

The fusion of courtyards and the city: Preserving Isfahan's Traditional Courtyard Houses

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Isfahan, a historically significant city situated in the heart of Iran, served as the capital for numerous periods throughout history.

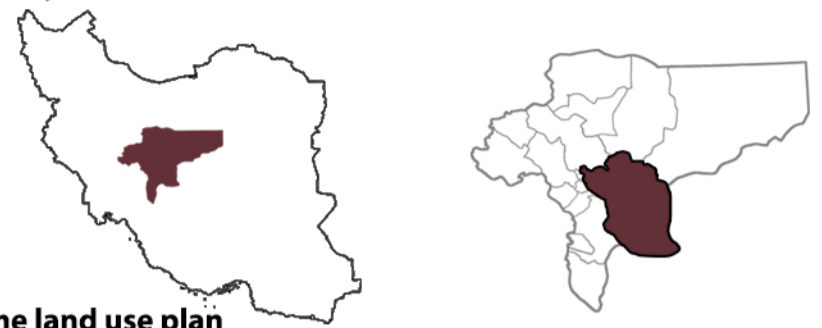
The city boasts a multitude of splendid historical sites and unique architectural styles. Among its remarkable features are the traditional courtyard houses that can be found scattered throughout the city, either individually or as part of designated historical areas within different zones. These courtyards play a vital role in shaping the form and function of these houses.

Unfortunately, in recent times, many of Isfahan's traditional houses in historical neighborhoods have faced destruction. This has been primarily due to their obstruction of urban development plans or their deteriorating conditions resulting from flawed conservation policies. Furthermore, these traditional courtyard houses have suffered from neglect, as they no longer adequately cater to the needs of modern living. Consequently, numerous individuals opt to reside in contemporary settlements where courtyards no longer hold the same significance. In certain cases, courtyards still exist, but their meaning and purpose have undergone significant transformations.

To mitigate the environmental impact and preserve the cultural heritage of Isfahan, it is essential to conserve these traditional courtyard houses. One approach involves repurposing them to function as both private residences and public spaces that can serve as community centers. Abandoned traditional courtyard houses can be revitalized and transformed into habitable dwellings, while existing public courtyards can be adapted to provide various services for the community. By establishing a network of connected spaces, these locations can form an integrated system that serves ecological and social purposes simultaneously. Consequently, the conversion of courtyards into public spaces not only infuses them with new meaning but also creates dynamic and active communal areas.

This initiative has several advantages. First and foremost, it allows for the preservation of historical architecture and cultural heritage. By repurposing traditional courtyard houses, they can be safeguarded from further deterioration or destruction. The revitalization of abandoned houses ensures that their historical value is maintained, contributing to the overall cultural landscape of Isfahan.

Moreover, the conversion of courtyards into public spaces promotes environmental sustainability. By transforming these areas into communal centers, a shared sense of responsibility for the environment can be fostered. Public courtyards can be designed to incorporate eco-friendly features such as green spaces, rainwater harvesting systems, and solar panels, thereby reducing the ecological footprint of these spaces and encouraging sustainable practices.

