F R O M T I M E

by
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AUTHOR'S DECLERATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I acknowledge I live and work on the traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee peoples. The University is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes 10 kilometres on each side of the Grand River. In addition, I acknowledge that Scarborough, studied in this thesis, is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. I also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

ABSTRACT

This thesis, From Time, explores the intersection of community and the built environment within Scarborough, Ontario, by examining the decommissioned Scarborough Rapid Transit elevated guideway as a site for adaptive reuse. Scarborough, one of six boroughs of Metropolitan Toronto, is shaped by post-WWII suburban sprawl, industrial zoning, and modernist ideals of efficiency. Its immigrant communities have adapted the industrial-residential landscape to meet their communal needs, both formally through the reuse of industrial buildings and informally through the occupation of the terrain vague.

Through personal reflections, historical research, and site analysis, this thesis investigates Scarborough's social and communal dynamics. It explores how the remnants of the Scarborough RT infrastructure can reimagine public space, fostering a sense of communal identity. The design proposes the guideway's reuse as a linear park with architectural infill, seeking to honour Scarborough's history while providing a space that reflects its diverse cultural spirit.

This thesis contributes to ongoing discussions on community-centric design, offering a locally rooted, culturally responsive approach to redevelopment. The project emphasizes the need for spaces that support local social life, preserving the ingenuity and optimism that define the community of Scarborough.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my hometown. A place that nurtured me and where inspiration still finds me.
Scarborough, from time.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Author's Declaration
Land Acknowledgement
Abstract
Acknowledgements
Dedication
List of Figures

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Chapter 2 – Meditation
Vague Programming and Quirky Spaces

Chapter 3 – Research
A Brief History of Scarborough

Chapter 4 – Meditation
Familiarity Found in Informality

Chapter 5 – Research
The Scarborough Rapid Transit and the Scarborough Centre Area

Chapter 6 – Meditation
Hopeful Thinking

Chapter 7 – Research
Case Studies

Chapter 8 – Design Implementation
Summary
RT Guideway Analysis
RT Guideway Reuse Strategy
Zone 3 Site Analysis
Architectural Infill Proposal
Conclusion

Chapter 9 – Meditation
A Rave in the East End

Chapter 10 – Conclusion

Bibliography
Appendices

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1.1
Underneath the RT Guideway. Page 17.
Image by author.

Figure 2.1.2
Underneath the RT Guideway, pixelated. Page 17-18.
Image by author.

Figure 3.1.1
Scarborough—relative to Toronto, Canada, and the world. Page 21.
Image by author.

Figure 3.1.2
Drawing of Scarborough Bluffs. Page 22.
Image by David I. Adolphus.
Edited by Author.
Reprinted from A History of Scarborough edited by Robert B. Bonis, Wm. Cornell's Schooner off Scarborough Bluffs, page VI.

Figure 3.1.3
Map of the township of Scarborough. Page 23.
Image by C.J. Wheelock.
Edited by Author.
Map of the Township of Scarborough by C.J. Wheelock
City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 79, Series 443, File 55.

Figure 3.1.4
Scarborough community plan. Page 23.
Edited by Author.
Reprinted from A History of Scarborough edited by Robert B. Bonis, Scarborough Township Community Plan, 1963, page 248.

Figure 3.1.5
Map of the Metropolitan Toronto. Page 23.
Edited by Author.
Reprinted from A History of Scarborough edited by Robert B. Bonis, Ward Map of Scarborough, 1967 and Map of Metropolitan Toronto, 1967, page 314.

Figure 3.1.6
Nolli map of the Scarborough Centre area. Page 24.
Image by Author.

Figure 3.1.7
Zoning map of the Scarborough Centre area. Page 24.
Image by Author.

Figure 3.1.8
View of downtown Toronto from Scarborough South. Page 25-26.
Image by author

Figure 4.1.1
RT Infrastructure construction, photo two. Page 28.
Edited by author.
Underside of Track Slab Between WP 3 and WP 4
City of Toronto Archives, Neg. No. 830429, 830483B-1.

Figure 4.1.2
Daytime under the RT Guideway, photo one. Page 29-30.
Image by author.

Figure 4.1.3
Daytime under the RT Guideway, photo two. Page 31-32.
Image by author.

Figure 4.1.4
Daytime under the RT Guideway, photo three. Page 33-34.
Image by author.

Figure 4.1.5
Daytime under the RT Guideway, photo four. Page 34.
Image by author.

Figure 4.1.6
Daytime under the RT Guideway, photo five. Page 35-36.
Image by author.

Figure 4.1.7
Daytime under the RT Guideway, photo six. Page 36.
Image by author.

Figure 4.1.8
Daytime under the RT Guideway photo seven. Page 37-38.
Image by author.

Figure 4.1.9
Demographic mapping of the Scarborough Centre area. Page 37.
Image by author.

Figure 5.1.1
RT Infrastructure construction, photo three. Page 40.
Edited by author.
View Looking East from Pier WP 48
City of Toronto Archives, Neg. No. 830429, 830483A-5.

Figure 5.1.2
The Scarborough RT. Page 41.
Image by author.

Figure 5.1.3
On board the Scarborough RT. Page 42.
Image by author.

Figure 5.1.4
Derailment of the Scarborough RT. Page 43.
Image by Nick Westoll, City News.
Edited by author.
"Loose Bolts Blamed for Scarborough RT Derailment That Led to Early Closure, TTC," Toronto CityNews, September 26, 2023, accessed February 23, 2025, https://toronto.citynews.ca/2023/09/26/loose-bolts-blamed-for-scarborough-rt-derailment-that-led-to-early-closure-ttc/.

Figure 5.1.5
A goodbye note for the Scarborough RT. Page 43.
City News.
Edited by author.
"Goodbye Party Being Held for Scarborough RT on Saturday," Toronto CityNews, September 23, 2023, accessed February 23, 2025, https://toronto.citynews.ca/2023/09/23/goodbye-party-being-held-for-scarborough-rt-on-saturday/.

Figure 5.1.6
Lifting the Scarborough RT. Page 44.
City News.
Edited by author.
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Figure 5.1.7
OurSC Diagram, one. Page 46.
Image by author.

Figure 5.1.8
OurSC Diagram, two. Page 48.
Image by author.

Figure 5.1.9
Photo out of RT window, one. Page 49-50.
Image by author.

Figure 5.1.10
Photo out of RT window, two. Page 51-52.
Image by author.

Figure 5.1.11
RT Infrastructure construction, photo four. Page 53.
Edited by author.
Detail of Wet Joint Steel Reinforcing
City of Toronto Archives, Neg. No. 830429, 830483C-4.

Figure 5.1.12
RT Infrastructure construction, photo two. Page 54.
Edited by author.
Underside of Track Slab Between WP 3 and WP 4
City of Toronto Archives, Neg. No. 830429, 830483B-1.

Figure 5.1.13
RT Infrastructure construction, photo three. Page 54.
Edited by author.
View Looking East from Pier WP 48
City of Toronto Archives, Neg. No. 830429, 830483A-5.

Figure 6.1.1
RT Infrastructure construction, photo one. Page 56.
Edited by author.
Detail of Vertical Reinforcing Installation
City of Toronto Archives, Neg. No. 830429, 83048A-4.

Figure 6.1.2
RT Infrastructure construction, photo two. Page 57-58.
Edited by author.
Underside of Track Slab Between WP 3 and WP 4
City of Toronto Archives, Neg. No. 830429, 830483B-1.

Figure 6.1.3
RT Infrastructure construction, photo three. Page 59-60.
Edited by author.
View Looking East from Pier WP 48
City of Toronto Archives, Neg. No. 830429, 830483A-5.

Figure 6.1.4
RT Infrastructure construction, photo four. Page 61-62.
Edited by author.
Detail of Wet Joint Steel Reinforcing
City of Toronto Archives, Neg. No. 830429, 830483C-4.

Figure 7.1.1
New York case study, photo one. Page 67-68.
Edited by author.
DSRNY, "The High Line," DSRNY, accessed February 23, 2025, https://dsrny.com/project/the-high-line.

Figure 7.1.2
New York case study, photo two. Page 67-68.
Edited by author.
DSRNY, "The High Line," DSRNY, accessed February 23, 2025, https://dsrny.com/project/the-high-line.

Figure 7.1.3
Yokohama case study, photo one. Page 69-70.
Edited by author.
Weburbanist, "In Japan, a Vibrant Community Springs to Life Beneath a Disused Overpass," Weburbanist, May 21, 2018, https://weburbanist.com/2018/05/21/in-japan-a-vibrant-community-springs-to-life-beneath-a-disused-overpass/.

Figure 7.1.4
Yokohamacase study, photo two. Page 69-70.
Edited by author.
Weburbanist, "In Japan, a Vibrant Community Springs to Life Beneath a Disused Overpass," Weburbanist, May 21, 2018, https://weburbanist.com/2018/05/21/in-japan-a-vibrant-community-springs-to-life-beneath-a-disused-overpass/.

Figure 7.1.5
Tokyo case study, photo one. Page 71-72.
Edited by author.
Takahiro Akiyama, "Machiya," Takahiro Akiyama, accessed February 23, 2025, https://takahiroakiyama.com/works/machiya/.

Figure 7.1.6
Tokyo case study, photo two. Page 71-72.
Edited by author.
Takahiro Akiyama, "Machiya," Takahiro Akiyama, accessed February 23, 2025, https://takahiroakiyama.com/works/machiya/.

Figure 7.1.7
Toronto case study, photo one. Page 73-74.
Edited by author.
ArchDaily, "The Bentway Public Work Photo," ArchDaily, accessed February 23, 2025, https://www.archdaily.com/912942/the-bentway-public-work/5c85d263284dd1d62c000264-the-bentway-public-work-photo.

Figure 7.1.8
Toronto case study, photo two. Page 73-74.
Edited by author.
ArchDaily, "The Bentway Public Work Photo," ArchDaily, accessed February 23, 2025, https://www.archdaily.com/912942/the-bentway-public-work/5c85d263284dd1d62c000264-the-bentway-public-work-photo.

Figure 8.1.1
The Scarborough RT in relation to the TTC subway. Page 79.
Image by author.

Figure 8.1.2
Zoning map of the Scarborough Centre area. Page 80.
Image by author.

Figure 8.1.3
The Scarborough RT in relation to parks and trails. Page 80.
Image by author.

Figure 8.1.4
Daytime under the RT Guideway, photo one. Page 81.
Image by author.

Figure 8.1.5
Analysis of the Scarborough RT guideway. Page 82.
Image by author.

Figure 8.1.6
Aerial plan of the Scarborough RT guideway. Page 83-84.
Image by author.

Figure 8.1.7
The Scarborough RT guideway component diagram. Page 85.
Image by author.
Edited by author.
Girder Erection
City of Toronto Archives, Neg. No. 830512, 830547-20A.

Figure 8.1.8
The Scarborough RT guideway reuse diagram. Page 86.
Image by author.

Figure 8.1.9
Elevated guideway master plan. Page 87-88.
Image by author.

Figure 8.1.10
Elevated guideway module diagram. Page 89-90.
Image by author.

Figure 8.1.11
Zone 3 aerial diagram. Page 91-92.
Image by author.

Figure 8.1.12
Site photo, one. Page 91.
Image by author.

Figure 8.1.13
Site photo, two. Page 91.
Image by author.

Figure 8.1.14
Site photo, three. Page 92.
Image by author.

Figure 8.1.15
Site photo, four. Page 92.
Image by author.

Figure 8.1.16
Zone 3 aerial plan. Page 91-92.
Image by author.

Figure 8.1.17
Zone 3 analytical drawing. Page 93-94
Image by author.

Figure 8.1.18
Superimposed massing, program, and circulation diagram. Page 96.
Image by author.

Figure 8.1.19
Transverse Section AA. Page 95-96.
Image by author.

Figure 8.1.20
Ground plan. Page 97-98.
Image by author.

Figure 8.1.21
+2 plan. Page 97-98.
Image by author.

Figure 8.1.22
Elevation along Brimley Road. Page 99-100.
Image by author.

Figure 8.1.23
Cross-section BB, Entrance. Page 101-102.
Image by author.

Figure 8.1.24
Cross-section CC, Lounge. Page 103-104.
Image by author.

Figure 8.1.25
Cross-section DD, Patio. Page 105-106.
Image by author.

Figure 8.1.26
Cross-section EE, Exhibition space. Page 107-108.
Image by author.

Figure 9.1.1
Party photo, one. Page 112.
Image by author.

Figure 9.1.2
Party photo, two. Page 113-114.
Image by author.

Figure 9.1.3
Party photo, three. Page 114
Image by author.

Figure 9.1.4
Party photo, four. Page 115-116.
Image by author.

Figure 9.1.5
Party photo, five. Page 115.
Image by author.

Figure 9.1.6
Party photo, six. Page 115.
Image by author.

Figure 9.1.7
Party photo, seven. Page 116.
Image by author.

Figure 9.1.8
Party photo, eight. Page 116.
Image by author.



INTRODUCTION

ONE

This thesis, From Time, explores the intersection of community and the built environment within Scarborough, Ontario, by examining the decommissioned Scarborough Rapid Transit elevated guideway as a site for adaptive reuse. Through personal reflections, research, and site analysis, this thesis investigates Scarborough's social and communal dynamics. It explores how the decommissioned Scarborough RT infrastructure can reimagine public space and foster communal identity.

Theme

Scarborough, one of six boroughs of Metropolitan Toronto, is shaped by post-WWII suburban sprawl, industrial zoning, and modernist ideals of efficiency. Its immigrant communities have adapted the industrial-residential landscape to meet their communal needs, both formally through the reuse of industrial buildings and informally through the occupation of the terrain vague. This thesis investigates Scarborough's social and communal dynamics from a personal lens, supported by research and expressed in a design proposal.

Subject

At the nucleus of this investigation is the Scarborough Rapid Transit—a transit line that operated from 1985 to 2023. Over its lifespan, the RT served as a vital, though flawed, transit link for Scarborough residents. As the City of Toronto moves forward with the Bloor-Danforth subway extension to replace the Scarborough Rapid Transit, the elevated guideway stands as a remnant of Scarborough's transit history.

Methodology

The methodology for this thesis is personal reflection, literary review, site analysis, and design. Personal reflections—presented as meditations—document the lived experience of Scarborough's suburban spaces, drawing connections between social dynamics, culture, and the built environment. The literary review situates the meditations in a broader discussion of Scarborough's conception, previous development, and proposed evolution. It includes articles, books, federal treaty reports, as well as municipal planning and assessment reports. Site analysis examines the spatial and structural conditions of the decommissioned RT elevated guideway—indicating the potential for its transformation. These three initial frameworks converge in a speculative design proposal that formalizes Scarborough's communal spirit in built form.

Objective

The objective of this thesis is to explore how design can reinforce Scarborough's communal identity by reimagining the RT corridor as a revitalized public space. By drawing on lived experience, historical analysis, and case studies, this project seeks to articulate a vision for Scarborough that favours a locally rooted, culturally responsive approach to redevelopment. The design proposal not only aims to honour the cultural vibrancy of Scarborough's diverse communities but also seeks to empower this community in shaping its urban environment. Through adaptive reuse, the RT guideway can become a symbol of both historical continuity and future resilience.

Significance

This work holds significance in the context of the Scarborough Centre area's ongoing transformation. As the neighbourhood densifies while the RT infrastructure faces demolition, questions of communal identity and history become increasingly relevant. The proposed adaptive reuse of the RT guideway highlights the potential for creating public spaces that support local social life while reflecting the borough's heritage. This thesis contributes to discussions on community-centric design.

Structure

Structurally, this thesis oscillates between informal meditations and research writing—supported by photographic documentation, diagrams, and drawings. Chapters dedicated to meditations capture the lived experience of Scarborough's social and communal dynamics, while research-based chapters establish Scarborough's historical and urban context. The oscillation between these two-chapter structures is disrupted by a design chapter containing a speculative proposal for the elevated guideway's reuse.

This thesis advocates for a design approach that is founded within Scarborough's existing social fabric, recognizing the informal ways in which people have adapted to the borough's rigid landscape with ingenuity and optimism. Through a combination of reflective writing, research, and design, this work proposes the reuse of the RT guideway as a linear park with architectural infill. This thesis acknowledges and formalizes Scarborough's communal identity and, in doing so offers an approach for Scarborough's future that embraces its history and cultural vibrance.



VAGUE PROGRAMMING AND QUIRKY SPACES

TWO

On a winter night in Scarborough, I get into a car with three friends and drive a few minutes down Brimley Road to a desolate parking lot abandoned by all activity apart from our own. The parking lot we pull into belongs to a private industrial business, so we park in the back, out of sight from the main road. When we get out, we carry a lantern and a speaker playing Space Song by Beach House—which sets a melancholic tone, matching the exhaustion we feel. My jacket is zipped to my chin, and I stuff my hands into its pockets as we make for shelter beneath the Scarborough Rapid Transit.

The RT underpass consists of brute concrete piers and an elevated guideway, hosting the TTC Line 3 train above the Scarborough Centre area. As I enter its bounds, the informal occupation of the underpass is evident through broken fencing, graffiti, an abandoned bonfire, and materials from nearby warehouses. I make my way towards a pier to place my speaker onto and recall previous nights in which I would sit on a curb or lean on cars outside Chinese take-out restaurants and bubble tea stores. As we make ourselves comfortable on a concrete slab just above my waist height, I think to myself that those memories feel very similar to this moment.

The suburban spaces we socialize in host cherished memories—deep conversations, laughs, and the sharing of culture. They unintentionally become an important part of social life in Scarborough as they host interactions between myself and the people in my community.

The most significant factor in the lifestyle of Scarborough is reliance on commuting. For the parents of youth who grew up in this area, like my parents, living in Scarborough often means taking the RT to downtown Toronto for work. Many moved to the city's outskirts, trading inner-city rent and mortgages for lengthy travel in their daily routines. Weekdays often consist of early departures and late arrivals to and from home, and the remaining amount of time in a person's day would be spent replenishing their energy from a tiring commute. The design of this borough follows the function of this lifestyle. As a result, it is rare to find spaces to accommodate leisure in the built environment. Home is the first place, work is the second place, and the third place—social spaces, are rare. For youth whose schedules are relative to the academic calendar, leisure is less of a luxury. Therefore, it is natural for them to find places

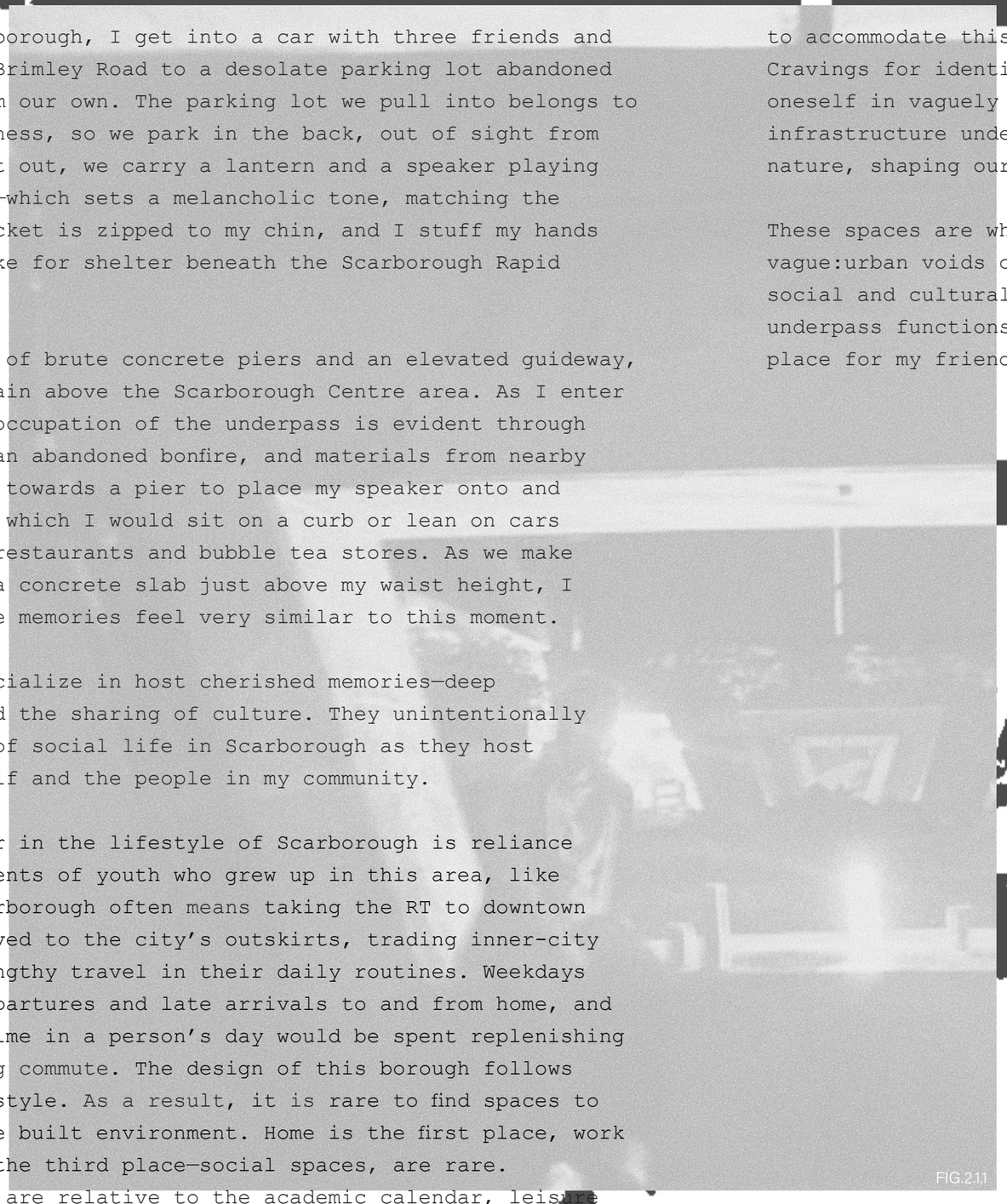


FIG.2.1.1

to accommodate this aspect of life that suburbia does not facilitate. Cravings for identity and communion manifest in the experience of finding oneself in vaguely programmed spaces: parks after dark, parking lots, and infrastructure underpasses. Adapting to ambiguous spaces becomes second nature, shaping our understanding of social life.

These spaces are what Ignasi de Solà-Morales describes as terrain vague:urban voids overlooked by formal planning that become essential to social and cultural life through informal use.[1] At this moment, the RT underpass functions as an example of the terrain vague as it evolves into a place for my friends and me to listen to Beach House.



FIG.2.1.2

1 Ignasi de Solà-Morales, "Terrain Vague."



A BRIEF HISTORY OF SCARBOROUGH

THREE

Scarborough is an industrial and residential borough of Toronto with a history dating back to 1787, independent from the settlement of York. Prior to European settlement, present-day Scarborough was home to Indigenous communities whose land rights were overlooked in early treaties. Settlement by European Loyalists established Scarborough as a township, gradually evolving the area from farmland to a community shaped by immigration and industry. Over time, the introduction of infrastructure cemented Scarborough as a borough of Metropolitan Toronto.

It would be in the Williams Treaty in 1923 that Scarborough was first declared under the property of the Canadian government.[1] Prior to this, Scarborough was excluded from the 1787 Toronto Purchase—in which land was acquired by European settlers in southern Ontario and its revision in 1805.[2] Regardless, the English began to settle in Toronto after the purchase of 1787 and, in 1791, surveyor Augustus Jones laid out a row of eleven townships along the shore of Lake Ontario, including the three westernmost townships, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Dublin.[3] In 1793, to honour the Duke of York, who had recently won a battle over the French, Dublin was renamed York, and the neighbouring township, Glasgow, was named Scarborough after a Yorkshire town with great grey cliffs.[4]

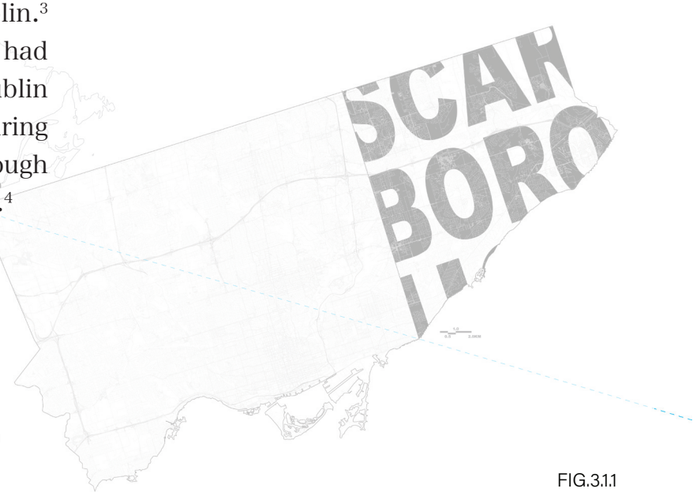


FIG.3.1.1

1 “Scarborough Indigenous First Nations – Heritage Toronto.”

2 “Upper Canada Land Surrenders – Government of Canada.”; “Scarborough Indigenous First Nations.”

3 “Upper Canada Land Surrenders”; “Treaty Research Report, The Williams Treaties – Government of Canada.”

