

CONCEPT

Synopsis

The brief for the Transformatorweg location contains a complex combination of additional space for the Mediacollege Amsterdam (MA), 'productive' workspaces and a substantial housing program. By taking cues from the classic example of audio-visual media – Hollywood, Los Angeles – we created a high-density media campus. At MCA Studios learning, working and living are combined to form an integral whole with a strong identity, but at the same time forming solid connections to the rest of the city.

Script

The program for the Transformatorweg assignment is a considerable 63.000 m² of education, housing and commercial functions. Furthermore, the brief asks for ideas to re-integrate productive and light industrial functions traditionally not associated with an urban environment. The Mediacollege Amsterdam will be the protagonist in the story of the successful redevelopment of the site; its presence will take centre stage in the design of the site. The obvious link with the media park at the Westergasfabriek promotes the audio-visual curriculum of the MA even more and forms the foundation for the concept of the mixed-use media campus of MCA Studios.

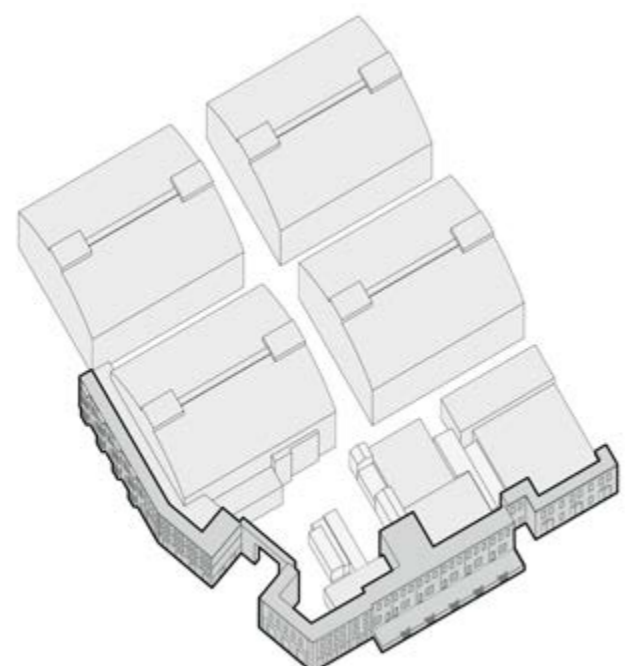
Adaptation

When thinking of a media campus one typology directly comes to mind: the movie studios of Hollywood. Aside from being associated with romantic and evocative imagery the birth place of the modern motion picture industry can teach us some interesting lessons in architecture and urban planning.



Nollis map of Warner Bros Studios - building blocks of different shapes and sizes

