

# **Vanopolis:**

*Between Edifice, Infrastructure, & Pseudo-topographies*

By:

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in

Azrieli School of Architecture & Urbanism

Carleton University  
Ottawa, Ontario

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Figure 01 (Packaged Artifice)

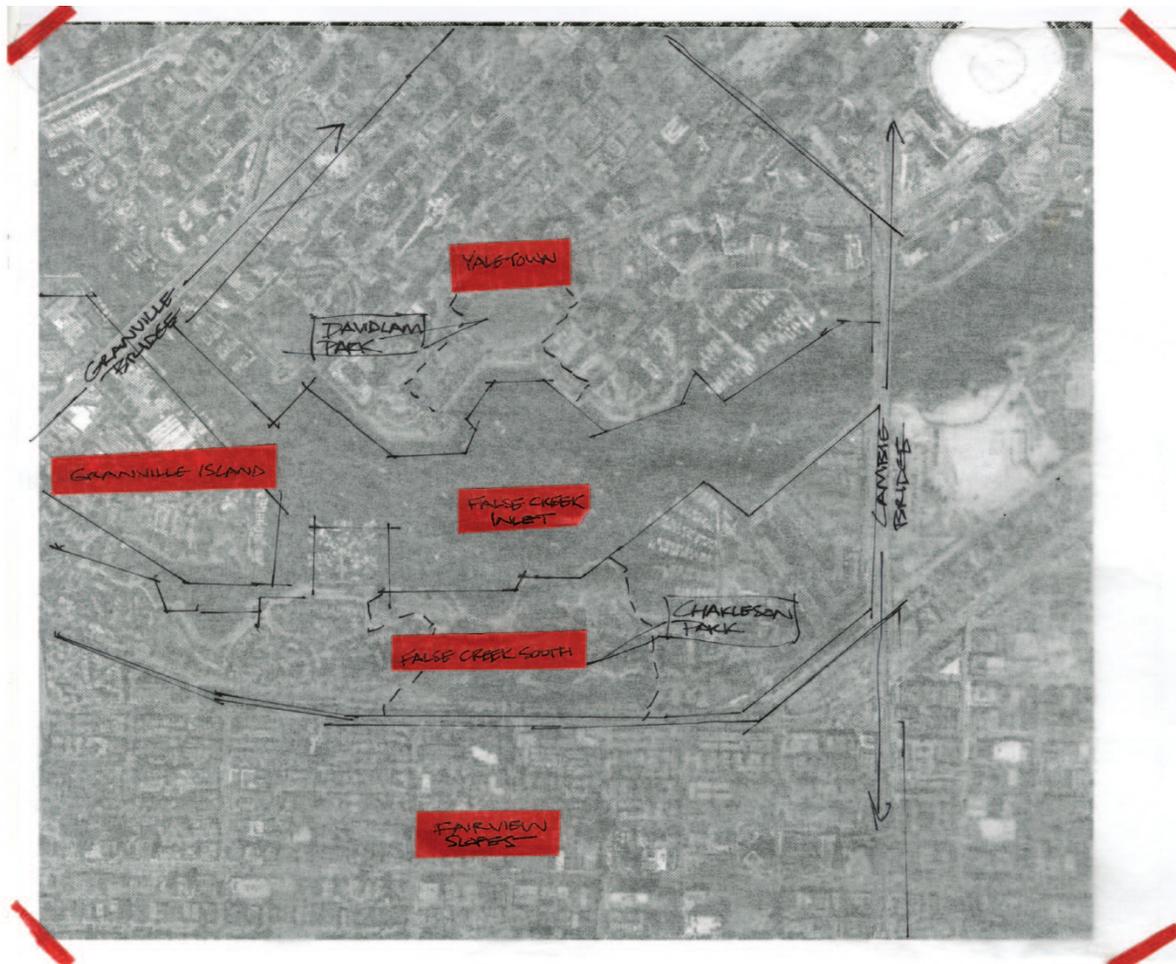


Figure 02 (Neighbourhoods of the False Creek Inlet)

## **Abstract**

*Vanopolis* proposes a new bridge across Vancouver's False Creek, connecting Yaletown to the north with Fairview Slopes to the south. Several viaducts already span the False Creek Inlet, namely the Burrard, Granville, and Cambie Bridges (Fig. 02). The project builds on the language of these crossings to propose a dedicated bridge for pedestrian and cyclists, supported by housing.

False Creek South is located on the southern edge of False Creek, bracketed by the Cambie and Granville Bridges. Built in the 1970's to replace an ageing industrial district, 80% of the land on which the neighbourhood sits is owned by the City of Vancouver. With leases set to expire in the next decade, concerned parties are keen to know what lies ahead — especially as the area is under pressure to intensify. The proposed pedestrian bridge across False Creek represents a bold approach to accommodating additional density and blurs the boundaries between architecture, infrastructure, and urban design. Using the bridge to support housing and/or the housing to support the bridge, will enable False Creek South — through and over which this new connection passes — to transform from a low-density enclave to a thriving, connected community. It also challenges the way we view and inhabit our cities — both on land and water.

## **Acknowledgements**

*To my advisor, Prof. Benjamin Gianni for his thoughtful criticism, guidance, and insight through the duration of this thesis project and the years prior — Thank you Ben.*

*To my many friends and family for their continued love and encouragement throughout my time in academia — Thank you.*

*And, to my art school instructors who believed I would “never make it” through architecture school — Thank you.*

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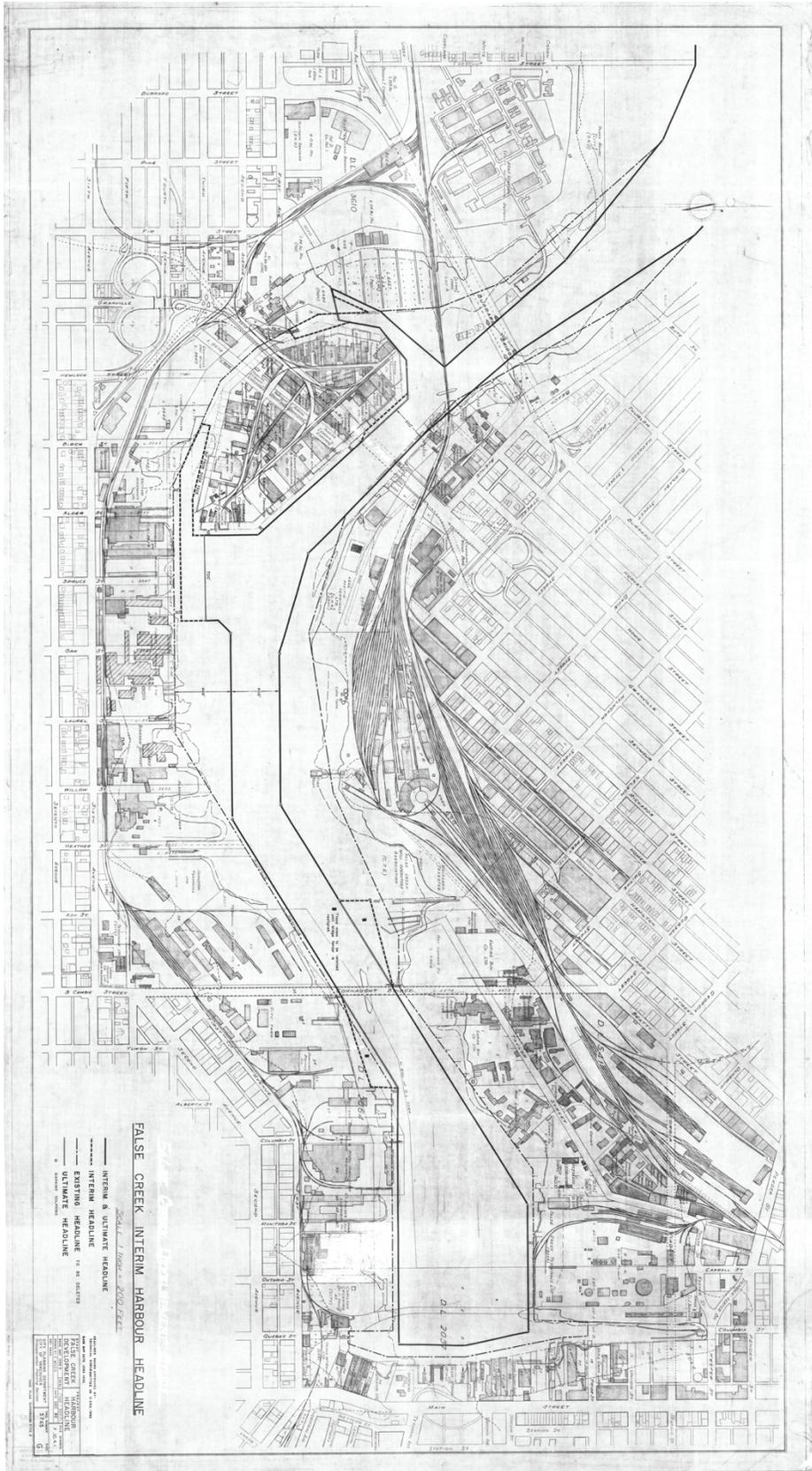


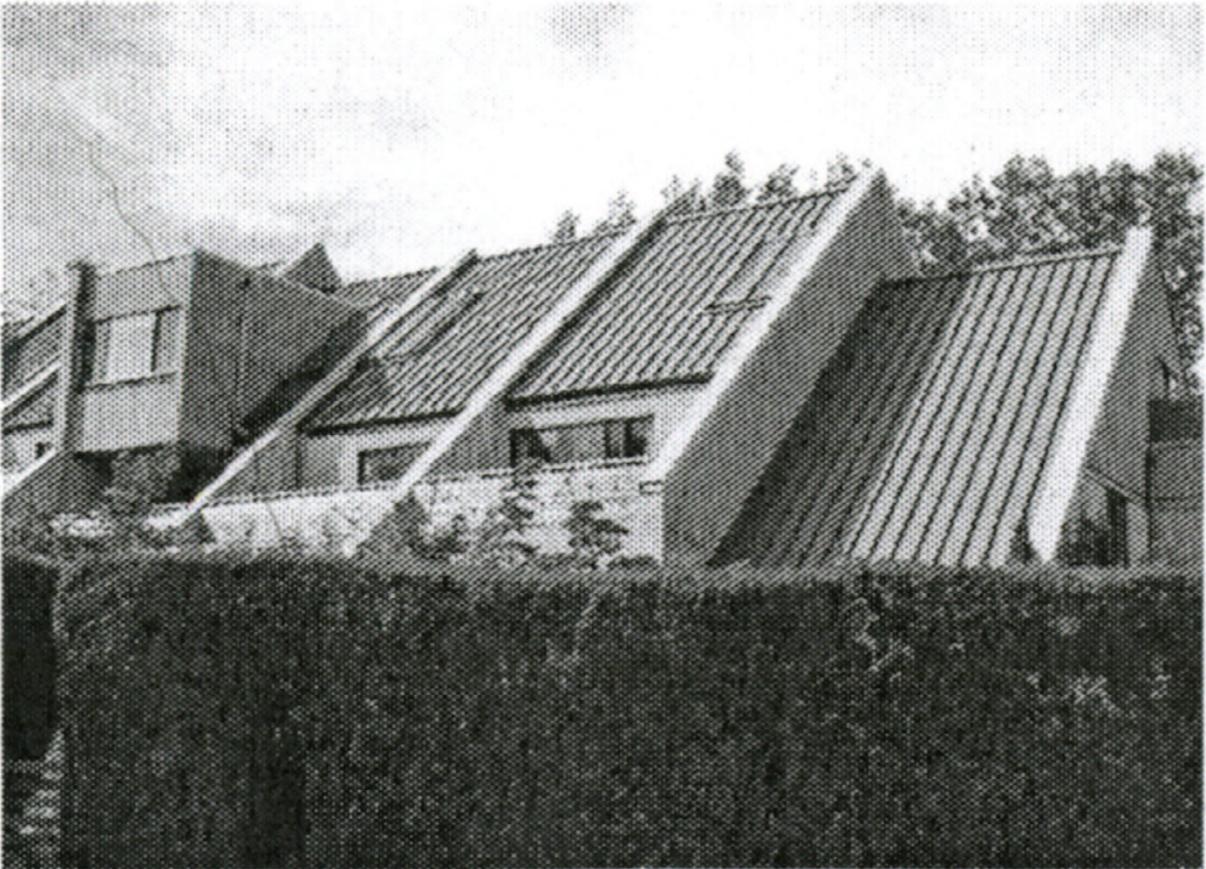
Figure 03 (False Creek Interim Harbour Headline)



**Figure 04** (False Creek Inlet — Logging Industry)

## **Context**

Until the 1970's, the flats encircling the False Creek Inlet were primarily industrial (Fig. 03). As industry departed, the City of Vancouver acquired and began redeveloping the land. False Creek South, located below Fairview Slopes between the Granville and Cambie Bridges, was one of earliest the areas to redevelop. Under auspices of the City, False Creek South was leased to a number of private builders and housing co-operatives — reserving a portion of the land for social housing. Housing in the area was divided evenly between market rental (some of which has converted to strata condos), co-op, and social housing. Reflecting the market preferences of the time, the area was built out at a relatively low density by current standards (approx. 90 PPH).



**Figure 05** (False Creek South— Housing Typology)

In the eyes of city planners and other interested parties, False Creek South occupies an extremely valuable piece of waterfront property at “less than desirable” densities. That being said, the False Creek South community has been extremely successful from a social perspective, offering its inhabitants a strong sense of safety and community within the hedge-lined enclaves. The design of False Creek South represented a radical departure both from older, gridded neighbourhoods like Fairview Slopes and from the modernist “tower-in-the-park” approach which was in vogue at the time. The goal was to create a “livable city,” emphasizing quality of life for its inhabitants (Fig. 05). Granville Island, immediately west of False Creek South, also redeveloped around the same time and quickly established itself as a major tourist destination. By contrast, False Creek South remains a relatively self-contained, low-density residential enclave on a prominent waterfront site.

Expectations regarding built form and appropriate density have changed in tandem with Vancouver’s transformation since the 1970’s. Most of the land abutting False Creek as well as many of low-scale neighbourhoods in and around the core of Vancouver have redeveloped at much higher densities (e.g., Concord Pacific, Yaletown, Olympic Village, the West End, etc.).

Leases on the False Creek South lands are set to expire within the next two decades. With these deadlines approaching, the City of Vancouver is formulating plans and targets for the area and evaluating capacity for intensification. The co-operative housing developments in the neighbourhood would also like to expand in order to offer additional housing options for its residents. As their children have grown and gone, many of the original residents of False Creek South are looking to trade in their three and four-bedroom townhouses for smaller units. For a variety of reasons, both social and financial, they do not want to leave the neighbourhood. Most residents feel a deep connection to the community.



**Figure 06** (Vandalized Canada-Pacific Rail Line Overpass — False Creek South)

A significant example of post-modern planning, False Creek South is now the subject of a debate over re-development and intensification. Heavily influenced by the principles articulated by Christopher Alexander in his book, *A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction*, the community might be characterized as a quasi-suburban enclave on an extremely valuable parcel of urban land. False Creek South is disconnected from the adjacent Fairview Slopes neighbourhood, which rises above it to the south, by a Canada Pacific Rail line, a holdover from the site's industrial past. 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, which runs parallel to the rail line at the base of Fairview Slopes, is a one-sided street used primarily as a traffic artery. The Canada-Pacific rail line is not currently in use and exists in a state of dilapidation (Fig. 06).

