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Unconventional
Affordable
Housing!

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ATLAS

RETHINKING

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RECOMMENDATIONS

TRIESTE

Trieste

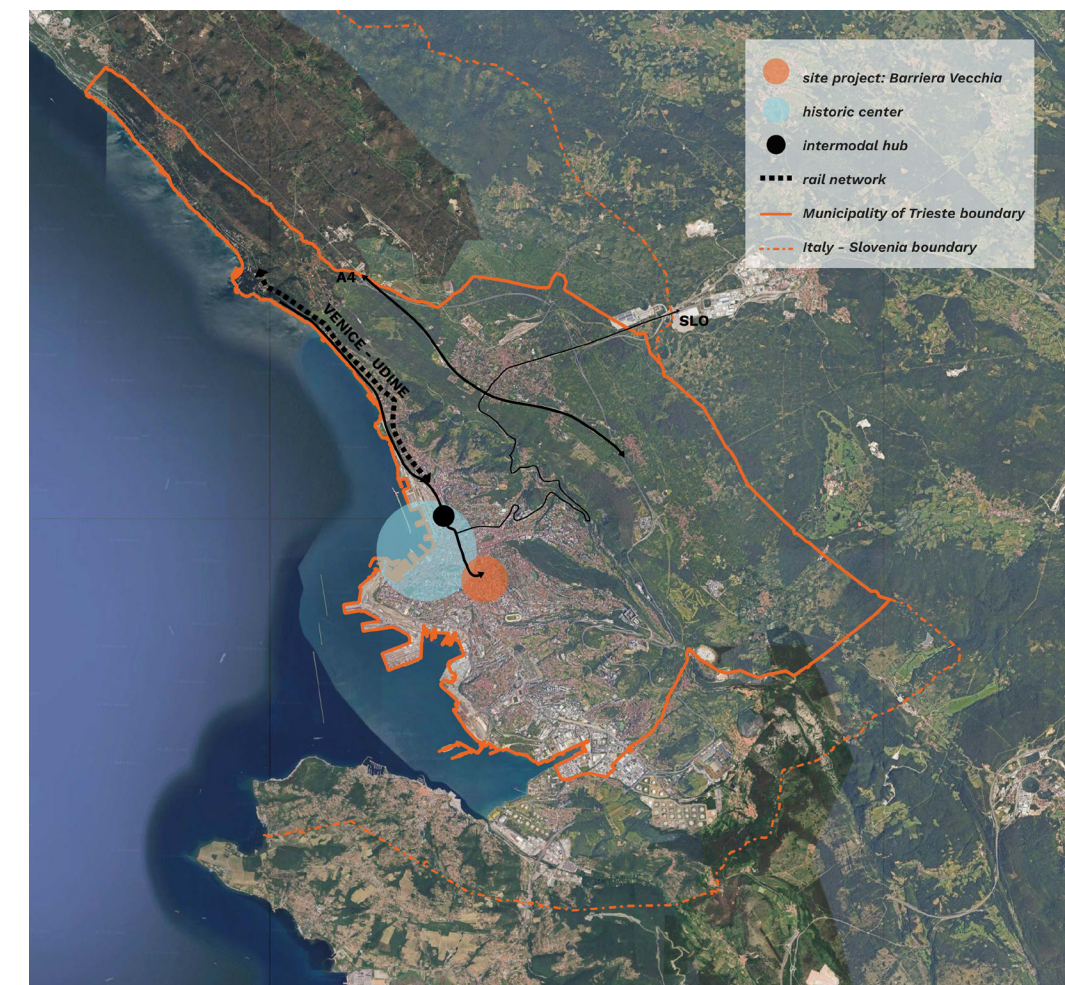
Located on the Italian-Slovenian border, Trieste is a medium-sized city (with a population of just over 200,000 today) whose social, demographic, and economic trends and challenges are similar with other urban areas in Italy and Europe.

