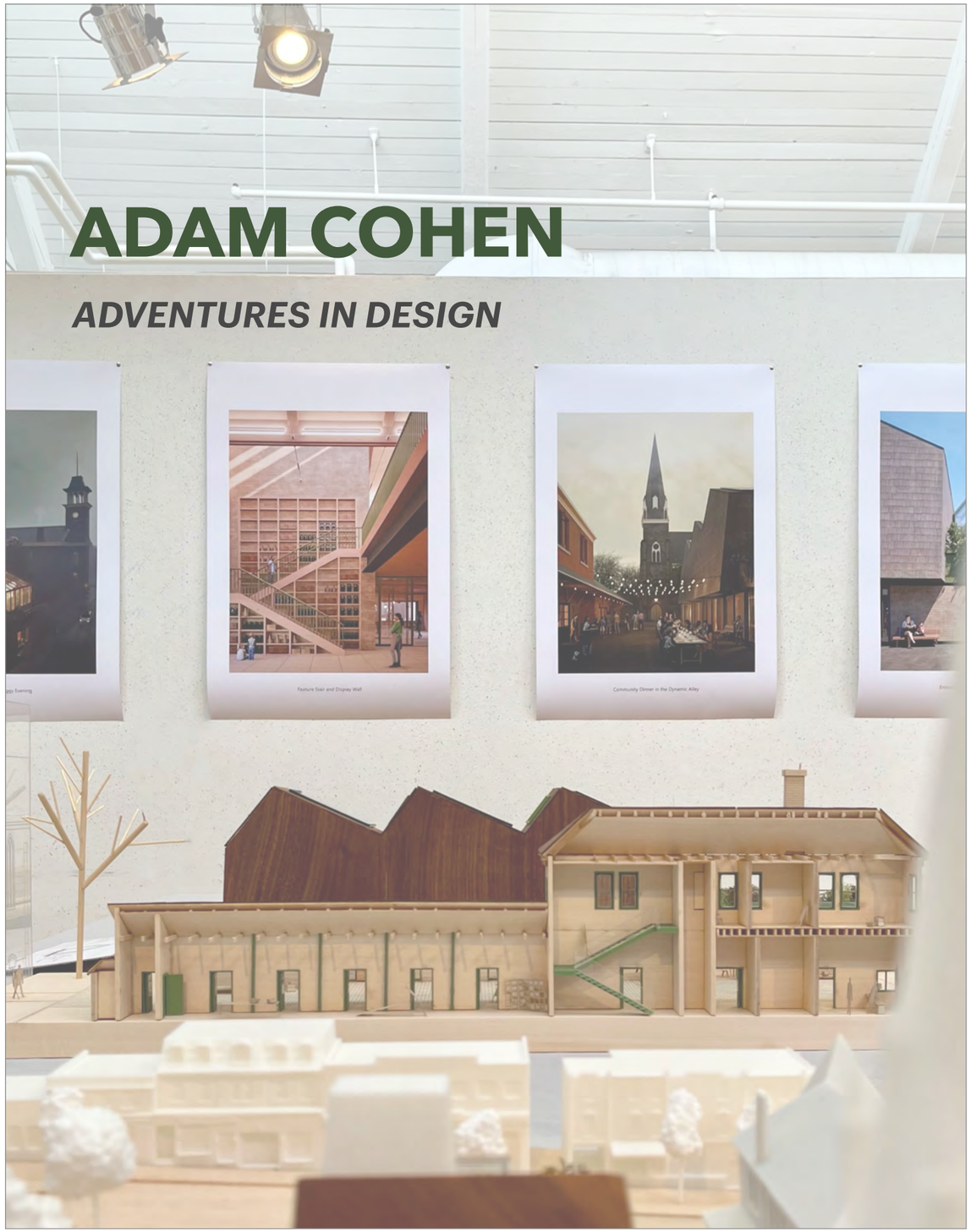
ADAM COHEN

ADVENTURES IN DESIGN



I Love Design

Because good design makes the world work better.

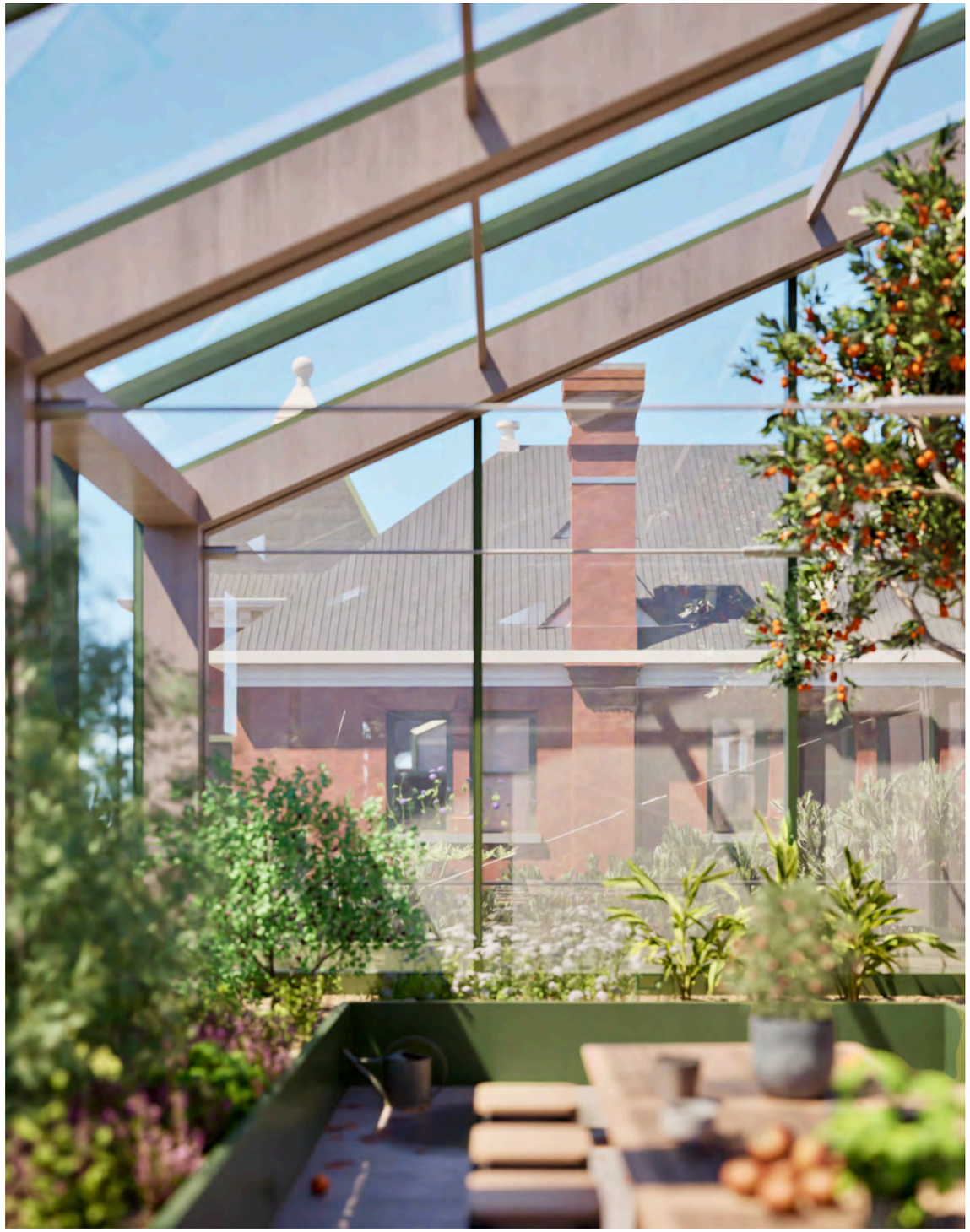
It's my conviction that:

Good design cares for both people and the environment.

Good design celebrates constraints.

Good design dances with complexity.

Good design delivers joy.



Professional Experience

Toronto
London
Copenhagen
Vancouver
New York

Plus a study term in Rome

Working with:

Bjarke Ingles Group
3XN
Terrefrom ONE
BDP Quadrangle
DesignAgency
ZGF

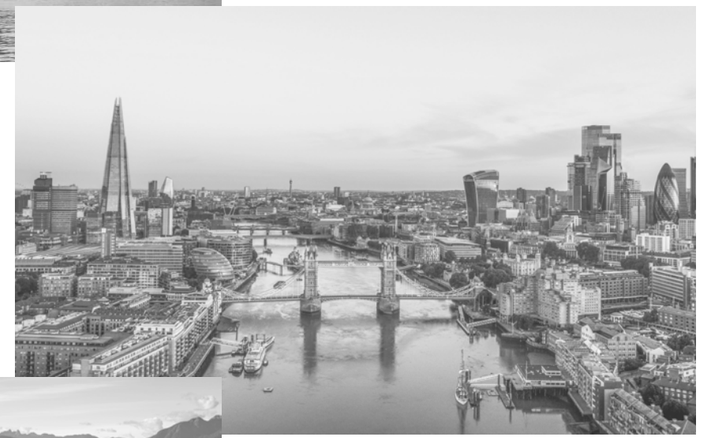


Table of Contents

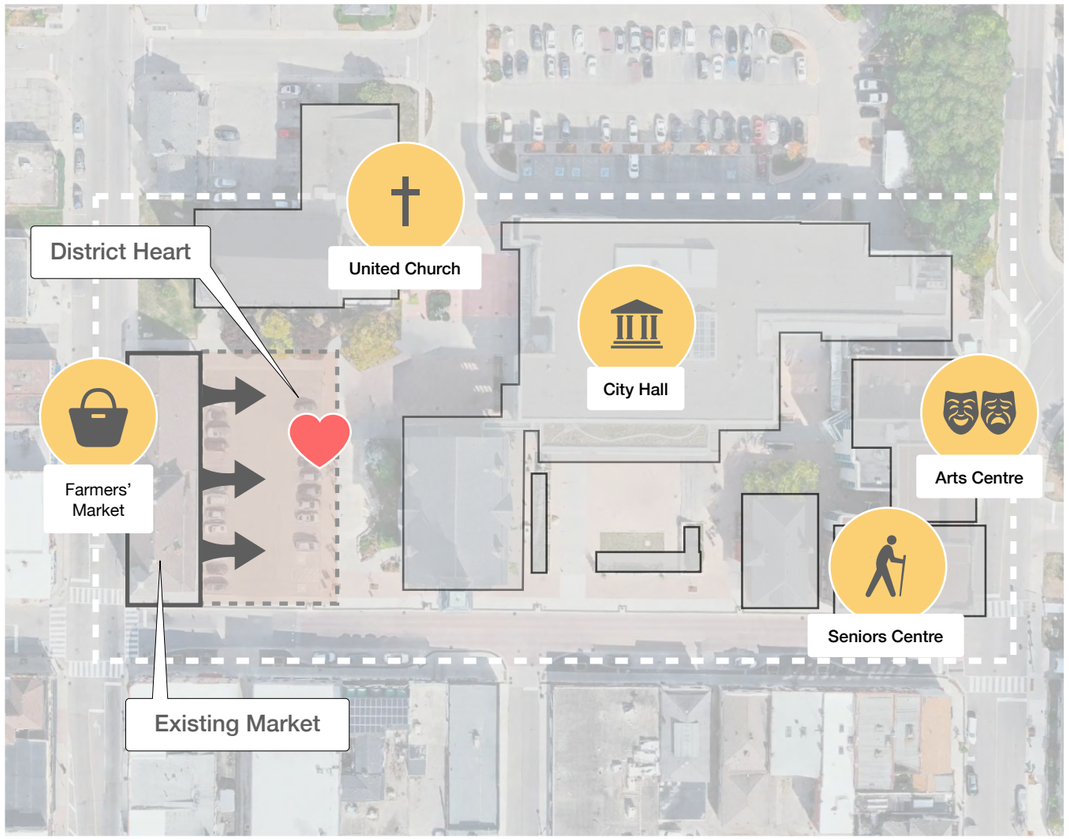
Active Market

How might a small-town farmer's market remain active all the time?

Designed in partnership with Ian Bryane

01

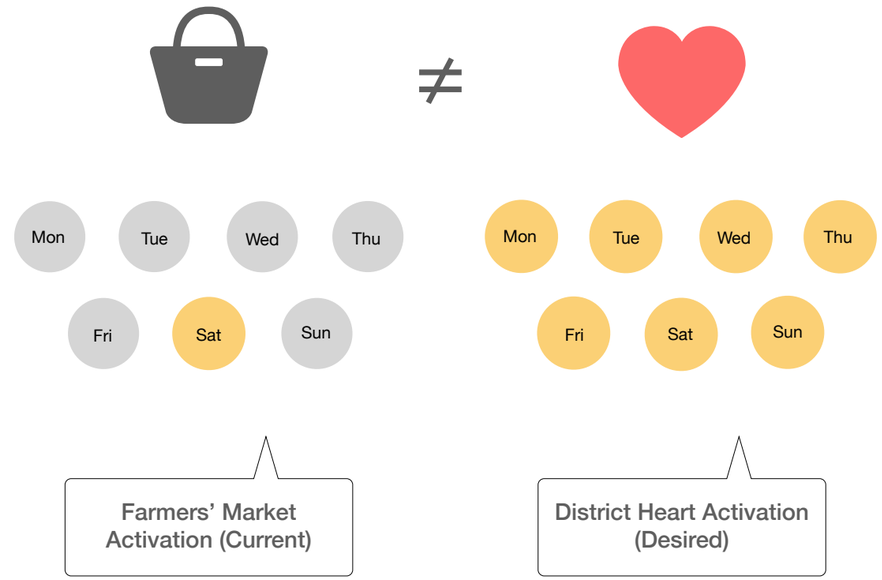
The Site



Expanding over the district heart

Cambridge's historic farmers' market sits on the western edge of a government-owned city block that's home to some of the town's most important public institutions.

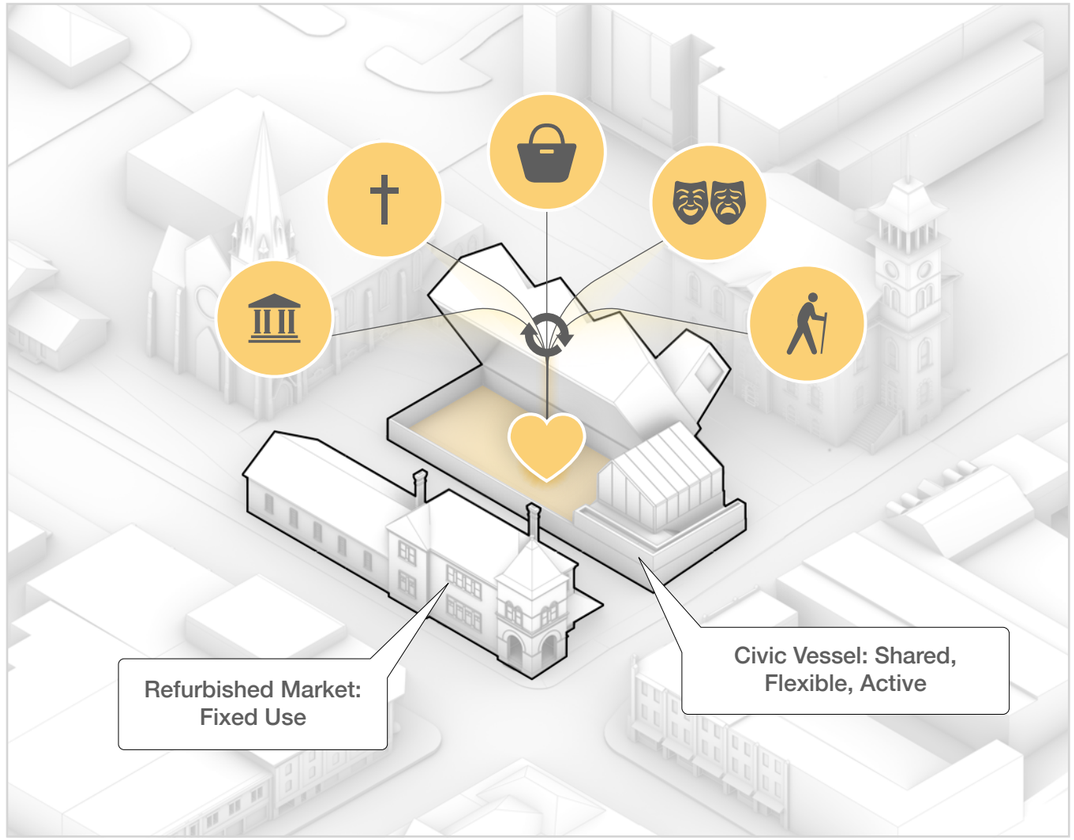
To address a shortage of indoor space, the market has secured permission to expand its footprint into an open area framed by heritage buildings on three sides — an urban room, which has served as the heart of this civic district for over 150 years.