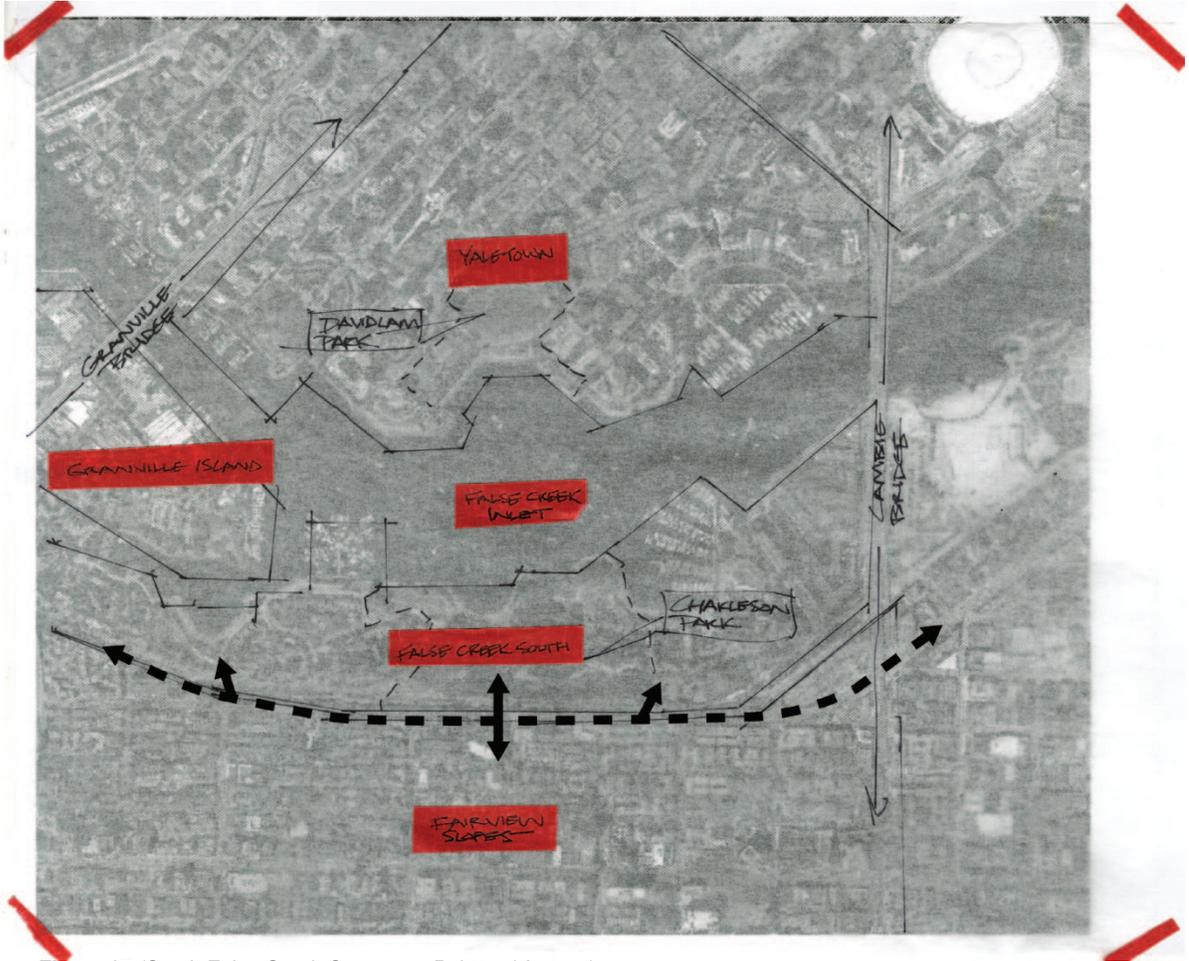


Figure 07 (South False Creek Context — Points of Access)

Only two streets connect Fairview Slopes with False Creek South, namely Alder Crossing and Moberly Road, both of which are accessible from 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue (shown in dashed-line with directional arrows — Fig. 07). The seawall — a popular pedestrian path that meanders along the False Creek shoreline — is one of two dedicated pedestrian connections into the site. A second connection into the neighbourhood is made via a land bridge across 6th Avenue at Laurel Street (shown as solid line directional arrow — Fig. 07). This connects into Charleson Park, which is situated between the two original housing enclaves of False Creek South.



**Figure 08** (Cambie Street Bridge Collapse)

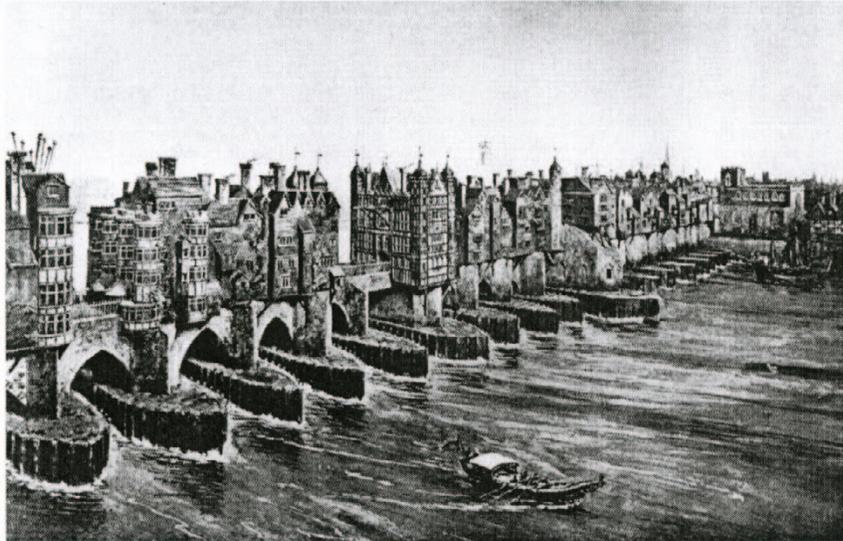
Crossing False Creek are a series of viaducts that lash together the northern and southern shorelines. The existing viaducts privilege high speed vehicles over pedestrians and cyclists, who also use these bridges. The narrow sidewalk and bike lanes on the Cambie Bridge, separated from the vehicular lanes by a thin concrete barrier, are not the most convivial of paths. That being said, the Cambie Bridge is considerably more pedestrian friendly than the Granville Bridge which has no physical barrier between vehicle and pedestrian. Proposals have been made to remove traffic lanes to improve the pedestrian corridor on these bridges. Reduced vehicular capacity, however, would put pressure on the remaining lanes. Rather than retrofitting the existing bridges, however, one might ask why we haven't proposed a dedicated viaduct to serve pedestrians and cyclists.

While Yaletown, which sits opposite False Creek South on the north shore of the inlet, is completely integrated into the surrounding street grid, False Creek South exists as a place apart. Greater pedestrian connectivity into and through the community could be the catalyst that allows the neighbourhood to better integrate with surrounding communities and with Vancouver at large. Ideally this would be done without displacing current residents or compromising the unique character or social cohesion of the neighbourhood.

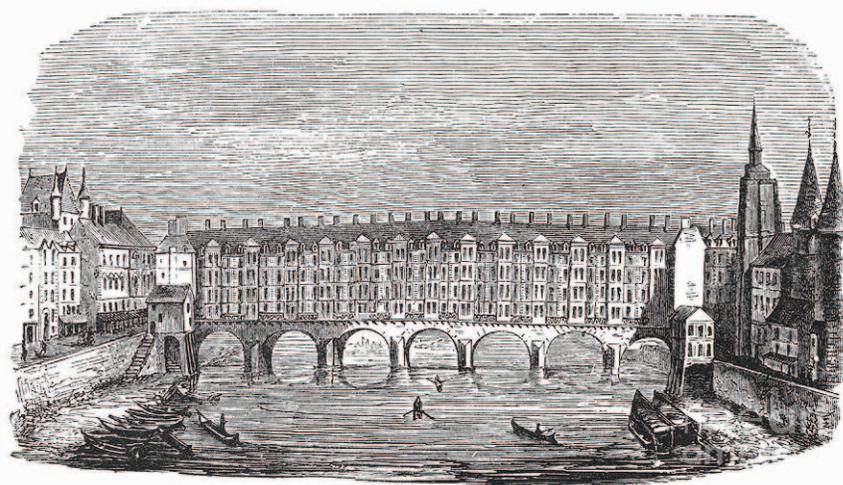


## Precedent

Important historical precedents exist for housing on and under bridges. Among the many historical examples are the Old London Bridge (Fig. 10), the original Pont au Change in Paris (Fig. 11), and the Ponte Vecchio in Florence (Fig. 12). Among the more contemporary examples are Steven Holl's *Bridge of Houses* (Fig. 13) and Le Corbusier's *Plan Obus for Algiers* (Fig. 14). While Holl follows the time-honoured approach of placing housing on the bridge, Le Corbusier reverses this by using housing to support an elevated highway. *Plan Obus* thus privileges the infrastructure over the architecture. It is this reversal of hierarchy that provided a starting point for the investigation into opportunities of combining housing with a bridge across False Creek.



**Figure 10** (Old London Bridge — London, England c.1206)



**Figure 11** (Pont au Change — Paris, France c.~1296)



Figure 12 (Ponte Vecchio — Florence, Italy c.1345)

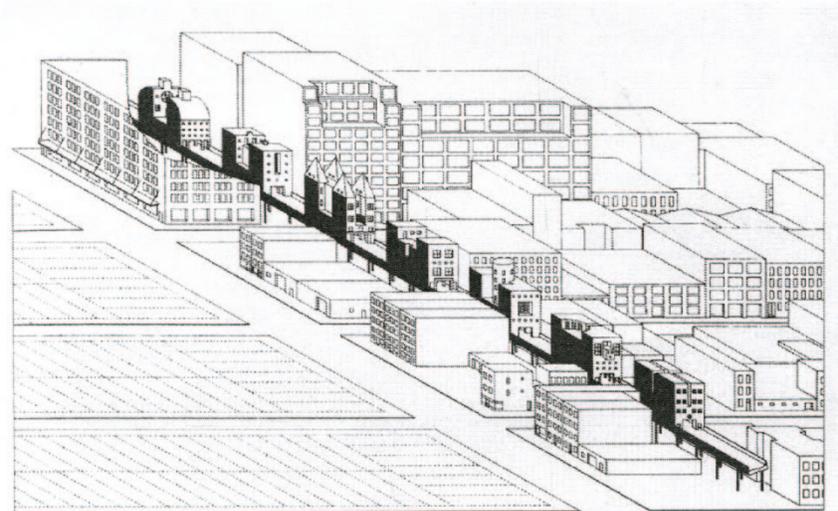
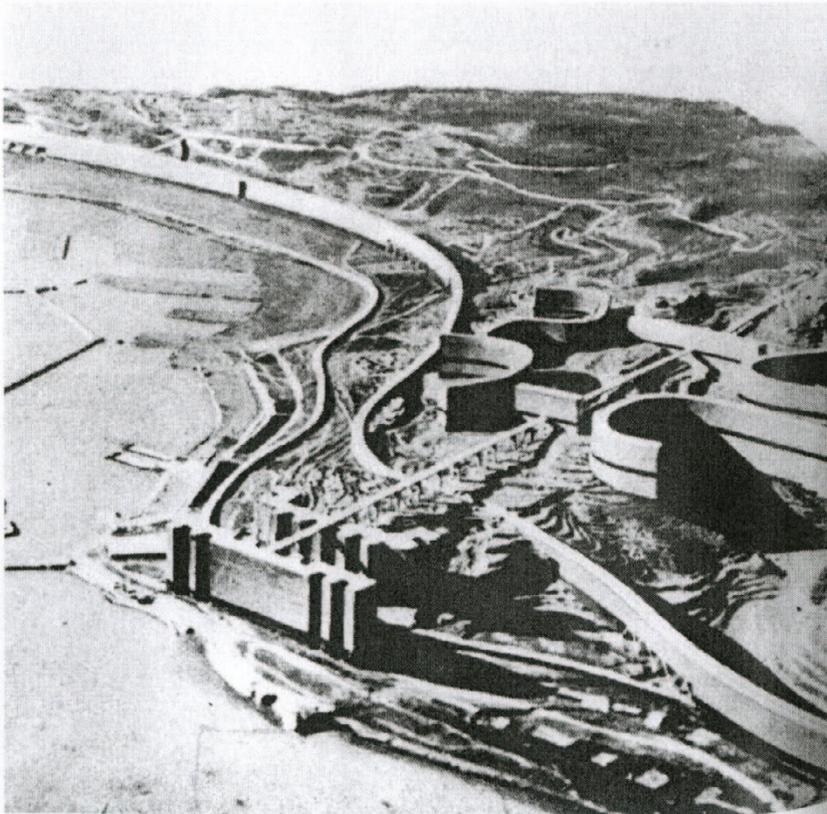


Figure 13 (Bridge of Houses — Steven Holl c.1978)



**Figure 14** (Plan Obus — Le Corbusier c.1933)

This led to the questioning of the implications of shifting or reversing the order of things in order to privilege the public pathway over private residences (Fig. 15). To what degree could the private realm be brought to bear on supporting public infrastructure? Investigating where and how these two realms might be connected, the competing orthogonal grids of Vancouver's downtown and Fairview Slopes were analysed. The initial thought was to use the change in orientation to define a formal logic by which to differentiate components and uses (public vs. private; housing vs. infrastructure; elevated paths vs. docks and pontoon bridges, etc.)

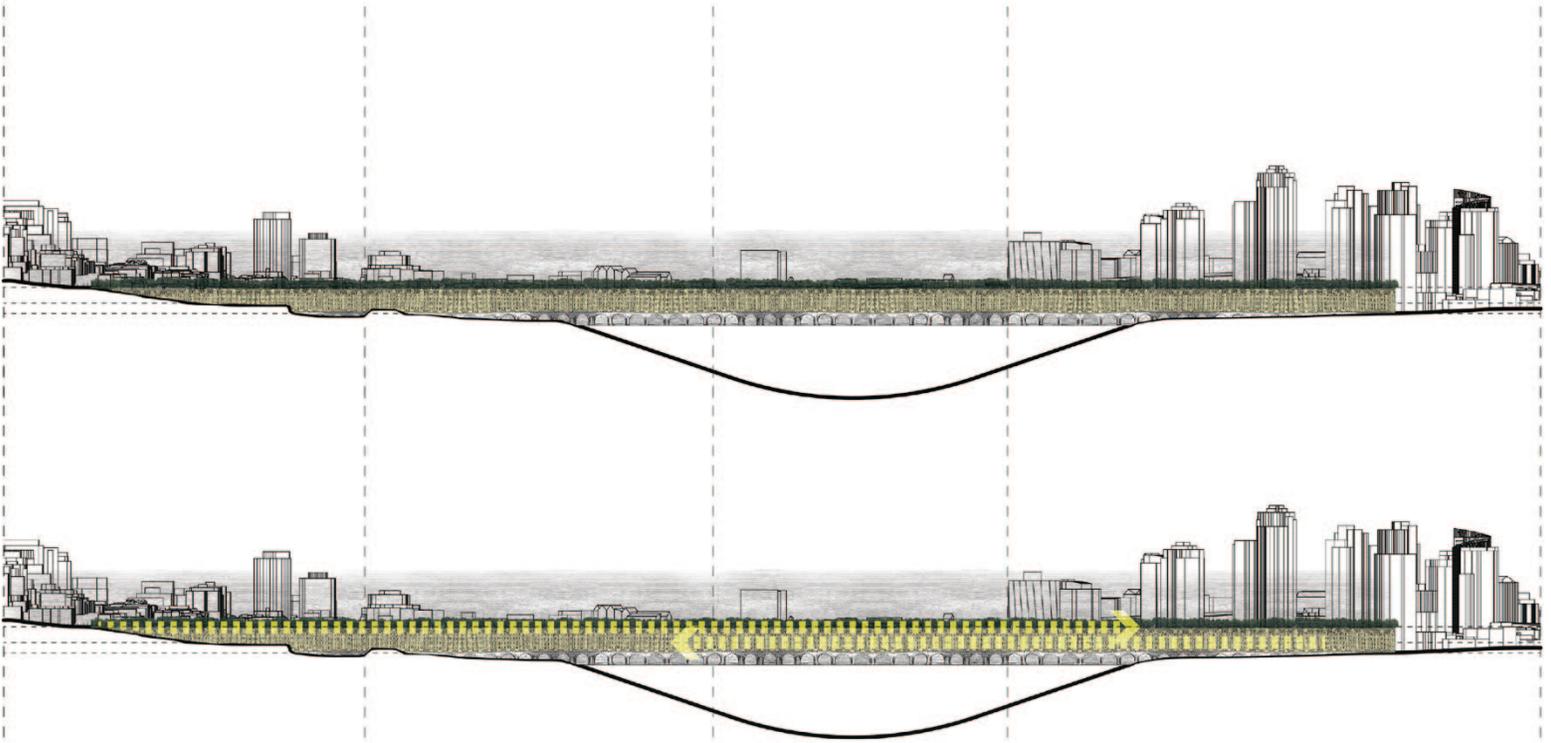
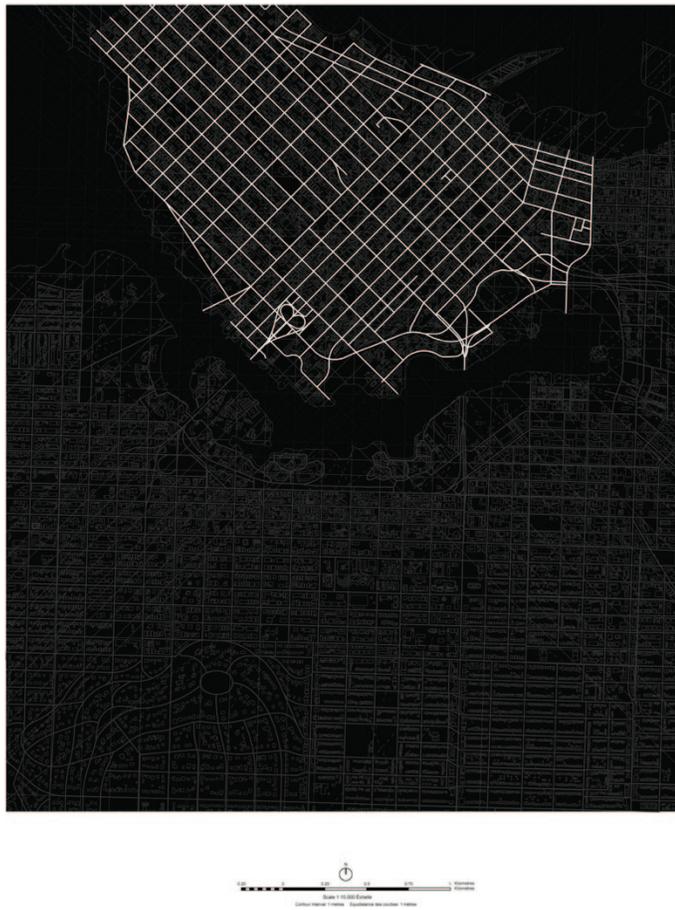


Figure 15 (Conceptual Site Elevation – Pont au Change Superimposed, Vancouver)



**Figure 16** (Vancouver Grids — Downtown, North)

## Analysis

### Downtown (North)

The fabric of downtown Vancouver is rotated toward the east in deference to the geography of the coastline (Fig. 16). Lines from this rotated grid were extended to better understand its implications on the city as a whole (shown in solid line — Fig. 17). Along with the linear extension of the grid, several deviations — or anomalies — within the grid were also highlighted and extended (shown in dashed line — fig. 17). This information was used to identify key moments of alignment and overlap between the north and south shores of False Creek (shown in thick yellow dashed directional arrow — Fig. 17).

