HYBRID HABITATS: RETHINKING URBAN FORM FOR FLEXIBLE WORK AND INCLUSIVE LIVING

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ABSTRACT

The rise of remote and hybrid work in the post-COVID era has fundamentally disrupted conventional urban patterns, exposing the inadequacy of traditional zoning models that rigidly separate residential, commercial, and public functions. As approximately 23% of the U.S. workforce currently engages in remote work—a figure projected to reach 35% by 2035—cities face urgent pressure to reimagine the built environment in response to evolving lifestyles and spatial needs. This thesis, Hybrid Habitat, proposes a new neighborhood model that integrates affordable living, flexible workspaces, and shared social infrastructure within a cohesive, sustainable urban framework. Focusing on Indianapolis, Indiana - a city emblematic of Midwest hybrid work adoption - the research identifies the former GM Stamping Plant site as a catalytic brownfield opportunity for adaptive urban regeneration. Through multi-scalar design strategies spanning individual live/work units, co-living typologies, and a community-scale social corridor, the project challenges the separation of home and work while fostering social connection, inclusivity, and ecological resilience. An energy-positive environmental strategy integrating passive design with solar, wind, and geothermal systems addresses the increased energy demands of hybrid living. Ultimately, Hybrid Habitat offers a replicable prototype for 21st-century neighborhoods—adaptive, community-centered, and responsive to the irreversible transformation of how and where people work.

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DEDICATION

To my parents, ***Umme Kulsum Akter*** *and* ***Syed Saifur Rahman****,*

whose sacrifices made this possible.

To my wife, ***Tasneem Tariq Nimmi,***

who constantly supported and encouraged me to achieve my goal.

To my mentors.

whose unwavering guidance was instrumental in shaping my research

And to those who work from home, from cafés, and from the margins -

this is for you.

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HYBRID HABITATS:
RETHINKING URBAN FORM FOR FLEXIBLE WORK AND INCLUSIVE LIVING

SYED KUSHOL

THESIS STATEMENT:

The rise of remote and hybrid work has fundamentally reshaped workplace dynamics and significantly impacted urban living environments. This shift necessitates a re-evaluation of urban design and built form typologies to better accommodate emerging lifestyles and dynamic work patterns, ensure economic resilience, and enhance livability. Therefore, this thesis proposes innovative design solutions that integrate affordable living and flexible workspaces within diverse urban environments, fostering a sustainable, inclusive, and adaptable urban future for the evolving hybrid workforce

Key Words: Hybrid Work and Remote Work, Urban Adaptation, Neighborhood Amenities, Affordability

ABSTRACT:

The post-COVID era has fundamentally transformed workplace dynamics, accelerating the adoption of remote and hybrid work models. Work is no longer tied to a fixed location but has become a flexible process. Remote and hybrid work arrangements have redefined how and where people work, concealing the boundaries between professional and personal life. This transformation has fundamentally altered traditional urban living patterns, blurring the lines between work and life and necessitating a re-evaluation of urban design and built form. This evolution has resulted in a significant decline in demand for traditional commercial office spaces, leaving major business hubs like New York City with unprecedented levels of vacancies. Concurrently, these same cities grapple with severe housing crises, characterized by limited space for new residential development and escalating affordability issues. With global office occupancy rates significantly below pre-pandemic levels and a growing demand for flexible, amenity-rich work environments. The current surplus of unoccupied office space presents a unique opportunity to address future needs and revitalizing downtown areas. This shift, coupled with rising affordability concerns, presents a critical challenge for urban centers: how to adapt existing infrastructure and design new spaces to accommodate the evolving needs of a hybrid workforce and ensure continued urban vitality. , this thesis proposes innovative design solutions that integrate affordable living and flexible workspaces within diverse urban environments, fostering a sustainable, inclusive, and adaptable urban future for the evolving hybrid workforce.

INTRODUCTION:

The post-COVID era has fundamentally reshaped workplace dynamics, accelerating the widespread adoption of remote and hybrid work models. This shift has moved away from the traditional concept of work being tied to a specific location, instead embracing a more flexible approach where work is seen as a dynamic process.[1] Remote and hybrid work arrangements have redefined not only how people work but also where they work, increasingly blurring the boundaries between professional and personal life. This transformation has had a profound impact on traditional urban living patterns, necessitating a rethinking of urban design and the built environment.[2]

One of the most significant consequences of this shift has been a dramatic decline in demand for conventional commercial office spaces. Major

business hubs such as New York City are now facing unprecedented levels of office vacancies. At the same time, these cities are struggling with severe housing crises, marked by limited space for new residential development and rising affordability challenges.[3] With global office occupancy rates still far below pre-pandemic levels and a growing preference for flexible, amenity-rich work environments, the surplus of vacant office space presents a unique opportunity. It allows cities to address future needs and breathe new life into downtown areas.[1]

This dual challenge—coupled with escalating affordability concerns—poses a critical question for urban centers: how can they adapt existing infrastructure and design new spaces to meet the evolving needs of a hybrid workforce while ensuring the continued vitality of urban areas? The answer lies in creatively repurposing underutilized office spaces and reimagining urban landscapes to foster both work and living environments that are adaptable, sustainable, and inclusive.

PROBLEM STATEMENT:

The shift to hybrid work has presented cities with a unique set of challenges and opportunities. Traditional urban models, predicated on the centralized office, are no longer sufficient to meet the needs of a workforce that increasingly demands flexibility, autonomy, and access to diverse amenities. The following key issues demand investigation:

Declining Office Occupancy and the Reimagining of Downtowns: With average office occupancy rates significantly below pre-pandemic levels, cities must explore strategies to revitalize downtown areas and repurpose underutilized commercial spaces.

The Expansion of the "Workplace Ecosystem": The definition of "workplace" has expanded beyond the traditional office, encompassing homes, coworking spaces, and various public and private venues. Understanding and optimizing this distributed ecosystem is crucial for fostering productivity and well-being.

The Demand for Amenity-Rich Neighborhoods: Employees are increasingly prioritizing access to diverse amenities, including care services, entertainment venues, and public spaces. Cities must develop strategies to enhance neighborhood livability and create vibrant, walkable communities.

The Affordability Crisis in Urban Centers: Rising living costs, exacerbated by global economic instability, pose a significant challenge to urban residents, particularly younger and marginalized populations. Cities must prioritize the development of affordable housing, transportation, and experiences.

Urban Exodus and the Rise of "Anywhere Work" Cities: The ability to work remotely has prompted many urban residents to consider relocation, often to smaller cities that offer a higher quality of life. Cities must adapt to attract and retain these mobile workers by providing the necessary infrastructure and amenities.

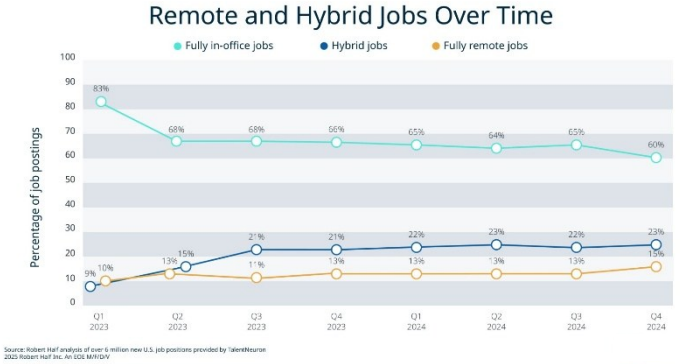


Figure 1: Source: Robert Half Inc.

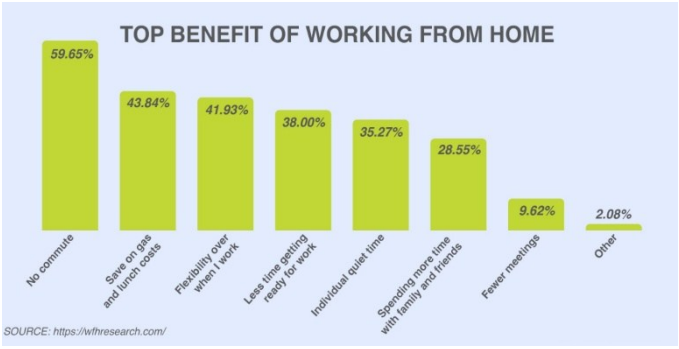


Figure 2: Source: Whresearch.com

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

This research will address the following key questions:

1. How has the shift to hybrid work impacted the spatial and functional dynamics of urban centers?
2. What are the key factors that contribute to the creation of successful "anywhere work" cities?
3. How can cities effectively integrate diverse workspaces and amenities into a cohesive urban ecosystem?
4. What strategies can cities implement to address the affordability crisis and ensure equitable access to urban resources?
5. How can urban planning and design principles be adapted to create resilient and adaptable cities that cater to the evolving needs of a hybrid workforce?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The acceleration of hybrid work has led to a decentralized workforce, with employees working across multiple locations—homes, co-working spaces, client sites, and public areas. This has significantly impacted traditional office spaces, with global office occupancy rates lingering at around 46.3% of pre-pandemic levels (Kastle Systems, 2023).[1] The role of the office is shifting from a mandatory workspace to a destination of choice, where experience, flexibility, and accessibility play a crucial role in its relevance. More than 95 million square feet of New York office space currently unoccupied - the equivalent of 30 Empire State Buildings.[4]

Simultaneously, urban affordability has become a growing concern. Economic pressures—including the aftermath of the pandemic and geopolitical instability—have driven up living costs, making it harder for residents, particularly younger and marginalized groups, to afford housing, transportation, and essential services. With nearly half of urban residents considering relocating due to cost concerns, cities must reimagine their infrastructure to attract and retain a diverse workforce. City's housing crisis has pushed some people into dangerous illegal basement apartments and prompted others to flee altogether.[5]

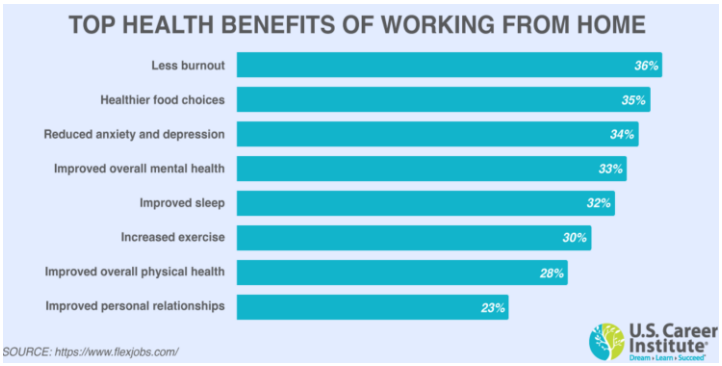


Figure 3: Source: statista.com



Figure 4: Work from home. Source: money.com



Figure 5: Co-living space. Source: russiancourses.com

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research endeavors to explore the intricate challenges of contemporary urban environments, specifically focusing on the dynamic interplay between evolving workplace dynamics and pressing housing crises. To achieve this, a multi-faceted approach will be employed, integrating diverse theoretical frameworks, rigorous literary analysis, and comprehensive case study precedents. The overarching aim is to develop innovative and sustainable solutions that address the complexities of urban development, particularly in the context of global cities like New York.

UTOPIA AND HETEROTOPIA IN URBAN FUTURES

At the core of this study is an exploration of **utopian and heterotopian concepts**, drawing from **Manfredo Tafuri's** *Architecture and Utopia* and the philosophical insights of **Michel Foucault**. These frameworks provide a critical lens for examining potential urban futures by analyzing the tension between idealized city planning and the fragmented realities of urban existence.[9] The study also engages with the historical visions of **Le Corbusier, Étienne-Louis Boullée, and Claude-Nicolas Ledoux**, whose speculative architectural models inform the reimagining of contemporary urban spaces.[10]

PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE LIVED URBAN EXPERIENCE

A **phenomenological approach** will further enhance this analysis by grounding the research in lived experiences and spatial perceptions. **Martin Heidegger's** concepts of **dwelling, place, and space** will serve as a foundation for understanding how individuals interact with their urban environments. Complementing this, **James J. Gibson's** theory of **affordances and perception** will help contextualize the diverse ways in which urban stakeholders navigate and shape their surroundings. In the case of New York—a city marked by its cosmopolitan nature and layered personal significances—this phenomenological lens is essential for capturing the depth and complexity of urban life.[6,7]

GLOBAL URBANISM AND THE EVOLUTION OF CITIES

Finally, **Rem Koolhaas's** theory of **global urbanism**, particularly his analysis of Manhattan in *Delirious New York*, provides a framework for understanding the forces driving urban transformation. Koolhaas's exploration of Manhattan's chaotic and speculative growth offers critical insights into the mechanisms of contemporary urban evolution, making his work a valuable reference for addressing the challenges faced by modern cities. His perspective positions urban development as a dynamic and often unpredictable process, underscoring the need for adaptive and forward-thinking design strategies.[12]

RATIONALE FOR THE PROPOSED RESEARCH

The rise of remote and hybrid work has fundamentally transformed workplace dynamics and living patterns in the United States. Recent data indicate that remote work has increased to 25% of total workforce in US job market in 2024 and is projected to reach 35% by 2035. [1] A key consequence of this shift is the ability of employees to relocate away from traditional urban centers, leading to significant changes in housing demand. Many remote and hybrid workers are migrating from high-cost cities to more affordable areas with desirable amenities, driven primarily by housing affordability.[2] However, this migration creates complex dynamics in local real estate markets. As remote workers move to more affordable areas, they increase demand for housing faster than supply can preserve. This pushes prices higher, making it harder for local workers—like teachers, retail employees, and other essential workers—to afford homes in their own communities.[3] For example, relocation of remote workers from New York to Tennessee has significantly increased housing costs in Tennessee, making it difficult for local residents to afford homes.[4] While existing research has largely focused on workplace implications of remote work, there is a critical gap in understanding its effects on housing

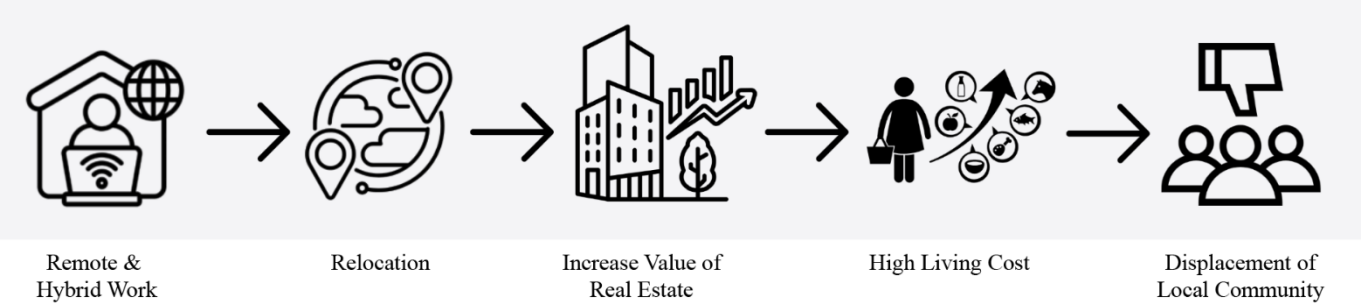


Figure 6:Impact of Hybrid & Remote work

affordability. This proposed study aims to address this gap by examining the relationship between remote or hybrid work and affordable housing crisis, exploring potential solutions to mitigate its impact. Through this investigation, the proposed research aims to develop practical solutions to address affordable housing challenges created by remote and hybrid workforce relocation.

BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH:

The growing affordable housing crisis in the United States, fueled by influx of remote and hybrid workers, is disrupting socioeconomic stability in many communities.[5] This research seeks to address this pressing issue by identifying viable solutions that restore balance, particularly for low- and middle-income residents who are disproportionately affected. Rising housing costs threaten to displace long-term residents, pushing many toward financial instability or even homelessness.[5] By proposing equitable housing policies, this research will help mitigate displacement and preserve economic balance. Affordable housing is directly linked to better physical and mental health outcomes.4 Ensuring stable housing for local community will enhance their well-being and productivity. Findings will provide actionable recommendations for policymakers and city planners, promoting mixed-income housing development and zoning reforms. The insights gained will be relevant to cities worldwide facing similar challenges due to remote work migration and will open avenues for further research on housing equity. Ultimately, this proposed research will not only help alleviate immediate housing crisis in the United States but also lay the groundwork for fairer, more resilient cities.

