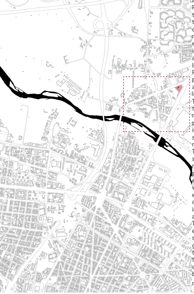
The Community Hub as Urban Strategy

The adaptive reuse of The Former Custom House as a catalyst for the regeneration of Pietra Alta district in Turin

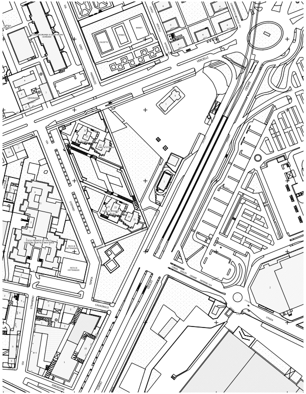


The project proposes a community hub in Pietra Alta located at the former Custom house at the Rotonda della Sfinge, a strategic yet neglected threshold within north Turin. The site lies at the intersection of major infrastructural corridors and ongoing urban transformations, including commercial developments and public space regeneration projects. Despite this concentration of investments, the area currently lacks a local civic anchor capable of supporting everyday social life.

Rather than competing with large-scale metropolitan interventions, the project positions itself as social infrastructure: a space for gathering, learning, informal exchange and collective use. The Community Hub is conceived as a connector between flows and performance, between mobility-oriented urban systems and the daily practices of residents. Its role is to translate large infrastructural transformations into human-scale spatial experiences, offering a place to stay, meet and participate

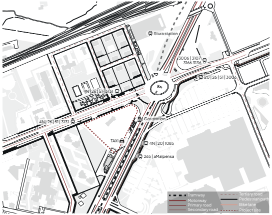
The architectural intervention operates through spatial openness, permeability and programmatic flexibility, enabling different degrees of publicness and use over time. By reactivating an existing building and redefining its relationship with the surrounding public space, the project establishes a new urban landmark that is both accessible and adaptable. The hub functions as an interface between interior and exterior, ground and underground, formal and informal activities.

Through a hybrid governance model the project supports collaboration between public institutions, local associations and informal user groups, allowing the space to evolve in response to community needs. In a context dominated by top-down infrastructural and commercial developments, this Community Hub introduce a hybrid dimension, reinforcing social cohesion and reclaiming the area a shared civic environment.



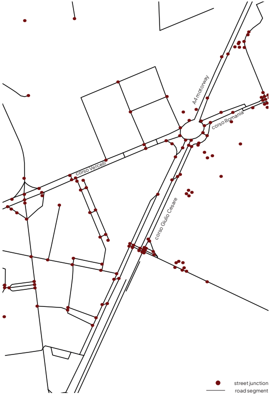
Base map From city of Turin
Scale 1:2000

URBAN CONTEXT ANALYSIS


Stura station
3006 | 3107
3166 3136
20 | 26 | 51 | 3006
4N | 26 | 51 | 3131
4N | 26 | 51 | 3131
Gas station
TAXI
4N | 20 | 1085
265 | aMalpensa
Tram way
Motorway
Primary road
Secondary road
Tertiary road
Pedestrian path
Bike lane
Project site

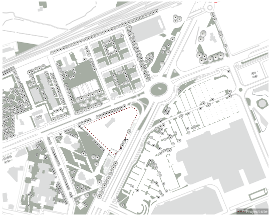
Integrated Mobility Network

The diagram illustrates the multimodal transport network surrounding the study area, including the hierarchy of the road system, pedestrian and cycling routes, tram infrastructure, and public transport services. The convergence of these mobility networks highlights the site's strategic position at the intersection of local and metropolitan movement corridors, providing direct accessibility for residents, commuters, and visitors. Beyond ensuring efficient connectivity, this network reinforces the site's potential to function as an accessible public destination capable of linking surrounding residential neighbourhoods with commercial activities, public facilities, and future urban developments. The combination of multiple transport modes establishes the site as an important mobility node and creates favourable conditions for the proposed community-oriented intervention.


