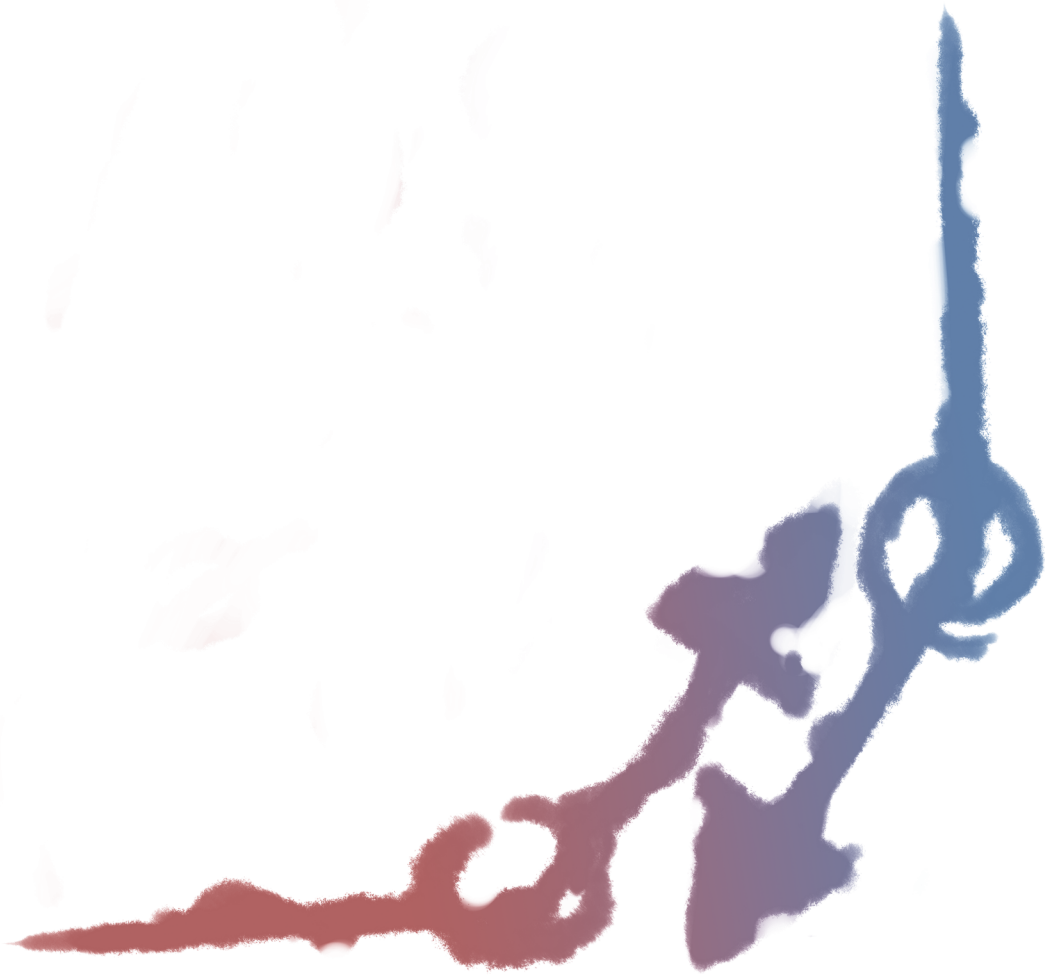
On Architecture and Interaction

Matthew Rybak



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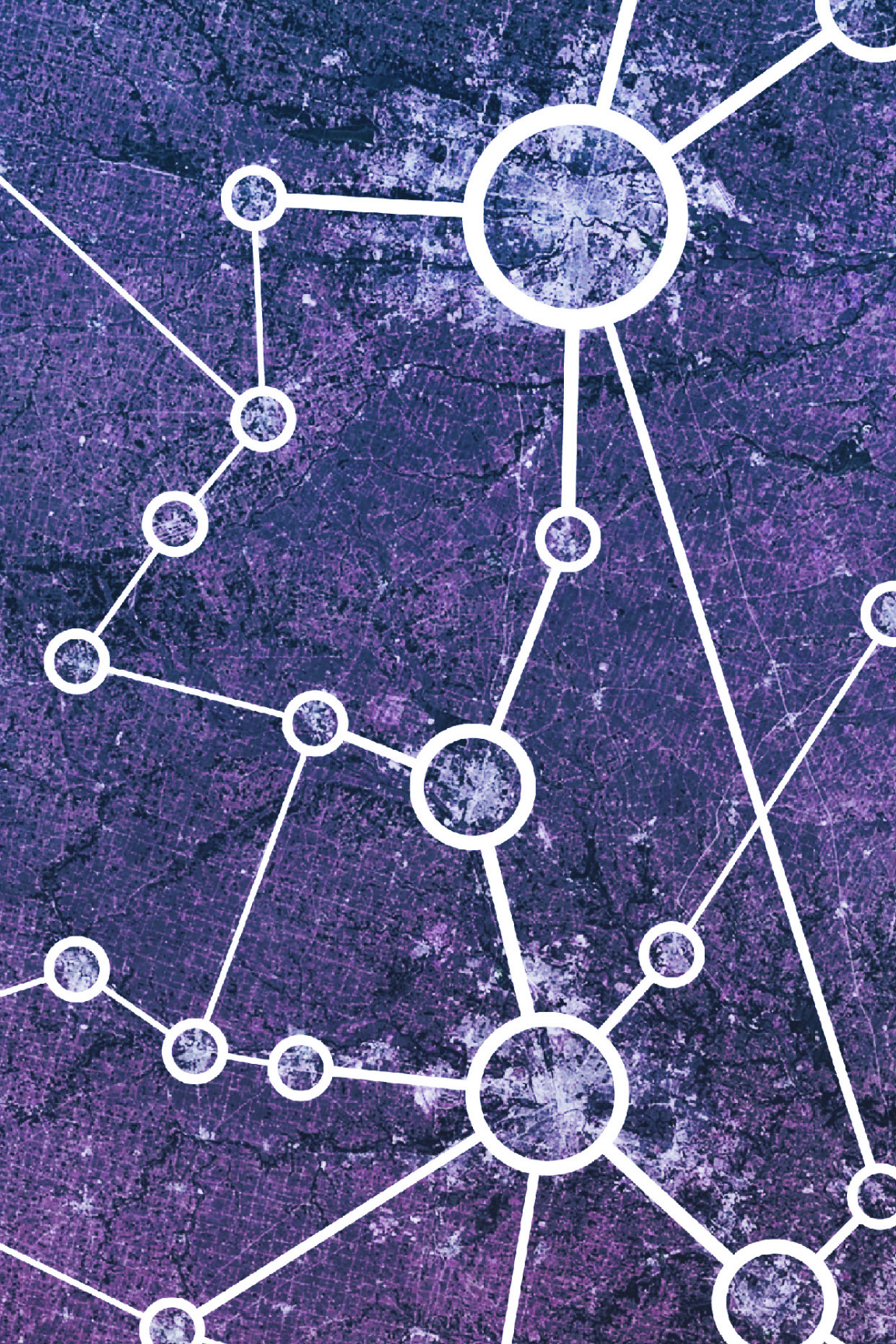
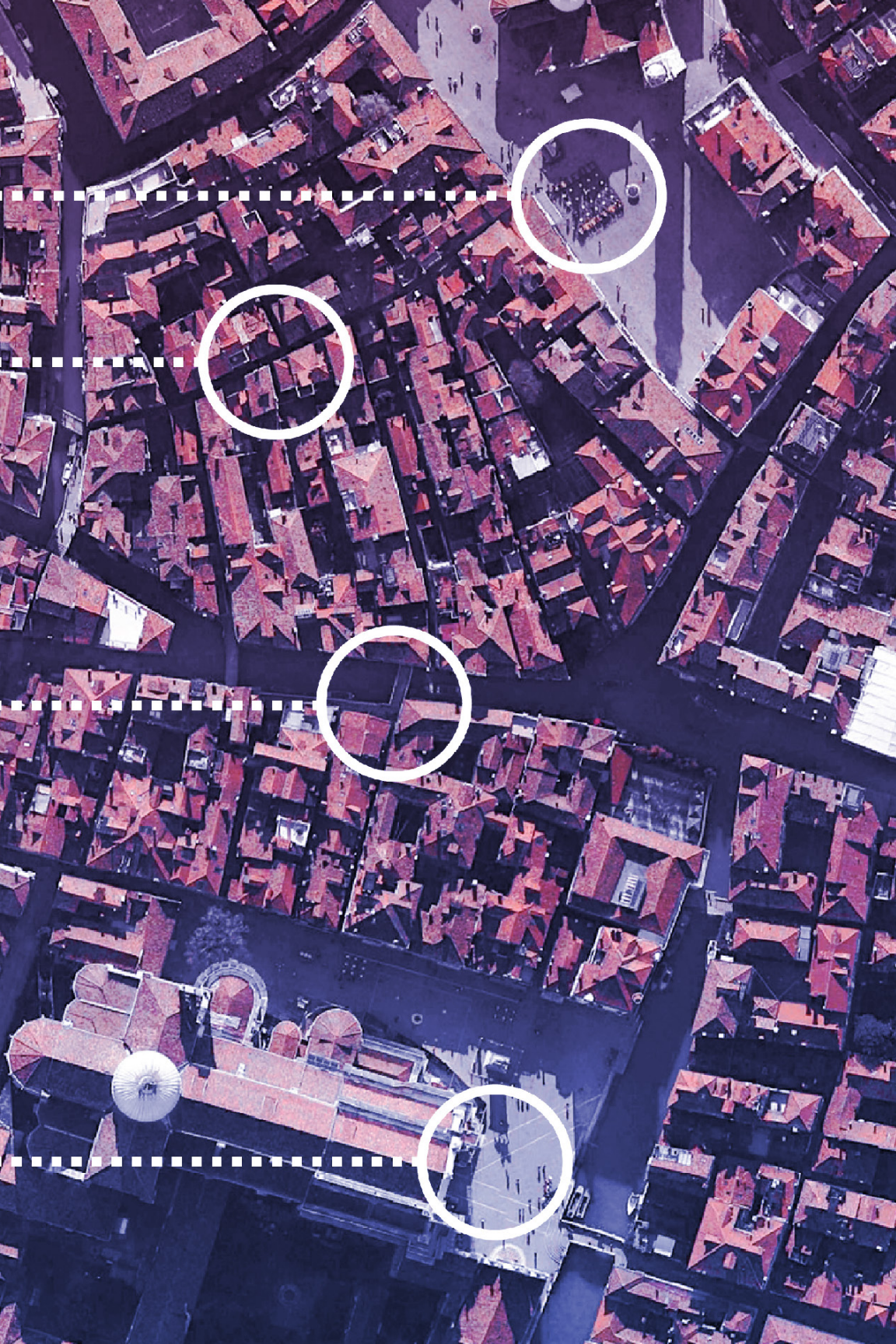


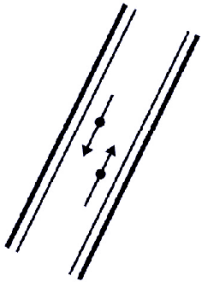
The Brief Introduction to
A Thesis

The American landscape is a sprawling network of towns, cities and metropolii that are connected to one another via roads, highways and railroads. By sea or air, by even the shapeless ether of the internet cities are connect to one another in such a way that communication and travel between them has never been easier. In the digital age, a man is easily able to communicate with someone who might be hundreds or even thousands of miles away. Yet even with this great ability, American communities are shrinking. A man is more willing to converse with someone over the internet, hundreds of miles away, than he is to walk next door and have a simple conversation with his neighbor, face to face.

This shift towards the private life has been occurring for decades in the United States. People gather in their homes behind closed doors rather than in town squares or parks not only because that is the societal norm, but because the shape of their cities, neighborhoods and communities demand it.

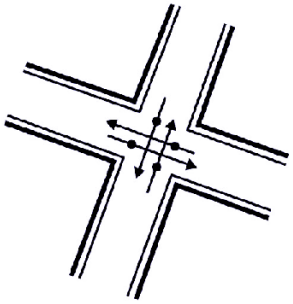


Methods of Interaction



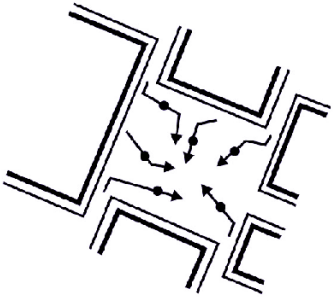
In order for people to interact with one another, first they must encounter each other. In the world outside of the internet, this occurs in a variety of different ways, which in large is shaped by the form of the city itself.

1. **In Passing**: A man walks down the street and passes by another man, in doing so they both stop and talk for a moment before continuing on their way.



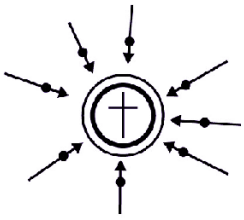
2. **Intersection**: Similar to the previous encounter, the man finds himself at an intersection of his own street and another, before he can continue on his way he encounters a woman, they exchange pleasantries before both continuing on their separate paths.

3. **In Between**: The man finds himself in a square where many people have gathered for a moment away from the bustling street of the city. As they pause here for a time they interact, speaking of minor things that they have encountered this day.



4. **In Focus**: The man finally reaches his destination, in coming to the train station he finds that many others have also gathered here, waiting for the train to arrive. He begins a conversation with those around him.

These methods of encountering another are typical in all forms of social interaction, though they may be more easily noticed and readily encountered in older, European cities. This is due in part to the fact that those cities were designed around people, horses and wagons, but not



for the automobile. While almost all cities were eventually adapted to the automobile upon its invention, it can be said that many American cities went too far in their adaptation.

Shifting Perspectives

Since the introduction of the automobile to the urban realm over one hundred years ago, the urban landscape of the American city has begun to shift more towards the vehicular and away from the pedestrian. In the United States in particular, the automobile became more and more readily available to a growing consumer class. With more people purchasing a car every day than in any other nation, the American urban landscape began to shift much more quickly than any other. As more people began to travel enclosed within their cars, less and less did so on their own feet. This is where the shift from the pedestrian urban existence to the vehicular one had the greatest impact in how people interact in an urban setting. Where once people interacted as they walked down the street, now it is nearly impossible to do so as they drive alongside one another. If it isn't illegal, than it is just something that is simply not done. Now the methods of interaction take on a new light. Those methods must be looked at in a different way. They must be examined not only from a distorted pedestrian perspective, but also from the perspective of the automobile.

1. **In Passing**: A man is walking down the street along the sidewalk.

Scenario 1: He spots an acquaintance further along, they stop and chat for a moment.

Scenario 2: He spots an acquaintance across the street, due to the automobile traffic in the street he is unable to chat with his passing friend.

2. **Intersection**: A man is comes to corner of a busy street.

Scenario 1: An acquaintance going in the other direction, on the same side of the street stops and chats with him while they both wait to be able to cross.

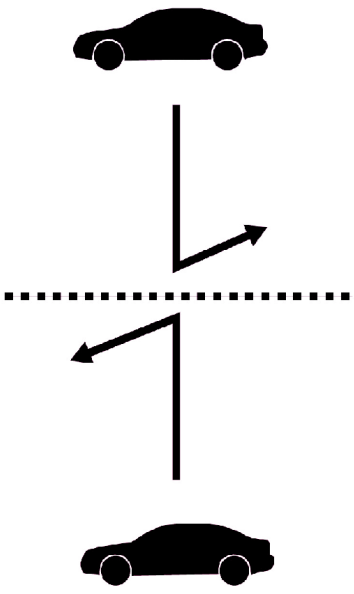
Scenario 2: The man crosses the street, but halfway across he encounters a friend going in the opposite direction. Do to traffic they are unable to stop and chat without one of them backtracking to the safety of the street corner or they run the risk of being hit by a car.

3. **In between**: A man finds himself heading towards the local square.

Scenario 1: The square is separate from lanes of traffic and he can easily walk to the square and start a conversation with anyone he chooses.

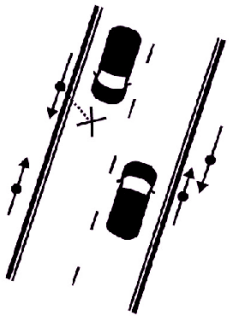
Scenario 2: The square is surrounded by lanes of traffic, in order to get to the square he must cross the busy street at least once to get to the square and begin a conversation with an acquaintance or stranger.

Scenario 3: In order to reach the square, the

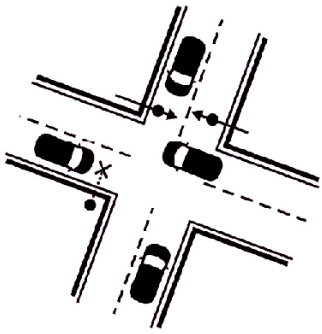


man must cross multiple lanes of traffic, waiting to do so safely would exhaust too much of his time for a chance encounter. The man chooses to go around the square and completely avoid it.

4. **In Focus**: The man reaches his destination, in arriving at the bus stop he finds several others gathered here as well. While waiting for the bus to arrive, he begins a conversation with some of the others waiting.



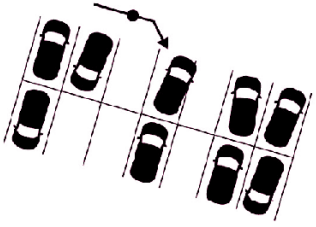
Only one of the methods of interaction is largely unchanged from the pedestrian perspective. Due to the way in which the city has adapted to the automobile, the other methods have become less efficient or appealing in how they allow pedestrians to interact. While this had a great effect on the pedestrian perspective, the vehicular perspective allows for even less interaction.



1. **In Passing**: A man is driving down the street, in the passing lane an acquaintance drives by.

Scenario 1: They both notice each other and wave, their interaction is concluded as driving takes precedent to social interaction for safety reasons.

Scenario 2: They try to interact more deeply with one another, due to their distraction the man rear-ends the car in front of him. His friend passes and he begins a new interaction with the person he rear-ended, this conversation is decidedly more hostile and financially harmful.



2. **Intersection**: A man stops at an intersection, in waiting for the light to change he sees an acquaintance walk by.

Scenario 1: He calls the friend over and they chat while the light is red, after it changes they both go on their separate ways.

Scenario 2: His friend comes over and they chat, though to do so his friend must stand in a lane of traffic. In doing this he is hit by an oncoming car that had turned from the perpendicular street. His friend is injured or dead.

3. **In Between**: A man is stuck in traffic, there is no movement in his lane, but as the lane to his left moves an acquaintance pulls up beside him. They spot one another.

Scenario 1: As they are both stopped next to one another they begin a brief conversation, as traffic begins to move again, the conversation ends.

Scenario 2: They once again begin a conversation, but as traffic begins to move neither notice. As their chat continues traffic only increases due to a lack of movement they caused. The drives behind them become aware and begin to honk their horns, the conversation eventually ends.

4. **In Focus**: A man arrives at his destination and needs to park his car, he drives to a nearby parking lot.

Scenario 1: He spots a friend while parking and decides to stop his car in order to talk, in doing so he not only loses his spot, but keeps others from leaving their own spot or looking for one by being in the way.

Scenario 2: His stopping in the parking lot, but not in a space causes an accident with someone else coming around the corner, at the least it still holds up others, at the worst someone is injured.

While some of these examples might seem extreme, they all exist within the realm of possibility. What is apparent in all of them is a certain degree of danger. The safety of self and others rises to a new level of importance, pushing social interaction further down and making it even less likely to happen. The need for safety while driving or even walking along cars makes social interaction not only less likely to happen, but even dangerous.

The Street

It is evident in the previous examples that the street shifted from a place for pedestrians to mingle to a place for the automobile to move. The street changed, its dimensions shifting and its rules altered.

The street, where man and horse once intermingled has become a place where they no longer truly belong, a realm completely devoted to that of the automobile. In many cases, to transgress into this realm would mean death. A place where the pedestrian once ruled supreme became divided, with the pedestrian pushed to the very edges.

