

**Integrating Infrastructure:  
Post-Traffic Viaducts as Community Connectors**

by

Brennan Jelinski

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Architecture

at

Dalhousie University  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
June 2021

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# **Abstract**

In many Canadian cities, over-built and under-used road infrastructures from the 'Urban Renewal' era exist adjacent to their city centres. In Vancouver, plans for their removal and site re-design strategies are already underway. This thesis challenges the demolition of such infrastructures generally, by investigating their potential for re-use locally.

As an alternative to clean-slate planning, cities should identify the potential in what has already been built. Following the removal of motor vehicles from their surface, the Georgia and Dunsmuir viaducts offer a unique opportunity to inject new life into a neglected city district. A multi-faceted design response draws from an urban landscape history to serve the communities originally impacted by the viaducts' construction, while improving conditions for current and future user groups. Design strategies focus on public placemaking through the intentional blending of user groups, like skateboarders, creatives, visitors and commuters, creating vibrancy and strengthening the community.

# Acknowledgements

To my supervisor, Diogo Burnay, and my advisor, Steve Parcell, I want to thank you both for your ongoing support, guidance, and availability throughout this process. I have become quite fond of our weekly discussions over Zoom and will miss them very much! Thank you both for pushing my ideas and encouraging me to trust my own instincts.

To my parents, Tim and Thérèse, thank you for a lifetime of love and support, and for instilling within me the confidence to chase my dreams.

To my siblings, Michelle, Cameron, Heather, and Lauren. Every one of you has helped me throughout this process more than you will know. I look up to you all immensely.

To my incredibly supportive partner, Alex, thank you for all of the conversations, coffee, meals, hugs, and late night design sessions. Thank you for believing in me.

To my classmates and peers, despite such a short time in Halifax, I am forever grateful to have spent it learning from, collaborating with, and travelling the world with you.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Freeways Over Neighbourhoods

The twentieth century saw the unprecedented growth of many major Canadian cities, with large-scale planning often centered around the automobile (Fig. 1). In the decades following the second world war, such car-centric planning began to reach new scales, with city planners increasingly eager to route major freeway infrastructure right through city centres in the name of progress and efficiency. The freeway boom of the 1950's and 60's in many ways complemented the clearing of 'blighted areas' in cities across Canada (and throughout North America) in the name of improved housing conditions. Though rarely explicitly labeled as such, this

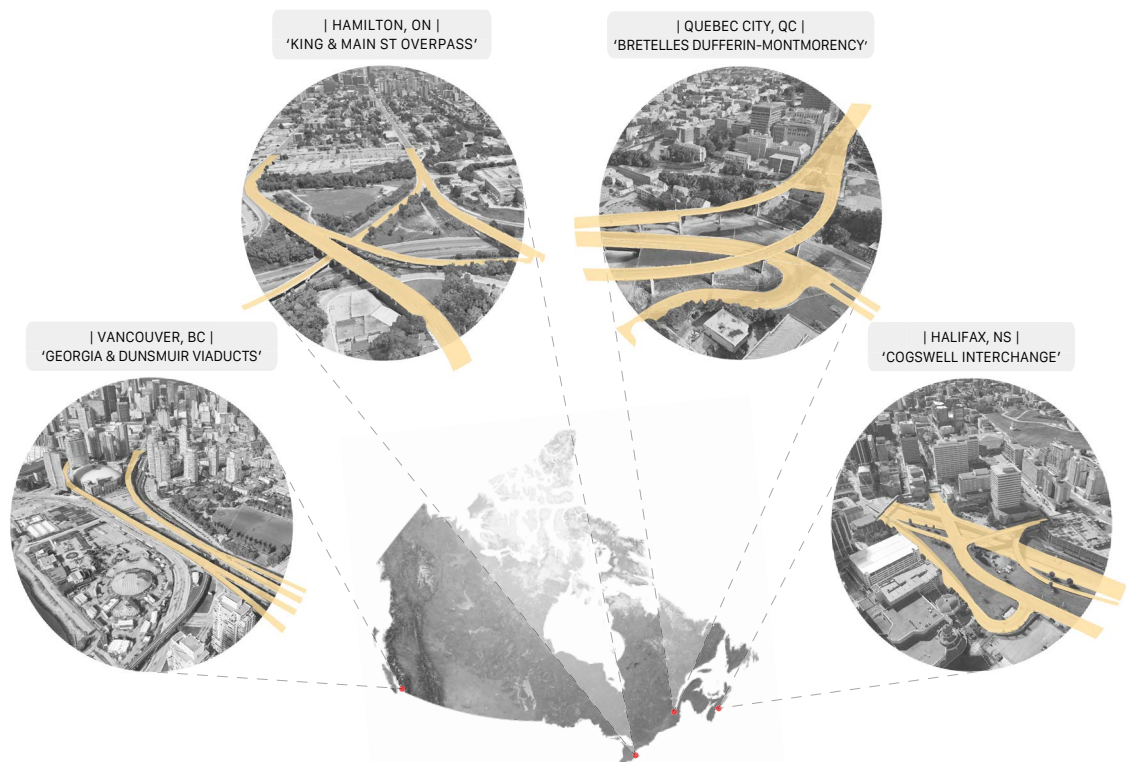


Fig. 1. In Canadian cities from coast to coast there is a pattern of large roadway infrastructures (often overbuilt and under-used) adjacent to their urban cores. In cities like Halifax and Vancouver, plans for their removal and site re-programming are already underway.

type of planning in cities disproportionately impacted and displaced those communities whose voices were not heard. These communities were mostly working-class, and were mainly comprised of non-white populations.

### **Urban Renewal Comes to Vancouver**



Fig. 2. Aerial photo showing the Georgia & Dunsmuir Viaducts on opening day, Jan. 9, 1972 (Vancouver Sun 2015)

In the mid-twentieth century, Vancouver city council planned to run an urban freeway (Fig. 2) through the neighborhoods of Strathcona and Chinatown (Compton 2012, 114), connecting the existing Trans-Canada highway to a third bridge across the Burrard Inlet to the North Shore. Destructive and short-sited though it was, this type of planning reflected the ethos of many North American civic governments at the time,



under the guise of 'Urban Renewal'. The planning often included partnerships across levels of government, as seen in the 'Housing Act, 1944', "whereby the federal government offered to share with municipalities the cost of acquiring and clearing blighted residential areas" (Pickett 1968, 233).

### **Renewal, Race, and Reconciliation**

Whether the demolition of such neighbourhoods involved new housing projects or roadway infrastructure directly in their place, their motivation was often justified in the name of "concern over the social consequences of slum housing" (Pickett 1968, 233). Official policies were less explicit about the fact that the neighbourhoods being razed for new housing or infrastructure projects were often racialized ones consisting of lower-income families. In the case of Vancouver's viaducts, the two communities most impacted were Chinatown and Strathcona, which were comprised of mainly Black and immigrant populations. As local historian and author Wayde Compton points out, "the fact that these two non-white sites were chosen above any other to be sacrificed for [the] project indicates an institutional racism that runs deep in Vancouver's past" (Compton 2012, 114).

Re-imagining the primary use of the viaducts today in a post-vehicle-traffic context is an opportunity to address the planning failures and racist practices of the past while drawing from and building upon those aspects that contributed to such strong communities in the first place.

### **Demolition and Counter-Proposal**

In October 2015, Vancouver City Council voted for the demolition of the Georgia and Dunsmuir viaducts as part of the Northeast False Creek Plan (NFCP). Due to the

controversial histories associated with the current viaducts and their predecessor over much of the past century, one can understand the political motivation for demolition. As argued in the NFCP, “replacing the viaducts creates an opportunity to reconnect the surrounding communities to the False Creek waterfront and to each other” (City of Vancouver 2018, 17).

While such a response is both rational and well-intentioned, this thesis will present an argument in favour of maintaining and working with the viaducts to achieve the goals of the NFCP in a more effective manner.

### **Adaptive Re-Use: An Argument for Preservation**

The damage to the communities demolished and displaced by the construction of the viaducts is indisputable, but to wipe them out entirely and start over would be to mimic the bulldozer-heavy approach that was so problematic half a century ago. Instead, reclaiming the viaducts can provide opportunities to literally ‘bridge’ existing communities together, while celebrating the memories and culture of those lost. This would result in a more inclusive approach to planning, as explained by Dolores Hayden:

A more inclusive urban landscape history can also stimulate new approaches to urban design, encouraging designers, artists, and writers, as well as citizens, to contribute to an urban art of creating a heightened sense of place in the city. This would be urban design that recognizes the social diversity of the city as well as the communal uses of space, very different from urban design as a monumental architecture governed by form or driven by real estate speculation. (Hayden 1995, 13)

In order to really understand the ‘sense of place’ in the city, as Hayden describes it, a look back into the origins of the site will be necessary.

## Chapter 2: History of the Site

### The Origins of False Creek

Prior to the late 1800s, and the increased activity of European settlers in the area currently known as Greater Vancouver, the lands around False Creek were inhabited by the Tsleil-Wauthuth, Musqueam, and Squamish peoples (City of Vancouver 2018, 12). The area provided abundant habitat for birds, insects and mammals, and the numerous freshwater streams draining into the bay provided ideal fishing grounds for local inhabitants (Keating 2016, 13). At that time, False Creek extended nearly 1.5 kilometers further east than it does today, with the area east of Main Street existing as a tidal mud flat (Fig. 3). The early 20th century saw Industrial activity increase along the waterfront of False Creek, and in 1913 the Canadian Northern Railway



Fig. 3. 1911 map of Vancouver, showing early extents of False Creek (Edeskuty 1911)

and Great Northern Railway successfully campaigned the City to fill in the False Creek Flats. The process of infilling began in 1915, paving the way for a new railway terminal, further concentrating industrial activity in the area.



Fig. 4. Vintage postcard of the first Georgia Street Viaduct, showing the view from Chinatown looking northwest toward Downtown (Vancouver Sun 2016)

### **Original Georgia-Harris Viaduct (1915-1972)**

That same year, the nearby urban fabric was further transformed with the introduction of a newly constructed raised viaduct spanning the north tip of False Creek (and adjoining railyards), connecting downtown Georgia Street with Harris Street in Chinatown. It is notable that the original viaduct did in fact span a body of water. Built with the intention of alleviating traffic congestion into downtown from Main Street, the structure was plagued with issues almost immediately following its opening in July of 1915 (Mackie 2016).

Despite its status as an engineering ‘marvel’ at the time, the viaduct’s first deficiencies were on full display in the form of two streetcar lines built into the middle of the roadway that were never used. Faulty construction was likely a



Fig. 5. In 1915 the first Georgia Viaduct was built. Its memory evokes an era of heavy industry, intermodal transport, and the original waterlines of False Creek.

contributing factor, as the viaduct was deemed unfit to bear the weight of streetcars (Mackie 2016). This would begin a pattern of under-use that would continue into the life of the replacement viaducts, more than half a century later. In a retrospective in 1965, city officials explained some of the problems with the original construction, including too much sand in the concrete. This was likely the primary cause for the ongoing structural issues, with pieces of cement falling off the viaduct as early as 1925.

Crumbling or not, plenty of cars continued to use the viaduct over the following half-century and it became an integral part of plans to build a freeway through East Vancouver (Mackie 2016).

## Construction of the Georgia and Dunsmuir Viaducts



Fig. 6. Construction of new Georgia viaduct, with original viaduct in the background (Vancouver Express 1970)



Fig. 7. Georgia and Dunsmuir ramps over Main St. looking northeast (City of Vancouver Archives 1971)

As stated in the Northeast False Creek Plan, “the city of Vancouver was not immune to the interstate freeway boom of the 1950s and 60s” (City of Vancouver 2018, 14). Three major freeways were planned to cut through the city, with all route options converging upon the area around the existing Georgia viaduct. A study presented to City Council in the

1960s recommended the removal of the old Georgia viaduct to be replaced by two separate ‘ribbons’ of raised concrete. Whereas the existing Georgia Viaduct had linked up with the road network in Chinatown, the new proposal would converge upon the city’s only Black community in Hogan’s Alley. From there it would connect to the next phase of the freeway through the neighbourhood of Strathcona and further into East Vancouver.



Fig. 8. In the early 1970s the new viaducts were built to replace the original, displacing entire communities in their wake. Community members continued to push back, including an active demonstration which blocked the mayor’s limousine from crossing the viaducts on opening day.

### Citizen Pushback

The opposition to freeways reached its peak in 1967, with the community of Strathcona leading the fight against the extended freeway proposal. That same year, “the Federal Government announced there would not be any further freeways without community support” (City of Vancouver 2018, 14). Without federal funding, the remaining phases of the freeway expansion plan were terminated and only the

Georgia and Dunsmuir viaducts were ever built, erasing the neighbourhood known as Hogan's Alley in the process.

### Hogan's Alley: A Brief History

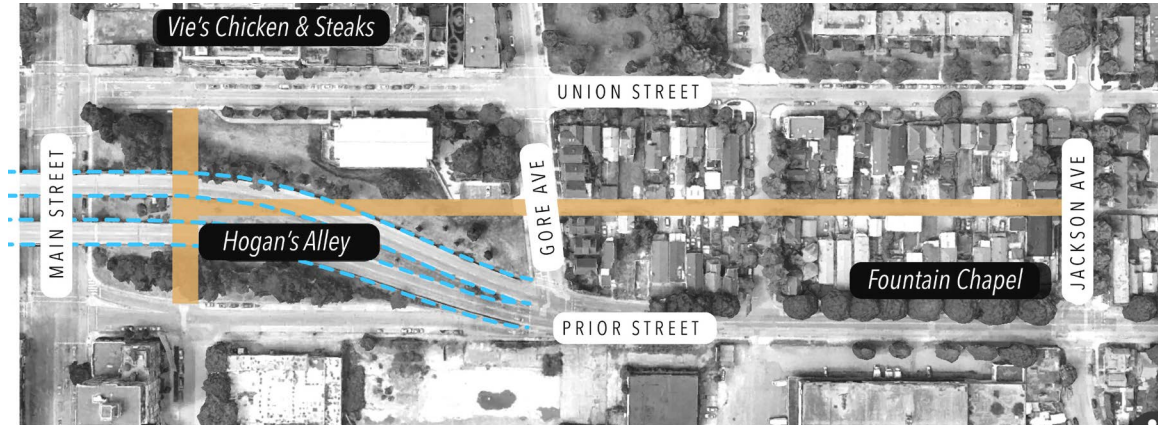


Fig. 9. Site plan for Hogan's Alley, showing original footprint of T-shaped intersection in yellow, and viaduct onramps in dashed blue lines (base map from Google Earth 2020)

Hogan's Alley was a Vancouver neighbourhood "home to multiple immigrant communities... known largely for its African-Canadian population" (City of Vancouver 2018, 15). The Black community had become established in the area by the 1920s with their settlement due largely to the neighbourhood's proximity to the nearby railway station where many of the men in the community worked as porters. A 'T'-intersection of two alleyways (Fig. 9) behind Main Street (Fig. 10.a) formed the nucleus of this community, which was a welcome neighbourhood for people of colour "at a time when Black renters faced racist hostility elsewhere" (City of Vancouver 2018, 23). In the following decades, the neighbourhood became known as a vibrant hub of culture and activity, often centering around food and live music.

### Honouring the Past

Throughout the entirety of the design, this thesis will attempt to celebrate the elements of Hogan's Alley that helped make it such a welcoming, diverse, cultural hub throughout much





Fig. 10.a. View of Hogan's Alley looking east (Matthews 1958)



Fig. 10.b. View today, looking east from atop the Georgia Viaduct (Google Maps 2021)



Fig. 11.a. Apartment buildings at 259 Prior Street in Hogan's Alley (City of Vancouver Archives 1968)



Fig. 11.b. View today, looking northwest from Prior Street, near the foot of the viaduct onramps (Google Maps 2021)



Fig. 12.a. Looking north up Main Street (City of Vancouver Archives 1969)



Fig. 12.b. View today, looking north up Main Street, beneath the viaduct overpass (Google Maps 2021)



Fig. 13. Commemorative stamp featuring Fielding Spotts and Nora Hendrix, two prominent figures in the history of Hogan's Alley ("Black History Month" 2014)

of the 20th century. In spite of the argument for the viaducts' preservation, it is critical that ***the complete removal of the viaducts from the footprint of Hogan's Alley*** occur, as per the unanimous wishes of the Hogan's Alley Working Group, who are currently engaged with the City of Vancouver on a plan for the future of the site. Wayde Compton of the Hogan's Alley Working Group explains his wishes for any future redevelopment on the site:

An acknowledgement of the place that was once Hogan's Alley, at the level of design, and in a way that facilitates an ongoing Black cultural presence there, makes possible the bridging of a Black past to a Black present and future in Vancouver. (City of Vancouver 2018, 23)

The design seeks to remain responsive to and respectful of these wishes.

## Chapter 3: The Push and Pull of the City



Fig. 14. In 2021, the viaducts play a precarious role in the city. As a singular horizontal ribbon, they span a largely unprogrammed area between neighbourhoods. (Base image from Google Earth 2020)

### Introduction

With some of the key socio-political historical layers uncovered, it is imperative to grasp an understanding of the forces at play around the viaducts (Fig. 14, Fig. 15) in 2021.

### Shifts in Urban Scale

Given their inherent quality as horizontal 'strips' through the city, the viaducts can easily be dismissed within the composition of the urban fabric; however, the way these strips interact with the dramatic shift in scale and density of the city warrants consideration.

Moving eastward out of downtown along the Georgia viaduct, the neighbouring building fabric of sports stadia and 100-metre-tall towers (Fig. 16.6, Fig. 16.5 & Fig. 17) is quickly replaced with low-rise one- and two-story buildings,



Fig. 15. At the confluence of tourism, transit, and transient living, in many ways the viaducts are a physical embodiment of the tensions that exist in the city today.

parking lots, and empty *terrain-vague* 'no-person' zones (Fig. 16.4, Fig. 16.3 & Fig. 18). This abrupt de-densifying of space achieves two things simultaneously. First, it allows for unimpeded views from the viaducts out toward False Creek, as well as an impressive framing of the downtown skyline. Secondly, it allows the viaducts themselves to take centre stage. This gives flexibility for any future interventions on or below the viaducts to be as connected, or removed from, their surrounding context as necessary.

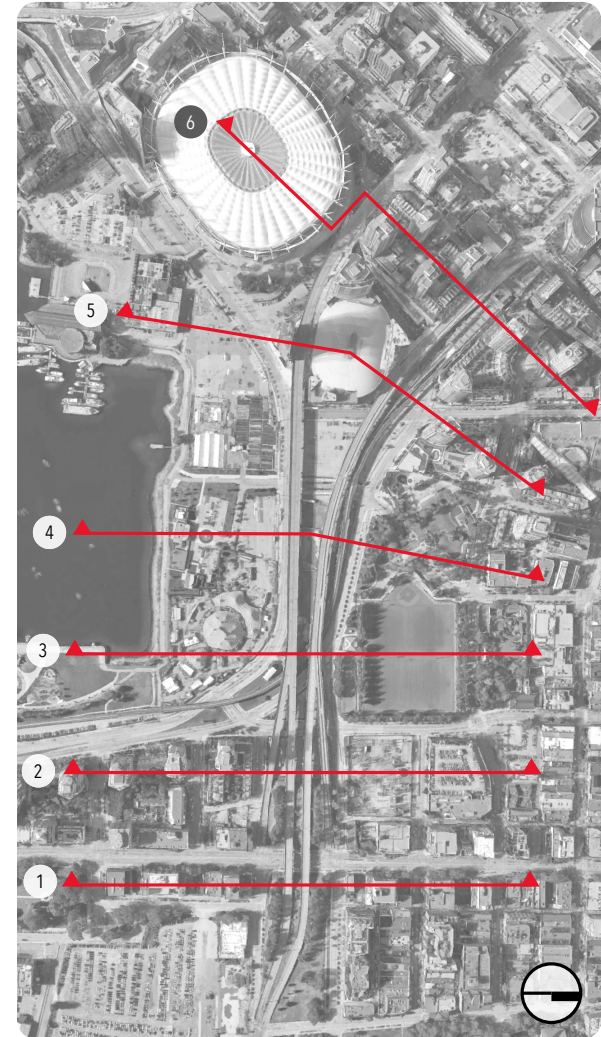
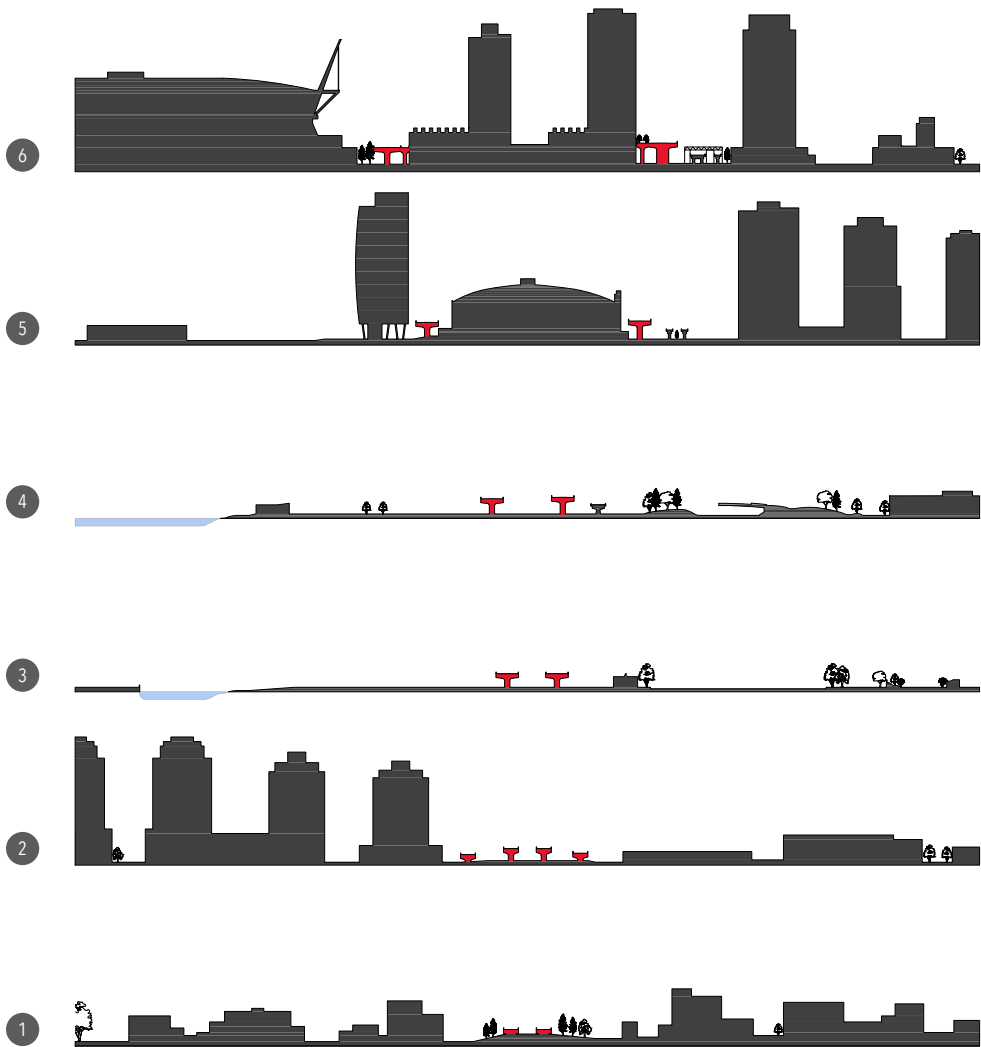


Fig. 16. A series of section cuts along the viaducts moving east to west helps to illustrate the disparity in scale of the surrounding urban context (Base image from Google Earth 2020)



Fig. 17. Looking north toward the viaducts, showing the abrupt end to the high-rise buildings moving eastward



Fig. 18. Looking eastward between the two viaducts at grade, showing a vast fenced-in area void of programming



Fig. 19. Looking south toward the single run of residential towers overlooking False Creek (as depicted in Fig. 16.2)



Fig. 20. Contemporary low-rise housing adjacent to viaduct on-ramps at Prior Street



Fig. 21. The viaducts have become the unofficial entrance into Chinatown when travelling northbound up Main Street



Fig. 22. Mid-rise mixed-use buildings along Main Street



Approaching the first set of ramps down to street level, the verticality and density of the surrounding fabric is temporarily restored, with a one-off row of high-rise residential towers (Fig. 16.2 & Fig. 19) before introducing low-rise townhouse style housing (Fig. 20). Finally the viaducts cross over Main St, at the south entrance to Chinatown, where the low-to-mid-rise mixed-use fabric is introduced (Fig. 16.1, Fig. 21, Fig. 22). This zone will prove integral to how a future scheme for the viaducts is re-integrated into the city, at the confluence of modern-day Chinatown and historic Hogan's Alley.