A conflict of personality

Since small-town markets operate just once per week, this project's central challenge lies in reconciling a conflict of personality. While the market spends most of the week sleeping, a healthy district heart must be a place that's always in use.

Concept



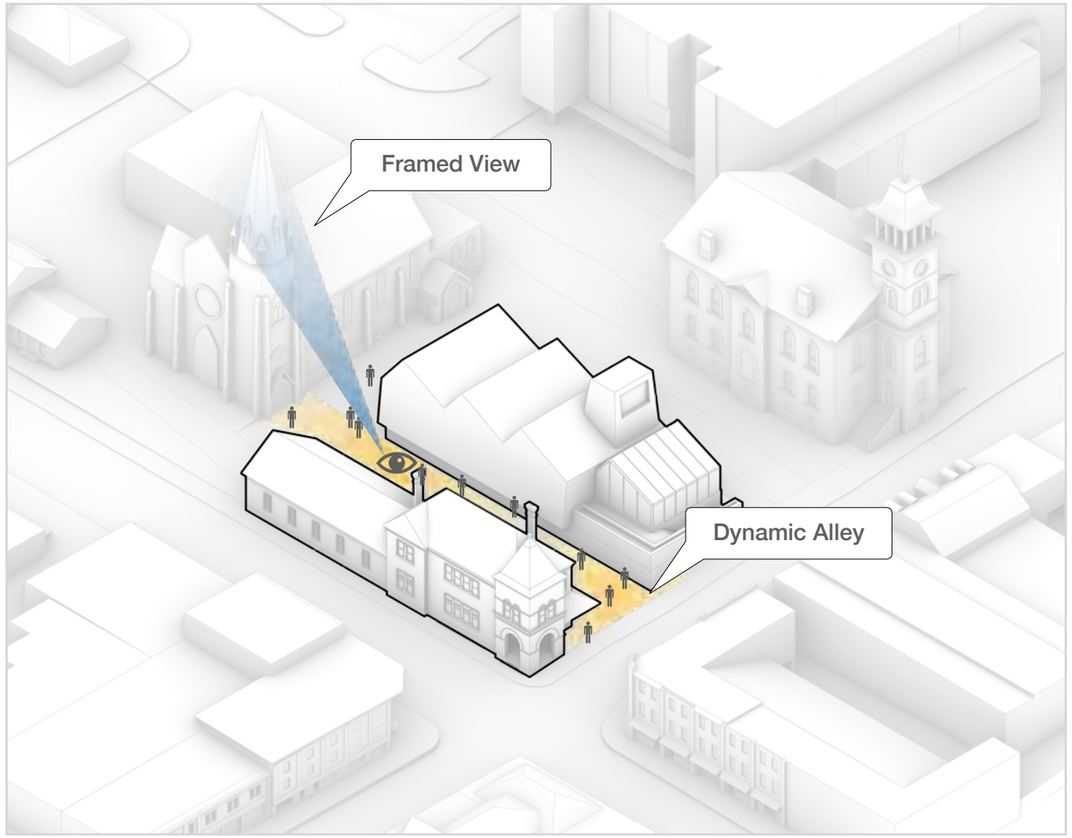
Concept: An activated vessel

We propose handling the added building volume not as a direct extension of the market, but as a civic vessel — a shared, flexible, permeable container that will be animated throughout the week by both the market and its neighbours.

With limited investment, the city can provide more public-facing space to all the institutions that need it, while creating a protected volume that can host the community at any time of year.

By separating the civic vessel from the original market building, each structure gets an independent but kindred identity. This strategy also allows the market's heritage shell and signature veranda to remain completely intact.

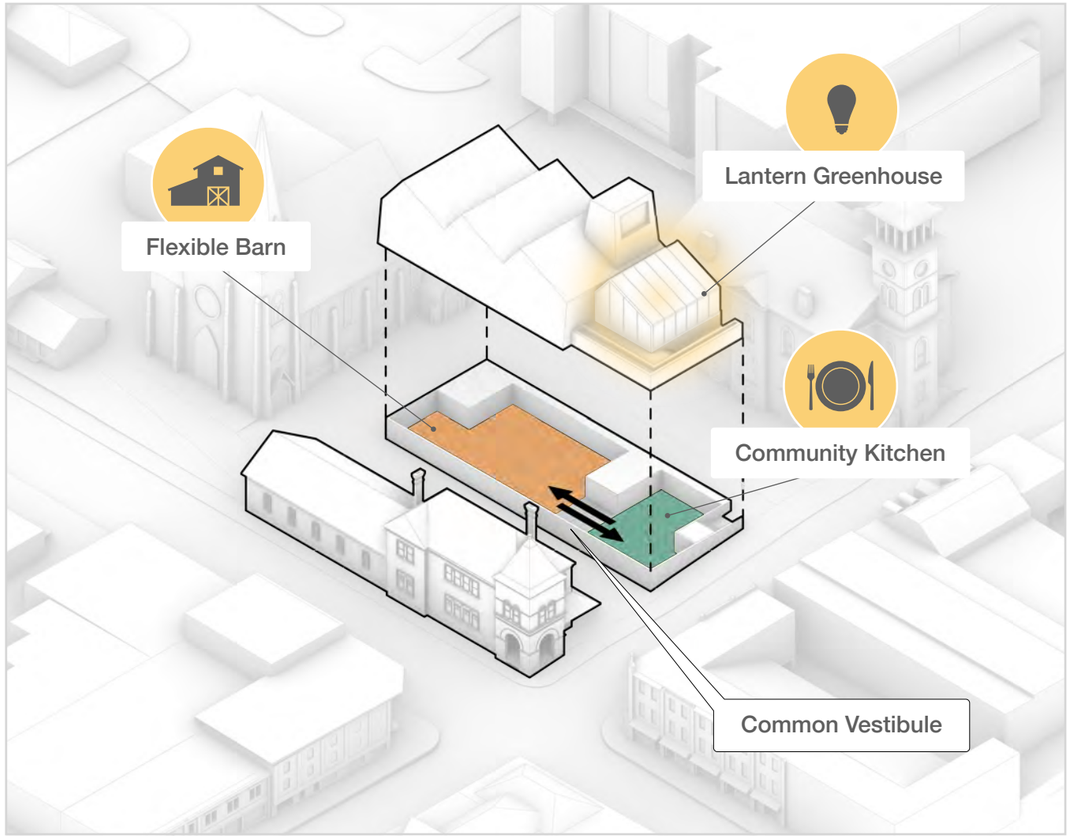
Public Gesture



Dynamic alley + framed view

The gap between the buildings becomes a charming pedestrian street with a framed view of the church spire. This space can be used in a variety of ways depending on the programming of the day. When the market is open, the alley acts as a platform for fluid connection between the old structure and new.

Flexibility



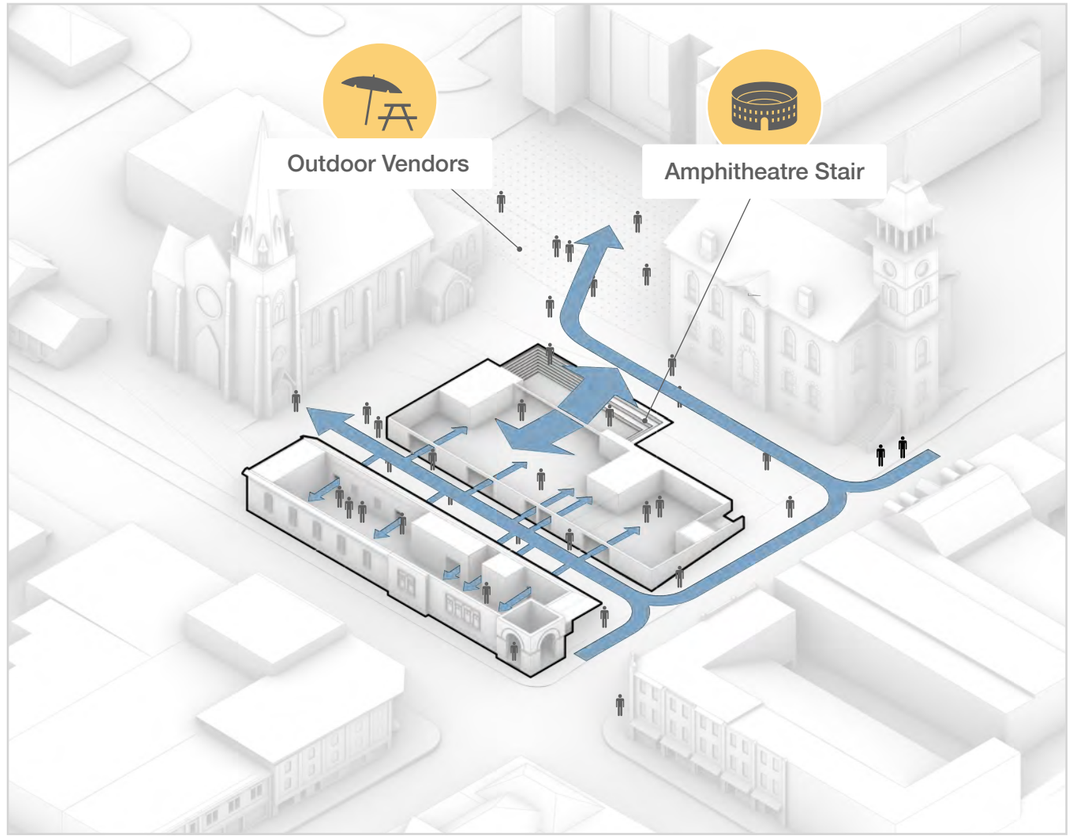
3 zones: independent, or together

The civic vessel is comprised of three zones linked by common vestibules and a commercial elevator. They can operate independently, or as a connected whole.

The largest zone is a flexible barn where any of the district's institutions can host public activities or events. A mezzanine within accommodates semi-permanent equipment.

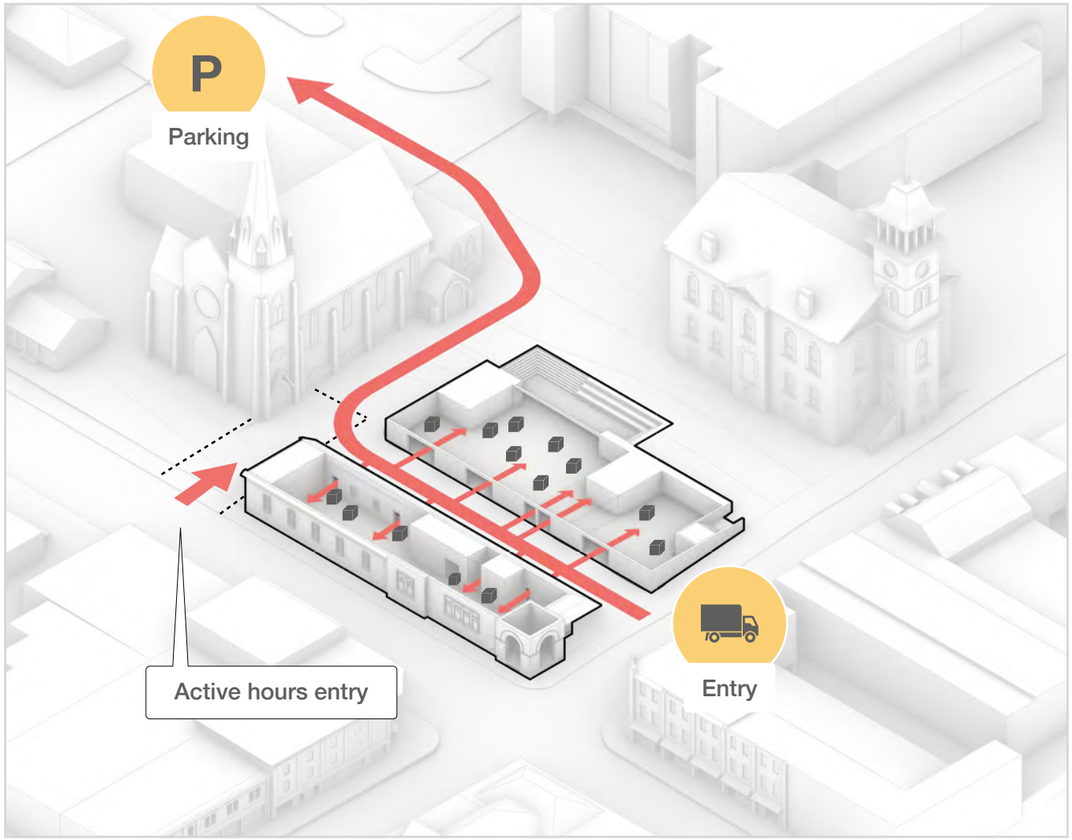
The community kitchen can serve small groups in parallel with the flexible barn's program, or act as a catering area for food-based gatherings.
The second-floor greenhouse is independently accessible through an external staircase, and functions as a lantern that signals activation.

Circulation



Guiding pedestrians

An absence of street front entrances draws visitors into the site and promotes East-West flow between the three market spaces: old, new, and outdoor. An amphitheatre stair negotiates a 1.5m change in grade.

