BARBARA ENGEL, NIKOLAS ROGGE (EDS.)

# OPEN SPACES IN LARGE HOUSING ESTATES

## THE GREEN SUPERBLOCK IN TBILISI

[transcript] URBAN STUDIES

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Barbara Engel / Nikolas Rogge (Eds.)
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URBAN STUDIES

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BARBARA ENGEL, NIKOLAS ROGGE

# 1. OPEN SPACES IN A MODERNIST NEIGHBORHOOD

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# OPEN SPACES AS IMPORTANT LIVING SPACE

Open spaces contribute significantly to the quality of urban life. Open spaces in the immediate living environment are important additional living spaces, whether they are organized as public, communal, or private spaces. They are drivers and catalysators for the sustainable development of cities and neighborhoods. Open spaces and especially green spaces in cities and neighborhoods are essential social and health resources for residents. Green spaces provide clean air and cooling, store water, and contribute to biodiversity. Open spaces are a vital green infrastructure that provides benefits such as mitigating climate change, alleviating floods, and supporting ecosystems. They can also present opportunities for water harvesting and community food cultivation.

Green spaces not only perform important functions in terms of urban climate and hygiene, but they also serve as important recreational and gathering places for a wide variety of social groups. Access to open spaces, whether large parks or small areas, has a demonstrably positive effect on both physical and mental well-being. These spaces provide opportunities for formal or informal sports, or for enjoying some peace and quiet. Open spaces contribute greatly to the spirit and pride of individual communities. Open spaces create identity and belonging. They enable social participation.

However, open spaces are not always developed to their full potential. At the same time, the demands placed on open spaces in our living environments have multiplied. These spaces are expected to fulfill various functions and requirements and meet the interests of different users, which may contradict or compete with each other. Today, land resources in growing metropolitan regions and cities are largely limited, so undeveloped and unbuilt urban spaces are becoming scarce resources. As the demand for robust, resilient cities increases, further development of urban green spaces requires increased attention. How can open spaces be organized and designed to fulfill their multitude of functions to a high standard? How can these spaces be made inviting and inclusive? What roles do commercialization and surveillance play? What is the optimal balance of density and open space?

The investments necessary for upgrading and redesigning open spaces are small compared to other urban measures and would have a significant impact on their surroundings. However, to secure open spaces, their provision and organization within neighborhoods must be embedded in planning policy and requires careful design strategies.

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## Green Spaces as Features of Large Housing Estates

Many large housing estates that were built during the 1960s and 1970s are characterized by abundant green areas, sometimes covering as much as 60–75 percent of the property.[1] Open spaces played a major role in the deliberate planning of the Soviet microdistricts. Green areas between the buildings of a residential complex were primarily intended to serve as a means of improving the microclimate and abating noise, and as an important design element. The master plans organized places for social life: sports, children's games, and the like were located away from the yards so residents could comfortably spend time there in peace and quiet.[2]

After more than forty years of vegetation growth, the open spaces in microdistricts often have park-like qualities today. The living environment offers valuable additional spaces for people living in cramped conditions, especially since some apartments lack terraces or balconies. The outdoor living environment is therefore particularly important as a balancing space that provides privacy, accommodates leisure activities, and supports the informal economy. People garden or do crafts here, and sometimes people gather to celebrate. With their ecological and social potential, open spaces are valuable resources that also offer future benefits in terms of resilience. Especially against the backdrop of climate protection challenges, the open spaces in large residential areas offer a major advantage. Large settlements have a structural advantage in this regard: their generous green living environments and public spaces are not divided into small parcels and thus offer opportunities for fundamental and cross-property measures for climate adaptation and protection.

## Vazha-Pshavela Block VI in Tbilisi, Georgia

The microdistricts built since the 1960s represent a significant portion of the residential areas in the Georgian capital. One such neighborhood is Vazha-Pshavela, which is located in the Saburtalo district, northwest of the city center. The district spans 75.14 square kilometers and is home to around 139,000 inhabitants.[3] Block VI constitutes the western end of the housing development in the district. Built in the 1960s and 1970s, this neighborhood

1 V. A. Gorokhov, "Normirovanie i razmeschenie zelenyih nasazhdeniy goroda: Sistema gorodskih zelenyih nasazhdeniy," in: *Zelenoe stroitelstvo* (Moscow: Stoyizdat, 1991), 416 pp.

2 Lev N. Kiselevich and Izidor L. Rabinovich, *Kompozitsiya massovyh zhilyh domov i ansamblya zastrojki* (Moscow, 1973), p. 84.

3 "Saburtalo (City District, Tbilisi City, Georgia) – Population," City Population (website), with data from the State Department for Statistics of Georgia, accessed June 29, 2025, www.citypopulation.de/en/georgia/tbilisicity/1153__saburtalo/.

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Figure 1: Open and green spaces in Vazha-Pshavela, Block VI

*Source: Cara Stiller, Loana Köhler, Sofia Vinnik, Jasmin Maichle, based on maps from the National Agency of Public Registry (NAPR), Georgia (https://maps.gov.ge)*

- Informal ways
- Streets
- Sport facilities
- Playground
- Sealed space
- Informal green space
- Public green space

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Figures 2, 3: The neighborhood is characterized by a lot of green spaces
*Source: Ekaterina Gladkova, 2024*

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Figures 4, 5: Additional functions were implemented in the neighborhood by adding new buildings
*Sources: Barbara Engel, 2023 (4), Ekaterina Gladkova, 2023 (5)*

occupies the westernmost part of Tbilisi and has become an integral part of the city's urban structure, housing around 10,000 people. Today, students and middle-class citizens live in large housing blocks and suburban family homes. However, many of the buildings are in poor condition and do not meet the residents' needs. The urban fabric and infrastructure must be adapted to meet new social, functional, and technical demands and requirements.

Although the amount of green space in Vazha-Pshavela Block VI has diminished from 45 percent in the 1960s to 37 percent today, the area is still characterized by a lot of green spaces. With big trees and small bushes, open sports fields and playgrounds, green balconies, and community gardens, the territo-

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ry offers a great variety of green places. These spaces constitute an essential amenity for the residents, providing places to meet, rest, be active, and relax. The vegetation contributes to the neighborhood's quiet atmosphere. The open organization of the built fabric is very important for the district's ventilation. There is no noise from the major roads surrounding the block on its northern and western sides. However, the lack of hierarchy among the streets and alleys, combined with the "green jungle," make orientation difficult within the megablock.

Since the early 1990s, the lack of governmental control has also led to the individual occupation of open spaces in the microdistrict, including the streets, pathways, and residential courtyards. As urban land was partially privatized, various interest groups started competing for desirable property, often using illicit practices such as bribes and influential pressure. Due to this lack of regulation, commercial, financial, service, and other high-value land uses have expanded into the residential districts.[4] At the same time, due to unclear organized ownership, differing interests among neighbors, and a lack of planning, there are problems of disorganization and maintenance. Garages, illegally parked cars, and new buildings (or the threat thereof) are increasingly occupying the property. Some existing green spaces, especially those behind the houses, are vacant and used. Many open spaces are paved with concrete and show no positive qualities.

The increased dominance of automobiles in Tbilisi has led to the rapid deterioration and modification of the communal areas of multistory apartment blocks, and courtyards have been transformed from leisure areas into parking spaces. These changes to the street-level fabric of Tbilisi have increased vehicle traffic in areas initially planned for residential use, causing conflicts over parking.[5] The lack of parking in such properties was the result of a Soviet-wide prioritization of public transportation and was reflected in the widespread absence of private vehicles.[6] Saburtalo, along with Vake, is among the districts with a very high rate of motorized vehicle ownership and the highest rate of parking problems.[7] The space consumed by on-street parking poses a signifi-

4 David Gogishvili, "Competing for Space in Tbilisi: Transforming Residential Courtyards to Parking in an Increasingly Car-Dependent City," *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, October 18, 2021, pp. 1–27, here p. 11, accessed January 4, 2024, https://doi.org/10.1080/15387216.2021.1993292.

5 Ibid., p. 11.

6 Ibid., p. 3.

7 Municipal Development Fund of Georgia (MDF), "Consulting Services for Organization of a Transportation Household Survey," in *Tbilisi Metropolitan Area: Final Report*, August 5, 2016, pp. 20, 27, accessed January 12, 2024, https://tbilisi.gov.ge/img/original/2018/4/20/THS_Final_Report_Eng.pdf.

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Figure 6: Land use in the neighborhood
*Source: Quendrese Bardiqi, Celine Martin, Sarah Schlindwein, based on maps from the National Agency of Public Registry (NAPR), Georgia (https://maps.gov.ge)*

- Dwelling
- Shops / local supply
- Garages
- Educational
- Commercial
- Dwelling + commercial

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Figures 7, 8: Living environment in Vazha-Pshavela, with illegally parked cars and impromptu garages
*Source: Barbara Engel, 2023*

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Figures 9–11:
Comparmentalization of open spaces in Vazha-Pshavela, appropriated by individual residents
*Source: Barbara Engel, 2023 (9,11), Ekaterina Gladkova, 2024 (10)*

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cant challenge to the city because, for example, it negatively impacts the quality of pedestrian paths.[8]

Today, one sees a variety of elements in the open space, as well as the reconfiguration of the spaces themselves: sheds, parking garages, private gardens, workshops, and small shops regularly occupy the space surrounding buildings, often extending into and occupying public streets. A total of 318 garages are visible along the streets and in the courtyards. Garages that have been built between the housing blocks are rarely ever used for parking, however, and are more often used for household storage. Some are used as commercial spaces, such as bakeries and fruit and vegetable stands.[9]

Courtyards have been "compartmentalized" with a bewildering variety of walls, fences, hedges, and markings.[10] People have appropriated small green spaces for themselves, fencing off small plots for individual gardens, communal meeting spaces, and playgrounds. Though these areas are primarily used by the residents of adjacent houses, they can be considered publicly accessible because they are not fully enclosed, except in rare cases where gates limit entry.

## Trilateral Research Project "The Future of Modernist Housing: Living Labs Socialist City"

This book has been realized as part of the research project "The Future of Modernist Housing: Living Labs Socialist City," funded by Volkswagen Stiftung and carried out since 2020. The research project focuses on the large housing estates built throughout the territory of the former Soviet Union in the 1960s and 1970s.

Large housing estates have an especially valuable role to play in providing housing. The dwellings in these estates are highly adaptable, which makes them suitable for designing a living environment with few barriers. They also have a high proportion of open spaces. These estates offer extensive and varied housing options and living conditions that appeal to different groups in the population. In addition to relatively low rents, the comprehensive range of

8 Ibid., p. 52.

9 Thomas Ibrahim, "The House Is Never Complete: A Cartography of Idiosyncrasy in Socio-Political Maelstrom," 2022, accessed January 10, 2024, https://repository.tudelft.nl/islandora/object/uuid:24e07142-b100-4291-9298-efc3aa490a4a/datastream/OBJ5/download.

10 Joseph Salukvadze and Ivane Javakhishvili, "Market Versus Planning? Mechanisms of Spatial Change in Post-Soviet Tbilisi," in Van Assche, Salukvadze, and Shavishvili (eds.), *City Culture and City Planning in Tbilisi: Where Europe and Asia Meet* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2009), pp. 158–187, here p. 179, accessed October 5, 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/290008134_Market_versus_planning_Mechanisms_of_spatial_change_in_post-Soviet_Tbilisi.

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existing amenities and services are very important for certain types of households.[11] However, the districts require extensive renewal and improvement so they can respond to new societal, functional, and technical needs. It is necessary to make technical improvements to the aging building stock, to expand the mix of available dwelling types, and to create a more attractive environment. The requisite renovation strategies entail measures at various levels and different scales—including improvement of the spatial-structural organization and orientation, redesign of the open spaces, and establishment of new mobility concepts and services. Additionally, planning strategies, instruments, regulations, and laws must be adapted.

The project's core question is how to secure and sustainably develop the existing living spaces in large housing estates. From an international, comparative, and interdisciplinary perspective, the project aims to elaborate fundamental knowledge that could support the necessary transformation.

Urban planning no longer works as a set of plans imposed from above. If concepts and master plans are to be effective strategies for sustainable development that are accepted by society and their users, it must be implemented through a dialogue in which all parties are on an equal footing. This is particularly important in situations where varied interests are often in conflict or when taking limited resources into consideration, the needs, objectives, and concepts must be weighed up against one another and repeatedly negotiated. Many citizens feel that they are not an integral part of the planning process. There is indeed an insufficient understanding of planning outcomes and of the task at hand, as well as of the interconnectedness of the problems being addressed. As the "housing experts" of their city, residents want to be kept informed and to be involved in the individual steps of planning, and they want to have a meaningful say in them. Repeatedly and increasingly, citizens, initiatives, and associations express their desire and expectation to have greater involvement in ongoing planning processes, to be informed about planned projects, and to participate in formulating goals. The needs and wishes of citizens must be taken seriously and given due consideration, and the broader overall context must be communicated so those directly affected by the planning goals can better understand and relate to them.

Therefore, the declared purpose of the research project is to promote an ongoing dialogue between theory and praxis, as well as between the project partners and the local actors, i.e., representatives of political bodies, administrative personnel, NGO members, and citizens. Rather than conducting a scholarly examination of housing forms and strategies, a discussion with the general public should be established on the topic of the further development

11 Uwe Altrock, Nico Grunze, and Sigrun Kabisch (eds.), *Großwohnsiedlungen im Haltbarkeitscheck* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2018), p. 5.

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of the housing estates. This discussion will allow for reflection on the expectations and possibilities for shaping local planning. How can the needs of users—the neighborhoods' residents, business owners, and those who run cultural or social facilities—be incorporated into the process in a way that profits everyone? How can planning concepts be explained and conveyed in such a way that renovation strategies are understood as an accepted, strategic orientation negotiated by everyone involved, rather than a construct imposed from above? The compiled expert knowledge, evaluative assessments, and planning approaches will be communicated to citizens, and the knowledge of local residents will be collected for further research. Individual procedural steps, such as creating urban planning analyses or developing concepts for action, will be considered and discussed with local stakeholders on an ongoing basis.

In the first year of the research project, the methodological and scientific foundations were developed, and then followed by the conference "Dialogue on Large Housing Estates: Experiences and Perspectives on Housing," which was held online in April 2021 due to the pandemic. This conference brought together interdisciplinary experts to discuss the topic of living in large housing estates. Constructional, spatial, and design aspects of large housing estates were examined—specifically, the supply of dwelling typologies, technical issues, and sociocultural, economic, and instrumental factors. The results were published in 2024 in the book *Large Housing Estates under Socialism: Experiences and Perspectives on Sustainable Development of Mass Housing Districts*.[12]

The program for the second phase was to elaborate guidelines for the sustainable continued development of selected large housing estates as exemplary case studies, in collaboration with local stakeholders. The establishment of so-called living labs, also known as real-world labs, was foreseen. These are on-site laboratories where research is accompanied by an ongoing dialogue with different local stakeholders.

Living labs are scientific experimentation arenas that involve practitioners from municipalities, professional associations, and interest groups in the research process from the outset. Members of society and academia work together here to test solutions that are viable for the future and sustainable. A unique aspect of this approach to conducting research outside the "ivory tower" and in the spirit of "citizen science" is the systematic and open participation of citizens and other stakeholders as knowledgeable contributors and beneficiaries who introduce their opinions and wishes into the process in order to reconcile them with decision-makers and the administration. This special collaboration forsters innovation and generates synergies. The acquired find-

12 Barbara Engel and Nikolas Rogge (eds.), *Large Housing Estates under Socialism: Experiences and Perspectives on Sustainable Development of Mass Housing Districts* (Berlin: transcript Verlag, 2024).

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ings, evaluative assessments, and planning approaches will be communicated to the citizens. At the same time, residents' knowledge will be incorporated into further research. How can planning concepts and renovation strategies be discussed and negotiated with the involvement of everyone who is interested? The living lab offers new formats for information and communication in order to break down the barriers that seem to be increasing between citizens and those responsible for planning.

This research project began as a trilateral collaboration between Germany, Ukraine, and Russia. However, Russia's attack on Ukraine forced us to reshape the research outline and revise our partners. In addition to the Odessa State Academy of Civil Engineering and Architecture, we incorporated Ilia State University in Georgia as a new academic partner and moved the case study to Georgia.

## The Green Superblock in Vazha-Pshavela in Tbilisi

The living lab "The Green Superblock" was established in the Vazha-Pshavela neighborhood of Tbilisi in May 2024. It features an experimental dialogue format that engages residents, the administration, and scientists to jointly devise ideas for the neighborhood's future development, putting the green and open spaces into focus. How can we create a better urban environment that offers spaces for meeting, being active, and relaxing, so as to encourage a better quality of life? How can we leverage the advantages of green areas? How can we reorganize the open spaces to meet the different needs of residents? How can we implement good pedestrian and cycling networks and community spaces? These and other questions were addressed from the very beginning.

The living lab in Tbilisi enables the trilateral research team to network with local residents, civil society, politicians, public administrators, and other local actors on site. The aim was to work together with these groups to develop a coherent plan for the district management and municipality to use as a basis for further action by the authorities of Tbilisi. The lab's concept is to couple scientific expertise with local knowledge. In a shared, temporary experimental space, it is possible to implement ideas one-to-one as experimental trials. Examples include the temporary conversion and reconfiguration of street spaces, squares, and courtyard areas, as well as the provisional establishment of neighborhood meeting points and a great deal more.

The overall goal of the "Green Superblock" is to discuss solutions to improve the residents' living conditions by reorganizing the open spaces in the neighborhood. The aim is to develop ideas for transformation and set incentives and impulses for sustainable development of the living environment. Unsealed ground and plants contribute significantly to sustainable development

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Figure 12: Poster advertising the living lab
*Source: The Green Superblock, 2024*

and comfortable living conditions in the neighborhood. Due to climate change, new climate adaption and mitigation concepts must be developed.

The lab aims to foster interaction and communication between residents, professionals, and the administration. To gain a holistic understanding, it is important to discuss the future development with all relevant parties: the inhabitants, the municipality, the district administration, and planners. Bringing all the stakeholders together to define problems and formulate solutions, highlights the importance of the green spaces and gives them the attention they deserve.

The living lab is physically located in the neighborhood and based in a rented garage. It is also accessible online at www.greensuperblock.com. The

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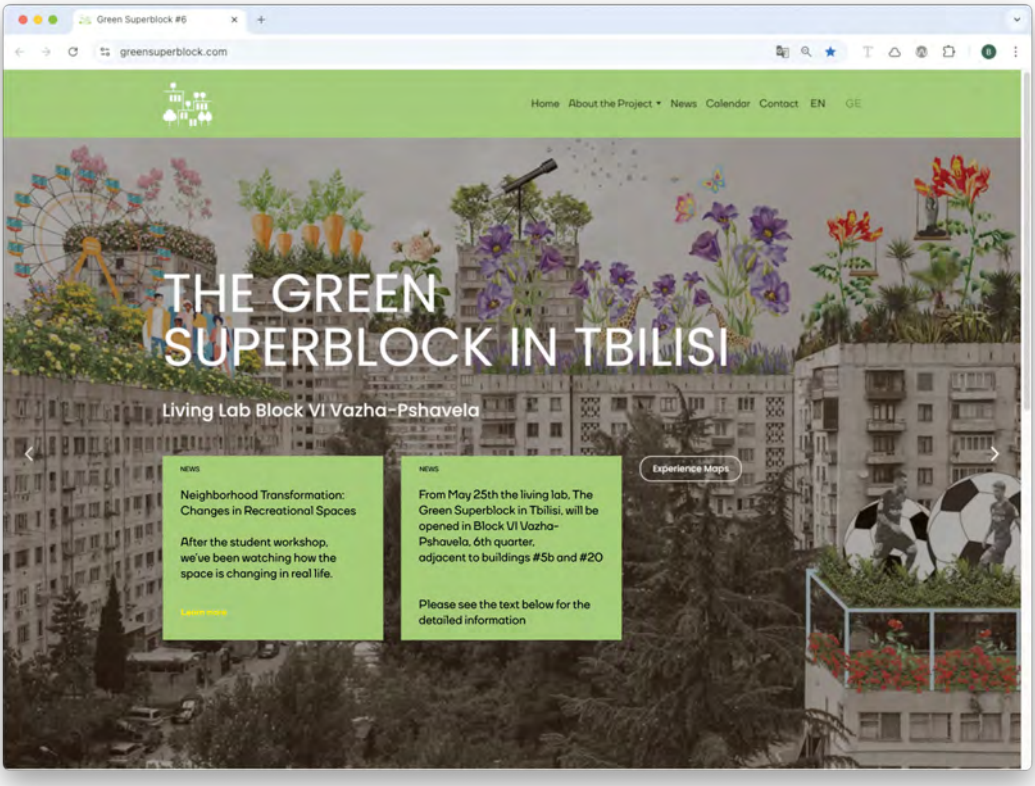


Figure 13: Homepage of *The Green Superblock* website
*Source: https://www.greensuperblock.com/ 18.12.2025*

first step of the lab's work was to understand the territory and all of its specific characteristics, values, and historical, geographical, and sociocultural backgrounds. Strengths and weaknesses were identified. A crucial part of the process was to get in touch with the neighborhood's various stakeholders and reaching out to and including all relevant parties, such as residents, planners, the municipality, the district administration, schools, clubs, and entrepreneurs, in order to discuss deficits and demands and identify conflicting interests concerning the open spaces near the housing. During regular opening hours, residents can meet with the research project team members in the lab, receive information about the project, and discuss best practices. Residents can share their personal impressions and evaluations of the spaces by marking their "I like" and "I don't like" places on the well-being map.

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Figures 14–16: Various activities were carried out together with local stakeholders, such as walking tours (Fig. 14), round-table discussions (Fig. 15), and “coloring day” (Fig. 16)
*Source: Ekaterina Gladkova, 2024*

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Figures 17, 18: Transformation of the neighborhood during the fall 2024 workshop with students
*Source: Nano Zazanashvili, 2024*

*Source: Ekaterina Gladkova, 2024*

Through various events such as neighborhood walks, round tables, and workshops, all those interested in the development of Block VI of Vazha-Pshavela were invited to contribute their interests and ideas. Subject-specific walking tours enabled an exchange of expertise and relevant information directly on location, revealing both visible and hidden qualities. Round-table discussions and other formats were arranged to consider different perspectives on problems, demands, requirements, and expectations. The implications for everyday life could be explored directly on location. The goal was to gain a comprehensive understanding of various interests regarding future development. How

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could the open spaces be improved? Which areas are available for transformation? What benefits could be achieved if cars were removed and green spaces were introduced? How could the quality of life be improved if paved surfaces were turned into green spaces?

To better integrate the lab into its surroundings and to collect as many different perspectives as possible for the future neighborhood, various accompanying events were organized. For instance, exhibitions were hosted, and lectures were held with diverse partners from the fields of science, professional practice, and civil society. During "coloring day" in the summer, schoolchildren drew ideal visions of "their" future Vazha-Pshavela.

In the second phase, scenarios for possible future development were elaborated. During different workshops, alternative concepts for improving the neighborhood environment were developed. Next, the transformation phase was prepared. To demonstrate the potentials inherent in the open spaces and to test possible transformative solutions, one yard in the area was transformed. Together with students from all three partner universities, small-scale interventions were carried out to exemplify the quality that could be achieved—for play, rest, and social interaction.

The results of the events are documented and published continuously on the living lab's homepage. The website is an important information tool for communicating with the local stakeholders and citizens. As a scientific multiplier, it continuously informs people about the program and the results of the lab.

Unfortunately, due to the current political situation, not everything went as planned or expected. Georgia has approved laws that severely restrict cooperation with foreign partners. Initially, the municipality of Tbilisi, specifically the Environmental Department and the Transport and Urban Development Agency (TUDA), provided very strong and promising support, but this was reduced, and colleagues working for the authorities stepped back from their engagement. The city is pursuing a forward-thinking mobility policy that encourages public transportation and creates a better mobility network for pedestrians and cyclists, implements bus rapid transit (BRT) routes, and even intends to extend the gondola routes to integrate them into the mass transportation system. The city of Tbilisi intends to establish several superblocks as sustainable mobility projects based on the Barcelona model, so TUDA had suggested making Vazha-Pshavela Block VI one of the pilot projects. However, they later stopped the integration of our project. The district management also withdrew from the project. At the beginning of the lab, they had suggested developing a coherent plan for Block VI as road map for sustainable transformation of the neighborhood.

Thus, it is questionable whether the lab's impact will be as intended. Implementing the ideas and concepts developed in the lab will be difficult if they

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are not linked to the official planning policies, strategies, and tools. However, much depends on the citizens themselves: Will they use the incentives and impulses and take responsibility for transforming their neighborhood? Only time will tell if the inhabitants will build on the initial stimulus —whether they will take care of the flowerpots, cherish the game installations, water and nurture the hedges, and use the seating areas for meetings and the tables for exhibitions or markets. Ongoing participation will be needed to build on the initial steps that have been made and to keep the lab alive.

## Typology of Open Spaces

As part of the living lab, the various configurations and types of open spaces in Block VI of Vazha-Pshavela were analyzed and systematized. While examining their current characteristics, we documented and evaluated the transformations that have occurred in recent years and decades, as well as the potential for future improvements. Through research conducted in dialogue with local experts and residents, we studied the current status of these open spaces and envisioned scenarios for how they could be used in the future.

The design of open spaces in large housing estates follows a specific logic. In contrast to the urban block, which clearly distinguishes between inside and outside—with a public, representative, address-forming space on one side and a private, shielded, rear space on the other—microdistricts follow a system with a loose arrangement of residential buildings and living groups amidst greenery and floating open spaces. The settlements "turn away" from the street space; their qualities and address are oriented toward the inside.[13] While the urban concept of open, flowing spaces sometimes hampers or prevents a clear hierarchy and spatial order in a neighborhood, it also creates exceptional spaces that give these neighborhoods their unique character.

The microdistricts are comprehensible neighborhoods with associated community facilities, such as daycare centers and playgrounds that can be reached on foot without crossing streets. In this sense, the microdistricts are extremely pedestrian-friendly and embody the principle of the superblock, which is celebrated and implemented internationally in many places as a new model for sustainable mobility transitions. However, microdistricts are not characterized only by their large, open spaces. They also have many small spaces, such as entrance areas, areas between streets and green spaces, garden areas, and in-between spaces, all of which constitute the unique green network of the microdistrict.

13 Bernd Hunger, Attraktiver öffentlicher Raum in Großsiedlungen. Unverzichtbar für den Zusammenhalt der Nachbarschaften, *DW die Wohnungswirtschaft* 08/2019, pp. 8–11, here p. 9, accessed October 5, 2025, http://www.gross-siedlungen.de/en/media/pdf/4198.pdf.

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My thanks extend to all the team members, especially our academic partners from Ilia State University, for their contributions to the project and their active involvement in carrying out the living lab and creating this document. This publication was only possible thanks to the financial support of the Volkswagen Foundation and its flexibility in responding to necessary project adaptations. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to David Koralek for his professional proofreading and copyediting, and to the team at Transcript for their constructive support throughout the entire publication process.

This book contextualizes the open spaces, presents their diverse characteristics, and their versatile uses. It also illustrates the underlying ideas with original plans and the changes that have occurred since then. Structural interventions, reorganization of routes, and the placement of garages and other installations did not always contribute to improvements, but they sometimes severely impaired the appearance. The book presents the broader context of the Vazha-Pshavela district, explaining its historical development and the current situation, which poses manifold challenges to sustainable transformation. This publication is a catalog of various types of open spaces. This typological systematization provides a valuable foundation for comparing Vazha-Pshavela's open spaces with one another and with those in other large housing estates. Additionally, examining scenarios of selected typologies reveals the rich potential these spaces hold for future transformation.

The transformation of public spaces, as well as the improvement of the existing buildings, must be based on a profound understanding of the inherent logic of these settlements. This will ensure that the "open urban landscape" typical of large settlements is preserved. Such a transformation must strengthen the existing spatial structures, treat them with respect, and not work against them. Nevertheless, redesigning and further developing the open spaces in a user-friendly way is an essential prerequisite for the resilient and sustainable development of the district overall.

The book at hand documents the variety of open spaces, from entrance areas and green spaces to streets and public facilities, and presents proposals for possible sustainable transformation that respect the urban heritage of the district, including its industrially produced fabric and its modernist features. By categorizing the different spaces—such as streets, gardens, entrance areas, playgrounds, parks, and yards—the book serves as a planning tool not only for the development of Vazha-Pshavela in particular, but also for other prefabricated districts in Tbilisi and other large housing estates in general.

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*Source: National Archives of Georgia, Tbilisi*

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# 2. CONTEXT OF VAZHA-PSHAVELA BLOCK VI

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BARBARA ENGEL, NIKOLAS ROGGE

# INTRODUCTION

The public spaces discussed in this book provide insights into the distinctive features of the open space structures of large housing estates in Eastern Europe in general, and specifically into the open spaces in Block VI of the Vazha-Pshavela microdistrict in the Sarbutalo district of Tbilisi. A coherent examination of these spaces and their attributes, as well as the issues they face and questions regarding their further development, requires a profound understanding of the larger historical, spatial, functional, and social context. Understanding the planning and development period and the history of ideas is just as necessary as recognizing today's needs and considering future changes and necessary adjustments.

Modern settlements have given rise to a unique form of urban development. This is characterized by an urban layout in which buildings often stand alone in a flowing open space, as if on a green field. Residential buildings are grouped together in microdistricts much like superblocks. Facilities related to residential life, such as kindergartens, schools, sports complexes, and supermarkets are located at the edges of these groups or in between them, close to the main roads. Historically, the interior of the microdistricts was dedicated to neighborhood living. Since their creation over fifty years ago, these settlements have undergone numerous transformations through planning and the efforts of their residents. Privatization and uncontrolled development have, in some cases, led to the construction of many new buildings. As a result, the open spaces have lost much of their original qualities. Often littered and neglected, with unclear usage and ownership status, these spaces are at risk of falling victim to investment pressure, especially in communities facing a housing shortage. Unlike residents of large housing estates in other countries, Georgian residents have remodeled and extended their houses in remarkable and unique ways in response to the housing shortage. They have appropriated and redesigned open spaces and their apartments—often without planning. While the quality of the results will not be evaluated in detail here, the transformations provide important insight into the shortcomings of the current planning process and indicate where improvements must begin.

This publication is based on the premise that sustainable transformation can only occur with a deep appreciation for these spaces and not in contradiction to their original intent. A deep understanding of the historical background, as well as the current demands and circumstances, is an important prerequi-

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site. A careful examination of Vazha-Pshavela Block VI reveals that the city's urban transformation problems can be easily traced back to the challenges it has faced since the collapse of the Soviet Union—challenges that continue to affect Tbilisi's development today. The unstable political situation, combined with rapid mass privatization that shifted public housing into private ownership, altered the urban fabric. This problem was later exacerbated by unregulated construction processes, interventions, and modifications. Today, the urban fabric, which was once rigidly structured based on Soviet spatial planning doctrines, has devolved into a chaotic urban space with numerous problems.

This chapter describes the historical development and the current state of the Vazha-Pshavela Block VI neighborhood, highlighting the challenges it faces in transforming its urban public and green spaces along with the potentials it offers. The chapter links back to initial design decisions and illustrates the deviations and improvements made by the microdistrict's inhabitants, as well as the design changes initiated and implemented by the city and the district.

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NANO ZAZANASHVILI

# 2.1 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Today, Saburtalo is one of the central districts of Tbilisi. The trajectory of its urban development serves as a reflection of the broader socioeconomic and political transformations that have shaped Georgia over time. This section examines the key phases in the evolution of Saburtalo's urban development from the late nineteenth century through the 1990s. Particular attention is given to the planning and construction processes of the Vazha-Pshavela residential microdistricts, with a focused analysis of the urban characteristics of Block VI.

## Formation of the Saburtalo District

When observing the historical growth of Tbilisi, it becomes evident that, until the early twentieth century, the city developed along the Mtkvari River. By the late nineteenth century, the city's boundary on the right bank of the river had nearly reached what is now Heroes' Square. The military road leading to Russia, which later became the foundation for Merab Kostava Street, began from roughly this point. The growth pattern of Tbilisi shifted during the first half of the twentieth century, with development gradually extending westward along the Vere River and further into the Vake and Saburtalo areas.

