



The Opportunity of Existing Buildings
in Creating Cultural Spaces:
A Cultural Hub & Residence for the NEIC

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Introduction

Motivation

This thesis intends to question whether existing buildings within our cities are worth saving or not. Some building uses are no longer in demand; leaving healthy structures derelict.

The demolition of these buildings may be removing historical architecture from the city, whilst contributing negatively to climate change.

I also questioned whether derelict buildings can be used to provide needed amenities to the city centre while also sustainably embracing historical architecture.

The research and resulting project design seek to explore and evaluate elements associated with the creation of spaces which allow people to

connect and share cultures and experiences.

In this project, the need for a cultural space became apparent due to the wide variety of cultures in the North East Inner City and the total lack of communal space where immigrants and Irish people can gather and connect.

*“The future of architecture is culture”
– Philip Johnson*

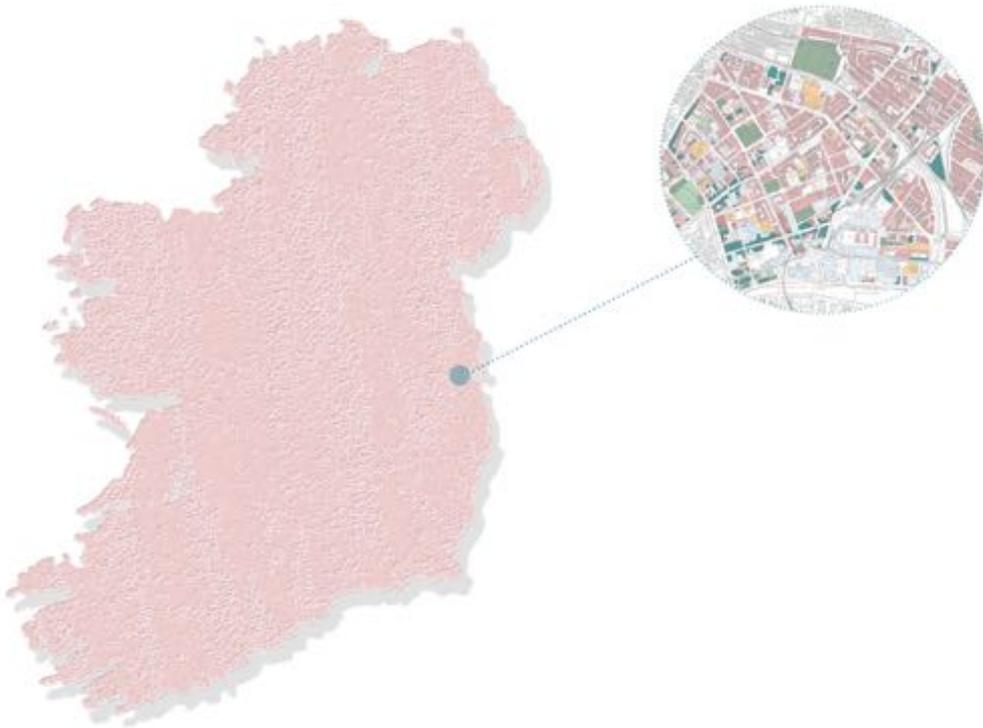
*“These older buildings with their rawness,
exposed bones and old scars don’t just provide evidence
of the past, they tell us that there are still things
in this world that endure and stand the
test of time”
– James Woolum*

What?

To create a ‘cultural hub’, it is necessary to attract a wide range of people to this area while forming a communal space that encourages positive relations between the inhabitant and creates bonds.

I created a community centre where anyone can come to attend classes, use the library and day-care and take part in recreational activities.

I also designed a market space, restaurant, exhibition space and apartments. In the residential zone interaction and communication between residents are encouraged through communal areas and co-living zones.



Who?

The residential section of the project focuses on a variety of users and embraces a wide age range containing residents for singles, couples, families and the elderly.

The community areas of the project are open to everyone to take advantage of the amenities which will encourage the exchange of a wide range of cultures.

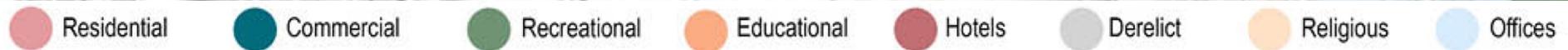
Where?

As a result of my research, Parnell Street is the most culturally diverse area in Dublin's 'North-East Inner City' regarding businesses. The idea of creating a 'hub' where this diversity could be encouraged and expanded became prominent in my project.

Whilst studying this area, two derelict buildings: 'The Telephone House' and 'Westbrook Motors' struck my interest. I started to focus on these two buildings and how they may be repurposed to provide the needed amenities for this area.

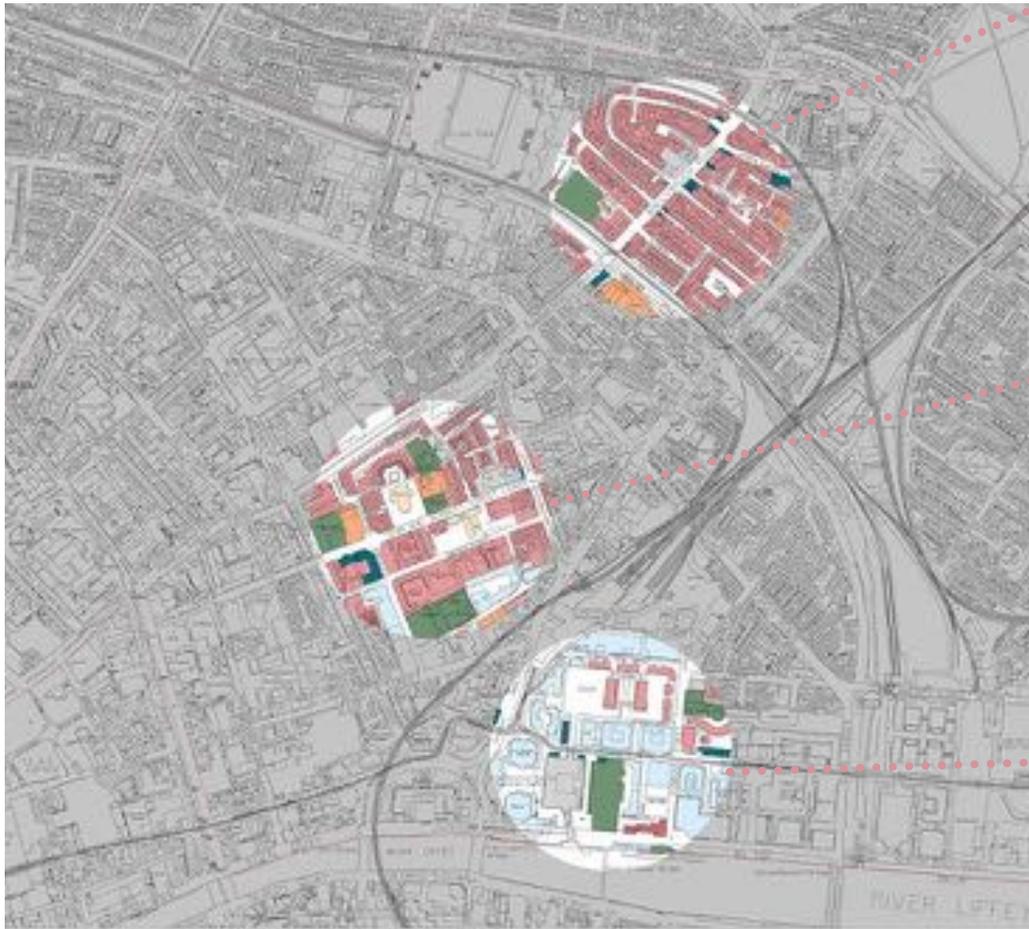


The Exploration of Dublin's North-East Inner City



I began the thesis process by mapping out the building uses in the NEIC. This enabled me to easily see areas that may be lacking in amenities and how those areas were affected by this.

To develop a better understanding of certain areas, I moved to a closer scale and carried out an '8-minute city' analysis. This is where I took a circular area where it takes no more than 8 minutes to walk from one point to another within that circle. I analysed Ballybough Road, Sean McDermott Street and Spencer Dock.

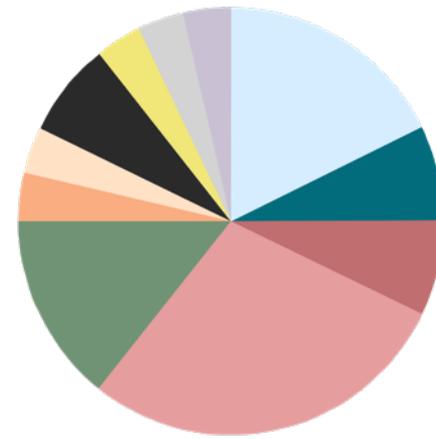


I carried out an 8-minute city analysis on Parnell Street.

There are a wide variety of site and building types in this zone. With everything within a comfortable walking distance, the area has potential to become extremely desirable.

However, the area, like most urban spaces, lacks a sense of community as there are no spaces to gather and to exchange ideas and opinions. By creating a community space, such as a market, residents and tourists could connect.





