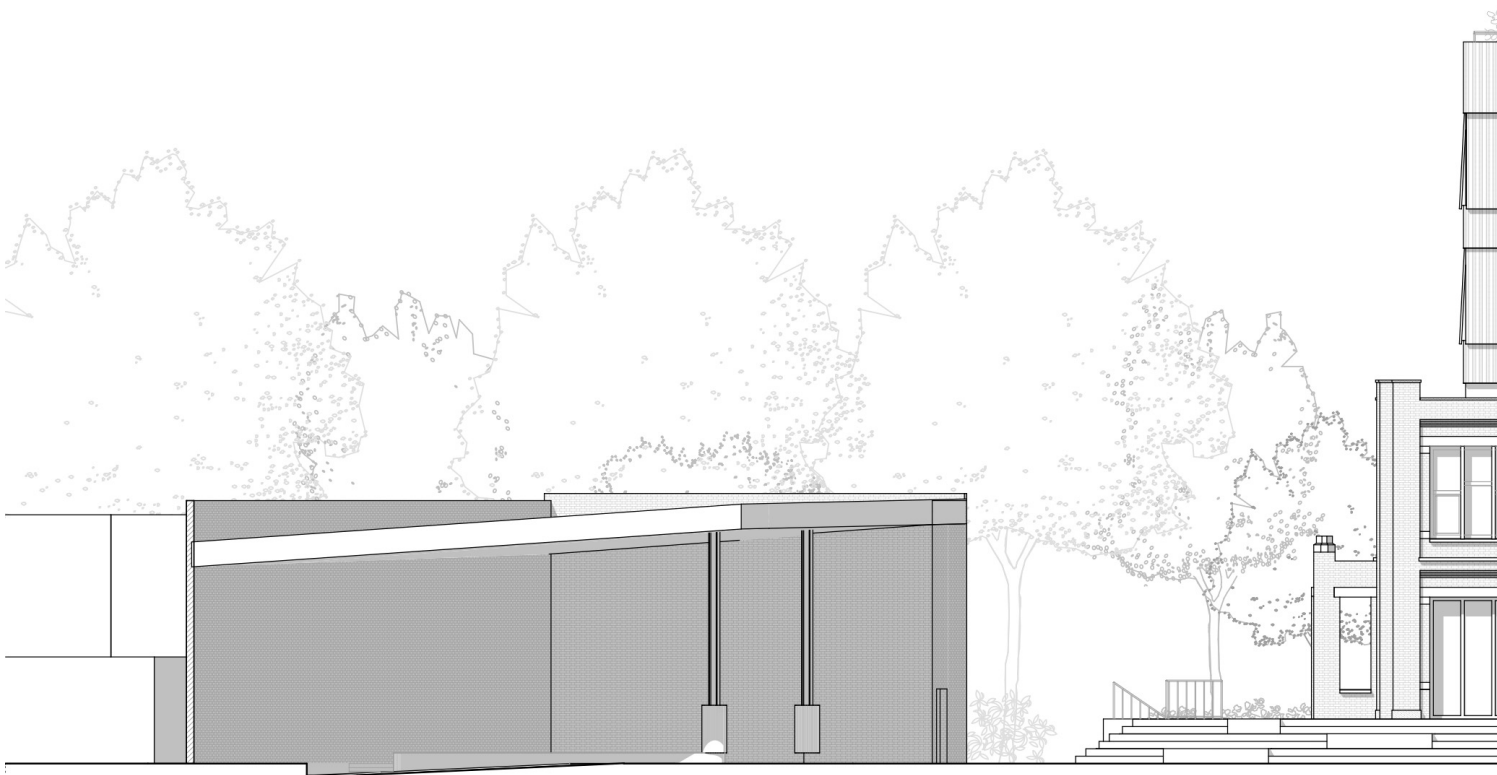






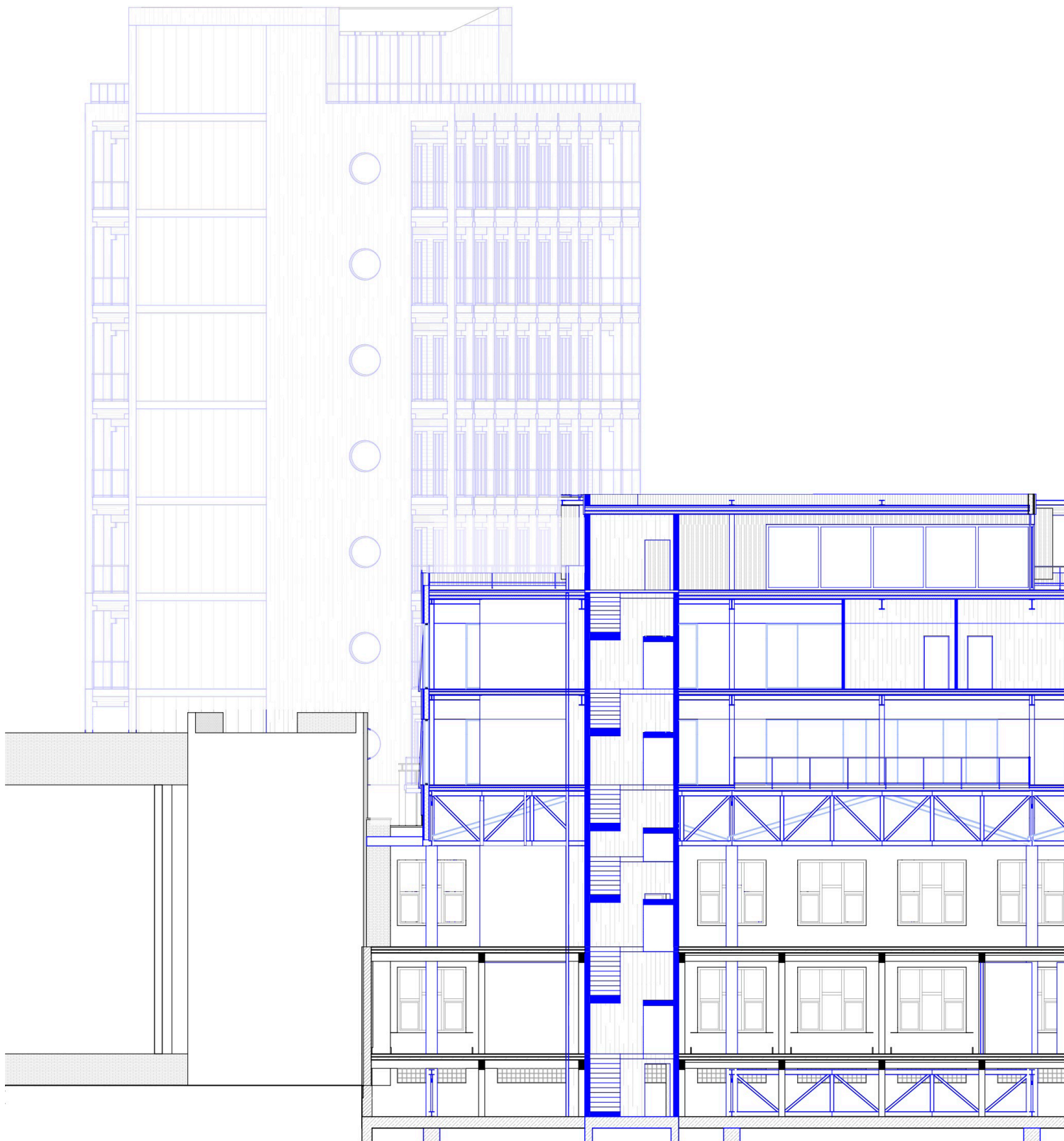
The slab like residential high rise situated deeper within the site approached the central square with a protruding plinth housing a public workshop facility. The construction methods are borrowed from industrial structures while being applied to the specific case on site. A skeleton of precast concrete columns and beams encapsulates the timber structure of the housing units. Only massive timber beams penetrate the facade layer ensuring a continuous thermal insulation layer. The lower stories stay true to the concrete logic while the main hall of the workshop is also supported by wide spanning glulam frames.

