

# Old Batumi Neighborhood Concept

Provision of Integrated Urban Development Documents for Batumi Urban Lab

## 4.3. Final design of Two Project Concept

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## 4.3. Final Design of Two Project Concepts

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Contents

Abstract .....3

Methdology.....4

Areas Selected for Application Projects.....9

Area 1 – Consolidation of fragmented green spaces along Rustaveli and Gogebashvili Streets and adjacent to the Batumi Drama Theater.....10

Area 2 – Consolidation of fragmented recreational spaces on Kutaisi and Z. Gamsakhurdia Streets and conversion of Zubalashvili Street into a pedestrian zone.....14

Annex .....20



## Abstract

This document describes the process and methodology for selecting application projects for the Old Batumi Neighborhood Concept. It was developed for the Batumi Urban Laboratory within the framework of the Integrated Urban Development Documents Support Project for the City of Batumi.

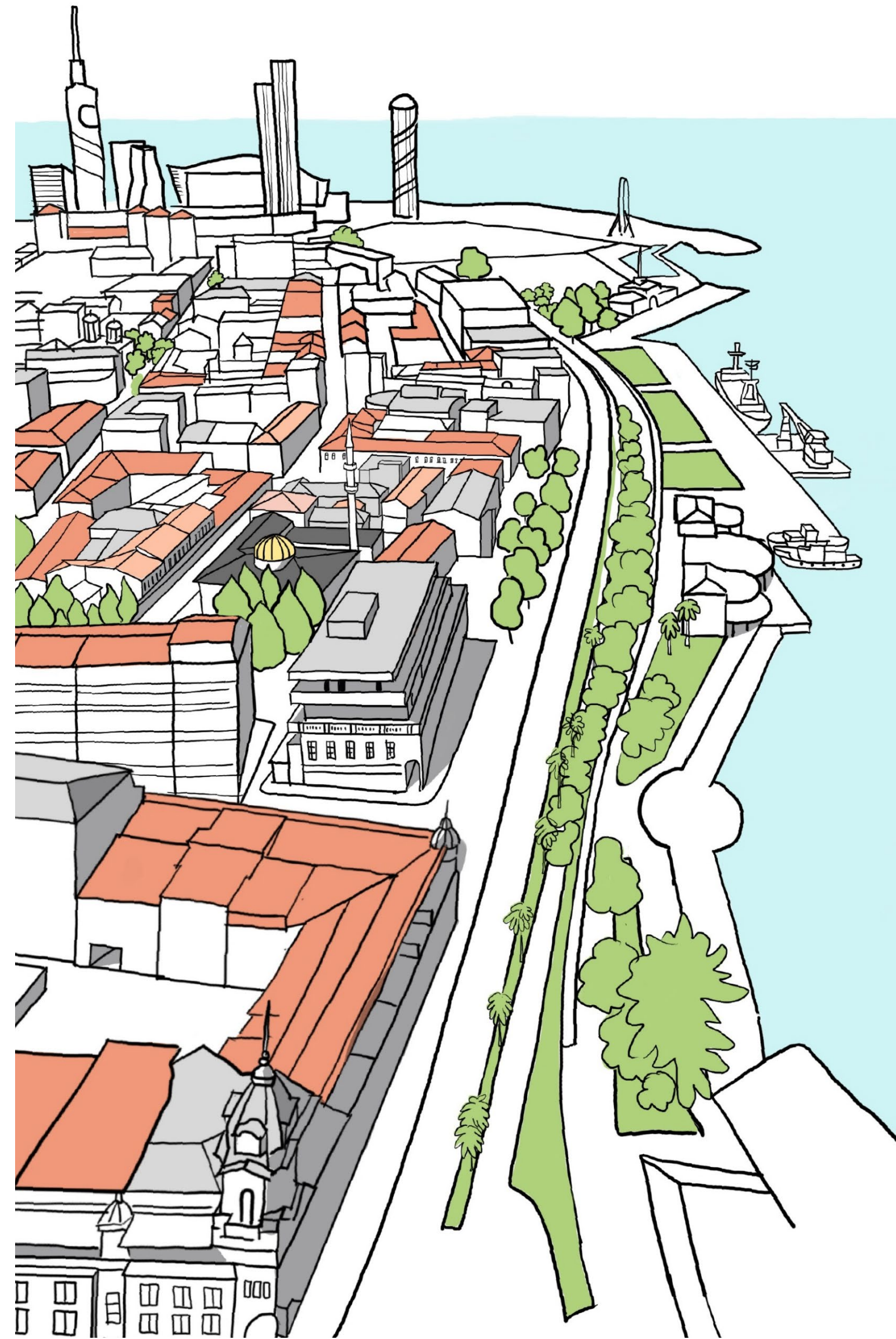
The application projects were selected from the initial outline of the development concept and from the portfolio of design solutions, in which priorities were identified through engagement and communication with various stakeholders.

This document is divided into several subsections. On the one hand, it presents the project selection process and methodology, including a description of the pre-design research, SWOT analysis, and the development of the vision and concept, which were later transformed into a portfolio of design solutions. In addition, the engagement and communication stage and process are briefly described. The document also outlines the criteria used for selecting the application projects.

The document describes the types of interventions and the nature of the changes, which aim to:

- Integrate and strengthen fragmented public and recreational spaces.
- Create pedestrian and green corridors that establish safe connections within the project area and between the project area and adjacent significant green spaces.
- Develop much-needed neighborhood, health-promoting, and sports infrastructure within reorganized spaces.

The purpose of the application projects is to implement the actions and ideas presented in the neighborhood concept and in the portfolio of actions of the design solutions.





## Methodology

The methodology for the application projects is based on the approaches and identified findings developed during the various stages of work on the neighborhood concept—urban analysis, vision development, SWOT analysis, and the working version of the concept. These stages consistently follow a set of key urban characteristics, encompassing both physical and social environment components, as well as their interconnections and interrelationships. Accordingly, the application projects represent a continuation of the logical sequence through which the neighborhood concept as a whole is developed.

### Urban Analysis

During the urban analysis, several factors related to pedestrian movement and public and green spaces were identified. Most streets within the project area are quite narrow, and all of them allow vehicular traffic as well as parking. This is further exacerbated by illegal parking, resulting in particularly difficult conditions for pedestrians, who are left with very narrow sidewalks that are also frequently obstructed by various elements such as poles, tables and chairs, plant pots, trees, and other obstacles.

In addition, public and green spaces suitable for rest and social gathering are very limited. As a result, children and elderly residents are especially constrained in this regard. During meetings, local residents noted that within the project area—Old Batumi district—there are practically no sports playgrounds for children and adolescents.

### SWOT Analysis

These issues are also reflected in the SWOT analysis of the vision document. The following are identified as weaknesses:

- Lack of green and public spaces
- Absence of sports and playground facilities
- Excessive parking relative to the street and neighborhood scale
- Illegal parking
- Functionally underutilized public spaces
- Physical barriers to pedestrian movement
- Physical safety risks, especially for minors
- Public spaces occupied and appropriated by small businesses
- Areas with an insufficient sense of safety
- Challenges in enforcing parking control

The following are considered opportunities:

- Transformation into a pedestrian-oriented neighborhood
- Opportunities for the creation and development of public spaces
- Potential for neighborhood revitalization

- Opportunities to create spaces based on social activities
- Creation of spaces for different age groups



*The small park area located between Z. Gamsakhurdia Street and Kutaisi Street, field visit, January 2025.*



*Small park and narrow sidewalk on Z. Gamsakhurdia Street, field visit, January 2025.*

The photos above show the results of observations conducted at different times within the project area, demonstrating that the identified areas serve as gathering points for various groups. Their needs and challenges are similar—narrow sidewalks with physical barriers, and limited space both for movement and for various activities.

