

HÀ NỘI IMPERMANENCE: REINTERPRETING COLLECTIVE HOUSING

A Senior Honors Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture and Design

University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Bachelor of Architecture

By

Benjamin Tonthat

May 2019

HÀ NỘI IMPERMANENCE: REINTERPRETING COLLECTIVE HOUSING

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The completion of this study would not have been possible without the kindness and patience of my mother, My Hanh Ton That and her good friend, Cô Minh Thu. My research could be considered successful solely because of their time spent as guides, interpreters, and endless sources of wisdom.

Một cây làm chẳng nên non.
Ba cây chụm lại nên hòn núi cao.



A debt of gratitude is also owed to the faculty of the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture and Design, in particular Bill Truitt and Marta Rodriguez.

To Bill: Thank you for being the push I never thought I needed to take on a thesis project.

To Marta: Your approach has inspired me to never stop seeking knowledge. One day I hope I can effectively answer "what's new."

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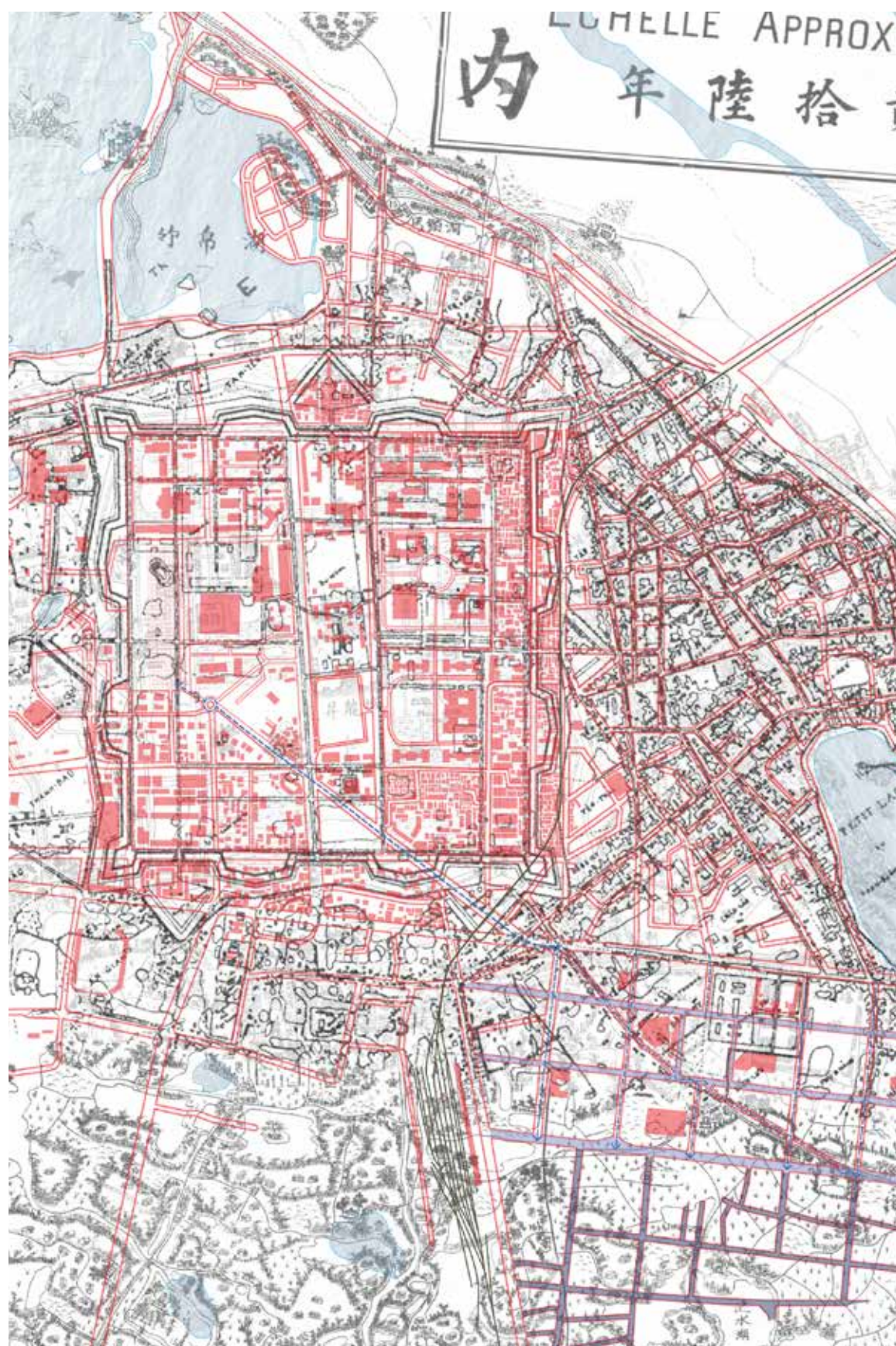
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“It is difficult to transform regions such as the Tonkin and North Annam’s deltas...In the communal and overpopulated territory, there is no detail which does not have a value, not a land crease which does not have a significance. It is impossible to reshape this as one would new land; one can only alter, touch up, complete.”

Charles Robequain, *L’évolution économique de l’Indochine française*
(Translated by Danielle Labbé)

This thesis proposes to study the implications of impermanence within the original citadel area through the reinterpretation of collective housing along the imprint of the sacred wall.



Abstract

The former citadel of Hanoi represents a landscape that has been continuously manipulated by both foreign entities and the current administration. Despite its initial purpose of being a symbol for fortification and monumentality, Hanoi's ruling sector has expressed an adaptability to the numerous violations imposed upon it over time. Hanoians, in particular, when compared to the rest of Vietnamese society express a notable sense of cultural fluidity that draws from their repeated conflicts with outsiders and allows them to remain flexible with their identity. The perimeter of the original, highly-formal citadel is the most important location to the capital city's sacred history and current growth, so further intervention along these avenues underscores the inherent complications of the past.

This thesis proposes to study the implications of impermanence within the original citadel area through the reinterpretation of collective housing along the imprint of the sacred wall.

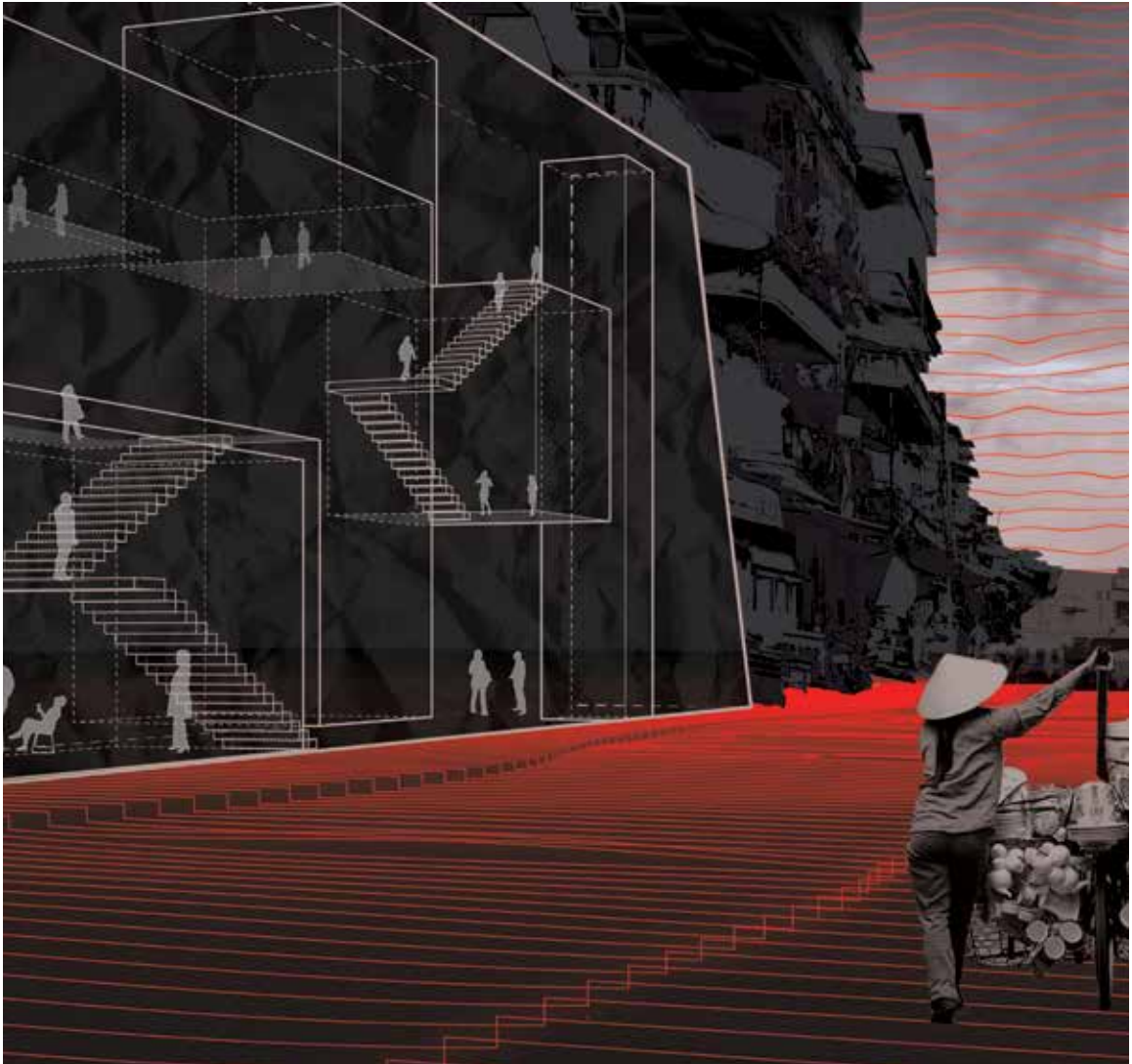
While the numerous elements of Hanoi's history have been seemingly erased by successive regimes, the existing networks have actually seen a layering of imposed changes rather than a complete

eradication. These layers express a fluidity that characterizes Hanoi's governing center and, in turn, reflect the flexibility of the Vietnamese identity.

The city's development outside of the former citadel area is best represented by the growth of housing for the locals. Housing in Hanoi becomes an important area of focus because it is an architectural typology that developed as a result of indirect coordination between the French and the Vietnamese emerging from the educational system established during the colonial era. While housing for the native population did not see substantial experimentation within the New Indigenous Quarter (now Bui Thi Xuan) until the 1930s, the resulting typologies have had a lasting influence on residential areas in Hanoi. This "co-production of housing space in Hanoi... the result of shared and interactive cultural processes" provides an insight on the continued layering of interventions across history that represent the current nature of Hanoi's built environment (Domesticating the Suburbs, Danielle Labbé).

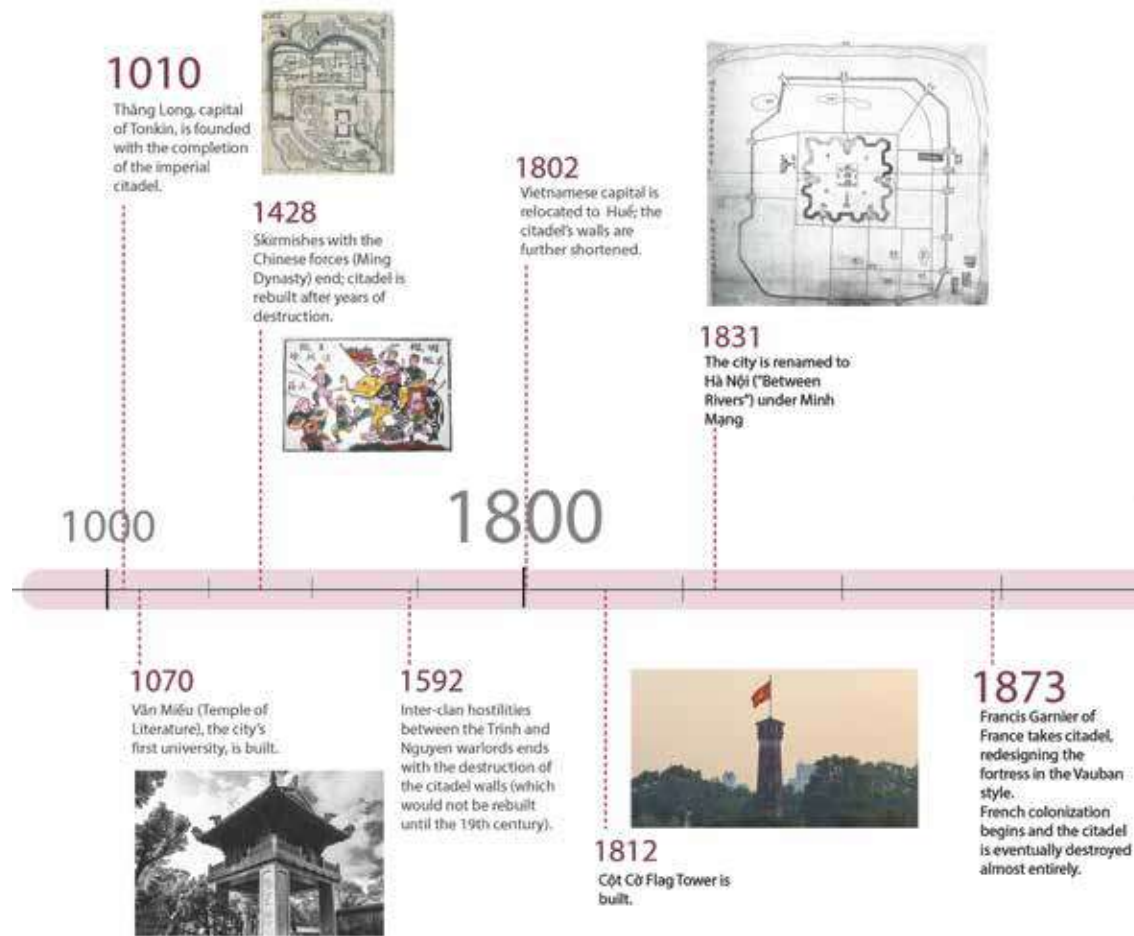
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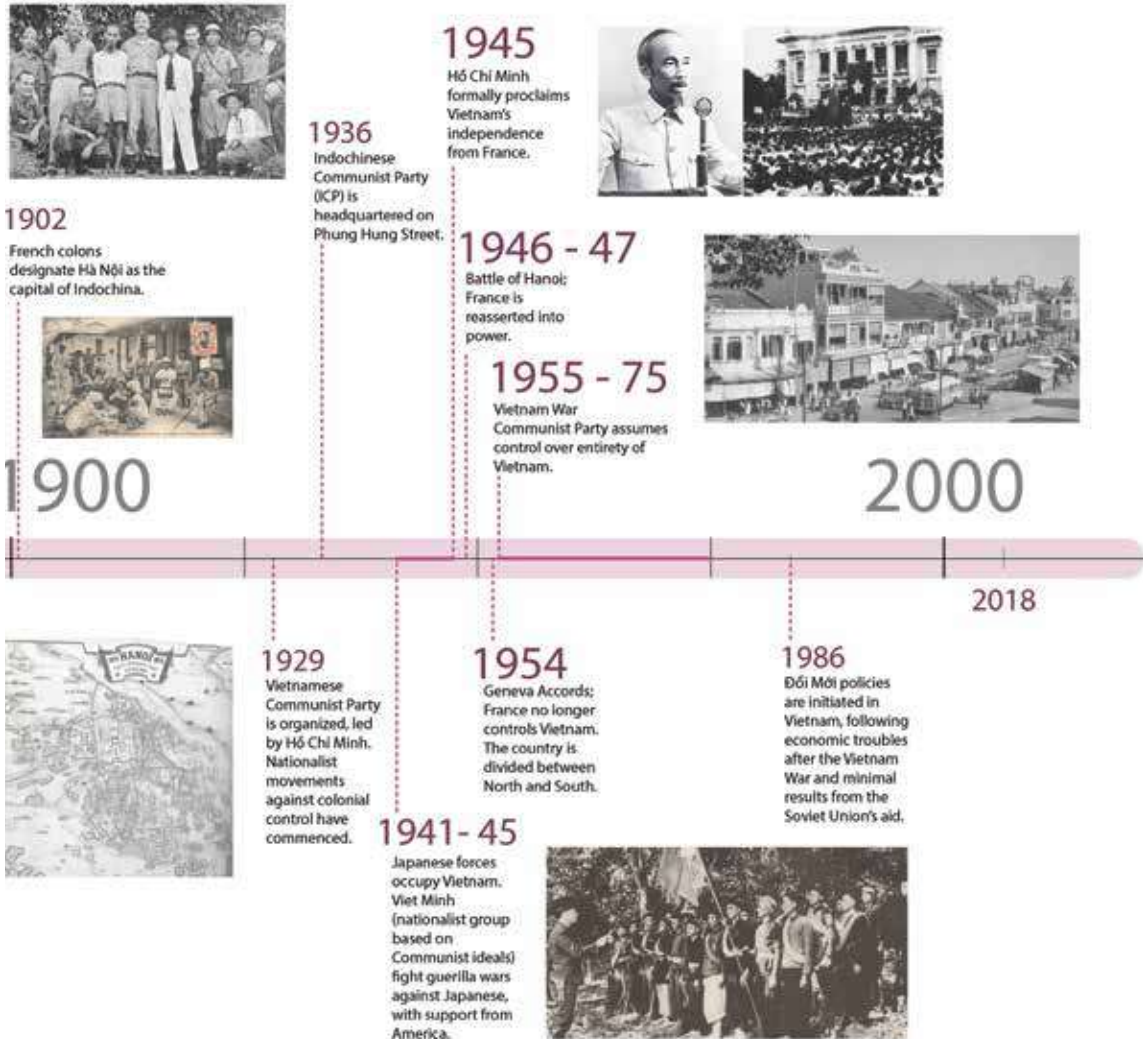
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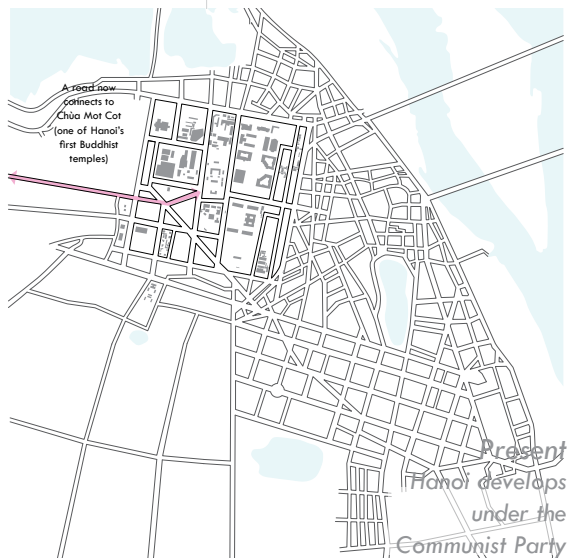
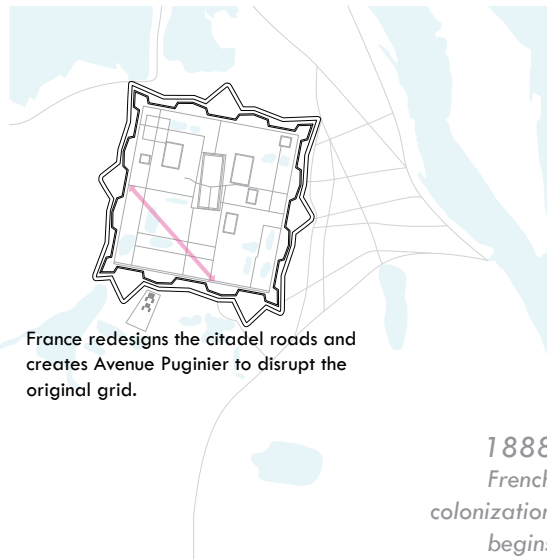
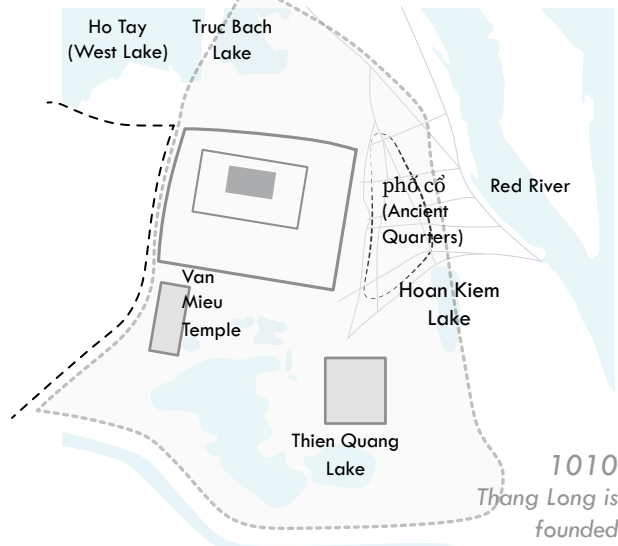
Reference to Hà Nội's past and acknowledgement of its future development lend themselves to a contemporary interpretation of communal living.

