

# DREAMING OF HOME

## Connected, Emotional, and Inspiring Dwelling in New York's Superblocks

What do you think of when you think of home? The beauty of home is in the difficulty of defining it. In the broadest sense, home is anything we see ourselves in. Yet, homes in urban areas fail to reflect this beauty and those living within.

In the past, our homes provided a way to connect to the world, our community, and ourselves. Moving through time, the house changed shape and these connections became weaker, yet the longing for a home where we belong stayed. A re-imagining is needed, as our homes today lack meaningful bridges to this desire to dwell. Nowhere is this needed more than affordable housing superblocks that provide essential homes.

In the late 1800's, Jacob Riis photographed the exploitative nature of the tenements in New York. As social reform came about, these homes were demolished and replaced with affordable housing superblocks. While open to air and light, these homes did not attempt to bridge their inhabitants to dwelling.



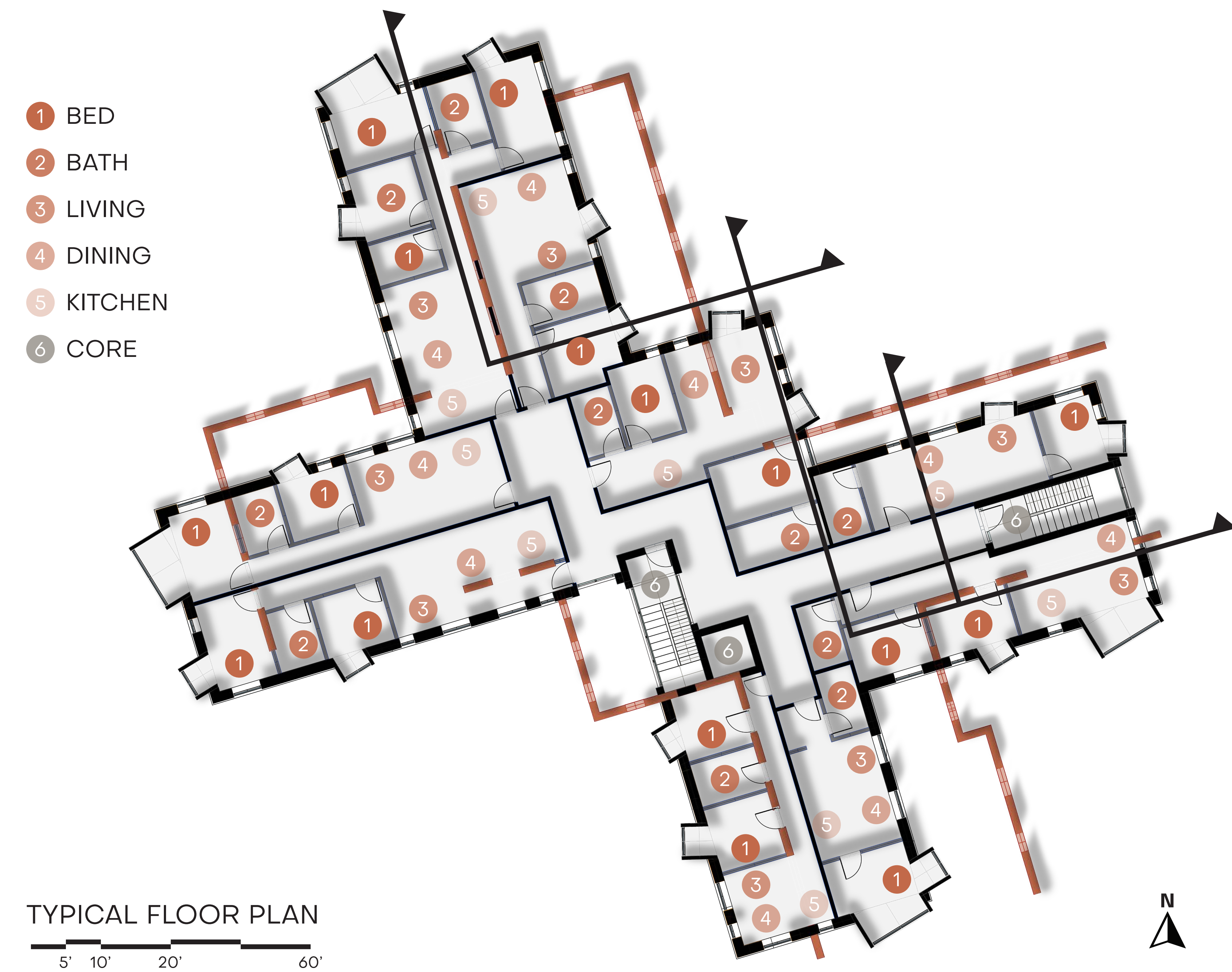
### RIIS HOUSES

Named after the social reformer, Riis Houses were originally built in 1949. The site features eight buildings of two shapes. This project focuses on the larger of the two. Like many of the superblocks in New York, these buildings have fallen into disrepair. As the buildings age, the future of housing will depend on our reaction to worsening conditions. Do we let these buildings fall and start anew, or can we bring forth life that already exists here?