## Vision

Within the vision section, five primary guiding principles were established, two of which are particularly relevant: inclusive social environment and environmental orientation. Among the objectives outlined under the principle of Inclusive Social Environment are:

- Creation of an accessible, safe, and inclusive environment for all - provision of age-appropriate infrastructure (e.g., play areas for children and resting spaces for the elderly).
- Development of an urban environment responsive to the needs of local residents - enhancing urban infrastructure primarily for community use; provision of gathering, socializing, and seating areas with shaded spaces; and organization of street-based sports events and activities.

Objectives under the principle of Environmental Orientation include:

- Expansion of urban green cover and green infrastructure
- Improvement of airflow and urban ventilation
- Preservation of green corridors and urban wildlife

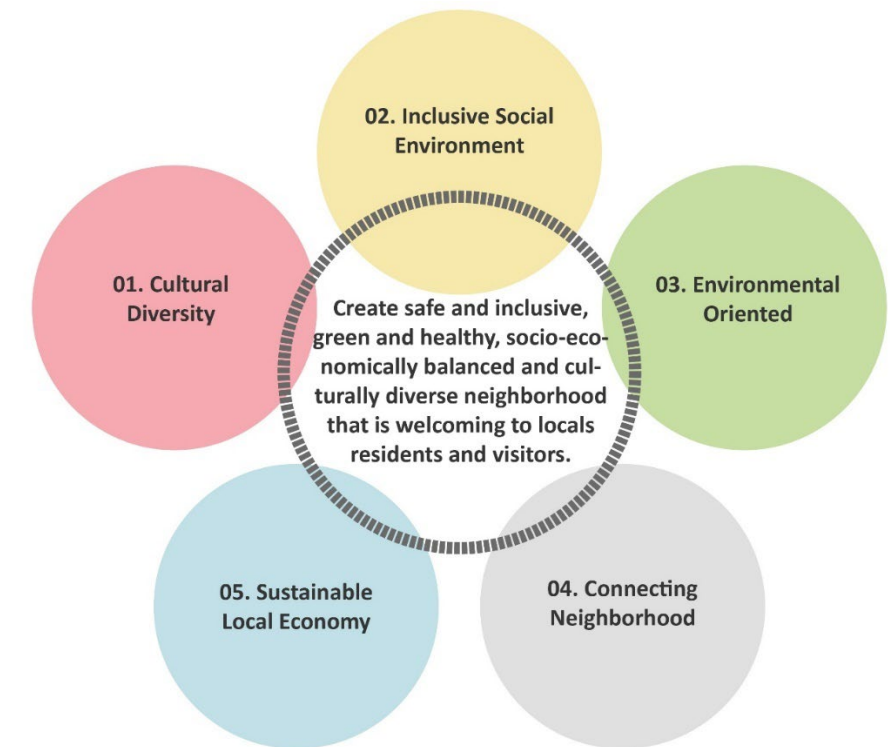
The overarching aim of the vision is articulated as the creation of a safe, inclusive, green, and health-promoting neighborhood that is attractive to both local residents and visitors.

## Draft Concept

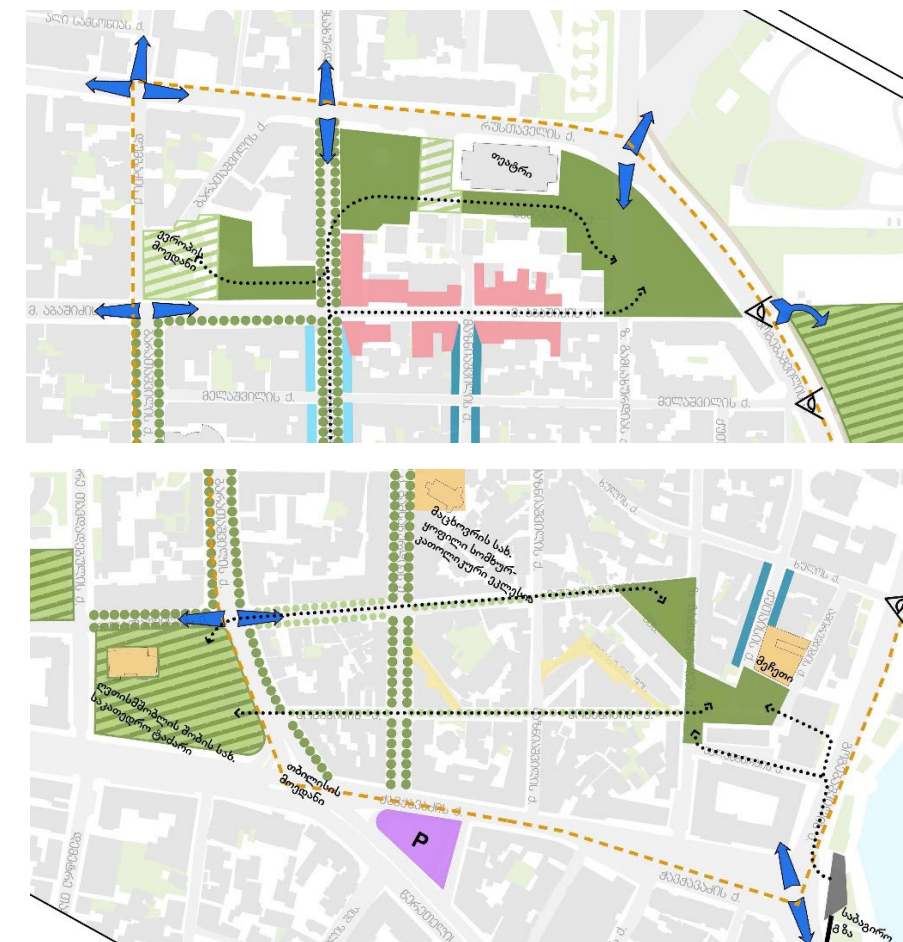
In the working version of the concept, one subsection is dedicated to the need to consolidate green spaces within the project area. It notes that utilizing the existing potential for this purpose would significantly enhance the attractiveness of the surrounding areas and the overall quality of the urban environment. Public spaces located close to residential areas are of great importance, especially for children and elderly residents. The document also emphasizes that within the project area, the availability of land suitable for the development of children’s playgrounds and sports facilities for adolescents is very limited.

For this reason, the working version of the concept from the outset identified green public spaces that could be consolidated and developed into larger recreational areas at neighborhood and city scale, featuring playgrounds and sports facilities, gathering spaces, shaded areas, and park furniture. These spaces include, on the one hand, the square at the intersection of Rustaveli and Gogebashvili Streets, the lawns and square adjacent to the Drama Theatre, and Europe Square. The second area includes the squares located along Z. Gamsakhurdia Street and near the mosque, as well as their connection—via Zubalashvili Street—to the park of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary Cathedral.

The chapter on transport and mobility states that the future of mobility in the neighborhood should be people-centered rather than car-oriented. Everyone, regardless of age or ability, should be able to move on foot comfortably, safely, and independently. To achieve this, pedestrian spaces need to be expanded by restricting vehicular traffic and parking on certain street sections. These areas should be replaced with spaces for public use—such as seating, green islands, or children’s zones.



Vision and its five objectives



Fragments of the map from the Draft Neighborhood Concept: Top—green spaces between Rustaveli, Gogebashvili, Baratashvili, and M. Abashidze Streets. Bottom—green spaces along Z. Gamsakhurdia Street and the park of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary Cathedral.



