

An aerial photograph of a city, likely Shumen, taken during the golden hour of sunset. The sky is a deep, warm orange, and the city's buildings and streets are silhouetted against the bright light. A river or canal winds through the center of the city, reflecting the orange glow. The overall atmosphere is hazy and nostalgic.

ELENA DIMITROVA | Y5 | STUDIO 07 | 5B

Reviving Shumen

Regenerating a forgotten historic part of the town center –
the Revival street and its surrounding area



DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE

AB 965 Design Studies 5B 2020/21
MArch/Pg Dip Advanced Architectural Design
MArch Architectural Design International

Declaration

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and has been composed by myself. It contains no unacknowledged text and has not been submitted in any previous context. All quotations have been distinguished by quotation marks and all sources of information, text, illustration, tables, images etc. have been specifically acknowledged.

I accept that if having signed this Declaration my work should be found at Examination to show evidence of academic dishonesty the work will fail and I will be liable to face the University Senate Discipline Committee."

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2020/21

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Abstract

Abstract

The intention of this project is to reimagine Shumen and its unmaintained townscape by starting with the regeneration of an important historic part of the town centre which has been forgotten – the Revival Street and its surroundings. This is an area with a great historic value for the town and has the highest concentration of built heritage. As the town centre is the public core of Shumen, the revival of the area will support the development of the local community, economy and urban environment. Thus, the preservation and reuse of the historic buildings and the recovery of the area's once vibrant public life are significant for improving the residential, commercial and tourist attractiveness of the town.

In the midst of the area, a massive concrete tower rises above the townscape. Being part of an abandoned ensemble of buildings, it is a large-scale project from the communist period in Bulgaria. However, due to an unexpected change of power in 1989, the construction of the buildings was abandoned and they were never completed. Today, more than thirty years later, the derelict structures stand as a reminder of the past. Considered the largest abandoned monument from the communist times, it was to become a cultural precinct for the town. Hence, this thesis project also aims to finish what was once started and propose a design that would resolve a number of issues which the town is currently facing in order to cater to the present-day needs of the citizens of Shumen.

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Shumen town center (Author's own)

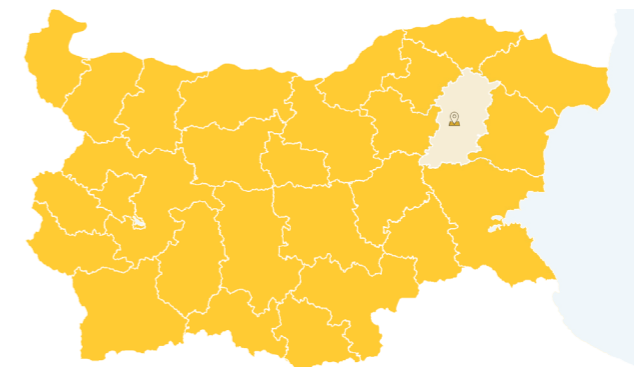
chapter 01:
Research Summary | 5A

The town

Despite being the 10th largest city in Bulgaria, Shumen is a small town in the northeast of the country, though a very important one in the Bulgarian history. It is believed that this is the land where the Bulgarian country was established more than 13 centuries ago (Shumen Municipality, 2017). Today, Shumen is an economic and administrative centre which has a very rich history, cultural heritage and nature (OPRD, 2013).



Bulgaria | location



Shumen | location



Town center area | site location



Issues & urgencies

At present, however, Shumen is facing degrowth as a consequence of a number of socio-economic and environmental issues. These issues are summarised in the diagram by Daniel Florentin on the right, which shows the general reasons behind shrinking cities, but also applies very well to the town of Shumen.

For instance, the demographic issues are linked with unmaintained and unattractive urban environment, which is due to lack of public finances. This in turn leads to people, especially the young population, immigrating to other towns and cities in order to search for more attractive urban settings, a better life quality and more job opportunities. This then results in lack of qualified labour, economic decline and closure of businesses.

Even though the town has a diverse cultural and historic heritage, it is not a renowned destination. In fact, the built heritage is neglected, unmaintained and mostly uninhabited, which results in an overall poor quality of the urban environment.

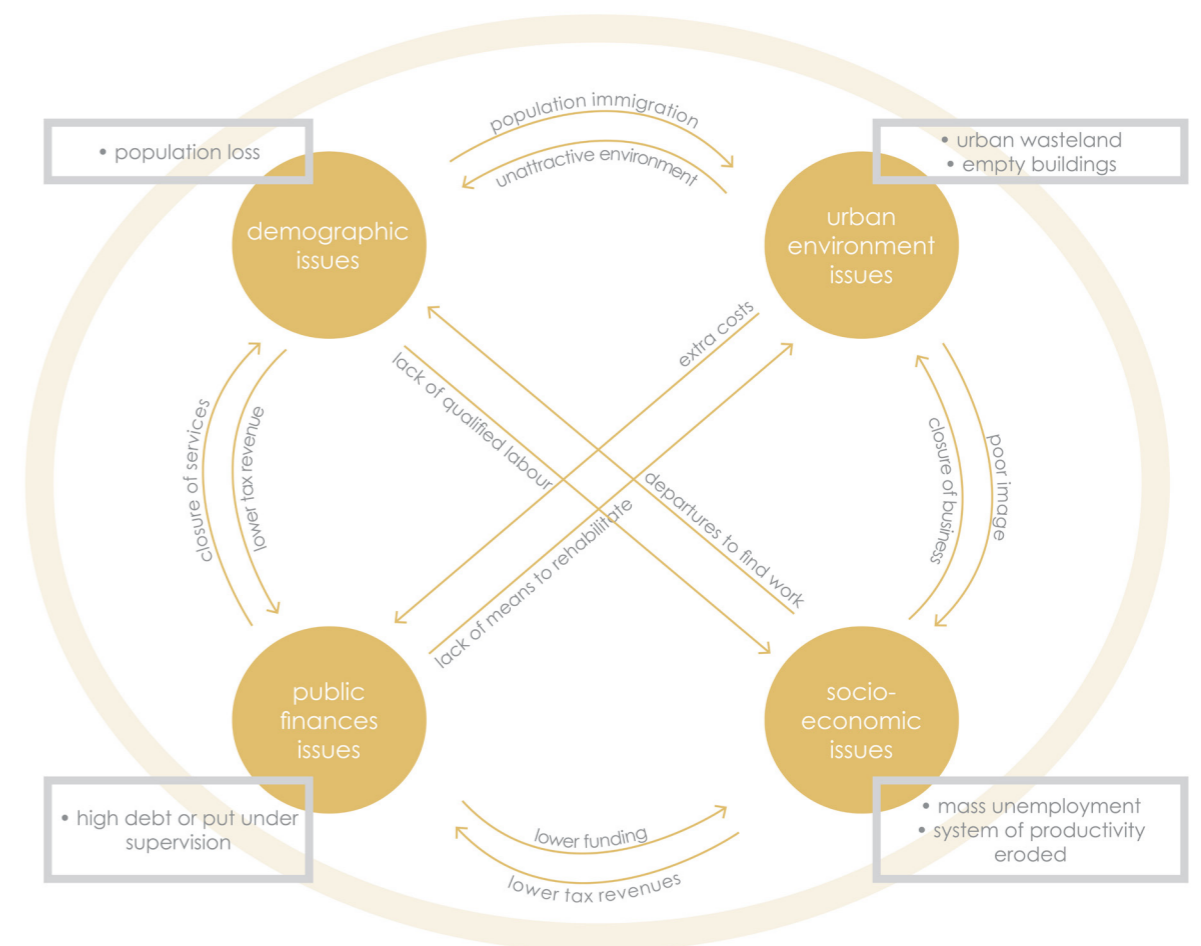


Figure 1: The challenges of degrowth in cities (Florentin, 2019)

The town center & the site

Having analysed the town and its issues, this lead the project focusing on the historic area of the town, located in the neglected and forgotten west part of the town centre.

The town centre itself is a well developed area of great public importance with a central pedestrian street which is the public core of the town. There is a good mix of public functions and activities along the street - a significant part of the administrative, commercial and social services are concentrated there. This is the place where people go shopping, do business, meet friends and spend their leisure time.

However, the west part of the central street is rundown and neglected, in contrast to the rest of it. Nevertheless, this is the historic part of Shumen. This is where the so-called Revival Street is located which is associated with the past of Shumen - a street that used to have a vibrant life and where many important historic events took place, not only for the town, but also for the country (Regional Library, 2019).



Central pedestrian street - the public core of town



Commercial programme along the central street



Revival street and the surrounding area



The abandoned communist project

In the middle of the area sits a large-scale building - the abandoned communist building, i.e. the Central City Square project.

At the end of the 20th century, the town centre of Shumen was in the government's list for reconstruction. In 1988, the construction of a cultural precinct began. The massive project consisted of a variety of public spaces, e.g. a trading house, concert hall, bank, post office, hotel, restaurant, coffee shop, underground parking, ice rink and square with fountains (Vasileva, 2011).

However, a year later, due to an unexpected change of power in 1989, the construction of the buildings was abandoned and they were left incomplete. Today, more than 30 years later, nothing has changed - they are standing as a derelict monument, with the tower being the most prominent reminder of the town's unfortunate past, that can be seen from every corner of Shumen (Vasileva, 2011).

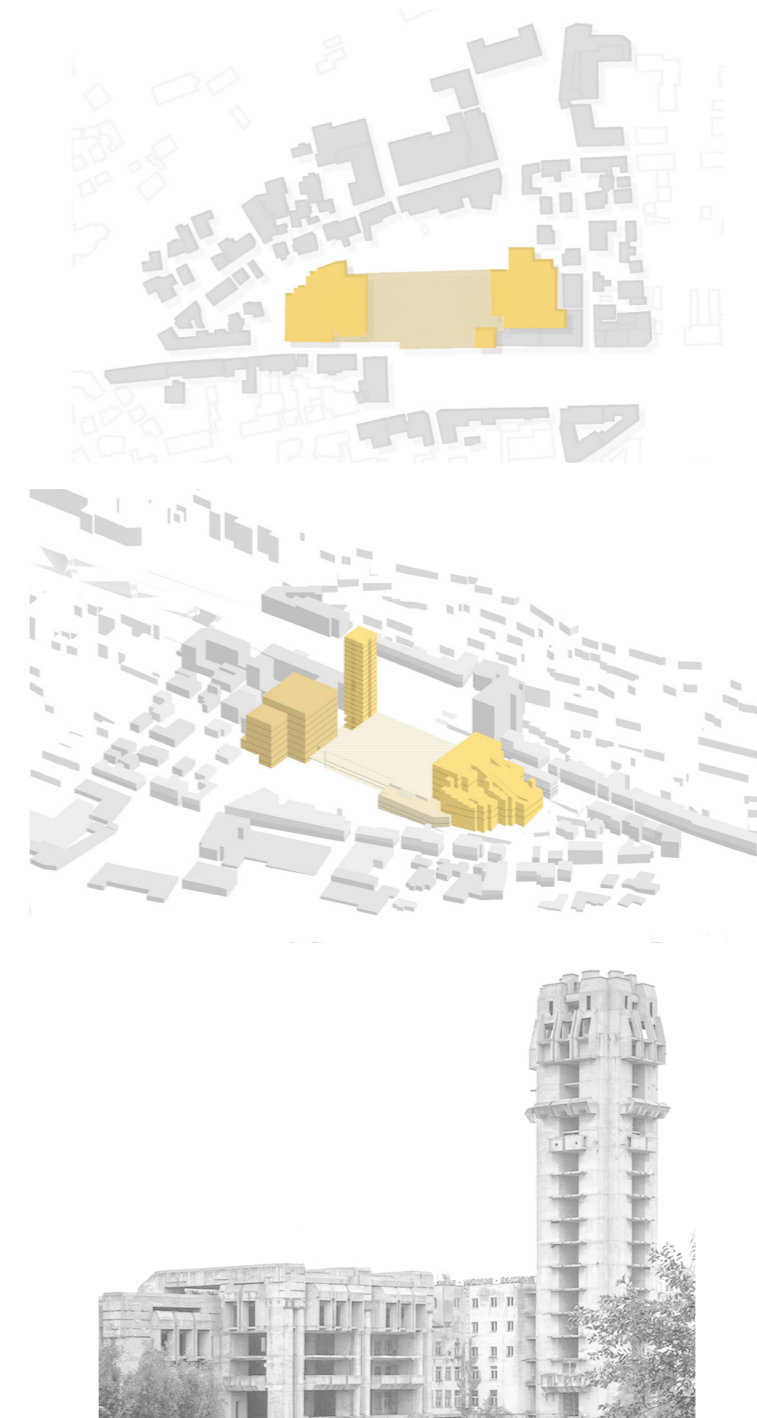


Figure 2: The 'Central City Square' project 1988
(Kondov, 2019)



Town view (Author's own)

chapter 02:

Site analysis

Site analysis

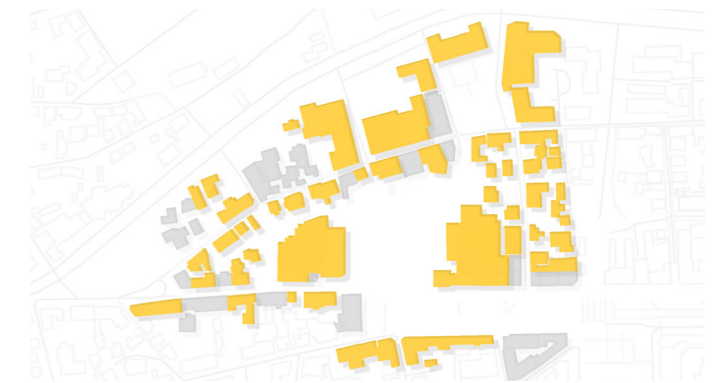
The site analysis from 5A showed that the chosen historic area has the highest concentration of built heritage. Unfortunately, today, most of the buildings are in bad condition, while a great number of them are completely empty and abandoned.

Also, there is no connection on the north-south axis in this area, whereas the green spaces are mostly unmaintained, rundown and thus, unused.

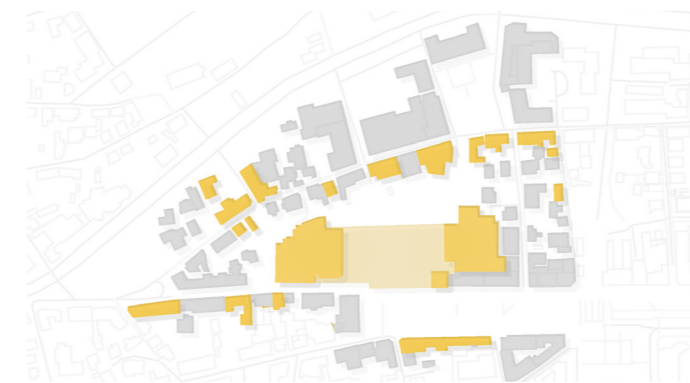
An interesting fact is that the town's compositional axes intersect at the tower of the communist project, making it an important feature.



