

# Happiness within the Uncanny

Revitalizing the Street Level in Hong Kong's New Town

by

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# Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners. I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.



# Abstract

Hong Kong is the physical embodiment of neoliberalism at all levels of society, and the city itself is seen as a domain for private corporations to generate profit, creating spaces that are purely functional and generic. This top-down design approach disregards the organic aspect of human social behavior and has generated disconnected communities. Without unique identities and without places that allow for unplanned encounters, the new towns become places that lack humanity.

Socio-economic segregation seeps its way into many aspects of the new towns, such as their infrastructure or demographics, and is a direct result of years of neglect towards human-centric urban design. These design problems are deeply rooted in the urban fabric and are not easily resolved.

This thesis has two objectives: to study how people adapt to the uncanny living environment within the densely built area; and encourage space appropriation through a range of architectural interventions, from feasible to visionary, within the site. By creating an environment that fosters human connections, people will be able to take ownership of the spaces around their neighborhood. With a strong sense of community, we will be able to reject the uncanniness, bringing back happiness and humanity to the streets of Hong Kong's new town.



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Preface

# An Anecdote of My Journey Back Home

(1)

6.12 pm, IFC Mall

It was another uneventful day at work.

Being a draftsman, I am just like a machine, turning hand sketches from the architects into lines on the screen. I do not need to understand what I am doing. As long as I get it done on time, no one will comment on my work.

My office is located in a large integrated development in Central. Just like any other day, I take the elevator down from my office on the 55th floor to the shopping mall level. Walking along with hundreds of strangers with their phones on hand and headphones on, I make my way to Hong Kong station, which is four escalators down from the office lift lobby. Everyone is walking quickly. If I slow my pace down just slightly, the person behind will bump into me as his sight is most certainly glued to his screen.

Unlike yesterday, everyone's shoes are making high-pitched noises as the floor is damped. Is it raining? I don't know. I am isolated from the outer world as the lighting in the mall is as bright as daytime, and there is only darkness outside. Not that I care, as the journey back home is entirely covered or enclosed.



*fig. 1.1 The IFC Shopping Mall*

(2)

6:19 pm, Hong Kong Station

After walking off the last escalator, I hear the beeps from the turnstiles. I instinctively reach for my Octopus card so I will not interfere with the flow of people. It always gets frustrating when the lady in front is frantically hitting her purse onto the card reader, hoping her card in it can somehow be registered. I can remember every single time when this happens. It is kind of hilarious in a way.

“Due to extreme overcrowding, we are currently implementing crowd-control measures. Please accept our apologies,”

As usual, the pre-recorded announcement repeats every minute. Even though the train runs every 4 minutes, the subway system always gets overwhelmed every day during rush hour.

I follow the flow, which stops and moves every few minutes, proceeding down the escalator that is not running step by step. I gaze at the grey aluminum wall panels, and I can't help but realize the reflection is slightly different than before. My eyes slowly follow the light source and finally notice they have changed the expansive, glaring billboard right in front of me, from an all-white iPhone display to a beauty product advertisement with a model in front of a deep blue background.

Despite being a few meters away from the train, I am still separated from the train doors by endless layers of silhouettes. Multiple trains come and go, but I still cannot get on. Exhausted, I let myself gradually zone out, letting the strangers around me guide my body into the already packed train compartment.





*fig. 1.2 Hong Kong Station*

(3)

6:37 pm, the Subway

“Next station, Admiralty.”

The cold breeze from the air vents, the humming sound from the train, and the squeaking noise from the wheels bring me back from my zone. Without me realizing it, the flow guided me into the train compartment.

I take a deep breath and prepare myself mentally for this one-hour train commute.

The handrails are all out of my reach. The only things holding me up are the surrounding strangers. I can feel their body movement, the warmth of their breath, and their faint sweat smell. Despite being filled with people, there is only complete silence on board. All I can hear are artificial mechanical noises from the train itself and the occasional pre-recorded announcements.

Glimpsing around, most of the strangers are looking down at their phones, scrolling through social media, replying to messages to their loved ones, and browsing through their music library. It seems like I am having a glimpse of humanity reflected through the digital screens.

I am physically close to the strangers, but all I can see are soulless silhouettes.

I am used to this. I have been doing this commute twice every weekday for the past five years. I have to get used to this.

I peek outside the window, where there is only darkness. The only thing I can make out is the passing cables on the tunnel wall, as the lights on the train are so bright.

I am quietly counting down the number of stops to Hang Hau station, and the only hint for that is the announcements.



*fig. 1.3 The Subway*

(4)

7:21 pm, The Pedestrian Bridge

I take a deep breath. This is the first indication that I am breathing in the fresh air, along with the smell of petrol, the sound of bustling vehicles, and the dampness of the humidity.

I slowly climb up the stairs onto the six-meter-high pedestrian bridge, the only way to cross the main road. One end of the bridge penetrates a 5-story shopping mall. I am turning the other way instead, which leads to my home in Tin Heng Estate.

Normally, I would be like other strangers, looking dead straight and pacing myself along the bridge, trying to avoid bumping into each other. Today, for some reason, I decide to stop, lean on the balustrade, and have a look at my city from above.

It indeed rained heavily during my journey back home. The reflections of the 50-story residential buildings make the street seem like a scene from the matrix. On the repetitions of building façades are thousands of windows. Most are brightly lit, forming abstract patterns on seemingly impermeable walls along both sides of the road. Countless vehicles rush through the puddles on the asphalt surface, splashing waves of rainwater onto the empty sidewalks.

I am nearly home.



*fig. 1.4 The Pedestrian Bridge*

(5)

7: 26 pm, The Public Square

I descend from the bridge through the endless meandering ramp. A weird sculpture of the Earth marks the entrance of the public estate I'm living at. The streetlamps emit a strong yellow hue, changing the normally pink-colored tile pavement into a slightly unsettling green.

Without the people around me, I can finally slow down my pace. The reflection of the recurring facades on the wet tiles somehow reassembles the view from the bridge. The only difference is that I can now identify the moving silhouettes through the curtains when I look up to the windows. There is a sense of humanity behind the sterile facades.

Along my walk are numerous benches. I assume they are for neighbors to socialize, but as usual, they are mostly unoccupied. The benches are all facing toward the walkway, separated either by rigid armrests or half-meter gaps. Tonight, there is an old man, probably in his 70s, sitting on one of those benches. He is holding a cane in one hand and a radio playing the 30s Cantonese pop music in the other. Perhaps I am overthinking, but I feel like he is showing off his musical taste to the passing neighbors more than enjoying the serenity of tonight's weather.

I am nearly home.



*fig. 1.5 The Public Square*

(6)

7:28 pm, the Lift Lobby

After entering a four-digit passcode, I hear a long beep and a loud click, indicating the metal gate to the tower lobby is unlocked. My body is already feeling a bit weak, as pulling the gate open is a challenge for me. Thankfully, as usual, the security guard comes over and gives me a helping hand.

“Thank you,” I whisper and nod at him. He smiles and returns to his counter.

I instinctively walk towards the mailroom. Without realizing it, I has already gotten my keys out and checked my mailbox. It is empty, just like yesterday.

I turn around and proceed to the elevators. Before I press the button, one of the four elevator doors has opened, and a family of three walks out. They are probably heading to the mall for a nice dinner.

“Hi...” I whisper and nod at them. They walk past me without saying anything. Perhaps they did not notice. I am used to that.

I enter the elevator, find my floor without looking, and press close doors. No one follows.

I am nearly home.





*fig. 1.6 The Lift Lobby*

(7)

7:31 pm, the Corridor

“39th Floor,”

The elevator doors open, exposing the green mosaic tiles on the wall.

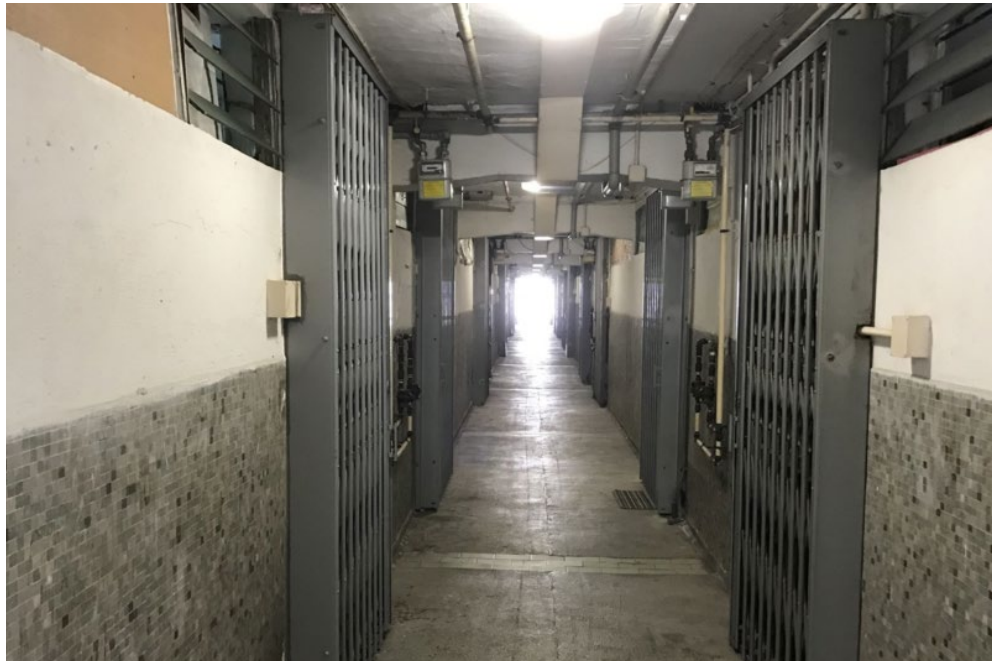
The lights along the corridor are so dim that I need a few seconds to adjust my eyes from the bright elevator lobby.

I stroll past the repeating metal gates in front of the other flats, labeled with the flat number. Some neighbors has decorated their gates with Chinese greetings, while others has left their doors slightly open. I can hear the sound of laughter, arguments, and televisions. I can smell the aroma of cooking as well.

Although I am the only one in the corridor, I can feel the sense of humanity behind the metal gates.

I eventually reach my flat. My keys, which I have been holding for a few minutes, have become somewhat sticky from my sweat. I unlock the metal gate with my first key and use my remaining energy of the day to push it open. I find my second key and unlock the door.

I am finally home.



*fig. 1.7 The Corridor*

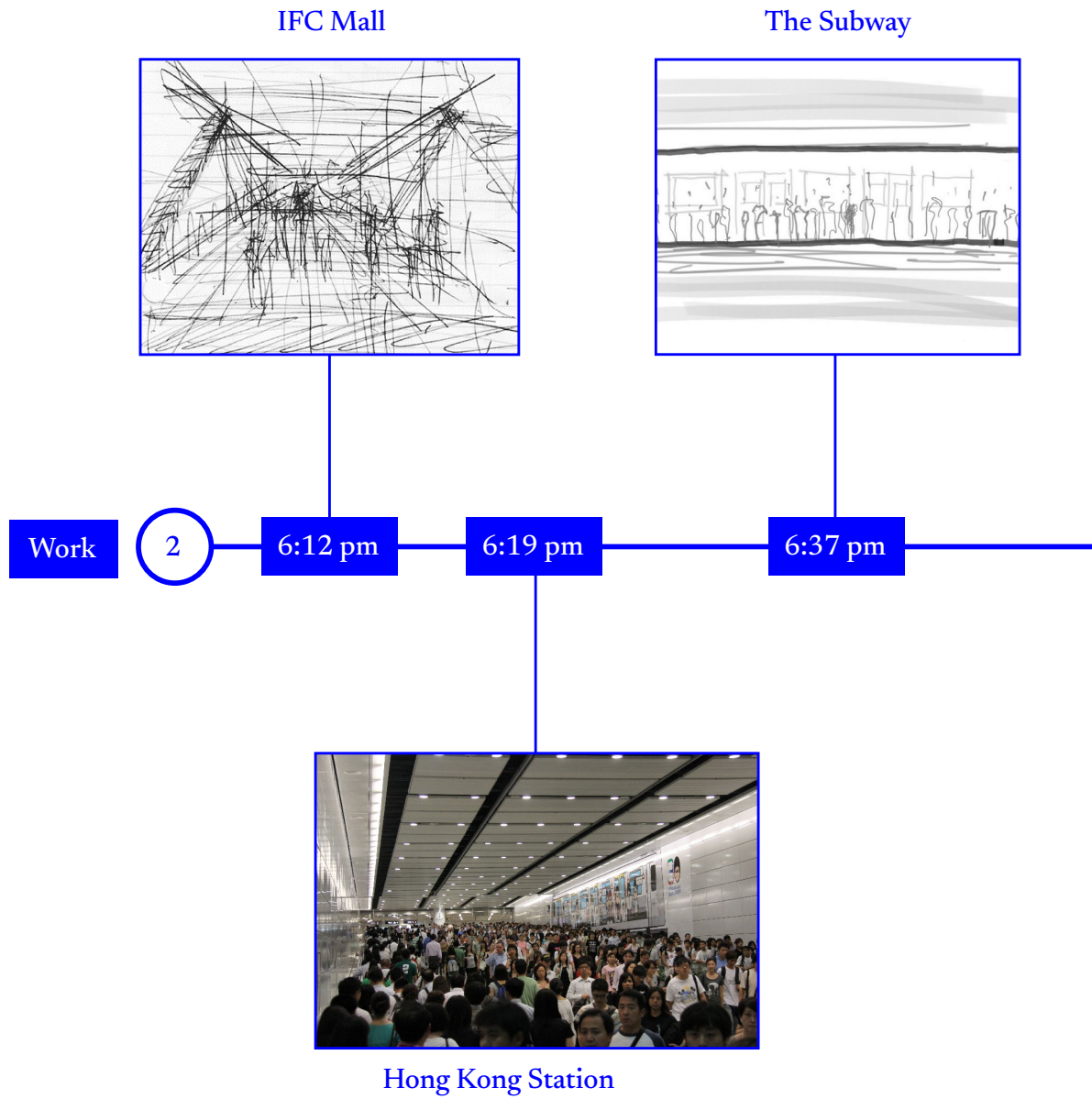
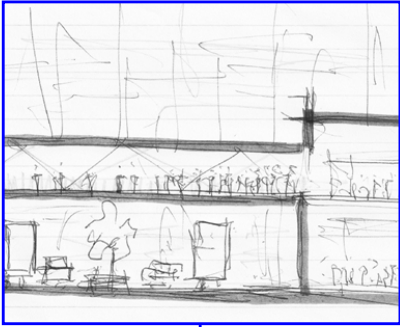
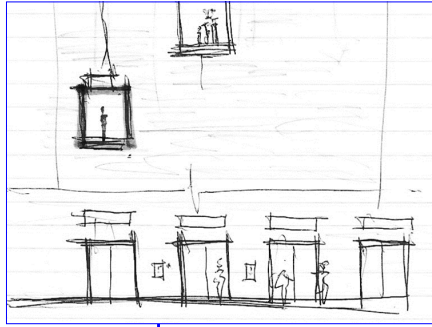


fig. 1.8 Anecdote Timeline

The Bridge



The Lift Lobby



7:21 pm

7:26 pm

7:28 pm

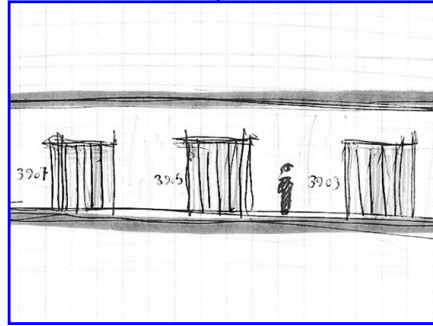
7:31 pm

1

Home



The Public Plaza



The Corridor

# Introduction

The inhumane experience that is illustrated in the anecdote is the norm for most people living in Hong Kong. Rather than walking on bustling streets with packed storefronts, and listening to conversations between the customers and the shopkeepers, the generic storefronts and elevated walkways of the shopping malls became the new streetscape. Enclosed pedestrian bridges act as direct connections between shopping malls, linking different communities within the district. These profit-generating spaces become the main pedestrian circulation arteries, blurring the line between the public and the private realm. The commodification of these public spaces stripped away the humane aspect of the city. All in all, the journey is overwhelmed by the pursuit of efficiency, profit, and functionality by the society that the neoliberal city creates.

This thesis raises several critical questions: How do people cope within this unique high-density urbanism? What are the implications for the residents of a neighborhood that lacks humanity? What opportunities exist to rectify the social imbalances within this privatized urban space?

Firstly, the thesis will investigate the topic of uncanniness and how it affects the spatial grammar of residential new towns in Hong Kong. It will define the term uncanniness through the study of literature on community and urban design theories. How such uncanniness led to the capitalism-led urban planning methodology and the implications for the living environment will also be addressed.

Secondly, it will look for opportunities to rectify the uncanniness through the concept of “play”. The role of play within a city will be redefined, from playgrounds exclusively for children to inclusive spaces that allow for enjoyment by everyone in the neighborhood, including adults and teenagers. The community of Hang Hau, a typical residential new town in Hong Kong, will then be introduced as the

site for this research. It will be followed by observations of street activities in established neighborhoods in Hong Kong, where streets are livelier than in Hang Hau. A series of collages and illustrations will be produced to identify the need of the local people and to bring those innovative place-making strategies into the non-places in Hang Hau.

Lastly, specific sites will be chosen to apply the concept of “playground” to Hang Hau. These architectural interventions will form a network of open spaces and serve appropriate functions in response to the mapping exercise. The functions of these places include short and long stopovers, playgrounds, green spaces, and landmarks. With a comprehensive planning system, neighborhoods within the city will become a holistic community, and open spaces will be well used by the locals as they are well integrated into the urban fabric.

The ultimate goal of this thesis is to be the driving force of the government and developers to put a human-centric approach to their design process. It also raises the question of whether or not the local communities should take ownership of the gathering spaces within the public realm. Therefore, these spaces will better respond to the local needs by allowing space appropriation and rejecting the neoliberal and bureaucratic forces that shaped the city as it is today.





Chapter 1

# The Uncanniness

*“The quality or state of being impossible to know, understand, or explain”<sup>1</sup>*

---

<sup>1</sup> “Uncanniness.”



*fig. 2.1 A typical residential development in a new town in Hong Kong*



## New Towns - Hong Kong's Garden City

The lack of housing has long been a problem in Hong Kong, calling for ambitious policies by the government to respond to the ever-rising population in the city<sup>1</sup>. Between the 60s and the 80s, the population rose by 58 percent to 5 million. Although a public housing scheme was established at the time for the influx of refugees from mainland China, the limited land supply and high density in the urban area caused great difficulties for the scheme to keep up with the growing housing demand. In the 80s, there were still 500,000 people staying in squatter areas scattered around the fringe of the city's urban area, and this forced urban planners to expand their sites beyond the developed city centers.

The garden city movement from the UK initiated by Ebenezer Howard in the 19<sup>th</sup> century served as an inspiration for the New Town Movements in Hong Kong<sup>2</sup>. These self-sustained communities are surrounded by green belts, acting as a relief to the overcrowding city centers at the time. This idea was bought into Hong Kong by the British Colonial Government to develop the New Territories, a largely rural area at the time.

According to the Government, the fundamental aim of a new town is to provide infrastructure and communal functions to a balanced and self-contained community<sup>3</sup>, and functional, environmental, and aesthetic considerations are of top priority in new town developments. Public and private housing developments and essential infrastructure form the basis of new towns, which are linked by public transit and major roads to the urban centers. Since 1973, when the New Town Development Program was started, nine new towns have developed, housing 3.47 million people as of 2016, and is expected to increase to 3.63 million in 2021<sup>4</sup>.

New towns are populated with different housing developments to cater to people with various incomes.

**Private developments** are developed by private developers

---

1 Hills and Yeh, "New Town Developments in Hong Kong (Sha Tin)."

2 Howard, *Garden Cities of To-Morrow*.

3 Civil Engineering and Development Department, "New Towns, New Development Areas and Urban Developments."

4 Civil Engineering and Development Department.

who target high-income residents, and they are typically gated communities accompanied by recreation amenities within the estates. On the other hand, there are two types of public housing estates developed by the government. **Public rental housing** is rented at a subsidized rate to low-income residents, and **Home Ownership Scheme estates (HOS)** are sold to mid-income residents at a heavily discounted rate. Despite several iterations of the housing policy, including increasing public housing supply, the housing shortage is still intensifying in the city<sup>5</sup>. While private developments are reaching record-breaking prices, the years-long waitlist for public housing is only getting lengthier.

5 Ng and Zhao, "Hong Kong to Increase Proportion of New Public Housing to 70 per Cent of Supply Target over next 10 Years, Minister Frank Chan Announces."



fig. 2.2 New Towns in Hong Kong and their Respective Population

## What is a Community?

Many metrics measure whether or not the planning of a city is successful. Lennard et al. (2013) mentions that cities are responsible for the transmission of culture, for socializing their inhabitants, and for providing opportunities for diverse people to confer, work, and celebrate together<sup>6</sup>. Gehl (2013) suggests that good architecture fosters public life and public space by encouraging interactions between people<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, a city should satisfy the needs of the people, allowing them to establish communities and attain the fundamental need for socialization.

While the term “community” is a vague concept and difficult to define, it is a critical keyword for analysis in various social contexts. Somerville (2016) stated that the core value of communities could be described as a group of people with common attachments, bonds, ties, or commitments<sup>8</sup>. A strong community tends to have a solid attachment to the permanent form of built space. He then introduced the concept of “a beloved community”, in which the free participation of all its members contributes to the community’s overall flourishing, leading to a liberal utopia. These connections are why society exists and develops, and these places are necessary for people to satisfy the need for social interaction and relaxation after work. The author later quotes DeFlippis et al. (2010) that the capitalistic nature of state-sponsored community-building threatens the working-class demographic, as it commodifies the social life within a community, including schools, parks, and other public spaces<sup>9</sup>.

---

6 Lennard and Lennard, “Introduction.”

7 Gehl and Svarre, *How to Study Public Life*.

8 Somerville, *Understanding Community: Politics, Policy and Practice*.

9 DeFilippis, Fisher, and Shragge, *Contesting Community: The Limits and Potential of Local Organizing*.



fig. 2.3 A Vibrant Street Market in an Old Neighborhood in Hong Kong

## Birthday Cake Developments

Since the start of the New Town Development Program, the Hong Kong government has established a mix-used model for private developments in new towns to maximize the density and value of the limited land supply in the city. According to the Hong Kong Building Ordinance, in a mix-used development, the commercial part of the building can utilize 100 percent of site coverage within 15 meters from the ground level. In comparison, the residential part of the building is allowed 60 to 65 percent site coverage<sup>10</sup>. The maximum building height is set according to the Outline Zoning Plan, ranging from 100 to 140 meters. To advocate transit-oriented development, subway stations are often integrated with the anchor shopping mall within the neighborhood. It is then connected to surrounding developments with bridges or landscaped platforms. This type of development consists of a large base with slender residential towers above, which looks like a birthday cake with candles on top, hence the name “birthday cake development”. Note that this only applies to private developments; government-led public housing are planned according to a different set of statutory standard.

In addition, the following uses are always permitted (a) on the lowest three floors of a building, taken to include basements; or (b) in the purpose-designed non-residential portion of an existing building, both excluding floors containing wholly or mainly car parking, loading/unloading bays and/or plant room:
<b>Eating Place</b>
Educational Institution
Institutional Use (not elsewhere specified)
Off-course Betting Centre
Office
<b>Place of Entertainment</b>
Private Club
Public Convenience
Recyclable Collection Centre
School
<b>Shop and Services</b>
Training Centre

fig. 2.4 Permitted uses in +15 m part of a mixed-use development

<sup>10</sup> “Cap. 123F Building (Planning) Regulations.”



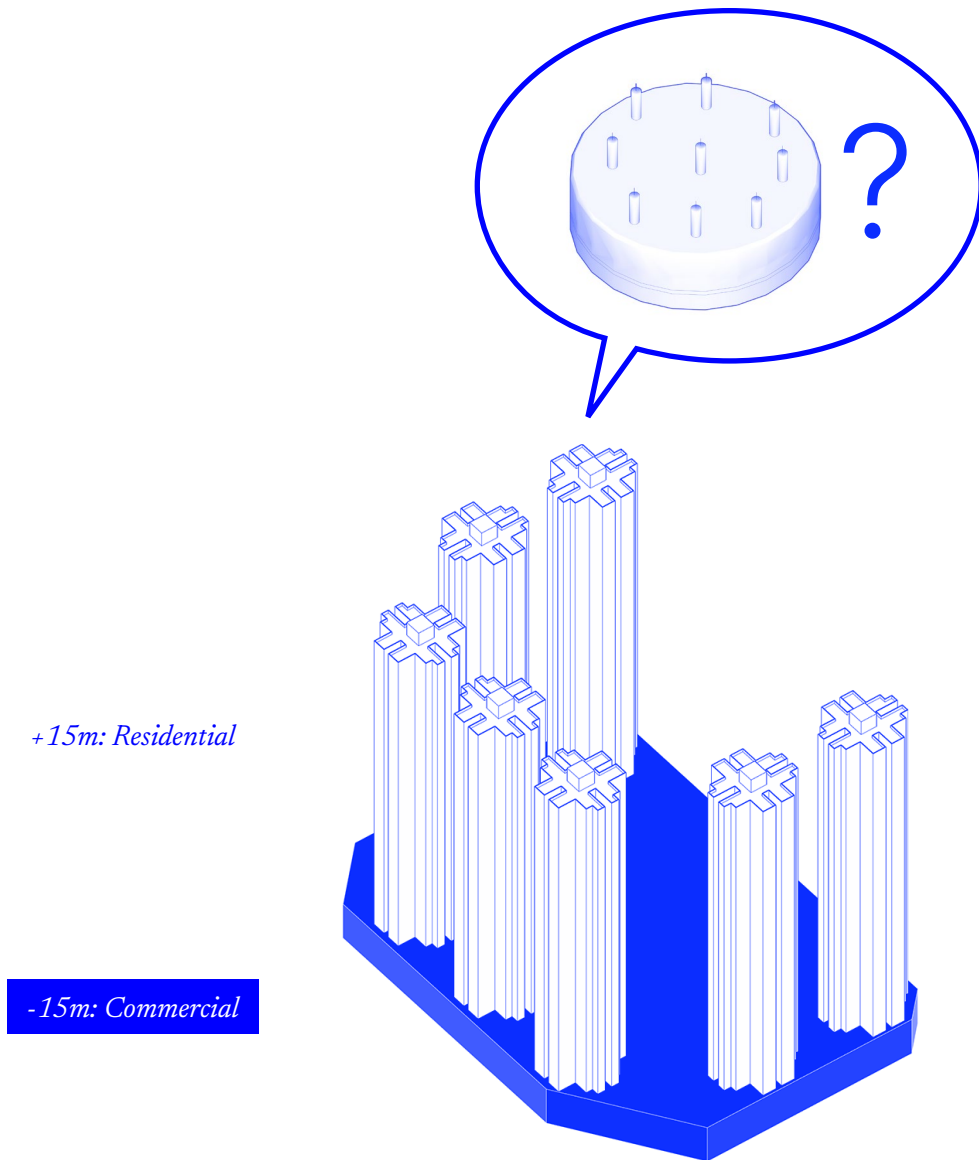


fig. 2.5 Birthday Cake Development



fig. 2.6 An Example of a Birthday Cake Development



fig. 2.7 Outline Zoning Plan of Hang Hau, Hong Kong

## **The City of Sadness**

The planning of new towns in Hong Kong illustrates the complex spatial logic of verticality unique to the city<sup>11</sup>. The traditional streetscape is replaced by airconditioned storefronts in malls, sandwiched between the ground level dedicated for transit hubs and building services and residential buildings above. The elevated shopping malls are interconnected to other public and private housing developments with an extensive pedestrian bridge network, and the ground floor is reserved for vehicular traffic. Such separation blurs the line between the public realm (pedestrian bridges) and the private realm (shopping malls), which both serve as vital pedestrian arteries within the district.

Consequently, even though the new towns are densely populated, the street level is often deserted and scattered with underutilized spaces, such as empty sidewalks and wide vehicular roads. Therefore, pedestrians would prefer to walk through air-conditioned shopping malls rather than the hostile street level, especially in the humid climate in the summer.

The top-down planning approach also implied the absence of cultural heritage in new towns. Many of the new towns were previously inhabited by the indigenous population, where they built walled villages and fish ponds. They were overridden by the generic material city imposed onto the site. Others were reclaimed from the sea and built from scratch. This indicates that new towns often lack the cultural heritage that the more established neighborhoods have. Without a common ground among the people and intangible notions and narratives that wove between people, the sense of dignity and belonging in the community would be lessened.

The application of this urban planning method has been proven catastrophic. Tin Shui Wai, named “the City of Sadness”, has been recognized as a sterile residential area with no unique identity. The district’s planning preferred shopping malls over neighborhood shops on the streets,

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11 Solomon, “Hong Kong – Aformal Urbanism.”

which reduced street-level activities<sup>12</sup>. The town also lacked adequate recreational facilities, such as community centers and parks, for the large population in public housing, discouraging face-to-face interaction between local residents. Combined with the lack of public resources, people in need of support were not considered, resulting in cases of family tragedies.

All in all, the uncanniness of new towns in Hong Kong is caused by the spatial complexity driven by planning that favors capitalistic development and the absence of communal common ground due to the lack of indigenous cultures. Therefore, in a place as generic as the new towns in Hong Kong, and as inhumane as the capitalistic-dominated urban fabric, there is no unique identity, and the sense of community would be lost. These places can be classified as non-places, where human beings are treated as anonymous objects and of minimal importance to be referred to as “places”<sup>13</sup>.

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12 Chui et al., “A Study on Tin Shui Wai New Town.”

13 Auge, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*.



fig. 2.8 An Intersection in Tin Shui Wai



fig. 2.9 A Pedestrian Bridge in Tin Shui Wai



fig. 2.10 A Shopping Mall in Tin Shui Wai



fig. 2.11 A Covered Walkway in Tin Shui Wai

## The Social Unrest and the Pandemic

The public realm in Hong Kong has been in jeopardy following the social unrest in 2019. The escalating conflict between the protesters and the law enforcement led to severe violence in many parts of the city, including the residential new towns. Places that the locals took for granted, such as shopping malls, roads, and pedestrian bridges, became sites for political expressions and conflicts. In response, metal barriers, walls, and gates were installed in numerous public spaces in the name of crowd control. These events resulted in severe damage and injuries, as well as injected fear into everyone in the city when they were on the streets.



fig. 2.12 Police responding to a protest in East Point Mall, Hang Hau





*fig. 2.13 Walls erected around the campus of the City University of Hong Kong (Before and After)*



*fig. 2.14 Metal barriers protecting the glass balustrate in New Town Mall, Sha Tin*

The pandemic has created an unfortunate coincidence that amplifies the adverse effects on the public realm. The government has enacted strict covid-zero rules policies, including the closure of recreational facilities like playgrounds and hiking trails, and enforcing a 2-people gathering limit. Compulsory testing mandates that call for community-wide lockdowns are daily occurrences, resulting in long lines in front of testing centers. Though the impact of the pandemic is universal worldwide, the imposed control on the public to attain covid-zero is unprecedented.

While this thesis is not intended to provoke any political discourse, it is critical to acknowledge the influence to the city's public realm. The following section will look beyond the seemingly bleak surface and search for humane moments driven by the local community.



fig. 2.15 Police and government personnels announcing the two-people limit for gatherings to domestic helpers



fig. 2.16 A blocked children's playground and long lines leading to a mandatory testing site in Hang Hau



fig. 2.17 Restaurants are using partitions to maintain the social distance between tables



## Chapter 2

# The Playfulness

*(n.) the quality of being light-hearted or full of fun. <sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> “Playfulness.”



*fig. 3.1 Park 'n' Play by JAJA Architects*





*fig. 3.2 Children playing cricket in a London street*



## Happiness and Play

*“Even in its simplest forms on the animal level, play is more than a mere physiological phenomenon or a psychological reflex, “*

*- Huizinga (1949)*

To address the lack of community common ground and the uncanniness of the new towns in Hong Kong, a base narrative shall be proposed to inject identity into these sterile and generic sites. Theories and precedents directed the research focus on making the built space less boring, and eventually, bringing happiness to the people. Several pieces of literature indicate that “happiness” and “play” are inseparable<sup>1</sup>. To understand how “happiness” came to be, one should first understand the concept of “play”.

According to Huizinga (1949), play is a critical function to attain basic human needs<sup>2</sup>. Rather than merely a physical or biological activity, it implies the fundamental requirements of life and signifies meanings that go beyond the actions of “playing”. The author suggested that play involves the process of making sense of the playing, including understanding the goal, rules, and equipment. This process forms the fundamental essence of play. He then expressed that play is freedom as no one is obliged to play. It is a realm for players to remove themselves from the chaotic “real” life, and experience a temporary state of “limited perfection” where order is found. Note that Huizinga did not associate “play” exclusively with children, but it is also necessary for adults when it is done at leisure and for the need for enjoyment.

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1 Fink, Saine, and Saine, “The Oasis of Happiness: Toward an Ontology of Play.”

2 Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*.

### The Third Place – “Play” in the Context of Cities

Another significant aspect of this thesis is to identify opportunities to translate the narration of play into urban gestures and architectural interventions, which is rather challenging in the context of Hong Kong’s new towns due to their density. The concept of “third place” helps identify where these narratives are needed the most. According to Oldenburg (2013), “third place” is a place that is not a home (first place) nor a workplace (second place)<sup>3</sup>. It is a type of public space that accommodates conversations between neighbors, or in Oldenburg’s words, “the core settings of informal public life.” These places are a necessity for people to satisfy the needs for social interactions and relaxation after work.

As described by the earlier anecdote, the journey from the local transit hub to the living places in new towns is currently dominated by artificial streetscapes in the form of shopping malls and pedestrian bridges. This strips away the humane side of a city by withdrawing possibilities for unexpected encounters between people. However, the underutilized street level “non-places” present unique opportunities to realize the concept of the third place.

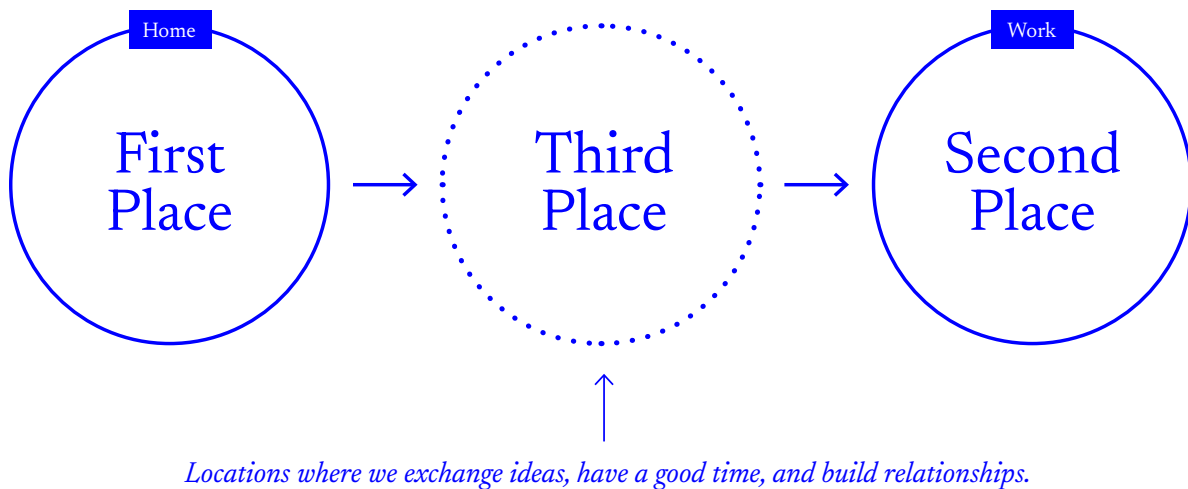


fig. 3.3 Definition of the Third Place

<sup>3</sup> Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place*.

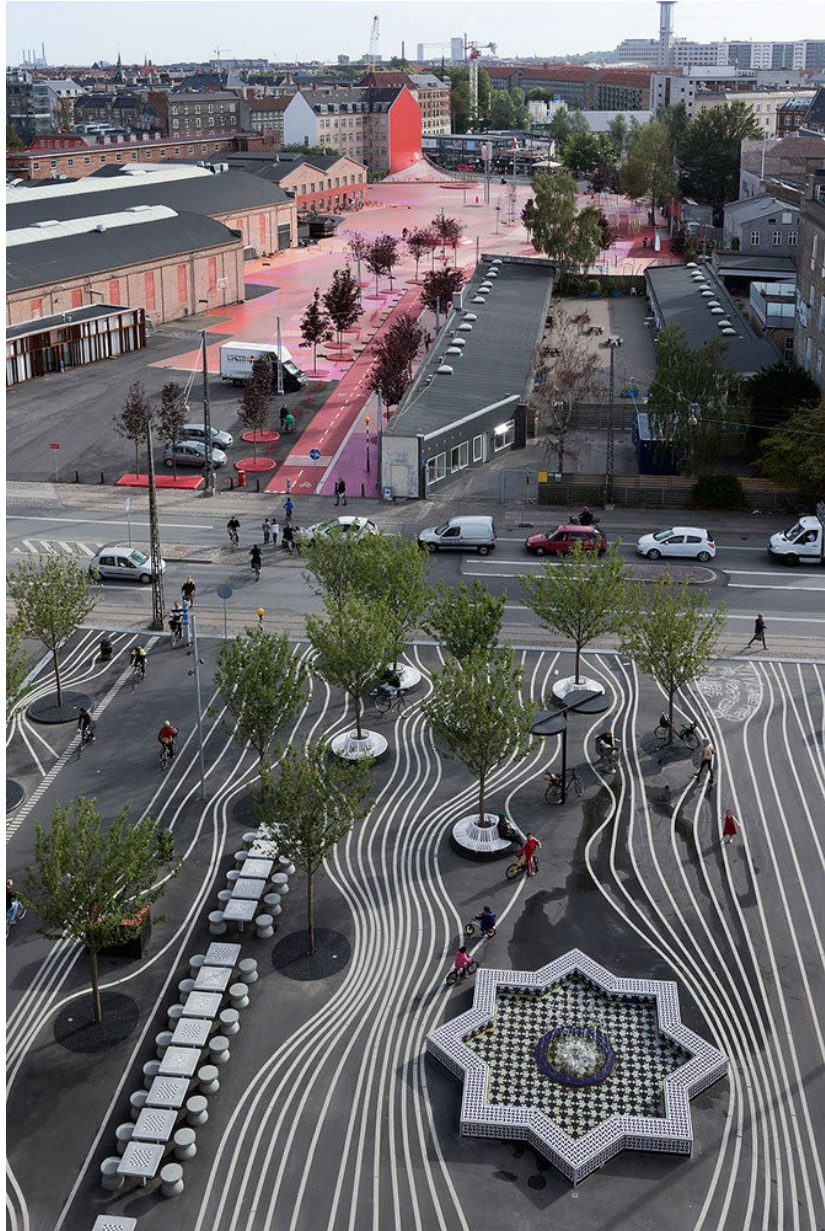


fig. 3.4 Superkilen by Big Architects

Architects and urban planners have strived to create happiness in cities by establishing third places through the concept of play in many forms. The first is to define a city as a giant playground. In Copenhagen, the Superkilen is an urban space converted from a vehicular road, forming a linear park exhibiting artifacts representing the diverse community within the neighborhood<sup>4</sup>. Playground and fitness facilities are scattered around the space, which becomes part of the last mile for the locals living around the area. In another case, Aldo van Eyck transformed underused urban spaces in Amsterdam, such as wide junctions and back alleyways, into playgrounds consisting of climbing frames, jumping stones, and sandpits<sup>5</sup>. These playgrounds are not demarcated with fences, creating part of the urban fabric of the city.

Another way architects have experimented with this concept is through urban acupuncture, which is revitalizing underutilized spaces at a local level through feasible architectural interventions<sup>6</sup>. Street Moves is an initiative in Sweden to transform street parking spaces into parklets using a standardized kit of furniture<sup>7</sup>. The parklets redefine vehicular spaces to third places for the hyper-local community that respond to their needs, namely benches, bicycle parking, and greenery. These kinds of architectural interventions have yet to be studied in cities like Hong Kong with complex and dense urban contexts.

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4 “Superkilen / Topotek 1 + BIG Architects + Superflex | ArchDaily.”

5 Withagen and Caljouw, “Aldo van Eyck’s Playgrounds: Aesthetics, Affordances, and Creativity.”

6 Andreea Cutieru, “Urban Acupuncture: Regenerating Public Space Through Hyper-Local Interventions.”

7 Feargus O’Sullivan, “A Tiny Twist on Street Design: The One-Minute City - Bloomberg.”



fig. 3.5 Sweden Street Move



fig. 3.6 Sweden Street Move

## Space Appropriation of the Public Realm in Hong Kong

Hong Kong is often associated with thriving and lively streets outside of new towns. In neighborhoods that predate the new town development scheme, streets are the places for all kinds of commercial activities, as people appropriate the space in front of the storefronts. One can observe restaurants placing tables on alleyways to increase capacity, patrons devouring snacks in front of the food stall, and shoppers browsing products from a shop right on the sidewalk. Such observations correlate to the social pattern in Beijing, where the continuous storefronts create urban life along the linear streets and around nodal areas<sup>8</sup>. These activities can only be developed organically and without interference from the state, leading to a public realm that satisfies the social, economic, and cultural considerations of the city.

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<sup>8</sup> Zhu, *Chinese Spatial Strategies*.



fig. 3.7 *Ad-hoc Gathering Places on a Pedestrian Bridge*



fig. 3.8 *Busking on a Pedestrian Bridge*



*fig. 3.9 Dining Tables on Sidewalk in a restaurant*



*fig. 3.10 Shops Placing Flowers on Street in a Flower Market*

Streets in Hong Kong are also sites for protest and political expressions. Before the social unrest in 2019, major artery roads leading to the government headquarters were regularly closed from traffic for peaceful demonstrations. Parties with different political views could participate with minimum restrictions from the government. The Umbrella Movement in 2014 represented the pinnacle of space appropriation through political movement. During the 3-month occupation, protesters populated a highway in the heart of the city with tents, graffiti, and art installations<sup>9</sup>. They set up supporting functions to keep the site well run, such as logistic centers, classrooms, and workshops. Essentially, the protesters created programs that would dynamically respond to the community's needs, resulting in a bottom-up curated public realm.

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9 Barber, "Hong Kong Protests: Anarchism in Action."



fig. 3.11 A Pop-up Art Workshop during the Umbrella Movement



fig. 3.12 A Shower Stall during the Umbrella Movement





fig. 3.13 The July 1st March in 2019



fig. 3.14 An Art Installation during the Umbrella Movement

As one can see, under the right circumstances, people in Hong Kong are willing to take ownership of the city through creatively appropriating spaces within their neighborhoods. Inspired by these place-making strategies, the following diagrams visualize the possibilities for user-generated urbanism in the seemingly sterile new towns in Hong Kong.