The city's demographic structure is going through a significant long-term population decline (-3.8% from 2011 to 2023; source: RUPA - Urban Regeneration and Housing Policies Observatory of the Municipality of Trieste - rupa.comune.trieste.it) and an aging rate above the national average (aging index: 271.7 for the Municipality of Trieste; 199.8 for the national average; sources: Municipality of Trieste; ISTAT, 2024). Recently, the intensification of migration flows along the Balkan route has led to an increase in the number of foreign people "in transit." Additionally, the significant number of students and researchers living away from home adds to the growing influx of tourism.

Regarding housing supply, the proportion of vacant public and private housing is high (103,435 units occupied out of 125,422 registered units in 2021; source: ISTAT, 2021). The large stock of subsidised public housing in the city is mostly outdated (above 47% is more than 50 years old; source: ATER Social Report, 2021), with significant issues related to energy efficiency, spatial adequacy, and widespread presence of architectural barriers.

As for housing demand, there are many unsatisfied requests on the Territorial Agency for Housing of Trieste (ATER) waiting list, estimated nearly 3,000. At the same time, private rental costs are becoming increasingly prohibitive (+22.9% in rent prices from 2016 to 2022; source: RUPA Observatory), due to tourism-driven processes and a significant shift in housing supply toward short-term rentals. This is further compounded by rising living costs, which reduce purchasing power and impact housing autonomy for an increasing number of people.

These conditions highlight a housing issue that, while not yet critical, is becoming increasingly serious and complex. In an effort to provide solutions, a diverse network of local public and third-sector actors has implemented a series of projects and experimentations in the housing sector over the years. However, these initiatives, as identified through close dialogue with local stakeholders in the early stages of the research, remain punctual. Local actors struggle to network due to the lack of structured housing policies to guide them. From this dialogue, an area in the 'inner periphery' of Trieste - the historic district of 'Barriera Vecchia' - was identified as a key site for experimenting with new approaches and solutions for affordable housing.



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The project issues

In order to foster reflections tailored to the context and the specific needs of the communities, the research group adopted an approach of listening and dialogue with the local stakeholders, at both the urban and neighborhood scales within the project area. At the same time, looking at new approaches such as *Housing First* provided important insights for working holistically and focusing on the prevention of homelessness. Through this process, the key issues related to affordable housing in the city were identified, the needs were analyzed, and the resources within the project area were mapped. These steps were crucial in defining some working perspectives.

Versatility of time and space

An increasingly changing and diverse housing demand calls for a rethinking of spatial solutions and traditional projects, through the development of personalized and versatile housing policies, both in terms of time (duration of the lease) and space (layout of housing units and common areas).

Personalized pathways and proximity operators

The integration of housing and services through a careful and personalized social, economic, and community management approach enables the promotion of housing autonomy. This is achieved through person-centered projects, combined with a range of services for support, well-being, and community integration. This strategy may also include new employment opportunities for tenants, for example, through the promotion of self-rehabilitation processes for housing units and self-management of social and economic activities (e.g., hospitality and catering services).

From solidarity housing to a solidarity neighborhood

Working at the neighborhood scale allows for the concept of ‘affordability 360°,’ addressing its economic,

