

STORA TULLHUSET

GOTHENBURG'S NEW WATERFRONT MARKET AND CULTURAL HUB



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Chalmers School of Architecture
Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering
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Supervisor: Carrie Bobo Gibbs | Examiner: Paula Femenías



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In this thesis, two students from the master's program Architecture and Planning Beyond Sustainability; in direction of Building Design and Transformation for Sustainability have collaborated, combining their shared interests and perspectives to develop a sustainable proposal for the transformation of Stora Tullhuset in Gothenburg.

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ABSTRACT

Stora Tullhuset is an old customs house located along the Göta River in central Gothenburg. After Casino Cosmopol closed in 2024, the building has been largely empty. It holds both architectural and historical value, but today it feels disconnected from the city around it. The surrounding spaces are fragmented, public access is limited, and its links to the waterfront and the wider city have weakened over time.

This thesis looks at how a building like Stora Tullhuset can be brought back to life in a way that serves the public and meets today's environmental and social needs.

The goal of the project is to design a proposal that turns Stora Tullhuset into a cultural hub for architecture and design, with a public food and market hall on the ground floor. The aim is to bring people back to the site, strengthen the connection between the building and the river, and show how an existing structure can be reused rather than replaced.

The study looks at the building's structure, its history, and the surrounding water. The work involved architectural intervention, spatial reorganization, and climate adaptation within a sustainable design framework.

The design process included literature studies, analysis of historical drawings, interviews with Higab AB, the property owner, and Canea, a tenant in the building, as well as case study comparisons and ongoing design development. Regular site visits helped assess conditions such as daylight, wind, noise, pedestrian movement, traffic, and land use. The project draws on theories of adaptive reuse, public space, and sustainability by Plevoets and Van Cleempoel, Gehl, Bullen and Love, Douglas, and Haggman.

The result is a design that reopens the inner courtyard, brings in a mix of cultural and market uses, and includes flood proofing strategies to prepare for future water risks. The ground floor is redesigned as an open public space that connects the city to the water.

By combining good spatial design, a variety of uses, and climate adaptation, the proposal places Stora Tullhuset back at the heart of Gothenburg's waterfront; as an active, resilient, and sustainable civic building.

KEY WORDS:

Building transformation - Adaptive reuse - Public space reactivation - Sustainable design

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01. PROLOGUE

Problem Description

Aim

Research Question

Delimitation

Method

PROBLEM DESCRIPTION

The main problem with Stora Tullhuset is that it has been empty since Casino Cosmopol closed in 2024. This is a waste, because the building sits in a great location along the Göta Älv river in central Gothenburg, easy to reach and hard to miss. Historic and important buildings doing nothing, cut off from the people and the cultural life of the city. The building itself is still in good shape and looks impressive, but without any activity inside, it adds nothing to the social or cultural life of Gothenburg.

The area around it already has hotels, offices, and restaurants. But there are no public cultural spaces, no places to gather informally, no spots for exhibitions or creative work, and no food market. Turning Stora Tullhuset into a cultural hub with a food and market space on the ground floor is a clear opportunity. It brings the building back to life and connects it with the people of the city again. It sits right between the city center and the harbor; which makes it a perfect place to grow the city's cultural offering and create a lively public space for both locals and visitors.

Reusing the building as a cultural center would keep its historic character while making room for exhibitions, performances, workshops, cafes, restaurants, and a food market. It would fill the gap left by the casino's closure and support the wider effort to bring Gothenburg's waterfront back to life.

AIM

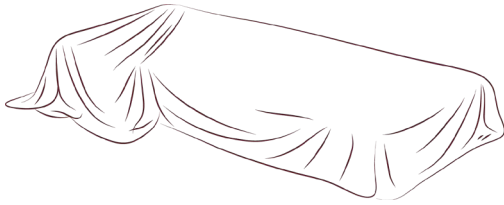
Our primary aim for this project starts with one simple decision: keeping the building instead of tearing it down. Rather than demolishing Stora Tullhuset and building something new, the project works with what is already there. This alone makes a big difference. Keeping the existing structure preserves the energy that was already used to build it and avoids the waste and carbon emissions that come with demolition and new construction. This fits well with Gothenburg's own environmental goals and long term sustainability plans (Higab, 2024; Göteborg & Co, 2025).

The idea is not only to preserve the historic building, but to bring it back as an open and active part of the city. The proposal combines exhibition spaces, workshops, studios, and with a market on the ground floor. Together; these create public activity throughout the day and across the whole year. The food and market space is central to this idea. It encourages people to visit regularly, not just during cultural events and also supports economic sustainability creating space for creative industries and local businesses to grow. In this way, the building becomes a natural part of the surrounding city and waterfront.

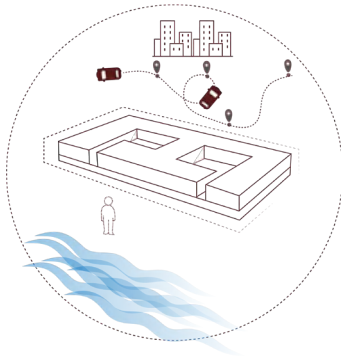
The project also deals with climate change. The site is at risk from rising water levels, so the design includes wet floodproofing. This means water is allowed to flow in a controlled way through certain parts of the building. Instead of treating water only as a danger, the proposal sees it as something that shapes how spaces are organized and what materials are used, while still protecting the building's structure and historic value.

Through careful architectural changes and spatial reorganization, the thesis shows how a listed historic building can become a strong, accessible, and inclusive cultural destination. The final proposal brings together preservation, public life, and climate response into one clear and coherent architectural design.

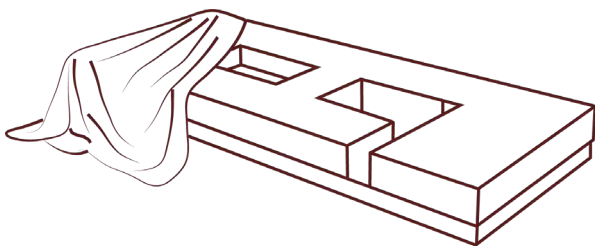
WHAT?



WHY?



HOW?



FOR WHOM?



RESIDENTS



STUDENTS



ELDERS



TOURISTS



SMALL BUSINESSES

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. How can architecture attract people back to Stora Tullhuset and reactivate it as a public waterfront destination?

1.1 How can the interior spatial organization of Stora Tullhuset be reconfigured to accommodate different uses while preserving significant structural and material elements?

DELIMITATIONS

This thesis is about the architectural transformation of Stora Tullhuset in Gothenburg. The work focuses on developing a design proposal. It does not include detailed structural calculations, cost estimates, or technical flood engineering.

The site is at risk of flooding, and the design takes this seriously. Wet floodproofing is used as a spatial and materials strategy to deal with this risk. However, detailed water calculation and engineering specifications are not part of this project.

The study looks at the existing building and the waterfront area directly around it. It does not go into detail about wider neighborhoods, and it does not suggest any changes to streets or public spaces outside the building. Those areas belong to the city, not to Higab.

The design program includes a cultural hub and a food and market hall. This is developed as an architectural idea. Questions about business planning, running costs, or how the building would be managed day to day are not covered in this thesis.

The building is one of the historic buildings in the city. This project does not carry a formal heritage assessment and all our decisions were made for the best possible outcome of the project, but we also took into account safety regulations. The information used comes from interviews with Higab and Canea.

Fig 2. Aim process diagram.

METHOD

This master's thesis works in two overlapping ways: research for design and research by design. Together, these two approaches help us create a well grounded and new transformation of Stora Tullhuset.

As shown in the diagram, each method has clear results, which are explained below.

The first phase is research for design. This is where we lay the groundwork for the whole project. We explore the site through mapping, site visits, photos, sketches and hands-on analysis. We look at things like walking routes and public transport links. The goal is to fully understand the site as it is today, how it fits into its surroundings, and what it means historically and culturally. The result is a detailed site report that shapes the design work that follows. Following the analysis, we conducted interviews with people from the company that owns the building and also from the company that is housed in the building. It was a way to learn from another perspective what happens inside, outside the building, what it is like to work in the building, but also, most importantly, what is missing from the building. Along with the interviews, we look at case studies from other similar projects around the world and also theories such as adaptive reuse and how we can reactivate a public space gives us useful strategies and examples to learn from, and helps us find the right approach for Stora Tullhuset.

At the same time, we study the building's history. Using old documents and records, we build a clear picture of the building's identity and decide what is worth keeping. This guides our design and makes sure we respect the building's past.

Next, we turn our research into early sketches and layout ideas. These drawings connect the analysis to the actual design work. After that, we develop the design in more detail. Using tools like Rhino and Autocad, we produce floor plans, sections, and 3D models. The result is a full design proposal that responds to both the needs of the space and the history of the building.

Throughout the whole process, analysis and design feed into each other. Each step builds on the last, leading to a better and more grounded result.

In the end, all the work comes together in a final presentation with drawings, visuals, and a written report. This clear and step by step approach makes sure that every phase serves the same goal: a well grounded, creative, and responsible transformation of Stora Tullhuset.

METHOD DIAGRAM

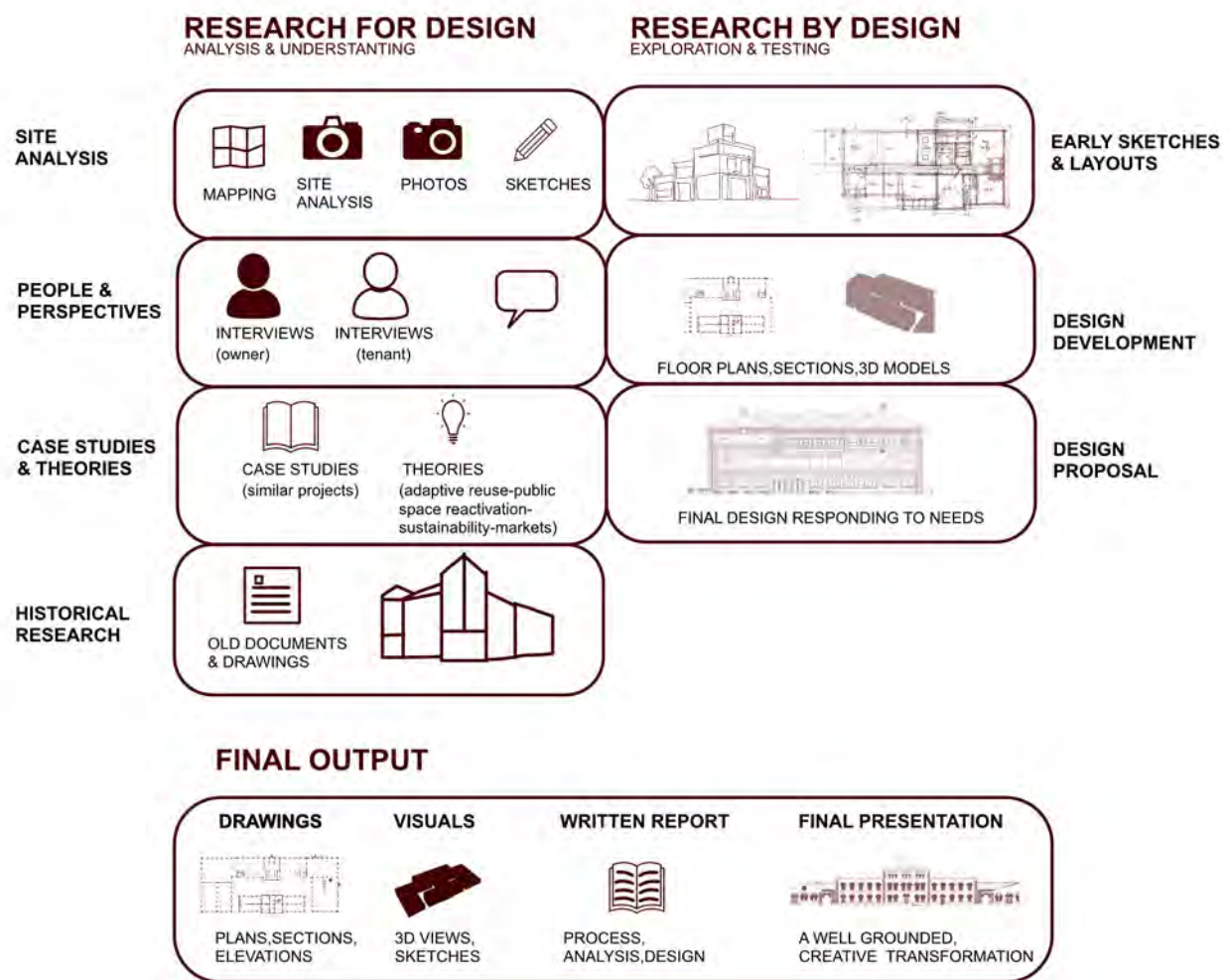


Fig 3. Method process diagram.

02.THEORY

Adaptive Reuse as Architectural Transformation
Public Space Activation and Programmatic Hybridity
Market Typologies
Relevance for Sustainable Development
Floodproofing Methods
Reference Projects

This thesis draws on three main ideas: adaptive reuse, public space activation, and sustainable design. Transforming Stora Tullhuset is not simply about preserving an old building. It is about asking how a historic building can play an active role in city life today. Instead of seeing the building as something that must stay exactly as it is, this project treats it as a building with many layers, where spaces can be rediscovered, changed, and opened up to welcome new kinds of public activity.

ADAPTIVE REUSE

For a long time, demolition was seen as the easiest answer when a building no longer worked or met modern needs (Douglas, 2006). But this way of thinking is becoming harder to defend, both because of environmental concerns and because of the growing understanding that existing buildings carry real cultural values. In architecture today, adaptive reuse is no longer seen as a second choice. It is recognized as an important and responsible way to transform buildings.

Adaptive reuse sits between preservation and innovation. Instead of freezing a building in one moment in history, it allows the building to grow and change over time. Buildings are seen as layered structures shaped by different periods, changes, and social contexts. They carry signs of their past while still being open to new uses and meanings. In this way, adaptive reuse becomes a conversation between past and present, keeping the cultural value of a building while allowing it to meet the needs of today (Plevoets & Van Cleempoel, 2019).

Reuse is also strongly connected to environmental responsibility. Keeping existing buildings alive preserves the energy already used to build them and cuts down on material waste, making transformation a smarter choice than demolition. Adapting building is also a thoughtful process that responds to shifting social expectations, new technologies, and changing regulations (Bullen & Love, 2011; Douglas, 2006).

Transformation here is seen as a chance to rethink the building's role in the city. By bringing in new cultural programs and a market based ground floor, the project gives the building a longer life while helping it fit into

the city as it is today. In this sense, adaptive reuse becomes both an environmental and social strategy, one that connects past and future through design.

PUBLIC SPACE ACTIVATION AND PROGRAMMATIC HYBRIDITY

Adaptive reuse alone does not make a building come alive socially. A building can be preserved, renovated, and beautifully designed, yet still feel empty and inactive. In urban theory, public space is not just about being open or easy to reach. It is about the variety and intensity of human activity that happens there. Making public space work depends on how it is shaped, what programs it holds, and how people use it every day.

Successful urban environments are built on mixed uses and activity that goes on throughout the day. A variety of functions creates a self sustainable energy, where different groups of people share time and space. Rather than keeping cultural functions separate and limited to set hours, the focus should be on weaving daily life into the urban fabric. Along the same lines, Gehl (2011) points out that physical design directly shapes how people interact. Open edges, visual transparency, and spaces designed at a human scale encourages people to stay longer, meet by chance, and feel like they belong. These ideas shift the focus from architecture as a thing to look at, to architecture as something that makes activity possible. Public space works not because it is grand or symbolic, but because people actually use it.

In the case of Stora Tullhuset, the building's recent history has limited its public role. The casino conversion divided the interior and cut off the connection between inside spaces and the surrounding waterfront. Even though the building sits in a central location, it currently lacks the everyday rhythm that makes civic spaces feel alive.

Using markets to activate public spaces is a proven way to bring historic buildings back to life and turn quiet areas into busy, social places. Gehl (2011) describes well how active streets grow from simple, human scale activities that make people want to stay rather than walk past. When markets are combined with exhibitions, workshops, and studios focused on architecture, design, and art, the building can hold both organized cultural activity and spontaneous public use at the same time.

One reason markets are so good at activating space is how they are laid out. Market layouts are designed to encourage movement, interaction, and easy access. Studies of both traditional and contemporary markets point to several recurring spatial arrangements that shape how people experience and move through these spaces. There are three types of market layouts that architects and designers use around the world.

MARKET TYPOLOGIES

The design decision of how markets are shaped has been affected by many factors. The arrangement of the stalls, paths and the open spaces determined how people move, where they stop, and how they interact with vendors and each other. It also affects how the market connects to the city around it. There are three main layout typologies, each with its own spatial character and social qualities.

The linear market layout (*figure 3*) places stalls along a central path or walkway. This keeps people moving while making sure every vendor is easy to see and reach (Gehl, 2011). This type of layout works well in long narrow spaces and fits nicely into existing structure, such as historic vaulted spaces found in adaptive resume projects (Carmona et al., 2010).

The grid or courtyard layout (*figure 4*) is one of the most common types. It organizes stalls around open areas or connected walkways, so people can enter and move through the market from different directions (Carmona et al., 2010). The open areas in the middle become natural spots where people stops, sit, and talk, which means people tend to stay longer and have more social interactions (Gehl, 2011).

The cluster layout (*figure 5*) groups stalls together by theme, product, activity, or culture. This makes it possible to add extra functions like food preparation areas, performances, or workshops (Amin & Thrift, 2002). By mixing buying and selling with culture and community activity, this layout turns a market into a lively and multi functional place.

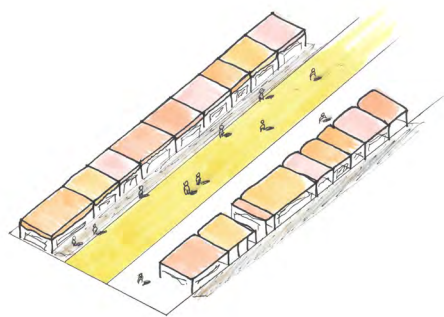


Fig 4. Linear market layout.

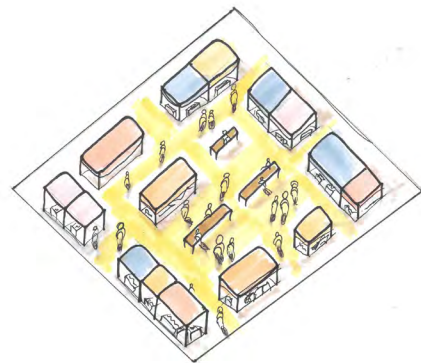


Fig 5. Grid/ Courtyard market layout.

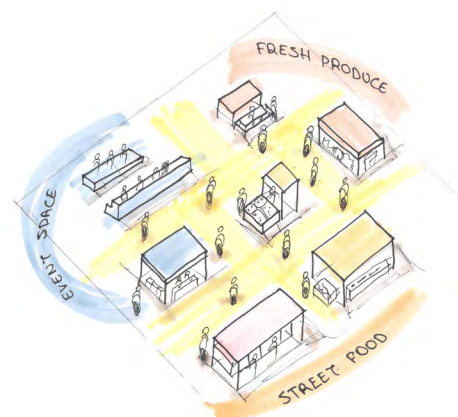


Fig 6. Cluster market layout.

RELEVANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPEMENT

Sustainability here is not about new technology on top of the building. It comes naturally from the decision to extend the building's life.