LITERATURE REVIEW & CONTEXT:

The Rise of Hybrid Work: The pandemic transformed "work as a place" to "work as a process," empowering individuals to work from diverse locations. This shift necessitates a re-evaluation of traditional office spaces and the broader urban ecosystem.[1]

Workplace Experience: Workplace performance is now measured by emotional response and experience, demanding spaces that inspire and enable human potential. The focus shifts from mere building efficiency to creating destinations of choice.[4]

Neighborhood Amenities & Urban Ecosystem: Amenity-rich neighborhoods, offering care services, entertainment, and public spaces, enhance workplace performance and attract residents. The surrounding urban area becomes an extension of the workplace ecosystem.[3]

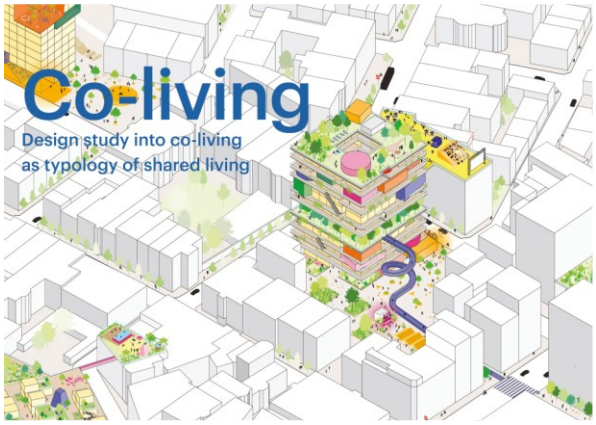
Affordability & Urban Migration: Rising living costs and the flexibility of remote work are driving urban residents to consider relocating, often to smaller cities. Cities must address affordability concerns and provide diverse, accessible experiences.[5]

Urban Resilience & Adaptability: Cities that effectively support remote working, through infrastructure adaptation and innovative development, will gain a competitive edge in attracting and retaining residents.[2]

CASE STUDY ANALYSIS:

Co-living Design Study

MVRDV



The housing sector is in desperate need of innovative thinking. In response to the housing crisis MVRDV has released a co-living design study, which researches and catalogues various typologies to create new opportunities for this emerging way of living that engenders lively neighborhoods. Created in collaboration with developer HUB and sustainable and impact investor Bridges Fund Management, the study proposes new solutions which reflect and incorporate societal attitudes towards sharing, community, flexibility, mobility, and working from home, while responding to the problems of climate change, a lack of affordability, and poor management. This series of ideas expands the options available to designers and builders of co-living projects, from new developments to repurposed buildings and spaces, for differing demographics, lifestyles, and communities.

Source: MVRDV.com

CONVERTING OFFICE BUILDINGS

INTO CO-LIVING

Gensler

The United States has a shortage of 4 million to 7 million homes and, at the same time, an all-time-high office vacancy rate of 20%, meaning that more than a billion square feet of office space is unused. But despite the urgent need for housing—and many local policymakers' desire to convert underused office space to apartments to help revitalize downtowns that lost residents and businesses during the pandemic.

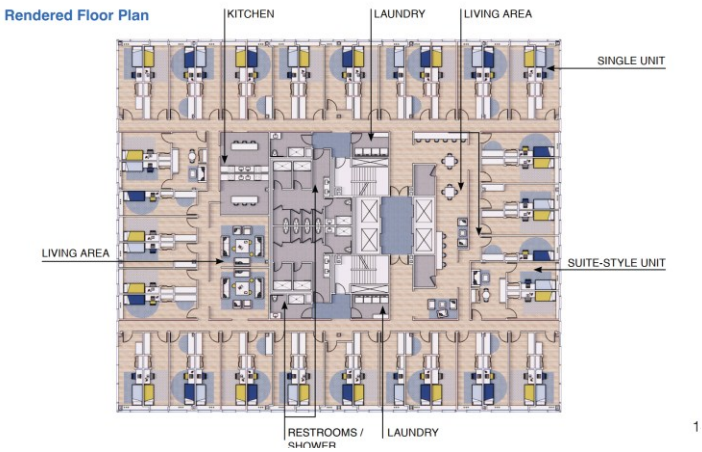
Rather than conventional apartments, the design calls for converting buildings to co-living dorm-style apartments. Adding large amounts of this low-cost, downtown housing would provide a much-needed option for students, service-industry workers, young professionals, veterans, new arrivals in a city, and retirees. It would also reduce homelessness. Previous Pew research has found that housing costs are the primary driver of homelessness

On the other hand, co-living development could save taxpayers money by reducing homelessness and stretching government subsidies by developing housing at lower cost.

Source: Gensler.com



>30% VACANT PROPERTIES	TYPE 1	TYPE 2	TYPE 3
% of Building Stock	*~30-35% of total SF*	*<15% of total SF*	*~50-55% of total SF*
Age	1940 and prior	1960-1980	1960-1990
Number of Floors	10	8	31
Average Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	5.8	6.0	11.2
Average Floorplate	17,600 SF	16,300 SF	17,700 SF
Average Vacancy Rate	54%	66%	45%
			DOMINANT TYPOLOGY



SITE SELECTION AND RATIONALE

Recent analyses of remote work migration patterns across the United States indicate a growing preference for cities that combine affordability with strong amenities and connectivity (Robert Half Talent Solutions, 2024). As seen in Figure 1, the Midwest has experienced a notable influx of remote and hybrid workers, largely due to its lower cost of living and proximity to major urban centers. Among potential locations, Indianapolis, Indiana, emerges as a leading candidate for several key reasons:

1. **High Demand for Hybrid Work** – Approximately **19-27% of newly posted jobs** in Indianapolis are remote or hybrid, ranking among the highest in the nation (Robert Half, 2024).

2. **Rapid Growth in Remote Workforce** – The city is one of the **top 10 U.S. metros** with the largest increase in remote workers between 2013 and 2023 (Economic Innovation Group, 2023).

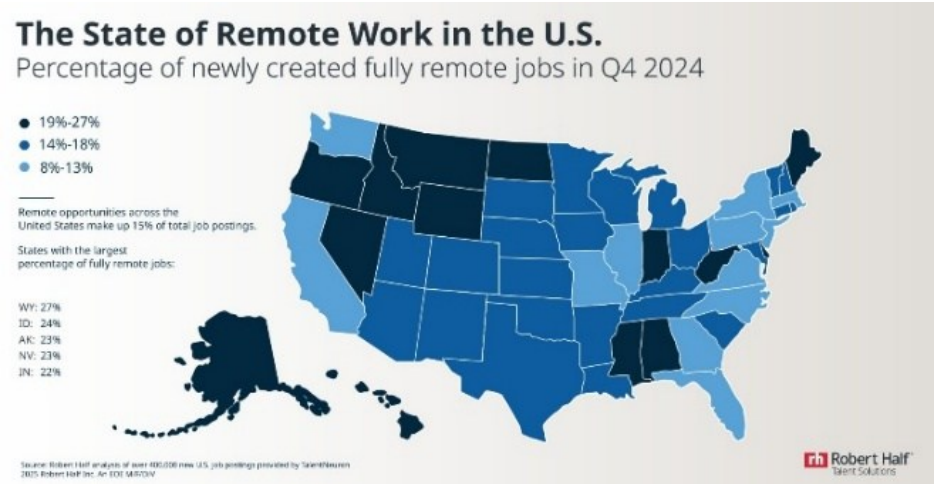


Figure 7: Newly created hybrid and remote jobs

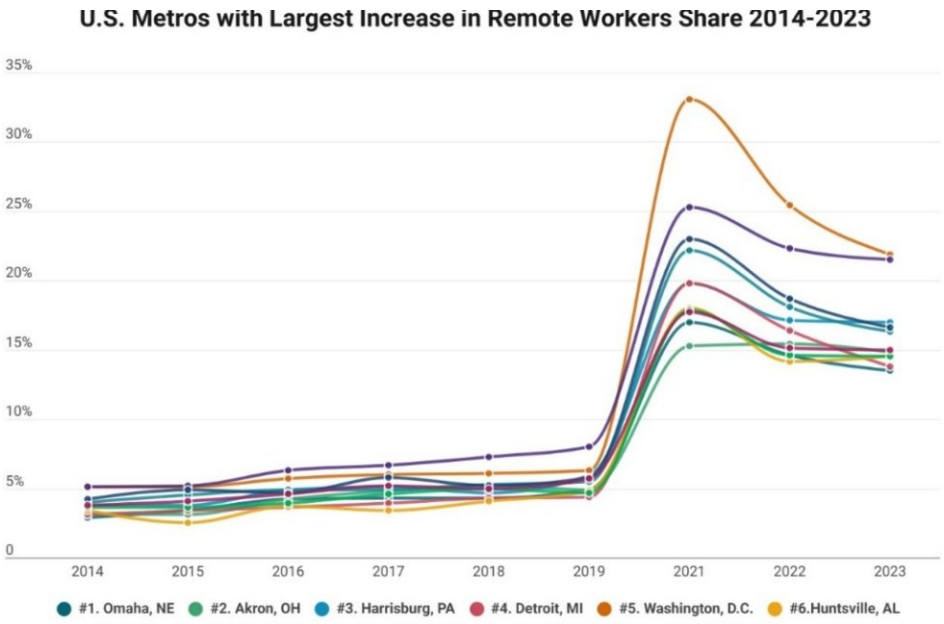


Figure 8: Increase in remote workers share

3. **State Incentives for Remote Workers** – Indiana's **Remote Worker Grant Program** offers financial incentives to attract professionals, further boosting the local economy (Indiana Economic Development Corporation, 2023).

Given these factors, Indianapolis presents an ideal case study for developing sustainable, hybrid work-live communities.

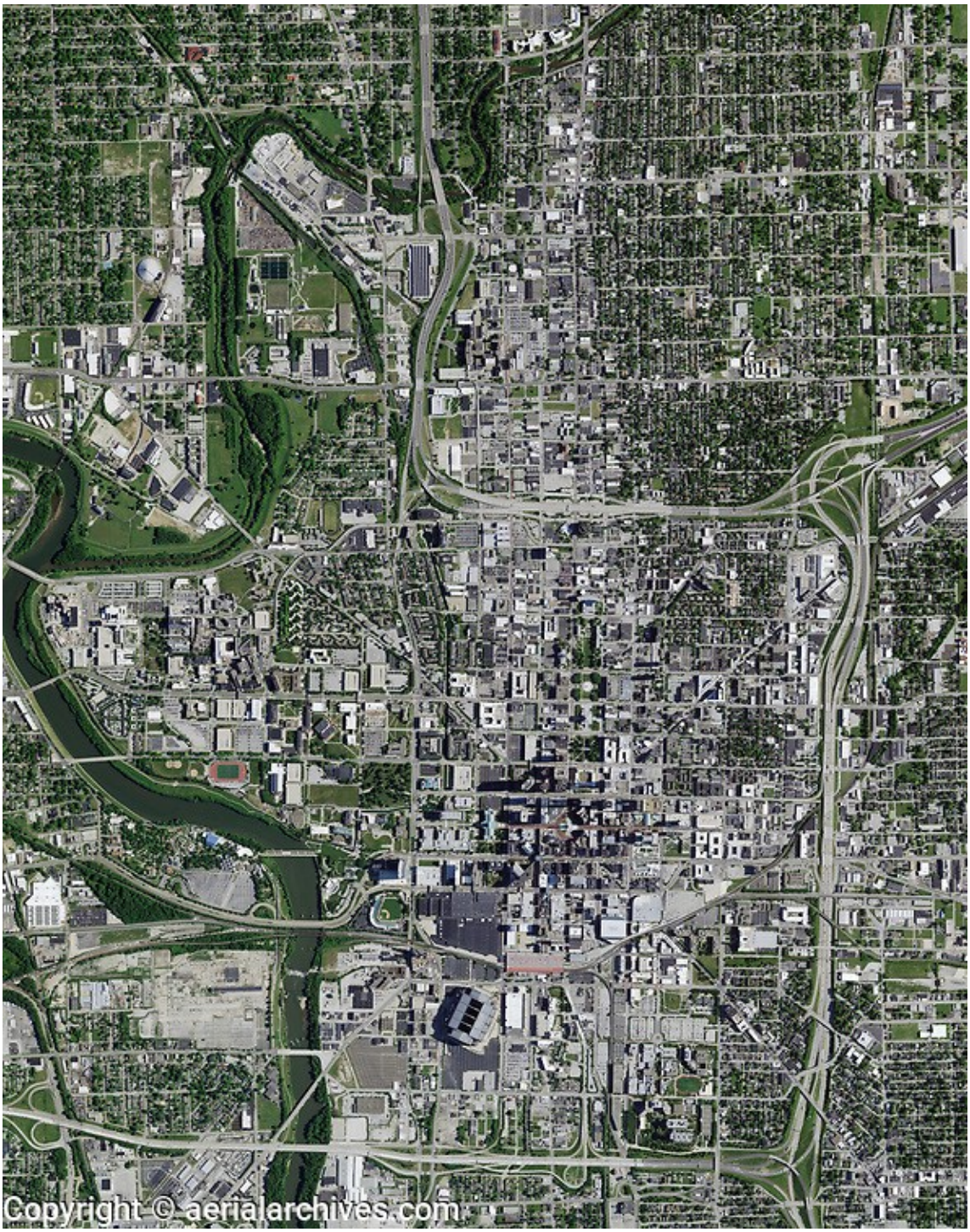


Figure 7: Satellite view of Indianapolis

WHY INDIANAPOLIS?

Indianapolis, the capital of Indiana, serves as a **central economic and cultural hub** in the Midwest. Its strategic location at the intersection of **Interstates 65, 70, and 74** ensures strong connectivity to major cities such as Chicago, St. Louis, and Louisville. Additionally, the **Indianapolis International Airport** facilitates global access, reinforcing the city's appeal for remote professionals (IND Airport Authority, 2023).

Neighborhoods with Development Potential

- **Fountain Square** – A culturally vibrant district with affordable housing and a growing arts scene (Urban Land Institute, 2022).
- **Near Eastside** – An area undergoing revitalization, offering opportunities for equitable community development (Local Initiatives Support Corporation, 2023).
- **Mapleton-Fall Creek** – A historic neighborhood with potential for adaptive reuse projects (Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission, 2023).

The **Indianapolis Cultural Trail**, an 8-mile pedestrian and bicycle loop, connects these neighborhoods and could serve as a backbone for integrated live-work mobility (City of Indianapolis, 2022).

STAKEHOLDERS AND COMMUNITY CONSIDERATIONS

Human Populations

1. **Existing Residents** – A diverse demographic including artists, young professionals, and working-class families (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022).
2. **At-Risk Communities** – Historic displacement due to urban renewal necessitates **equitable development strategies** to prevent gentrification (Saving Places, 2023).
3. **Relocating Remote Workers** – Professionals migrating from high-cost cities seeking affordability and quality of life (Brookings Institution, 2023).

Ecological Considerations

- The **White River and Fall Creek corridors** provide critical habitats for urban wildlife and opportunities for green infrastructure integration (White River Vision Plan, 2021).



Figure 8The Indianapolis Cultural Trail (Image Source: indystar.com)

HISTORICAL AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT INSIGHTS

- **Founded in 1821** as a planned city with a grid layout centered on **Monument Circle** (Indiana Historical Society, 2020).
- **Mid-20th Century** – Urban renewal and highway construction led to community displacement, particularly in Black and immigrant neighborhoods (Smith, *Journal of Urban History*, 2019).
- **Recent Initiatives** – Efforts such as the **Cultural Trail**, **IndyGo Red Line (BRT)**, and **White River**



Figure 9: Site attractions (Image Source: makemymove.com)

restoration reflect a commitment to sustainable urbanism (Plan 2020, City of Indianapolis).

Key Site Advantages

1. **Cultural Trail & Greenways** – Enhances walkability and social connectivity (American Planning Association, 2023).
2. **Affordable Housing Stock** – Opportunities for adaptive reuse of historic structures (National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2022).
3. **Tech and Creative Economy** – Growing coworking spaces (e.g., **Industrious**, **The Speakeasy**) support remote professionals (TechPoint, 2023).
4. **Transit Expansion** – The **IndyGo Blue Line (BRT)** will improve regional mobility (IndyGo, 2024).
5. **Ecological Restoration** – The **White River Vision Plan** integrates nature

into urban development (The Nature Conservancy, 2021).

Image: Site attractions (Image Source: makemymove.com)

Indianapolis's combination of **affordability, connectivity, and progressive urban policies** positions it as an exemplary model for hybrid work communities. By leveraging existing infrastructure while prioritizing **equitable development and ecological sustainability**, the city can foster a dynamic environment for the future of remote work.

METHODOLOGY:

This research will employ a multi-faceted approach:

DATA ANALYSIS: Analyze existing data on office occupancy rates, remote work trends, and urban migration patterns.

a. Data Sources

Housing Market Data: Real estate website and U.S. Census Bureau datasets on home prices, rental rates, and inventory levels in selected cities.

Migration & Workforce Data: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and LinkedIn Workforce Reports on remote work trends and relocation patterns.

Policy Documents: Municipal housing policies, zoning laws, and affordability initiatives from city planning departments.

