

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Verneda neighbourhood takes its name from the alder trees (*alnus glutinosa*) that used to grow on the banks of the river Besòs. A name that bears witness to a not-too-distant past when the green of the area had not yet been covered by the dense urban fabric of today. La Verneda and La Pau is a neighbourhood that has condensed the last few hundred years of history into decades, making the current fabric, as well as the identity of the area, one of the most unique in the Barcelona area. A neighbourhood strongly influenced by its industrial past, where we now see blocks of apartments typical of a dormitory town, in the past it was populated by farmhouses that exploited the surrounding agricultural land. The change, although sudden, built on what already existed: the large agricultural extensions were replaced by the first textile factories and the prats of indians.

Masies in la Verneda; catalan country houses

There are traces of a past that are easy to follow. In the shadows of the residential towers there are still old *masies* -catalan country houses - that in the 19th century exploited the surrounding agricultural land. Now converted into day centres, some of them have urban allotments that serve the neighbourhood's residents, such as Can Cadena, located close to European's 18 site in Sant Martí de Provençals.

The future urban development of the Prim sector between this site and the new Sagrera station aims to highlight the existence of these facilities, embracing them into the new urban fabric to be developed. Thus, a facility is planned for the Can Riera country house, currently colonised by workshops and industry of the surrounding area.

Industrial identity and remaining chimneys

The industry that appeared after the agricultural period helped to define the skyline and identity of the neighbourhood. The chimneys of many of these factories, which have now disappeared, appear in the urban fabric of the Verneda and its neighbours and give singularity to the open spaces. A clear example of this is *plaça de la Palmera*, the centre of the neighbourhood, where, apart from the aforementioned palm tree, there is a work by Richard Serra and a chimney from an old textile factory.

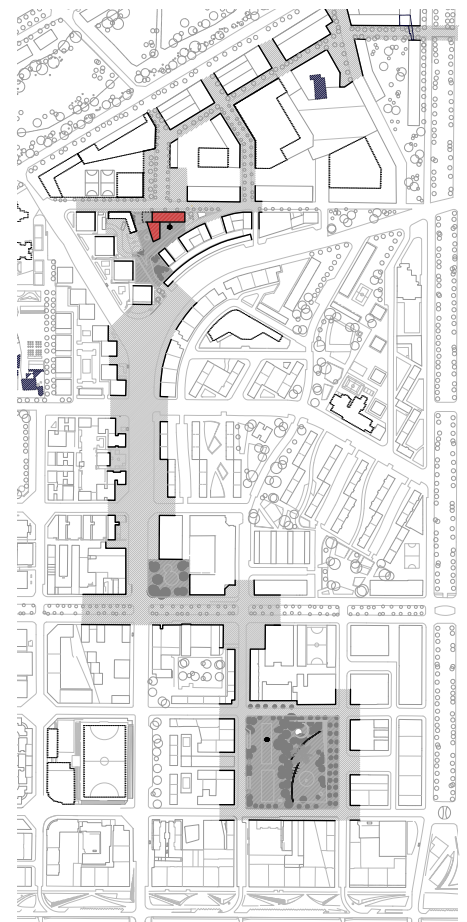
EMPTY SPACES, SQUARES AND PASSAGES

The large buildings in the Verneda neighbourhood between *carrer de Cantabria* and *Rambla de Prim* are characterised by the fact that they do not follow a clear structure, but form a set of disgregated pieces between which free spaces of different scales and uses appear. Squares with hard paving, children's playgrounds, sport areas, tree-lined spaces, walkways of different widths... characterise this neighbourhood without a clear hierarchy of axes. The apparent lack of structure of the apartment blocks gives the interstitial spaces multiple characteristics -the voids happen on different sizes- configuring a neighbourhood rich in diversity of empty spaces.

There are larger squares, such as *plaça de la Palmera*, important due to its size within the urban fabric and for the elements that make it up: an old chimney, a gazebo and a sculpture by Richard Serra. Further north, the *plaça de l'Aigua* is smaller in size and has a different configuration as it is positioned as an extension of *carrer de Cantabria*, giving it a connotation of a passageway. The space with the most organic layout is *plaça de la Verneda*, as it breaks up into different areas between buildings separated by tree-lined pedestrian walkways.

This dispersion of empty spaces allows us to understand that, as a whole, they form a universe of empty spaces that coexist. Given that *plaça de la Palmera* exists, it makes sense that next to it *plaça de l'Aigua* is smaller in size and used as a dynamic space.

