

Newtown Suburban Centre DENSIFICATION

3D Digital Modelling

by Red Design Architects'

Urban Activation Lab

*Place based Concept Design: Visualising the Newtown community
sourced design initiative for intensification*

Newtown Residents' Association

APPROVED MOTION June 2021:

If Newtown's Spatial Plan mapping for 6 storeys was all focused within the suburban centre and Mansfield St escarpment area, as in the concept plan developed by Red Design, and if the residential areas not included in heritage character protection were zoned for in-scale up to 3 storey infill housing, rather than enabling 6 or more storeys, then the Newtown Residents' Association would wholeheartedly support the WCC Spatial Plan and would support the prioritising of Newtown to be one of the first suburbs where densification is developed. The Association members would also support in-depth community consultation, where a Newtown place-based zoning exercise (where the Proposed District Plan) identifies other areas of our suburb where our community would approve of additional future intensification.

WCC Planning for Growth 2019:
Newtown Residents' Association
Welcoming INTENSIFICATION

March - May 2019



Newtown Residents' Association
Submission on **Our City Tomorrow: Planning for Growth**

Introduction

The Newtown Residents' Association is the Incorporated Society representing Newtown and the surrounding suburbs. We are an active local group of residents and businesspeople, concerned with maintaining and improving our area's liveability, connectedness and sustainability and working to make our community a thriving, diverse, great place to live.

Submission

The Wellington City Council website says that this consultation is the start of a conversation to develop a model for the City's growth and change over the next 30 years. We welcome this approach and this submission is designed as an initial contribution to the conversation. We are primarily concentrating on the opportunities and risks that growth might bring to our Newtown community, but we have also considered the wider concerns for Wellington as a whole.

We have chosen to make the Association's submission in this written form as the points we want to make don't fit neatly into the 'approve-disapprove' format of the survey.

Building up or building out?

In general terms we agree that as Wellington grows the 'zero carbon Capital' goals will be best met by avoiding urban sprawl and increasing housing density in the existing city and suburbs. In the future, electrified public and private transport might well reduce the emissions involved with commuting, but even so, rural land is best used for open space, food production or tree planting. We also value the vitality of a compact well connected city.

The character of Newtown

A key focus of the consultation documents is whether or not to keep the current protections on pre-1930s housing. In Newtown the character area includes most of the suburb, excluding only Riddiford St and a few adjacent streets. A network of narrow streets is tightly packed with houses, the majority of which are indeed pre-1930s. The implication in the scenarios is that if the pre-1930s protections are removed this opens the way for replacing these houses with apartment blocks of up to six storeys. Our observation is that the character of Newtown isn't just about the age of the buildings, but also depends on the human scale of the residential streetscape. Keeping or removing the protections isn't the only consideration.

A vision for Newtown's future

We support intensification but want to see developments which strengthen the character of our suburb. With thoughtful attention to the District Plan review this could be an opportunity for Newtown to be a resilient, affordable and attractive place to live. We agree that increasing the number of residents supports local shops and services, and hopefully it will spur investments in transport and council services.

Development along our Suburban Centre mainstreets - Riddiford St and Adelaide Road

We are in favour of increasing density along the 'growth spine' of Adelaide Rd and Riddiford St. High-quality multi-use developments in Riddiford Street would bring vibrancy and opportunities with trade, commerce, hospitality and entertainment at street level and apartments above. Our observation is that buildings at a four storey height would retain the character of Newtown and its human scale and reduce shading and other adverse effects on

neighbours. An example is the apartment building on the corner of Riddiford and Hall Streets which is four storeys on Riddiford Street but steps down as Hall Street rises and it joins the residential zoning. It is also the same height as the buildings on the opposite side of Hall Street and in scale with the neighbourhood. Another is the apartment building under construction in Constable Street, which also fits the scale of neighbouring buildings.

Height causes shading which makes neighbouring residences cold and damp, and their solar panels dysfunctional. Our pedestrian friendly narrow main street corridor would become a shady canyon at more than four storeys. The exception to the four storey limit is along Adelaide Road between Basin Reserve and John Street which could be six storeyed or higher, but stepped down on their western side as a transition to the residential built form of Mt Cook. (two or three storeys of often Victorian stud height). More than four storey height might also be possible where Riddiford Street is wider, as it is in front of the hospital, or where the terrain behind the main street growth spine is elevated, as it is in the vicinity of the Newtown Park flats. Local fine grain fit is required to tailor potential growth to our physical setting.

The future of the Newtown Character Area

We appreciate the heritage of character commercial buildings in Newtown, and would want the character respected, retained and made earthquake safe. The tapestry of age contributes to Newtown's identity, our local sense of place, and is celebrated by the whole city and the region once a year as the setting for our legendary Newtown Festival. District Plan rules and Newtown Suburban Centre Design guide provisions need to be crafted to encourage working with this character, preserving significant facades, while adding height and occupancy density. New builds should read as of their time, but have the grain and human scale as documented in the current Newtown Suburban Centre Design Guide.

The proposed Lets Get Wellington Moving mass transit public transport spine needs to track through, matching the growth spine of planned increased density. Aligning dense living with the convenience of easy access to the mass transit is crucial to a viable sustainable city. Tracked lightrail type mass transit is ideal for its ability to cope with a big increase in population numbers overtime at the same time as providing the certainty of a fixed route. Certainty of the planned route encourages investment in building the increased density, which may well happen in advance of the mass transit roll out. Certainty of mass transit route also allows comprehensive planning and establishment of a linking network of walkways, cycleways and shared space streets that support our greater population density.

When we move out of the area surrounding the Riddiford St mainstreet corridor we are much more cautious. A single minded emphasis on increasing housing density risks losing the very qualities that make Newtown a great place to live. Tall apartment buildings lining our residential narrow streets would turn them into sunless concrete canyons, however sympathetic the design. The energy efficiency of the dense existing housing would be reduced by the lack of sun. Tall buildings would also cause significant wind issues, wind being deflected off the sides of the buildings down into neighbouring houses. If such buildings were next to existing family homes the effect would be devastating.

We would rather strengthen the protections around some character homes than get rid of them. Large character houses can be retrofitted into apartments to house more people while still retaining their character and existing houses can be made more comfortable, warmer and healthier. Many character homes have been lovingly restored and should be preserved and protected.

We observe some owners letting properties run down until demolition seems inevitable and we would like to see some mechanism to prevent this. In some cases this is too late and all character has disappeared over time. An assessment of character homes on their merits, which is what the consultants appear to have been doing, is warranted, but ideally those not worth saving would not automatically be replaced with apartment blocks.

Instead we would like to see new buildings designed so they fit the human scale and established character of Newtown, with District Planning rules that ensure quality of design, as currently the District Plan's Mount Cook, Newtown & Berhampore Design Guide for multi unit developments does. Sites should be assessed on a case by case basis. There are some areas where buildings of three or four stories can be tolerated without damaging effects on their neighbours, but this isn't the norm. In many places increased density could well be achieved by increasing the site coverage but not the height. Tailoring growth potential with local fine grain fit to each neighbourhood's physical setting with good community consultation is the best way to plan for growth.

Ancillary considerations

As mentioned earlier, to support higher density living there need to be walkways and cycle lanes and shared space streets. Planned growth should also include places where electric cars can recharge, sites for shared cars, cycle parks, e-scooter parks as well as excellent public transport.

Providing for parking is already contentious. We wouldn't like open space taken up with car-parks, but there may be an argument for a community/resident car-parking building that could be financed through a range of mechanisms. It would have to be balanced by removing some on-street parking and making streets more slower speed shared spaces and multi-use environments with street trees to compensate for the loss of trees due to intensification. Our streets should improve people's lives rather than their current limited role of moving vehicles through the suburb.

With higher density there will be a need for quality green open space. Currently most houses have their own gardens but when density is increased via increased site coverage or increased height then more and more people will have little or no outdoor space on their own properties. We have parks for sports in the suburb – Newtown Park, Rugby League Park and Basin Reserve, with Prince of Wales Park in Mt Cook and Wakefield Park in Berhampore, and we have the trees, open spaces, tracks and recreational opportunities in the Town Belt. But we will need more neighbourhood reserves, commons like Carrara Park, that are close to people's homes where people can relax, enjoy the green space, play backyard-type games with their kids, grow community vegies, socialise and hold local outdoor events and gatherings. The Council target is a 10 minute walk or 600 metres to a neighbourhood reserve.

In Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further with WCC Councillors and Officers.

Rhona Carson
President
Newtown Residents' Association
17th May 2019

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WCC Planning for Growth 2020:
Wellington Spatial Plan
Community input overlooked

March - September 2020

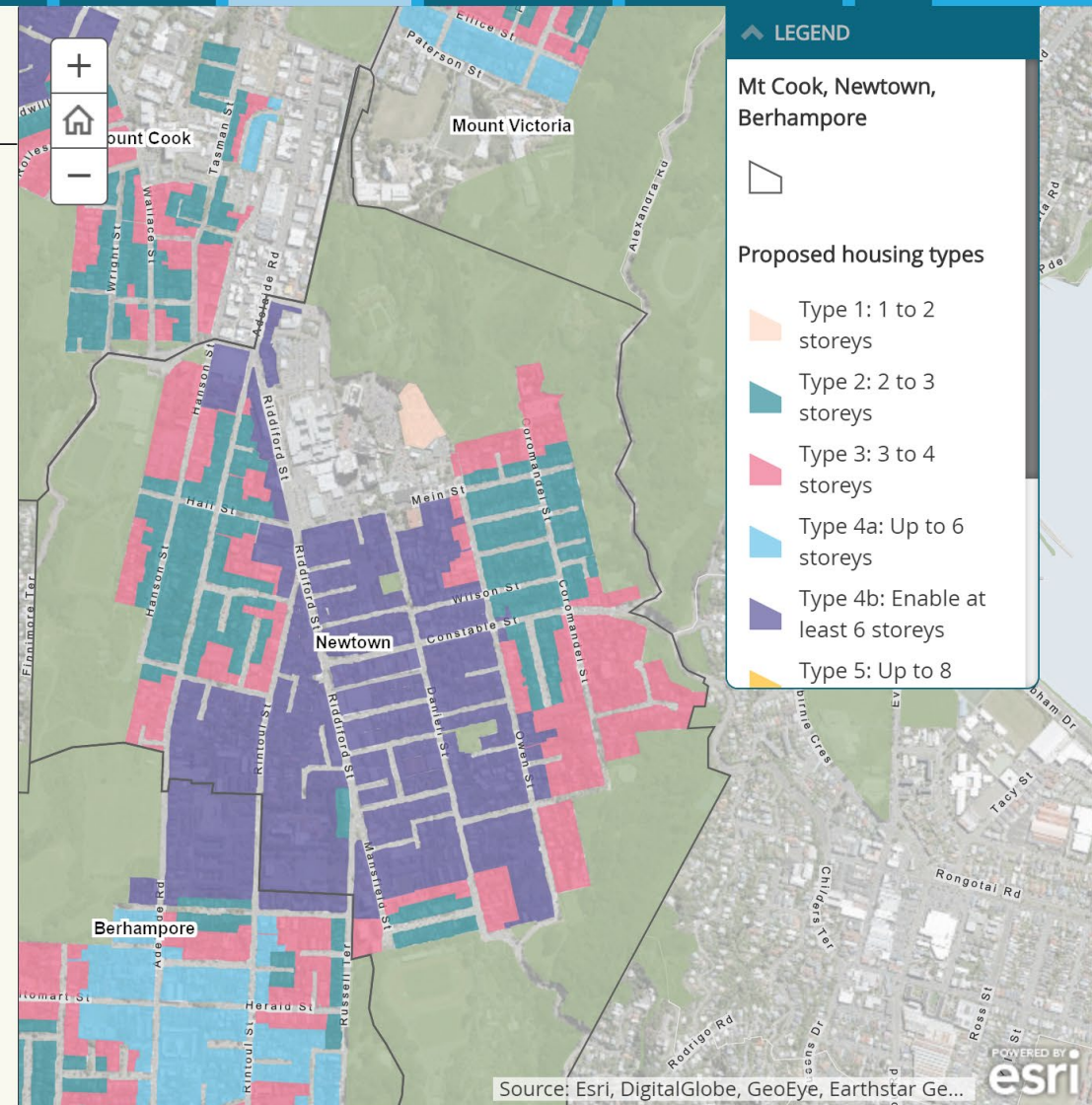
Tell us your view!

Inner Suburbs

Housing Density: Mt Cook, Newtown, Berhampore

What changes are anticipated here?

