“Abrir puertas y ventanas”

HERITAGE

“La Malatería no se tira”
The current building, dating from 1929 and designed by architect Manuel Bobes Díaz (1879–1947), is the heir to a medieval hospital that dates back to the 12th century. In our view, it has suffered significant architectural abuse (addition of foreign volumes, bricking up original openings...) and above all, urban mistreatment: buildings placed too close to its eastern edge, and a disconnection from surrounding public spaces (Parque de Invierno). This neglect went as far as to propose its demolition—a demolition only prevented thanks to neighborhood movements that recognized La Malatería’s potential as a building that tells part of Oviedo’s history.

Valuing the existing
The current building has good proportions in plan, with two clearly differentiated north and south wings connected by a central core of shared spaces and services (bathrooms, common rest areas for the elderly). Vertical circulation is provided via large staircases and elevators located at the east and west ends, as originally intended in the first design.

Fifteen years of abandonment and lack of maintenance have caused some minor damage, including a recent collapse of the roof cornice on Gil Blas Street. Nonetheless, the building—constructed with load-bearing masonry walls and ceramic-vaulted slabs over metal beams—is structurally sound and its restoration remains feasible.

“Vivienda corredor”, local materials
The proposal hybridizes one of the most traditional and popular Asturian typologies: the “casa de corredor” (gallery house), which originated in the 18th century. It adapts this typology from a single-family format to collective housing. This architectural element also allows for the use of local materials: Asturias—and specifically Siero, just 15 km from the site—is one of the main production hubs for glued laminated timber and CLT in the Iberian Peninsula. The traditional typology also teaches us a constructive logic that avoids exposing wooden elements to direct rainfall, always protecting beam ends.

Valuing the original layout
The building’s original spatial organization is preserved and revalidated: shared areas are placed where the original common rooms were located, and rental apartments occupy the spaces once used for bedrooms. A single architectural operation ensures compliance with modern codes (fire safety, ventilation) and transforms corridors—previously residual spaces—into the core of the project.

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The intervention is based on controlled acts of addition and subtraction. Through added exterior galleries and subtracted interior voids (such as a new covered courtyard and enlarged openings), passive strategies are implemented to improve energy efficiency while ensuring year-round comfort and creating climate-resilient zones. The new openings also help meet updated habitability and safety regulations.

URBAN

El Parque de Invierno
Planned in 1952 and built in the late 1980s, Parque de Invierno suffers from poor connectivity on its eastern edge due to the proximity of the Veneranda Manzano School and the San Lázaro sports grounds, which constrict access from Gil Blas Street. A recent street redesign tried to address this by creating a one-way road. However, pedestrians must still follow the vehicular path—suitable in slope for cars but too steep for foot traffic—and go through the municipal pool parking lot to access the park.

A new entrance to the park
The urban proposal splits the existing road into two: one lane descending steeply for car access to the pool parking, and a pedestrian and bicycle path that gently meanders to reduce slope. This path uses the newly proposed west plaza of La Malatería as a first stopping point before entering the park.

A new entrance for pilgrims
This new plaza will also serve as a welcome point for pilgrims arriving via the Camino Primitivo, the ancient Santiago route that runs along the western edge of the site. The route is seamlessly integrated into the project.

La Plaza de la Malatería
A new public space is created to connect La Malatería with its context. From the west façade, a new visual and physical link is made between the common interior spaces and the park. The building also gains a new identity for incoming pilgrims—without altering its familiar north façade, which remains unchanged for local residents. This plaza can host interpretive signage to emphasize the historical value of the building.

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Spaces for the city
In line with the Veneranda Manzano school’s educational garden, the newly formed slope from the descending pedestrian path will feature fruit trees and blueberry bushes, both staples of the Asturian rural economy. While the building will primarily house residences, certain spaces can be opened occasionally for public and pilgrim use (e.g., bicycle workshops, dining areas, parking). All uses remain within the bounds of regulatory zoning permissions.

Cycling and pedestrian link
This new access route to the park also establishes a continuous pedestrian/cyclist corridor, improving connections to the Oviedo–Fuso Green Path and the underground tunnel leading to the city center. Currently, bicycle access is shared with cars, and there is no direct route between La Malatería and the tunnel.

Garden parking
A private parking area is located at the southern end of the site. Existing vegetation is preserved, and a garden terrace is created above the cars, on the building’s south façade. The park-facing image remains largely unchanged, with the historic wall and vegetation intact.

STRATEGY

Reuse everything
The proposal seeks to give a true second life to all parts of the building, reusing the existing fabric to the maximum extent possible. The main strategy involves adding external galleries and restoring the original openings.

Accept typology
The building’s original configuration is respected and hybridized to become viable as a collective residential experiment. No structural modifications are made, allowing future reversibility of use.