The space for the pedestrian began to grow ever smaller. More lanes were added to the street as traffic began to increase, creating a vicious cycle caused by induced demand. When a road is widened with more lanes, thereby becoming more convenient,

it causes motorists who would not normally use the route to do so. The idea behind induced demand is simple. If you build it, they will come.

The problem here is that when planners see a road that gets too much traffic, they jump to widening the road. In many cases this is not a solution, all it accomplishes is the widening of the road itself and thereby the shrinking of the pedestrian space at its edges. While the street expands, motorists come to fill the new gaps. Planners aren't solving the traffic problem, but they are actually creating more demand for the roads and streets in question. This is the theory behind induced demand.

Corners had to be further and further rounded to allow for cars to turn around them at higher speeds. As this, and the increase in lanes went on, the intersection of streets became wider and wider. This makes many city intersections intimidating to the pedestrian at large, decreasing not only the likelihood that they will use the sidewalks, but actually taking away their safety too by allowing inner-city streets to become faster and faster through-ways.

A change must be made, not to completely remove the car in our cities, but to find a balance between them and the pedestrian. In many cities around the country this is starting to happen already in the form of inner-city greenways and the introduction of dedicated bike lanes.

These changes have affected the areas within the city and within its close boundaries. Yet, there has been one other major change that has affected the entire American landscape. The introduction of the freeway.

The Freeway

With the increasing desire for automobiles in the United States came the increased desire of fast, personal transportation. This desire, to be able to travel quickly and easily, with limited interruption, led to the introduction to a new type of road to the American landscape.

The introduction of controlled-access highways, or freeways as they are commonly called, drastically changed the American landscape. By the end of the twentieth century, every major U.S. town or city was connected by a system of freeways, multi-lane roads that were uninterrupted by intersections or rail lines. These freeways connected suburbs to urban centers, making it easier than ever to live away from the bustling downtown of larger cities. The average American was able to easily able to live in quiet suburbia,

but still able to work in the city center.

While at first, this concept seems like a novel idea, it had drastic consequences for the American city. In most American cities it caused a steady de-densification of the urban core while simultaneously increasing the rate at which urban sprawl could occur. This was the major long-term effect that freeways helped to establish, but there was also a great short term effect that is hardly thought about in modern times.

The modern American city is connected to the suburb by a system of freeways. In many cases, these freeways enter into the urban core itself, cutting through the city to allow its citizens ease of transportation. When the freeway was introduced to this city though it most likely replaced existing neighborhoods and homes. In the city of Detroit, which will become the focus of this study and the project that follows, this very thing occurred.

Two neighborhoods were destroyed and reclaimed, their land used to build the Chrysler Freeway (Interstate 75 and Interstate 375). The Paradise Valley and Black Bottom (an area named for its rich soil by the French) were both destroyed by the introduction of this freeway. They were prominent African American communities at the time, a place even called the jazz mecca of the 40s and 50s.

While the destruction of these areas is largely forgotten, or at the very least ignored, now, it still has another large effect on the city. The highways cut through the urban core, dividing the city with large canyons of automotive transit. Midtown is quite literally separated from the Downtown area by a canyon, a wide expanse that makes it difficult to access the heart of the city without an automobile.

While this is the story of one city in the United States, in many ways it is the story of all of its cities. Few urban cores were left intact after the introduction of the freeway and while it allowed for ease of access via the automobile to the urban core, it continued the segregation of the city. The gape between automobile and pedestrian only grew larger and sprawl only continued to progress at a faster rate.

It is difficult to gauge whether or not the freeway system had an overall positive or negative effect on the development of the modern city, but it did allow for the development of a new piece of the urban fabric. Suburbia.

The Suburbs

Suburbs were introduced to the shifting American landscape, these areas, while outside the city center were near enough that a man could live there but still work in the city. He could still easily travel there thanks to the freeways that cut through many American downtowns.

The suburb also allowed for privacy that was not available within the scope of the city center. Having a house with a wide backyard and a white picket fence that was all your own was appealing to many Americans and so it became a part of the American dream. This shift can be seen as negative in terms of the development of the urban framework as well as our dependence on the automobile.

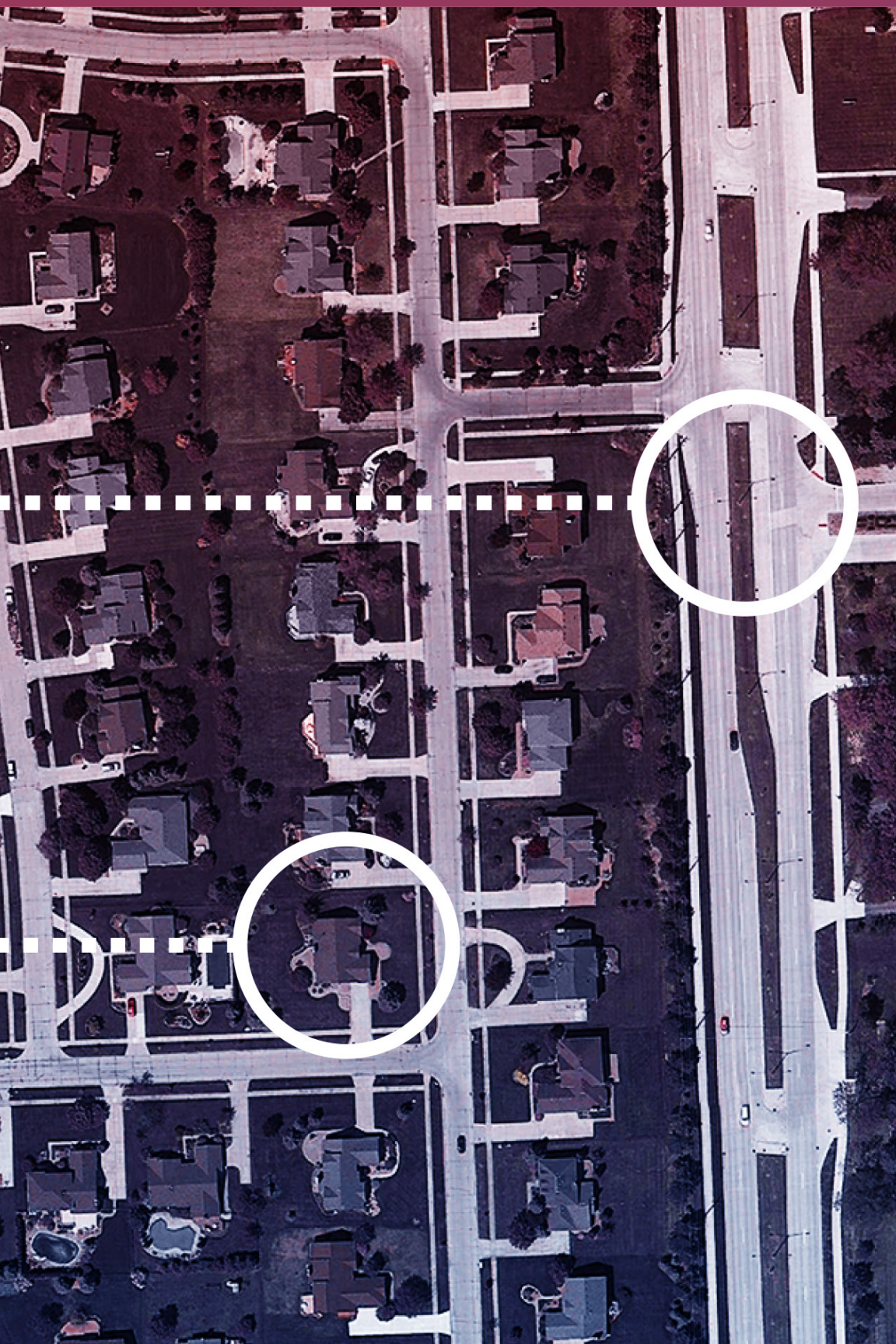
Those who live in the suburbs are basically forced to own a car. The suburban framework is spread out in pockets of neighborhoods connected by wide, high-speed roads. The corner store is no longer a small shop within walking distance, but a large big-box grocery store that must be driven to.

Suburbs are an attractive concept for many Americans, having that small slice of land and a white picket fence has been a part of the American Dream for many years. It isn't something that has to be given up in order to solve many of the problems that have been mentioned, but it is something that must be examined. Many of the suburban ideals have become a large part of the American way of life. Particularly the sense of privacy, the notion that socialization doesn't happen outside, but within smaller controllable areas, like the home. These concepts will play a large role in the project that follows, in creating new ways and means of socialization.

In Detroit, many people live in traditional houses as opposed to large apartment buildings that are common in other cities. This leads to another issue for the city in particular, a lack of housing options. This lack of different options within the city itself also strains the desire for those who want to live within the city.

In a way the suburbs have become a part of the core of the city, while they are not true suburbs, these neighborhoods have the feel and look of suburbs, only adding to the lack of density that the city suffers from as a whole.

While low density is a problem that every city faces, it is especially prevalent in Detroit and serves as



one of the many problems within the cities urban core itself due to a lack of actual built space and the abundance of vacant and parking lots.

The Lot

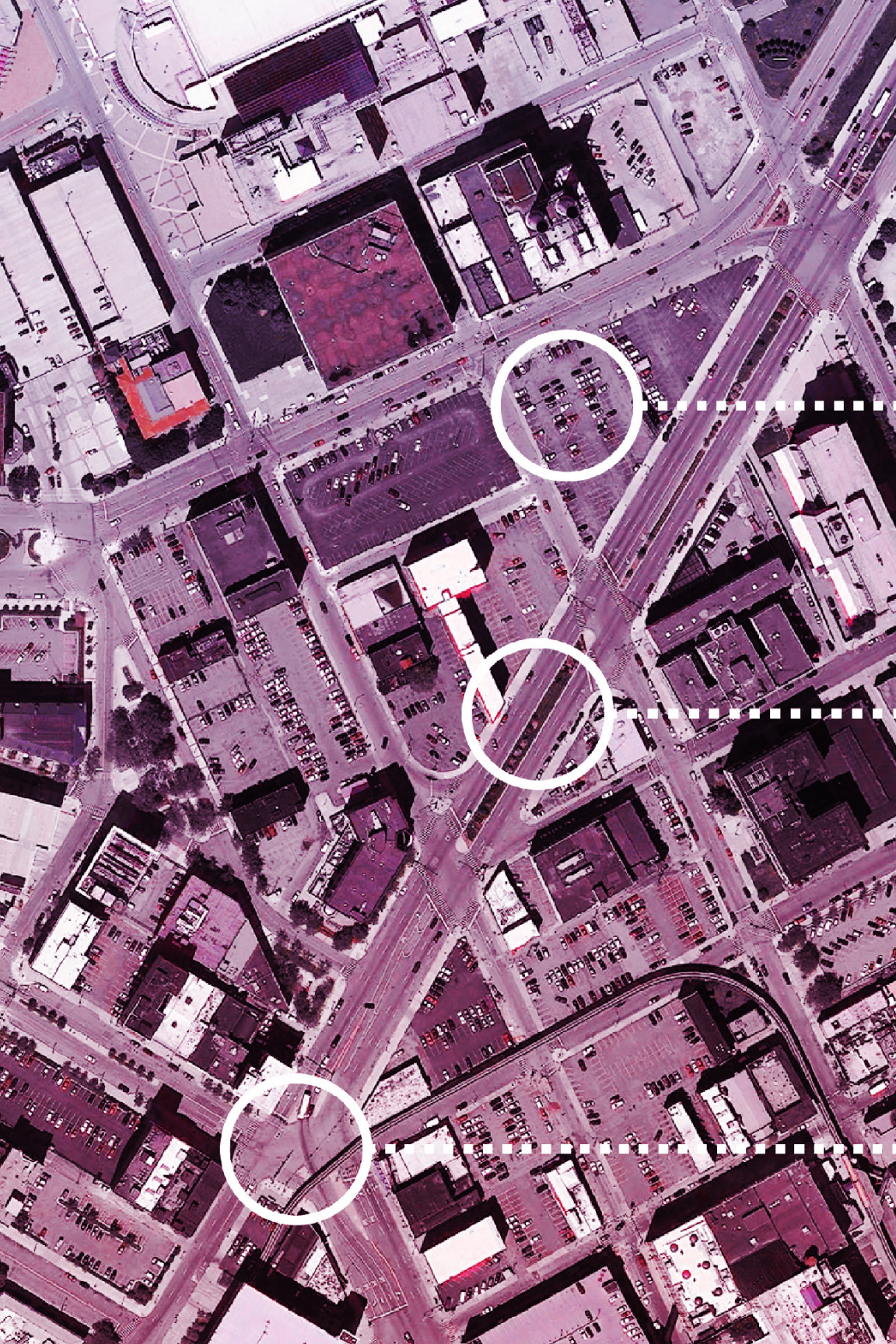
While the suburbs played a large role in the increasing sprawl of many American cities, they also had an effect of the core of the city as well. As more people began to travel to the city for work and other needs, the need for parking also increased.

In the modern city, parking is a major concern for the common citizen. Finding a place for them to park their car while they work or shop is central to their concern, for if they cannot park, they cannot enjoy what the city has to offer. Parking lots dot the urban landscape, in cities like Detroit it forms the basis of that landscape, causing large voids to form within the framework of the built space.

A city whose work force lives primarily outside of the city, requires a large area to park, which only furthers the need of sprawl and therefor the de-densification of the city as a whole. Detroit also suffers from an increase in vacant land. This land, that is steadily becoming reclaimed by nature due to a lack of maintenance, continues to pick away at the density of the city.

The strange mix of decay in the urban framework as well as an increasing need for parking creates an interesting situation within the city. It puts a premium on parking while not allowing for the growth of real built space.

It is easy to see that the automobile is becoming more and more a central figure in the urban landscape of American cities. In the past century, this idea has only gained strength. The city is no longer a place where human life is the focus, but a place where the automobile is king, where its needs supersedes that of the pedestrian, of the average citizen.




the
CITY
is A
PLACE
for
PEOPLE

Solutions Taking Shape

With all of these problems in mind, a question arises. Is it really possible to reclaim the lost space within the city for the pedestrian without alienating those who own cars and live outside of the urban core?

This can be done in a variety of ways, but if the goal is to recapture the interactions of the pedestrian then a new place for them must be found. The street will always be a place for the car, though shifts towards the bike are being seen more and more, it is unlikely that cars will completely get left behind and that they will in fact remain a dominant element on the streets of the city, at least for the time being.

With these notions in mind, a new realm for the pedestrian must be found or forged. The first step in realizing this new 'social realm' is an examination of the parts remaining to the pedestrian and an examination of the original concept of the street itself.

This brings two concepts to mind, the idea of the block, not only as an organizational unit but as a habitable area, and the concept of 'ambular space.' An examination of these two elements will become crucial in the design that follows.

The Block

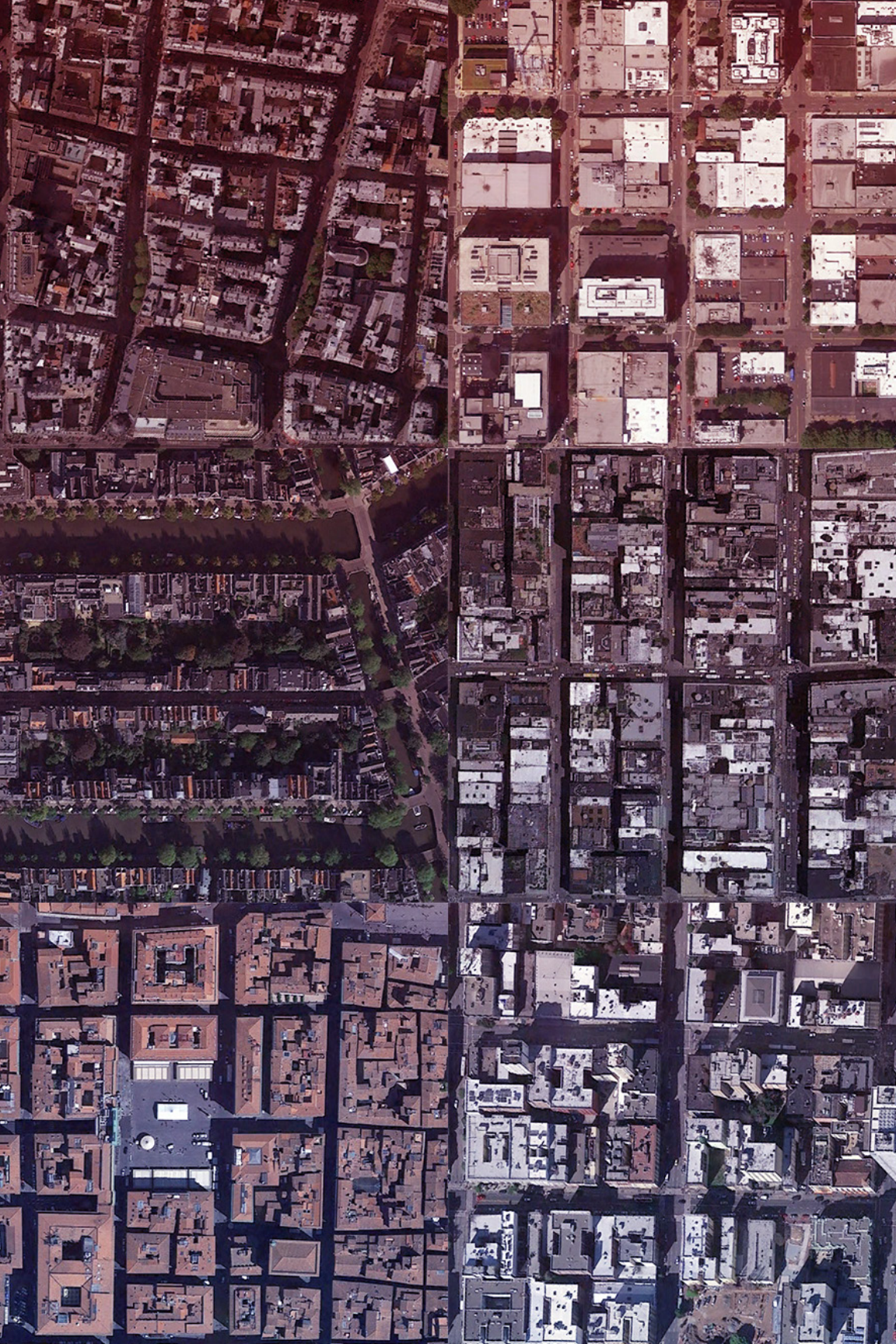
The street is the defining element of the city, in that it sections the city into parts, dividing sections and creating space between. The spaces between streets is most commonly called the block. While the street defines the city by dividing, the block is the element of the city being defined. This system of blocks is where the build environment exists and is also the space that people most readily inhabit. As the street is a place for transportation, the block is a place for living.

The sidewalk is how people navigate between blocks and along streets, it is here that shops have their frontage and it is here that people are able to enter buildings. Think of the sidewalk as an exterior membrane, in order to fully enter the center of the block a person must pass through this membrane. If the sidewalk is looked at in this manner, it becomes clear that it is almost exclusively a boundary element to the block. This walking space wraps around the block but it does not pass through it. Despite this it is still the primary method of navigating the city, yet still the block suffers.

In many larger cities that have become overly dependent on the car, in part due to a lack of other means of transportation and a de-densification of the city center, the sidewalk is an alien realm. It is underused, perhaps only utilized when a person parks right in front of the place they wish to go and in doing so only needing to travel the short distance from car to door. Many people are unwilling to park much further away, circling the block many times over for that perfect spot that will require the least amount of actual walking time from car to shop instead of parking further away. Convenience and laziness have joined forces in their fight against walkable cities. The question here arises, is the city to blame or the culture of the city as a whole?

The culture of the city can not easily be changed, but by designing the environment of the city itself, change can begin to take place. By changing the built environment, allowing for social interaction through walkable and attractive spaces, the culture itself may begin to reshape itself.