4 Bonis, *A History of Scarborough*.

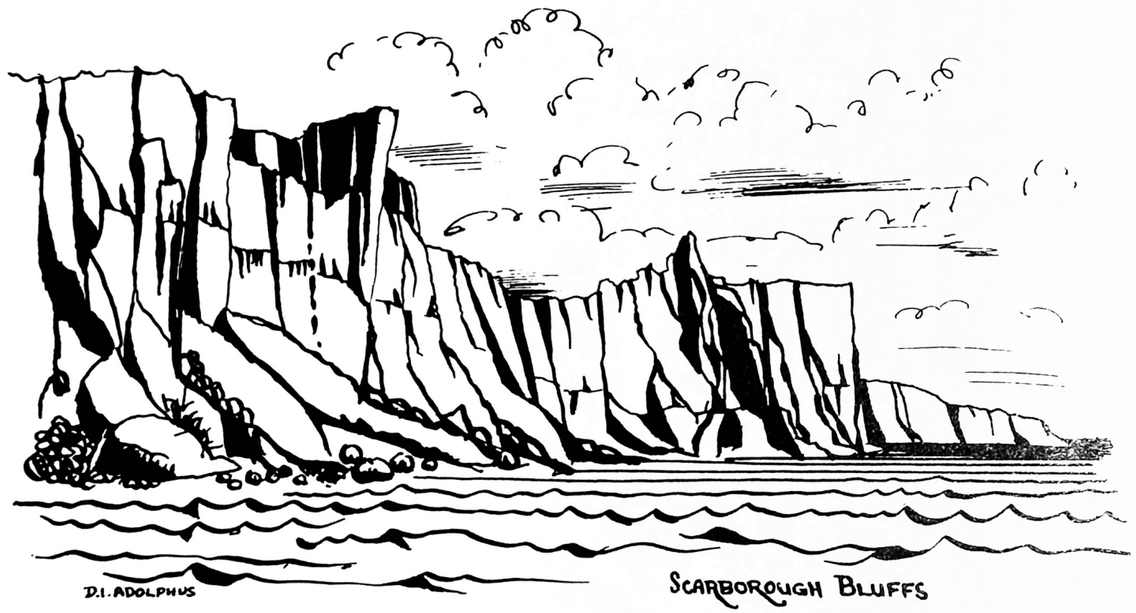


FIG.3.1.2

The township of Scarborough was initially an investment for European Loyalists.[5] At the turn of the nineteenth century, immigration to Scarborough increased as people left the British Isles for America, hoping to settle in a new prosperous land.[6] By 1843, York had a population of over 9,000 people. Meanwhile, the township of Scarborough was primarily occupied as farmland.[7] After the War of 1812, Scarborough’s farms thrived, and the township grew from 2,750 people in 1842 to 3,821 people by 1850.[8] This growth culminated in the incorporation of local self-government in 1850.[9] Following the incorporation of self-government and the introduction of rapid transportation and communication advancements, the township decided to look toward a suburban residential and industrial future.[10] This future was supported by immigration post-

5 Jason Stephenson, “Southwest Agincourt Transportation Connections Study Environmental Assessment.”

6 James Maurice et al., “Toronto – The Canadian Encyclopedia.”

7 Bonis, *A History of Scarborough*.

8 Bonis.

9 “Scarborough Before the Civic Centre – City of Toronto.”

10 Bonis.

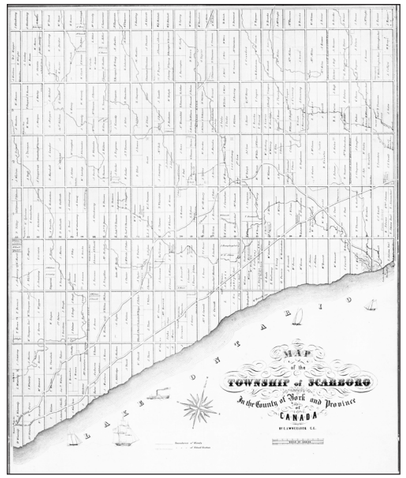


FIG.3.1.3

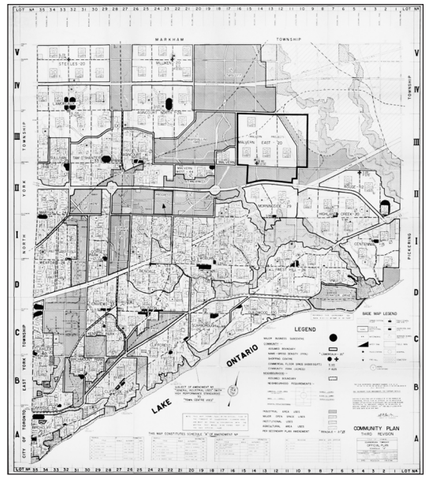
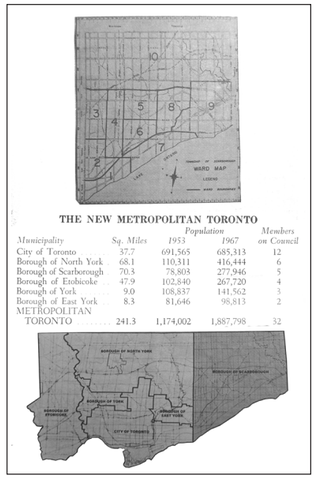


FIG.3.1.4



THE NEW METROPOLITAN TORONTO

Municipality	Sq. Miles	Population 1953	Population 1967	Members on Council
City of Toronto	37.7	691,565	685,313	12
Borough of North York	68.1	110,311	416,444	6
Borough of Scarborough	70.3	78,803	277,946	5
Borough of Etobicoke	47.9	102,840	267,720	4
Borough of York	9.0	108,837	141,562	3
Borough of East York	8.3	81,646	98,813	2
METROPOLITAN TORONTO	241.3	1,174,002	1,887,798	32

FIG.3.1.5



FIG.3.1.6

Nolli map of the Scarborough Centre area. This map highlights the location of industrial and residential buildings in the Scarborough Centre area.



FIG.3.1.7

Zoning map of the Scarborough Centre area. This map highlights the zoning assigned to the Scarborough Centre area by the City of Toronto.

WWII as men, often newlyweds, returned to or migrated to Canada.[11] The rural farmland turned into subdivided lots filled with rows of houses, apartment buildings, and factories.[12] In 1945, Scarborough became a residential and industrial suburb with roughly 25,000 residents.[13] Shortly thereafter, the municipality began to construct an extensive network of new metropolitan infrastructure with concrete to support the city's expansion, inclusive of highways, water supply and sewage treatment systems, as well as the channelization of water courses.[14] Scarborough received an official Land Use Plan to guide growth in 1957, restating its identity in industry and suburban living.[15] This culminated in the incorporation of Scarborough as one of six boroughs in the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto on January 1st, 1967.[16] One piece of infrastructure included was the Toronto Transit Commission Bloor-Danforth Subway extension into Scarborough— the foundation on which the Scarborough RT would be constructed.[17]

11 "The Arrival of Displaced Persons in Canada, 1945-1951 National Historic Event – Parks Canada Agency."
12 Spremo, "City and Suburbs – Toronto Star."
13 Bonis.
14 Van Nostrand, *Concrete Toronto - Metro Concrete*.
15 Bonis.
16 "Resources on Former Municipalities – City of Toronto."
17 Bonis.

The industrial-residential zoning of Scarborough, known today, was established post-WWII through the transformation of land originally taken under ownership by the English. Present-day Scarborough was originally Indigenous land, which was largely omitted from early land treaties, that expanded from a settlement into an agricultural township before its fast-paced expansion into a sprawling suburb. Infrastructure became essential to Scarborough's suburban expansion, shaping its transformation into a commuter-driven industrial-residential borough within Metropolitan Toronto.



FIG.3.1.8

FAMILIARITY FOUND IN INFORMALITY



FIG.4.1.1

FOUR

Some time has passed since I last went underneath the RT elevated guideway. Today is my day off. I get into my car and drive to Silver Spoon to pick up fried fish. I am meeting people at the Port Union waterfront shortly, and we decided to eat together there. Beyond that, my day consists of a photoshoot for a local business and a rave in the west end of Toronto.

I drive towards Silver Spoon, observing the scene around me as I do. A temple and a church occupy old warehouse buildings. Vibrant red and white paint cover the brown brick pillars of the Hindu Temple, drawing my attention. A store sign decorated with a white dove sits on the street face of the church. Voices flood from nearby basketball courts and baseball diamonds—repurposed as cricket pitches. Cars honk in a restaurant parking lot as people maneuver narrow gaps in front of Babu, where the aromas of masala saturate the air. Many restaurants in Scarborough can easily be overlooked while driving by because of the spaces they occupy. It is typical for a local joint to be in an unassuming structure while having a stellar reputation.

I park my car and join the line at Silver Spoon. The takeout restaurant is bustling with people chatting to workers about biryani, fried fish, and mutton curry displayed in a row while making their way to the cash register. They walk forward in line as a worker assigned to them grabs the dishes they ask for. By the time they arrive at the cash register, a bag with the food they have selected is ready. When approached by staff, I let them know that I unfortunately only speak English, while doing my best to point towards the fried fish I crave. As I make my way to cash, I note that this interaction's qualities: fast conversation, continual movement forward, and slight chaos, are orchestrated by the South Asian culture of Silver Spoon and the available space within the warehouse building. As I get into my car while noticing other businesses nearby, I realize that Scarborough's identity is found in the relationship between its culturally diverse community and the spaces that they occupy.

I arrive at the Port Union waterfront and carry my fried fish and *doubles* that a friend brought from Mona's Roti to the shore. *Doubles*, an Indo-Trinidadian dish, consists of a warm roti stuffed

FIG.4.1.2

with chickpea curry and chutney - spicy, savoury and best eaten with your hands. It’s one of Scarborough’s go-to street foods. As we eat, the conversation drifts to other restaurants we had not visited in a while. Ghadir and Sumaq, both known for their incredible shawarma, come up, along with Koh Lipe, a brilliant Thai restaurant, and Northern Smokes, a top-notch barbecue spot. Of course, we couldn’t forget the Caribbean staples, Roti Hut and Chris Jerk. Scarborough’s cuisine is among the best in the city, and at its core are the waves of immigration from East Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, and the Caribbean.

Growing up in Scarborough exposed me to different cultures as expressed in the conversation I am having now. I often share meals of different cuisines with friends, much like I do today, and through conversation, learn about their interests—which often reference their heritage. The possibility for these interactions to sprout stems from a mix of factors. Still, at a high level—it is because of the choices of people to move to Scarborough and the borough’s transformation from a colonial settlement to an industrial-residential suburb. Scarborough has a strong South Asian presence, and though I can only speculate, my parents must feel a sense of comfort in it. There is Sri-Lankan food nearby, Sinhalese Church services, and immigrants who share a similar life story. Once here, communities found ways to accommodate their cultures by adapting into available space—such as industrial buildings. As a result, today I find myself sitting on a rock at Lake Ontario’s waterfront, eating takeout roti and fried fish. A very standard summer afternoon activity in the Ends.

After lunch, I pull up in front of a single-detached house where my cousin is sorting through bins and bags of clothes. He is wearing a reverse-weave Champion hoodie, Veilance pants, and Adidas slides. The garage door is open and a tarp extending onto the parking lot provides real estate for a new shipment of items from Japan. He runs a curated vintage company with a friend, and today I am helping shoot some of the new pieces that the business will be selling. I dap him up, pull out my Fuji XT-100 and set up the camera’s settings as he cues *Peroxide* by Ecco2k.

Throughout our childhood, we developed an interest in fashion together. I have memories from elementary school when it meant something to wear Jordans and a fitted hat, and from high school when we camped outside stores for NMDs and Yeezys in negative-degree weather. We develop interests in music and sports exposed to us in Scarborough, and perhaps subconsciously, we identify with their familiarity and express these subcultures through what we wear. As we grow older, the styles that influence us fuse together. Somewhere among our influences today are remnants of early memories from our upbringing in the east end.

My sister meets us and models for the afternoon. I shoot her on my Fuji as my cousin curates outfits. A few hours later, we stash away his clothes while hanging onto some Issey Miyake and Undercover pieces—he and I are attending a rave in the west end and we need outfits for it.

FIG.4.1.3

About an hour later, with bags stashed with soju and Red Bull, we make our way to the Scarborough RT. The journey, inclusive of both the RT and the Bloor-Danforth line, is about an hour and a half long in which we traverse most of Toronto. While on the RT, sparse lighting flashes by as its wheels screech along its tracks. Looking out the window, I see the city centre, then industrial roofs, and residential backyards rendered in the dim light—the journey of the RT capturing the DNA of the East End in a quick snapshot. Once at Kennedy, we make our way off the RT, meet friends waiting for us at the station and head down below grade to the Bloor-Danforth platform. The journey on this subway is long, so we mute the noise of the train with music in our headphones, cueing tracks we send to each other over text.

Getting off sometime later, we find ourselves emerging above grade and arriving at another quaint suburb. The area could be mistaken for Scarborough—it is York. I walk next to a creek enclosed by concrete flood walls, past backyard fences, and arrive at an alleyway guiding us into a residential neighbourhood. Perhaps mixed-use neighbourhood would be a better description, but it has the regular suspects of a residential suburb: single detached housing, neighbourhood parks, an elementary school, crescents, and streets. What differs is the industrial warehouses across the street from homes. One of these warehouses, 131, is tonight's venue.

Before heading in, we had found a sloped hill in a neighbourhood park nearby to sip on our soju and Red Bull. Sitting with friends in a neighbourhood park is so familiar to us, regardless of which neighbourhood. This is a suburban custom where we have learned to make use of the spaces in our communities. It is interesting to me how similar the built landscape is to that of Scarborough and how we can find familiar comfort in it. We chat, sip our drinks, and relax under the cover of a tree as we wait for the warehouse to open.

Once the drinks are finished, we head over to the back of 131, where fencing has been placed between the outdoor gathering space and the doorway to usher a formal entrance line. Music leaks from the door and strobe lights contrast the darkness of the night as we wait in cue. As we enter after a pat down from security, bass, synths and hi-hats flood my ears. The speakers, a Funktion-One loudspeaker system, reverberate off the cement masonry unit walls. I put in earplugs to protect my hearing. The warehouse surprisingly keeps the neighbourhood peaceful—it is loud inside the venue to the point of feeling



FIG.4.1.5

FIG.4.1.4

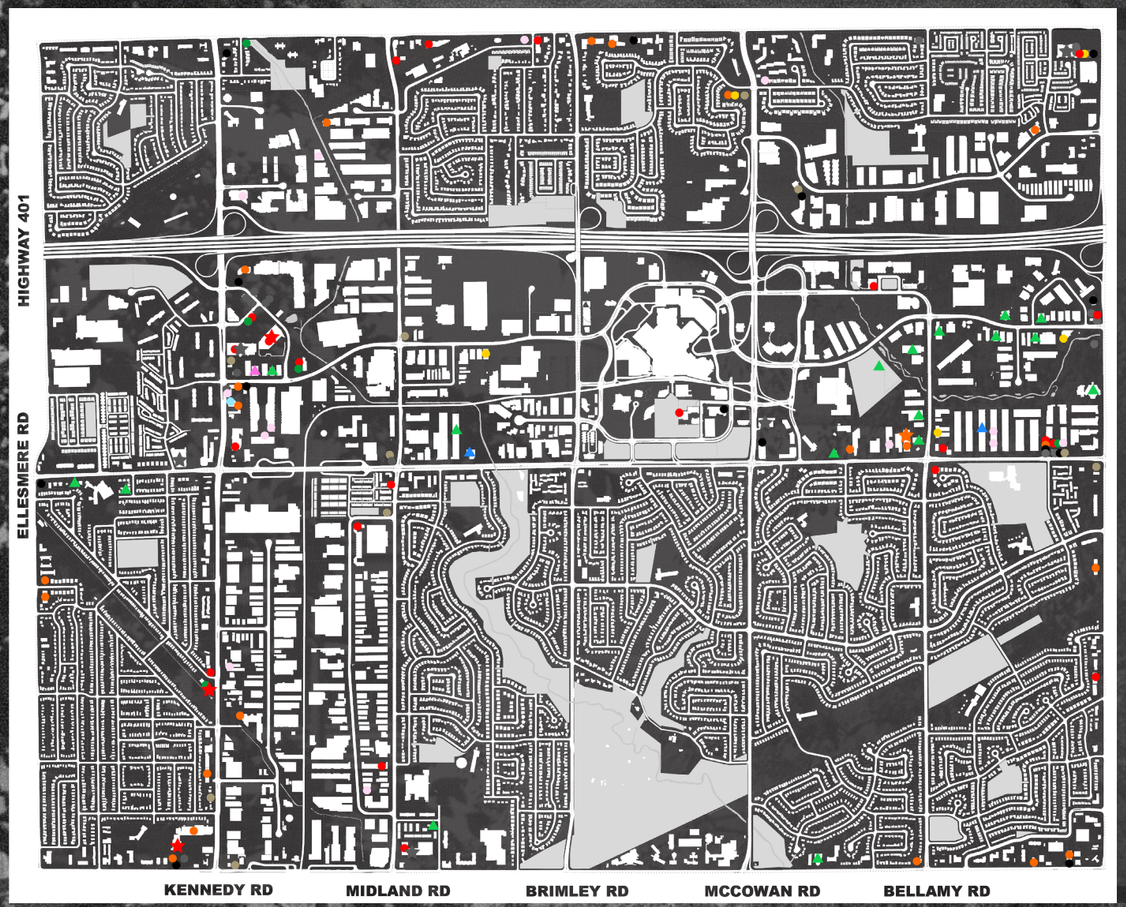
the music in my chest, but it is quiet outside. Crowds of people move freely under the strobing lights and waves of atmosphere from a smoke machine. The warehouse’s large spans provided a freeing dance floor. The energy of this venue is inspiring in its ability to adapt a basic space to accommodate an encapsulating environment. It is not dressed up like a standard club in Toronto, it is better - genuine to its core. I sense the passion of the rave’s hosts through the stripped-back DIY design that results in a sincere and inspiring intervention.

People use this space for fashion shows, exhibitions, and, tonight, a techno rave. VTSS, a Berlin-based DJ, is headlining, and we are excited to finally see them - it is interesting to think that an in-demand artist from outside the country came to Toronto and made way into the suburbs. I wonder what her opinion of the space is.

My friends and I express the importance of the venue on our way home, as we talk about how it is a catalyst for creativity in an unassuming residential area. I relate the experience to the restaurants of Scarborough, which carry a similarly rich communal and cultural energy in an otherwise mundane building.

FIG.4.1.7

FIG.4.1.6



- MOSQUE
- CHURCH
- TEMPLE
- SOUTH ASIAN RESTURANT
- EAST ASIAN RESTURANT
- BAKERY
- MIDDLE EASTERN RESTURANT
- CAFE
- CARRIBEAN RESTURANT
- FAST FOOD RESTURANT
- NORTH AMERICAN RESTURANT
- GROCERY
- EAST ASIAN GROCERY
- SOUTH ASIAN GROCERY

Demographic mapping of the Scarborough Centre area

FIG.4.1.9

These examples of what we eat, what we wear, and where we party are very much integral to the suburban life of Scarborough. Industrial buildings are often renovated to accommodate the programs people want in their communities—places of worship, restaurants, and venues. Entrepreneurs use the space available to them—their homes—to accommodate their business needs. Casually, people use spaces to socialize in ways that were not intended by design—the terrain vague. What is beautiful about these places is that while industrial-residential zoning can create alienation by limiting accessibility to occupiable space and communal programming, people occupy the terrain vague and adapt buildings regardless. It is a story of resilience on two fronts, formally—through the reuse of industrial space—and informally—through the occupation of the terrain vague. This takes me back to the last time we hung out underneath the RT guideway - oh how wonderful that space feels.

FIG.4.1.8

THE SCARBOROUGH RAPID TRANSIT AND THE SCARBOROUGH CENTRE AREA



FIG.5.1.1

FIVE



FIG.5.1.2

The Scarborough Rapid Transit opened its doors in 1985 as a 6.4-kilometre intermediate-capacity rapid transit train that connected Torontonians from Kennedy, the easternmost Bloor-Danforth Line station, to McCowan Station in the Scarborough Centre area.[1] Kennedy, the terminal station of the Bloor-Danforth line, served both the Scarborough RT and Bloor–Danforth trains, facilitating the needed transportation up and down different elevations on which the two lines existed.[2] The RT operated above grade and the Bloor–Danforth subway operates below grade to this day.[3] If travelling from Line 2, patrons would go up two storeys to reach the Kennedy Station RT platform. Once boarded, the Scarborough RT would travel in a northern direction through the centre of an industrial block between Ellesmere Road and Midland Avenue until it reached Ellesmere Station.[4] After which, the train would dip underground while turning eastwards to pass the CP Rail, which sits parallel and to the east of the RT.[5] Afterwards, the train would climb above grade and travel east towards the Scarborough Centre Area, crossing over Midland Avenue and Brimley Road.[6] The RT transported people from Kennedy Road and Eglinton Avenue East to McCowan Station for 35 years.[7] In 2022, during its final year of full service, it completed an average of 22,872 trips on a typical weekday[8].

1 Gary Downie, “SRT Life Extension Project Options Analysis – Toronto Transit Commission.”
2 “Kennedy Station Information – Toronto Transit Commission.”; “Scarborough Rapid Transit – Toronto Transit Commission.”
3 “Kennedy Station Information – Toronto Transit Commission.”; “Scarborough Rapid Transit – Toronto Transit Commission.”
4 “Scarborough Rapid Transit Progress Report No. 3 – Toronto Transit Commission.”
5 “Scarborough Rapid Transit Progress Report No. 3 – Toronto Transit Commission.”
6 “Scarborough Rapid Transit Progress Report No. 3 – Toronto Transit Commission.”
7 Gary Downie, “SRT Life Extension Project Options Analysis – Toronto Transit Commission.”
8 “Subway Ridership, 2022 – Toronto Transit Commission.”

The Scarborough RT sat above grade as it was intended for the line to be a light rail system; however, after construction began Ontario’s Urban Transportation Development Corporation suggested its new Intermediate Capacity Transit System, ICTS, should be used instead.[9] The Ontario government was looking to sell the technology to British Columbia, and as proof of concept, the Scarborough RT became a working example to showcase their new technology.[10] The ICTS cars used a new method of power and propulsion and was the first instance in North America of a computer-controlled automatic train operation.[11] The light rail line concept began by the Transportation Technology Task Force, composed of members of provincial and federal governments, municipal planning boards, the Toronto Transit Commission, and private industry who identified intermediate-capacity transit as an urban transportation need that would act as a secondary or feeder system supplementing subways.[12] This new technology called for a new name, something other than a “subway”, and so the name Scarborough Rapid Transit was born.[13] In Scarborough, it was common for the names Line 3, Scarborough RT, and RT to be used interchangeably when discussing Scarborough’s transit line.

The Scarborough RT fell into controversy due to problems related to its mid-construction design changes, new technology’s growing pains, and design flaws, which cast doubt on the technology’s capabilities to fill the gap between buses, streetcars,

9 “Scarborough Rapid Transit – Toronto Transit Commission.”
10 Ken Cameron, “How the Spadina Expressway Gave Vancouver SkyTrain.”
11 “Scarborough Rapid Transit – Toronto Transit Commission.”
12 Harmelink, “Ontario’s Program for Intermediate Capacity Transit.”
13 “Scarborough Rapid Transit – Toronto Transit Commission.”


FIG.5.1.3


FIG.5.1.4

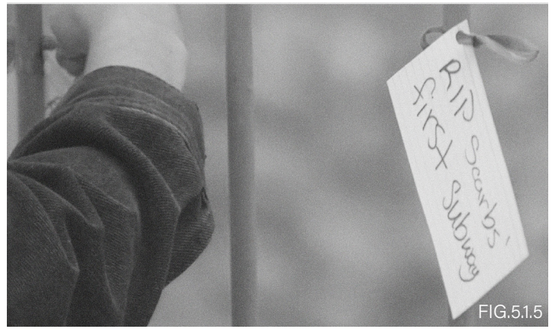


FIG.5.1.5


FIG.5.1.6

and subways.[14] Critics, such as the Toronto Star, began to question the cost-effectiveness of the technology and suggested reverting to more traditional and reliable subway systems for future transit projects as a result.[15] In 2003, the TTC introduced its Ridership Growth Strategy, proposing gradual improvements to enhance public transit in Toronto, increasing ridership, where it noted that the RT capacity would be a bottleneck for the TTC's growth.[16] After a 16-year period, the TTC made a decisive move related to providing a replacement for the RT in April 2019.[17] The replacement of the Scarborough RT would be announced by the Province of Ontario to be an extension of the Bloor-Danforth line in April 2019.[18] The new extension would travel North along McCowan Road, with stops at Lawrence Avenue East, Scarborough Centre, and Sheppard Avenue. [19] Construction of the 7.8km Bloor-Danforth extension began in 2023 and is estimated to be complete by 2030.[20] Following this announcement, the RT closed service prematurely in 2023 due to a derailment.[21] Currently, buses replace this service.[22] This decision marked the end of the transit line, setting a new course for Scarborough's connectivity to the rest of the city.

14 "Upper Canada Railway Society Newsletter 444."
15 "Upper Canada Railway Society Newsletter 444."
16 "Staff Response to Comission Inquiry - Increasing TTC Ridership – Toronto Transit Commission."
17 "Toronto-Ontario Transit Update – City of Toronto."
18 "Transit Network Expansion Update, Capital Budget Adjustment – City of Toronto."
19 "Scarborough Subway Extension – Metrolinx."
20 "Scarborough Subway Extension – Metrolinx."; Westoll, "Scarborough Subway Extension Project Tunnelling Begins – CityNews Toronto."
21 Freeman, "TTC Head Confirms Cause of Scarborough RT Derailment – CTV News."
22 "The Future of TTC's Line 3 Scarborough (SRT) – Toronto Transit Commission."