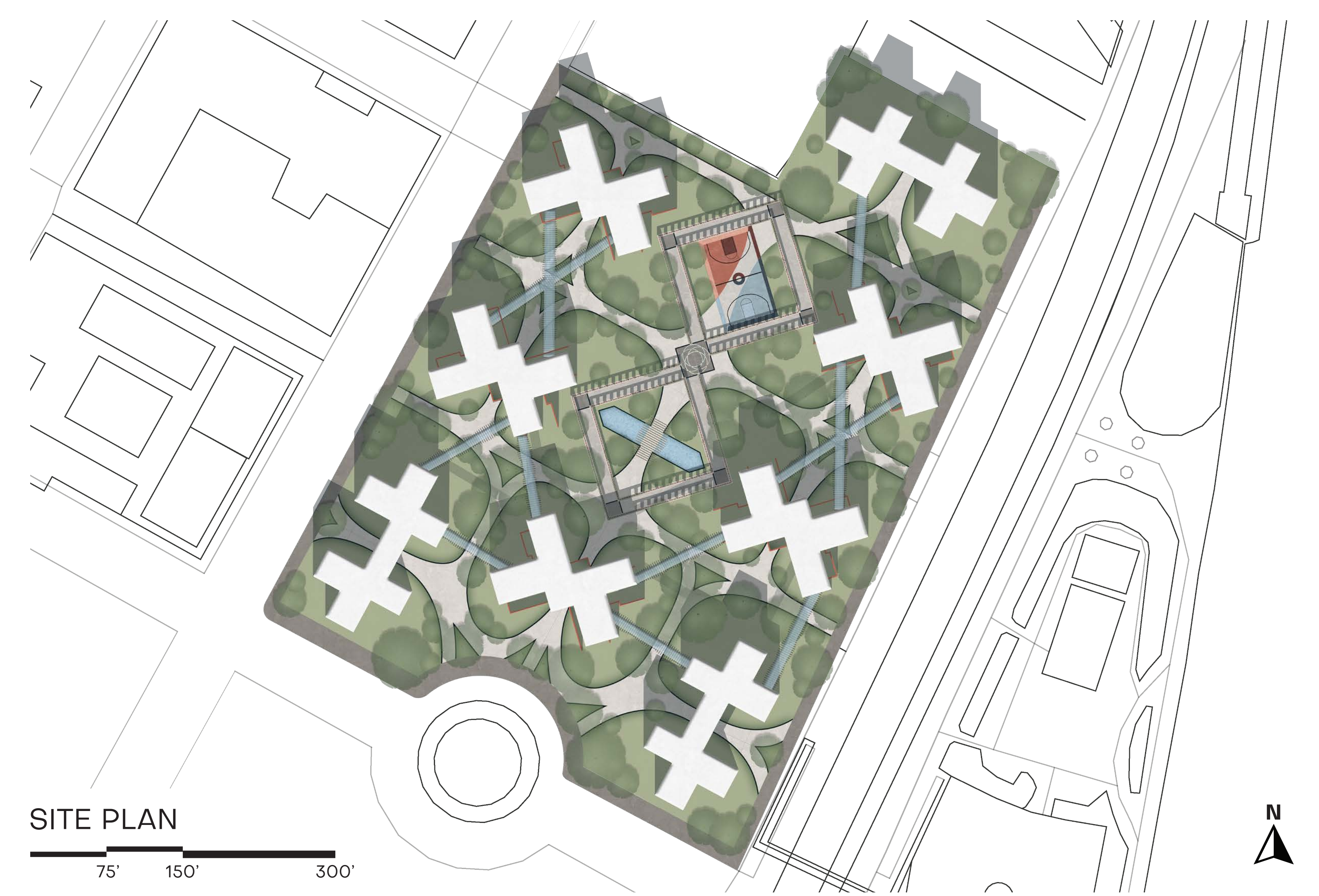
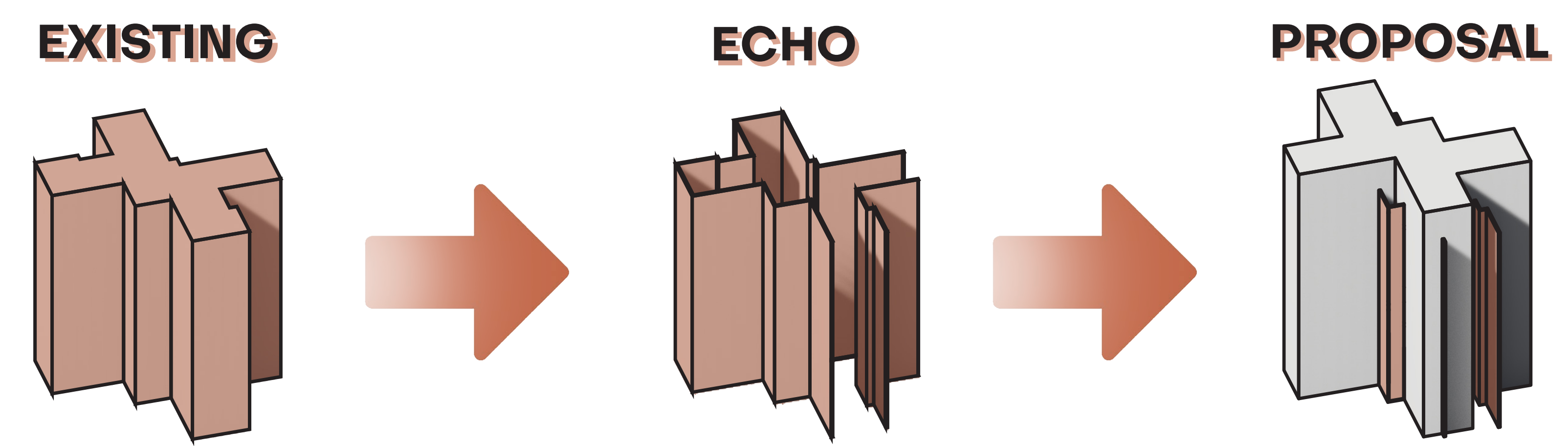
With the existing framework of these superblocks, the aim of this project is a re-imagining of the poetic potential of the Riis Houses for those currently living there. A dream to be more connected, emotional and inspired.