History of Hà Nội

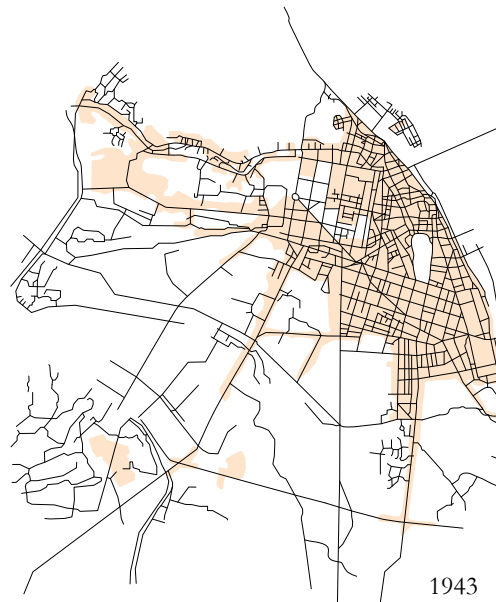
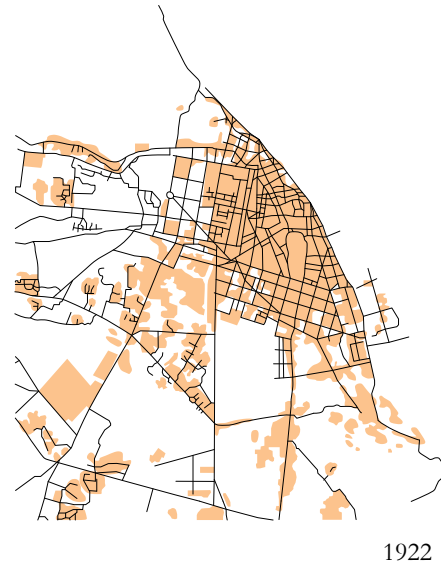
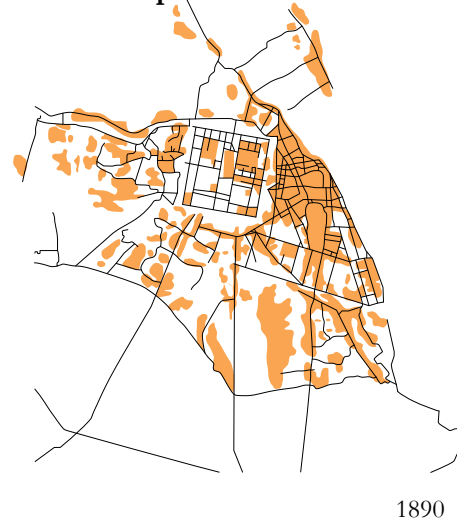




Evolution of the citadel



Urban development



Background

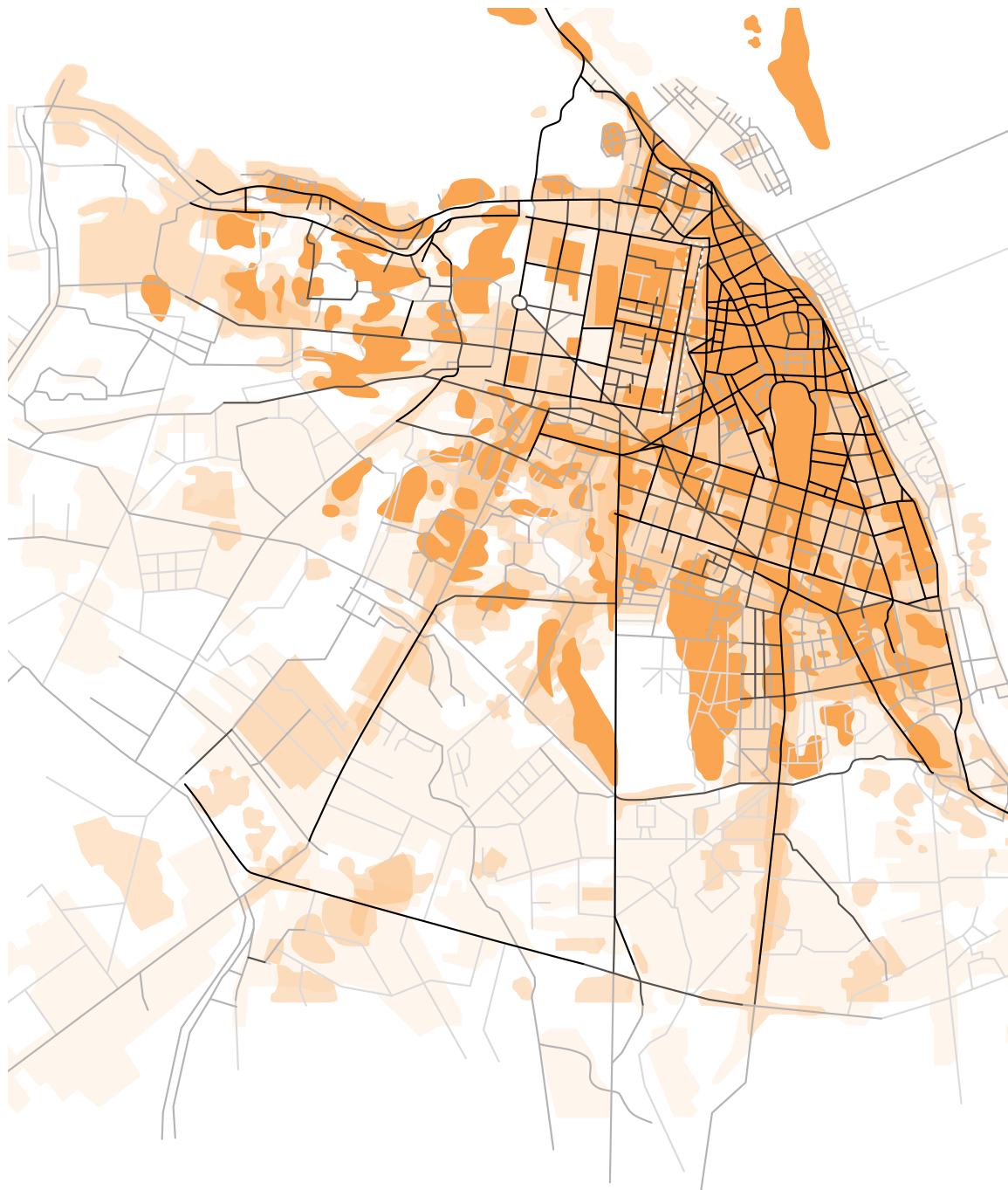
The site for the original Thăng Long citadel was chosen for its central location and proximity to the Red River delta and Ba Vi Mountain: two geographic features that hold major spiritual significance to Confucian ideology. Historical figure Nguyen Tuan asserted that the site of the original fortress “is not a holy land in the religious sense of the term, but a sacred land;” the locals reverence for the site as a direct link to divine forces illustrates the catalyst to a long-standing desire by foreign entities to obtain this land (Nguyen Van Ky 19). While later powers sought to conquer Hanoi’s citadel for political or economic dominance, the significance of its location and adjacent elements is rooted in the spiritual implications of the site.

Although the mandarin rulers, French protectorate, pre-war Communist regime, and current administration have all designated the citadel area for their administrative headquarters, the site achieved its importance from geomantic principles dating back to 866. Consider Tam T. T. Ngo’s discussion of Hanoi as the cosmological center of the world; this allusion to the conflicts that have shaped the city’s history have established its current character.

“By placing the discourse of Hanoi urban planning in a theoretical debate about urban religiosity, I argue that contrary to what is often said of urban planning as a rational, technological, and modern state-directed secular project, the process of renewing urban space in Hanoi can provide insight into grassroots understandings of sacred geography, national history, and political transition in contemporary Vietnam.”

Dealing with the Dragon, Tam T. T. Ngo

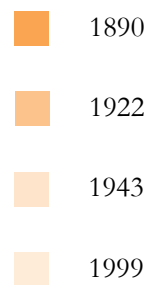
The establishment of the doi moi policies following ineffective aid from the Soviet Union (during its final years) further reflect the flexible nature of imposed ideologies upon Hanoi. While the country is ruled by the Communist party, it does not strictly adhere to the original policies laid out by Ho Chi Minh. The government in 1986 adopted reform policies in order to remedy the economic toll still felt by the Vietnam War, allowing for a capitalist framework to be adopted and spurring the creation of a private business sector. Vietnamese communism’s loose adherence to the traditionally constrictive rule further illustrates the adaptable nature of the elements developing within Hanoi’s confines.



Roads existing since:



Extent of urban fabric in:



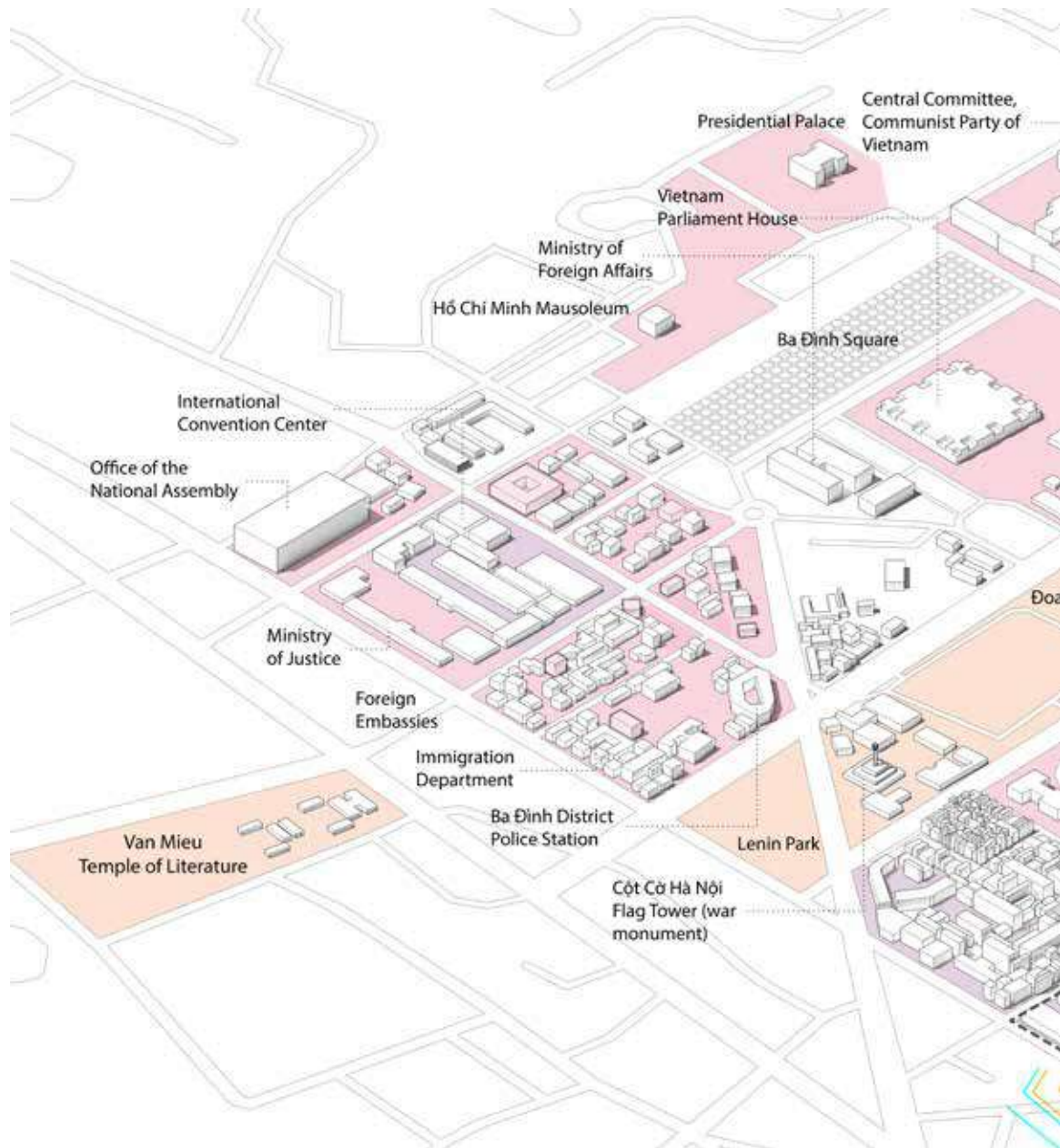
Innvasive Mogols from the southern tip of mainland China had been at odds with Hanoi since the fourteenth century. The Vietnamese have consistently maintained their territory amidst constant fighting even among feudal clans within domestic territory. The authority of the citadel has also remained constant over time. Since it is always a symbol of authority, it has always represented the resilience of Hanoi (and in turn, Vietnamese identity). Because it has also been redesigned, damaged, and renamed to reflect the moving of the country capital to Hue in the early 1800s, it also demonstrates the fluid nature of its people: Tangible yet intangible, highly formal yet also not permanent.