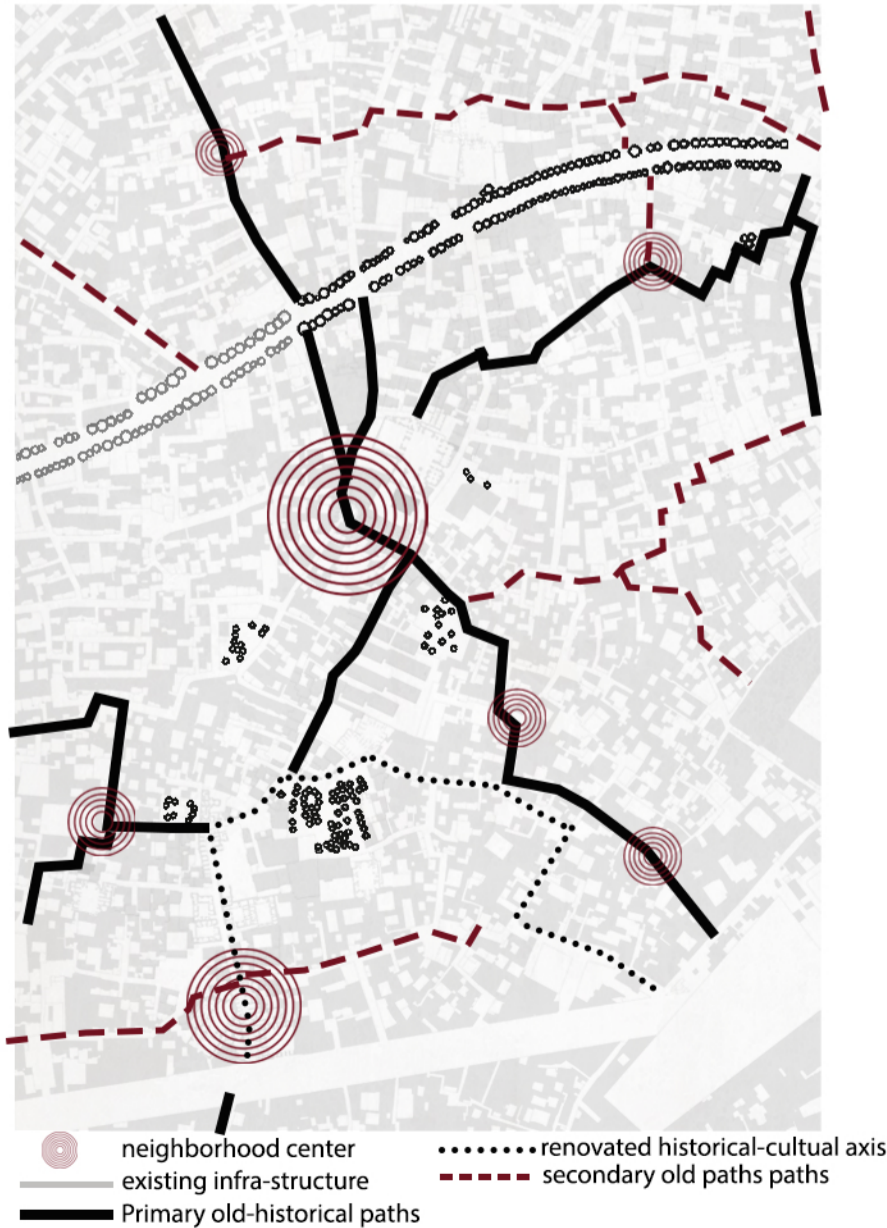


The land use plan



● Commercial Buildings ● Educational Buildings ● covered street
○ Cultural Buildings ● Religious Buildings ● Hotel & Tourist services

The historical-cultural axis



The courtyards and accessibility



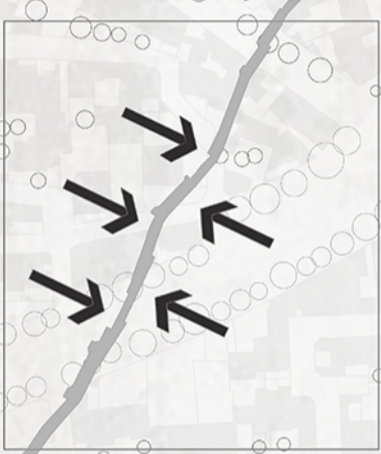
● Remanent courtyards ● Selected courtyards
— primary modern streets — historical path — secondary path



