

Recolonize Lelycentre

graduation thesis : research and analysis

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Heritage and Architecture: Adapting 20C Architecture
Tomorrows Heritage - Flevoland

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1.0 General information

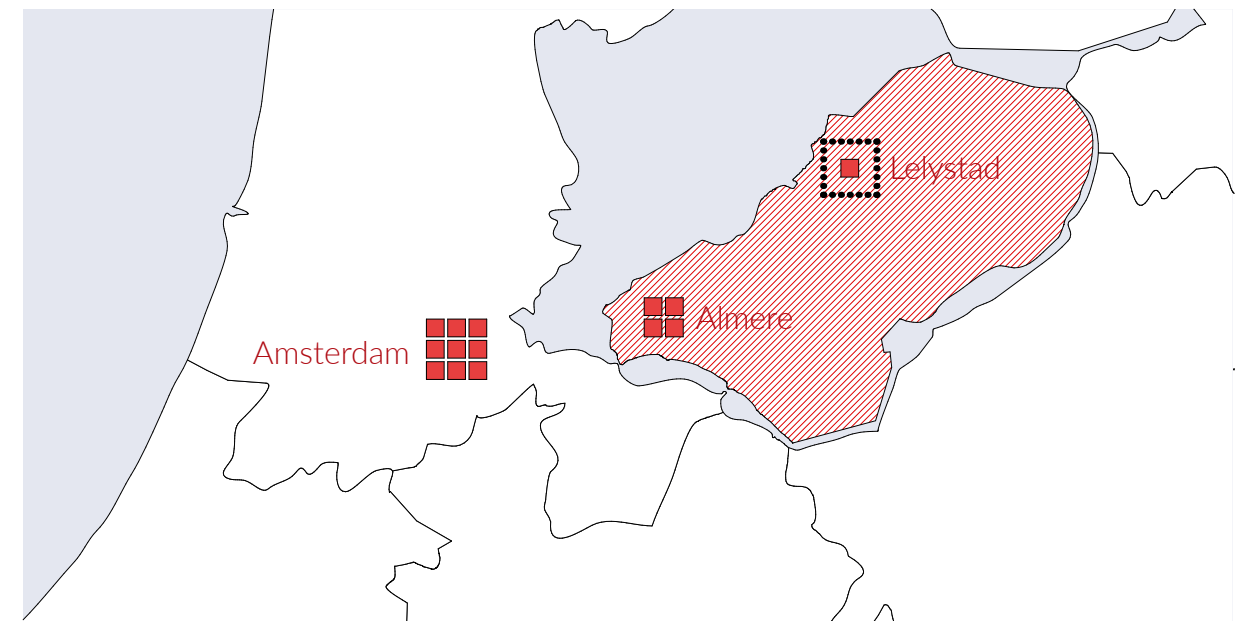
1.0 introduction - studio theme, location and site

The last century was an age of rapid urbanization which still continues. It is estimated that before 2050 over 60% of the world's population will live in urbanized areas and buildings constructed in the twentieth century constitute massive part of this environment. This makes the constant evaluation and adaptation of the 20 C built heritage a valid mission for today - never before in the history of humanity we have built so much so quickly. A responsible approach towards these structures is a vital part of sustainable growth strategy aimed at reducing energy consumption for new structures by saving the old ones and saving materials in the world of finite resources, which we are beginning to be more and more aware of.

It is hard to look for a better example of strictly twentieth-century built environment than the cities of Flevoland province. Entire region was reclaimed from the sea due to Zuiderzee reclamation project of Cornelis Lely. In the second half of the last century and two new towns were constructed- Lelystad and Almere. Both cities were a true testing ground for the urban and architectural ideas of CIAM modernism and later post-modernism. The focus of our studio was to revise, react to and adapt these ideas and their manifestations to the conditions of today's reality.

In this project I want to stress the topic of "social sustainability" of the built environment, which seems to be particularly relevant for Lelystad. To me the question of social sustainability is - are the cities of the last century attractive and livable for us today, do they catch up with our changing lifestyles and needs, do they still make a dignifying place to live in? When the answer to these questions is "yes" for a significant group of people they will take the building further in time with them by their care, maintenance and attention. The buildings survive by being loved and cared for. If they are not - they descend to neglect and ruin, slowly but surely making their way to demolition.

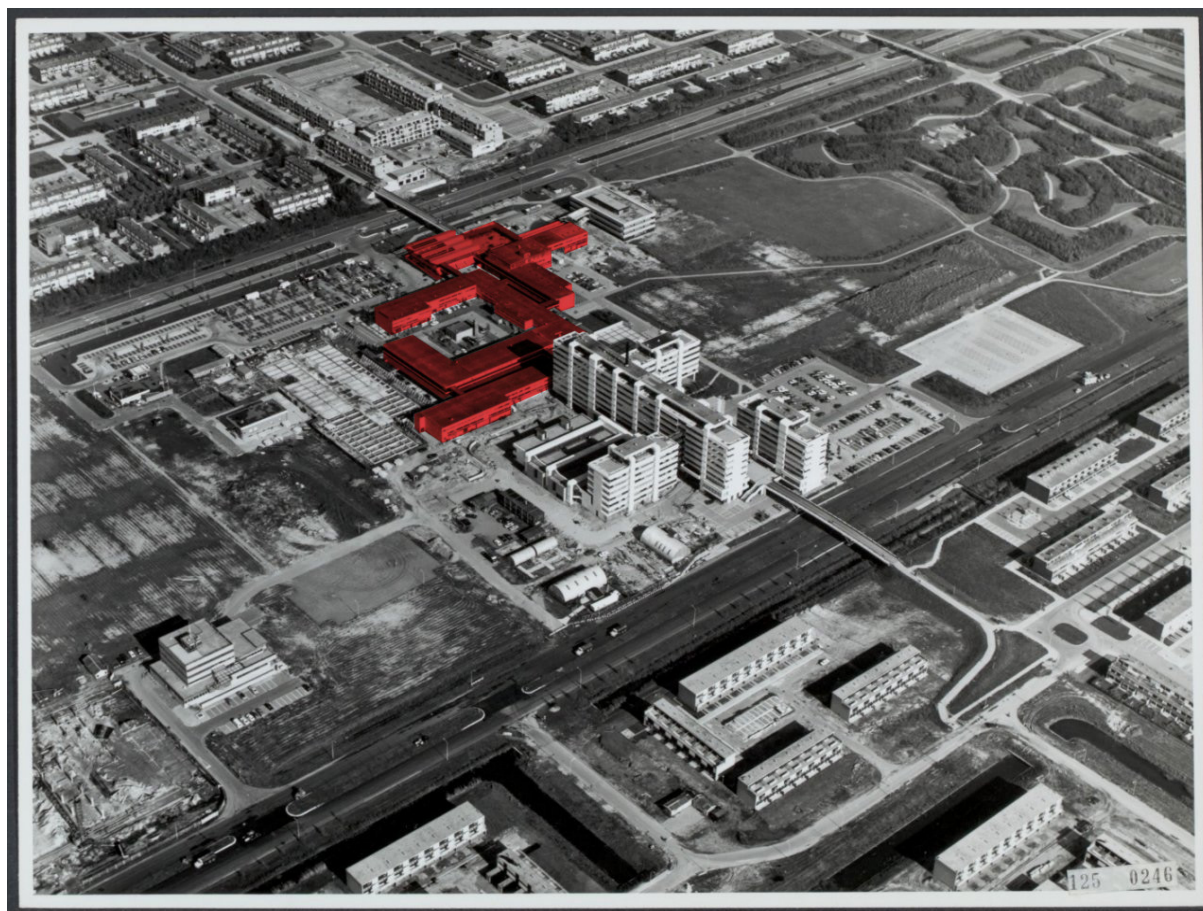
This project presents a story and possible future vision for Lelycentre - a building which is a rather prosaic element of daily life - a shopping center, but it played an important role in Lelystad colonization and life of the first pioneer families, who decided to settle down in the new town in the middle of a new polder.



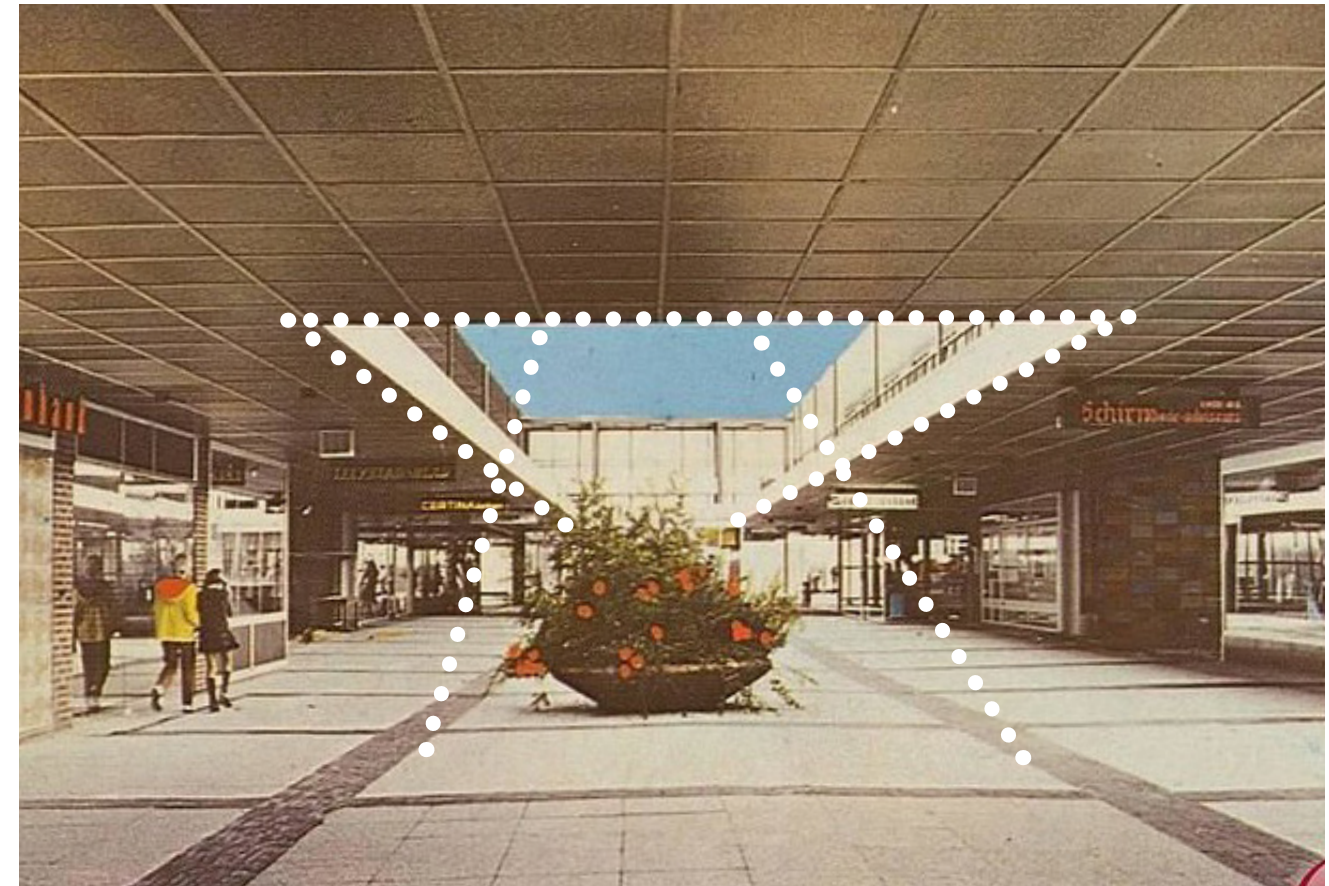
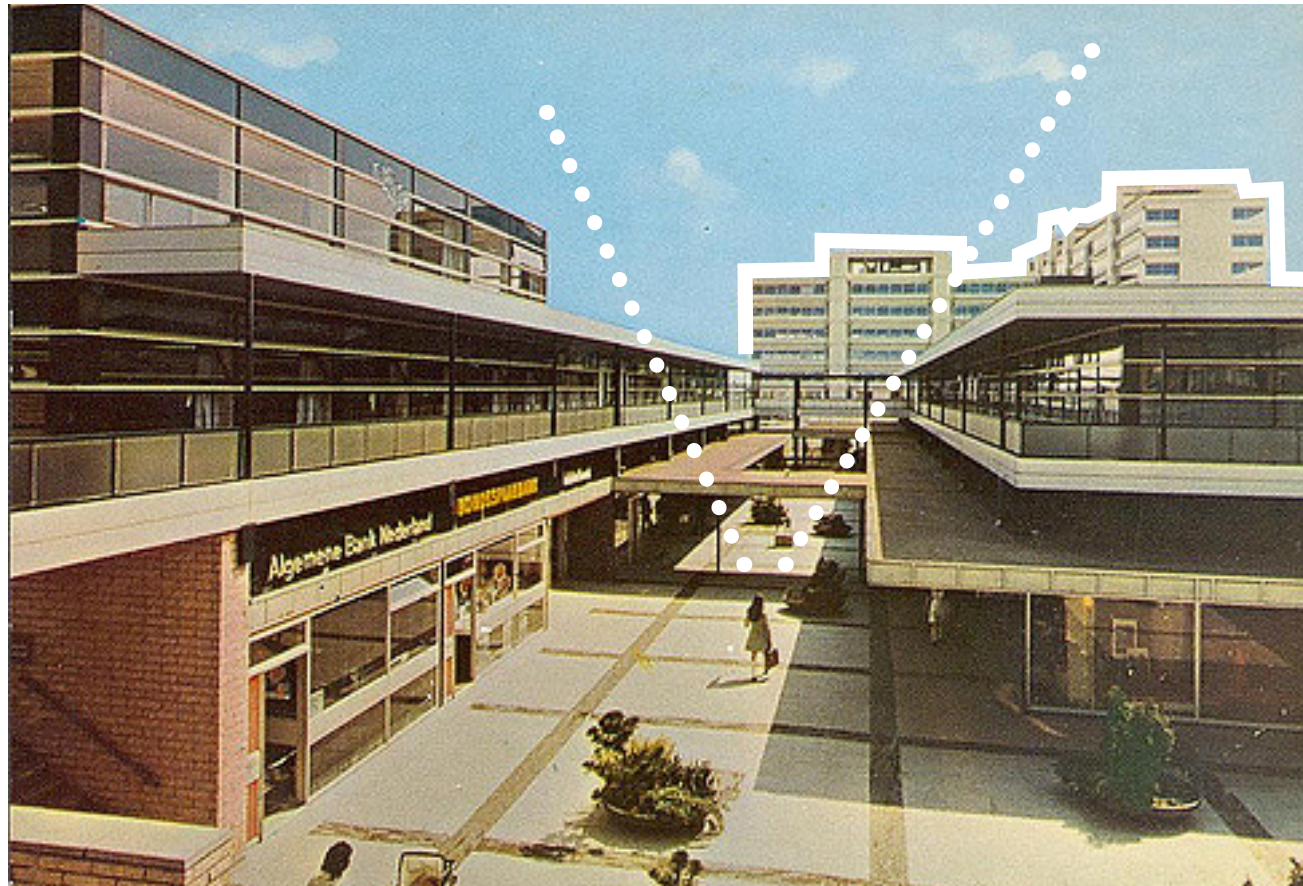
1.2 building history and cultural value

Lelycentre was one of the very first buildings constructed in Lelystad. It is a pedestrian shopping center and its construction was linked with the construction of the first neighborhoods in the new town - Zuiderzeewijk and Atolwijk. Lelycentre - which is also the name of the Neighbourhood in which the shopping center is located - is a service plot for these first settlements and accommodated the daily life shops and services as well as workspaces.