The decommissioning of the RT occurred during a period of transition for the Scarborough Centre area, as the municipality is now exploring how to guide its densification. The exploration was formalized in the Our Scarborough Centre Phase Four Study planning document, created in March 2023. This is expressed in the Vision Statement of the Our Scarborough Centre Phase Four Study:

Evolve into a transit-oriented community focused on the new Scarborough Centre subway station, characterized by a mix of live-work-play uses supported by a vibrant, safe and interconnected public realm, a robust network of local parks, public open spaces, diverse and affordable housing options and accessible community services.[23]

In summary, the city envisions a walkable, densified, culturally rich neighbourhood. A secondary network of streets supporting pedestrian permeability will be built, creating a public realm that encourages walking and biking. The arteries of the area are described to be supported with amenities such as street furniture, vegetation, bike racks, and wayfinding elements. Additionally, the city will address barriers to connectivity, including Highway 401 and major arterial roads, to improve pedestrian-friendliness.[24] Today, the area consists of 536 businesses within the Centre, employing 15,816 full and part-time employees and approximately 13,800 residents in 2021. As of March 22, 2022, an additional 6,700 additional units have been approved, and over 21,000 are under review which would increase density in the area.[25] From a cultural perspective, the city acknowledges that Scarborough is home to many artists whose work reflects its multicultural character - some that have achieved international recognition. Resultantly, the city sees the redevelopment of the centre as an opportunity to invest in the arts and cultural heritage of

23 "OurSC – City of Toronto."
24 "OurSC – City of Toronto."
25 "OurSC – City of Toronto."

Scarborough.[26] The OurSC plan aims to redefine the area through cultural emphasis, densification of mixed-use programs, and a pedestrian-friendly streetscape.

The city's strategy to accomplish these qualities is specified in the introduction of distinct districts into the Scarborough Centre area. This solution builds off the city's 2005 Secondary Plan in which the Scarborough Centre area was divided into four precincts: the Brimley Precinct, McCowan Precinct, Town Centre Commercial Precinct, and Civic Precinct.[27] In the OurSC plan, there are now six districts: the Commercial District, McCowan District, Civic District, Brimley District, East Highland Creek District, and North District[28], and each has distinct qualities. Relevant districts to the Scarborough RT are the Commercial District, Civic District, and Brimley District as the decommissioned elevated guideway infrastructure intersects them.

The Commercial District is centred around the Scarborough Town Centre mall and its surrounding areas, which are bordered by Progress Avenue to the north, the Triton trench to the south, and blocks to the east and west of the mall. The Scarborough Town Centre Mall serves as a hub for retail, services, and entertainment, and is also an important regional employment center. While the mall is expected to remain a vital community asset in its current form for the foreseeable future, there is potential for development on the nearby surface parking lots. The vision for these adjacent areas includes mixed-use blocks with a grid of pedestrian-friendly streets, offering connections to the mall and nearby developments. These blocks will feature retail spaces and will be designed with streetscapes that lead to parks, squares, and plazas, creating an accessible public space.[29]

The Civic District is defined by civic buildings, government and commercial office spaces, community services, residential towers, parks, open areas, and the Frank Faubert Woodlots. This area evolved from Raymond Moriyama's design vision in 1960, as outlined in the OurSC Background Report. It acts as the hub of public life centred around Albert Campbell Square, which is surrounded by several key civic buildings. Landmark structures in this district include the Scarborough Civic Centre, the Toronto Public Library – Scarborough Civic Centre Branch, a Federal Building, and the Scarborough YMCA. Public spaces like Albert Campbell Square Park, Frank Faubert Woodlots offer recreation and open areas within the district.[30]
The Brimley District is located along Brimley Road, south of Progress Avenue, and is adjacent

26 "OurSC – City of Toronto."
27 "OurSC – City of Toronto."
28 "OurSC – City of Toronto."
29 "OurSC – City of Toronto."
30 "OurSC – City of Toronto."

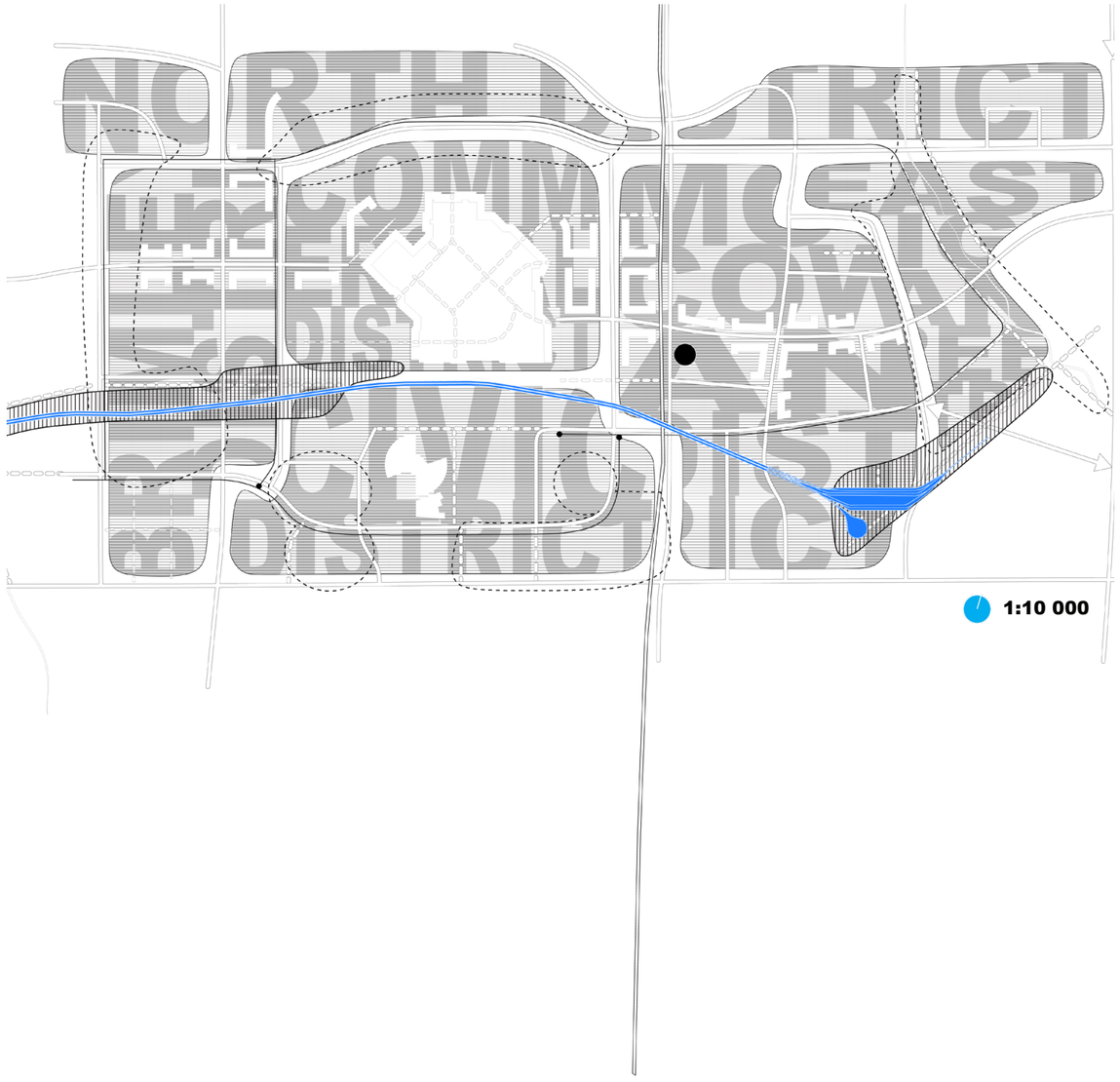


FIG.5.1.7

to employment areas and West Highland Creek to the west. The district features office spaces to the west of Brimley Road and residential towers to the east. The Brimley District will maintain its mixed-use character, with a blend of residential, employment, and retail spaces, complemented by parks, plazas, and open areas. Green spaces and parks along the western edge of the district will act as a buffer between employment areas and the Scarborough Centre. To enhance connectivity between the Centre and West Highland Creek, the district will include east-west pedestrian pathways and green spaces along the RT Corridor.[31]

Overall, this vision for the Scarborough Centre encapsulates a layered transformation focused on community-oriented urban planning with enhanced accessibility and cultural enrichment. It presents a framework for the future of the area while leaving the RT corridor to be explored in greater depth.

On March 20, 2024, the City Council discussed and adopted the request of Councillor Jamaal Myers, seconded by Councillor Paul Ainslie, to consider the technical and fiscal feasibility of adaptively reusing Scarborough RT infrastructure. The request details the need for a preliminary assessment of the potential adaptive reuse of the right-of-way and station RT assets to the City Council by the end of the fourth quarter of 2024.[32] The report was aimed to explore the opportunities for the development of a new linear park and active transportation corridor comprised of the existing Scarborough RT infrastructure, with reference to similar projects, including the High Line in New York, the Beltline in Atlanta, Cuernavaca's Railway Linear Park in Mexico City, and the Potrero Yard Modernization Project in San Francisco.[33] It also calls for an investigation into high-capacity mobility solutions along the corridor.[34] Lastly it calls for commercial and housing development potential along, adjacent, and integrated into the existing Scarborough Rapid Transit corridor.[35] It notes that community engagement, academic collaboration and exploration of funding opportunities are of interest.[36] This assessment was the first step into addressing the potential re-use of the RT and resulted in the submission of a feasibility report on November 26, 2024, titled Assessment of Scarborough Rapid Transit Adaptive Reuse and Next Steps.

The Assessment of Scarborough Rapid Transit Adaptive Reuse and Next Steps report advised that the city council endorse the removal of the Scarborough RT infrastructure, no longer

31 "OurSC – City of Toronto."
32 "Motion MM16.7 – City of Toronto."
33 "Motion MM16.7 – City of Toronto."
34 "Motion MM16.7 – City of Toronto."
35 "Motion MM16.7 – City of Toronto."
36 "Motion MM16.7 – City of Toronto."



FIG.5.1.8

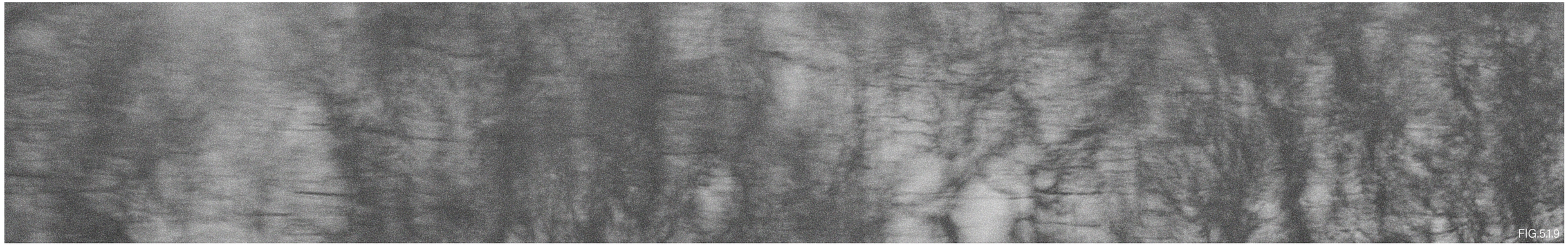


FIG.5.1.9

required for transit operations, so the land corridor may be considered for future use. The decision was supported by legal risks related to land ownership, capital expenditures and implementation complexity.[37] In terms of legal risks, the City of Toronto does not own all of the land on which the RT infrastructure sits. There are third-party landowners, left unnamed, to whom the city has obligations. Part of the City's obligations include the use of their land only for transit operations and requirements to maintain infrastructure in good repair. It also requires that the city restore land within one or two years to the owners once the transit system ceases operations in July 2023.[38] On top of this, the city noted that they currently do not have the capital to undertake due diligence of retaining third-party lands, redevelopment planning, and assess lifecycle requirements of aging infrastructure. The city recognizes that coordination is required in collaboration with large projects in the Scarborough Centre area, Subway Extension, Transit Oriented Developments, and housing developments, for which they cannot provide capital. Additionally, the city acknowledges that the narrow corridor presents a design challenge, specifically highlighting its own limitations in addressing it. Given these constraints, City staff recommend the RT transit infrastructure be considered for substantive removal.[39]

It is important to note that the demolition of the RT infrastructure has not been confirmed – it is a suggestion that has yet to be acted on. The suggested next steps for the city include undertaking of legal review and title search for the RT corridor to confirm ownership, technical studies, including scope, options, and cost estimates for the removal of RT infrastructure to help determine the next steps, confirm accountability for the structure's maintenance, safety, and security during and after technical analysis and any future phases; and, plan a 'future use' study of the RT corridor and a strategy for public consultation.[40] In terms of approach, it was recommended that the city use a 'stage gate' process, enabling a full understanding of the scope, cost, risks, and timing of each step forward and report back in Q4 2025 with the final scope and a plan for a 'future use' analysis and strategy for public consultations; and, report back in 2026. [41] In summary, the recommendation of this report was to demolish the Scarborough RT infrastructure due to partial third-party land ownership, the complexity of implementation and the cost of expenditures, and to do so in a stage-gate method.

City council discussed the contents of the report Assessment of Scarborough Rapid Transit Adaptive Reuse and Next Steps from November 2024 on December 17 and 18, 2024 and reported on the matter in council minutes titled Assessment of Scarborough Rapid Transit Adaptive Reuse and Next Steps, 2024.EX19.6. Through their assessment, the city directed the City Manager to report back to City Council identification of any infrastructure that could be repurposed, estimated costs, and a strategy for public consultations in 2026.[42] The final decisions on the infrastructure's removal and future use will be based on these assessments and community input.

The Scarborough Rapid Transit (SRT) line operated from 1985 to 2023, as a vital transit link between Kennedy and McCowan Station. Originally planned as a light rail system, it was built using ICTS technology, making it a proof of concept for Ontario's transit exports which led to significant reliability issues, prompting plans for its replacement with the Scarborough Subway Extension. The decommissioning coincides with the redevelopment of Scarborough Centre,

37 "Assessment of Scarborough Rapid Transit Adaptive Reuse and Next Steps – City of Toronto."
38 "Assessment of Scarborough Rapid Transit Adaptive Reuse and Next Steps – City of Toronto."
39 "Assessment of Scarborough Rapid Transit Adaptive Reuse and Next Steps – City of Toronto."
40 "Assessment of Scarborough Rapid Transit Adaptive Reuse and Next Steps – City of Toronto."
41 "Assessment of Scarborough Rapid Transit Adaptive Reuse and Next Steps – City of Toronto."
42 "Assessment of Scarborough Rapid Transit Adaptive Reuse and Next Steps – City of Toronto."

guided by the Our Scarborough Centre plan, envisioning a walkable, mixed-use community. Recognizing the relationship between the area and the RT corridor, the Toronto City Council conducted a feasibility study in 2024, exploring possibilities for adaptive reuse of the RT infrastructure. Resultantly, a report issued in November 2024 recommended dismantling the infrastructure due to legal constraints, financial limitations, and design challenges. The city will proceed with a stage gate evaluation, including a legal review, infrastructure studies, and public consultations to inform long-term planning of the RT corridor – likely with the RT infrastructure demolished. For the time being, the RT infrastructure remains unused.



FIG.5.1.10



FIG.5.1.11

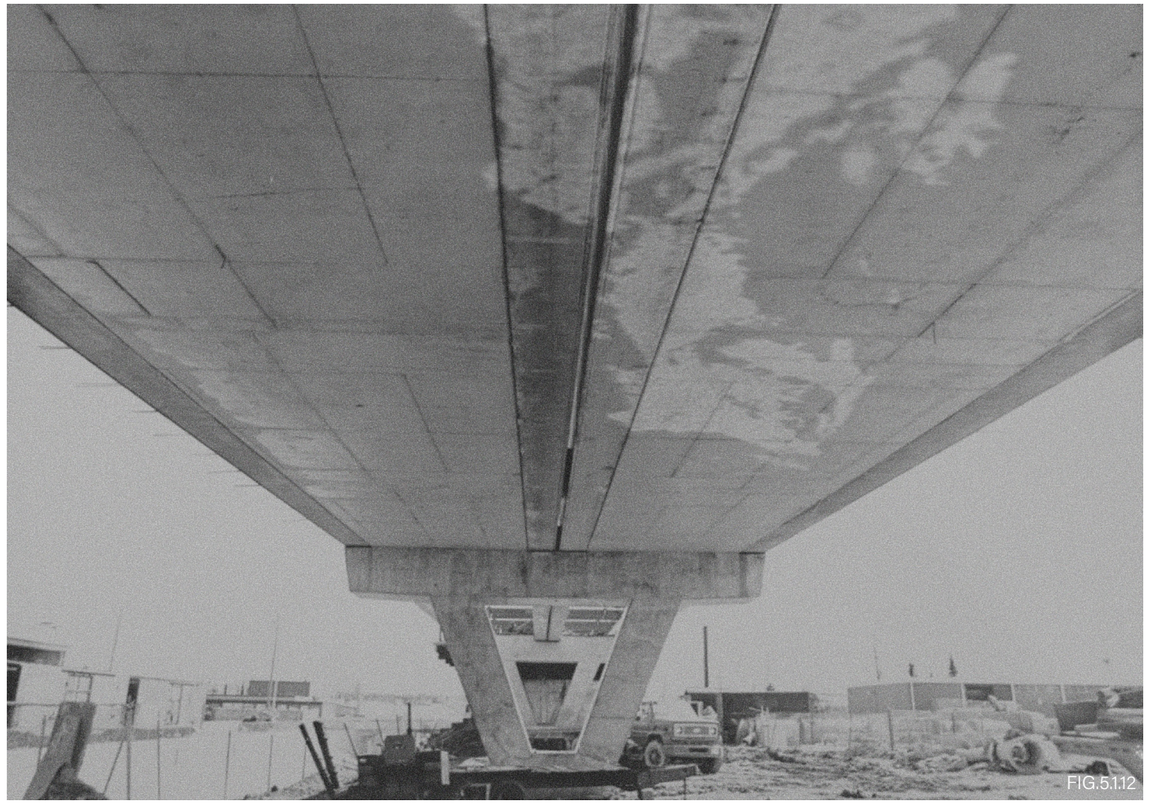


FIG.5.1.12



FIG.5.1.13

HOPEFUL THINKING



FIG.6.1.1

SIX

A few months have passed since I last visited the RT underpass. While finishing this thesis in Cambridge, I find reaching Toronto's east end difficult. The one time I did get down to the west end, a family member informed me that the RT guideway was demolished. The demolition almost changed the tone of this entire document from one of hopeful potential to melancholic remembrance. It turns out that they misspoke - it was a pedestrian bridge guiding people to the last stop of the RT that was demolished. The bridge was taken down to clear an area for the construction of the new Scarborough Centre Subway Station. Unintentionally, this became a forewarning as today, the RT demolition is very much a reality. This final meditation reflects on Scarborough's ingenuity and rich cultural heritage, imagining how the RT could have celebrated—and given form to—the spirit of its community.

In my last meditation, I noted that the occupation of the terrain vague and re-use of industrial space plays an integral role in shaping Scarborough. However, it should be noted that the landscape of this borough is not unique; it is in line with a global phenomenon—the widespread adoption of concrete as a building material.[1]

This material enabled large-scale urban planning initiatives in rapidly expanding cities following WWII. In the post-war boom, concrete allowed for the rapid construction of war-torn cities—embraced for its speed, affordability, and adaptability. Because of these qualities of concrete, nations were able to construct infrastructure such as dams, highways, and airports.[2] Canada was no exception to this trend and concrete became the material driving the expansion of Toronto.[3] The Metropolitan Toronto plan of the late 1940s initiated extensive growth, driven by a vast concrete infrastructure network that enabled the development of suburbia.[4] The new communities of central

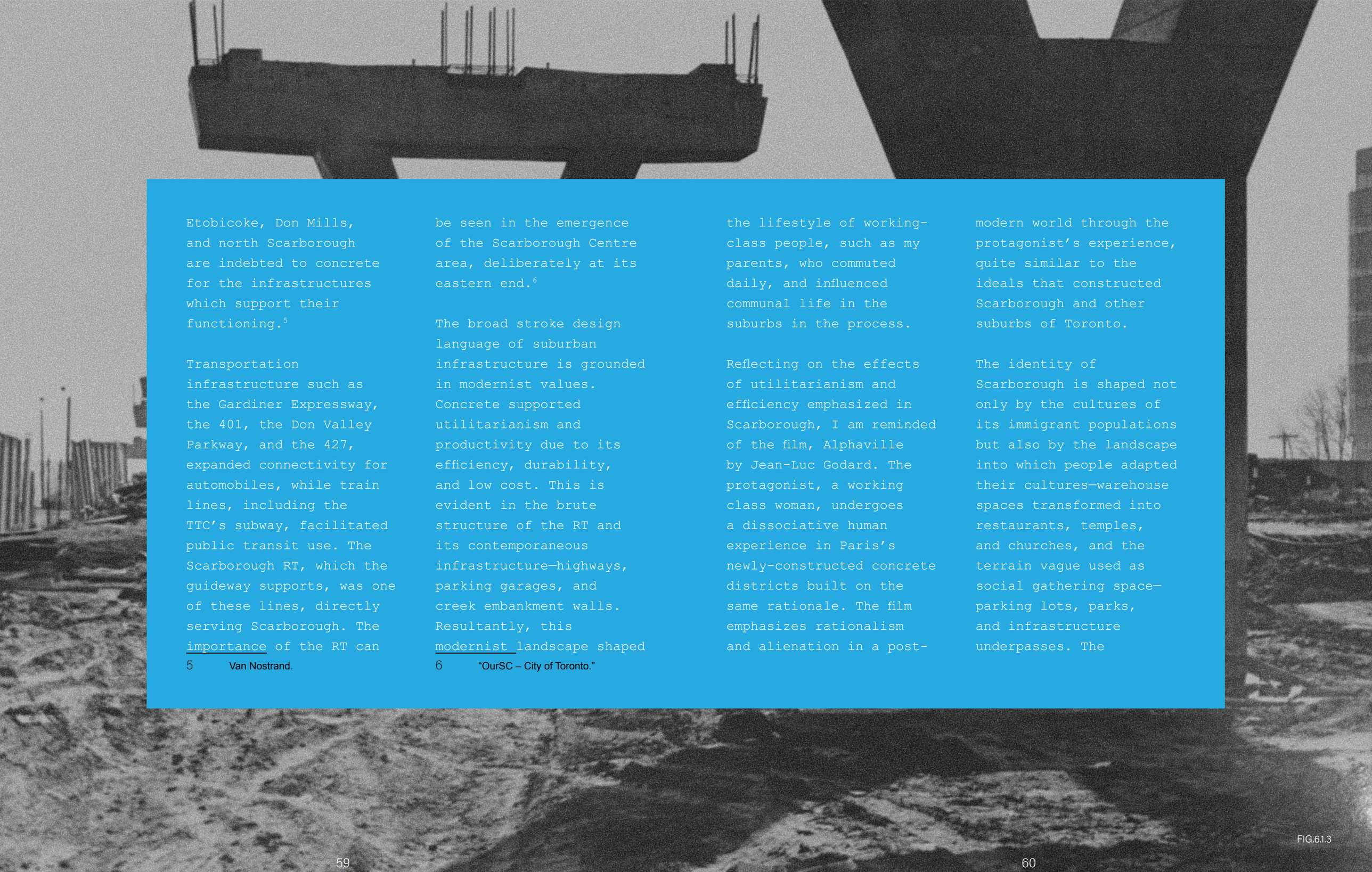
1 Zadeh, "Concrete Built the Modern World. Now Its Destroying It."

2 Zadeh, "Concrete Built the Modern World. Now Its Destroying It."

3 Van Nostrand, *Concrete Toronto - Metro Concrete*.

4 Van Nostrand.

FIG.6.1.2



Etobicoke, Don Mills, and north Scarborough are indebted to concrete for the infrastructures which support their functioning.[5]

Transportation infrastructure such as the Gardiner Expressway, the 401, the Don Valley Parkway, and the 427, expanded connectivity for automobiles, while train lines, including the TTC's subway, facilitated public transit use. The Scarborough RT, which the guideway supports, was one of these lines, directly serving Scarborough. The importance of the RT can be seen in the emergence of the Scarborough Centre area, deliberately at its eastern end.[6]

The broad stroke design language of suburban infrastructure is grounded in modernist values. Concrete supported utilitarianism and productivity due to its efficiency, durability, and low cost. This is evident in the brute structure of the RT and its contemporaneous infrastructure—highways, parking garages, and creek embankment walls. Resultantly, this modernist landscape shaped the lifestyle of working-class people, such as my parents, who commuted daily, and influenced communal life in the suburbs in the process.

Reflecting on the effects of utilitarianism and efficiency emphasized in Scarborough, I am reminded of the film, Alphaville by Jean-Luc Godard. The protagonist, a working class woman, undergoes a dissociative human experience in Paris's newly-constructed concrete districts built on the same rationale. The film emphasizes rationalism and alienation in a post-modern world through the protagonist's experience, quite similar to the ideals that constructed Scarborough and other suburbs of Toronto.

The identity of Scarborough is shaped not only by the cultures of its immigrant populations but also by the landscape into which people adapted their cultures—warehouse spaces transformed into restaurants, temples, and churches, and the terrain vague used as social gathering space—parking lots, parks, and infrastructure underpasses. The

5 Van Nostrand.

6 "OurSC – City of Toronto."

FIG.6.1.3

Scarborough RT means something to the community of Scarborough; it embodies the values that have helped shape the social dynamics of the community. Its infrastructure is a part of the industrial history of Scarborough and the space below it is terrain vague.

The reuse of the RT infrastructure could have been a valuable investment for the city, offering a framework for intentionally redefining disregarded infrastructure and the terrain vague to support pre-existing communal habits.

Although it may be too late to make a tangible case for the Scarborough RT guideway, humouring its reuse allows for the exploration of supporting communal identity during the soon-to-come densification of the Scarborough Centre area. Having said that, I would like to conclude this thesis by observing relevant case studies and a design exploration imagining the reuse of the RT elevated guideway. Imagining this future offers a lens through which we can reconsider the role of infrastructure. It challenges us to envision a Scarborough that draws on its historical infrastructure to enhance social connections and celebrate its diverse heritage.