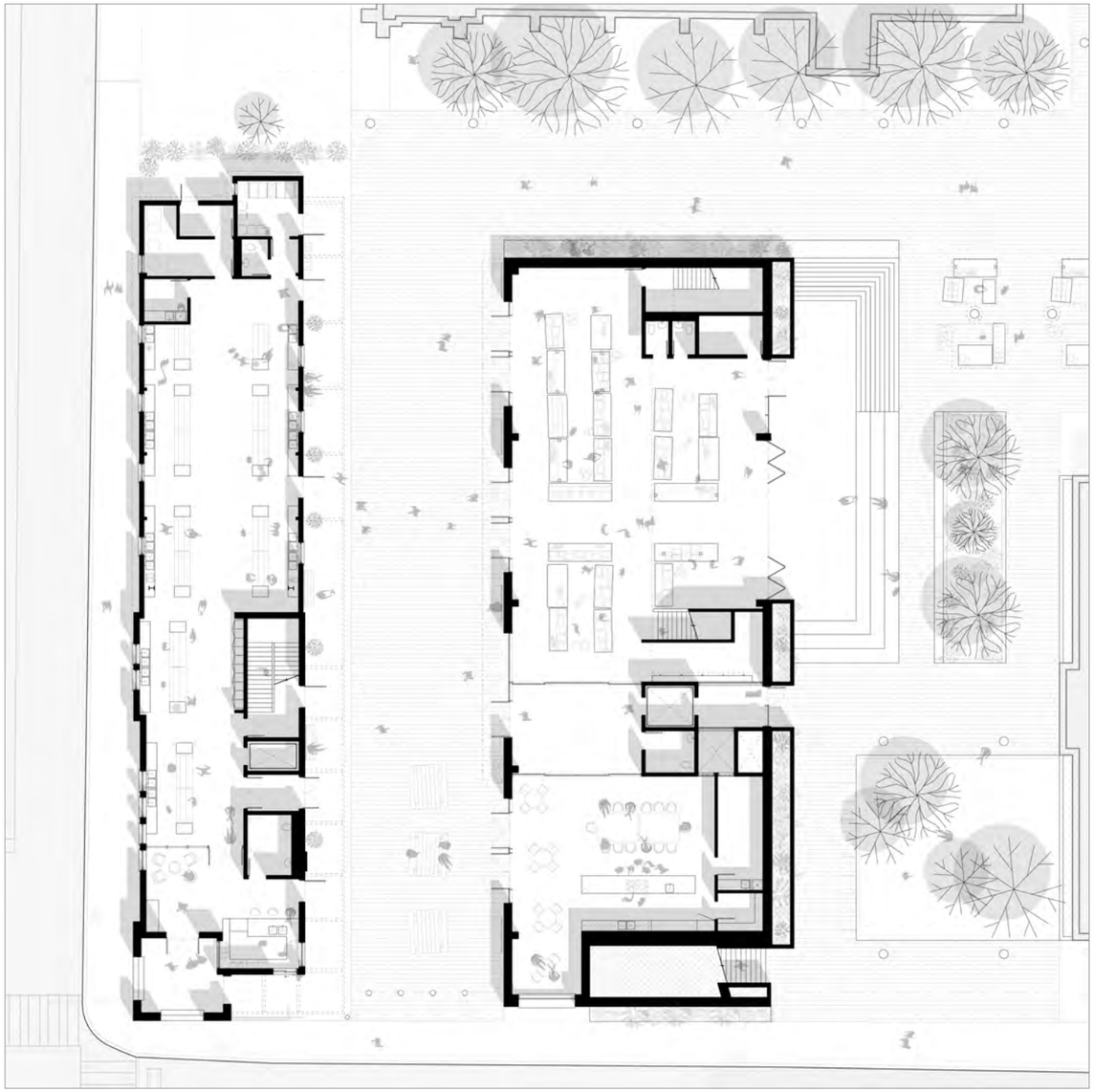


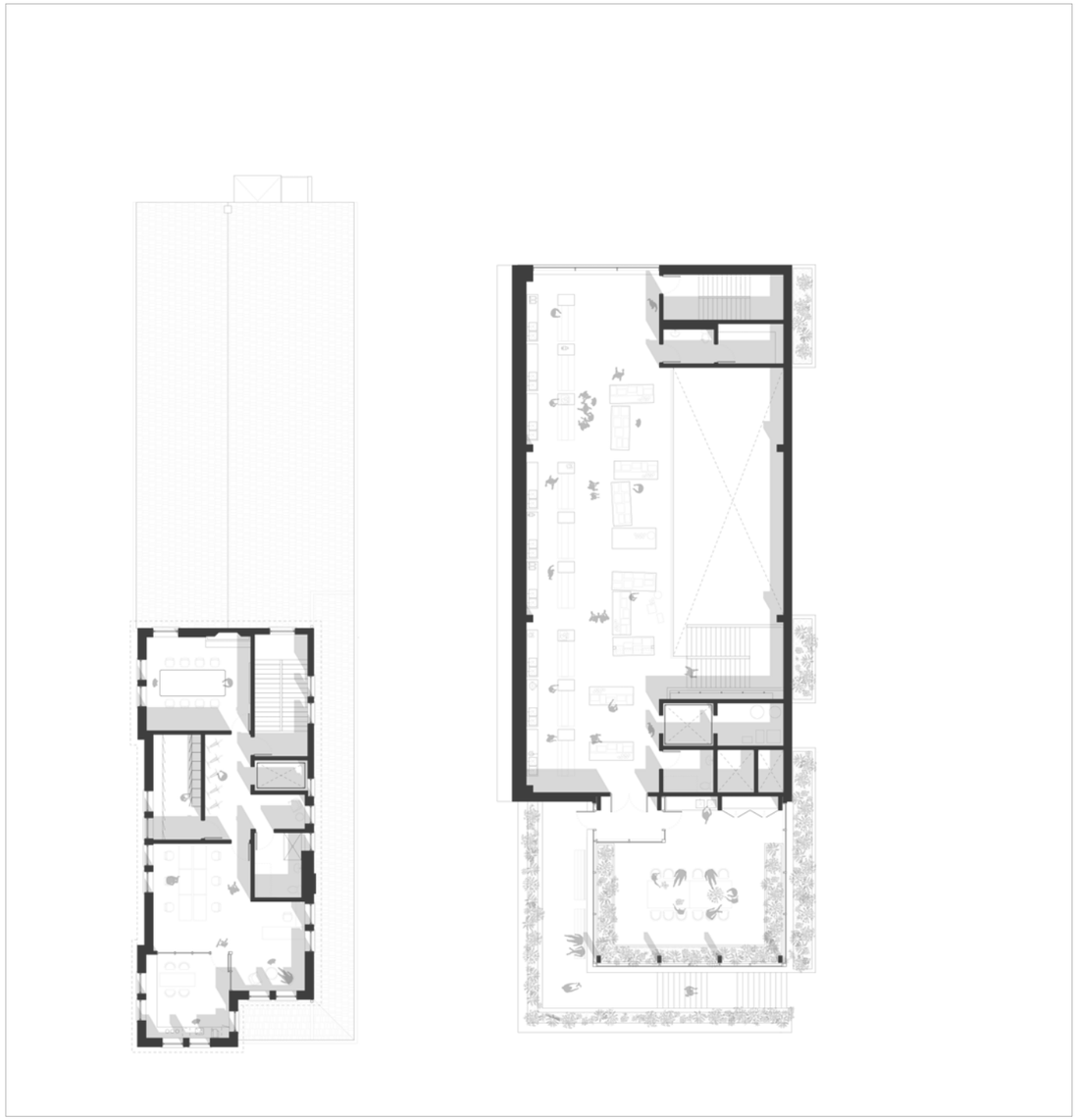
An efficient loading corridor

To facilitate setup for markets and complex events, the dynamic alley can become a highly efficient loading/ unloading zone. Gaps between the buildings' entrance doors are sized to accommodate momentary van parking.

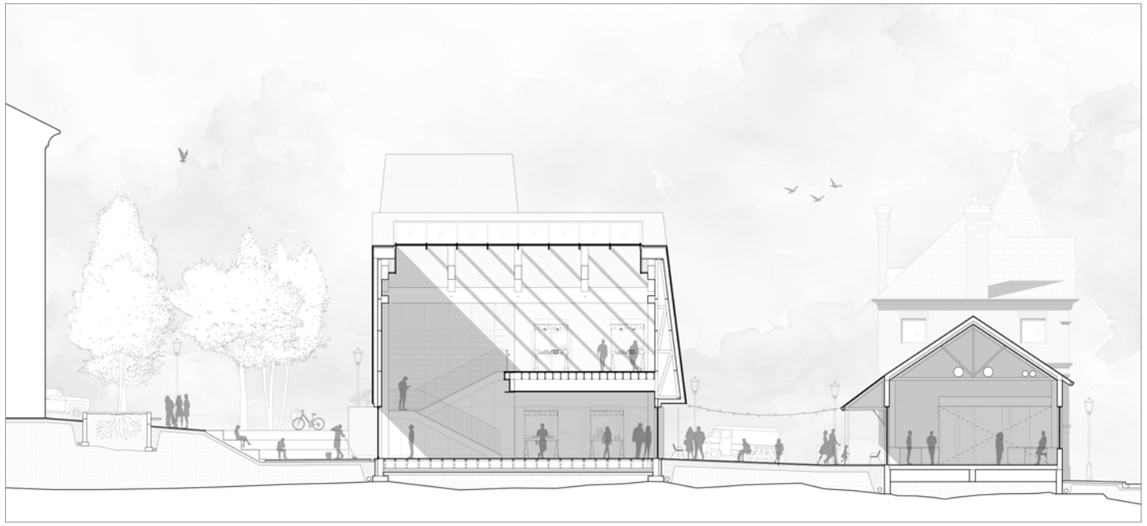
A one-way vehicular path toward the parking lot enables a safe and organized process. During active hours, trucks can pull up to the north end of the alley for supplementary inventory drop-offs.