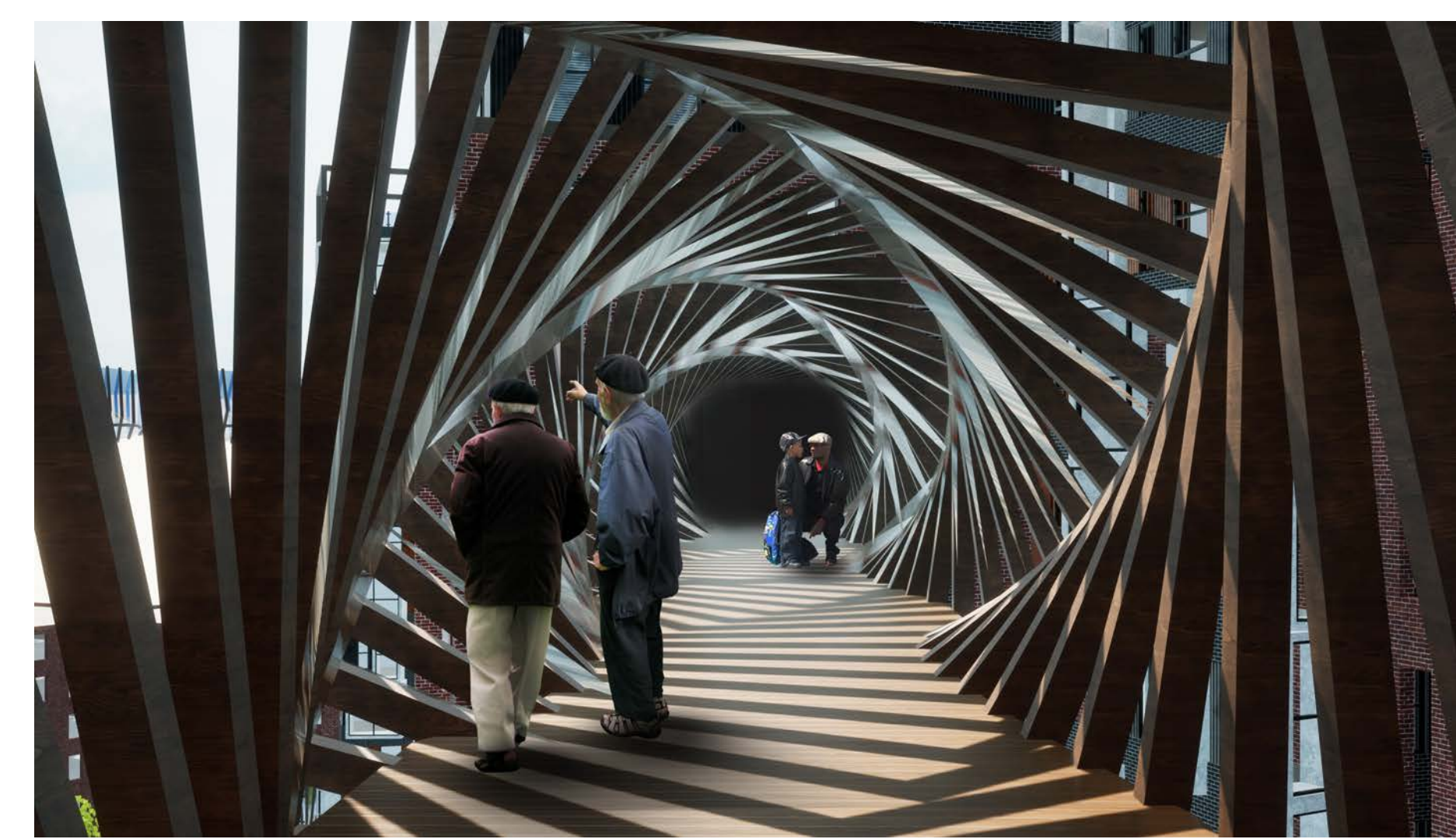