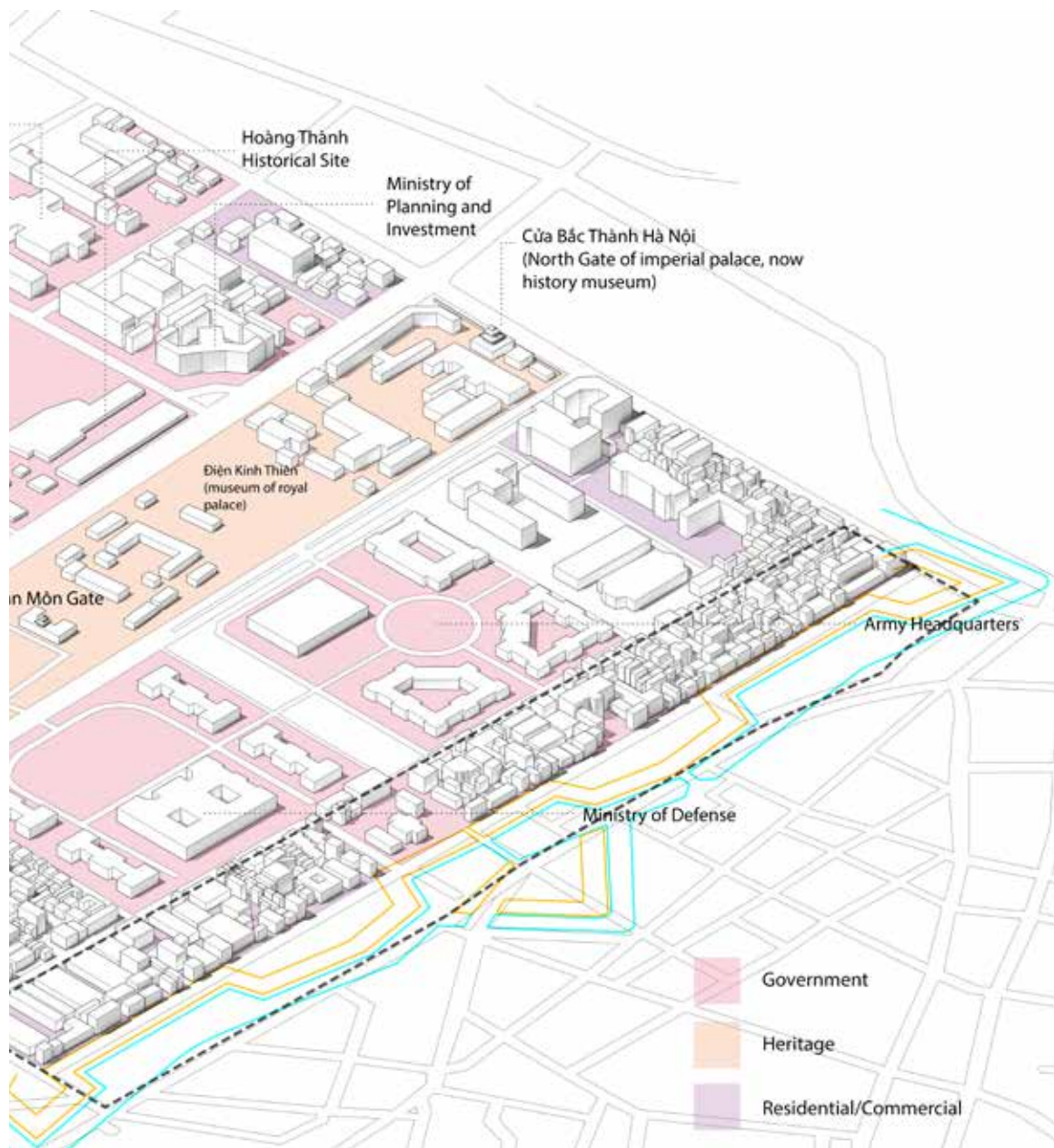
Once French colonialism begins the citadel is completely destroyed, marking the reign of the first foreign power. The former garrison within the citadel is the stronghold for the French administration. The French colons remained in power for nearly a century before the rise of Vietnamese nationalism, and subsequently, Communism. While nationalism failed to spur the movement for Hanoians, what actually ignited mass movement were the movements led by the Viet Minh (organized by Nguyen Ai Quoc, otherwise known as Ho Chi Minh).

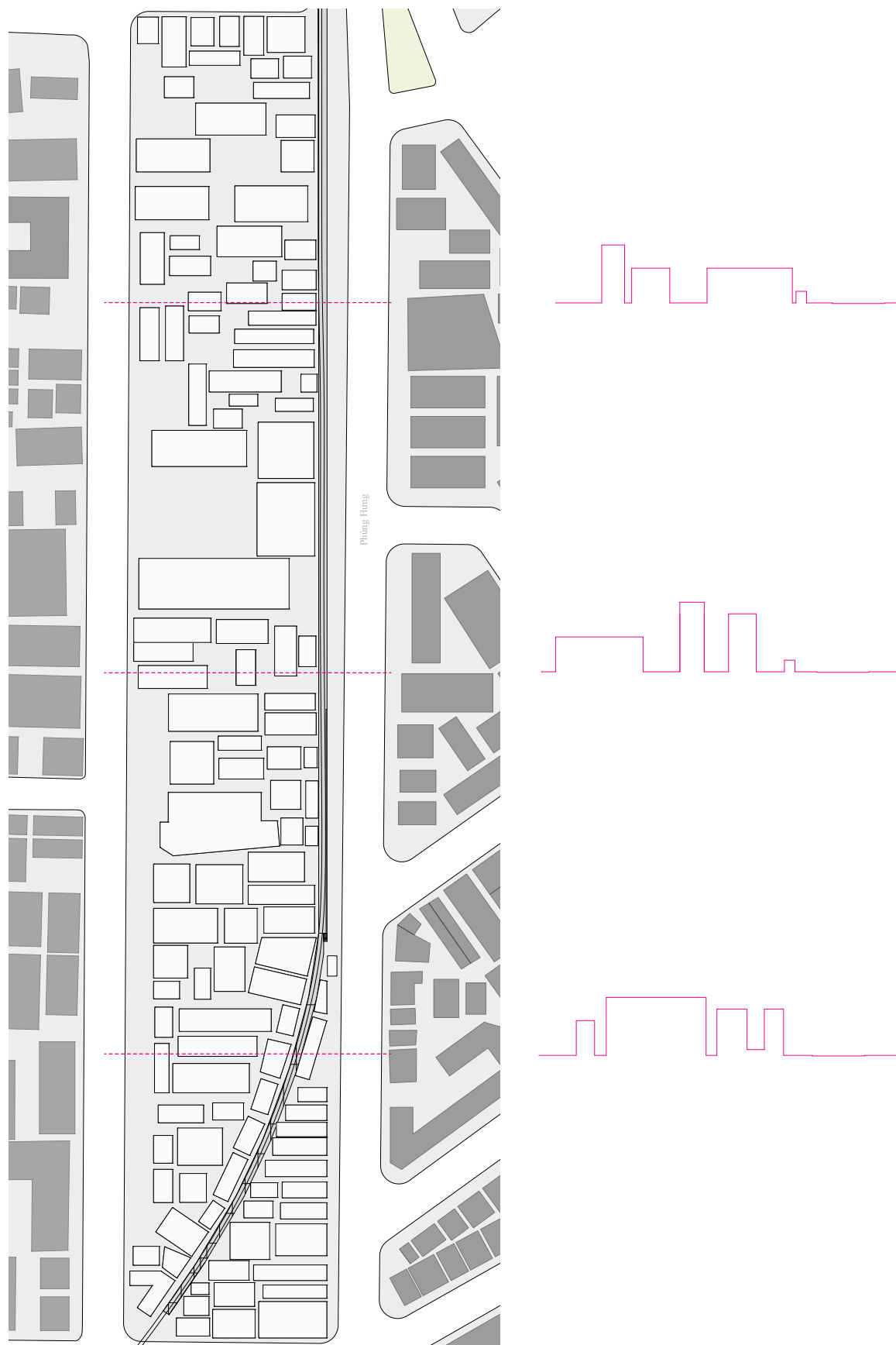
At this point in time, the citadel area has become the stronghold for the DRV after the country was split between north and south. Briefly during WWII, the Japanese imposed their power, although brief. This is important because their regime is a reflection of the north's ties to the Soviet Union. The original idea of Communism has changed as Hanoi's urban structure expanded. An idea of impermanence has always been a part of the city's character, as Hanoi always finds a way to mold itself to new interventions. Whether this means a loss of heritage or erasure of existing culture is not necessarily pertinent, this is more highlighting the fact that there is always additions, layerings, and expansions on what is already there. Housing has constantly reflected one of the only stable infrastructures in Hanoi, so this building type is particularly relevant as one moves closer to the original citadel area (now, it functions as the socialist government's headquarters).

Hà Nội citadel

current condition







Site + Situation

Phùng Hưng Street

Phùng Hưng Street is important because it has existed throughout Hanoi's history as the eastern extent of the Thang Long citadel. It has also effectively served as the buffer between the ruling class' imperial stronghold and the artisan villages of phố cổ in pre-colonial times. This interaction between the administrative center and the original gathering space for the rural population living in the extent of the city provides a transition between two sides of Hanoi's character: at once chaotic and susceptible to unregulated development while simultaneously responding to the regulation set out by the country's socialist government.

The site for the project in Hanoi seeks to utilize the existing conditions of Phùng Hưng Street to invoke the presence of the former citadel. While successive regimes have seemingly erased nearly all remnants of Hanoi's early history (particular elements like the citadel which represent the city's particular identity rather than an imposed ideology), the site poses an opportunity for these forgotten ideas to regain significance. The layering of forced beliefs on the landscape represents a constant fascination with molding the

governing center to reflect the current administration; however, this rebuilding also reflects the need to reiterate the implications of permanent structures.

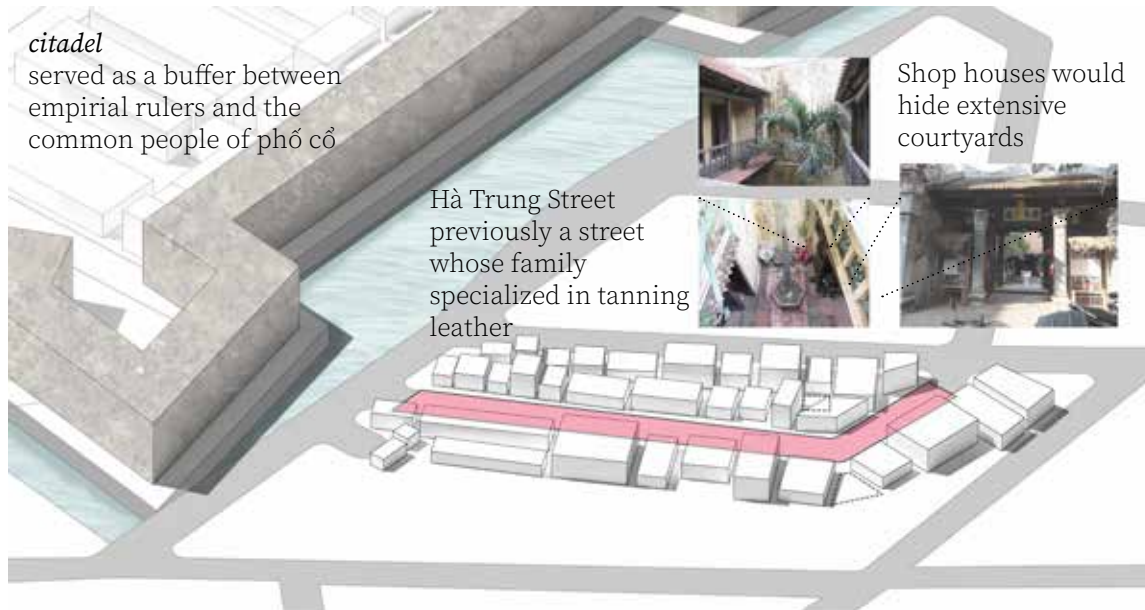
This project targets individuals who are most impacted by the unregulated development by foreign investors currently happening within Hanoi: *young adults*.

Men and women between the ages of 18 and 30 are systematically unable to afford and live in the high-rise constructions made to cater to high-income families and the growing population of expats. With the existing, older homes found along Phùng Hưng street (as well as the rest of the Old Quarter) being reserved for individuals whose families have had existing ties and those who work for the government, young adults without established connections through either parties are left with little choice but to remain with their parents or extended families. This is a practice that is accepted within the culture, but does not reflect the growth occurring within the economy or changes to the social condition of the traditional, nuclear family structure for Vietnam.



phố cổ Hà Nội, "Ancient Quarter" or 36 guilded streets

analysis of a typical guilded street



citadel

served as a buffer between
empirical rulers and the
common people of phố cổ

Hà Trung Street
previously a street
whose family
specialized in tanning
leather

Shop houses would
hide extensive
courtyards

The inhabitants of phố cổ, or the commoner's
grounds outside of the imperial citadel, were
merchants and craftsmen whose backgrounds
originated outside of Ha Noi.



Hà Trung Street in
reference to the
boundary of Phố Cổ.



Extended families would concentrate
their trade to one particular street



The current condition of
Hà Trung Street: it is still
remembered for being a
street for tanning leather,
but is now used more
for blackmarket money
dealing.

Above: artist depictions from Lịch sử Hà Nội (*Histoire de Hanoi*) by Philippe Papin



Above:
Cửa Bắc, or the “north gate”
of the citadel, now used as a
history museum;
the gate is the only preserved
artifact of the wall before its
destruction by the French in the
late 1800s.

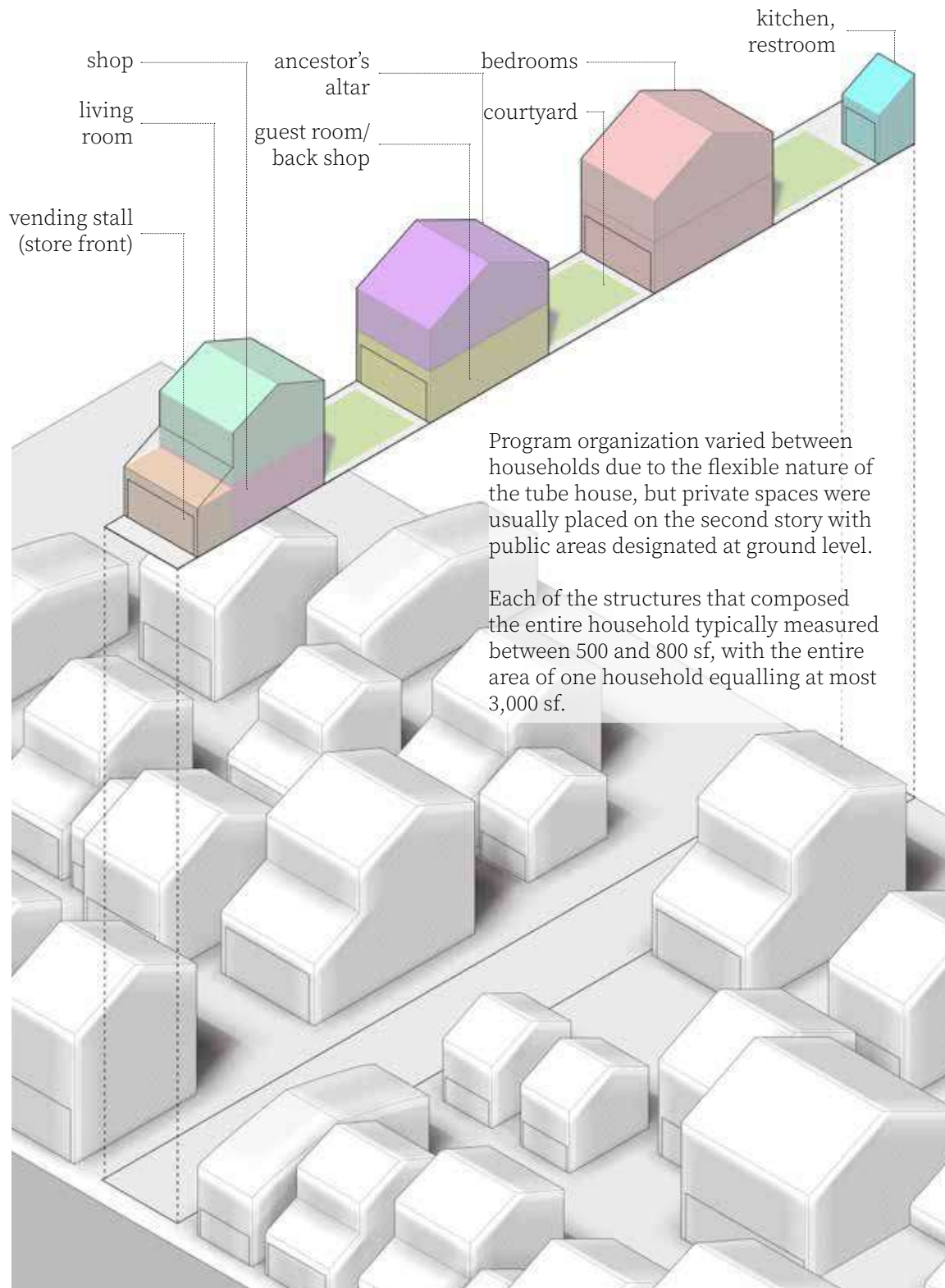
Middle + Below:
site conditions along Phùng
Hưng street, December 2018



Program Analysis

Housing		Rooms	SF	subtotal
single unit 30-50 units)	Kitchen	1	100	
	Living Room	1	200	
	Restroom	1	80	
	Bedroom	1	300	
	Storage	1	100	
	Terrace	1	100	
shared unit (10-20 units)	Kitchen	1	200	
	Living Room	1	300	
	Restroom	2	160	
	Bedrooms	2	600	
	Storage	1	100	
	Terrace	1	100	
family unit (10-20 units)	Kitchen	1	400	
	Living Room	1	450	
	Restroom	2	80-160	
	Bedrooms	3	300-800	
<i>*diagram of units, see pg. 40</i>	Storage	2	200	
	Terrace	1	150	
				70,000
Communal	Entry Lobby (first floor)	1	1,000	
	Retail (first-third floor)	---	10,000	
	Social Area	1	5,000	
	Vending Area	1	5,000	
	Reading/Study Area	1	5,000	
				26,000
Outdoor	Exterior Gathering	---	4,000	
	Interstitial Space	---	---	
Utilities	Mechanical	800	3	
	Restroom	600	6	
				1,400
# of occupants				300-350 people

Precedent Studies



Nhà Ống (Tube House)

Ancient Quarter, Gilded Streets *Hanoi, Vietnam*

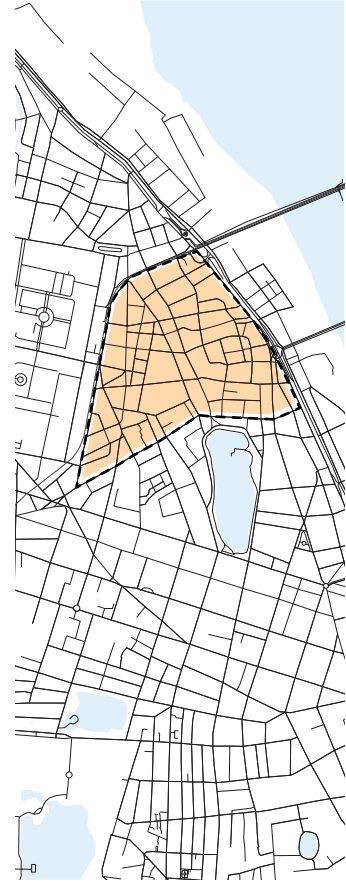
In precolonial times, the merchant city that developed east of the imperial citadel, known as *phố cổ*, grew as the town that commoners were meant to dwell in. Merchants and artisans who lived in *phố cổ* and the villages that surrounded the capital city would regularly travel between their homes and the royal palace to conduct trade with the elite class.

