

FROM STRIP MALL TO SMALL TOWN :

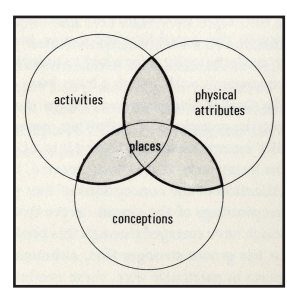
Placemaking in the Suburbs

My research indicates that the most vibrant plazas exhibit Evolution of Place, Civility, and Topophilia, yet these qualitties seem to be absent from many of Atlanta’s public spaces. By looking to the Medieval City as a model for urbanization, designers can emphasize pedestrian activity, sensory awareness, and incrementalism in the redevelopment of transit-adjacent greyfields.

IDENTIFYING ATTRACTIVE PLACES : THE SITUATIONIST DERIVE

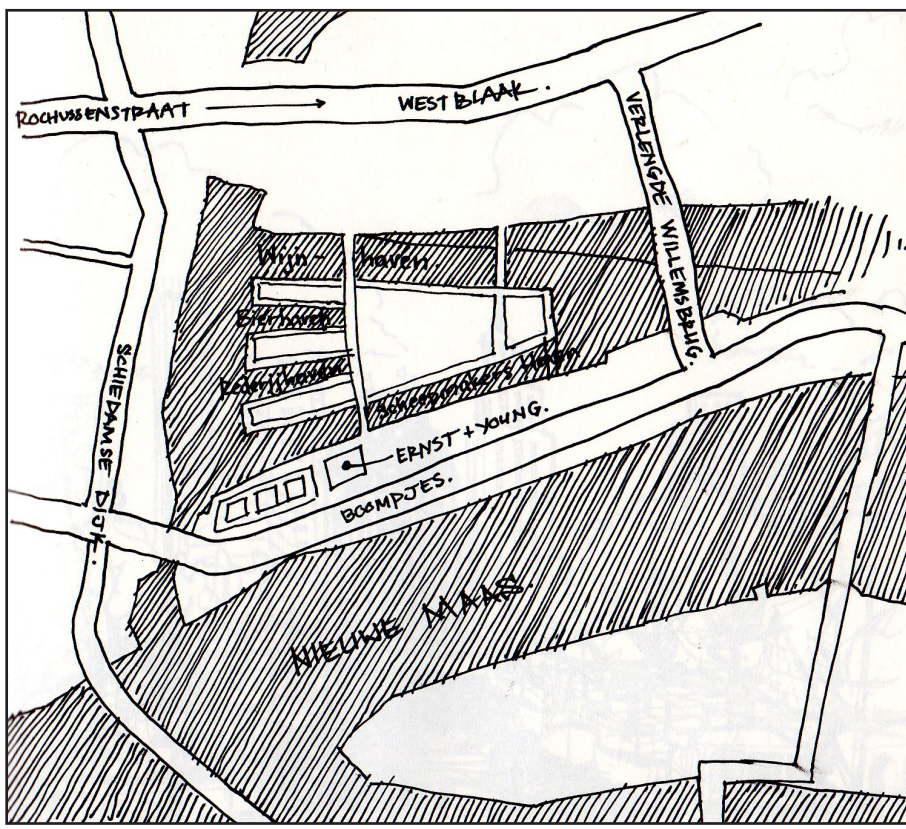
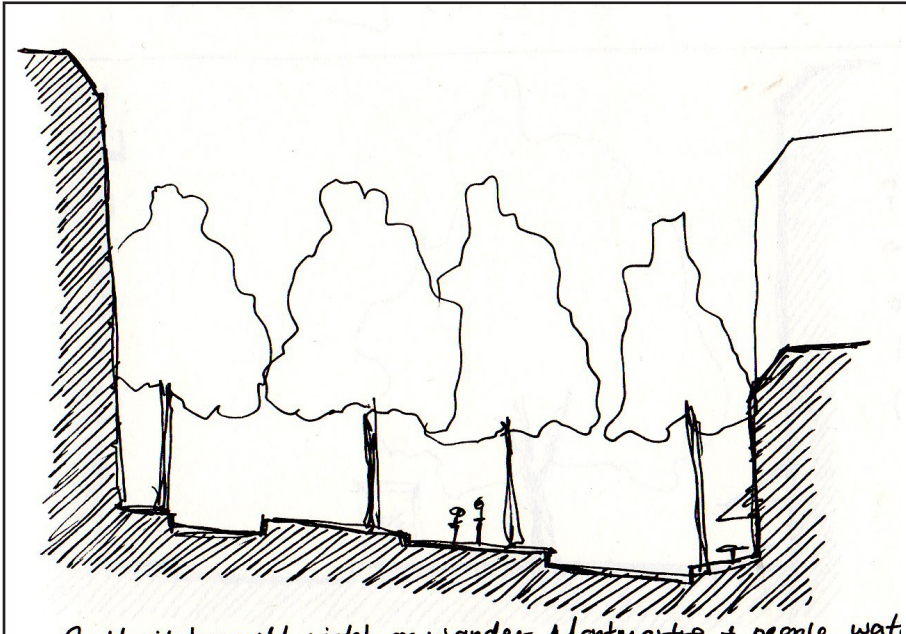
GUY DEBORD AND THE PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY OF CITIES :

"In a derive one or more persons... let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there."
-Guy Debord

