RETHINKING THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY CENTER IN A DENSELY POPULATED AREA

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Abstract

A community is a social unit and often shares a sense of place. People living in any particular community tend to define the social ties between the people of that community as important as their identity, practice or even their roles in the social institutions. Thus every community at some point needs a platform to gather around for different purposes, which makes such place the centre of the community. These centres completely depend on the characteristics of the community, the centre is consists of all the facilities that a community requires in order to enhance its people socially, economically, physically, culturally and even making the community more sustainable. We call such place “Community Centre”.

Now if we look at the current situation of the community centres in our Dhaka city, there is not much that it offers to its respective communities and that is where the thought of rethinking the concept of a community centre came from. How it should be for a particular community that is densely populated. Thus this write up will lead one to understand the aspects that has been worked on to rethink the concept of a community centre and how it shaped up to be one that represents its respective community.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I offer my sincerest gratitude to my parents, who have made it possible for me to achieve all that I have today. I owe my deepest gratitude to my supervisors Mohammad Habib Reza and Huraera Jabeen for supporting me throughout my project with their patience and knowledge whilst allowing me the room to work in my own way.

I want to thank all my seniors who have found time from their busy schedules for all those endless discussions about the project. I am very indebted to Nurul Islam, Arik Islam, Bhaskar Chowdhury, Fahim Shahrear Fahim, Ridwan Bin Abdullah, Md. Hasan Mahabub, Jannatun Nayeem, Rukaiya Binte Kareem, Dipta Bhowmick, Yukiko Kunimoto, Sampurna Das, Oindriza Reza and Faiyaz Hasnain Khan for being there with me unconditionally, I could not have done this without all your support till the end.

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1.1 Project Brief

Name of the Project: Rethinking the concept of community centre in a densely populated area.
Client: Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC)

Site Location: Sahista Khan Road, Old Town, Dhaka, Bangladesh (Ward No-63)

Site area: 40,000sft

1.2 Background of the Project

Community centres are intended to be identifiable focal points and activity centers for surrounding groups of residential neighbourhoods. They contain a diversity of uses such as small offices, cultural and entertainment facilities, schools and libraries in addition to neighbourhood-oriented uses (Department of city planning, LA). Though in present situation this is completely missing in the existing community centres. Thus I have found the importance in rethinking the concept of community centre.

There is a proposal of building a community centre in the given site, from DSCC.

I have tried to rethink and find out one of the possible ways of designing a community centre specific to this site and its community.

1.3 Aim of the Project

The aim of the project was to create awareness regarding the fact that the existing condition of the community centres in our city is failing to contribute to its community thus we must think of the concept of community centres in a different way, that is, community centres are not only for rental purposes rather it has a greater role to play in the community. A good community centre can enhance the image of the community in many different ways.

1.3 Given Program

- 20 storied building
- Car parking
- Banquet hall
- Community health facilities
- Community services/ information services
- Ward councillor office
- Library
- Gymnasium
- Indoor games
- Kids centre
- Swimming pool
- Restaurants
- Shopping complex
- Residential flats for DSCC officers
- Commercial space

Reference:

Chapter 3. Chapter 3 - Land Use GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES ISSUE TWO: USES, DENSITY, AND CHARACTER, Community Centers. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://planning.lacity.org/cwd/framwk/chapters/03/03204.htm

02: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept Of Community Centre

Community centres are intended to be identifiable focal points and activity centres for surrounding groups of residential neighbourhoods. They contain a diversity of uses such as small offices, cultural and entertainment facilities, schools and libraries in addition to neighbourhood-oriented uses (Department of city planning, LA).

Fig:01 showing the aspects of community
Source: Author

Fig:02 showing the services of community centre
Source: Author

Uses and activities

Community centre is a common platform for the community, it generally performs many of the following functions of its community.

- Place to celebrate all the festivals of the community at different events and customs
- Place for open gatherings of the community on different issues
- Place where government officials or other authority pioneers come to meet the nationals and request their sentiments, support or votes
- place where community people meet each other socially

- Place where local clubs and volunteer activities are held
- place that community individuals (and now and then others), can lease economically when a private family capacity or gathering is too huge for their own home. For example the non-religious parts of weddings, funerals and so forth
- place that passes on and retells neighbourhood history
- place where neighbourhood non-government activities are sorted out
- Place for community bazaars
- Place for community's skill development
- Place where fun activities can entertain the paying public
- Place of shelter in times of community tragedies

Fig:03 showing the activities of community centre
Source: Author

Fig:04 showing the detail activities of community centre
Source: Author

Organisation and ownership

The community centre can be owned by the government and financed by the government, also the centre can be owned by the community itself and can be financed by the community. Community centres can be financed by the sponsors also through commercial facilities.

Fig:05 showing the organisations that can have the ownership of community centre
Source: Author

2.1 Existing condition of community centre in Dhaka city

In the existing condition of community centres, found from survey, there is lack of community engaging activity in both the centres owned by the government and private owners.

a

b

c

a. Fig:6 North Brook Haal Community Centre
b. Fig:7 Shuchona Community Centre
c. Fig:8 Sadek Hossain Community Centre

These community centres that were surveyed has nothing else to offer to its community rather than rental services.

There is no interactive space or any green breathing space, also there are no skill development services as well as no place for the community people to gather together for discussing issues on their community.

These only fulfils the commercial purpose but does nothing to Enhance the essence of the community.

Fig:9 Priyanka Community Centre

Except for North Brook Hall, which has a gym in its premises and with the money raised from renting the hall and from gym the only good thing that happens is the maintenance of North Brook Hall as it is one of the many heritage buildings in old Dhaka.

From the survey report on Community Centers for Community Development:A Case Study of Dhaka City by Farhana Yasmin and Dr. Gulsan Ara Parvin, I have been able to come to the conclusion that it is really necessary to rethink the concept of community centre in Dhaka as the report data shows the only purpose for using the existing community centres is for rental causes only and other reasons for not using these community centres are because they are in unsuitable locations, less accessible, bad structural condition, inadequate utility services, inadequate ventilation, unhygienic condition, political encroachment, antisocial activities, inadequate security system, less manpower for maintenance, poor management, inadequate facilities and inadequate floor space (Yasmin and Parvin, 2008).

Table 1: Percentage distribution of purpose for the use of CC.

Purposes	Bakshi Bazar (%)	Paltan (%)
Marriage Ceremony	40	20
Birth Day	7	20
Community activities	0	0
Cultural Activities	0	20
Religious Activities	0	0
Political Activities	0	0
Not Used	53	40
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2005.

Table 2: Ranking of reasons for not using the community centers.

Reasons	Bakshi Bazar		Vuter Gali		Paltan	
	Frequency	Rank	Frequency	Rank	Frequency	Rank
Unsuitable location	-	-	9	6	-	-
Less accessible	-	-	3	7	-	-
Bad structural condition	3	4	24	3	-	-
Inadequate utility service	6	3	12	5	-	-
Inadequate ventilation	6	3	3	7	-	-
Unhygienic condition	9	2	24	3	-	-
Political encroachment	-	-	33	2	-	-
Antisocial activity	9	2	9	6	-	-
Inadequate security system	9	2	9	6	3	3
Less manpower for maintenance	18	1	21	4	-	
Poor management	9	4	36	1	6	2
Inadequate facilities	18	1	-	-	6	2
Inadequate floor space	6	3	-	-	-	-
No need	3	4	12	5	9	1
Total responses	96	-	195	-	24	-

Source: Field survey, 2005.

Fig:10 and Fig:11 Source: Yasmin and Parvin, 2008

Table 3: Satisfaction level measured on different aspects of the community center.

Aspects	Category	Bakshi Bazar		Vuter Gali		Paltan	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Location	Satisfactory	45	100	18	40	45	100
	Dissatisfactory	0	0	27	60	0	0
Accessibility	Satisfactory	45	100	17	37.78	45	100
	Dissatisfactory	0	0	28	62.22	0	0
Structural Condition	Satisfactory	27	60	0	0	45	100
	Dissatisfactory	18	40	45	100	0	0
Floor Space	Satisfactory	16	35.56	15	33.33	42	93.33
	Dissatisfactory	29	64.44	30	66.67	3	6.67
Utility Services	Satisfactory	33	73.33	0	0	45	100
	Dissatisfactory	12	26.67	45	100	0	0

Source: Field survey, 2005.

Fig:12 Source: Yasmin and Parvin, 2008

Table 4: Expectations related to community center for community development.

Priority	Time Period							
	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)
Gathering center for different age groups	108	80	27	20	0	0	0	0
Leisure time activities	66	49	54	40	12	9	3	2
Center for training and workshop	54	40	57	42	24	18	0	
Health care center	51	38	48	36	27	20	9	7
Shelter for natural disaster	27	20	42	31	39	29	12	9
Disaster management center	30	22	48	36	42	31	15	11
Center for community development by public participation	72	53	48	36	9	7	0	0
Center for religious purpose	45	33	51	38	27	20	12	9
Social welfare center	63	47	54	40	15	11	3	2
Women welfare center	63	47	45	33	24	18	3	2
Adult education	36	27	48	35.5	48	35.5	3	2
Maintenance of law and order	3	2	0	0	24	18	105	78
Motivation and awareness building program	30	22	42	31	51	38	12	9

Note: F means frequency
Source: Field Survey, 2005.

Fig:13 Source: Yasmin and Parvin, 2008

Table 4 outlines that the majority of the inhabitants need that community center focus will encourage get-together of individuals of various age gatherings, place for community development by public support, and relaxation time exercises. Some people expect that community center should also work as a center for training, workshop and social welfare.

Further, the vast majority of the people think that CCs should not deal with the law and order maintenance of the
locality. CCs are used as a center for adult education or informal education and self training of residents in the developed countries like UK and USA (Kelly, 1970; Harrison, 1961). Like the developed countries, the residents of Dhaka City expect the use of CC as a place for adult education, knowledge and awareness building, social development, women welfare and other related activities of community interests.

Marriot (1997) found that the specialists of numerous focuses in England engaged with the association of network building had an inadequately created sense about the evolving example of the necessities and prerequisites of their nearby network, and the market for what they bring to the table. As indicated by him, they are frequently significantly more worried about the physical administration of the working than with the improvement of the nearby network what's more, the job the building needs to play inside such advancement. From the perception and poll overview, it was discovered that the situation is comparative in Bangladesh if there should arise an occurrence of prioritization of individuals' need; and even the specialists have no enthusiasm for physical administration. Over the time, the mindful specialist could expand the arrangement of distinctive employments. To improve the network advancement inside the city, each ward ought to have one CC which will be arranged as a 'Ward Development Complex' where all network improvement exercises could happen. Chaos and King (1947) recognized that the idea of the administration is an exceptionally noteworthy factor for the achievement of the focuses. The Ward Office ought to have given the duty regarding giving network offices counting CC for fruitful network advancement. They may likewise assume the liability of administration of the CCs. A warning board of trustees of network agents (who are all around organized in their neighborhood network), clients and nonusers ought to be chosen at an open gathering to help the ward office with the vision for administration of the focuses. The advisory group will guarantee the necessities of the network through giving fitting projects and openings. Network focus ought to act naturally needy and kept up through the reserve of its procuring. The CCs will create salary by giving offices to various age gatherings, relaxation time exercises, preparing and workshop, debacle administration activity, network advancement activities by open investment, religious capacities, grown-up instruction, and inspiration and mindfulness building programs. Along these lines, the utilization of CCs of DCC would be advanced for the network improvement.

The Community Centres in Bangladesh, particularly in Dhaka City, can contribute a lot in the community development if they are properly utilized with adequate manpower, maintenance and management. It is expected that the research will be useful for future researches on community development in major cities of Bangladesh.