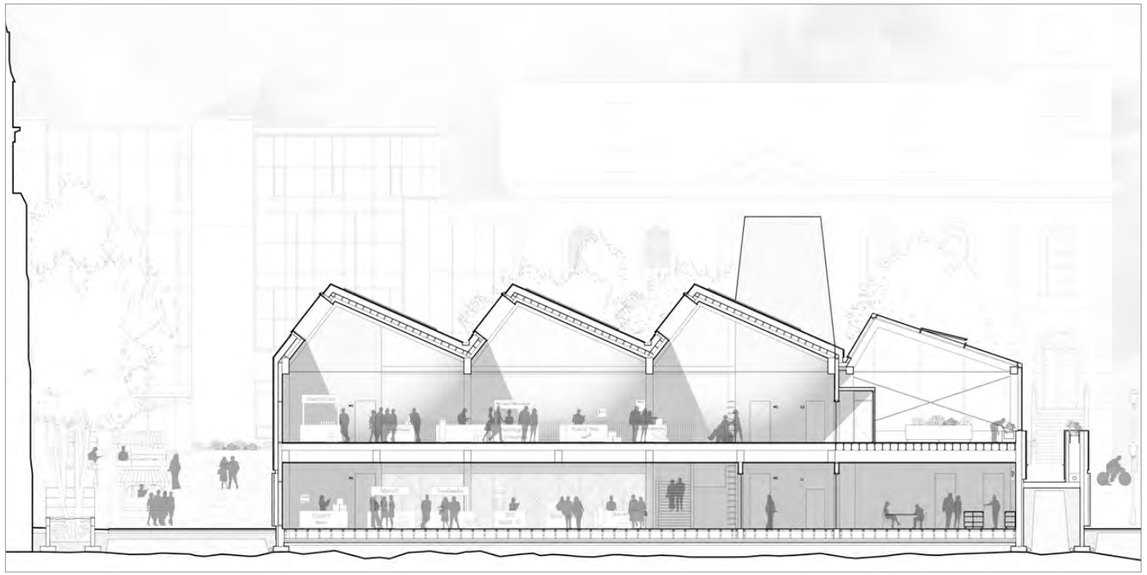
Plans





Sections

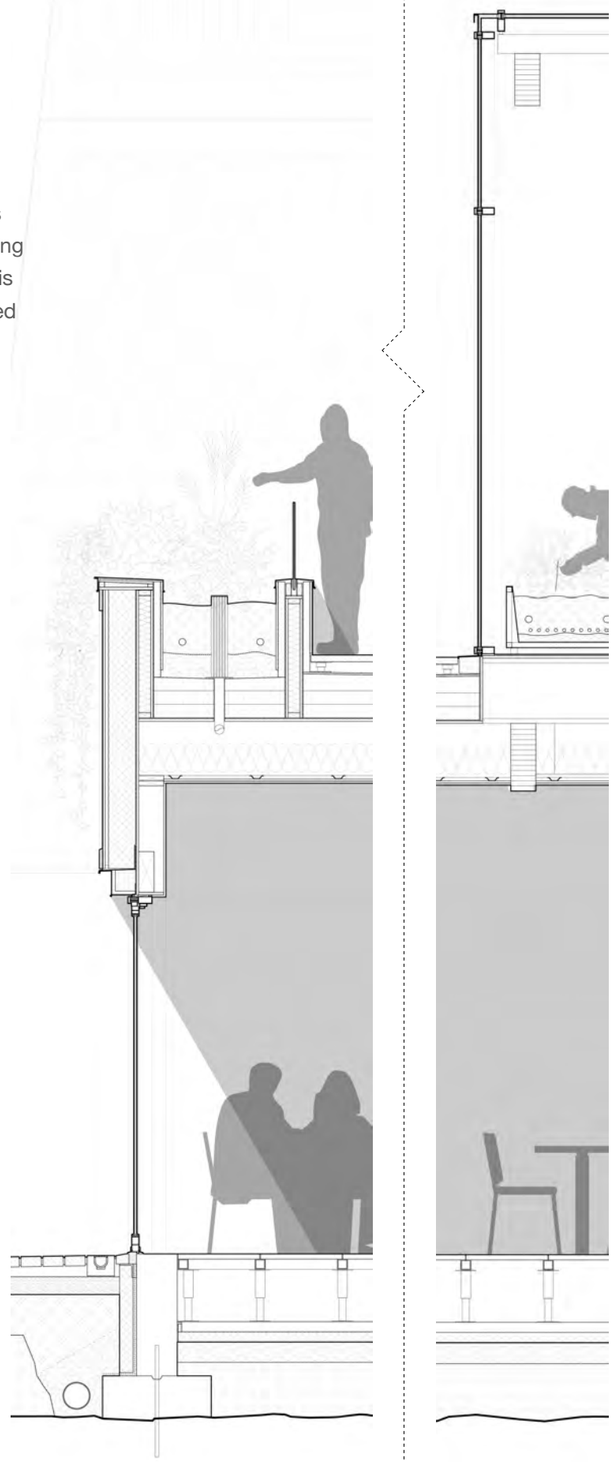


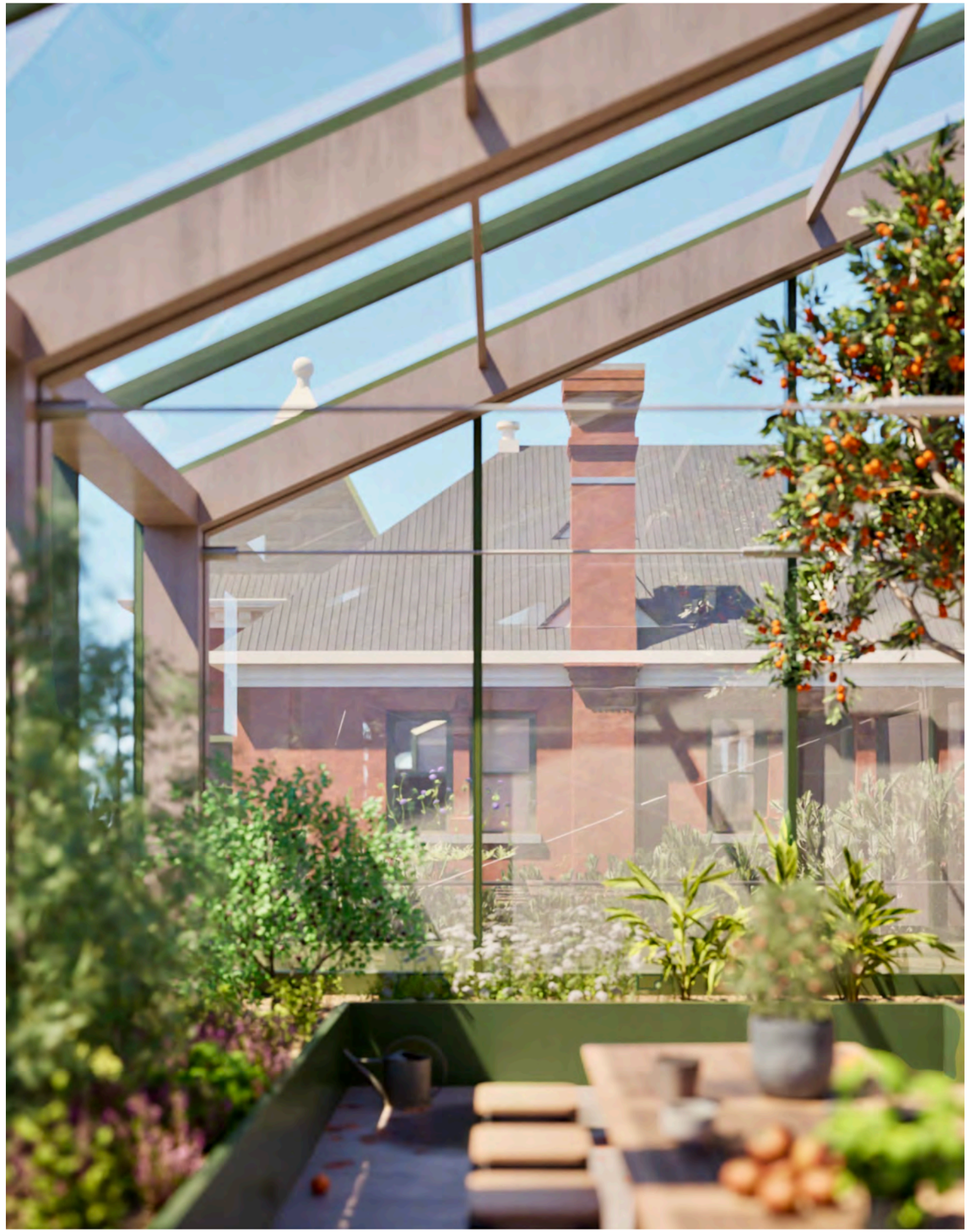


Detail

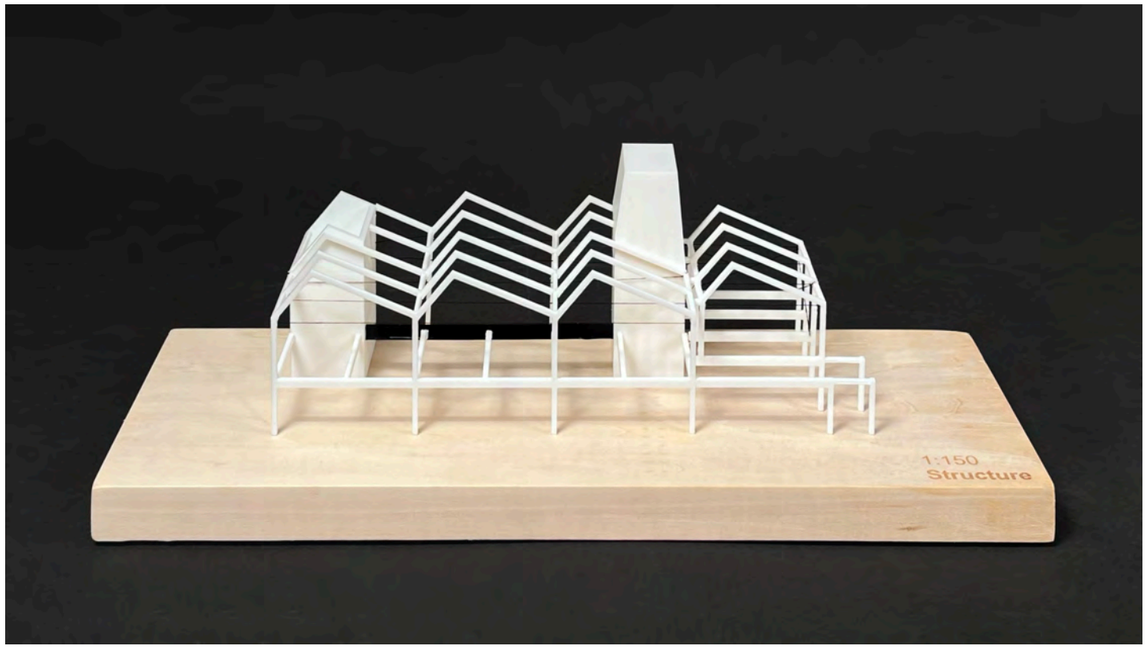
Shearing layers

When developing details, we took a shearing layers approach. Superstructure, substructure, and cladding are kept separate from each other. The space plan is flexible, and services are distributed through a raised access floor/ plenum cavity — maximizing adaptability and minimizing visual disruption within the spaces.





Structure + Construction



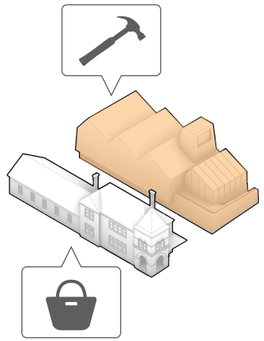
Strategic material use

The civic vessel is supported by a hybrid wood + steel structure. While mass timber makes up the vast majority of the primary frame, steel ties and a singular steel W-section span the largest space in the building. The entire project is free of internal columns, increasing span-plan freedom.

The primary structure is infilled with light-frame wooden stud walls/ floors which are more materially efficient than CLT — which is reserved for the structural core.

The foundation is slab-on-grade concrete and supports a raised access ground floor, maximizing future adaptability and freedom from visual clutter.

The existing building's structure is retained.

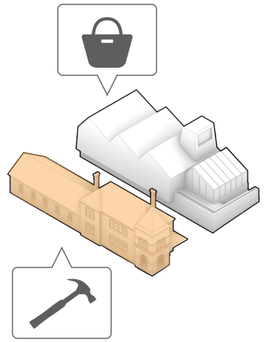


Phase One

Market building:
Operational

Civic vessel:
Under Construction

Market status: Open!

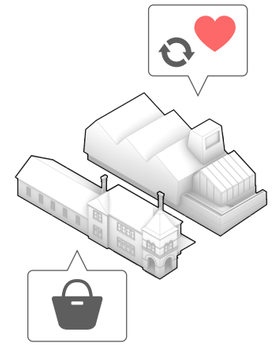


Phase Two

Market building:
Under Construction

Civic vessel:
Operational

Market status: Open!



Phase Three

Market building:
Operational!

Civic vessel:
Operational!

Market status: Open!

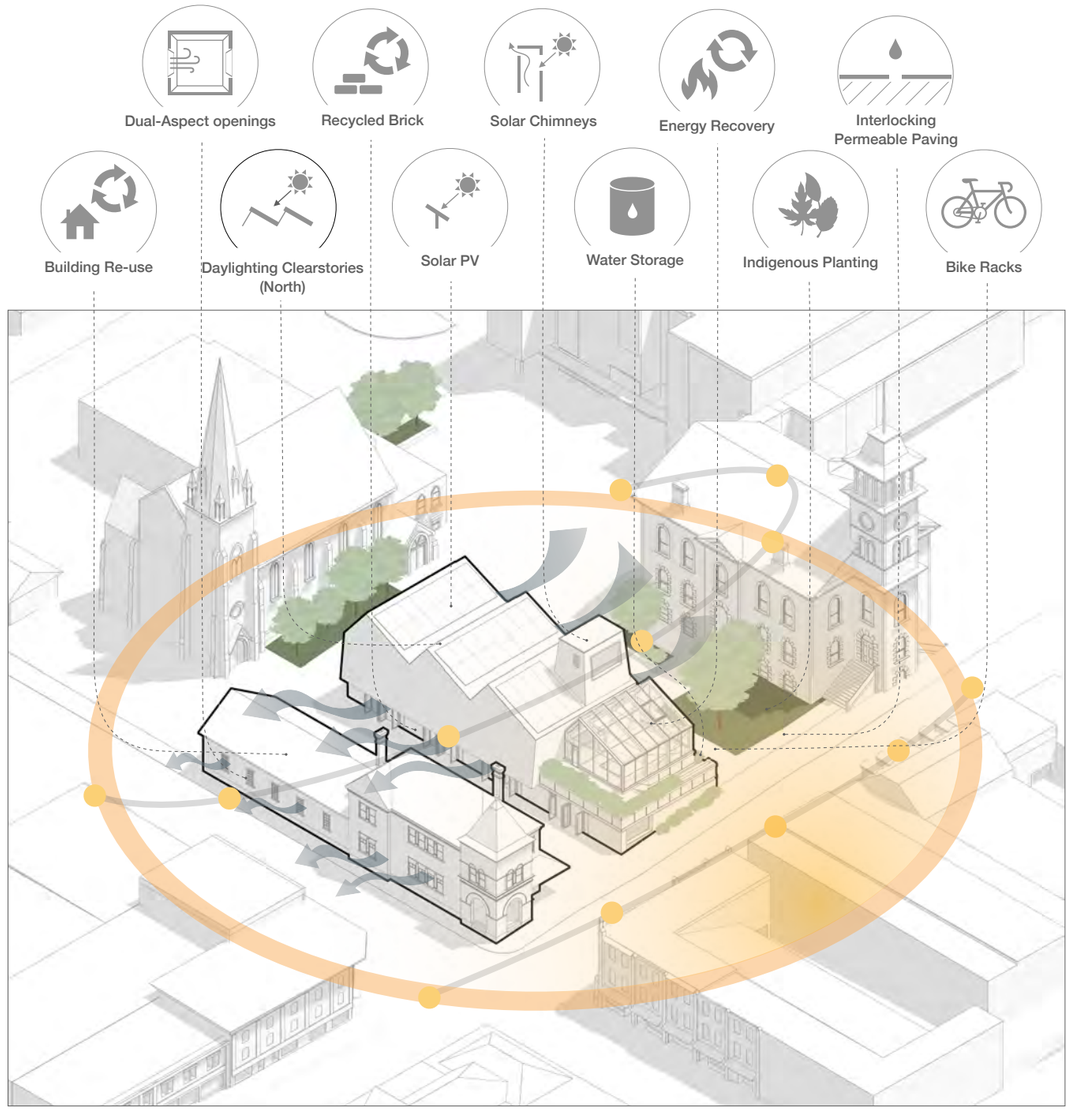
A phased approach

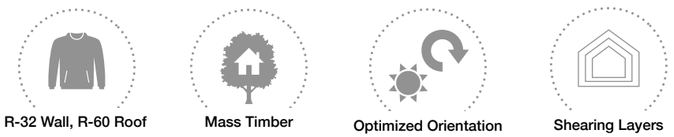
In the spirit of constant activation, construction will be completed in phases so that one building is always available for use.

When the civic vessel is completed, it will temporarily accommodate the existing market's large-scale fixed equipment while the heritage building is refurbished and internally reconfigured. Once the heritage building is complete, the civic vessel will take on its intended role as a flexible space, while the market's fixed equipment will return to its original home.

This strategy will protect the farmers' incomes in a way that would not be possible in a scheme where the new and old volumes are intertwined.

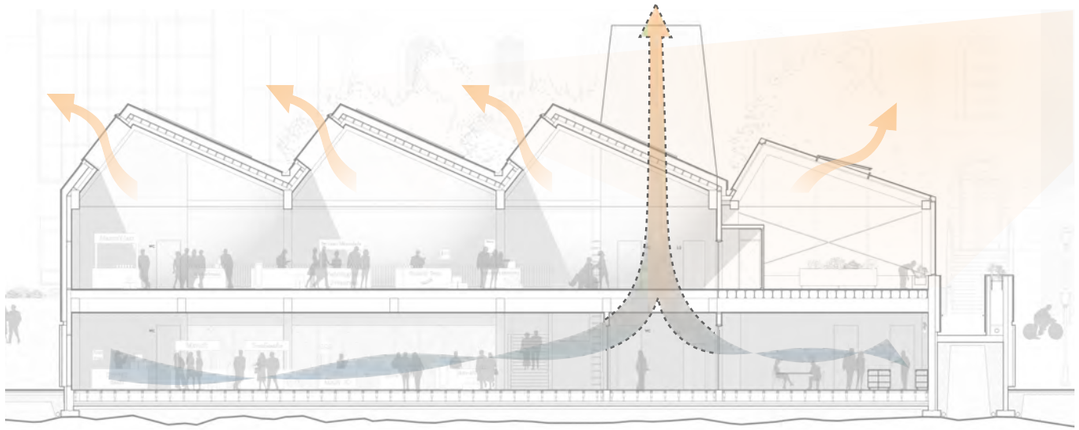
Sustainability

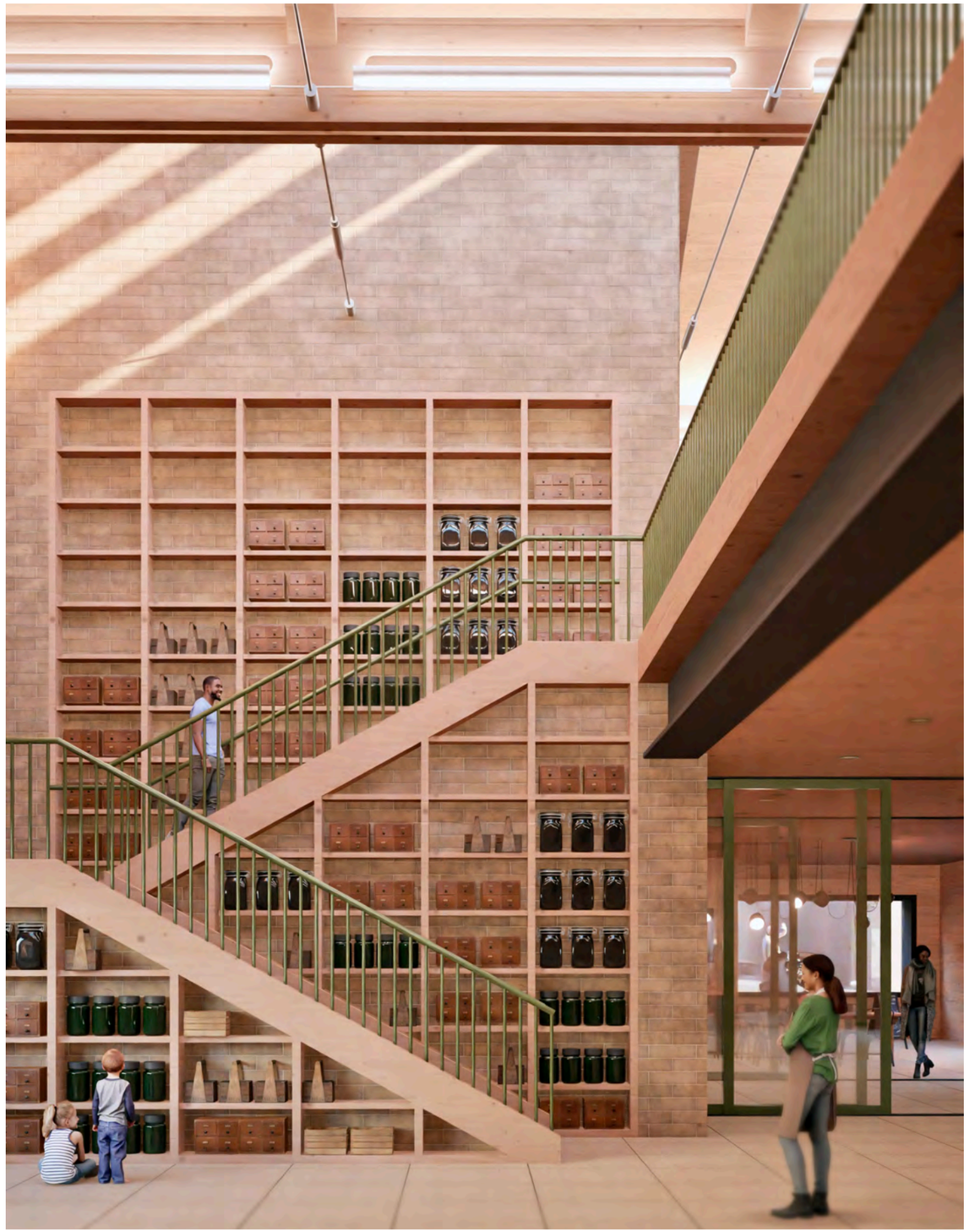




Harnessing the elements

The civic vessel's massing is inherently sustainable, leveraging sun and wind as primary drivers of performance. Its sawtooth roof maximizes southern exposure for solar panels while north-facing clearstories provide diffuse daylight and natural exhaust, complemented by a solar chimney that powers passive heating, cooling, and ventilation across seasons. By separating the new building from the old, the scheme creates dual-aspect spaces that harness prevailing breezes for cross-ventilation, reducing reliance on mechanical systems. These strategies, embedded directly into the form and orientation of the architecture, ensure the building works with natural forces rather than against them, setting a foundation for long-term efficiency.