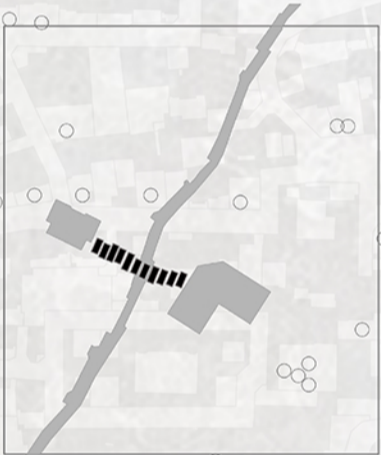
MASTER PLAN



CONTINUITY



COLLECTIVITY



CONNECTIVITY



PATH



PUBLIC SPACES



OPEN SPACES



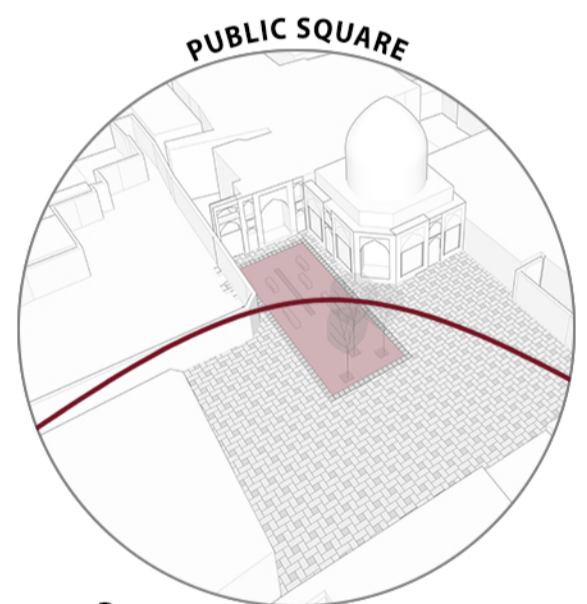
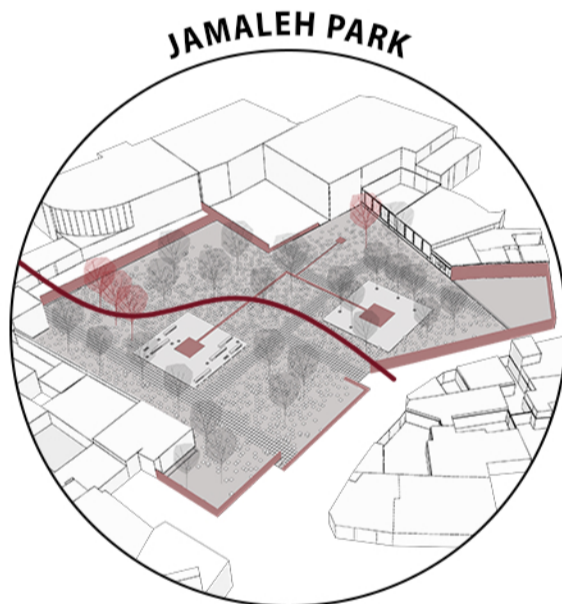
