

**Black  
Entrepreneurship  
Alliance.**

# THE ELEMENT CENTRE: LEVERAGING INNOVATION INFRASTRUCTURE FOR COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Pre-Design Study

# LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In producing this report, we express our gratitude to the Indigenous Nations who are the original stewards of the lands on which the research team, the Black Entrepreneurship Alliance (BEA), and its key partners reside, work, and engage, and the focus of this study. Our acknowledgment extends, with deep respect, to the Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Huron-Wendat, who have historically cared for the lands encompassing the area known as Tkaronto (Toronto). This region is now home to many First Nation, Inuit, and Métis communities, and the current treaty holders, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. This territory is subject to the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement symbolizing the collective responsibility to peacefully share and care for the Great Lakes region.

We would also like to acknowledge those who came here as settlers – as migrants either in this generation or in generations past – and those of us who came here involuntarily, particularly those brought to these lands as a result of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery. We pay tribute to those ancestors of African origin and descent.

We would also like to express our sincere gratitude to the members of the research roundtable, interviewees and northwest Toronto community who provided their valuable resources, time, and insights to inform this report.

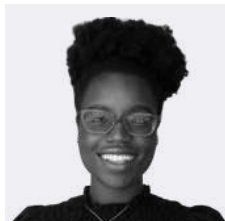
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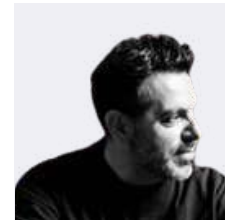
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## AN ELEMENTAL MANIFESTO:

place/space of curiosity and resilience in the city for inclusive innovation and creativity

COMMUNITY is made up of several ELEMENTS that work together in a natural cohesion to create both a physical and metaphorical support system and network.

COMMUNITY creates a refuge and sanctuary among ELEMENTS of uncertainty through uplifting and supporting individuals.

The architecture grows confidence to emerge in a world of challenging ELEMENTS

Young, bright-eyed talents, revisited entrepreneurial ideas, established independently-owned businesses work together in a COMMUNITY to offer each other valuable collaboration

“You know careers take off, just gotta be patient” – Kendrick Lamar, ELEMENT. (DAMN, 2017)

Braving the ELEMENTS while also being within your ELEMENT; A welcoming and inclusive space to learn, make mistakes and collaborate.

## IN/OUT.

A spatial construct ‘out of my element’

Be out of your element – To be uncomfortable in a certain situation, typically because one lacks experience or familiarity with it. Be in your element – be in a situation or environment that one particularly likes and in which one can perform well.

A welcoming and inclusive space to learn, make mistakes and collaborate.

## SPONTANEOUS

Element of surprise – a spontaneous city. A spontaneous architecture. The urban forest/ coming across a place, accidentally.

## ATMOSPHERE

To weather the elements – If someone weathers the storm, they succeed in reaching the end of a very difficult period without much harm or damage

Brave the elements – To go out into and endure bad or stormy weather. Usually used hyperbolically.”

Periodic Table of Elements: a metaphor for an architecture

Organized around catalytic relationships

Small and large convergences

Shifts in scale

Goes back to the Innovation Hub being a convergence centre. Centre will have a mix of anchor institutions, tenants, and talent.

A collective of partners behind the project will inform infrastructure and programming. New connections will develop unsuspected collaborations, programming, and innovative solutions. This happens not only on an organizational but individual level (ex., individual finding their co-founder, peer-to-peer support, new conversations)

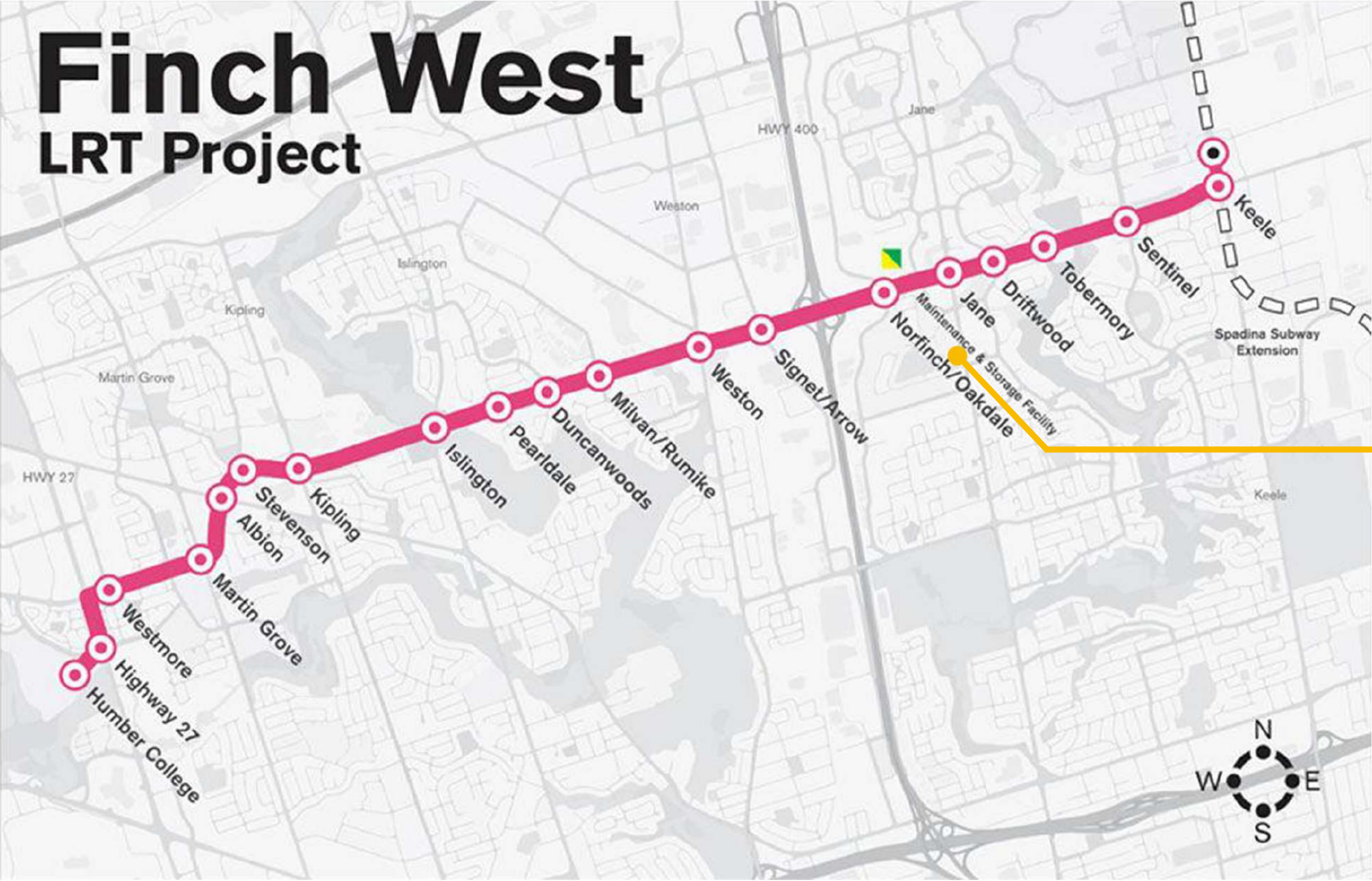
Separate elements coming into contact and reacting, resulting in something new and unexpected.

“an architecture of music and words

ELEMENT; a manifesto for the project

Convergence	the project is a symbol for a resurgent community
Personas	key characters in a fluid interaction
Learn	learning and teaching, overtly and implicitly
Surprise	instilling delight and imagination
Memory	contemplation
Making	working through meaningful collaboration”

FORM  
PROGRAM  
WORDS  
MUSIC  
SPACE

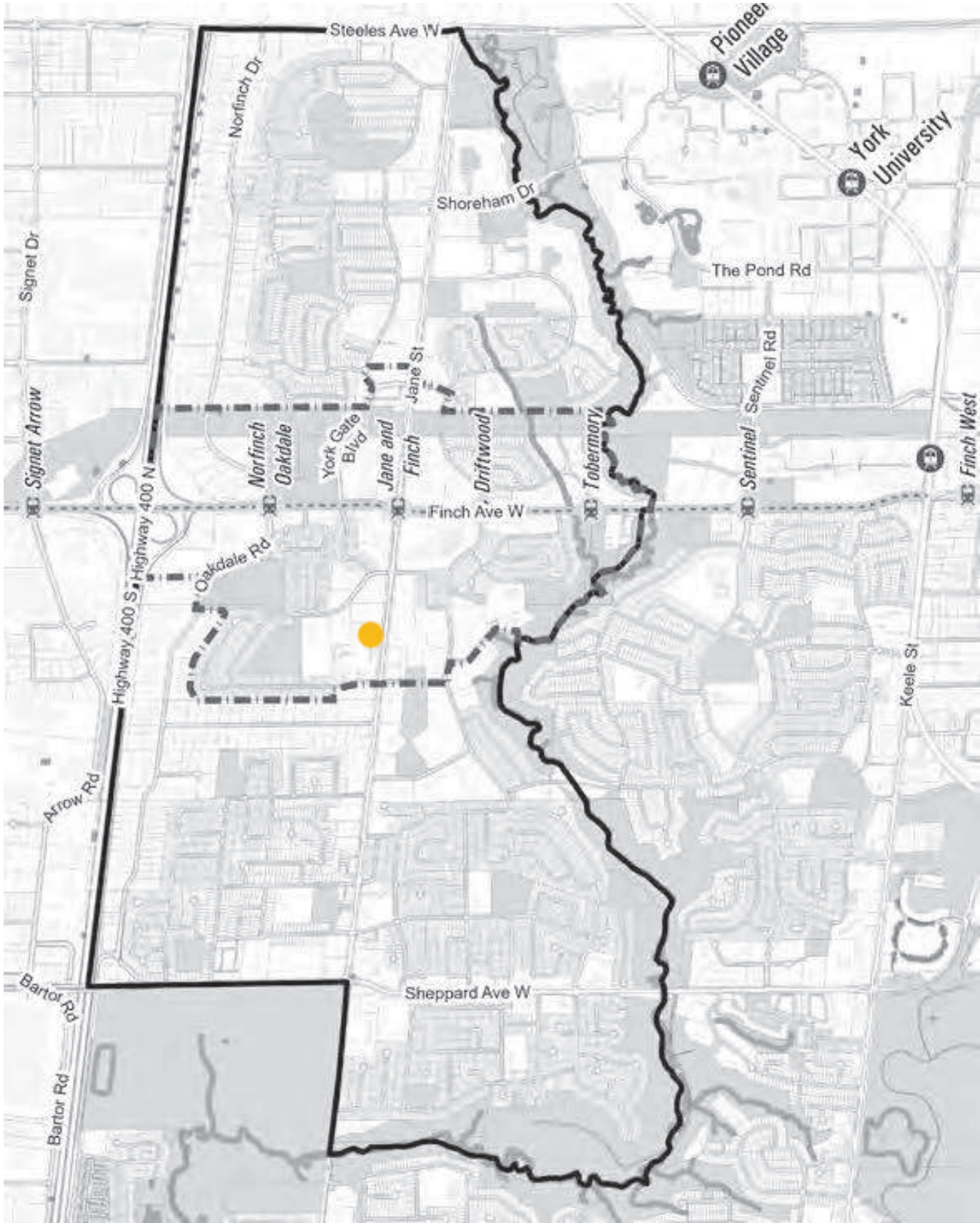


Proposed Site on Finch St.

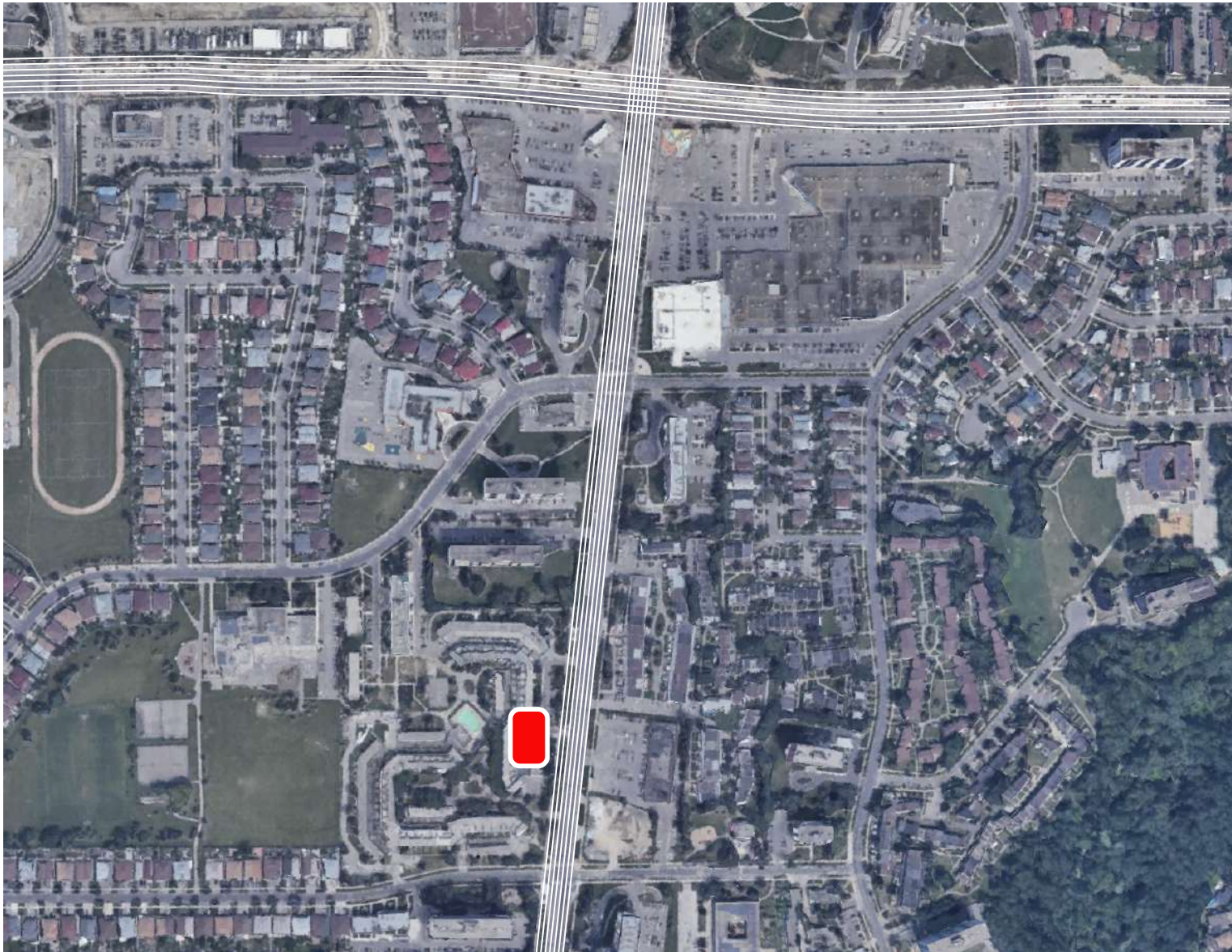
One of the identified potential site locations of the BEA 'ELEMENT' Centre within walking distance of the in construction Finch West LTR Project scheduled for completion in 2023.



