



An Ecological Revolution & a Cultural Evolution

At the very heart of the city, the new ConfEx Park is the project that will define the future of Thessaloniki. Not only because of its urban location and size, but also because of its place in the hearts of the city's residents and visitors. A strong factor for the city's development as a commercial centre, Thessaloniki's International Fair has also been, for decades, the link between local residents and the rest of the world. It was the place to find new products, to see new spectacles, to try new games and new tastes. As such, it has not only been a place of magic but also a place of culture, shaping the citizens of tomorrow. Having the unique opportunity to redefine this place and make it an integral part of the city again, one needs to ask the question: "What is the innovation that the city of the 21st century needs?"

In line with the ongoing greening strategies of cities around the world, Thessaloniki's Innovation Forest, or TIF, proposes an urban forest right in the heart of Thessaloniki. At the point where the urban fabric becomes narrower and the city's suburban forest comes closer to the Thermaic Gulf, the new ConfEx Park is envisioned as a place that will be more than a city park. Aspiring to become a model of innovative urban development, that can lead to a more symbiotic relationship between cities and the planet, TIF proposes a full urban forest, that will not only increase the 1.6 m² of green resident indicator, but will also create a new habitat of urban wildlife. A biodiversity hotspot right in the middle of the city, a forest to become the city's new public destination, a forest that will not only provide space for leisure and recreation, but that will also be a place of education and environmental awareness. Coupled with a state-of-the-art Exhibition, Congress and Business Centre, TIF provides for urban innovation in the power of 3; an Intelligent, Inclusive & Iconic new destination for the city of Thessaloniki, the Balkans and beyond.

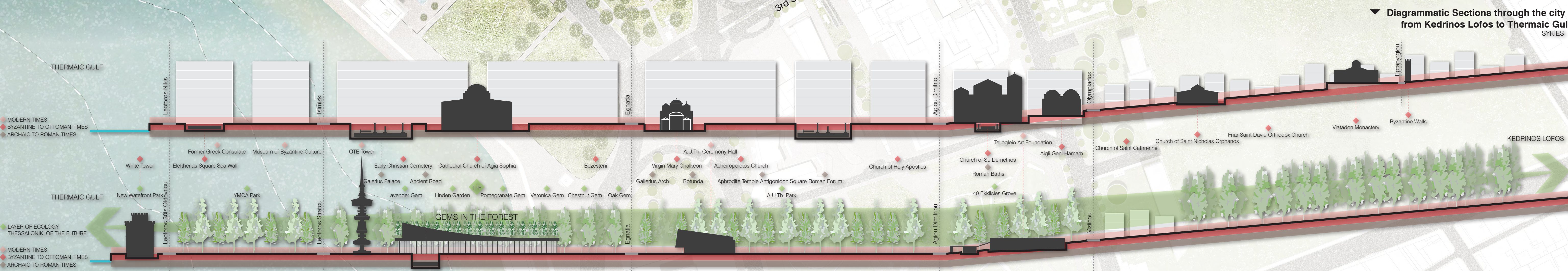
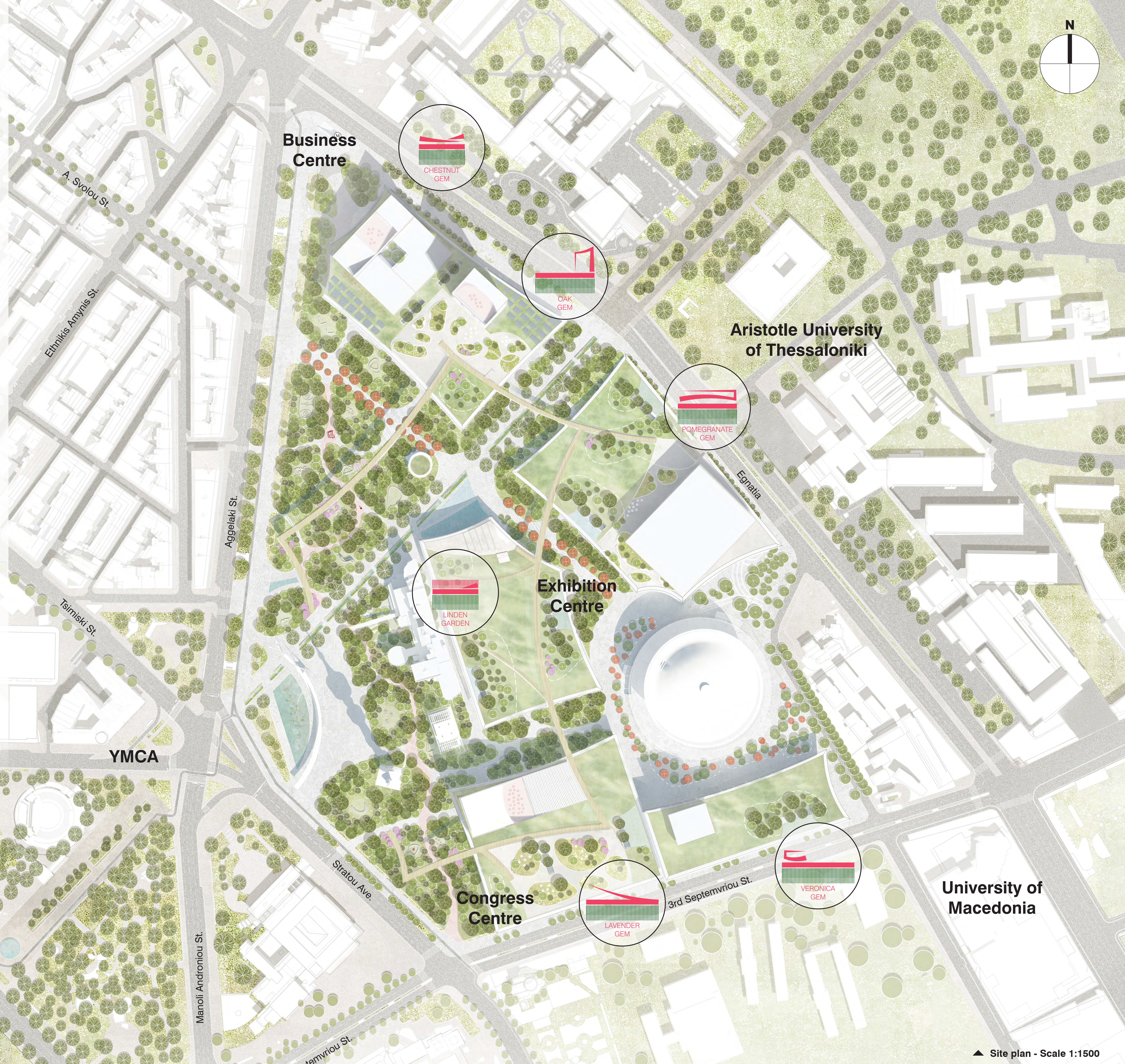


Gems in the Forest

Facing the challenge of transforming a huge amount of programme into a human scale space, our proposal looks at the city's DNA. Thessaloniki, a city with a rich history, a melting pot of cultures throughout time, is a city of layers and gems. The layers of history are literally visible in the urban fabric, with monuments and fragments of antiquities sitting on different levels than that of the vibrant streets, while the monuments appear like hidden gems among the modern buildings, transforming a stroll around the city into an experience of discovery. Our design embraces the layered structure of the city and adds another layer on top of the history ones, the layer of nature and ecology. Translated formally into a thick forest and its tree canopies, our nature layer forms a green base. At the same time, the new Exhibition, Congress and Business Centre buildings form another kind of base, on top of which sits a canopy of green & publicly accessible roofs, and a series of smaller buildings with a public destination. Trees, canopies and roots, form the new green layer, on top of which sit the city's new Gems.

1417 newly planted trees
1226 meters of elevated tree path
408 meters of Green-Blue Axis
77.7% coverage of newly planted Urban Forest

Thessaloniki Waterfront



Intelligent: An Exhibition & Congress Centre at the Forefront of the Global Expo Industry

Aspiring to make TIF one of the most important destinations in Europe and the world for expo tourism, efficiency, functionality and optimization are the main parameters of the design. Next to the clean and simple hall volumes, the proposal is looking into enhancing the relation of the new expo centre with the rest of the city, by minimizing the impact of the big spaces and the servicing. The forest around the big halls, not only merges TIF Expo with the rest of Thessaloniki's green spaces, but also offers a unique experience to the Exhibition and Congress visitors. Anticipating the possible transformation of the industry, due to the Covid-19 implications, and its possible turn towards hybrid events, our proposal includes a part of flexible spaces that could, in the future, be adapted to a new use. A smart design, that seeks to make a seamless connection between expo and the city, tourists and residents, nature and the city.

Inclusive: A Milestone in the History of the City's Green Development

Looking to align TIF with the city's Resilient Cities Network agenda, as well as with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, our proposal extends the notion of inclusivity. With a multiple range of activities, human scale public space, fully accessible spaces, intergenerational destinations, flexible spaces to be given back to the community, but also a lush green space and a comprehensive sustainability and climate adaptation strategy, inclusivity extends to embrace not only people, but also animal and plant species and the planet. The forest plays an important role in conveying this message by not only including an educational component in the form of information spots about the species it hosts, but also by creating a community around it. We envision that the new Forest of Thessaloniki will be planted by the people and by the city's future citizens. Through the "My TIF" programme, families will be able to adopt a tree, plant it and watch it grow, along with their children. Education, community and stewardship, are integral components of the future TIF.

Iconic: The Landmark of the 21st Century

Envisioning the new ConEx Park as the city's future landmark par excellence, TIF tells the story of a different kind of icon. Moving away from the idea of an iconic building, and closer to the idea of an iconic landscape and placemaking, we propose a green landmark, a landmark that will tell the story of resiliency, and that will broadcast the environmental performance of this new green space. The buildings are merged with the forest, leaving fragments of them to be revealed on top of it, while the forest becomes the new icon of the city. OTE Tower, becomes part of the tress, a beacon that communicates to the whole city the performance of the forest, through a night-lighting scheme that will change according to the water that is stored, or the oxygen that is produced. A live, green landmark that will breathe along with the city.

A Multi-Layered Approach- Connecting People, City & Nature

The layered organization of the public space of Thessaloniki is further reflected in the organization of the public space of TIF. The green canopy, formed by the trees and the canopies of the buildings, creates two different layers that offer two distinct experiences. On the layer below, a vibrant world exists under the trees. The forest is a place full of activities, offering the opportunity for playing, relaxing, exercising, meditating, a unique opportunity for recreation under a lush green. At the ground floor of the buildings, activities spill out under the canopies, like cafes and sitting areas for the Exhibition, Convention and Business areas visitors. With the trees framing the buildings and getting as close as possible to them, the boundaries between buildings and forest are blurred. Two axes and a path through the forest add to the vibrancy of this lower level and seamlessly connect the site with the rest of the city.

On the layer on top, the forest continues in a different form, while the green roofs host a number of activities, for both visitors and the employees of the Business, Exhibition and Convention Centre. The upper layer creates the possibility of experiencing Thessaloniki, in a different way, by offering views towards the city, the sea and the mountain, while strolling along beautiful forest gardens and green. The Gems have themselves a public destination, offering more possibilities for activities on that level.

In between the two levels, runs an elevated walkway, a tree-path that not only connects the two worlds, but also offers the unique experience of walking in between the lush, green canopies of the forest.

Merging Buildings and Forest

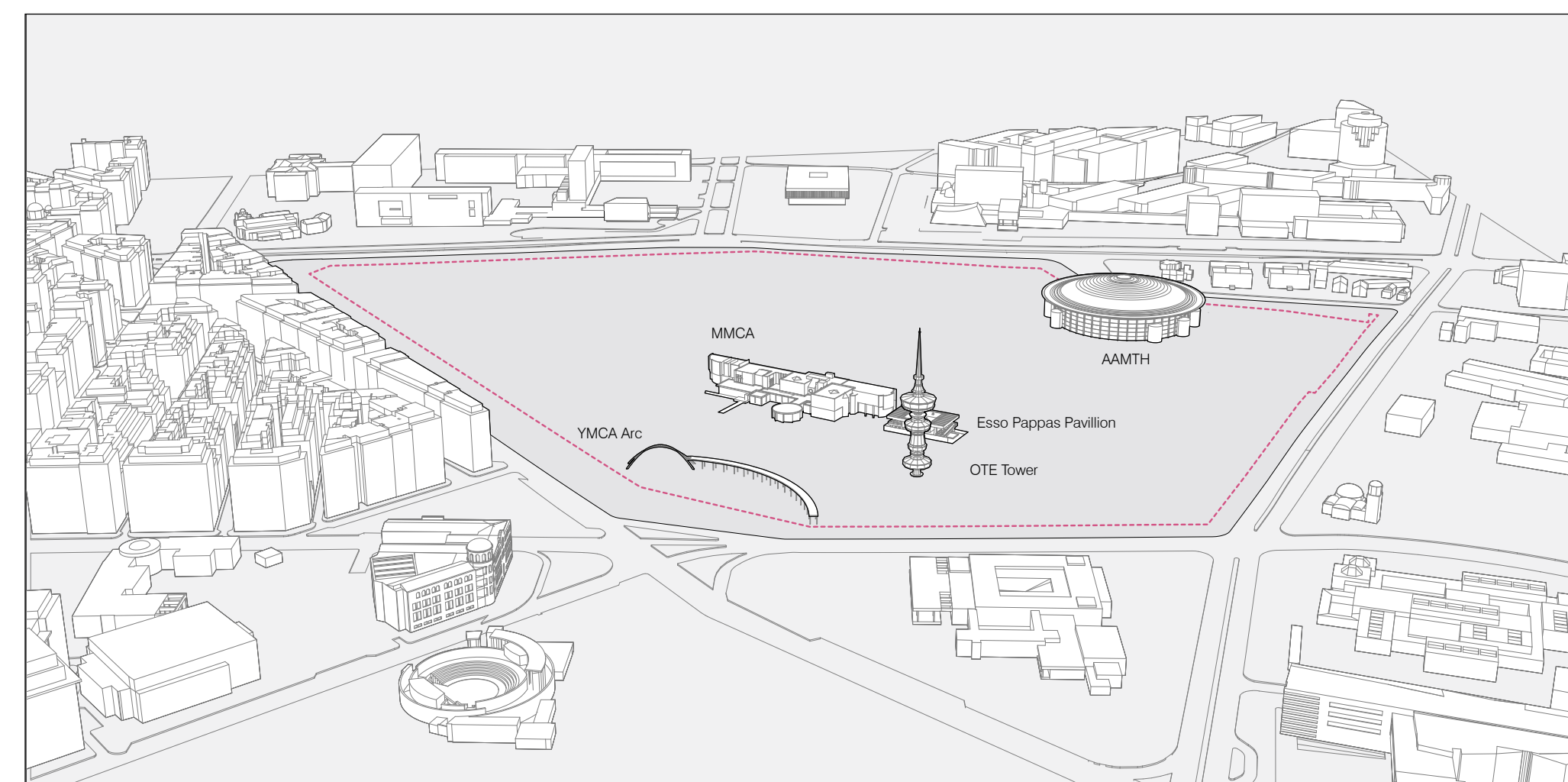
Podiums and Gems are treated in different ways, in order to further enhance the idea of Gems in the Forest. Our design blends the bases of the new buildings with the lower level of the forest, while the Gems pop-out on the upper level, as distinct volumes. In order to achieve a blend with the surroundings, the bases are treated with natural materials, while the dimension of verticality is explored, in order to match with the trunks of the trees. Structural columns, supporting the canopy, are changing direction, creating like this a diversity in views and shadows. Three basic materials are used for the façade treatment of the base: first, transparent glass at the places where the building "breathes" and people come in and out, second, corrugated panels, and third, foggy reflective glass that augments the presence of the forest. On top of the base, canopies with curved edges, further blur the big volumes with the green, creating interesting perspectives of the buildings and trees interaction. The big horizontal plates of the canopies, create an elevated plateau, which aligns with the site's higher elevation at the side of Egnatia, allowing for access on the roofs from that side. On this plate, appear the Gems. Clean, pristine volumes, with no curves on the plan, but with curves appearing on the vertical dimension of the meticulously designed facades. Refined objects on a tray of canopies and trees, the Gems break the big scale of the development and anchor the human scale public space of the elevated forest. Each Gem, has a distinct shape, creating like this a natural wayfinding on the site.