FIG.6.1.4



CASE STUDIES

SEVEN

The adaptation of transit infrastructure is not a new idea—there are examples in Toronto, New York, Yokohama, and Tokyo that highlight the potential of rail infrastructure to improve communal living. The Highline is a linear park in New York City that exists on a decommissioned elevated guideway, emphasizing nature's reclamation of space.[1] The Kogane-cho underpass in Yokohama was revitalized into a destination for local artists and residents.[2] In Tokyo, Takahiro Akiyama Architects + Atelier designed an elementary school underneath an operating elevated rail line as a solution to Japan's need for growth in a dense country.[3] The Bentway, by urban design firm PUBLIC WORK, is a 1.75km space underneath Toronto's Gardiner Expressway where the public can access engaging outdoor activities and programs such as trails and installations. Each of these precedents contributes a unique perspective for the reuse of the decommissioned RT guideway.

The Highline was constructed in New York from 2009-2019 as a revitalization of a decommissioned rail line into a linear park. Designed in collaboration with James Corner Field Operations and Piet Oudolf, the linear park stretches 2.4km in length. It aims to translate the biodiversity which grew over the decommissioned elevated rail line into consecutive microclimates appropriate for surrounding contexts. Initially the project was imagined as an idiosyncratic, local solution, however, it has gone on to influence cities worldwide to transform their obsolete urban infrastructure into public parks.[4] The Highline provides inspiration for the reuse of the RT elevated guideway as a linear park as its decommissioned infrastructure is similar in form and context. Here we can see how a linear park can be adapted on top of a decommissioned elevated rail line, successfully proving that a reality in which the RT guideway can be repurposed is tangible.

The Kogane-cho underpass revitalization project occurred when the municipal government and the Koganecho Area Management Center commissioned five architects to transform a 100-to-150 square meter site into space studios and residences. Five architectural practices—Contemporaries, Studio 2A, Workstation, Koizumi Atelier, and Nishikura Architectural Design Office—were involved and the intervention resulted in a gallery, cafe, studio, meeting hall, and a plaza located underneath an elevated rail line.[5] The intervention in Yokohama acts as a precedent describing the capability of underutilized space to accommodate cultural programming.

1 "High Line – DS+R."
2 Karissa Rosenfield, "Studio Beneath the Railway + Step Plaza."
3 "Takahiro Akiyama Architects Nursery School – Takahiro Akiyama Architects."
4 "High Line – DS+R."
5 Karissa Rosenfield, "Studio Beneath the Railway + Step Plaza."

The Nursery School by Takahiro Akiyama Architects + Atelier in Tokyo was constructed in 2023 and is designed to address Japan's lack of nursery schools by creatively using unconventional spaces. Situated beneath an old railway from 1931, the school integrates with the city, encouraging community interaction. The layout includes three nursery clusters separated by a playground and sandpit, linked by a semi-outdoor corridor.[6] This design solution proposed by Takahiro Akiyama Architects + Atelier describes how the underpass of a rail line can be transformed into a series of sequential spaces equating to one building.

The Bentway, designed by PUBLIC WORK, is a 1.75 km-long revitalization project beneath Toronto's Gardiner Expressway which transformed the infrastructures underpass into a vibrant communal space. The project connects seven neighborhoods, improves pedestrian and cyclist access, and integrates key landmarks like Fort York National Historic site. By introducing diverse activities and programs, The Bentway creates new urban gathering spaces for Toronto's population.[7][8] PUBLIC WORK adapted unused space below infrastructure—much like the RT—to become occupiable and invaluable, stitching together the neighbourhoods it intersects and creating a focal point for community engagement.[9]

Each of these projects demonstrates different strategies for adapting decommissioned infrastructure into meaningful public spaces. The High Line showcases the potential of repurposing elevated infrastructure to create a linear public park. The Kogane-cho underpass revitalization highlights small-scale architecture infill in underutilized space to foster community. The Machiya Nursery School demonstrates how underutilized spaces beneath railways can be utilized to construct a large-scale architectural project that is beneficial for a community. The Bentway exemplifies the transformation of neglected urban spaces into vibrant pedestrian corridors. Together, these precedents outline the potential for the RT to serve Scarborough's future.

6 "Takahiro Akiyama Architects Nursery School – Takahiro Akiyama Architects."
7 "The Bentway – PUBLIC WORK."
8 "The Bentway – PUBLIC WORK."
9 "The Bentway – PUBLIC WORK."



FIG.7.1.1



FIG.7.1.2

The Highline
New York City

The Highline was constructed in New York from 2009-2019 as a revitalization of a decommissioned rail line into a linear park. The linear park stretches 2.4km in length. It aims to translate the biodiversity which grew over the decommissioned elevated rail line into consecutive microclimates appropriate for surrounding contexts.



FIG.7.1.3

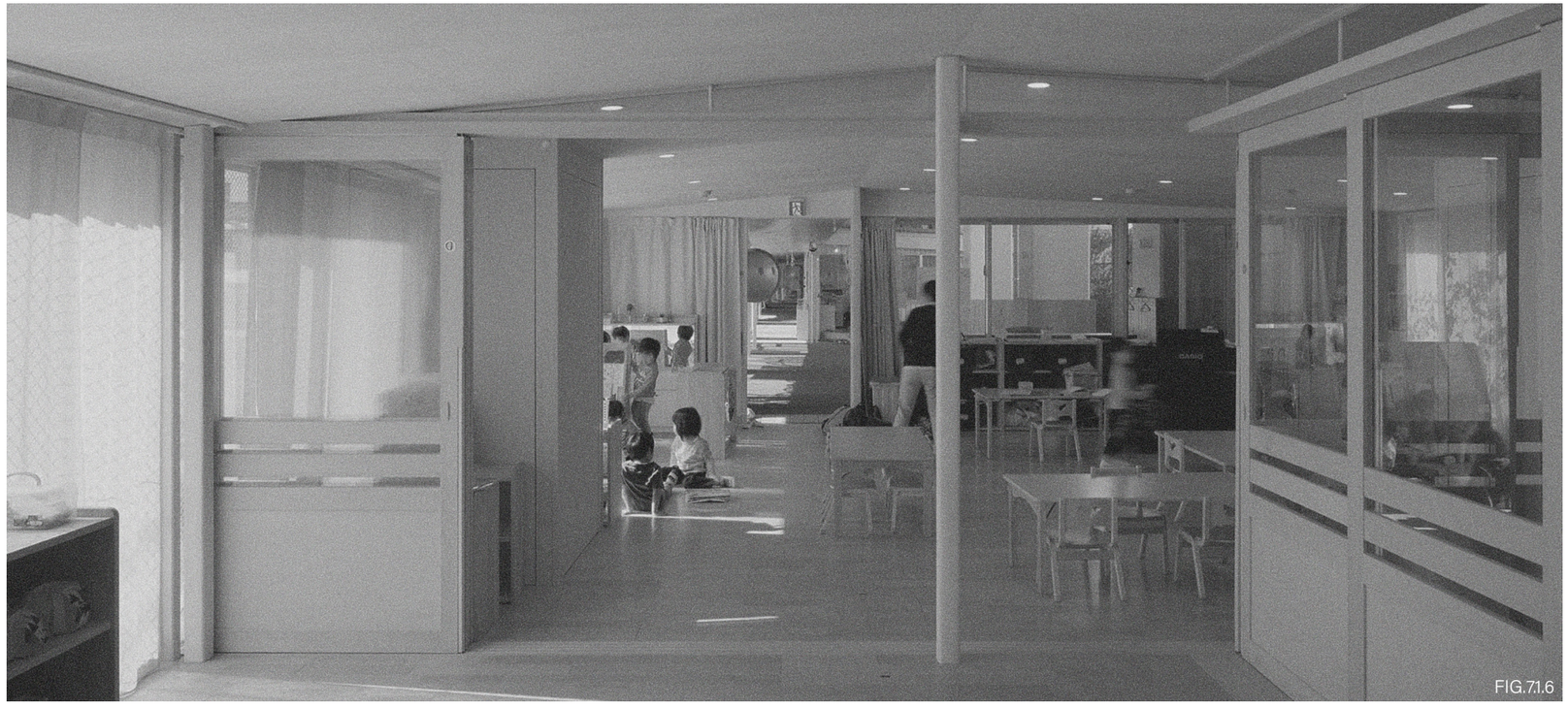


FIG.7.1.4

The Kogane-cho Underpass Revitalization Project
Yokohama

The Kogane-cho underpass revitalization project occurred when the municipal government and the Koganecho Area Management Center commissioned five architects to transform a 100-to-150 square meter site into space studios and residences.


FIG.7.1.5


FIG.7.1.6

Nursery School
Tokyo

The Nursery School by Takahiro Akiyama Architects + Atelier in Tokyo was constructed in 2023 and is designed to address Japan’s lack of nursery schools by creatively using unconventional spaces. This design solution proposed describes how the underpass of a rail line can be transformed into a series of sequential spaces equating to one building.



FIG.7.1.7



FIG.7.1.8

The Bentway
Toronto

The Bentway, designed by PUBLIC WORK, is a 1.75 km-long revitalization project beneath Toronto's Gardiner Expressway which transformed the infrastructures underpass into a communal space. PUBLIC WORK adapted unused space below infrastructure—much like the RT—to become occupiable and invaluable, stitching together the neighbourhoods it intersects.



DESIGN
IMPLEMENTATION

EIGHT

SUMMARY

This chapter looks at the reuse of the Scarborough RT infrastructure to serve its community after its decommissioning. The scope includes a high-level strategy for the RT guideway and an in-depth intervention for a select portion of the guideway. The high-level strategy comments on opportunities for the RT structure to assist a pedestrian walkway transecting through the Scarborough Centre Area, as well as the implementation of architectural infill in its underpass. The in-depth proposal examines a particularly challenging portion of the guideway, suggesting how its underpass can be revitalized as a multi-media art venue. As a whole, the proposal aims to describe how the decommissioned RT infrastructure can support its community's future.

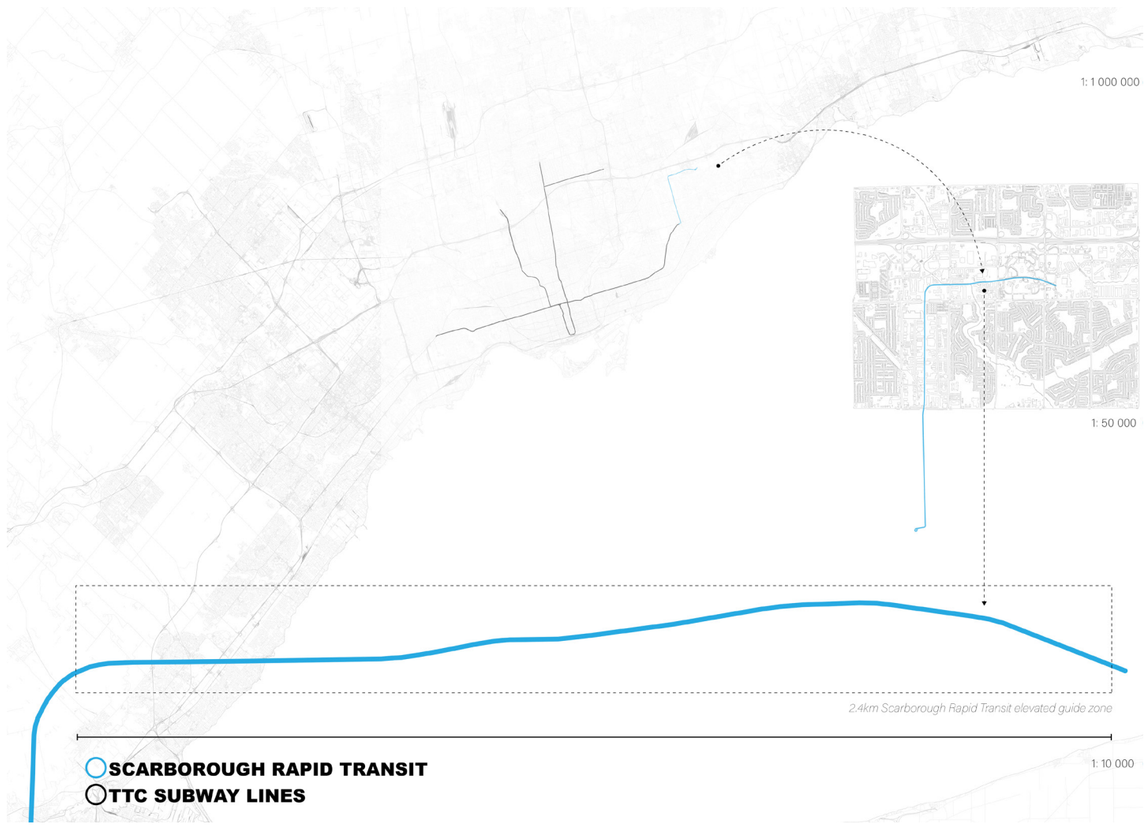
Sections of the design chapter include the RT Guideway Analysis, RT Guideway Reuse Strategy, Zone 3 Site Analysis, and Architectural Infill Proposal. The RT Guideway Analysis situates the infrastructure in the Scarborough Centre area and introduces its structural components. The RT Guideway Reuse Strategy outlines a method to repurpose the guideway as a pedestrian path with supporting architectural infill. Three adaptive strategies are explored through examination of a singular RT bay, and are proposed as a combined solution placed along the infrastructure's length. The Zone 3 Site Analysis examines one contextual/guideway relationship—previously introduced in the RT Guideway Analysis—in greater depth. The Architectural Infill Proposal explores reconciliation between the guideway and the selected site segment, formalizing its relationship to the surrounding context.

This proposal builds upon pre-existing communal practices described in this thesis—repurposing industrial space and occupying the terrain vague. Adaptive re-use of the RT guideway references Scarborough's repurposed industrial buildings while engaging the informal social spaces of Scarborough's suburban landscape. Merging these two logics—industrial adaptation and the terrain vague—into one built form enables architecture to reflect and support communal identity.

RT GUIDEWAY ANALYSIS

The Scarborough RT was the third transit line of the Toronto Transit Commission and served from 1985 to 2023, when it was decommissioned in favour of the Bloor-Danforth subway extension. As a result of its decommissioning, the RTs 2.4km concrete guideway situated in the Scarborough Centre area is currently unused. Scarborough is the Easternmost borough of Toronto that formally joined the municipality in the 1940s. The eastern borough predominantly hosts industrial and residential zoning and was connected to the city by concrete infrastructure such as the RT guideway. The Scarborough RT ran from the easternmost station of the Bloor-Danforth line, Kennedy, to the Scarborough Centre area. It currently stands as a remnant of Scarborough's industrial-suburban roots, awaiting its likely demolition.

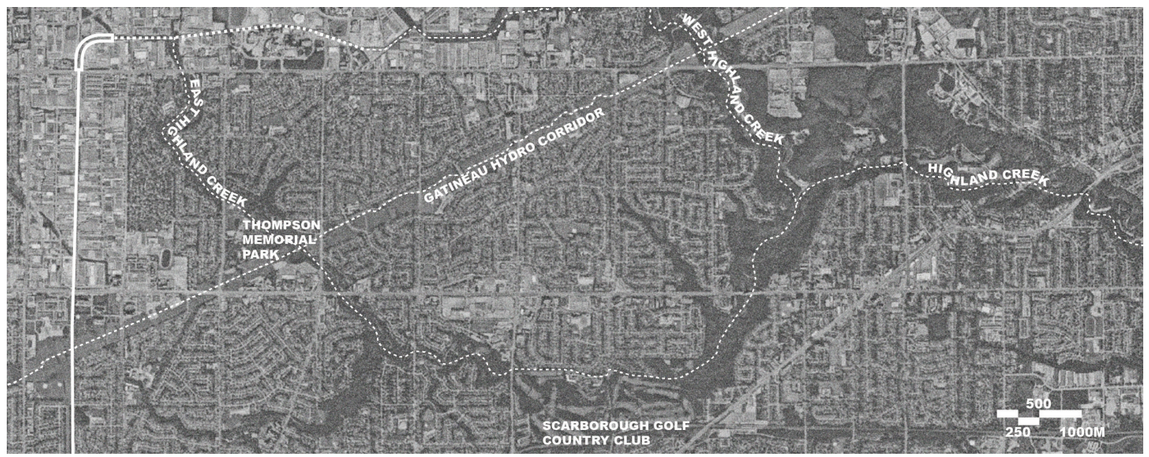
Interplaying with the industrial-residential zoning of the area are ravines, and their adjacent trails and parks. The interaction of these two systems, zoning and natural, occurs near the Scarborough Centre and directly relates to the RT guideway. The East Highland Creek runs near the RT rail park. The West Highland Creek runs parallel to and crosses underneath the guideway west of Midland Road. Involving the RT infrastructure in the connectivity of these two trails would create a pedestrian path to Thompson Memorial Park and the Gatineau Hydro Corridor. Furthermore, the Gatineau corridor would provide a route reaching the Rouge Valley independent of the roadway network.



The Scarborough RT in relation to the TTC subway FIG.8.1.1



Nolli map of the Scarborough Centre area. This map highlights the location of industrial and residential buildings in the Scarborough Centre area. FIG.8.1.2

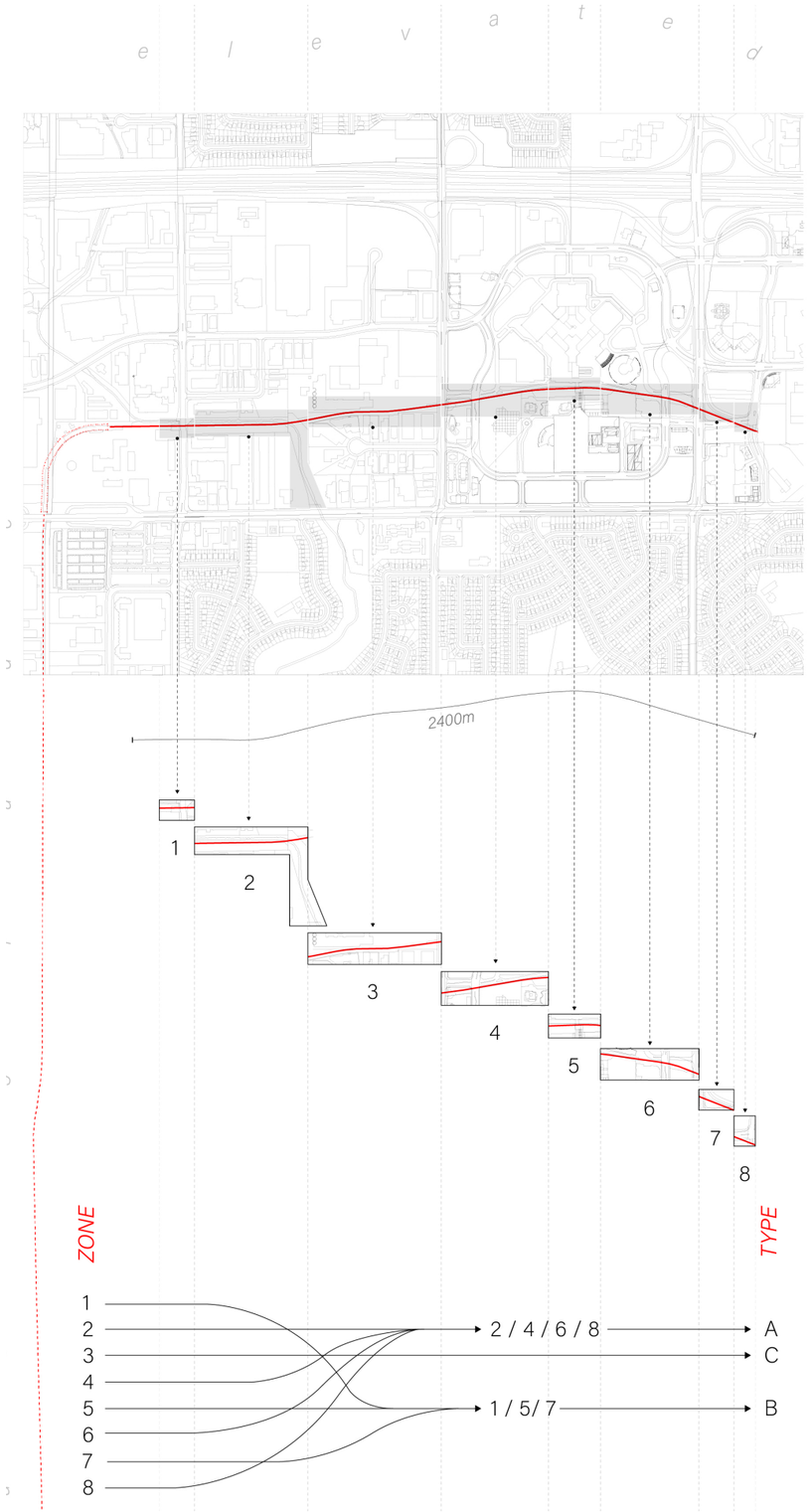


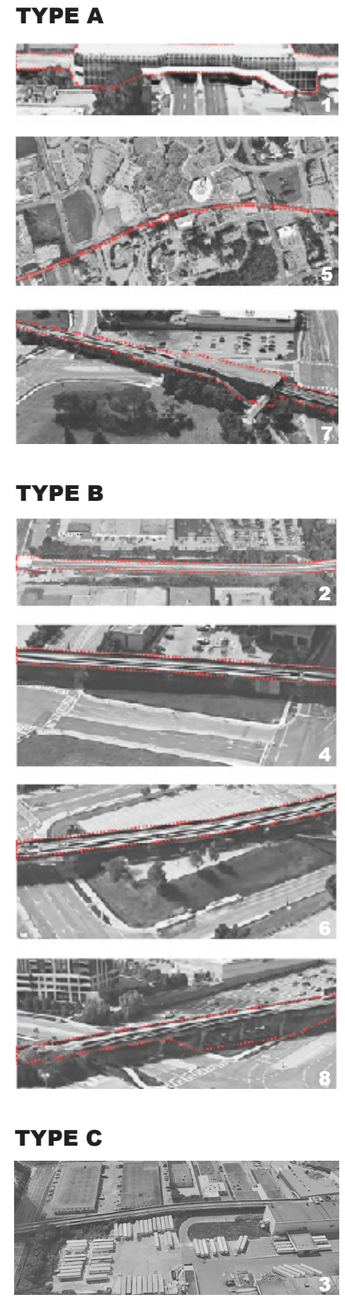
The Scarborough RT in relation to parks and trails. This map highlights the location of trails and parks related to the RT guideway. FIG.8.1.3

The Scarborough guideway unfolds across eight zones that can be simplified into three conditions shaped by contextual constraints. Zone One occurs at the intersection of Midland Road and consists of a station. This is similar to Zone Five, where Scarborough Centre Station is located, and Zone Seven, where McCowan Station is located. These three zones are described as Type B—the intersection of a station and the RT guideway. Zone Two consists of open space beneath the guideway, offering accessible conditions suitable for architectural infill. Zones Four and Six—on either side of the Scarborough Centre Station, and Zone Eight—to the west of McCowan Station are equally accessible. They are described as Type A zoning— segments of the guideway where the underpass is accessible and viable for development. Type C – a unique segment consisting only of Zone Three—is a restrictive condition of the guideway in which the underpass is largely inaccessible. Zone 3 is sandwiched between industrial properties and has one access point, along the frontage of Brimley Road. This zone poses significant difficulties for the adaptive reuse of the RT underpass and will be examined in greater detail through the design proposal portion of this chapter.