The proposal aims for the creation of a passageway and a small square that will become part of this universe of voids, allowing pedestrians to walk from square to square, following multiple scales of passages and crossings.

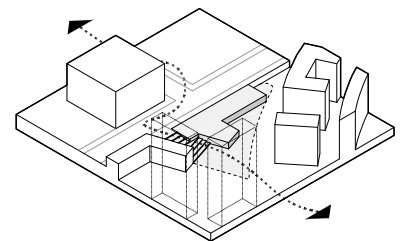
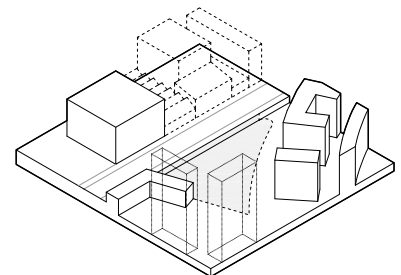
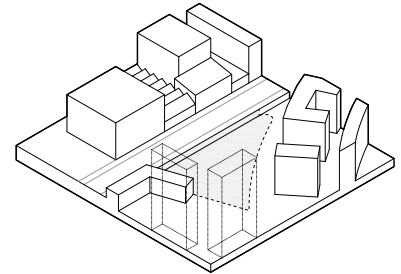


URBAN STRATEGY

The plot is located between *carrer de Santander* and *passatge de la Ferradura*, on the edge of the consolidated urban fabric and on the border with what will be the new urban planning for the area, which restructures the whole area in relation to the Sagrera station, which contemplates the construction of new facilities and green axes. This new restructuration places the site at a point that connects the existing fabric with the new one. With the study of the new planning, it is understood that the site can become a passage area that facilitates the flow of pedestrian traffic at a point where, due to the placement of the current buildings, we find a visual and traffic barrier. Our implementation proposes to resolve this funnel and promote a connection between the existing urban openings in the Verneda neighbourhood and the openings in the new urban planning.

Taking advantage of the height difference between *carrer de Santander* and *passatge de la Ferradura*, it was decided to bury the equipment, freeing up space on the ground floor for a new square that absorbs the fragmented urban fabric of the south-east. Space is given to the current *Casal del Barri* and its side and rear facades are revalued with a pedestrian space that connects the Sagrera station with *plaça de la Palmera*, the main free space in the Verneda neighbourhood.

The dwellings are developed on ground floor +7, aligned with *carrer de Santander* and the future planning in Prim's area, helping to consolidate a new road axis that connects the Salvador Seguí high school and *Rambla de Prim*.



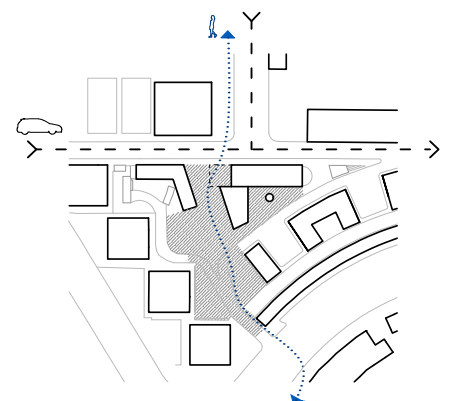
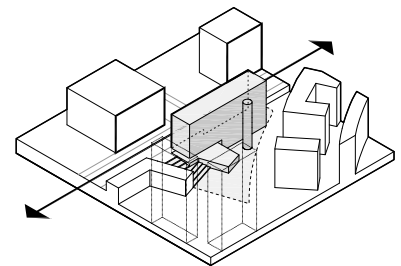
PUBLIC BUILDING AND PLAZA