A4 motorway
corso Romania
corso Vercelli
corso Giulio Cesare
street junction
road segment

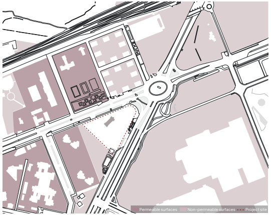
Street Network Connectivity

The graph represents the topological structure of the road network. Nodes correspond to street junctions, while links represent road segments, illustrating the degree of connectivity and permeability within the study area.


Project site

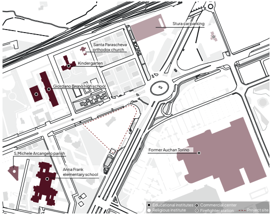
Green Infrastructure and Existing Vegetation

Identification of the existing network of green areas and tree-lined streets around the intervention site. The surrounding vegetation plays a key role in defining spatial character, environmental comfort, and potential ecological connections for the future project.


Permeable surfaces
Non-permeable surfaces
Project site

Spatial Permeability

The map illustrates the degree of pedestrian permeability within the study area. Publicly accessible spaces are distinguished from enclosed or fenced areas with restricted access, highlighting the continuity of pedestrian movement and the physical barriers surrounding the project site.

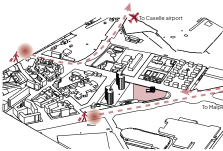

Stura car parking
Santa Parascheva orthodox church
Kindergarten
Giordano Bruno high school
S.Michele Arcangelo parish
Anna Frank elementary school
Former Auchan Torino
Educational institutes
Religious institute
Commercial center
Firefighter station
Project site

Services

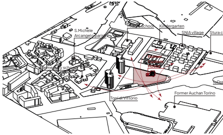
This diagram identifies the main services and public institutions located within the study area. Their distribution reveals the site's integration within an active urban environment supported by educational, commercial, and community facilities.

0 10 20 40m

STRATEGIC URBAN POSITION – MULTI-SCALAR APPROACH

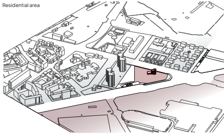

To Caselle airport
To Malpe

URBAN GATEWAY


S.Michele Arcangelo parish
Middle school
Kindergarten
SNIA village
Stura c
Former Custom House
Elementary school
Torri di Vittorio
Former Auchan Torino

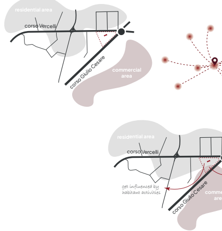
CATALYTIC URBAN NODE

Residential area



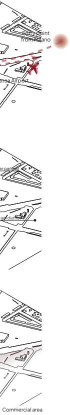
URBAN THRESHOLD

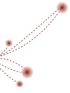
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

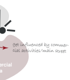

residential area
corso Vercelli
corso Giulio Cesare
commercial area
residential area
corso Vercelli
get influenced by habitant activities
corso Giulio Cesare
comme
are

Urban influences

The site is influenced by the coexistence of residential and commercial activities. Dai destination-oriented commercial flows converge around the site, defining its role wi context.

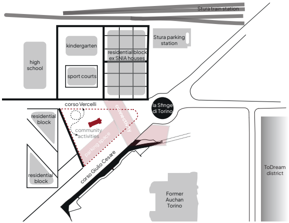

Entry point from Milano
nsa Airport
ar parking
am district
Commercial area


Site as urban node


get influenced by commercial activities/main street
ercial
a

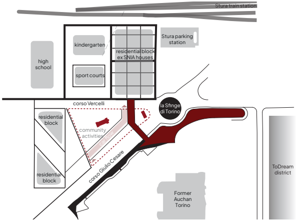
ly neighbourhood use and
thin the surrounding urban

URBAN STRATEGIES


Stura train station
kindergarten
residential block ex SNIA houses
Stura parking station
high school
sport courts
corso Vercelli
la Sfinge di Torino
residential block
community activities
parking space
Connectivity
residential block
corso Giulio Cesare
ToDream district
Former Auchan Torino

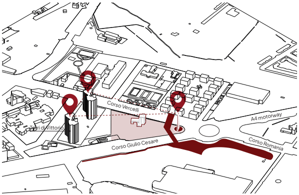
Functional zoning

The site's strategic location between residential, commercial, educational, and transport functions creates the conditions for a context-responsive functional organization. The proposed zoning reinforces its role as a **public interface**, connecting different urban activities and supporting the **transformation** of the surrounding area.