2.1 Density of Chawkbazar thana

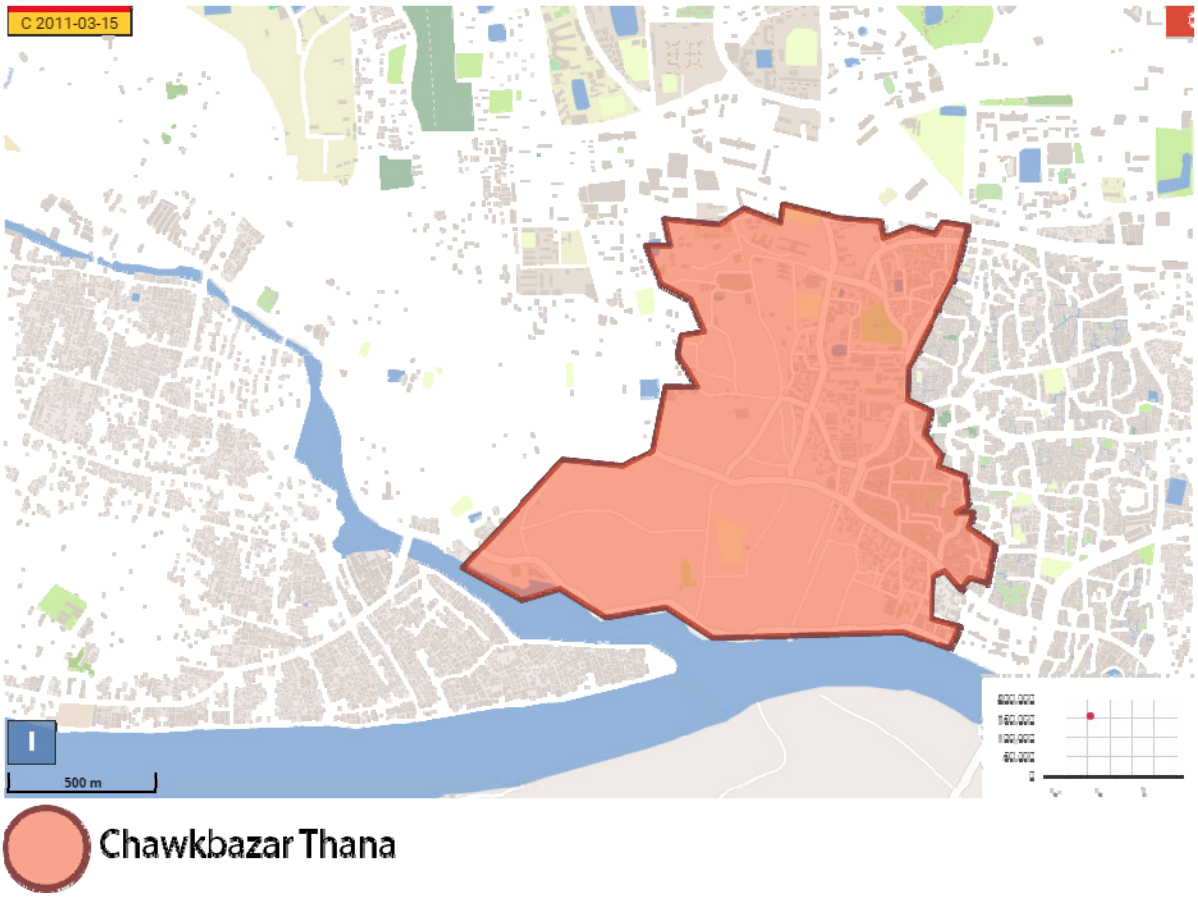


Fig:14 Source: City Population

Chawkbazar Model Thana (Dhaka metropolitan) area 2.07 sq km, located in between 23°42' and 23°43' north latitudes and 90°23' and 90°24' east longitudes. It is bounded by SHAHBAGH thana on the north, KERANIGANJ upazila and KAMRANGIRCHAR thana on the south, BANGSHAL and KOTWALIthanas on the east, LALBAGH thana on the west.

Population Total 160112; male 104484, female 55628; Muslim 155237, Hindu 4586, Buddhist 205, Christian 45 and others 39.

Water bodies Main river: BURIGANGA.

Administration Chawkbazar Model Thana was formed on 30 August 2009 comprising parts of Lalbagh and Kotwali thanas.

Source Bangladesh Population Census 2001, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

Thana						
Ward	Mahalla	Population		Density (per sq km)	Literacy rate (%)	
		Urban	Rural		Urban	Rural
3+3 (part)	62	160112	-	77349	75.49	-

Fig:1 Source Bangladesh Population Census 2001, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

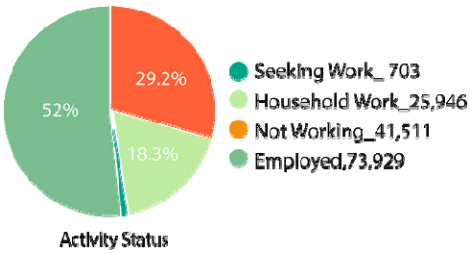


Fig:16 Source : City Population

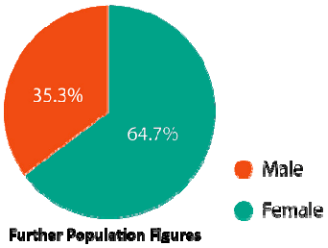


Fig:17 Source : City Population

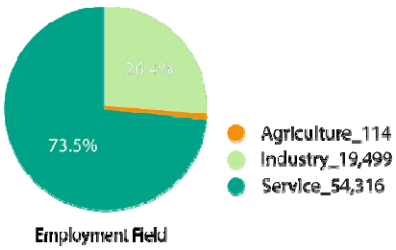
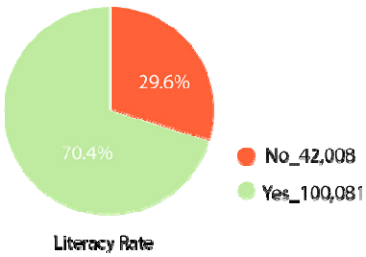


Fig:18 Source : City Population



Fih:19 Source : City Population

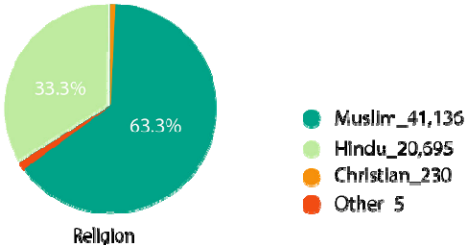


Fig:20 Source : City Population

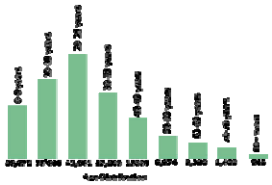


Fig:21 Source : City Population

Fig:25 *Source* Bangladesh Population Census 2001, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

Ward No.	Area (sq km)	Population		Literacy rate (%)
		Male	Female	
Ward No. 56 (part)	0.20	1668	814	93.76
Ward No. 63	0.47	16306	9901	77.42
Ward No. 64	0.16	15883	9716	76.89
Ward No. 65	0.35	36786	22586	62.14
Ward No. 66 (part)	0.50	18131	8566	68.49
Ward No. 67 (part)	0.39	15710	4045	74.26

Fig: 23 Source Bangladesh Population Census 2001, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

Reference:

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Chapter 03: SITE AND CONTEXT ANALYSIS

3.1 Understanding the character of the community

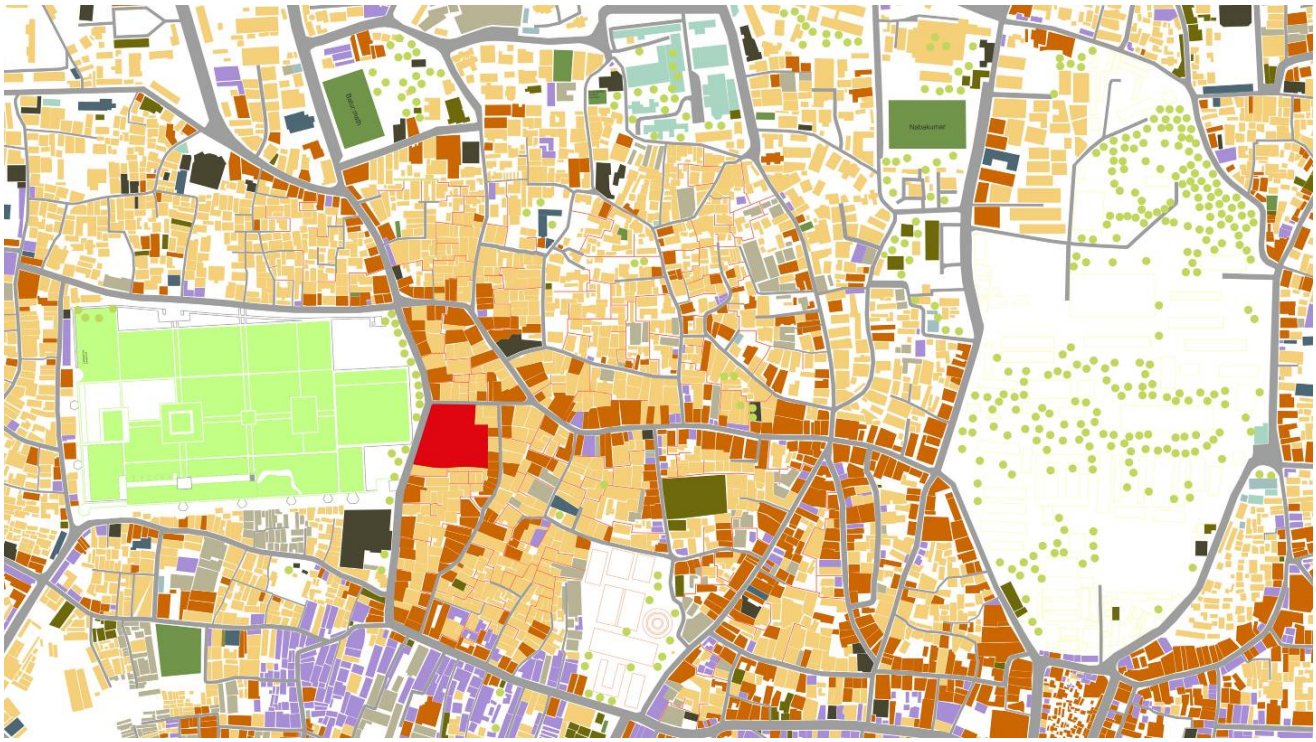


Fig:25 Source: Author

SITE

The site is situated in ward No. 63 of Chawkbazar thana, right at the bottom of Lalbagh Fort. The community for this specific community centre is the people living in ward 63. In spite of having such big green area of Lalbagh the community still lacks a common ground for the community to gather together for different social activities. If we look at the above map we see there in no open field around the walking distance of the site, which is also a reason why the community desperately needs a breathing space. Most of the people in this community are business oriented. The community holds the very essence of old Dhaka, that is, the commercial belt at ground level and residential belt above the ground level.

The community is between two big chunks of green, one is the Lalbagh Fort itself and the other is the old central jail but this does not contribute much to the community based activities as

Lalbagh Fort is a heritage site so it has its own restrictions and the old jail is also proposed to be a museum which will also have its bindings, thus the community needs such a community centre which will give them a breathing space in this densely populated area and a platform for the community people where they can gather together for different events to enhance the essence of the community. There is a larger percentage of youth in this community who has so much more to gain from their community and it is only possible if they get a proper platform for this, which is their own community centre.

3.2 Understanding the need of the people of the community

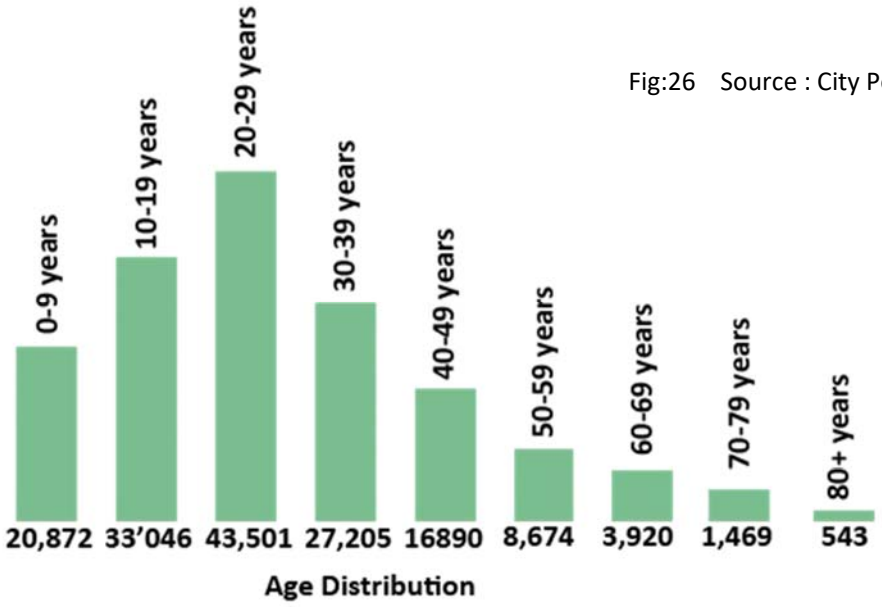


Fig:26 Source : City Population

The community has larger number of youth and from survey it has been found that they lack a place of quality interactions and skill development scopes. The adults also miss out on a platform where they can grow their business more efficiently and in respect to the new technologies. The elderly people of this community requires a place for daily walks as the narrow roads makes it impossible for morning and evening walks. The women of the community lacks a place where they can communicate and interact and learn new skills. The children are deprived from the most simplest form of breathing space for them, their play

area where parents also have access to and can keep an eye on them. From the survey these are the activities that different age groups of this community requires in order to improve themselves as well as the community, shown in the diagram below.

