

# RAPID IN TRANSIT

A place people pass, without belonging

## 1878: "The Fifteen Milestone"

Yap Ah Lay built a road connecting Klang to KL to speed up trade, 17 miles long. At the 15th mile mark, workers and traders stopped to rest — marking the gateway into Kuala Lumpur's city boundary

十五碑



## 1900s: "Rail town"

Became KL's rail marshalling yard for rebuilding in brick and tile for safety; A landscape of clay pits, drying yards and kilns with rudimentary tracks the later informed the main spine (Jalan Tun Sambanthan)



Tamil Methodist Church roots 1896

100 quarters built along Jalan Chan Ah Tong in 1915

Vivekananda Ashram established 1904

Klang River straightened and canalised to control flooding in 1914

## 1960s:

### "Post-Independence Era"

After Merdeka in 1957, railway and government workers living in Brickfields chose to stay, making it the first stable working-class suburbs of Kuala Lumpur

Indian-Ceylonese core (railway workers, teachers, and civil servants)

Small mid-rise flats, light industries and hostels are introduced

Abandoned rail sheds, disused sidings, and rusting equipment

## 1980s: "Dead Zone"

Keretapi Tanah Melayu (KTM) operations were being centralised in Sentul; the once-busy marshalling yard in Brickfields fell quiet

Informal workshops, scrap collectors, and mechanic sheds began occupying these spaces

## 2000s:

### "The Transformation"

KL Sentral brought the world closer but pushed the community further apart

KL Sentral Transport Hub officially opens in April 16, 2001

The old and new coexist — not in harmony, but in tension

High-end skyline tower: Le Méridien & Hilton Hotels (2004)

Increasing land pressure on residents and small traders. "100 quarters" demolished in 2015.

Torana Gate gifted by Indian Government in 2010

## 2010: "Little India"

To revive Brickfields' image, DBKL and the Ministry of Federal Territories rebrand it as "Little India"

"They say Little India, but feels like movie set. Tourists come, take photo, then go. We stay here — we know what was lost."

— Thomas, working in YMCA for 10 years

## URBAN FORM



Old Brickfields  
KL Sentral Superblocks

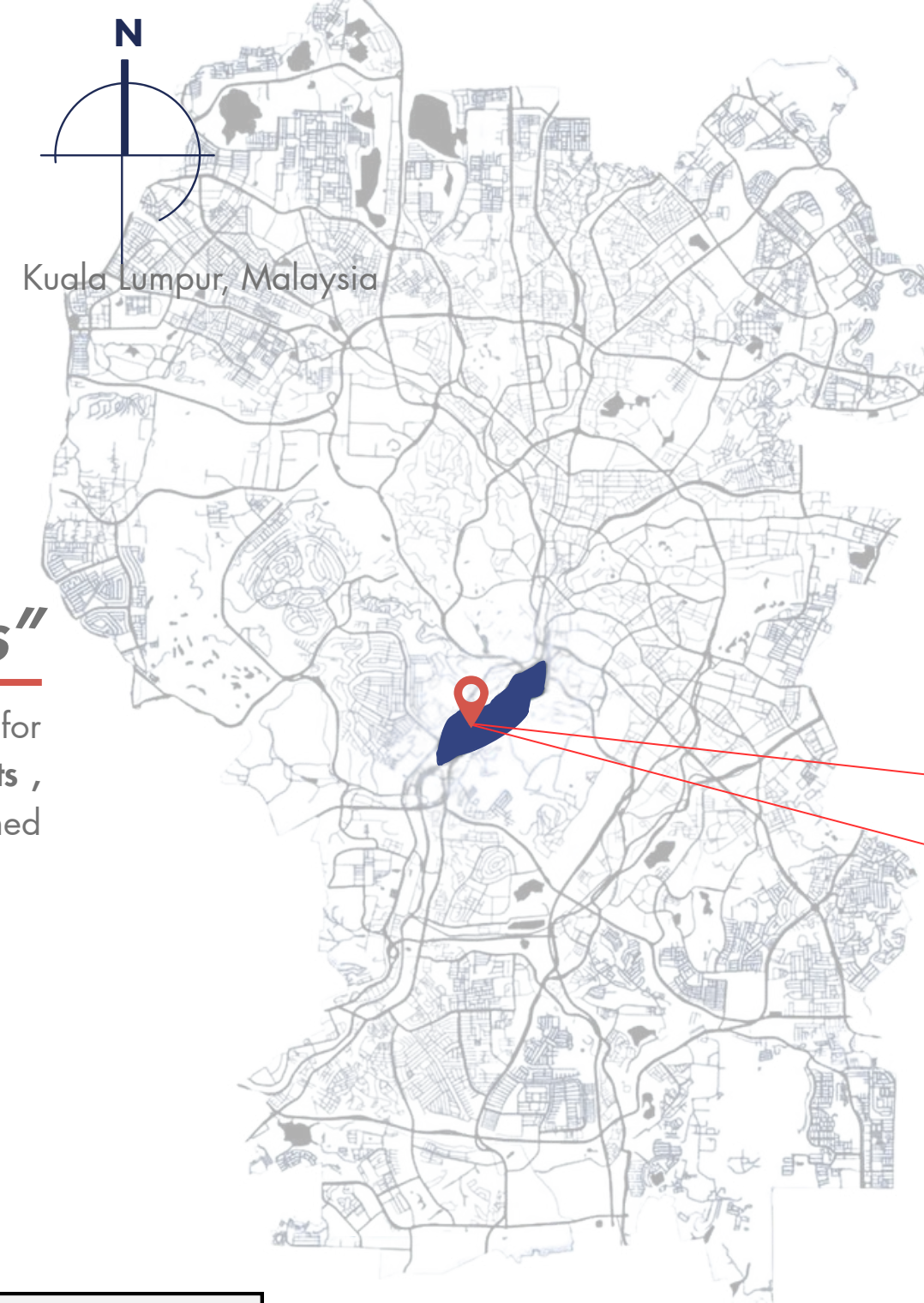
## LINEAR FORM

The entire district is organized along one dominant axis, Jalan Tun Sambanthan, which runs north-south

Block composition: narrow shophouse plots facing the street, with temples or schools occupying irregular parcels inside