Stura train station
kindergarten
residential block ex SNIA houses
Stura parking station
high school
sport courts
corso Vercelli
la Sfinge di Torino
residential block
community activities
residential block
corso Giulio Cesare
ToDream district
Former Auchan Torino

Urban connectivity and slow mobility

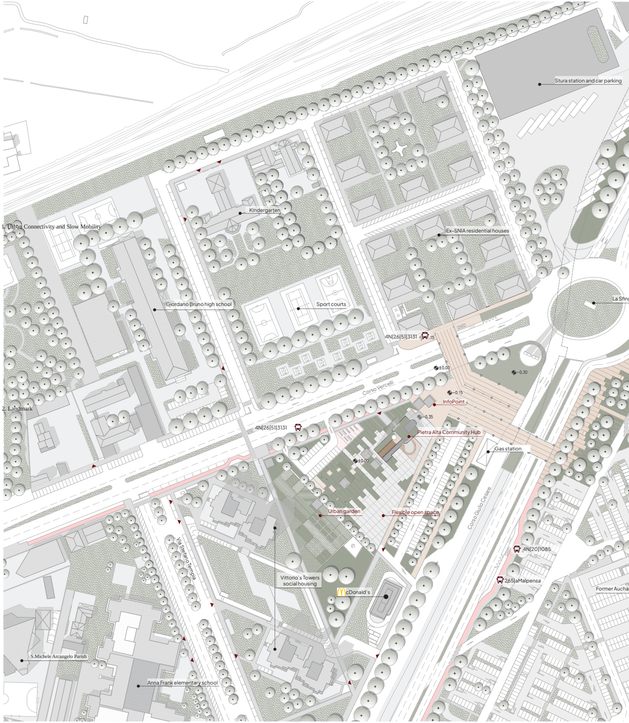
Through continuous pavementation and material coherence, the project aims to establish a smooth and readable **pedestrian network**, while simultaneously functioning as a traffic-calming strategy for vehicles approaching from the highway.

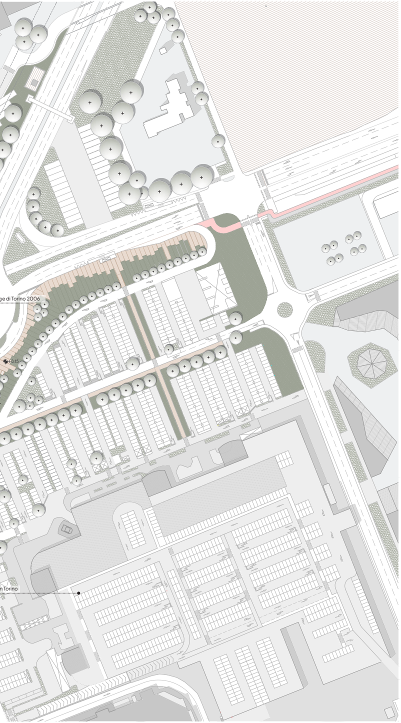

Corso Vercelli
A4 motorway
Torri di Vittorio
Corso Giulio Cesare
Corso Romania

Landmark

The final strategy addresses the symbolic and perceptual dimension of the project through the construction of visibility, orientation, and **urban recognition**. Rather than relying on monumentality alone, the intervention establishes a recognizable identity through light, spatial openness, and the articulation of a coherent nighttime presence within the surrounding urban landscape.