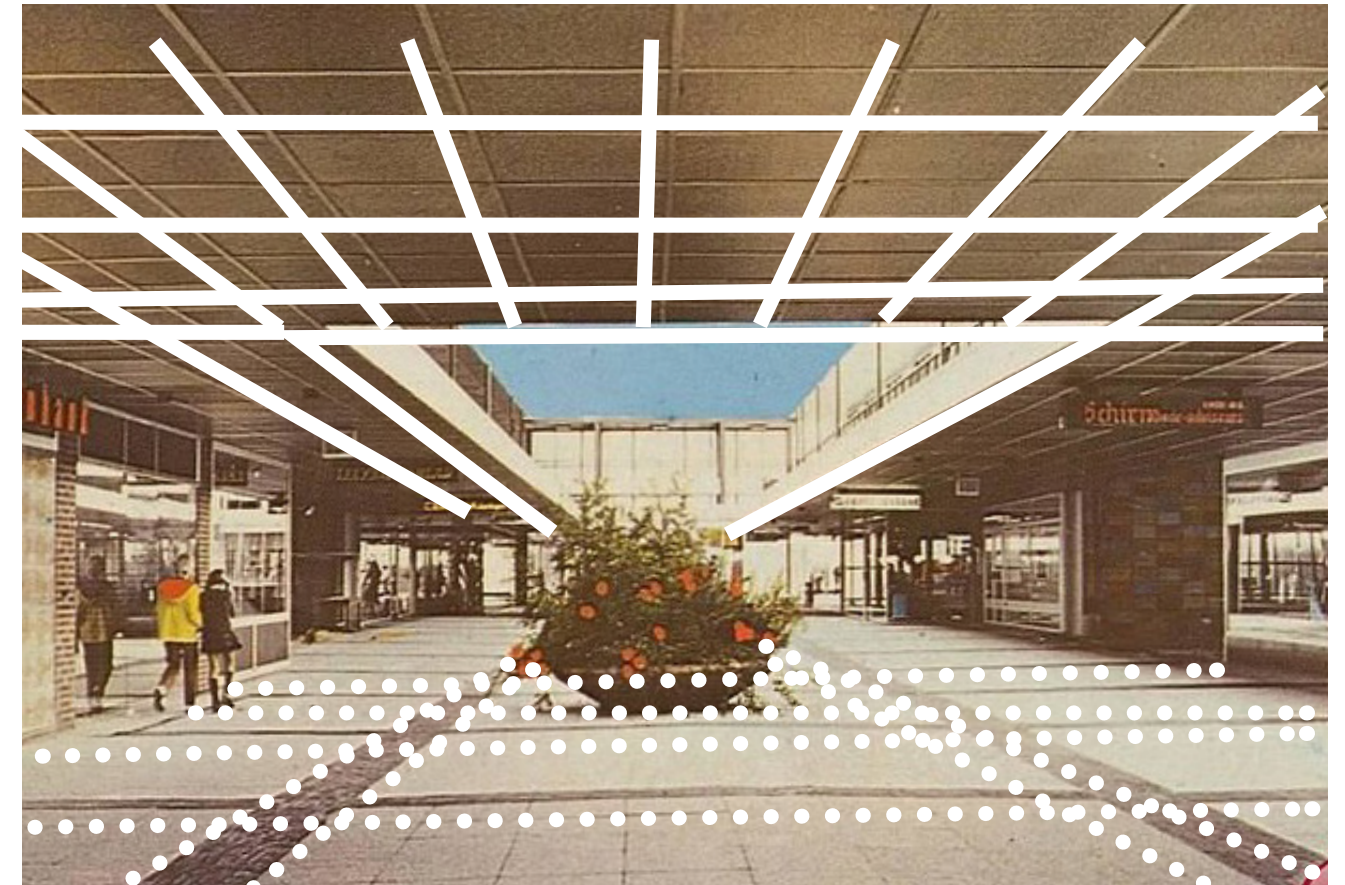
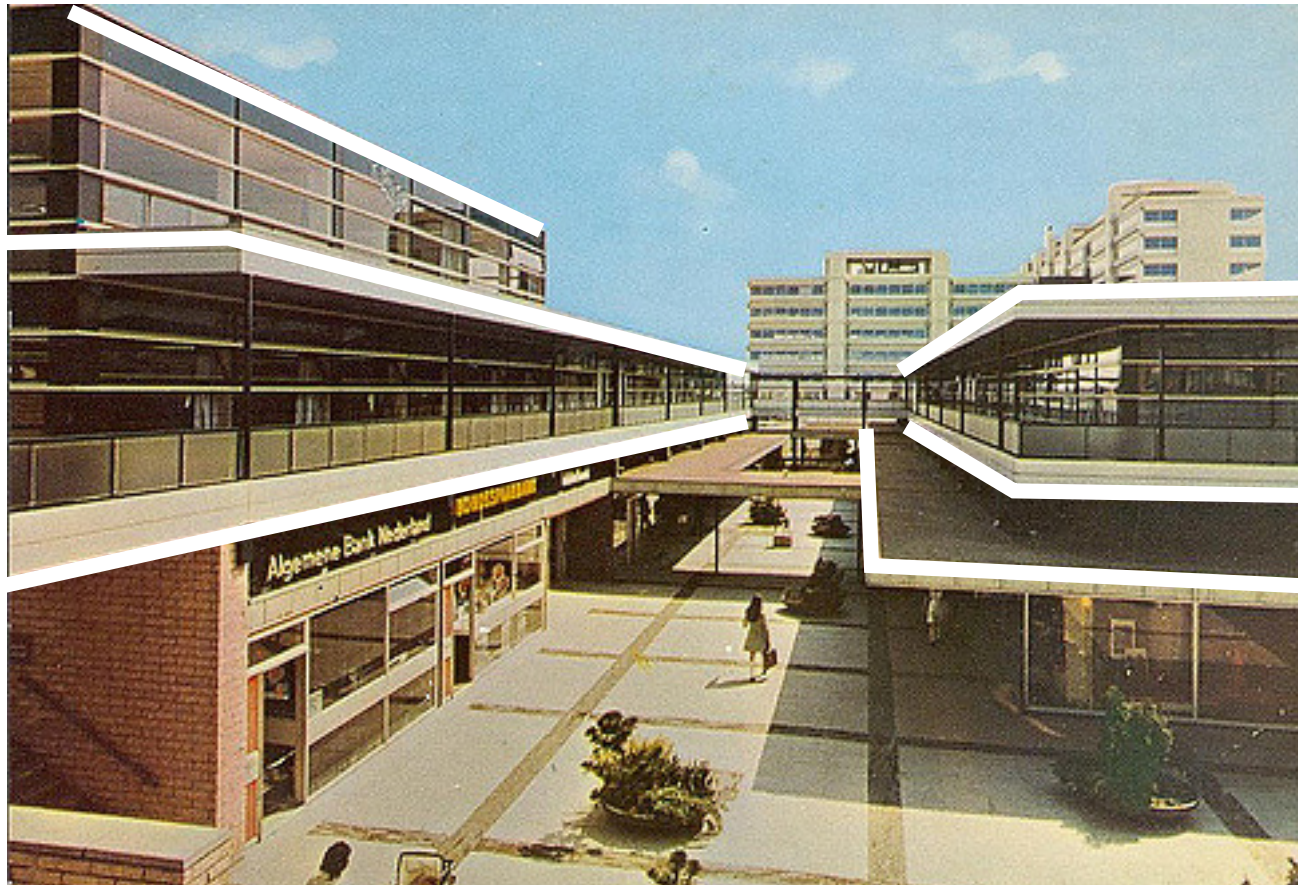
Building has a presence in collective memory of the Lelystad first inhabitants. In the years of Lelystad it used to be the only place to go - all the social activities, neighbour meetings, leisure and entertainment happened there. It was also the place of work and local economy. The role of the building as a heart of neighbourhood and its social life is the central cultural value of the building.



The main qualities of the original design are the character of the open air shopping center, street-like passages and views extending towards the surrounding buildings.



The expression of the original building is based on the strong horizontal accents of the facade and orthogonal grid visible in every surface of the building.



1.2 site visit and observations

First, the most obvious observation is that the building has changed diametrically. In the early 90's it has undergone a very dominant renovation - all the open air passages were covered with polycarbonate roof on red painted steel truss structure. Also the original tectonics was altered by blunt yellow covers for the facades. The overall expression of the renovation creates the atmosphere of cheap bazaar rather than modern shopping passage.

The building lacks proper maintenance and care, but the underlying reason for it's degradation seems to be deeper than just no regular cleaning. The shopping center is subject to vandalism and overall neglect suggests the lack of sense of ownership of the shop owners towards the passagess.

Combined with the isolating and unattended delivery areas exposed to the visitor which certainly feel unsafe after the closing of the shops - this mixture of factors make Lel-centre an unfriendly, poor quality public space. The marginalized shopping centre, once a thriving and lively heart of neighbourhood now seems desolate and degrading.



1.3 interviews and consulting

To get a glimpse on how do the people associated with Lelycentre and experiencing it in their daily life feel about the building we decided as a group to conduct a series of interviews.

This series of conversations series of interviews with the stakeholders, interested parties, inhabitants and visitors. This research method had two main benefits for my design concept- firstly I had an opportunity to learn the perspective of people who are in fact personally interested in the future of Lelycentre neighborhood - and this is a variety of different relationships to the place, starting from people who live nearby and use the object on the daily basis, through the Wonzorg Flevoland employees, whose interest and mission is to tackle the aging population challenge and ending with the urban planners and government property managers, whose interest is in developing and maintaining the buildings and designing the cohesive plan for the future of the district. This multi-faceted image of the site gave me a broad overview of the aspects which I could relate my intervention project to, providing me with this anchorage point for the design, which historical analysis itself could not give me. Second benefit of the interviews was that all of them have either confirmed or corrected my initial ideas which I brought about with me to discuss during the meetings. This was when my design has already taken more clarified direction, and being able to consult and reach for advice from - for example - Lelystad urban planner has largely helped me to support my decisions and take them as a sound basis for the further development of the design.

1.4 conclusion - problem statement

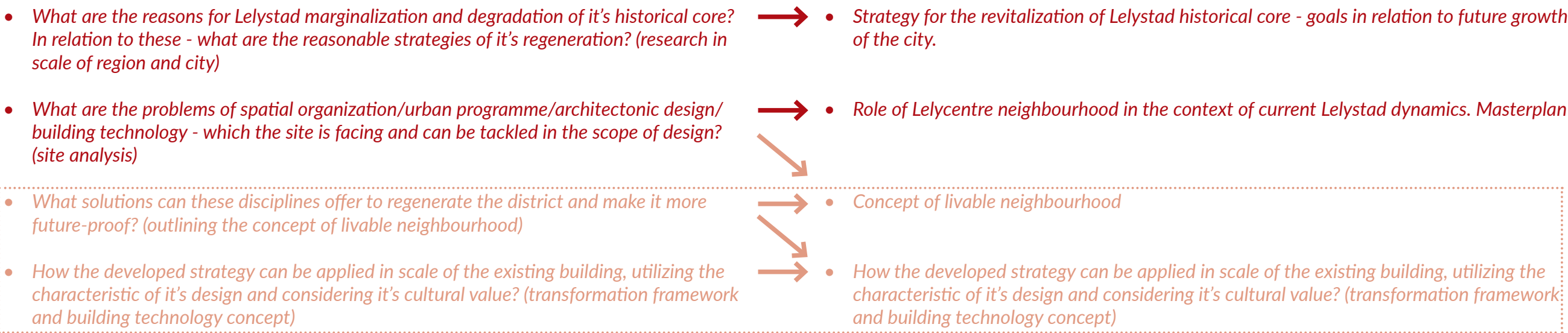
The initial recognition of the plot revealed the social relevance and urgency of intervention - the fragile social and economical situation of the neighbourhood must be taken into account, which does not offer high dynamics and obvious scenarios of improvement. Despite the worsening situation of the shopping center it is still accommodating the local economy and the social life of the nearby neighbourhoods. It is also a place of choice for the local community due to its affordability. With no other services and shops in the surrounding homogeneous residential plots, Lelycentre is the main concentration of businesses and activities available in this part of the city. The central position of the building in the plot, extensive area it occupies and the multitude of relationships it creates with the surrounding context make it impossible to ignore its presence in any plan of the neighbourhood revitalization. As unattractive and unprosperous as it is today - it affects the daily experience and life quality of a significant number of Lelystad inhabitants and thus its degradation should be treated seriously by the municipality - and is an interesting and challenging case for the architectural intervention project.