### **User Groups and Movement Through the Site**

Visits to the site at different times of day reveal a variety of user groups. Among the groups are those traversing the site: cyclists (Fig. 23), pedestrians (Fig. 24), transit users (Fig. 25). A second set of user groups relates to those using the site as a destination or for shelter: skateboarders (Fig. 26, Fig. 27) and transient people (Fig. 28).

Given the pockets of life and diversity that such user groups already provide to the largely barren site, drawing inspiration from these groups is imperative to the successful integration of the design into the urban landscape.

### **Skateboarding and The City**

Throughout much of the 1990s and early 2000s, the sport of street skateboarding was deemed illegal in many public places. In 2021, perception of skateboarding as a "delinquent" activity is mainly a thing of the past, but the path to shifting this negative stigma has been a long battle. Vancouver has played an important role in this trajectory, having been one of the first major North American cities to legalize the sport in the early 2000s, which led to a cultural

re-framing of the sport in the decades following. In addition to a more favourable understanding of the sport by the public generally, designers and planners are beginning to better understand the holistic benefits that skateboarding can provide to cities. As architectural historian and lifelong skateboarder Iain Borden states:

Beyond being simply accommodated in urban realms, in return skateboarding can enhance our cities; 'Skateboarding contributes to the variety, vitality and security of outdoor public spaces,' states architect Anthony Bracali. 'Skateboarders are tourists, consumers and participants in the arts, culture and economy of cities. Skateboarders extend the hours of the use of public spaces. Many non-skateboarders are attracted to spaces where people skateboard, just to watch the activity'. (Borden 2019, 153)

### **Vancouver Skate Plaza**

Located beneath the viaducts, on a triangular "island" of land between three busy streets, the existing Vancouver Skate Plaza is an excellent example of how a neglected space can be given new life. The plaza was built out of a necessity for an urban "street-style" destination to practice the sport, following a large-scale clampdown on skateboarding in existing public plazas around downtown Vancouver. As a grassroots organization, the Vancouver Skateboard Coalition (VSBC) independently raised funds and worked with the City of Vancouver (CoV) to have the park built. In the decades since its inception, the plaza has become well-known as the epicentre of the street skating community in the city. Today, the VSCB is working alongside the CoV to engage the public through "pop-up skatepark" events across city neighbourhoods, in an effort to have more skateparks built where they will be well-used by youth. The design will look for ways to bolster this initiative, in the spirit of community building that is fundamental to the ethos of skateboarding.



Fig. 23. A cyclist along the Dunsmuir Viaduct's dedicated bike lane, heading eastward into Strathcona



Fig. 24. A pedestrian walks beneath the Dunsmuir Viaduct.



Fig. 25. Vancouver's SkyTrain 'Expo Line' traverses beneath the viaducts



Fig. 26. Located beneath both viaducts, the Vancouver Skate Plaza is a world-renowned destination for skateboarders.



Fig. 27. The Plaza is a popular gathering spot for locals as well. In a city known for its frequent rainy days, an outdoor facility that is free and protected from the elements is invaluable.



Fig. 28. In certain areas around the viaducts with less foot traffic, it is not uncommon to find signs of temporary shelter or drug use.

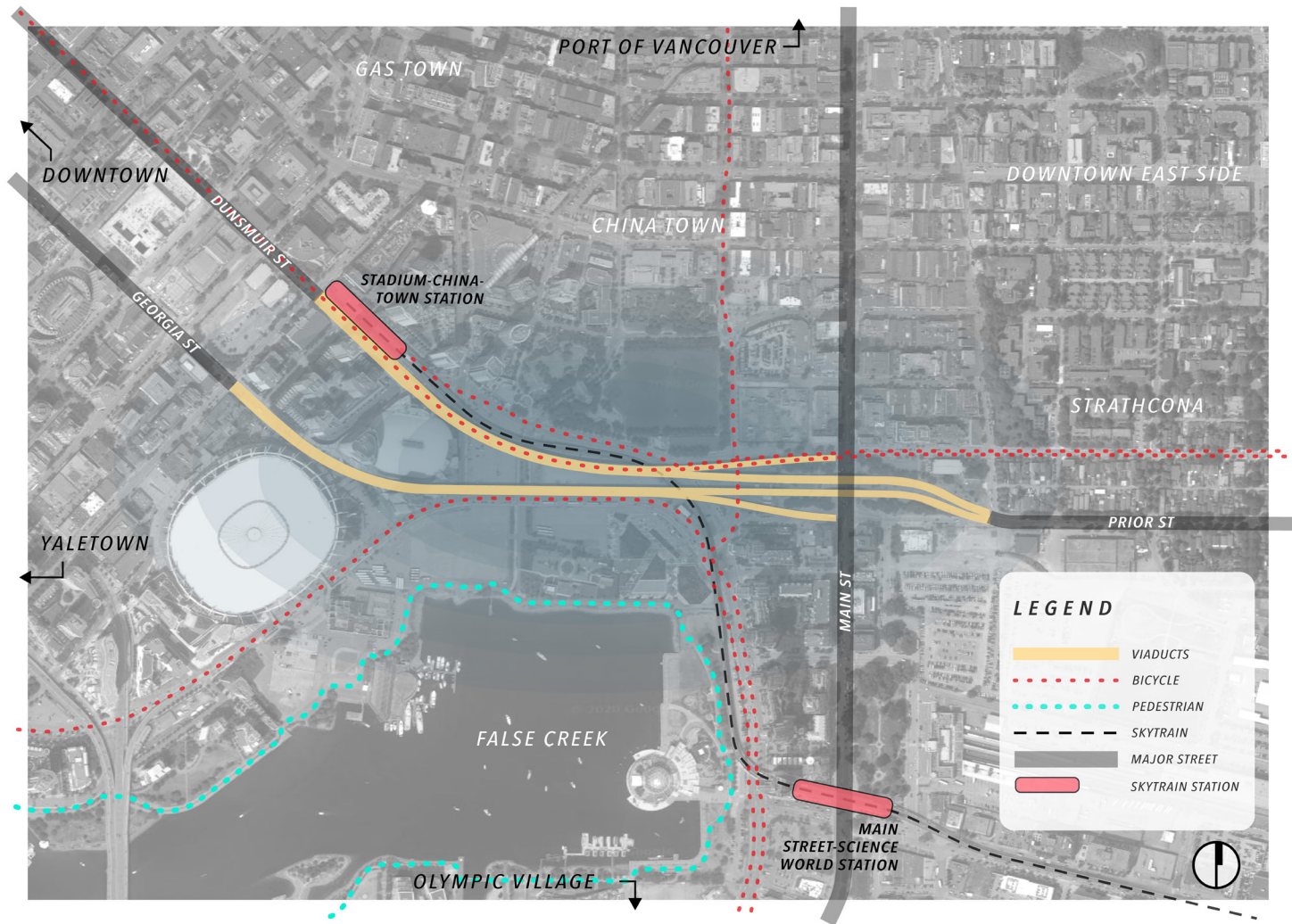


Fig. 29. Site map of Northeast False Creek (and beyond) showing the convergence of key movement corridors (vehicular traffic N-S, vehicular traffic E-W, light rail transit (SkyTrain), bicycle lanes, and the popular pedestrian route around the nearby Seawall)

## Chapter 4: A Tale of Two (Linear) Parks

### Case Study: The High Line, New York City

New York City's High Line is widely seen as successful in terms of a local community advocating for its own neighbourhood improvement. Additionally, the High Line serves as an important precedent for the reuse of contested urban infrastructures. Despite its complexity as an intertwined system, comprising of social, architectural, economic and cultural elements, the High Line should also serve as a cautionary tale when weighing the potential benefits versus impact of transforming a piece of infrastructure into public space. When approaching any revitalization project of this scale, the question of "who is this really for?" must be asked. In a critical analysis of the role the High Line has played in the increased gentrification of West Manhattan, geographer Nate Millington argues that "the High Line is suggestive of a contemporary neoliberalization of park space that privileges high profile parks over the broader provisioning of green space" (Millington 2015, 2327). The risk, of course, with high profile parks is their influence on adjacent property values. This was seen in the case of the High Line, where, between 2003 and 2011, property values in the area collectively rose by 103% (New York City Economic Development Corporation 2011).

Another common critique of the High Line is that it focuses overly on ecology and landscape while ignoring social needs. A by-product of this approach is that it is a strategy that "does not focus on upgrading practical street-level improvements but instead creates an attraction to pull outsiders into the



Fig. 30. Aerial photograph of the High Line, showing adjacent new construction projects alongside signs for 'Luxury Rentals' (Shankbone 2015)



Fig. 31. A section of Phase 1 of the High Line showing less manicured greenery

neighbourhood" (Littke et al. 2016, 365). With countless outdoor public destinations throughout Vancouver, including parks (Stanley Park, Queen Elizabeth, Trout Lake), beaches (English Bay, Sunset Beach, Kitsilano, and Spanish Banks), and pedestrian corridors (Seawall, Arbutus Greenway), the Georgia and Dunsmuir viaducts certainly do not need to become a tourist destination.



Fig. 32. People walk along the High Line, while others relax and socialize on a lawn area

### **Striking a Balance**

Ideally, the viaducts can act as an inviting public space that will serve the communities on either side, without becoming overwhelmed as a destination. Recognizing that design is but one of the factors responsible in any process of gentrification, striking this balance will remain of utmost priority throughout the design process. As a counterpoint to the condo-heavy development surrounding the High Line in New York City today, this thesis will aim to mix in affordable housing (with an emphasis on seniors assisted living) directly along the line.

### **Case Study: Superkilen Park, Copenhagen**

Superkilen Park is located in the heart of Nørrebro, the most ethnically diverse district in the city of Copenhagen.

Superkilen is a linear park in a dense urban neighbourhood which has also enhanced the public life of the surrounding city. In direct comparison to the High Line, however, the park's existence has not led to the unintended consequences of driving up adjacent property values and pricing out residents. Additionally, the park seems to strike the careful



balance of being well-used by a diverse mixture of people, though rarely crowded.

The park design celebrates the intercultural diversity of the neighbourhood by incorporating objects from around the world in a sort of “global exposition for the local residents, who have been invited to contribute their own ideas and personal artifacts to the park” (McLaren and Agyeman 2015, 139). As the authors describe:

In one public space, this diverse community can gather on Iraqi swings, Turkish and Brazilian benches, around a Moroccan fountain, and under Japanese cherry trees, all while sharing space for meals, games, and conversation. (McLaren and Agyeman 2015, 139)

Having personally visited both parks on multiple occasions, it is clear that the local community of Nørrebro is being served much better than that of Chelsea (NYC). On the High Line it is not uncommon to find oneself shuffling along, shoulder-to-shoulder amongst tour groups and people



Fig. 33. People of all ages relax, socialize, and play amidst the varied components of the park (Baan 2012)

snapping selfies. At Superkilen, it is common to see groups of teenagers socializing and laughing together around a makeshift skatepark, or a young family playing on a slide



Fig. 34. Bright colours and modest landscaping are used in the playful plaza design for the Red Square zone of Superkilen Park. (Baan 2012)

that looks like an elephant or a sea monster (Fig. 33), or a pair of seniors deep in concentration over a game of chess.

### **Takeaway**

Though Vancouver's viaducts and New York City's High Line share the physical commonality of being antiquated elevated structures in cities whose public largely wanted them torn down, the viaducts are well-positioned to include more varied and playful design elements similar to those found at Superkilen. This thesis prioritizes bringing groups together to serve the local community, as featured at Superkilen, in addition to drawing inspiration from the many beautiful landscape elements of the High Line.

## Chapter 5: Program Analysis and Theory

### Existing Public Program

Beyond the viaducts themselves, it is of equal importance to look at elements of public program throughout the larger area. The diagram on the following page (Fig. 36) points to public programs in the area which were successful in the recent past but which have been pushed out due to different economic forces. Among these are included an urban street farm (immediately south of the viaducts), and a public night market (a few blocks north of the viaducts in Chinatown).

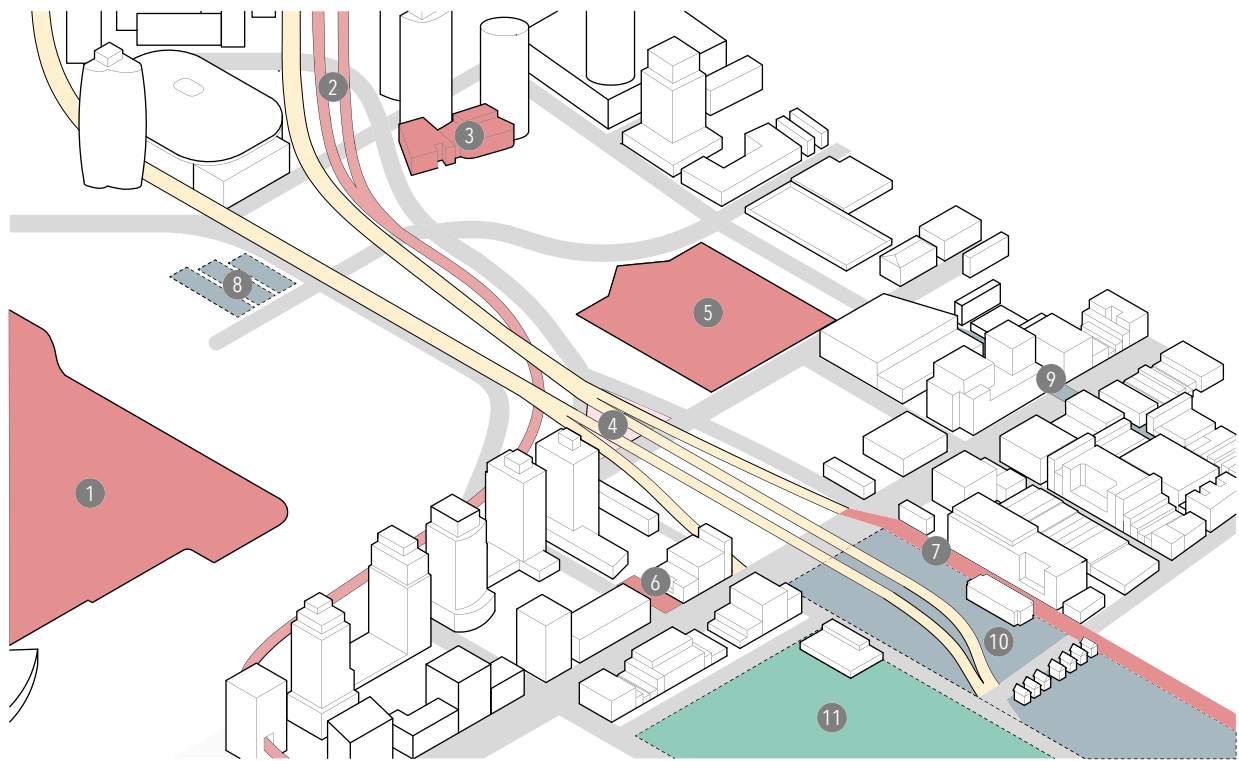
### Sole Foods Street Farm

Started by Michael Ableman and Seann Dory in 2009, Sole Foods is a Vancouver-based urban street farm venture focusing on creating positive change in the lives of residents of the Downtown Eastside (Johnson 2017).

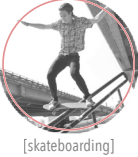
The theory is simple: that growing food together communally is an effective way to foster meaningful connections among



Fig. 35. Aerial view of Sole Foods urban farm in Northeast False Creek (Johnson 2017)



**PRESENT**



**PAST  
FUTURE**



Fig. 36. Isometric map of Northeast False Creek and surrounding area, showing a variety of public program elements, divided into three categories: Past (blue), Present (pink) and Future (green)

community members. In 2012, Sole Foods entered a partnership with developer Concord Pacific to build a 5-acre plot of raised planter beds on an unused parking lot in Northeast False Creek (Fig. 35, Fig. 36.8, Fig. 37). While this particular farm operated successfully for nearly 5 years, in 2017 the agreement with Concord Pacific was up, and Sole Foods was forced to relocate outside downtown (Vikander 2017).

### ***Potential for Viaducts***



Fig. 37. Sole Foods urban farm as seen from Georgia Viaduct (Johnson 2017)

Growing food along the viaducts could be a catalyst for community-building, regardless of individual economic status. Residents from the wealthier adjacent Yaletown neighbourhood would be just as likely to benefit from an urban farm as those from Chinatown or Strathcona. If built atop a repurposed viaduct, the risk of ‘eviction’ due to real estate speculation becomes nearly non-existent. The longer-term stability provided by the viaducts would allow for urban farming downtown to continue for generations.

### **Kefer Street Night Market**

Just a few blocks north of the viaducts, in the heart of Chinatown (Fig. 36.9, Fig. 38), is the legacy of the Kefer Street Night Market (KSNM). The market ran for nearly two decades before shutting down indefinitely in the late 2010s. Though modest in size, the KSNM was known for its personal atmosphere and a strong community focus amongst the historical Chinatown backdrop (Cheung 2014). Over the years, however, along with what many felt was a pattern of gentrification in the area, the dynamic of the market began to shift.



Fig. 38. Kefer Street Night Market at sunset (Cheung 2014)

On the reinvention of the night market in its final years of operation, one local resident felt that Chinatown had “changed a lot as there is a younger, hipper crowd now and it almost didn’t feel like a Chinese night market” and that the night market was “a reflection of what Chinatown has become with all the new bars and restaurants in the area” (Cheung 2014).

### ***Potential for Viaducts***

For reasons of disingenuity and recognizing the recent gentrification in the area, the suggestion is not to try to recreate

the KSNM along the viaducts, rather to implement some of its successful elements within the design. These elements could include the idea of *event* and the way the viaducts' use could differ across times of day. The transformative nature of a night market, “a process by which ordinary streets by day morph into zones of ‘red hot sociability’ by night” (Chau 2008), is an interesting idea. Pointing to the importance of activating dense areas at different times, Jane Jacobs argues that “numbers [of people], in themselves, are not an equivalent to people distributed throughout the day” (Jacobs 1961, 154).

### **Program Theory: Bernard Tschumi**



Fig. 39. Tschumi's 'Folie N4', Parc de la Villette, Paris, 1987

Methods for approaching program in this thesis are framed through the lens of Bernard Tschumi's theories on program, form, and event. Two of his key theories that will be applied to the design are his distinction between program and event, as well as the different types of relationships between program and form.

## Program vs. Event

The two preceding examples of public program (urban farms, night markets) can be analyzed using his theory. According to Tschumi, the predictability and/or frequency of an activity determines whether it falls under the category of 'program' or 'event':

A program relies on repetition and habit; it can be written down and be prescriptive. In contrast, an event occurs unexpectedly. Your design may contribute to conditions for some future, unknown event to occur, but you do not "design" the event. (Litke et al. 2008, 8)

In working through program elements it will be important to consider this distinction, and the important role that both program and event can play in a vibrant community.