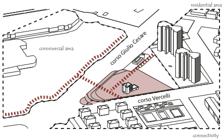
FROM STARTEGY TO MASTERPLAN


Stura station and car parking
Kindergarten
1. Urban Connectivity and Slow Mobility
Ex-SNIA residential houses
Giordano Bruno high school
Sport courts
La Sfing
4N|26|51|3131
±0.00
-0.30
Corso Vercelli
-0.15
InfoPoint
2. Landmark
-0.35
4N|26|51|3131
Pietra Alta Community Hub
Gas station
±0.00
Urban garden
Flexible open space
Corso Giulio Cesare
4N|20|1085
Via Stefano Tempia
Vittorio's Towers social housing
265|aMalpensa
McDonald's
Former Aucha
S.Michele Arcangelo Parish
Anna Frank elementary school


ge di Torino 2006
+0.15
n Torino

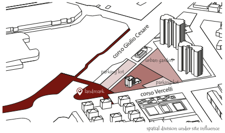
Masterplan
Scale 1:1000

Site development


residential area
commercial area
corso Giulio Cesare
corso Vercelli
connectivity

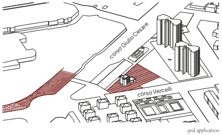
Strengthening Urban Connections

The masterplan reinforces existing movement corridors and introduces new pedestrian connections, transforming the site into a link between the residential neighbourhood, the commercial district, and surrounding transport infrastructure.


corso Giulio Cesare
urban garden
parking lot
parking lot
landmark
corso Vercelli
spatial division under site influence

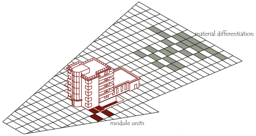
Context-Responsive Spatial Organization

The functional organization responds to the site's strategic position, allocating activities according to surrounding uses while establishing a public interface that connects residential, commercial, and community functions.


corso Giulio Cesare
corso Vercelli
grid application

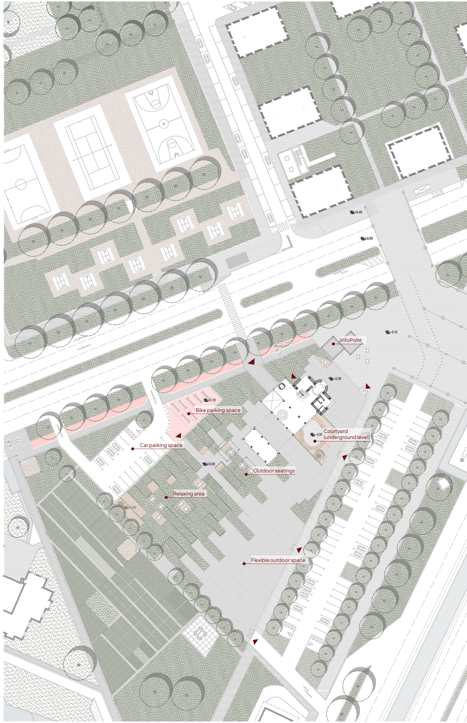
Grid integration

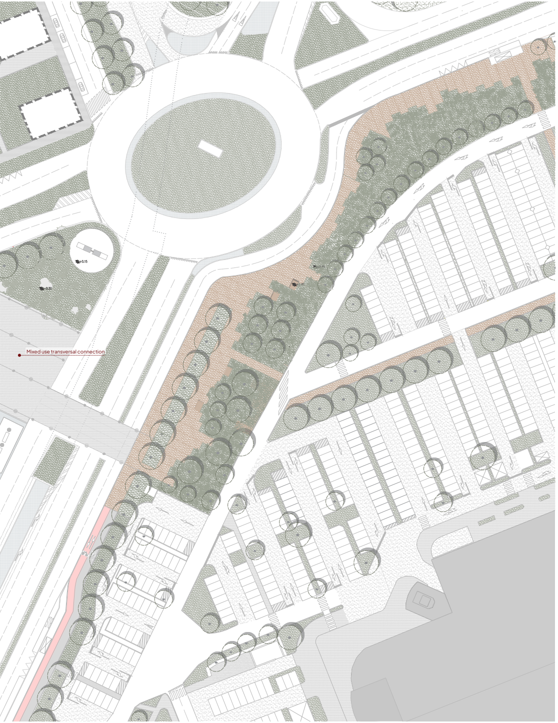
A modular grid provides the organizational framework for the intervention, ensuring spatial coherence while allowing flexibility in the arrangement of public spaces, landscape, and built elements.


material differentiation
module units

Modular framework

The modular grid is derived from the proportions of the existing building, extending its geometry across the site to establish a coherent spatial framework. This approach creates a continuous relationship between architecture and landscape, using the building as the organizing element for public spaces, circulation, and material differentiation.