In the late nineteenth century, Saburtalo was a settlement on the periphery of the city, inhabited by a low-income, ethnically diverse population. Saburtalo was incorporated into the city in 1917.[1] Maps of Tbilisi from this period already show development to the west of the military road, along the area now defined by Viktor Dolidze Street and between Pekini Avenue and Zhuli Shartava Street. By the 1920s, these residential areas had expanded further. The draining of swampy lands that had been a breeding ground for malaria for years also contributed to this growth.[2]

1 Teimuraz Beridze, ძველი თბილისის გარეუბნების ისტორია [History of the suburbs of Old Tbilisi] (Tbilisi: Metsniereba, 1977), pp. 67–68.

2 Nino Asatiani, Грузинское Советское Градостроительство 1920-1930-х Годов [Georgian Soviet urban development of the 1920s–1930s], Tbilisi: Metsniereba, 1989, p. 16; and საბურთალოს ჭაობების ამოშრობა [Draining the Saburtalo swamps], *Komunisti*, no. 170 (July 1925), p. 4.

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Figure 1: Plan of Tbilisi (1924), with the Saburtalo district framed in blue
*Source: Ioseb Grishashvili Tbilisi History Museum of the Georgian National Museum, Tbilisi*

Broader urban development initiatives in Saburtalo began after the establishment of the Soviet regime in Georgia. In the second half of the 1920s, discussions began on the systematic development of the Saburtalo residential area. At the same time, plans were made to improve connections between the central railway station and the city center. These plans included the construction of Station Street, Heroes' Square, Kostava Street, and a new bridge over the Mtkvari River.[3]

By the 1930s, these ideas materialized, and Heroes' Square and its surrounding areas became central to Tbilisi's Soviet reconstruction efforts. Between 1932 and 1935, the contemporary Queen Tamar Bridge, designed by engineer Slovinsky and architect Nikoloz Severov, was built to link the riverbanks and the central railway station.[4] The development of Heroes' Square and the first part of Kostava Street represented significant steps in improving urban

3 Nodar Janberidze, ქართული საბჭოთა არქიტექტურა [Georgian Soviet architecture] (Tbilisi: Khelovneba, 1971), pp. 30–31.

4 Ibid, p. 139.

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connections. During this period, steps were also taken to create recreational spaces. For instance, a zoological park was established in the Vere Gorge, near the former Vere Gardens and close to Heroes' Square.

Figure 2: General view of the zoological park and the road to Saburtalo (Heroes' Square area) in 1938
*Source: Vladimir Stoliarov, 1938, National Archives of Georgia, Tbilisi*

Notable examples of residential development include the so-called Specialists' Houses, designed by architects Aleksandre Nikolaishvili and Mikheil Shavishvili, built on the outskirts of Saburtalo between 1932 and 1935.[5] This was one of the first examples of residential block development in Soviet Tbilisi. These three residential buildings, constructed in the early Soviet modernist style, still stand at the intersection of Jiuli Shartava and Ana Kalandadze Streets.[6] A development plan for the surrounding area was also intended to be created during this period.[7] The 1934 map of Tbilisi shows outlines of intended future developments, indicating plans for systematic expansion. However, these efforts were not part of a unified, well-conceived plan and were often carried out sporadically.

5 At that time, the northern boundary of the neighborhood reached approximately up to the intersection of today's Vazha-Pshavela and Pekini Avenues.

6 Levan Kalandarishvili, "Constructivism in Georgia," in Palavandishvili and Kurtishvili (eds.), *Building Socialist Georgia* (Tbilisi: CEZANNE Printing House, 2022), p. 48; Janberidze, ქართული საბჭოთა არქიტექტურა [Georgian Soviet architecture], pp. 60–62.

7 Janberidze, ქართული საბჭოთა არქიტექტურა [Georgian Soviet architecture], pp. 137–138.

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At the beginning of the 1930s, Soviet urban planning underwent a significant turn. The socioeconomic policies implemented during the first Five-Year Plan — including rapid industrialization and forced collectivization — had a profound impact on Soviet cities. These changes were especially evident in Moscow. Due to the rapid migration of the rural population to urban areas, Moscow expanded chaotically and was no longer able to meet the housing and communal needs of its growing population. To address these urban challenges, the resolution "On the Urban Economy of Moscow and on the Development of the Urban Economy of the USSR" was adopted on July 15, 1931. This resolution laid the groundwork for the planned development of Soviet cities. During the 1930s, general plans were devised and adopted for Moscow and other Soviet cities.[8]

In response to this policy, Tbilisi's first general plan was developed in 1934. This plan aimed to address issues related to the city's development and transformation, aligning with the Soviet Union's new socioeconomic and political directions. The plan also sought to keep pace with the city's rapid population growth. Between 1922 and 1926, Tbilisi's population increased by 60,000, growing at an annual rate of 5.8 percent, which was one of the highest rates in the Soviet Union.[9] By 1932, Tbilisi had a population of 370,000. The general plan projected that this number would rise to 725,000 within 25 to 30 years.[10]

Saburtalo, along with other parts of the city, was identified as a key area for housing the growing population. The plan foresaw development of the entire east–west corridor, including the areas around present-day Aleksandre Kazbegi and Vazha-Pshavela Avenues. However, it took several decades to realize this vision.[11] Until the 1950s, development remained concentrated around Khiliani Street and the area between Kostava and Pekini Avenues; other parts were only partially developed.[12]

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8 "Beschluss 'Über die Moskauer städtische Wirtschaft und die Entwicklung der städtischen Wirtschaft in der UdSSR,'" 100(0) Schlüsseldokumente (website), accessed April 6, 2025, https://www.1000dokumente.de/Dokumente/Beschluss_%E2%80%9E%C3%9Cber_die_Moskauer_st%C3%A4dtische_Wirtschaft_und_die_Entwicklung_der_st%C3%A4dtischen_Wirtschaft_in_der_UdSSR%E2%80%9C?setlang=de.

9 Giorgi Mgeladze, თბილისის დემოგრაფიული განვითარების ეტაპები [Periods of demographic development of Tbilisi], in Salukvadze, Van Assche, Shavishvili (eds.), თბილისი ცვლილებების ხანაში (ურბანული სივრცისა და ქალაქგეგმარების სოციალურ-პოლიტიკური განზომილება) [Tbilisi in times of change (sociocultural dimensions of urban space and urban planning] (Tbilisi: Tbilisi University Publishing House, 2010), p. 25.

10 D. Tutberidze (ed.), За Социалистическую Реконструкцию Тифлиса (К Обсуждению Проекта Планировки Города) [For the Socialist reconstruction of Tiflis (Towards the discussion of the city planning project)] (Tiflis: Izdatelski Sektor Tifsoveta, 1934), pp. 32–33.

11 The Second General Plan of Tbilisi, developed in 1955, did not make any significant changes in this regard.

12 This is evidenced by the analysis of cartographic and satellite materials from that period.

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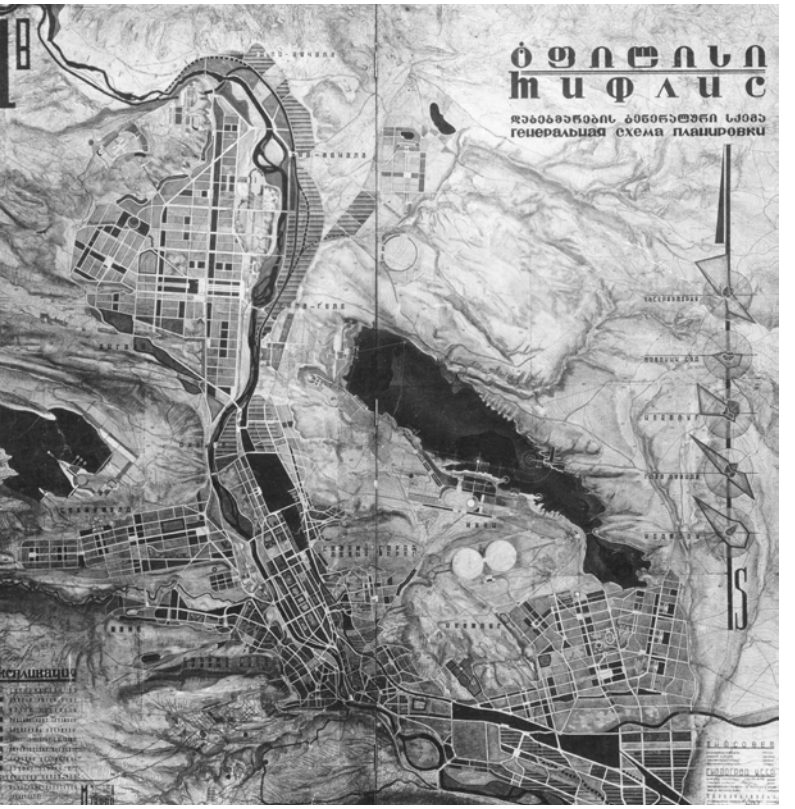


Figure 3: General Plan for Tbilisi, 1934
*Source: National Archives of Georgia, Tbilisi*

The General Plan for Tbilisi also established urban planning conditions for the disposition of residential blocks. However, during the era of Socialist Realism, these requirements were largely disregarded. Construction focused on individual residential buildings along major avenues, often neglecting the creation of recreational spaces and service facilities at the neighborhood level. The housing shortage remained a persistent challenge, as the speed of construction could not keep up with the growing population.

According to the general plan, there was a critical shortage of green spaces in Tbilisi in the early 1930s. The city had only 3.1 square meters of green space per person, which was significantly below the levels in other Soviet cities. For example, Baku had 4.4 square meters per capita, Rostov-on-Don had 26.3, Saratov had 16, and Moscow had 19.[13] Efforts were made in subsequent years to improve the city's ecological conditions through mass planting on slopes

13 Tutberidze, За Социалистическую Реконструкцию Тифлиса [For the Socialist reconstruction of Tiflis], p. 17.

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and the creation of large urban parks in various districts. However, aside from the zoological park, no other large parks were established in Saburtalo.[14] As will be seen below, this challenge persisted in the following decades. Starting in the 1940s, the siting of university campuses and scientific institutions in Saburtalo shaped the district's subsequent functions and demographic characteristics.[15]

## Development and Construction of the Vazha-Pshavela Microdistricts

It is well known that transformative changes in housing construction and architectural policies occurred in the Soviet Union during the 1950s, following a leadership change in the Communist Party and the rise of Nikita Khrushchev. Saburtalo's intensive growth also began during this period.

Several resolutions issued during the 1950s laid the legal grounds for the new construction policies. In 1955, the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the USSR Council of Ministers adopted the resolution "On Eliminating Excesses in Design and Construction." This decree criticized the uneconomical practices of the design and construction of residential and public buildings in previous years. It aimed to accelerate the construction process by adopting standard designs and industrial construction methods.[16] Another significant legal act was the 1957 resolution "On the Development of Housing Construction in the USSR," also passed by the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the USSR Council of Ministers. This decree aimed to eliminate the Soviet Union's housing crisis within ten to twelve years. To achieve this, Soviet republics were required to prepare plans for siting residential buildings on vacant

14 During the Soviet period, a relatively small park (today known as Vaso Godziashvili Park) was established on what is now Al. Kazbegi Avenue. Additionally, a riding arena was built in Saburtalo for equestrian sports shows. After Georgia gained independence, the area was transferred into private ownership. Gradually, equestrian sports activities came to a complete halt, and the local population began using the open space for recreational purposes. Currently, a park is being constructed on the site of the former racetrack; however, in the greenest part of the arena property, the construction of massive, multistory buildings is planned.

15 Vakhtang Jaoshvili (ed.), თბილისი (ეკონომიკურ-გეოგრაფიული გამოკვლევა) [Tbilisi (Economic-geographical survey)] (Tbilisi: Sabchota Sakartvelo, 1989), pp. 131–132, 357–358.

16 Постановлению ЦК КПСС и Совета Министров СССР от от 4 ноября 1955 г. N 1871, "Об Устранении Излишеств в Проектировании и Строительстве" [Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Council of Ministers of the USSR from 4 November 1955, No. 1871, "On the Elimination of Redundancies in Design and Construction"], accessed April 5, 2025, https://www.libussr.ru/doc_ussr/ussr_5043.htm.

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urban land, and various institutions were tasked with using industrial construction methods. Increased funding was also allocated for housing construction.[17]

In line with this political course, the principles of planning residential areas changed significantly. Construction primarily utilized undeveloped land. Residential areas were divided into blocks, varying in size from 10 to 25 hectares. When developing the blocks, attention was given to geographical factors, and buildings were placed using a free layout. The blocks were surrounded by streets that did not intersect them. In addition to residential buildings, everyday facilities such as schools, kindergartens, and shops were incorporated.[18] The most economical type of urban housing was identified as four- to five-story buildings. Reducing the height simplified the structures and eliminated the need for elevators.[19] However, today this approach poses challenges in terms of accessibility.

The Vazha-Pshavela microdistricts are the first large-scale example of this type of development in Tbilisi. The project for the Saburtalo residential area was prepared in 1957 by the architects Shota Kavlashvili, Aleksandre Bakradze, David Grdzelidze, and Ilo Kavlashvili).[20] By this time, Aleksandre Kazbegi Avenue and Vazha-Pshavela Avenue had already been partially developed.

The plan encompassed the area west of Vazha-Pshavela Avenue, extending from the current Delisi Metro Station to the end of the avenue. Approximately 265 hectares were allocated for the construction of the new district, which was designed to house 42,000–45,000 people. In addition to residential blocks, the plan included areas for individual development. The project envisioned the creation of a district center near today's Delisi Metro Station, as well as a 45-hectare park. According to the plan, block sizes would vary between

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17 Постановлению ЦК КПСС и С овета Министров СССР от 31 июля 1957 г. N 931 "О развитиижилищного строительства в СССР" [Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Council of Ministers of the USSR from 31 July 1957, No. 931, "On the Development of Housing Construction in the USSR"], accessed April 5, 2025, https://www.libussr.ru/doc_ussr/ussr_5213.htm.

18 Janberidze, ქართული საბჭოთა არქიტექტურა [Georgian Soviet architecture], p. 366; Ruben Agababian, Irakli Tsistsishvili, and G. Chigogidze, Архитектурная Практика Грузии [Architectural practice of Georgia], *Architecture USSR*, no. 7 (1960), p. 13.

19 Janberidze, ქართული საბჭოთა არქიტექტურა [Georgian Soviet architecture], p. 400.

20 During our research, we encountered difficulties in determining the exact dates of the project's development and the start of construction. Researchers focusing on this period provide different dates. For instance, Nodar Janberidze names 1956 as the year of construction, while Tengiz Kvirkvelia cites 1955 as the date of approval for the Saburtalo district development plan. However, it is not entirely clear which specific plan he is referring to. The biographical materials of David Grdzelidze, a coauthor of the project—which are preserved in the archive of the Union of Architects of Georgia, indicate that the project was implemented between 1956 and 1958, whereas another note in the file mentions the year 1957. For this text, we rely on the archival project documentation preserved in the private archive of Shota Kavlashvili and the date specified therein.

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Figure 4: Intersection of Pekin and Pavlovi (today's Al. Kazbegi) streets, 1962
*Source: National Archives of Georgia, Tbilisi*

10 and 12 hectares. Schools and kindergartens were planned within a green area of approximately 3.5 hectares that would separate the blocks.[21] Schools were designed to accommodate 920 students. The plan also specified that 11.8 square meters of green space should be provided per resident within the block. Block development was planned with four- to five-story buildings, while six- to eight-story buildings with ground floors dedicated to shops and public facilities were planned along the avenues.[22]

However, during implementation, the plan underwent significant changes. The density of development increased, and the amount of green space decreased. The planned park was never built, and the area is now occupied by

21 Janberidze, ქართული საბჭოთა არქიტექტურა [Georgian Soviet architecture], pp. 376–377; Tengiz Kvirkvelia, Архитектура Тбилиси [Architecture of Tbilisi] (Tbilisi: Sabchota Sakartvelo, 1982), p. 77; Shota Kavlashvili, Новый Жилой Район в Тбилиси [New residential district in Tbilisi], *Architecture USSR*, no. 11 (1958), p. 27.

22 Ibid.

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839470459 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY-SA

Figure 5: Detailed project for the planning and development of the new Saburtalo residential district. Designed by Sh. Kavlashvili, A. Bakradze, D. Grelidze, and I. Kavlashvili.
*Source: Archive of Georgian Union of Architects, Tbilisi*

buildings. The district center and square planned at the intersection of M. Tamarashvili and Vazha-Pshavela Avenues, as well as the development at the end of Vazha-Pshavela Avenue, were not realized according to the plan. The poor construction quality and monotonous uniformity of the development have been repeatedly criticized by the local press and professionals alike.

The construction of a highway in Varaziskhevi, near Heroes' Square in 1957, and of Tamarashvili Avenue in 1959, improved connectivity between the residential areas of Saburtalo and Vake.[23] The first stations of the Saburtalo Metro line were not built until much later, in 1979. Until the 2000s, Delisi subway station was the final stop on the Saburtalo line. As a result, many Vazha-Pshavela microdistricts remained outside the city's main subway transit lines. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the construction of the "Vazha-Pshavela" and "State University" stations were delayed for years due to a lack of funding.[24] The stations finally opened in 2000 and 2017, respectively.

23 Janberidze, ქართული საბჭოთა არქიტექტურა [Georgian Soviet architecture], p. 382.

24 მეტროპოლიტენი თბილისისა ["Tbilisi Metro"], in თბილისი (ენციკლოპედია) [Tbilisi (Encyclopedia)] (Tbilisi: Metsniereba), pp. 667–669.

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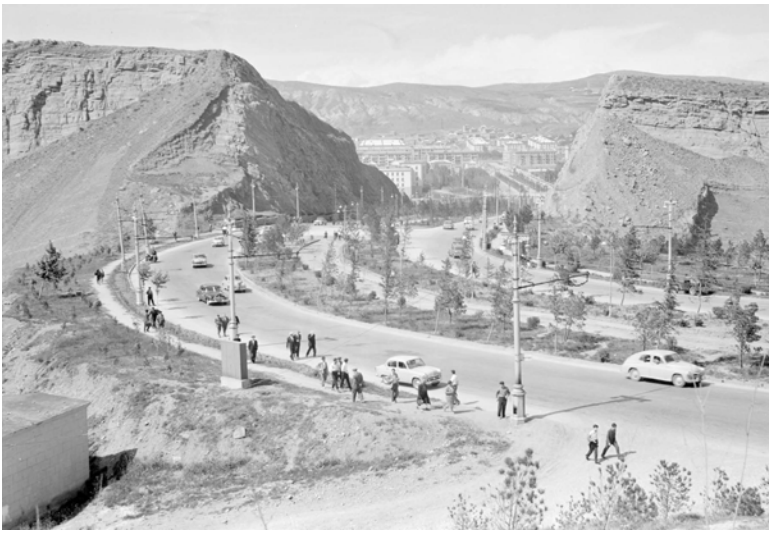

Figure 6: New road between Vake and Saburtalo in 1962
*Source: National Archives of Georgia, Tbilisi*

## Vazha-Pshavela Block VI

Block VI, one of the seven microdistricts built in Vazha-Pshavela during this period,[25] is located at the southern end of Vazha-Pshavela Avenue. The block is bordered to the west by Zurab Anjaparidze Street, to the south by Petre Kavtaradze and Vagharshak Mamasakhlisovi Streets, to the east by Mikheil Shavishvili Street, and to the north by Vazha-Pshavela Avenue. To the south, the block borders a large open space and the high-rise Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University building, constructed in 1968. As previously mentioned, when the population settled here, the area was not served by the Metro, so residents relied on buses and trolleybuses for transportation.[26]

Structurally, the block consists of two separate territorial units, divided by Petre Kavtaradze Street. These units differ topographically and in the layout of their buildings. Development followed the basic planning principles established during this period. The road network was hierarchical, with urban and

25 As mentioned earlier, Vazha-Pshavela Block V, located at the end of the avenue, was not implemented according to plan.

26 Otar Tkeshelashvili, თბილისი – მოკლე ცნობარი-მეგზური [Tbilisi – A Short Guide] (Tbilisi: Sabchota Sakartvelo, 1967), pp. 96–116; S. I. Svani and T. Sh. Turabelidze (eds.), თბილსის ქუჩების ცნობარი [Tbilisi street guide] (Tbilisi: Sabchota Sakartvelo, 1986), pp. 51, 143.

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Figure 7: Vazha-Pshavela Block VI in 1971
*Source: National Archives of Georgia, Tbilisi*

neighborhood streets circumscribing the block Internal streets within the quarter were cul-de-sacs that did not cross through it. However, the internal pedestrian connections appear to be poorly organized.

Block VI's buildings were arranged in a free layout. Along Vazha-Pshavela Avenue, eight-story buildings were constructed. Two corner buildings were placed parallel to the avenue and three buildings were positioned perpendicular to it. The ground floors of these buildings were designated for shops and public facilities. In the main part of the block, five-story residential buildings were arranged diagonally to the streets and parallel to each other.

In Georgia, a standardized project for three- to five-story residential buildings (series 1G-450c) was approved in 1958 (architects: Z. Kurdiani, S. Revishvili, G. Tavdgiridze, and D. Chofikashvili). These buildings included one-, two-, and three-room apartments, and this design was predominant for housing construction throughout Georgia. In 1960, the design was modified and a standardized project for eight-story buildings was developed in addition. While the plan remained unchanged, balconies were added along the entire length of the facade, and elevators were introduced.[27] These projects were also used to construct residential buildings in Block VI of Vazha-Pshavela.

27 Janberidze, ქართული საბჭოთა არქიტექტურა [Georgian Soviet architecture], pp. 404–406; Ruben Agababian, Irakli Tsistsishvili, and G. Chigogidze, Архитектурная Практика Грузии [Architectural practice of Georgia], *Architecture USSR*, no. 7 (1960), pp. 14–15; Natia Jokhadze, Программа комплексной реабилитации жилых домов массовой застройки первого поколения (на примере г. Тбилиси) [Comprehensive rehabilitation program for first-generation mass housing (on the example of Tbilisi)], January

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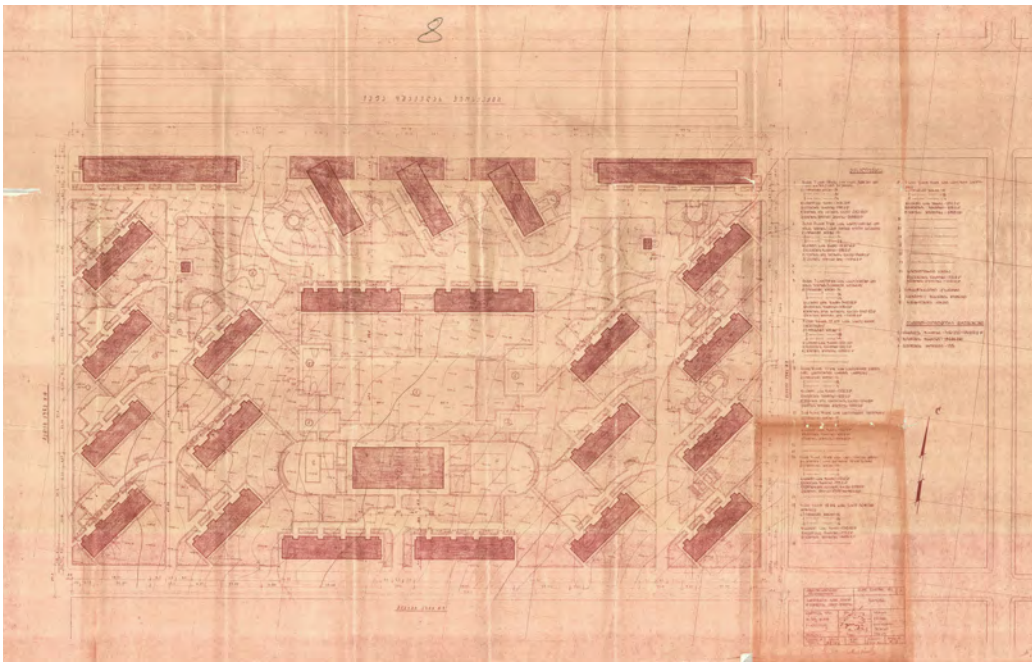

Figure 8: Master plan of Block VI. Designed in 1961 by Melkadze (chief architect), Sh. Kavlashvili, and T. Abashidze, drawn by Beklau
*Source: National Archives of Georgia, Tbilisi*

The block is bordered to the west and north by boulevards with lush greenery in the middle of the street. The boulevard along Vazha-Pshavela Avenue is wider than the one along Anjaparidze Street, reflecting the characteristics and hierarchical significance of the two streets. To the east of the block, school and kindergarten buildings were constructed alongside sports fields in a separate area bordered by Vazha-Pshavela Avenue and Shavishvili, Kavtaradze, and Topuria Streets. Another sports field complex was established in the center of the block, serving as a gathering and recreational area for the neighborhood over the years. The internal greenery and open spaces within the block are fragmented, likely due to the positioning of buildings, poorly planned pedestrian connections, and the architectural deficiencies of the residential buildings themselves. Archival photographs reveal that the open space to the south of the block, between the university high-rise and the neighborhood, served as

15, 2005, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Tbilisi – South Caucasus Region, accessed April 6, 2025, https://ge.boell.org/en/2005/01/16/programma-kompleksnoy-reabilitacii-zhilyh-domov-massovoy-zastroyki-pervogo-pokoleniya-na.

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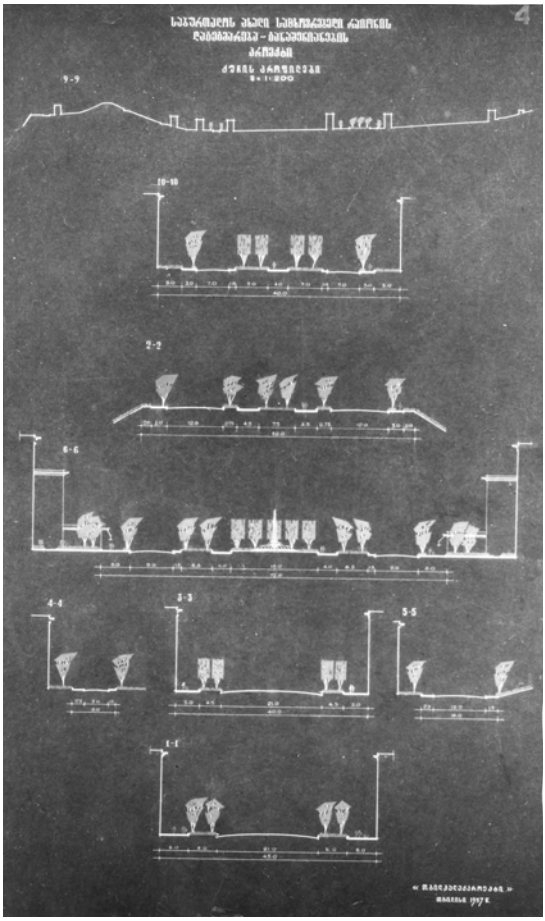


Figure 9: Street profiles, project for the planning and development of the Saburtalo residential district, 1957
*Source: Shota Kavlashvili's private archive, Tbilisi*

a natural peripheral zone. The initial plan had envisioned individual housing in this area, but this was never realized.

Our analysis of the available plans indicates that the layout of buildings and the functional characteristics of the block changed during its development. Initially, all buildings were planned to be aligned parallel to Vazha-Pshavela Avenue. However, by 1961, the development plan for the block showed some buildings arranged diagonally. In the implemented project, only four buildings remained parallel to the street, two of which line the avenue directly. The main internal cul-de-sac streets that run parallel to Anjaparidze and Shavishvili Streets (now Kavtaradze's Third and Fourth Alleys) were largely preserved. These axes provided vehicle access to the buildings located deep within the block. Notably, the 1961 plan envisioned shops on the ground floors of the buildings along Kavtaradze Street, in addition to those along Vazha-Pshavela

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Figure 10: Rendered elevation of an eight-story residential building on Vazha-Pshavela Avenue
*Source: Shota Kavlashvili's private archive, Tbilisi*

Avenue. A public facility was also planned for this area, but these ideas were not implemented. Along Kavtaradze Street, purely residential buildings were constructed. The 1957 plan also included a cinema on the plot adjacent to the avenue where the school and kindergarten were planned. This idea was also abandoned. Until the 1990s, a small square occupied this site. It appears that the internal open spaces within the block were not adequately developed either.

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Figure 11: Standard design of an eight-story, two-section, 48-unit residential building, with facade oriented to the yard. Designed by Sh. Kavlashvili (chief architect) and Chachanidze.
*Source: National Archives of Georgia, Tbilisi*

## Conclusion

The development of Vazha-Pshavela represents a significant continuation of Tbilisi's westward expansion. In parallel with the development of the Vake district it met the growing demand for housing in a rapidly expanding city. This fast-paced development came at a time of political transformation and economic adversity, resulting in rigid yet inspired planning principles. However, these ideals were not consistently adhered to in practice. The following chapter will show that a number of current problems are a direct result of these circumstances and can be seen in the challenges that Block VI faces today.

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Figure 12: Eight-story residential building in Saburtalo, 1950s/1960s
*Source: Shota Kavlashvili's private archive, Tbilisi*

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IA KUPATADZE

# 2.2 CURRENT SITUATION — CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

Due to mass construction in the 1950s and '60s, Soviet cities faced a new urban development challenge. So-called microdistricts became new units in town planning.[1] A microdistrict followed a perimeter-based, "free" linear planning system, essentially functioning as a satellite town.[2] It consisted of demarcated housing areas strictly separated by commercial, cultural, and recreational facilities within walking distance.[3] A three-level service system was in place, which meant that the services used daily, once a week, and periodically had to be located within specific distances.[4] According to the newly established requirements, planners were empowered to disperse buildings throughout the area,[5] allowing for greater diversity in the urban landscape while still adhering to standardized planning requirements.

The Soviet authorities established a planning system that worked effectively only under a specific political regime and for a limited time, without any consideration of future transformation processes. This top-down method resulted in a city structure without the ability to easily adapt or evolve. In Tbilisi, the conventional approach to microdistrict design and allocation disregards

1 Kazakova, Olga (2019). "Intangible Values of Mass Housing During the Soviet Era." In: Engel, B. (ed.), *Mass Housing in the Socialist City: Heritage, Values, and Perspectives.* Berlin: DOM Publishers, p. 154.

2 Asatiani, Nino (1992a). თბილისის არქიტექტურა 1970–1980-იანი წლები [Architecture of Tbilisi 1970–1980]. Ars Geogica (online magazine). George Chubinashvili National Research Centre for Georgian Art History and Heritage Preservation. Accessed November 2022. http://www.georgianart.ge/index.php/en/component/content/article/197.html?ed=17.

3 Crawford, Christina E. (2022). *Spatial Revolution: Architecture and Planning in the Early Soviet Union.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

4 Asatiani, Nino (1992a). თბილისის არქიტექტურა 1970–1980-იანი წლები [Architecture of Tbilisi 1970–1980]. Ars Geogica (online magazine). George Chubinashvili National Research Centre for Georgian Art History and Heritage Preservation. Accessed November 2022. http://www.georgianart.ge/index.php/en/component/content/article/197.html?ed=17.

5 Ibid.

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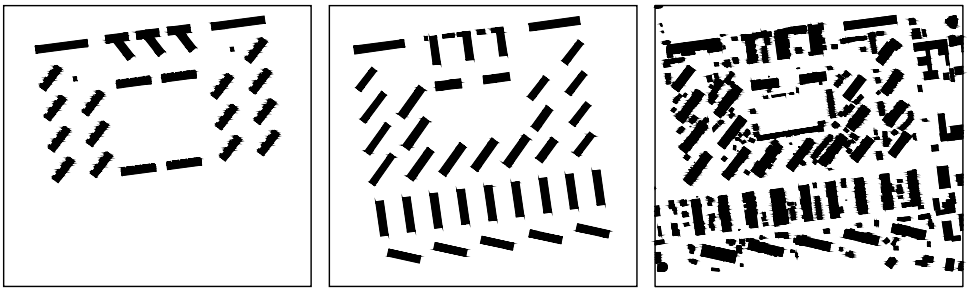

*Vasha-Pshavela, Block VI*
*A proposal Plan prepared in 1961*

*Vasha-Pshavela, Block V*
*A Plan View 1981*

*Vasha-Pshavela, Block VI*
*Current Situation 2025*

Figure 1: Vasha-Pshavela transformation diagram
*Source: Ia Kupatadze, based on the proposal project prepared by "Tbilkalakproeqti" in 1961 (material received from National Archives of Georgia, Tbilisi topographical map prepared in 1980s, and current situation (2025).*

the city's topography, morphology, culture, and traditions, resulting in a rigid and homogenized urban fabric.