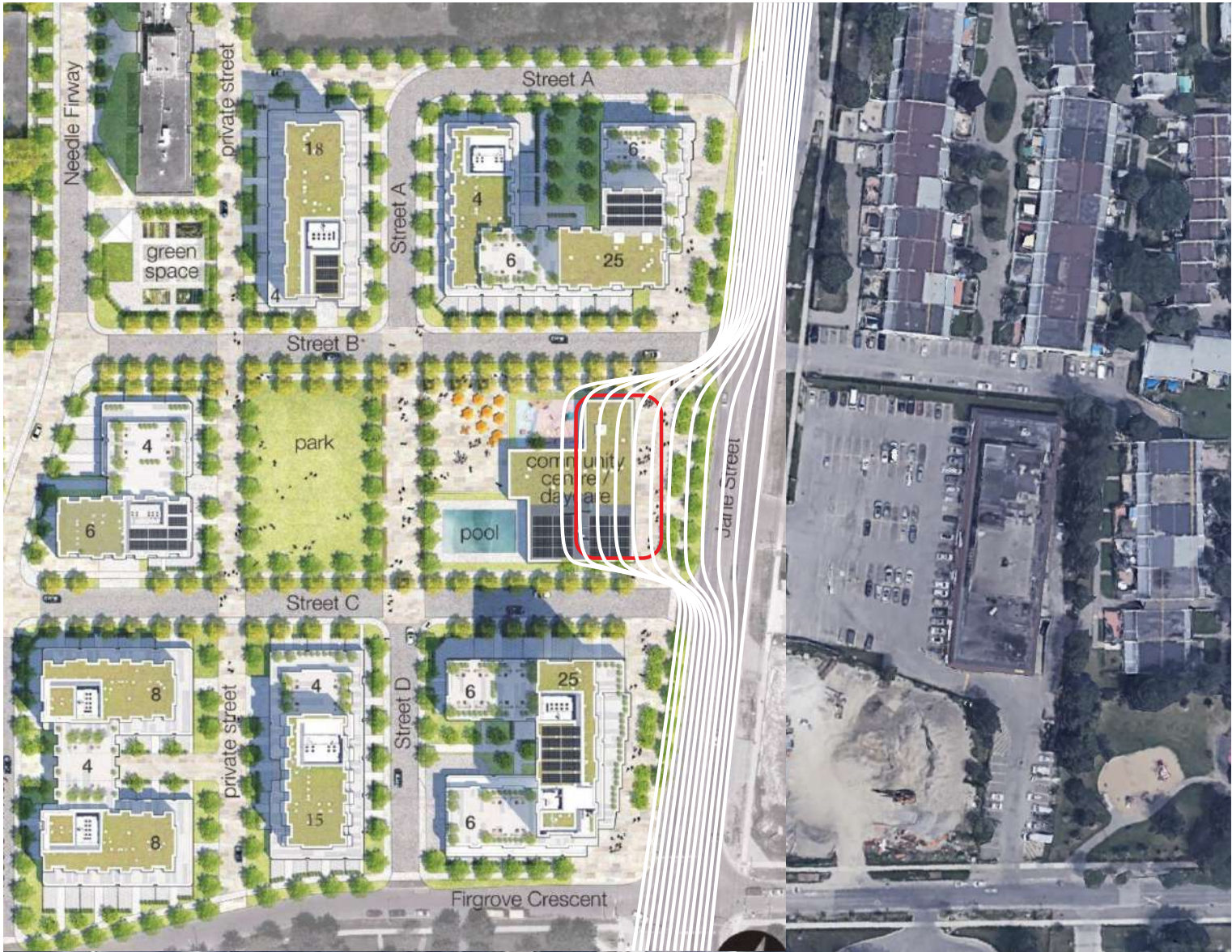
Aerial view of Finch Avenue West looking east. Source: Metrolinx



Scope of Jane Finch Initiative study area. A potential site for BEA 'ELEMENT' Centre location is indicated in yellow.

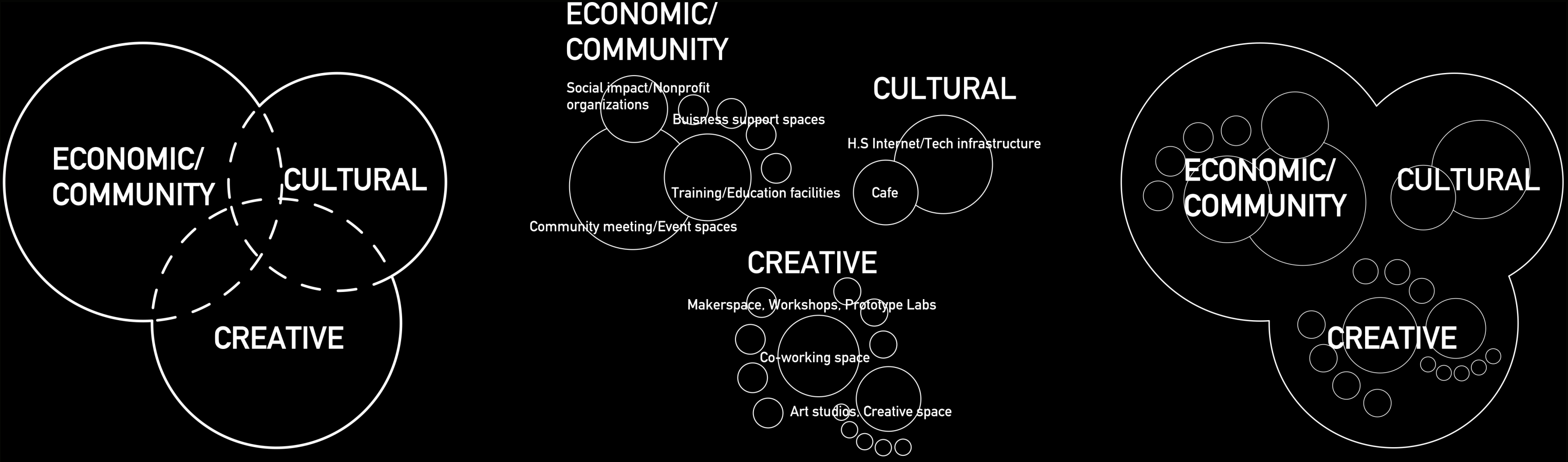


Potential site (Firgrove-Grassways) in relation to Jane St. and Finch Ave.

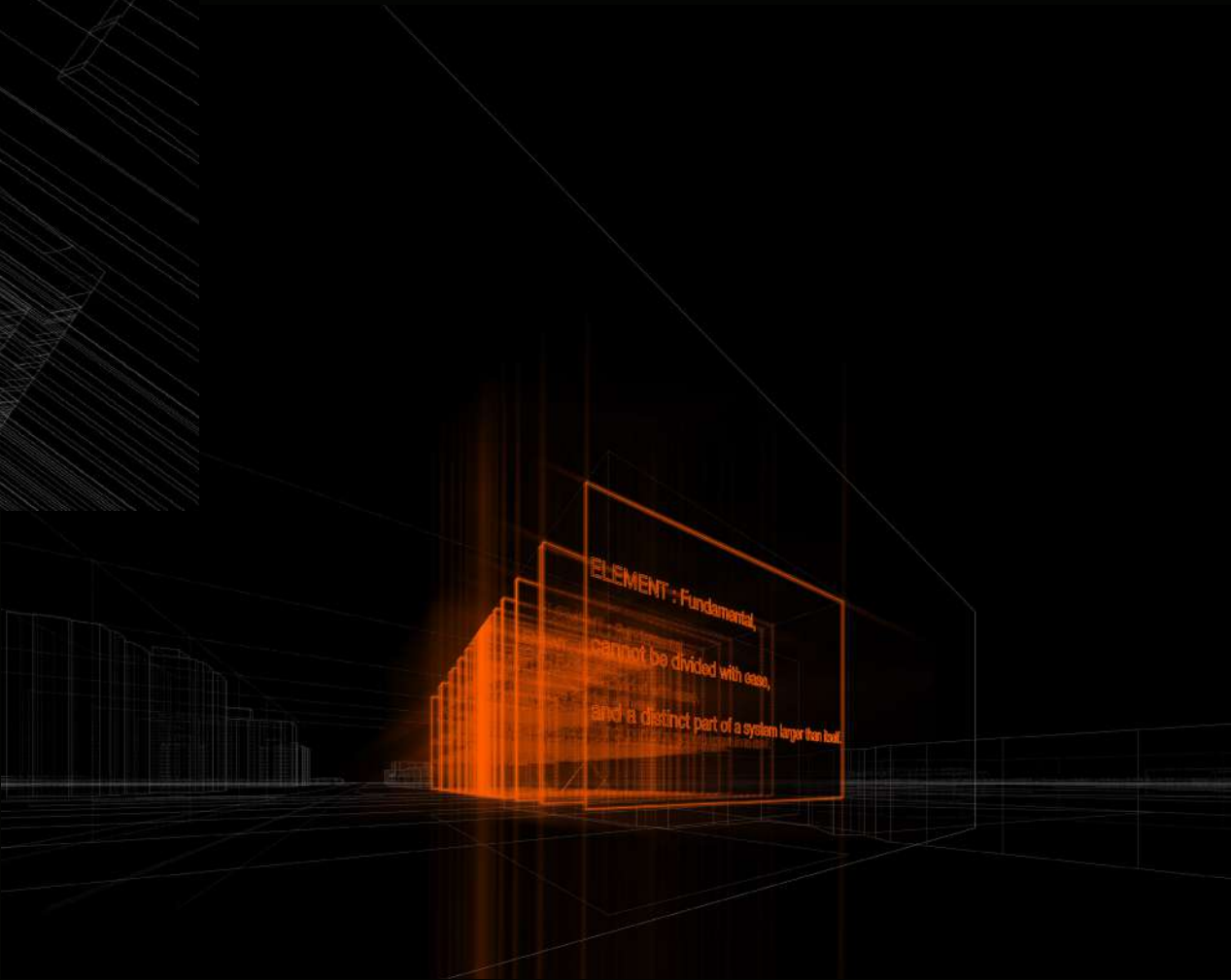


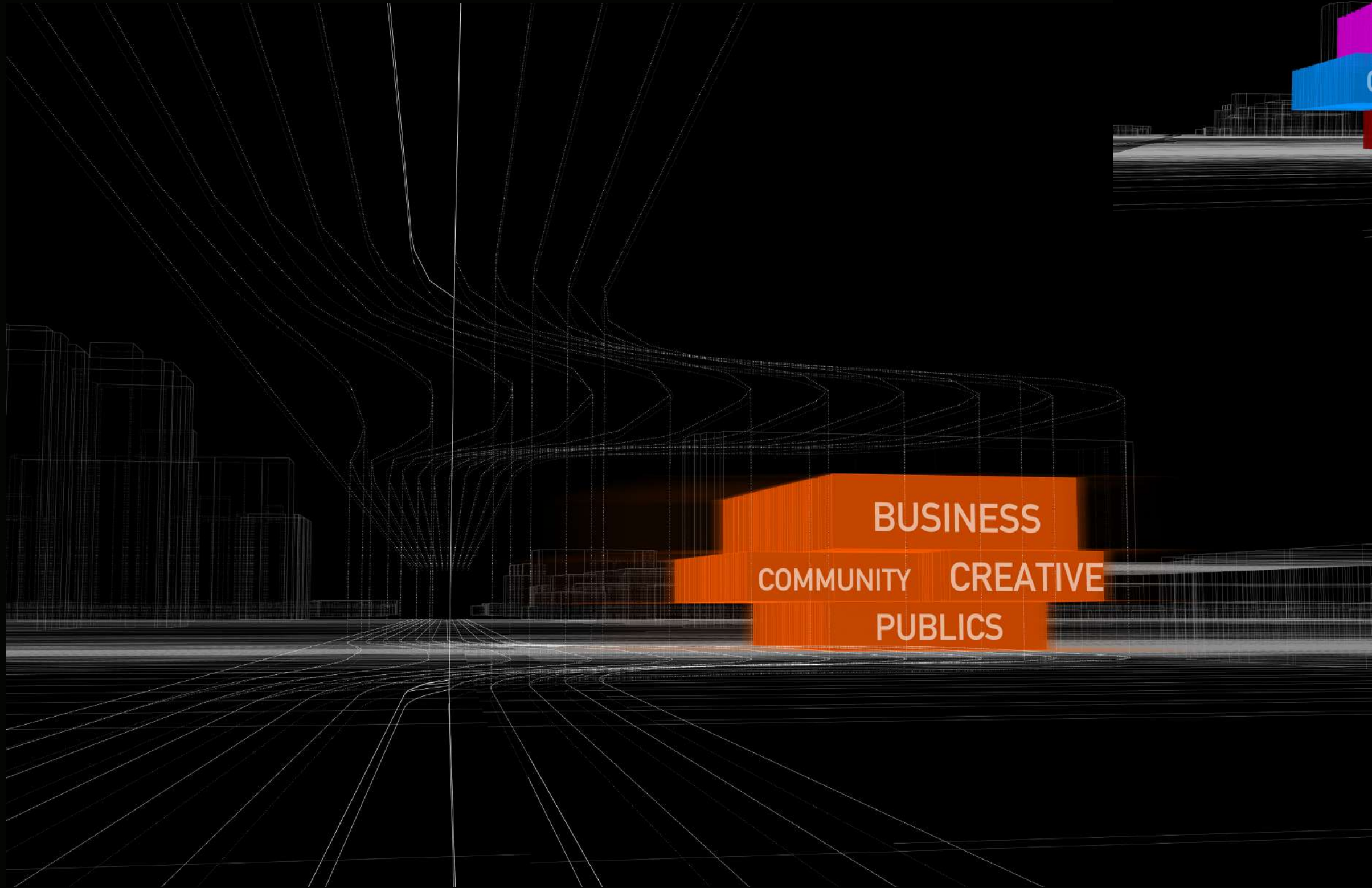
Potential site and its adjacency to Jane St.

Based on the visioning exercise of anchoring the 'ELEMENT' Centre to a physical location and integrated into Toronto Community Housing's Corporation proposed master plan for the Firgrove-Grassways Revitalization site. Initial vision of the 'ELEMENT' centre/innovation hub was to be integrated into the community centre to reinforce the centre's theme of early intervention with youth (Future Innovator) when it comes to entrepreneurship and innovation.