2.0 Research and analysis

2.1 introduction - research structure and goals

To make informed decisions and position the revitalization project within the dynamics of the region and city I answer the research questions at different scales. This allows for the strategy progressing from the broad context of Flevoland province and gradually zooming into the scale of an architectural intervention on Lelycentre building:

Answers to the research questions translate into the project brief, determining the goals and constraints to the design:

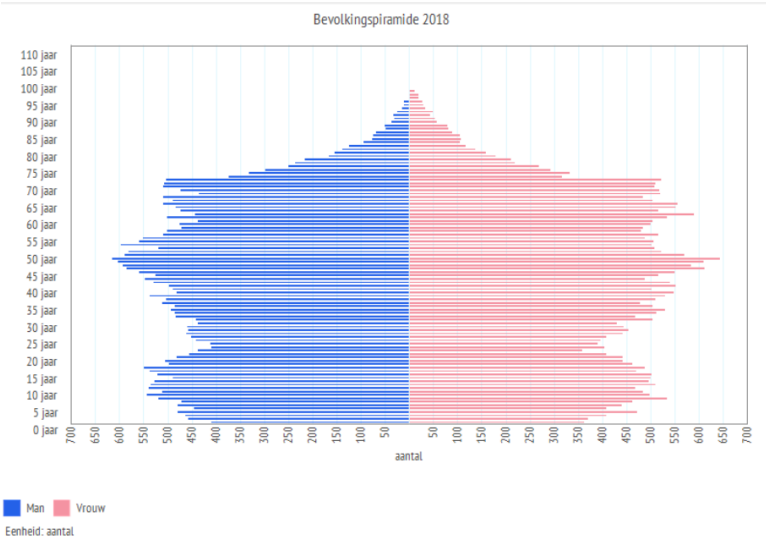


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developed parallel to design

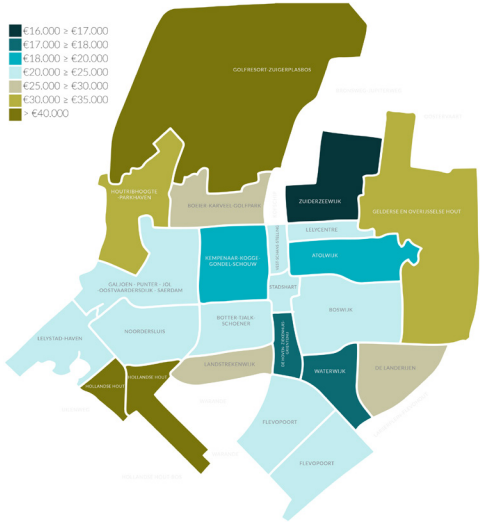
2.2 region

The sequence of historical events in scale of the region is responsible for today's situation of Lelystad - most importantly Almere was constructed too early and became too strong as a competition for Lelystad- it was closer to Amsterdam and more attractive as a place to move out of overcrowded Randstad cities. Lelystad became marginalized, without direct connection to Amsterdam it was isolated. City could not develop independent economy and lost its central role in the province. Today's population of Lelystad is merely 77 000 out of 125 000 initially planned for year 2000, while Almere is the seventh largest municipality in The Netherlands with its 350 000 inhabitants and currently is the fastest growing city in the country.

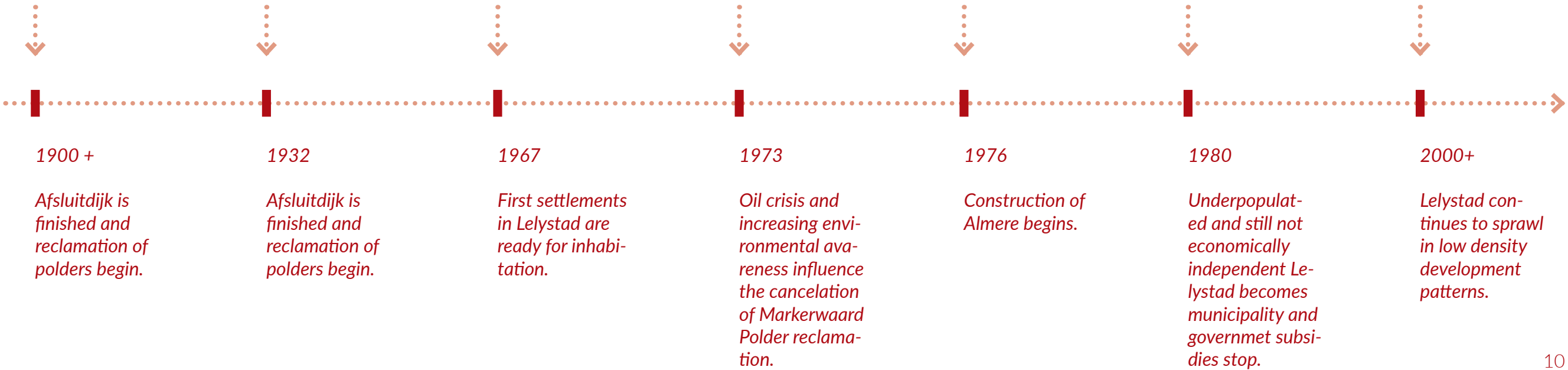
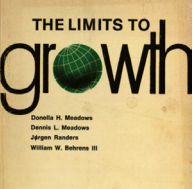
Isolation, lack of employment opportunities and education institutes cause youth emigration and Lelystad faces the challenge of aging population. Dropping property prices in the 1980's attracted the influx of low income groups.



age distribution showing aging population and youth emmigration in Lelystad



average income per neighbourhood in Lelystad



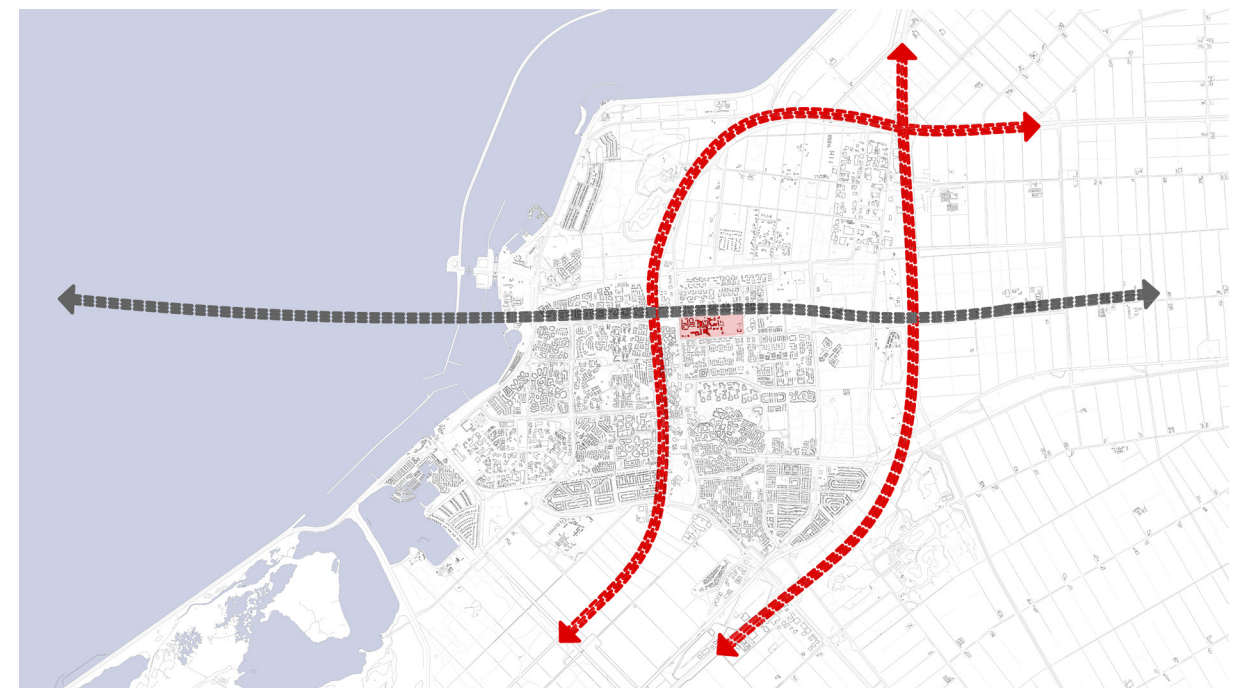
2.3 city

The turbulent first decades of Lelystad influenced the spatial composition of the city. When the decision of Markerwaard polder cancelation was made the city reoriented from east to west direction into north south - accordingly to the route towards Amsterdam. The districts which were initially part of the core - such as Lelycentre - became marginal.

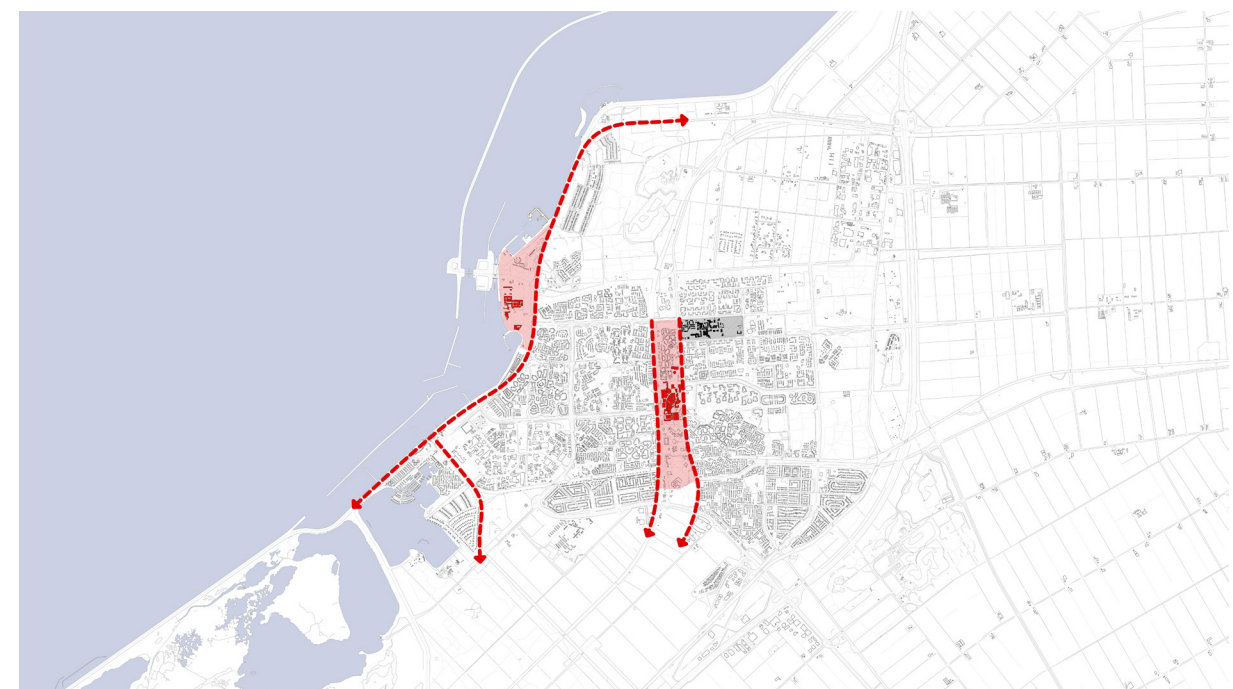
Lelystad developed new center- Stadshart, competing with the first one and city was not populated and affluent enough to support the two hearts- especially from the start of 1980's when Lelystad was no longer subsidized from the budget of the government and city has gone through the crisis. Starting from the 2000's city has seen the gradual improvement and developed new commercial areas on the coast- Batavia Stad. Today both Stadshart and Batavia Stad are more attractive and successful than Lelycentre and Stadshart accessibility in the current development of the city is simply better. Lelycentre - due to its marginalization and lower quality finds users mainly in the surrounding neighbourhoods.

My recognition of the current Lelycentre situation is that it cannot compete with the newer and more attractive commercial centers in Lelystad. The vision for the future of the site is rather a center of the surrounding neighbourhoods, oriented more locally, to provide a platform for more activity, interaction and business. This would help boost the local economy and enable more independence to the community of inhabitants in Lelycentre, Zuiderzeewijk and Atolwijk. Unlocking the potential of Lelycentre as a sub-core will improve the livability of the adjacent sites, increasing their chances for densification and offering more opportunities for their inhabitants.

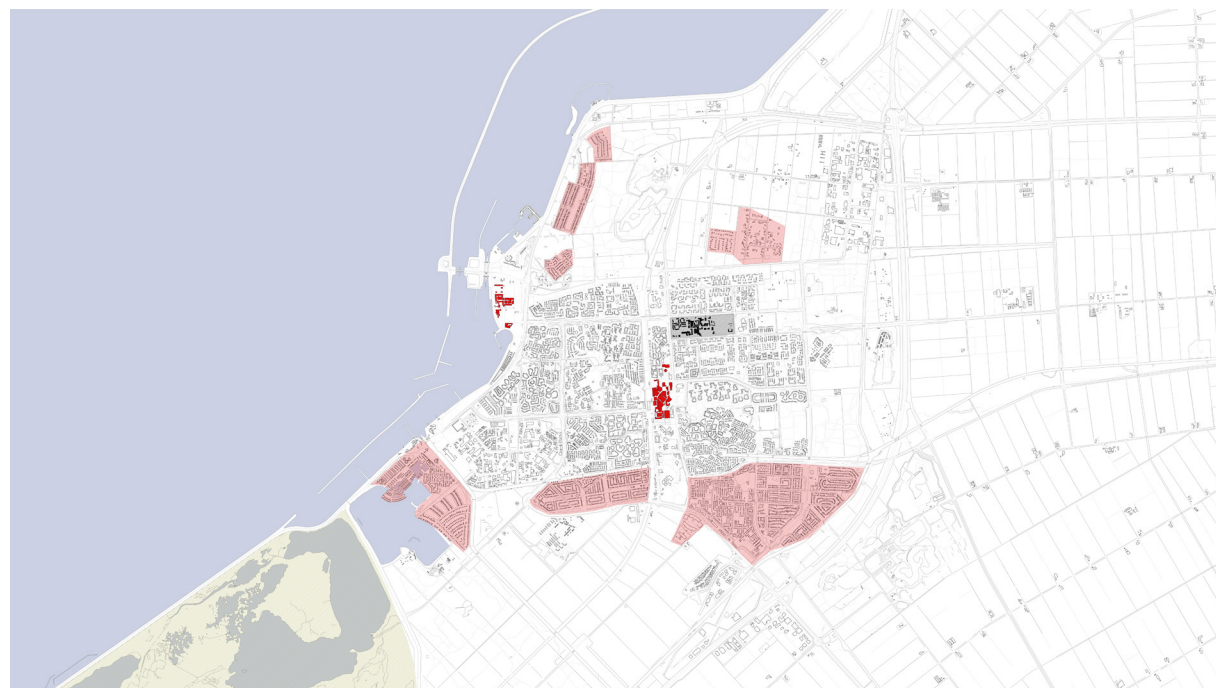
Retroactive densification of the Lelystad historical core has additional meaning in context of the future sustainable development of the region. Lelystad is currently under-populated and while the center is stagnated or in decline, the fringe of the city undergoes an expansion of urban sprawl. The type of dwellings constructed in the outskirts are mainly low density detached houses with large gardens - not the most efficient form of land consumption we can think of today. Growth within the reasonable borders seems to be a more favorable scenario of development for the Flevoland province, which as an overspill area for the Amsterdam should be able to accommodate the population growth in the upcoming decades.