Cultural sustainability is just as important. Stora Tullhuset has real architectural and historical value along Gothenburg's waterfront. Keeping its spatial character and urban presence helps maintain a sense of continuity in the city's shared memory, while also allowing the building to take on new public roles (Higab, 2024). As Haggman (2022) argues, transforming heritage buildings in a sustainable way means finding the right balance between protecting what makes them special and allowing them to change, so they can stay meaningful as society evolves.

Social sustainability is addressed through openness and public access. By turning a building that was previously closed off into an open cultural space with a food market, the project invites civic participation and everyday use. Shared spaces bring together residents, students, professionals, and visitors, strengthening the building's place in the public life of the city.

Beyond environmental sustainability, the project also has to deal with the growing risks of climate change. Flooding is one of the most common and serious threats, especially for buildings close to the water. While a detailed engineering solution for flood resilience is not the focus of this project, the proposal takes the waterfront condition seriously. It applies common approaches such as raising critical systems, adjusting structural components, and using floodproofing techniques where needed.

Taken together, the transformation of Stora Tullhuset shows how adaptive reuse can work as a full sustainability strategy. By combining environmental responsibility, cultural continuity, economic activity, and social inclusion, the project positions the buildings as an active and meaningful part of Gothenburg's sustainable future.

FLOODPROOFING METHODS

There are three main ways to protect buildings from flooding: elevating utilities, wet floodproofing, and dry floodproofing.

Elevating utilities means raising things like heating systems, electrical panels, water heaters, and generators up on platforms or rooftops, high enough that floodwater cannot reach them. This protects these systems as long as the water stays below the raised level. Once water rises above that point, the protection no longer works. This method slightly changes the cost balance of utilities but overall reduces damage when water stays below the protected height (Paleo-Torres et al., 2021).

Wet flooding proofing means letting water into the building in a controlled way, while using materials that can handle getting wet. These include cement boards, tile floors, vinyl baseboards, PVC frames, and waterproof paint. Instead of trying to keep water out, this approach reduces the pressure water puts on walls and makes cleaning with elevating utilities. It can cut damage in half when water stays below the protected height (Paleo-Torres et al., 2021).

Dry floodproofing means sealing the building completely to stop water from getting in at all. This is done using waterproof membranes, coating sealants, and backflow valves. It gives the strongest interior protection and makes it easier to return to normal after a flood. However, it is not suitable for basements because of the pressure water puts on sealed walls. It significantly reduces damage when water stays below the protected level (Paleo-Torres et al., 2021).

To reduce flood risk at the waterfront site of our building, the local authority put in place a perimeter based floodproofing system combined with drainage management. A continuous flood barrier was built along the outer edge of the quay to stop seawater from entering the site during high water levels or storm surges. This wall acts as the first line of defense, blocking water from coming over the edge of the harbor directly onto the site.

Floodproofing measurements taken from municipality



Fig 7. Floodproofing method.



Fig 8. Flood risk areas 1 meter.



Fig 9. Flood risk areas 2 meter.



Fig 10. Flood risk areas 3 meter.

REFERENCE PROJECTS

The following case studies look at projects that show different strategies relevant to the transformation of Stora Tullhuset. They provide specific design strategies that have directly informed this project. Through this research, identification of spatial and programmatic approaches used in the revitalization and adaptive reuse of historic buildings, and to understand how these projects deal with challenges related to public space and waterfront environment.

SAN FRANCISCO FERRY BUILDING

San Francisco, USA

Original: 1898

Renovation completed: 2003

Page & Turnbull + Roma Design Group

The San Francisco Ferry Building was originally built as a transport hub along the Embarcadero waterfront. After decades of decline, it went through a major renovation that was completed in 2003. The transformation kept the historic structure and clock tower while turning the interior into a public marketplace combined with offices and event spaces. The ground floor works as an active food market with local vendors, bringing people in every day, not just during special events.

The project shows how adaptive reuse can work both for the building itself and for the area around it. Instead of turning the building into a museum piece, the design made it a lively civic space connected to the waterfront and the people walking along it. The reason it works is simple: there are many different things happening there, and the space is open and easy to move through. The market brings people in everyday, and the mix of uses keeps the building alive over time.

For Stora Tullhuset, the Ferry Building is a good example to learn from. Adding a food and market space in the ground floor in Gothenburg follows the same idea. The goal is to bring everyday activity to the site and make the connection between the building and the waterfront stronger.

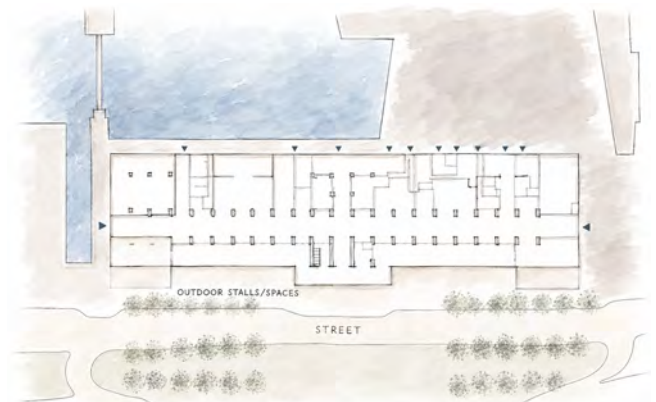


Fig 11. Ferry Building, San Francisco, USA. Sketch.

DOMINO SUGAR REFINERY REDEVELOPMENT

Brooklyn, New York, USA

Original Refinery: 1882

Redevelopment: 2014-2023

The Domino Sugar Refinery in Brooklyn is a large example of adaptive reuse of an old industrial building within a modern city. Instead of tearing the historic refinery down, the project kept important parts of the original structure and combined them with new uses, including offices, public spaces, and a waterfront park.

One of the clearest things about this project is how it separates old from new. The historic brick walls and structural elements are kept visible, while the new additions are designed in a clean and simple way. This fits well with how Plevoets and Van Cleempoel (2019) describe adaptive reuse, as a conversation between the history of a building and a fresh architectural interpretation.

For Stora Tullhuset, the Domino project is a useful example. It shows the value of uncovering the layers of a building rather than hiding them. It supports the idea of removing walls and divisions that were added later and letting the building's original spatial logic show through. It also shows how important it is to reconnect a historic building to the waterfront around it, making it part of a bigger urban picture.



Fig 12. Domino Sugar Refinery Building, Brooklyn, USA. Sketch.

HUNTER'S POINT SOUTH PARK

Queens, New York, USA

Phase 1: 2013

Phase 2: 2018

SWA/Balsley + Weiss/Manfredi

Hunter's Point South Park is a waterfront public space where climate adaptation was a central part of the design from the start. It sits along the East River and deals with the flood risk through sloped landscapes, strong materials, and plants that can handle being underwater from time to time. Rather than just building walls to keep water out, the design works with water and makes it part of how the space is organized.

This project reflects a modern way of thinking about resilience. Instead of trying to stop flooding completely, the idea is to design spaces that can handle it safely when it happens. The park shows that a place can be vulnerable to flooding and still be accessible, beautiful, and useful for the public.

Hunter's Point South Park works at the scale of a landscape, not a building. But it is still relevant to Stora Tullhuset because of the thinking behind it. The decision to include wet floodproofing in the Gothenburg project follows the same logic. Flood risk is taken seriously and dealt with through spatial and material choices, while detailed engineering calculations remain outside the scope of this architectural project.



Fig 13. Hunter's Point South Park, USA. Sketch.

03. HISTORY OF THE BUILDING

Background
Drawings

BACKGROUND

Stora Tullhuset is a historic building on the waterfront at Packhusplatsen in central Gothenburg. It tells the story of how the city grew from a busy trading port to a major point of departure for emigrants, and now has the potential to become a cultural destination. The building was designed by architect Frans Jacob Heilborn and built between 1861 - 1867. It served as the city's main customs and packing house, replacing older facilities that could no longer handle the growing trade along the Göta Älv river. This reflected Sweden's industrial growth in the mid 19th century (Gamla Göteborg, 2018). The site itself has a long history. It was previously known as "Franska tomten", a free port for French wine traders since 1784, with connections to Sweden's colonial trade with the island of St. Barthelemy. The area once had an inn called The French Inn. At the time, the land was swampy, unsafe, and had no proper quay. A coppersmith named Carl Erik Lilja built a gasworks there in 1832 and began constructing a quay, but a storm destroyed it the very next year. The site was abandoned and became mockingly known as "Lilja's grave". Quay construction started again in 1861 and was finished just before Stora Tullhuset was completed (Vårt Göteborg, n.d.).

Stora Tullhuset opened in April 1866 and quickly became central to Gothenburg's customs operations. During Sweden's great emigration period between 1850 and 1930, more than 1.2 million Swedes left for the United States, driven by farming crises, population growth, and hardship in rural areas (Högman, n.d.). Packhusplatsen became a key departure point. Many emigrants walked to the quay from the central station along Sillgatan, today called Postgatan, and also known as "the emigrant street." It was lined with travel offices, hotels, and restaurants, and led straight to Packhusplatsen. As ships moved from sail to steam, departures peaked during 1868 - 1873 and again during 1880 - 1893 (Göteborgsregionens Släktforskarförbund, n.d.). Farewell church services were often held at the quay before ships left. Later, Swedish authorities introduced strict rules at the customs house, including an 1883 ban on agent advertising to protect emigrants from being taken advantage of. These rules directly shaped how the building was used and what emigrants experienced there (Högman, n.d.).



Fig 14. View of Stora Tullhuset and the harbour area of Gothenburg, Göteborgs Stadsmuseum (Olson är photographer and Hafström är artist)

Stora Tullhuset was built in yellow brick with natural stone details, typical of the civic and industrial architecture of mid 19th century Gothenburg. Over the years, the building went through several changes to keep up with growing demands. In 1885, an extension facing Packhusplatsen was added. In 1911, architect Ernst Krüger added extensions to the north and south and turned the main facade toward the river for better use. Between 1925 and 1927, Karl Bengtson added two more floors on the Packhusplatsen side, giving the building the appearance it has today and strengthening its neoclassical character (Vårt Göteborg, n.d.). In the 1930s and 1940s, the inner courtyard was enclosed and garage facilities were added. The building continued as a customs house until 1973, when operations moved to new facilities in Östra Nordstaden.

After that, the building had several different tenants and its future was widely debated. Ideas such as a technical high school or a youth center were discussed but never fully realized (Gamla Göteborg, 2018). In the 1970s, the Gothenburg Port Authority suggested tearing the building down, believing it had outlived its purpose. But cultural advocates, including a group called Maneten, pushed back and argued for preserving it, proposing it become a cultural community center or even a music theater. For a time, the building was used as classrooms for a technical high school, bringing young people and music into the space, though the youth center idea never came to life (Higab, 2024).

In the early 2000s, the western wing was renovated and turned into Casino Cosmopol, which ran until it closed in 2024. Part of the building also used the House of Emigrants museum, keeping alive the stories and objects from the emigrants era (Gamla Göteborg, 2018). After the casino closed, the property owner Higab AB began a study to figure out what the building should become next. Its location on the waterfront, combined with its historical and architectural value, makes it a strong candidate for new public oriented use. Current discussions point toward restaurant, cultural, or event uses, in line with Higab's vision that Stora Tullhuset should be open, inclusive, and socially engaging, and should help bring Packhusplatsen back to life (Higab, 2024).

Today, Stora Tullhuset is structurally sound, with its solid brick and its well known waterfront facade still intact. However, the interior remains largely unused, which is both a challenge and an opportunity. From an architectural point of view, the main task is to bring in new and sustainable functions while respecting the building's history and strengthening its relationship with the river and the surrounding city. From customs house to emigration gateway, from temporary casino to potential cultural anchor, the building has shown real resilience. Its story mirrors Gothenburg's own journey from a city of departure to a sustainable and forward looking harbor district (Högman, n.d.; Göteborgsregionens Släktforskning Förbund, n.d.).



Fig 15. View of Packhuskajen and Stora Tullhuset, constructed in 1866, from which approximately one million people emigrated to North America between the 1850s and 1930s (Postcard photograph, ca 1955)

TIMELINE

1770

The site was named Franska tomten
(The French Plot).1784

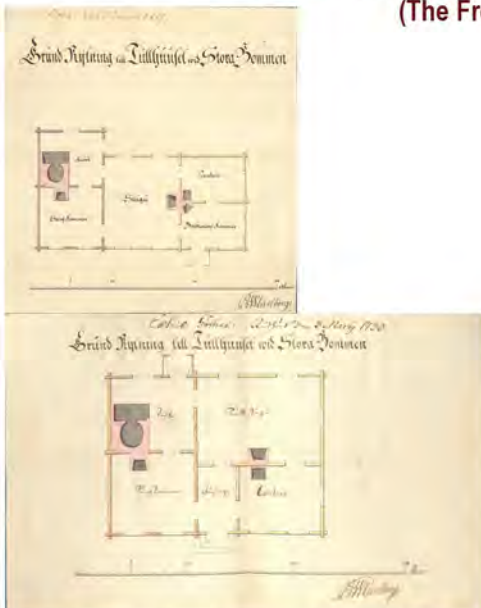


Fig 16. Carlberg's plans of the customs house from 1729 (up) and 1730.

1800



GhmD:48285
Fig 18. Packhuskajen, Gothenburg harbour [Postcard photograph].
(1910, July 19). Göteborgs Stadsmuseum (Object No. 484899).

1830

Carl Erik Lijla began constructing a quay and first
gasworks.1832
Quay collapsed into the river. After that nicknamed
'Lijla's Grave'.1837
Development of Gothenburg as an emigrant centre
began.1840



1860

Fig 19. The vessel Ariosto transporting emigrants from Mästhuggskajen, Gothenburg, bound for Hull, England [Photograph]. (after 1910). Göteborgs Stadsmuseums Samlingar.

Almost 15.000 people emigrated from Sweden-passport
requirements were abolished.
Quay construction resumed paving the way for the erection of
Stora Tullhuset shortly there after.1861
Building of Stora Tullhuset constructed by F.J. Heilborn until
1866. 1863
New extension constructed facing Packhusplatsen. 1885



Fig 17. Exterior view of Tullpackhuset, Gothenburg.

1890

Rename the streets name from Sillgatan to
Postgatan.1895
The building expanded to North and South by Ernst
Kruger.1911

1920

New expansion towards Packhusplatsen-major renovation by Karl M. Bengtson added 2 new floors. 1925-1927
Enclosure of the inner country yard (1938) and additional garage facilities



Fig 20. View over Packhusplatsen and Tullpackhuset with Magasinskvartret in the background [Photograph]. (n.d.). Göteborgs Stadsmuseum (Object No. 350116).

1950

Gothenburg's port authority proposed demolition because the harbor could not see any future. 1970

1980

School administration took over most of the line premised. 1980
Western part of the building was rebuilt for Casino Cosmopol until 2024. 2001
Housing Canea company since 2001



Fig 22. The mouth of Stora Hamnkanalen at the river [Photograph]. (n.d.). Göteborgs Stadsmuseum (Object No. 293584)

2010



Fig 21. Packhusplatsen approximately 150 years ago, shortly after the inauguration of the customs and warehouse building [Photograph]. (ca. 1870s). Göteborgs Båtförbund



Fig 23. View over Packhusplatsen facing south-west. The photograph was taken around 1885. The towers of the post house can be seen to the left and a small part of the customs house can be discerned to the right.

2040

Future plans to bring life in the building and the area



Fig 24. View from Kvarnberget towards the customs house and River Göta Älv, around 1896. [Photograph]. (n.d.). Göteborgs Stadsmuseum (Object No. 361345).

HISTORICAL LAYERS

The building has gone through many changes and extensions over the years. In 1885, only the western part of the building existed. By 1911, two workshop sections had been added to the northern and southern wings of the building. Later, in 1938, the open courtyards were covered with roofs for the first time and later in 2001 they were covered again with a new roof structure as part of the casino renovation.

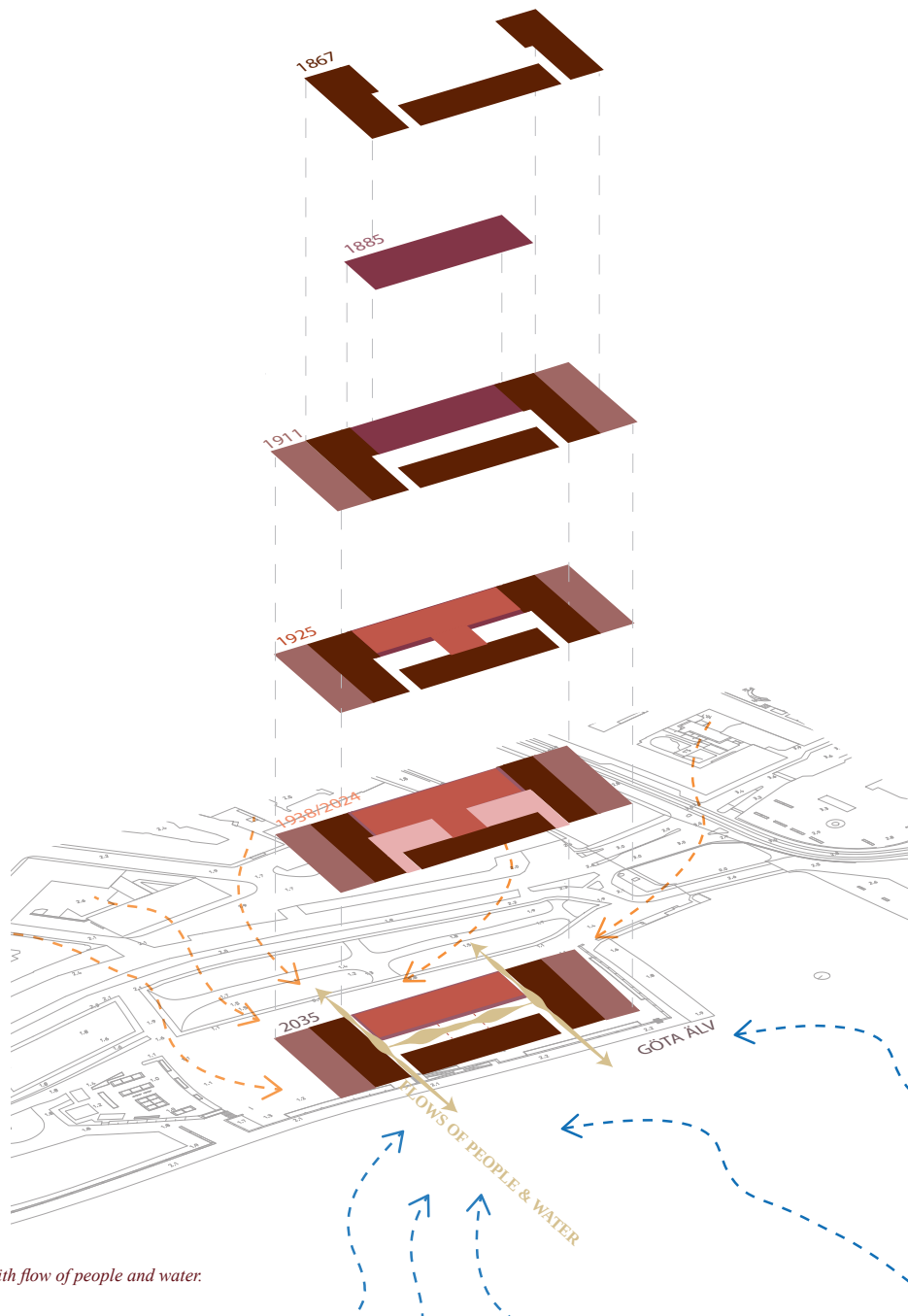


Fig 25. Historical layers with flow of people and water.