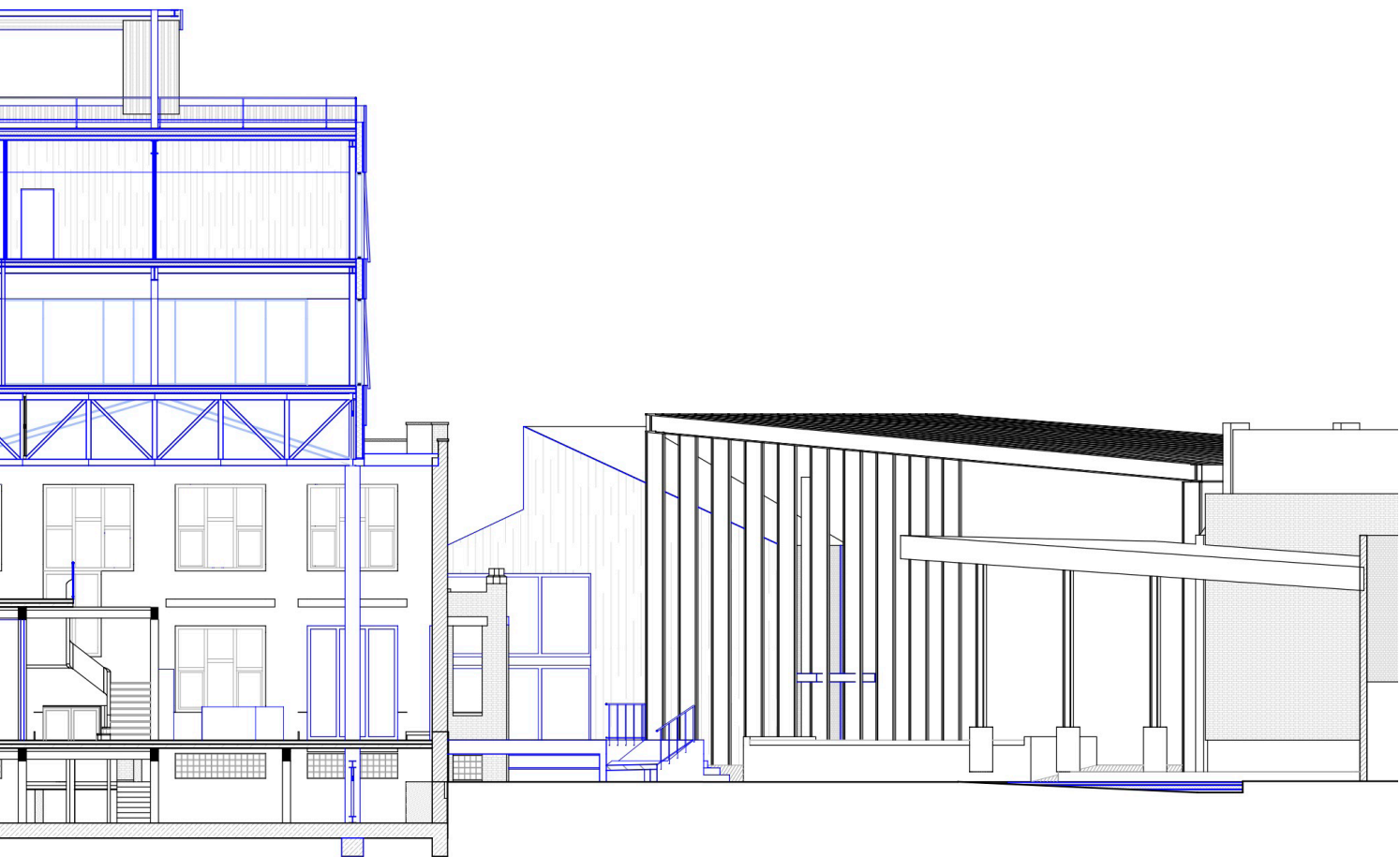


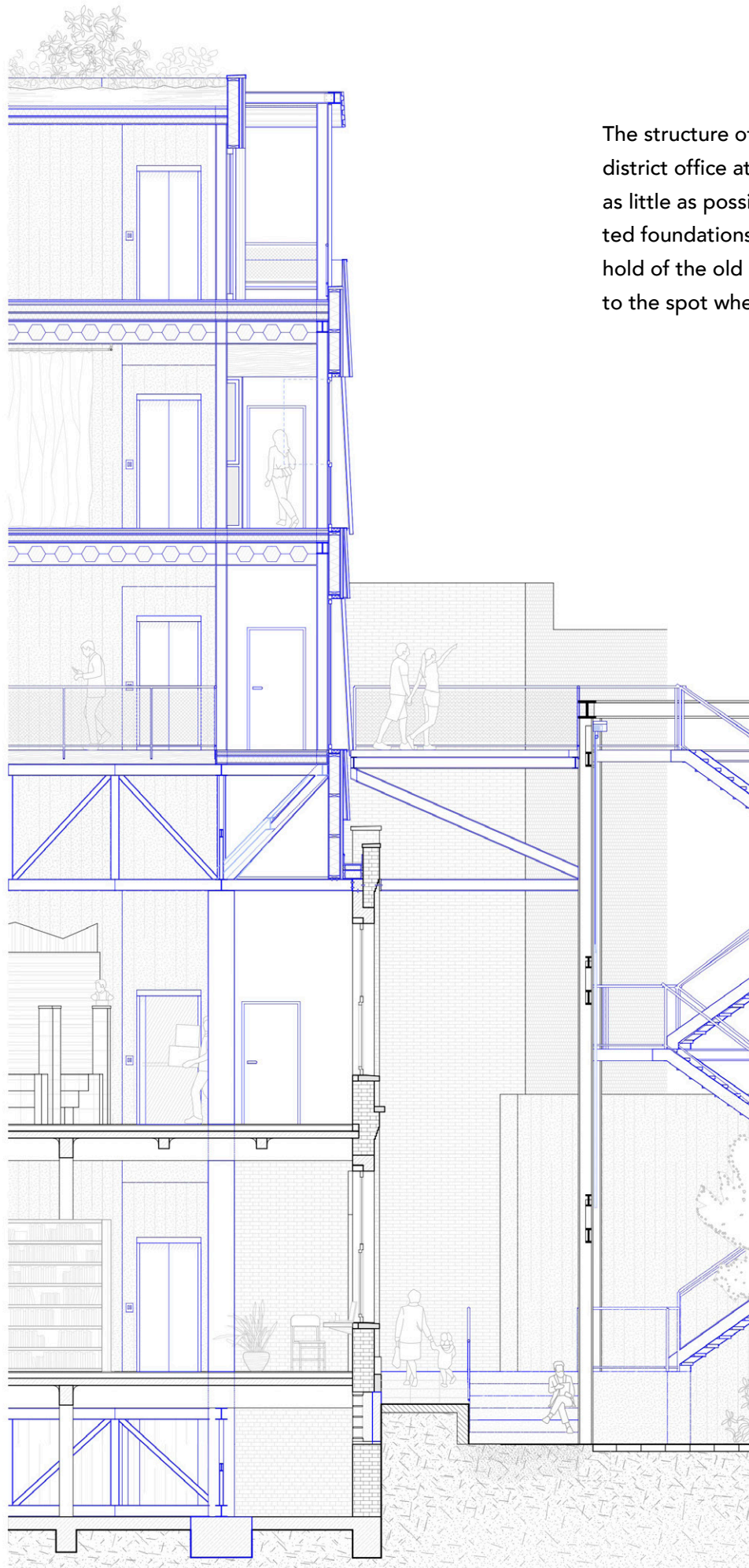


The backside of the newly conceived district office presents itself more playful than the neutral front towards the street. The remnants of a former factory hall which gave way to the open square still line its facade in the shape of a last remaining row of columns. This is utilized to create additional outdoor space, circulation and solar shading.