## Program and Form

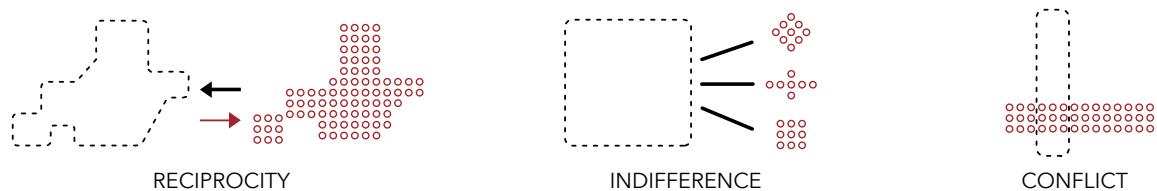


Fig. 40. A visual interpretation of Tschumi's three types of relationship between program and form

According to Tschumi, there are three possible types of relationships between program and form (Fig. 40):

- 1) Reciprocity: When the program is shaped so that it coincides with the form, or the form is shaped so that it reciprocates the configuration given to the program.
- 2) Indifference: When a selected form can accommodate any program.
- 3) Conflict: When program and form intentionally clash (e.g. pole vaulting in a chapel).



In the process of adaptively reusing the viaducts it is crucial to identify which of these relationships are applied throughout each of the design interventions. Tschumi emphasizes the importance of this action, stating that “the act of choosing one such relationship is *where architecture begins*” (Miljacki et al. 2006, 8).

## Chapter 6: Defining a Methodology

Taking on a site so fundamentally at odds with its context as a freeway in downtown Vancouver, and attempting to re-integrate it into the city is not without its challenges. Despite being a 'carte-blanche' of opportunity, the sheer size of the viaducts (each a nearly 1-kilometre-long stretch of roadway), means that each architectural intervention here needs to be understood as an opportunity to establish connections with its immediate surroundings. In order to ensure human-scaled responses to vehicle-scaled infrastructure, such design challenges demand a set of rules and strategies. This chapter looks to Jane Jacobs' theories for generating diversity in a city district as an initial urban framework for approaching a re-design for the viaducts.

### Generators of Diversity

In her seminal book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jacobs writes about the conditions necessary for generating diversity within a city district (Jacobs 1961). Given that the viaducts exist within one of the city's last large-scale plots of undeveloped land, albeit surrounded by dense urban fabric, they are uniquely situated to respond to such generators of diversity. Three conditions in particular provide a useful application as a set of guidelines.

#### Condition #1: Multiple Primary Functions

Jacobs argues that a vibrant city district must serve more than one primary function, and preferably more than two. Anybody who has ever spent time in a suburban neighbourhood will understand the general lack of diversity/

activity that occurs when an area serves mainly one function.

As Jacobs reasons:

And if we look at the parts of cities most literally attractive - ie those that literally attract people... these fortunate localities are seldom in the zones immediately adjoining massive single uses. (Jacobs 1961, 259)



Fig. 41. Aerial view of suburban sprawl showing lack of diversity due to the presence of a single function: dwelling (Weakley n.d.)

The importance of this condition cannot be overstated. In envisioning a radical re-invention of the viaducts, it is tempting to imagine a bold single-use scheme such as covering the entire surface with housing, commercial offices, or sports facilities, or creating a kilometre-long urban farm in the city centre. Committing to only one function, however, would result in a re-development that lacks context, similar to the urban freeway that exists today.

## **Condition #2: Dense Concentration of People**

Jacobs asserts that “there must be a sufficiently dense concentration of people, for whatever purposes they may be there. This includes dense concentration in the case of people who are there because of residence” (Jacobs 1961, 151). Conversely, there can be diminishing returns on the generating of diversity if the density becomes too high:

At some point, to accommodate so many dwellings on the land, standardization of the buildings must set in. This is fatal,

because great diversity in age and types of buildings has a direct, explicit connection with diversity of population, diversity of enterprises and diversity of scenes. (Jacobs 1961, 259)

### Condition #3: Short Blocks

Arguably the most direct and pragmatic of Jacobs' conditions is her assertion that "most blocks must be short; that is, streets and opportunities to turn corners must be frequent" (Jacobs 1961, 151). She goes on to deduce that shorter city blocks support a greater level of choice and variety in the routes that pedestrians will take (Fig. 43). This, in turn, leads to increased opportunities for chance encounters among residents.

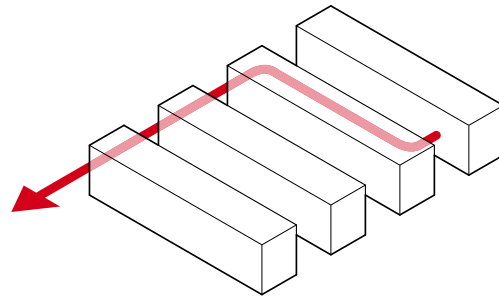


Fig. 42. When city blocks are unnecessarily long, residents have fewer options to move from A to B.

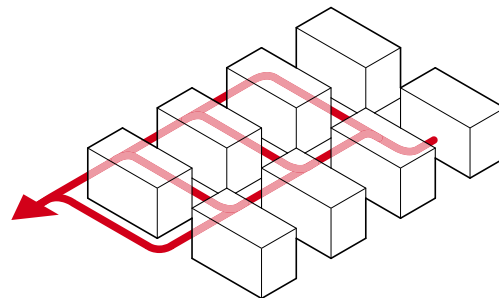


Fig. 43. When city blocks are shortened, residents are given a choice of multiple routes to take from A to B.

### Scaling to Vancouver's Grid

Looking at Downtown Vancouver, Jacobs' ideas can inform a methodology for the spacing and frequency of connector nodes along the viaducts. Similar to a 100-meter city block

downtown (Fig. 44), the spaces between three column bays become the 'blocks' along the length of the viaduct (Fig. 46).

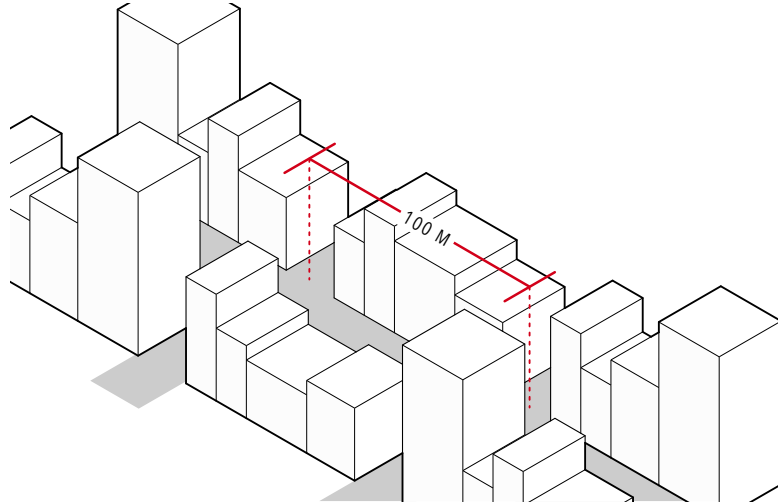


Fig. 44. Length of typical downtown Vancouver city block: 100m

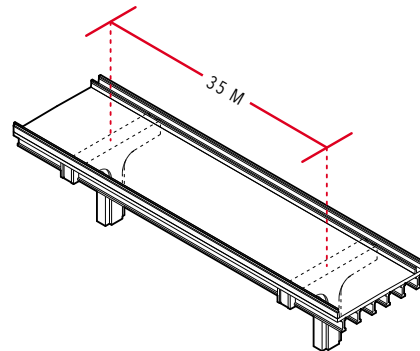


Fig. 45. Typical distance between viaduct columns: ~35m

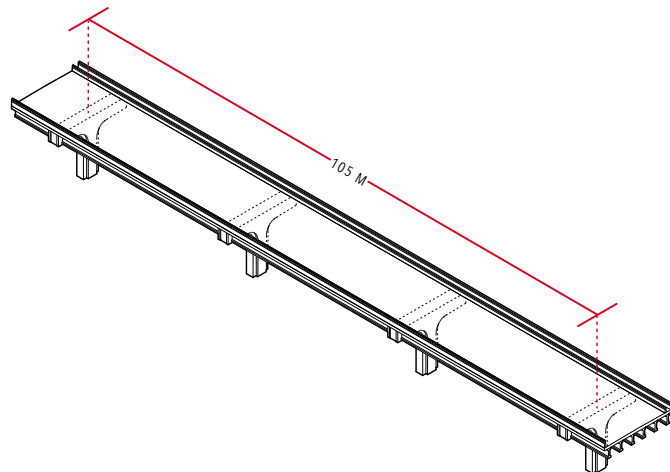


Fig. 46. Approx. distance across three column bays: ~100m

## Application of 'Short Blocks' Theory

The original design of the viaducts was scaled to the automobile. From a pedestrian's perspective today, each elevated road functions as one 'mega-block' with few opportunities to change course (Fig. 47).



Fig. 47. Red arrows indicate a fairly rigid trajectory of travel across/along the viaducts as they exist in 2021

Though shorter blocks along an elevated highway may seem unfeasible in the literal sense, different strategies can be used to achieve a similar effect of social mixing that increased intersections can provide. This could be done by introducing to the viaducts a series of connector nodes from which to enter into, depart from, or cross between viaducts (Fig. 48).

These nodes will provide multiple vertical access points connecting the viaducts to grade, while simultaneously

contributing to the continuous mixing of people, which according to Jacobs is “the only device that keeps streets safe” (Jacobs 1961, 259).

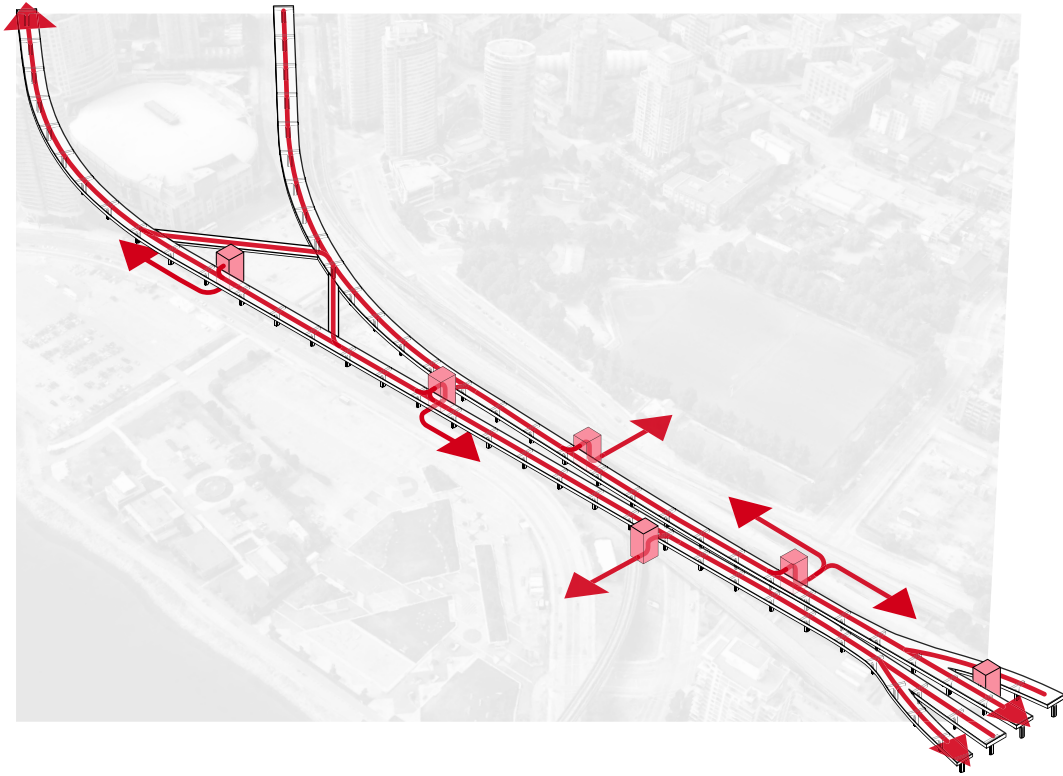


Fig. 48. Pink stacks indicate notional circulatory ‘nodes’, which become vertical connectors allowing for increased opportunities for travel into/out of/along/between the viaducts.

### Urban Scale: Nodes + Blocks

Initially, the urban organizational strategies for the project focused on Jane Jacobs’ ‘short blocks’ theory, as it related to the context of downtown Vancouver’s city blocks. Following the rhythm established with the help of the ‘short blocks’ theory, the question of infilling the spaces between the nodes arises. While the areas surrounding the ‘nodes’ (pink) become hubs for public space and community amenities, the ‘blocks’ (yellow), as the spaces in between, could become populated with an assortment of dwelling options (Fig. 49).

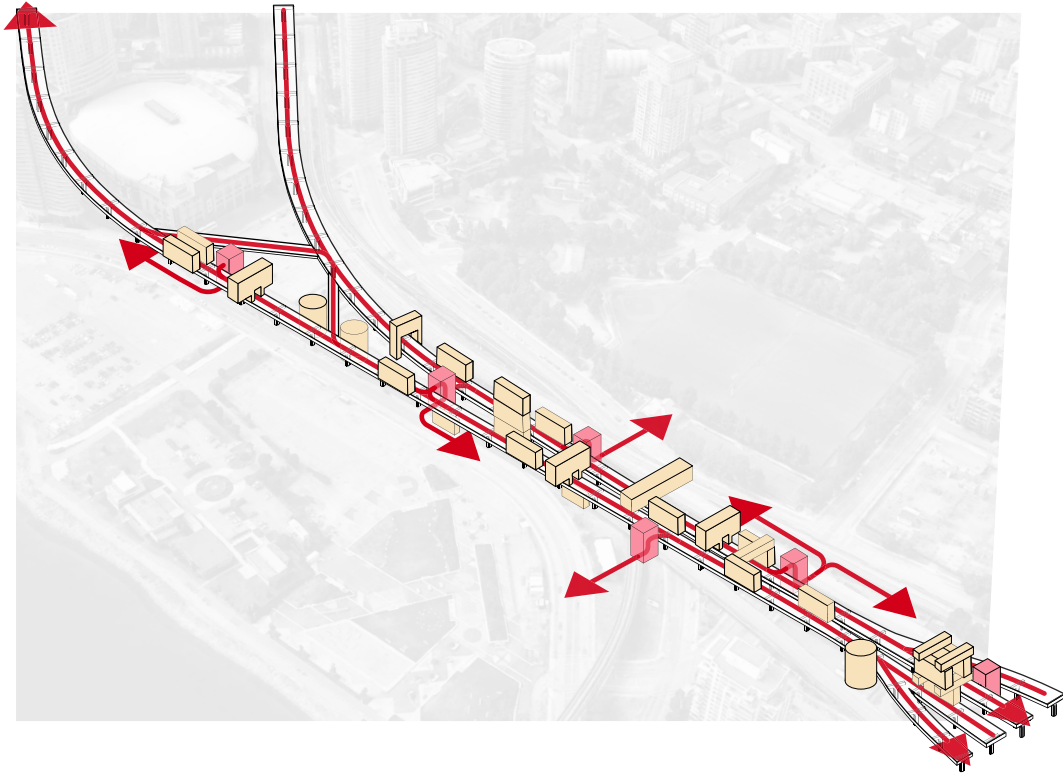


Fig. 49. As the 'nodes' (pink) themselves become hubs for public space and community amenities, the 'blocks' (yellow) become populated with different dwelling options.

### Nodes and the Ground Condition

Though the rhythm of approximately 100 metres will act as the default spacing between nodes, flexibility will allow for their placement to correspond directly with points of activity at ground level. These could be, for example, adjacent to the existing Skateboard Plaza, or meeting up with a Hogan's Alley community centre along Main Street, or perhaps near a confluence of different transportation methods (bike lanes, or a new transit station) at ground level. The goal through all of these nodes is to achieve a symbiosis between the ground plane and the upper level of the viaducts; so that one always reinforces the other.



## **Neighbourhood Scale: Nodes**

At the scale of the neighbourhood, design intentions focus on the transprogramming of inclusive and accessible democratic spaces with the aim of providing the greatest potential for interactions between people, whether they are strangers or next-door neighbours. Jan Gehl nicely sums up the concept of triangulation as defined by William H. Whyte:

While it is less common to talk to strangers, it is easier to strike up a conversation with people standing nearby, even strangers, if you experience something together in common space. William H. Whyte uses the term 'triangulation' to define the scenario where two people who don't know each other start talking due to an external event. (Gehl 2013, 17)

Areas adjacent to the vertical connector 'nodes' become logical zones for transprogramming to occur. Emphasis is placed on programs with low-to-no economic barriers.

## **Neighbourhood Scale: Blocks**

Eventually, the areas within these 'blocks' will prioritize dwellings - allowing small 'neighbourhoods' to emerge, each with its own identity. Programs like community gardens can encourage residents both within and outside the viaduct to grow together. An intentional diversity in building scale, form, and orientation is necessary to accommodate a diversity of residents, while prioritizing character over monotony.

## **Alternatives to Demolition**

To argue in favour of the viaducts' ability to enhance the city (in a post-traffic context) is to question the motive for their demolition in the first place. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 1, a "clean-slate" approach to urban planning on such a large scale can be problematic for a number of reasons. As Jane Jacobs writes, "in cities you have to build from existing assets, to make more assets" (Jacobs 1961, 176). In order

to have a thoughtful and critical conversation about what the fate(s) of the viaducts ought to be, the word ‘demolish’ can be looked at as but one in a series of *action verbs* that can be applied to different portions of the viaduct. Indeed, to ‘*demolish*’ might be the most appropriate action to take for specific portions of the viaduct, as established in Chapter 2, regarding where the viaducts interact with the historical footprint of Hogan’s Alley.

For many other ‘points’ along the viaducts, however, further action verbs can and should be used, so as to tap into the wide variety of structural, spatial, and experiential conditions offered by different approaches to design interventions. For example, certain design intentions and programmed spaces may benefit from their placement atop the viaducts, removed from urban conditions present along the ground plane (Fig. 50, Fig. 51, Fig. 52, Fig. 53). Others might be better served by their interaction with existing user groups at street level (i.e., skateboarders, cyclists) (Fig. 54, Fig. 55). As another example, certain programmatic conditions, like a multi-purpose venue or gathering space, might be most effective straddling the horizontal plane *between* the ground and the viaduct (Fig. 56).

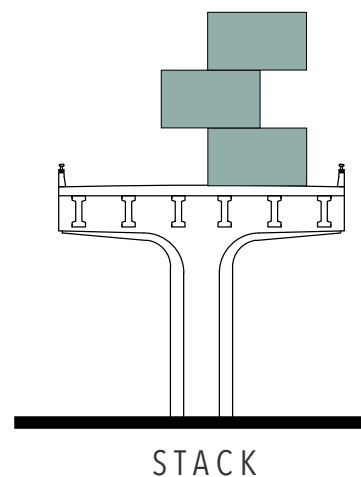


Fig. 50. A series of volumes are stacked atop the viaduct

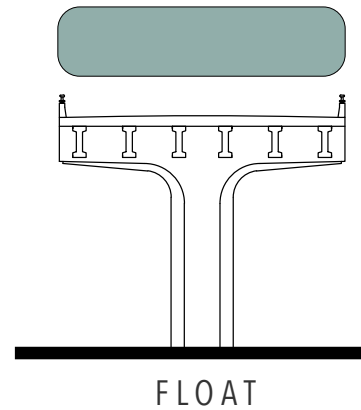


Fig. 51. The intervention sits suspended above the viaduct

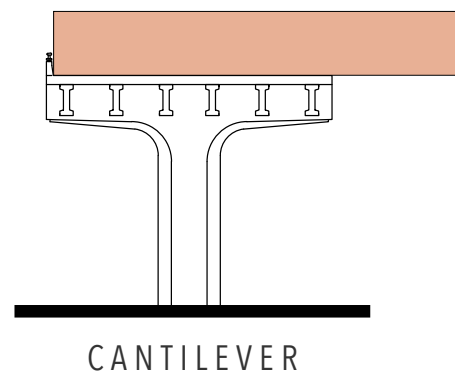


Fig. 52. Anchored atop the viaduct, a mass cantilevers over the side

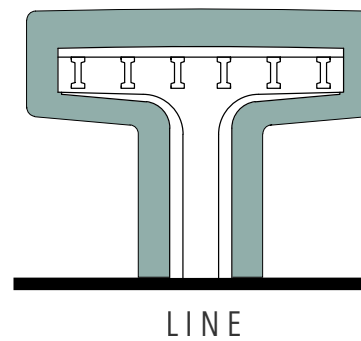
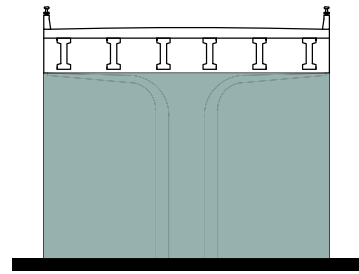
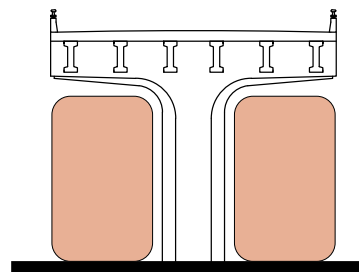


Fig. 53. The design wraps around the periphery of the structure



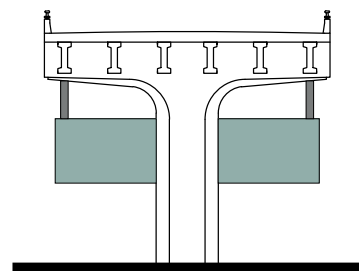
INFILL

Fig. 54. Utilizing the viaduct overhead as a roof structure to build into



SHELTER

Fig. 55. Using the viaduct passively to protect from the elements, but as a standalone structure



HANG

Fig. 56. A mass is suspended from the structure above, existing at a level mid-way between the ground plane and the viaduct