DRAWINGS

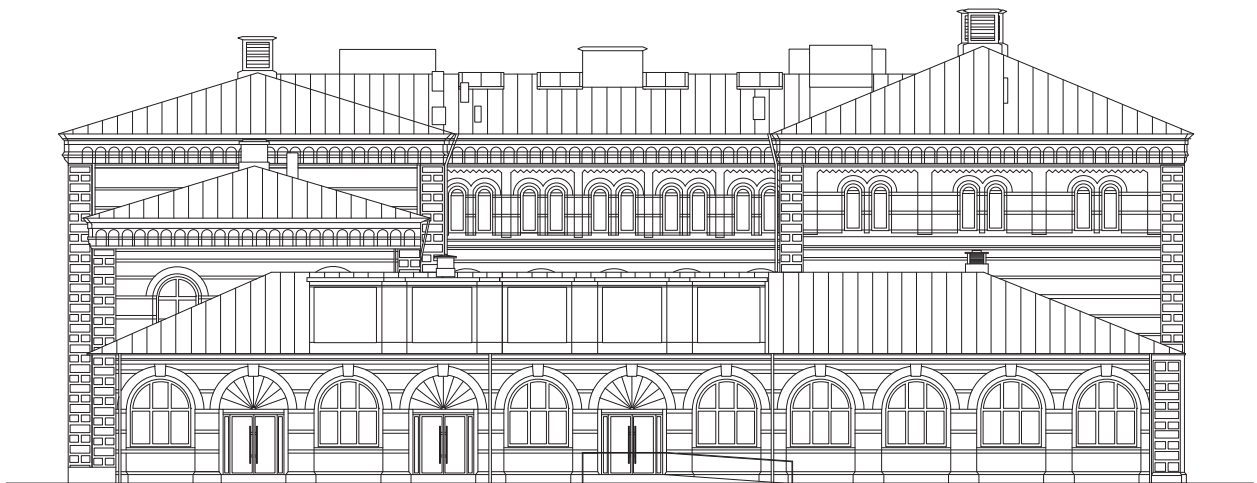


Fig 26. Existing building South Facade in scale 1:300.

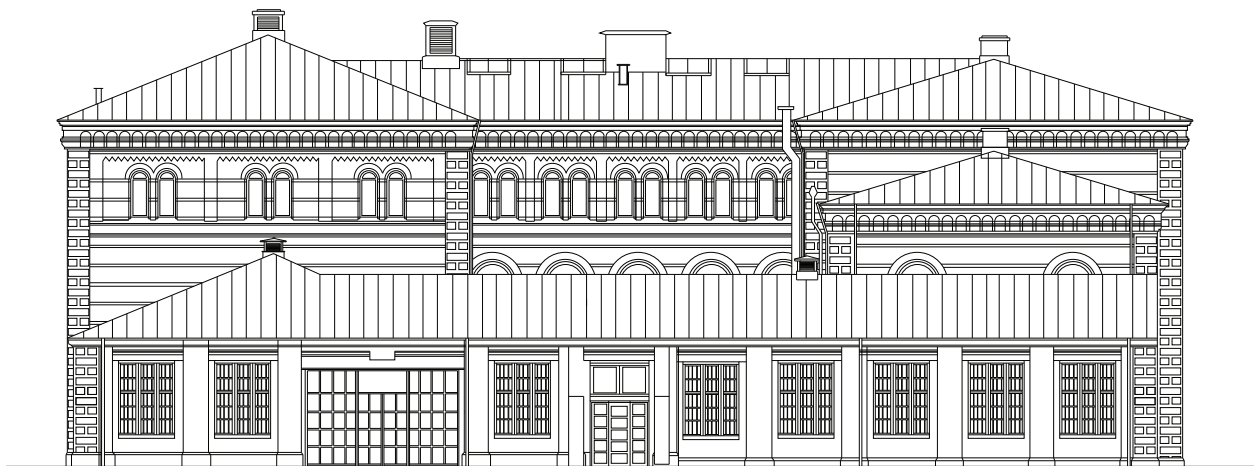


Fig 27. Existing building North Facade in scale 1:300.



Fig 28. Existing building West Facade in scale 1:300.

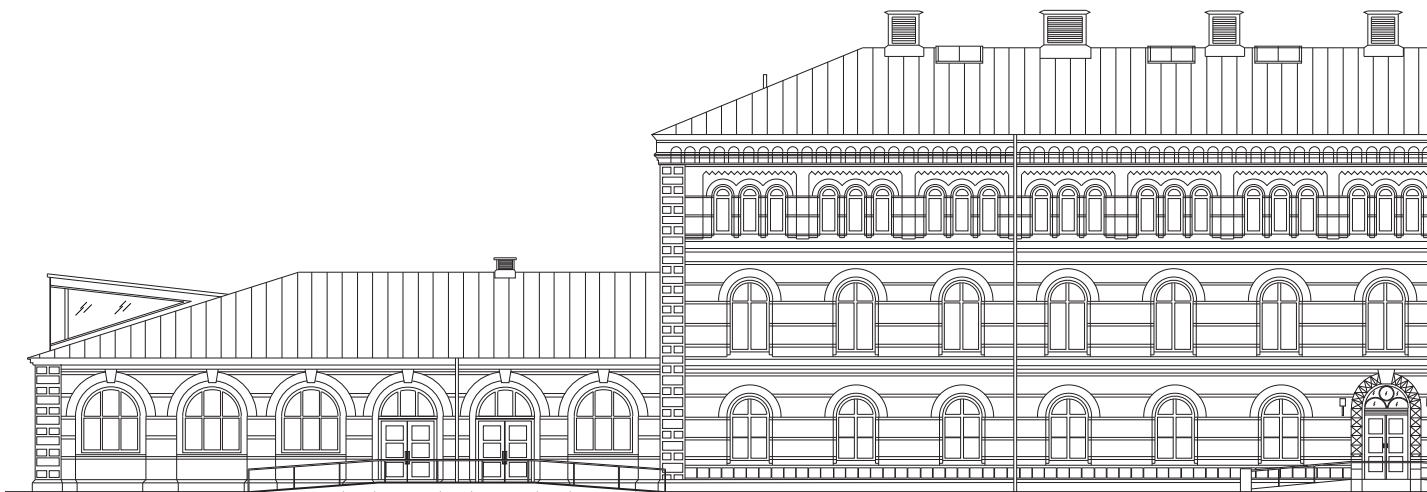
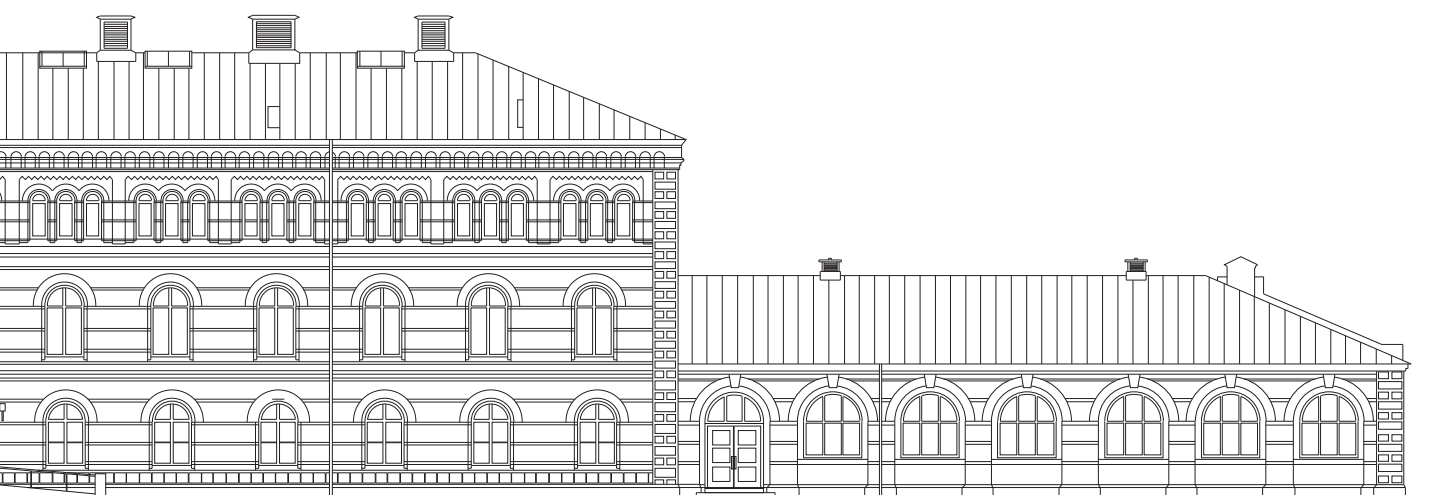


Fig 29. Existing building East Facade in scale 1:300.



ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

INTERIOR

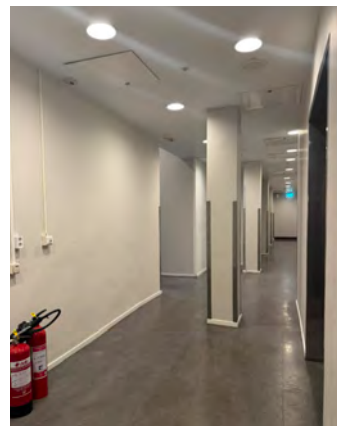
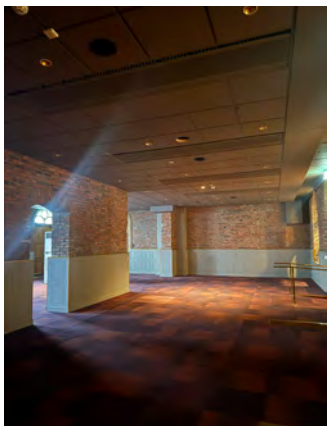
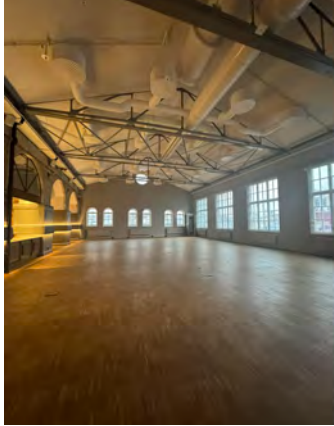


Fig 30. Site visit images - interior qualities.

EXTERIOR



MATERIAL

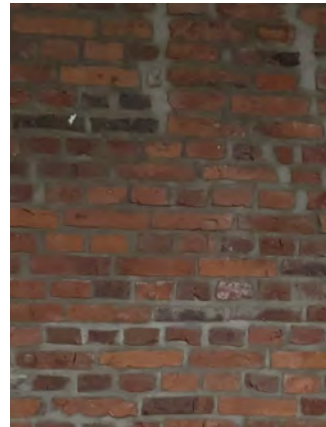


Fig 31. Site visit images - exterior qualities & materials.

04. CONTENT

Building Today

Site Analysis

Interview with Markus Gustafsson, Higab

Interview with Andreas Klementsson, Canea

SWOT

BUILDING TODAY

Visiting Stora Tullhuset gave us a clear picture of the building's character and how it sits within Gothenburg's changing central waterfront. This part of the city is in transition. Old port infrastructure stands alongside new cultural venues and housing developments, and the area feels somewhat fragmented. Stora Tullhuset is one of the few buildings left that still reflects the city's maritime and industrial past. Yet despite its strong presence and easy access by tram, ferry, and on foot (*Fig. 23*), it feels cut off from the everyday cultural life of the city.

The area around the building is mostly made up of hotels, offices, restaurants, and new housing (*Fig. 24*). There are very few places for public cultural activity or creative work. The site is calm and has beautiful views of the river, which makes it even more striking how little the building is being used right now.

The site visit made it clear that Stora Tullhuset could play a key role in reconnecting the city's heritage with its contemporary urban life. The building has large open halls, brick facades, a clear structure, and a symmetrical interior that make it well suited for adaptive reuse and new public programs. At the same time, their interior spaces feel visually and physically separated from the river, and limited public access reduces their civic potential. These observations shaped our spatial strategy, which focuses on opening the building towards the waterfront, introducing more accessible ground level functions, and creating shared spaces that support cultural, educational, and participatory activities.

The building sits between Gothenburg's historic core and its modernized waterfront, giving it a strategic position within the city's cultural corridor. This corridor connects the Gothenburg Opera House, Röda Sten Konsthall, and emerging creative districts. By transforming the building into a venue with exhibitions, workshops, cafe, and gathering spaces, the proposal aims to bring continuous public life to a part of the city that currently only sees seasonal activity.

The site visit confirmed that Stora Tullhuset has real potential to serve as both a social and ecological connector. With a design approach that responds

carefully to its context, the building can contribute to a more resilient and inclusive waterfront while strengthening Gothenburg's identity as a city where maritime heritage and contemporary creativity exists side by side.

SITE ANALYSIS



Fig 32. Mobility analysis.

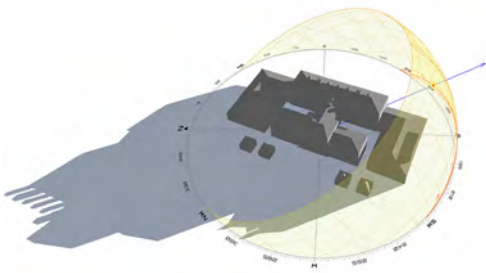


Fig 33. Land use analysis.

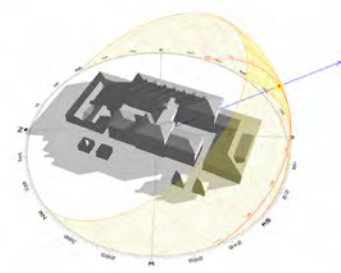
SUN ANALYSIS

A sun path analysis of Stora Tullhuset was done using Andrew Marsh tool to understand how sunlight moves around the building during the year. The analysis looked at the sun path on random dates and times across all twelve months, giving a clear picture of how sunlight reaches the site in different seasons as shown below.

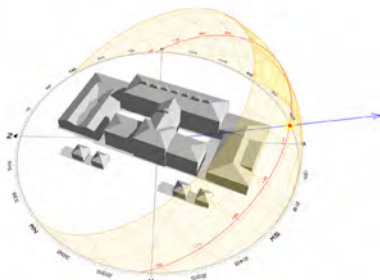
The results show that shadows are longest during winter, especially in January, October, November, and December. In spring and summer, from April to August, sunlight hits the building more directly and shadows become much smaller. The inner courtyard gets good sunlight during these warmer months, making it a nice and comfortable place to be in as shown below.



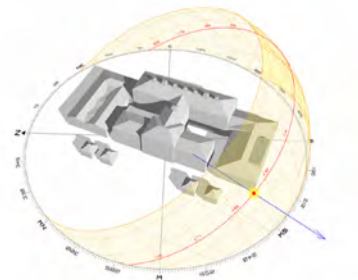
JANUARY 9. 10:30



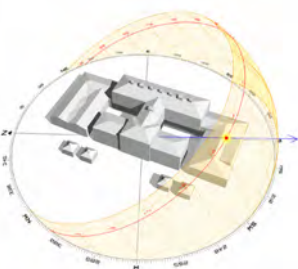
FEBRUARY 15. 11:30



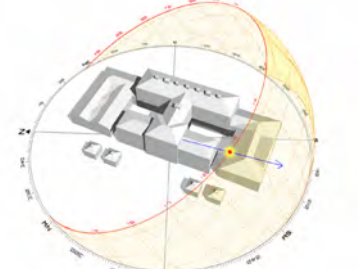
MARCH 25. 13:30



APRIL 4. 15:30



MAY 10. 14:30



JUNE 13. 15:15

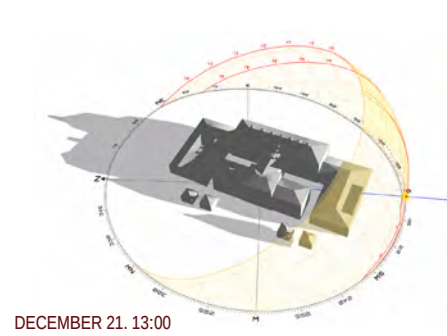
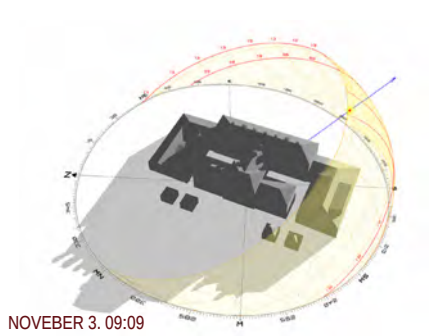
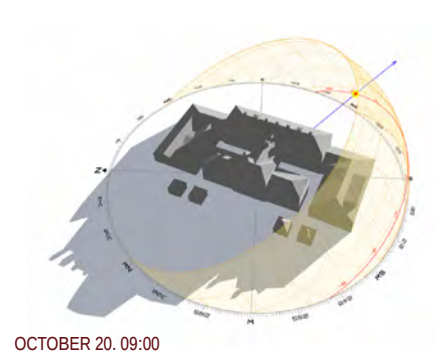
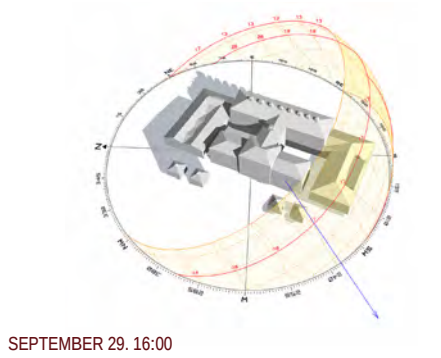
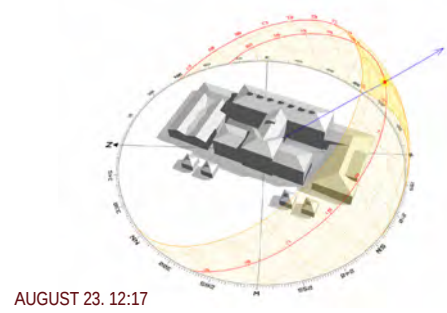
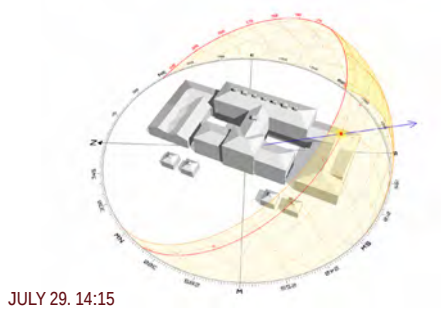


Fig 34. 3D Sun path analysis by Andrew Marsh tool.

WIND ANALYSIS

Several site visits were made to study the wind conditions around Stora Tullhuset. Instead of using technical tools, we visited the site ourselves at different times and in different weather conditions. We walked around the building and paid attention to how each side felt, noticing where it was comfortable to stay and where it was not.



Fig 35. Wind analysis.