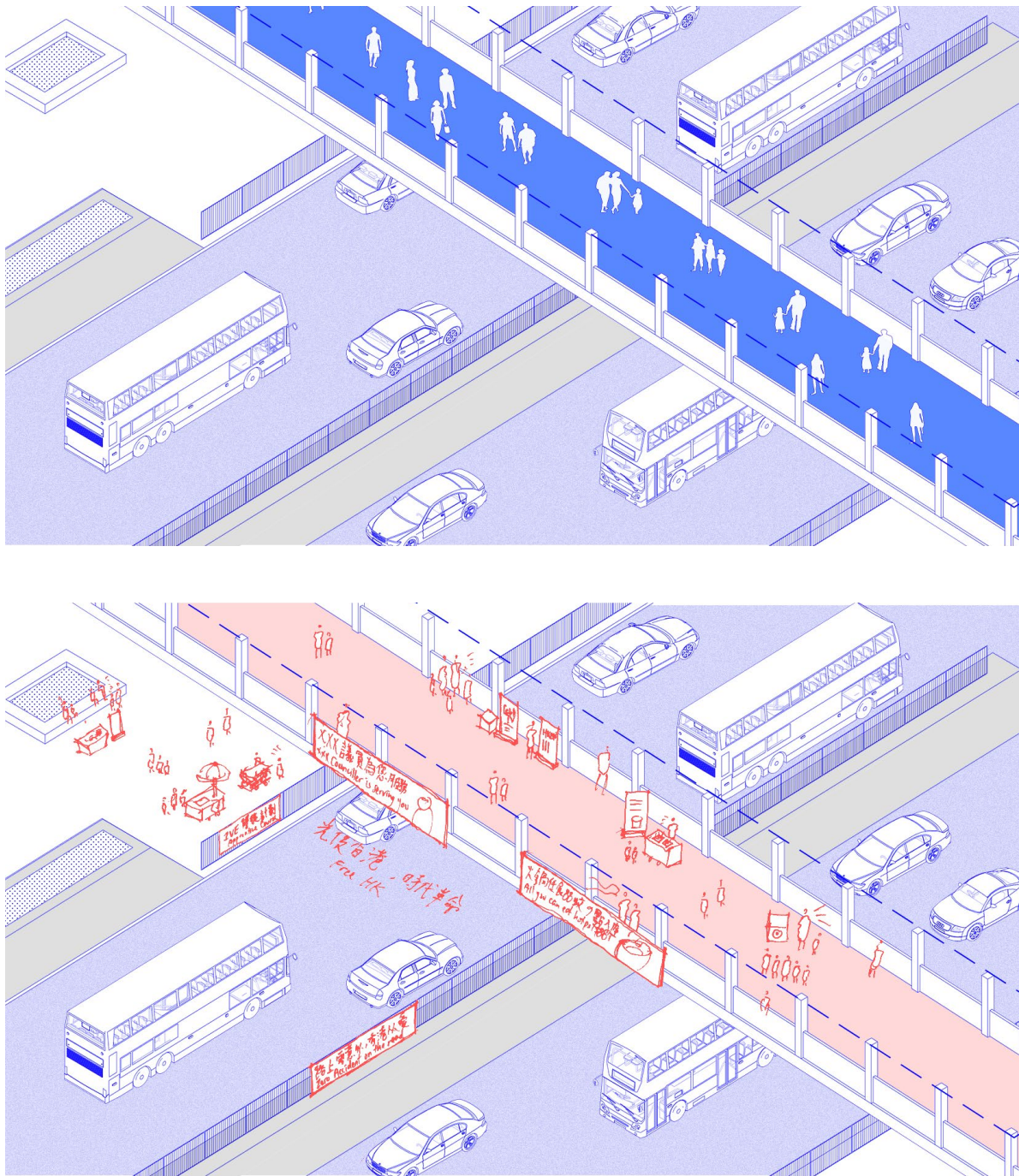
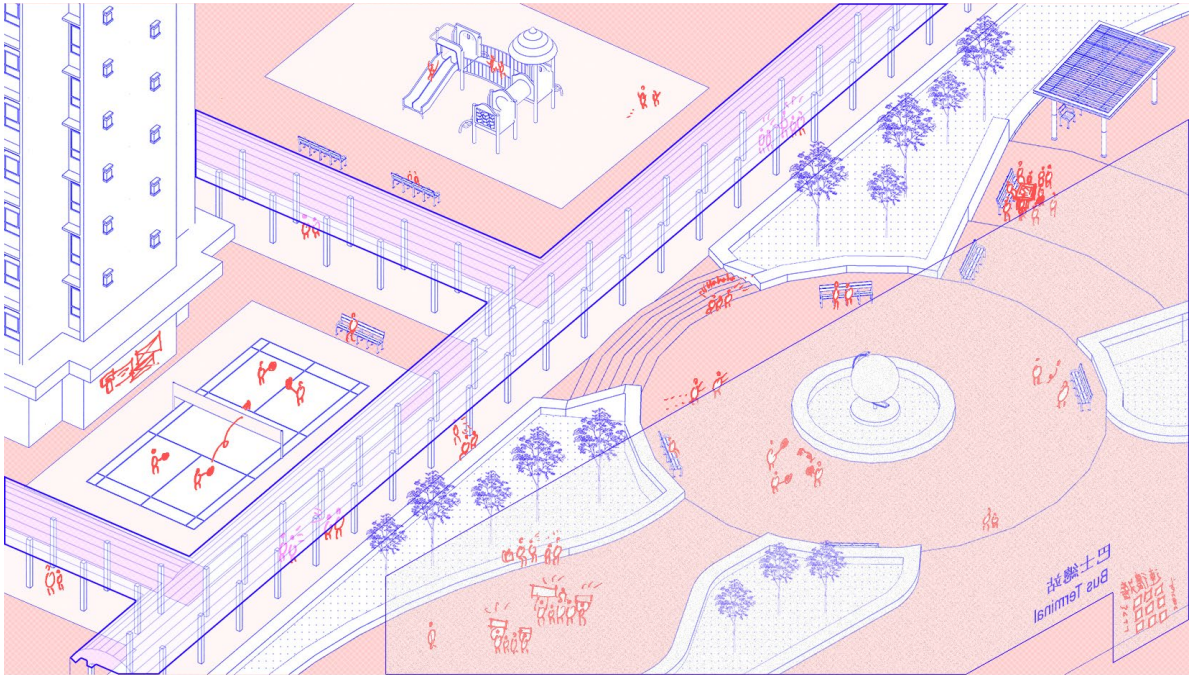
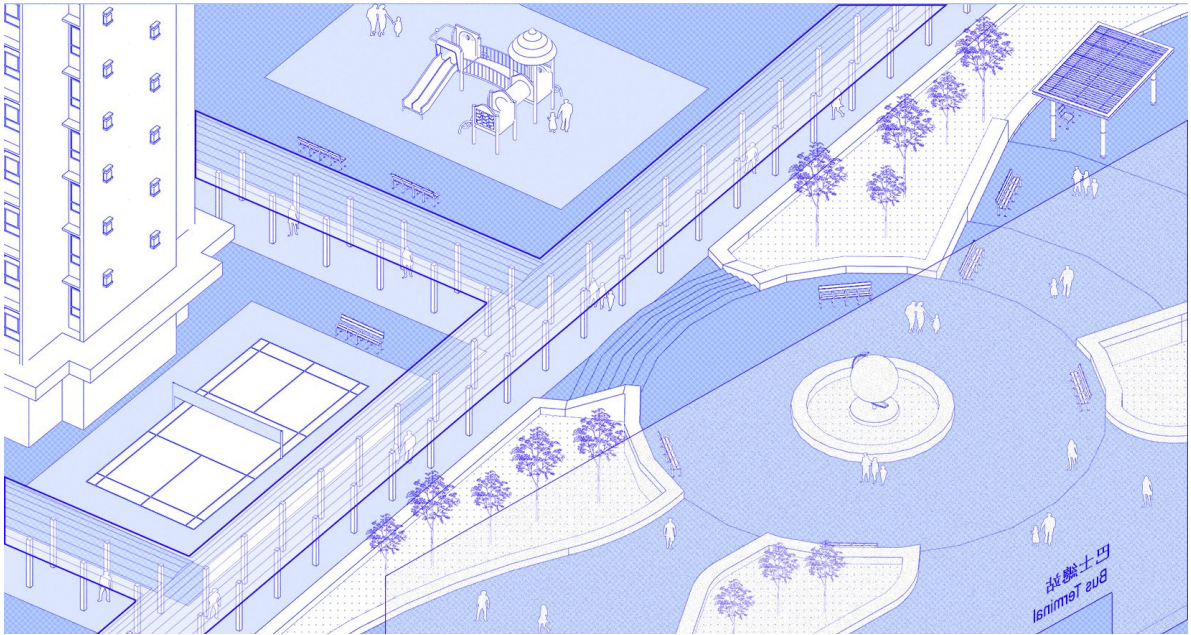


fig. 3.15 Community Space Appropriation in Non-places



## Cases of Pedestrianization

Mong Kok is one of the most popular shopping and entertainment destinations in Hong Kong for both locals and tourists. With 130,000 people per square kilometer, it was once referred to as the densest neighborhood in the world as of 2011<sup>10</sup>. To relieve the busiest stretch of the shopping district, the government had pedestrianized Sai Yeung Choi Street South by closing traffic off daytime daily in 2000<sup>11</sup>. This measure had proven extremely popular, as it generated extra foot traffic, and created a vibrant public realm, drawing street performances, public speaking, and more.<sup>12</sup>.

However, residents and local businesses had raised complaints against the street performances. With no laws regulating street performances, people from different backgrounds could participate, and many of them were criticized for being overly loud and had no artistic merit, mainly “off-key karaoke singers” who made use of the busking scene to make money<sup>13</sup>. In addition, the street performers often needed to compete for patrons’ attention by being louder than their counterparts. The noise issue gained widespread public discussion when a cosmetic shop installed a noise barrier in front of their storefront to reduce the noise in the shop<sup>14</sup>.

The constant noise from the street performers caused serious disruption to the daily lives of the residents and in some cases, caused physical and psychological impacts, forcing the government to remove the pedestrian zone along Sai Yeung Choi Street South in 2018<sup>15</sup>. Traffic once again dominated the street after 28 years, forcing the pedestrians to cram onto the narrow sidewalks.

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10 Keegan, “This Neighbourhood Is the Most Densely Populated Place on Earth.”

11 Transport Department, “Pedestrian Schemes for Mong Kok.”

12 Cheung, “From Buskers to Off-Key Karaoke Singers: The Public Space Debate at the Heart of Mong Kok’s Pedestrian Zone.”

13 Cheung.

14 Cheng, “Mong Kok Shop Installs Noise Barrier to Block Loud Music from Pedestrian Zone.”

15 Keegan, “Don’t Walk This Way: Why Hong Kong Reopened a Pedestrian Street to Cars.”

On the other hand, the case in Chater Road, Central has a more successful fate in pedestrianization. With 374,000 foreign domestic helpers, or 5% of the total population in Hong Kong<sup>16</sup>, they have appropriated many public spaces as their gathering places on every Sunday and public holidays. Crowds of foreign domestic helpers replace the busy car-centric street of Charter Road in Central<sup>17</sup>. They can be seen sitting barefoot in makeshift partitions made of cardboard, sharing food, playing music, and even dancing along with the rhythm. The community is so thriving that the area is named “Little Manila” on Sundays.

On the surface, it may seem like a stark conflict with the place for gathering surrounded by luxury brand storefronts, 5-star hotels, and office buildings. However, by looking deeper, there are shops serving their targeted demographics in a nearby shopping mall, including restaurants, couriers, and money exchanges. Some Hong Kong locals who collect cardboard boxes for a living can be seen pushing their carts and offering the cardboard to the gathering crowds<sup>18</sup>. Furthermore, there is a mutual respect between cultures, as the gathering crowds leave ample circulation space on sidewalks, and the pedestrians understand the need for them to relax on holidays. Moreover, the site is in the central business district of the city, which with the absence of office workers, should be deserted on non-working days, preventing clashes between different user groups. Therefore, the success of the Chater Road pedestrianization is due to a strong sense of community and identity curated by the sophisticated network of supporting programming and mutual respect.

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16 Immigration Department, “Statistics on the Number of Foreign Domestic Helpers in Hong Kong.”

17 Moss, “‘That One Day Is All You Have’: How Hong Kong’s Domestic Workers Seized Sunday.”

18 Kwok, “Little Manila: An Unlikely Crowd of Resistance in Hong Kong.”

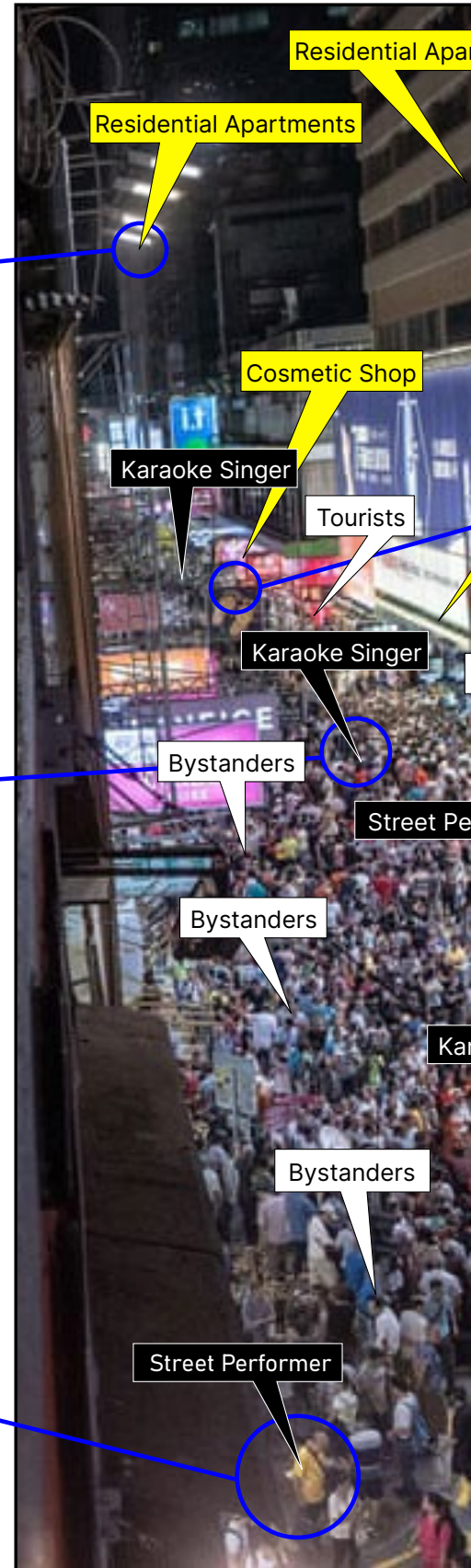
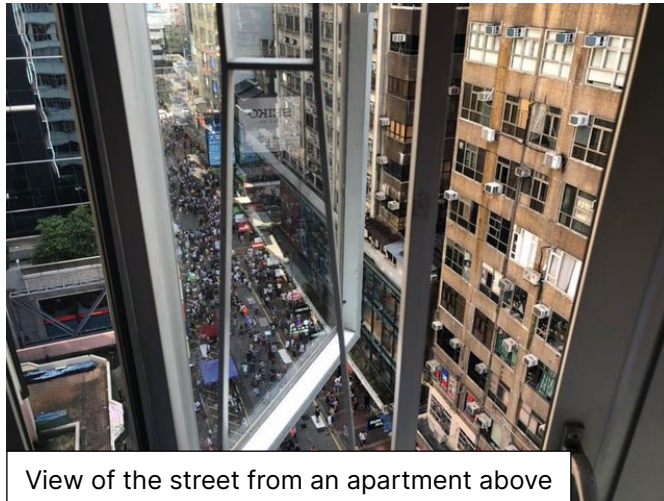


fig. 3.16 Street Activities Mapping at Mong Kok

rtments

Jewellery Shop

Electronic Store

Tourists

rformer

Bystanders

raoke Singer

Bystanders

Bystanders

Tourists



Noise barrier installed by a cosmetic shop



Interactions between a singer and crowds



Large crowds gathered around a singer



fig. 3.17 Street Activities Mapping at Central







## Chapter 3

# The Site



fig. 4.1 *Neighborhoods in Tseung Kwan O New Town*



## Hang Hau, Tseung Kwan O – The City Without Streets

Hang Hau is one of the neighborhoods within the larger Tseung Kwan O new town, which forms part of the Sai Kung Administrative District. The Chinese name (坑口) literal meaning is the mouth of the water channel, referring to the river leading to the sea within proximity. The origin of Hang Hau started in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when an agricultural and fishing village was settled around the area, followed by four indigenous villages being established after that. In the 60s, industrial activities related to shipbuilding and gas production, which required direct marine access, flourished in Tseung Kwan O<sup>1</sup>. Those industrial activities gradually relocated in 1982 to make way for the redevelopment of Tseung Kwan O into a new town.

The redevelopment plan involved large-scale land reclamation on Tseung Kwan O Bay. Aiming for functionally self-containing, the master plan provides shopping facilities in the town center of Tseung Kwan O and other district centers, including Hang Hau. Due to the proximity from urban centers, density in Tseung Kwan O's residential developments is higher than in other new towns<sup>2</sup>. Such density is reflected in the abundance of "birthday cake developments" throughout all of its neighborhoods, and shopping malls are more deeply incorporated into their urban landscape. Consequently, Tseung Kwan O is named "the City without Streets", as locals are more familiar with the layout of shopping malls than street names<sup>3</sup>.

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1 Planning Department, "Tseung Kwan O: Planning for Liveable New Towns."

2 Planning Department.

3 Wing Lam, "在無街之城上街 天橋貫穿 說不出的商場名字 (Strolling along the City without Streets - Intercepting Bridges, Shopping Malls with Unfamiliar Names)."

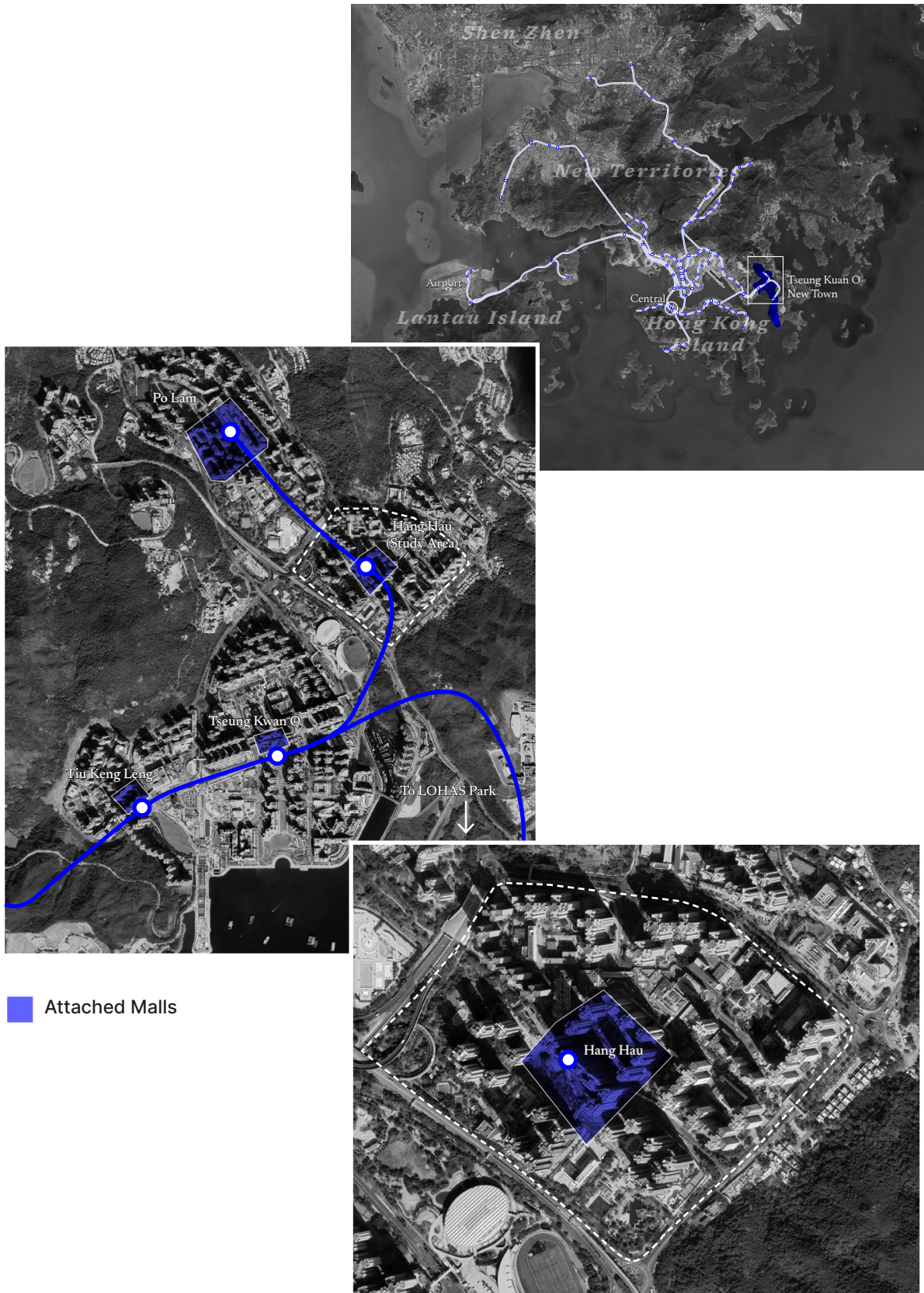


fig. 4.2 Tseung Kwan O New Town Subway Stations and the Attached Malls



*fig. 4.3 Coastline of Tseung Kwan O Before and After (Red indicating reclaimed area)*

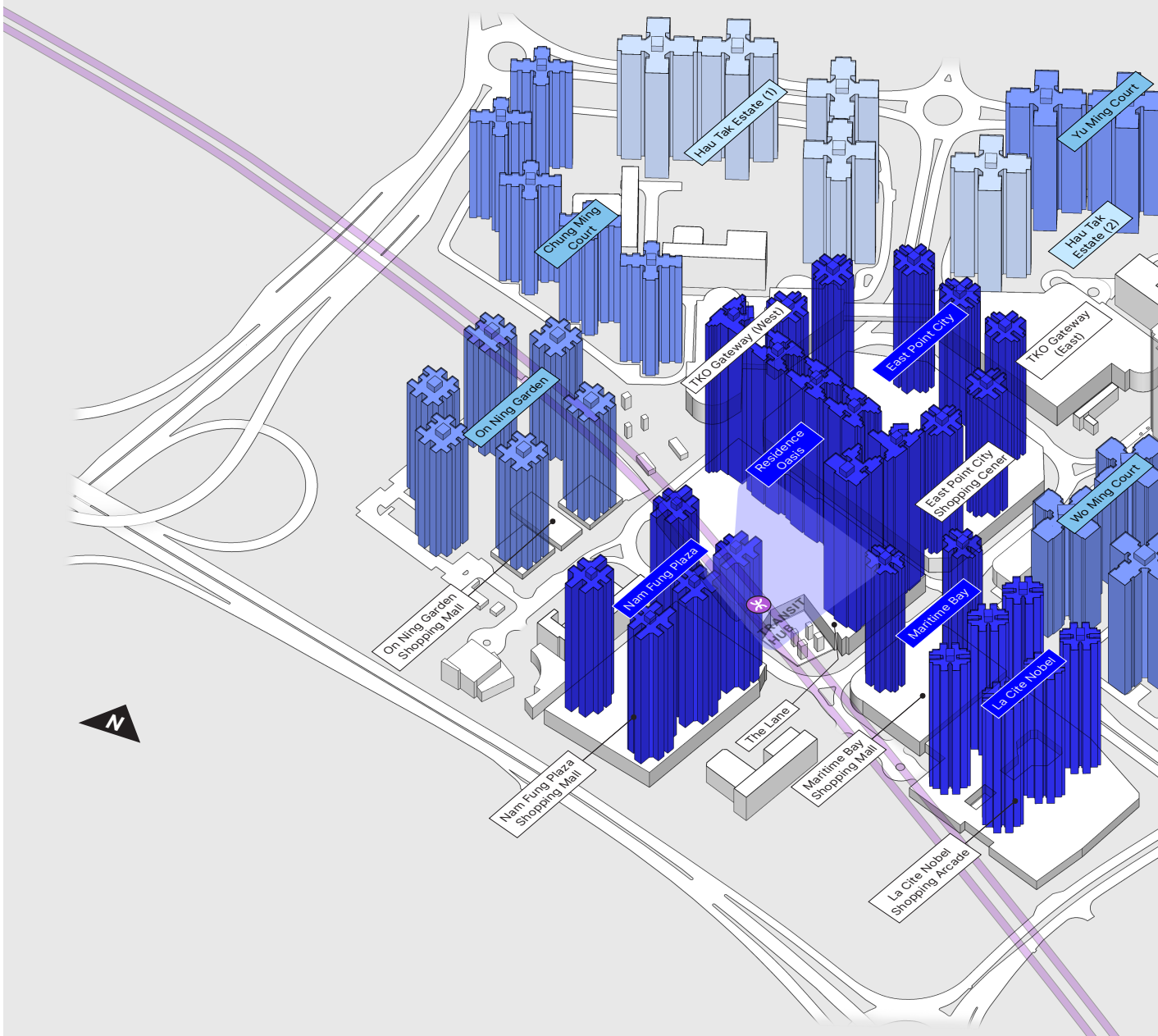


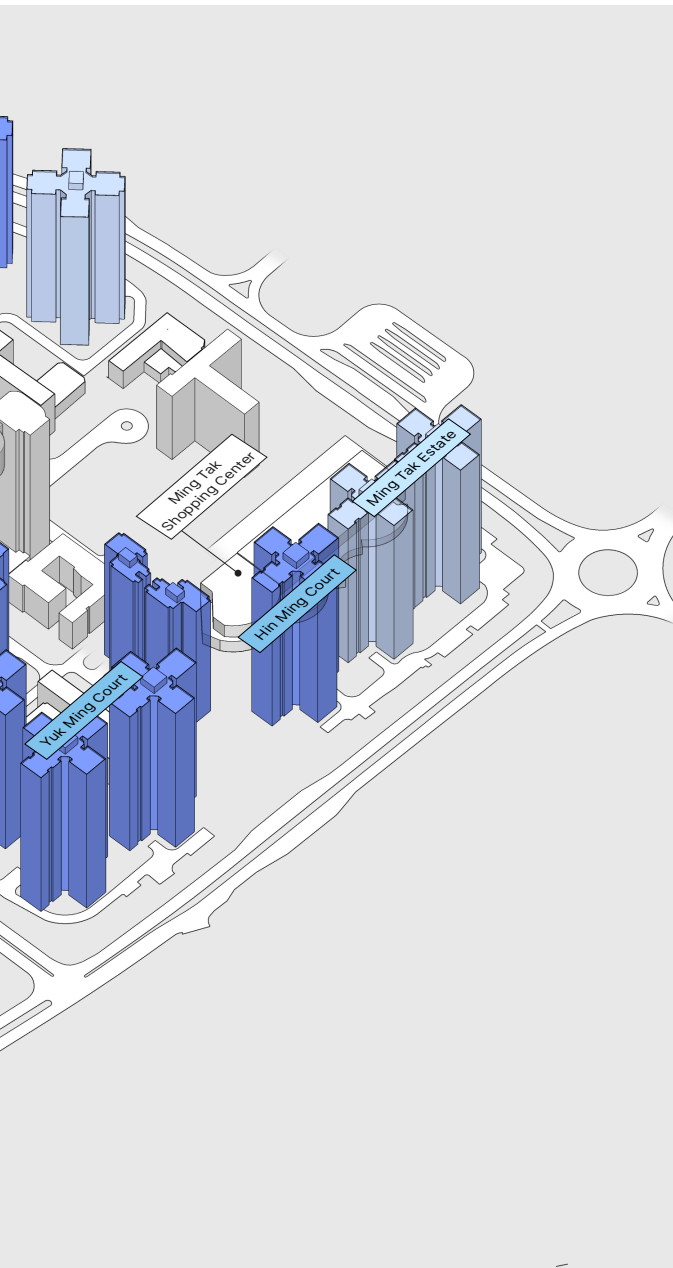


*fig. 4.4 Shipyards at Tseung Kwan O, 1977*



*fig. 4.5 Tseung Kwan O New Town Under Development*





- Shopping Mall
- Private Development
- Home Ownership Scheme Estate (HOS)
- Public Estate

*fig. 4.6 Residential Development and Shopping Malls*

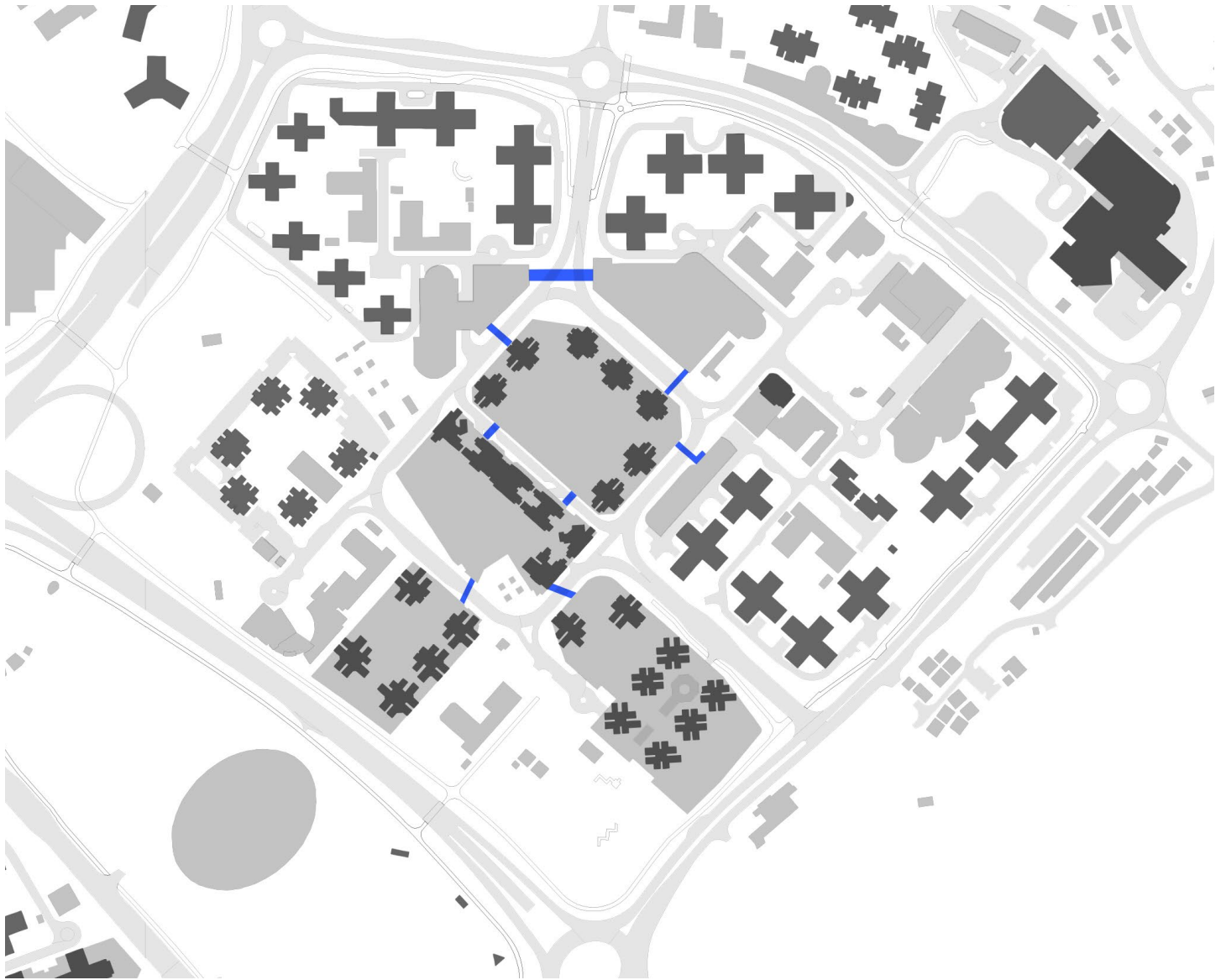


fig. 4.7 *Figure Ground of Hang Hau*

- Below 15 m & Stand-alone buildings
- Above 15 m Residential Towers
- Pedestrian Bridges

Development	Population	Median Age	% 15/under age	% 65/up age	Median Household Income (CAD)
<b>Private Development</b>					
East Point City	7259	42	17%	13%	106560
Residence Oasis	6003	40	17%	9%	100224
Nam Fung Plaza	5182	42	16%	15%	88320
Maritime Bay	1889	42	12%	11%	86400
La Cite Noble	6359	41	17%	9%	94080
<b>Private Overall</b>	<b>26692</b>	<b>41.3</b>	<b>16.5%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>97194</b>
<b>HOS (House Ownership Scheme)</b>					
On Ning Garden	6955	49	8%	21%	53760
Chung Ming Court	4938	50	7%	21%	54720
Yu Ming Court	3630	45	13%	20%	58176
Wo Ming Court	5020	47	7%	16%	62400
Yuk Ming Court	5675	48	10%	13%	55680
Hin Ming Court	1832	49	9%	15%	38400
<b>HOS Overall</b>	<b>28050</b>	<b>48.1</b>	<b>8.8%</b>	<b>18.0%</b>	<b>55432</b>
<b>Public Estate</b>					
Hau Tak Estate (I)	8989	47	7%	20%	43776
Hau Tak Estate (II)	3945	45	7%	26%	32160
Ming Tak Estate	4467	47	10%	17%	38400
<b>Public Overall</b>	<b>17401</b>	<b>46.5</b>	<b>7.8%</b>	<b>20.6%</b>	<b>39762</b>
<b>Within Study Area</b>	<b>72143</b>	<b>45.2</b>	<b>11.4%</b>	<b>16.2%</b>	<b>67104</b>
<b>Hong Kong</b>	<b>7336585</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>11.3%</b>	<b>15.9%</b>	<b>47789</b>

fig. 4.8 2016 Population By-census Statistics within the Study Area

- Commercial Retail
- Community Retail
- Transit
- Private Amenity
- Parking
- Back of House

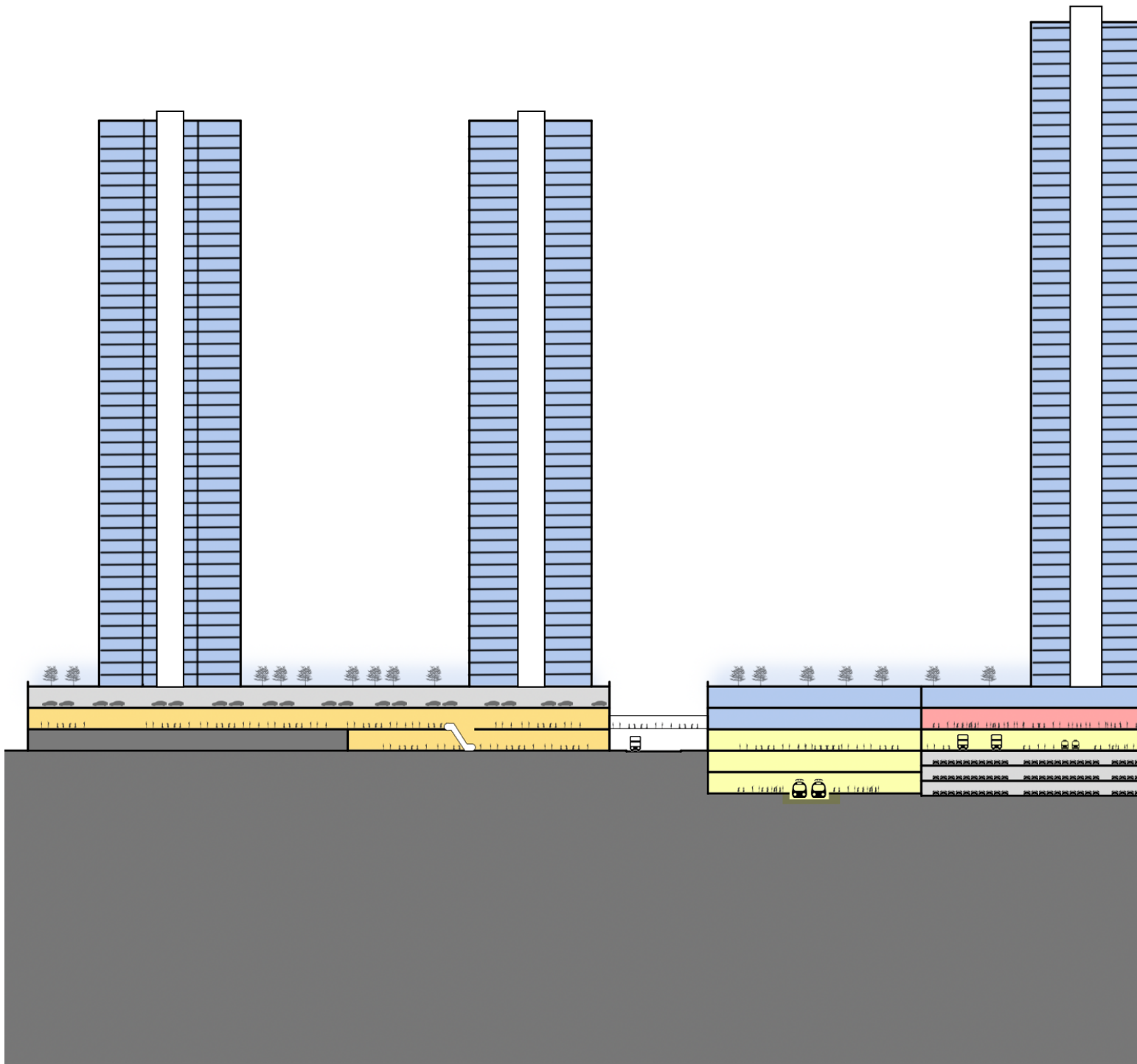
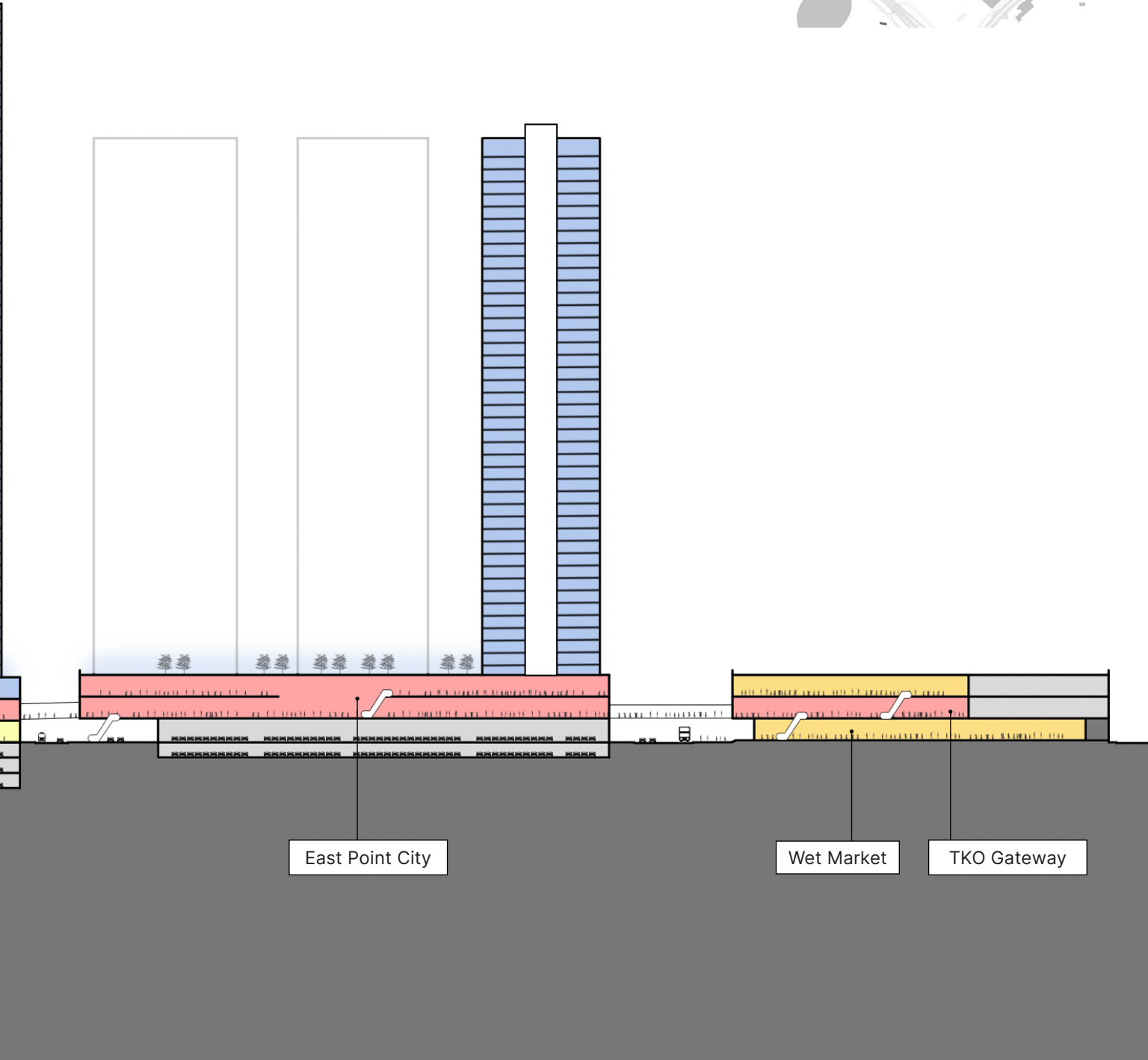
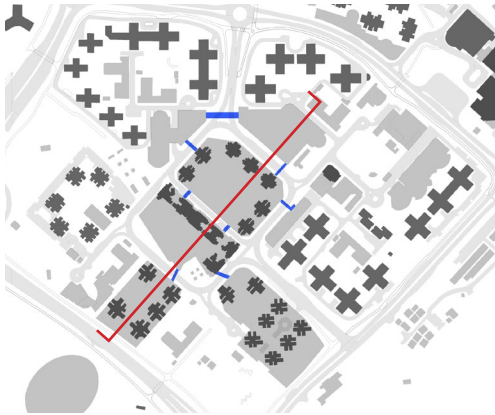
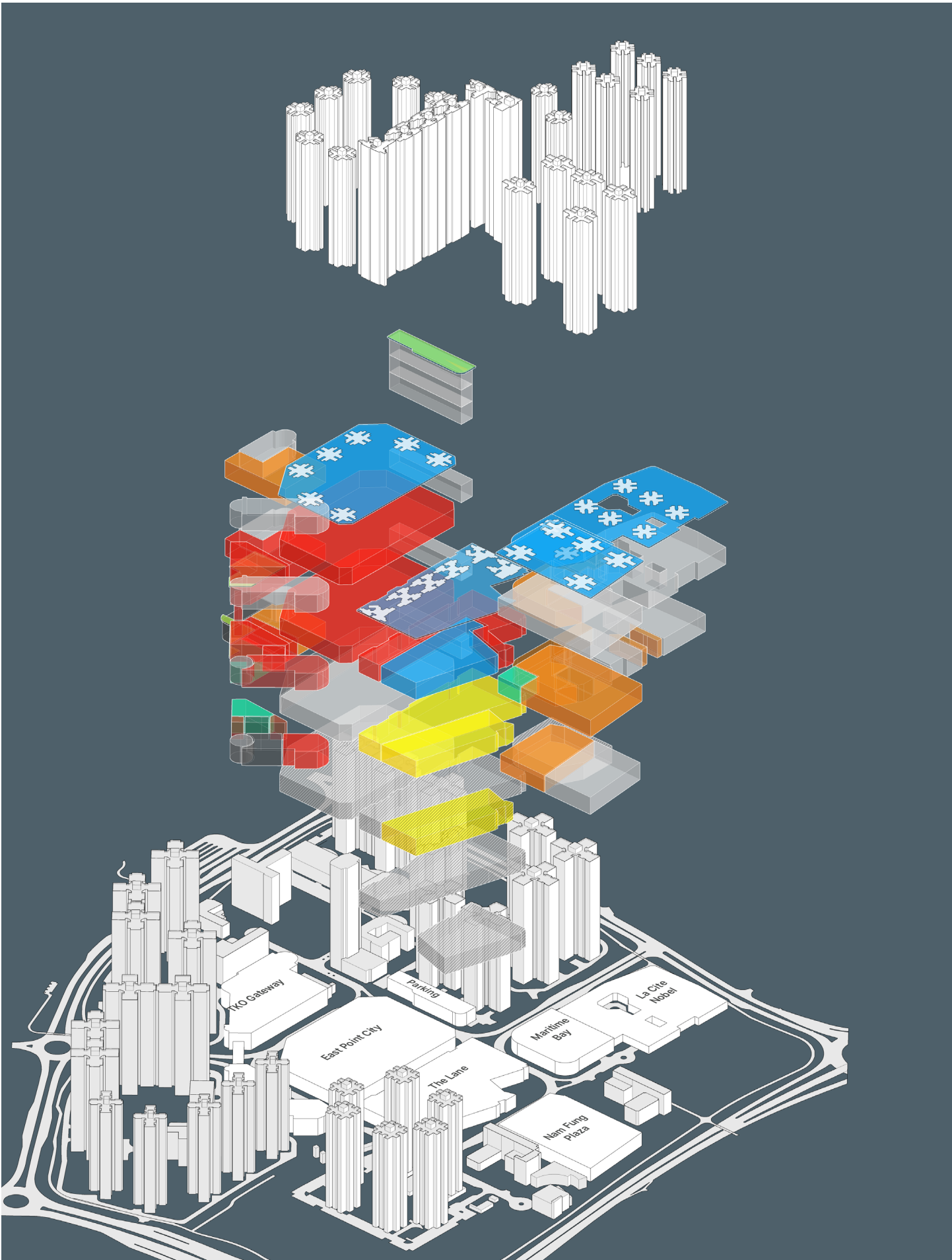











fig. 4.9 Program Site Section

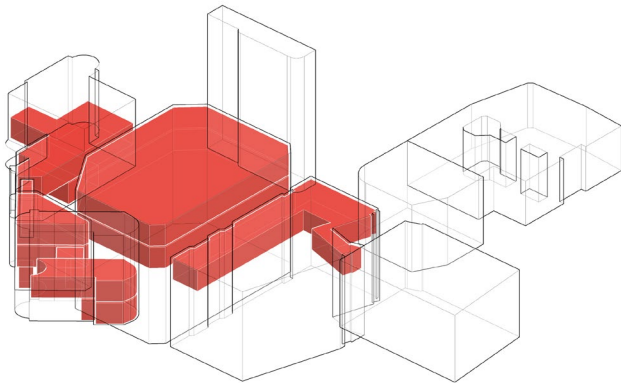






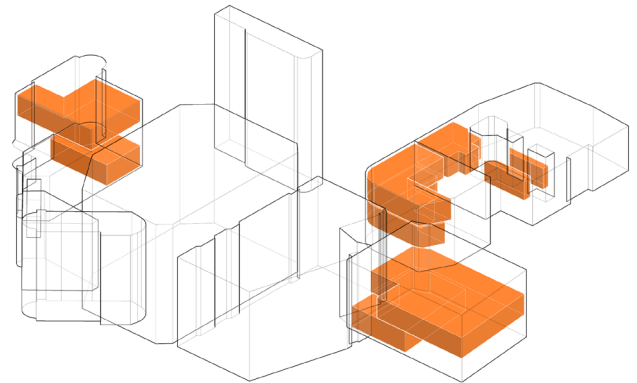
-  Commercial Retail
-  Community Retail
-  Kindergarten
-  Transit
-  Private Amenity
-  Green Podium
-  Parking
-  Back of House
-  Underground Space

*fig. 4.10 Exploded Program Axometric*



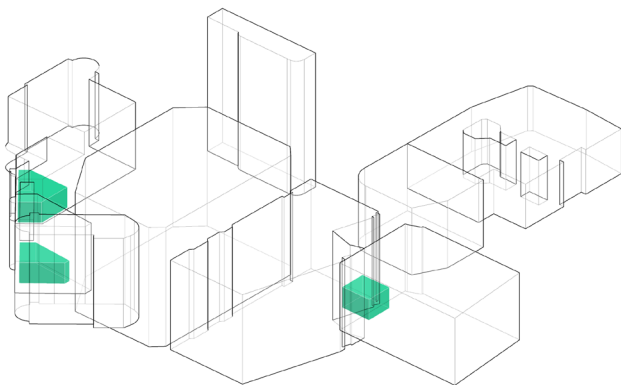
**Commercial Retail**

Consumer-oriented shopping malls with chain restaurants, anchor stores, high-end supermarkets, etc.



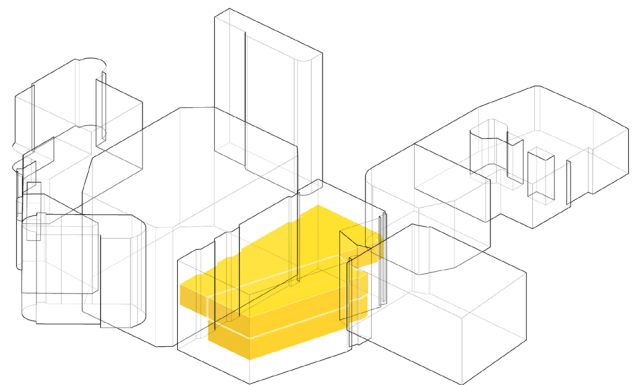
**Community Retail**

Shopping malls with community-facing programs - individual shops and restaurants, tutoring centers, pharmacies, etc.