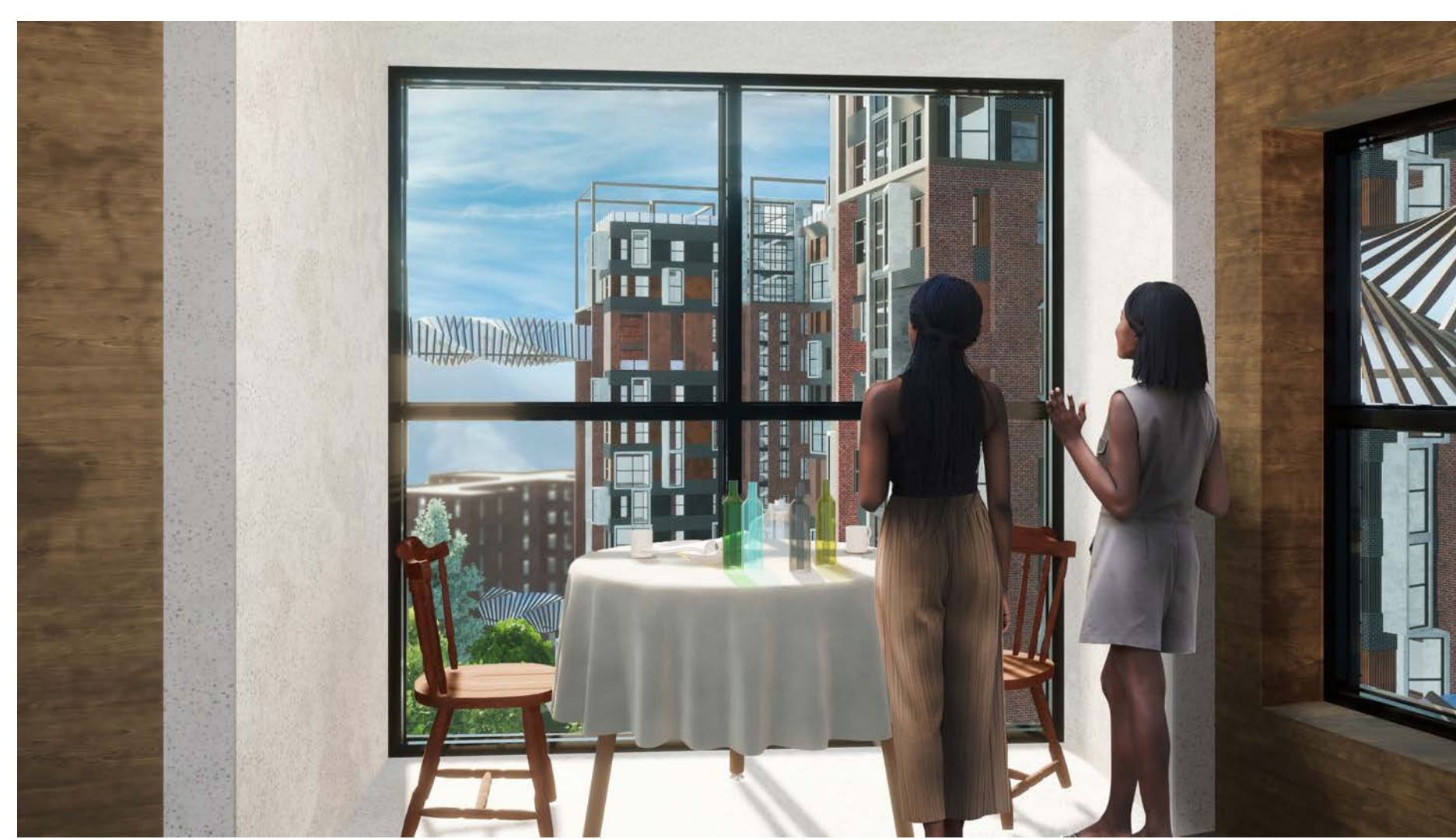
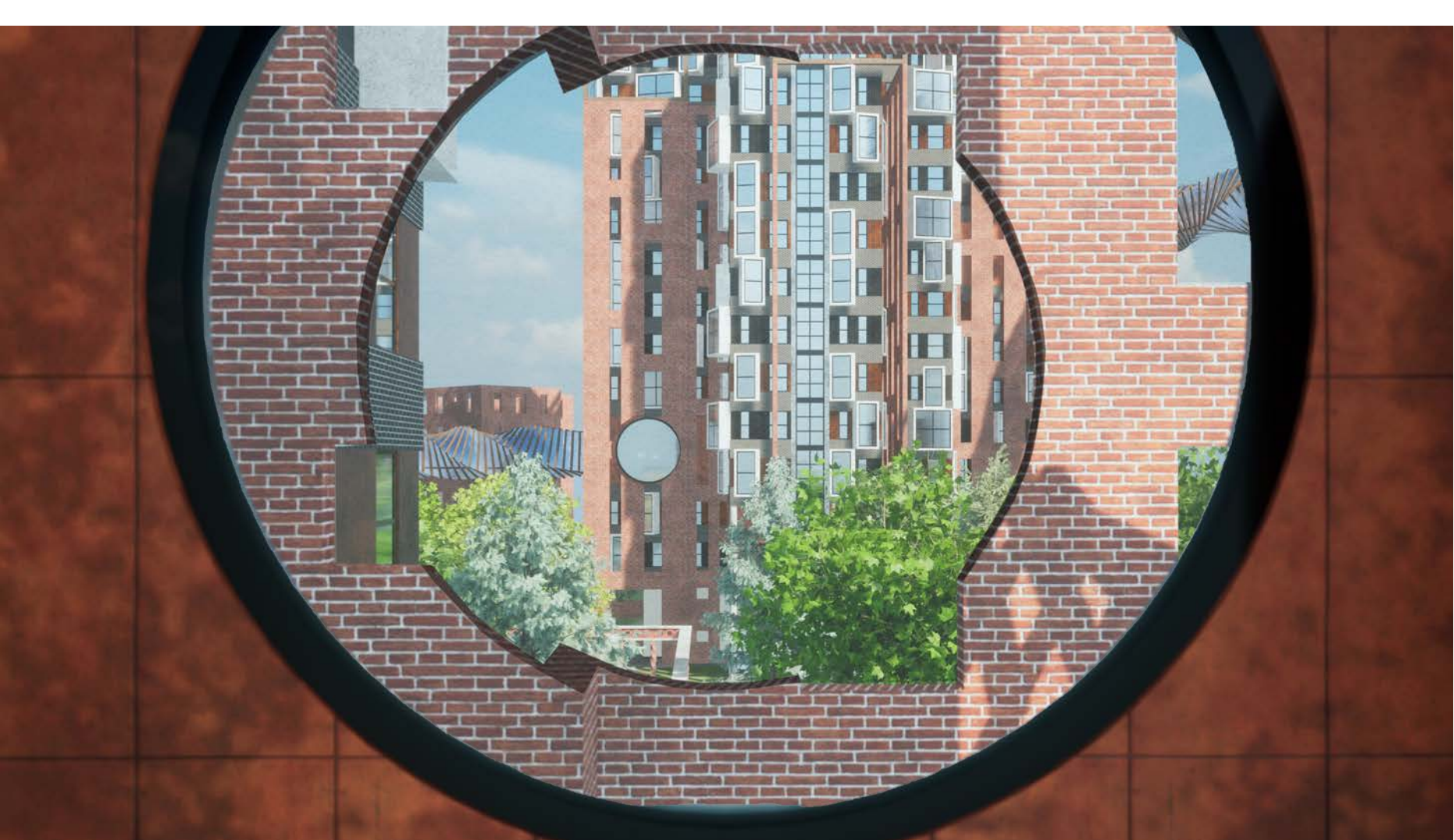