Today, walking through Block VI, one can observe the outcomes of the Soviet system that was introduced. Even many years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, microdistricts remain isolated and fragmented, reflecting the complex and illogical organization of public and green spaces, mobility challenges within the microdistrict, and a lack of diverse functional areas. One will notice several critical factors that reflect the transformation processes acting on the urban fabric (see fig. 1). These factors include building extensions, uncontrolled parking, garages that are now abandoned or used for household storage rather than cars, and altered public and green spaces. These factors are transforming the district's appearance and how the population uses the space.

## Built Fabric—Apartment Building Extensions (ABEs)

The Soviet government introduced a legal framework for apartment building extensions (ABEs) in the late 1980s. – To increase the limited space in apartments, residents were permitted to expand their living spaces by adding to the front or back of the apartment buildings, thereby increasing the apartment sizes by 25 percent or more.[6] In 1989, the state passed a resolution permit-

6 Engel, Barbara (2024). "Vazha-Pshavela Block VI in Tbilisi, Georgia: Community-Driven Spatial Transformations." In: Engel, B. (ed.), E*choes of Soviet Urbanism: Exploring Modernist Housing Narratives*. Berlin: DOM Publishers, p.197. Bouzarovski, Stefan, Salukvadze, Joseph, and Gentile, Michael (2011). "A Socially Resilient Urban Transition? The

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Figures 2, 3: Apartment building extensions (ABEs) in Vazha-Pshavela Block VI. The photo illustrates how each family has constructed its own extension. The resulting differences point to an unregulated construction process, highlighting the lack of standardized guidelines.
*Source: Ia Kupatadze, 2025*

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Figure 4: ABEs adapted for commercial function
*Source: Ia Kupatadze, 2025*

ting the construction of apartment building extensions, establishing regulations for their dimensions and means of construction.[7] However, following the collapse of the public construction system due to privatization, this practice became unregulated.[8] The financial constraints at that time and, more signif-

Contested Landscapes of Apartment Building Extensions in Two Post-Communist Cities." Urban Studies 48, no. 13 (October), pp. 2689–2714.

7 Bouzarovski, Stefan, Salukvadze, Joseph, and Gentile, Michael (2011). "A Socially Resilient Urban Transition? The Contested Landscapes of Apartment Building Extensions in Two Post-Communist Cities." *Urban Studies* 48, no. 13 (October), pp. 2689–2714.

8 Salukvadze, Joseph, and Van Assche, Kristof (2022). "Multiple Transformations, Coordination and Public Goods: Tbilisi and the Search for Planning as a Collective Strategy." *European Planning Studies* 31, no. 4 (May), pp. 722-723. Accessed August 12, 2025. https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2022.2065878.

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icantly, the lack of regulations governing construction methods and materials led to the uncontrolled expansion of ABEs, resulting in chaotic and inconsistent development (see figs. 2, 3).

While all of these additions have a primary structural steel frame, the infill varies at each level. Some buildings are covered with small windows, others have enclosed spaces with balconies, and a few remain untouched, showcasing unfinished terraces. This variety creates an intriguing appearance—a unique facade that is often regarded as aesthetically unattractive and raises serious safety concerns. The study indicates that most dwellings in Block VI have been modified: 66 percent have top-floor additions, 16 percent have both top and side extensions, 8 percent have only side extensions, and just 10 percent remain unchanged and fully unmodified.[9]

The average apartment size in Block VI today is 38.41 square meters. Of the 2,005 dwellings in total, 491 are occupied by two people, 467 occupied by one person, and 448 occupied by three people. While most apartments are occupied by one, two, or three individuals, there are a few cases of four or more occupants. According to the National Statistics Office of Georgia, the average occupancy per apartment is 2.7 persons (based on statistics collected in 2014). Most residents are middle-aged (25–59 years old), followed by young adults (19–24 years old).[10]

Previously, green spaces at the back of buildings or public spaces in front of buildings were occupied by ABEs, resulting in a decrease in public and urban green space and altering its function. ABEs are primarily used for residential purposes, though in some cases, ground-floor extensions have been adapted for commercial use, such as offices, salons, or shops (see fig. 4). New walkways or paths leading to the new ABEs have been created. Furthermore, these extensions have reduced courtyard and green spaces, shifted the balance of public areas, and limited residents' access to recreational areas. Today, the existing footprint of these extensions covers large areas that were previously green or public spaces. Thus, the widespread addition of these structures has significantly impacted the urban landscape, affecting building proportions, safety, appearance, air quality, and exposure to natural light. The public and green spaces surrounding the buildings have also been greatly affected.

9 The study was conducted by master's level students at Ilia State University during the Fall 2024 semester.

10 Based on a demographic survey from March 2014.

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Figure 5: Garages constructed after the 1990s were built to protect cars from theft. Today, however, they are mostly empty or abandoned spaces
*Source: Ia Kupatadze, 2025*

Figure 6: Residents use green spaces for parking purposes
*Source: Ia Kupatadze, 2025*

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Figures 7, 8: Garages have been repurposed as storage spaces and are located within public green spaces
*Source: Ia Kupatadze, 2025*

## Open Spaces

The original design of Vazha-Pshavela's Block VI included green and open spaces to enhance the sense of spaciousness. However, over time, urban needs and unplanned modifications have impacted these areas, transforming the neighborhood's overall layout. Today, the district's green and public spaces exist in various forms, reflecting a combination of planned and bottom-up design development.

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Figure 9: An existing garage has been transformed into a small market where people can buy fruits, vegetables, and freshly baked Georgian bread. It is also a place where neighbors interact because most residents shop here.
*Source: Gvantsa Tkemaladze, 2025*

## Unregulated Parking and Garages

Unregulated parking and garages have significantly altered the urban landscape of the districts, particularly impacting the transformation of Block VI's public and green spaces (see figs. 5, 6). During Soviet times, the authorities did not anticipate a large number of car owners. Thus, parking areas were not included in the master plan, and the idea was to build a communal garage next to each microdistrict was never realized. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the unstable political situation and increased private car ownership made it necessary to protect cars from theft. Consequently, vehicle owners began constructing makeshift structures, such as single-story, fully enclosed sheds or roofed, cage-type constructions.

The garages were mainly located in front of the residential buildings so car owners could more easily see their vehicles. Since the front areas were initially designated for public gatherings, children's playgrounds, or green spaces, the construction of garages reduced the space available for these purposes. It also created more unsafe and uncomfortable places in neighborhoods. This especially affected children, as it is now nearly impossible to use the space to play ball, hide-and-seek, or engage in other activities.

Although the need for security is less pressing today, garages still exist and cover 1.8 Hectares of the total area. Some garages are privately owned and have a designated cadastre number (12%), while most are unregistered garages. These are either built on Home Owners' Association–registered land and have a designated cadastre code under the HOA registry as well as an in-

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dividual number (73.6%), or they are built on municipal land (1%).[11] However, their function has mostly changed. In inner courtyards, garages have become storage facilities or vacant boxes (see figs. 7, 8). Near the main avenue, their original purpose has partly shifted. Now, they are used as workshops, pantries, or commercial spaces for selling fruits, vegetables, secondhand clothes, car equipment, and so on.

In some cases, they even serve as places where bread is baked, among other commercial uses (see fig. 9). It is also important to note that some garages

Figure 10: A newly developed park by the district administration
*Source: Ia Kupatadze, 2025*

erected in green spaces—mainly those more akin to cage-type structures—have since been abandoned. Although vegetation has grown in these areas, the lack of proper maintenance has rendered them dirty and unsanitary.

In some instances, neighborhoods have restricted access to inner courtyard spaces exclusively to their residents. To achieve this, parking barriers have been installed to create regulated parking areas. However, this also means these spaces are often converted entirely into parking lots.[12] This occupies

11 The study was conducted by master's level students at Ilia State University during the Fall 2024 semester.

12 Gogishvili, David (2021). "Competing for Space in Tbilisi: Transforming Residential Courtyards to Parking in an Increasingly Car-Dependent City." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 65, no. 3 (October), pp. 371–397. Accessed August 12, 2025. https://doi.org/10.1080/15387216.2021.1993292

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both the public space where the garage is positioned and the space in front of the garage. Consequently, public space is reduced twice.

## Types of Green Spaces

The study of the territory reveals the existence of several types of green and public spaces. These include: (1) formal green areas developed and maintained by the district administration; (2) informal green spaces (both open and fenced) created and maintained by residents; (3) small green zones in front of the five-story buildings; (4) urban vegetable gardens located near wild green areas on the district's southern edge; and (5) sports fields that were originally public but are now rented to a private club. Each of these spaces has become integral to the district's character, evolving primarily through a bottom-up approach by its residents over many years.

The new public park, constructed by the Tbilisi City Hall and the Vake District Government from October 2023 to 2024, is active for most of the day (see fig. 10). During the day, children and the elderly enjoy the space, and later, teenagers come and participate in various activities. *"This is a place where every resident enjoys spending time. It is well-equipped with seating and is a place for kids to play. The only downside is the noise at night when teenagers or people from outside the neighborhood hang out,"* says the resident and head of the HOA of one of the buildings.[13]

A large boulevard median along the main avenue at the northern edge of the microdistrict covers, accounting for 8 percent of the territory. It currently serves as a recreational area for nearby residents. However, people must cross the main avenue to reach the median, which can be difficult and dangerous, particularly for the elderly and young children.

A large, public green space, which was initially designed for local residents to enjoy various sports activities, is now leased to a private soccer club (see fig. 11). Adjacent to the large stadium are a small soccer field and a basketball area. However, these small enclaves seem insufficient for a densely populated neighborhood.[14] The soccer stadium disturbs residents during games. *"On game days, people come to watch their kids play. They park their cars in our neighborhood, which causes us discomfort, not to mention the increased noise and air pollution,"* said one resident in an interview conducted in the summer of 2024.

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13 Round table discussion conducted by the Living Lab group on June 28, 2024.

14 Based on an interview with old residents, conducted by the Living Lab group on Feb. 22, 2024; on historical archive material, see chapter 2.1.

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Urban gardens are situated along the southern edge of the microdistrict (see fig. 12). These spaces have been informally appropriated by local residents, who enclosed individual plots and initiated small-scale vegetable gardens. At present, the gardens function as privately maintained yet unofficially owned spaces allocated to individual households. Although public access to the plots is restricted, visitors may still walk the adjacent areas of spontaneous vegetation, walk their dogs, and experience the natural environment. Considering the high density of the surrounding built fabric, these residual green areas constitute a valuable ecological and social resource for the neighborhood.

Figure 11: A large stadium owned by a private soccer club
*Source: Ia Kupatadze, 2025*

Figure 12: Urban gardens created and maintained by residents
*Source: Ia Kupatadze, 2025*

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After the collapse of the Soviet Union and subsequent privatization, the municipality was unable to adequately maintain the neighborhood's public and green spaces. Consequently, either individual residents maintained these areas themselves, or they were neglected and occupied by squatters. Some HOA heads maintained the area around their building themselves (see fig. 13). Over time, some of the squatted parcels have been neglected, resulting in unstructured, dirty spaces (see fig. 14). Other spaces have been well-maintained or have been replaced by small extensions/additions and entrance areas for the ground-floor apartments. Although these areas have been poorly maintained, the property is protected from new construction or interventions.

Today, residents actively use about half of the total recreational space, which amounts to 11.28 hectares. Meanwhile, 14 percent of the microdistric'st territory 3.25 hectares consists of unused green space that is currently occupied by uncontrolled parking and garages, presenting opportunities for future development.[15]

## Mobility

Vazha-Pshavela Block VI can be characterized as having relatively good accessibility at both the citywide and neighborhood levels. The microdistrict is bordered to the north by Vazha-Pshavela Avenue and to the west by Sandro Euli Street. In both cases two way streets are divided with the greenery in the middle forming a boulevard. To the east is Mikheil Shavishvili Street, a secondary road. Vagharshak Mamasakhlisovi Street and Petre Kavtaradze Street are also important thoroughfares. The three main streets - Vazha-Pshavela Ave., Sandro Euli St.,and P.Kavtaradze street are well-equipped with a transportation system, and each has several designated bus stops. A metro station at the intersection of Vaja-Pshavela Avenue and Sandro Euli Street further enhances the microdistrict's accessibility. This arrangement allows residents to reach public transportation within a 15-minute walk and facilitates easy connections to the city center and other destinations.

Although the area is well-connected by public transportation, the microdistrict's inner structure lacks well-defined and developed pedestrian and cycling infrastructure. The absence of clear distinctions between pedestrian and vehicular spaces compromises safety and inconveniences residents. Due to the uncontrolled construction of garages, some areas have become blocked off as dead ends. This creates a feeling of insecurity and makes navigating the area difficult.

15 The study was conducted by master's level students at Ilia State University during the fall semester 2024.

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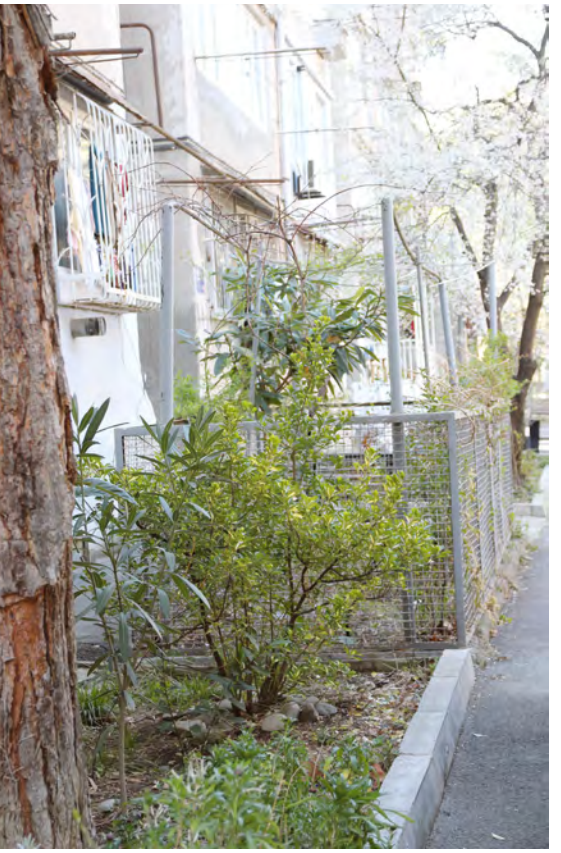

Figure 13: A small green space maintained by a ground-floor resident
*Source: Ia Kupatadze, 2025*

Figure 14: Unstructured, abandoned, fenced-in green spaces
*Source: Ia Kupatadze, 2025*

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## Future Perspectives

The urban transformation of Vazha-Pshavela Block VI reflects broader post-Soviet challenges. Unregulated modifications, increased reliance on cars and the privatization of public spaces have transformed the territory's urban fabric, significantly affecting the neighborhood's livability, safety, and environmental quality.

Preserving and restoring green and public spaces is crucial to improving the microdistrict's quality of life. For example, abandoned or unused garages could be demolished, transforming the area into a public or recreational space. Neglected areas can be converted into pocket parks that provide residents with safer, more accessible, and more functional outdoor spaces. Improving the pedestrian and cycling infrastructure could also enhance accessibility within the microdistrict.

It is also essential to safeguard the adjacent open green space. This area can be viewed as a green belt surrounding the neighborhood, fostering a peaceful, quiet, and secure environment. This space currently serves as a walking area, a recreational space, and urban gardens. The property has repeatedly been proposed as a site for high-rise construction, but the efforts of residents and activists have delayed the plans. Meanwhile, the municipality has acquired the land, but no construction is taking place. However, the area still faces risks.

Improving and regulating the parking system could free up street-level spaces for community use, pedestrian-friendly zones, and recreational areas. Introducing new regulations and strict guidelines for future modifications would ensure controlled urban transformation processes, address mobility issues, enhance safety, promote environmental sustainability, and improve aesthetic quality.

Restoring the neighborhood's urban fabric would be aided by simplifying the existing incentive program that already encourages homeowners to replace unused outdoor structures (such as garages) with community-centered infrastructure. The program currently exists, but the process is unclear. Therefore, the municipality and district must devise a straightforward solution. With a clear process in place, more residents will be eager to relinquish their garage spaces in favor of shared green and recreational areas.

Land resources in the city's central districts have decreased significantly, and in some areas, they are nearly depleted. Meanwhile, urban densification is occurring in an unplanned and chaotic manner. With limited space in the city center, developers are constantly seeking new opportunities. Vazha-Pshavela Block VI could soon become their next target. Currently, the neighborhood consists of eight-story residential buildings along the main street and five-story buildings surrounded by green spaces. This creates a quiet, self-contained community with its own character. However, this tranquility is at risk of being

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replaced by dense, unregulated development. According to municipal authorities, most of the residential buildings in the area are structurally sound and do not require urgent replacement. However, only 9 out of 38 buildings have been inspected so far. One was classified as having Category II damage (some structural damage but still safe for living), while another had Category I damage.[16] Nevertheless, there is a growing risk that the area will experience piecemeal densification, with existing five-story buildings being replaced by ten- to twelve-story structures. A similar situation has already occurred in Varketili's 3rd district (see fig. 15), which was developed in the 1956 according to plans

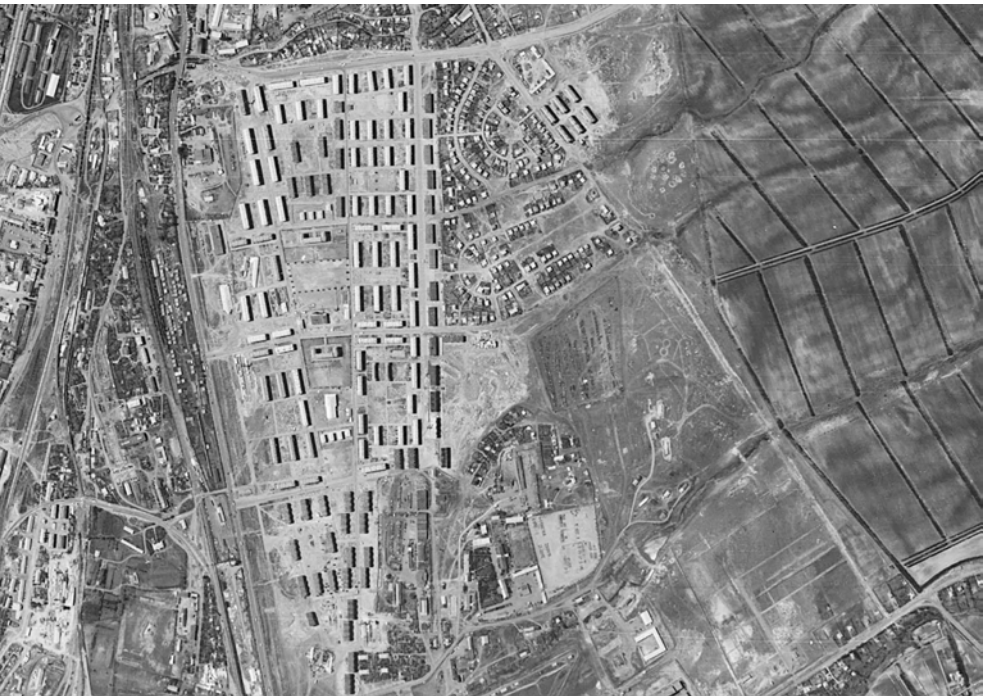

Figure 15: Varketili 3rd District, as seen in one of the first satellite images of Tbilisi, taken by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency in 1965
*Source: Kvamli (2021), https://kvamli.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/e1839be18394e183a1e18390e1839be18394e1839be18390e183a1e18398e18395e18398.jpg, 05.12.2025*

16 Based on a survey conducted by the District Government and corroborated by the official letter from Tbilisi City Hall, Vake District Government, Letter #30-01240182226, January 18, 2024.

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by architects M. Japaridze and N. Mikadze[17] and has a similar density and arrangement. Deteriorating buildings were replaced without a comprehensive urban development plan, resulting in uncoordinated growth.

To ensure that Vazha-Pshavela Block VI develops in a sustainable and livable way, future changes must be guided by a cohesive urban vision and a detailed regulatory plan that prioritizes proper planning over chaotic expansion. Future microdistrict transformation processes should be carried out in collaboration with residents, policymakers, and urban planners. The community must initiate participatory urban planning initiatives in which residents can co-design spaces. The bottom-up approach will strengthen and enhance the community's role in urban space transformation. This will, in turn, support maintenance and development processes. The microdistrict has wonderful potential to become a rich, well-connected, and sustainable urban place that improves its residents' quality of life.

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**Streets and Parking**

- Main streets
- Collector streets
- Local streets
- Pedestrian and bike paths
- Parking lots
- Wild illegal parking

**Yards and Entrance Areas**

- Yards associated with a building
- Yards between buildings and streets
- Dwelling entrance areas
- Store entrance areas
- Private and allotment gardens

**Public Spaces, Sports and Play Facilities**

- Neighborhood parks
- Landscape parks
- Communal gardens
- Urban agriculture / brownfields
- Sports fields
- Playgrounds

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NANO ZAZANASHVILI

# 3. TYPOLOGIES AND TRANSFORMATIONS

Figure 1: Site plan with types of open spaces in Vazha-Pshavela Block VI

0 50 100m

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# INTRODUCTION

Open spaces provide additional living space. In general, although there are many open spaces in the neighborhood, they do not always meet the different demands of various target groups. While it is important to ensure sufficient green spaces for adequate water retention and reduce sealed surfaces, not all areas need to remain unbuilt or publicly accessible. Due to the lack of complementary functions for housing, the need for new housing typologies that promote social diversity, and the general housing shortage, questions arise about where and to what extent densification can occur.

Large housing estates from the 1960s to the 1980s offer ample open spaces with great potential for sustainable and resilient transformation. Planned and realized according to a systematic concept that clearly defined hierarchies and functions, today they lack qualities important for contemporary living spaces. At the same time, they offer possibilities for adaptation to current and future needs, as well as to the requirements of sustainability and resilience, such as climate adaption and mitigation, social interaction, and much more. This chapter presents scenarios that demonstrate the potential for transforming these open spaces, with a view to enhancing the overall benefits to the quarter.

The buildings within the block are positioned at a 45-degree angle relative to its perimeter. Only at the northern edge, facing Vazha-Pshavela Avenue, are the buildings oriented parallel or perpendicular to the street. The average distance between the buildings is about 25 meters, with an overlap of about 40 percent over their length.

Three predominant types characterize the neighborhood. The first group encompasses all sites pertaining to transportation, thoroughfares, and designated parking areas. The second group—yards, entrance areas, and private gardens—comprises the more intimate green open spaces, while the third group—parks, sports and play facilities, and communal spaces—embraces all open spaces used publicly and by the residents. The identified types are not merely characteristic of this particular neighborhood, but also exist in a similar manner throughout the majority of large housing estates. Each type is presented in its current form and described in terms of its specific characteristics, revealing its qualities as well as its deficits and problems.

Furthermore, this chapter presents several proposals for future transformation of selected areas—for sites in Vazha-Pshavela in particular and for large housing estates in general. All transformations aim to enhance the open spaces and focus on sustainable and resilient development of the neighborhood. In order to enhance the quality of the living environment, car traffic should be re-

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duced, functions should be added and diversified, and spatial qualities should be strengthened.

One of the most significant challenges encountered in the context of open spaces in large housing estates pertains to the uncontrolled influx of parked vehicles. The further development of the open spaces aims to enhance accessibility and inclusivity for all user groups, with a particular focus on marginalized and vulnerable individuals. The unorganized, spontaneous, and illicit appropriation and privatization of open spaces shows potential for additional use and different designs, but this can also lead to friction among residents. A holistic approach that respects privacy and offers spaces for the community could benefit all residents. Besides improving the living quality of the residents, the possible transformations would improve water mitigation and adaptation by unsealing surfaces where possible and using the potential inherent in the existing green spaces.

The following proposals address this issue by securing valuable open spaces and testing densification with new uses to achieve diversity and variance. For each scenario, one representative site was selected for each of the different subtypes and presented in plan and axonometric views. While the level of detail exhibited in the drawings of all sites is comparable, the scale at which they are presented varies depending on the size of the site. It is important to note that some of the open spaces are unique in their expression and dimensions, making them too specific to be included in this typology. Consequently, they are not included in this publication. Nevertheless, it is evident that some of the selected types are unique to the site and may not be found in many other large housing estates. The transformations presented should not be understood as specific design proposals, but rather as generalized scenarios for further development that offer rich possibilities for the neighborhood's sustainable future.

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# 3.1 STREETS AND PARKING

This typology contains all open spaces dedicated to mobility. It includes spaces for all modes of transportation, yet the focus lays on motorized traffic. There are five distinct subtypes in the neighborhood: main streets, collector streets, local streets, organized parking, and pedestrian and bike paths.

The first subtype, the surrounding main streets, connect the whole district to other districts and include spaces for public transportation along with broad sidewalks and parallel parking. Since the microdistricts of large housing estates were typically designed to be free of through traffic, only smaller streets of the second and third subtypes can be found within the Block VI. These were designed either as cul-de-sacs or ring streets. This strict hierarchical organization of streets ensured the separation of through traffic and destination traffic. The second subtype, the collector streets, connect to the surrounding main streets. These streets, which organize the traffic between main streets and local streets, have no designated parking or sidewalks. The third subtype, the local streets, provide access only to the different building blocks, shops, and garages within the neighborhood and are entirely free of through traffic. The fourth subtype consists of organized parking. Although the original layout included only very few such areas, they can now be found throughout Block VI. These areas are often located close to the building blocks and are usually accessed through the collector streets or are a direct part of the local streets.

The last subtype, the pedestrian and bike paths, received little initial consideration. While the original plans had a limited number of paths, today there is a tight network of more or less formalized paths that create shortcuts throughout the neighborhood and connect streets with shops and open spaces.

The increase in individual mobility has led to a surge in unauthorized parking within the district today. The extent of illegal garages, in particular, puts a great strain on the open spaces and now dominates the neighborhood. This affects all open spaces but is especially dominant in those spaces that are neither privately owned nor publicly maintained. Besides occupying a lot of space, illegally parked cars and illicitly built garages have also given the neighborhood a very chaotic appearance. Pedestrians share the internal local streets with all other modes of transportation. This was not a problem at the time of construction because there were very few private cars when the district was built. Today, however, the streets within the quarter are overwhelmed by the increased traffic.

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Figure 1: Streets and parking areas in Block VI

At the same time, due to the neighborhood's size and functions, only a few streets are actually needed within the block. Nevertheless, the current street network within the block is inefficient and redundant. Therefore, the chaotic street layout and unregulated parking throughout the district, as well as the privately erected barriers, are in urgent need of reform.

The enormous amount of paved space, among other factors, hinders any approach to sustainable district development and puts a strain on the effective water management of a self-regulating city. This increases the risk of flooding

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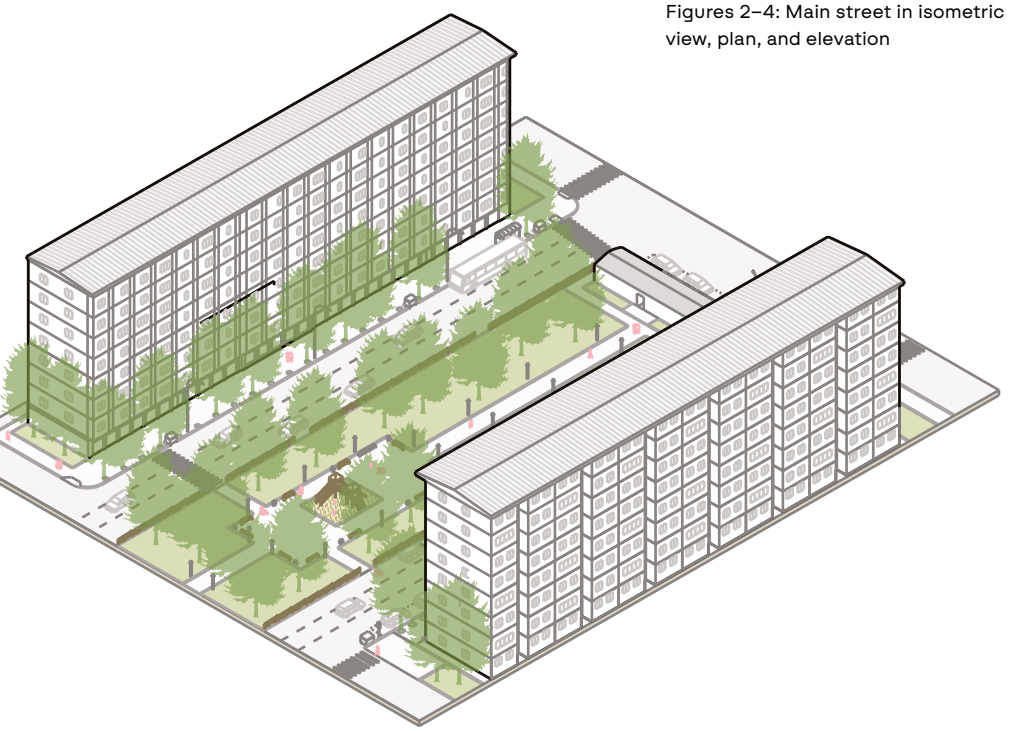
during the wet season and droughts during the dry season. It also increases the likelihood of heat islands and worsens air quality due to higher levels of dust compared to green areas.

From purely mobility point of view, the network also needs attention. The collector streets are too narrow for today's demands and must be freed of some traffic, as they can be dangerous for pedestrians, in particular for children, the elderly, and other vulnerable groups.

### 3.1.1 Main Streets

In the context of Block VI, the main streets—namely Vazha-Pshavela Avenue, Mikheli Shavishvili Street, Petre Kavdaradze Street, and Vagan Mamasakhlisovi Street—connect the neighborhood to the rest of the Sarbutalo district and other parts of the city. These streets have multiple lanes for cars traveling in each direction and are sometimes designed as boulevards. Where the buildings are parallel to the main streets, public and commercial functions can



Figures 2–4: Main street in isometric view, plan, and elevation

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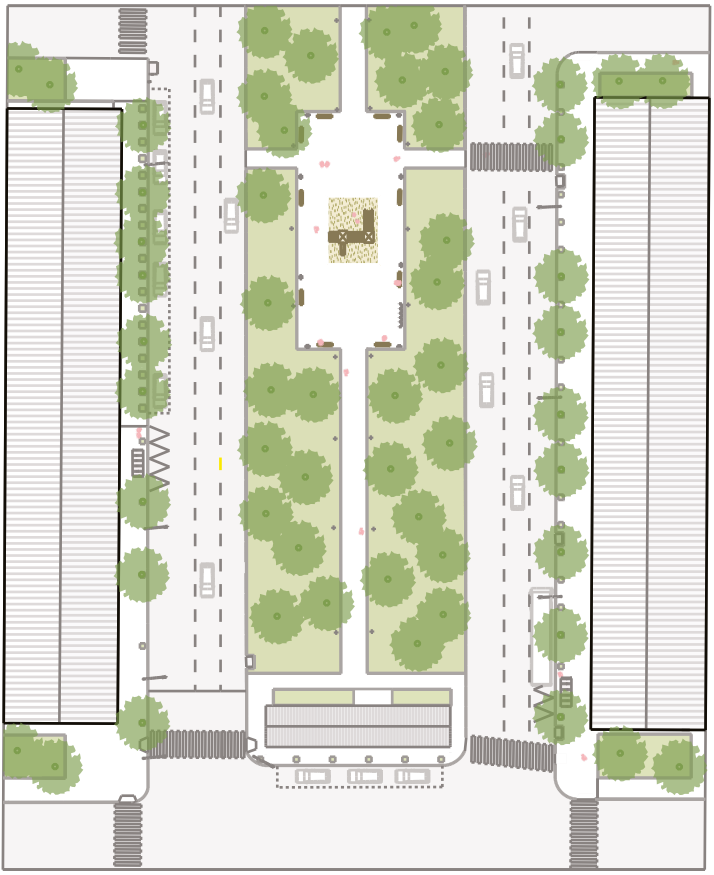

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Figure 5: Vazha-Pshavela Avenue, looking west, with central sidewalk
Figure 6: Vazha-Pshavela Avenue with pedestrian crossing

Figure 7: Vazha-Pshavela Avenue, looking west, with one-way traffic
Figure 8: Vazha-Pshavela Avenue, looking west, with fenced-in central green area
*Source: Ia Kupatadze, 2025*

be found on the ground floor. The sidewalks along the avenue are wide and spacious, with enough room for retail, social interactions, and mobility, whereas the sidewalks alongside all other main streets are barely wide enough for pedestrians. Currently, buses use the same lanes as the cars. Therefore, buses travel in the same direction as the car traffic, and the bus stops are on the right-hand side.