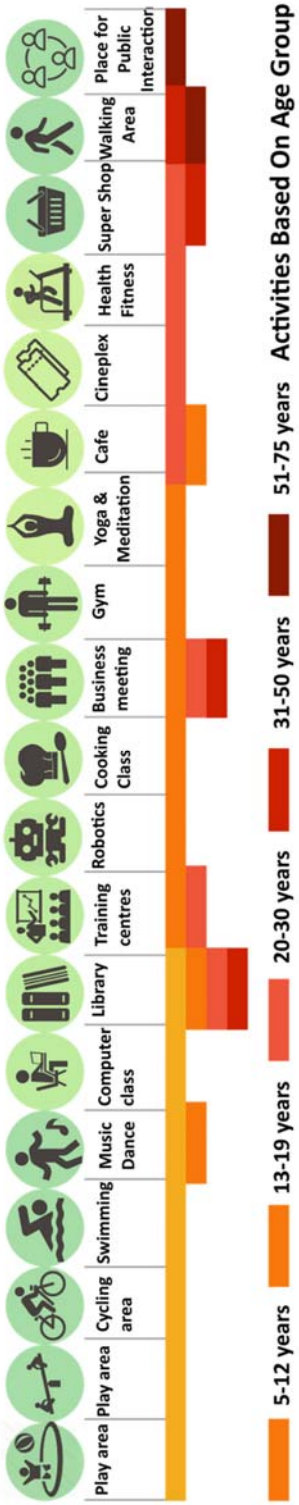


Fig:27

Source : Author

3.3 Site surroundings

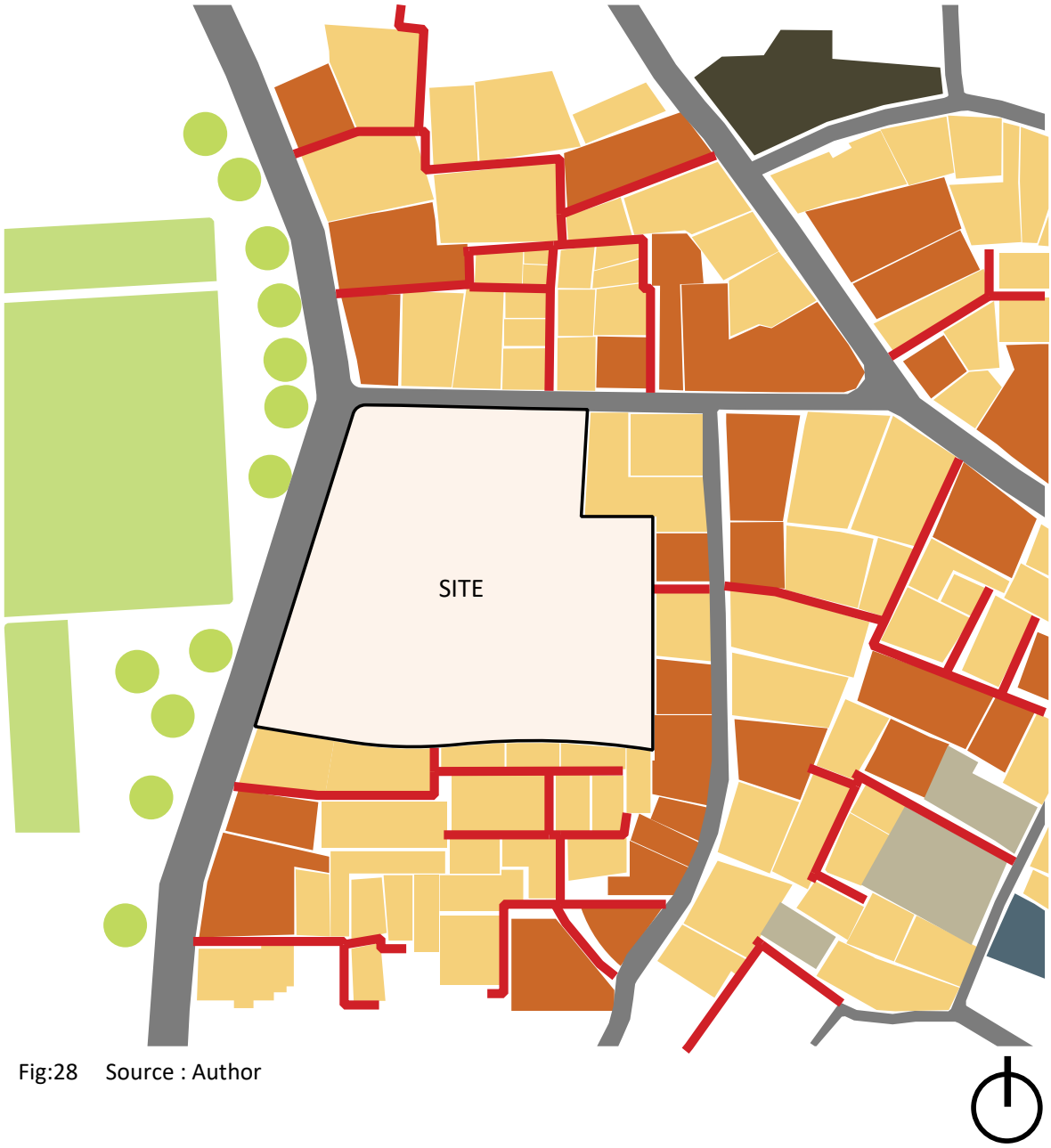


Fig:28 Source : Author

The above map shows tha site and its surrounding roads and built mass

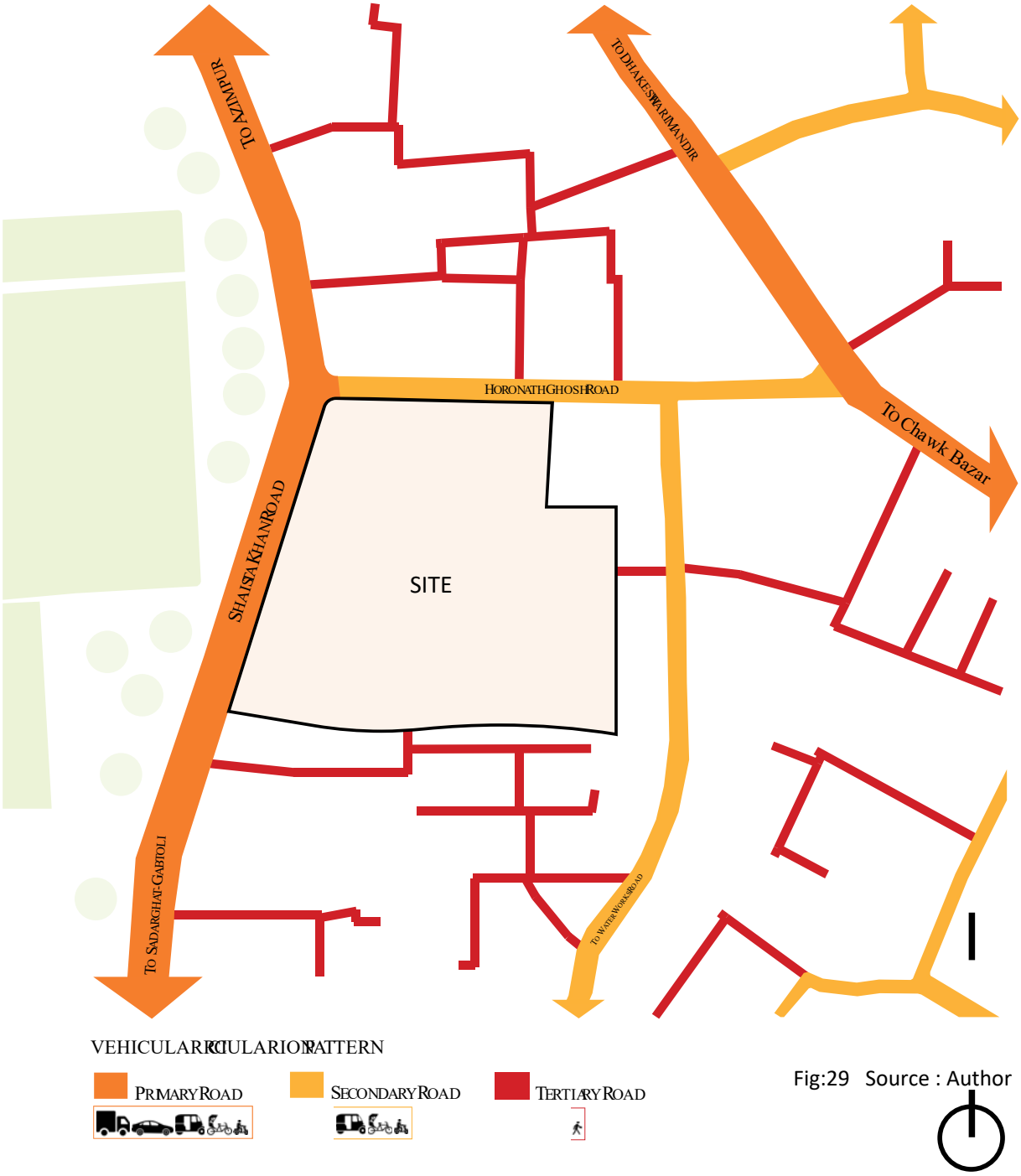


Fig:29 Source : Author

The above map shows tha site and its surrounding primary, secondary and tertiary roads and what kind of vehicles run on them. The tertiary roads are as narrow as 4' -5' thus it is impossible for any vehicle to run on them.