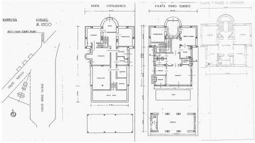

±0.45
±0.00
-0.15
InfoPoint
-0.35
+0.10
Bike parking space
Courtyard
(underground level)
-3.00
Car parking space
±0.00
Outdoor seatings
Relaxing area
Flexible outdoor space


Mixed use transversal connection
+0.15
-0.30

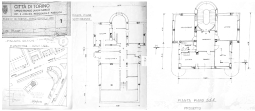
Site plan
Scale 1:500

FORMER CUSTOM HOUSE AS A COMMUNITY HUB
From passage to place

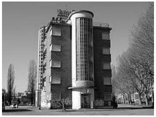
The former customs house is the historical and spatial anchor of the site. Preserving and adapting the existing structure with the support of archival material documents, allows its architectural identity to become the foundation of a new community hub, reinforcing the transformation of the area from a place of passage into a place of everyday life.

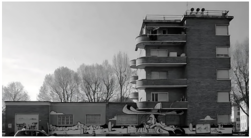

PLANIMETRIA
GENERALE
M. 1:500
PIANTA SOTTERRANEO
PIANTA PIANO TERRENO
PIANTA 1° PIANO E SUPERIORI

Selected original drawings from 1936

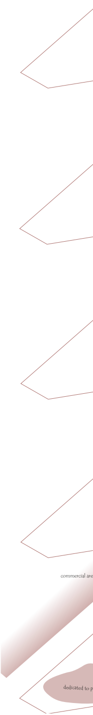

CITTÀ DI TORINO
UFFICIO TECNICO LAVORI PUBBLICI
RIP. X - EDILIZIA RESIDENZIALE PUBBLICA
STABILE IN TORINO - CORSO VERCELLI 440
1
MIGLIORIE IGIENICHE
PLANIMETRIA - SCALA 1:1000
PIANTA PIANO SOTTERRANEO
PIANTA PIANO 2-3-4
PROGETTO

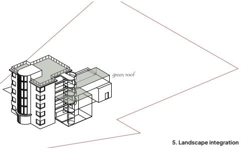
Selected refurbishment drawings from 1987



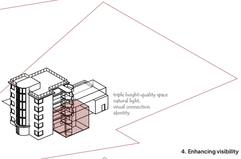


Volumetric development

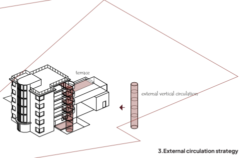

commercial are
dedicated to p



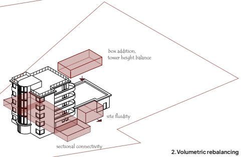
5. Landscape integration


triple height-quality space
natural light,
visual connection
identity

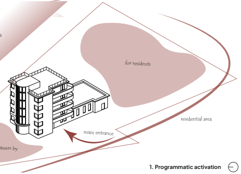
4. Enhancing visibility


terrace
external vertical circulation

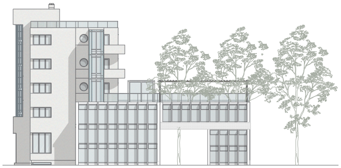
3.External circulation strategy


box addition,
tower height balance
site fluidity
sectional connectivity

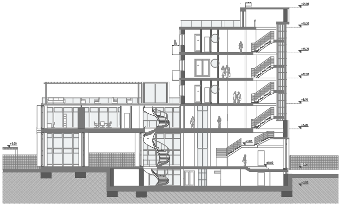
2.Volumetric rebalancing


for residents
residential area
main entrance
assers by

1. Programmatic activation



West elevation
Scale 1:200



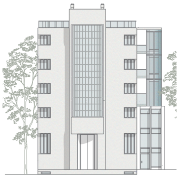
Section A-A
Scale 1:200

Internal building transformation

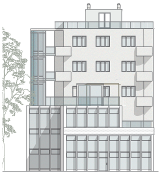
The project transforms the ground floor into a continuous and adaptable spatial field, where movement, visibility, and interaction replace conventional room-based organizatio.