There are distinct areas for parking between the road and the sidewalk on one or both side of the street. On-street parking is almost exclusively parallel and usually occurs on only one side of the street in the direction of travel. The regulated on-street parking areas are usually officially marked at the edge of the main roads and have a width of approximately 2.50 meters. These areas are publicly accessible and are either equipped with parking meters or assigned to certain user groups, such as residents with valid long-term parking permits. In

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either case, the duration and frequency of use are often controlled. Most main streets in the neighborhood do not have dedicated bike lanes. Crosswalks allow pedestrians to cross the street independently of traffic-light controlled intersections. However, crosswalks are infrequent, and consequently pedestrians do not casually cross the boulevard or wander along the park-like center, even though its spatial quality would invite leisurely strolls.

## Possible Transformations

Many of the spaces on the main street could be reclaimed for other uses and activities, thus supporting sustainable transformation of the neighborhood. Some lanes must remain open for cars and additional paths for pedestrians and cyclists should be added. Additionally, streets and parking areas should be simplified and rearranged.

An intelligent parking system coupled with on-street parking alongside the main and collector streets could reduce the parking pressure on the yards. Beyond changing the use and users of many streets, planting additional trees, bushes, and hedges would further enhance the streetscape. In all transformation proposals, spaces for temporary parking will remain available for customers of businesses alongside the buildings.

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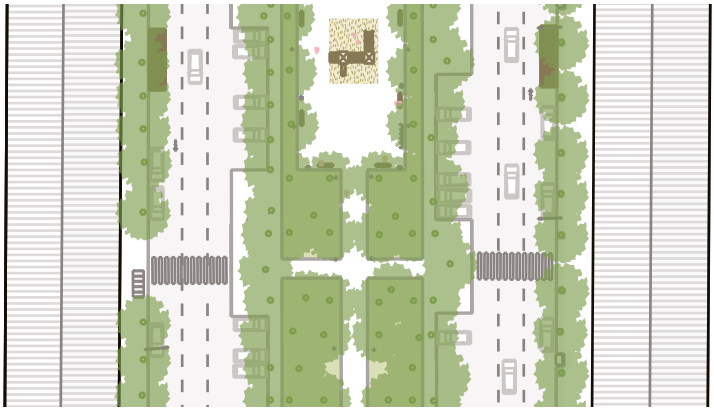
## Main Street with Additional Parking

Using additional parking spaces in the surrounding boulevards could free up the yards from uncontrolled "wild" parking. To maximize the space provided, parking could be located on both sides of the traffic lane and center parking could be arranged as parking pockets.

While this transformation aims to provide as much parking as possible at the perimeter of the neighborhood, the main street should simultaneously be improved by planting trees alongside the street and between the parking spaces. Additional crosswalks should be created to provide easy and safe access to the central parking spaces. This solution would enlarge the transportation space while maintaining a green setting and ensuring that the central area remains comfortable for pedestrians.



Figures 9–11: Transformation of main street with additional parking

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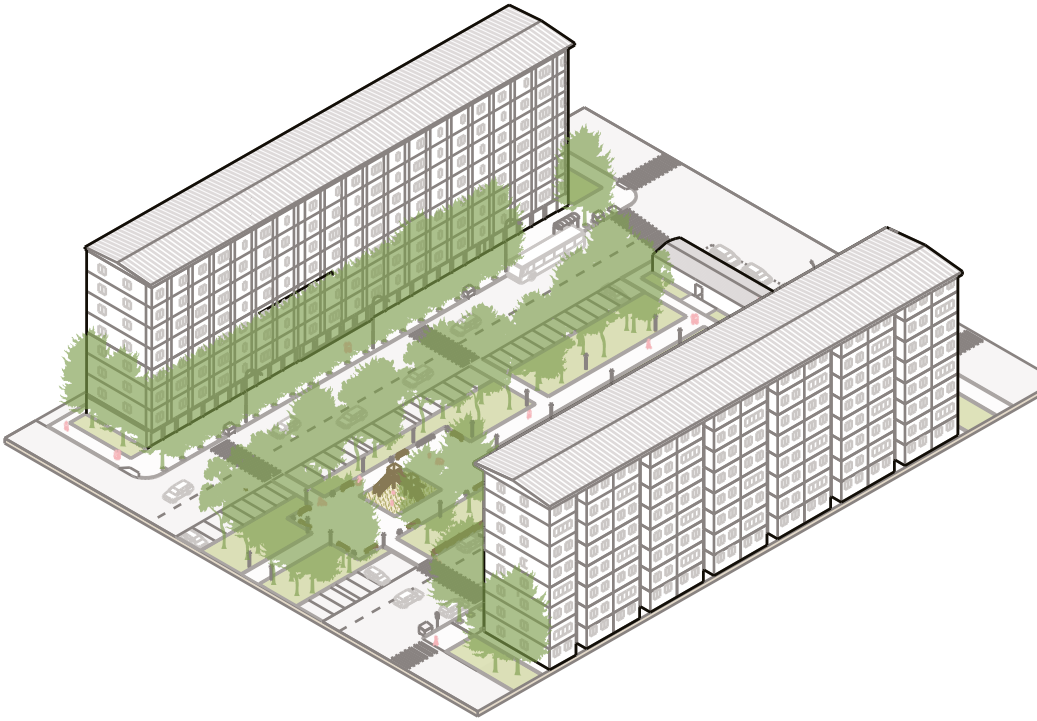

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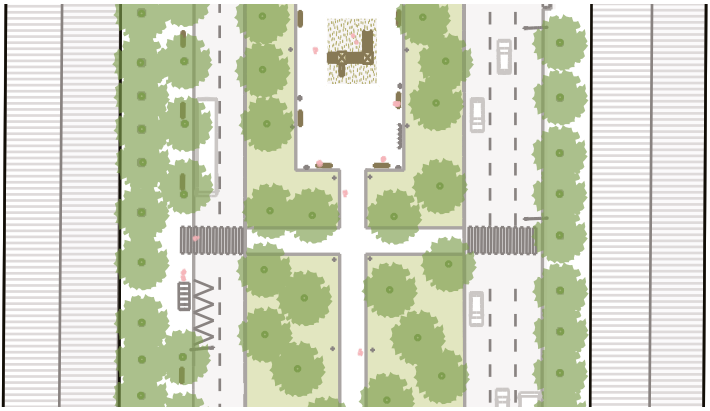
## Main Street with Enlarged Pedestrian Areas

This transformation focuses on the adjacent businesses, optimizing the streetscape and providing more space in front of the businesses to make both shopping and strolling more enjoyable. Additional seating for cafés and restaurants on the widened sidewalk and even in the center of the boulevard can provide additional space for businesses and encourage people to linger. Parking for motorized vehicles will also be available here. On the far side of the park, two lanes for private vehicles and a bus lane will provide the minimal but sufficient space for neighborhood accessibility. On the other side of the boulevard, only public transportation and bicycles are allowed, thus ensuring a tight connection between the central green space and the shopping area. This transformation is quite extreme and could only work alongside neighborhood-level measures and an improved public transportation network.



Figures 12, 13: Transformation of main streets with enlarged pedestrian areas

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## Main Street as Green Corridor

Through traffic with private cars will be banned entirely from the boulevard. The sidewalk will be widened, followed by public transportation, a car lane for residents, and bike lanes. Multiple crosswalks will connect the central park tightly with the sidewalk, which should be equipped with bushes and flowerpots along the buildings.

Figures 14, 15: Transformation of main street as green corridor

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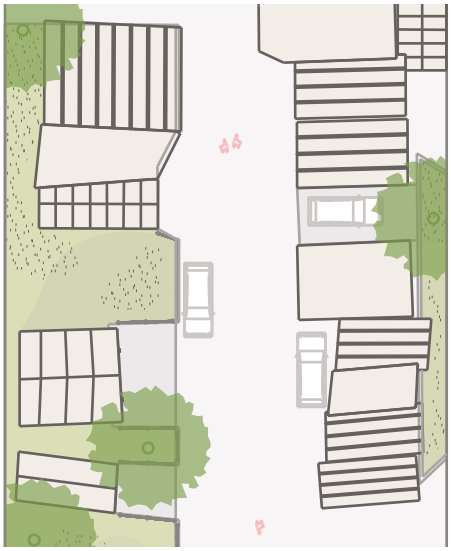
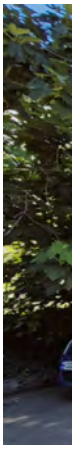
## 3.1.2 Collector Streets

Collector streets lead through the micro district; they do not necessarily connect the surrounding main streets directly but often form a loop within the block. These streets are not linear but have multiple curves to minimize traffic through the interior of the block. At the moment these streets are open and accessible for all users and modes of transportation, currently there is no public transportation within the block. Residential collector streets usually have two lanes, one in each direction of travel, they connect the block to the peripheral main streets and distribute the traffic within the block. As with all streets within the block, the residential collector streets lack parallel sidewalks or bike lanes and offer on-street parking.



Figures 16–18: Collector street in plan, elevation, and isometric view



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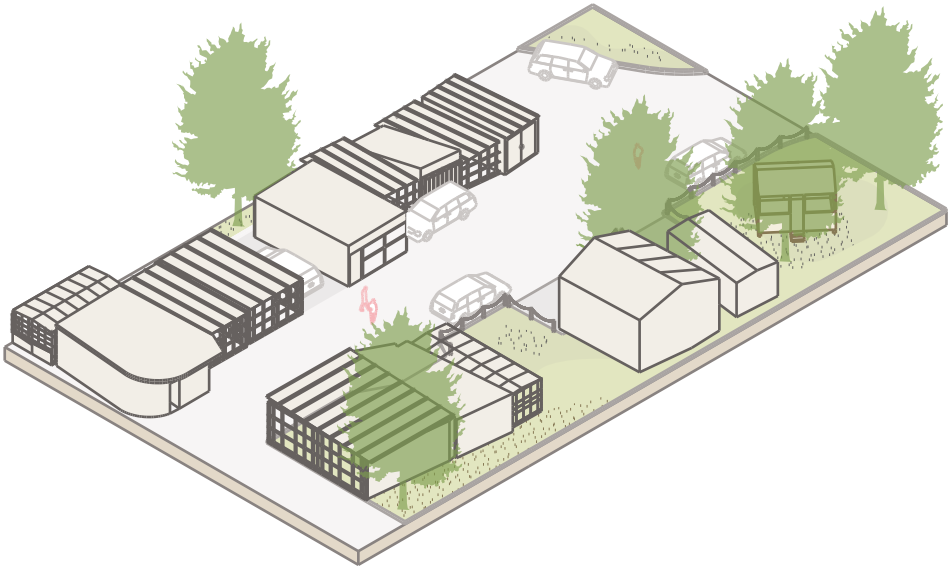

Figure 19: Collector street between building 2 (98) on Vazha-Pshavela Ave. and building 6 (15) on P. Kavtaradze 3rd turn
*Source: Ekaterina Gladkova, 2024*

Figure 20: Collector street between building 2 (98) and 1b on Vazha-Pshavela Avenue
*Source: Ekaterina Gladkova, 2024*

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Figure 21: Collector street, P. Kavtaradze 4th turn, near buildings 4 (20) and 6
*Source: Ekaterina Gladkova, 2024*

Figure 22: Collector street, P. Kavtaradze 3rd turn, near building 5
*Source: Nano Zazanashvil, 2024*

Along the collector streets, there are parking areas that are usually unregulated. Although the streets are owned and maintained by the municipality, on-street parking within Block VI is free of charge. Therefore, neither the duration nor the positioning of parking is controlled. Cars usually park in the direction of travel on the right-hand side of the road.

The current street layout poses challenges for non-motorized traffic. While the streets are wide enough for cars to pass by easily, the lack of sidewalks often pushes pedestrians to the center of the street. This situation is inadequate for a residential area because it makes the pedestrians more vulnerable due to the lack of sufficient space reserved for them, such as a sidewalk adjacent to the road.

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## Possible Transformations

Transforming the collector streets could significantly calm the neighborhood and potentially free it from cars altogether. Pedestrians would benefit significantly. The other open spaces would also improve with less traffic and better-organized street sections. Even the car traffic could improve from less bidirectional traffic and fewer turns. On-street parking within the neighborhood should be reserved for local residents, and introducing payment schemes could make it less attractive for non-local users and free up space for the residents. Since corners and crossings can be hazardous for non-motorized traffic, clear markings could help to avoid unsafe zones for pedestrians. Playing children who are obscured by parked vehicles are at high risk of getting into an accident in such situations. At the same time, the possibility of eliminating all on-street parking could be discussed. Such a measure could benefit pedestrians, cyclists, and even other users and functions. These areas are well connected to both the street network and public services such as water and electricity, making them especially interesting for micro businesses. Allocating this space for other modes of transportation would also support the idea of the superblock. Strengthening the pedestrian network could help to reduce short car trips and make walking in the neighborhood safer and more convenient.

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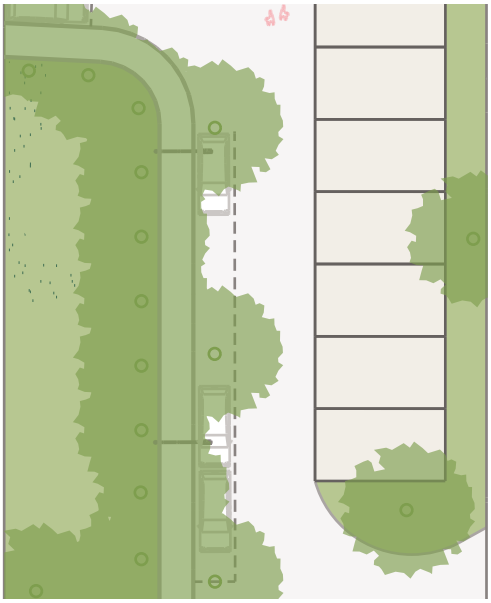
## Multimodal Street

In this transformation, the streets remain open for all modes of transportation, but the different transportation spaces, such as parking areas, motorized traffic lanes, and pedestrian walkways, will be separated in assigned areas. Restructuring the street's cross section by adding sidewalks and trees will guarantee a safe environment for pedestrians. Marking areas for parking on alternating sides slows down the traffic and allows pedestrians to walk more safely through the neighborhood, minimizing the need for crosswalks. Some garages will be restructured and assigned to nearby residents, while other



Figures 23–25: Transformation of a collector street into a multimodal space, as seen in plan, elevation, and isometric view

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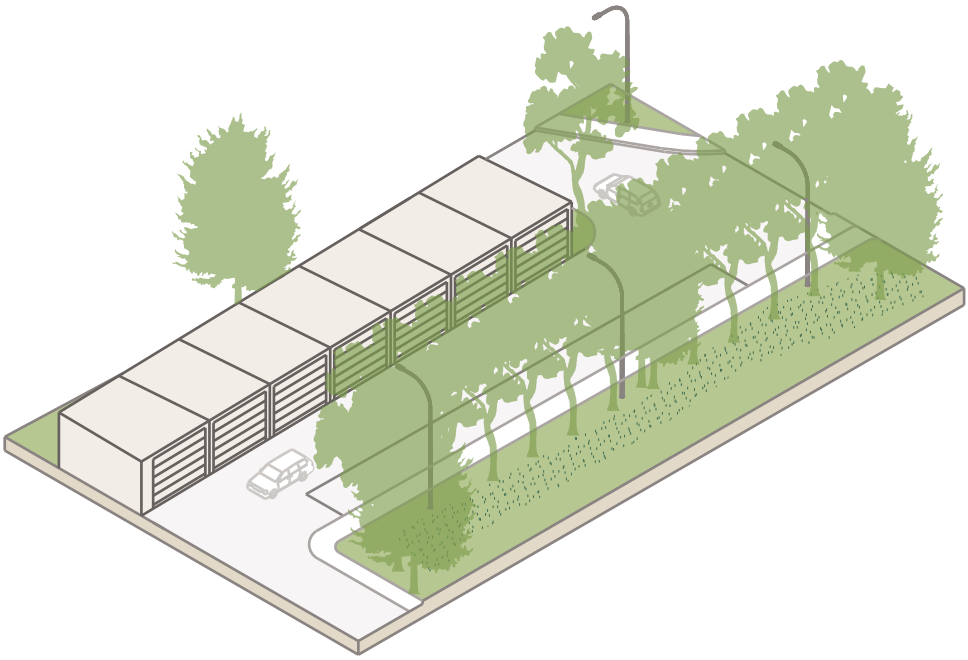
garages should be removed to ensure sufficient open spaces for play and wildlife. This will further clarify the street spaces and allow for sufficient parking throughout the neighborhood. Additional trees along the street provide shade for pedestrians.



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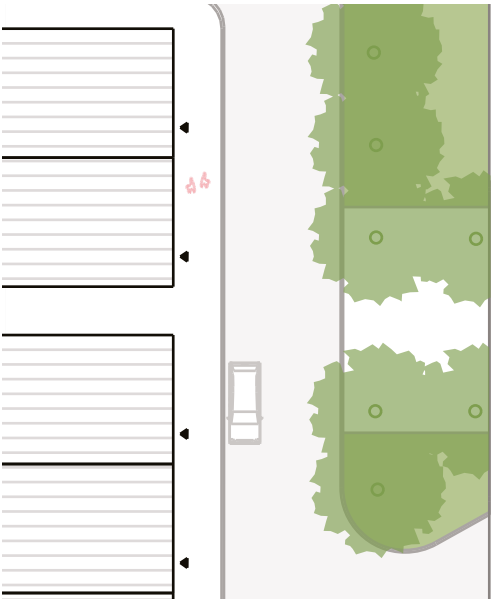
## Neighborhood Street

The street will be reorganized with a new profile featuring a shared section for cars and cyclists, as well as sidewalks on both sides. The introduction of mainly one-way traffic and modal filters will redirect the motorized traffic and reduce through traffic even further, which will generally lead to a calming of the neighborhood. Adding tree islands will slow the traffic. Narrowing the lane width will reduce the speed of cars further. The garages will be removed, and the space gained will be used to build row houses, which will attract new residents to the neighborhood. This different typology is ideal for families and will foster social cohesion within the block.



Figures 26, 27: Transformation of a collector street into a neighborhood street, in plan and elevation

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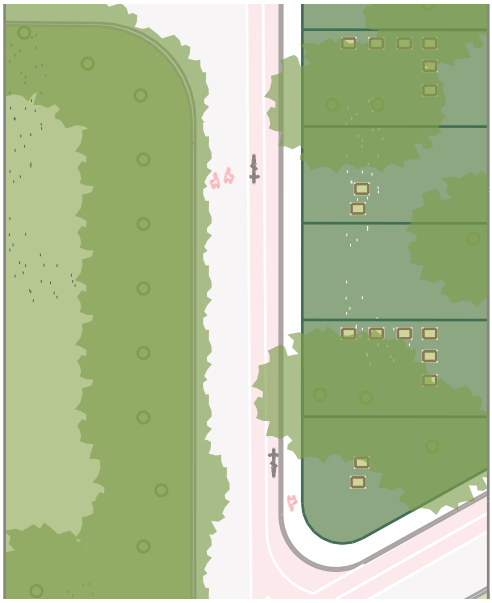
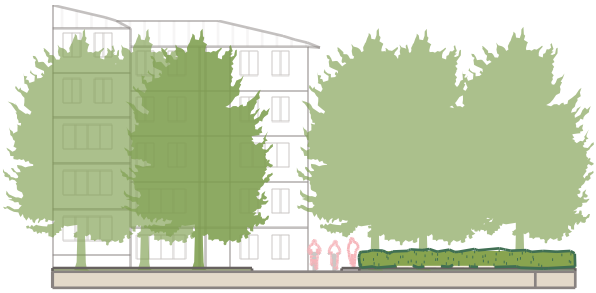
## Car-Free Street

In this transformation, personal cars will be banned entirely from the street and inside the block. This requires the addition of parking spaces at the periphery, located at the entry points to the neighborhood. Existing streets can be narrowed but must remain wide enough to allow service and emergency vehicles to safely pass through. The removed garages make way for wide open spaces that can be used by all. Private gardens will add to the diversity of users of these open spaces and give residents the desired space for their own creativity.

Figures 28, 29: Transformation of a collector street into a car-free street, as seen in plan and elevation





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### 3.1.3 Local Streets

Local streets constitute the lowest level in the street hierarchy. They branch off from the collector or main streets and guarantee access to the neighborhood buildings. Sometimes these streets are blocked with barriers, such as gates, and are consequently only accessible for residents of the adjacent buildings. At night these streets are often used for parking, leaving barely enough space for mobility. These streets account for up to 50 percent of the yard space. While these streets were not always part of the original layout as planned or built, they have been increasingly formalized over time. They are often paved with non-permeable materials. From a mobility viewpoint, these streets are not necessary since they only service the last stretch toward the houses.

Figures 30–32: Local street in plan, elevation, and isometric view

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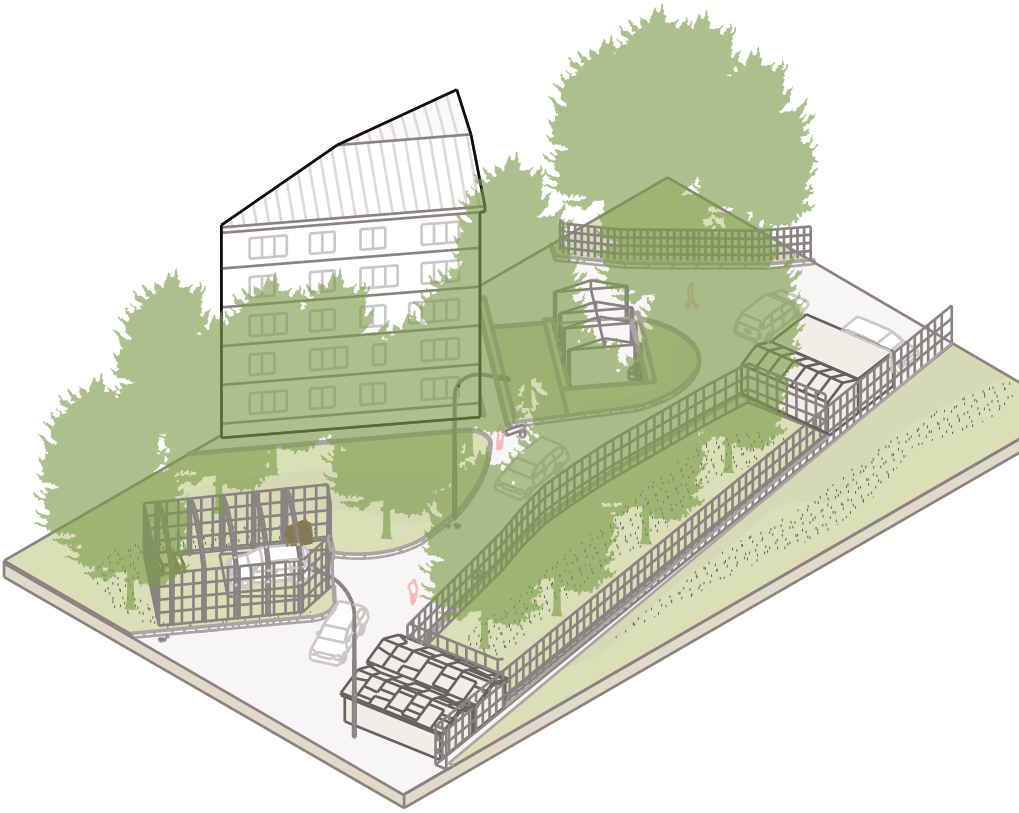

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Figure 33: Local street between the football field and building 1 (18) on P. Kavtaradze 4th turn
*Source: Ekaterina Gladkova, 2024*

Figure 34: Local street, south of the football field, between buildings 6 (15) and 4 (10) of P. Kavtaradze 3rd turn
*Source: Ekaterina Gladkova, 2024*

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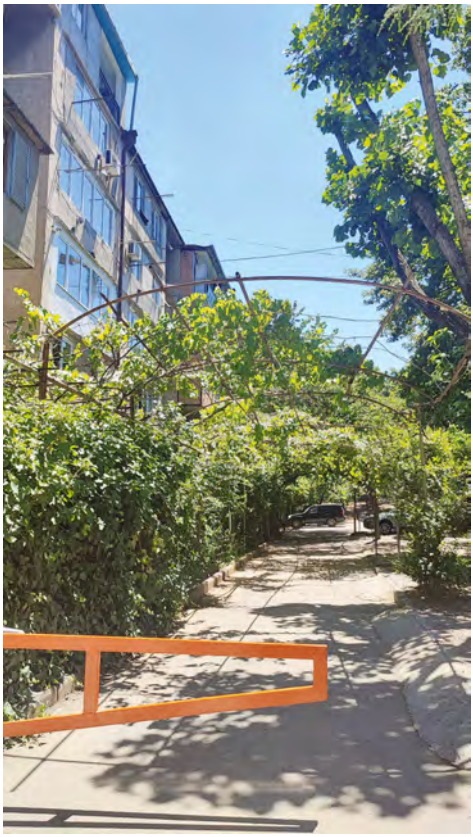
Figure 35: Local street, entrance to the courtyard of the P. Kavtaradze 70
*Source: Ekaterina Gladkova, 2024*

Figure 36: Local street between the soccer field and building 1 (18) on P. Kavtaradze 4th turn
*Source: Nano Zazanashvili, 2024*



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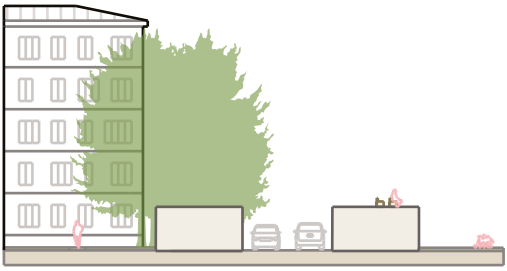
## Organized Parking

In this proposal the street section within the yards would be minimized. The streets would offer parking along their entire length, interspersed with trees. Other functions, such as bike stands and trash collection, could be integrated into this space, depending on the specific location. At the chosen site, parking is accommodated in garages that would also provide elevated seating for the stadium on one side and an additional barrier toward the residential yards on the other side. While the transformation seems quite rigorous at first, it actually serves as a valuable buffer between the busy stadium and the calm neighborhood. This type of transformation works best where sufficient space is available and where multiple competing functions are located close to one another. Although the sealed surface area increases in this scenario, the quality of the adjacent spaces improves due to clear zoning and better separation.



Figures 37–39: Transformation of a local street with barrier forming garages, in plan, elevation, and isometric view

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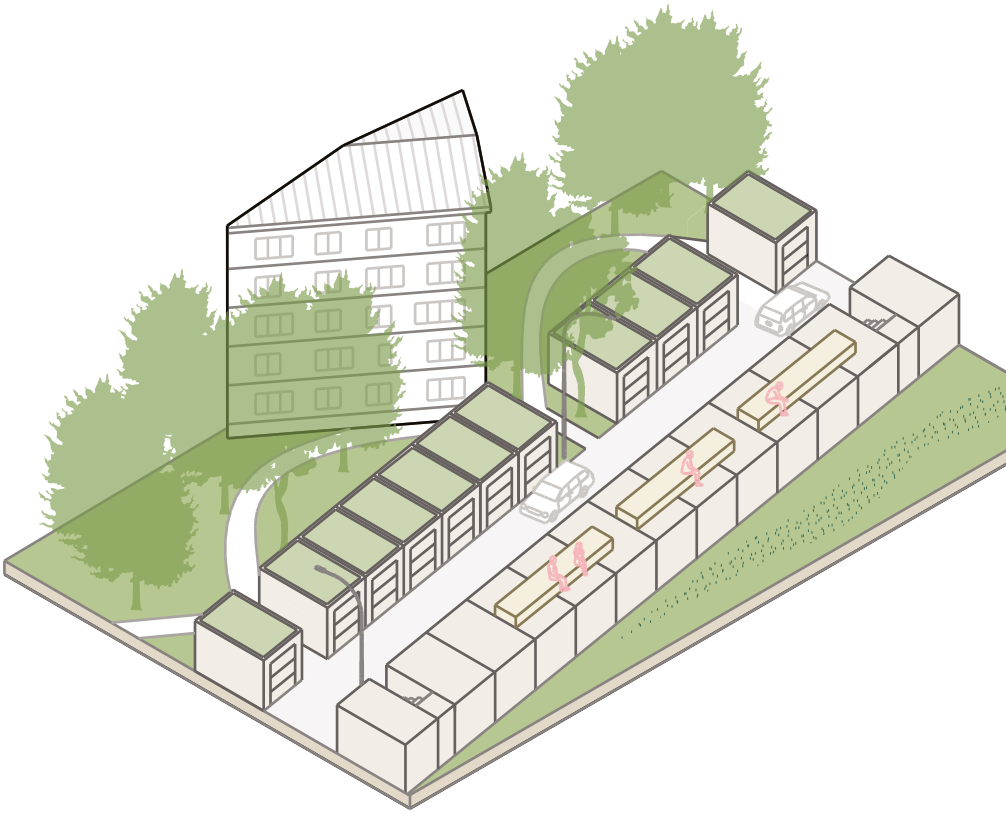

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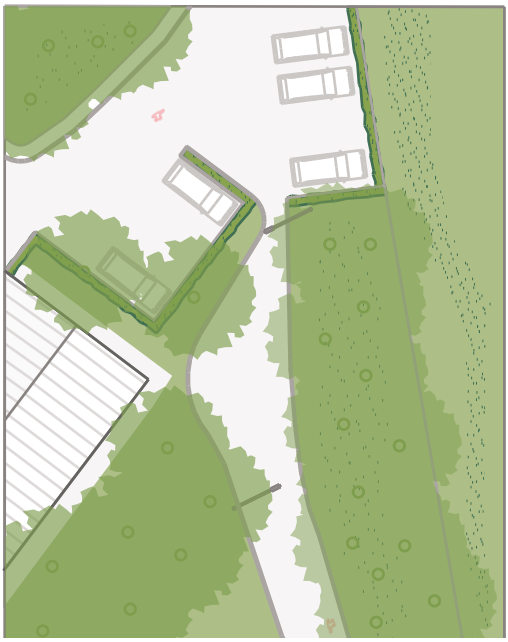
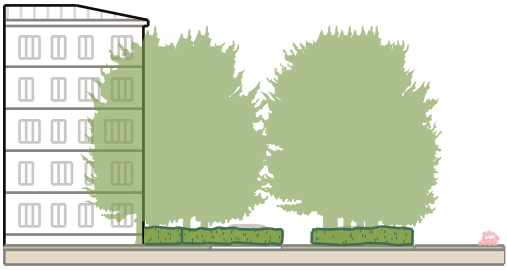
## Car-Free Street with Parking at the Entrance

Parking will be organized at the entrance to the yard. Both garages and uncovered parking are viable options. In the yards, the goal is to minimize paved surfaces and transform the street into a pedestrian path, leaving the remaining open spaces for recreational and personal use.

Figures 40, 41: Transformation of a local street with parking at the entrance, as seen in plan and elevation





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## Car-Free Street without Parking

This transformation bans the cars altogether. The newly gained spaces are used for leisure activities and additional sports amenities. The existing garages are transformed into little shops that provide a rudimentary infrastructure for the stadium and the nearby houses.

Figures 42, 43: Transformation of a local street into a car-free zone, with a new playground and a comfortable path for pedestrians and cyclists as seen in plan and elevation

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## 3.1.4 Pedestrian and Bike Paths

This subtype includes pathways intended mainly for pedestrians but also used by cyclists. These pathways were planned to provide comfortable connections for pedestrians and shortcuts between streets and yards, thereby connecting buildings and entrances to public open spaces. The sidewalks parallel to the main streets are also part of the footpath network. They have a relatively small width of about 1.5 meters, allowing two pedestrians to pass each other comfortably. The surface of the paths can consist of various materials, such as asphalt, paving stones, sand, or dirt. Some footpaths are equipped with lighting and other urban furniture, such as benches or trash cans.

Figures 44–46: Footpath in plan, elevation, and isometric view

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The footpaths in Block VI are in overall simple conditions. The pavement is often cracked, and there are severe thresholds and bumps. The paths offer few or no supporting functions and would therefore benefit from investments. Consequently, they do not always provide barrier free access, often have insufficient lighting, and lack signage altogether. There is no clear hierarchy, and many paths seem to exist more or less accidentally, connecting specific functions without ensuring accessibility throughout the block.