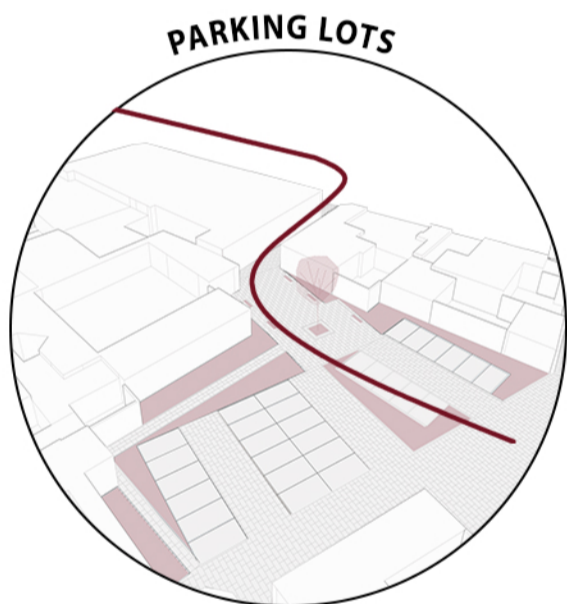
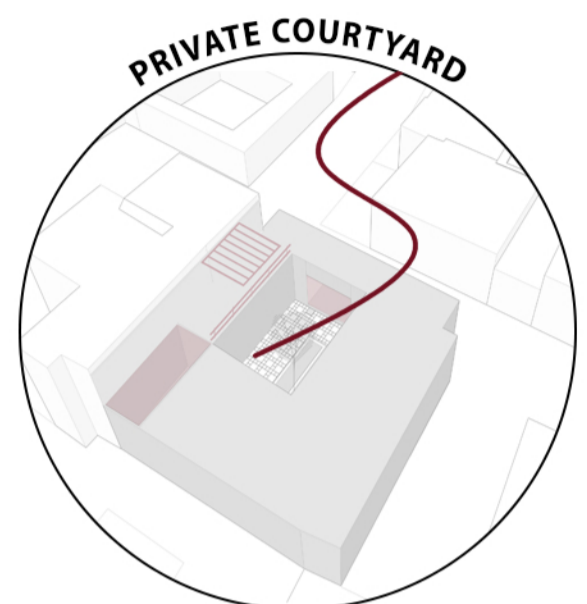
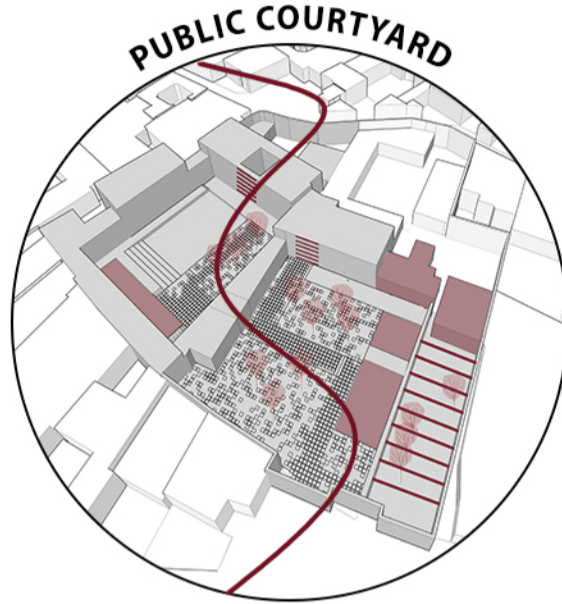
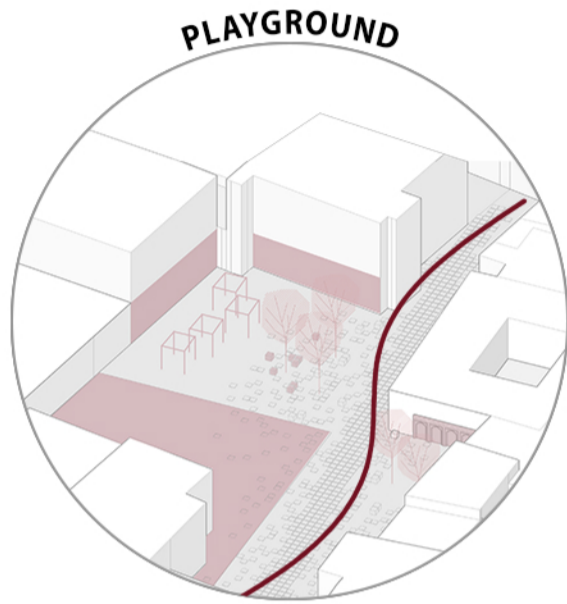
ATTRACTION POINTS