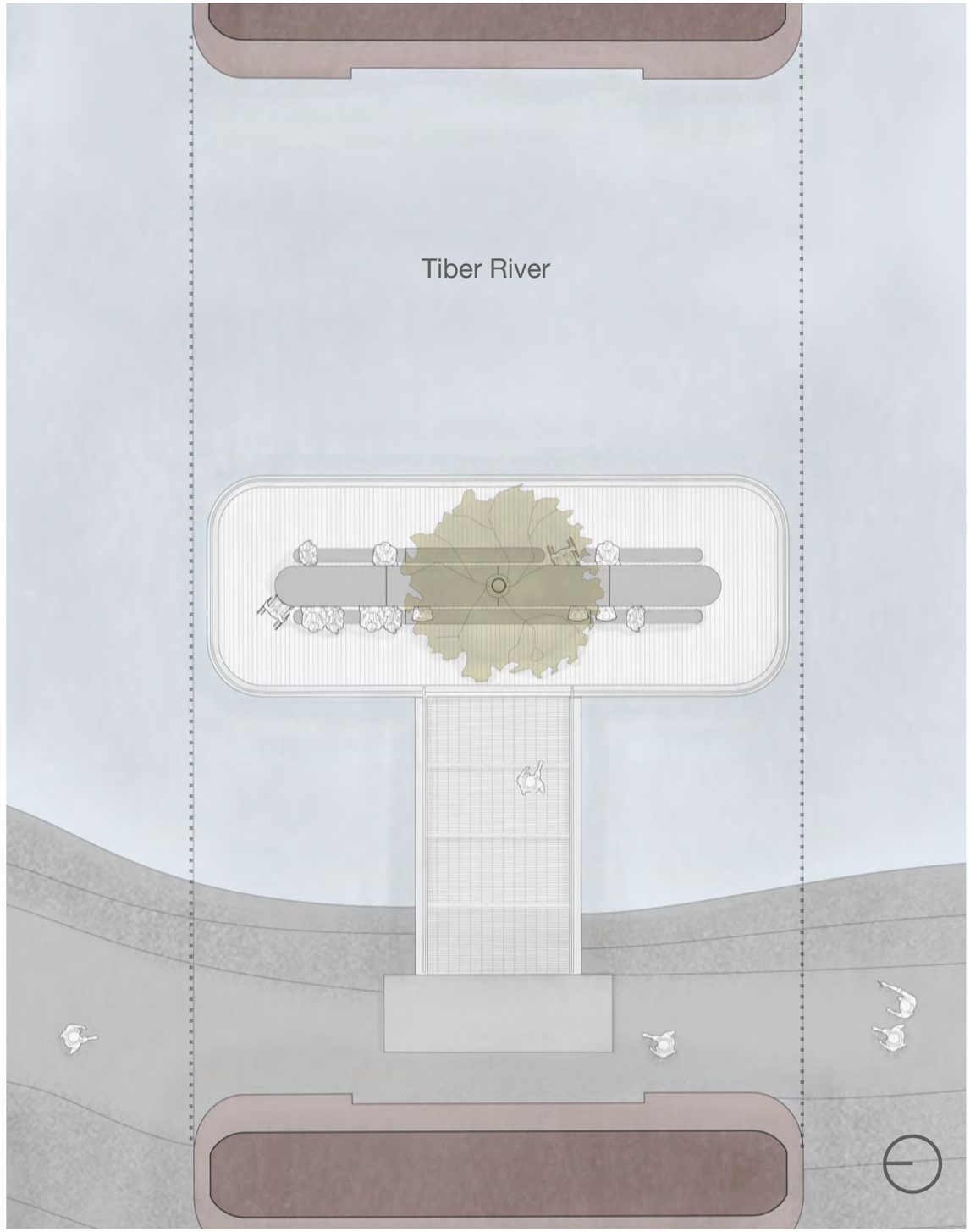


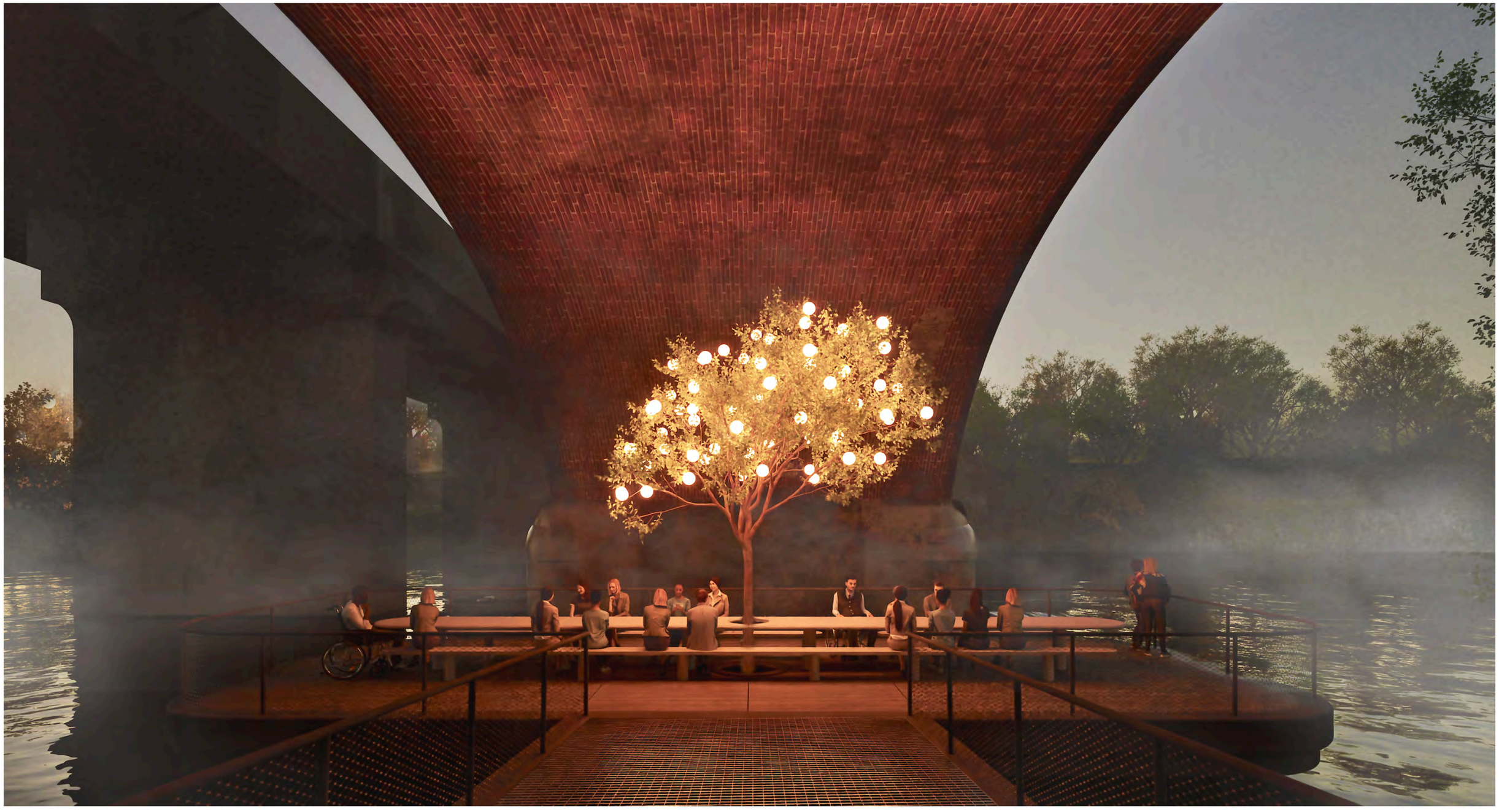
Community Catalyst

How might a temporary installation spark community driven revitalization?

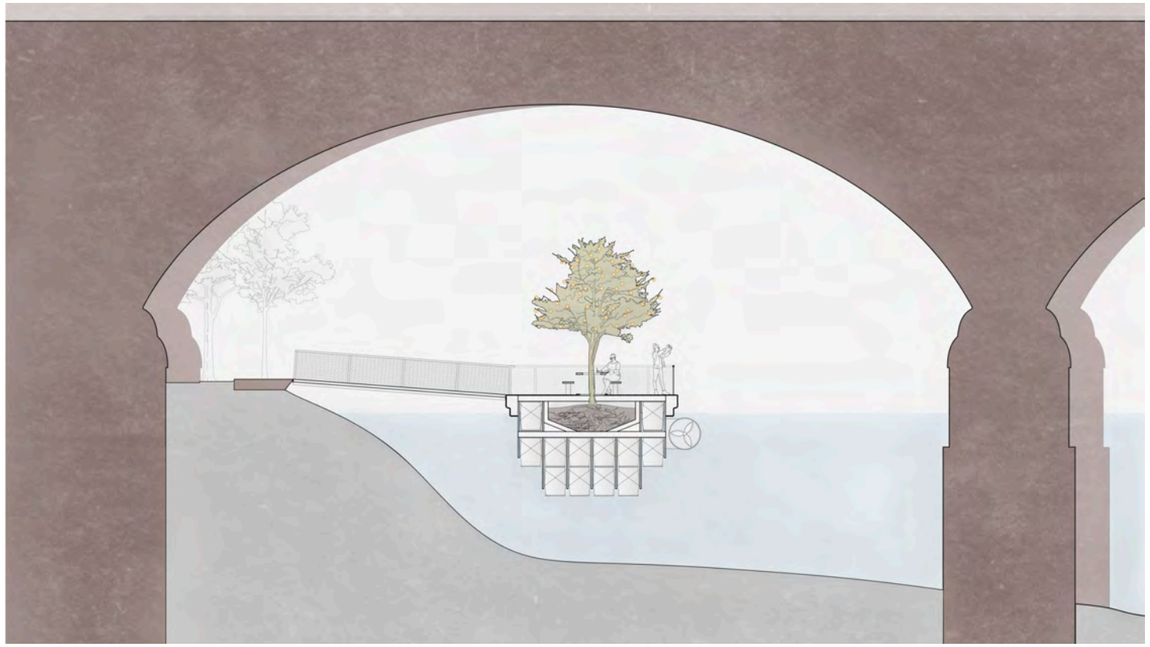
Winner of the Norm Li Visualization Award

02





Prefab/ Modular/ Resilient



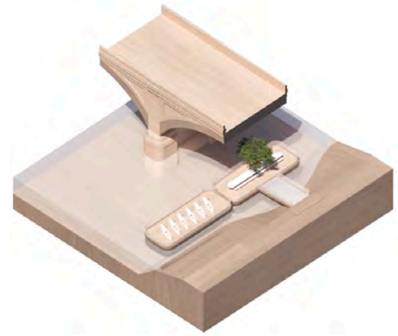
A borrowed roof

Tucked beneath a historic arch bridge on Rome's Tiber River, this floating barge transforms leftover infrastructure into a sheltered gathering space. A European beech tree anchors the project, its lights washing the brick vault above and turning the underside of the bridge into a safe harbour.

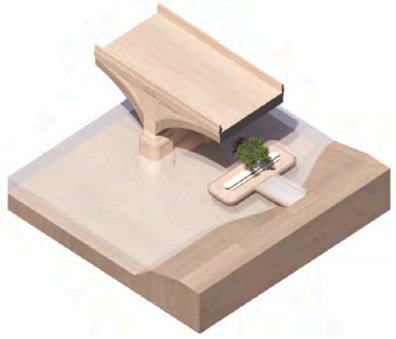
The barge rises and falls with the river, detaching during extreme floods, and floats on repurposable air-filled barrels. A central dining table, secured yet wheelchair-accessible, invites the community to meet and debate the site's future under a "roof" provided by the bridge itself.

A river-powered turbine runs the tree's lights and filters water to nourish its soil. At the project's end, the tree will be planted on land, growing into a long-lived marker of the area's transformation from neglected edge to active community hub.

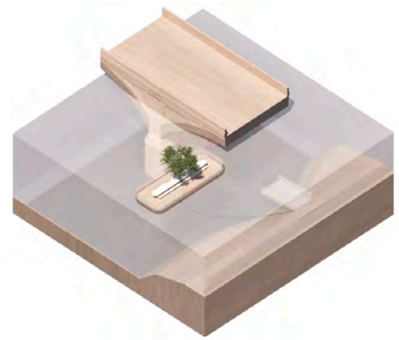
Prefab boat delivery



Modular expansion



Standard water level



Flood condition

Accessible

Theft-resistant

Elder-tree sapling

Reusable floatation

Energy-independent

Pre-assembled

Revitalizing Mattatoio

How might Rome's former slaughterhouse reconnect with its context?

Completed during the Waterloo Rome program.

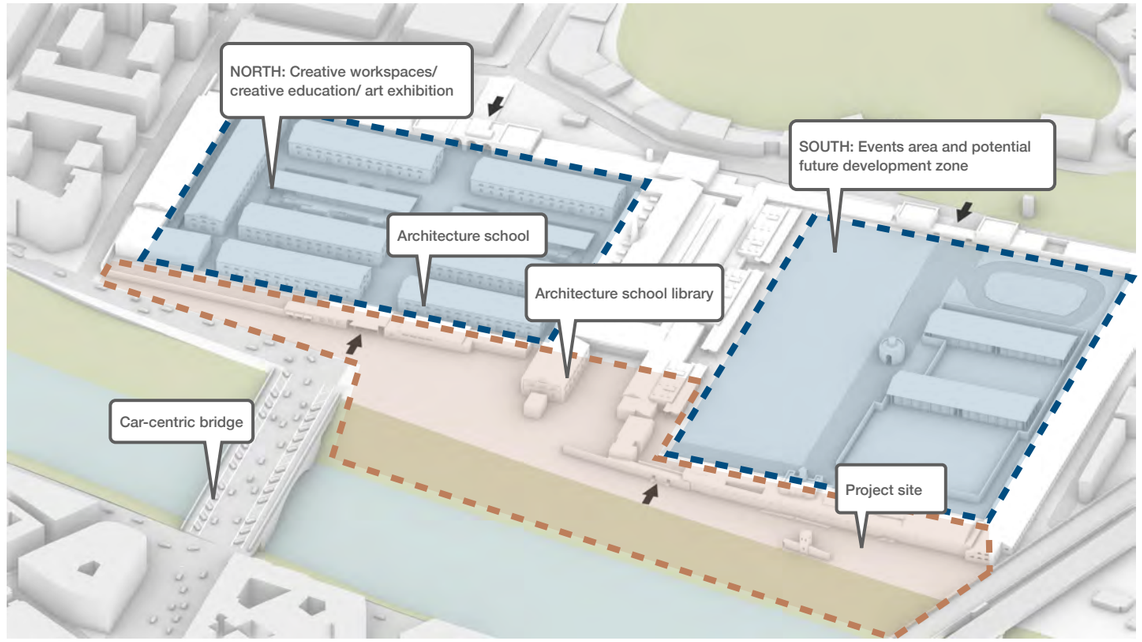
03

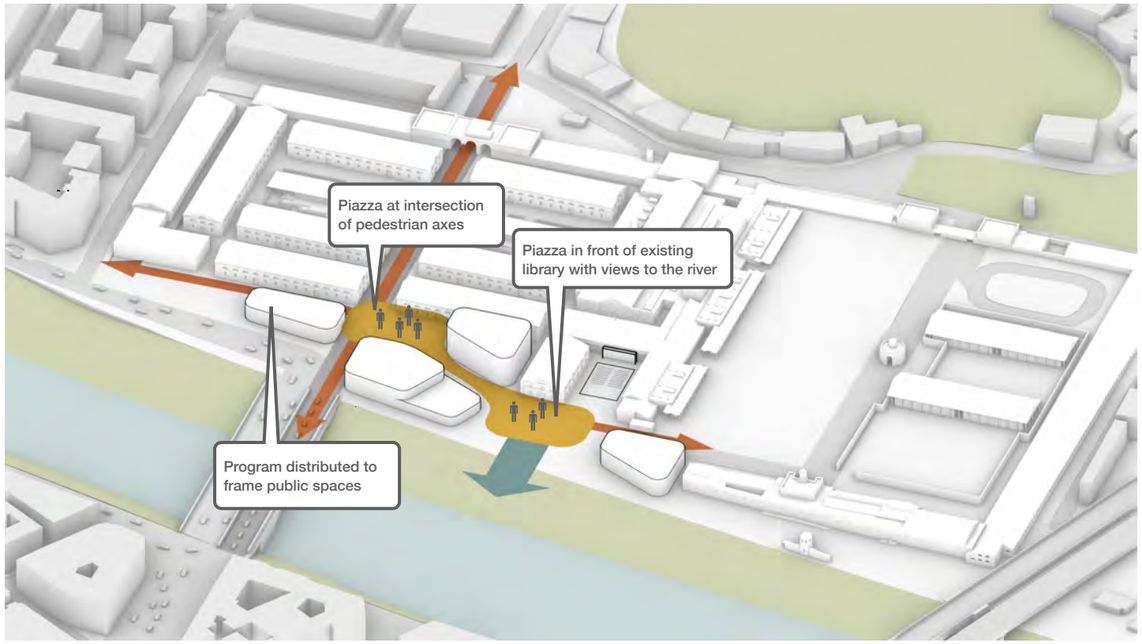
Mending Urban Fabric

A great neighbourhood with no flow

Rome's Mattatoio district, a former slaughterhouse complex, is rapidly evolving: the North side now hosts studios, venues, and an architecture school, while the mostly vacant South side is used for outdoor events and awaits future development.