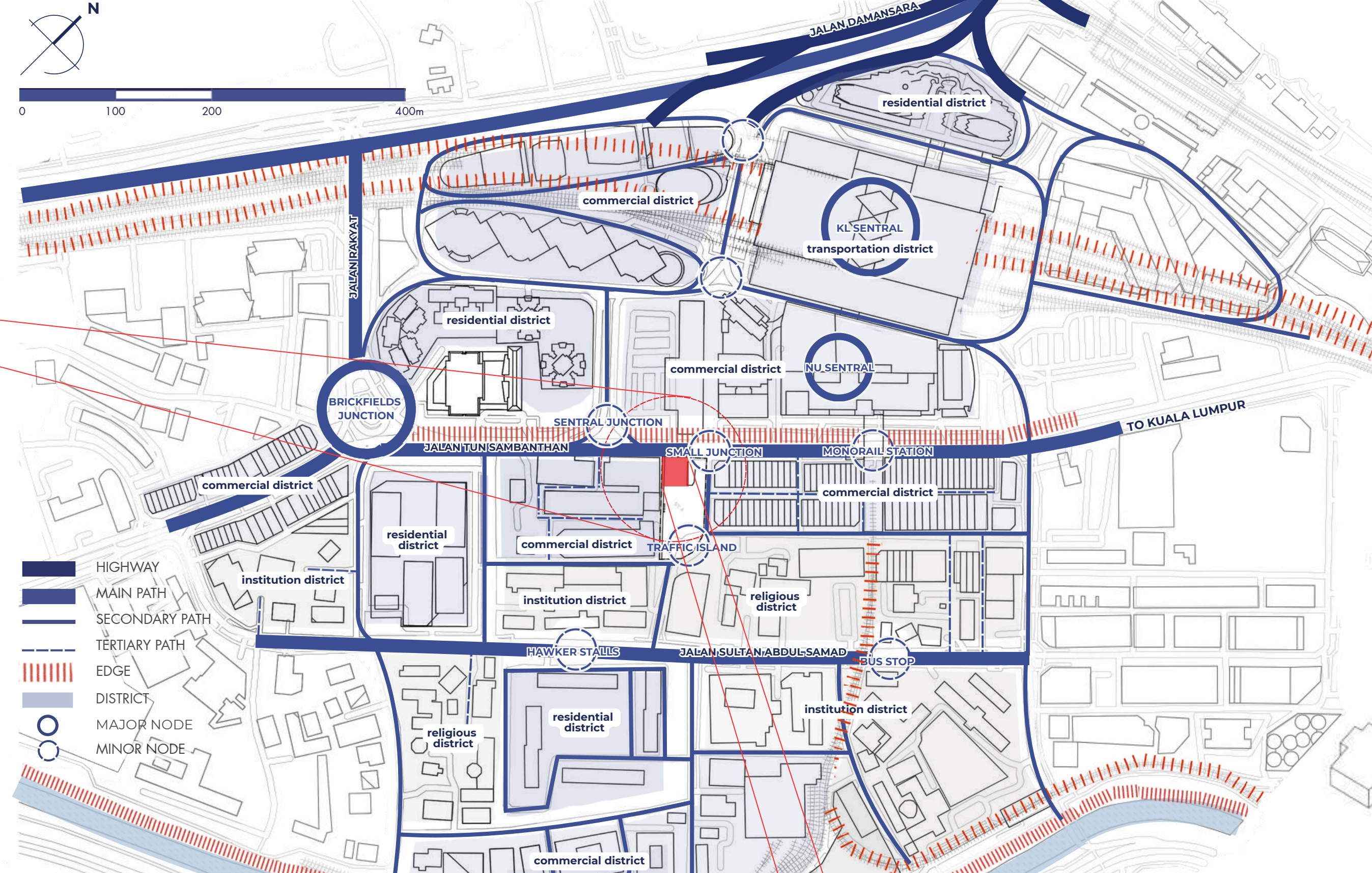
## SUPERBLOCK MORPHOLOGY

A vertical superblock — a trans-orientated megastructure built on efficiency, control, and integration, oriented along the railway. This juxtaposition creates a fragmented district structure (lynch, K, 1964) Its mega block ordered geometry contrasts sharply with the porous, fine-grained street life of Brickfields.



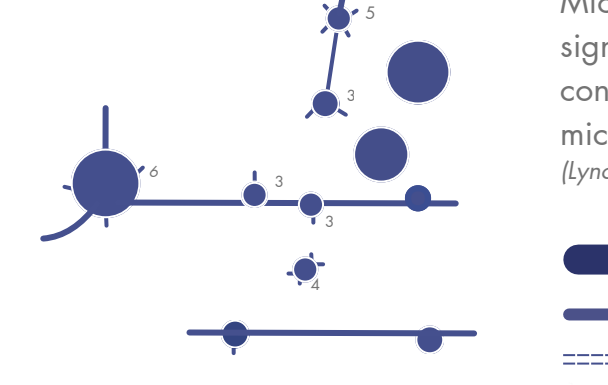
## IMAGEABILITY & URBAN STRUCTURE

KEVIN LYNCH'S IMAGE OF A CITY



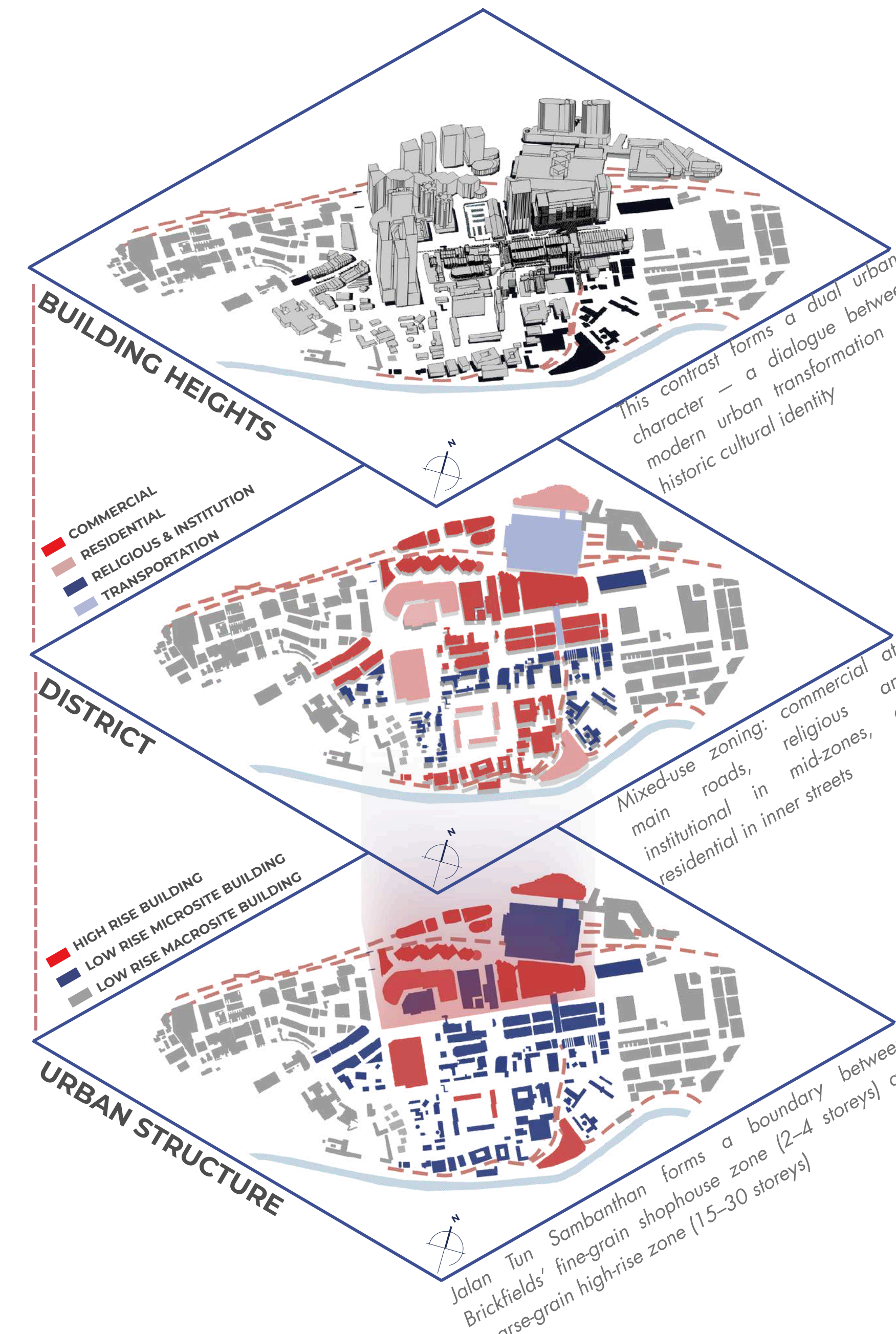
## A physically Permeable Layout

Nodes are accessible via a number of alternative routes (Bentley L, 1985)