FIG.8.1.4





Analysis of the Scarborough RT guideway
FIG.8.1.5

AERIAL PLAN

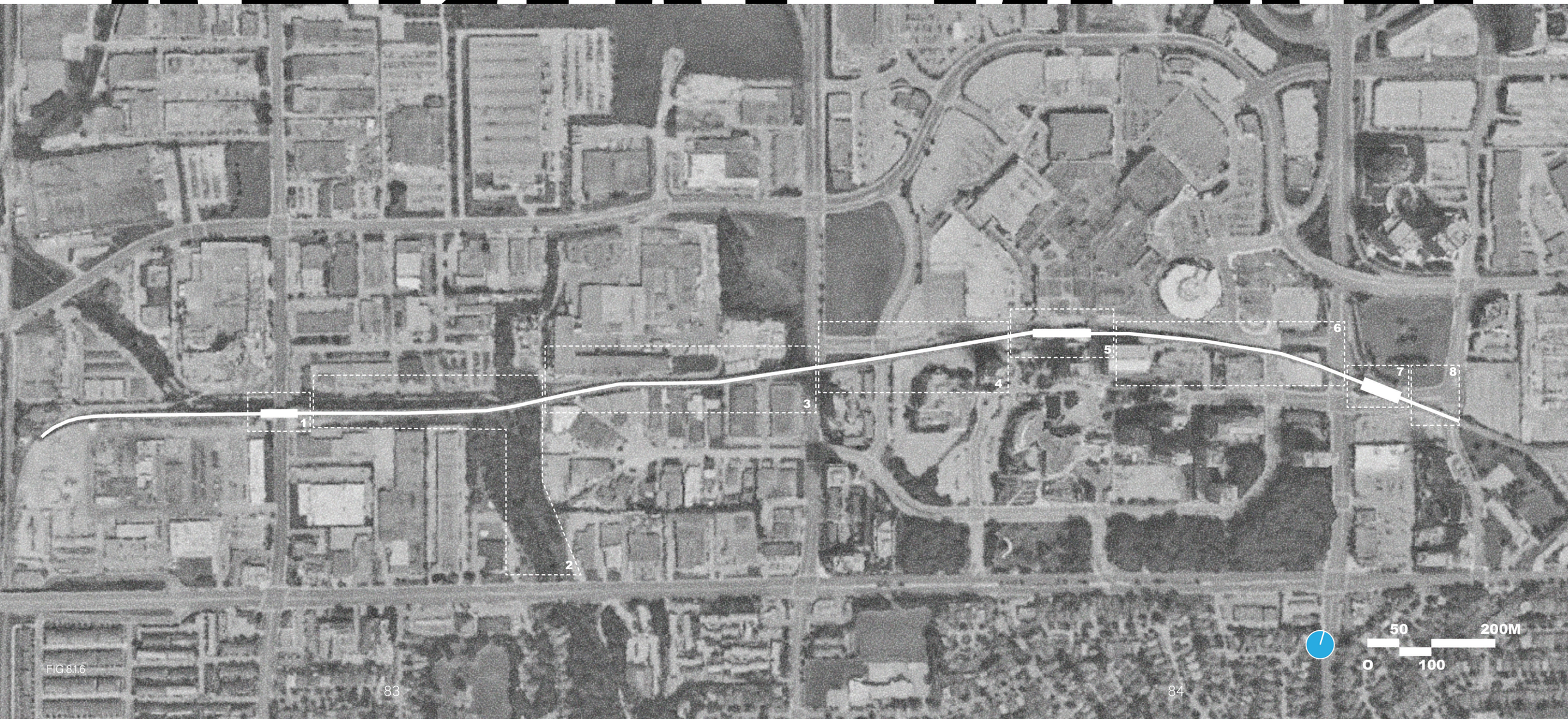


FIG.8.1.6

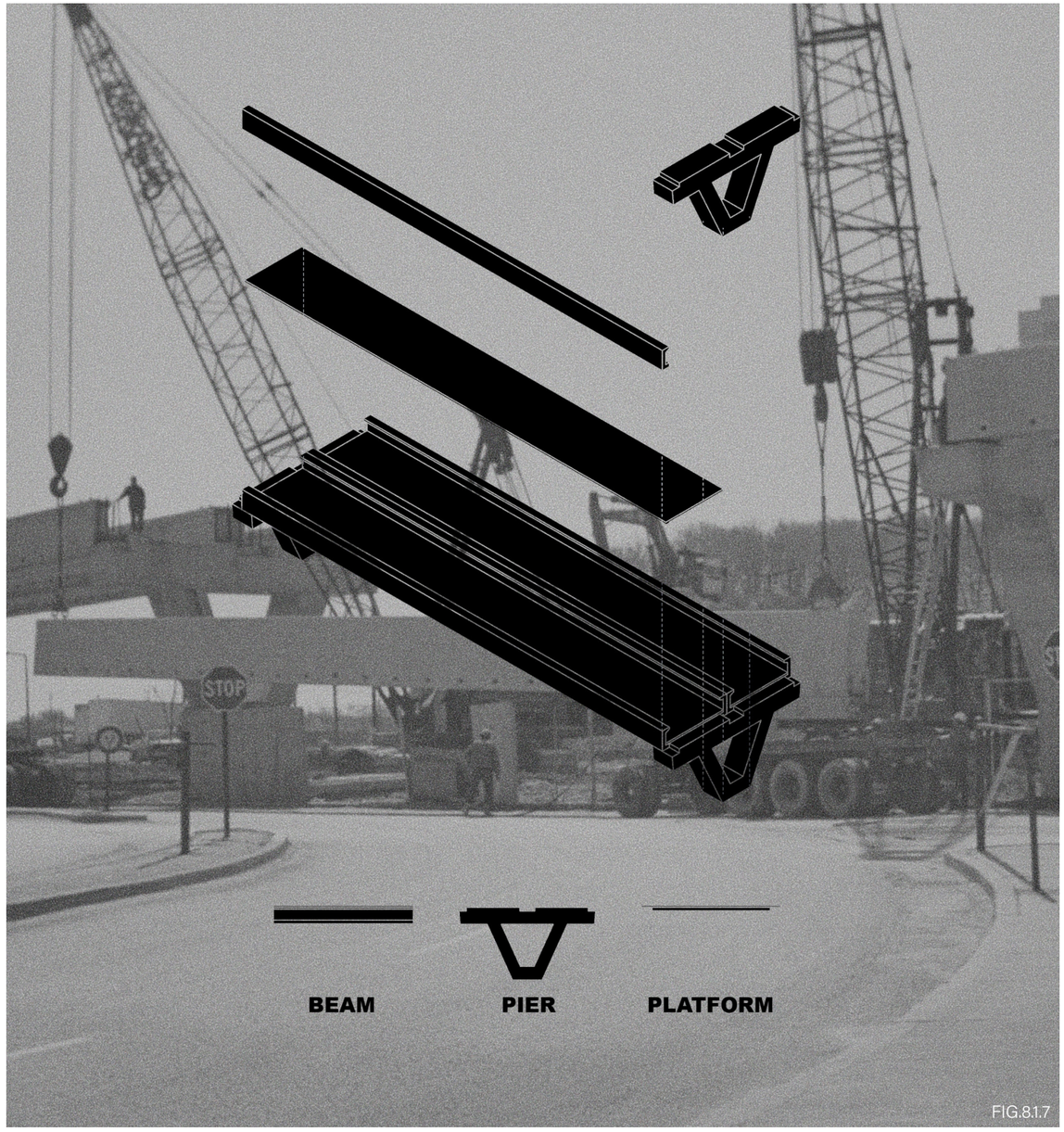


FIG.8.1.7

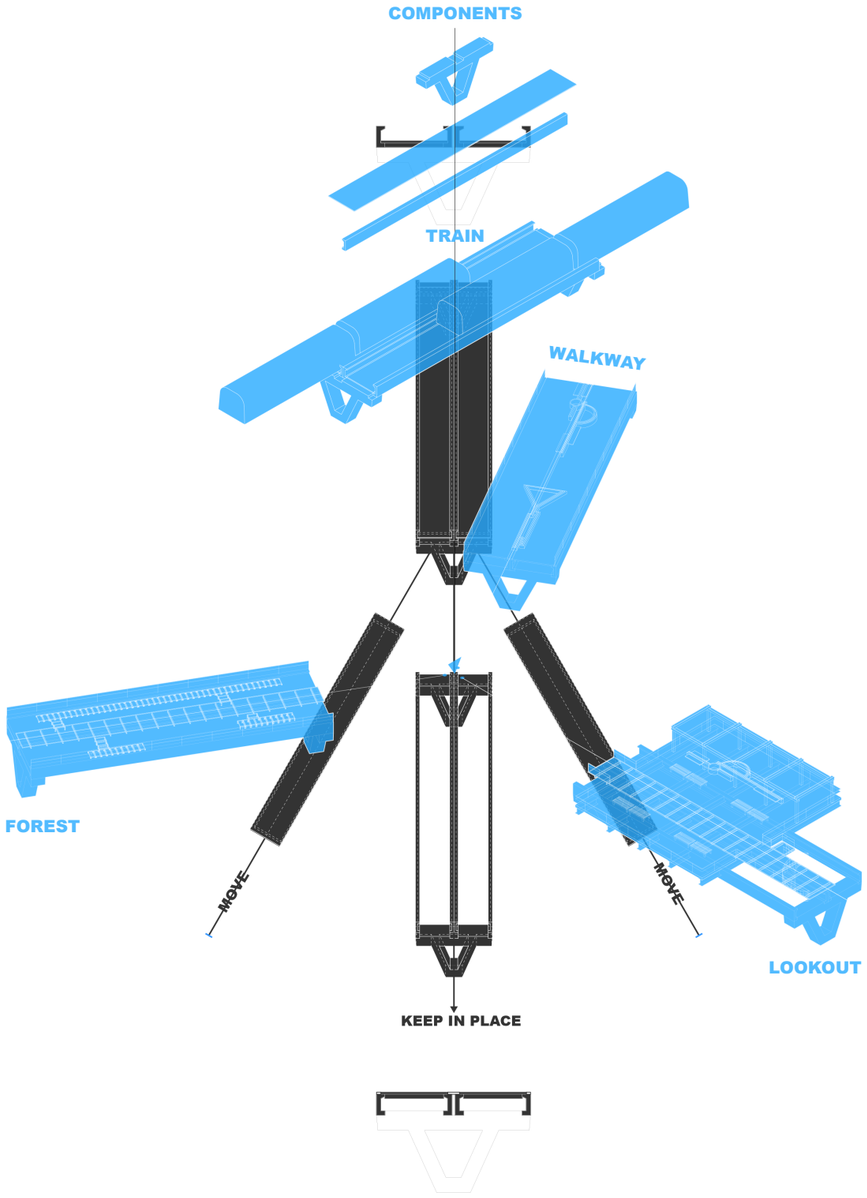
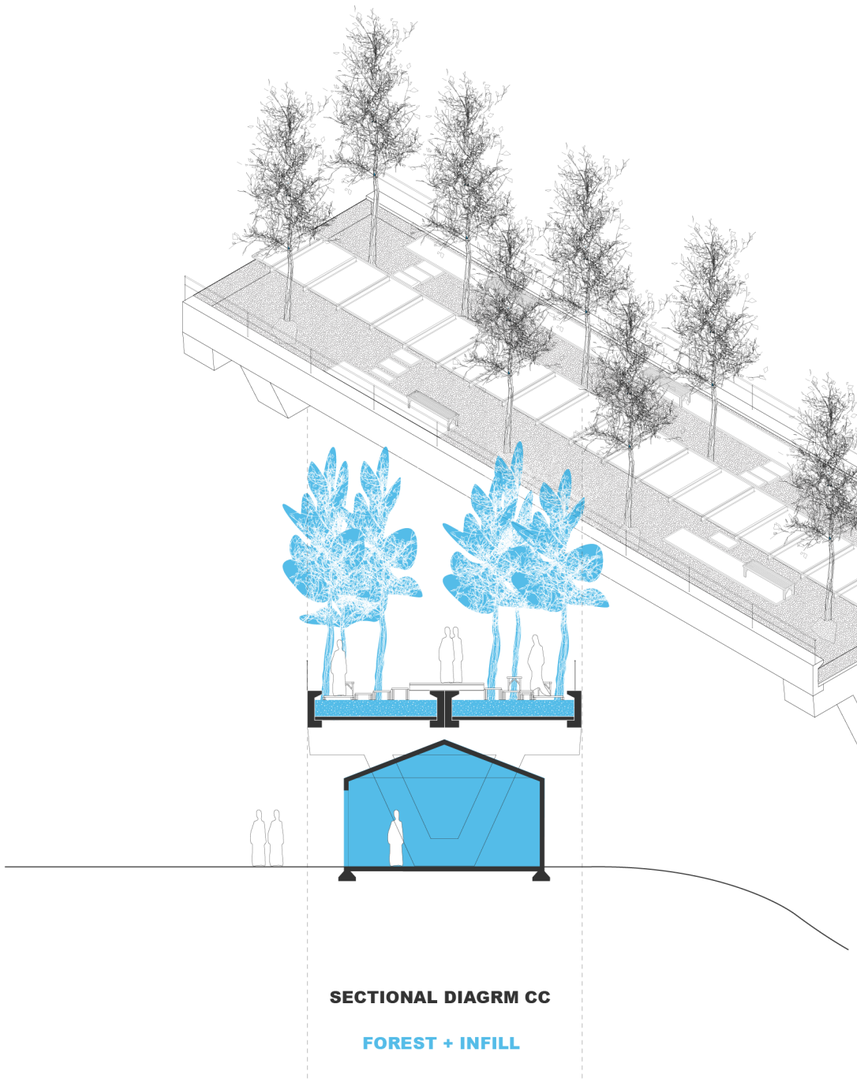


FIG.8.1.8

The elevated guideway was constructed with three distinct components assembled on site. The piers are trapezoidal in shape, the beams are C-channel in shape, and the slabs are notched to fit within the C-channel beams. Each component is made of reinforced concrete. Given the longevity of concrete—as described in Concrete Toronto—for the sake of this thesis, these components are considered sound for reuse and will become the foundation onto which the reuse strategy is built.

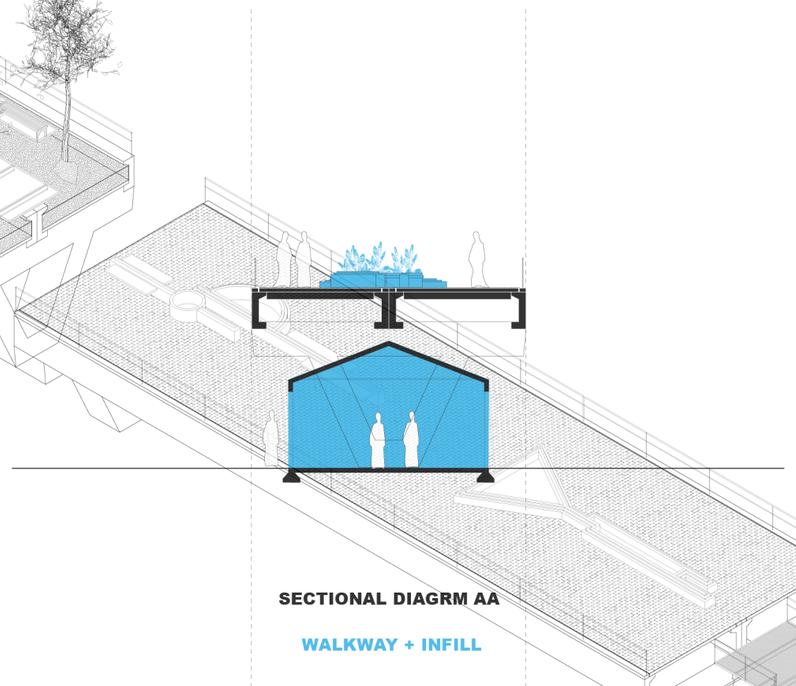
The reuse strategy for the RT guideway is to rearrange its three components to create walkways, planted segments, and lookout points. From here, a combination of these configurations can be assembled to create a dynamic pedestrian path for the Scarborough Centre area.

RT GUIDEWAY REUSE STRATEGY



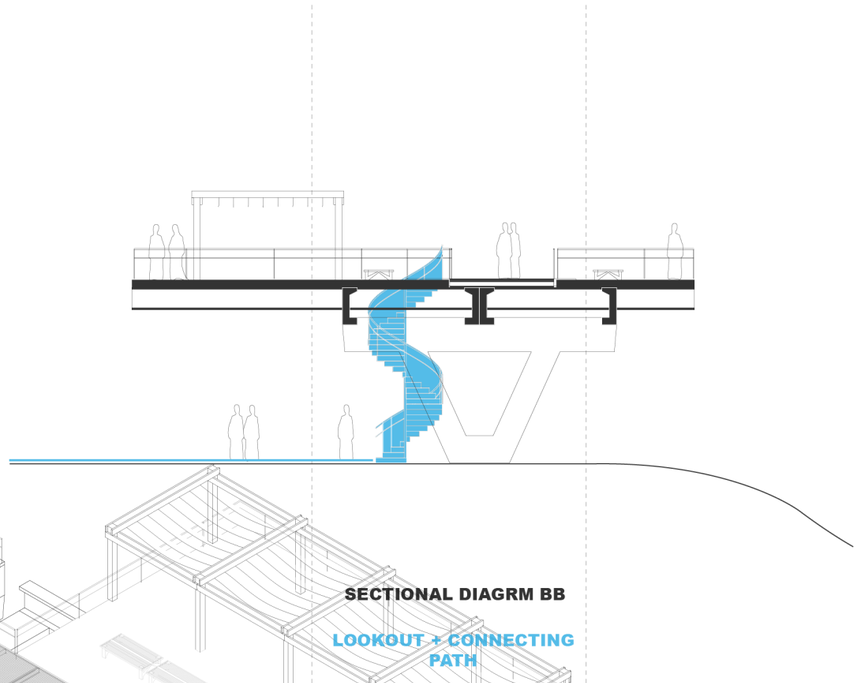
SECTIONAL DIAGRM CC

FOREST + INFILL



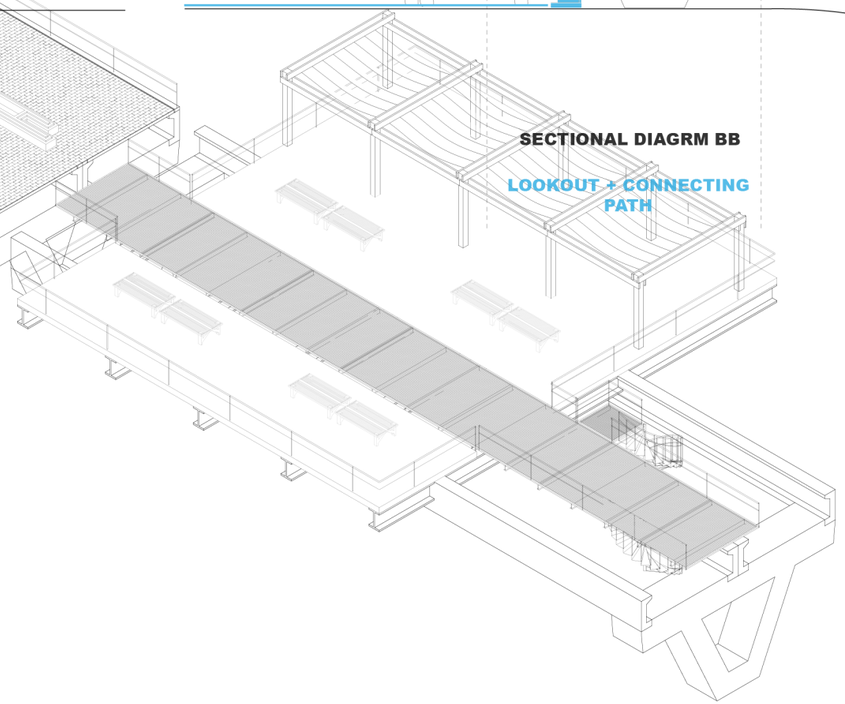
SECTIONAL DIAGRM AA

WALKWAY + INFILL



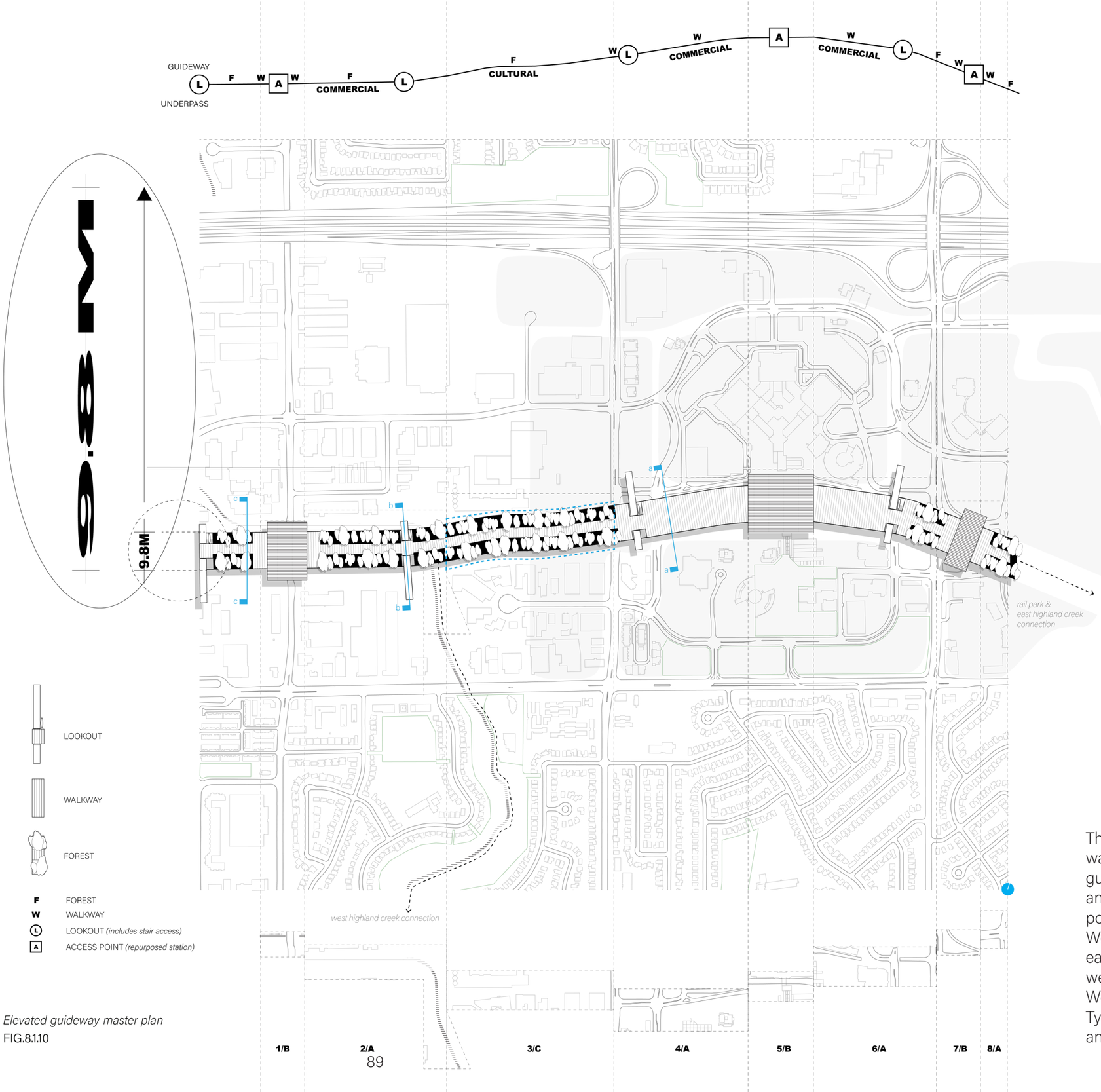
SECTIONAL DIAGRM BB

LOOKOUT + CONNECTING PATH



Further examination of the structural system results in three distinct forms, referred to as modules: the forest module, the lookout module, and the walkway module. The walkway module introduces planters and paving; the lookout module reconfigures the slabs to create a raised viewing platform; and the forest module retains the original slab arrangement, filling the channel with soil to support tree planting. Collectively, these modules shape the spatial logic of the master plan.

FIG.8.1.9



Elevated guideway master plan
FIG.8.1.10

The master plan consists of lookout points, planted segments and walkways - fused together to form a pedestrian path above the RT guideway infrastructure. The RT stations – McCowan, Scarborough Centre, and Midland – are repurposed as access points to the new path. Lookout points provide secondary access to ground levels at the intersection of West Highland Creek, Brimley Road, and west of McCowan Road. The east end of the guideway is proposed to connect to the RT rail park. The westernmost point of the line is proposed to become a lookout point, West of Midland Road. Architectural infill is indicated to be located in. Type B area. The master plan prioritizes increased pedestrian connectivity and architectural density.