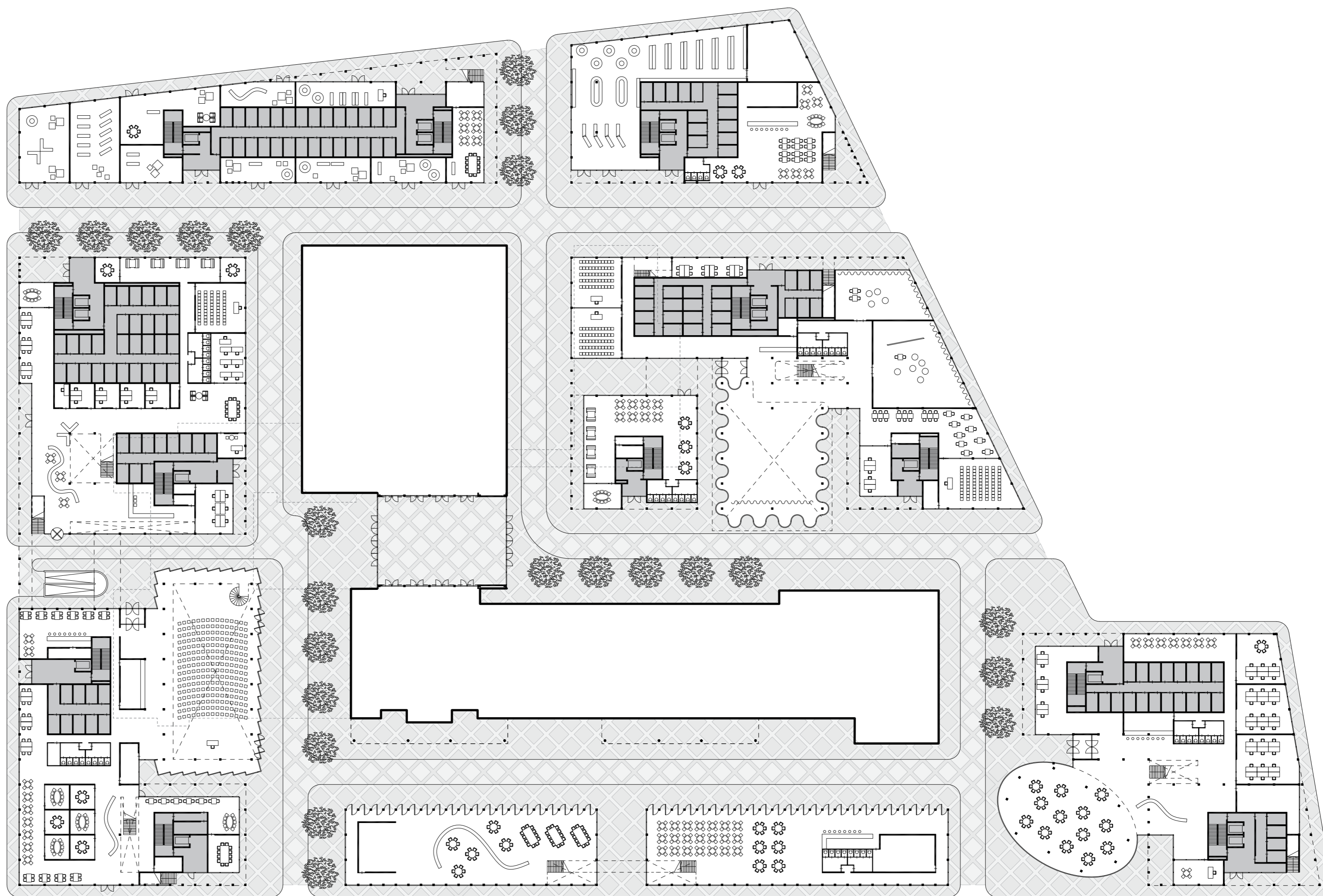
The Warner Bros Studios in Burbank make for a good case study. The studio grounds combine large generic 'sheds' in a strict grid structure with a jumble of smaller, highly specific buildings and facades. The latter part of the studio also serves as outdoor movie set where each street has its own (faux) character and historic reference: one street is New York, another one London, a third resembles a Bavarian town. At specific locations the large sheds and 'historic' streets merge and form an interesting amalgamation where the qualities of both typologies become apparent. We take these lessons and apply them to our design for the Transformatorweg site. Referencing the name of the iconic MGM studios, the Transformatorweg site will become MCA Studios



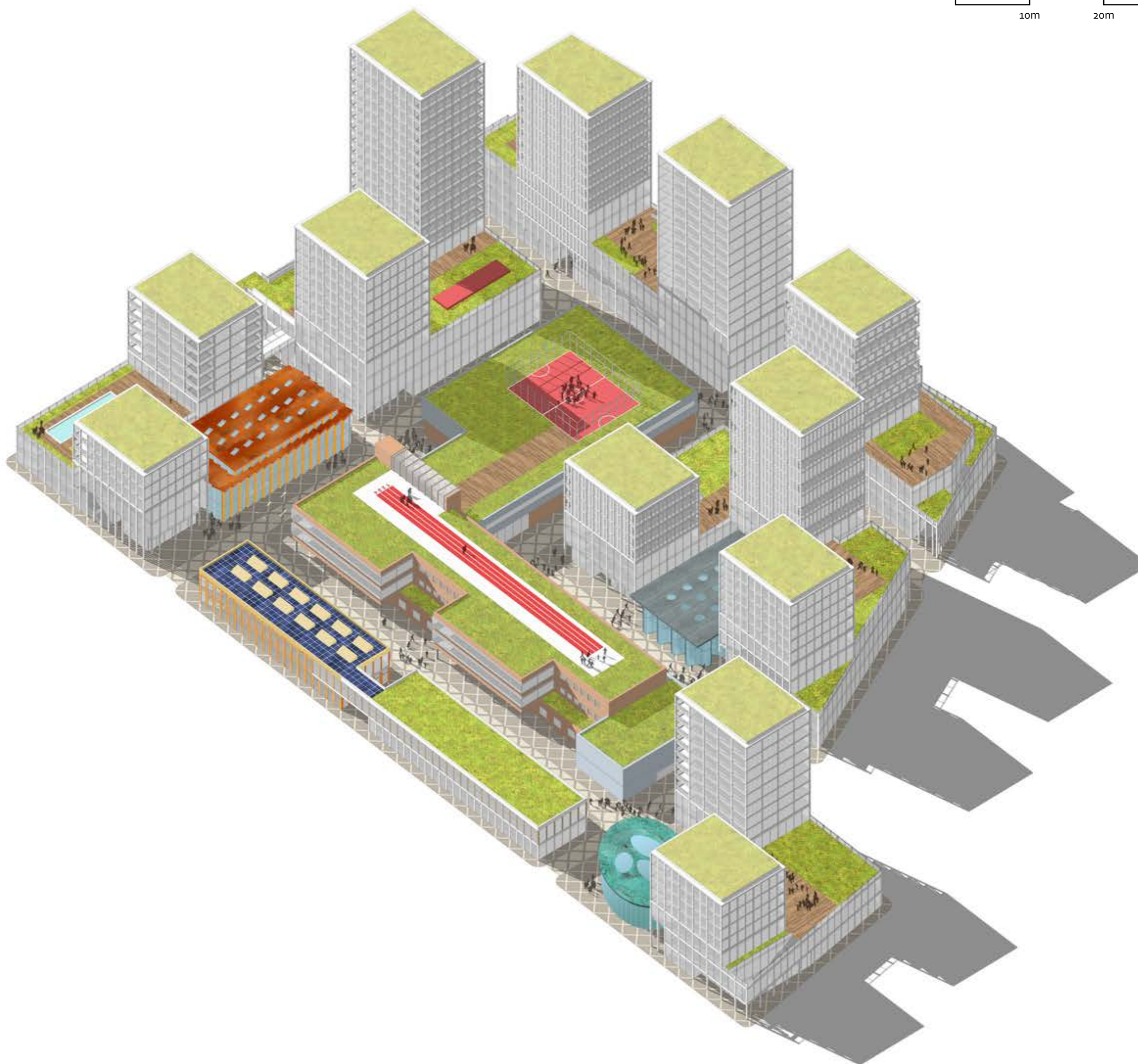
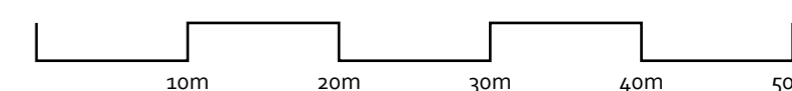
A typical part of WB Studios - large generic sheds with hyper-specific additions

