

SABA
MIRHOSSEINI
2022 RAIC —
INTERNATIONAL
PRIZE —



TRANSFORMATIVE ARCHITECTURE

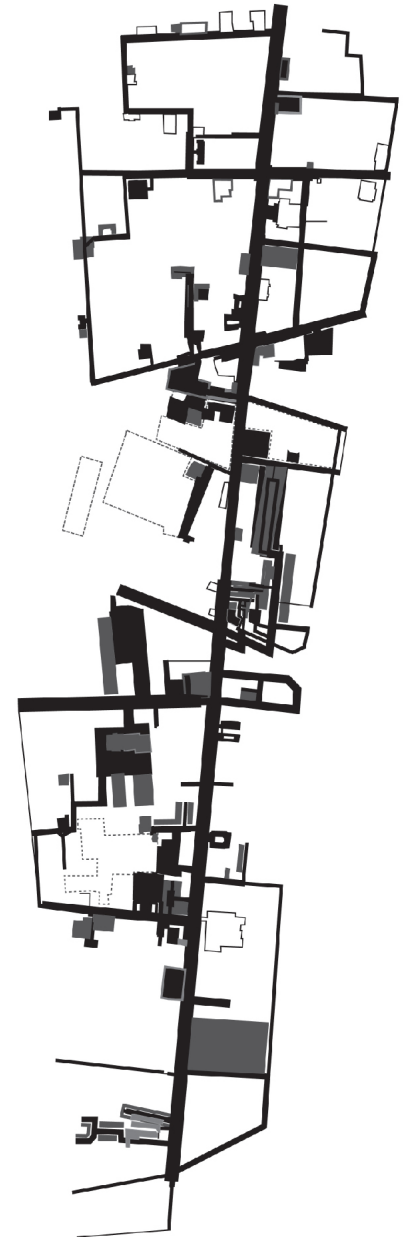
How can a building, a street, or, more generally, space be transformative through ages? Is that a decision and choice to be taken, or is it experimental and unpredictable?

Can architects decide to design such a transformative place before designing, or can they ideally try to create such sites and allow time to discover and explore them? Is there any formula for designing transformative architecture?

Architects are always interested in designing in a visionary and knowing way that will contribute to future history. Sometimes they pay attention to the needs of the time, sometimes to the needs of the future, and sometimes to the past; But what makes an architectural endeavor keep a place alive over time and undergo dynamic changes?

Now, if we are looking for a more accurate definition of how to create a space that operates permanently and is transformative, we must consider that although good or bad are relative traits but inevitably, these spaces are judged, and their changes are widely according to the needs of the time. These changes can be in function, content, or even in the type of connections and access. There is no doubt that these changes can be somewhat predictable for the architect. Many parameters are entirely unpredictable because the economy, politics, urban growth, contextual changes, the needs of the time and people, and the details and buildings associated with a place can be affected during the lifetime of a place, and they cannot be guessed or controlled. This means only the space itself can be predicted to some extent. As a result, perhaps the most crucial factor influencing «transformative architecture» can be the site and context. Perhaps the most vital point in the city can become the beating heart of the town with the right approach and remain active over time with its developments.