ZONE 3 SITE ANALYSIS

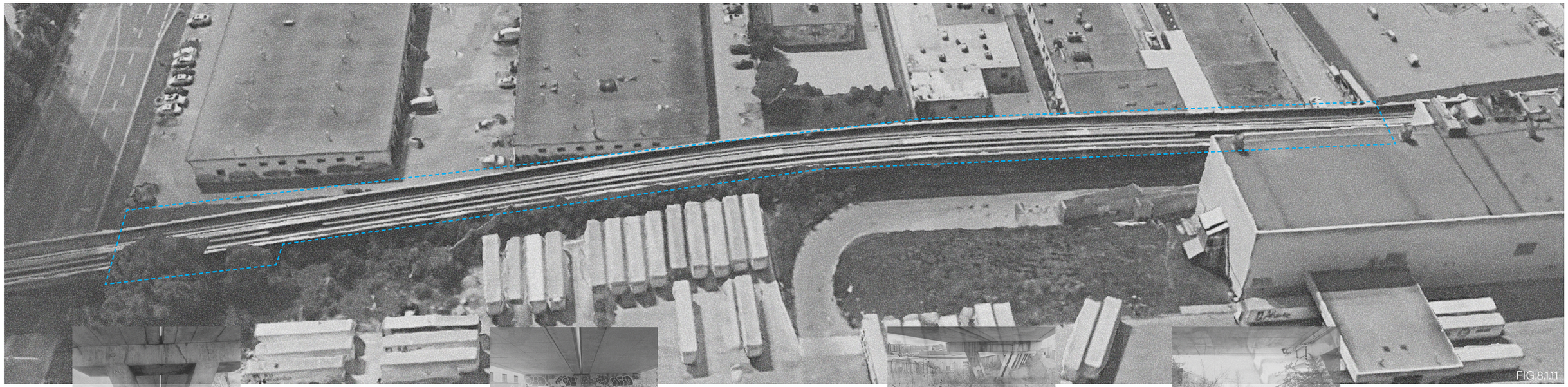


FIG.8.1.11



FIG.8.1.12



FIG.8.1.13



FIG.8.1.14



FIG.8.1.15

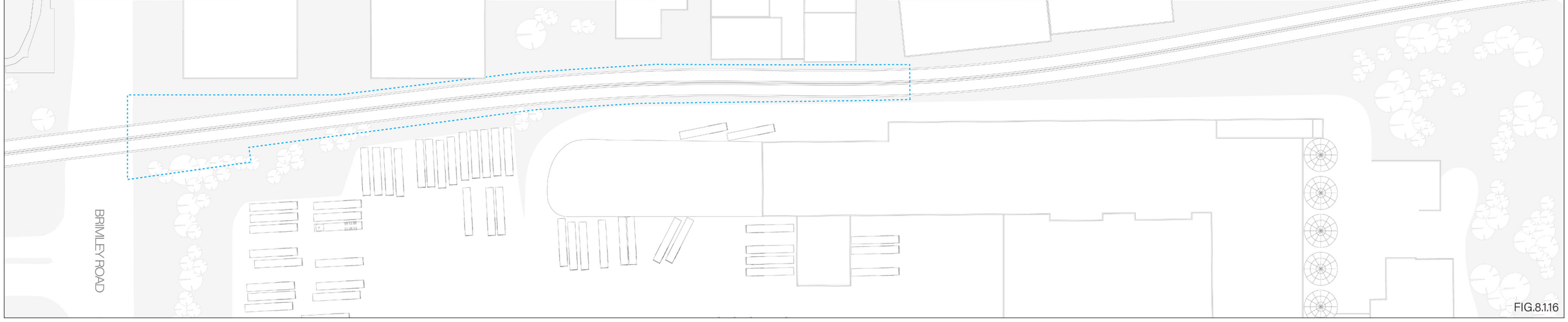
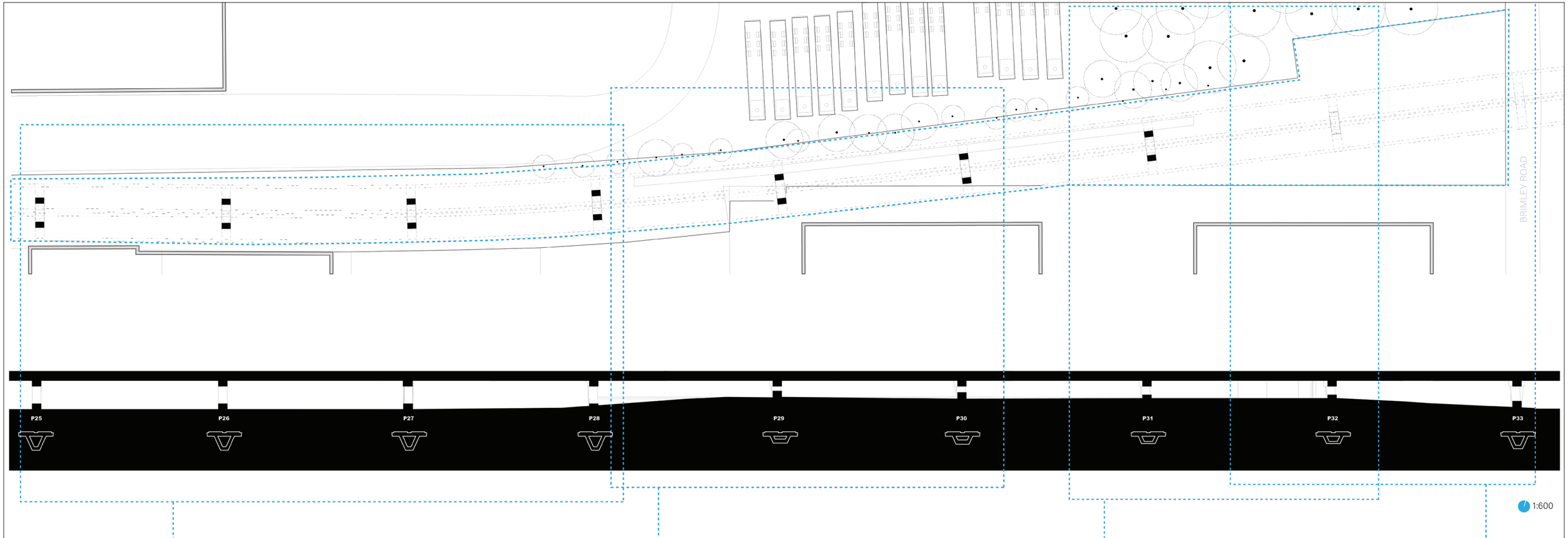


FIG.8.1.16

0 10 30M

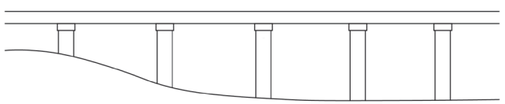
The Site Analysis section of this chapter examines Zone 3, or Type C, in greater depth. This segment presents a uniquely restrictive condition of the RT, where the underpass is largely inaccessible—sandwiched between industrial properties with a single access point along Brimley Road. The analysis was conducted using

publicly available data from the City of Toronto and supplemented by site visits. On-site measurements were gathered manually, due to the absence of detailed topographical data in city records and limited access to RT guideway documentation held by the TTC.

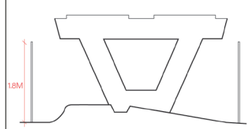


AREA 4: PIER 25, 26, 27, 28

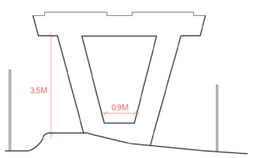
PLAN



PIER 28 ELEVATION



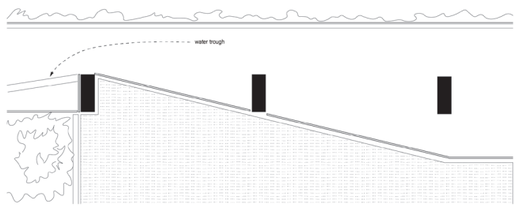
PIER 25, 26, 27 ELEVATION



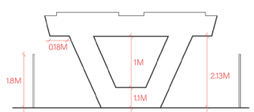
"area" diagrams are not to scale
"≈" indicates an estimated measurement

AREA 3: PIER 29, 30

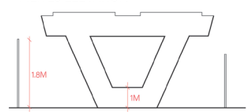
PLAN



PIER 30 ELEVATION

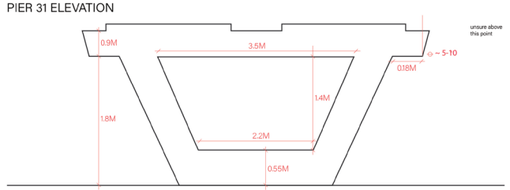


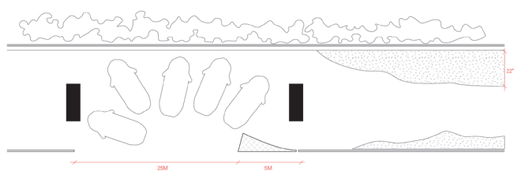
PIER 29 ELEVATION



AREA 2: PIER 31, 32

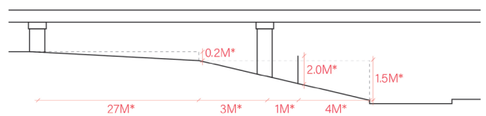
PIER 31 ELEVATION



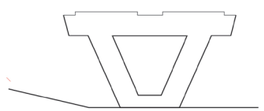


AREA 1: PIER 33

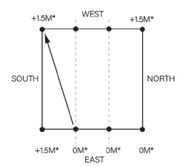
SOUTH ELEVATION



EAST ELEVATION



ELEVATION DIAGRAM (PLAN)



Zone 3 analytical drawing

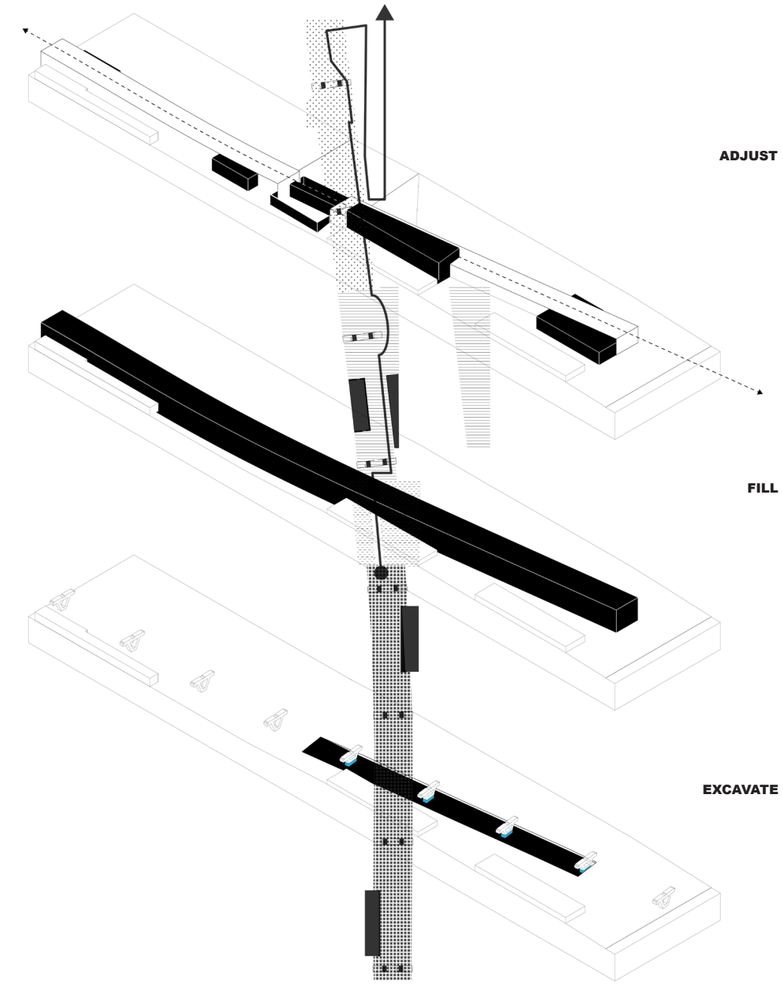
FIG.8.1.17

ARCHITECTURAL INFILL PROPOSAL

The Design Proposal transforms the terrain vague of the RT underpass in Zone 3 into a dynamic, multipurpose art venue serving the Scarborough Centre area. Rooted in the communal ingenuity explored throughout this thesis, the design draws from local practices of adapting industrial buildings and socially occupying underused spaces. It embodies these ideas through a formal intervention that reclaims both the terrain vague and the abandoned infrastructure.

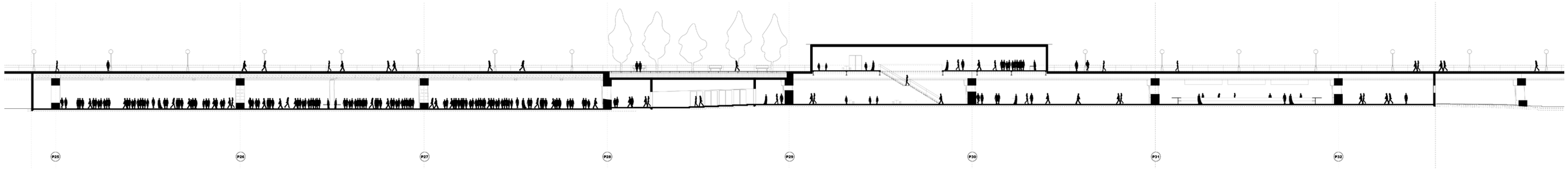
The massing strategy is to occupy the underpass of the guideway west of Brimley Road, treating the space as a sequential journey, with Brimley Road as the access point. The first move involves the excavation and reinforcement of piers to increase headroom beneath the guideway. Next, volumes are added to the underpass, situating the new building alongside the existing industrial context. Finally, volume is both removed and added to respond to surrounding buildings and to vary the spatial form of the structure in relation to its program and the site's topography.

The multi-media venue includes an entrance, lounge, patio, and exhibition space. The entrance is designed to guide visitors from the axis of the surrounding context to the axis of the RT. The lounge introduces a second-floor condition on the guideway platform, creating an intimate setting. The patio, supported by a hallway and two walls, forms a partially enclosed outdoor space beneath the RT, serving as an escape to the outdoors. The exhibition space is tall and open-spanned, offering flexibility of use. The sequential nature of the building's form reinforces the experiential quality of the site and emphasizes its adaptive reuse.