Screenplay

To create enough space for a true studio campus we propose to take down some of the older buildings of the MA. It goes without saying that demolition of these parts shall not hamper the functioning of the school (see phasing on the third panel). Enter: a formal grid of 4 by 4 meters, imposing itself over the site. Given the considerable programmatic demands we project larger building blocks of 2 to 4 stories on this grid to accommodate the educational and commercial program. On top of this 'plinth-layer': a second ground plane on which a neighbourhood of towers is superimposed. Finally, a number of 'specials' insert themselves into the grid. These specials express the theme of the productive city and will house an array of spaces for audio-visual production, performances and other media-related activities. These building blocks will form the focal points of the campus, creating a diverse urban environment.

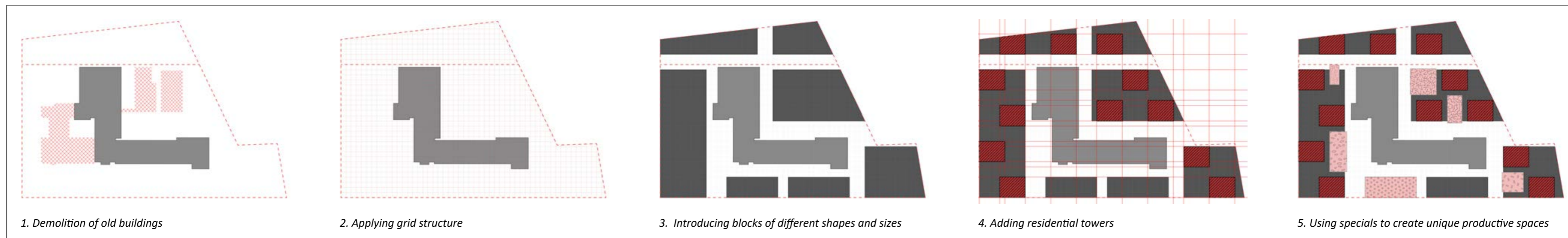


Ground floor - 1:500



Impression of the MCA Studios - generic (and efficient buildings) combined with iconic specials giving identity and character