**Kindergarten**

Separated entrances from shopping malls



**Transit**

Bus terminal and Subway station

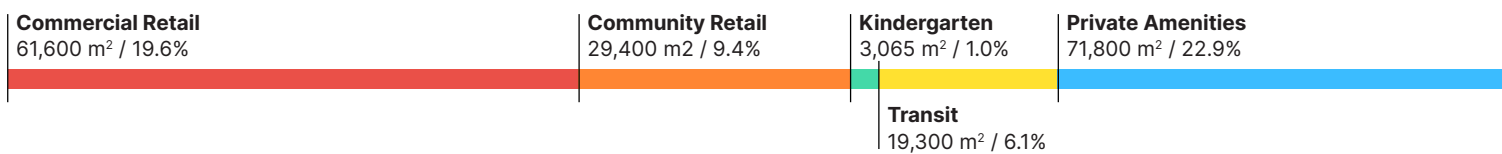
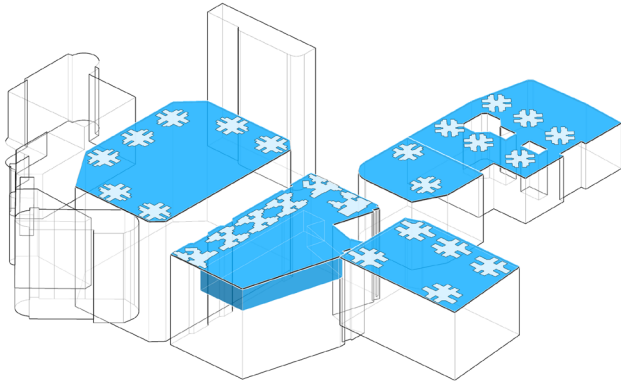
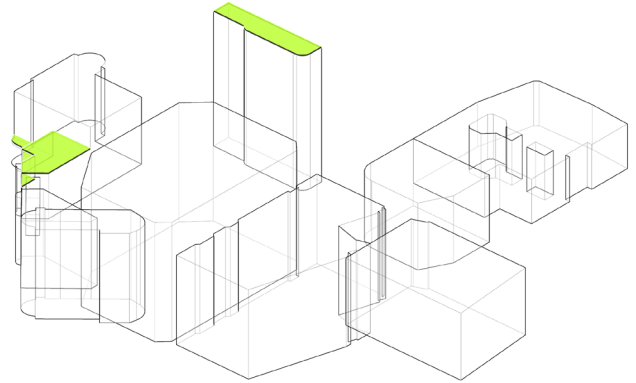


fig. 4.11 Program Axometric



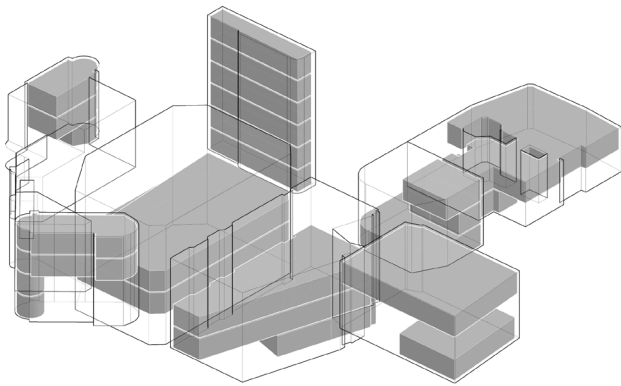
**Private Amenities + Podium Garden**

Podium garden and recreational activities for private condominiums above, no public access



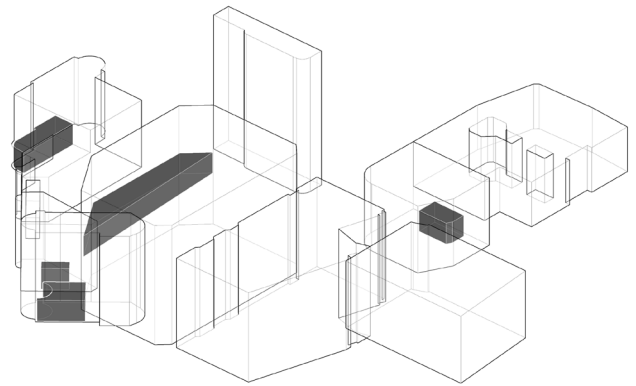
**Green Roof**

Public accessible podium garden



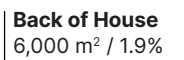
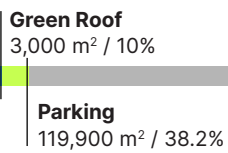
**Parking**

Parking attached to shopping malls and residential developments



**Back of House**

Loading bay and building service, only street-facing back of house are highlighted



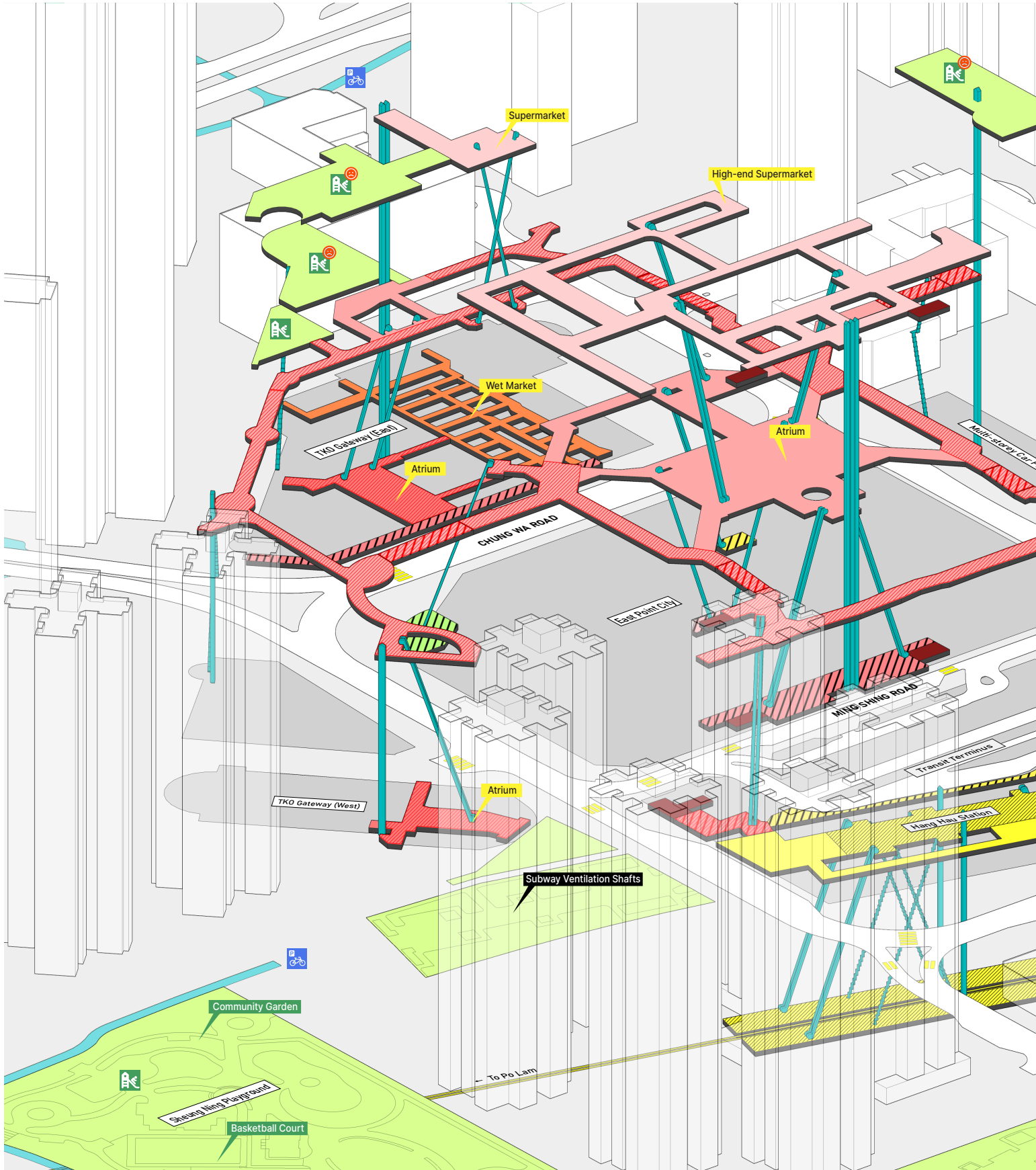
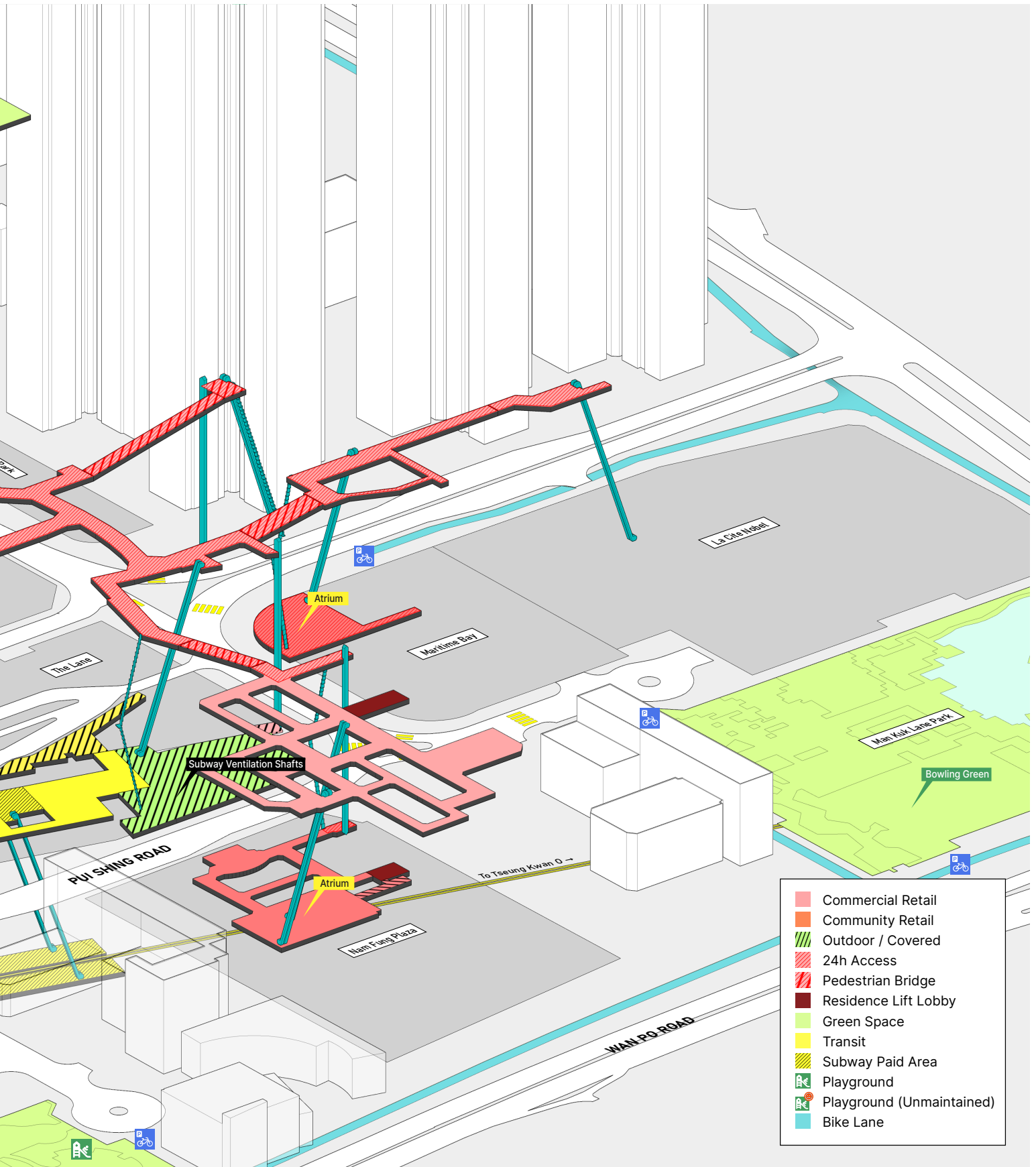


fig. 4.12 Hang Hau Pedway System Map



- Commercial Retail
- Community Retail
- Outdoor / Covered
- 24h Access
- Pedestrian Bridge
- Residence Lift Lobby
- Green Space
- Transit
- Subway Paid Area
- 🏞️ Playground
- 🏞️ Playground (Unmaintained)
- 🚲 Bike Lane

Photo Mapping - Mall and Street Interfaces



fig. 4.13 TKO Gateway West



fig. 4.17 TKO Wet Market



fig. 4.14 Maritime Bay Shopping Mall



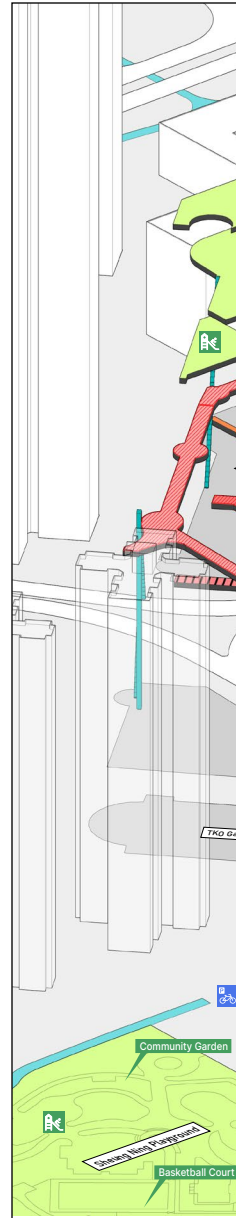
fig. 4.18 The Lane



fig. 4.15 East Point Mall



fig. 4.16 TKO Gateway East



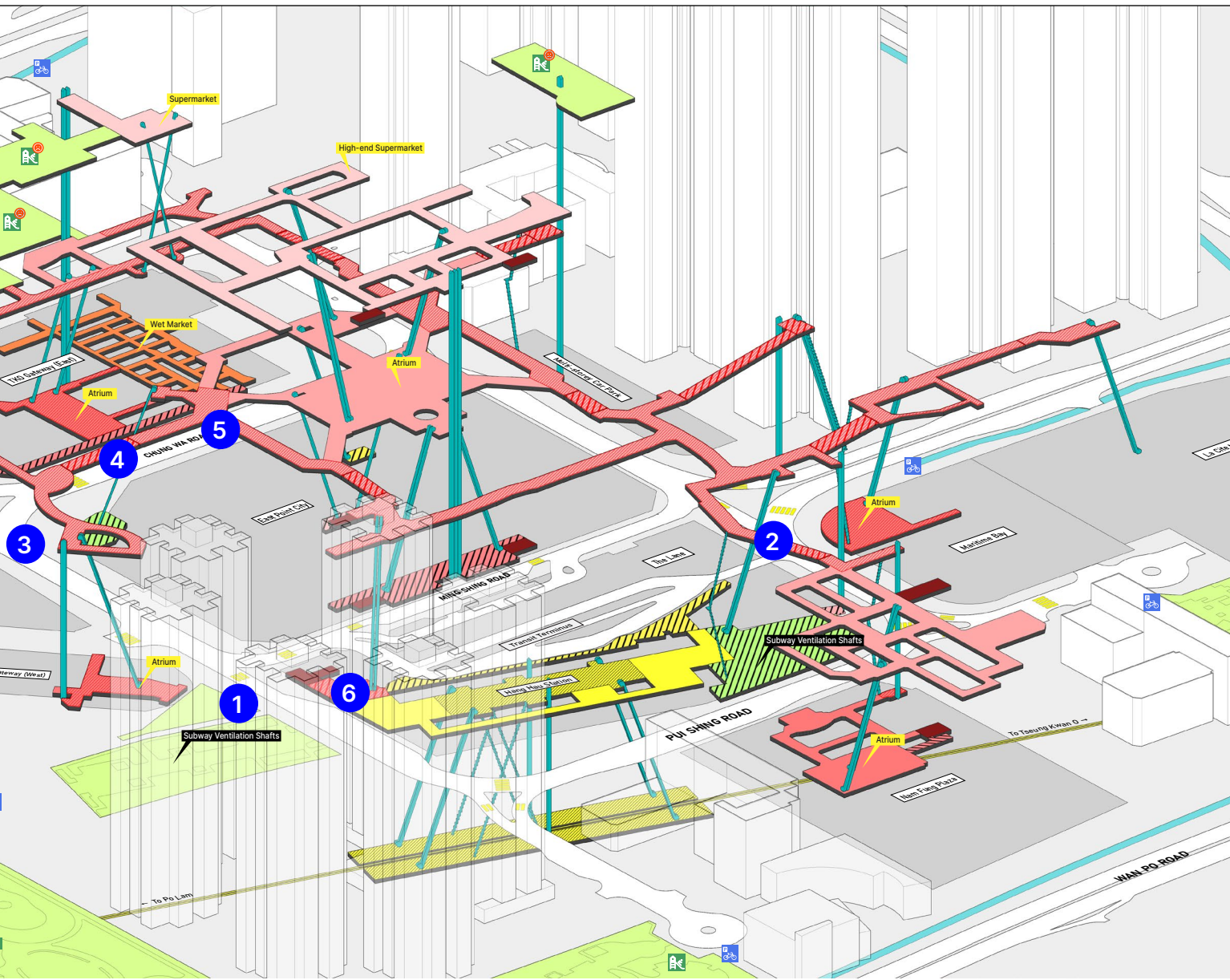


fig. 4.19 Hang Hau Pedway System Map

## Photo Mapping - Mall Interior and Atriums



fig. 4.20 East Point Mall Atrium



fig. 4.21 TKO Gateway East Atrium



fig. 4.22 TKO Gateway West Atrium



fig. 4.23 Nam fung Plaza Shopping Mall Atrium



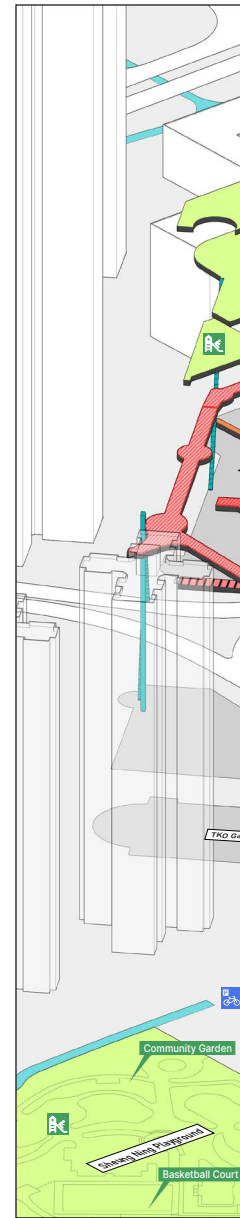
fig. 4.24 TKO Gateway West Corridor



fig. 4.25 The Lane Corridor



fig. 4.26 East Point City Corridor





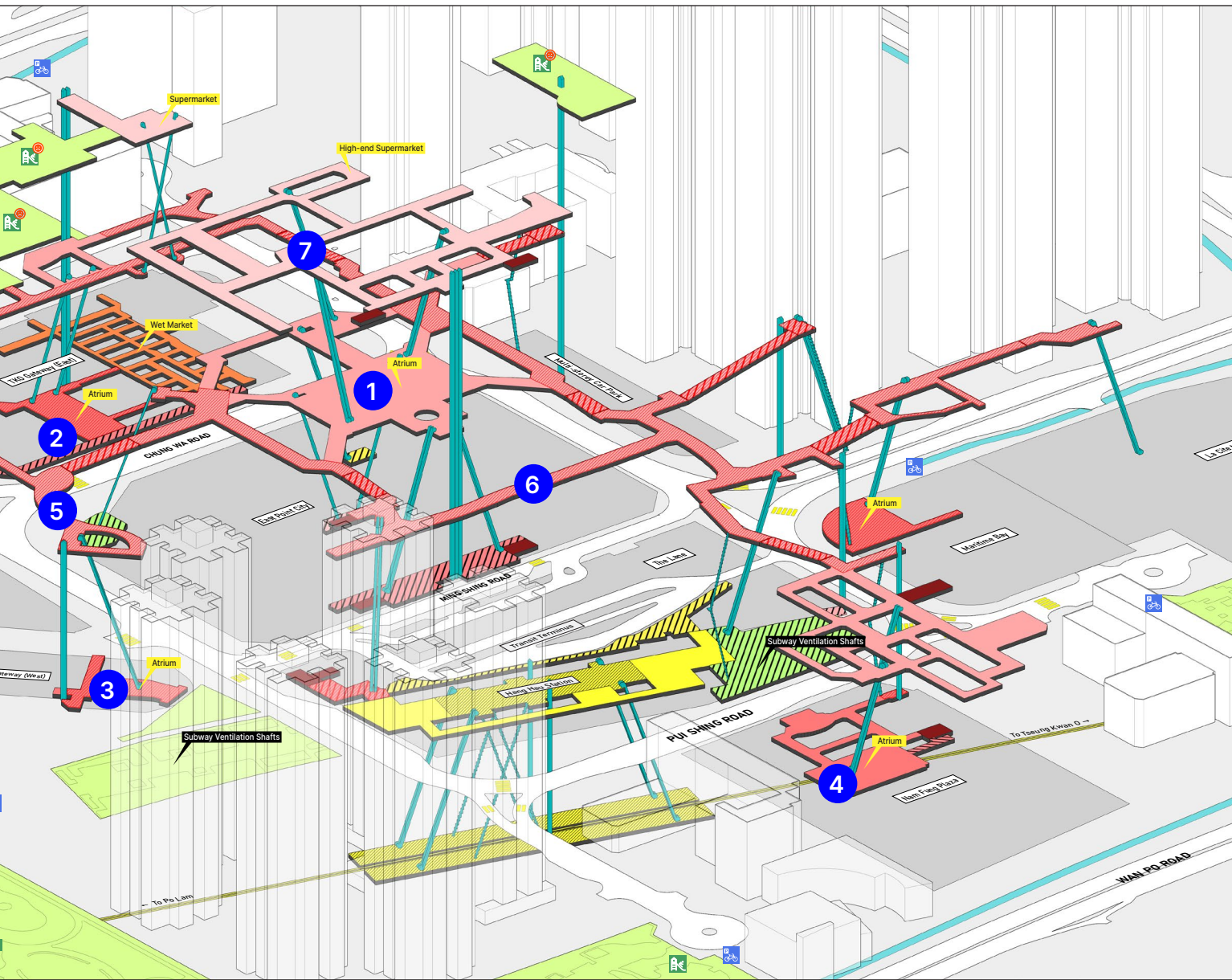


fig. 4.27 Hang Hau Pedway System Map

Photo Mapping - Pedestrian Bridges



fig. 4.28 Pedestrian Bridge between Malls



fig. 4.31 Pedestrian Bridge between Malls



fig. 4.29 Pedestrian Bridge between Malls



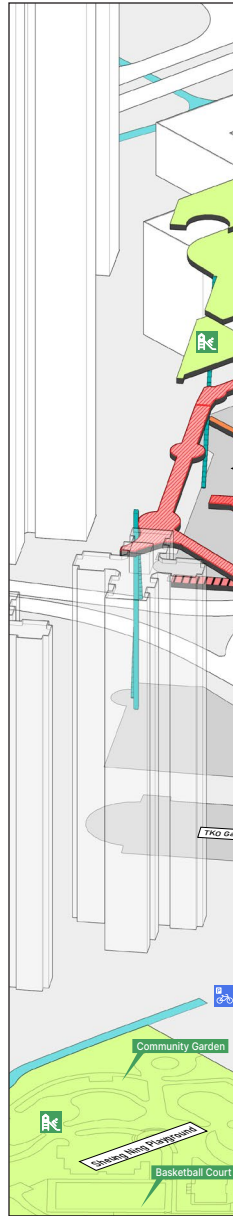
fig. 4.32 Pedestrian Bridge between Malls



fig. 4.30 Pedestrian Bridge between Malls



fig. 4.33 Pedestrian Bridge between Malls



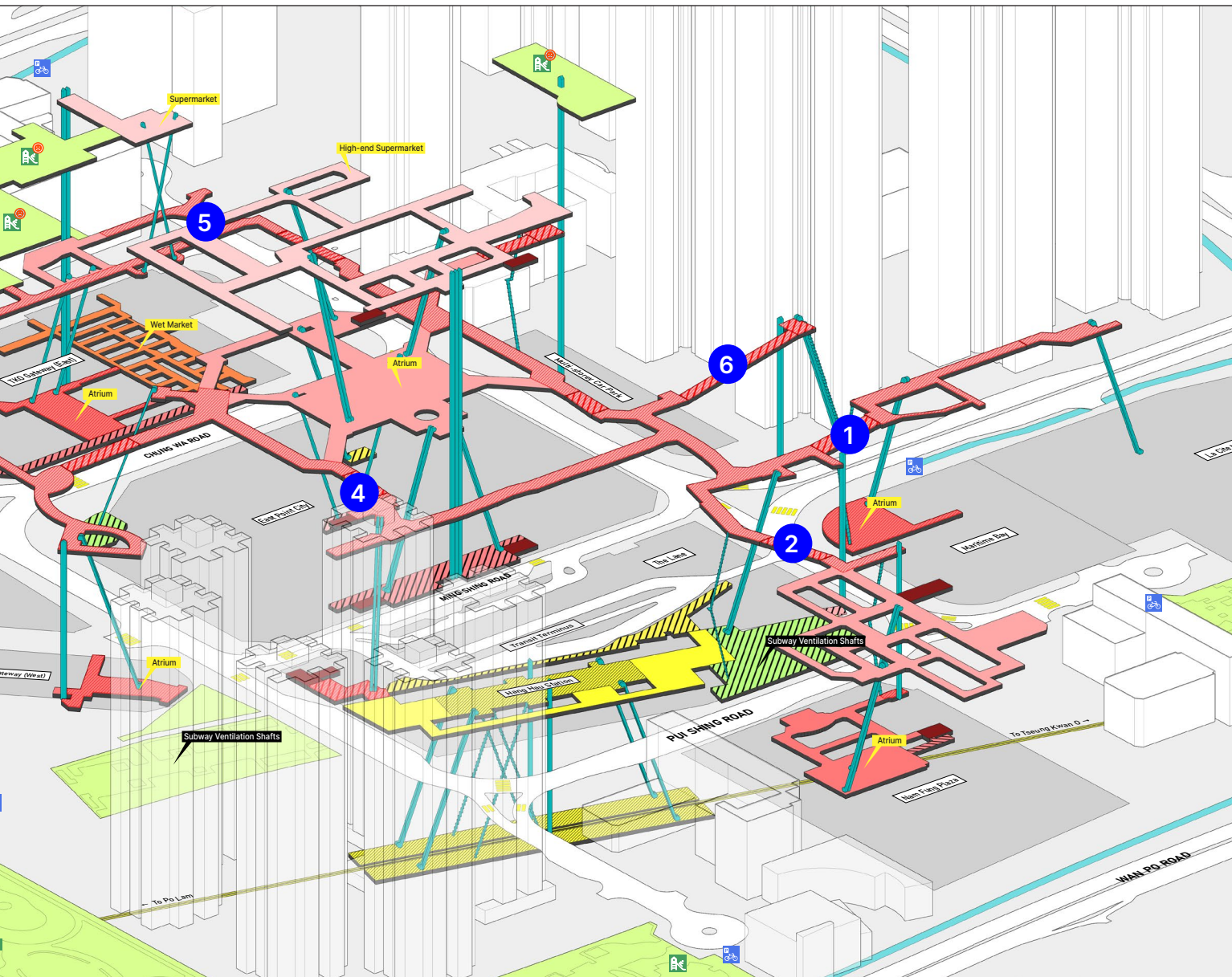


fig. 4.34 Hang Hau Pedway System Map

## Photo Mapping - Recreational Facilities



fig. 4.35 Ming Tak Sports Court

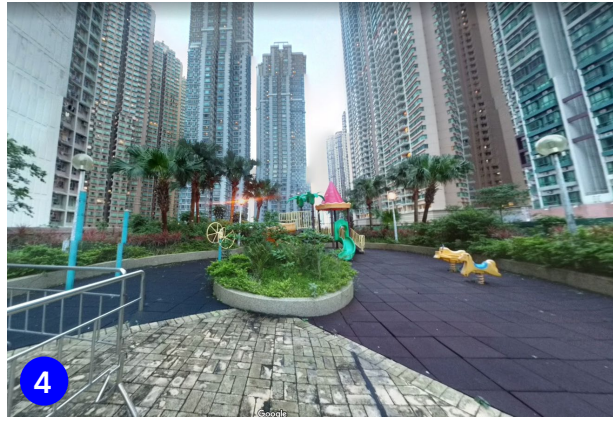


fig. 4.38 Ming Tak Sports Court

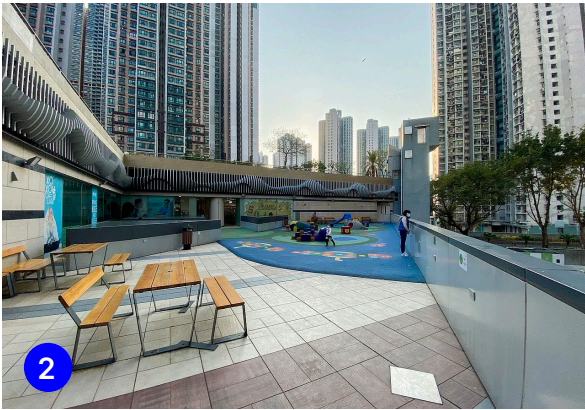


fig. 4.36 TKO Gateway Podium Playground



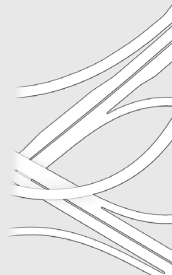
fig. 4.39 Pui Shing Garden



fig. 4.37 Man Kuk Lane Park



fig. 4.40 Sai Kung Government Complex



### Recreational Fa

- Private Residenc
- Public Residenc
- Parks and Playg
- Rooftop Garden
- Government Co

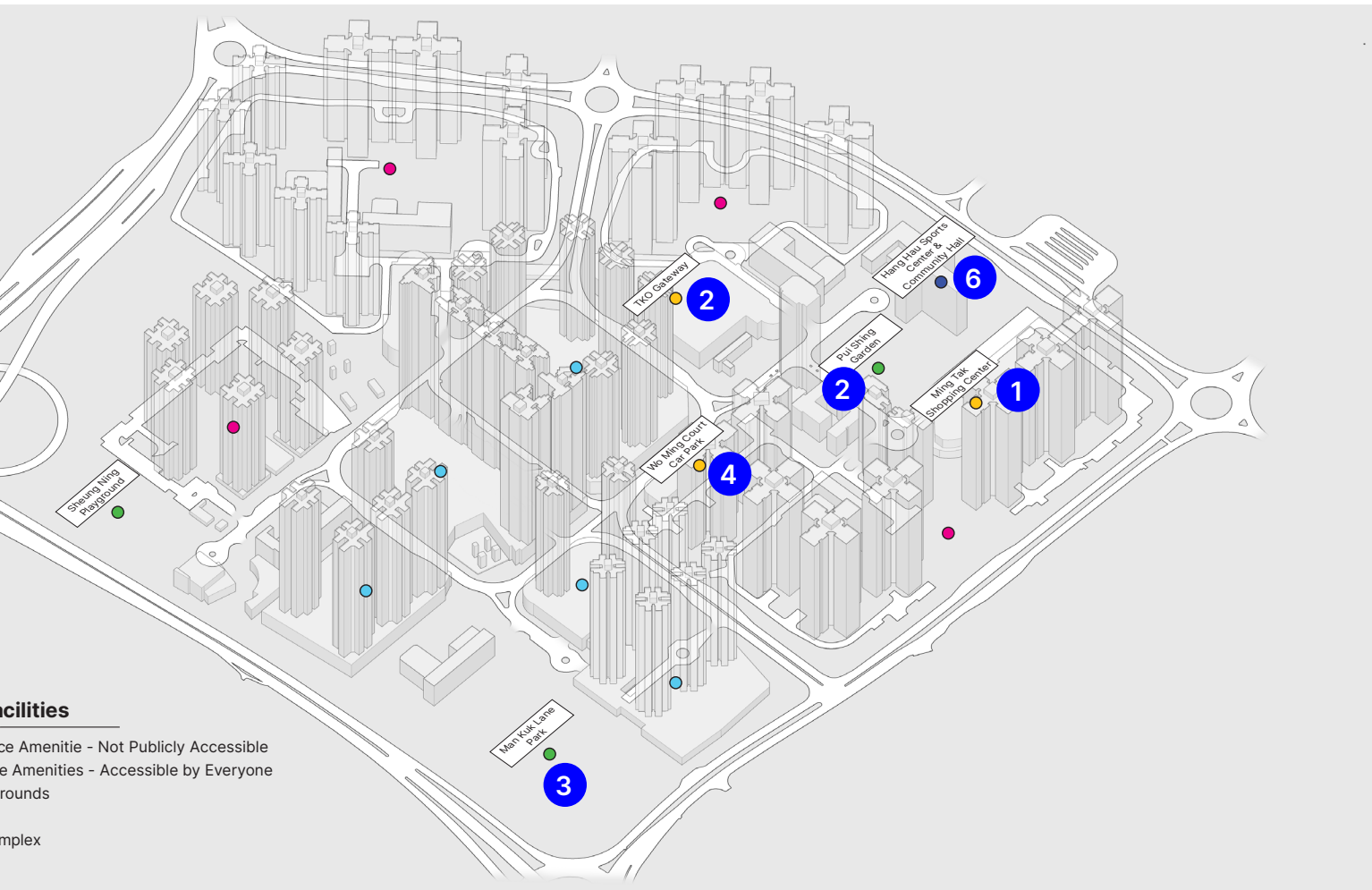


fig. 4.41 Recreational Facilities in Hang Hau

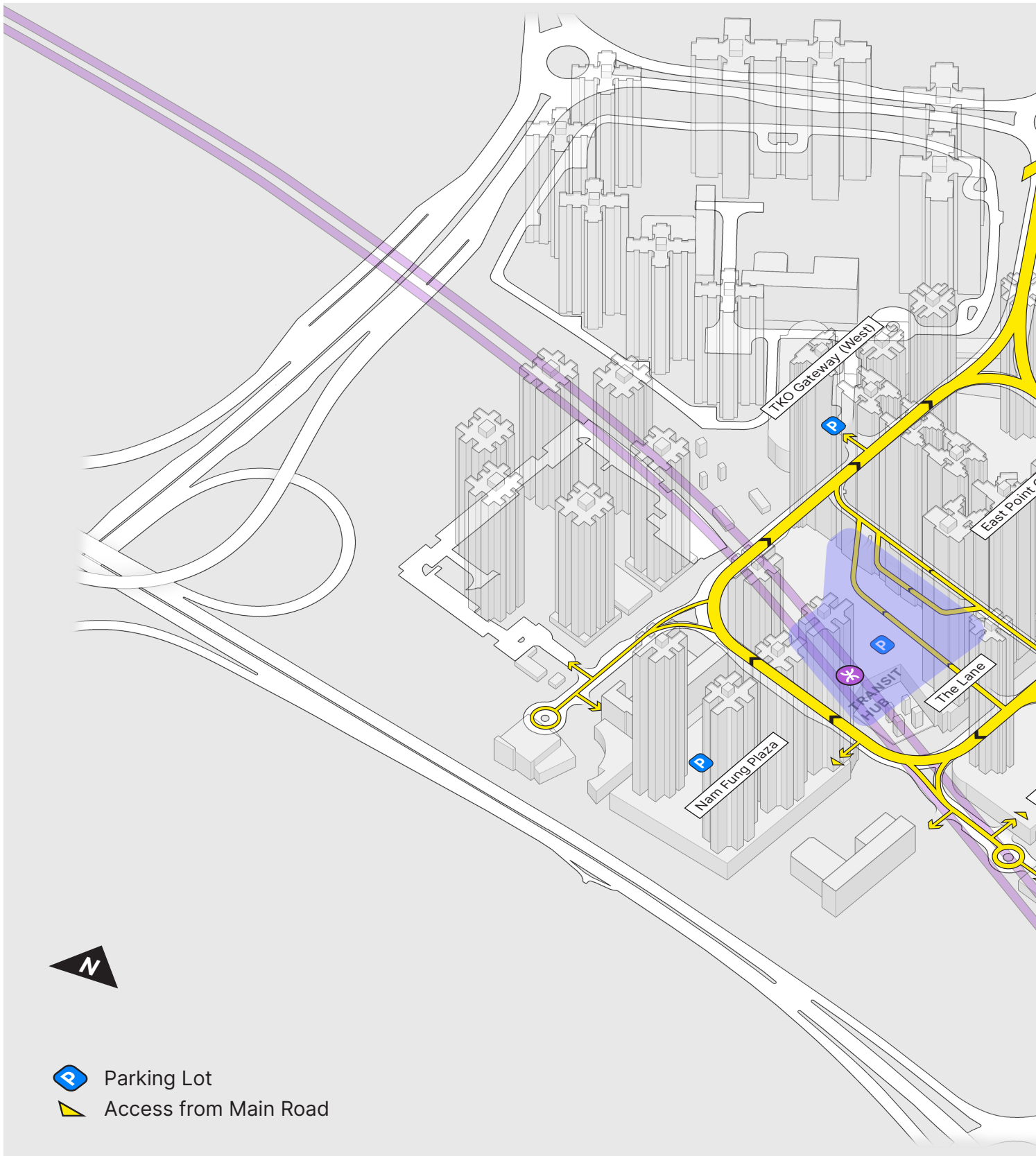
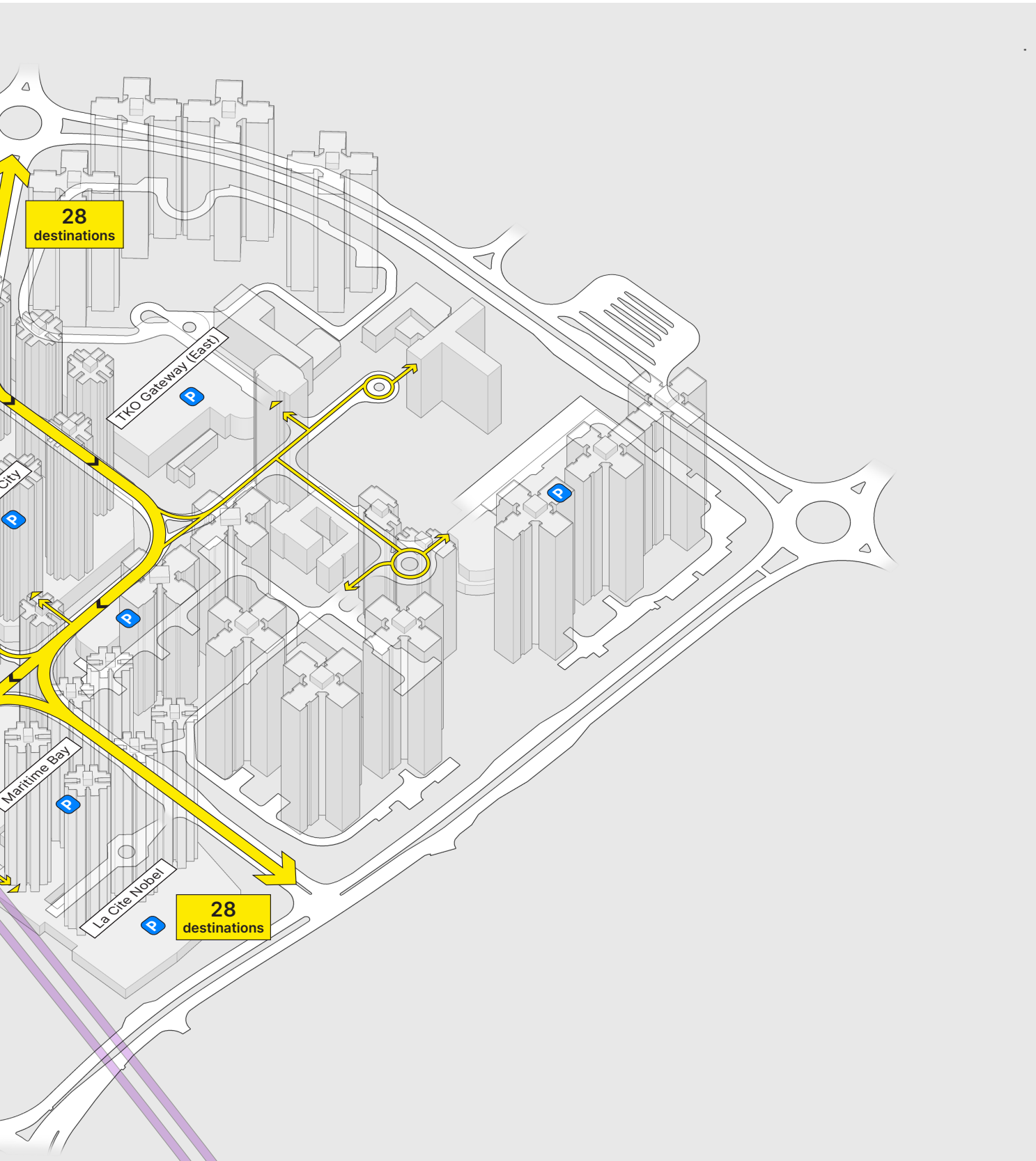


fig. 4.42 Vehicular Circulation Diagram



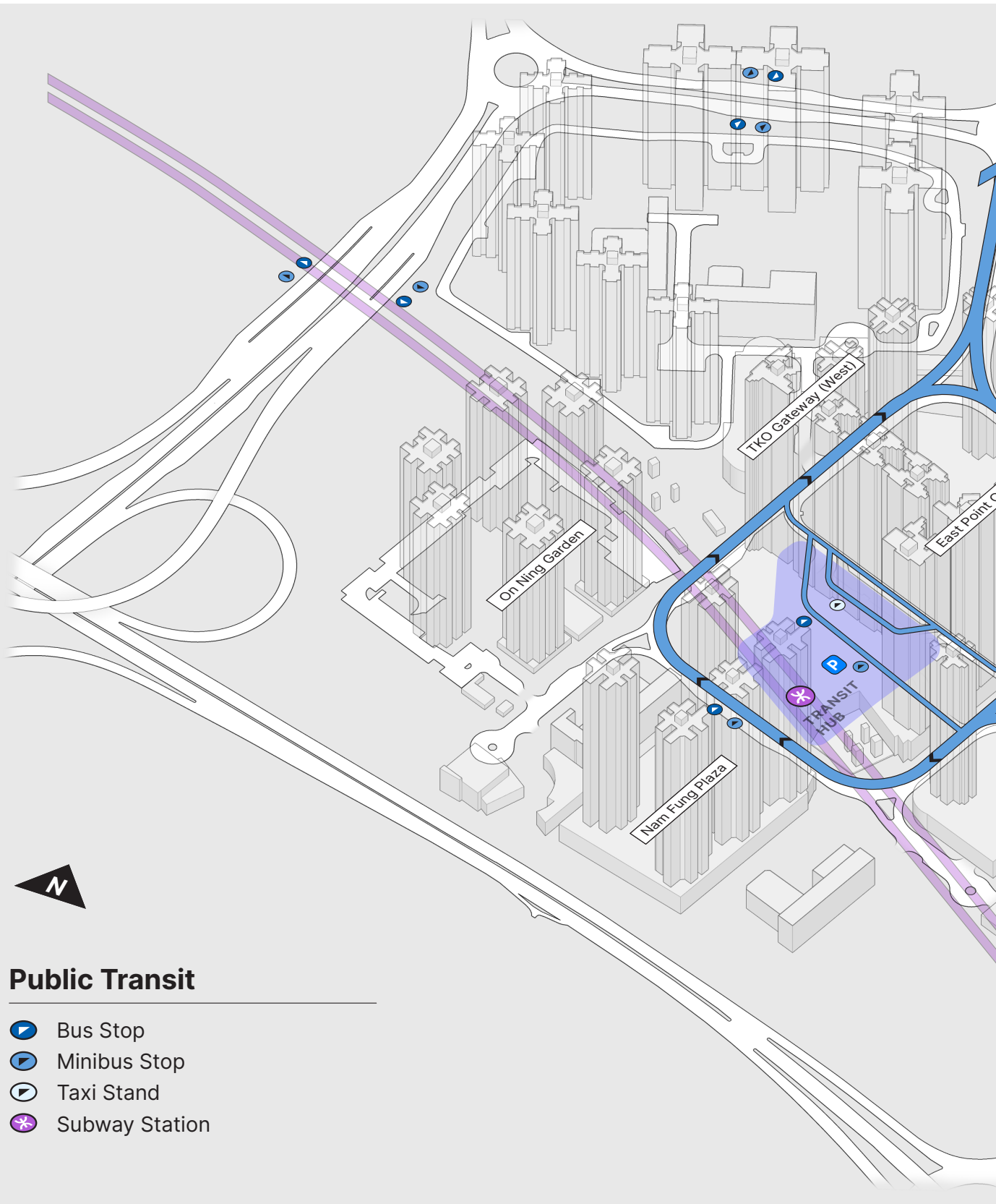
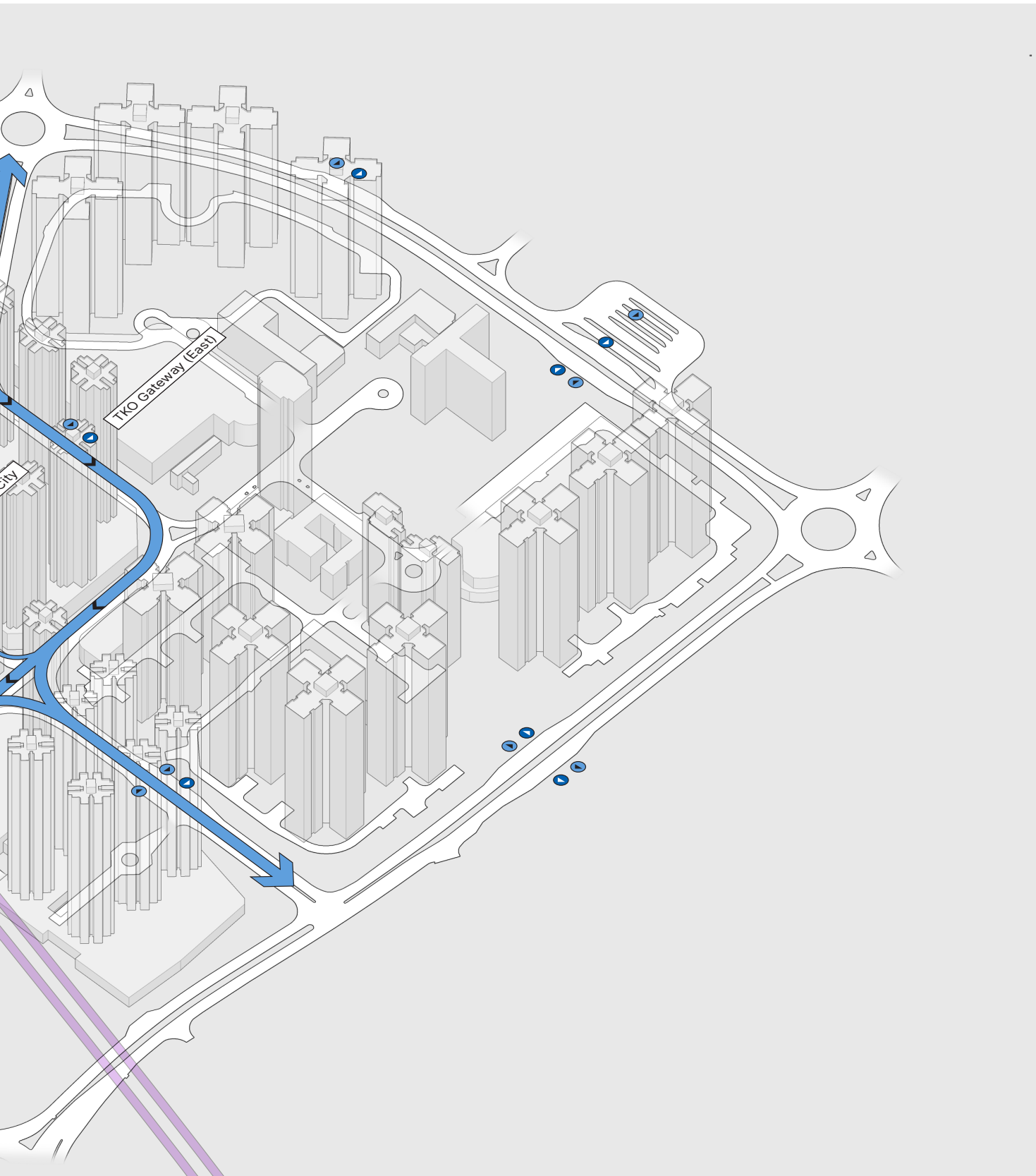