Thessaloniki's Public Space par Excellence

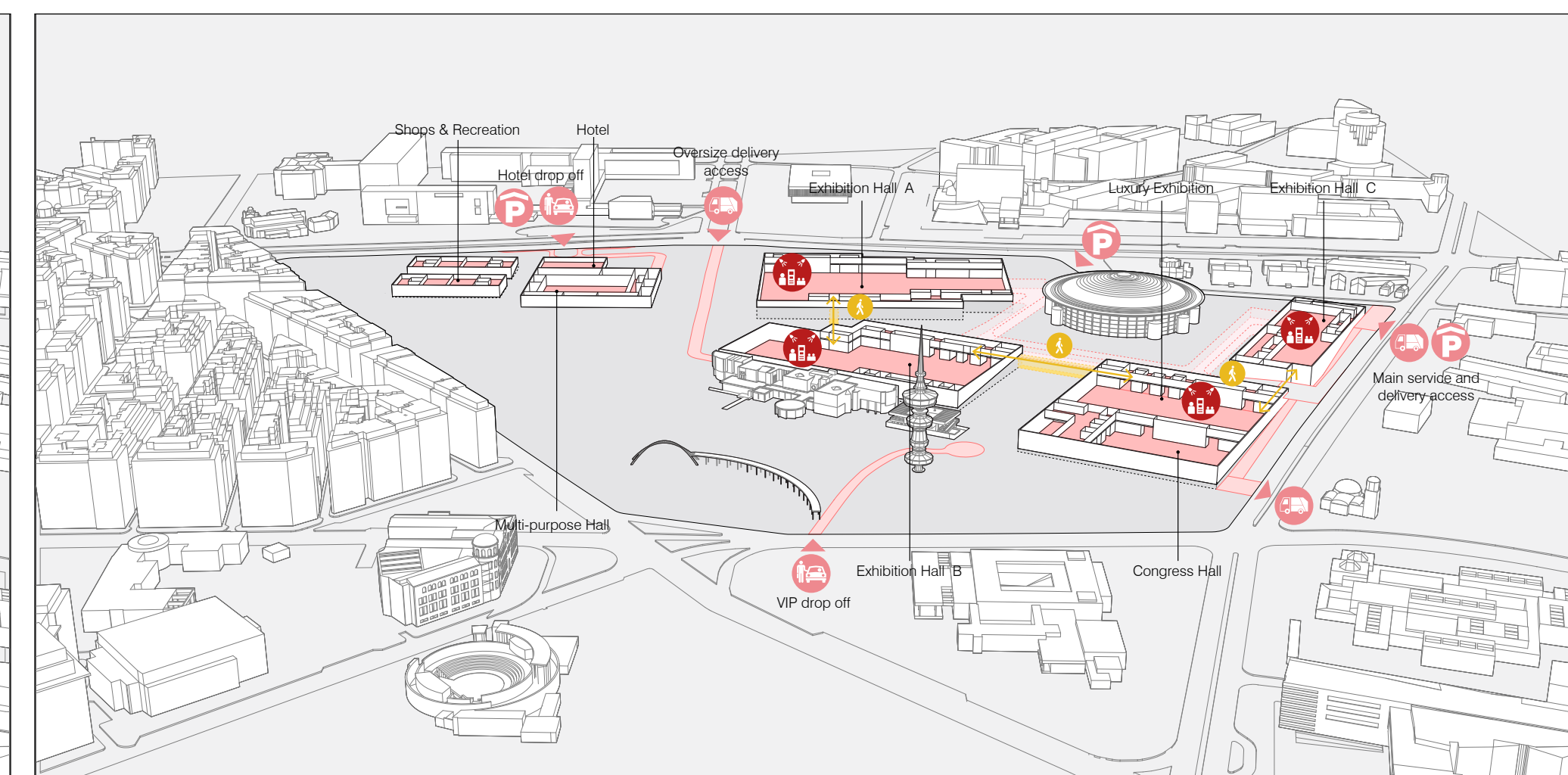
The history of TIF-Helexpo, like all fairs, is strongly connected to a feeling of magic. Hosting the first amusement park of the city and spectacles like the "Loop of Death", or being the place where the city's residents tried Coca Cola for the first time, the park has been imprinted in the minds of the people as a place of fun, novelties, and fascination. Our proposal envisions of bringing back this sense of magic, offering at the same time something new, something that the city of Thessaloniki does not have. Connecting to the site's history, we introduce places like the TIF Gardens, invoking the flower avenues of the old fairs, or the TIF Beer Garden, remembering the "black" beer and sausages of the older times. The TIF Tree Path is the new thing that TIF will offer to the city of Thessaloniki, while the new destination is programmed with activities that service residents, tourists, students and employees.

TIF STEP BY STEP

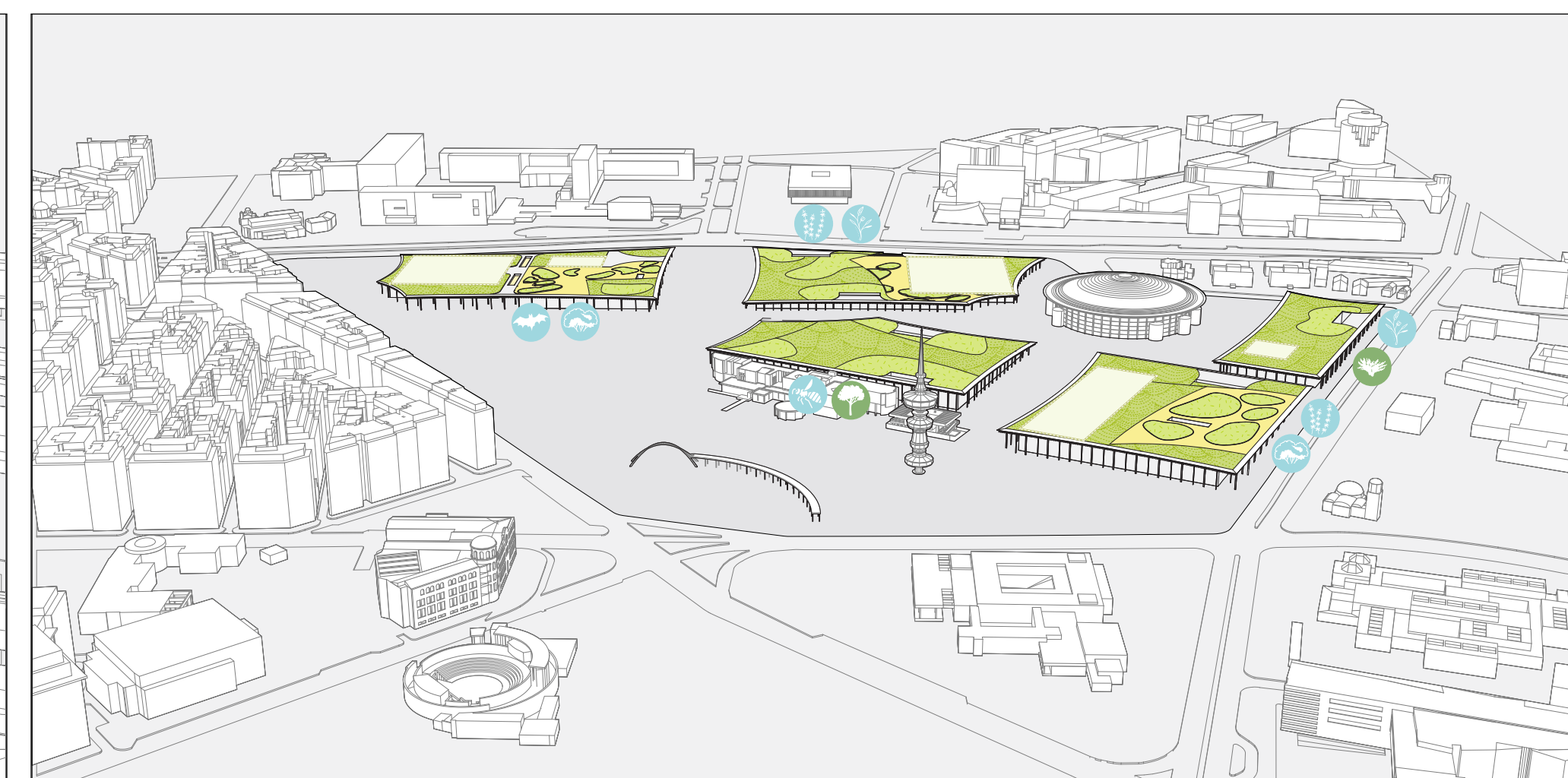
Step 0: Preserving buildings and structures of unique architectural, cultural and historical value, on site.

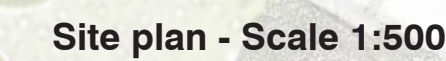


Step 1: Optimizing the design of the Business, Exhibition & Congress Centre, by using functional & efficient grids. Minimizing the impact of servicing by a) placing the service access on 3rd Septemvriou and allowing for a seamless connection with the University of Macedonia, through a vibrant square around AAMTH, b) implementing an underground system, while allowing at the same time for surface service, needed on special occasions.

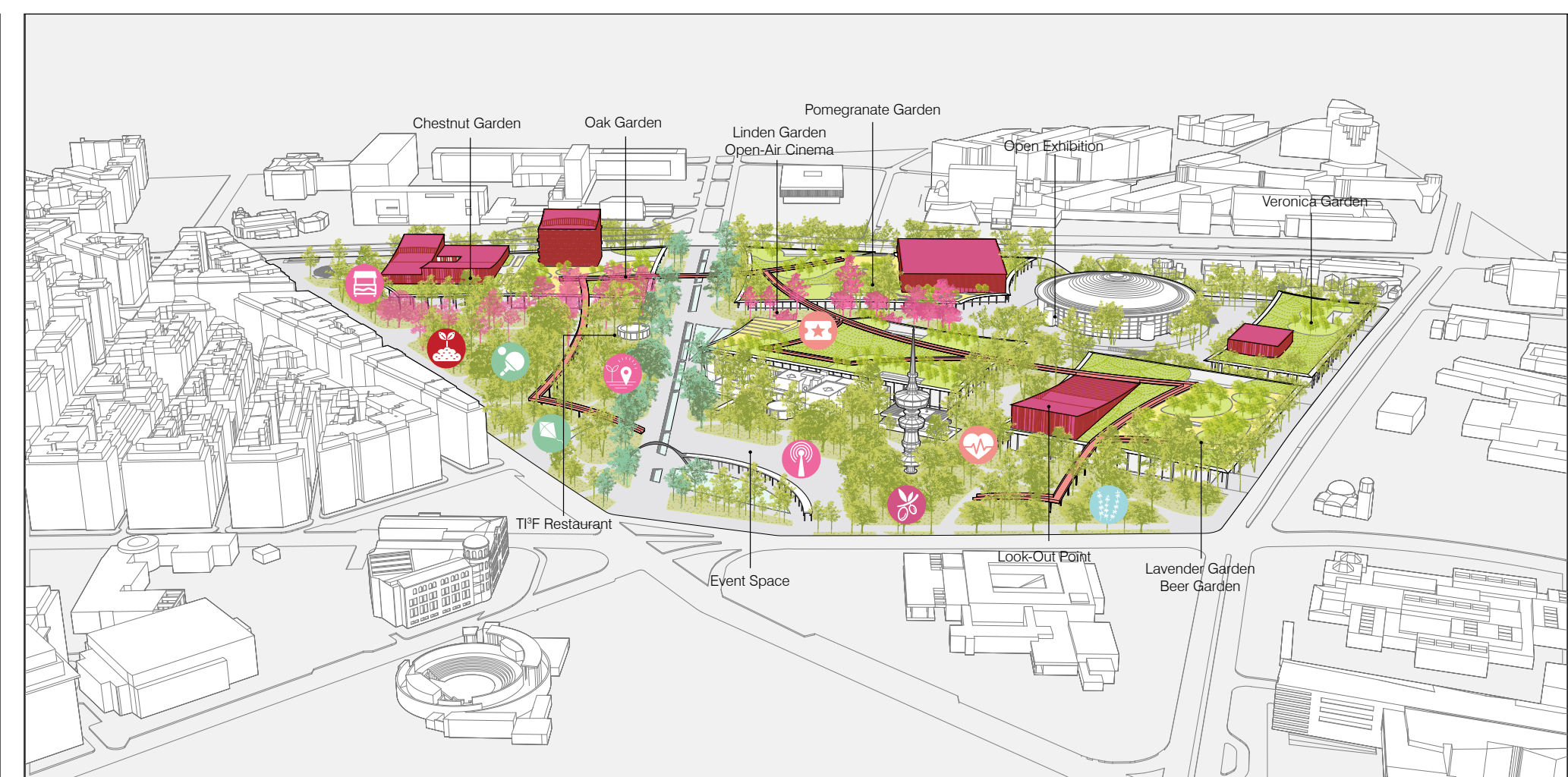


Step 2: Blurring the limits of built space and forest by a series of green canopies, which at the same time create an elevated plateau, a second level for public activities.





Step 5: Creating TIF, the Innovative Forest of Thessaloniki. A lower and an elevated forest, a resiliency & biodiversity hotspot, full with recreational functions and activities, a unique destination for the city of Thessaloniki.



THESSALONIKI
INNOVATIVE
FOREST
#MeetMeAtTheForest

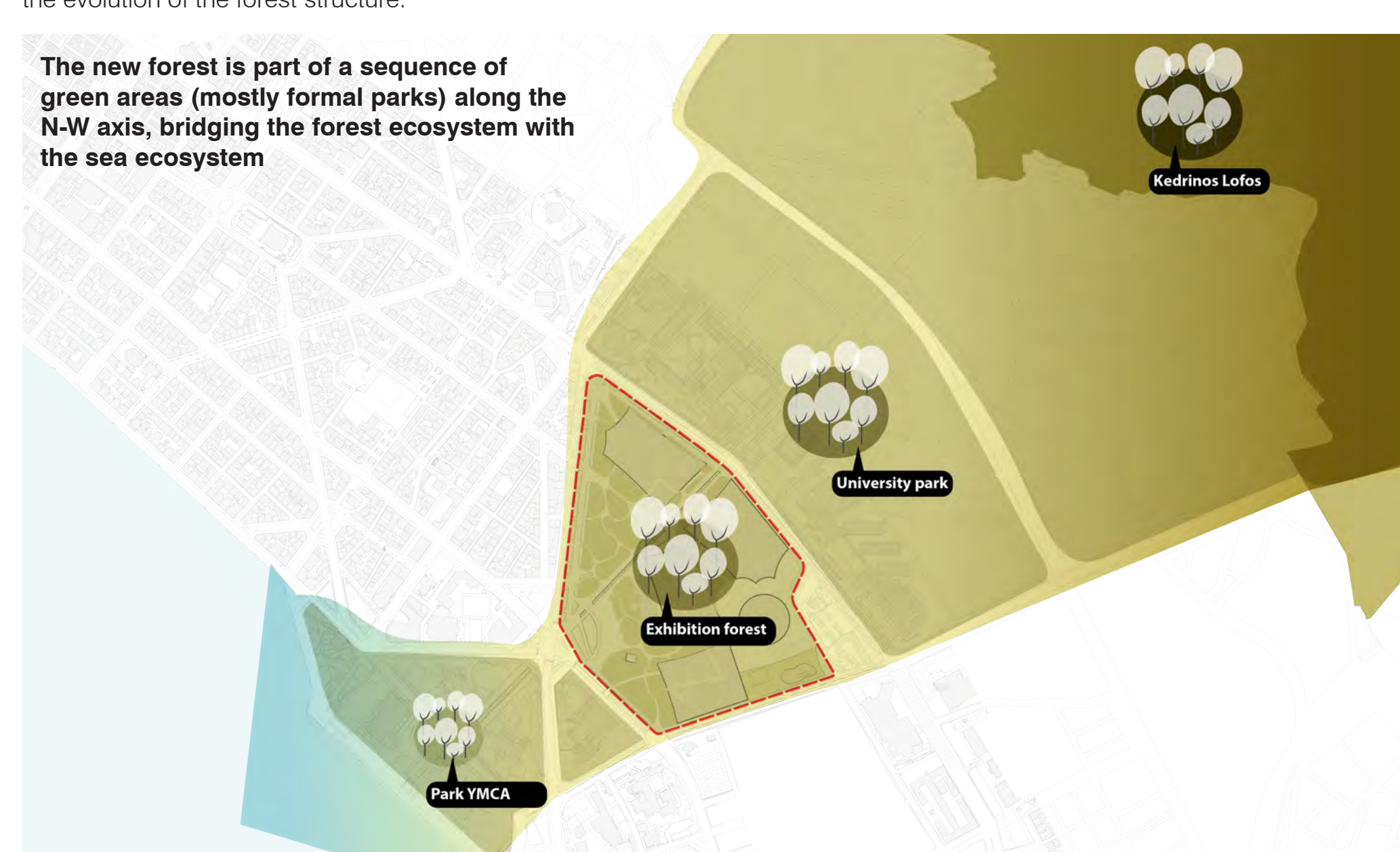
Thessaloniki's Innovative Forest

Towards a resilient future

The site is envisioned as a hotspot for nature, in the middle of the city, that aims to respond to the strong desire for green spaces expressed by the citizens. Far from the image of the traditional ornamental park, often underutilized and reliant on high maintenance, the proposed urban forest is conceived as a performative and self-sufficient organism, which will strongly contribute to the wellbeing of the local community, on multiple levels. Thanks to an integrated approach, the forest will provide several ecological services, including increase of local biodiversity, carbon footprint reduction, and climate resilience, while offering social and psychological benefits to the citizens. These include opportunities for learning about environmental issues, as well as local flora and fauna, thus encouraging a renewed bond with the city. For foreign visitors, the park will act as a living showcase, branding the identity of Thessaloniki and its rich natural and cultural heritage.

Urban scale approach

The design proposal sets the foundation on the large scale and aims at connecting to the wider green framework, in support of the local biodiversity. Triggered by the strategic location of the site, between sea and mountains, the design approach embraces the sequence of valuable green spaces emerging from the urban context along the N-W direction, by activating a new green stepping-stone, well anchored to the local green network, via robust trees corridors. Inspired by the Seih-Sou forest north of the site, the new landscape icon of Thessaloniki will showcase a mosaic of woodland typologies, "broadcasting" live the evolution of the forest structure.