- Within Character Sub-Areas new buildings would be limited to a **maximum height of 3 storeys** (as is generally the case currently) while outside of the Sub-Areas and within a general character overlay, new buildings would have a **maximum height of 4-6 storeys**.
- Areas outside of the 'general character overlay' and within a walkable catchment from the central city would have building heights of **at least 6 storeys** enabled as required by the **National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2020 (NPS-UD)**, as well as areas within a walkable catchment of the mass rapid transit route.
- Creating more opportunities for **medium-density** development to occur in these suburbs, by:
 - **Concentrating** future development in areas that can suitably accommodate further intensification, including along existing bus routes and the proposed **mass rapid transit route** and around the existing Berhampore neighbourhood and Mt Cook/Newtown town centres.
 - **Increasing height** limits, to provide for development of at least 6 storeys along existing/proposed mass transit and bus routes and around the Berhampore neighbourhood and Mt Cook/Newtown town centres to enable an increase in density in key areas that offer good





WCC INNERCITY FINAL



Watch later Share

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MORE VIDEOS



0:44 / 3:00



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WCC INNERCITY FINAL



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WCC INNERCITY FINAL



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Re



healthier,
modernised
homes

2:40 / 3:00



YouTube



Newtown Impact:
WCC Spatial Plan
Community test drives

March - September 2020



Van
Be
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Low
1-2
det
Ex
B



Corner Owen and Constable st. Time: 9.00 hours Lat: -41.286460876464844 Lon: 174.77622985839844 Date: 23.6.2020 Shadow Projection



We Are Newtown

1 d · 🌐



Winter light plane simulation

A few people have been asking what the shadow from a six storey building would look like in winter....

See more

Rhona Carson and 1 other 2 comments

Like Comment Share

Up next



How much shade does a six storey building...

We Are Newtown
a week ago · 207 views

Comments [See all](#)



Write a comment...





About



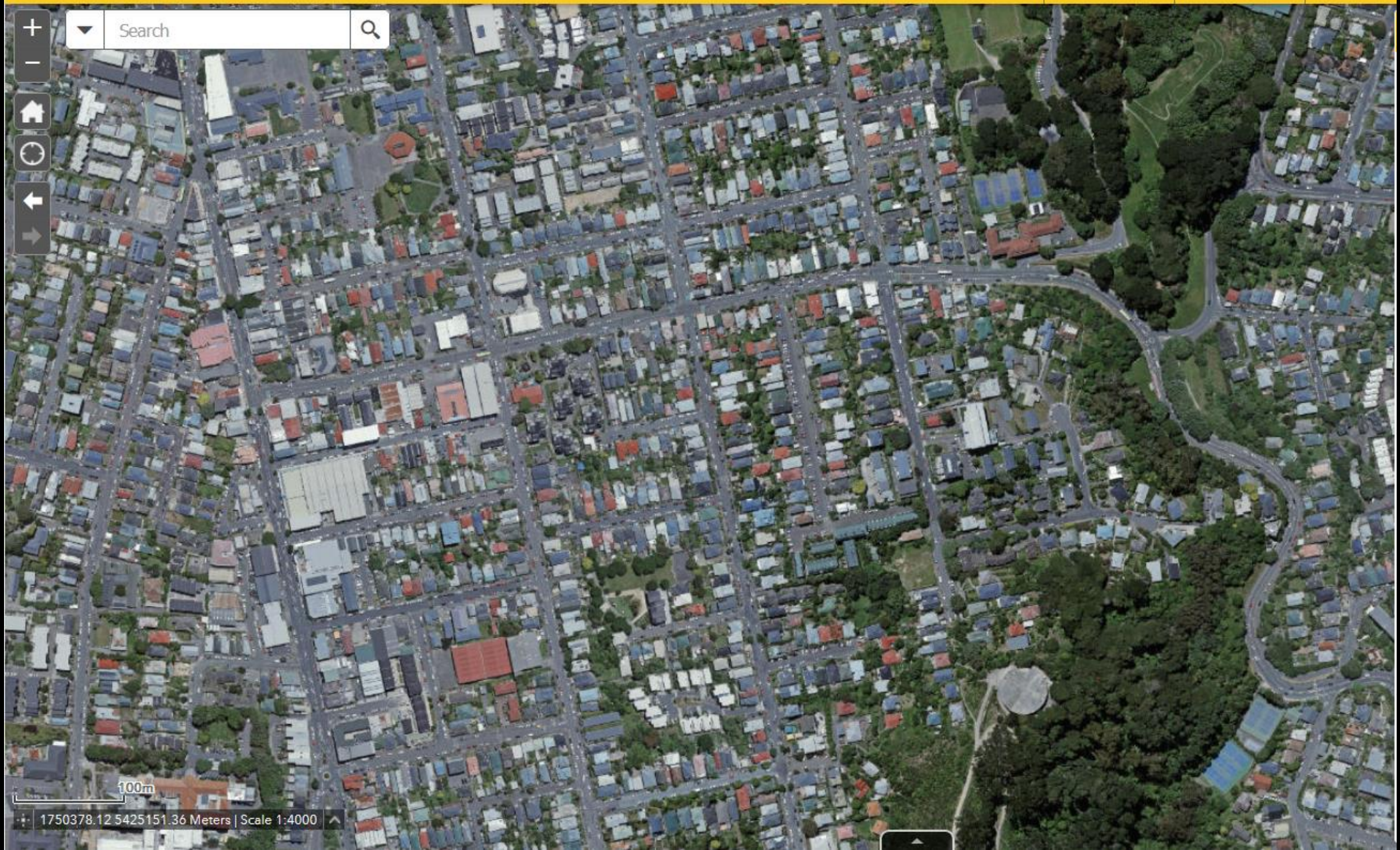
Legend



Layers



Basemap



100m

1750378.12 5425151.36 Meters | Scale 1:4000

Newtown Suburban Centre DENSIFICATION

Alternative Planning for Growth

by Red Design Architects'

Urban Activation Lab

*Place based Concept Design Plan – test driving the Newtown community
sourced design alternative initiative for intensification*

Newtown as it might be....

Newtown as it might be....

Shown in Plan

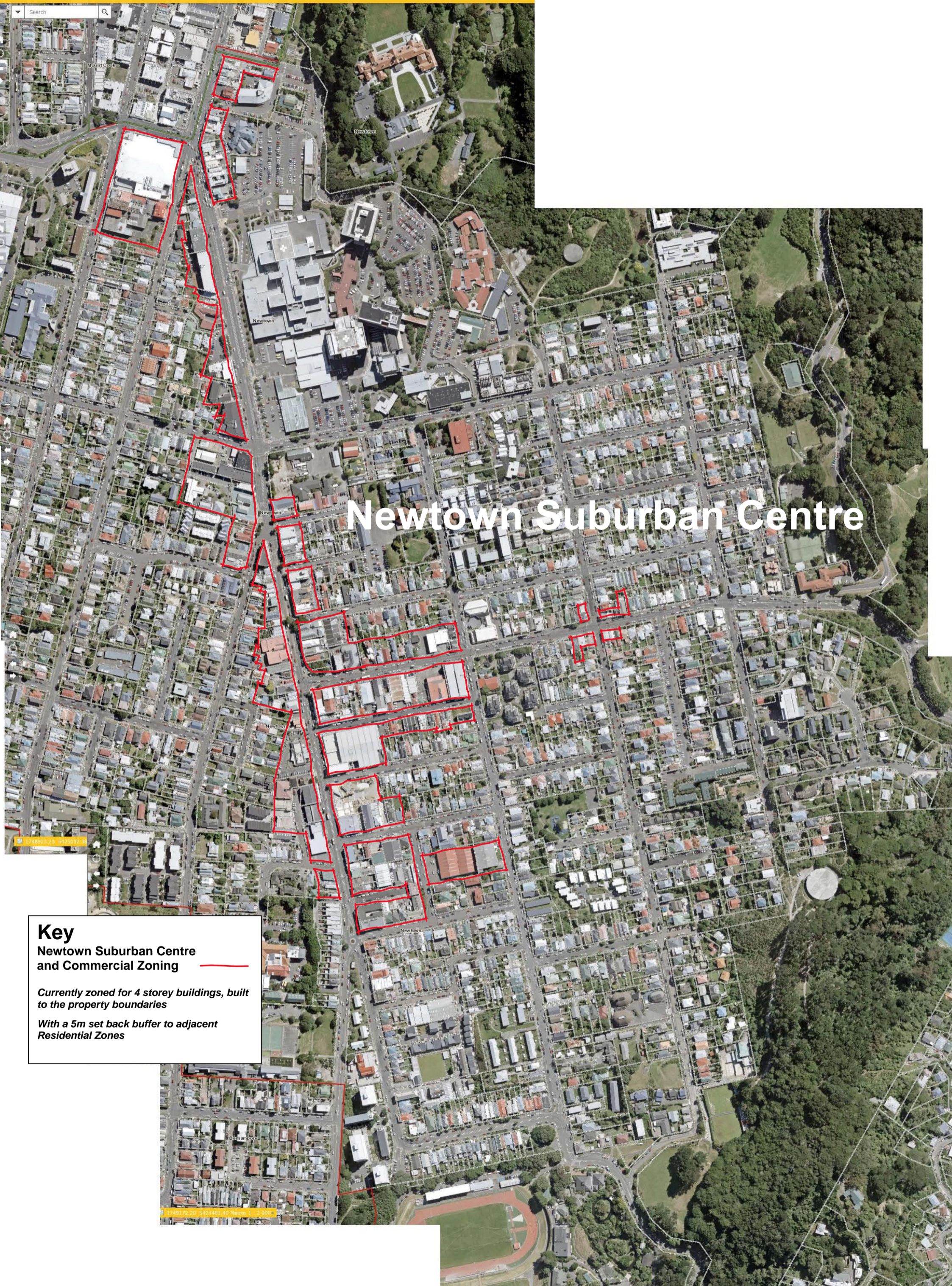


Key

Newtown Suburban Centre
and Commercial Zoning

*Currently zoned for 4 storey buildings, built
to the property boundaries*

*With a 5m set back buffer to adjacent
Residential Zones*



Newtown Suburban Centre

Key Newtown Suburban Centre and Commercial Zoning

Currently zoned for 4 storey buildings, built to the property boundaries

With a 5m set back buffer to adjacent Residential Zones



Key

Newtown Suburban Centre and Commercial Zoning ———

New Home Types:

- Two apartment units per floor**
= 12 homes on 6 storeys
= 10 homes on 5 storeys above shop / cafe
Each 84sqm apartment has windows on at least 2 opposite sides for sun and outlook
- Two apartment units per floor**
= 6 homes on 3 storeys
- Co Housing Apartment Complex**
= 20 homes on 5 storeys above shop / cafe
With open space & some shared amenities
- Town House Apartment Complex**
= 70 homes on 5 storeys above shop / cafe
= 56 homes on 4 storeys above shop / cafe
With central shared open space

Where new apartments are set back from the street it is to preserve character shopfronts and to allow more sun and light at street level

Mapping where over 2,000 homes could be built in the next 30+ years



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Newtown Suburban Centre and Commercial Zoning

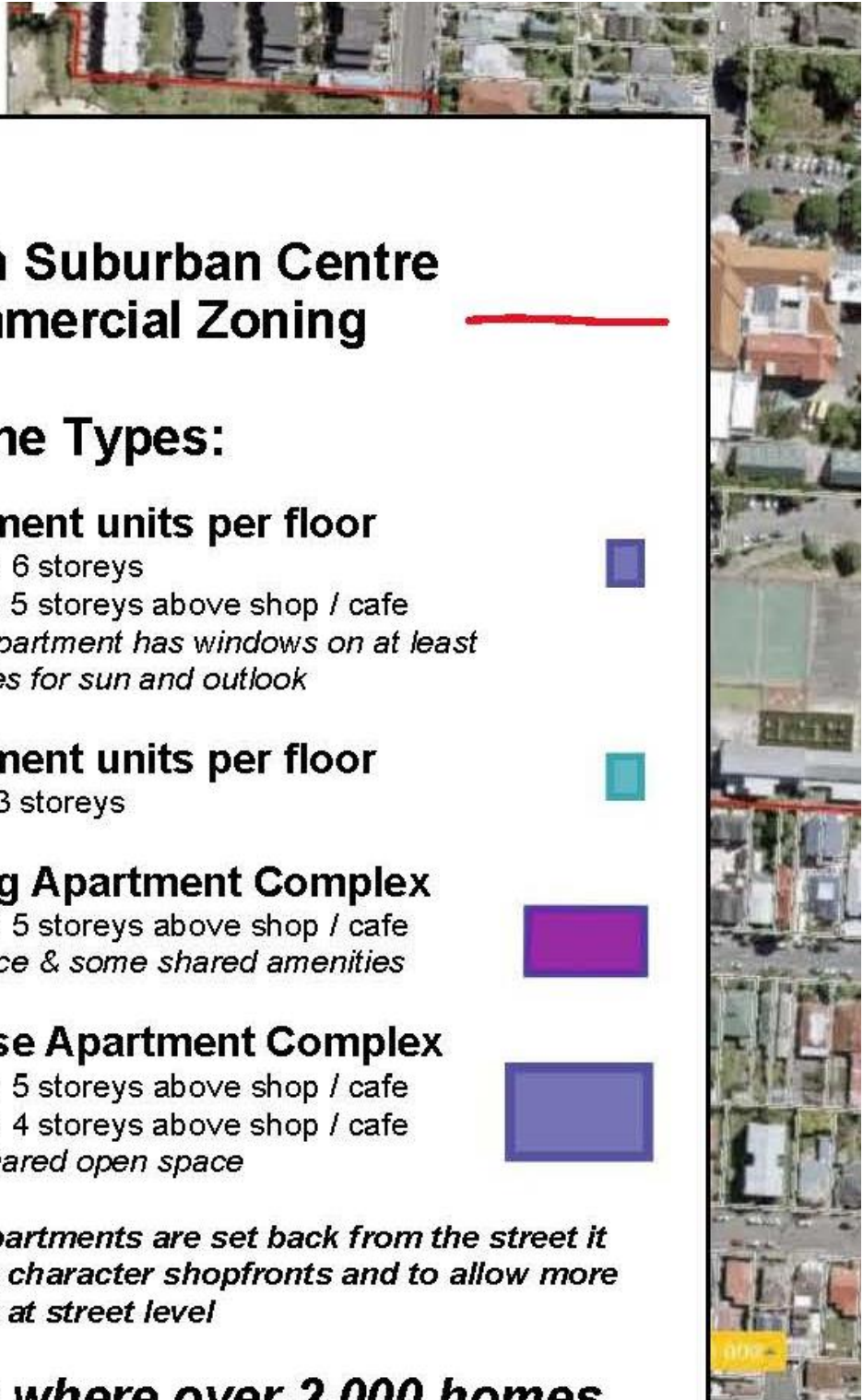
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Constable St



Key

Newtown Suburban Centre and Commercial Zoning



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 **Owner interested in developing**

The NPS UD allows local authorities to take into account Social, Economic, Environmental and Cultural qualifying factors when deciding the land to be zoned for intensification.

