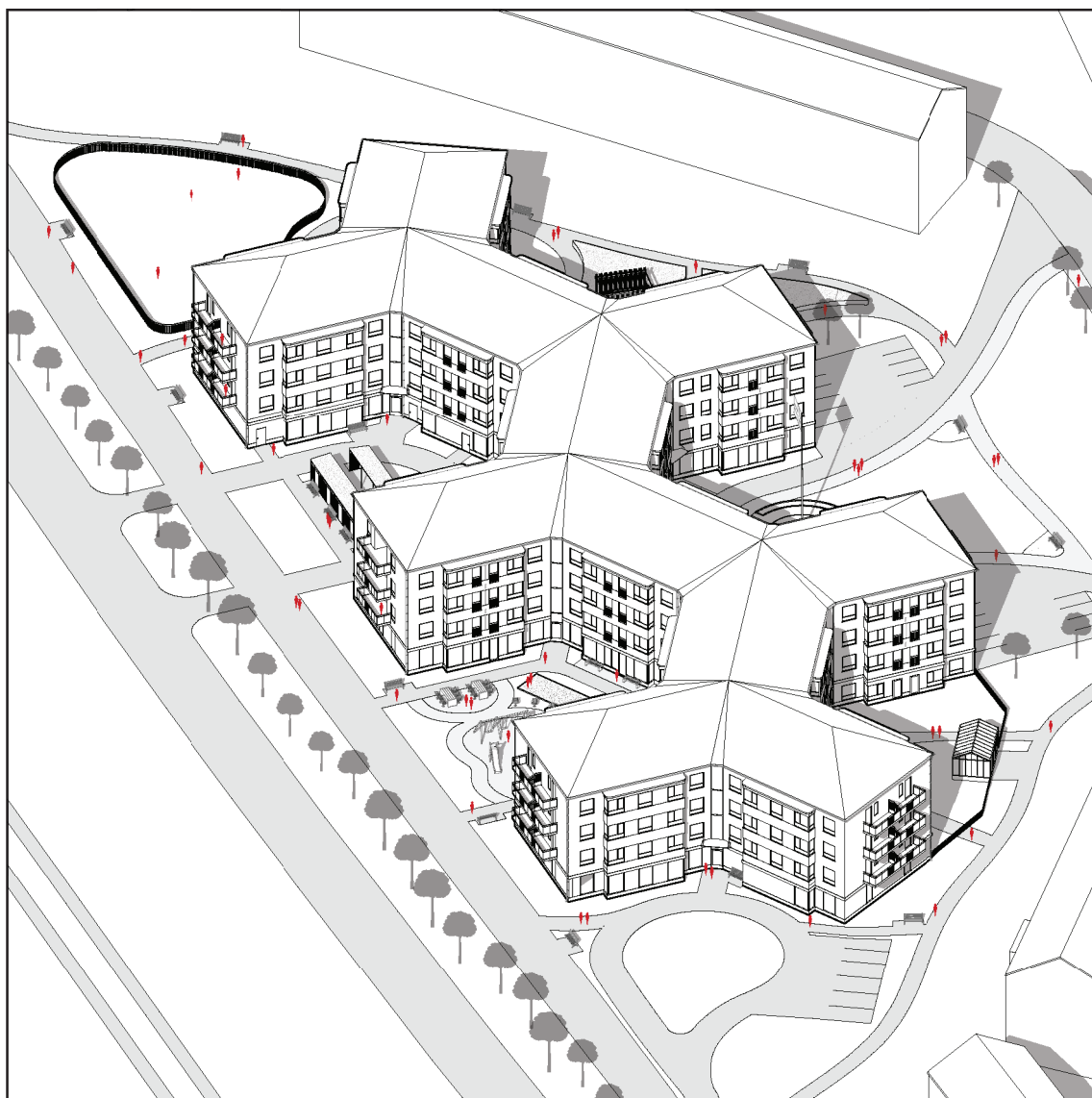




ASSISTED LIVING REIMAGINED

A reorganizational study of housing for seniors



CHALMERS
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Master's Thesis 2026

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PERSONAL NOTES

When the preparations for this thesis started I had a clear goal, to design a good assisted living facility of tomorrow. The complexity of the program, the combination of it being both a workplace and a home, and the growing need for new and high quality assisted living facilities fascinated me. During my many years studying I've worked extra with care for fragile people, and up close experienced how architecture can prevent and inhibit people from living life to its fullest, as well as the struggles staff face on a daily basis when the built environment doesn't support their work. My goal was clear, design an environment that supports residents in their everyday life, helping them enjoy their last home to the fullest.

However, as the work took off, I found myself more and more frustrated with the premise of assisted living facilities. The guidelines and directives that help ensure good quality living and working environments, in combination with a desire to keep costs down, result in that most, if not all, assisted living facilities today follow the same spatial organisation. While these facilities definitely serve a clear purpose and may have high architectural qualities, they all do however all answer the same question.

When something is done in a similar fashion it's usually a tried and tested solution, with good qualities and results. It might however be healthy to take a step back and rethink, is there another way that this could be done? This thesis became just that, a step back and a questioning of how and why we organize housing for seniors the way we do. With the help of my supervisor and many others, I've tried to rethink assisted living for seniors, offering something different compared to what we normally do. Perhaps how we organize senior housing today is the best solution, it is not for me to decide. What I've tried to do is to broaden what an assisted living facility can be, raising new questions and ideas to be further explored.

SPECIAL THANKS

- Monica Berglund*
- For taking the time to guide, inspire and push me to push the boundaries of assisted living facilities
- Ida Rydén*
- For showing the inspiring work they do in broadening how housing, care and community for seniors can be organized
- Susanne Clase*
- My supervisor who helped me keep a clear direction throughout the process, and provided me with key insights on every possible scale of the project.
- My desk buddies at school*
- For bearing with me in my highs and lows, for offering congratulations when something came together and support when something fell apart.

The many experts and professionals who've taken the time to talk about their work and the challenges and possibilities they see with care for seniors in the future.

ABSTRACT

As many other countries, Sweden is facing an aging population. Not only will this lead to a need for more people to work in elderly care, it will also lead to a need for more suitable housing options for elderly in need of some kind of care. Today, care provided in the home is the most common solution for elders in need of some kind of support. However, bad accessibility, difficulties moving and isolation often becomes a problem as one grows older. Today the most common option when the need for care becomes unmanageable in the home is a move into an assisted living facility. This is often a dreaded option put off to the last possible moment, making what will most probably be one’s last move to be a stressful and unenjoyable experience.

Most assisted living facilities of today are designed by the same principles, with 10 small apartments organized around a shared living space with kitchen, dining and living room. While this may suit some people, for others this organisation is so associated with an institution so that what will probably be their last apartment never truly becomes their home.

In this thesis, an alternative to the traditional assisted living facility is explored, where apartments are more generously sized to accommodate a more varied group of elders, while still offering working staff and residents the support needed to allow for extensive care in the home. This not only allows residents to age in place, removing the need for an exhausting move towards one’s latter days, but also gives seniors a place for community and support as they age, making one’s last home something to enjoy and thrive in.

The project is applied in eastern Gothenburg, but the ideas and organisational principle can very well be adapted to other sites as well, creating alternatives of living for the ageing population wherever the need may be. With drawings, diagrams and visualizations, this thesis hopes to inspire towards a more varied residential supply for seniors, where one has the right to choose how one lives even as one grows older.

Key words: *HOUSING FOR SENIORS, NURSING HOME, ASSISTED LIVING FACILITY, ELDERLY*

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1.

INTRODUCTION

SENIOR HOUSING TODAY

AN AGEING POPULATION

Sweden today has an aging population, with around 302 000 people over the age of 85 (SCB, 2026) of which around 15% live in assisted living facilities. These numbers are projected to increase in the next few years, to around 490 000 people over the age of 85 around 2040 (SCB, 2026). Despite the trend that people tend to be healthier when they get older, providing care and service for these people will still pose a large logistical and financial challenge if care is to be organised the same way as it is today.

To meet the growing need for housing suitable for elderly Gothenburg municipality plans to build around 100 apartments per year in assisted living facilities until 2045 (Göteborgs Stad, 2025, p.25). Some areas have a higher projected increase of

citizens over 85, but overall there is a need for suitable housing throughout Gothenburg.

The aging population will also require an increased workforce of caregivers. Swedish municipalities and Regions (SKR) estimate a need for between 15-30% more workers until 2033 (SKR, 2025, p. 25), a big challenge in a field already facing a lack of workers. Today 7 out of 10 municipalities report difficulties finding enough staff (Gunnarsson & Klingberg Hjort, 2023). Designing apartments to offer a more independent lifestyle and maintain the capabilities of the elderly as long as possible has the potential to create more flexibility for the staff, allowing them to focus on helping residents with tasks they are unable to perform themselves.

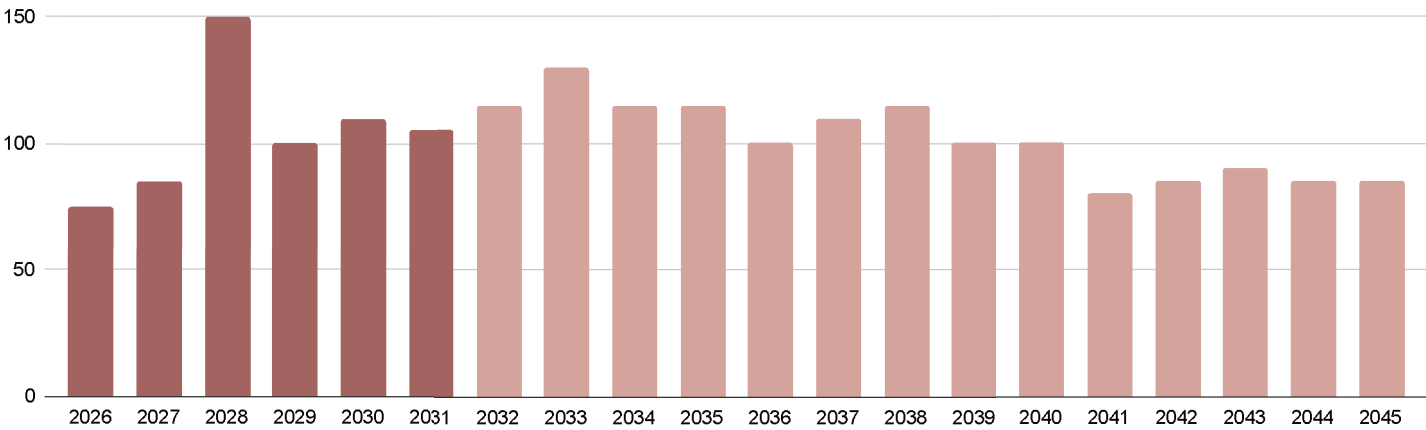


Figure 1. Yearly need for new apartments in care homes in Gothenburg (Göteborgs Stad, 2024, p.12)

■ Specific projects

■ Land and plot allocation is needed

AGE GROUPS IN SWEDEN 2025 COMPARED TO 2050

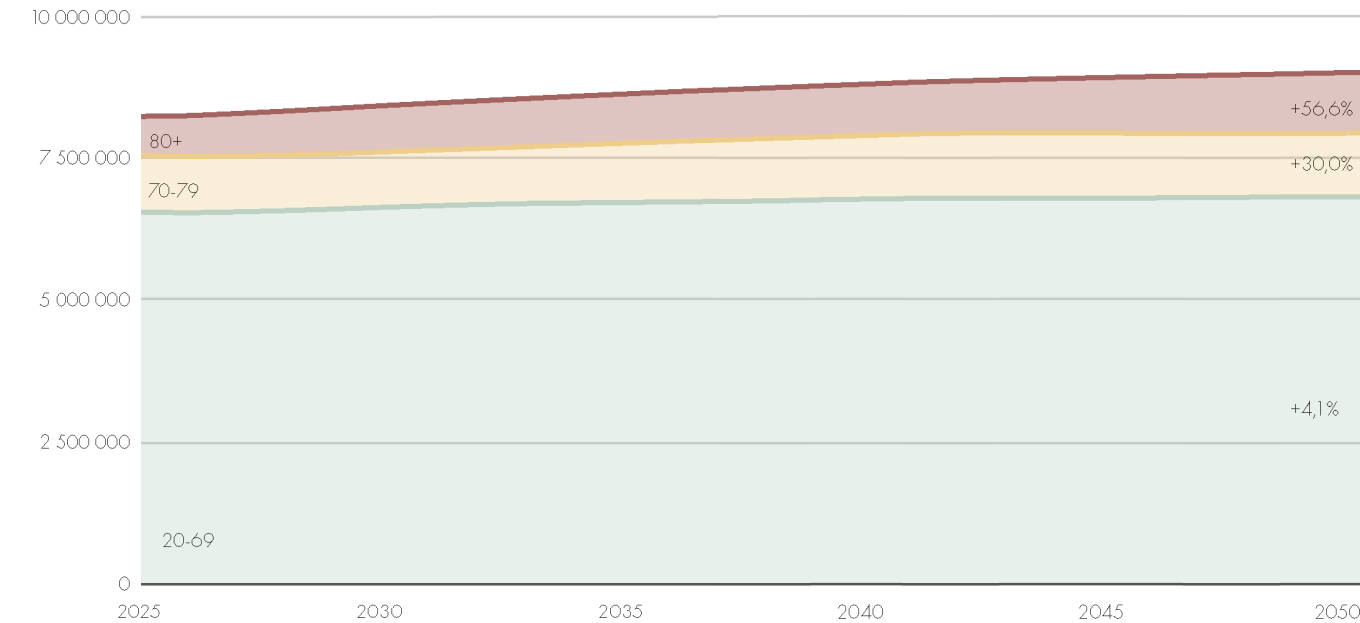


Figure 2. Projected population distribution (SCB, 2026)

SENIOR HOUSING TODAY

EXTRA CARE HOUSING

Extra care housing (*Transl. Trygghetsboende*) was established in 2008 and functions similar to Senior housing (SKR, 2012, p.27). The apartments however need to fulfill the higher standard of accessibility as defined in the Swedish standards. They also have an age requirement of 70 or older and must have shared social spaces. They must also have staff present during daytime (SKR, 2012, p.27).

The financial subsidies for development of senior housing were removed as of January 1st 2026 (Boverket, 2026).

NEED BASED EXTRA CARE HOUSING

Similar to Extra care housing, Need based extra care housing (*Transl. Biståndsbedömt Trygghetsboende*) are designed to offer more suitable apartments as one ages, focusing on reducing loneliness and allowing ageing in place. This format for living came about in 2019 and is optional for municipalities to offer. As of 2025 around 30 municipalities (10%) offer Need-based extra care housing in some format. The difference from ordinary extra care housing is that the municipality decides if someone should be offered an apartment, based on their assessed need for support.

ASSISTED LIVING FACILITIES

Assisted living facilities (**ALF**) (*Trans. Vård- och omsorgsboende/ Särskilt boende*) are the format for people with the most extensive need for care. It's a housing format the municipality is required to offer with staff present around the clock (SKR, 2012, p.28). Care homes also offer opportunities for social connections, with some square meters moved from their own apartment to common areas (SKR, 2012, p.27). Dinners are either served in their own apartment or taken in a common dining room, giving residents the chance for social connections when their possibility to participate in society is reduced.

As the needs for support changes as one ages several options exist for housing and receiving care. Some of these are granted and required by the municipalities, while other formats are offered outside of the municipal organization. The variety of formats allow for different needs and preferences to be met.

HOME CARE & ADAPTATIONS GRANTS

Sweden follows the praxis of age in place, with the goal of allowing people to grow old in their own home. When they need support to manage their everyday life home care is granted (*transl. Hemtjänst*). Around 16% of people over the age of 80 receive home care to some extent in Sweden (Bäsén, 2026). Home care is very beneficial in many cases and can help people maintain independence in their own home for a long period (Paulsson, 2023, p.24). All homes are however not accessible and suitable to provide care within. Obstacles such as stairs leading into the home, small bathrooms, or a heavy front door may prevent seniors in living their life to its fullest (SKR, 2012, p.26). To make one's home more accessible one can apply for an adaptation grant (*transl. "Bostadsanpassning"*) from the municipality, for interventions such as ramp installations, safety bars in the shower or removal of thresholds (SKR, 2012, p.26). These interventions can further help people to live in their home for a longer period of time. In 2024 a total of 53 637 interventions were granted at a total cost of 997 000 000 SEK (Boverket, 2025). This cost covers both the adaptations and installations, as well as the restoration once the alterations are restored.

SENIOR HOUSING

Senior housing (*Transl. Seniorboende*) was established in the 1980s in Sweden, but is not a strictly defined concept (SKR, 2012, p.26). It has an age requirement that varies between projects, ranging from 55 and older. The homes fulfill the standard requirements of accessibility and the complex usually have some kind of shared social space.

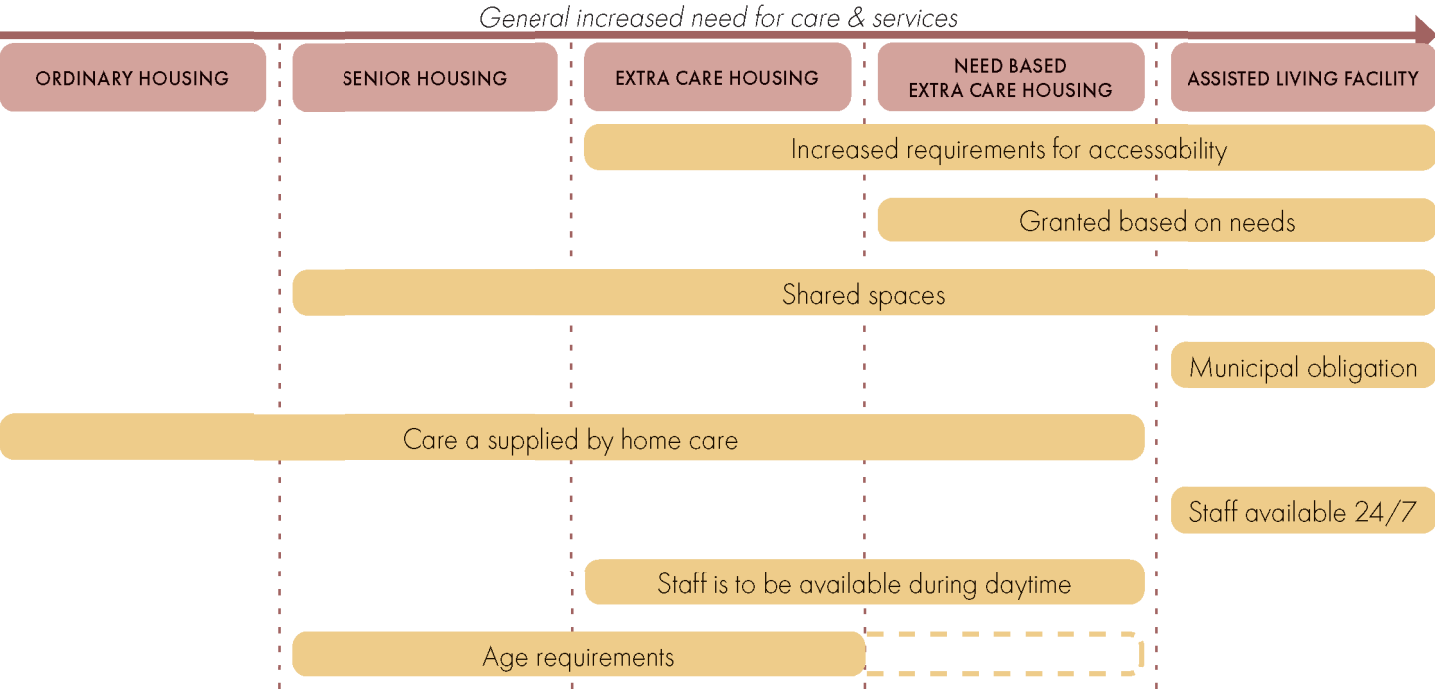


Figure 3. Housing options for seniors

SENIOR HOUSING TODAY

MOVING CHAINS

Creating attractive housing options for seniors is not only beneficial for the seniors who have somewhere to move. The house or apartment that becomes free when someone moves to a more suitable housing option that can be filled with someone whose needs are better matched with it. Bofrämjandet (2021, p.6) describes how these moving chains are of great benefit for society as a whole, as they increase the flexibility on the residential market and make it easier for many people to move. Creating attractive housing options for seniors is therefore beneficial for society as a whole, and can be a part in reducing housing shortage as a whole.

Seniors have a lower tendency to move than the population as a whole (Äldrecentrum, 2017, 7). This may be due to strong connections to their home or neighbourhood, or that they don't think that more suitable homes are available. When seniors do move, they tend to do so to a smaller residence, if possible in the vicinity, moving from house to apartment or from one apartment to a smaller one. These moves may increase the possibility to live independently, as the move usually is to a more accessible and manageable home. However, Äldrecentrum (2017, p.7) mentions studies showing that these moves may not be to a home accessible **enough**, resulting in the need for yet another move as one grows older.

IF IT BECOMES UNMANAGABLE

As one ages, an increased need for care and services may occur. The support is usually provided by a spouse or children (Äldrecentrum, 2017, p.6), but receiving home care becomes more common the older one becomes. In a suitable residence this may function well for a long time, and is the preferred situation of living for most seniors over moving to an ALF (Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting, 2018, p.8). Äldrecentrum (2017, p.31) report of seniors who wouldn't want to leave their house under any circumstances, due to the strong connections they have to their home. Stating that if they were to move "...it would be in a wooden coffin". There may come a time, however, when the need for care is no longer possible to provide in the home, and a move to an ALF becomes necessary.

However, as a person's disabilities increase, and the trust in their own capabilities decrease, they may experience a fear of living independently, and the home can be experienced more like a prison than a home (Äldrecentrum, 2017, p.8). A small staircase without an elevator may prevent someone from taking a short walk on their own, a bathroom can feel unsafe to use, or the house can be too large to manage by themselves. The safety of the home is replaced by insecurity and fear. The home may also more and more become a place where care is provided, and with that a workplace for care givers. The residence becomes something in between a home and an institution for care. Äldrecentrum (2017, p.31) reports of seniors who worry about not being granted an apartment at an ALF if their needs were to increase, expressing that they would not want to remain in their current home if they would need more support from home

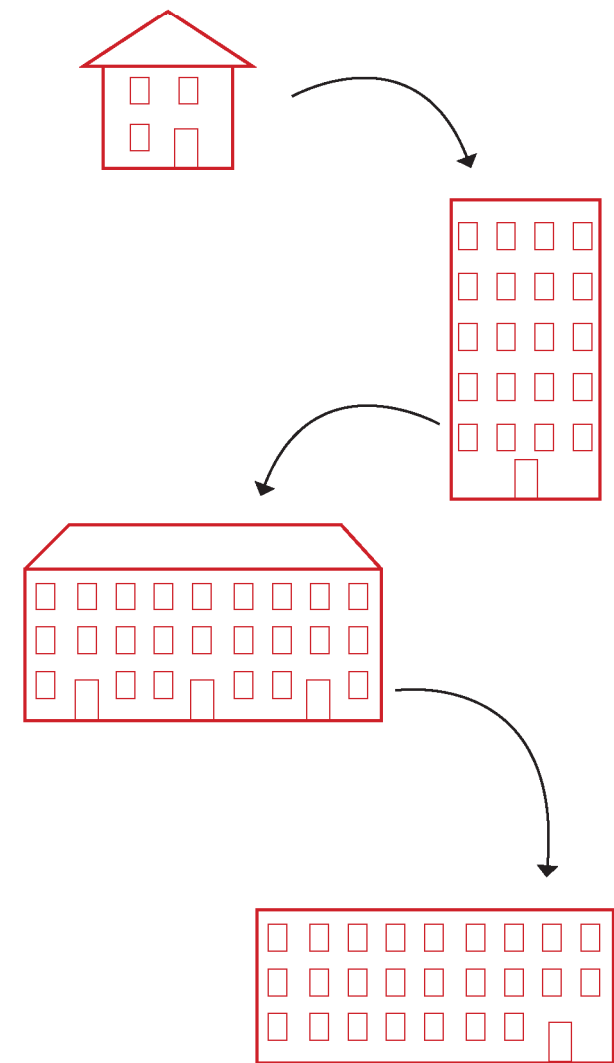


Figure 4. Moving chains

care than they had today. They raise several reasons for this, such as thinking it to be boring and wanting life around them, or not wanting home care to visit 8 times a day, considering it inhumane.

The median age of moving to an ALF in Sweden is 86 years old (Heimersson, 2020), and the requirements for being granted an apartment have risen over the past years. As a result, the seniors who move into ALF in general have a high need for care and services. Today the median time living at an ALF is 27 months, with a slightly higher median for women (30 months) than for men (23 months) . These requirements can be criticised for being too high (Äldrecentrum, 2017, p.41), resulting in people with extensive care needs remaining in their homes even if they have a desire to move to an ALF (Äldrecentrum, 2017, p.9). For people in less accessible housing and without the option to move to a more suitable option the only solution is to wait for their care needs to become high enough to be approved for an apartment in an assisted living facility.

CONSEQUENCES OF A POORLY ADAPTED HOME

While many seniors prefer to remain in their home for as long as it is possible, remaining there may have negative consequences for their health. Clase (2023, p. 88) describes how seniors spend more and more time in their home as they grow older. This is a major difference compared to other people in society who have access to a larger variety of places and environments besides their own home. The home for seniors can therefore become their entire living environment, as places outside the home become difficult to access on their own. With this reduction of the lived environment comes the risk of loss of stimulation, both physical, social and cognitive and the consequences that this loss brings.

As the lived environment shrinks, so does daily exercise one previously has taken for granted (Bjelke, 2023, p.41). This leads to an increased risk of many diseases associated with a high age. Helgerud & Hoff (2023, p.68) describe how health problems such as diabetes, heart failure and stroke often have their origins in inactivity. Decreased physical activity also risks leading to a negative spiral where one's physical capabilities decrease even further, both making it even more challenging to engage in daily activities as well as increasing the risk of physical trauma such as a fall that may severely worsen one's physical health (Senior Lifestyle, 2016).

The reduction of physical ability to access other environments than one's home, and the shrinkage of one's social network that often comes with older age, leaves one at the risk of experiencing loneliness (Nilsson, 2023, p.61). Experienced loneliness can be related to health issues such as cardi-vascular diseases, depression and cognitive decline, with studies showing a 26% increased risk of premature mortality (Cacioppo & Cacioppo,

A NEGATIVE SPIRAL

The lack of stimulation, physical, social and cognitive, risks starting a negative spiral where lack of stimulation leads to further loss of capabilities and with that the opportunity for stimulation. Activities in daily living (ADL:s) are tasks performed on a daily basis to take care of one's body or one's home (Kelley & Larson, 2025). From basic essentials, such as going to the bathroom, taking a shower or eating, to more complex tasks such as managing one's money, planning transportation, or communicating with others. ADL:s offer important daily exercise and stimulation, both physical and cognitive, and are therefore an important aspect of preserving seniors' capabilities. A poorly adapted home that does not support a resident's possibility to perform ADL:s independently not only costs money in terms of staff cost, it also removes the daily exercise and stimulation that the ADL:s offer. It can therefore, unintuitively, be damaging for seniors to receive care or service as the loss of stimulation risks leading to accelerated physical and cognitive decline. Helgerud & Hoff (2023, p.68) describe it as "The worst thing we can do.....", highlighting the importance in offering support where it is needed, and encouraging independence wherever it is possible.

SENIOR HOUSING TODAY

2018). Experienced loneliness is draining and often associated with shame and guilt (Nilsson, 2023, p.62). This shame and the stigma can further increase a person's tendency to isolate, exacerbating the problems experienced (Nilsson, 2023, p.63). The loss of social connections may also lead to further loss of physical stimulation as it may lead to attending fewer social gatherings outside of the home, removing even more important daily exercise and stimulation (Bjelke, 2023, p.41)

Activities such as social interactions, performing tasks and experiencing new things offer mental stimulation and help reduce the risk of cognitive decline (Gómez-Soria et al., 2023, p.1). The loss of available and accessible mental stimulation therefore risks leading to accelerated cognitive decline and loss of even more cognitive capabilities. Gómez-Soria et al. (2023, p.1) show this to be the case for both seniors affected by dementia and with cognitive healthy seniors. Being unstimulated in one's home is therefore not only boring, it's also an accelerator for cognitive decline, negatively affecting cognitive functions such as language, attention, orientation, calculation, visuospatial abilities and executive functions (Gómez-Soria et al., 2023).

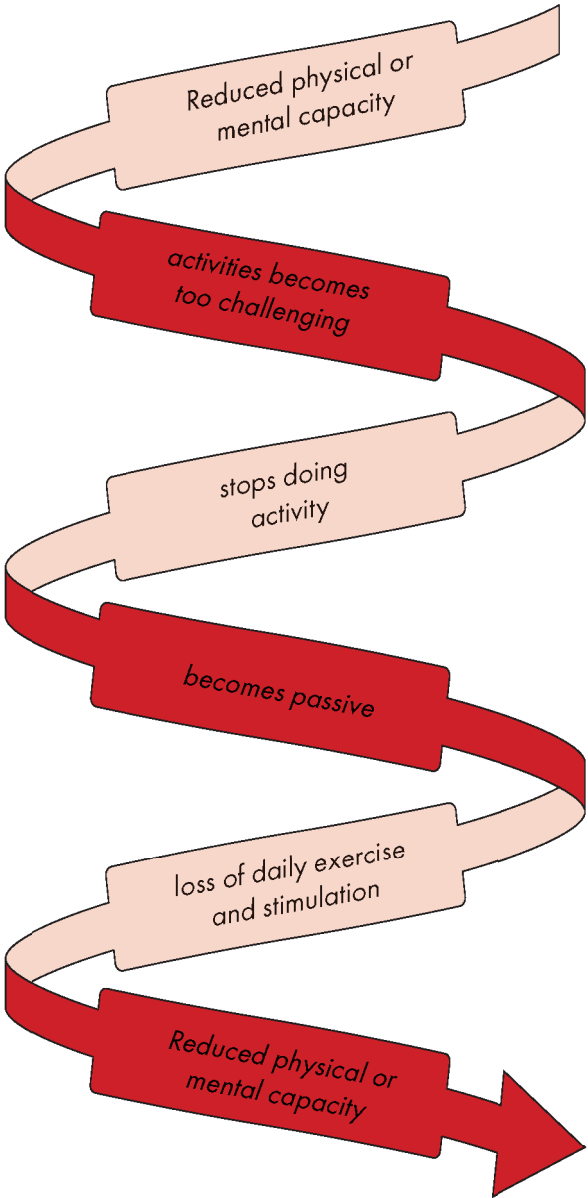


Figure 5. Negative spiral of inactivity

SENIOR HOUSING TODAY

CONSEQUENCES OF MOVING

The move to a care home is often a necessity, sprung from the fact that one is unable to take care of one’s self or one’s home. Äldrecentrum (2017, p.8) describes how the senior’s moving to ALF today are in general more sick and in need of more care and services. While remaining in one’s home and being independent as long as possible is important as described in earlier segments, a move to a new home is a challenging and draining task for everyone involved, and for the seniors moving in particular (Hyresgästföreningen, 2026, p.36). The move to an ALF can be described as involuntary (Äldrecentrum, 2017, p.8), being the result of a gradual decline of capabilities, or the consequence of an accident or trauma resulting in a drastic loss of capabilities. The average person moving to ALF in 2016 received 55 hours of home care each month, however 22% of the men and 15% of the women received no home care the month before moving into ALF (Äldrecentrum, 2017, p.8). Relocation Stress Syndrome (RSS) describes the emotional, physical and mental stress one experiences when moving to a new environment. Effects such as eating disorders, depression, anxiety, cognitive decline and fatigue are common (Russel, 2025). These effects may be worsened by existing health issues such as cognitive decline or mobility issues, making it harder to explore the new environment, adapt to the change or participate

in social activities around the new home, however the literature surrounding the effects of pre-existing cognitive impairment and RSS is inconsistent (Costlow & Parmelee, 2020). Studies are however clear that a move is a stressful event and results in a higher risk of physical decline (Mirotznik & Kamp, 2000).