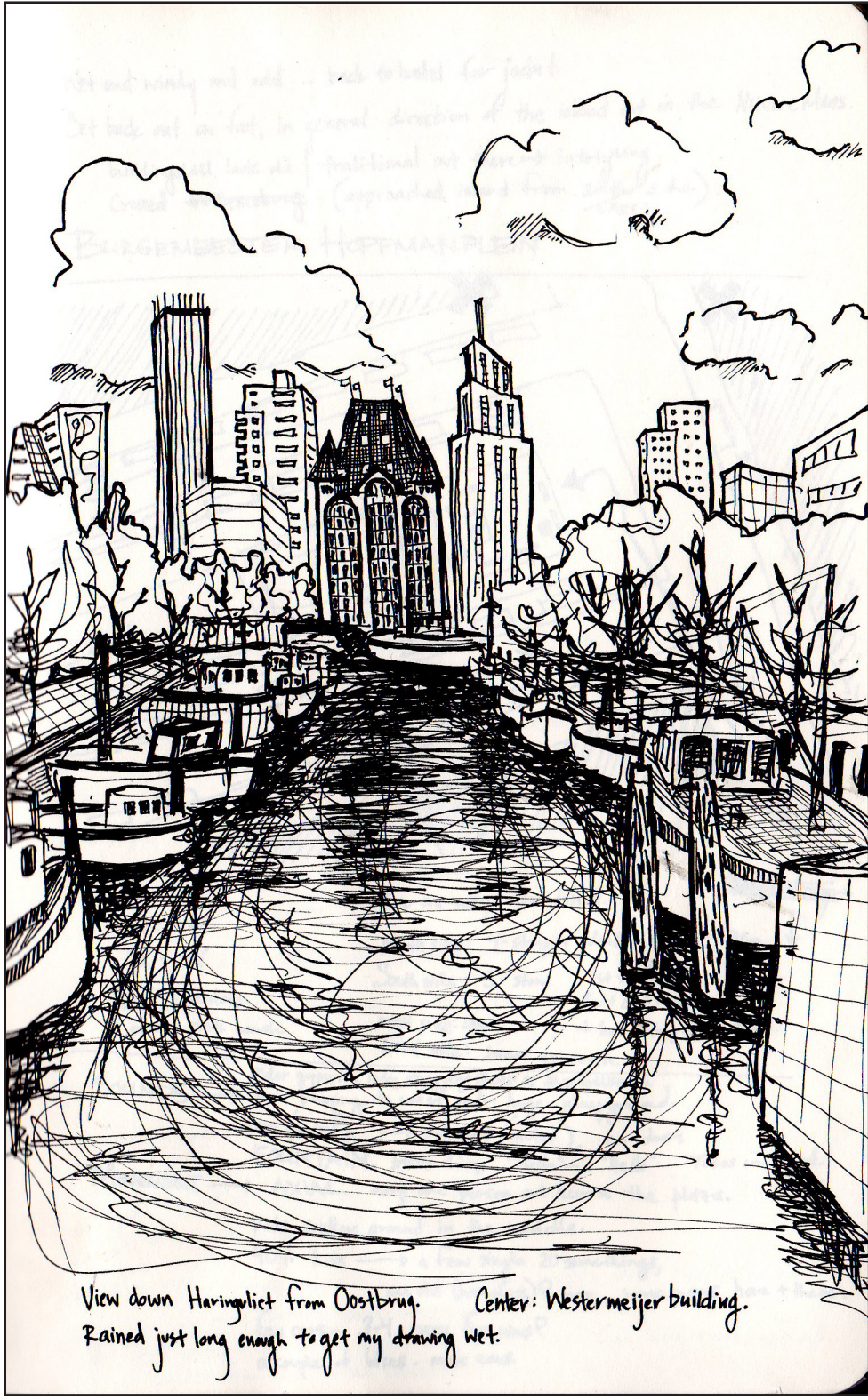
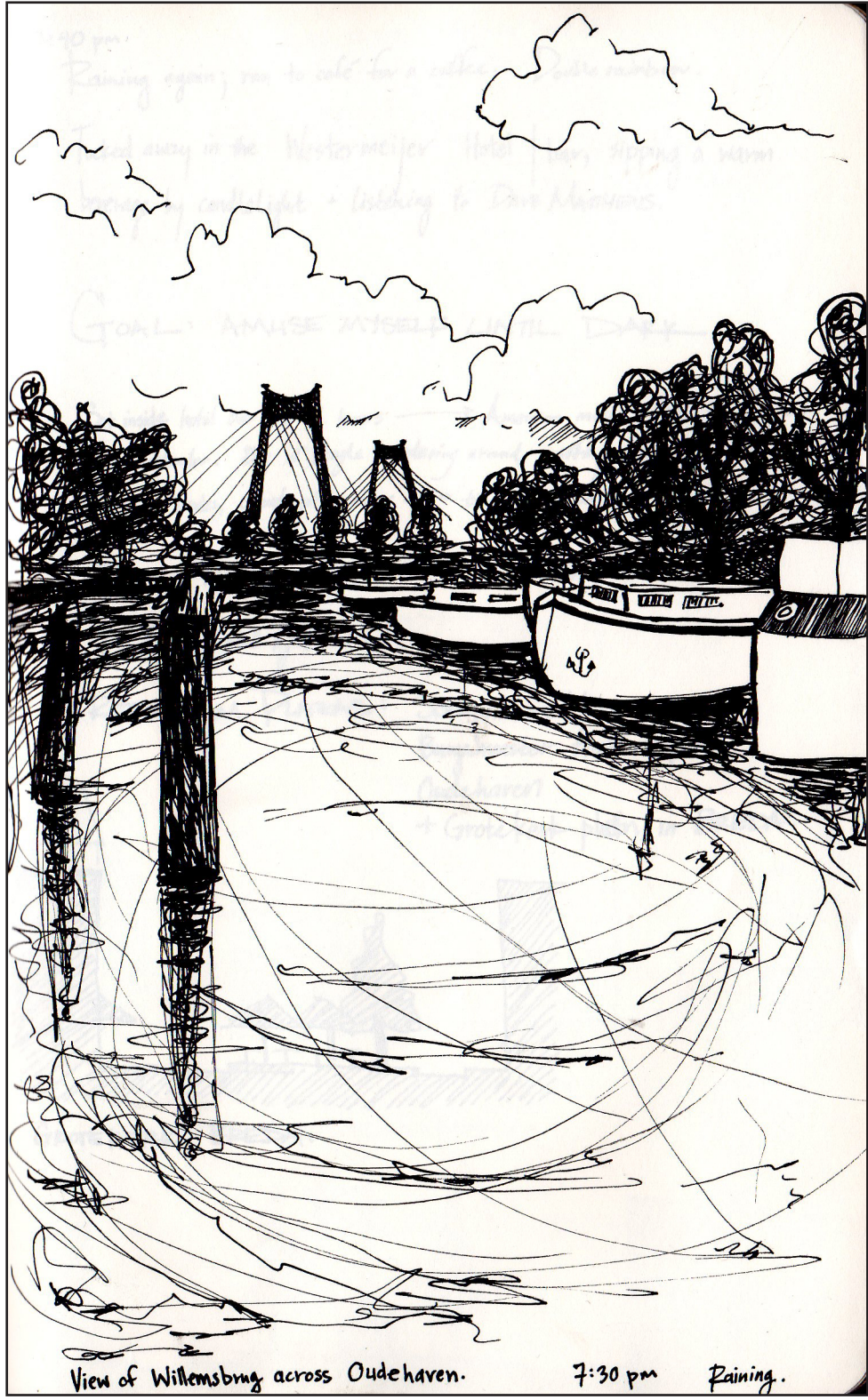


PLAZA RESEARCH : IDENTIFYING THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ATTRACTIVE PLACES

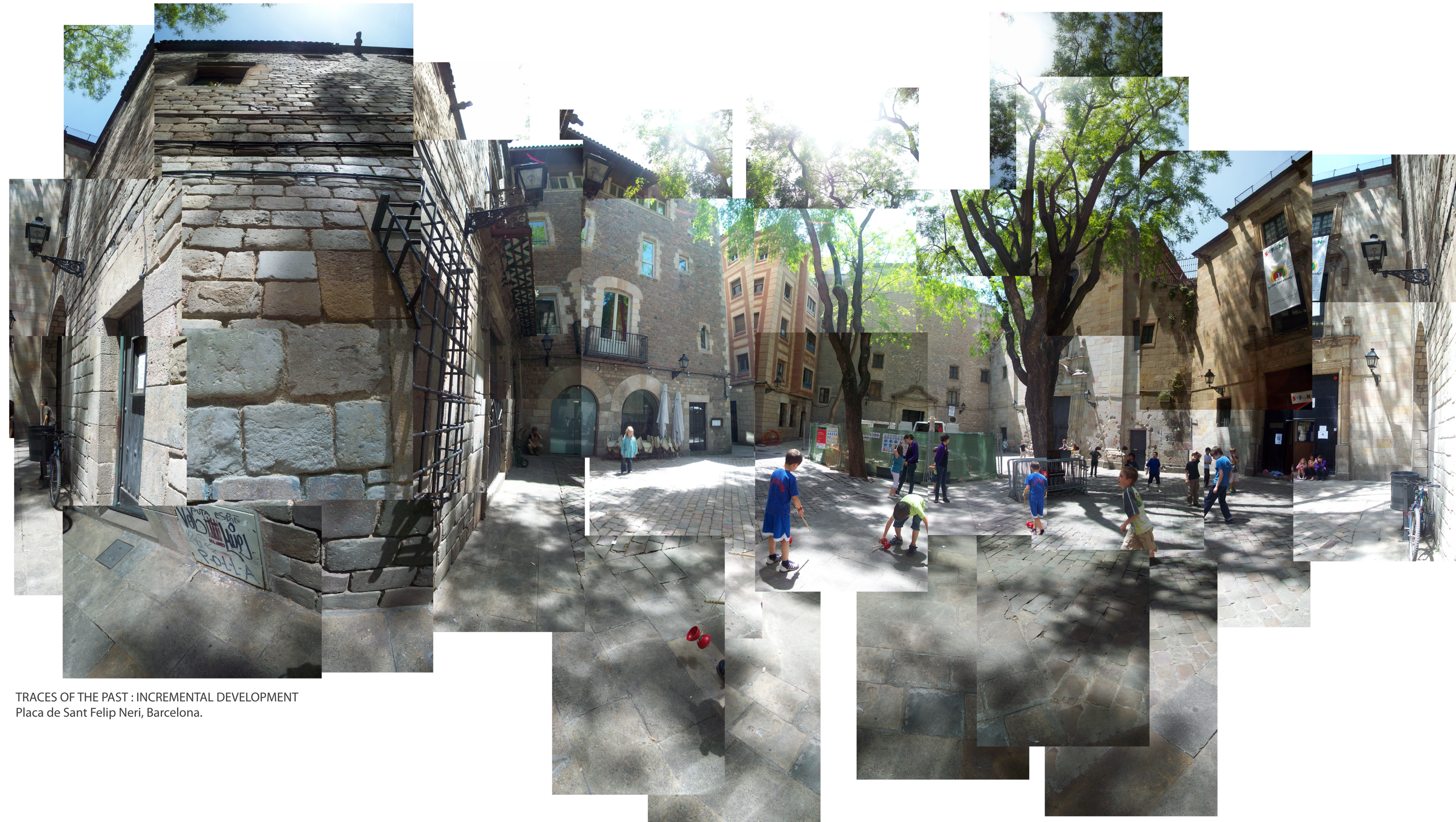
In order to better understand the sorts of places which tend to attract me, I decided to study a series of public plazas. In the spirit of the Situationists, I went on "derives" in a number of cities, wandering on foot until I encountered a Place that caught my attention. I then documented that Place over the course of several days in order to identify and dissect the attributes which I found to be attractive, with a focus on David Canter's three components of Place : Activities, Physical Attributes, and Conceptions.