Through sectional manipulation, the ground floor, underground level, and exterior landscape are interconnected as a single spatial system. Natural light, visual permeability, and multiple circulation paths extend public activity below grade, dissolving boundaries between interior and exterior while fostering spatial continuity and collective use.

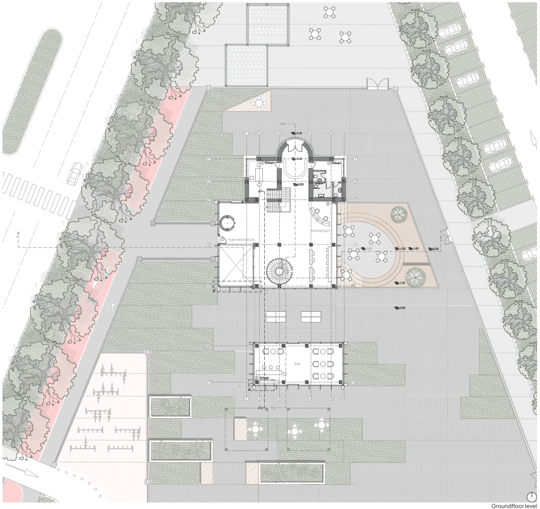
The project proposes a deliberate **breakdown** of internal **boundaries**, particularly on the ground floor, where the removal of interior walls becomes an operative act of **spatial liberation**.



North elevation
Scale 1:200

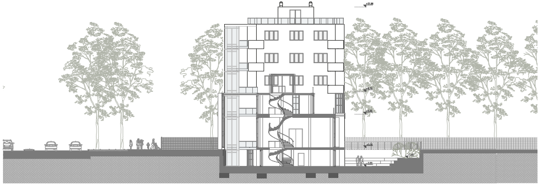


South elevation
Scale 1:200

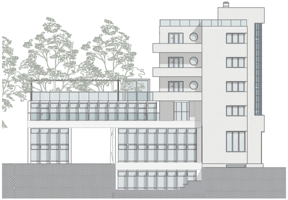

main entrance
reception
bar

Groundfloor level
Scale 1:200

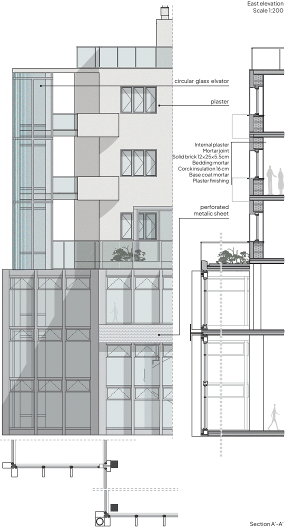
- ▨ Stabilizedgravel
- ▨ Mownlawn
- ▨ Exposedaggregateconcrete
- ▨ Timbercladding
- ▨ Concrete paving
- 🟥 Colored asphalt - bicycle lane
- ▨ Resin bound aggregate
- ▨ Grasscrede



Section B-B

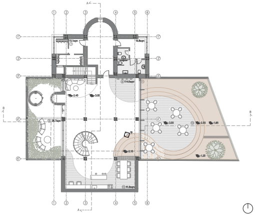


East elevation
Scale 1:200


circular glass elevator
plaster
Internal plaster
Mortar joint
Solid brick 12×25×5.5cm
Bedding mortar
Corck insulation 16 cm
Base coat mortar
Plaster finishing
perforated
metalic sheet

Section A'-A'