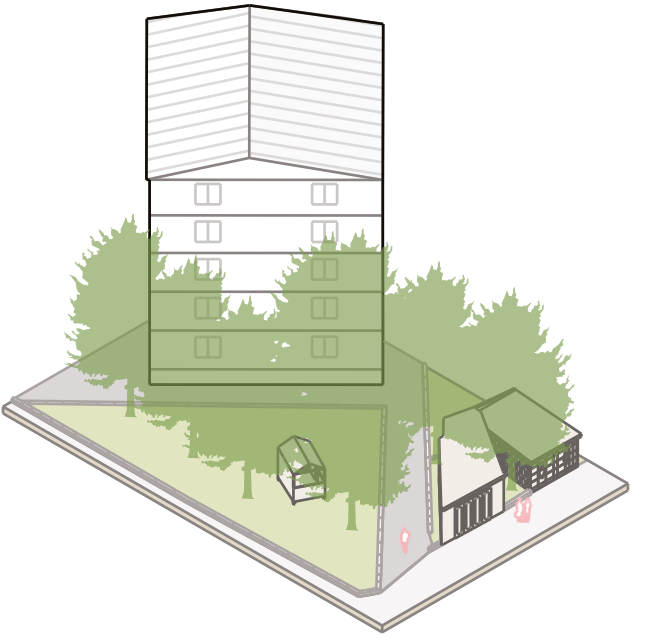

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Figure 47: M. Shavishvili Street, pathway to building 5 on P. Kavtaradze 3rd turn
*Source: Nano Zazanashvili, 2024*

Figure 48: Pathway near P. Kavtaradze 43
*Source: Nano Zazanashvili, 2024*

Figure 49: Pathway near P. Kavtaradze 51
*Source: Nano Zazanashvili, 2024*

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## Formalizing the Existing Situation

Further formalizing existing paths would allow all users to comfortably use them. The first priority would be to provide barrier-free access, especially for public transportation. However, additional lighting and seating areas would also be significant improvements, particularly for vulnerable groups.

Figures 50, 51: Transformation of footpath with formalized borders, as seen in plan and elevation

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## Integrated Bike Path

Widening the footpath and adding a separate bike path would allow cyclists to profit from the same shortcuts that pedestrians enjoy. This transformation would only be implemented on a few paths because cyclists can easily use the street network.

Figures 52–54: Transformation of footpath with additional bike path, as seen in plan, elevation, and isometric view

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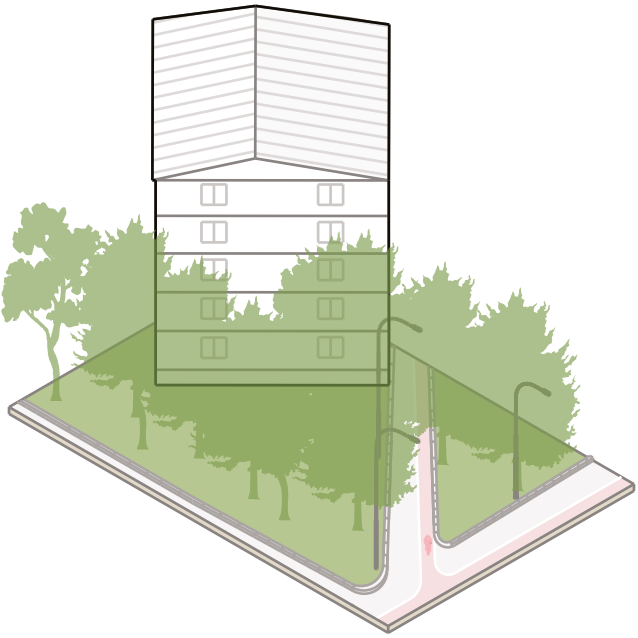

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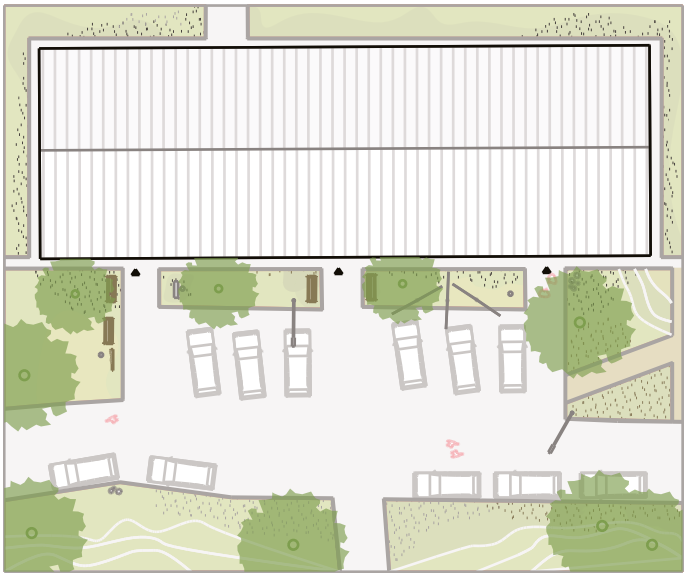
### 3.1.5 Parking Lots

Parking lots are the only form of organized, legal parking within Block VI. This subtype comprises all open spaces off the street that are exclusively reserved for parking. The lots usually consist of 8–16 perpendicular parking spaces situated near the entrance to buildings. The parking spaces are on public land but are often maintained and organized privately by the HOA of the building. Some of these parking options are personalized and are only accessible to the owners of the building. These parking spaces are relatively efficient and well-maintained. They pose few conflicts with other uses and are conveniently located for the users because they are close to the buildings.



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Figures 55–57: Parking lot in plan, elevation, and isometric view

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Figures 58, 59: Parking near P. Kavtaradze 3rd turn building 6
*Source: Ia Kupatadze, 2025*

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## Multifunctional Parking Lots

Formalizing the existing parking spaces could make them more attractive, which would benefit carport users and their neighbors alike. Carports should have green roofs or solar roofs with rainwater collection. Electric charging options with integrated bike and stroller parking could be additional ways to transform these spaces with quality gains for the community. Due to the ample street space, additional parking could be provided across the street and a sidewalk could be added for the pedestrians.

Figures 60, 61: Transformation of a parking area with garages, as seen in plan, elevation, and isometric view

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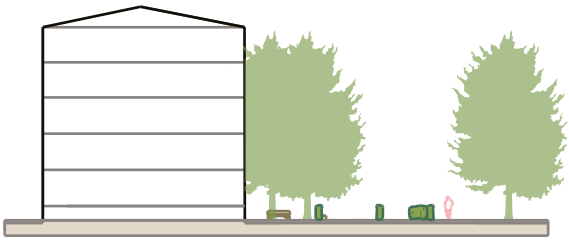
## Repurposing and Repositioning

In both car-free and car-reduced neighborhoods, the parking lots at the heart of the neighborhood could be repurposed. Due to their proximity to houses, these areas could be transformed into private or shared gardens. Small plazas for gathering could also be offered. These should be placed at a distance from buildings and could be open to the existing street.



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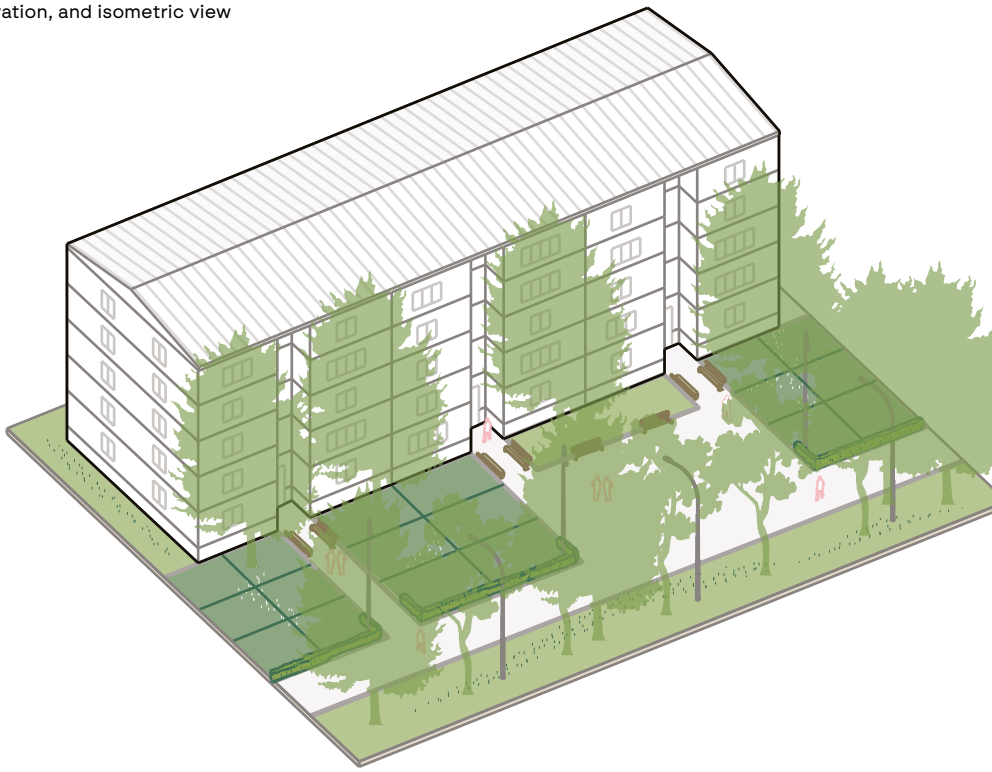
Figures 62–64: Transformation of a parking area with private gardens and a square with benches, as seen in plan, elevation, and isometric view



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# 3.2 YARDS, ENTRANCE AREAS, AND PRIVATE GARDENS

The subtypes of this chapter are among the most prominent open spaces in large housing estates. The basis of the open space network within large housing estates consists of enclosed directly associated with buildings, yards between buildings and the street, entrance areas from the yards, store entrances, and private and allotment gardens.

All yards belong to one of the first two subtypes. The first subtype comprises yards that are exclusively associated with a building. The second subtype comprises all yards that are located between buildings and streets. The separation into these two subtypes helps us to understand the different qualities and potentials of these open spaces. The first subtype is enclosed by the built fabric it has great potential for activities related to housing. It can be of high quality and highly valuable for its direct residents. Spaces of the second subtype are spatially less well-defined and need more qualification to be of benefit for the local residents. Therefore, they lend themselves to more public activities.

Similar to the distinction between yards, there are two subtypes of entrance areas. Entrance areas from the yards are usually private and important for the residents' quality of life because they provide space for social micro-interactions. They are rather intimate yet help with establishing a sense of place. In contrast, the fourth subtype, store entrances, serves an entirely different purpose. They profit from being highly visible and very public. Their spatial qualities focus on ease of entry and consumer experience.

The last subtype of this chapter describes all privately used garden spaces. Although they were uncommon in the original plans, they have become abundant after the privatization of the microdistricts and are used in various ways today.

Yards are a particularly defining element of open space for large estates. While most yards are open spaces adjacent to and associated with a specific building, some are located next to streets and serve as buffer zones. Yards can be enclosed or open on one or more sides, creating the fluid space characteristic of large housing estates. Typical of the open structure of large housing estates from the 1960s and 1970s, the buildings are situated in a continuum of flowing green spaces rather than defining spaces themselves. Yards were usually interconnected by other larger open spaces, such as parks, schoolyards, or internal streets. Today, however, some of these connections have often

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been lost due to unregulated structures, such as fences and garages. Within the continuum of open spaces are the access points, the entrance areas of the buildings.

The topography and diagonal placement of buildings with relatively short overlaps of adjacent houses create many spatially undefined spaces at the

Figure 1: Privately used open spaces in Block VI

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ends of the yards. Often it is not apparent whether a specific area should be considered a front or back yard, or even part of the street. Due to this specific layout, only two types of yards can be distinguished within Block VI.

The spatial organization, accessibility, and usage of the yards have changed over the years. Due to a lack of oversight, the quality of the yards has deteriorated significantly. In the original layout, the yards were interconnected; today, they are often interrupted by fences or other obstacles. Unregulated new construction, privately enclosed areas, chains, and other barriers interrupt the flow of the yards. These alterations have lowered the overall quality of the yards, restricting access for the general public and granting rights only to individuals or specific groups. The fragmentation of the yards has also led to a decline in day-to-day leisure usage in favor of specialized and individualized functions, such as private gardens and enclosed areas filled with trash.

Besides this fragmentation, the biggest threat to the quality of the yards is illegal ("wild") parking. Cars driving over unpaved ground destroy any existing flora, leaving behind a barren, gray wasteland. Even a single car in a yard can lower the quality of the space, leading to less frequent usage and inviting even more cars. Since the cars park chaotically in ever-changing positions, other uses of the yard can be lost entirely the, making this the biggest challenge for the yards and the neighborhood. However, the urban layout of Block VI actually facilitates and exacerbates the appropriation of the yard.

Converting the neighborhood back to its original layout by removing unauthorized construction would already be a great improvement to the current situation, yet it would fall short of the potential of these open spaces and would not meet modern needs. Any conversion should also entail a change in ownership or, at least, management. Having all open spaces managed by the district, for example—or, in a less drastic change, by multiple HOAs—would allow for more coherent action regarding transportation and other uses within the settlements. However, it would not result in privatized and personalized open spaces as we know them from other urban morphologies, such as the inner space in block developments. The management of private spaces—where to place them, how to assign them, etc.—would also have to be organized. To unlock the full potential, the usage and ownership of the yards should be managed at the district level, allowing parts of the spaces to be used individually while ensuring the majority are kept publicly accessible and communally maintained.

The entrance areas of the houses are separate and have the potential to serve as individual addresses and offer space for all daily residential activities. Originally, the adjacent areas served as places where the residents could meet, spend their leisure time, and do household chores. Today, these areas are either privately or publicly and may be reserved for the inhabitants of the buildings or accessible to everyone.

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Figure 2: Individually configured entrance area
*Source: Ekaterina Gladkova, 2024*

Figure 3: Fenced-in private garden
*Source: Ekaterina Gladkova, 2024*

Private gardens are small, individually used green spaces. Ownership can vary. These spaces are typically used for gardening, such as planting flowers or vegetables. They are spaces where people spend their leisure time and can function as an extension of the apartment if the climate and weather conditions allow it. Although private gardens and entrance areas are both part of the yards, they are considered separate subtypes due to their specific ownership and usage.

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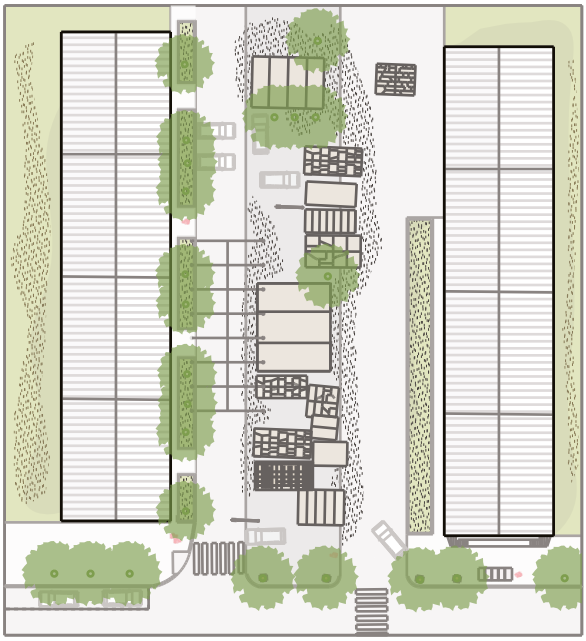
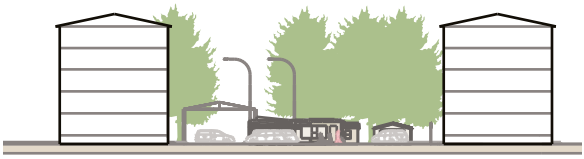
## 3.2.1 Yards Associated with a Building

The yard located between two buildings is the most prevalent type in the neighborhood. Due to the diagonal positioning and the resulting half overlap of most buildings within the block, the yards are spatially very undefined. They are typically open to both sides, although some of the yards are closed on one side at the northern and eastern edges of the block. This openness makes the yards very public and reduces their spatial qualities. In many yards, new dividing elements have been built, such as fences or garages. Most of the yards also provide entry to the buildings. Due to unclear ownership and a lack of regulation and supervision, a lot of chaotic structures have been built. Illegally parked cars and occasionally random pathways or enclosed private gardens make the yards unattractive for other users. The yards often lack good lighting, making them unsafe or at least uncomfortable to walk through at night.





Figures 4–6: Courtyard in plan, elevation, and isometric view

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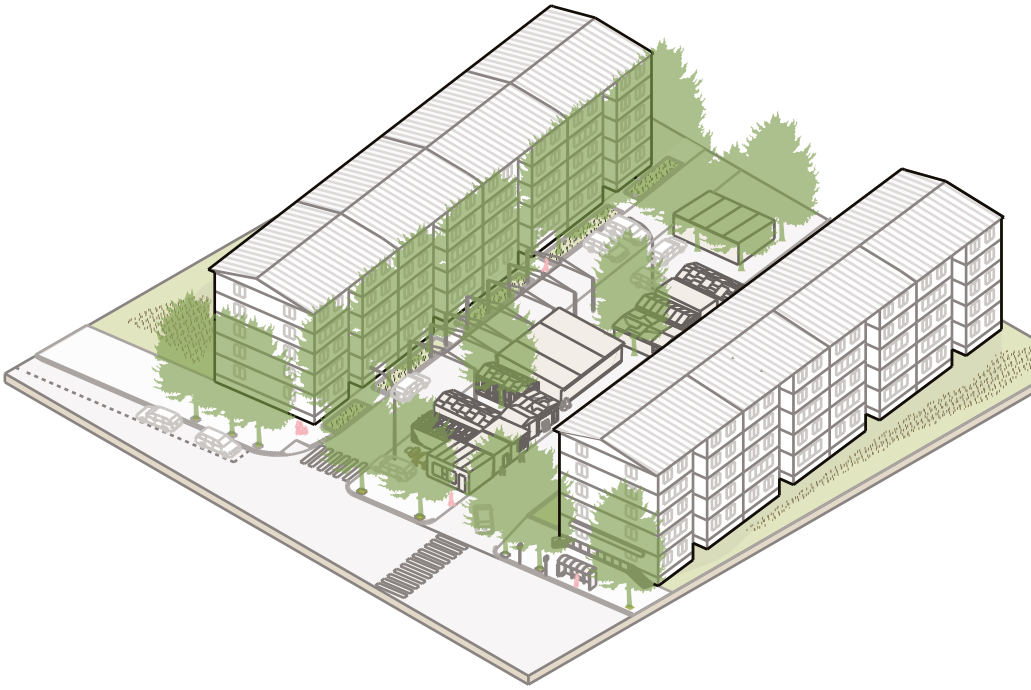

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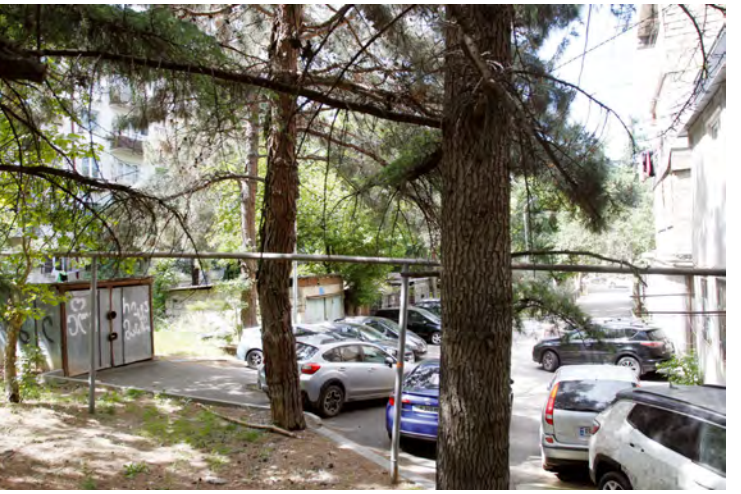

Figure 7: Courtyard with elevation and wild parking between buildings 72 and 74 on P. Kavtaradze Street
*Source: Ia Kupatadze, 2025*

Figure 8: View into courtyard between buildings 70 and 72, as seen from P. Kavtaradze Street
*Source: Ia Kupatadze, 2025*

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Figure 9: Courtyard with stairs between buildings 72 and 74 on P. Kavtaradze Street
*Source: Ia Kupatadze, 2025*

## Possible Transformations

A portion of each yard should be reserved for communal ownership to ensure it remains accessible to neighborhood residents. The maintenance of these areas should be the responsibility of the relevant HOAs. In order to facilitate unobstructed "fluid" movement throughout the settlement, these open spaces must not be divided by physical structures following the property lines. Instead, they should be transformed to serve all adjacent buildings. However, this does not imply that the entire open space must be designated for communal or single use. A variety of scenarios could allow for greater or lesser private use, and the placement of small business within the open spaces or the construction of small service buildings could enhance the yards' structure further.

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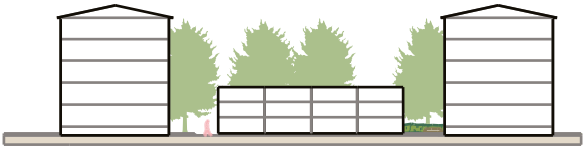
## Densification with Row Houses and a Communal Yard

In larger yards, housing densification can greatly enhance otherwise underused and misused space. Row houses could help to diversify the socioeconomic fabric of the neighborhood by attracting middle-class residents. Although the houses in this transformation would occupy a significant part of the yard, the remaining area could be developed to provide amenities for other residents. The architectural scheme under consideration presents an alternative design that incorporates additional private gardens to optimize the space available for individual use. The central green space could accommodate a variety of amenities such as a playground, bicycle parking facilities, or simply a lawn.



Figures 10–12: Transformation through densification with row houses and a communal yard

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## Private Gardens

This transformation aims to return parts of the yard to their original communal use. The offerings in the open space should be adapted to current needs and made available to all users. In addition to reestablishing a communal center, this transformation also addresses the need for more private outdoor spaces. The ground floor gains access to a row of gardens directly adjoining the building. The remaining part could be developed into an allotment garden for other residents of the house or a communal space for the remaining residents to share.

Figures 13, 14: Transformation with privatized gardens alongside buildings

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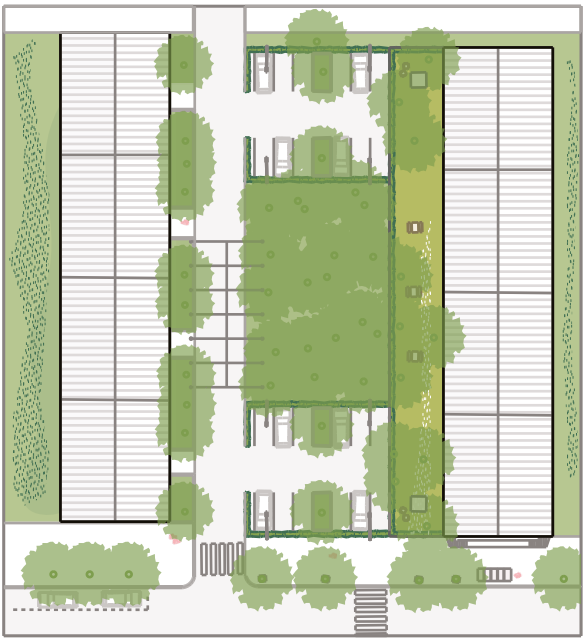
## Organized Parking and Communal Garden

In locations where the yards are of low quality—due to large streets or a lack of interest in communal spaces, for example—the yards could be partly converted into organized parking space. The sides of the yards can be closed by a row of garages, providing a calmer space at the center and additional parking for residents at the sides. While aspects of solar exposure and noise pollution should still be respected, this would allow the rest of the neighborhood to be car-free.

Figures 15, 16: Transformation with organized parking and communal garden



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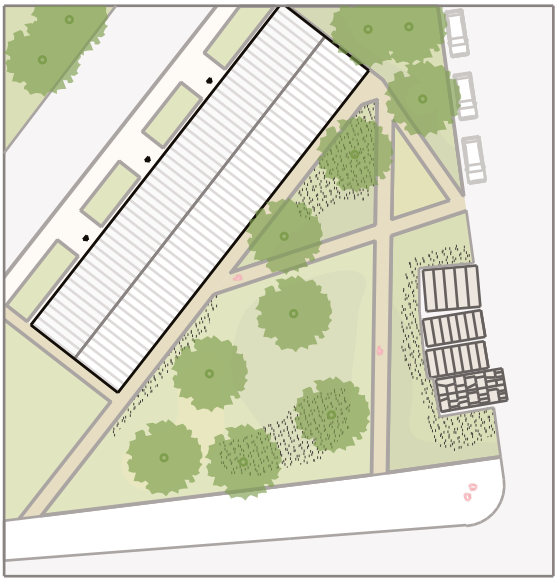
## 3.2.2 Yards between Buildings and Streets

The second type of yard is located between the buildings and the streets. Currently, this type often lacks a clear functional association with any of the buildings. These yards make slightly less than 50 percent of the total yard space in the neighborhood. Those on the entrance side of a building are almost exclusively paved, while those on the opposite side are usually green. Despite their odd location and the lack of spatial framing, these spaces hold great potential for the neighborhood. Since the rear sides of the buildings face the outer perimeter of Block VI, these yards contribute to the character of the rest of the city, giving the block an especially green appearance. Since they are located along the rear of the buildings and are cut off from the main street by a sidewalk, surprisingly few cars park in these areas. However, when such yards are located next to one of the access streets within the neighborhood, they are almost exclusively used for parking.

Figures 17–19: Yard in plan, elevation, and isometric view



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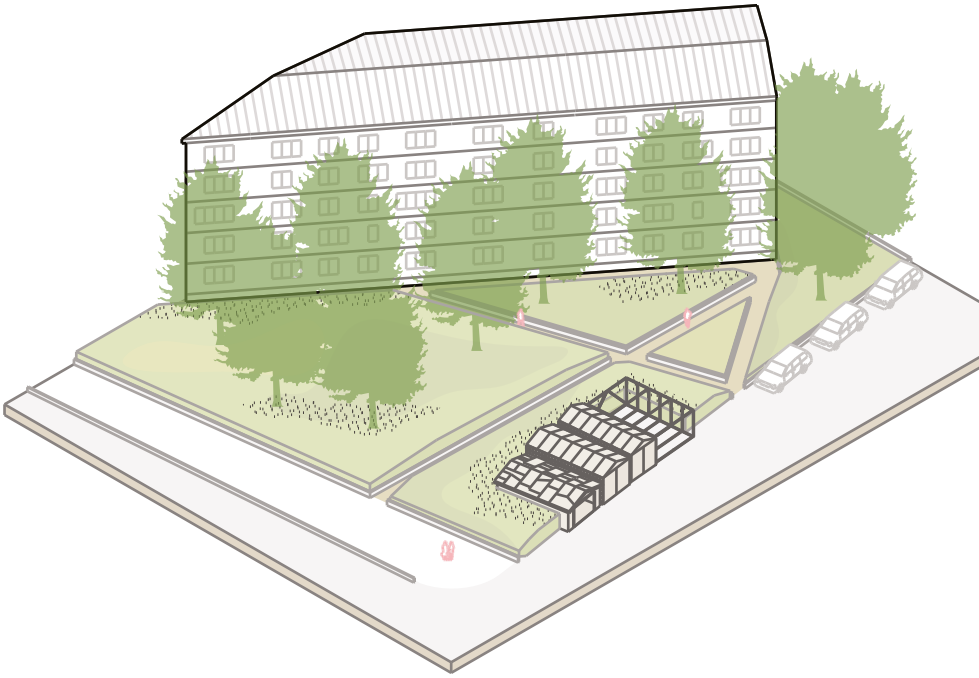

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Figures 20, 21: Yard next to building 51 on P. Kavtaradze Street
*Source: Ekaterina Gladkova, 2023*

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Figure 22: Yard near building 6 (20) on P. Kavtaradze Street 4th turn
*Source: Ia Kupatadze, 2025*

Figure 23: View into yard from P. Kavtaradze Street
*Source: Ia Kupatadze, 2025*

## Possible Transformations

Due to their public position, these areas should generally be maintained by the municipality or another blockwide-operating legal entity, such as a housing cooperation. Depending on the specific situation, these areas can serve many different purposes, including organized parking, neighborhood parks, plazas, playgrounds, and even gardens. In any case, due to their intermediate position, they have to link the more private yards to the public street spaces and other open areas.

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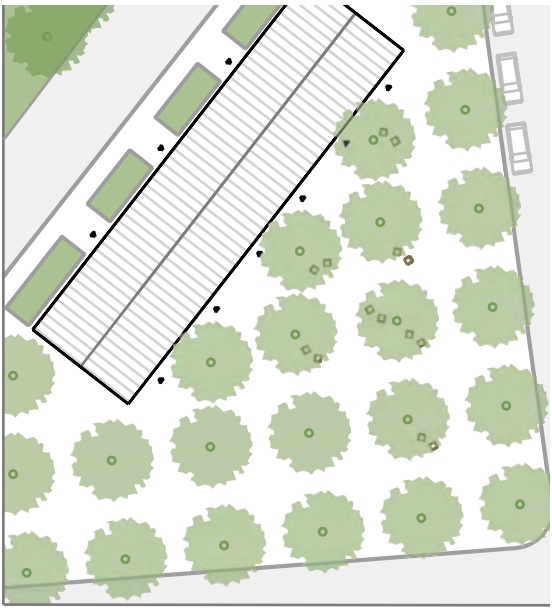
## Green Plaza

In a highly public location, the yard can be transformed into a plaza or square. The presence of public squares has the potential to enhance the quality of life in the surrounding community, particularly when located in close proximity to public transportation or other public places frequented by many people in their daily routines In this scenario, the ground floor of the building should be allocated for the establishment of retail spaces, cafés, and restaurants.

Figures 24–26: Transformation into a green plaza



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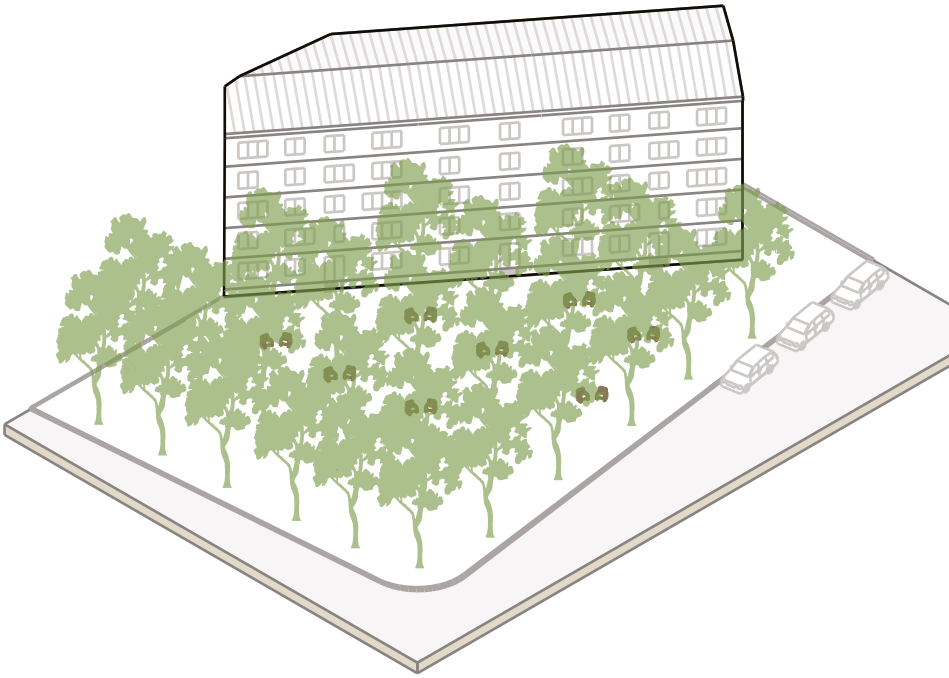

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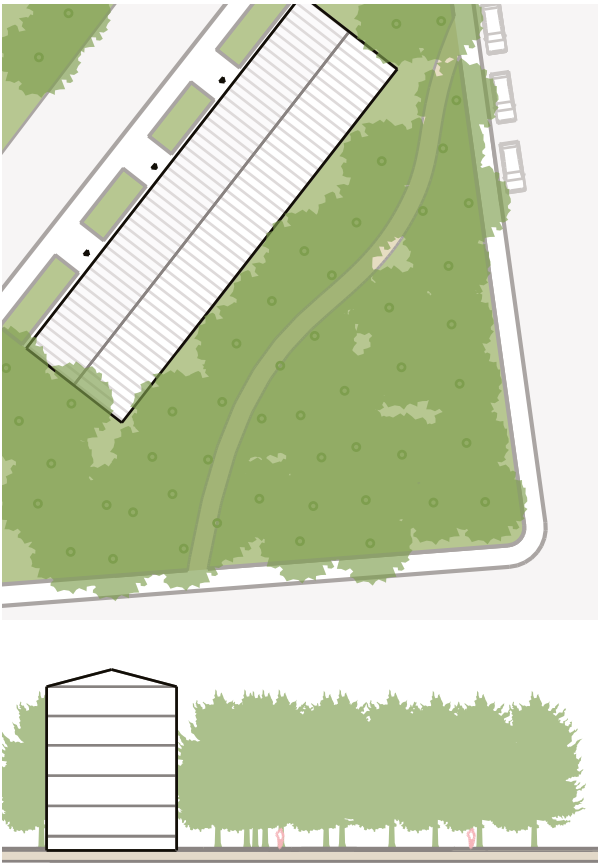
## Buffer Green Spaces

In yards of smaller dimensions or those situated further inside the neighborhood rather than at the boundary, the implementation of buffer spaces is often the preferred alternative. These green spaces offer numerous ecological benefits, especially by providing a habitat for local flora and fauna. Furthermore, these areas have been shown to mitigate the urban heat island effect. Additionally, green spaces can serve as a physical barrier between a building or yard and surrounding noise pollution, thereby enhancing the quality of the neighborhood. If pathways provide access to the space, it is crucial that they be kept a certain distance from the building.