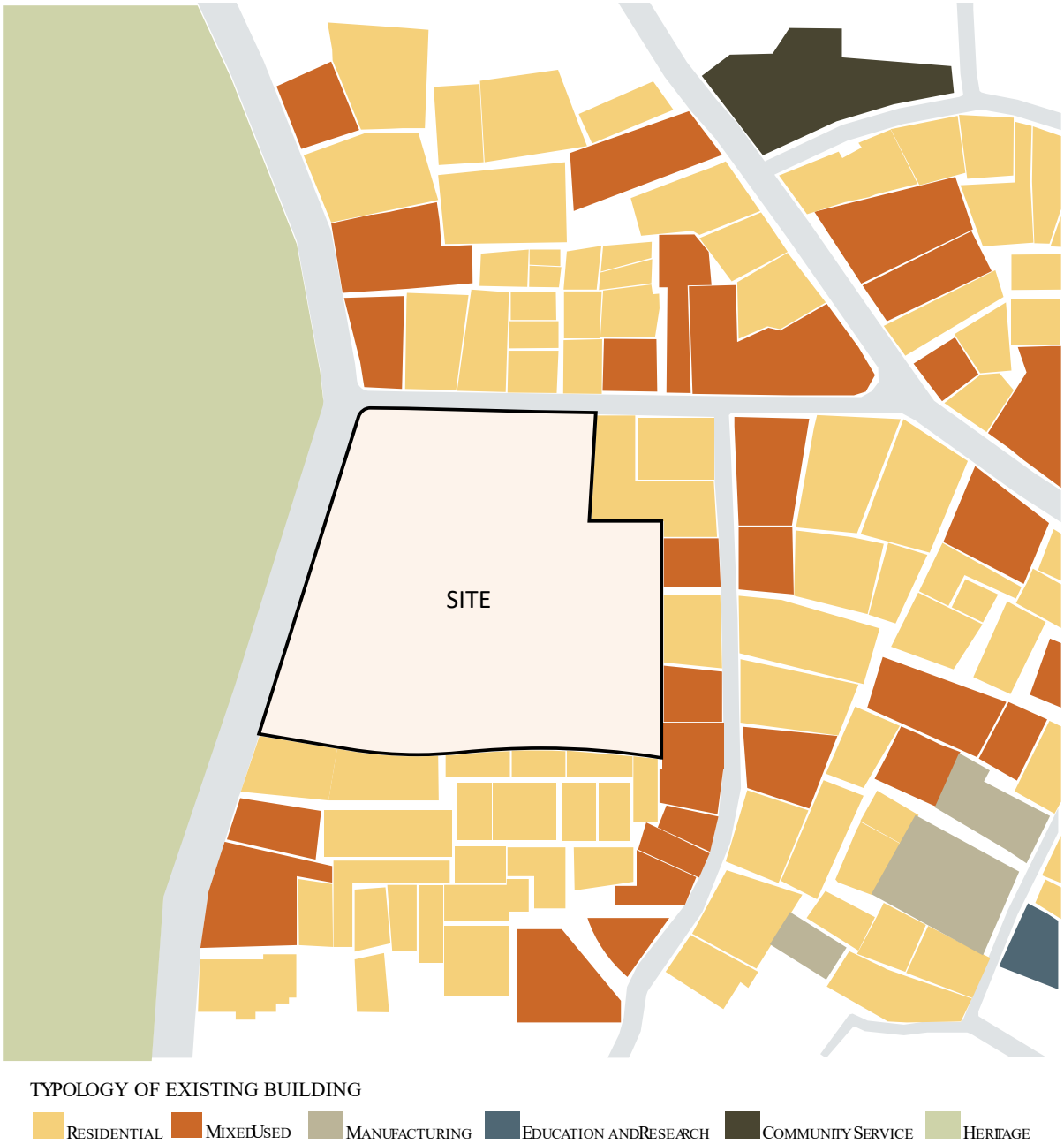
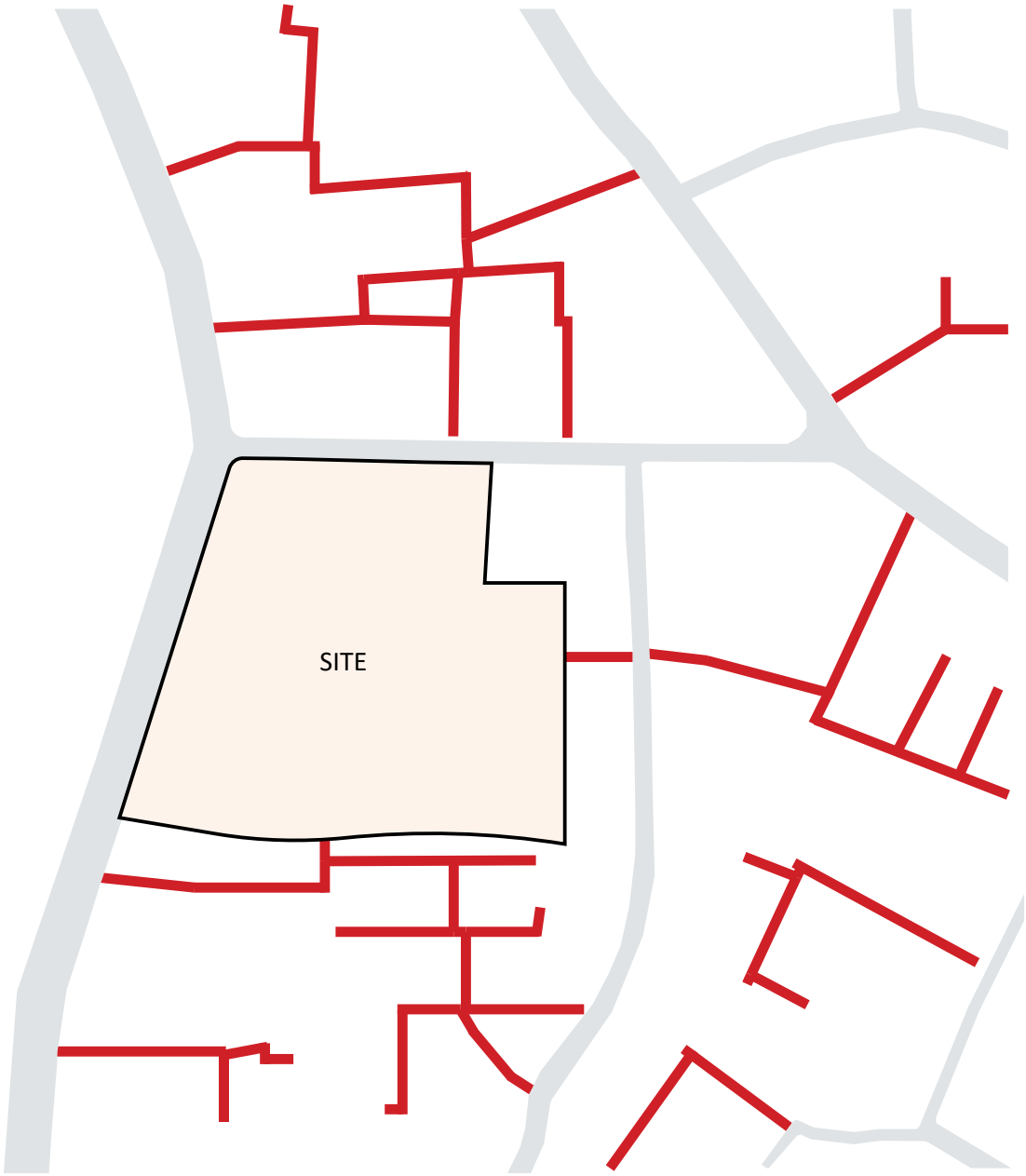


Fig:30 Source : Author

The above map shows the building typology around the site, and as we can see there are mixed use buildings on road sides and residential blocks on the inner edge. The mixed use buildings have commercial activities on the ground level and storage and residential facilities on the above levels.



PEDESTRIAN RCTULATIONPATTERNS

Fig:31 Source : Author

NARROW WALKWAYS IN BETWEENTHE BUILDINGS

The above map shows the tertiary roads that circulate around the site and two of them directly have access to the site.

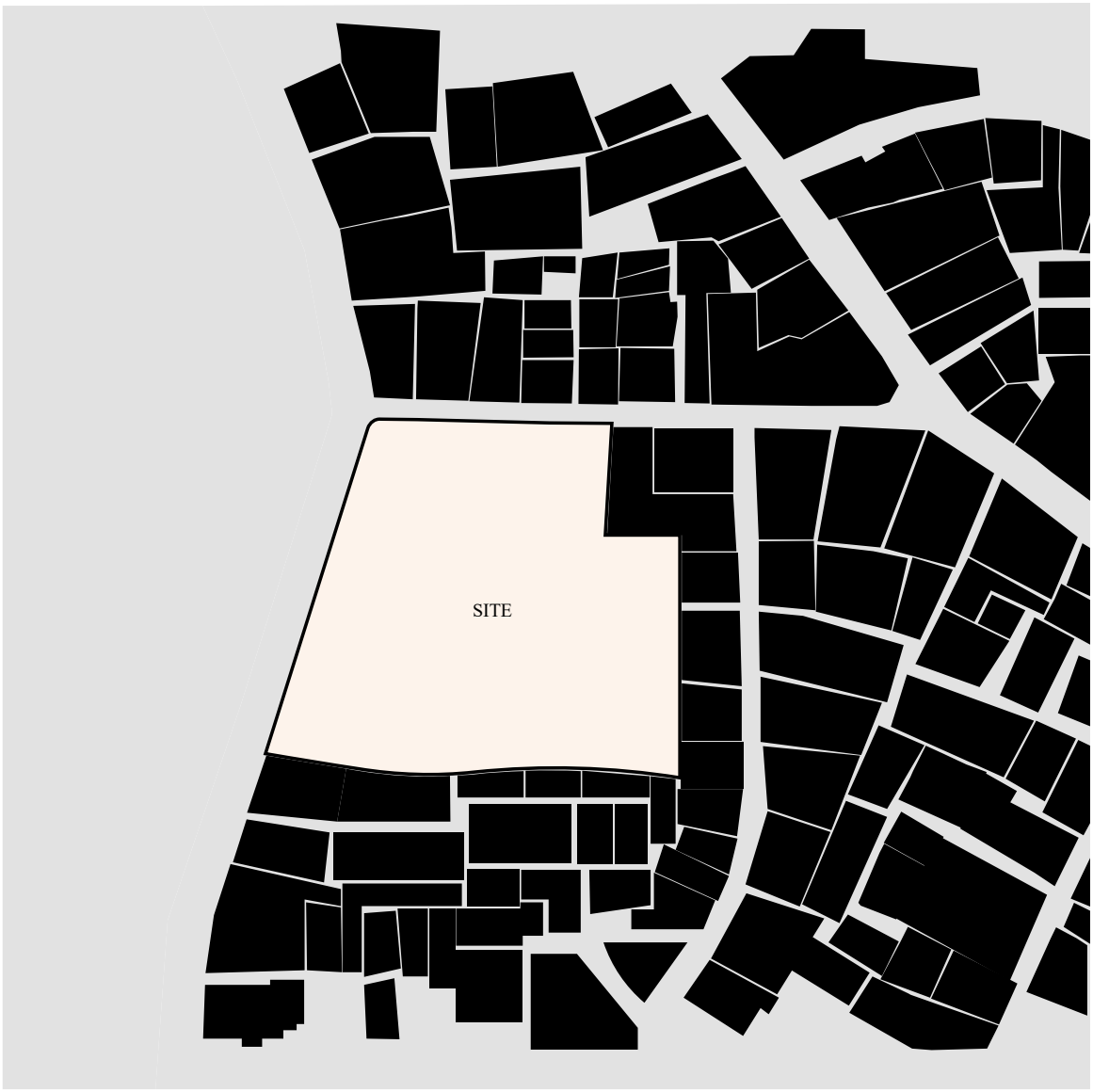


Fig:32 Source : Author

The above map shows the relation of solid built form and open space around the site and there is barely any open space around the site except for Lalbagh Fort on the west side of the site, which is a heritage site.

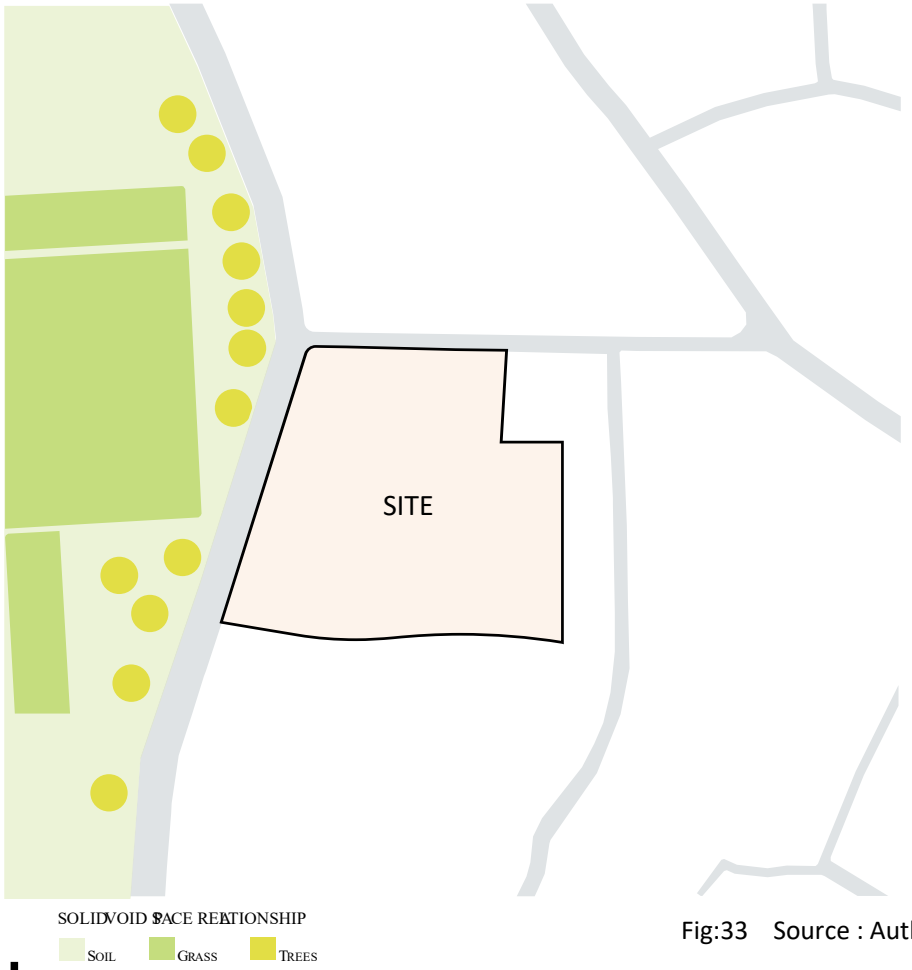


Fig:33 Source : Author

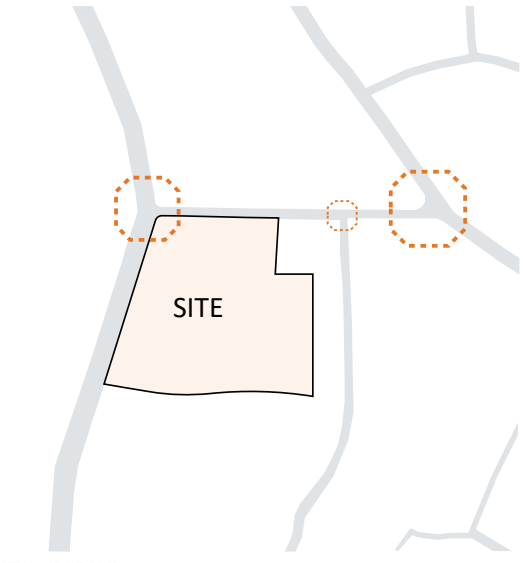


Fig:34 Source : Author

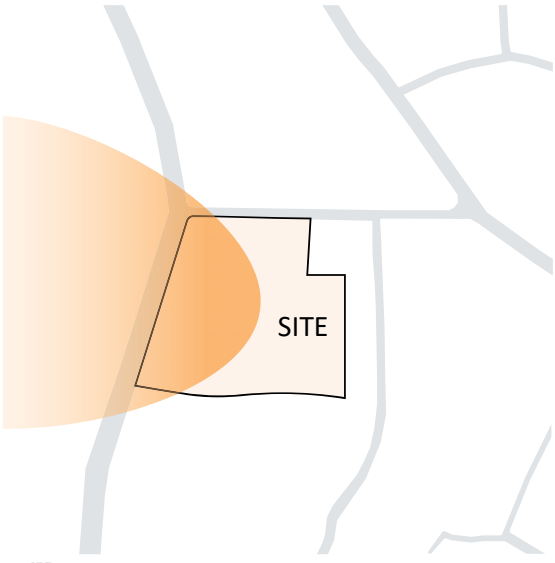


Fig:35 Source : Author

3.4 Social context

Fig:36 Source : Author

The ground level is completely commercial and holds the tradition of old Dhaka.