fig. 4.43 Public Transit Diagram





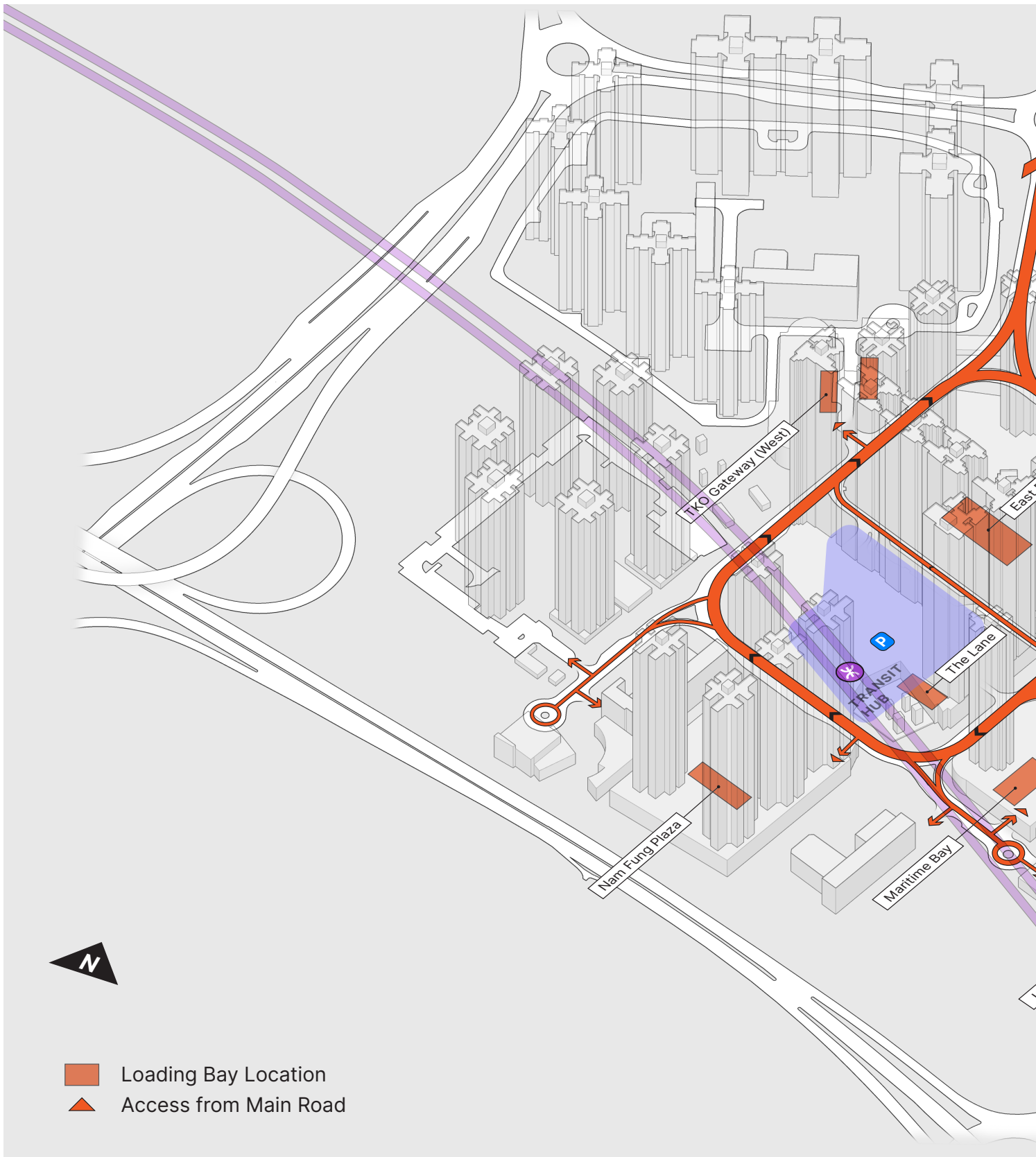
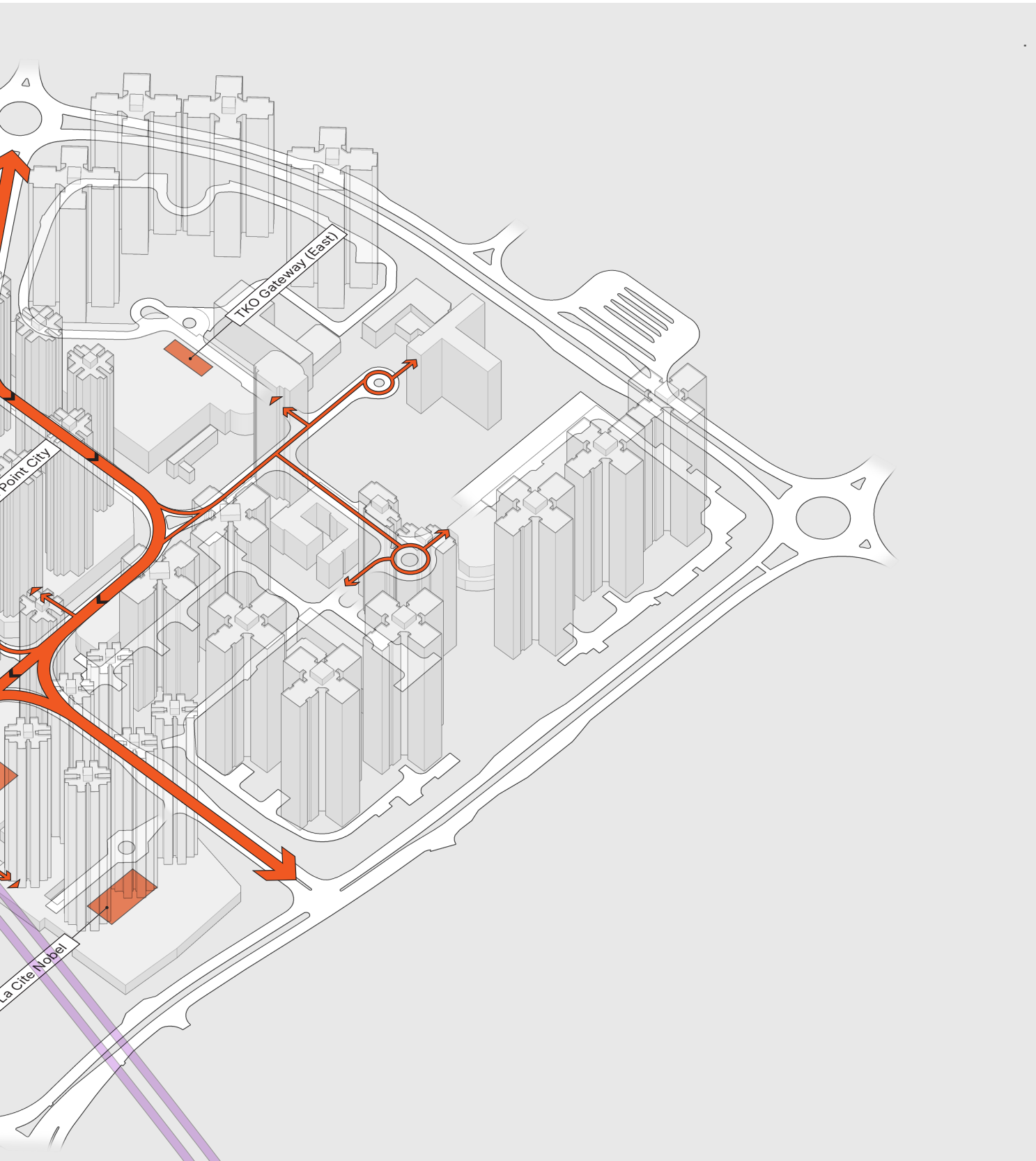


fig. 4.44 Loading Bay Access Diagram



## Site Challenges

The first challenge is **placelessness**. The shopping malls and the pedestrian walkway system artificially fabricate human behavior within the community and alienate the spaces on the street level. Also, recreational facilities for the general public are placed at the fringe of the neighborhood, making the spaces around the center purely for commercial and circulation purposes.

The second challenge is **fragmentation**. The street level is divided with wide vehicle roads, inaccessible planters, and railings. Sites The pedestrian walkway system as the only walkable option further amplifies the uncanniness and spatial fragmentation within the community.

The third challenge is **a lack of humanity**. The absence of human activities on the streets removes opportunities to develop dialogues and idea exchanges within the neighborhood. As there is no opportunity for the people to appropriate the space, the community has no identity and humanity.



fig. 4.45 Hang Hau



# The Intervention

## **Project Scope**

This design exercise aims to transform the street level into appropriated space by the community through hyper-local urbanism. As this thesis intends to complement the spaces in the shopping malls and provide additional third places for people on the streets, the study area will focus on the outdoor spaces on the ground level.

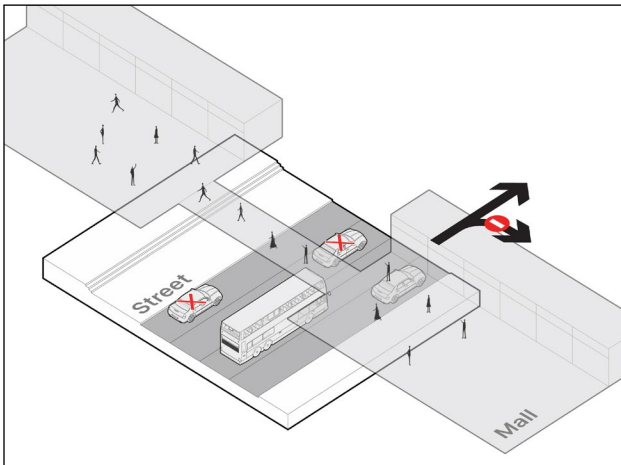
The design exercise will be conducted on two scales to respond to various site challenges. On the macro scale, connectivity within and beyond the study area will be enhanced by improving the road network and cycling infrastructure. On the micro scale, detailed design solutions will be explored in a selected study area. This area is chosen due to its proximity to all types of housing estates and shopping malls within the site.





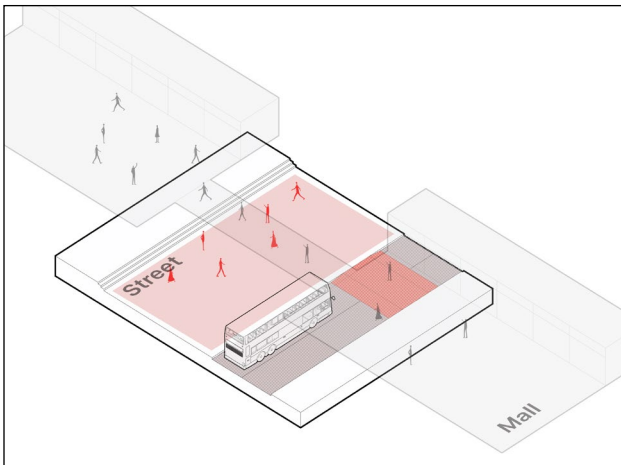
fig 5.1 Demarcation of the Macro and Micro Study Areas

## Design Strategies



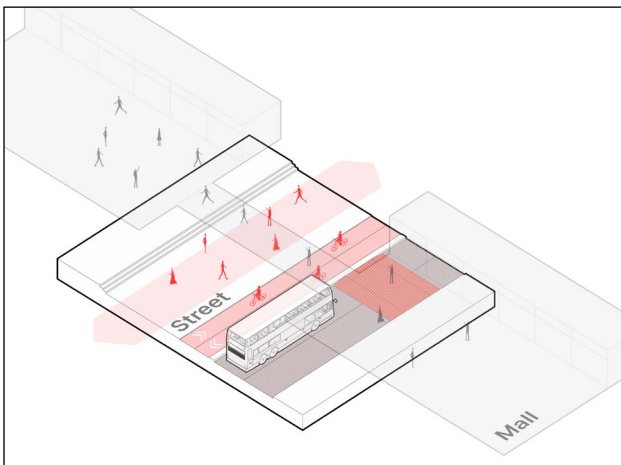
1

Reallocate Street Priority from Automobiles to People



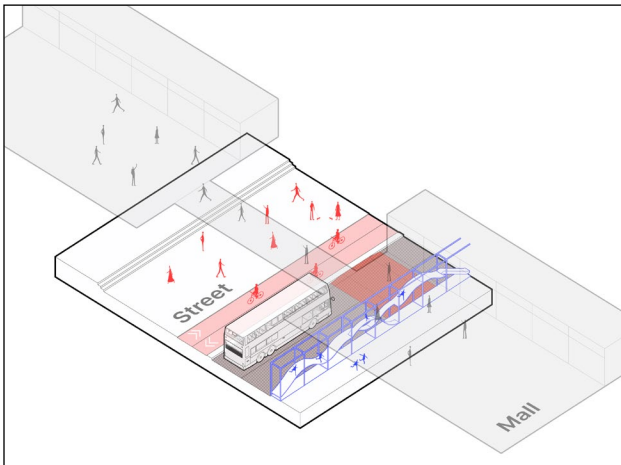
2

Enhance Pedestrian Sense of Safety through Traffic Calming



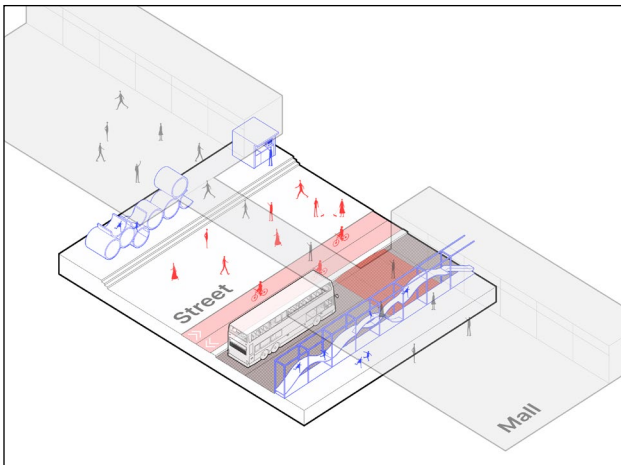
3

Establish Missing Links in the Active Mobility Network



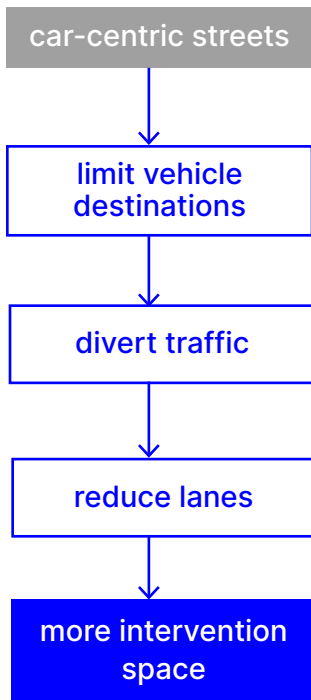
**4**

Revitalize Uncanny Non-places  
with “Play”



**5**

Activate Street Level with Space  
Appropriation



### Strategy 1 - Reallocate Street Priority from Automobiles to People

We have established that vehicles are overly privileged on the car-centric street level, leading to a hostile environment that discourages pedestrians from walking on the streets. The first step to limit automobile priority is to modify the street network to reduce vehicle destinations through the study area. Traffic will then be diverted to alternative routes outside of the study area. Public transit, emergency vehicle, and delivery truck access are prioritized to ensure relevant services will not be impacted. These measures will reduce the number of traffic lanes, allocating more spaces for pedestrians.

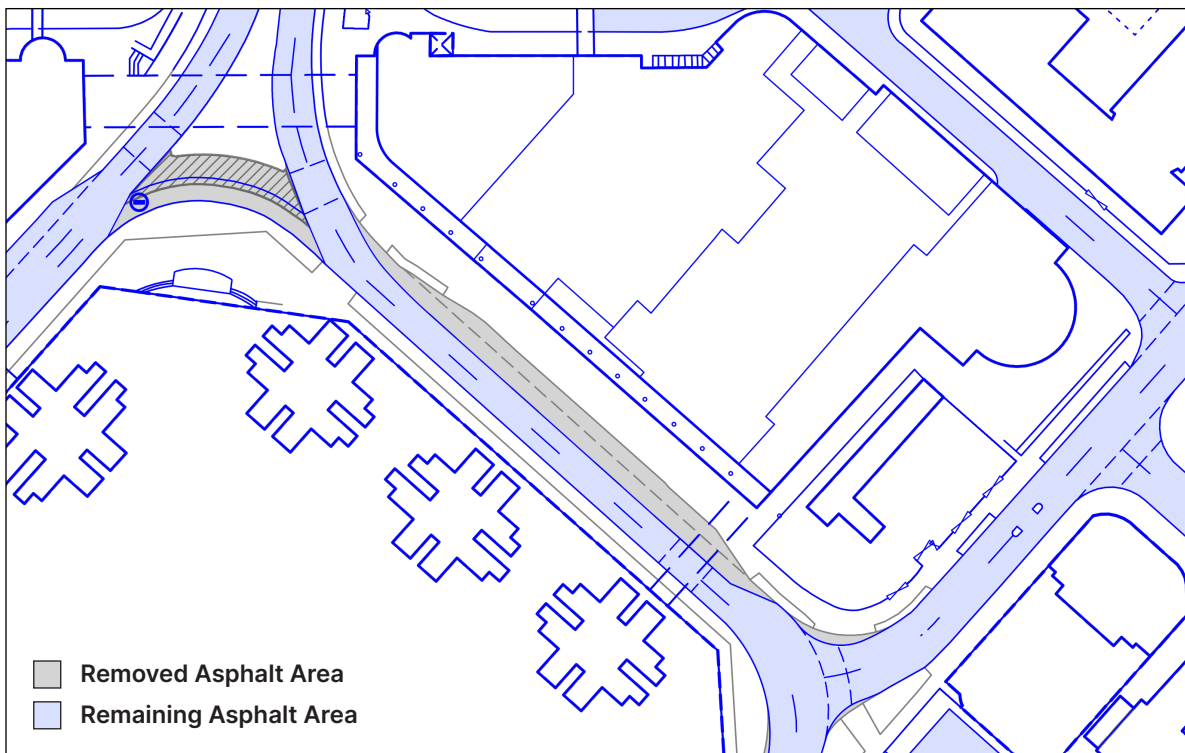


fig. 5.2 Reduced Asphalt Area for Vehicles

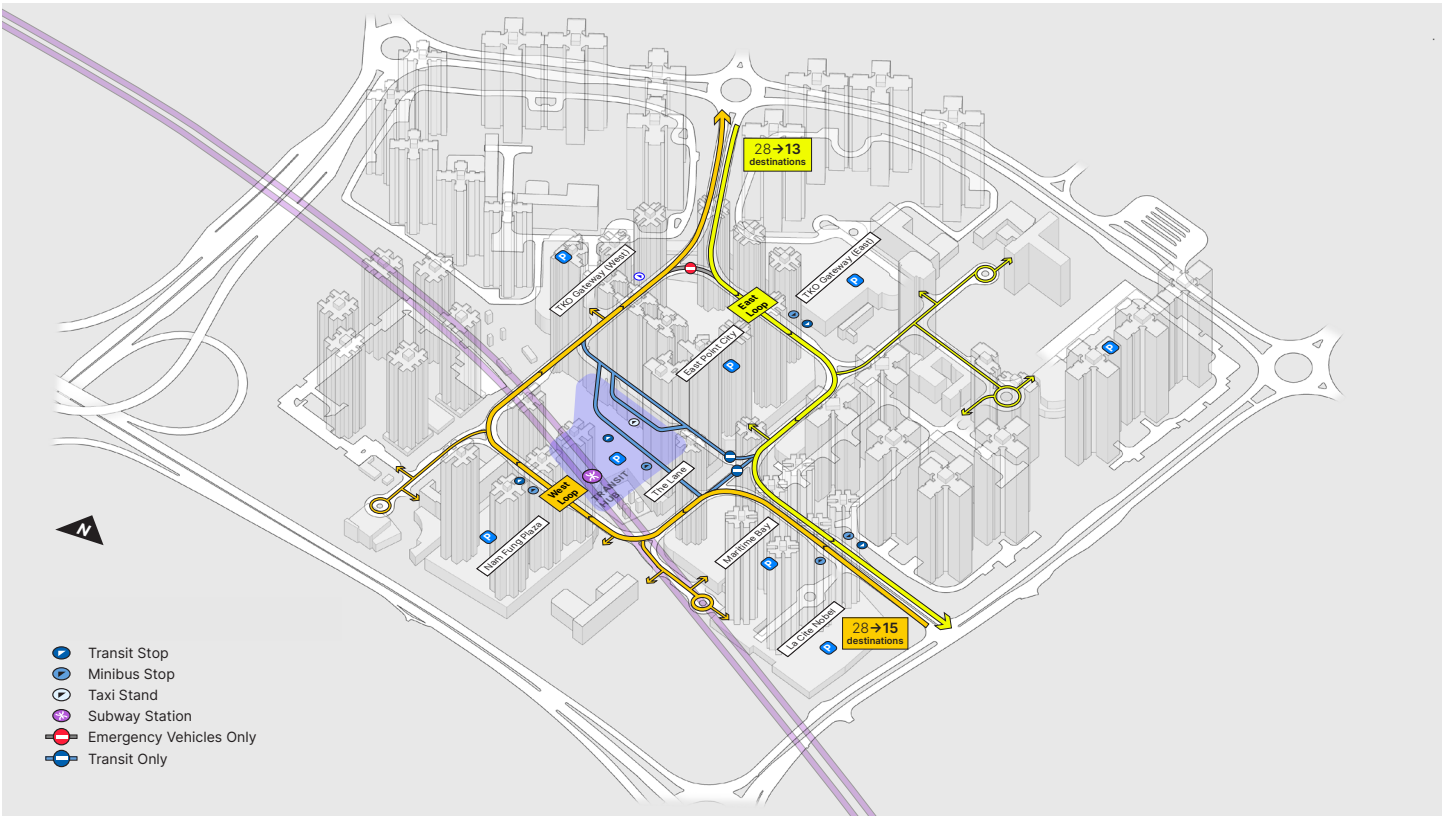


fig. 5.3 Proposed Vehicular Circulation

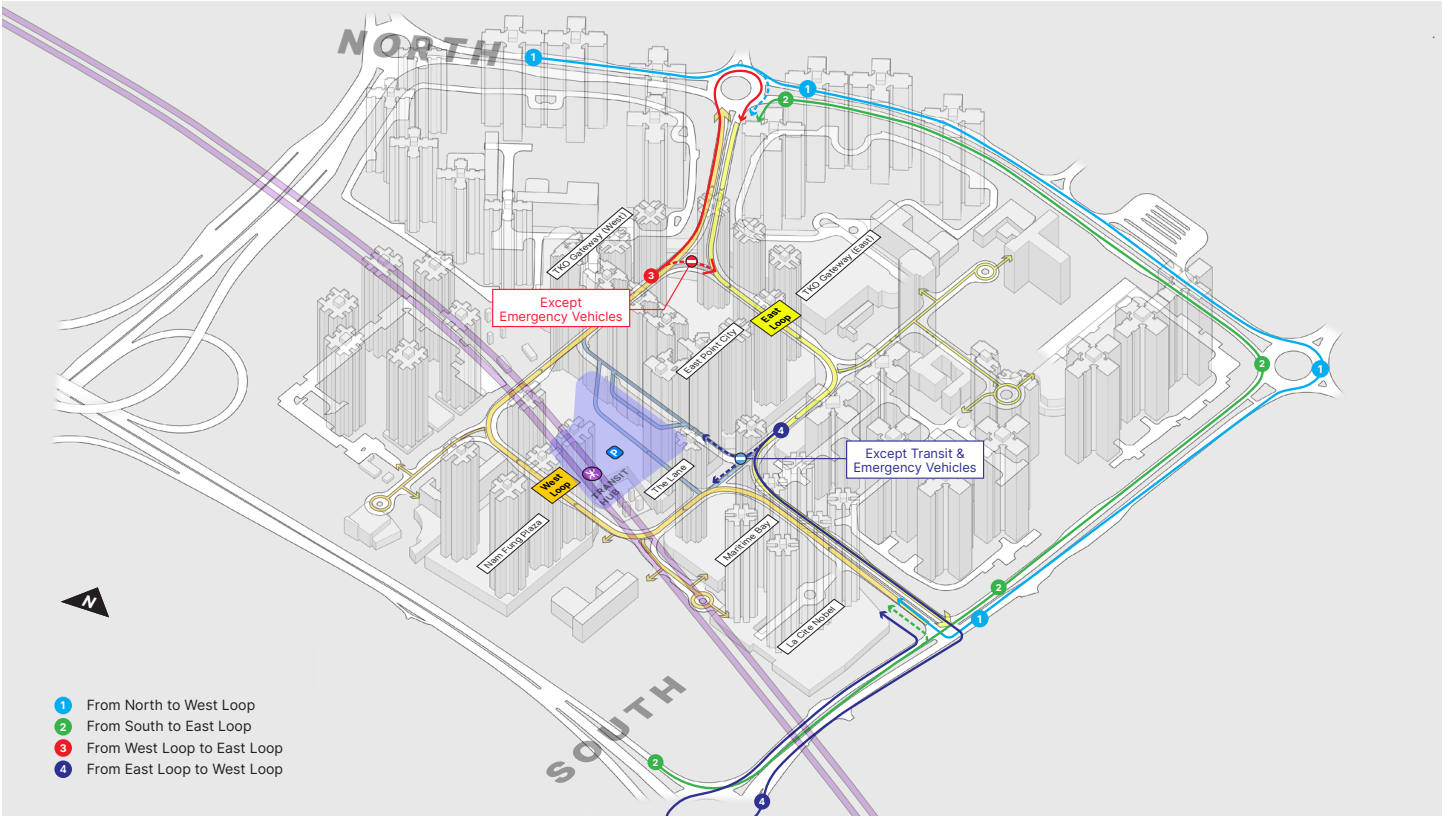
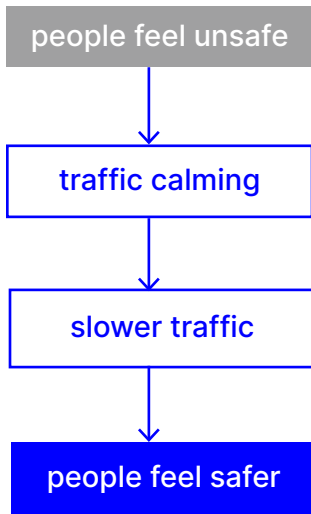


fig. 5.4 Alternative Routes for Vehicles



## Strategy 2 - Enhance Pedestrian Sense of Safety through Traffic Calming

Slowing down the traffic is an effective way to provide a sense of safety from vehicles for pedestrians, which is vital to encourage them to use the street level. As drivers drive at the speed they are comfortable with, speed signs are not helpful to slow them down. Instead, streets should incorporate traffic calming measures to force drivers to reduce their speed, including textured road paving, level pedestrian crossings, chicanes, tighter turning radius, and more. In addition, slower traffic eliminates the need for pedestrian fences on sidewalks, reinforcing pedestrians' priority over traffic.



fig. 5.5 Raised Pedestrian Crossing



fig. 5.6 Textured Road Surface

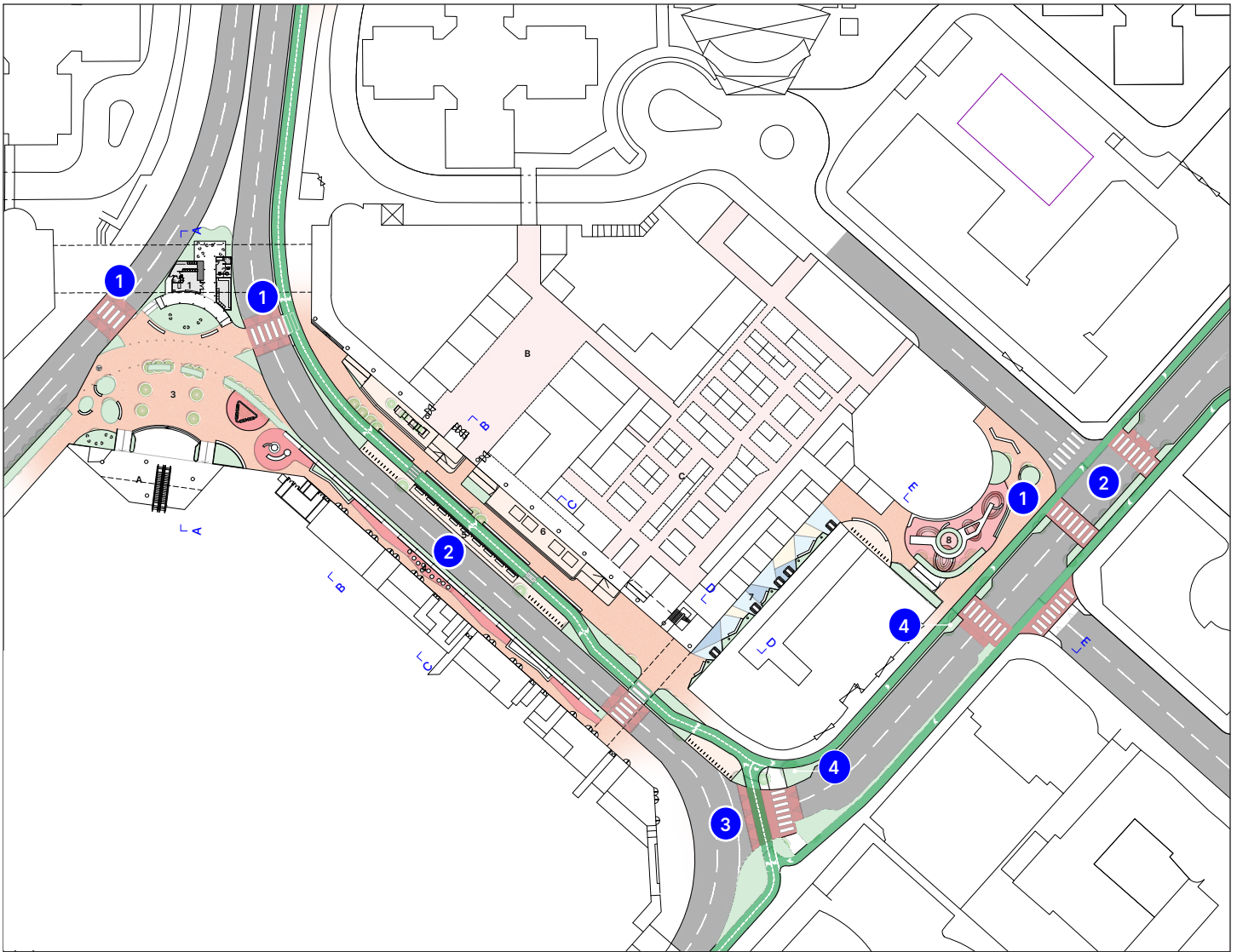


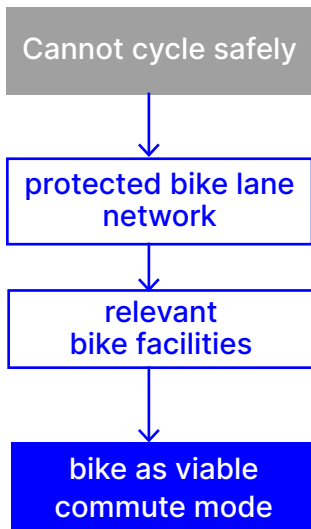
fig. 5.9 Map of Traffic Calming Measures



fig. 5.7 Continuous Sidewalk



fig. 5.8 Chicane



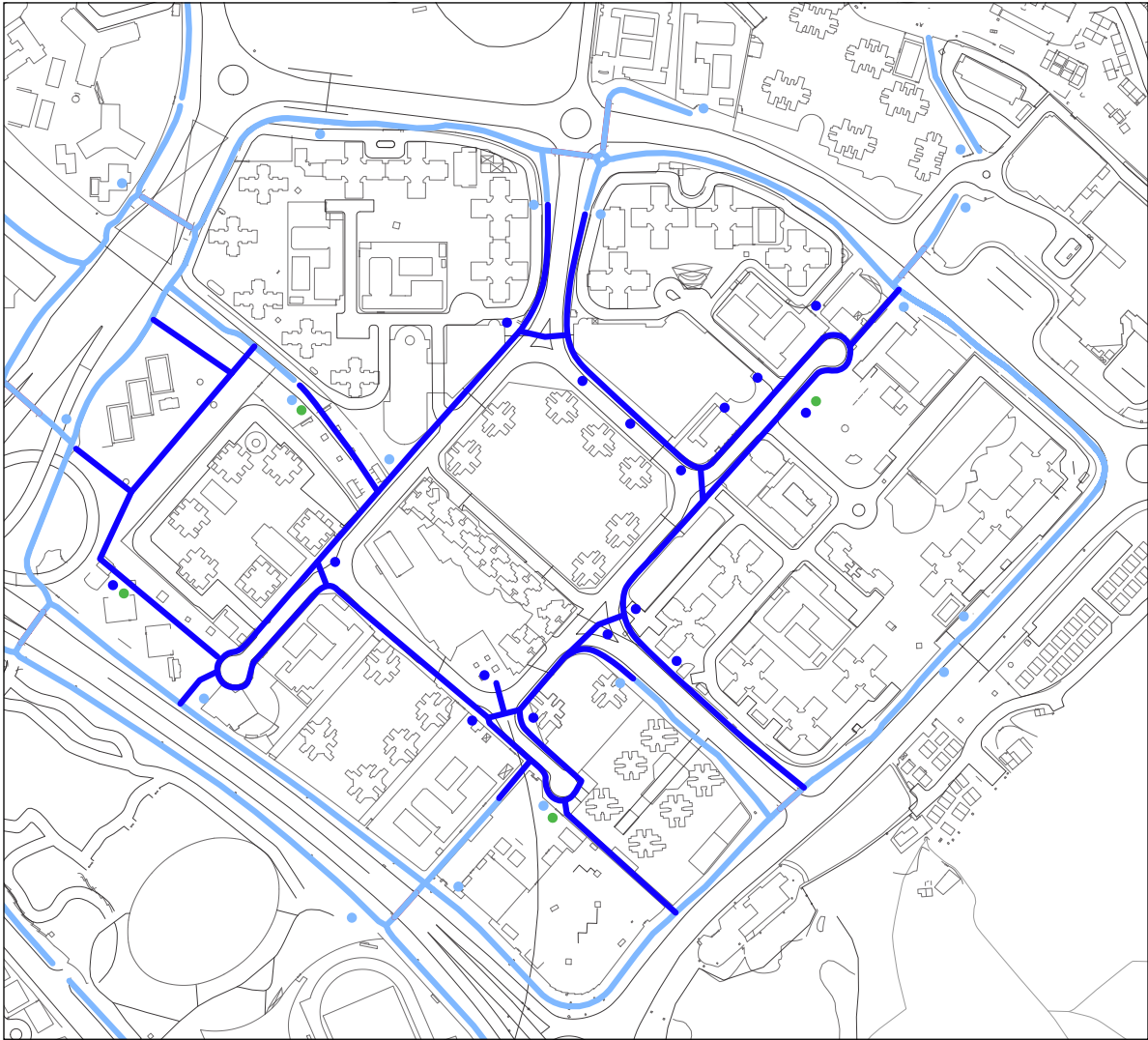
### Strategy 3- Establish Missing Links in the Active Mobility Network

The success of public spaces depends on their ease of access within a neighborhood. While there are bike lanes outside of the study area, there is no bicycle infrastructure connecting the heart of the new town. New space from reduced lanes allowed the implementation of new bike lanes through the entire study area, forming the backbone of the public space network. These bike lanes are physically protected from vehicles, and bike racks and repair stations are also provided. Ultimately, a safe and complete bike lane network will promote cycling as a viable mode of commute within and beyond the neighborhood.



*fig. 5.10 A protected bike lane in Tseung Kwan O, Hong Kong*





- Existing Bike Lane
- Proposed Bike Lane
- Existing Bike Parking
- Proposed Bike Parking
- Proposed Bike Repair Station

fig. 5.11 Proposed Bike Lane Network in Hang Hau

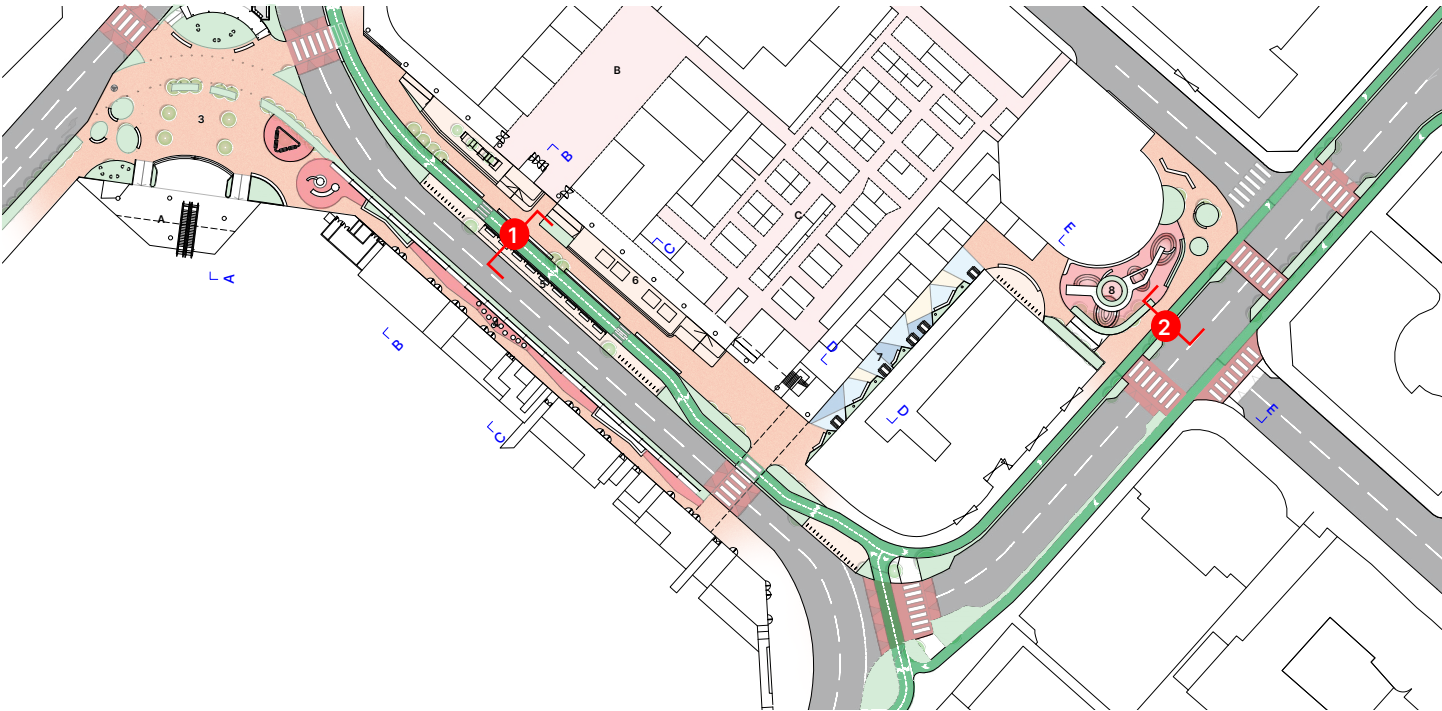
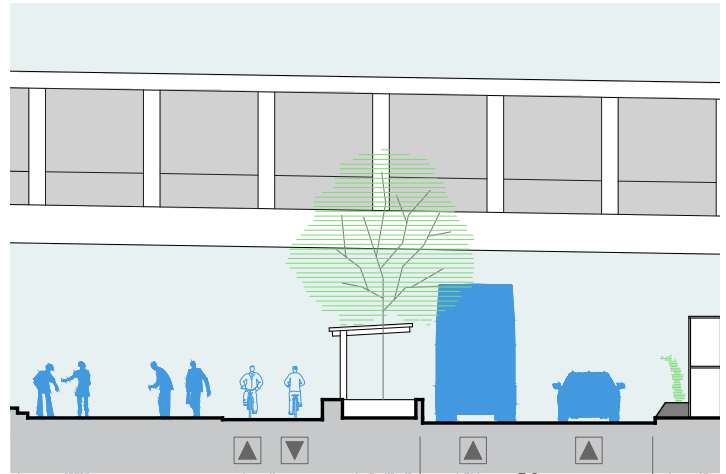
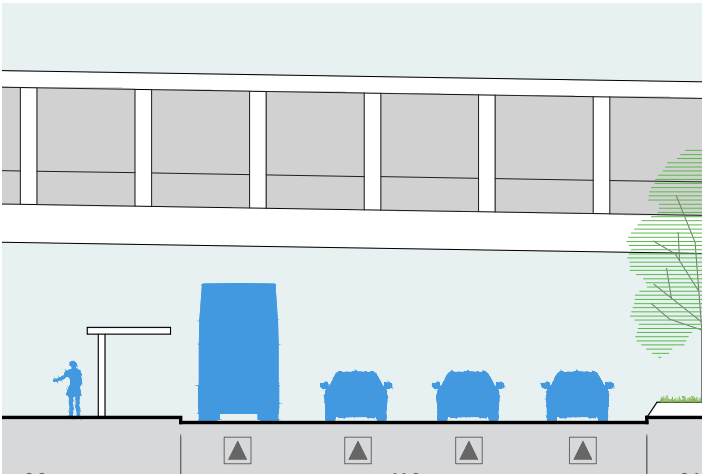
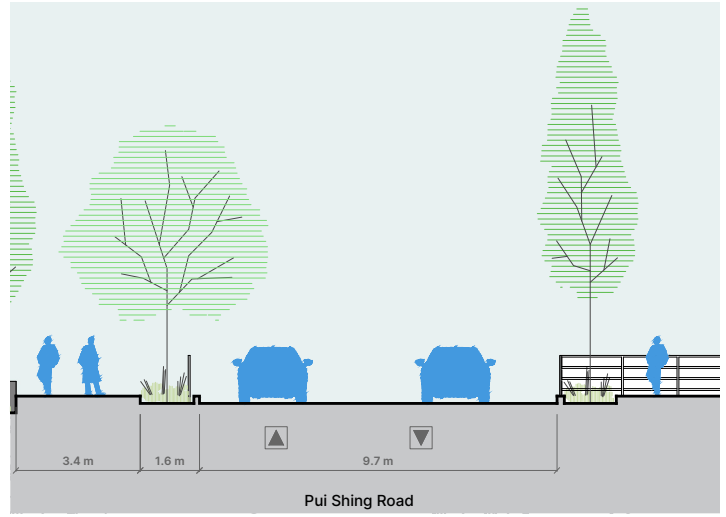
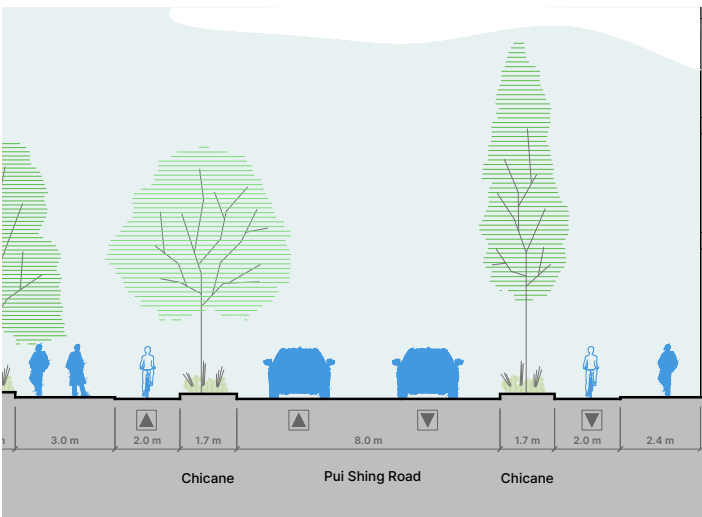


fig. 5.12 Bike Lane Section Key Plan

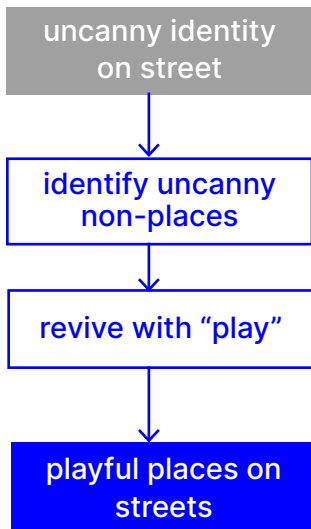


1



2

fig. 5.13 Bike Lane Before and After Sections



#### Strategy 4 - Revitalize Uncanny Non-places with “Play”

Reviving underused spaces with “play” is an effective way to eradicate the uncanniness within new towns. These spaces, including inaccessible planters, service frontages, and empty spaces, open up opportunities to create children’s playgrounds at every corner of the study area. In addition, rather than simply putting in generic plastic-molded playing structures, the playgrounds are designed to be integrated into the surrounding urban fabrics. This makes the act of playing the backdrop of the streets, providing happiness to children and everyone walking through the neighborhood.

