



FOUR BUILDINGS FOR SCHIFFLÄNDE

1. BASEL'S COMPACT MEDIEVAL CITY



ANALYSIS/ BACKGROUND



Löffelplan 1859, Ludwig Heinrich Löffel

Public Realm Historically and Today

The project site is situated in Basel's historic centre, next to the city's first and for a long time only connection across the river Rhein - the Mittlere Rheinbrücke. Topologically, it is shaped by the valley of the much smaller side river Birs, which now runs mainly underground. The extent of intervention more specifically lies on and between Blumenplatz, Fischmarkt and Schiffländle.

The squares (and the streets between them) today lack the definition and hierarchy that was apparent historically. The 1859 Plan of Basel named after Ludwig Heinrich Löffel, for example, shows a clear distinction between narrow streets (street widths of on average 4-8m) and large open squares (much wider in comparison, defined by the buildings surrounding the square, and often a fountain marking its centre). Today, in the Schiffländle area, the distinction between street and square becomes much more blurred. The streets have become wider to accommodate transport needs, however have become much more wide than functionally necessary. Squares have turned into junctions with traffic islands, trams are allowed to stop in the midst of the square or in front of through routes to wait their turn to serve tram stops, and it is incomprehensible why some former squares have kept their names while others have simply become a junction as part of a street crossing.

The built fabric at the back of the site's central urban block is loose and does not take advantage of its prime location. On the other side of this most critical street, the Spiegelgasse, the late 1930s Spiegelhof city council and police building may be clearly defining the street edge, however has close to no interaction with the street. With only one entrance to the building and one through route passage to a 120m long facade, the Spiegelhof has a 'dead' street frontage. The programme of almost entirely office space for buildings on both sides of the Spiegelgasse discourages public vibrancy further. At an urban scale, squares and street edges need to be re-defined and focus given to the connections between squares to help re-establish a sense of identity and to improve the quality of urban space.



after the Löffelplan 1857-1859, Ludwig Heinrich Löffel



Basel today overlapped with the 1859 Löffelplan

- Buildings today
- Building around 1850 according Löffelplan



Schiffflände, Basel



Blumenplatz - left: Spiegelgasse 2, Kantonbank Headquarters (1938), and right: Blumenrain 8, Trois Rois Hotel



Blumengasse - left: Blumenrain 1-4, apartment and commercial building(s) (1909-1910), and right: backside to



Spiegelgasse - backside to Alte Börse (1906-08) and front of Spiegel-



Fischmarkt - left: Marktgasse 8, Alte Börse (1906-08), and right: Fischmarkt 5: 'Seidenhaus Hoch' commercial/



Current Situation in 2013, Ground Floor Plan, 1:1'250

Built Fabric and Programme

To establish the extent of necessary intervention (and resulting on-site demolition) we first looked closely at the existing building fabric.

All buildings from the turn of the 19th century were found to be in good or exceptionally good preservation and use. An exception to this general positive valuation is the Alte Börse building, which, despite a generally satisfactory condition, turned into an urbanistically awkward massing after the stock exchange moved to a larger building at Aeschenplatz and the additional side wing of the building was demolished around 1939. Today the stone building with huge windows and many ornaments has a supermarket in the ground floor and southern wing, while the northern part is the headquarter of the local F.M. station Radio Basilisk. The building is now no longer making use of its prime location on the Fischmarkt square (its street frontage is blocked by supermarket storage and shelving) and the floor levels, vertical circulation and unit division/ use of the original building have been ruthlessly tempered with. A re-organisation of the building to its original spatial qualities would be desirable. The programme of a supermarket could move underground instead of blocking valuable ground floor retail area and street frontage.

The modernist Spiegelhof and Kantonbank buildings from 1938/39 are by most people considered to be the biggest problem of the site. However, we see the problem of these buildings to be their single-use occupancy and resulting lack of active frontage to the street (there is only one entrance per large building). In terms of energy, the buildings contain a lot of grey energy and offer a fairly flexible floor plan, structure, and facade. A new build would require the use of a lot further energy and is judged unlikely to offer much better performance/ density.