Eventually, the area came to be known as the “36 Streets,” since each street housed a family that specialized in a particular craft (these include goldsmithing, pottery, etc.).

The standard building type of the 36 Streets was the ‘tube house,’ or *nhà ống*. These might typically be 2-4 meters wide by up to 100 metres deep, as a consequence of the taxing of property on the basis of street frontage.

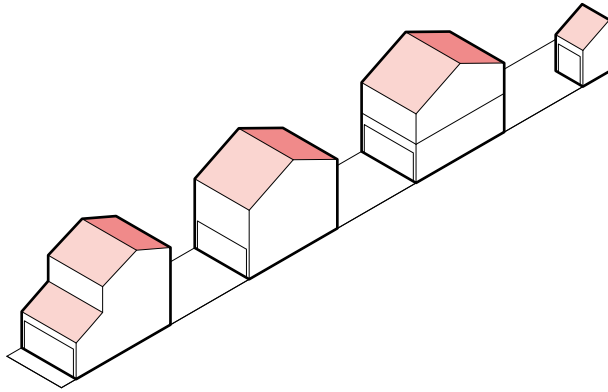
The house is organized around a series of courtyards, with the interior spaces being multifunctional to serve the needs of the specific owner. Small frontages and narrow streets reduce sun penetration in the city’s fiercely hot and humid summers.

The pre-French tube houses of the 36 Streets were considered nomad space (The king’s regulations are inferior to the village’s rules). While the sprawl of the ancient quarter would be brought to order by French colonizers (who effectively disdained the development of the indigenous quarters), the “nomads” of the area still added their own character even following French regulation.

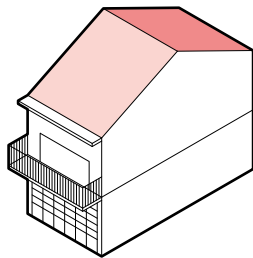


Evolution of nhà ống

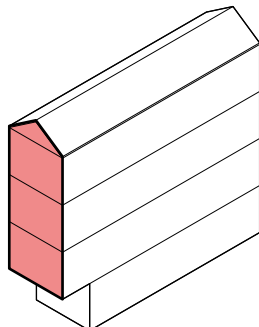
following French colonization



traditional tube house (1884-1900)



adapted tube house (1900-1945)



contemporary tube house (after 1945)

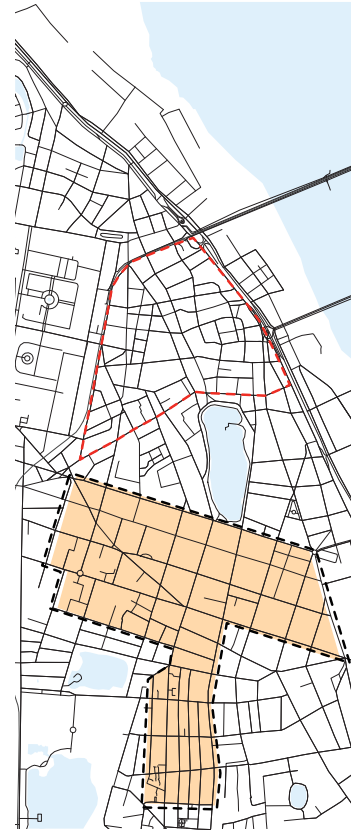
Nhà Ống (Tube House)

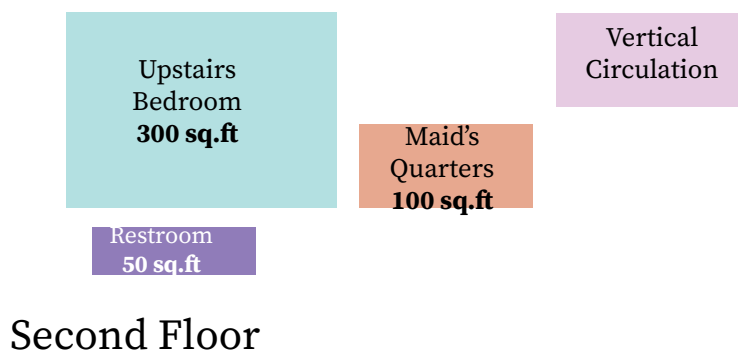
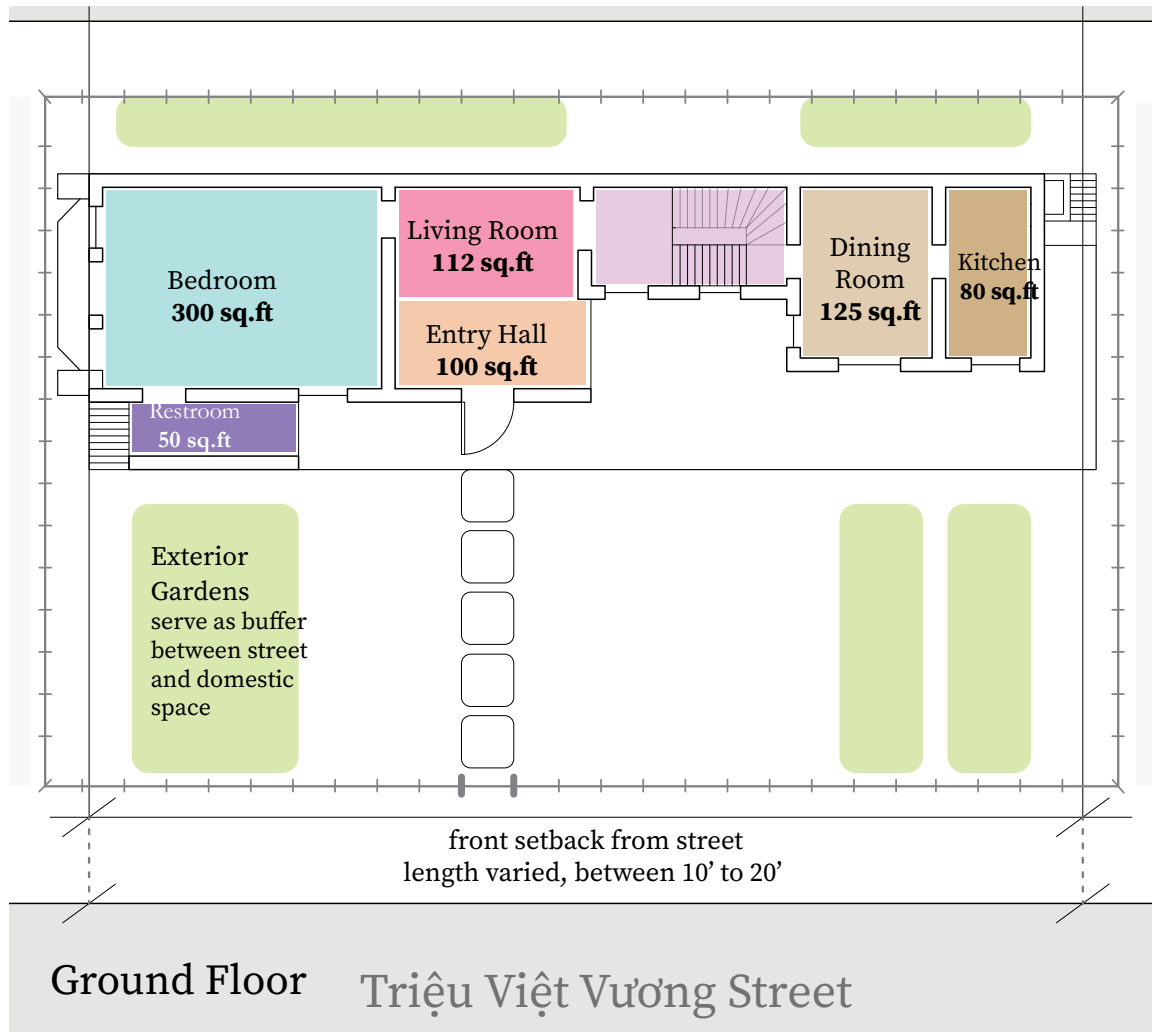
widespread adoption, *Hanoi, Vietnam*

As new restrictions within the colonial administration favored permanent building materials and practices, tube houses in Hanoi began to change. Facades began to adapt to the specific tastes of each building's owner, as property ownership became accessible to the native population (previously, only Europeans were granted land ownership in Hanoi). By the 1940s, styles for tube houses ranged from French inspiration taken from the villas built in the European Quarter, Art Deco, and modernist impressions. By the mid-century tube houses were being built outside of phố cổ (the ancient quarter). Due to the cost of taxes for property being determined by the width of a building's facade, the popularity of the

vernacular typology saw its rapid evolution into the contemporary style that most individuals today associate with the tube house.

The contemporary version of the tube house has been widely adopted outside of Ha Noi, and can be found all throughout Vietnam currently.





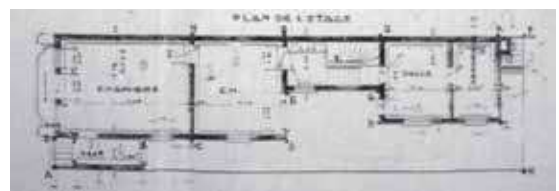
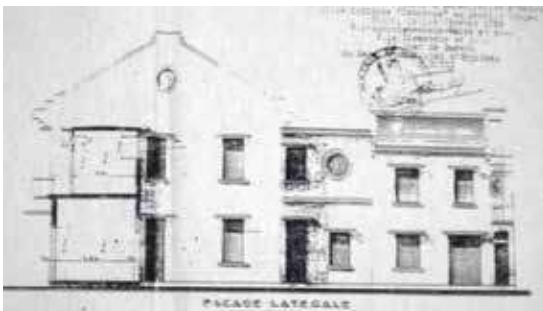
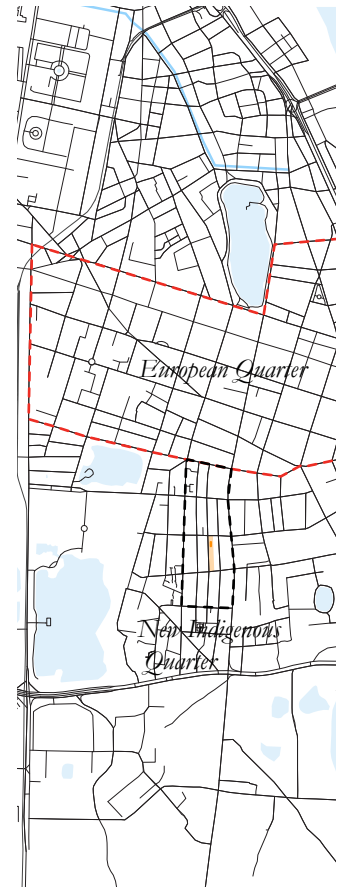
French Colonial Villa

93 Triệu Việt Vương Street *Hanoi, Vietnam*

The villa sits in the middle of a square-shaped plot. The house itself consists of one large, detached volume on two floors rather than a series of small constructions. Rooms in the villa are accessible through an internal circulation system and are specific to each domestic activity: eating, sleeping, cooking, etc. The outdoor space that surrounds the main building is not used for economic production, as is the case in the tube-house. Fenced landscaped gardens serve as hygienic buffers between the street and domestic spaces. Like the house itself, this exterior space is a symbol of wealth, comfort, hygiene, and intimacy. The buildings generally had two floors and benefited from large openings with a preference for high and narrow glassed windows and wooden doors. In contrast to the tube house,

the main buildings gathered all the living activities and segregated them into functional spaces. Some new roles, unheard of in the old merchant city, also made their appearance, including entry hall, office, dining room, maid's room, and pantry.

Buildings did not open directly on the street, as was the case in the merchant city. Front setbacks were therefore inserted, with small gardens enclosed by a main gate. This exterior buffer created a sense of representational space unheard of in traditional Vietnamese architecture. While this residence was built in the New Indigenous Quarter of Hanoi (years after the original villas were built in the French Quarter), it still derives much of the organizational principals from the original villas.



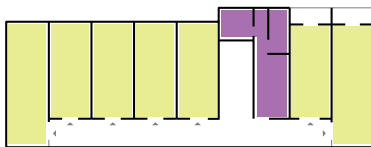


1. School
2. Kindergarten
3. Community Hall
4. Market
5. Athletic

Housing

Other

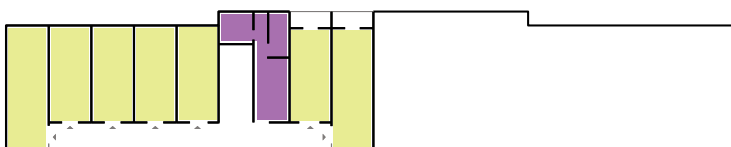
Building built before 1986



Typical Floor Plan for one unit

Living Space

Kitchen & Utilities



Typical Floor Plan for one building

Khu Tập Thể (Collective Housing)

Kim Liên KTT *Hanoi, Vietnam*

The First Indochina War of 1946-1954 (“Anti-French Resistance War”) formally split Vietnam into two different states.

Communist Vietnam (Viet Minh and People’s Army of Vietnam) fought against France and the Vietnamese National Army. With the Communist party winning the war, Vietnam is split at the 17th parallel: DRV controls north, Quốc Gia Việt Nam controls the south.

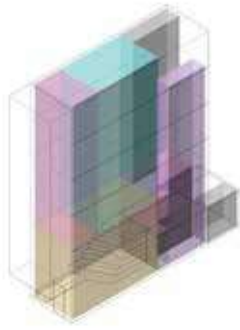
A Five Year Plan for economic development created in 1961 spurred the creation of Khu Tập Thể in all major northern cities (Hanoi, Hai Phong, Nam Dinh, and Vinh). Khu Tập Thể translates to “dormitory,” but refers to a “collective quarter” that employs socialist ideas of shared space and communal living.

Between 1954-1986, the housing policy in Vietnam was to develop subsidized housing for government officials and employees. Funds for this policy are taken directly from the government budget. Housing is almost distributed free to beneficiaries when the required housing fees do not exceed 1% of their wages. Housing is not considered a personal property but a social asset. Residential distribution is carried out in a relatively simple hierarchy of priorities, established on the level of wages and job levels employed by the user. Houses are also classified by square meters and number of rooms.

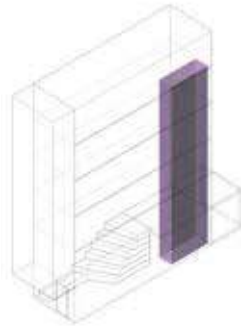
Kim Liên KTT was the first of its kind to be built in Hanoi, and shares its name with the birthplace of Ho Chi Minh.



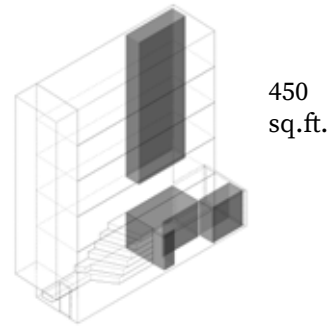
Program Distribution



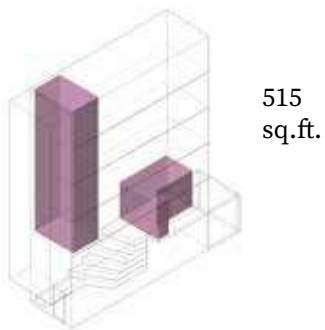
Vertical Circulation



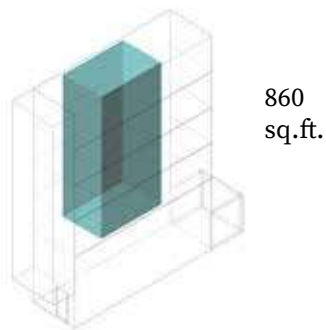
Service (RR, Mech, Storage)



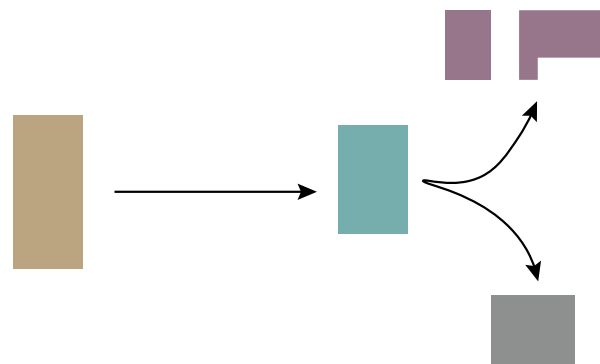
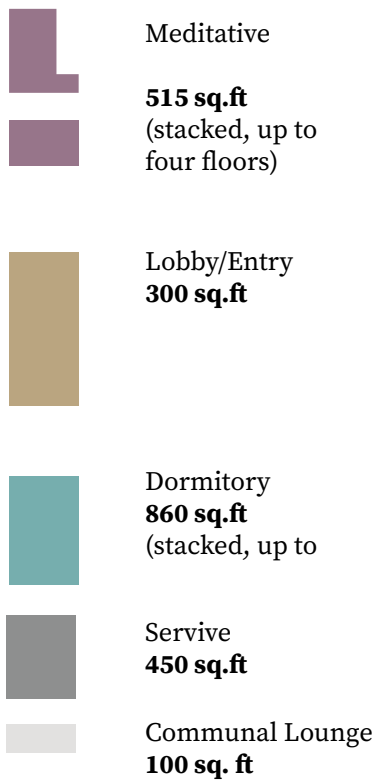
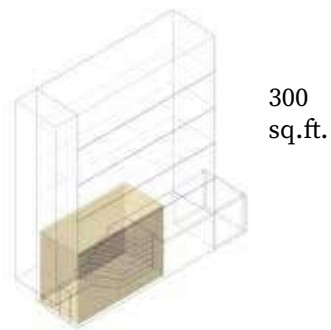
Meditative



Dormitory



Lobby



After entering lobby, vertical circulation takes patrons to dorm spaces (vertical typology of tube housing), which connect to both meditative areas and service core. Communal Lounge is found on the first floor.