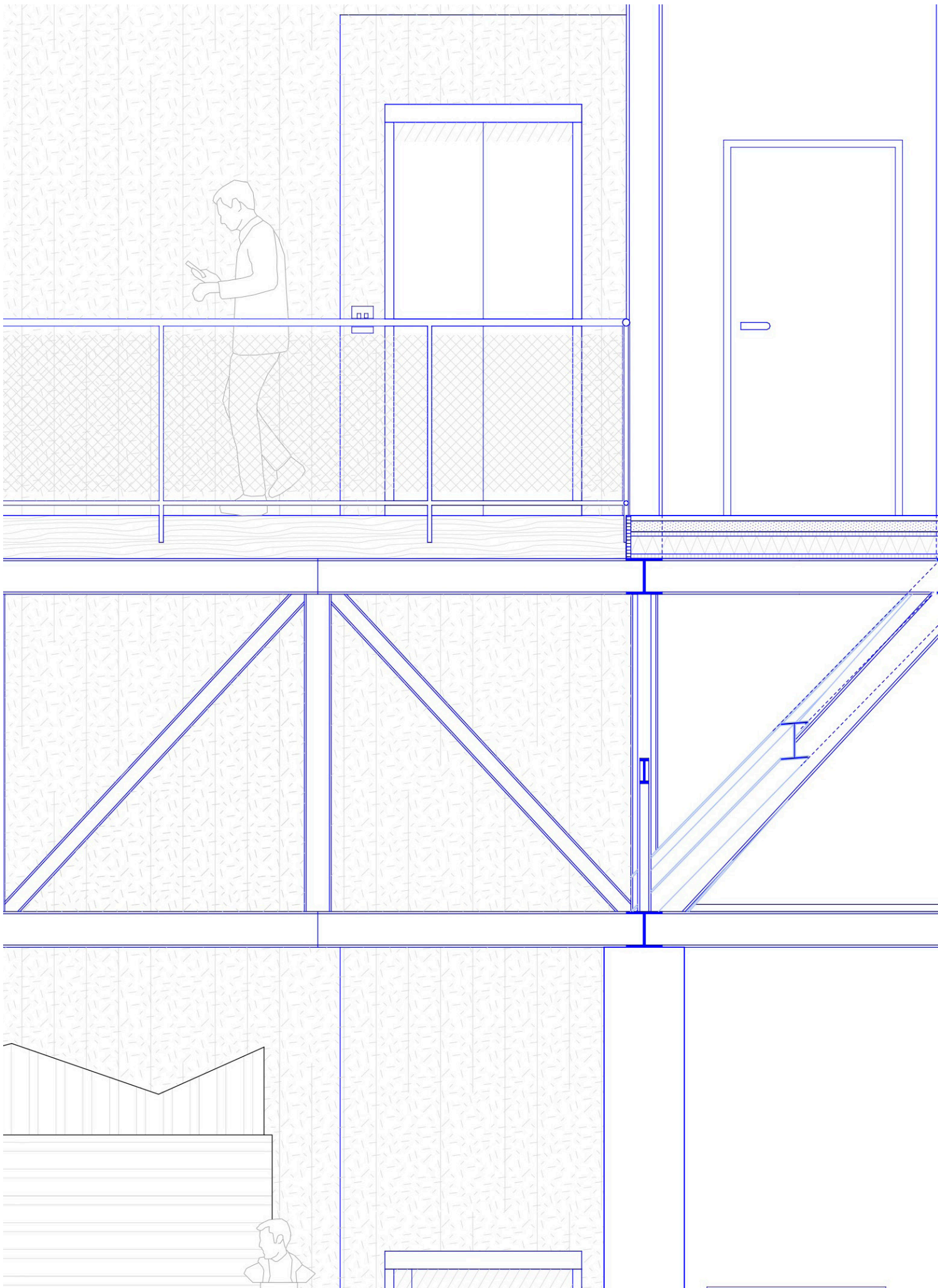


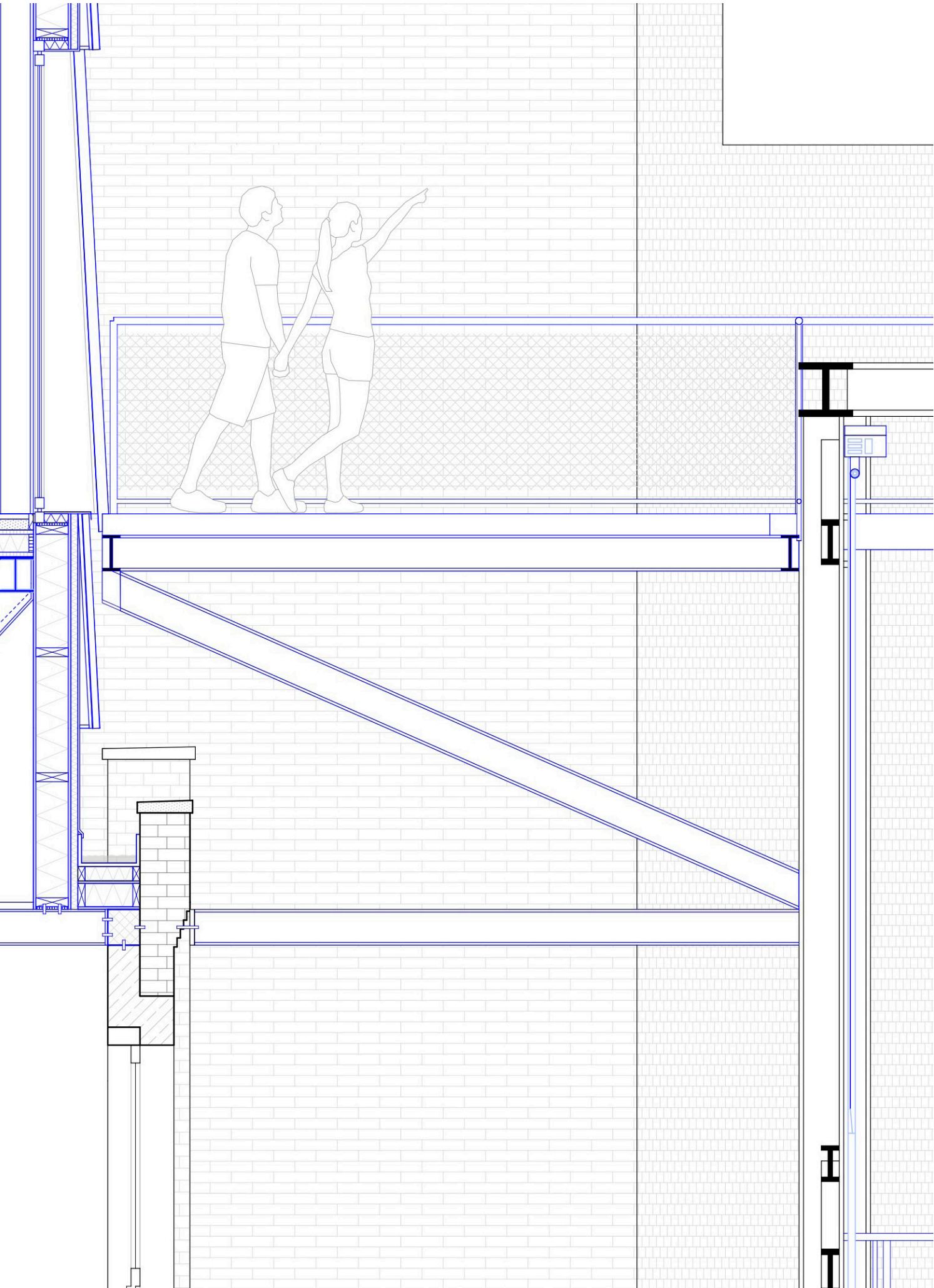




The structure of the vertical extension of the new district office attempts to touch the existing building as little as possible. Massive columns on newly casted foundations raise the volume above the threshold of the old office building and it connects only to the spot where the former roof used to lie in.