Sketches from Plaza Research



CHARACTERISTICS OF ATTRACTIVE PLACES :



TRACES OF THE PAST : INCREMENTAL DEVELOPMENT
Placa de Sant Felip Neri, Barcelona.

EVOLUTION OF PLACE : RETAINING TRACES OF THE PAST

INCREMENTAL REDEVELOPMENT

Places have a sense of evolution when TRACES OF PREVIOUS ERAS are apparent as a result of small scale, INCREMENTAL REDEVELOPMENT.

INCREMENTALISM has been lost from much of today's suburban development as a result of the large-scale property subdivision, and the "instant urbanism" model of development.



CHANCE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE OTHER :
Place de la Contrescarpe, Paris.

CIVILITY : CHANCE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE OTHER

PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENTS

Civility is defined by Richard Sennet in The Fall of Public Man as social interaction in the form of chance encounters with the Other. Civility is distinct from Community interaction, which occurs both by choice and with people similar to oneself.

CIVILITY HAS BEEN LOST from much of today's public realm as a result of the segregation of uses and people, as well as the transformation to an automobile-centric society.



AWARENESS OF AND ATTACHMENT TO PLACE :
Van Der Helst Plein, Amsterdam.

TOPOPHILIA : AWARENESS OF AND ATTACHMENT TO PLACE

HEIGHTENED SENSORY AWARENESS IN PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED ENVIRONMENTS

Yi Fu Tuan defines Topophilia as the "BOND BETWEEN PEOPLE AND PLACE."

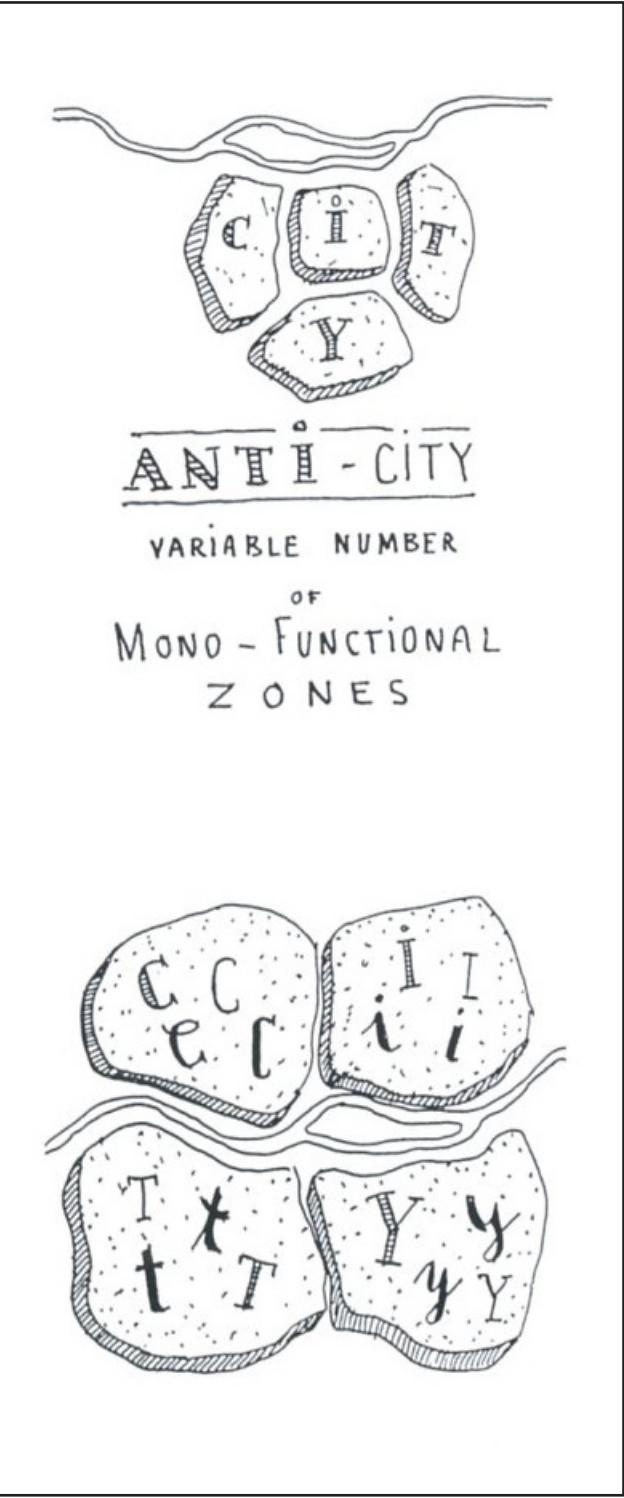
Topophilia has been lost from much of today's public realm as a result of auto-centricity.

An emphasis on the pedestrian, and the activation of the senses can revive place attachment.

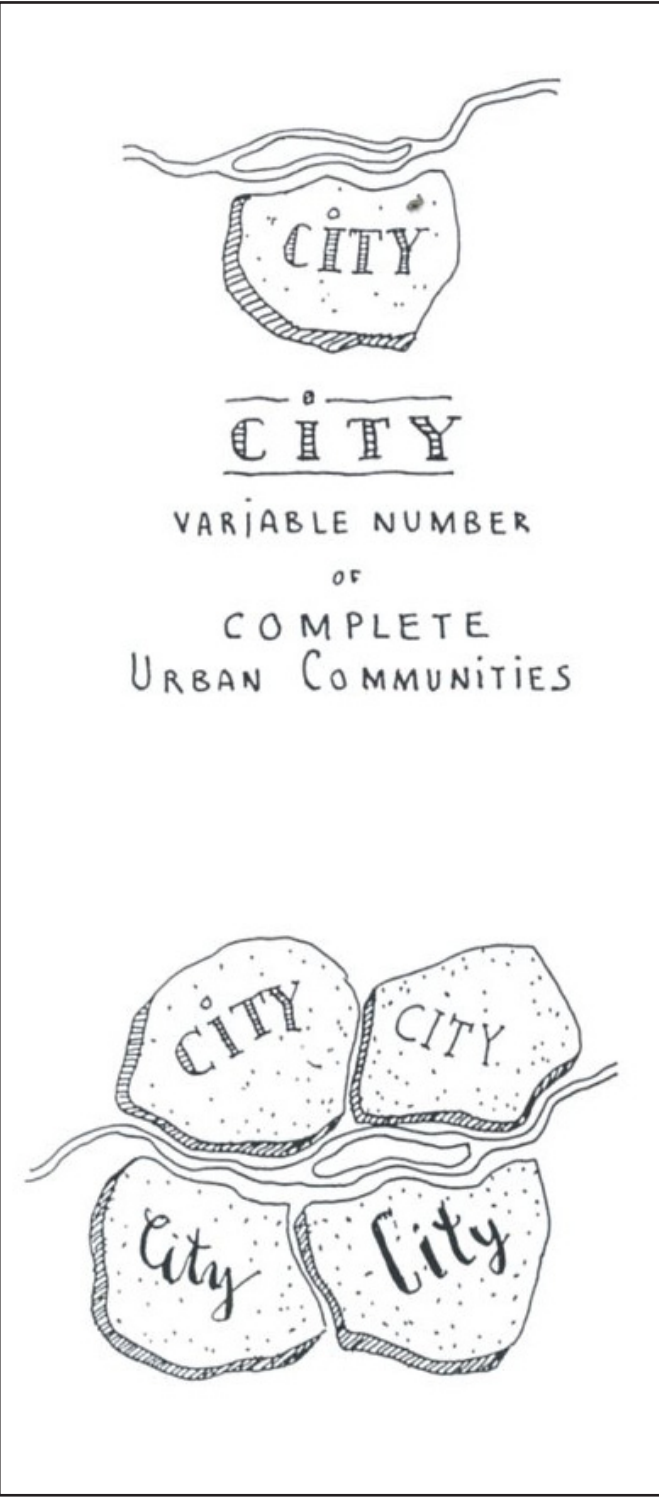


OPPORTUNITY FOR REDEVELOPMENT: A Transit-Adjacent Greyfield in Sandy Springs, Georgia