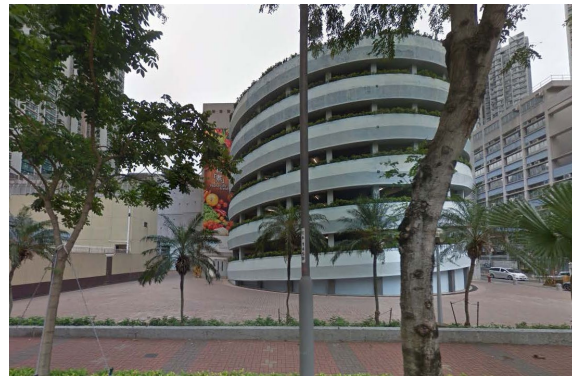
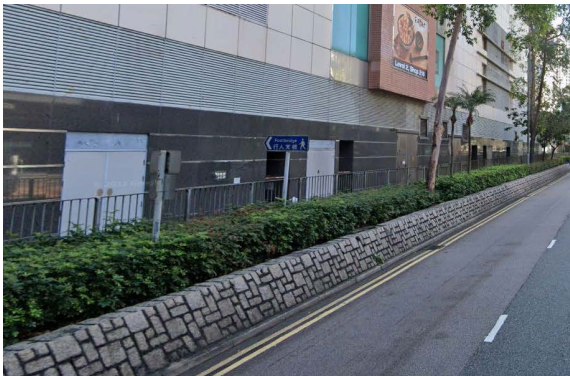
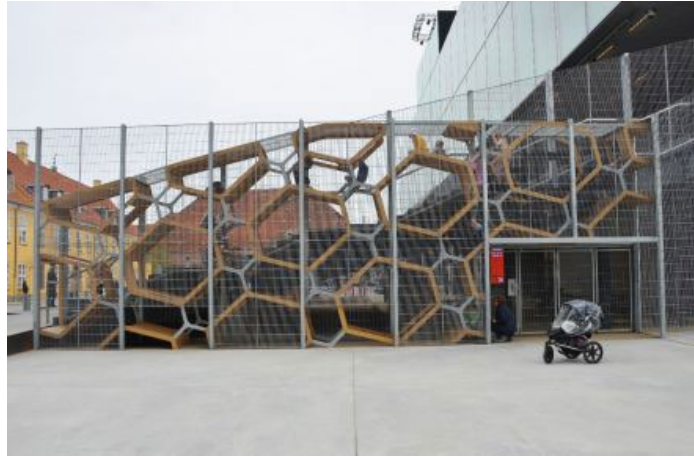


fig. 5.14 Examples of Uncanny Non-places in Hang Hau



*fig. 5.15 Bicentennial Park by Elemental*



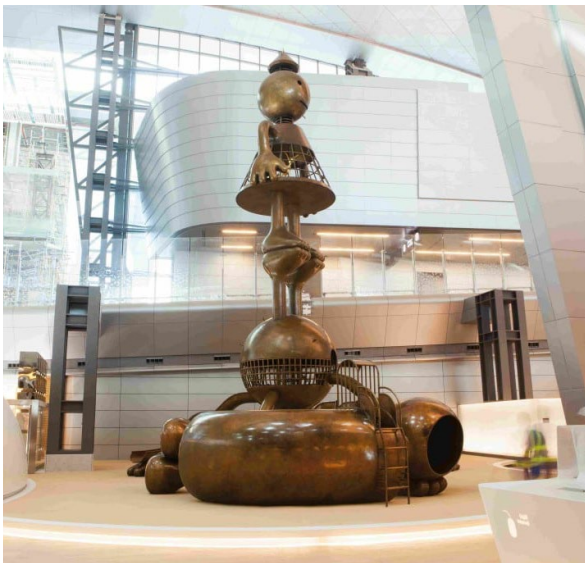
*fig. 5.16 Blox Playscape by Crave*



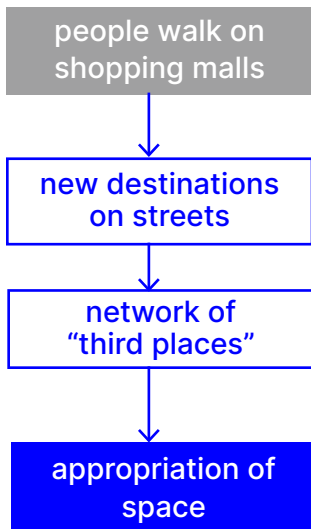
*fig. 5.17 Santa Maria Mazzarello Square by HDH arquitectos*



*fig. 5.18 Clear Water Bay by Crave*



*fig. 5.19 Qatar Airport Playgrounds by Tom Otterness*



### Strategy 5 - Activate Street Level with Space Appropriation

Currently, the top-down design approach of the neighborhood reduces opportunities for locals to appropriate the street level, leading to a place without identity. To bring people back to the ground level, functional and inclusive programs ensure that everyone within the community will use them well. These spaces will also consider shading and greenery to control the microclimate during the summer. Treating these "third places" as a holistic network of on-street destinations creates a viable alternative to the walkway system, which is critical to encourage people to return to the street level for last-mile journeys and increase opportunities for ad-hoc interactions. Allowing people to appropriate the street level will bring humanity and a sense of ownership to the community.

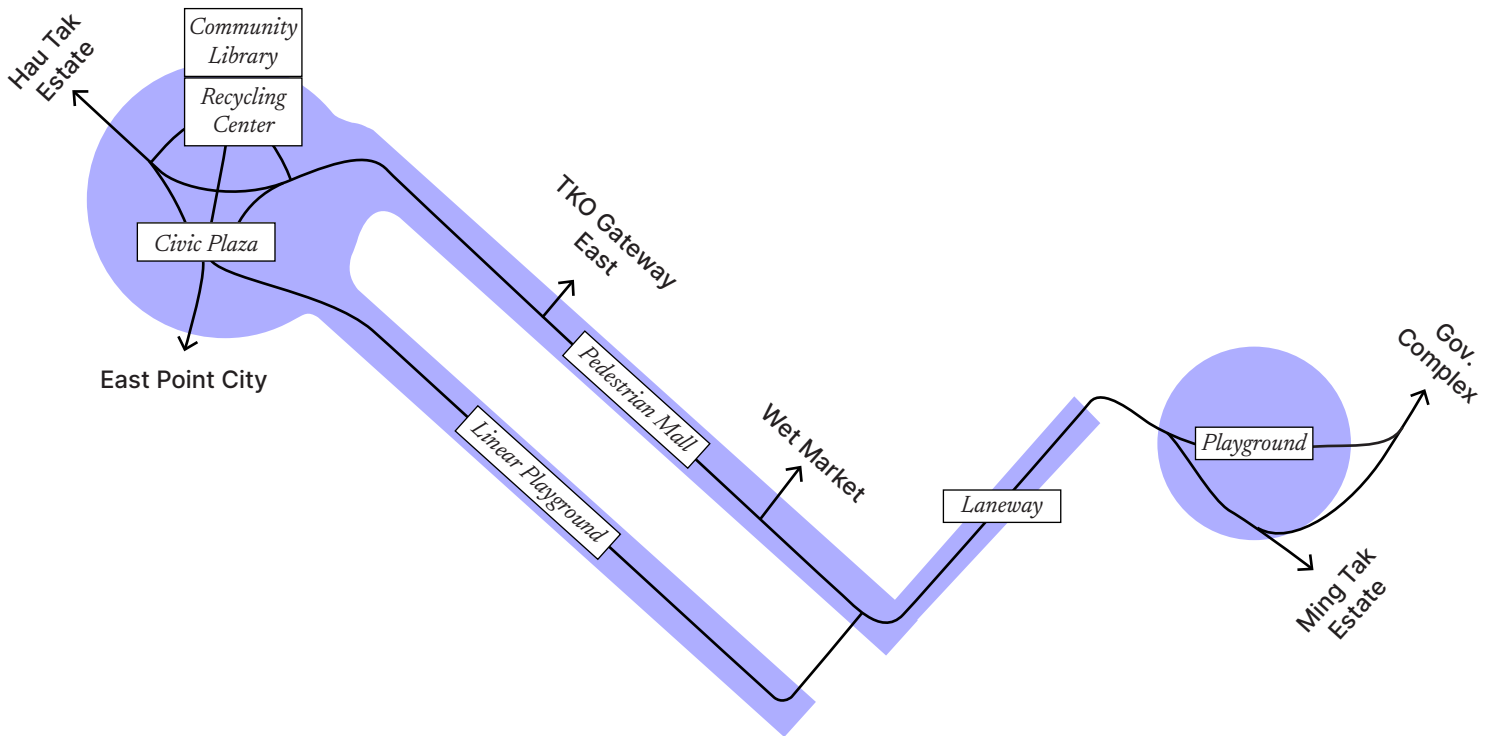


fig. 5.20 Proposed Third-place Network



fig. 5.21 King Street Parklet by Plant



fig. 5.22 The Meadow at Elephant Park by BD



fig. 5.23 A Food Stall (Dai Pai Dong) in Hong Kong

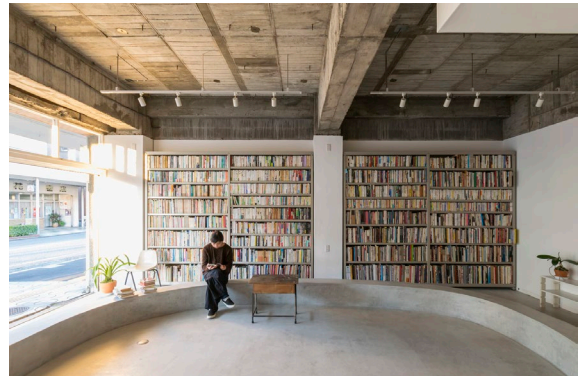


fig. 5.24 House with a Small Library by Hiroshi Kinoshita

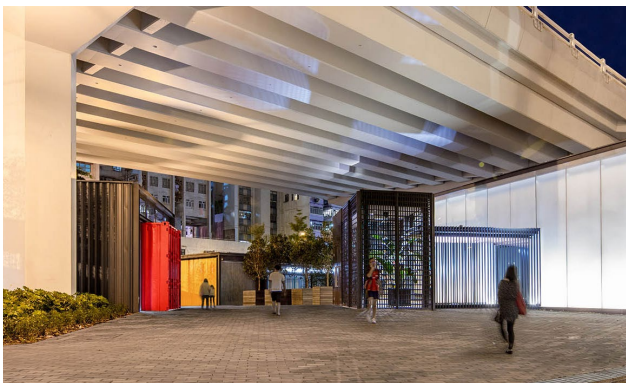
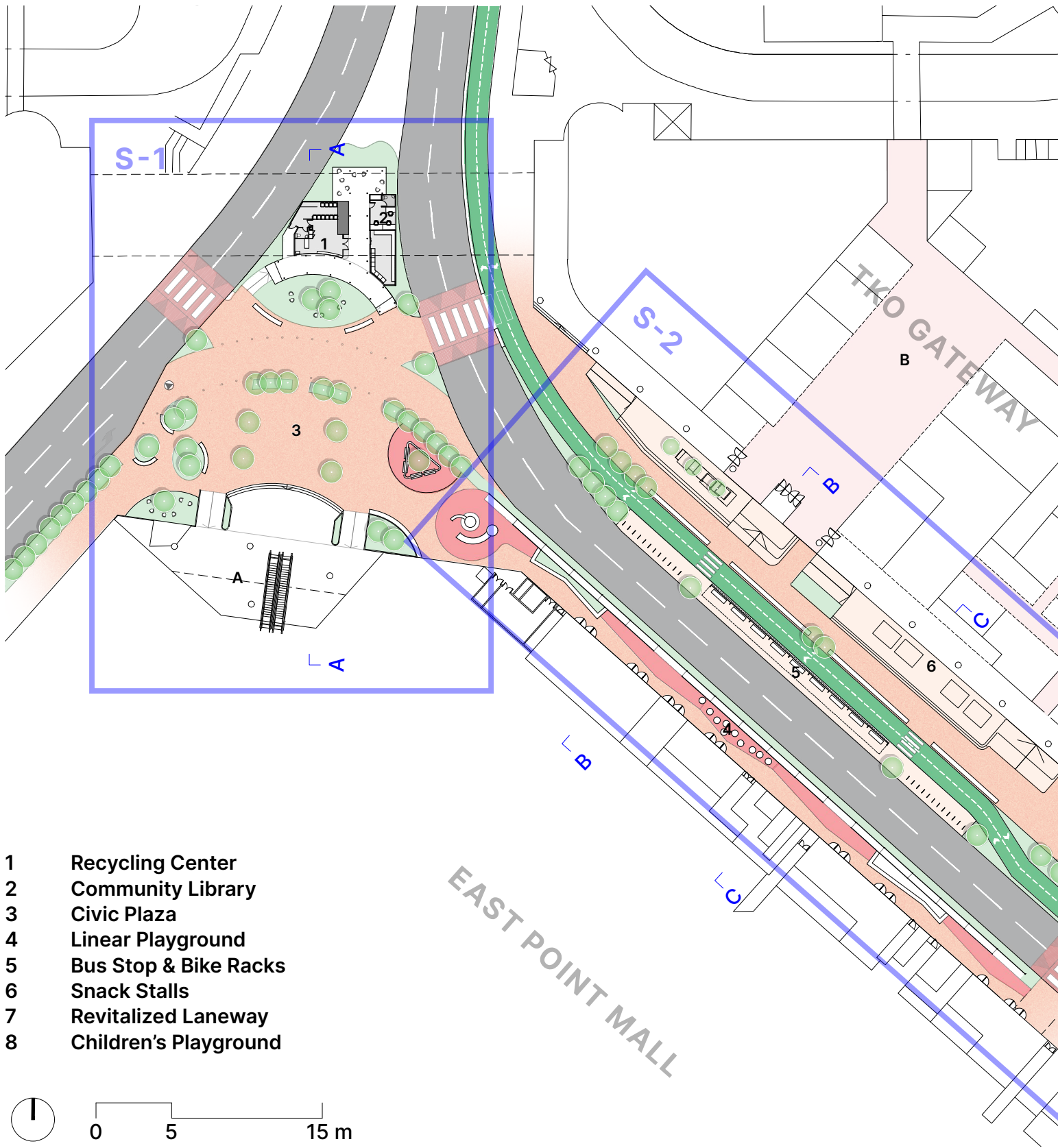


fig. 5.25 Eastern Community Green Station by HKASD



fig. 5.26 Green@Community Interior, HKGOV



- 1 Recycling Center
- 2 Community Library
- 3 Civic Plaza
- 4 Linear Playground
- 5 Bus Stop & Bike Racks
- 6 Snack Stalls
- 7 Revitalized Laneway
- 8 Children's Playground

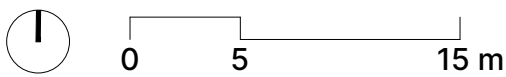


fig. 5.27 Master Layout Plan, 1:1500



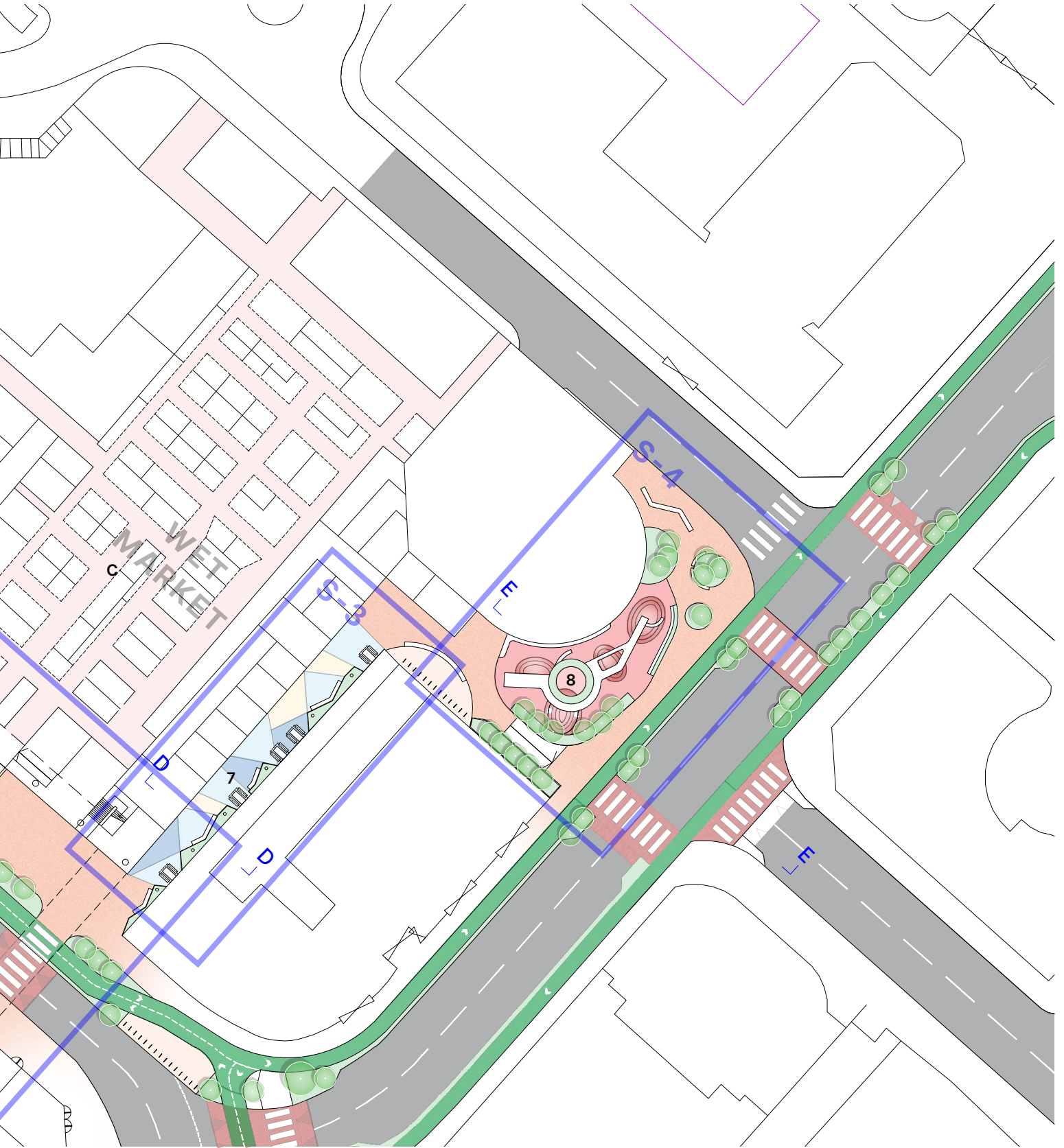




fig. 5.28 Existing Condition of Site 1



*Plaza only for  
Circulation*

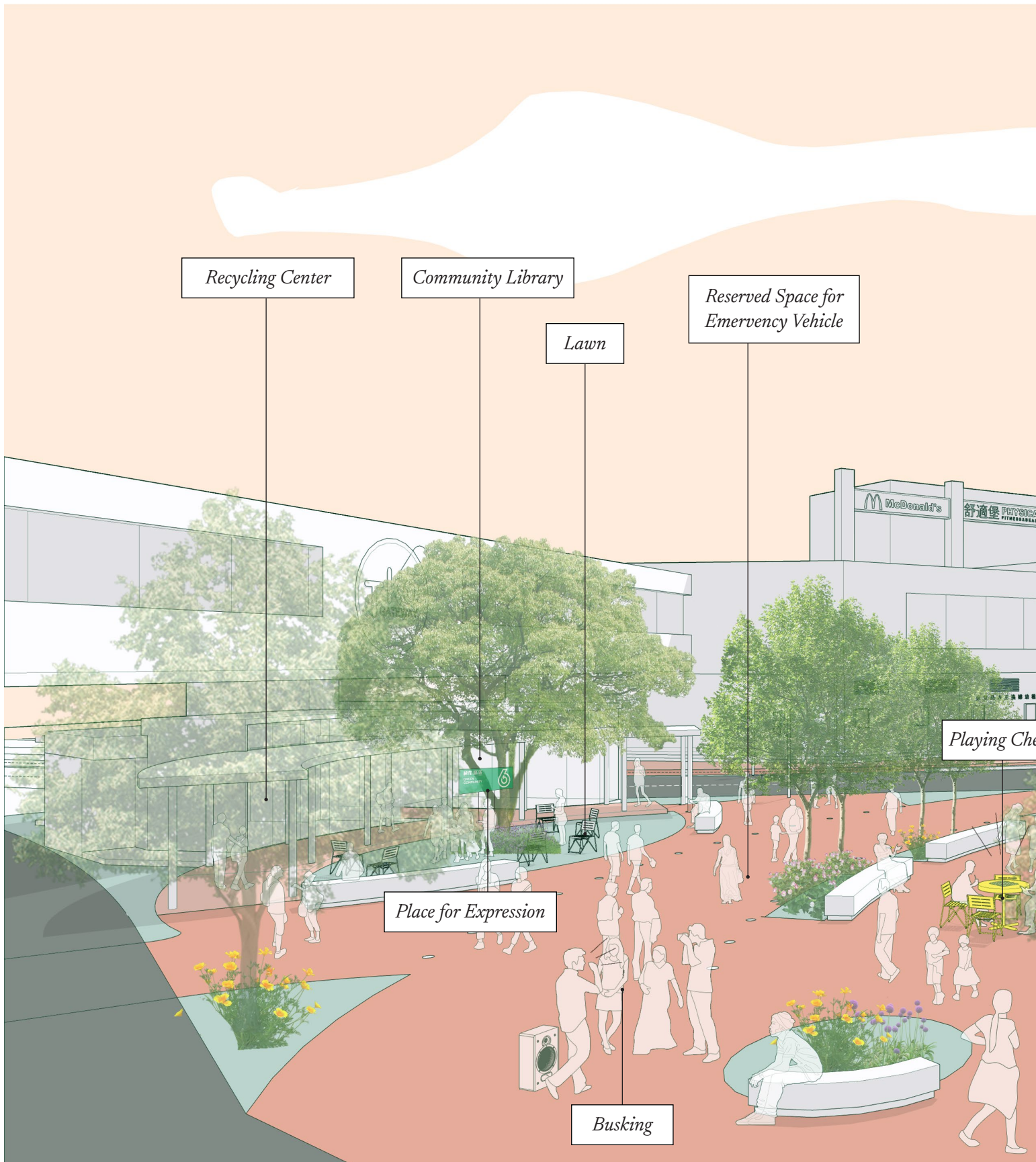
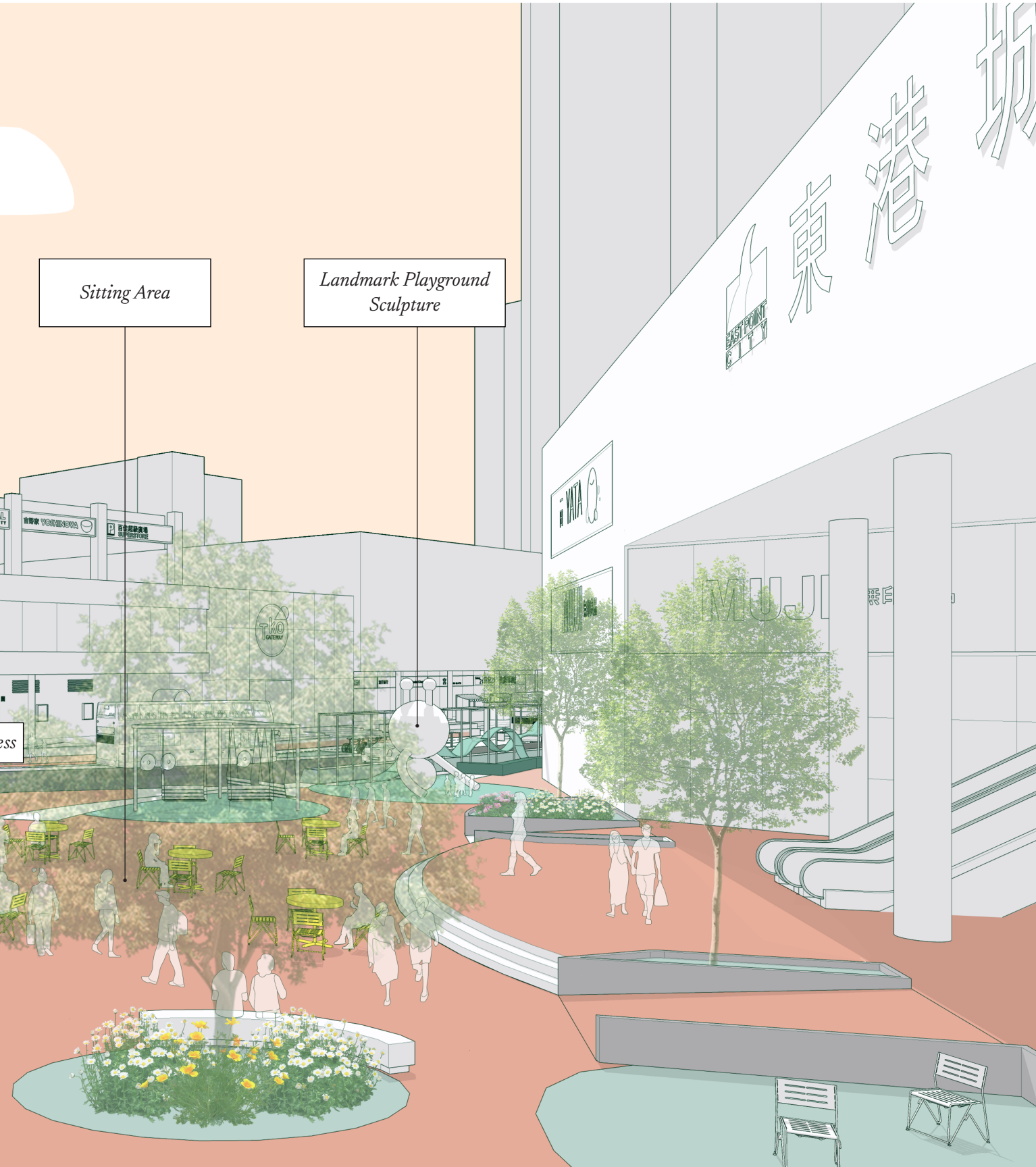


fig. 5.29 Proposed Design of Site 1 - Regular Seating at the Civic Plaza



Sitting Area

Landmark Playground Sculpture

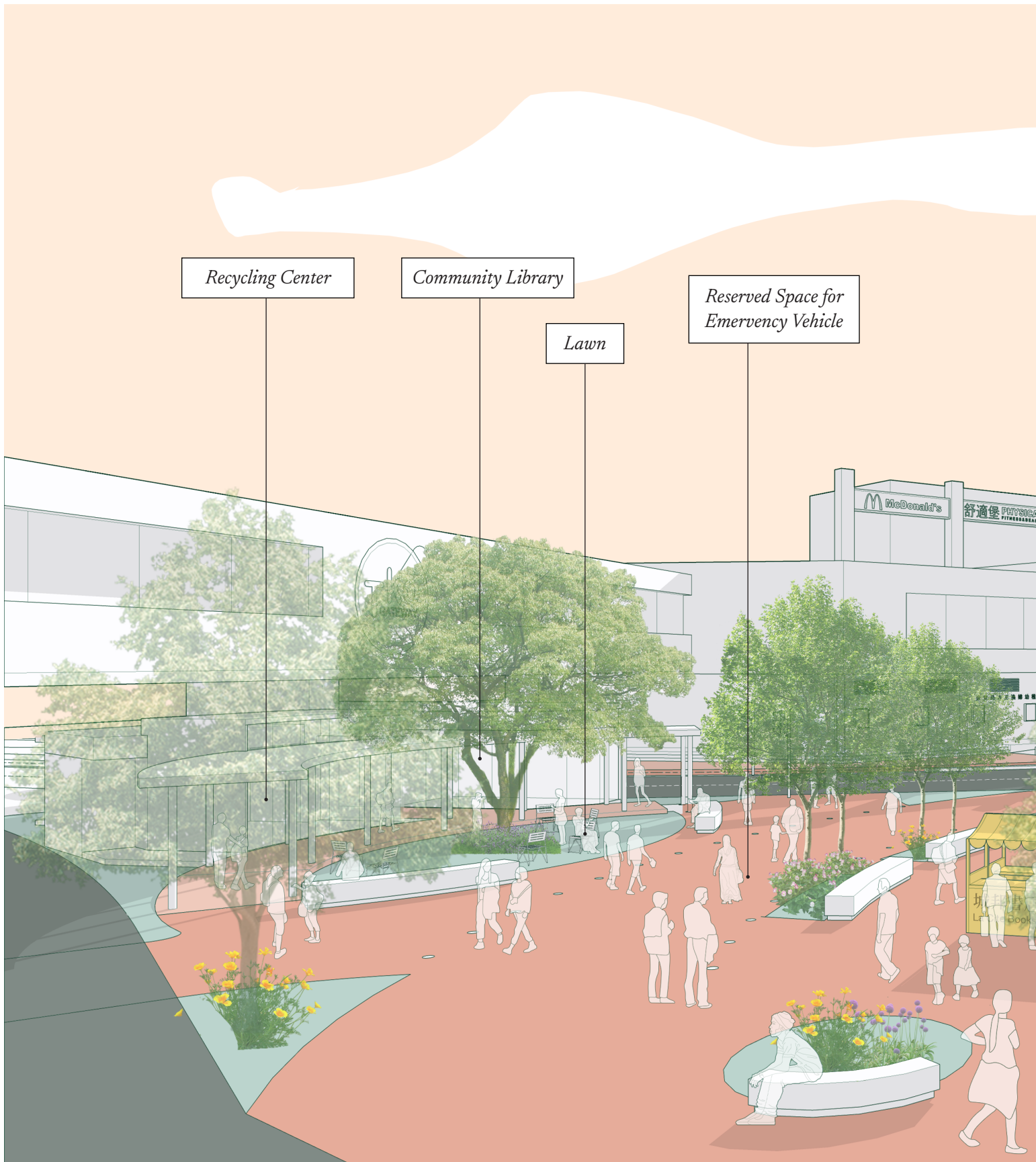
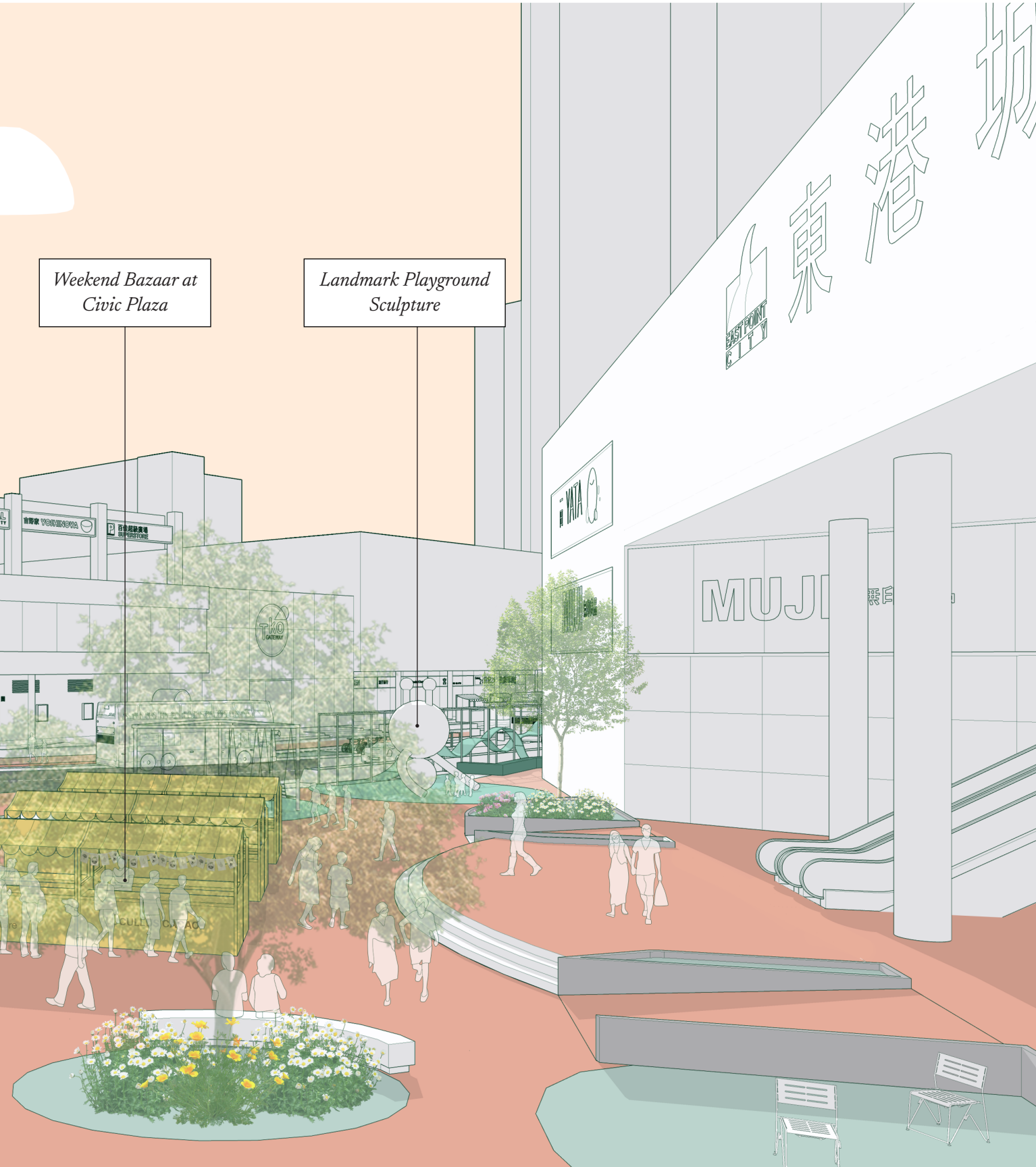


fig. 5.30 Proposed Design of Site 1 - Weekend Bazaar at the Civic Plaza



*Weekend Bazaar at Civic Plaza*

*Landmark Playground Sculpture*

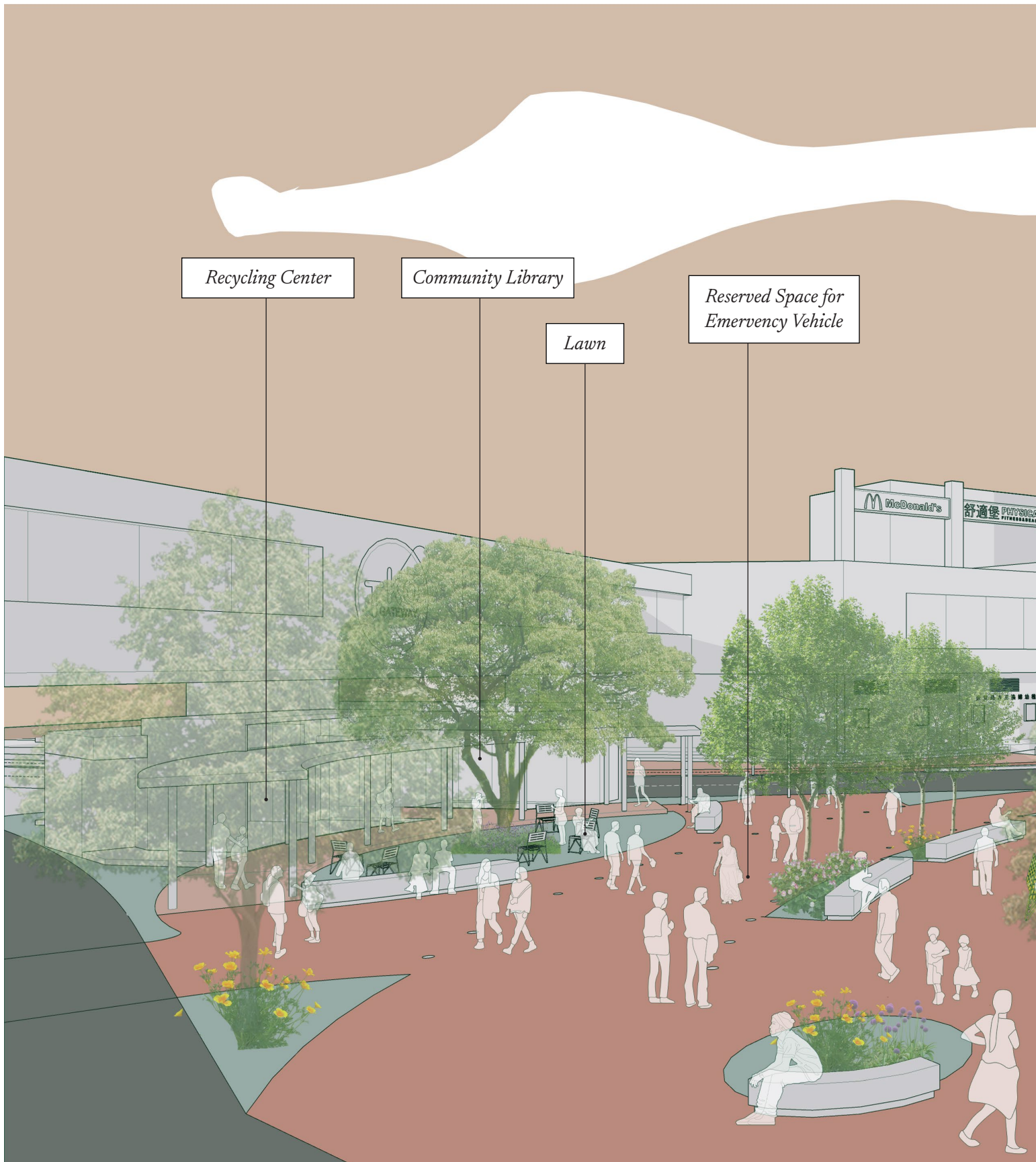
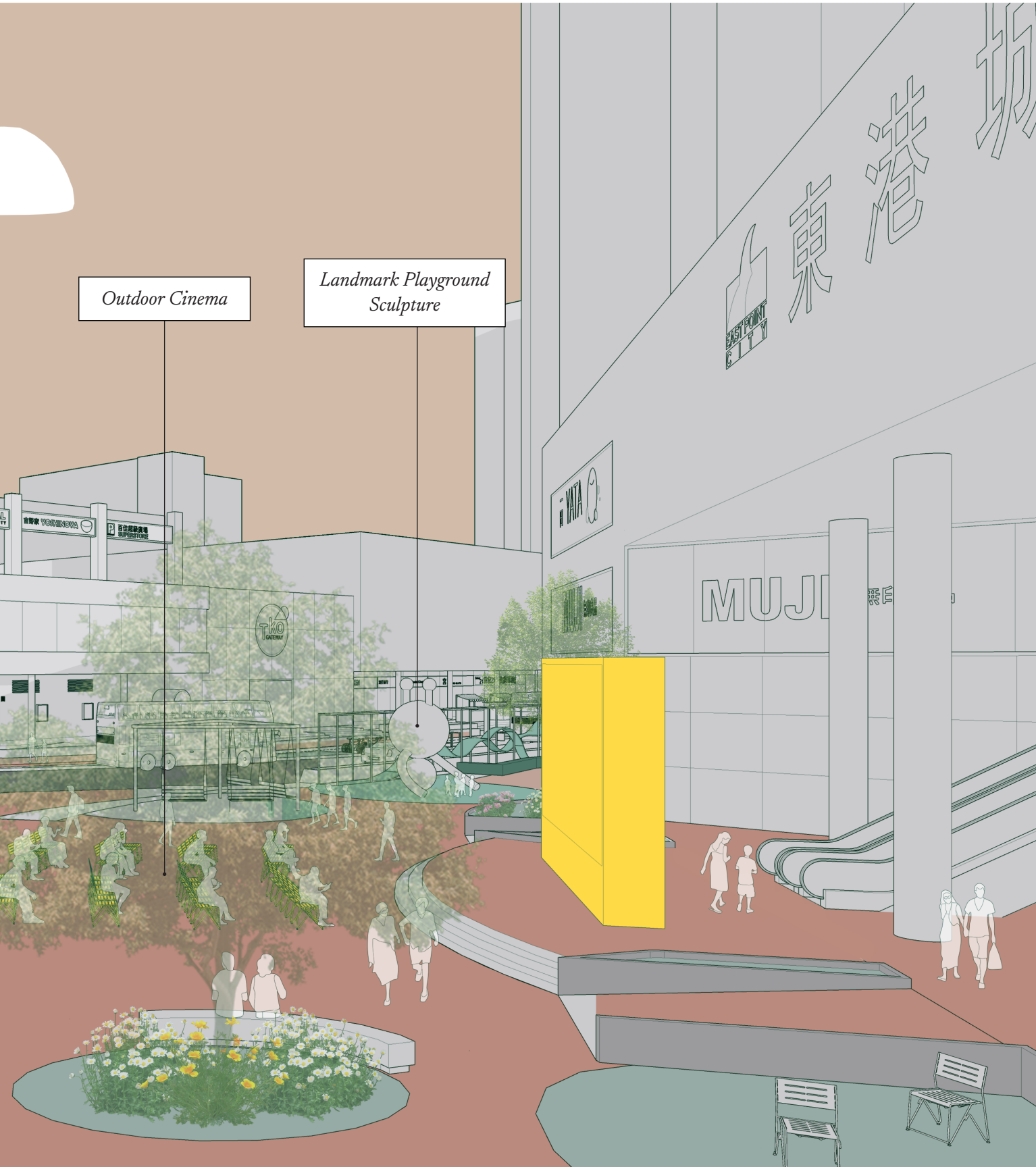