NOISE ANALYSIS

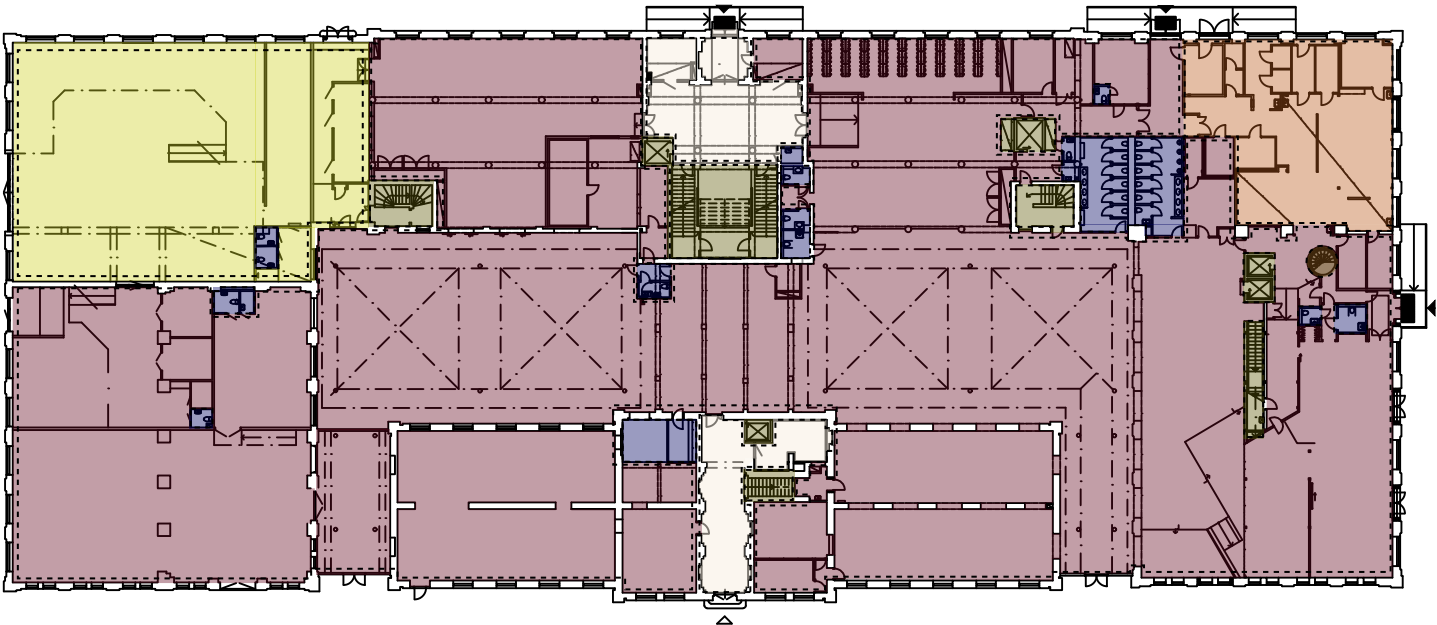
We also looked at the noise levels around the building during our site visits. Instead of measuring exact numbers, we simply paid attention to what we heard and how each side of the building felt.

The north, west, and south sides were relatively calm and quiet. The east side was clearly the noisiest, mainly because of the heavy traffic in the area. The west side could also get a little noisy at times, mostly due to the ships and passengers coming and going from nearby ferry terminals as shown below.



DRAWINGS TODAY

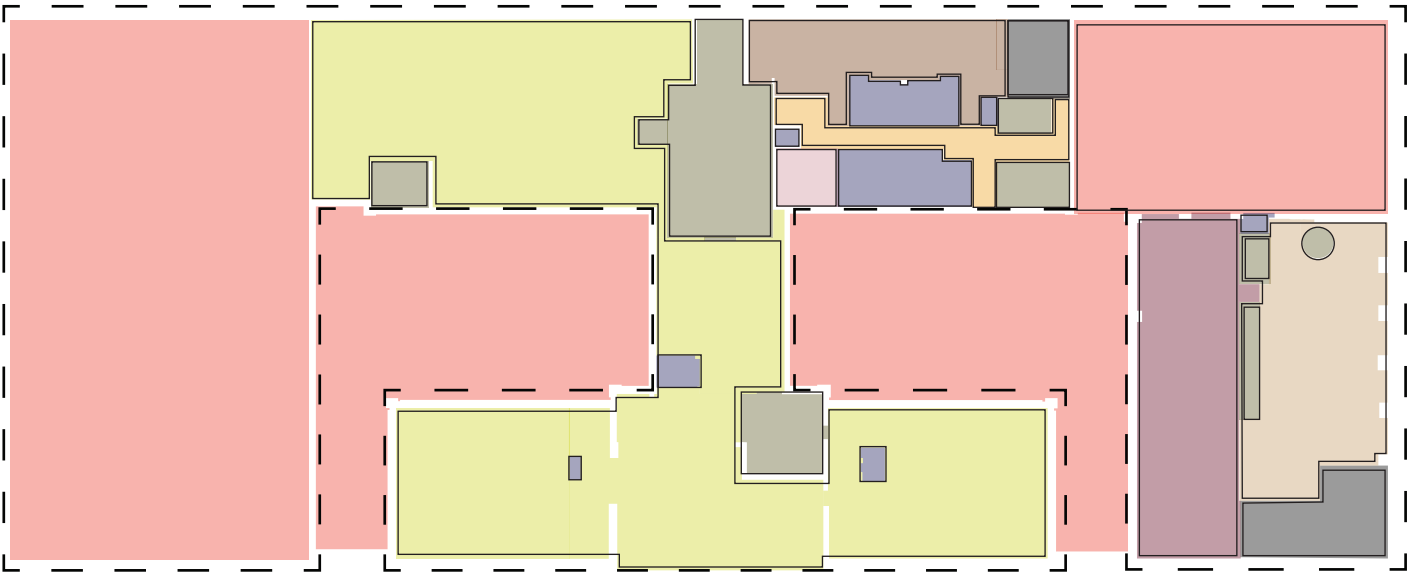
Since 2001, the casino has been operating inside the building. The floor plans from that period show how the different activities and program were divided across the building. This is how the building is still arranged today in 2026.



GROUND FLOOR
SCALE 1:600 (A3)



- WC & SHOWER
- STAIRCASE & ELEVATOR
- KITCHEN
- ADJACENT BUSINESS
- CASINO COSMOPOL
- COMMON ENTRANCE

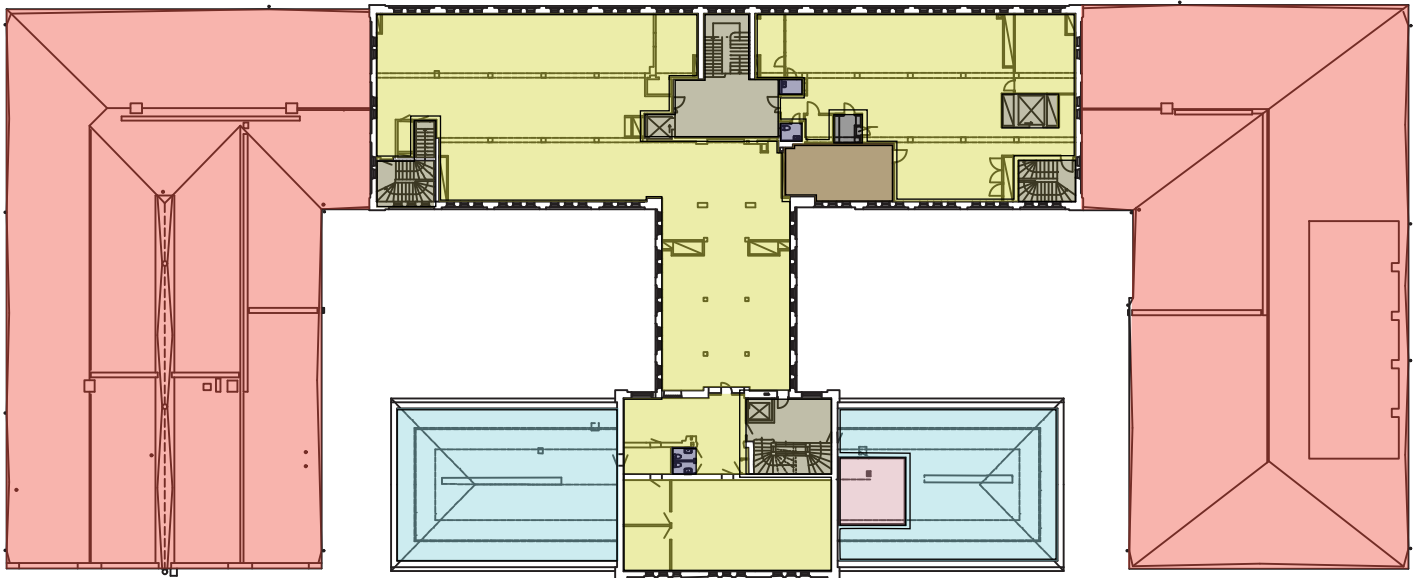


FIRST FLOOR
SCALE 1:600 (A3)



- WC & SHOWER
- STAIRCASE & ELEVATOR
- CHANGING ROOMS
- RESTAURANT & BAR
- STORAGE ROOMS
- TECHNICAL ROOMS
- ADJACENT BUSINESS
- ROOF
- CASINO COSMOPOL
- CORRIDOR

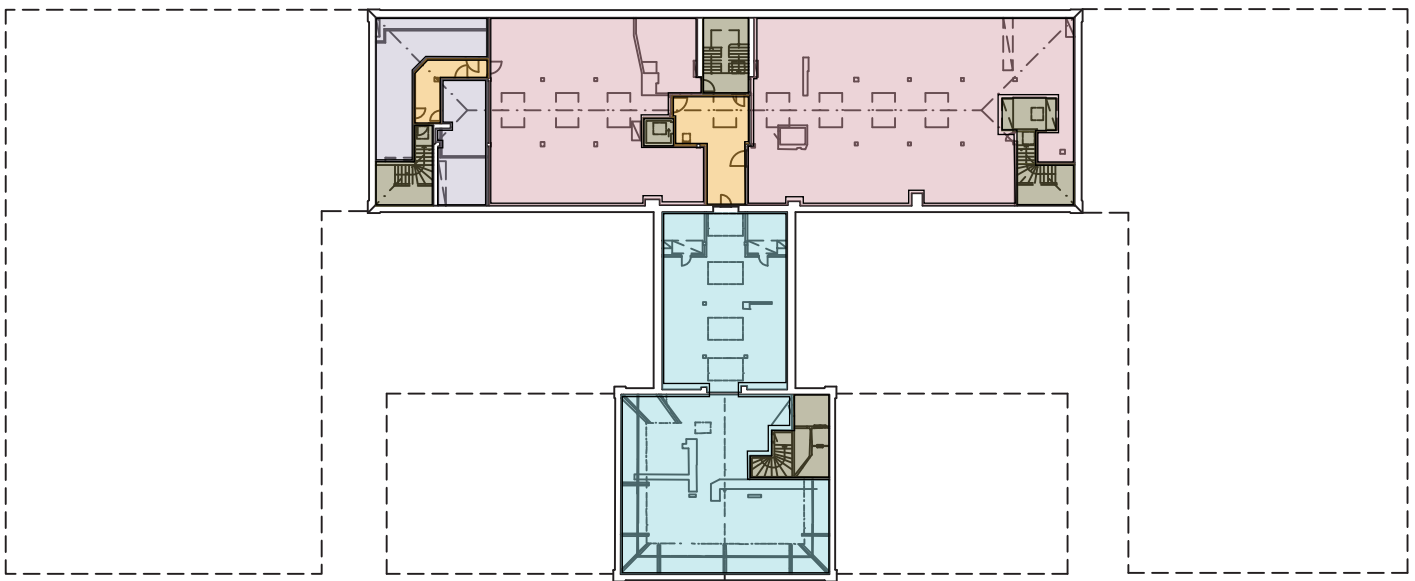
Fig 28. Casino Cosmopol floor plan drawings.



SECOND FLOOR
SCALE 1:600 (A3)



- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| WC & SHOWER | SERVER ROOM |
| STAIRCASE & ELEVATOR | ADJACENT BUSINESS |
| COLD ATTIC | |
| TECHNICAL ROOM | |
| STORAGE ROOM | |
| ROOF | |



ATTIC
SCALE 1:600 (A3)



- | |
|----------------------|
| CORRIDOR |
| STAIRCASE & ELEVATOR |
| COLD ATTIC |
| TECHNICAL ROOM |
| EL-ROOM |

INTERVIEW WITH MARCUS GUSTAFSSON, HIGAB

An interview with Marcus Gustafsson, who works as a project manager at Higab, the city owned company that manages Stora Tullhuset was conducted. The discussion was about the building's history, its spaces, its limitations, and its potential for future use.

Stora Tullhuset sits in a central waterfront location in Gothenburg, close to Stenpiren, Nordstan, and the Gothenburg Opera House. It is a protected historic building, which means that most changes to it need approval from the city planning office and heritage specialists. This makes every design decision more complex and time consuming.

Even though it looks like one building from the outside, Stora Tullhuset is actually made up of around five or six buildings that were built at different times. It originally served as a customs house, where goods and passengers arriving by ship were checked, stored, and taxed.

The building has a ground floor, a second floor, and upper levels. The spaces vary quite a lot, from large open halls to smaller rooms, especially on the upper floors. One of the most interesting features is the inner courtyard, which was originally open to the sky. When the building was converted into Casino Cosmopol in 2001, the courtyard was covered with a roof to create an enclosed space. This roof is a recent addition and could potentially be removed or replaced in a future design. Behind the main building, there are also four smaller buildings currently used for storage and other service functions.

Several parts of the building are protected and must be kept as they are. These include the stone facades, the exterior walls, the original structural systems, the main entrance, and certain rooms near the entrance. The stone construction and facade are considered the most important heritage features of the building.

Marcus Gustafsson added that the changes made during the 2001 casino renovation are a different story. These are not considered historically valuable, and many of

them can be changed or removed. This includes the courtyard roof, the new interior rooms, and the modern finishes and technical systems added at that time. Some windows were also turned into doors during the building's history, but this was done with permission and using the original stone materials.

There are clear limits to what can be changed. The stone facades, historic walls, and visible exterior elements are strictly protected and very hard to alter. Demolishing any historically significant part of the building is not allowed. However, the upper floor interiors offer much more flexibility, as most of what is there today comes from the casino renovation and can be re-worked.

Higab owns the main building and the four smaller structures behind it, as well as the land directly behind them. The streets and public spaces around the building belong to the city, not Higab. Permanent construction outside the building's footprint is generally not allowed, though temporary outdoor seating may be possible in some cases.

Flooding is a real challenge for the building. Because it sits on the waterfront, rising river water can enter through drainage systems. The building currently uses large pumps to deal with this. In past flood events, water has reached the level of the entrance doors, though no major structural damage has occurred so far. Dealing with flooding on a larger scale is primarily the city's responsibility.

All proposed changes to the building must go through the city planning process. Heritage consultants are involved in major decisions, and each intervention is reviewed on a case by case basis.

Despite all these challenges, the building has strong potential. It has large and flexible spaces, an existing restaurant kitchen, event areas, and multiple entrances. The inner courtyard is a particularly valuable space. The building could work well for public uses, cultural programs, cafes, restaurants, and other mixed activities.

Finally, Gustafsson added; Stora Tullhuset is a historic waterfront building with real architectural value and a lot of potential. The casino renovation changed many things inside, but most of those changes can be undone. The exterior and key historic elements must stay, but the interior offers real freedom to create something new and meaningful for the city.

INTERVIEW WITH ANDREAS KLEMENTSSON, CANEA

We also interviewed Andreas Klementsson from Canea to learn more about the building's architecture, structure, and renovation history. The conversation covered how the building was built, how it has changed over time, and what conditions will shape its future.

Stora Tullhuset has gone through many changes over the years, but it has kept a lot of its original character. Before it became a casino, parts of the building were used as youth facilities and later as offices. Through all of these changes many of the original architectural elements survived.

A major renovation happened around 2001. Damaged interior parts were repaired and restored, and original materials were used wherever possible to keep the building's historic feel. Beneath the newer floors and finishes, the original stone floors, vaulted ceilings, and wall materials are still there. The building is essentially a mix of old and new, with different layers built up over many years.

The ground floor has large open spaces with ceiling heights of around four to four and a half meters, which makes them well suited for events and flexible uses. There are also long, narrow rooms with big windows that bring in a lot of natural light. However, these rooms are hard to divide into smaller spaces without ruining the light and the proportions.

The upper floors are quite different. The ceilings are lower, around 2.7 meters. and there is a lot of modern

technical equipment up there, including ventilation and electrical systems. The casino renovation. This changed the feel of the building significantly and removed the balcony areas that once surrounded the courtyards. Even so, the building still has large communal spaces that can hold over a hundred people.

Some interesting historic details have also been found inside the building. Sawdust insulation was discovered beneath certain floors, which tells us something about how buildings were constructed in that era. The exterior is made mainly of stone and masonry, which is both structurally important and a key part of the building's heritage identity.

The casino conversion in the early 2000s brought further changes. Some walls were removed to create bigger spaces, while other areas were divided up with reinforced partitions to meet security requirements. Specialized electrical systems and security infrastructure were also added. These changes added another layer of modern intervention on top of everything that was already there.

There are also some practical challenges to deal with. The hard surfaces, stone floors and masonry walls, cause a lot of sound to bounce in the large spaces. Heating is uneven because of the large volumes and the thermal mass of the old materials. The modern technical systems built into the ceiling and walls make renovation work more complicated. And the reinforced partitions from the casino period make it harder to reconfigure the spaces freely.

Flooding is another ongoing challenge. Water has entered the ground floor during past flood events and damaged interior spaces and electrical systems. To deal with this, flood barriers have been installed at the entrances, and pumping systems and drainage infrastructure have been upgraded. These measures have helped reduce the problem in recent years.

Despite all of this, the building has a lot going for it. Many of the casino era changes can be undone. The inner courtyards in particular offer a real opportunity.

Rethink those spaces could bring back some of the building's original character while creating something new and valuable for the public. The large open spaces, combined with the existing technical setup and the flexibility of the interior, make Stora Tullhuset a strong candidate for adaptive reuse that keeps its historic identity while welcoming new life.

SWOT

STRENGTH

- Strong identity as an old customs house
- Big open spaces and high ceilings
- Central location
- Beautiful original materials and character

WEAKNESSES

- Accessibility may need improvement
- Flooding issues
- Heritage rules limit changes

OPPORTUNITIES

- Brings the building back to life in a meaningful way
- Can become a social and cultural meeting place
- Attracts both locals and tourists
- Reuse of existing building is more sustainable

THREATS

- Risk of losing its character
- Conflicts between preservation and new functions
- High costs for renovation and maintenance
- Weather may affect how the space is used

05. DESIGN PROJECT

The New Site
Concept
Design Proposal

THE NEW SITE

Stora Tullhuset was once part of Gothenburg's customs system. The building was originally designed to manage the movement of goods, people and administration between the city and the waterfront. The layout also guided how people moved through the building, almost like a path that took you from the city to the water.

When the building became Casino Cosmopol, everything changed inside. The spaces were divided up and cut off from each other. The visibility disappeared from one room to the next. Walls and doors blocked the view at every turn. The exterior of the building stayed untouched, but the interior became something completely different. What used to be open and easy to move through, turned into a series of closed off rooms. The connections to the waterfront and the city were lost and the ground floor, which once brought people in from the public space outside, no longer did that.

The new design for Stora Tullhuset will change that. Instead, it will give the building a new purpose. The walls that were added during the casino years, which divided the building to provide the best possible spatial layout for its function, will be removed and the original layout will be brought back. The inner courtyard will be reopened and once again become a central part of the building, helping guide people naturally through the space without relying on controlled circulation.

The ground floor will be open to everyone. The market and food spaces allow local vendors and small businesses to sell products and present food and goods connected to their cultural backgrounds, while the workshops create opportunities for visitors to learn through participation, conversation and making.

The design also strengthens the connection between the city, the building and the waterfront. Outdoor seating will be added, making the height difference of the site and the transition from the inside to outside more smoothly, while the ground floor is adapted to respond to potential flooring conditions.

The upper floors will hold studios, ateliers, exhibitions, meeting rooms and offices. These areas will transition from public to more private depending on the level. The

owners will be able to manage access, but the overall feel will still be open and connected.