It is time to set the car aside, it is not the villain of this story, merely a misunderstood supporting character. The real challenge is creating comfortable walkable spaces within the city that people want to walk through. There will always be the individual who will only park right



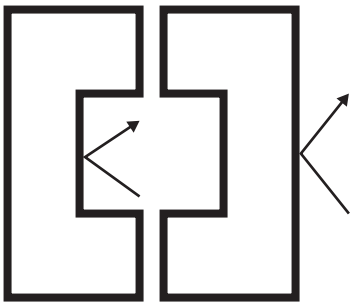
in front of the store so he spends as little time as possible on the sidewalk, but many more who would be willing, or even happy to park further away for a chance at a sunny afternoon stroll along their city streets.

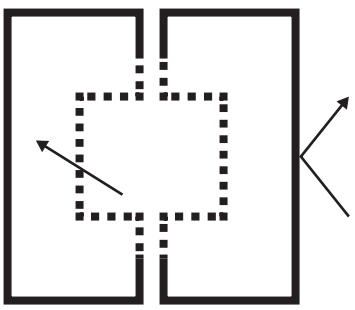
The sidewalk has been examined as the primary means of navigating the city, it is the membrane through which pedestrians travel. Yet what of the interior of the block itself, is there a space here that the pedestrian might be able to call his own?

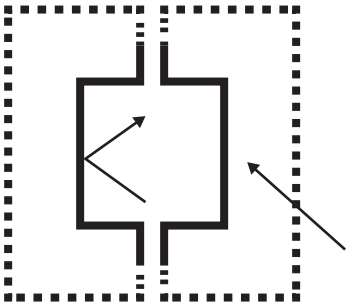
The interior of the block, the areas between built space, have become more and more a place of service, functioning as storage space, or much more likely, trash and maintenance space. These spaces are pushed to hidden corners, ill-lit dark alleys that people are not only hesitant to walk through, but in many cases warned against doing so for their own safety.

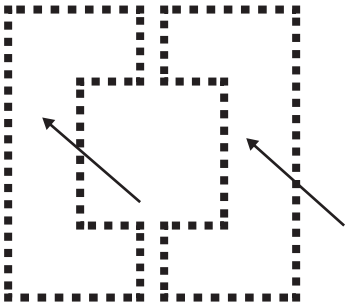
The alleyway was once a place to walk, a narrower path through the city where carts and horses could not go, but people were able to comfortably pass through. Its function now serves a necessary evil, but perhaps it may be reclaimed for the pedestrian.

The paths through blocks have the potential to become not only walkable, but desirable spaces for the pedestrians of the city, the only issue





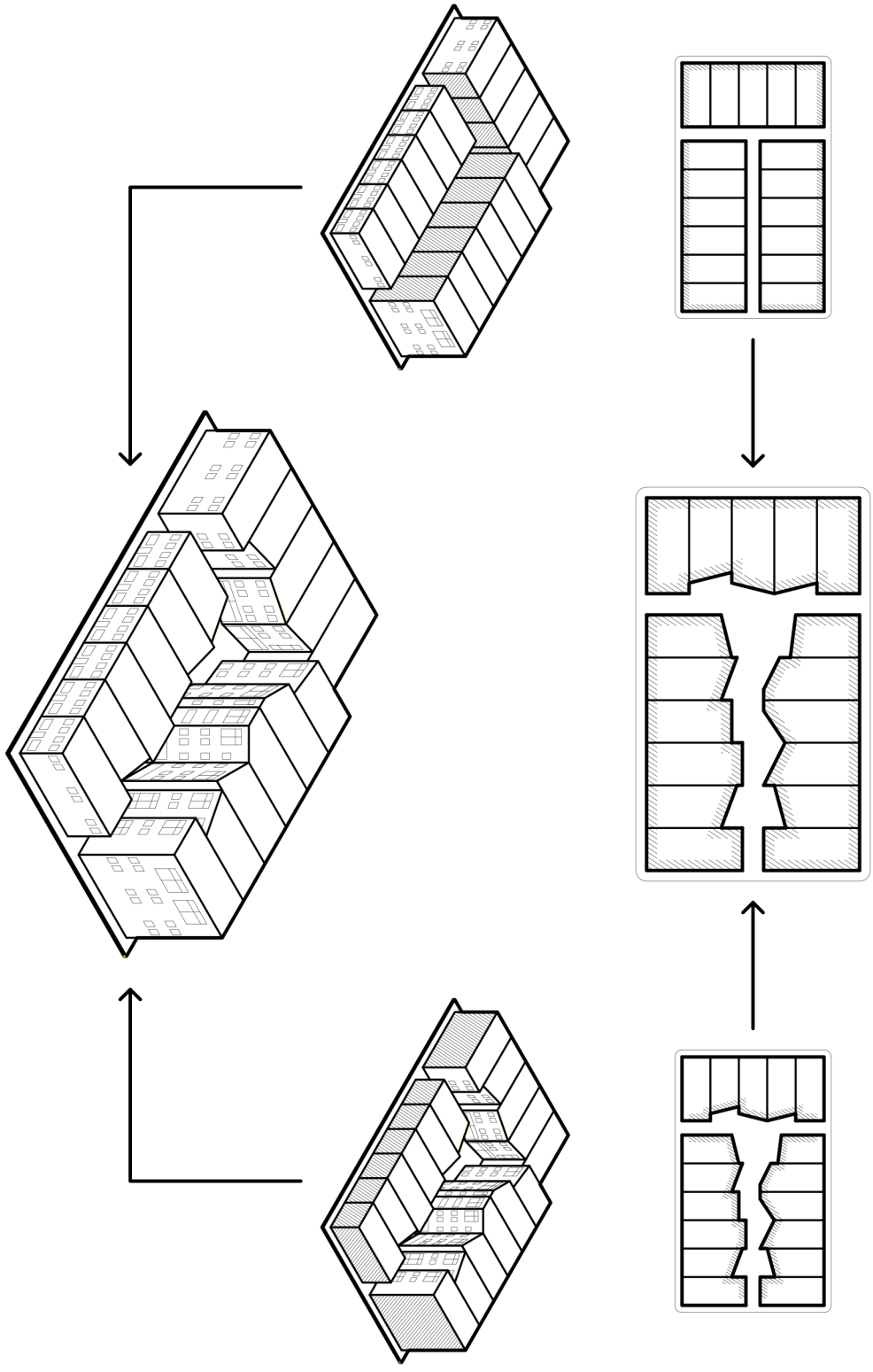


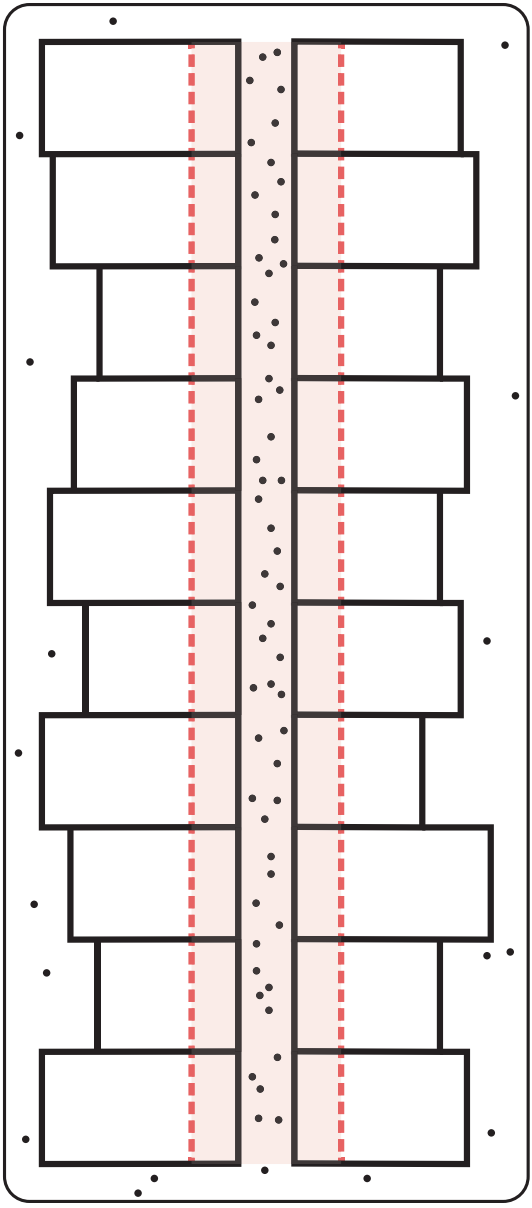


is in how the built spaces of the city are designed. A building is designed to face outward, in almost all cases this means facing the sidewalk and the street. It is here that the most light will enter the building and it is here that most people will enter the building. This idea puts an outward facing typology on the building and the block. The building may only be entered through the membrane of the sidewalk, not through the block's interior.

By shifting this mindset, it may become possible to not only design buildings in new and exciting ways, but to also allow the free movement through city blocks, expanding the network of walkable spaces within the city beyond the corridor of city streets.

This space between buildings has great potential, but it is currently being underutilized as simply service space. It must be reappropriated for the pedestrian in a way that will not only increase the walkability of the city center as a whole, but provide a space where meaningful interactions between people may occur. Not a space that forces these interactions, but provide for them in a way that the current urban framework does not. It is time to examine these spaces, to give meaning to them. It is time to reappropriate the in-between.





Ambular Space

The alley was once a place that people freely walked, the root of the word alley means 'to walk.' As it was once a space for people to walk, it can be so once again, not only a passage through the block, but a destination point within it as well.

As the alley currently exists, there is no desire to reclaim it for the pedestrian, it is an ignored space by most inhabitants of the city, but it still has great potential. This potential lies in its ability to draw people into the heart of the block, creating a different kind of public space. This space exists somewhere between the private life that dwells within the built spaces of the block and the public life of the street. This blended space between public and private could become the new 'social realm' of the city.

If the city streets are the elements that divide the city into blocks and buildings define the interior areas of the block then perhaps a new type of building could be designed, one that doesn't focus all of its attention on the street. A type of building that faces all sides and welcomes entry from all sides. The new typology could not only allow for this new social space to exist, but promote it and draw from it as well.

Ambular space does not even need to remain in the spaces between buildings. It can be built space that facilitates interaction between people. While the alleyway remains a spot for great potential in creating ambular space, it is not the only space for it.

This space is simply a part of the social realm of the city that designers and planners need to think about. The larger social realm is the greatest concern and the alley remains one of the most readily available spaces for it to take shape. Another possibility is that of the courtyard.

These open inner spaces found great popularity in European countries, but never really took hold in the United States. They remain a part of the urban framework, but are widely under utilized in many major American cities. These spaces are generally seen as private, something that must be avoided in the design work to come as spaces that seem private while only further alienate visitors.

A balance must be found between the two. In order to accomplish this, a form study was begun. The primary objective of this study was the examination of how space can be divided through either the use of path or area space.

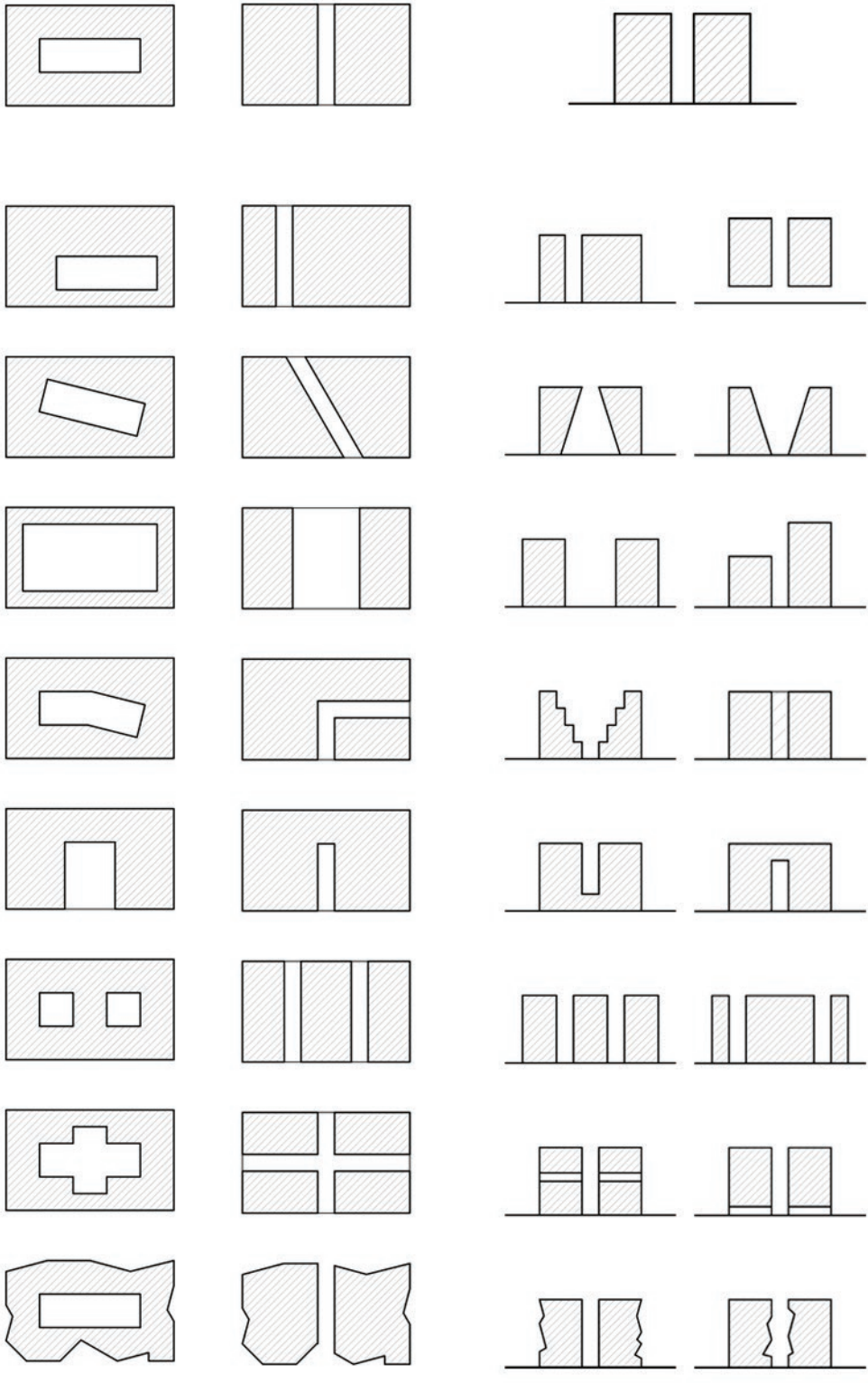
Form Divisions

Eight modifiers were used on simple forms as a means of manipulating the space created. These modifications were done both in section as well as in plan and then were analyzed in terms of spacial relationships and experiencial qualities.

The following pages detail this analysis for each of the modifiers:

Shift, Skew, Scale, Turn, Slice, Addition, Intersect, Distortion.

By examining these, an experiencial basis for form could begin to take shape, which would aid in further design once a site was chosen.

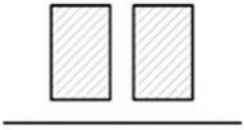


Shift

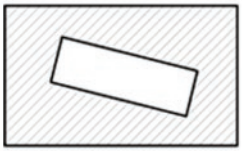
An uneven distribution of private space is created here. It draws the social space of the courtyard nearer to the public space. Due to its nearness, the private space is thinned out, perhaps making it less private in that regard.

The inequality of space here lends to an intuitive notion of importance or weight. At the very least it might suggest a very different level of function between the two private spaces.

This section functions much as the plan of alley space before it. It is more or less a shift in weight that could be perceived as a shift in importance towards the heavier block. It also suggests the thinner breathes more easily.



Pulling the private off the ground level allows the public into the social space. The question is if this removes the social or not. Once again bridging could be used within this method, but a hierarchy is still created with the social above.



A rotation of the courtyard creates points of possible "stress" where the corners of this social space draw nearest to the public. The opposite is also true, creating "relief" where the corners draw away from it.

This space functions much like the basic shape above, but it creates stress and relief points within the private space as seen by the acute and obtuse angles. This might be used to create an emotion or feeling within the private space.

The narrow space says something about light, existing in this space might draw the eye towards the light above as well as towards the overhang above. It functions more or less like a cave, further moving the social towards the private.

An openness above lends itself to the sky, drawing others in like a canyon gathers water. This space allows everyone a view of the sky and creates a sectional openness to the public realm.

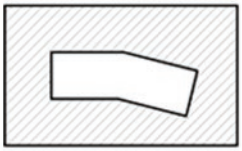
Scale

The scale of the social space creates an imbalance between private and public spaces. The size of it pushes it closer towards the public domain. The opposite could also be true if the scale of private to social were reversed.

The social space has become larger than the private, creating a disconnect that was not present in the basic shape. This disconnect could result in a feeling of unimportance or dis-ownership within the residents of the private space.

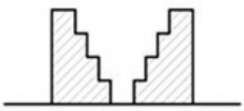
The equality of social to private creates a disconnect between the two structures of the block. Bridging might remedy this feeling, but otherwise the social space becomes more or less public, disconnecting the private.

Using scale in this manner could be of great advantage. While it does lend to a sense of difference and function, it might be used to allow light into the social space if used correctly. A hierarchy is created and should be cautioned against.



An angling of this manner results in a stress and relief that was previously seen in the rotation. The difference is that it is no longer symmetrical and could be used to create different typologies within the social space.

Like in the Move diagram above, this shift creates a possible shift in weight between the two private spaces. It perhaps brings the smaller private space closer to the social, as opposed to the social becoming further from the public. It does not.



The terracing of this private mass seems to lend itself to creative a hierarchy of social space. This could be used to advantage but should be cautioned against as well as it might disconnect each level by granting them this unique space.

This notion feels a lot like the segment of the plan alley, but there is actually a bend. This could create a sense of discovery within the block at the social level, which might draw public users into it for exploration if not for anything else.

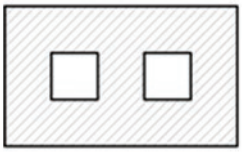
Slice

The segmentation of the social space brings it closer to the public realm. This nearness creates a kind of disconnect between the social and private realms, but not as near as it might if it were to be on the corner as opposed to the center.

This segmentation creates a sort of dead-end or possibly a notion of destination within the block. This might be used as a method of pathing that could be used in conjunction with the courtyard mechanism.

Pulling the social space up inherently makes it more private, as it pulls itself away from the most public realm, the level of the street where pedestrians walk and cars are driven. This should not be used alone, but might be used along with another method.

This space is the most reminiscent of the Parisian arcade and creates an enclosure that blocks it off from the outside much like it did in the previous experiment, but it is perhaps more accessible due to its close-ness to the street plane.



The addition of new social spaces creates a middle ground that has no public space. Both the front and back of this middle ground is social space, which might create a disconnect with the public realm. The function of this space should differ.

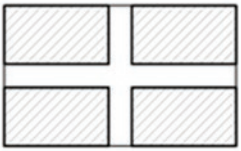
Like the courtyard addition experiment, this addition of social space creates a disconnect from the central private space with that of the public space, a shift in function might be appropriate.

This experiment should be looked at again with scale in mind as a possible assisting tool. The private space of the center could then reach the outside. As it stands now, it is disconnected from the public realm.

Much like above, this space is hierarchical in weight, creating a sense of importance and walling off. This could be used to an advantage but it might benefit from use along with scale as with the previous experiment.

Intersect

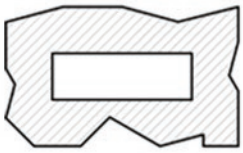
The overlapping of space creates areas of thick and thin within the private realm. The private realm has more opportunities to engage the social area due to increased surface space and additional angling.



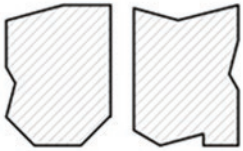
The overlap of this manner creates a sense of street within the block, further sectioning it and thus further dividing the private spaces by social. This inherently draws it closer to the public realm, though not by much. A middle-ground might be appropriate.

Like the terracing above, this creates a level within the private that could be considered a new level of privacy. It adds a layer to each structure and might seem more successful in this manner, as each building gains a private social space.