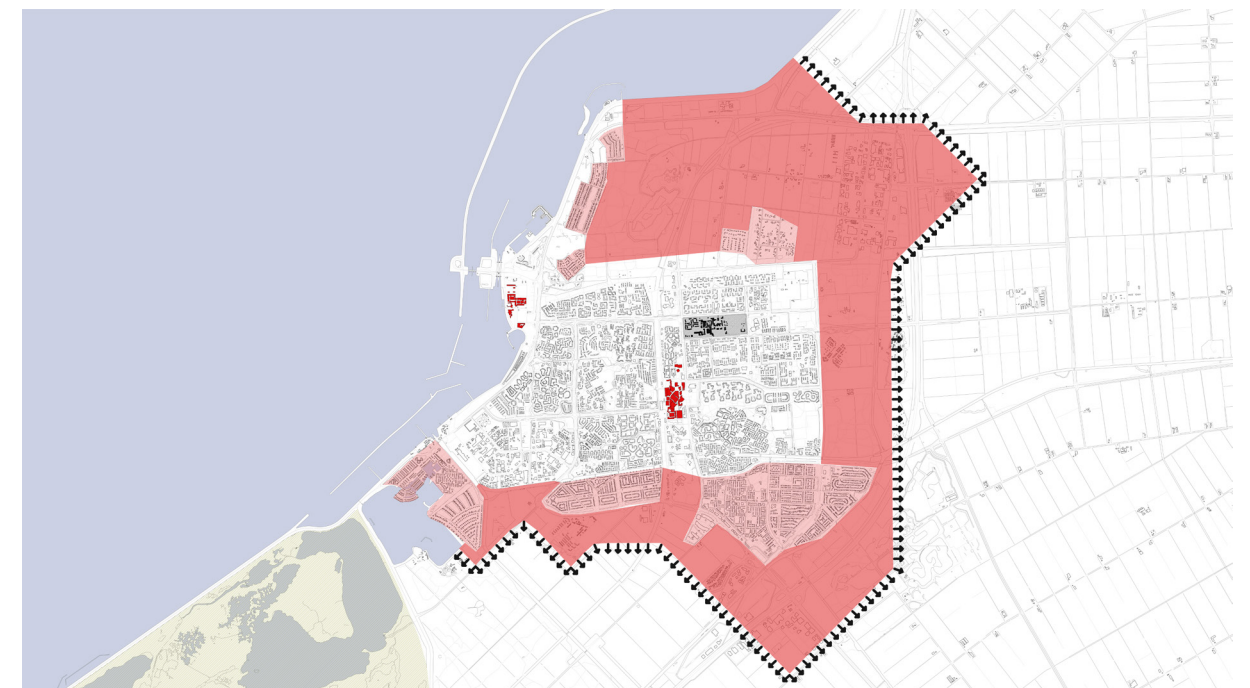
axis re-orientation



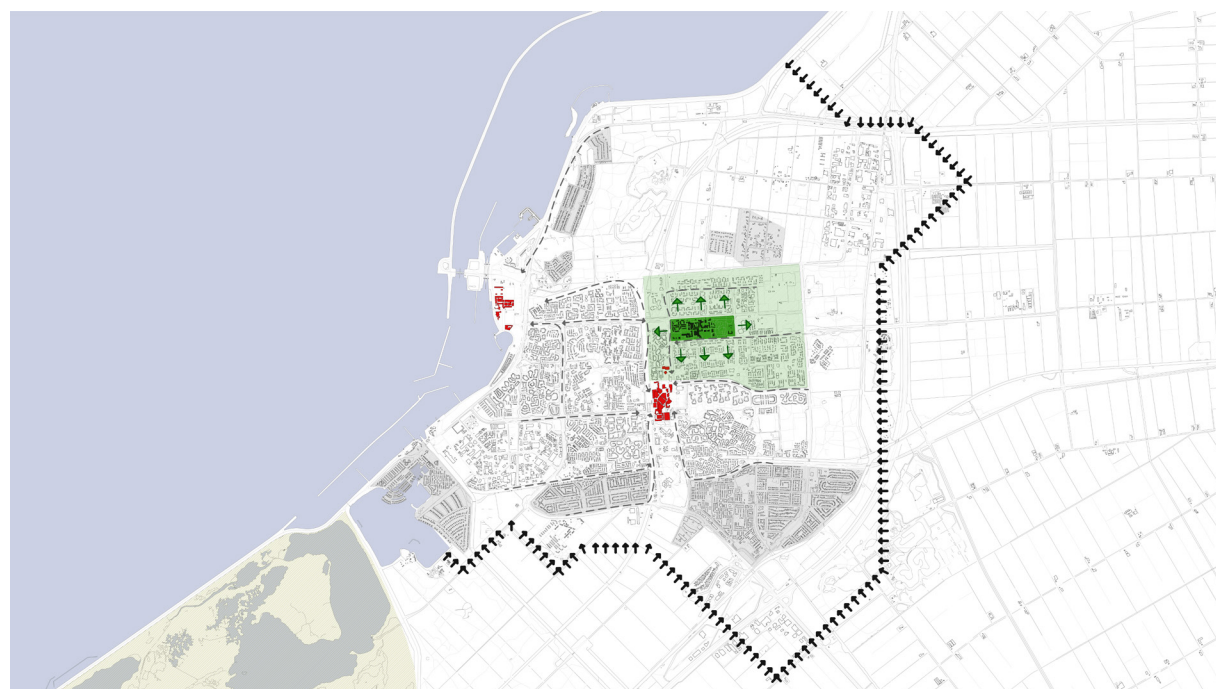
development of the new city center and coast area



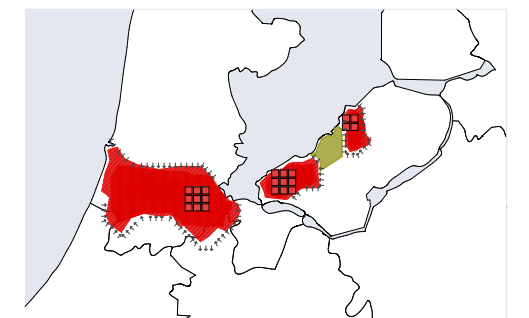
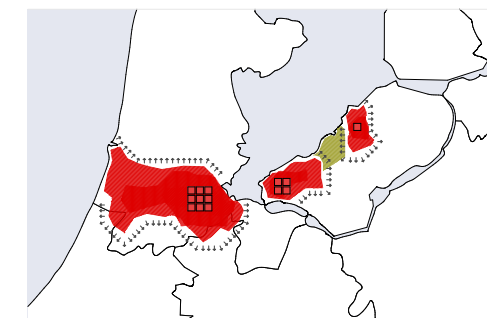
Lelystad suburbia sprawl



Potential for inefficient land consumption in the future



Vision of alternative scenario - retroactive densification of the Lelystad historical core.



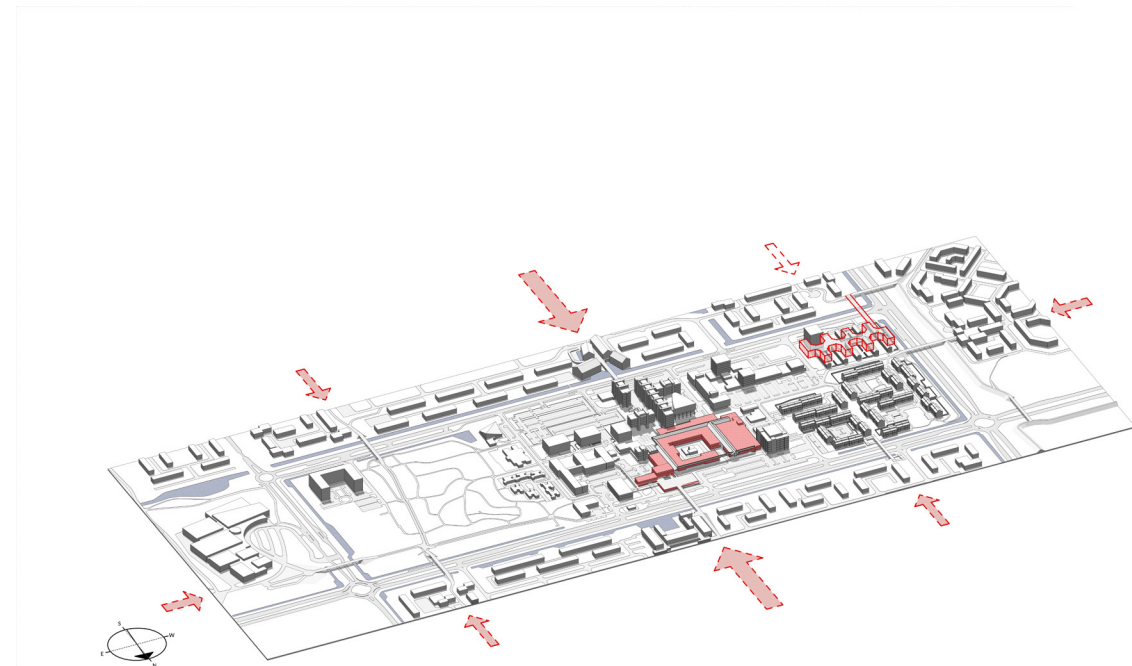
Relevance of the compact cities in the region - preservation of wild nature and agricultural areas due to dense growth on limited areas.

2.4 site

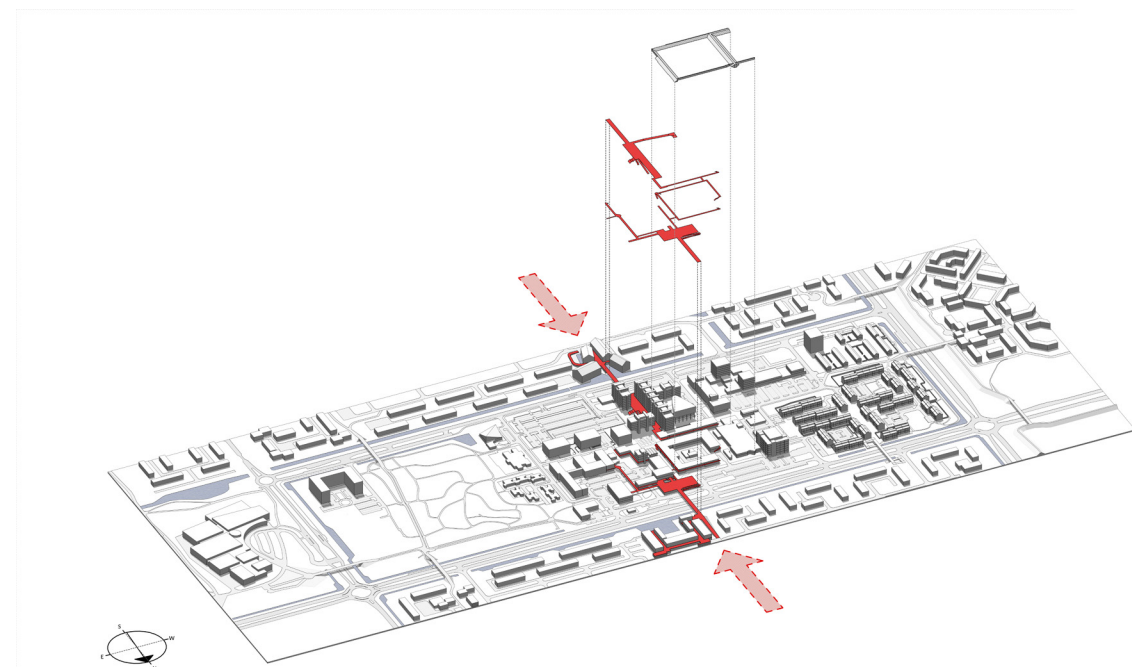
Lelycentre site originated as the service core between the first neighbourhoods of Lelystad. The plot is accessible via the set of bridges. Interestingly those bridges continue throughout the site, connecting buildings with the network of elevated walkways. This silution of pedestrian, bike and car traffic is a characteristic feature of early Lelystad design and takes roots in the ideas of Cornelis van Eesteren and CIAM modernism. Although this network is a landmark in Lelystad the system in it's current state is incomplete and counter-intuitive. Long sections between buildings create feeling of unsafety and isolation.

Diagnosis is done that the major problem of the plot is the strict division of functions introduced by the initial functionalist plan. The mono functional enclaves have little interaction with each other i.e. housing is only housing, office zone is not mixed with any other function. With the overwhelming rate of vacancy in office part and poor state of the shopping centre the heart of the plot is doing really badly. The conclusion is that three main spatial problems can be identified - 1. segregated and isolated enclaves of single-function zones 2.delivery and technical spaces- needed from point of view of functionality, but unattended and underused most of the time create dead zones in the plot which results in poor quality of public space, 3. the very cntre of the plot - shopping and office part has the potential for improvemet - it is there where most of the vacancy is found and where the characteristic network of walkways is situated.

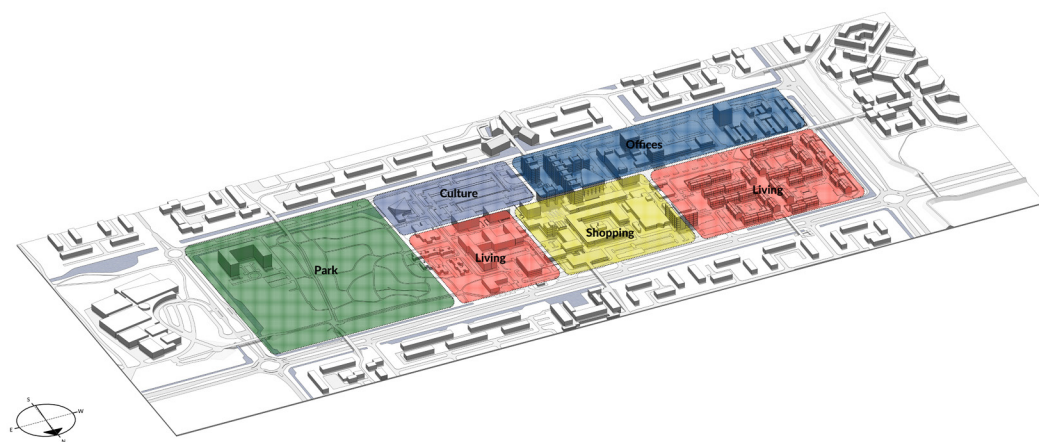
Goal of the masterplan will be to reactivate the center of the plot by placing a mix of functions in the vacant office part and shopping centre and re-using the elevated infrastructure with its potential for interconnectedness and tight-knit urbanity.