Stakeholder Interviews: Urban planners, real estate developers, local policymakers, and affected residents (remote workers and long-term locals).

b. Context

The study focuses on U.S. cities experiencing significant remote-worker migration, such as primary High-Cost Cities like New York, San Francisco and Secondary cities with rising affordability pressures like Austin, Nashville, Boise.

c. Instruments & Tools

Quantitative Tools: Statistical software (R, Stata) for housing price regression analysis, GIS mapping (ArcGIS) to visualize migration and price trends.

Qualitative Tools: Semi-structured interview guides for stakeholders and case study frameworks to evaluate policy effectiveness.

d. Data Collection

Quantitative Phase: Collect 5–10 years of housing/migration data for target cities.

Qualitative Phase: Conduct 20–30 interviews with stakeholders (sampled via snowball and purposive methods). Review policy documents and media reports on housing crises.

e. Data Analysis

Quantitative: Regression models to isolate remote work's impact on prices, controlling for other factors (e.g., interest rates, population growth). Time-series analysis to track displacement indicators (e.g., changes in low-income housing stock).

Qualitative: Thematic coding of interviews to identify common challenges and policy gaps. Comparative case analysis to highlight best/worst practices in affordability governance.

CASE STUDIES: Examine successful examples of urban spaces and buildings that have adapted to the hybrid work model.

SPATIAL ANALYSIS: Investigate the relationship between neighborhood amenities, public spaces, and workplace performance.

DESIGN EXPLORATION: Develop conceptual design proposals that integrate flexible work spaces within diverse urban contexts, considering affordability, sustainability, and community engagement.

SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS: Gather qualitative data through surveys and interviews with remote workers and urban residents to understand their needs and preferences.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

This research will contribute to:

- A deeper understanding of the impact of hybrid work on urban environments.
- The development of innovative design strategies for creating flexible and adaptable urban spaces.
- Recommendations for urban planning policies that support the evolving needs of the hybrid workforce.
- A set of design guidelines that can be applied to future urban development projects.
- Conceptual designs that demonstrate the integration of flexible workspaces and emerging lifestyles.



Figure 10: Visualizing Research Outcomes: An AI-Generated Image (Dhali 3)

CONCLUSION

The hybrid work revolution has redefined the relationship between work and urban living. While cities face challenges in affordability and workplace adaptation, they also have the opportunity to create environments that support this new model of work. By investing in flexible workspaces, improving neighborhood amenities, and addressing economic disparities, urban centers can emerge stronger, more resilient, and better equipped to serve the workforce of the future. This research is significant because it addresses a pressing challenge facing urban centers worldwide. By proposing innovative design solutions, this thesis aims to contribute to the creation of more resilient, equitable, and vibrant urban communities that are well-equipped to thrive in the post-pandemic era.

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THESIS ADDENDUM

SYED KUSHOL
Miami University

THESIS STATEMENT:

The rise of remote and hybrid work has fundamentally reshaped workplace dynamics and significantly impacted urban living environments. This shift necessitates a re-evaluation of urban design and built form typologies to better accommodate emerging lifestyles and dynamic work patterns, ensure economic resilience, and enhance livability. Therefore, this thesis proposes innovative design solutions that integrate affordable living and flexible workspaces within diverse urban environments, fostering a sustainable, inclusive, and adaptable urban future for the evolving hybrid workforce.

THESIS SUMMARY:

The post-COVID era has redefined workplace dynamics, accelerating the shift toward remote and hybrid models that blur boundaries between work and home. This thesis argues that these changes challenge conventional urban patterns and call for new design frameworks integrating affordable housing with flexible workspaces to create inclusive, adaptable, and sustainable environments for the hybrid workforce. It critiques traditional urban growth models that have reinforced the separation of living and working spaces. Focusing on Indianapolis, the research reimagines housing as a place to live, work, connect, and belong. It proposes a series of typological solutions—ranging from individual units to family houses and neighborhood designs—that support this integrated lifestyle. Addressing the increased energy demands of hybrid living, the thesis also envisions energy-positive, resilient neighborhoods through the incorporation of solar, wind, and geothermal systems as active design components, ensuring sustainable energy generation for future hybrid communities.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The dominant narrative advocating a universal return-to-office culture contradicts emerging data and global labor trends. As of 2024, approximately 23% of the U.S. workforce engages in remote work at least part-time, and this share is projected to rise to 35% by 2035 [i]. Large corporations are increasingly adopting hybrid models to reduce overhead, enhance flexibility, and boost employee retention. This marks a fundamental redefinition of the workplace, signaling a lasting departure from traditional urban models built around centralized office cores.

The rise of hybrid work presents both systemic challenges and new opportunities for cities. The shifting "workplace ecosystem"—extending from offices to homes, cafés, and co-working spaces—demands design frameworks that promote distributed productivity and well-being. Workers now seek amenity-rich neighborhoods offering access to services, public spaces, and social infrastructure within walkable distances. Yet, these aspirations collide with the ongoing affordability crisis that heavily burdens younger and marginalized communities. Moreover, the growth of "anywhere work" has reshaped migration patterns, with professionals relocating to smaller, affordable cities—pushing municipalities to invest in connectivity, livability, and cultural vitality to attract mobile talent.

Collectively, these transformations call for a fundamental rethinking of urban form and policy. Traditional zoning, based on rigid separations between residential, commercial, and industrial functions, no longer corresponds to the dynamic realities of hybrid living and working. Instead, future urban design must prioritize resilience, inclusivity, and adaptability—building integrated environments where living, working, and community coexist harmoniously.

GLOCAL CHALLENGES AND ARCHITECTURAL RESPONSES

The phenomenon of remote work exemplifies a fundamentally glocal challenge—global in reach yet locally experienced. While digital infrastructure enables employees to work from anywhere, their social and ecological lives remain deeply rooted in specific neighborhoods and cultural contexts. Architectural and urban design practices must therefore balance global mobility with local identity, crafting contextual responses that reinforce community cohesion while accommodating flexible work patterns.

Post-pandemic architectural discourse increasingly reflects this shift. Leading firms such as OMA, BIG, MVRDV, and Gensler have expanded regionally autonomous design approaches tailored to local contexts. Gensler champions adaptive reuse as a tool for revitalizing dormant office districts; BIG interweaves large-scale residential programs with commercial fabrics, fostering multifunctional neighborhoods; and MVRDV experiments with co-living models that prioritize social interaction over individual isolation. Despite methodological differences, all advocate mixed-use, human-scaled urban strategies as the cornerstone of sustainable post-pandemic development.

Historically, Western cities have followed the concentric zoning principles of Ernest Burgess or the planned suburban ideals of Howard and Taylor. Yet these paradigms prove inadequate in the post-industrial, post-pandemic age. The decline of manufacturing and the rise of digital economies have rendered many industrial belts obsolete, creating brownfield opportunities for urban regeneration. Simultaneously, the satellite-city model's reliance on extensive commuting has become environmentally unsustainable. The contemporary response—through glocal design thinking—advocates hybrid, mixed-use urbanism grounded in local culture yet informed by global ecological and economic imperatives.

WRITTEN THESIS TO DESIGN APPROACH:

The lines between home, work, and community have blurred in the post-pandemic world. Yet our neighborhoods remain shaped by outdated zoning that separates living from working, leading to isolation and inefficiency in how people inhabit cities. My thesis, Hybrid Habitat, responds to this gap by proposing new ways to integrate domestic, professional, and social life.

Survey findings reveal the urgency of this shift: 85% of respondents want a dedicated home workspace, 57% would use co-working spaces nearby, and 71% seek everyday amenities—groceries, gyms, cafés, and parks—within walking distance. These needs point toward a neighborhood model that supports flexibility, accessibility, and social connection.

The design approach begins with typological research, exploring adaptable forms that span from individual live/work units to interconnected community hubs. It emphasizes mixed-use density, shared infrastructures, and ecological linkages that sustain both people and place. The design envisions a collaborative urban ecosystem—where living and working coexist fluidly, fostering a more resilient, connected, and human-scaled model for future neighborhoods.

SITE SELECTION:

Architecture, at its most transformative, engages not only with form and material but also with social, economic, and ecological contexts. In the development of my thesis Hybrid Habitat, the site becomes more than a backdrop—it is an active agent through which ideas of hybrid living, flexible work environments, and sustainable community-building can be tested. The selection of a suitable site was therefore an integral part of my research methodology. Indianapolis, with its unique policy direction, demographic shifts, and spatial potentials, offers an exemplary terrain for this exploration.

Indianapolis stands as a major political, cultural, and economic nucleus within the Midwest. Its central location—strategically positioned between Chicago, St. Louis, and Louisville—

affords both regional accessibility and global connectivity through the Indianapolis International Airport. More importantly, the city has emerged as an ambitious adopter of hybrid work culture, with Indiana ranking among the top ten states in the U.S. for hybrid workforce participation. This demographic trend has amplified the city's efforts to attract remote workers through policies emphasizing affordability, livability, and infrastructural improvement.

The relatively low cost of living, expanding creative economy, and ongoing urban investment make Indianapolis an ideal testing ground for a Hybrid Habitat: a new typology where living, working, and community functions coalesce. The city's growing emphasis on connectivity—evidenced through projects such as the Cultural Trail and the IndyGo Red Line—further positions it as a fertile urban laboratory for adaptive and inclusive development.

Historical map research over the past three decades reveals a consistent pattern: while downtown cores remain spatially stable, industrial zones have progressively fallen into disuse. The shift from manufacturing to a service-based economy has left behind numerous brownfield sites—vacant lands that symbolize both environmental degradation and latent potential. These conditions open up critical opportunities for reimagining post-industrial territories as resilient, hybrid neighborhoods integrating ecological and social infrastructure.

The former GM Stamping Plant site, located southwest of downtown along the White River, serves as the focal point for this exploration. Once employing over 5,000 workers across 2.1 million square feet, the plant closed in 2011, leaving a 103-acre brownfield ripe for redevelopment. Ongoing efforts, including the establishment of Elanco Animal Health's global headquarters and collaborations between the City of Indianapolis, White River State Park, and the Indiana Economic Development Corporation, illustrate the site's potential as a new civic and environmental hub.

The surrounding neighborhoods—West Indianapolis, Valley, and Near West—house working-class families, artists, immigrants, and remote professionals attracted by affordability and culture. However, they also face displacement pressures, necessitating equitable design strategies. The site's adjacency to green corridors, emerging transit networks, and cultural infrastructure provides opportunities to reconnect fragmented ecologies and communities through an inclusive, mixed-use neighborhood model.

By situating *Hybrid Habitat* within this post-industrial landscape, the thesis seeks to transform a legacy of manufacturing and segregation into a prototype of hybrid living. The redevelopment of the GM Stamping Plant exemplifies the potential for adaptive urban regeneration that nurtures economic vitality, ecological restoration, and social resilience in a rapidly evolving hybrid era.

DESIGN CONCEPT: THE HYBRID HABITAT

The central design concept is the creation of a new neighborhood model that seamlessly integrates living, working, and social life within a connected ecological and urban system. At its core, the concept challenges the traditional separation of residential, commercial, and public zones in American cities. Instead, it promotes spatial hybridity — overlapping domestic, professional, and collective functions to foster interaction, inclusivity, and well-being.

The design operates through three interrelated principles:

1. **Integration:** Blending home, work, and public spaces into a cohesive living framework supported by mixed-use density and shared community infrastructure.
2. **Connectivity:** Establishing physical and social linkages through a "social corridor" — a public spine that organizes co-working hubs, amenities, and green networks while reconnecting people to nature and one another.
3. **Resilience:** Embedding passive and renewable design systems to create an energy-positive, adaptive neighborhood

that supports both human and ecological health.

Through these principles, *Hybrid Habitat* envisions a self-sustaining urban ecosystem—a prototype for future neighborhoods that evolve alongside the ways people live and work.

DESIGN STRATEGIES

1. Individual Scale: Flexible Living

At the smallest scale, the design redefines conventional housing types to accommodate contemporary patterns of hybrid work. For single occupants, the typical linear studio expands to include a small, dedicated workspace—on the same level or a split level—to enhance focus and productivity. For families, a detached workspace in the backyard forms a courtyard or terrace, encouraging social interaction and introducing spatial diversity into the urban fabric.

2. Collective Scale: Shared Typologies

At the community level, housing evolves into co-living and co-working typologies. Co-living residences locate private units on upper floors and shared amenities—lounges, kitchens, and co-working areas—below, fostering collaboration and a sense of community. A new neighborhood co-working building features a central courtyard for daylight and ventilation, with cafés, open work areas, and private offices organized vertically to support different modes of work.

3. Urban Scale: The Social Corridor

At the neighborhood scale, the design introduces a "social corridor"—a vibrant urban spine connecting housing clusters with co-working areas, plazas, retail shops, groceries, and gyms. This continuous public zone blurs boundaries between living and civic life, transforming housing from a private activity into a collective, urban experience.

4. Environmental Strategy: Energy-Positive Systems

As hybrid lifestyles increase energy demand, the master plan adopts an energy-positive approach built on two strategies:

- Passive Design: Optimizing orientation, shading, natural ventilation, and daylight to reduce energy use for heating and cooling.
- Renewable Integration: Embedding solar panels, wind turbines, and geothermal systems into buildings to produce clean energy on-site.

5. Site Integration: The Adaptive Master Plan

Four spatial layers define the plan: pedestrian pathways, a social corridor, green infrastructure, and continuous riverfront connections. Together, these layers support ecology, recreation, and social interaction while linking the community to the White River.

CONCLUSION

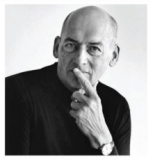
Hybrid Habitat envisions a new model of living where work, home, and community coexist within an adaptive, connected, and sustainable urban framework. Rooted in the shifting realities of remote and hybrid work, the thesis transforms outdated zoning and post-industrial landscapes into opportunities for reintegration — between people, place, and ecology. The former GM Stamping Plant site in Indianapolis serves as both context and catalyst, demonstrating how flexible architectural typologies and energy-positive systems can regenerate a neglected urban area. Through multi-scalar design strategies—ranging from individual housing units to collective co-living and co-working environments—the project fosters social interaction, inclusivity, and environmental resilience. Ultimately, the *Hybrid Habitat* is more than a design proposal; it is a vision for the future of neighborhoods—responsive to human behavior, guided by ecological intelligence, and grounded in community life. It calls for a rethinking of how architecture can shape the evolving relationship between living and working in the 21st century city.

Discourse Board

THINKERS: DISCOURSE



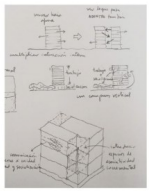
Alejandro Aravena
Community engagement
Incremental housing
Urban equity
Empirical feedback

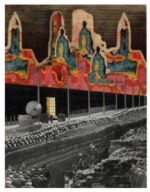


Rem Koolhaas
Theoretical investigation
Critical urban research
Archival and
speculative methods



Bjarke Ingels
Diagrammatic research
Technology & sustainability
Playful pragmatism







THINKERS: ARTIST



James Turrell
Question reality,
challenging our perceptions
of art & the world around us



Jean-Michel Basquiat
Graffiti and Abstract Expressionism,
Race, identity, politics, classism,
and colonialism.