fig. 5.31 Proposed Design of Site 1 - Outdoor Cinema at the Civic Plaza



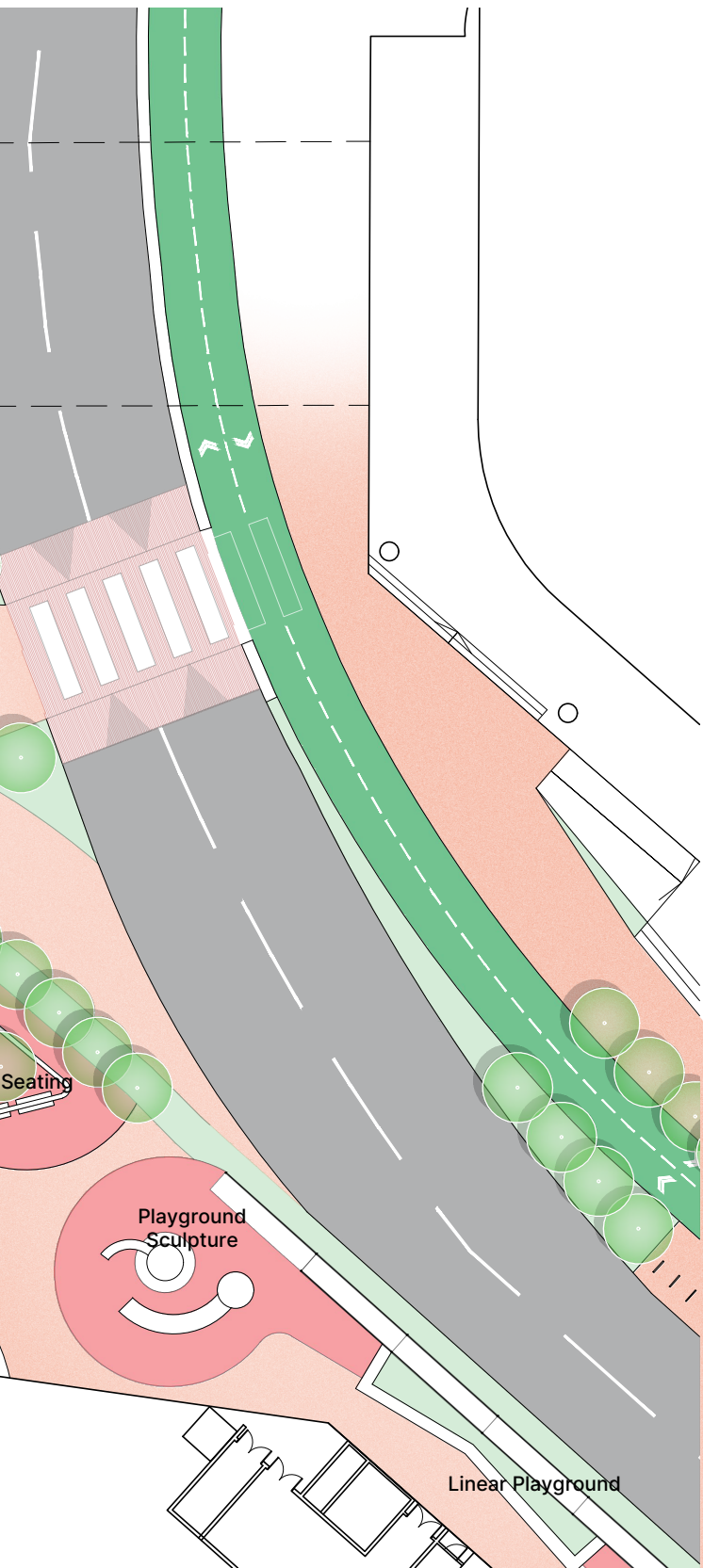


Outdoor Cinema

Landmark Playground Sculpture



fig. 5.32 Proposed Design of Site 1 - 1:300



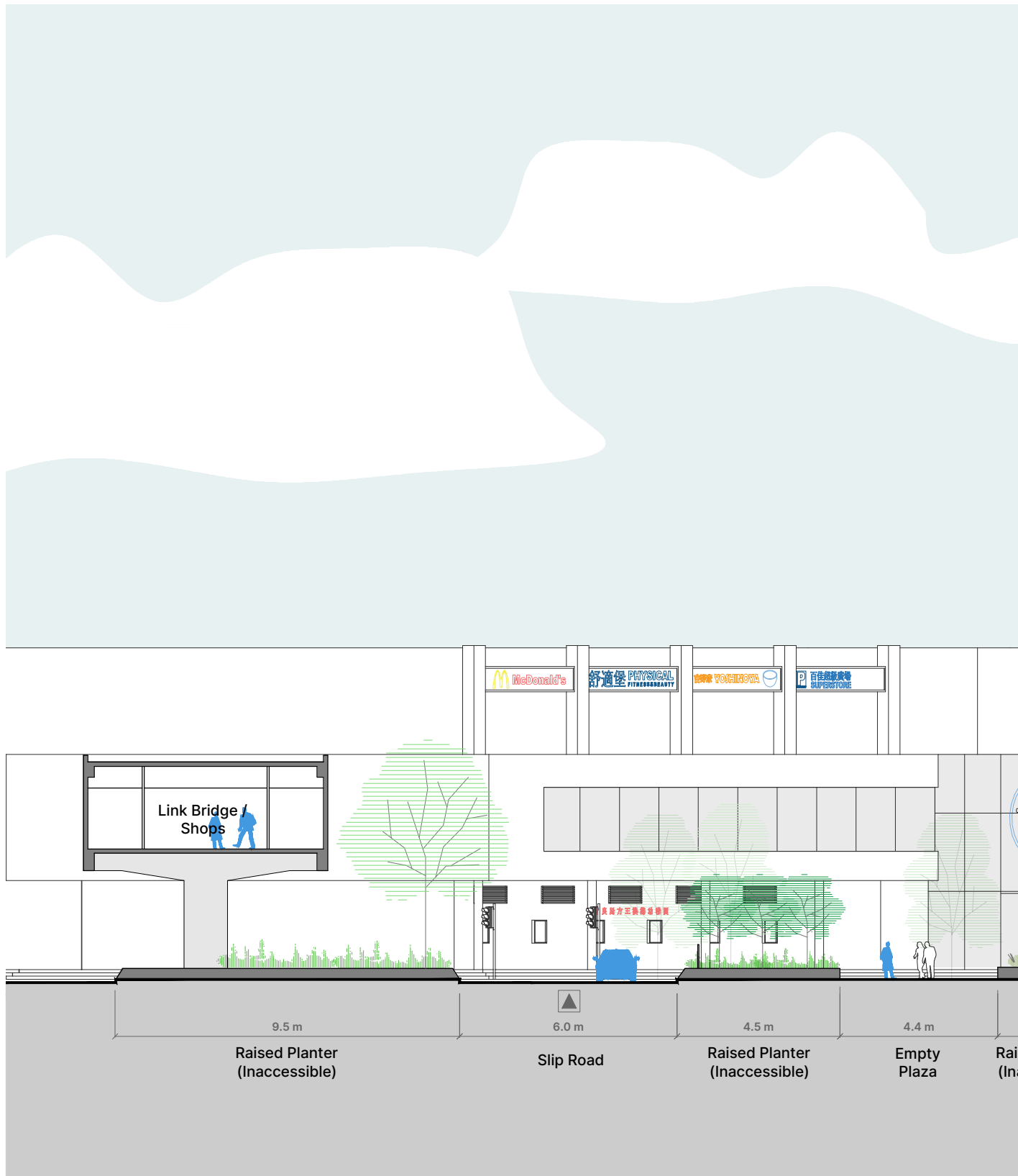


fig. 5.33 Existing Condition of Site 1 - 1:250

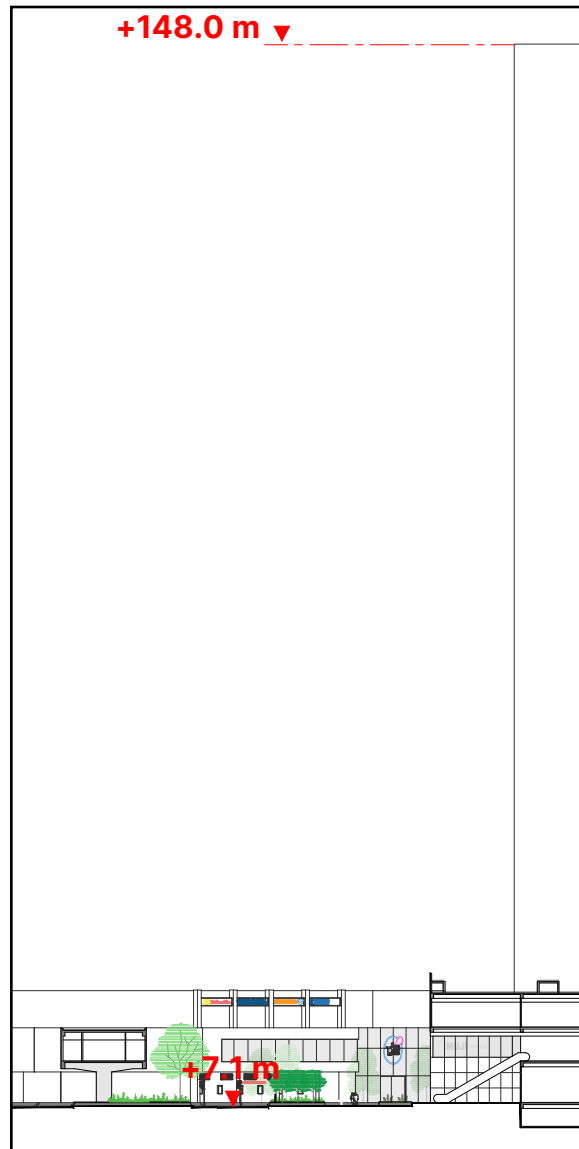
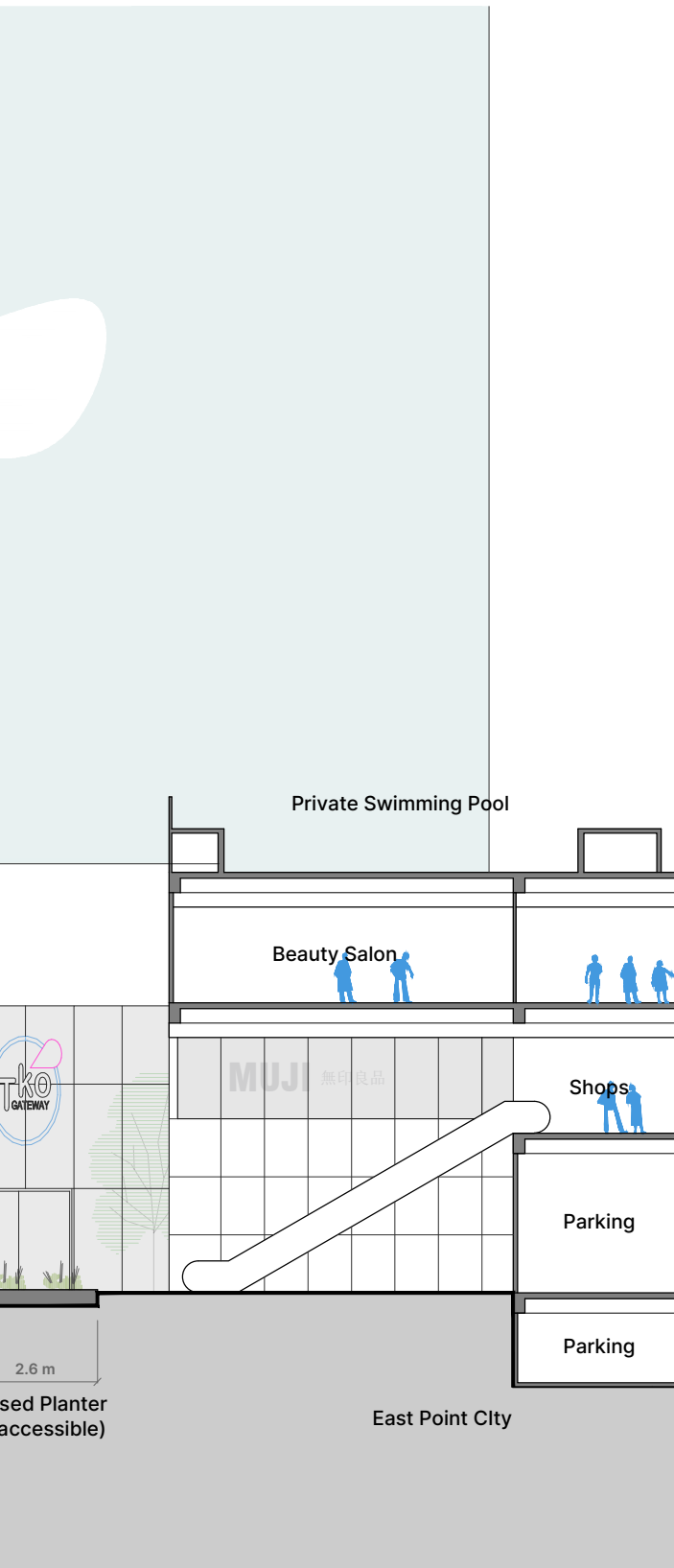
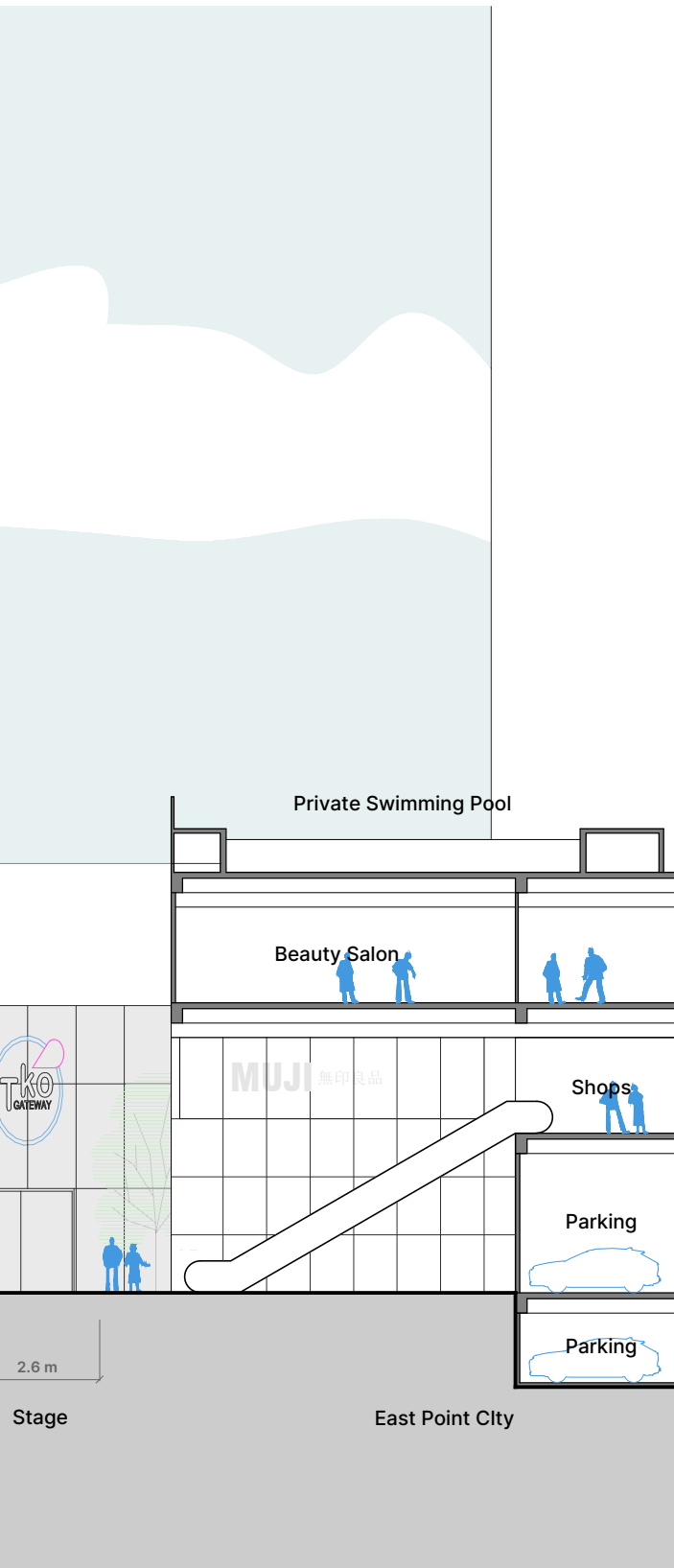


fig. 5.34 Site 1 Key Section 1:1500



fig. 5.35 Proposed Design of Site 1 - Section A-A - 1:250



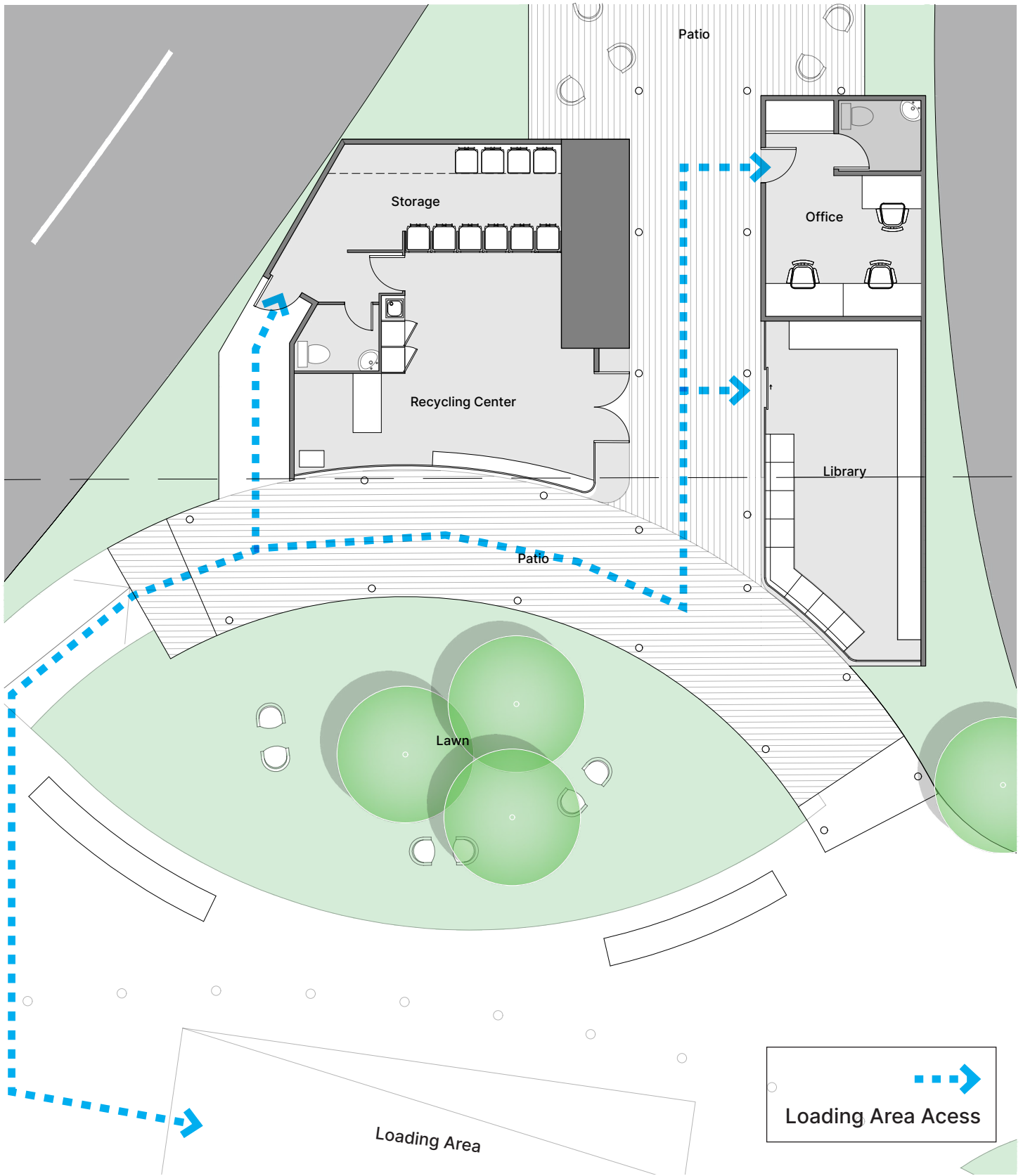


fig. 5.36 Recycling Center and Community Library Pavilion - 1:100



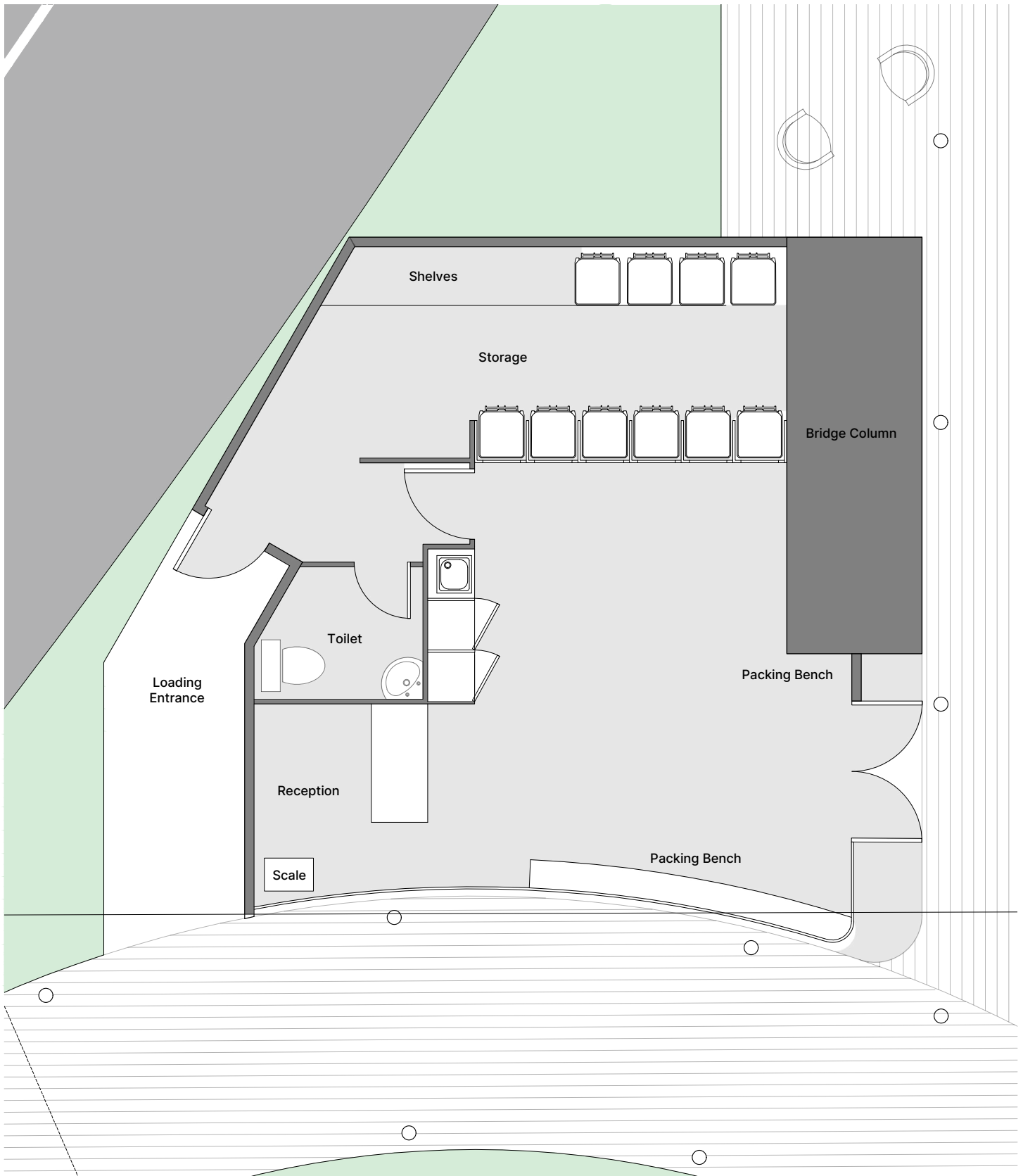


fig. 5.37 Recycling Center - 1:50

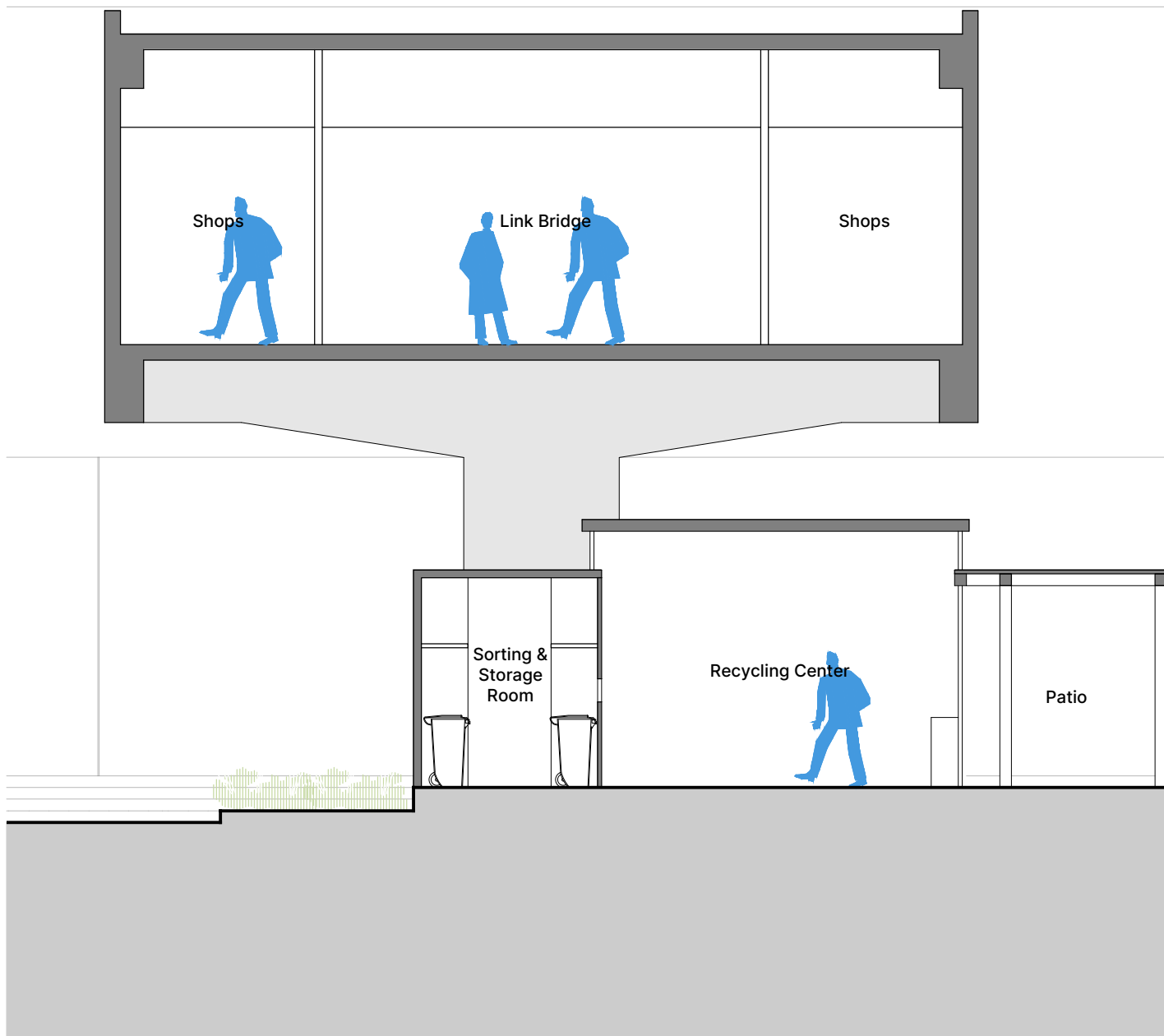


fig. 5.38 Recycling Center - 1:80

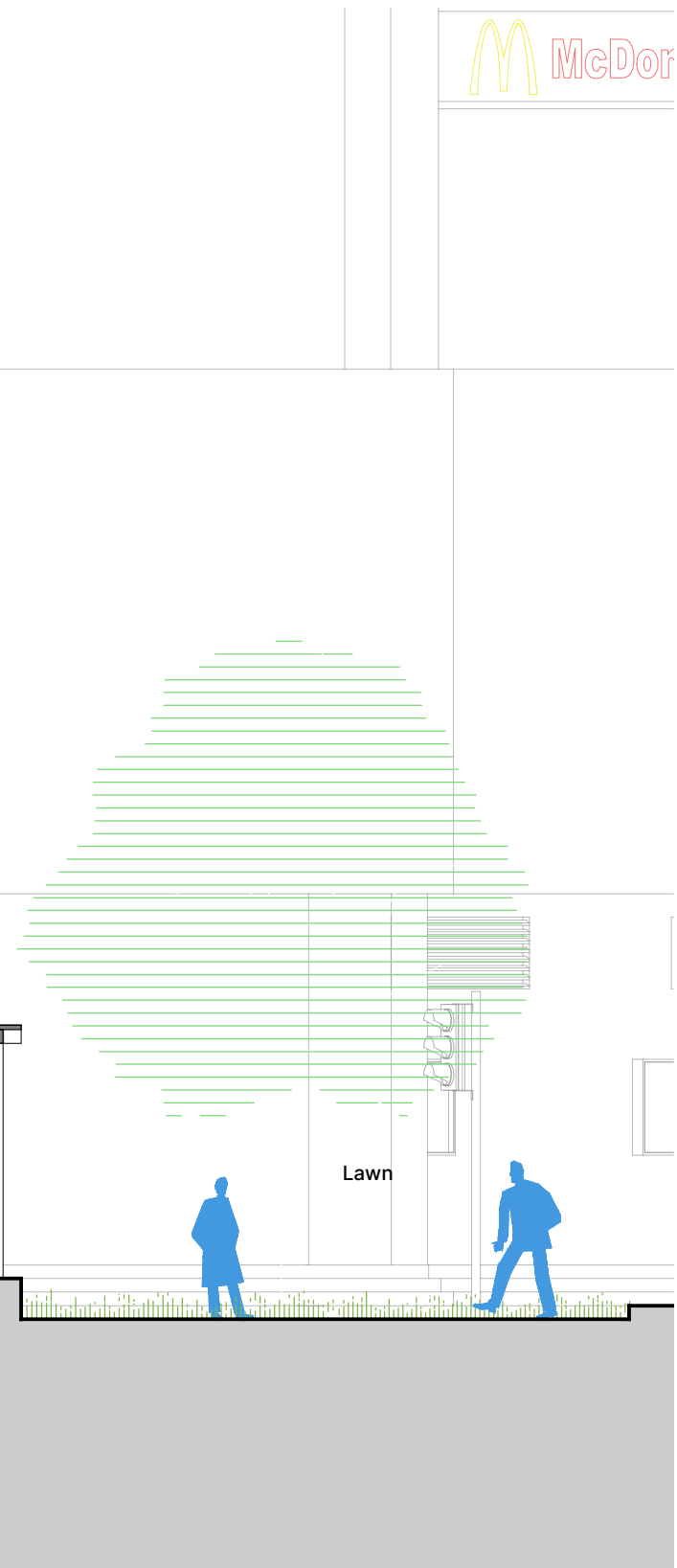




fig. 5.39 Existing Condition of Site 2



*4-lane Road*

*Underused Service Lane*

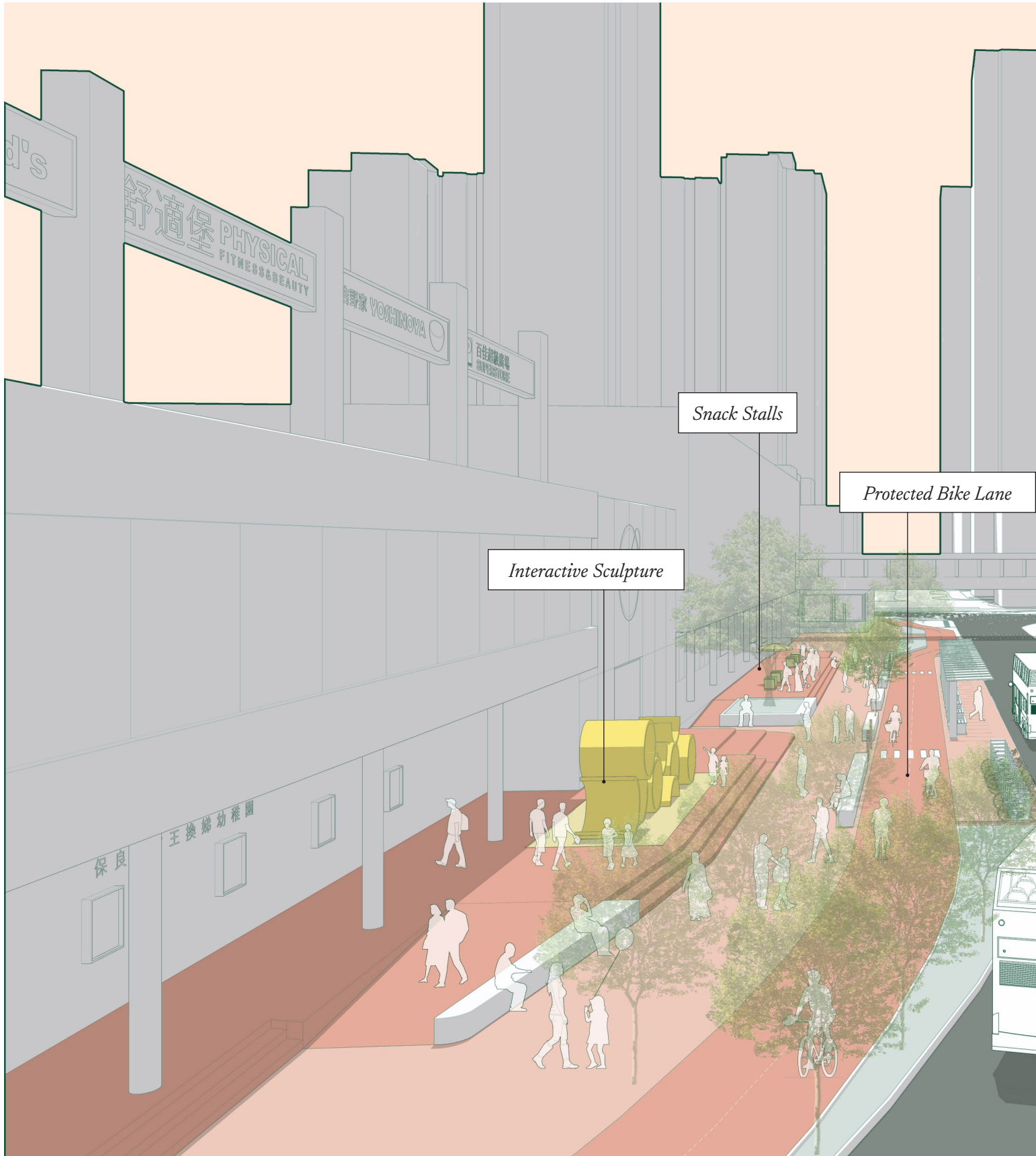
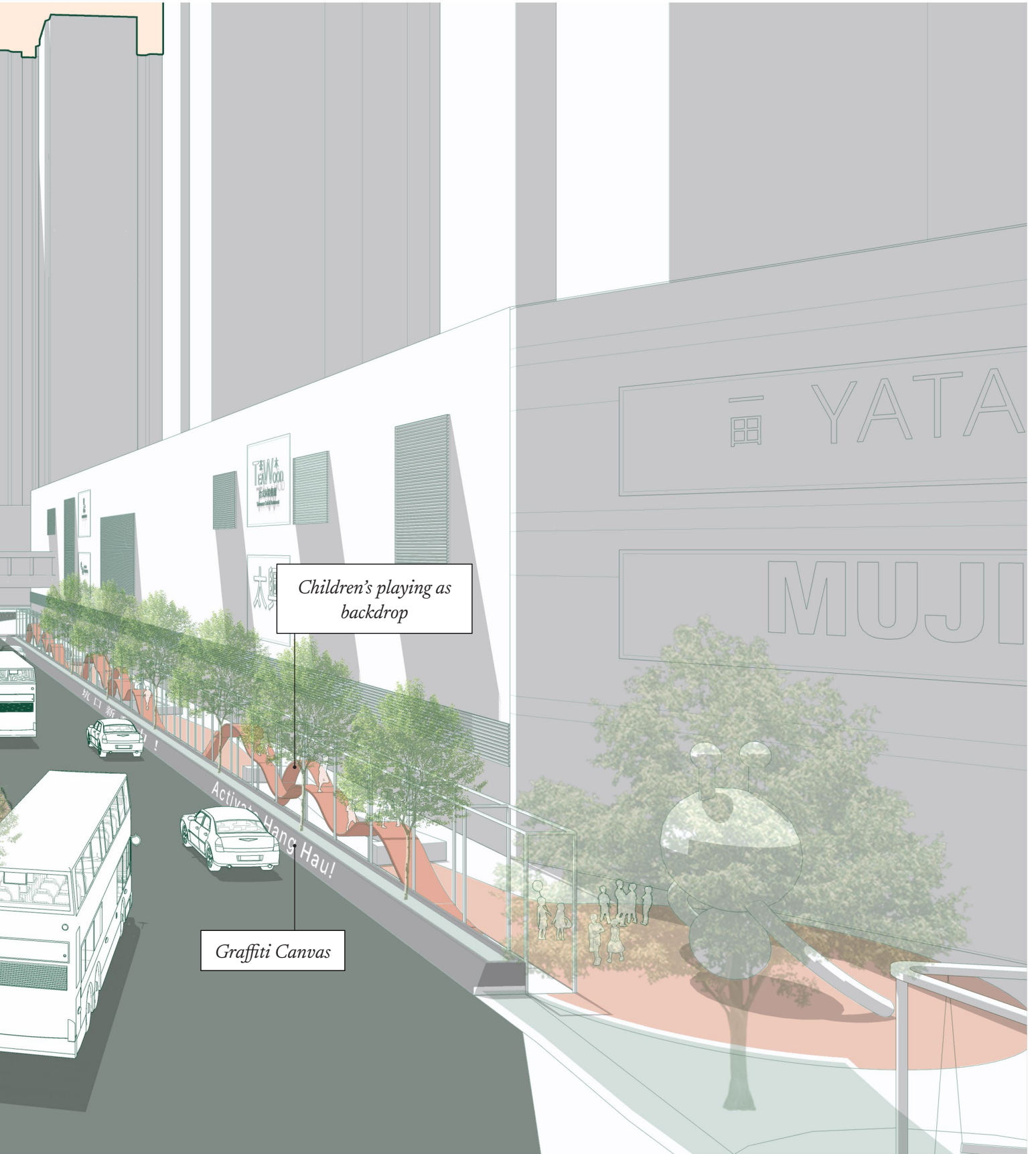


fig. 5.40 Proposed Design of Site 2 - Pedestrian Mall



*Children's playing as backdrop*

*Graffiti Canvas*

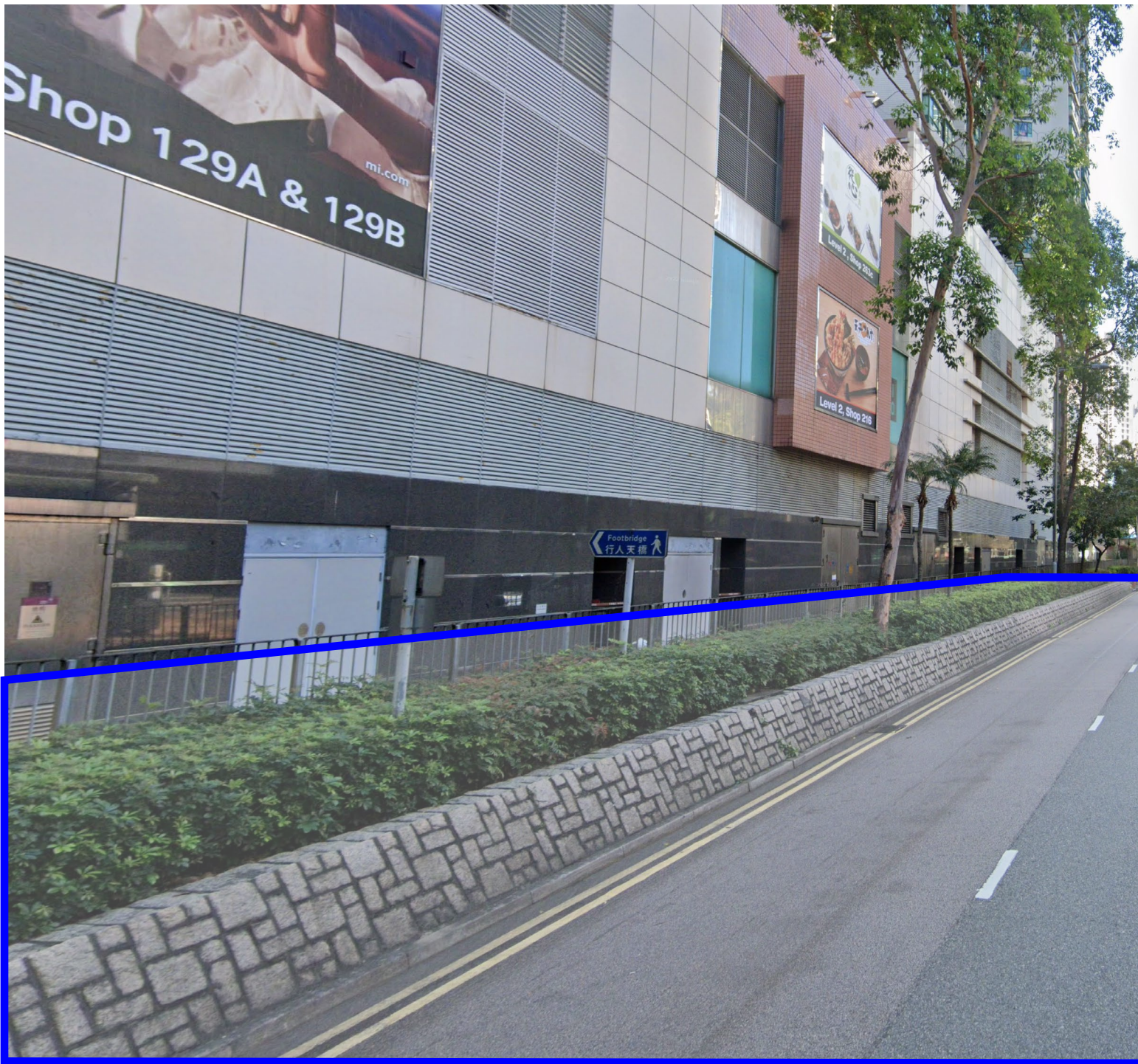


fig. 5.41 Existing Condition of Site 2





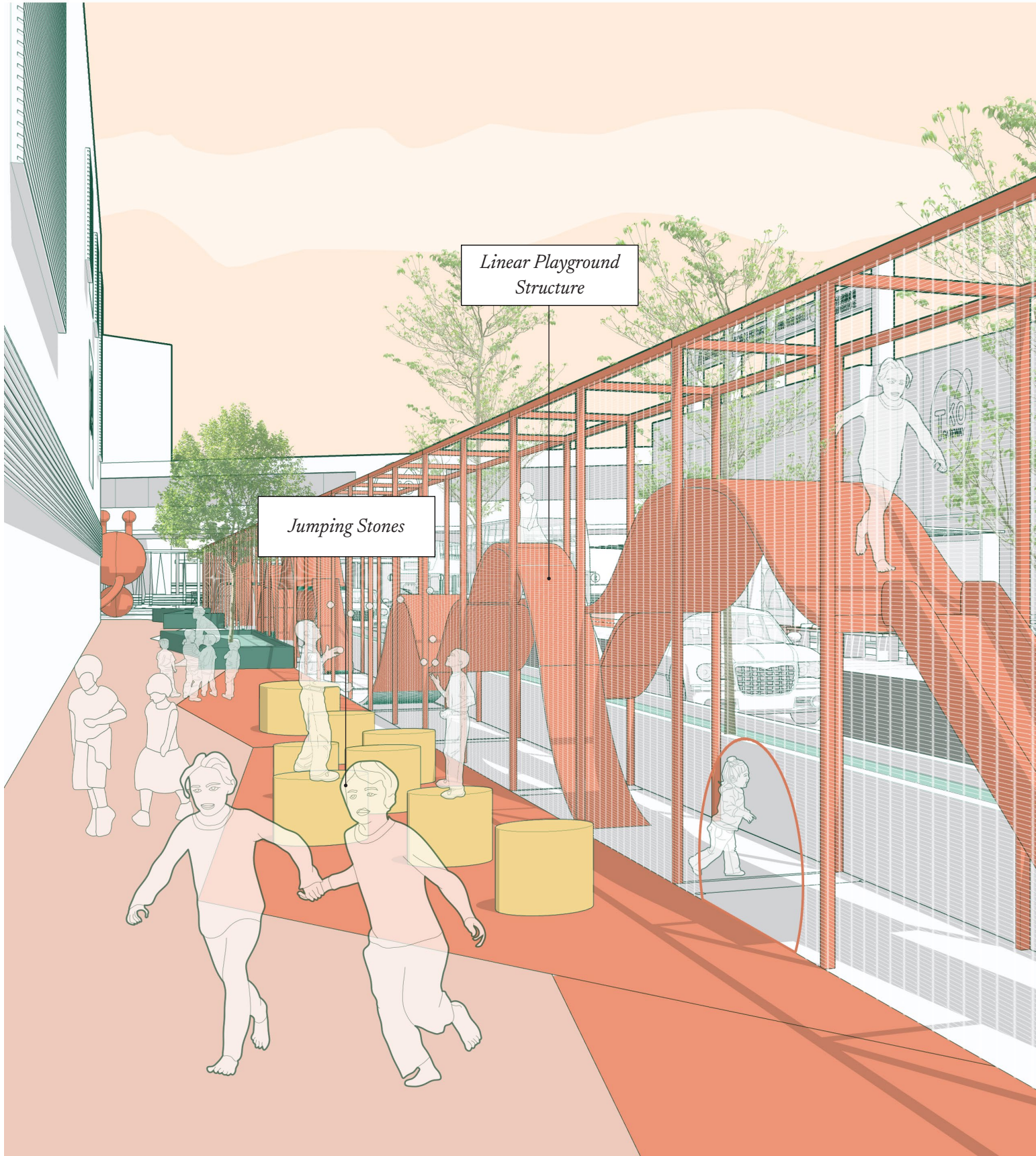


fig. 5.42 Proposed Design of Site 2 - Linear Playground



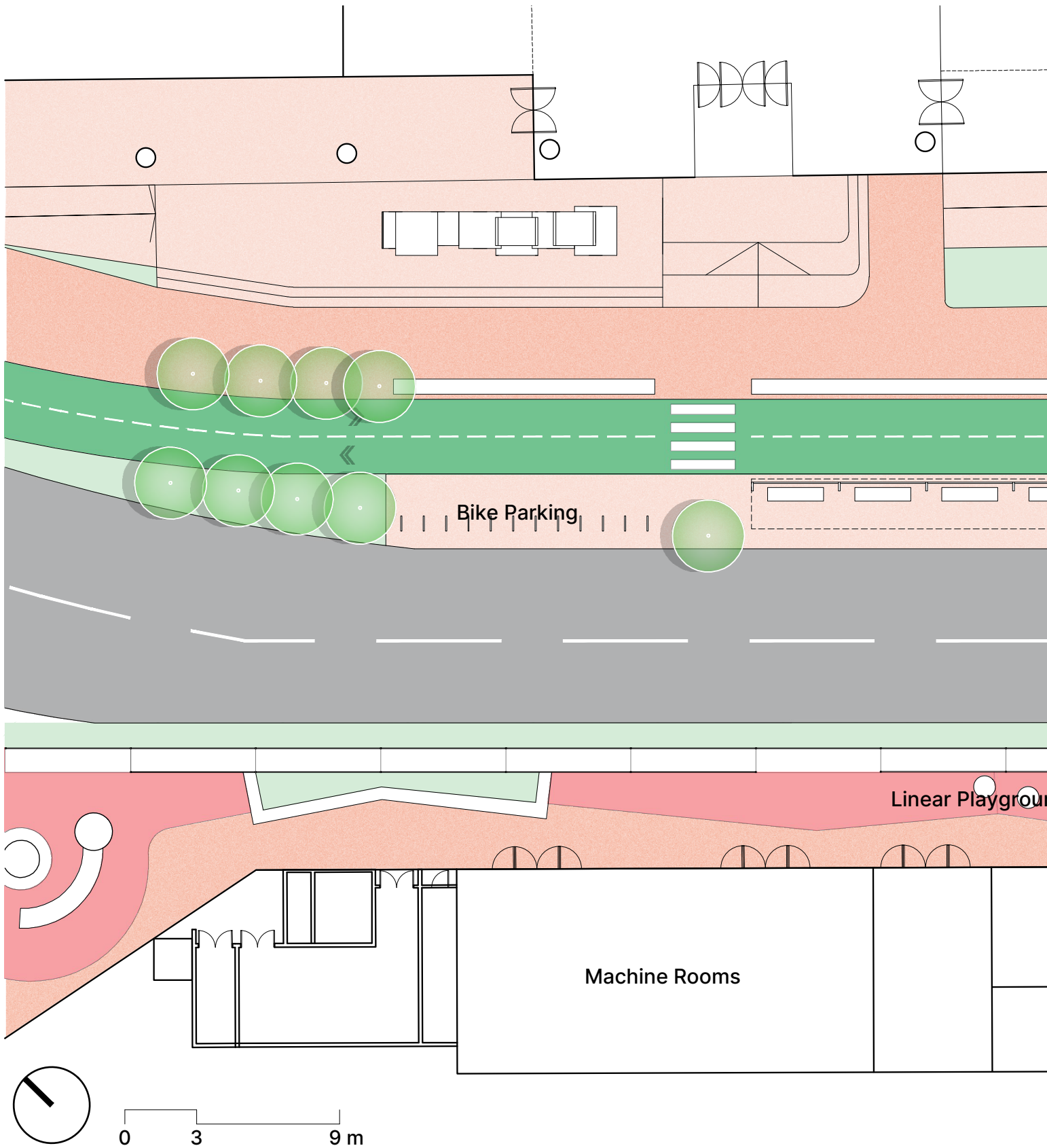
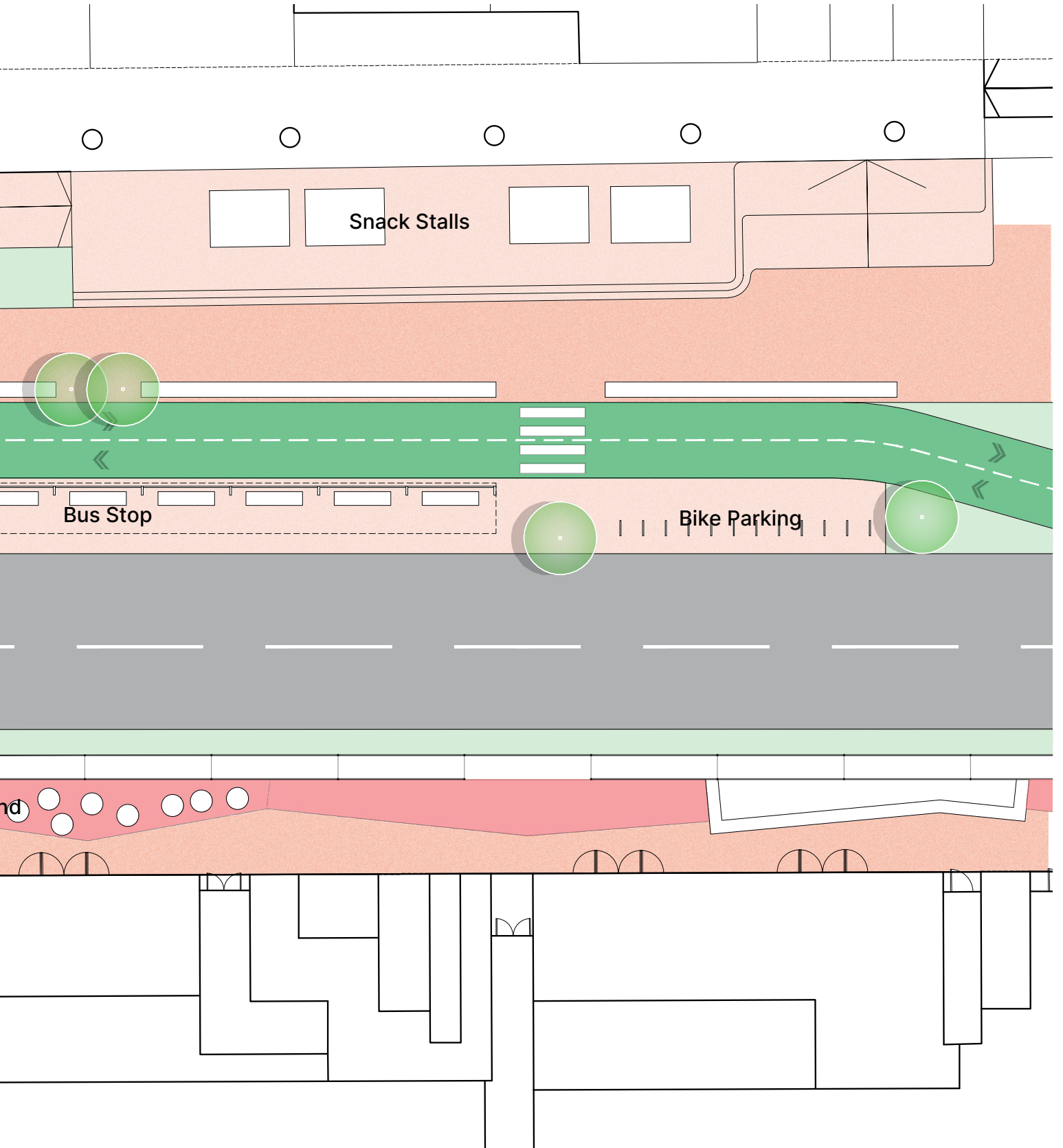