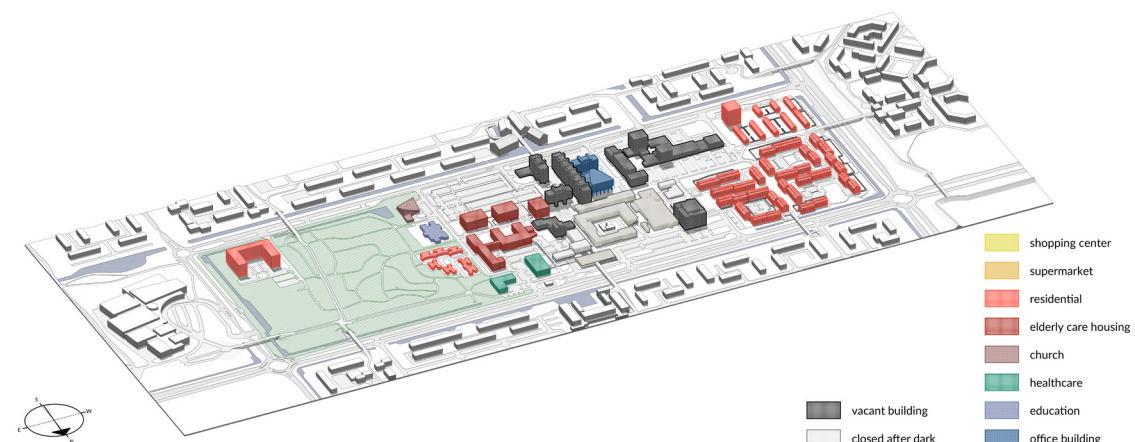
Lelycentre as a service core and neighbourhood center



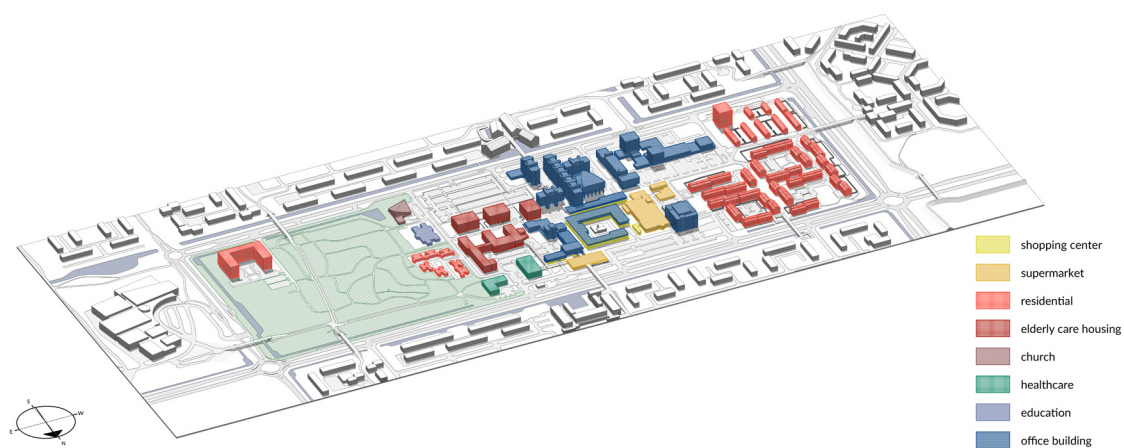
Network of elevated walkways



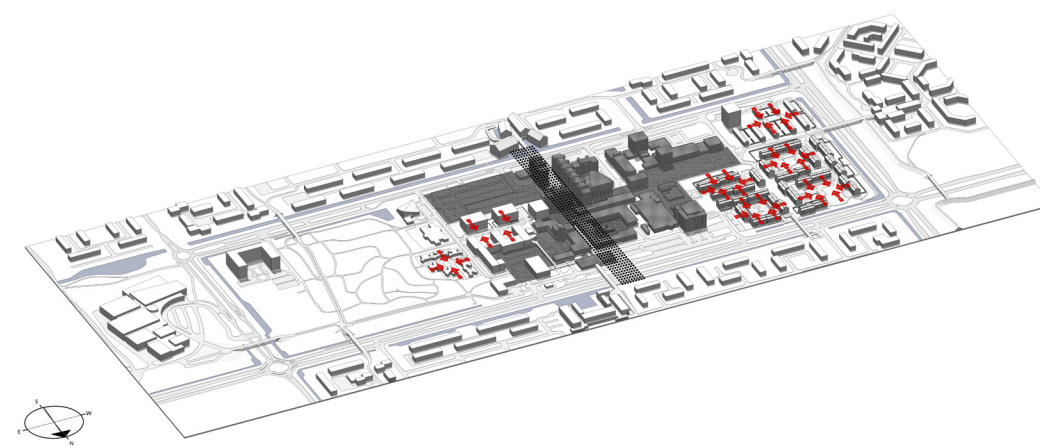
function zoning according to original plan



vacancy and underuse in the central part of the plot



function distribution in buildings



isolating unattended spaces create the barrier in the middle of the plot - in place of once lively neighbourhood center

2.5 conclusion - project brief

The research in scale of the region and urban situation of Lelycentre results in the set of goals for the project:

Lelystad in scale of the region:

- *Underpopulated city, low density*
- *Youth emigration due to lack of economical and educational opportunities*
- *Aging population challenge*

Lelycentre in the context of the city:

- *Marginalized former center of the city*
- *Attractive and accessible mainly for the surrounding neighbourhoods*

Site analysis:

- *Vacancy of the offices in the central area*
- *Mono-functional enclaves*
- *incomplete system of elevated walkways*

Answers to the research questions translate into the project brief, determining the goals and constraints to the design:

- ➔ • *Focus of the masterpplan is the retroactive densification of the historical center of Lelystad*
- ➔ • *Project targets mainly young starters to encourage them to stay in Lelystad*
- ➔ • *Inclusive character of the architecture*
- ➔ • *Focus on the potential of Lelycentre as a sub-core*
- ➔ • *Role of the lively neighbourhood center, increasing chances of the district to become attractive and re-inhabited*
- ➔ • *Transformation of the offices to housing*
- ➔ • *Addition of dwelling function in the heart of the plot to create condition of inhabitation*
- ➔ • *Utilize the underused elevated infrastructure, focusing on its potential to mix and link functions*

3.0 General information

1.0 introduction - design approach

The last century was an age of rapid urbanization which still continues. It is estimated that before 2050 over 60% of the world's population will live in urbanized areas and buildings constructed in the twentieth century constitute massive part of this environment. This makes the constant evaluation and adaptation of the 20 C built heritage a valid mission for today - never before in the history of humanity we have built so much so quickly. A responsible approach towards these structures is a vital part of sustainable growth strategy aimed at reducing energy consumption for new structures by saving the old ones and saving materials in the world of finite resources, which we are beginning to be more and more aware of.

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3.2 concept of livable neighbourhood

DENSITY & DIVERSITY

compact, efficient land use

varied and mixed forms of dwelling and tenure - mixed socio-economic and demographic composition

MIXED USE

more varied and rich environment, that offers more functions to more users at close proximity

symbiotic functions supplement each other

different functions are active in different time-spans, so the place is alive in extended hours

ARCHITECTURE FOR ALL

affordability (should offer both budget dwellings and possibility for higher standard)

empowers local community

accessible and inclusive for persons with disabilities

SAFETY & WELCOMENESS

attended, used and inhabited spaces

walkable / pedestrian friendly / street-like quality

quality public space

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

proximity - pedestrian and biking friendly

promotes walking and cycling

public transport

shared cars

ECOLOGICAL BUILT ENVIRONMENT

energy-> local production and efficient use

other resources - water/food/waste/building materials -> promote closing local cycles/ loops

buildings: existing -> adapt, renovate, do not demolish; new -> construct for adaptability

GREENERY

commonly accessible recreation

urban biodiversity

microclimate: retention, heat island effect reduction, noise reduction, evaporation

functional greenery: shadow, privacy, food production, division of spaces etc.

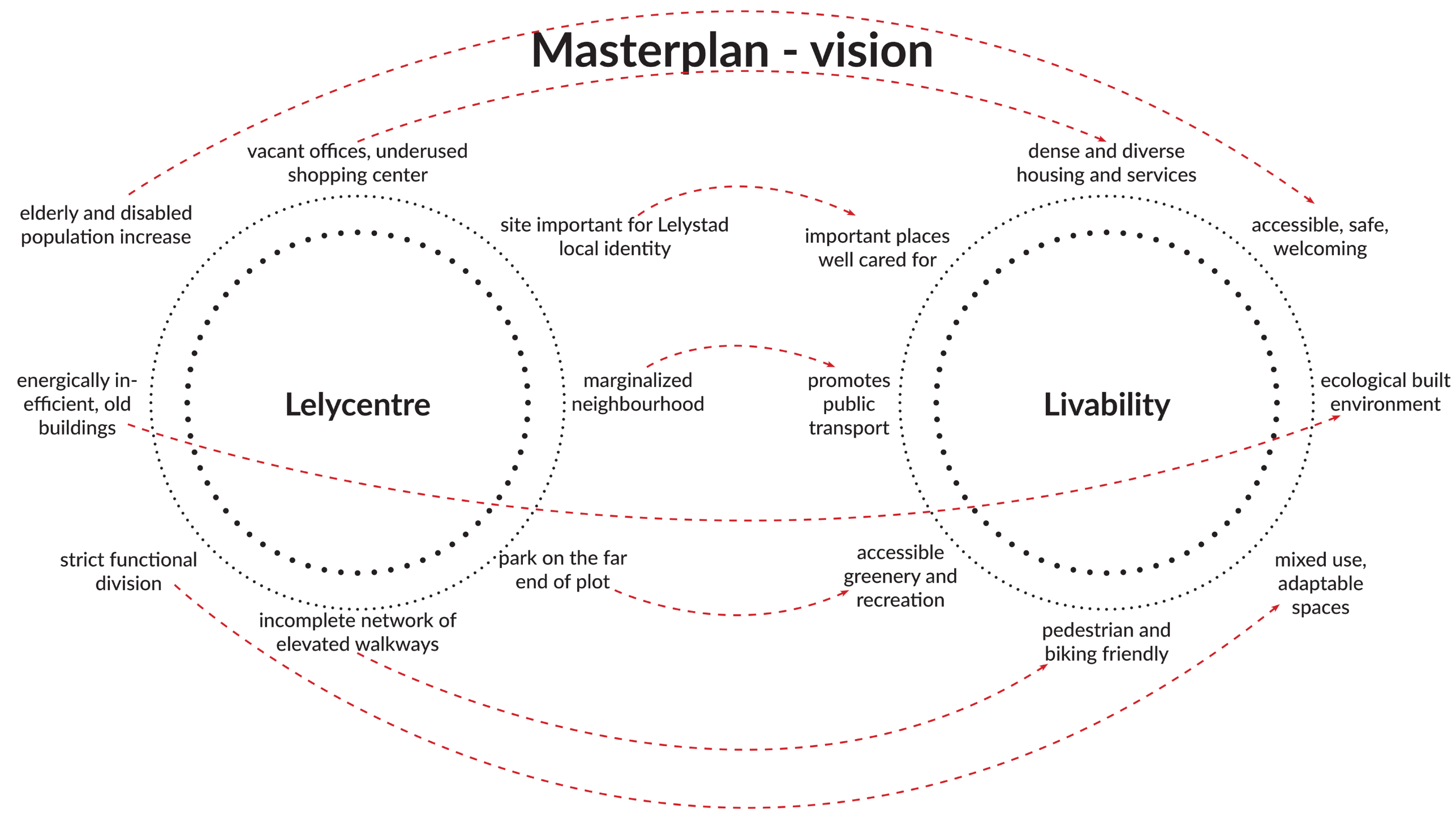
LOCAL IDENTITY

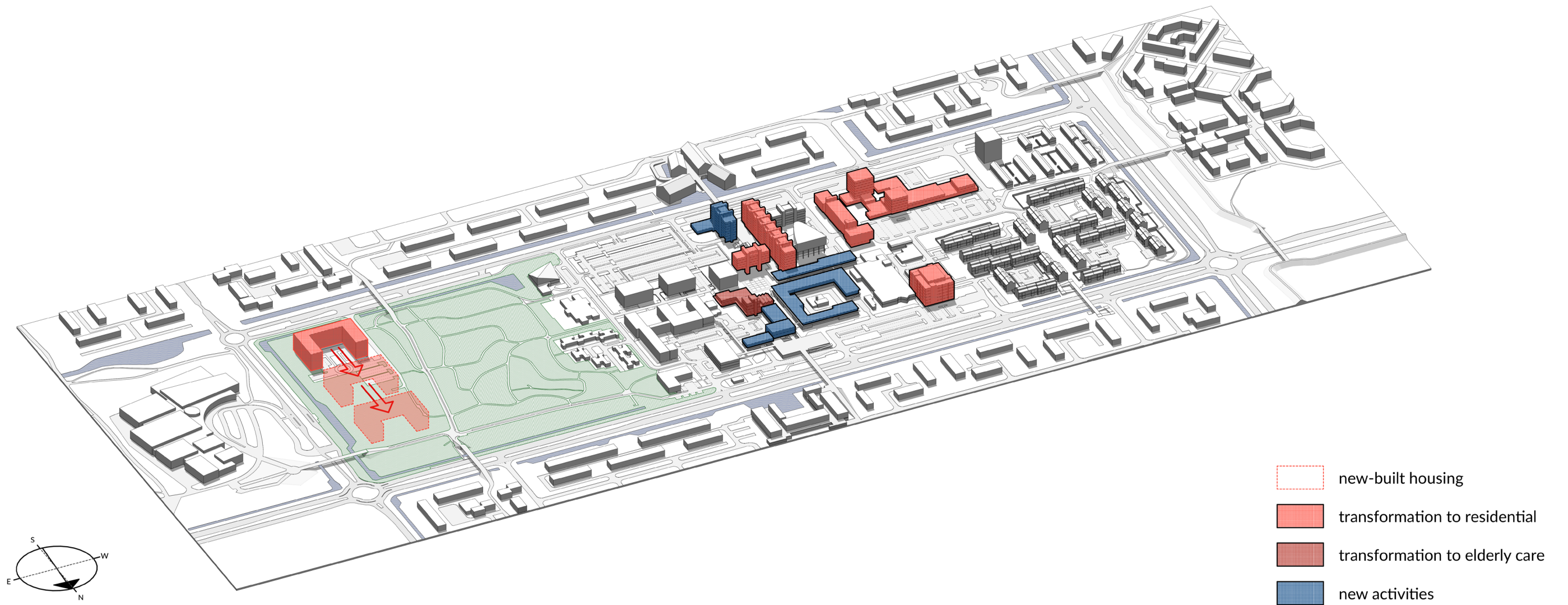
care for culturally important buildings and places of collective memory