ATLANTA’S OUTLYING TRANSIT STATIONS : REDEVELOPMENT CAN CREATE COMPLETE URBAN COMMUNITIES



Leon Krier's "Mono-Functional Zones"



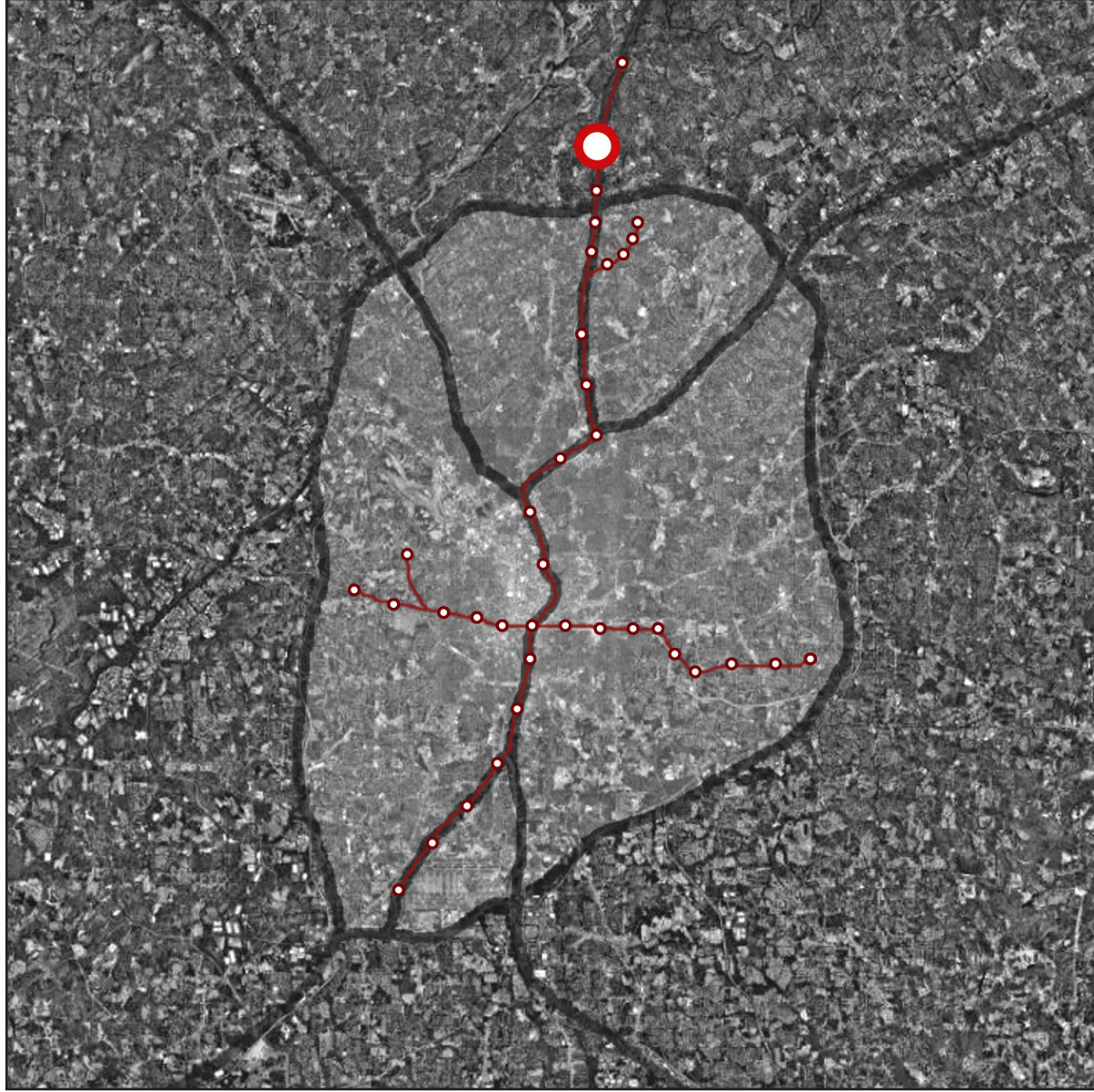
Leon Krier's "Complete Urban Communities"

“COMPLETE URBAN COMMUNITIES”

Leon Krier defines the city as a “complete urban community.” (see diagrams to the left)

Atlanta, which is connected by means of public transportation, has the opportunity to develop “Complete Urban Communities” in the form of small towns at its outlying transit stations.

This model for urban growth (diagram to the far right) is comprised of a central urban core, “CITY,” with surrounding communities, “TOWNS,” connected to the urban core by transit.



Sandy Springs, Georgia, one of Atlanta's outlying transit stations.