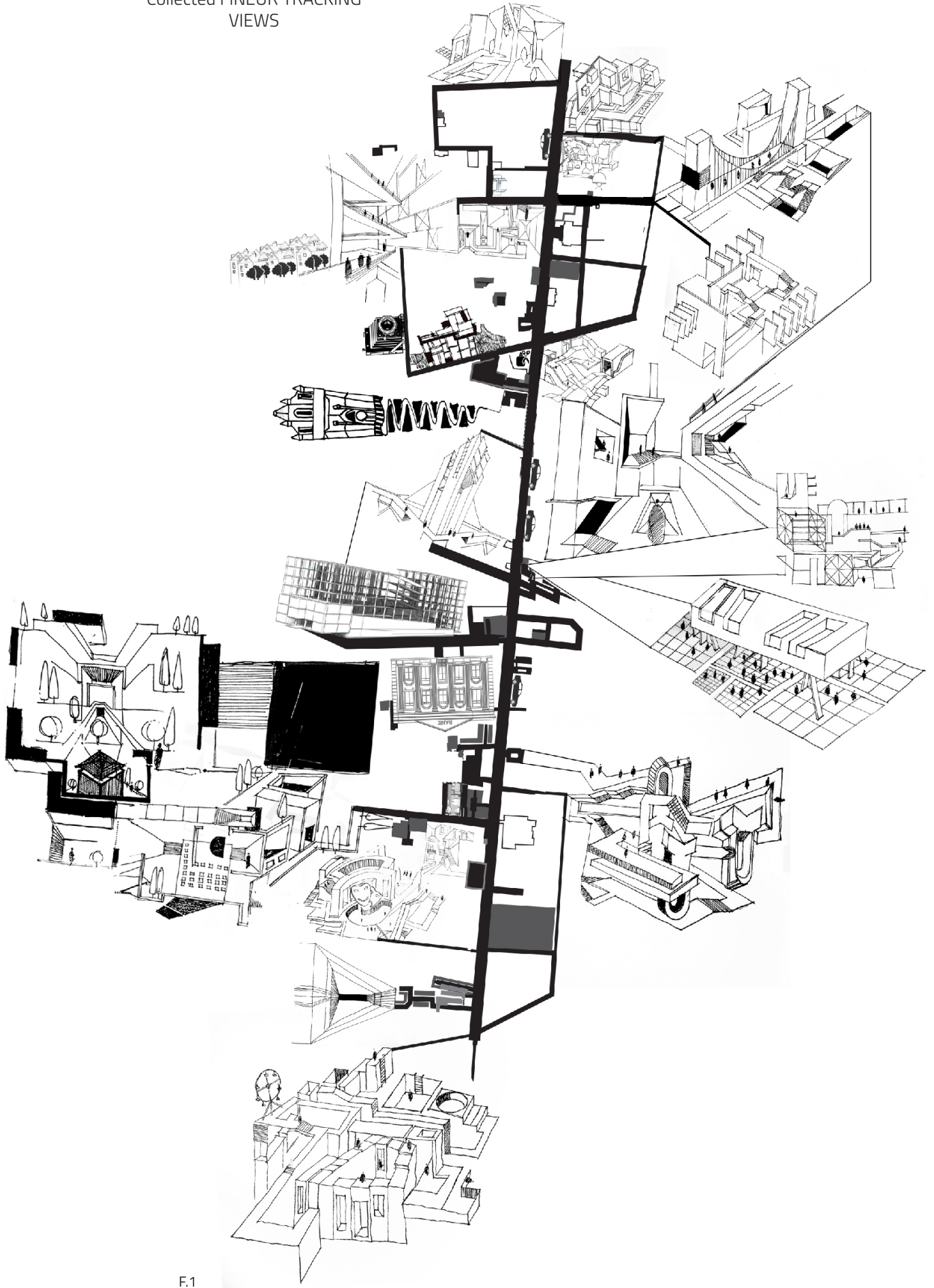
For me, Lalehzar Street in Tehran-Iran is exemplary in this regard. This street was designed and built by direct order of «Nasser al-Din Shah Qajar» in 1832. After his trip to France, he decided to make a street like the Champs-Élysées in Tehran under Iranian culture. At first, this street was the passage and destination of the bourgeoisie, whose prosperity transformed this street with new entertainments, commerce and apparel. It was a street full of masons, tailors, draperies, clothing stores, and other shops that introduced them to the world of fashion. But over time, between 1905 and 1932, the use of this area changed, and the shops transformed. Suddenly, clothing stores turned into entertainment venues, CD stores, and cafes. One-hall cinemas were formed in the middle of the buildings (courtyards), and the street took on a different perspective. This time, cinema and theater lovers considered their cultural appointments suitable for this platform, a street where by purchasing one ticket, could be explored and visited in three different halls to watch three films. Walking in Lalehzar was a new experience for the audience to explore Tehran differently among the glamorous spectacle of shops, cinemas, theaters, and cafes.