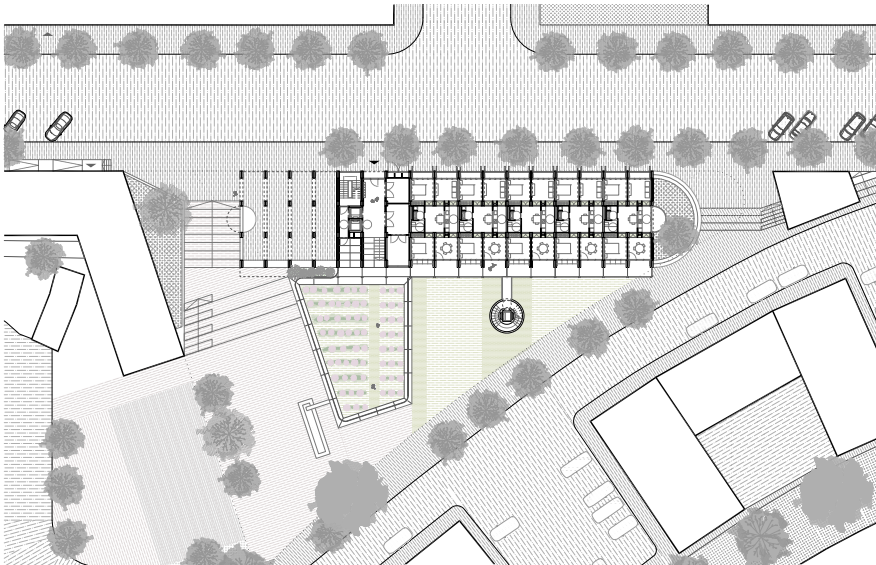
The facility for the neighbourhood is located on the basement floor. It is proposed to be complementary to the *Casal de Barri de la Verneda*, since it is explained that the current space is not enough for the neighbourhood's demand.

The inhabitants of the Verneda are characterised by its community spirit, trade unionism and defence of its rights; the people who came to live there in the 50s, 60s and 70s are still the inhabitants who live there today. Apart from this, the *Casal del Barri* is overwhelmed both in terms of size and management because many young people want to make use of it, both as a study space and as a recreational space.

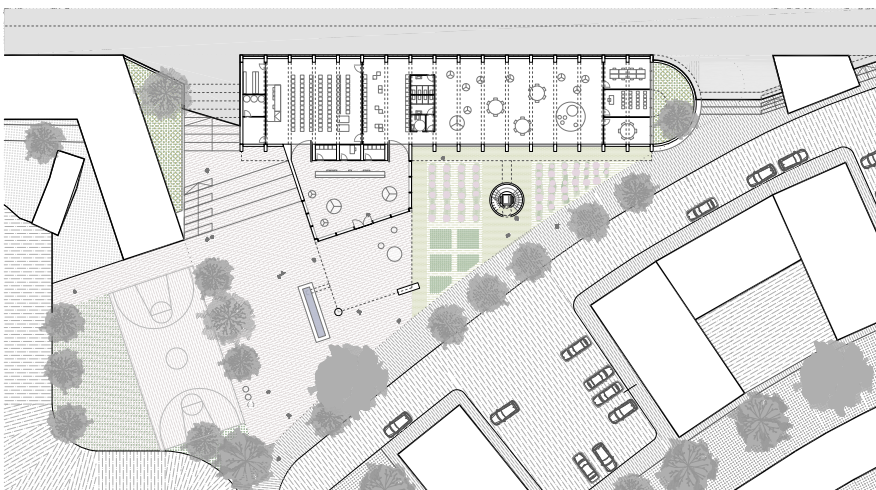
This information, both the knowledge that the neighbourhood has a high percentage of elderly population and the data provided by the manager and the director of the *Casal del Barri*, lead us to propose an extension of the current equipment that could complement its spaces. A study centre, a meeting place and some public allotments.

We propose a hard square, a public urban garden and a civic centre with a library and a space for conferences and meetings. This proposal aims to solve two things: to provide quality to the empty space, which can be used both by the young people of the neighbourhood and by the Salvador Seguí high school located in front of the plot, and an interior space, which can accommodate activities for young people as well as for the elderly.





ground floor plan



basement floor plan

MEMBRANE

The facade is treated with industrialised and systematised elements that are common in Barcelona and in the neighbourhood of La Verneda. On *carrer de Santander*-facing northwest- folding and adjustable shutters have been installed to provide privacy to the interior. The depth of the balconies, embedded in the concrete pillars structure, provides a buffer zone between the street and the apartment. The adjustable *louvres* of the shutters allow air to circulate even when they are closed, providing both ventilation and protection from the summer sun in the afternoon.

The façade facing the square is much friendlier and where the life of the block takes place. A generous 1.5 m. wide walkway connects all the apartments. Deep pillars appear again, generating a rhythm and allowing different uses and distributions between them: from benches to sit on or planters that provide privacy for those who want it, to spaces where to leave the street shoes, the bicycle or hang the clothes on the clothesline.