SUNSHINE

Sunlight is important for warmth and wellbeing. That it won't matter if tall apartment buildings cast shade across lots of low rise homes is an idea from a continental climate. In the likes of continental New York, Paris, Milan, or Melbourne the climate can be so hot in summer that you want to escape the sun and be in the shade, and in wintertime it is so cold the sun won't warm you up anyway. In Wellington's temperate coastal climate with its high humidity, direct sunshine is important summer and winter, it's the natural carbon zero engine that powers the survival and wellbeing of our existing timber structures, living plants and our people [tenants and owners equally]. In Wellington people seldom gather in the shade when in the sun is an option. Because we are a cooler climate many people aren't aware of how high our humidity is.*

The very closely packed wooden houses on small sections of the character inner suburbs with their small gardens and trees, form such a tight dense configuration the effective ground plane is often 1 - 2 storeys above actual ground level. Much of the housing stock were built so close together they only receive sunshine on two sides and on their roof during the course of a day. Many of the existing dwellings in Newtown are accessible, have proven resilient to earthquakes and storms. They're adaptable housing stock supporting multi generational families from diverse cultural backgrounds. The existing neighbourhoods and their greenery are an ecosystem like a living breathing organism, part of the lungs of the city.

The mass of established buildings and their garden vegetation depend on sunshine for survival. 90 to 150 year old wooden houses are all built out of untreated heart native timbers that rely on being warm and dry to not grow mould and rot. Sunshine is essential to their survival. Proven over a century the community of homes is a fit with its solar input. Although some that are too damp remain and need to be fixed up or replaced, most structures where the conditions were too damp have already rotted out and been replaced. Over the decades, the importance of sunlight for the occupants and the structures has been understood, acknowledged and supported by the daylight envelope rules and height limits in the District Plan.

Add in six storey tall apartment buildings blocking the sunshine across an existing inner city neighbourhood then that neighbourhood will become colder and, because of our high humidity, damper, shaded trees and gardens will cease to thrive, the existing accessible, adaptable, resilient housing stock will begin to rot and decay. Spatial planning for these existing functioning communities of tenants and owners needs to consider as qualifying factors their natural renewable energy needs, their current functionality, their embodied energy and their sequestered carbon.

* **82% humidity** at 3pm Wed 9th June, a bright sunny autumn-like day
87% humidity at 6pm Tues 8th June, a cloudy day
100% humidity for most of Mon 7th June (but no rain !), low cloud most of the day

NEWTOWN RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION POSITION

The Newtown Residents' Association meeting on 21st June 2021 discussed the Wellington City Council Spatial Plan and agreed on the following position statement:

The Newtown Residents' Association would like to be able to support the WCC Spatial Plan prioritising Newtown to be one of the first Wellington suburbs where densification is developed. We agree with Generation Zero and Renters United that many more warm, dry, affordable homes are needed in Wellington. We would like more warm, dry, affordable homes here in Newtown, and we would love to be the suburb where the next generation could afford a home. Our Association has spent over 30 years lobbying Council in favour of intensification within our Newtown suburban centre* where 6 storey apartments can easily fit on underdeveloped commercial and industrial sites and in behind our heritage shopfronts. Intensification here puts our new residents right on the transport corridor, with sheltered verandahs, and close walking distance to all our suburb's amenities.

Red Design's** test scheme that demonstrated 6 storey infill housing in this part of our suburb proved that new buildings on only 45% of this part of Newtown can provide 2,000 sunny accessible new homes***. The Association would like the Spatial Plan mapping to enable intense development in the Newtown suburban centre, development that works with the iconic historic buildings and shopfronts. If Newtown's Spatial Plan intensification mapping was all focused on the suburban centre and the Mansfield St escarpment area used by Red Design, then only 16% of this area would need to be built to 6 storeys for our community to meet the expected NPS UD required growth. Our Association would welcome more homes than required being built in this part of our community.

Spatial Plan mapping that meant Newtown locals would not need to dispute what might happen next door to their homes or flats is a significant qualifying matter that is the bonus of this approach. If the residential areas outside of the protected heritage and character areas were zoned for in scale up to 3 storey infill (not 6 storey high rise), then Newtown Residents' Association would then be able to support the Spatial Plan wholeheartedly. Mana whenua, the Residents' Association, Generation Zero, Renters United, We Are Newtown, other local groups and members of our community would all be able to collaborate with Council, and focus instead on the District Plan Rules that enable Newtown to take the lead, embrace the Spatial Plan, and to get on with providing additional housing****.

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*Here 4 storey buildings can already be built without side yards and daylight set-backs between in-zone neighbours.

**Local Architecture, Urban Design and Social Policy practice embedded within the Newtown Community for the last 40 years. Red Design are experts in in-depth community consultation and the driving force behind the Newtown Festival. [Newtown's intergenerational multi-cultural celebration of place, performance, creativity, culture and community that every year involves nearly 1000 performers and 450 stalls (run by approx. 1200 stallholders) all convened by 250 volunteers and 210 paid crew and staged on one magnificent day in the heart of central Newtown].

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Newtown as it might be....

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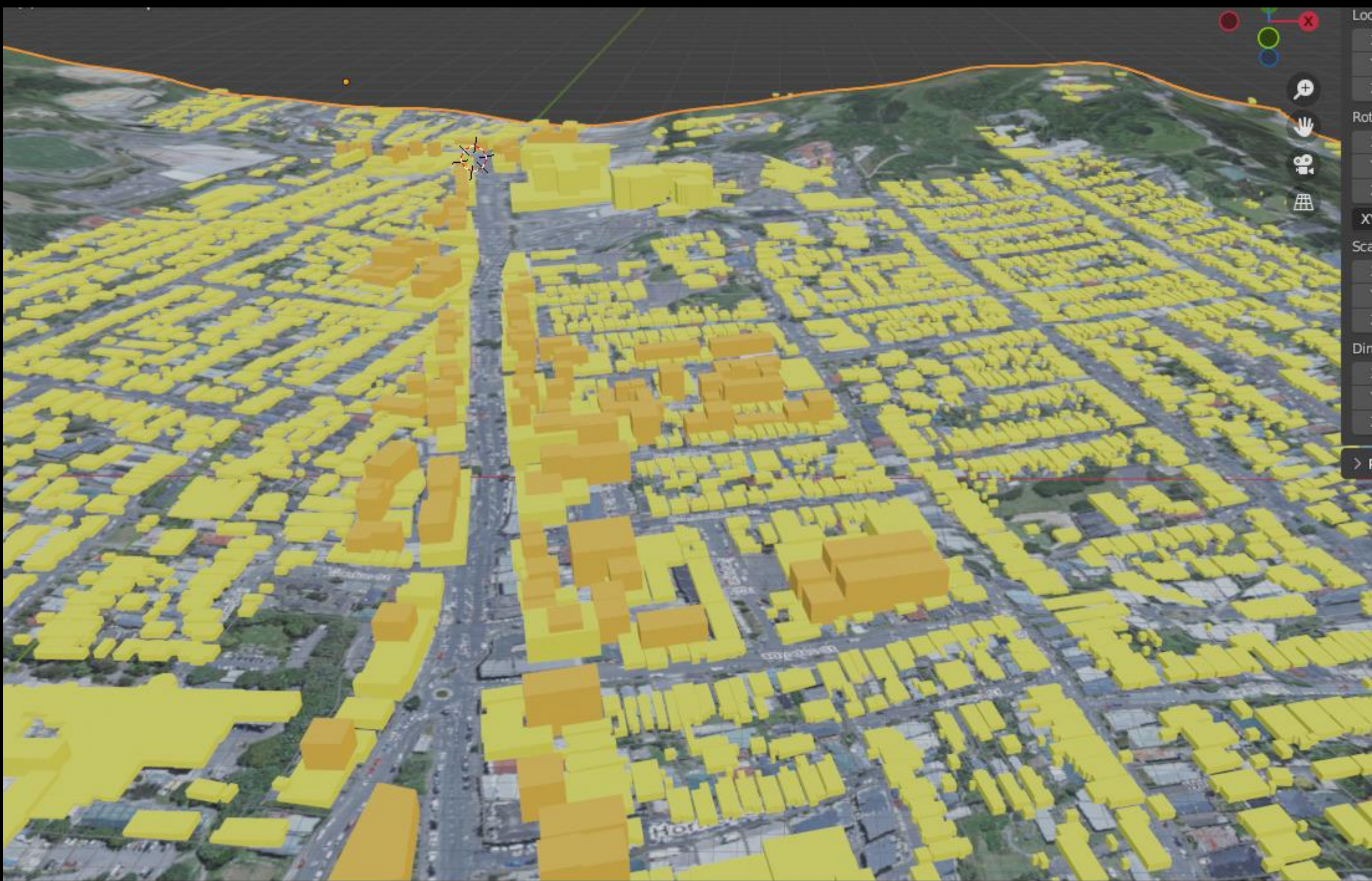
Shown in 3D

Newtown Suburban Centre 3D Digital Modelling

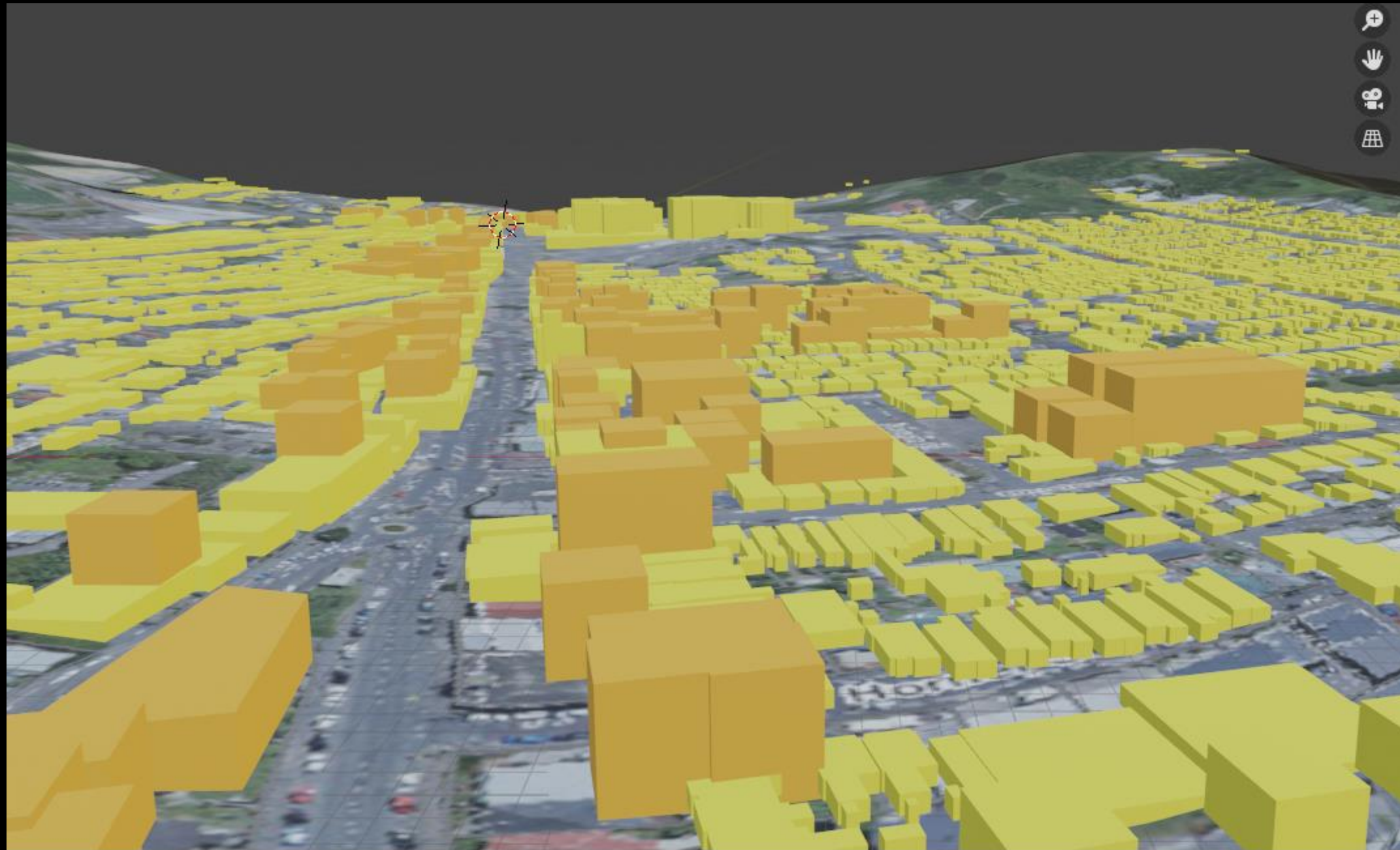
Block Modelling of concept designs for apartments giving possible form
to