Fig:37 Source : Author

Levels above the ground are residential and in some cases used as storage.

Fig:38 Source : Author

The major vehicle used in these narrow roads are rickshaw, most people prefer walking.

Fig:39 Source : Author

No street lights are present on the streets and there are rows of wires hanging from the electric poles.

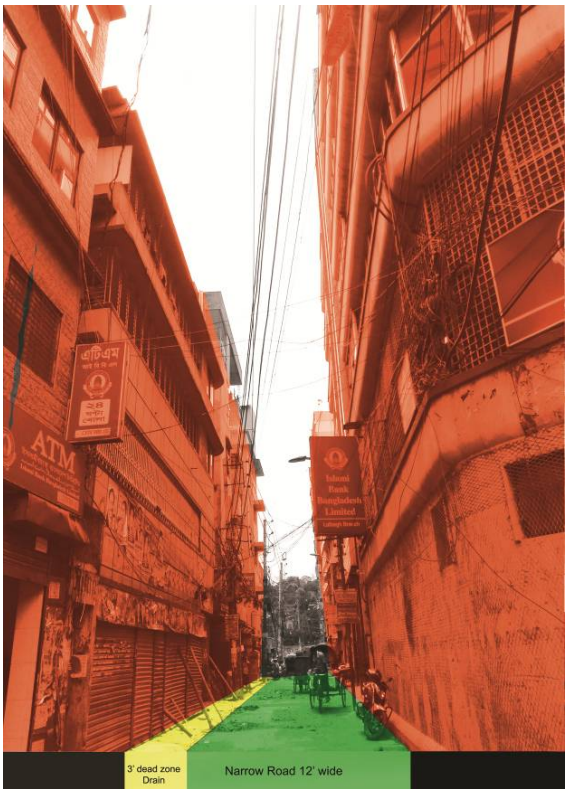


Fig: 40 Source : Author

Narrow roads with open drains makes it harder for the pedestrian to walk

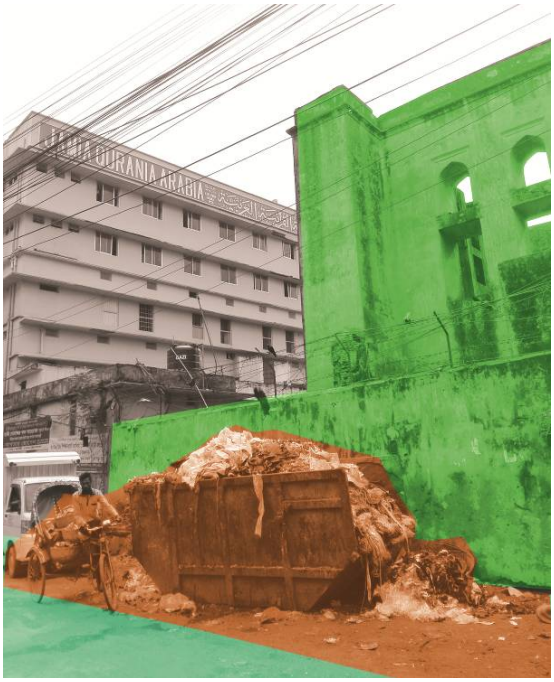


Fig:41 Source : Author

Very poor waste management system

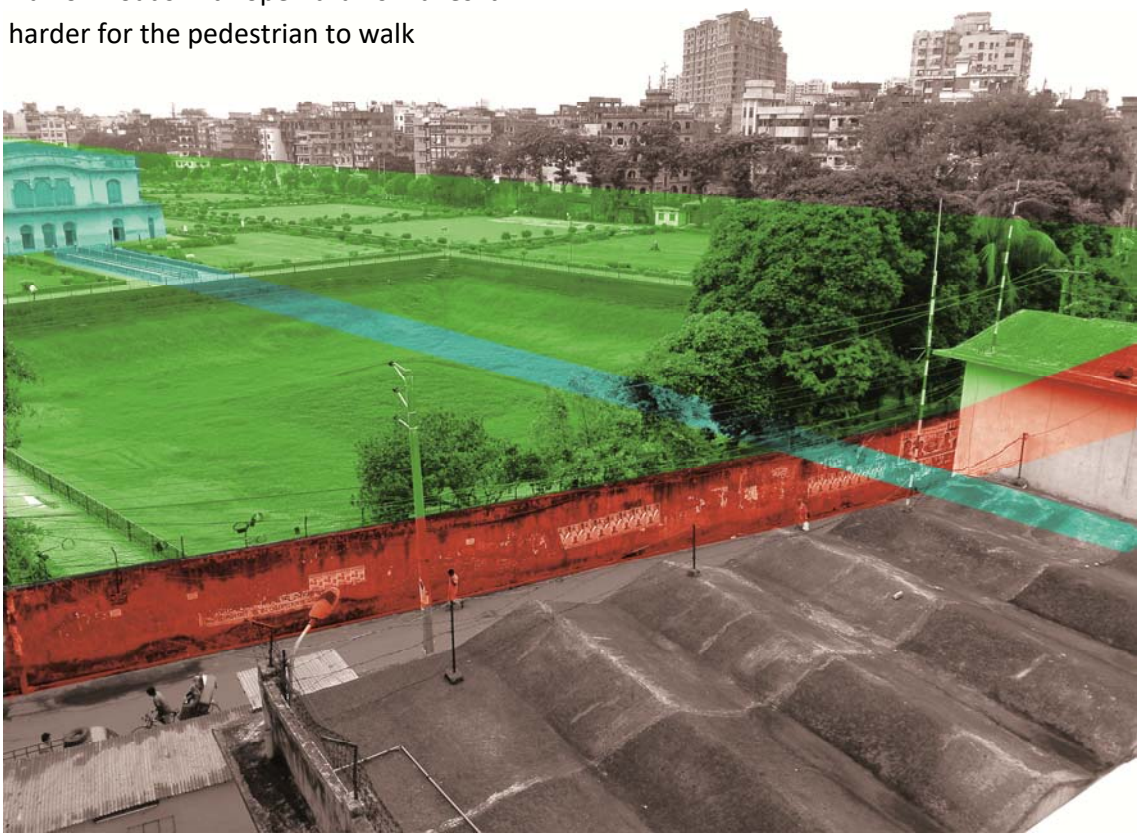


Fig: 42 Source : Author

The 12’ high boundary wall of Lalbagh makes it impossible for the pedestrian to enjoy the view of Lalbagh.

Chapter 04: Case Study

4.1 Pani community centre

Fig:43 Source : archdaily

Architects : SchilderScholte architects

Location
Rajarhat, Bangladesh

Area : 910.0 sqm

Project Year
2014

Fig:44 Source : archdaily

The Dutch foundation Pani commissioned SchilderScholte architects to design an educational building in the north Bengal town of Rajarhat. The architects couple embraced this pro bono assignment coming from ideological motives and knowledge sharing. The building serves as a community centre for folks from the region, aged from toddlers to elder people.

During the design process attention was mainly focused on locally available materials and weather conditions. The starting point was to realize a building using materials and skills from within a 15 miles radius around the site. Bamboo, hand-shaped brick, Mango wood, reused steel, local mortar and wafer-thin recycled corrugated panels are the main materials used in the building.

The drive was to encourage locals to become aware on the basic principles of sustainability and durable building concepts. In effect close to zero electricity or fossil fuels were used during construction and other necessities required for erecting this building. Thus realizing an environmentally friendly building that contributes to the community in a significant way.

Source : archdaily

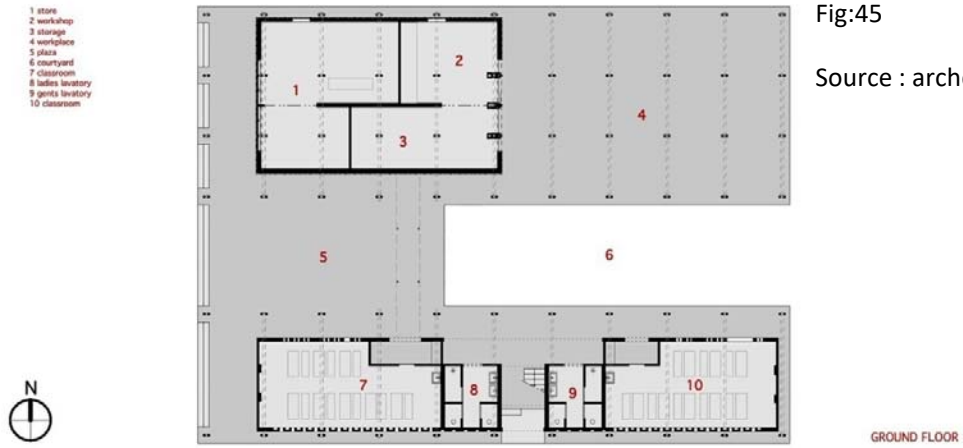


Fig:45

Source : archdaily

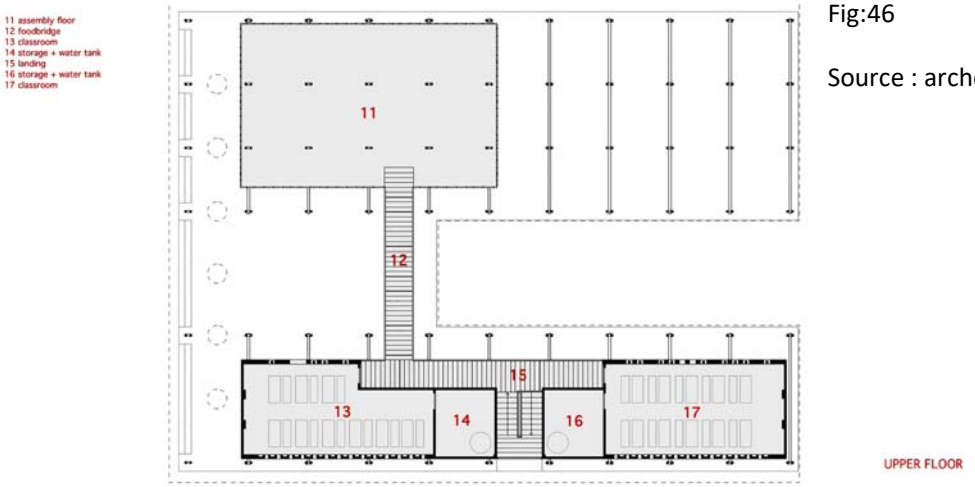


Fig:46

Source : archdaily

Fig:47 Source : archdaily

Fig: 48 Source : archdaily

4.2 Friendship centre

Architects
Kashef Mahboob Chowdhury/URBANA

Location
Gaibandha, Bangladesh

Team
Anup Kumar Basak, Sharif Jahir Hossain, Motiur Rahman, Amrul Hasan

Area
2897.0 sqm

Project Year
2011

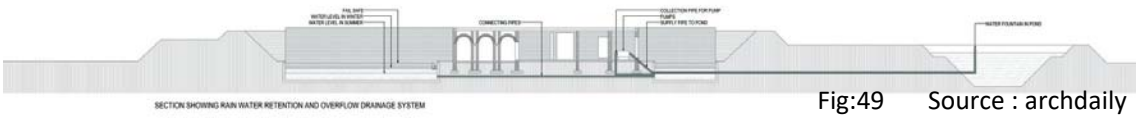
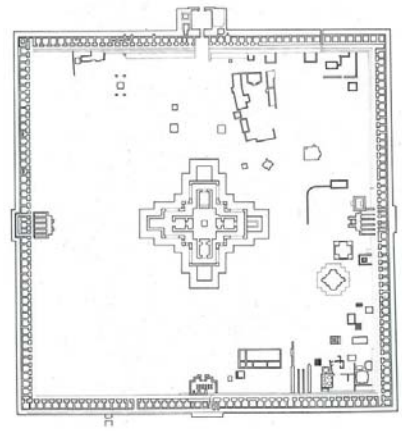
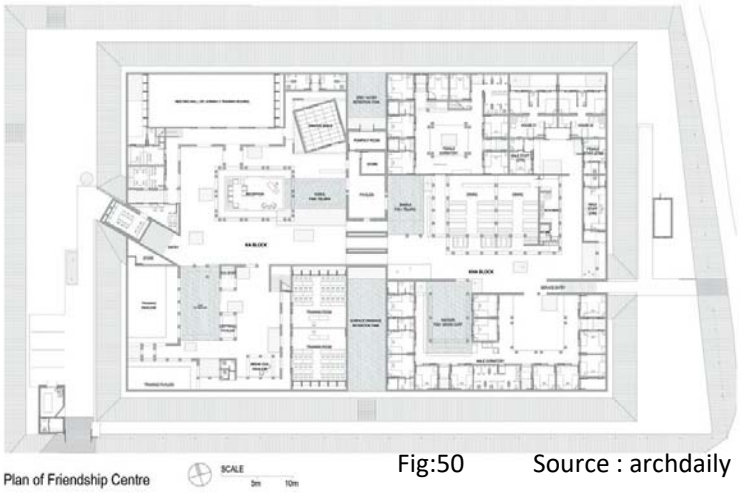


Fig:49 Source : archdaily



Plan of Paharpur Monastery, Naogaon, 770-810 AD (85 Km From Site)



Plan of Friendship Centre

Fig:50 Source : archdaily

The low lying land, which is located in rural Gaibandha where agriculture is predominant, is under threat of flooding if the embankment encircling the town and peripheries break. The centre serves and brings together some of the poorest of poor in the country and -by extension - in the world, yet in the extreme limitation of means was a search for the luxury of light and shadows of the economy and generosity of small spaces; of the joy of movement and discovery in the bare and the essential.