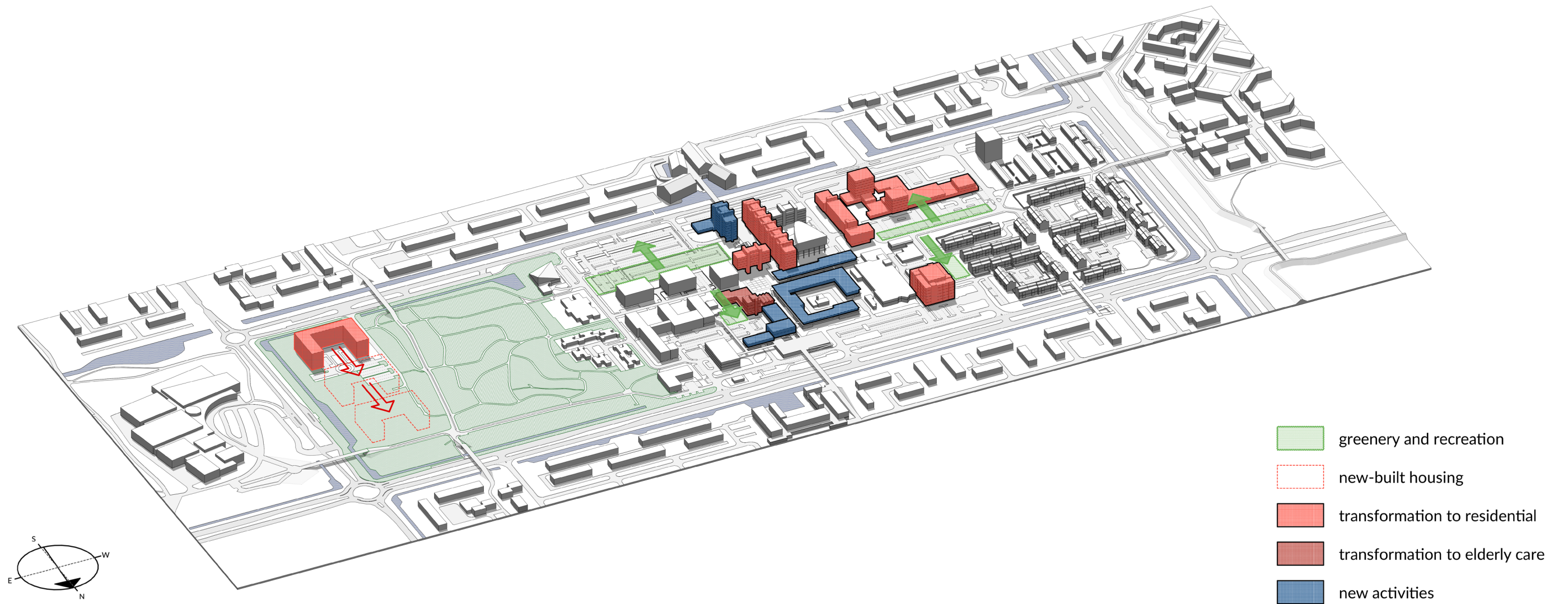
sense of ownership and stewardship, responsibility