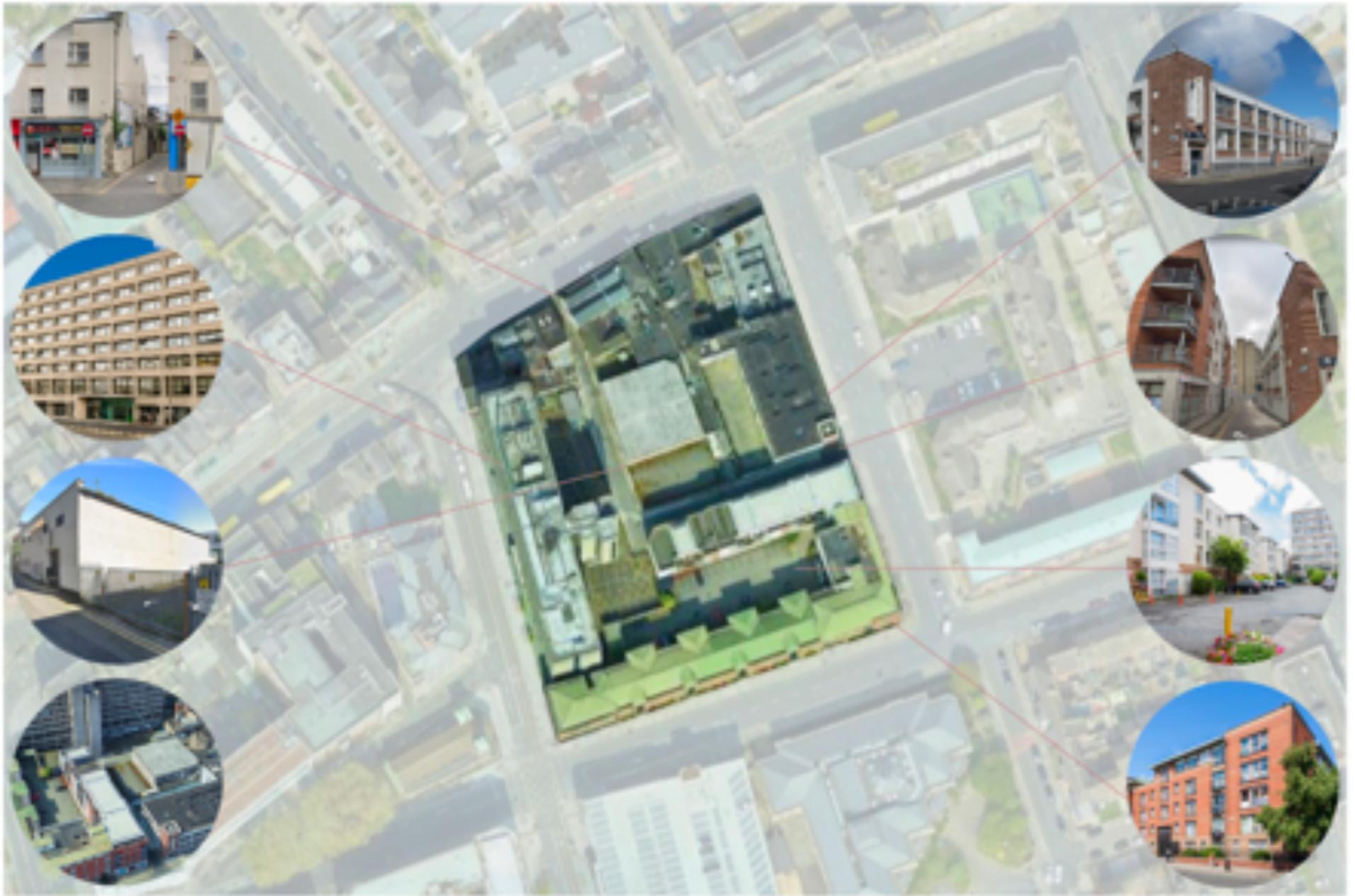
The diversity on Parnell Street intrigued me. There are 27 businesses along this street that belong to a range of ethnicities such as Chinese, Korean and Mexican. The idea of creating a space for cultural exchange to celebrate the wide range of diversity, where small gatherings and festivals could take place, became the driving factor of the project.



I became interested in using the back-land space to create this space of cultural exchange. This back-land area connects the wide range of ethnicities on Parnell Street to the historical 'The Hill' market on North Cumberland Street. By creating a designated space where people can gather and socialise, the exchange of cultures could thrive in this area.









Introduction to the Thesis Idea

Whilst looking at Parnell Street, I became interested in the block surrounded by Parnell Street, Marlborough Street, North Cumberland Street and Cathal Brugha Street. The Telephone House and Westbrook Motors are two derelict buildings within the square.

I began to study the buildings and trial how they could be repurposed to provide the needed amenities for this area.

I was mainly interested in the 'Telephone House' on Marlborough Street. The Telephone House is a derelict office building, which was built in 1969. I wanted to refurbish this derelict office building into a community space on the lower levels and a residential space on the upper levels.

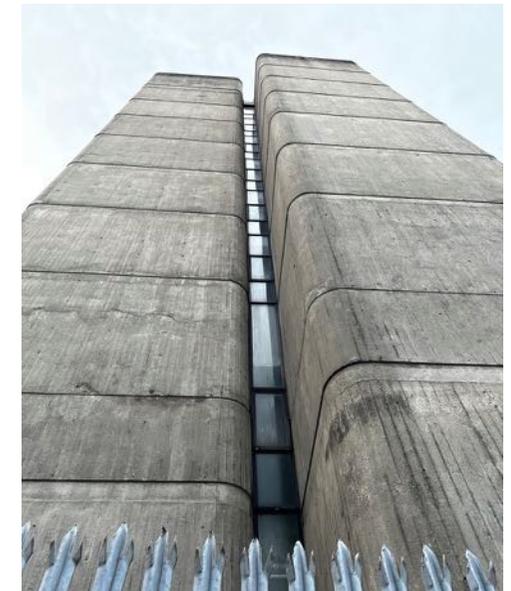


Fig 1. Left & Middle: Telephone House,
Marlborough Street Facade
Right: Telephone House,
Britain Place Facade



Due to my interest in this derelict office block, I carried out a study of the location of all the buildings currently deemed as office use buildings in the NEIC. I mapped these buildings and colour coded them in terms of which decade they were built. The most desirable area for new offices to set up is around the docklands.

Offices from the 1960s are no longer desirable to today's modern workspace. The brutalist, 1960s office blocks are then left derelict. Leading to the majority of these buildings being demolished, for example, the Findlater House on O'Connell Street, which was built in 1974, was demolished and rebuilt as a Holiday Inn.

The Telephone House is one of the few offices from this decade in the NEIC.



The Old Admiralty Office - First official designated office building



Skyscrapers being introduced



Increase of female office workers - offices required more privacy
 'Modesty board' to cover women's legs from the front of their desk

Standardisation: less rigid, open space with desks. Workplace became social



The Action Office: moveable modular furniture, informative work settings, freedom of movement with privacy when working

1726

1885

1960

1880

1939

1980

Today



Taylorism - Workman's efficiency. No consideration for human elements



Introduction of Open Plan: Johnson's Wax Company - F.L. Wright



The Cubicle Farm: Cheap, modular walls, increased focus and productivity - at the expense of working conditions



Break-out spaces
 Collaboration
 Colourful Offices
 Natural light
 sense of 'fun' in the office

According to a timeline of the evolution of office design, the 1960s office type compared to today's modern workspace is no longer desirable. Although 1960s offices are open to encourage the workplace to be more social, it still doesn't comply with the expectation of the modern office, which includes bright open spaces, breakout spaces and a much more casual and colourful setting. Because of this, buildings like the 'Telephone House' are no longer in demand. Most office buildings similar to this one have been demolished. The opportunity to refurbish and change the use of these buildings is a possibility to restore and appreciate this historic architecture.

From my interest in refurbishing the Telephone House, I started to study different office refurbishment projects; particularly ones built in the 1960s and 70s. A precedent I became interested in was 'Centre Point' in London. Centre Point is a 1960s office block which was converted into apartments on the upper levels and a plaza area filled with shops, bars and restaurants on the ground and first floor.



Levels 10-20 (3-Bed apartments)

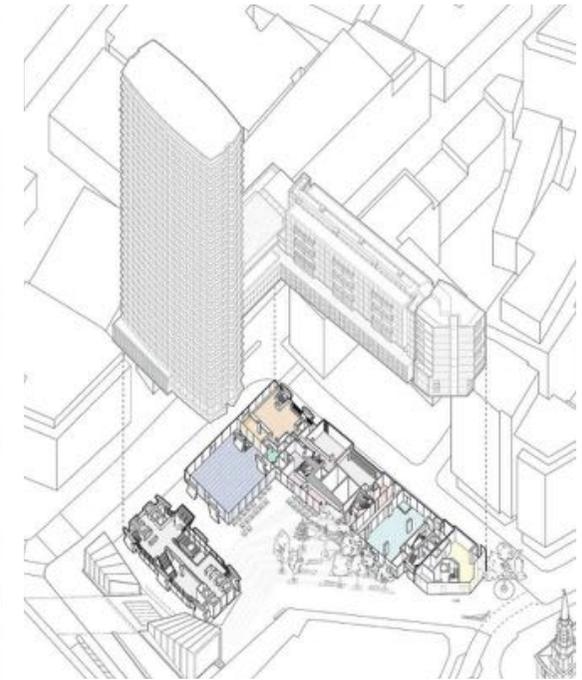


Fig 2. Centre Point, London
Architect: George Marsh

Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028

In February 2022, I made a submission to the Dublin City Council based on the research I had been doing for my thesis. This helped clarify the relevance of my thesis, addressing an issue of concern from the Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2028, 'Chapter 12: Culture'.

Culture is defined by UNESCO as: *“a set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, that encompasses, not only art and literature but lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.”*

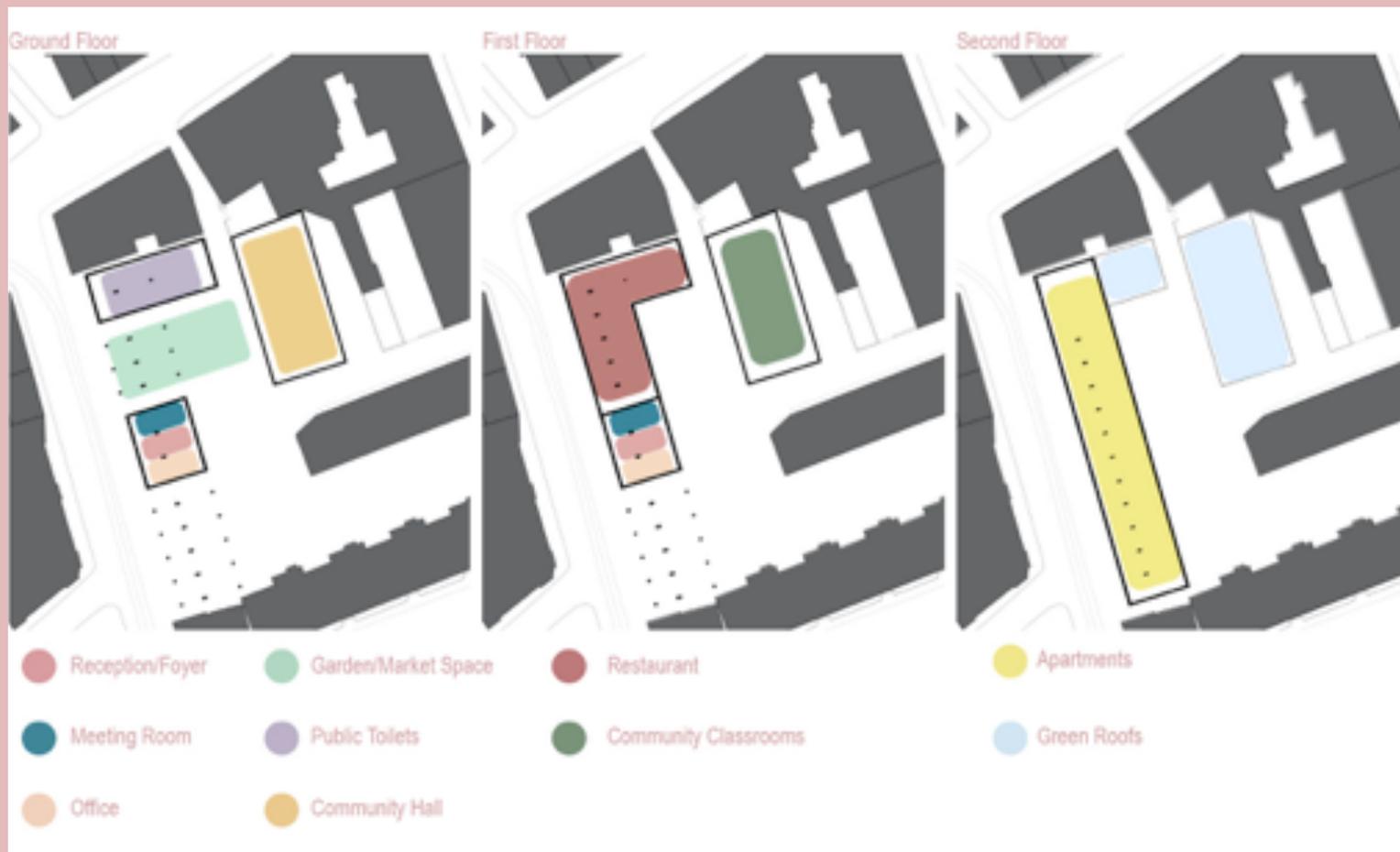
In terms of the Development Plan, culture infrastructure can either be defined as *‘the buildings structures and spaces where culture is either experienced or created’*. I aimed to create a space where culture could be both experienced and created. This heavily influenced my brief.

