



La VERNEDA

BARCELONA EUROPA 18

An architecture born from a stance — we build to connect. In La Verneda, one of Barcelona's densest and most neglected neighborhoods, this project does not arrive merely as architecture but as a network of relationships.

A public plot, once residual, is transformed not by adding mass, but by drawing voids. The gesture is not one of presence, but of passage. A new civic horizon emerges: elevated housing as archway, ground as commons, architecture as infrastructure for shared life.

Between the fading towers of the 1960s and the ambitious reconversion of the Prim sector, this project acts as a hinge — bridging social memory and urban future, opening not just streets, but possibilities.

Why It Matters.

This neighborhood embodies both structural inequality and civic resilience. It is a place where people have historically fought for light, water, schools — and won.

Today, the challenges lie in access to mental well-being, intergenerational dignity, and the right to spaces that heal.

This project emerges in this context as a response. By designing with lightness, care, and ecological reciprocity, it speaks directly to the deficits in the neighborhood and to intangible needs: dignity, belonging, and everyday beauty.

Associations, cooperatives, informal gardens — these are the urban protagonists. Rather than replace them, the project scaffolds their expansion.

Ground Realities: Challenges, Anchors, and Thresholds

This project began by walking the site. An architecture born from a stance, not from a form.

There, I met the Casal de Barri La Verneda, not merely a civic building, but an active anchor of neighborhood life. Inside: language classes, health workshops, seniors' gatherings, women-led initiatives.

It is a space of assembly, care, and self-organization. Rather than overshadow it, the project grows from it, transforming the Casal into a gateway to the civic rooftop above.

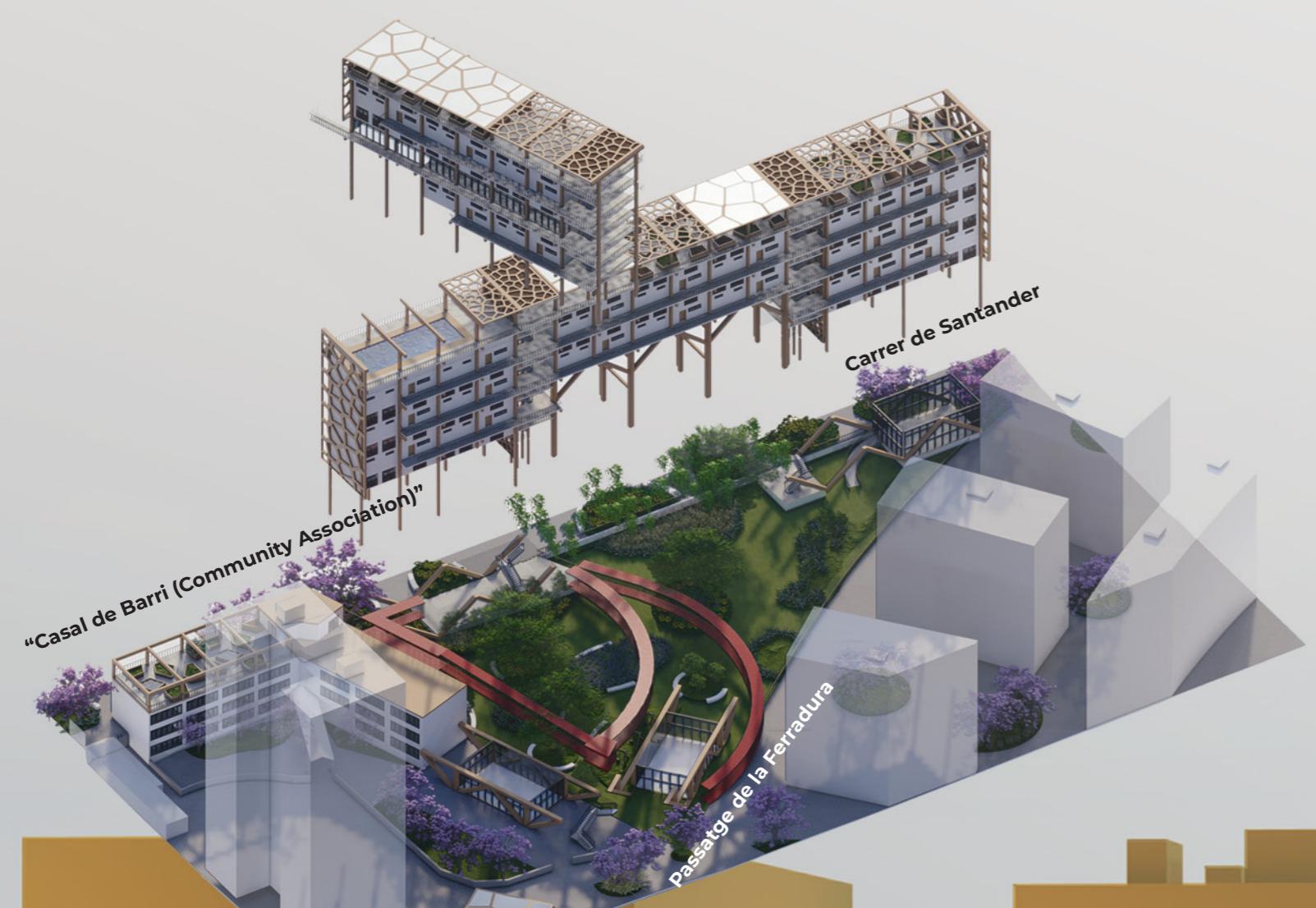
On the other side of the plot lies the cooperative garden, absent from the competition brief, but revealed as a landscape of sovereignty. This land was reclaimed and cultivated by neighbors decades ago, resisting speculative pressures.

The project formalizes it, granting access, governance, and continuity to those who have always cared for it.

Finally, a subtle but defining condition: a 2.5 m drop between Carrer de Santander and the site. Not enough for a full floor, yet too significant to ignore. The project turns it into a series of expanded thresholds: ramps, platforms, planted terraces. This small shift becomes a spatial strategy.



The project defines itself not by its mass, but by what it frames. Facing the Sector Prim redevelopment and the future Sagrera linear park, the building stands as an archway — a civic and ecological portal between past and future, community and city, earth and canopy.



Botanical & Ground Block

Architecture scaffolds a living neighborhood. Here, the housing bar is not an obstacle but an elevated framework. It leaves the ground open — for light, vegetation, and collective life.

Vegetated islands structure the terrain:

- *Alnus glutinosa*, solitary and symbolic, echoes the origin of "La Verneda."
- Rows of *Prunus cerasifera* and *Cercis siliquastrum* bring rhythm and seasonal bloom.
- Ground layers of *Acanthus mollis* and *Achillea millefolium* absorb, detoxify, and define textures.

Beneath the surface, rainwater is captured and filtered. Above, elevated bridges connect people to the Casa de Barri and the cooperative garden — stitching together community, nature, and urban movement.

This architecture that activates and preserves the existing plot.

La Verneda i la Pau: Contextual Snapshot

• Net residential density: 717 dwellings per hectare.

• Population: ~25,000 people in just 0.75 km².

• Dwellings: ~86% built between 1960-1980.

• Average flat size: 60–80 m².

• Building stock: Largely outdated and under-insulated.

• Public amenities: Sparse, fragmented, many hard-won through activism.

• Mobility: Limited integration between old industrial and residential grids.

• Mental health: one of the top challenges in the area (adults and youth).

• Elderly population: Among the highest in the city, with increasing dependency needs.

• Youth vulnerabilities: High rates of stimulant use, lack of cultural or civic anchors.

• Housing stress: Families spend ~44% of income on rent (vs. recommended 30%).