fig. 5.43 Proposed Design of Site 2 - 1:250



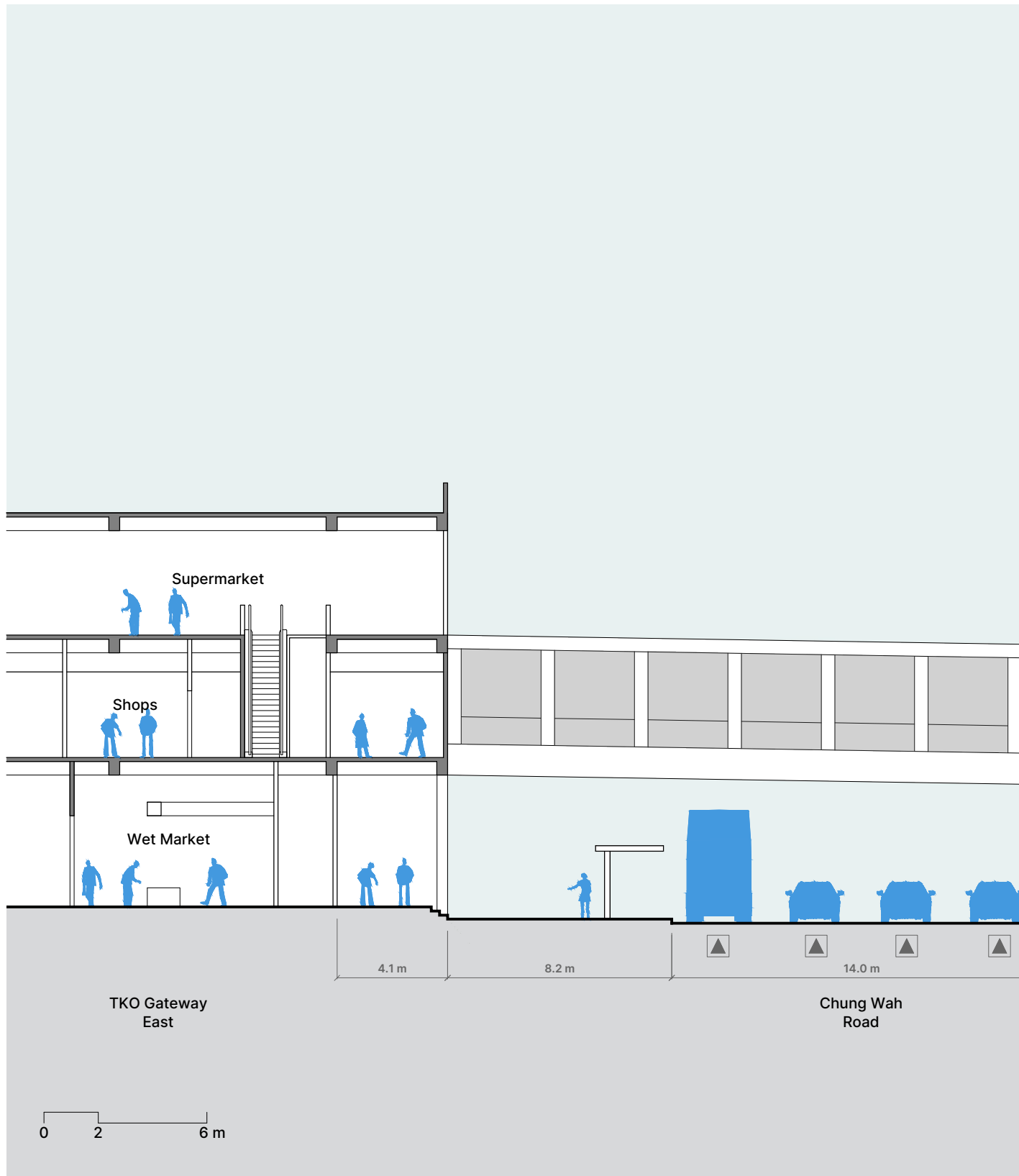


fig. 5.44 Existing Condition of Site 2 - 1:200

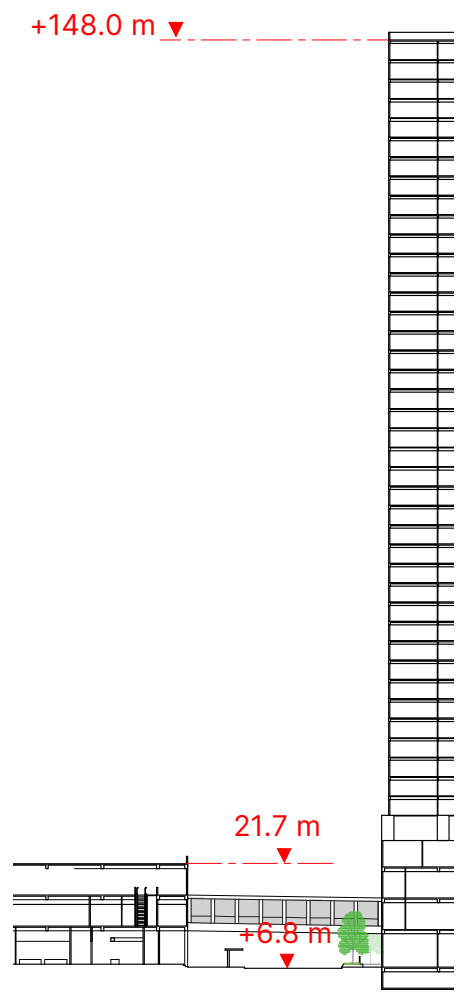
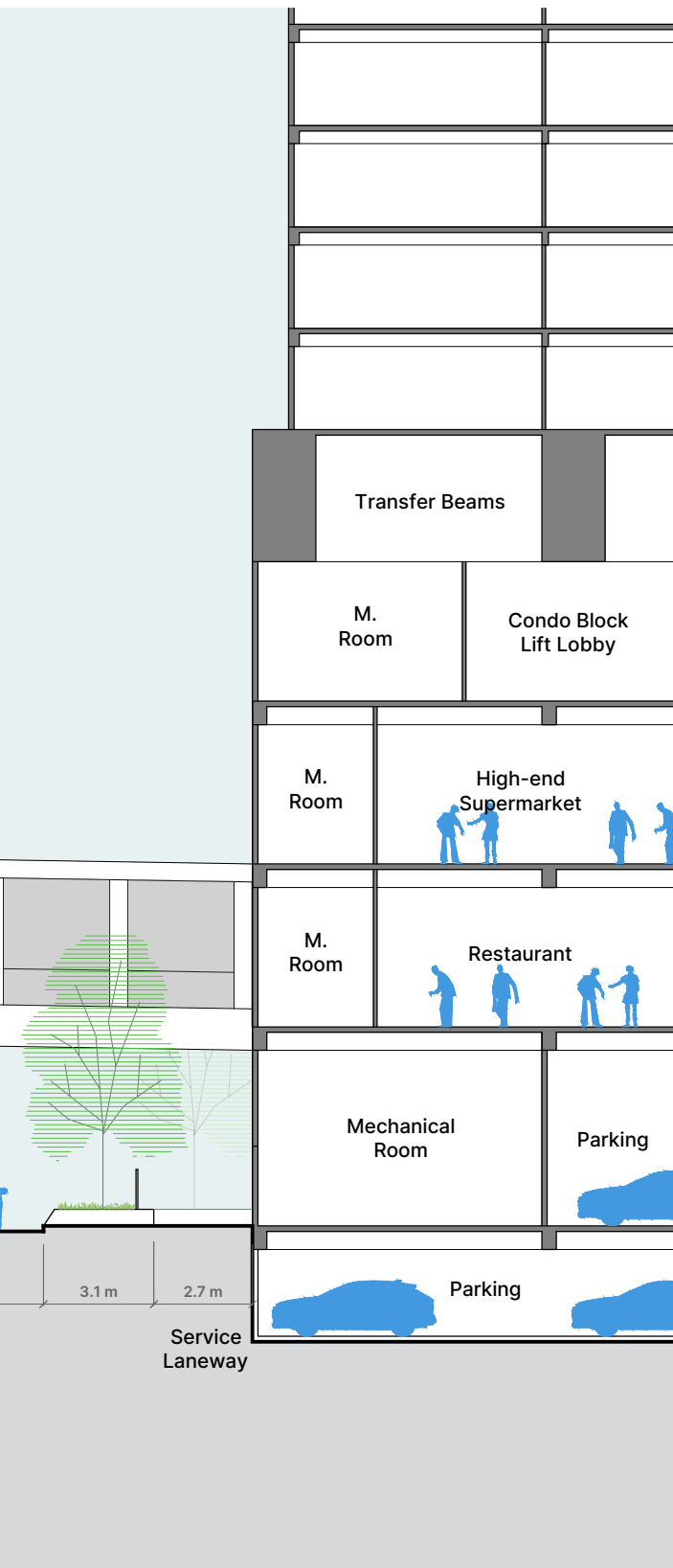


fig. 5.45 Key Section of Site 2, 1:1000

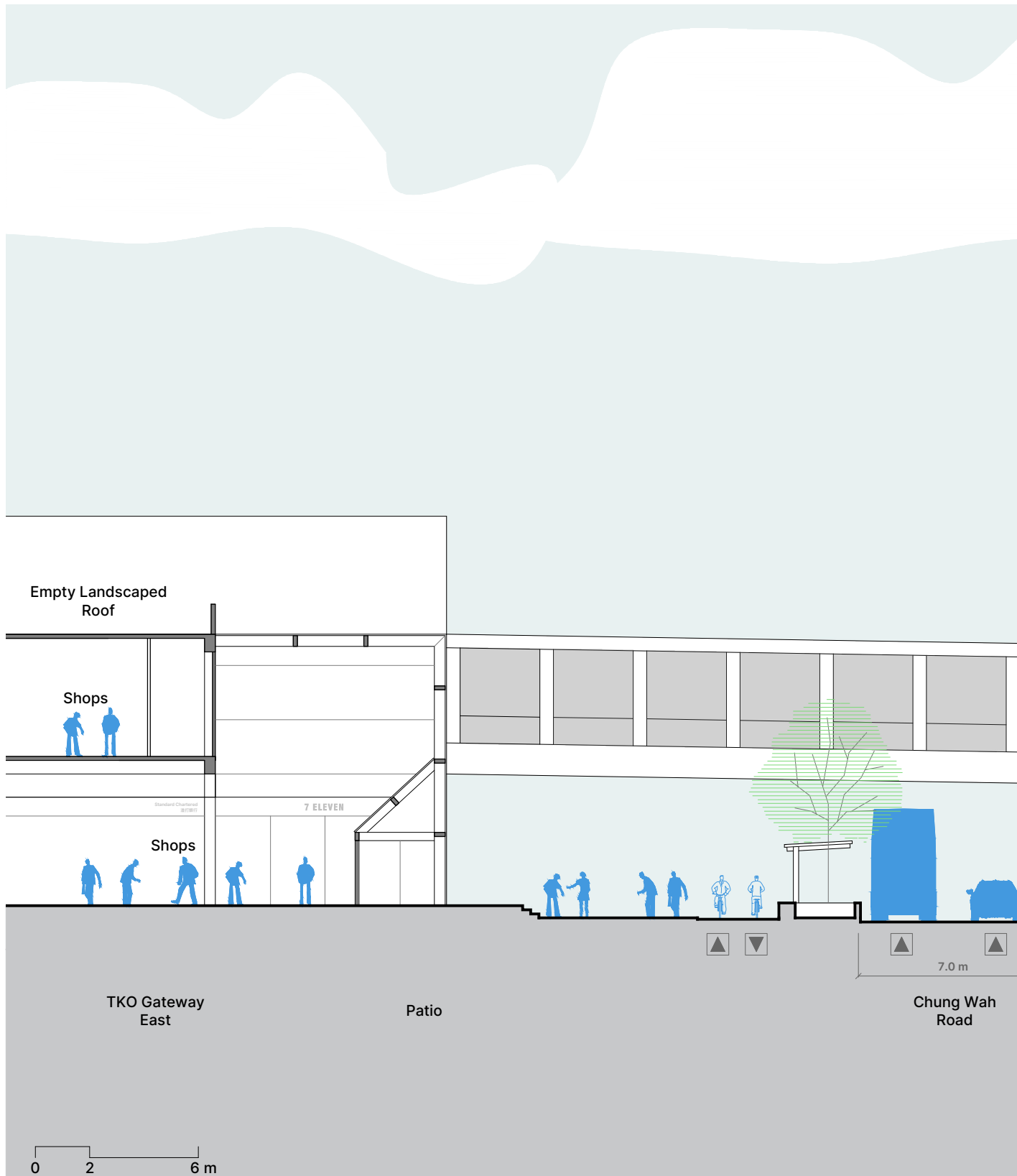
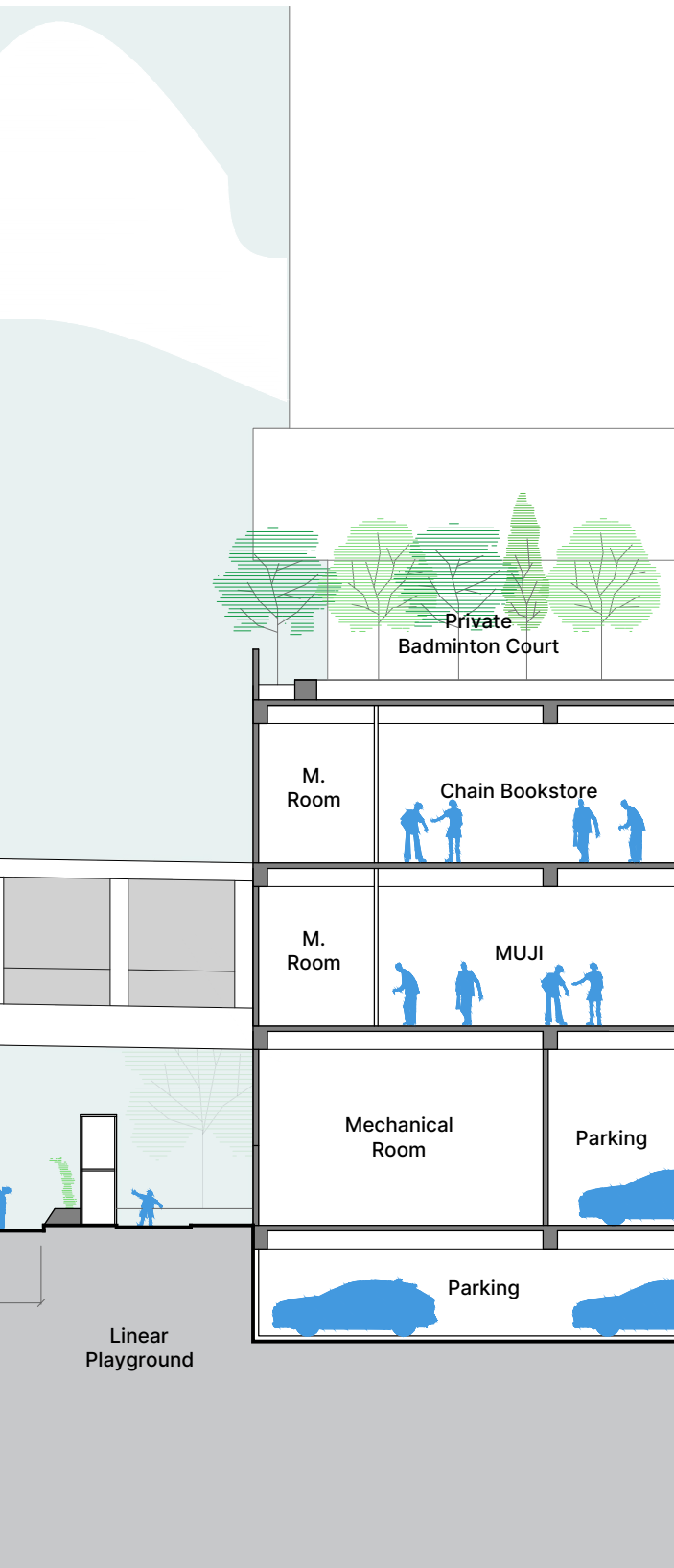


fig. 5.46 Proposed Design of Site 2 - Section B-B - 1:200





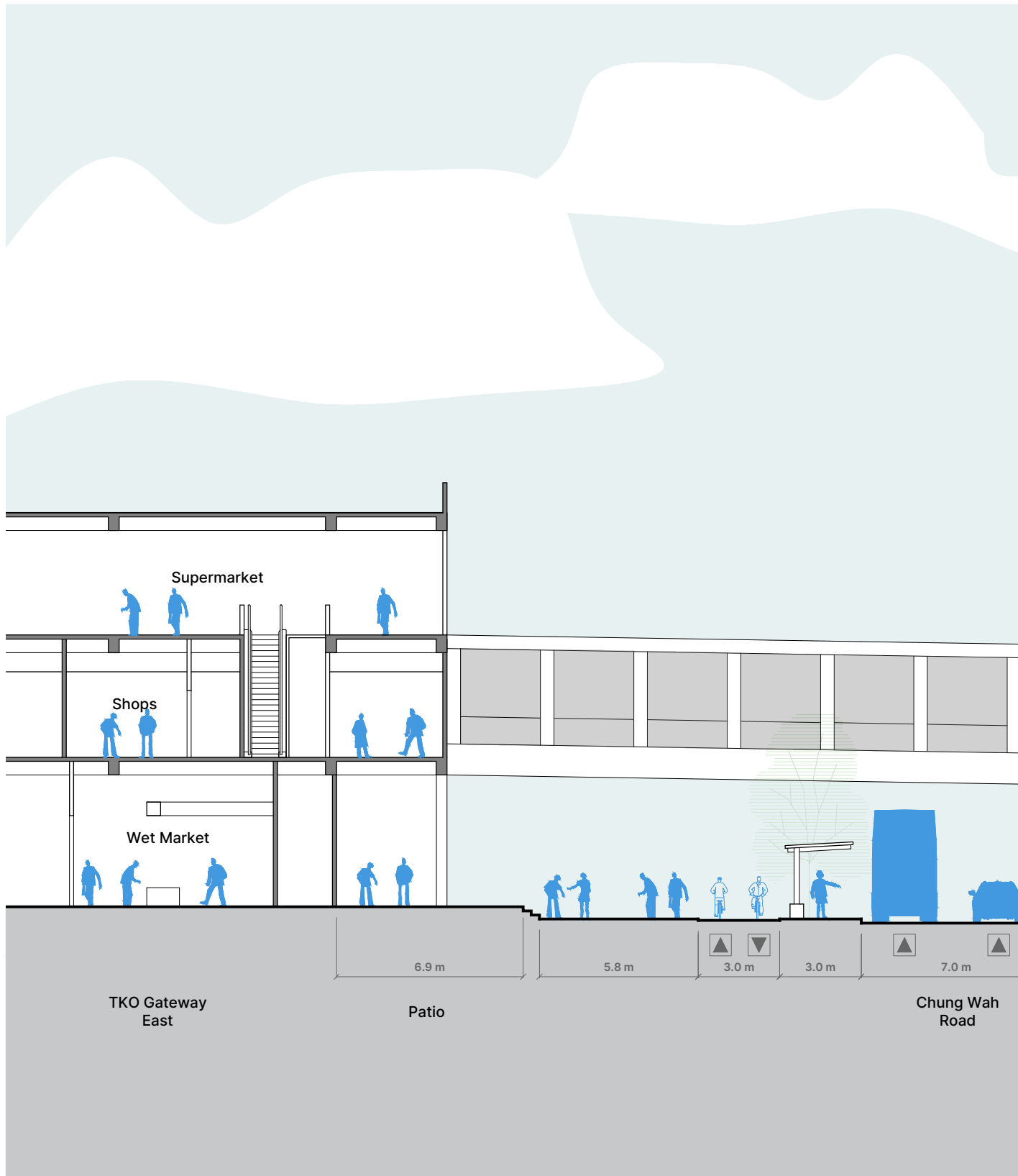
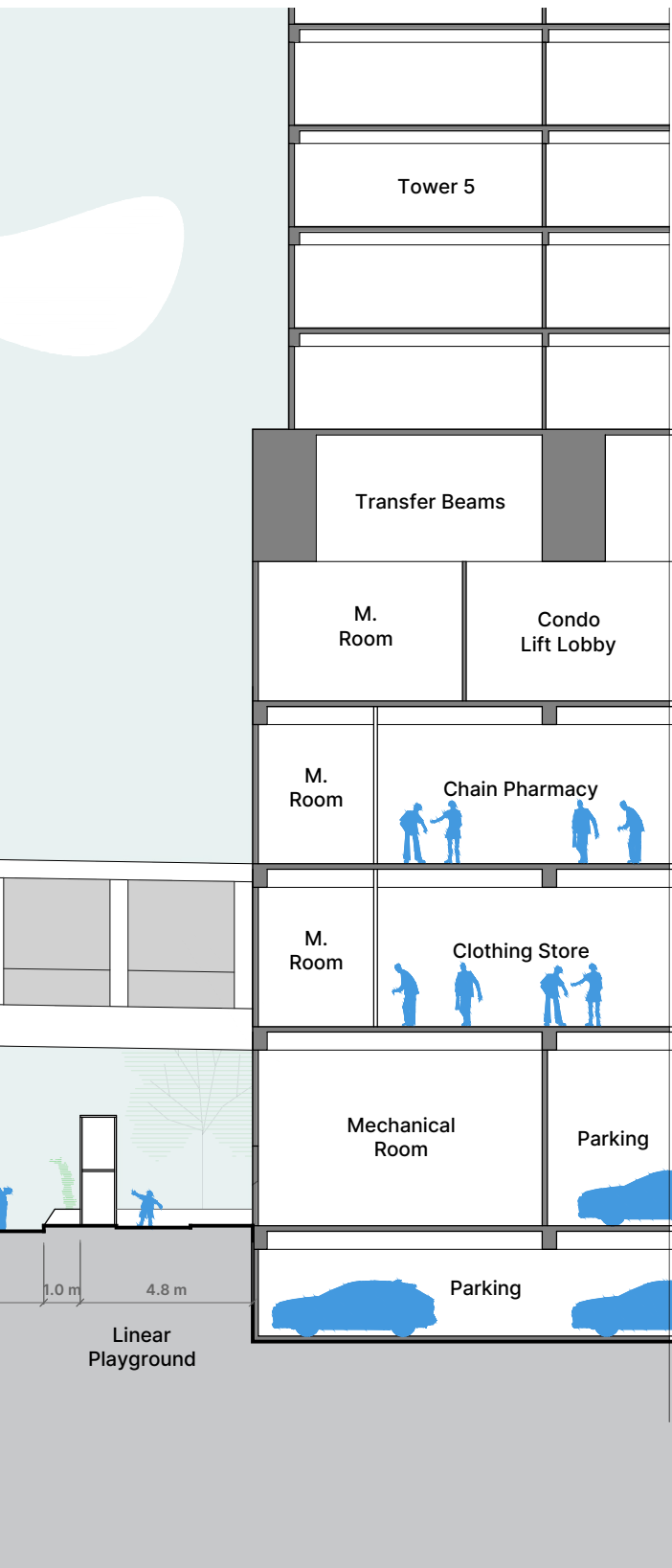


fig. 5.47 Proposed Design of Site 2 - Section C-C - 1:200



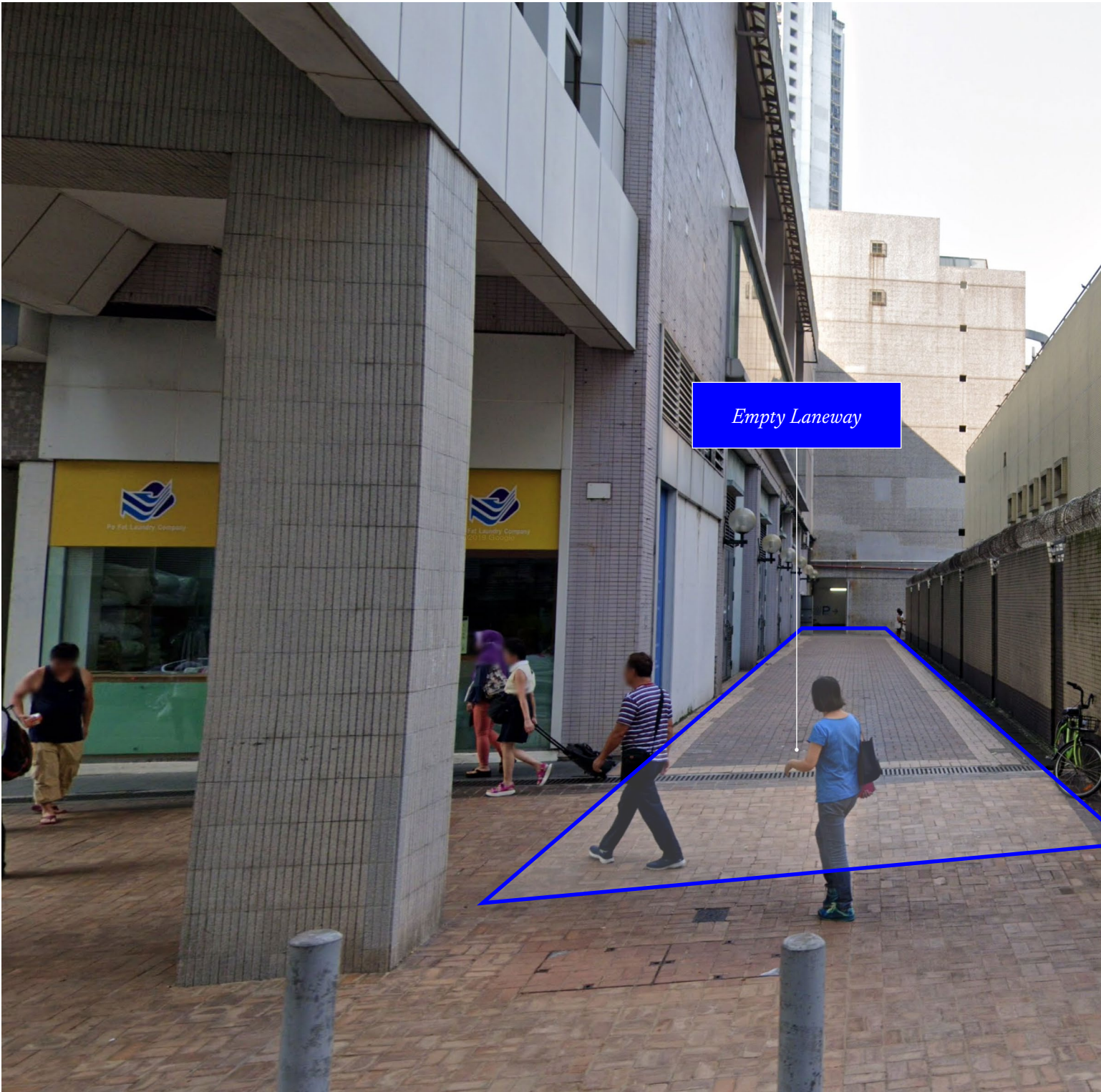


fig. 5.48 Existing Condition of Site 3



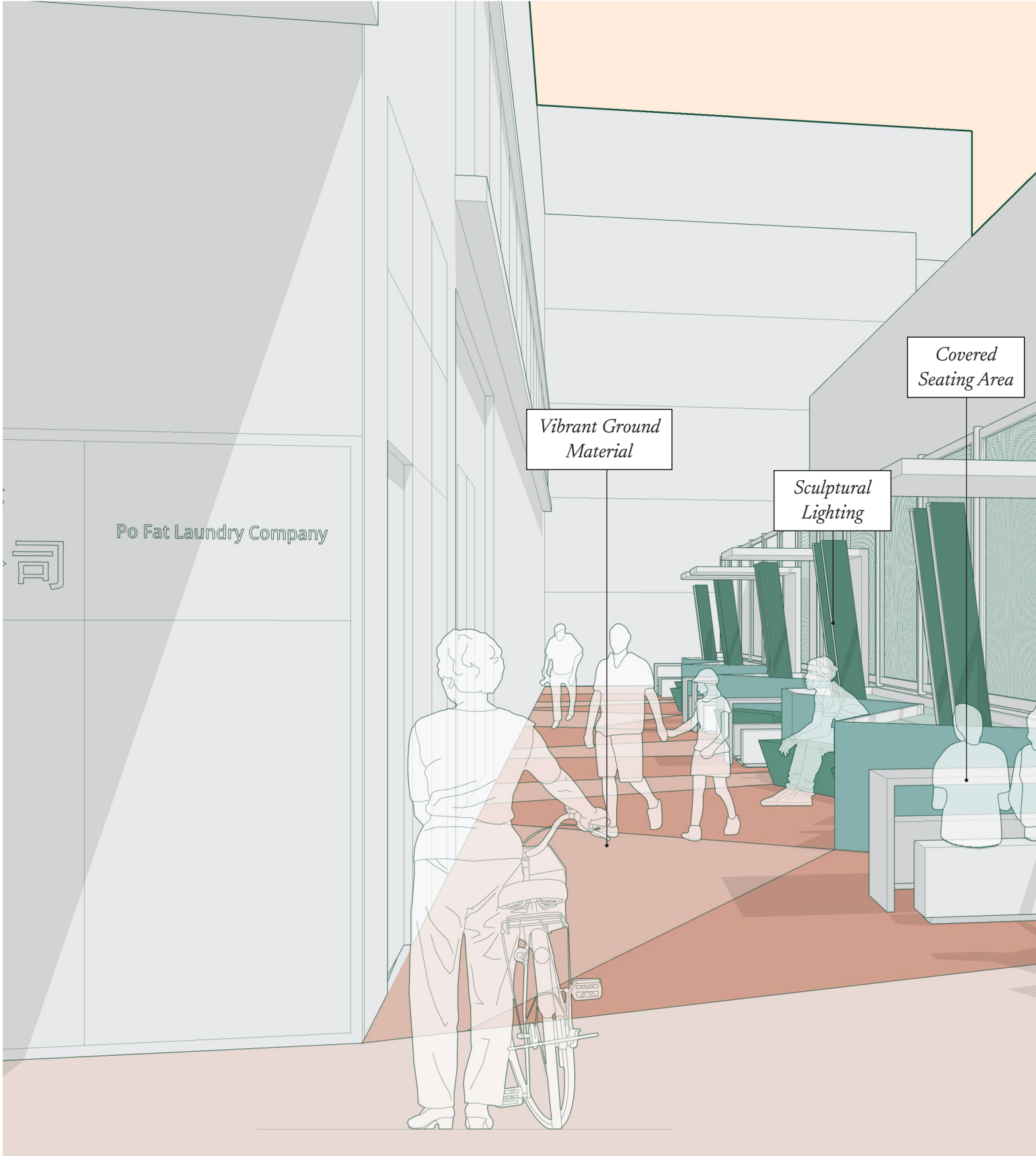


fig. 5.49 Proposed Design of Site 3



*Permeable Wall with  
Vegetation*

*Planters with  
Integrated Seating*

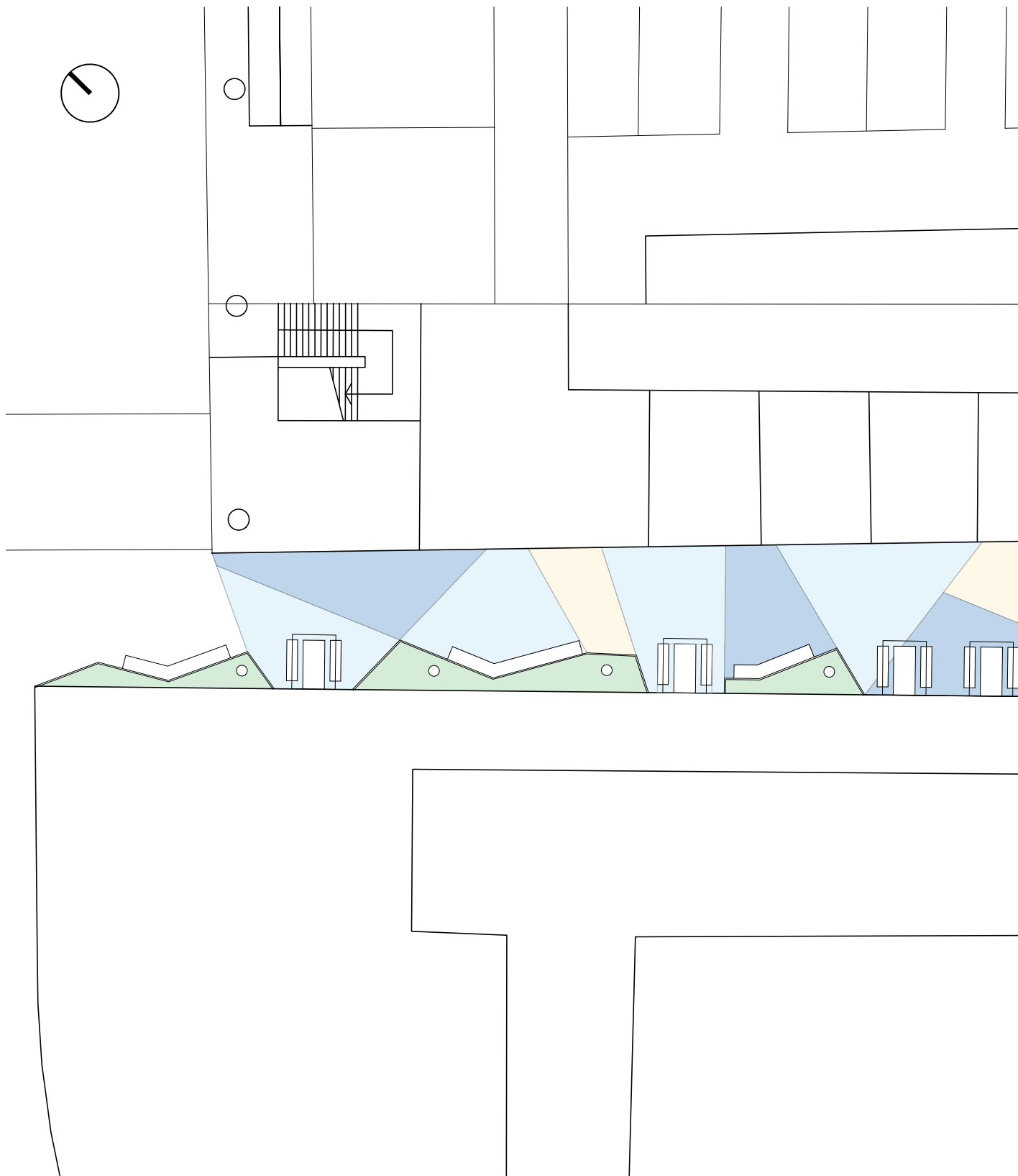
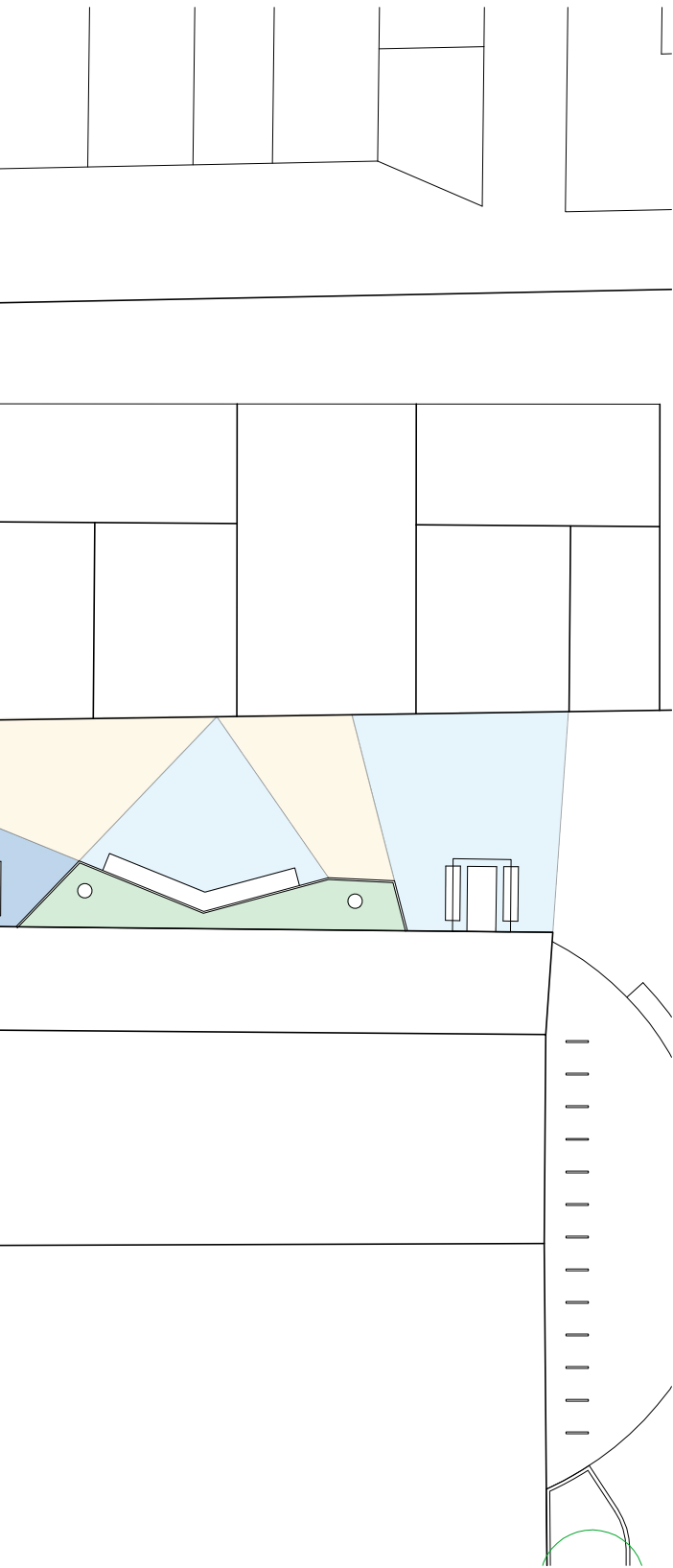