Cultural heritage



Buildings in bad condition



Vacant buildings



Permeability



Green spaces

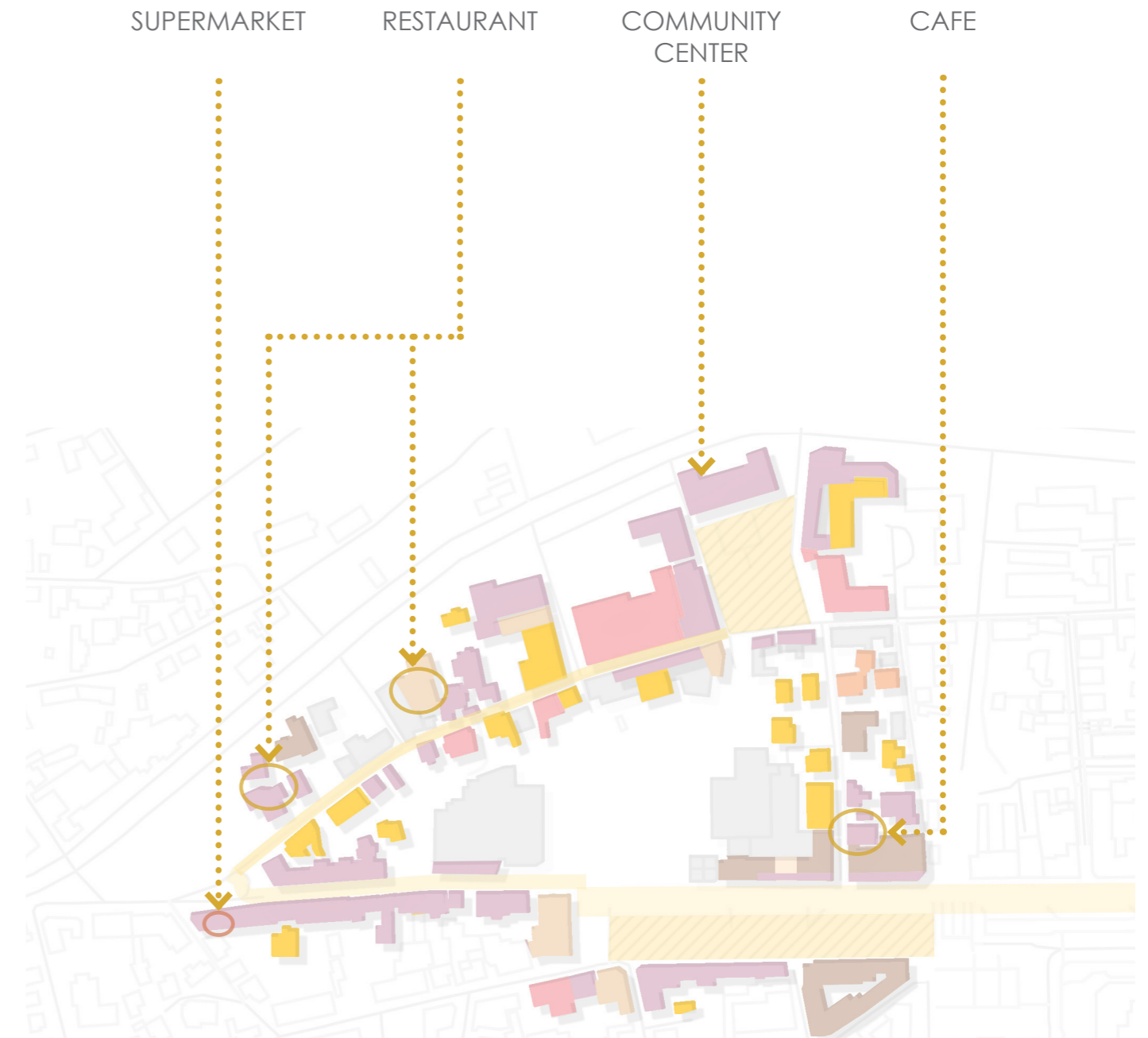


Intersection of the town's compositional axes

Building typology | Site

In terms of programme, even though there are lots of small retail shops, the rundown state of the area is due to the lack of residents, the existence of only one cafe, two restaurants, one supermarket and, as mentioned, the lack of middle connection between the two main streets - the Revival and the central pedestrian street.

Nevertheless, there is a community centre, a number of administrative buildings, a few hotels and medical centres. Also, schools are located closely to the north and there are a couple of kindergartens.



- residential
- administrative
- small retail shops
- health care
- educational
- hotels
- religious
- central pedestrian street
- squares



Building typology | Town center

Looking into the wider context of the town centre, there is a good mix of use. As already explained, the variety of functions and activities take place mainly along the central pedestrian street: most administrative buildings, a lot of small retail shops and cafes, though the latter are located mostly on the east part of the central street.

Moreover, most of the built heritage monuments are situated here as well. A significant space in the middle is dedicated to military services, which is prohibited for the general public.

In the town, there is a sports arena which, however, is also used for concerts due to the lack of large event spaces; a shopping center though with only 1 supermarket, 1 cafe and 3 other shops; a youth center that is in a rundown state and used for a cinema hall as there is not a working cinema in town at present.

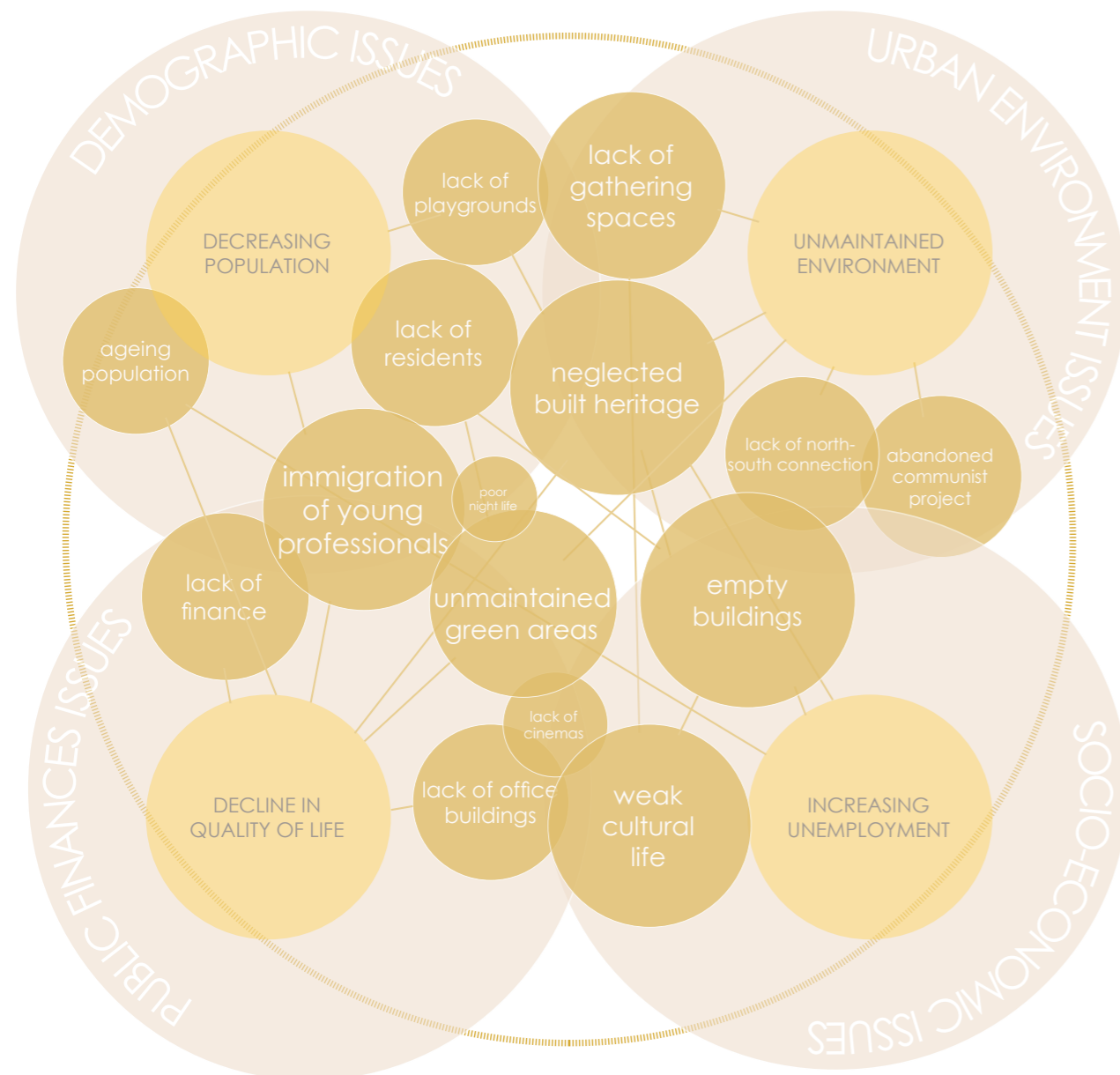
The rest are mainly residential buildings.

The analysis of the town centre's programme helped to define what the town lacks and needs, which is listed in the following pages.



- residential
- administrative
- commercial
- military
- health care
- educational
- hotels
- religious
- central pedestrian street

Issues & urgencies



Vacant buildings | What is missing?



Potential programme for the vacant buildings



Potential programme for the communist buildings





Tower (Author's own)

chapter 03:
Design development

Design approach

The main issues, which were previously analysed, were used as a starting point to set up the objectives for the project. These will lead to the regeneration of the town, by firstly implementing them into the chosen area for this project.

- improve the quality of life
- regenerate the vibrant atmosphere of the streets
- restore the disappearing communities

- promote the rich cultural and historical heritage in order to develop tourism
- create attractive urban settings to attract public investments



- restore and maintain the cultural heritage
- improve the urban, commercial and residential conditions

- introduce employment opportunities to make (young) people stay in town
- reuse the neglected, abandoned buildings

Design concept

Design concept for the regeneration of the area:

The whole area will become a cultural centre that balances historic heritage and modern lifestyle, activities and functions in order to create an attractive and multifunctional environment for residents, businesses and visitors to live, work, explore and enjoy.

The aim is to keep the area dynamic throughout the whole day until late evening - the way the rest of the central pedestrian street is developed. Also, gathering spaces will be provided, where people can socialise, meet other people and feel part of the local community, as the lack of such places is a major current issue in town.

As the site is part of the central pedestrian street, the whole area will become a pedestrian zone, in order to provide safe walking routes and public spaces that will benefit the use of the area and its public attractiveness. New connections will be established between the Revival street and the central pedestrian street, which are currently disconnected from one another.

Public transport will be supported by adding new bus stops for a more convenient access to the site.

All the historic buildings and their authenticity will be preserved by keeping the original

Design concept

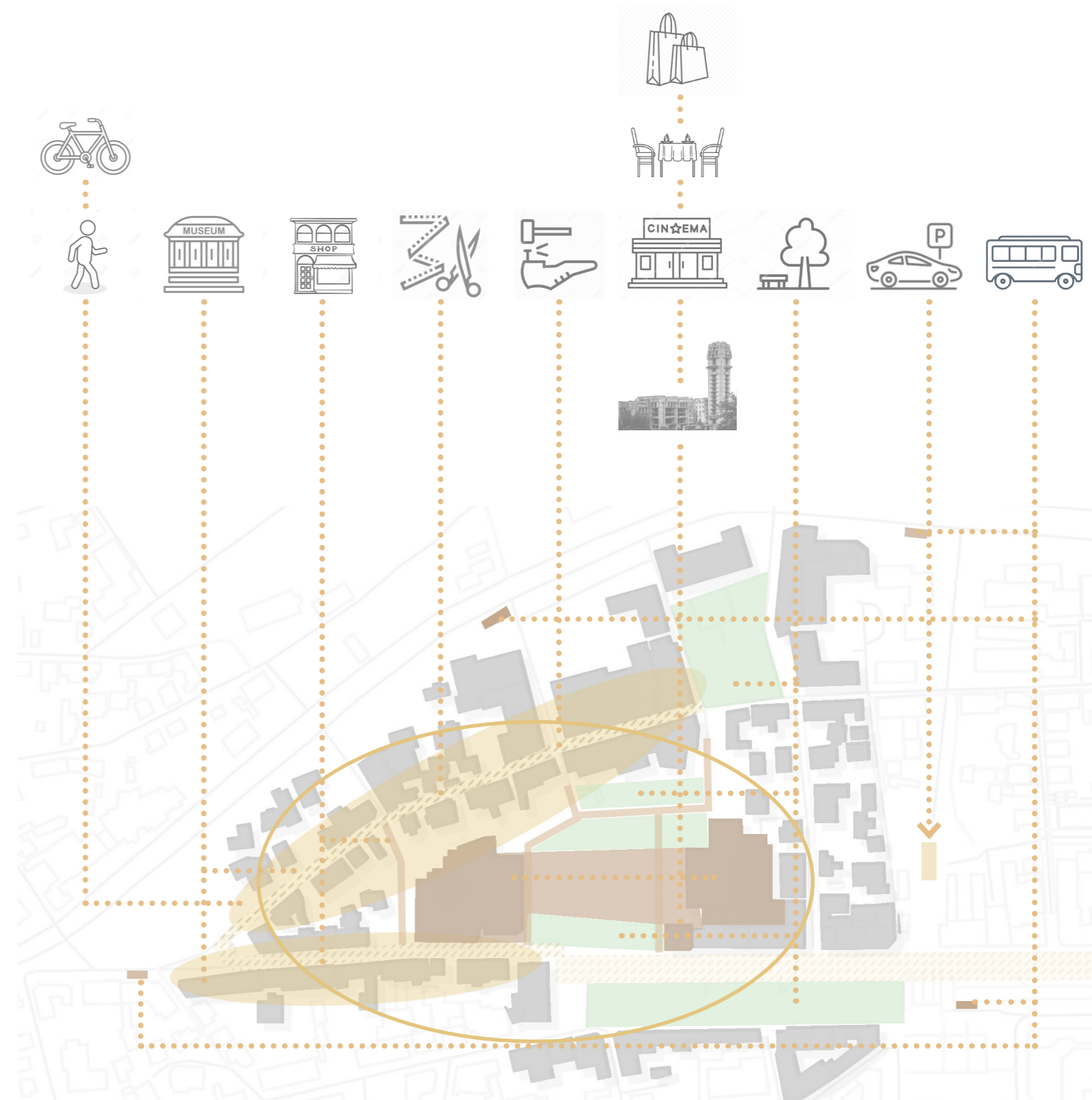
aesthetics, features and details of the houses from the different historic periods. The buildings that are abandoned and empty will be restored with commercial units on ground floor and residential use on upper floors. New uses will be proposed based on what functions and activities are missing both in the area and the town.

The houses of important Bulgarians will become museums presenting the spirit of the past, so that the history of the area is celebrated and valued.

Shops of craftsmen, such as shoemakers and tailors, will be located all in one place - on the Revival street for convenience of their customers, so that people know where to find such shops when needed, as these are currently scattered around town.

The present-day lack of car parking spaces will be resolved with an underground parking which has already been constructed as part of the communist Central City Square project. Therefore, this will provide an opportunity for creating more green spaces.

As the cultural and social life in Shumen is considerably weak, the communist Central City Square building gives an opportunity to introduce various public functions, which are missing in the town today, for example: cinema, concert hall, roof top restaurant with view of the whole town, coworking spaces.