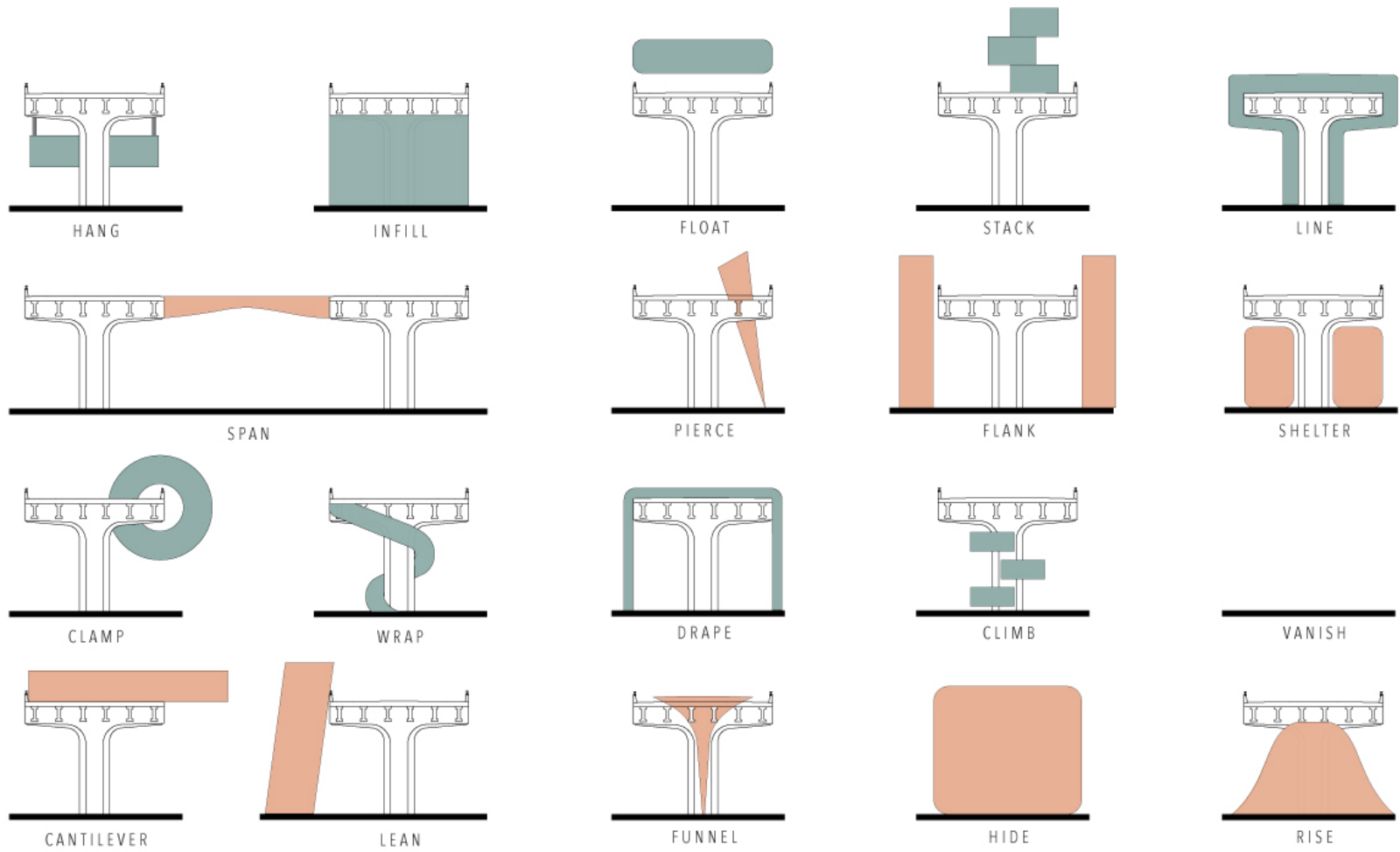


Fig. 57. Diagram study exploring a variety of potential formal “moves” as they relate to the existing viaduct structure

## **Chapter 7: A Conceptual Detour**

### **Introduction**

This chapter is a glimpse into a more conceptual body of work, and the development of narratives that helped to critically re-frame the thesis. The work is split into two groups. The first group is a series of more conceptual, alternate-reality heterotopias cityscapes and their corresponding narratives attempting to re-interpret critical research questions in a general sense. The second series hones in on the specific conditions atop the viaducts themselves.

### **Dreamscape Cities**

#### **(Sub)urban Dream: A Backyard in the City**

Ideals of home ownership, along with a lifestyle of leisure quickly became a measure of success across much of post-war North America. Such lifestyles historically favoured those with a certain amount of class and racial (read 'white') privilege. Today, in cities like Vancouver, where house prices have become largely decoupled from working wages, the dream of owning a detached home with a yard has become unachievable for an increasing percentage of the population.

Following restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 global pandemic in the year 2020, many urban dwellers in major cities fled to the suburbs, in the hopes of having more access to space and the freedom to enjoy leisure time in outdoor spaces (Fig. 58). This phenomenon prompts the question "what lifestyle amenities are lacking in city centres that cause people to want to leave?" Furthermore, how might a strategic re-integration of such amenities lead to improved conditions for both individuals and communities to thrive?



Fig 58. 'A Backyard in the City' overlays a collection of idyllic leisure activities onto a bird's eye view of downtown Vancouver, at a range of scales. The juxtaposition of typically suburban activities with the density of the cityscape helps to ponder their role in the heart of the city.

### Ad Hoc Dream: Re-Purposing the Purpose-Built

When the city of Vancouver voted unanimously for their removal in 2015, the collective perception of the viaducts quickly shifted from *functional* to *obsolete*. Though slightly more abrupt, this shift into obsolescence is not unlike that experienced by many other examples of the built environment throughout the 20th century. In the 1970s, it would have been difficult to imagine a future in which a popular department store like Sears is not the anchor tenant in every suburban mall. Similarly, who would have imagined that items as ubiquitous as phone booths would soon become empty eyesores littering the urban landscape?

Inherently, all but the most general of designed spaces will eventually lose some level of functionality. If left unaltered, they inevitably become waste.

In an evolutionary society, in which needs are constantly adapting, we must challenge the methods of hyper-specific building. In the case of buildings and infrastructure losing value once their original function is no longer, society must invest a certain amount of ingenuity to re-imagine their usefulness. As a protest to the throwaway culture that renders these items obsolete, we must *re-purpose the purpose-built* (Fig. 59). A method through which to achieve this is 'adhocist' thinking. Charles Jencks states, "like all good adhocist concoctions, the parts show *what* they do, *where* they come from in the past, and *how* they are put together." (Jencks 2013, 4)



Fig. 59. 'Ad Hoc City' imagines a series of ad-hoc inventions floating atop the viaduct, surrounded by iconic elements of the built environment that have gone the way of obsolescence.



Today, in 2021, it is hard to imagine much of a future for a massive concrete viaduct if its primary function is no longer to serve automobile traffic. A solution, then, is to allow ad hoc interventions to re-establish a new functionality.



Fig. 60. Vehicles on an interchange in Chongqing, with five layers and 20 lanes (Dufour 2017)

### **Inter/Change: A Linear Progress**

Enormous and complex freeway interchanges like the one shown in Fig. 60 in Chongqing, China continue to be built in cities around the world. Local governments often employ buzzwords like ‘progress’ and ‘efficiency’ to justify the enormous costs, while the disruption to the surrounding city is considered part of a ‘natural’ process. Time and time again, such narratives prioritize traffic efficiency above all else. It is no wonder, then, that citizens become complacent toward the construction of each new mega-project.

Car-culture (and its accompanying road infrastructures) has been so central to the ethos of city-building for the past century that it becomes radical to imagine such large-scale projects being built for anything else.

But what if the narrative were altered, centering people instead of motor vehicles?



Fig. 61. Following their construction, vehicles traverse the roadways in the sky.

### ***The New Road Typology***

Following many months of construction, barricades are finally removed and the roadways become open to vehicular traffic (Fig. 61). Thus begins the ritual of unobstructed movement across these elevated platforms in the sky, like a rite of passage from the suburbs to the city – a celebration of humankind’s ingenuity. The ritual continues day in, day out, unbroken, but with the singular purpose of moving vehicles through the city, one cannot help but ponder the roadways’ use, were the vehicles to suddenly stop showing up. In a

rare and fleeting moment attributed to chance alone, the tangled web of roadways sits empty (Fig. 62).



Fig. 62. In the absence of vehicles, the roadways appear as an absurd entanglement of roads.

Once viewed in this context, the undeniable absurdity of the situation is revealed. Bearing witness to this labyrinthine collection of surfaces in the sky prompts the question, “*who* are these infrastructures really serving?” Furthermore, “*who could they serve?*”

As the alien vehicles begin to retreat, the human citizens of the city begin to re-appropriate the endless strips of new ground left behind. These monoliths, once so divisive and destructive to the community, suddenly find new life as venues for leisure and expression (Fig. 63). The very roadways which helped poison the city’s air are now symbols of healthy living. Communities from all walks of life reinhabit the structures in support of their own leisure activities. A collection of democratic spaces emerges. The absurd becomes the beautiful.

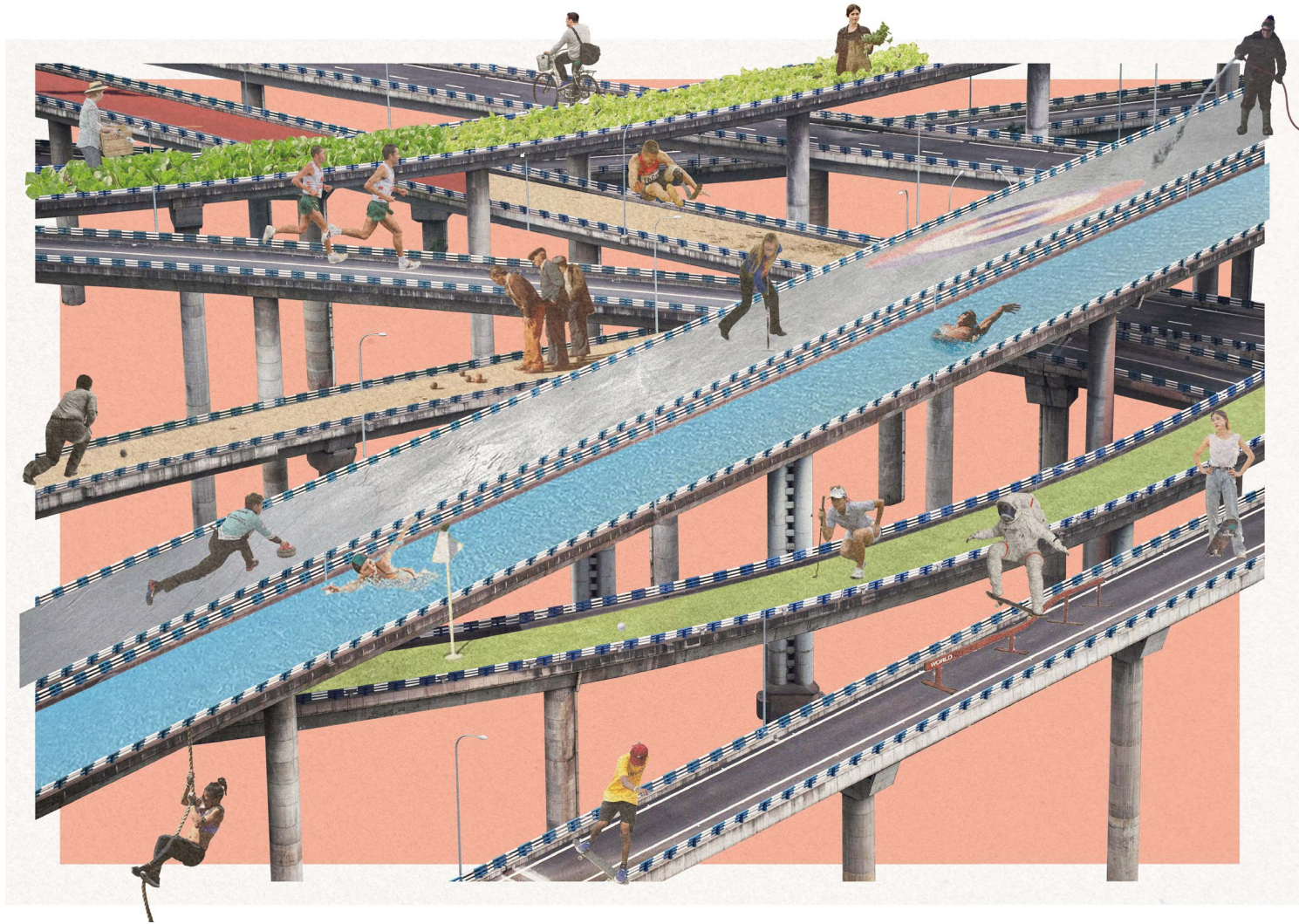


Fig. 63. The tangled web of roadways re-imagined as venues for leisure activities serving all communities

## Single-Use Streets

Following the removal of motor vehicles from the viaducts, comes the question of context. Beyond simply re-appropriating the roadways for human use through the injection of program, the surrounding context (i.e., what is happening on either side of, and around the roadways) must be considered. Being that the Georgia and Dunsmuir viaducts are but two elevated roadways existing side-by-side at the same level, it will be crucial to consider the potential for diversity vs. single programming along any given stretch of the viaducts. In an effort to understand the visual implications of applying single-use strategies at such a large scale, a series of collages were produced. In each, an individual urban element is superimposed over a one-point-perspective view looking west down the Georgia viaduct (Figs. 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70).



01\_ROWHOUSE

Fig. 64. 'Rowhouse' reimagines the streetscape as being flanked on either side by endless strips of Brooklyn-style brownstone apartments.



02\_SALES

Fig. 65. In 'Sales', the street is re-imagined in the context of Midtown Manhattan, surrounded by the high-end retail shops of 5th Avenue.



03\_FOREST

Fig. 66. 'Forest' shows the downtown Vancouver skyline peeking through the tall conifers of nearby Stanley Park, suggestive of a return to the site's natural condition.



Fig. 67. In 'Courts', the street becomes a linear break in an otherwise endless array of fenced-in outdoor sports facilities.

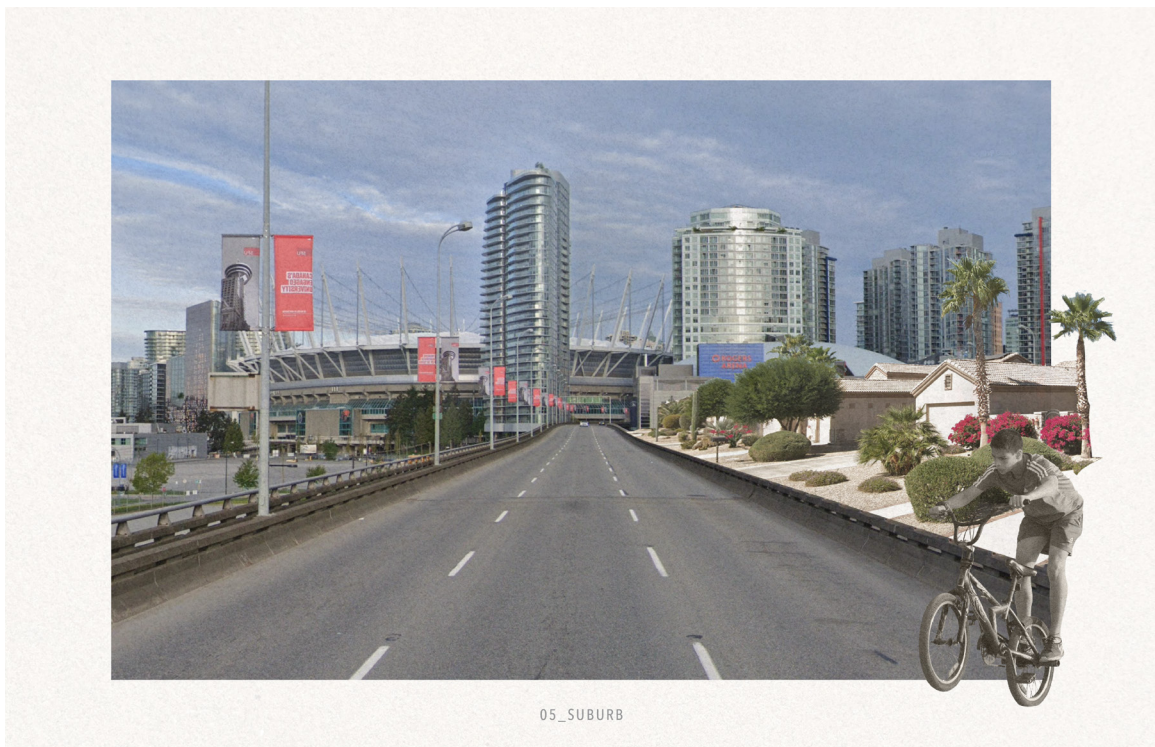


Fig. 68. 'Suburb' hints at the elevated condition of the viaduct, displaying the parking lot wasteland to the south while superimposing a sunny, tropical-like suburban street to the north.



Fig. 69. In 'Docks', the streetscape is transformed into an endless row of single story, faceless warehouses and loading docks.

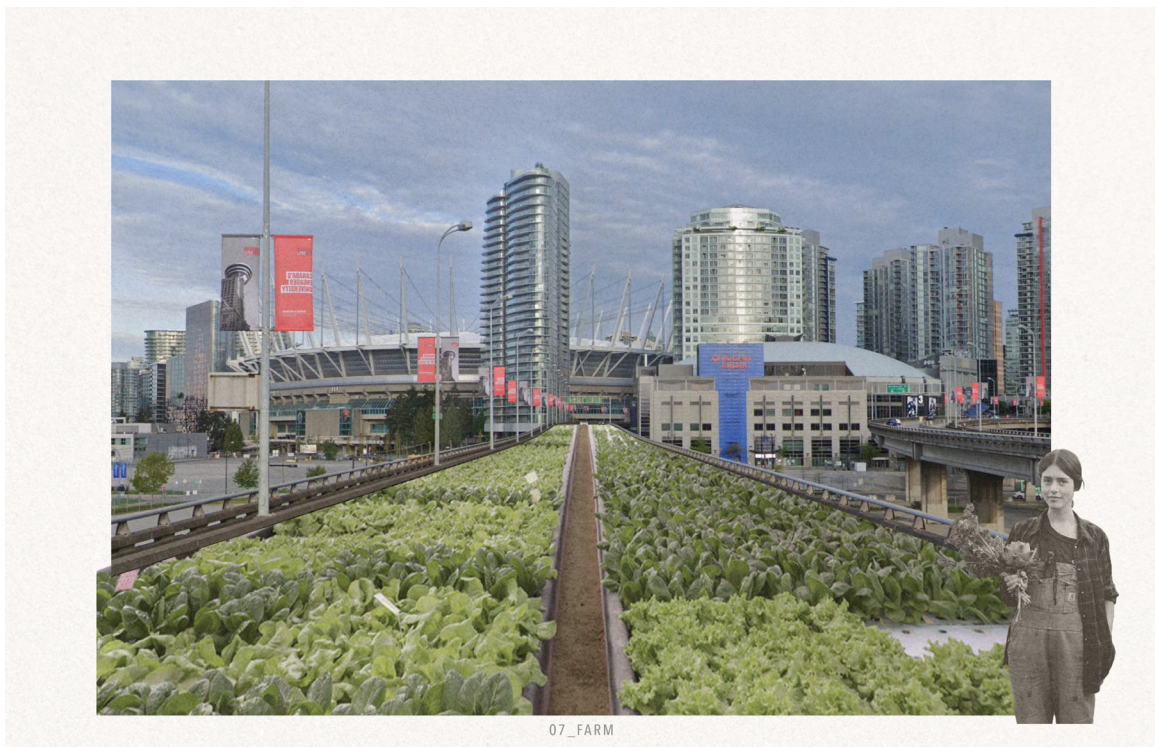


Fig. 70. 'Farm' shows the streetscape being populated with a dense concentration of agricultural plots, with the surroundings kept free of further interventions.



## **The Importance of Adjacencies**

As one of the less conceptual of the collage exercises, this series was nonetheless helpful in identifying the potential repercussions of loading too much of the viaduct with a single use. As a condition necessary to generate “exuberant diversity in a city’s streets and districts”, Jane Jacobs pointed out that:

The district must serve more than one primary function; preferably more than two. These must ensure the presence of people who go outdoors on different schedules and are in the place for different purposes, but who are able to use many facilities in common. (Jacobs 1961, 151)

Even something as community-oriented as a multi-use sports facility can end up being vacuous, in the absence of “subsidiary conveniences” and a diversity of user groups (Jacobs 1961, 146).

Removing vehicular traffic from the viaducts will not lead to a more diverse and vibrant neighbourhood, if the single-use of moving cars is simply replaced with another single-use (i.e., housing, shopping, sports, nature, etc.) Therefore, the strategic placement and mixing of programmed spaces (Fig. 71.), application of theory and a calculated response to existing user groups will help to ensure a more successful re-integration of the viaducts into the surrounding neighbourhoods.