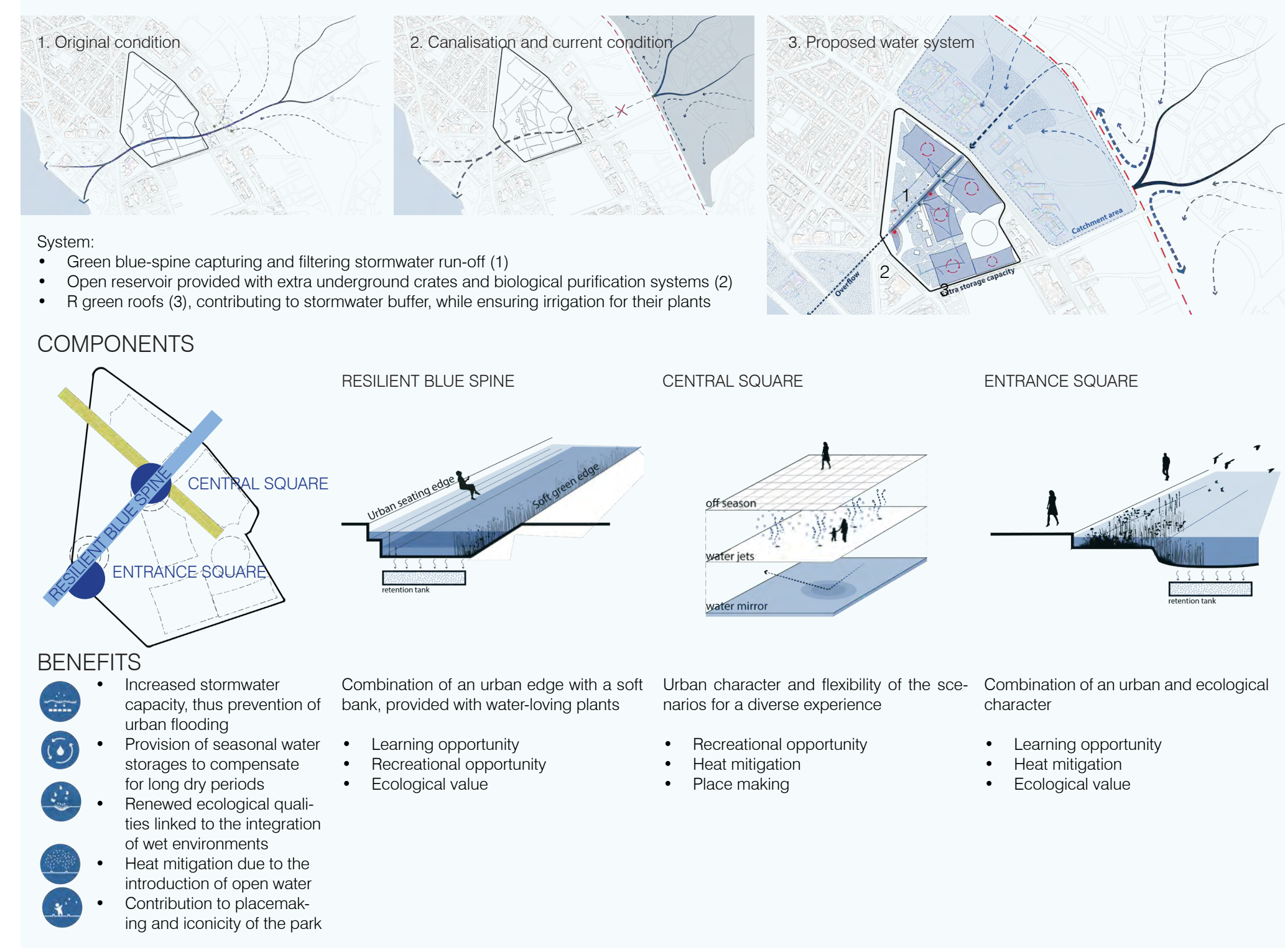
Water System

EVOLUTION OF THE LOCAL WATER SYSTEM

During the urbanisation process, natural water systems and relative ecological qualities have been replaced by more controlled and urban water engineering solutions, which resulted into limited flexibility towards the upcoming climate change. Already today, the excess of landscape and the increase of extreme climate events cause severe urban floods in winter and excess of heat during summers.

THE NEW WATER MACHINE

The ambition of the proposed water strategy is to re-establish the buffering role of the stream, today disappeared, via a sequence of climate adaptive solutions, visibly integrated within the landscape areas.

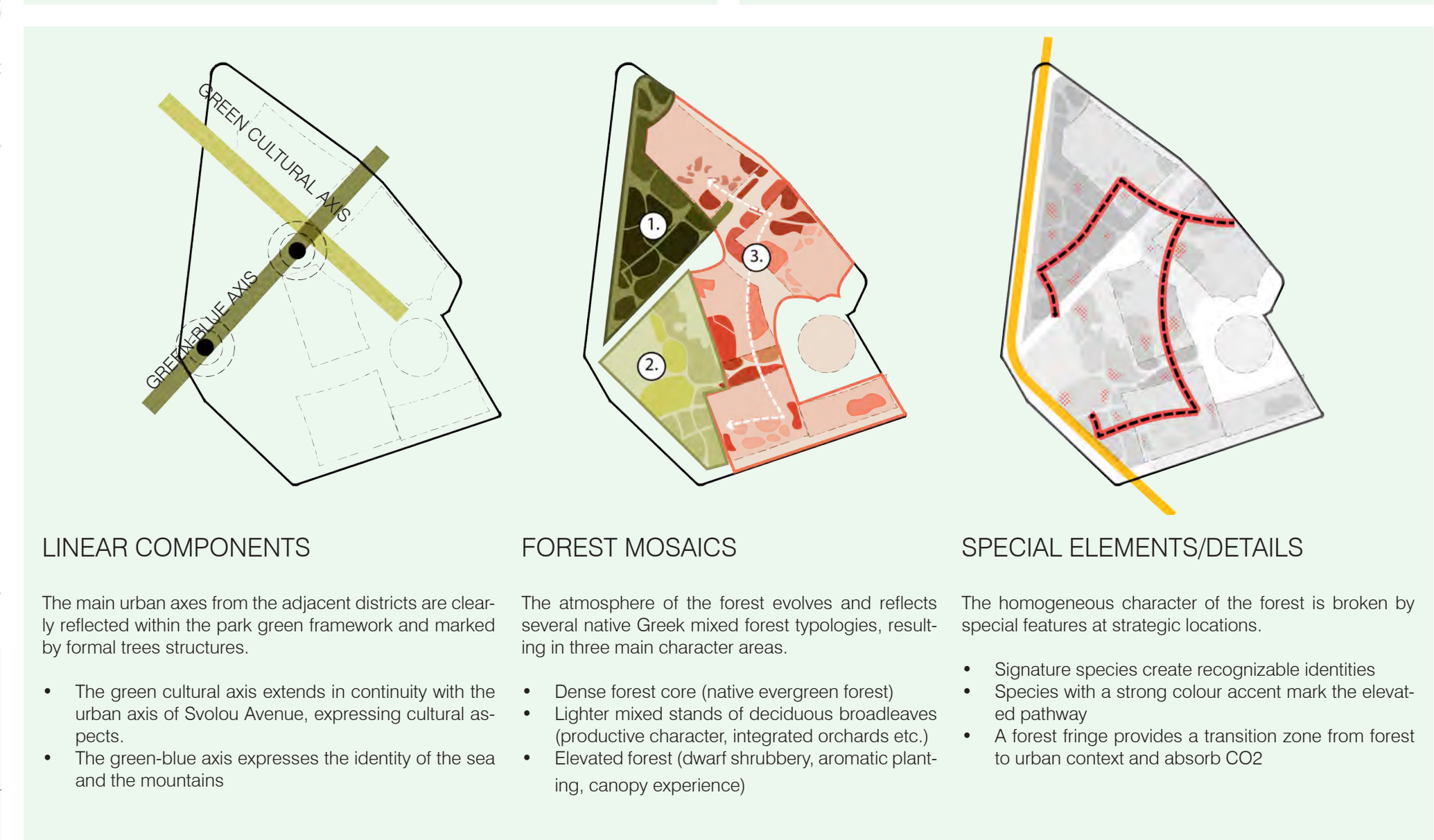
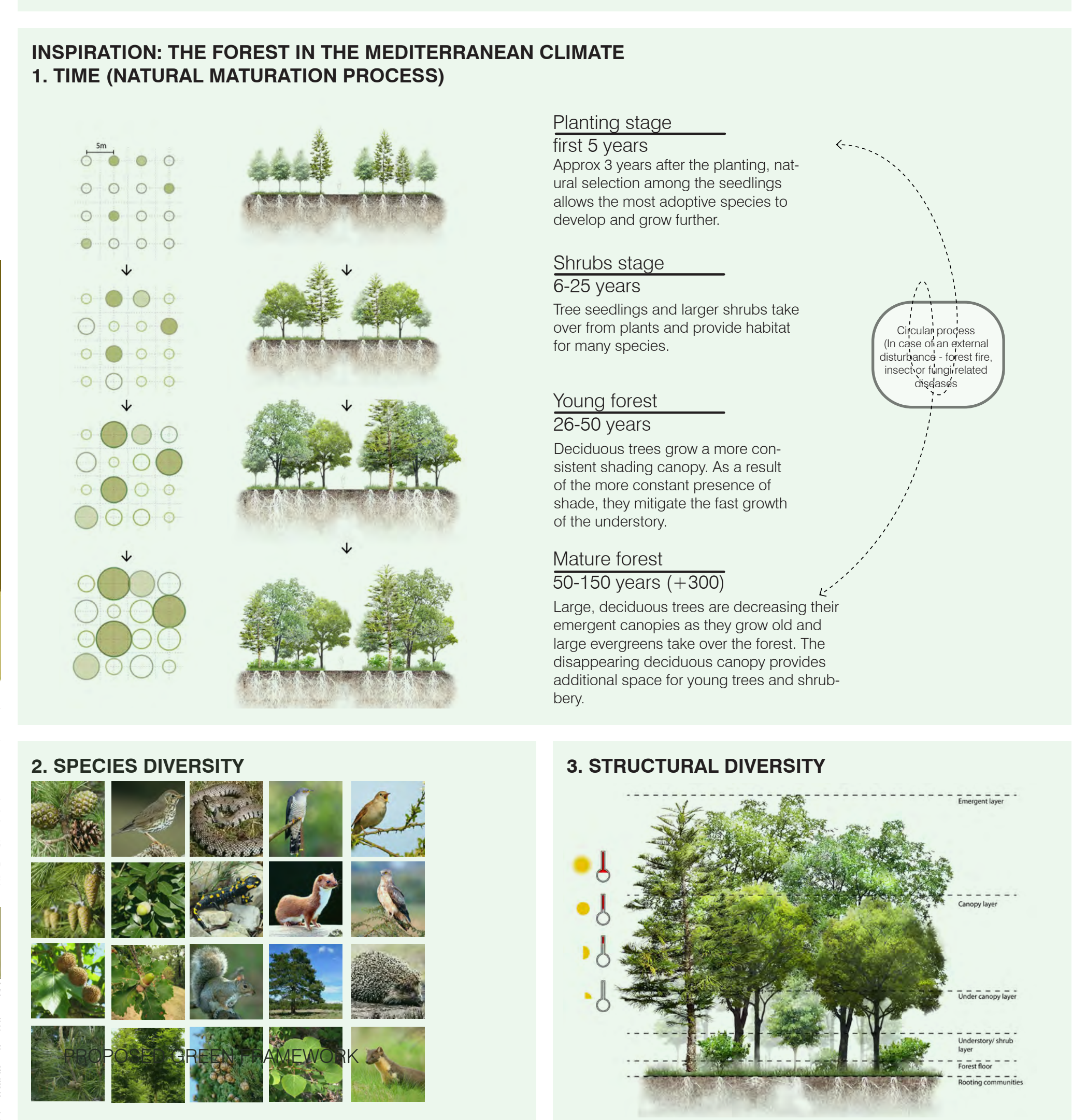


Green System

DESIGNING THE NEW FOREST

Based on the characteristics of the local ecosystem and climate, the design strategy aims at encouraging a natural evolution of the forest, resulting in a healthy and self-sufficient ecological system. By combining the plantation of new trees with more mature ones, and fast-growing species, an attractive and recognizable image of the forest will be achieved already in the short term.

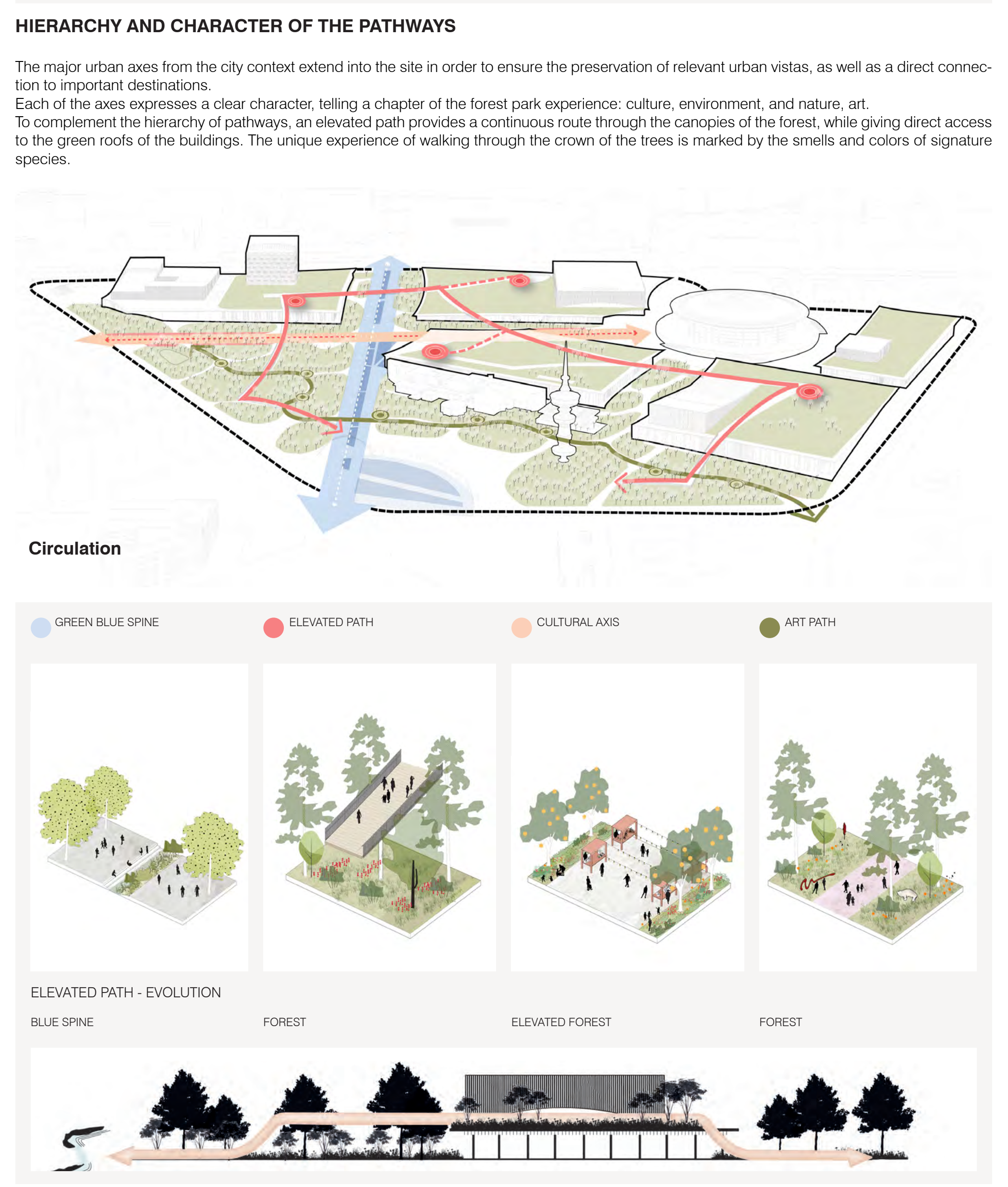
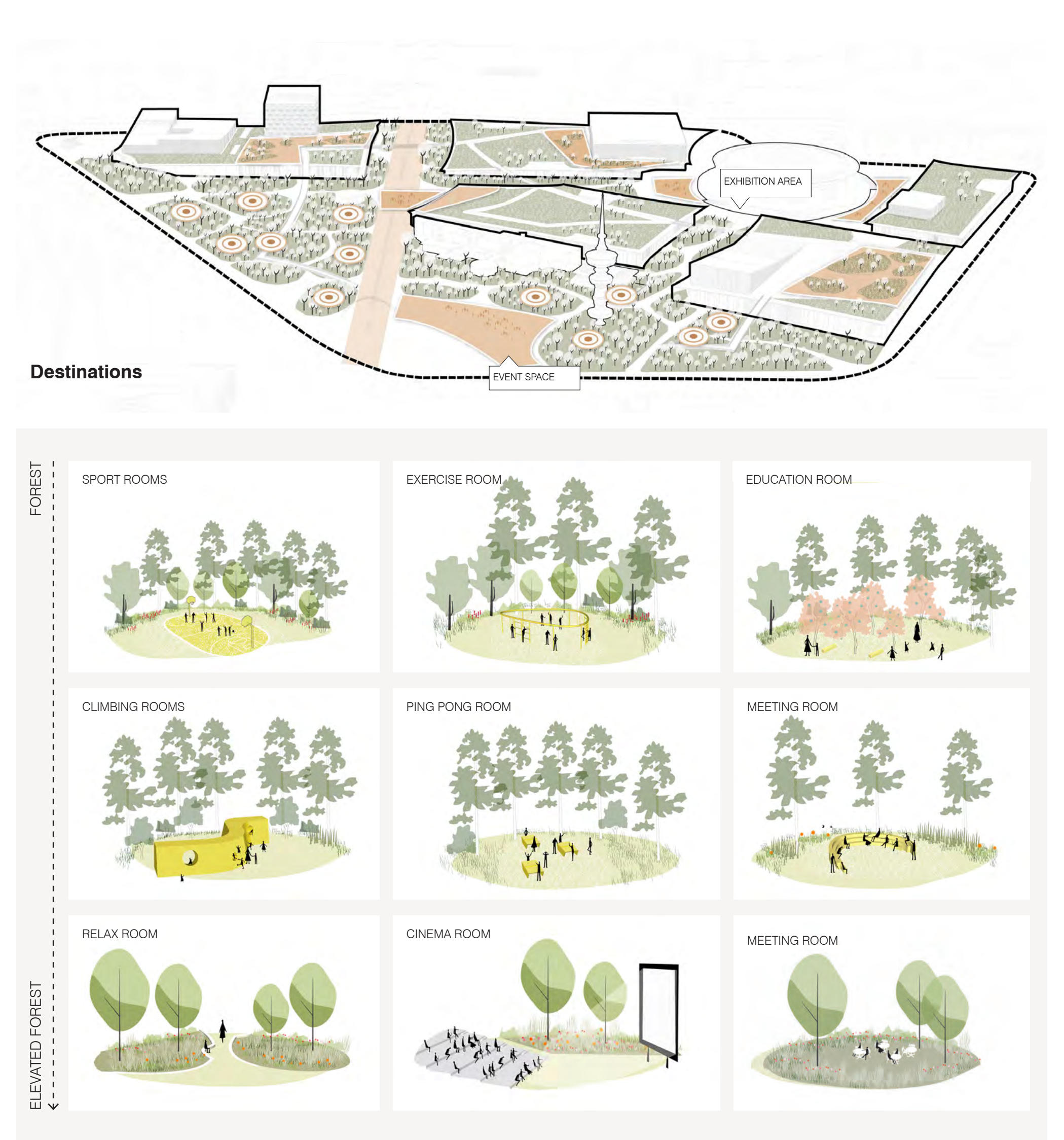
The typical structural complexity and density patterns of the forest are replicated within the new park, allowing for the integration of transition corridors or more programmed areas.