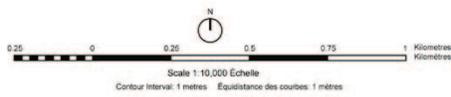
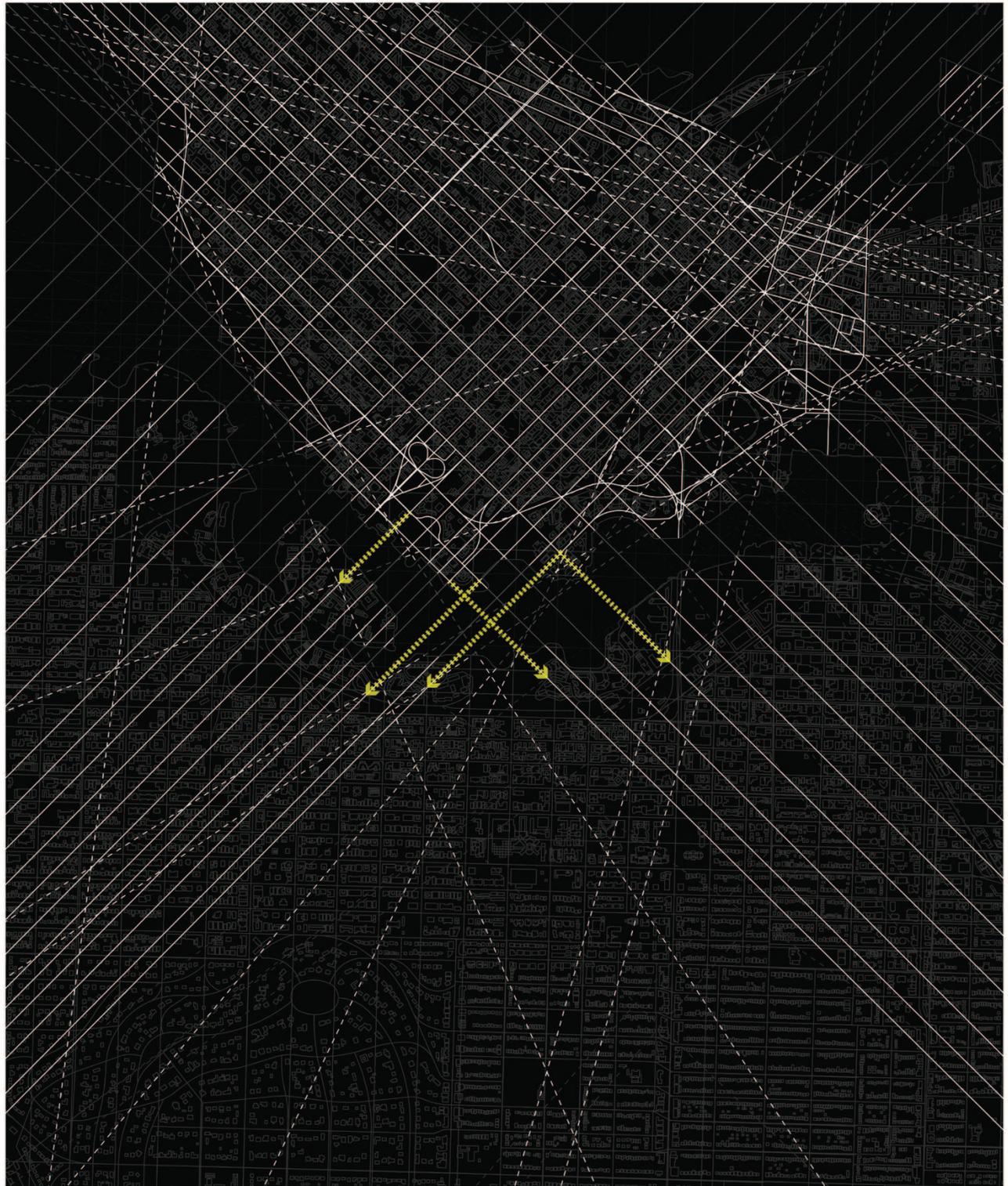
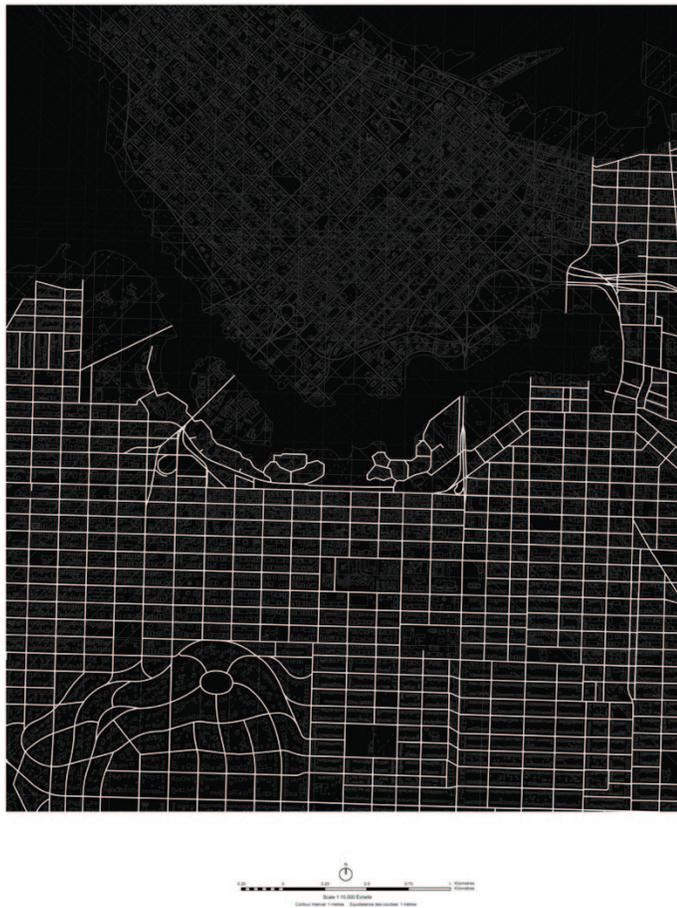


Figure 17 (Vancouver Grids — Downtown, North Extrapolated)



**Figure 18** (Vancouver Grids —Fairview, South)

## **Analysis** Fairview (South)

The gridded fabric of Fairview Slopes is oriented almost exactly north/south (Fig. 18). As with downtown, the lines from this fabric were extended (shown in solid line — Fig. 19) in search of overlaps, alignments and points of registration with the downtown street grid. As well as extending the grid, inconsistencies and anomalies were highlighted (shown in dashed line — Fig. 19). Again, this information was used to identify key moments of alignment and overlap between the north and south shores of False Creek (shown in thick yellow dashed directional arrow — Fig. 19).

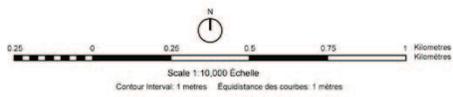
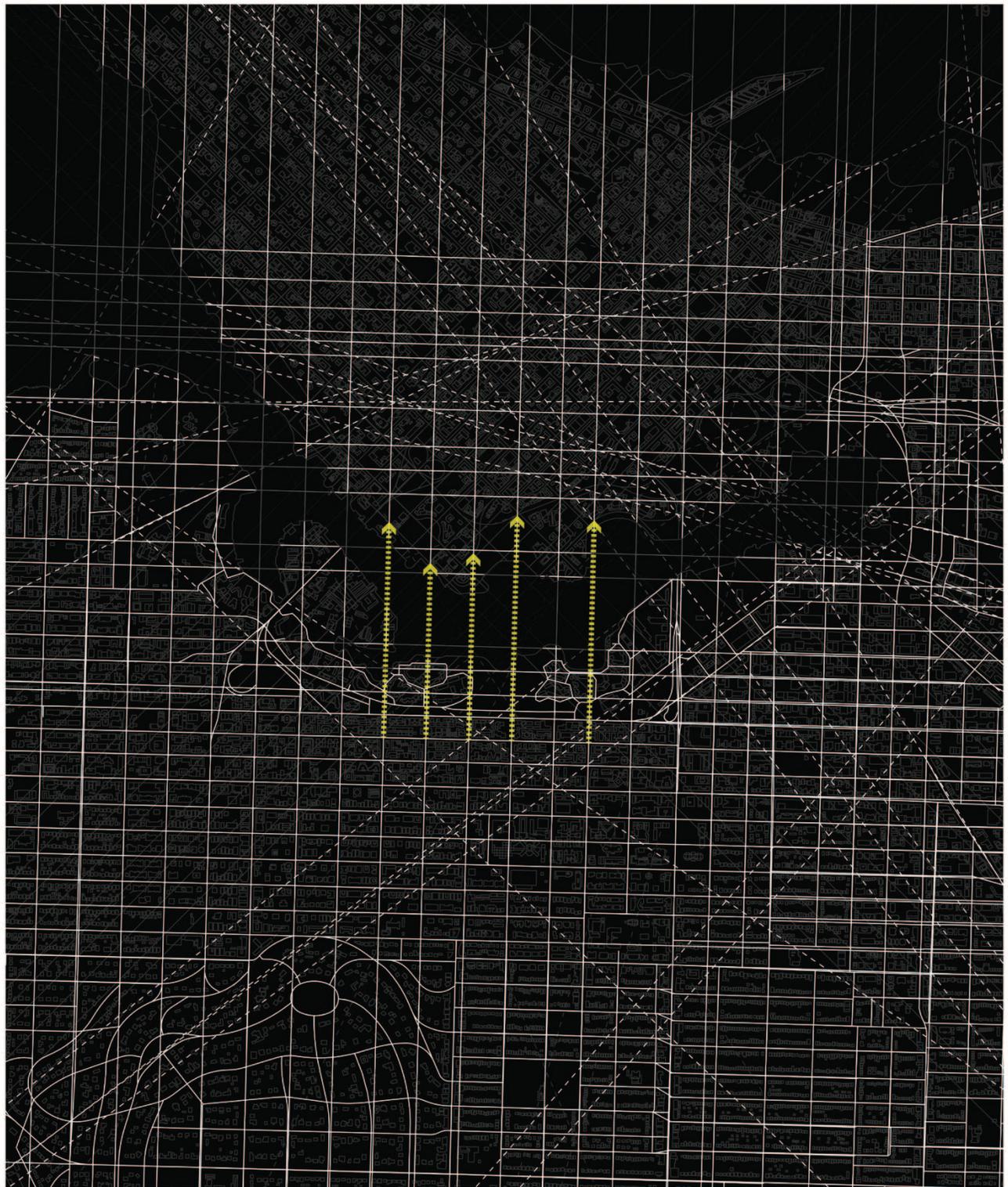
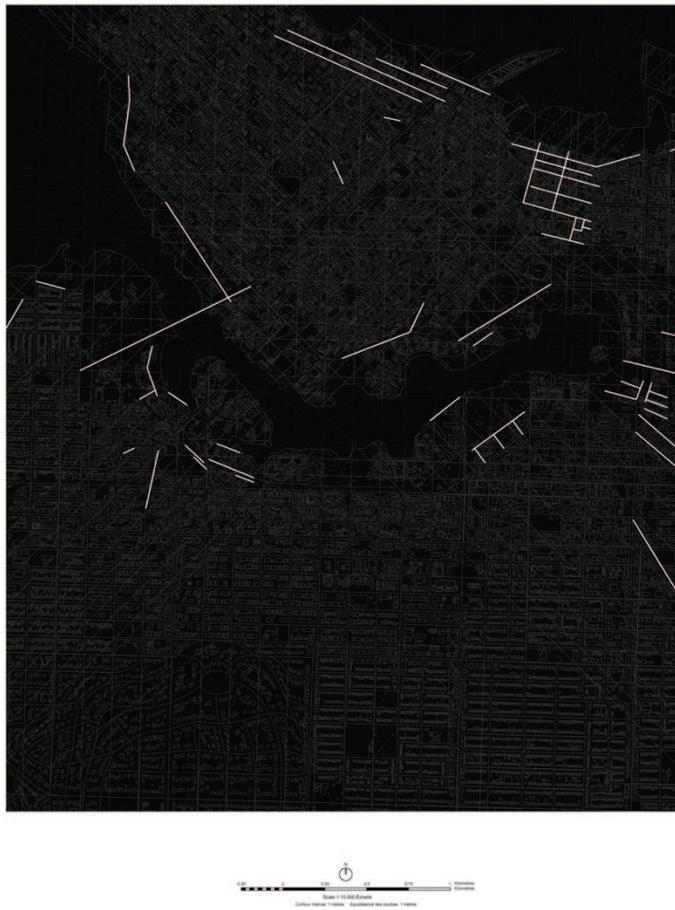


Figure 19 (Vancouver Grids — Fairview, South Extrapolated)



**Figure 20** (Vancouver Grids — Typos)

## Analysis

### Typos

Vancouver's urban fabric exists as competing orthogonal grids. Hidden within these orthogonal fabrics, many anomalies exist. These anomalies — or typos become highlighted and extrapolated from the fabrics of downtown and fairview to offer an alternative perspective on the city of Vancouver. Pacific Boulevard is a particular anomaly of interest which deviates due to its industrious origin. These typos within the urban fabric may become privileged in creating new impromptu points of connection within the city.

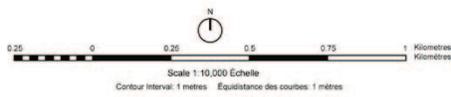
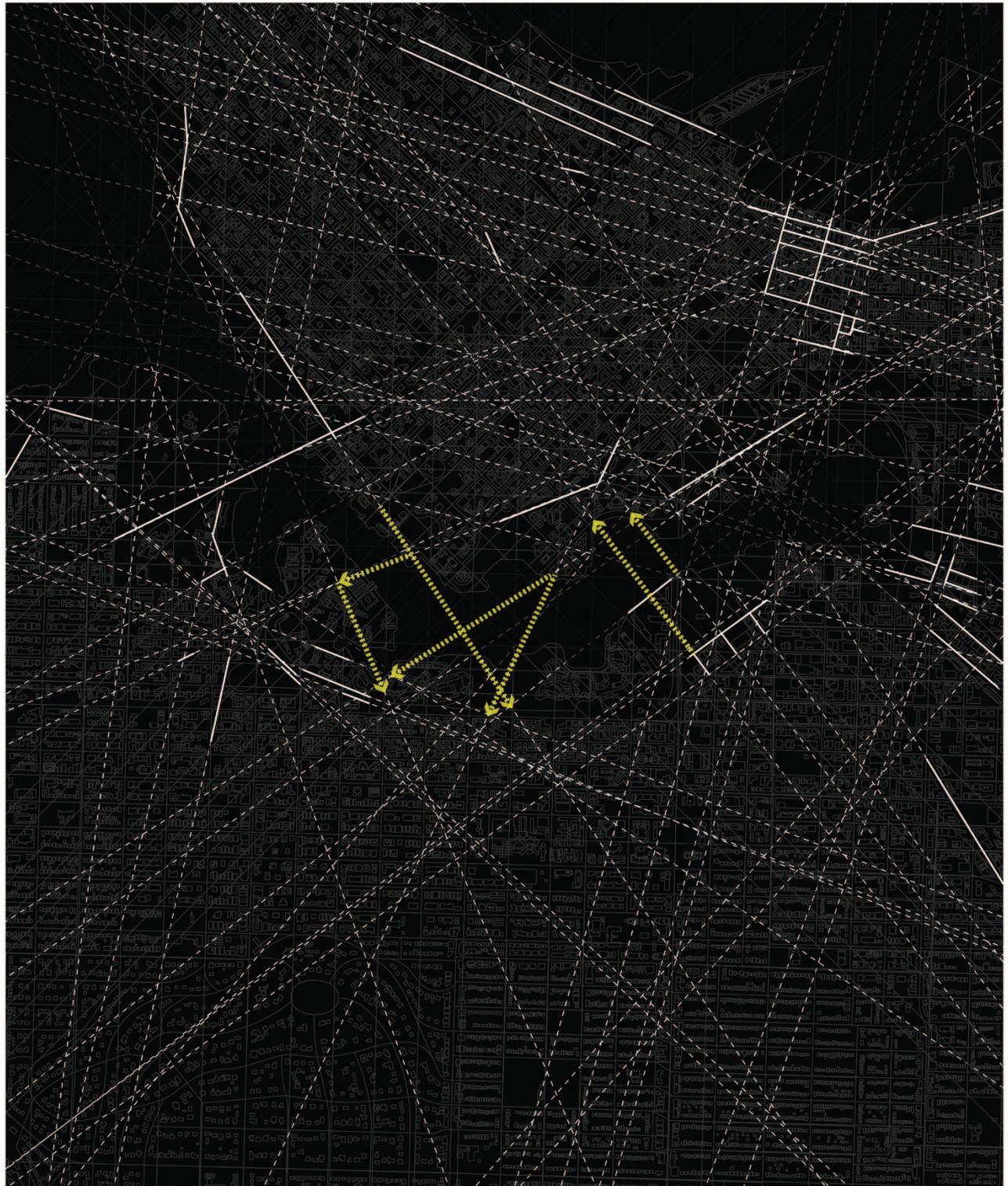