It is therefore our proposed strategy to keep both buildings, but to enforce some changes in use. For the Kantonbank building, which is planned to be relocated in the near future, we propose the use as an educational institution/ a university (educational programme was found to be under-represented in the wider Schiffflände area in the 2012 research by Studio Basel, see right). To have little impact on the Spiegelhof's function as a public service building, but to improve the street level condition, we suggest the inclusion of retail units at ground floor level and to retain the rest of the programme in the building as it currently is.

The 1950s-80s buildings on site are performing poorly both energetically and in terms of their contribution to Schiffflände as a piece of city - they are of loose building fabric and not very dense in terms of occupancy. We suggest the demolition of these buildings and replacement by denser, more mixed-used buildings. The inclusion of housing programme in the new neighborhood would further be desirable, as residential use of the inner city fabric is diminishing. Bringing more housing back into the city centre would encourage a more vibrant neighborhood, especially at evening and night time.



Building Types

- pre-industrial/ old city
- buildings from the turn of the 19th century
- pre-war buildings (before/around 1938)
- buildings from around the 1950s
- buildings from the 1960s-1980s



Building Programme, map + statistics: Studio Basel, 2012

- Residential 8.5% (7.3% Housing, 1.2% Hotel)
- Infrastructure 29.6%
- Retail 21.9% (of which 4.0% food)
- Education/ Public 4.0%
- Office 13.4%
- Leisure 22.6% (16.7% Green Space, 4.0% Museum/Theatre, 1.9% Churches)

(Building Programme statistics are based on the entire Schiffflände area; map + statistics: Studio Basel, 2012)

Traffic Infrastructure

Heavy tram, bus and car traffic have a great impact on the Schiffflände area, which is struggling to accommodate the necessary transportation needs. The junction were Blumenplatz once used to be is no longer read as a square, as wide streets, traffic and traffic islands inform the space. The historic fountain at Fischmarkt is swallowed up by streets and tram traffic and no longer given much importance. Everywhere you go you have to watch out for any coming traffic, meaning you cannot take your eyes of the traffic situation to appreciate your surrounding, and at times you have to wait minutes for the trams to stop blocking the way in inconvenient spaces. Both on the Fischmarkt square and in front of the Blumengasse passage trams stop to wait their turn to serve the tram stops.

The re-organisation of traffic in the Schiffflände area (relocating tram lines and restricted car access only for delivery) would allow the extension of the pedestrianised area to the vibrant new neighborhood, through the Blumengasse passage and to Schiffflände and the Mittlere Rheinbrücke. The strategy is to further include a new transport hub in the centre of this newly created pedestrianised area: an entrance and station for the proposed new S-train connection between Basel SBB – Aeschenplatz – Barfüsserplatz – Schiffflände – Mittlere Rheinbrücke – Claraplatz – and Badischer Bahnhof: in terms of passengers the most frequented line in Switzerland.

Studio Basel's research from 2012 forecasts that without the construction of the S-Bahn, tram line service in 2020 would be heavily burdened and the street network overloaded. The aims are to reduce the road traffic, to improve housing and environmental quality and to have less traffic in the inner city.

A station in the heart of Schiffflände would be an ideal catalyst for the area and enliven a possibly re-established Blumenplatz and Fischmarkt.



Traffic Study, Studio Basel, 2012

- pedestrian
- tram stops
- tram
- bus
- car/ bus



Proposed S-Train Route, map Studio Basel, 2012

APPROACH (PROJECT DESCRIPTION)

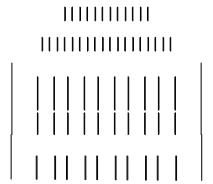
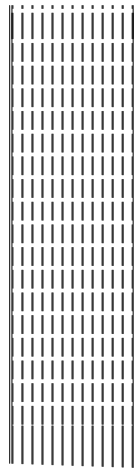
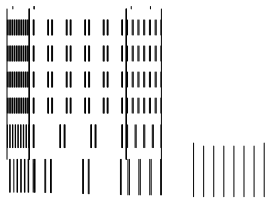
Four Buildings For Schiffländer