## Portfolio of Solutions

Within the framework of the Old Batumi neighborhood concept, a portfolio of design solutions was developed based on the study of the area and the exploration of its development potential. This portfolio encompassed a set of actions aimed at achieving the objectives outlined in the vision. The proposed actions, representing various types of interventions, addressed multiple components, including mobility and parking, public and green spaces, play and gathering areas, environmental quality, tourism, and several other domains.

To ensure the inclusion of residents and other stakeholders in the decision-making process, multiple meetings were conducted with different groups, including local residents, heads of housing associations, small business representatives, municipal service managers and staff, activists, students, and persons with disabilities. Workshops were organized with these participants, during which they prioritized issues from a long list and highlighted those most important to them.

Based on this process, attention was focused on interventions that were identified as high-priority, which were then used to define the small-scale interventions. These priority actions primarily relate to public spaces and greenery, recreational and meeting areas, children’s playgrounds, as well as parking and congested traffic issues.

### Criteria for Selecting Application Projects

Based on the work carried out at the various stages of the neighborhood concept—including meetings with stakeholder groups, research findings, and developed approaches—criteria were established to identify and select the application project areas. This process confirmed that the idea proposed at the working version stage of the neighborhood concept—consolidating several fragmented public and green spaces into two distinct areas—represents a viable and high-priority urban renewal project. This project serves as the foundation of the neighborhood concept and becomes its most significant element in terms of urban planning and application projects.

Application project areas were selected where:

- There is potential to strengthen recreational and green spaces to encourage more effective use.
- New public spaces can be created and recreational or health-promoting functions can be developed, addressing the clear absence of such amenities in the project area.
- Residential functions dominate, and the primary target group is the local population.

The purpose of the application projects is to better organize existing neighborhood and communal public spaces, create new ones, and improve them collectively. This involves combining squares and separate green “islands,” some of which are actively used by all age and gender groups and often overcrowded, while others are poorly maintained and underutilized by residents.

Such spaces require interventions that activate them and make them more attractive for citizens. Additionally, designated areas will allow children to play and engage in physical activity, adults and elderly residents to gather and socialize, and adolescents and youth to have access to sports facilities.

## Urban Planning Approaches

The implementation of the application projects takes into account comprehensive urban development interventions:

- Redirecting vehicular traffic and planning a corresponding new traffic scheme.
- Allocating certain streets exclusively for pedestrians, prohibiting vehicular traffic on them.
- Designating certain street sections as integrated public spaces and integrating them into a shared park area.
- Introducing the “shared street” principle on specific street segments, where the entire paved surface is at the same level; vehicular traffic is permitted only for residents of that segment, with a low-speed limit (around 20 km/h); pedestrians have priority first, followed by cyclists, and finally vehicles.
- Developing functions and infrastructure that are lacking in the neighborhood—such as sports and playground facilities, gathering and relaxation spaces, and urban-park furniture.
- Establishing pedestrian connections between various open green public spaces within and around the project area through “green corridors” and pedestrian-friendly streets.

### Potential Benefits of Application Projects

The application projects can create multiple benefits for both local residents of the project area and, more broadly, for all residents of Batumi and the city’s visitors:

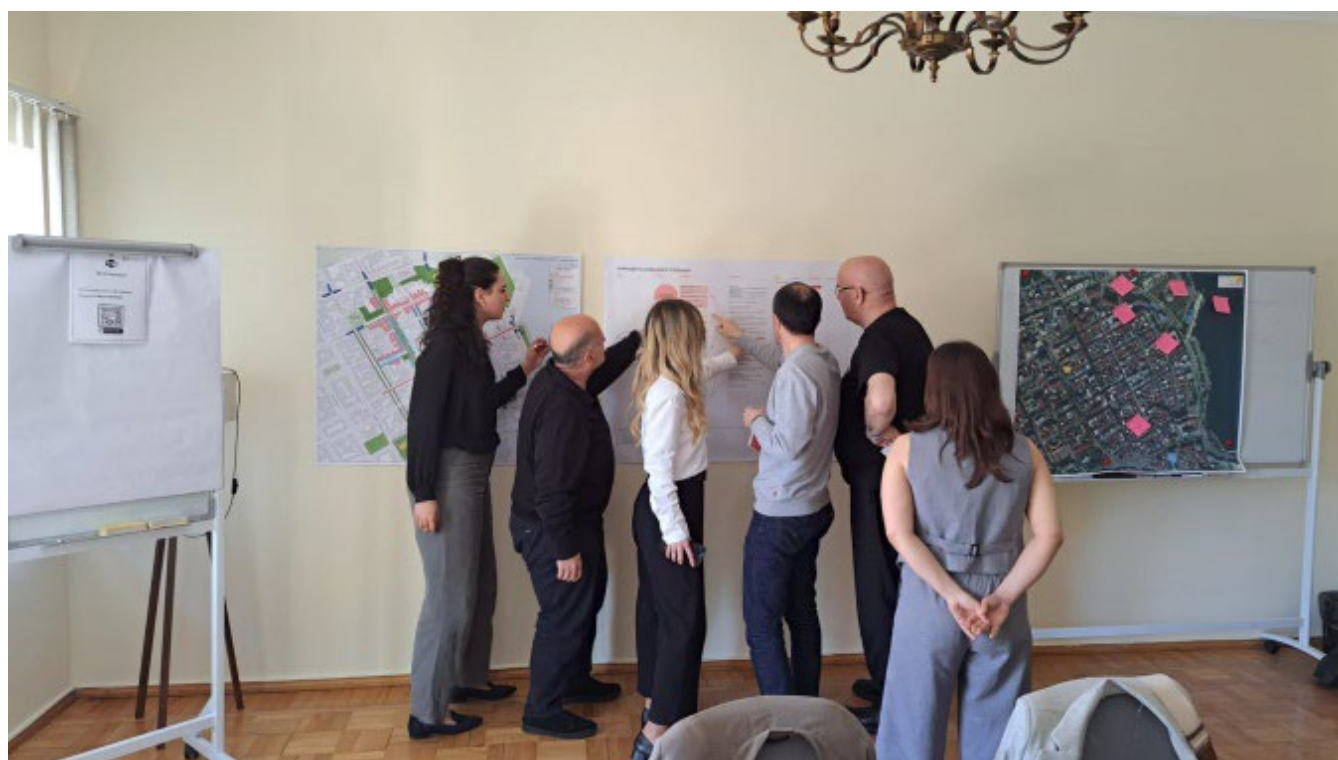
- Significantly increasing spaces freed from vehicles and allocated to pedestrians, thereby creating a safer neighborhood environment, especially for children.
- Reducing or eliminating noise and air pollution caused by vehicles within the project areas, improving the overall quality of urban life.
- Ecological improvement of the neighborhood through reduced emissions and noise, as well as enhanced greenery, positively impacting residents’ health.
- Promoting physical activity through the provision of sports infrastructure.
- Encouraging social and neighborhood interactions by creating relaxation and gathering spaces.
- Creating a positive climatic effect during the summer through increased greenery, permeable surfaces, and improved air quality.
- Boosting economic activity within pedestrian zones.
- Introducing the city’s first urban planning initiative of this kind, serving as a model for other areas of Batumi.