Figure 21 (Vancouver Grids — Typos Extrapolated)

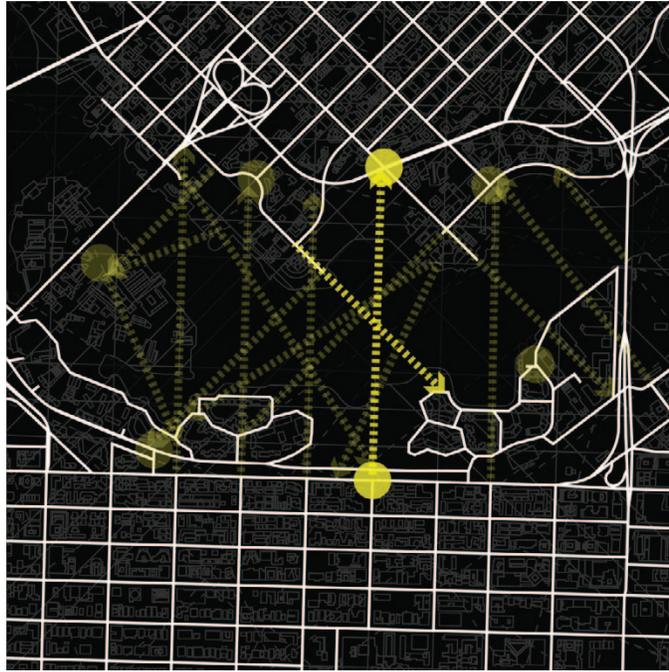


Figure 22 (Vancouver Grids — Refined Data)

Having extended and examined overlaps and anomalies in Vancouver's competing urban fabrics, it was concluded that the most logical alignment for a new bridge across False Creek corresponded with the trajectory of the existing Laurel Street Land Bridge (data extrapolated — Fig. 19) and/or along the same trajectory as Drake Street in Yaletown (data extrapolated — Fig. 17).



Figure 23 (Figure Ground Study Diagram)

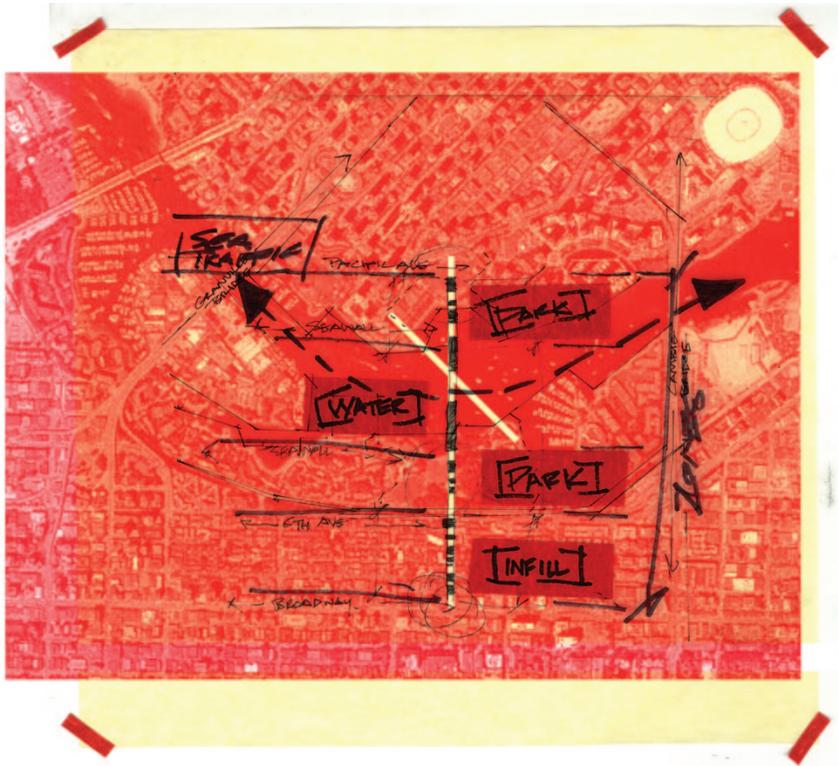


Figure 24 (Figure Ground Study Composite Sketch — Zones)

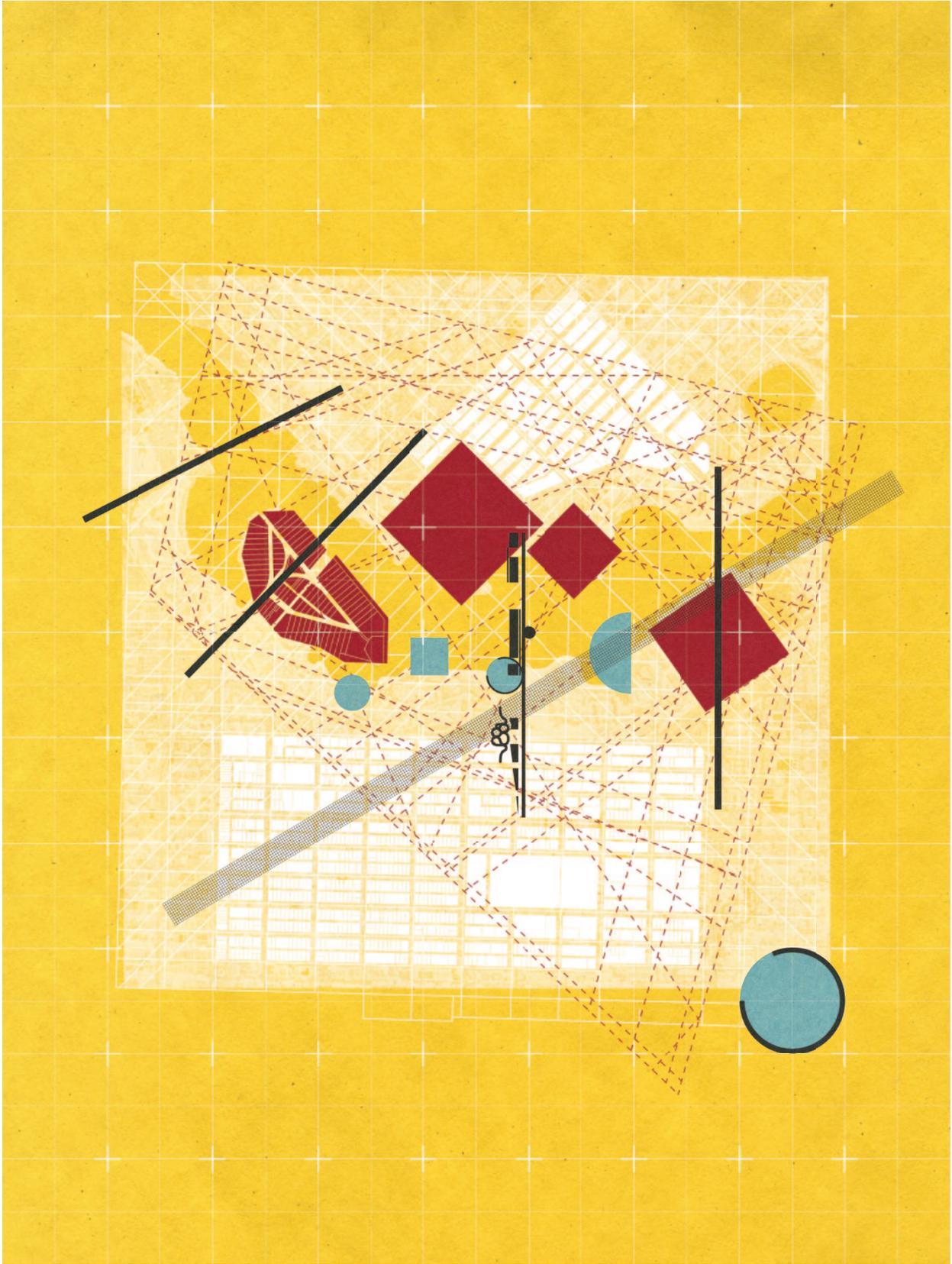


Figure 25 (Conceptual Mapping Study - Speculative Urban Geometries)

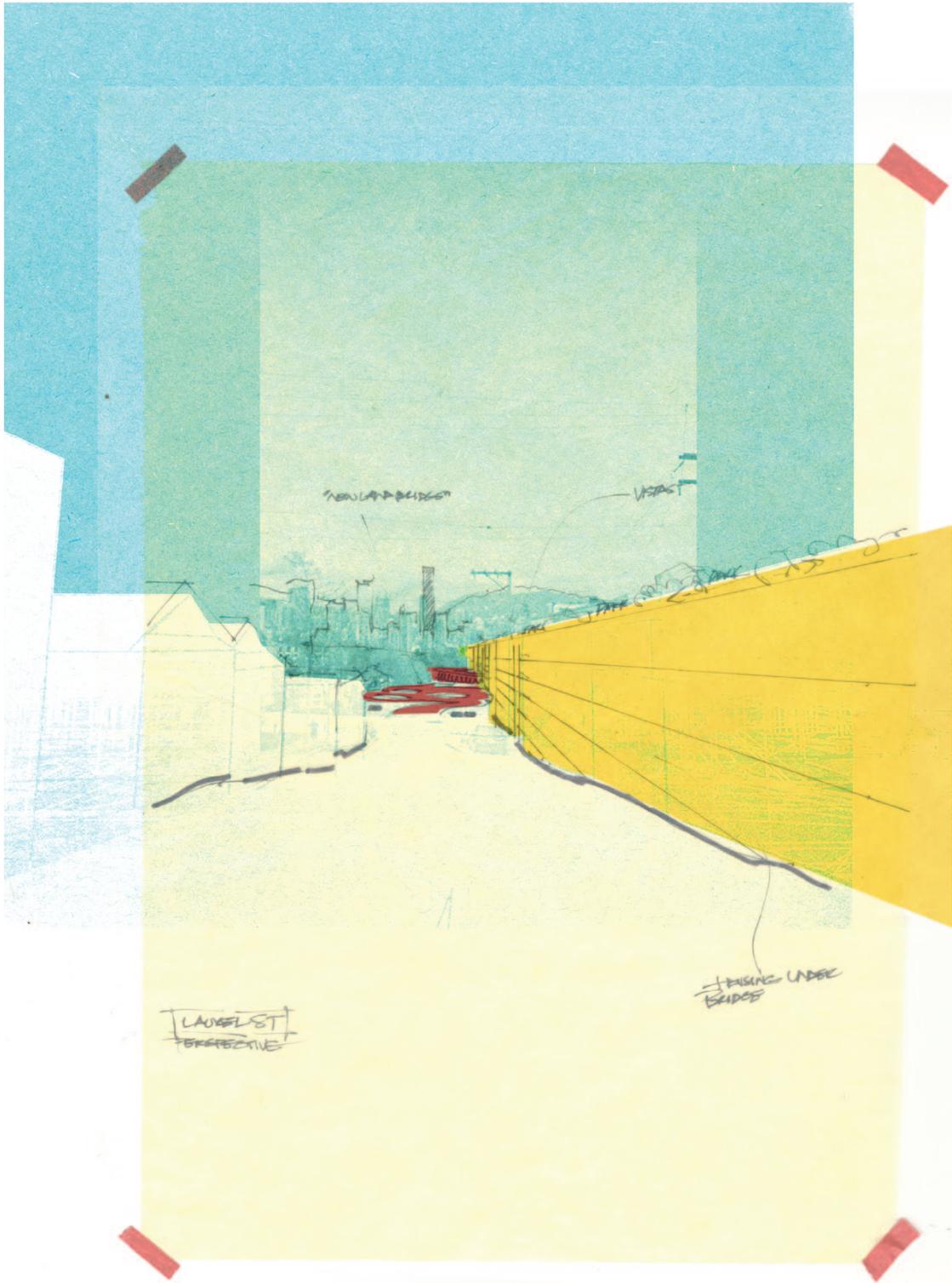


Figure 26 (Massing Study Composite Sketch — Fairview, Laurel Street)

## Vanopolis

The proposed new connection across False Creek begins, at grade, at the corner of Broadway Avenue and Laurel Street in Fairview Slopes. It terminates in Yaletown's David Lam Park on the north shore. En route the structure traverses several different terrains or "zones," which can be characterized as follows: 1) infill — along Laurel Street through Fairview Slopes, 2) park 1 — through and over Charleson Park, 3) water over the False Creek Inlet, and 4) park 2 — as the bridge lands in David Lam Park (Fig. 24).

As a point of departure images of the Pont au Change were collaged over images of False Creek — and added a linear park/pedestrian path across the rooftops of the housing. (Fig. 15) This layering of program helped to establish a programmatic hierarchy and to determine points of connection between Fairview Slopes and Yaletown. The massing was further refined as various phenomena at play were further identified and explored. Having begun by extending and overlapping competing urban grids, the basic components were manipulated to respond to of site conditions, including topography.

Beginning at Broadway Avenue, the proposed housing blocks interact with the adjacent residential fabric. Here, as elsewhere, housing is located below the pedestrian path, which runs along the rooftops. As the bridge extends across 6th Avenue and into Charleson Park, a housing block is placed along Lamey's Mill/Charleson Road as a "book-end" to the park. From this point the bridge spans across the park in a sort of 'Granville-esque' fashion — gently meeting the ground with elegant structural supports. In the case of Granville Island, the bustling streets of the market are largely oblivious of the bridge hovering above. The notion of the bridge as a kind of canopy could be applied to Charleson Park.

A housing block is placed beneath the bridge where the park meets the seawall. Straddling the edge, a portion of this block is elevated to accommodate daily shifts in tides. Immediately adjacent to it, a second block sits in the water — accessible both from the bridge above and from a dock structure below. The bridge then spans across the False Creek Inlet enabling ships and other water craft to pass beneath it. Housing blocks appear again on the Yaletown side of the inlet. They interact lightly with David Lam Park via a dock structure at grade — which provide access from below. Again, ramps and stairs — each of which becomes an amenity in its own right — connect the bridge with the park.



**Figure 27** (Pedestrian Bridge at Tremblay Rd. — Ottawa, ON)



**Figure 28** (Pedestrian Bridge at Tremblay Rd. — Ottawa, ON)

Pedestrian Bridge passing over The Queensway (417) at Tremblay Road. Illustrating the split between pedestrian and cyclist lanes while resolving changes in topography.

*Negotiating Changes in Topography:*

Had the pedestrian bridge been carried across False Creek at the same elevation as Broadway, it would be approximately 30 meters above grade in David Lam Park. However interesting, a concoction of 150 steps and landings at the northern end of the bridge would have been impractical and have compromised access. In order to address the change in elevation, the bridge gradually drops over its approximately one kilometre length. This drop, in turn is broken into a series of ramped and flat areas to mitigate the drudgery of a continuous climb (or decent). Similarly, to alleviate potential monotony, the breaks in the various sections of the bridge were developed into nodes, like beads along a chain.