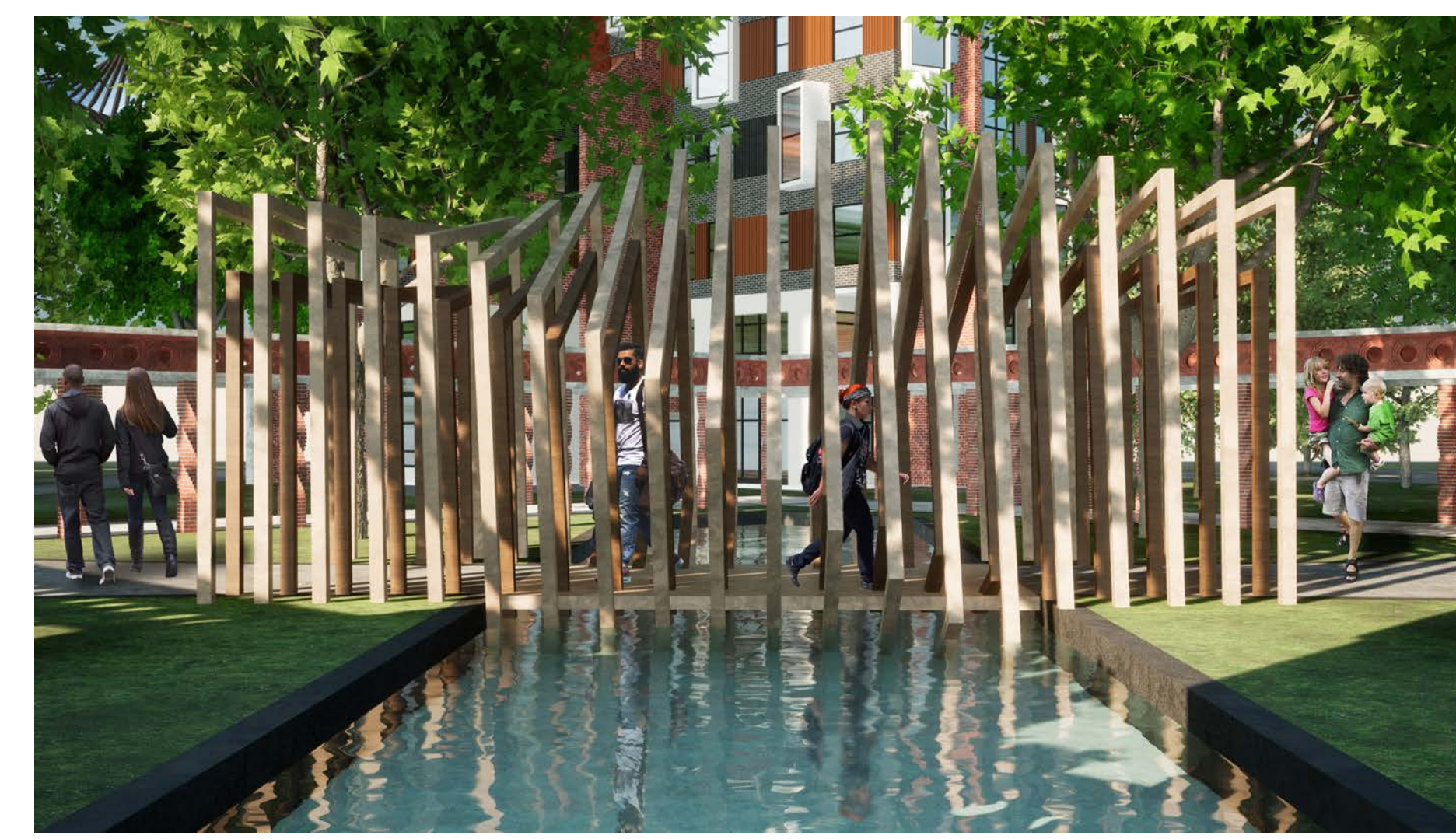