Tube House Typology: Hostel Analysis

BED ONE BLOCK HOSTEL *Bangkok, Thailand*

Bed One Block Hostel is a modern interpretation of the tube house typology present in Hanoi as well as other parts of Southeast Asia. While the project is located in Bangkok, the city is experiencing rapid development that is similar to Hanoi. With properties taxed according to the size of their street frontage, land owners naturally chose to take advantage of plots that had narrow storefronts and extensive depths.

At approximately 13 feet wide by 52 feet deep, the small floor area is a condition that reflects the vernacular housing that has developed. Multiple stories also become a common element for the tube house (taxes do not increase as the building's verticality is increased).

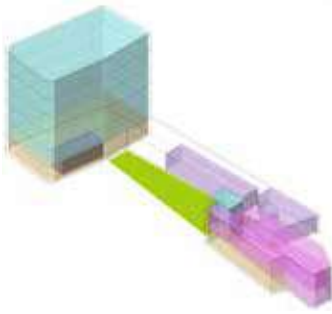
This project also expresses traditional practice,

containing five inhabitable floors; most common tube houses in Vietnam and Thailand contain between three to five floors.

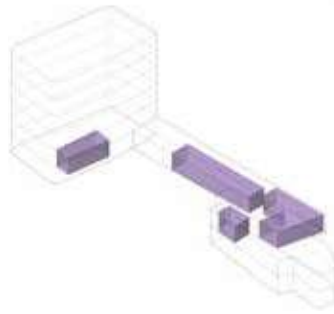
A primary design value for the project revolves around the idea of fostering guests' social interaction. In Bed One Block Hostel, social spaces were created for guests to share and relax: one in the common area but also one in each dormitory. The common area was designed to be a monumental stair on the ground floor that connects to a mezzanine, where guests can meet or use as a working space. Apart from the common area, each floor has its own small meditative area.



Program Distribution

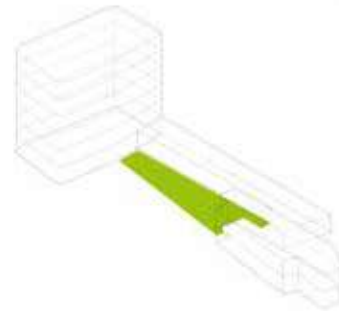


Communal Space



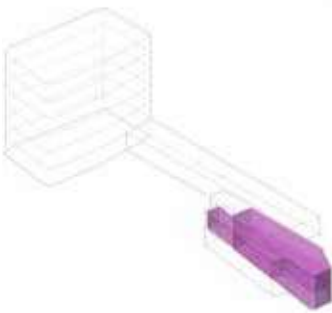
1,400 sq.ft.

Garden (transition)



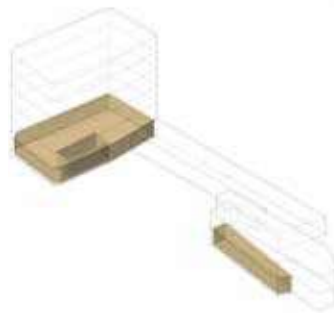
2,500 sq.ft.

Childcare



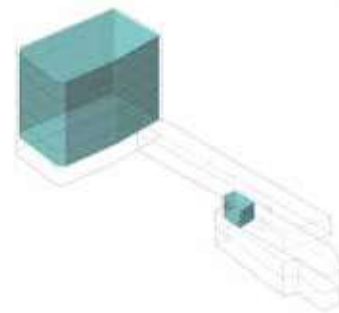
2,000 sq.ft.

Lobby

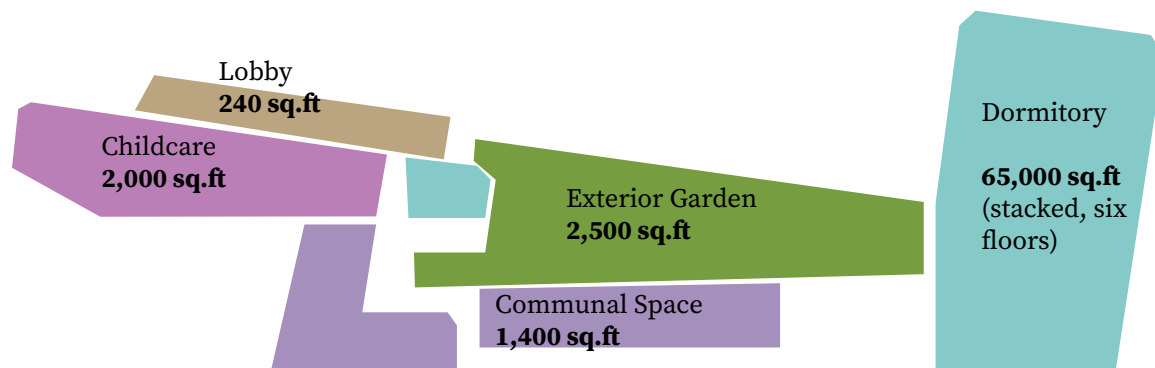


1,600 sq.ft.

Dormitories



65,000 sq.ft.



Dormitory Analysis

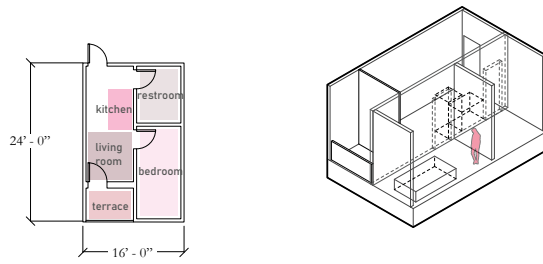
VIB Architecture Student Housing *Paris, France*

The site of this project presented conditions similar to the long, narrow allotments for housing in Hanoi's old quarter and French colonial districts. The project takes advantage of Paris's specific urban rules: apartments are located on the street and rise to the 7th floor, while the childcare center is located around a courtyard at the back, among smaller scale additions and small roofs. The existing building links the two programs together. The dormitory volume hosts 81 students on 7 floors and offers on the 5th floor a common rooftop with a panoramic view of Paris. The nursery's ground floor rooms are dedicated to the youngest children, and rooms on the upper floor are designed for the children in their intermediate and last years of nursery.

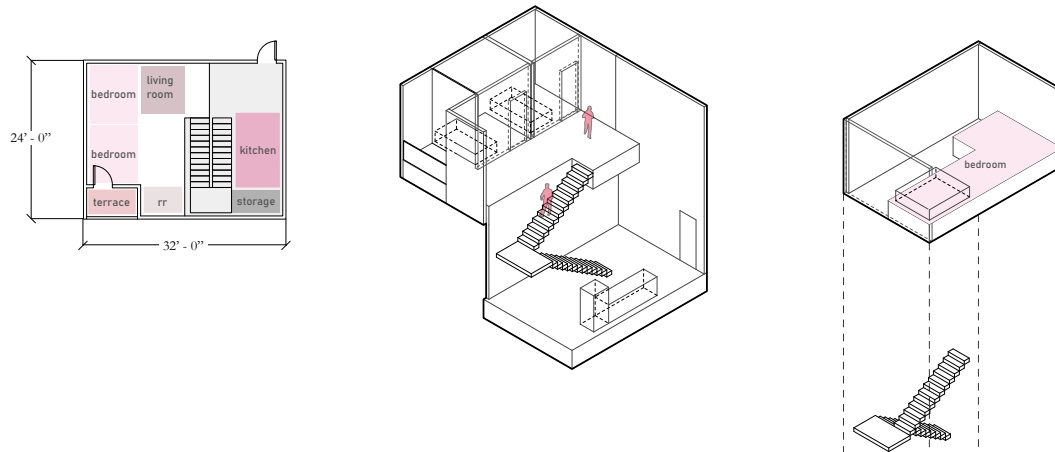
This precedent is significant because it illustrates an integration of two programs that have distinct requirements. The housing and nursery are separate spaces with little integration between one another aside from their connection by a narrow passageway. The most significant aspect about this project is the transition space between the two disparate programs. While the exterior garden and landscaping are meant to serve as a buffer between the two buildings, much of the communal aspect of the project happens in this in-between space. The exterior space houses a playground that serves the nursery, and functions as both a public and private area. While the garden offers a protected area for children to explore, it still offers an outside space for guests to



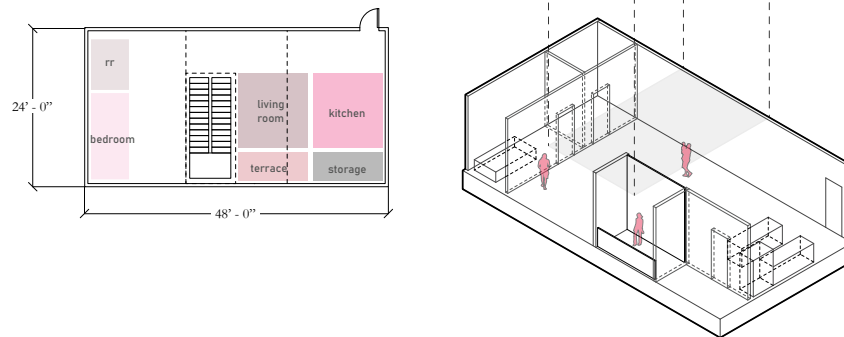
single unit



shared unit



family unit

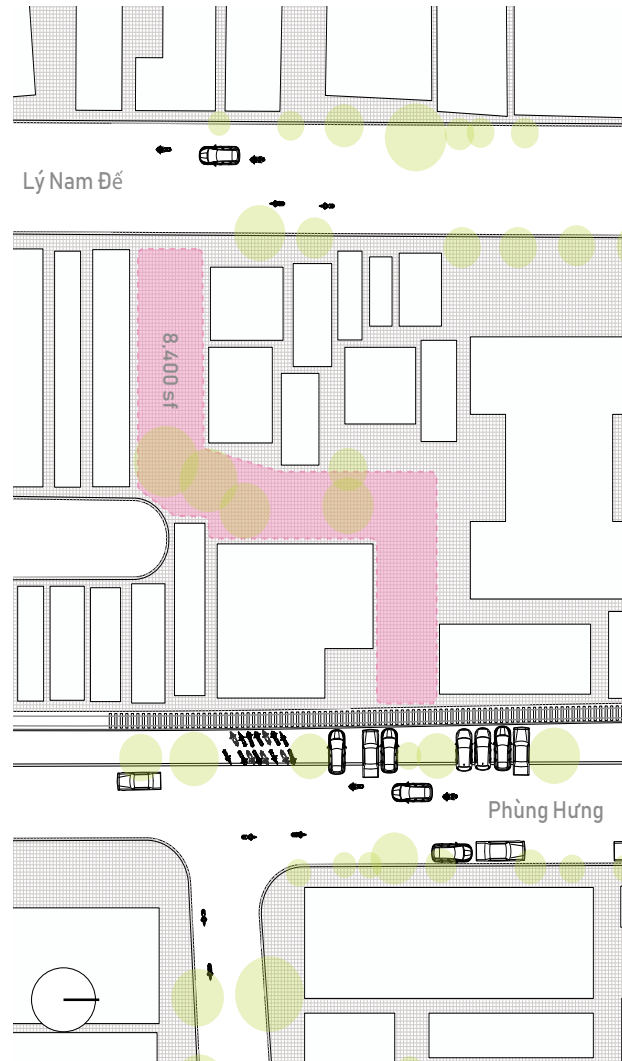


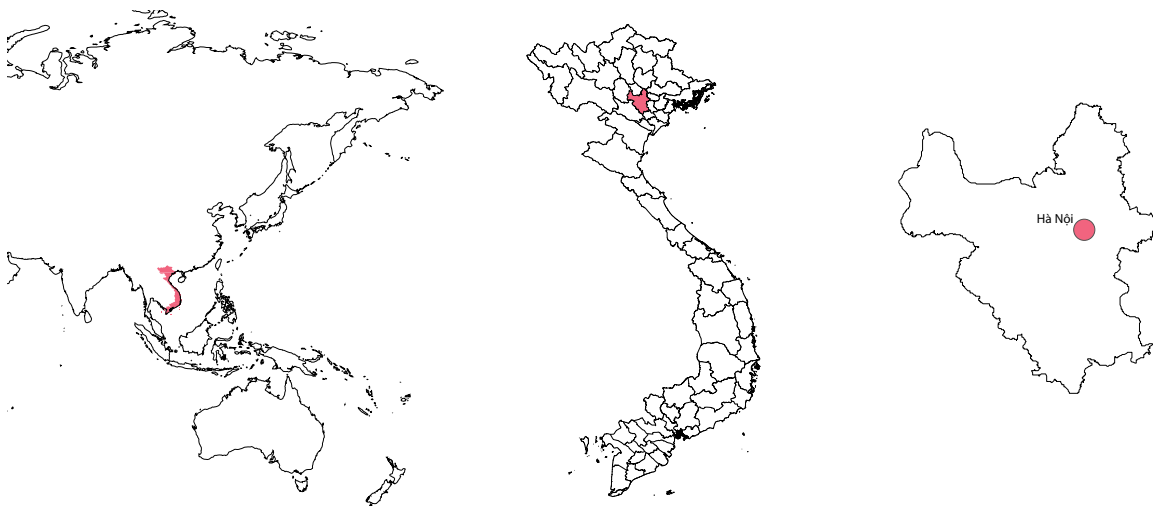
Design Concept

Reinterpreting Collective Housing

To reestablish the Vietnamese identity that has been rewritten and influenced by outside powers throughout history, the original citadel perimeter represents the most effective place to do so within the city. Housing for middle-class individuals in Hanoi responds not only to the growing urbanization of the city but also to the original idea of communal living that has existed for centuries within *phố cổ*. The site's location on the buffer zone between the ancient quarter and the administrative center and imperial border seeks to ignite the memory of Hanoi's constantly rewritten history.

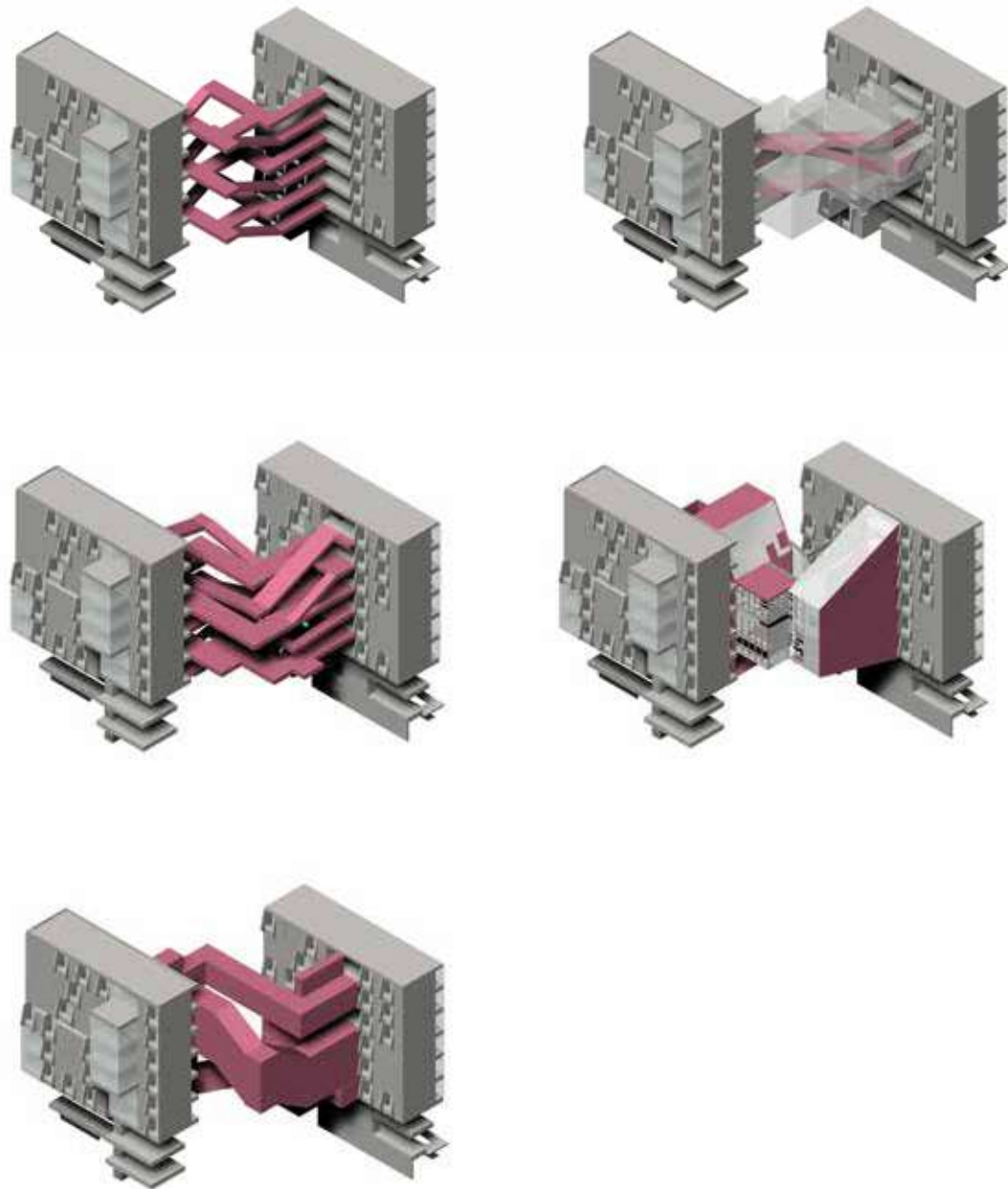
The importance of interstitial space within the urban fabric of Vietnam is further reinforced by the lack of habitable space within the street level of Hanoi.