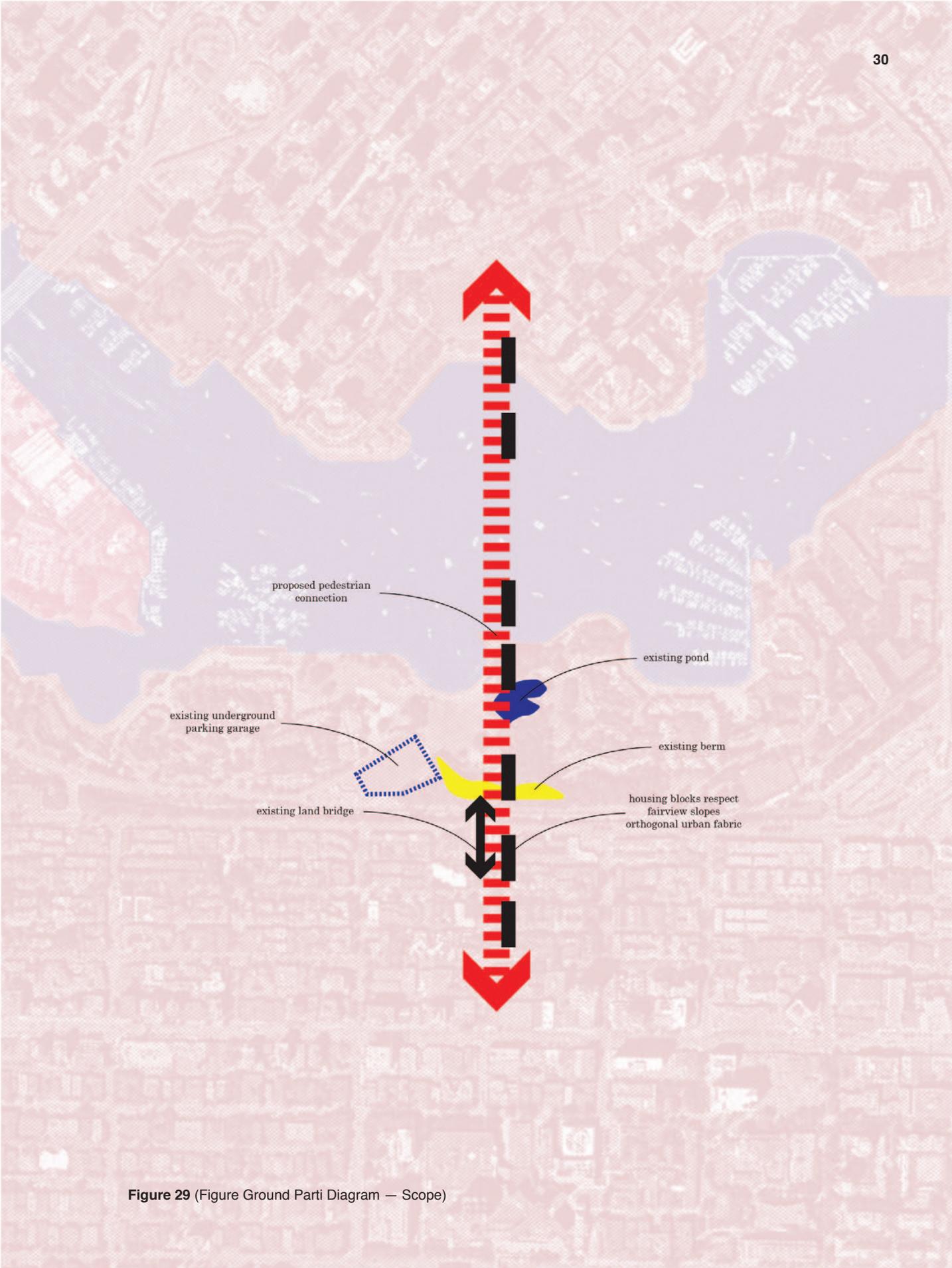


Figure 29 (Figure Ground Parti Diagram — Scope)

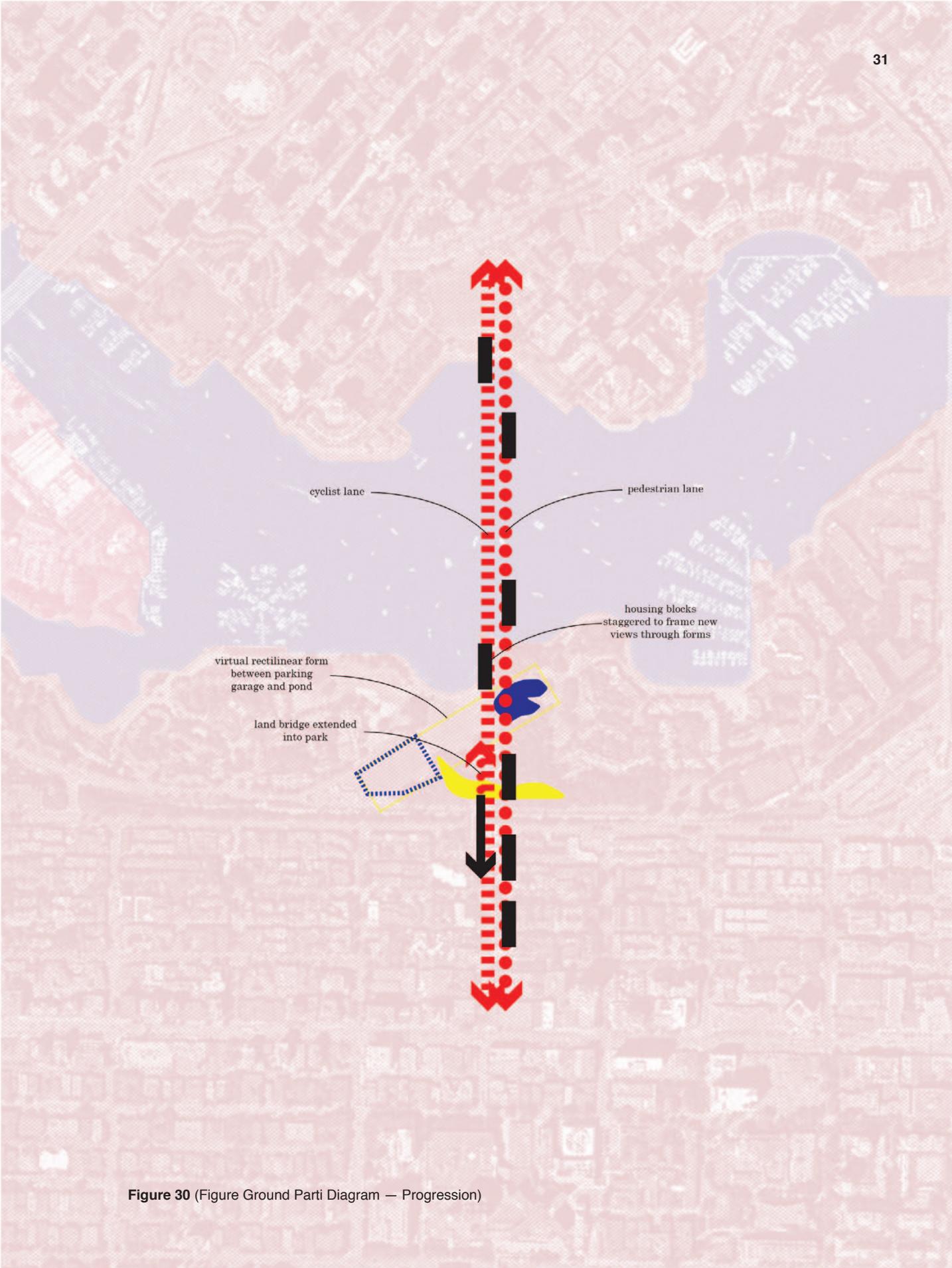


Figure 30 (Figure Ground Parti Diagram — Progression)

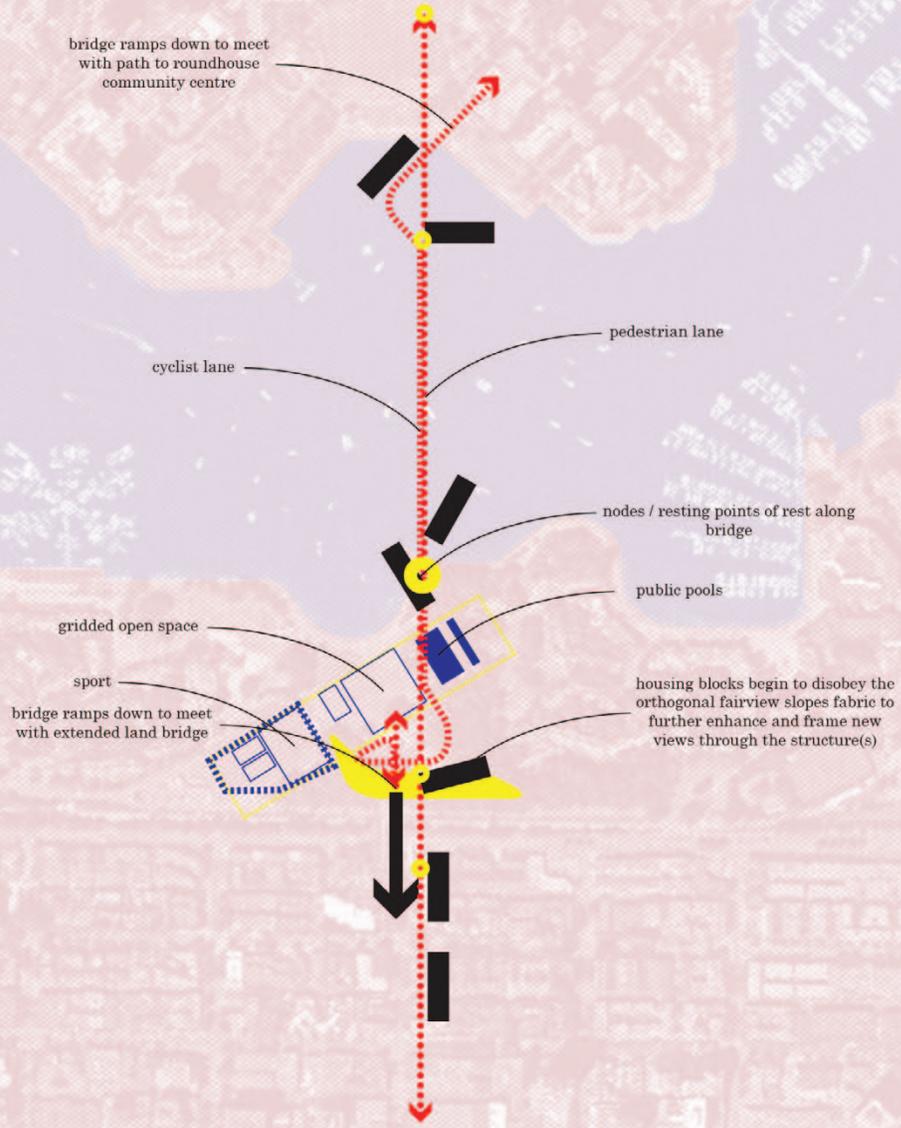


Figure 31 (Figure Ground Parti Diagram — Refined)

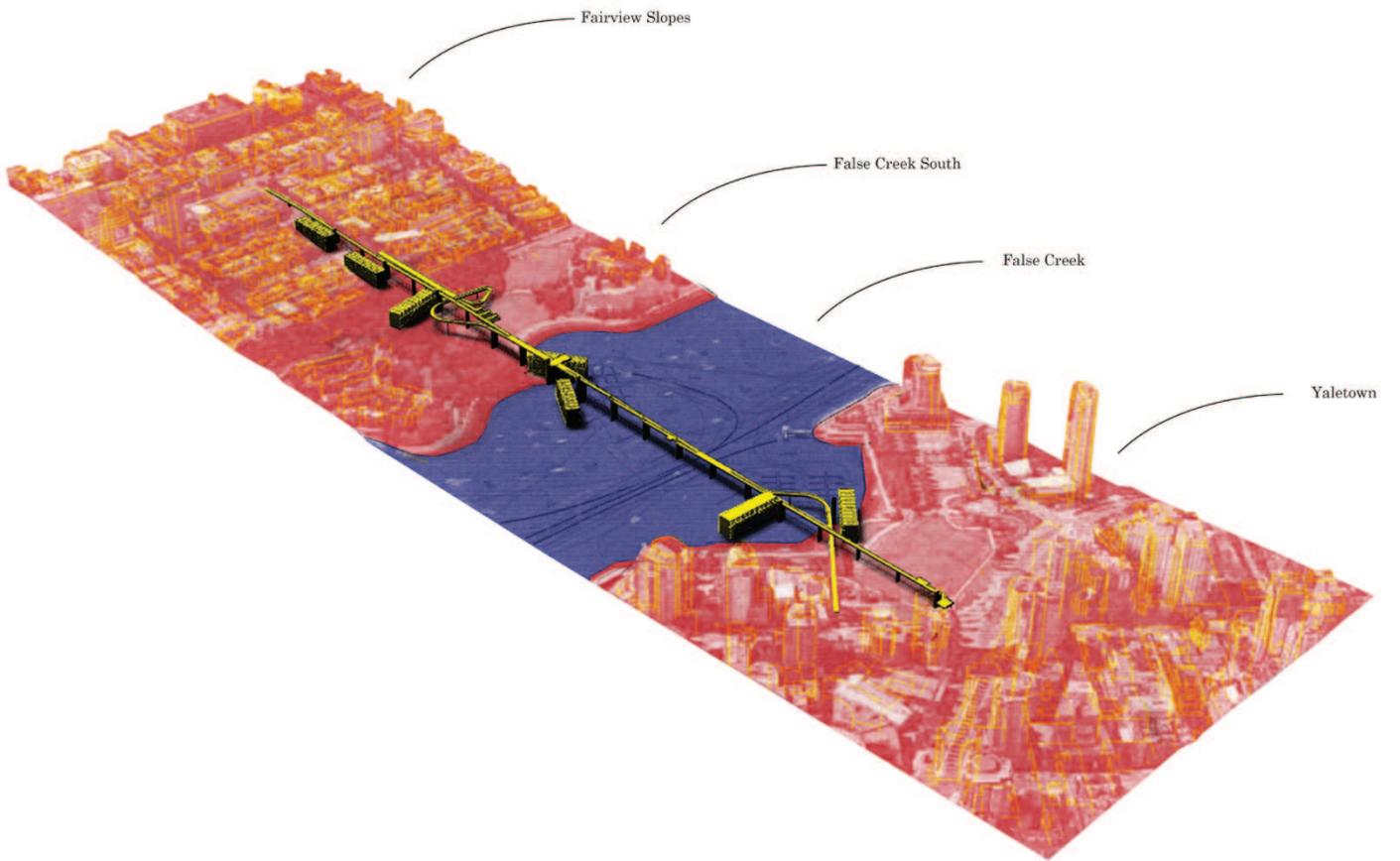


Figure 32 (Bird's Eye Perspective Diagram — Northwest)

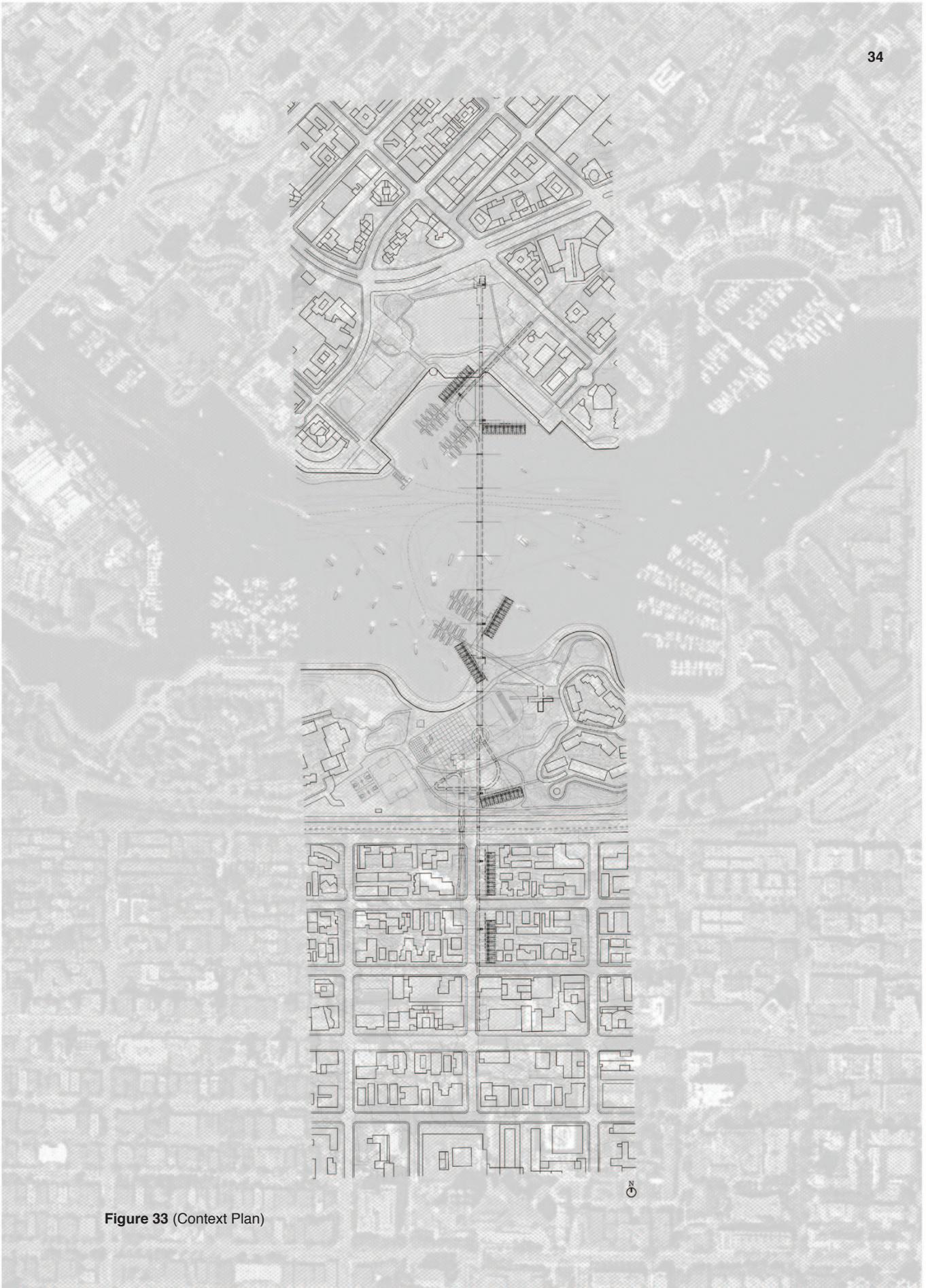


Figure 33 (Context Plan)