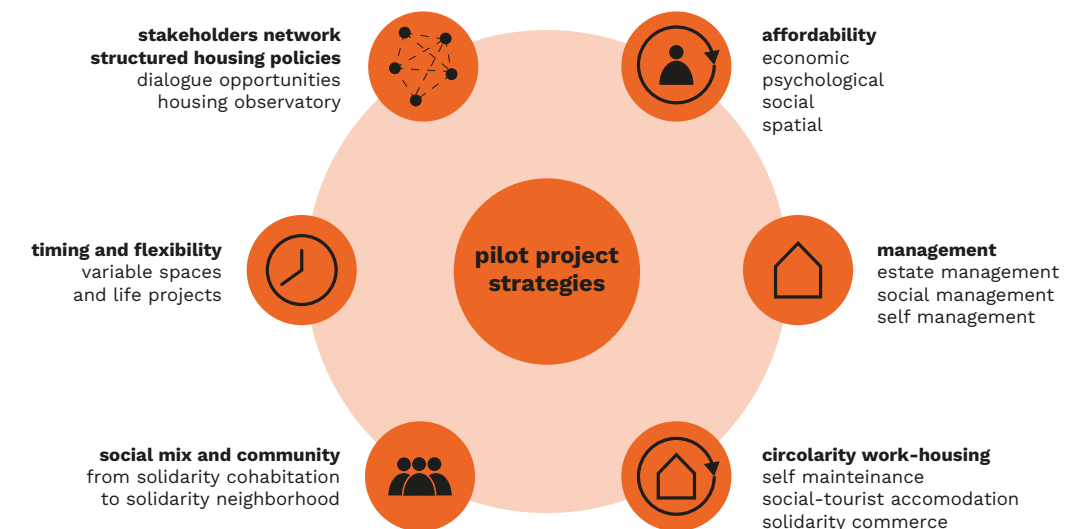
social, and spatial dimensions. This approach enables the creation of a social mix, whether within a single building or by connecting multiple nearby buildings, while also organizing community-building activities. It combines a wide range of material and immaterial resources and manages various facilities and structures essential for implementing complex, versatile, and personalized housing models. These solutions can also be adapted and replicated in other urban contexts using an incremental approach.

Public assets as a driver in regeneration processes and an integrated housing and services system

The enhancement of public assets, conceived as a network of underutilized or vacant buildings, public spaces, and services, acts as a driving force for creating more complex housing projects, that integrate housing, services, and employment.