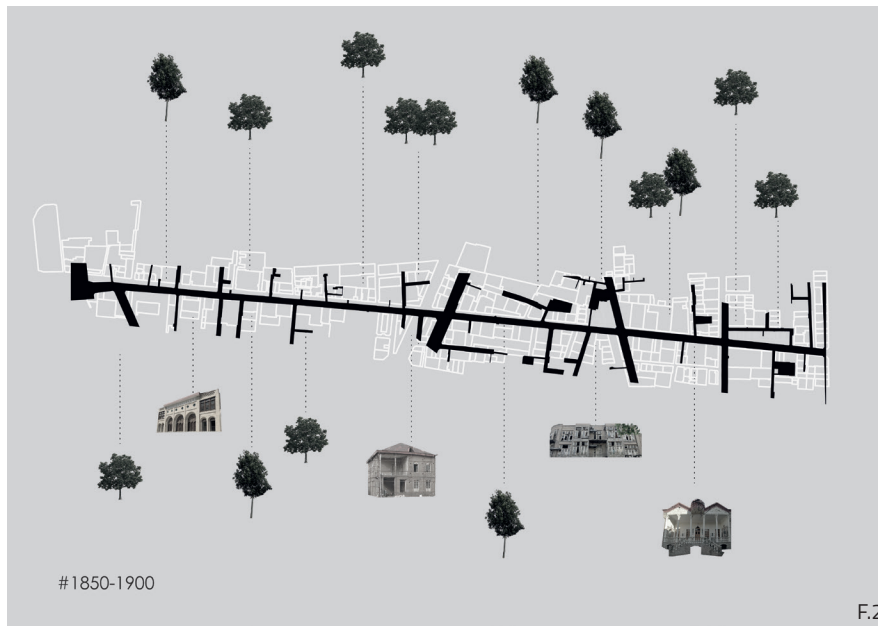


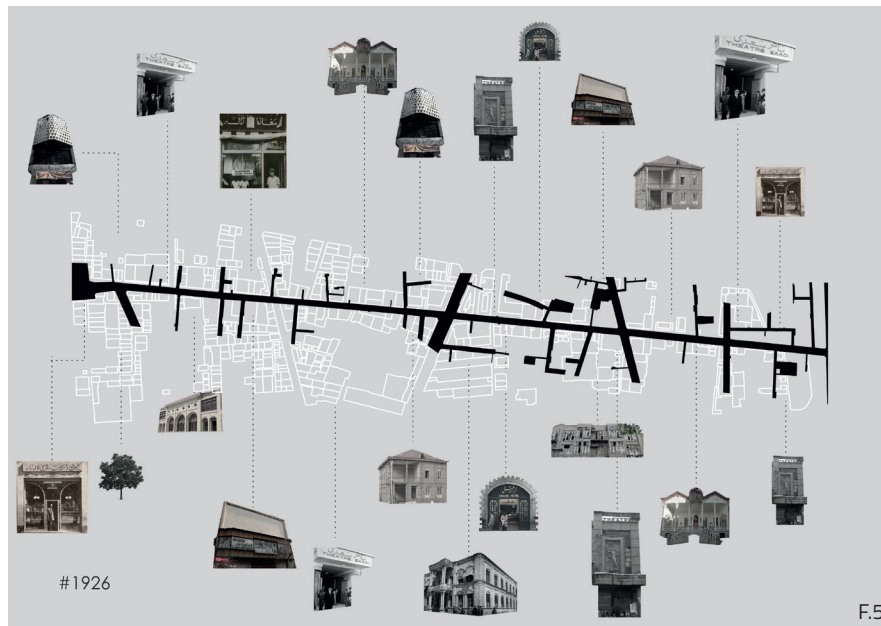
F.1

Collected FINEUR TRACKING
PATH

Collected FINEUR TRACKING
VIEWS







After a few years, Lalehzar lost its cinematic aspect, and this time music found a more important place in the city. Some cafes and shops added performance scenes and stages for themselves, and inns and hotels became more active, and cabaret fitted inside them. Singers, dancers, and poets took over Lalehzar, the streets were filled with concerts and nightclubs, but this period was also temporary for Lalehzar.

The 1979 revolution and changes in Iranian politics caused music and film to fade among the city's people's daily life. This time, Lalehzar underwent a profound change. Despite the policy of opposing the aforementioned aspect of this platform functionality, Lalehzar remained crowded due to its important location, which connected the city center to the north. But the buildings were no longer allowed to return to their original activity. On the other hand, they were cultural heritage, and there was no permission to destroy them, so the bodies had to survive differently. These critical changes completely altered the financial value of the land and led to less worth inside the buildings and becoming abandoned and warehouses. Still, the edges of these building persisted, with many becoming lamp and chandelier shops.