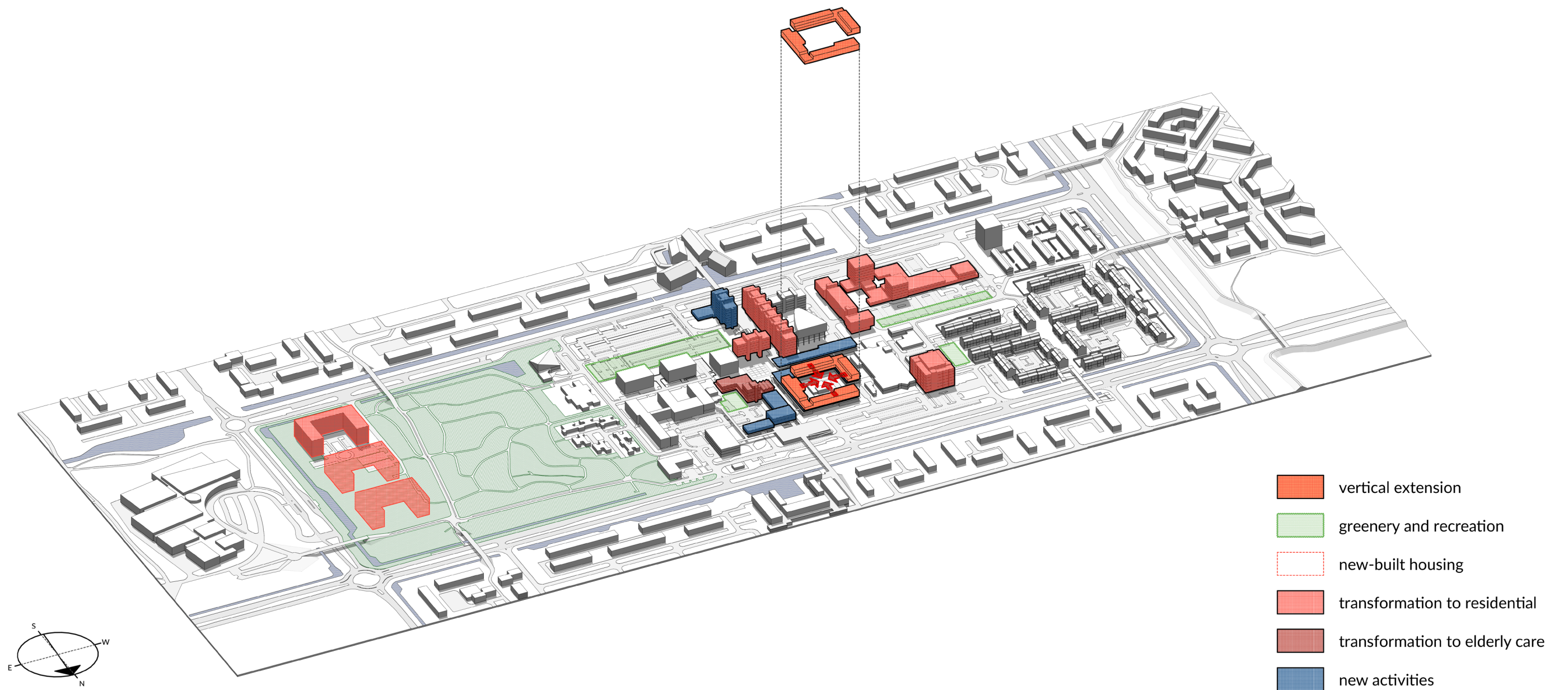
care means conservation and maintenance

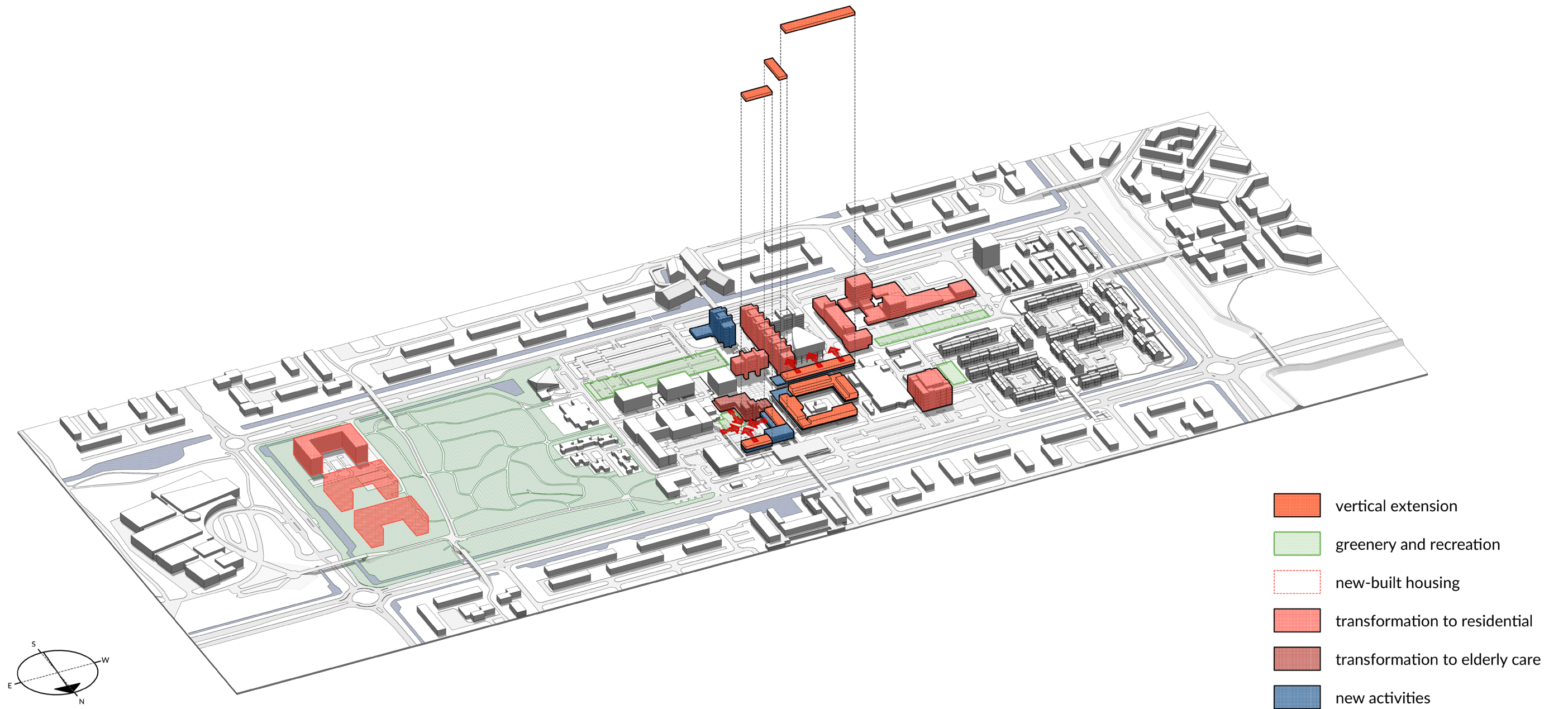
3.3 masterplan

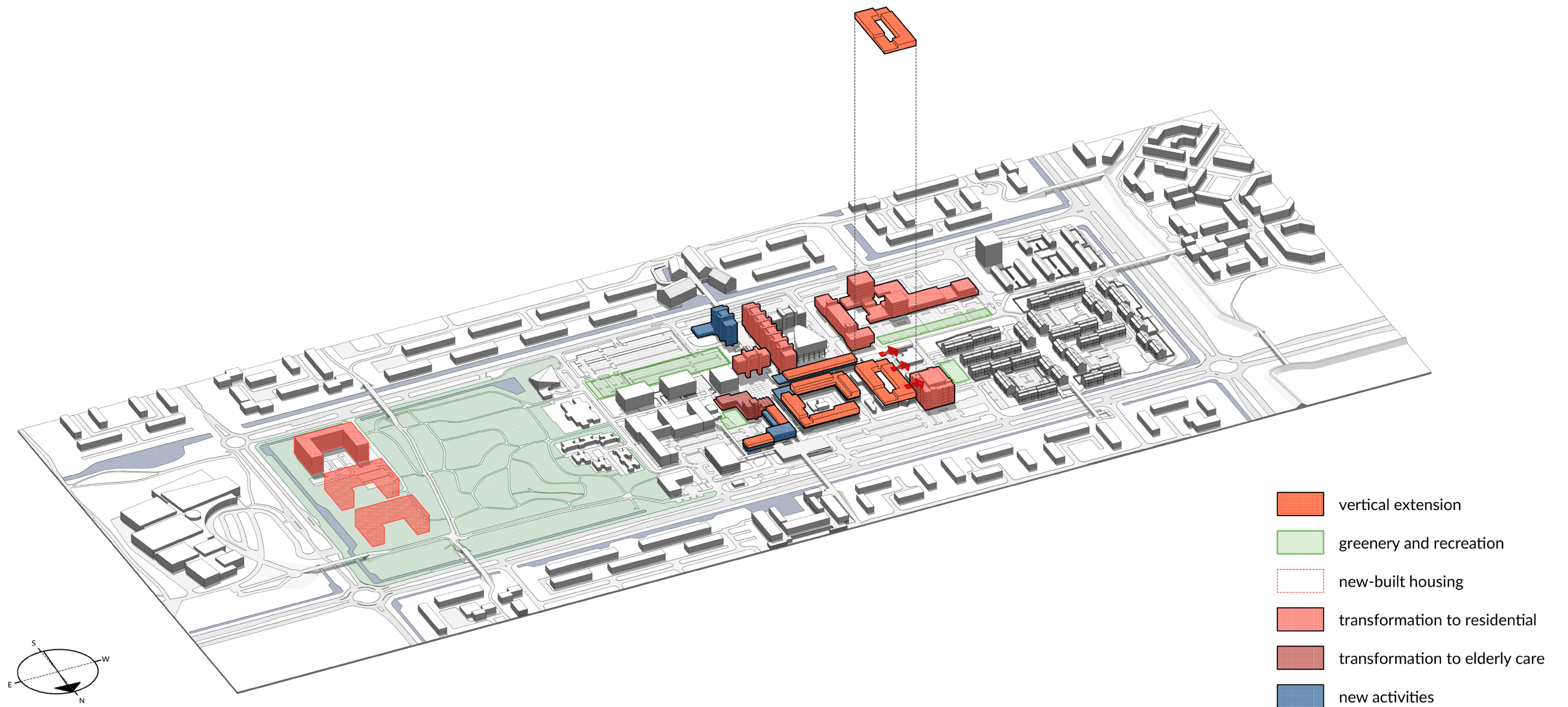


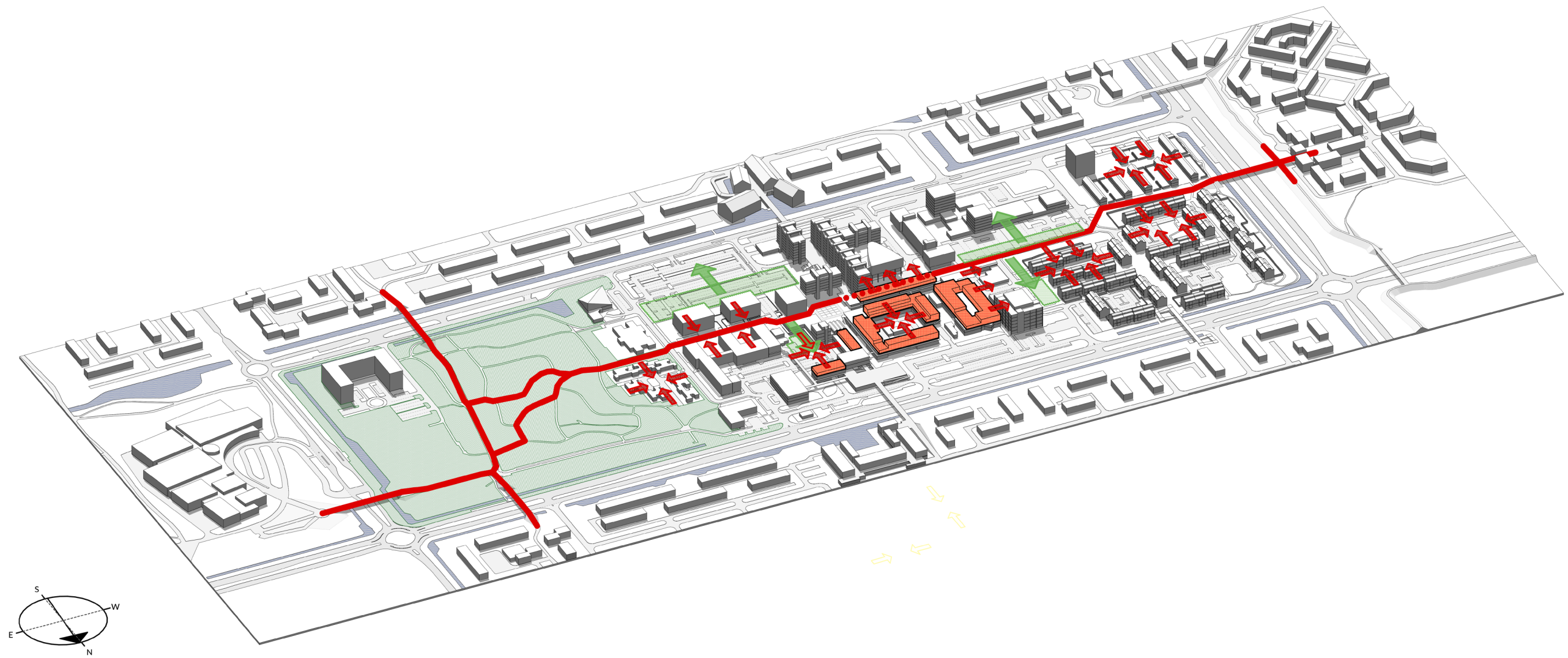


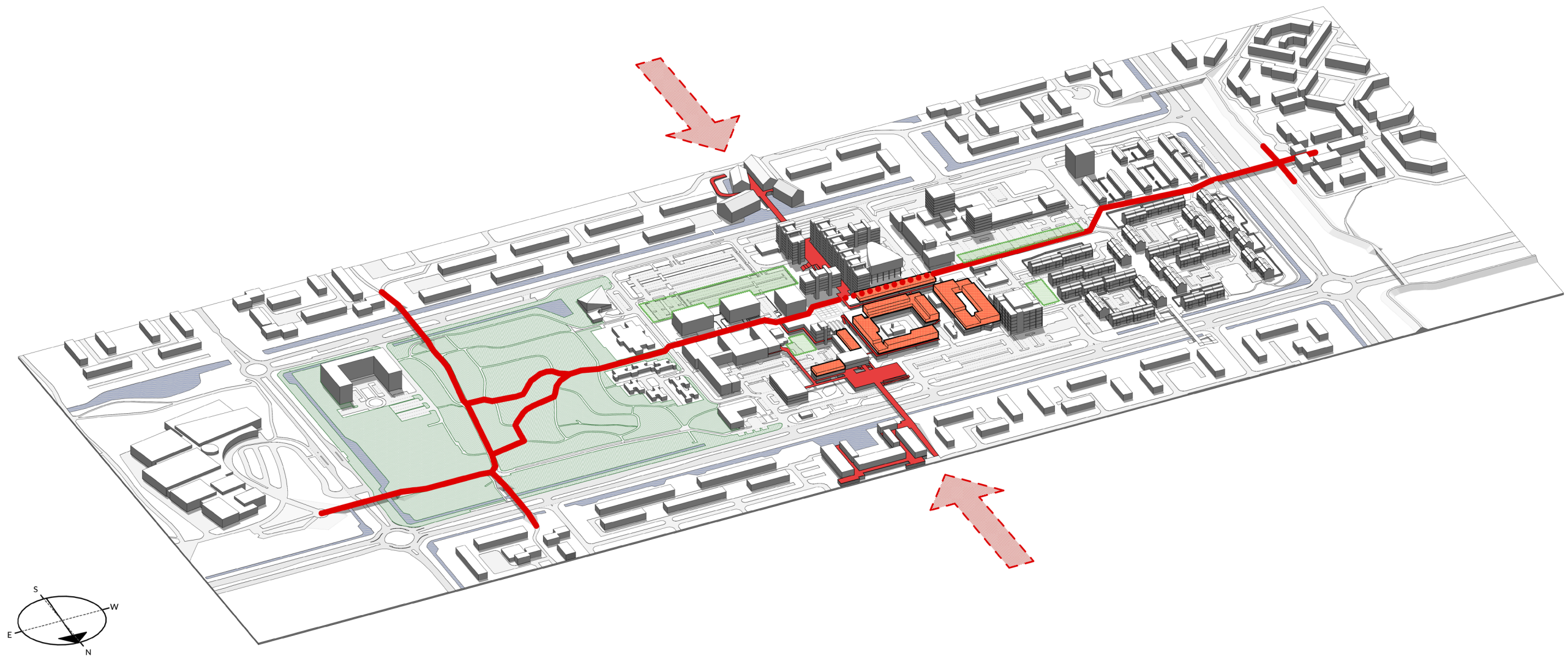


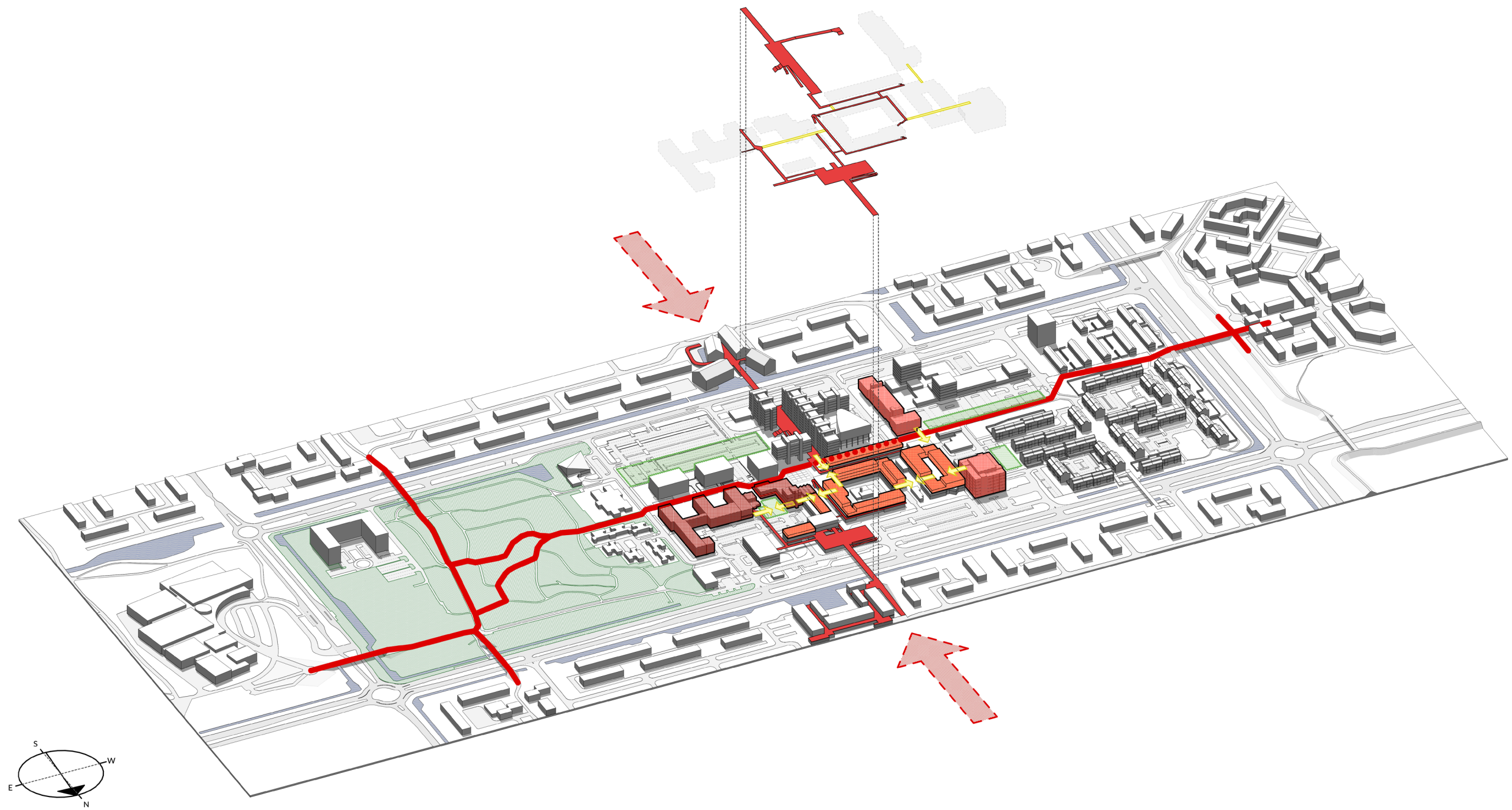












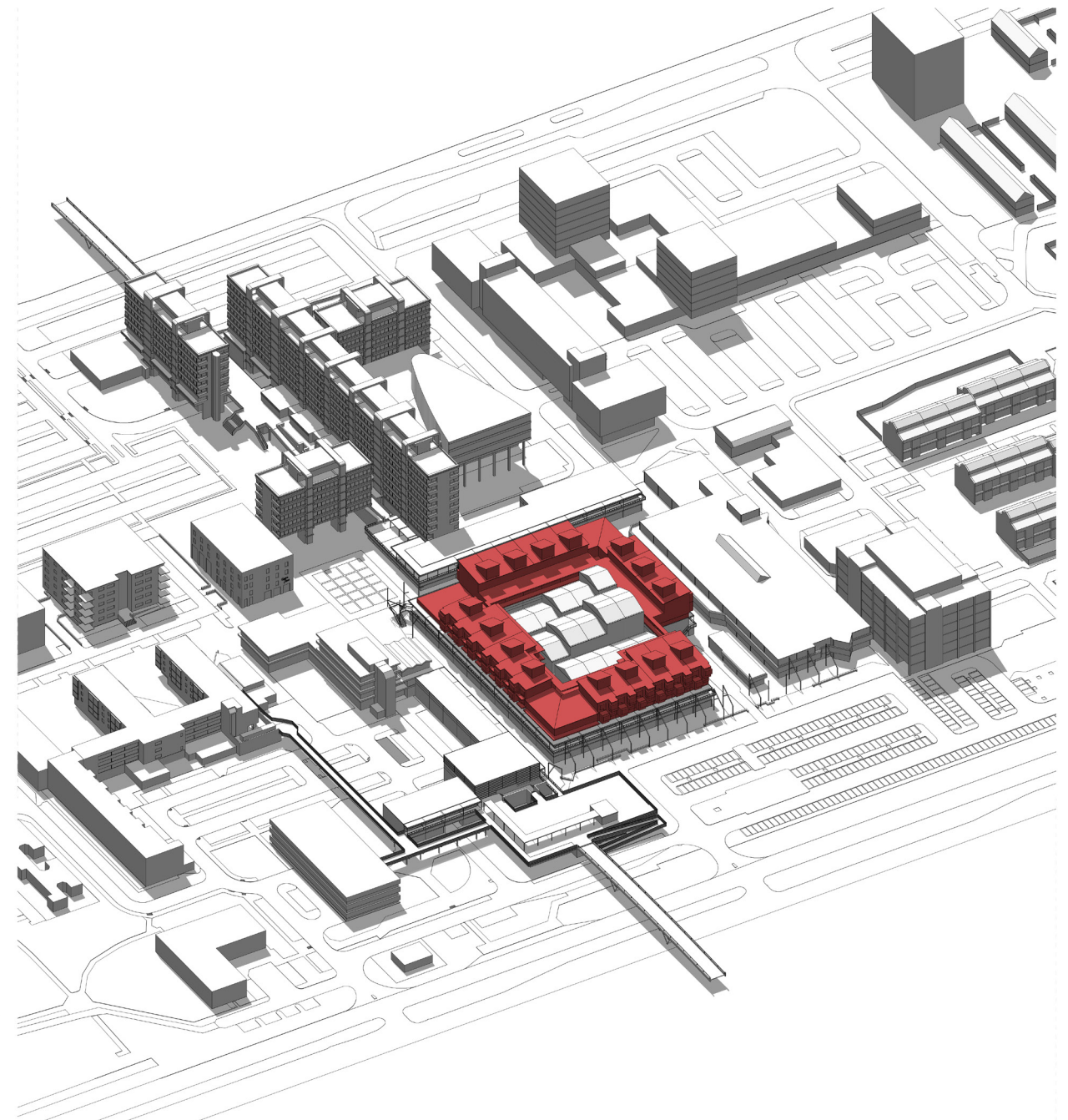
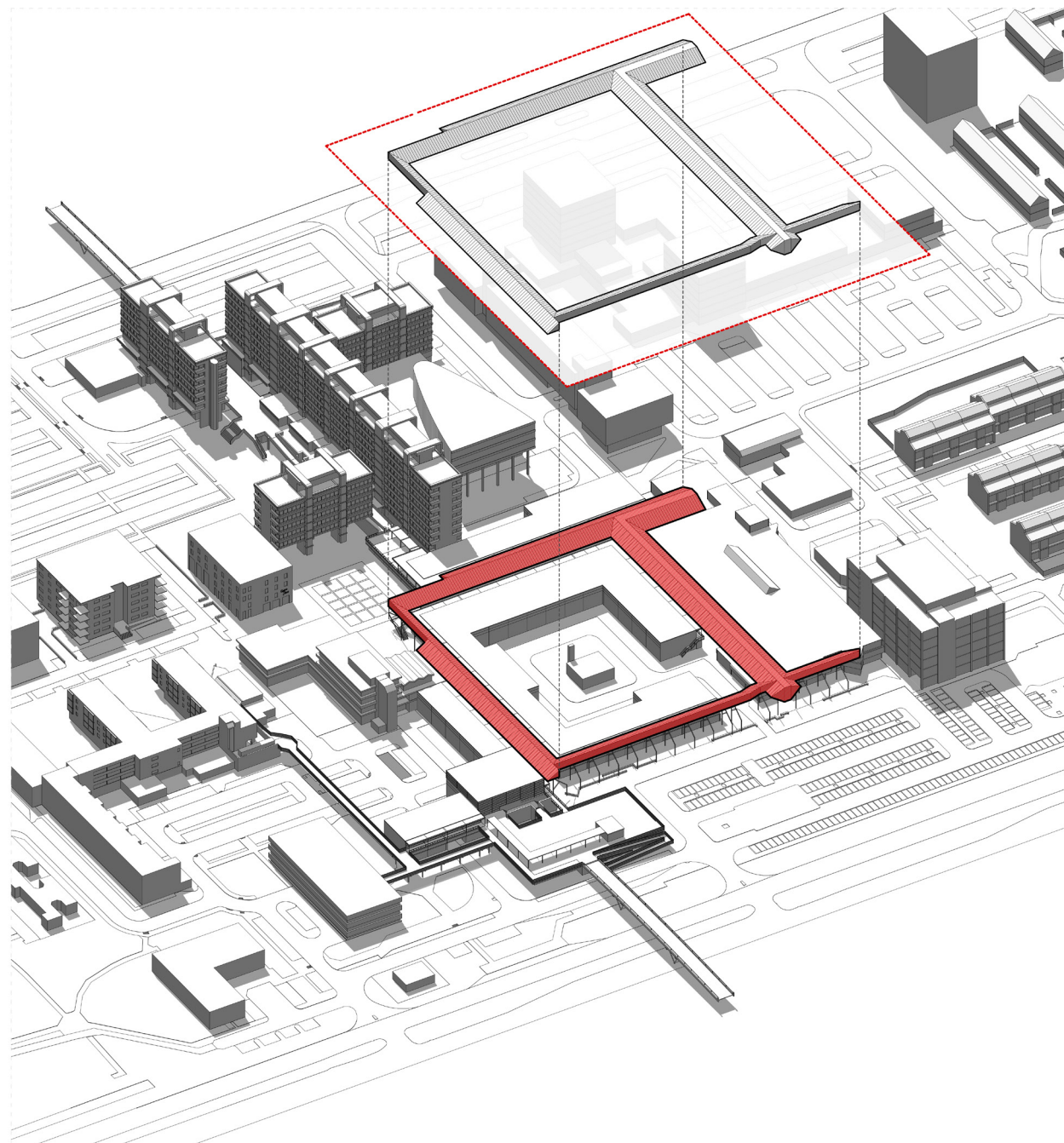
Summary of the masterplan interventions:

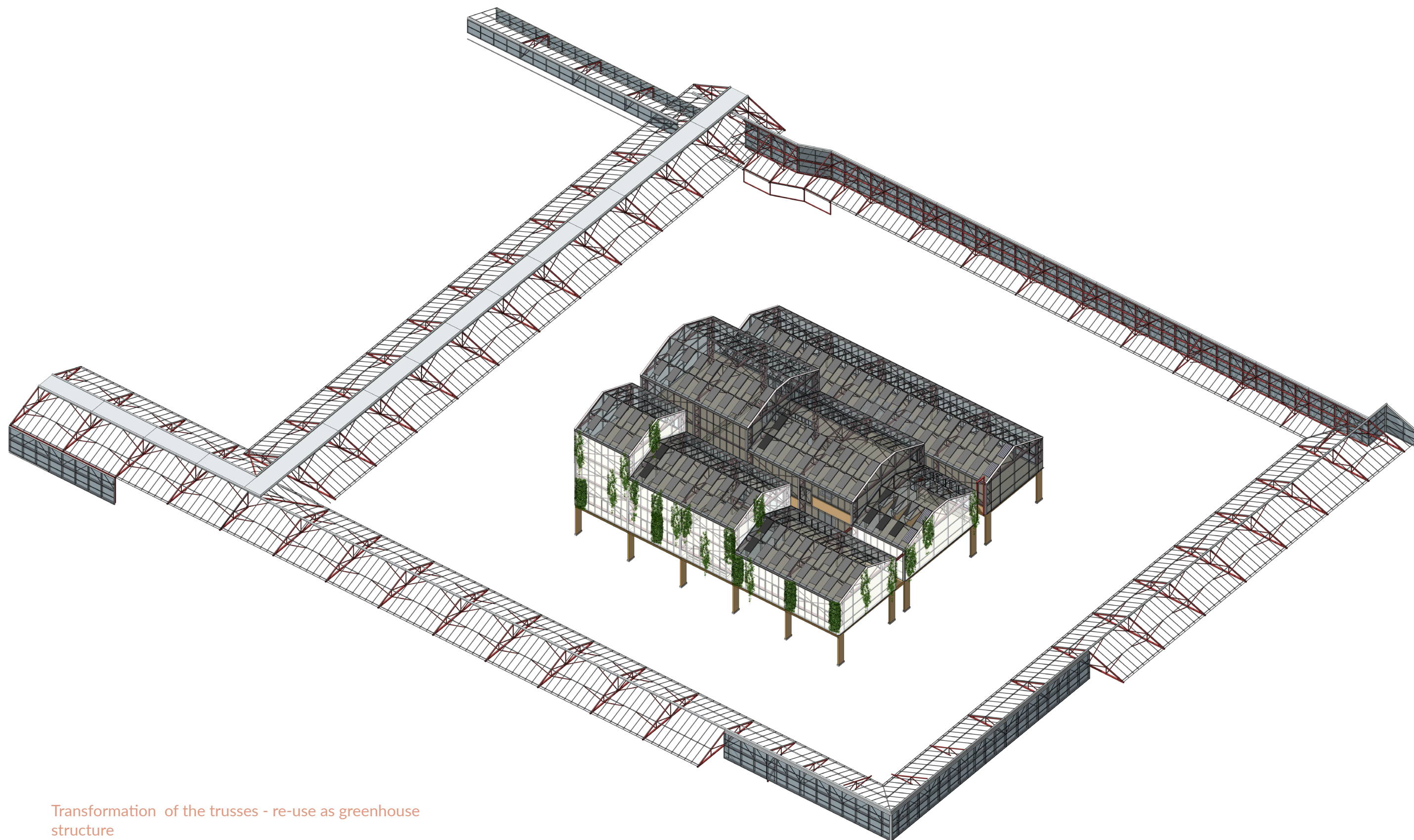
- tackling the issue of vacancy by transforming former offices to apartments. Introduction of additional housing on top of the existing shopping centre. These interventions respond to the need of more density and diverse housing options in the area
- additional service functions located in the Lelycentre and Smedinghuis - shops, restaurants, rentable workspaces and small businesses in Lelycentre and cultural activities in former Police station introduce more mixed use of the central part of the plot, making it an attractive destination for the neighborhood.
- transformation of public space: housing requires less parking space than offices, therefore the parkings can be partially transformed into recreation spaces: parks, allotments, gardens, playgrounds. The change of the office destination of the plot is also reflected in the quality of the surroundings- it is adapted to become a livable neighbourhood, not just apartments pushed into the office buildings.
- further transformation of public space- technical/delivery spaces are “domesticated” by positioning the housing function on rooftops of Lelycentre. This intervention increases safety of previously unattended and underused area by permanent inhabitation and presence of dwellings.
- the newly created public and collective spaces introduced in the plan are connected with the new axis - intuitive and pleasant access between the enclaves and the existing park in the eastern part of the neighbourhood is created.