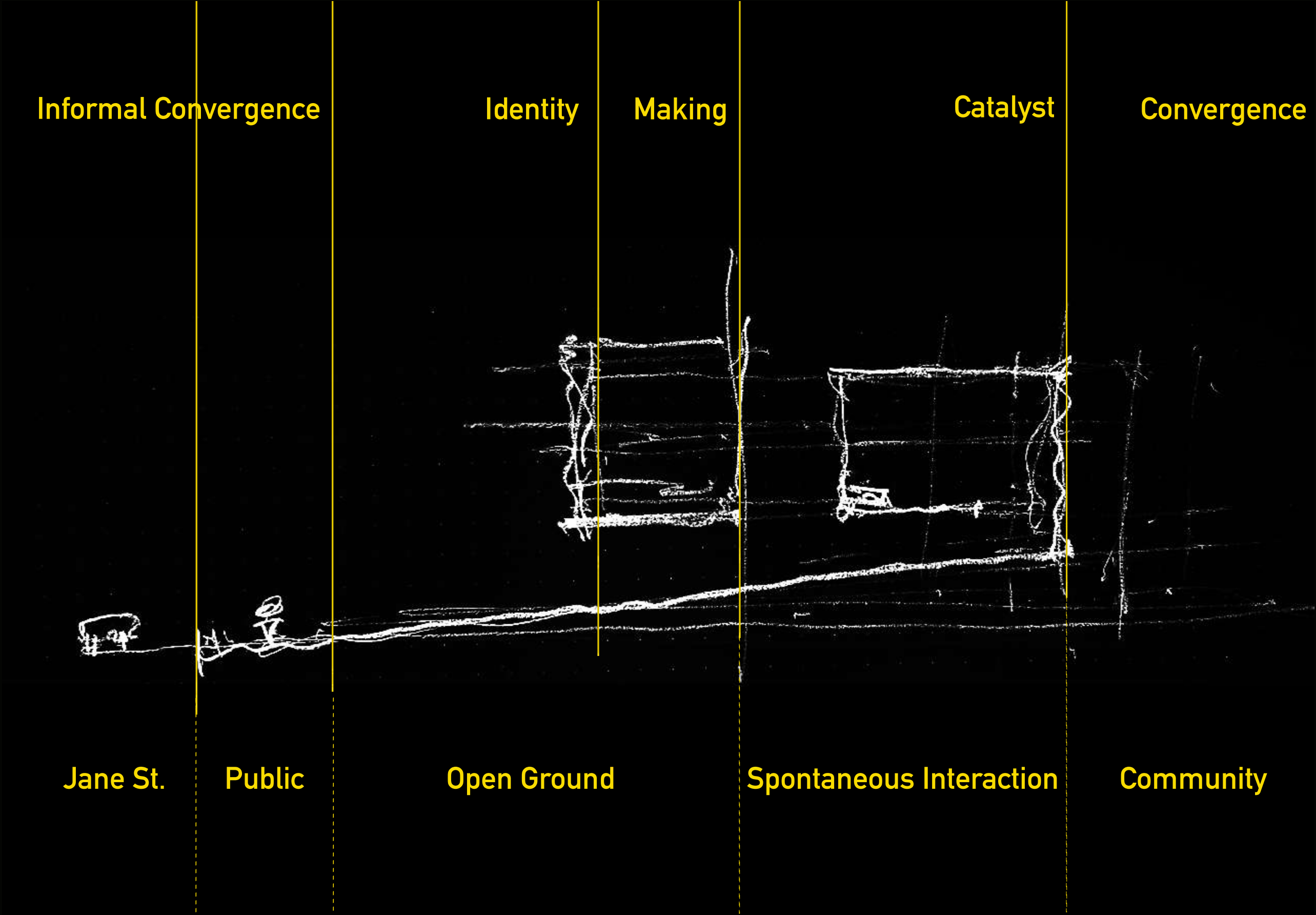


The results of our first survey – 190 survey respondents from Jane & Finch/Northwest Toronto communities and broader innovation ecosystem. Based on respondent feedback, programming themes emerged from preferred uses of space and hub activities for the proposed space. Program themes were used as building blocks for the pre-design Element Centre.

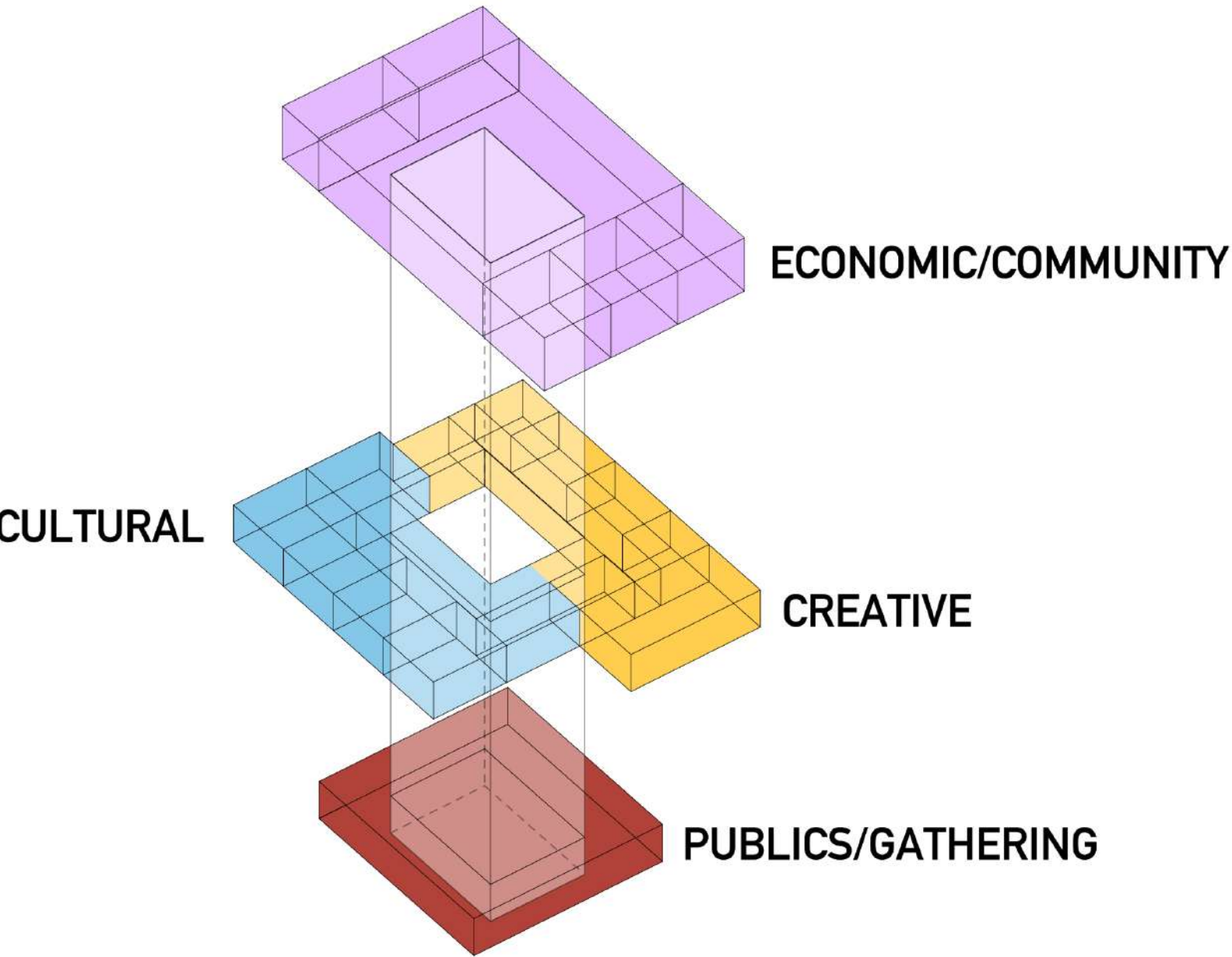




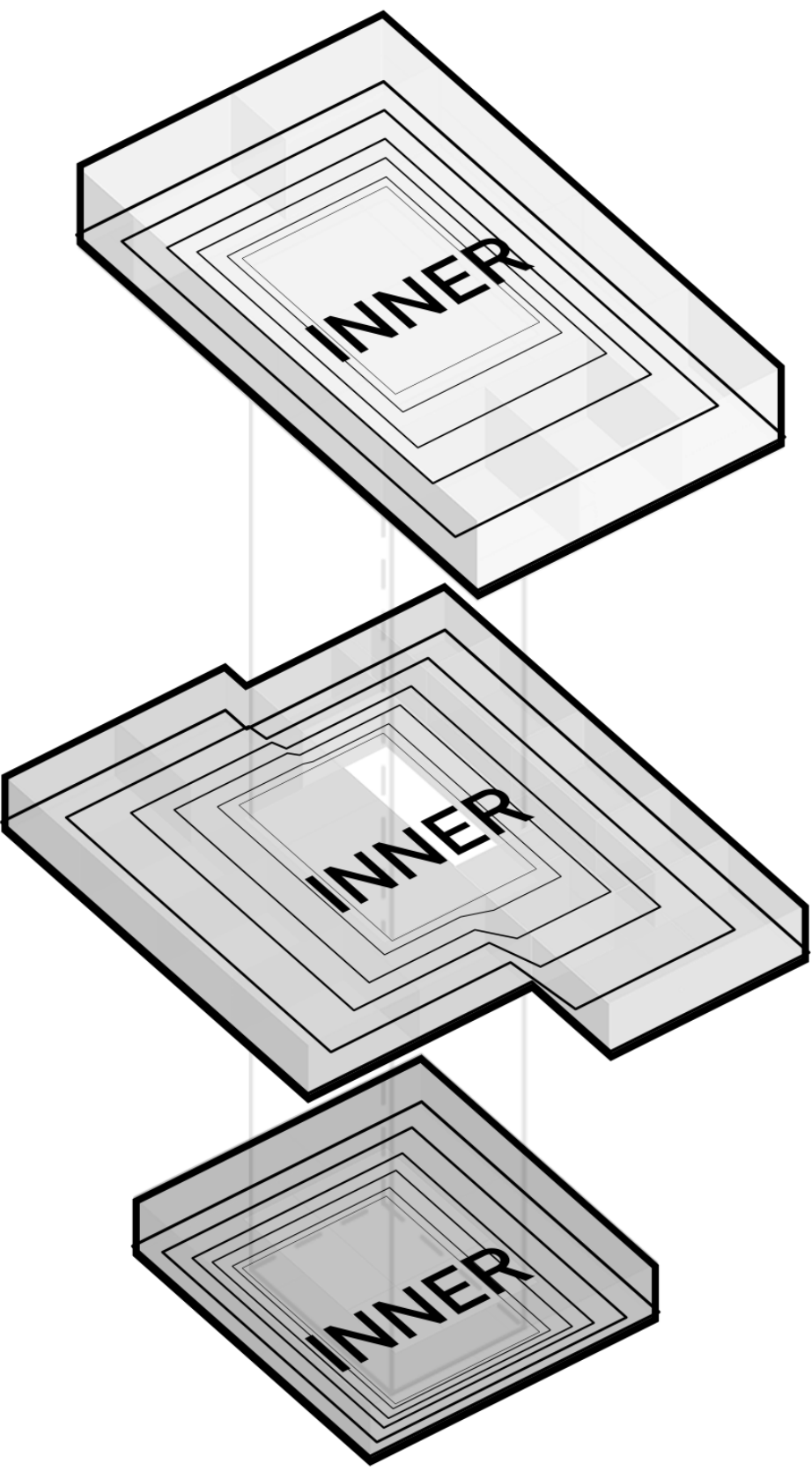
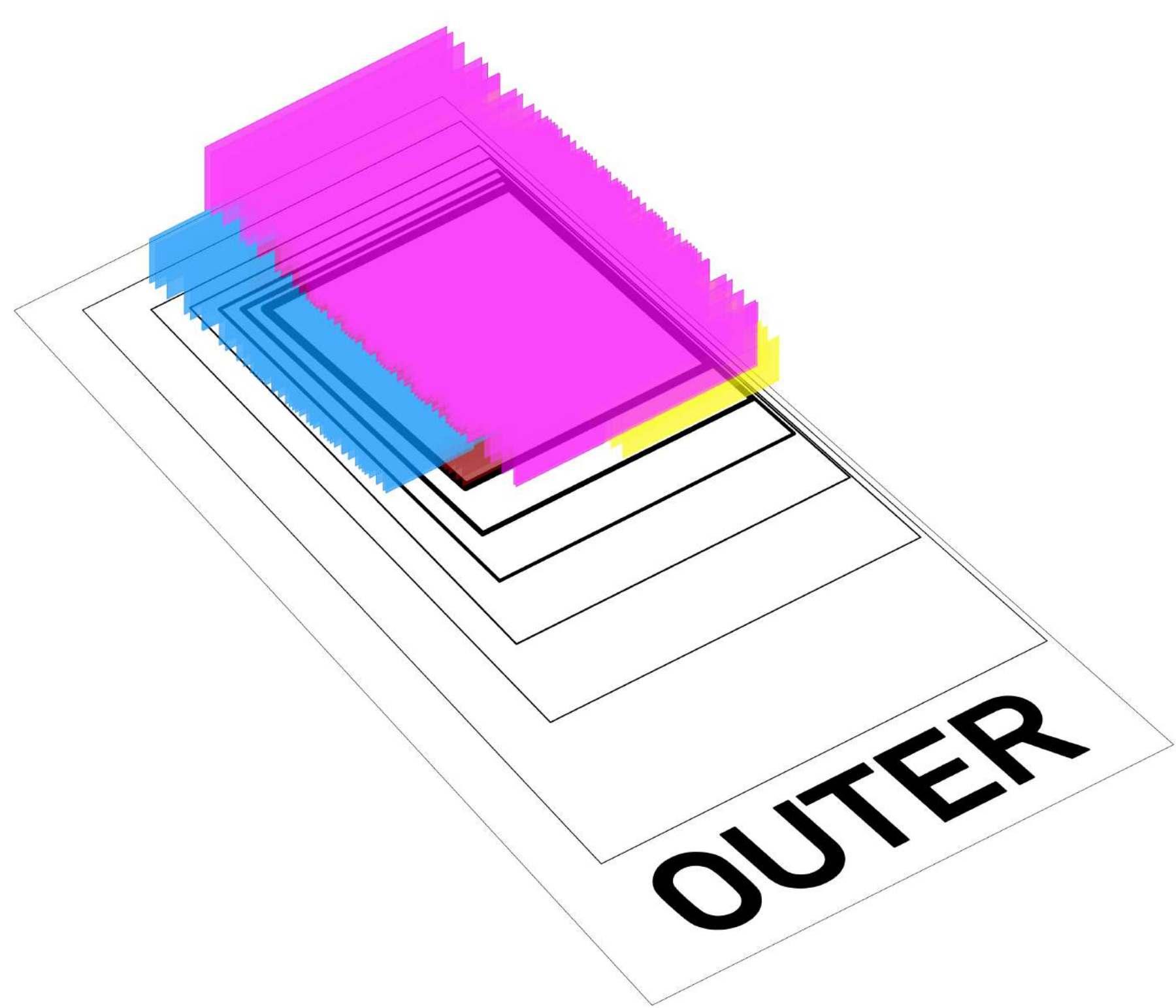
Programming themes resulting into the building blocks of the building. The first floor is made for the convergence of all personas and the "uninitiated" or curious to be invited in. A common place to gather, connect, and converse. The second floor is made for founder and professional day-to-day activities. Creative, cultural and community expression is hosted on this floor. While the top floor is directed by business and economic pursuits. A formalized place for facilitating business and career growth via curated collective of incubator, accelerator and operator tenants.