South facade detail
Scale 1:50

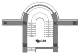


Underground level
Scale 1:200

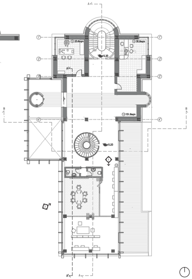
Room key:

1.Main entrance
2.Reception
3.Office
4.Services
5.Outdoor entertainment space
6.Bar
7.Lockers

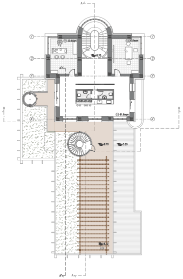
8(9)Informal seatings
10.Community kitchen
11.Courtyard
12(14) Offices
13. Multi-Functional Space
15. Office kitchen and services
16.Meeting rooms



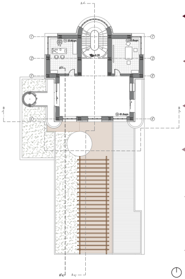
Intermediate floor



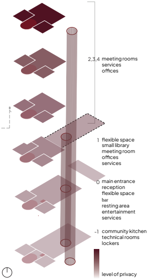
First floor
Scale 1:200



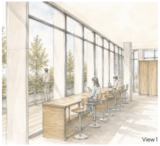
Second floor
Scale 1:200



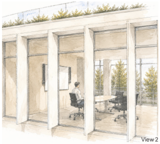
Third & fourth floor
Scale 1:200


2,3,4 meeting rooms
services
offices
1 flexible space
small library
meeting room
offices
services
0 main entrance
reception
flexible space
bar
resting area
entertainment
services
-1 community kitchen
technical rooms
lockers
level of privacy

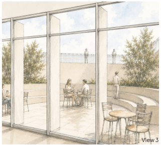
Functional scheme



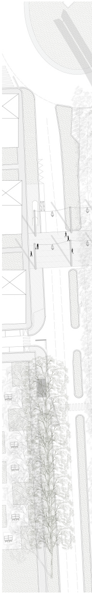
View 1



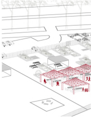
View 2

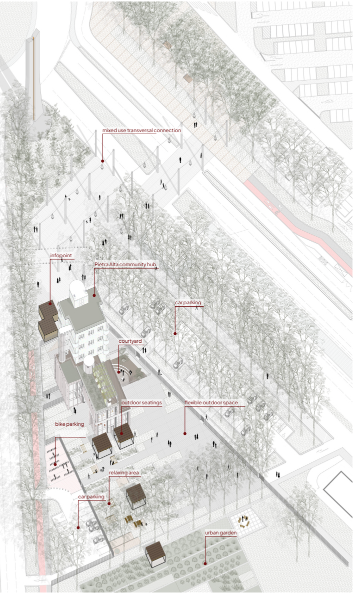


View 3

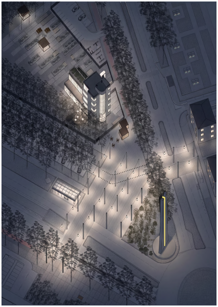


The Productive Void: Flexible Oou

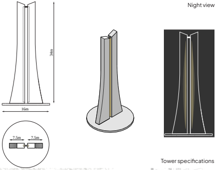



mixed use transversal connection
infopoint
Pietra Alta community hub
car parking
courtyard
outdoor seatings
flexible outdoor space
bike parking
relaxing area
car parking
urban garden

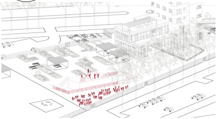
Monometric view
Scale 1:500



Night view

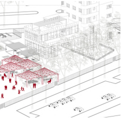

34m
16m
7.5m
7.5m

Tower specifications

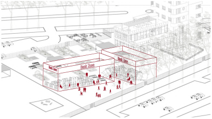


Outdoor concert

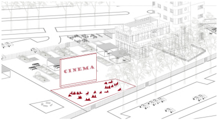
tdoor Space as Programmatic Potential



Open market


Book Zone
Book Zone
Book Zone

Open fair



Outdoor cinema