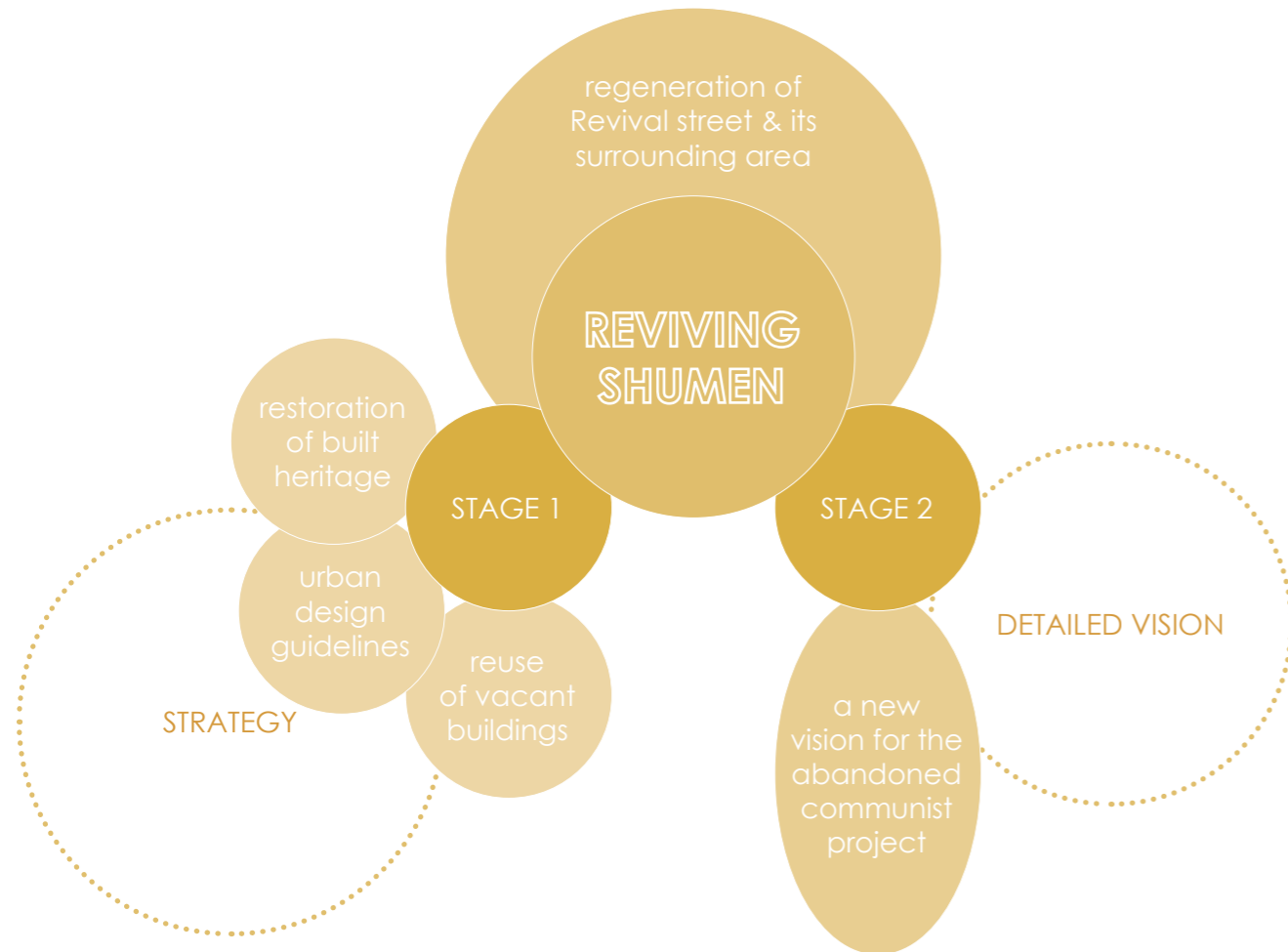


Design concept diagram



Design concept

The project is divided into two stages. Stage 1 includes the design of a strategy to restore the site's built heritage, reuse the empty buildings and introduce urban design guidelines with the aim to create consistency across the urban realm. Whereas, Stage 2 deals with creating a new vision for the never-completed communist project in accordance to the current needs of the town and its citizens.



a mixed-use quarter in the heart of Shumen, to revive a forgotten historic part of the town centre - with a series of landscaped open spaces, pedestrianised area, reused empty cultural heritage buildings and a reimagined abandoned communist scheme

a cultural centre that balances historic heritage & modern lifestyle

to create an attractive and multifunctional environment for residents, businesses and visitors to live, work, explore and enjoy

Design development

Stage 1 | Restoration of built heritage

To restore and renovate the important historic buildings in order to preserve and respect the history of the site, to improve the attractiveness of the area and thus, attract and encourage tourism.

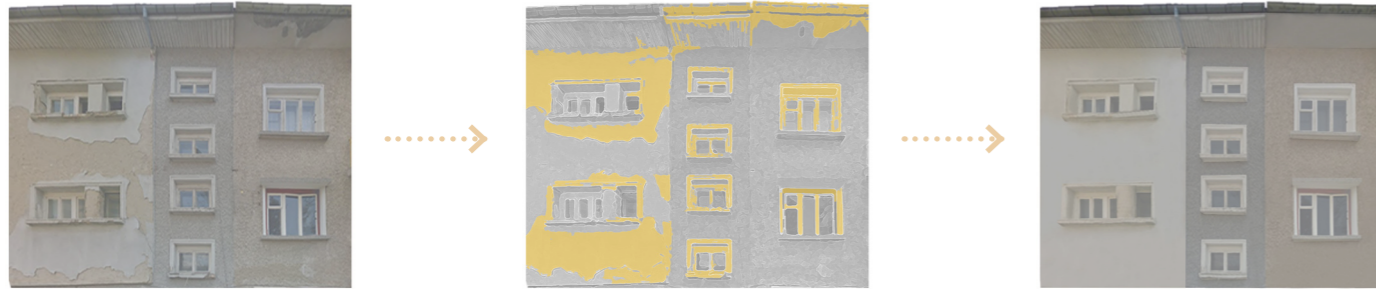
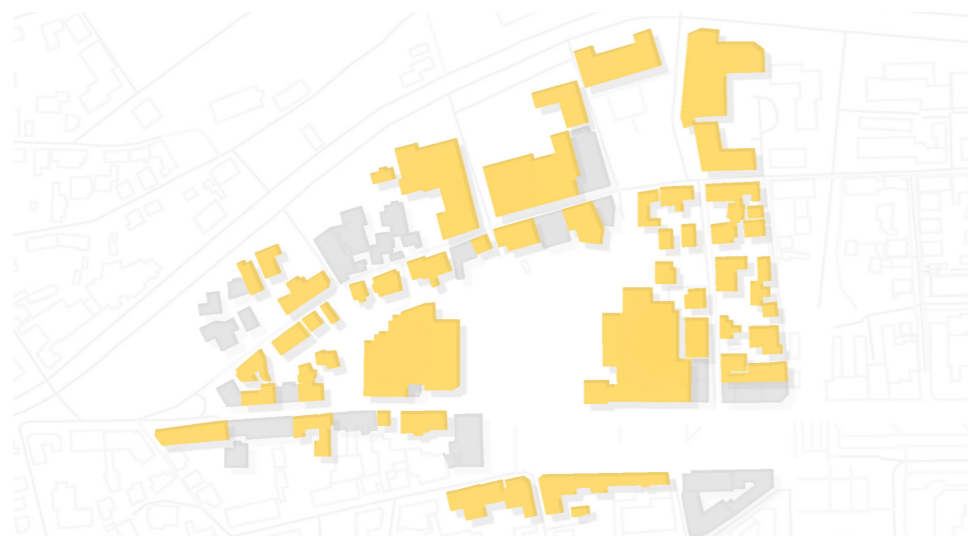


Figure 3: Buildings in bad condition



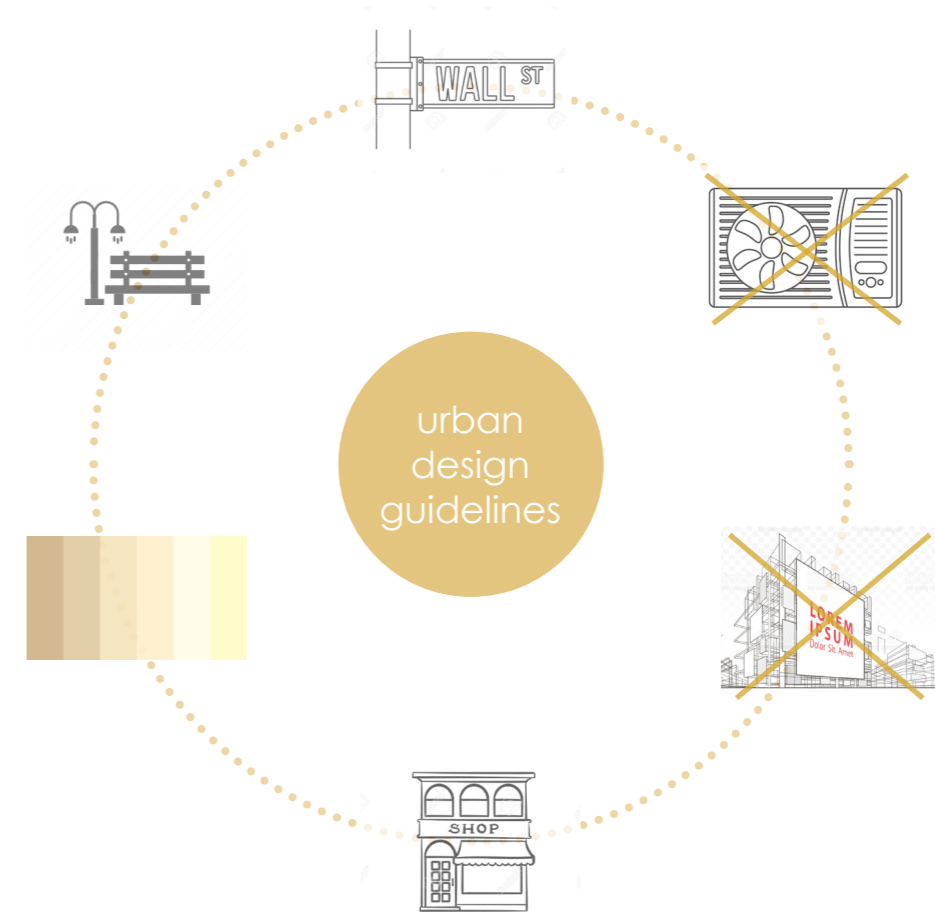
Design development

Stage 1 | Urban design guidelines

To create regulations concerning the urban aesthetics so that there is consistency, order and the authenticity of the historic site is revived.

These include:

- pastel colour palette
- standardised shop frontages + street signs + street furniture
- clean front facades (e.g. without any air conditioners equipment or advertisement posters, as these are very common)



Design development

Stage 1 | Reuse of vacant buildings

To propose new uses for the empty buildings which the area currently lacks and needs.

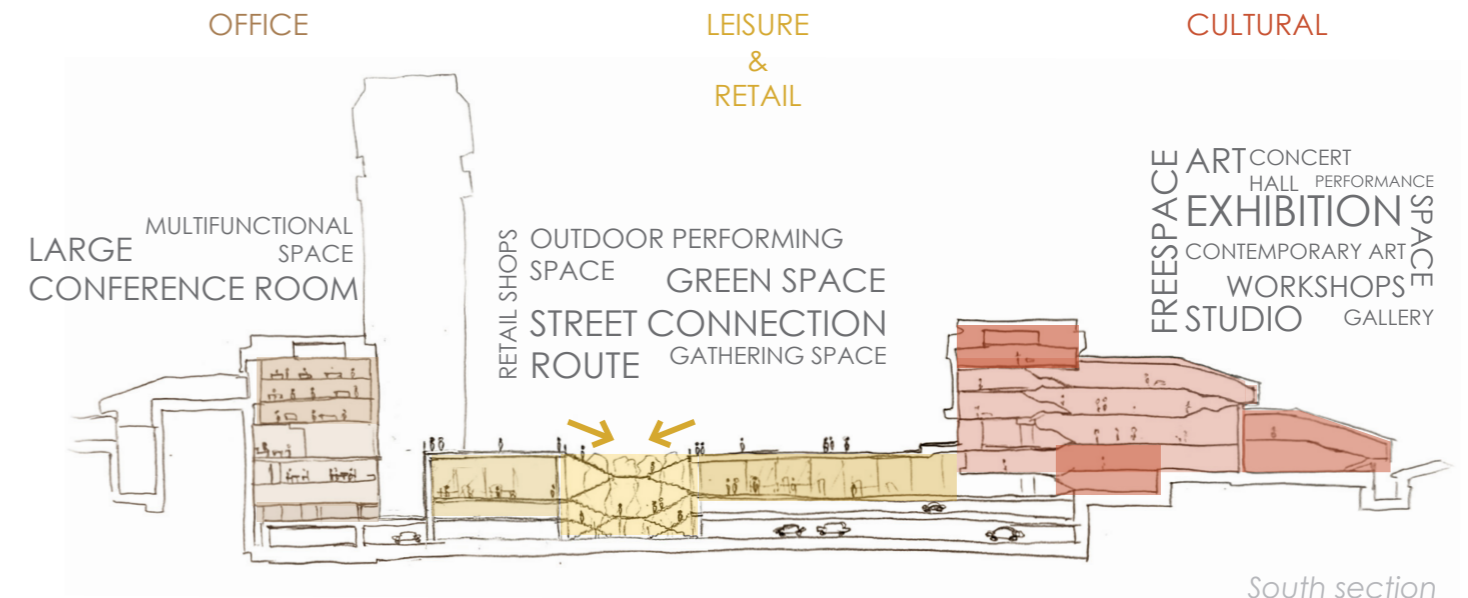
E.g. more cafes, restaurants, bars which can fill in the ground floor spaces; more residents (on the upper floors) which in turn will need more grocery stores, drug stores, hairdressers, shops, outdoor playgrounds for children, etc.



Design development

Stage 2 | The communist project

To retain each building and work with the existing structures and reappropriate them. Thus, keeping the legacy from the past, showing respect to the history of the place as well as responding to the current needs of the town. The proposed functions are divided into 3 categories: office, leisure and cultural.



main emphasis on the preservation of the external form but with slight changes to the interiors

Design development

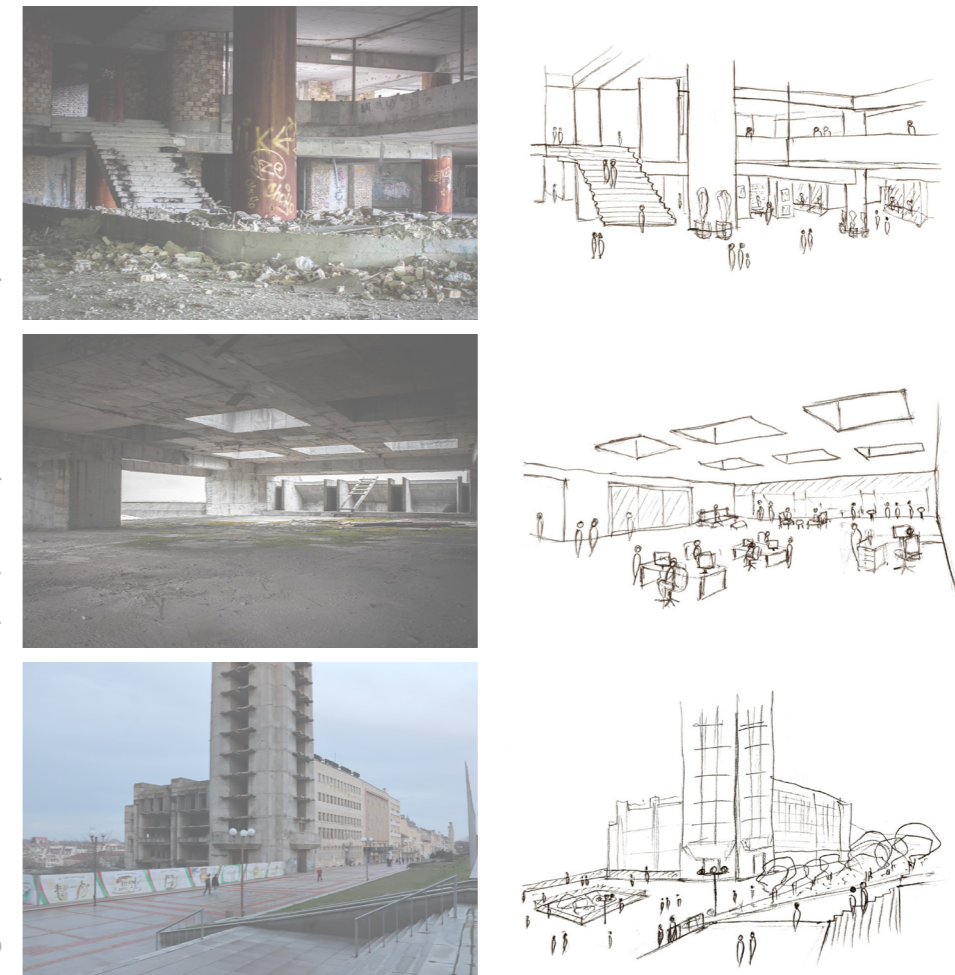
Figure 4: The 'Central City Square' (Kondov, 2019)



A vision

Design development

Figure 5: The 'Central City Square' (Kondov, 2019)