A move can also bring positive effects to residents, as it can lead to the option to participate in organized social activities and an increase in perceived safety in their new home (Costlow & Parmelee, 2020). The transactional model for stress, a model for describing stress process, describes how the level of perceived control over an event affects a person’s ability to deal with stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987). The model offers an explanation for the differences of RSS, as a move that is more anticipated and initiated by one’s own will is more controlled than a move that is done out of necessity. This raises the question if the Swedish model where home care is provided for as long as possible is the most suitable for all, or if another option should be offered, as it may lead to the move to one’s last home will be sprung out of necessity and not offer a sense of control.

SENIORS’ PREFERENCES

In the report “Seniors housing in Gothenburg 2026”, Hyresgästföreningen (2026) surveyed over 2000 seniors in Gothenburg about their current housing situation and their thoughts for the future. The report affirms what previously has been stated by Äldrecentrum (2017), with 51% of the seniors reporting that they would prefer to remain in their home in the future (Hyresgästföreningen, 2026, p.34). However, 66% answer that they believe their housing needs will change over the next 10 years. This number is even higher when looking at

just those aged 80 or older, where 86% think that their needs will change (Hyresgästföreningen, 2026, p.39). When asked if enough is being done to facilitate access to suitable housing for seniors 74% answered that they disagree, indicating that there is a lack of attractive options for seniors. 79% report feeling troubled about the idea of moving when they grow older, and more so the older the respondents are, with 90% of those aged 80 or higher feeling troubled (Hyresgästföreningen, 2026, p.36).

“I think there’s a lack of nice housing options for seniors with a higher need of care without it being a dementia home”

Respondent in Seniors housing in Gothenburg 2026” (Hyresgästföreningen, p.44)
Author’s translation

When asked about what they prioritized in future housing, lower rent was the most prioritized answer, followed by access to balcony or green area as well as access to elevator or no staircases (Hyresgästföreningen, 2026, p.25). Lower rent was not a necessity with all respondents though. When asked about how much one could spend on housing a month in the future, most respondents reported that a reduction of housing costs would be necessary, with the highest reduction for those with the lowest income (monthly income below 25 000 SEK). Those with the highest income, above 70 000 SEK, answered that an increase of housing costs would be possible (Hyresgästföreningen, 2026, p.21). Most residents however, 74%, believe that they can afford to move to suitable housing in the future (Hyresgästföreningen, 2026, p. 37).

Respondents also show a low willingness to share housing in the future. When asked if they would consider sharing housing with others, 75% answered that they could not (Hyresgästföreningen, 2026, 41).

The report highlights the diversity that exists in the heterogenous group that seniors are, with different wants, wishes and options. It also highlights that housing options is something that seniors worry about, where a lack of attractive options is evident. The different financial situations for seniors also becomes clear and that rent levels need to be considered when designing for seniors. Finally, it shows that having a private home is a priority for seniors, as the openness for shared housing in the future is in general low.

PROBLEM DESCRIPTION

While the system for moving into assisted living facilities after home care for as long as possible is the preferred option for some, it is also evident that for some this is not a desired solution. The consequences of today’s system risk leaving seniors stuck in their home without the opportunity to stay as active and independent as possible, due to limitations in the built environment. Bjelke (2023, p.41) describe that the problem is having somewhere one can move to where one’s health and life quality will be improved, but instead of moving there in time to support a healthy aging seniors are being “...carried out ten years too late and dumped in a place you don’t have time to enjoy. Once you’re standing alone at the platform and the train has left, then you’ve simply missed the train”

Could housing for seniors be organized in another way? Where architecture supports healthy and active aging by lowering thresholds preventing activity, reversing the negative spiral of reduced activity? Helgerud & Hoff, 2023 (p.68) describe that its possible to exercise away 30 years of ageing in an 85-year old, providing there are options available. This means enabling and encouraging activity, both in terms of daily activities and physical exercise, can not only prevent further loss of capabilities in seniors, breaking the negative spiral of loss activity. It can also restore and enable new strengths and skills, reversing the spiral and creating a positive spiral of activity, resulting in more strengths and capabilities and a healthier aging. This has the potential to reduce the need of assistance and care for seniors, lowering costs and staffing needs, but more importantly, increase the quality of life and facilitate healthy aging and a good quality of life for seniors.

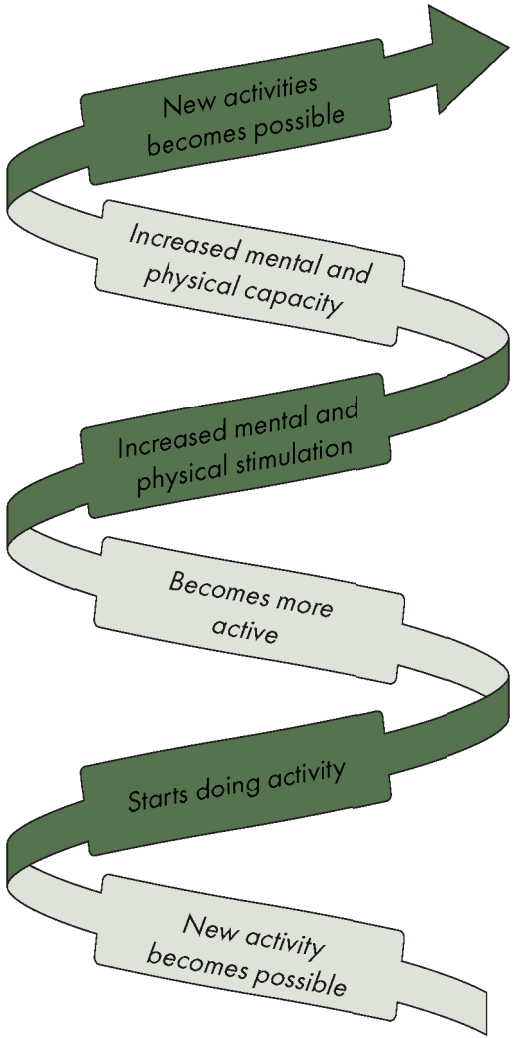


Figure 6. Positive spiral of activity

PURPOSE

The goal of this thesis is to explore how architecture can encourage and enable independence and self efficacy, reduce loneliness, and contribute to healthy aging in seniors. The means for this is to explore alternative ways to organize housing and care for seniors by offering an “in-between” housing option suitable for those who no longer feel that their previous homes are suitable due to increased disabilities, loneliness or need for care and service. The design will strive towards encouraging independence and self efficacy, where support and services are provided when needed, and move away from the traditional spatial organization of assisted living facilities.

The apartments will consist of a majority of 1 bedroom apartments suitable for a single resident, focusing on balancing the possibility for care while being perceived as a “normal” apartment. With a high accessibility standard, good storage possibilities and a well designed bathroom and bedroom the care given should still be able to reach the same levels as provided within a traditional assisted living facility. An important aspect as one should not be forced to move once more if the need for care increases. Apartments suitable for couples will also be designed, where either one or both of the partners are in need of some level of care. Spatial autonomy here becomes a key feature to allow for the partner with the least need for care to live an as independent life as possible.

Shared social spaces are to be designed and placed in a way that allows each resident to easily access them and choose when to partake in the community of the complex. The spaces should include a restaurant for daily meals and a larger shared social space. Other spaces for physical exercise should be explored as well.

The complex should be well adapted to the site in terms of size, shape, material choices and connection to infrastructure. However, this thesis’s main focus is on the organization and design of apartments and supporting functions, and the site presented should be seen as an example.

The exact target group and formal organization of the complex are beyond the scope of this thesis. While the legal definition of the complex will determine what services are offered and how high the need for care is within the target group, the aim is to be able to meet a high variety of care needed to allow the complex to meet changing needs throughout its own and its residents’ lifetime. Examples for how care can be organized will be presented and compared to parameters of traditional care homes. It is however an aim of this study to create more flexibility in how care can be organized differently as needs change, hence an exact solution for the formal organization of the working organization will not be presented.

OBJECTIVES

This thesis explores an alternative organization of housing for seniors that can offer a high level of service and care while still functioning as traditional independent apartments. The goal is to create an alternative to what is offered today, an in-between from the traditional assisted living facility and extra care housing, that allows residents to age in place without them losing their independence or self efficacy.

With models, drawings, literature and reference projects, this thesis aims to show that an alternative organization of care is possible with more independent apartments where the same level of care for the residents is possible and the staff still have a suitable and supporting work environment.

RESEARCH QUESTION

MAIN:

Can the Swedish assisted living facility model be spatially reorganized to offer more independent living environments for the residents to encourage and enable an active and healthy lifestyle, and if so how?

SUB:

How can an assisted living facility be designed to offer support for care workers and enable quick movement throughout the complex, while encouraging independence and a sense of normality for its residents?

METHOD

The project is developed using a "Research by and for design" approach, allowing for exploratory approaches and an iterative development. For the process three phases are mapped out.

1. Research, investigate, analyze and reflect

The first stage focuses on understanding the current context and discourse. What is being built today and why? Which regulation, laws and norms have made it so? What is not being built and why? By methods such as literature studies, discussions with various professions connected to senior housing and reference projects a mapping of the current field is developed, and. It also creates an understanding of the program, requirements of specific functions and the overall organization principle established today. This allows for a base when exploring sites and developing the program, transitioning the project to the 2nd phase.

2. Discover, Design and develop

The 2nd phase focuses on spatial exploration and program exploration. Based on a foundation of theoretical knowledge the exploration creates an effective interchange between new ideas and theoretical framework. By going back and forth between designing and discovering the project remains anchored in theoretical knowledge and maintains feasibility and relevance to society.

3. Finalizing

After iterating and exploring ideas, design, drawing and models are finalized, in combination with drawing conclusions between design and theory. The delivered design proposal is discussed in relation to the explored theory and relevant reference project to anchor the discussion of what is plausible and realistic.

LITERATURE STUDIES

By reading and collecting ideas and knowledge from books, research articles, news articles and reports, a base for the thesis is developed. The literature became the foundation for problem description, and guided the formation of core design strategies in the proposed design. A wide variety of literature was examined, concerning many different types of senior housing. Selection was made focusing on the Swedish context as well as on different housing formats focusing on a higher level of support. Key words in literature searches included *assisted living*, *senior housing*, *care home*, and *nursing home*.

REFERENCE PROJECTS

Exploring built projects, both by literature examination and site visits, offers insights, design solutions and a base for spatial organization strategies to base exploration on. This applies to a variety of topics such as materiality, building massing, programming, floor plans, spatial sequences, details, site location etc. The reference projects form a vast knowledge base for design exploration, as understanding what is being built and why is a core question to ask when exploring new spatial configurations and ideas.

SKETCHING

Sketching has been utilized as an iterative tool to quickly explore spatial organization, massing and programme simultaneously. Combining 3D tools and analogue methods such as hand drawing and model building allows for a wide and quick exploration of the various aspects of the problem. Models allowed for quick massing studies while 3D tools allowed for exploration of measurements and feasibility. Exploring the various scales of the project early on, from apartment design and building massing, allowed for a strong connection between the various scales and problems discovered in one scale could often be solved in another scale.

SITE VISIT AND ANALYSIS

Site visit and a context analysis was performed to understand the surroundings and what framework the design proposal must adhere to. Questions such as building scale, approach directions and materiality were explored. Digital analysis was also performed early on to evaluate ideas and sketches based on criteria such as sun exposure and view of the sky. This guided design decisions such as placement of outdoor areas and green spaces.

METHOD

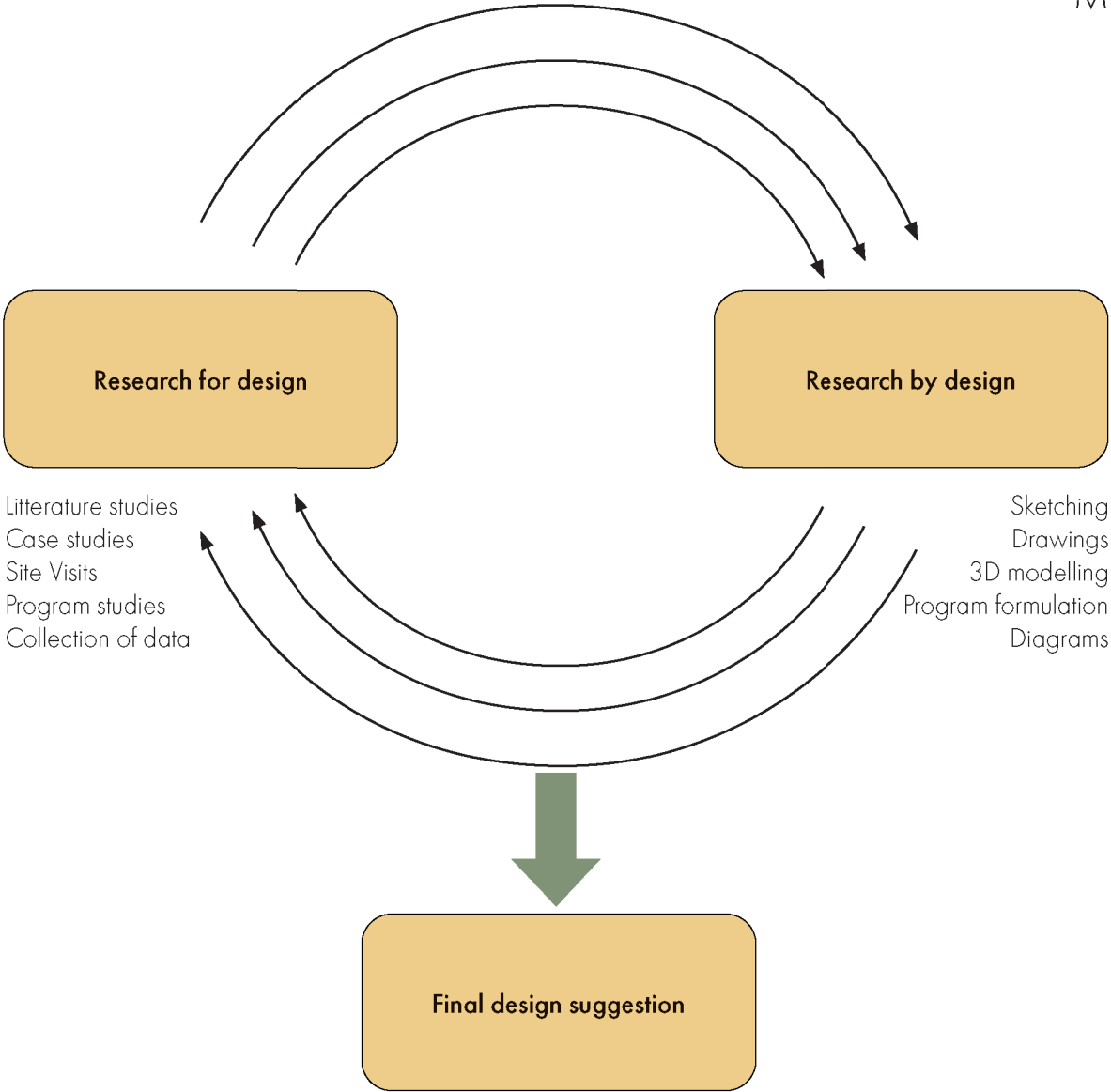


Figure 7. Method diagram

DELIMITATIONS

The main focus of this thesis is to explore housing and care for seniors and how it can be spatially reorganized to create health promoting and independent housing for seniors. While a specific site is chosen and explored, and the design will therefore respond to the current context, the site should be seen as an example of how a design proposal can be placed as ideas and strategies developed could be applied in other contexts as well. Zoning rules and development plans for the chosen site will not be taken into consideration.

While funding and formal organization questions are central in housing and care for seniors, this thesis will not cover funding strategies, ownership or financial organization of the facility. Even if such questions are of high importance to offer good care for seniors, the design proposal should be seen as an example, where specific wants and wishes of developers and owners should then be evaluated and applied further on. The project focus is to provide housing for seniors that

encourages a healthy and active lifestyle. While many residents of assisted living facilities today are affected by dementia, the design will not have those affected by dementia as a target group, as this group have different needs than seniors who want a more independent housing option.

Rent levels and costs for residents will not be covered within this thesis, but is of high importance for further exploration. While it is not covered extensively, the project still aims to provide small and affordable housing options for seniors.

Construction and technical detailing will not be covered in this thesis. While spaces for technical solutions are schematically placed, the exact sizes of solutions are not explored. While this is of great importance for a finalized building, the impact on the overall spatial organization is deemed small, as the design suggestion should have the capacity to expand or shrink to adapt to new requirements.

2. RESEARCH

BACKGROUND

ASSITED LIVING FACILITIES TODAY

Newly built nursing homes in general follow the same organizational principles, with standardized apartments of 30-35 m2 in groups of 8-10 per unit, and with at least 60 apartments per project (Nord, 2023) (Göteborgs stad, 2016, p.9). Gothenburg’s municipality recommends approximately 100 apartments per complex to both ensure a wide variety of activities and services, such as spas and activity areas, as well as effective use of staff such as nurses and night staffing (Göteborgs stad, 2016, p.12) Similar directives can be found in other municipalities as well, offering clear guidelines for how a nursing home should be designed (Falun Kommun, 2017, p.8) (Micasa Fastigheter, 2022, p.20). While strong directives can be good to ensure a suitable environment for care, it may also result in most of new production looking similar, with the only big differences being adaptation to the local conditions and changes in material and colour choices.

These buildings also utilize long corridors for horizontal communication which differs heavy from ordinary housing complex (Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting, 2018, p.13). The apartments’ small sizes and usage of long corridors makes remodelling difficult without the need for heavy interventions. Even then it may be hard to get away from the institutional appearance.

The shared spaces of each unit of around 10 apartments are included in the rent for the apartment, meaning that the residents

pay for a portion of the spaces (SPF Seniorerna, 2025, p.7). The usage of these shared spaces varies however, with residents spending on average 15-20 hours in their own apartments (Nord, 2023). Yet most newly built care homes follow the same typology, forcing elderly who may never have lived in shared housing to be part of a collective home when the need for care occurs.

The horizontal organization and focus on proximity within units may also result in long walking distances for residents wanting to visit a place outside of their own unit. While the directives state that a walking distance to the shared spaces within a unit should be kept below 15 meters (Göteborgs Stad, 2024, p.14), nothing is stated for proximity to an elevator or services outside of the unit. This has the risk of creating a too high threshold for residents to venture outside of their own unit and independently participate in activities and social life outside of the unit. Walking distances longer than 40 meters to the elevator can be the consequence of following the set up directives for spatial organization (Göteborgs stad, 2017, p.16), and in one story buildings the walking distances between units can become even further. An alternative organization offering closer proximity to services and activities outside of the standardized unit would enable the residents to themselves take a more active role in their social life and activities, allowing them to access social spaces and green areas themselves.

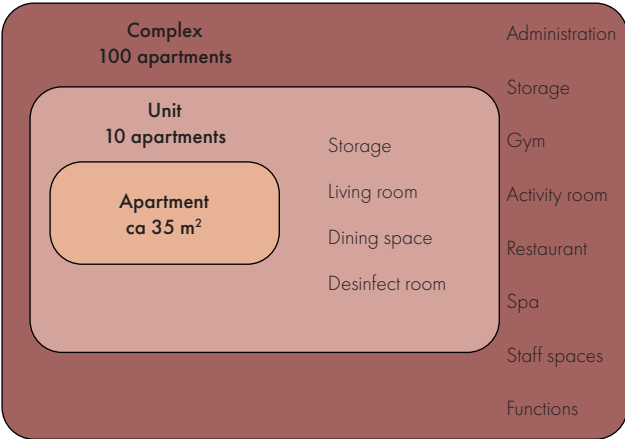


Figure 8. Spatial organization principle of assisted living facilities

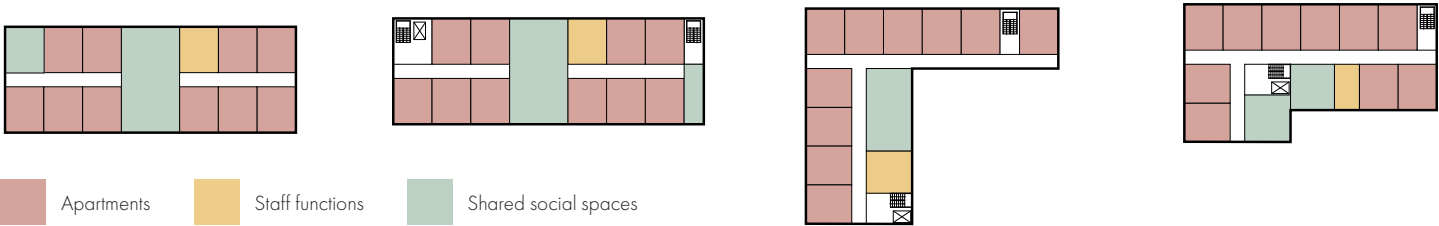


Figure 9. Unit layout examples of assisted living facilities
Organization principles derived from Göteborgs stad (2017)

BACKGROUND

The illustration is derived from the functional program for Assisted Living Facilities of Gothenburg city (Göteborgs stad, 2016). The chart portrays functions present in ALF, not the exact spatial organization or spatial connections of said functions.



Figure 10. Function organization of assisted living facilities

SPACE FOR INDEPENDENCE

As the residents spend most of their days in their apartment, the size of apartments should be considered (Nord, 2023). When the apartment only has one room, the whole living space becomes a space for care, making a separation between private and public in the apartment difficult (Regnier, 2002, p.126). By offering a separate bedroom the space where care is provided can be separated from the living spaces, creating a more neutral space for occupancy in the living space of the apartments.

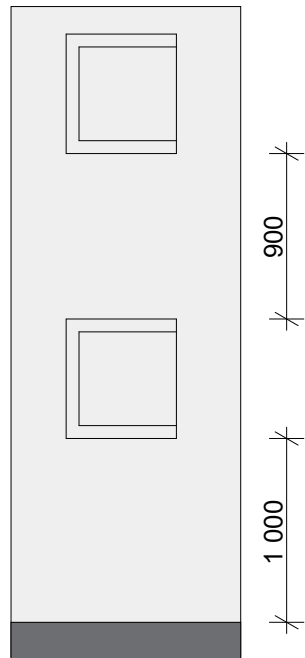
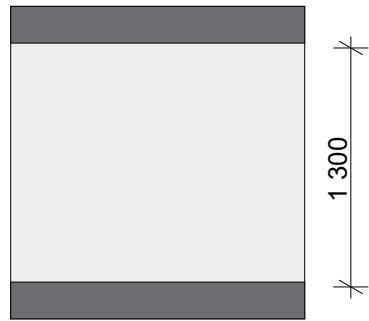
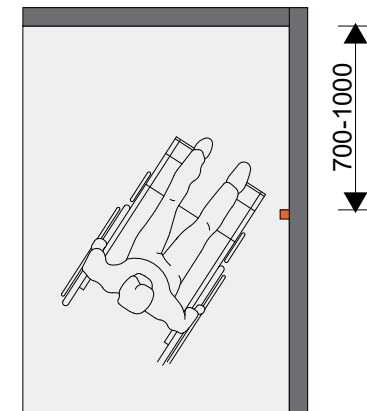
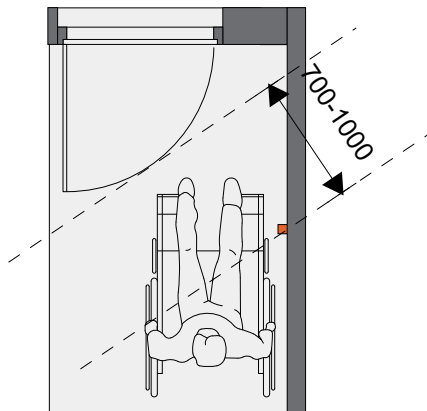
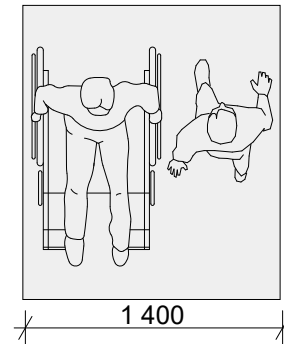
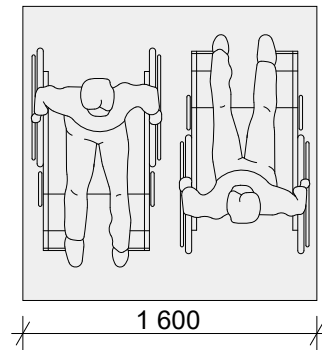
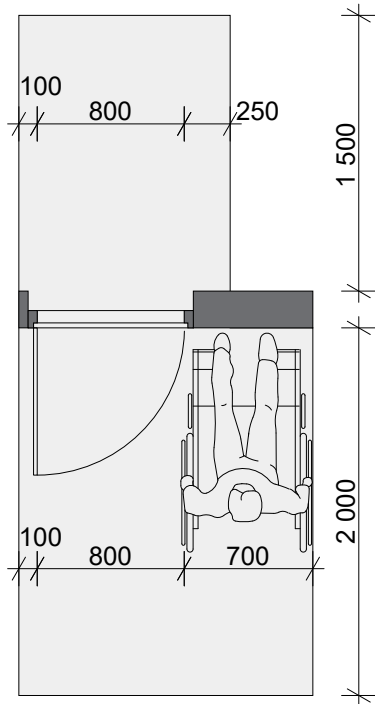
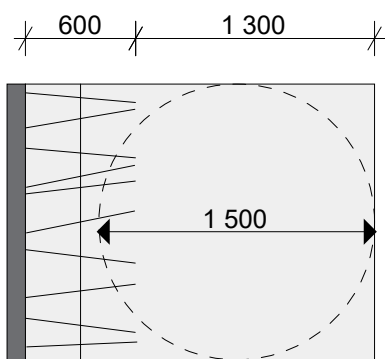
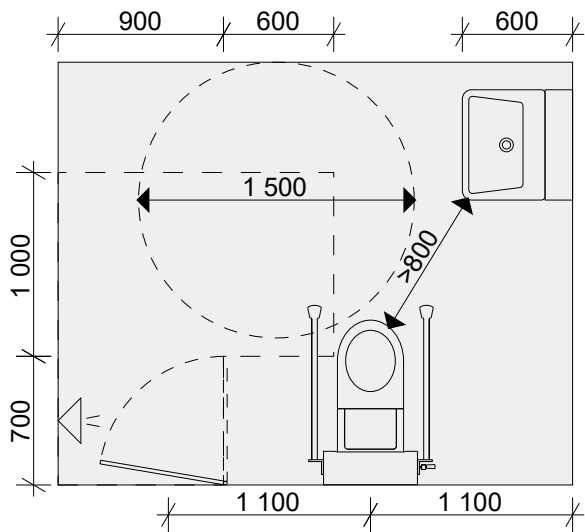
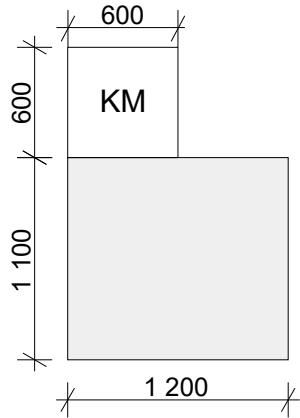
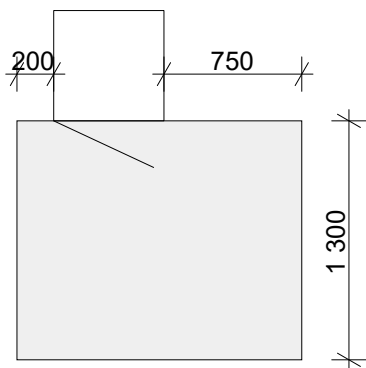
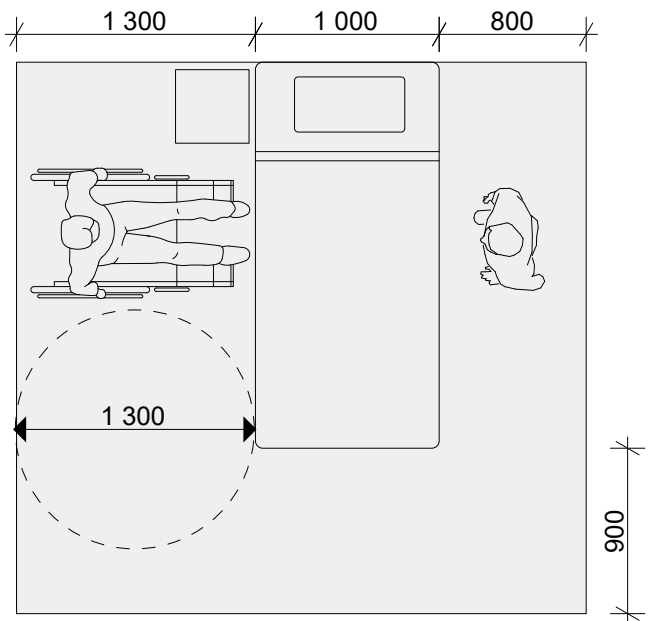
The apartments' kitchenettes is a debated aspect of ALF:s. Where some argue that they are not used and parts of them such as the stove plates could therefore be removed (Hemsö, 2025, p.5) allowing residents to remain as independent as possible requires some kind of kitchen option. The shared kitchen areas in the common spaces are hardly used by residents (Andersson, 2013, p.46), and are by the residents not considered part of the residents' homes. Therefore having a kitchenette with some possibility for food storage and light cooking becomes even more important. This allows the residents to themselves organize a small snack when needed or prepare the meals that they themselves are capable of, while larger meals can be provided for those who are not capable of preparing them for themselves. Moving the shared kitchen functions back into the apartment and offering a small kitchenette for light cooking, while offering a centralized restaurant option for those who

wish to have meals together might therefore be the preferred solution. Residents who wish to have their meals in their own apartment could instead receive delivered meals from the central restaurant similar to what is being offered in home care today (Göteborgs Stad, 2026).