The new design uses what is already there and makes it work better. Instead of controlling how people move, the building will use movement to bring the space to life. Stora Tullhuset will go from a closed off space to an open public place where people can meet, move around freely, and feel connected to each other and to the city.



SITUATION PLAN
SCALE 1:900

CONCEPT

The concept of this project grew from three things: the interviews we conducted, the physical character of the building, and what was clearly missing in the area.

The main idea was to reopen the closed parts of the building and make it more welcoming, so that people are drawn to come and gather here, while still preserving its historic character and structural layers. By bringing these ideas together, the concept became Flow; allowing people, movement, and life to flow freely through the building.

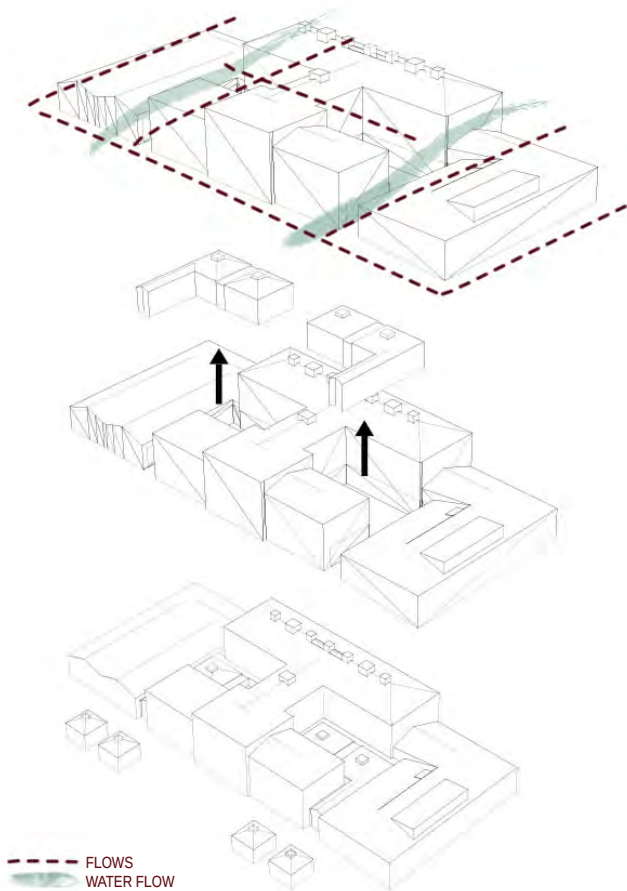


Fig 36. Concept diagram.

MARKET AND CULTURAL HUB

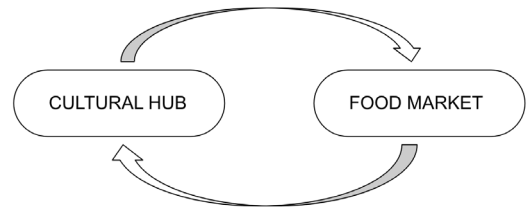


Fig 37. A simple diagram showing the connection between the: Interrelationship

A food and market space and a cultural hub work at different times of the day, but they go very well together. Markets bring people in every day and attract all kinds of visitors. Cultural spaces give people a place to create, learn, and see exhibitions. Putting these two things together means the building stays busy throughout the day and has something to offer for everyone.

The market keeps the ground floor alive through daily buying, selling and socializing. Gives the opportunity to people from different cultural backgrounds to share their goods and traditions with others.

The cultural hub adds spaces for creative work, collaboration, and events. Visitors can participate in activities, experience different cultural practices and engage directly with people from different communities. Together, they turn Stora Tullhuset into a place of commerce, culture, and community all happen under one roof.

In simple terms, the market brings people in, and the cultural hub gives them a reason to stay and come back and vice versa.

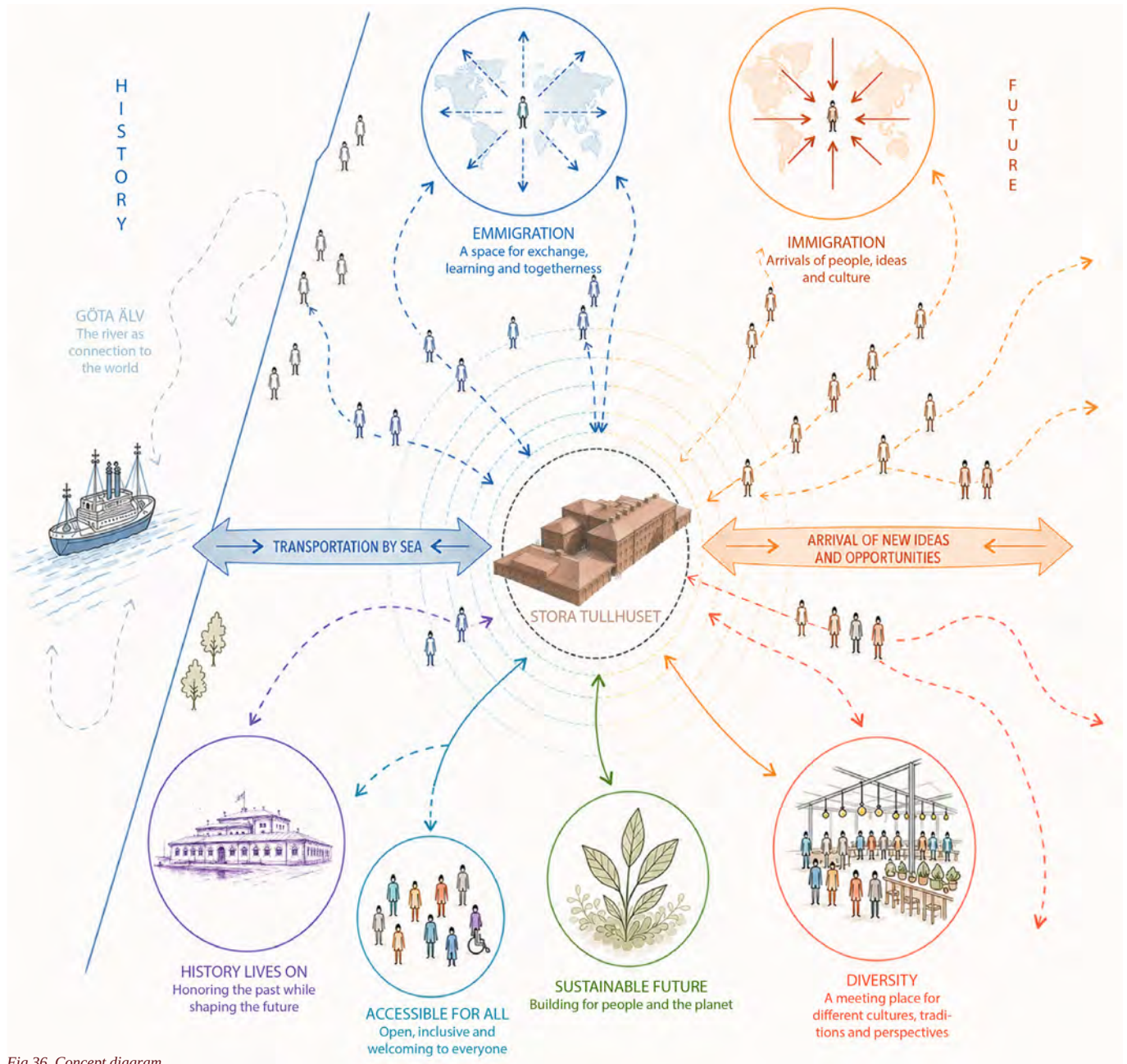


Fig 36. Concept diagram.

Stora Tullhuset is a historic building that connects the past and the future. The building is located by Göta Älv river, which was once an important route for sea trade and connected Gothenburg with the rest of the world.

Today, the building has the opportunity to become a place where people, ideas, and cultures come together. People from different countries can meet, learn from each other, and share their experiences.

The design vision is based on six important values. The first is emigration and immigration, which reflects the movement of people and the exchange of cultures and ideas. The second is history, where the building's past is respected and remembered. The third is accessibility, making the building open, welcoming, and easy for everyone to use. The fourth is a sustainable future, focusing on the well-being of both people and the environment. The fifth is diversity, celebrating different cultures, traditions, and perspectives.

DESIGN PROPOSAL

The flow is a crucial factor in this project. People arrive from across the city onto the site through multiple routes. The new design opens up the building, making movement through the site easier and more natural than before. By reopening the inner courtyard and reorganising the ground floor the building becomes genuinely accessible and welcoming. A place where different paths draw people inward and bring them together in the shared space of the courtyard. In this way, the building reconnects to the broader site and waterfront.

The ground floor is organised around four areas. The north part houses a market hall with food, retail and crafts stalls. It's more than a commercial space, the market becomes a hall for people from different cultural backgrounds to share food, products, traditions and knowledge with others. Since it used to be a customs house, the idea of exchange brings life in a contemporary way. In today's Gothenburg where different cultures exist together, the building becomes a meeting place where people from different neighborhoods, communities and cultures can present their identities through food, crafts and local products. The inner yard becomes the place where everyone can meet, becoming the heart of the building.

On the north side, a flexible open zone is reserved for seasonal stalls, temporary markets and cultural events that activate during 3 days per week and also during holidays and civic celebrations, giving an opportunity for activity that shifts with the seasons. Visitors also have the opportunity to sit outdoors, in the terraces and along the waterfront and enjoy the view to the river under the trees.

The south part contains a restaurant. The west part pairs a cafe with a pottery workshop, creating a relationship between making and social interaction. On the east side, a cultural workshop and a food workshop sit in proximity, offering visitors the opportunity to learn, produce and share different cultural practices.

Markets have historically been foundational to civic life. They are spaces of exchange not only of goods but of conversation and social continuity. The market at Stora Tullhuset operates within this frame, becoming

somewhere people return to regularly, not only for programmed events but as part of ordinary life. The stalls are clustered around open pockets of space that encourage slower movement, informal encounters and exploration.

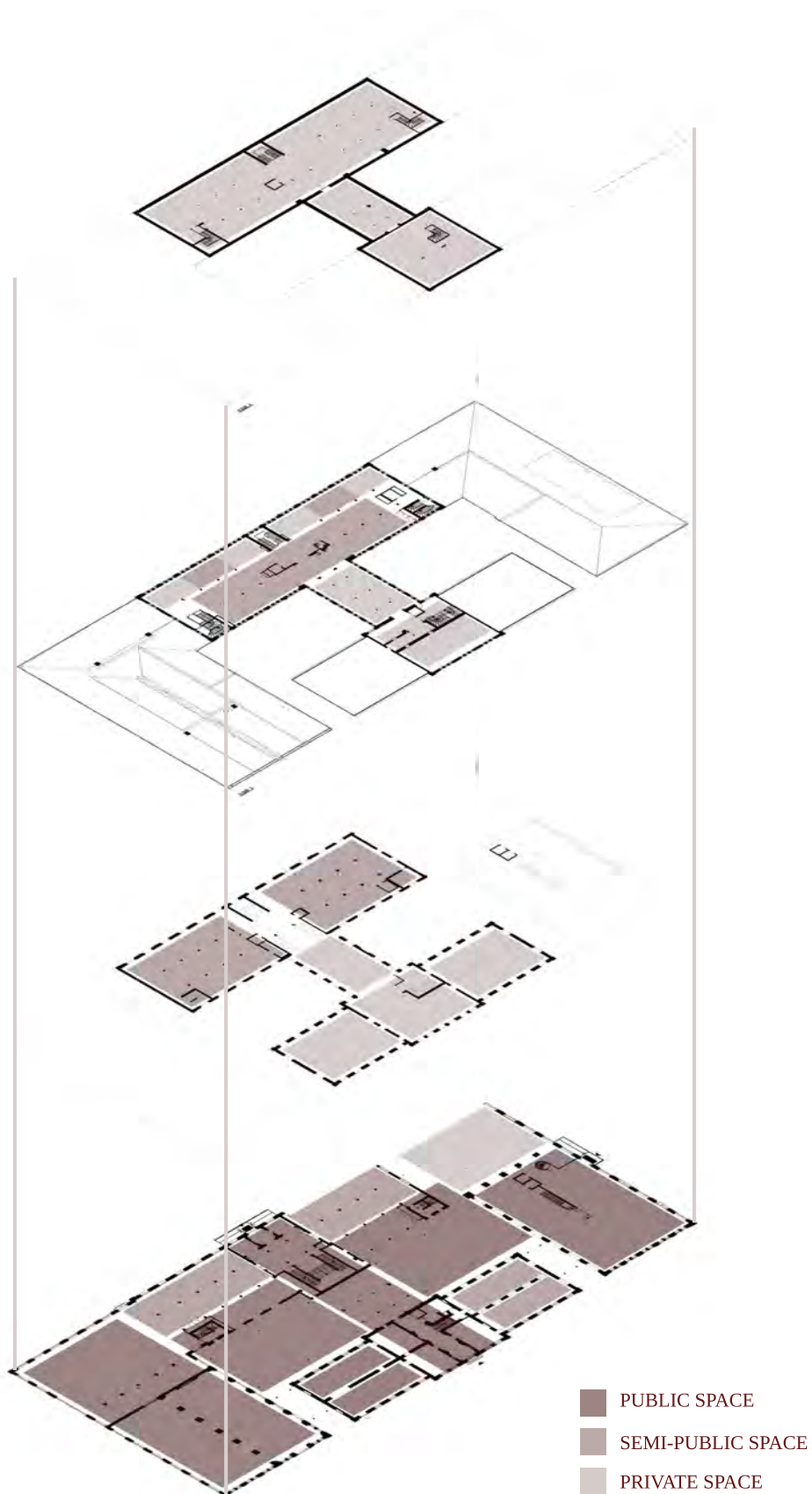


Fig 38. Program distribution across building diagram.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The building is organised around two core functions: a market and a cultural hub. These two elements work together to create space that is active, publicly accessible and socially engaged.

The ground floor is anchored by the market, workshops, cafe and restaurant is open to all visitors and serves as the main point and activity.

Moving upward, the building transitions into more structured cultural spaces making the access more controlled.

As you move further, the access turns into private for the staff, administration and technical rooms.

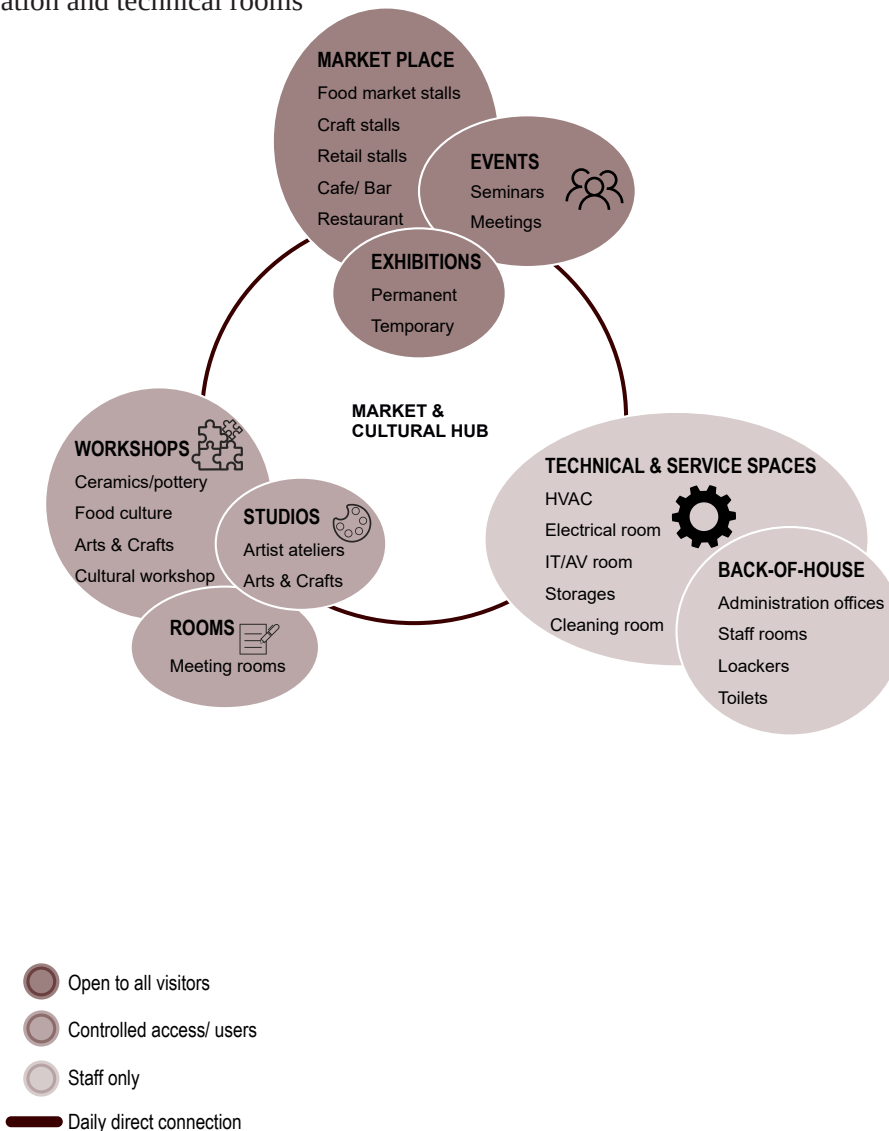


Fig 39. Program distribution across building diagram.

SPATIAL ORGANISATION MOVEMENT

This diagram shows how Stora Tullhuset is organised across its floors and how movement flows through the building both horizontally and vertically.

People are drawn into the building and especially to the ground floor in multiple directions through main flows that connect the building to the surrounding city and the waterfront.

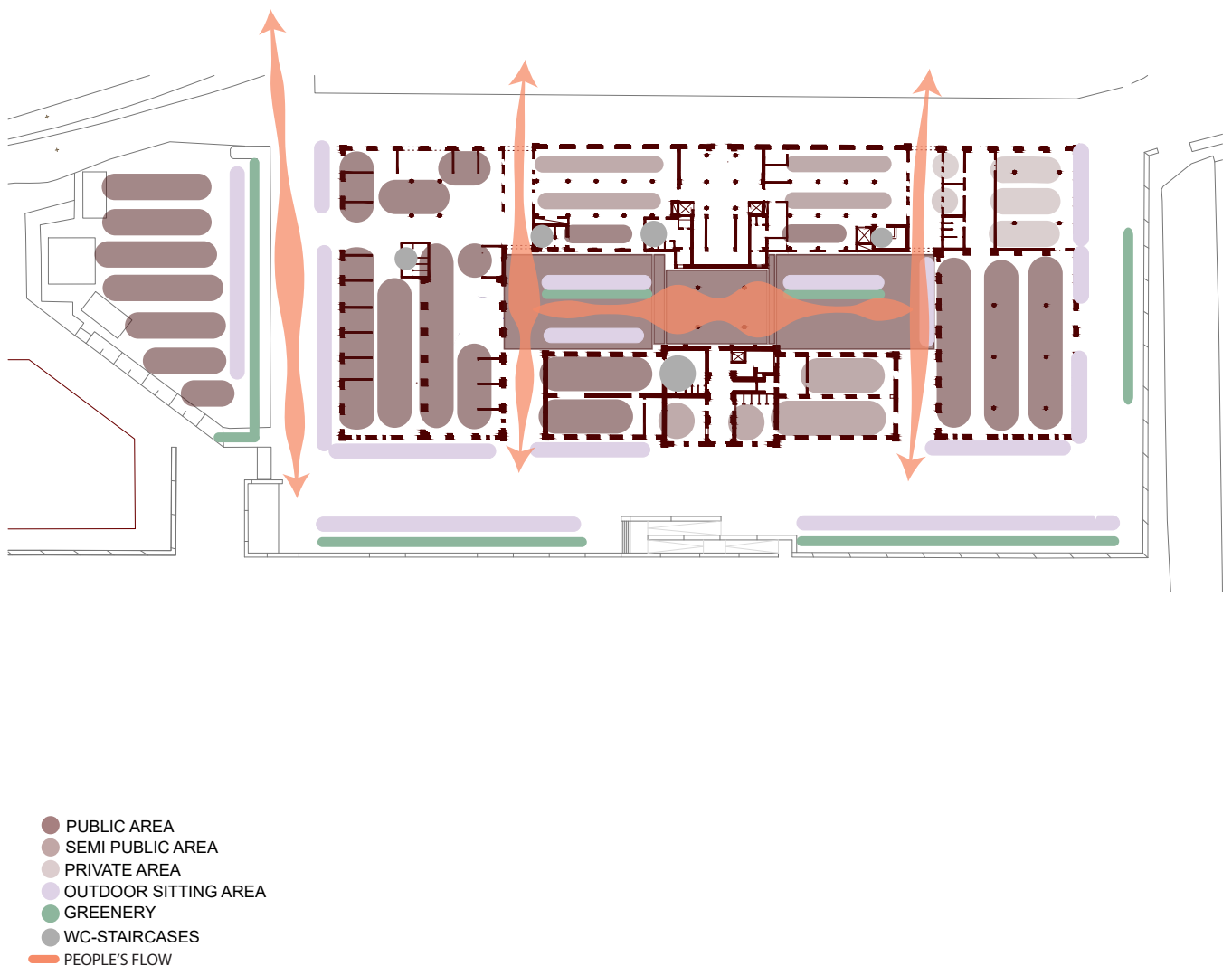


Fig 40. Spatial organization movement diagram.