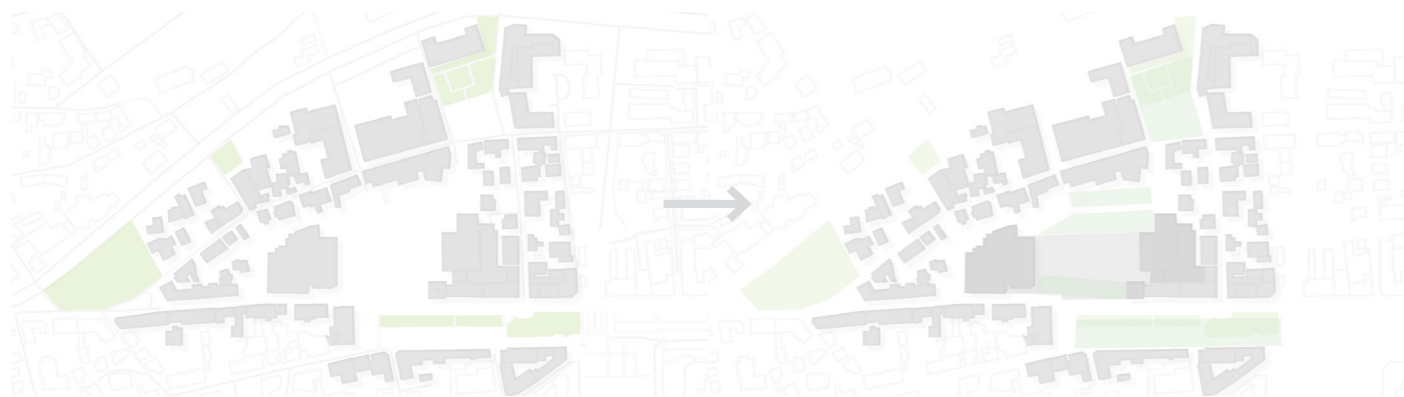
A vision

Design development

CONNECTION | PERMEABILITY | ENTRANCES | OUTDOOR SPACE | UNDERGROUND PARKING

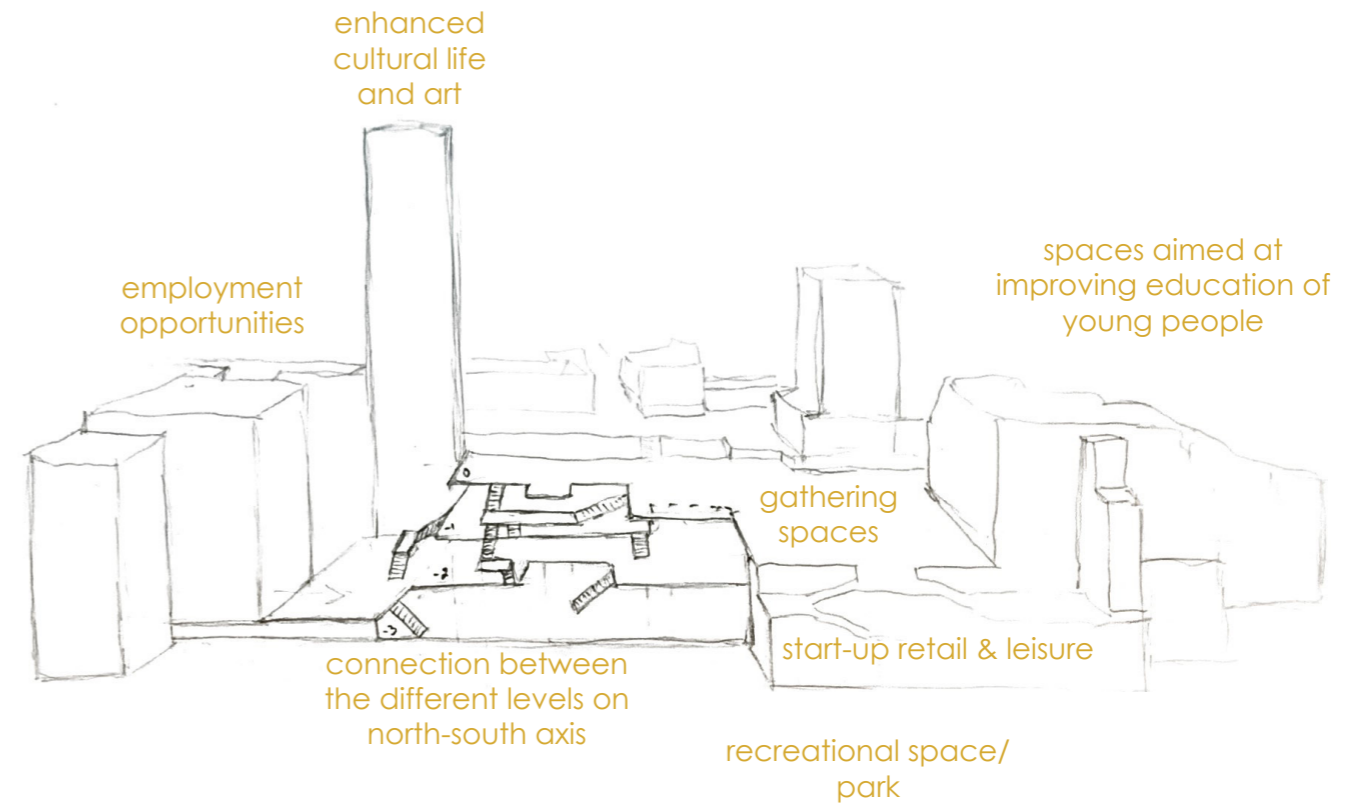


Permeability

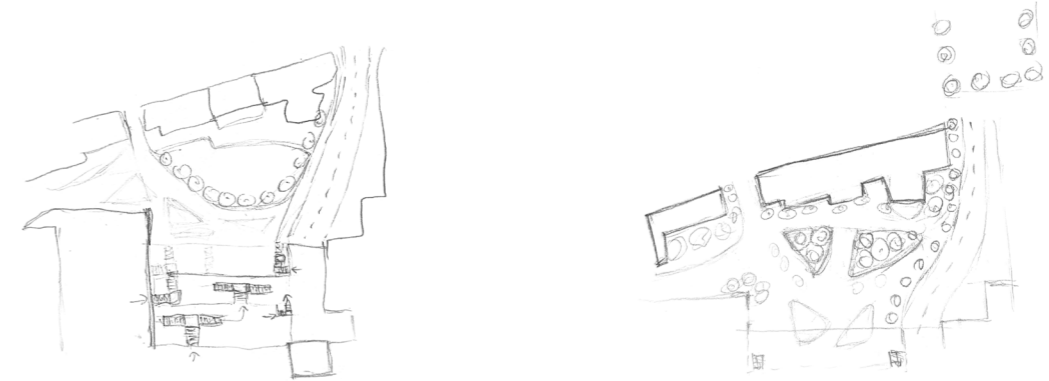


Expanded green areas

Design development



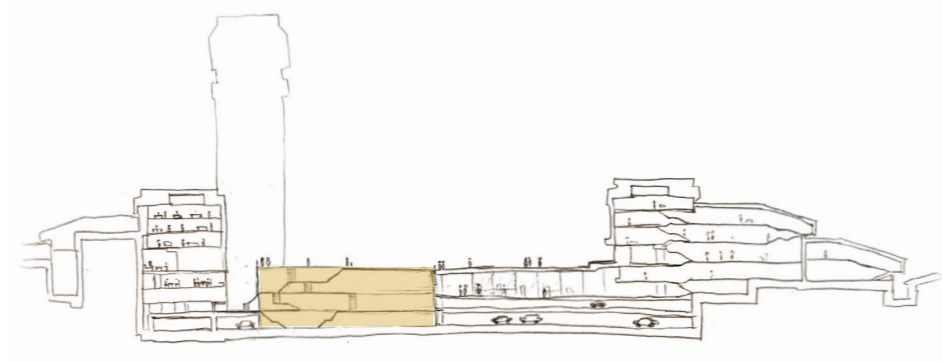
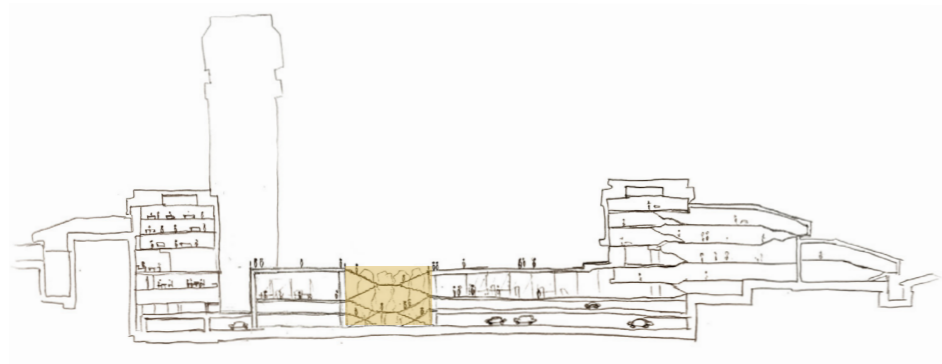
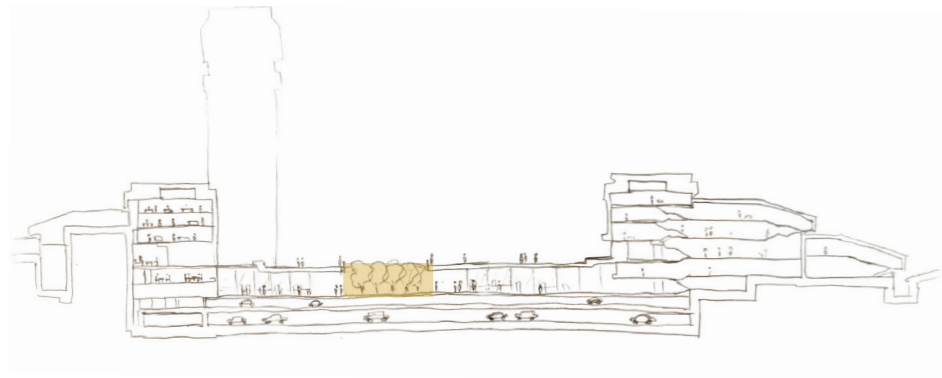
each building refers to the project's objectives



Parks and public spaces encouraging activity and social interaction - a meeting place for the community

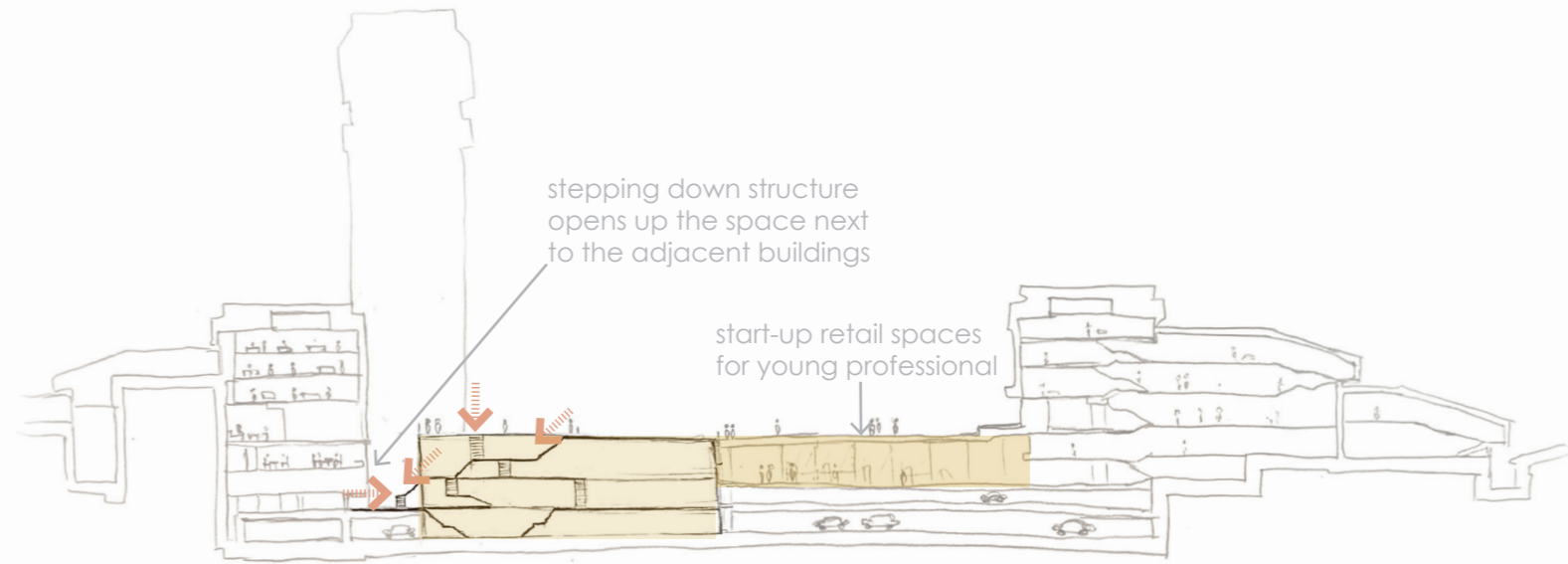
Design development

GREEN SPACE
STREET CONNECTION
ROUTE GATHERING SPACE



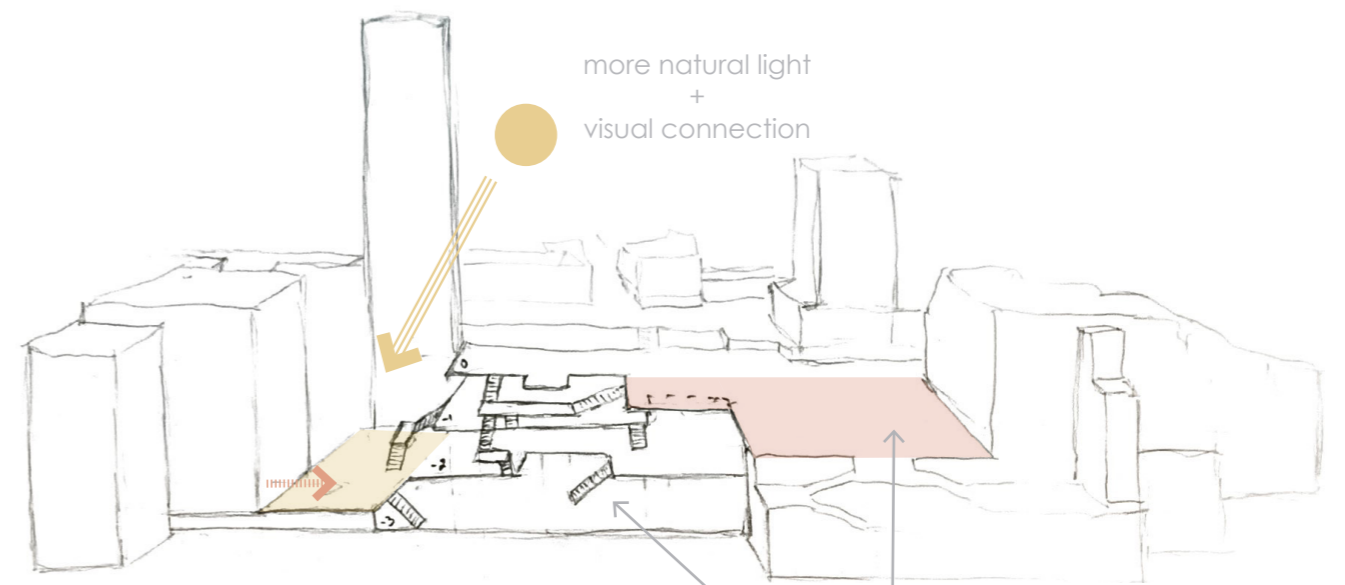
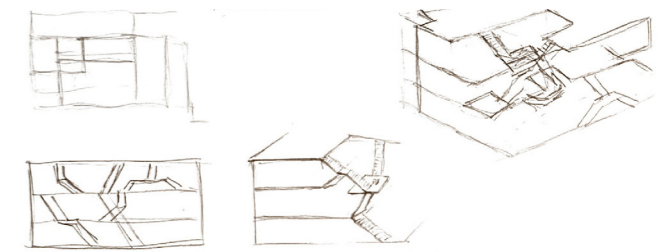
South section