A place where culture is experienced is where culture is showcased, exhibited, sold or participated in. Such as; museums, galleries, libraries, music venues and markets.

Culture can be created in places where creative work is made by artists, performers and makers, for example; performance arts rehearsal spaces and creative workspaces.



Fig 3, 4 & 5: North Cumberland Street Market, Dublin
A historical market (The Hill) where culture is experienced.



In order to achieve a space where culture could be both experienced and created, I decided to design a space which included a market space which allowed for the cultural exchange of goods, a community centre which included a library, classrooms, and recreational rooms to allow for performance arts rehearsal spaces and creative workspaces.

Dublin is currently experiencing a housing crisis. Due to this, I felt it would be appropriate to include apartments in my scheme. It was important to ensure there were opportunities within the housing for residents to socialise with one another and create a community within this refurbished building.

Process and Exploration of the Thesis Idea

Places of Exchange

A place of exchange is where people of different cultures and classes meet. The exchange of goods, social exchange of ideas and opinions and the contribution to civic life can take place in a place of exchange. These spaces can take place as a market space. Public spaces historically have always been important in a city's urban planning and currently remain fundamental elements of cities. Plazas, squares, and parks are necessary for the urban fabric of cities (Pintos, 2020). The quality of urban spaces can have a strong influence on people's lives. The decisions made about the design, planning and management of public spaces can enhance or restrict one's sense of belonging in a city (Inclusion by Design, 2008). Social health benefits can also result from access to public spaces. Public social spaces may serve as meeting spaces, which leads to stronger social ties and social cohesion within a community (Groenewegen et al., 2006). In a study about social spaces in England, it was found that those who were interviewed believed that when available to everyone, social spaces can serve to break down social inequalities within cities and unite people (Bell, 2005).



Fig. 6 Top Left: Piazza del Campo
Fig. 7 Middle Left: Blackrock Market
Fig. 8 Bottom Left: Moore Street Market



Fig. 9 Top Right: Piazza del Campo
Fig. 10 Middle Right: Meeting House Square
Fig. 11 Bottom Right: North Cumberland Street Market

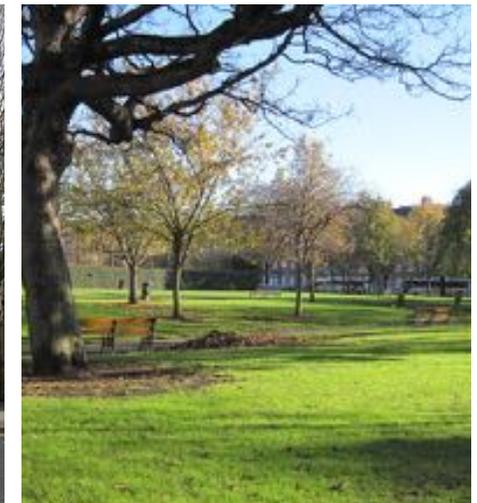
Accessibility to public spaces is an issue in some parts of our cities, with the number of public spaces not being evenly distributed throughout communities (Koohsari, 2011). Inequalities are a matter of life and death and well-being and misery. The relationship between humans and nature is interdependent because urban nature is not reliant on the residents of cities, however, according to research, human wellbeing is affected positively by the presence of nature. This symbiosis is rarely recognised by the governments, planning bodies and residents of cities (Taylor and Hochuli, 2014).

Regarding climate change, public spaces are where we experience global environmental challenges on a human scale. We can use public spaces as tools for, lessening our collective contributions to climate change and dealing with its effects (Peinhardt, 2018). The United Nations predicts that 68% of the global population will live in urban areas by 2050 while currently, 55% of the world's population lives in urban areas (UN DESA, 2018). This continual growth of urban sprawl may mean that in the future, for some people, who live in cities, only access to nature will be through urban green public spaces. Urban green spaces can be defined as “those that make contributions to the ecological, aesthetic or public health needs of the urban environment” (Taylor & Hochuli, 2017).

Abandoned spaces will always exist in a city as it is always evolving and never ceases to develop. Unused urban spaces are forgotten wastelands or gaps between buildings. These unused spaces have the potential to be repurposed by integrating social spaces and green areas. (Graner, 2017) Concerning unused office buildings, there is the opportunity to convert old car parks and entrance plazas into urban green spaces for the community to benefit from.



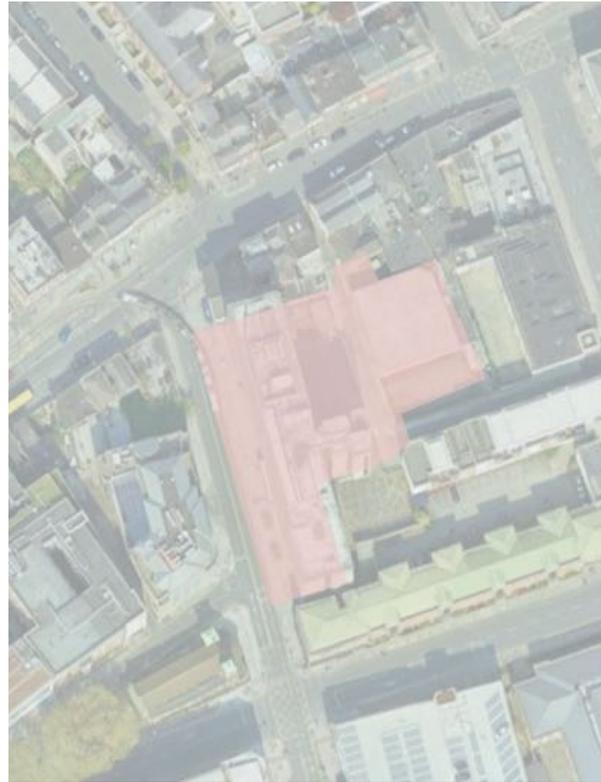
Map of 'Recreational Spaces' in the NEIC



Left: Diamond Park, Gardiner Street
Right: Mountjoy Square Park

Site

As I've been interested in this square, I decided to use the two derelict buildings and the exterior back-land area as my site. The site connects Parnell Street and North Cumberland Street through Britain Place. The site is situated beside the Parnell Luas stops and is a one-minute walk to O'Connell Street which houses a large number of bus stops. Therefore the site is extremely well connected to the entirety of Dublin.



Front Facade of the Telephone House



Rear Facade of the Telephone House



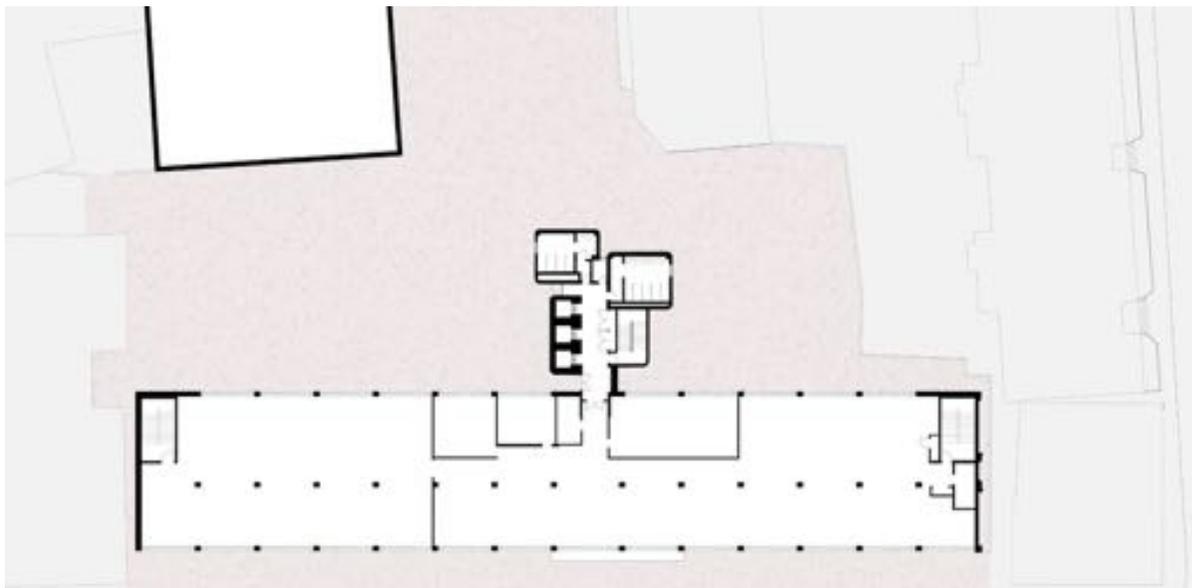




Fig 12. Telephone House, Marlborough Street Facade

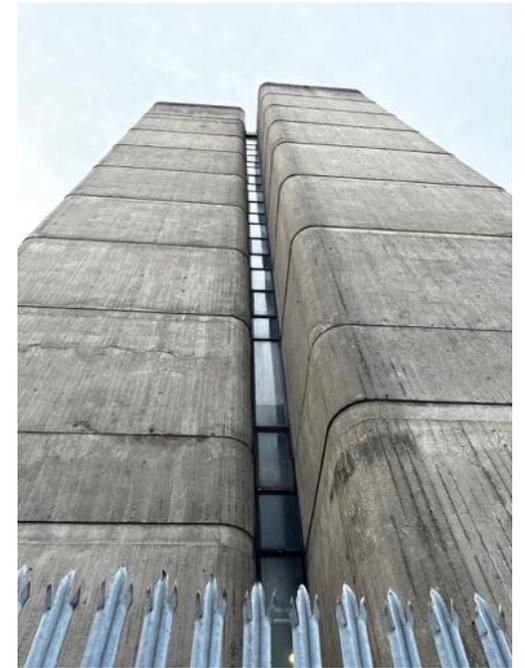
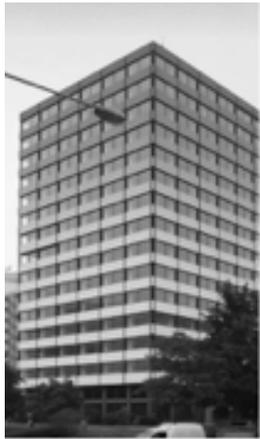