Figures 27, 28: Transformation into a buffer green



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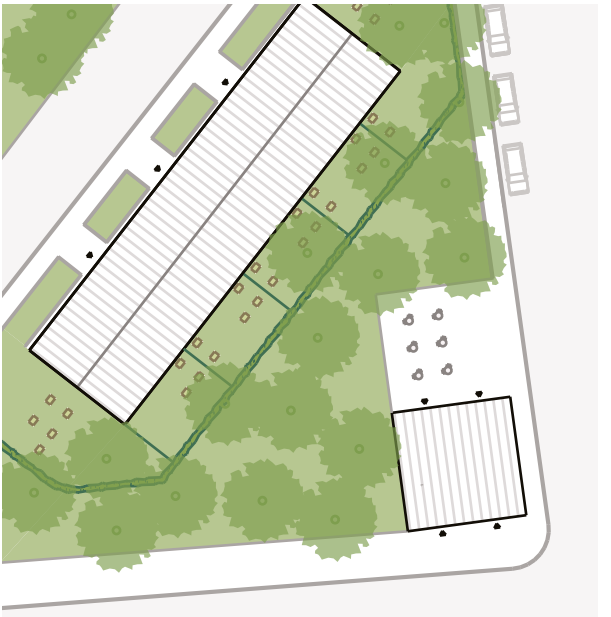
## Integration and Activation

In many cases, integrating these open spaces with adjacent areas is an effective way to utilize these challenging spaces. This can involve other yards or even street spaces, as seen below. This increases the dimensions of the adjacent open spaces, enabling an expanded array of functions or more optimal integration of existing ones. When the yard is situated close to a major thoroughfare, adding amenities such as cafés can further enhance the space's functionality and appeal. The implementation of organised parking is also a valid transformation for these spaces, offering a number of advantages to the neighborhood by reducing the need for parking in other, higher-quality locations. However, in all these transformations, the yard should be structured with effective spatial elements, such as hedges, to create a private area associated with the building, as well as an open area relating to other functions and spaces.



Figures 29, 30: Transformation through integration and activation

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## 3.2.3 Dwelling Entrance Areas

This subtype encompasses all dwelling entrance areas. These open spaces play a crucial role in the inhabitants' quality of life, since they must pass through them to access their homes. However, many of the entrance areas are of poor quality. The planting areas are either bare or have few flowers, and the rest of the open space is unplanned, with some outdoor furniture dating back to Soviet times dispersed throughout.

Figures 31–33: Dwelling entrance areas from the yard, shown in plan, elevation, and isometric view

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In the case of apartment buildings in socialist neighborhoods from the 1960s and 1970s, the entrances are situated toward the inside of the microdistrict and are frequently accompanied by seating areas in close proximity to the door. However, given that the entrance is not from the public street but rather from the semi-public yard, these areas are relatively private.

The buildings within the block were designated for residential use only. Their entrance areas typically have a narrow strip of asphalt or similar material along the perimeter, followed by a strip approximately two meters wide, intended for the development of gardens or other outdoor spaces. The greenery in these areas is also in a state of relative neglect, despite many inhabitants taking responsibility and pride in them. In instances where individuals have initiated improvements, such as planting flowers or installing additional benches, these efforts often lack the oversight of a planner, resulting in limited enhancement of the existing conditions.

Additionally, these spaces are under considerable pressure due to the encroachment of building extensions. The entrances themselves are often obscured, thereby creating an unwelcoming and dimly lit ambiance. In the absence of extensions, the entrance areas are adequately sized for outdoor seating, trash containers, and bicycle parking. However, there is a lack of systematic efforts to address the existing shortcomings of these open spaces and transform them into welcoming spaces.

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Figure 34: Entrance to building 6 (20) on P. Kavtaradze 4th turn
*Source: Nano Zazanashvili, 2025*

Figure 35: Entrance with parking and seating
*Source: Ekaterina Gladkova, 2023*

Figure 36: Entrance with laundry and seating, near P. Kavtaradze 74
*Source: Ekaterina Gladkova, 2023*

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Figure 37: Entrance with trash collection area near Vazha-Pshavela Avenue
*Source: Ekaterina Gladkova, 2023*

## Possible Transformations

The entrance area is of particular significance in this regard, as it functions as a crucial buffer between the private home and the public street. It is imperative to acknowledge the pivotal function of the entrance area in all transformations. The area should fulfil the dual role of serving as both an open and pleasant face to the public, inviting to visitors and providing room for daily communication for the inhabitants. Furthermore, the proposed changes should assist in bolstering the privacy requirements for the inhabitants, thereby ensuring their protection from the public.

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## Private Gardens

In this transformation, the ground-floor units get exclusive access to the strip of land between the street and the building. Where possible, each ground-floor unit gets direct access from the apartment. Enclosing the gardens with a hedge protects the area from the street and adds some privacy. The privatization of the open spaces helps to reduce the municipality's maintenance obligations, qualifies the ground-floor apartments for families, and helps to create a calmer streetscape. The risk is that the hedges will form a somewhat anonymous presence on the street. Design guidelines can help to regulate how the private gardens are designed. This can help to keep the appearance of the neighborhood somewhat coherent while allowing the individual owners freedom to express their own preferences.

Figures 38–40:
Transformation into private gardens

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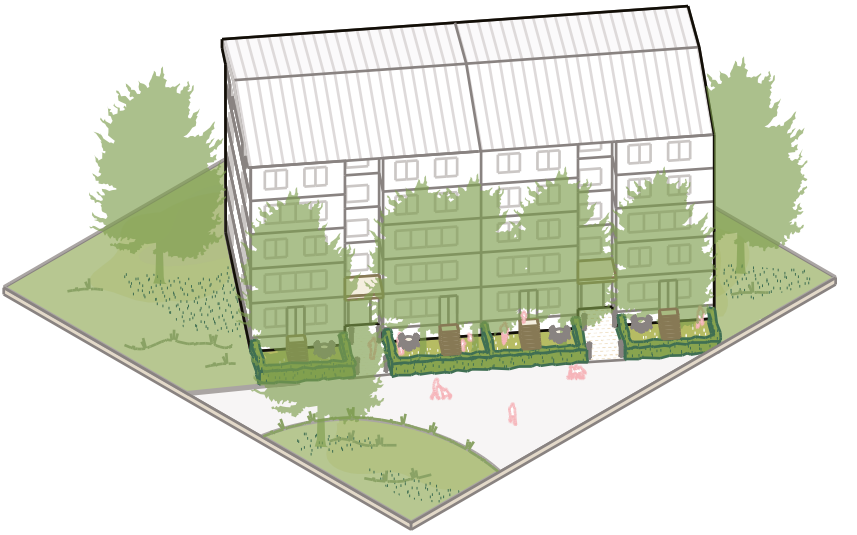

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## Communal Gardens

Enclosing the front yard with a hedge while leaving the sides open toward the entrance will make the area more inviting for the residents. The area near the entrances can also be partially blocked off with a small structure for trash, bikes, and/or strollers. In this case, access can be restricted to one or more residents or given to all residents of the building. Providing communal furniture, such as barbecue equipment, will make the space more attractive to users. This will activate the space, ensuring higher levels of maintenance while keeping it communal. A downside of this transformation is the area's proximity to ground-floor apartments, so clear usage rules must be established.

Figures 41, 42:
Transformation into communal gardens

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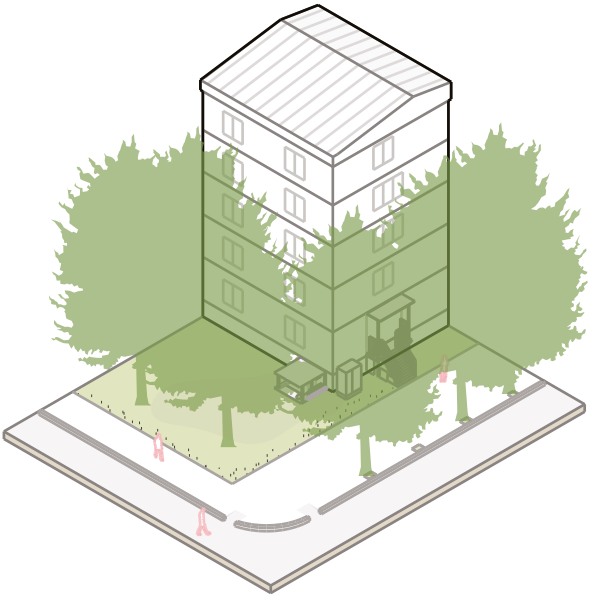
## 3.2.4 Store Entrance Areas

This subtype is predominantly located on the main streets along the perimeter of the district and encompasses all open spaces in front of storefronts. Strictly speaking, this subtype constitutes part of the sidewalk and street space. However, due to its unique usage, it is classified as its own subtype. The area's topography invariably results in a few steps leading into the stores. In contrast to the residential entrances, where the steps are are located inside as part of the building, these steps are situated outside and thus become part of the open space. Beyond this common characteristic, the store entrances share very few features. Nevertheless, this area is crucial for the stores. It allows businesses to display their goods, advertise, and even provide seating for customers. A review of Block VI's perimeter reveals only a few examples of positive alterations to these open spaces. Also, the few store entrances in the neighborhood have undergone significant modifications. Since these areas were not originally designed for stores, extensive construction was needed to enable customers to access the businesses. However, most of these open spaces lack the quality necessary to encourage prolonged stay. This represents a missed opportunity, both for the local community and for the businesses themselves. Cafés, bakeries, and similar establishments that are tucked away here, off the main streets, could also thrive inside the settlement if they were to offer seating areas for customers and would have greater visibility, for example by clustering together.



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Figures 43–45: Store entrance, shown in plan, elevation, and isometric view

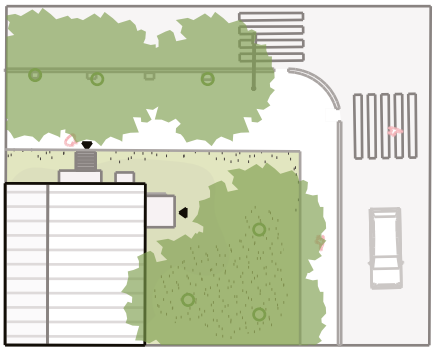

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Figure 46: Store entrance P. Kavtaradze str. No. 41
*Source: Nano Zazanashvili, 2025*

Figure 47: Store entrance P. Kavtaradze str. No. 66
*Source: Nano Zazanashvili, 2025*

Figure 48: Store entrance at P. Kavtaradze No. 51
*Source: Ekaterina Gladkova, 2024*

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Figure 49: Store entrance at P. Kavtaradze str. No. 62
*Source: Nano Zazanashvili, 2025*

## Possible Transformations

The elevated first storey of the building constitutes a significant impediment to the effective integration of stores within this housing typology. The presence of this object has been shown to impede a seamless transition from the pavement into the retail establishment. It is recommended that all transformations address this issue. The transformation solutions could either help to ease said transition, or alternatively, the level difference could be used to integrate store specific functions. As an alternative strategy relocation of the business could be considered, this makes sense where the threshold is particularly challenging to address, or where the public function is not beneficial for the neighborhood.

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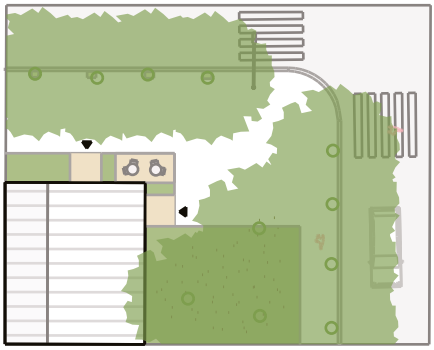
## Clarified Entrance Design

This transformation is intended to maintain the status quo while clarifying the current situation by reducing visual elements and introducing design guidelines. The implementation of explicit design guidelines has the potential to enhance the neighborhood's aesthetic appeal, thereby mitigating the likelihood of conflicting interests among various stakeholders. The designation of a specific area for each business entity could enable these spaces to be used to their full potential in a beautiful and efficient manner. These guidelines could define uses such as seating, advertising, or showcasing. They could also provide a style guide relating to materials, furniture dimensions, or even a color schemes. The implementation of regulatory measures should be deliberated at the local level and subsequently enforced by the district administration.

Figures 50, 51: Transformation by clarifying entrance design



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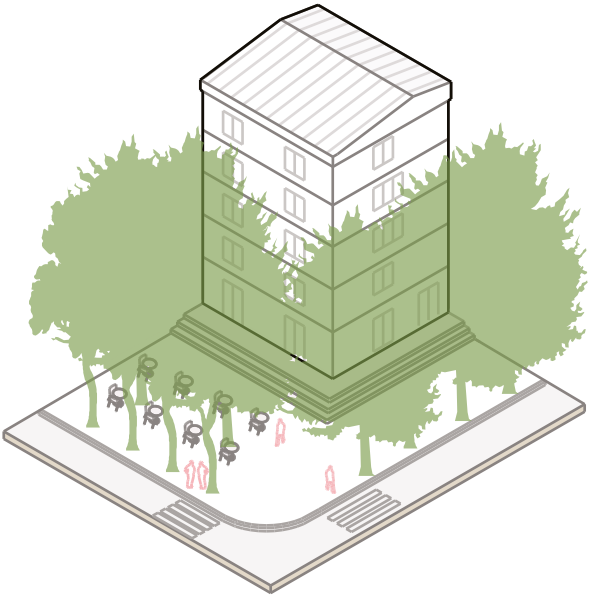
## Combined Store Entrances

This transformation aims to reduce the chaotic appearance of the storefronts, especially at the corners along the main street. Providing a shared raised gallery for multiple commercial entities mitigates the need for disorderly individual stairways. This will also free up additional space on the sidewalks, thereby creating an opportunity for shops to install outdoor seating areas. Giving the shops a combined entrance area can also accentuate the building corners and clarify where businesses are located. Strategic placement of additional trees along the thoroughfare serves a dual purpose. They provide a respite from the summer heat and enhance the overall aesthetic of the streetscape.

Figures 52: Transformation by combining store entrances



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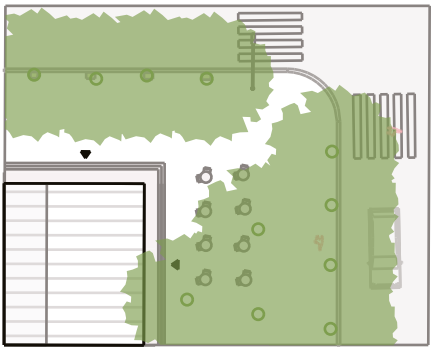
Figures 53, 54: Transformation by combining store entrances



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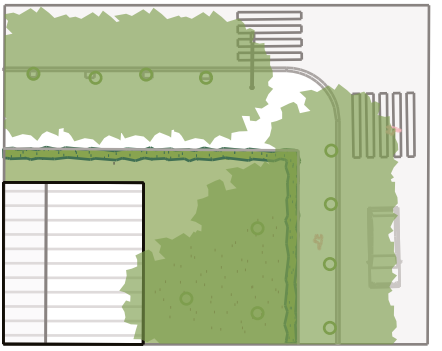
## Bundling Commercial Activities

In some cases, entrances should disappear altogether from the main streets. Where the economic pressure is low clearly marked and maintained green areas would improve the appearance of the buildings and heighten the comfort for the pedestrians on the sidewalk. This transformation could be combined with the former ones leading to a greener appearance while providing sufficient space for retail, restaurants and cafés.



Figures 55, 56: Transformation by bundling commercial activities

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## 3.2.5 Private and Allotment Gardens

Private gardens are found throughout the neighborhood, but they are often adjacent to the buildings or a garage. Due to their privatized nature and individual use they are often fenced in and can only be accessed by the user. The location of such private gardens is pretty random. It seems that people have taken over areas of low use and privatized these without considering the neighborhood's overall appearance or functionality.

These gardens also pose a risk to the neighborhood. The litter and waste that accumulates in the them is unsightly and attracts pests such as mice and rats. Even if the gardens are free of rubbish, a lack of maintenance makes them unattractive and lowers the value of the adjacent areas. The fences surrounding the gardens prevent people from using the areas in other ways. The main challenges of the private gardens throughout the neighborhood are mismanagement and their random locations.

Figures 57–59: Private garden in plan, elevation, and isometric view

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Despite these risks, the gardens have great potential for each owner because they can use the parcel in any way they like. Under these privileged conditions, people are willing to invest in this kind of garden as they also benefit from their investment and work. However, many of the private gardens in Block VI seem to have been abandoned, as they exhibit significant dilapidation. There are manifold reasons for mismanagement. One is that people today actually have less time to maintain a private garden. The standard of living has grown over past decades, making private vegetable gardens less of a necessity for many people. Another explanation for the many underused fenced-in gardens is that their owners have simply moved away or are too old to take care of them. Unfortunately, the fences and barriers remain.

Nevertheless, the areas currently occupied by gardens have great potential for the neighborhood. If maintained, they increase biodiversity. Maintained gardens also improve the quality of life. The beauty of the flowers and other plants improves the quality of the neighborhood. Although the gardens are currently privately used, they often lay on public land.

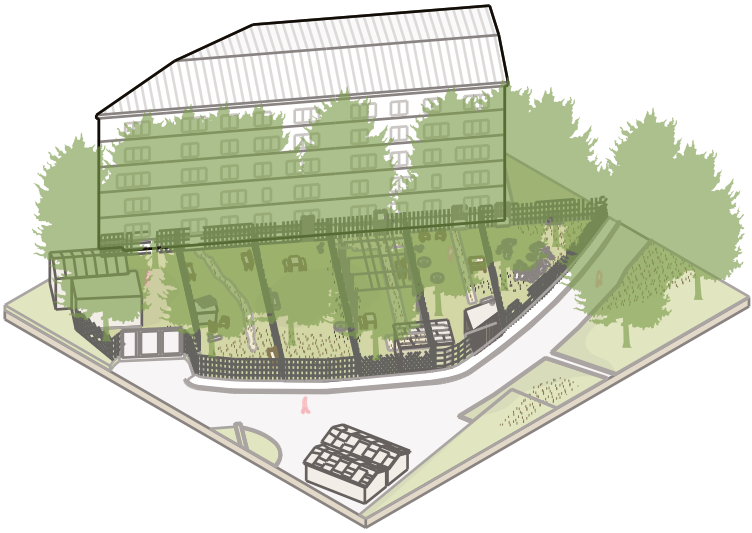

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Figure 60: Wild private garden near P. Kavtaradze 4th turn building 3
*Source: Nano Zazanashvili, 2025*

Figure 61: Private garden on a curve, with fig tree
*Source: Ekaterina Gladkova, 2024*

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## Possible Transformations

There are evident advantages to the privatization of open spaces. The economic burden and maintenance responsibilities lie with a specific owner, who, in turn, can profit from the privately owned space. However, it is important that significant areas in large housing estates remain publicly accessible. The outcome of this process is an improvement in the settlement's overall aesthetic quality. The reduction of boundaries will result in a decrease in the fragmentation of the land, thereby preserving the integrity of the original character of the settlement. In general, many structures, such as garages, should be considered for removal since they primarily benefit only a single individual. If the street is sufficiently wide, it is feasible to position on-street parking on the periphery of the shared garden instead of occupying the garden space.

Figure 62: Shared garden in yard, with pergola
*Source: Ekaterina Gladkova, 2023*

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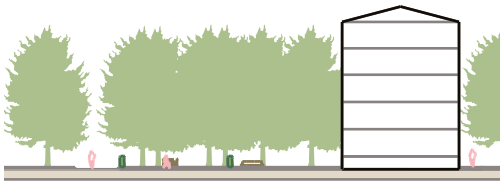
## Clustered Gardens

More efficient management and utilization of allotment gardens can be achieved by reorganizing their parcels and dimensions. Implementing an equitable plot size allocation and establishing a remuneration framework and allotment system, can ensure that the gardens are used optimally. It is important to ensure that no land is left unoccupied so that most residents are able to reap the benefits of a private garden. In the context of residential development, it is helpful to cluster the private gardens, with the objective of facilitating the shared utilization of infrastructural resources. The allocation of built-up space must be subject to stringent regulation, and its use must be in accordance with the established character of the neighborhood. The implementation of a design charter has been demonstrated to further enhance the quality of these open spaces.

Figures 63–65:
Transformation into clustered gardens



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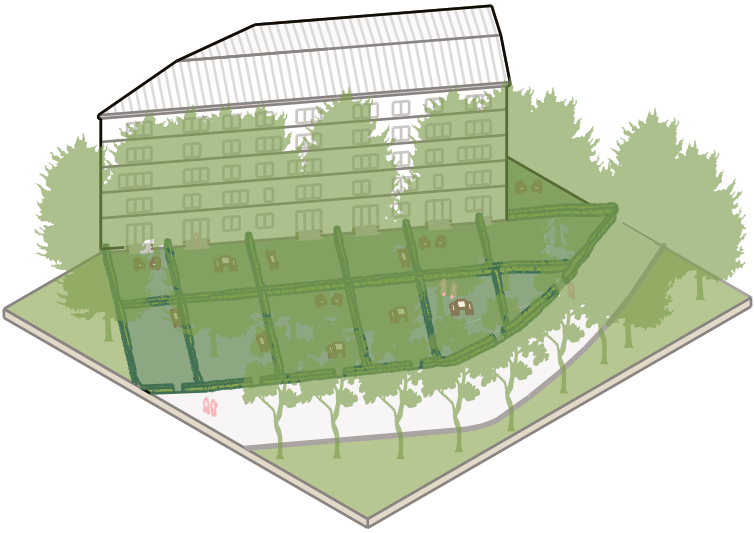

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## Shared Gardens

This transformation aims to give the privatized space back to the community. While these areas should be accessible to the neighborhood residents, it is possible to partially enclose them with hedges or fences in order to enhance the safety of young children and reduce the risk of walk-through traffic, which should be confined to designated pathways.

The maintenance of these areas should remain the responsibility of the respective homeowners' association, and the primary use of these areas should be reserved for local residents. Notwithstanding the communal character of the space, direct access could be granted to the residents of ground-floor apartments. The design of these spaces could be approached in a variety of ways, incorporating amenities such as playgrounds, seating areas, and sports facilities. However, it is imperative that the surfaces remain predominantly permeable and green.

Figures 66, 67: Shared gardens

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# 3.3 PARKS, SPORTS AND PLAY FACILITIES, AND COMMUNAL SPACES

This type of open space includes all kinds of formal and informal organized meeting places for the community on public or publicly maintained land. In large housing estates, most bigger spaces for gathering, leisure, and culture are positioned between the microdistricts and are therefore used by all surrounding neighborhoods. In some cases, these open spaces are also located within the blocks, bringing guests from the district into the more private space of the microdistrict.

The first subtype of this chapter comprises landscape parks: large natural areas that are an important asset for both the city's biodiversity and the district's sense community. Despite variations in size, these green spaces invariably feature elements such as trees, shrubs, and lawns, thereby playing an important role in enhancing the biodiversity of the district.

The second and third subtypes are large, open spaces that play an important role in the social framework of the block. With their reasonable size and offerings for sports and recreation, they are small "centers," or focal points, within the neighborhood. Sports fields and neighborhood parks occupy a prominent position within the open spaces of large housing estates. These spaces serve broad part of the community and are often placed at the center of the block for easy accessibility. Squares also belong to this subset of open public spaces, and they are equally significant for the social structure of a community. They can provide substantial support for surrounding businesses by offering high-quality outdoor areas for cafés and similar establishments. Squares typically have hard paving and no green areas. There are no squares in Block VI.

The third subtype comprises communal meeting spaces. They offer amenities such as benches, picnic tables, table tennis tables, and chessboards. These spaces are used mostly by immediate neighbors for social gatherings and meetings, and they are decentralized throughout the neighborhood.

The fourth subtype consists of urban agricultural spaces and brownfields. These publicly owned open spaces encompass all areas that lack organized public oversight. They are typically managed by groups of people who organize specifically to take care of them. They may be used solely for leisure or left fallow if no one takes ownership. In large housing estates, however, they are often used for planting vegetables, fruits, and berries. The harvest is sometimes

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shared within the community, significantly reducing the need to go to the supermarket. Or the produce is sold at small neighborhood markets to boost the family income.

The last subtype in this chapter are places with smaller sports and play facilities. These spaces are defined by their specific programming and user groups. They are very common, and playgrounds in particular have always been a typical element in large housing estates.

Figure 1: Publicly used open spaces in Block VI

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The integration of nature into the housing districts was an essential component of the planning concepts for large housing estates of the 1960s and 19070s, Like the rest of the spatial organization, the green spaces were also organized into a clear hierarchy. The green spaces included central parks and open spaces within the residential groups with different functional areas for sports, play, and recreation. The green spaces on the edge of the residential areas, which were often built on the outskirts of the city, were to be preserved as much as possible. As with many communal facilities in large housing estates, there was a discrepancy between the initial plans and the realized project regarding parks and sports facilities. While a large communal park and sports center with various options for recreation and sports was planned, only a fraction of this was realized. No other facilities were planned, and the few that were built were only added gradually over the past decades. Today, the block is well-equipped with various offerings.

In modern society, individualized settings are very common in both virtual and physical spaces, where many activities are offered to individual users. Similarly, many people spend little time in communal settings in their immediate neighborhoods, finding community instead at larger events, in commercial settings, or even online. This calls into question a key feature of former socialist neighborhoods: communal open spaces. As people increasingly deal with daily challenges in a private or family environment, communal activities that occurred during the Soviet era, such as the regularly organized weekly cleanings of public spaces during subbotniks, become less relevant. At the same time, groups periodically form to organize voluntary work, staying relevant by strengthening opportunities and creating spaces for meetings that attract various groups at the neighborhood level.

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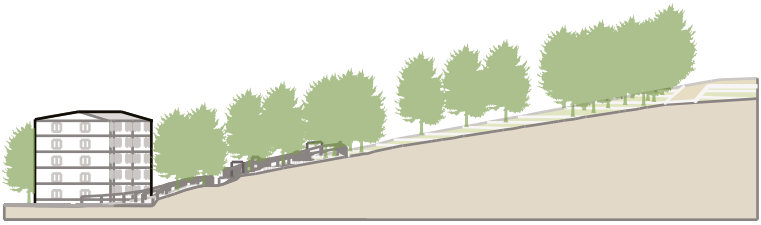
## 3.3.1 Landscape Parks

This subtype comprises public open spaces of district-wide importance. They are characterized by their public accessibility and are typically maintained by the municipality. They lack borders, such as fences, since they usually end at the sidewalk along a major street. Despite their upkeep, these spaces often retain a natural aesthetic, unadorned and devoid of elaborate designs or features. Instead, they are characterized by the presence of native flora, which lends a natural and unspoiled quality to the environment. These spaces are crisscrossed by footpaths, ensuring their accessibility and giving them a "natural" feel. Their substantial size gives them the role of a natural refuge within the urban landscape, providing a sanctuary for diverse fauna. These spaces offer residents a valuable opportunity to engage in leisure activities such as walking and picnicking, thereby promoting mental well-being in the midst of urban congestion.



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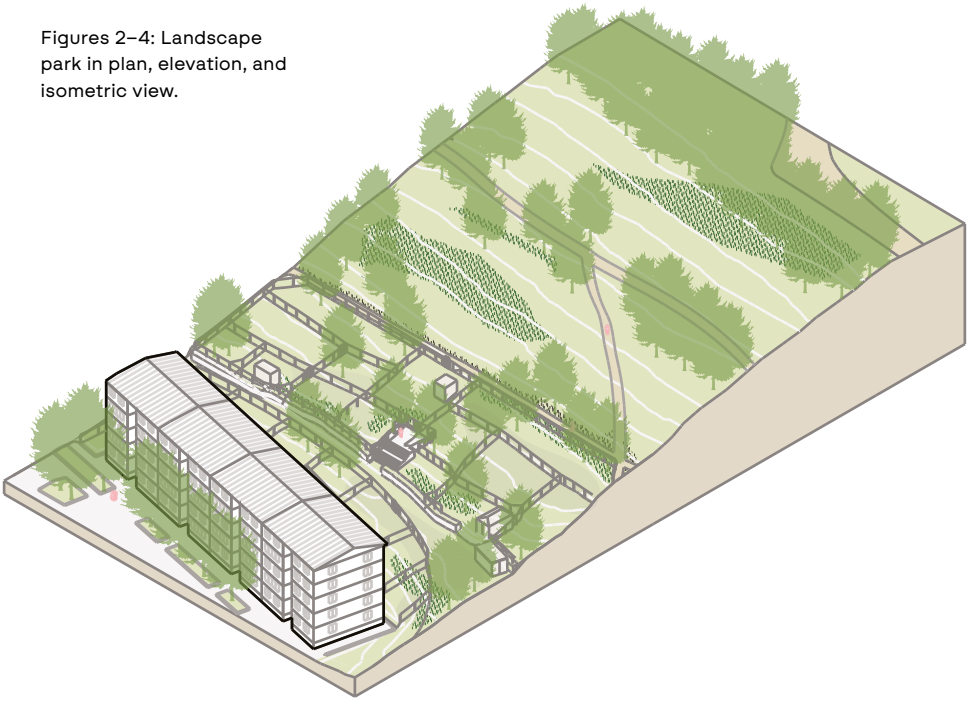
Figures 2–4: Landscape park in plan, elevation, and isometric view.