- finally - with increased density and variety of functions in the plot the connectivity offered by the elevated infrastructure of paths can be put to use. In this way the relic of the modernist urban planning can be reused reasonably and new meanings can be attached to it. It is treated both as a functional element of the dense and interconnected urban neighbourhood and as distinctive landmark of the Lelystad first district.

3.4 conclusion - role of Lelycentre in the masterplan

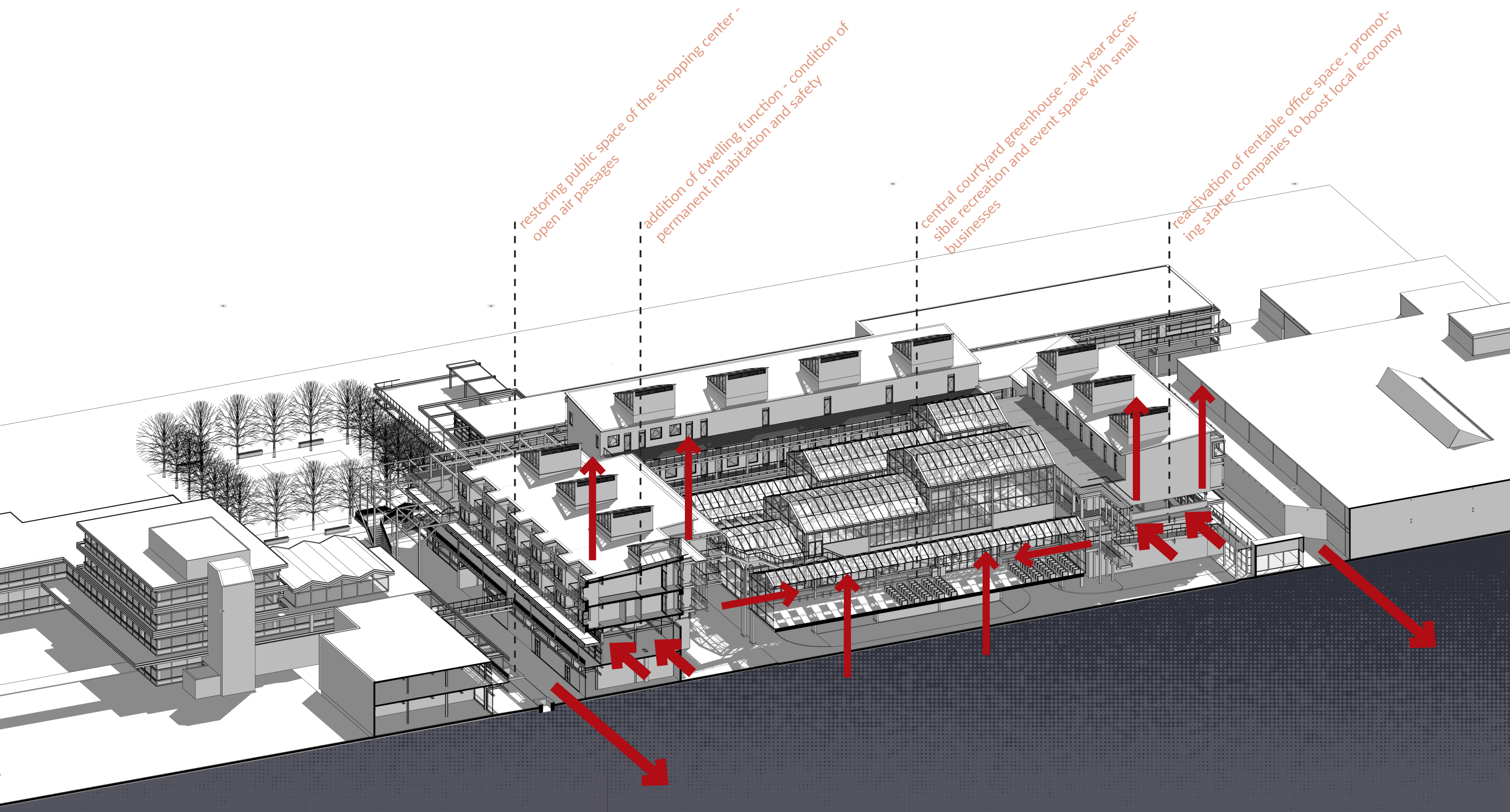
Lelycentre intervention realizes the target of the masterplan to make the heart of the neighbourhood lively again. It introduces the function of dwellings on top of the existing shopping center. Greater safety is created by introducing the new group of inhabitants with the sense of ownership for the place. The addition is attached to the existing network of elevated infrastructure- more users on the same access routes - this also promotes more interactions and safety. Addition benefits the existing shops - more inhabitants equals more clients - which results in the betterment of the shopping center quality without the gentrification. Local businesses improve rather than disappear. The former office part is re-activated - the conversion improves the quality of the space, making it an attractive space to run a business, which promotes local economy in the area. The formerly underused delivery space in the center is transformed with the re-use of the 90's addition trusses - large common space is created in the heart of the quarter - accommodating the recreation for the dwellings and offices, small businesses and occasionally serving as event space for the neighbourhood.

As a result of the intervention the quality of the building changes from the mono-functional shopping mall, operating only within work-hours of the shop and standing empty throughout the rest of the day - into the mixed use environment, promoting interaction and offering multiple activities to variety of user groups in the accessible proximity.





Transformation of the trusses - re-use as greenhouse structure



Lelycentre -interventions - from single function to a mixed-use building