The bathroom is one of the most important spaces within the apartment, and needs to be carefully considered to support the special needs that may occur. A common solution is to place the bathroom door towards the bed (Göteborgs stad, 2017, p.8). This allows for an easier transfer to the toilet and shower if a lift is needed, and reduces the walking distance for residents who need to use the toilet during the night. This increases residents' independence as it allows them to go to the bathroom independently for as long as possible.

Supporting staff working with care and service is important to create a suitable working environment and enable residents with an increasing need for care to continue to live in their apartment. To do this sufficient space is needed in both bedroom and bathroom to give space for staff to assist when needed, for example when getting dressed or when moving from toilet to wheelchair. Sufficient storage also needs to be provided, both in the entrance and in the bedroom and bathroom (Göteborgs stad, 2016, p.13).

Measurements derived from "Arkitektens Handbok" (Bodin et al., 2020), "Potential för kvarboende"(Andersson et al., 2021) and Axl:s "Koncept för badrum i särskilt boende" (AXLA, 2026).



Design consideration

- Increase apartment size, seperate bedroom
- Bathroom-bedroom connection
- Storage throughout apartment
- Kitchenette for light cooking
- Centralized restaurant

Figure 11. Measurements for accessibility

WELLFARE TECHNOLOGY

TECHNOLOGY FOR INDEPENDENCE

The development of new technology to aid workers and residents in senior care is constant. Where some years ago there were crude floor alarms that could be triggered by a blanket slipping down on the floor (authors own working experiences), there are now sophisticated systems that give a more detailed view of the situation. These new systems have and will radically change how care can be provided. For the residents, it provides a sense of safety to know that if they have a fall or another emergency staff will quickly come and help. It also allows them to maintain their independence for longer, as technology can help compensate for their loss of ability without the need for aid from a staff member. For the staff, technology

BATHROOM FIXTURES

Managing one's personal hygiene is one of the most private everyday tasks, and the loss of the ability to properly do so may feel like a humiliating experience, as well as a risk for one's personal health. With thought through systems in the bathroom, residents may keep their agency for longer, both reducing the need for care workers to aid, but also maintaining the residents' sense of independence and control (AXLA, 2026).

For the toilet, a raisable toilet seat with handlebars on the sides offers safety both while sitting and when getting on and off. Installing a built-in bidé function with wash and dry function helps clean afterwards and removes the need for care workers to be involved in the residents' visit to the toilet.

A movable basin may also be very helpful, as it allows the residents to wash their hands while remaining seated. This removes the step of standing up to wash one's hands or brushing one's teeth, making both activities safer for the residents as the risk of falling is drastically reduced. If the basin is also verically adjustable it allows it to be raised to a suitable height for each resident, ensuring an even safer and more accessible environment. If a movable basin is installed it must however be sturdy enough to support grabbing onto if one loses one's balance. It may therefore be safer with a fixed basin instead

CAMERAS

Camera surveillance has, contradictory, the potential to increase residents' integrity while also ensuring their safety. Today's technology allows for the anonymisation of the video feed by blurring the apartment and person (Sensio, 2026). If the resident has a fall the system can alert the staff who can check the camera feed and rush to help. If it is a false alarm there's no need for the staff to enter the apartment and disturb the resident. With fewer false alarms, the staff's visits will be more predictable for the residents, increasing their sense of control of their own apartment. This is extra valuable during the night as it reduces the need for the staff to enter apartments and risk disturbing the residents' sleep.

This also reduces the need for physical oversight and frees up the staff to who instead can focus and plan their work efficiently, giving them more information to work with in their assessment of a situation.

can help to prioritize the work they do everyday, by helping them make informed decisions with as much information as possible. By reducing the need for physical check-ins, the staff becomes more flexible and free, allowing the staff to focus on what they're actually there for, helping the residents with tasks they can't manage on their own.

While the technology has great possibilities, the fact that it can never replace human interaction should always be kept in mind. While it has the potential to reduce staffing needs and therefore costs, implementation should be based on the residents' experience and focus on increasing the quality of life for residents and working staff, not reducing costs.



Figure 12. Raisable toilett



Figure 13. Built in bidé



Figure 14. Basin with handrails

AUTOMATIC LIGHTS

Falls in the home are one of the most common causes of injury for seniors, and 20% of them happen in the dark or with poor lighting, often on the way to the bathroom during the night (Seniorval, 2026). While floor alarms or cameras can help staff assist quickly if a fall happens, the injuries and trauma have still been caused.

One way to increase the safety of the nightly walk is to install automated lights that light up when the resident sits up in the bed. These should provide sufficient lighting for the resident and help them safely walk to the bathroom and back without themselves having to find a light switch. Many systems for this exist and consideration should be made whether or not systems should be installed in all apartments as a standard or on demand. Fall risk does however cost Sweden around 16,8 billions SEK each year (Socialstyrelsen, 2022), besides the trauma of a fall, indicating that measures taken to reduce the risk of fall can both secure seniors' quality of life and be cost effective.

LIFT SYSTEM

Frail elders with heavily reduced mobility need assistance when transferring between different aids, such as from wheelchair to the bed or toilet. Many different systems are available for this, each with their own ups and downsides. A system working well for one resident may very well be a poor match for another. But as a whole the systems are a crucial part of offering a safe work environment for staff and residents, allowing the staff to give the care needed in an ergonomic way (ARJO AB, 2005, p.28). The lifts can either be floor lifts or ceiling mounted lifts. (ARJO AB, 2005, p.35) The floor lifts offer flexibility, both in where they are used and which residents can benefit from them. They do however take up a lot of floor space, requiring space for storage when not in use. And if multiple residents are in need of the same lift at the same time the system quickly fails. Guidelines exist on how many lifts should be available, this however does not help if multiple residents are in need of a lift at the same time, or if a lift is misplaced by a staff member.

Ceiling lifts have the advantage of being readily available for the residents and staff at all times. This ensures that staff actively use the systems, even when doing small adjustments, reducing the risk of work related injuries with staff. They also don't require any floor space and the apartments therefore become easier to maneuver around. They do however require ceiling mounted rails to be installed, either being kept in place at all times or mounted for residents in need of them. This also puts requirements on the ceiling's load bearing capacity, which might be another cost driving factor.

WELLFARE TECHNOLOGY

PERSONAL ALARMS

Personal alarms are systems carried with the residents, mainly as a wristband or around the neck in a keychain. They can include different features, such as GPS signaling or an emergency button if the resident is in need of aid. Since they are carried with the person, they give increased security and a sense of safety for the residents to venture beyond their own apartment (Sensio, 2026). This both increase their options for everyday activities, such as going outside for a walk, while giving staff and relatives the assurance that the resident can be found and aided if they have trouble returning to their apartment. While the systems require a level of cognitive clarity from the users to be manually activated, they can also have passive features such as activation when the resident exits through their front door or when moving.

FLOOR ALARMS

Floor alarms come in various systems, from simple mats ones only reacting to pressure to more sophisticated systems installed under the entire floor reacting only if someone pressure indicates that someone has had a fall or is in another emergency (MariCare, 2026). They have the advantage of being completely invisible, allowing the apartment to feel closer to a regular apartment than a place for care. Similar to the advanced camera systems of today, they allow the staff to make informed decisions about when and where they are needed and reduce the need for physical overviews. They can also be adapted to the individual resident, alerting the staff in different situations for each resident, ensuring a safety net well adapted to all the residents.

Design considerations

- *Sensors and cameras makes physical overview redundant*
- *Storage space in apartments for aids*
- *Storage nearby apartments for aids if they are shared by residents*

RETHINKING ASSISTED LIVING

THE SOCIAL SPACES

The common spaces of the assisted living facilities today can be seen as a result of the small scale institutional way of building that emerged in the late 20th century (Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting, 2018, p.13), with the intent of providing each resident with shared spaces for “cooking and for daily social interactions as well as a space for meals”. These areas are to compensate for the reduction of areas in the private apartments and are a part of the residents lease (Andersson, 2013, p.17). Andersson (2013) however explores how these areas are perceived by the residents, coming to the conclusion that the common spaces to a great extent are not perceived as part of nor used as the residents’ home environment, and should therefore be considered an addition to, and not a supplement for apartment areas. Andersson (2013) also highlights that even though the shared kitchen is legally part of the residents’ lease, they are not used at all by the residents, forcing them to pay rent for an area that they don’t utilize at all. Nord (2023) points out that residents spend most of their time in their own apartments, 15-20 hours per day, and prefer to withdraw to their own apartments rather than spending time in the shared spaces.

Hyresgästföreningens (2026, p.41) survey of housing for seniors also shows that most seniors are not open for shared housing (transl. “Öppenhet för att dela boende”), reporting that 75% answered “completely disagree” or “disagree” when asked if they could consider sharing housing with others in the future.

The relocation of social spaces from the apartment to shared social spaces also makes it difficult for seniors to live an ordinary life as they have done before. If the relocation of areas results in a studio apartment, the room becomes both bedroom, room for care and the only social spaces controlled by the resident (Andersson, 2013, p.16). This makes inviting friends or family difficult, as the only spaces available are the most private areas of one’s home. Andersson (2013, p.40) describes that residents on average had few visitors and did not visit each other’s apartments. Andersson also states that the common spaces are not used for social interactions with relatives, showing that the loss of spaces in one’s own apartment can not fully be compensated with the common spaces as is being done today. This does not mean, according to Andersson (2013), that the shared social spaces are simply made redundant, arguing that low usage is not congruent with low level of importance. The activities carried out in the shared spaces, meals etc., may be of great importance for some residents and less for others, and having venues for social interactions is stressed by all parties involved in the study.

Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting (2018, p.10) discusses that the spaces should instead be centralized and be made

Design considerations

- *Centralize social functions*
- *Create neutral social space in apartments*
- *Enable previewing*
- *Places for spontaneous meetings*

for more people, similar to a hotel lobby. This would allow for a larger variety of people to meet, making it more likely to find people with similar interests as oneself, compared to in a common space with 9 neighbours. The social space should be clearly coded as public spaces to reduce the ambiguity of shared spaces described by Andersson (2013), where the common spaces become something in between private and public. Having spaces for everyday social interactions within a manageable distance would also create the option for residents to venture outside of the private apartment if the want for it occurs.

Centralizing the social spaces also creates opportunities to create activities and places that encourage residents to remain active, both mentally and physically. A venue further from the apartment “forces” residents to take the small walk there, resulting in daily exercise. The requirement being that the distance to the venue is not too long, as the threshold therefore becomes too high.

Other types of venues serve the same purpose, enabling and encouraging seniors to remain active and have daily exercise. In a study conducted by Äldrecentrum (2017, p.36) the surveyed mentioned venues such as shared outdoor spaces, gym, pool, sauna and a guest apartment. The survey however found that the activities themselves were not the most important, but the possibility to meet other people in an easily accessible environment.

Social spaces should also be designed to offer the possibility to be assessed before committing to social interactions. Regnier (2002, p.81) describes this as previewing, looking into shared spaces before one makes a decision whether or not to join the interaction. This is more important in group living environments, where residents always will have people they like less and people they like more. Creating the option for residents to survey an area while having a possible exit gives residents a sense of control in the spontaneous social interactions.

From a municipal perspective the centralization may also be beneficial. Centralization and cumulation of social spaces allows for them to be larger and used more as public spaces and less as extensions of residents’ apartments, creating the opportunity to organize daily activities for seniors not only living in the complex, but from the surrounding neighbourhood (Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting, 2018, p.17). For this to be effective the social spaces should be placed as publicly as possible, preferably on the ground floor as close to entrances as possible and in view of the main pedestrian route. More public venues can also be rented out or used by different groups if the residents themselves don’t utilize them.

THE COMMUNICATION SPACES

Accessing one’s apartment in an ordinary assisted living facility is done differently from ordinary housing forms (Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting, 2018, 13). The usage of wide corridors for horizontal communication requires some residents to pass by shared spaces to access their own apartments. This creates a semi public zone in the corridors, often enhanced by creating seating arrangements within the corridors. While the seatings can create spontaneous meeting spots, as described in Reigner (2002, p.72) and visual connection to social spaces to enable previewing (Regnier, 2002, p.81), it also makes going to one’s apartment a public affair. In ordinary housing the vertical communication ensures a large amount of anonymity for residents (Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting, 2018, p.13), creating integrity and independence for the residents. To increase residential integrity corridors and vertical communication should be designed to enable residents to move to their apartments from the outside anonymously, in a communication system more similar to ordinary housing.

While the communication should allow residents to move anonymously to and from their apartment, it must also allow for staff to move quickly between different apartments. Guidelines also exist concerning storage availability (Göteborgs stad, 2016, p.13), requiring storage possibility for consumables within

Design considerations

- *Neutral communication*
- *Apartment proximity for staff*
- *Walking distances to and from apartments*
- *Reprogramming possibilities*

THE APARTMENT SIZES

The uniformity of apartment design in assisted living described in Nord (2023) and the resulting small apartment sizes may be good to provide seniors with as cheap housing as possible. Many seniors living in assisted living facilities live with low pensions and the costs for rent is usually substantially higher than ordinary housing (SPF Seniorerna, 2025, p.17). In addition to this the residents also pay a fee for care, for meals and for other qualities the facility offers. While systems for supporting seniors struggling with these costs exist, the financial situation for some seniors is still challenging (SPF Seniorerna, 2025, p.9). Offering small and effective apartments should therefore be considered to allow seniors with a more restricted financial situation to enjoy the benefits of the project.

Design considerations

- *Offer a majority of compact apartments*
- *Have a variety of sizes, all with high capacity for care*

RETHINKING ASSITED LIVING

each unit. Easily available storage also removes the need to store large amounts of consumables within each apartment, keeping them less coded as a place for care and closer to a “normal” apartment. Storage should therefore be provided close to apartments for easy access.

The ordinary spatial organization of the assisted living facilities create highly programmed buildings, often with a distinct typology, recognisable from the outside both in terms of scale and appearance (Sveriges Kommuner och Landsting, 2018, p.13). The long corridors used for horizontal communication and small scale of the apartments makes reprogramming of the building difficult, as large interventions need to be taken to create housing for people other than seniors with a high need for care. Examples of refurbishment of existing assisted living facilities exist, for example Trädgården in Falkenberg discussed later in this thesis, where parts of the assisted living facility was converted to extra care housing. Here the problem however with the long corridors remains. By creating shorter corridor segments the building would become easier to repurpose and can more easily be used for other housing formats than AL. This creates flexibility for the municipality and can help reduce costs for renovations should the needs of housing change in the future.

Hyresgästföreningen (2026) however highlights the diversity that exists within the older generation. While most seniors report a desire to reduce housing costs for the future, seniors who today have a higher income or own their house consider this less of an issue. 44% of respondents today living in their owned house report being able to pay over 12 000 sek in monthly rent. Different sized apartments, where larger apartments with the possibility to live together as a couple is an option or living a slightly more independent life, should therefore be considered. The apartments should however have the same high capacity for care in the bathroom and bedroom as previously discussed.

REFERENCE PROJECT - KVARTERET TRÄDGÅRDEN

Like most of Sweden’s municipalities, Falkenberg is facing an ageing population that will challenge the way senior care is performed. In an effort to explore new ways of offering housing and care Kvarteret Trädgården has been developed. Formed from three assisted living buildings built in the 70s, and with one fourth building just finished, the complex now houses 163 apartments under various housing forms. Most of the apartments, 99, are “ordinary” assisted living apartments, and the other 64 are extra care housing apartments. The working staff in the assisted living facility also perform the care in the extra care housing apartments in a home care format. This organization allows the residents to live in the complex for several years, and should the need for care increase to the extent that moving into a care home apartment the move will be less dramatic, as it is still within the same building complex.

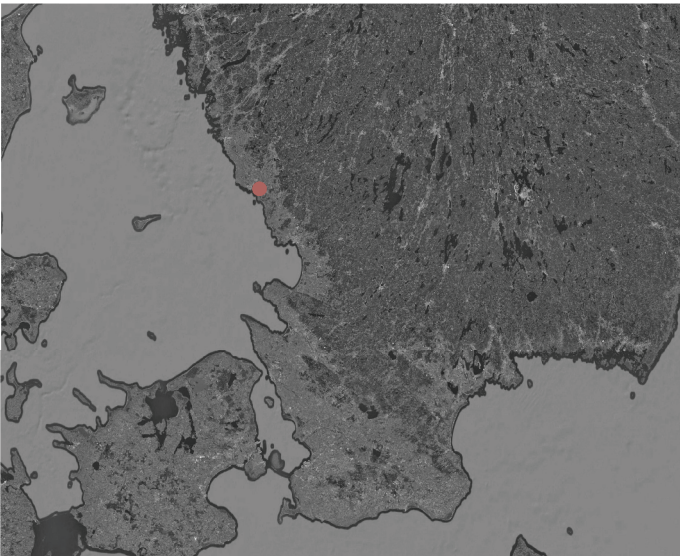


Figure 15. Falkenberg location



Figure 16. Trädgården location

A BLOCK FOR COMMUNITY

One core idea for Trädgården is to offer a community for those seniors who feel a need for it. Two hosts work full time within the block. They’re the people who greet you when you move in and who you can call for help with simple tasks in the apartment. While they can help organize events, their main goal is to help the residents connect with each other and become active members in the community. For some this may be difficult and some time may be needed after moving in before they feel ready to attend an event, while for others they become active members from day one. The hosts can see what interests and wants there are in the complex and help the residents find likeminded people and form new friendships. They can also function the small push some people may need to attend an event for the first time, a familiar face to tag along to. Besides the hosts, the staff also fill an important community building function. The home care staff working in the vicinity have their base, allowing them to have a connection to the complex and make it easier to invite the people they encounter to participate if they want to. The staff working in the units of the care home are the same staff members who perform the care and services in the extra care housing, with the work organized per story. This gives the residents familiar faces throughout the building and creates familiarity when moving through the complex.

MEETINGPLACE MÖLLE

Located near Trädgården is the local meeting place for seniors, Mölle. Housed in an old school building where many of the seniors themselves went to school, it is a popular place to go for events and lunches. Here seniors from the area can come and enjoy an affordable meal or have a coffee, or attend the many events and classes organized daily. People who are offered meals through home care can choose to have their meal at Mölle, and those who do not can preorder before to make sure a lunch is available. If a visit is more spontaneous the cafe has lighter lunch options available. Residents from Trädgården are frequent visitors, and around lunch time staff members can be seen walking back and forth with residents who struggle to make the around 150 meter walk themselves. While the walk is rather short, it is still raised as one key disadvantage of today’s organization. The walk consumes staff members time and becomes a threshold for the residents of Trädgården to attend the events organized at Mölle. Some of the younger residents have also expressed that they wish for a café or similar in Trädgården, as Mölle is by them perceived for the “older”, themselves not included. Here the need to avoid the stigma of age-separated venues become clear, as it in this case becomes a barrier for people who may benefit from Mölle, but feel that it is aimed at a different target group than themselves.

REFERENCE PROJECT - KVARTERET TRÄDGÅRDEN

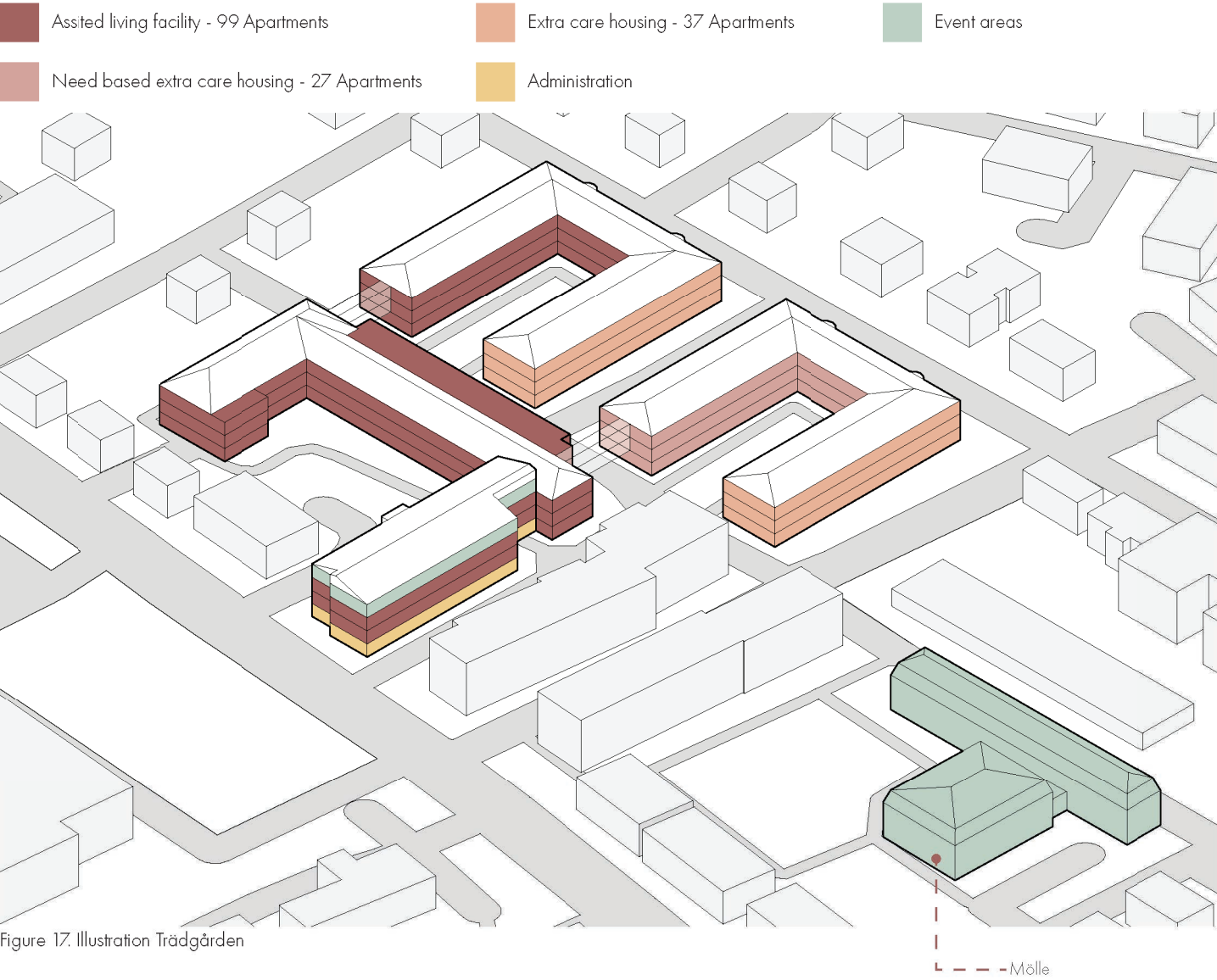


Figure 17. Illustration Trädgården



Figure 18. Meetingplace Mölle

3. PROCESS

SPATIAL ORGANIZATION

RETHINKING ASSISTED LIVING

Two core design ideas were guiding in the spatial organization exploration, creating independent apartments accessible without passing through public/social areas, and creating easy access to and from apartments to public spaces such as green areas and the restaurant.

The function of the “unit” in the common solution of today was removed, with the functions placed there either moved into the apartments or centralized within the complex. Part of the shared space of the units are relocated into the apartments to allow for a bigger kitchenette and a separate bedroom, while still having a bathroom suitable for care and support and creating a neutral living space.

Shared social functions are centralized on the ground floor making it possible to have them open for seniors living in the vicinity, as well as making subletting of areas possible if needed or possible.

Storage options are deemed to be needed near apartments on each floor, while disinfection rooms are considered possible to centralize on the ground floor as well. They should however be placed with easy access for staff.

The sizing of the volume is kept according to Gothenburg’s guidelines with an aim of 100 apartments to create financial and organizational plausibility. Sizing of staff spaces and number of staff present each day are estimations, and the complex should have the capacity to change spaces and apartments to adapt to either more or less shared/staff venues.

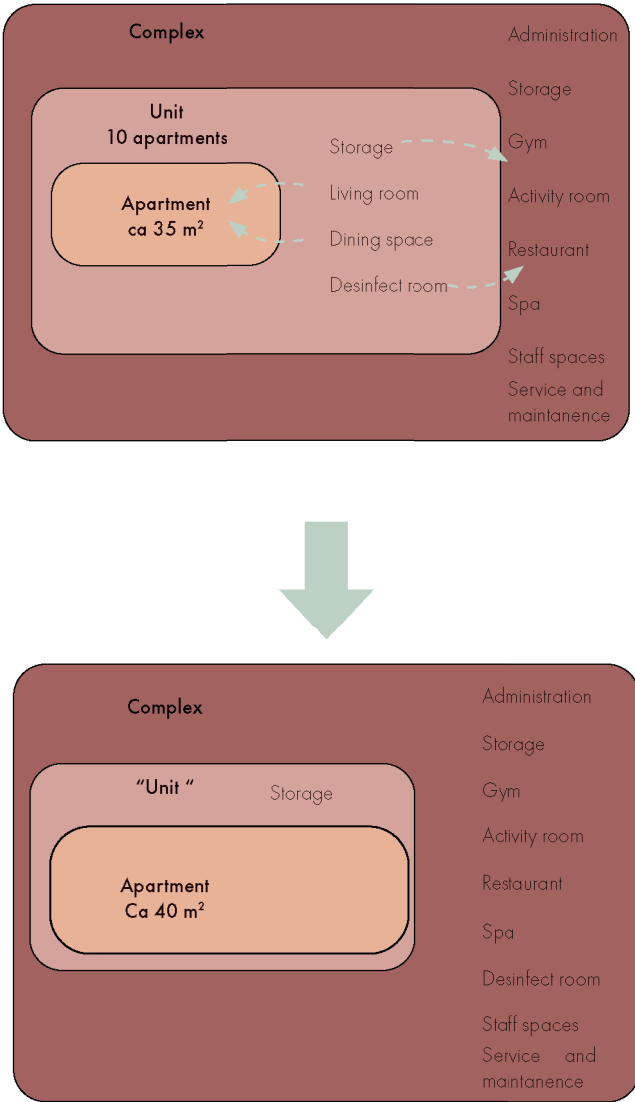


Figure 19. Spatial reorganization of assisted living

SPATIAL ORGANIZATION

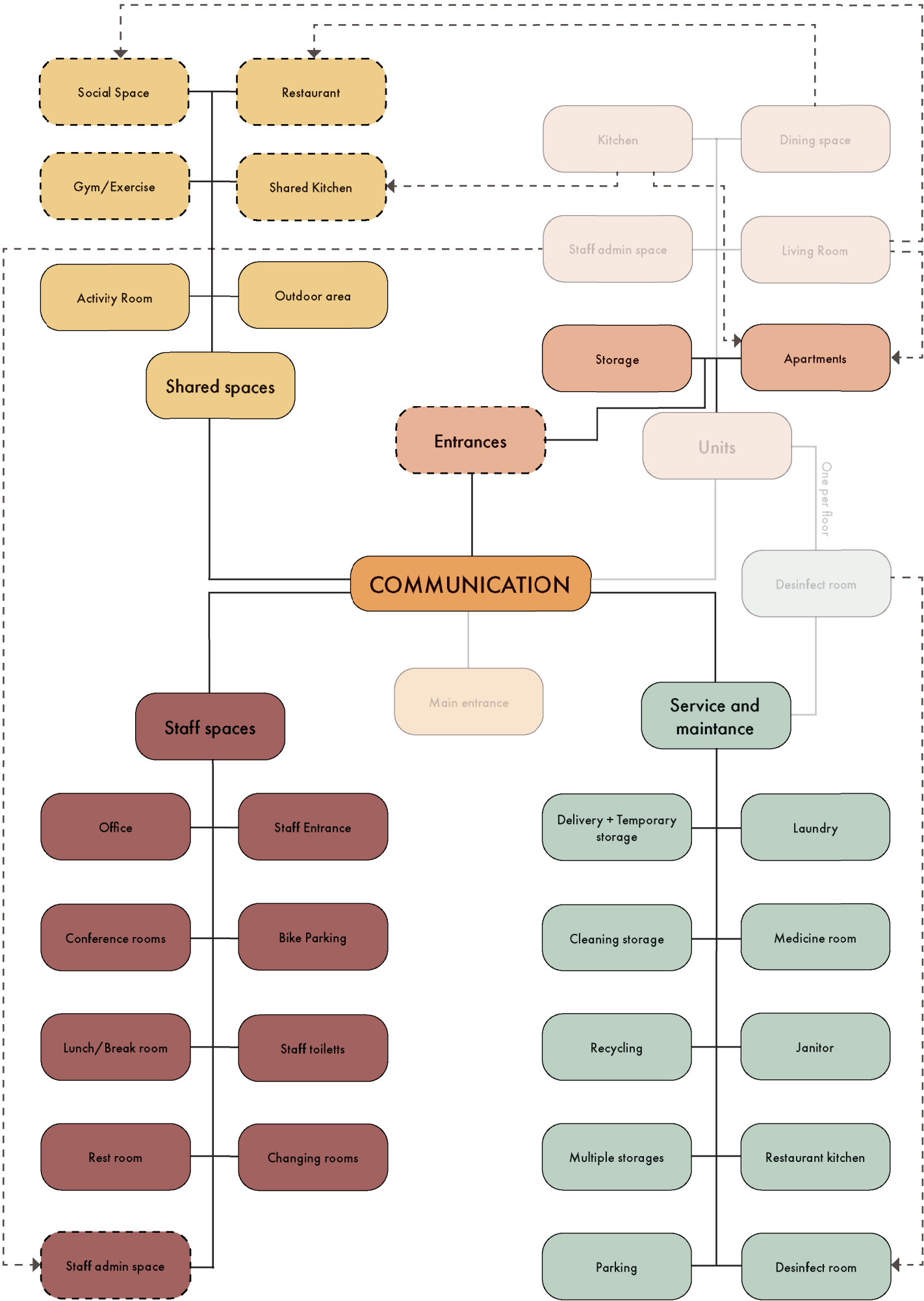


Figure 20. Functional reorganization of assisted living

SITE REQUIREMENTS

The examined context for the site was chosen to be in eastern Gothenburg, an area mainly dominated by villas and 3-4 story apartment buildings. Placing an assisted living facility within a residential area has the benefit that social connections with neighbours and friends are easier to maintain (Regnier, 2002, p.44), and the social functions can function as open meeting spaces to the seniors living around the complex, similar to Meetingplace Mölle in Trädgården, Falkenberg. When examining the suitable site four requirements were set up.