Today, its urban flow is broken: the two halves are disconnected, cut off from the river, and reached via a car-dominated bridge. This civic centre proposal "slices" the program like cuts of meat, using the building mass to frame new pedestrian axes and piazzas so that, by carving up the program, it can stitch the neighbourhood back together.





Reconnecting the site

Removing decaying edge buildings and the perimeter wall makes room for new pedestrian axes that link Mattatoio to the nearby market, adjacent neighbourhoods, and a widened pedestrian path across the bridge.

Opening to the river

Terraced seating, a lookout ring, and multiple paths create direct, legible access to the water, while ramps and gentle slopes make almost the entire river edge wheelchair accessible.

Piazzas as focal points

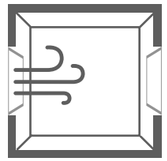
Two framed piazzas at the crossroads and in front of the library become the district's public heart, with fountains and rounded corners guiding movement.

East building + school connection

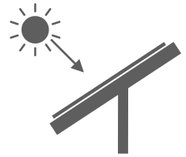
A lifted main volume and an infill ground bar extend the architecture school, threading circulation through galleries and a shared reception that the parking-garage elevator opens directly into.

Sustainability Strategies

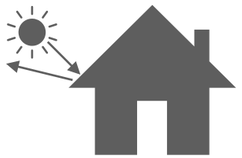
Much of the site stays naturalized



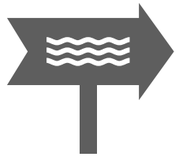
Dual-aspect window openings



Solar PV on roofs

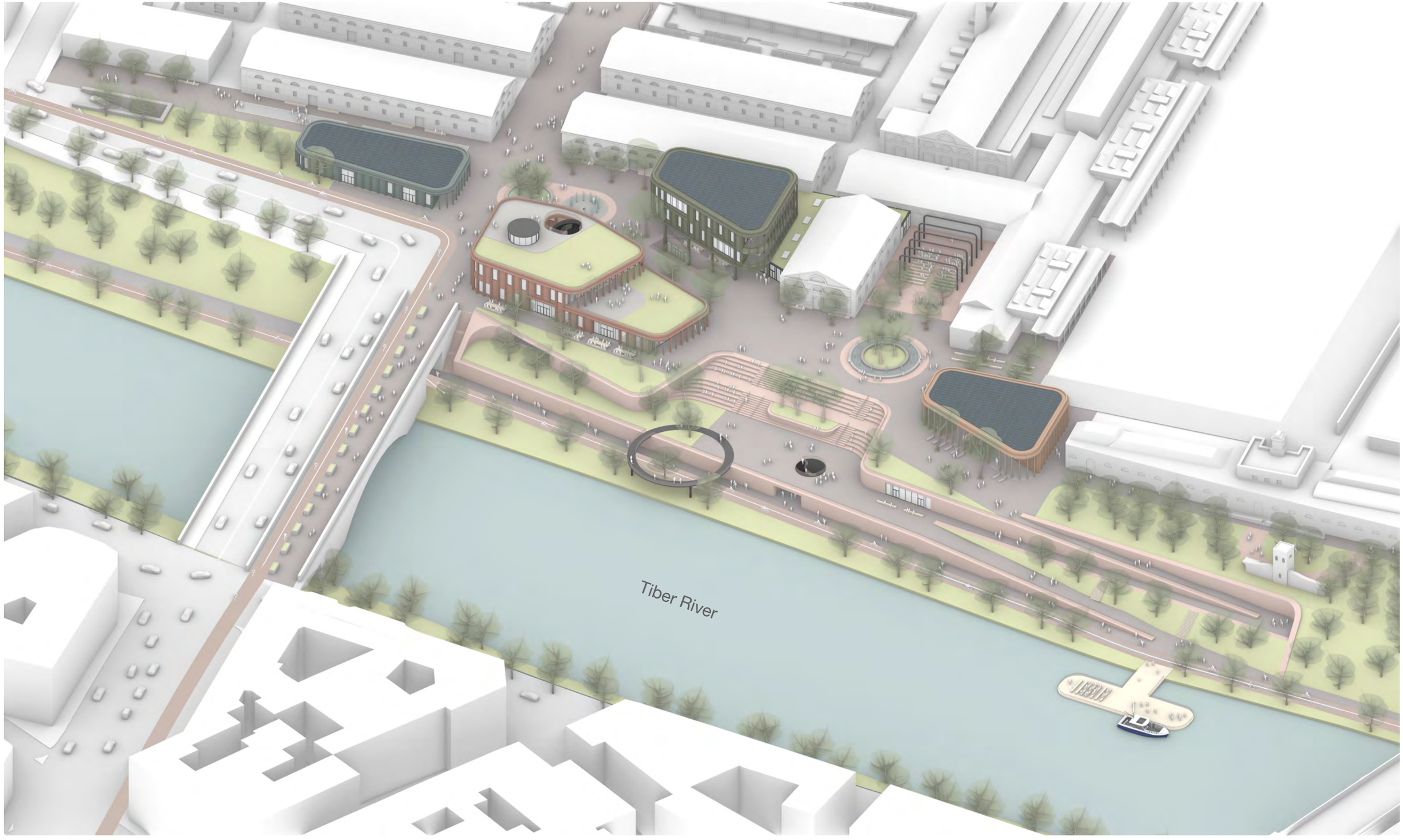


Overhangs + shaded facades



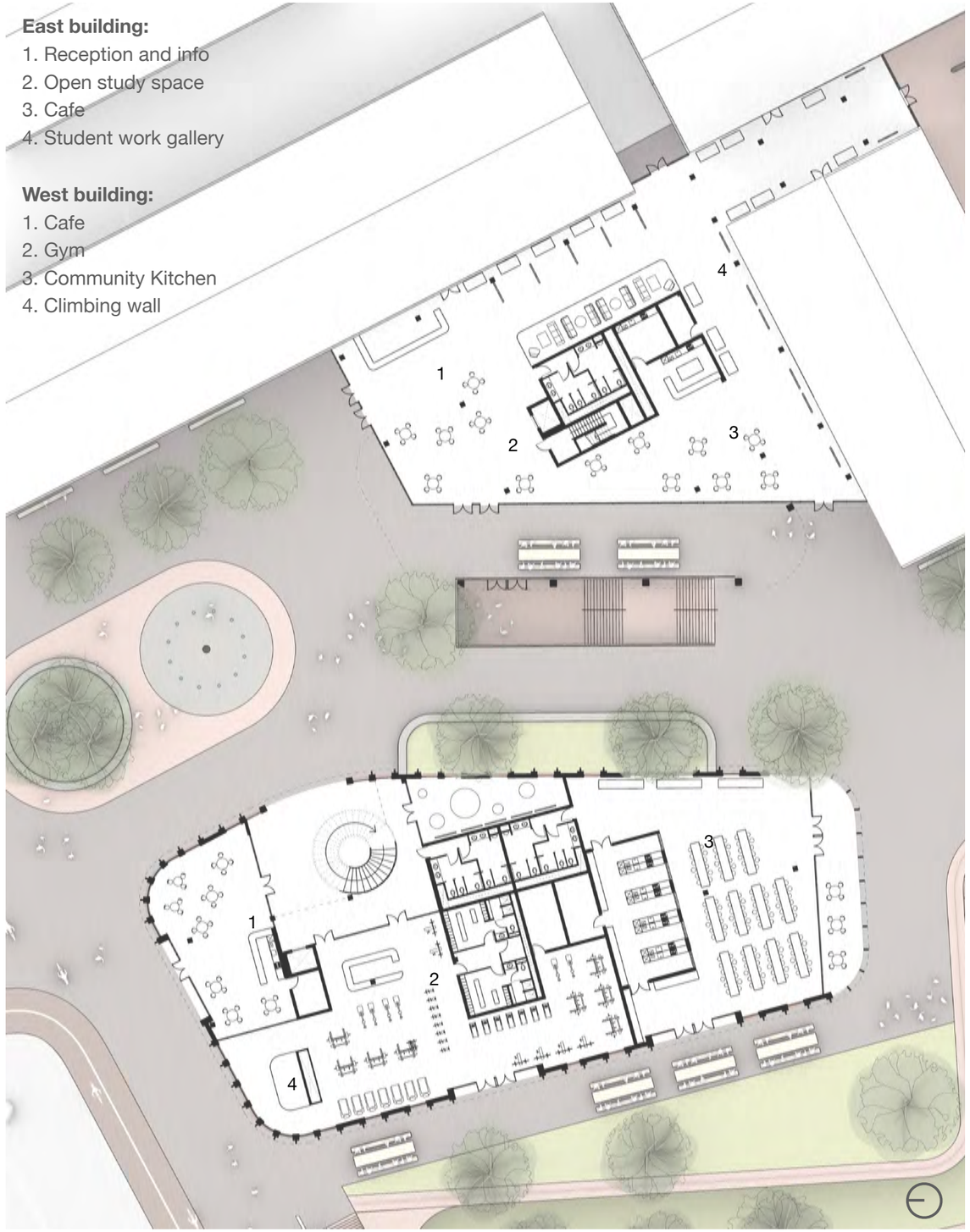
River access improved.

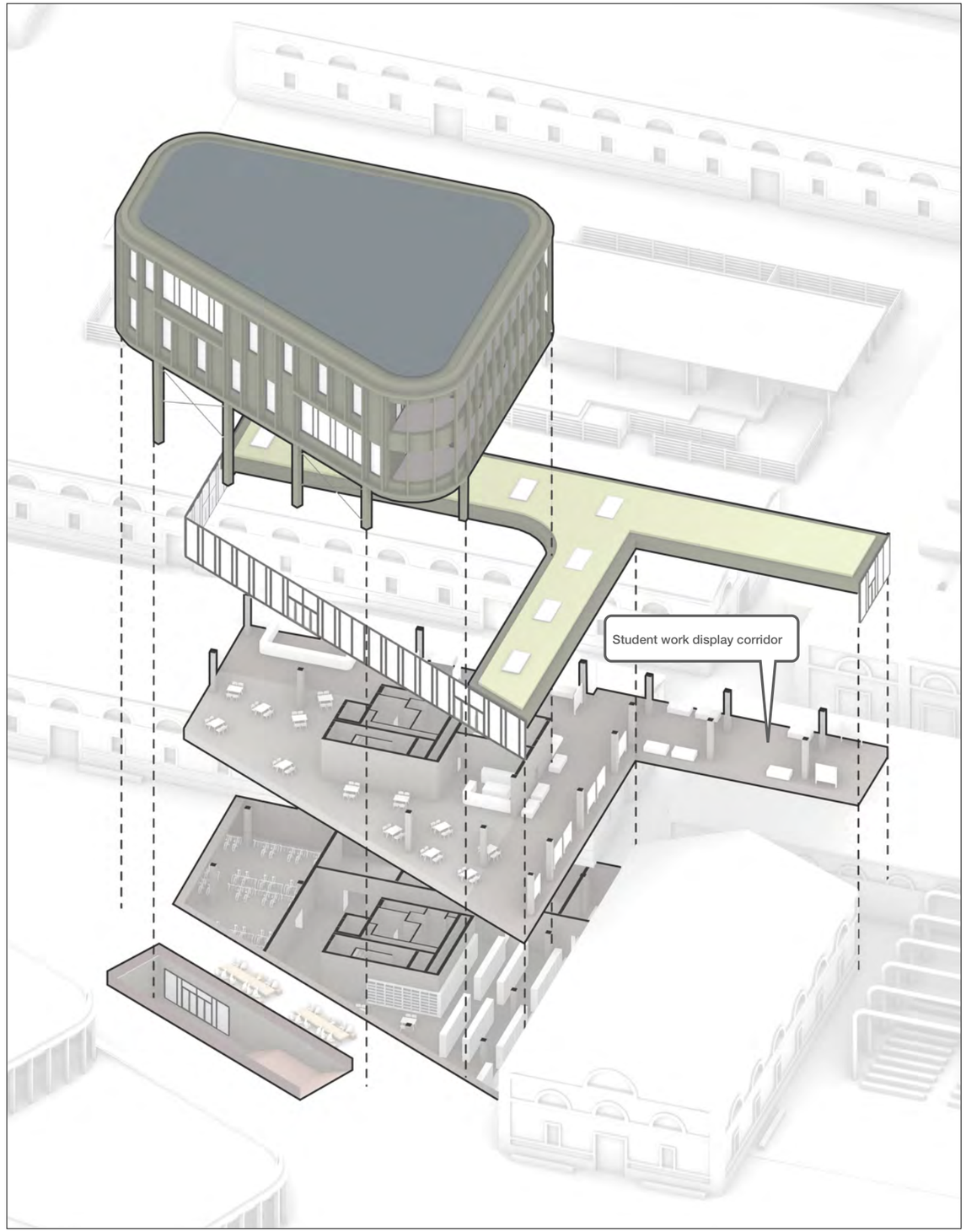
Bike lanes and bike parking


Tiber River

East building:
1. Reception and info
2. Open study space
3. Cafe
4. Student work gallery

West building:
1. Cafe
2. Gym
3. Community Kitchen
4. Climbing wall





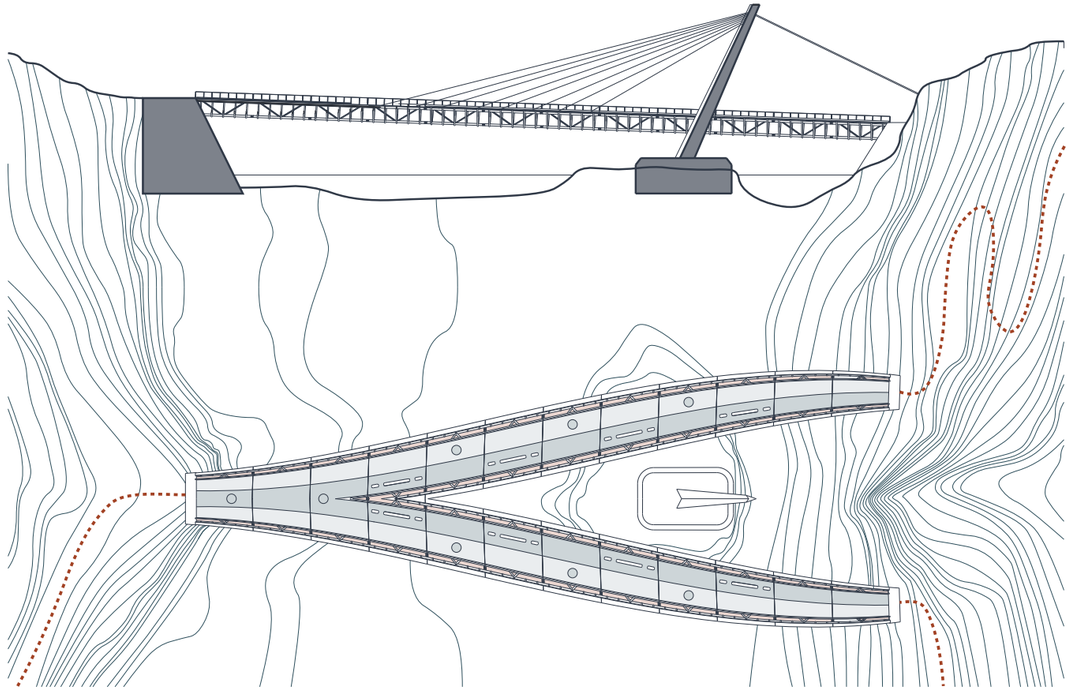
Jasper Crossing

How can a bridge enable a better visitor experience?