RELATION STRUCTURE

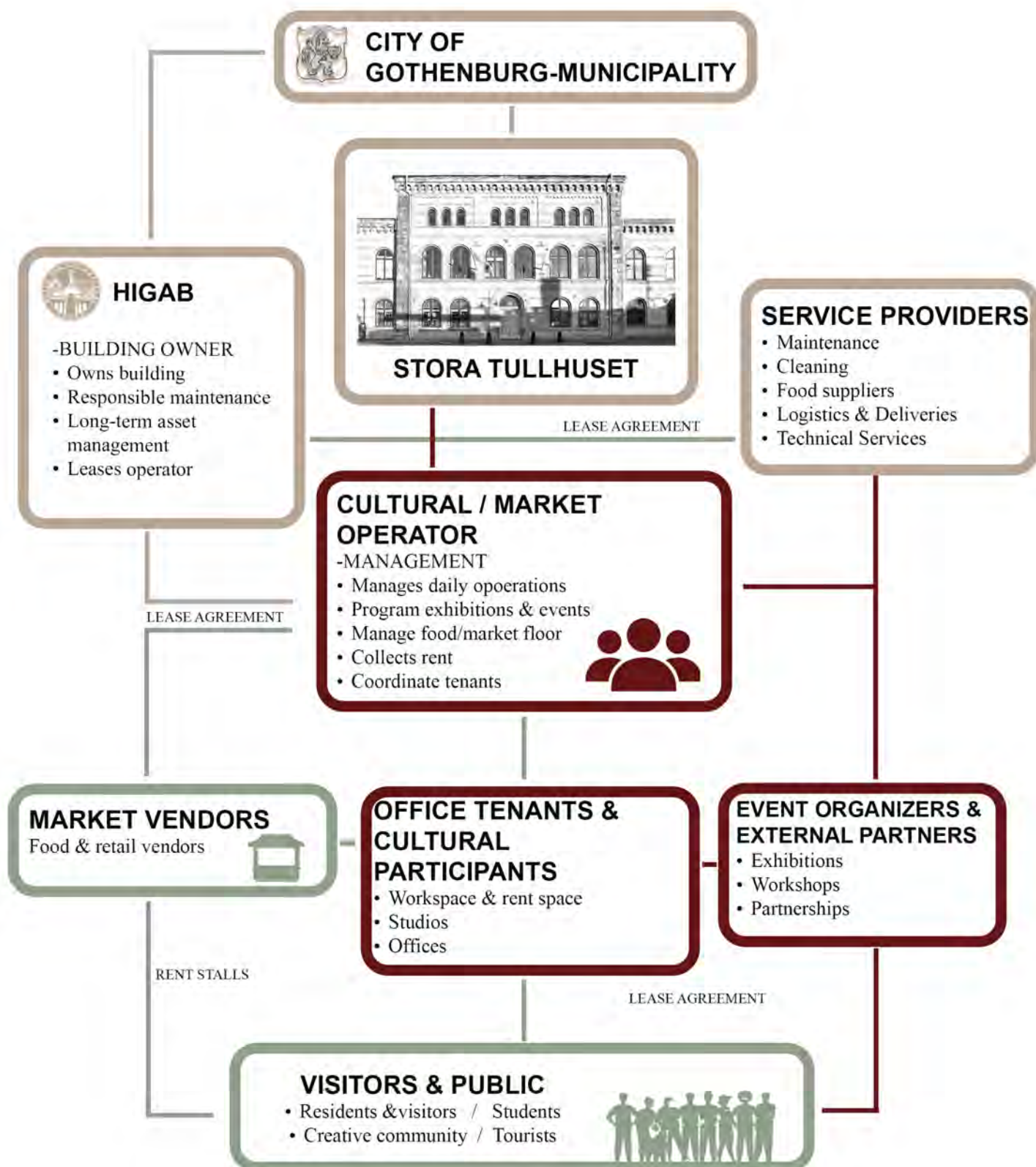
The way Stora Tullhuset works as a public building involves several connected layers, but the basic idea is straightforward. Rather than being a traditional cultural building that stands alone, it works more like a living system where management, user, and services all play a role and support each other.

At the top level, the city of Gothenburg sets the rules and policies that govern the building and the area around it. The building is owned and managed by Higab, which takes care of the structure and looks after the building in the long term. Hijab has leased the building to a cultural and market operator. This means Higab owns the building, but someone else runs it day to day. This separation gives the building stability while also allowing for flexible and changing programming.

The cultural and market operator is the one who keeps things running. They manage daily operations, organize the program, and handle the rental agreements with the market vendors on the ground floor and the studio tenants on the upper floors. They also work with event organizers to bring in temporary activities.

The diagram shows three main flows: oversight from the city, coordination by the operator, and money moving between the different parties. This shows that making a building like this work is not just about good design. It also depends on a fair and clear sharing of responsibilities and benefits between everyone involved.

In the end, Stora Tullhuset is set up to work as a lasting public platform. The users bring it to life, the city keeps an eye on it, and the ongoing management keeps it running.



— FINANCIAL FLOW — OPERATIONAL FLOW — INSTITUTIONAL FLOW

Fig 41. Relation structure diagram.

DAILY ACTIVITY

The building operates seven days a week with a variety of spaces. The cafe and bar has the longest hours, open most of the days from 8 A.M to 10 P.M. The restaurant serves lunch and dinner daily. The indoor market runs every day usually 9 A.M to 7 P.M while the outdoor market only opens 3 days per week. Workshops, exhibitions, and artist studios are generally available Monday through Friday with reduced or no hours during the weekends.

DAILY ACTIVITIES

USE		M	T
	OUTDOOR MARKET Outdoor market with local vendors and goods	CLOSED	10:00 AM-2:00 PM
	CAFE / BAR Cafe and bar with indoor and outdoor seating	8:00 AM-10:00 PM	8:00 AM-10:00 PM
	RESTAURANT Full - service restaurant	12:00 AM-9:00 PM	12:00 AM-9:00 PM
	WORKSHOPS Creative and educational workshops	10:00 AM-6:00 PM	10:00 AM-6:00 PM
	MARKET Indoor food, crafts and retail area	9:00 AM-7:00 PM	9:00 AM-7:00 PM
	EXHIBITIONS Art and cultural exhibitions	10:00 AM-6:00 PM	10:00 AM-6:00 PM
	ATELIERS / STUDIOS Workspaces for artists and creatives	10:00 AM-6:00 PM	10:00 AM-6:00 PM

Fig 42. Daily activities and opening hours' schedule in the building diagram.

S & OPENING HOURS

W	T	F	S	S
CLOSED	10:00 AM-2:00 PM	CLOSED	8:00 AM-2:00 PM	CLOSED
8:00 AM-10:00 PM	8:00 AM-10:00 PM	8:00 AM-12:00 PM	10:00 AM-1:00 PM	10:00 AM-9:00 PM
12:00 AM-9:00 PM	12:00 AM-9:00 PM	12:00 AM-12:00 PM	10:00 AM-1:00 PM	12:00 AM-9:00 PM
10:00 AM-6:00 PM	10:00 AM-6:00 PM	10:00 AM-6:00 PM	12:00 AM-7:00 PM	12:00 AM-5:00 PM
9:00 AM-7:00 PM	9:00 AM-7:00 PM	9:00 AM-7:00 PM	10:00 AM-5:00 PM	10:00 AM-5:00 PM
10:00 AM-6:00 PM	10:00 AM-6:00 PM	10:00 AM-6:00 PM	10:00 AM-6:00 PM	CLOSED
10:00 AM-6:00 PM	10:00 AM-6:00 PM	10:00 AM-6:00 PM	CLOSED	CLOSED

 PEAK ACTIVITY
  OPERATIONAL TIME



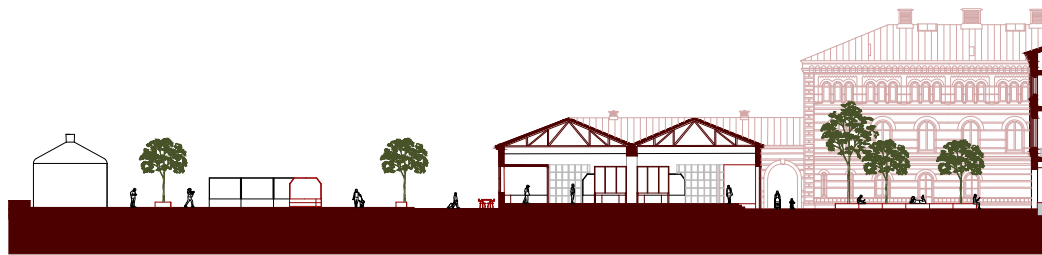
Fig 43. Bird perspective visualization over Stora Tullhuset.