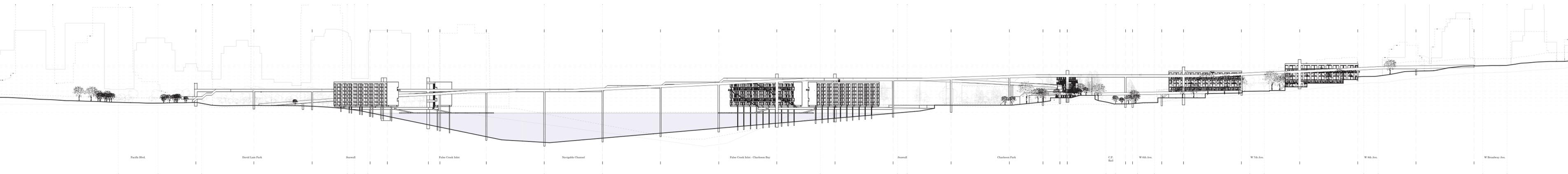


Figure 34 (Site Elevation)

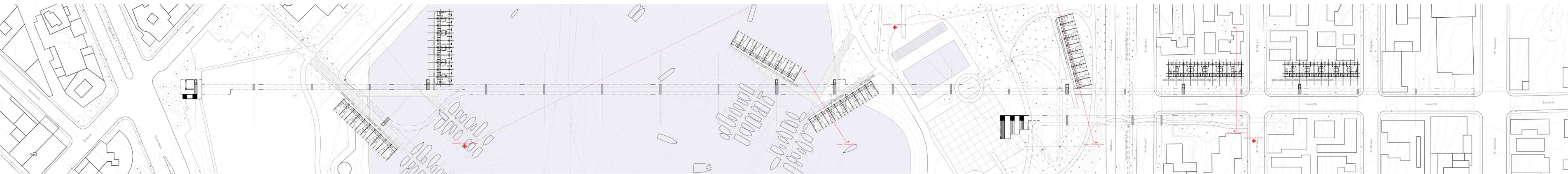


Figure 35 (Site Plan)

“Just as an individual person dreams fantastic happenings to release the inner forces which cannot be encompassed by ordinary events, so too a city needs its dreams”<sup>1</sup>

## **Vanopolis** Edifice

*Vanopolis* challenges distinctions between figure and fabric with respect to residential development. Traditionally, residential development produced the relatively continuous urban fabric against which significant civic and religious buildings were read as figures. Even as residential buildings morphed into condo towers, their status as fabric can be seen in “the sheer ubiquity and relative uniformity of towers — from their glass facades and anemic colour schemes, to rectangular volumetric — and have become the condominium’s most distinctive qualities (Fig. 34).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Alexander, Christopher, et al. *A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction*. 1974. (299)

<sup>2</sup> Ibelings, Hans, and Spunt, Nicola. *Rise and Sprawl: the Condominiumization of Toronto*. The Architecture Observer, 2016. (107)



Figure 36 (Yaletown vs. Granville Floating Homes)

By definition, figures stand out against the urban fabric. As such they are called upon (or take it upon themselves) to be worthy of the attention they draw to themselves: unique, intriguing, and “remarkable.” Ideally this uniqueness relates both to their form and function. While distinctions between figure and fabric can challenge practitioners and the public to think more conceptually about architecture and urban design, the issue of what is and isn’t figural is a function of context — both physical and temporal. A figure only remains figure as long as it continues to be unique to its surroundings. The figure can achieve both contextuality and a sense of place so long as it is produced intelligently, and strategically.

*Vanopolis* becomes the felled condominium tower, a horizontal counterpoint to the banal vertical fabric of Yaletown. The housing blocks associated with the bridge appear to have escaped — or been expelled from — the fabric of towers along the north shore of False Creek. Housing blocks have been strewn horizontally across the site as pieces of a whole. These pieces act as infiltrators within the public realm. The distinction between figure and fabric becomes more complex as these housing blocks are neither one nor the other, neither public nor private. Rather, *Vanopolis* suspends them somewhere between the two.

And while *Vanopolis* as a whole appears to be a figure to the extent that it is unique to and framed by its surroundings, it reverts to fabric when viewed as infrastructure. The pedestrian path along the rooftops of the residential blocks is a literal extension of the city's urban fabric and the structure as a whole respects the repeating language of viaducts across the False Creek Inlet.

One of the objectives of *Vanopolis* is to be critical of city building processes. As every new development becomes an additional piece of the urban puzzle, it is important to “drop the play it safe attitude” and be more intelligent, provocative and dynamic.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Ibelings, Hans, and Spunt, Nicola. *Rise and Sprawl: the Condominiumization of Toronto*. The Architecture Observer, 2016. (107)

## **Vanopolis** Infrastructure

“Where fast moving cars and pedestrians meet in cities, the cars overwhelm the pedestrians. The car is king, and the people are made to feel small.”<sup>4</sup>

In addition to augmenting connectivity between Vancouver’s Yaletown, False Creek South and Fairview Slopes neighbourhoods, the proposed bridge will create a safe passage without the threat of high speed vehicular traffic. In addition to cars, however, cyclists can pose a significant threat to pedestrians. Taking cues from other, similar projects, *Vanopolis* provides separate rights-of-way for pedestrians and cyclists. OMA’s proposal for the *Nine Elms to Pimlico Bridge* served as precedent, both in the way it segregates modes of circulation and in the way it embraces its role — whether intentional or inadvertent — as an urban landmark — its beauty being in understatement rather than overstatement.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Alexander, Christopher, et al. *A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction*. 1974. (286)

<sup>5</sup> OMA. *Nine Elms to Pimlico Bridge*. London, 2015.

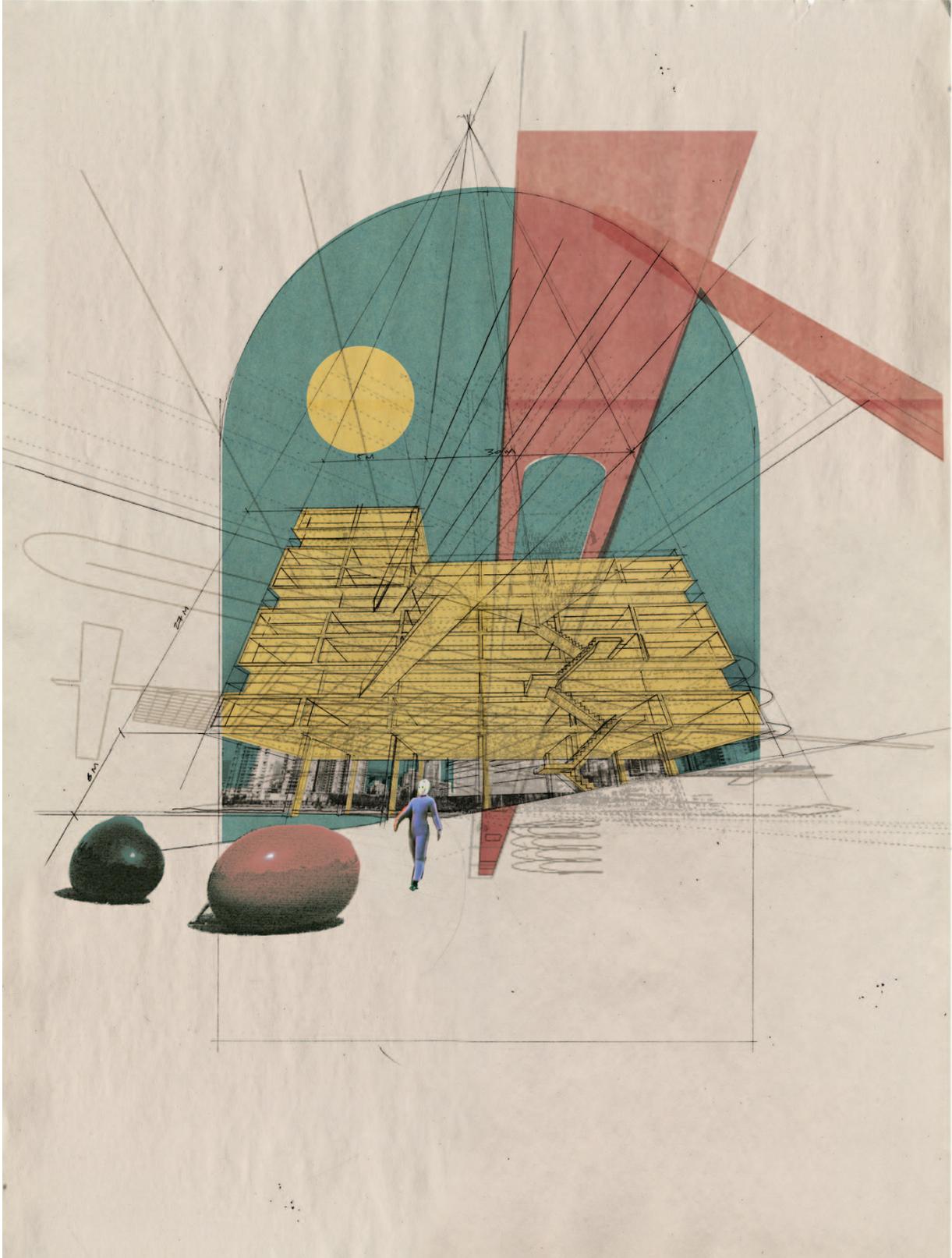


Figure 37 (Composite Sketch Study — Charleson Bay Housing, Charleson Park)

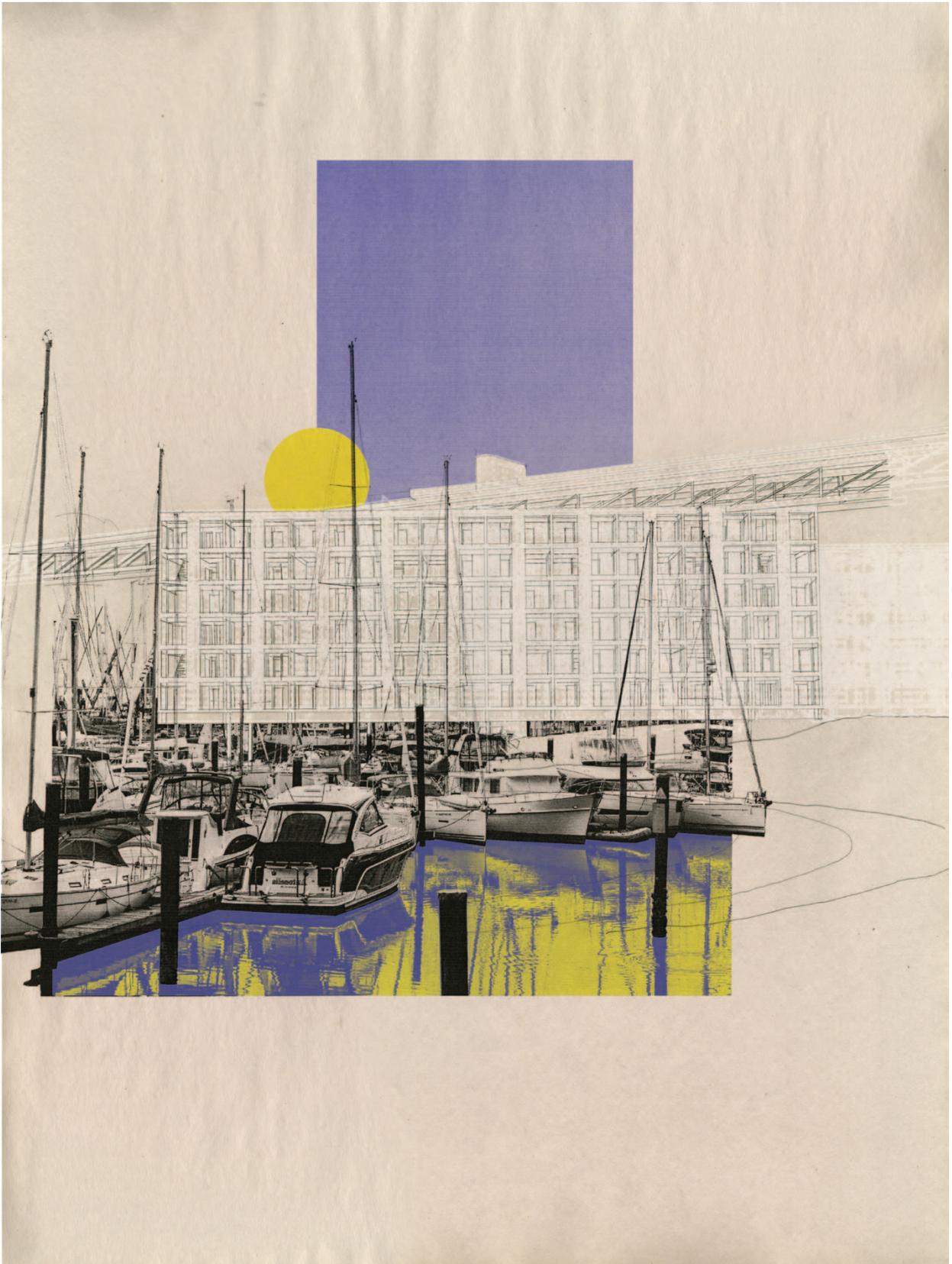


Figure 38 (Composite Sketch Study — Charleson Bay Marina, Charleson Park)

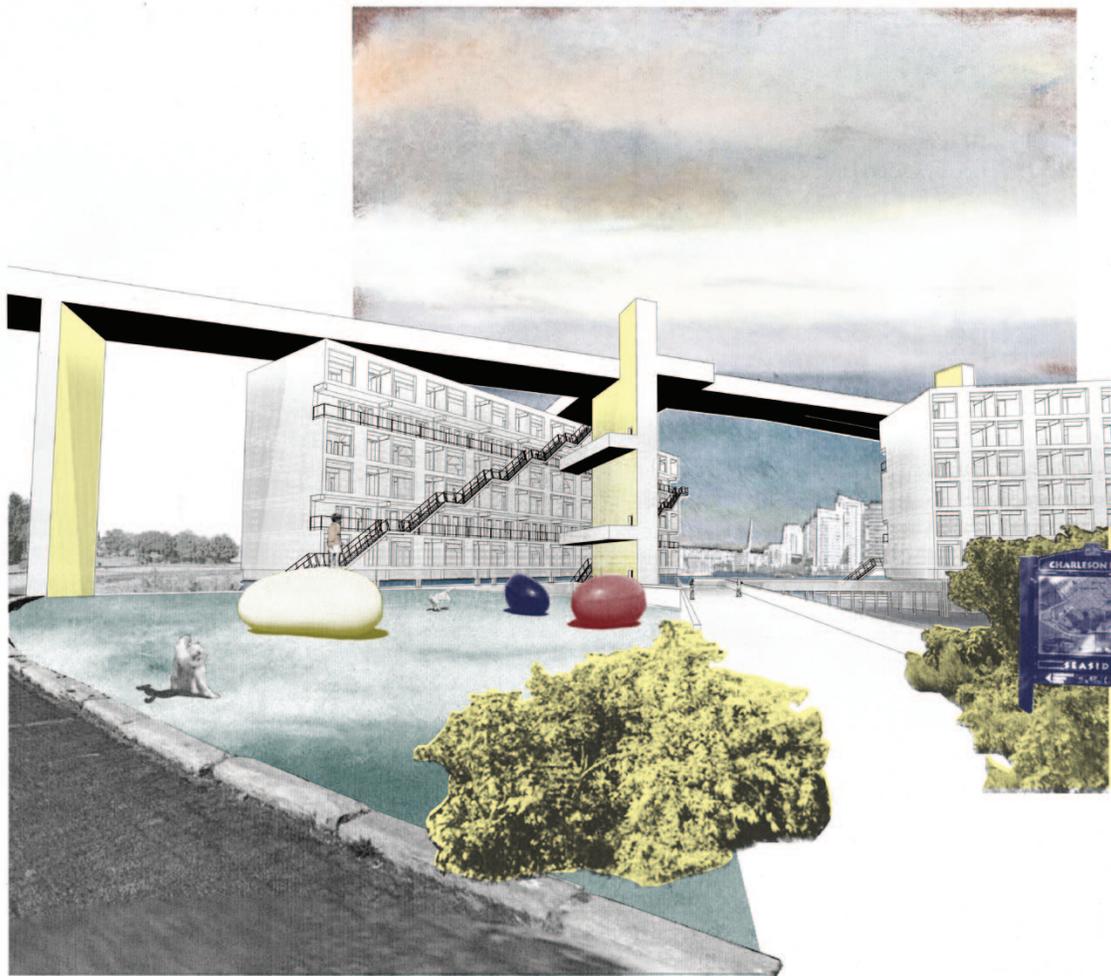


Figure 39 (Composite Sketch Study — Charleson Bay Marina, Charleson Park)



Figure 40 (Pedestrian Bridge — JLCG Arquitectos — Covilhã, Portugal c.2009)



Figure 41 (Pedestrian Bridge — JLCG Arquitectos — Covilhã, Portugal c.2009)

Pedestrian bridge crossing the Carpinteira Stream in Covilhã, Portugal by JLCG Arquitectos. The bridge shows it is possible to achieve a long spanning structure while retaining a thin, ribbon-like form.