Like the previous overlapping experiment, this creates a new layer of hierarchy, though it is between the social and the public as opposed to the private and the social. This could be used to an advantage as a transition between the two.



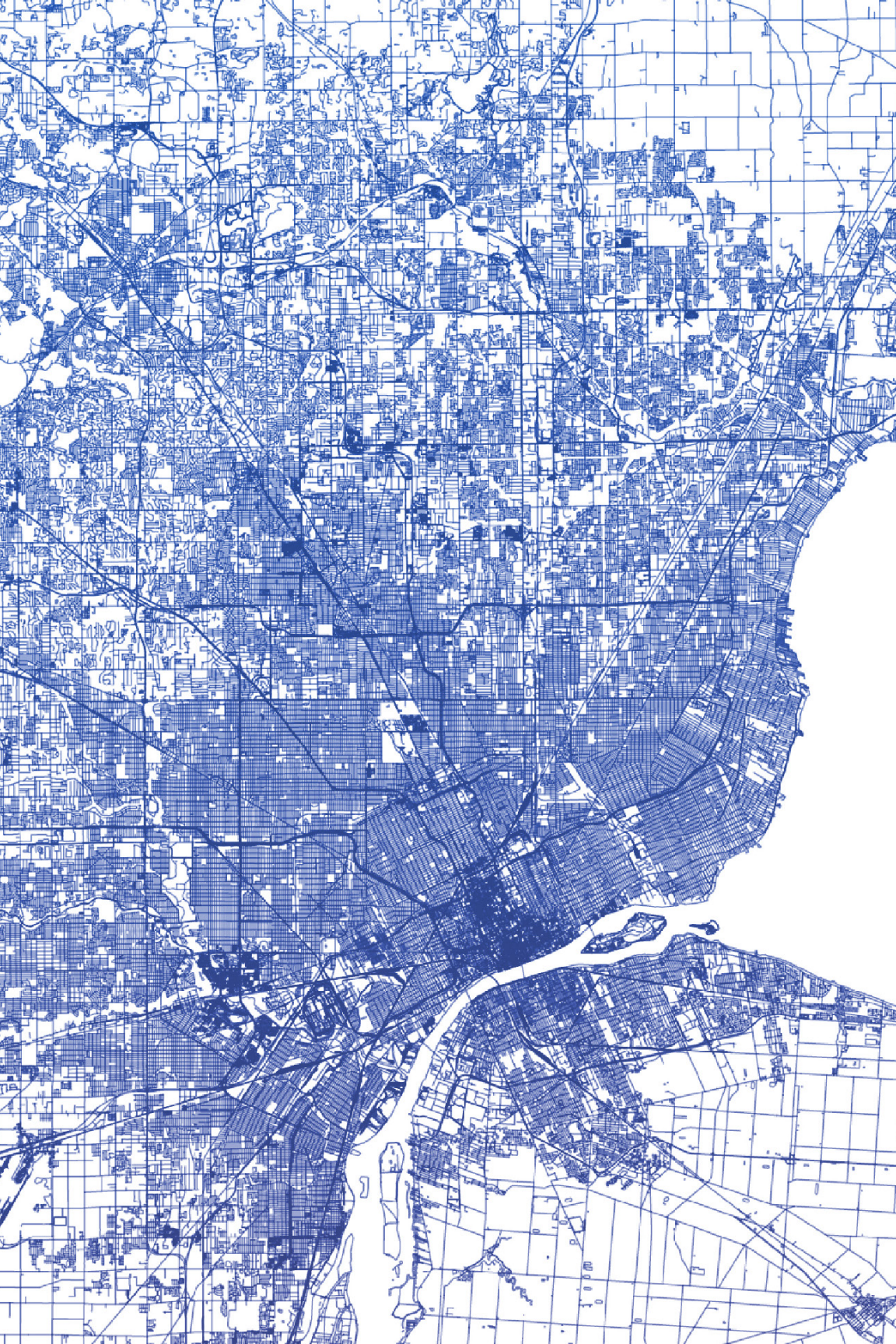
When the exterior private/public wall is distorted in this manner, the ordered social space becomes order within chaos. The question is if this space becomes a positive or a negative.



A division within chaos creates a momentary break from it, though it does not necessarily become order as the courtyard experiment might have. It is a break for the eyes, a shadow of order.

An order within chaos topology creates a sense of balance for the social space, but the exterior seems outwardly hostile as if it were protecting the interior. This should be warned against as it is does not draw any in, but pushes away.

Chaos within order. Is this space the ruin that is hidden away or the eclectic gem sequestered by the private. Does it push away both the private and the public?



In Search of Site

The time came to apply what was learned from previous explorations to an actual site, and so it became time to establish one.

The city of Detroit was examined as a whole in search of this site for numerous reasons. The first of which being its proximity, allowing for easy testing and site evaluation. Secondly, the city presents numerous problems and situations that might be rectified, as well as a fair deal of potential in certain areas.

The issue of sprawl is a difficult, nearly impossible, task for any city to handle. Few are easily capable of doing so, some cities, like Portland have been actively battling sprawl for the past few decades, far ahead of any other city in the United States. Some cities, like New York City, benefit from a high density and the land itself, as the city center exists on an island.

Detroit suffers from sprawl more than many large urban centers. The city lacks a proper transportation system, beyond under utilized and under maintained buses, and offers little in ways of alternative means of transportation. Luckily both of these problems are currently being worked on. The first in the form of a light rail

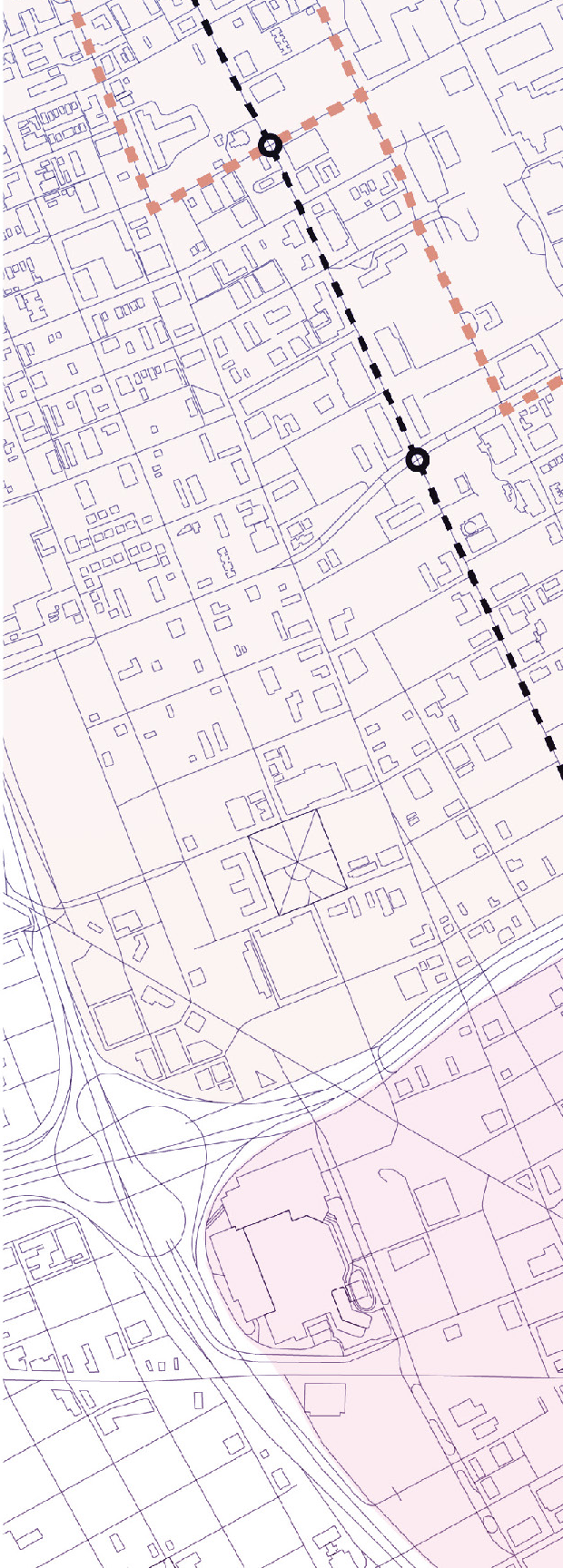
line, that in its first phase will cover 3.3 miles along Woodward Avenue. The street car system will allow pedestrians to travel from the center of Downtown easily into Midtown and beyond. This system is a great start to making the city an attractive and more walkable place to live.

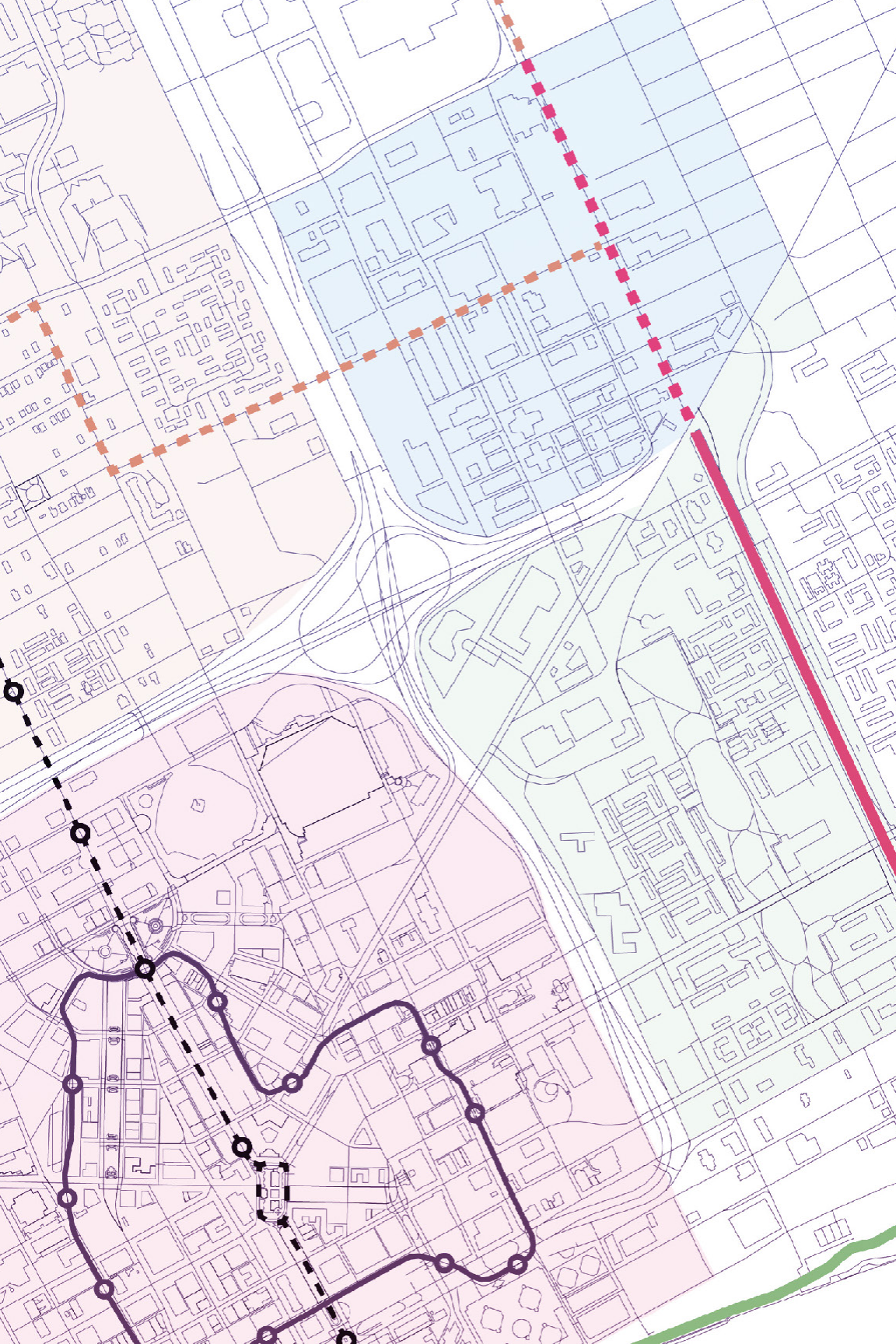
At the same time a network of bike paths throughout the city have begun to form. These paths aid in connecting the Downtown with each neighboring district and neighborhood.

The map to the right shows four of the cities major districts: Downtown (red), Midtown (orange), Eastern Market (blue) and Lafayette Park (green). These four districts are being better and better connected, despite being physically divided by the freeways that cut through the city.

The M-1 Light Rail line can be seen in black along with the already existing People Mover. The bike paths planned bike paths can be seen connected to the already existing Dequindre Cut and Detroit River Walk.

The Dequindre Cut is a reclaimed section of unused rail line that has become a 1.35 mile long greenway. The path is planned to continue North through Eastern Market and



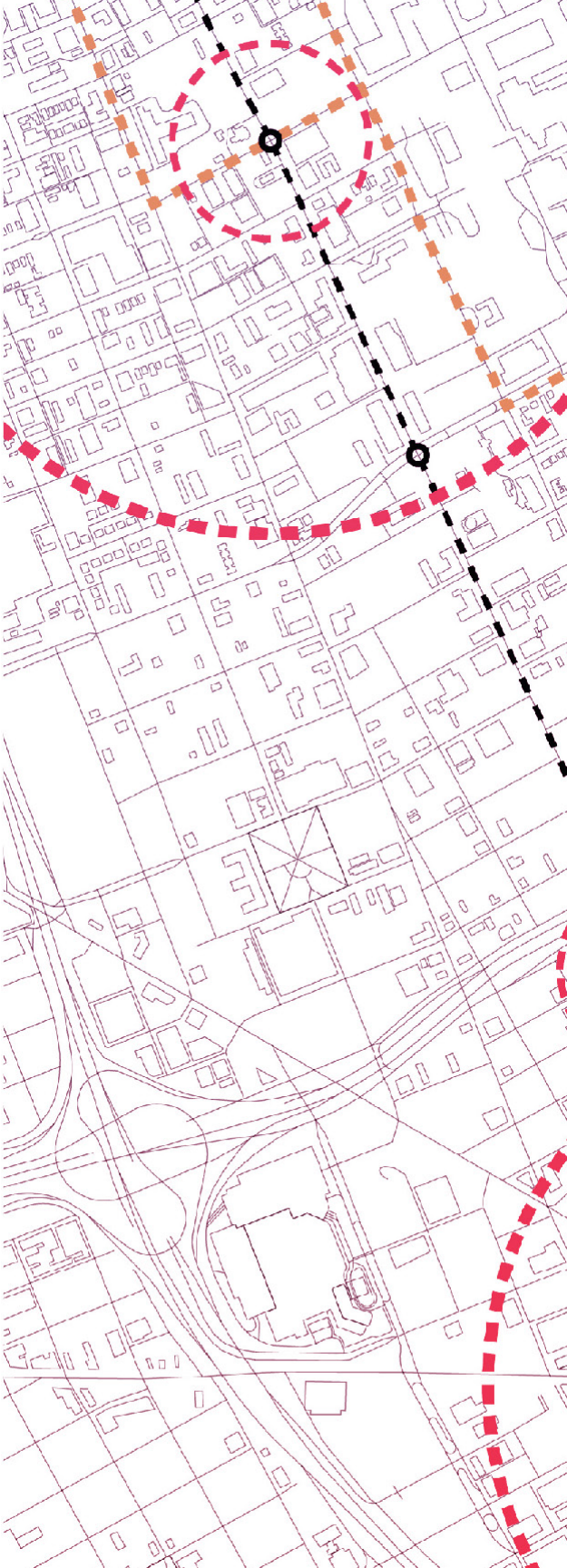


construction has already begun to make this a reality. Soon each district of the city center will be connected with routes beyond the simple sidewalks and streets that already exist within the city.

These methods of transportation within the city were more closely examined and overlayed with Detroit's major focal points. The intersection of important existing and planned pathways was also taken in account. By examining these, potential areas of site were narrowed down even further.

In order to narrow down the potential sites even further it became important to think of the idea of community. A site could not be chosen that had no potential to grow, an existing nearby presence was also a strong requirement in the selection of site. An area that began to show the most potential in this regard was Eastern Market.

This historic community has existed for over a hundred years. Not only is it the longest running farmers market in the entire United States, but it is a neighborhood within the city that has remained largely unchanged while many others have been reshaped or even destroyed completely over the last century. It is also here where the Dequindre Cut will not only intersect



with the future Midtown bike path, but with the Hamtramck connection as well. These two facts, along with the district's proximity to two of the city's major arteries, Gratiot Avenue and Interstate-75, made the selection of the district as the project's site relatively easy.

The process of site evaluation began again, though at a much more focused scale.

Eastern Market

A series of mapping studies began at the district scale, this was done in order to once again narrow the field and choose a site for the design work within Eastern Market.

The district is primarily an industrial and commercial area, while to most the market functions for the day to day consumers and home-owners in the city, the market gains a majority of its profits from the wholesale of its goods. This wholesale market is what keeps the district alive, at the same time it creates a unique day/night cycle of use.

During the day, the market is used by the typical citizen, but by night the area gets a great deal of wholesale traffic in the form of large trucks and semi-trucks. This is part of the reason why the district lacks a strong residential component.

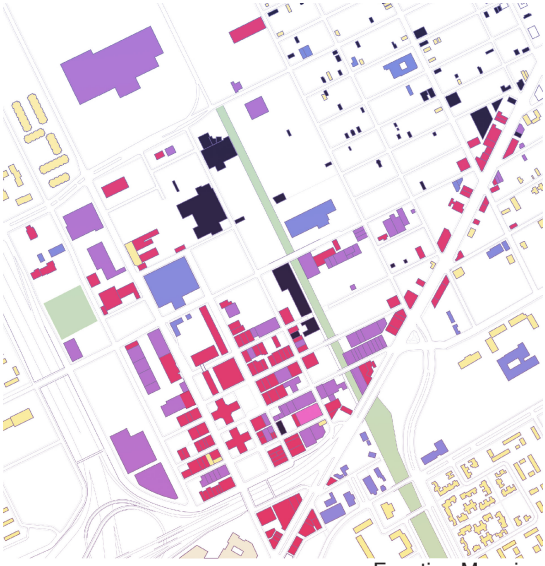
Traffic and focus studies show that there are primarily two ways of entering the site. Either through Mack Avenue to the North, or via Russel Street to the South. Eventually there will be a stronger pedestrian entrance to the area via the Dequindre Cut and future bike paths, but as the site stands now, these are the two primary entrances.

The time came to approach the Eastern Market Corporation, the group in charge of maintaining and administering the district. A conversation began about the future of the area. The Corporation was currently concerned with improving the district in many ways, such as increasing walkability along Russel Street and improving the quality of the store frontages.

At the same time, development of the Dequindre Cut's second phase was already underway. In this phase, the greenway was being extended from Gratiot Avenue up to Mack Avenue, directly through Eastern Market. It was during this phase that a series of bridges that connected the two sections of the market over the Dequindre Cut were also evaluated. The bridges were completely rebuilt due to structural problems, one of the four bridges was not rebuilt due to lack of use.

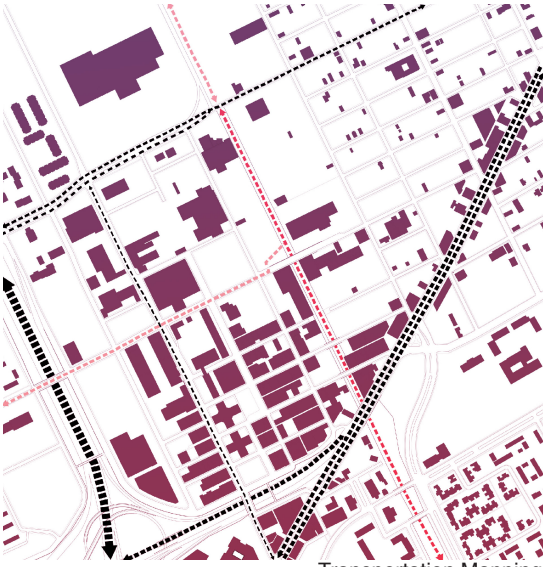
The conversation continued, detailing future construction and possibilities for the area. When the topic of residential development was brought up, the Eastern Market Corporation displayed a definite lack of interest with pursuing this sort of development within the heart of the site, but that it might be possible in other areas. The area surrounding

Figure Ground



Function Mapping

Focal Mapping



Transportation Mapping

the Dequindre Cut and the largely unused and abandoned areas to the north of the site had great potential in this regard.