These types of shops and their warehouse orientation changed the logic of using space, as objects and tools began to redefine the street. Lalehzar remains one of the most essential and famous streets in Tehran. During these 190 years, every location of this street has told a new story in dialogue with times. Regardless of whether it is joyful or difficult, the vital street continued to thrive by changing and adapting to daily life.

What has kept Lalehzar alive and active despite all these changes? How could a street with so many architecturally valuable buildings be able to keep its living so flexible and active? How has Tehran's Champs-Elysees been able to maintain its position among the people by imposing all these changes in terms of economy, politics, culture, and time?

Many variables can be influential, and all of them will vary depending on the context, time, reputation, etc. Still, indeed the site and context are among the most important factors to be considered that can help in the formation and survival of the «Transformative architecture.»

Examining space and urban planning and architecture can be the first step in deciding to build such a project, but before that, there are countless questions that need to be posed and answered.

In my opinion, one of the most important examples in this street is Grand Hotel. The street's dynamic resilience has been helped by the architectural stability provided by the this hotel. This landmark building gives focus, persistent character, memory, and identity to the changeful street. Grand Hotel serves as a magnet, fulcrum, anchor, and keel, bringing stability and orientation within the fluid cosmos of Lalehzar street.



Now

F.10



F.6

Old days



Now

F.11

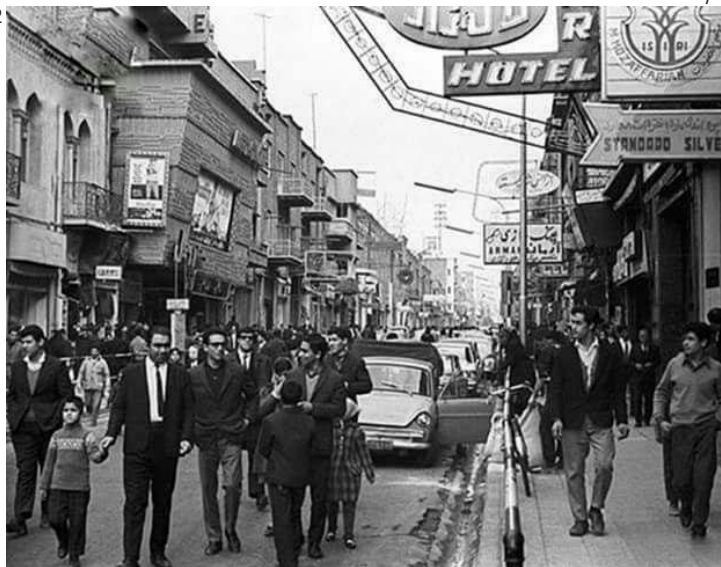


F.7



Now

F.12



F.8

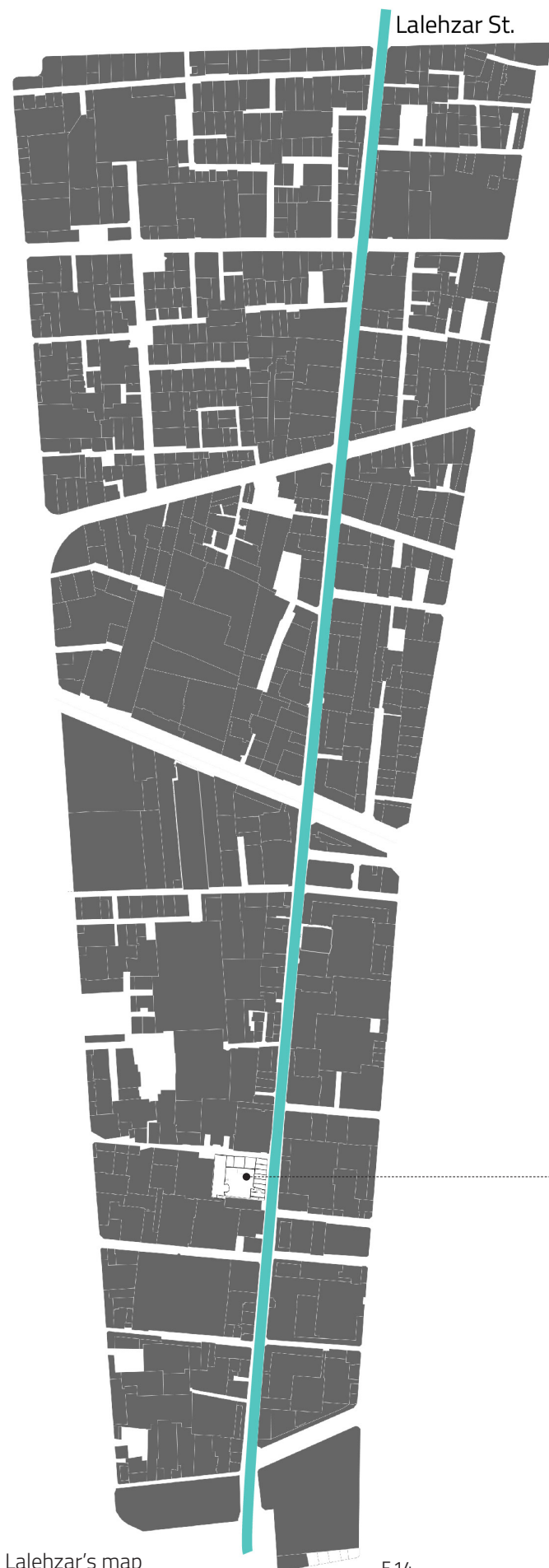
Old days



F.9



Lalehzar's
iconic
places



Lalehzar St.