Engagement workshop with TSPA and CSOs, 5–6 May 2025, Batumi



Engagement event with students, 29 May 2025, Batumi



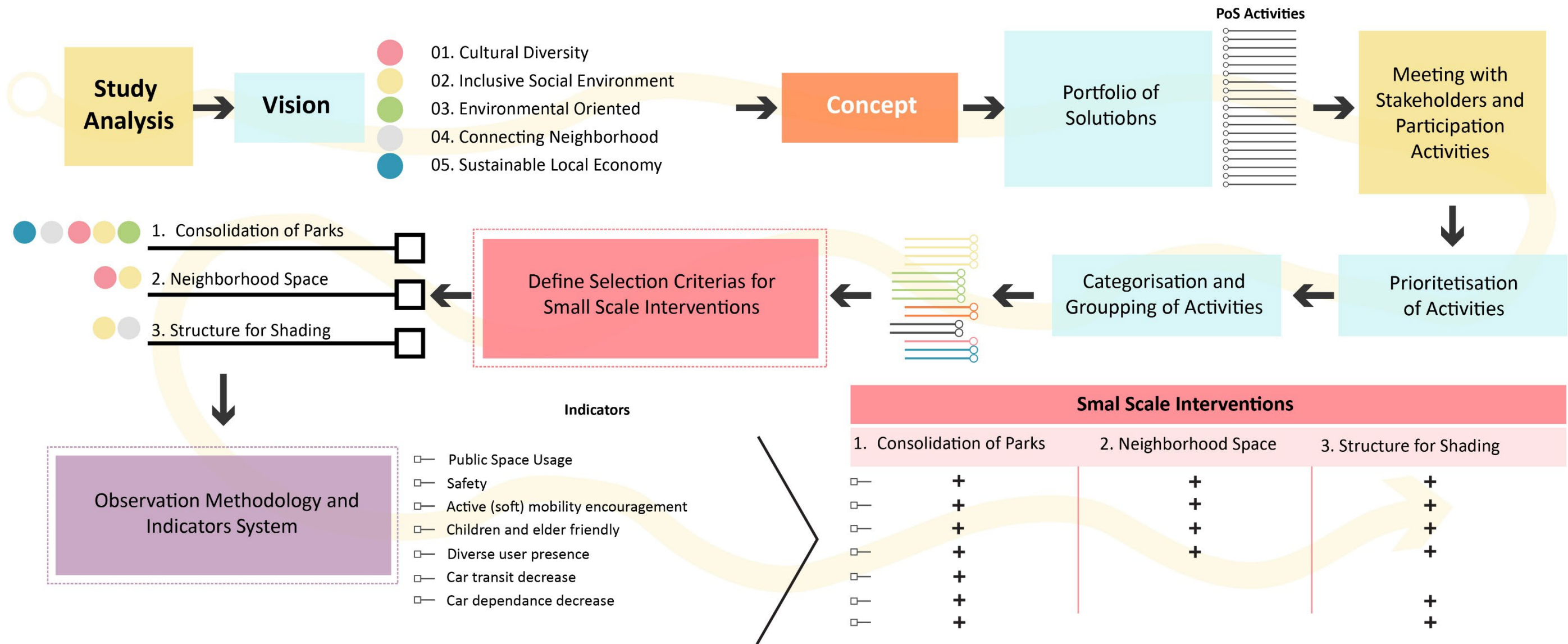
Engagement event with municipal departments, 7 May 2025, Batumi



Engagement event in the project area, 21 June 2025, Batumi



Methodology Process



Graphical representation of the methodology process



## Areas Selected for Application Projects

Two areas have been selected for the application projects, for which urban design interventions in public spaces have been proposed. These interventions are based on the so-called “**Placemaking**” principles, which primarily aim to create a more engaging urban environment close to residents’ homes, while also benefiting others, and to enhance the overall attractiveness of a specific neighborhood. This approach strengthens residents’ sense of connection and belonging to the place. Such urban spaces are more actively used by the community, whose members tend to take greater responsibility for their maintenance and care. A well-designed neighborhood environment positively influences the perceived quality of life and overall mood of residents

These areas were selected in the working version of the neighborhood concept and presented to various stakeholder groups through presentations and discussions. They have also been approved by the Batumi City Hall as suitable for detailed development. The areas are located on two different sides of the project territory in the neighborhood concept—one in the northern part and the other in the southern part. This ensures that the integrated public open spaces resulting from the application projects will be easily accessible to residents from both halves of the Old Batumi district.

- **Area 1** encompasses the territory bounded by sections of Rustaveli, Gogebashvili, K. Gamsakhurdia, and M. Abashidze Streets.
- **Area 2** includes small green spaces and squares along Z. Gamsakhurdia Street, near the mosque, and the full length of Zubalashvili Street.

The application project areas include two types of public spaces: **green recreational spaces** and **streets**. Both play distinct roles in the urban environment and have important functions in city life.

Both application project areas are illustrated on the figure on this page.



*Application Project Areas within the Boundaries of the Neighborhood Concept*



## Area 1 – Consolidation of fragmented green spaces along Rustaveli and Gogebashvili Streets and adjacent to the Batumi Drama Theatre

In this project area, which includes the city block between Rustaveli, Gogebashvili, K. Gamsakhurdia, and Z. Gamsakhurdia Streets, as well as the triangular-shaped garden between Rustaveli, Gogebashvili, and M. Abashidze Streets, there are several fragmented park and green spaces. These include:

- The Cadets’ Memorial Square
- The square in front of three multi-story residential buildings with a children’s playground
- The garden in front of the Batumi Drama Theatre
- The square behind it, at the corner of Rustaveli and Gogebashvili Streets
- A green area south-east of the theatre building

These spaces are green and maintained, but largely underutilized. People rarely use them because, being fragmented into “islands,” they are not properly organized or designed. There is little or no shading, seating, or large trees providing relief from the summer sun.

The proposal for this area envisions consolidating the separate recreational “islands” into a large integrated park system. This can be achieved through a unified approach to the entire area, including restricting vehicular traffic and parking on certain street sections and introducing recreational and health-promoting functions.

Specifically, the section of Z. Gamsakhurdia Street between M. Abashidze and Gogebashvili Streets will be incorporated into the unified park zone. Vehicular traffic on this section will be removed, and the surface will be leveled to match the sidewalks and park areas. A pedestrian corridor will be maintained along this street segment.

In the Cadets’ Memorial Square, new pedestrian paths will be created, improving access to the memorial and enhancing its visibility. Green lawns will be added, along with large trees providing shaded areas for relaxation during hot summer days. Park benches will be installed in the well-designed garden. The small square in front of the three multi-story residential buildings will be revitalized with interesting landscape design.

The space between the theatre’s southeast façade and the opposite buildings currently functions as a pedestrian corridor connecting the square with the Ilia Chavchavadze monument to the garden in front of the theatre’s main entrance. This pedestrian corridor will be enriched with functions currently lacking in the project area.



*Fragmented public space in project area 1*



*View of Area 1 with various separated and poorly organized green spaces divided by vehicular roads*



Between the Ilia Chavchavadze Memorial Square and the square in front of the three residential buildings, new sports facilities will be introduced, including:

- A multi-purpose mini football and basketball court with a small spectator stand
- Two paddle tennis courts

Within the mentioned pedestrian corridor, moving southwest from the sports courts, children’s playgrounds and recreational facilities are planned. Their location in front of multi-story residential buildings is particularly advantageous. Following these is a dancing fountain for children, accompanied by a reflecting water pool—a small decorative basin fed by the fountain—and a shaded pergola. These two landscape design elements provide comfort for users during hot summer days.

The area also includes two buildings—a shared workspace and a music center. Together, they create an engaging and pleasant environment, combining cultural and creative buildings with recreational and entertainment open spaces that are attractive to all age groups and people with diverse interests.