Not only did the Eastern Market Corporation express great interest in redeveloping this area, but owners of current buildings along the Cut also expressed an interest in seeing what could be done there. Most of these structures have remained vacant for the past several years.

These areas were far enough away from the center of the market that the residential development would not be disrupted by the wholesale market. At the same time, it would be close enough to easily be able to access the market and benefit greatly from its position along the Dequindre Cut and the other future bike path connections. The Northern quarter of the market remains the most under utilized section of the market, and remains within a five minute walk with the center of the market, or a two to three minute bike ride.

For these reasons, this smaller portion of the site was chosen for future development in the project.

As the site had finally chosen, a short sketch problem began as a means of gauging how best to use the site and to give vision to initial concepts.

Copy and Paste

The core idea of this scheme was to bring the Dequindre Cut up and extend it through the built space of a series of Live-Work developments. By doing this, it would encourage interaction between those who lived along the Cut with those who travel along it.

The first floor of each structure was dedicated to large retail. These rentable spaces had two facades, the front of which faced the street, while the rear faced the Dequindre Cut itself. The side facing the Cut was seen as the social side, developed as a more open and approachable front while the street face acted as the formal entrance.

From either side it was possible to enter the second level which acted as a public garden space as well as the entrance to the live-work residences. This garden space, or Dequindre Cut extension space, allowed travelers to enter into the businesses that the live-work residences oversaw.

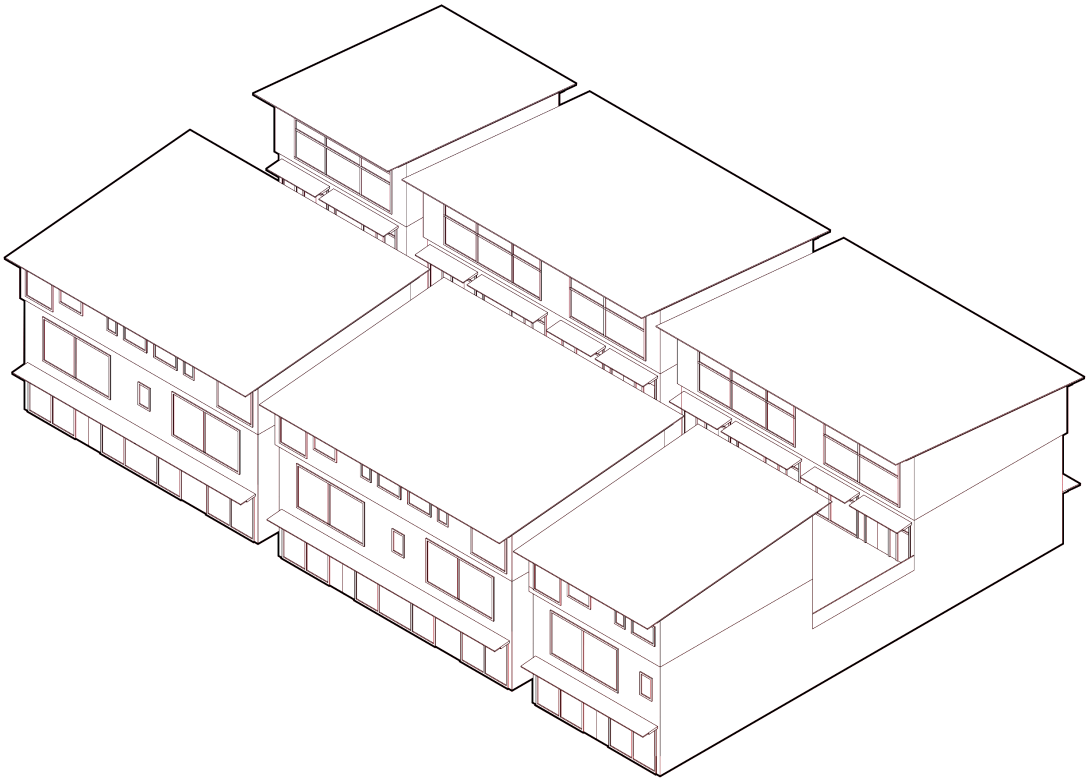
The residences themselves were designed with the overall idea of public-social-private spaces in mind as well. The social spaces of these apartments, such as the kitchen and living rooms, faced the gardens, the social space of the overall structure. While the private spaces were set along the street, positioned three floors up, they grant sanctuary to those inhabiting them.

The idea was to expand the cut and bring social spaces up into the built space of the development, while in a way this was accomplished, it only served to alienate the cut from the rest of the site.

Where the original goal was to design a space that turned its back on none of its sides, allowing entry and social spaces to occur around and within, this design only served to turn its back on the Dequindre Cut and street.

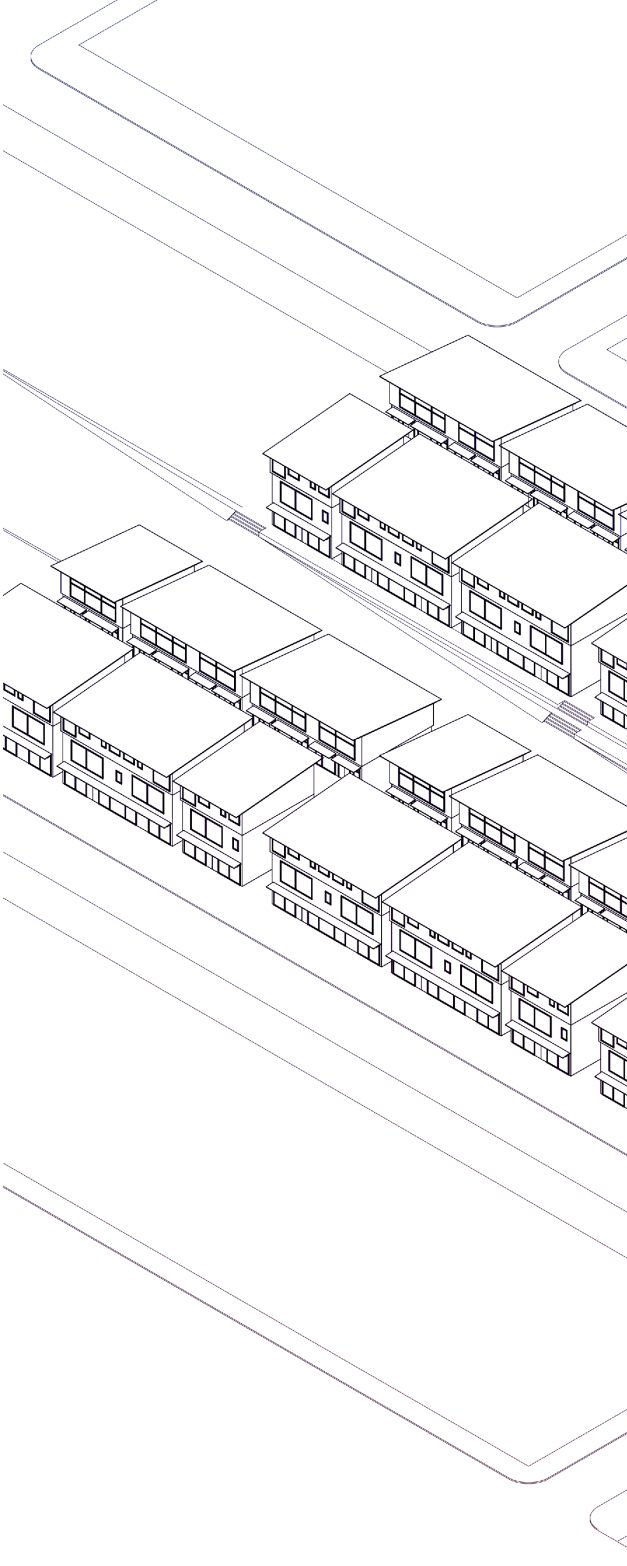
Not only did it turn its back on two sides, it also ignored the site almost as a whole. The design did not react to the site in almost anyway, it could exist anywhere. It was simply "copied and pasted" across the Dequindre Cut without any regard for the rest of the area.

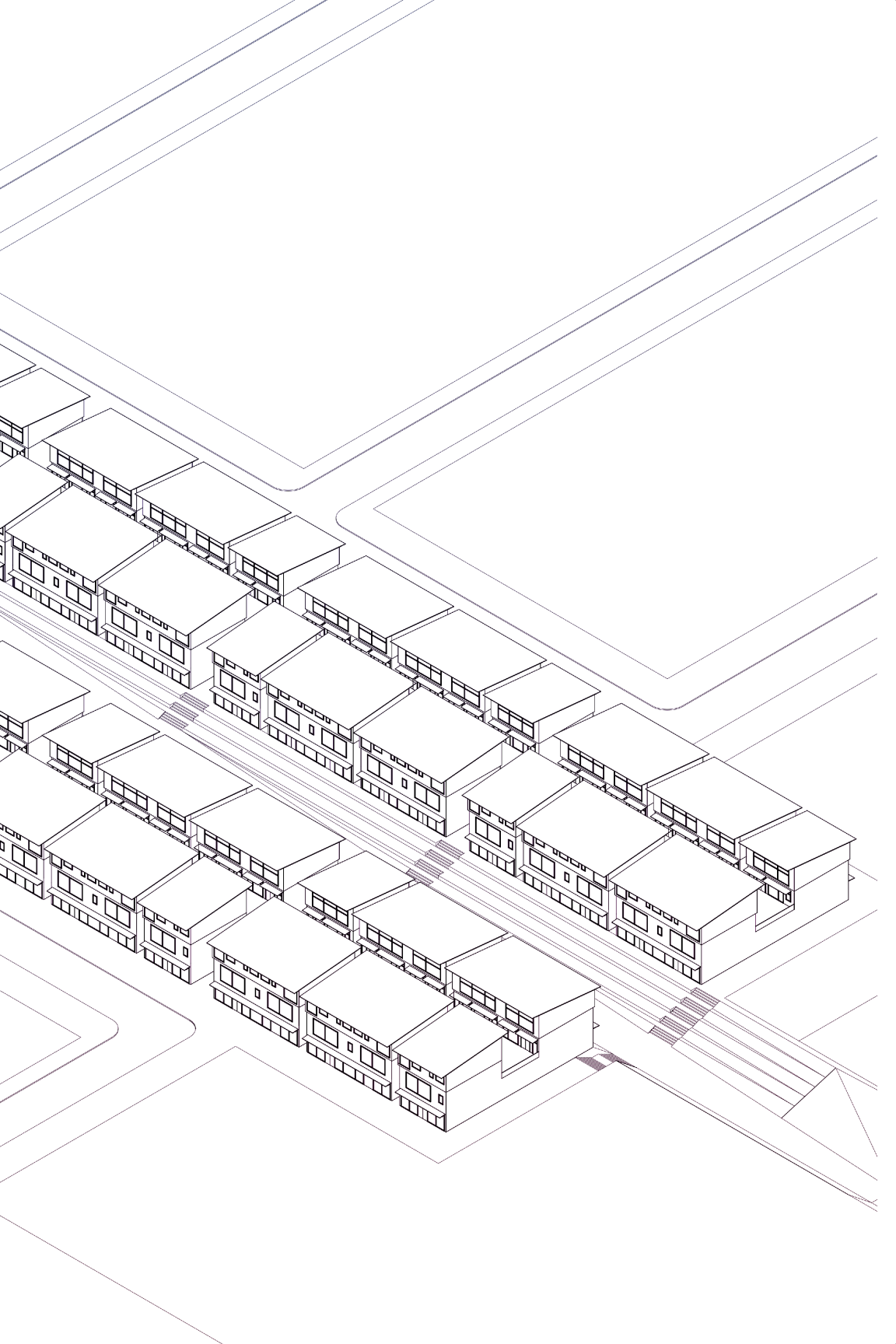
Although this design failed to meet the requirements of site, it did help in furthering the overall idea of how to design for public-social-private spaces. The most ground was made in designing the residential spaces, a portion of the work that will make it



to the final design in some form.

The next step of the process was to once again go back to the site and evaluate the major forces of it. By doing so it could be determined what forces would play the largest role in the design of the final project.





Forces at Work

In returning to the site for one final evaluation, several forces were observed and taken into account.

1. Dequindre Cut: The Dequindre Cut itself will play a huge role in the project, as the most prominent site feature it is given the most weight in the design. Failing in this requirement would not be acceptable.

2. Future Midtown Connection: The future connection to Midtown was given the next strongest influence, as it will soon be a major entry point onto the site.

3. Mack Avenue Terminus: All end points have significance, the Dequindre Cut is no exception. As this will not be a true end point once it continues to Hamtramck, this is given the third most influence. It is not an intersection, merely a point along the path.

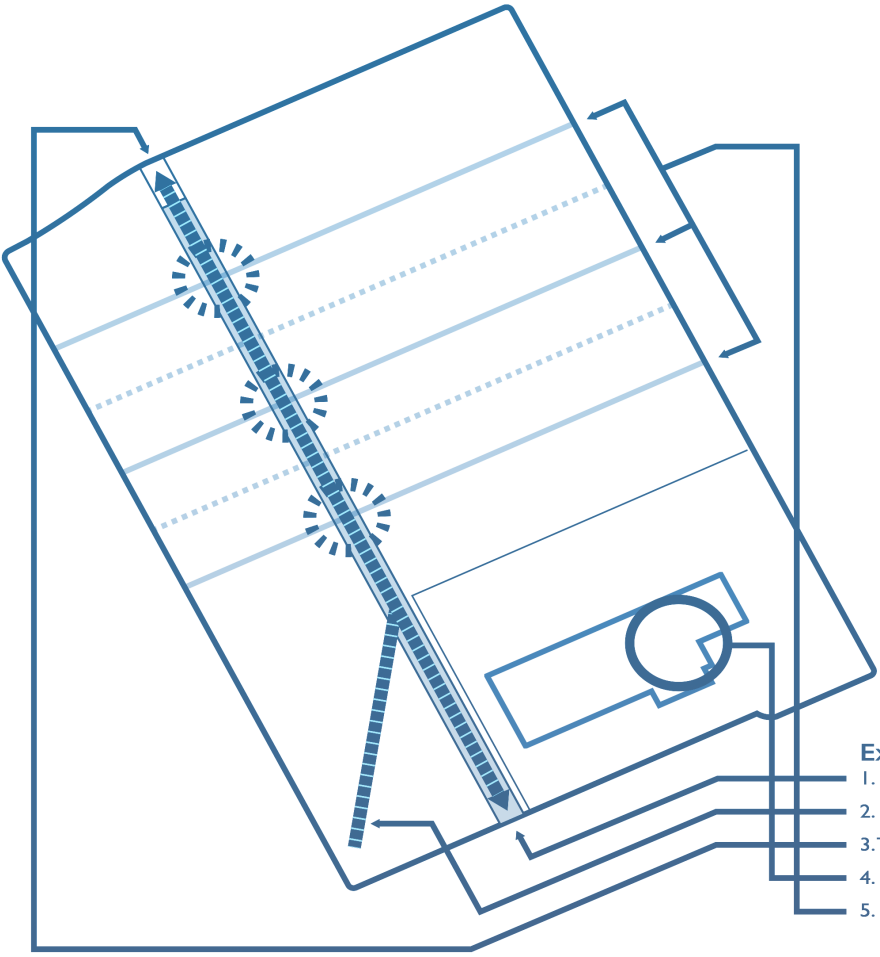
4. Existing School: There is an existing school on the site, although it is fenced off and private from the site itself it still holds a sway over the site at large.

5. Existing Streets: The existing streets on the site have the potential to continue onward. They should at the least be acknowledged by the site's design.

These forces were taken into account in the next several schemes, each of which will be gone over in some detail as to its strengths and weaknesses concerning not only the site, but the idea of public-social-private.

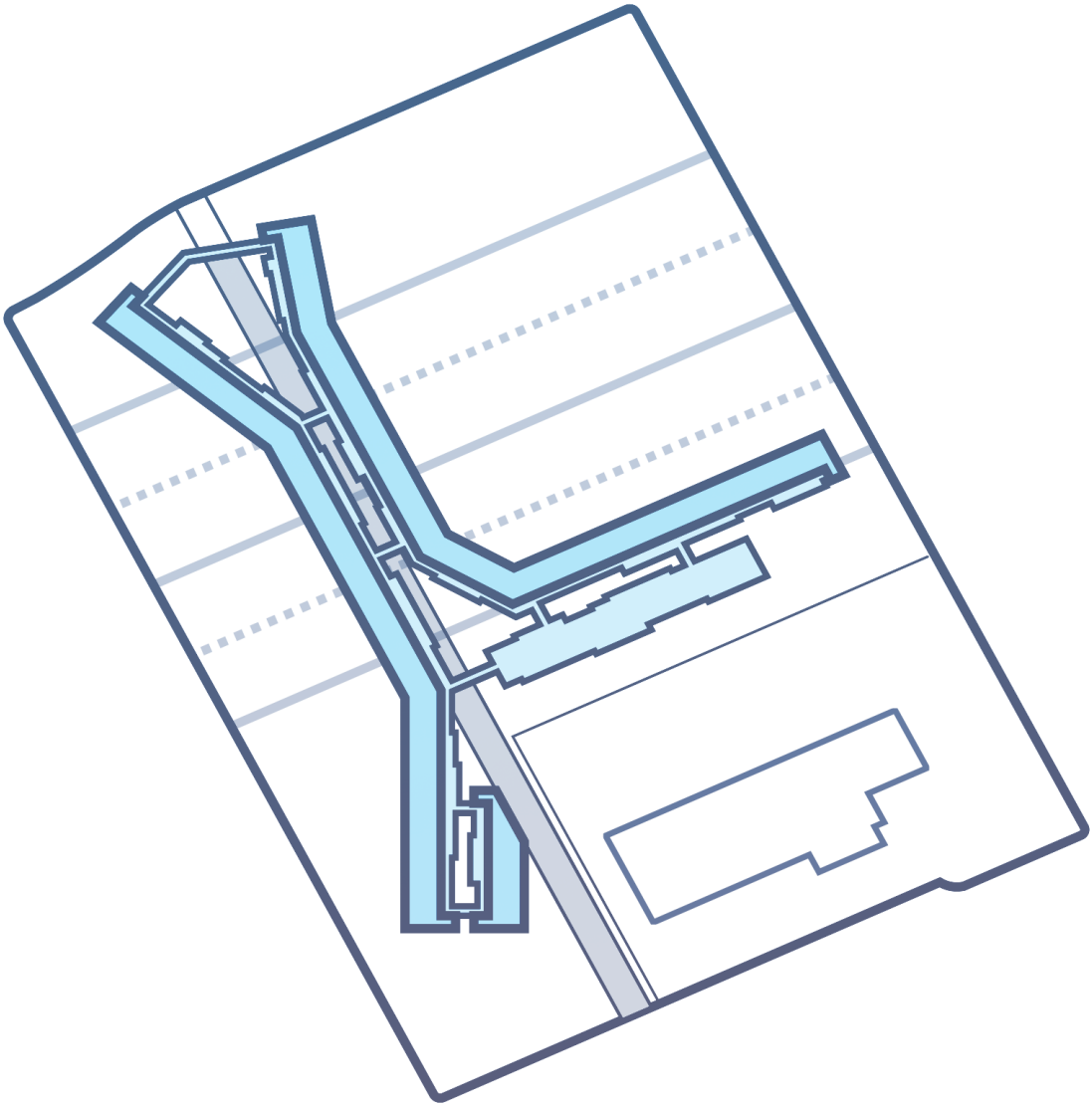
Eventually a final scheme was chosen from the set, presented here are the five strongest schemes, the last of which was chosen to move forward with.