Sketch of side view of 'ELEMENT' Centre: Displaying primary functions of the space as one proceeds closer and inside the building. From main street interaction through different areas of the building is ingrained with a purpose and activity that drives personas.



COMMUNITY  
CONVERGENCE  
CATALYSTS  
PERSONAS  
ELEMENTS



PREDESIGN\_FUNCTIONAL PROGRAMMING

BEA ELEMENT CENTRE

Budget 15-20M\$  
approx. 650\$/sq. ft  
30,000 sq ft

ELEMENT – Innovation Centre Design Considerations Guide

FUNCTIONAL PROGRAMMING

Program model definition  
Three floors at 10,000 sq ft / floor

**Third Floor, Thinking – Making; Business**

Persona individual meeting spaces 1200-1500 sq ft

Catalyst rooms 1500 sq ft

Small co-working 3x300, Business Accelerators 3x200

Convergence space 4500 sq ft

Library 3000, Shared space for Non-Profit Organizations 1000, Venture Lending/Community Bank 500

Opening to below 500 sq ft

**Second Floor, Thinking – Making; Young Professionals/Founders**

Persona individual meeting spaces 1200-1500 sq ft

Catalyst rooms (5-6 per floor) 1500 sq ft

Small art/Creative studio 3x300, Support/mentoring 300, Prayer room 300

Convergence space 4500 sq ft

Workshop 1000, Prototyping lab 250, Charette space 750, Seminar rooms 2x500, Venue Hall 1500

Opening to below 500 sq ft

**Ground Floor, Community**

Art gallery 2500 sq ft

Art/Exhibition Elements of a Science Museum, Travelling exhibitions, Demo space, Future Innovator section

Daycare 1000 sq ft

Digital space 500 sq ft

Public digital support/early intervention

Public gathering space 2500 sq ft

Food hall, Entertainment space

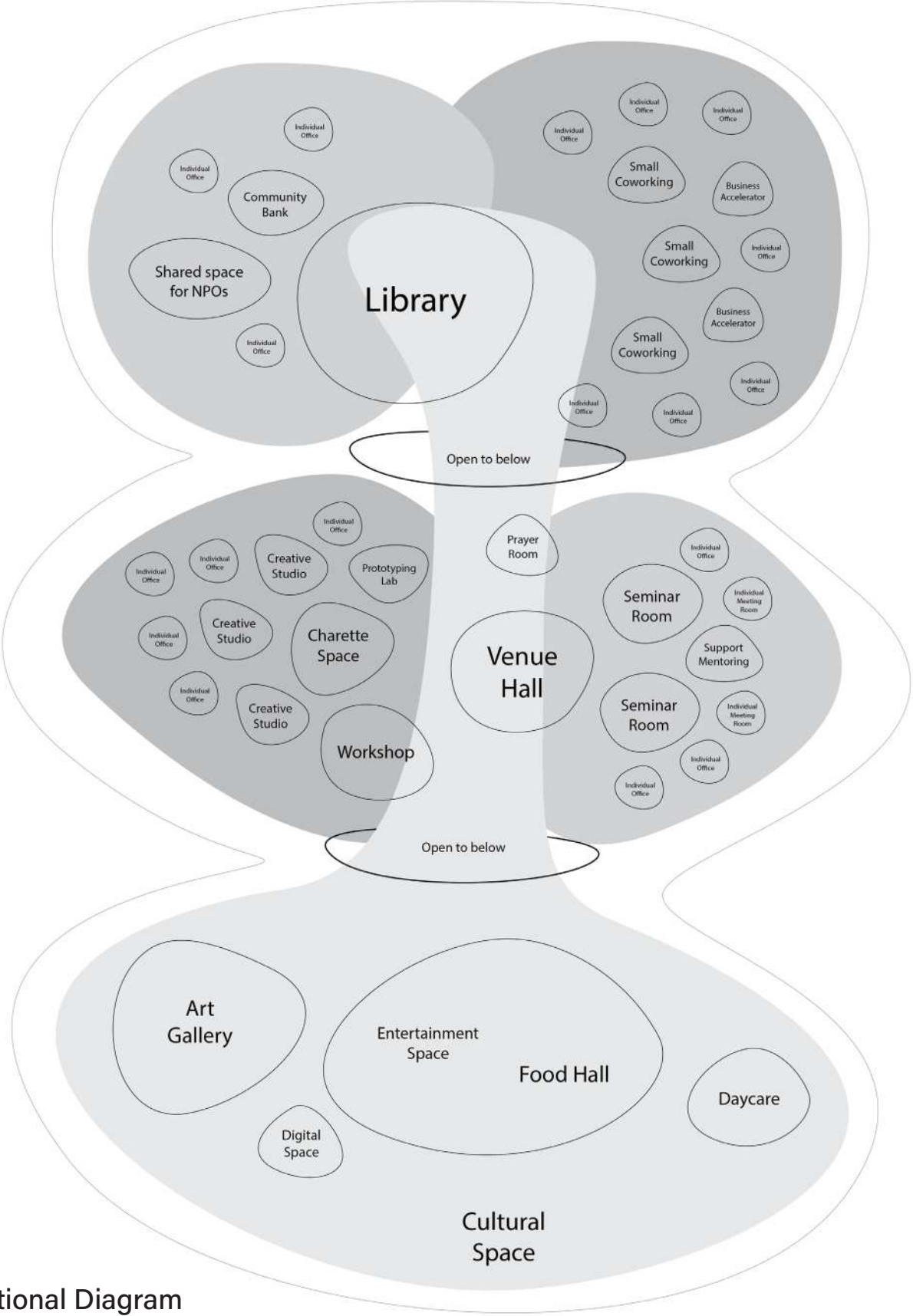
Circulation 1500 sq ft

Exterior to Interior ground floor

Community landscape forest, Cultural Space (1%)

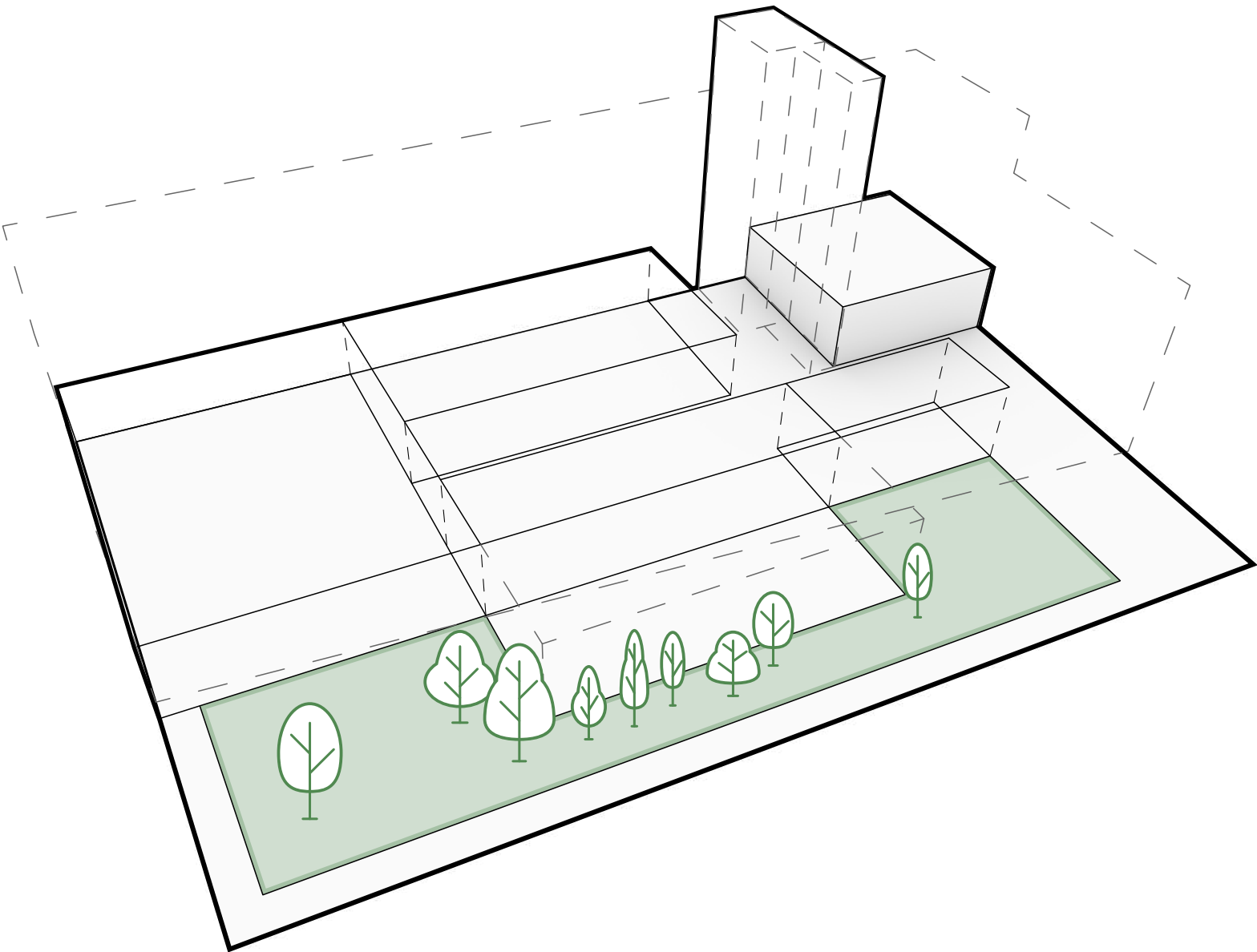
Total estimated preliminary area: 30000 sf gross