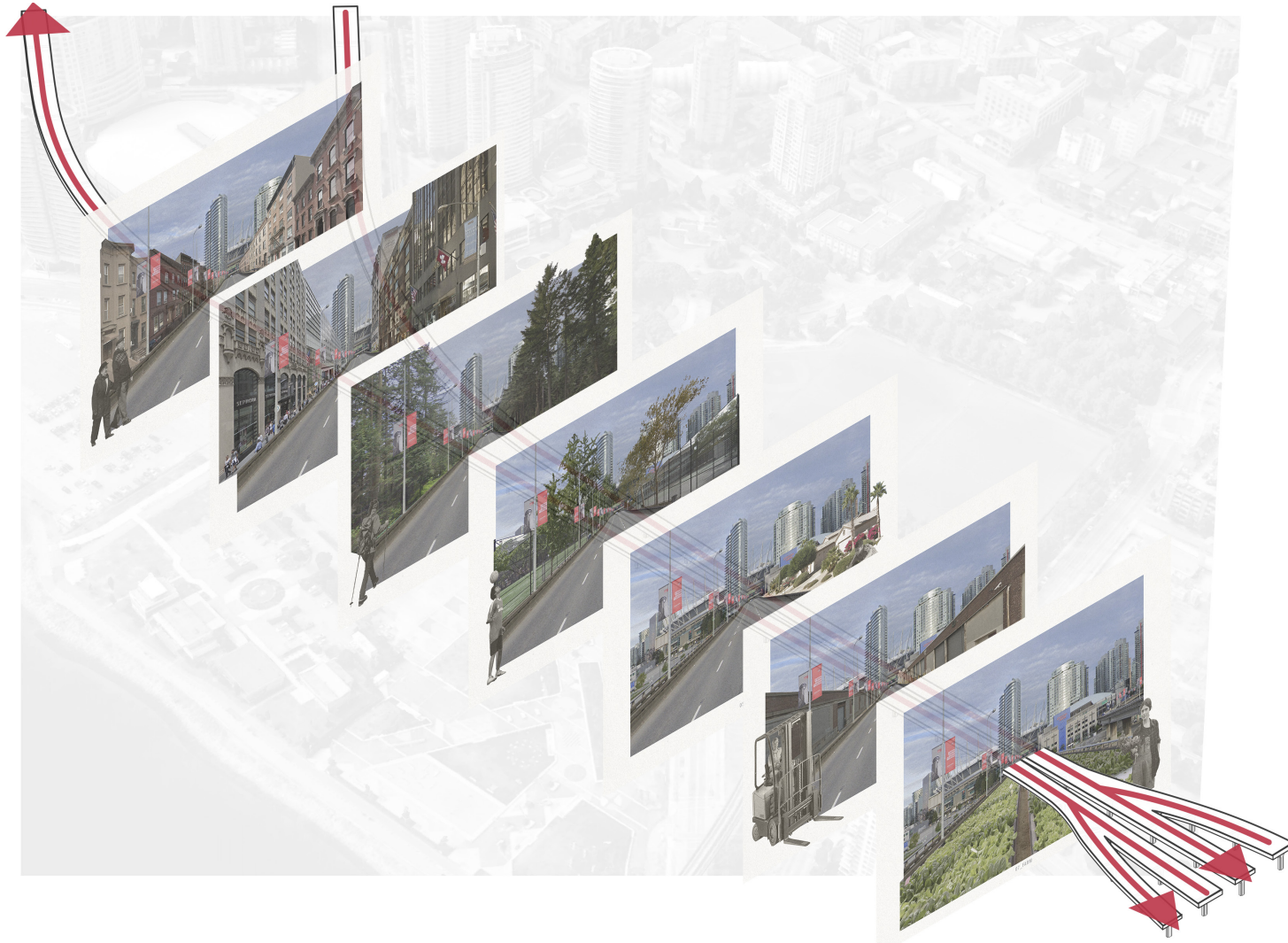


Fig. 71. 'Single-Use Streets' is re-organized as a series of programmatic cuts along the viaducts. In this way, programmed spaces can be thought of like different pieces of meat and vegetables along a kebab, in which the viaducts are the skewers.

## Chapter 8: Design

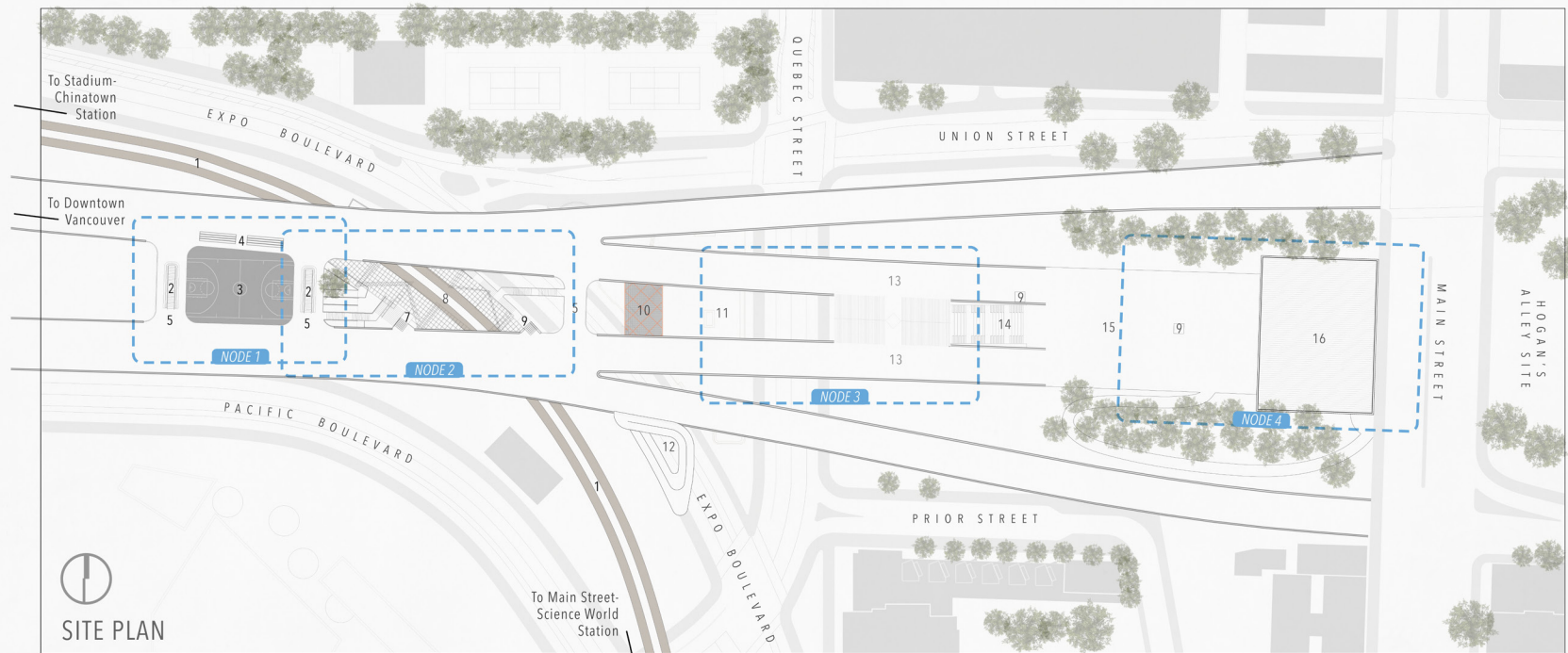
### General Design Response

From early on, this thesis has been guided by a counter-argument of “what if, rather than erase the viaducts, the city worked *with* them?” Responding to this question has culminated in a varied design proposal that attempts to mitigate between the scale of the city and that of the individual. Following the necessary demolition of the viaducts between Gore Avenue and Main Street (as described in Chapter 2), the scope of this design project focuses on the area of the viaducts beginning at Main Street and moving westward toward downtown (Fig. 72). A series of vertical connectors or “nodes” work in tandem with programmed public spaces, encouraging the blending of diverse user groups.

### Node #1: Court-Yard

#### Urban Strategy

The court is placed centrally, both in plan (between the two viaducts - Fig. 73) and in section (between the ground and the surface of the viaducts - Fig. 74). This strategic placement makes the court highly visible as a platform for activity from passersby, whether moving horizontally between viaducts or vertically between levels. The perimeter of the court platform is supported by tensile members fastened into the concrete girders above, “borrowing” from the structure of the viaducts. Amidst the tensile members is a light steel mesh which helps to contain the area, while allowing light and air to pass through. This mesh can play host to creeper vines that acoustically soften the space, while injecting some greenery into the otherwise bleak surroundings.



**SITE PLAN**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Skytrain Expo Line                   | 9. Elevator (East Tower)                              |
| 2. Stairwell w/ Incorporated Seating    | 10. "The Nets"  |
| 3. Court-Yard [NODE 1]                  | 11. Skate Plaza                                       |
| 4. Bleachers                            | 12. Ramps   |
| 5. Connector Bridges                    | 13. Creative Commons [NODE 3]                         |
| 6. Accessible Ramps                     | 14. Stairs w/ Bleacher Seating                        |
| 7. Elevator (West Tower)                | 15. Elevated Park/Plaza                               |
| 8. Skate Plaza-Viaduct Station [NODE 2] | 16. Hogan's Alley Community Centre & Gallery [NODE 4] |

Fig. 72. Site Plan. The 4 different nodes (in blue) are strategically placed along the line to respond to existing urban conditions and user groups.

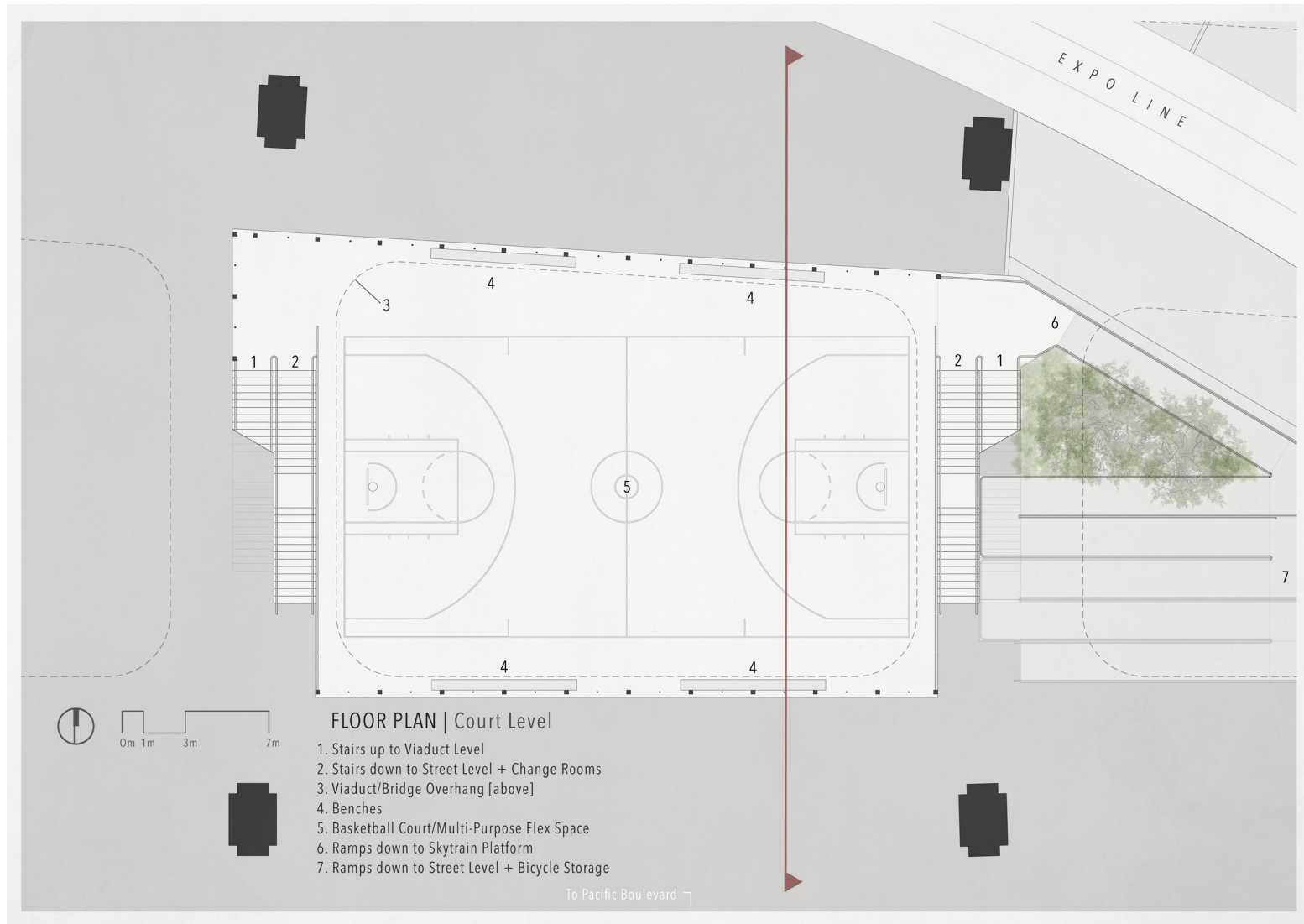


Fig. 73. Site/Floor Plan for Node 1: Court-Yard.

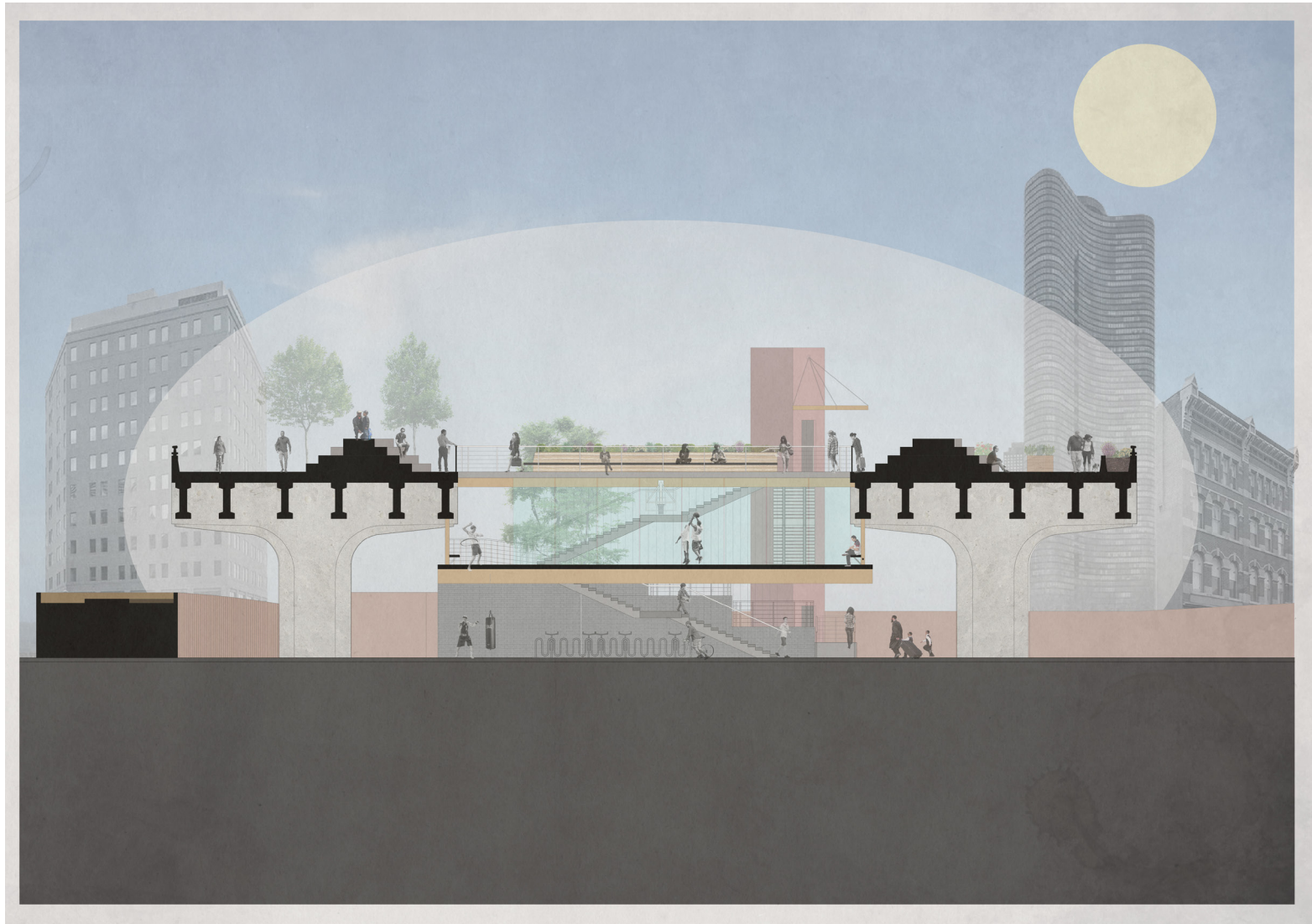


Fig. 74. Section looking east through Node 1: Court-Yard.

The court is flanked to the west and east by two 'bridges' between the existing viaducts, each with its own set of single-run, switchback stairs. Laminated glass panels span the vertical space behind the basketball nets on either end of the court (Fig. 74). These panels open up in the northwest and northeast corners of the court, leading to the stairs, as well as a set of ramps connecting down to the skytrain station and to ground level.

### **Design and Program**

Drawing on Tschumi's distinction between 'program' and 'event', as introduced in Chapter 5, the design of the court contributes to conditions for future unknown events to take place. Though specifically designed as a venue to play basketball (program), the suspension of the court midway between the ground and viaducts lends to the potential for 'spectacle' (Fig. 75, Fig. 77). This could take the form of a weekend farmer's market, a breakdance circle, a Tai Chi class, a musical performance, or countless possible events (Fig. 76).

At ground level, the underside of the court structure provides shelter and lighting for an outdoor workout facility (Fig. 75) and bicycle storage. These facilities are further served by a modest pavilion building featuring universal public change rooms and shower facilities.

### **Node #2: Viaduct-Plaza Station**

#### **Urban Strategy**

Constructed in the 1980s as the first SkyTrain (light rail transit) line out of downtown Vancouver, the elevated Expo line passes beneath the viaducts, where it temporarily touches down just above grade. This location serves a new



Fig. 75. Ground-level perspective render for Node 1: Court-Yard. View looking northeast.





Fig. 76. Court-level perspective render for Node 1: Court-Yard. View looking east.



Fig. 77. Viaduct-level perspective render for Node 1: Court-Yard. View looking northeast.

station well, as it is located midway between two existing stations. This makes it an opportune point from which to connect the future community of the viaducts to the rest of the city.

### **Design and Program**

Beyond connecting the city to the new budding neighbourhood along the viaducts, the station doubles as a “connector” between the viaducts and the ground below. The SkyTrain line is a natural obstacle at grade, so to ensure good connectivity between the viaducts and the surrounding city, stairs, ramps, and an elevator are added on either side of the line (Fig. 78). To the east of the line, the stairs are compressed into a tighter footprint, connecting up to a connector “bridge” directly overtop of Expo Blvd. To the west, more ample space allows for a set of ramps and a staircase leading up to the connector bridge (Fig. 79, Fig. 80). From the platform down to street level, a 4-metre-wide staircase becomes a natural gathering space. A series of triangular glulam and glass woven panels are suspended by tensile cables from fasteners in the existing viaduct concrete girders overhead. This roof system provides shelter from the elements, while further expressing a structure that is light and suspended, in contrast to the massive and heavy viaducts.

Though pragmatic in its design, the intention of Viaduct-Plaza Station is to celebrate the dynamic nature of the city. In and around the station, *movement* is on display in every possible form. The intentional crossing of multiple methods of travel, alongside the highly visible nearby activities of skateboarding and basketball, provides catalysts for community-building.

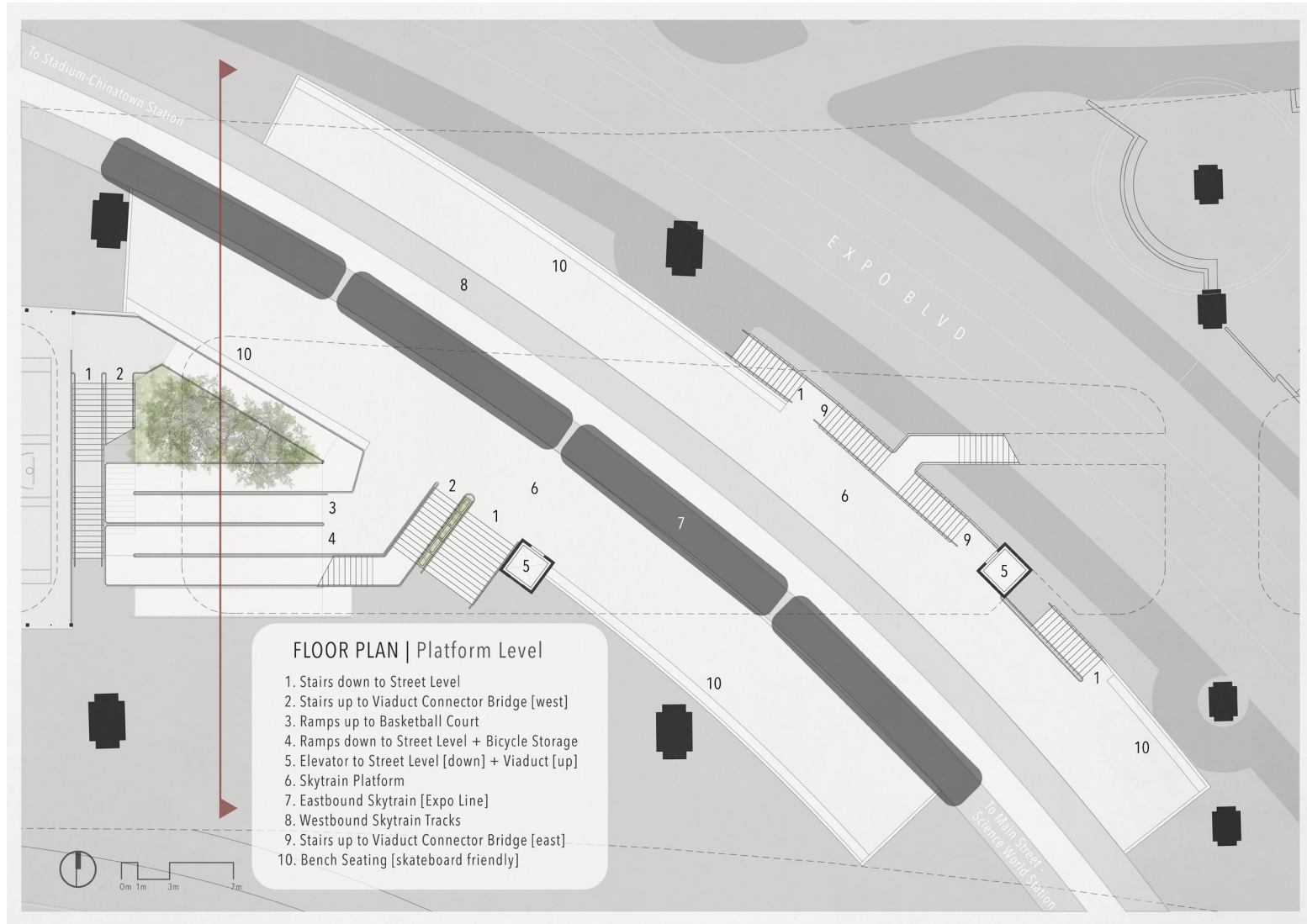


Fig. 78. Site/Floor Plan for Node 2: Viaduct-Plaza Station.