THINKERS: SUBJECT MATTER



Sheila Foster

Housing justice and
urban governance



Dan Parolek
Missing Middle Housing

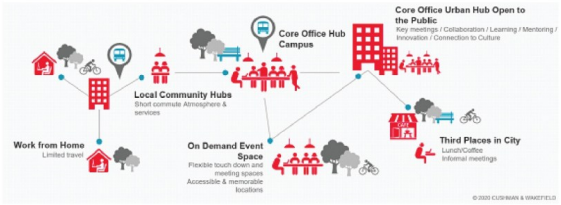


Jane Jacobs

community involvement
and pedestrian-friendly
urban design

CONDITION

Urban work life ecosystem
Hybrid work life ecosystem
Urban Life beyond work
Sustainability and Affordability



TOPIC

History of mixed use development
Urban Morphology
The Rise of Coliving




HYBRID
HABITAT
HOME OFFICE
LIVING & WORKING
GYM
CAFE
OUTDOOR CAFE
CONCERT
VIDEO GAMES
SPORTS
SWIMMING
COMMUNITY PARK
EXHIBITION
MEDIA LIBRARY
START-UP
GROCERY
URBAN FARMING
CO-WORKING SPACE
RECORDING STUDIO
RETAIL
COMMUNITY HALL

Arteffect: Collage



Sketch of A Remote Worker's Daily Life

Sketch by the author



6 am



7 am



8 am



12 pm



2 pm



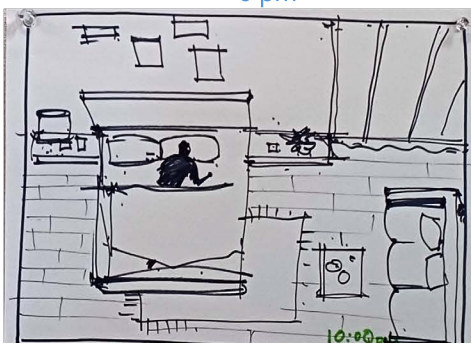
6 pm



7pm



8 pm

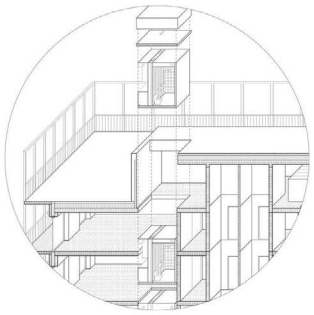


10 pm

Case Studies

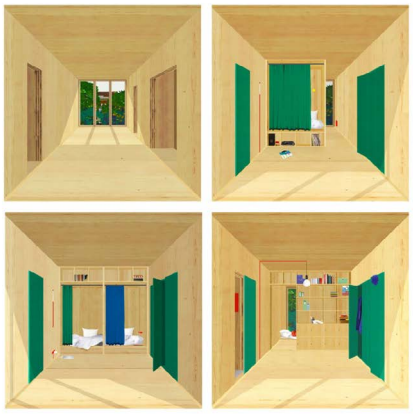
case studies **DOGMA**
LIVING AND WORKING



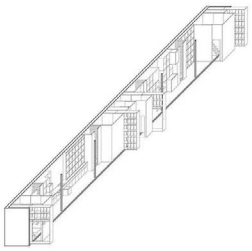












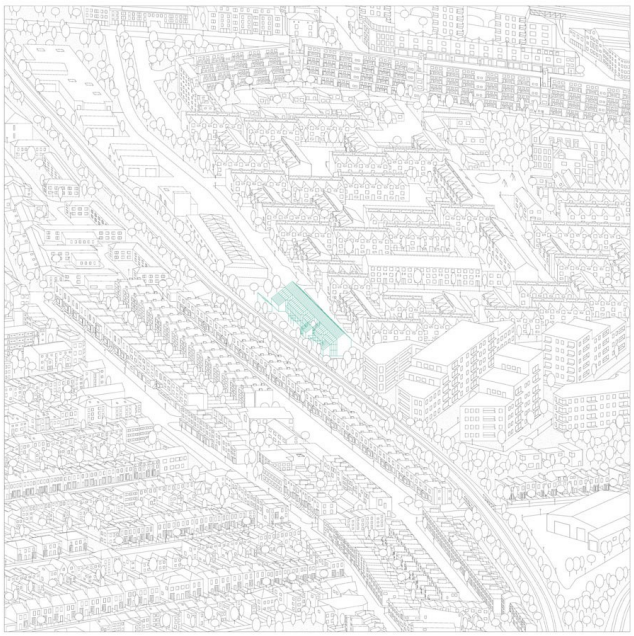




case studies **DOGMA**
LIVING AND WORKING

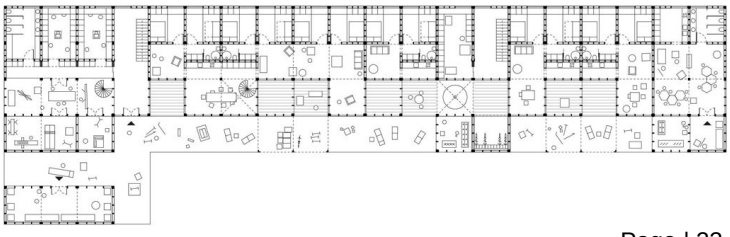
We always considered housing as a **private issue**, while it's a **societal one at the same time**.

Housing as a **socially shared space** with the inhabitants and with the city itself.