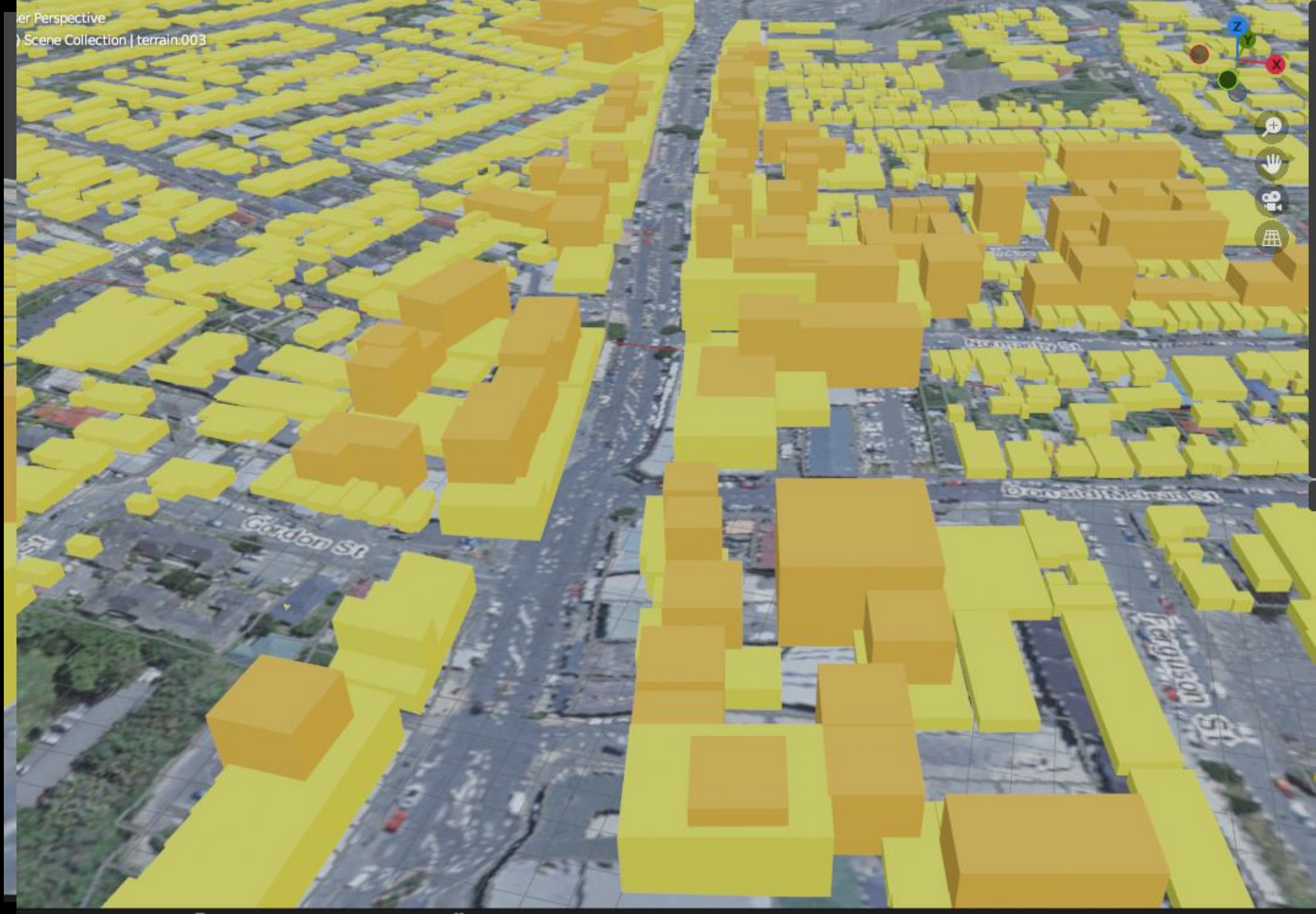
Red Design Architects' Urban Activation Lab
community sourced scheme for central Newtown