AKAFLDWRK

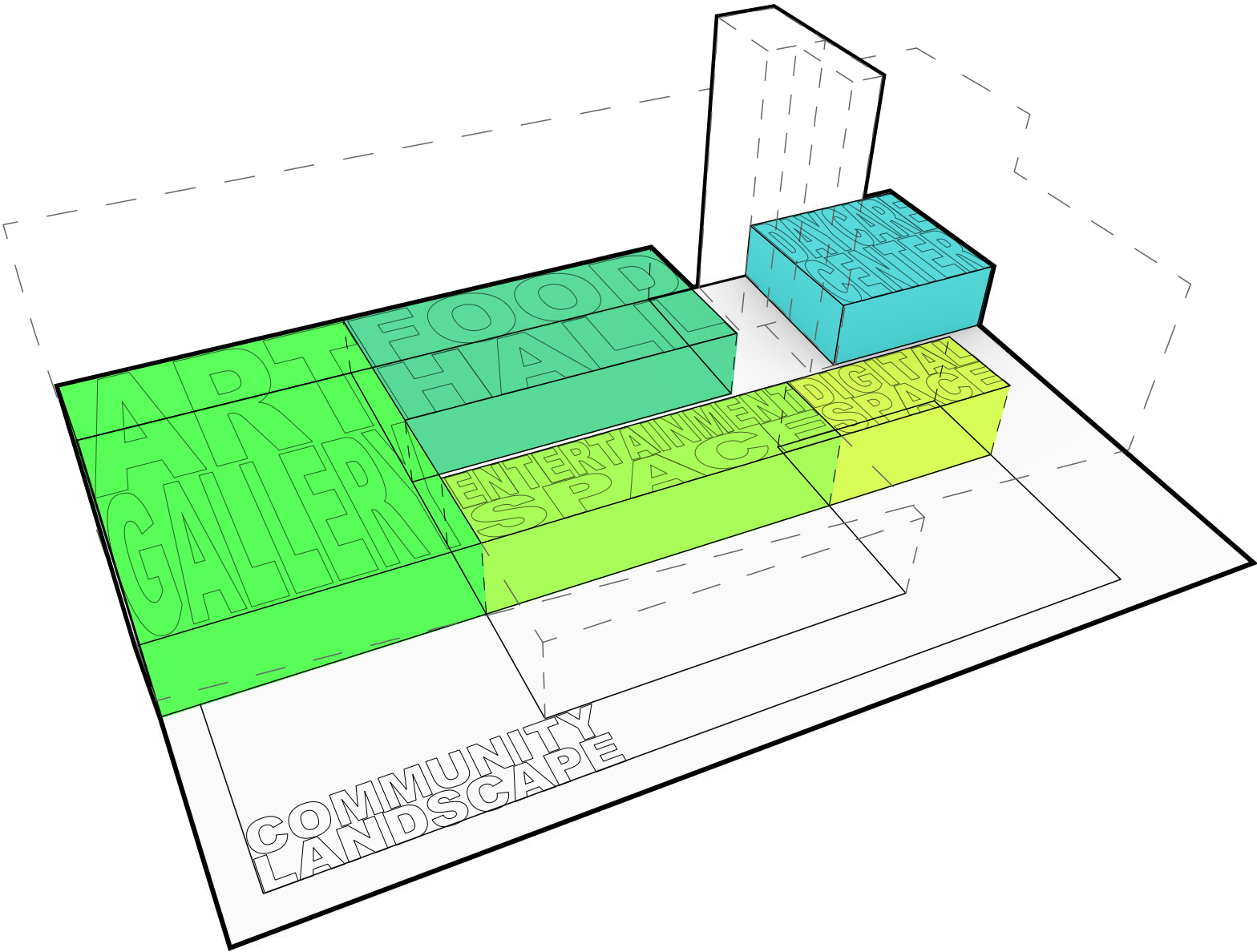


Relational Diagram

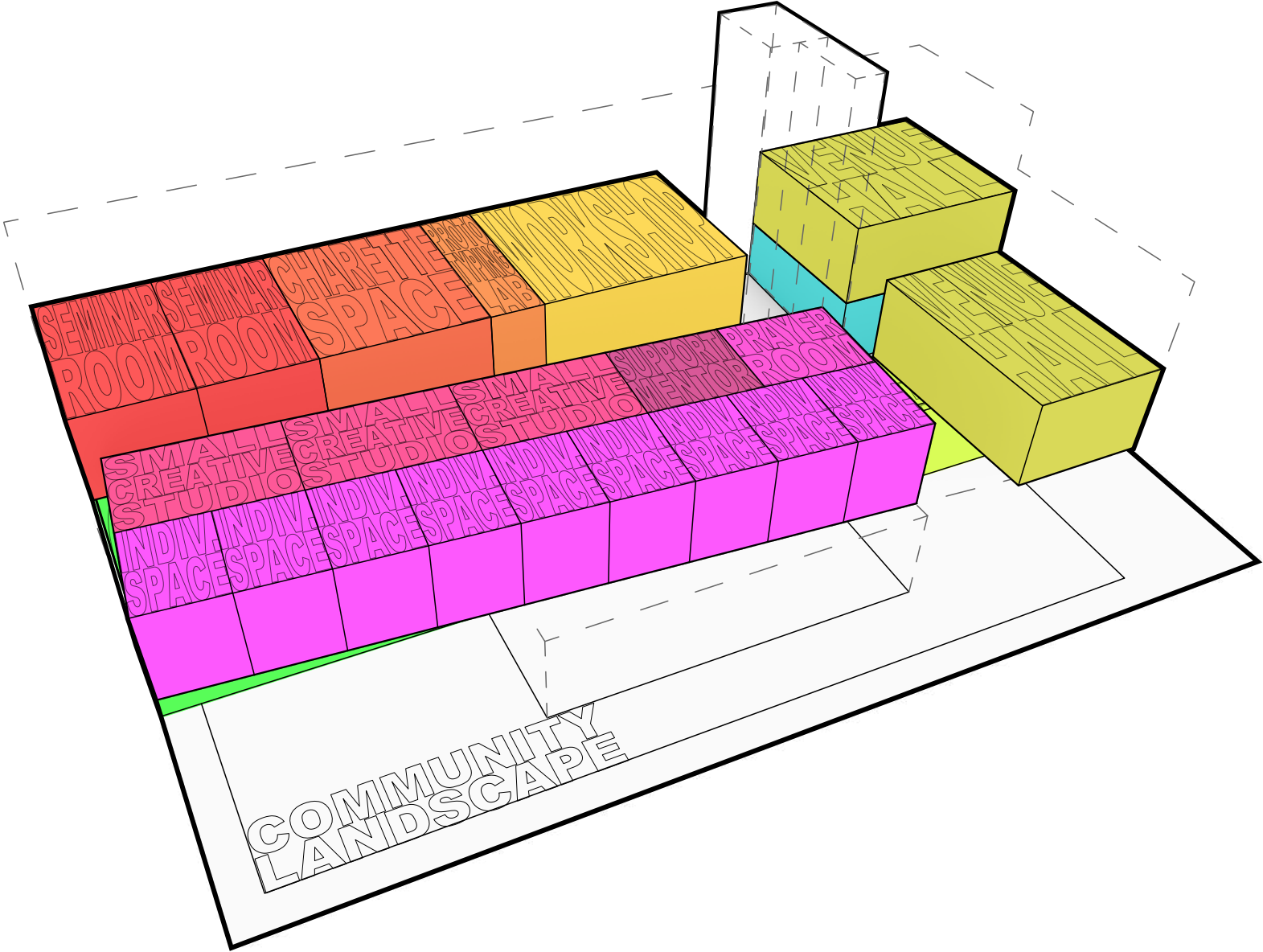
PREDESIGN\_ GREENING DIAGRAM



The community landscape serves both as an attractor and an accessible green buffer enclosing the extension of the indoor entertainment space into the outdoors.

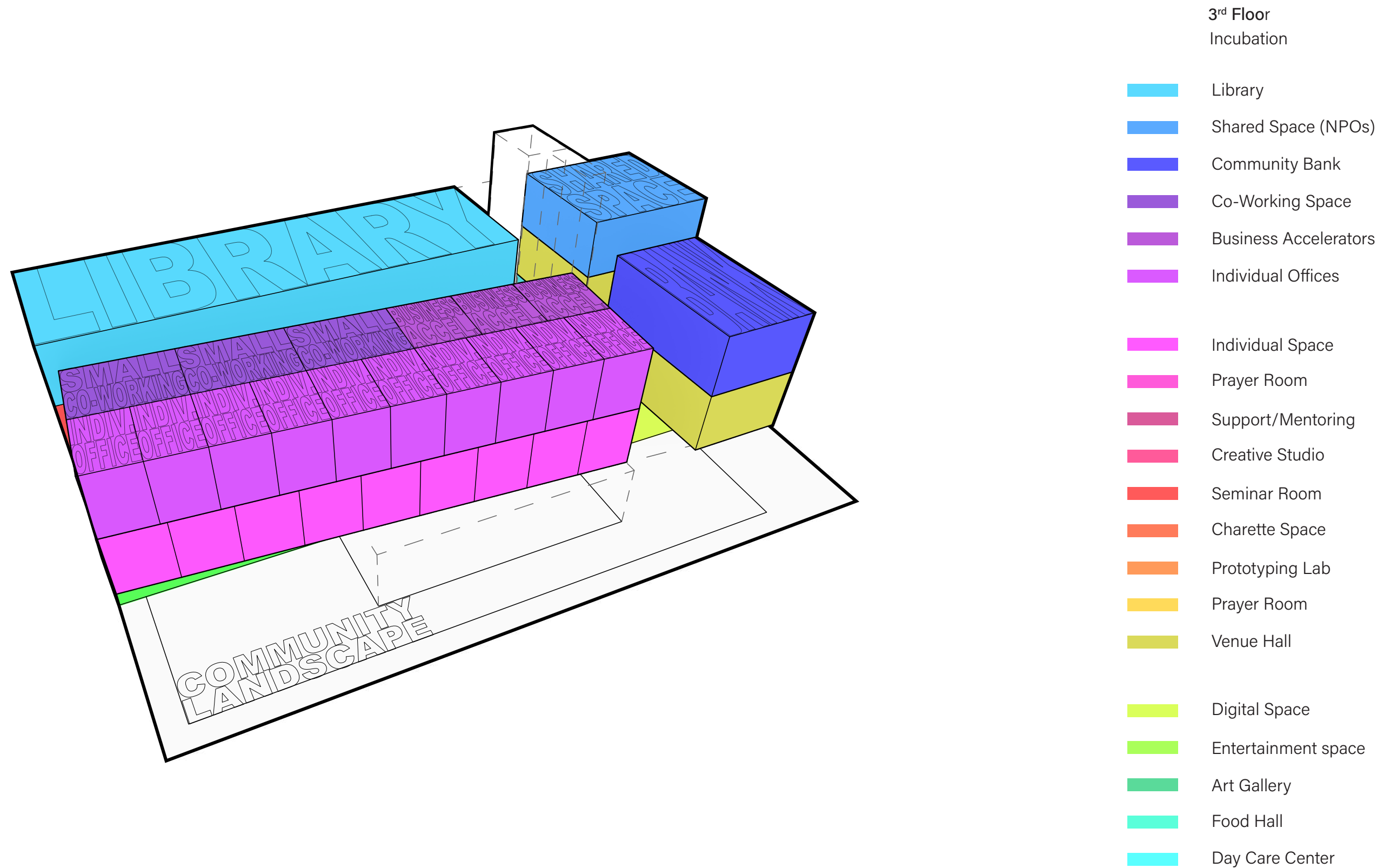


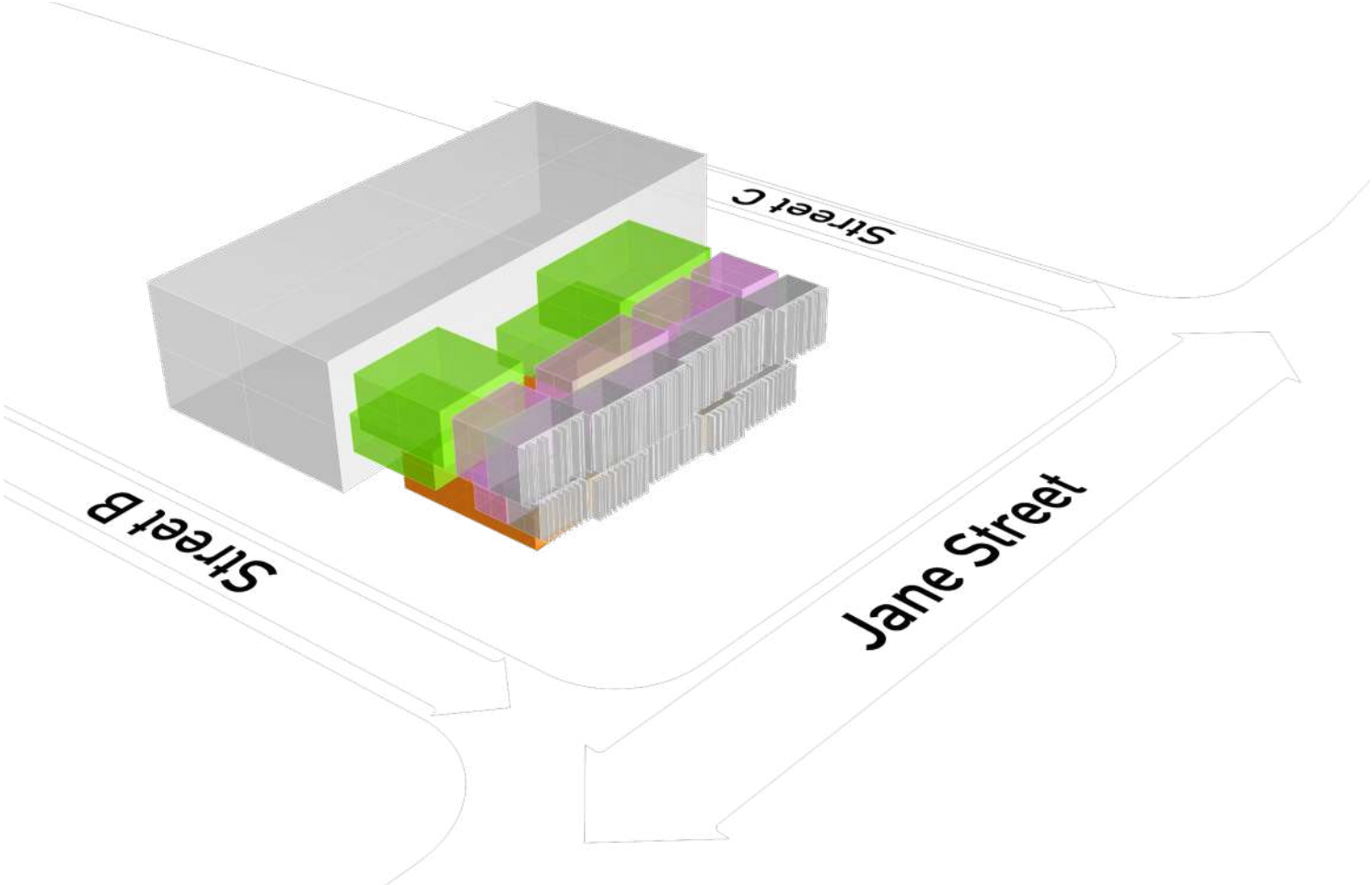
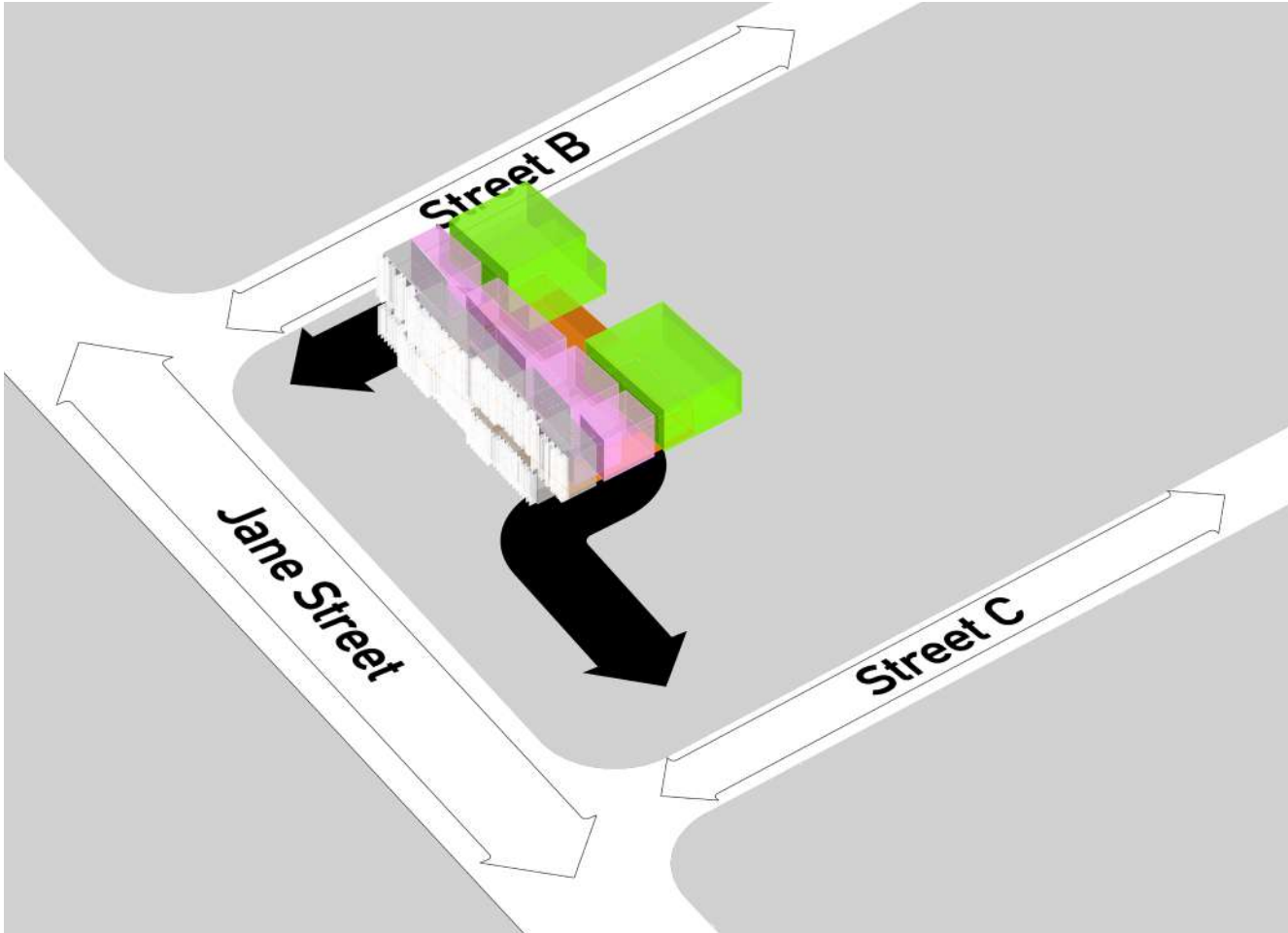
- Ground floor  
Community
- Digital Space
  - Entertainment space
  - Art Gallery
  - Food Hall
  - Day Care Center