Initial sketches for the *Vanopolis* bridge included steel trusses and supports (Fig. 36). After careful consideration, however, the decision was made to take a more minimalist approach. This was done both to avoid making the structure too similar to the adjacent Burrard, Granville and Cambie Bridges and to keep it from competing with the gridded facades of the housing blocks beneath it. As a result, a structure was chosen that was much more elemental and contemporary in nature — a thin ribbon hovering above housing, occasionally, and gently meeting the land or sea below (Fig. 37). Further, the decision to de-emphasize the structural expression of the bridge was in large part due to the idea of a frame more than an object. It was envisioned more as something to look from and through rather than to look at. As Christopher Alexander points out, it is these high places which are vital to our satisfy our curiosity and gain our bearings, as places from which to look down; places that give a spectacular, comprehensive view of the town.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Alexander, Christopher, et al. *A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction*. 1974. (317)

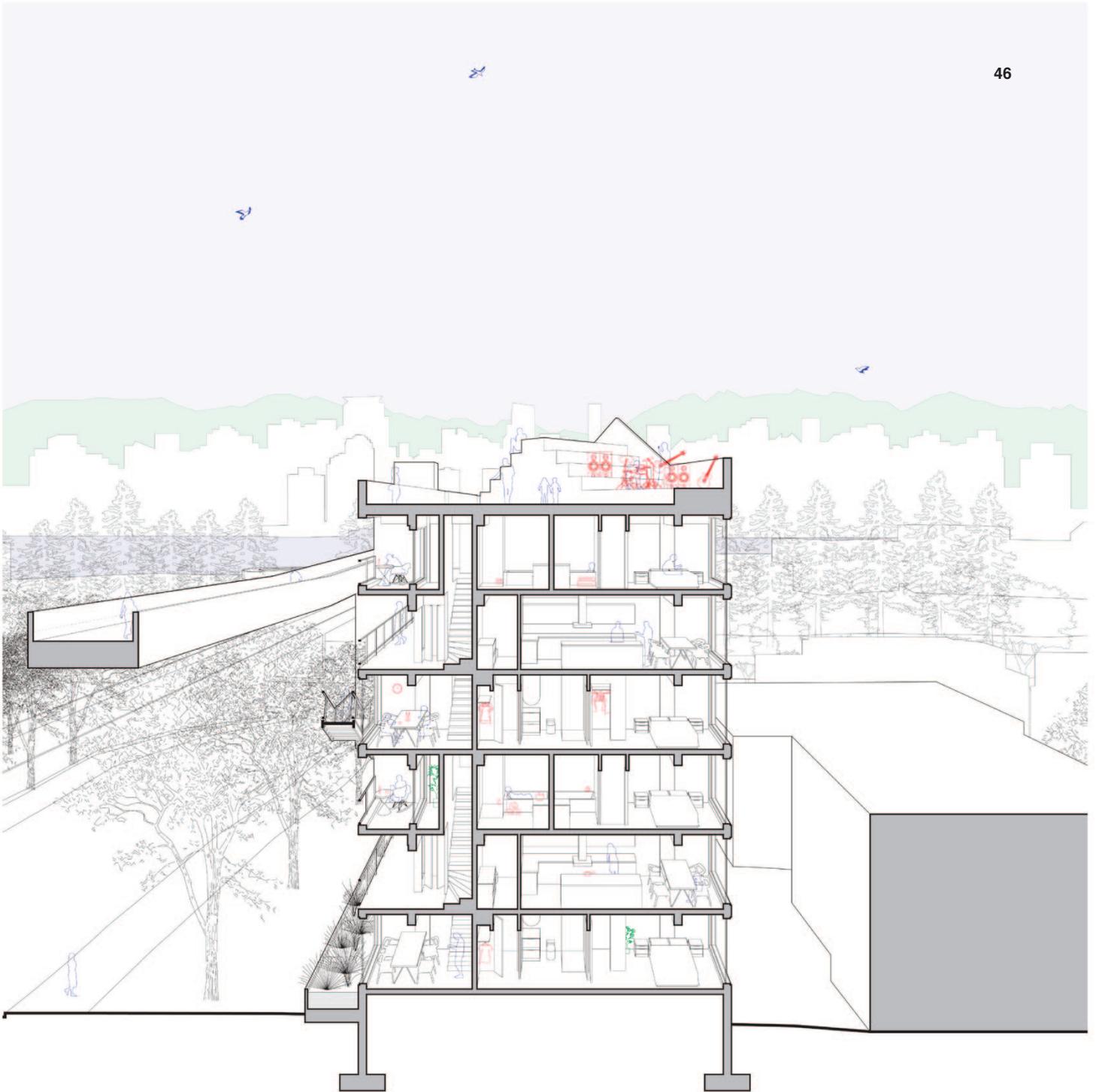


Figure 42 (Section Perspective — W 7th Ave. & Laurel St., Fairview Slopes)

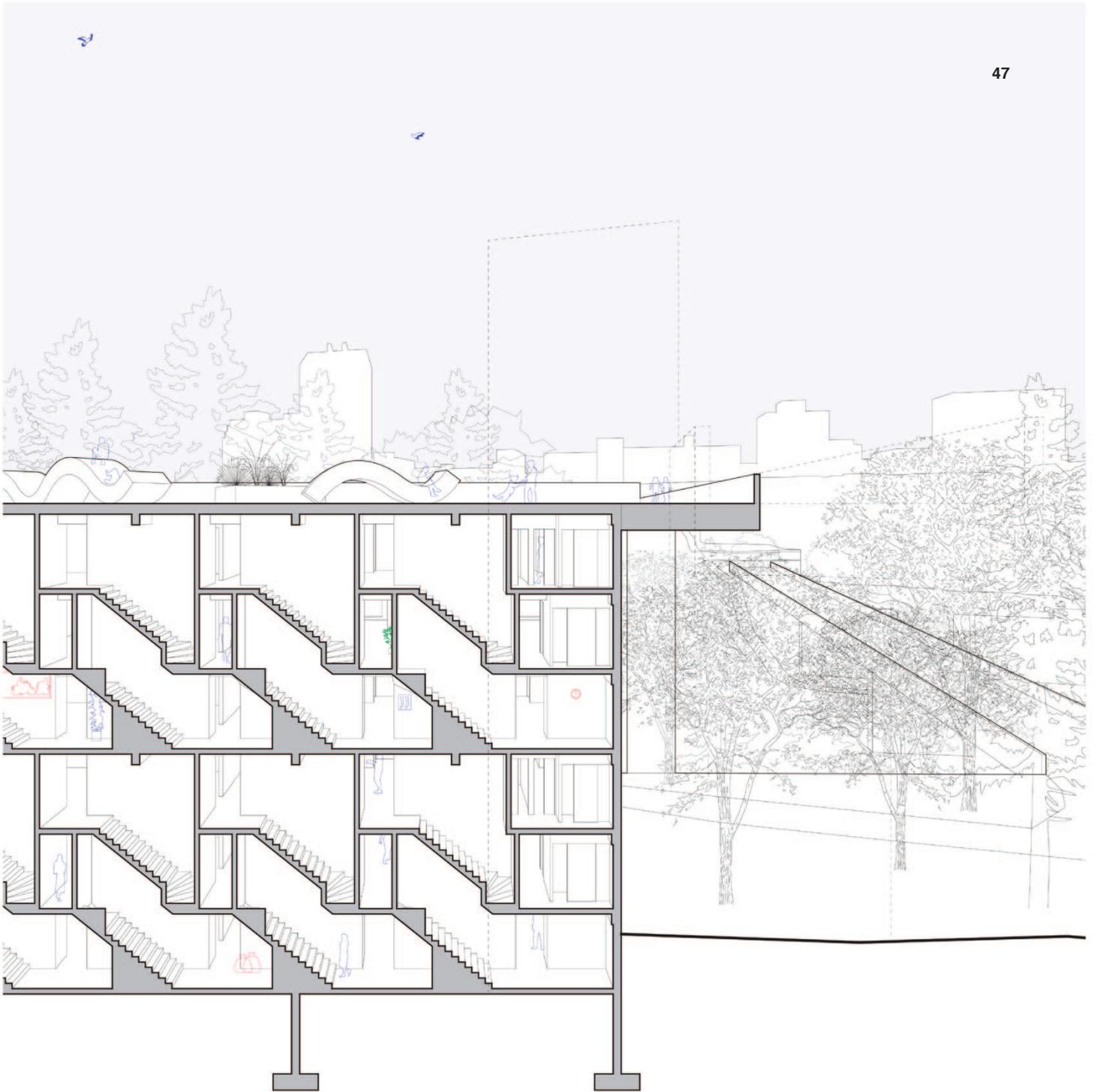


Figure 43 (Section Perspective — Charleson Berm & Charleson Road, Charleson Park)

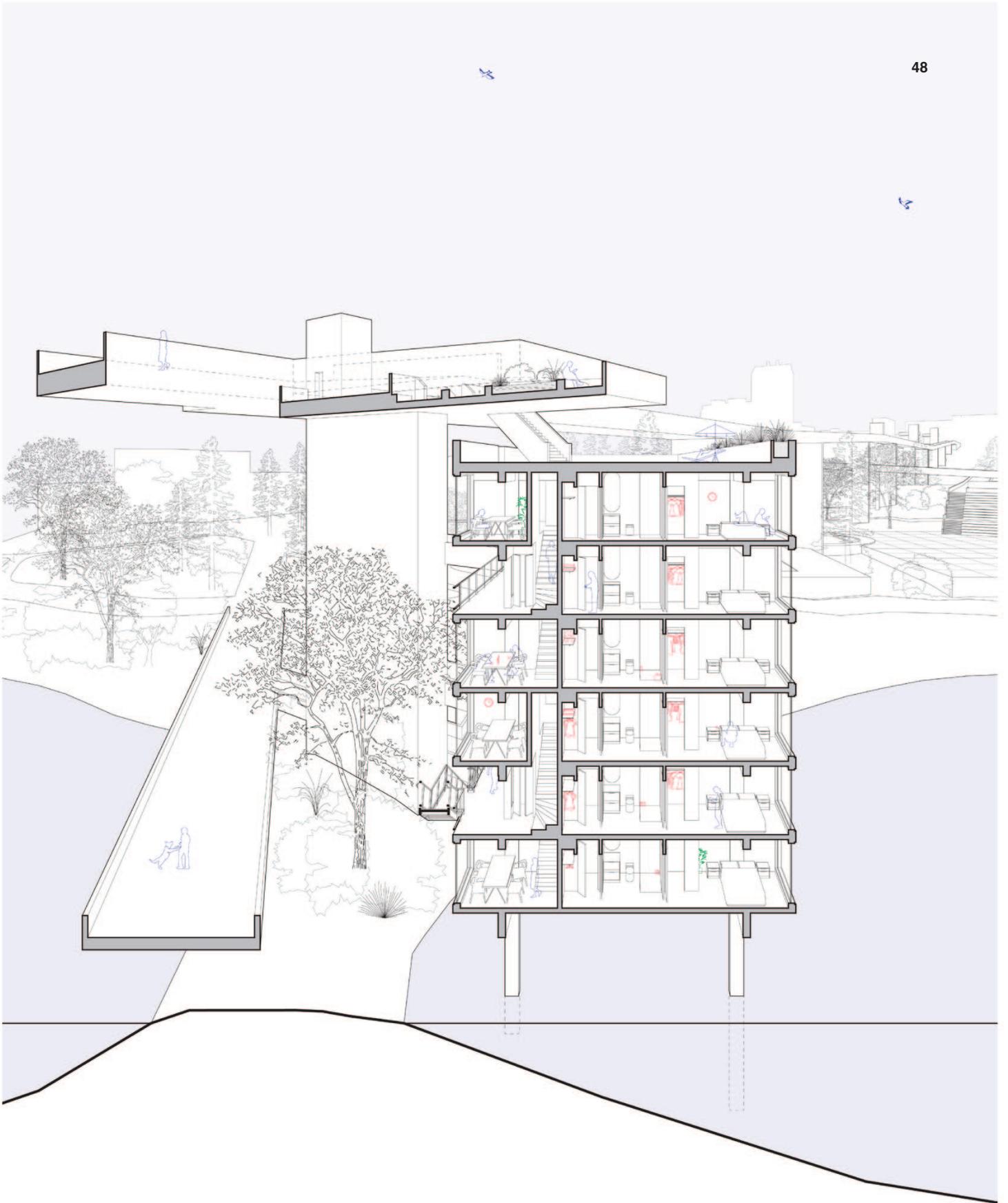


Figure 44 (Section Perspective — Charleson Bay & Seawall, Charleson Park)

## **Vanopolis**

### Pseudo- Topographies

Many of those who have an interest in the future of False Creek South take issue with its density compared to the intensity of development on other sites around False Creek, especially Yaletown (Fig. 34). *Vanopolis* attempts to mediate this discrepancy by connecting these two neighbourhoods while taking advantage of the changing topography of Vancouver. Former industrial flats, False Creek South has evolved into a sculpted naturalistic environment. Indeed, the design of Charleson Park suggests that is and has always been the way it is, namely a bit of preserved greenscape. Pseudo-topographies such as the berm in Charleson Park attempt to blend in with the natural topography of the Fairview Slopes. With its meandering paths, shallow pond and mechanically operated stream of chlorinated water, Charleson Park dissimulates as natural — hiding its status as a highly artificial landscape.

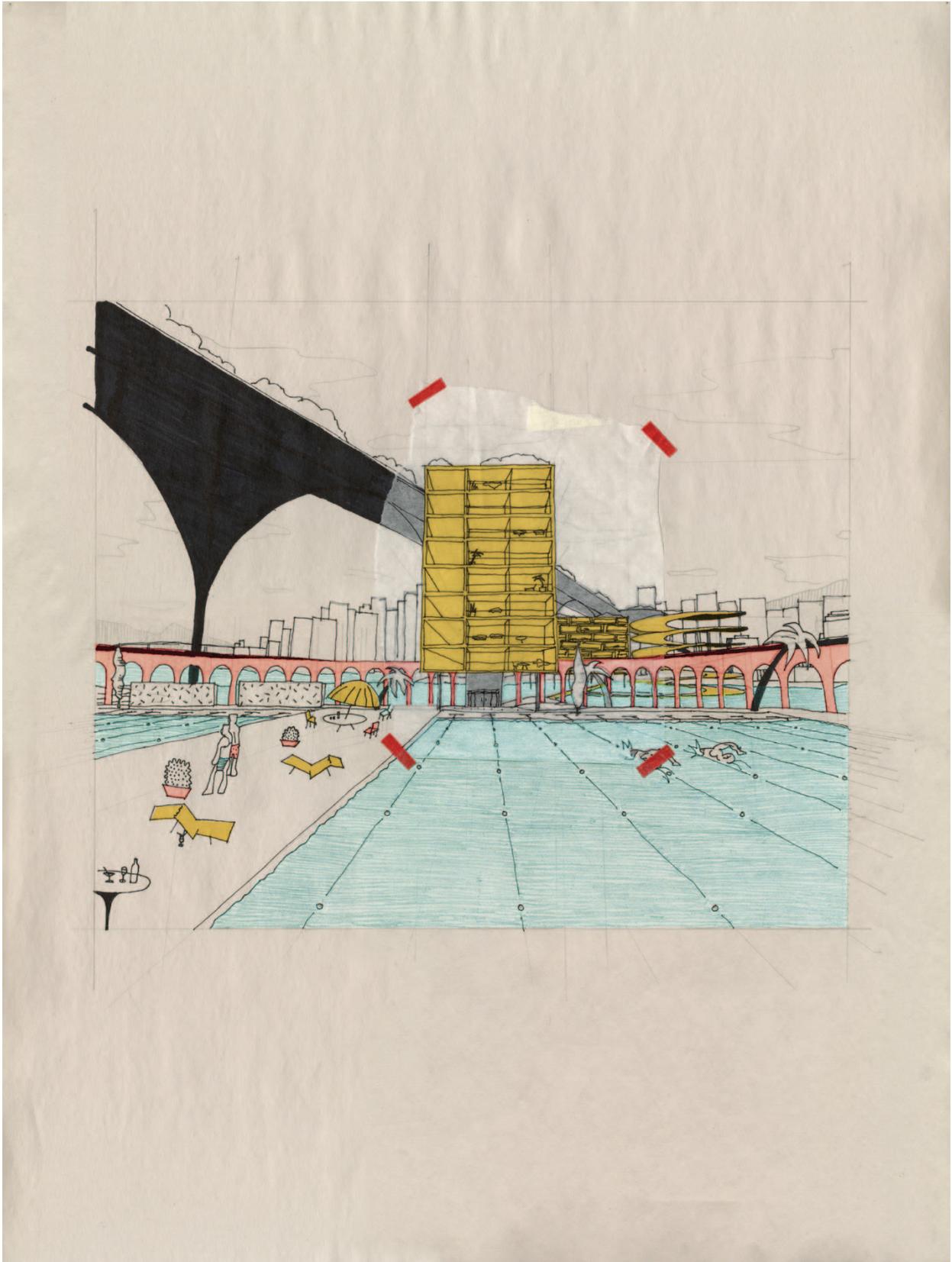


Figure 45 (Composite Sketch — Charleson Park Pond, A Place to Swim)

In the centre and to the west of Charleson Park there is a fenced-off field which follows the footprint of the buried parking garage on which it sits. This footprint coincidentally aligns with the swampy pond on the opposite side of the park. This alignment creates a virtual rectangle within the naturalistic, pseudo-topography of Charleson Park. *Vanopolis*, was positioned to exploit this phenomenon, namely the tension between the natural and the artificial, the picturesque and the geometric. The pond has been transformed into a large public swimming pool and smaller lap pool, offering Vancouver-ites a place to swim within the city (Fig. 43). The area between the pools and field — currently an off-leash dog park — is re-envisioned as an un-programmed gridded landscape that remains open to off-leash canine play. The Cartesian markings, however, allude to the possibility of an impromptu marketplace. The fenced-off field opposite the swimming pools was programmed with a 5 a-side soccer field and two basketball courts to promote social engagement — through sports — throughout the park.