The Forest Experience

FOREST PROGRAM

The immersive forest experience, supported by meandering discovery paths, is complemented by designated areas with different types of programs, seamlessly integrated within the various openings of the forest. Hidden within the structure of the dense tree, these green rooms provide a range of activities for all age groups, including sport and play, as well as intimate gathering spots for leisure and formal orchards supporting the learning experience.

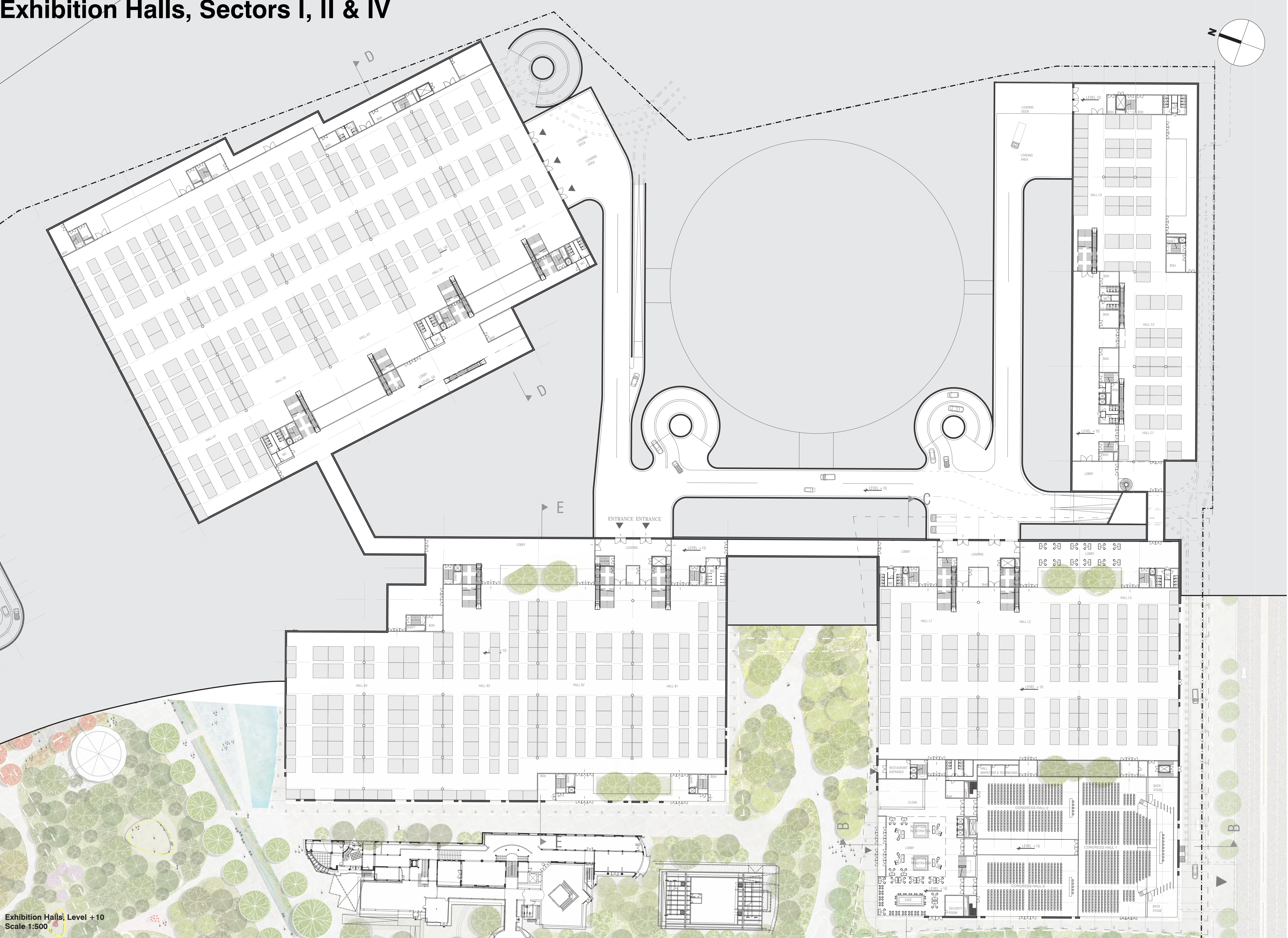




An Axis with Purpose

Aerial view from Thessaloniki Gulf

Exhibition Halls, Sectors I, II & IV



Exhibition Halls, Level +10
Scale 1:500

Exhibition Halls, Key Elevation
Scale 1:500

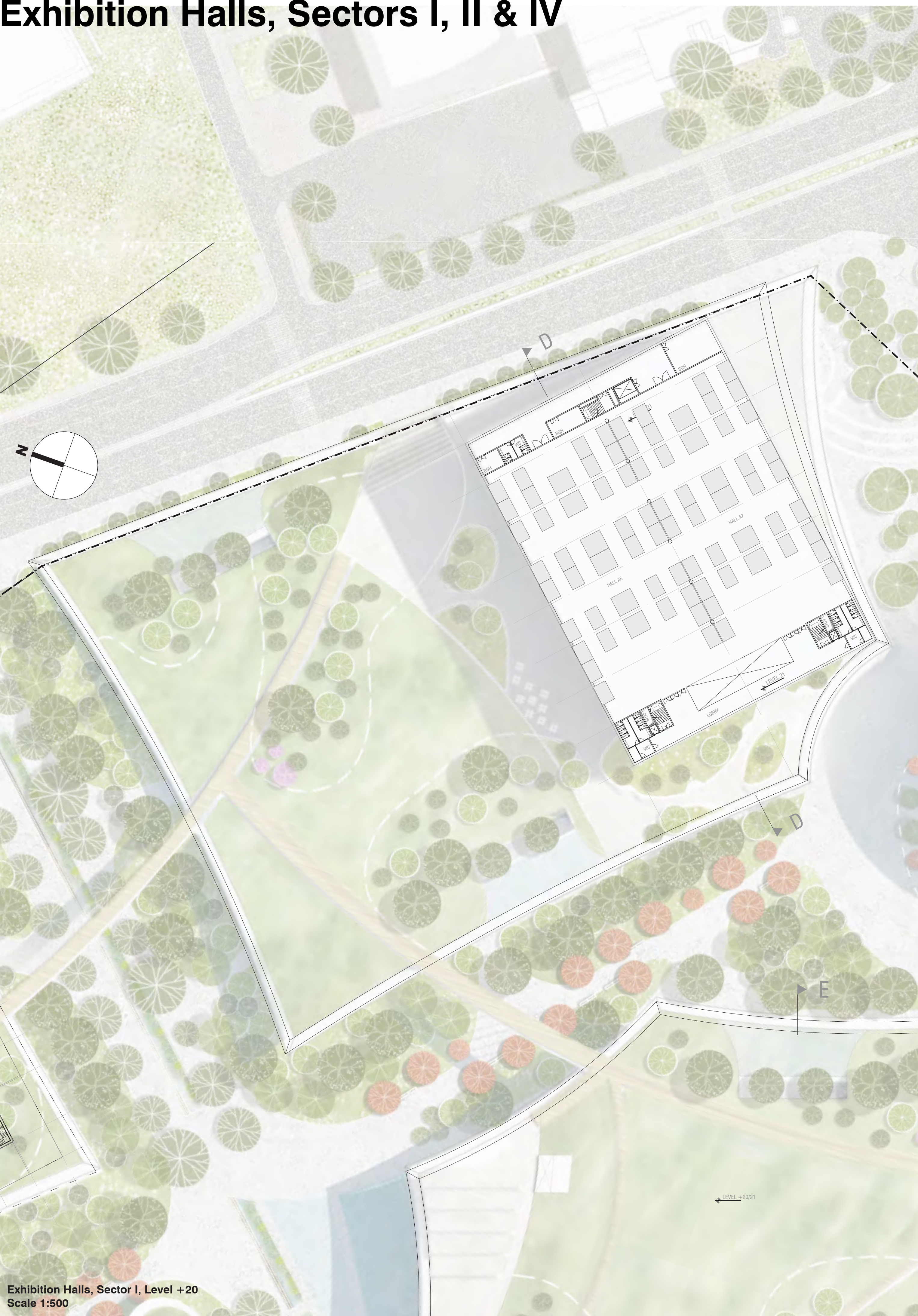




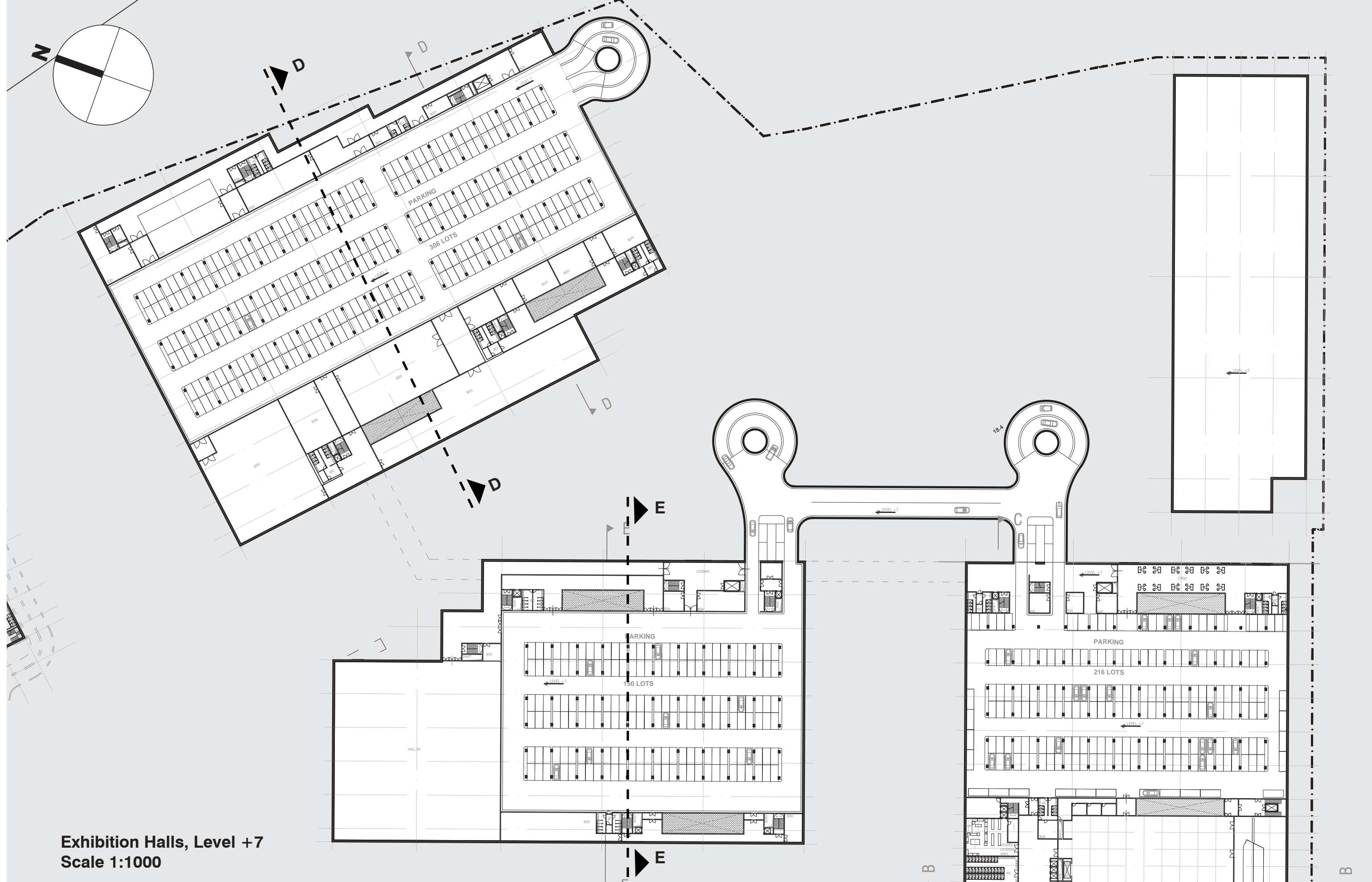
The Pomegranate Gem

Exhibition Halls and Outdoor Exhibition Area

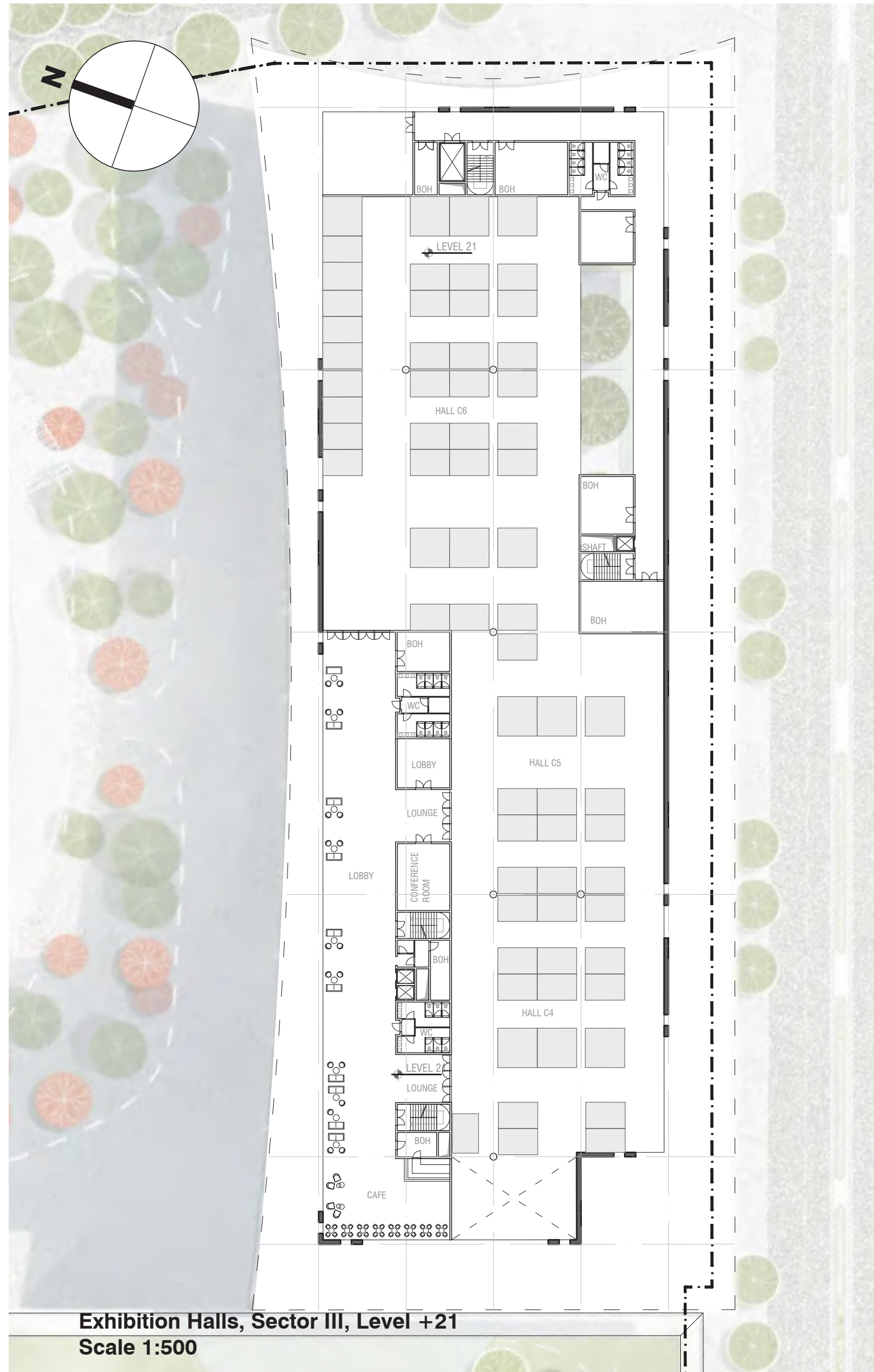
Exhibition Halls, Sectors I, II & IV



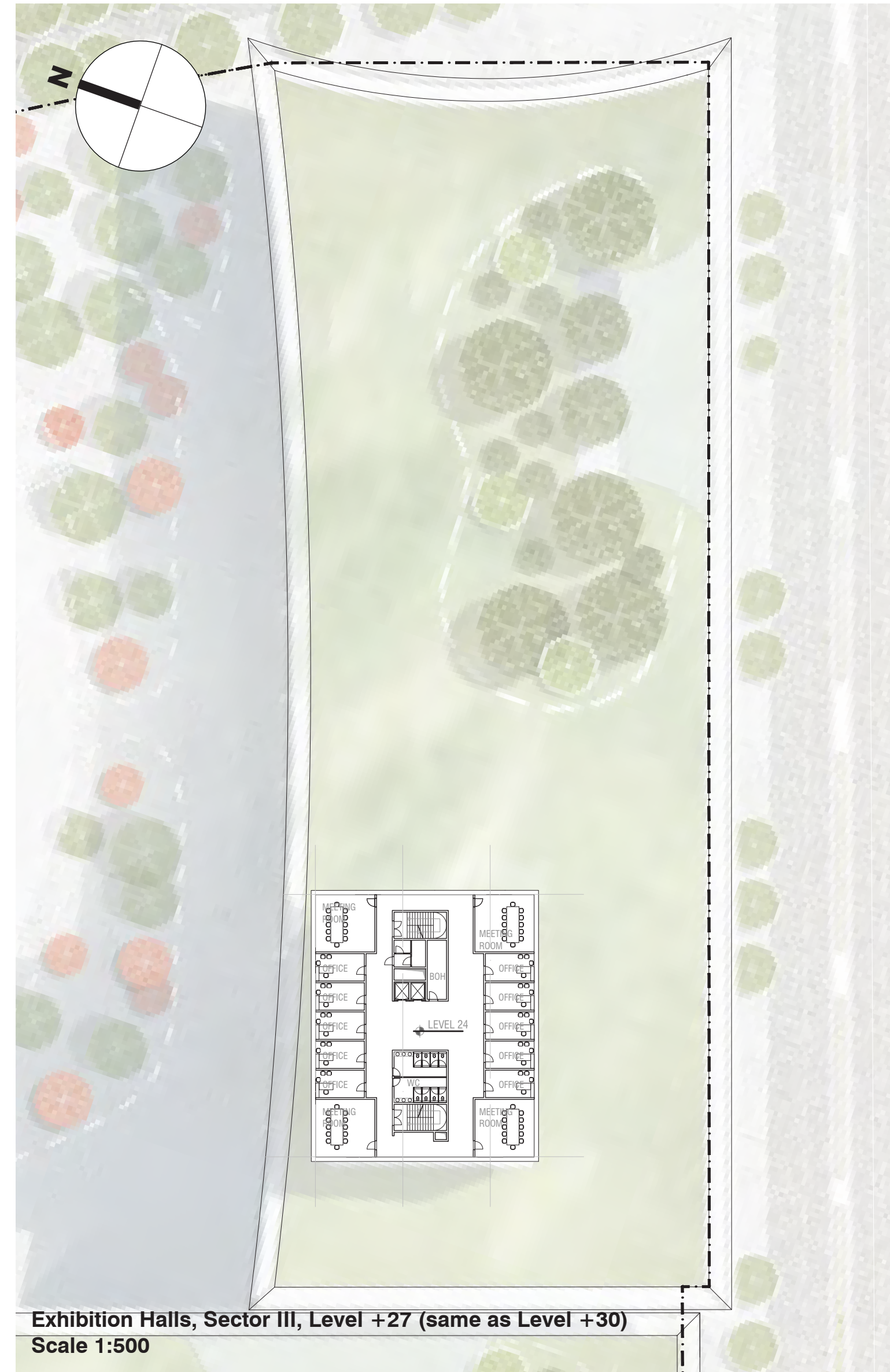
Exhibition Halls, Sector I, Level +20
Scale 1:500



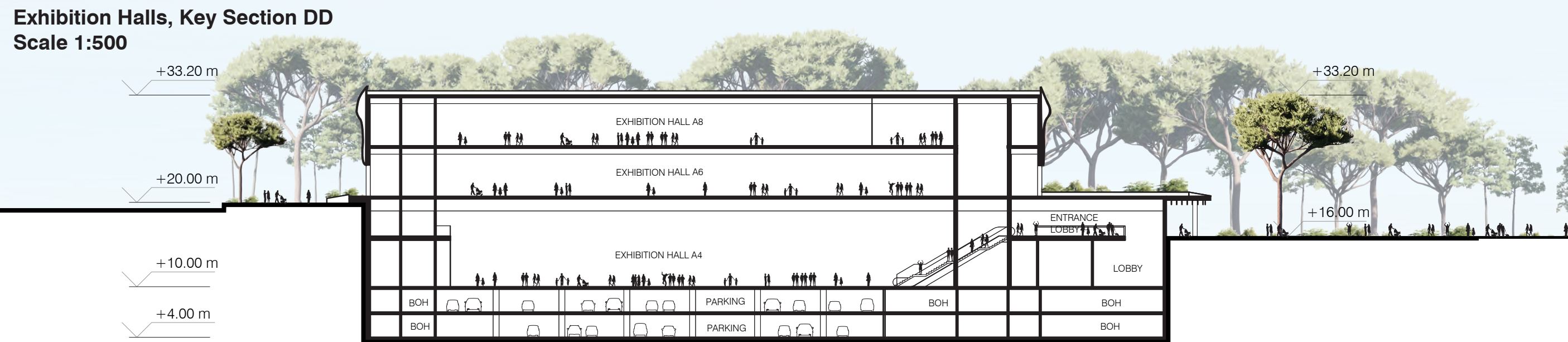
Exhibition Halls, Level +7
Scale 1:1000



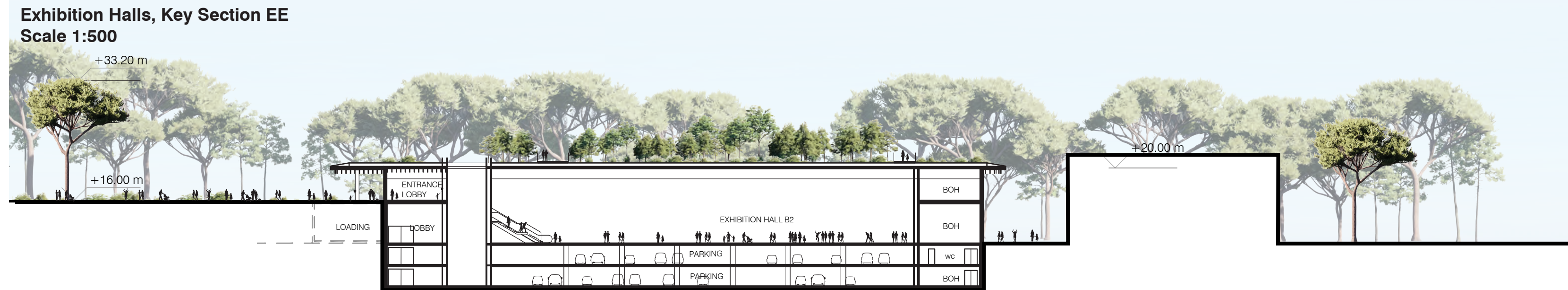
Exhibition Halls, Sector III, Level +21
Scale 1:500



Exhibition Halls, Sector III, Level +27 (same as Level +30)
Scale 1:500



Exhibition Halls, Key Section DD
Scale 1:500



Exhibition Halls, Key Section EE
Scale 1:500



Congress Centre

Congress Centre

The Lavender Gem