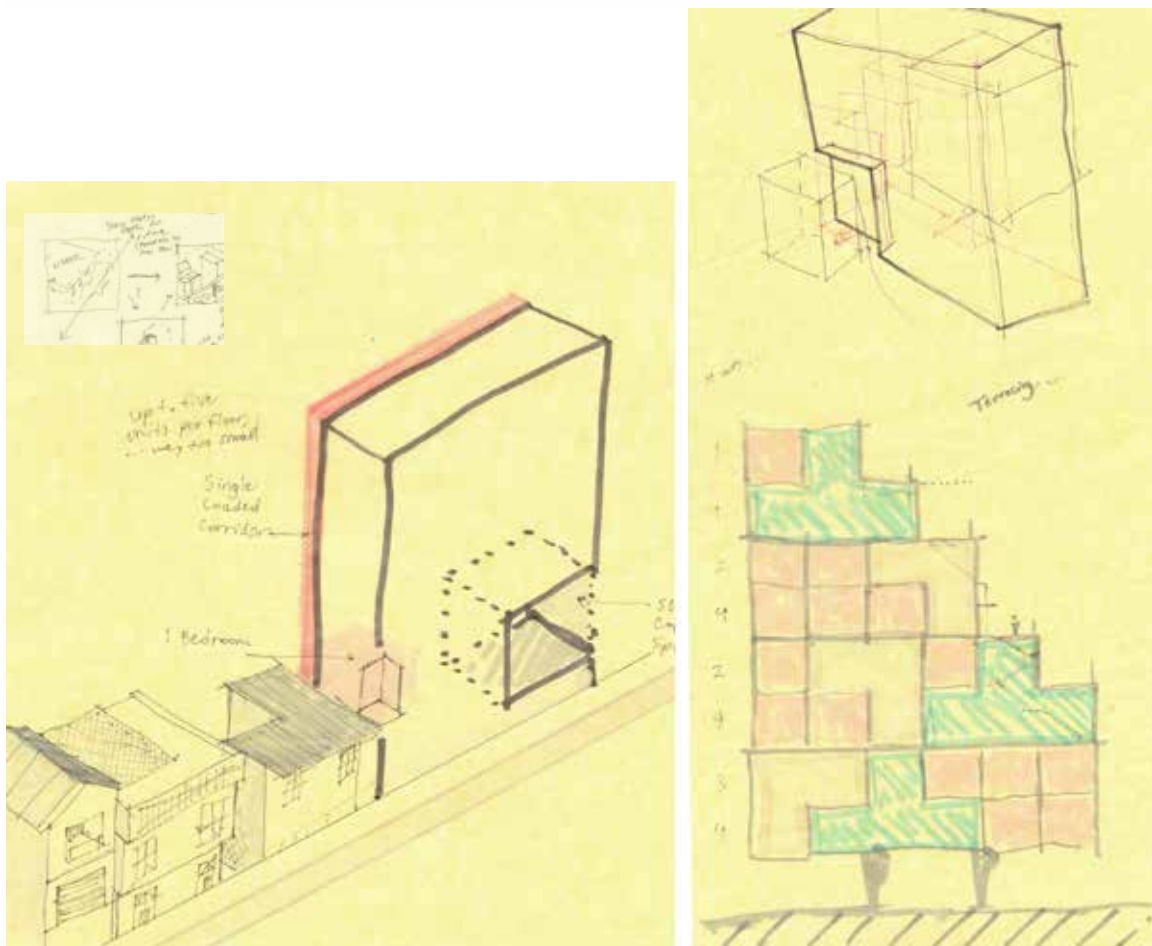
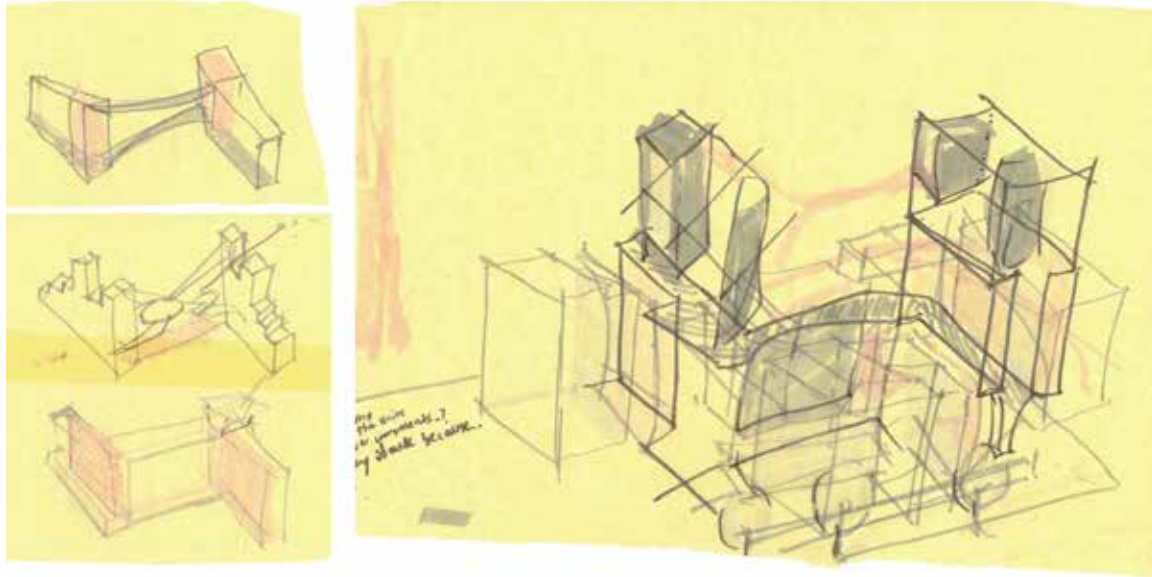


Above:
Site location

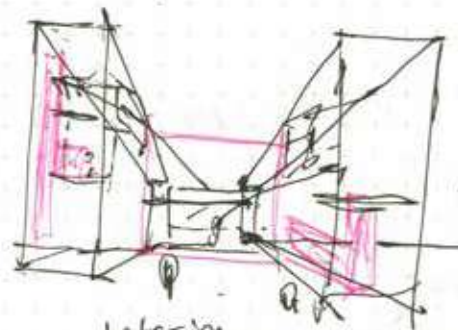
Drawings and Models



Above:
Design development of communal space between housing units



Above:
Concept sketches



Interim trading

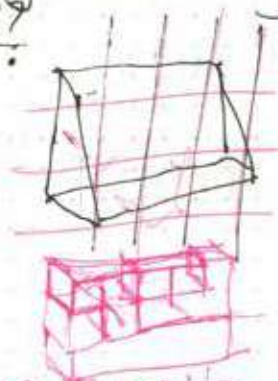
→ leads into private sector

→ Draws on the narrow passage ways that Hanoians in old quarter go thru...



Does this area really foster the use of space?

→ Remember: What are you saying about housing in Hanoi?



Single corridor... w/ puzzle pieces

but the communal spaces happen... haphazardly (seemingly)

Precedents:

Maps of Scope → country, city, site

Phases of Wall



permanent pre-1882

- buffer to Market - ancient quarters
→ A reinterpretation



The wall is: Somewhat existent

- while it still denotes the governing center, now you see infills of commoners



The wall is No longer Present

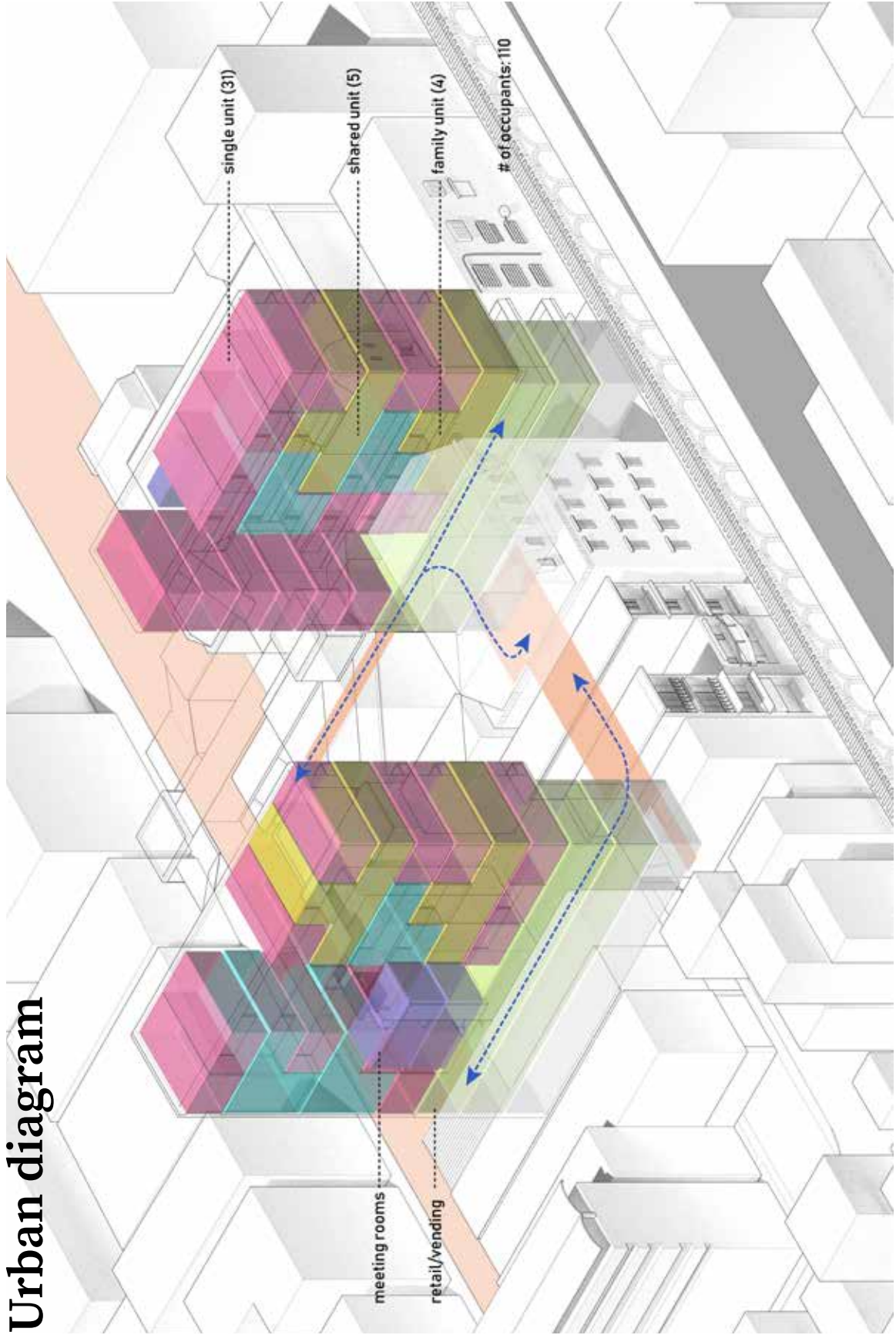
• Trees line avenues
• Nha ong, commercial businesses → Constant Rotation

Above:
Process Work; east elevation (analysis of
typical facades on Phùng Hưng street
Below:
Process Work; west elevation (analysis of
typical facades on Lý Nam Đế street