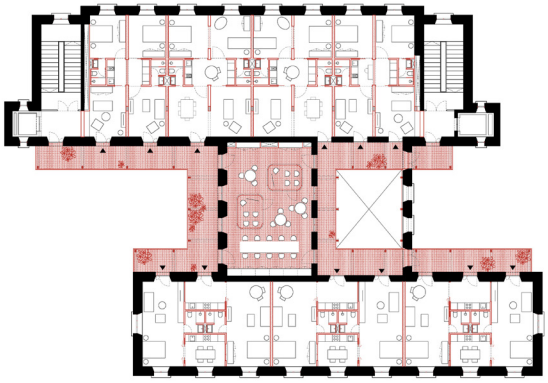
Open Malatería
The building opens at multiple scales: a central courtyard is created for ventilation and natural light, and the existing western patio is transformed into La Plaza de la Malatería.

Boost systems
Energy systems are updated using as much of the existing infrastructure as possible. The new courtyard will act as a heat collector in winter and provide natural ventilation in summer.

TYPOLOGY

New exterior galleries
The existing building layout is adopted, replacing the current corridors with exterior galleries. This simple addition makes the apartments more spacious and provides cross ventilation.

Preserving vertical connections
Existing staircases and elevators are retained. A new spiral staircase is added in the new courtyard, creating a direct connection from the lower level (plaza and southern parking) to the ground floor. An additional external staircase is also introduced on the south façade for direct access to the garden-parking area.

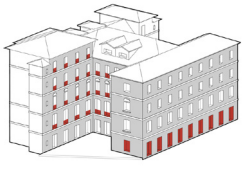


Floor 1 & 2

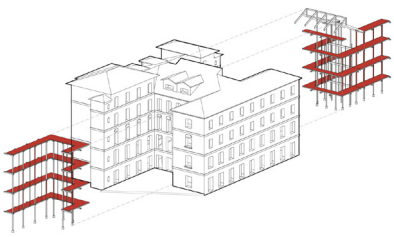
Communal and private spaces
The layout between individual and collective space is maintained. Where the original building had bathrooms, consultation rooms, and lounges, we now find the shared spaces of future tenants: kitchens and canteen on the lower floor, an elderly day center on the ground floor, a multifunctional room on the first floor (open to neighborhood events), coworking areas on the second, and a gym on the third. Where the bedrooms once were, now stand affordable rental units for young people.

The shared program is complemented by a new bicycle parking area at the entrance (with section modifications to ease access), and a bike repair workshop for tenants—also available for pilgrims.

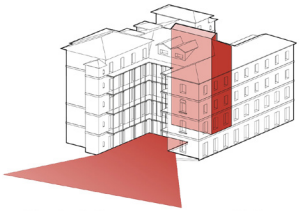
Restoring the original
Non-original ground floor additions are removed, and the roof is reorganized, returning to a form more faithful to the original design.



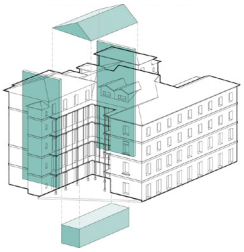
Reuse everything



Accept typology



Open Malatería



Boost systems

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DOMESTIC

Same room size
Flexibility and adaptability of spaces according to the tenants’ use and needs. The rooms are of similar dimensions, allowing them to accommodate whatever use the tenants choose.

Kitchen as nexus
Kitchens are conceived as meeting spaces, and a modular expansion system is proposed through them. A 66m² apartment can become two 33m² studios and vice versa, simply by opening doors and adjusting kitchen furniture.

Gallery as extension
The gallery as an extension of the home. A place to talk, contemplate, sit, water plants. An indeterminate space that fosters shared life. Functional ambiguity. Undefined space.

Material memory
The intention is to preserve the original flooring and woodwork as much as possible.

ENERGY BALANCE

Patio as energy exchanger
A new courtyard is proposed in the central part of the building to provide ventilation and natural light to the apartments. This courtyard will be an unconditioned outdoor space that can be closed off to enhance the greenhouse effect during winter. A heat recovery unit will be installed on the roof to collect air extracted from the courtyard, reusing this heat to condition the building’s common areas.

Shared systems
The existing radiator and domestic hot water networks are to be reused, using the existing utility shafts in the building. All production units will be updated to meet current energy efficiency standards.

Roof upgrade and restoration
A full repair of the roof is planned (due to its poor condition), preserving its original character and restoring the dormers to their original size and position. Over the courtyard, a translucent roof area is proposed to allow light through, with an automated opening system for both the pre-existing vertical wall and the new skylight above.

Upgrade and insulation
A comprehensive energy renovation of the building is proposed, to be detailed in later phases. It will likely require an external thermal insulation system (SATE) to preserve the facade’s appearance while meeting efficiency standards.

Local materials and detail
The use of laminated glued timber and CLT from Asturias is proposed. The construction detail is simple and considers the service classes the timber will be exposed to, given its use outdoors in a climate like Asturias.