ACTIVITY DIAGRAMS

Additionally, the integration of public courtyards as community centers fosters social cohesion and interaction. These spaces can accommodate various activities and functions, ranging from educational programs and cultural exhibitions to recreational facilities and public gatherings. By facilitating opportunities for social engagement, the transformed courtyards become catalysts for community building and the exchange of ideas.

In conclusion, the preservation and revitalization of Isfahan's traditional courtyard houses offer a viable solution to mitigate the destruction of historical fabric in the city. By repurposing these houses as both private residences and public spaces, Isfahan can strike a balance between preserving its cultural heritage and meeting the needs of modern society. The transformation of courtyards into public areas not only redefines their purpose but also creates vibrant and sustainable spaces that contribute to the ecological and social well-being of the community.



PUBLIC COURTYARD

PUBLIC SQUARE

PRIVATE COURTYARD

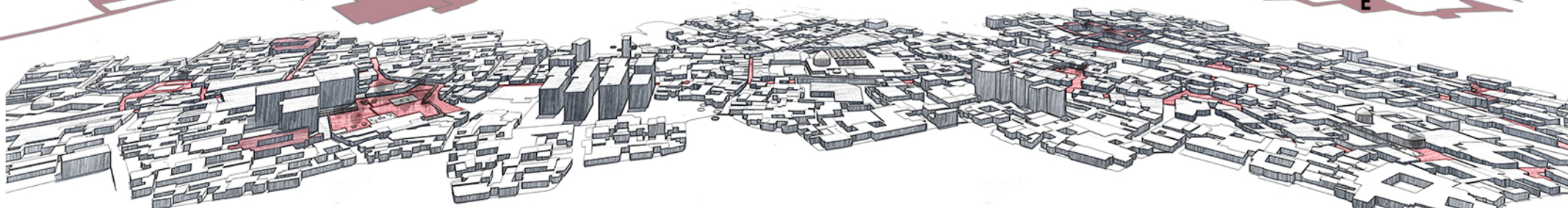
PARKING LOTS

JAMALEH PARK

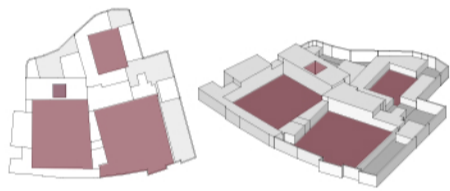
PLAYGROUND

PUBLIC SQUARE

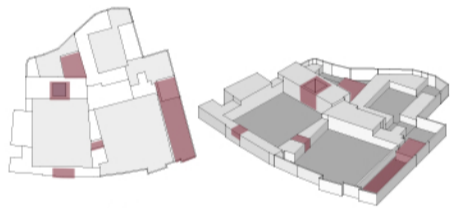
PRIVATE COURTYARD



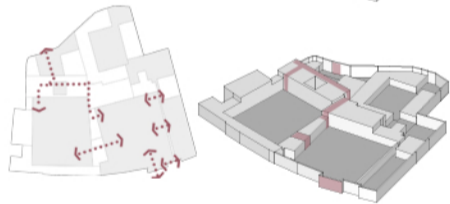
PUBLIC COURTYARDS (HABIB ABADI & GHADERIAN HOUSES)



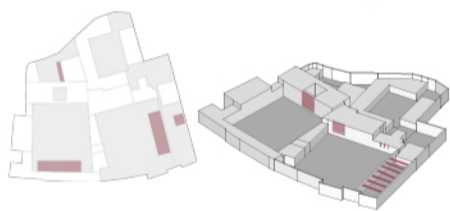
Primary and secondary courtyards



Transformation of private spaces to public and semi public areas



Maximizing connection between the courtyards and exterior context



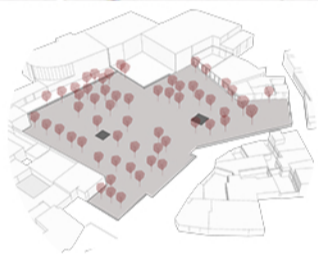
Define a new design for water, greenery and new kind of opening for facades



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

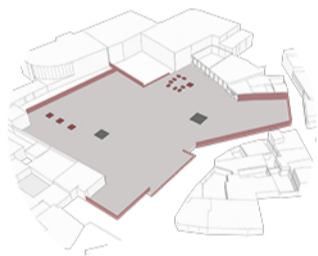


JAMALEH PARK

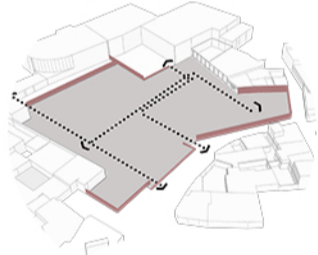


current situation

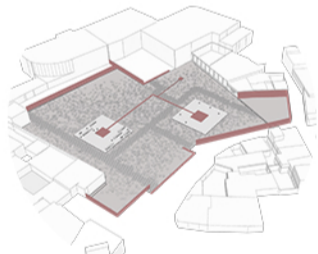
new design for Jamaleh park, considering the preservation of natural elements like its existing trees.