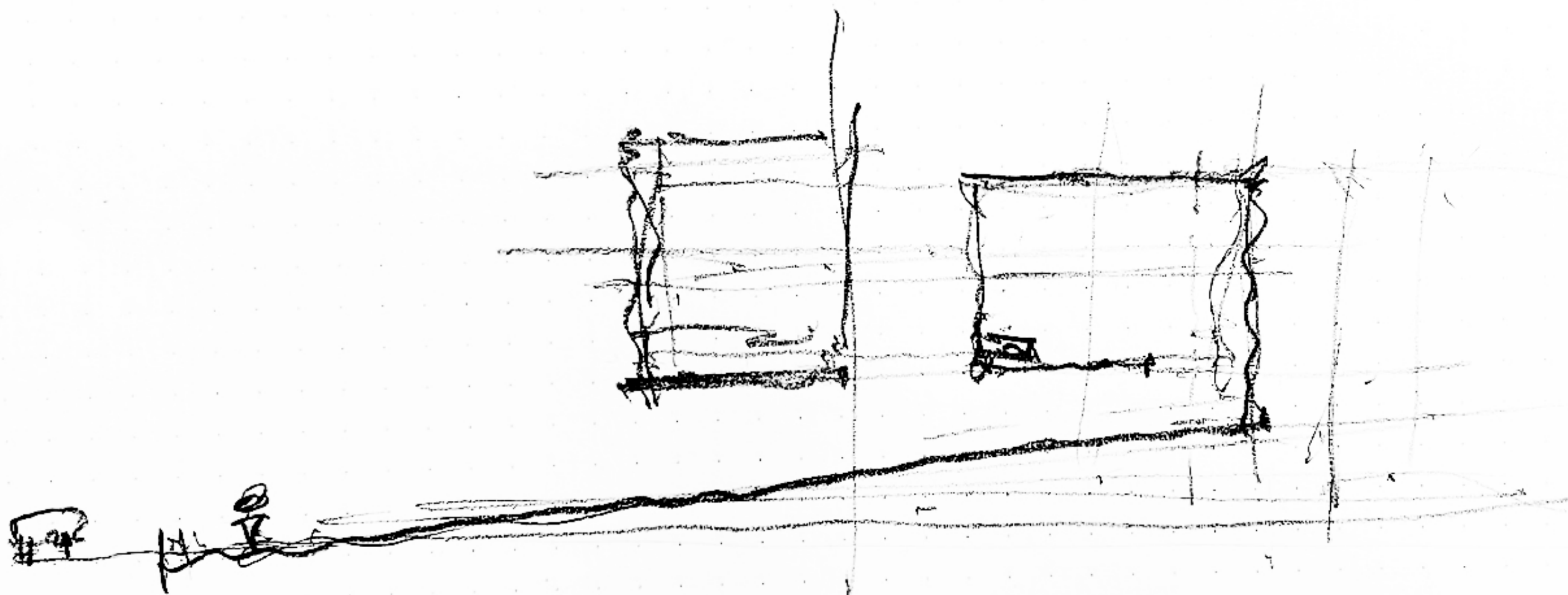


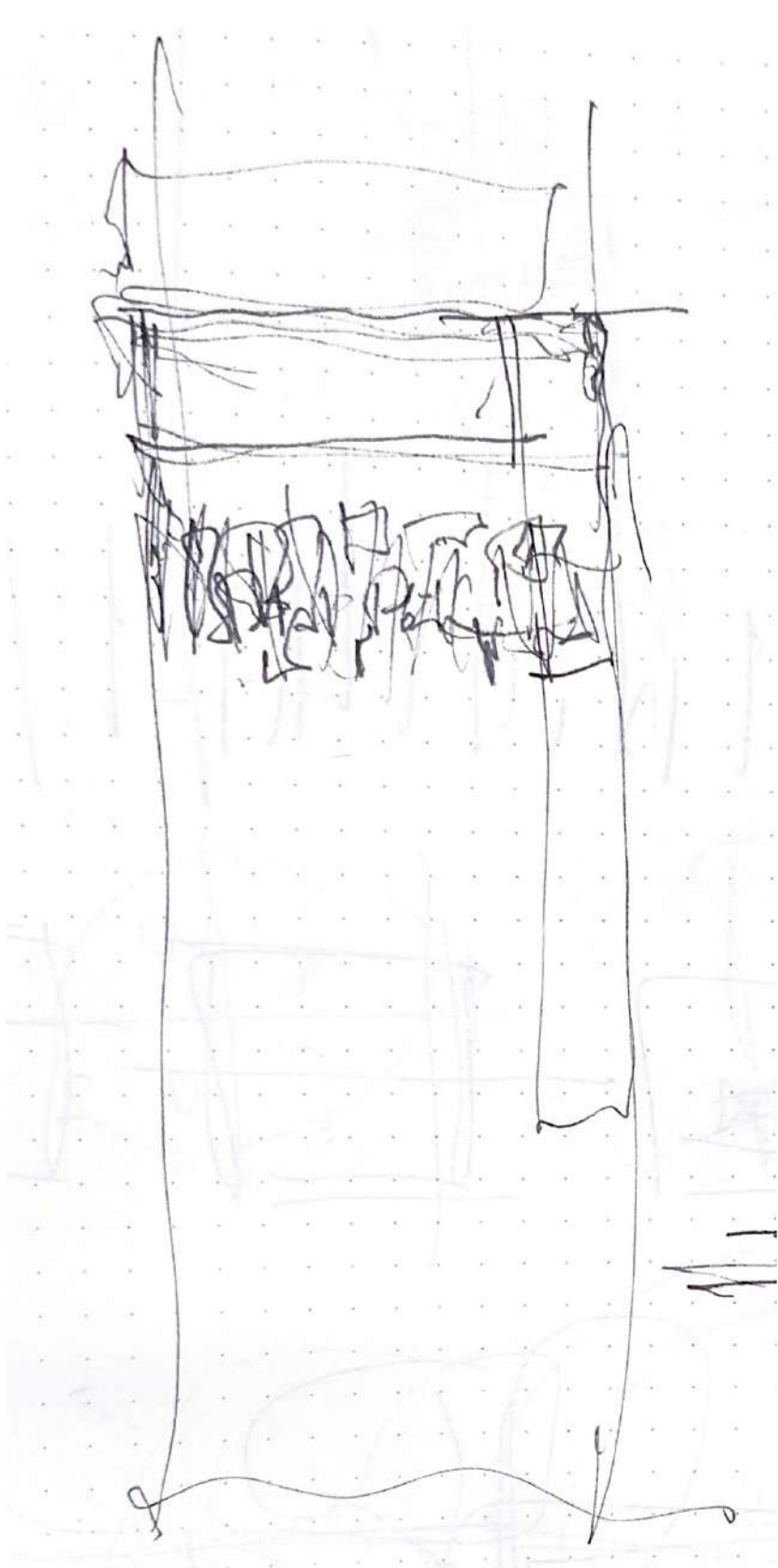
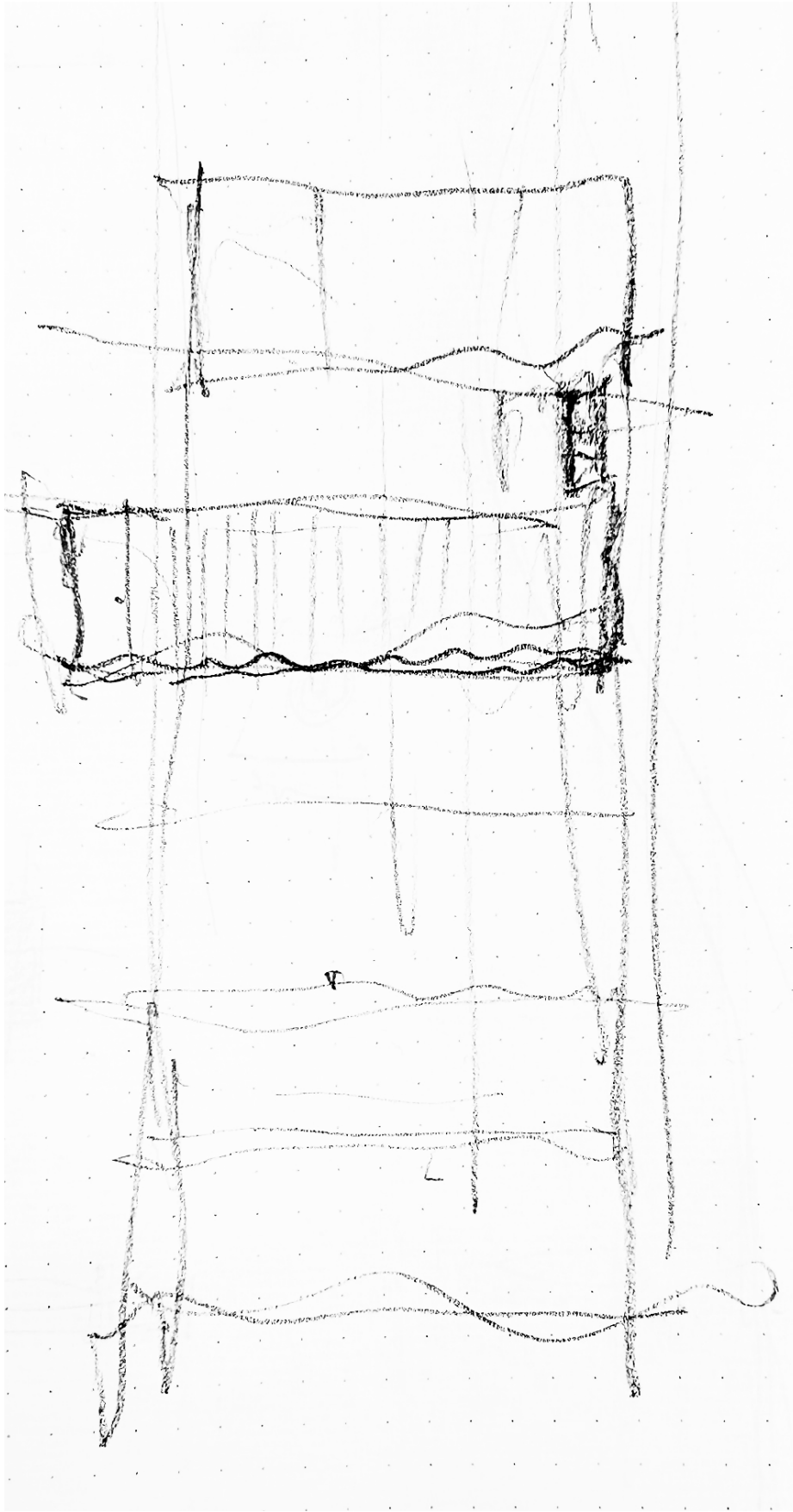
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Training

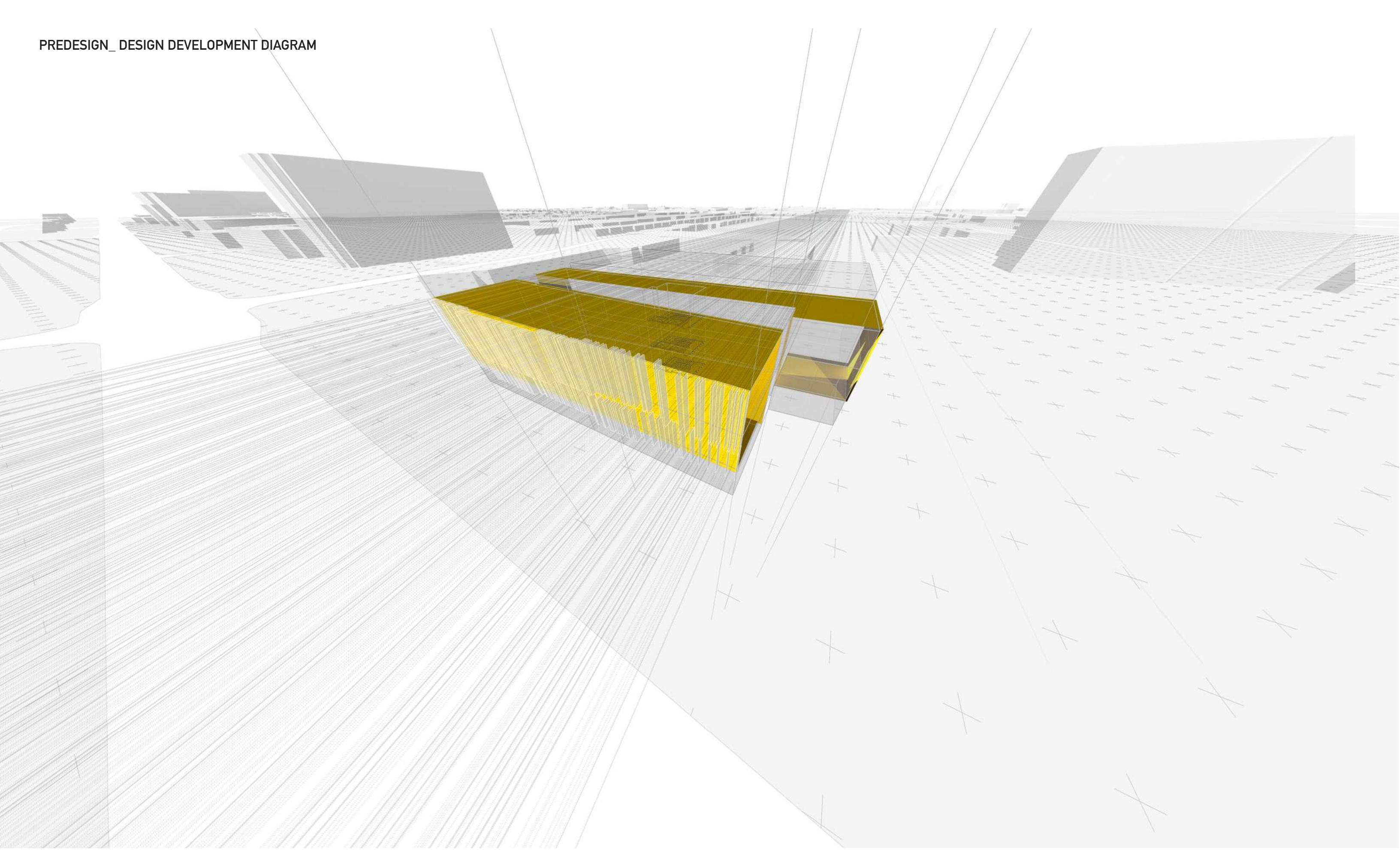
- Individual Space
- Prayer Room
- Support/Mentoring
- Creative Studio
- Seminar Room
- Charette Space
- Prototyping Lab
- Prayer Room
- Venue Hall
- Digital Space
- Entertainment space
- Art Gallery
- Food Hall
- Day Care Center