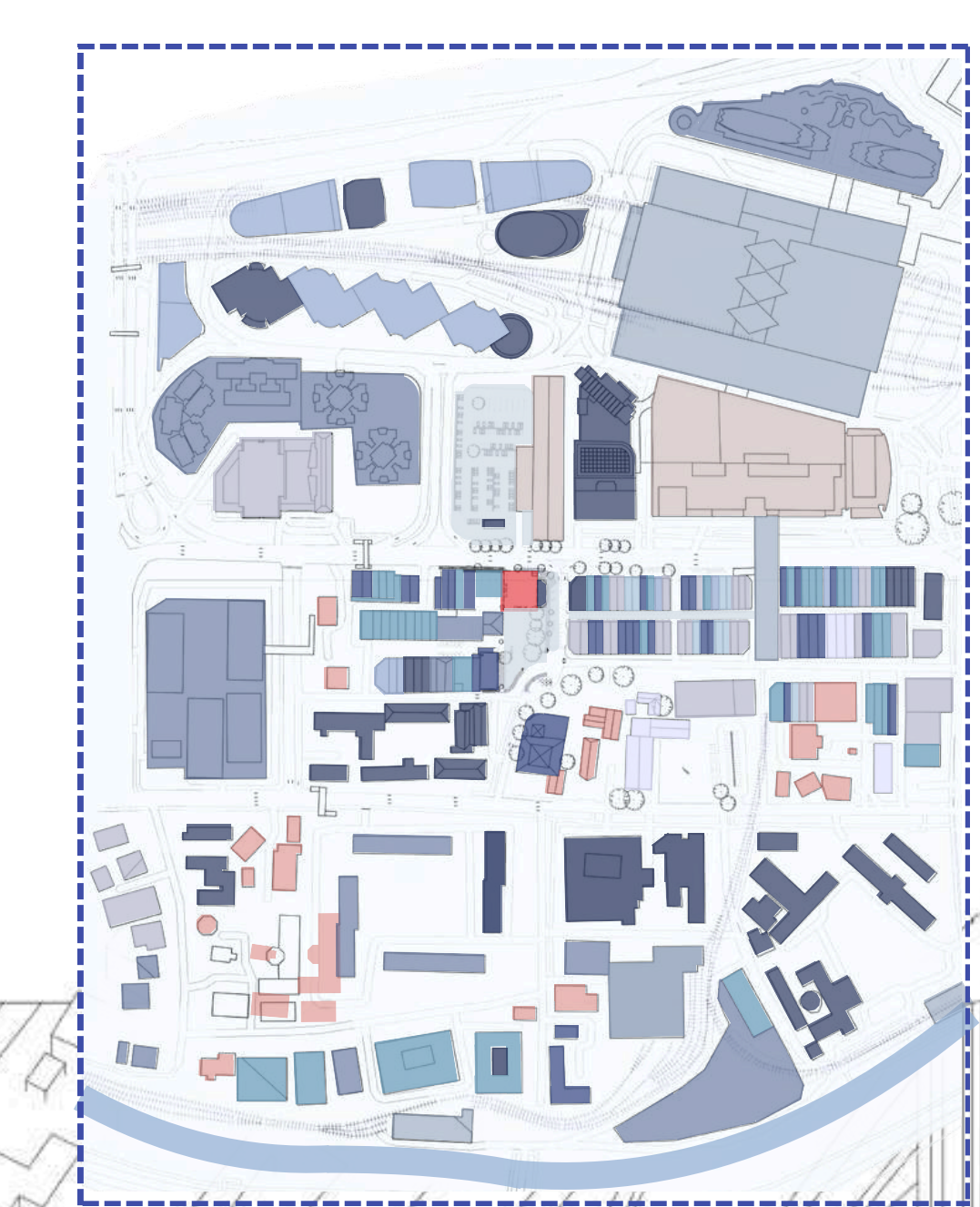
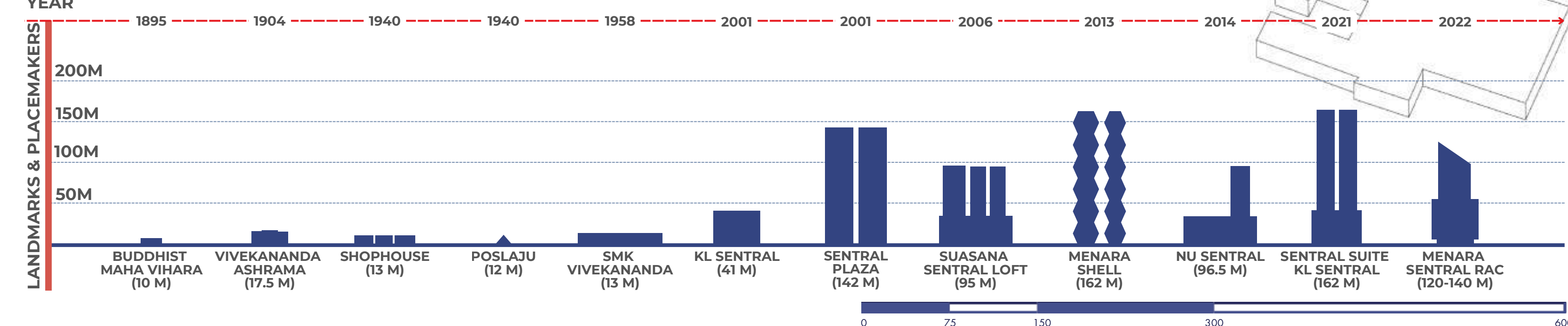


## A microsite with weak image

Microsite has no major node nor significant placemaker also does not contain a significant district. Thus, the microsite has a weak image (lynch K, 1964)



## AN ANALYSIS ON THE SYMBOLISM OF LANDMARK AND PLACEMAKER



DISTRICTS by function

INSTITUTION (bank, school, hospital)  
RESTAURANT  
RETAIL  
WHOLESALE  
PARKING / SERVICE  
PUBLIC TRANSPORT  
RESIDENTIAL

ENTERTAINMENT  
RELIGIOUS  
OFFICE  
HOSPITALITY  
NGOs

FROM DAMANSARA

NU Sentral

Pos Laju

Shophouses

Ascott Hotel

Little India fountain & statue

The Vivekananda Ashrama

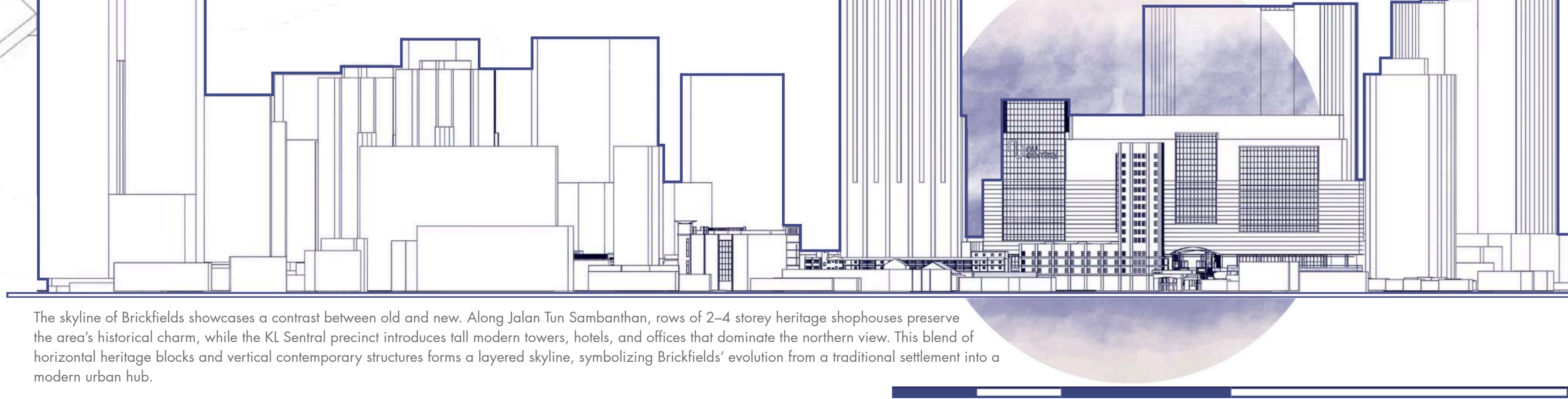
Sentral Suite KL Sentral

Little India Commercial Street

LANDMARK

PLACEMAKER

## SKYLINE OF BRICKFIELDS



The skyline of Brickfields showcases a contrast between old and new. Along Jalan Tun Sambanthan, rows of 2-4 storey heritage shophouses preserve the area's historical charm, while the KL Sentral precinct introduces tall modern towers, hotels, and offices that dominate the northern view. This blend of horizontal heritage blocks and vertical contemporary structures forms a layered skyline, symbolizing Brickfields' evolution from a traditional settlement into a modern urban hub.

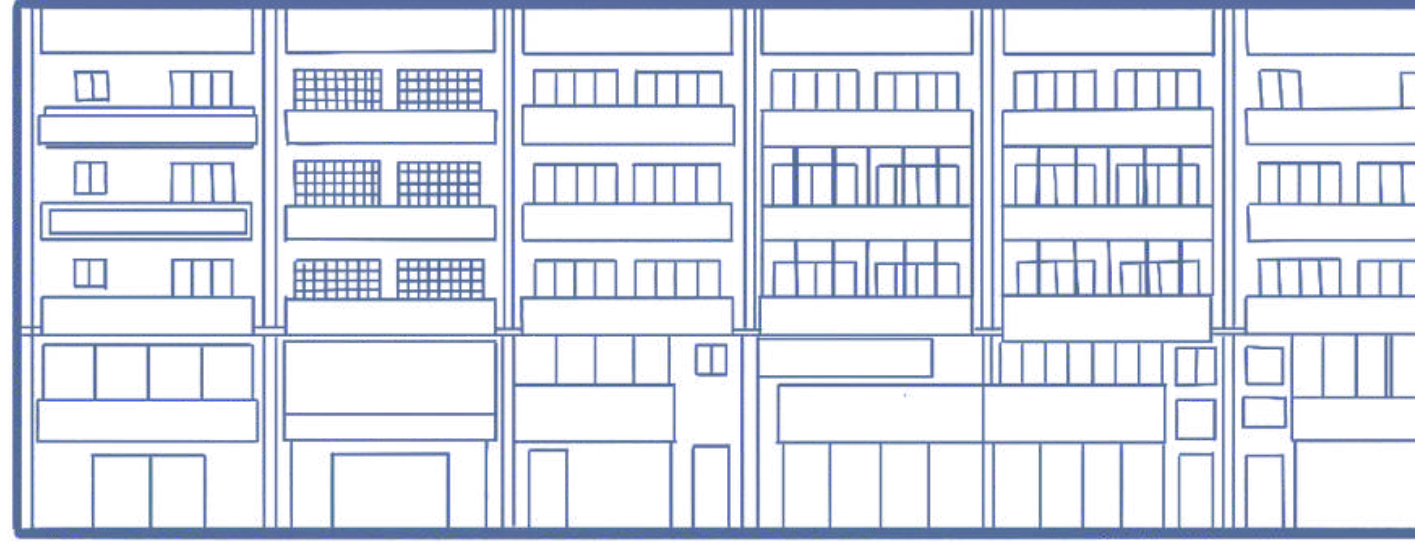
## VARIETY & VISUAL APPROPRIATENESS

Variety provides users with visual and experiential richness through differences in building form, function, and detail. Visual appropriateness ensures these variations are consistent with the place's use and meaning, creating an environment that is both diverse and contextually fitting. (Bentley L 1985)

Colonial Old Shophouses vs Post-War Modernist Shophouses



VS



The shophouses display a mix of colonial and modern architectural styles, blending traditional decorative elements with contemporary materials, symbolizing Brickfields' cultural and temporal layers.