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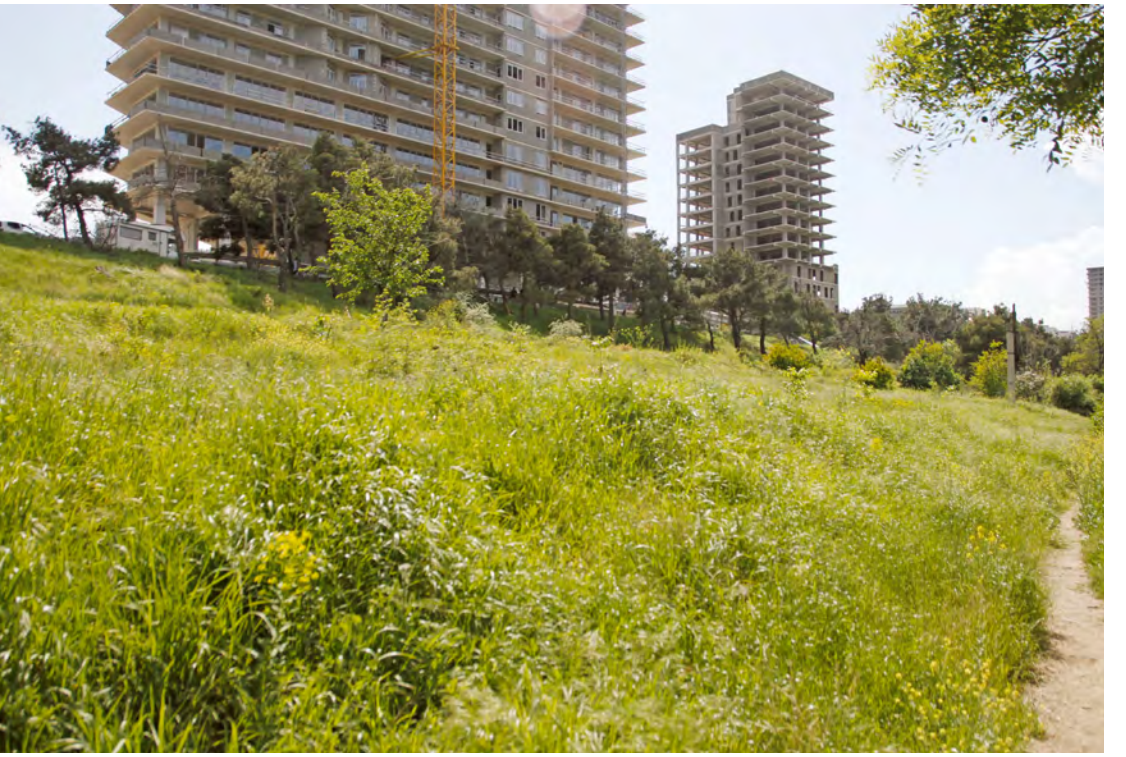

Figure 5: Landscape park with new development in the background
*Source: Ia Kupatadze, 2024*

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## Possible Transformations

These open spaces are usually very accessible, requiring only modest initial investments for transformation. This makes them a compelling proposition for developers seeking to convert them into profitable real estate. However, it is imperative to acknowledge their ecological and social significance, since these spaces serve as vital habitats for local fauna and are an essential resource for the mental well-being of the community, underscoring the need for their preservation. Therefore, all scenarios for future transformation should prioritize the protection of these crucial spaces. Any proposed transformation involving construction should be regarded as a threat and be evaluated carefully. These spaces could therefore benefit from some enclosure to protect them from illegal construction.

Figure 6: Landscape park
*Source: Nano Zazanashvili, 2024*

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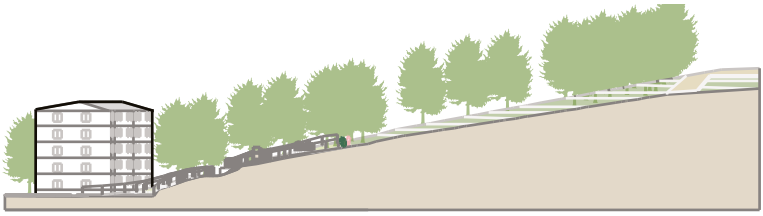
## Entrances and Pathways

Providing clear entryways will help formalize these natural spaces. While there is an inherent quality to keeping the spaces unmarked and without formal pathways, adding some pathways could help raise awareness that these are relevant open spaces, not just leftover spaces. Additionally, providing information about the native fauna and flora can make users more aware of the space's relevance. Placing trash collection areas and seating close to entrances will increase comfort, especially for vulnerable user groups, and help keep the spaces attractive in the future.



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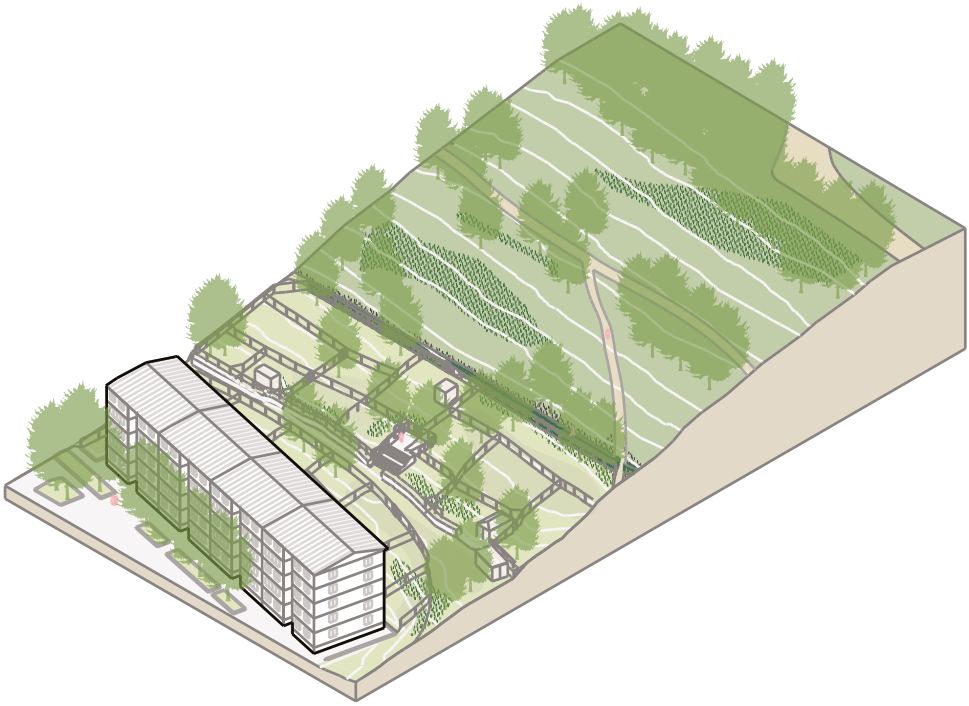
Figures 7–9:
Transformation entrances and pathways in plan, elevation, and isometric view



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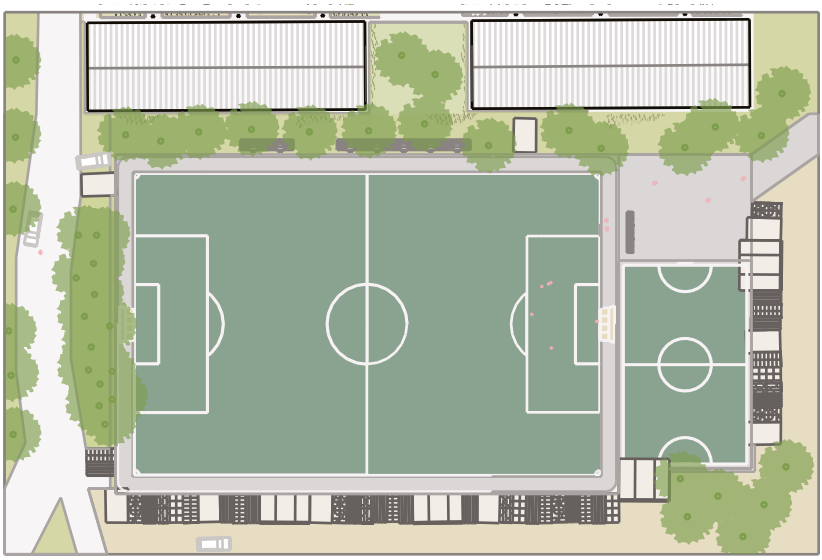
## 3.3.2 Sports Fields and Neighborhood Parks

This subtype comprises large open spaces with varied functions. With their considerable size and different functions, they serve as focal points within the neighborhood, be it a large sports field, a neighborhood park, or a square.

### Sports Fields

At the center of Block VI is a soccer field, placing it in a very prominent location. The city owns the field but has leased it to a sports club for a period of many years. The field is currently enclosed by a tall fence, the purpose of which is to prevent balls from leaving the field, ensure the safety of spectators, and prevent others from entering the space. The field is equipped with several viewing benches for spectators and professional lighting, which allows its use during nighttime hours. There are also stands for coaches and substitute players.



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Figures 10–12: Sports field in plan, elevation, and isometric view

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Figure 13: Sports field with seating
*Source: Ekaterina Gladkova, 2024*

Figure 14: Sports field with urban development in the background
*Source: Nano Zazanashvili, 2025*

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## Possible Transformations

The field lacks additional infrastructure, such as dedicated parking or retail areas. Despite its semi-professional use and considerable size, these elements should be considered if the space continues to be used as it is. The field's location in the middle of a housing district presents both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it attracts many guests to the neighborhood, contributing to a more vibrant atmosphere and drawing customers to surrounding businesses. However, this influx can also generate undesirable consequences, such as noise and litter, which can adversely impact local residents. The sports field's boundaries are the primary challenge that should be addressed in any transformation, particularly due to its central location within the neighborhood.

As the sports field occupies the most significant open space in the area, it creates a substantial void that is inaccessible to the public and remains underutilized by local residents. This situation has a cascading effect on the adjacent open spaces, which become less appealing for communal activities and suffer from a general decline in aesthetic appeal. Consequently, a reduction in the size of the space should be considered and other functions should be added.

Figure 15: Small sports field between P. Kavtaradze 4th turn No. 5 and P. Kavtaradze 3rd Turn No. 6
*Source: Ekaterina Gladkova, 2024*

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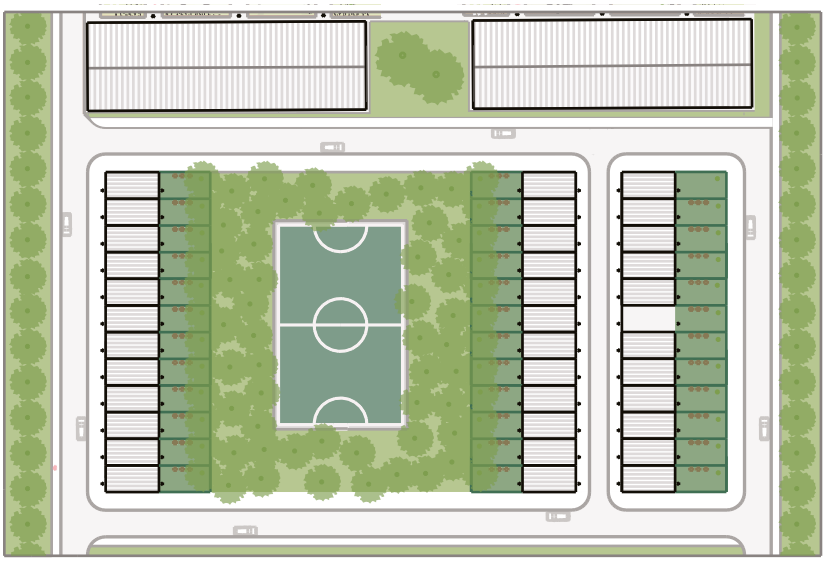
## Densification

In light of the significant housing shortage, it is important to explore the potential of utilizing the existing urban fabric to facilitate densification. Although this space should retain some functionality for recreation and sports, there is considerable scope for reducing its dimensions. Due to the size of this area, a wide variety of housing typologies could be considered for densification. The proposed variation with row houses maintains relatively low density and therefore does not significantly impact the usage of existing amenities. The row house layout also opens up the space and makes it more permeable, thereby facilitating traversal of the neighborhood and reducing travel distances between points on either side. Therefore, such a scenario could benefit the neighborhood while maintaining its functionality for sporting events. An alternative space for professional sports should be found outside the neighborhood.



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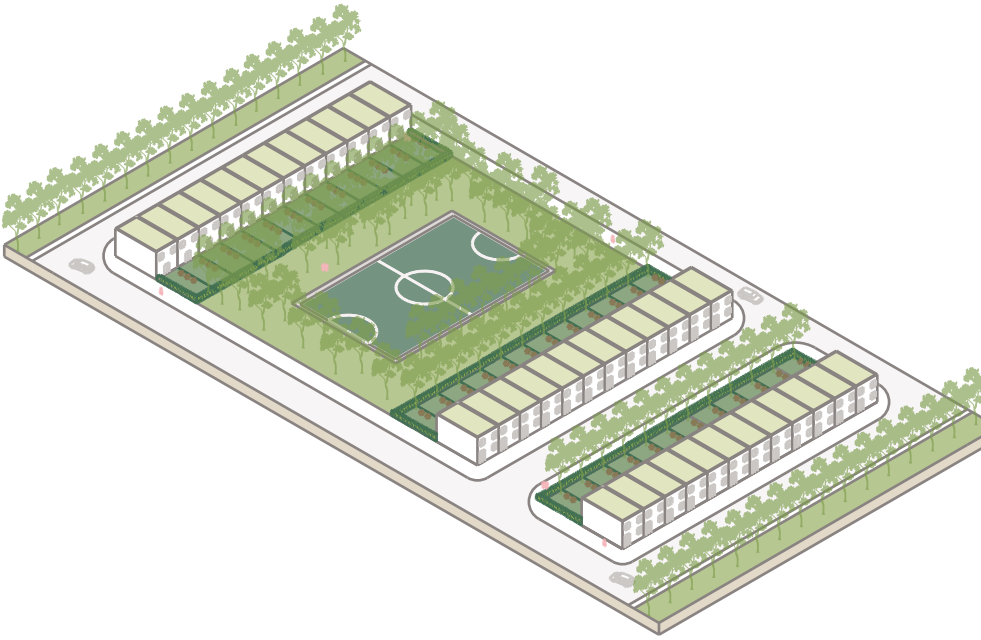
Figures 16–18: Transformation through densification



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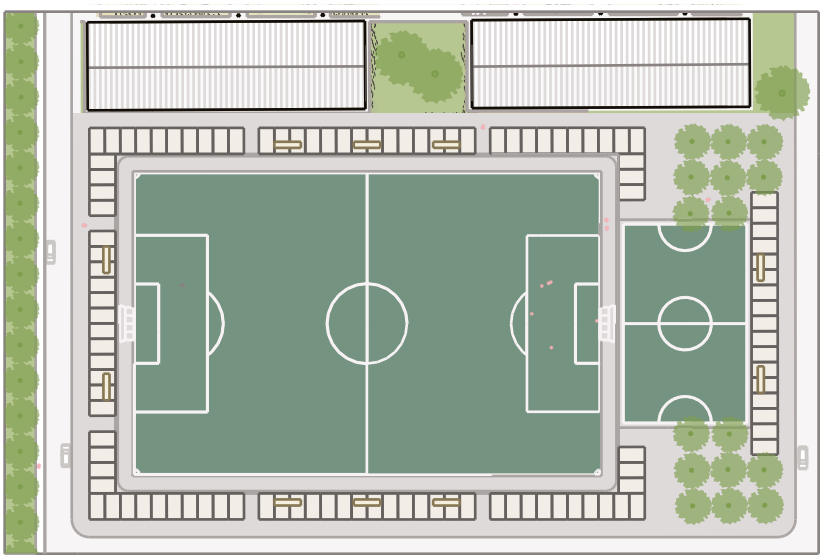
## Garage Perimeter

If the size of the sports field remains the same, the surrounding area could be enhanced by building more garages around it. This would further isolate the field, making it seem like a foreign object in the neighborhood. The garages could then serve as raised seating for watching games. Some garages could house facilities that support sporting activities, such as small shops. While the field would still negatively impact the neighborhood, residents could benefit from the additional garage space and would be less burdened by the stadium's noise pollution. Fences and other dividing structures would become superfluous, and the neighborhood would effectively gain a new interior facade. This encapsulation could be an effective way to address issues that negatively impact the neighborhood's quality of life.

Figures 19, 20: Transformation through densification



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## Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood parks feature varied greenery and also offer diverse functions for leisure and contemplation. Block VI is home to several neighborhood parks, which are built and maintained by the municipality. These parks offer a diverse array of activities, catering to people of all ages. While primarily designed for the benefit of local residents, these parks frequently attract visitors from neighboring districts. In recent decades, many of these smaller public spaces have been developed by the districts and the municipality. These public spaces are of great importance for the immediate community; they are within walking distance from the homes of local residents. They provide spaces for social interaction and leisure activities during the week. These open public spaces are usually designed to cater to the needs of the entire family.

The neighborhood parks are typically enclosed by fences and equipped with various playground equipment, such as swings and sandboxes. Due to their organized nature, furniture, and sports equipment such as basketball hoops, soccer goals, swings, seesaws, carousels, and sandboxes, the use is

Figures 21–23: Neighborhood park in plan, elevation, and isometric view

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mostly prescribed and the level of required maintenance is high. Additionally, they may provide designated barbecuing areas with tables and benches. Depending on the park's size, it may also incorporate sports amenities such as table tennis tables or basketball courts. In recent years, the district has developed many of these community facilities. They are well-accepted by the neighborhood but sometimes lack specificity. They are mostly equipped with standardized nonspecific furniture and lighting.

These parks play a pivotal role in community building. They offer spaces for gatherings and ample space for events such as children's birthday parties. They provide a diverse array of activities, fostering interaction among people with diverse interests or allowing users to enjoy the space on their own. Their public location ensures safety, and the presence of lighting enhances their usability. Overall, these parks provide valuable opportunities for neighborhoods by providing spaces for communal gatherings. This alleviates pressure on other, more private spaces like yards, which in return allows those spaces in the immediate housing environment to be further developed for private gardens or other individualized uses.

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Figure 24: Play structures in a neighborhood park
Figure 25: Swing set in a neighborhood park
*Source: Ekaterina Gladkova, 2024*

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## Possible Transformations

Neighborhood parks should be open and inclusive. Zoning should be clear yet uncomplicated, and activities should cater to a diverse range of user groups. While furniture such as benches and lighting can be beneficial, it should be placed in specific locations rather than distributed randomly throughout. While neighborhood parks should ideally be well accessible and integrated into the neighborhood, they also benefit from clear delineations and even built-up boundaries.

Figure 26: Seating in neighborhood park
Figure 27: View on neighborhood park
*Source: Ekaterina Gladkova, 2024*

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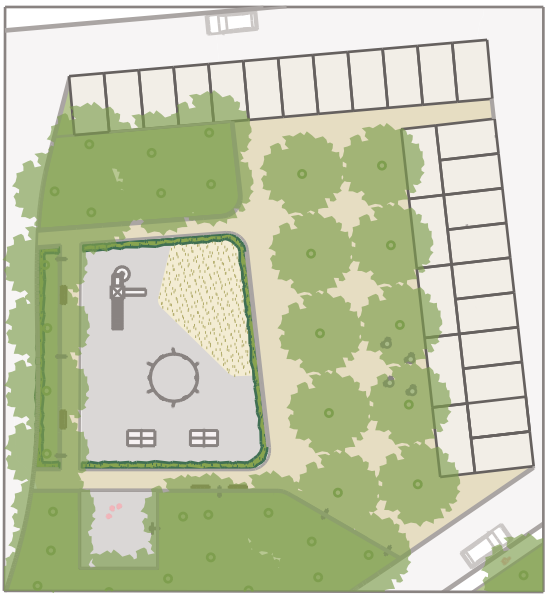
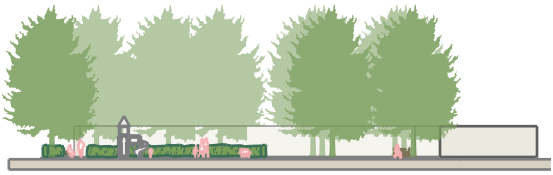
## Structured Surrounding Garages

By adding onto the existing garages and closing off two of the sides with these structures, the enclosure of the park is strengthened. Entrance areas should be accentuated. The new structures could host a café with seating areas facing the park. Other shops selling basic necessitiies could also be located here, allowing the visitors to do some shopping during or after their visit. The actual play areas should be clearly zoned, and areas designed especially for younger children could benefit from being enclosed. By reducing the number of small zones, the remaining ones will be more attractive. Garages should be given green facades toward the park to integrate them into the area.

Figures 28–30: Transformation through structured surrounding garages





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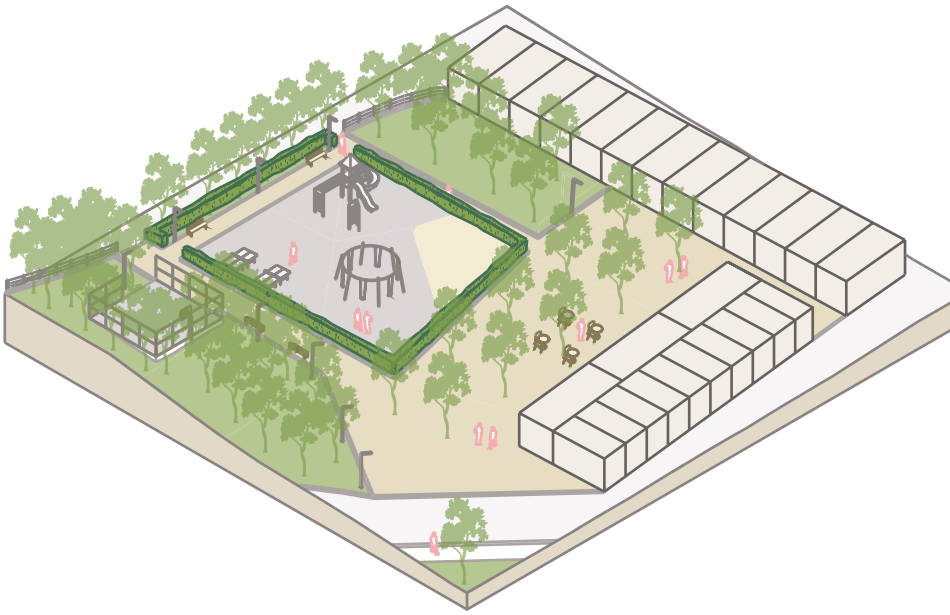

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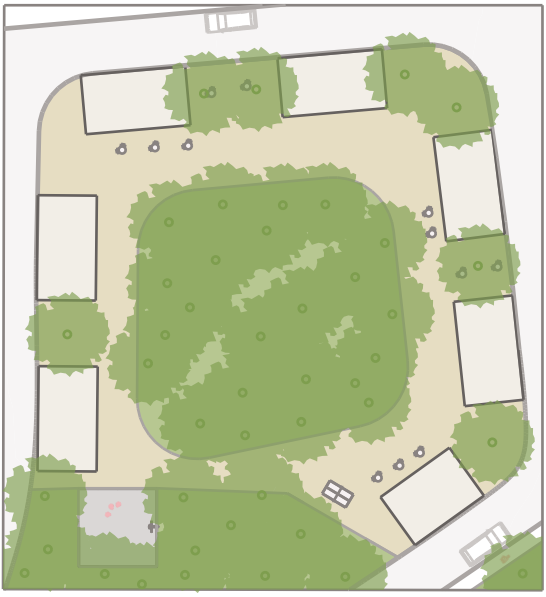
## Central Green with Perforated Boundaries

By opening the boundaries of the built-up area, the park becomes accessible from all sides while remaining clearly demarcated. The buildings could house various functions, such as neighborhood centers, cafés, youth centers, and child daycare facilities. All of these functions would benefit from the park, and vice versa, since the park would benefit from these functions during working hours. This scenario proposes a simple grass lawn in the center of the park. Trees would provide shade, making the area inviting for picnics. The area adjacent to the building could be used for ball play or other sports activities, but it primarily serves the specific function of the building's users. While these areas could be designed according to their needs, the rules regarding furniture, materials, etc., should be consistent throughout the entire park.

Figures 31, 32:
Transformation into a central green with perforated boundaries



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## Green Park with Large Lawn

This variation demonstrates the simplest approach to design a neighborhood park. At the same time, this can be very attractive for denser neighborhoods. By offering only green spaces and no built facilities, the area's use remains open to the creativity of its users. While ideal for social gatherings, a large unobstructed lawn also offers space for recreational games such as frisbee or soccer. The greenery positively impacts the neighborhod's climate. It is relatively inexpensive to build and maintain, yet attractive to all age groups. Creating differentiated open and closed areas with and without trees enables comfortable use during different seasons and weather conditions.

Figures 33, 34: Transformation into a green park with a large lawn

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## 3.3.3 Communal Meeting Spaces

Communal meeting spaces can serve different functions but are often used for gatherings and meetings. They are usually maintained by a group of people who share common interests. These spaces typically have some sort of urban furniture, such as benches and tables. They are usually accessible by everyone with no strict enclosure, and although they are maintained by a specific group of residents, the user group can be much broader. They are larger than the private gardens and are generally well visible and connected to the street network. These community meeting spaces are a crucial element for the large housing estates because they offer free gathering places for the entire community. As the open spaces experience increasing use pressure and more and more areas are privatized, commercialized, or restricted to specific uses or users, these open and somewhat undefined areas are increasingly important to neighborhood identity. They also offer a great space for markets or other recurring non-permanent commercial activity.

Figures 35–37: Communal garden in plan, elevation, and isometric view

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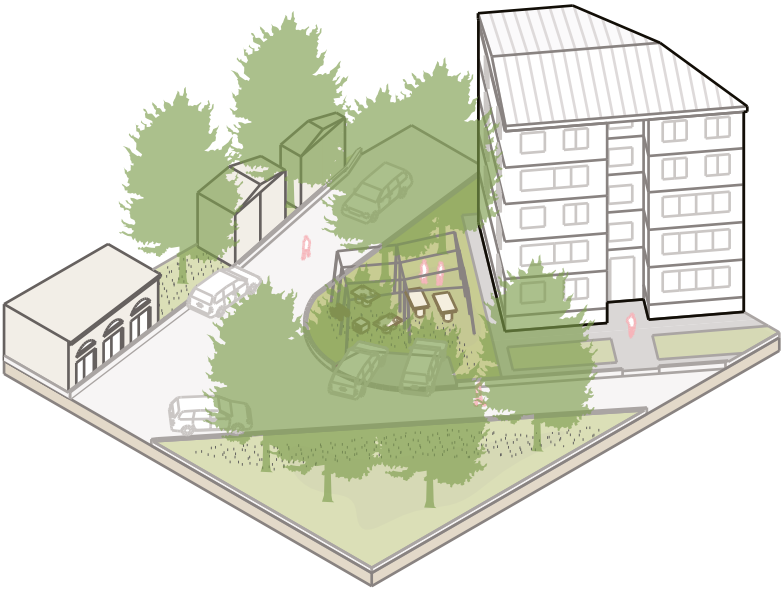

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Figure 38: Meeting space near P. Kavtaradze 4th turn building 4
*Source: Nano Zazanashvili, 2025*

Figure 39: Meeting space, near P. Kavtaradze 4th turn building 4
*Source: Ekaterina Gladkova, 2024*

Figure 40: Meeting space near P. Kavtaradze 3rd turn building 5
*Source: Ekaterina Gladkova, 2024*

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## Possible Transformations

The lack of specificity is one of the biggest challenges posed by communal gardens. Their potential as meeting places for the community and the benefits of their spatial quality for the neighborhood are often hidden due to undefined responsibilities and a lack of maintenance, which makes them vulnerable to redevelopment. Due to their size, they have a great potential for other functions. Depending on their location, people already use them today for parking. While communal gardens are an important community asset, their current locations are not always ideal. This makes relocation advisable, enabling the currently occupied spaces to be redeveloped for other functions.

Figure 41: Meeting space near P. Kavtaradze 4th turn building 6
*Source: Ekaterina Gladkova, 2024*

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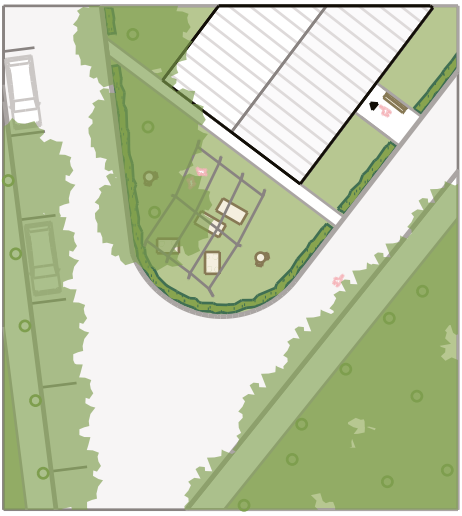
## Formalizing and Qualifying

The easiest and best way to manage communal gardens is to formalize them when possible. By establishing clear agreements with the landowners and garden users, the latter are encouraged to invest more in improving the garden. As in other instances, design guides can help maintain a coherent neighborhood image while giving users sufficient freedom to design the space to their liking. In most cases, a soft border helps protect the space from competing uses, such as parking. Integrating the surrounding open spaces, such as front gardens or yards, benefits everyone. Due to the communal character of the space, clear entrances and accessibility to the community should be guaranteed.

Figures 42–44: Transformation by formalizing and qualifying



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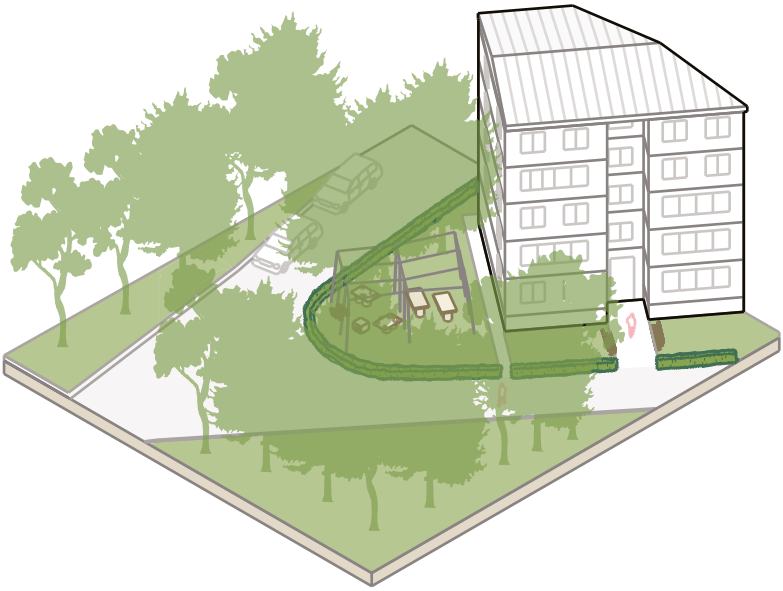

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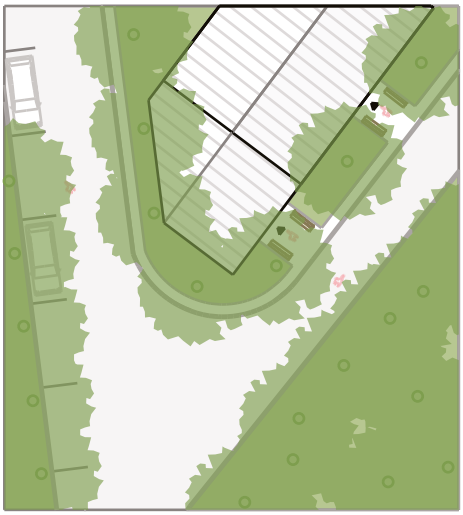
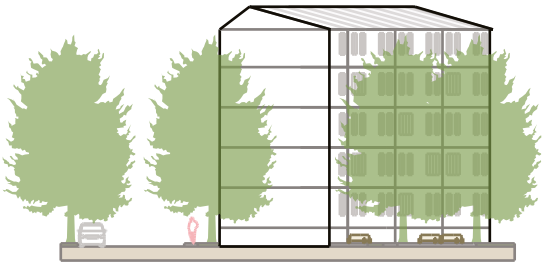
## Additional Housing

If a garden is located next to a fully developed building, it may be possible to build additional housing by extending the building into the garden. This option should be considered when the quality of the space is not worth preserving and there is a high demand for additional housing. While some open space would be lost for the neighborhood, the additional housing would be more relevant and therefore justified. As shown in this scenario, the space is poorly utilized and has low spatial quality because it lies next to multiple streets.

Figures 45, 46: Transformation with additional housing





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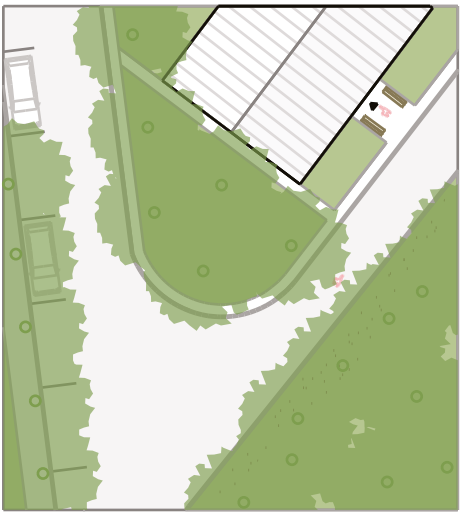
## Removal and Redevelopment

If users are unwilling or unable to maintain the garden properly or reach a formal agreement to do so and there are no other feasible alternative uses, such as parking or redevelopment, it may be best to restore the space to its original design. Often, this was a green area without a specific function. In this case, the owner, or the representative of the owner—the HOA—should maintain this area and protect it from disruptive uses such as unauthorized parking. The area should also be integrated into the district-wide landscape concept. This may entail planting trees and providing water features.