The Lavender Gem: Placed on top of the Congress Centre, the Lavender Gem is designed as the final destination of the elevated TIF Tree Path and as the most public gem of all. With an accessible inclined roof that functions also as a seating area, it offers not only views towards the Ano Poli, but also a look-out point towards the Waterfront. Publicly accessible during day and night, all year long, it is an integral part of the upper level experience. The Lavender Gem hosts also the restaurant of the new Congress Centre, which is accessible from both the elevated path and the groundfloor lobby. The restaurant opens its doors to a patio facing the forest, adding like this another stop, to the dining opportunities offered at TIF. All around the Lavender Gem, the Lavender Garden hosts a Beer Garden, as a reference to the past's Black Beer and as a connection to the Beer Festival organized every year at the TIF-HELEXPO grounds.



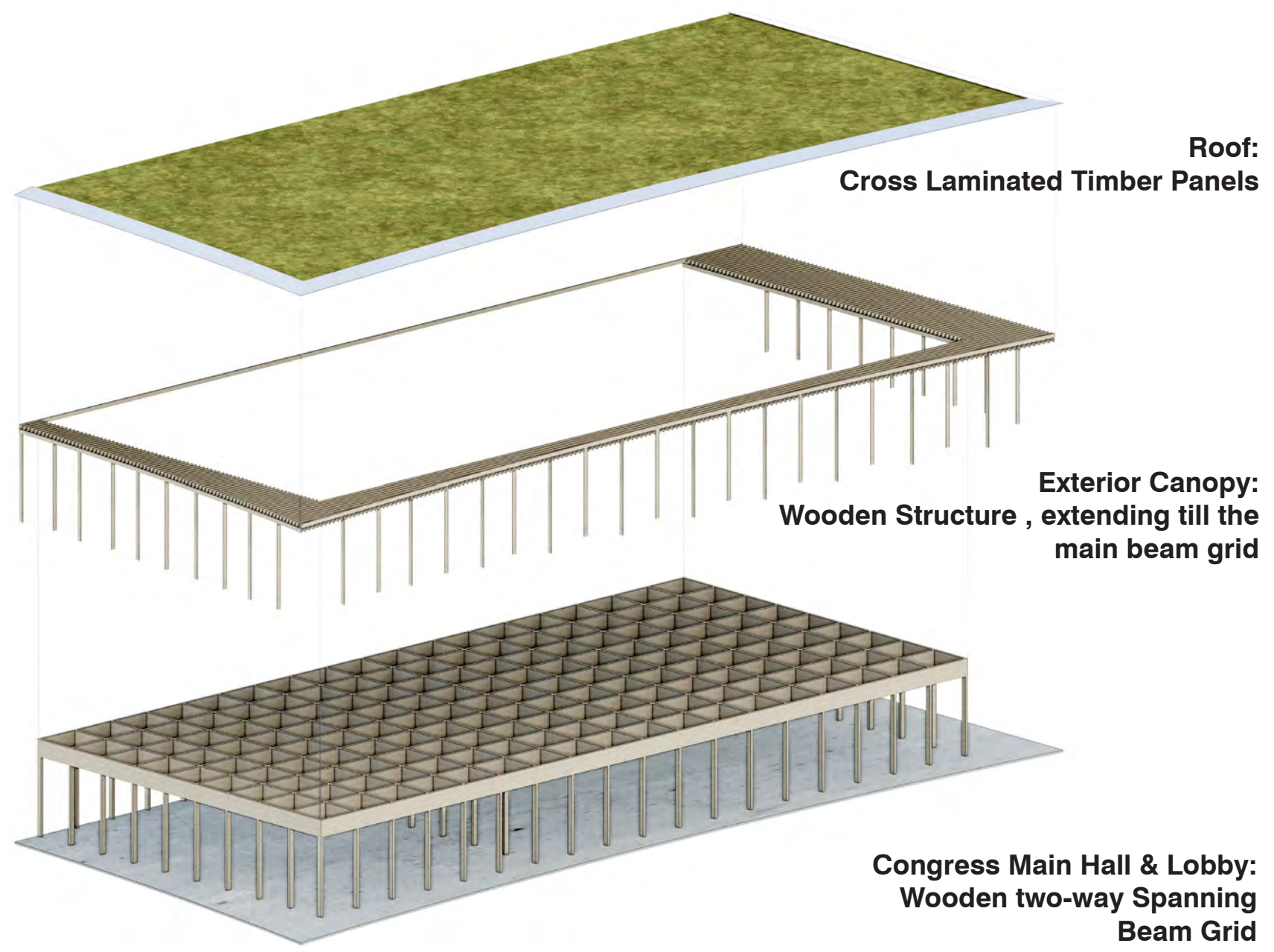
Congress Hall, Interior view

Structural Systems

Within the TIF master plan there are two different structural systems used: The Congress Centre has a wooden structural frame while the Exhibition Centre and the Business Centre are relying on concrete structural frames.

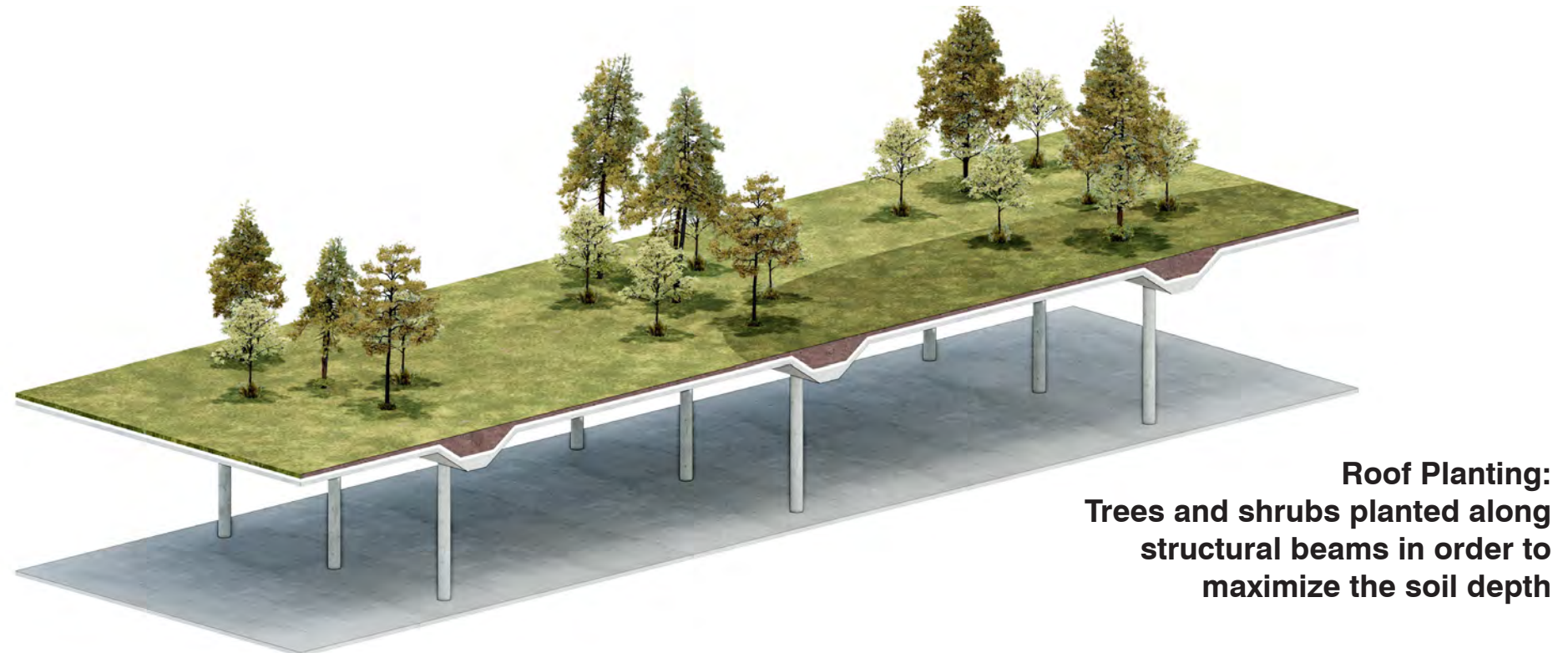
CONGRESS CENTRE

The roof structure for lobby and the main hall of the Congress Centre are formed by a two way spanning beam grid using glue laminated timber sections. All joints are designed invisible by using slotted plate/ drift pin points joint at the beam intersections. The Fire Resistance F60 can be achieved without additional covers or coating considering the mass burning rate of the timber sections. The halls are covered by prefabricated cross laminated timber panels which are nailed to the beam grid in order to provide a rigid braced slab. All timber can be sourced from and fabricated by local manufacturer.