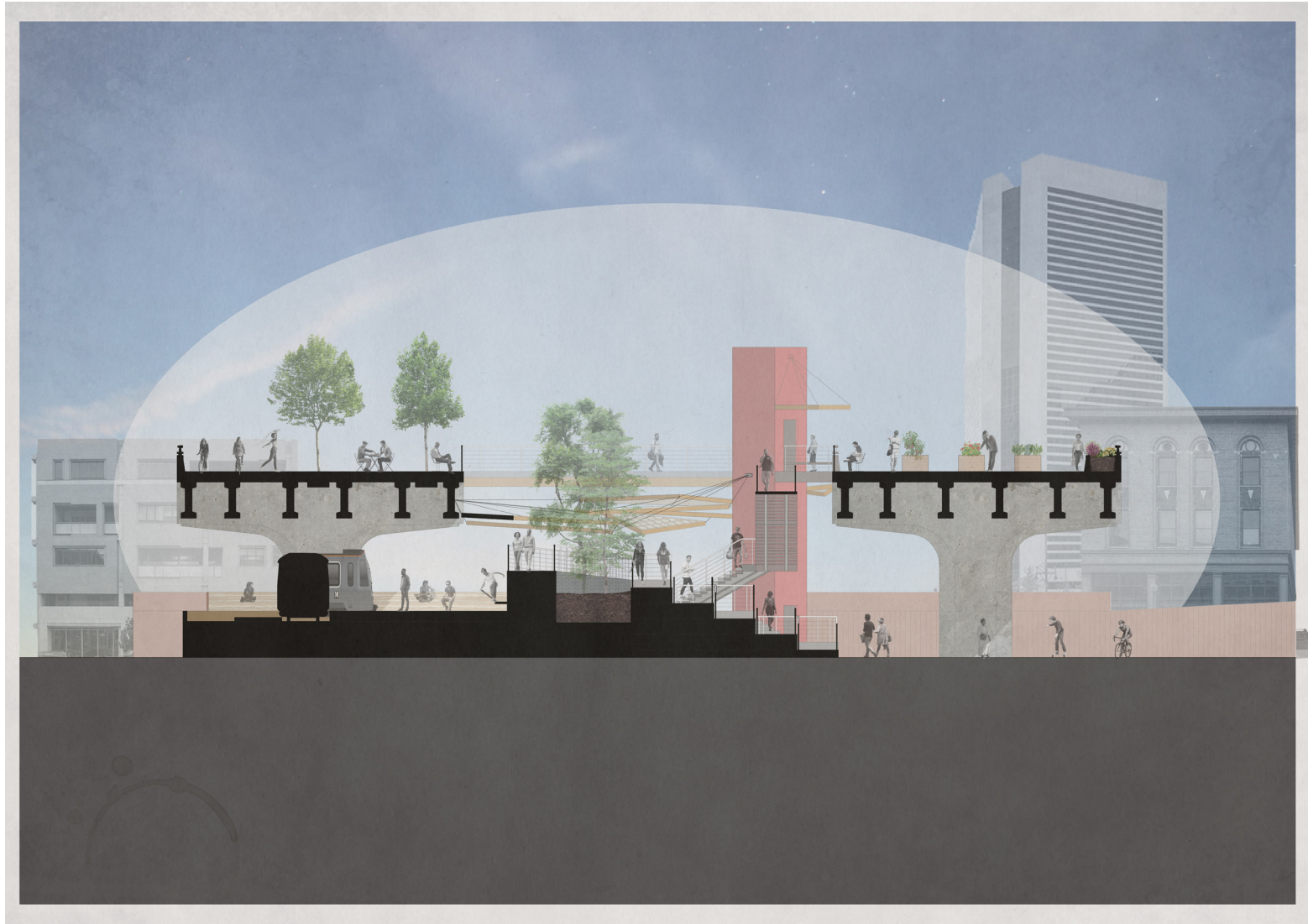


Fig. 79. Section looking east through Node 2: Viaduct-Plaza Station.

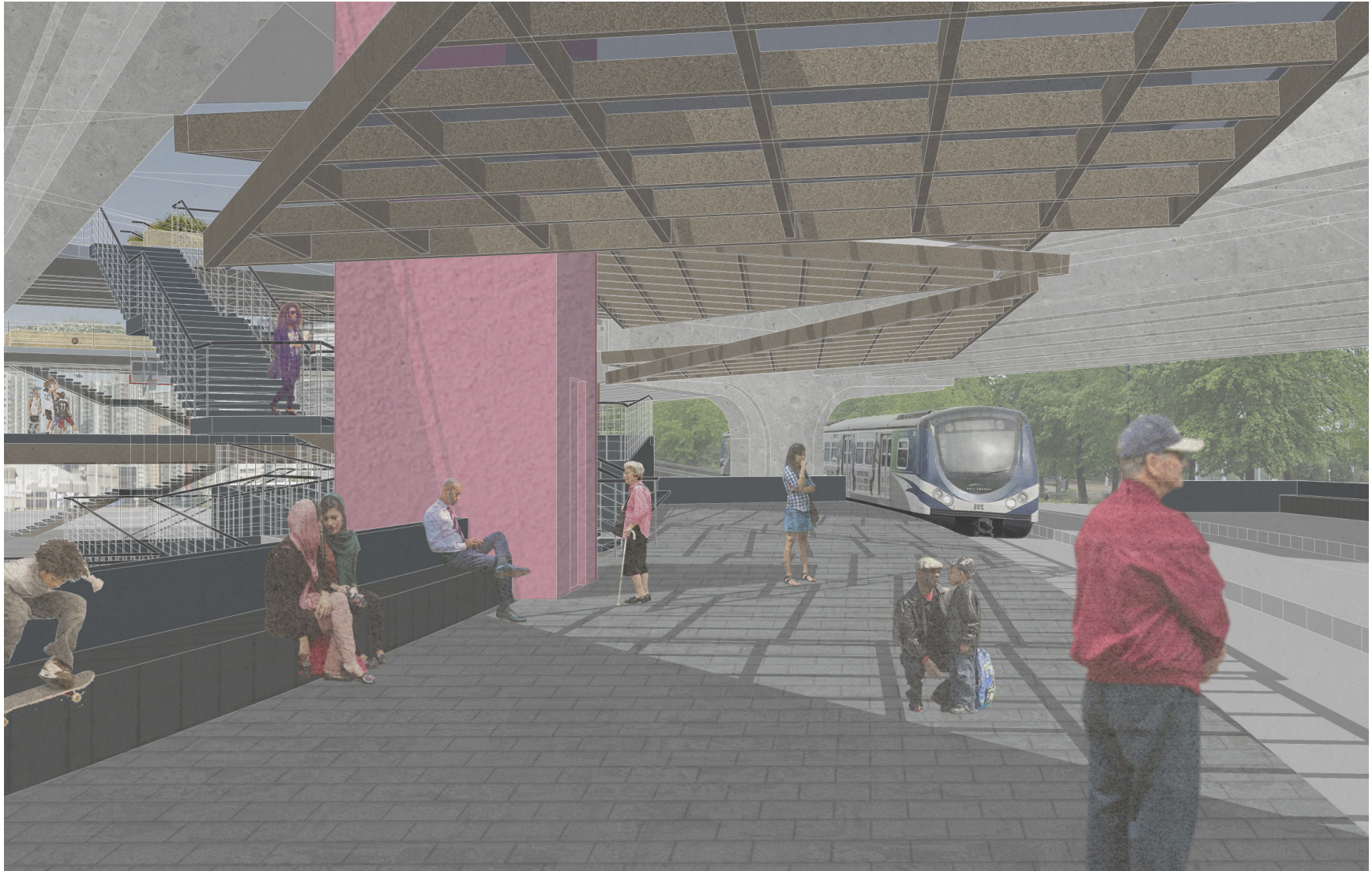


Fig. 80. Platform-level perspective render for Node 2: Viaduct-Plaza Station. View looking northwest.

## **Node #3: Skate Plaza-Creative Commons**

### **Urban Strategy**

The Vancouver Skate Plaza is the most developed existing node within the overall scheme. As such, the design proposal seeks to minimally disrupt this already successful public space by proposing only limited interventions to the skatepark itself, alongside complementary amenities across the street. The design goals of each addition are rooted in enhancing the experience of the skateboarder while also improving engagement between skaters and the surrounding community. Directly across Quebec Street from the Skate Plaza is the Creative Commons, which provides complementary services to the users of the skate plaza, improving the overall experience for the skateboarders and the larger community.

### **Design and Program**

#### ***Skate Slope***

The first addition to the design of the Skate Plaza is a large triangular ramp structure in the southeast corner of the park. The fully accessible ramp contributes to the connectivity between street level and the viaducts while adding a new element of 'vert' skating to the plaza. The ramp is divided into two 'lanes', with the milder 1:12 slope of the outer lane meeting accessibility standards. The inner lane has a more aggressive slope, with built-up quarter pipe style berm features at each corner of the triangle, complementing undulating concrete banks along the straight runs. The skate slope complements the existing street-style skateboarding experience of the plaza with a more vert-style feature, similar to 'snake run' skateparks from the 1970s and 80s.

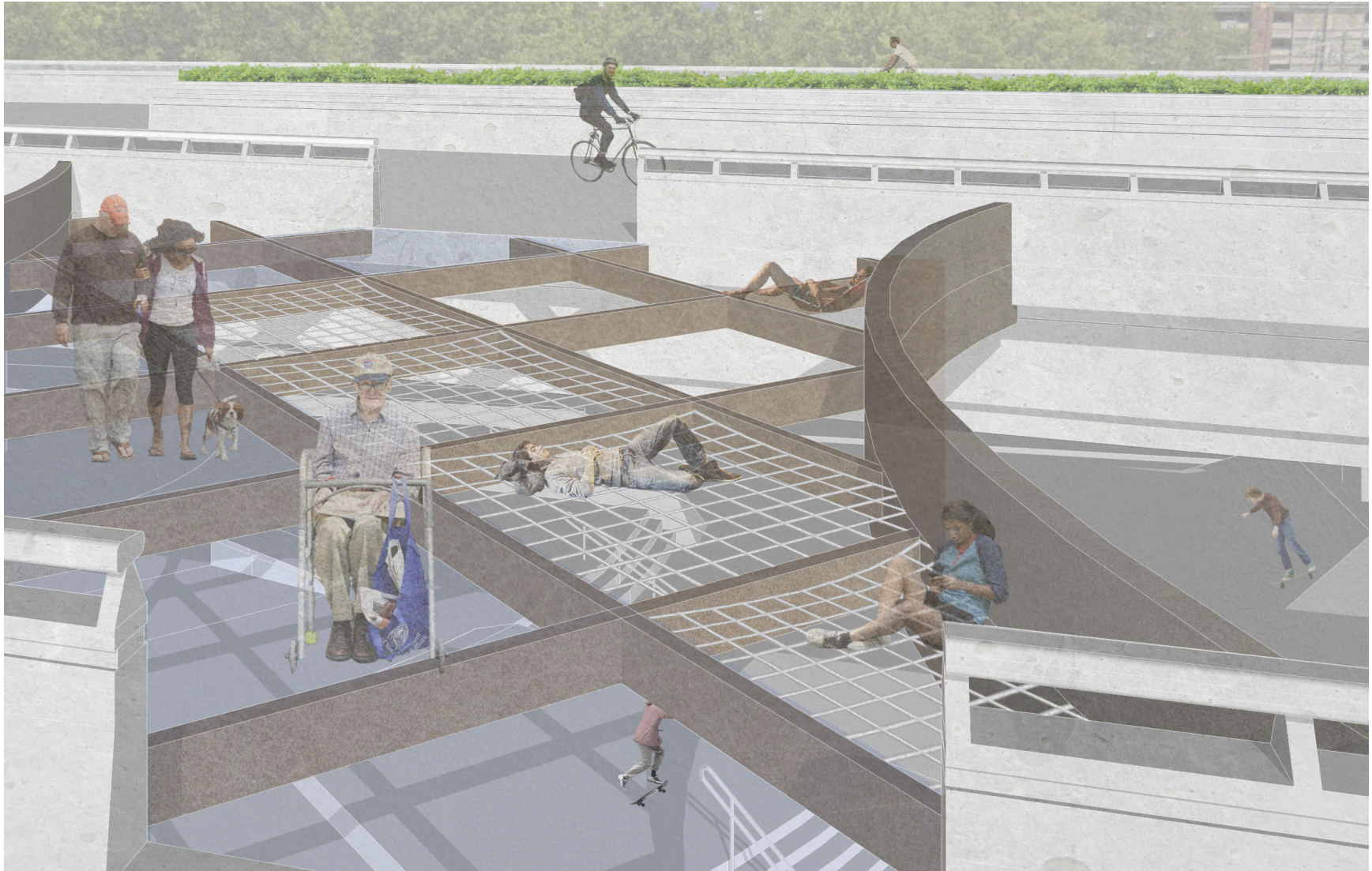


Fig. 81. Viaduct-level perspective render for Node 3: Skate Plaza-Creative Commons. View looking north.





Fig. 82. Ground-level perspective render for Node 3: Skate Plaza-Creative Commons. View looking west.

### ***The Nets***

Two large convex curved glulam beams, 10 metres apart, span between the two viaducts, directly above the heart of the Skate Plaza below. Between the beams a web of smaller laminated timber trusses span in an 'x' formation, on a 3 x 3 metre grid (Fig. 81, Fig. 82). Suspended from these squares is a tensile netted fabric, upon which pedestrians from the viaduct can take a break and lie in the sunshine, visit, or just relax. In addition to providing a comfortable vantage point from which to appreciate the skateboarding activity below, the perforated assembly also provides shade to the Plaza. This helps to soften the stark contrast currently experienced by skaters navigating between the shaded and exposed areas of the Skate Plaza.

### ***Creative Commons***

Across Quebec Street from the Skate Plaza, the architectural strategy of *infill* is employed. By extruding walls down from the footprint of the viaducts overhead, two new "buildings" are created, each providing approximately 350 square metres of flexible and semi-programmed spaces (Fig. 83). Bisecting the ground level space between these new buildings is a protected pedestrian street (Fig. 84), covered by a woven glulam structure overhead.

Collectively titled the 'Creative Commons', the area is a hub for all types of creatives, artists and makers. The flexible and purpose-built studio and workshop spaces directly complement adjacent communities (skateboarders, Black artists and creators, local residents), while acting as a creative hub for the broader community.



Fig. 83. Site/Floor Plan for Node 3: Skate Plaza-Creative Commons.



Fig. 84. Ground-level perspective render for Node 3: Skate Plaza-Creative Commons. View looking southeast.

### ***Pedestrian Street/Covered Plaza***

Beginning at the foot of the stairs; at roughly 50 metres long by 12 metres wide, the covered plaza is a flexible public outdoor space that can be activated through events (informal or planned) connected to the programming inside the workshop studios. One example is the DIY skateparks that might pop up here (Fig. 84). Protected from the elements, and situated across the street from the existing Skate Plaza, the covered plaza is an ideal location for members from the skateboarding community to test out new skatepark obstacles following their fabrication inside the workshops (ramps, rails, stair sets, boxes, ledges, etc.).

### ***The Bleachers***

At the east end of the 'alley' is a large wooden staircase with integrated bleacher-style seating up the centre. The stairs provide a direct connection to the landscaped viaduct up above, while anchoring the courtyard. With views down into the covered corridor, the maker spaces, and the skateboard plaza beyond, the stairs provide space as a shaded venue to read a book, chat with a friend over coffee, or gather to watch a live performance or a film screening (Fig. 84).

### ***Maker Spaces/Studios***

Large glass overhead doors will line the covered plaza-facing walls of the studio and fabrication shops. These 'workshop' style doors can be opened in fair weather to promote air circulation, and the casual flow of pedestrians, equipment and skatepark features in and out of the studios (Fig. 84). Following the lead of public building requirements in the city of Copenhagen, the majority of the ground floor walls will

be glass, “actively promoting eye contact as a way to build community” (McLaren and Agyeman 2015, 138).

The interior workshop/studio spaces are built into the underside of the viaducts, exposing the concrete structure overhead. This raw or “unpolished” feel lends itself to the nature of the work taking place here, be it welding, wood turning, pottery spinning, video editing, photo developing, etc.

## **Node #4: Hogan’s Alley Community Centre and Gallery**

### **Urban Strategy**

The west side of Main Street, between Union and Prior, is home to the final and most important node; a modest multi-volume community centre and exhibition space. The placement of the building at this critical juncture achieves three design goals at the urban scale. First, it helps to re-stitch the continuous urban fabric along Main Street that the viaducts severed. Second, it serves as a vertical connector, encouraging the flow of pedestrians between Main Street and the elevated viaducts above. Finally, the building’s location is important given its immediate proximity to the future redevelopment of the Hogan’s Alley site, across the street.

Symbolically, the incorporation into the space of two massive cantilevered concrete structures originally built to support the span of the viaducts over Main Street provide a visual reminder of their impact over Hogan’s Alley across the street. *The hope is that re-appropriating these structures, rather than demolishing them, might help to facilitate productive conversations about community planning and reconciliation.*

## **User Groups and Program Elements**

As mentioned in Chapter 2, this project does not attempt to propose any plans for the future of the Hogan's Alley site. Within this particular node, however, the Black community of Vancouver (including the Hogan's Alley Working Group) is provided with a dedicated space immediately next to the site. In addition to being a gathering space for members of the Black community, the building provides public amenities to the larger neighbourhood, including universally accessible public washroom and shower facilities, educational historical and artistic exhibits, multi-purpose meeting rooms, a flexible multi-volume gathering space for events, and a dedicated rotating exhibition space. As an example of an immersive exhibition that could be presented within this space, please refer to the content under 'Appendix D'.

## **Design Strategy**

In order to best serve the needs of the community, the design seeks to respond to Wayde Compton's aforementioned desire for "bridging a Black past to a Black present and future in Vancouver" (City of Vancouver 2018, 23). By organizing both the formal and program components through these three lenses, specific spaces within the building are able to respond to these needs. Responding to the Black past on the site is accommodated by sharing education through immersive art and design exhibitions, and gallery space for local artists. The Black present is celebrated through live performance events, a spotlight on works by local Black artists, and the sharing of conversation and ideas over coffee in this space. Finally, the Black future is bolstered through dedicated meeting rooms and spaces for community engagement, allowing for ongoing dialogues

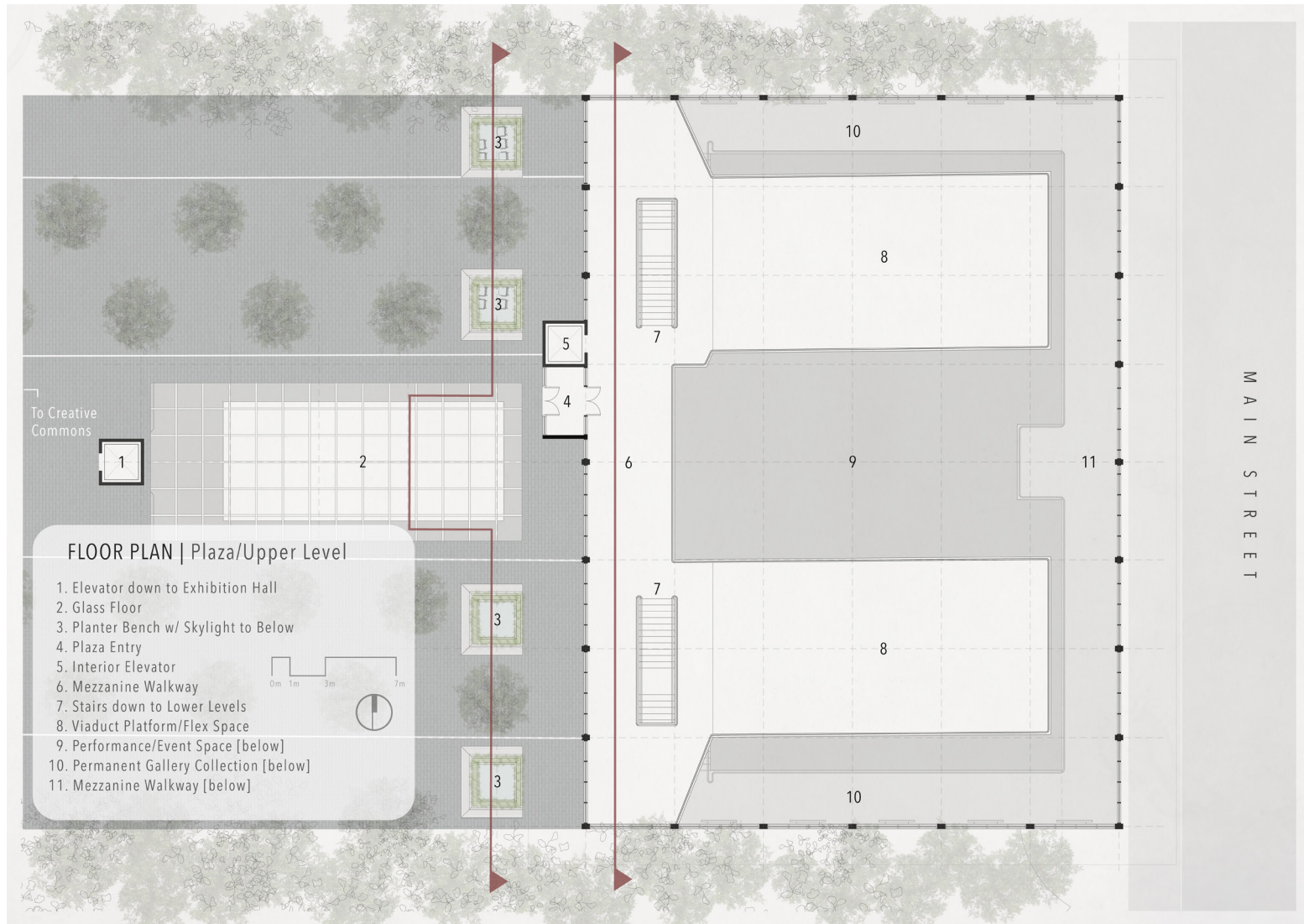


Fig. 85. Site/Floor Plan for Node 4: Hogan's Alley Community Centre & Gallery. Plaza/Upper Level.