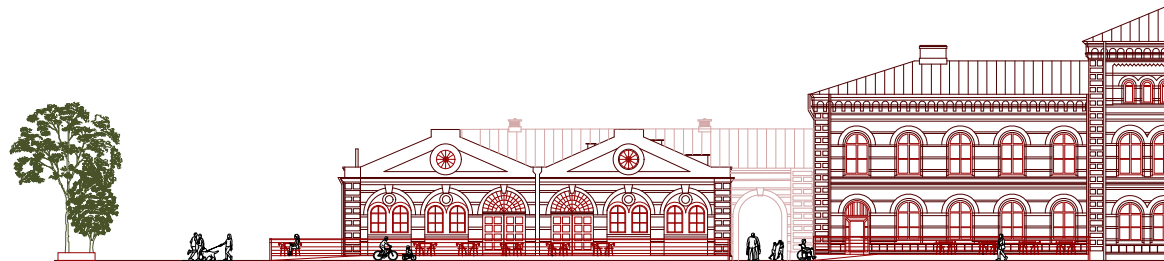


GROUND FLOOR
SCALE 1:500



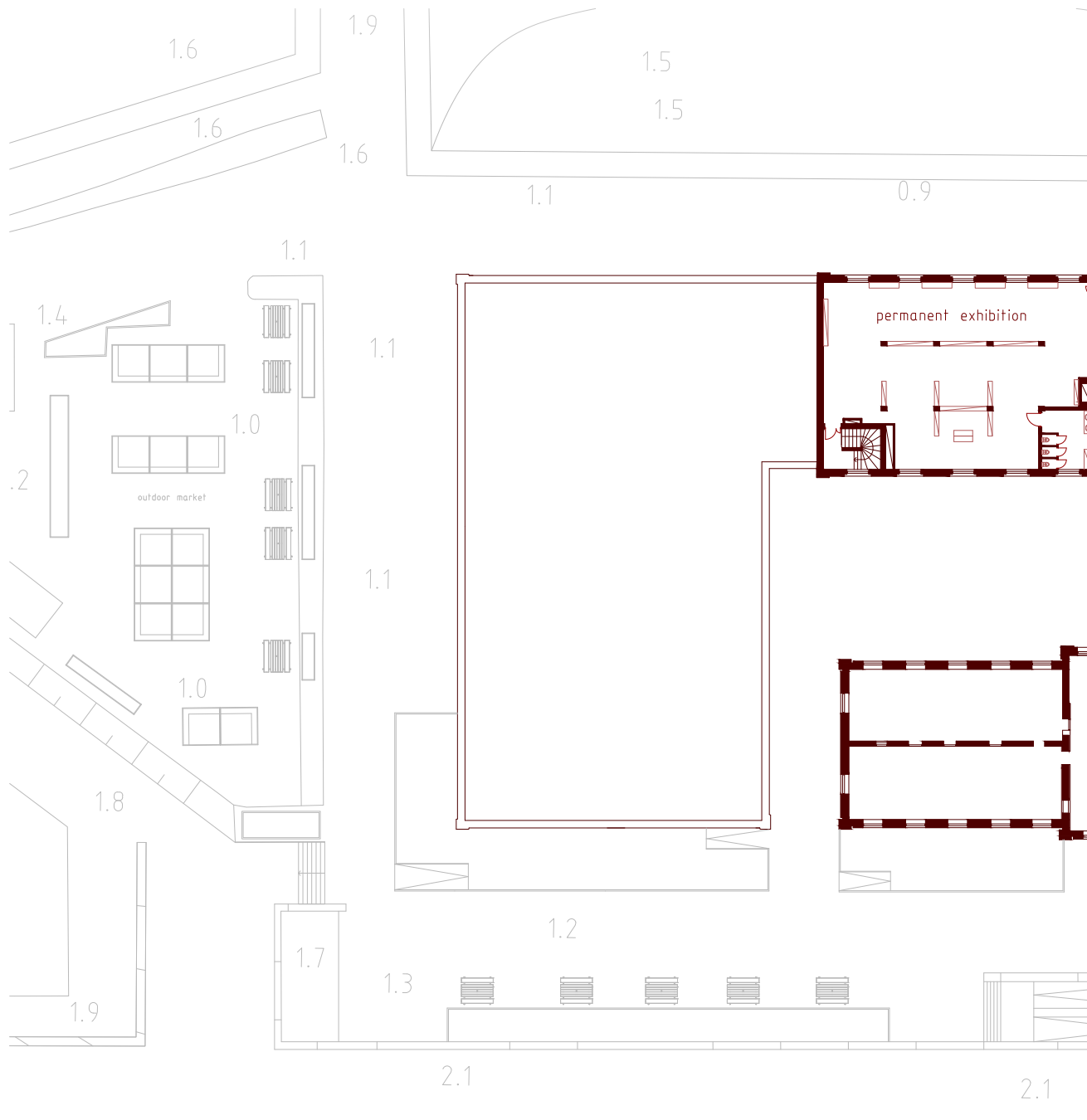


SECTION AA'
SCALE 1:500

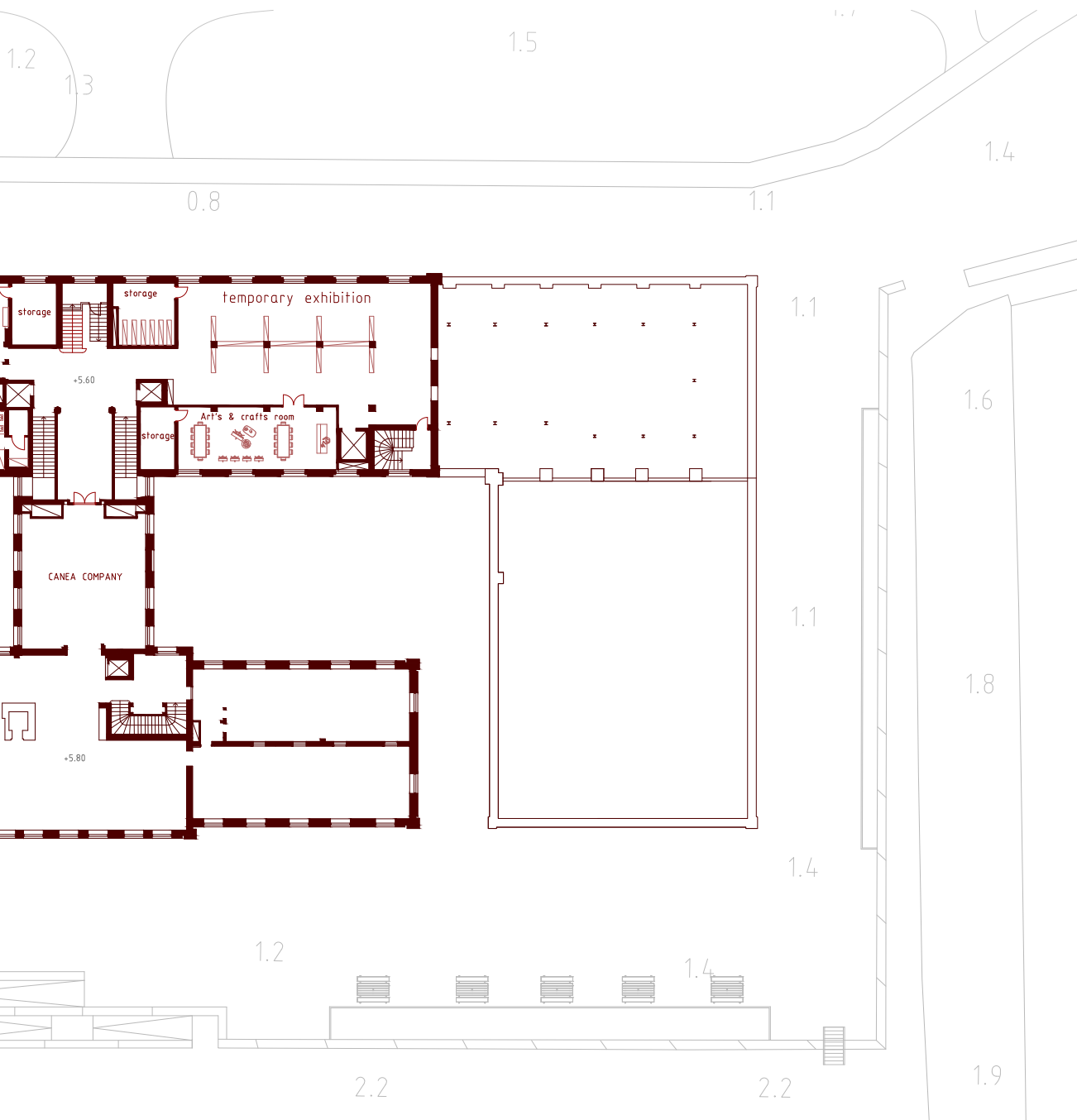


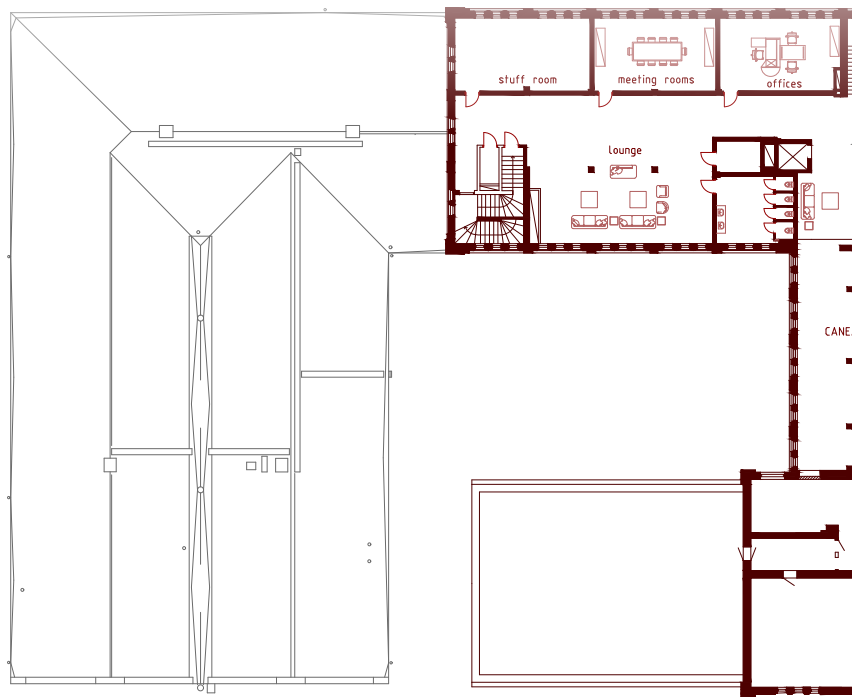
WEST FACADE
SCALE 1:400



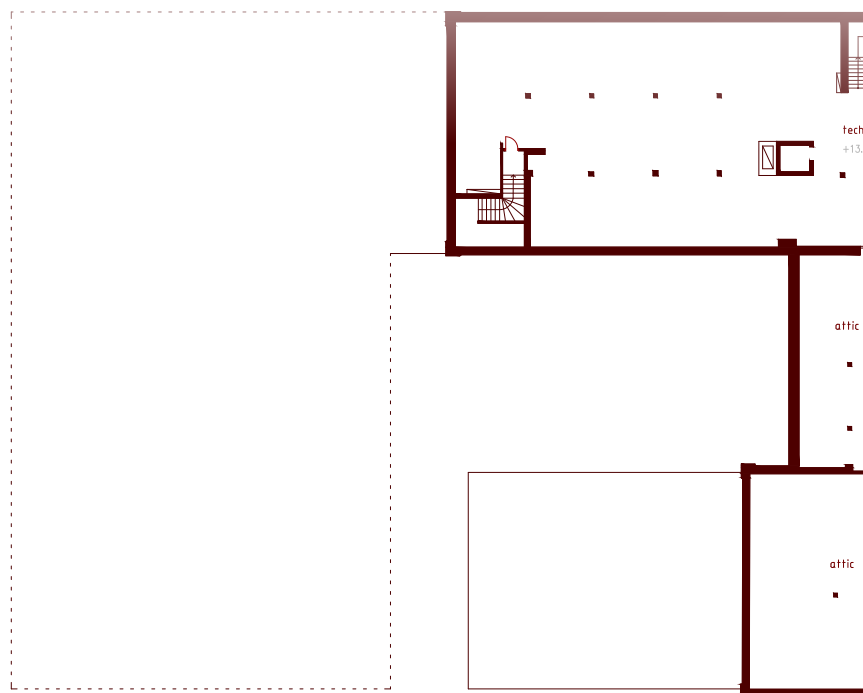


FIRST FLOOR
SCALE 1:500





SECOND FLOOR
SCALE 1:500



ATTIC
SCALE 1:500

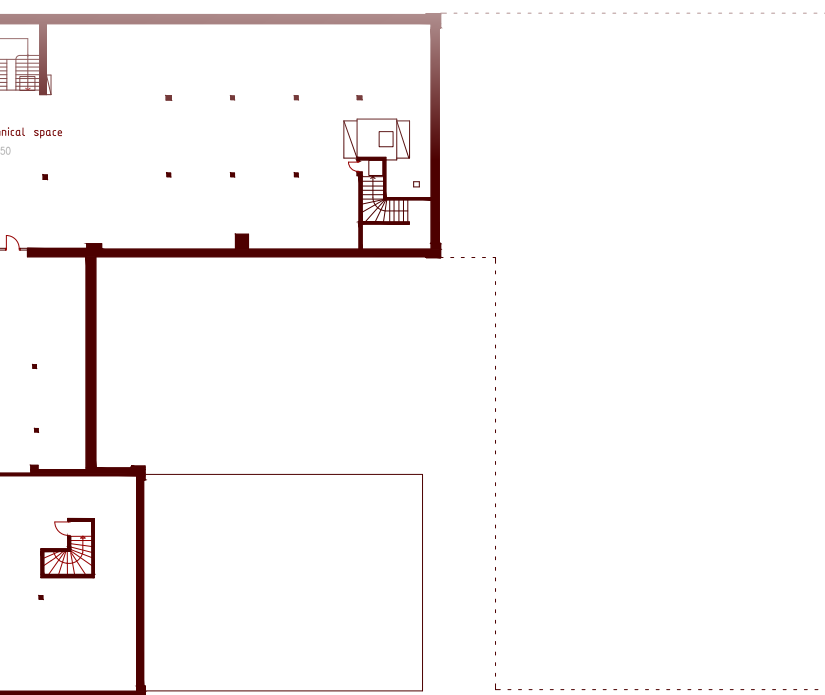
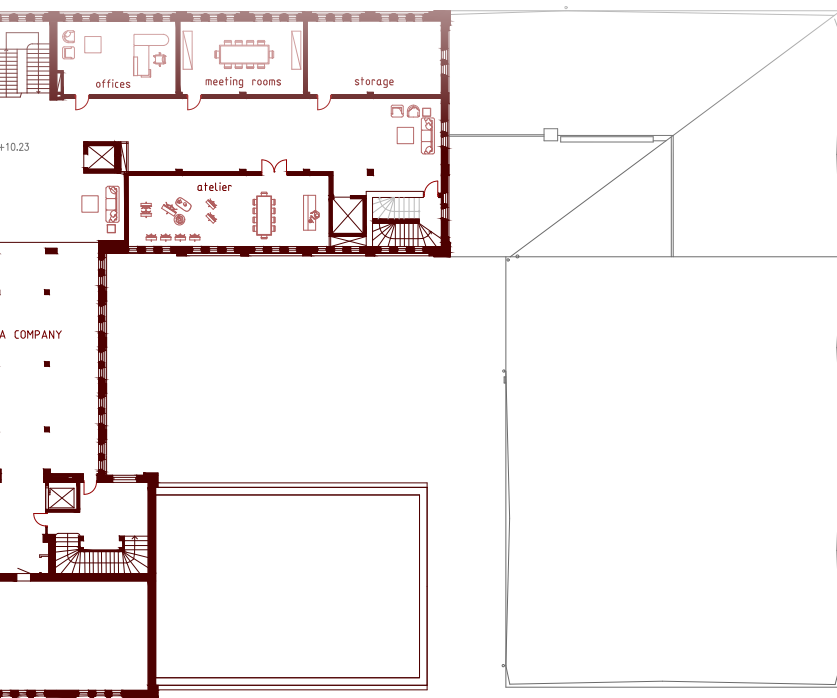
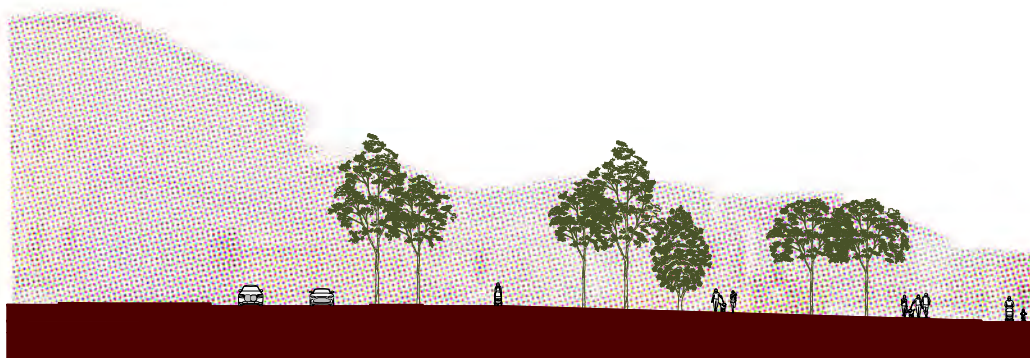




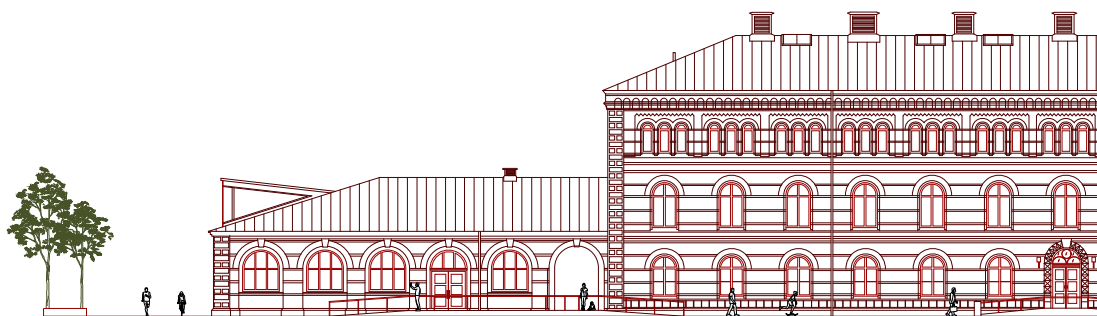
Fig 44. Permanent exhibition visualization.



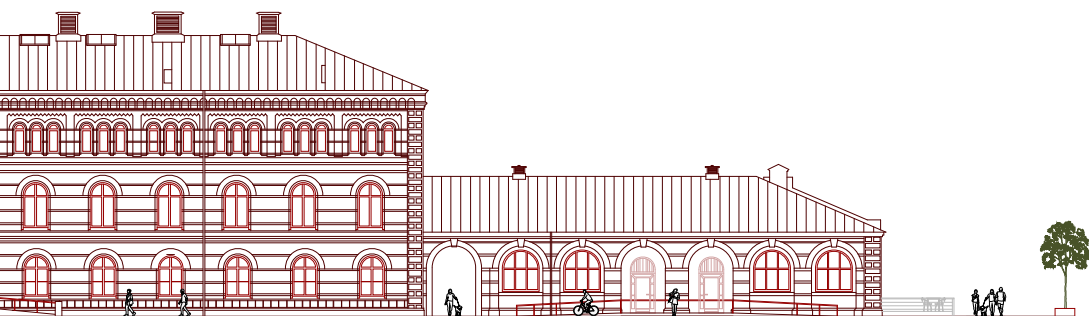
Fig 45. Restaurant entrance visualization.

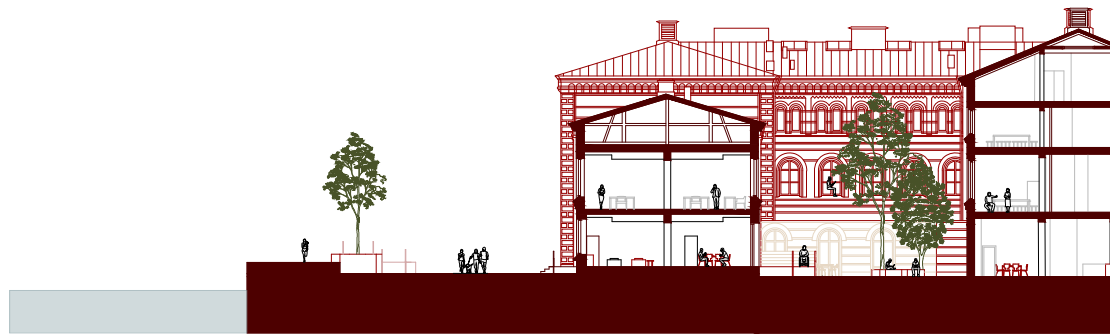


SECTION BB'
SCALE 1:400



EAST FACADE
SCALE 1:400

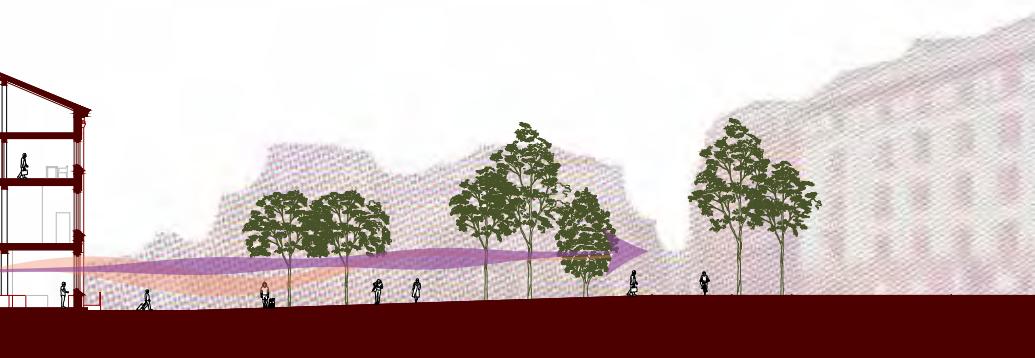
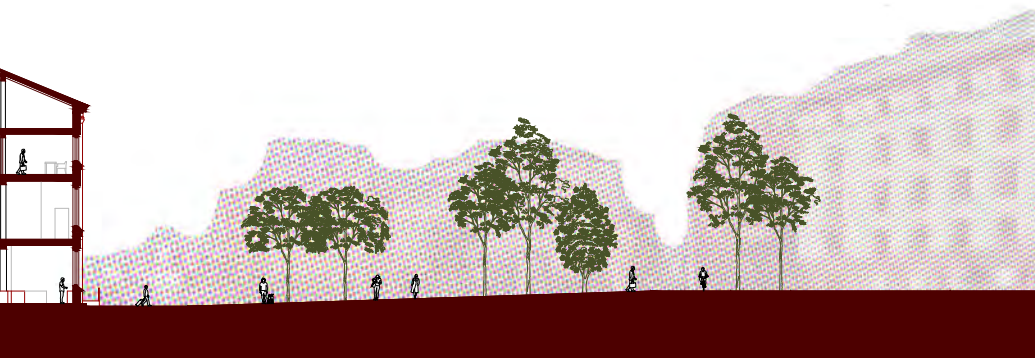




SECTION CC'
SCALE 1:400

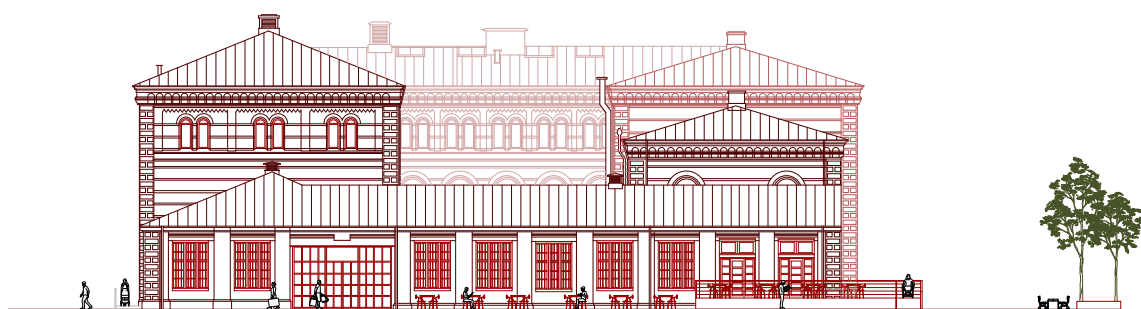


CONCEPTUAL SECTION CC' SHOWING PEOPLE AND WATER FLOW
SCALE 1:400





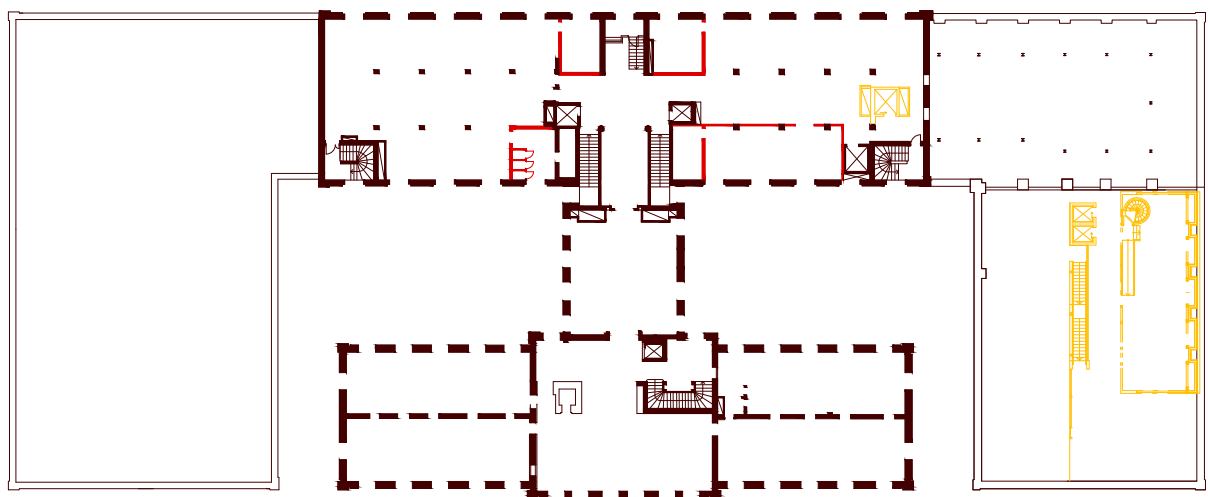
SOUTH FACADE
SCALE 1:400



NORTH FACADE
SCALE 1:400

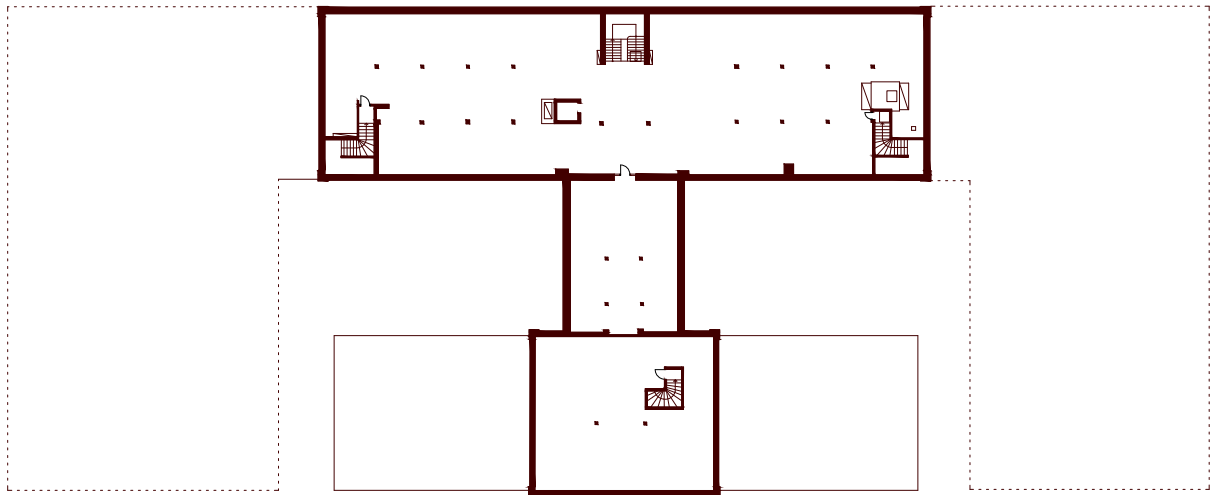
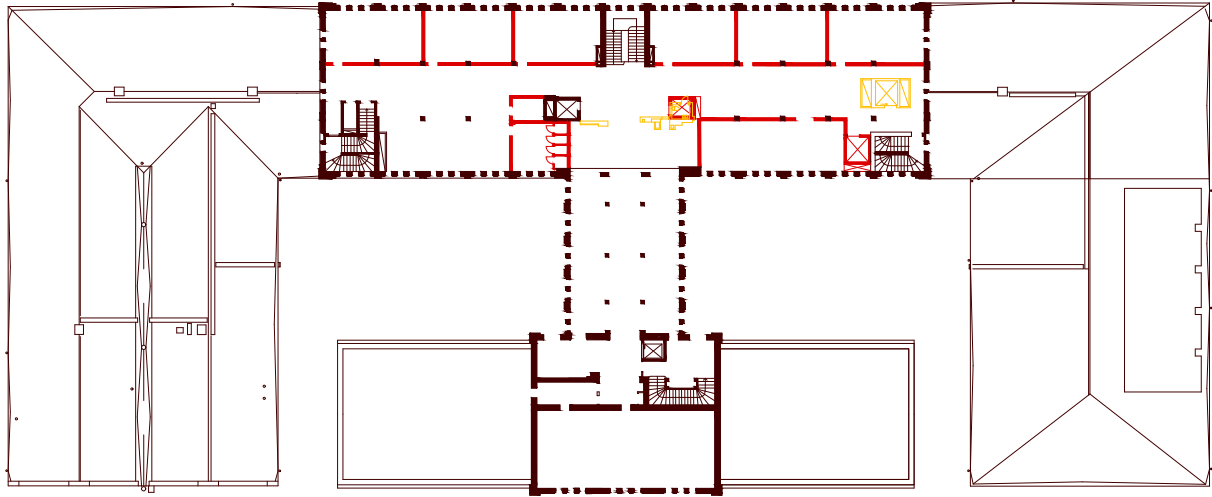


Fig 46. Courtyard visualization.