To evaluate site and capacity of sites available an estimated footprint set up. 100 apartments of 40 m2, and an equal area for communication and shared/staff spaces resulted in a required area of 8000 m2 according to Micasa Fastigheter (2022, p.20) that estimates 50% of surface is allotted to apartments and 50% for communication and shared spaces. To fit within the context a maximum number of floors was set to 4, resulting in an estimated footprint of 2000 m2. This consideration also involved surrounding structures and the site capacity to host a volume of 8000 m2 in terms of scale and

respect to the surrounding buildings. Further consideration was proximity to public transport, either tram or bus, which allows residents to more easily move independently throughout the city if they are able. It also makes the complex more accessible for both staff, visiting family and friends, and other seniors in the city who want to take part in possible open functions and events at the complex.

Proximity to a grocery store was also considered, as it enables residents to make small purchases themselves, maintaining independence and encouraging daily walks and activity. It also allows for visitors to purchase something right before visiting, making a spontaneous visit with coffee bread a bit easier to accomplish.

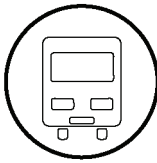
While regulations and a development plan may exist for examined plots, it was not considered when in the evaluation of possible sites as it was considered beyond the scope of this thesis to take current development plan into consideration.

After analyses based on established criteria Wingårdsgatan was selected as a plot to develop. With good access to public transport, proximity to a grocery store, manageable site typology and generous size it fulfilled all set up criteria.

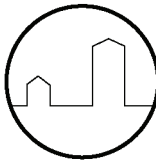
Three sites were examined and evaluated based on established criteria, Överåsparken, Prästgårdsgatan and Wingårdsgatan. Överåsparken was considered as the site for a new assisted living facility in 2019, but the plans were abandoned by the developers (Mittl Göteborg, 2019). Prästgårdsgatan is an open grass field next to a kindergarten, today used for sport activities even though not a structured sport field. Wingårdsgatan is an open field in between two tilted lamella buildings. The fields open up towards Delsjövägen, the main road of the area, making it the most public of the three plots considered.



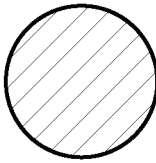
Figure 21. Site locations



Public Transport



Site typology



Size



Grocery store

1.

Överåsparken

2.

Prästgårdsgatan

3.

Wingårdsgatan



Figure 22. Overview Överåsparken

ÖVERÅSPARKEN



Tight space on plot



Sensitive surroundings, mainly smaller scale buildings



Closest public transport - 250 m



Closest grocery store - 600 m

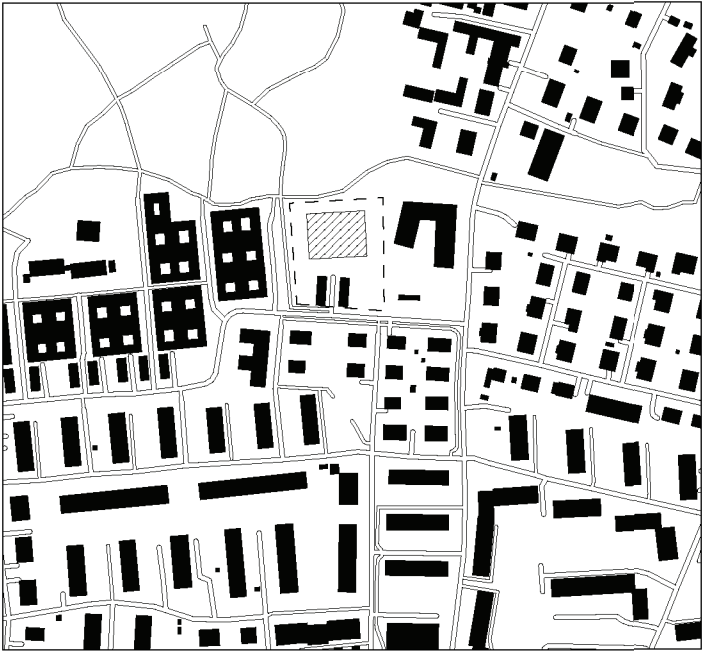
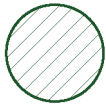


Figure 23. Overview Prästgårdsgatan

PRÄSTGÅRDSGATAN



Sufficient size of plot



Mixed surrounding building types



Closest public transport - 500 m



Closest grocery store - 800 m

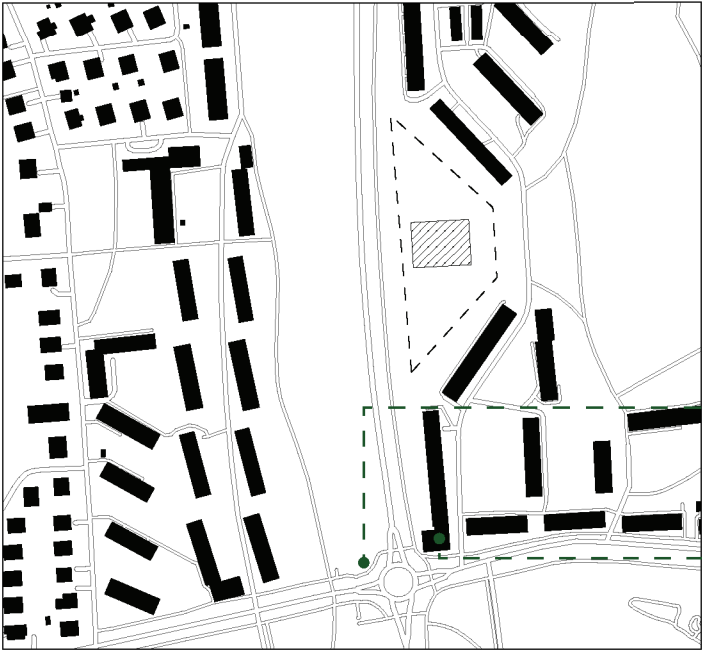


Figure 24. Overview Wingårdsgatan

WINGÅRDSGATAN



Generous size of plot



Larger lamellas in neighbourhood



Closest public transport - 200 m



Closest grocery store - 150 m

SITE

The site is defined by two tilted lamellas to the north and south, with Delsjövägen, the main road of the area, to the west and a smaller street, Wingårdsgatan, to the east. Access to both lamellas is done through Wingårdsgatan, as is the rest of the buildings in the vicinity, making this the natural main access point of the plot.

While the plot is relatively large, the angle of the two lamellas pose a challenge to the massing of the volume, as a new structure needs to allow for sufficient views and daylight for apartments facing the open lawn. The distance towards both lamellas must therefore be considered in the massing process.

The orientation and shape of the plot allows for outdoor spaces in multiple directions. While the Delsjövägen is to the west and might bring disturbance because of traffic, it is not a heavily trafficked road and trees create a visual barrier between the road and the plot. The direction of outdoor spaces should take both the need for sun and shade into consideration, as seniors have a higher risk of suffering from heat strokes. The massing should therefore consider outdoor spaces in both east and west, to allow for both shade and sun during warm summer days. Outdoor spaces towards both east and west would also create sunlit areas during early summer mornings and late evenings, a time where sun exposure might be more pleasant than during the middle of a summer day.

Wind analysis shows that most of the wind in the area comes from south west, which will be even more amplified with the shielding that the hill towards east brings, highlighting even more the benefits of outdoor spaces in multiple directions.



Figure 25. North lamella



Figure 26. View of Wingårdsgatan



Figure 27. South lamella

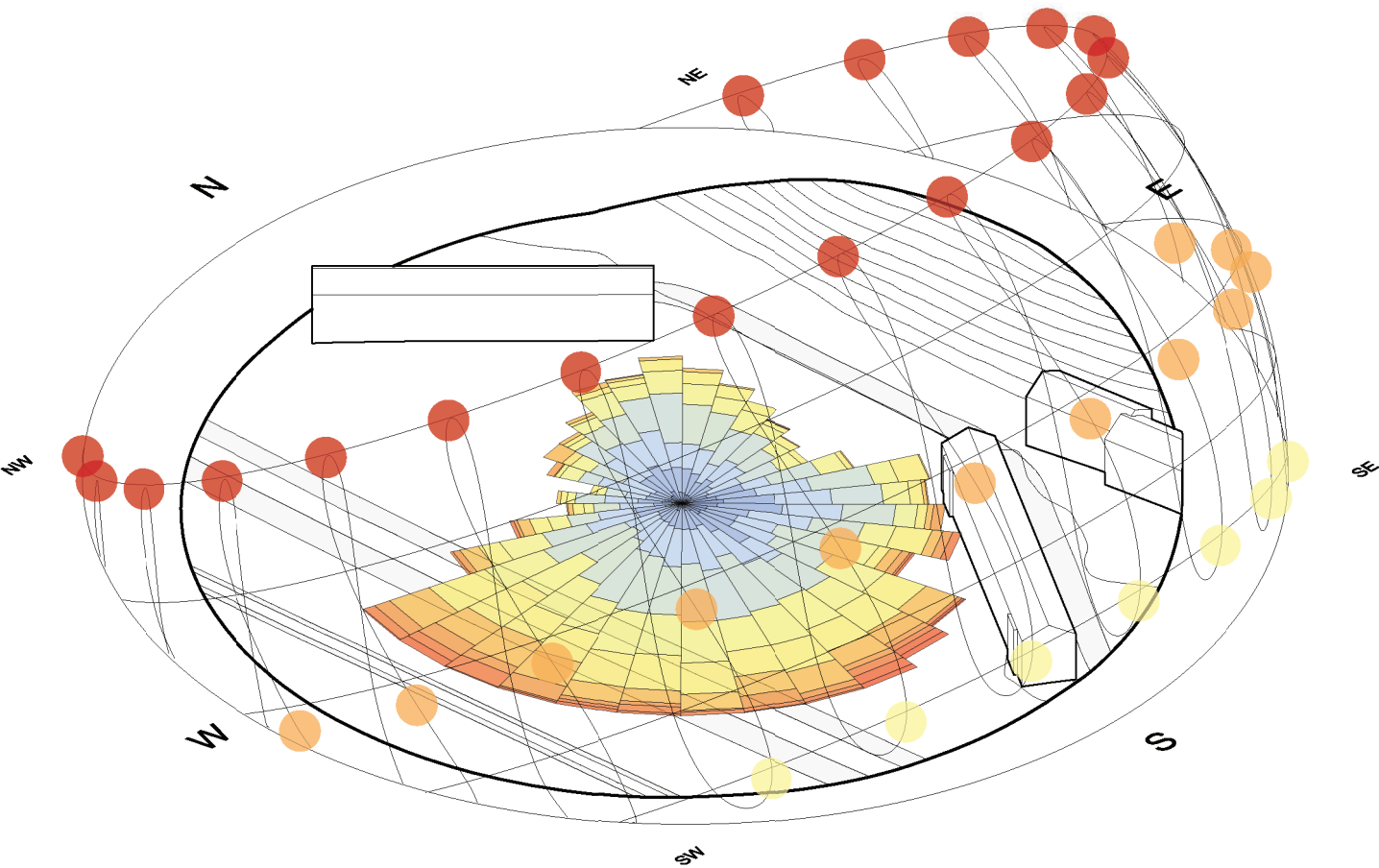


Figure 28. Sun path and windrose analysis

SITE

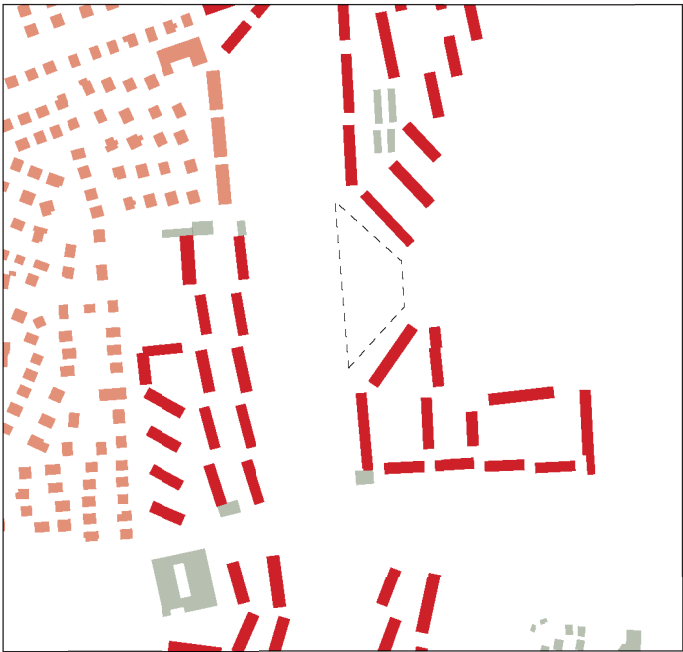


Figure 29. Surrounding building heights

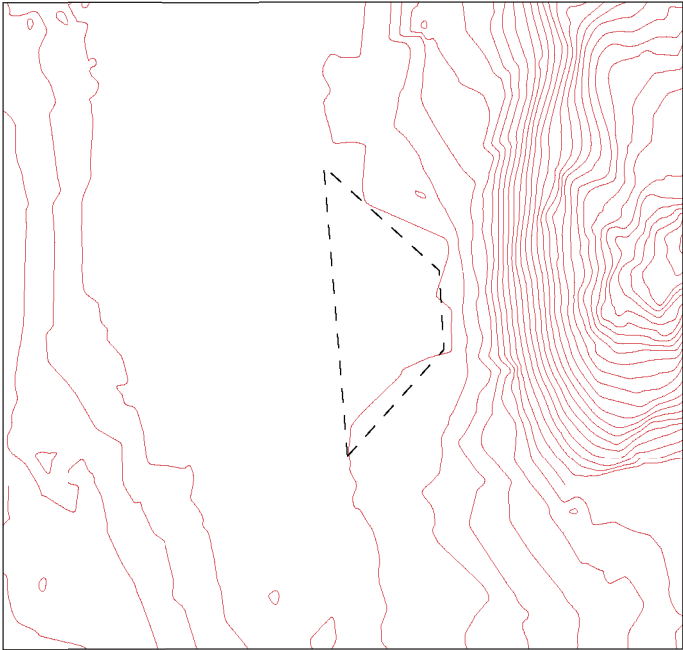


Figure 30. Site topography

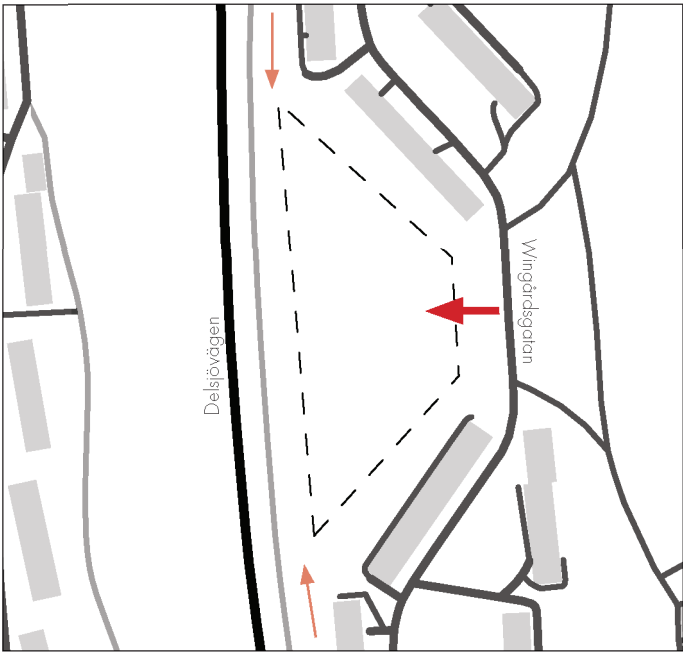


Figure 31. Site access point

SURROUNDING BUILDING HEIGHTS

The immediate surroundings are dominated by three story lamella buildings, mainly clad in plaster. The closest buildings have a semi buried basement, resulting in three and a half story buildings. One layer further away holds mainly two story villas and townhouses, as well as two story lamellas.

- 3 story building
- 2 story building
- 1 story building

TOPOGRAPHY

The plot is relatively flat, with a height difference towards the east. A large tree covered hill rises on the east side. There is no height differences to either access point by public transport to the north or to the south

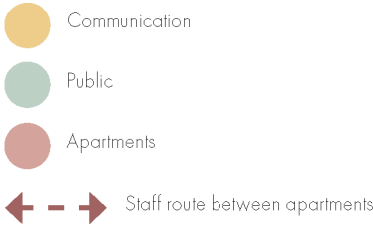
ACCESS POINTS

The surrounding buildings are accessed by Wingårdsgatan, and Delsjövägen mainly connects to smaller streets, serving as the main road of the area. Hence the main access points for cars should be placed towards Wingårdsgatan. Pedestrians and cyclists mainly access the plot through the combined bicycle and pedestrian lane along Delsjövägen. Pedestrian and bike access from Delsjövägen should therefore be considered.

- Pedestrian access
- Main car access

VOLUME
TYPOLOGY EXPLORATION

The building typology was explored with the core ideas to allow for short walking distances for residents, with a “neutral” path from entrance to apartment, as well as easy access between apartments for staff to allow for effective working conditions. The exploration was conducted from two methods. Number one was examining present day building typologies and assessing their capacity to fulfill the set up requirements, number two exploring building massing through sketch models and their relation to the built surroundings of the site. This combination allowed for easy assessment of the capacity of the site and what scale was possible to design.



LAMELLA

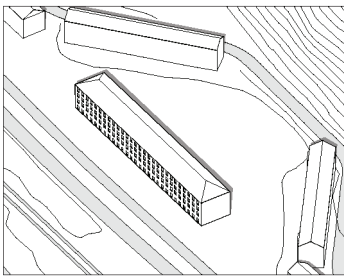


Figure 32. Lamella massing

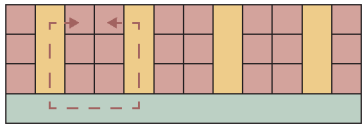


Figure 33. Lamella movement

- + Similar building structure to surroundings
- + Compact building structure
- No horizontal communication on residential floors
- Building volume becomes large when scaled up

POINT BLOCKS

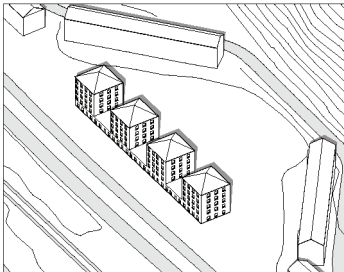


Figure 35. Point block massing

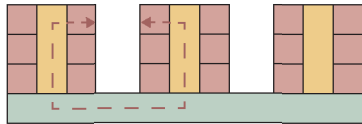


Figure 36. Point block movement

- + Volume becomes more open
- + Raised private terraces
- Few apartments connected per floor
- Difficult for staff to move quickly between blocks
- Few similar structures in the surroundings

HIGH RISE BUILDING

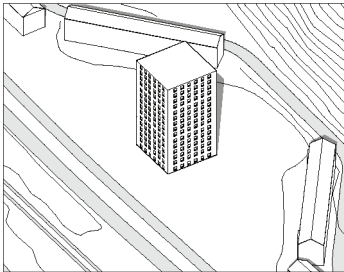


Figure 36. High rise building massing

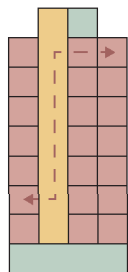


Figure 37. High rise building movement

- + Compact building structure
- + Easy for staff and residents to move in the building
- + Short horizontal walking distances
- No similar structures nearby, will disrupt the urban silhouette
- Footprint will become massive if 8-10 apartments per floor
- Elevator dependant, long waiting times?

ACCESS GALLERY BUILDING

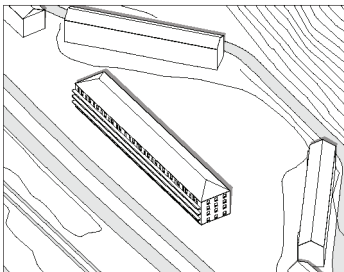


Figure 38. Access gallery massing

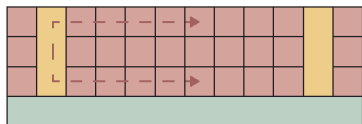


Figure 39. Access gallery movement

- + Compact building structure
- + Effective horizontal communication
- + Access gallery can be glazed, winter garden?
- Long walking distances between floors
- Volume becomes massive if number of apartments increases

VOLUME

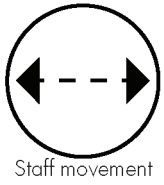
VOLUME REQUIREMENTS

The volume exploration and evaluation was performed based on four criteria. Firstly, the volume should allow for quick staff movement between a sufficient amount of apartments. Current norms of 10 apartments per unit, and with possibility for one night shift staff to cover two units of a total of 20 apartments was the base for evaluation. These apartments could be connected on separate floors, however horizontal communication throughout the complex should be pursued to allow for quick and flexible staff movement.

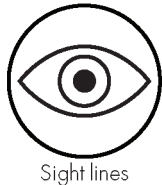
Secondly, each apartment should have close access to an entrance, and not have to pass through a “public/social” space to get to and from their apartment. This spatial organization more resembles a “normal” apartment complex, making a reorganization or repurposing of apartments easier.

Third, the volume should reduce long corridors and sightlines to avoid an appearance of a hospital environment. Sightlines in corridors should have a clear view, and not end in a dead end.

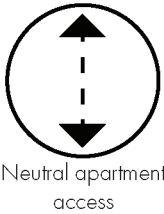
Fourth the shape should break down the scale of the volume, making the visual impression of the complex more approachable and less massive. Since the volume aims towards at least 8000 m2 and 100 apartments measures need to be taken to reduce the perceived scale.



Staff movement



Sight lines



Neutral apartment access



Reduce perceived scale

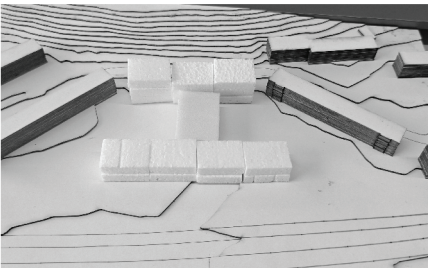
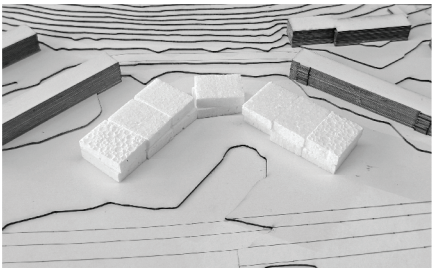
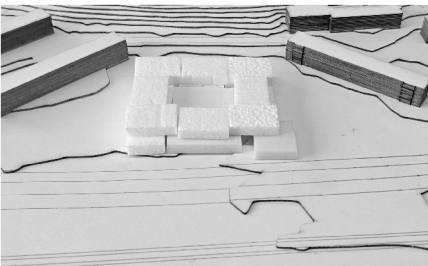
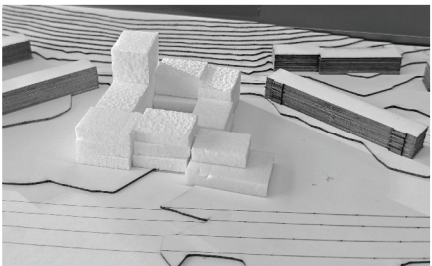
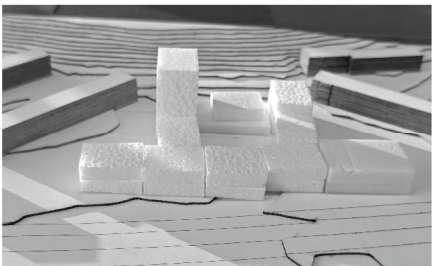
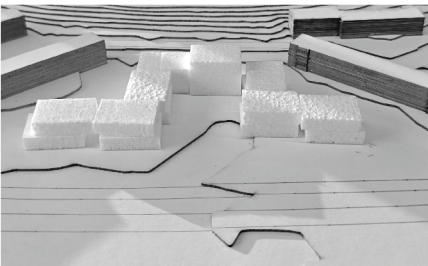
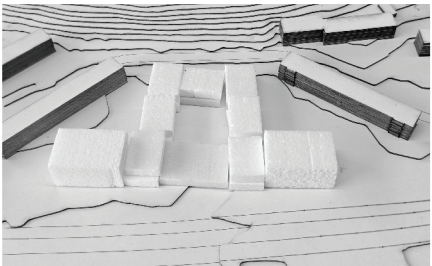
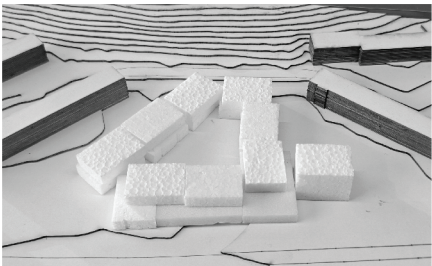
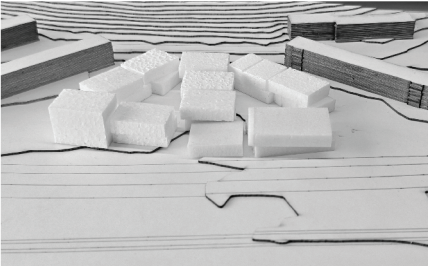
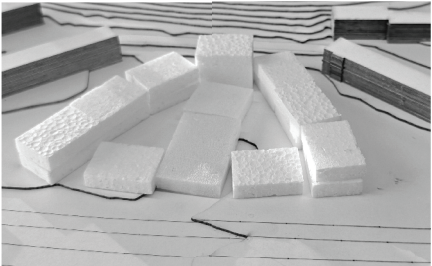
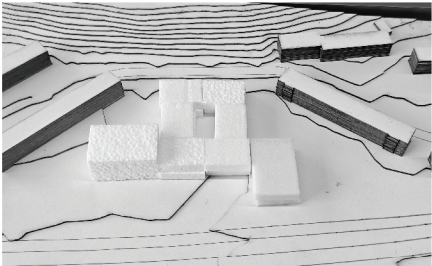


Figure 40. Volume sketches

FORM EVOLUTION

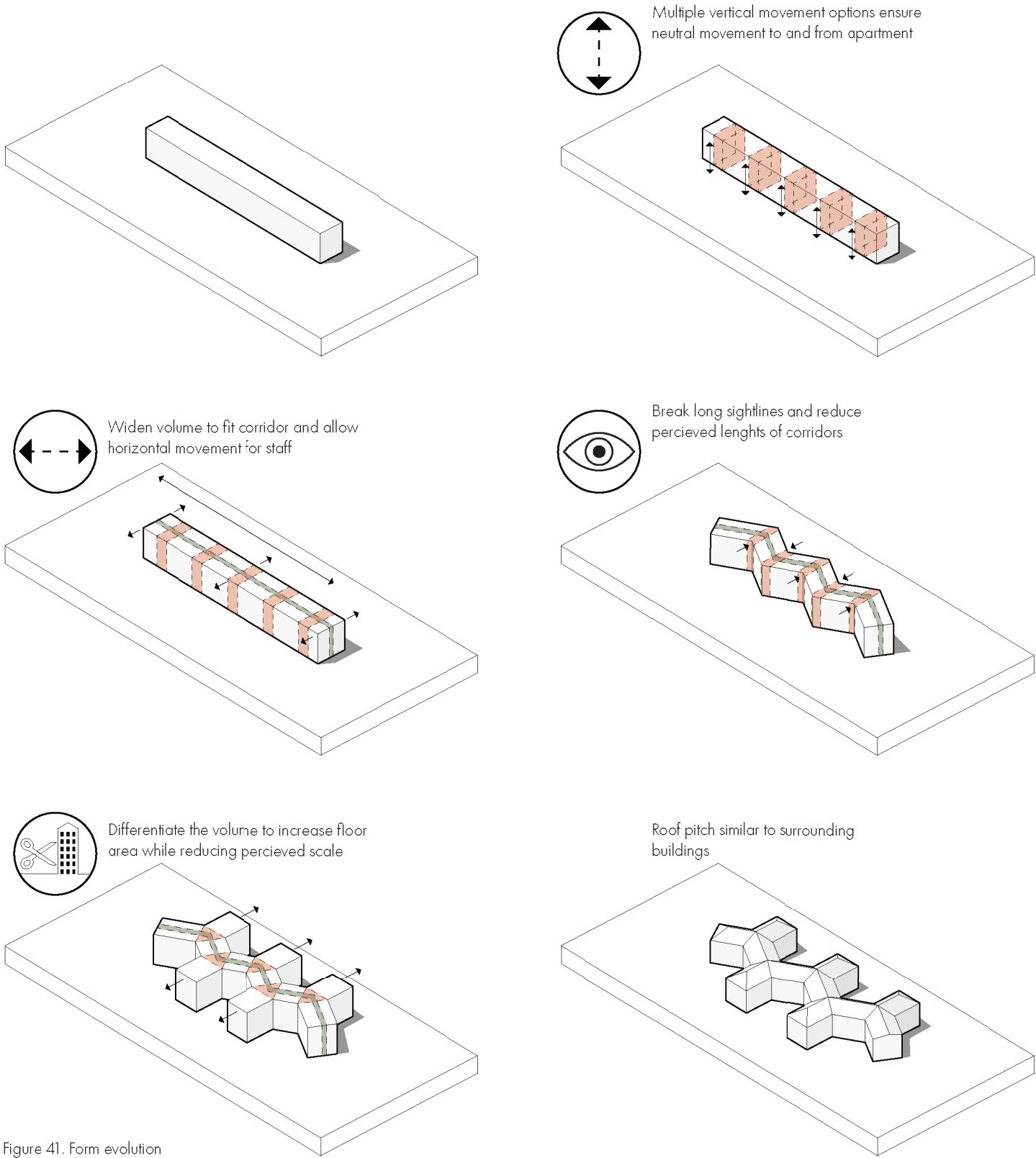
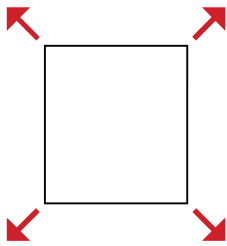


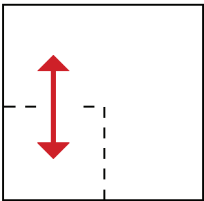
Figure 41. Form evolution

APARTMENT DESIGN PRINCIPLES

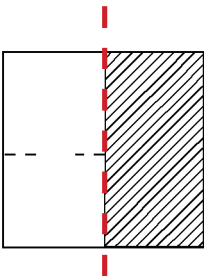
Based on literature, reference projects and design considerations set out throughout the research, sketching of the apartments started. This was done concurrently with massing studies to keep both scales of sketching relevant throughout the massing studies. The core design of the apartments was to allow for a high level of care and support, while also allowing for a neutral living space within the apartment, shielded from the care giving zone. Storage with a place to hide wheelchairs or walkers when they're not in need was also prioritized.