Design development



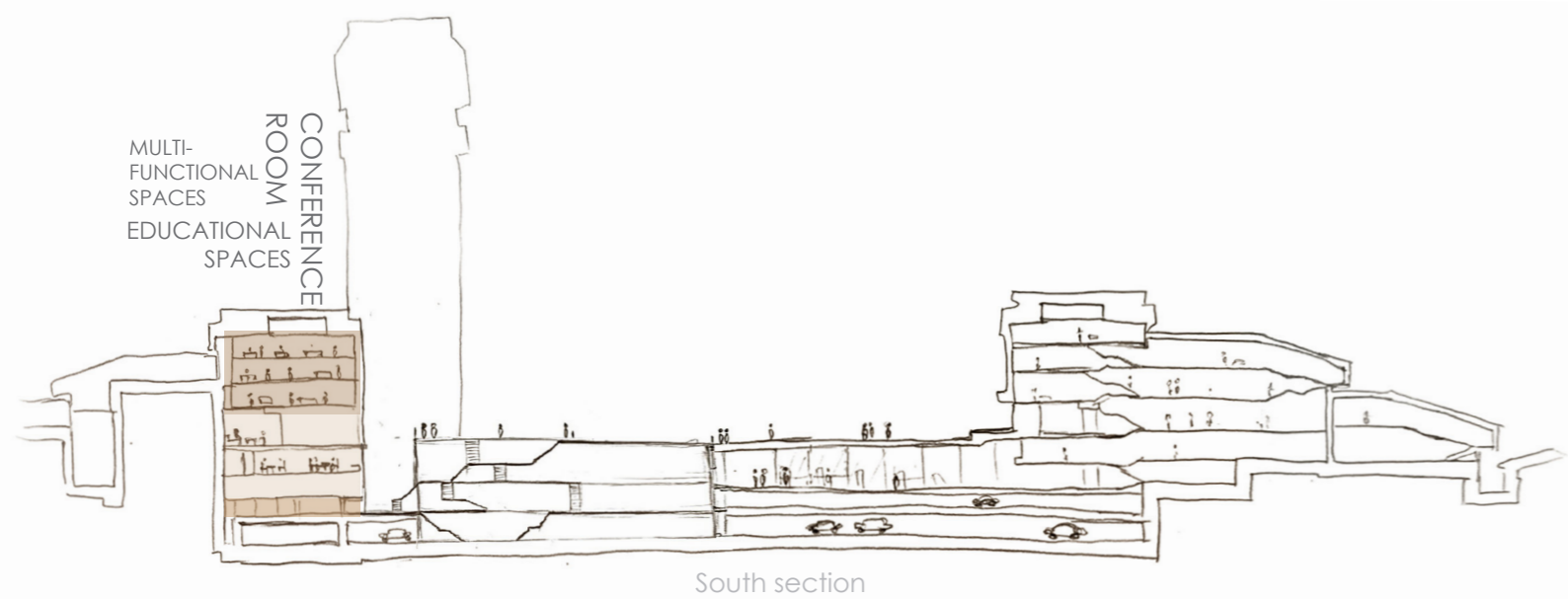
South section

RETAIL SHOPS
OUTDOOR PERFORMING
SPACE GREEN SPACE
STREET CONNECTION
ROUTE GATHERING SPACE

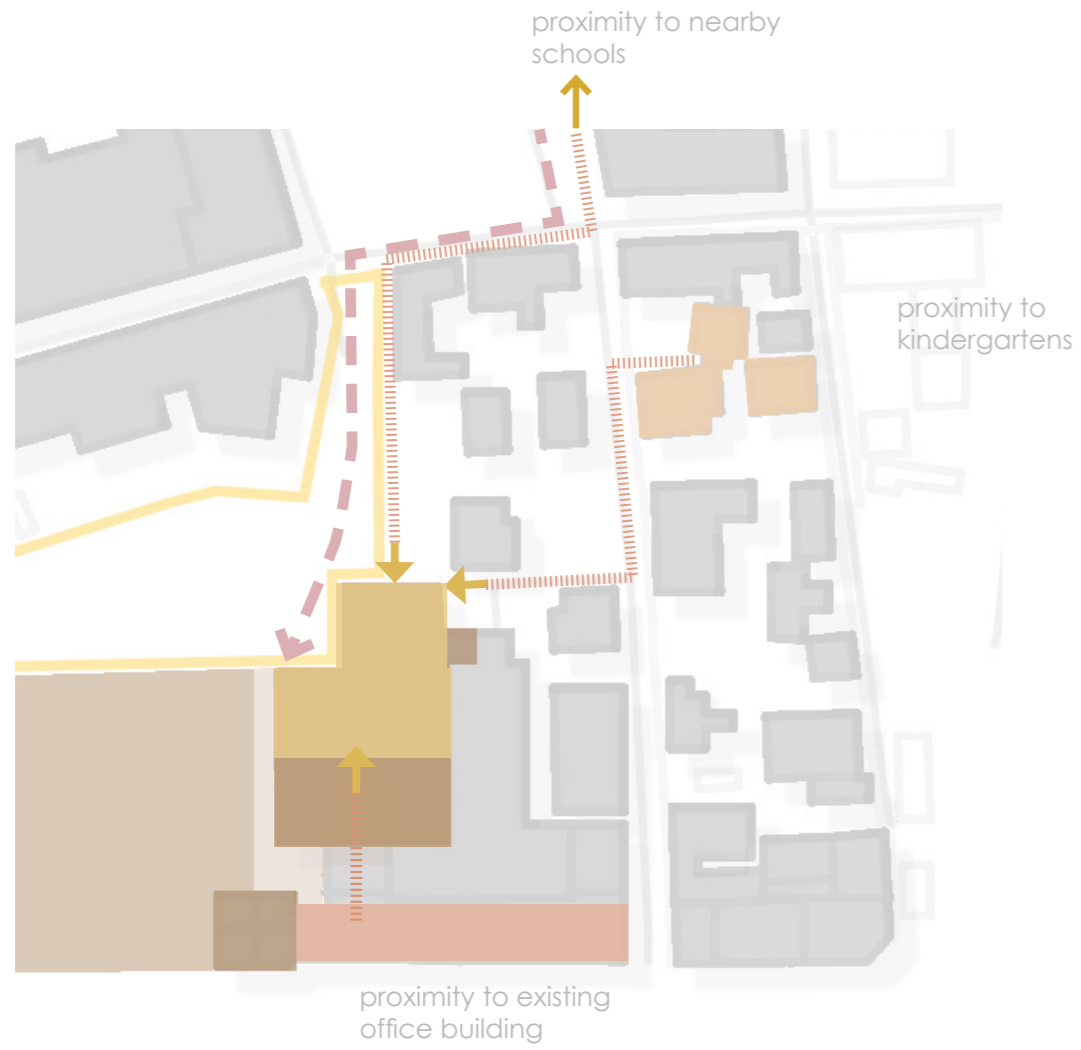


keeping maximum square space but at the same time creating an interesting & attractive connection to lower levels

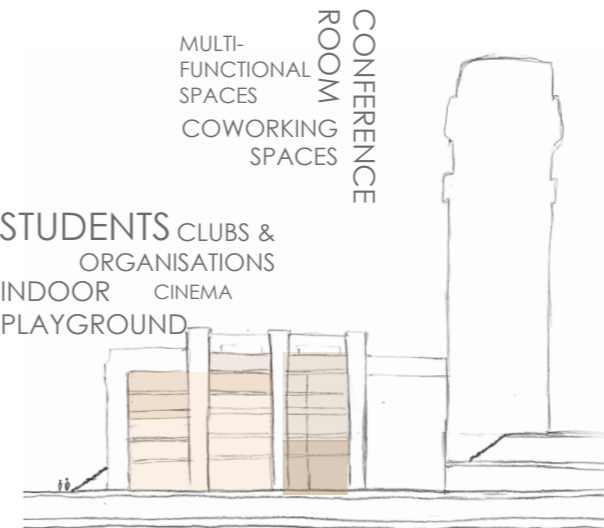
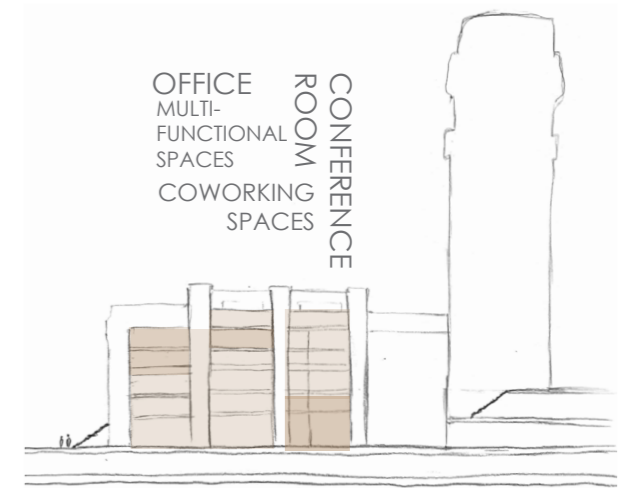
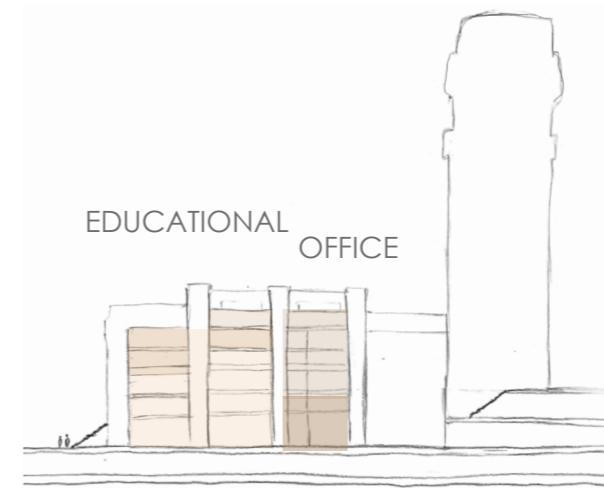
Design development