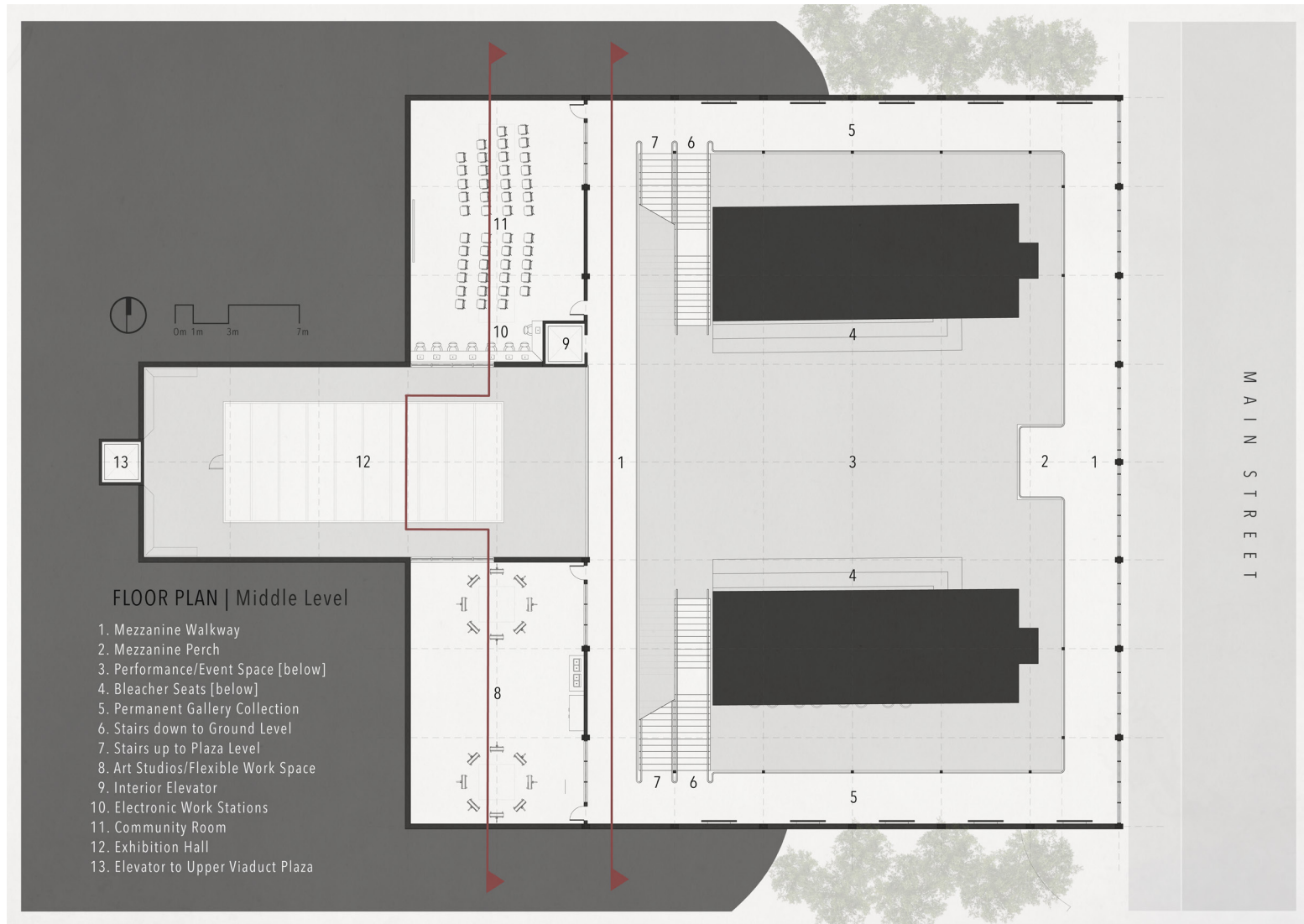


Fig. 86. Floor Plan for Node 4: Hogan's Alley Community Centre & Gallery. Mezzanine/Middle Level.

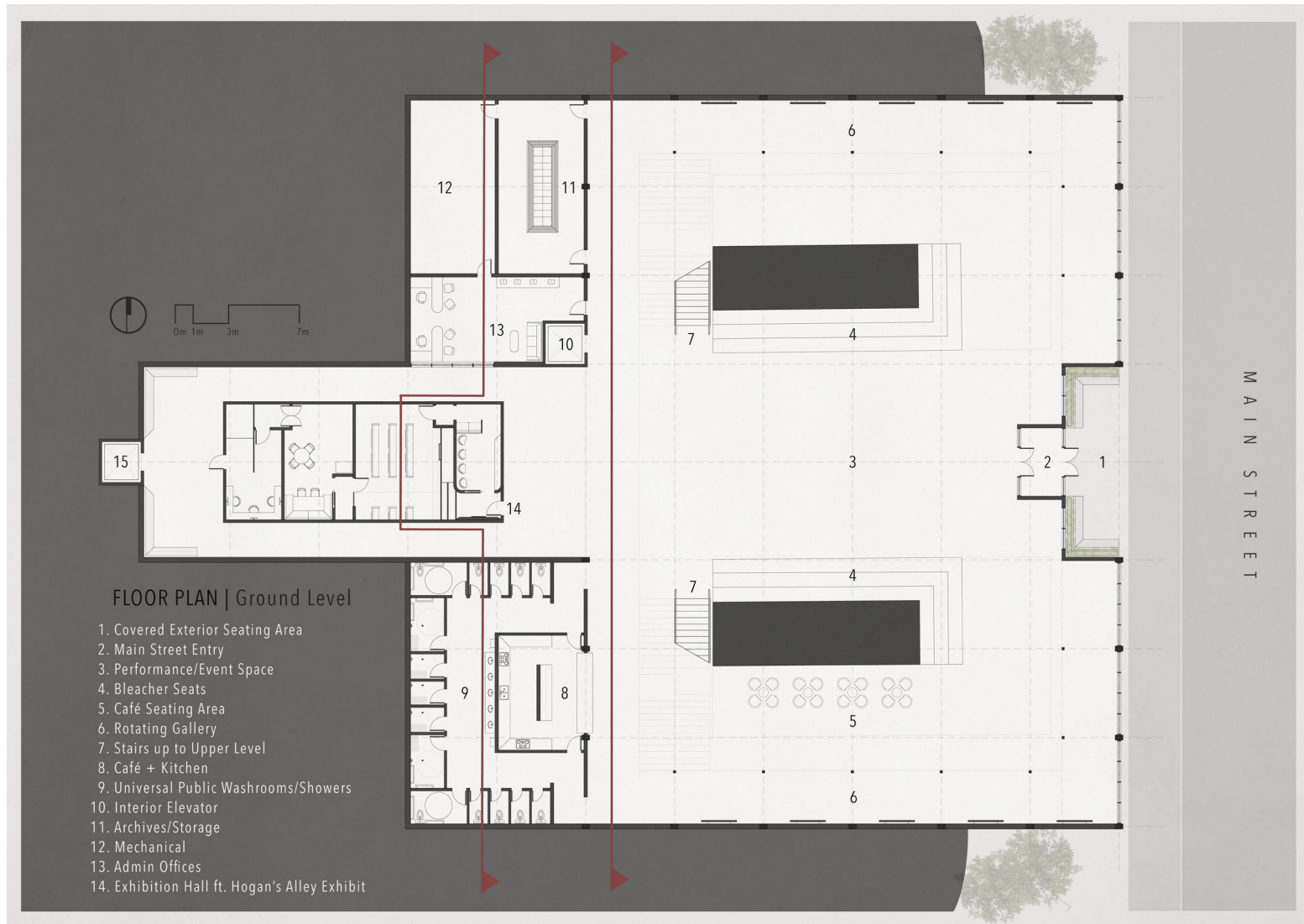


Fig. 87. Floor Plan for Node 4: Hogan's Alley Community Centre & Gallery. Ground/Street Level.

regarding the future of Hogan's Alley. The three floors of the building are presented beginning with the upper level (Fig. 85), followed by the middle (200) level (Fig. 86), and ending with the lower (100) level (Fig. 87). This trajectory mimics the way a pedestrian would move toward the end of the viaducts, then through the building during the vertical transition down to Main Street.

### ***Upper Viaduct Plaza [exterior]***

Between Quebec Street and Main Street, a significant amount of soil was artificially built up in the late 1960s, in order to support the construction of the viaducts. Today this artificial hill provides an interesting variation in an otherwise flat part of the city. By removing the paved surface of the viaducts at the top of the hill, the rigid 10 metre width of each is allowed to open up into a more spacious urban plaza. Simple pavers underfoot incorporate a subtle colour shift to notionally reference the footprint of where the viaducts once were. Rows of planted trees provide shade and help give context to the cluster of existing tall conifers on either hillside. A single elevator core emerges from the centre of the plaza (Fig. 85.1), behind which a large glass floor reveals a spacious multi-volume space carved out of the earth below (Fig. 85.2, Fig. 88). A series of four planter benches with incorporated skylights (Fig. 85.3) provide a more discreet visual connection between the unprogrammed plaza and the spaces inside the building below. An off-centre vestibule with glazed double doors provides a relief from the otherwise symmetrical plaza, inviting visitors inside the Hogan's Alley Community Centre and Gallery.

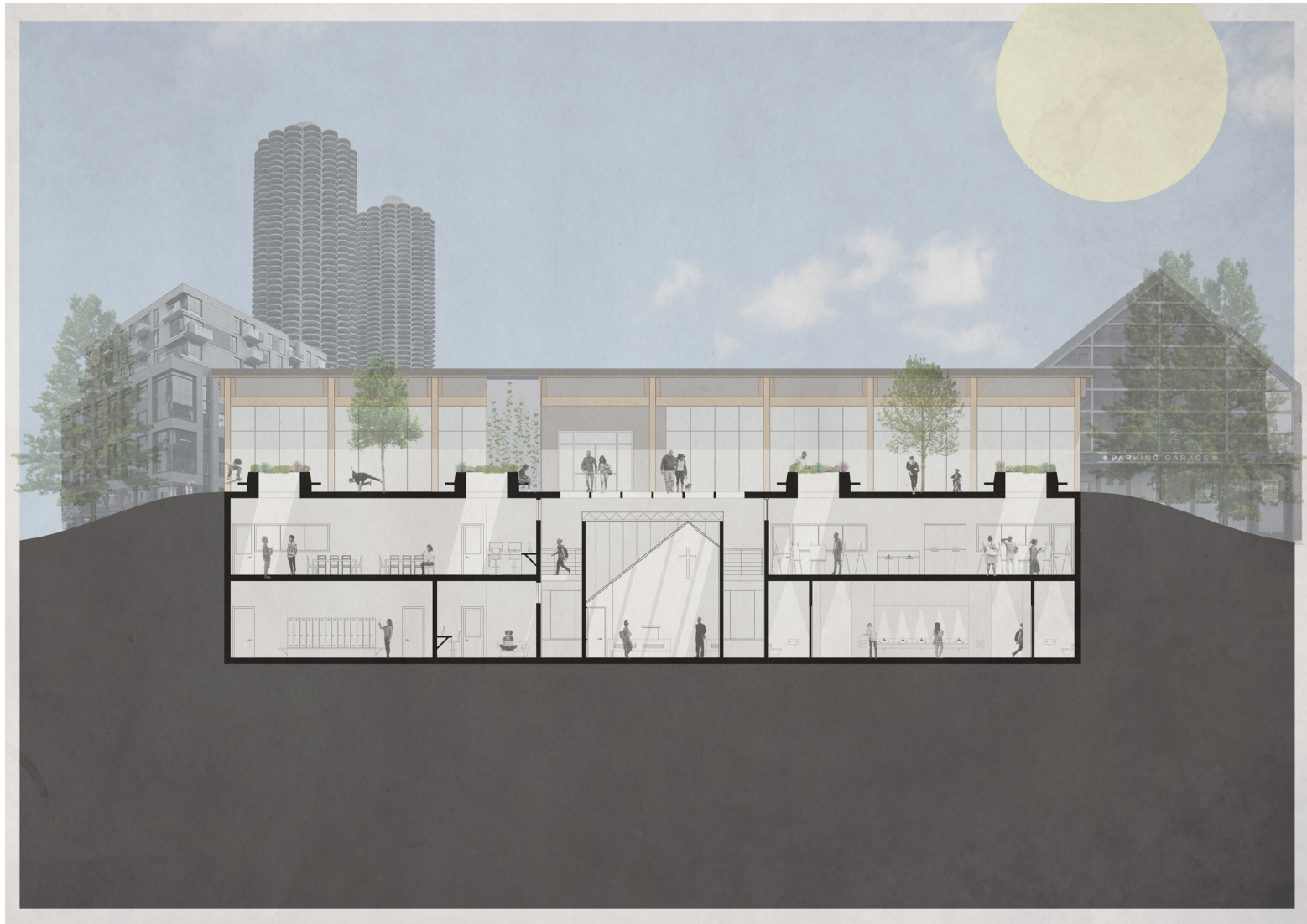


Fig. 88. Section looking east through Node 4: Hogan's Alley Community Centre & Gallery.

***300 Level [interior]***

The vestibule opens up onto a mezzanine walkway, leading to single-run dogleg staircases to the south and north (Fig. 85.7). Overhead, massive built-up engineered wood beams and an exposed CLT ceiling provide a warmth to contrast the massive remnants of the viaducts below. While the majority of the east and west-facing exterior walls are glazed in between the repetitive wood columns, the south and north walls are solid, save for a strip of clerestory windows. This provides light and views in and out on all four sides of the building, giving a unique experience to anyone gathered atop the viaduct platforms (Fig. 85.8). Additionally, the platforms are unprogrammed, but provide opportunity for 'event', in whatever format that might take.

***200 Level [interior]***

Emerging from the interior elevator (Fig. 86.9) or either staircase, one arrives on the mezzanine walkway (Fig. 86.1), which wraps the entire building exterior. The north and south lengths of the mezzanine incorporate gallery collections along the walls (Fig. 89). As it spans between the performance/event space (Fig. 86.3) and the exhibition hall (Fig. 86.12), the mezzanine provides views unique views down into either space (Fig. 90). Carved into the hillside, and accessed from this level are two community-oriented spaces. To the north, is a community room which could be used for presentations, meetings, or any community gathering. To the south, is a dedicated artist studio space. Here, local visual artists can create works with the intention of them being displayed in the building's gallery spaces. Skylights and clerestory windows are placed in both spaces

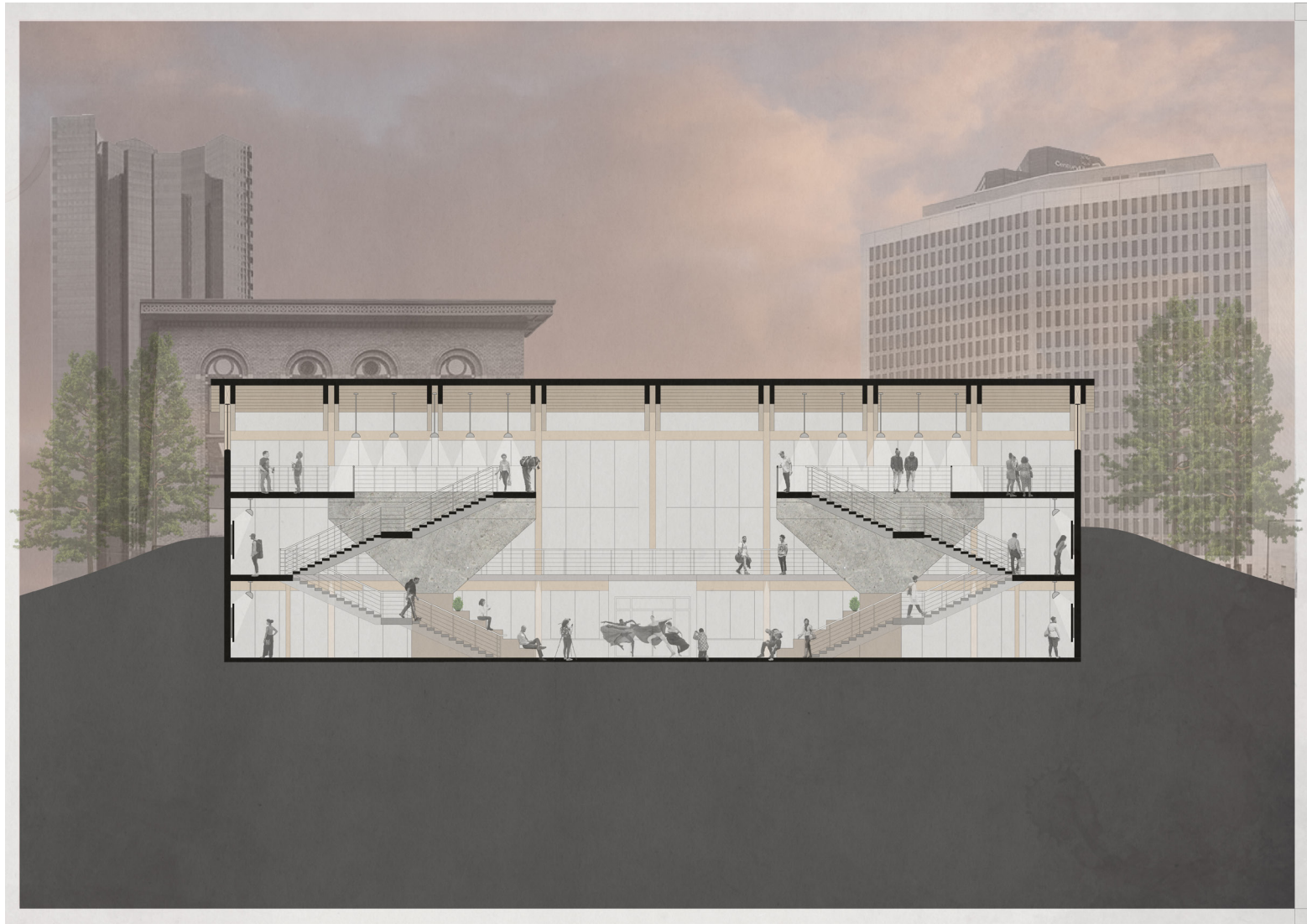


Fig. 89. Section looking east through Node 4: Hogan's Alley Community Centre & Gallery.



Fig. 90. Ground-level perspective render for Node 4: Hogan's Alley Community Centre & Gallery. View looking northwest.

to provide a combination of direct overhead, and softer refracted daylight.

### ***100 Level [interior]***

Arriving at the ground level, the sheer scale and volume of the viaduct remnants is fully appreciated (Fig. 92). Their unique, alien form is accented with built-up wooden bleacher seating, providing a small “black-box theatre” style formation for events to occur in the central space (Fig. 91). Stacked beneath the mezzanine walkway along the south and north walls, are more dedicated gallery spaces. The northwest corner of the ground level provides “back of house” amenities including mechanical, administrative offices, and dedicated archive and storage space for the collection of artifacts as they relate to the history of Hogan’s Alley.

Oversized universal public washrooms and showers are provided for both the occupants of the building, as well as members of the local community who may not have access to safe and clean facilities. Finally, a modest café and kitchen space provides refreshments and a reason for passersby from Main Street to enter the space and perhaps learn about the legacy of Hogan’s Alley while enjoying a coffee and conversation.





Fig. 91. Ground-level perspective render for Node 4: Hogan's Alley Community Centre & Gallery. View looking southeast.



Fig. 92. Street-level elevation render for Node 4: Hogan's Alley Community Centre & Gallery. View looking west.

## **Chapter 9: Conclusion**

This thesis has shown that countering an argument for the demolition of an unpopular piece of infrastructure with one for its preservation is a politically and historically complex endeavour. Knowing this, the thesis attempted to be ambitious in its proposals. A mono-cultural large-scale “development” would not suffice. Instead, nodes and blocks help to contribute to conditions in which community can thrive. Throughout the design of the nodes, fully accessible spaces and activities with low economic barriers take precedence over typical programs that exist in new-build mixed-use urban developments. Few roadway infrastructures from the era of urban renewal do not have a charged past. By acknowledging the complex history of the site, this thesis attempts to show how a design response can bring light to the injustices of the past, while meaningfully contributing to the future of impacted communities.

### **Contribution to Discourse**

Although the entire process guiding the research and design for this thesis is centered on the local histories and context of Vancouver, the intention is that this research can influence and inspire similar arguments for the preservation and re-use of infrastructures in cities everywhere. Through a well-researched and sensitive design response, the re-imagined Georgia and Dunsmuir viaducts can become a precedent for other cities to re-think community building.

# Appendix A: Supplemental Precedent Analysis

Project Info	Project: <b>The Highline</b> Location: New York City, NY Year: 2009 Design: DS+R, JCFO  Originally: Elev. Freight Rail Built in: 1933 Structure: Steel	Project: <b>Secret Studio</b> Location: Spain Year: 2017 Design: Fernando Abellanas  Originally: Vehicle Bridge Built in: N/A Structure: Cast Concrete	Project: <b>The Bentway</b> Location: Toronto, ON Year: 2018 Design: Public Work  Originally: Elev. Expressway Built in: 1958 Structure: Cast Concrete	Project: <b>Hoffplein Station</b> Location: Rotterdam, NL Year: 2015 Design: PENA & Akropolis  Originally: Elev. Comm. Rail Built in: 1908 Structure: Cast Concrete	Project: <b>Villa 31</b> Location: Buenos Aires, AR Year: Ongoing Design: Citizens  Originally: Elev. Freeway Built in: N/A Structure: Cast Concrete
Context					
Primary Program					
Public/Private					
Above/Below					
Indoor/Outdoor					
Planned/Informal					

Fig. A1. Early research matrix investigating different examples of adaptive re-use on road and rail infrastructures and analyzing their conditions.