CONCEPTUAL DIAGRAMS



1. Demolition of old buildings

2. Applying grid structure

3. Introducing blocks of different shapes and sizes

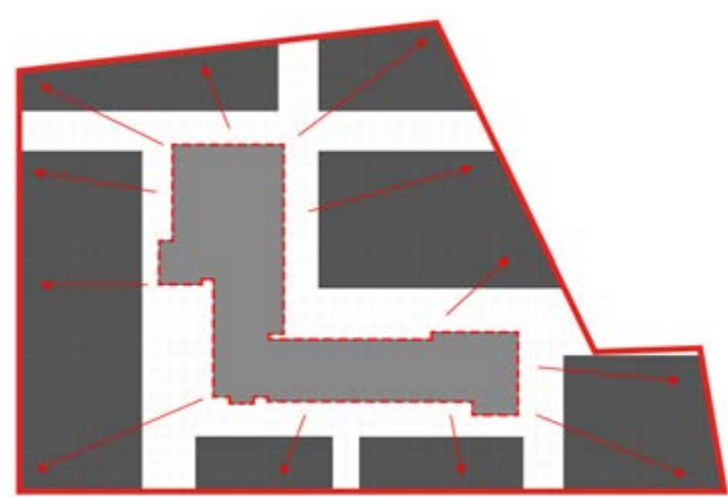
4. Adding residential towers

5. Using specials to create unique productive spaces

DESIGN

Montage

The existing division between the municipal and Mediacollege plots is used to differentiate the functions between commercial north, and educational programme south of the divide. Even though the largest portion of the plinth houses Mediacollege programme, the exterior appearance of the site shows a singular identity: the MCA studios. This provides an opportunity to increase the exposure of Mediacollege in its surroundings, especially when the larger Sloterdijk area has been transformed into a mixed-use urban neighbourhood.



Increasing the exposure of MA

The facades of plinth and towers form a coherent whole; all using the same family of facade types, referring back to the base grid of 4 by 4 meters. The specials on the other hand break character, contrasting with the austere facades of plinth and tower: standing out in materialization, shape and size, they form a counterpoint in the dialogue with their surroundings.

The roof of the plinth is designed as a second 'maaienveld'; a controlled access, collective outdoor space for the local community – students, makers and residents. It functions as a programmatic and spatial buffer between the educational, commercial and working spaces in the plinth and the housing in the towers. This way, a high quality urban environment is created for people to work and live pleasantly next to each other.

The towers on the plinth vary from 4 to 17 stories. With a uniform footprint of 320m² (16 by 20 meters), they allow for extensive standardization which in turn strengthens the business case of MCA Studios as a whole. The floor plans each contain a standard core which combines staircases, two elevators and various shafts for plumbing and electricity. Around this uniform core a large variety of floor plans, ranging from student housing in a dorm typology to single room starter studios and family apartments can be created. The flexibility of this concept allows the plan to respond to evolving market demands. Apart from the communal spaces on the second ground plane, each apartment has a large private outdoor space.