**final design with context see pg. 58-59*



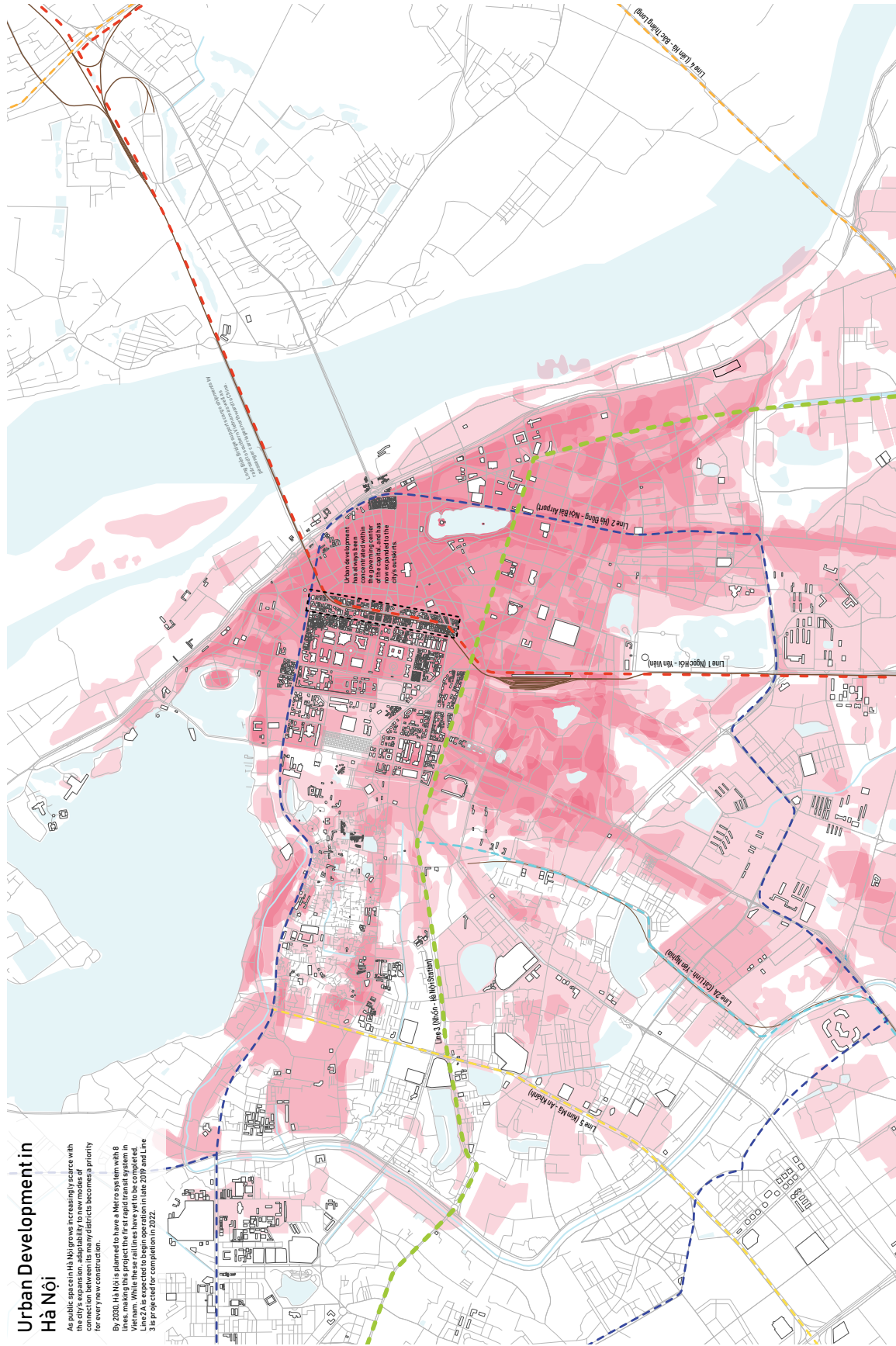
Urban diagram

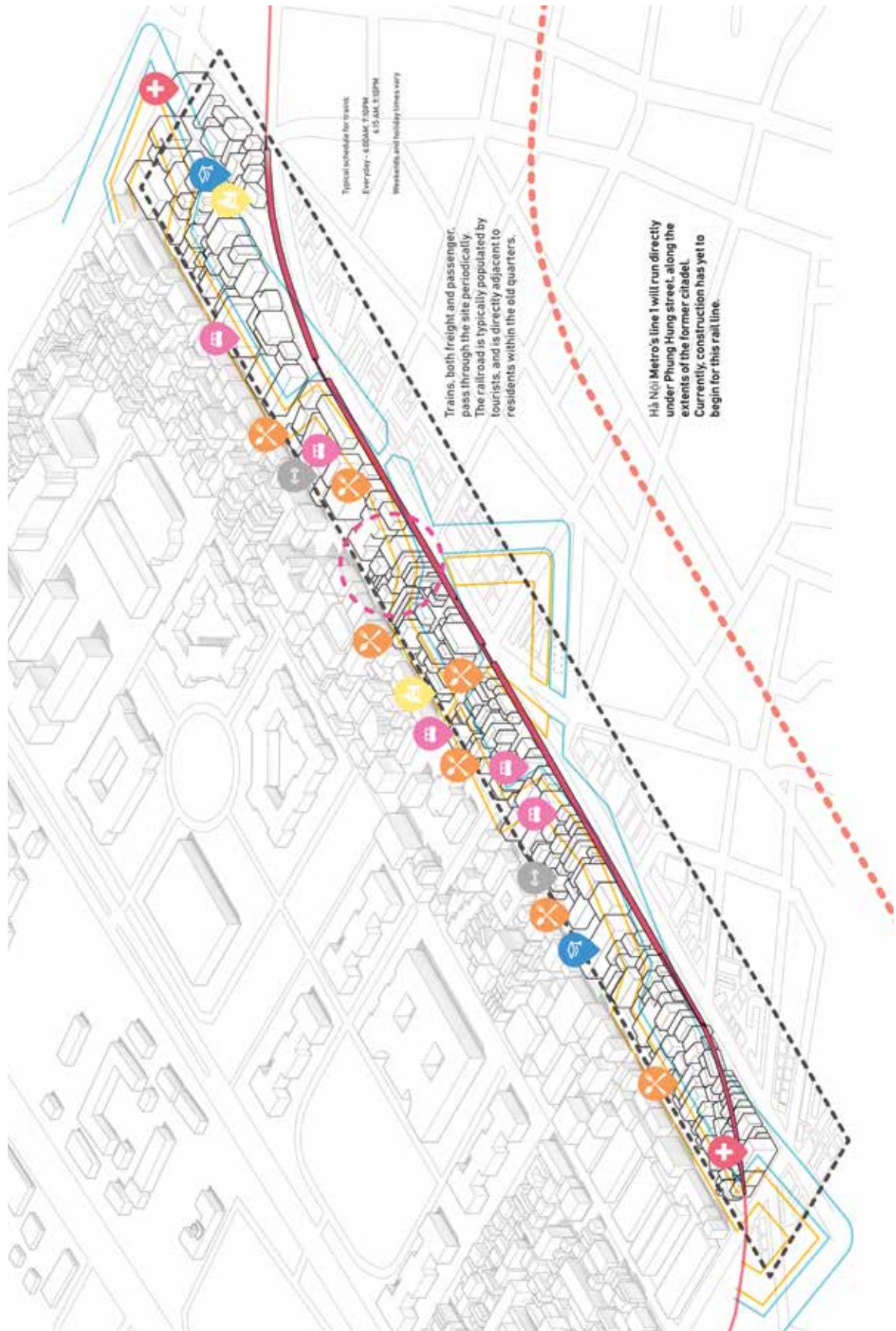


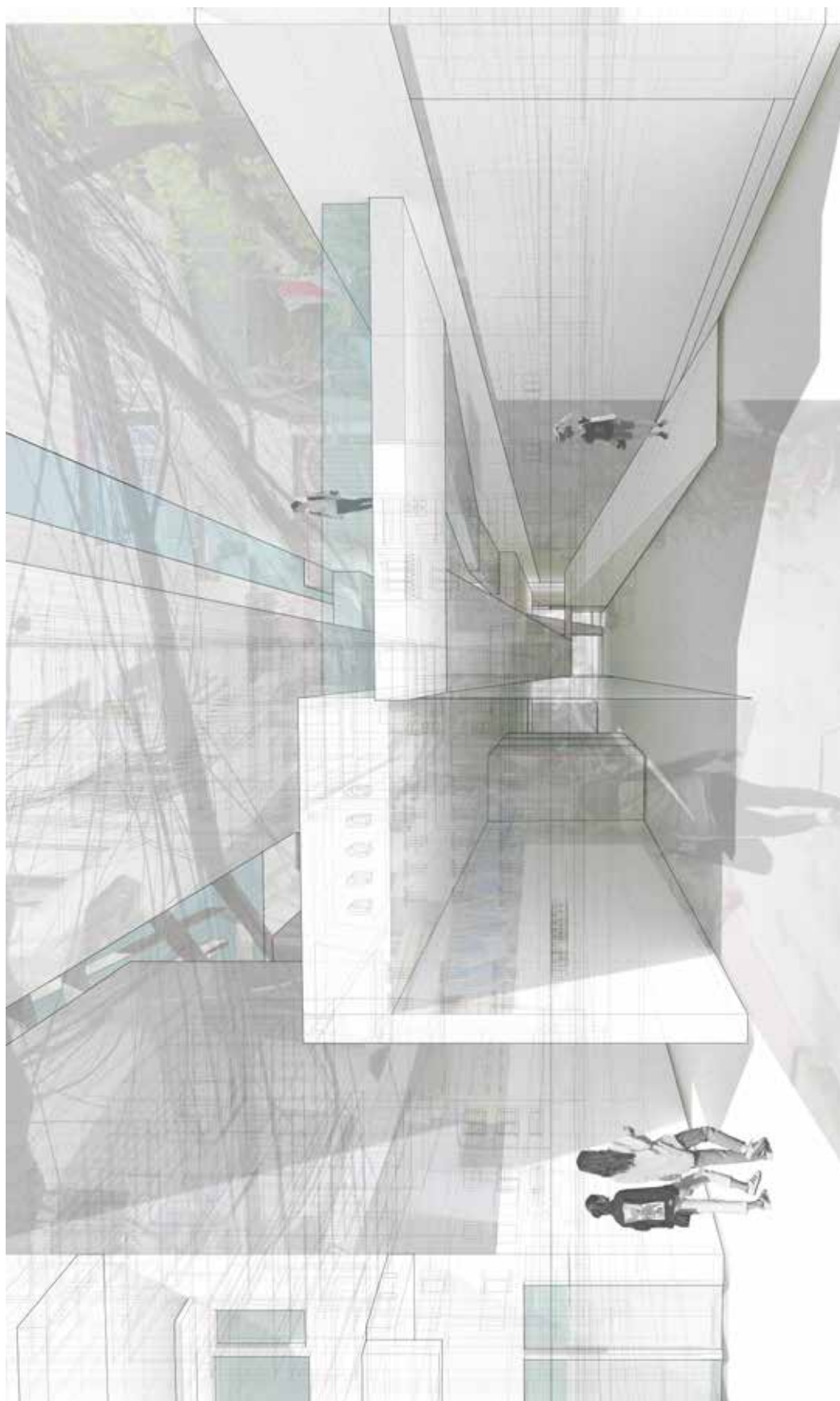
Urban Development in Hà Nội

As public transport Hà Nội grows in capacity, it will support the city's expansion, adaptability for new modes of connection between its many districts becomes a priority for every new construction.

By 2030, Hà Nội is planned to have a Metro system with 8 lines, making this project the first rapid transit system in Vietnam. While these rail lines have yet to be completed, the first line is expected to be completed in late 2019 and Line 3 is projected for completion in 2022.



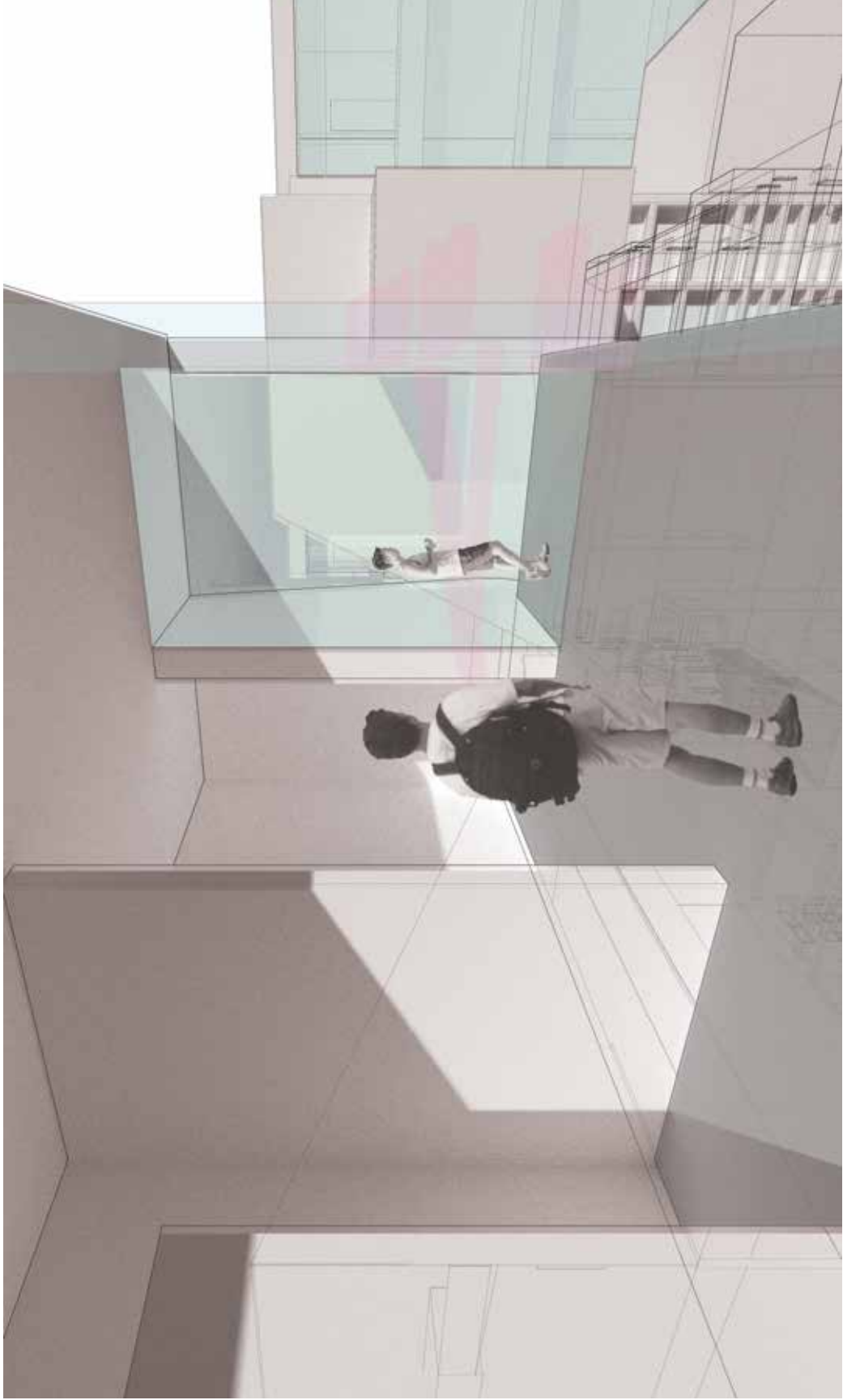




PUBLIC

entry

alley

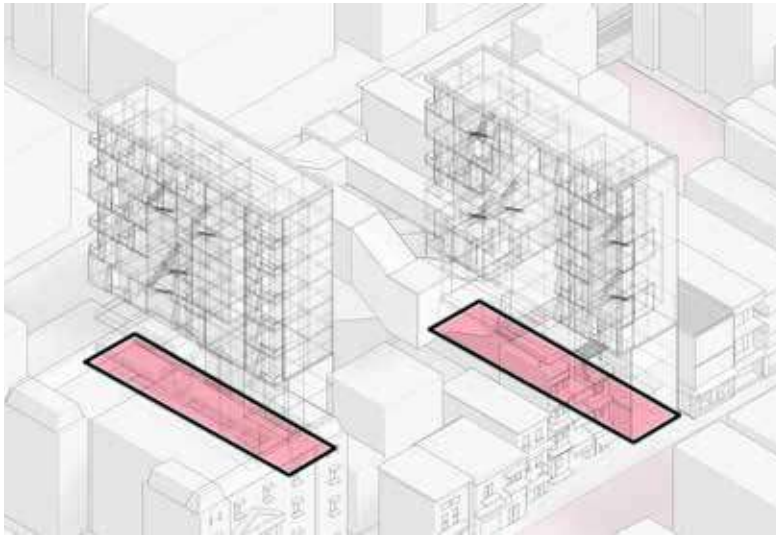


views to communal

PRIVATE

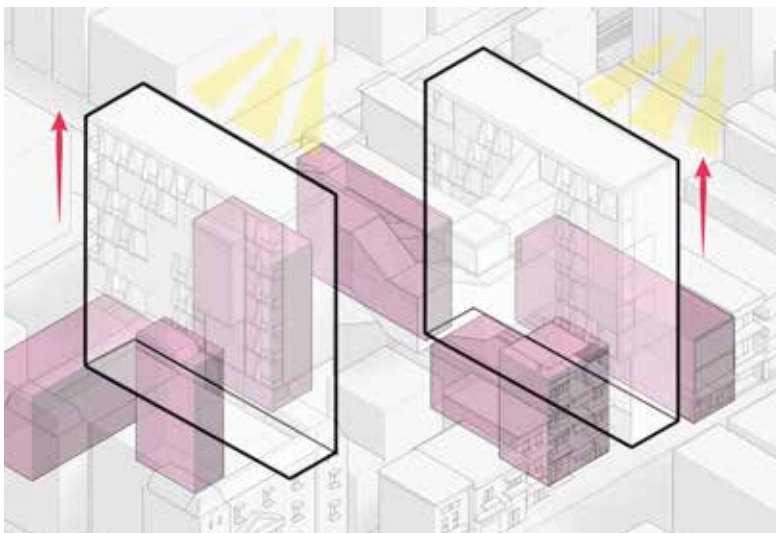
movable partitions

Housing

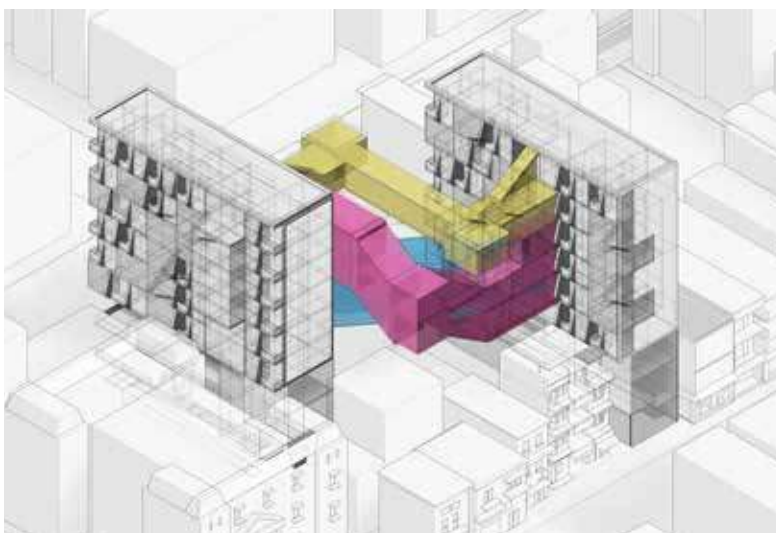


Housing units are organized in a long, narrow arrangement perpendicular to the street: based on tube house typology.

Open space is not readily available in the old quarter, so this strategy takes advantage of pre-existing conditions.



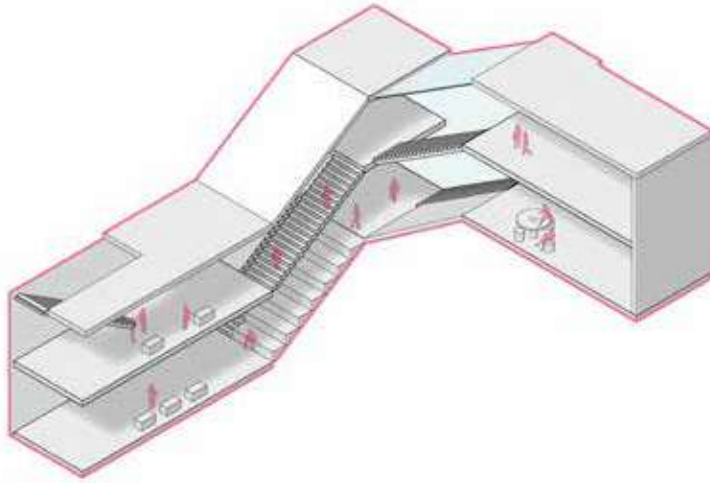
The building responds to adjacent context by extending vertically. Significant density happens closer to the ground, so the addition of height allows for natural light to easily enter: a condition not available to the traditional tube house or KTT.



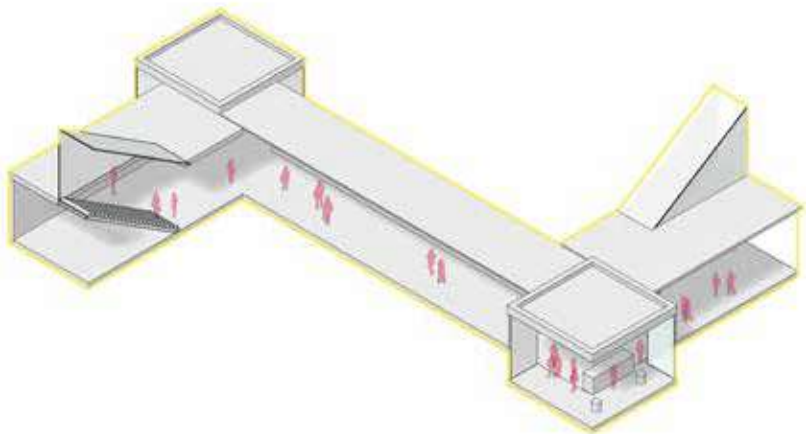
Connections between the two housing blocks are established to reinterpret the original Vietnamese (or Soviet Union) idea of communal living. The links between the living quarters invite dwellers to engage with one another to fit the needs of young adults in Ha Noi: through learning, creating, and socializing.