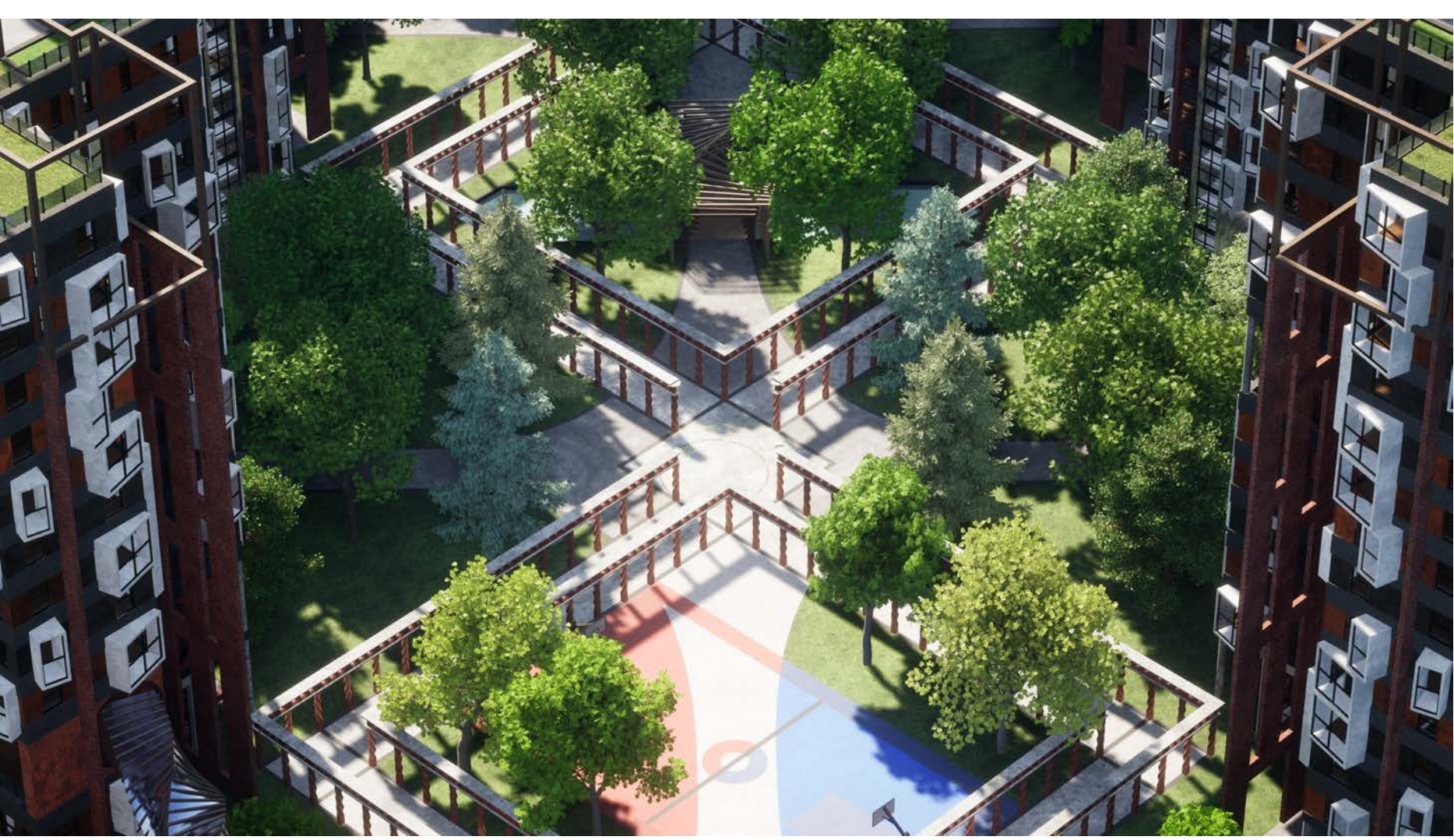
New York City, NY