Vacant properties as a resource

Providing fiscal incentives and guarantees to private property owners to adapt and rent out their properties is crucial for promoting rental housing for social purposes, rather than the short-term rental market. In this context, solidarity rental agencies and third-sector intermediaries can play a key role.



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The project site: Barriera Vecchia

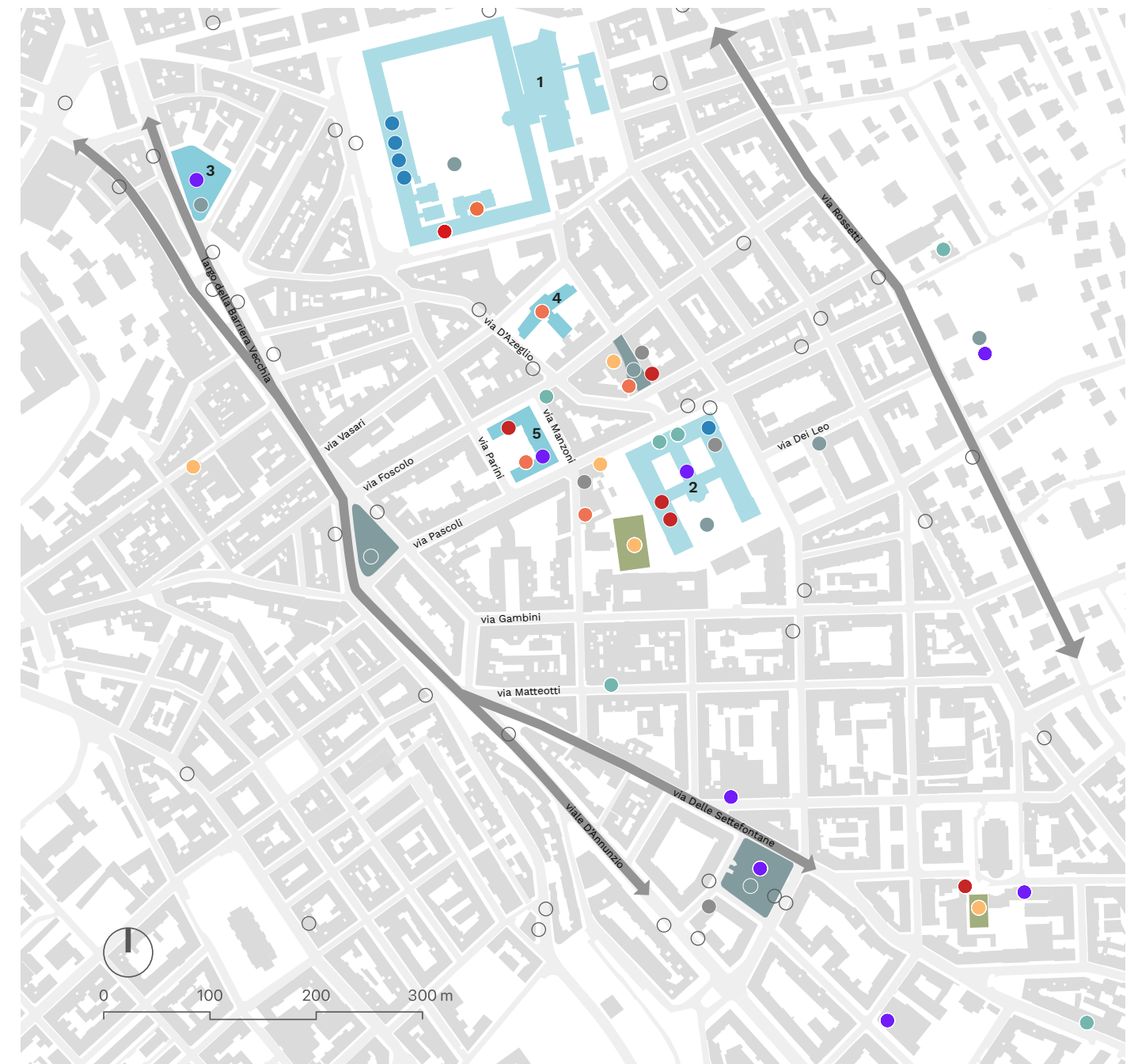
Barriera Vecchia is part of District V, the most populous and densely populated area of the city, characterized by a predominance of small family units and a significant presence of residents with a migration background. Issues of isolation, loneliness, and marginalization are common, and the presence of a recent social mix creates challenges in terms of integration and conflicts among residents.