Collective Spaces

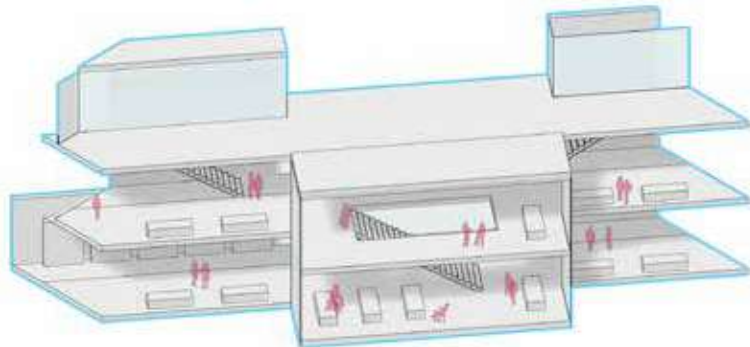
social, gathering space

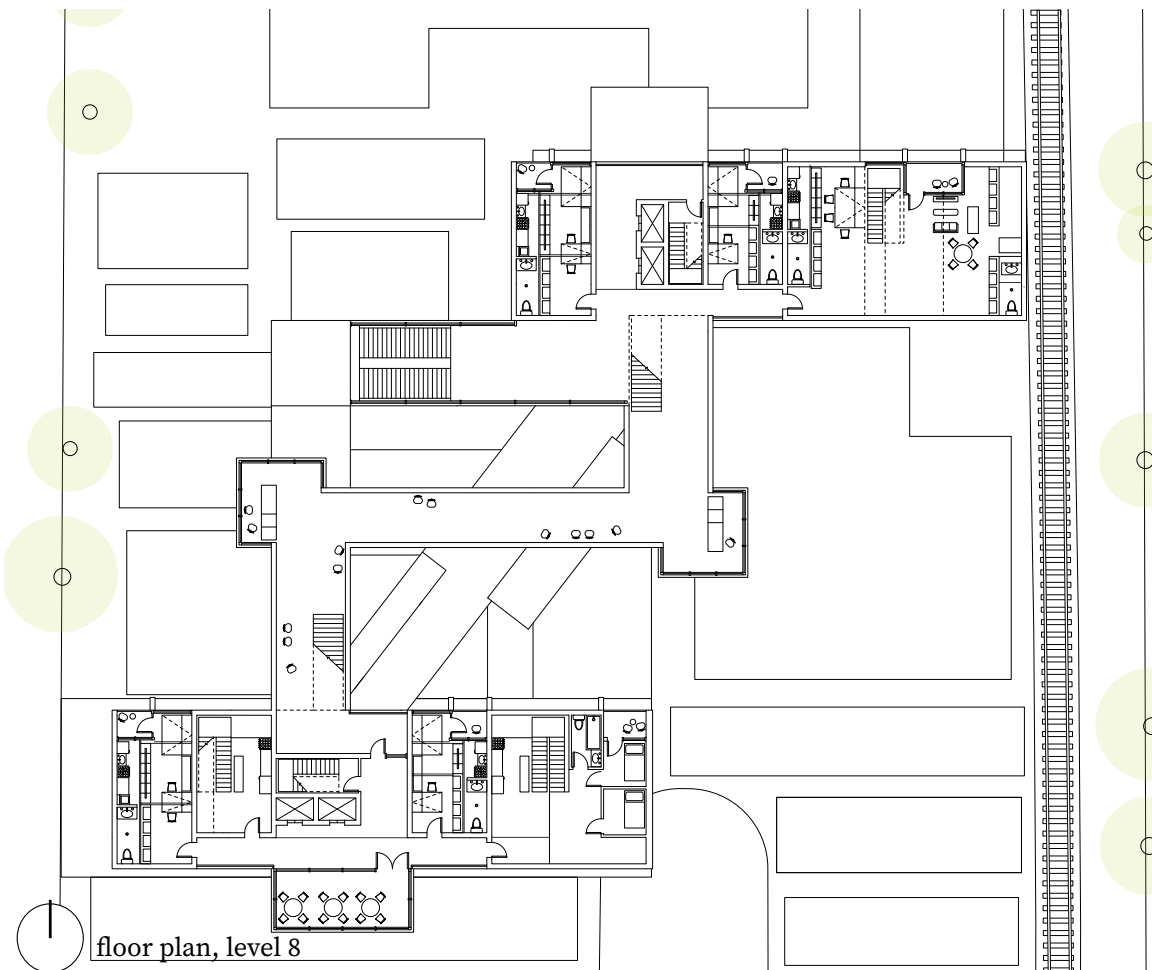


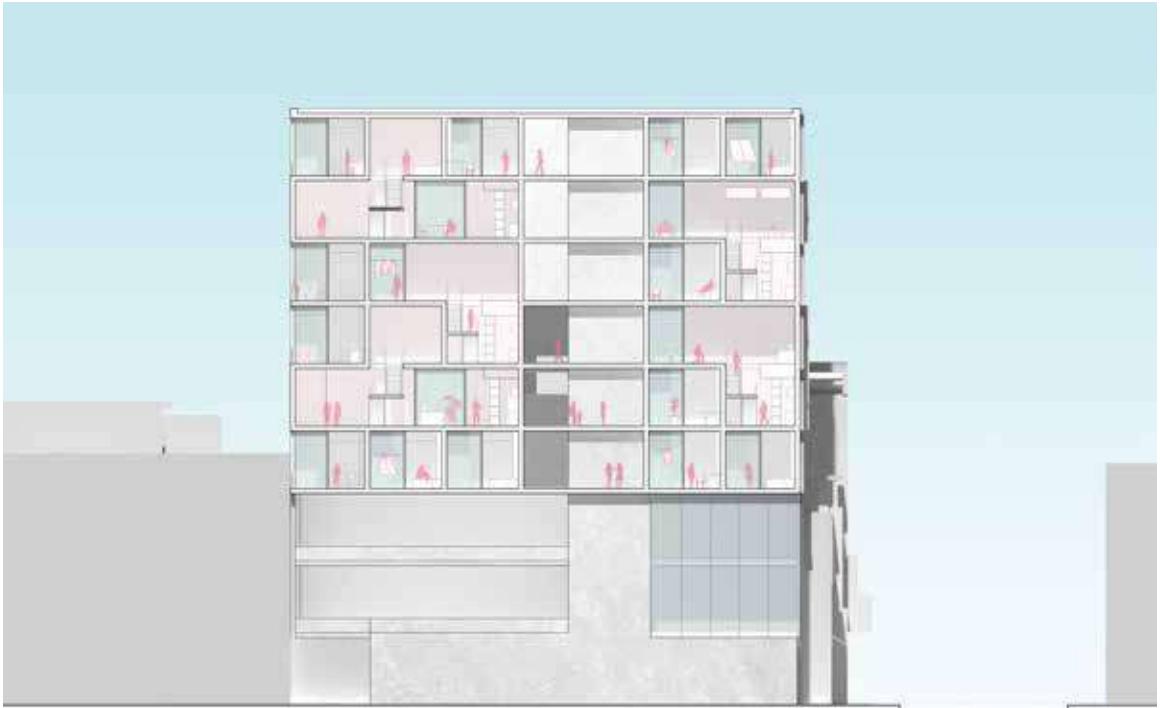
vending, interim trading



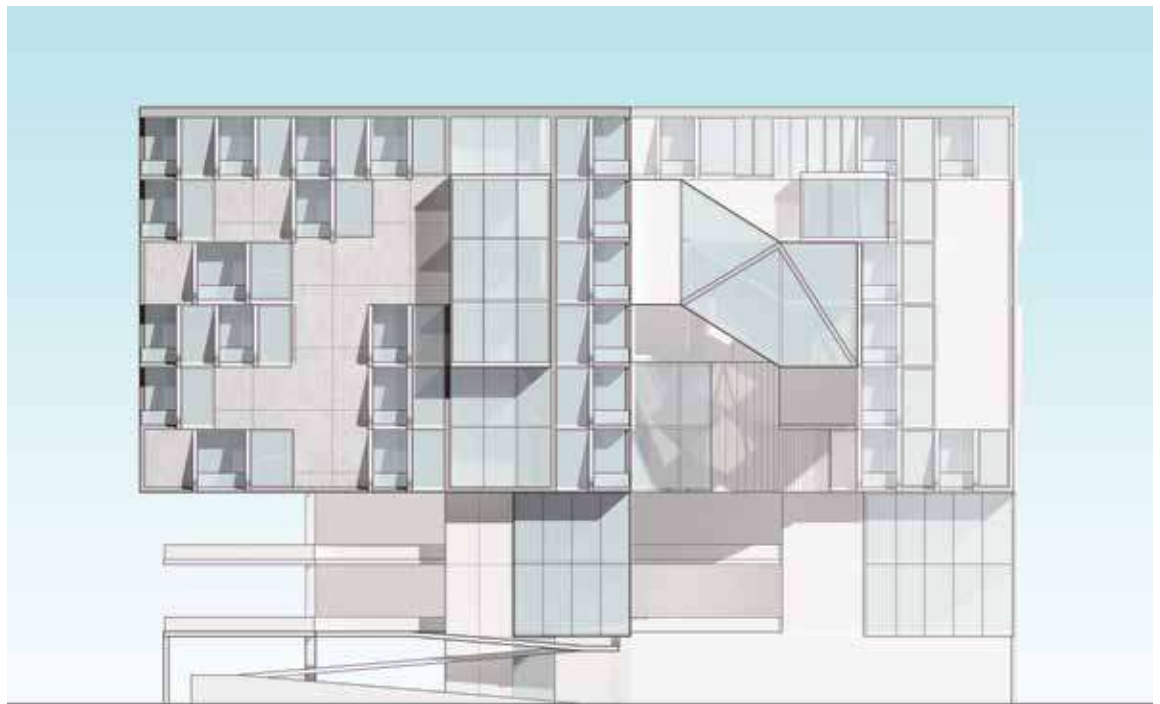
reading/study space







short section



north elevation

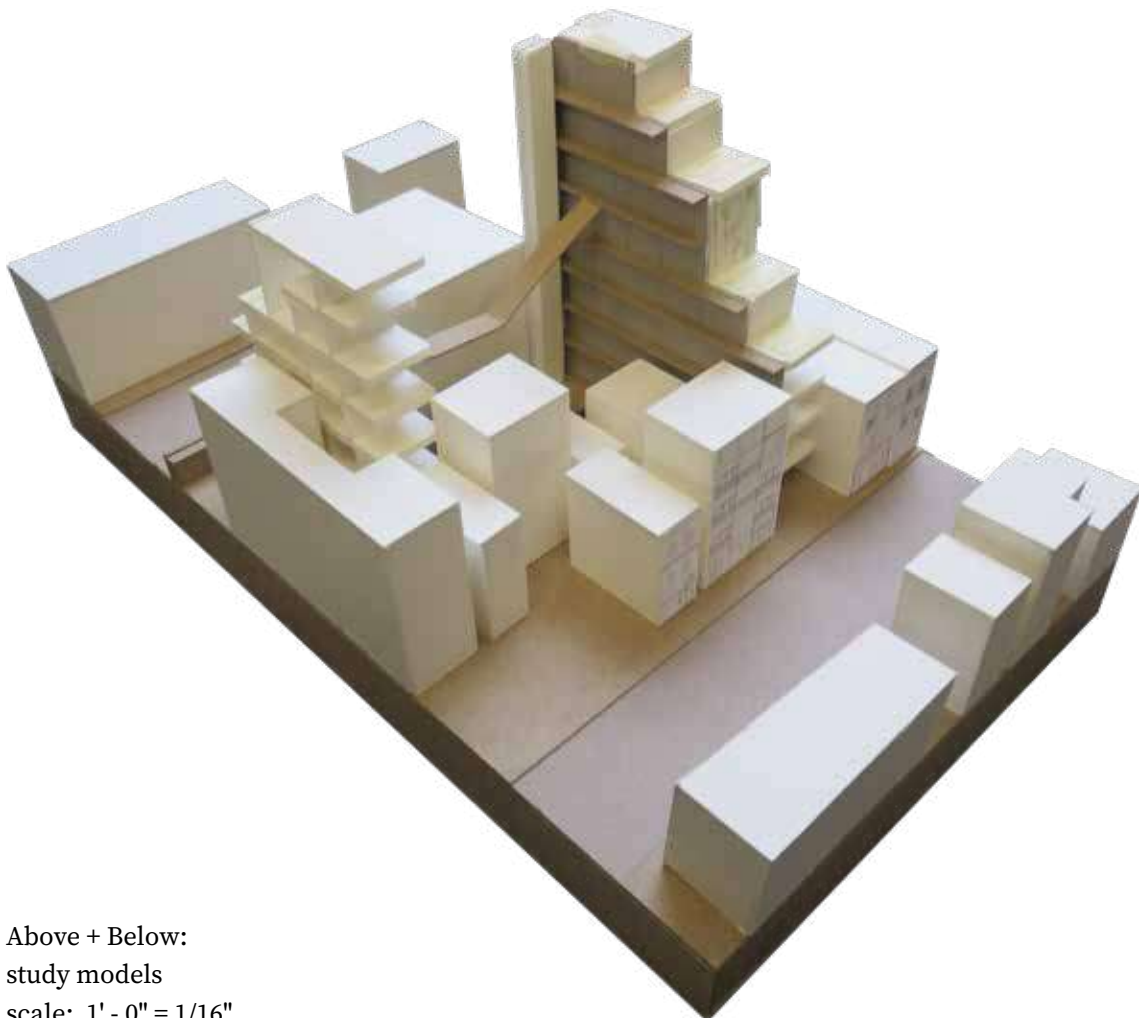


west elevation

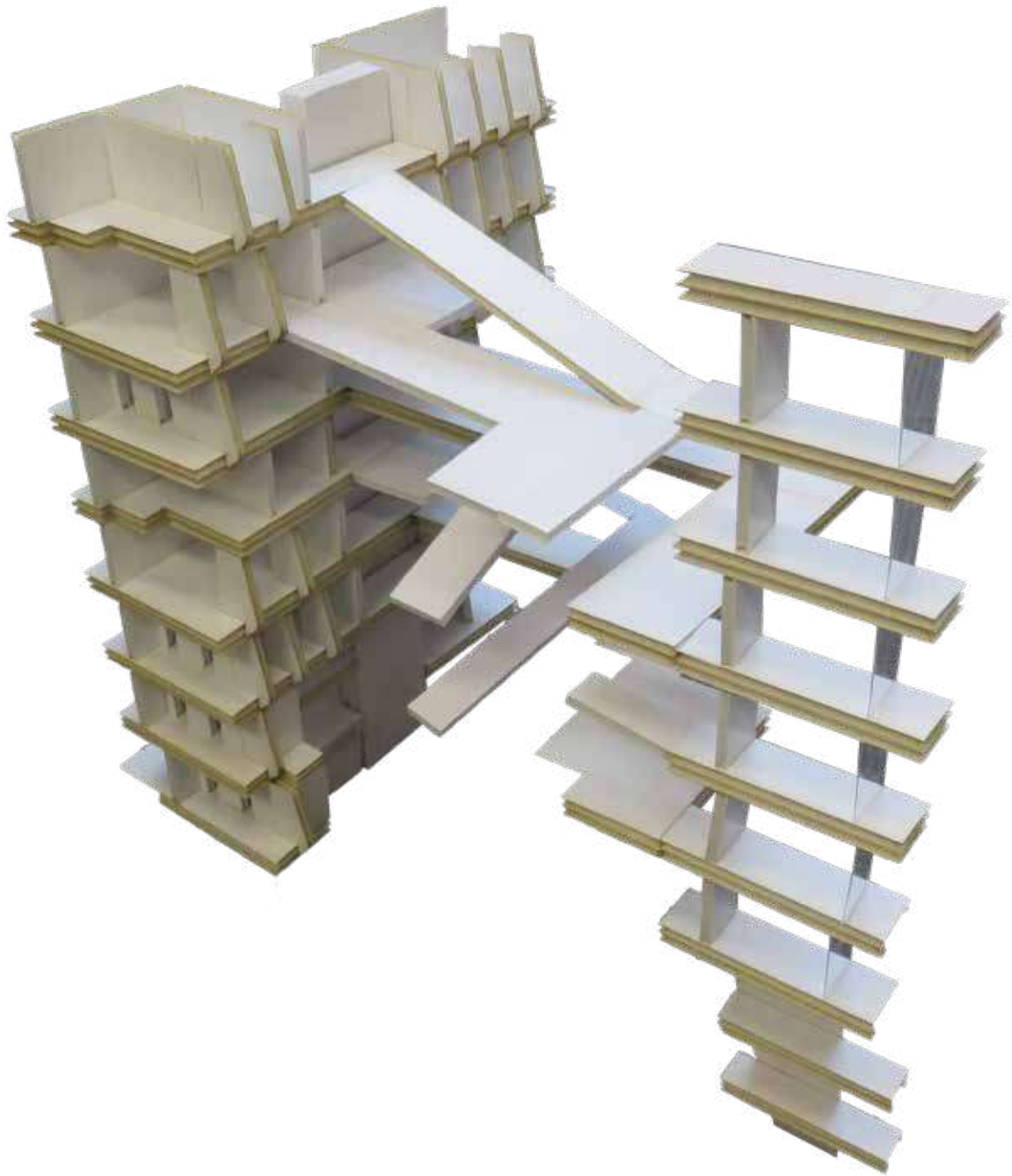








Above + Below:
study models
scale: 1' - 0" = 1/16"



Above:
process: section model
scale: 1' - 0" = 1/8"



Above: site model

scale: 1" = 40' - 0"

Below: site model, full extent (dimensions: 1'-0" x 8'-0")





Above:
section model, housing units
scale: 1' - 0" = 1/8"



Above:
building model
scale: 1' - 0" = 1/16"

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