TYPICAL FLOOR PLAN

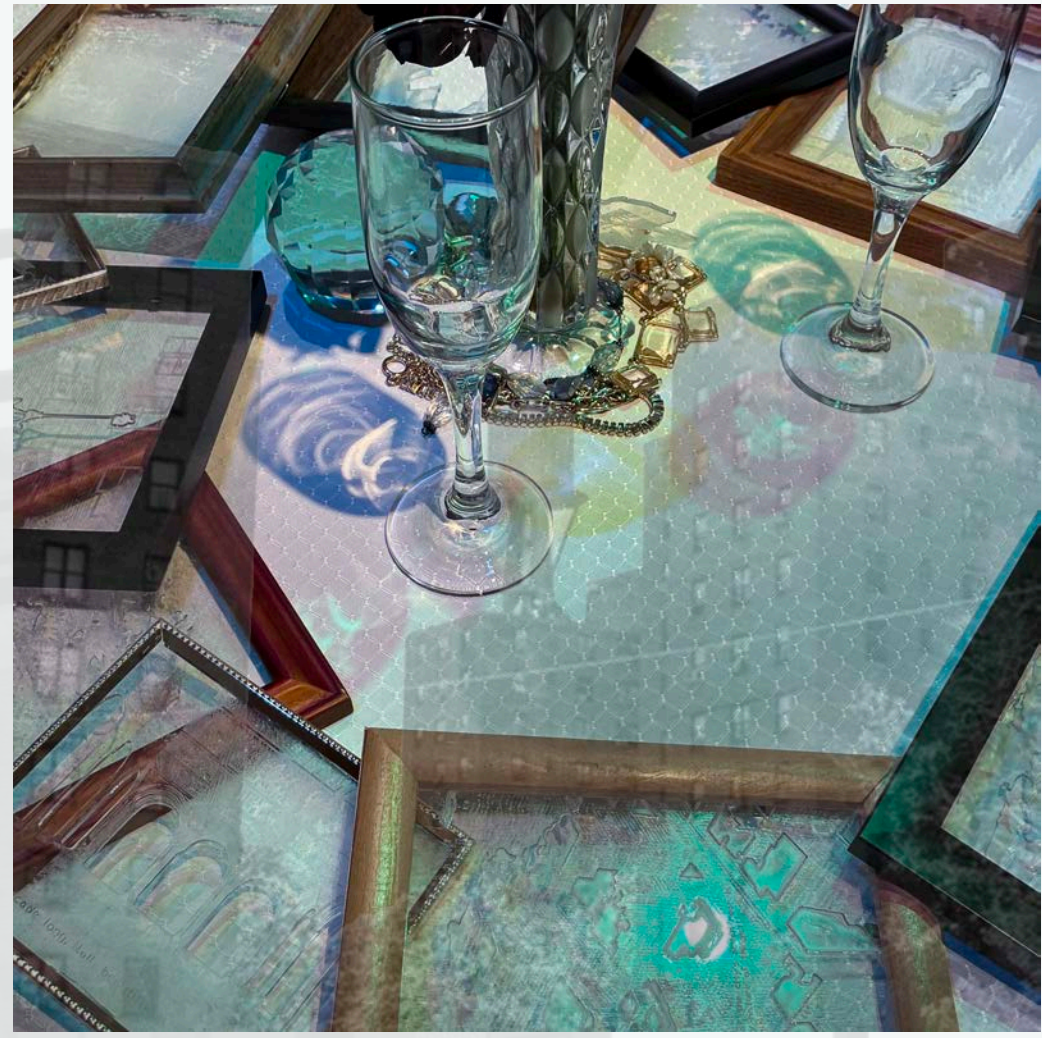


SITE PLAN



### ARTEFACT

The artefact features a table set with frames illuminated by four colored lights symbolizing the fourfold. The table allows us into a domestic setting surrounded by framed moments inspired by and featuring poems. Poetry allows us to imagine the situation and create our dreams, just as we each have our ideas of home. Through the light of the fourfold, the frames cast an echo, bringing the intangible into home. Overlaying these stories creates connections as meanings collect and home becomes a place of wonder. An architectural intervention needs to respond to the specific stories of the site to engage the fourfold and true dwelling. Riis Houses hold a deep history that is not reflected in the architecture.



### FOURFOLD

Martin Heidegger says that to dwell is to live within the fourfold. The fourfold is composed of fundamental pieces that define what it means to be human. Earth, Sky, Mortality, and Divinity. The first three are easy to understand, but divinity means something different to nearly everyone. It's beautifully summarized by Karsten Harries as "a love that lets us experience ourselves as essentially incomplete, in need of others, in need of community".

**Earth** is represented through a transformation of the site with native New York vegetation and a keeping of the existing buildings' shell. This reconnects inhabitants with the local beauty within their homes and reduces the impact on the earth. **Sky** is represented by providing unique views from each apartment and a reflecting pool that collects excess rainwater. Individual views create singular moments of wonder and the reflecting pool acts as a memory of Hurricane Sandy, mitigating future storms and opening a space for remembrance. **Mortality** is represented by the second life of the