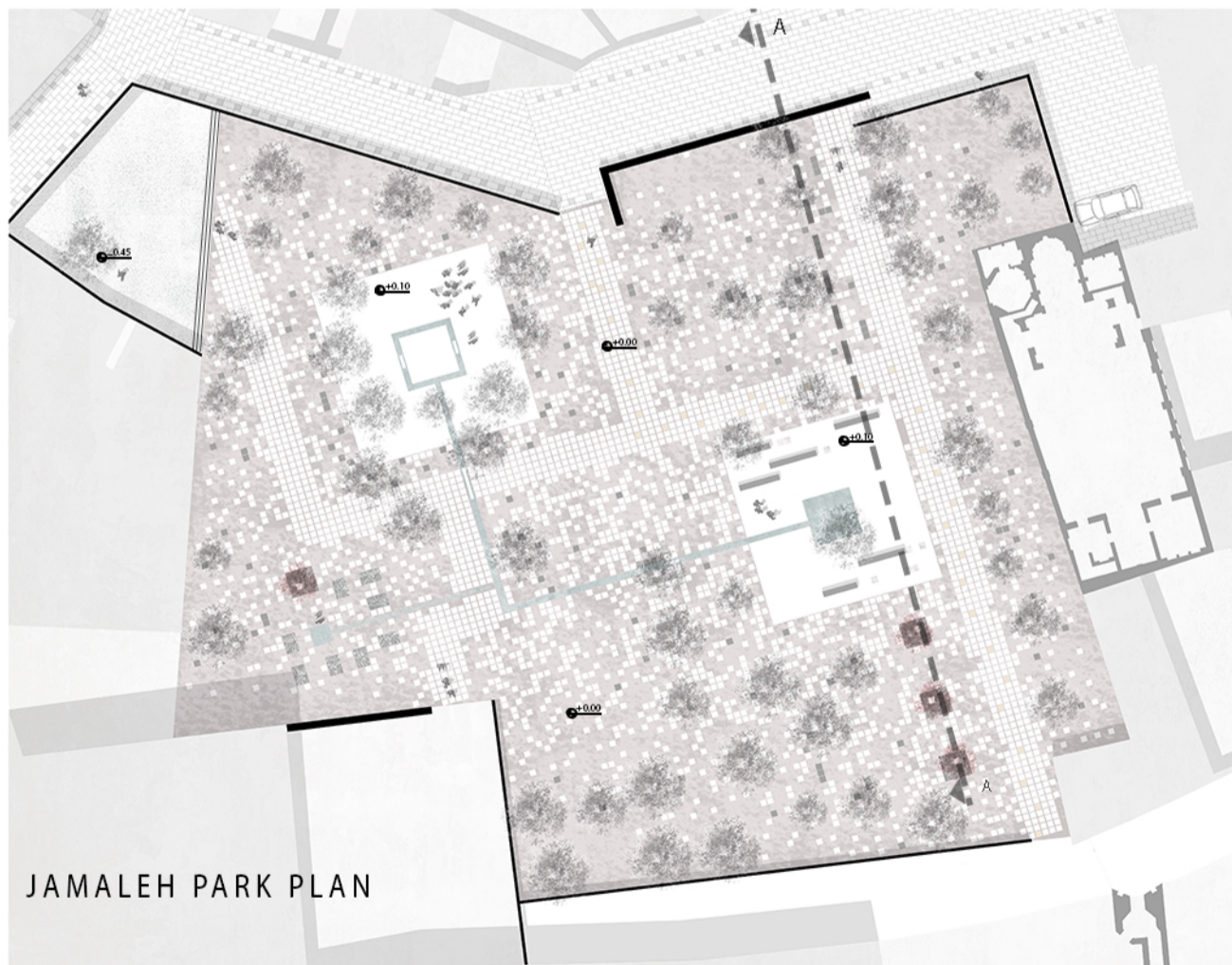
define a new limit to create a sense of security and safety. also these limits work as bench in some areas. Ideas for group and social activities such as climbing wall and share garden