Fig 13. Telephone House, in the 1970s

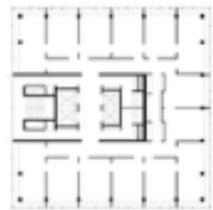




Fig 14. Telephone House, Interior Existing Photos



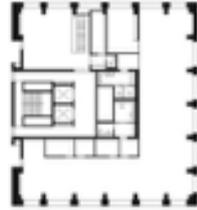
Office conversions in cities are not a new idea. In Frankfurt, Germany an office district called Niederrad experienced a large-scale conversion project between 2007 and 2015 due to the high level of office vacancies of approximately 30 per cent (Viros & Nappi, 2021). This high level of vacancy was due to inadequate architectural, technical facilities and infrastructural deficiencies such as a lack of shopping facilities and childcare options. At this time, Frankfurt was experiencing a surge in its population and needed more housing (Using empty buildings to create living space, n.d.).



Original OF Plan



Original Residential Plan



Converted OF Plan



Converted Residential Plan

Fig 15. Lyoner Strasse

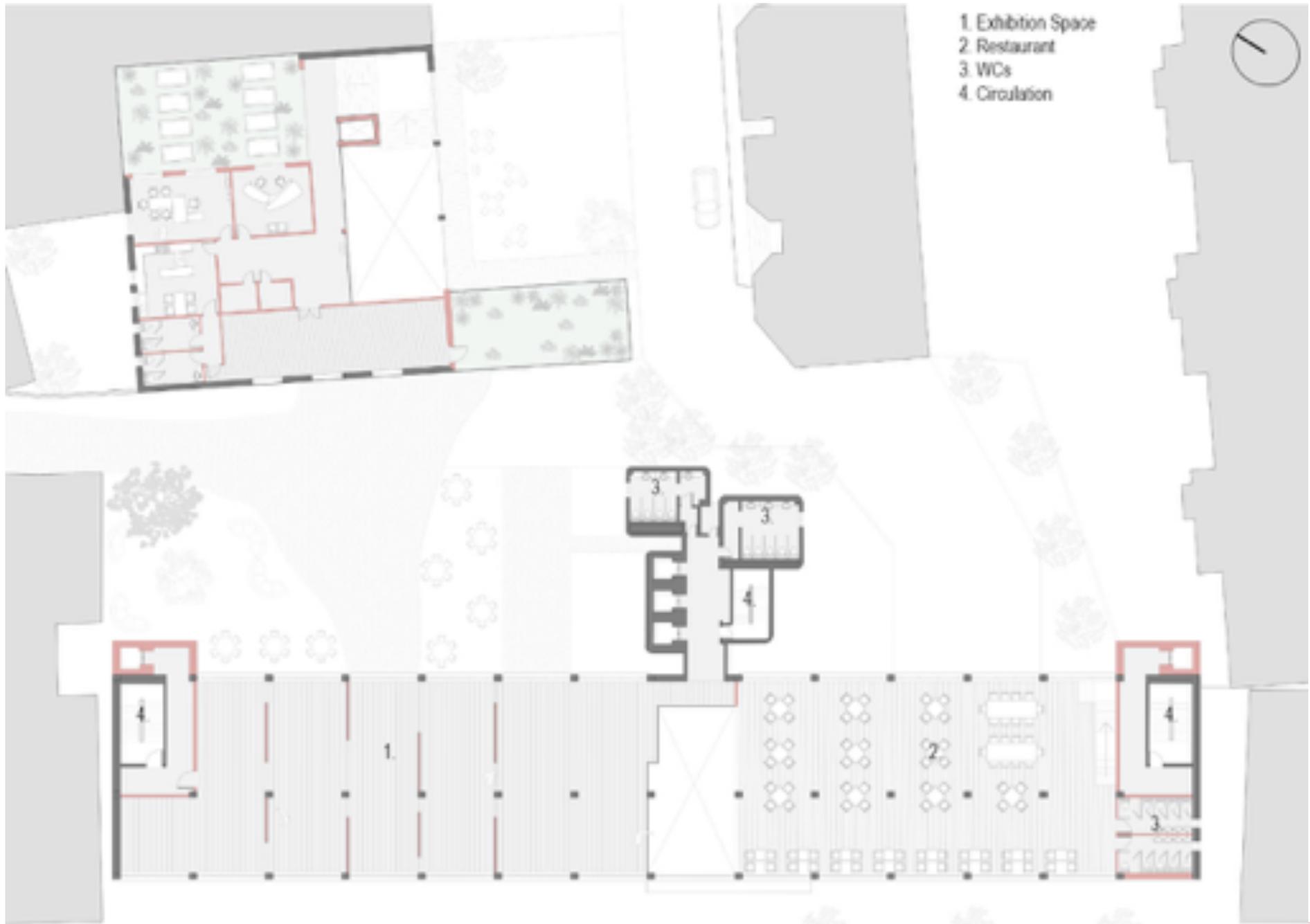
The first building to be converted into a residential building was the 15-storey high-rise Lyoner Strasse, which had been derelict for years. The office building was gutted for 15.4 million euros, two storeys were added, and the building was filled with 98 partially furnished apartments and a commercial enterprise (Skyline Atlas, 2021). Approximately 3000 apartments for 6000 residents have been built in the

converted office buildings and these figures could be exceeded as there is still potential development space and the demand for housing. The development also includes new shops and new social infrastructure. Public space surrounding the buildings was also developed, such as playgrounds, green spaces, cycle paths and a green corridor (ibid).

Structurally, the building was not suitable for a different commercial use or as a residential property with apartments. However, the floor plan was suited to be converted into a residential building with small/medium-sized apartments. The building shell was kept, and small extensions were removed. The residential character that the architects wanted was expressed in the new façade with its floor to ceiling windows and a contemporary, bright, rendered finish (Glasson web, 2017).