## Appendix B: Early Designs

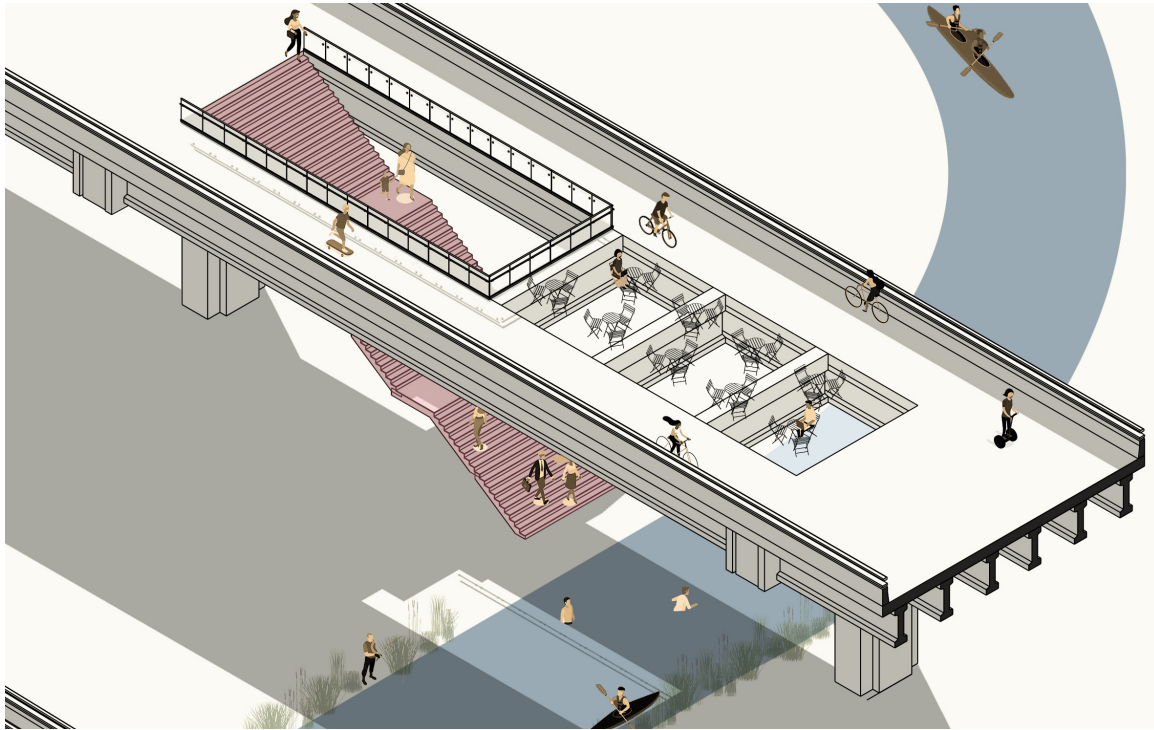


Fig. B1. A wide staircase takes centre stage as both a functional 'node' connecting down to street level and a place to sit and watch the water activities below.

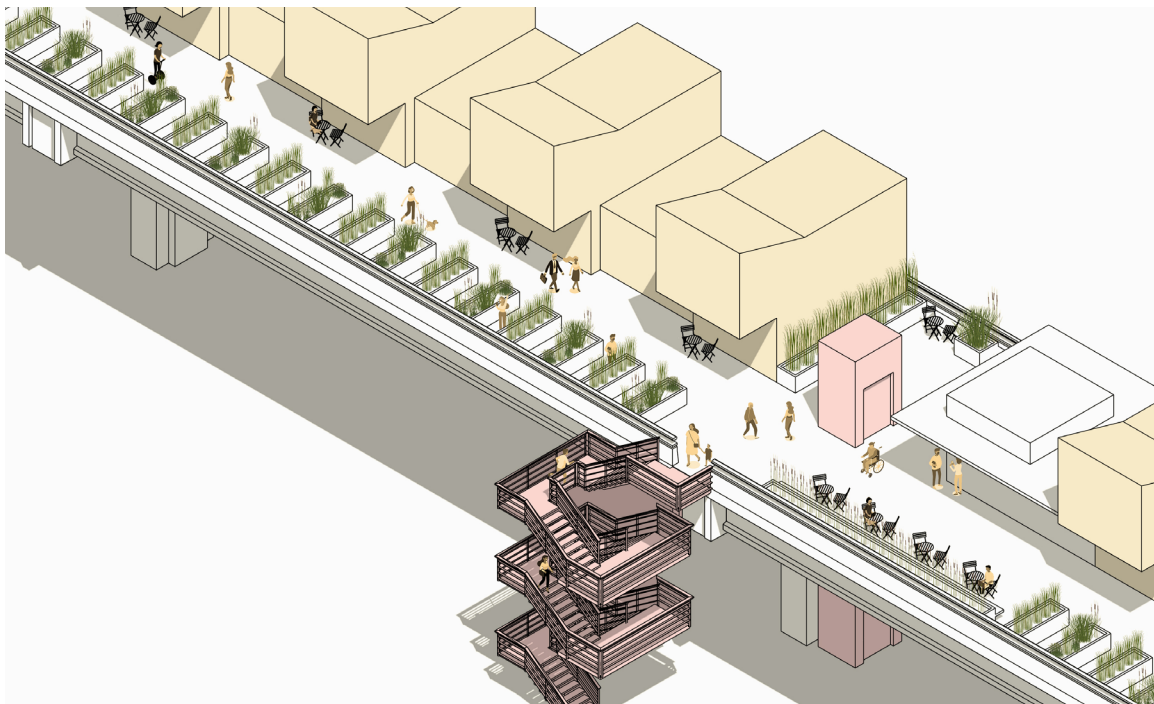


Fig. B2. Early attempt at showing notional housing masses, prioritizing front porch areas and an assortment of public and private garden plots.

## Appendix C: Celebrating Vancouver's Black History and Culture in Hogan's Alley

### Engaging the Public through Exhibition

As a project originally researched and proposed for Sarah Bonnemaison's ARCH 5110: Architectural Exhibitions course, the Hogan's Alley exhibition ended up inspiring the design for the final node of the thesis project. The following paragraphs will describe the user experience of *one example*



Fig. C1. Perspective view situating the Exhibit within the context of the Hogan's Alley Community Centre and Gallery.

of the type of immersive exhibition that might exist within the rotating exhibition space of the Hogan's Alley Community Centre and Gallery. A 1:1 walk-through exhibition featuring four different "rooms" illustrates stories of important spaces and characters from the local Black community through multi-sensory installations. The four "rooms" are presented as abstractions of spaces in which the original stories took place, including: a railway sleeping car, the local church, a late-night restaurant, and a portion of the "alley" itself.

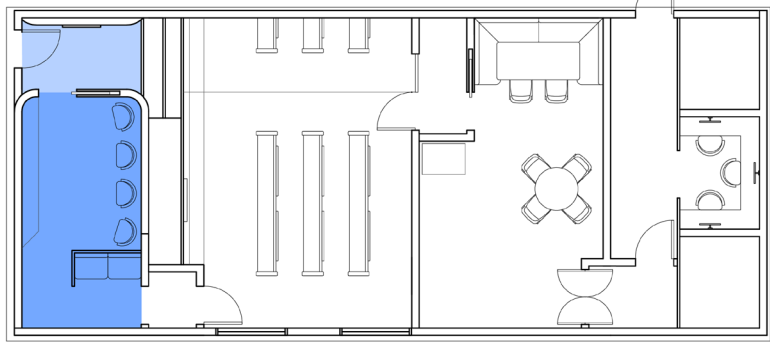


Fig. C2. Exhibition key plan (Sleeping Car shown in blue).



Fig. C3. Interior of a Pullman 'Sunbeam' Sleeping Car. (Hussar 2018)

### ***The Exhibition: Context within the Building***

Centered within the double volume space, and visible from Main Street through floor-to-ceiling glazing, the exhibition exists within the walls of an enigmatic, large canvas box. Such a large alien object makes it difficult to ignore, inviting curiosity from passersby. Light tensile fabric in the form of a large rectangular prism conceals a stick-framed structure behind. The stretched fabric allows filtered light to penetrate the spaces within.

### **Room #1: The Pullman Sleeping Car**

The first exhibition space is devoted to the history of the ‘Pullman Sleeping Car’ and the men who staffed it. The introduction of this luxury form of railroad travel into the Canadian market in the early 20th century brought with it countless Black American men (and their families) who migrated to cities like Vancouver for steady, well-paying jobs. Despite the steady paycheck, Black porters faced racism in every aspect of their job. Passengers regularly disrespected porters by calling them demeaning names like “George” (as in George Pullman, inventor of the Sleeping Car) or “boy”. Furthermore, Black porters received lower pay than their white colleagues, did not receive promotions, and could not apply for higher positions such as engineer or conductor.

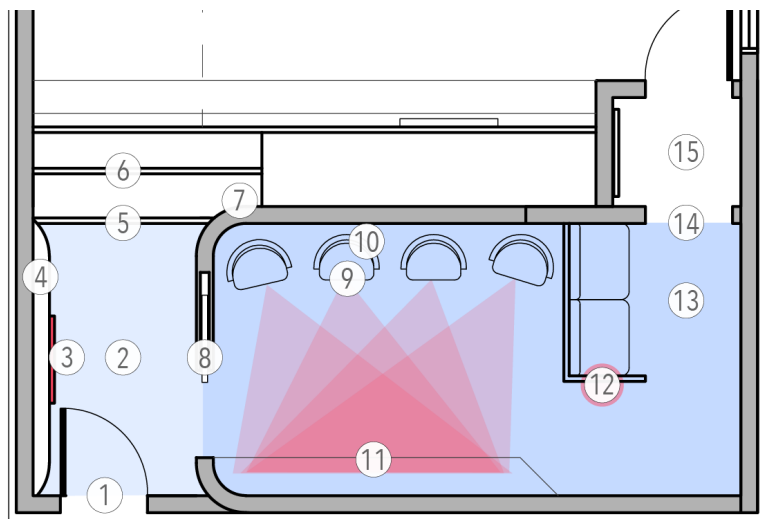


Fig. C4. Floor plan for Room #1: The Pullman Sleeping Car

### **The Pullman Sleeping Car: Exhibition Experience (Fig. 10)**

The exhibition begins when the visitor opens the **swing door [1]** and crosses the initial threshold, arriving in a space reminiscent of the gap between two moving railcars, standing



atop a ***floor of diamond-plate steel [2]***. Turning to one's left, a ***wall-mounted touch screen [3]*** sits on what would be ***the door of a built-out railcar [4]***. The screen provides an introduction to the project, "*Celebrating Vancouver's Black History and Culture in Hogan's Alley*", preparing the visitor for what is to come. Behind the adjacent ***guardrail [5]***, a ***stretched fabric projection screen [6]*** displays clips of moving scenery of the Western Canadian landscape. Meanwhile a ***hidden speaker [7]*** plays an accompanying audio track which mimics the soundscape of a moving train.

The visitor then passes through a ***pocket door [8]*** and enters the Sleeping Car. A collection of ***upholstered wooden chairs [9]*** sits along the left wall, along with a ***pair of headphones [10]*** in each. The visitor can then choose to sit and put on the headphones, across from a ***projection screen [11]*** playing historical video footage describing the long and often challenging trajectory of Black railway porters and their struggle for equitable working conditions. The video also explores the close relationship between railway porters and the adjacent neighbourhood of Strathcona (which would eventually become known as Hogan's Alley).

Continuing through the car, the visitor passes by an ***official name plate [12]*** mounted on the wall. These were the result of a collective bargaining agreement reached between the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and CP rail in 1945 – a tangible step in the long fight against discrimination toward Black porters. Finally, the visitor enters a ***private car [13]*** where ***curtains on the wall [14]*** imply a window covering. Drawing the curtains reveals a small ***vestibule [15]***, leading away from the Sleeping Car and into the next room.

## Room #2: AME Fountain Chapel



Fig. C5. Location of the chapel within neighbourhood. Base map from Google Earth (2020).

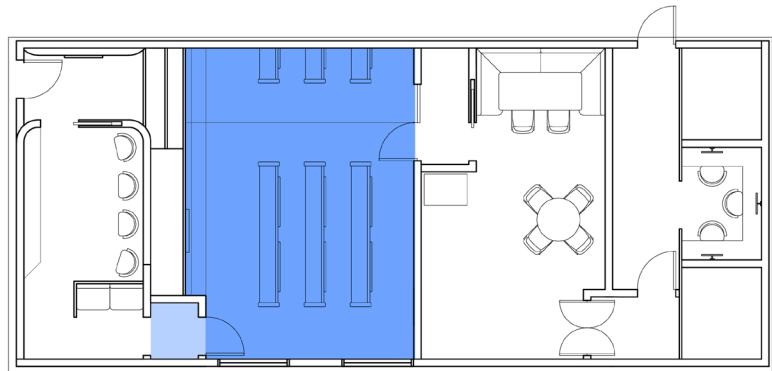


Fig. C6. Exhibition key plan (Fountain Chapel shown in blue).



Fig. C7. Fountain Chapel at 823 Jackson Ave, 1978. (City of Vancouver Archives 1978).

One of the only institutional buildings from the Hogan's Alley era that still stands today is the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Fountain Chapel. From 1918 until the late 1970's the

chapel was the foundation for much of the Black community in Strathcona. In addition to its faith, the congregation was centred around communal entities including music, food, and social justice issues.

The tight-knit church community rallied together in the name of justice on multiple occasions. In 1923, it mobilized to ensure a fair trial for Fred Deal, a railway porter charged with killing a Vancouver Police constable. In the 1940's the congregation demanded an inquiry into the police beating of a congregation member, longshoreman Clarence Clemons (Black Strathcona, 2014).

#### ***AME Fountain Chapel: Exhibition Experience (Fig. 14)***

Upon arrival into the ***vestibule [1]*** which includes a 16' tall ceiling of exposed open-web steel trusses and stretched white fabric (providing filtered natural light from the clerestory windows overhead), the visitor is greeted with another ***digital orientation screen [2]*** mounted to the wall on their left. The screen gives a brief overview of both the location and the historical significance of the African Methodist Episcopal Fountain Chapel within the Black Community, before the visitor passes through the ***swing door [3]*** and into an abstracted version of the interior of the Chapel. The pitched ceiling form mimics that which existed in the original building, with a stretched fabric canopy as the ceiling surface (also allowing filtered light to pass through).

As the visitor enters the space, they have the option to sit at any of the multiple ***'church pews' [4]***, constructed of baltic birch plywood. Sitting in the pews, the visitor looks back toward the 'front' of the church, up ***a flight of two steps [5]*** and toward a built-out altar [6], in front of a massive ***pro-***

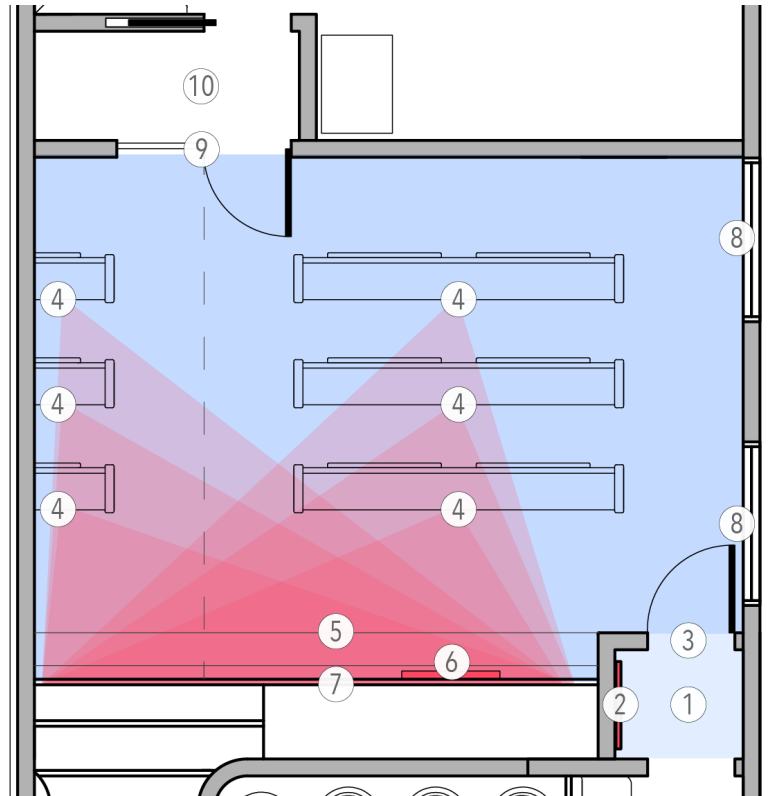


Fig. C8. Floor plan for Room #2: AME Fountain Chapel

**jection screen [7]** spanning the entire width of the wall. A montage of looped video plays on the screen, as audio emanates from hidden speakers mounted to the underside of the pews. While seated in the pews, the visitor can relax and absorb audio and visual stories of the characters and events which made this building so significant. Among these include the mobilizing of the church congregation on multiple occasions to get proper legal representation for members of the Black community, as well as the communal dinners that took place here. In between different stories, the warm sounds of gospel African Methodist Episcopal choir performances fill the room, as images of the different choirs over the years appear on the screen.

As the looped video and audio segments play, the **frosted and backlit windows [8]** move through a light sequence

mimicking a sped-up cycle of daylight, before passing into sunset and eventually, nightfall. Once “night” falls, the visitor is invited to proceed through the **double doors [9]** out of the rear of the church and into the next **vestibule [10]**.

### **Room #3: Vie’s Chicken & Steaks**

Built into the main floor of a modest 1920s wood-frame home on the northwestern edge of Hogan’s Alley, Vie’s Chicken and Steaks grew from humble beginnings in 1948 to an esteemed local eatery and late-night hangout where all were welcome.



Fig. C9. Location of Vie’s (corner of Union St and Main St) within neighbourhood. Base map from Google Earth 2020).

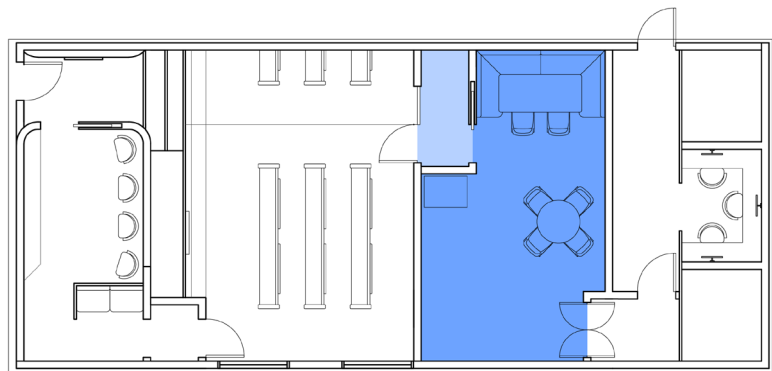


Fig. C10. Exhibition key plan (Vie’s shown in blue).

Run by Vie Moore and her husband Bob for more than three decades, Vie’s became equally well-known for its high quality cooking, and its reputation as a favourite hangout of locals and stars alike.

***Vie's Chicken & Steak: Exhibition Experience (Fig. 19)***

Upon arrival into the vestibule [1] the visitor is directed toward another digital orientation screen [2] mounted on the wall opposite the double doors, on the left. This introduces the visitor to Vie's Chicken & Steaks, before they pass through the pocket door [3] and into a space reminiscent



Fig. C11. Sammy Davis Jr. entertains a crowd while Vie Moore and her customers gather. (Black Strathcona 2014)



Fig. C12. Vie Moore working in the kitchen of her restaurant. (Black Strathcona 2014)

of the interior of a nighttime scene at Vie's. Immediately to the left is a booth table [4] with two moveable chairs. On the surface of the table, alongside condiments and napkin dispensers from the 1960s, menus [5] await. Along the rear wall, at counter height, a wide digital screen [6] is integrated



Fig. C13. Replica of what a typical menu at Vie's might have looked like.

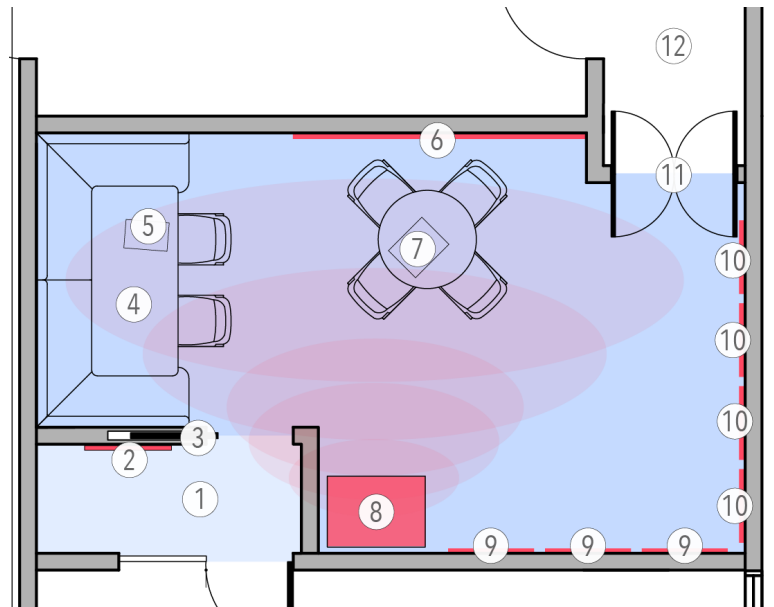


Fig. C14. Floor plan for Room #3: Vie's Chicken & Steaks

into the wall finish, looping video footage of kitchen hands plating meals (from the menu) and setting them atop the server's "counter".

The visitor can peruse the items atop the nearby circular table, including laminated copies of local newspapers from the 1960s [7], depicting the approval of funding for the viaducts (which would soon destroy what remained of Hogan's Alley).

In the corner across from the table sits a retro jukebox [8], stocked with recordings from the golden era of Jazz, centering on those who frequented Vie's, including Ella Fitzgerald, Duke Ellington, Lena Horne, and others. Posters [9] of such performers are mounted to the wall beside the jukebox, along with photographs of their time spent at Vie's (e.g., Sammy Davis Jr. entertaining a late-night crowd). The adjacent wall features a collection of photographs of "regulars" [10] with captions printed beneath. The visitor can spend as much time as they like enjoying the music



and learning about the locals before eventually passing into what appears to be the kitchen via saloon-style swing doors [11] and into the final vestibule [12].

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