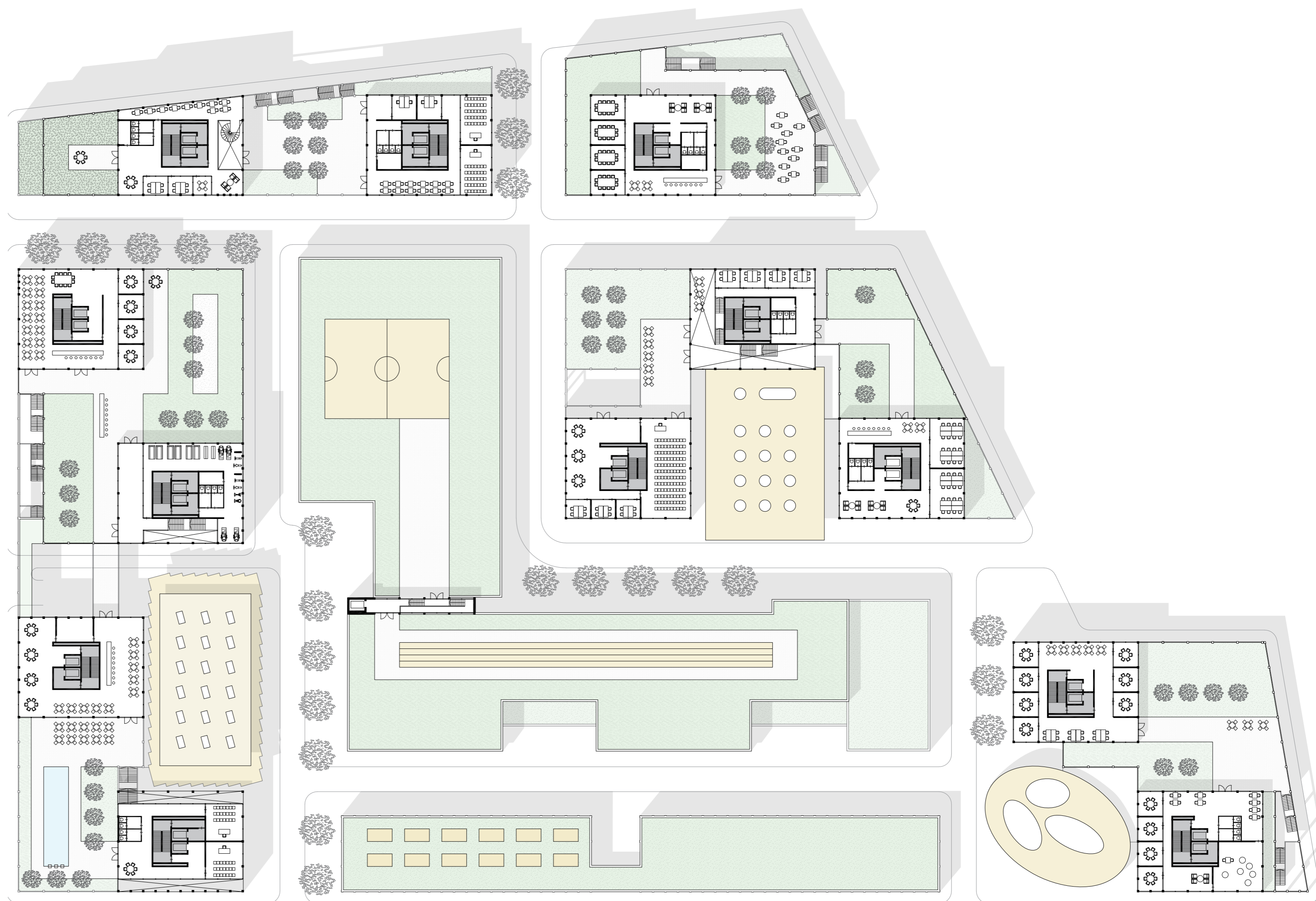
Scenery

For both the city and Mediacollege Amsterdam it is essential that MCA Studios is embedded firmly within the future urban neighbourhood of Sloterdijk. It should be recognizable as a distinct entity in its larger surroundings, while at the same time being connected and accessible. The first aspect is achieved by creating height and volume at the northern edge of the plot, providing a strong presence on the city boulevard-to-be the Transformatorweg. Various entrance 'gates' signify the singular identity of the MCA Studios.

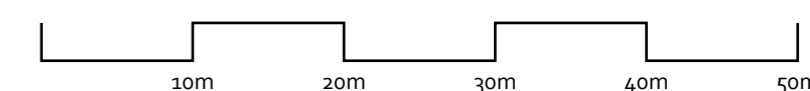


The iconic gate of MGM Studios

To accomplish a solid footing of the plot within the city we have a number of proposals for the (larger) study site. First of all: push the plot boundaries outward. Doing this, we can increase density and provide more intimate street profiles. Secondly, we redevelop the Contactweg from an open-ended boulevard into a green plaza. By removing the median strip between the two roads more functional public space can be created. Designing the Contactweg as shared-space – where pedestrians, cars and cyclists share the road as equals – will increase the connectivity between MCA Studios and future developments west of it. By aligning the cross-connections through the building plots (as proposed in the municipal vision for the area) with the main entrance of MCA Studios a clear hierarchy in the urban spaces is accomplished.



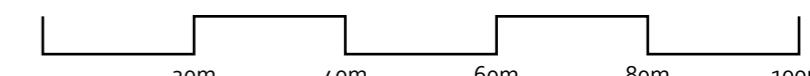
The intermediate (collective) level, 2nd-4th floor - 1:500



Impression of the streetlevel of one of the entrances



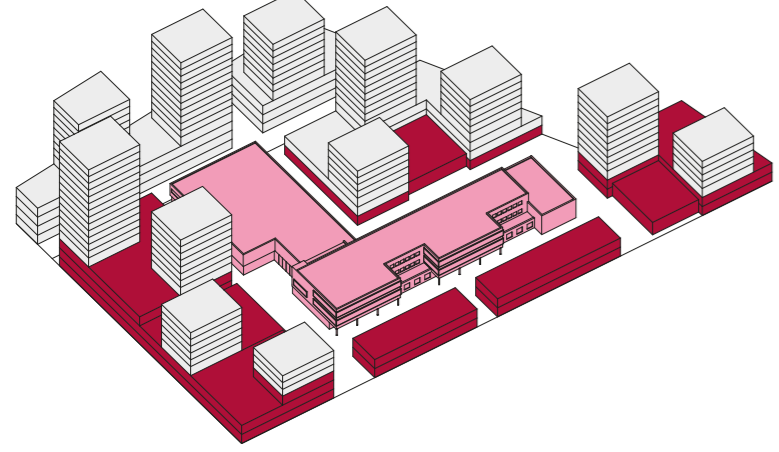
The public space of MCA Studios in its context - 1:1000