While the chosen scheme was believed to be the strongest in terms of site and design concept, ideas from many of the others were taken into account in the final design.



Existing Site Forces

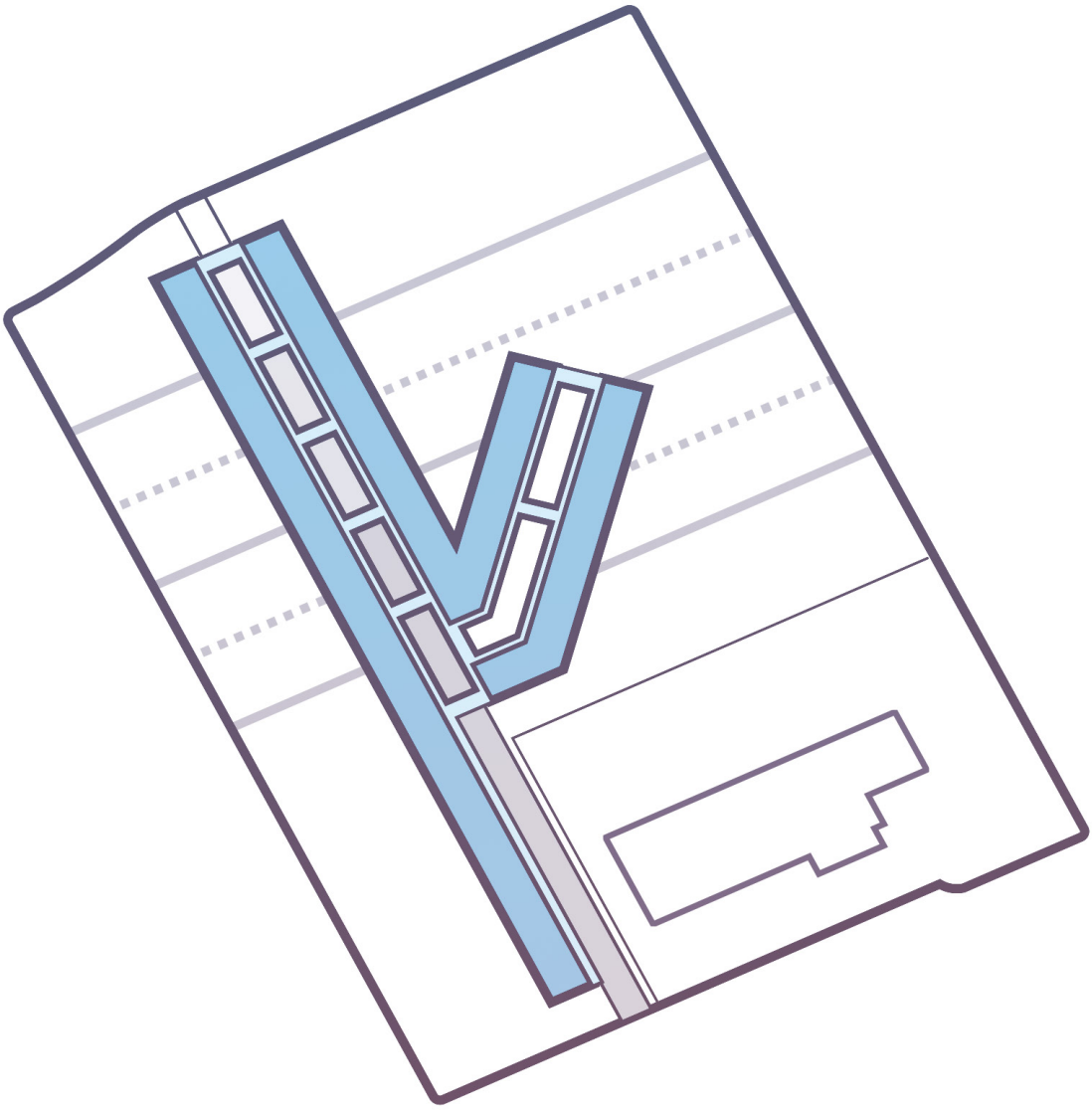
1. Dequindre Cut
2. Future Midtown Connection
3. Terminus At Mack Ave.
4. Existing School
5. Existing Streets



This scheme's core concept was the elevation of social space and the compression and release of end points.

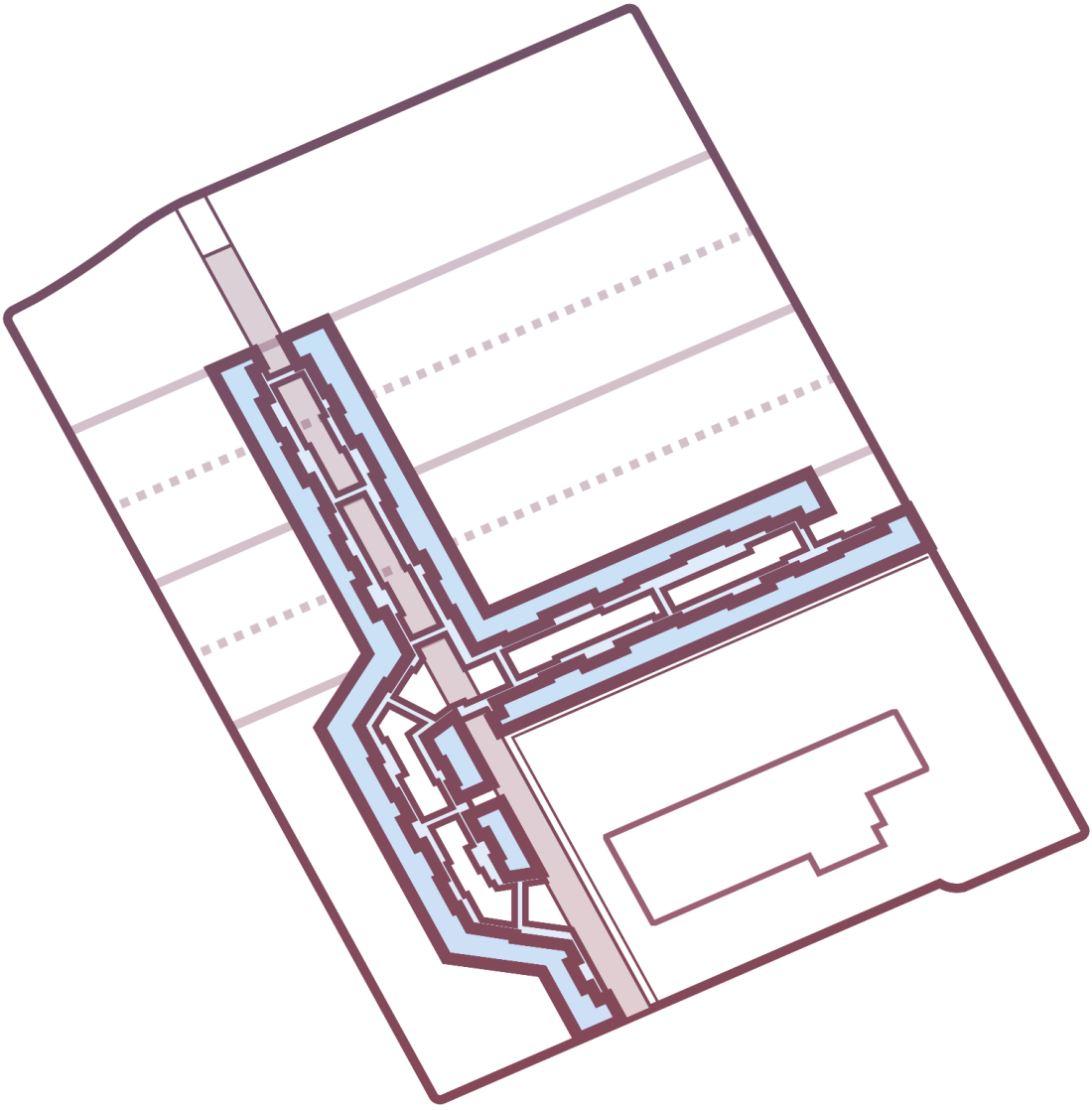
It sought to bring the Dequindre cut up onto garden pathways that line the social interior, expanding upon the previous idea.

While it did much to celebrate the Dequindre Cut itself and the Mack Avenue terminus point, it did little in almost every other regard and even ignored the streets completely. Despite this it remains one of the strongest of this set of schemes.



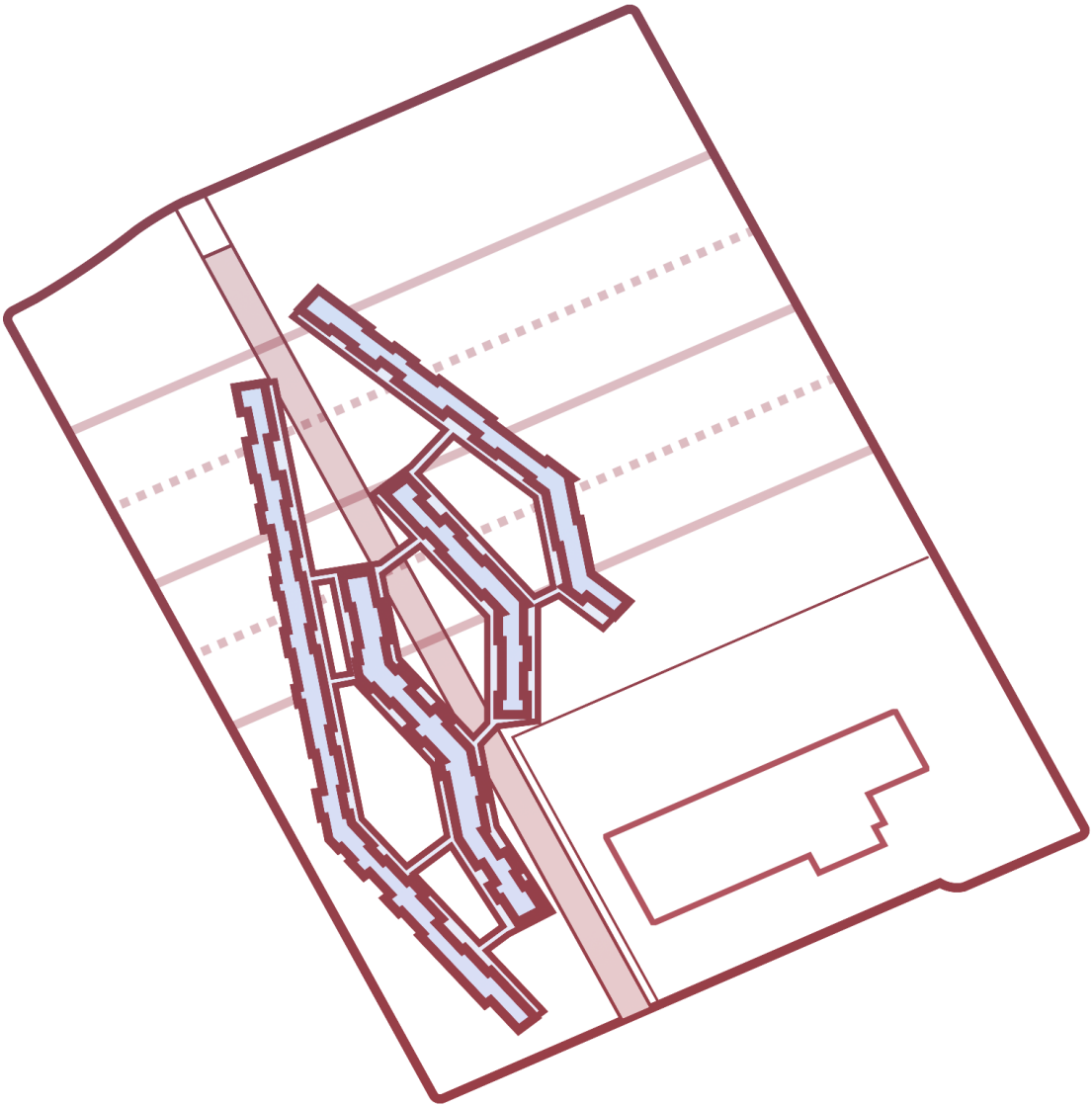
Much like the previous scheme, this scheme focused on the Dequindre Cut itself and the expansion into the rest of the site.

It once again brings the Cut up to a new level in hopes of expanding it and wrapping the community around the Dequindre cut with the Dequindre cut, but it fails to address almost every other site force. (It also looked like an exposed shopping mall.)

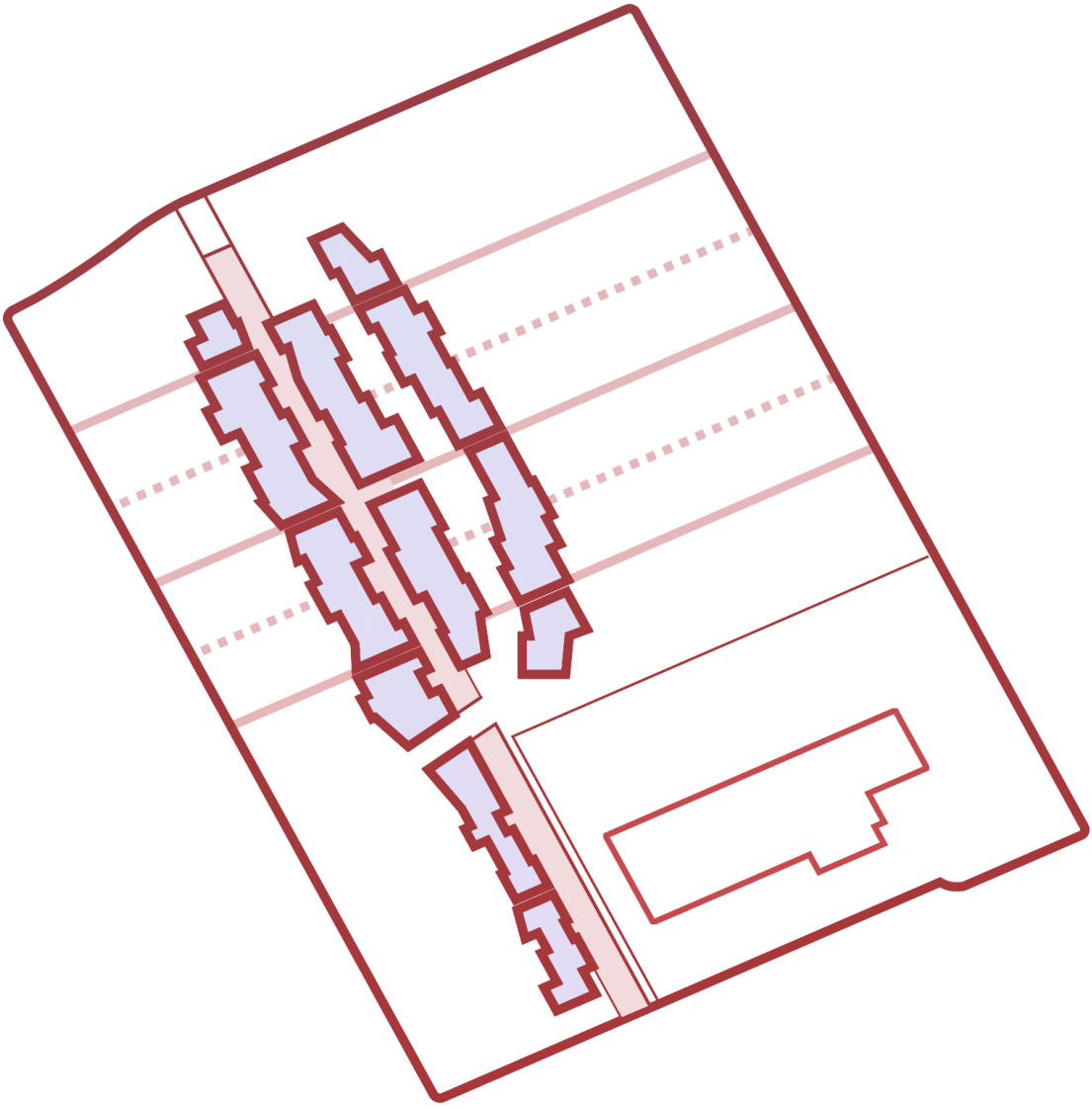


This scheme showed a lot of promise in the amount of energy it produced, while it may have ignored some of the forces of the site, it had other goals in mind.

The idea here was to bring the central focus down towards the lowest level of the cut, at the base of the slope. Here it bridged off onto another raised section where the future Midtown connection would be made. Although, it did not easily allow entry for it and so it was left behind.



This scheme once again took the school into account, while at the same time play with the shape of the Dequindre Cut, it expanded and compressed the site as a means of creating focal points along the central path. At the same time, it created two branching paths to either side of the Dequindre Cut which compress at the Mack Avenue Terminus Point.



This final scheme, took the ideas of those before it and applied all of their central ideas onto the site's forces.

Creating a path system that would continue the existing roads and create a raised section of the cut, it expands the areas of interaction.

This plan engaged most of the site's forces while ignoring the neighboring school as a fenced off entity.

This scheme would become the basis of the following project. Utilizing the ideas of the other schemes as a way of strengthening the core of this scheme.

The Village of Eastern Market

The focus of the overall project remained the same, creating a community within Eastern Market with a strong public-social-private dynamic.

The Dequindre cut itself remains basically the same, as it is already a designed greenway path it serves as one of the major entry points into the village. Along the cut many shops and gathering spaces can be found.

Alongside the cut is a new path, connecting from the Future Midtown Bike Path around the social hub and back to the Dequindre Cut itself. This path serves to both connect the site with Midtown as well as the nearby Easter Market center.

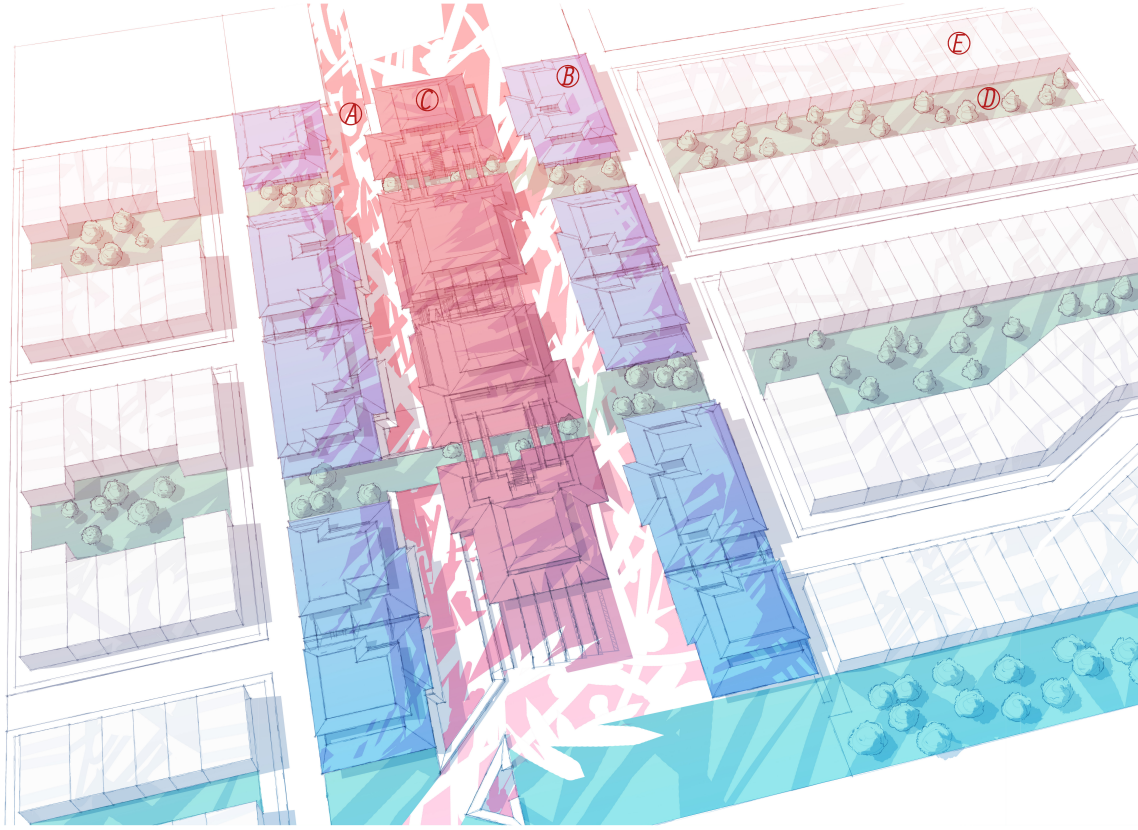
At the center of the site, bordering the Dequindre Cut to the South-West and the raised Market Path to the East, lies the social gathering hub of the site. These buildings were designed at a slightly larger scale than its neighbors, its sides facing only the social interiors of the site. This hub was meant to serve as a gathering nexus along the Dequindre Cut, its purpose, to draw in those traveling both along the cut and through the village. It serves as an "In-Focus" point and can fill various functions as can be seen from the diagram to the right. From restaurants to galleries, shops to music venues.