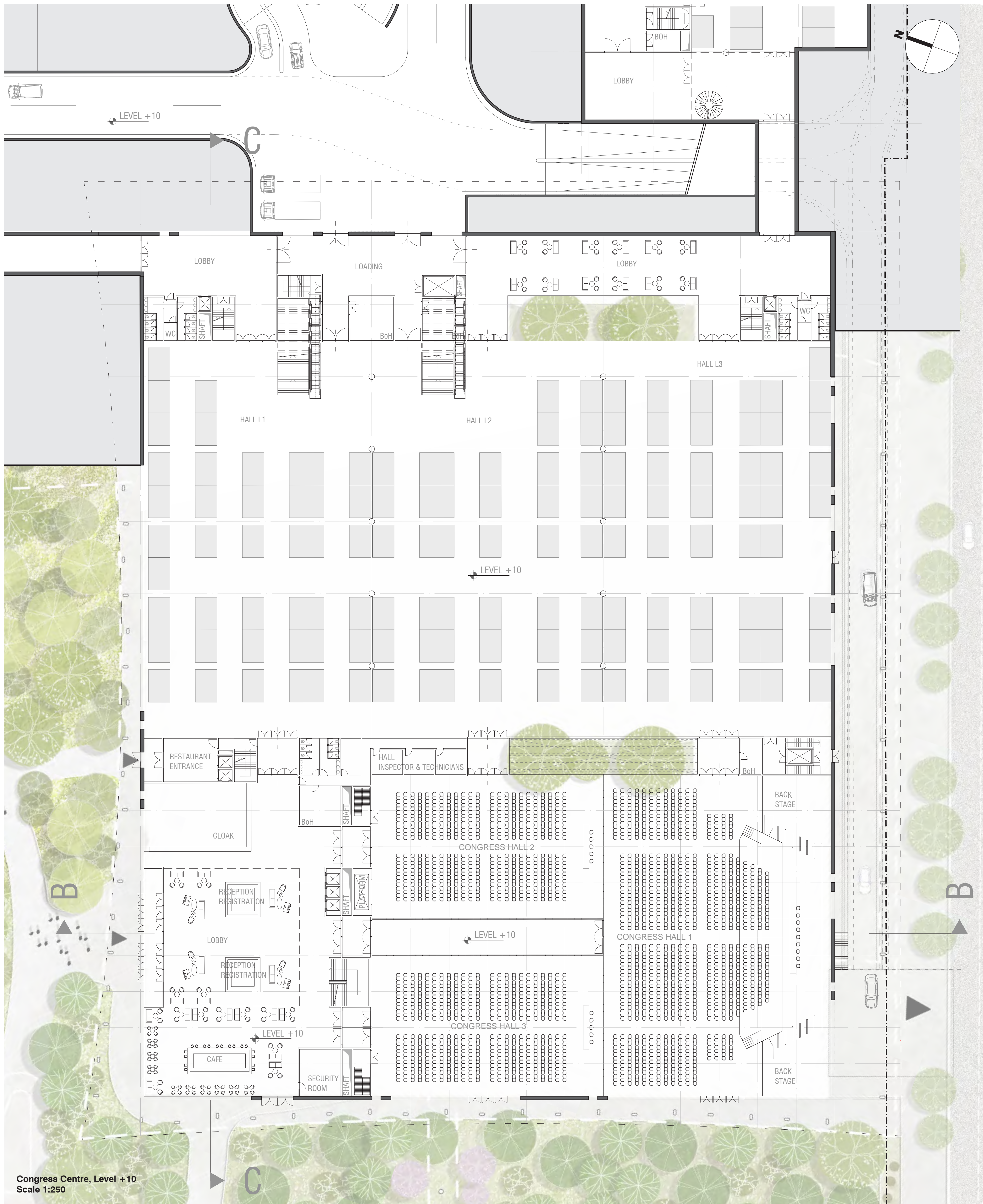


EXHIBITION HALLS

The Exhibition Halls are using a concrete structural system with a 30-meter spanning grid. In order to maintain the artificial forest on top of the halls, the 2-meter-high beams have a customized v-shaped section that allows, locally, 1,2-1



Roof Planting:
Trees and shrubs planted along
structural beams in order to
maximize the soil depth



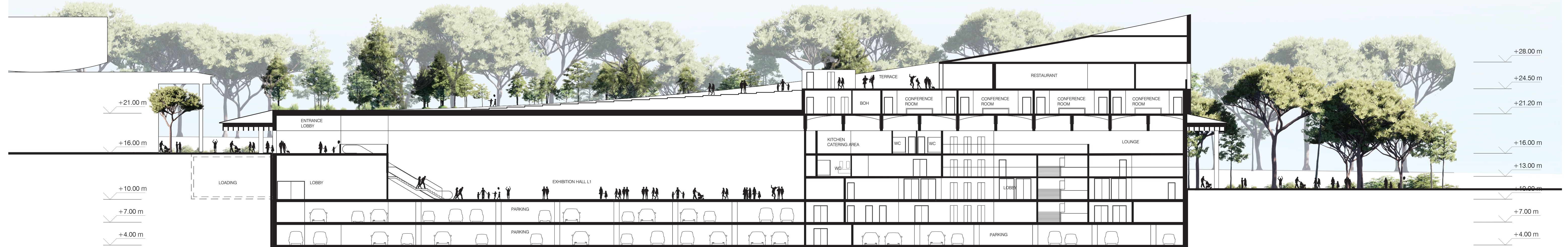
Congress Centre, Level +10
Scale 1:250



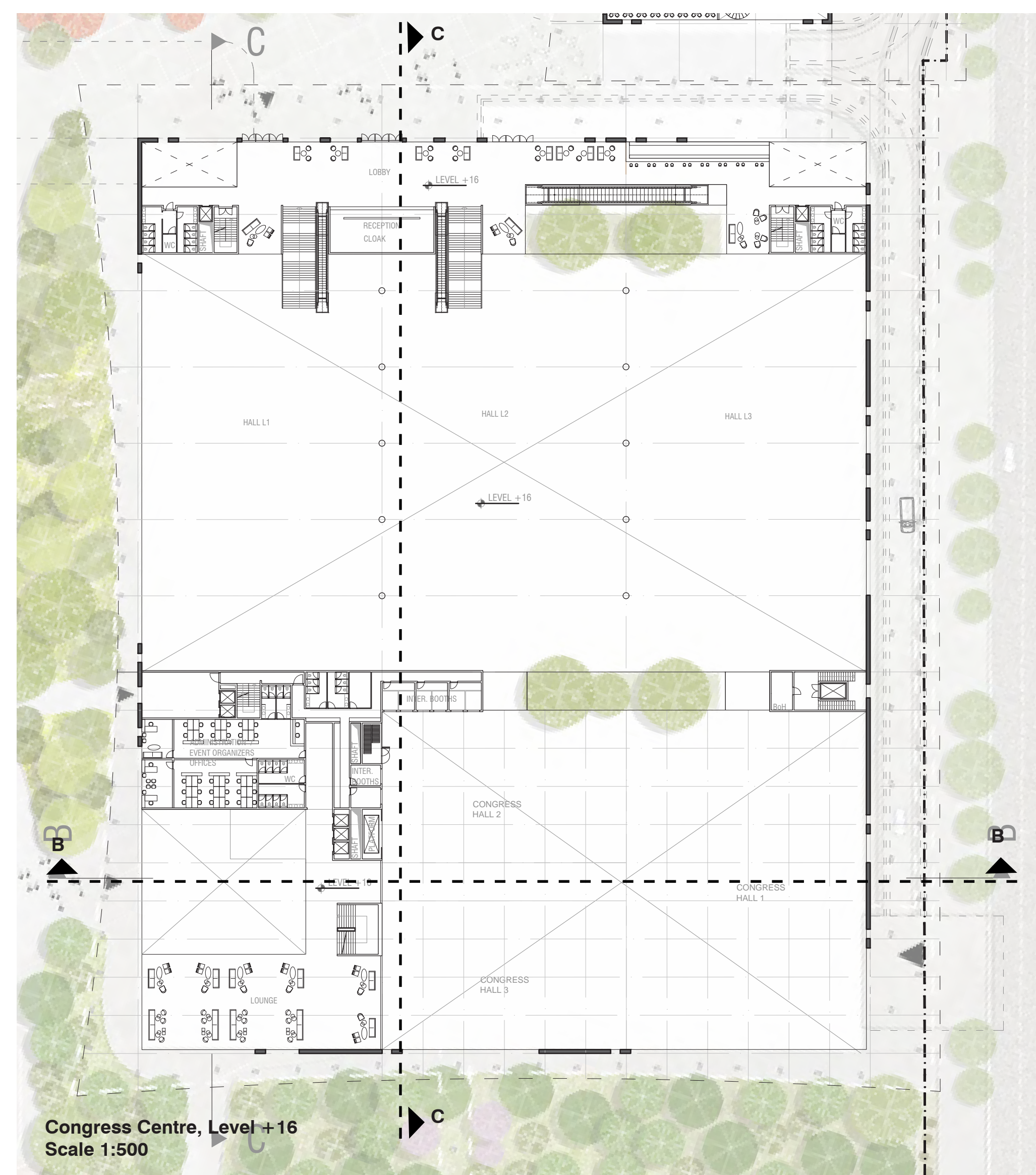
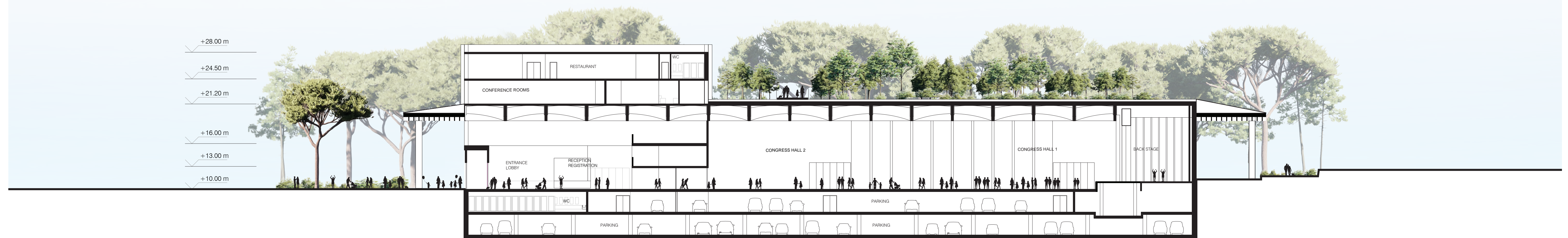
Congress Centre

Main Congress Hall

Congress Centre, Key Section CC, Longitudinal Direction
Scale 1:500



Congress Centre, Key Section BB, Cross Direction
Scale 1:500



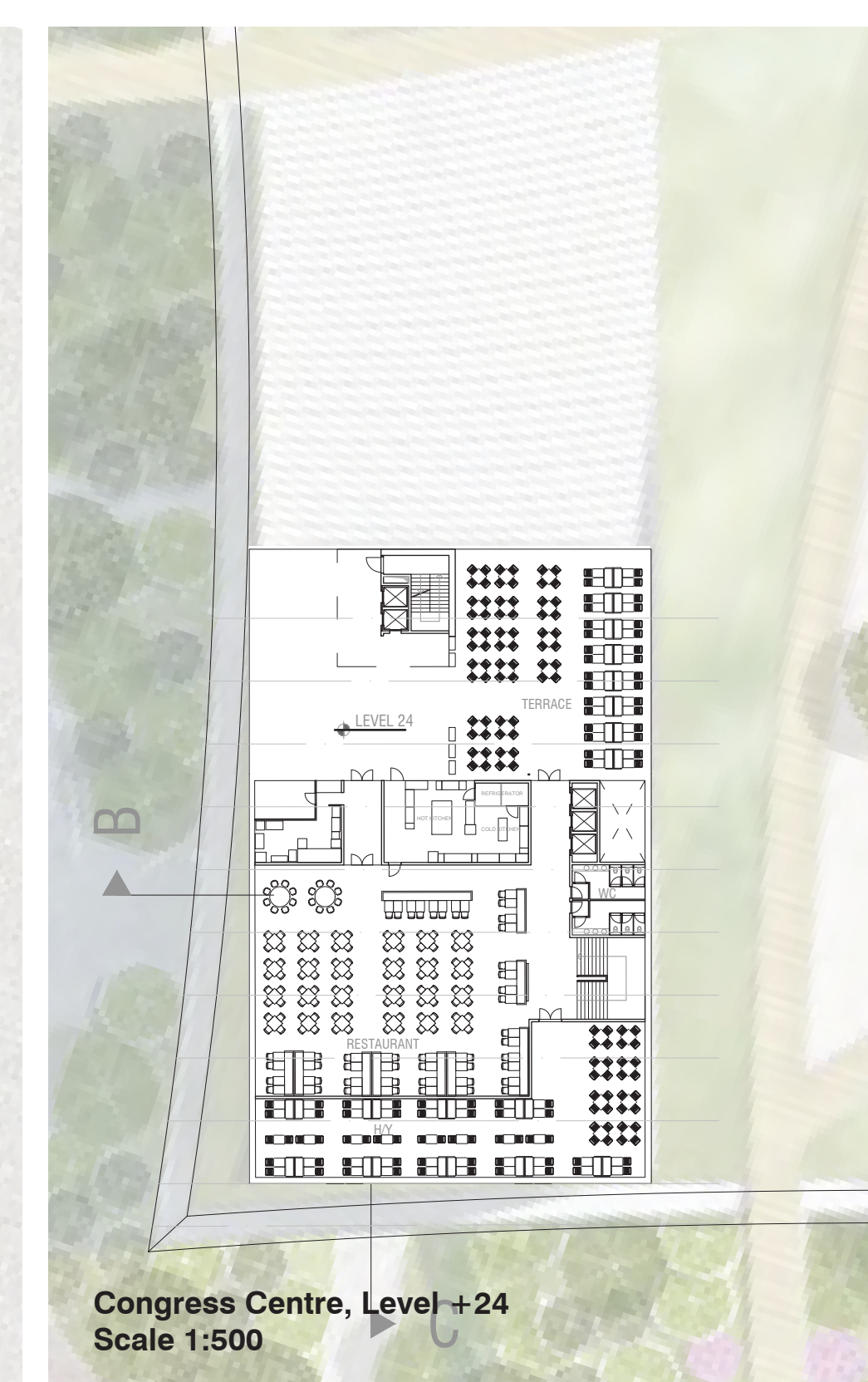
Congress Centre, Level +16
Scale 1:500



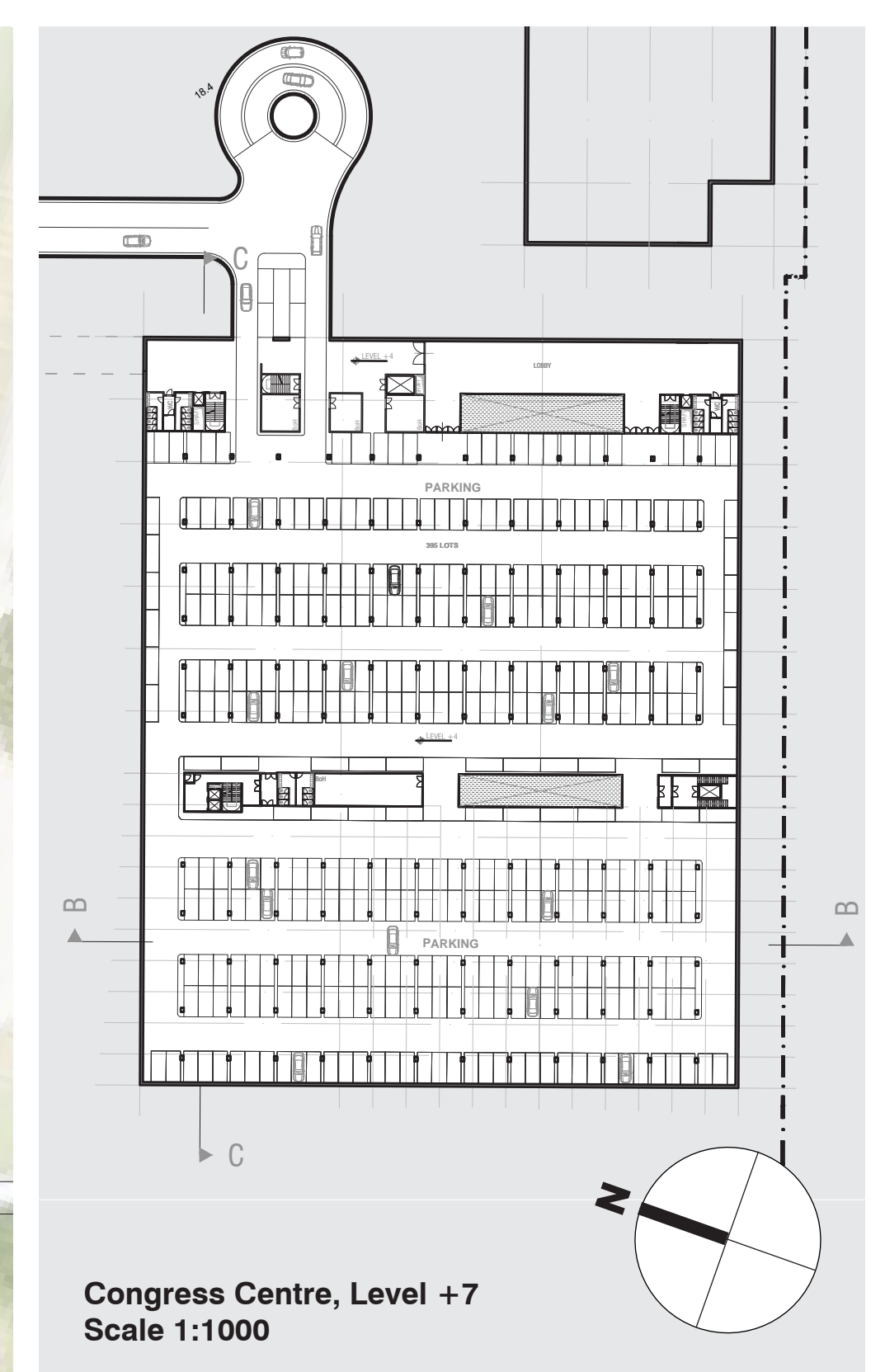
Congress Centre, Key Elevation
Scale 1:1000