Our intervention is in Basel's historic centre on and between Blumenplatz, Fischmarkt and Schiffländer. The squares (and the streets between them) currently lack definition, hierarchy, and have become victim to accommodating transport needs. The built fabric at the back of the site's central urban block is loose and does not take advantage of its prime location while its programme of almost entirely office space discourages public vibrancy. To tackle these issues by architectural means, our strategy is to:

1) **Densify** - Energetically and urbanistically poorly performing buildings facing Spiegelhof are replaced by the denser tower building typology, using the site more efficiently. The street section for Spiegelgasse is reduced to 8 m width by four distinct buildings along an imaginary profile of an urban block.

2) **Diversify** – Through more diverse typologies and programme (two educational corner stone buildings (6 stories), a residential tower (18 stories) and a single story S-train station pavilion)) Schiffländer is enlivened during day and night time. In the preserved Spiegelhof building the ground floor now includes retail units to help establish a more active street frontage.

3) **Enhance Identity** – With the proposed 18-story residential tower, Schiffländer will have its mark on the Basel skyline. Smaller scale buildings (6 stories) help define edges of Blumenplatz and Fischmarkt. The squares will each be of their own character, their assets reasserted, facades even mirrored, and more city space given back to the pedestrians. The incorporated S-train station will replace overground tram lines with a transport hub. The axis Petersplatz – Spiegelhof – Blumengasse – Schiffländer will be further articulated and becomes the main of three alleyways, opening the interior space of the urban block to the city.



Strategy

1.
 - demolish badly performing buildings of the 1950s-80s (footprint 1'400 m²)
 - re-organise the traffic situation
 - incorporate new S-train station

2.
 - define squares and enhance square identity by mirroring 'corner stone' buildings (the doubling-up of facades of similar hierarchies is also present in the southern corner stone building at Marktplatz and archive photos show the Börse building had a doubled-up facade of two different hierarchies itself from 1906-1939)
 - extend pedestrianised area of the city centre to include new neighborhood and entrance to new S-train station transport hub

3.
 - enlivening area by creating active street frontage on narrowed Spiegelgasse
 - diversify use of various buildings on site to create more mixed-use programme
 - articulate axis Petersplatz – Spiegelhof – Blumengasse – Schiffflände
 - open up urban block to the public
 - densify with mixed use/ housing programme



Fischmarkt (Marktgassee 8): Alte Börse, 1906-1908, with addition demolished in 1939 (archive photo)



Marktplatz 16: 'zum Roten Turm' and 'zur Laute' double head buildings, 1907-1909



0. Figure Ground Plan of Current Situation



1.



2.



3. Figure Ground Plan of Proposed Situation

Proposed demolition/ new-build and change of use:

■ proposed demolished:	
retail	1'500 m ²
office	5'200 m ²
total	6'700 m ²

■ proposed new-build:	
retail	2'100 m ²
educational/ public	5'200 m ²
housing	5'100 m ²
infrastructure	1'000 m ²
total	13'400 m ²