The existing streets continue towards the site, connecting the neighborhoods around the area with the Dequindre Cut. When these streets reach the Village itself, they become paths down onto the Market and the Dequindre Cut. Beginning from the center of each of those blocks sprouts a linear park.

These linear parks, or garden paths, serve as a sort of communal space in the neighboring blocks and as resting points within the village itself. Crossing and intersecting with the Dequindre Cut where they bridge across it to continue on.

These three types of pathing through the site led to the creation of the reworked live-work units (shown in blue) that line either side of the village.

The rest of the area is purposed with future development around the expanded streets and garden paths. These living units will vary in type, bring a larger variation to the different types of residential units within the area at large.



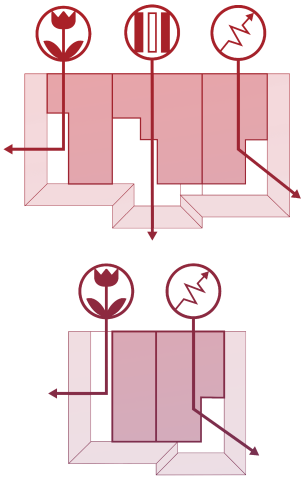
Ⓐ Dequindre Cut

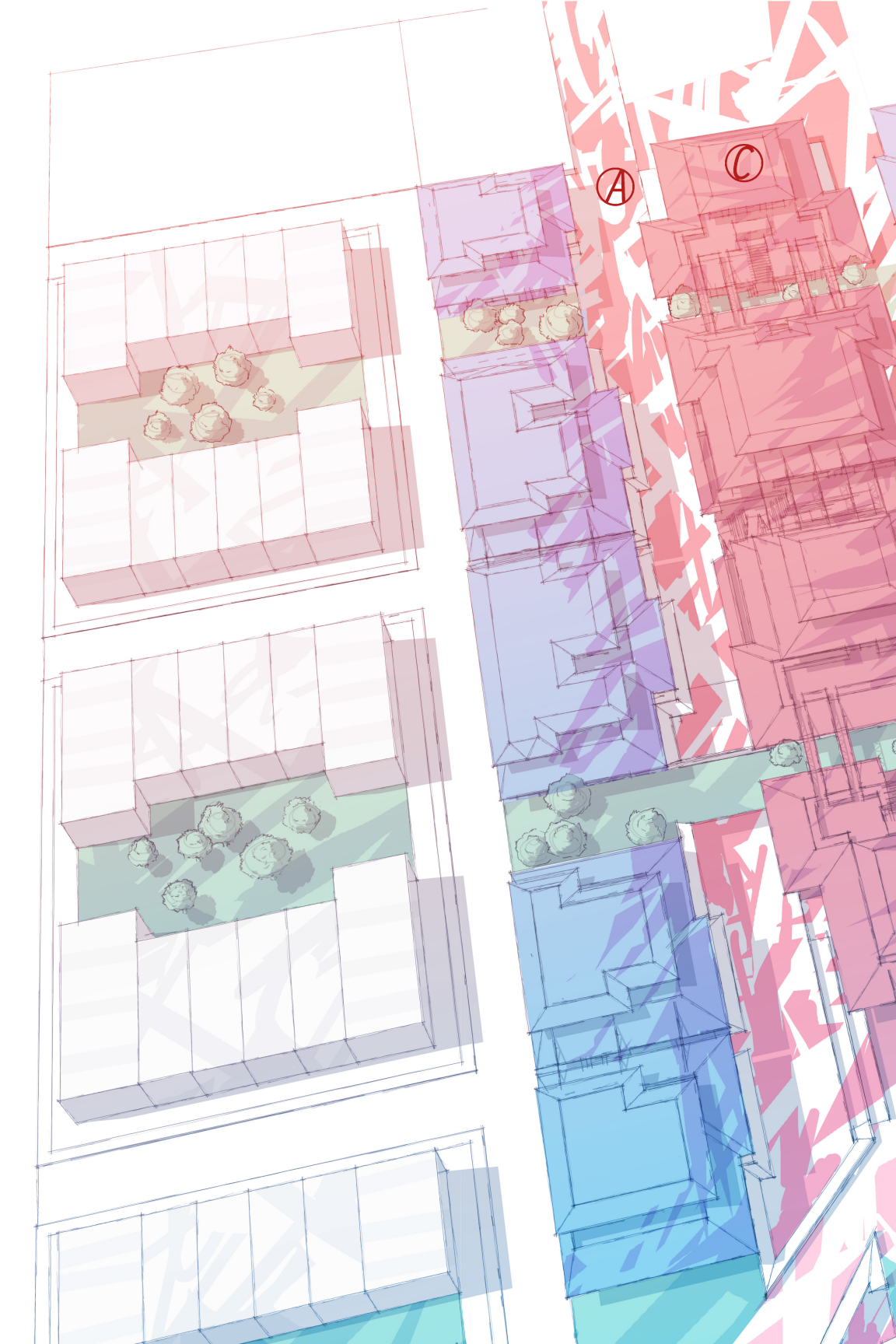
Ⓑ Live-Work Residential

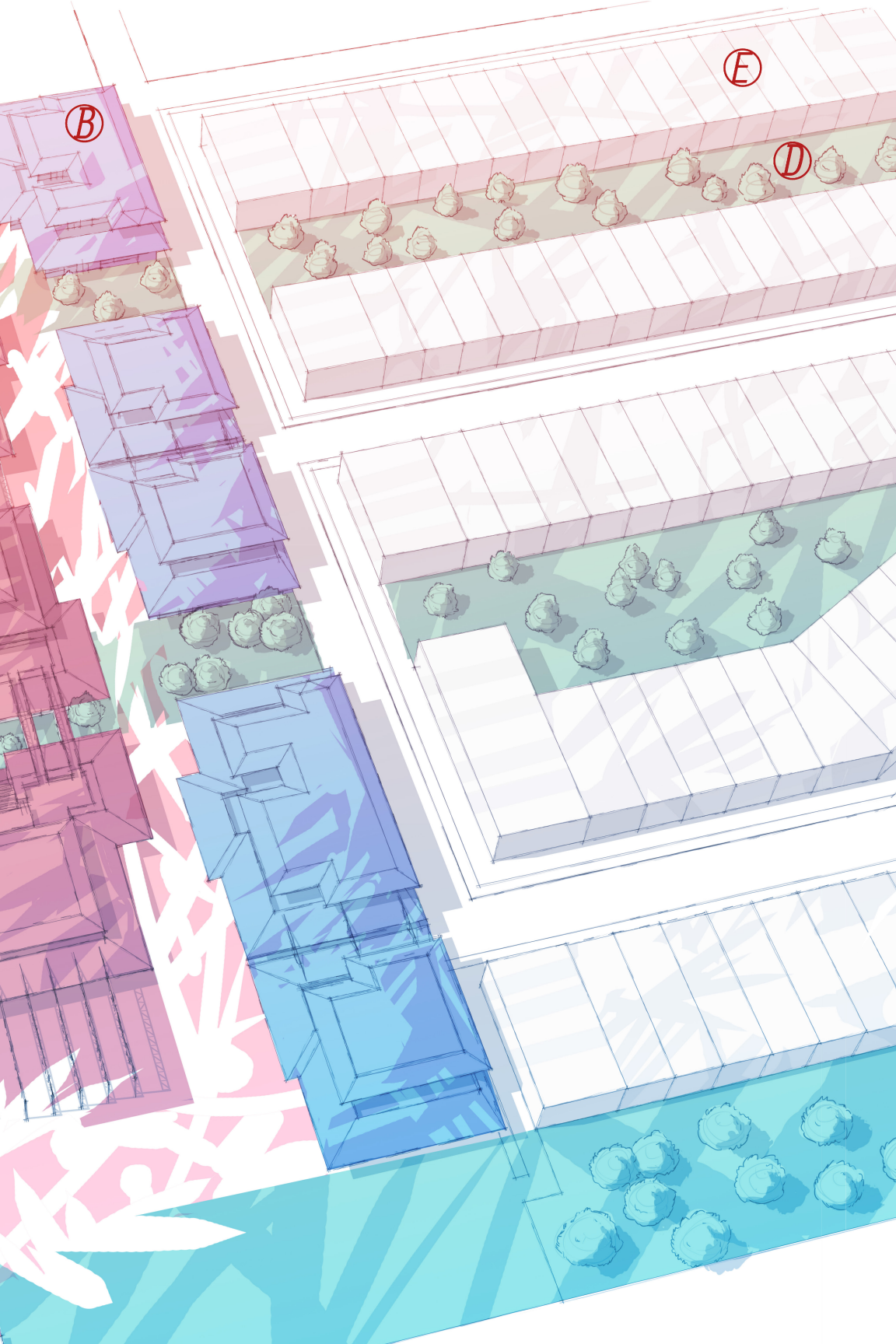
Ⓒ Gathering Spaces

Ⓓ Linear Parks

Ⓔ Future Developments







Each apartment was designed similar to the previous sketch problem. With the main entry at ground level, facing the streets and a secondary entry path on the Dequindre Cut and Market Path side. This allows residents to easily bring guests up from the social areas and into their homes, which act as secondary social gathering spaces.

Each Apartment typology was designed with the idea of what path it bordered in mind. The Garden Path Apartments face to the garden itself, these apartments have the largest exterior space, acting as the true social apartment.

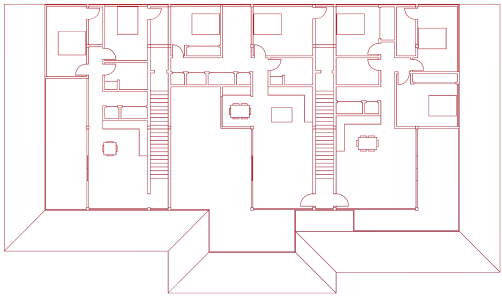
The Cut Apartment Typology focuses on the Dequindre Cut and Market path itself and serves as a passing social area. The interior space here is the largest, even making it possible for three bedrooms and two bathrooms. While at the same time boasting a comfortable exterior terrace.

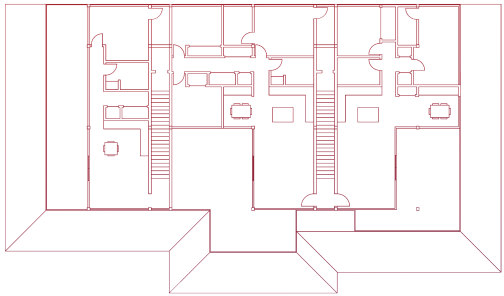
The final typology is that of the Path Apartments, these border the narrower paths of the site and focus on the intersections of Dequindre Cut and paths. These corner apartments boast a long, yet narrow exterior path leading to a larger area at the corner.

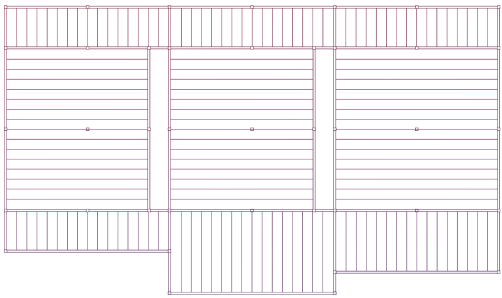
The purpose of these living spaces was to create a hierarchy of space, while at the same time allowing for variances that would allow residence to choose an apartment based off of their preferred living style. While these apartments are still considered live-work apartments with a large work and retail space beneath, in this design it is also possible for this space to be rented out, separate from the home above.

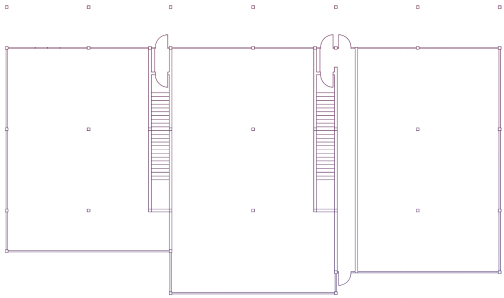
The different apartment typologies were created to work with the four methods of interaction stated earlier, while still allowing for the private life that many American's enjoy and covet. Through their use, many other variations become possible on other potential sites.

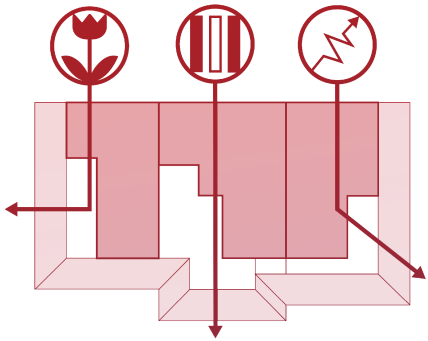
If their basic idea is retained it might be possible to create an open source model that is not only able to fit into any site, but is able to do so without ignoring the site itself, but by making it a real strength.

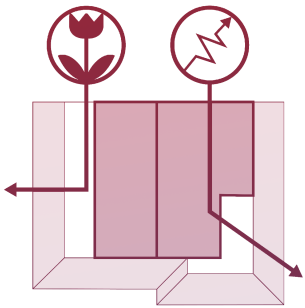












Bridging elements were used in order to bring the garden paths up into the social hubs, creating elevated gardens which allow for slightly more private gathering spaces. The Southern-most hub (shown at the top right) functions as an open air market, a smaller continuation off of the larger Eastern Market just to the South.

In section, the horizontality of the design becomes present, drawing elements from prairie-style architecture, it both expresses the movement of the Dequindre Cut and the site itself.

The architecture itself was intended to be built from a timber structure with wood, glass, steel and brick as aesthetic materials. This was done in respect of the historic district the project lies within. The buildings themselves remain low to the ground in order to express the site.

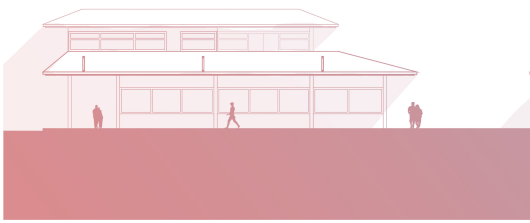
In the end, the idea was to encourage interaction between people through architecture, to not only allow for these interactions to occur, but to instigate and invigorate them. While the project keeps the automobile from the heart of the project, it does so in order to respect the Dequindre Cut, not as a separate street, but as a pedestrian "freeway" through the city.

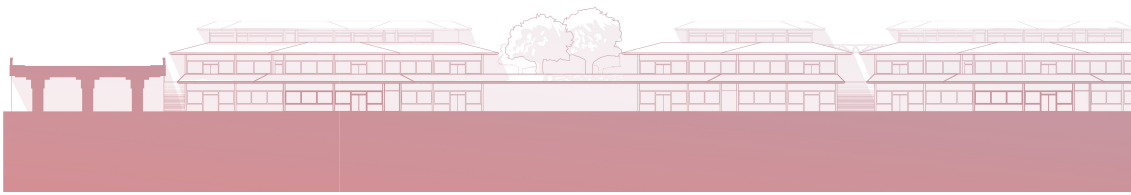
The idea was never to forsake the care completely, but to find a space for it as a supporting character. Within the scope of this project it serves only to bring people and goods to the site, without cutting through it itself.

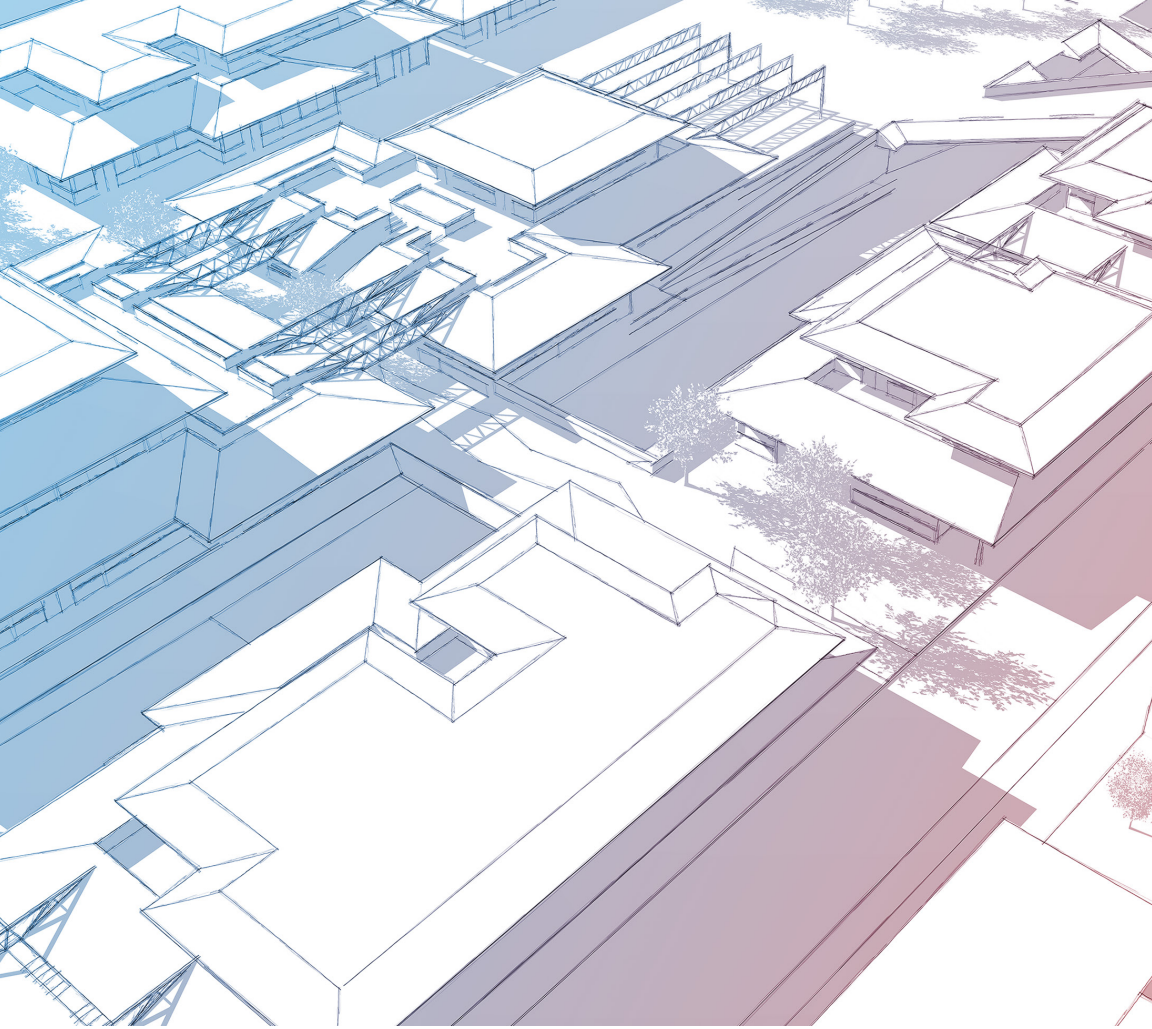
While the Dequindre Cut remains an element that by its very name cuts the site in two, in this project it serves to bind the two halves together through use of architecture and points of interaction.