## ACCESSIBILITY

MAJOR ACCESS

MINOR ACCESS

FROM DAMANSARA



Brickfields is easily accessible via major highways, with the Damansara Highway and Kuala Lumpur Highway connecting directly to Jalan Tun Sambanthan, allowing smooth entry from both city and suburban areas

## NODES AND PEDESTRIAN

MAJOR NODES

MINOR NODES

MAJOR PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY

MINOR PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY

LINKAGE (SKYBRIDGE)

ZEBRA CROSSING

SENTRAL SUITE KL SENTRAL

A luxury residential development representing modern urban living integrated with trans-orientated design

LITTLE INDIA COMMERCIAL STREET

A vibrant shophouse zone filled with colorful shops, spices, and textiles, embodying the sensory essence of Indian culture

PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY

KAKI LIMA

Key nodes occur at major intersections such as Jalan Tun Sambanthan-Jalan Travers and around KL Sentral, where commercial, cultural, and social activities concentrate; pedestrian movement is active along five-foot walkways (kaki lima) and side streets but often interrupted by narrow paths, uneven surfaces, and heavy traffic crossings







SPILLOVER PLACES

Illegal or not, spillover places of temporary and permanent structures find itself integrated in the people's lifestyles

1

JALAN TUN SAMBANTHAN

SHOPHOUSES

SHOPHOUSES

2

PUBLIC BANK

CIMB BANK

3

SHOPHOUSES

JALAN TUN SAMBANTHAN

THIRD PLACES

A neutral ground upon where people may gather (Oldenburg, 1989)

4

Monorail Station

Types of People: Middle aged, elderly

Types of Conversations: Coincidental conversation on everyday life

5

Bus Stop

Types of People: Students, male workers

Types of Conversations: Conversation on planned activities

6

Roadside vendors

Types of People: Students, parents, workers

Types of Conversations: Conversation on everyday life

7

Back Alley Food Stalls

Types of People: Middle aged, teenagers

Types of Conversations: Conversation on everyday life  
Conversation on recent activities

MICRO ANALYSIS ON HUMAN ATTITUDE

8

Resting Under Structure

A rhythm of rest emerges under shadows, where nature and architecture absorbs human fatigue

9

Social Interaction

Pop-up stalls blur between private talk and public rhythm, interaction animates the formal facades, giving the street its pulse

10

Informal Parking

Informal parking transforms order into adaptation, revealing how people claim ground beyond design

11

Informal Parking

12

Informal Parking

13

Informal Parking

SENSE OF PLACE

**Jalan Tun Sambanthan**

**Chatting**

**Resting**

**On Site Restaurant**

**Eating at food stall**

**Buying Kuih**

**Selling Kuih Muih**

**Gathering**

**Praying**

**Waiting for Bus**

**Blindman walking**

**Near YMCA**

**What have you bought for Chris's Birthday?**

**It is so not well maintained here. Too much waste around the corner.**

**I can't wait to explore what we could do in Little India!**

**The Parking is expensive here!**

**Your son helped a student that tripped and fell this morning. He's a well educated child.**

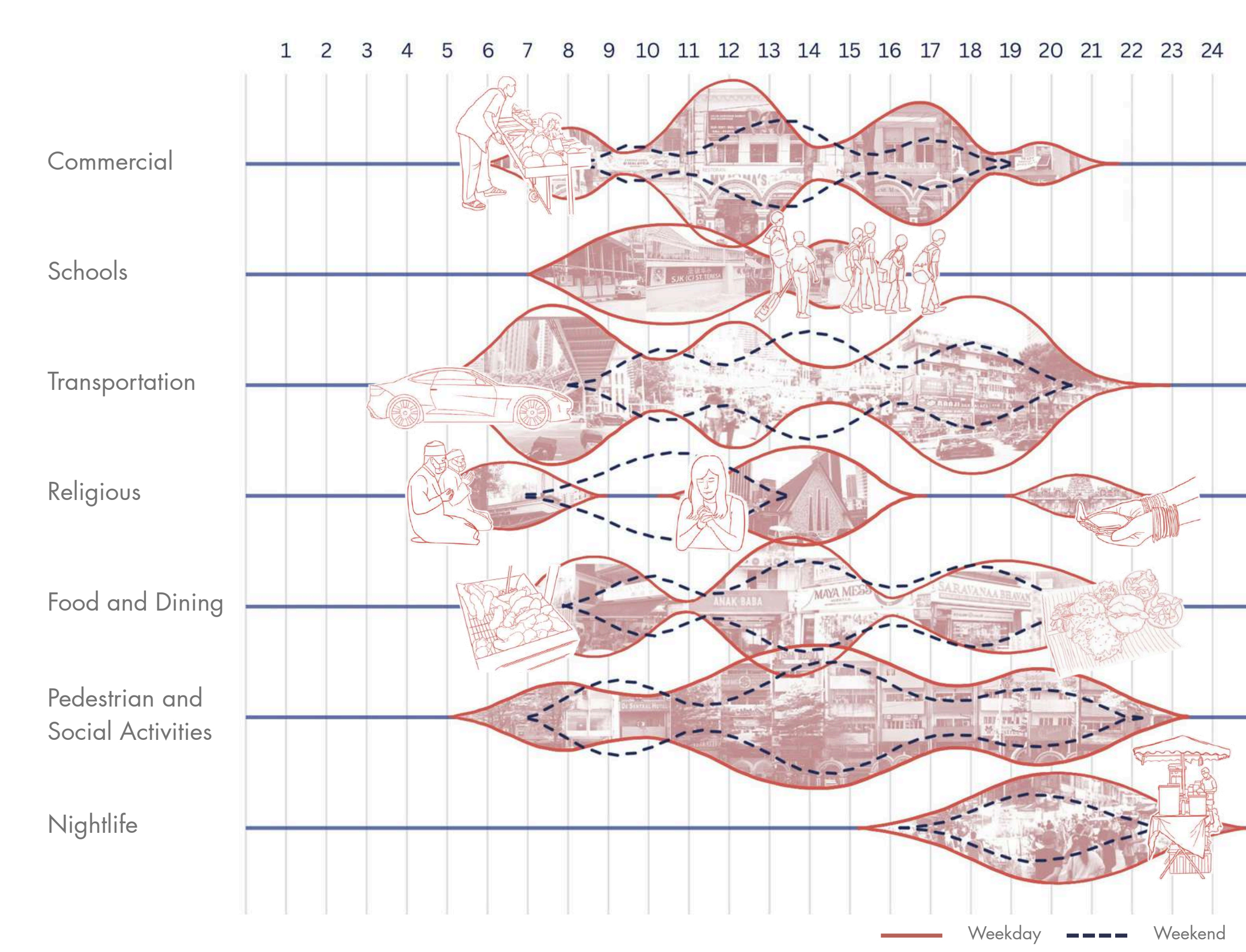
**I feel unsafe to park here.**

**"Ah, Brickfields... this place got soul, you know?"**  
Used to be quiet, everyone knew each other. Now got tall buildings and busy people, but the smell of curry, the temple bells, the colours — still the same. Even with all the changes, Brickfields still alive, still got its heart.