The space in front of the theatre’s main entrance is freed from vehicles and parking. Instead, it is transformed into an open theatrical podium with multiple levels and stepped seating. This allows people to simply sit and relax while enjoying views of the garden in front of the theatre and K. Gamsakhurdia and Rustaveli Streets from a slightly elevated vantage point. The podium can also host small musical and theatrical performances, speeches, or shows—illusionist, acrobatic, or comedic. Such a public space encourages self-expression and functionally complements the theatre building, allowing staged performances to extend seamlessly from the indoor stage to the outdoor space.

The described area is directly connected to other important recreational spaces located outside the project boundaries of our neighborhood concept. These include:

- On one side, Batumi Boulevard, leading toward the Alphabet Tower, the newly developed square near Batumi Seaport, and the seaside promenade.
- On the other side, Europe Square.

This creates a unique opportunity to connect several currently separated public recreational spaces, forming a continuous, safe, pedestrian-friendly park and wellness corridor from the seashore to Europe Square.

All buildings within this first project area—whether residential or otherwise—retain vehicular access to their courtyards via entrances from M. Abashidze Street.



*Cadets’ Memorial Square and the section of M. Abashidze Street to be incorporated into the consolidated park area*



*Ilia Chavchavadze Memorial Square located behind the Drama Theatre and the area designated for sports facilities*





Space next to the Drama Theatre where a children's playground, fountain, shaded pergola, and decorative water pool will be installed



Space in front of the Drama Theatre where an open air terraced podium should be installed



The area 1 of unified park spaces and its connections to other existing green and open public spaces located within and beyond the project boundaries of the neighborhood concept












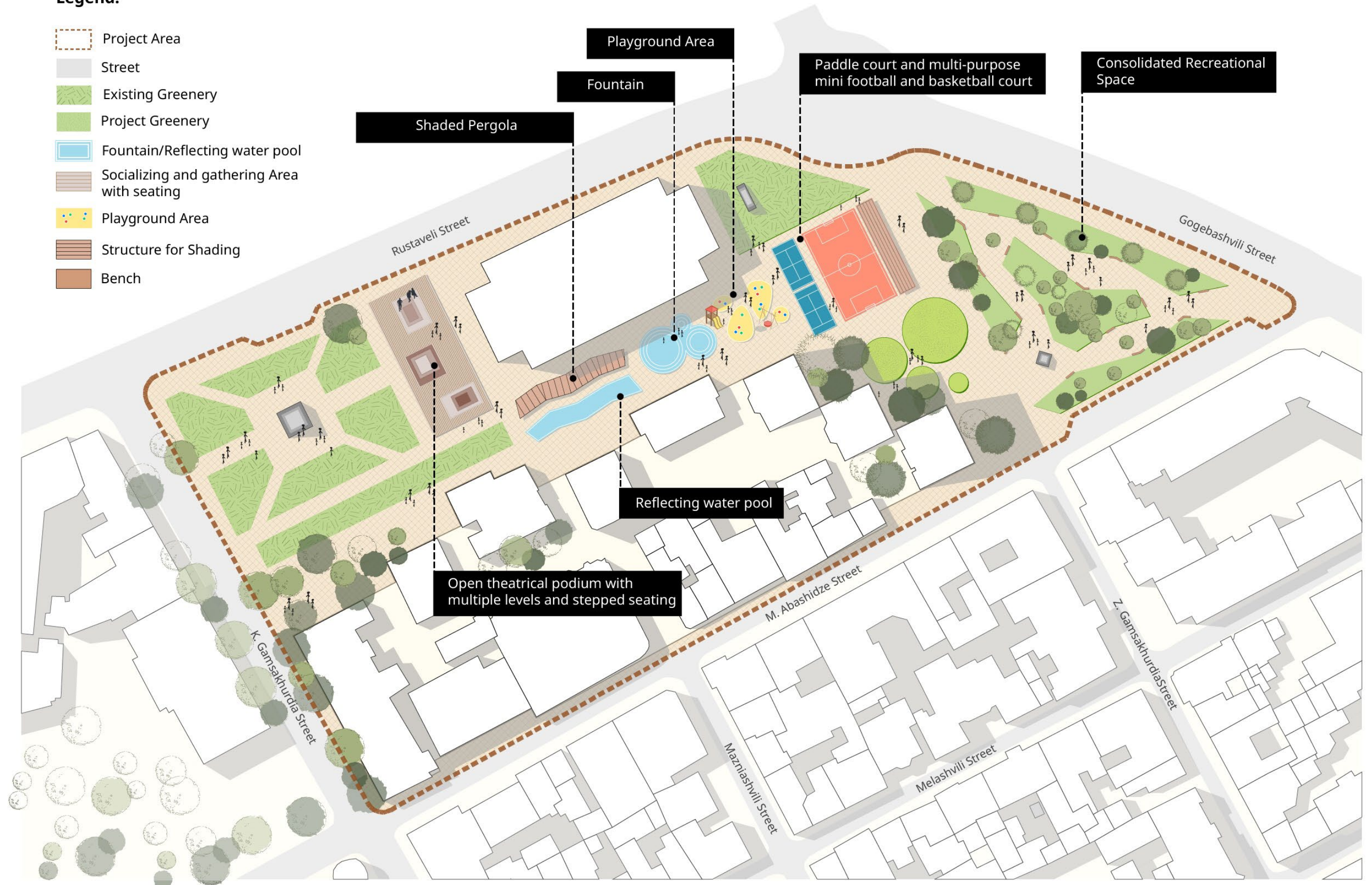
Open air terraced podium in front of the Batumi Drama Theatre



Area 1 – Situational Plan of the Application Project

Legend:

-  Project Area
-  Street
-  Existing Greenery
-  Project Greenery
-  Fountain/Reflecting water pool
-  Socializing and gathering Area with seating
-  Playground Area
-  Structure for Shading
-  Bench





## Area 2 – Consolidation of fragmented recreational spaces on Kutaisi and Z. Gamsakhurdia Streets and conversion of Zubalashvili Street into a pedestrian zone

The second area of the application projects was selected due to the potential for consolidating separated and underutilized public spaces. Similar to the park spaces identified on Rustaveli and Gogebashvili Streets, here too it is planned to consolidate fragmented small recreational “islands” into a unified neighborhood park. This idea was already included in the working version of the concept.

Currently, only one centrally located park is actively used, which contains a small children’s playground with swings. There is also an open café that serves locals and visitors during the summer season. This space attracts many people—both children and adults—but the area is limited and insufficient for everyone.

It is proposed that the neighboring green “islands,” which are less utilized and separated by street carriageways—located between Amirejibi, Kutaisi, and Z. Gamsakhurdia Streets and Valenberg, Komakhidze, and Zubalashvili Streets—be consolidated into a single park area. This would increase the availability of recreational spaces for all age groups in the local community and enhance their use.

The existing park is popular year-round, especially in sunny and warm weather, constantly visited by children and local residents. Observations show that the space is quite limited, while demand for its use is high. Nearby, to the east in front of a multi-story residential building and to the northeast across from the mosque, there are two even smaller green “islands” that are practically unused. On the opposite side of Z. Gamsakhurdia Street, up to the corner of Zubalashvili Street, there is also a triangular-shaped small park in front of another multi-story residential building, which lacks proper park furniture and is therefore underused and largely unexploited.