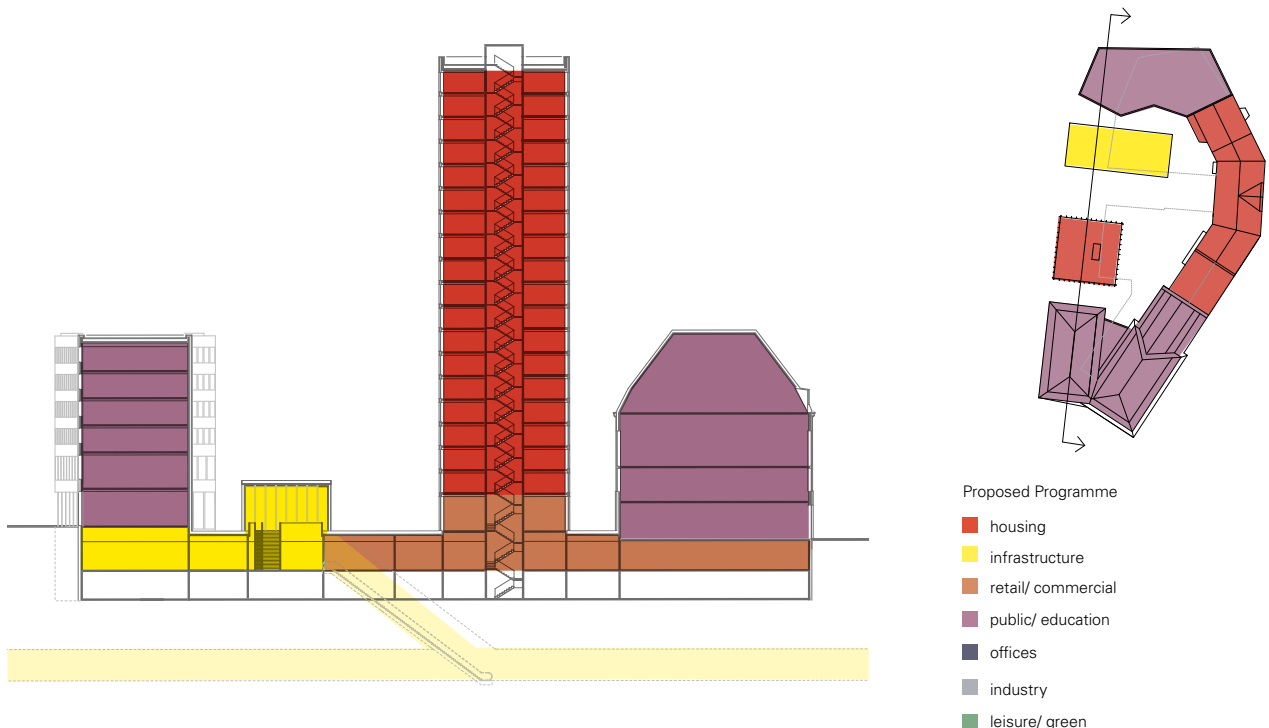
■ proposed change of use:	
office › educational/ public	8'500 m ²
office › retail	250 m ²
retail › educational/ public	550 m ²
office › educational/ public	550 m ²
total	9'850 m ²

Diverse Programme for an enlivened neighborhood

The strategy envisages reducing the street section for Spiegelgasse to 8 m width by four distinct buildings along an imaginary profile of an urban block. These four buildings are of different typologies, programme and architectural expression and could be designed in a series of stages by a number of architects seeing that their characters are distinctly different from each other.

A rigidity to the buildings similar to that of the modernist 1938/39 Spiegelhof building on the opposite edge of the urban block, and an architectural expression that is as alien to the site as the Spiegelhof is to the surrounding city, create an ordered complexity. The opened-up inner urban block provides an interesting interplay and intimacy between the tidied-up back facades of the turn-of-the-19th-century buildings to the modernist Spiegelhof and the proposed later additions. Walking along the axis Petersplatz – Spiegelhof – Blumengasse and S-train station entrance – Schiffplände this interesting spatial sequence can be experienced.

The diagram below shows the proposed diversity in programme and building typology in both roof plan and section.



Proposed Section showing programme, scale 1:1500

Fischmarkt

built fabric:

- 'mirror the Alte Börse' to help define the square with an extended facade to the awkwardly placed existing Alte Börse facade
- future phase intervention to western side of the square

programme:

- introduce currently under-represented public/ educational programme to the Schiffplände area with the new-build, and change use of existing Börse building to also include this
- accommodate the supermarket currently within the Alte Börse building in proposal's basement with S-train station and enlarge (not wasting valuable ground floor area and street frontage)
- change ground floor plan of Spiegelhof to retail use to activate street frontage

infrastructure/ transport:

- square freed up from tram lines and public car use
- square to large extent pedestrianised



Ground Floor Plan, 1:1250, Existing





Ground Floor Plan, 1:1'250, Proposed



Blumenplatz

built fabric:

- demolition of urbanistically weak existing head building between Spiegelgasse and Blumenrain
- 'mirror the Kantonalbank Headquarters' to help define the re-established Blumenplatz square with a third facade of equal dimensions and importance to the existing square facades, giving more square frontage/ importance to the Trois Rois Hotel and forming a unique triangular-shaped square

programme:

- introduce under-represented public/ educational programme (a library) to the Schiffflände area with the new-build, and change use of the soon-to-be -relocated Kantonalbank building to house a university

infrastructure/ transport:

- square freed-up from tram lines and public car use
- square to large extent pedestrianised

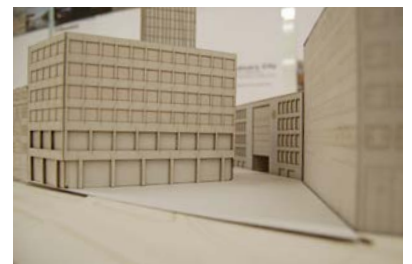


Ground Floor Plan, 1:1250, Existing





Ground Floor Plan, 1:1'250, Proposed



Spiegelgasse and Blumengasse

built fabric:

- demolition of urbanistically and energetically poorly performing buildings from the 1950s-80s between Spiegelgasse and Blumenrain
- open up urban block to the public
- densify with diverse building typologies:
 - two educational corner stone buildings (6 stories)
 - a residential tower (18 stories) and
 - a single story S-train station pavilion

programme:

- diversify with mixed use/ housing programme
- create active street frontage through introducing retail in Spiegelhof ground floor

infrastructure/ transport:

- street narrowed to 8m width
- street freed-up from tram lines/ public car use and pedestrianised
- articulate axis Petersplatz – Spiegelhof – Blumengasse – Schiffplände