Overall, the area is well-served and connected to the historic center by public transport and the urban fabric. The existing network of pathways and public spaces provides a potentially solid support for pedestrian mobility. However, many buildings face accessibility issues due to various architectural barriers, such as the lack of elevators.

The neighborhood is rich in both material and immaterial resources: different forms of cohabitation, vacant public and private buildings, underutilized open spaces, a variety of commercial establishments and a range of social, health, and cultural services. In particular, a group of public and third-sector actors is ready to collaborate and pool resources, skills, and experiences in the fields of ‘social and very social’ rental housing. Within the project area, four ‘pilot buildings’ have been identified, managed by the local partners of the research project. Here new spatial solutions can be tested to explore the emerging themes, with the goal of fostering affordable living that integrates housing and services.



Largo Niccolini and main facade of ITIS



- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> main roads secondary road system local public transport stops green areas outdoor sport areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> main services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Hospital “Maggiore” 2 ITIS (public centre for health services) 3 Covered market 4 Primary School “Pittoni” 5 Secondary School “Savio-Manzoni” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> other services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> healthcare social social / housing educational sports recreational and community cultural |
|---|--|---|



Primary School “A. Pittoni”



Hospital “Maggiore”

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The pilot buildings

Building A

Built-up area: approx. 220 sqm

Floors: 6

Units: 11

Year of construction: 1906

Use: residential + commercial

State: partially vacant

Building B

Built-up area: approx. 653 sqm

Floors: 5

Year of project approval: 1849

Use: residential + disused chapel

State: partially vacant

Building C

Area: approx. 480 sqm

Floors: 5

Units: 10

Year of project: 1897

Use: residential

State: partially vacant

Building D

Built-up area: approx. 330 sqm

Floors: 5

Units: 8

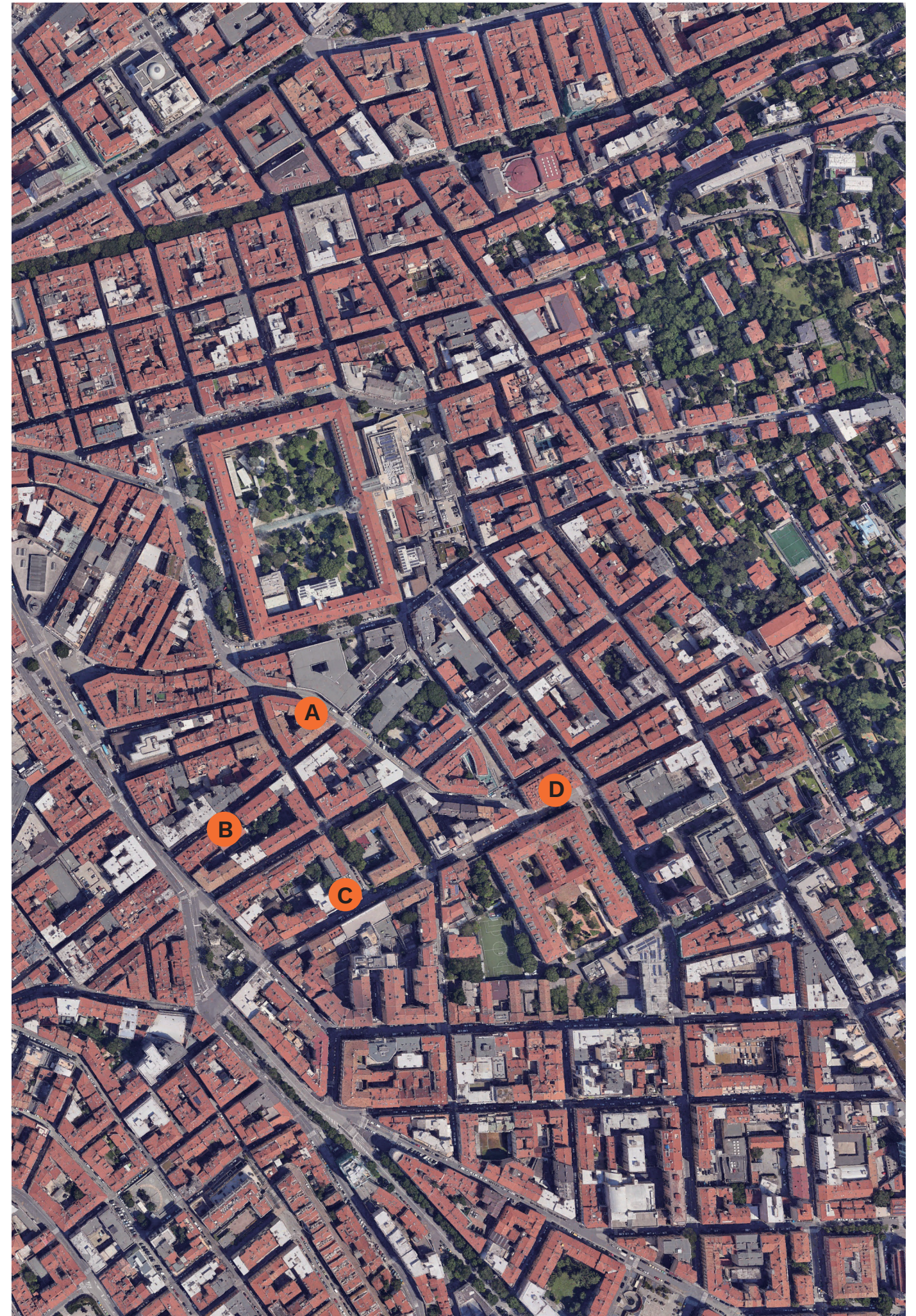
Year of project approval: 1885

Use: residential + commercial

State: occupied

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Building A



Building B



Facade on via D'Azeglio. Room. View of the inner courtyard.



Facade on via Vasari. Interior of the disused chapel on the ground floor. Entrance hall.

Building C



Facade on Via Pascoli. Entrance hall. Facade facing the inner courtyard.

Building D



Facade on Via Pascoli. Entrance and commercial premises on the ground floor.