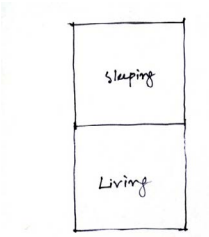




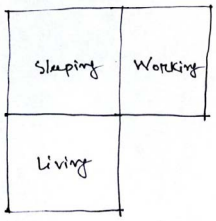


Typological Research

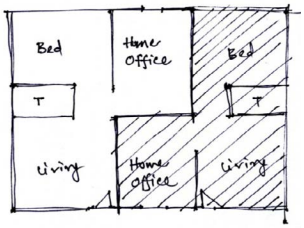
1. FOR A **SINGLE USER**

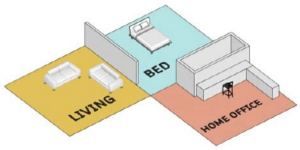


Type: Studio Apartment

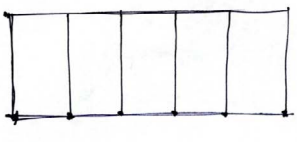


Addition of working space

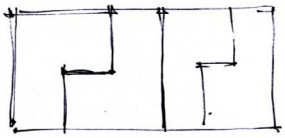




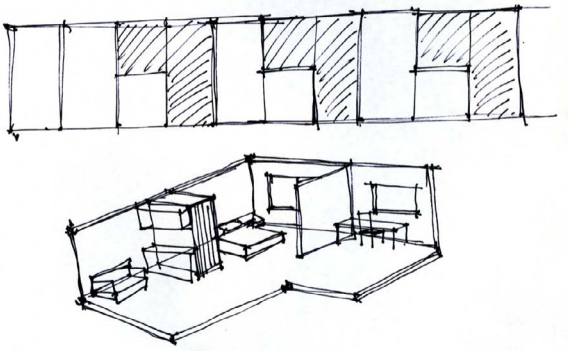
Functional Arrangement



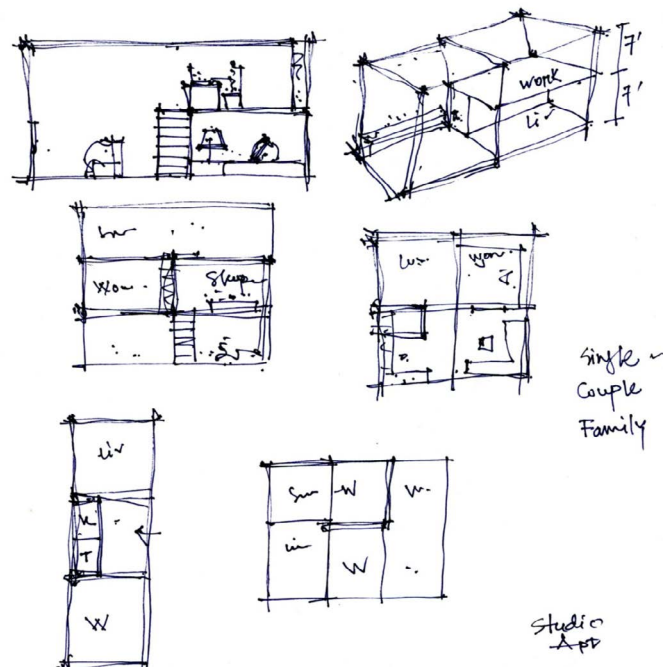
Liner arrangement

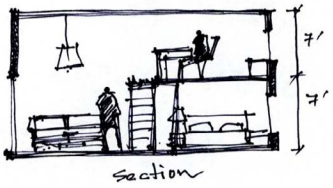


Interlocking liner arrangement

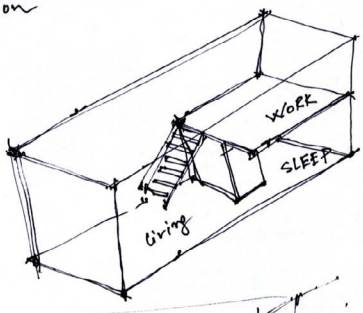


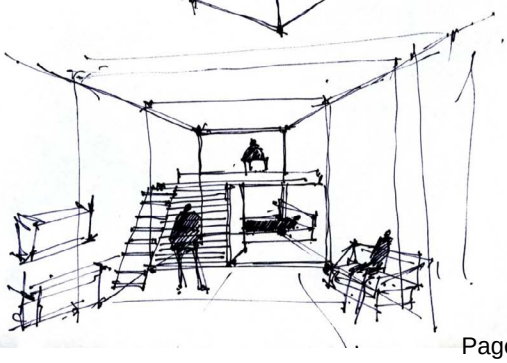
1. FOR A **SINGLE USER**



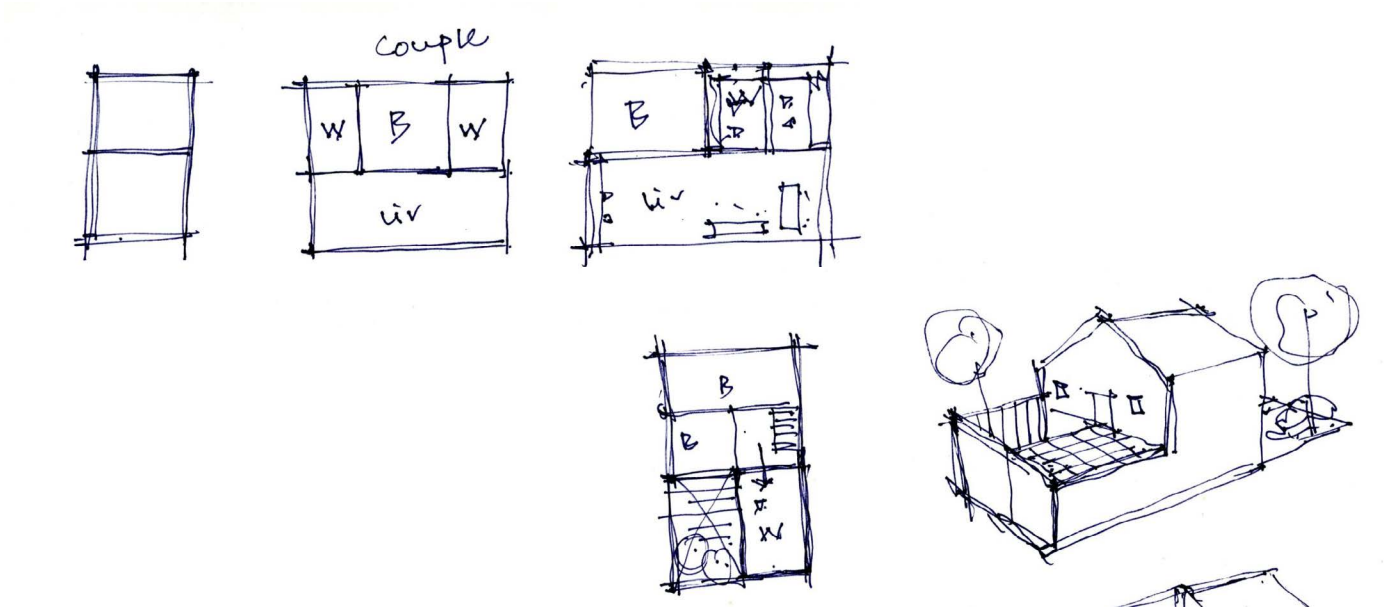


Type:
Studio Apartment



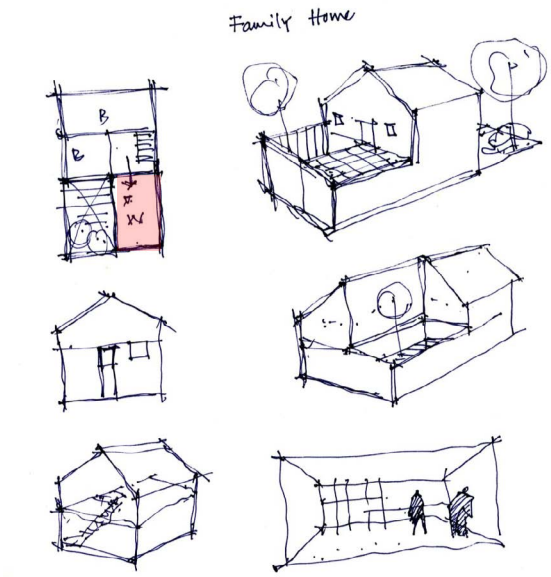


2. FOR A **COUPLE**

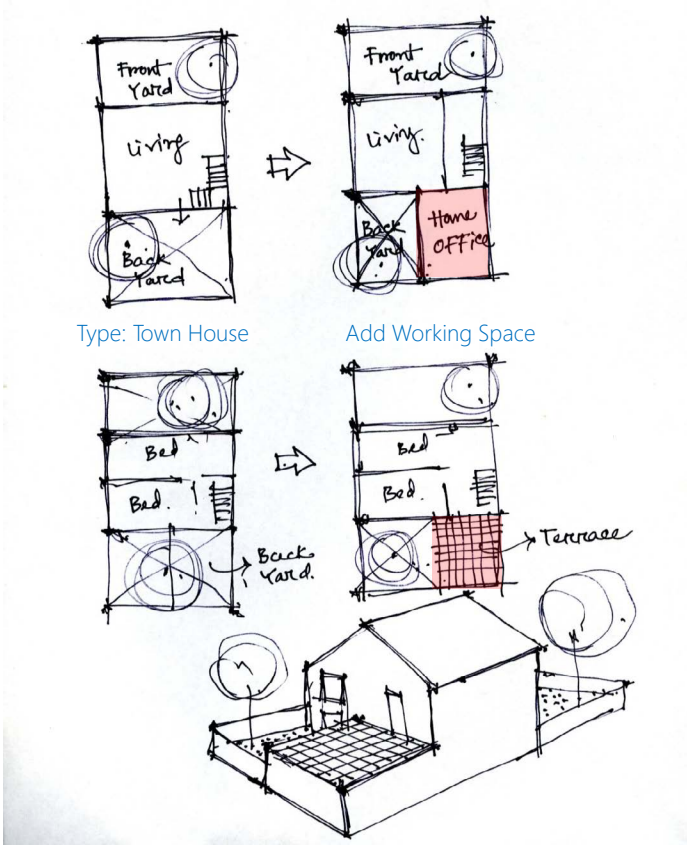


Typological Research

3. FOR A **FAMILY**

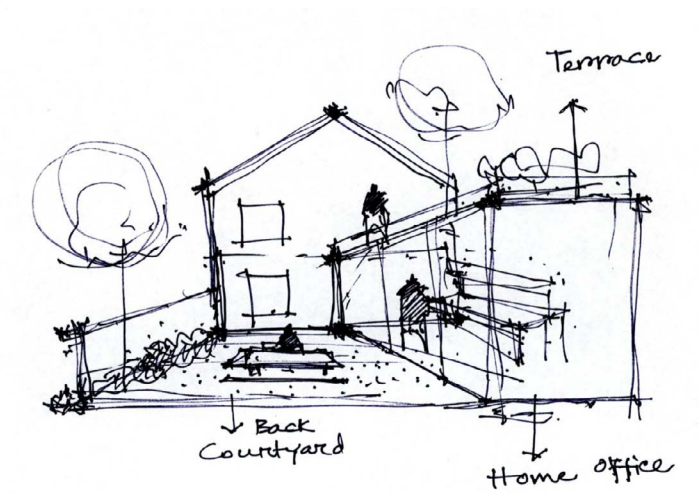


Adding Working Space,
resulted in courtyard and terrace

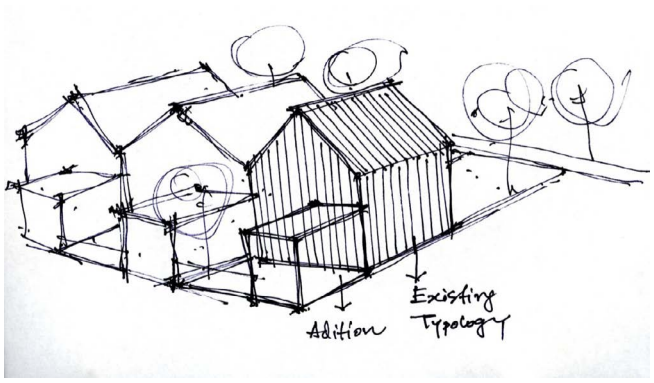


Type: Town House Add Working Space

3. FOR A **FAMILY**

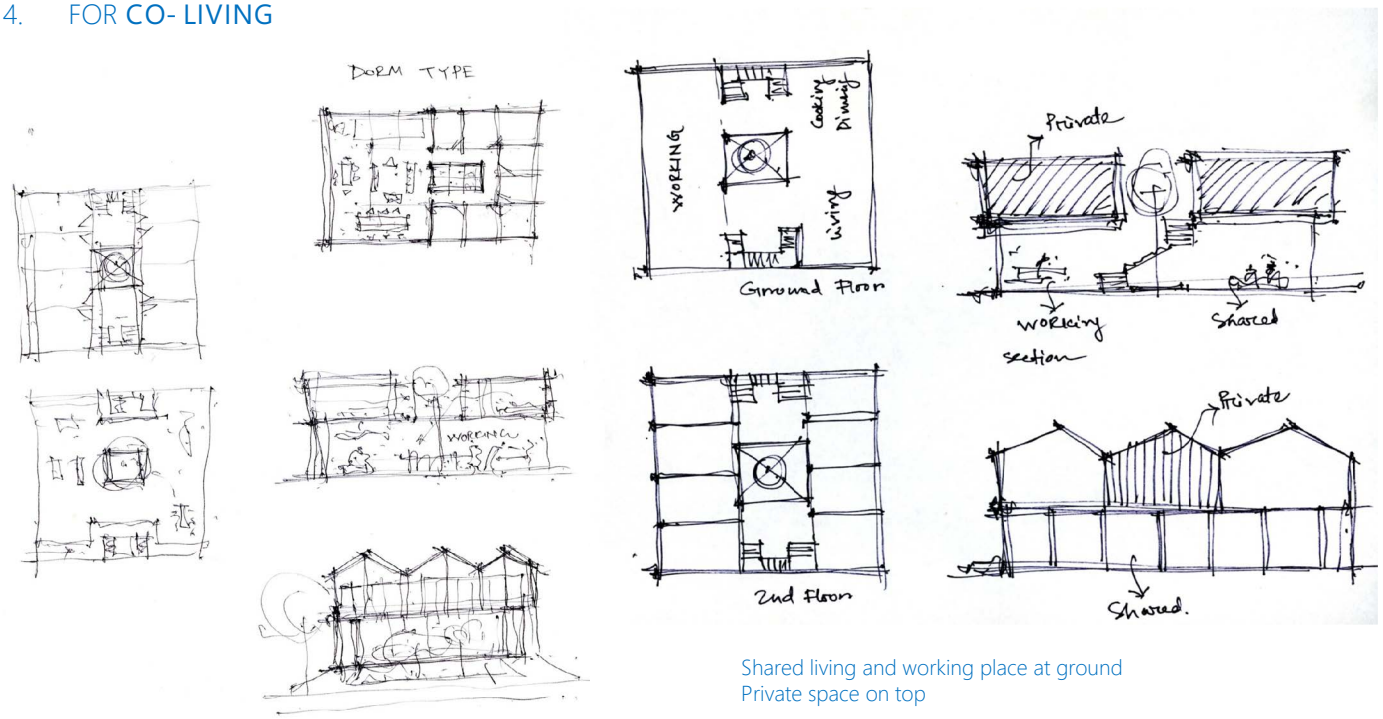


Backyard to Workplace



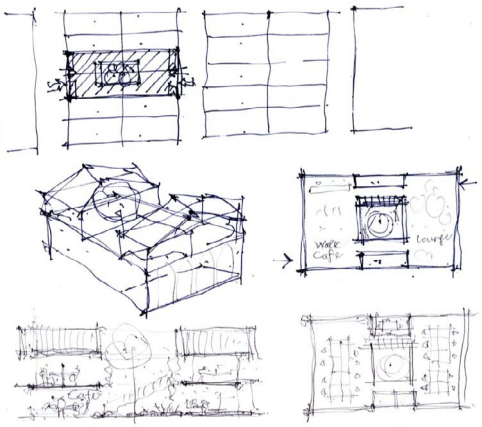
Spatial Diversity

4. FOR **CO- LIVING**

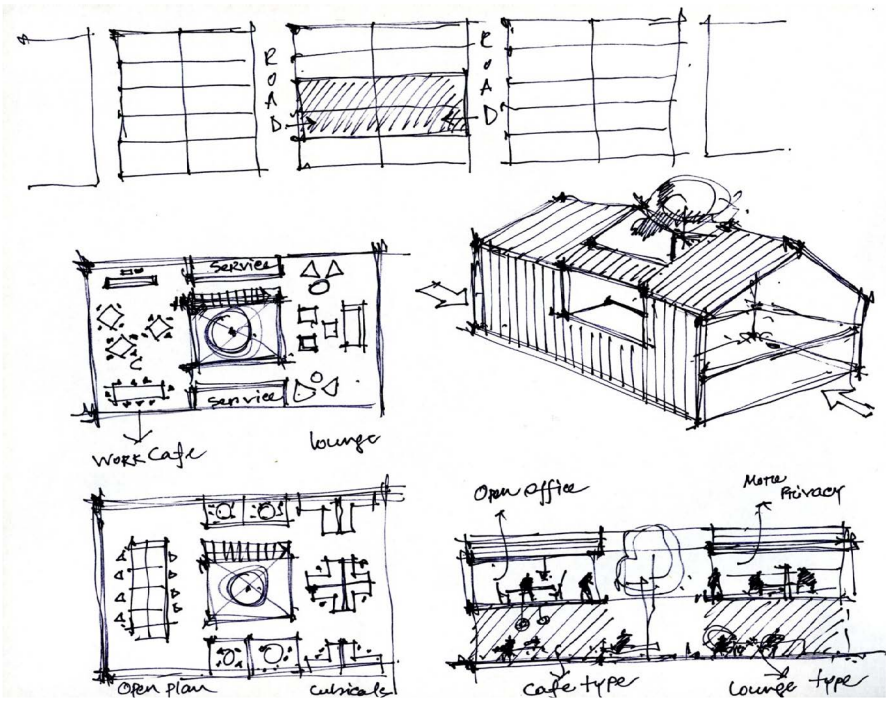


Shared living and working place at ground
Private space on top

5. IN A **RESIDENTIAL BLOCK**

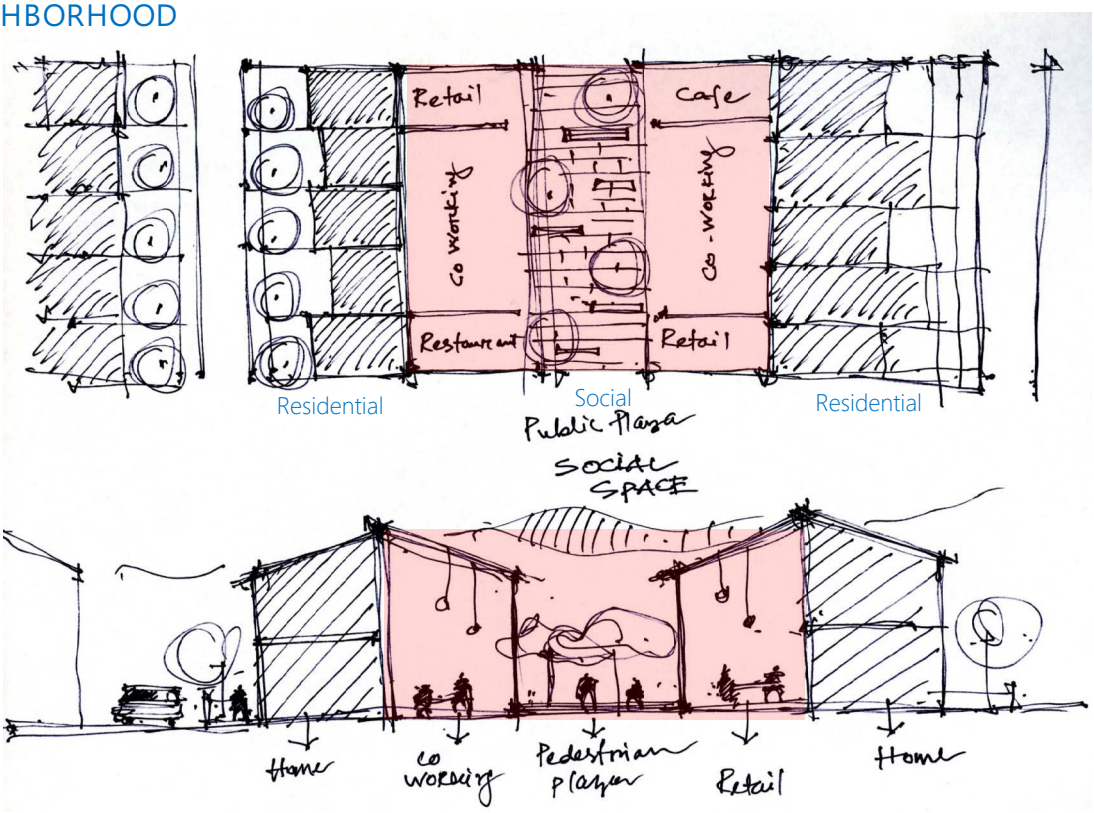


Maximum natural light
And variation of space
Offering different type of work environment