New set of connections, reduced in numbers, between the critical points such as main and side entrances as well as main areas.



new modern fountain by which we are able to irrigate the share gardens. New pattern and a new design which was inspired by the previous historical neighborhood pavement.



PROJECT EVALUATIONS

THE FUSION OF COURTYARD AND THE CITY. ISFAHAN 3 votes+1 appreciation

Mahnush Arbabi, Ghazaleh Eslami

• Cherubini appreciation

"This I had thought I understood on that distant trip to Isfahan: that the most important thing in the world is empty spaces. The honeycomb (mogharnas) vaults of the domes of the Shah Abbas Mosque, the brown dome of the Friday Mosque, which stands on a succession of arches of decreasing size, calculated according to sophisticated arithmetic to weld the square base to the circle that holds the dome; the iwans, the great quadrangular portals with arched vaults: everything here confirms that the true substance of the world is given by the hollow form. Perhaps a city that has been made following a happy disposition of fullness and emptiness lends itself to be lived with a happy disposition of spirit even in times of megalomaniac despotism: this is the thought that came to me as I strolled in the evening animation through the famous square of Isfahan, looking at the mosques with their blue and copper-colored domes, the houses of equal height with communicating terraces, the wide vaults of the palace of Abbas the Great and the bazaar."

Italo Calvino, *Collezione di sabbia*, 1984

• Alessandra De Cesaris 1 vote

In the history of Iranian cities on the plateau, the urban fabric has been built around emptiness "following," as Italo Calvin puts it, "an interesting arrangement of fullness and emptiness." (See Roberto Cherubini's evaluation, below.) It is the emptiness of the mosques, madrasas, and caravanserais, the semi-full emptiness of the bazaars, and the more minute emptiness of the courtyards of the houses. Such emptinesses give the measure of fullness. Emptiness is dense with meaning both on the urban scale and on the scale of domestic life. It is in fact around the enclosures of gardens, mosques, and madrasas, in the open but covered spaces of the iwans, and in the courtyards of the caravanserais within the bazaars that, in the history of the city, public space has been organized and social life has thickened. While the courtyards of the dwellings were the center of the activities of domestic life, this fabric is now at risk of destruction. Traditional houses no longer meet the needs of contemporary life and the family has been radically transformed.

The idea of hosting in some courtyards a series of common services for the community (while others retain their residential function) and of "reactivating" the courtyards by opening them up to a network of paths and public spaces are intelligent proposals for the urban regeneration of fabrics at risk of extinction. I would like to add a small suggestion: since traditional courtyards are divided into a more private part (andarooni) and a public part (birooni), it may be that the latter will accommodate the system of new public spaces.

• Marsia Marino 1 vote

The project aims to preserve and enhance the historical and identity-bound courtyard system typical of the city of Isfahan through systematization and public use.

To this end, the project employs three strategies: "continuity"; "collectivity" and "connectivity," through the reactivation of "paths"; and "public spaces," "open spaces," and "attraction points". Despite belonging to the thematic category of "reactivation of courtyards," the project also references the Persian garden.

The result highlights a comprehensive urban vision and a great sensitivity to traditional themes.

• Emma Tagliacollo 1 vote

Typology

The city is "measured" through minimal spaces such as courtyards and hidden voids that give breathing room to the city. An interesting study of typology is accompanied by a reflection on the nature of public and private space, which here seems to me to mingle, becoming semi-public and semi-private.