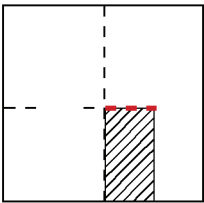
Increase apartment sizes



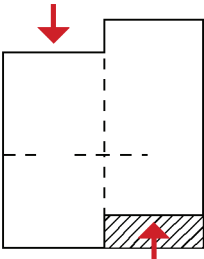
Bathroom-Bedroom connection for easy access and transfer if lift is needed



Separate bedroom to allow for neutral living space



Storage for aids hidden from view



Push and pull to form entrance zone and increase size of living space

Figure 42. Design principles

4. DESIGN PROPOSAL

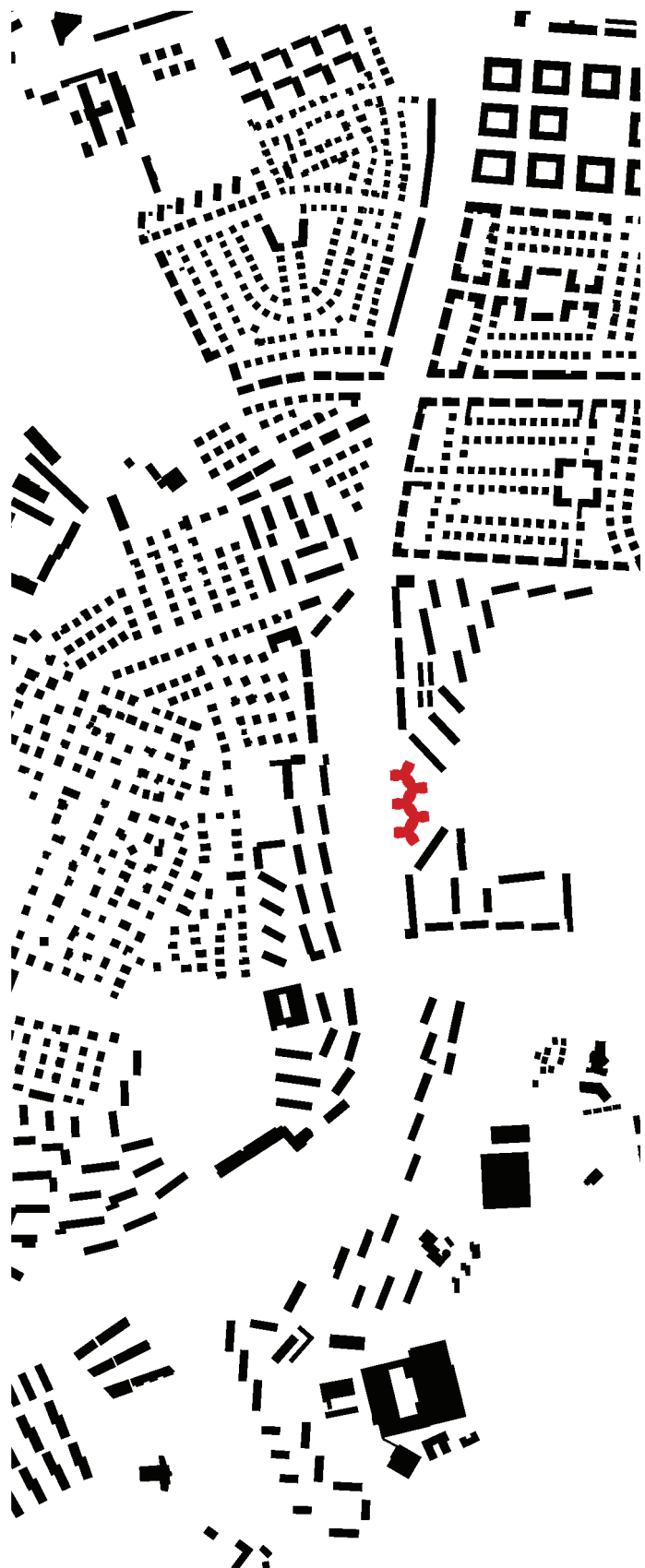


Figure 43. Schwarzplan 1:10 000

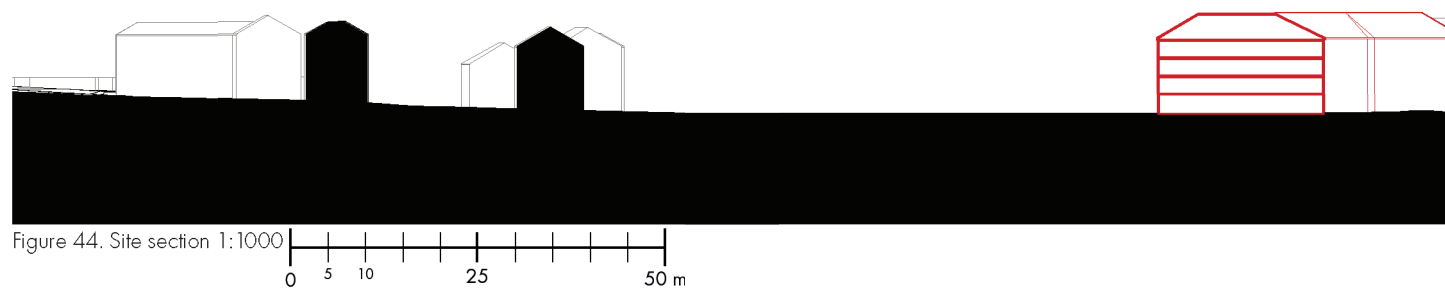


Figure 44. Site section 1:1000

SITE

Situated in Källtorp, an residential area in the east part of Gothenburg, the site today holds a large open lawn in an opening in the otherwise distinct rhythm in the area. With two tram stops within 200 meters the site has easy access to the rest of the city and is easy for staff and visitors to get to. Surrounded by 3-story lamellas with plaster walls, the suggested design carefully adapts to the surrounding and fills the void left on the plot.

To the east a dense forest rises on a hill, creating a calm backdrop for the project, while to the east the main bicycle route and road of the neighbourhood stretches from south to north.

The project is approachable and enterable from multiple directions, with the main entrance for cars from the east. Here a grandiose gesture welcomes you with a circular driveway, allowing for easy access by car or a scenic route for pedestrians. Two more access points for cars connect to the main road, used for deliveries and for those who struggle to walk and need to arrive closer to their front door. For those arriving by public transport, the complex has entrances both to the north and the south, allowing one to decide how far one wants to walk outside or inside.

The surroundings offer small streets with plenty of greenery, and walks around the neighbourhood offer great daily exercise for seniors. For those who would prefer a shorter walk, a stroll around or through the complex might be more suitable, as the project offers a variety of lengths for the daily walk.

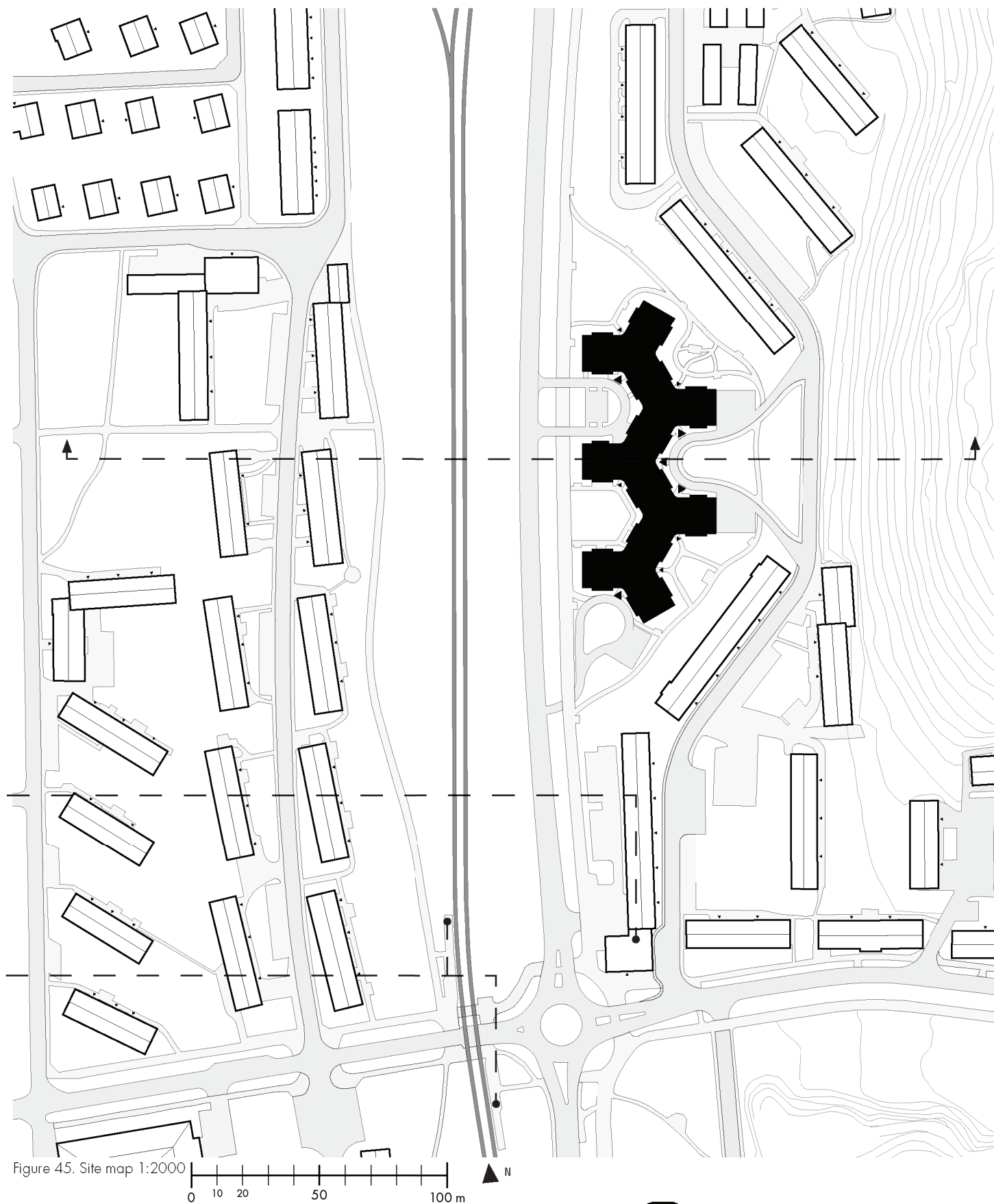
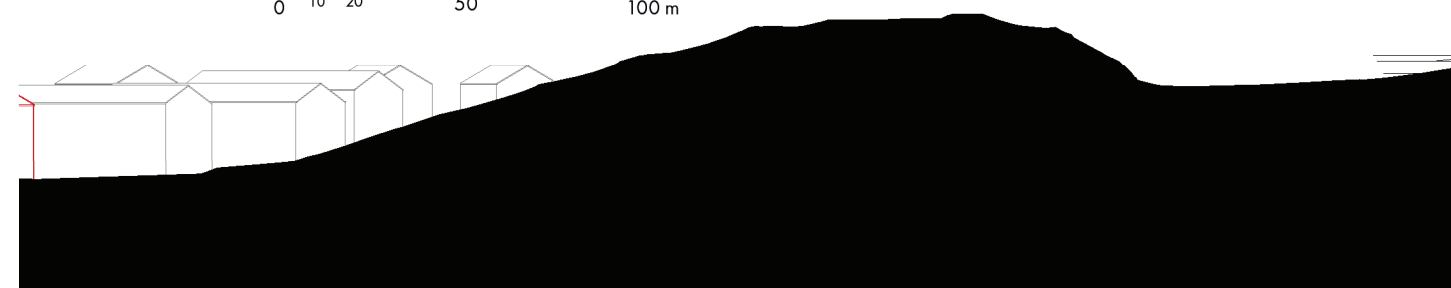


Figure 45. Site map 1:2000



VOLUME OVERVIEW

The volume has a total floor area of 11 517 m² distributed on 5 stories. The ground floor holds public venues, staff areas, ten apartments and storage. The three floors above are identical and hold in total 120 apartments and staff storage. In the basement you find staff changing rooms, bike storage, apartment storages, storage for staff, as well as tech rooms. Fan rooms are placed in the attic. The fractioned shape of the volume effectively reduces the perceived scale of it, as most of the massing hides behind itself from a pedestrian perspective. This helps enhance an residential impression of the otherwise large scaled project.

Vertical communication is placed in the vertices of the volume, ensuring easy access to and from all the apartments throughout the complex, both when arriving and when going outside to the green areas.

The complex is accessed through three of the seven courtyard, where the central one to the east becomes the main entrance serving three of the staircases and having easy access to the centrally placed public spaces. Pedestrians arriving from the two tram stops nearby can enter in both the north and southern corner and make their way through the building inside, or walk around the complex on one of the many pathways around it.

Total building - 11 517 m²
Staff areas - 707 m²
Apartments - 6192 m²
Communication - 2676 m²
Staff storage - 370 m²
Apartment storage - 411 m²
Tech - 103 m²

Third floor - 2597 m²
Staff storage - 72 m²
Apartments - 1925 m²
Communication - 600 m²

Second floor - 2597 m²
Staff storage - 72 m²
Apartments - 1925 m²
Communication - 600 m²

First floor - 2597 m²
Staff storage - 72 m²
Apartments - 1925 m²
Communication - 600 m²

Ground floor - 2767 m²
Staff spaces - 523 m²
Staff storage - 31 m²
Public spaces - 1060 m²
Apartments - 418 m²
Communication - 736 m²

Basement - 960 m²
Staff spaces - 184 m²
Staff storage - 125 m²
Tech - 103 m²
Communication - 138 m²

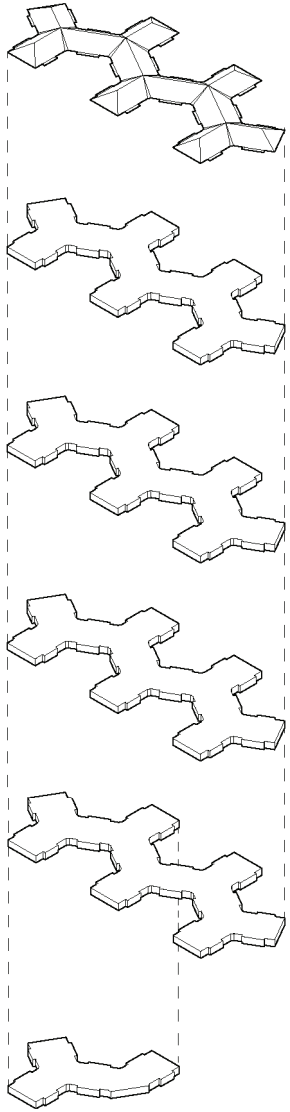
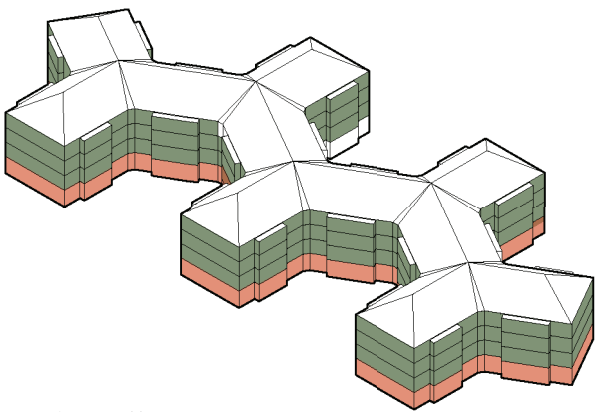
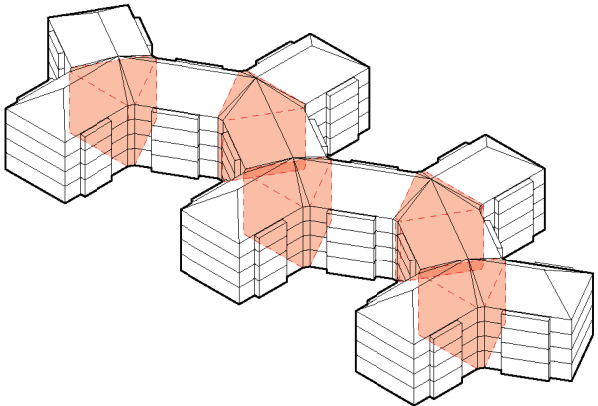


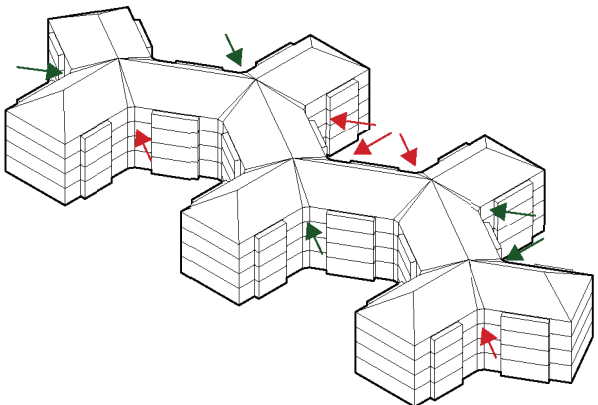
Figure 46. Area distribution



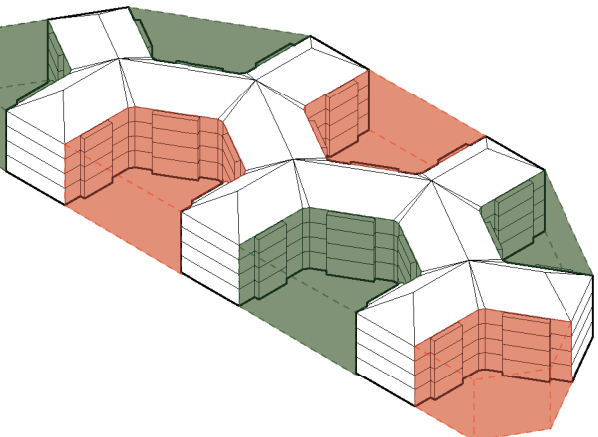
Centralization of functions - Ground floor holds public and shared functions, floor 1-3 hold apartments.



Neutral apartment access - 5 vertical shafts allow for easy access to and from apartments



Easy access to and from apartments - Each corner have access to car drop off as well as green space



Three courtyards are designated for cars and deliveries, four are used for outdoor activities

Figure 47. Volume diagrams

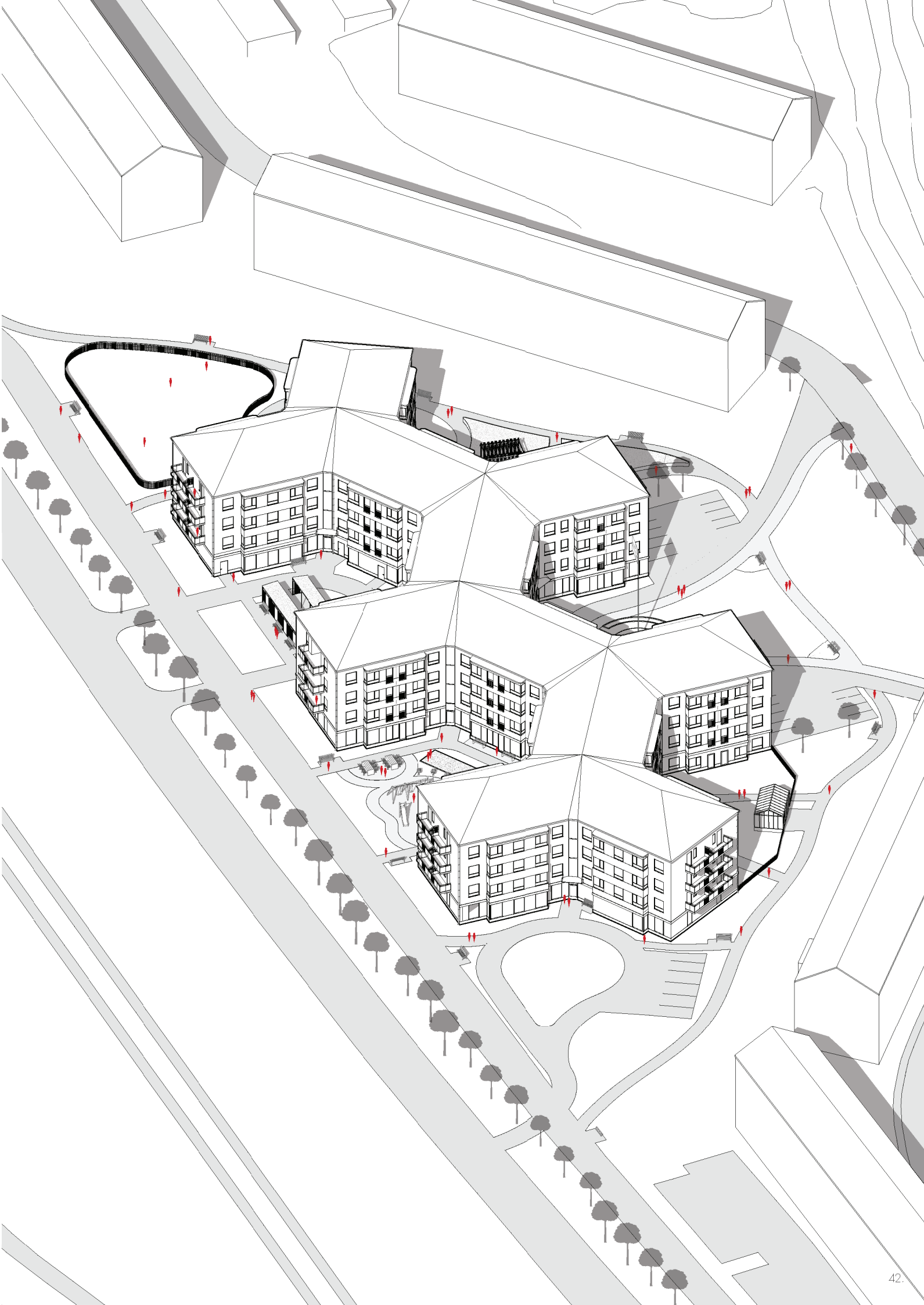


Figure 48. Isometric overview



GROUND FLOOR - OVERVIEW

The ground floor holds all public and staff spaces of the complex, as well as service functions and ten apartments. The main social spaces for residents are placed in the central areas, making accessing them as easy as possible for the residents. The central modules also hold janitors office, nurse office, hair saloon and reception, making a visit here easy to get done before dinner.

The two modules one step further away from the center hold the staff service functions that need quick access, disinfect room, laundry, recycling and cleaning. This makes it easy for staff to access these spaces on the go when moving through the complex.

The north and south corners hold functions for more designated activities. The south corner holds spaces for physical exercise and recreation. This enables them to be accessed for outside visitors, inviting seniors from all over Gothenburg to engage in physical exercise and well being. The north corner holds an activity room intended for daily activities, offering a space for residents who need a more structured and organized everyday life. The north corner also holds staff breaks and admin spaces are placed in the north corner, giving them a secluded area for work and recreation when they need it.

The complex offers four car free semi enclosed courtyards. The central one holds areas for activity and exercise, as well as a playground. It is overlooked by the restaurant and the social space, making committing to joining easier as well as giving residents who want to be more passive something to observe. The south most green space holds a green house and spaces for gardening. Here residents can stay active and get their hands dirty, or just enjoy a coffee in a protected outdoor space. The north east courtyard holds a calmer garden intended for walks and recreation. Small paths offer strolls of various lengths and a pergola creates a shelter place to sit down if one needs a rest. The north most courtyard holds an enclosed dog park, creating an active place where residents or neighbors can let their dogs run around freely, and the residents can enjoy watching, petting or playing with dogs and all the joy that brings.

The many entrance points and paths around and through the complex create endless alternatives for daily walks, with various lengths and views to choose from. Some might aim for the full tour around the complex of 500 meters, while others might prefer a shorter excursion of 15 meters. The many access points allow for a flexible walking pattern and decisions to be made as you go. Benches are placed every 30 meters to ensure walkers have the option to sit and catch their breath should the need for that occur.

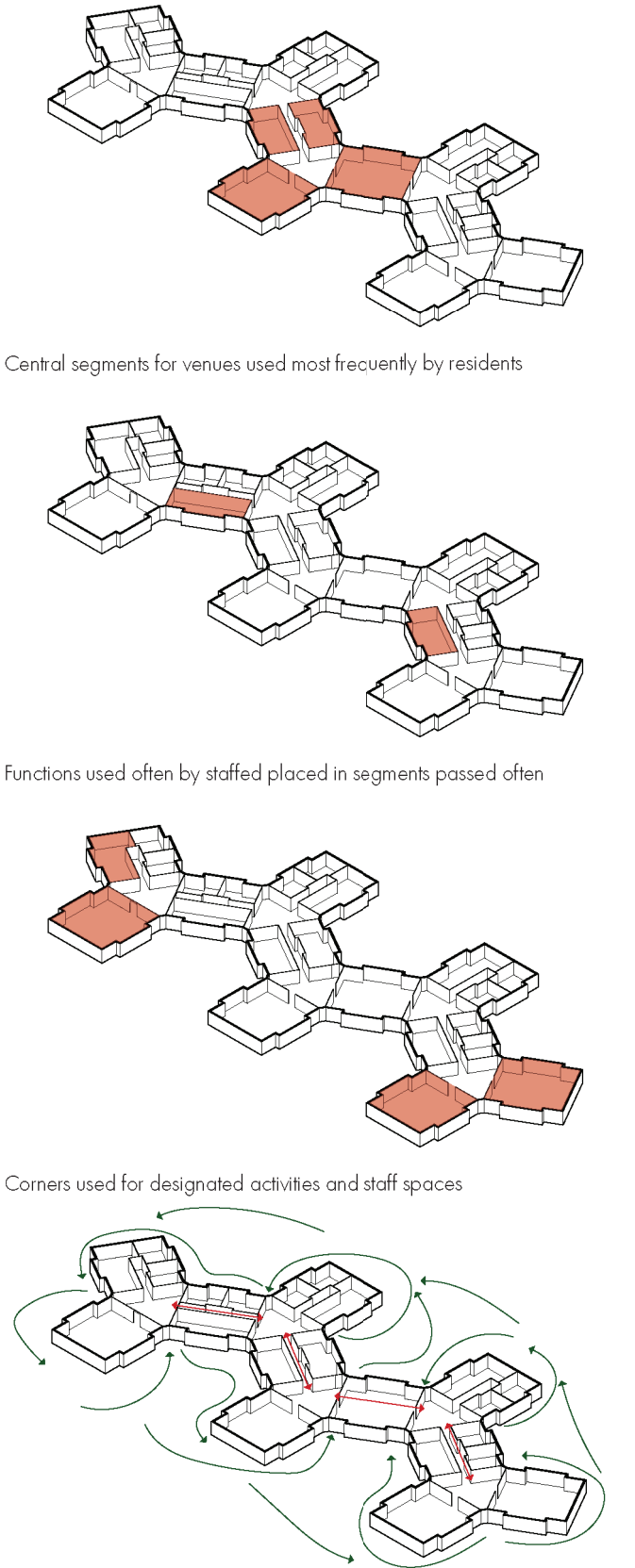


Figure 49. Ground floor diagrams

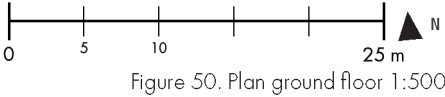
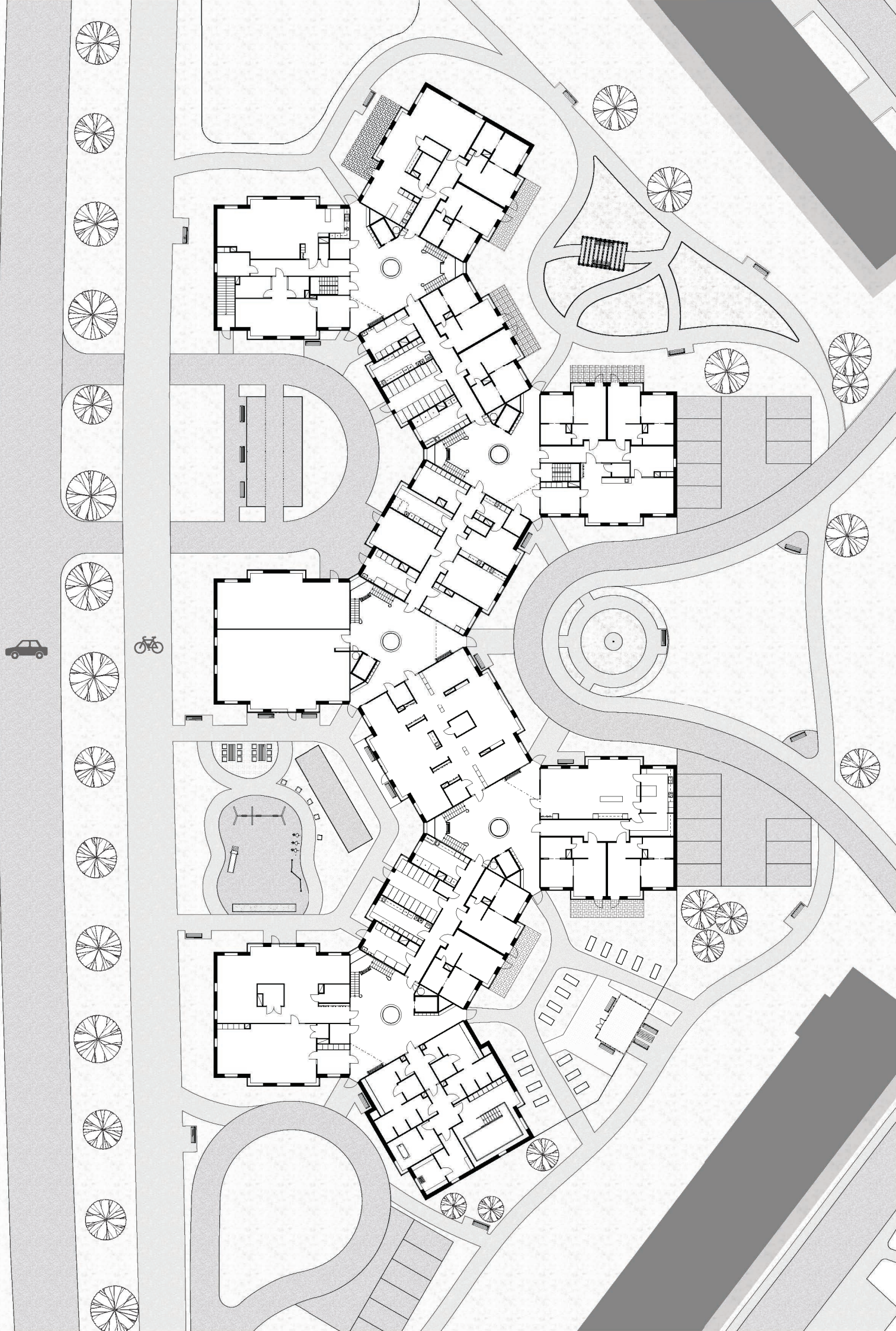