Final Project

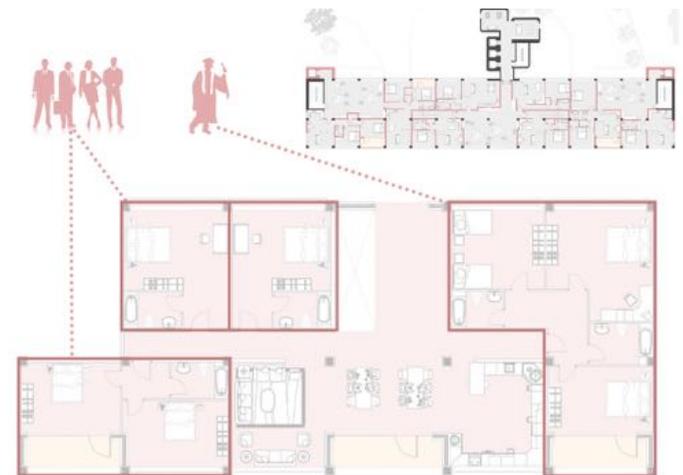




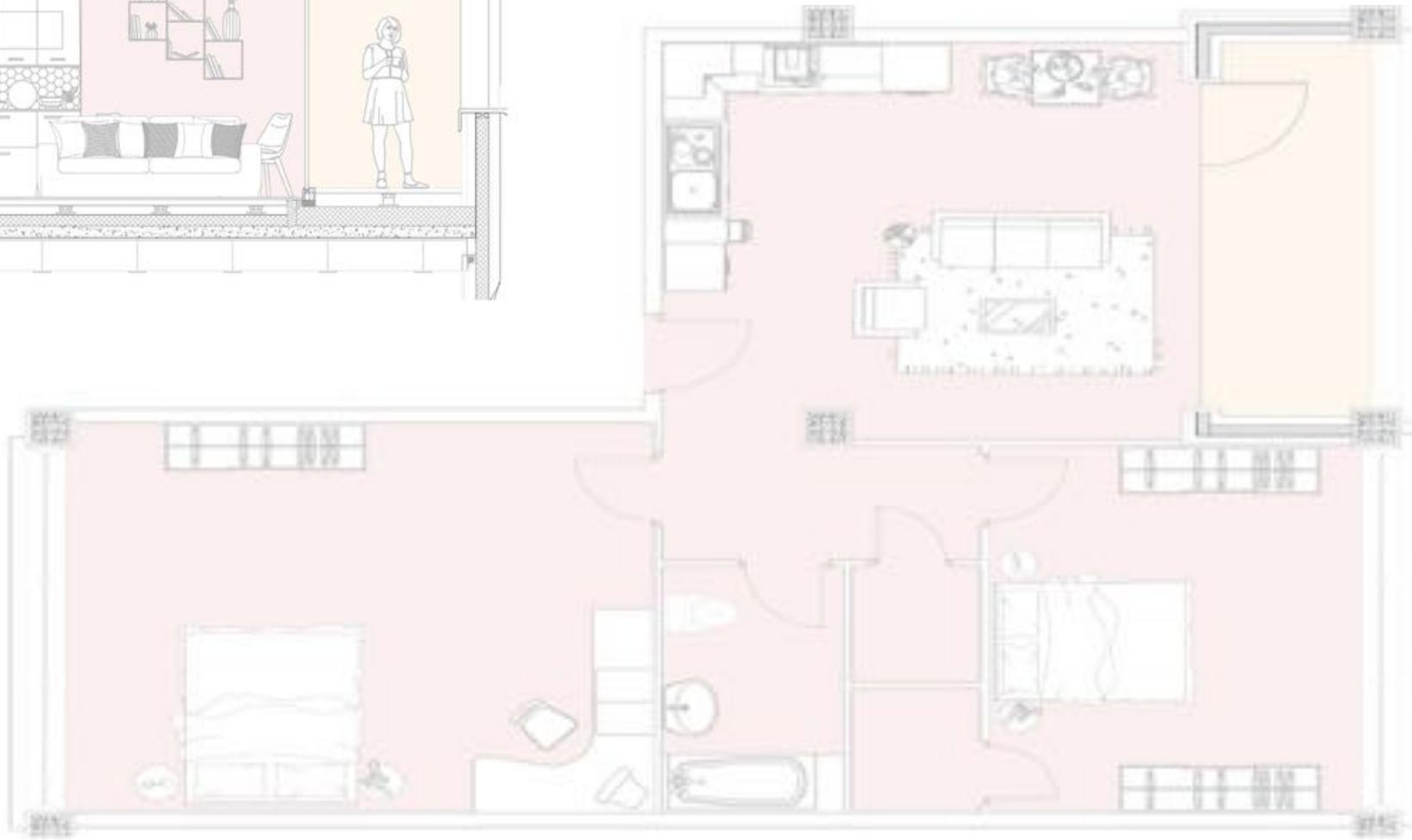
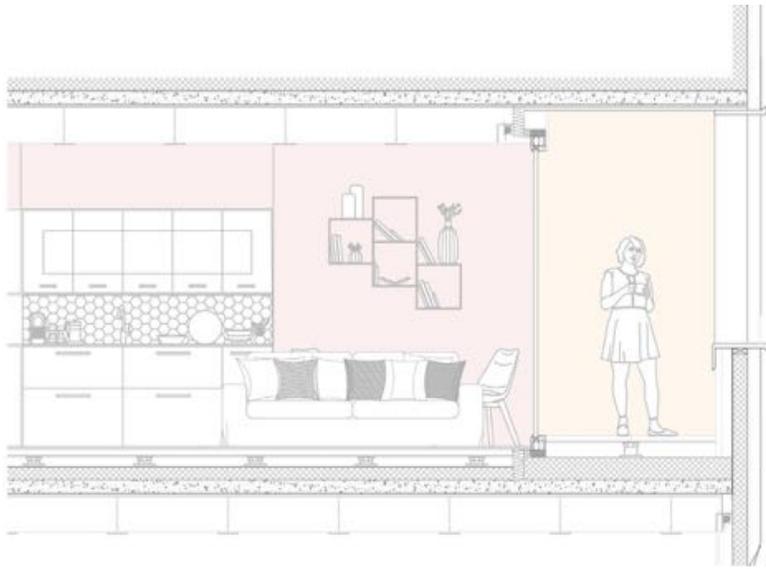


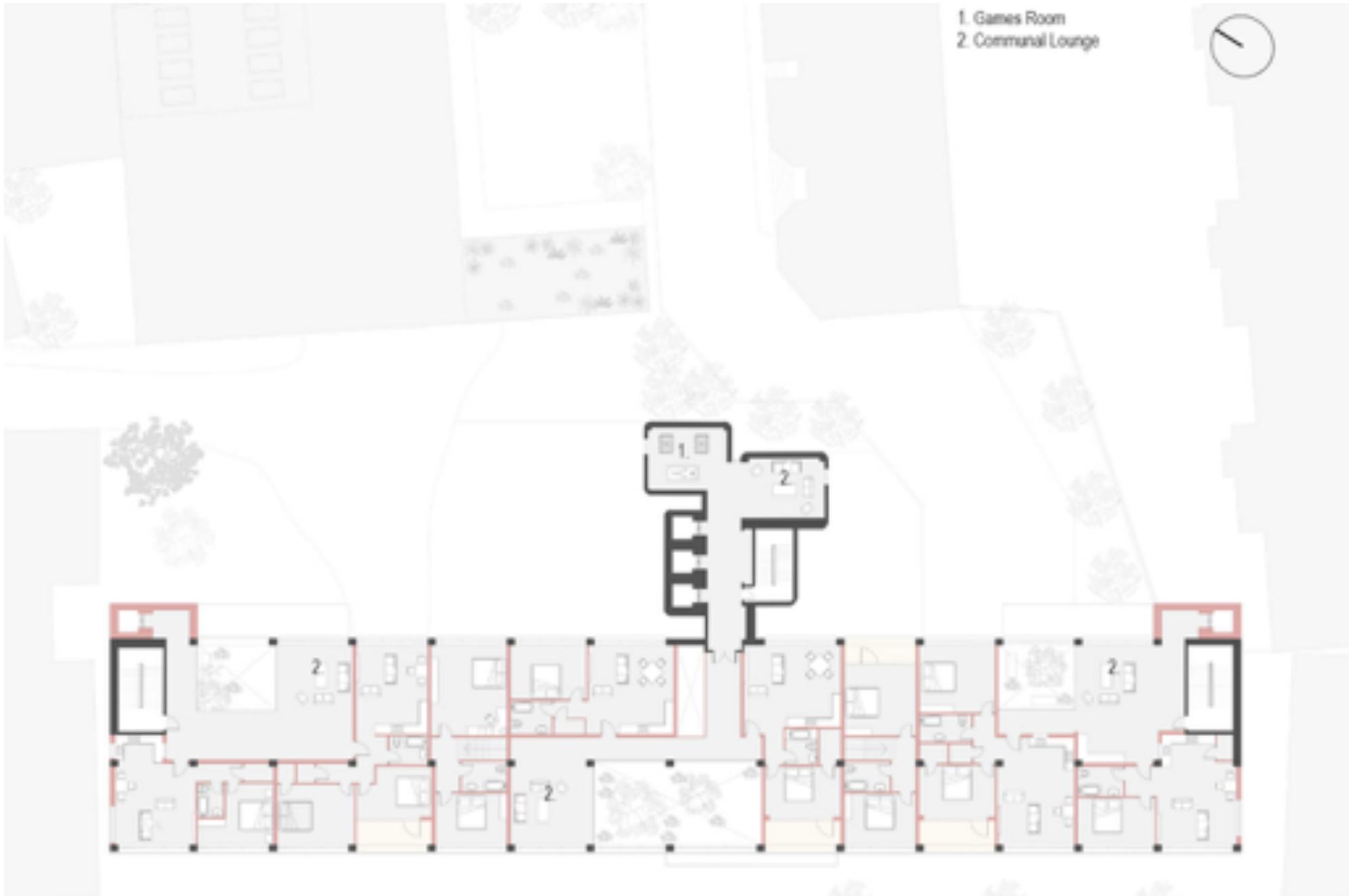


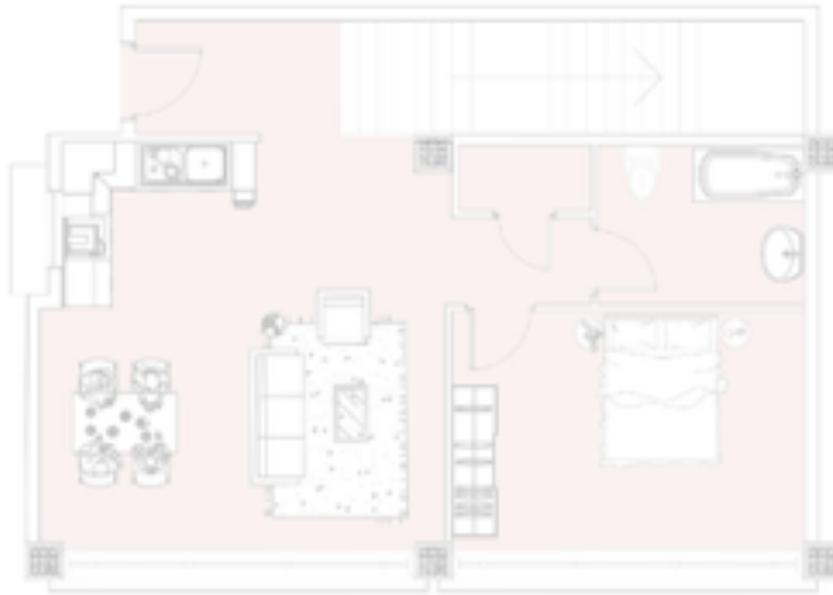
Increasing urbanization leads to more compact cities. Although people are living closer in proximity to one other, a lot of people feel lonely and are unconnected. Loneliness and isolation also affect public health negatively. The type of dwellings within a city can play an important role in encouraging connections and social interaction. Therefore, architects face the challenge of developing attractive, but compact urban residential areas that encourage human interaction and community feeling. By creating a space where young people are encouraged to socialize, the feelings of loneliness may diminish.