This area is privately owned; however, the public registry records a restriction imposed by the Ministry of Finance and Economy of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara on the owner: *“The purchaser is obliged to maintain the functional purpose of the park located on the transferred land plot indefinitely.”* These spaces are fragmented and separated by street carriageways, with one side used for parking.

This solution would improve the quality of the residential neighborhood and create an interesting route for tourists. Since the small park is already a popular public space for different age groups—locals and passersby alike—consolidating the surrounding “islands” would provide a much larger area for pedestrians and create additional space for rest, social gatherings, and recreation. Children would have a safe environment for play and activities without the risk of crossing paths with vehicles.

According to the working version of the Neighborhood Concept and the Old Batumi Pedestrian Concept, Zubalashvili Street is designated for pedestrians. In our vision, it should become a green corridor connecting the consolidated park located between Amirejibi, Kutaisi, and Z. Gamsakhurdia Streets to the Park of the Nativity of the Mother of God Cathedral (former Catholic Church).

In this way, Zubalashvili Street will link a city-scale park to a neighborhood park, from which the coastal area is easily accessible through the arch in the “Le Port” building. This provides a unique opportunity to combine “green” and “blue” recreational resources.

In our project proposal, Zubalashvili Street, between Z. Gamsakhurdia and K. Gamsakhurdia Streets, is entirely reserved for pedestrians. This section of the street is narrow and has almost no trees or greenery. Therefore, it is planned to plant trees along the central strip and install benches between them. This will allow residents to spend more time outdoors in front of their homes, sit in the shade, and interact with each other. It will also increase comfort for both locals and city visitors, who can use Zubalashvili Street as a pedestrian connection—a “green corridor”—from the seaside to the Nativity of the Mother of God Cathedral Park (former Catholic Church), passing by the mosque and through the consolidated park between Amirejibi, Kutaisi, and Z. Gamsakhurdia Streets.

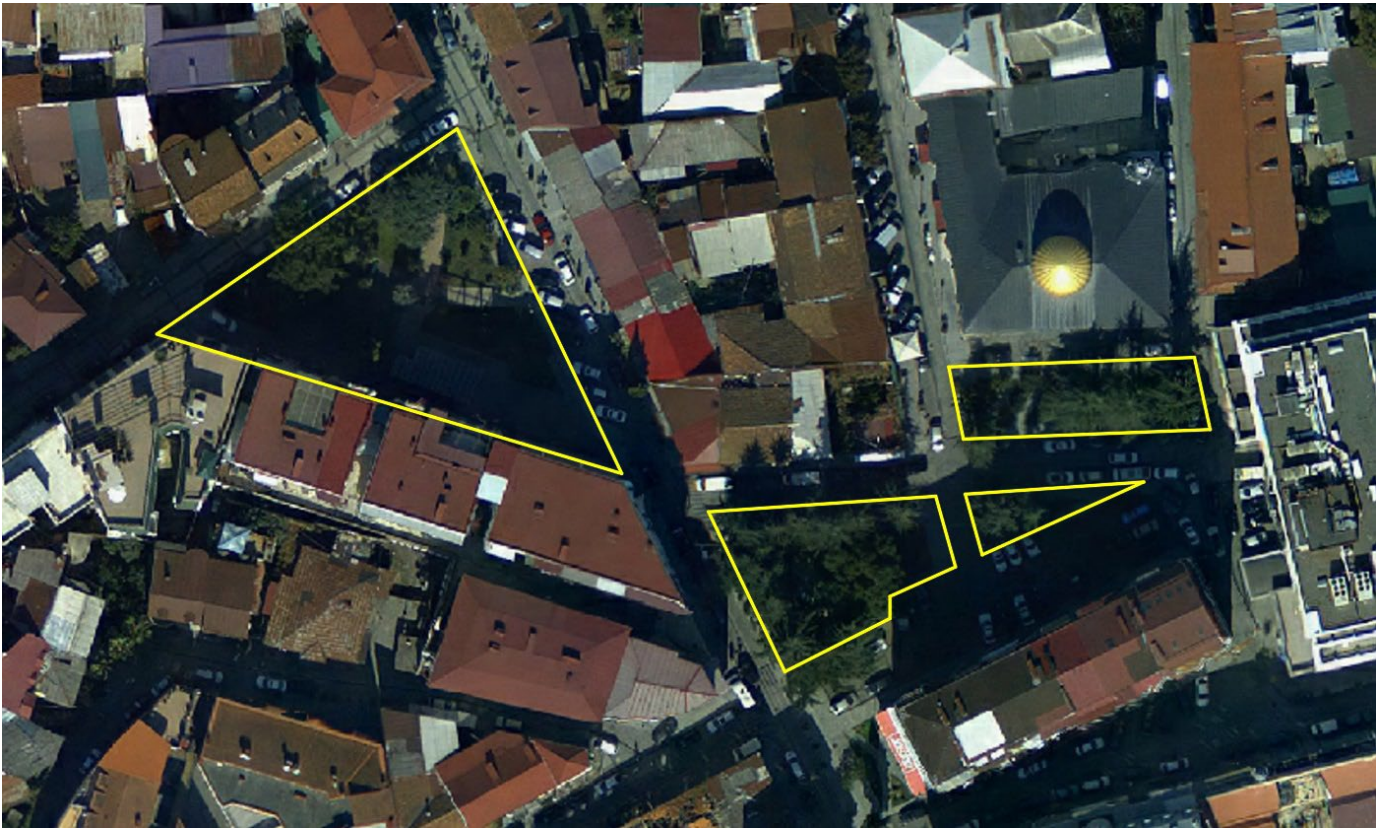
The section of Zubalashvili Street between K. Gamsakhurdia and Baratashvili Streets is relatively wide. Several multi-story residential buildings are located here, resulting in higher population density and more vehicles. Some of these buildings have vehicular access to backyards via arches from Zubalashvili Street.

Therefore, it was decided to implement the “shared street” principle on this section of Zubalashvili Street and develop an appropriate urban street design. A shared street allows both pedestrians and vehicles to move freely across the entire surface, without a separation between sidewalks and carriageways, and without curbs. There is no distinct division between pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicle lanes. Pedestrians and cyclists have priority at all times, while vehicles are allowed to move at a low speed, not exceeding 20 km/h. Where the street width allows, spaces for pedestrians and vehicles are differentiated using different colors, textures, or paving patterns, all on a single level. This is the approach applied in the project design for this section of Zubalashvili Street.

Since there are many residents and vehicles in this section, vehicle access will be permitted only for local residents. Movable bollards will be installed at the entry from Baratashvili Street to control access. Traffic will remain one-way, as it is currently. A single lane for vehicles is provided in the middle of the street, with parallel parking allowed on both sides and pedestrian zones along the building front. The street design accommodates existing trees, includes green strips, bicycle parking posts, and benches. Within the scope of small-scale neighborhood interventions, shaded areas and seating for residents are already planned and will be integrated into the shared street space.