Figures 47, 48: Transformation by removal and redevelopment

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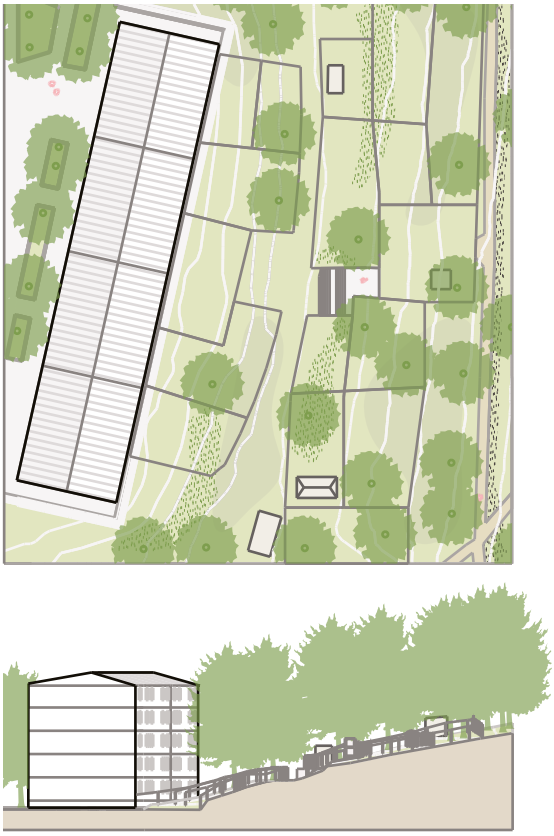
## 3.3.4 Urban Agriculture and Brownfields

All areas used for urban agriculture and all brownfield sites in Block VI are owned and maintained by the community. Most smaller sites of this type lie fallow, contain urban wilderness, and are unmaintained. The larger examples of this subtype are appropriated by the community, consist of multiple private individual parcels, and are used for urban gardening, a form of inner-city agriculture. Besides being used for vegetable cultivation, urban gardens are sometimes used to also raise small animals, such as rabbits or chickens. The purpose of these gardens is small-scale food production, usually for individual private use, but it can also be of small-scale commercial activity.

Currently, all urban agriculture is located at the southern edge of Block VI, between the last row of buildings and the natural park. The brownfield sites are scattered throughout the neighborhood. The most significant one is at the northern edge of the main sports field.

Figures 49–51: Urban garden in plan, elevation, and isometric view



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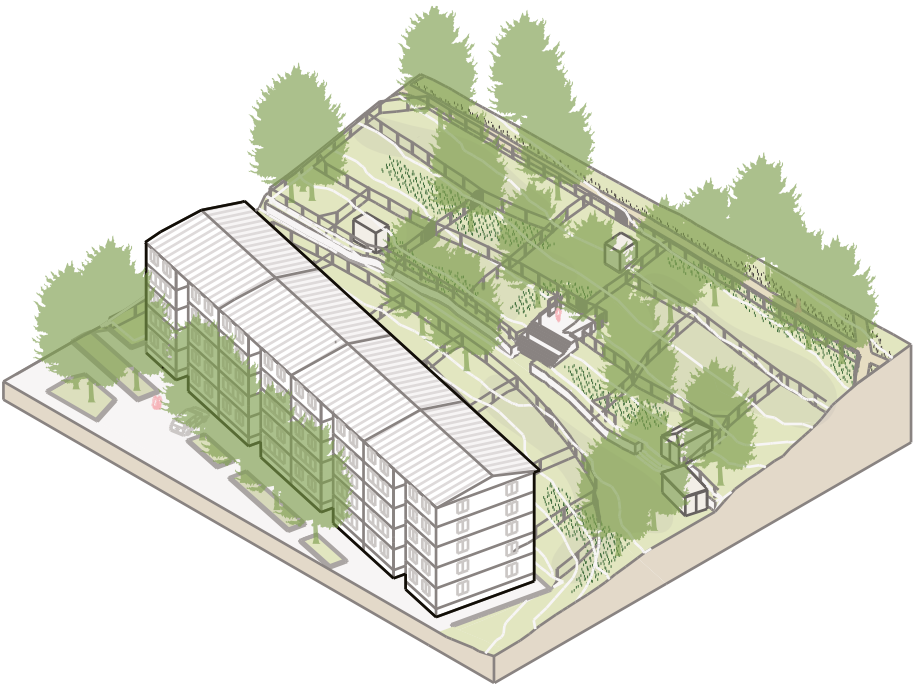

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Figure 52: Urban agriculture with apartment buildings in the background
*Source: Ia Kupatadze, 2025*

Figure 53: Urban agriculture with formal seating
*Source: Ia Kupatadze, 2025*

Figure 54: Urban agriculture with improvised seating
*Source: Ia Kupatadze, 2025*

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Figure 55: Urban agriculture to the south of Block VI
*Source: Ia Kupatadze, 2025*

## Possible Transformations

As with other communal areas, the urban gardens are a significant resource for the community. Although the necessity for urban agricultural areas is currently minimal, the demand for designated planting spaces is increasing. Determining the optimal locations for these open spaces is challenging because the immediate needs are not always evident. These areas are frequently situated at the periphery of the district. However, it is important to recognize that the district could benefit from a central location for these gardens. This consideration should be incorporated into all scenarios involving transformation or relocation.

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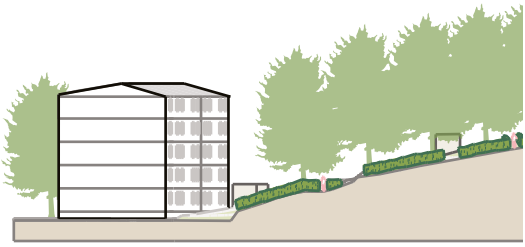
## Parceled Plots

This scenario investigates the possibility of optimizing the utilization of the designated space. Introducing a central pathway and allocating a portion of the garden space to the apartment building has the potential to generate additional individual plots. Diversifying the size of the individual parcels caters to more needs. The central structures, which include water supply and tool storage facilities, serve all the gardens in the area. The wide pathway, which is designed for small gatherings, extends along the perimeter of the property. The strategic placement of hedges of varying lengths serves to define the spatial configuration, thereby offering refuge to diverse species while preserving an atmosphere that is both permeable and communal.

Figures 56–58:
Transformation into parceled plots



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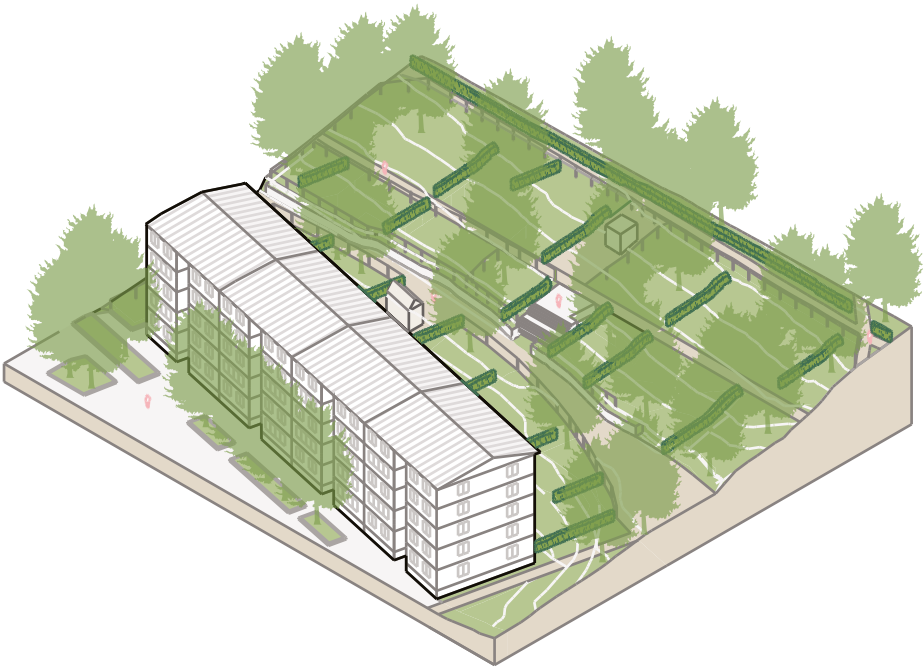

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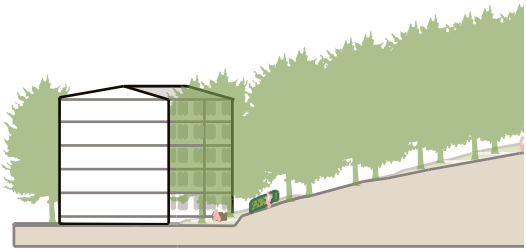
## Common Garden

In the event of relocation or underutilization resulting in surplus, the spaces may be repurposed for the adjacent building. Establishing a shared garden at this decentralized location is a suitable use of the available space. Moreover, the gardens could be reintegrated into the nearby natural park, which would benefit from additional space. Similar integrations into adjacent spaces are also possible with other examples. If the space is of low value to the neighborhood and has little or no potential for natural development, even new building projects could be appropriate.

Figures 59, 60:
Transformation into a common garden



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## 3.3.5 Playgrounds and Spaces with Sport Facilities

This subtype comprises all open spaces designated for playful recreational and sport activities. Spaces with sports and play facilities are designed specifically for sporting and recreational activities. These spaces are often limited in terms of both usage and user demographic, frequently catering to a particular age group. Usage of these facilities may be regulated through direct payment systems or mandatory club membership.

The installation of specific instruments, goals, hoops, and workout or play equipment enables users to perform exercises or play games such as soccer or basketball, as well as activities like swinging, balancing, and so on. Due to their specialized nature, these open spaces often require a significant initial investment and relatively high maintenance costs. Consequently, many people who are not interested in or capable of performing the offered activity are excluded from using them.

Figures 61–63: Playground in plan, elevation, and isometric view

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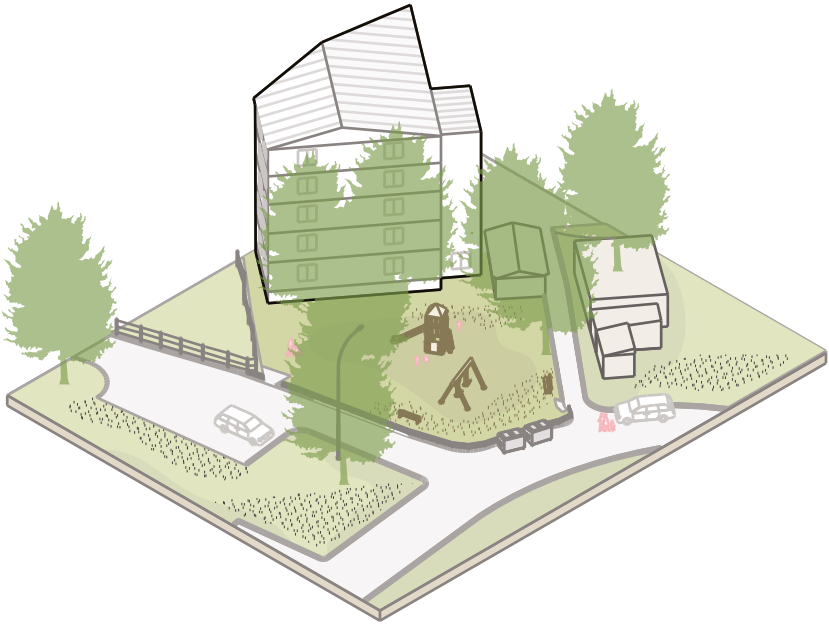

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While some sports can be practiced in a less regulated environment, sports fields are an integral component of our culture and society. They facilitate the practice of sports and serve as meeting places for recreational activities, with the potential to enhance physical and mental well-being. These open spaces are often enclosed by physical barriers, such as fences. In addition to their numerous advantages, sports fields can also negatively impact residential neighborhoods. Due to their restrictive nature, they can create inaccessible islands within the neighborhood.

There are also sport fields that are considerably smaller in size and are maintained by the district. These fields are open to the public and seamlessly integrate into the surrounding open spaces, such as neighborhood parks or residential yards. Despite their designated use, they are generally accessible to all members of the community. The basketball and soccer courts in Block VI are particularly popular among the youth population. These spaces are notable for their high levels of activity and their role as catalysts for the surrounding environment. Apart from the limitations imposed by urban furniture, these areas are also used as social spaces, particularly by children and adolescents.

There is one designated workout area with several exercise machines in the neighborhood. These open spaces are not delineated by a physical perimeter, but rather defined by the equipment itself. Although usage of these spaces is constrained to the specific exercise performed on each machine, they can serve as valuable assets for community building due to the presence of diverse user groups. It would be advantageous to consider integrating these workout spaces with other forms of sporting equipment, as this could further stimulate the use of these spaces and foster interaction among different groups within the neighborhood.

Playgrounds serve a similar function for children. These spaces offer specialized area for a specific user group. Some of these spaces have soccer goals and basketball hoops. Additionally, there are areas within Block VI with table tennis tables and workout equipment. The playgrounds are typically intended for children between the ages of 1 to 15 and are often enclosed to ensure safety and prevent children from leaving without supervision. They offer a valuable leisure opportunity for families, allowing caregivers to unwind while children engage in enjoyable activities. The playground equipment found in these spaces can vary, encompassing elements such as swings, seesaws, climbing structures, and sandboxes. Equipment intended for use by different age groups is typically characterized by variations in terms of both complexity and level of difficulty. Playgrounds are a vital part of the community infrastructure, serving as an essential open space for the development of social capital within the community. They foster the development of interpersonal skills, the resolution of conflict, and the cultivation of enjoyment by integrating diverse families and children.

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The presence of privately constructed and maintained playgrounds underscores the importance of accessibility for a broader demographic. While these playgrounds may not possess the same permanence as their public counterparts, they can serve as valuable resources for specific user groups. The utilization of playgrounds by families or young children necessitates their strategic placement in safe and secluded areas, distanced from the potential hazards of traffic and environmental contamination.

Figure 64: Playground with swing set near P. Kavtaradze 4th turn 3
*Source: Ekaterina Gladkova, 2024*

Figure 65: Playground with parked cars near P. Kavtaradze 47
*Source: Nano Zazanashvili, 2025*

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Figure 66: Playground with seesaw near P. Kavtaradze 47
*Source: Nano Zazanashvili, 2025*

## Possible Transformations

Playgrounds are important, yet they are often found in suboptimal locations. Therefore, it makes sense to evaluate them and adapt the space accordingly. When replacing a playground with another type of space, alternative options have to be considered. It might also be advisable to divide the space, optimizing it for more than one function. When the function remains, it should be formalized to actually fit the needs of children and caregivers.

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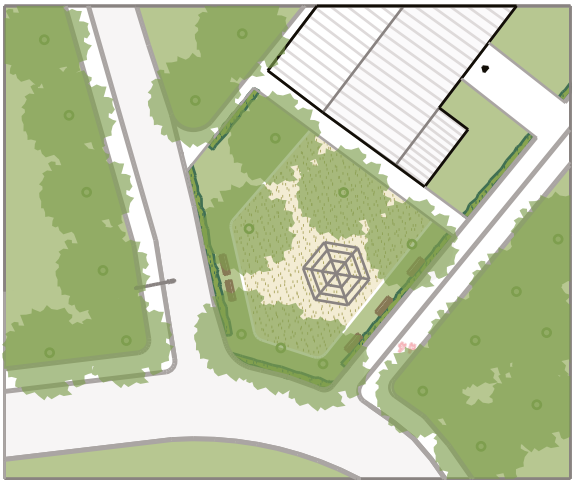
## Formalized Playgrounds

By addressing all areas surrounding a playground, the quality of the play space itself can be improved. Adding sidewalks to the streets, removing unnecessary parking areas, and planting trees are some of the measures to further improve the space. Enclosing the playground, creating clear entry areas, and adding safe walkways for pedestrians transforms the area into an open space of high quality for the neighborhood, offering residents, especially those who live directly nearby, a place to meet and spend afternoons with their children.



Figures 67, 68: Transformation into a formal playground

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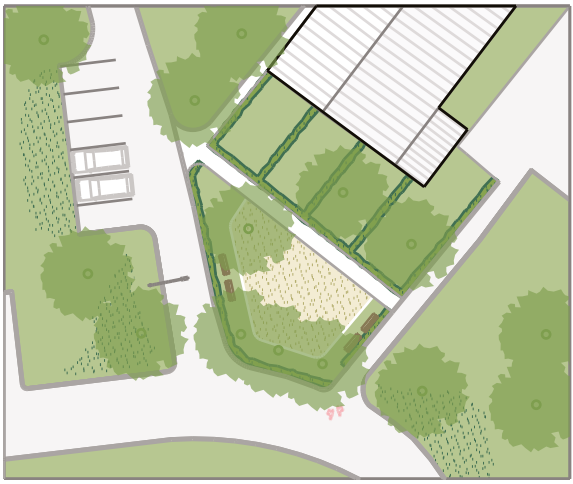
## Private Gardens and Formalized Playgrounds

The dimension of the open space could be rearranged, creating private gardens and a small formalized playground. Adding a hedge and urban furniture can make the space safer and more comfortable. Building a formal footpath clarifies the entrance, which makes it easier to supervise children. At the same time, the space directly adjacent to a building might be better suited for its immediate inhabitants and could be transformed accordingly. In this case, private gardens would be provided for the residents of the building.



Figures 69–71: Transformation into private gardens and formalized playground

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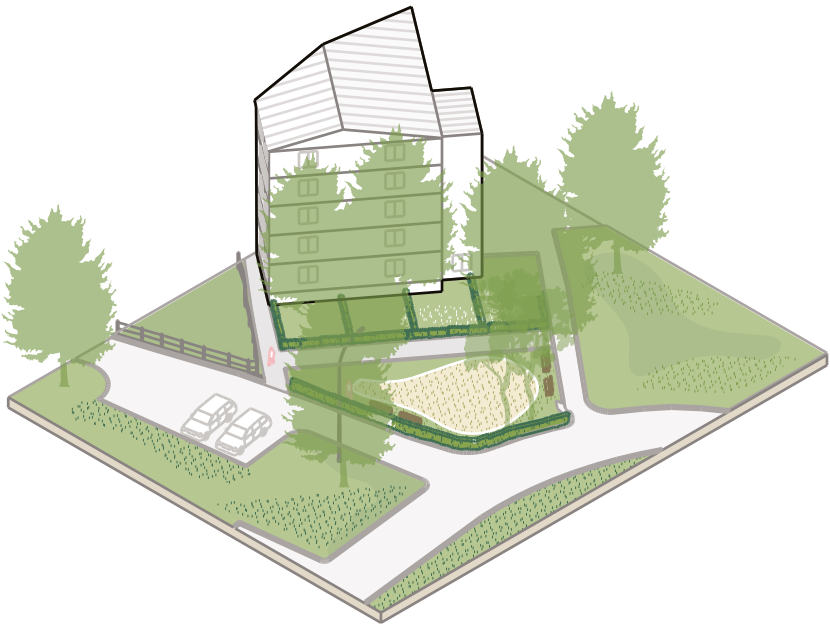

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# 4. CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

*Source: Aleksandre Okrostsvaridze*

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# TRANSFORMATION OF OPEN SPACES

The presented proposals for transforming the different open space typologies demonstrate the variety of open spaces that exist and the potential these typologies have to contribute to a more sustainable neighborhood. The proposals differ in terms of the depth of implementation, the time and financial effort required, legal framework, ownership issues, and much more. Some of the proposed solutions can be implemented by the residents themselves, while others require the involvement of an organized and professional entity.

Identifying types allows for a systematic approach to organizing the transformation of the neighborhood. Instead of presenting a precise design for every location in Block VI, principles of transformation for typical open spaces show the strengths and weaknesses of each type and their broad spectrum of possibilities. This approach enables the development of action plans that can be implemented step by step, and it offers the ability to focus initially on a certain typology or a specific part of the neighborhood, depending on development pressure, community activity, or financial means. Some of the measures can be managed by individuals, which provides an opportunity for short-term improvement of Block VI and, at the same time, can strengthen neighborhood involvement and participation, thereby supporting and strengthening social cohesion and self-identification with the neighborhood.

The proposals were conceived as distinct measures—a tool kit of available options rather than part of a definitive and comprehensive master plan. The various transformation proposals could be implemented as single actions or could build on each other. One typology could be transformed consistently throughout a neighborhood, or it could be flexibly adapted according to residents' changing needs and interests—and the available budget. It would not be helpful to create a definitive and detailed blueprint for transforming Block VI, as this would contradict flexibility and would make future adaptations difficult. And yet, although the measures work independently, a strategic plan would be of great value. Such a plan could identify which projects should be prioritized and which transformations could benefit from each other. It could also explain which measures could be organized and realized by residents themselves and where support from district management and/or the municipality would be needed.

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## The Green Superblock

As described in the previous chapter with regard to a variety of options, the transformation of open spaces could lead to the transformation of the entire neighborhood. If a critical mass of proposed measures is implemented, the neighborhood will take on a completely different character. It will be characterized by attractive green spaces that contribute to greater social interaction, a higher quality of life, and climate protection and adaptation. At the same time, Vazha-Pshavela Block VI could become the first green superblock in Tbilisi.

Figure 1: The Future of Vazha-Pshavela Block VI
*Source: Aleksandre Okrostsvaridze*

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The Green Superblock could be a car-restricted neighborhood, allowing access only for pick-up and delivery for its residents, or it could even be car-free. All parking would be located outside the block in parking garages, bundled along the perimeter of the block, or arranged along the surrounding streets. Traffic inside the neighborhood would be mostly or entirely non-motorized, prioritizing pedestrians and cyclists—of course with exceptions made for emergency vehicles and people with disabilities. The inner streets and passages would not only provide accessibility, but would also—and most importantly—facilitate communication and social interaction. The new transportation infrastructure would shorten distances for pedestrians and cyclists within the block, improve connections to public transportation, and ensure the residential area remains accessible to those traveling by car.

The restructured outdoor spaces optimize access to high-quality open spaces for diverse user groups and densify the neighborhood by adding essential amenities and living spaces. Future transformation measures would prioritize open, unsealed surfaces and green spaces over concrete and paved spaces. The Green Superblock offers a variety of open spaces for communal activities, meetings, and gathering with neighbors; sports activities; relaxation; and private use

The goal is to have as much green space as possible and only as many buildings as necessary. New buildings would be placed in select locations to help organize the space, for instance by dividing private spaces from public spaces, noisy spaces from calm spaces, et cetera. With the careful addition of buildings, the neighborhood could be augmented with missing functions, such as additional services or more apartments. The interconnected network of open spaces offers inhabitants many spaces to take charge of their living environment and leads to ideal microclimate conditions. It helps deal with rising heat, and provides plenty of room for diverse flora and fauna. These features further qualify the quarter for changing climate conditions and strengthen the social cohesion of the neighborhood.

## Requirements and Perspectives

Scenarios are not design proposals. Rather, they are meant to exemplify possible futures. They clearly show what positive future potentials could arise for people and the planet if action is taken. The scenarios also demonstrate that specific prerequisites are necessary to achieve a desired future. The presented scenarios illustrate only simplified design solutions; many other measures are needed to achieve the outlined improvements. For successful implementation, citizens, planners, and the administration must work hand in hand, supporting each other. Professional approaches cannot be limited to a single approach, nor can they be achieved by a single profession. The silos of disciplines with-

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in administrative departments and within university study programs must be dissolved, and integrated solutions that take knowledge from different viewpoints into account have to be tested. Resources must be used sustainably, and climate-resilient solutions that consider our natural and social resources must be negotiated against profitability and political will. It is essential to find new planning approaches that address land use and ownership in a future-proof manner that limits speculation and ensures that scarce resources remain accessible for the public good.

Living labs are a great tool for enabling participatory processes that can initiate discussions and actions about the sustainable transformation of the neighborhood, driven by the local community. The living lab "The Green Superblock" that we established in Vasha-Pshavela in May 2025 has the potential to serve as a model for similar activities in other parts of Tbilisi. The lab's various activities, such as round tables, planning workshops, and walking tours, sparked and promoted discussions about the future development of Block VI and even implemented a transformation in one of the yards. The site transformation of an underused open space, implemented during an integrated workshop in which students and neighbors worked together, demonstrates the great potential of bottom-up activities. And the transformed space has become a beloved place. By supporting projects like this, the city will gain access to the fundamental knowledge its citizens have about their living environment. Integrated approaches help to achieve sustainable solutions that are accepted by users and planners alike, but they depend as much on the active involvement of the administration as they do on that of the participating citizens.

The planning proposals for Block VI in Vazha-Pshavela integrate existing policies because the 15-minute city concept is already on Tbilisi's planning agenda. This model envisions urban spaces where all essential services, workplaces, educational institutions, healthcare facilities, shops, parks, and recreational areas are accessible within 15 minutes on foot or by bicycle. In this regard, the Georgian capital envisions several superblocks as pilot projects, modeled after Barcelona. Superblocks are urban areas with a strong focus on human well-being. Surrounded by perimeter roads, their street layout prevents through traffic, offering improved quality of life in the urban environment. All current pilot projects are in densely urbanized areas close to the city center. Block VI has the potential to become Tbilisi's first Green Superblock.

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# GLOSSARY

**apartment building extension (ABE)**
Apartment building extensions (ABEs) are structural enlargements of dwellings in multistory apartment blocks that extend beyond the original footprints of their host buildings. ABEs are mainly present in housing estates in the post-communist cities of the Balkans and Caucasus, where their magnitude and ubiquity often rival the original built structures in terms of size and function.

**bottom-up approach**
A bottom-up approach in urban planning emphasizes community involvement and local knowledge to shape development. It contrasts with top-down planning, which is initiated and directed by influential entities and governing bodies. The bottom-up approach prioritizes the needs and desires of residents, who are actively involved in the planning procedures.

**bus rapid transit (BRT)**
A bus rapid transit (BRT) system is an express system of public transportation designed to improve capacity and reliability in congested cities. It is based on separate bus lanes that can only be used by the large buses operated by BRT companies.

**cadastre**
A cadastre (or cadaster) is a comprehensive record of the property boundaries, the so-called metes and bounds, of real estate parcels. It is often represented graphically in a cadastral map. In most countries, legal systems have developed around the original administrative systems and use the cadastre to define the dimensions and location of land parcels described in legal documentation.

**compartmentalization**
In the context of development in Georgian neighborhoods, compartmentalization means the extension of apartments by privatizing and occupying vacant spaces between buildings or green areas between residential districts. Collectively owned areas like courtyards have been compartmentalized, with a bewildering variety of walls, fences, hedges, and markings.

**district management**
District management in the context of Tbilisi refers to the administrative entity responsible for governing, maintaining, and developing a specific district of the city. Its functions on the local level include preparing district development documents, coordinating infrastructure and greening projects, managing social and humanitarian programs, overseeing public property, protecting existing cultural heritage monuments within the district, and responding to the needs of the area's residents.

**Five-Year Plan**
The Five-Year Plans for the development of the national economy of the USSR [Union of Soviet Socialist Republics] (Russian: пятилетние планы развития народного хозяйства СССР, pyatiletniye plany razvitiya narodnogo khozyaystva SSSR) were a series of centralized, nationwide economic plans for the Soviet Union that began in the late 1920s. The Soviet state planning committee, Gosplan, developed these economic plans based on the productive forces theory, which was an essential part of the Communist Party's ideology for developing the Soviet economy. Fulfilling the current plan became the guiding principle of the Soviet bureaucracy.

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**general plan**
In Russia, a general plan, often referred to as a "genplan," is a strategic document that outlines the long-term spatial development of a city or region. It serves as a comprehensive blueprint for urban planning, addressing various aspects such as infrastructure, land use, transportation, and environmental considerations. It essentially serves as a roadmap for how a city or region should grow and develop over a specific period, typically 20–30 years.

**homeowners' association (HOA)**
A homeowners' association is a governing body formed by the owners of residential and non-residential spaces, including commercial spaces, in a specific apartment building in a community. HOAs are responsible for managing common areas and enforcing rules.

**Nikita Khrushchev**
Khrushchev (1894–1971) was the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1953 to 1964 and the Chairman of the Council of Ministers (premier) from 1958 to 1964.

**large housing estate**
A large housing estate is a large residential complex consisting of multi-unit apartment buildings or single-family homes located in a single area. These estates often include shared infrastructure, such as parks, schools, shops, and transport hubs.

**living lab / real-world lab**
A living lab is a field of scientific experimentation in which practitioners from municipalities, professional associations, and interest groups are involved in the research process from the outset. It is a research environment where innovations and solutions are tested under real-life conditions with the participation of end users. Living labs enable the integration of users into the development process of products, services, and/or systems to enhance their efficiency and alignment with real-world needs.

**microdistrict**
A microdistrict (Russian: микрорайон, microrayon) is a planning unit located outside a core city, typically comprised of standardized multistory buildings in large panel construction. According to Soviet planning standards, a microdistrict usually covers an area of 10 to 60 hectares, with a maximum of 80 hectares. It should not be divided by main roads. Furthermore, maximum distances to infrastructure facilities apply (e.g., schools should be no more than 500 m from the farthest residential block). Depending on its size, a microdistrict usually has its own kindergartens, schools, and leisure infrastructure, such as playgrounds and sports fields, as well as retail, healthcare, and administrative units.

**modernism**
Modernism was an artistic movement that swept across various artistic disciplines in the early twentieth century, including literature, the visual and performing arts, and music. It placed a strong emphasis on experimentation, abstraction, and subjective experience.

**Mtkvari River**
The Georgian name for the longest river (1,364 km) in the Caucasus, which flows through Tbilisi. Its Turkish name is Kura.

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**non-governmental organization (NGO)**
A non-governmental organization (NGO) is an independent entity that is not part of government structures and does not aim to generate profit. NGOs address social, environmental, humanitarian, and/or other issues of public concern and are funded through donations, grants, or voluntary support. They operate independently of governments.

**participatory urban planning**
Participatory urban planning is an approach to planning in which the community is actively engaged in decision-making processes.

**pocket park**
A pocket park is a small green space designed for recreation and environmental improvement in a densely populated urban area.

**round table**
A round table is a discussion format in which a group of people, often with diverse perspectives, engage in a structured conversation focused on exchanging ideas, opinions, and expertise on a specific topic. This format emphasizes open dialogue, equal participation, and collaborative problem-solving and is often facilitated by a moderator.

**Saburtalo**
Saburtalo is a central administrative district in Tbilisi. It covers 75.14 km² and includes the neighborhoods of Saburtalo, Vedzisi, Vashlijvari, Didi Dighomi, Patara Dighomi, Dighomi Village, Zurgovana, Telovani, and Didgori. The district is currently experiencing highly dynamic development.

**scenario**
In the context of urban planning, a scenario is a possible future developed to explore different possibilities rather than relying on a single, linear projection. This approach helps urban planners anticipate challenges and explore opportunities.

**socialist city**
The socialist city is a specific type of city developed within the framework of socialism in the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc. These cities were based on the general principles of modern urban planning set forth in the Athens Charter of 1933. The implementation of a socialist way of life was reflected in the evolving urban planning concepts of these cities. The conditions and prerequisites for realizing the socialist city included centralized planning, nationalized land ownership, and a dirigiste housing industry. Technological prerequisites included industrialization, standardization, and the typification of construction.

**socialist realism**
Socialist realism is an articstic an literary style that emerged in the twentieth century in socialist states, particularly the Soviet Union. It flourished under under Joseph Stalin's leadership, particularly from the 1930s until the mid-1950s. The style is characterized by its depiction of an idealized socialist life, often portraying ordinary people engaged in work and leisure activities and promoting socialist ideology.

**superblock**
The superblock is an urban planning concept that is used, among other things, to calm traffic in residential areas. It employs suitable means to prevent motor traffic from passing through the area and instead directs it back onto main roads. This improves traffic safety and quality of life for the residents and increases their health and climate resilience. Barcelona is a well-known example of a city that has implemented the superblock concept.

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**Tbilisi General Plan**
The Tbilisi General Plan was the first comprehensive plan for Tbilisi's development and shaped the city's expansion. It was approved in 1934.

**Transport and Urban Development Agency (TUDA)**
The Transport and Urban Development Agency of Tbilisi City Municipality (TUDA), is a key entity within Tbilisi City Hall. The TUDA plays a crucial role in managing and developing the city's transportation and urban infrastructure.

**Vake**
Vake is an administrative district in the southwestern part of Tbilisi, including the neighbourhood of Vake, Bagebi, Upper Saburtalo, Nutsubidze Plateau, Tskneti, Tkhinvala, Agaraki, Akhaldaba, Betania, and Kveseti.

**well-being map**
A well-being map is a tool for analyzing and visualizing spaces in a specific area or neighborhood. It shows the places and spaces that people appreciate most, as well as the places they dislike and/or avoid.

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# CONTRIBUTORS

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