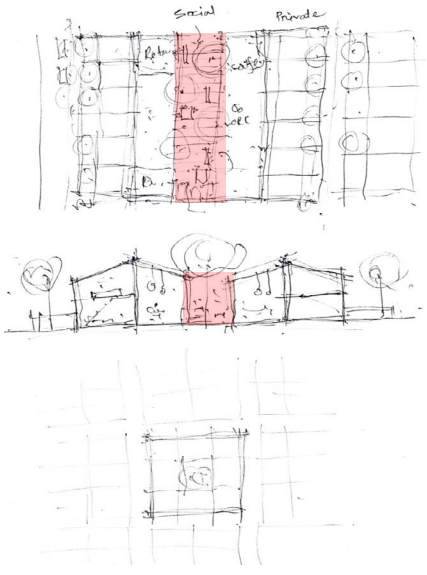


Typological Research

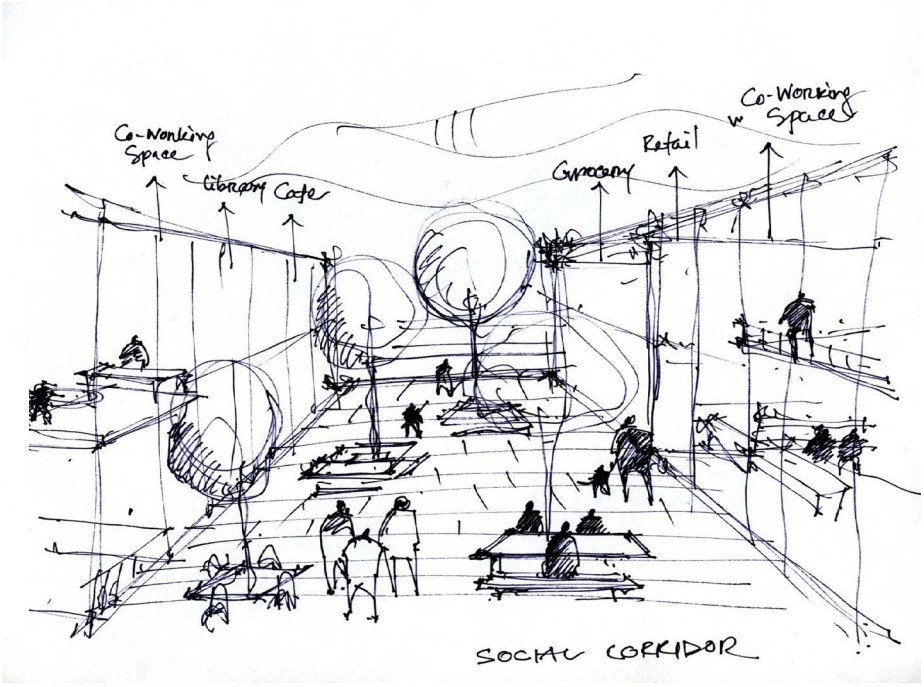
5. IN A **NEIGHBORHOOD**



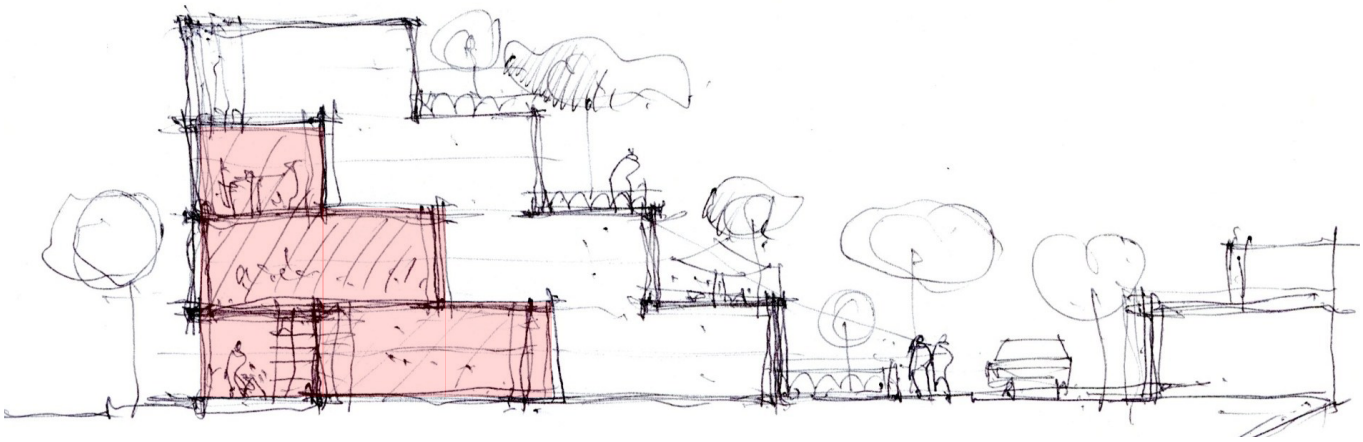
5. IN A **NEIGHBORHOOD**



Social Corridor



5. IN A **NEIGHBORHOOD**

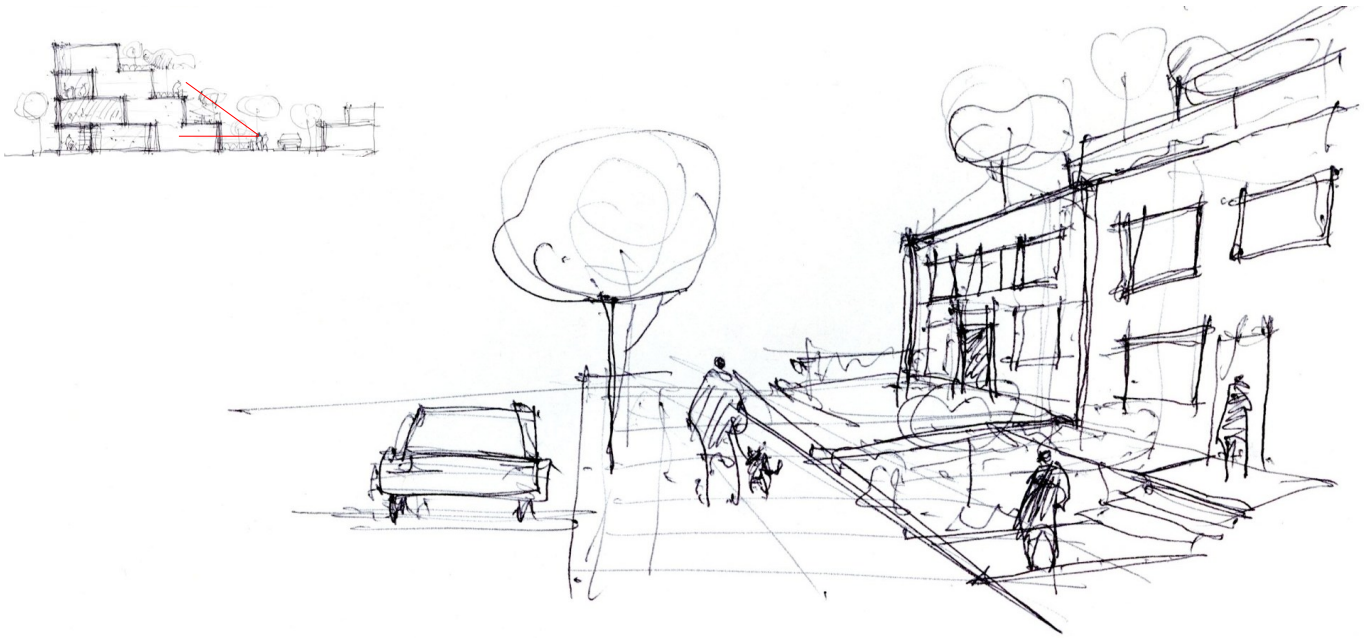


Social

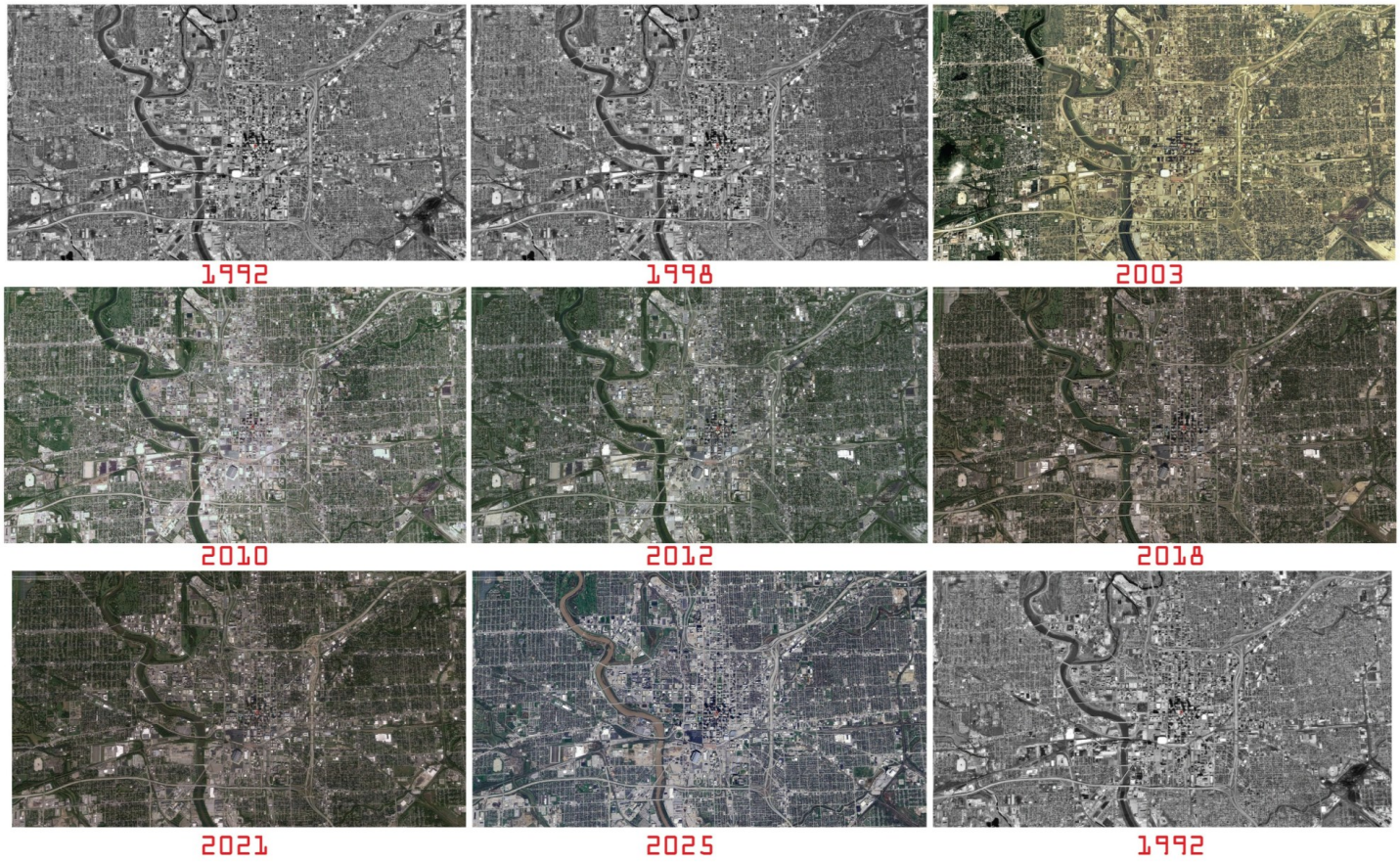
Residential

Low height
Residential

5. IN A **NEIGHBORHOOD**



HISTORICAL MAP RESEARCH (33 YEARS)



KEY FINDINGS

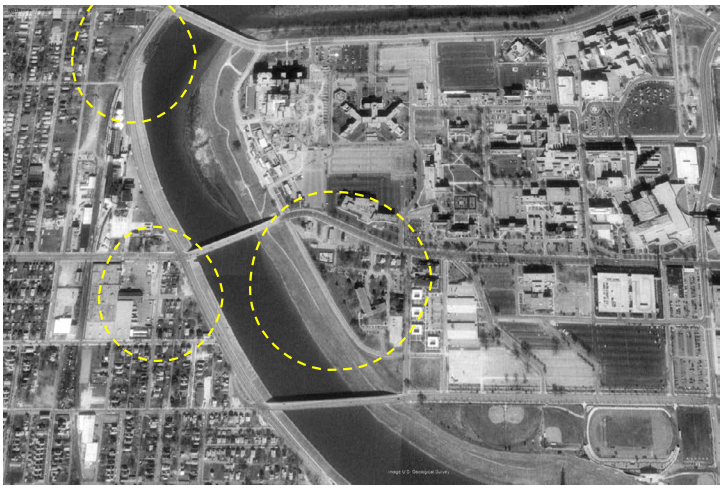
Downtown & core neighborhoods remain stable

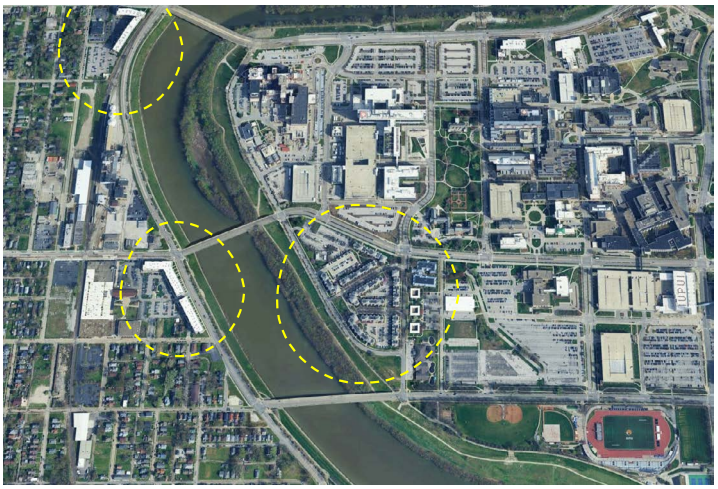
Industrial zones increasingly underused & abandoned

Shift from industrial → service-based economy

Brownfields create disconnection within the city

Site Analysis





1992

URBAN TRANSFORMATION PATTERN

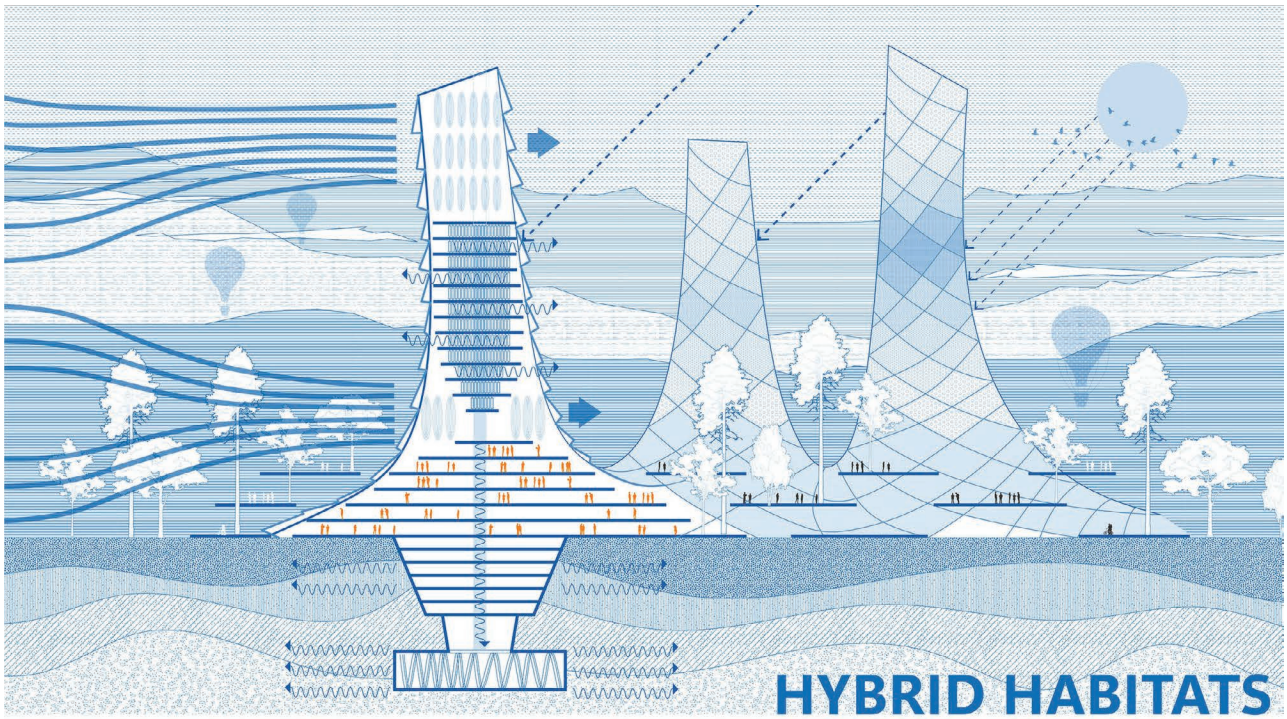
2025

Brownfield Opportunity
Opens space for new development

Land Use Shift
Transformation from industrial → residential housing

River Integration
Potential to connect waterways with daily life & community spaces

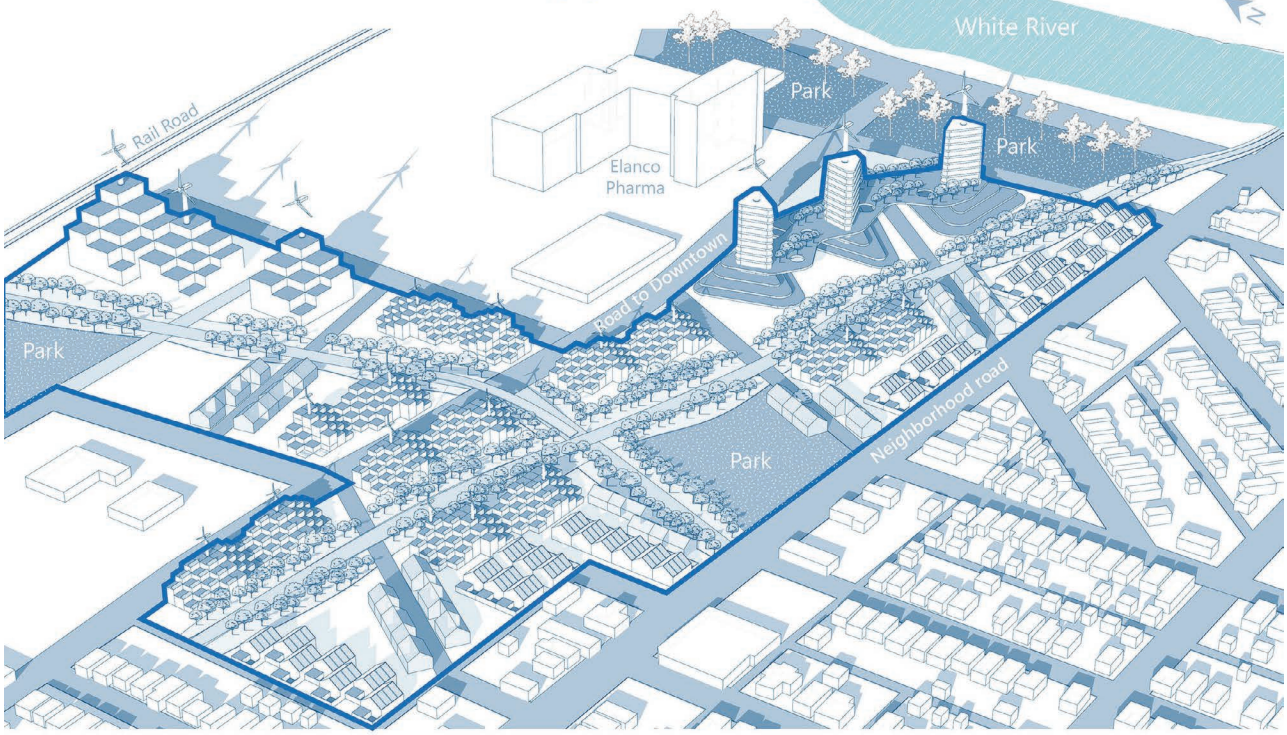


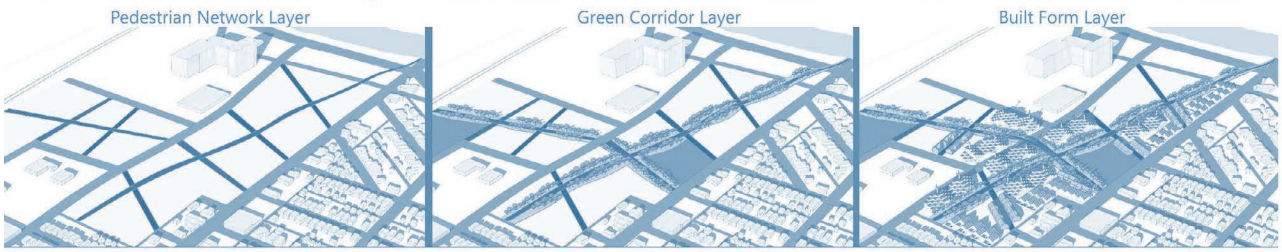


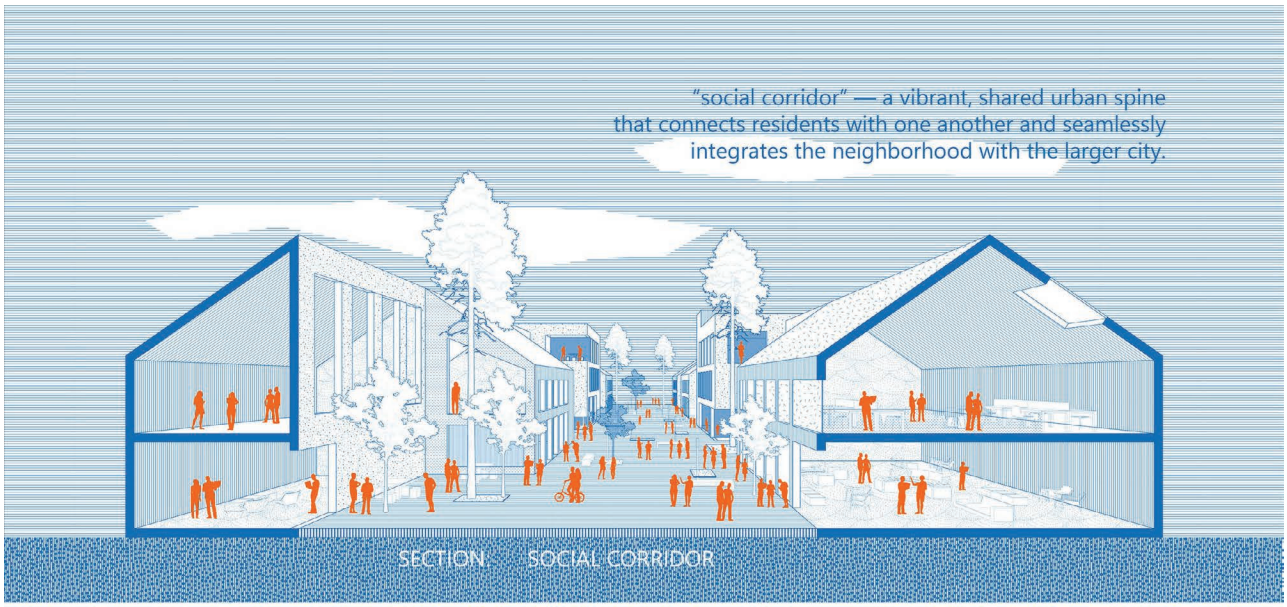
HYBRID HABITATS

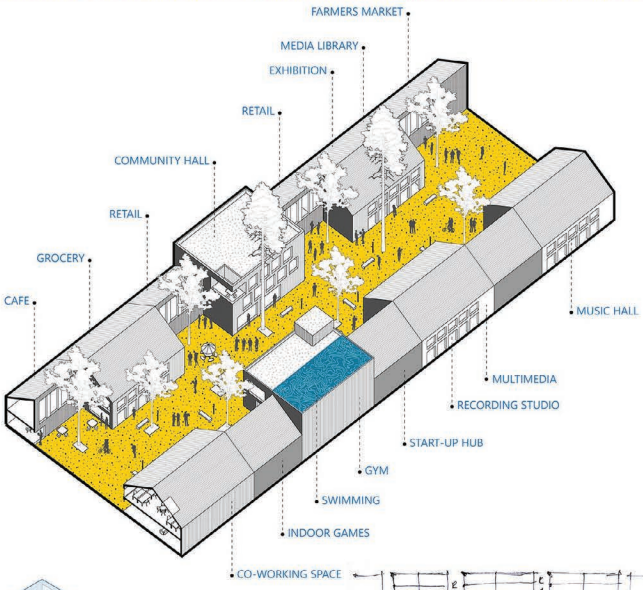
RETHINKING URBAN FORM FOR FLEXIBLE **WORK** AND INCLUSIVE **LIVING**

The rise of **remote** and **hybrid work** has disrupted traditional urban patterns and demands new **design frameworks** that integrate affordable **housing** with **flexible workspaces**, creating inclusive, **adaptable**, and **sustainable** urban environments for the evolving hybrid workforce.