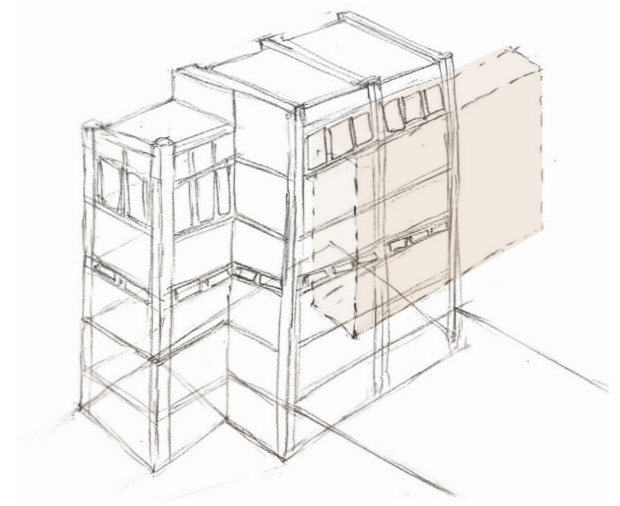
South section



Design development

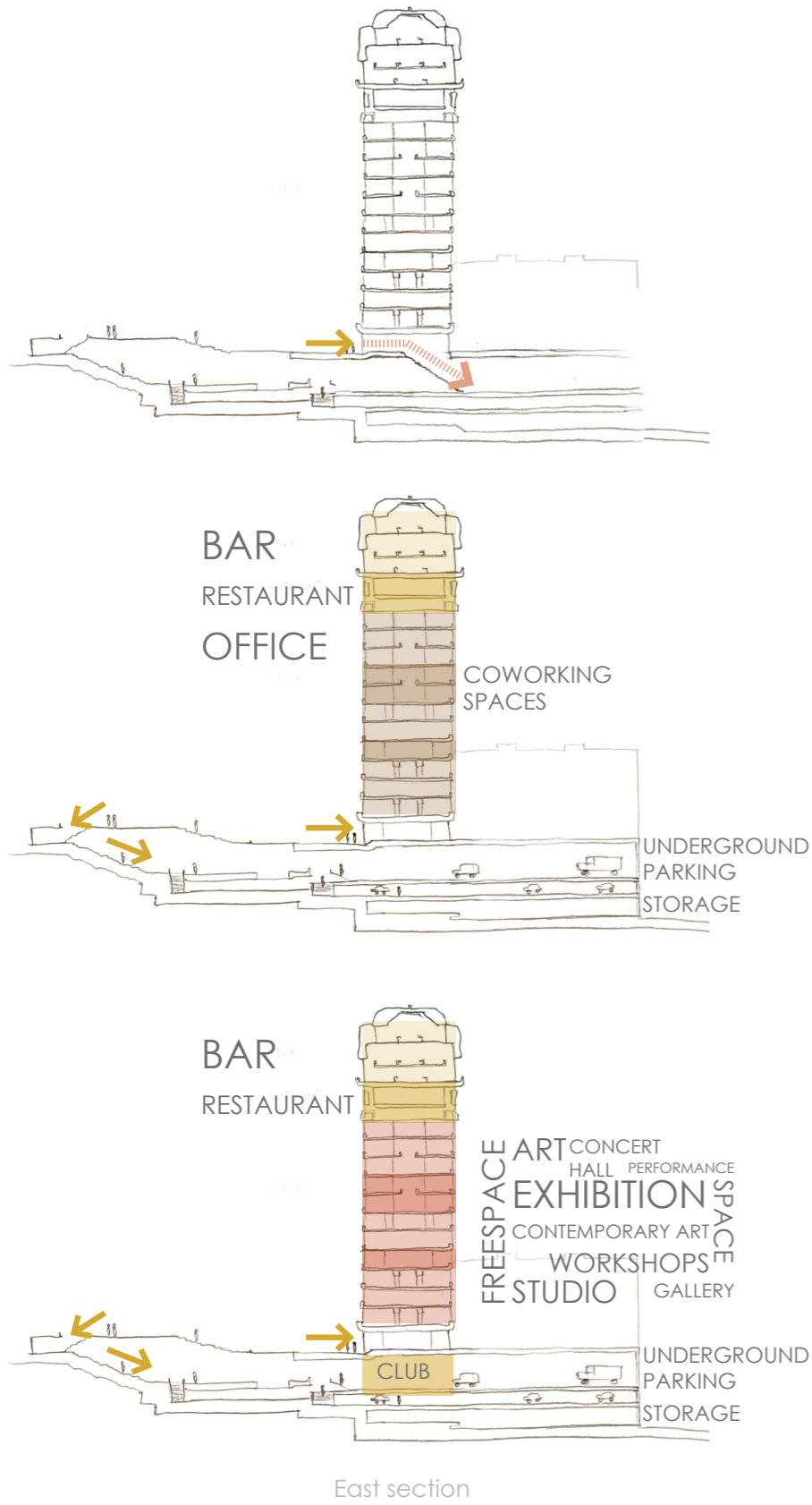


West section

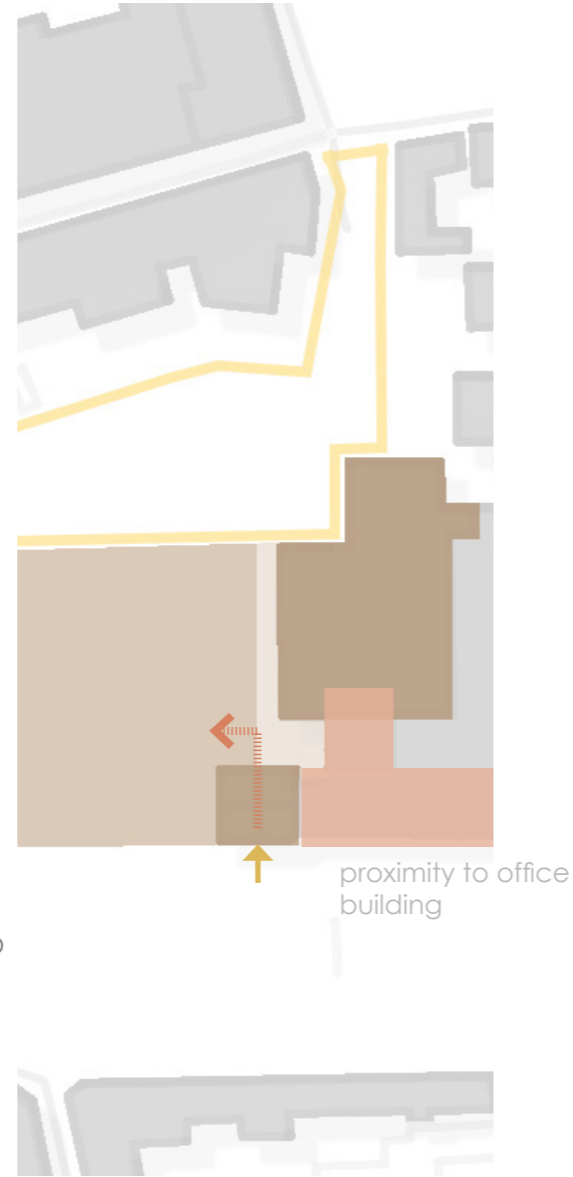


existing office building within the communist building

Design development

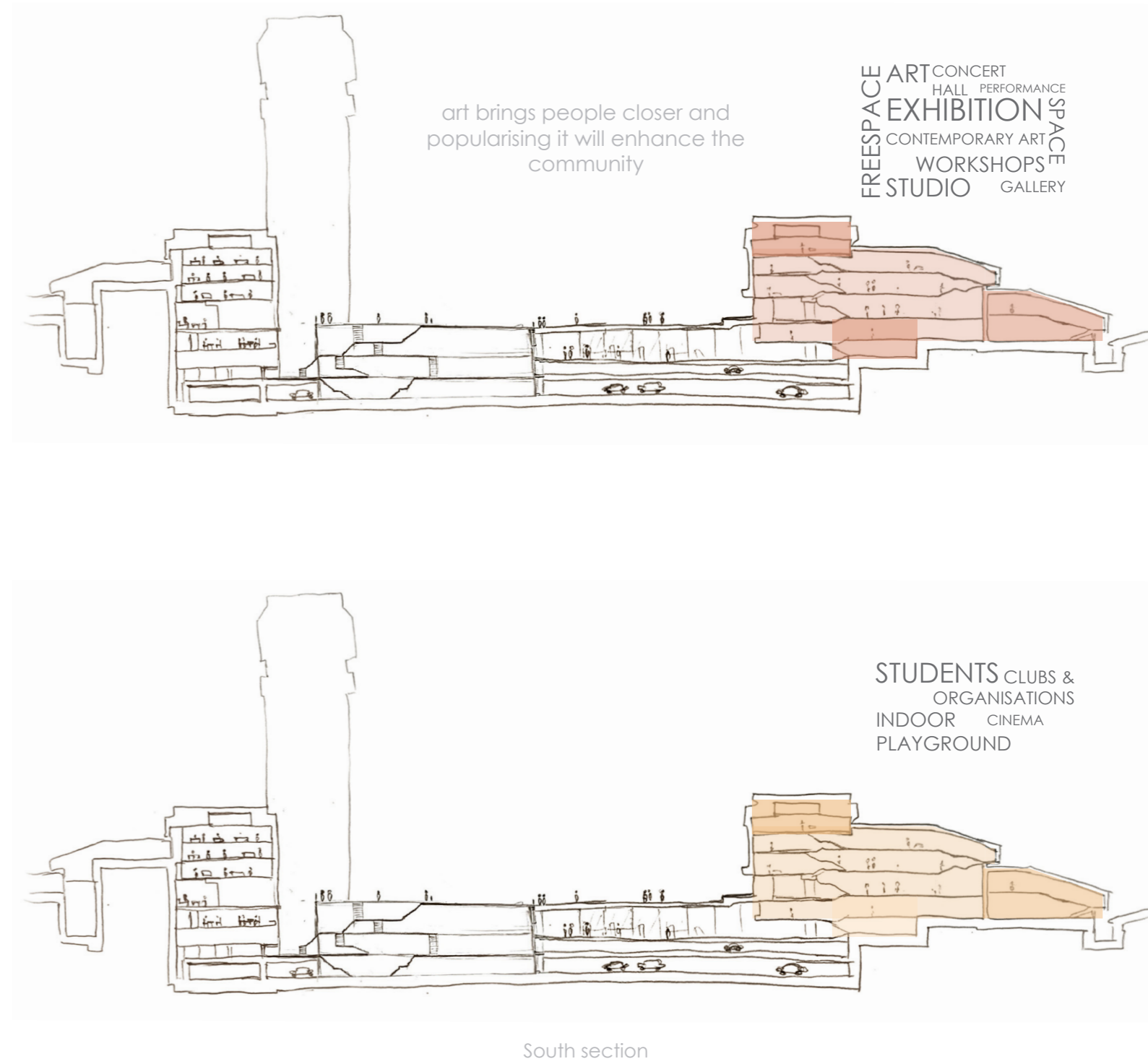


East section



proximity to office building

Design development



art brings people closer and popularising it will enhance the community

FREESPACE
 ART CONCERT HALL PERFORMANCE SPACE
 EXHIBITION CONTEMPORARY ART SPACE
 WORKSHOPS
 STUDIO GALLERY

STUDENTS CLUBS & ORGANISATIONS
 INDOOR CINEMA
 PLAYGROUND

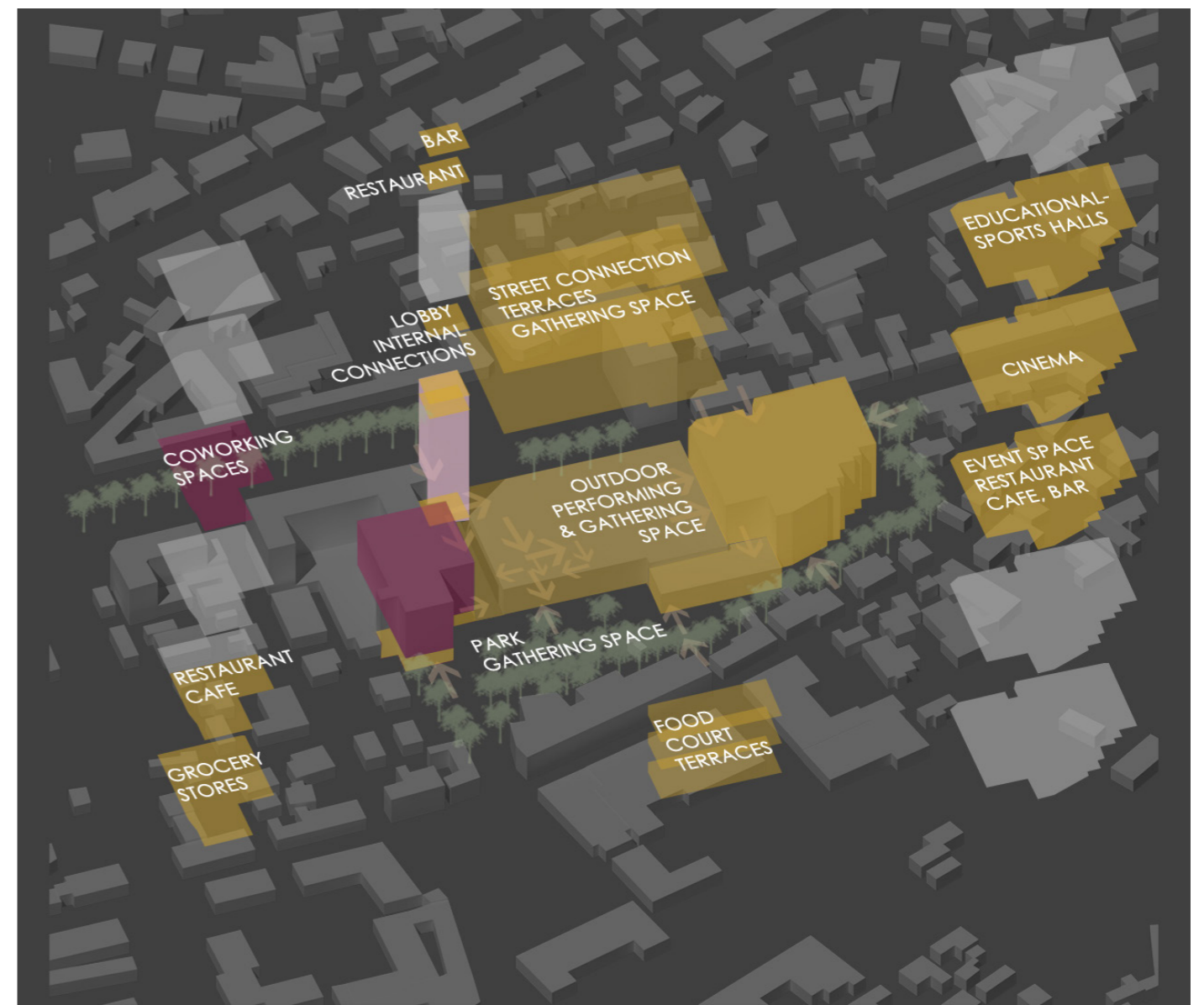
South section

Design development



day time activities

Design development



night time activities



Communist building (Author's own)

chapter 04:

Design proposal

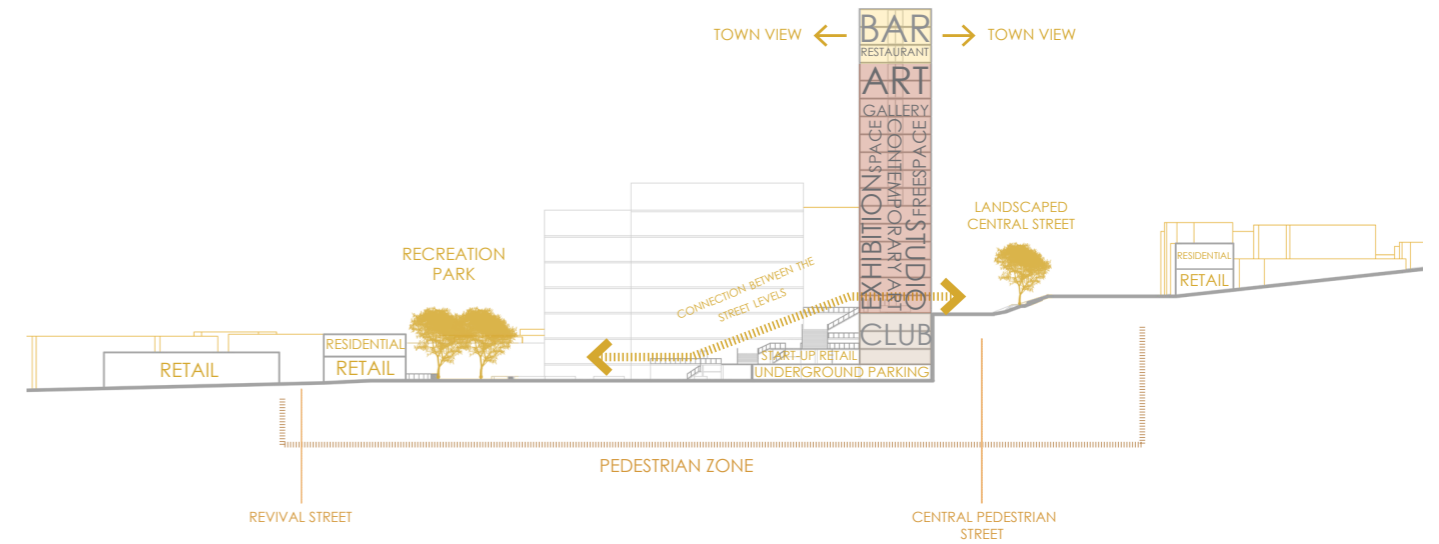
Design proposal

Looking into the wider context, the site will become a 'destination park' for the west part of the central pedestrian street, the same way the east part of it ends in a well-established and active town park.