Ground Floor Plan, 1:1 250, Existing

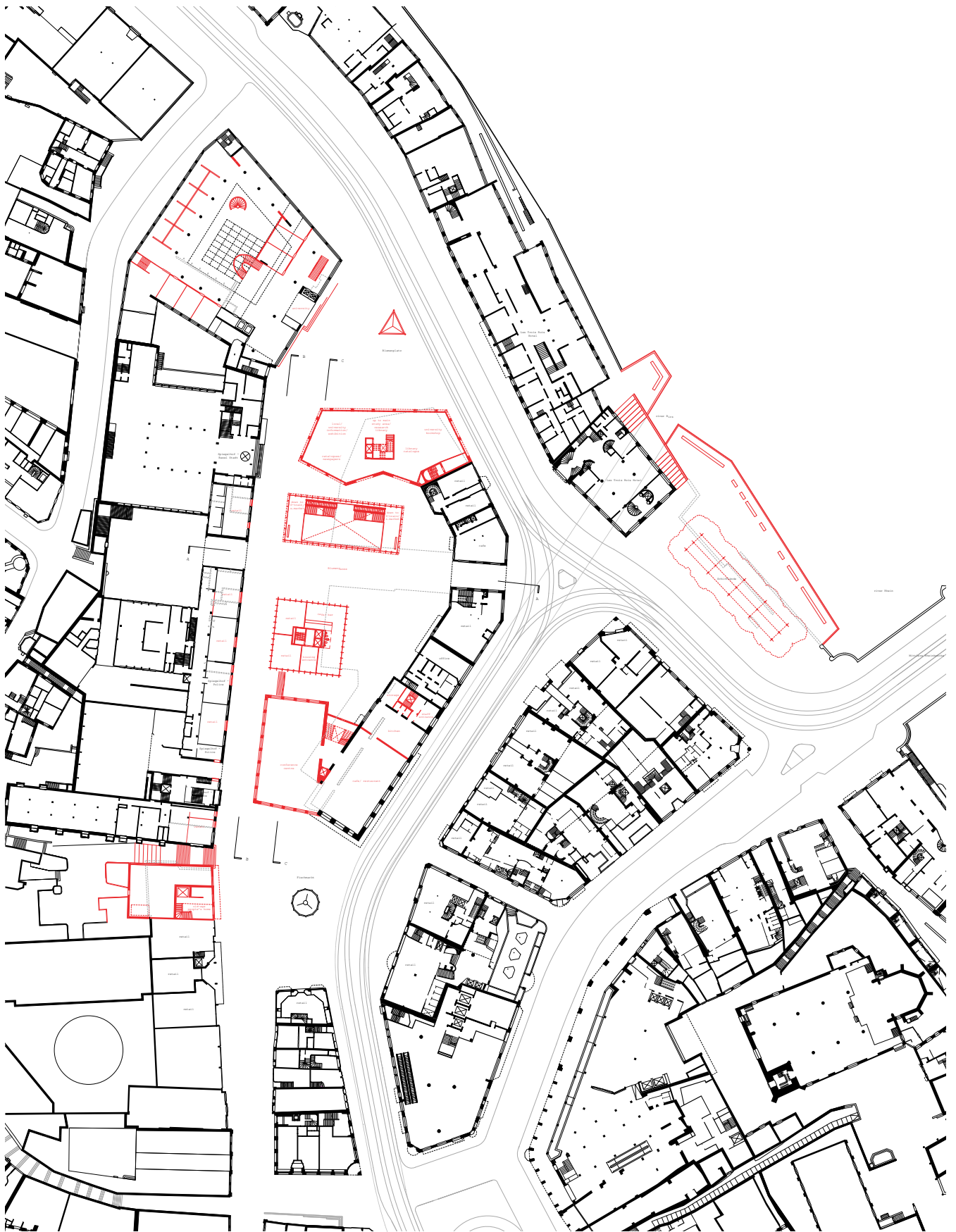




Ground Floor Plan, 1:1'250, Proposed



PROJECT PLAN





Fischmarkt



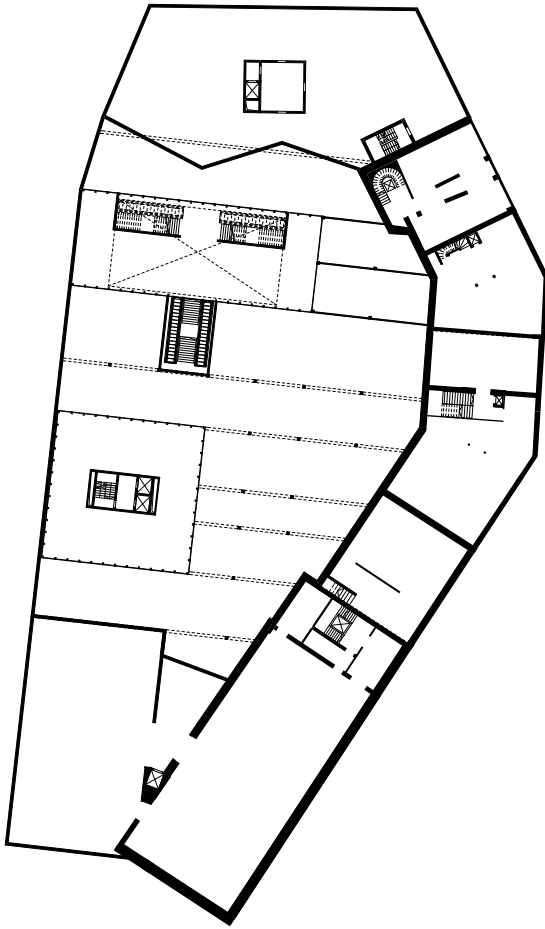