Congress Centre, Level +21
Scale 1:500



Congress Centre, Level +24
Scale 1:500



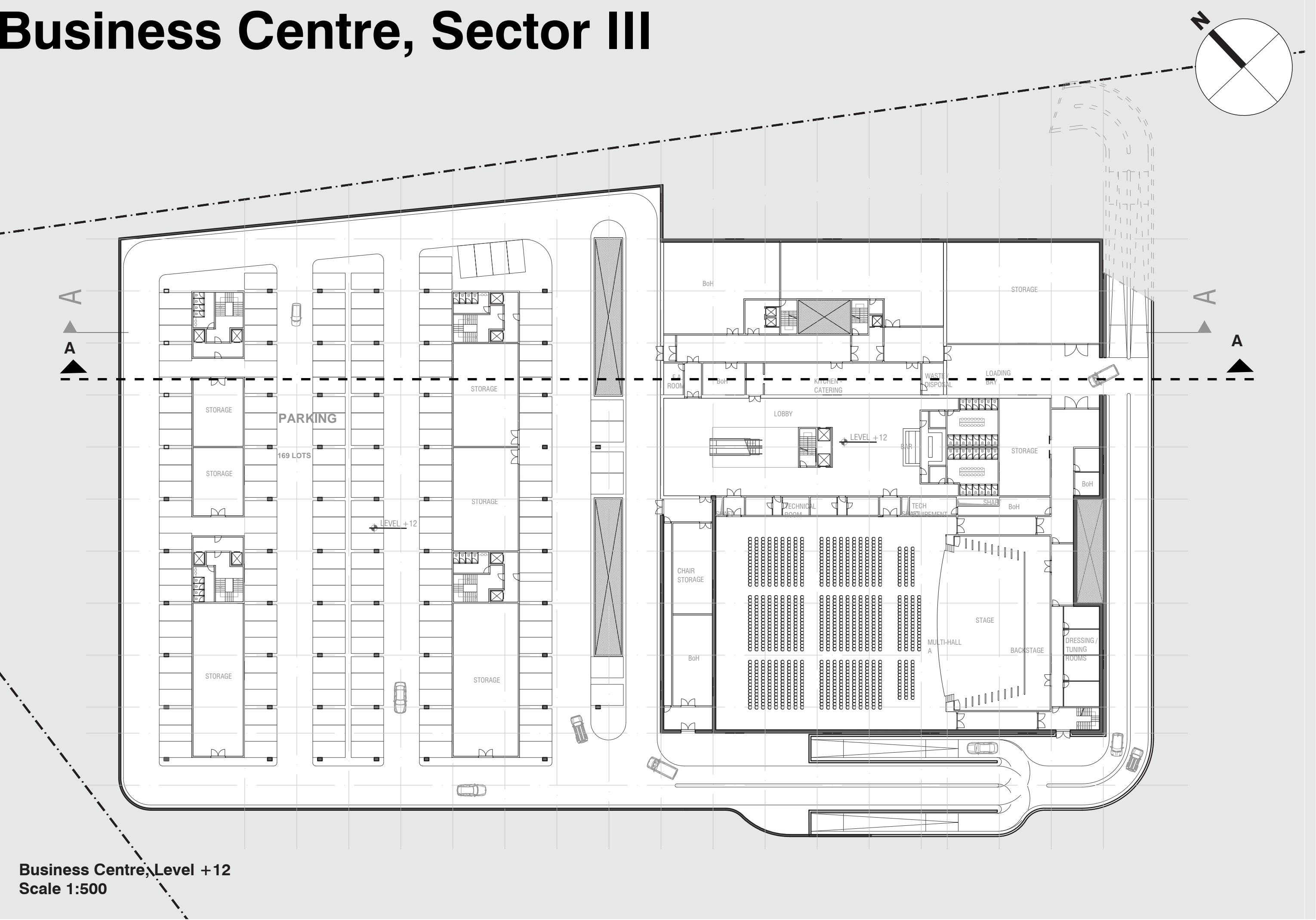
Congress Centre, Level +7
Scale 1:1000



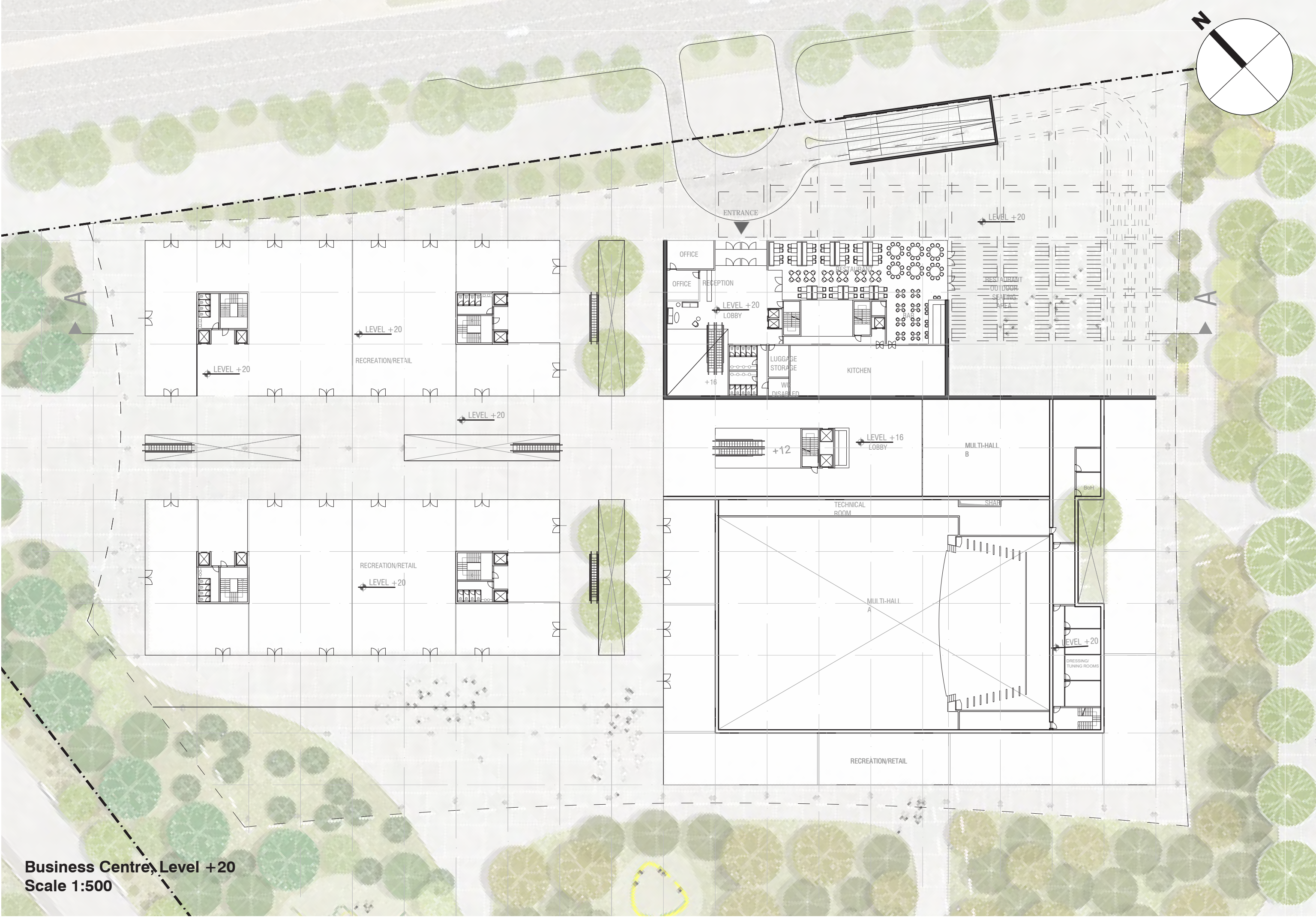
Business Centre: The Chestnut Gem

TIF Approach from the Sintrivani Square

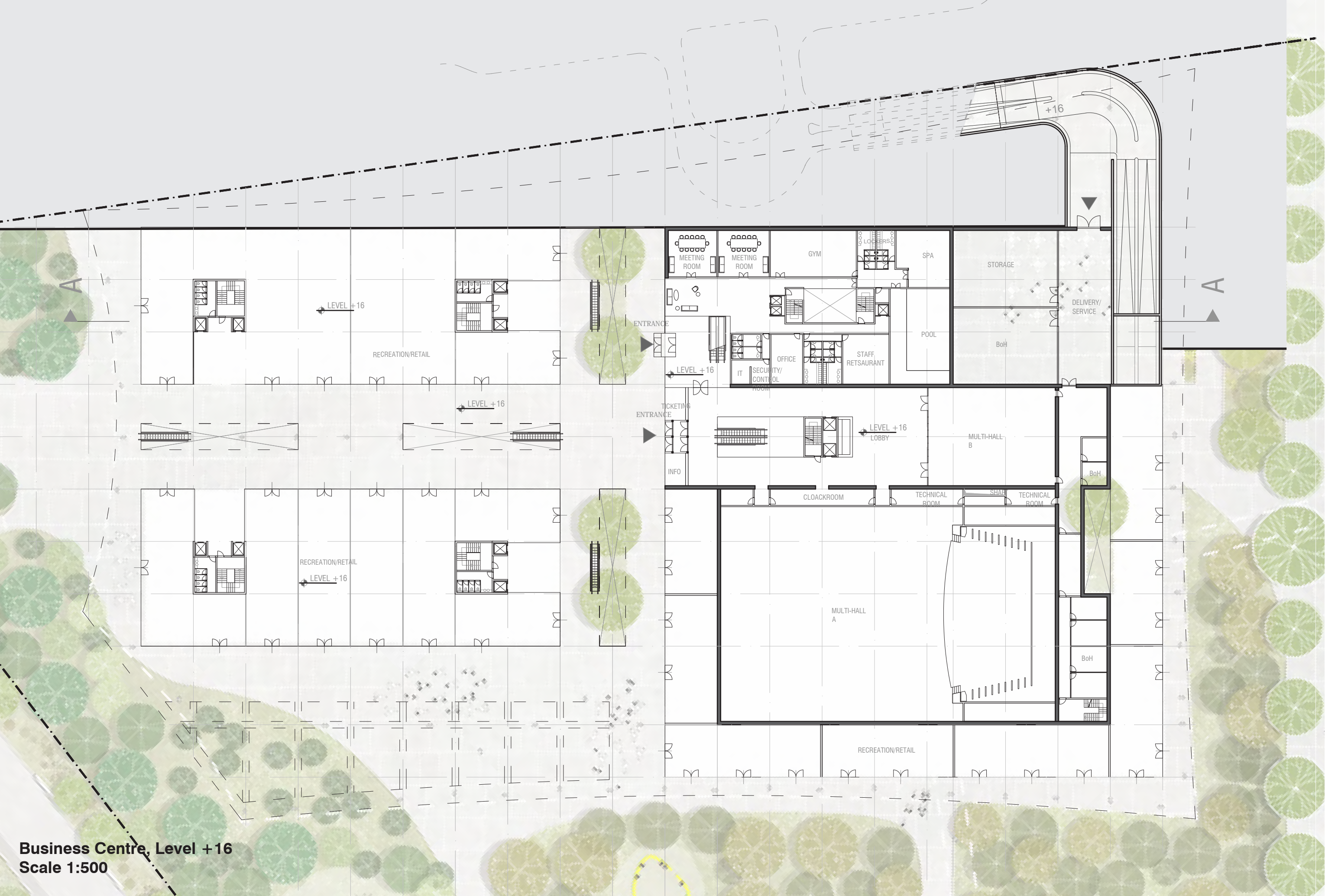
Business Centre, Sector III



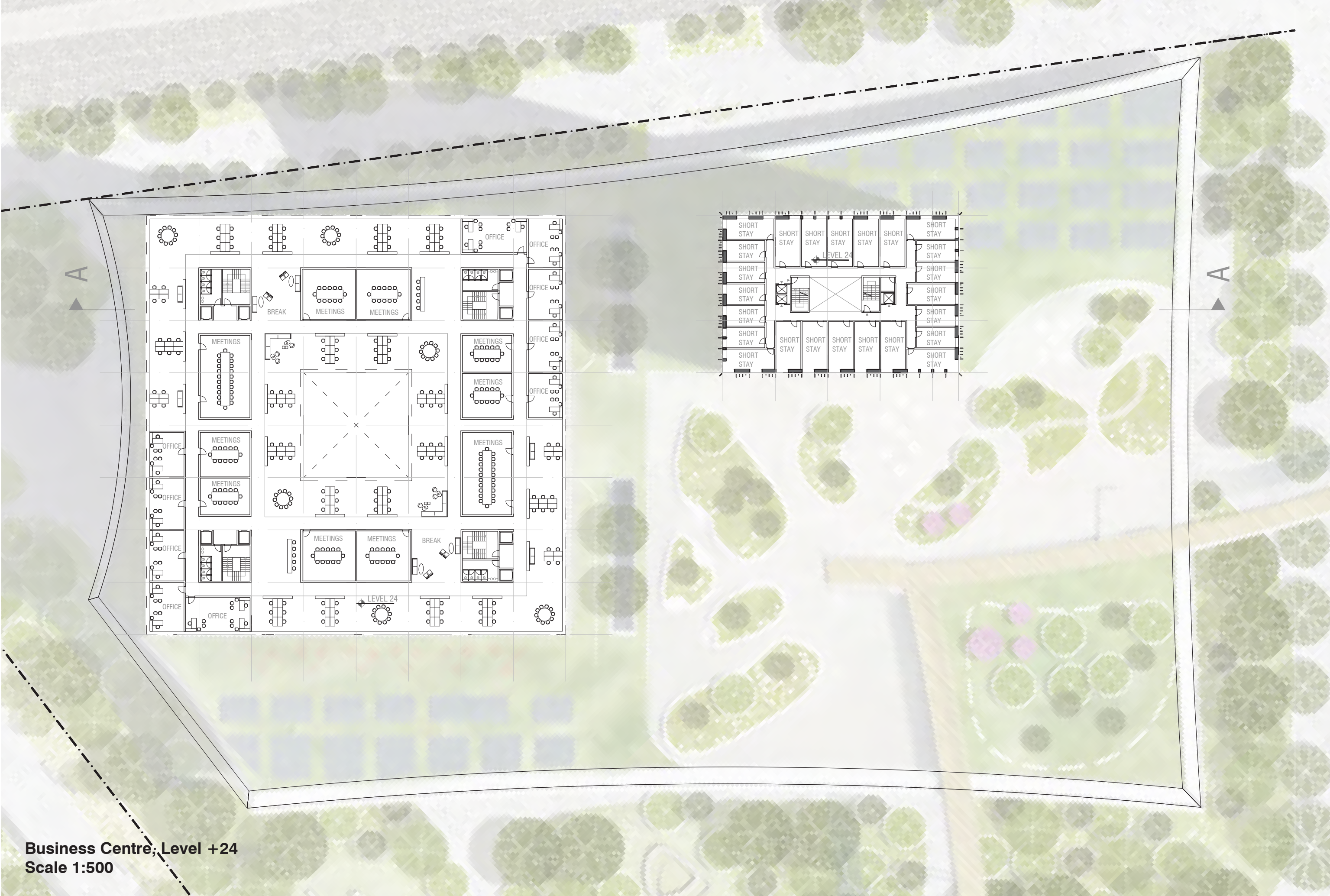
Business Centre, Level +12
Scale 1:500



Business Centre, Level +20
Scale 1:500



Business Centre, Level +16
Scale 1:500



Business Centre, Level +24
Scale 1:500



Business Centre, Key Elevation
Scale 1:500



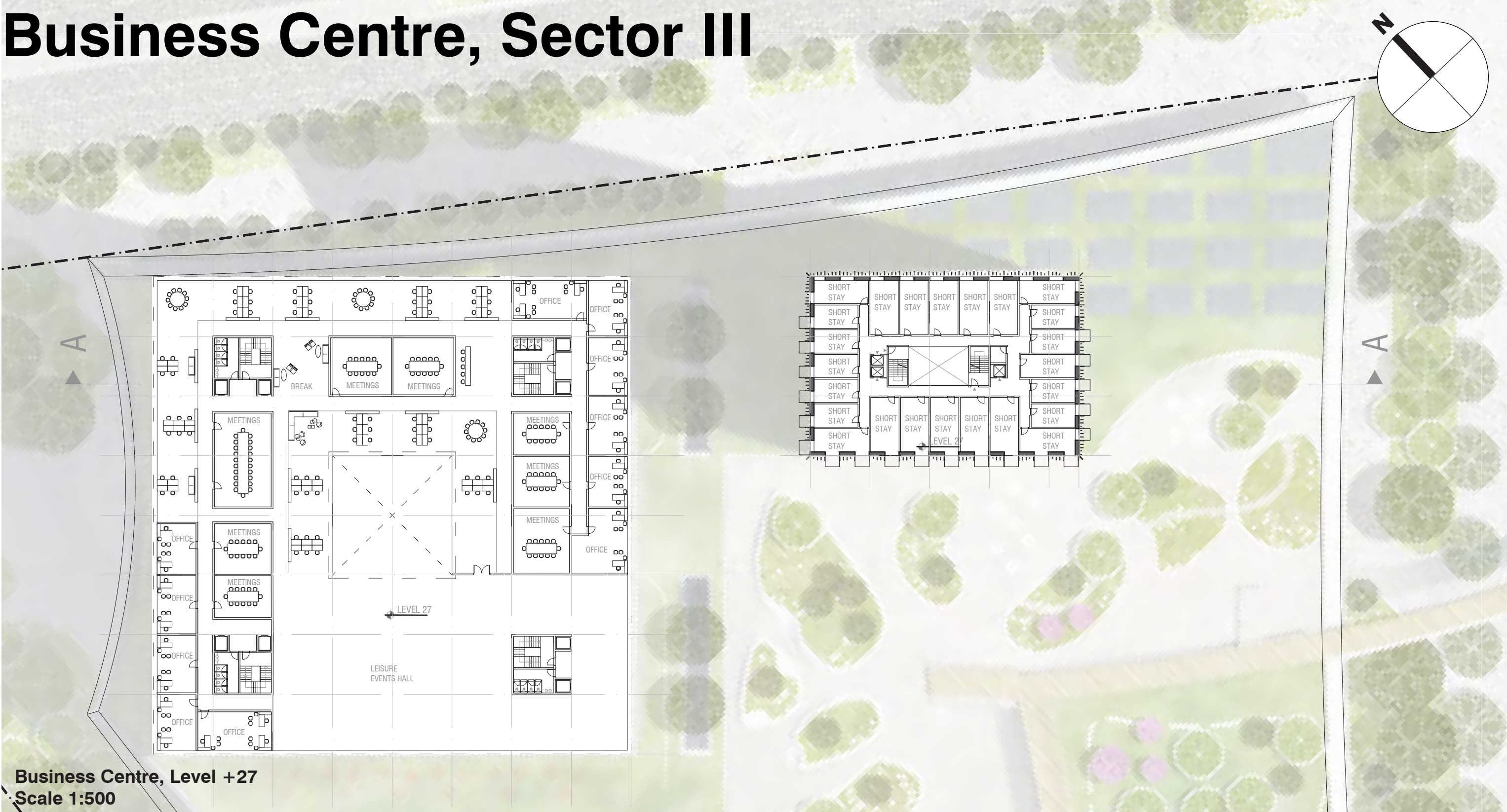
Business Centre, Key Section AA
Scale 1:500