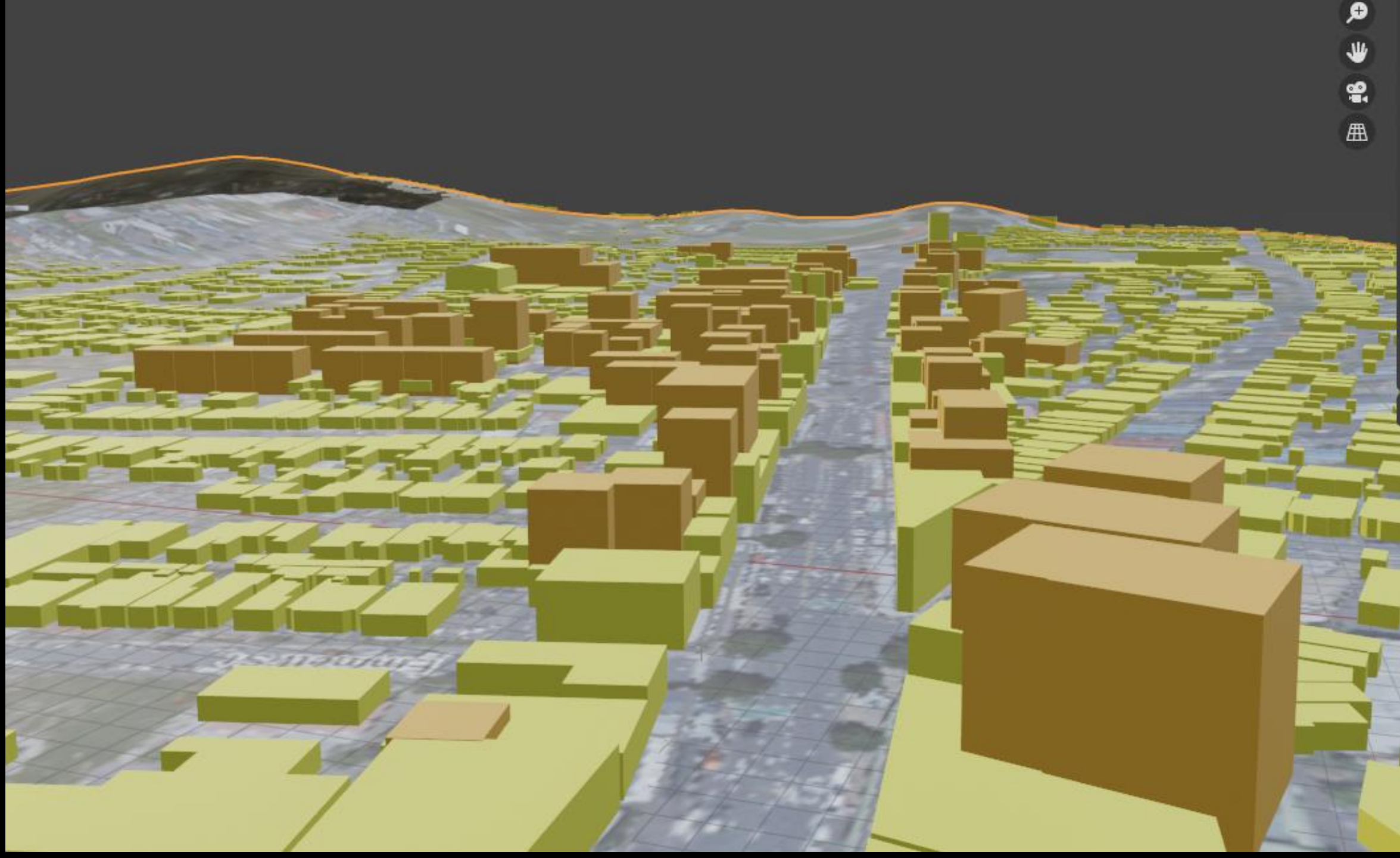


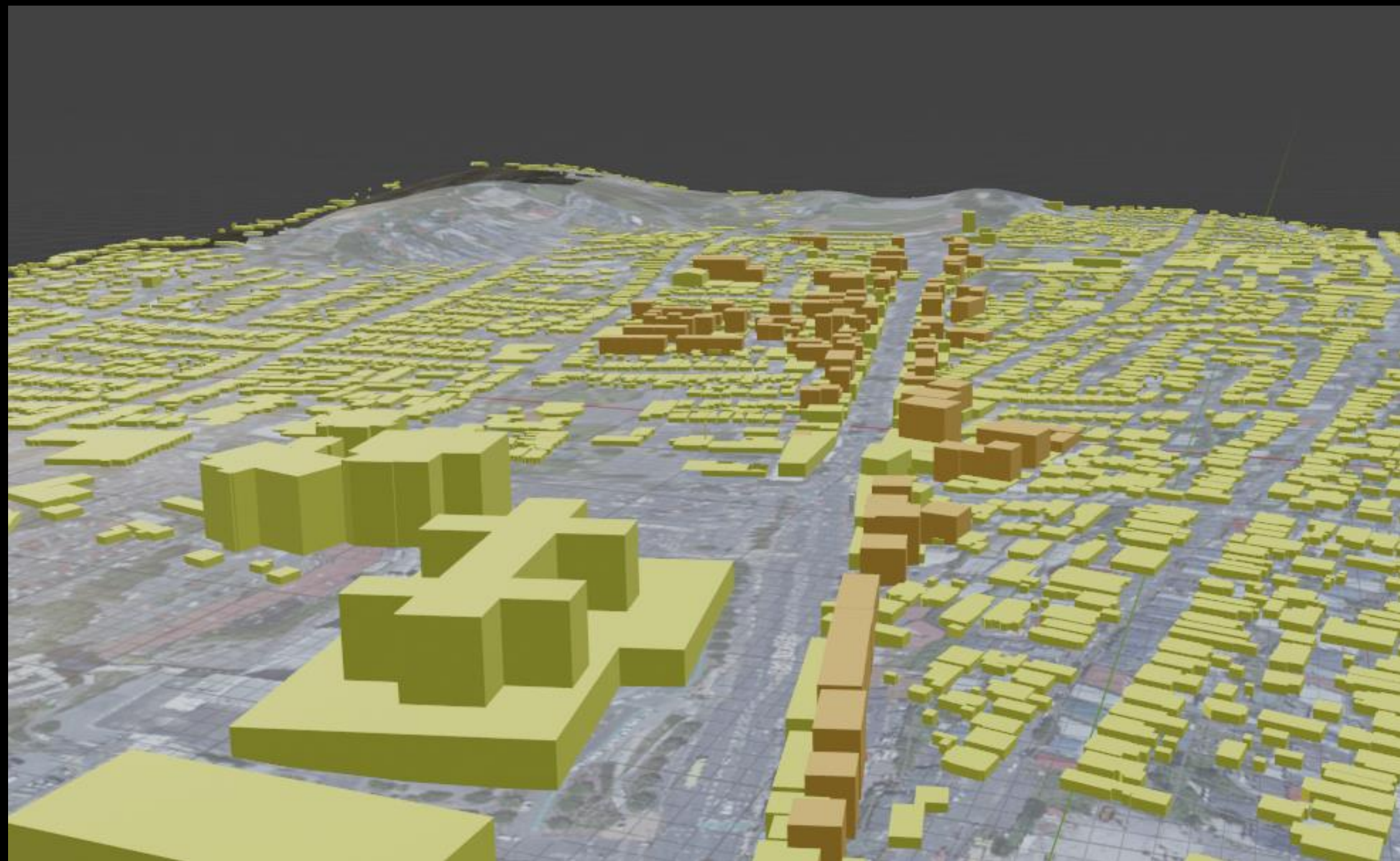


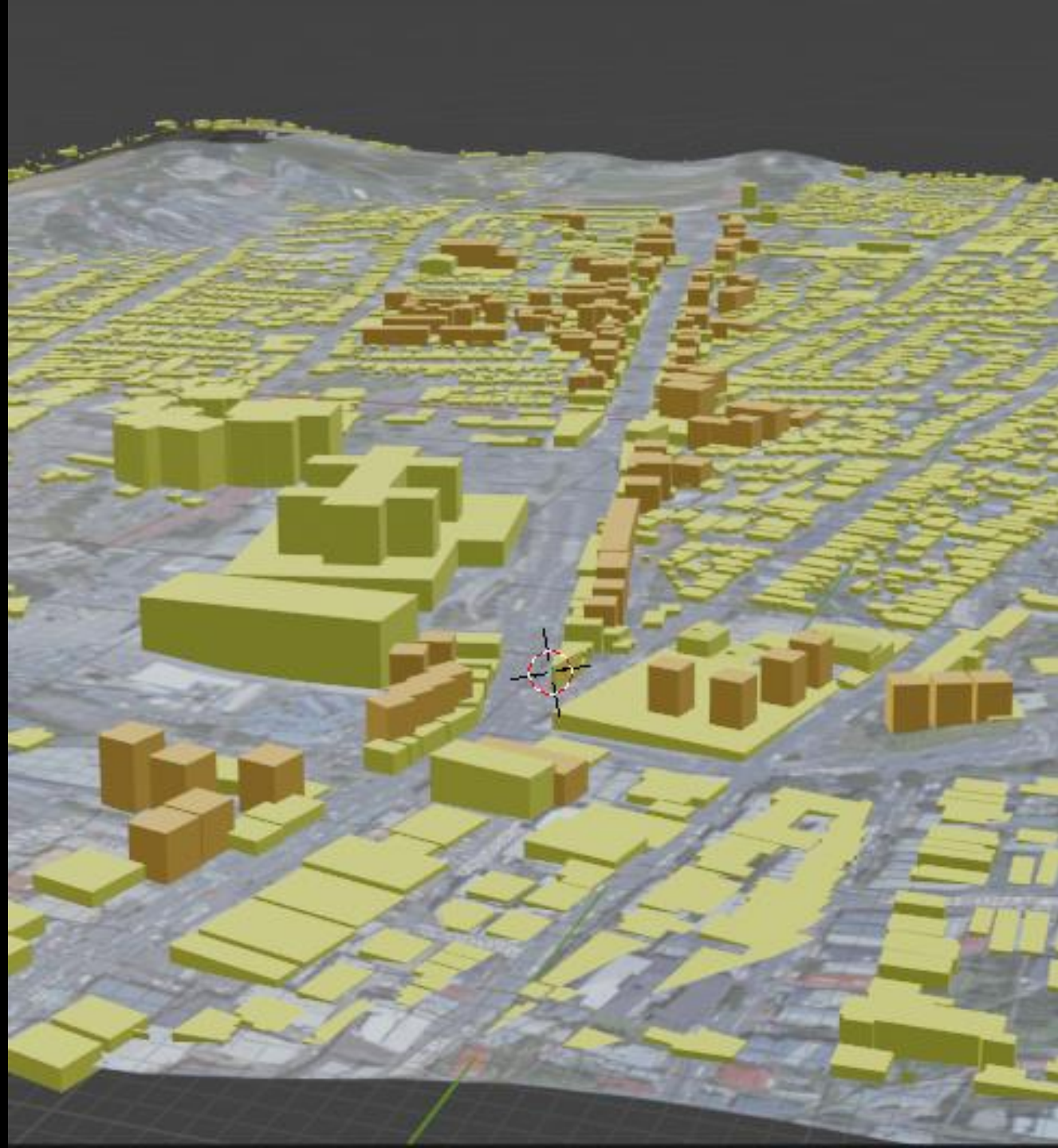
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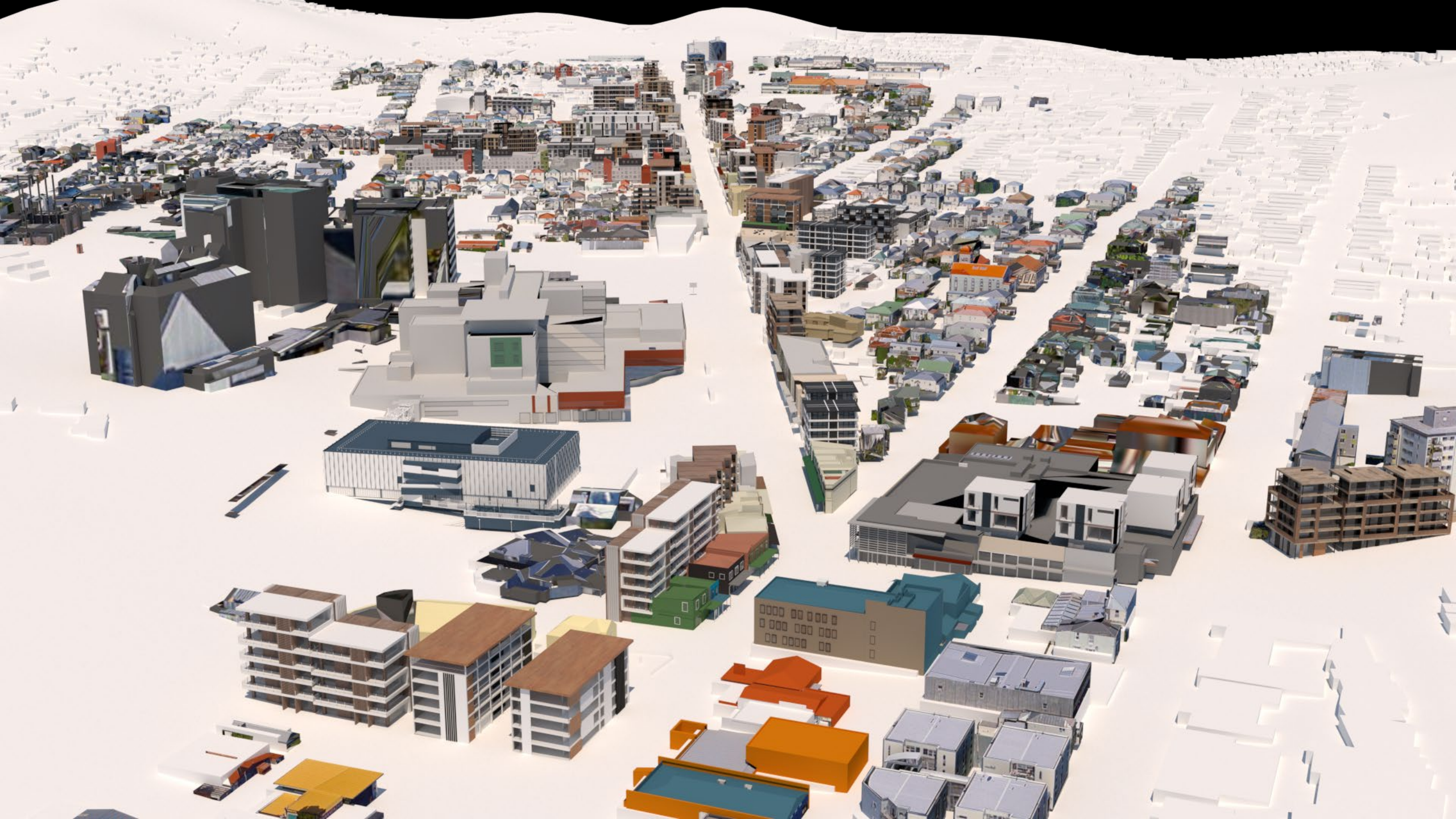
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VUW Summer Scholars' concept designs for apartments giving possible
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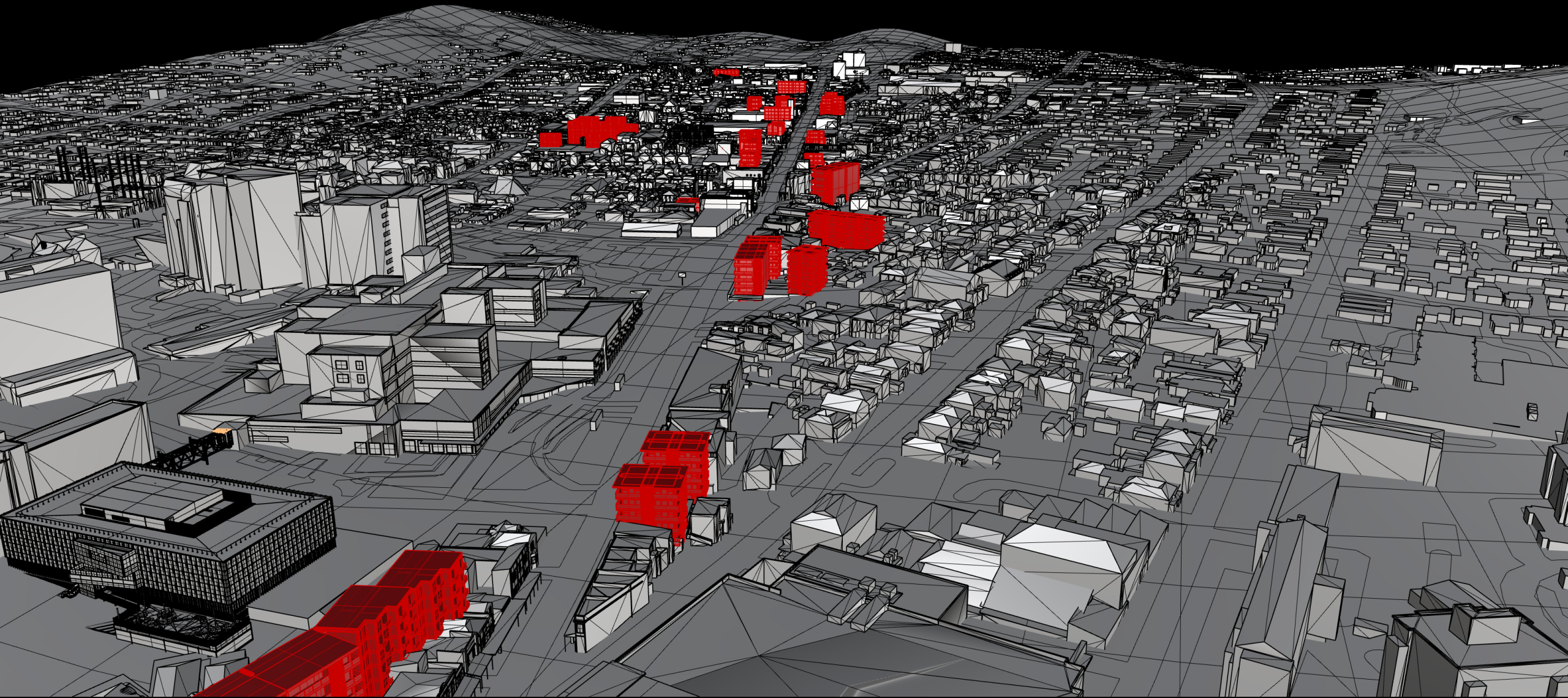
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Newtown Suburban Centre
DENSIFICATION
Looking South