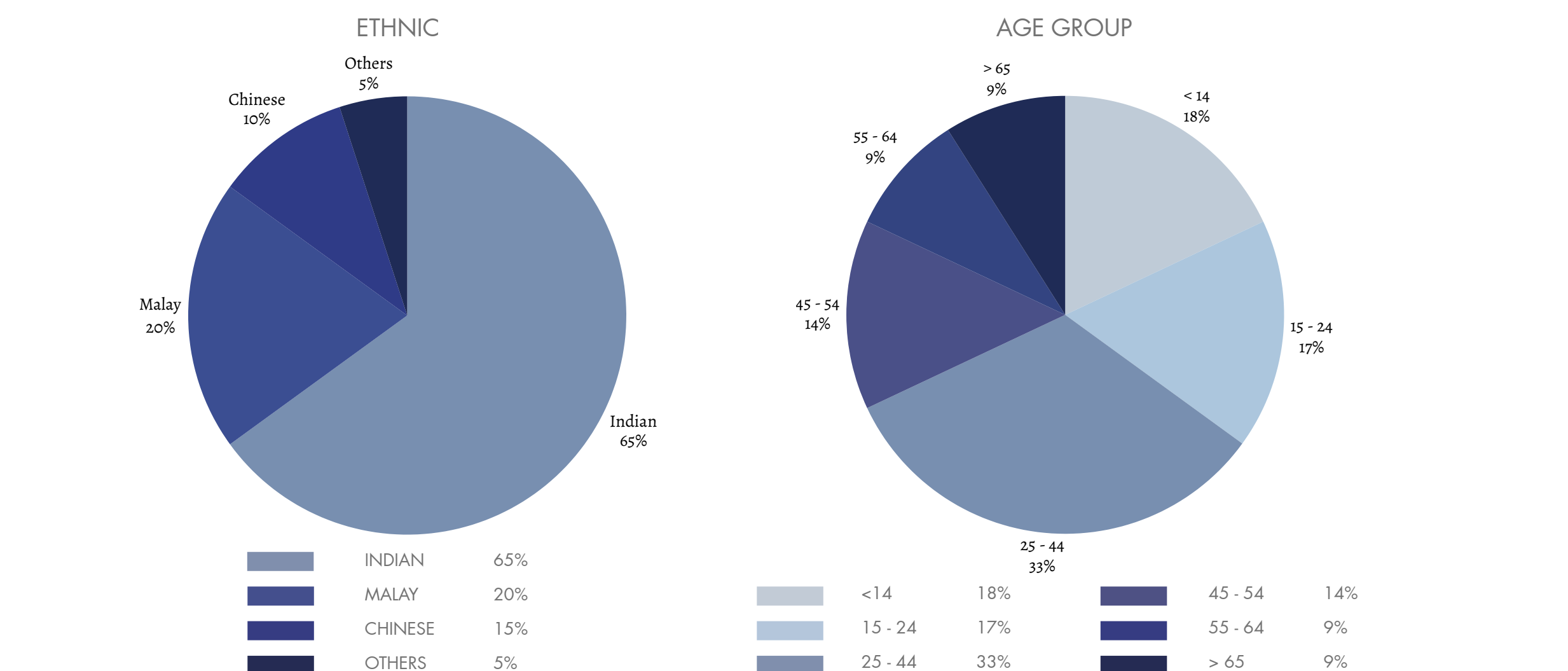
**Sri Sakthi Karpaga Vinayagar Alayam**

**SMK Vivekananda**

TEMPORAL ACTIVITIES



DEMOGRAPHIC



Brickfields is a vibrant multicultural neighbourhood dominated by a Tamil-Indian community, giving it a strong Little India identity. The population is largely working-age (25-44 years), reflecting an active commercial and service-oriented community linked to KL Sentral. While youths contribute to its urban energy, the presence of elderly residents preserves its heritage roots. Overall, Brickfields represents a mature yet evolving community, balancing cultural continuity with ongoing urban transformation.

USER GROUP

**LOCAL RESIDENTS**  
Long-term inhabitants, mostly from the Indian-Tamil community, living in old shophouses and flats, many run family-owned shops and eateries.

**TOURISTS**  
Attracted by "Little India" streetpops, temples, and food culture, they bring vibrancy but also cause crowding during peak hours.

**COMMUTERS**  
Office workers and business people passing through Brickfields via KL Sentral, Malaysia's main transportation hub.

**STUDENTS**  
Students from nearby colleges and training centers who frequent cafes, bookstores, and public spaces adjacent to SMK Vivekananda.

**WORKERS & TRADERS**  
Daily wage earners, hawkers, vendors, restaurant staff, and service workers supporting the local economy and business.

**RELIGIOUS GROUPS**  
Brickfields serves as a mosaic of Malaysia's religious harmony, where Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, and Christian communities coexist side by side.

**HAWKERS**  
Outdoor vendors selling street food, primarily concentrated along the main corridor.

**Conclusion**

Strong cultural identity and atmosphere deeply rooted in heritage, religion, and daily community life

The area suffers from visual clutter, inconsistent maintenance, and congestion that disrupt its aesthetic coherence

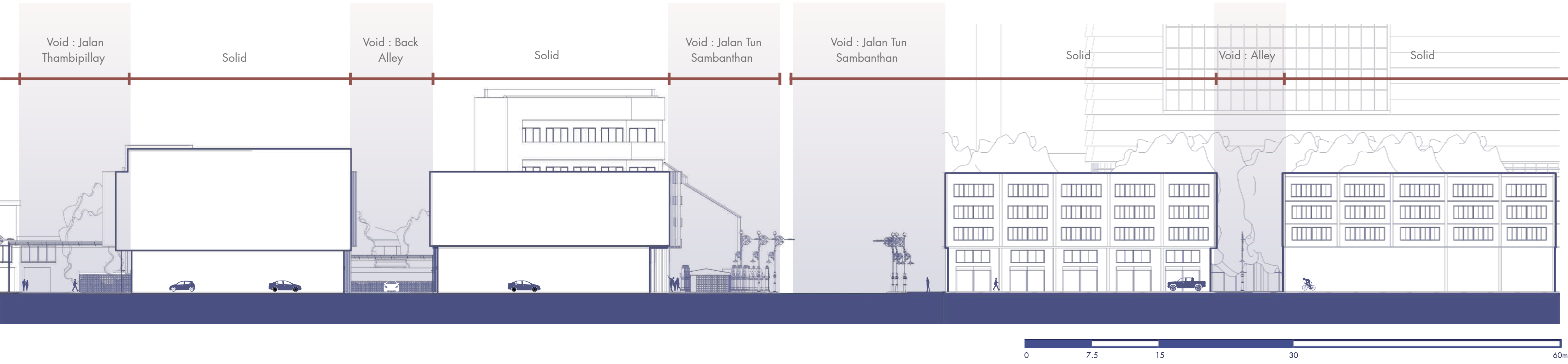
Revitalization projects and cultural tourism initiatives can enhance the area's identity while preserving its heritage character

Rapid urban redevelopment and gentrification risk eroding the traditional charm and authenticity that define its sense of place

SENSE OF ENCLOSURE

Enclosure is formed by the interplay of solid and void. (Ching, F. D. K. (2014))

Along Jalan Tun Sambanthan, alternating shophouse blocks and alleys create rhythmic spatial boundaries that define the street's character



SYNTHESIS: MACRO TO MICRO

**Railway yard 1915**

**Highrise developments**

**Convergence point**

**JALAN BANGSAR**

**JALAN TUN SAMBANTHAN**

**JALAN SULTAN ABUL SAMAD**

**KL SENTRAL**

**Strategic location at Kuala Lumpur's transport heart — connected to the Klang River and railway network since the 1900s. Its proximity to KL Sentral gives it strong urban accessibility and visibility**

**Potential to reconnect the fragmented edges through blue-green corridors (Klang River revitalization, shaded pedestrian links)**

**KL Sentral's superblocks disrupted the continuity of the old street grid, cutting visual and pedestrian connections to the river and across the district**

**KL Sentral's expansion and corporate ownership threaten to engulf Brickfields' small-lot economy and erase its fine-grain diversity**

ACCESSIBILITY

RAILWAY

DEVELOPMENTS AFTER 2000

OLD BRICKFIELDS

MAJOR NODE

LANDMARK

PEDESTRIAN PATTERN

INSTITUTIONS

COMMERCIAL

RELIGIOUS

JUNCTION NODE

LANDMARK

PLACEMARKER

SKYBRIDGE (LINKAGE)

UNACCESSIBLE

BACKLANES

Multi-district held the community together by rituals, faith, and shared spaces keeping the social rhythm intact

Rich heritage buildings and cultures in Brickfields makes it a strong identity, turning its daily life into a cultural attraction

Adaptive reuse of existing underutilised structure could balance new functions with preserved memory

Transform transient flows (tourists, commuters) into cultural engagement through interpretive trails and sensory wayfinding

Sidewalks cluttered with signage, traffic, and vendors reduce comfort and accessibility

Transient flows of commuters

Local traders and small families displaced by developers and short-term tenants

Gentrification replaces old residents with transient populations, weakening lived memory and place attachment

**Vivekananda ashram since 1904**

**Pos Laju Office been serving for 30 years**

**PEDESTRIAN PATTERN**

**INSTITUTIONS**

**COMMERCIAL**

**RELIGIOUS**

**JUNCTION NODE**

**LANDMARK**

**PLACEMARKER**

**SKYBRIDGE (LINKAGE)**

**UNACCESSIBLE**

**BACKLANES**

WHATS THE ISSUES?