Lower Floor Plan



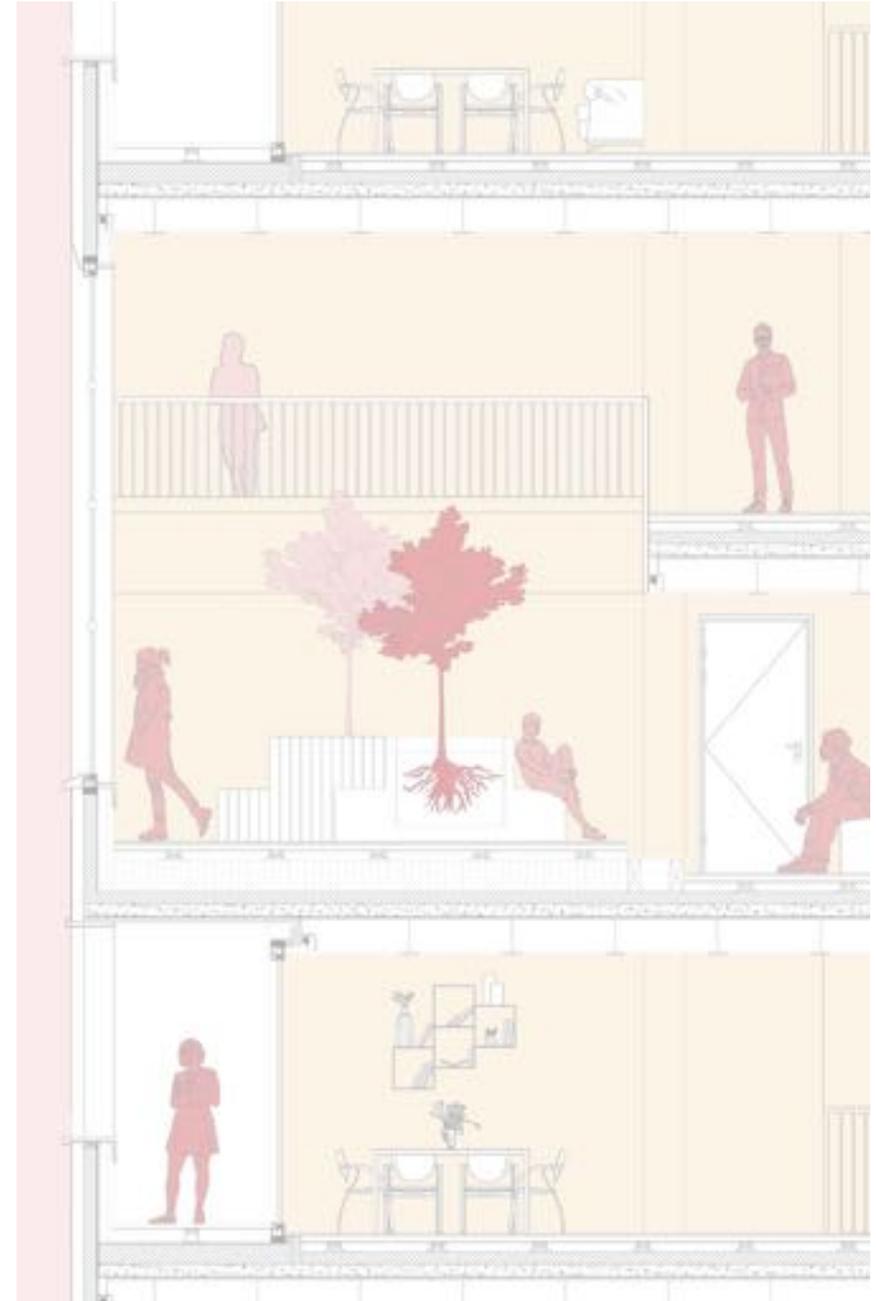
Upper Floor Plan

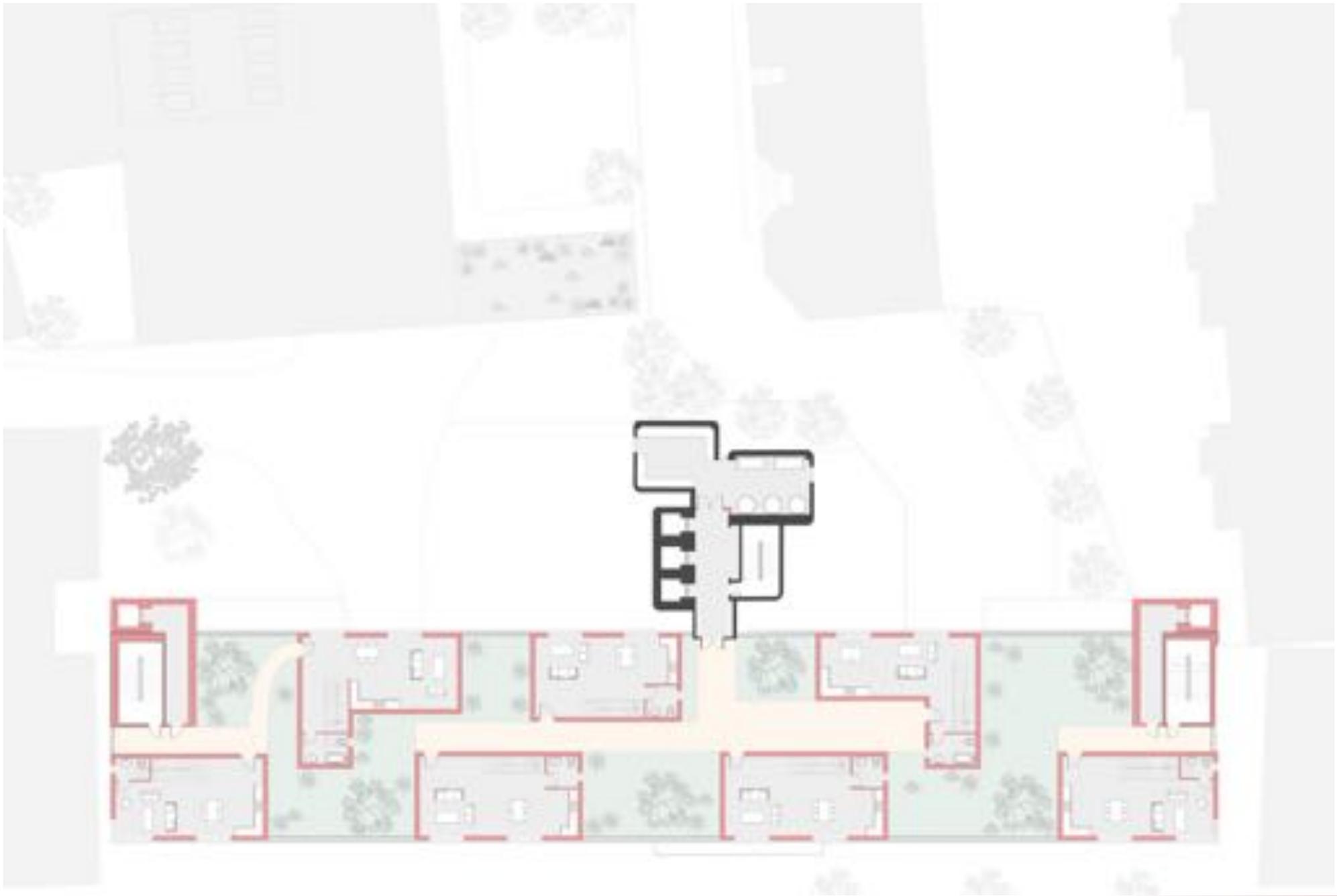


Section



By creating communal spaces within the private apartments, residents can come to socialize and interact with one another. The cut-out slab allows for a double-height space that connects the communal spaces of different floors. Residents could also grow their own herbs and some vegetables in these spaces.