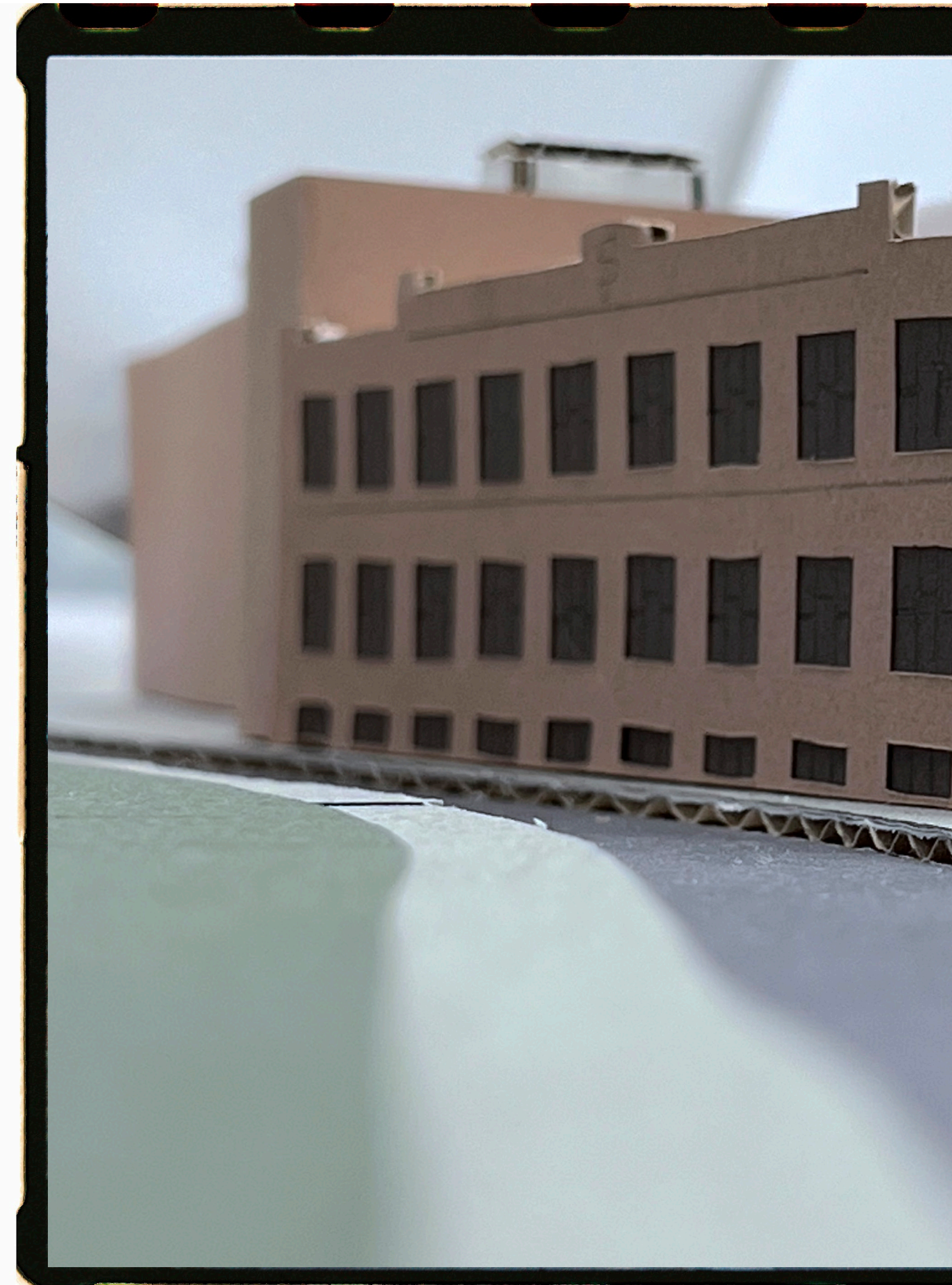




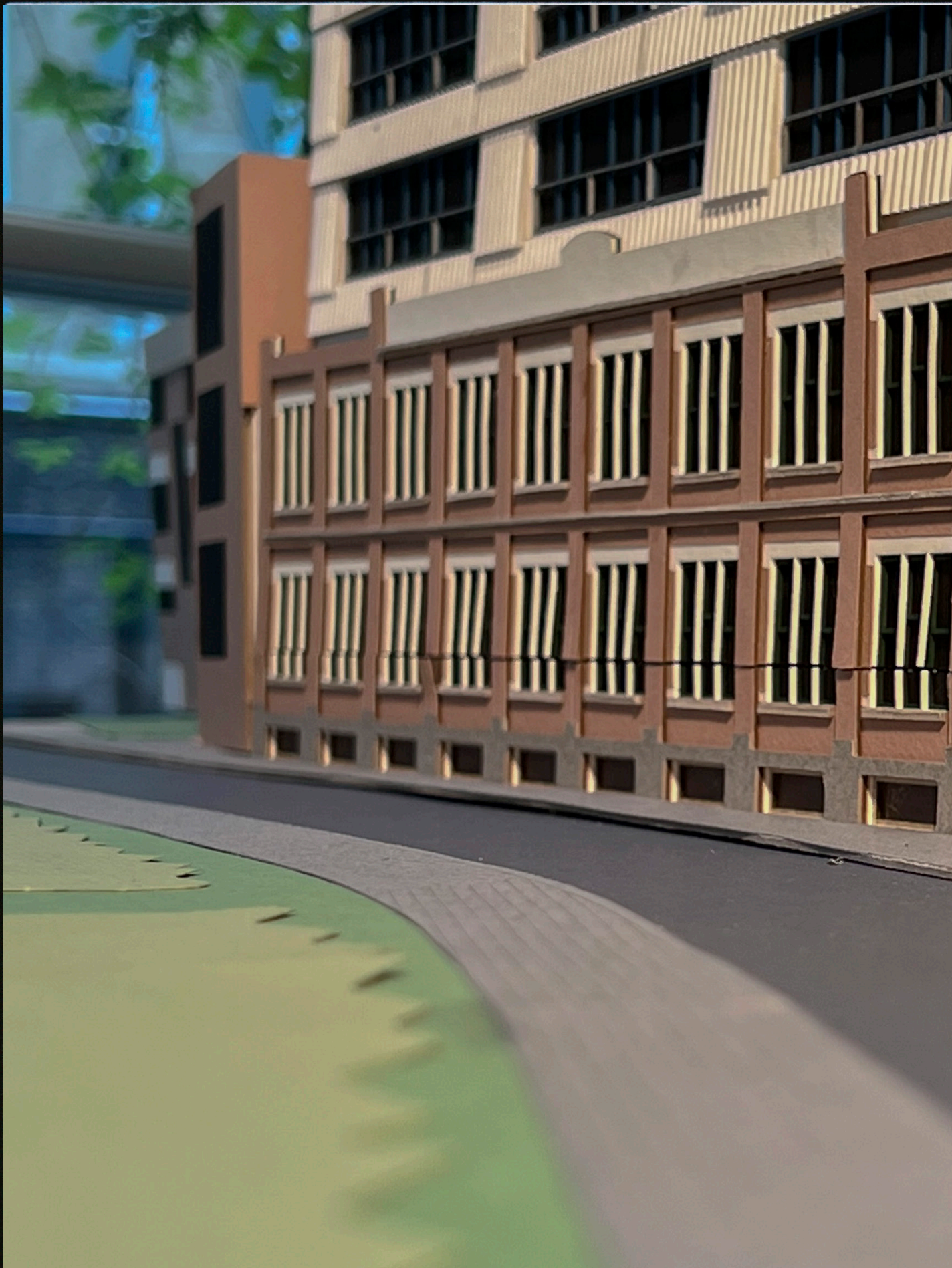
LOW TOWN DOWN TOWN

































FABIAN WACHTER

2978300

URBAN ARCHITECTURE

GRADUATION STUDIO

2024/25

PAUL VERMEULEN

LEEKE REINDERS

ROSIE VAN DER SCHANS

LEX VAN DEUDEKOM

P5 PRESENTATION



17.06.2025