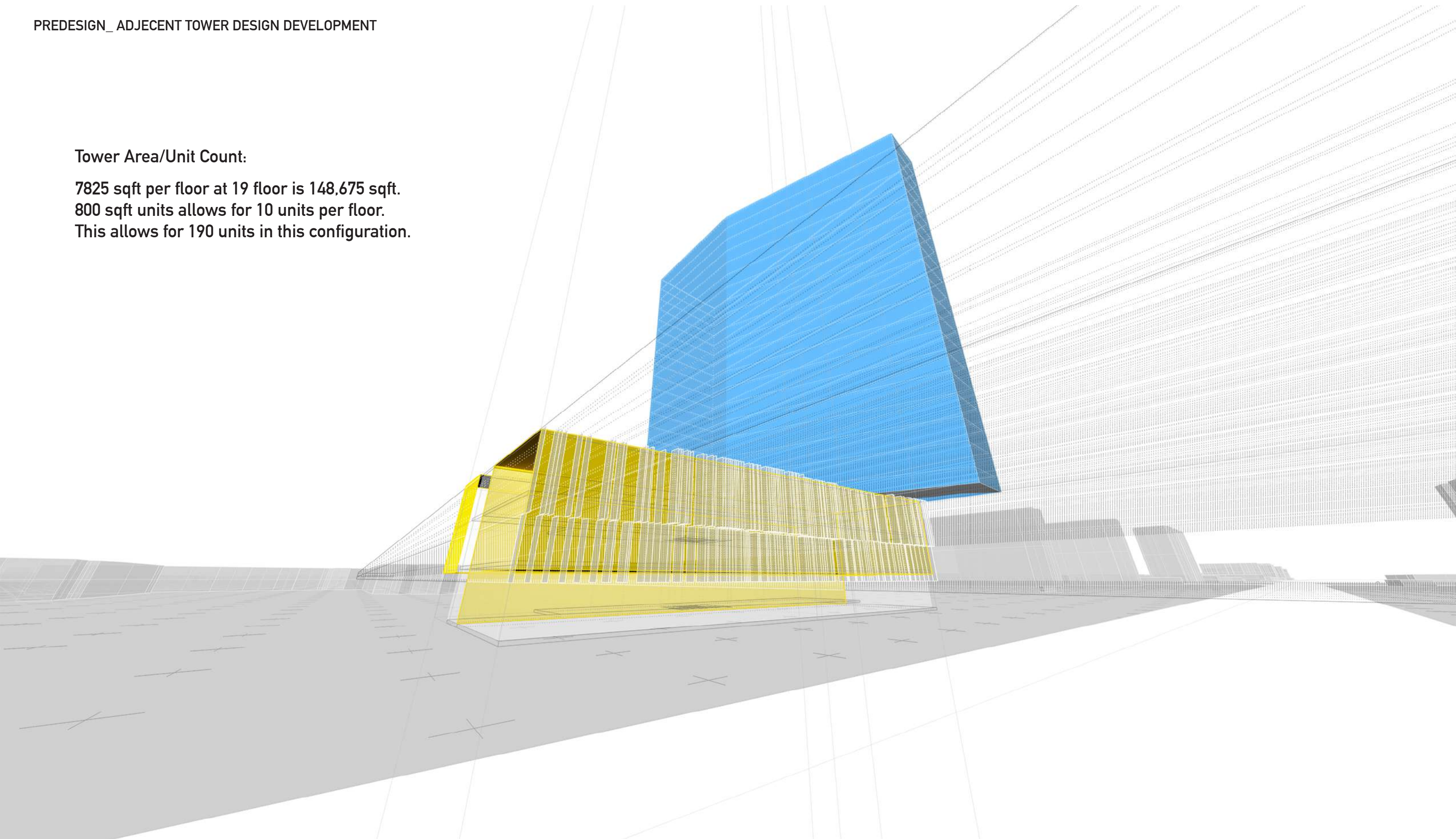


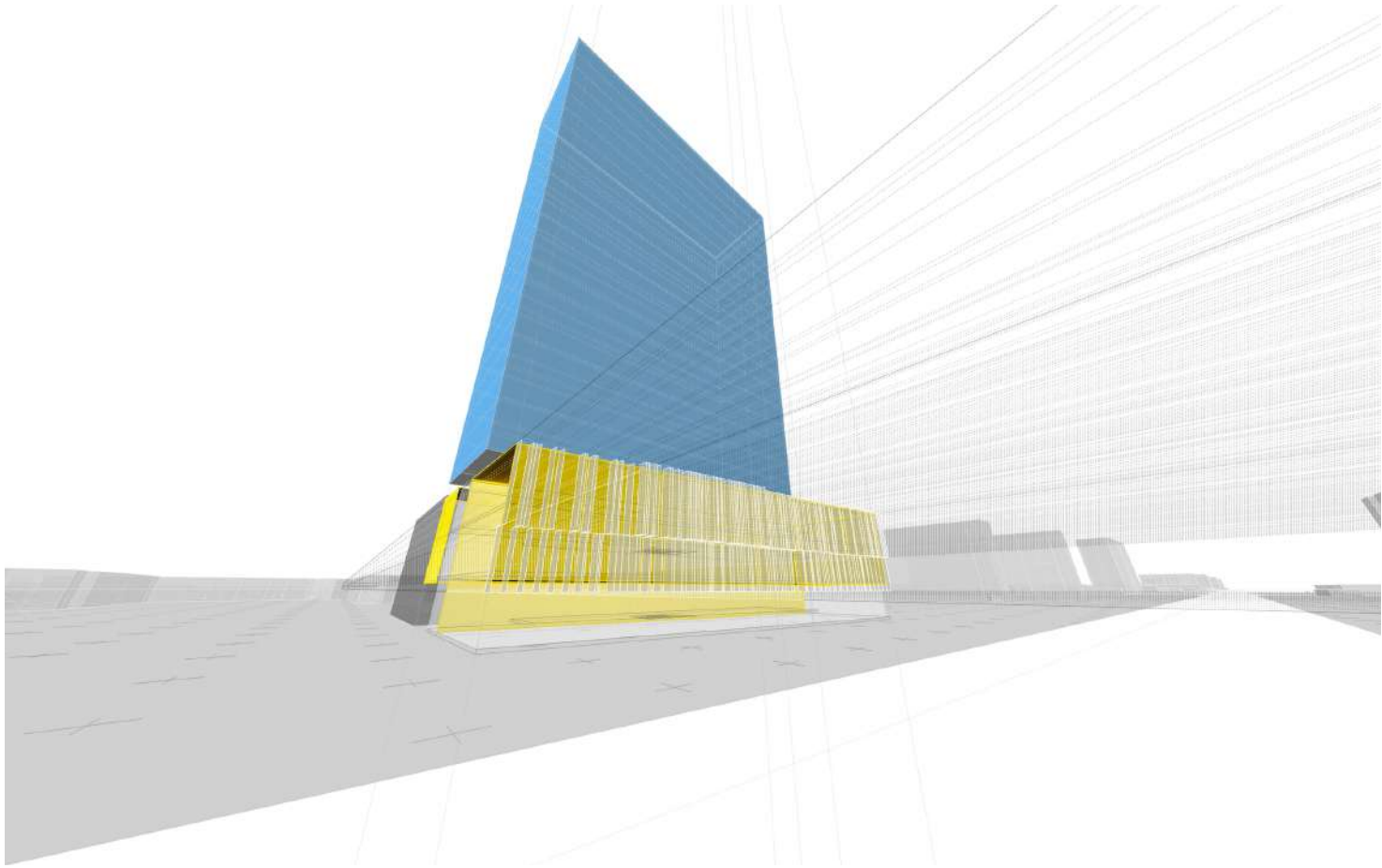
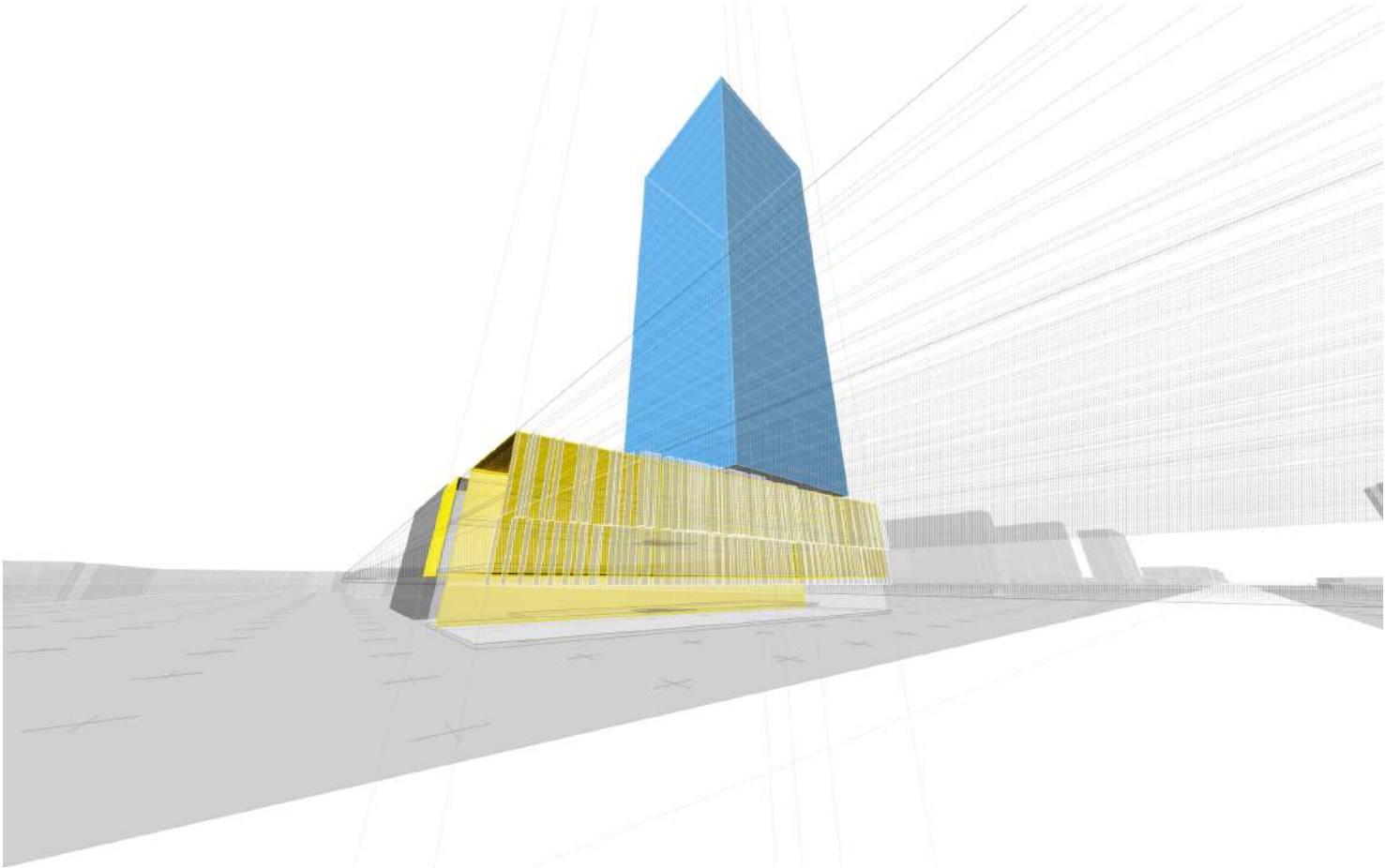
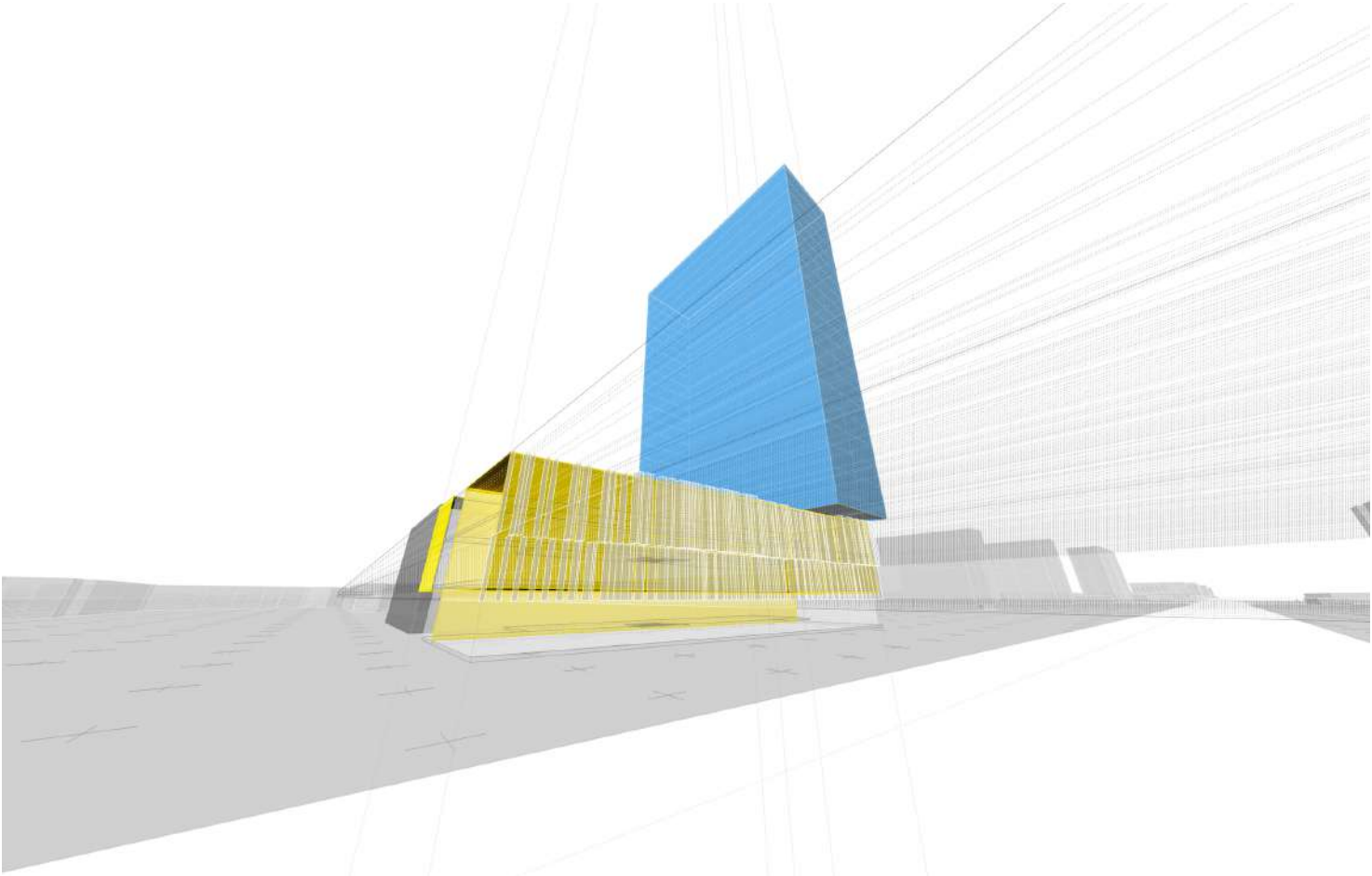
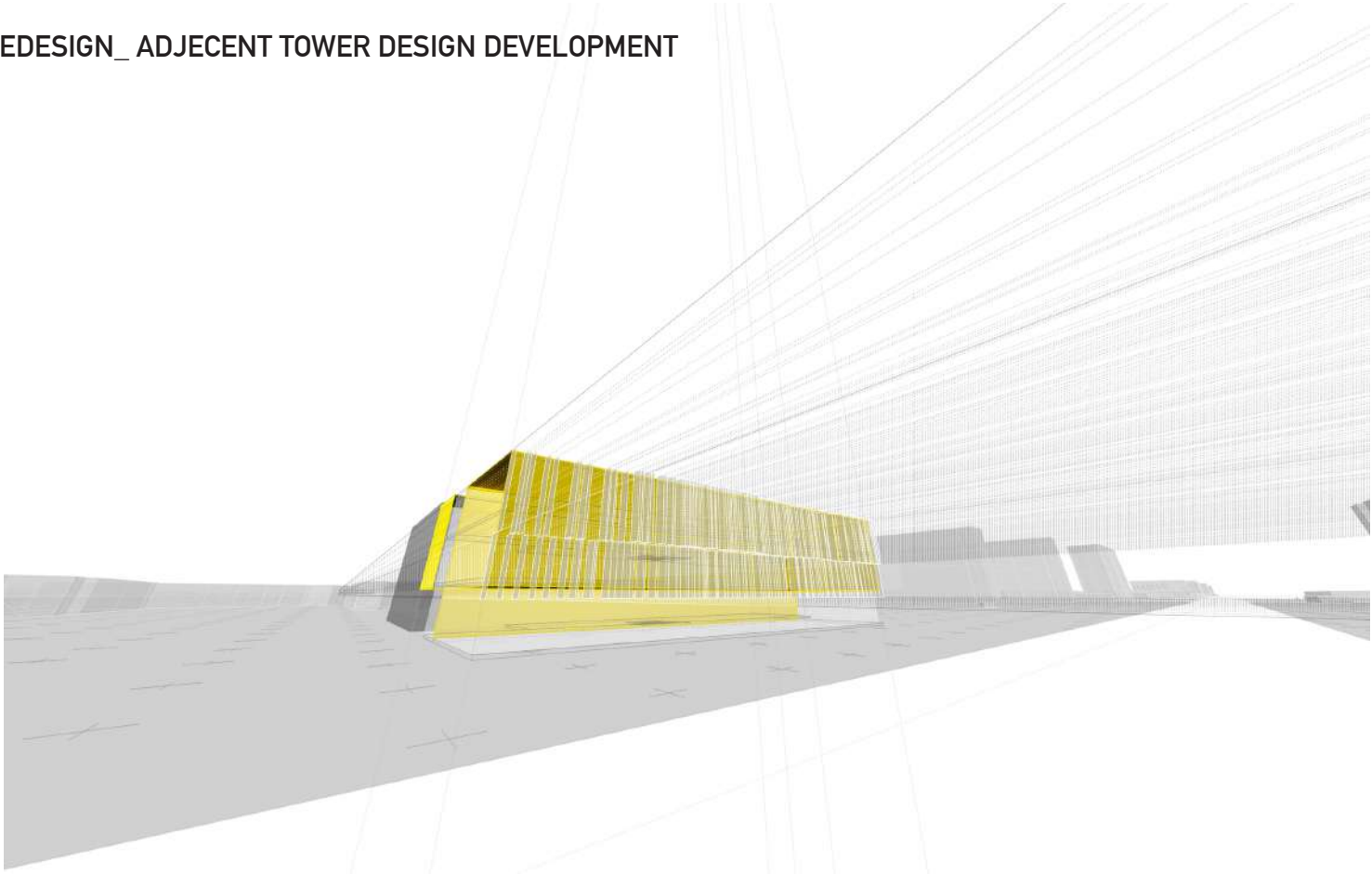