Figure 50. Plan ground floor 1:500



GROUND FLOOR - NORTH



1. Activity room	98 m ²
2. Staff break room	81 m ²
3. Staff rest room	9 m ²
4. Bike entrance	
5. Staff office	70 m ²
6. Recycling	20 m ²
7. Disinfect room	18 m ²
8. Storage for walker, wheelchairs etc.	28 m ²
9. Laundry	21 m ²
10. Admin office	98 m ²
11. Apartments	42 m ²

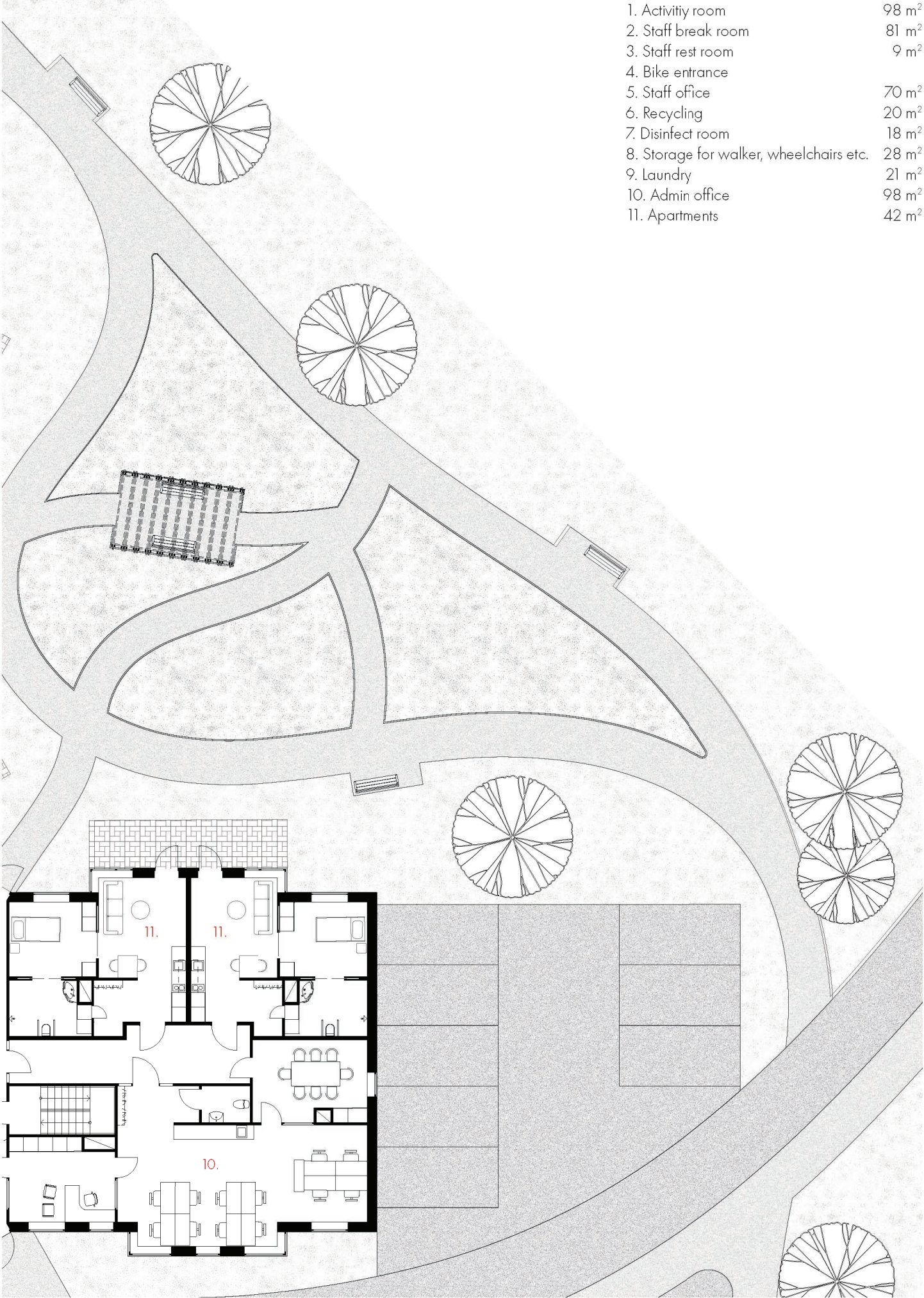
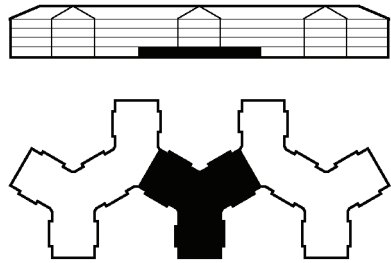


Figure 51. Plan ground floor north 1:200



- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Janitor office | 20 m ² |
| 2. Cleaning storage | 19 m ² |
| 3. Central storage | 30 m ² |
| 4. Restaurant recycling | 20 m ² |
| 5. Medicine storage | 8 m ² |
| 6. Nurse's office | 23 m ² |
| 7. Salon | 25 m ² |
| 8. Reception | 22 m ² |
| 9. Restaurant kitchen | 83 m ² |
| 10. Restaurant | 125 m ² |
| 11. Social space | 197 m ² |
| 12. Boule court | |
| 13. Playground | |

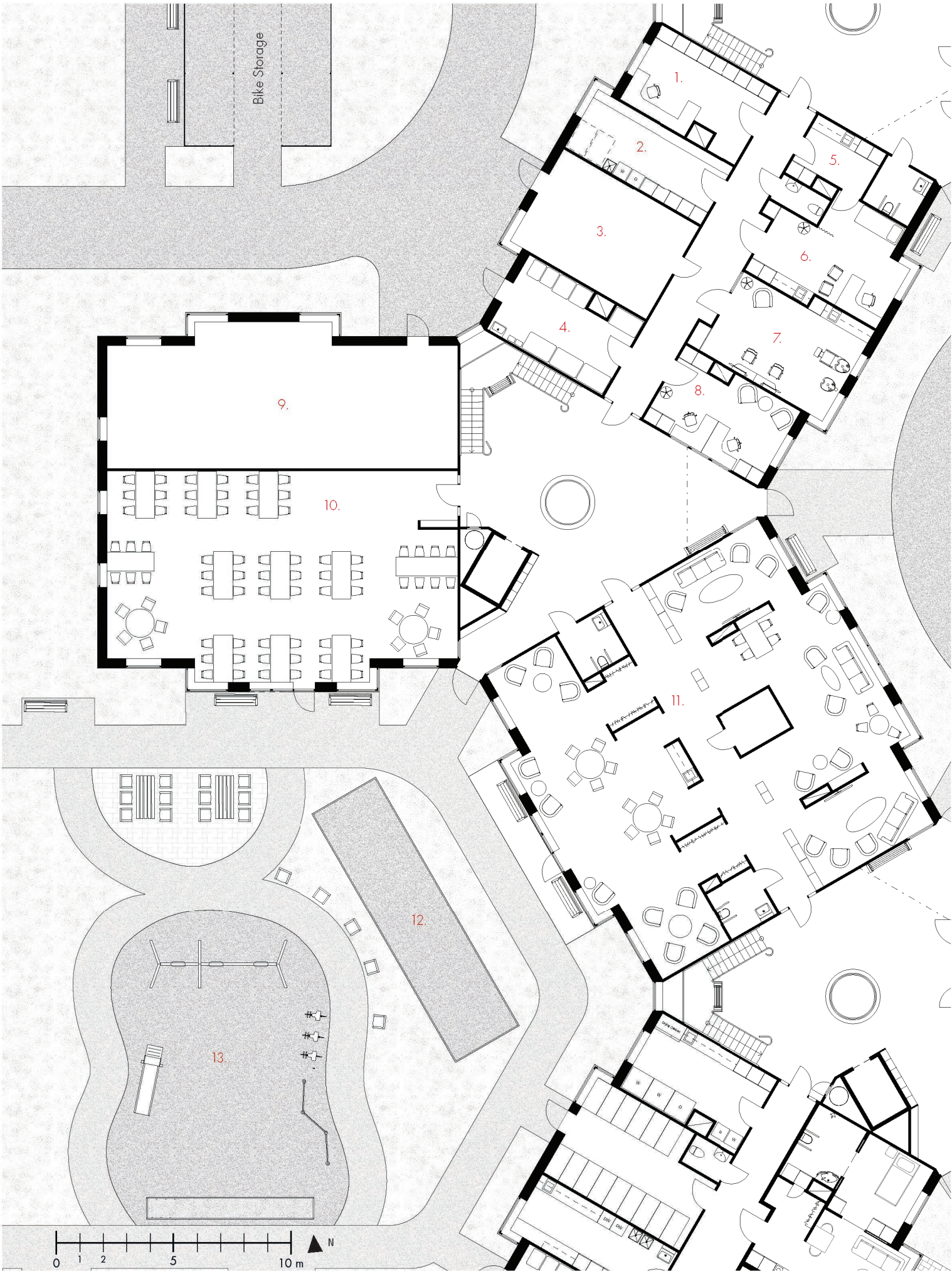
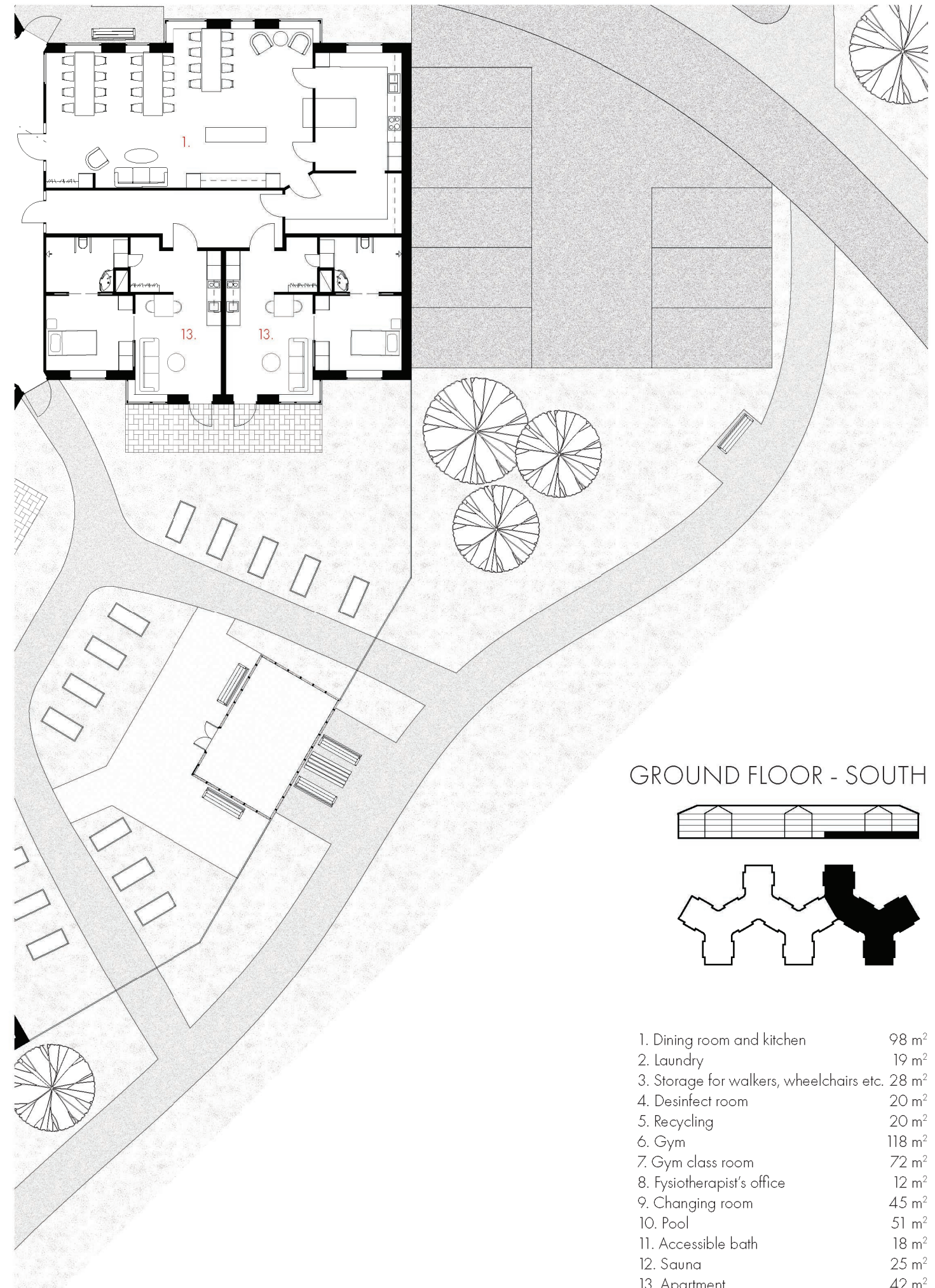
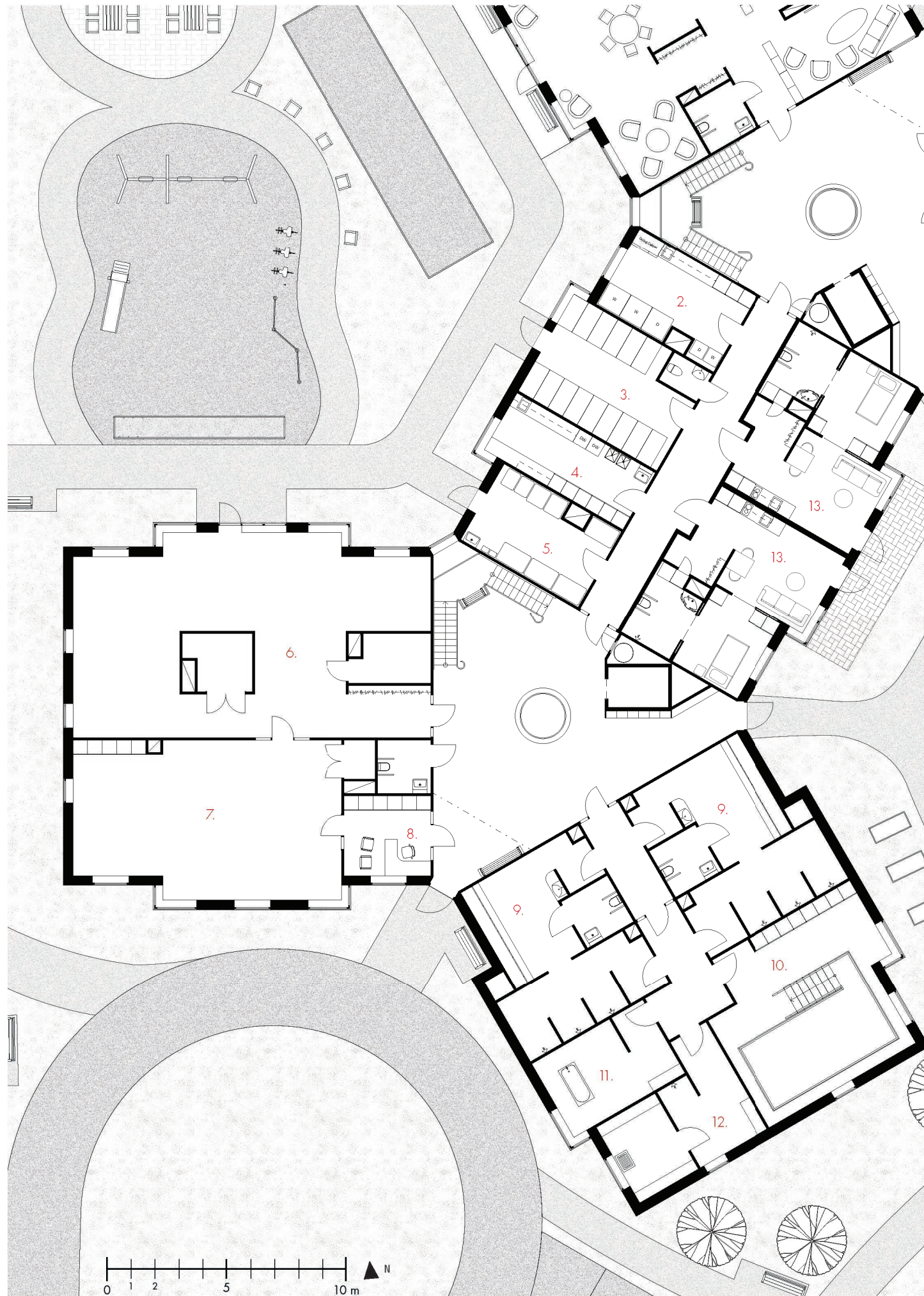
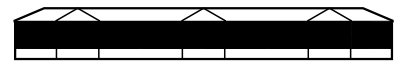


Figure 52. Plan ground floor central1:200





RESIDENTIAL - FLOOR 1-3



Floor 1-3 consists of 40 apartments each, connected horizontally with a corridor throughout the volume. Railing is mounted along the corridors, making it safer for residents who struggle with balance to practice walking without their walker or wheelchair. The angled volume shortens the line of sight in the corridors, reducing it to a manageable 30 meters. The apartments passed in the corridors have small alcoves for their entrances, creating a transition zone when entering the apartment.

The corridors create a pleasant walking route for seniors, offering a stroll of 100 meters from one end to the other. Throughout the route the lobbies create openings with greenery and daylight, as well as seating to sit down and have a rest. If you don't want to walk the same route back you can take the elevator to another floor and walk the route back there instead.

Each lobby is shared by 7-9 apartments, creating a small cluster of apartments where spontaneous meetings are more likely on a daily basis. The apartments are also clustered in groups of 3 or 4, creating an even more familiar unit between neighbours. This grouping can help neighbours form instinctive connections to their closest neighbours, encouraging new relationships when moving in.

The clustering of apartments is also beneficial as it allows for separation of apartments and groups, something that was proven necessary during Covid and recurring outbreaks of other diseases such as the Norovirus. As seniors are more at risk for many diseases and their consequences, having the opportunity to clearly separate apartments allows for easier quarantine of residents who are sick and can be life saving.

This division could also be utilized if some residents would have a higher need for staff presence, where one group could function as a dementia unit or similar. In that scenario design changes should be considered as the needs of those affected by dementia differ from those who are not. In the proposed design all groups are designed to function as open units with independent apartments.

Apartments are offered in 5 sizes, with a clear majority of Unit A. While the apartments offer different qualities, they're all designed with the capacity to provide the same high level of care for those who have a need for it.

The variety of sizes allows for various levels of independence. It also allows for residents with different needs and wishes to find housing more suitable for them, embracing the heterogeneity of seniors today. The different sizes also gives residents the option to move within the complex should their housing need change. A spouse who loses their partner might want to change to a smaller apartment to pay less rent. A move within the complex is both easier logistically, and allows the person moving to maintain their social connections and their emotional connection to the neighbourhood.

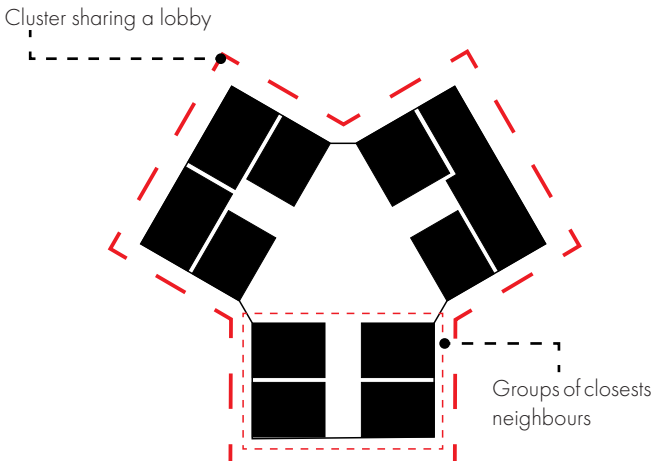


Figure 54. Apartment clusters

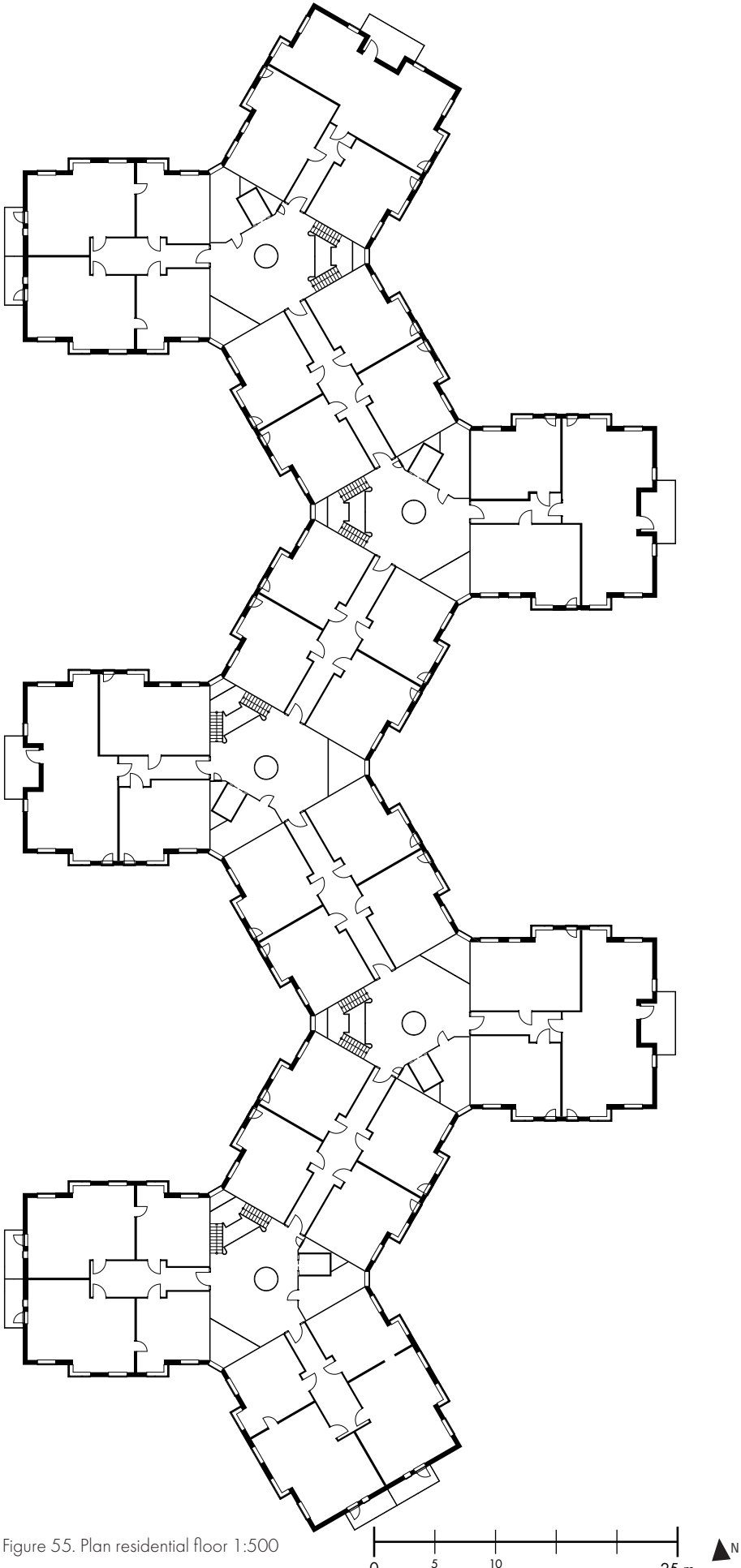
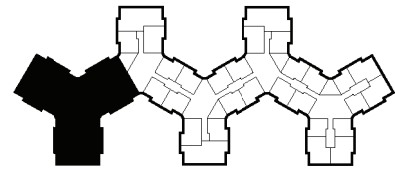


Figure 55. Plan residential floor 1:500

MOVING THROUGH THE COMPLEX - LOBBYS



- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Staff Storage | 14 m ² |
| 2. Garbage chute | |
| 3. Apartment A | 42 m ² |
| 4. Apartment B | 52 m ² |
| 5. Apartment C | 87 m ² |
| 6. Apartment D | 33 m ² |
| 7. Apartment E | 55 m ² |

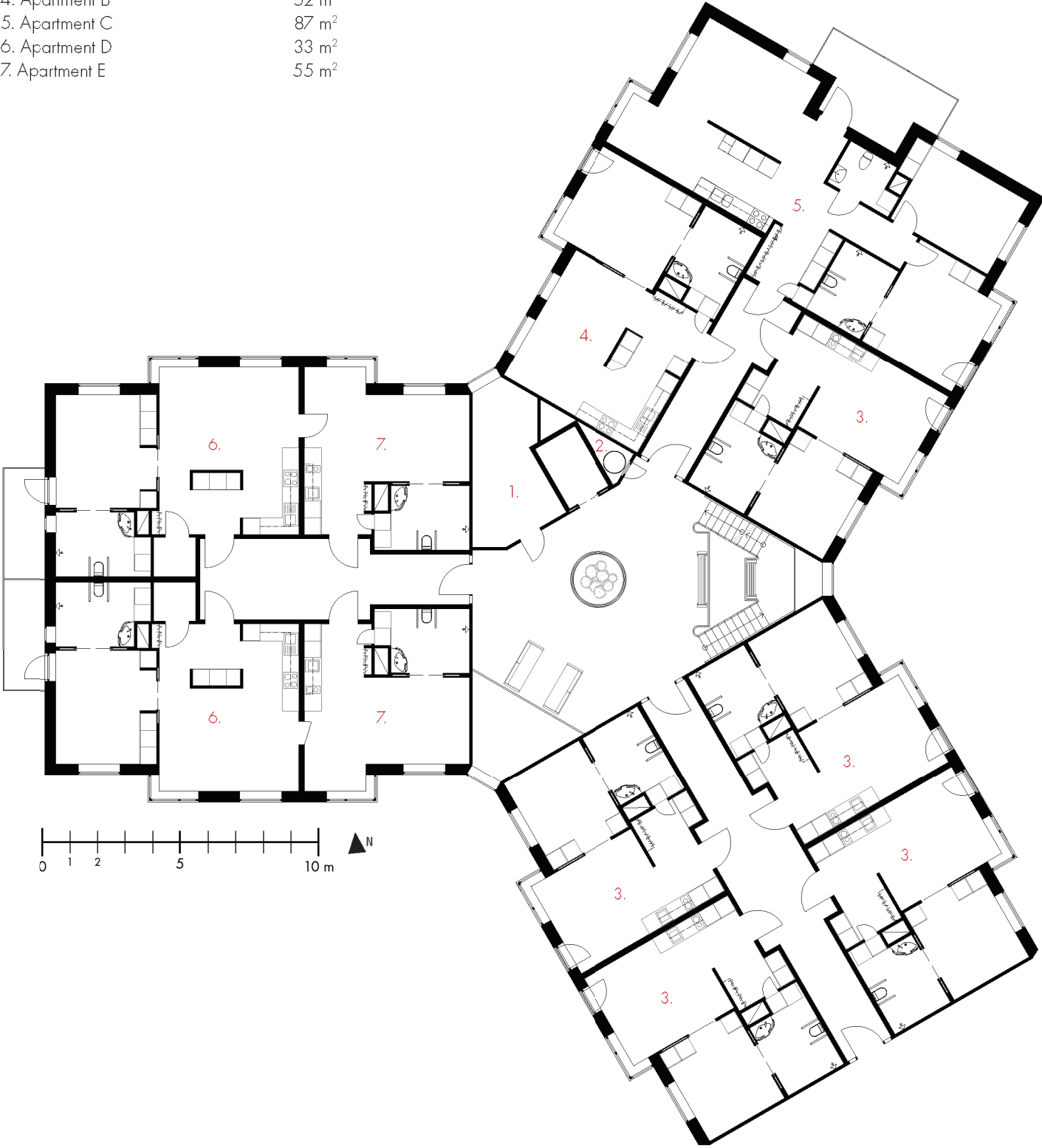


Figure 56. Plan lobby 1:200

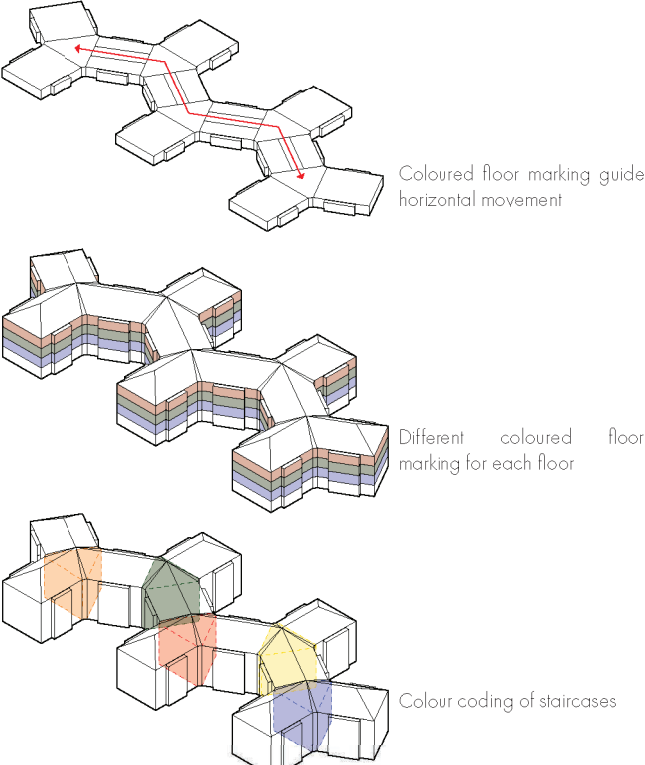


Figure 57. Colour coding system

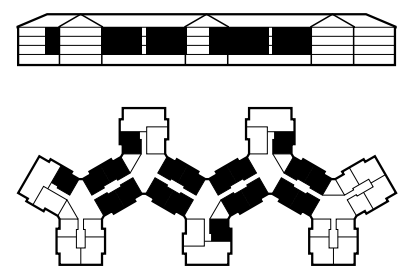
Five lobbies connect the building vertically ensuring easy and neutral access to each apartment, each of them colour coded to help staff and residents orient themselves in the complex. Horizontally a coloured path on the floor helps guide residents and staff, showing in which direction the corridor continues and which doors only lead to apartments.