Designed in partnership with Morgan Jacobson and Brianna Klei

04

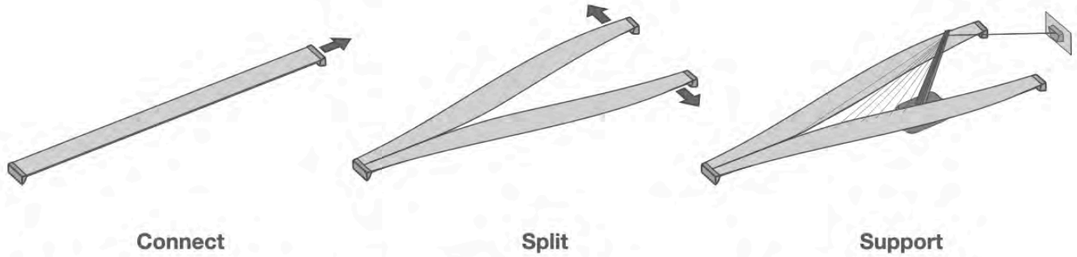
Stitching Pathways



Two directions, two adventures

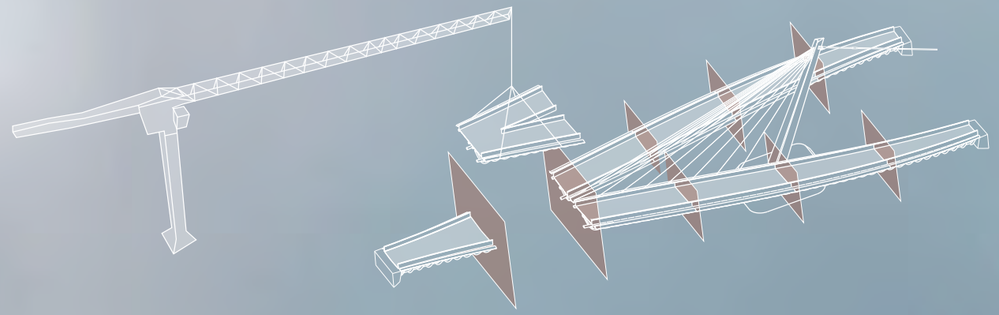
In Jasper National Park, this wishbone-shaped bridge stitches several disconnected trails into one clear network. Starting from a single point on the west bank, it splits around a steep stone ridge on the east bank, offering two routes: a longer hiking trail in one direction and a short loop to the Sunwapta Falls viewpoint in the other.

The bridge deck gently tilts with the terrain and is supported by a central mast and two converging inverted triangular trusses with rounded ribs and an efficient matrix of W-sections. A mix of anti-slip steel decking and open grating reveals the structure below while preserving views to the landscape. Cast-steel information plaques set into the grating share site history, and benches provide places to pause.



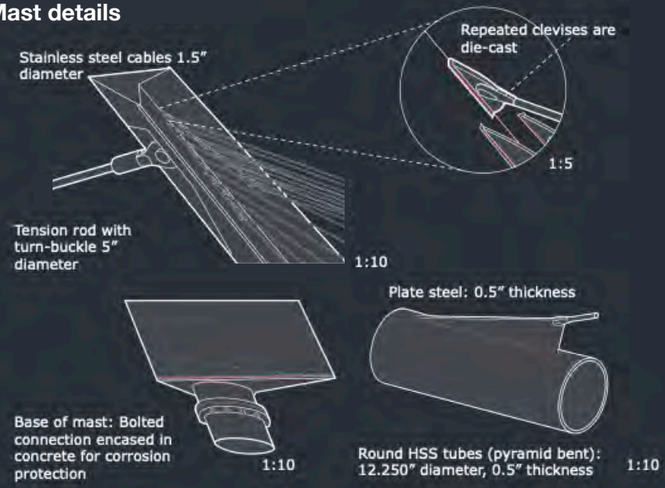
The bridge splits to connect visitors to paths on either side of a stone ridge. A mast and cable system supports the span.

Exploded truss structure and deck



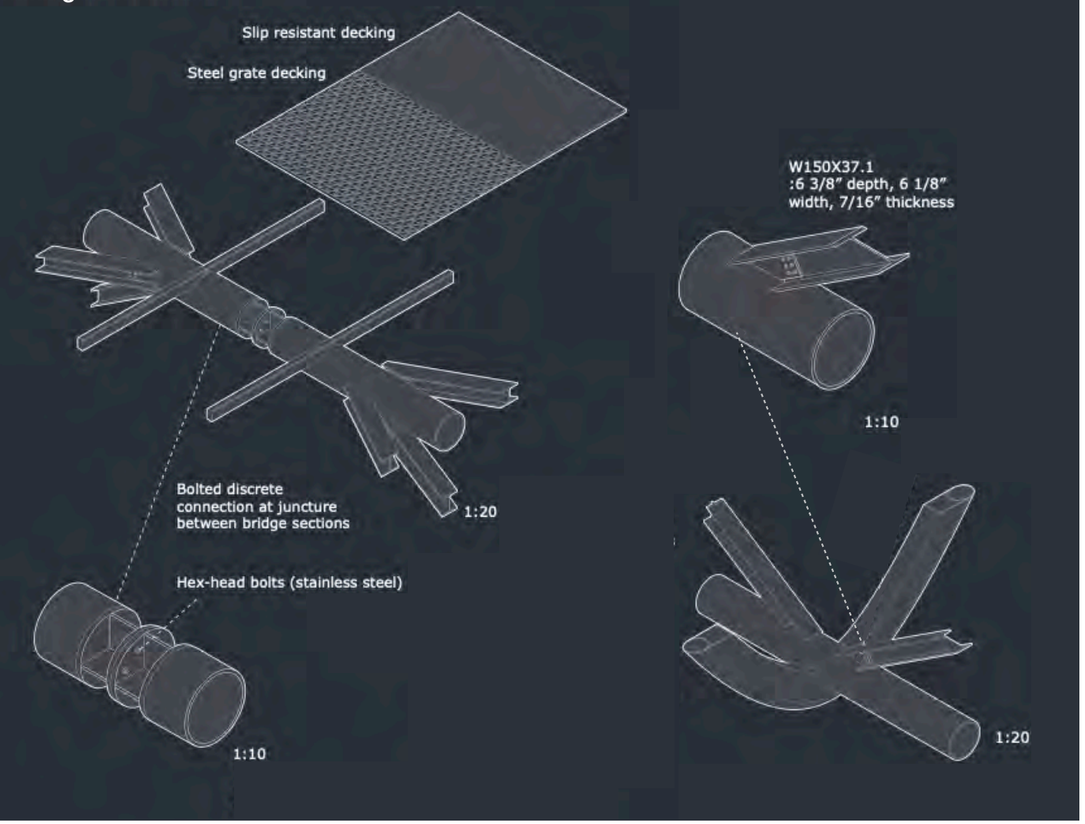
The mast is anchored into existing rock, and the remaining structure is installed by crane in ten prefabricated sections, using discreet bolted connections for efficient on-site assembly.

Mast details



Steel finishes

Walking deck details

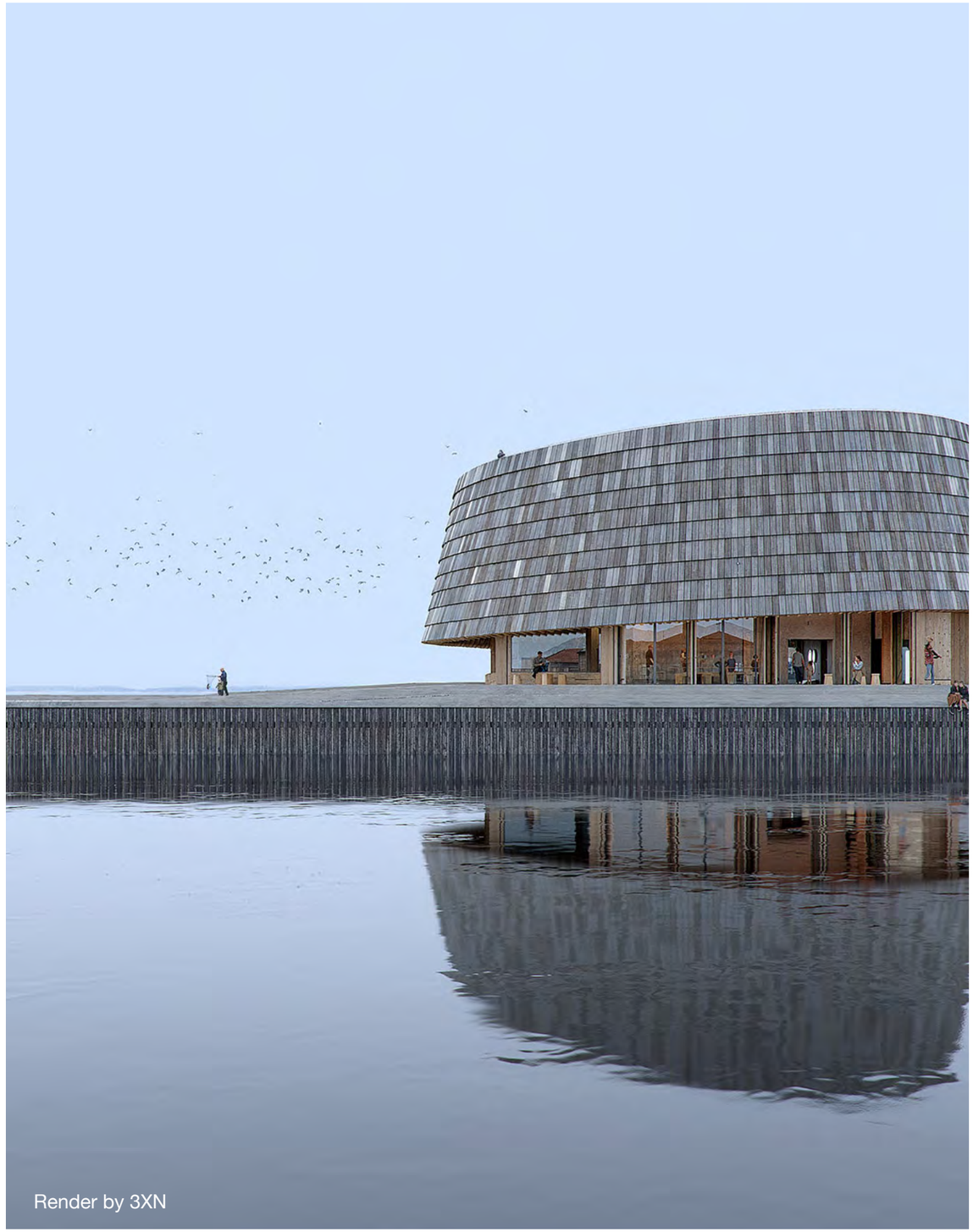


Professional Work

A selection of projects I've contributed to during co-ops and internships

With gratitude to many extremely talented colleagues

05



Render by 3XN

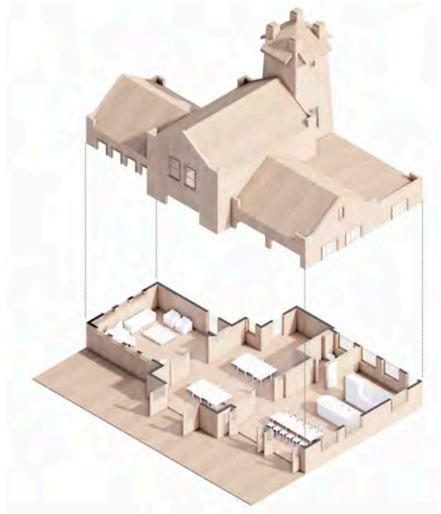
UBC Student Housing — 3XN

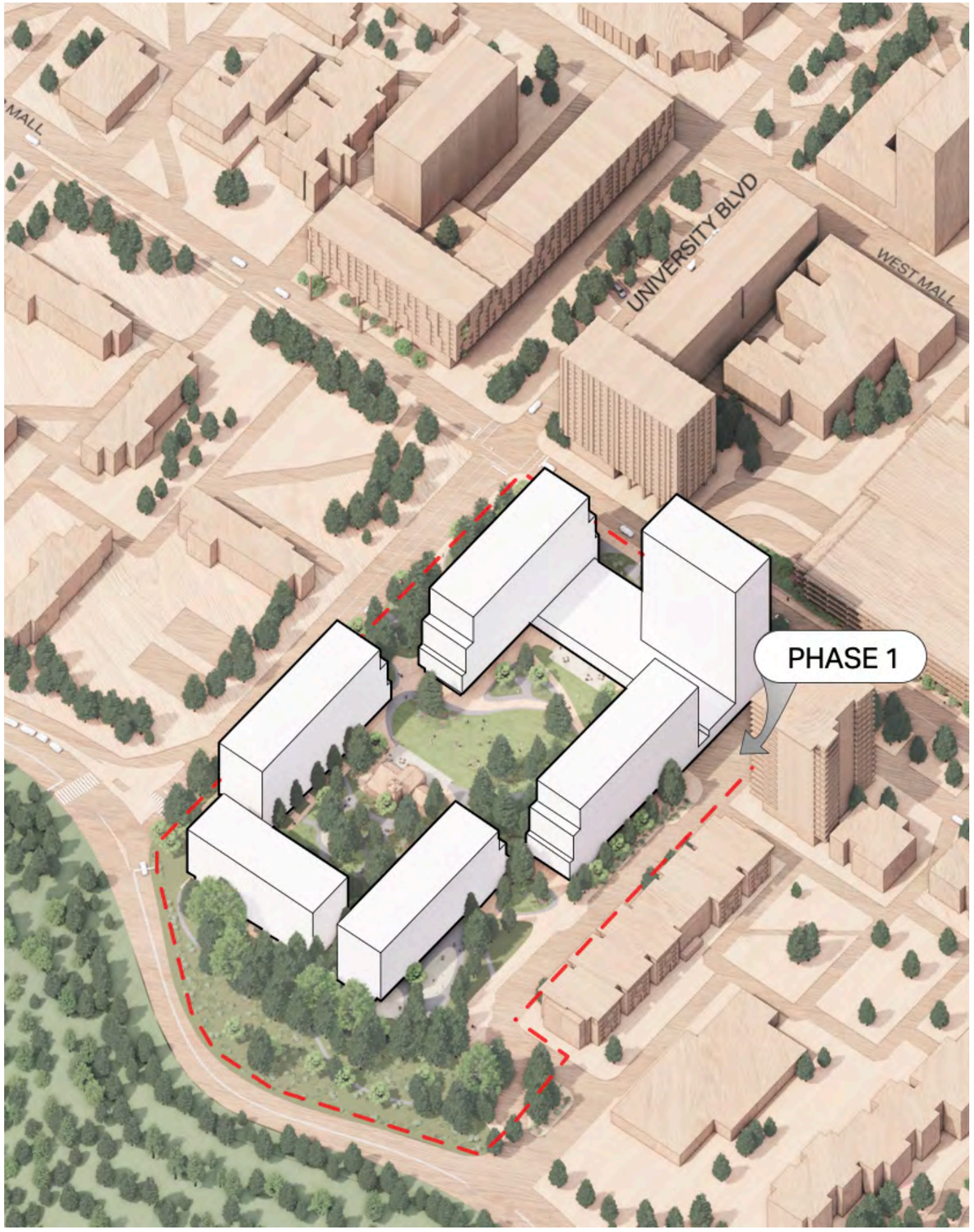
Creating a new student community

Tasked with designing a residence community for 1500 students at UBC, our team opted for a dynamic but affordable design that prioritizes public space.