Blumenplatz



Mittlere Rheinbrücke



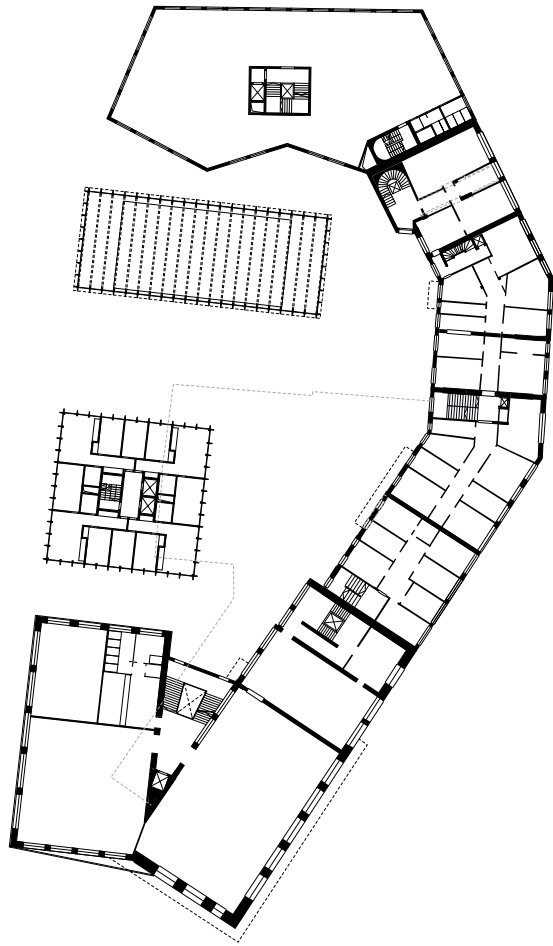
Blumengasse



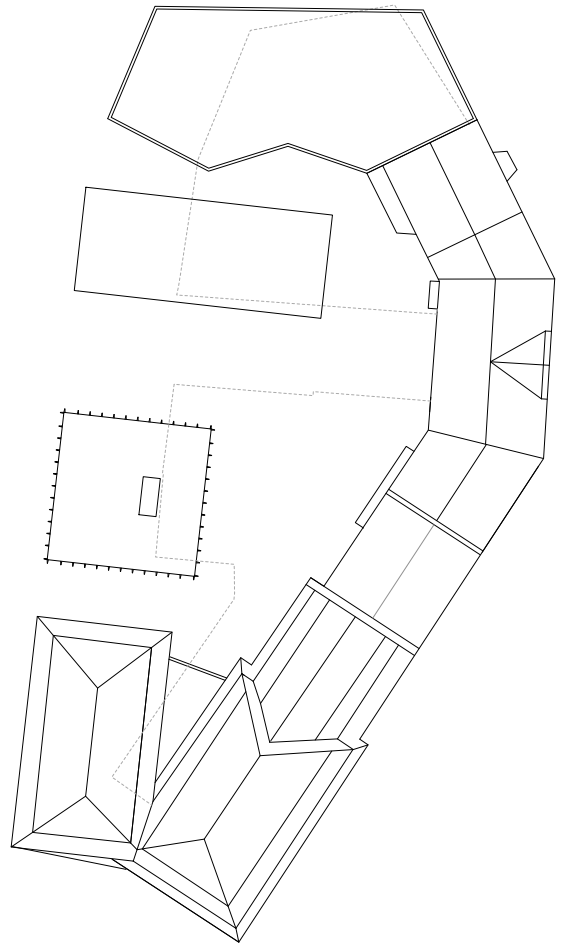
basement floor plan



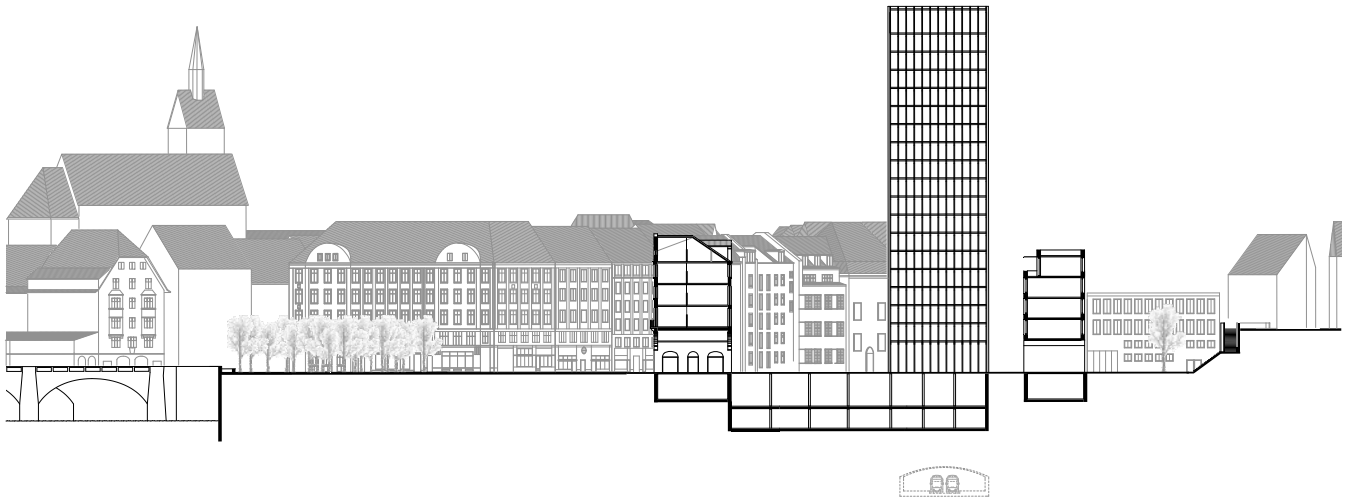