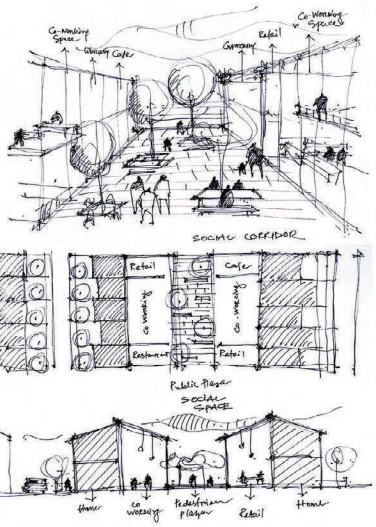


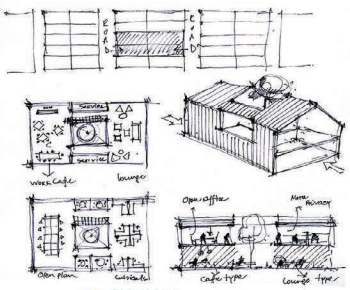




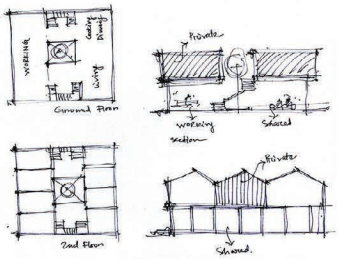


Typological research: Amenities





Co-Working



Co-Living

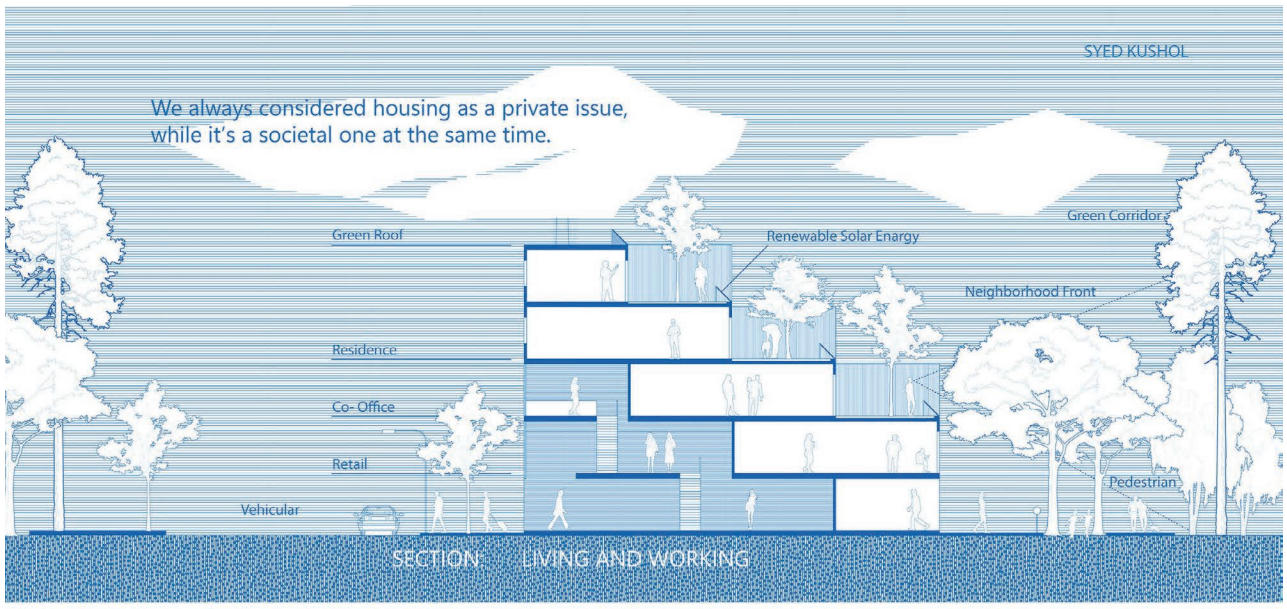


DIAGRAM:
SPATIAL NECESSITY

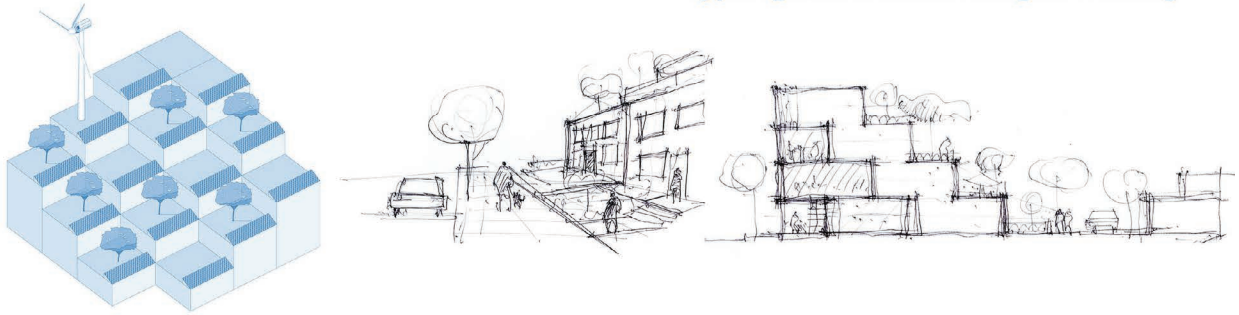


Connecting the surrounding context





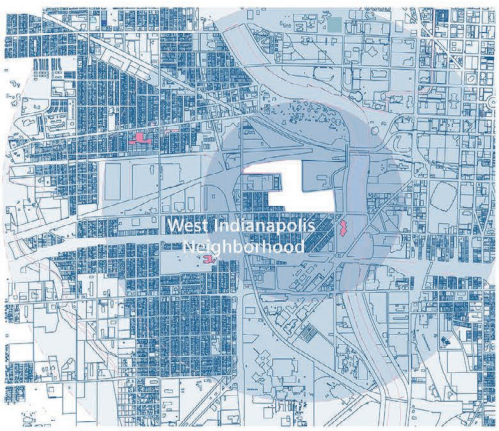
Typological research: Living & Working



Studio

Family House

Backyard to Workplace



West Indianapolis Neighborhood

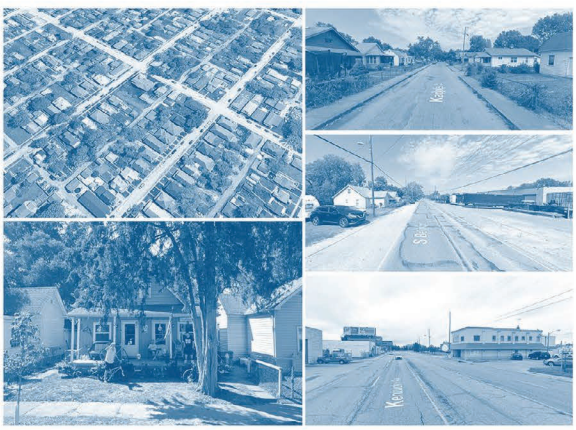
Low-income community

Limited infrastructure & municipal services

Scarcity of commercial & retail facilities

Few public amenities

Poor separation of industrial & residential zones



DESIGN INTERVENTIONS

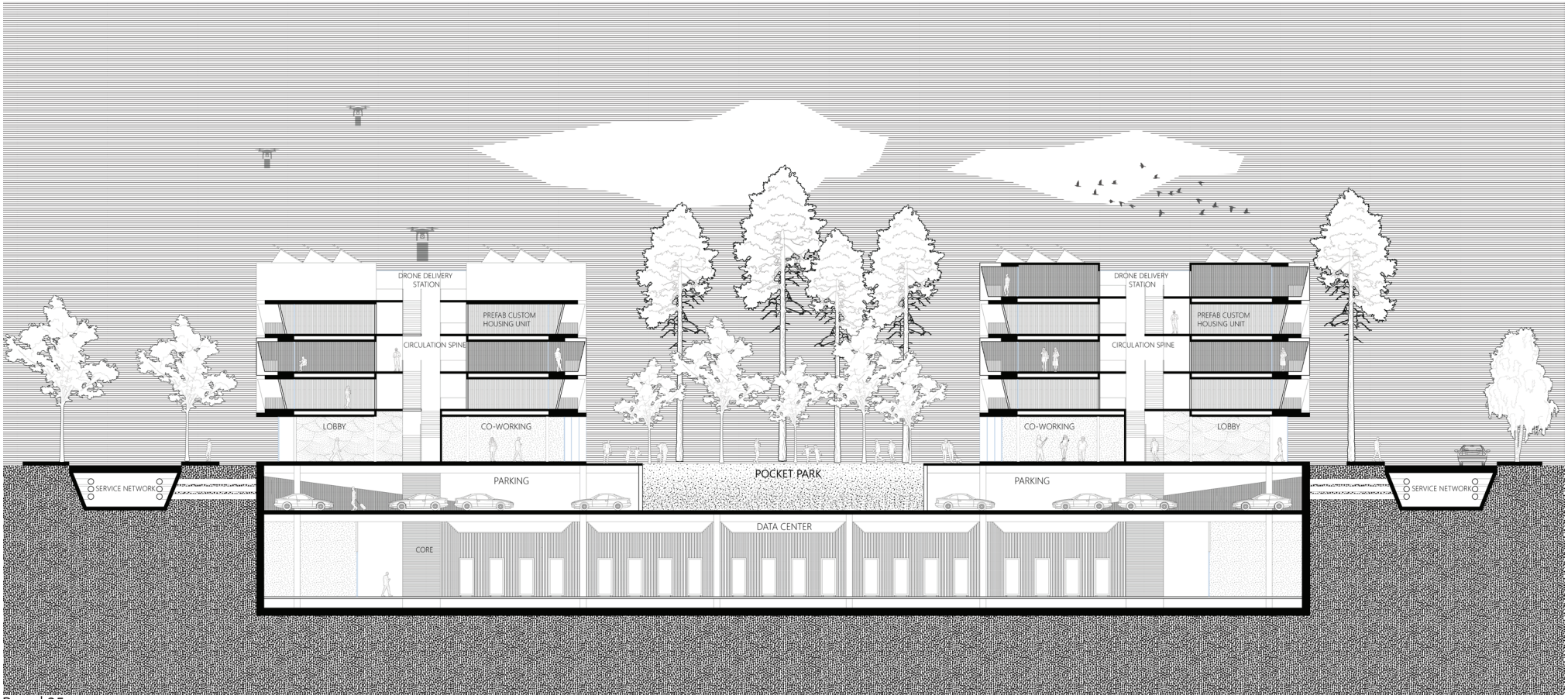
Design Concept

A vertically layered hybrid building where a secure underground data center occupies thermally stable ground, separated from housing above by a service-buffer podium. This intermediate layer isolates noise, vibration, and technical systems while enabling energy exchange, reusing server waste heat for residential needs. Above, light-filled housing forms a livable environment. The project reframes hidden digital infrastructure as a productive urban layer, integrating technology and everyday life without compromising comfort.

Key benefits of an underground data center with housing above:

Efficient land use: Stacks critical infrastructure below and frees valuable surface/air rights for housing.
Urban compatibility: Hides typically "anti-urban" data centers, preserving street life and livability.
Thermal stability: Subterranean conditions reduce temperature fluctuation, improving cooling efficiency.
Resilience & security: Underground facilities are better protected from storms, physical threats, and disruption.
Noise & visual reduction: Keeps heavy equipment out of sight and away from daily urban experience.
Energy synergy (potential): Waste heat from servers can be reused for domestic hot water or heating.

A highly efficient, resilient, and future-oriented hybrid typology—strongest when designed with proper technical separation and energy integration.