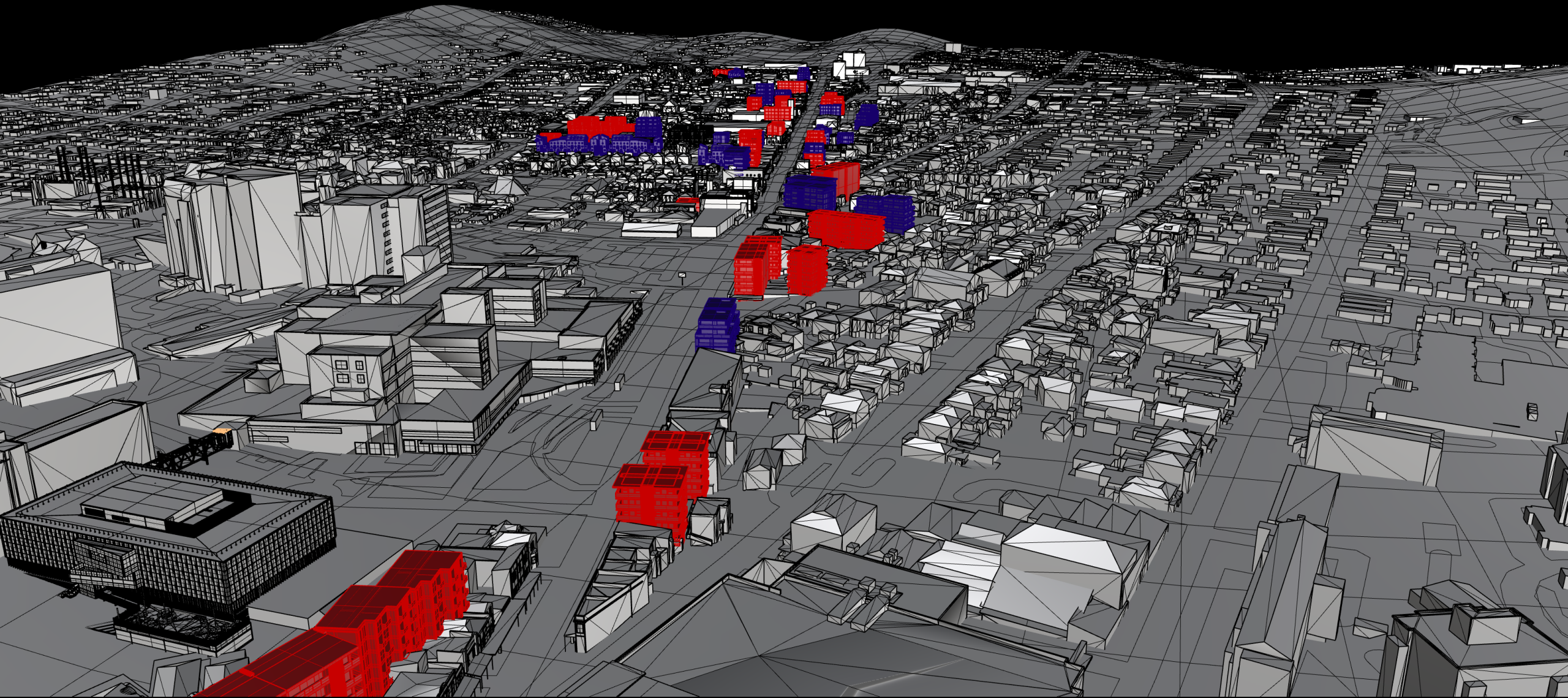
From John Street towards Newtown Park



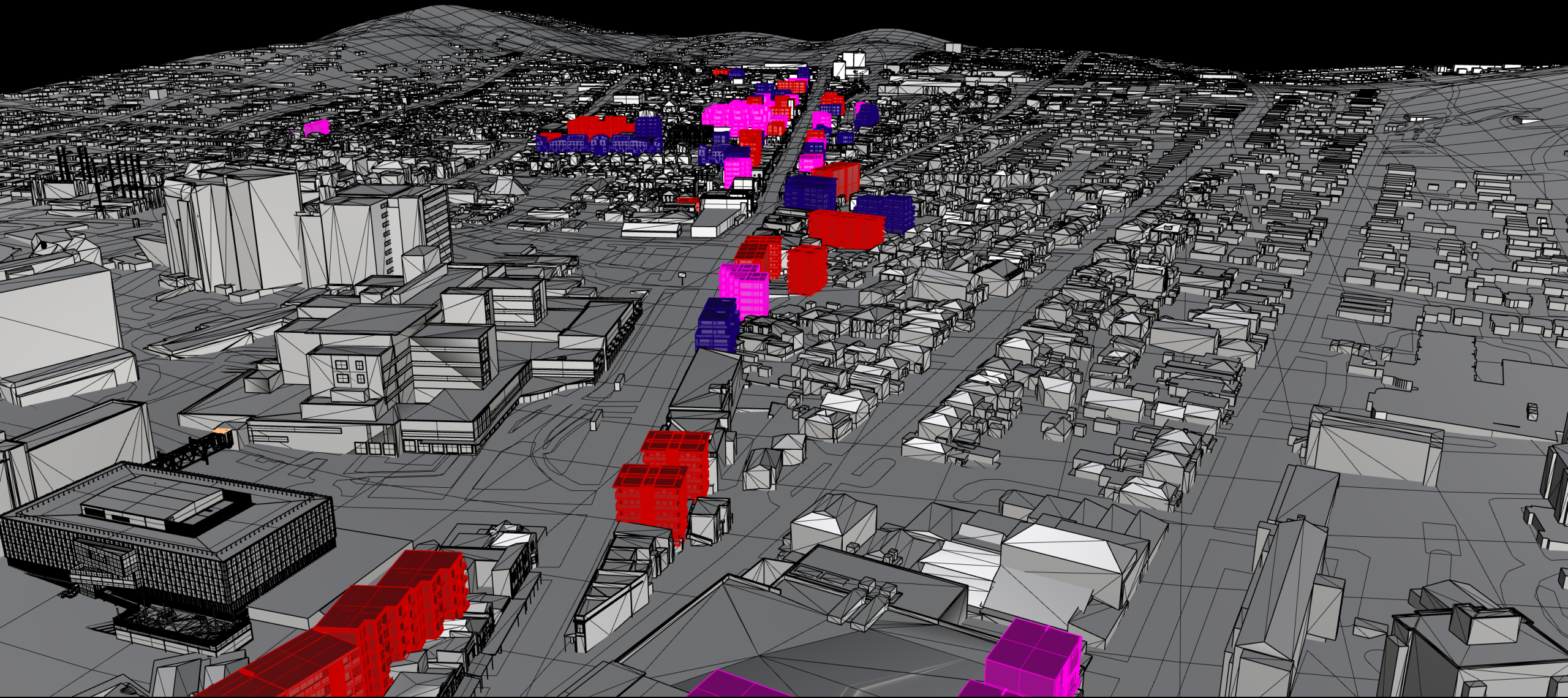




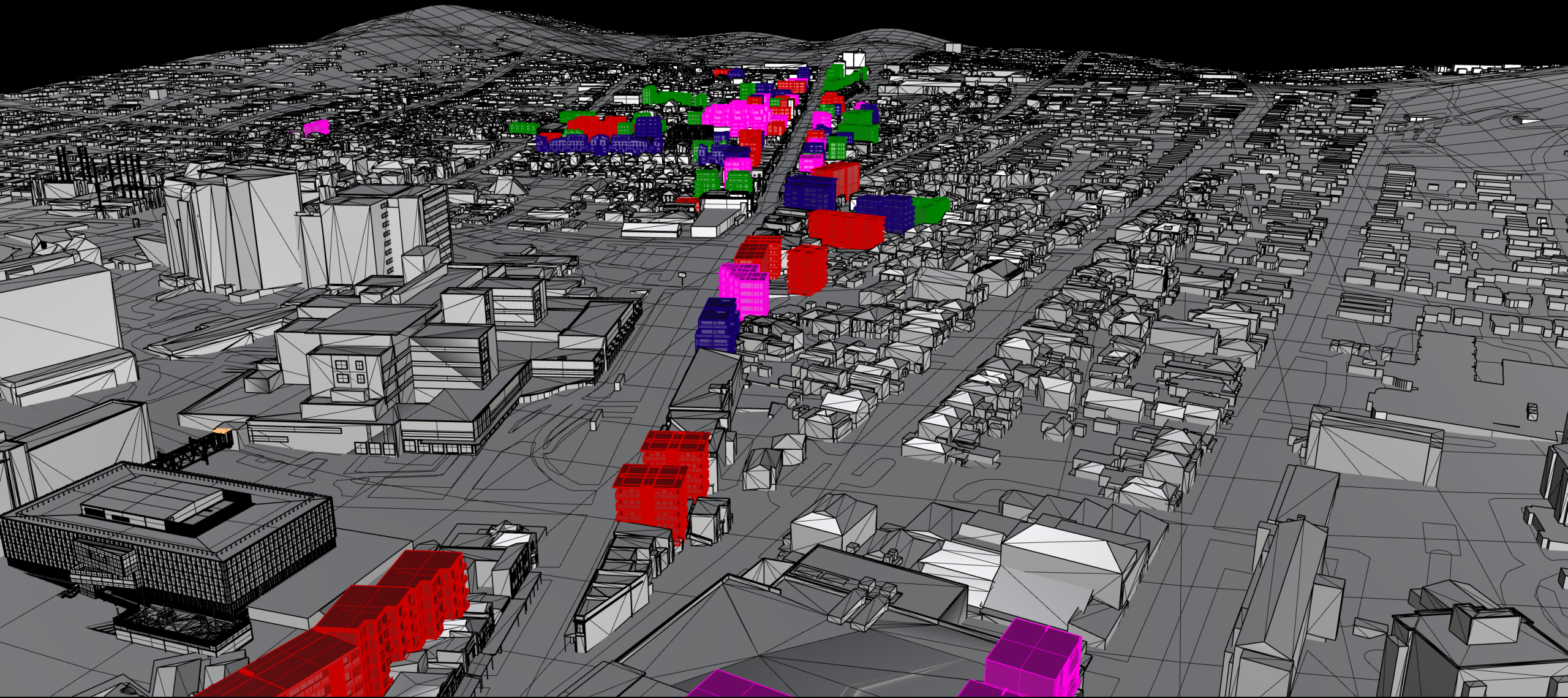
In 10 years



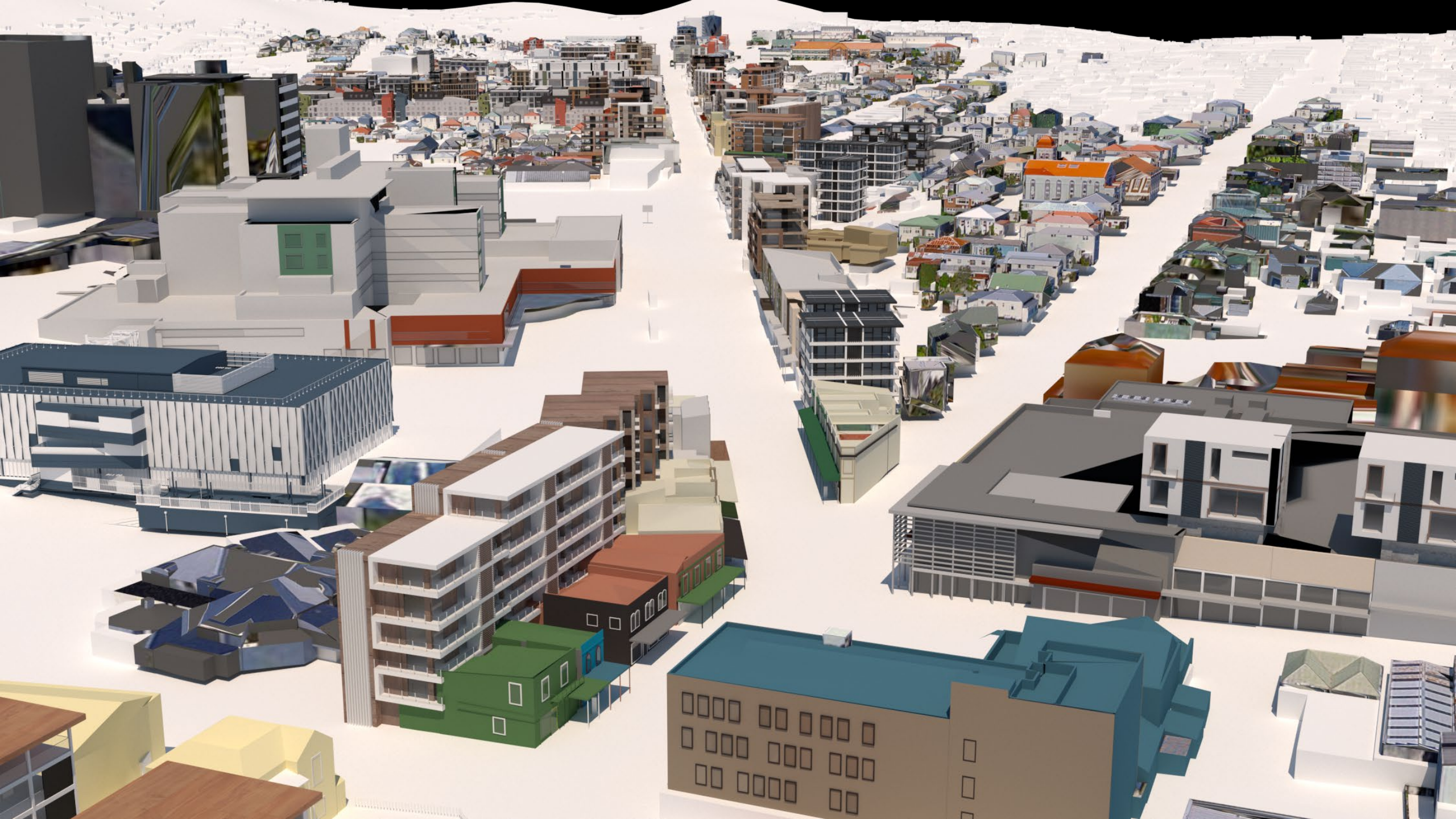
In 20 years



In 30 years