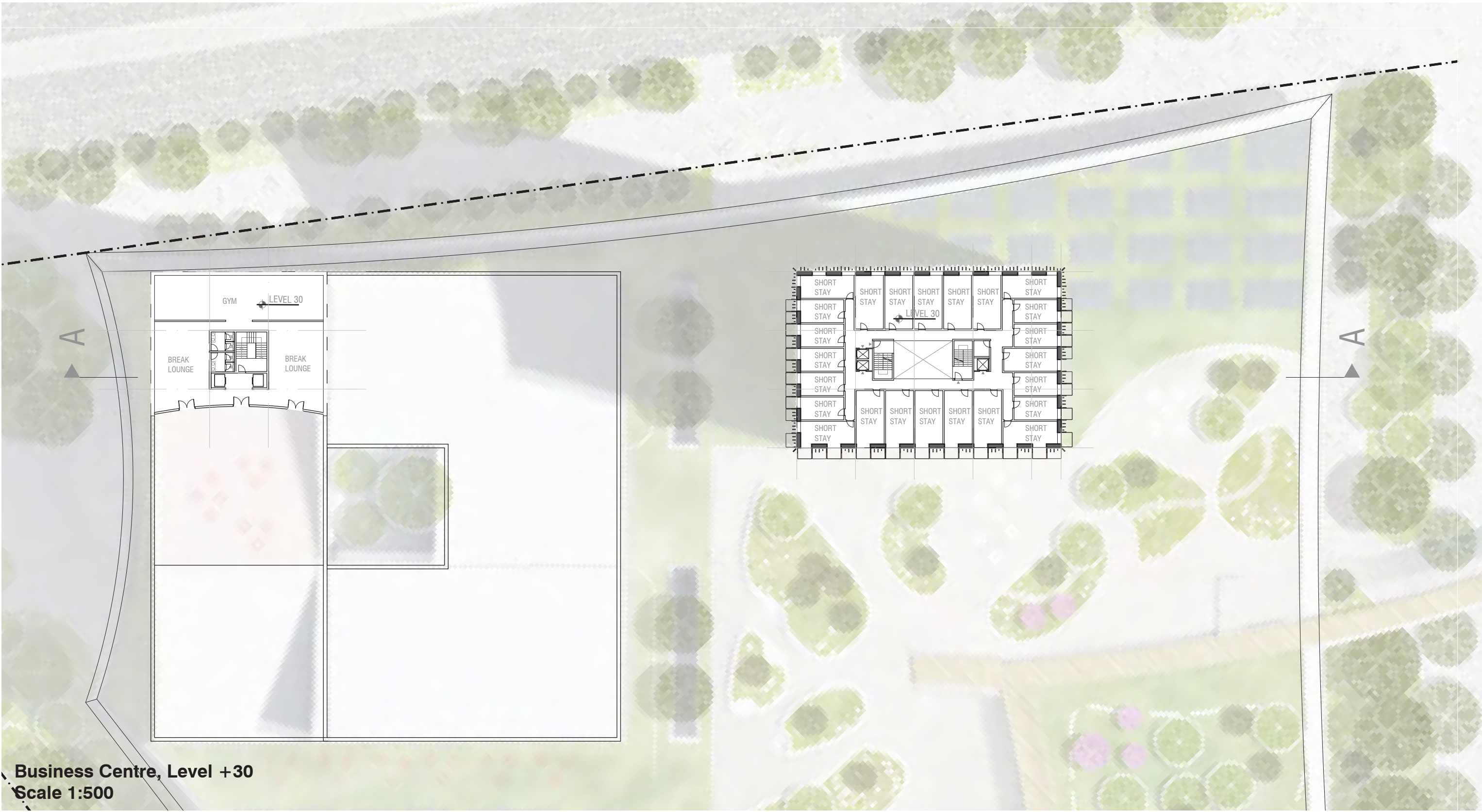
Business Centre: The Oak Gem

TI³F Business Centre

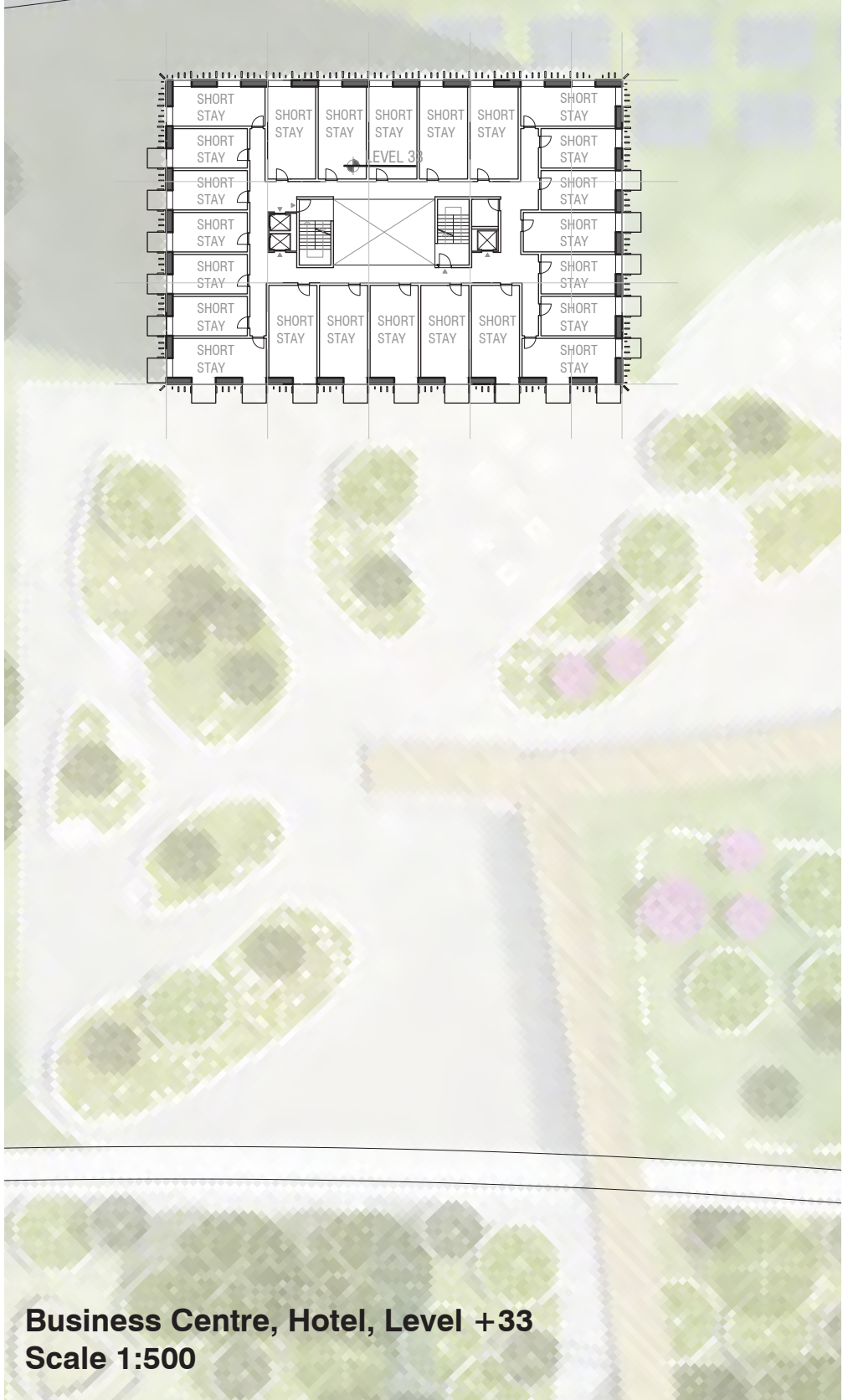
Business Centre, Sector III



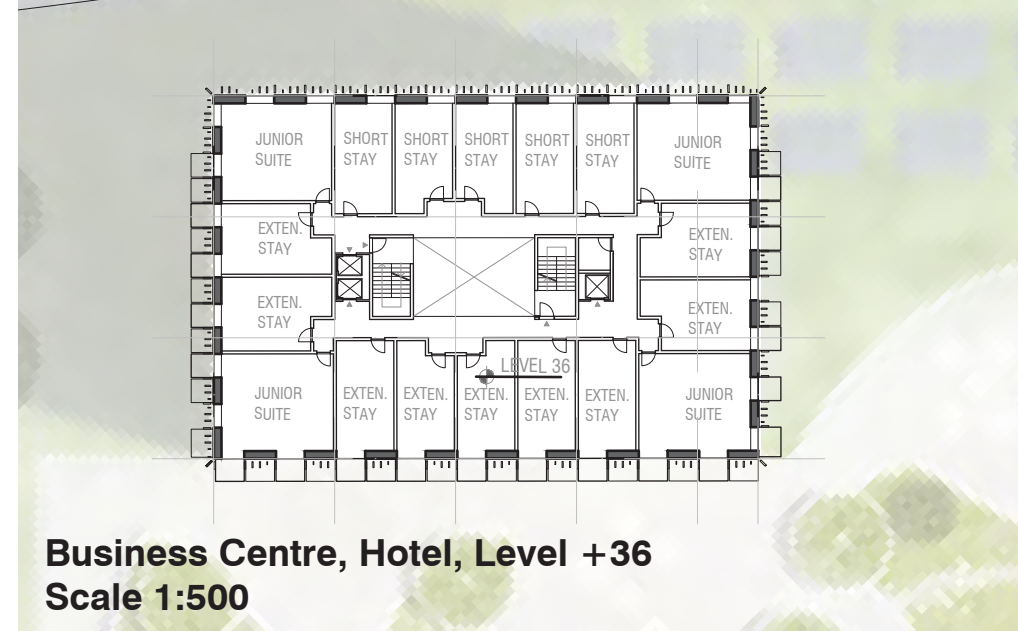
Business Centre, Level +27
Scale 1:500



Business Centre, Level +30
Scale 1:500



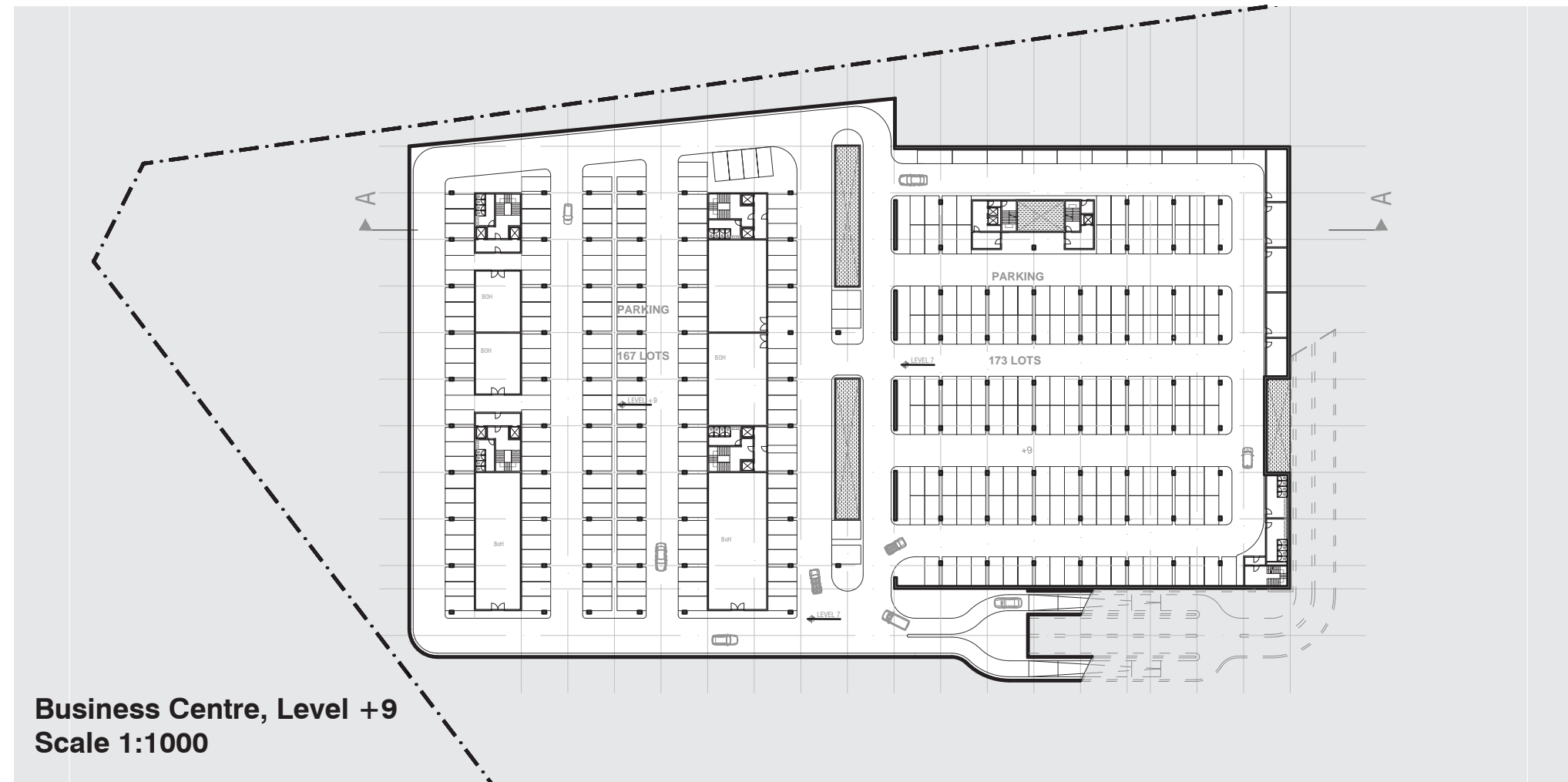
Business Centre, Hotel, Level +33
Scale 1:500



Business Centre, Hotel, Level +36
Scale 1:500



Business Centre, Hotel, Level +42
Scale 1:500



Business Centre, Hotel, Level +9
Scale 1:1000

TI³F Sustainability

The redevelopment of the ConfexPark region within Thessaloniki provides a prime opportunity to improve the sustainable performance with the revised design. Not only of the site itself, but also of the surrounding neighbourhoods and the city as a whole, without harming the historical gem structure. Through a holistic and systemic approach the site can serve more than its own needs, and extend services towards the city itself. These services are diverse in nature, including environmental (ecosystem services), social (public services), and financial (commercial services).

It is for this reason that the strategy towards a holistic and systemic approach is built upon three pillars: The Landscape, The Community, and the Buildings. Each of these pillars is again subdivided into different service subcategories. The Landscape pillar for example focuses on four specific services, including Water Management, which helps the city manage urban flooding and drought events, Urban Comfort, helping reduce thermal stress in the urban fabric, Recreation, serving as an urban retreat, and Urban Biodiversity, strengthening the local ecosystem. Each of these subcategories are investigated for potential and practical solutions to be integrated into the design.

With this approach the challenge is addressed holistically, and guaranteed to get as much sustainable value out of the site as possible. Under the Natural Capital framework by the EU this value could potentially be quantified as well. Creating a resilient, autonomous, and equitable space within the city of Thessaloniki.