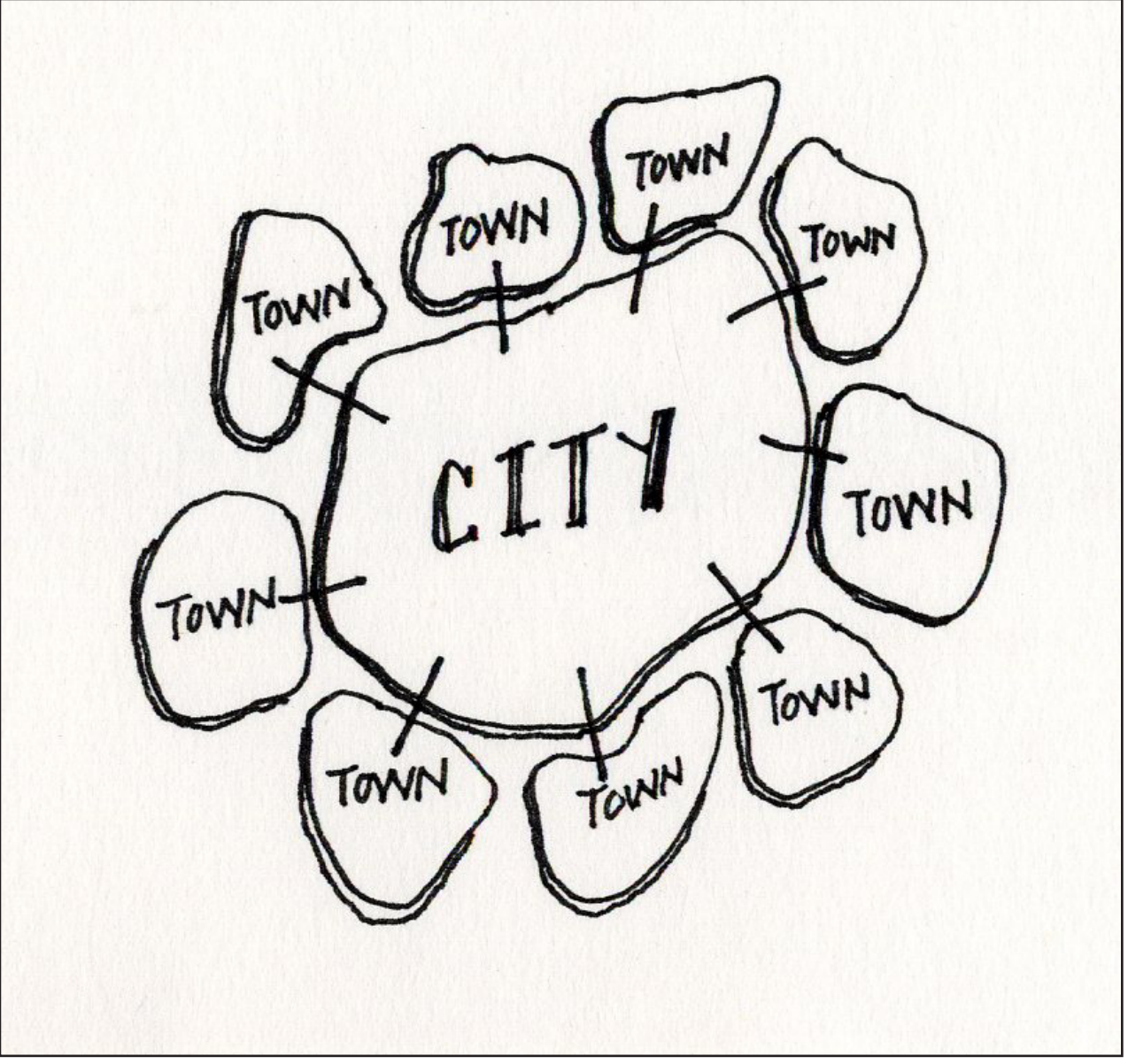


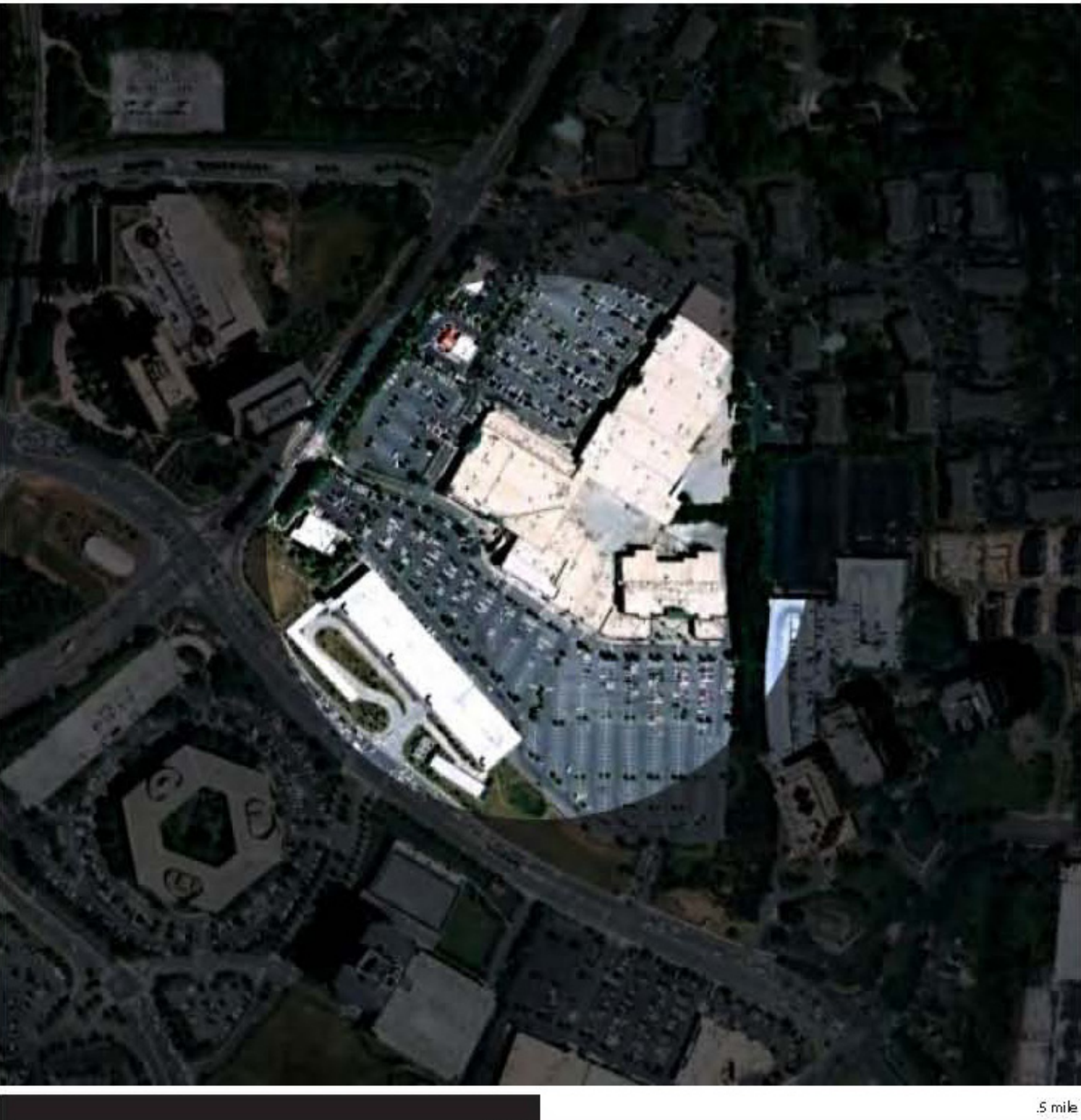
Diagram of urban growth for Atlanta, based on Leon Krier's diagram of "Complete Urban Communities."

REDEVELOPING TRANSIT-ADJACENT GREYFIELDS : LEARNING FROM THE MEDIEVAL CITY



HIGHLY RETROFITTABLE SANDY SPRINGS, GEORGIA : STRIP MALL + PARKING LOT

Brenda Case Scheer describes three types of urban fabric : STATIC, ELASTIC, and CAMPUS tissues. This 36-acre "CAMPUS" parcel adjacent to the Sandy Springs MARTA station is highly retrofittable, due to its size and single ownership.



MODEL FOR REDEVELOPMENT

HISTORIC CITIES : INCREMENTAL DEVELOPMENT, PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTATION, AND SENSORY AWARENESS

Cities like Florence, Italy can serve as models for redevelopment of the suburbs. Through incremental development, pedestrian-orientation, and heightened sensory awareness, many historic cities exhibit a successful public realm.



EVOLUTION OF PLACE, CIVILITY, AND TOPOPHILIA URBAN AND ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN ORIENTED TO PLACEMAKING

When redeveloping parcels like Perimeter Pointe Shopping Center in Sandy Springs, designers can incorporate qualities of the Medieval city in order to produce successful places.



Florence, Italy juxtaposed onto the large parcel adjacent to Sandy Springs MARTA station.



Regulating Plan
Scale : 1" = 200'

AN URBAN FRAMEWORK AND PLAZA DESIGN ORIENTED TO SUCCESSFUL PLACEMAKING

"It hardly needs saying that the visibility of a modern city suffers from the lack of public occasions to which the people are drawn and for which the halls and streets function as supportive stage"