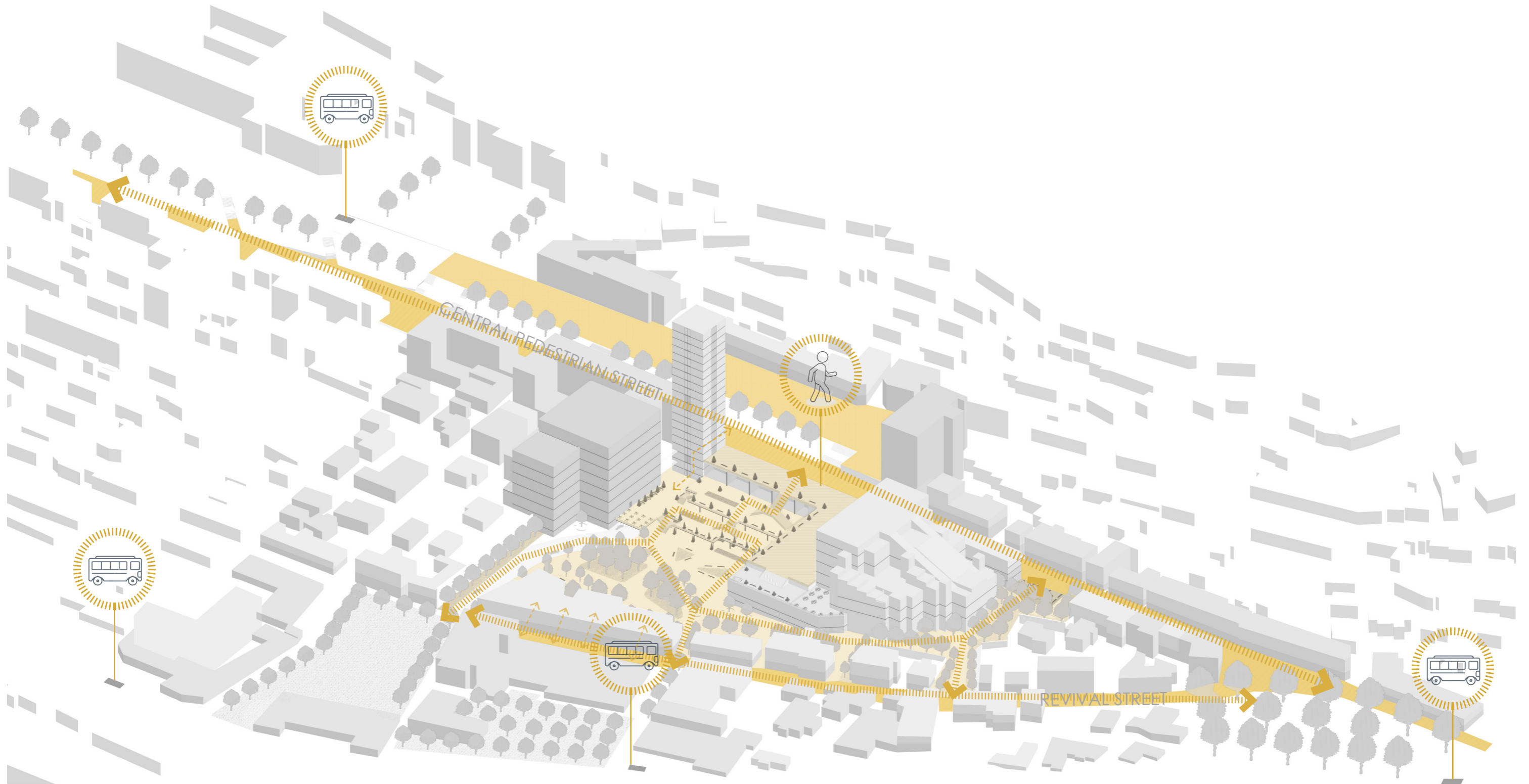


Destination

Design proposal



West section



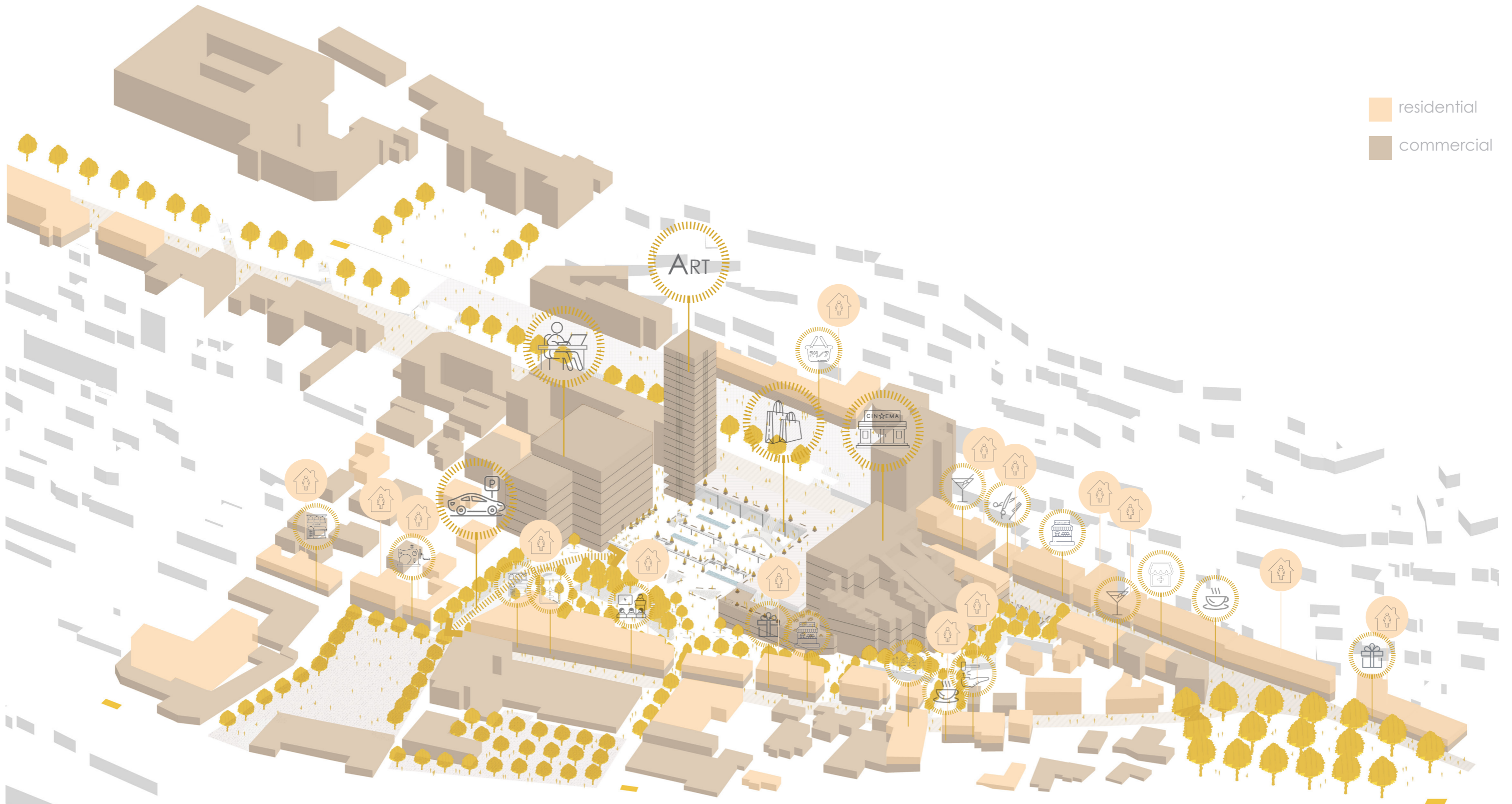
Permeability





Landscape



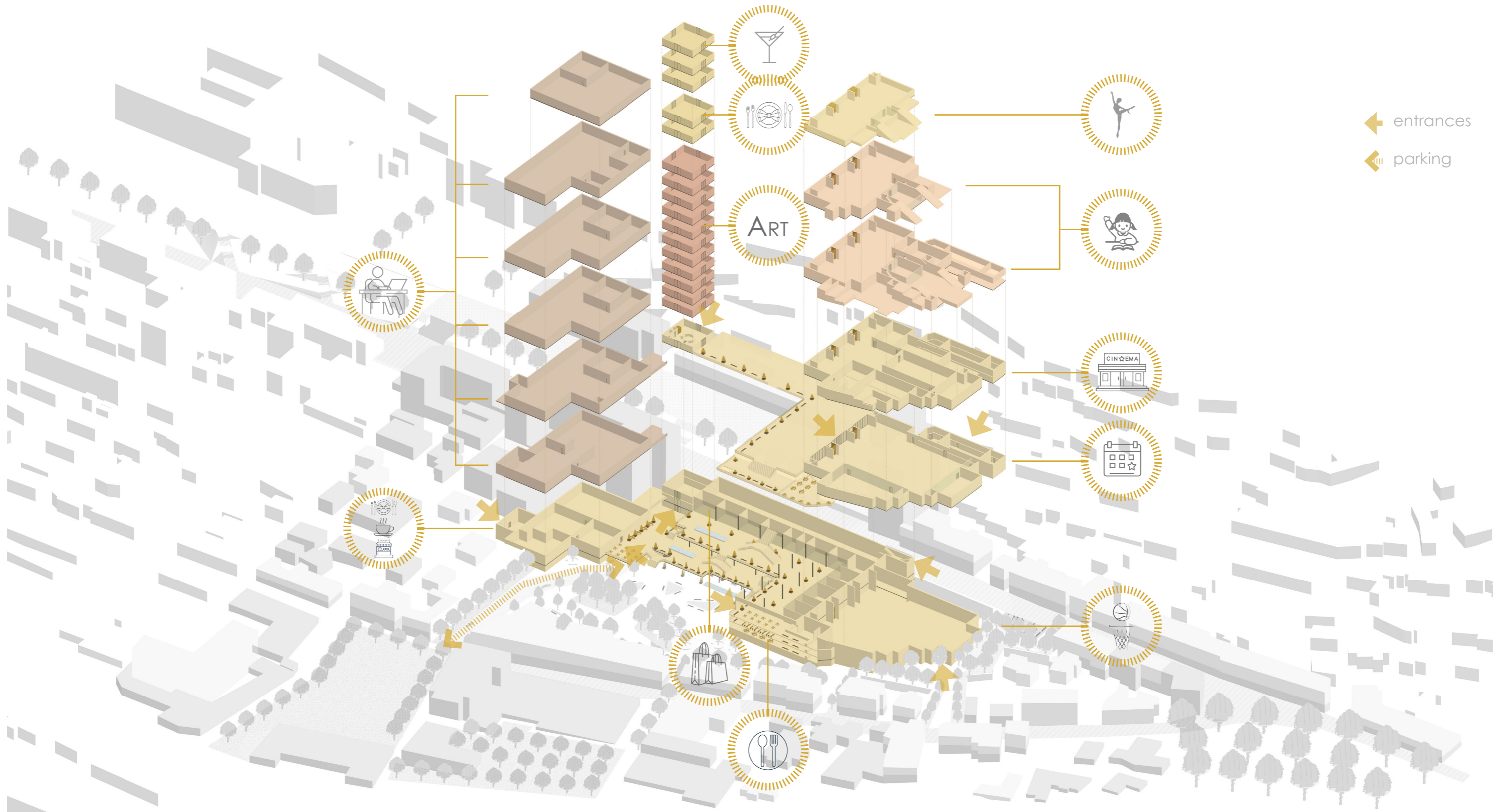


- residential
- commercial

Programme
in context

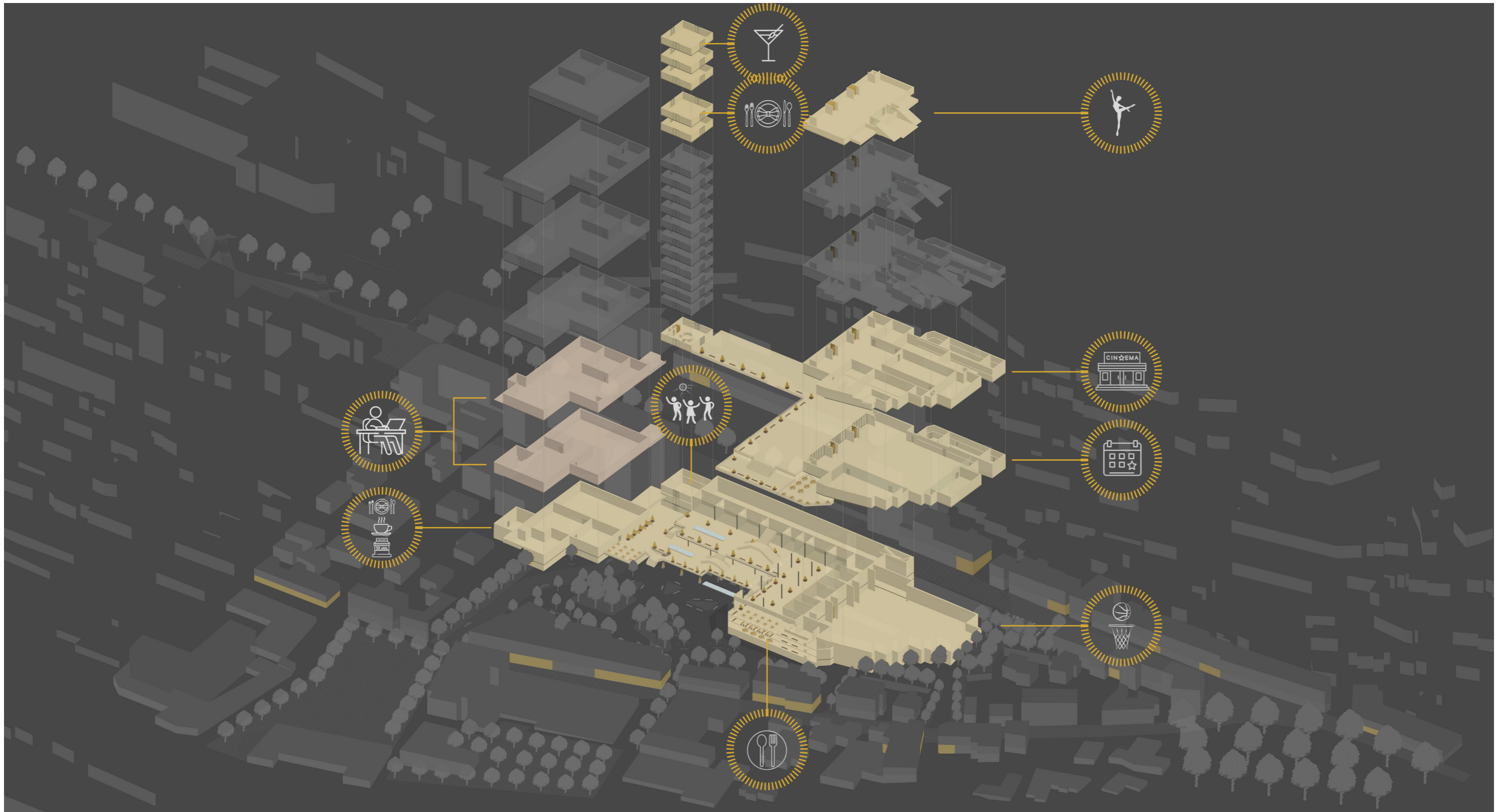


Design proposal



Programme
day time





Programme
night time

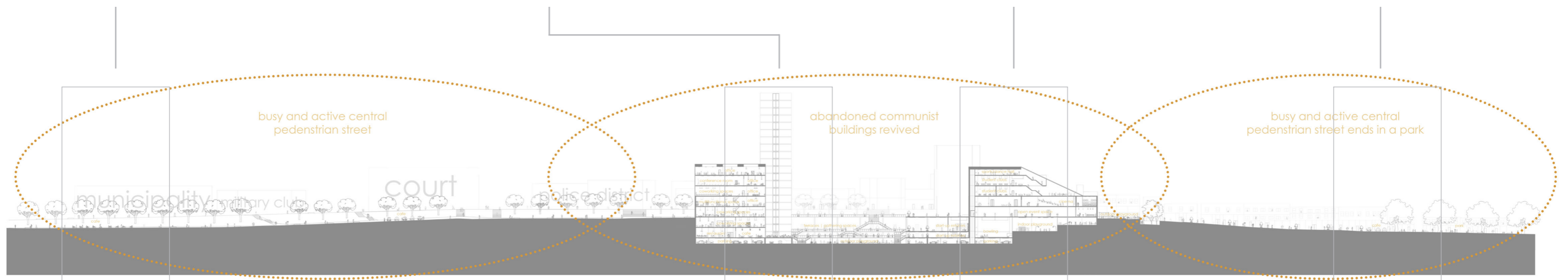
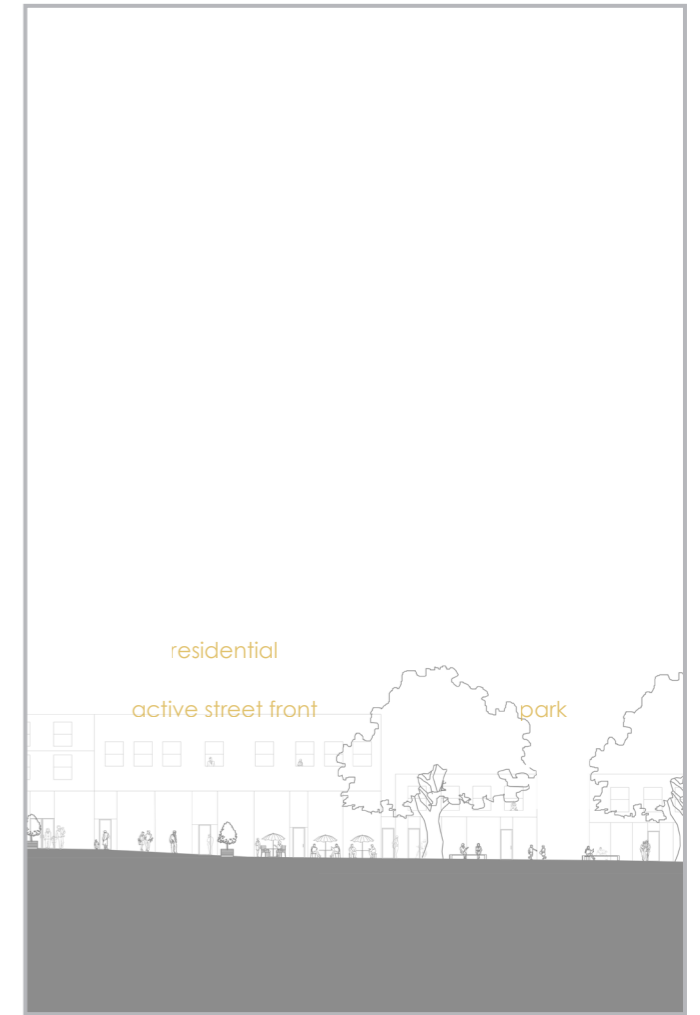
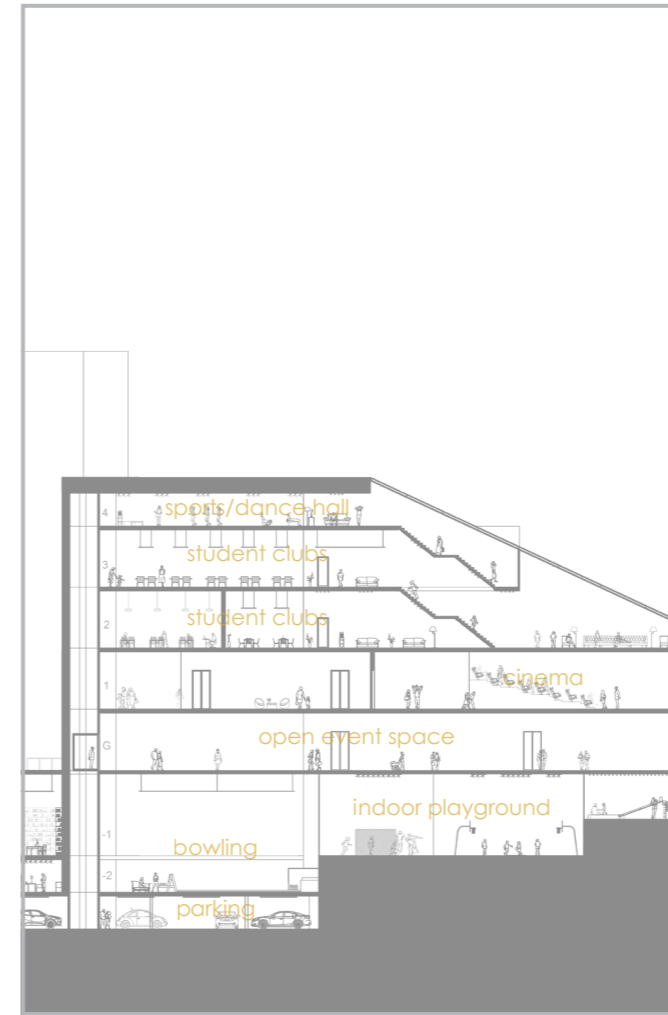
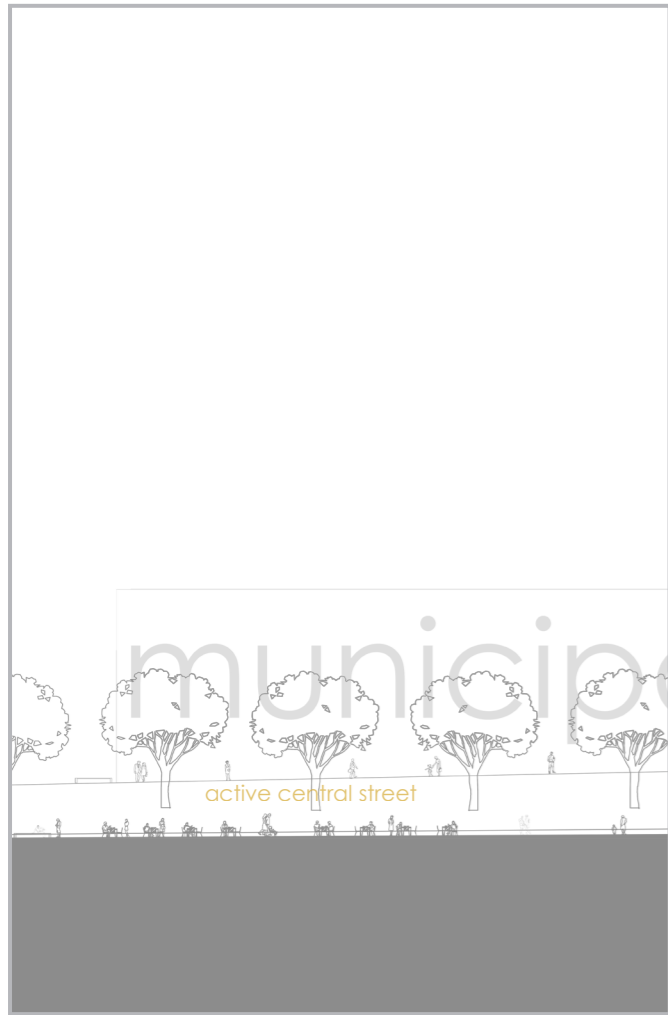