The staircases offer seating options and great natural lighting to encourage daily exercise for the residents. The landing offers a semi secluded seating option facing the outdoors, both giving resting options half way through the trip and making the stair a destination in itself.

Each lobby holds generous storage for staff where consumables and various aids don't need to be used constantly in the residents' apartments. The size of the space and the fact that it has a window also means it also function as a small office space for staff to do quick admin. A solution where a one or two storages per floor are used for admin and the rest kept as storages would provide with easy access to admin space close to the apartments. In this proposal all spaces are kept as storage and spaces for daily admin is placed on the ground floor staff spaces.

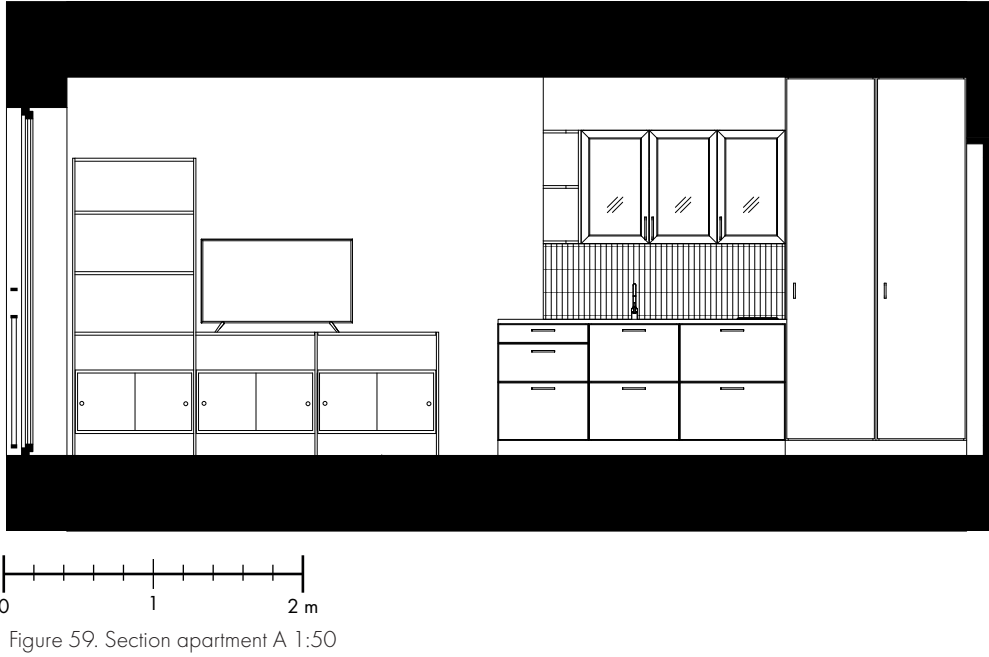
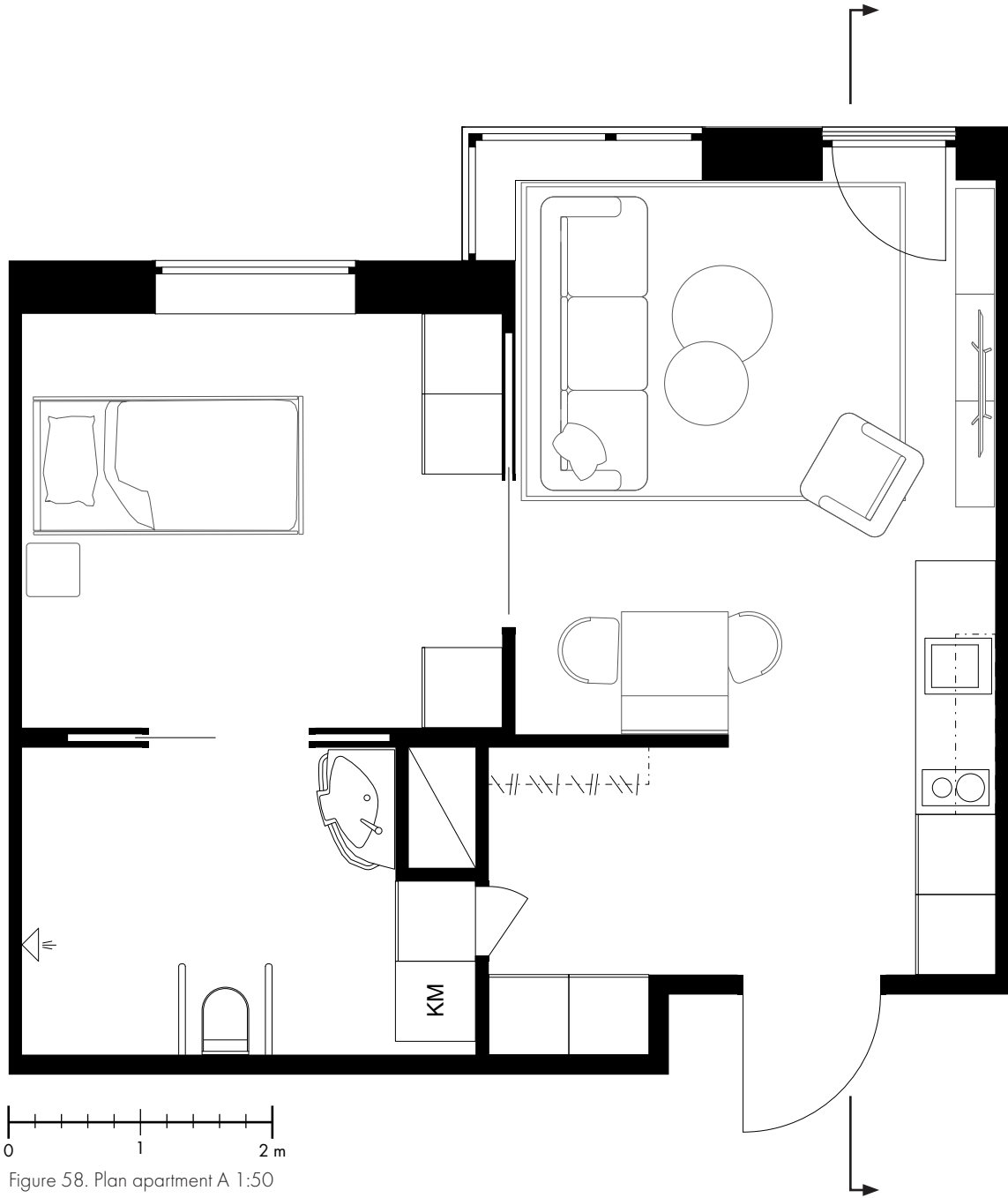


APARTMENT DESIGN - A



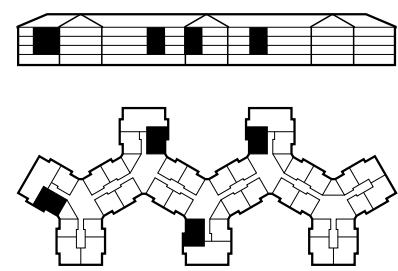
One bedroom
42 m²
60 +10 apartments

Apartment A is the most frequent apartment throughout the complex. With 42 m² it has a small kitchenette, a living space, a bedroom and a large bathroom. The large hallway has space for a wheelchair and walker and one of the closets connects to both hallway and bathroom, which allows for staff to easily restock and access consumables from both rooms. A french balcony opens the apartment towards the outside, and a corner window gives generous lighting in the living space.





APARTMENT DESIGN - B



 One bedroom
52 m²
12 apartments

Apartment B offer, with 52 m², a more complete kitchen and living room, and has the space for a two person bed in the bedroom. The bedroom may also be furnished with two separate beds, where one is accessible for care giving. This allows spouses to keep sharing a bedroom, even if the need for care for one of the spouses increases. The full size kitchen offers more independence, while the bathrooms allow for extensive care to be given if that need would increase.

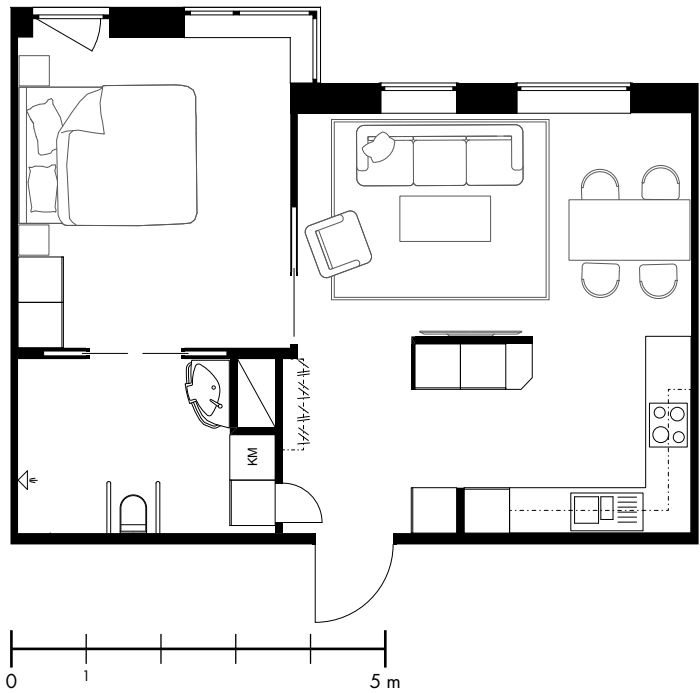
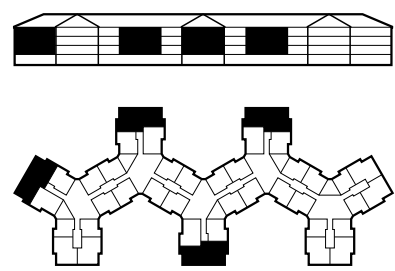


Figure 60. Plan apartment B 1:100

APARTMENT DESIGN - C



 Two bedroom
87 m²
12 apartments

Apartment C is the largest of the apartments, with two bedrooms, a full sized kitchen and two bathrooms. One bedroom and bathroom is suitable for a high care need, while the other bathroom fulfills the standard accessible norms. This makes the apartment suitable for a couple where one of the spouses has a high need for care and the other doesn't, as care can be provided without affecting the more independent spouse.

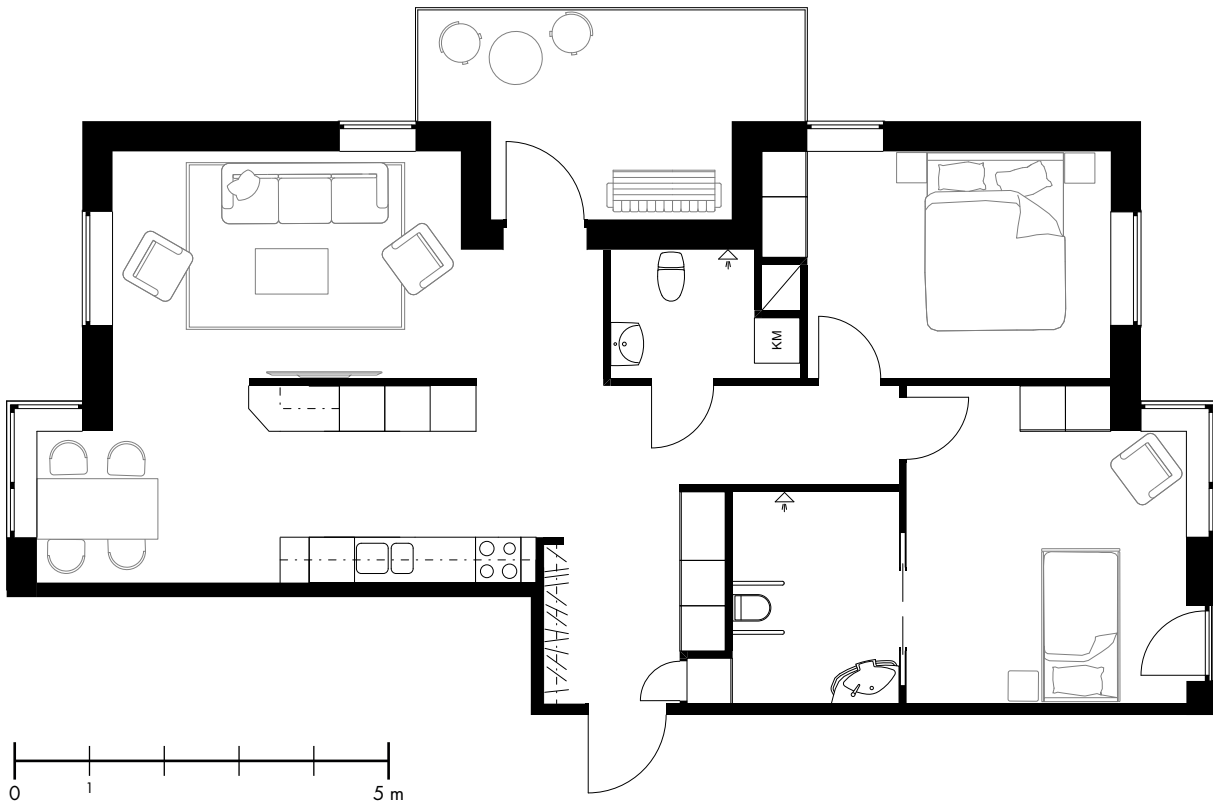
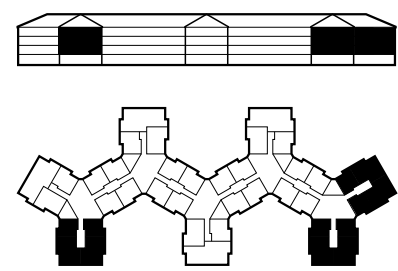


Figure 61. Plan apartment C 1:100

APARTMENT DESIGN - D & E



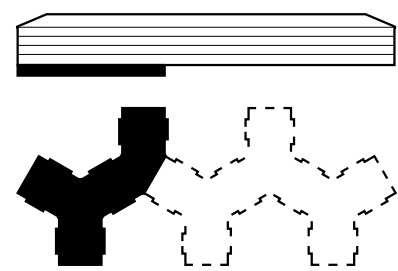
- 

One bedroom
55 m²
9 Apartments
- 

Studio
33 m²
9 Apartments

Apartments D and E can function either independently or in combination. Apartment D is 55 m² and holds a separate bedroom large enough for two, a bathroom suitable for care and a full sized kitchen and living space. Apartment E is the smallest apartment with 33 m². The studio apartment is similar to apartments common in assisted living facilities today. A door connects the two apartments, allowing them to be combined to serve as one large apartment of 88 m², suitable if one of the spouses have a high need for care and the other spouse wants to be able to live completely independent of staff. The bedrooms size allows for furnishing with two beds, where one is suitable for care. This combination allows for adaptations to be made as the need for care changes. A couple first sharing a bedroom could move to a two bedroom solution if the need for care increases, or someone could live independently in the studio who is satisfied living in a smaller sized apartment.

BASEMENT



1. Bike storage
2. Tech room
3. Staff storage
4. Changing room
5. Changing room flex
6. Apartment storage
7. AVAC Central

A basement is placed under the north part of the complex, holding tech rooms, storage and staff changing rooms. A bike entrance with a ramp leads down to the bike storage, where staff who want to keep their bikes inside can leave them.

The two larger changing rooms hold 72 and 60 lockers, and the smaller flexible one holds 24. This configuration allows for flexibility in how changing rooms are distributed depending on the demography of the staff.

In the basement you also find storage units for each of the apartments, as well as plenty of storage for staff.

In the south corner a AVAC central is placed, collecting the trash thrown out in the garbage chutes throughout the complex. A chute leads the trash out to the loading dock where it is collected by a truck when needed. The system allows staff and residents to quickly and discreetly throw away trash, reducing odours and work load for the staff.

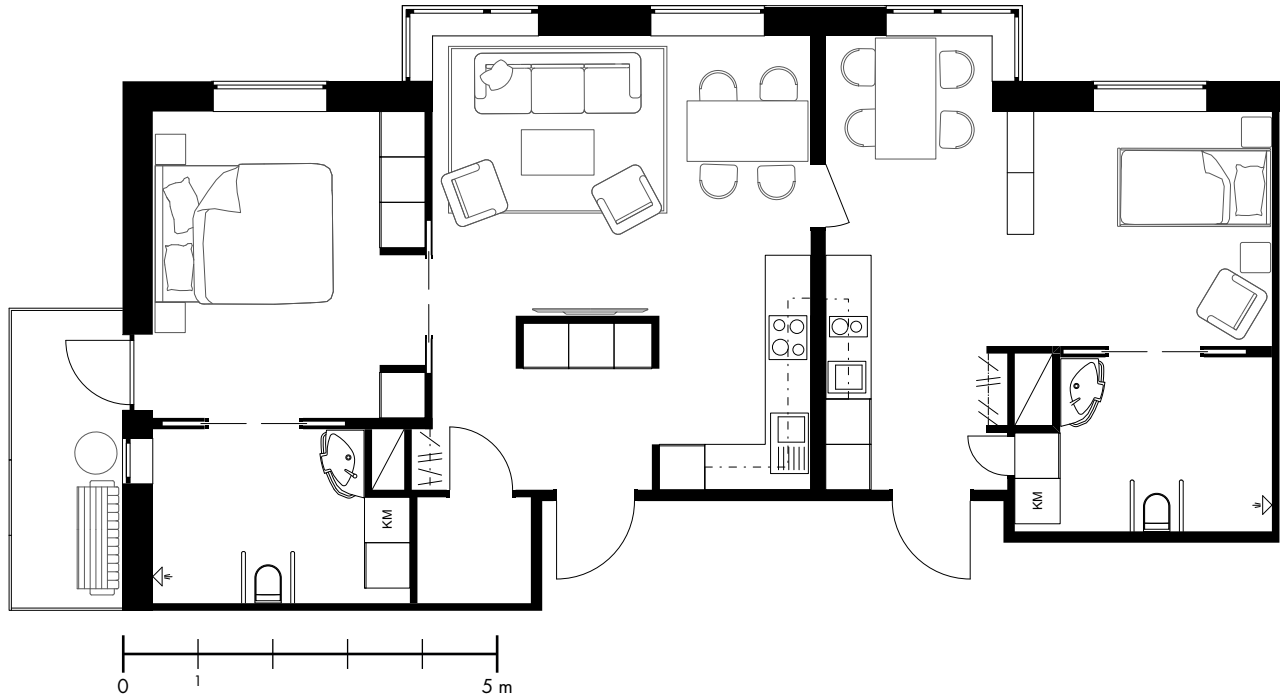


Figure 62. Plan apartment D & E 1:100

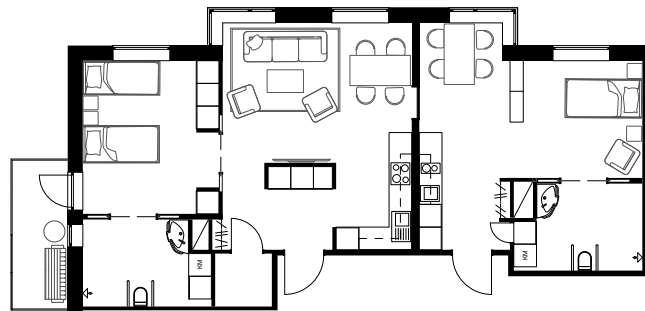


Figure 63. Alternative plan apartment D & E 1:200

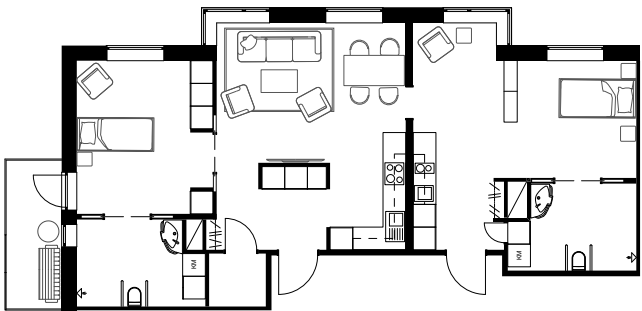


Figure 64. Alternative plan apartment D & E 1:200



1:400 0 10 20 m N
Figure 65. Plan basement 1:400

FACADES

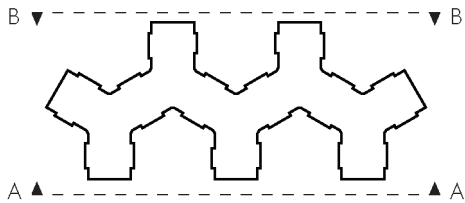
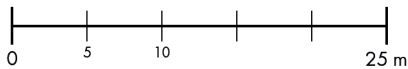


Figure 66. Elevation A 1:500



Figure 67. Elevation B 1:500



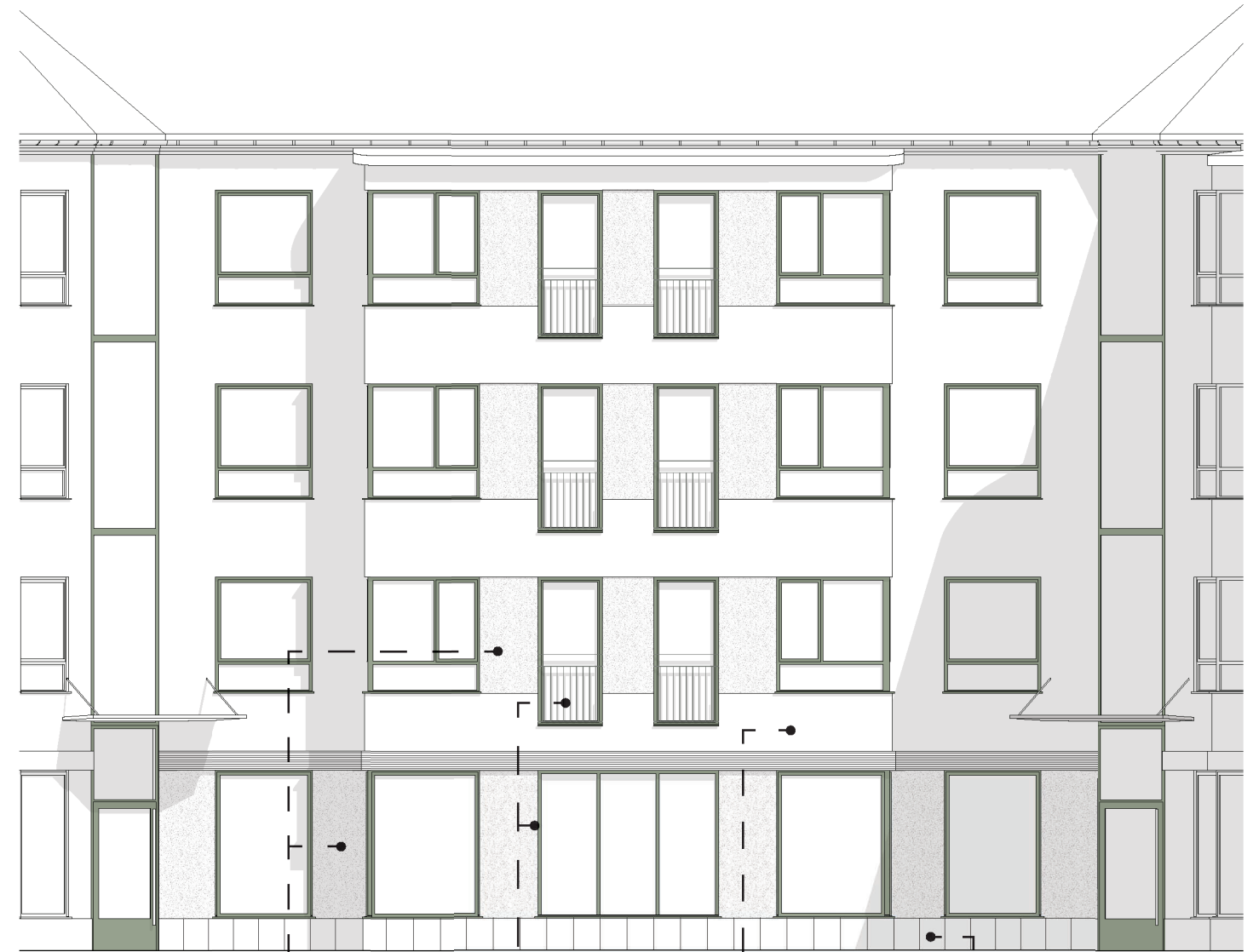
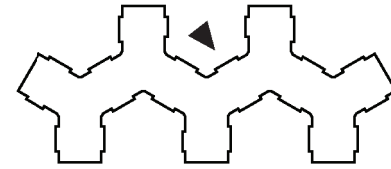
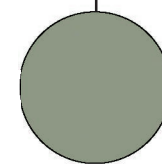


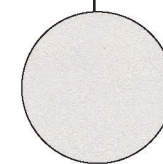
Figure 68. Elevation segment 1:100



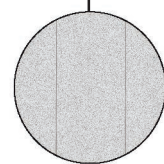
Rough plaster finish



Matte green metal



Fine plaster finish



Granite plate

SECTIONS

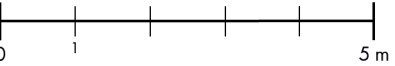
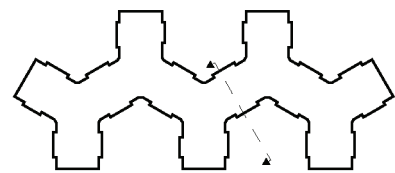
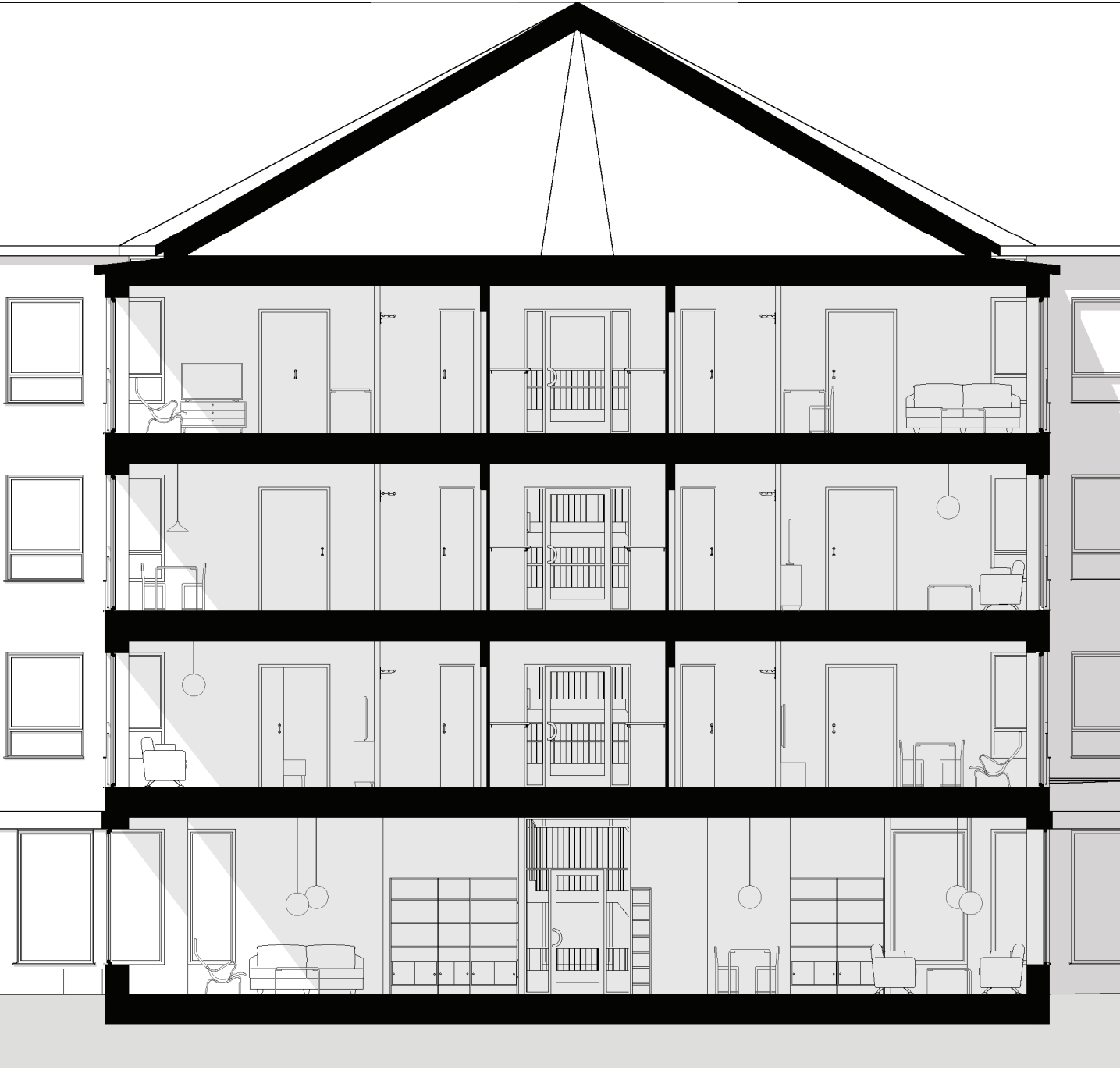


Figure 69. Section AA 1:100



SECTIONS

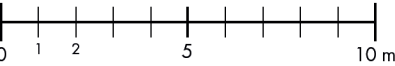
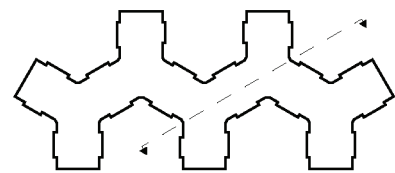
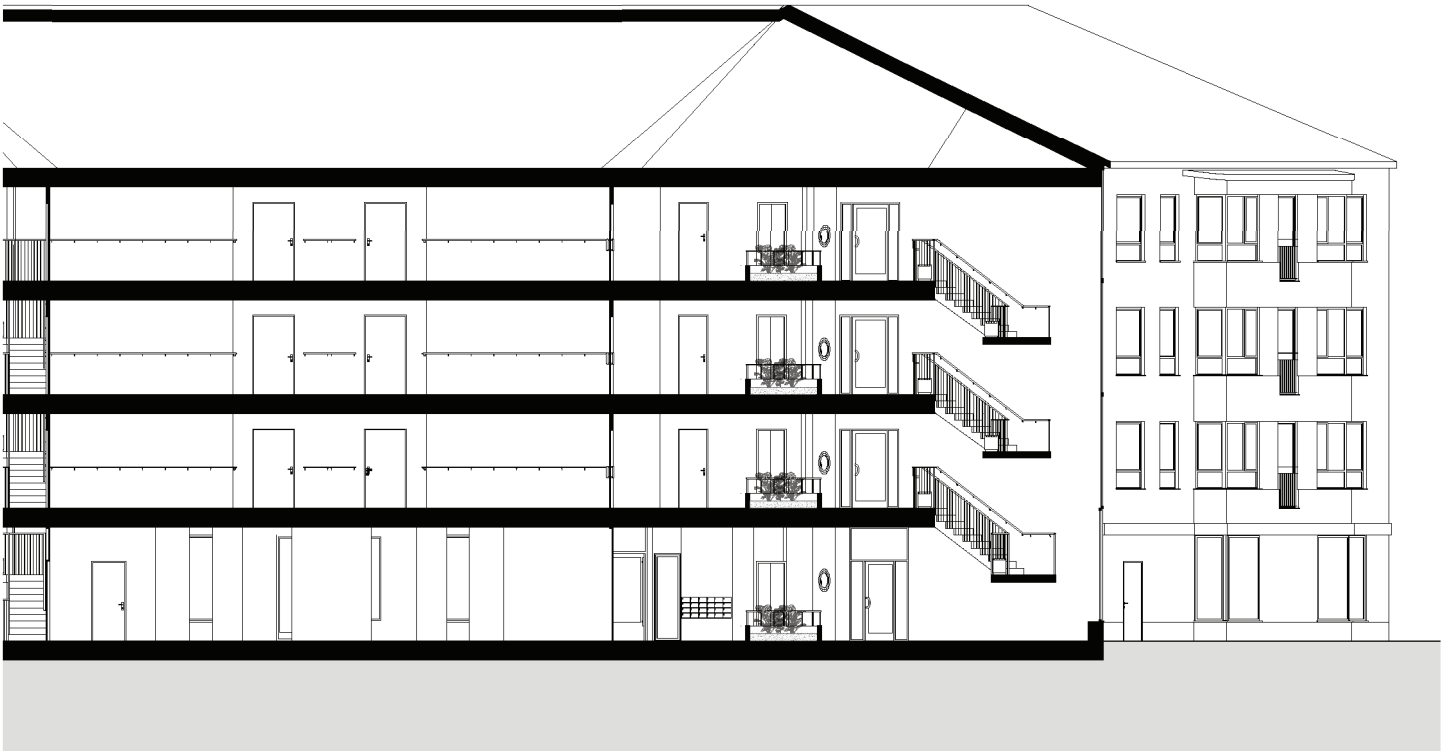


Figure 70. Section BB 1:200



5.