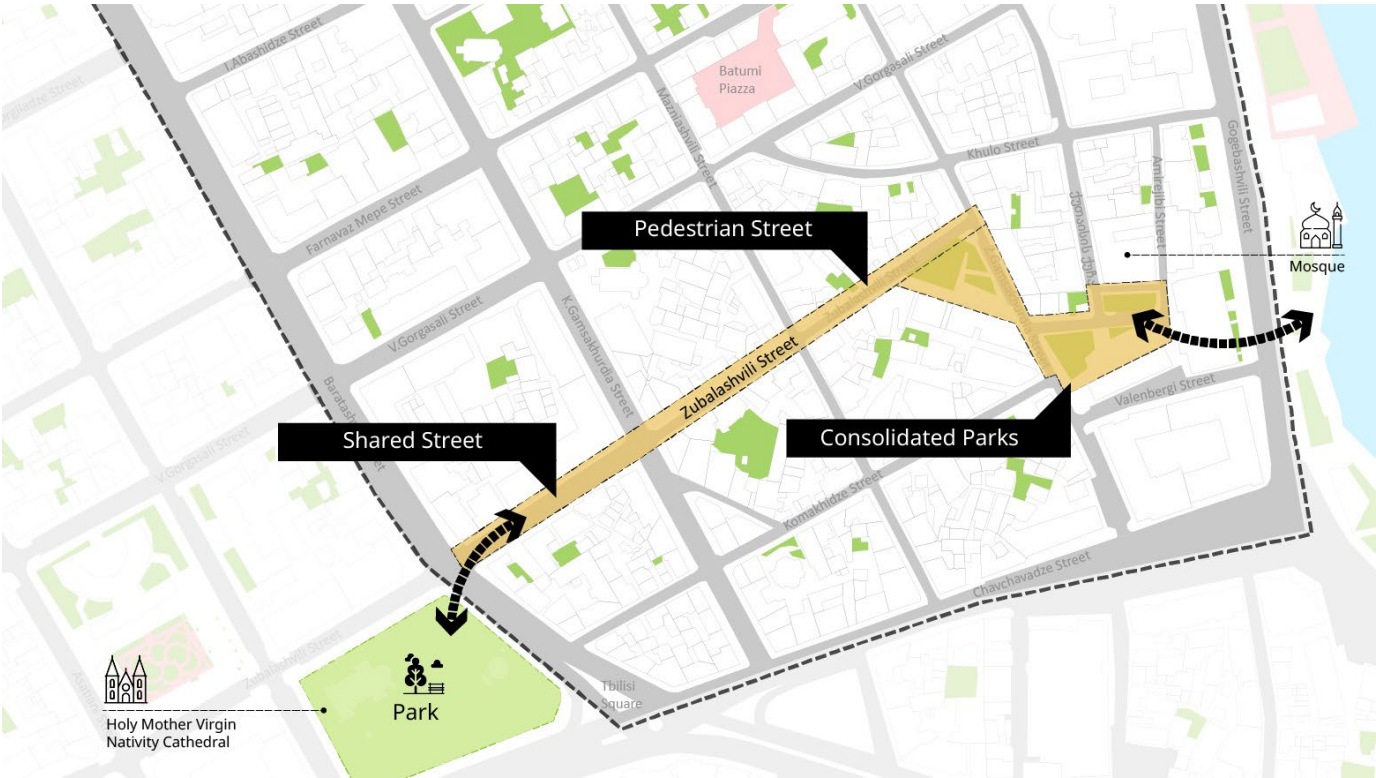
Photos of Area 2



Fragmented open public spaces in area 2



Busy small park with children's playground



The connections of the consolidated recreational spaces and the Zubalashvili Street area with other existing recreational and open public spaces located within and beyond the project boundaries of the neighborhood concept.



A actively used park with a children's playground and an open café





Two underutilized green “islands” located between the mosque and the residential building on Valenberg Street.



Shared street section of Zubalashvili Street – view towards K. Gamsakhurdia Street



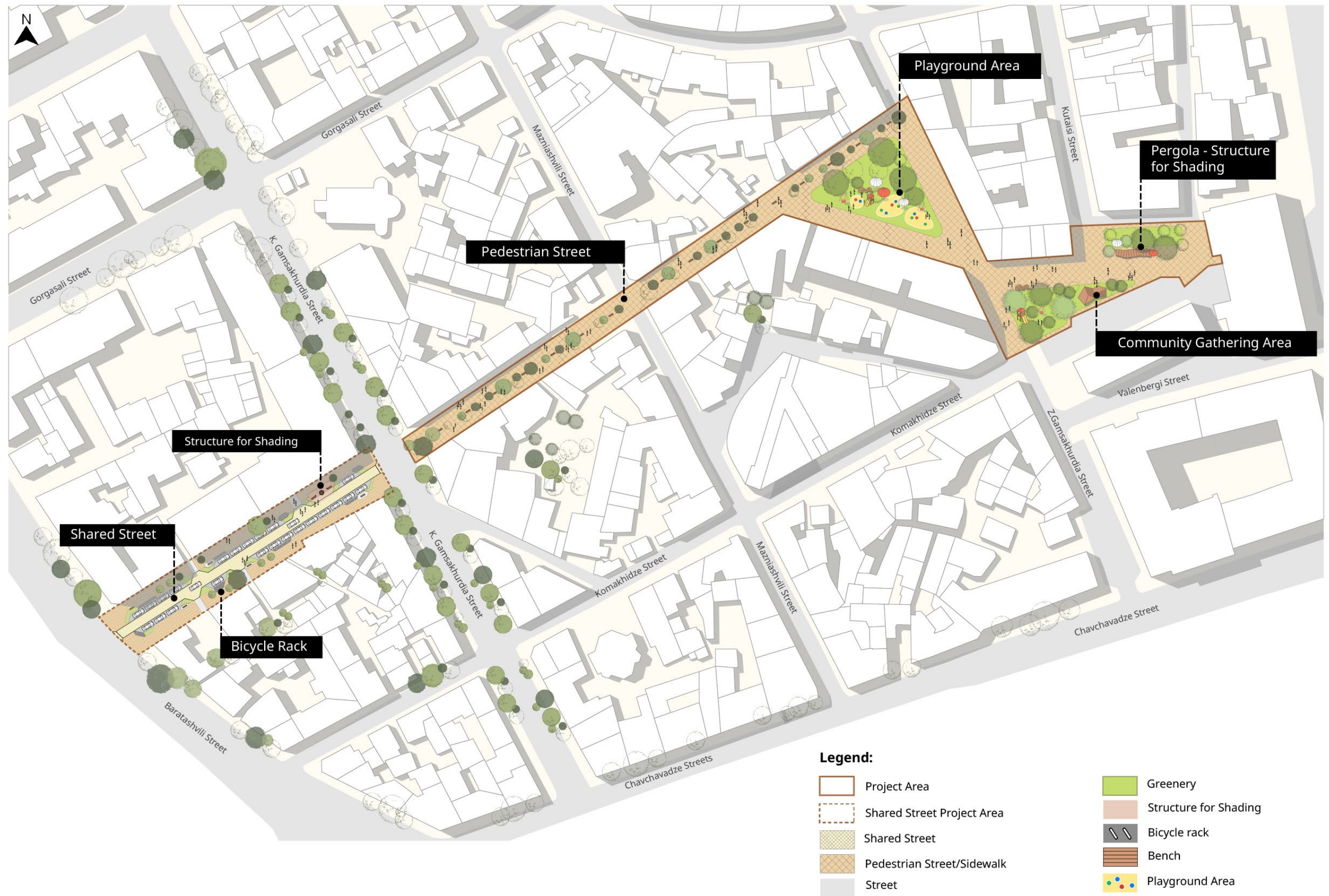
The triangular park and Zubalashvili Street, which are planned to be incorporated into a unified neighborhood park and pedestrian zone



Shared street section of Zubalashvili Street – view towards Baratashvili Street and the park of the Cathedral of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary (former Catholic Church).