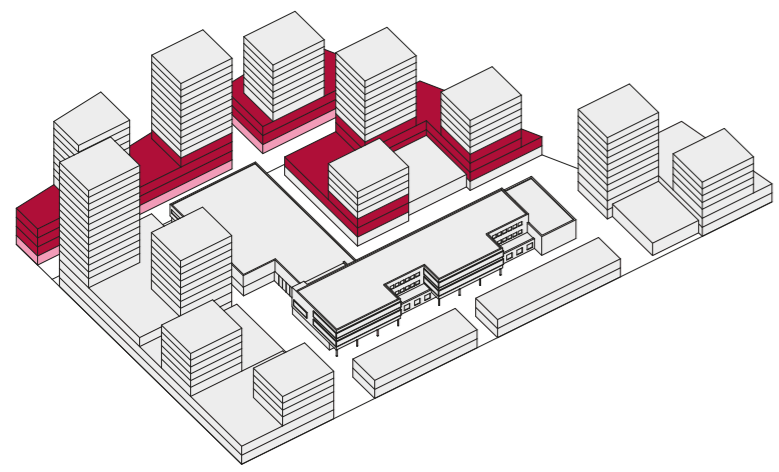
IMPLEMENTATION

Production

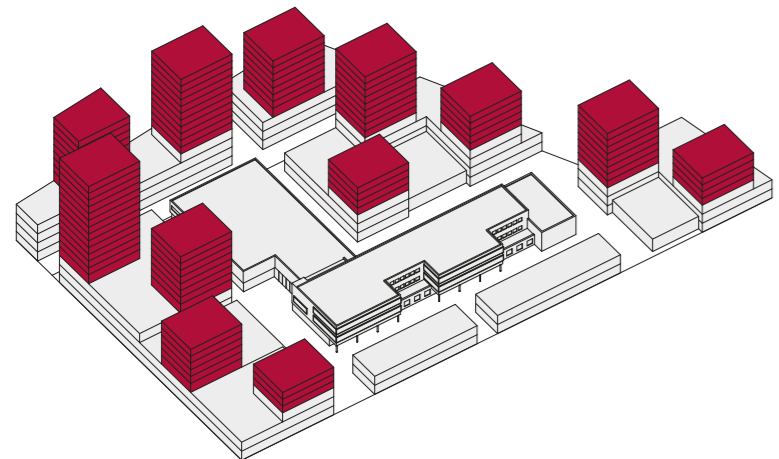
Divided over the two plots (a total of 2,16 ha), MCA Studios has a footprint of 1,44 ha. The remainder, 7.200 m², will become public space. We propose to demolish 5.100 m² of existing MA buildings. These square meters, together with the required expansion of 9.500 m² are reconstructed as the bulk of the plinth. The northern, municipal plot contains 8.600 m² of commercial and productive spaces in the plinth. The twelve towers on the plinth add a total of 30.000 m² of residential program.