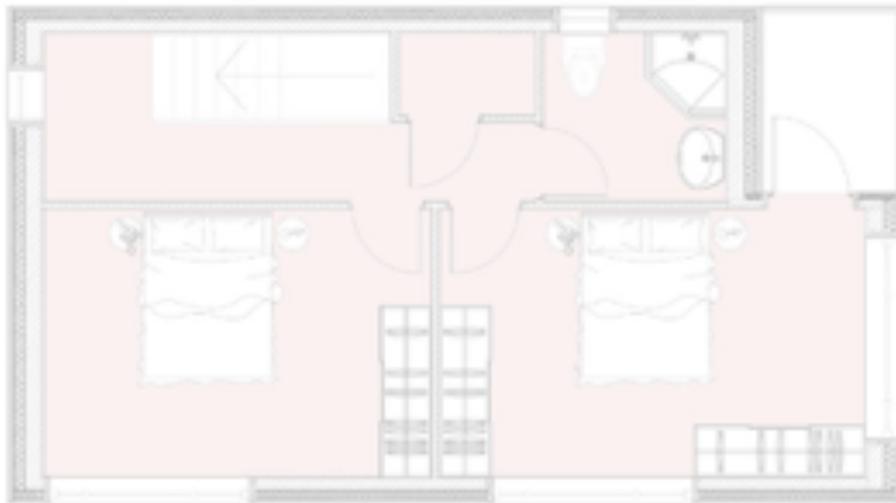




Lower Floor Plan

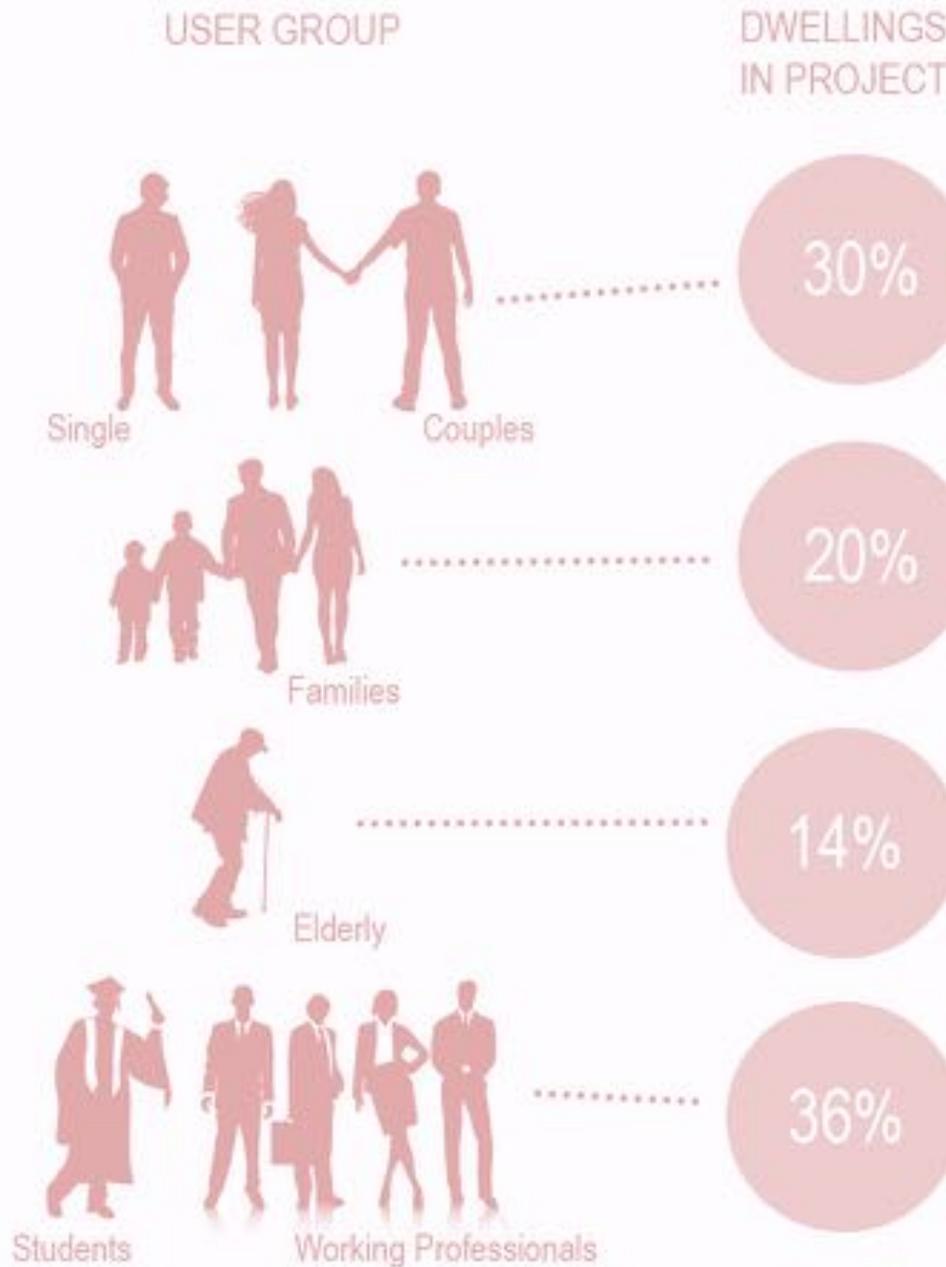


Section



Upper Floor Plan

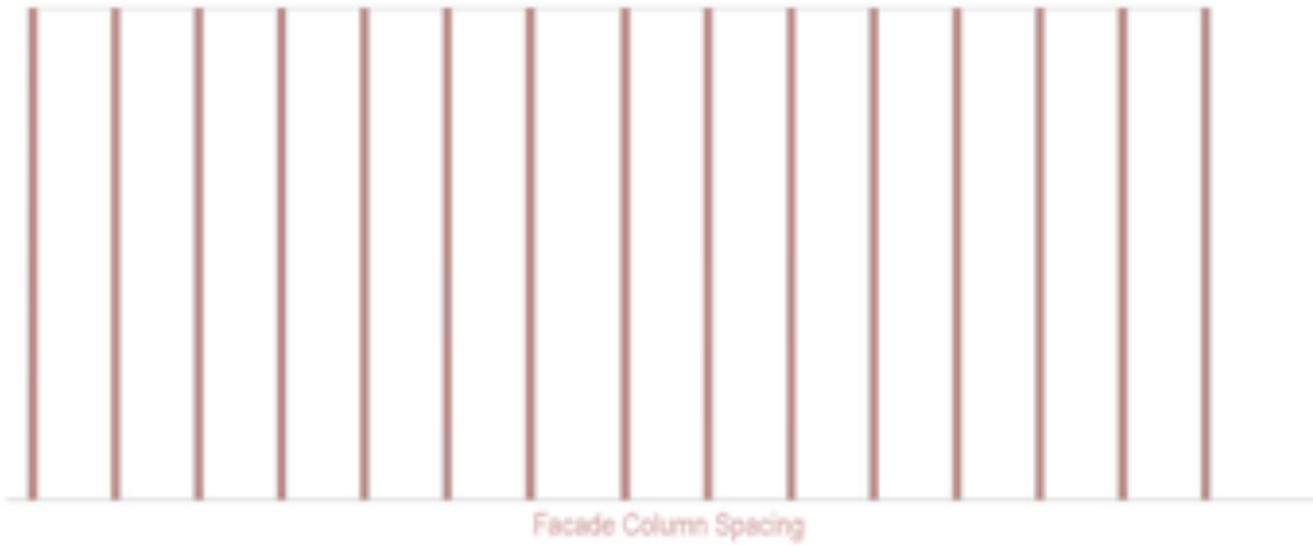




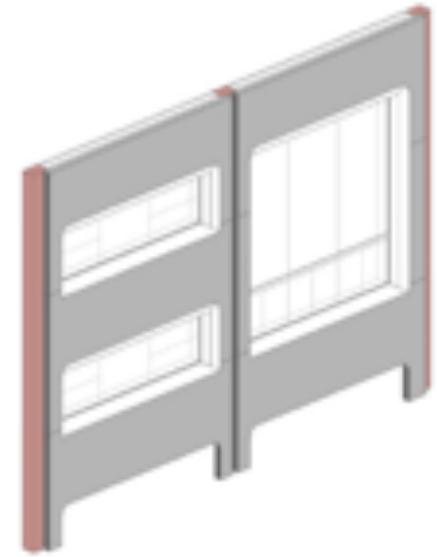
The increasing amount of people living in cities results in an increased amount of people living in apartment blocks. (Ho, Liu and Easthope, 2018)

By having a wide range of people in terms of age, profession, race etc. and providing communal spaces for these people to converse, knowledge can be spread within an apartment complex.

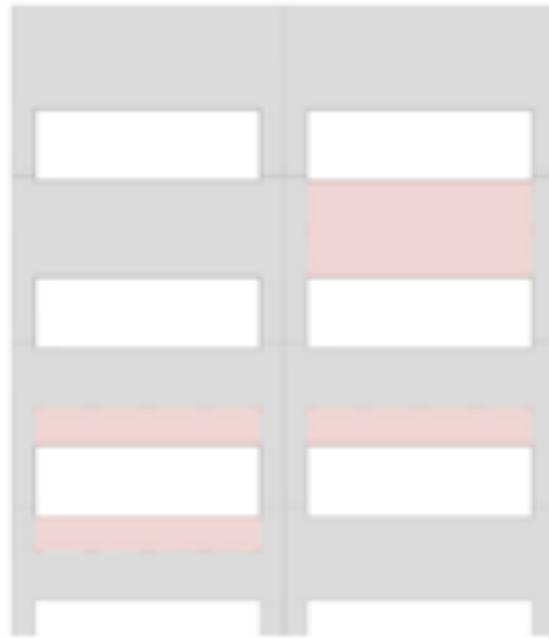
TOTAL 55 DWELLINGS
MAXIMUM: 150 RESIDENTS



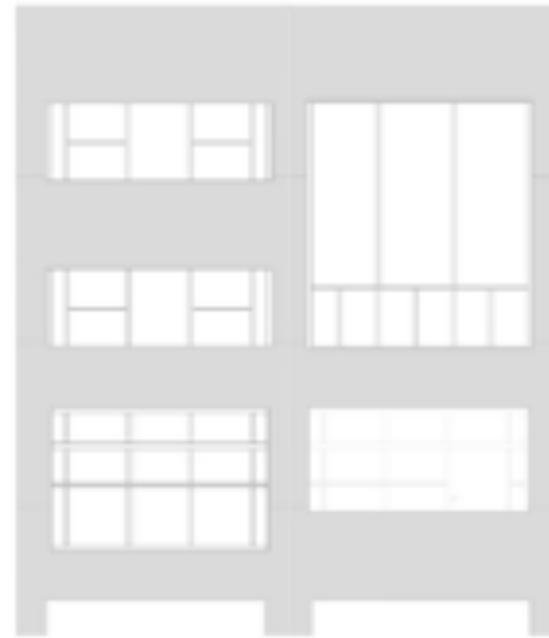
Facade Column Spacing



Existing Section & Elevation



Proposed Alterations



Proposed Facade



Accordion Window Section



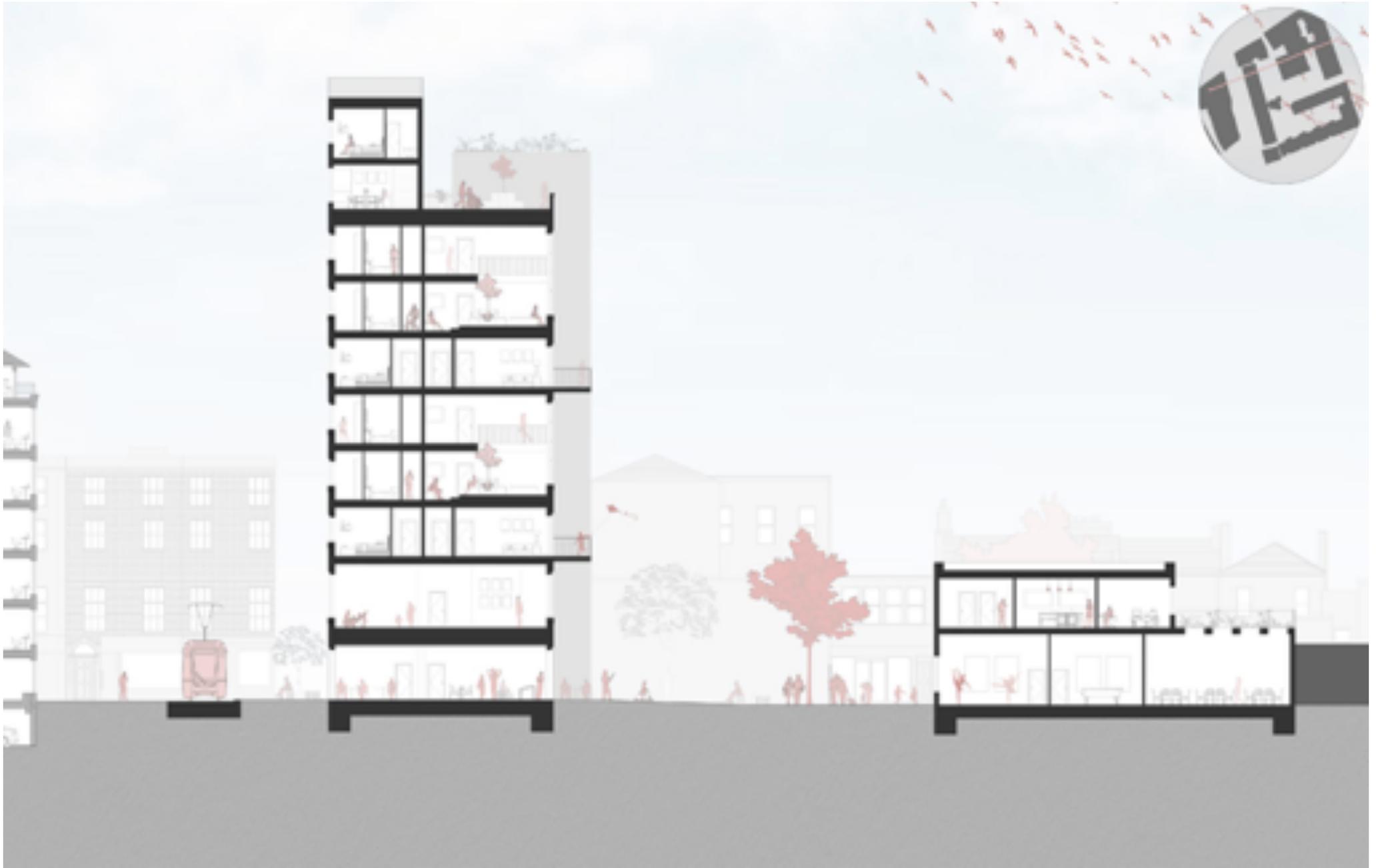
- 1. Reception
- 2. Multipurpose Room
- 3. Recreational Room
- 4. WCs
- 5. Library
- 6. Classroom
- 7. Daycare
- 8. Office
- 9. Meeting Room
- 10. Kitchen
- 11. Roof Terrace