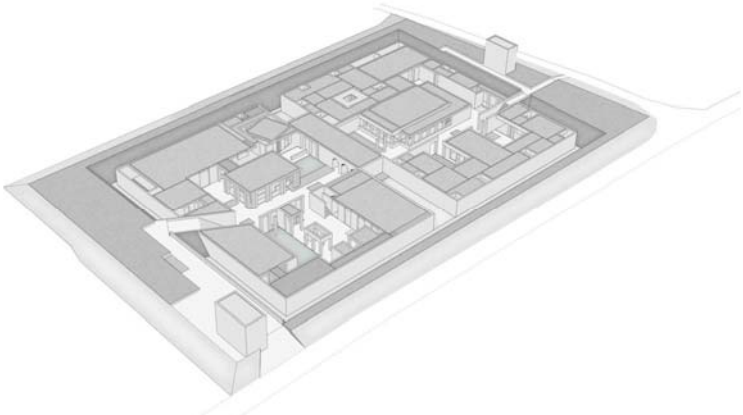


Fig: 51 Source : archdaily

4.3 Bronx Police Station

Fig:52 Source : archdaily

Architects : Bjarke Ingels Group

Location : 378 E 156th St, Bronx, NY 10455, USA

Partners In Charge
Bjarke Ingels, Beat Schenk, Daniel Sundlin, Thomas Christoffersen

Project Leaders
Liz McDonald, Sören Grünert

Project Architect
Aran Coakley

Design Team

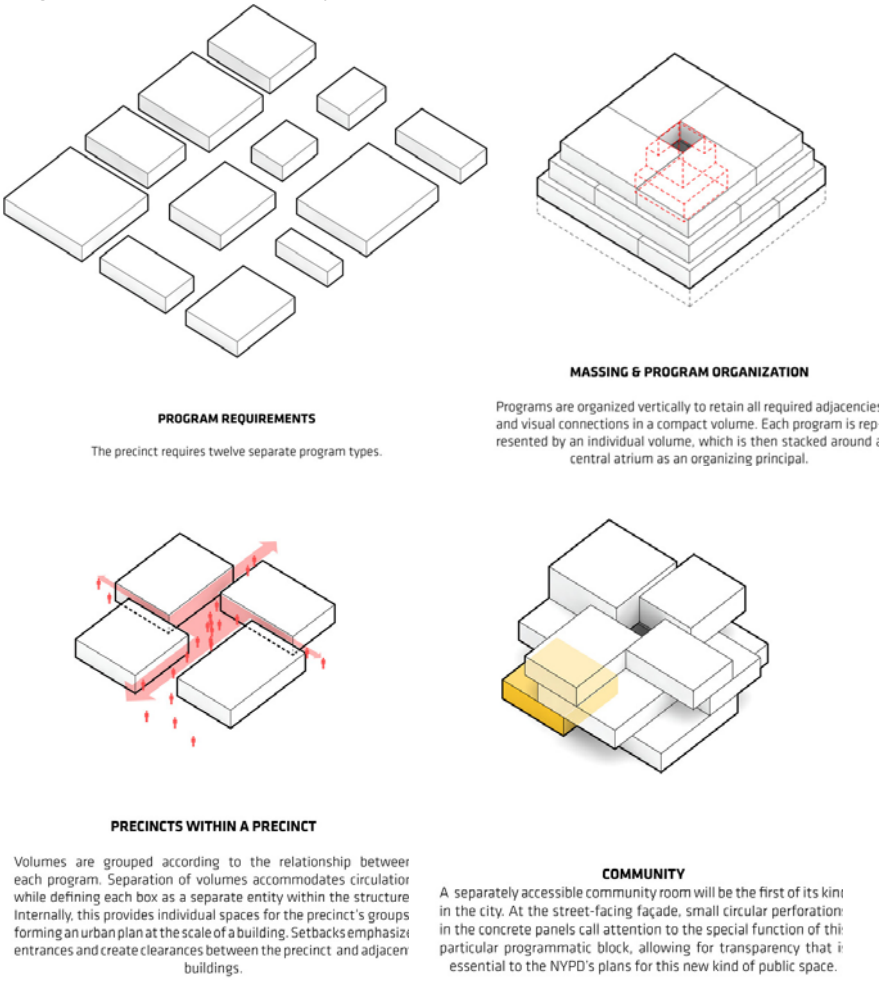
Adam Sheraden, David Sharratt, Hsiao Rou Huang, Jacob Waas, Jennifer Ng, Kelli Reinhardt, Ku Hun Chung, Liyang Zhang, Peter Lee, Phillip MacDougall

Client
NYC Department of Design & Construction

Collaborators
Silman, Cosentini, DACK, Tillotson, Starr Whitehouse, Philip Habib, Carlin Simpson & Associates, The Friday Group, Cerami, CCI, Urban Arborists, The Facade Group, Prime Engineering

Area
4180.0 sqm

Fig:53 Source : archdaily



The first station to house a public multi-purpose room, the building aims to strengthen the department's relationship with the community, while reducing officer stress.

"The 40th Precinct will also house a brand new piece of city program: the first ever community meeting room in a precinct. With its own street-level entrance, the multipurpose space will contain information kiosks and areas to hold classes or events, encouraging civic engagement with the precinct," says the architects.

The building also

Fig:54 Source : archdaily

Chapter 05: Programs

Fig: 55 Source: Author

From the survey result on the needs and requirements of people of different age group in this community, as shown in figure:27, I have come to the conclusion that this particular community does not need a 20 storied commercial community centre as proposed by DSCC rather this community needs a breathing space and an open ground where they can have their daily walks, interactions while having light snacks from the tea store beside, the children needs play space, a common platform to gather together as a community and discuss on issues regarding the community, for both political and non-political issues also a ground to celebrate different occasions and festivals of the community people.

The community also requires a community library where they can donate and collect books for free and share knowledge, elevated platforms to enjoy the magnificent view of Lalbagh Fort, Cafe to interact, resource centre and training facilities for skill development of all age groups, exhibition spaces, indoor games, Gym and information centre for all information required regarding legal issues, health issues and tourist guidance. Urban roof garden for practising urban roof farming in making the community more sustainable and an observatory on top of the roof to enjoy the view of Lalbagh and the fabric of old Dhaka as well as a multipurpose hall.

Chapter 06: Design development

6.1 Design Considerations

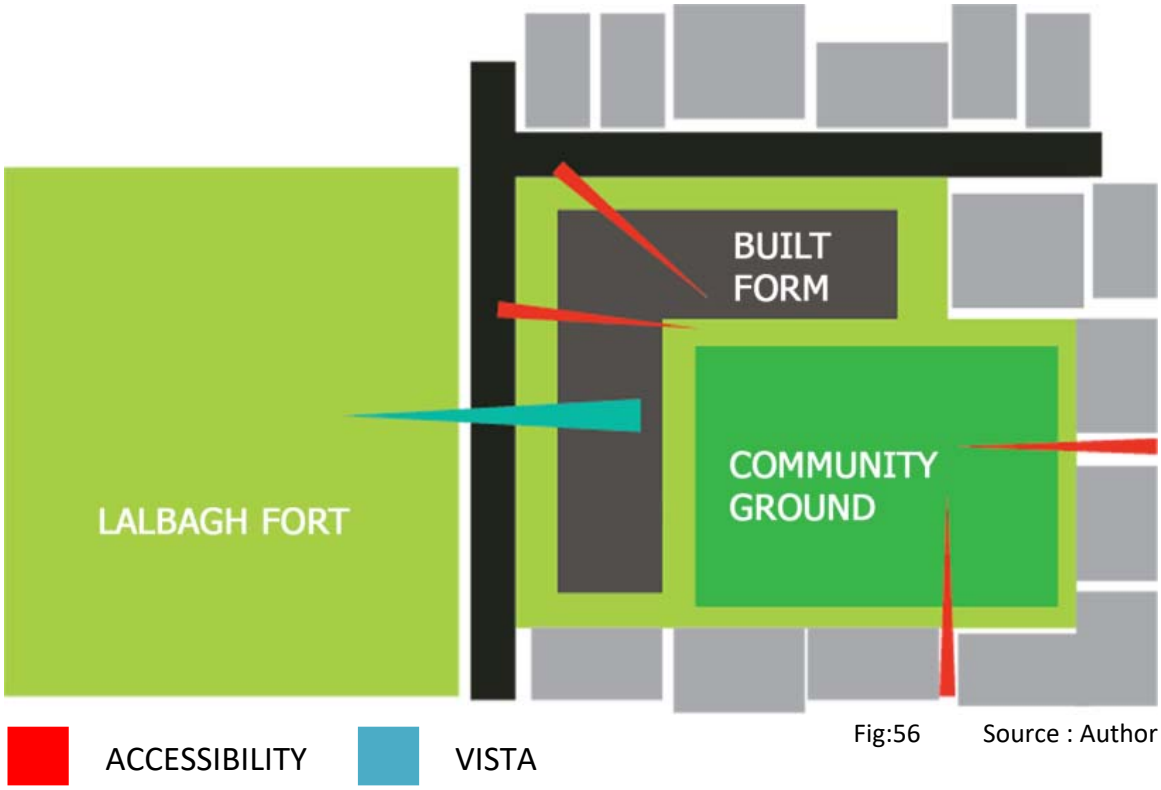


Fig:56 Source : Author

Bringing in the community ground and placing it closer to the community and its people.
Creating access for the community people from all the feasible ways.

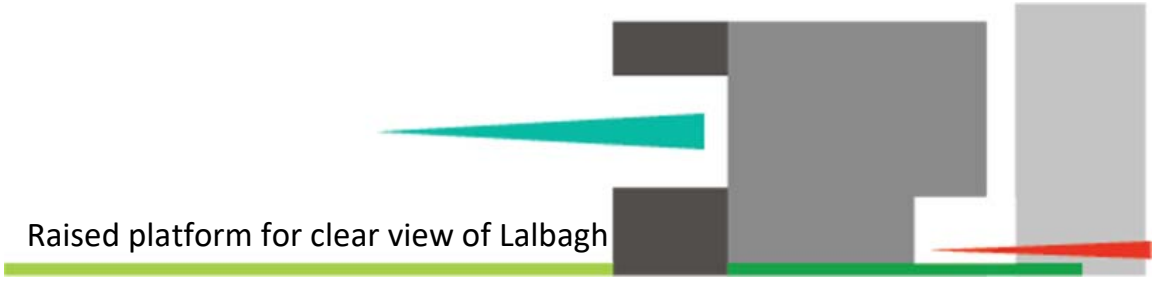


Fig: 57 Source : Author

Raising Public plaza in order to create vista towards Lalbagh.

6.2 Zoning

BLOW UP AXONOMETRIC VIEW SHOWING ALL THE FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY CENTRE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS.