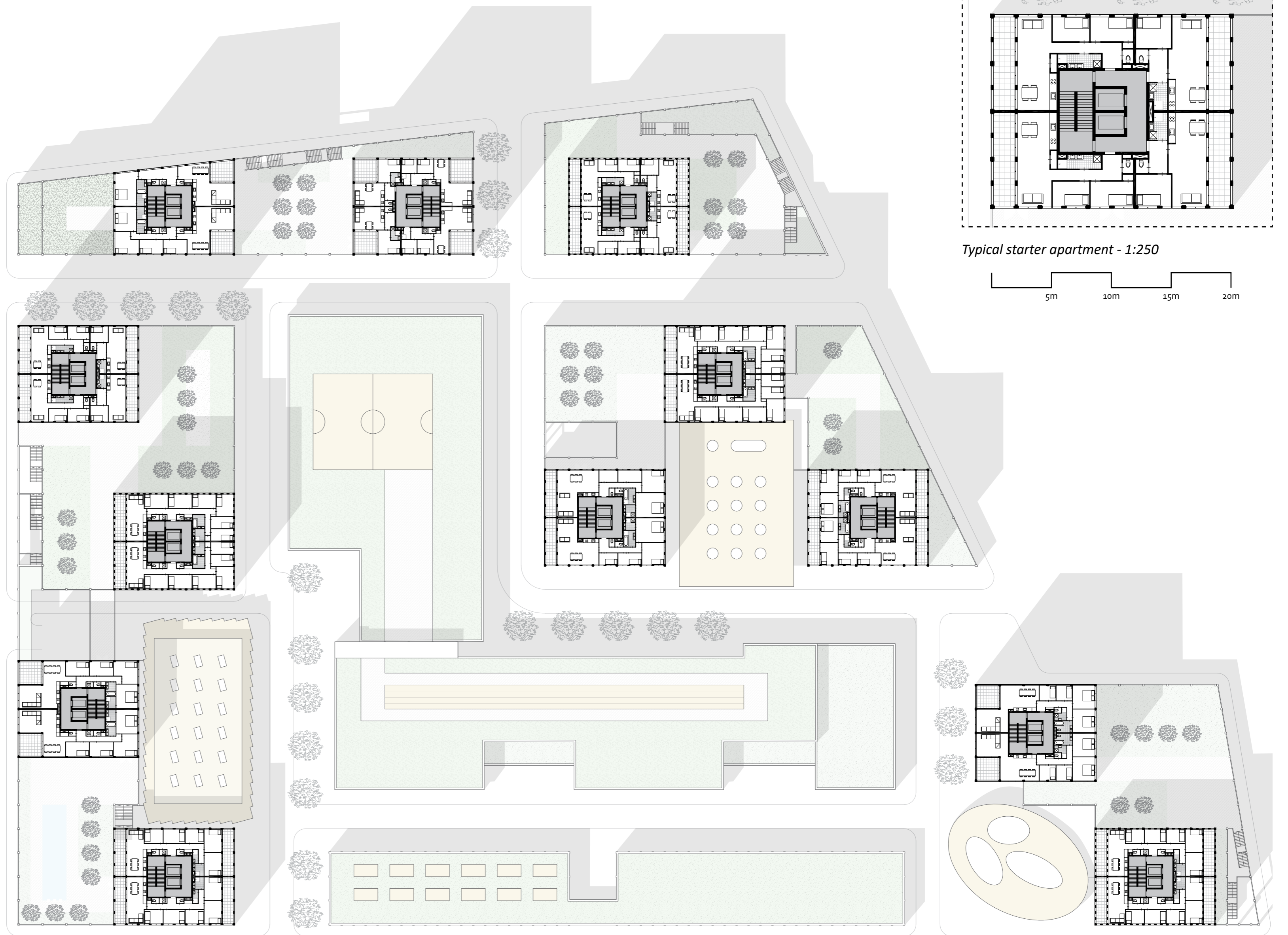
Existing and new MA buildings



Commercial and productive program

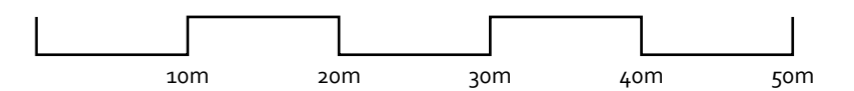
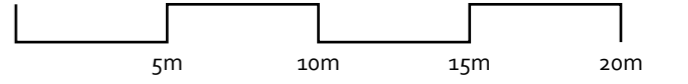