EPILOGUE

RESULTS

The shifting demography and aging of our society is an upcoming challenge, and we as a society need to rethink how we organize care and housing for seniors. Our modern society has allowed us to become older and healthier than we’ve ever been, and how we offer housing for seniors should reflect that. Housing options should be built that not only allow for, but encourage seniors to be active and independent for as long as possible. Architects today have to question, explore and develop new housing solutions compared to what is offered today, responding to the heterogenous group that seniors are. The possibility and responsibility for architects to enable seniors to remain active for as long as possible is enormous, as an ill-placed threshold (figuratively or literally) can make all the difference.

This thesis started with a frustration with how housing for seniors was organized today, its down sides and the consequences for seniors. While “aging in place” is a preferable solution for many, as most people prefer to live in their home for as long as possible, the solution is not for everyone. Some homes are simply too restricting for people with disabilities. The goal with this project was to explore an alternative, an in-between, where seniors who feel held back by the architecture around them can find space and design that supports them where they need it, and have independence where they want it.

While costs of the project have not been explored, it will always be a main factor in a building’s realisation. The redistribution of space from shared social venues in “units” back into the apartments means that residents in apartment A, the most common one, still have access to an equivalent area compared to the standard assisted living facility. This means the increase of apartment size is no direct cause for rent increase. Comparing the size and space efficiency of the complex as a whole to an assisted living facilities of today is like comparing apples and pears, as the suggested design radically changes how assisted living would operate on a daily basis. Some simple comparisons could however help determine the feasibility of the project. For this two projects have been selected, Trädgården in Falkenberg, discussed previously in this thesis, and Skra Bro, a newly designed project to be built in Gothenburg. For schematic plans of the projects see appendix AA.

What exact areas to examine and how to compare them are big questions to be discussed, and exactly how such a comparison should be done is beyond the scope of this thesis. For this discussion a rough area calculation on a floor plan was conducted on the reference projects, and communication spaces within staff areas were excluded. Areas included are spaces within the units and spaces connecting units with the stairwell and elevator. These areas are similar to what the residential floors of the suggested design holds.

Rough calculation shows that on a story level, the communication space between the suggested design and the two projects is comparable. Skra Bro has 354 m² of communication space per floor with 20 apartments, equaling 17,7 m² per apartment.

Trädgården having the traditional straight unit layout has 150 m² of communication space in a unit of 10 apartments, equaling 15 m² per apartment. The proposed design each residential floor (floor 1-3) have 600 m² of communication space while holding 40 apartments, equaling 15 m² per apartment. The suggested design has not, however, done exact sizing and dimensioning of ducts, wall thicknesses and technical rooms, and communication spaces could therefore be expected to increase marginally with a continuation of the project. It is still well within the same range as the compared projects, strengthening the feasibility of the design.

The walking distance from apartment to elevator has been an important aspect throughout this project, as a long distance both becomes an obstacle residents from going outside, and forces residents and visitors to pass through public spaces when going to and from the apartments. In the proposed design the average walking distance from apartment front door and elevator is 13,6 meters, with a shortest of 9,1 and a longest of 19,1 meters. This is substantially shorter than in Skra Bro where the average walking distance is 35,2 meters, with a shortest of 18,8 and a longest of 49,2. It is also shorter than in Trädgården where the average distance is 25,7 meters, with a shortest distance of 7,8 meters and a longest of 40,2 meters. The proposed design also has the quality that residents and visitors don’t pass through a public/social space on the way to and from the apartment, but instead have neutral access all the way to the front door.

While the feasibility of the project and the financial aspect is always an important aspect, this project’s focus is the spatial organization of housing for seniors, and how this can be done to promote healthy aging and activity. Costs and numbers will always be a key argument when planning a building. The health benefits and improvement of life quality for seniors moving to a home that aids and supports them should however not be overlooked. The increase in quality of life cannot be valued in an economic sense, but a healthier and more active lifestyle does have the potential to reduce costs for care and support to a great extent. The flexibility of staffing in the complex should also be considered when discussing costs. With the removal of units and a more flexible organization of staff, less work time would be needed for physical oversight, and the staff could instead focus their help and support to where it is needed. This creates flexibility for an employer, where the need for staff can be adapted to meet the changing need for care of the residents. The spatial reorganization explored in this project would allow and require a shift in the working methods of the staff. While safety and supervision can be increased using welfare technology, physical care cannot be replaced. Here working methods similar to home care could be applied, with visits at specific times and staff moving freely through the complex to respond when a need arises. The exact organization of this is not for this thesis to map out, and would have to be examined in detail for an efficient working environment for the staff and safe living environment for the residents.

SUMMARY

The proposed design shows how a spatial reorganization of the Swedish model for assisted living facilities can be reorganized to offer more independent homes for seniors in need of various levels of care and service. With slightly larger apartments, neutral communication to and from the apartments, a neutral social space within the apartments, and with venues on the ground floor encouraging activity the proposed design offers what could be seen as something between assisted living facilities and extra care housing. A place where independence is the norm and support is added when it’s needed. With generously sized bathrooms, a direct connection from bathroom to bedroom, and generously sized storage, the apartments still hold a high capacity to support care workers in their work, meaning that residents won’t have to move to a new place if their need for care would increase even further. The complex also has great possibility for staff to move effectively between apartments, allowing them to quickly respond to calls and predicaments that might require their attention. This also allows residents to move through the complex in numerous routes, giving them options for daily exercise that is unparalleled in housing options today. The centralization of public venues to the ground floor allows it to also function as a hub for seniors from outside the complex, becoming a center for health, activity and social connections for seniors living both in and outside the complex. This increases the potential to utilize the spaces, making effective usage of the building and its many functions.

DISCUSSION

This project has to me become an inspiration of how architecture can enable activity and offer health promoting settings for people to live in. Throughout the research process more questions have probably been raised than have been answered. Ideas and presumptions have been questioned and reworked, and facts I never had considered had to be incorporated in the design. The study has also made me aware of how guidelines and regulations, while good for ensuring appropriate housing environments, can also inhibit innovation and a diverse housing stock. It has also made me aware of the importance of asking the question “WHY?” when faced with established solutions. Only by understanding and exploring different solutions to the problem can new ideas be developed and explored.

The design proposed should be seen as a concept to be further designed, not as a finished building, as many questions remain to be explored and answered. Technical solutions and load-bearing systems have not been treated in detail, and sizes of shafts, slabs and wall thickness should be seen as schematic. One large difficulty has been narrowing down the project. As the floors cover approximately 12 000 m2, designing all spaces in detail has been impossible. While the detailing of all spaces are of great importance, as small decisions have a big impact on the life of residents and staff, many spaces outside of the apartments have been treated with broad brush strokes. To further improve the project and the developed concept, further detailing should be explored, both spatially, technically and in materiality.

The functions placed in the ground floor have been chosen to reflect what today is offered in many assisted living facilities or what might help encourage seniors be active. These functions could however be altered to fit in with a more specified brief. This highlights one of the advantages of the design, as the centralization and placement of shared spaces allows for flexibility and multi-purpose usage. Should needs change and functions are no longer needed, the spaces could be repurposed easily and used for more apartments or other public functions, allowing the complex to be well utilized throughout its life span and serve its users as well as possible.

While the site has influenced to a great extent, the overall spatial organization of the complex, and the core design ideas can easily be transferred to other sites as well. One of the strengths of the project is the residential scale of the complex, with the shape breaking down the volume and allowing it to fit in well with residential contexts. As the need for suitable housing for seniors will be present all over Sweden, the proposed design can be applied and developed in similar areas as the proposed site in municipalities throughout Sweden.

Overall, one of the biggest challenges the proposed design has is whether or not the support offered within the more independent apartments is sufficient for seniors with a high need for care. While the residents envisioned are able to move in earlier than they are in ordinary assisted living facilities today, and are therefore healthier, the intention to allow for ageing in place still results in the question if the support offered is sufficient. While staff can move around effectively and respond when a need occurs, the safety that the units of ordinary assisted living facilities offer with having staff right outside one’s door is still lost. Solutions with apartments with higher staff proximity or clear locations for staff presence near the elevators were considered early in the design process, but was considered beyond the scope of this thesis. Exploration of the balance of residential independence, staff presence and the spatial organization of such is a topic for further research. Many aspects of this topic remain to be explored, and have had to be overlooked in order to make this project manageable. What I’ve tried to do is to broaden the view of assisted living facilities of today, and show that an alternative is possible. And with challenge how we build assisted living facilities today. Only by questioning and challenging what we are doing today can we find out how we should do it tomorrow.

FINAL THOUGHTS

This project, like most design projects, has been a mixture of ecstatic design and creative blocks. What brought me through it all however has been my passion for the subject. Allowing myself to dive into questions about housing, care environments and spatial organization, and talking to people who are experts within this field, has been a blessing without comparisons and has only made me even more curious in these questions. The realization that the 5 months spent on this project is not nearly as long as one first thinks, and definitely not enough to fully investigate a new housing format in detail, has been a hard learned truth and has forced me to focus on what I considered important for the project. Several thoughts, ideas and studies had to be abandoned, much remains to be explored and discovered. My hope for this thesis is that it can serve as a kindle in the discussion of how we build the assisted living facilities of tomorrow, a place where I myself would want to want to move to, a home that allows me to thrive and helps me remain healthy for as long as possible. A place to call home.

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IMAGE SOURCES

All images are the author’s own unless stated otherwise

Figure 12. - Axla (2026) - Online Image - Retreived from <https://www.axlacare.se/clean.html>

Figure 13. - Axla (2026) - Online Image - <https://www.axlacare.se/level.html>

Figure 14. - Axla (2026) - Online Image - <https://www.axlacare.se/sabo-koncept.html>

APPENDIX

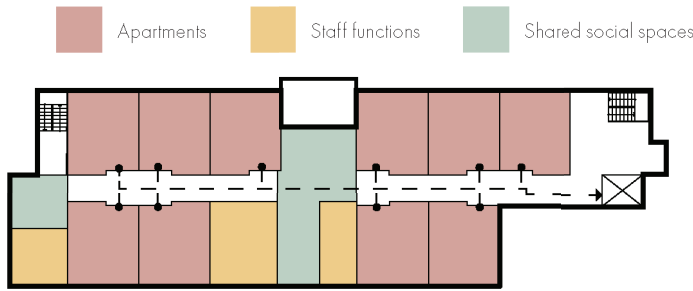
APPENDIX - A

TRÄDGÅRDEN

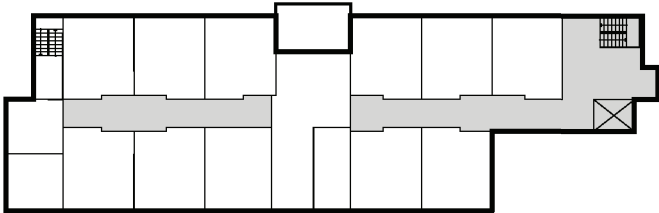
Trädgården in Falkenberg follows the common double-loaded corridor with shared social and staff spaces placed in the middle of the unit. Some shared spaces are also placed on the opposite end from the elevator along with an emergency fire escape. A generous balcony connects to the social spaces. This solution is effective and allows for short walking distances from the apartments to the shared social spaces. This results in an average walking distance from apartment to elevator of 25,7 meters. It should be noted that the distance varies greatly, as the shortest distance is 7,9 meters and the longest is 40,1 for the apartments placed furthest away. The communication space total 150 m2 which results in 15 m2 per apartment.

- Average walking distance to elevator: 25,7 m
- Apartments per floor: 10
- Communication area per floor: 150 m²
- Communication per apartment: 15 m²

*Plans presented are schematic simplifications of plans provided by the courtesy of Trädgården



Walking distances from apartments to elevators - Trädgården



Communication area - Trädgården

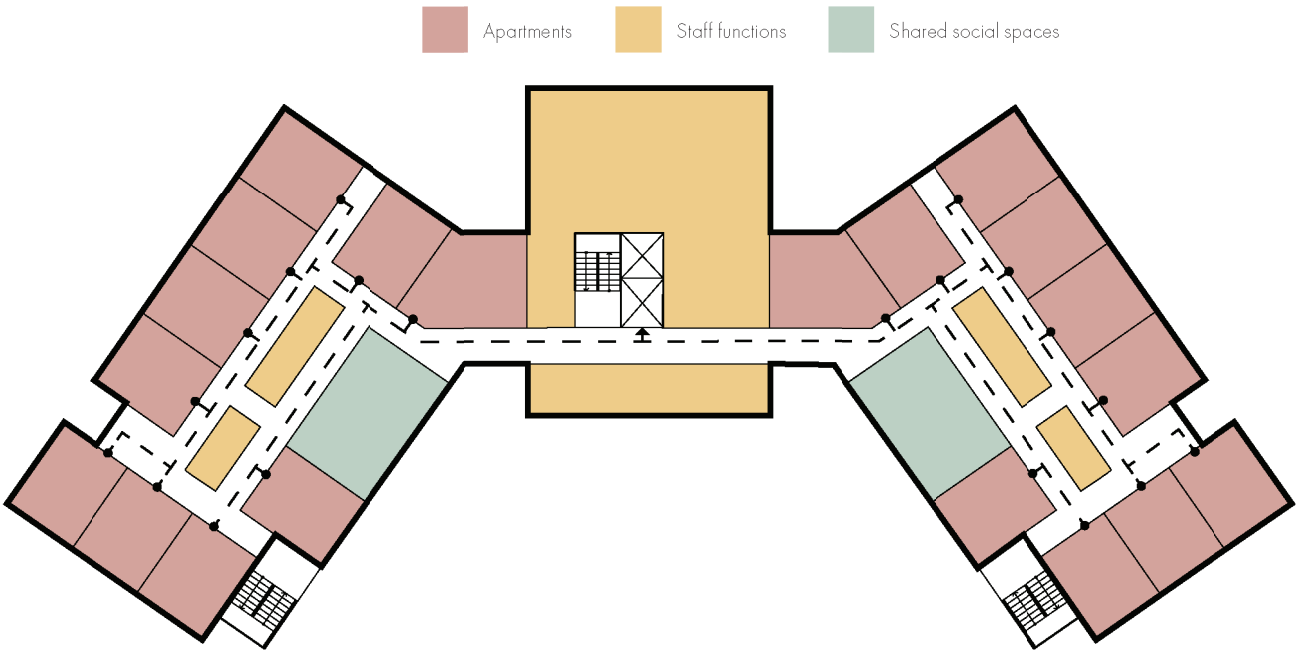
APPENDIX - A

SKRA BRO

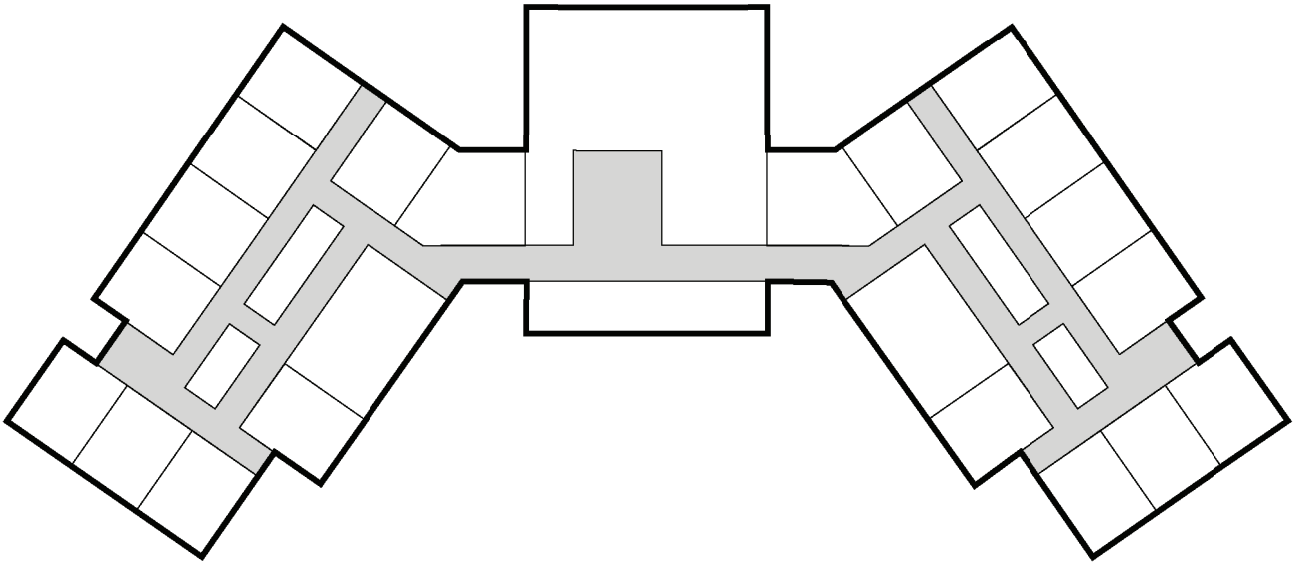
Skra Bro in Gothenburg has an innovative unit organization, with the apartments accessed through a corridor circling staff spaces. This allows for residents to walk without reaching a dead end, and allows the units to be segmented if there's a need to limit the spread of disease. Social spaces are placed at the corner when entering the unit. As it is under construction the results of this design have yet to be evaluated. The average walking distance from apartment to elevator is 35,1 meters, with a shortest of 18,1 and a longest of 49,2 meters. The communication spaces make up 354 m2 per floor, resulting in 17,7 m2 per apartment.

- Average walking distance to elevator: 35,1 m
- Apartments per floor: 20
- Communication area per floor: 354 m²
- Communication per apartment: 17,7 m²

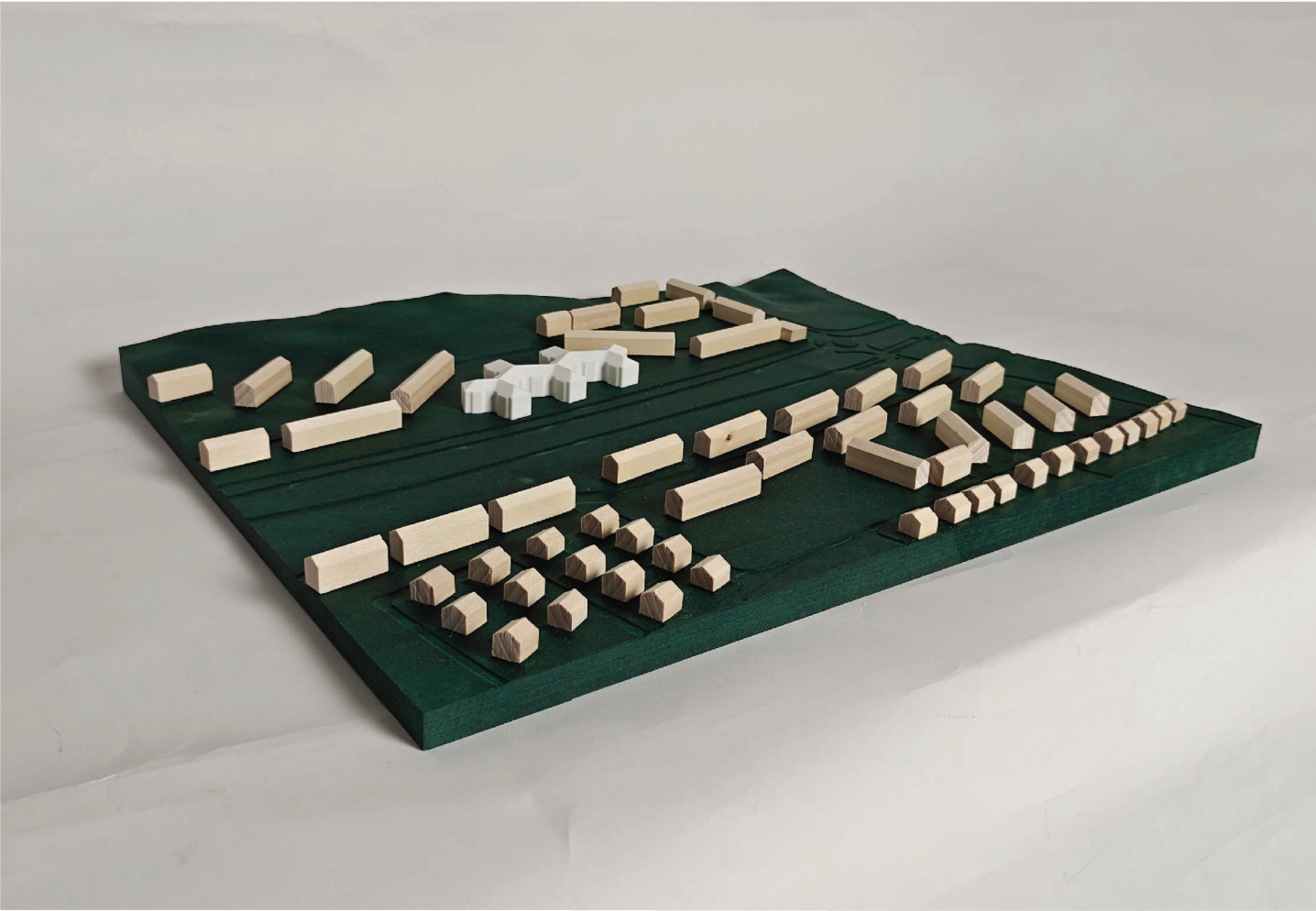
*Plans presented are schematic simplifications of plans provided by the courtesy of Liljewall Architects



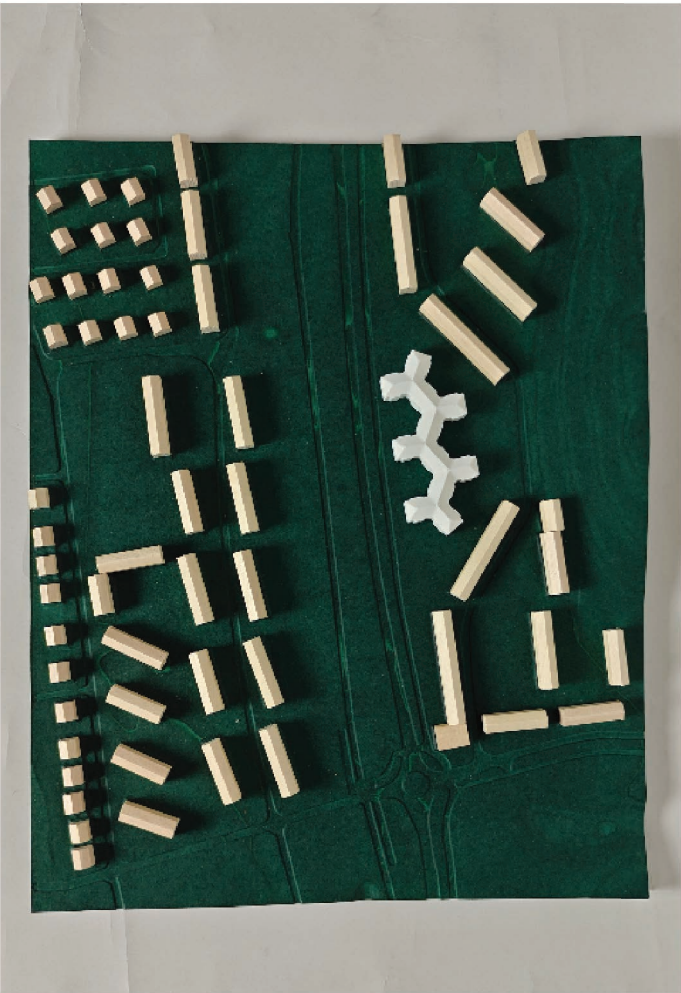
Walking distances from apartments to elevators - Skra Bro



Communication area - Skra Bro



Site model - 1:1000



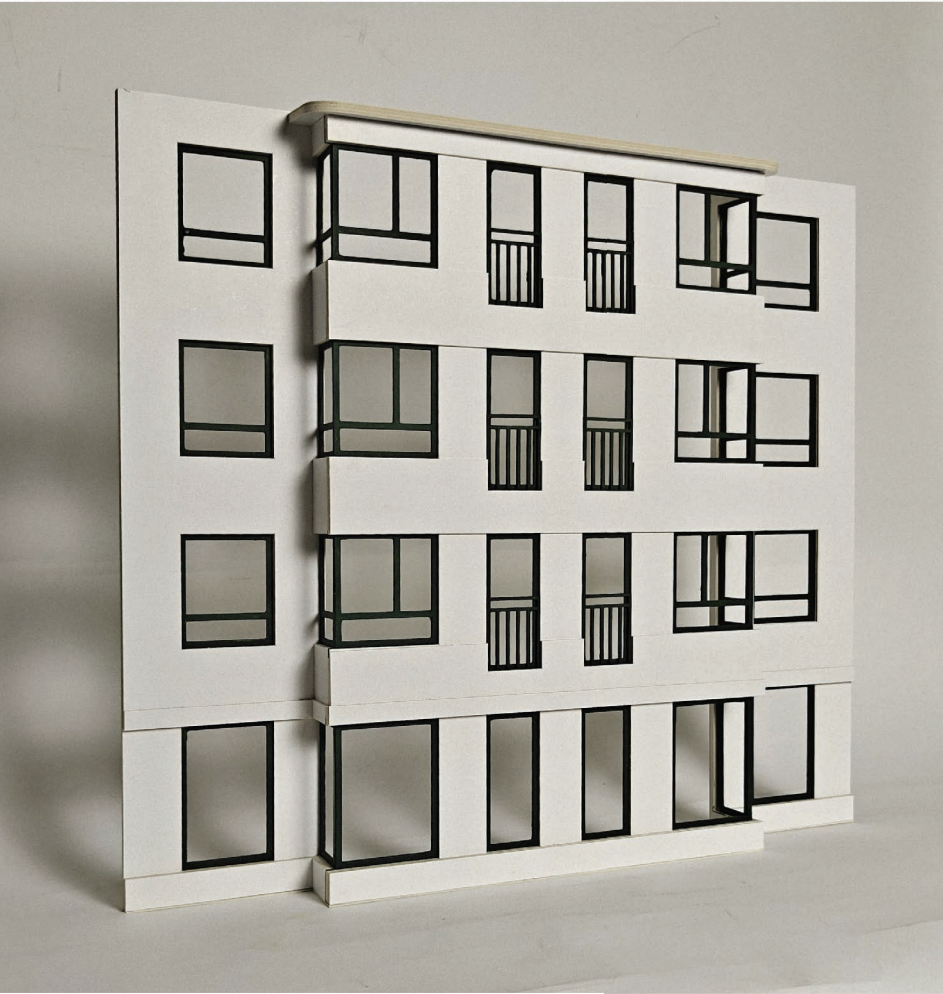
Site model - 1:1000

Site model
Scale: 1:1000

Base - CNC:ed MDF board
Context - Hand cut pine
Building - 3D-printed PLA plastic

Facade segment model
Scale: 1:25

CNC paper cut 2 mm paper



Facade segment model - 1:25



Facade segment model - 1:25