Programme | Ground floor level



Design proposal



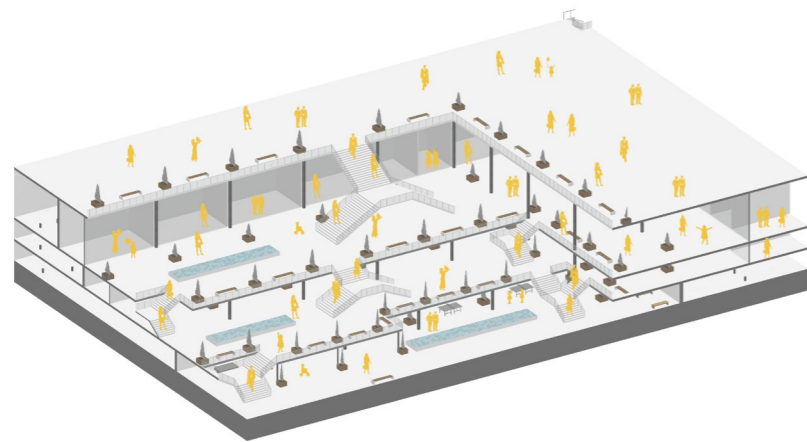
South section
Active central pedestrian street & its revived historic area

Design proposal

Design proposal

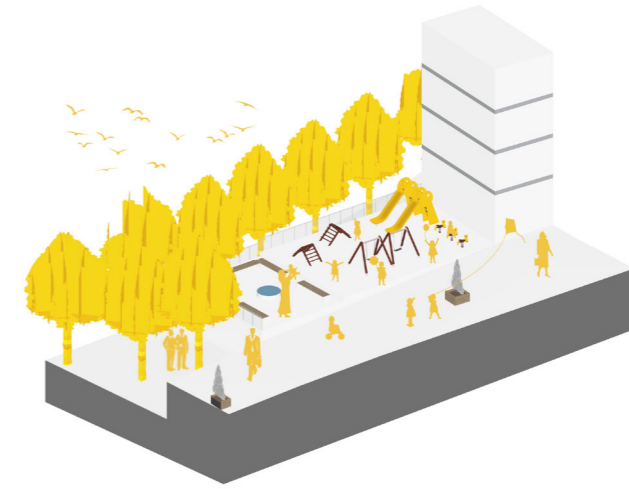


Active street front

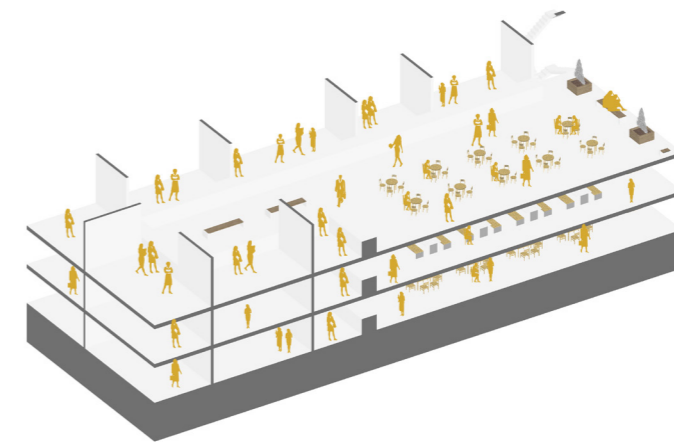


Connection | Terraces

Design proposal

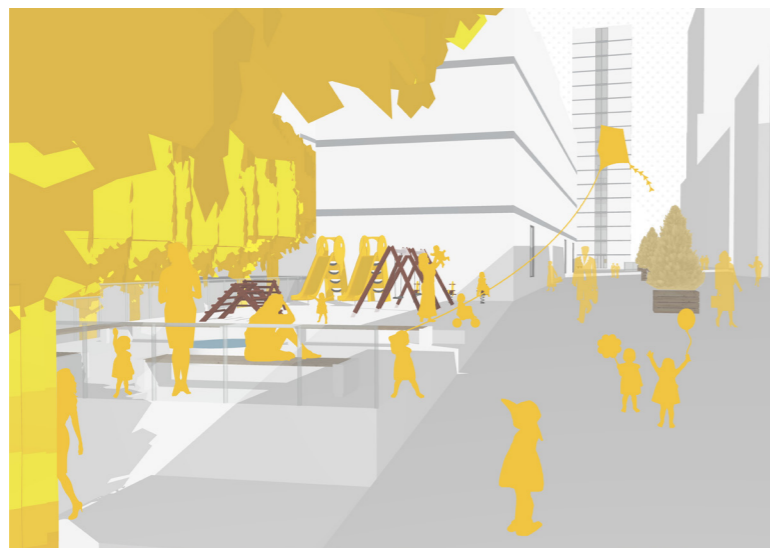


Playground



Food court

Design proposal



A journey through the scheme

Design proposal



A journey through the scheme



Communist building (Author's own)

chapter 05:

Precedents

Precedents

The following precedents are urban regeneration projects, which aim is to bring back life to urban areas by creating mixed-use developments with a variety of activities.

Wickside by Ash Sakula, London, UK

The aim of Ash Sakula architects is to work with the site's history and reuse existing structures on site for new uses or to become part of new buildings. This project provides a 24-hour mix of uses and activities, such as a co-working operation, a market, shops, gallery, event space, restaurants, a brewery, a foundry, creative business and artists' workshops (Ash Sakula Architects, 2017).

Coventry city centre regeneration by Chapman Taylor, Coventry, UK

Aiming to create a sustainable community at the city center of Coventry, this project includes a carefully considered mix of retail, residential and leisure. These consist of new retail units, a number of new public realm spaces, a pavilion containing independent and start-up retailers and restaurants, a cinema and other leisure uses, a medical centre, private and rented residential accommodation and a hotel (Chapman Taylor, 2021).

Quartier Fünfgassen regeneration by Chapman Taylor, Wiesbaden, Germany

The architect's aim for this project is to create attractive spaces where people go and stay, and spend a few hours. It is a 24-hour mixed-use with many cafes, bars, restaurants, new streets and squares, upper floors hotel, leisure and residential facilities (Chapman Taylor, 2018).

Further exploring the work of Chapman Taylor and a number of their mixed-use urban projects (Chapman Taylor, 2020), the following statement concluded the importance of the mix of use for the development of town centres:

Retail, residential, leisure and office are very important to create a vibrant and sustainable urban environment that is self-sustaining: where residents have access to daily necessities, workers use the cafes, restaurants and shops during the day, organisation of different events bring people into the area during the day as well as at night. Thus, the economy is constantly moving. And all of these contribute to the attractive development of the place.

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Retail, residential, leisure and office to support sustainable living and working.



Wickside | Ash Sakula, London, UK



Coventry city centre regeneration | Chapman Taylor



Quartier Fünfgassen regeneration | Chapman Taylor, Wiesbaden, Germany

Figure 6: Precedents I

Precedents

The following precedents are examples of buildings with civic use.

Neue Nationalgalerie, Mies van der Rohe, renovated by David Chipperfield Architects, Berlin, Germany

The refurbishment of this museum modernises its use and services and preserves the original appearance of its fabric. Hence, the renovation works show respect to the history of the building (Ravenscroft, 2020).

SESC Pompeia Factory, Lina Bo Bardi, Sao Paulo, Brazil

This project is a dialog between the old and new (Daudén, 2020). The renovation of the industrial buildings preserved their original appearance, again respectful to the history and characteristics of the place. The factory is turned into a civic space, with workshop area, library, exhibition halls, restaurant, auditorium, sports facilities, creating a connection between the spaces and the surrounding context (Fracalossi, 2013).

The Tanks, Tate Modern, Herzog + de Meuron, London, UK

These underground concrete spaces for art and exhibition offer a variety of spaces with rich, raw texture for artist, while also respecting the site's history (Cilento, 2012).

Cultural powerhouse, Renzo Piano, Moscow, Russia

This project is a transformation of a historic building in order to cater to the contemporary culture. An old, derelict power station is turned into an innovative cultural centre of visual and performing art, music, academia (Schneyder,



Neue Nationalgalerie | Mies van der Rohe, renovated by David Chipperfield Architects, Berlin



SESC Pompeia Factory | Lina Bo Bardi, Sao Paulo



The Tanks, Tate Modern | Herzog + de Meuron, London



Cultural powerhouse | Renzo Piano, Moscow

Figure 7: Precedents II

Precedents

The following precedents represent a vision for the proposed design ideas in this project.

Vertical park, Studio Fuksas, Monaco

This scheme offers "a vertical park" within the urban space on Monaco waterfront. Along with the landscaped areas, it provides a mix of cultural and commercial facilities that are linked via five-storey terraces (Crook, 2019).

Mixed-Use District, Astoria Neighborhood | ODA Designs, New York City, USA

The masterplan proposal revitalises a neighbourhood by taking into account the community's urgent needs. The design turns a large parking area into a lively residential and commercial area that will boost the local economy (Harrouk, 2020).

Tokyo Pop Lab, Nima Nian & Behdad Heydari
An example of a network of staircases (Nian, 2016).

Taiwan cafe, Sou Fujimoto

The design forms a new urban environment through a network of staircases which act as passageways in a 'three-dimensional alley' (Chin, 2014).



Monaco Vertical park | Studio Fuksas



Mixed-Use District to revitalize Astoria Neighborhood | ODA Designs, New York City



Tokyo Pop Lab | Nima Nian & Behdad Heydari



Taiwan cafe | Sou Fujimoto | network of staircases

Figure 8: Precedents III

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Appendix | The Central City Square communist project

Appendix

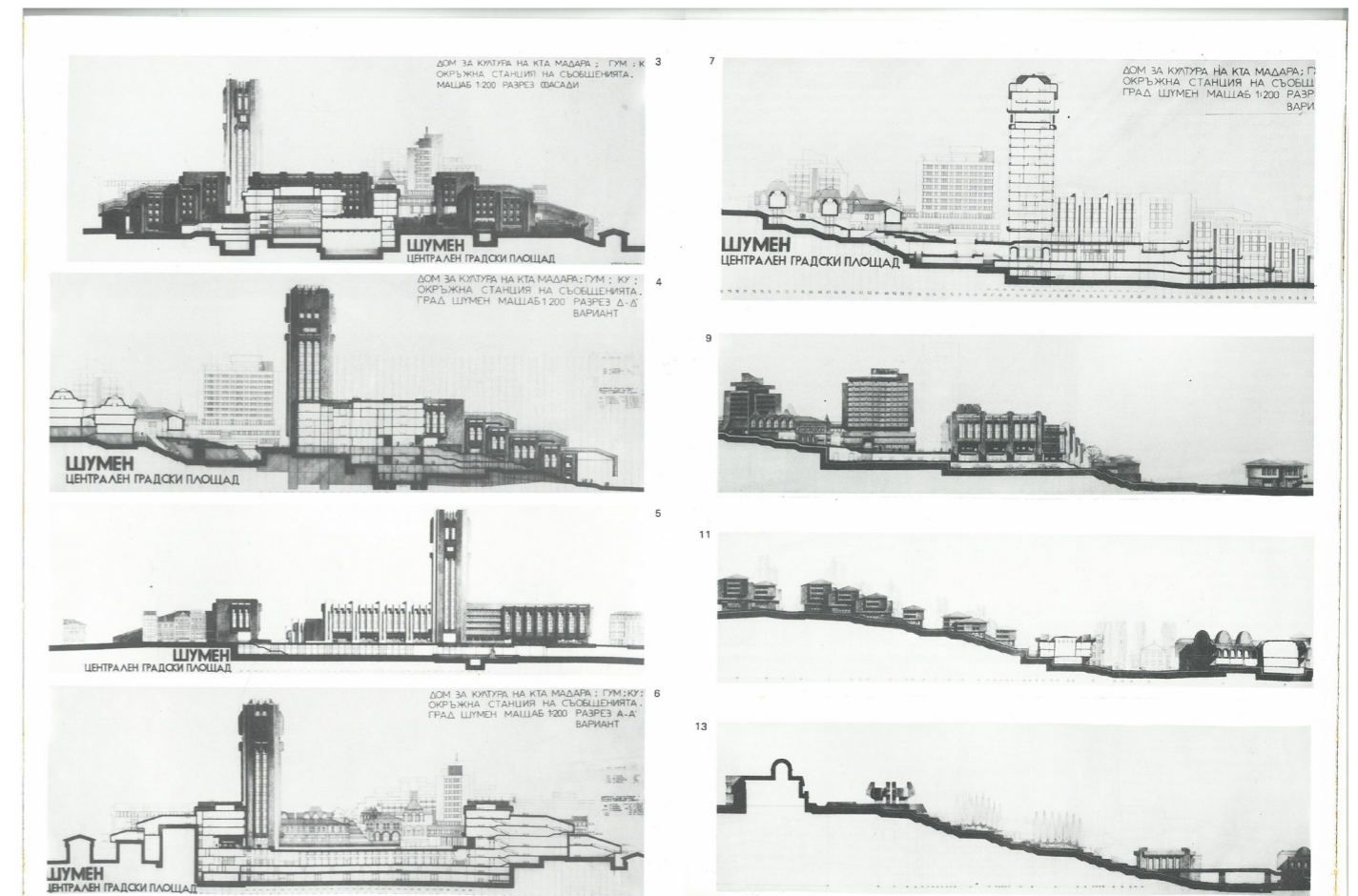


Figure 9: Central City Square project drawings (Kondov, 2019)