- Yi Fu Tuan

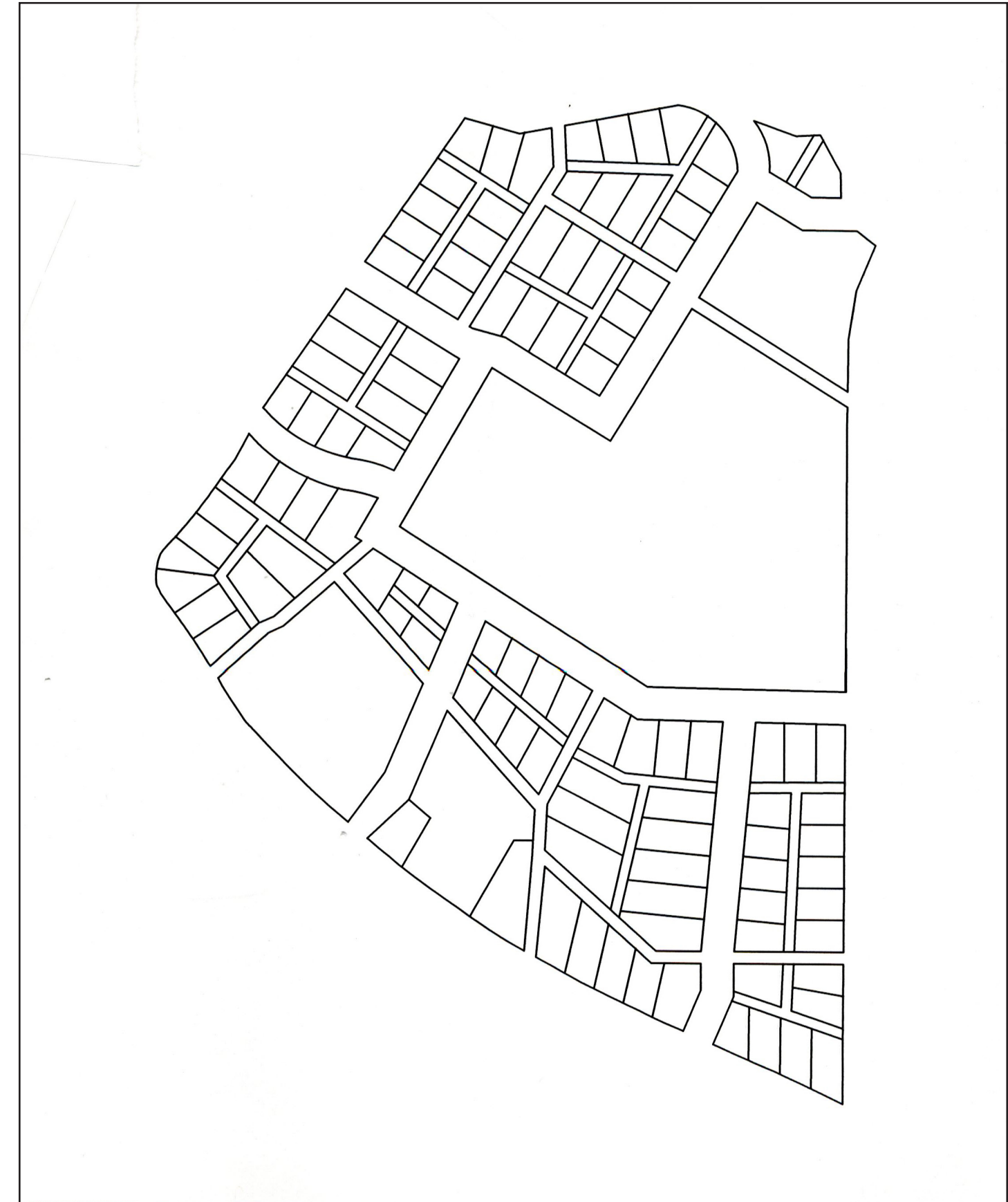


Plaza Plan
Scale : 1/32" = 1'



INCREASING LIKELIHOOD OF INCREMENTAL REDEVELOPMENT : SUBDIVIDING INTO SMALLER PARCELS

TWO LOTS BECOME ONE HUNDRED AND ELEVEN



New Parcels, not to scale.

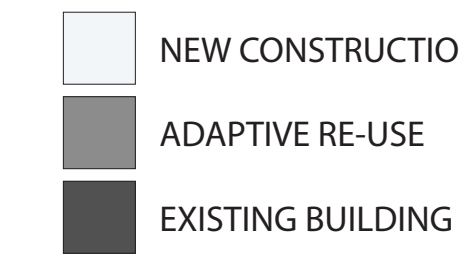
" Small lots will support resilience because they allow many people to attend directly to their needs by designing, building, and maintaining their own environment. By ensuring that property remains in many hands, small lots bring important results : many people make many different decisions, thereby ensuring variety in the resulting environment. And many property owners slow down the rate of change by making large-scale real estate transactions difficult."

- Ann Vernez Moudon, *Built for Change*

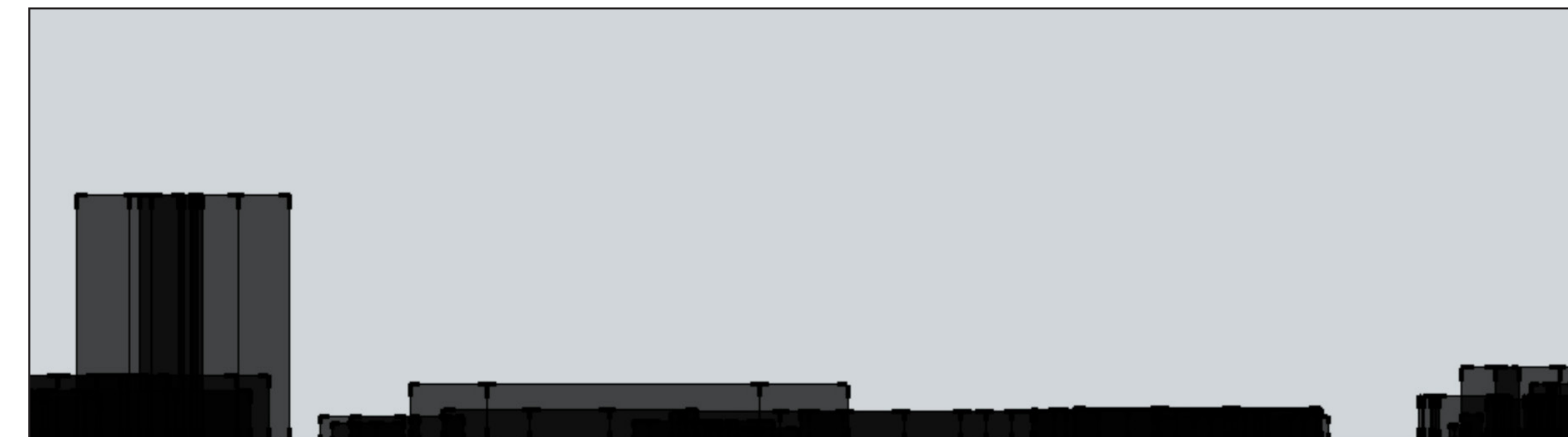
URBAN MORPHOLOGY : ANTICIPATED EVOLUTION OF PLACE OVER 20 YEARS

INCREMENTALISM

Minimalizing demolition, reducing parcel size, and restricting ownership, will facilitate the incremental evolution of this strip mall's parking lot.



Site Plan : EXISTING, not to scale.



Transverse Section : EXISTING, not to scale.



Site Plan : PLUS 10 YEARS, not to scale.



Transverse section : PLUS 10 YEARS, not to scale.



Site Plan : PLUS 20 YEARS, not to scale.



Transverse section : PLUS 20 YEARS, not to scale.

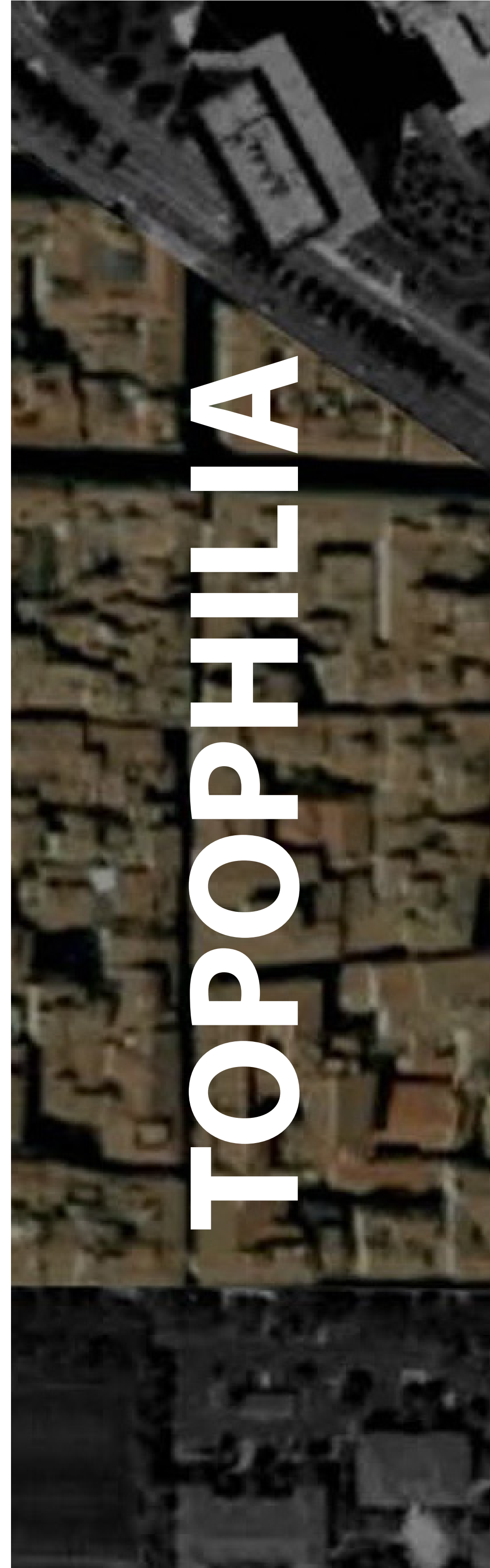


ANTICIPATING ADAPTIVE RE-USE : USING CONSTRUCTION TYPE TO SLOW THE RATE OF CHANGE

EXTERIOR LOAD-BEARING WALLS

In *On Weathering*, David Leatherbarrow compares modern construction techniques with traditional ones. Whereas a modern curtain wall system is separate from a building's structure, and can therefore be easily removed, traditional construction techniques merge skin and structure into one system. An exterior load-bearing wall is likely to change more slowly over time than a curtain wall system, and therefore more likely to show its age and adaptations.