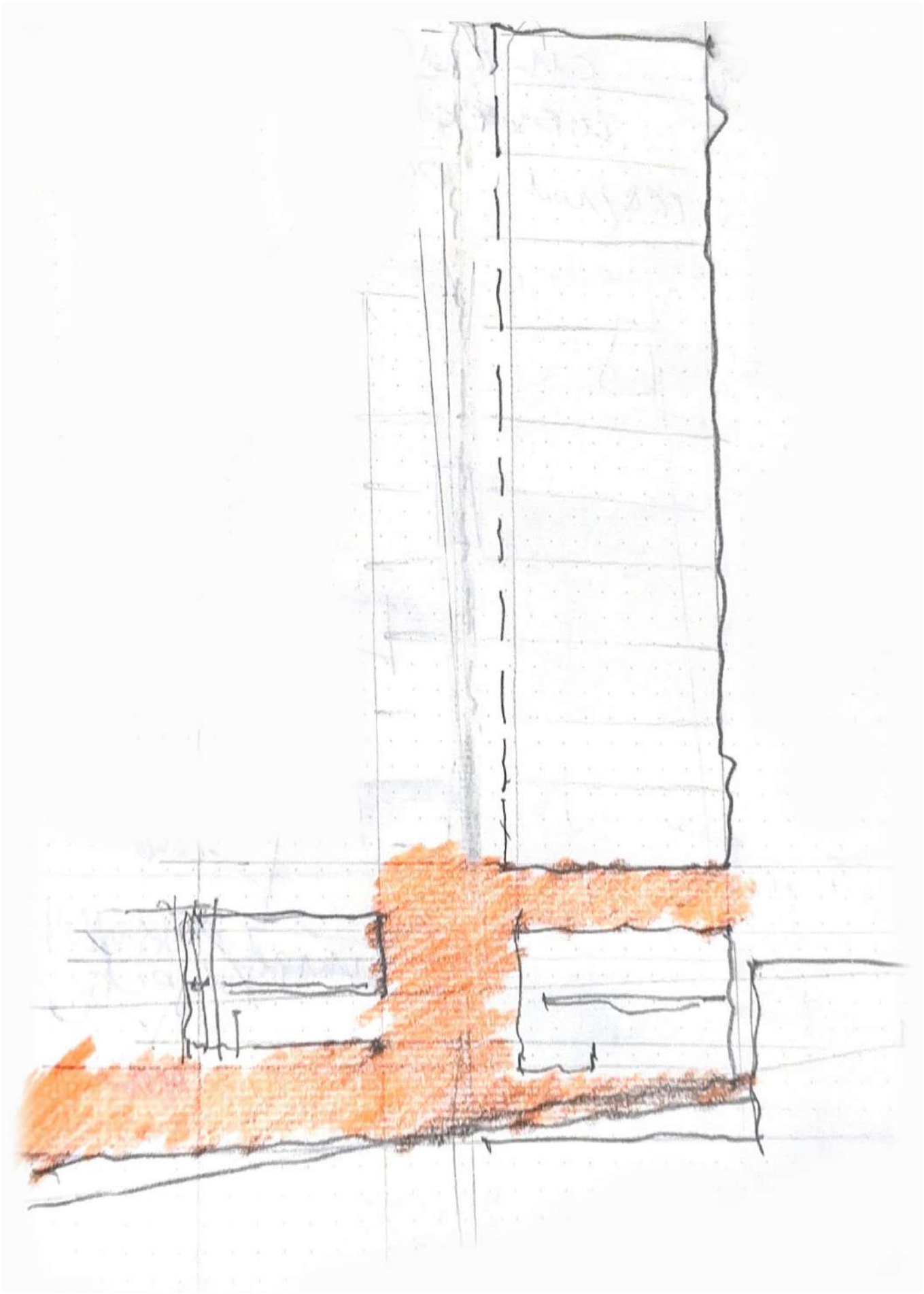


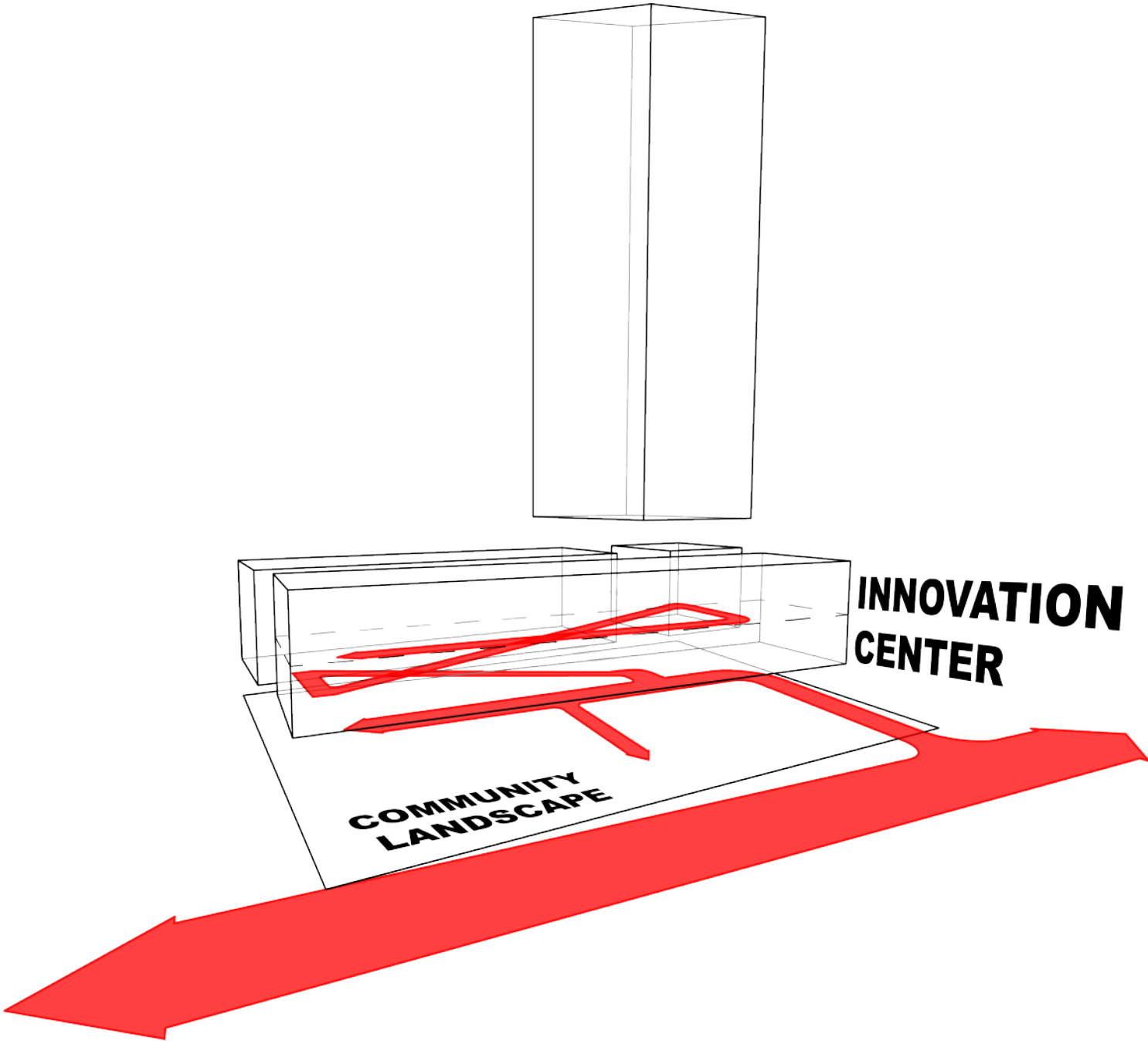
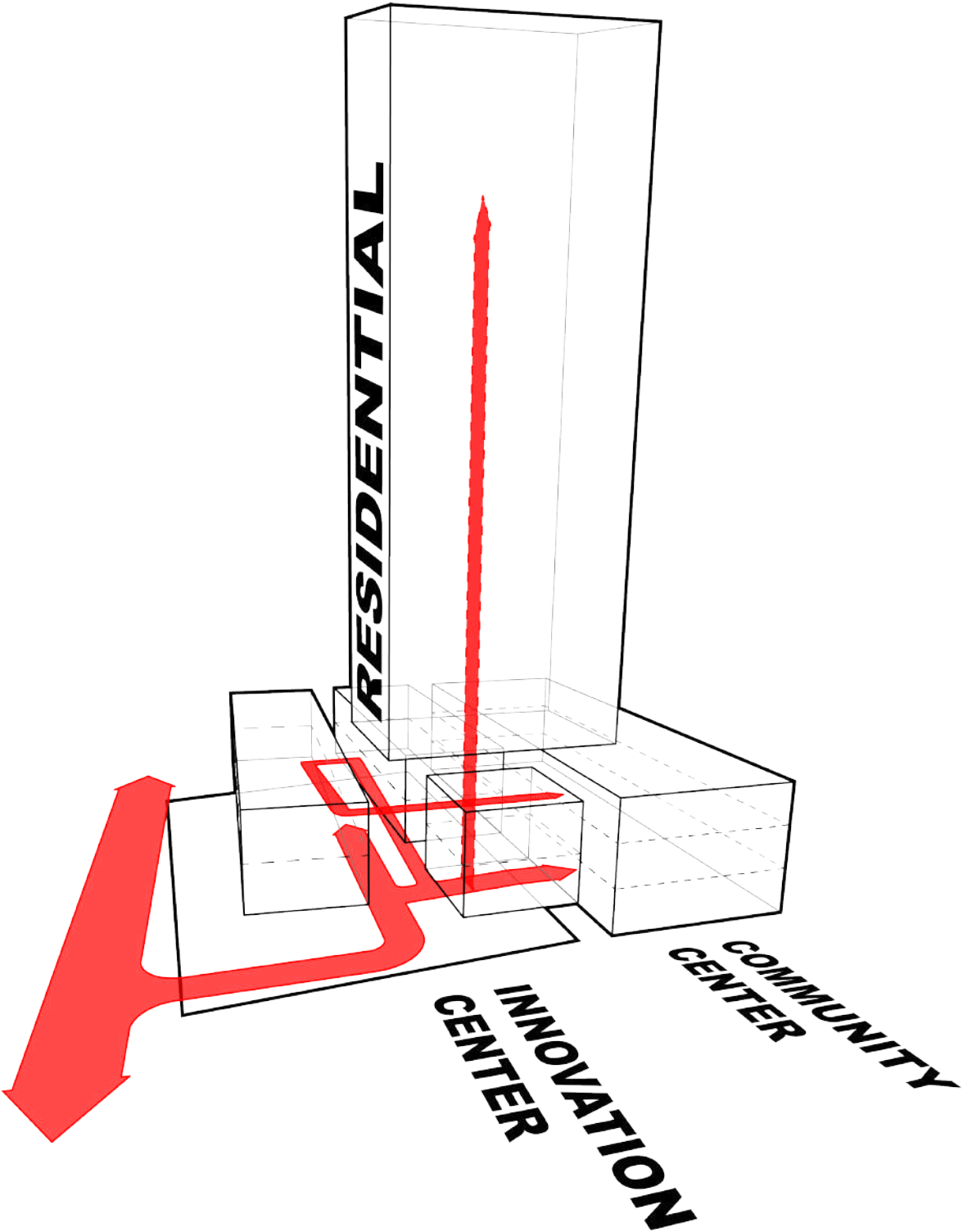


Tower Area/Unit Count:  
7825 sqft per floor at 19 floor is 148,675 sqft.  
800 sqft units allows for 10 units per floor.  
This allows for 190 units in this configuration.









The idea of incorporating residential component of the 'ELEMENT' Centre was added in halfway into the project due the expressed need of "affordable housing to pursue entrepreneurship" frequently coming up during program check-ins from our founders that have recently move from West Africa to Canada.