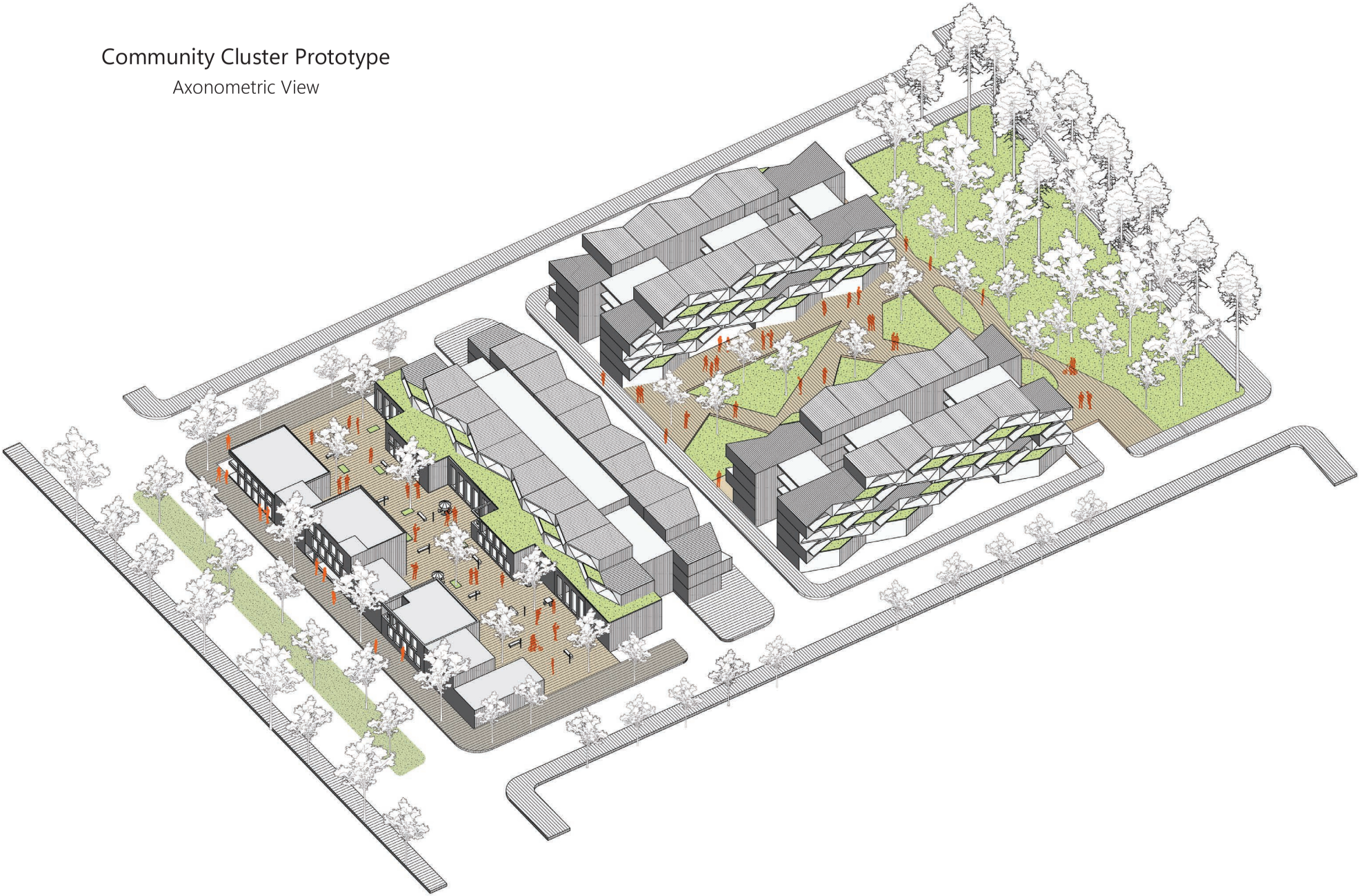


Site Masterplan



Community Cluster Prototype

Axonometric View

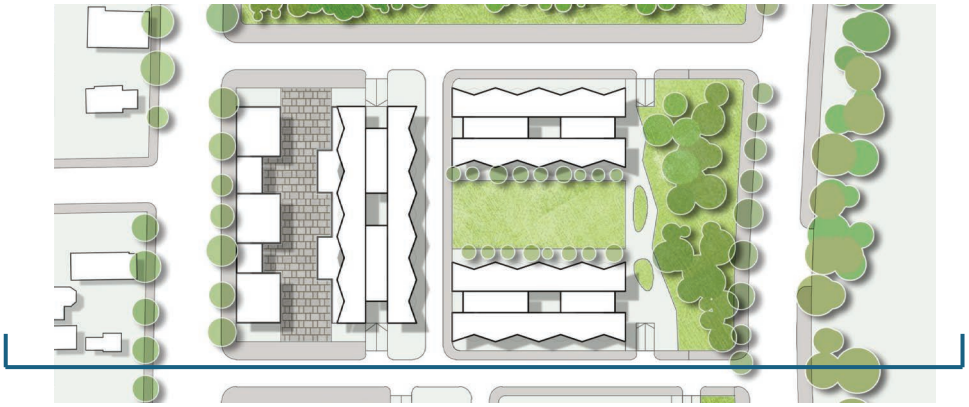


Community Cluster

Layers Of Activity

Elevation



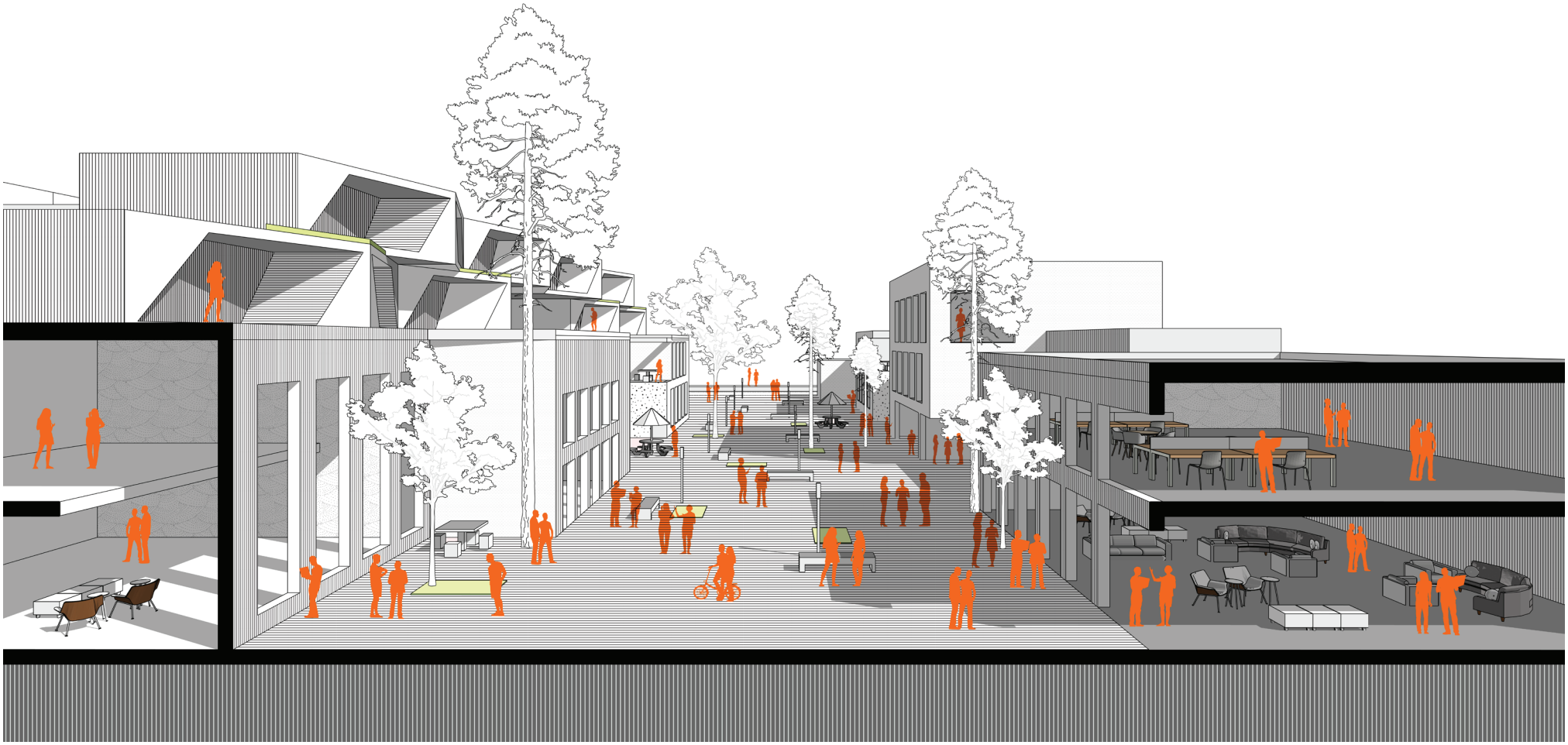


HYBRID HABITATS
Activity around the pocket park



Social Corridor

Essential Amenities for the Neighborhood



Social Corridor

Essential Amenities for the Neighborhood



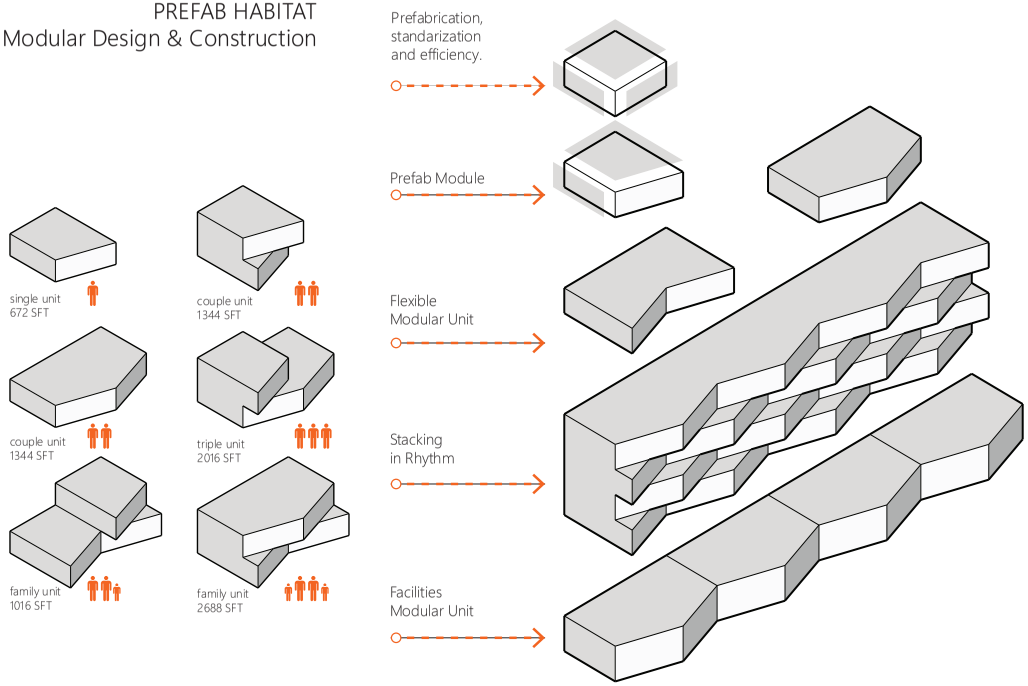
PREFAB HABITAT
Modular Design & Construction

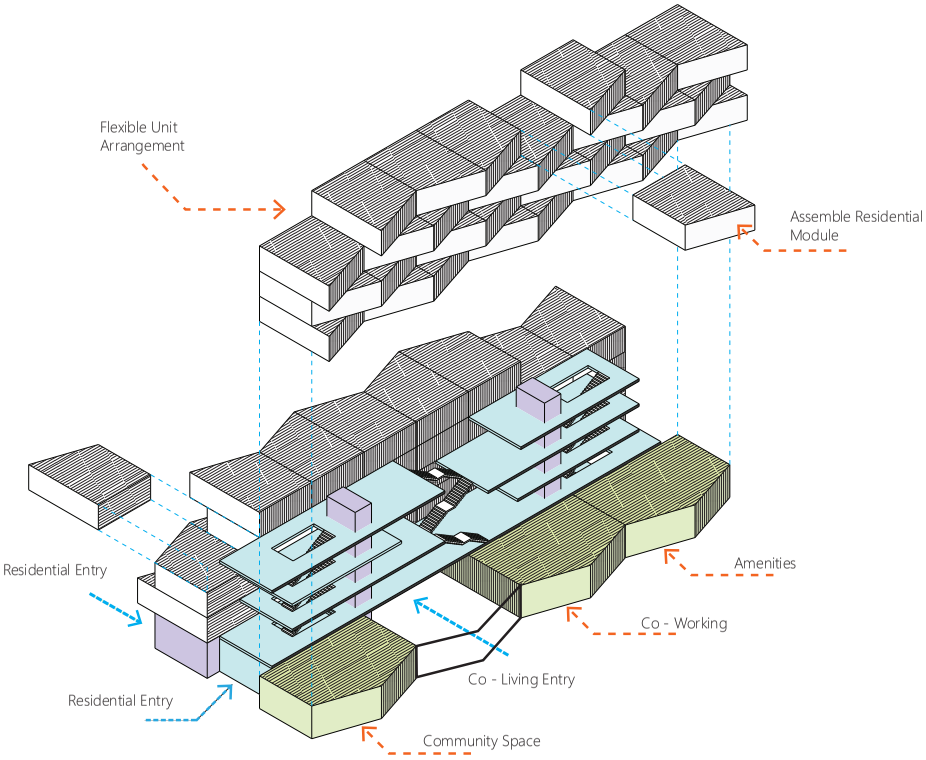
Housing Unit: prefabricated, modular housing units with integrated smart features, automation & Ai technology The units can be plugged in to the structural grid and connected to service core

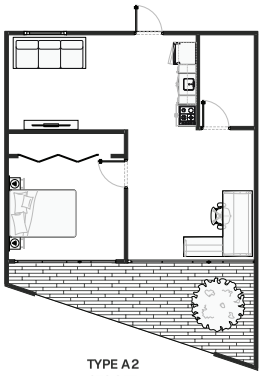


The smart modular housing unit will enable user to customize according their need. The integrated AI features will be prefabricated as an industrial production. The building system will organize the efficiency of this functionality and will also incorporate the social and psychological aspect of the user.

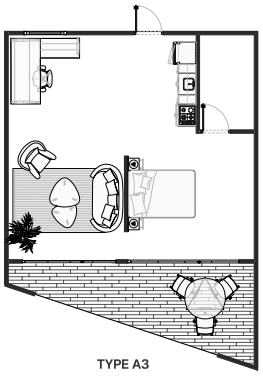
PREFAB HABITAT
Modular Design & Construction



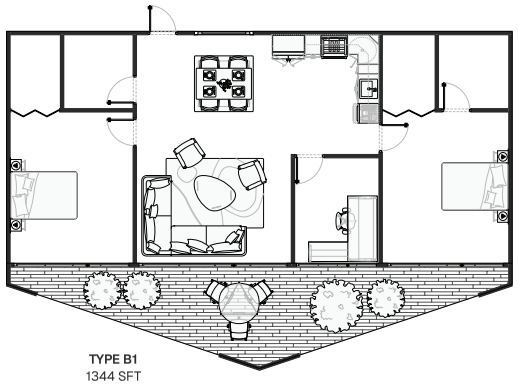




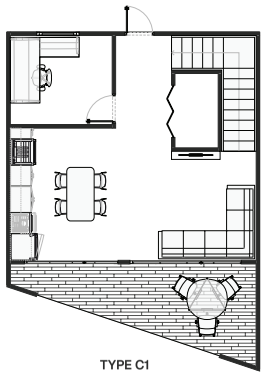
TYPE A2
672 SFT
01 BED + WORKSPACE



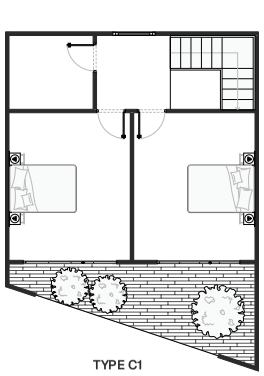
TYPE A3
672 SFT
STUDIO



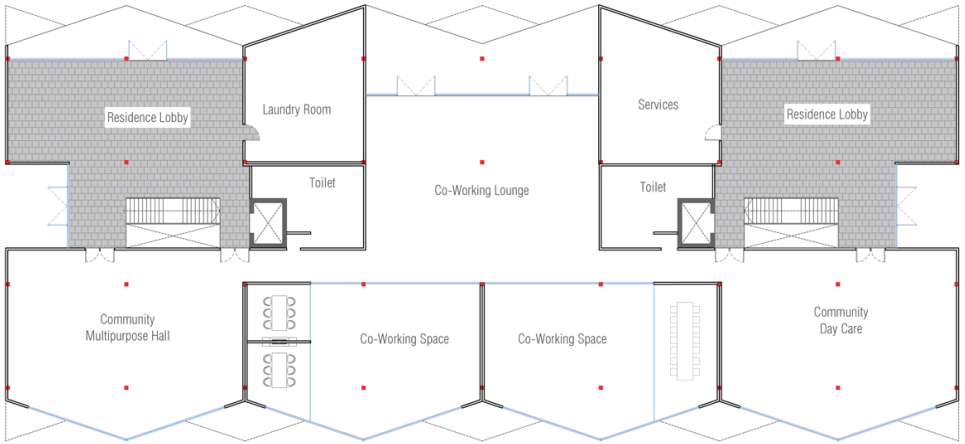
TYPE B1
1344 SFT
02 BED + WORKSPACE



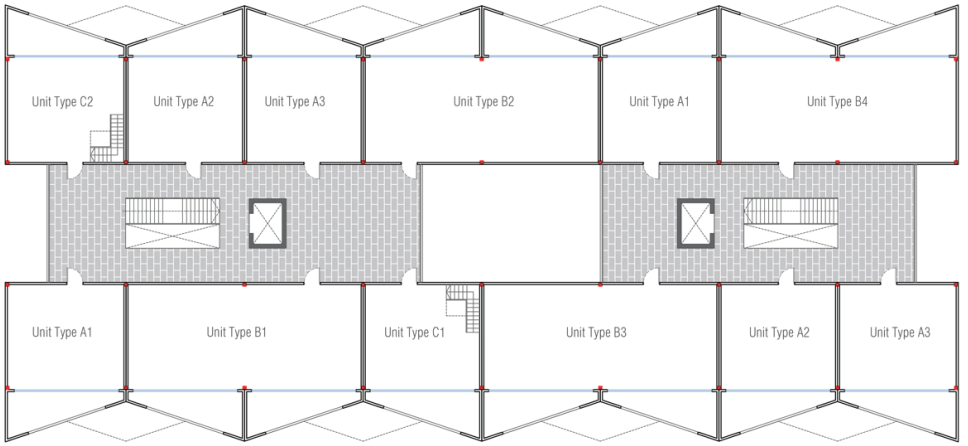
TYPE C1
1344 SFT
Duplex 2BED



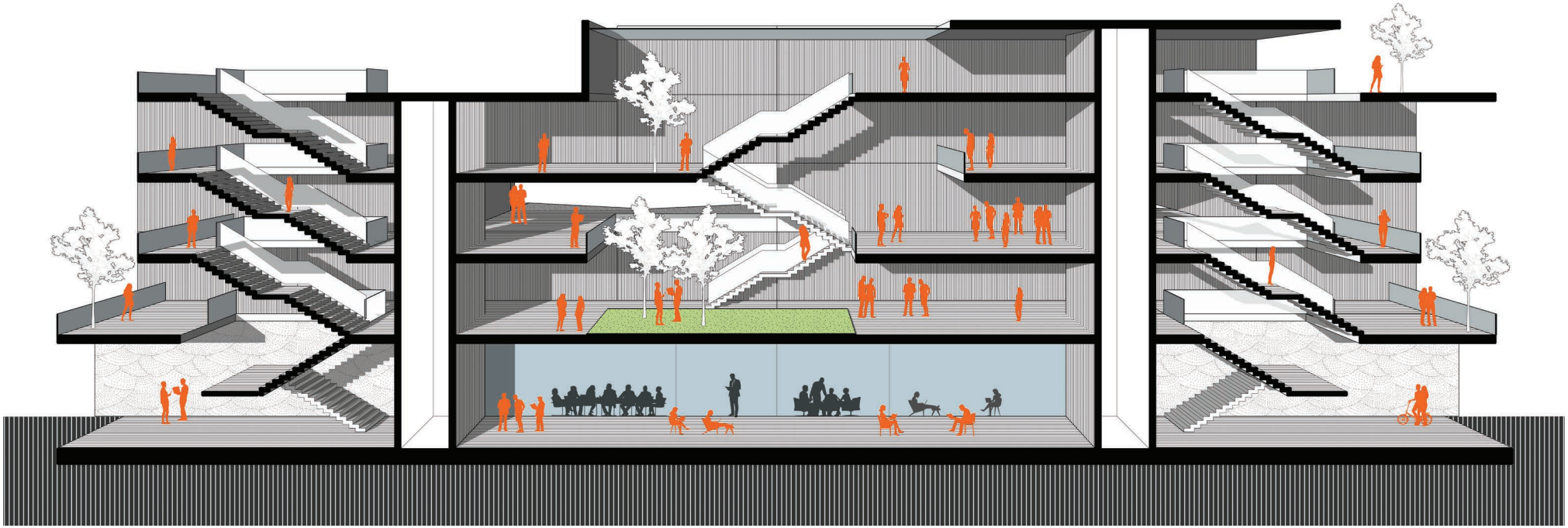
TYPE C1
1344 SFT
Duplex 2BED



Ground Floor Plan Scale: 1:150



Typical Floor Plan Scale: 1:150



SECTION THROUGH CIRCULATION SPINE

HYBRID HABITATS:
RETHINKING URBAN FORM FOR
FLEXIBLE WORK AND INCLUSIVE LIVING