Area 1 – Situational Plan of the Application Project



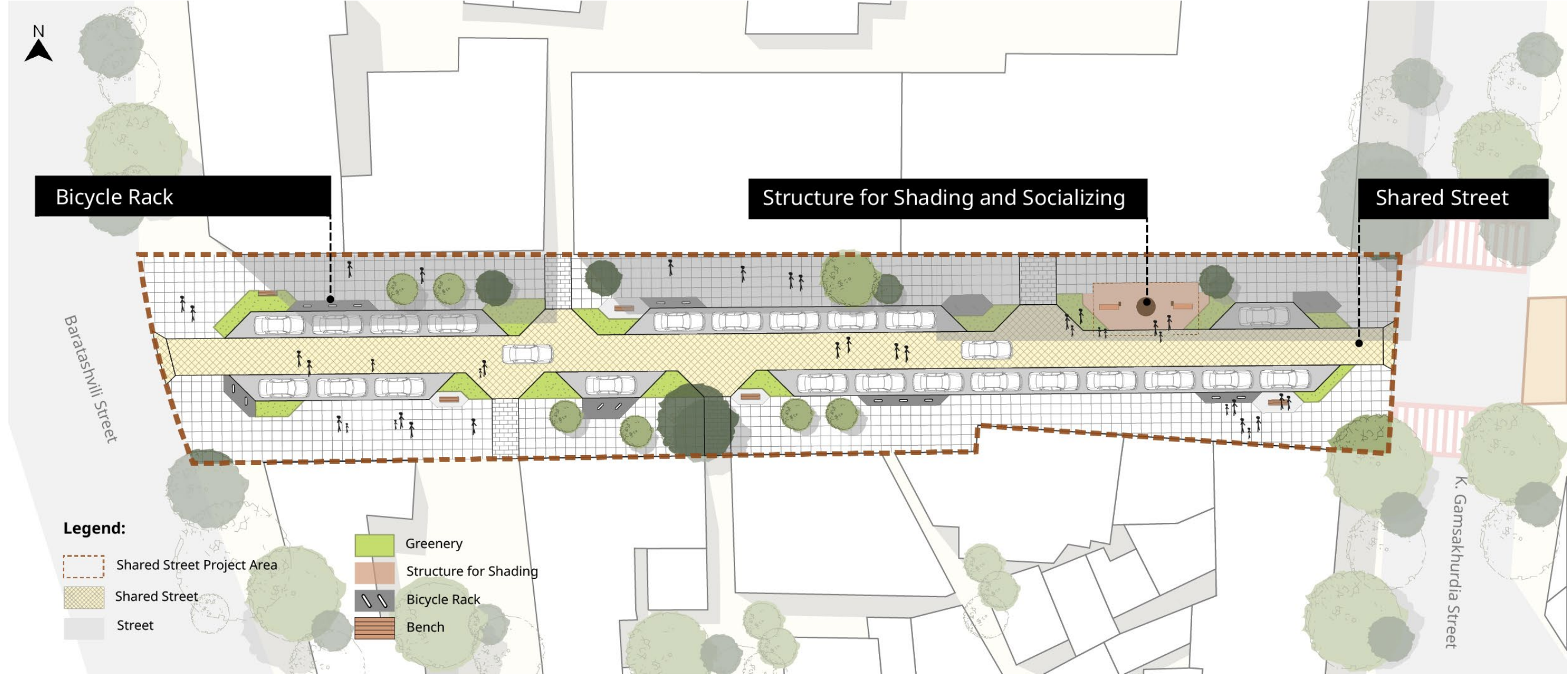


Area 2 – Fragment 1: Consolidated individual green public spaces between Amirejibi, Kutaisi, Z. Gamsakhurdia, and Zubalashvili Streets.





Area 2 – Fragment 2: Shared section of Zubalashvili Street between K. Gamsakhurdia and Baratashvili Streets.

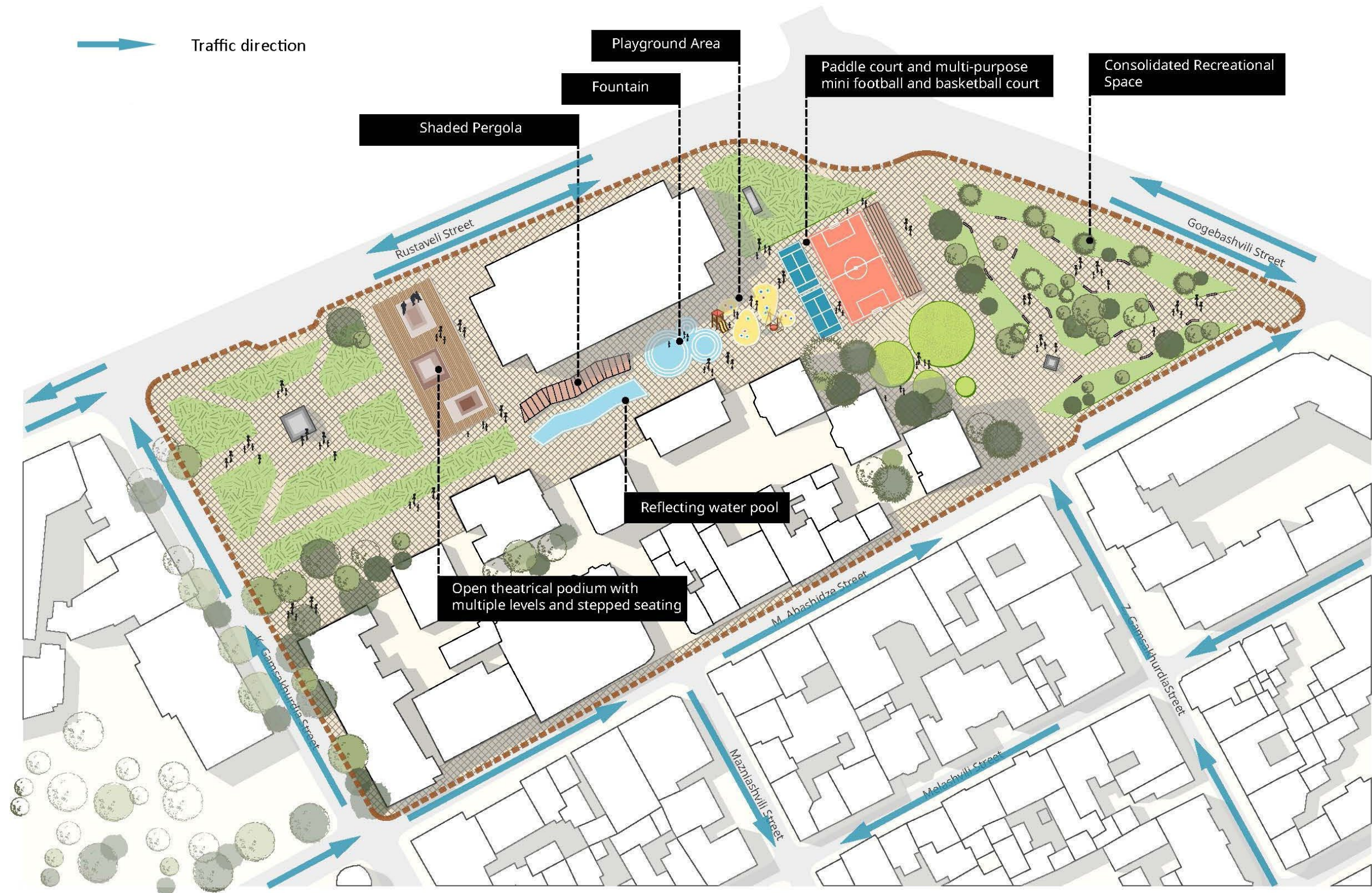








Area 1 – Vehicular movement scheme





Area 2 – Vehicular movement scheme





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