current exterior shell, its influence on the new form and the use of materials that show the traces of time. The history of Riis Houses informs the future as time manifests immediately with form and gradually through materiality. **Divinity** is represented by two public squares framed by the towers and the bridges that connect the towers. The squares and bridges provide a path and a space for the incessant flow of human connection and culture.

### BRIDGING

A bridge serves to connect us to something outside of ourselves and an object's immediate purpose. The bridge brings forth, revealing something new about what already exists in a new light, connecting across scales and time. Bridges span the towers into community spaces, twisting to open new perspectives across the familiar city. Across the glass, poetry, including that from local Nuyorican poets, is etched so that discoveries can be made within each trip no matter how many times it has been traversed. Poetry, similar to bridges, connects familiar points to create wonder. By standing over and within Riis Houses, inhabitants intimately experience stories on the glass creating connections to that seen in the distance.



### ASSEMBLY

Each room has four variations featuring different portals. This puzzling allows for all apartments to have their own intimate moment independent of any other across the whole superblock forming a deeper connection. The rooms have another variation for a larger scale of home and connections with others. Community rooms occupy the space of two rooms on two levels and shape the space for the bridges to connect. Across the superblock, these rooms manifest as daycares, libraries, gardens, gathering spaces, and laundry rooms. The assembly creates a menagerie of portals, shadows, and patterns reflecting the diversity of people, personalities, and dreams within.