This new construction on the South side of the Plaza uses exterior load-bearing brick walls, in anticipation of future re-use, and in order to encourage a patina on the surfaces framing the public space.



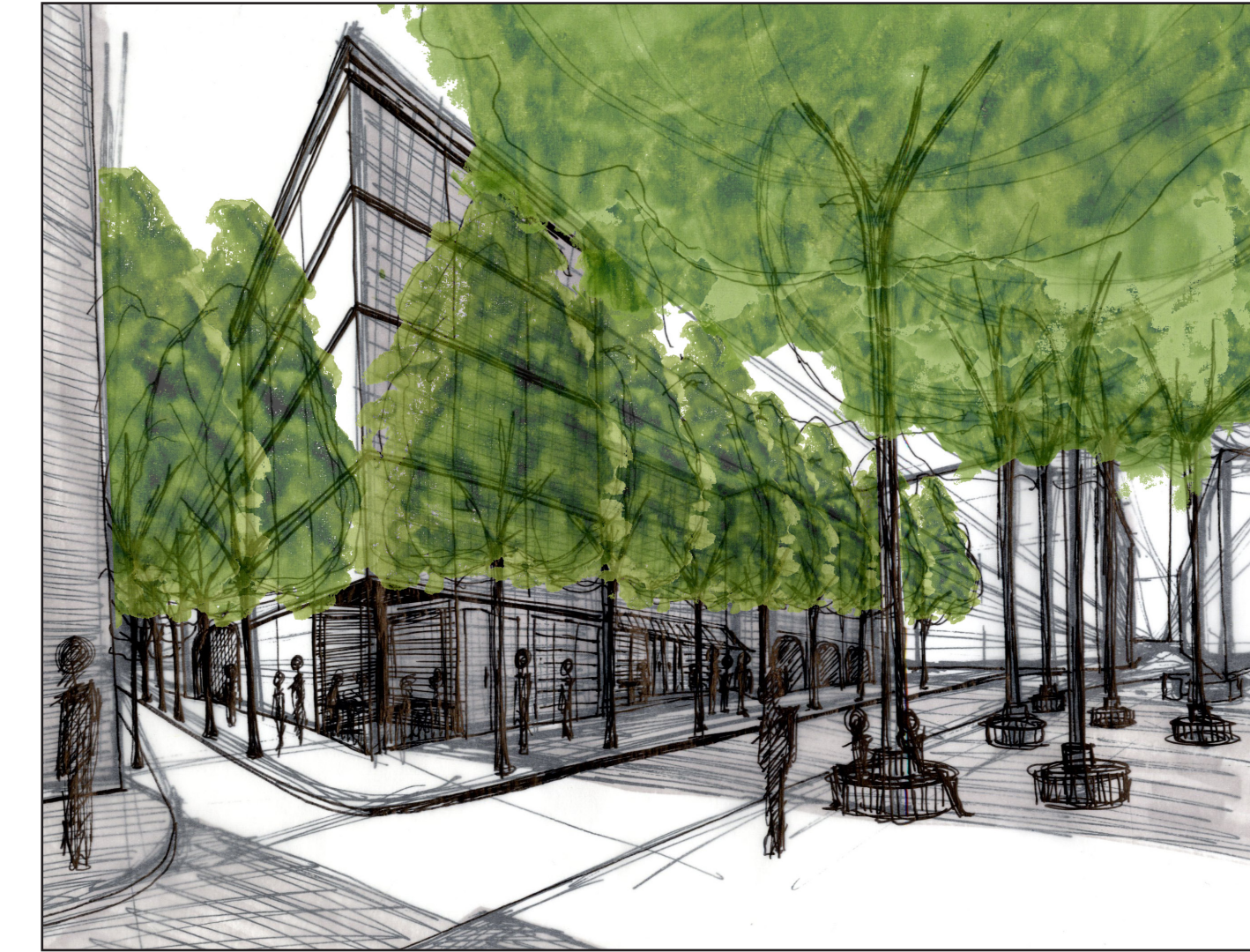
HEIGHTENING SENSORY AWARENESS OF PLACE: TEXTURE, RESPONSIVENESS TO SUN + WIND

TEXTURED GROUND PLANE

Cobblestone paving in the plaza heightens awareness of place by attracting attention to the ground plane.

RESPONSIVENESS TO SUN AND WIND

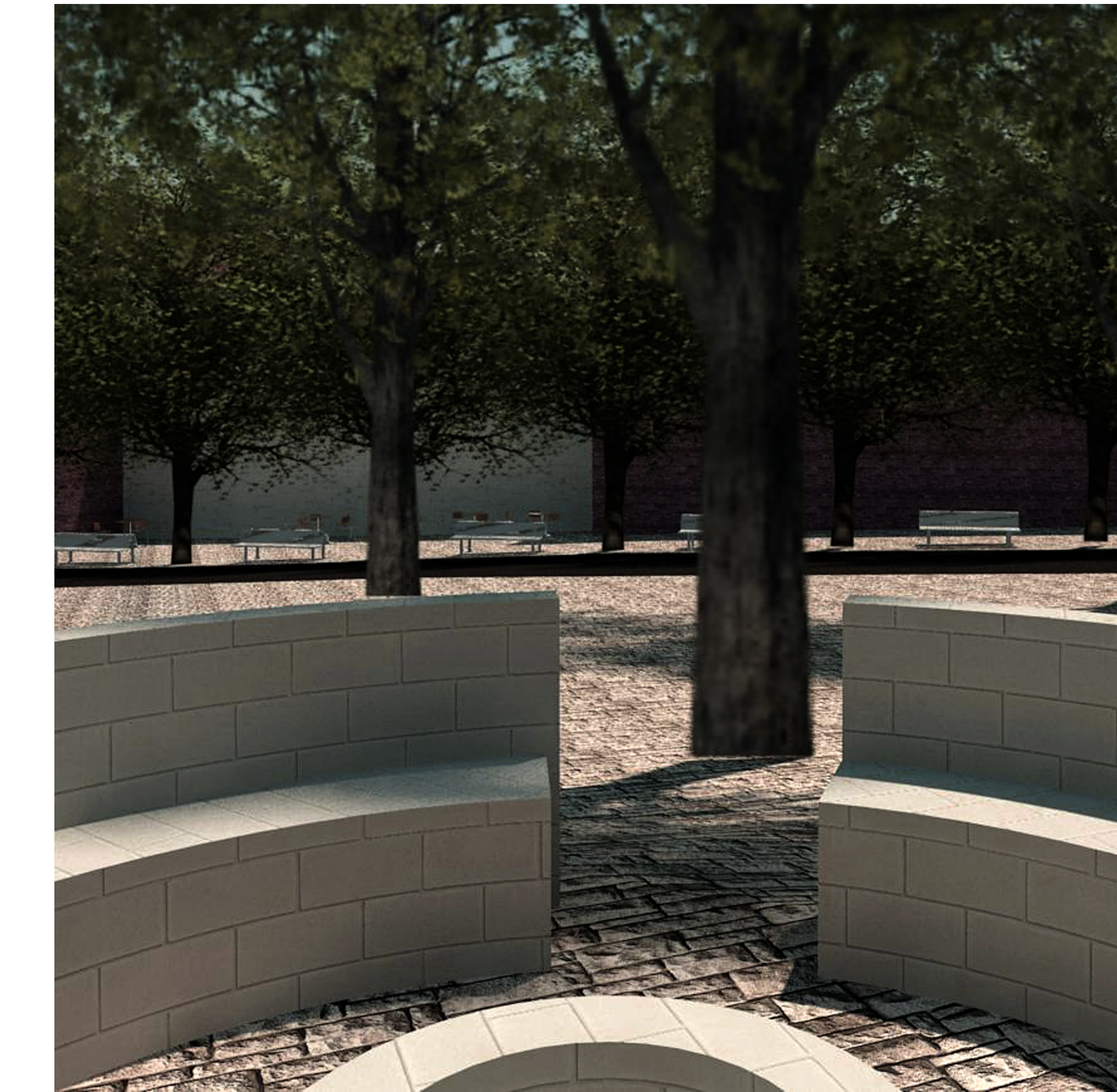
A cluster of Oak trees in the plaza heighten sensory awareness by responding to the sun and the wind.



Cluster of Oak trees in the plaza.