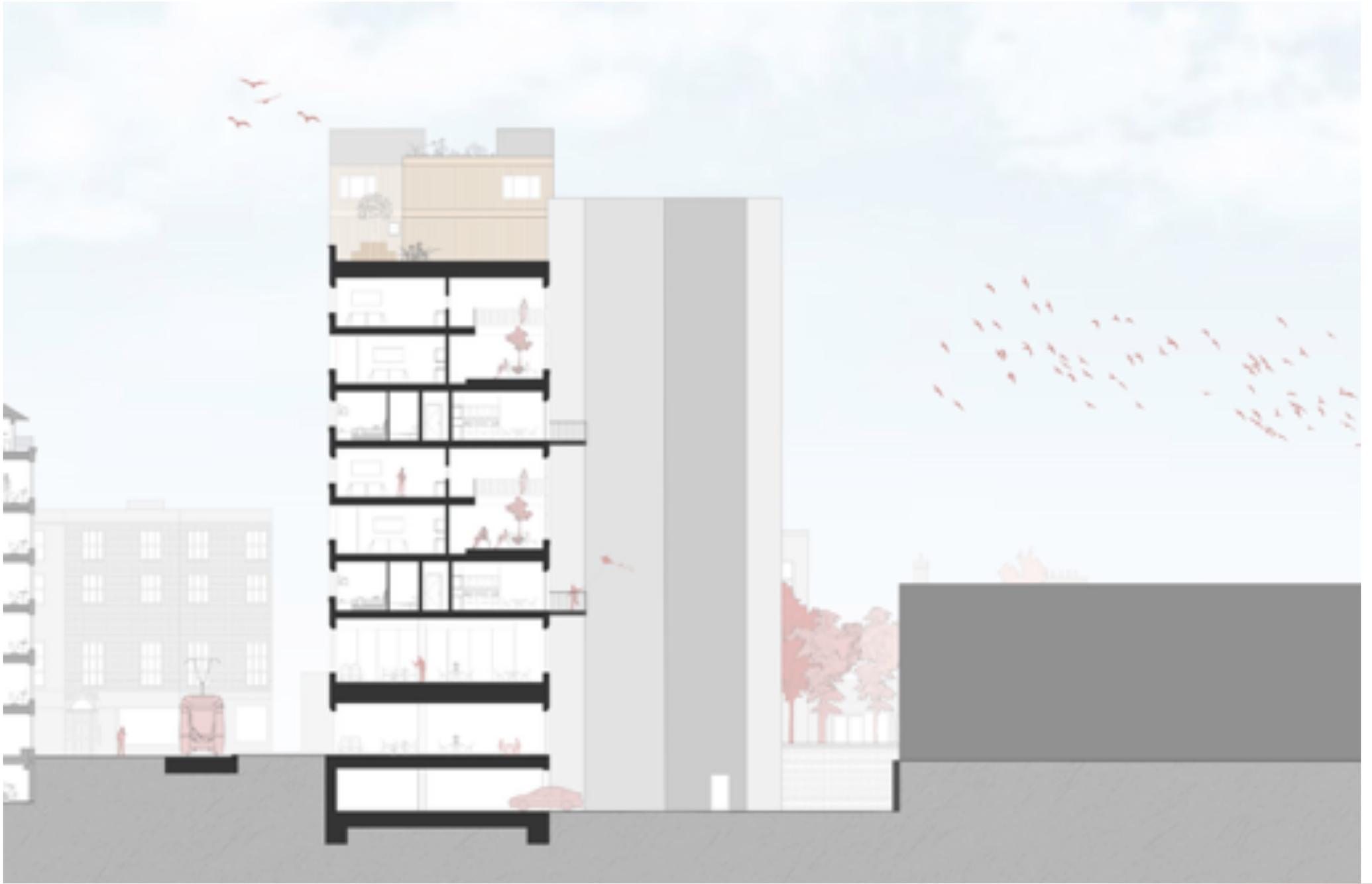


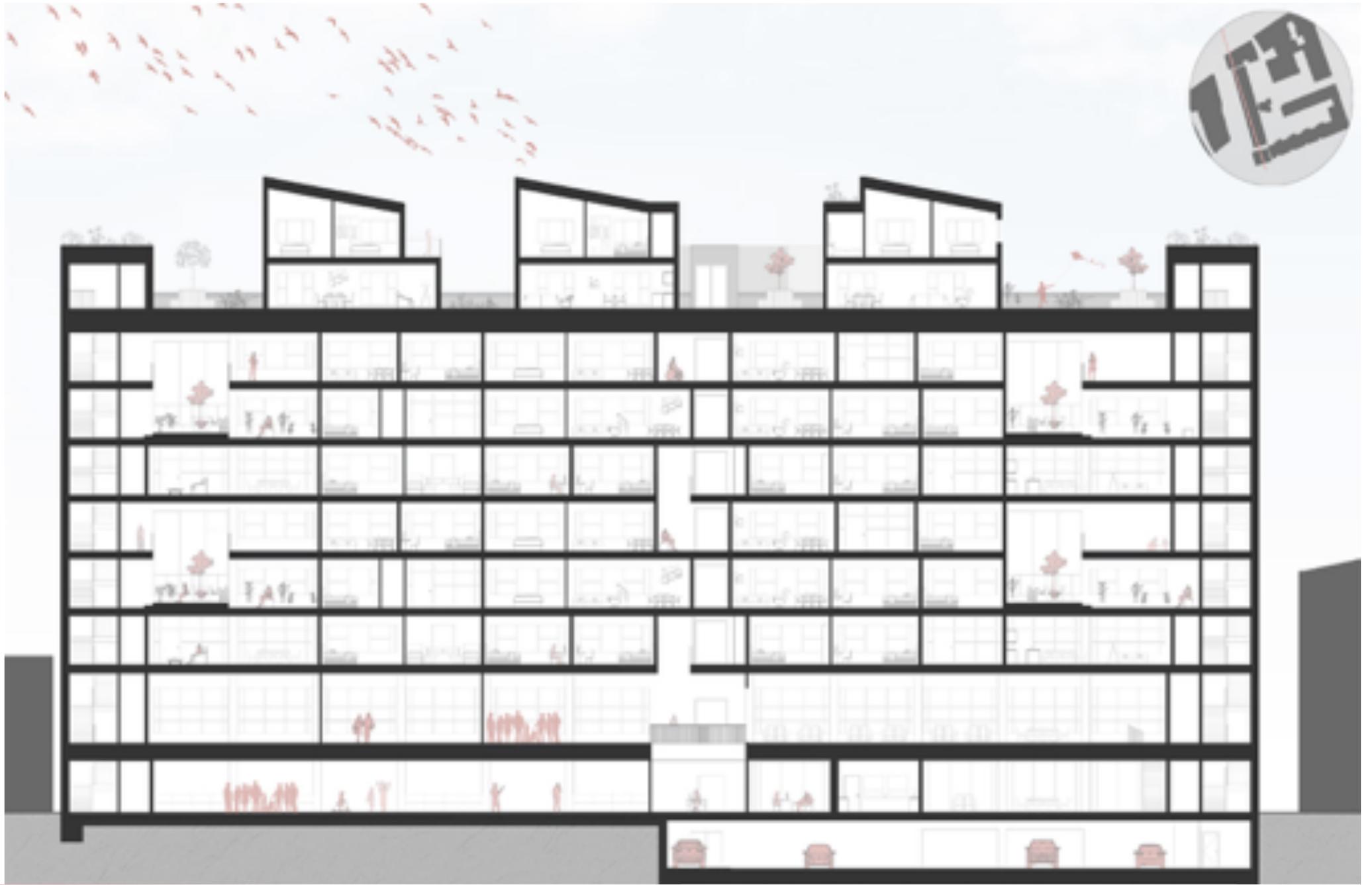
Photo of Existing Motor Shop Building













Conclusion

I began my thesis with the idea of using existing buildings to create a space where people could interact and learn from each other. This developed into a project that created a 'cultural hub' and residence for a wide range of occupants.

Encouraging people to mix with others widens their way of thinking and increases their knowledge of other cultures. Also, by creating these communal spaces for residents, the sense of community within the city increases and tackles the issue of loneliness within cities.

It is imperative that the North East Inner City of Dublin creates more spaces where the residents of the city can interact with one another and exchange cultures. It is also important that we, the city of Dublin, appreciate the existing architecture and the character that these older buildings add to the city.



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Image References

- Fig. 1 *The Telephone House* <<https://www.irishtimes.com/business/commercial-property/landmark-dublin-building-goes-on-sale-with-11-5m-guide-price-1.2502247>>
- Fig. 2 *Centre Point London* <<https://micaarchitects.com/projects/st-giles-square>>
- Fig. 3 *North Cumberland Street Market* <<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/goodbye-to-the-hill-street-traders-resolve-to-resist-any-bid-to-oust-them-1.3439482>>
- Fig. 4 *North Cumberland Street Market* <<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/goodbye-to-the-hill-street-traders-resolve-to-resist-any-bid-to-oust-them-1.3439482>>
- Fig. 5 *North Cumberland Street Market* <<https://www.thesun.ie/news/2419903/global-campaign-to-save-legendary-dublin-market-the-hill-from-the-axe-after-more-than-a-century-as-traders-worried-days-of-selling-could-come-to-an-end/>>
- Fig. 6 *Piazza del Campo* <<https://www.pps.org/places/piazza-del-campo>>
- Fig. 7 *Blackrock Market* <<https://blackrock.ie/blackrock-business-community-newsletter-july-2021/>>
- Fig. 8 *Moore Street Market* <<https://lovindublin.com/news/moore-street-is-a-battlefield-site-and-must-be-protected-as-a-national-monument-says-high-court-judge>>
- Fig. 9 *Piazza del Campo* <<https://www.re-thinkingthefuture.com/designing-for-typologies/a2972-15-famous-and-culturally-important-public-squares-in-europe/>>
- Fig. 10 *Meeting House Square* <<https://www.archdaily.com/898175/meeting-house-square-rainscreen-sean-harrington-architects>>
- Fig. 11 *North Cumberland Street Market* <<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/goodbye-to-the-hill-street-traders-resolve-to-resist-any-bid-to-oust-them-1.3439482>>
- Fig. 12 *The Telephone House* <<https://www.irishtimes.com/business/commercial-property/landmark-dublin-building-goes-on-sale-with-11-5m-guide-price-1.2502247>>
- Fig. 13 *The Telephone House in the 1970s* <<https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/art-and-design/the-rubble-club-an-irish-architect-watches-his-life-s-work-disappear-1.3829540>>
- Fig. 14 *The Telephone House Interiors* <<https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/mediamaster-s3eu/a/b/abfd7a6fc02154626f2c5011ce99d0af.pdf>>
- Fig. 15 *Lyoner Strasse* <<https://www.sfa.de/de/projekte/lyoner-strasse-01/>>