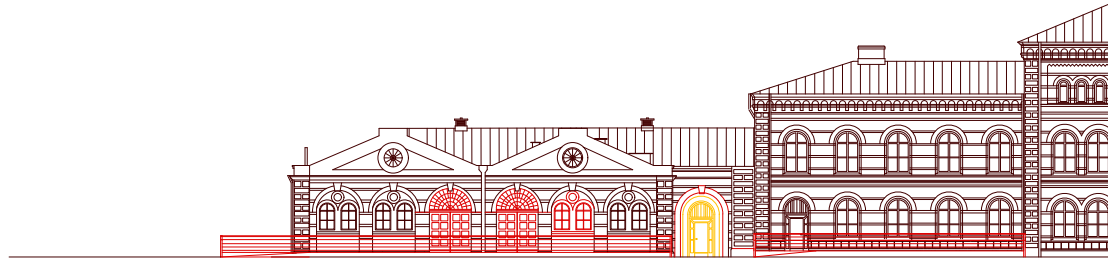
TRANSFORMATION PLANS SCALE 1:700

EXISTING —
 ADDED —
 DEMOLISHED —



TRANSFORMATION PLANS SCALE 1:700

EXISTING
ADDED
DEMOLISHED



TRANSFORMATION PLANS SCALE 1:400

EXISTING ———
 ADDED ———
 DEMOLISHED ———





Fig 47. Outdoor market, night time visualization.



Fig 48. Outdoor market, evening time visualization.

06. EPILOGUE

Discussion and Conclusion
Reflection
References

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This project started with a simple observation: Stora Tullhuset is one of the most well located buildings in Gothenburg, and it was standing completely empty. After Casino Cosmopol closed in 2024, the building lost its only active function. The area around it already had hotels, offices, and restaurants. But there was nothing for people to gather around; no market, no cultural space, no real reason to stop and stay. That gap shaped every decision in this project.

The choice to reuse the building rather than replace it was the most fundamental decision of all. As Douglas (2006) points out, demolition was once the standard answer when a building no longer served its original purpose. But that thinking has changed. Keeping a building alive means keeping energy already used to build it. It avoids the waste and carbon cost of demolition and new construction. For a city like Gothenburg, which has clear sustainability goals, this is not a small contribution. It is a direct response to those goals (Higab, 2024; Göteborg & Co, 2025).

But reuse alone is not enough. As Plevoets and Van Cleempoel (2019) argue, adaptive reuse is not only about preserving a structure. It is about asking what role a building can play in the city today. A preserved building that stays empty is still a failure. The design had to give Stora Tullhuset a reason to be used every single day; not just during events or on weekends.

That is why the food and market hall on the ground floor became the core of the proposal. A market brings people in out of habit. People come for food, for craft, for familiar vendors not because of a cultural program, but because it is part of their week. And while they are there, they pass the exhibitions, they notice the workshops, they stay longer than they planned. This is exactly what Gehl (2011) describes when he talks about how good public space works. It does not depend on big gestures. It depends on small, everyday reasons to be there.

The cluster layout was chosen for this reason. Instead of placing market stalls in straight line, the clusters create small open area where people naturally slow down

and talk. This arrangement makes it easy to add workshops, performances, and food preparation areas alongside the market itself. According to Amin and Thrift (2002), mixing commerce with culture and community activity is one of the most effective ways to make a space genuinely public. The design follows this idea directly.

The single most important spatial decision was reopening the inner courtyard. When Casino Cosmopol moved in during 2001, the courtyard was covered over and the interior was divided into a series of closed rooms. That one change damaged how the whole building felt and functioned. Once the casino walls and partitions were removed on paper, the original layout came back; the long halls, the symmetry, the way one space leads naturally to the next. The building started to make sense again. Both Higab and Canea confirmed during the interviews that this was the right move, which gave use confidence to commit to it fully.

Flood risk could not be ignored. The building sits on the waterfront and water has already entered the ground floor during past flood events. The strategy used here is wet floodproofing; accepting that water may sometimes reach the ground floor and designing honestly for that situation, rather than pretending it will never happen. Materials that can handle moisture, utilities raised above flood level, and a ground floor layout that can be cleaned and returned to use quickly. This approach felt more realistic and more responsible than trying to seal the building completely, and it keeps the historic character of the ground floor intact. As Paleo-Torres et al. (2021) show, designing with flood risk in mind is an essential part of working on waterfront buildings today.

The tension between preservation and new use ran through the entire project. The building is protected by law. The stone facades, the exterior walls, the main entrance, and key structural elements must stay as they are. That is right. But protection cannot become a reason for a building to stand empty and disconnected from the city. Bullen and Love (2011) make this point clearly: the best way to protect a historic building is to keep it alive and give it a purpose. A building that is

used and loved is far harder to lose than one that simply stands empty.

The result of all these decisions is a cultural hub with a food and market hall on the ground floor, organized around a reopened inner courtyard. The casino era walls and partitions are removed. The original spatial logic is restored. The ground floor is open to everyone. The upper floors hold workshops, studios, and exhibition spaces that move from semi public to more private as you go higher. Together, these moves answer the research question directly: Stora Tullhuset can be transformed through adaptive reuse by restoring its spatial logic, introducing a program that serves people every day, and responding honestly to the climate challenges it faces; all while keeping everything that makes it historically significant.

The proposal shows that adaptive reuse is not only a design strategy. It is also an environmental, social, and cultural one. Keeping the building alive means keeping its story alive. The building was once a customs house where good and people passed between the city and the sea. More than a million people walked through Packhusplatsen on their way to a new life. Today, the idea of exchange returns in a new form; a market where people from different cultural backgrounds share food, crafts, and traditions with each other and with the city.

This project has clear limits. No structural engineering was done. No detailed flood calculations were carried out. No business plan was developed. These are important next steps that would need to happen before anything could move forward in reality. What this thesis offers is a clear and grounded architectural direction; one that a future team of engineers, heritage specialists, and building operators can build upon.

Stora Tullhuset does not have to stay empty. The building already has everything it needs to become one of the most active and meaningful public spaces in Gothenburg. What it needs now is a clear vision and the commitment to carry it through. This thesis is an attempt to provide that vision.

REFLECTION

Working on this project was one of the most demanding and rewarding experiences of our studies. The reason it felt different from other projects we have had in the past is simple: everything was real. The building is real, the history is real, the flood risk is real, and the people we interviewed gave us real opinions and real constraints. Every design decision carried a weight that felt different from designing something imaginary.

The interviews with Marcus Gustafsson from Higab and Andreas Klementsson from Canea were two of the most useful parts of the whole process as well. They did not just give us information; they gave us perspective. They told us what actually happens inside the building, what is missing, what the heritage rules allow, and what the practical challenges look like from the inside. That kind of knowledge cannot come from books alone. It changed how we understood the site and pushed the design in directions we would not have found on our own.

The site visits were equally important. We visited Stora Tullhuset many times, in different weather and at different times of the day. We paid attention to where the sun fell, where the wind was uncomfortable, how loud the traffic was from the east side, how quiet and calm the waterfront side felt. These observations shaped the spatial strategy in direct ways; the outdoor seating areas, the orientation of the market, the decision to keep the south and west sides of the ground floor more open and welcoming.

Looking back, we would have liked more time to develop the upper floors in greater detail. The ground floor and courtyard received most of our attention, which is appropriate given that they are the heart of the proposal. But the studios, ateliers, and exhibition spaces on the first and second floors could have been worked out more carefully. There is also more to explore in how the building transitions from fully public on the ground floor to semi public and private on the upper levels; that gradient is important and we feel it was only partially resolved.

Time was one of the biggest challenges throughout this thesis. A master's thesis has a fixed deadline, and there is always more to explore, more to draw, and more to

refine. Learning to make decisions under time pressure, and trusting those decisions, was something we had to practice every week. It taught us that good design is not just about having the best ideas. It is also about knowing when to stop refining and commit to a direction.

We leave this project proud of what we have produced and fully aware of how much more could still be done. Stora Tullhuset is a remarkable building. It has survived more than 160 years of changes; from a customs house to an emigration gateway to a casino and now to a building waiting for its next chapter. We hope this proposal contributes, in some small way, to the conversation about what that chapter should be.

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IMAGES

Images and drawings without reference have been developed by the authors of this thesis.

Figure 14. View of Stora Tullhuset and the harbour area of Gothenburg. [Illustration]. (1869). Hafström, A. (Artist), & Olson (Photographer). Ny Illustrerad Tidning. Göteborgs Stadsmuseums Samlingar. <https://samlingar.goteborgsstadsmuseum.se/carlotta/web/object/349149> (Retrieved May 31, 2026)

Figure 15. View of Packhuskajen and Stora Tullhuset, constructed in 1866, from which approximately one million people emigrated to North America between the 1850s and 1930s [Postcard photograph]. (ca. 1955). Nostalgorama. <https://nostalgorama.blogspot.com/2017/05/vykort-pa-goteborg-fran-omkring-1950.html> (Retrieved May 31, 2026)

Figure 16. Archaeological and historical documentation of the Stora Tullhuset area [Photograph]. (n.d.). Arkeologerna. Västlänken Magasin, p.137 https://arkeologerna.com/downloads/Vastlanken_magasin_2_enkelsidig_low_minskad.pdf (Retrieved May 31, 2026)

Figure 17. Exterior view of Tullpackhuset, Gothenburg [Photograph]. (n.d.). Vårt Göteborg. <https://vartgoteborg.se/p/tullpackhuset/> (Retrieved May 31, 2026)

Figure 18. Packhuskajen, Gothenburg harbour [Postcard photograph]. (1910, July 19). Göteborgs Stadsmuseum (Object No. 484899). <https://samlingar.goteborgsstadsmuseum.se/carlotta/web/object/484899> (Retrieved May 31, 2026)

Figure 19. The vessel Ariosto transporting emigrants from Masthuggskajen, Gothenburg, bound for Hull, England [Photograph]. (after 1910).

Göteborgs Stadsmuseums Samlingar. [https://www5.goteborg.se/prod/fastighetskontoret/etjanst/planobygg.nsf/vyFiler/Centrum%20-%20G%C3%A5ng-%20och%20cykelbro%20%C3%B6ver%20G%C3%B6ta%20%C3%84lv-Plan%20ut%C3%B6kat%20f%C3%B6rfarande%20-%20samr%C3%A5d-Kulturmilj%C3%B6utredning/\\$File/019.%20Kulturmilj%C3%B6utredning.pdf?OpenElement](https://www5.goteborg.se/prod/fastighetskontoret/etjanst/planobygg.nsf/vyFiler/Centrum%20-%20G%C3%A5ng-%20och%20cykelbro%20%C3%B6ver%20G%C3%B6ta%20%C3%84lv-Plan%20ut%C3%B6kat%20f%C3%B6rfarande%20-%20samr%C3%A5d-Kulturmilj%C3%B6utredning/$File/019.%20Kulturmilj%C3%B6utredning.pdf?OpenElement) (Retrieved May 31, 2026)

Figure 20. View over Packhusplatsen and Tullpackhuset with Magasinskvartret in the background [Photograph]. (n.d.). Göteborgs Stadsmuseum (Object No. 350116). <https://samlingar.goteborgsstadsmuseum.se/carlotta/web/object/350116> (Retrieved May 31, 2026)

Figure 21. Packhusplatsen approximately 150 years ago, shortly after the inauguration of the customs and warehouse building [Photograph]. (ca. 1870s). Göteborgs Båtförbund. <https://www.gbgbf.se/aktivitet/packhusplatsen-230119/> (Retrieved May 31, 2026)

Figure 22. The mouth of Stora Hamnkanalen at the river [Photograph]. (n.d.). Göteborgs Stadsmuseum (Object No. 293584). <https://samlingar.goteborgsstadsmuseum.se/carlotta/web/object/293584> (Retrieved May 31, 2026)

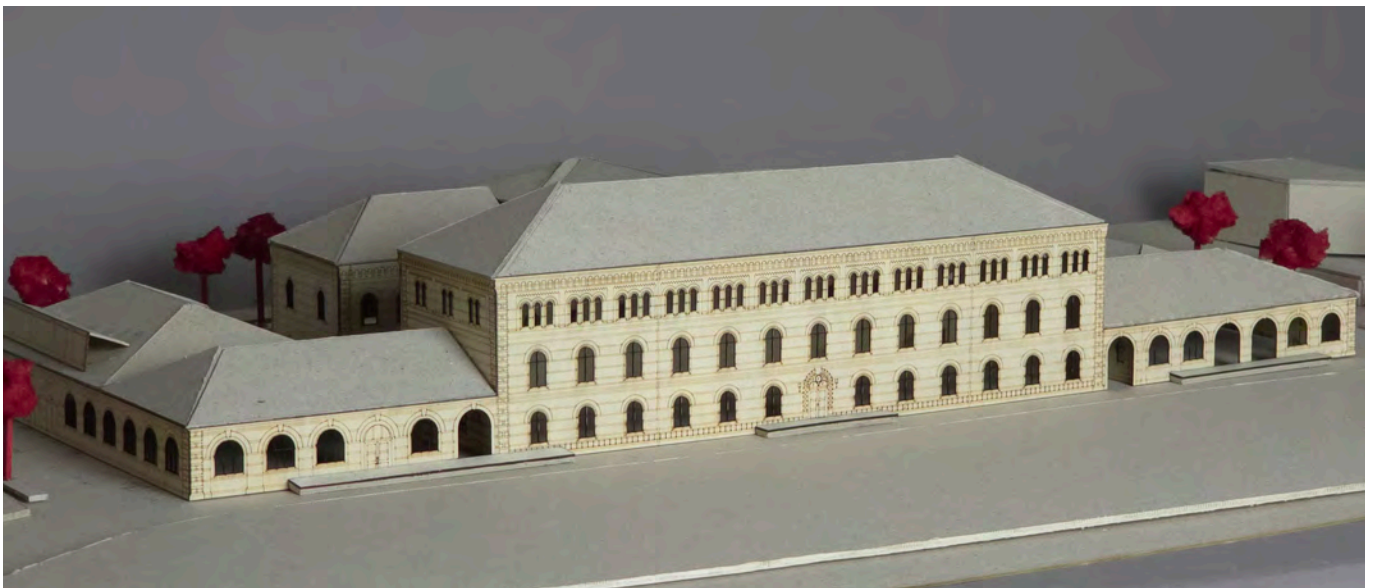
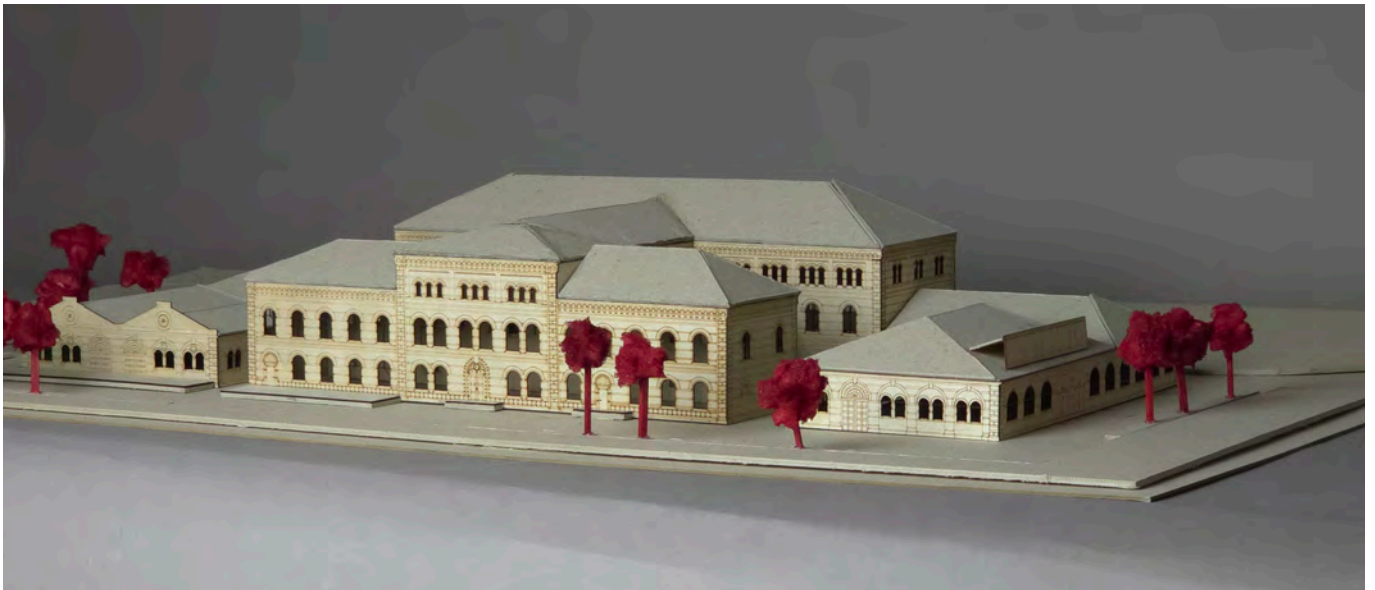
Figure 23. View over Packhusplatsen facing southwest. The photograph was taken around 1885. The towers of the post house can be seen to the left and a small part of the customs house can be discerned to the right. (Page 69). chrome-extension://efaidnbmninnibpcjpcglclefindmkaj/https://arkeologerna.com/downloads/Vastlanken_magasin_2_enkelsidig_low_minskad.pdf (Retrieved May 31, 2026)

Figure 24. View from Kvarnberget towards the customs house and River Göta Älv [Photograph]. (ca. 1896). Göteborgs Stadsmuseum (Object No. 361345). <https://samlingar.goteborgsstadsmuseum.se/carlotta/web/object/361345> (Retrieved May 31, 2026)

07. APPENDIX

Physical Model
Exhibition

PHYSICAL MODEL





EXHIBITION



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Master Thesis, Spring 2026
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