**Transient Flows, Fragile Ground**  
Over-compressed public realm

The main spine of Brickfields, Jalan Tun Sambanthan, functions as the neighbourhood's urban corridor — yet its spatial proportion is unbalanced

The pedestrian path is too narrow, forcing human movement to merge with each other. Facade-sidewalk interface is linear and hard-edged, offering little opportunity for pause or street interaction

The result is an over-compressed public realm — a transient stream of bodies moving through a fragile, congested edge

**Hidden Fragility**  
Residual and neglected space

The backlane behind the shophouse row along Jalan Thambipillay is a residual void — narrow, poorly lit, and obstructed by spillover vendors and services

It holds potential as a secondary pedestrian corridor, but its architectural section and boundary condition (blank rear walls, uneven surfaces) create discomfort and visual neglect

Overflowing drains, exposed pipes, uneven ground surfaces, and accumulated waste reveal the invisible infrastructure that sustains front-facing commerce but is never designed for occupation

**The Shadow of Transience**  
Movement only, no identity

The monorail underpass represents the city's infrastructural underside — a harsh, unfinished concrete environment with poor lighting, hygiene, and accessibility

The presence of parked vehicles further reduces visibility, airflow, and pedestrian movement — transforming what should be a connective threshold into a fragmented, obstructed void

The spatial volume lacks human scale, while unfinished materials and absence of tactile guidance create psychological and physical insecurity for the blind community

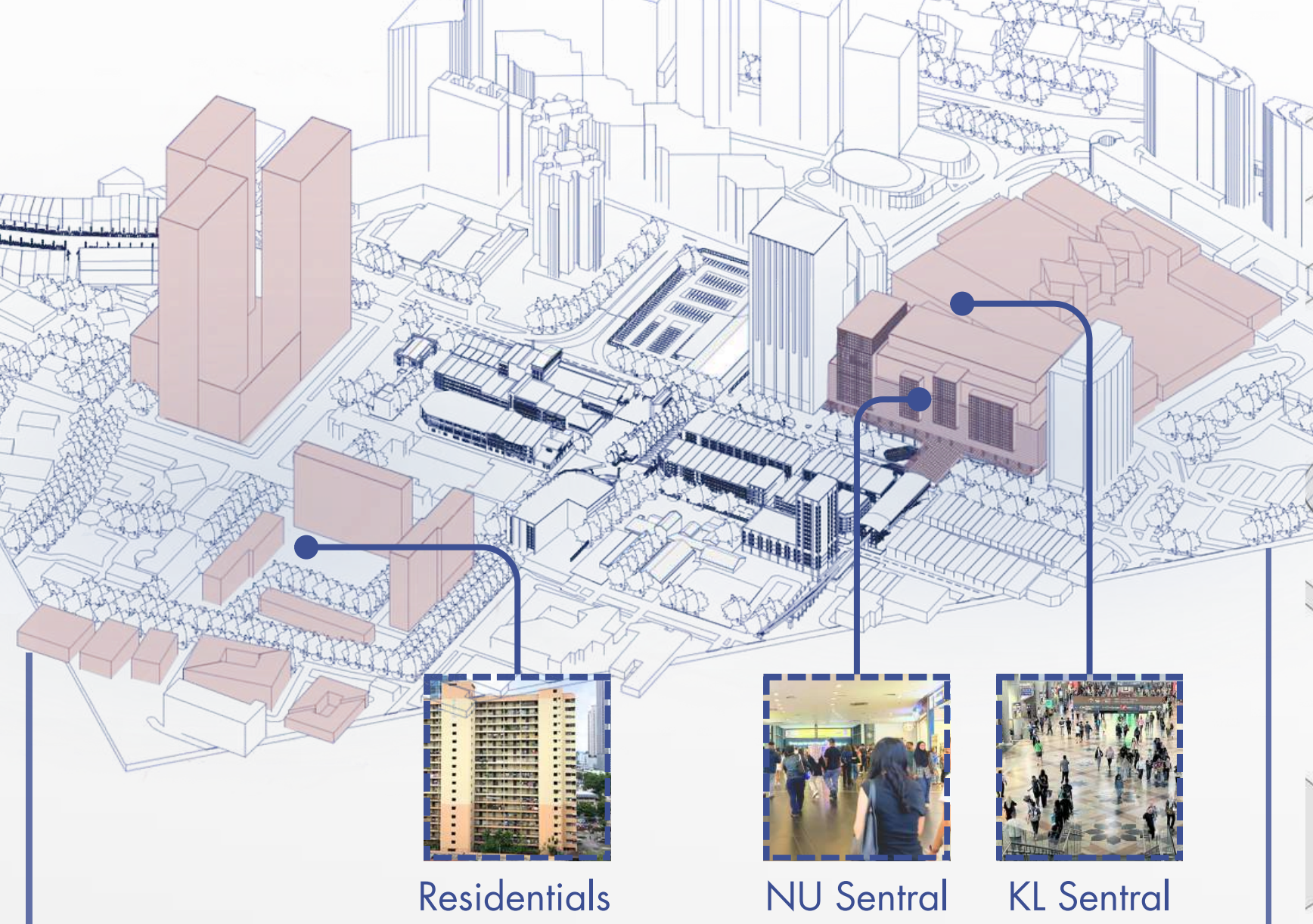


URBAN INTERVENTION

# PAUSE IN TRANSIT

## Weaving Stories through the Loops of Brickfields

Brickfields is a place in motion, a fragile urban corridor shaped by layers of history, culture, and daily movement. As transient flows overshadow its narratives, this intervention reclaims those stories, turning movement into meaningful pauses that reconnect people to place.



### Why are we connecting them?

We aim to bridge the gap between **residents and commuters** by extending movement beyond NU Sentral into Brickfields, encouraging interaction, activating public spaces, and creating a stronger, more connected community.