Both facades are always changing: the first thanks to its system of adaptable shutters; the second is due to the personalisation that each inhabitant can make to adapt this semi-outdoor space to their needs.

FACADES AND CIRCULATION

The apartments are partially distributed on ground floor and the upper seven levels. On the roof of the civic centre there are allotments for the inhabitants of the block, which complement the ones on the ground floor linked to the civic centre. The housing block has an interior circulation core, accessed through *carrer de Santander*, and a free-standing tower, placed in the middle of the public space in relation to *passatge de la Ferradura* as an element that recalls the old demolished chimneys of the neighbourhood's industry.

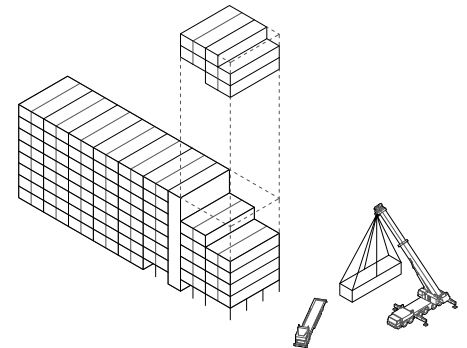
Access to the dwellings is via a communal walkway on the south-east façade. This façade is conceived as a small-grained domestic element, where the inhabitants of each dwelling can make daily use of it, taking out tables and chairs. The walkway is wide enough to allow for these actions, encouraging the use of the communal space. The façade facing *carrer de Santander* has a more urban connotation, a more opaque and thicker skin. Each apartment has two terraces that have solar protection with shutters, giving privacy and protecting it from the western sun.



APARTMENTS

The aim is two-bedroom apartments of approximately 60 m² that seek flexibility of use and spatial quality. Flexibility of use is introduced in the proposal by proposing four equal spaces of about 11 m² connected to a central space. From the latter, all the others can be accessed, generating rich visual connections to the adjoining spaces and to the exterior.

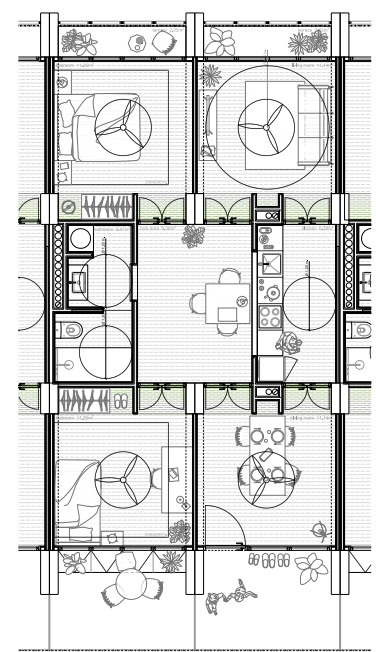
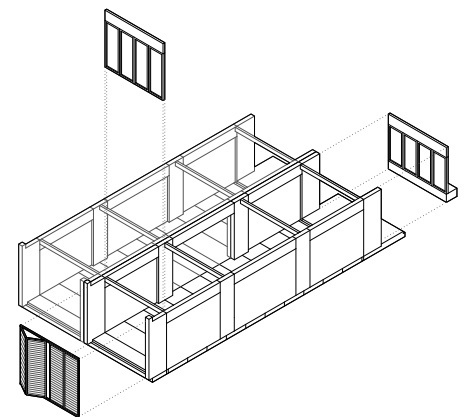
The interstices between these spaces are taken into account in order to bring quality and uniqueness to the house. Thus, deep passages with double doors frame the rooms and help configuring the spaces for installations and storage. An elongated window links the kitchen -which is partially closed- with the heart of the house.



MODULARITY

The housing units have been designed according to the principle of modular construction using elements of 3.3 x 14.5 m. that together with the rationality of the structure allow the maximum optimisation of space. The use of concrete as a structural element reduces costs and provides structural rigidity to an element that must be transported one by one to the construction site. The thermal bridge is solved by separating the balcony slabs from the interior structure. The work carried out beforehand in the workshop on each of the modules allows for a quick and precise execution, minimising the impact of the works on the site and aiming for record time in terms of the construction of the building.

Supported on prefabricated pillars and beams placed on site, each of the dwellings is made up of two of modules with a shared central space. The enclosures and cladding are entirely dry, ranging from plasterboard partitions to light wooden cladding for the external facades. Stony solutions are avoided for flooring, always opting for light flooring solutions with resistant finishes.



apartment floor plan