**Figure 46** (Perspective — W 7th Ave. & Laurel St., Fairview Slopes)

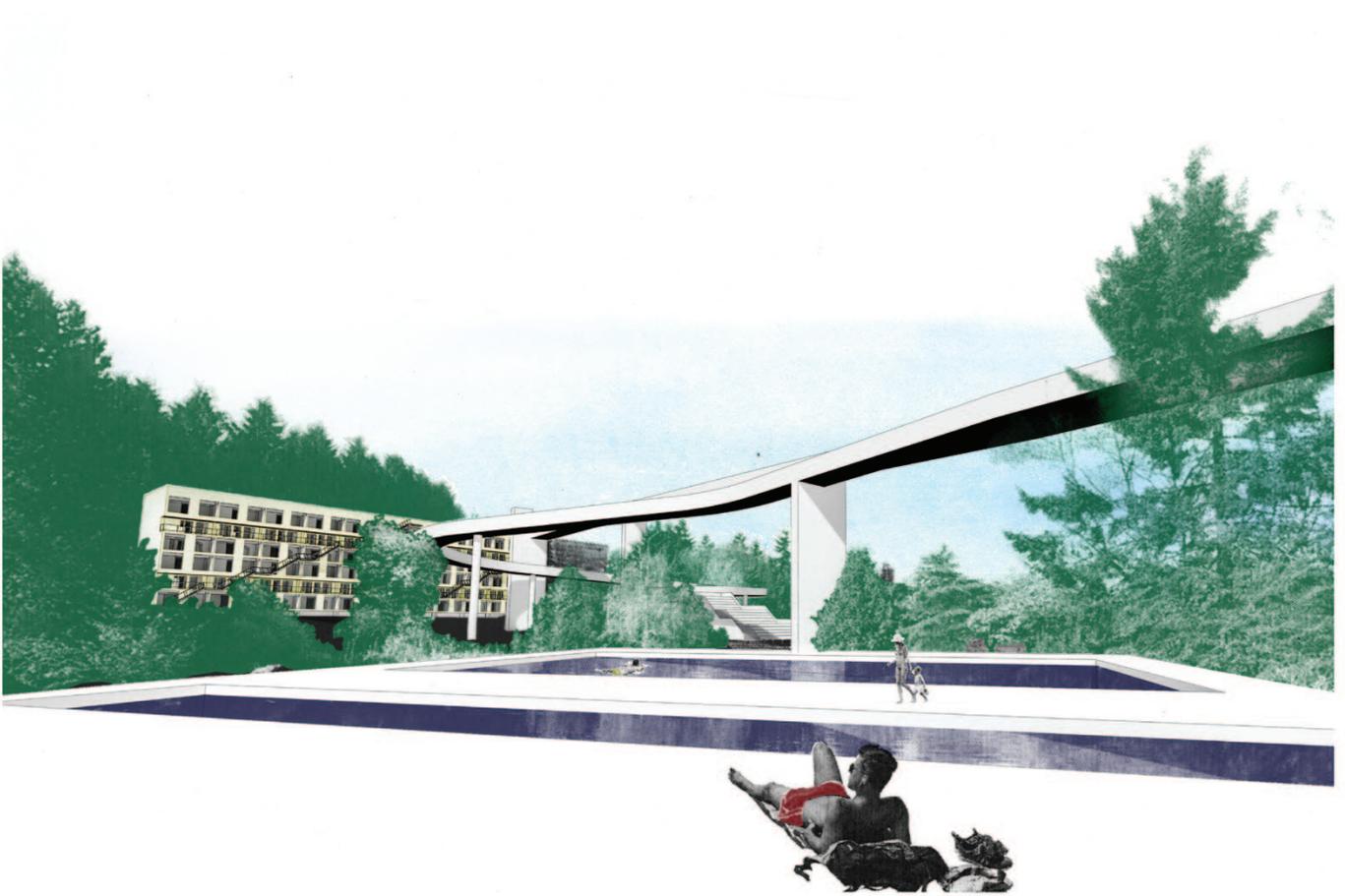


Figure 47 (Perspective — Charleson Park Pond, Charleson Park)



**Figure 48** (Perspective — Yaletown Marina, David Lam Park)

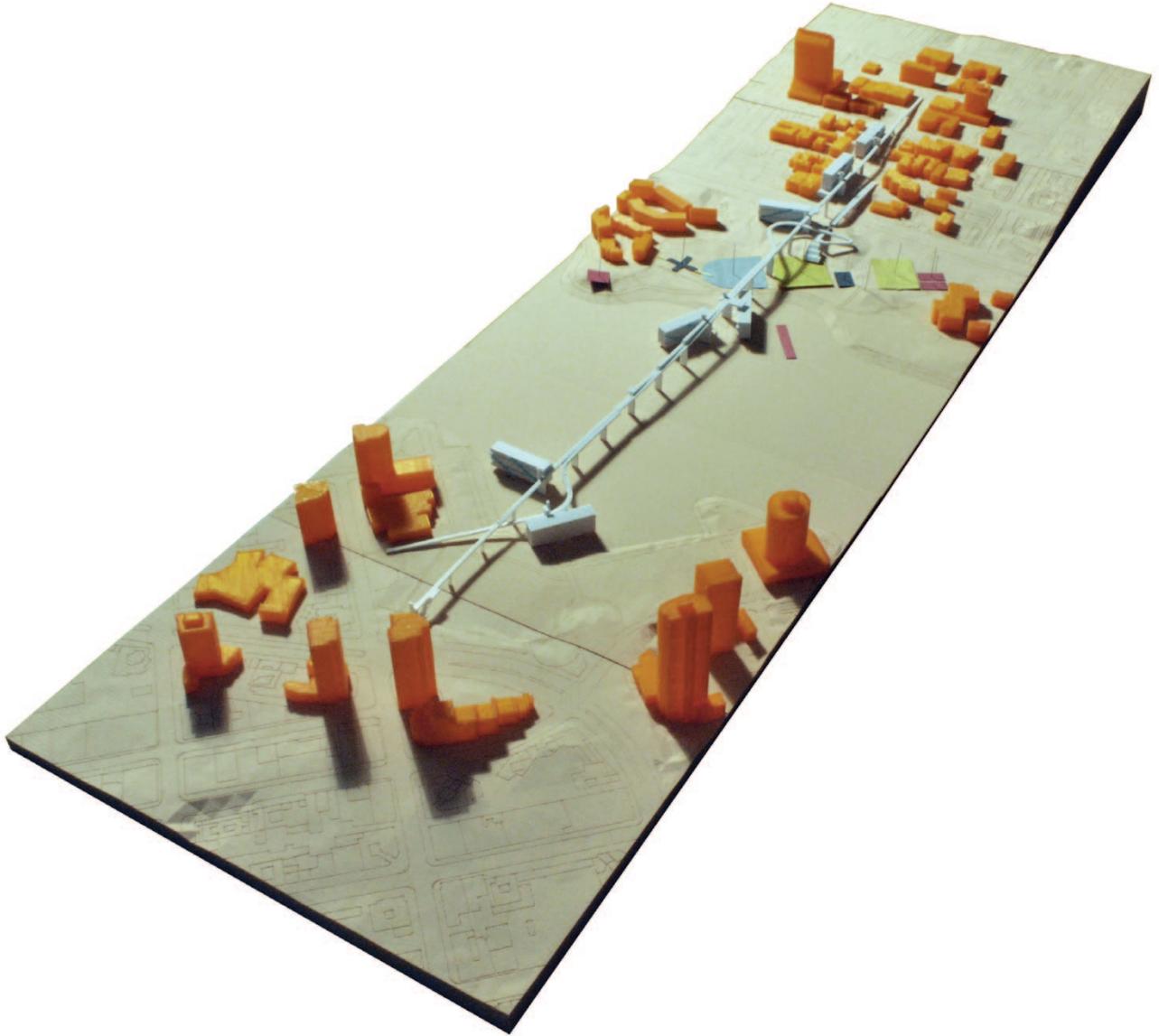


Figure 49 (Perspective — Physical Model, NW)

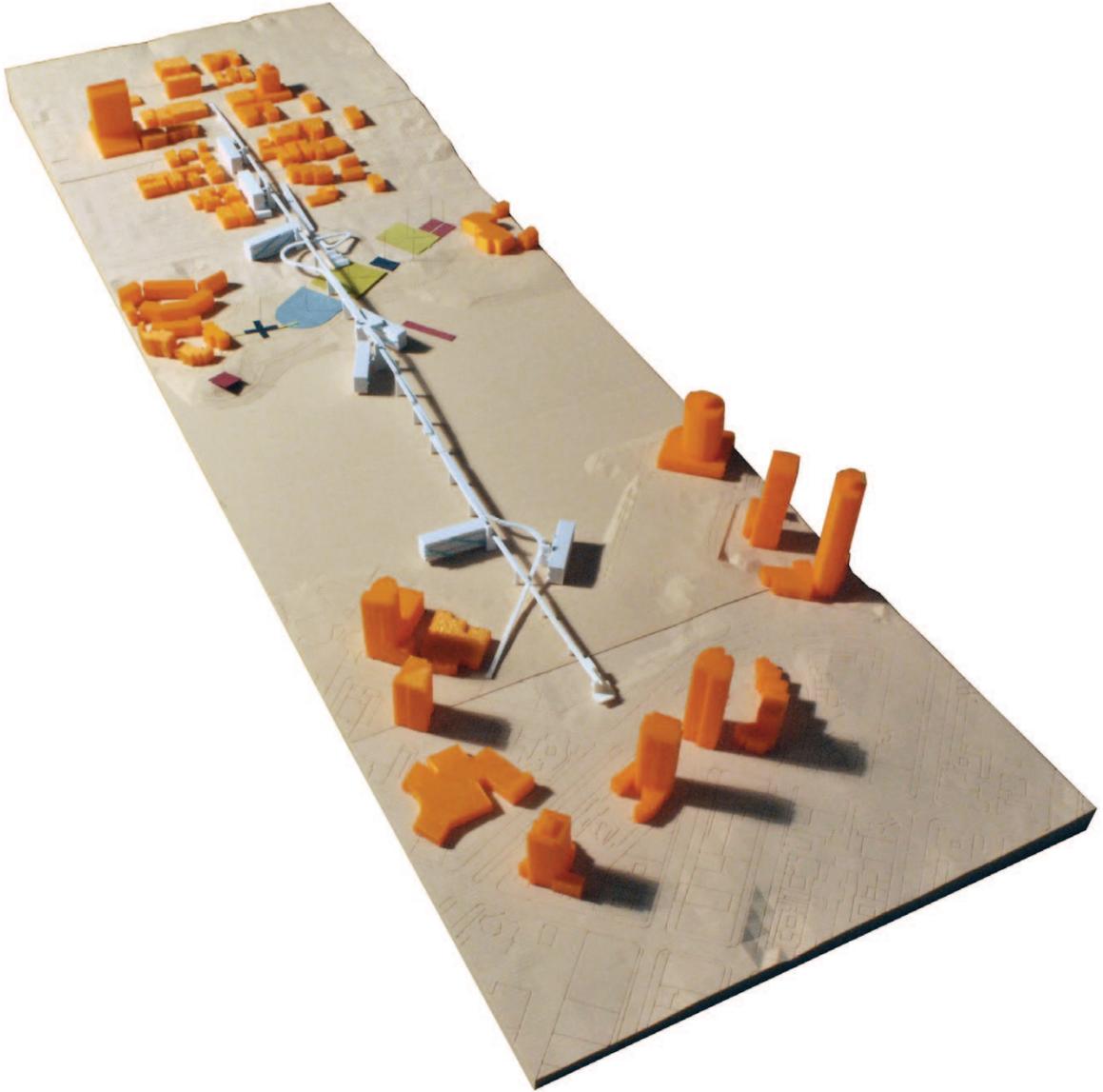


Figure 50 (Perspective — Physical Model, NE)



Figure 51 (Perspective — Physical Model, SW)

## Reflection

*Vanopolis* proposes an elevated connection between Vancouver's Pacific Boulevard in Yaletown and Broadway Avenue in Fairview Slopes. Several viaducts already span the False Creek Inlet, namely the Burrard, Granville, and Cambie Bridges. The project picks up on the language of these crossings to propose a dedicated bridge for pedestrian and cyclists, supported by housing.

*Vanopolis* is intended as a speculative response to the opportunities and challenges facing False Creek South. The territory it occupies is somewhere between the diagrammatic and the real. Conversations with residents, architects, city planners, and other Vancouver-ites suggest that change is both inevitable and desirable — assuming it can be orchestrated in a way that benefits both the community and the city at large. With this in mind, the aim of the proposal was to provoke and incite discussion.

Comparing the final proposal with early sketches, it appears that *Vanopolis* has remained true to the initial concept, despite development in an arguably productive direction. The path from a diagrammatic impulse to a realistic proposition might be considered to be successful if it encourages a conversation about how we might think more creatively and critically about how we occupy our cities — including both land and water and both the private and public realms.

With land leases in False Creek South set to expire in the next decade, concerned parties are keen to know what lies ahead — especially as the area is under pressure to intensify. The proposed pedestrian/cycle bridge across False Creek represents a bold approach to accommodating additional density and blurs the boundaries between architecture, infrastructure, and urban design. Using the bridge to support housing and housing to support the bridge, will enable False Creek South — through and over which this new connection passes — to transform from a self-contained enclave to a thriving, connected community.

Blurring, as it does, the boundaries between architecture, infrastructure and urban design, the proposal can be interpreted and evaluated in a variety of ways. One might, for example, be fascinated by the idea of injecting housing into the public realm (e.g., into Charleson Park, David Lam Park and False Creek) but fail to see the advantages of a direct pedestrian connection between Fairview Slopes and Yaletown. Conversely, one might be enthused by implications of connecting things that have never before been connected but fail to be convinced by the way housing is deployed. Similarly, one's reaction to the connection depends on whether, for example, it is seen as a bridge or something more like an elevated dock that extends into the adjacent neighbourhoods. One's reaction to the housing depends on whether it is seen as displaced fabric (i.e., private dwellings that have tumbled into and invaded the public realm), floating homes (i.e., scaled up versions of the floating houses attached to Granville Island), mini cruise ships docked in False Creek, or infrastructure (i.e., bridge piers).

Oddly, the strength of the project is in its ambiguity. Each interpretation is valid and no single interpretation dominates. Indeed ambiguity may be appropriate inasmuch as the larger goal of the proposition is to incite and provoke the community to think "outside the box."

Reflecting on the method, i.e., on the way the exploration was conducted, it is fair to say that it had both positive and negative outcomes. On one hand the use of collage, sketching, xeroxing, and overlaying different elements spoke effectively to the complexity of the site and to the issues at play. It also enabled me to quickly uncover, explore and visualize ideas. On the other hand, the willful and ad hoc way in which the proposition emerged — not to mention its apparently tangential relationship to the issues of concern to the community — made it difficult to effectively communicate what I was doing and why it was relevant, much less desirable. While it could be argued that the visualizations I produced are in synch with the notion of ‘in betweenness,’ the images lack a certain cohesiveness when placed together. Moving forward, additional images will be produced to further refine and better communicate the project. In many ways the thesis could be characterized as both a search for a response to the issues facing False Creek South and the search for a set of visual techniques and representational conventions through which to explore, identify, depict and refine concepts as they emerged.

*Post Script:*

Vanopolis was well received by the thesis committee before which I defended it in Ottawa. As hoped, it sparked lively conversations about public and private spaces, infrastructure vs. architecture, and the blurred boundary between architecture and urban design. A few weeks later, the project traveled to Vancouver where it was presented to a group of residents, city planners and local architects. Needless to say, this was an extremely nerve-racking undertaking given the fundamentally conceptual and academic nature of the proposal. To my surprise, the project was also well received in Vancouver and provoked discussions with numerous individuals over the course of the reception that followed the formal presentation. However far afield it might be from what the community and City have been discussing, I came away feeling that Vanopolis had made a contribution to the False Creek South community.

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