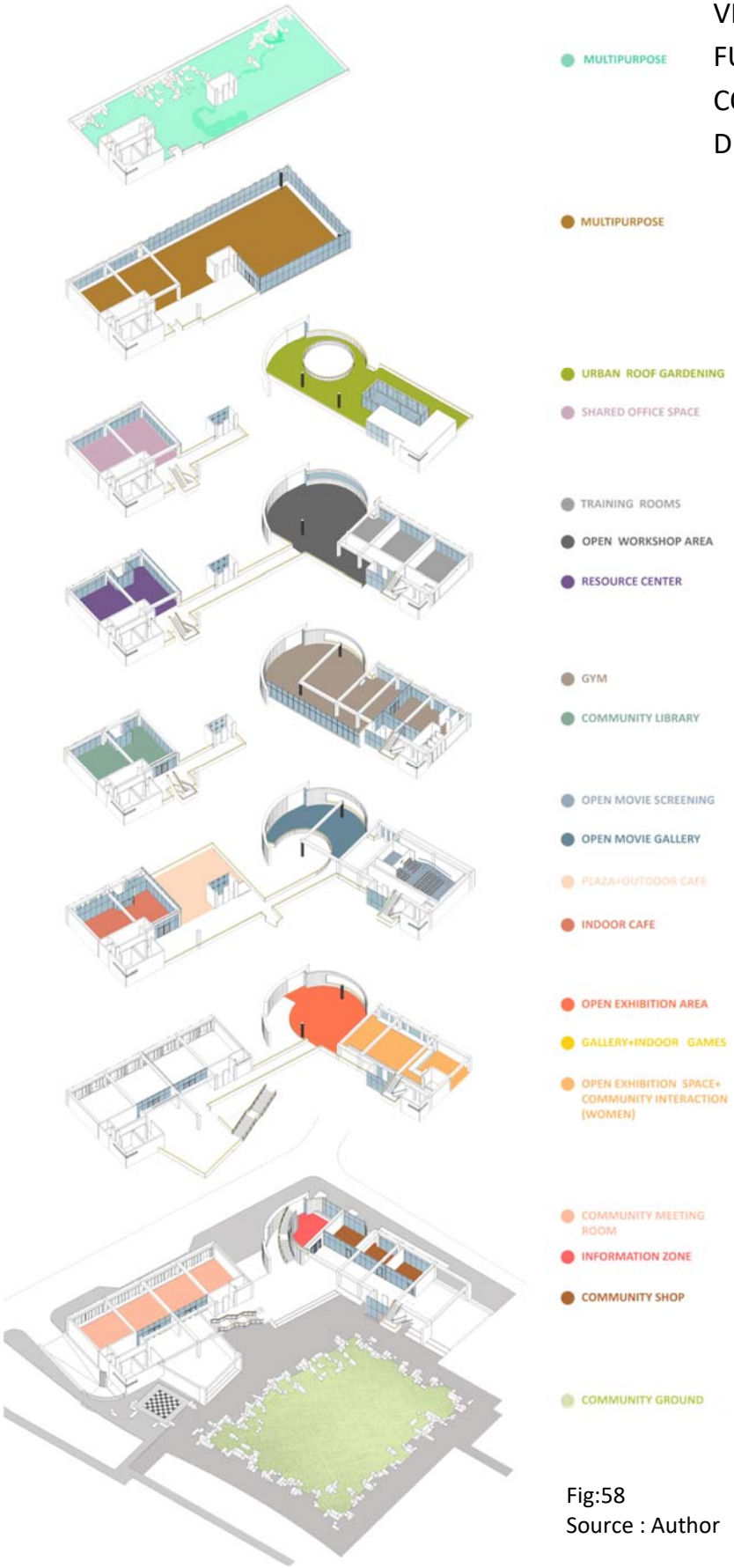
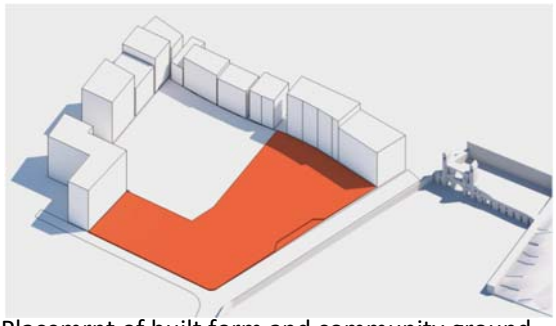
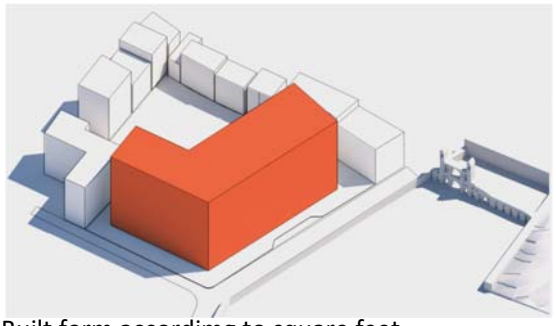


Fig:58
Source : Author

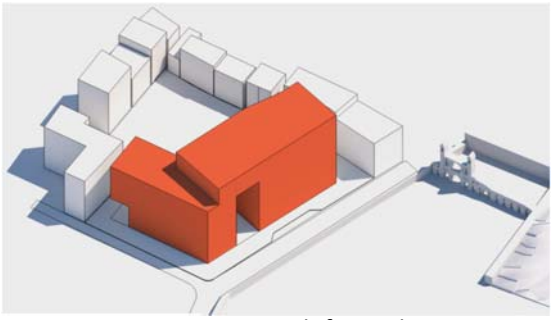
6.3 Formation of Built form Fig: 59 Source : Author



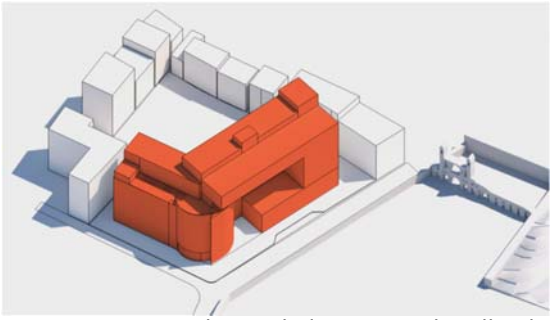
Placemrnt of built form and community ground



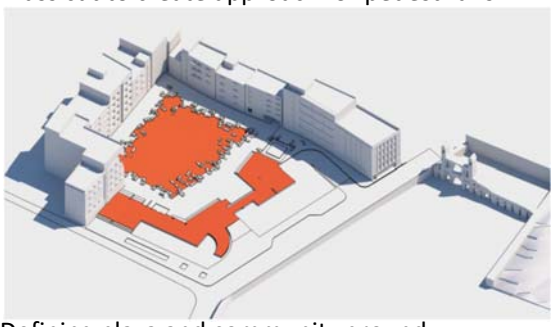
Built form accordimg to square feet



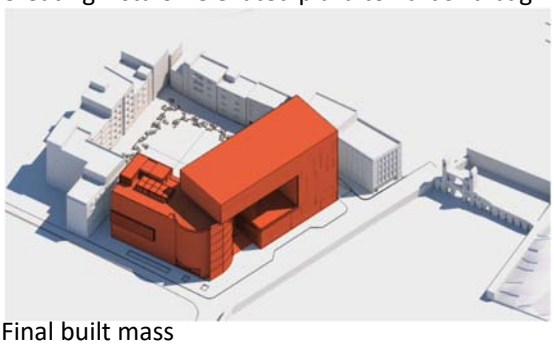
Mass cut to create approach for pedestrians



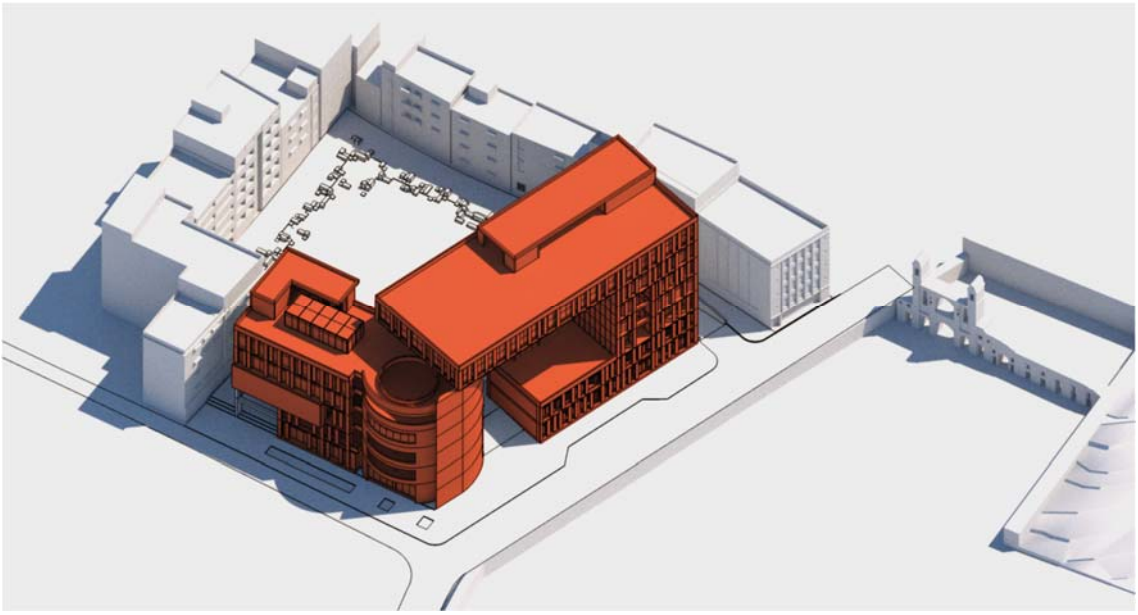
Creating vista on elevated plaza towards Lalbagh



Defining plaza and community ground



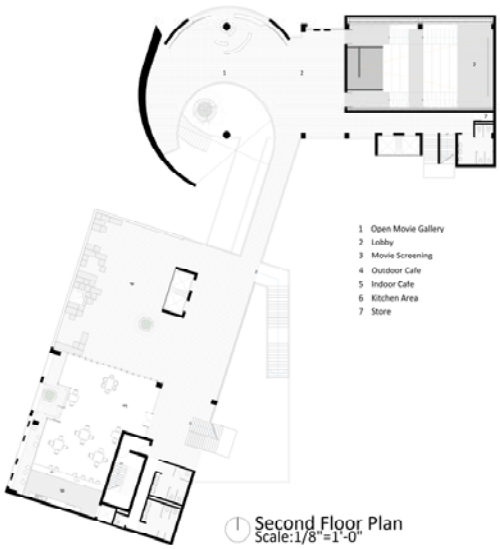
Final built mass



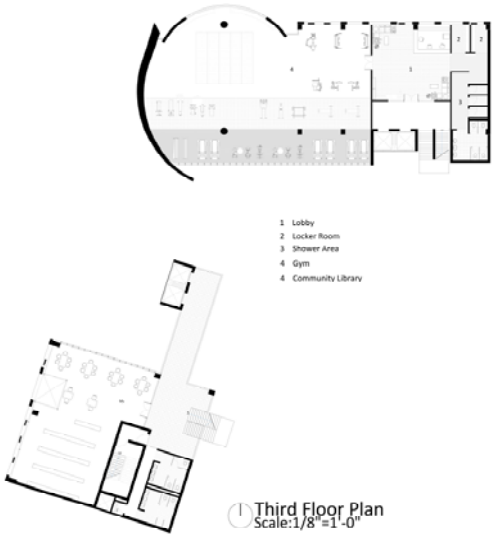
Elevations added to the built mass

6.1 Plans, Sections , Elevations

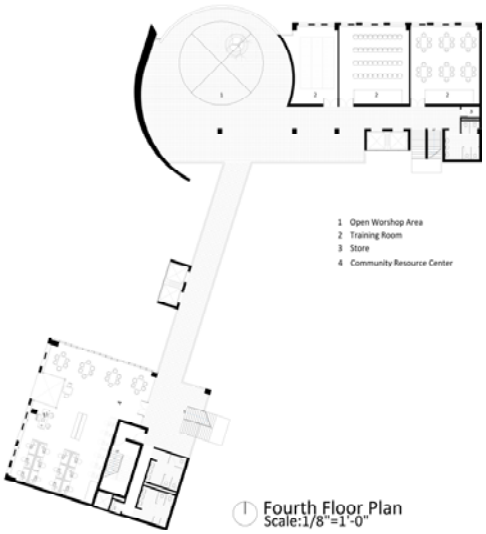
First Floor Plan
Scale:1/8"=1'-0"



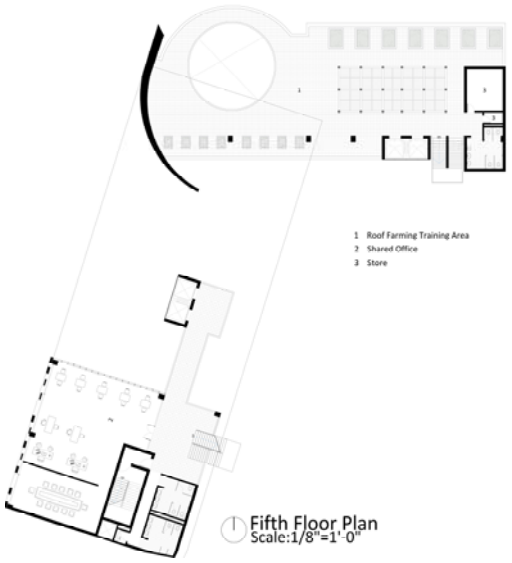
Second Floor Plan
Scale:1/8"=1'-0"