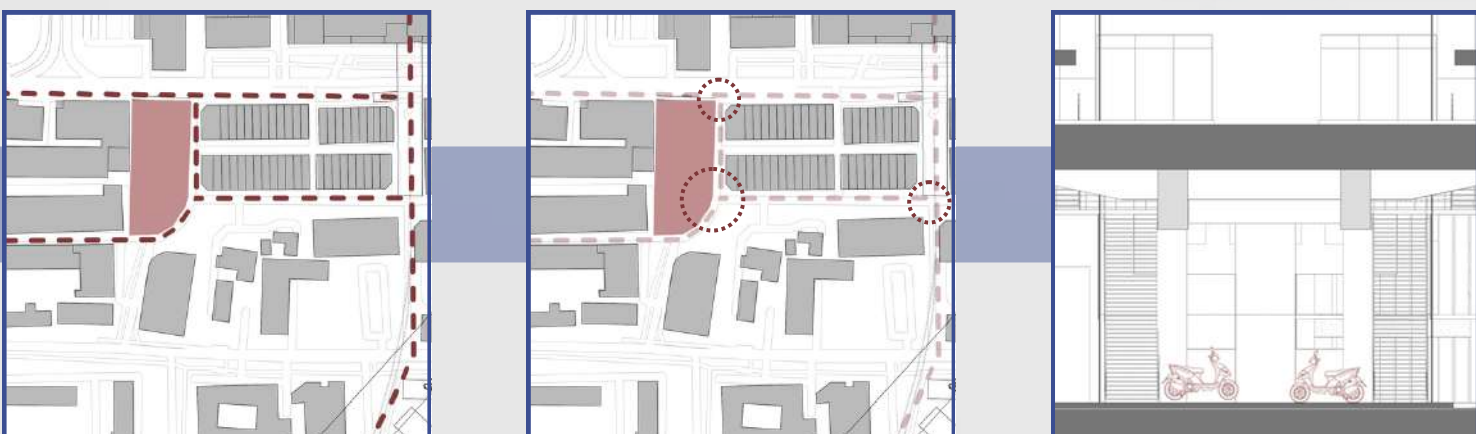
### KEY SITE CHALLENGES

**KL Sentral Area (North)**  
Major transport hub, people stop at NU Sentral, disconnected from Brickfields

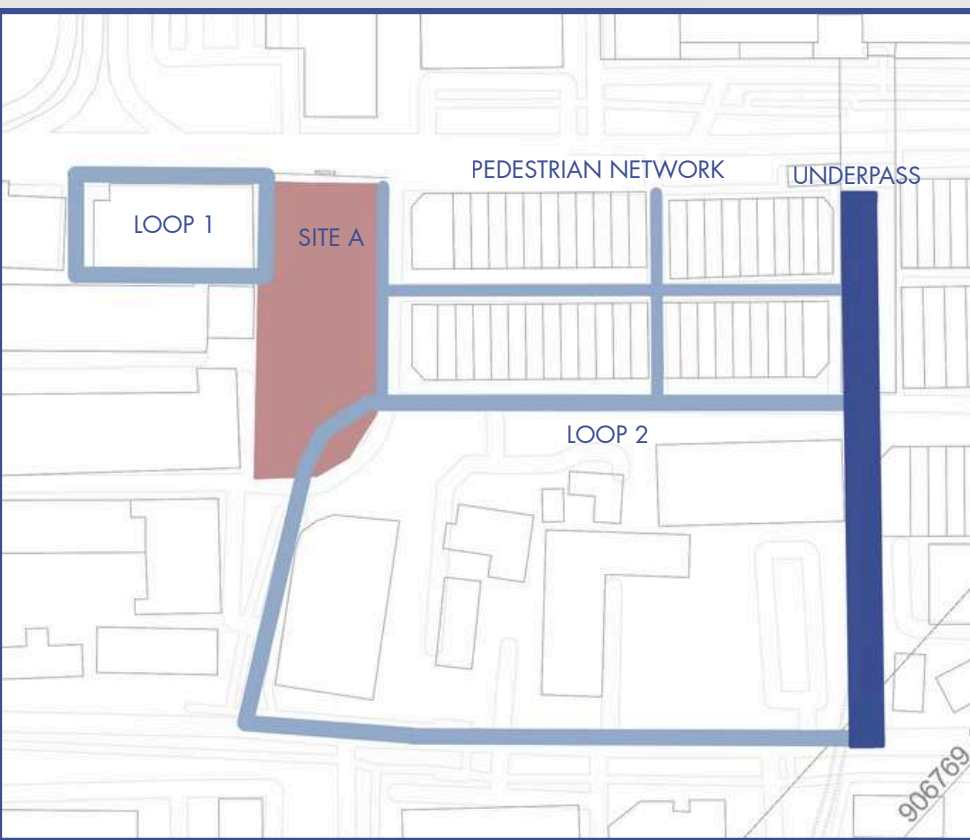
**Transition Area (Middle)**  
Intended as a connector between commuters and residents but has weak pedestrian flow, no interactive nodes, lacks community energy

**Residential Area (South)**  
Home to the local community. Residents primarily use the underpass as a shortcut to KL Sentral, a potential for stronger pedestrian links and community interaction

### DESIGN CONCEPT



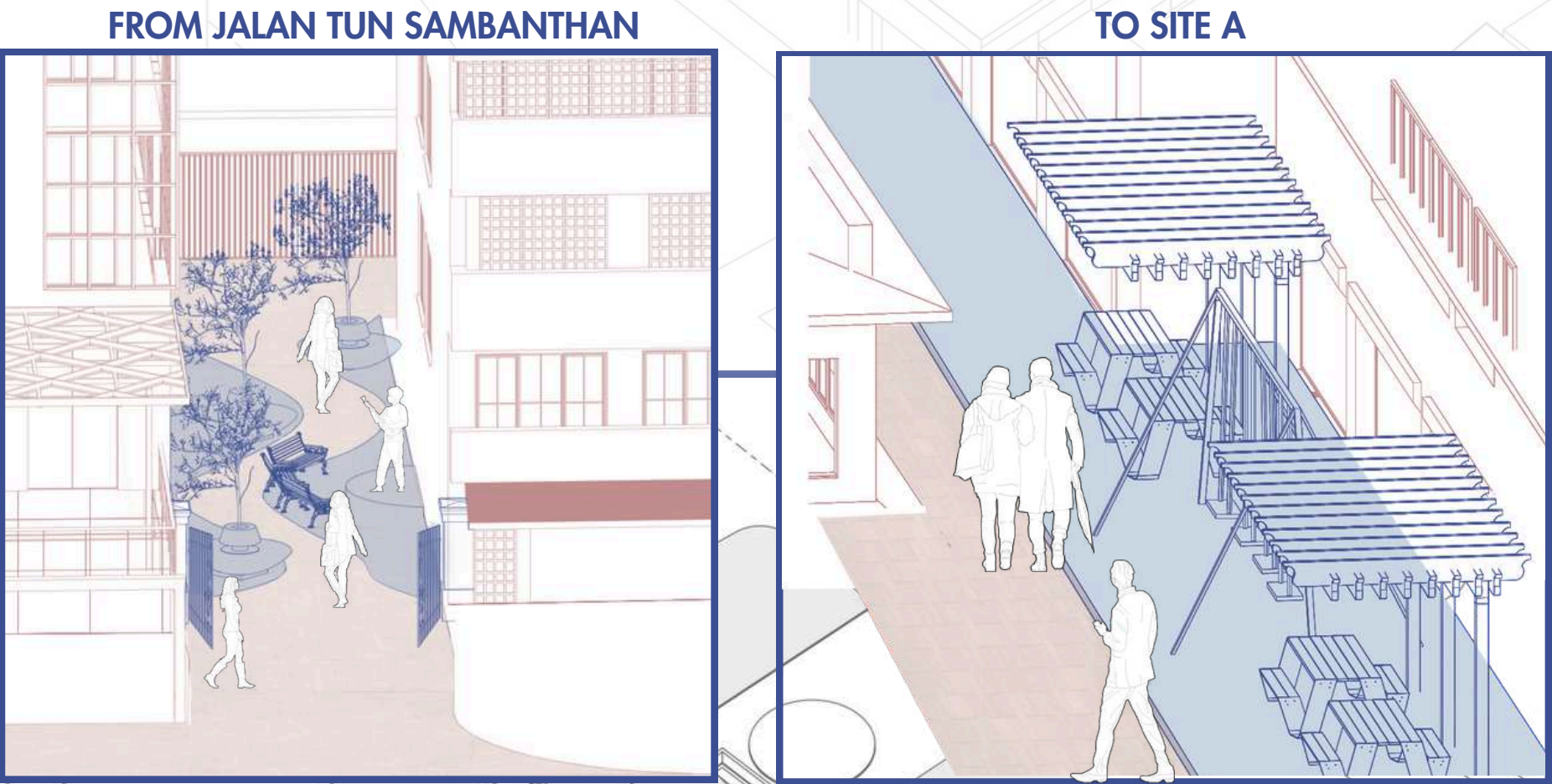
Weak Pedestrian Network    Lack of Interactive Nodes    Underutilized Underpass



**Urban Intervention**  
Connects underpass, Site A, and backlanes through interactive loops, activating spaces and fostering community interaction