fig. 5.50 Proposed Design of Site 3 - 1:200





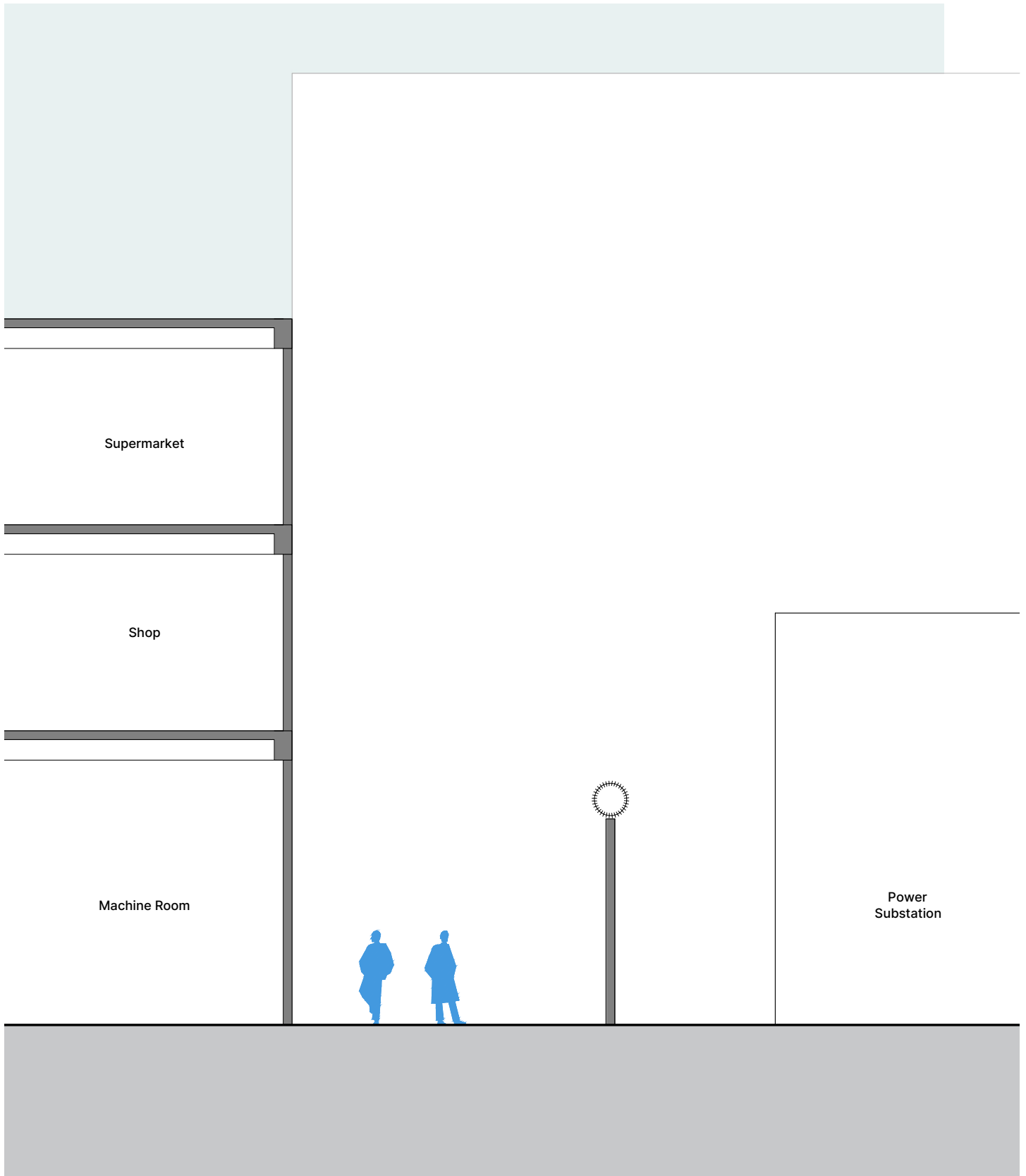


fig. 5.51 Existing Condition of Site 3 - 1:80

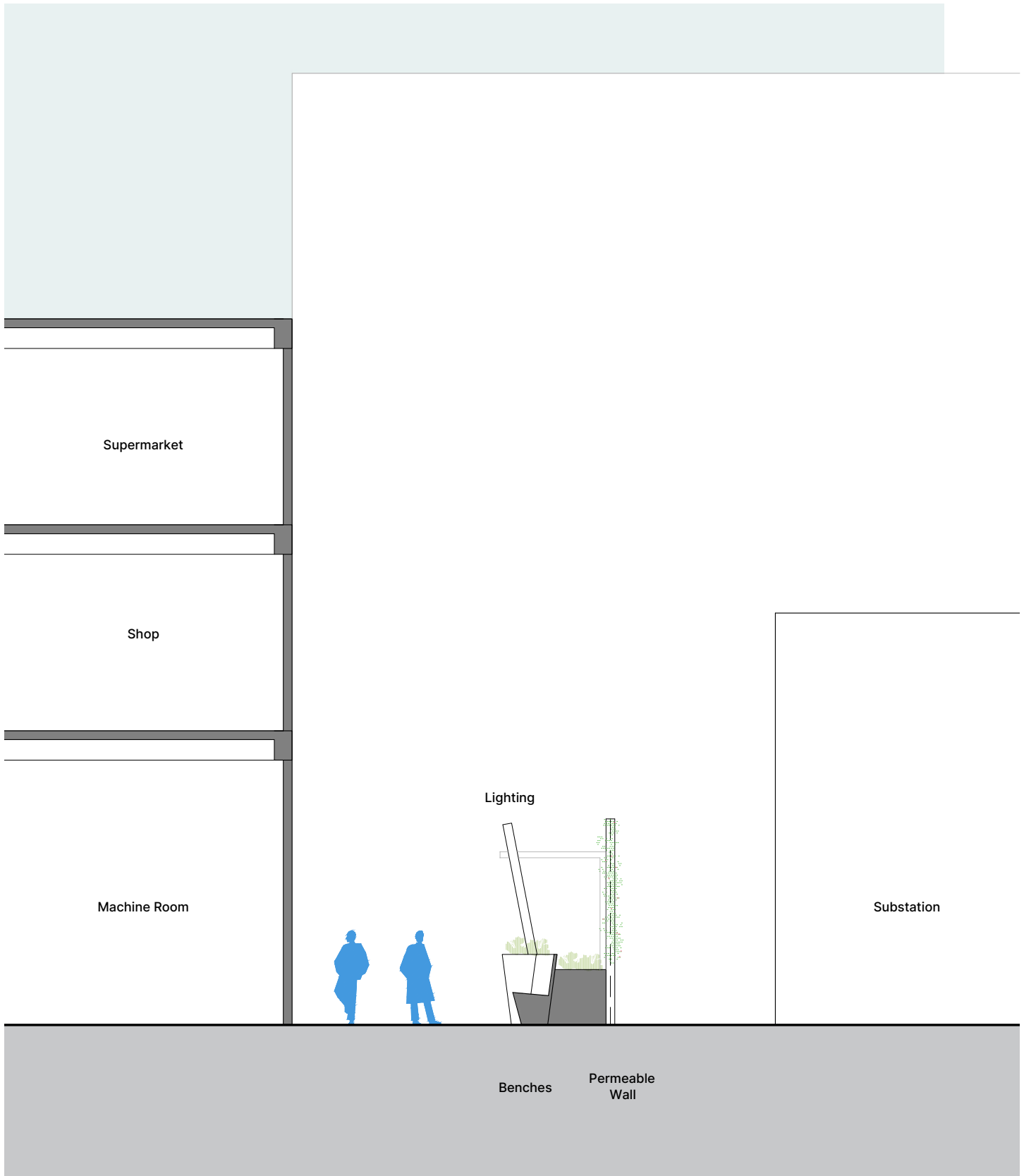


fig. 5.52 Proposed Design of Site 3 - Section D-D - 1:80

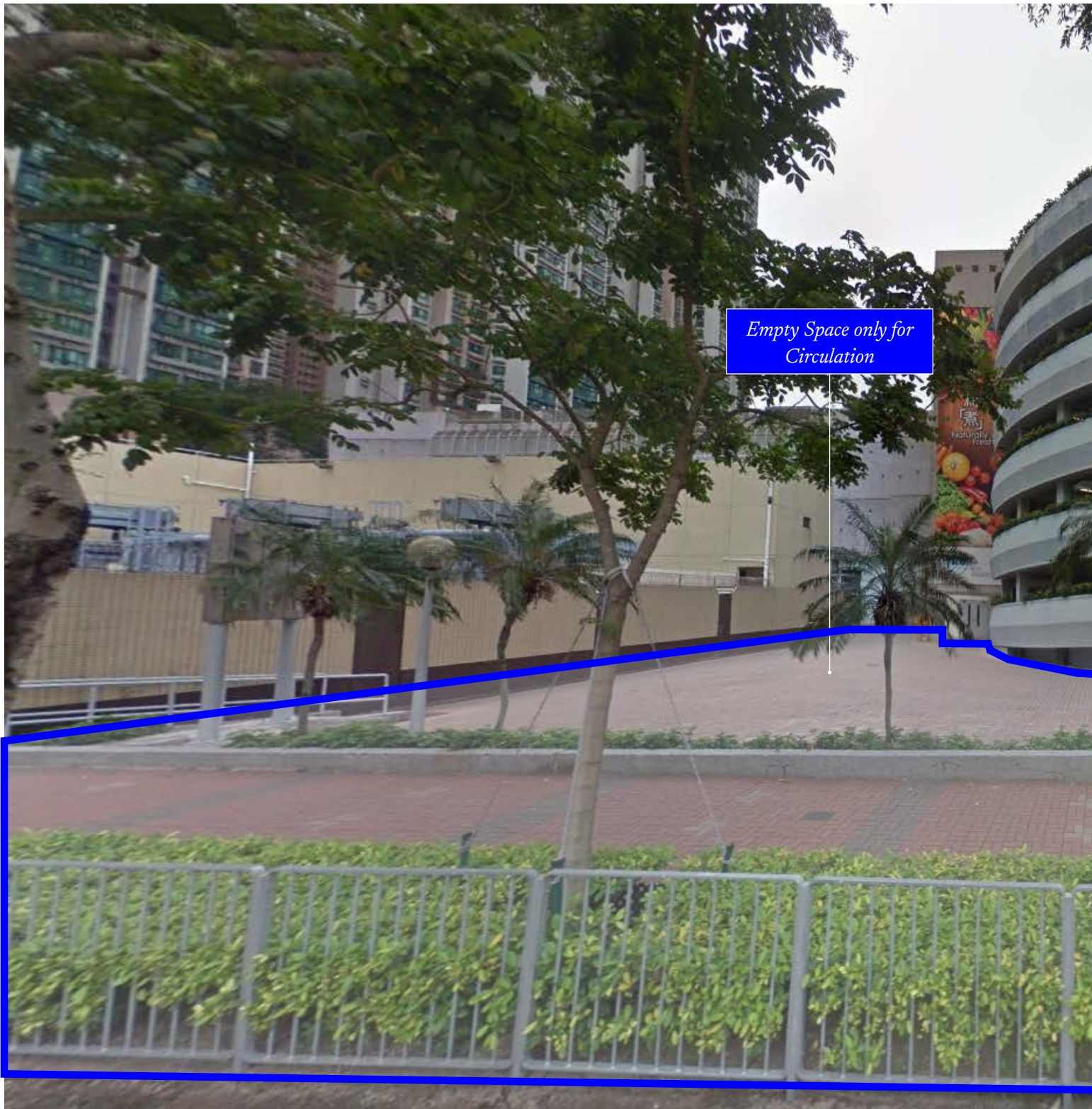
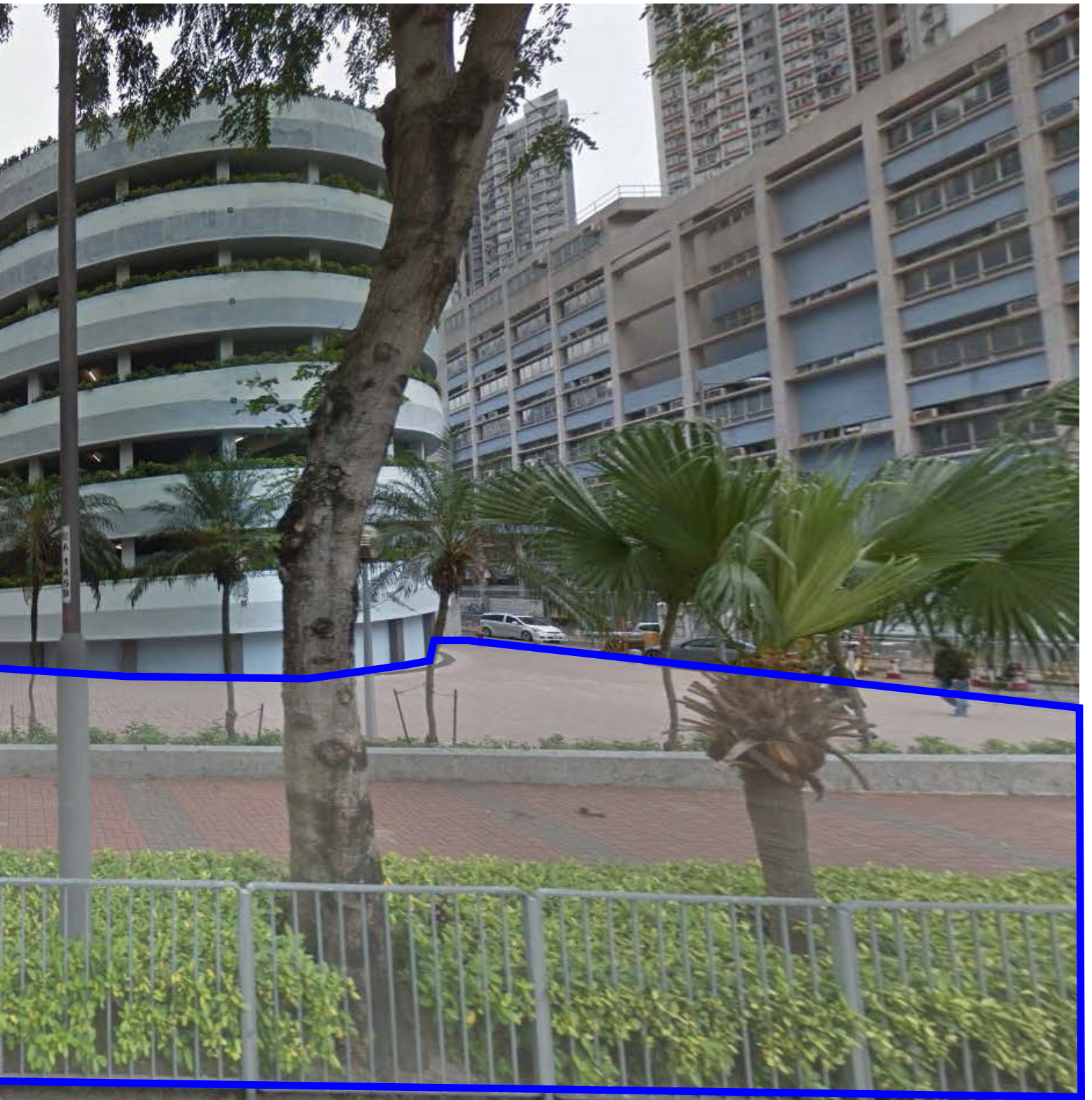


fig. 5.53 Existing Condition of Site 4



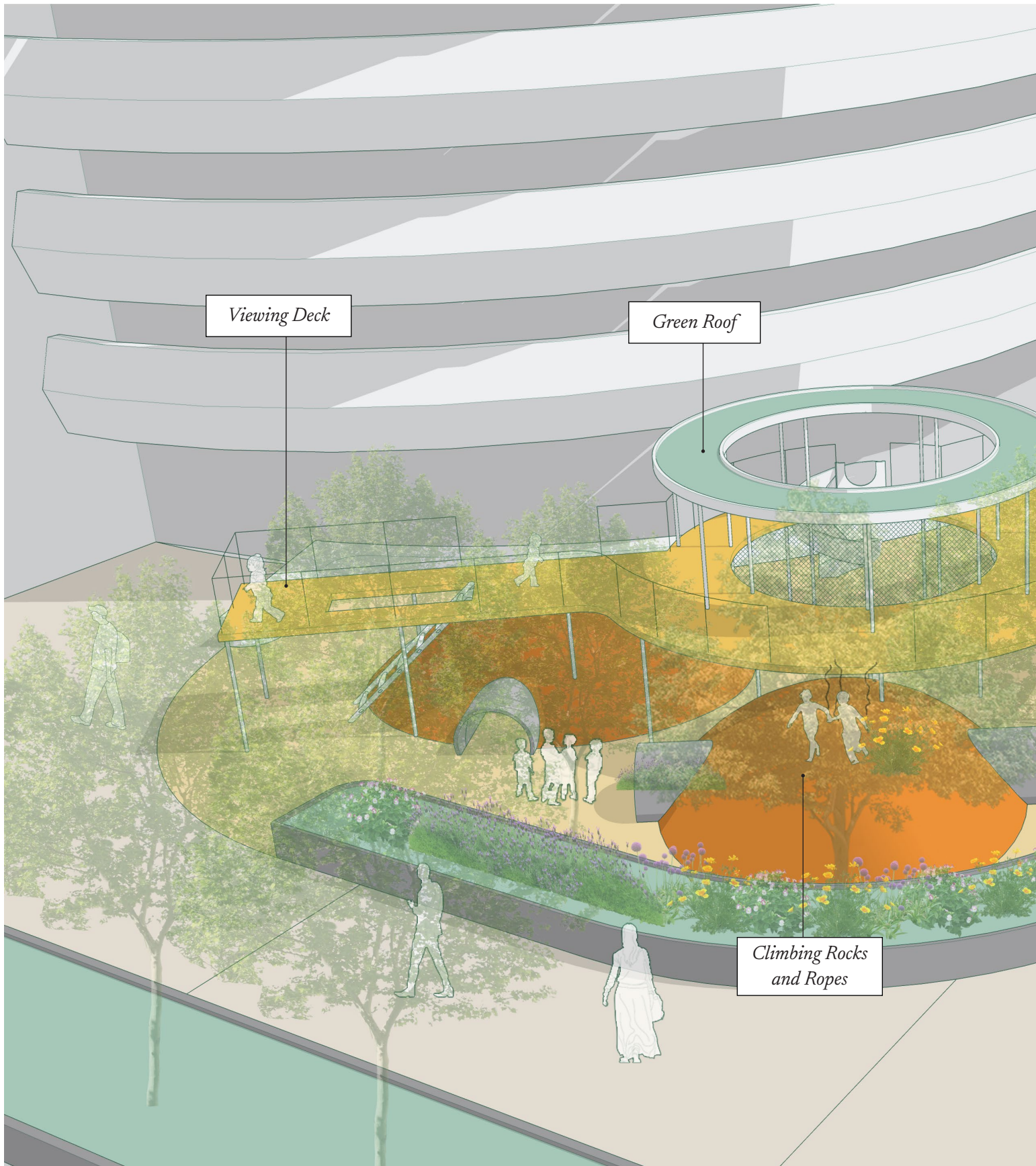
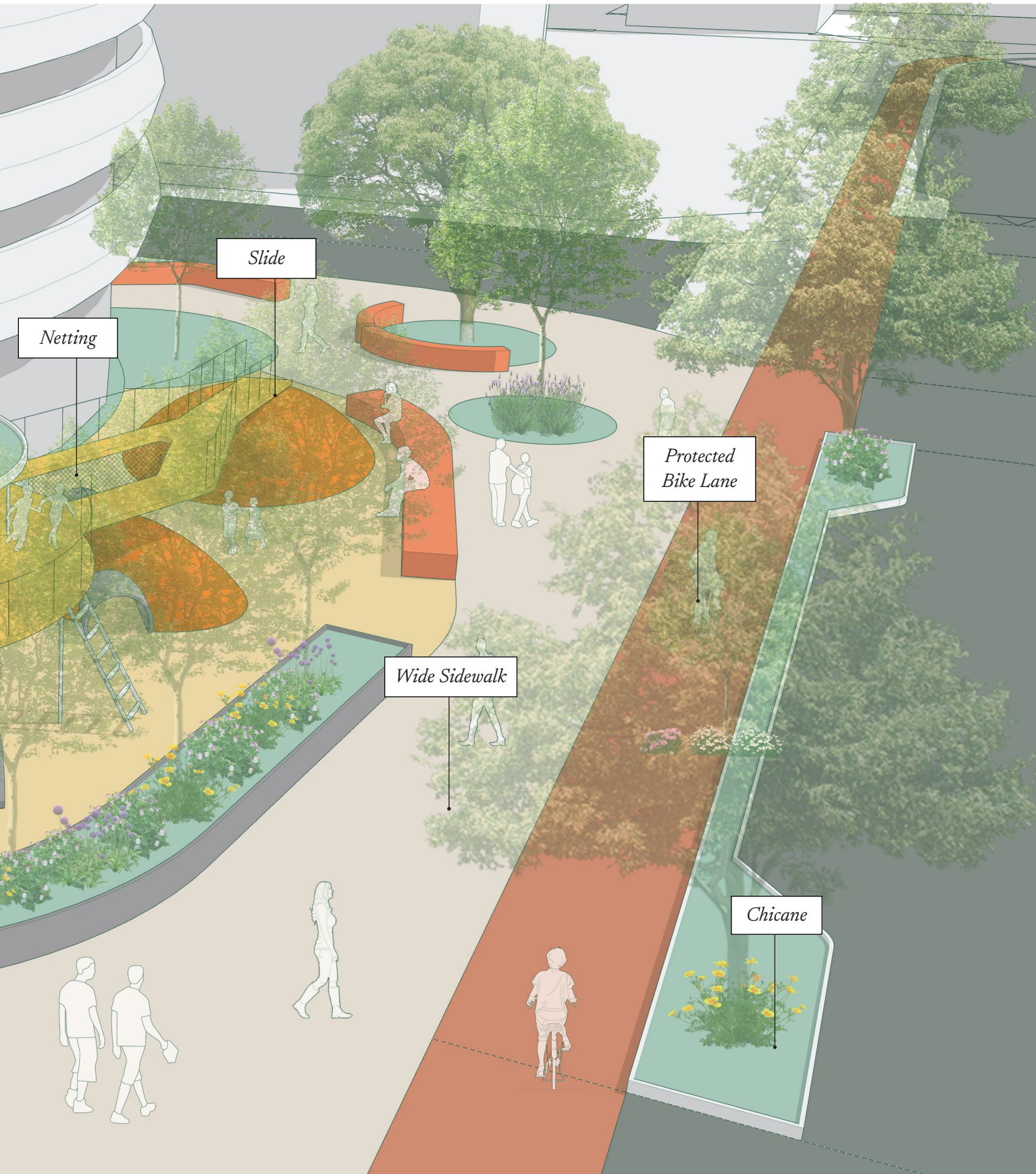
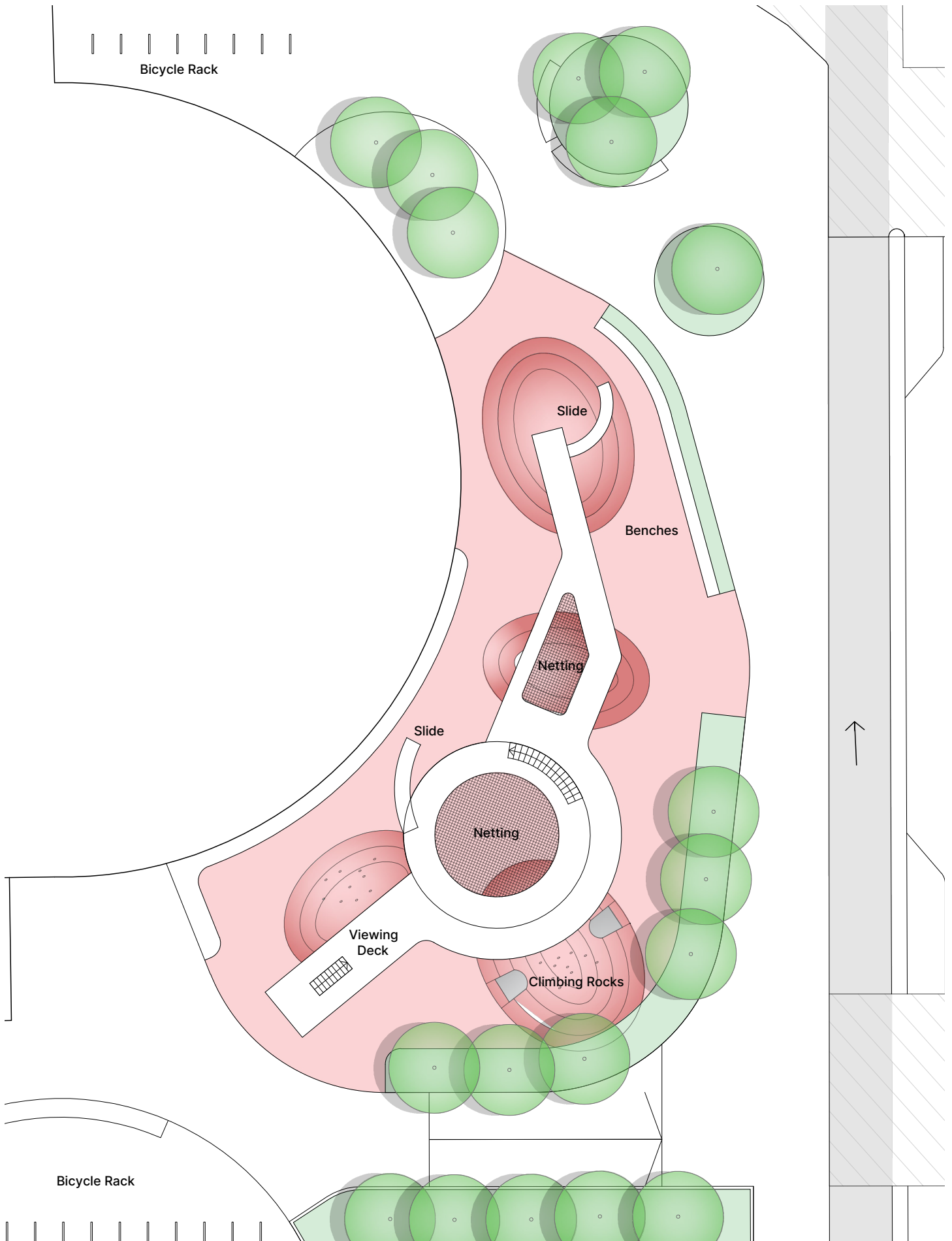


fig. 5.54 Proposed Design of Site 4









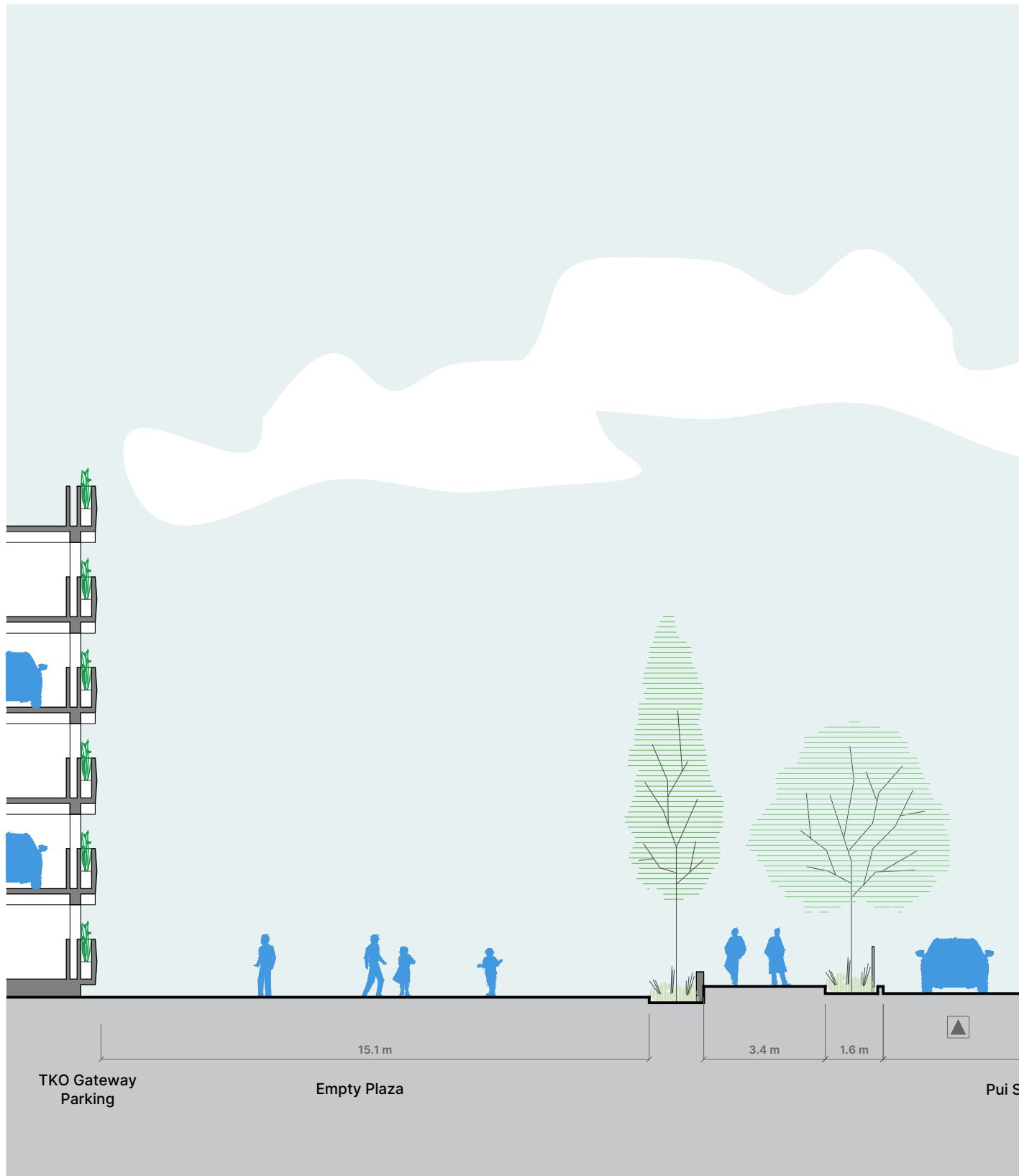


fig. 5.56 Existing Condition of Site 4 - 1:150

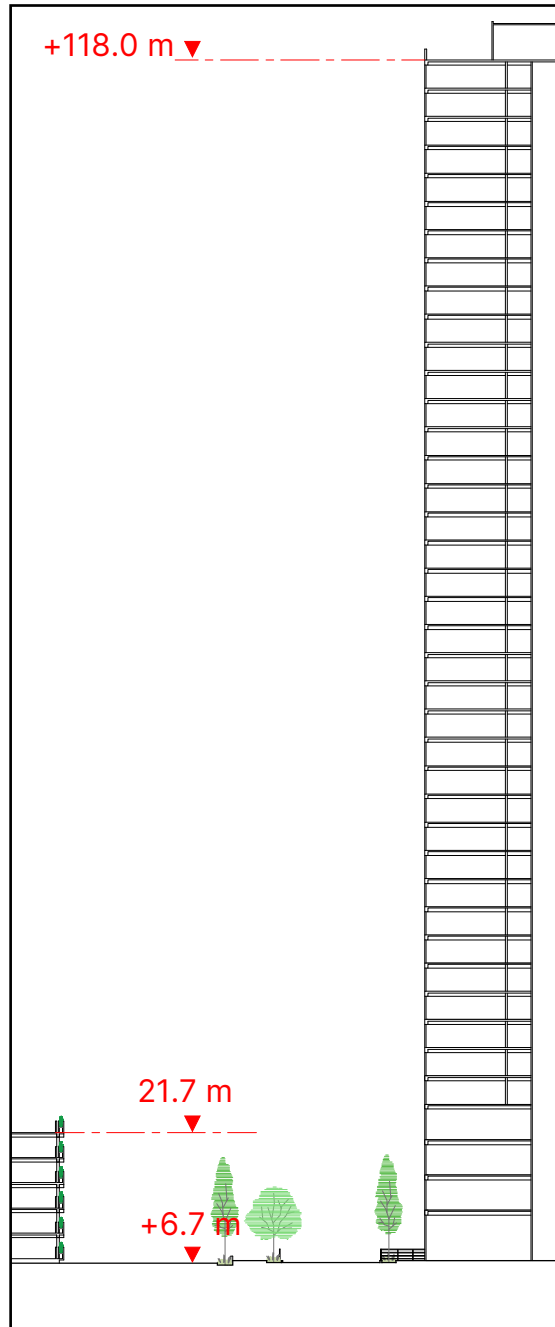
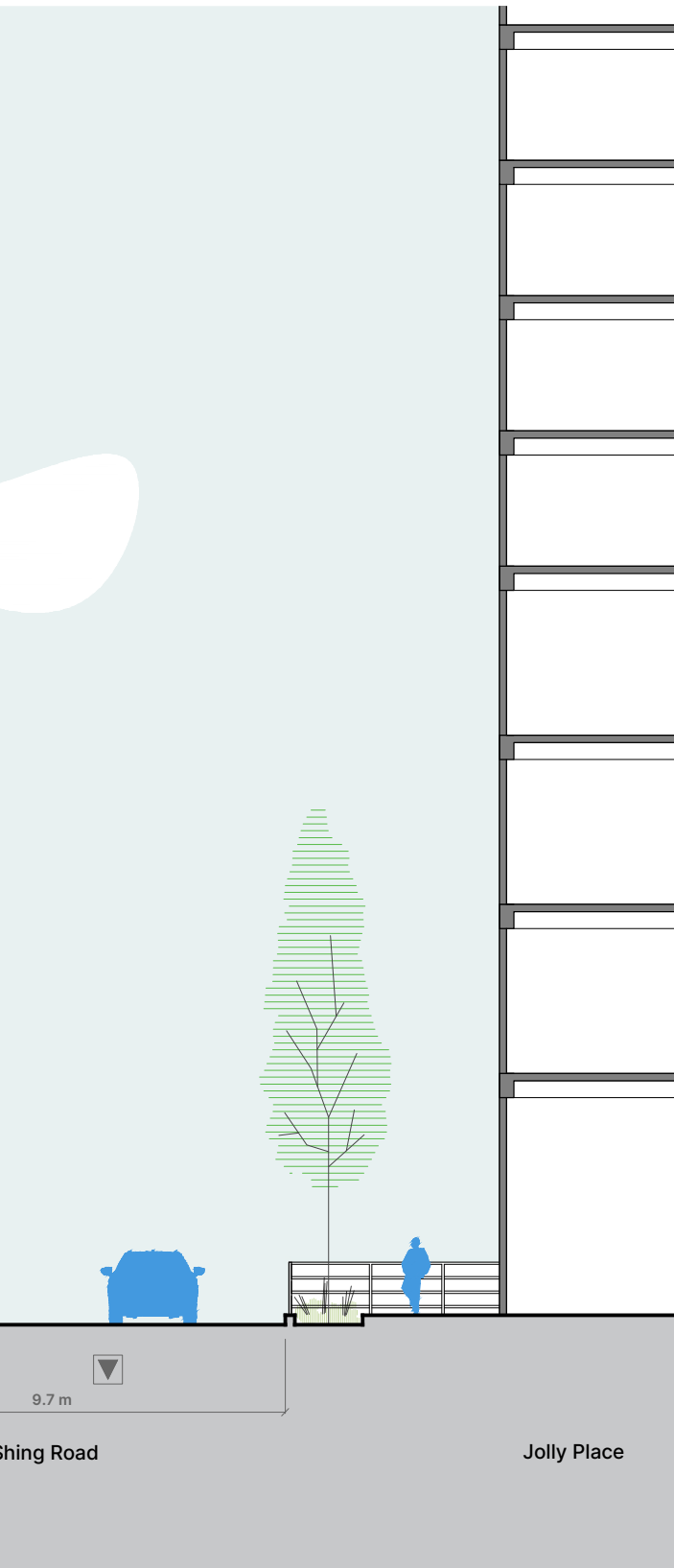


fig. 5.57 Site 4 Key Section 1:750

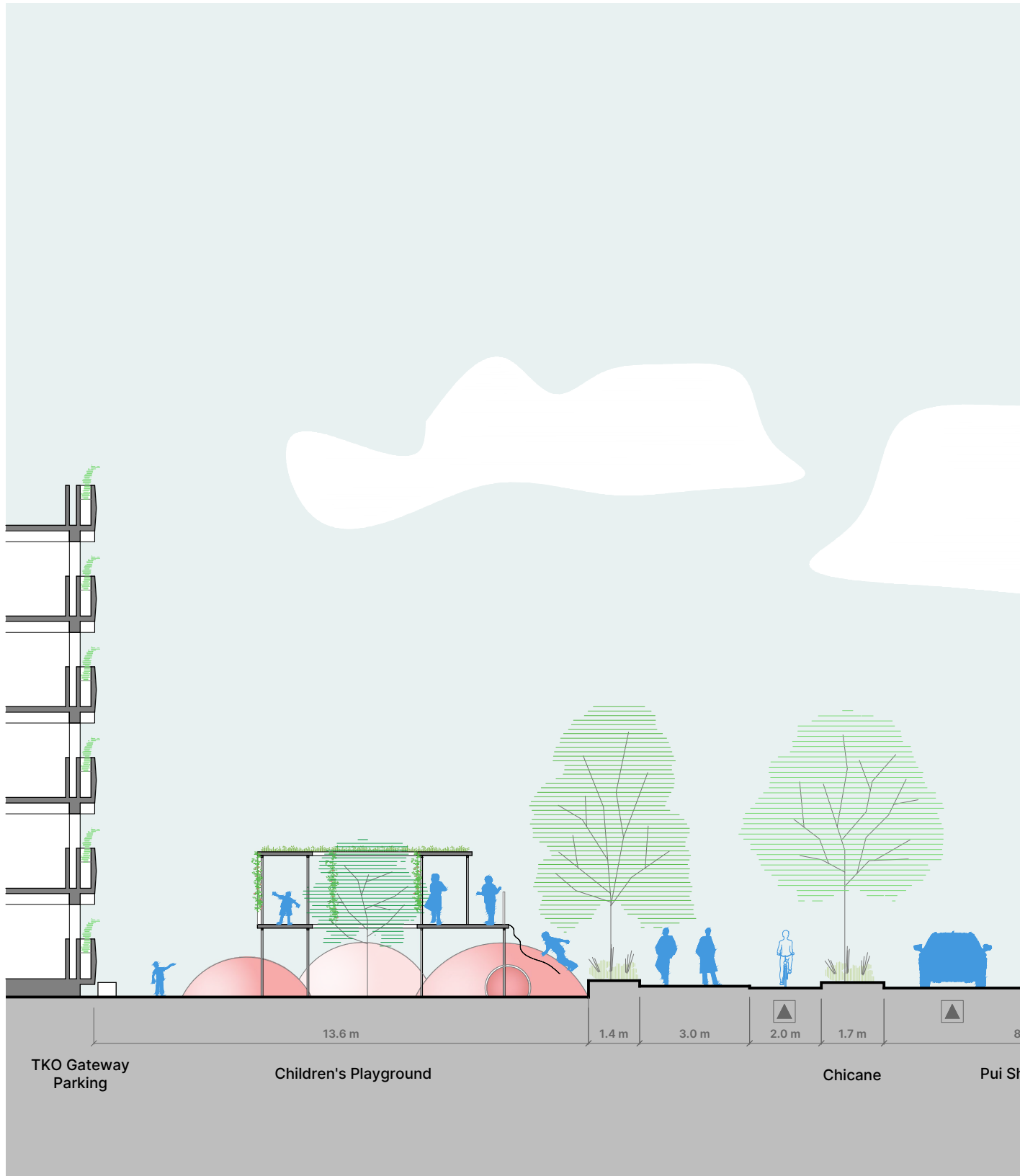
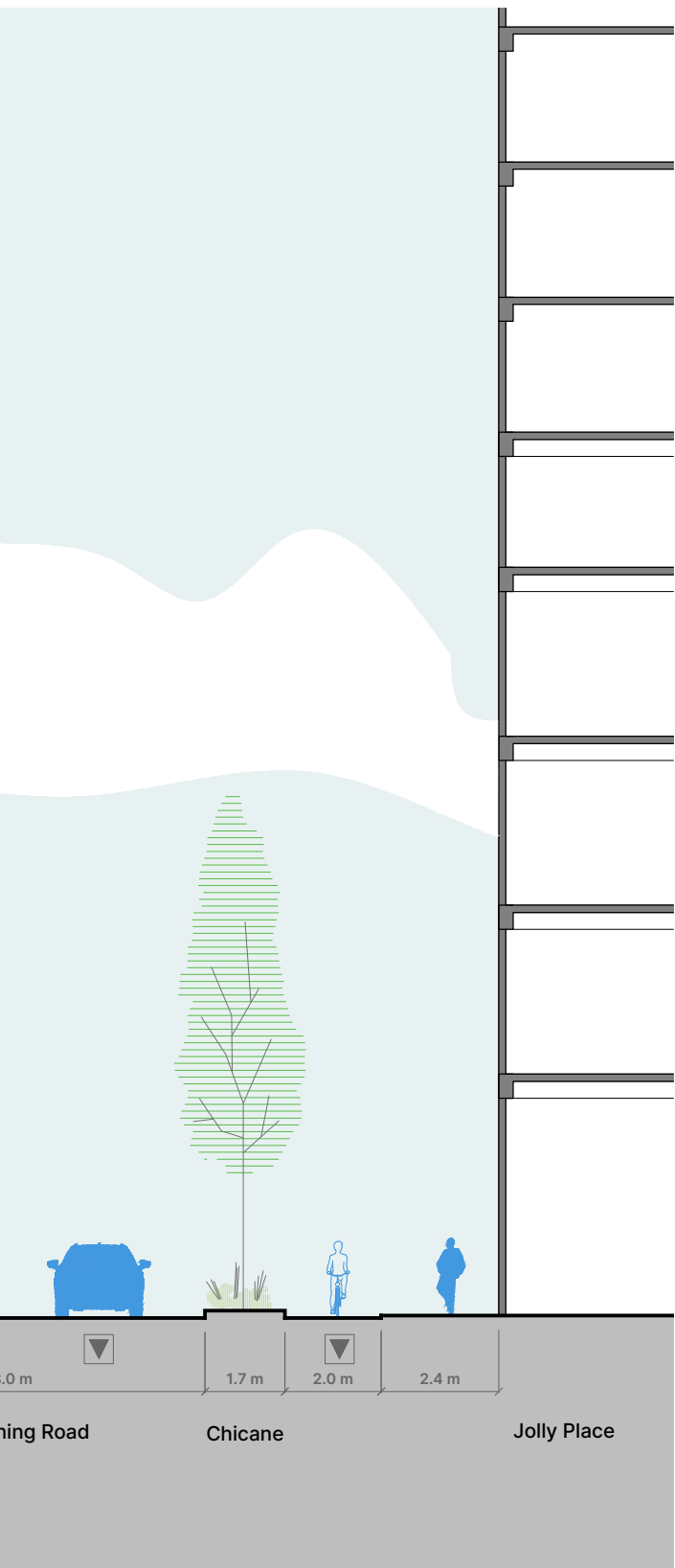


fig. 5.58 Proposed Design of Site 4 - Section E-E - 1:150



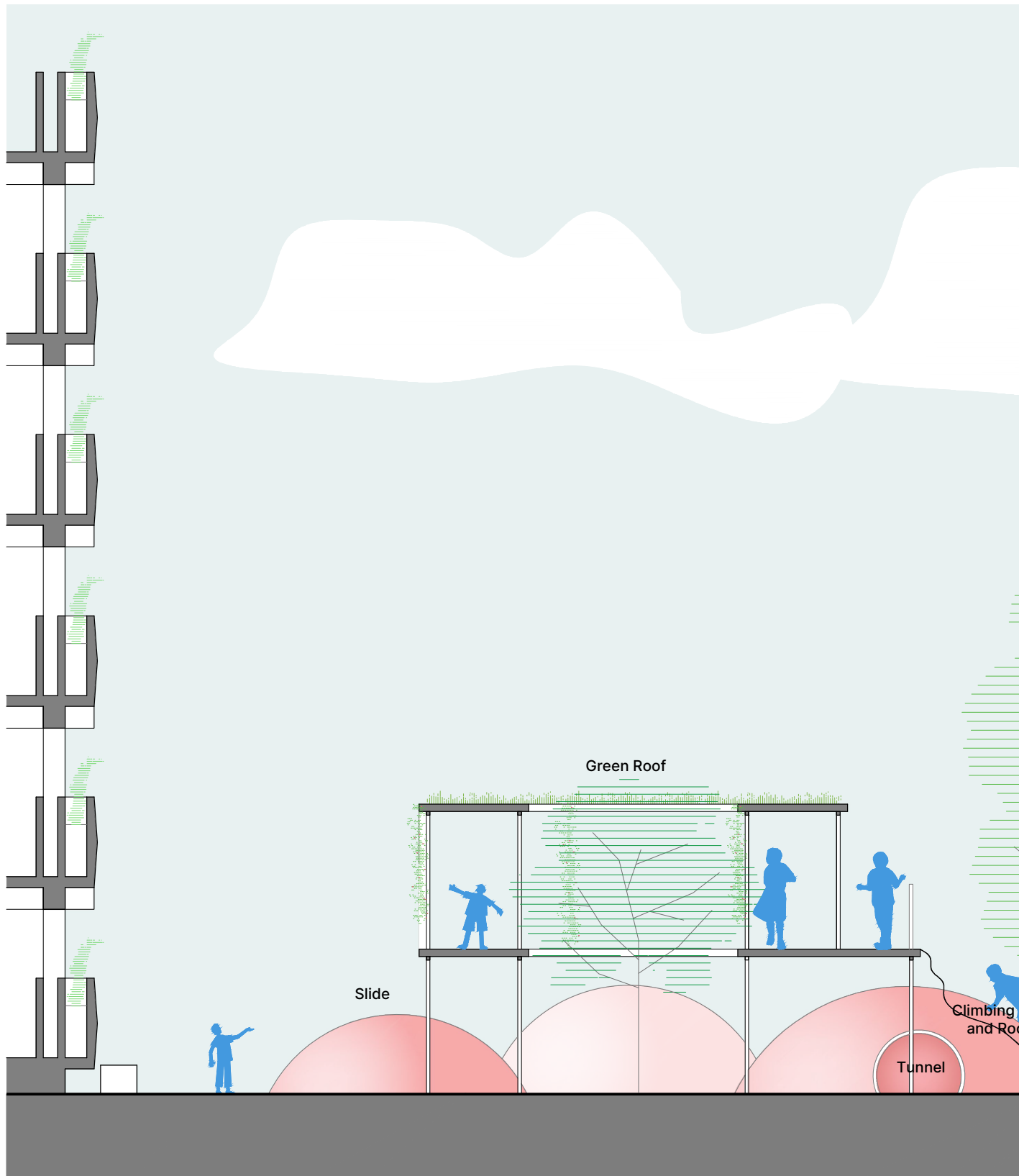


fig. 5.59 Proposed Design of Site 4 - Section E-E - 1:75



# Conclusion

The dependence on shopping malls in Hong Kong's new town has been the norm for many people living in the city, as it is generally accepted as a byproduct of its ultra density and lack of land supply. While shopping malls provide direct and comfortable space for locals to travel within the neighborhood, its nature of fabricating consumerism into the daily lives of the people is problematic. Issue arises when the streets are auto-centric, and the right of way for human are not respected on the street level. This legitimizes the argument that automobiles have the highest priority on the street level and form deserted and uncanny non-places on streets, removing opportunities for the community to appropriate the spaces.

In response, the design proposal utilizes the underused spaces on streets as opportunities for interventions, including third places, active mobility, and playgrounds. These new destinations form a network of open spaces on the street level, allowing people to gather and exchange ideas and creating practical programs that improve the quality of life within the neighborhood. This proposal is not intended to replace the shopping malls but to create an alternative that will bring happiness to the new town and help establish a sense of community.

Fortunately, the planning of future districts in Hong Kong has resolved the auto-centric nature of previous new towns. In a recent project involving development at the old Kai Tak Airport, emphasis is put on walkability and street activities<sup>1</sup>. The ratio of public and private housing is also adjusted to increase the supply of affordable housing.

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1 Civil Engineering and Development Department, "Kai Tak Development Urban Design Guidelines and Manual for the Private Non-Domestic Sites."



This thesis attempts to resist the neoliberal and bureaucratic force that formed the hyper-dense urbanism in Hong Kong. We have learnt that a successful city is one that people can understand and navigate. It is not a place defined by generic shopping malls and chain stores but through human activities and connections. Allowing people to appropriate the spaces is the most effective way to strengthen the sense of belonging among the community, bringing humanity within a city.



*fig. 6.1 Rendering of a pedestrian street in Kai Tai Development*

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