ground floor plan



typical plan



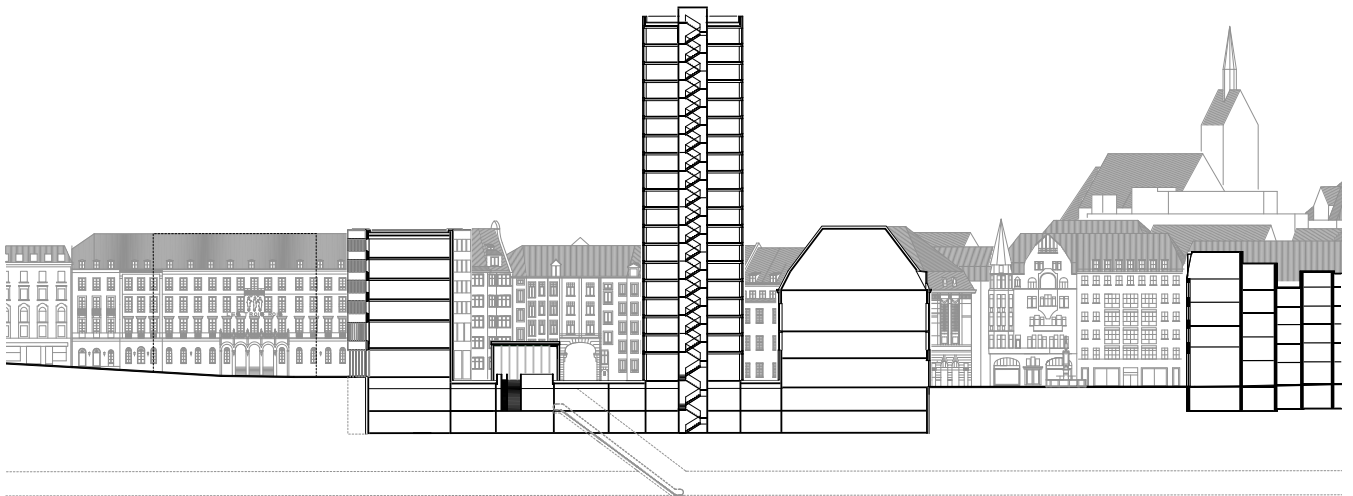
roof plan



Section through Blumengasse



Section through Spiegelgasse (West elevation)



Section through proposal