Superimposed massing, program, and circulation diagram

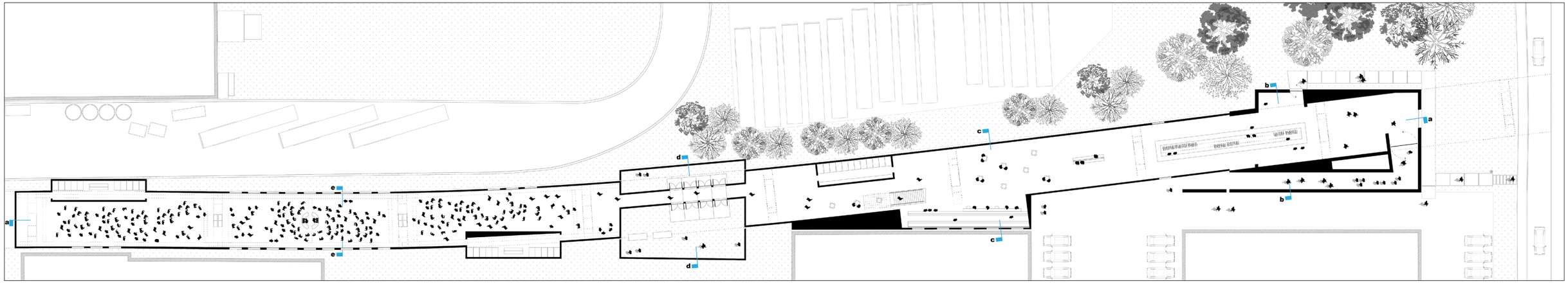
FIG.8.1.18



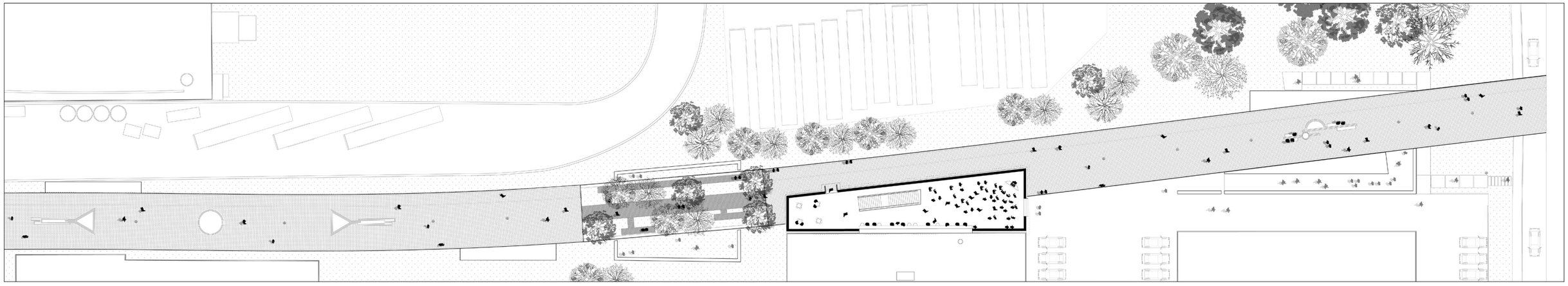
Transverse Section AA

FIG.8.1.19

0 5 10M

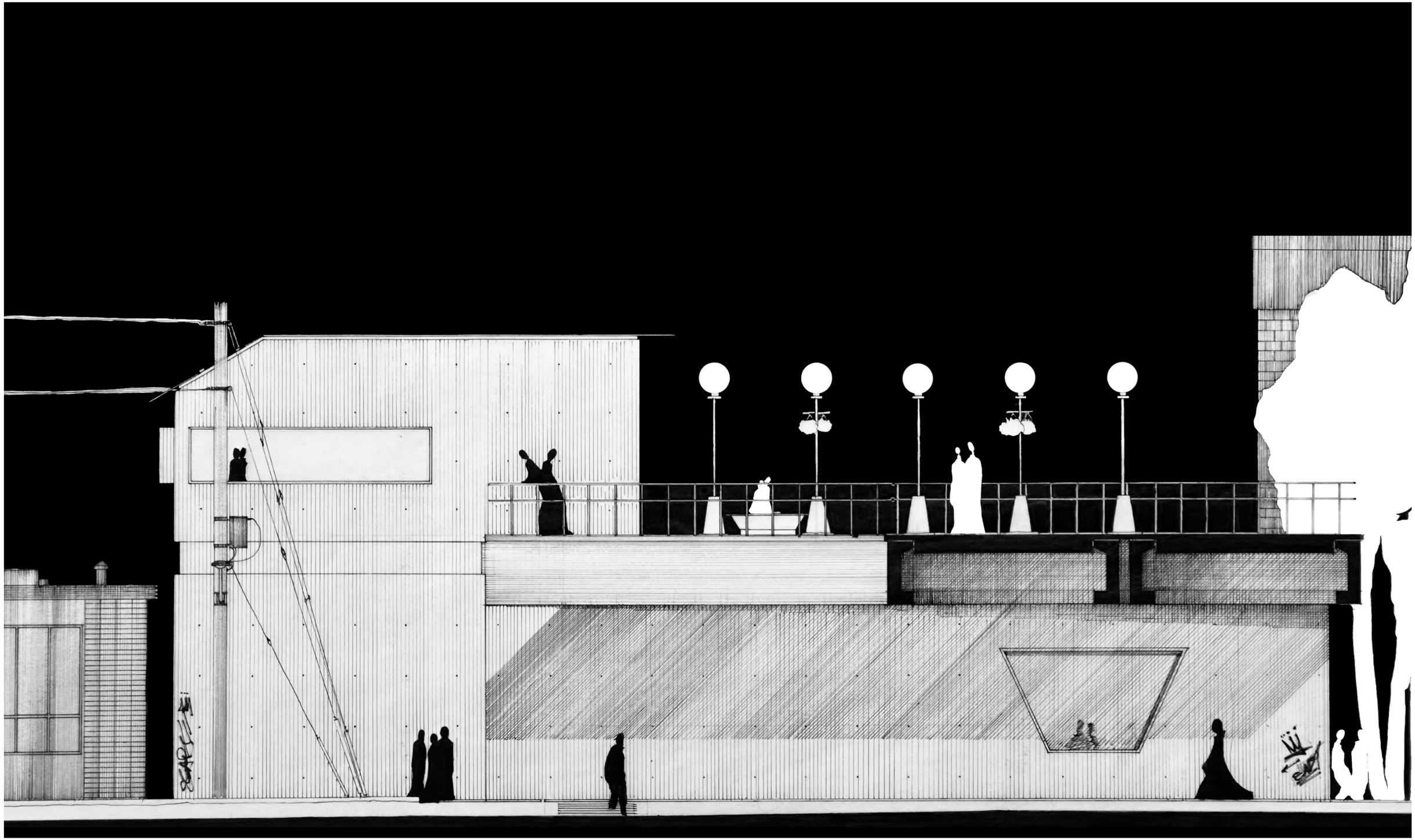


Ground plan
FIG.8.1.20



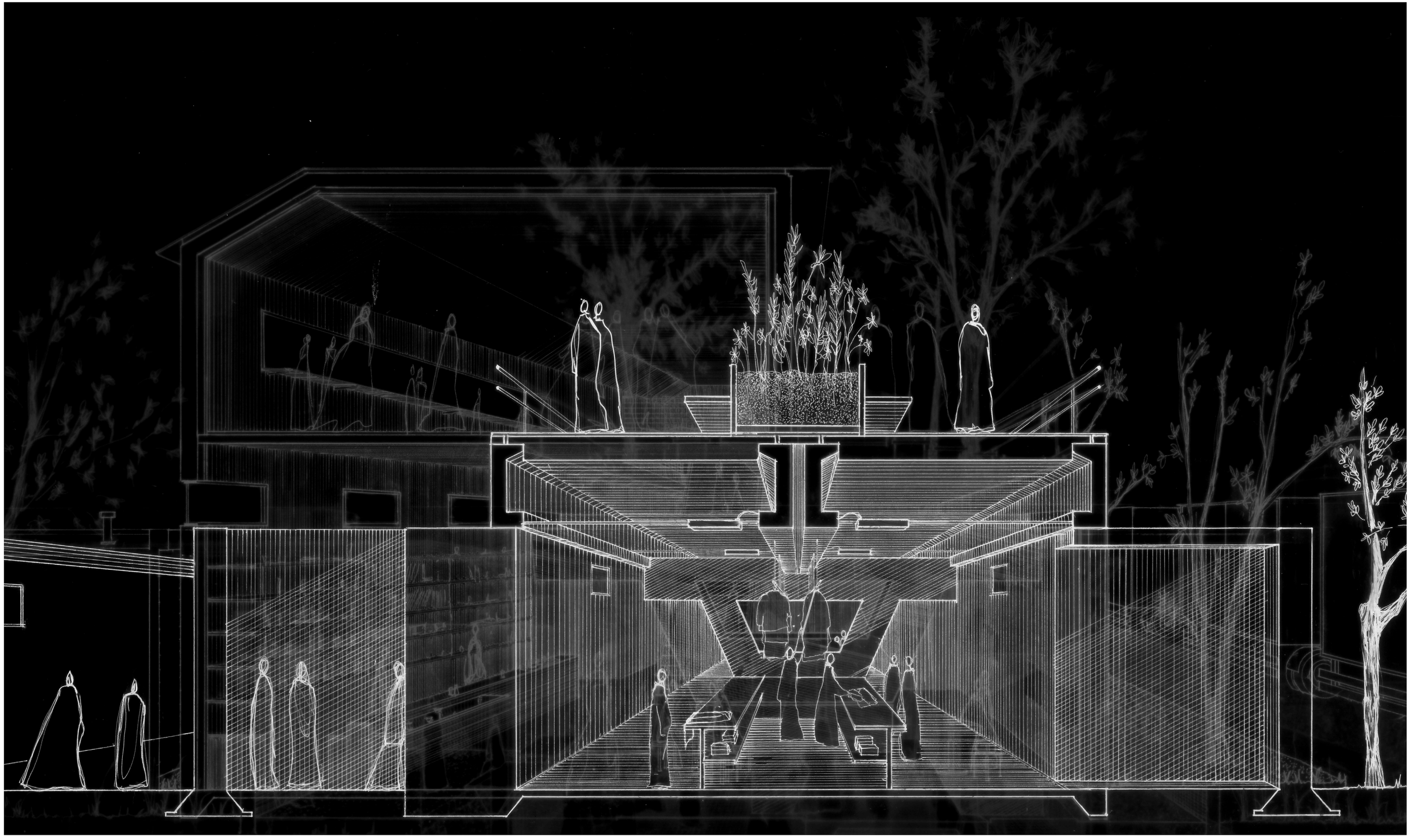
+2 plan
FIG.8.1.21

0 5 10M



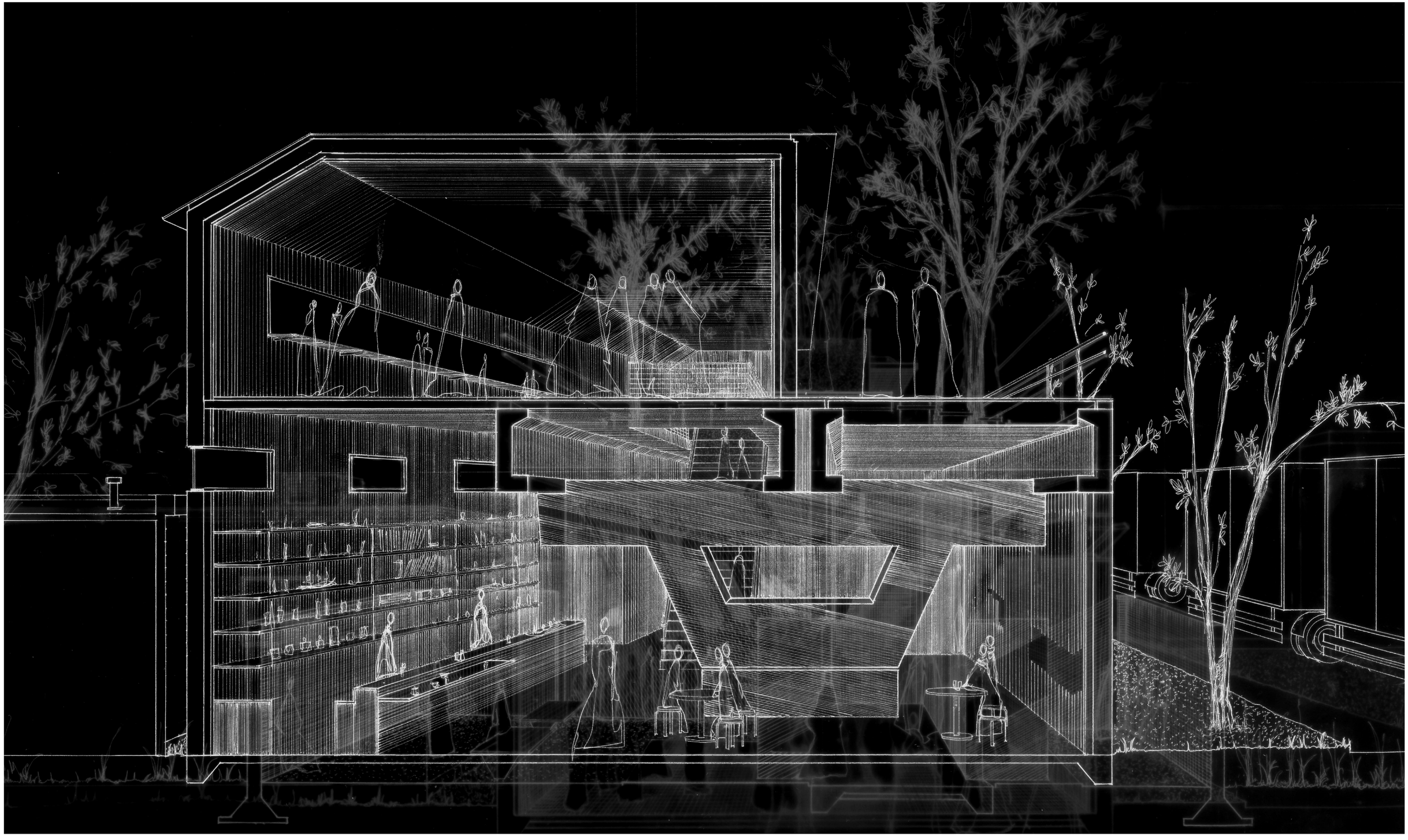
Elevation along Brimley Road
FIG.8.1.22

0 1 3M



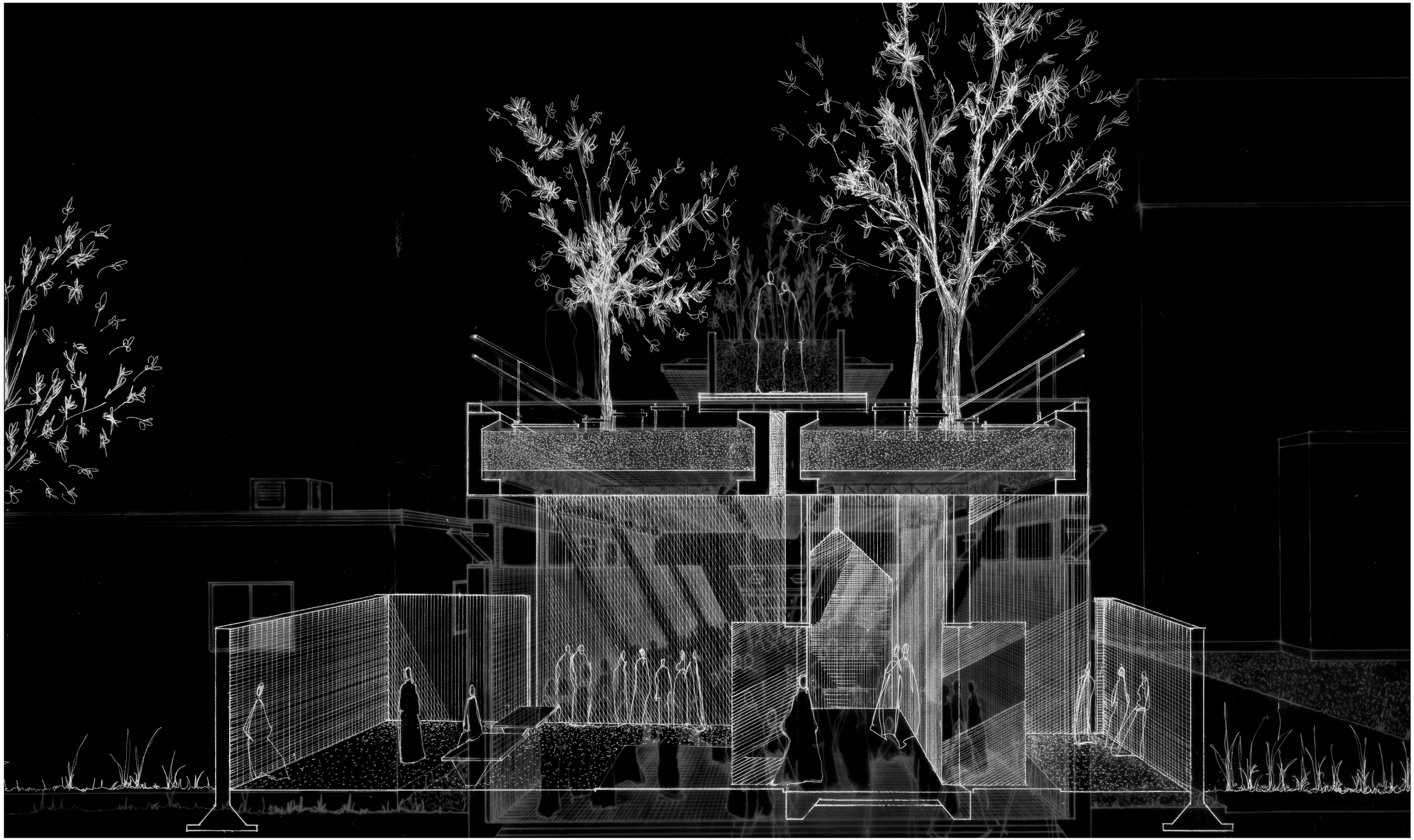
Cross-Section BB, Entrance
FIG.8.1.23

0 1 3M



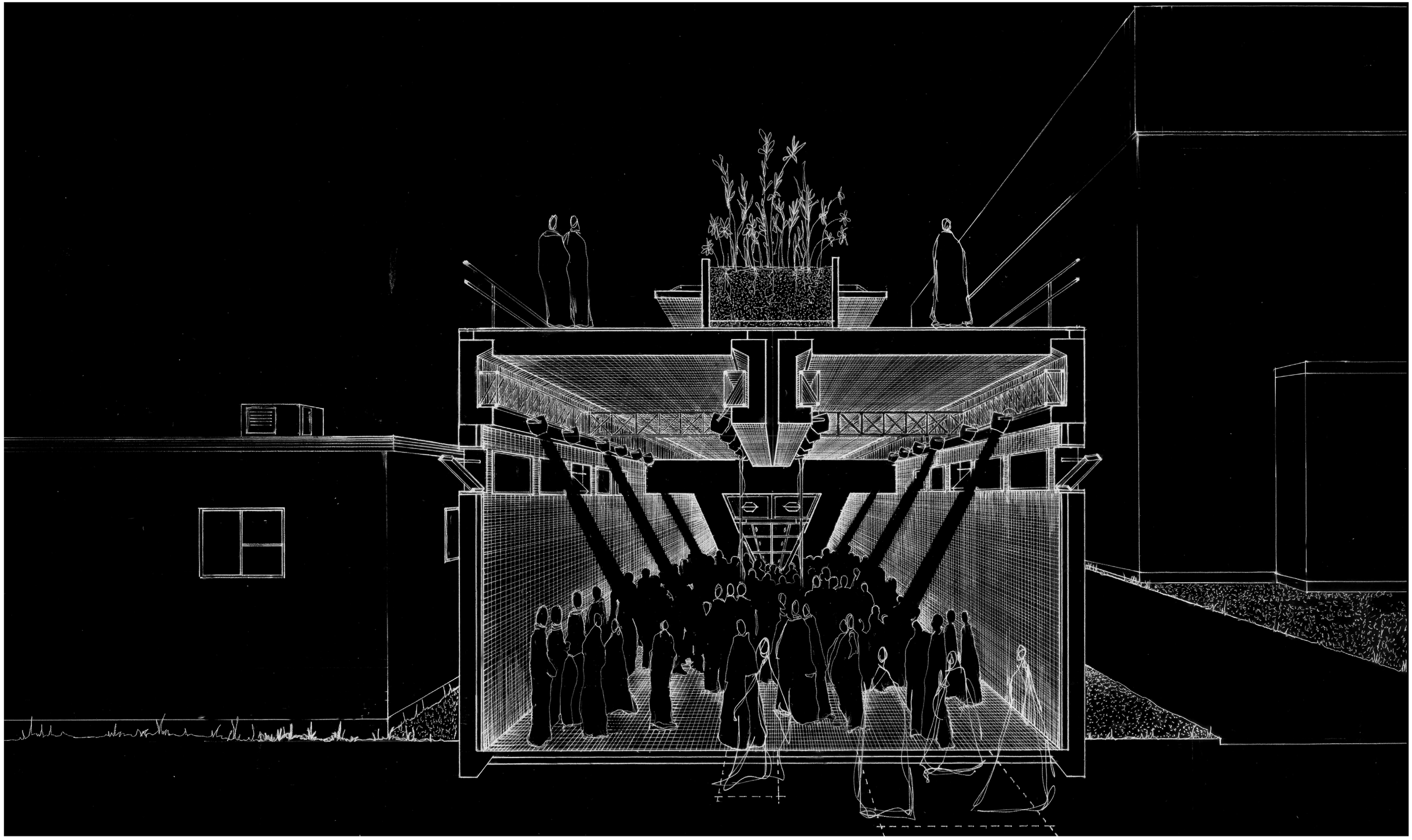
Cross-Section CC, Lounge
FIG.8.1.24

0 1 3M



Cross-Section DD, Patio
FIG.8.1.25

0 1 3M



Cross-Section EE, Exhibition space
FIG.8.1.26

0 1 3M

CONCLUSION

This design proposal reimagines the Scarborough RT's decommissioned elevated guideway as a public space that bridges the area's cultural identity with its industrial suburban landscape. By transforming the guideway into a pedestrian path and introducing architectural infill beneath its span, the design attempts to formalize the adaptive ingenuity found in Scarborough's communal identity. It engages with the guideway's unique spatial conditions—excavating and reinforcing structural elements, strategically adding, and subtracting volumes—to create a sequence of program and form. Through a sequenced massing strategy, the intervention frames new relationships between people, the terrain vague, and infrastructure, ensuring the RT's endures as a communal asset. The experience of this proposal is imagined in the following meditation, *A Rave in the East End*.

A
RAVE
IN
THE
EAST END

NINE



FIG.9.1.1

January is cold, grey, and quiet in Toronto. Usually, a night like this would be written off, but friends convinced me to get out of my suburban house and go to a jungle rave. As I step outside and zip up my North Face puffer, I make my way toward the alleyway connecting to Brimley Road. The sky above is grey, and the air is crisp—each breath I take is sharp. While making my way down the residential sidewalk towards the entrance of the alleyway, I shelter my hands in the pockets of my down jacket and notice shadows of my companions cast onto the sidewalk in front of me. We all live in this neighbourhood and meet here at the junction between our houses before making our way to Brimley Road together. Once through the alleyway, we walk south along a path lined with deciduous trees appearing as silhouettes in the light of street lamps illuminating the road.

Our first sign of the Scarborough Centre area is crossing a 401 ramp. The trees no longer line the sidewalk, and the road is clear in the light of a lamp above our heads. We wait for a moment in which headlights are far enough in the distance to indicate safety. Once crossed, we see cars below whizzing past us at 100km an hour as we walk across the overpass. Past the 401, we find ourselves next to industrial buildings to our west, closed for the evening. The only sign of life on the western side of Brimley Road is a trapezoidal window underneath the RT guideway, marking tonight's venue.

The frosted trapezoidal window blurs silhouettes entering the space. A dim glow of warm light marks each person as they walk past on the inside. The Underpass occupies the decommissioned RT infrastructure West of Brimley Road, keeping the neighbourhood active at night when neighbouring properties are desolate.

The building's presence is minimal, hosting only the window and some graffiti. There is

no entrance to be found or clear indication of one. What is noticeable are figures at the back of a neighbouring parking lot and steps at the front of the venue leading to them. We follow the path. It is subtle, but it is intuitive enough for us to slowly realize that the entrance is where the people we saw a moment ago disappeared into. The concrete wall we walk along lines up parallel to the building next to it, stopping exactly where the neighbouring building ends. Here, the entrance to the Underpass is found.

Behind this partition is a queue extending back towards the direction from which we came. People in line filter forward in a hallway-like space, sandwiched between the wall of the venue and the exterior partition open to the night sky, towards security. At the end of the hall, where security stands, the walls meet the RT guideway, marking the building's front door.

The experience of entering feels familiar to the times I used to walk underneath the guideway with a speaker and a lantern. I would park in the back of the lot away from traffic—where the line begins today—and use my intuition to find a way into the underpass property. At its core, the experience is the same—listening to music underneath the RT—which my friends and I came to do tonight.

As the line moves along, security pats us down, and we are faced with the front door spanning from the floor up to the beam of the guideway, pivoting centrally. As we step past this large threshold, we find ourselves enclosed within a concrete structure illuminated by warm, dim light. Here, workers positioned between two of the RT's old piers invite us to remove our puffer jackets. Industrial pipes fashioned into the RT beams act as coat hangers. After I get my ticket for retrieving my possessions post-event, I sit down on a pier and wait for others to join me. It is cool, smooth, and



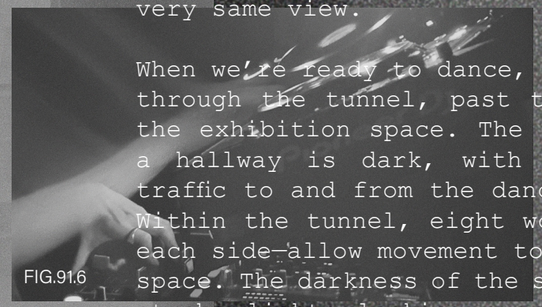
FIG.9.1.3

FIG.9.1.2

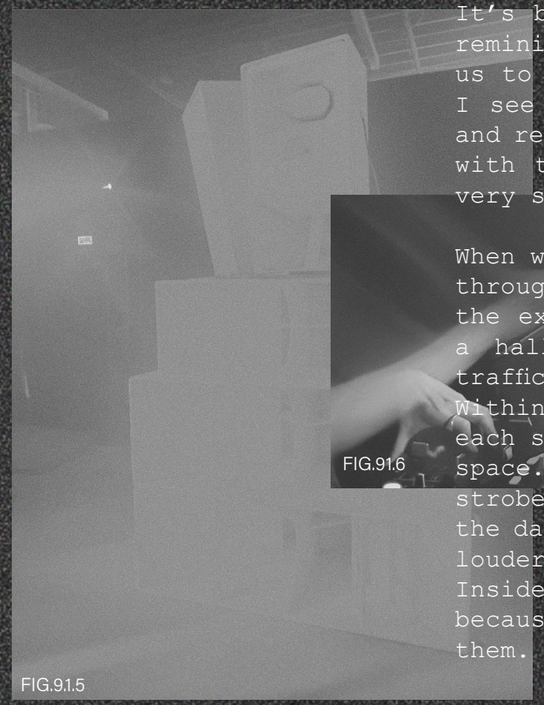
covered in graffiti tags left from when the RT was in use. The ground has been excavated slightly to create comfortable headroom—an indent on the pier indicates the pre-existing ground level.

Once our coats are checked, we spot a friend behind the bar and grab a drink from them. As an artist themselves, they work here to stay immersed in the Toronto art scene. They mention that people we know are upstairs, as another mutual friend is mixing for the evening. We're thrilled to hear that someone we know is involved in tonight's event so, after handing us our drinks, we eagerly head up the staircase into the lounge.

People are having conversations in the warm light—some seated, some standing, and others swaying to Sade's vocals on top of breakbeats. Looking around I see black Rick Owen cargos, football jerseys, Hood by Air long sleeves, and a BAPE hoodie. Even in the dimly lit room, influences stemming from music and sport are an aesthetic feature of the evening. I find old friends next to a panoramic window, their faces lighting up with excitement as we approach. It's been a while since we've spoken, and we reminisce about our shared interests that led us to jungle music. As I look out the window, I see the industrial rooftops of Scarborough and recall the times when I used to ride the RT with these friends to school, looking at the very same view.


FIG.91.6

When we're ready to dance, we head downstairs, through the tunnel, past the patio, and into the exhibition space. The tunnel—functionally a hallway is dark, with lighting directing traffic to and from the dance floor and lounge. Within the tunnel, eight wooden doors—four on each side—allow movement to and from the patio space. The darkness of the space contrasts with strobe lights leaking around the entrance to the dance floor. As we approach, the music grows louder.
Inside, the scene is energetic and lively—both because of the sounds and the people dancing to them. The music places the crowd in a trance—


FIG.9.1.5

bodies moving to the groove, heads nodding to the beat. Nia Archive's edit of Skepta's song Man comes on and gun-fingers go up in the air—a nod to both the UK rave scene and Toronto's Caribbean influences. An MC says something inaudible through the knocking bass—the energy is high and a mosh pit forms in front of me.

Like the rest of the building, the dance floor is narrow and long, so we move inwards and find space to join. As we do, I notice beams from lights hosted rhythmically between piers bouncing around in the atmosphere of smoke machines. Within the trapezoidal openings of the piers sits Funktion-one sound systems, filling the space with music from the DJ's decks. We feel the bass reverberating in our chests, and I remember the lantern and the Bluetooth speaker we used to carry—this feels like an enhanced version of that moment. The implantation of sound and light seems adaptive, placed in relation to what predated the venue. Even though the room is now enclosed, it is reminiscent of when I used to hang out here underneath the running RT. As the music picks up, we move further into the dance floor, smoke blurring the entrance from which we came. The experience of the rave keeps us in the present moment.

After we run out of steam, we make our way to the patio. It is a relaxed contrast to the high energy of the dancefloor, with people leaning and sitting, engaged in conversation. The cold air is refreshing, as brisk as my walk to the venue. The sounds of distant cars and soft chatter fill the space, adding to the calm ambiance. There are benches nestled among the grass, and above on the guideway, trees stand tall, making the space feel like a peaceful escape. The moonlight casts a gentle glow over everything, giving the space an ethereal, serene quality. Groups of friends laugh and talk. After some time, we decide to dance more and ascend the steps of the patio back into the tunnel—our senses are engulfed by music, anticipation and excitement energizing our bodies once again.


FIG.9.1.7


FIG.9.1.8

FIG.9.1.4

P25



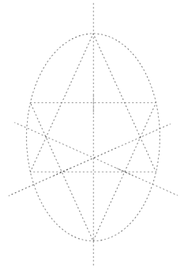
CONCLUSION

TEN

This thesis, explores the intersection of community and the built environment within Scarborough, Ontario, by examining the decommissioned Scarborough Rapid Transit elevated guideway as a site for adaptive reuse. Through personal reflections, historical research, and site analysis, this thesis investigates Scarborough's social and communal dynamics. It explores how the remnants of the Scarborough RT infrastructure can reimagine public space, fostering a sense of communal identity. The design proposes the guideway's reuse as a linear park with architectural infill, seeking to honour Scarborough's history while providing a space that reflects its diverse cultural spirit.

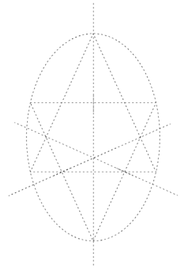
Key insights include the role of concrete infrastructure in Scarborough's evolution into a modern suburb of Metropolitan Toronto, the occupation of terrain vague in its social life, and the importance of adaptive reuse by immigrant communities in shaping Scarborough's built environment. Concrete infrastructure allowed for the connection of suburbia to a metropolitan area at a larger scale and at a faster pace than previously achievable. This creates ambiguous spaces as design prioritizes utility and efficiency. As a result, in conjunction with a lack of communal programming, people find ingenious ways to adapt their community's built environment—in this case by repurposing industrial buildings—to accommodate the programming they are deprived of. Social interaction is influenced by this ingenuity as people find familiarity in this built environment and the informality it creates. As a result, the terrain vague is occupied: parking lots, parks at night, and infrastructure underpasses. As the Scarborough Centre is envisioned to develop into a dense, walkable, mixed-use community the RT guideway becomes a topic to consider the evolution of these familiar social dynamics.

The goal of this document is to reflect on the lived experience of suburbia within the evolving Scarborough Centre area. The design approach draws from communal resilience and cultural identity. While challenges to reusing the guideway—outlined by the city—make its demolition likely, this thesis embraces that reality. Still, humouring its reuse allows for the acknowledgment of the infrastructure's integral influence on the social and communal life of Scarborough.

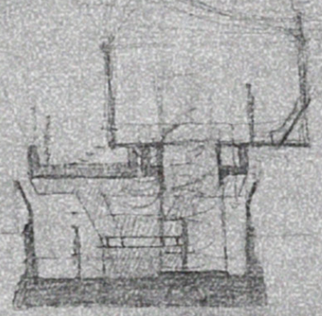


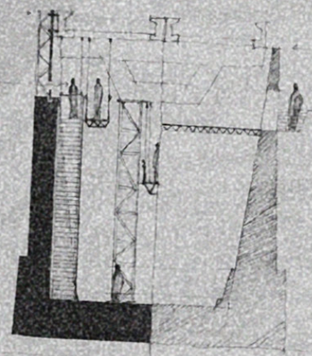
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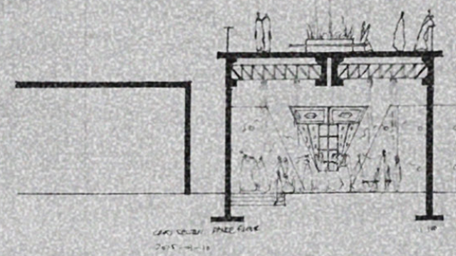
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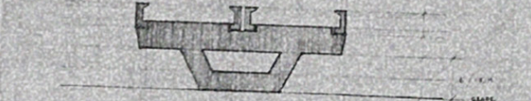