In 40 years





Travelling South

John Street to Newtown Park











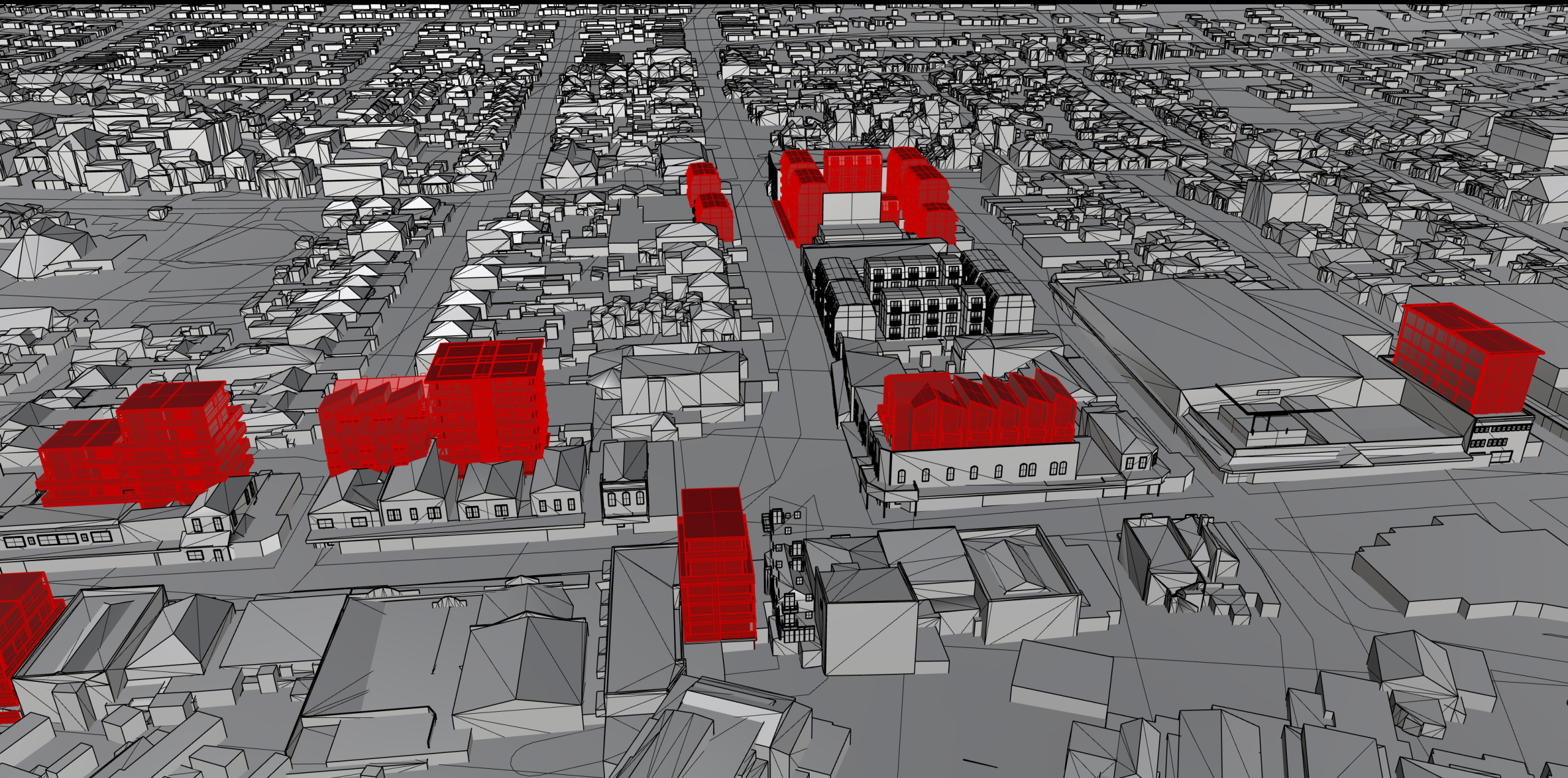




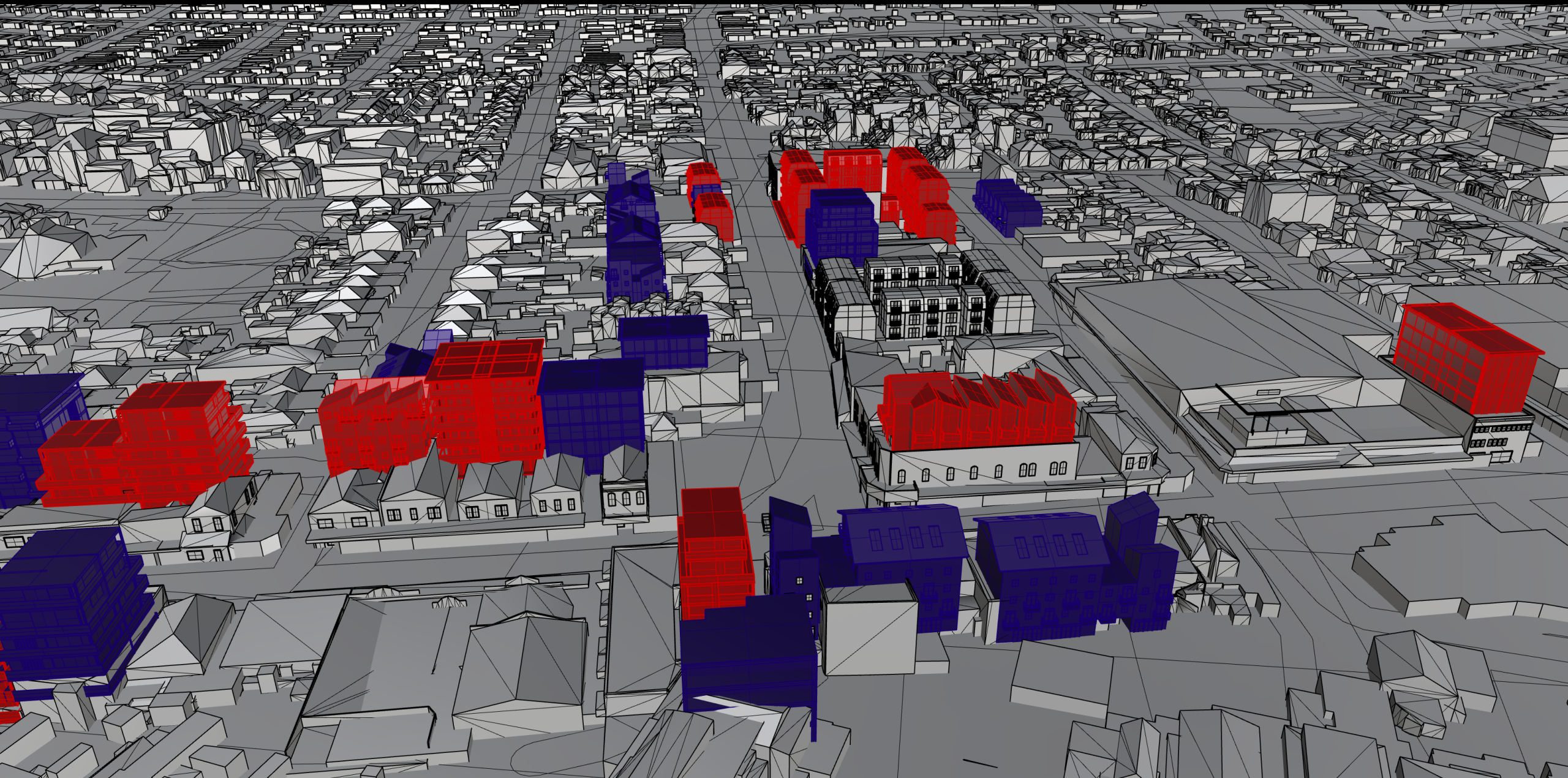




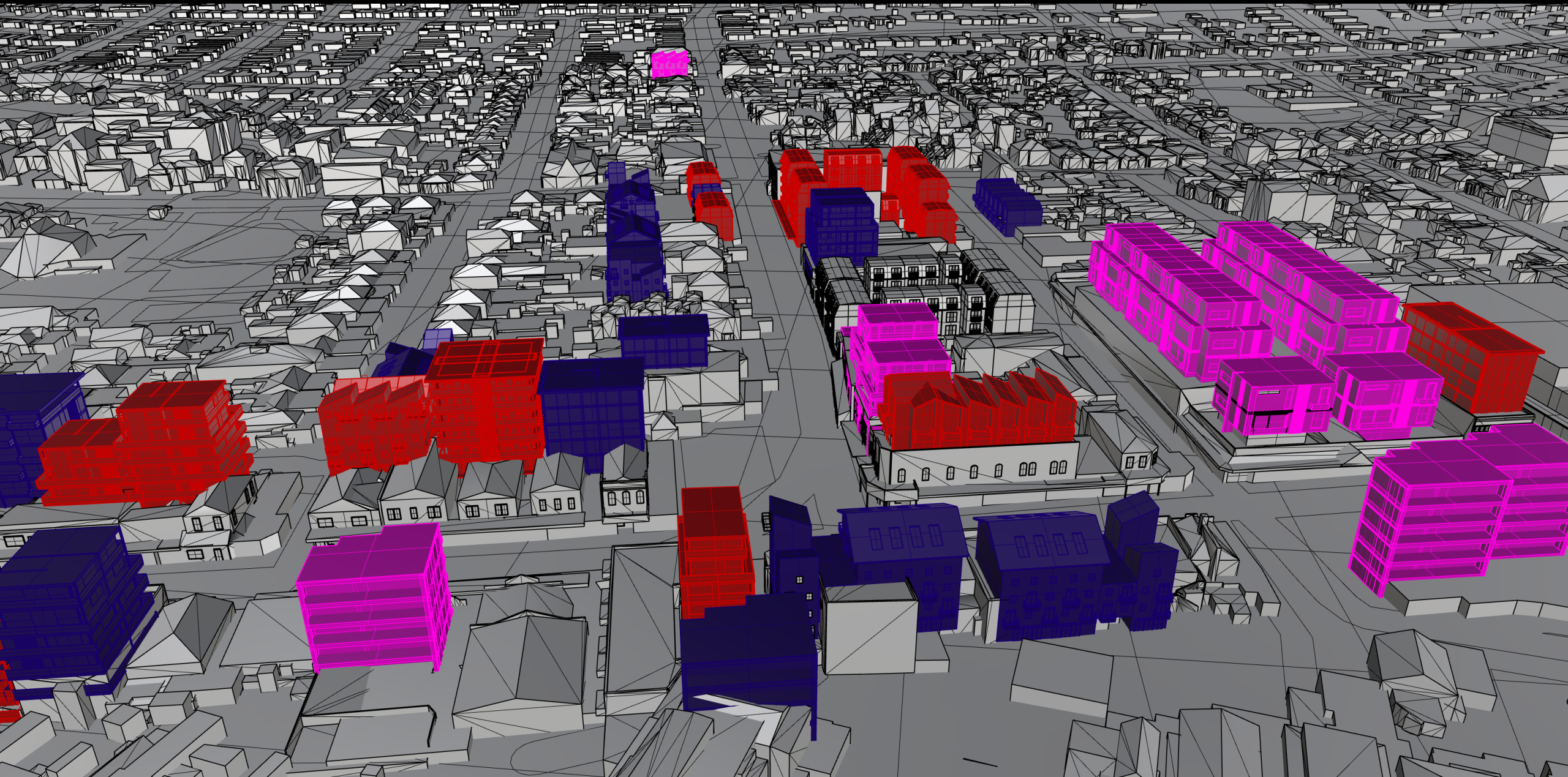
Central Newtown Looking East Up Constable Street