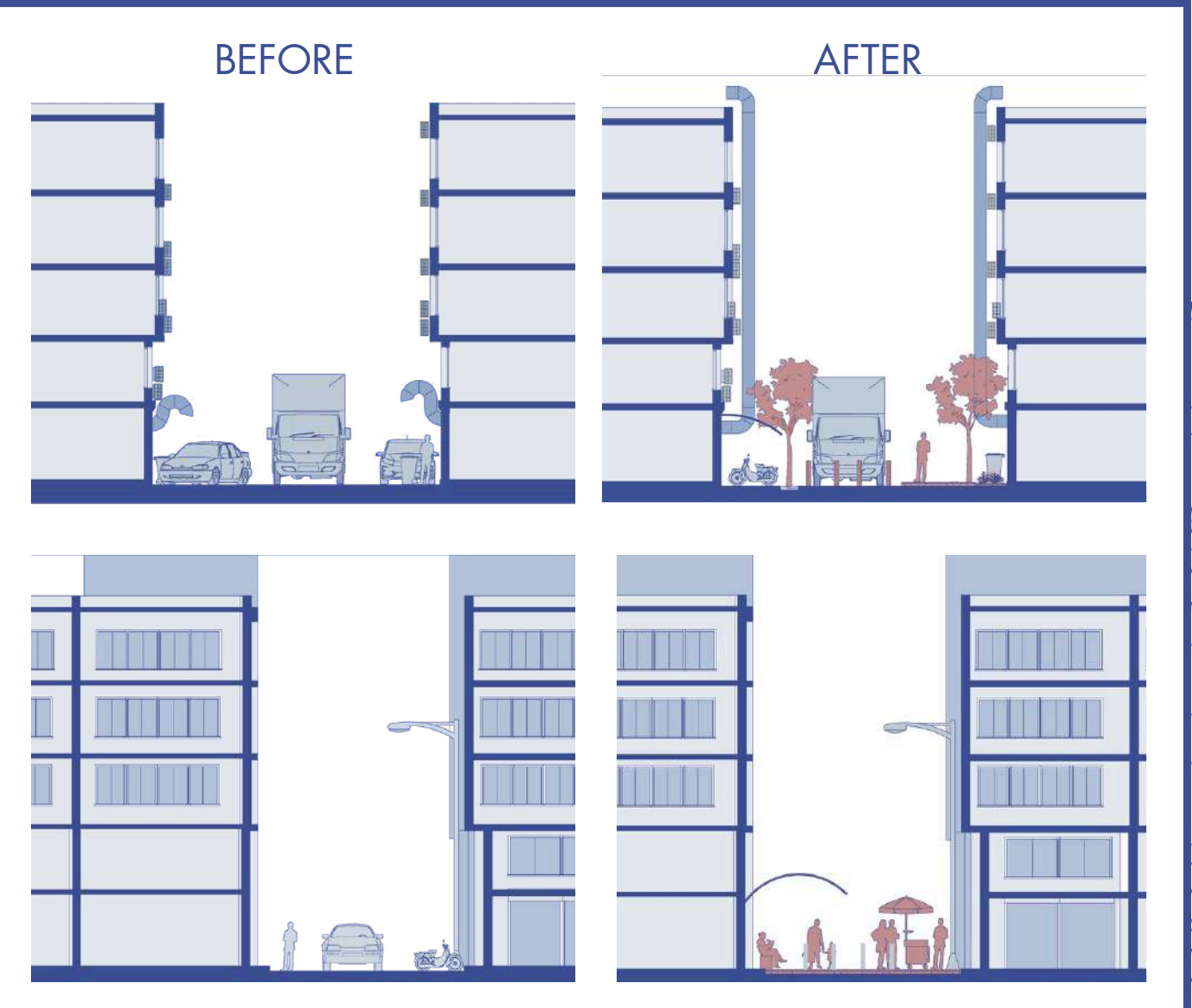
### LOOP 1

Loop 1 fully pedestrianises the backlane of Jalan Tun Sambanthan, linking it to Site A to enhance pedestrian flow, activate underutilised spaces, improve connectivity, and create a lively, walkable urban corridor.



### REVITALISED URBAN BACKLANE

Transforming the backlanes of Jalan Thambipillay and Jalan Tun Sambanthan into a pedestrian-friendly corridor with motorcycle parking, removable bollards, and service access, enhancing connectivity between the transit hub and Site A.



### COMMUNITY UNDERPASS ACTIVATION

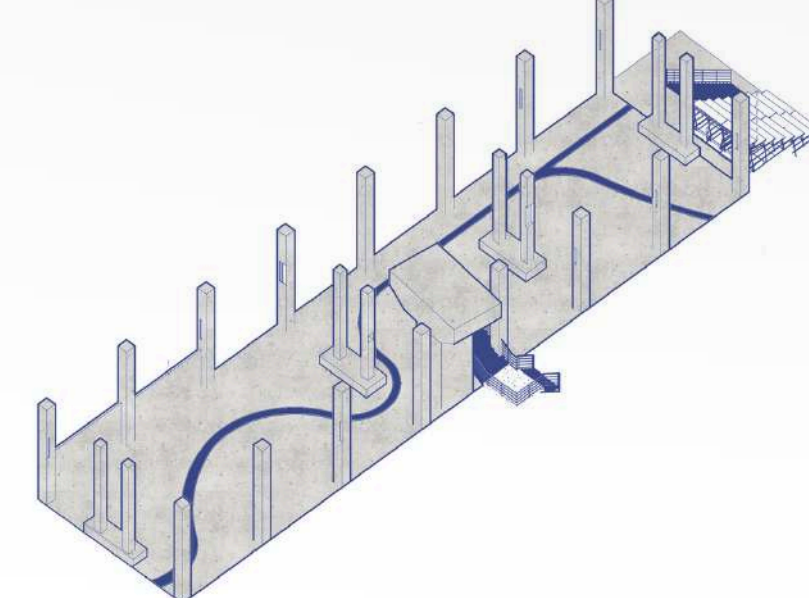
The underpass is transformed into a vibrant community space that prioritises pedestrian comfort and interaction. Shaded seating, greenery, and ambient lighting create a welcoming environment for daily leisure activities, casual gatherings, and social encounters. This activated underpass strengthens the connection between the transit hub and Site A, encouraging people to linger, interact, and move safely through the area.



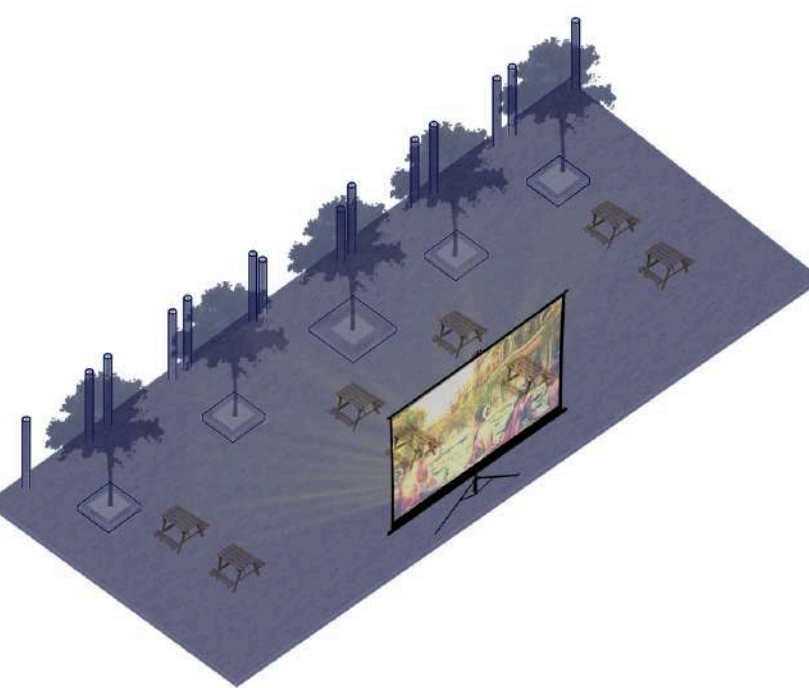
### PROGRAMMES



Relocation of Roadside Vendors



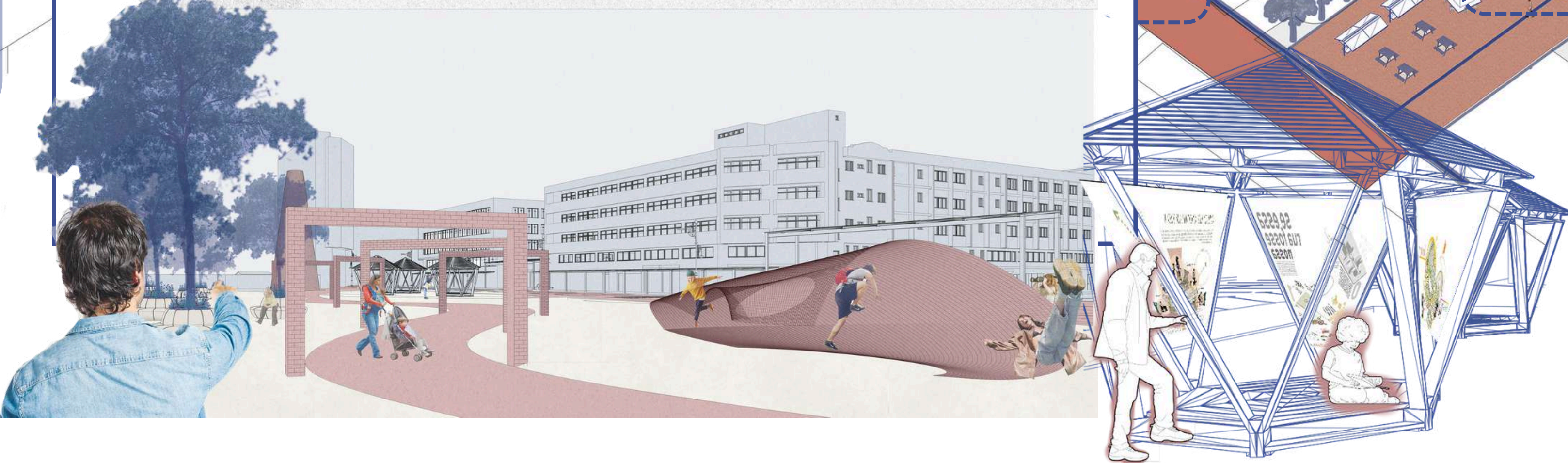
Kids Play Area and Gym



Film Screenings at Night

### SITE A GREEN POCKET PARK

A central green space is introduced within Site A, transforming the loop into a lively urban park. Shaded seating, soft landscaping, and open lawns provide a calm retreat for everyday leisure, social interaction, and community gathering. This park acts as the heart of the pedestrian loop, encouraging people to pause, rest, and connect with nature while moving through the site.



### LOOP 2

Loop 2 is redesigned as a shared corridor where selected carpark spaces are converted into seating areas for cafe spillovers and small green pockets for rest. This approach balances vehicular access with pedestrian comfort, creating inviting resting zones along the route. The loop strengthens circulation between key areas while fostering casual interaction, shade, and a more walk-able, community-friendly environment.