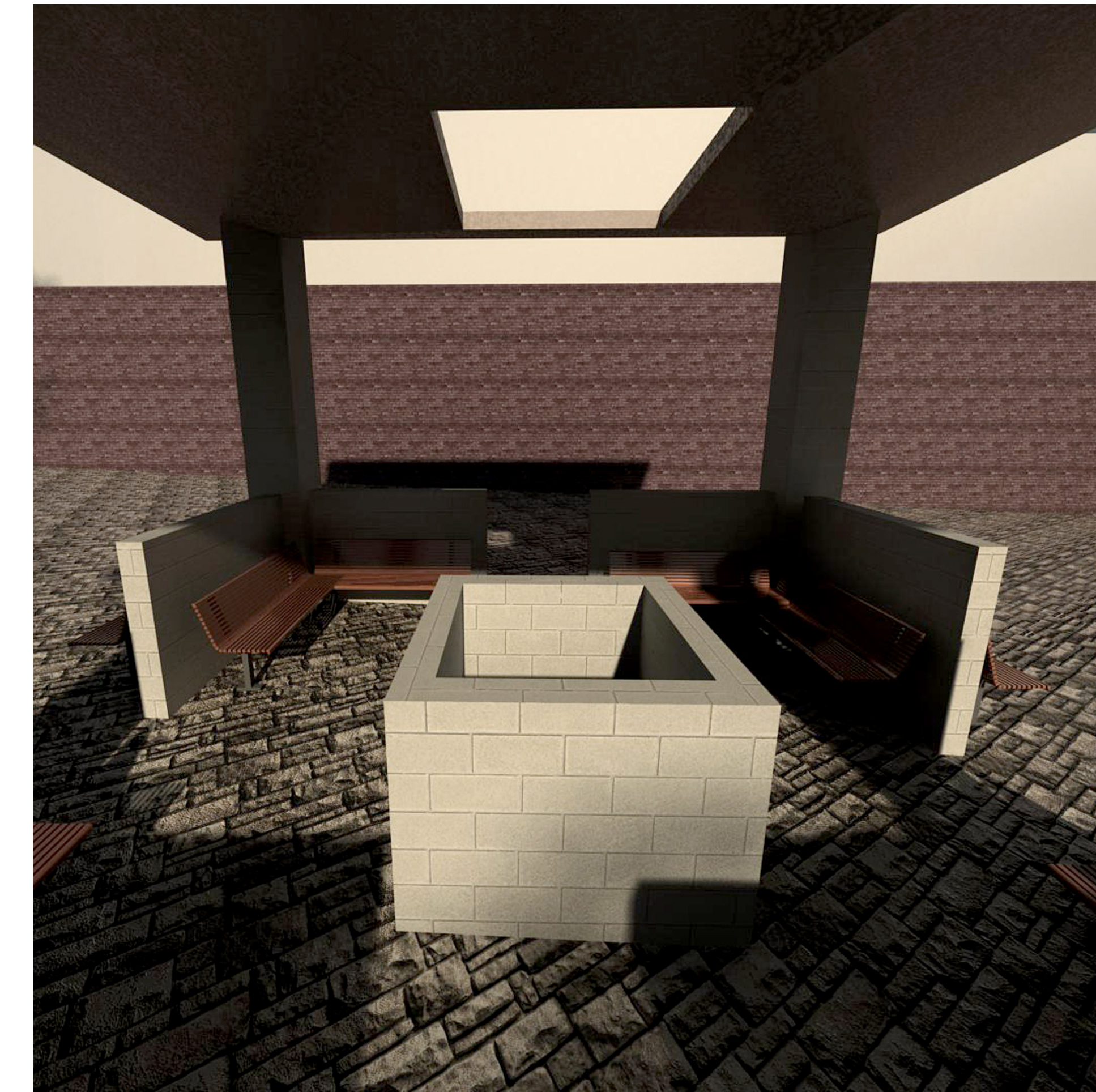
Longitudinal Section of Plaza, facing north.



SENSORY AWARENESS : SEATING BENEATH CLUSTER OF OAK TREES

CURVED STONE BENCHES AROUND A FIRE PIT

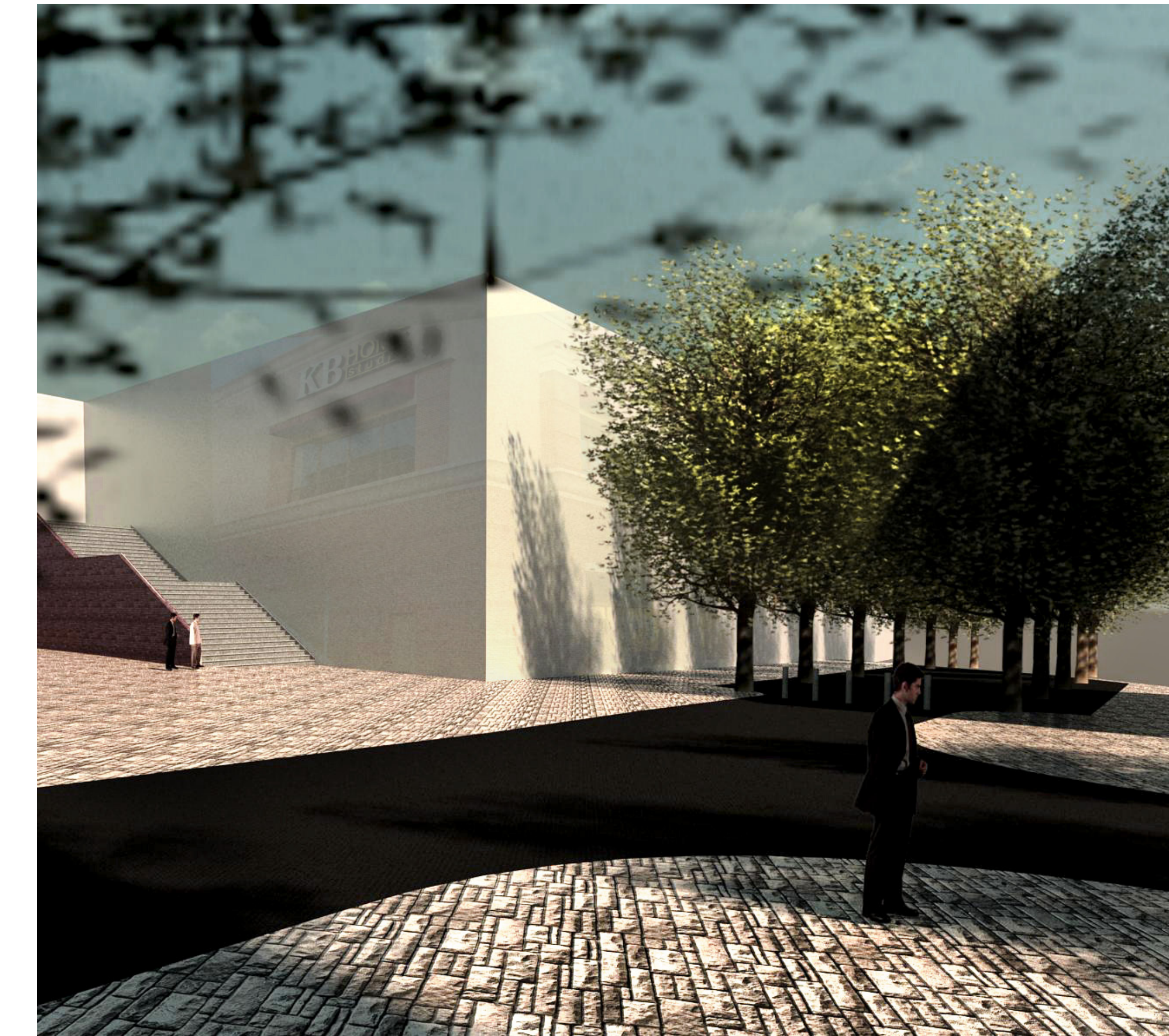
Seating beneath the oak trees provides opportunity to pause and experience the Place.



SENSORY AWARENESS : RAIN PAVILION

RESPONSIVENESS TO WATER

The Rain Pavilion in the plaza heightens both auditory and visual senses. The fountain at the center runs constantly, but the experience changes when it begins to rain. The line of chains running down from the oculus in the roof direct runoff into the fountain.



SENSORY AWARENESS : KINETIC BUILDING SKIN

RESPONSIVENESS TO WIND

A new skin on one of the existing buildings heightens sensory awareness by responding to wind. Inspired by kinetic artists like Tim Prentice, this skin moves with even a slight breeze.