Housing program



Typical floor plans of the towers - 1:500

Typical starter apartment - 1:250

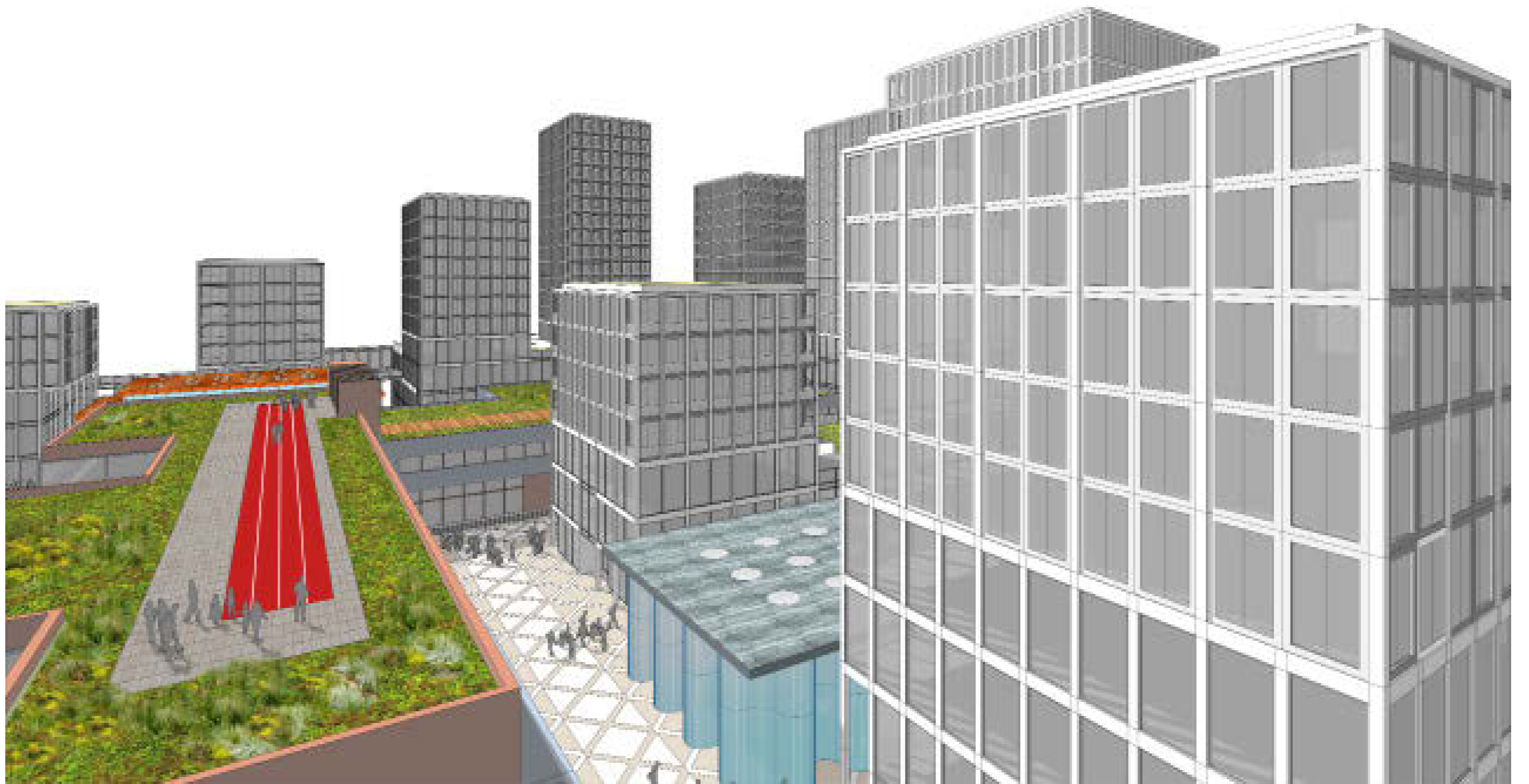


Action Sequence

Construction work on a site that needs to continue functioning requires an intelligent phased redevelopment strategy. The plan for MCA Studios allows for a flexible phasing strategy keeping nuisances to a minimum. Using a clear subplot division, adjustments in programme, housing typology or scale can be made even when development is already underway. An extra special, more or fewer tower floors, anything is possible. By first building one of the specials as a gigantic billboard for MCA Studios, the site will announce its existence to the city.

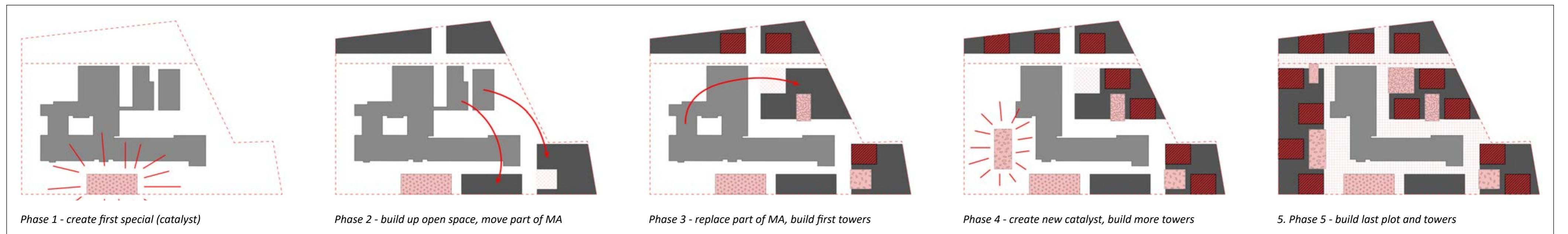
The next step is developing the parts of the site already available for construction. In the northern section, the first commercial spaces can be developed, while in the southern part educational spaces can be built. When finished, Mediacollege can move its activities into the new buildings allowing the demolition of existing structures. Towers can be developed as soon as the first part of the plinth is ready, and new specials can be inserted if need be. When enough new spaces are built, the final parts of the existing MA building can be demolished and the site completed. Unpredictable market conditions no longer have to be a show stopper in the development of a large-scale site such as MCA Studios.

And if the midway screening fails to wow the audience, we can just rewrite the script for the remainder of the site. A choose-your-own-adventure for the city, so to speak.



Impression of the view from one of the balconies

PHASING



Phase 1 - create first special (catalyst)

Phase 2 - build up open space, move part of MA

Phase 3 - replace part of MA, build first towers

Phase 4 - create new catalyst, build more towers

5. Phase 5 - build last plot and towers