Lalehzar's map

F.14

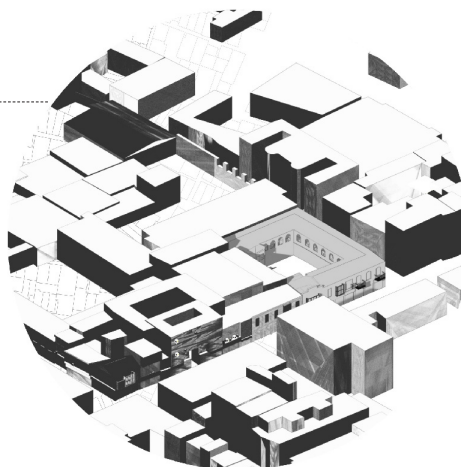


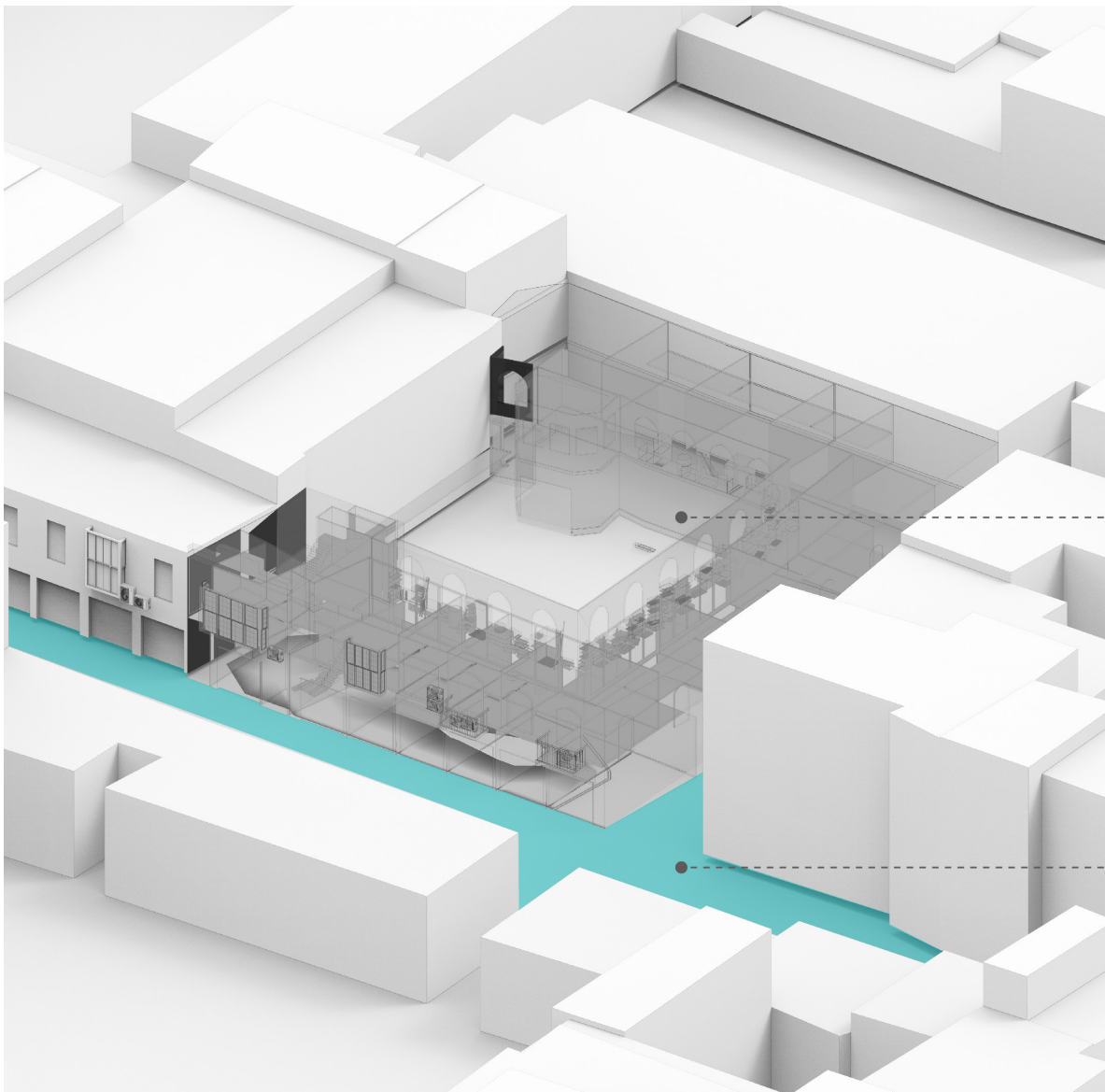
F.15

Grand Hotel

Grand Hotel is the oldest hotel in Iran, built by Baqer Khan during the Qajar dynasty. This hotel has been operating as a temporary residence since it has been constructed until the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah. In all periods of its life, its functions have been expanded according to the origins of the people. Many concerts were performed there, and even in its