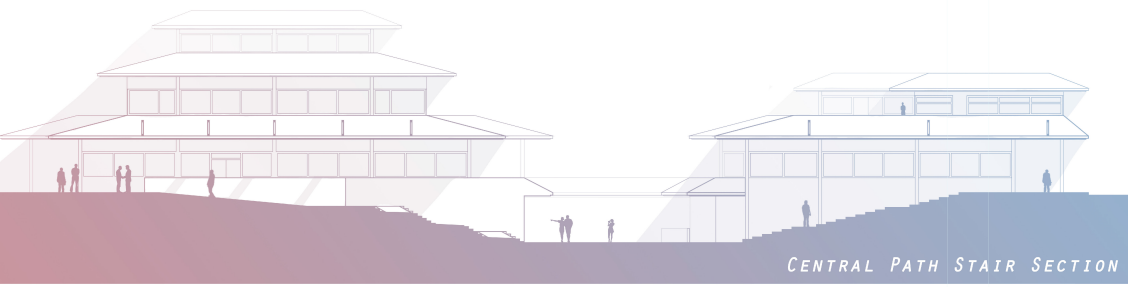
Architecture should bring people together, it is the area that people inhabit in the world and so it must do what it can to help forge bonds between those that inhabit it.

Architecture without people is simply sculpture. Architecture needs people to give it life, and so it too should brighten and invigorate those who give it that life.

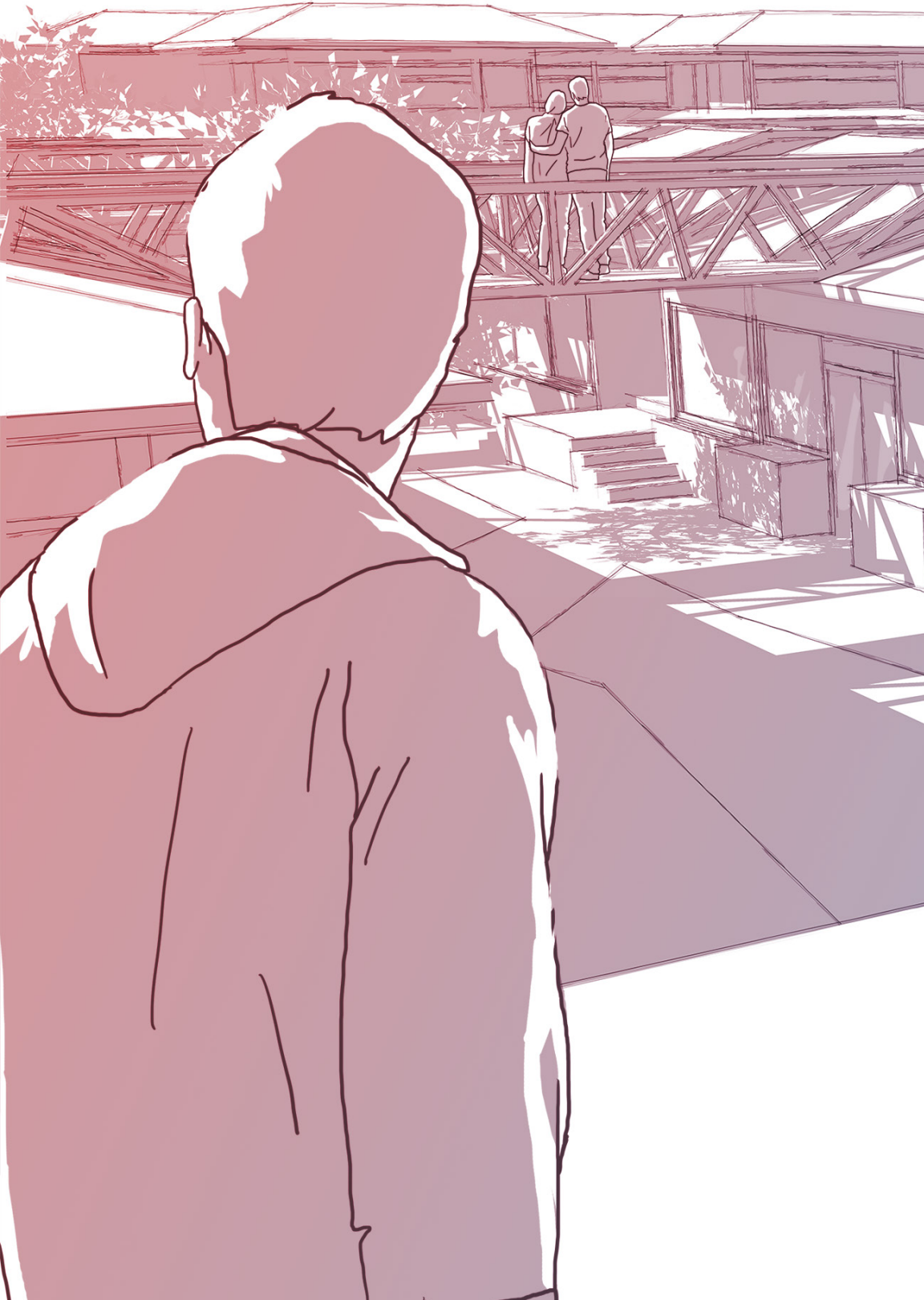


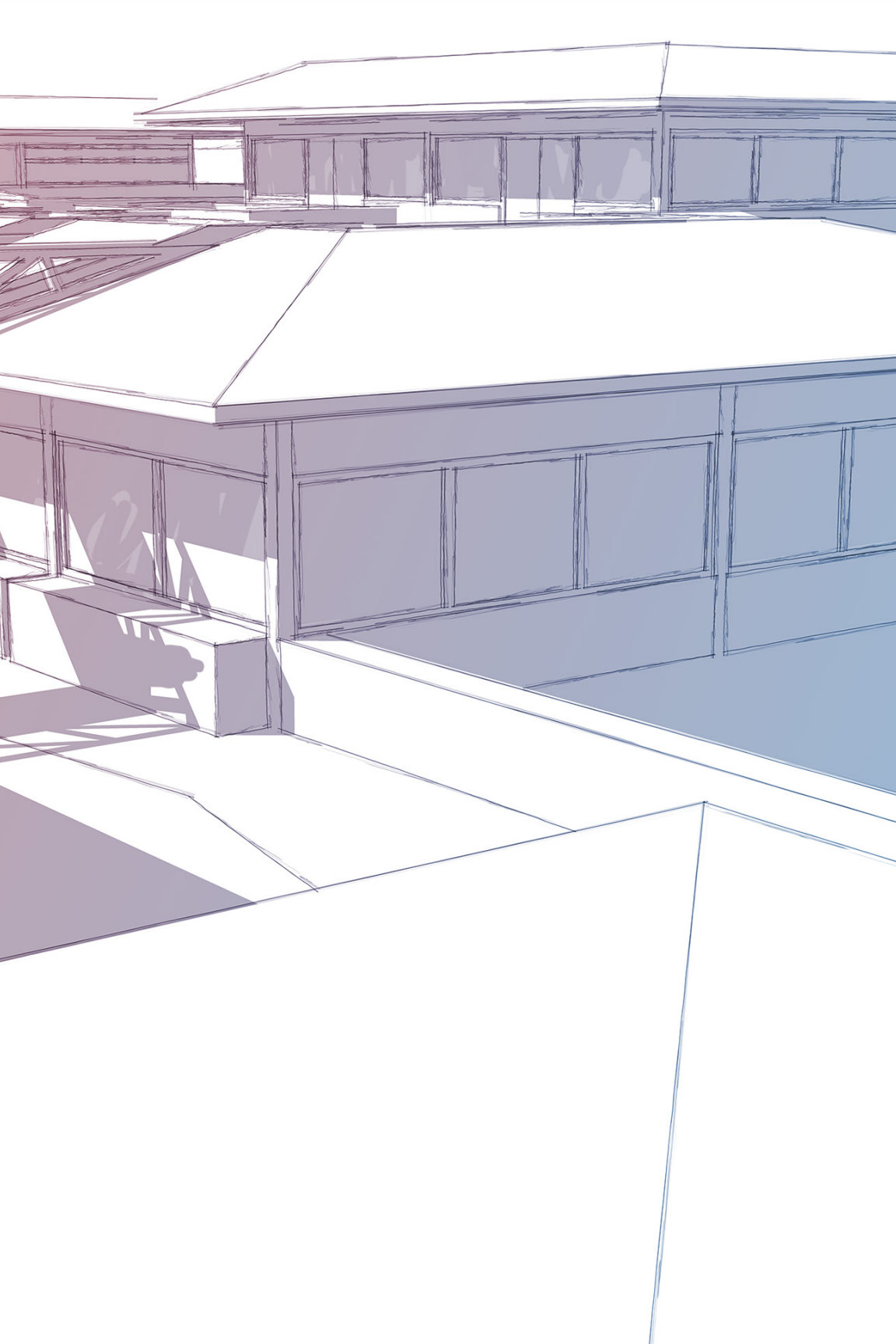


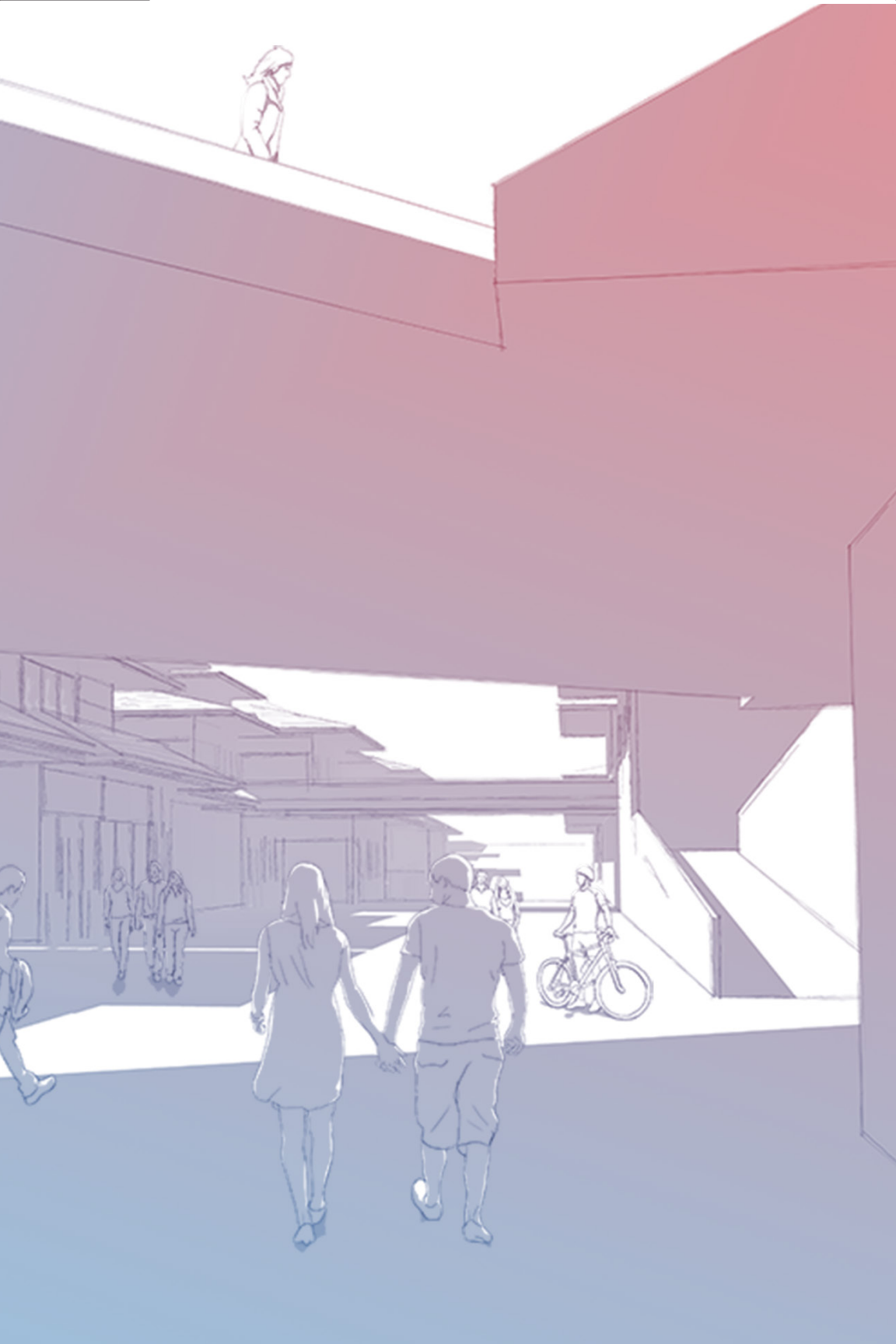


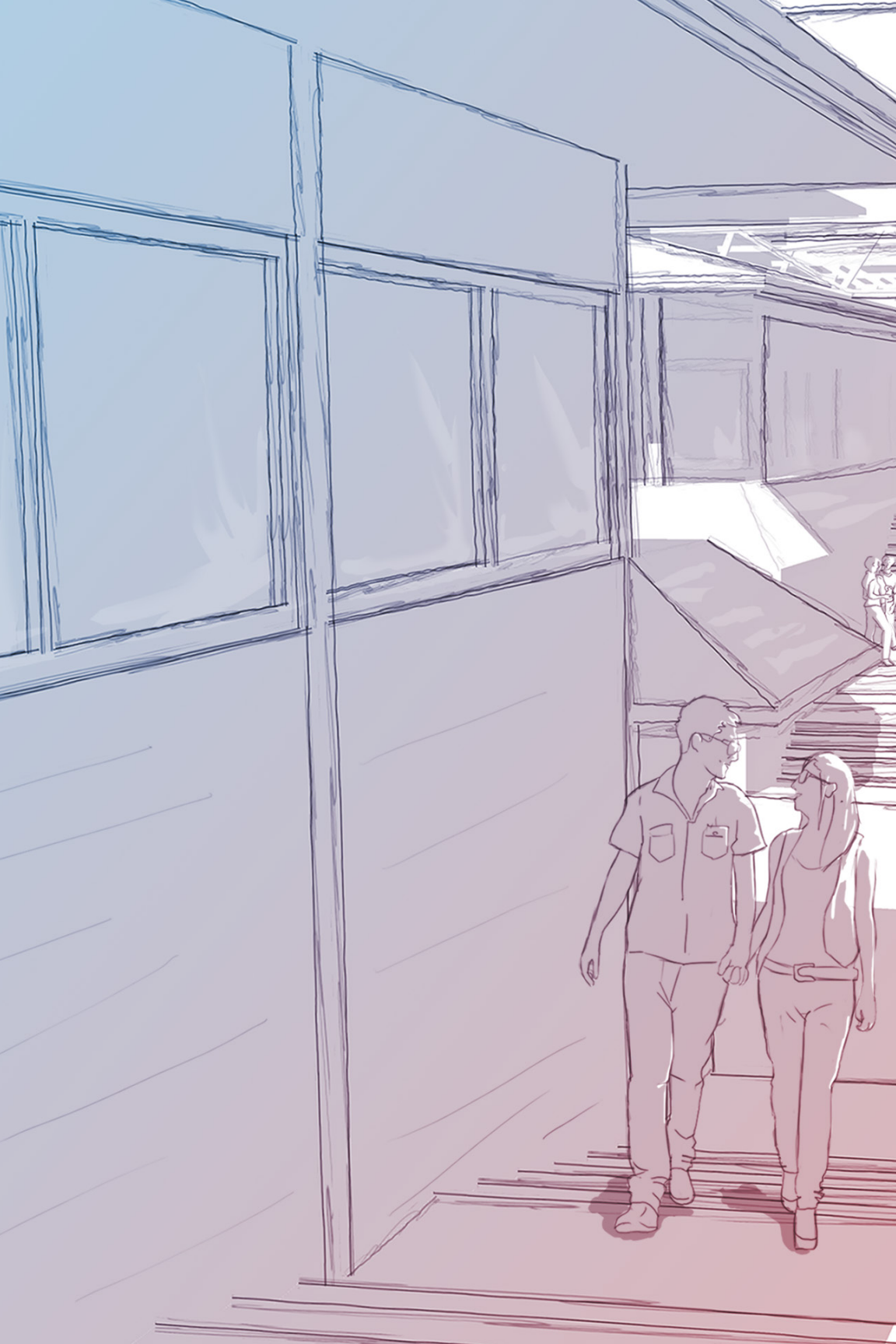


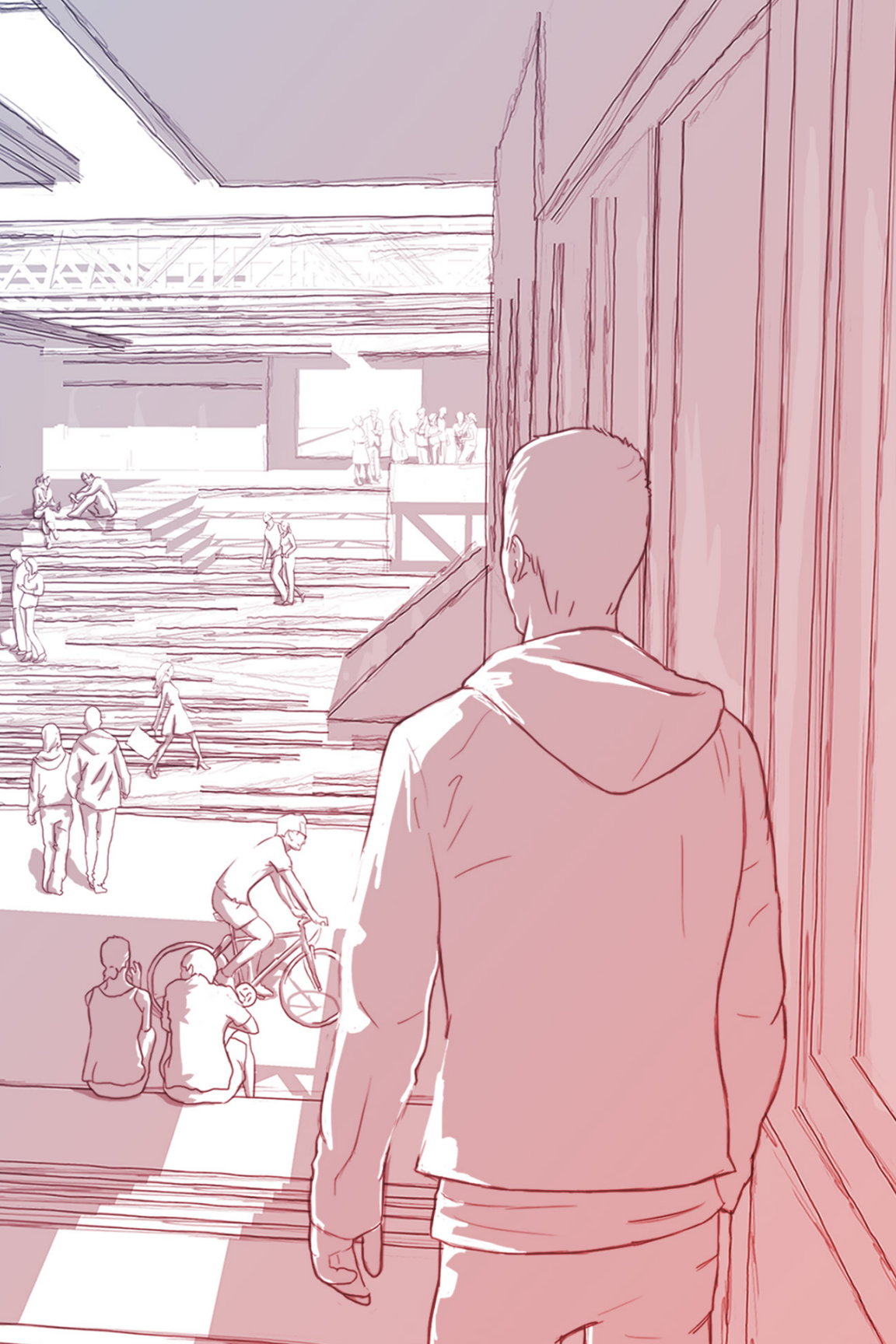
Central Path Stair Section











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