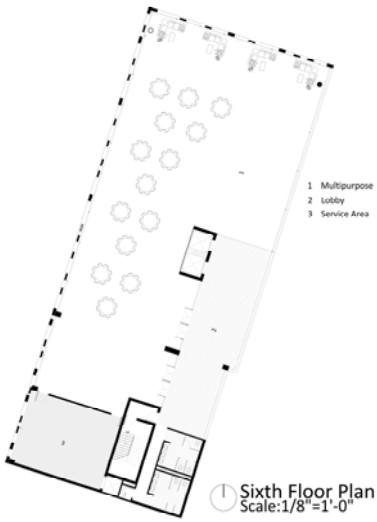
Third Floor Plan
Scale:1/8"=1'-0"



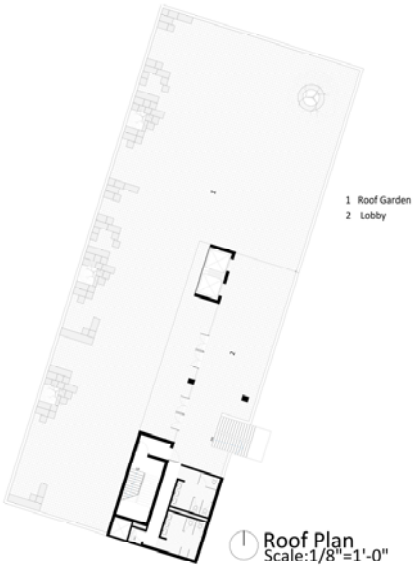
Fourth Floor Plan
Scale:1/8"=1'-0"



Fifth Floor Plan
Scale:1/8"=1'-0"



Sixth Floor Plan
Scale:1/8"=1'-0"



Roof Plan
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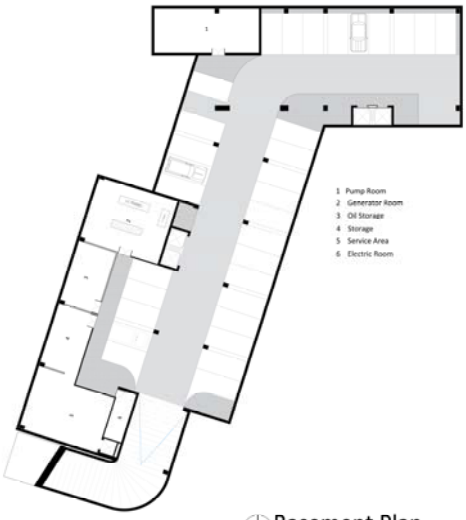
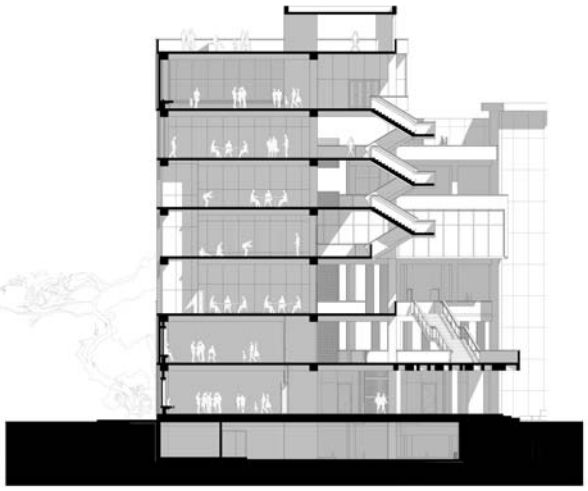


Basement Plan
Scale:3/32"=1'-0"

East Elevation
Scale:1/8"=1'-0"

West Elevation
Scale:1/8"=1'-0"

North Elevation
Scale:1/8"=1'-0"



Section:BB'
Scale:1/8"=1'-0"

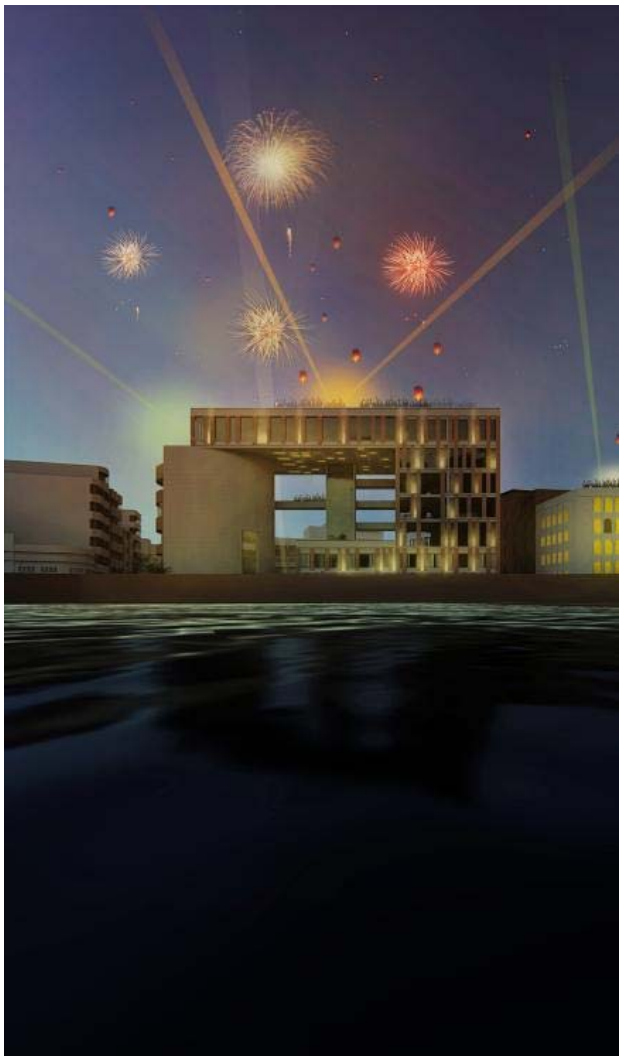
Section:AA'
Scale:1/8"=1'-0"

Section:DD'
Scale:1/8"=1'-0"

Section:CC'
Scale:1/8"=1'-0"

View of the community centre from the road

The community ground allowing everyone in the community to enjoy the open green breathing space for different purposes. An interactive space for all ages and groups of the community.

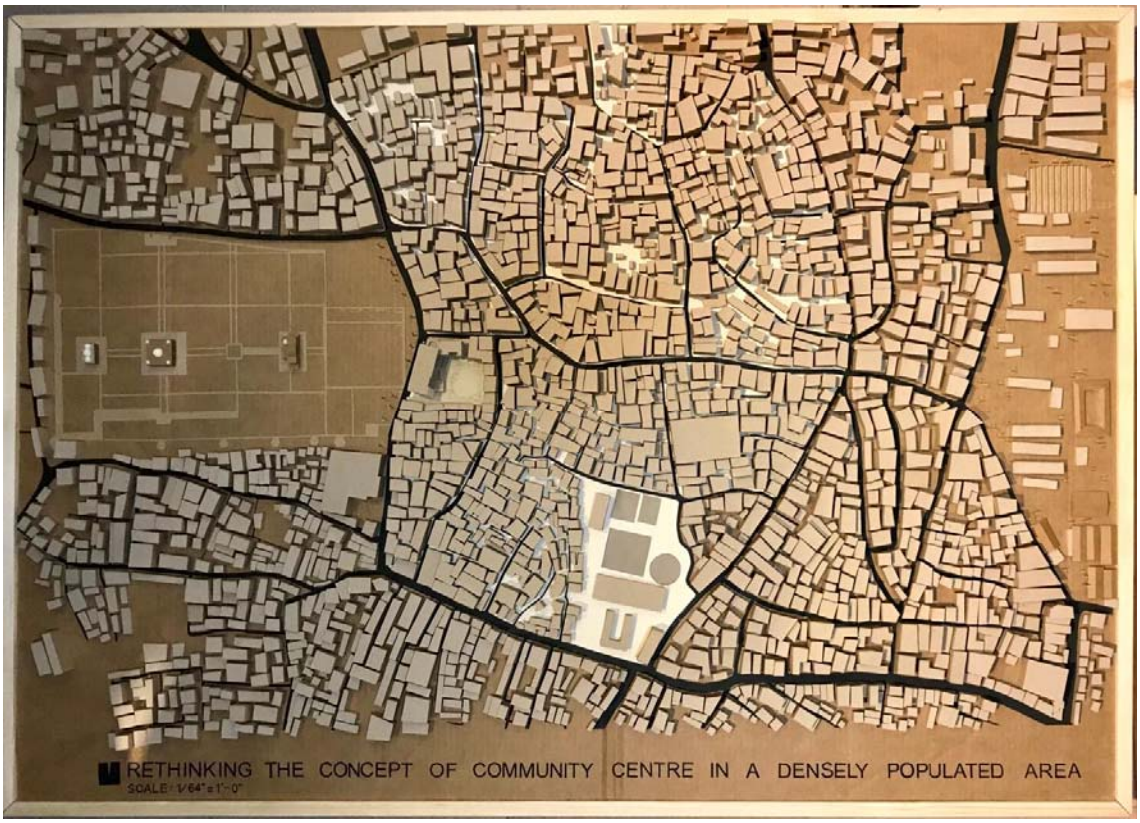


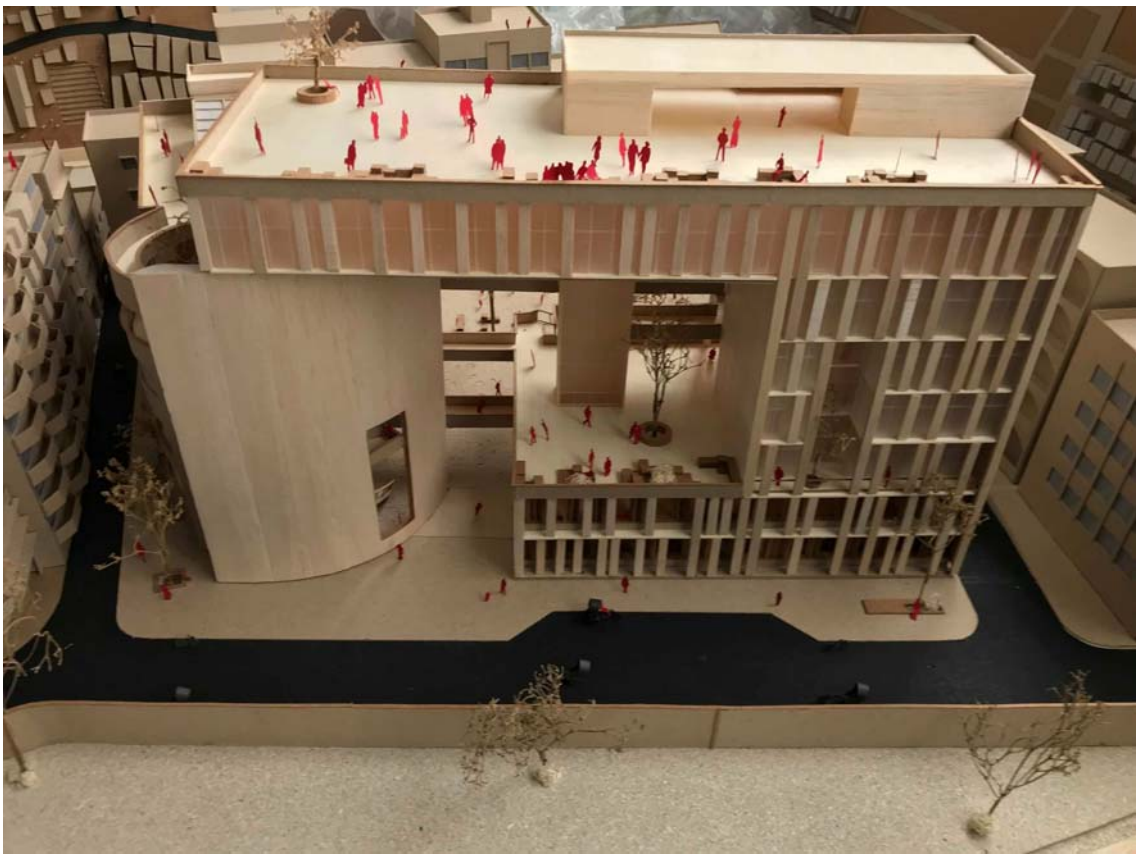
a

a. The community centre during Shakhrain
b. View from the street
c. Interactive spaces inside the building

b

c


RETHINKING THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY CENTRE IN A DENSELY POPULATED AREA
SCALE : 1/64"=1'-0"



NCEPT OF COMMUNITY CEN

CONCLUCION

To conclude i would like to state that though the present condition and concept of community centre needs to be improved and rethought but it is true that there are tremendous possibilities and scope for this in our Dhaka city. People's life can be changed completely only by improving its neighbourhood in order to make a better community.

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