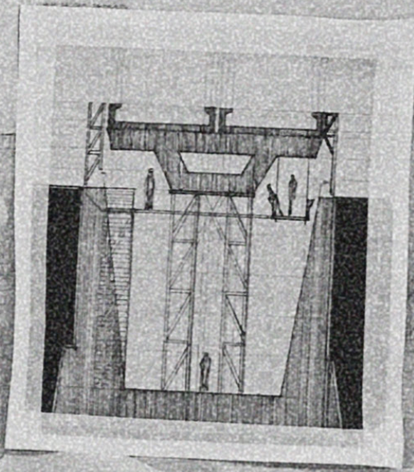
APPENDICES

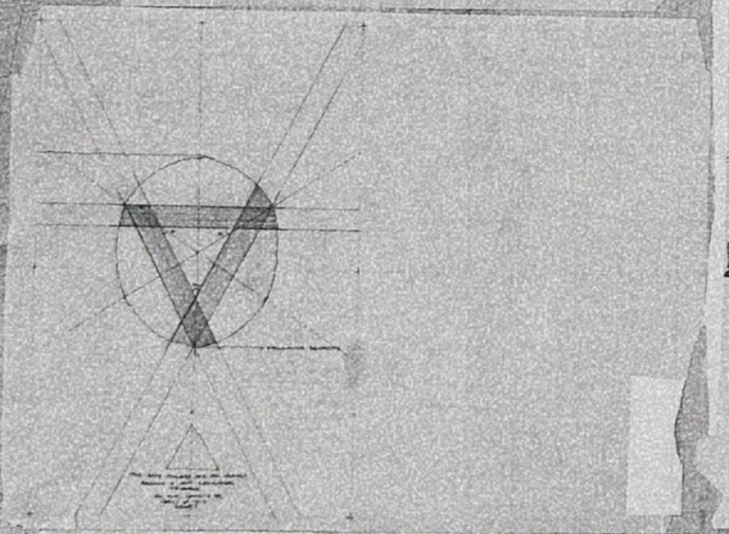


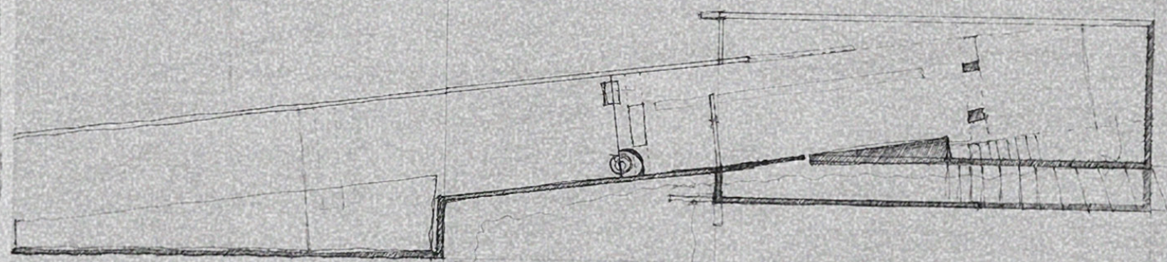


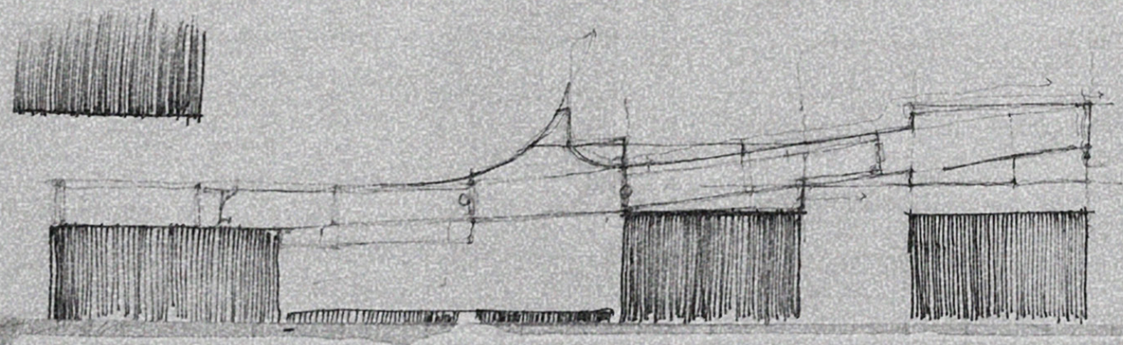


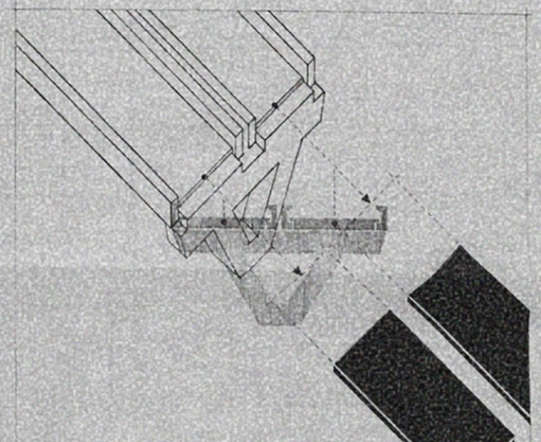


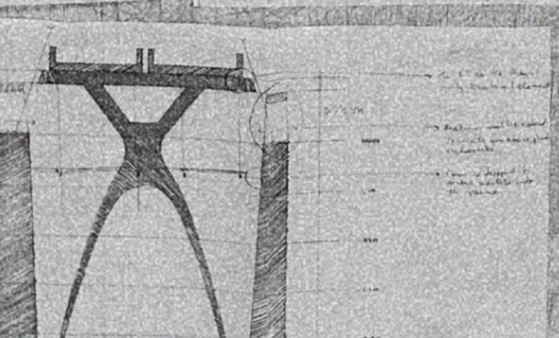


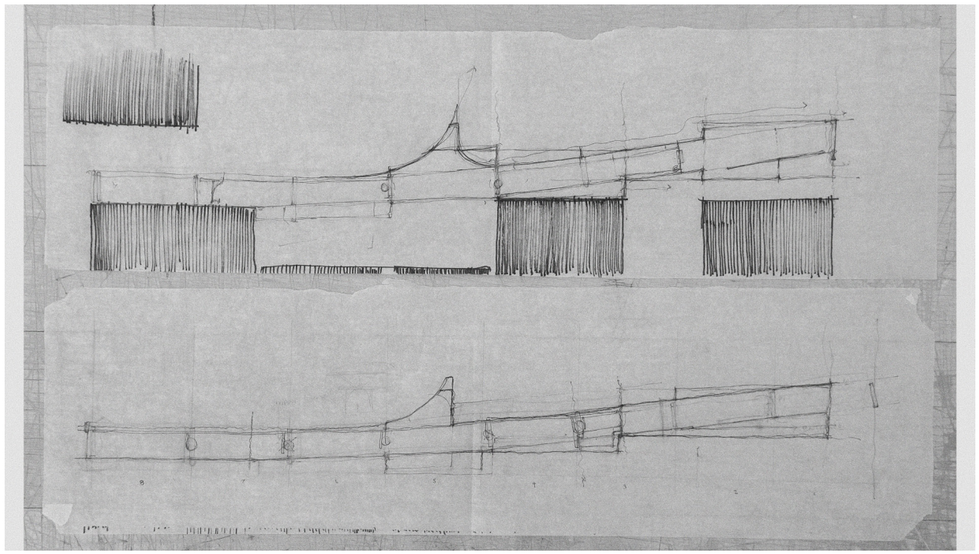


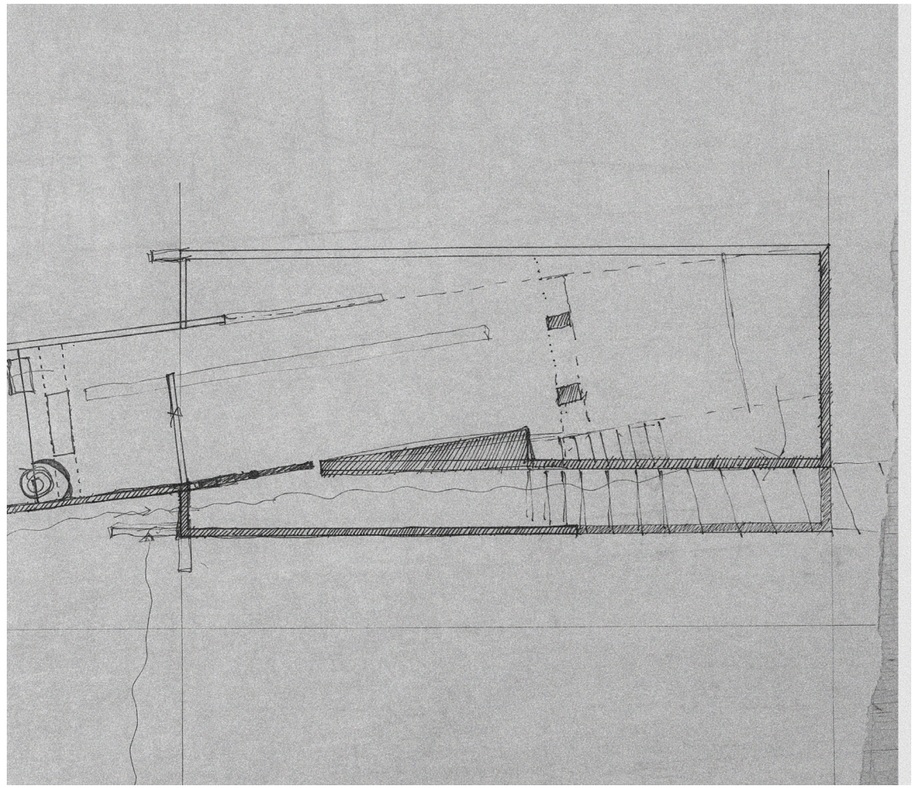


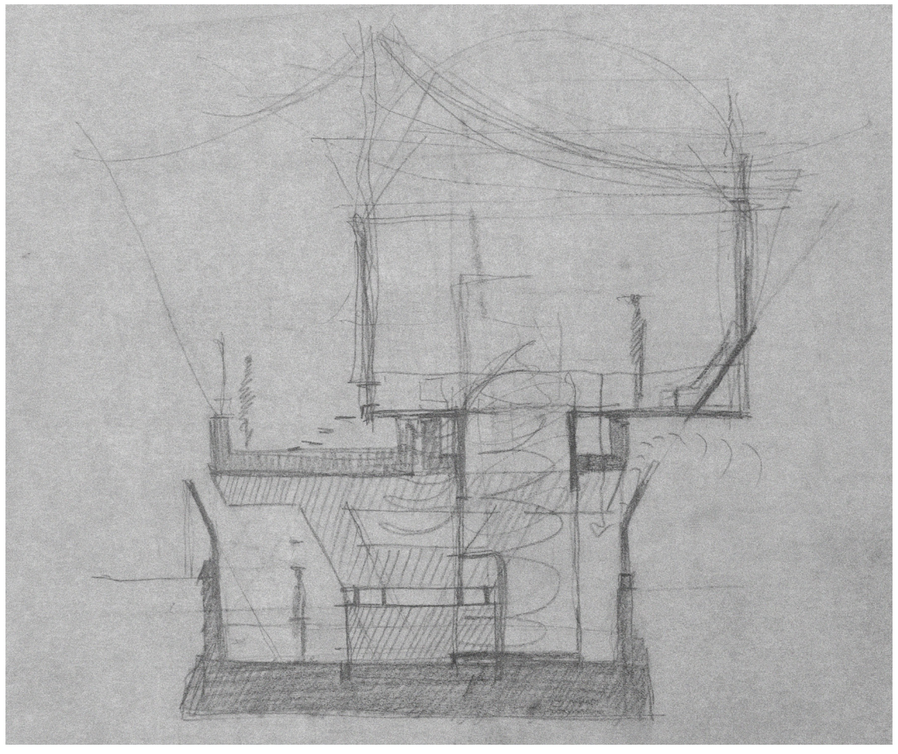


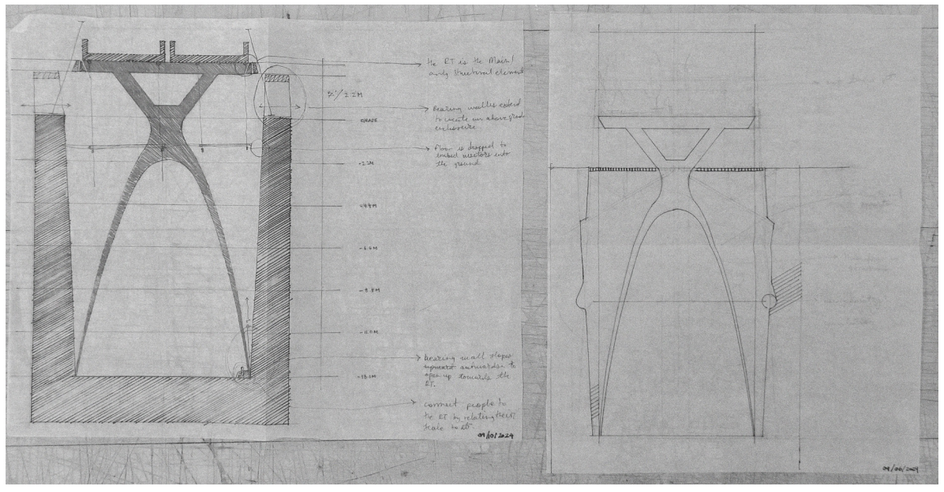


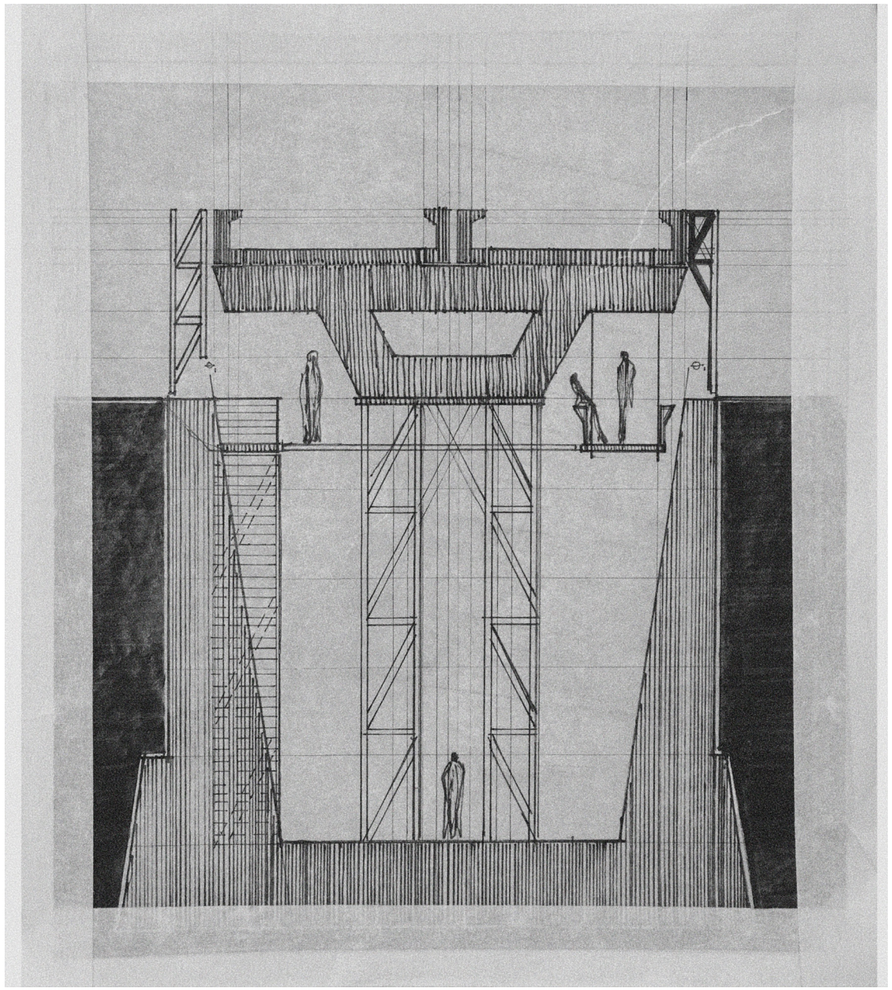


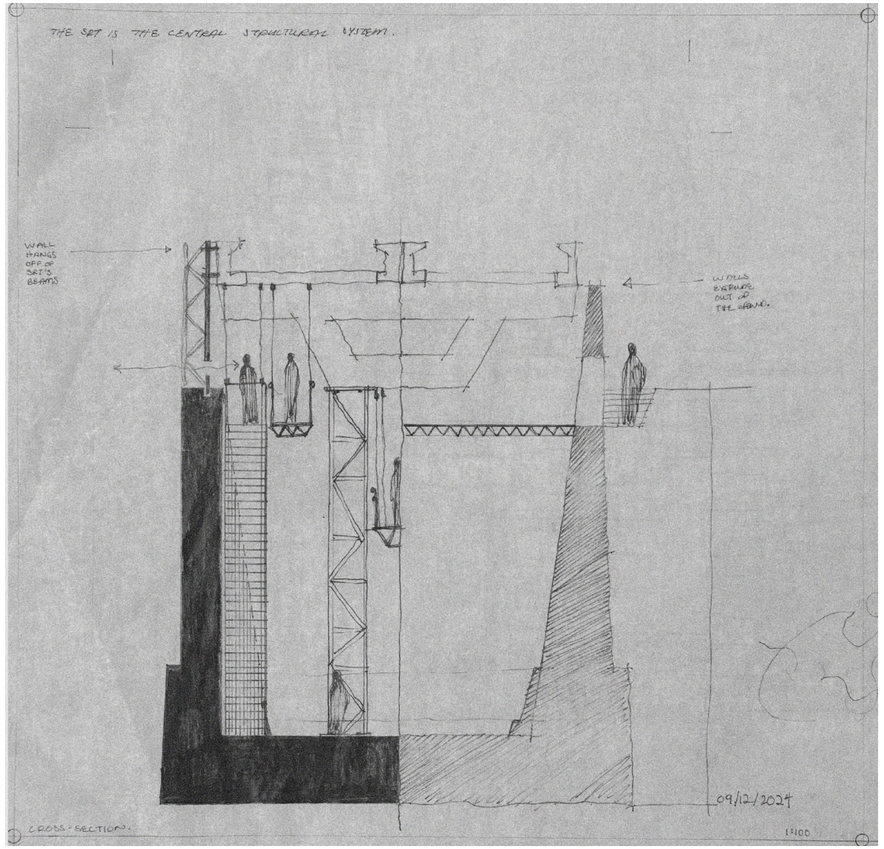


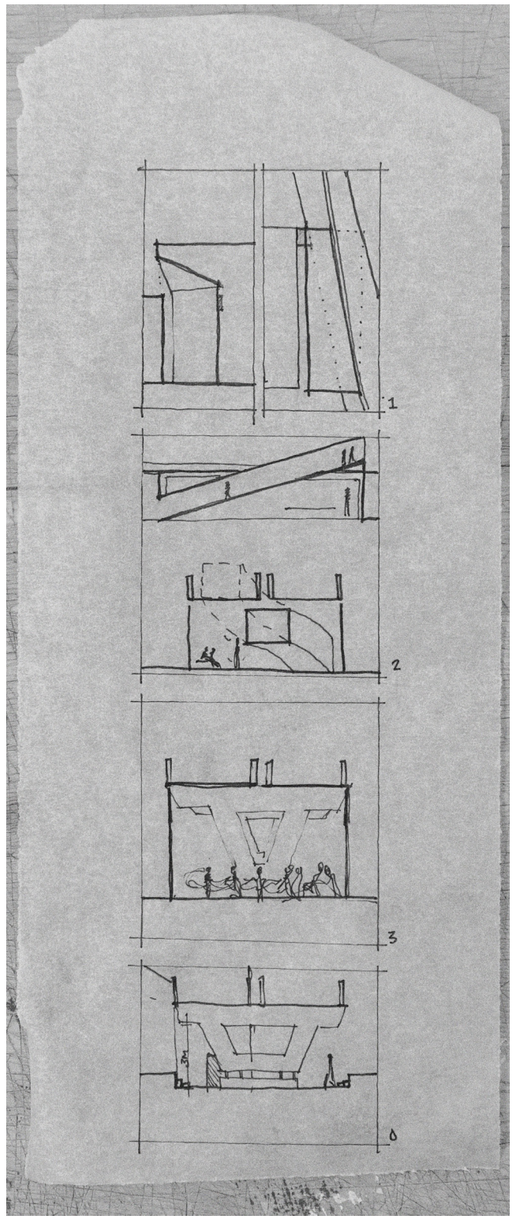


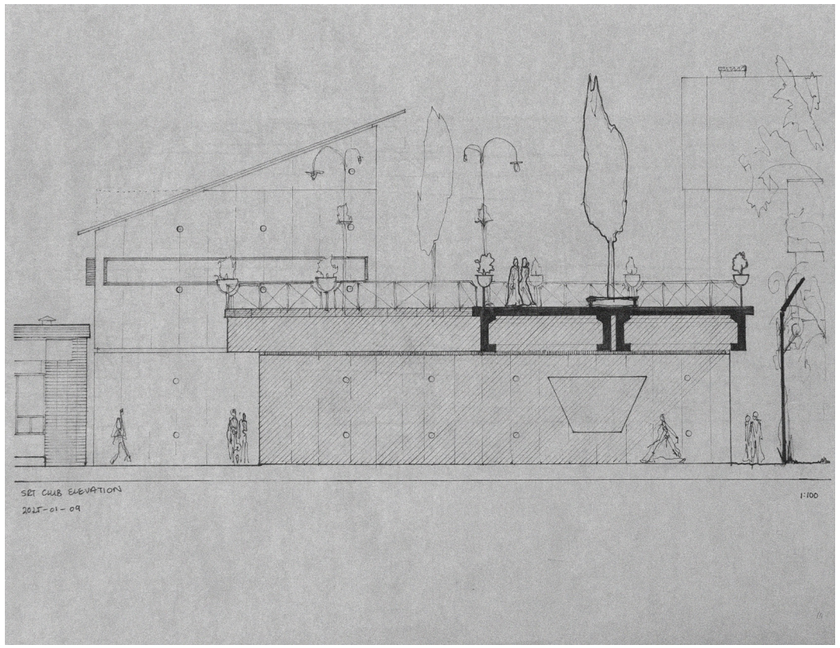


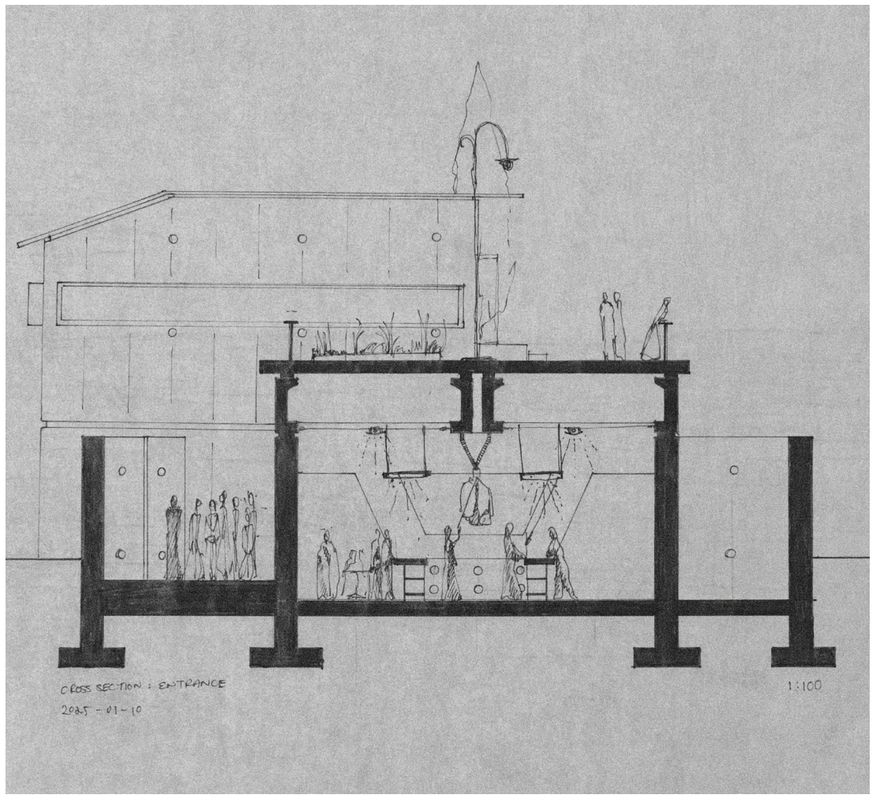

+2.5M
+1.5M
+0.5M
-0.5M
-1.5M
-2.5M
-3.5M
-4.5M
-5.5M
-6.5M
-7.5M
GRADE
-10.5M
09/01/2024

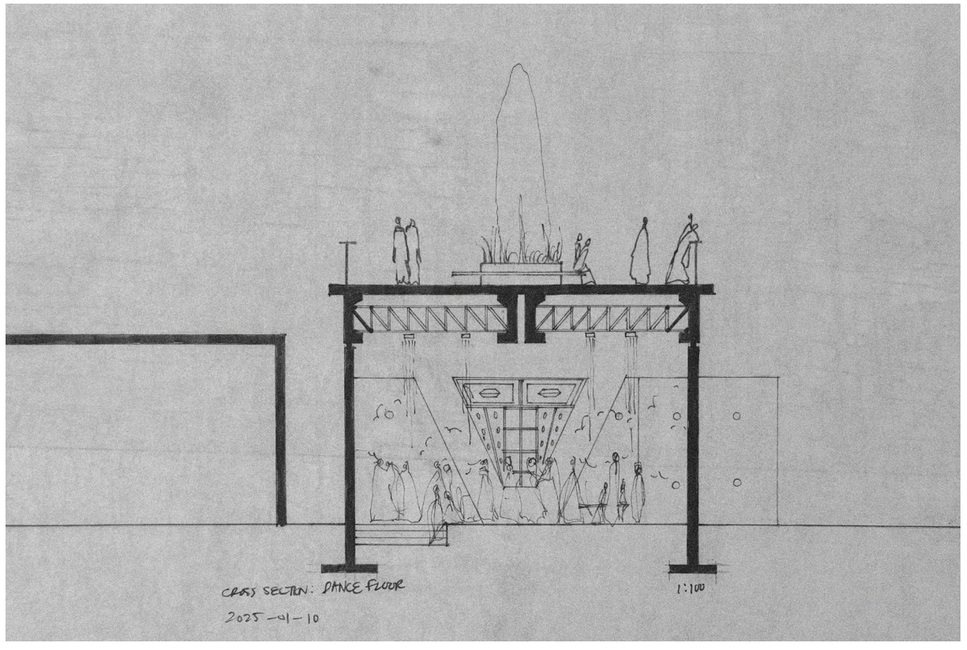


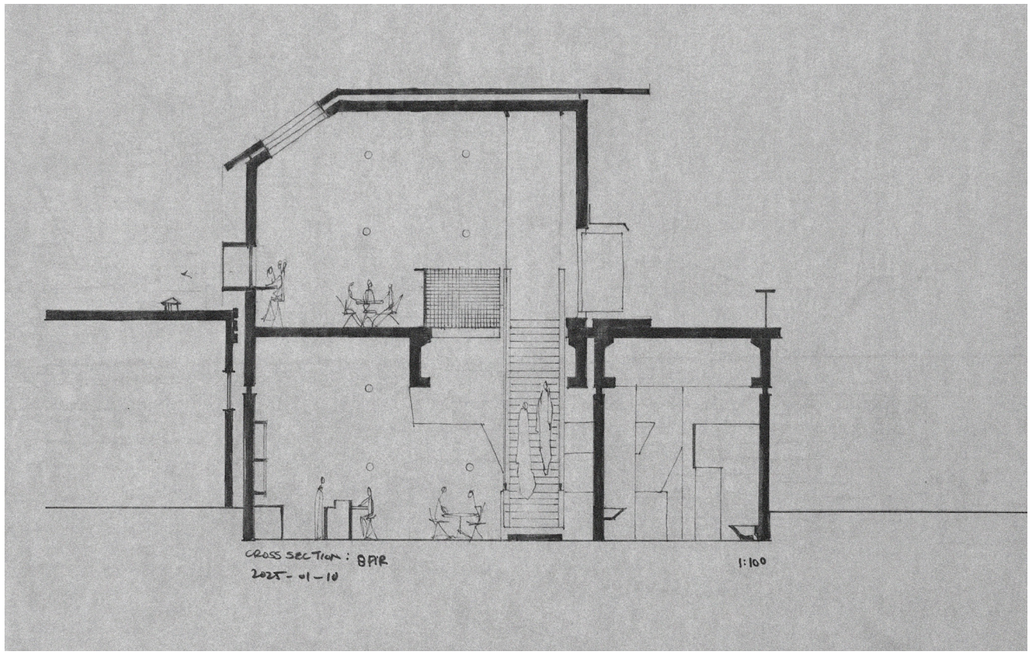

THE SET IS THE CENTRAL STRUCTURAL SYSTEM.
WALL HANGS OFF OF SET'S BEAMS
W/ PILES EXTEND OUT TO THE GRAVEL.
09/12/2024
CROSS-SECTION.
1/100

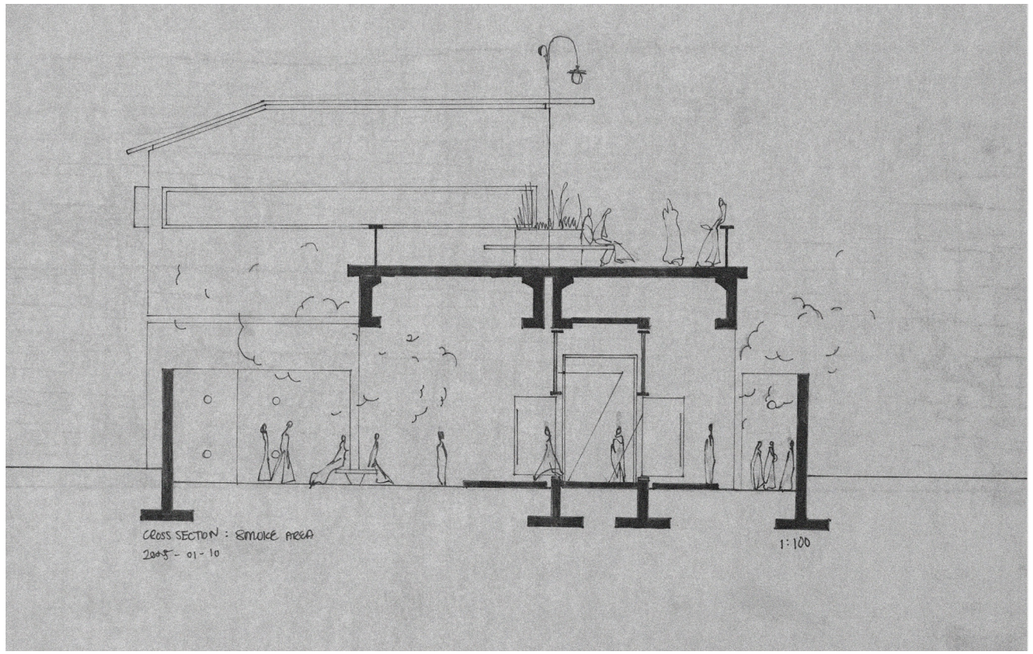

1
2
3
6


SET CLUB ELEVATION
2021-01-09
1:100


CROSS SECTION : ENTRANCE
2025 - 01 - 10
1:100


CROSS SECTION: DANCE FLOOR
2025 - 01 - 10
1:100


CROSS SECTION : BAR
2025 - 01 - 10
1:100


CROSS SECTION : SMOKE AREA
2025 - 01 - 10
1:100