While each of the six buildings has a unique identity, a limited choice of facade patterns and materials makes the cluster identifiable as a unified whole.

I worked on this project from massing through early design development. I contributed to facade design, 3D modelling, and developing a scheme for a historic firehouse to be reused as a social hub.





2 Finsbury Avenue — 3XN

Under construction!

I joined this high-end office project late in the design development process. Our small team's role was to get this building across the finish line — and that meant gaining approval from the City of London, the developer, and the prospective anchor tenants. We succeeded.

I created 3D interior layout diagrams, renderings of entrance and lobby configurations, and I prepared a full set of planning permission and marketing/ leasing plans — a task which involved substantial reorganization of existing digital files, along with detail-oriented updates.

Render by 3XN

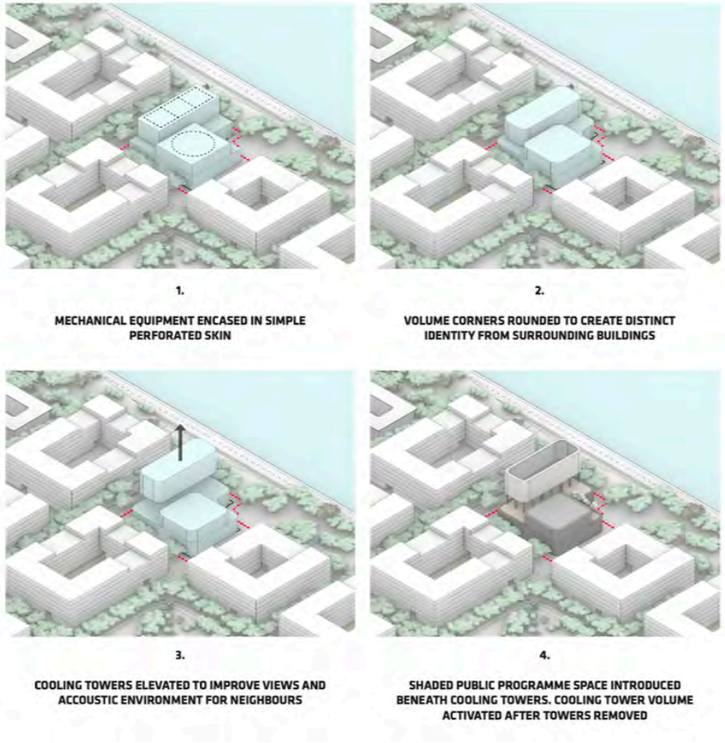
District Cooling Plant — BIG

Approved for construction!

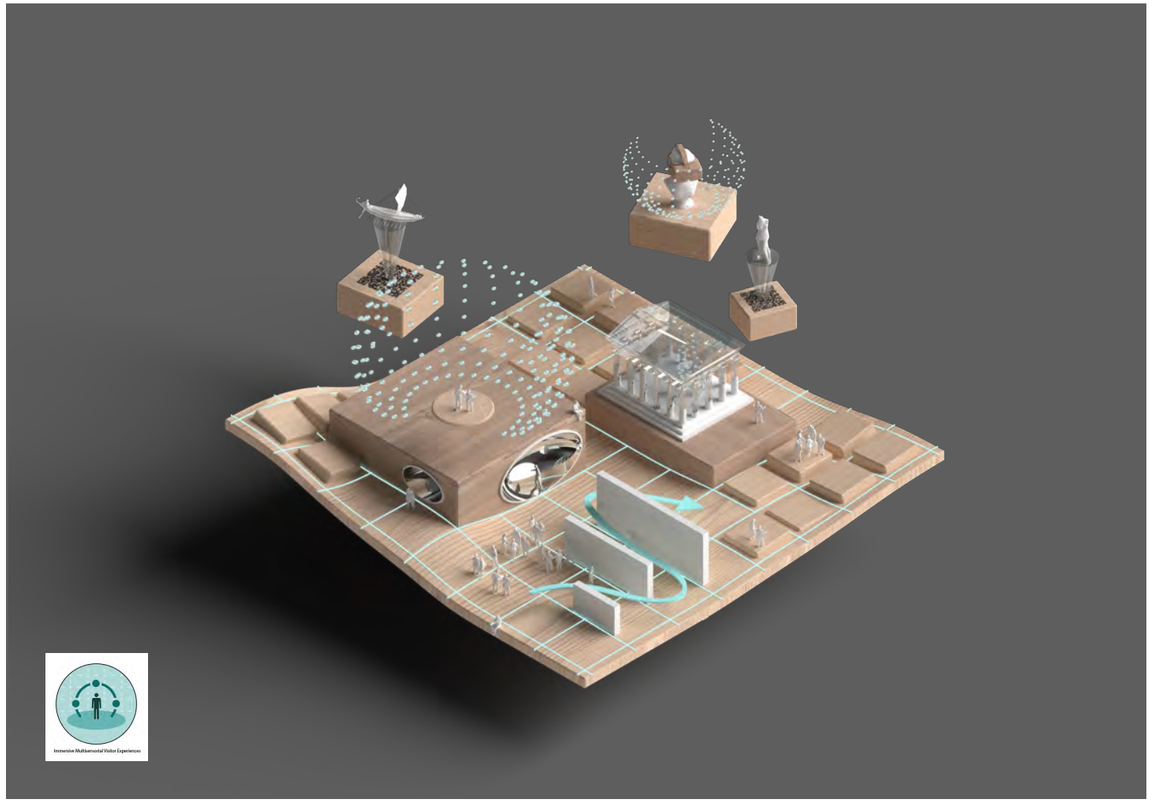
This commission-based project will be one of the first buildings constructed as part of a masterplan for a new industrial port city.

While the final design is not public, the image on the right is a provisional rendering I created for a scheme similar to what was ultimately selected. It aims to be playful and charming while retaining an authentically industrial identity.

The diagram below represents an additional iteration of the scheme.



Museum Pre-qualification Bid— 3XN



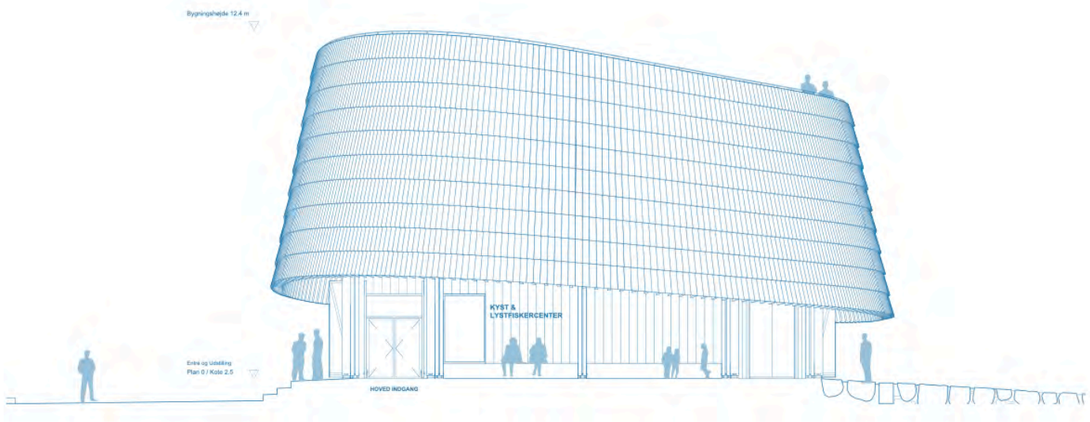
How might you illustrate the future of the museum?

For 3XN's pre-qualification bid for a major museum renovation, I was part of a three-person team that had to answer "What is the future of the museum?".

Through brainstorming and focused research, we arrived at eight core principles (pictured right).

The challenge was making these ideas visually compelling without an architectural form.
We illustrated our vision through a family of three-dimensional rendered diagrams inspired by the Islands of Personality in Pixar's Inside Out. The jury commended this portion of the submission.

Assens Coastal Fishing Centre — 3XN

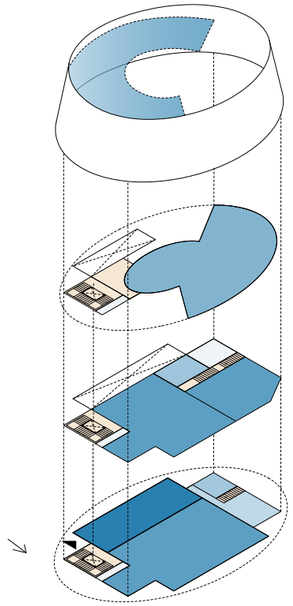


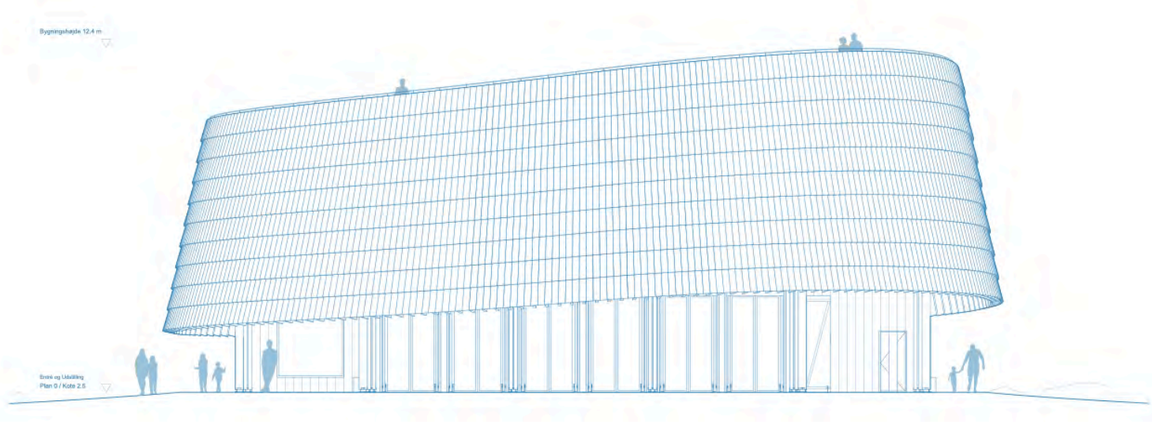
Competition win!

The brief requested a 700 m2 fishing and coastal centre for a town on the Danish island of Funen.

Our team of four successfully proposed a scheme that prioritized flexibility and practicality beneath a humble but architecturally iconic roof. We saw off competition from teams at BIG and Lundgaard & Tranberg.

I was involved from week one. After we collectively established the basic massing through a process of digital iteration, I was responsible for context modelling, program + structural diagramming, and creating the elevations seen above.





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Writing Sample

Winner of the Bing Thom Architectural Essay Competition

Awarded 2025 — RAIC

06

Fuller's Pantheon

An Essay on Transformative Architecture

The Biosphere and Pantheon. Photos captured by the author.

Fuller's Pantheon

I had read all about Buckminster Fuller's Biosphere in Montreal, but nothing prepared me for the sheer wonder of experiencing it on location. As I ascended to the observation deck, the elevator doors opened to reveal an impressively vast spherical expanse, its airy volume framed by a mesmerizing lattice of steel that seemed to defy gravity. Its diameter is nearly twice that of the Roman Pantheon, and its technical advancements represent a comparable leap forward for what's possible in the built environment. Following a fire that consumed its acrylic skin in the 1970s, the Biosphere has itself taken on the stoic quality of a living ruin — like the Pantheon, it's stripped of its cladding, open to the sky, and nevertheless in use to this day.

If not quite a temple, Fuller's Biosphere is a place every architect should regard as spiritually significant. It's a building that sought to transform the world — an ideal to which all great architecture must at some level aspire.

The Biosphere's magic lies, I believe, in its conceptual purity. Its purpose was simply to catalyze change, a mission expressed in both its structural logic and intended program. In the paragraphs ahead, we'll explore both facets, and in doing so, I hope to convince you that there's perhaps no building that so powerfully embodies what it means for architecture to take on a transformational posture.

Approaching the Biosphere, the audacity of its engineering is immediately clear. Calculated and drafted by Fuller's collaborator Shoji Sadao, its strikingly thin geodesic shell is entirely self-supporting, curving inward like a droplet of water on a silicone surface before making contact with the ground. Five decades post completion, my visit there still felt like a trip to the future.

Unlike traditional structures, which rely on compression, geodesic domes achieve stability through tension, much like an inflated ball. This enables both radical material efficiency and vast column-free spans — maximizing space while minimizing resources.

While Mies van der Rohe famously declared that "less is more," Fuller was less concerned with aesthetic refinement than with doing more with less. He believed that through "design-science," we could stretch our resources to meet humanity's needs without exhausting the planet. The Biosphere was a built manifesto for this vision — a prototype for a sustainable, prosperous future.

A project with such globally minded ambitions could not have found a better stage than Montreal's Expo '67, a world's fair dedicated to envisioning the future. Though it served as the U.S. pavilion, Fuller himself rejected nationalism. He famously declared Earth to be a spaceship, observing that humanity's greatest challenge lay in the fact that its crew — nation-states — saw themselves as adversaries in a zero-sum game rather than as co-stewards of a shared vessel.

This belief shaped Fuller's original vision for the pavilion. Instead of showcasing an all-American collection of artifacts, he proposed an immersive, data-driven installation: the Geoscope, a colossal, computer-controlled model of the Earth. Visitors would interact with its glowing surface, exploring how different strategies for managing energy, resources, and the environment might shape the future. Crucially, and in his signature provocative fashion, there would be no national borders.

Good buildings enable change within their communities. Positioned at the heart of a world expo, Fuller's Biosphere aspired fittingly to enable change for the human community in its entirety.

I began this essay by comparing the Biosphere to the Pantheon. There are many parallels to be drawn between these buildings, but one in particular intrigues me most: both were conceived as architectural encapsulations of the world as it was understood in their respective eras. The Pantheon's circular plan and hemispherical dome are believed to have symbolized the Earth and the heavens above. The Biosphere, had it housed the Geoscope as intended, would have contained a literal model of the planet, interactive and alive with data.

Yet there is a profound difference in how they position the visitor. In the Pantheon, one stands below, looking up toward the divine. In the Biosphere, one is positioned symbolically in the sky, gazing inward at a model of the world over which human technology and industry now exerts god-like influence — for better or worse.

I read Fuller's Pantheon as an invitation to agency. Where, according to common interpretation, the Roman original honoured "all of the gods," the Biosphere honours the change-making potential in all of us.

Staring up at the dome's steel web on the day of my visit, I admit my delight was tempered by the haunting thought of what might have been. *Why didn't we listen?* Despite Fuller's profound influence on visionaries including Steve Jobs, Neri Oxman, Stewart Brand, Norman Foster, and countless others, it's clear that the future he envisioned hasn't yet come to pass. Then again, if young designers like myself give in to the notion that it's too late to succeed, it surely never will.

Our task now is clear. Despite all present obstacles, we must double down on our efforts to relentlessly, strategically, create positively transformational work in any way we can. As the proverb goes, "*The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now*."

If you need inspiration, you know which building to visit.

Thank you

Thanks for reviewing my work! Please connect with any questions.

acohen@uwaterloo.ca