central courtyard, such as the cinema and theater, screens and chairs were placed. Still, after this period, due to politics changes, its rooms became shops, and other spaces became warehouses. Grand Hotel has been very famous and important throughout its life so that its visitors overshadowed the type of Lalehzar's users.

Grand Hotel

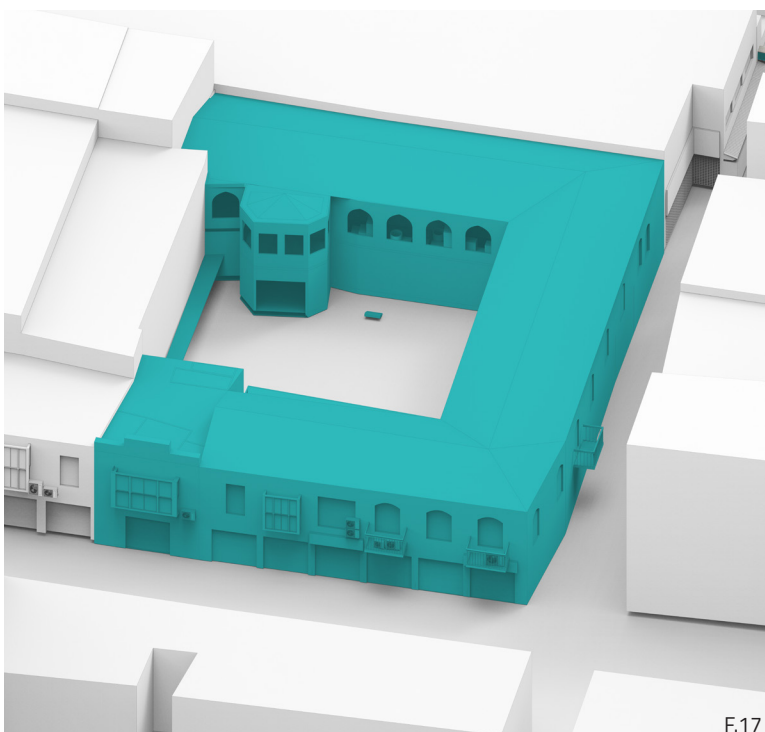




Grand Hotel

Lalehzar Street

F.16



F.17



Grand Hotel

F.18



Grand Hotel

F.19

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