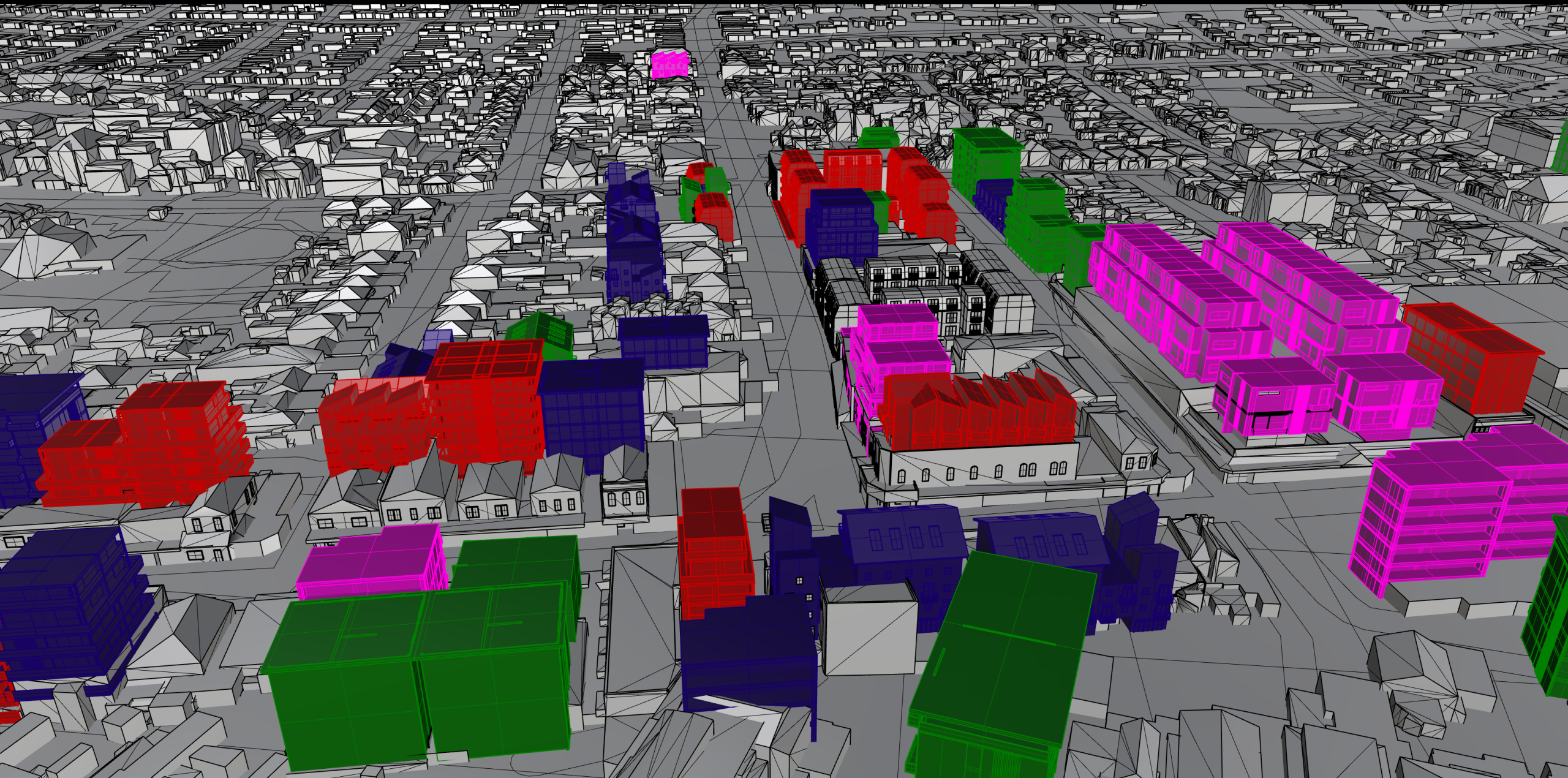
In 10 years



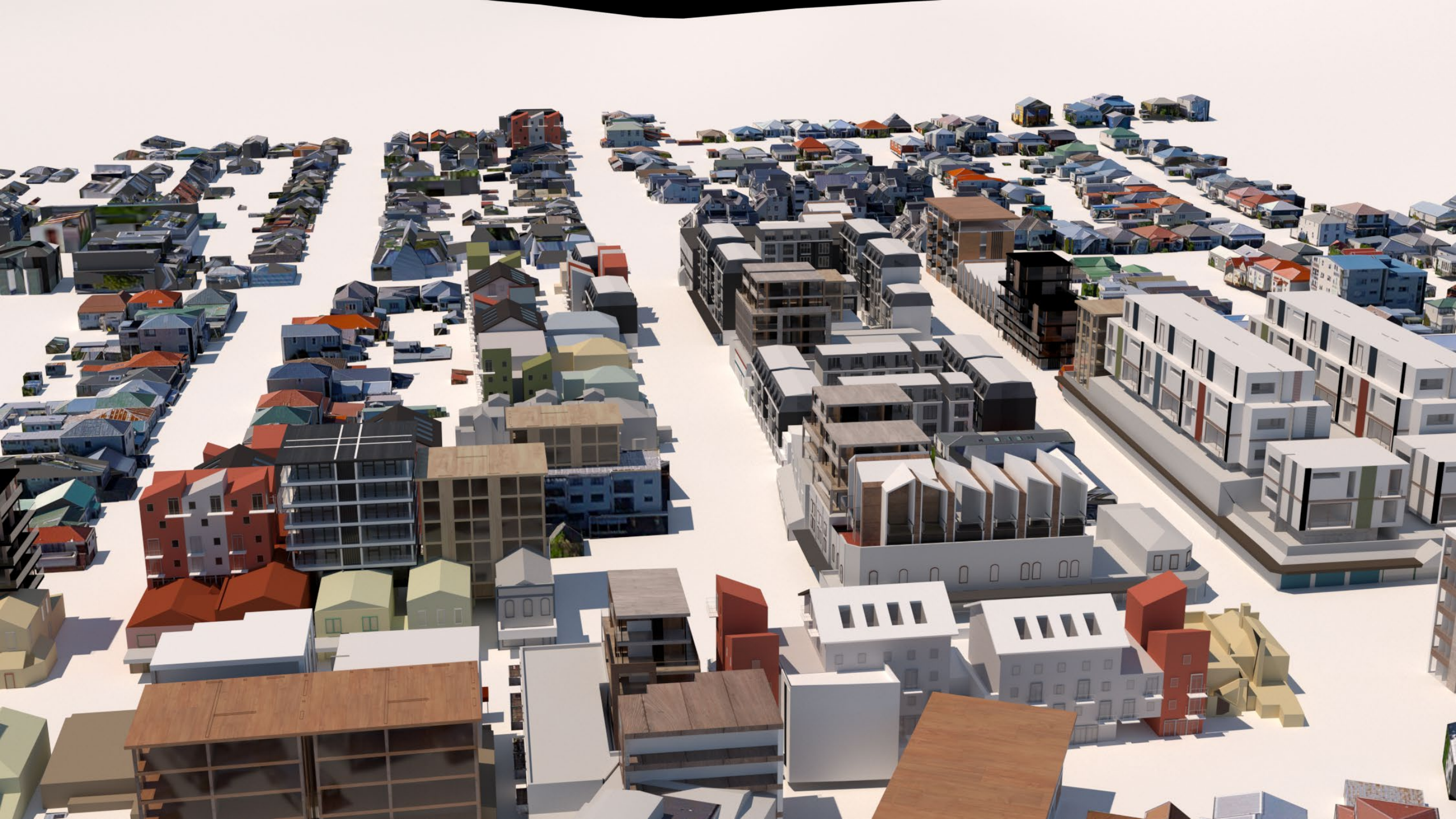
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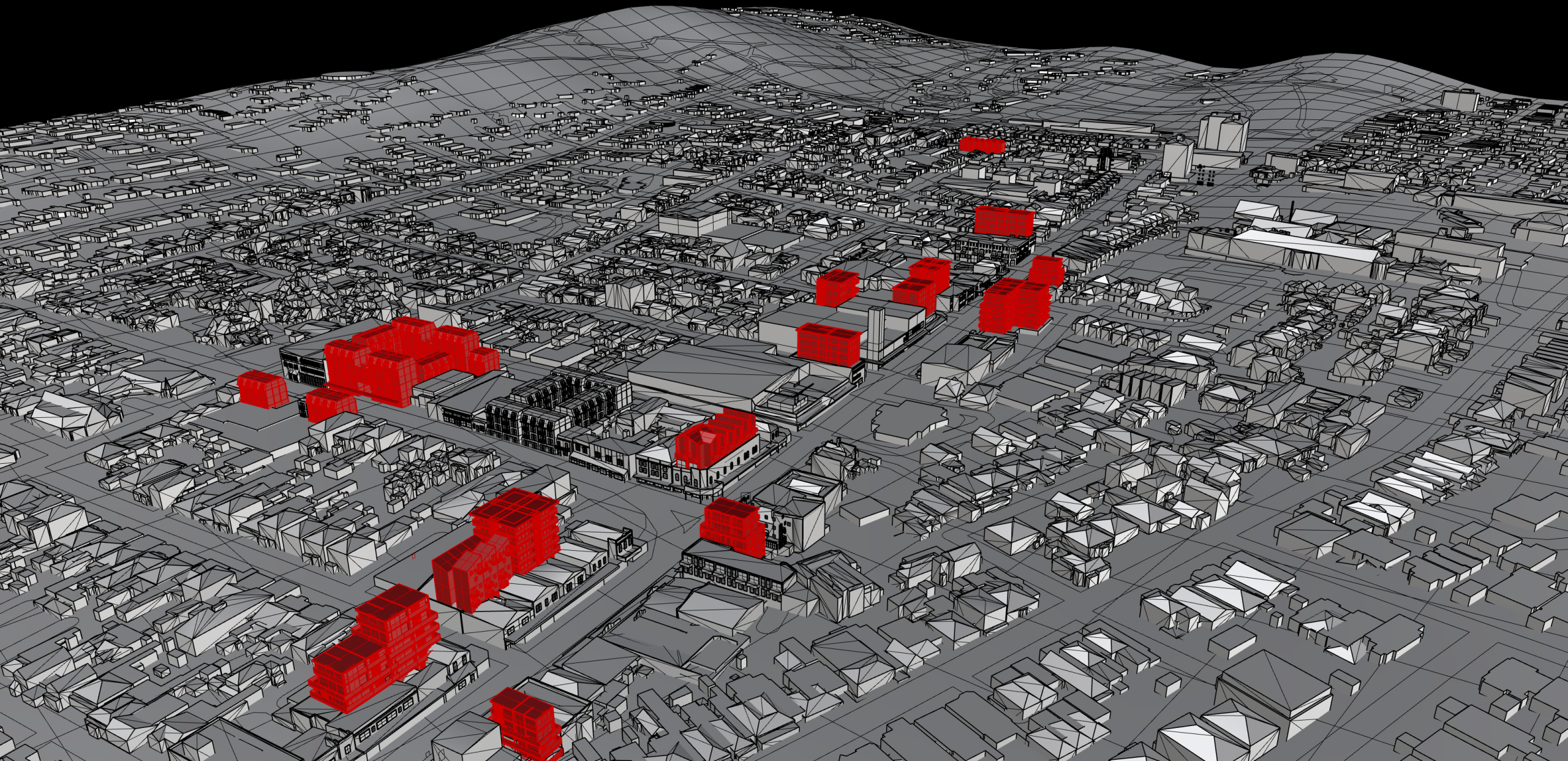




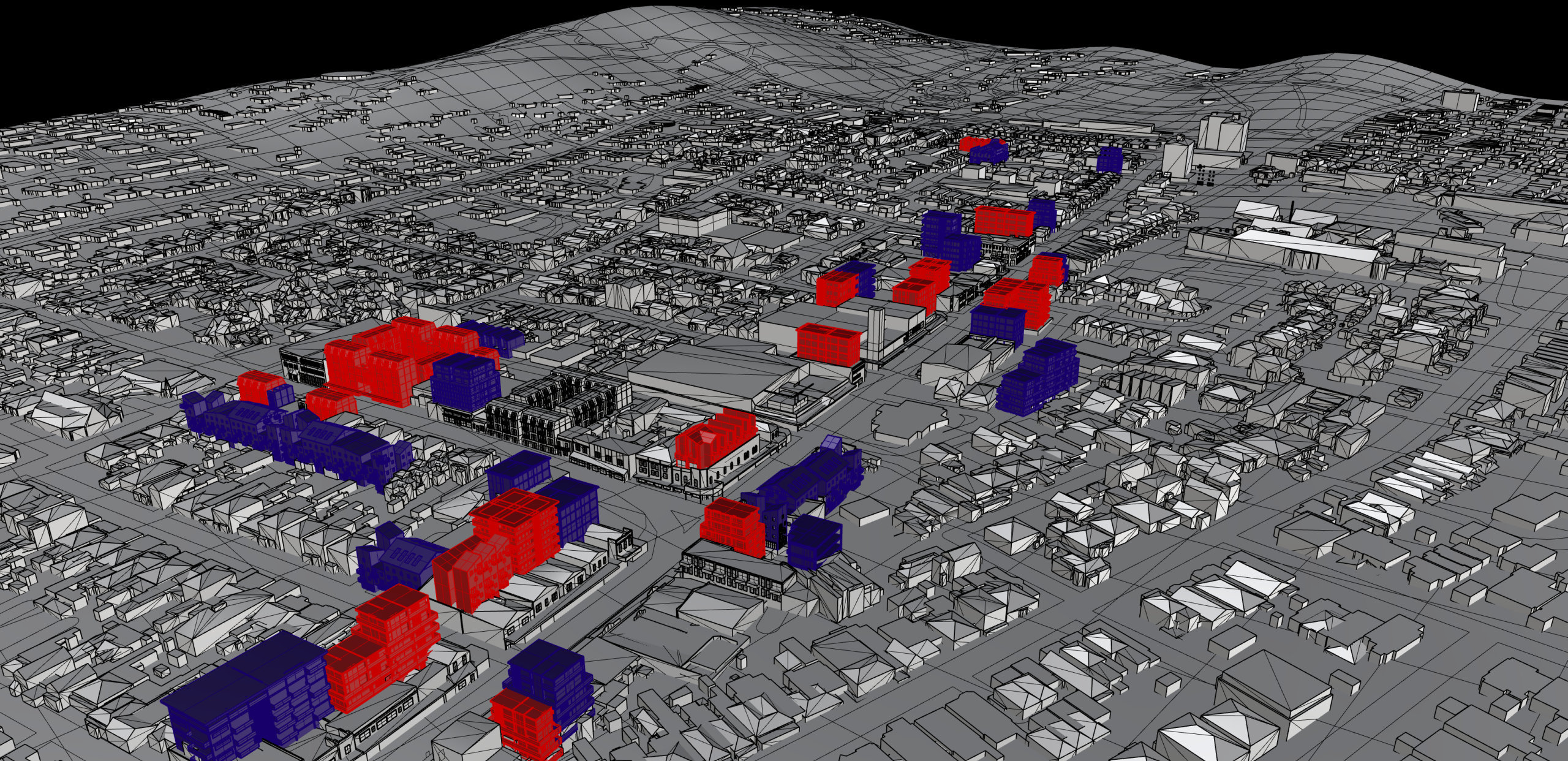


Central Newtown Looking South East

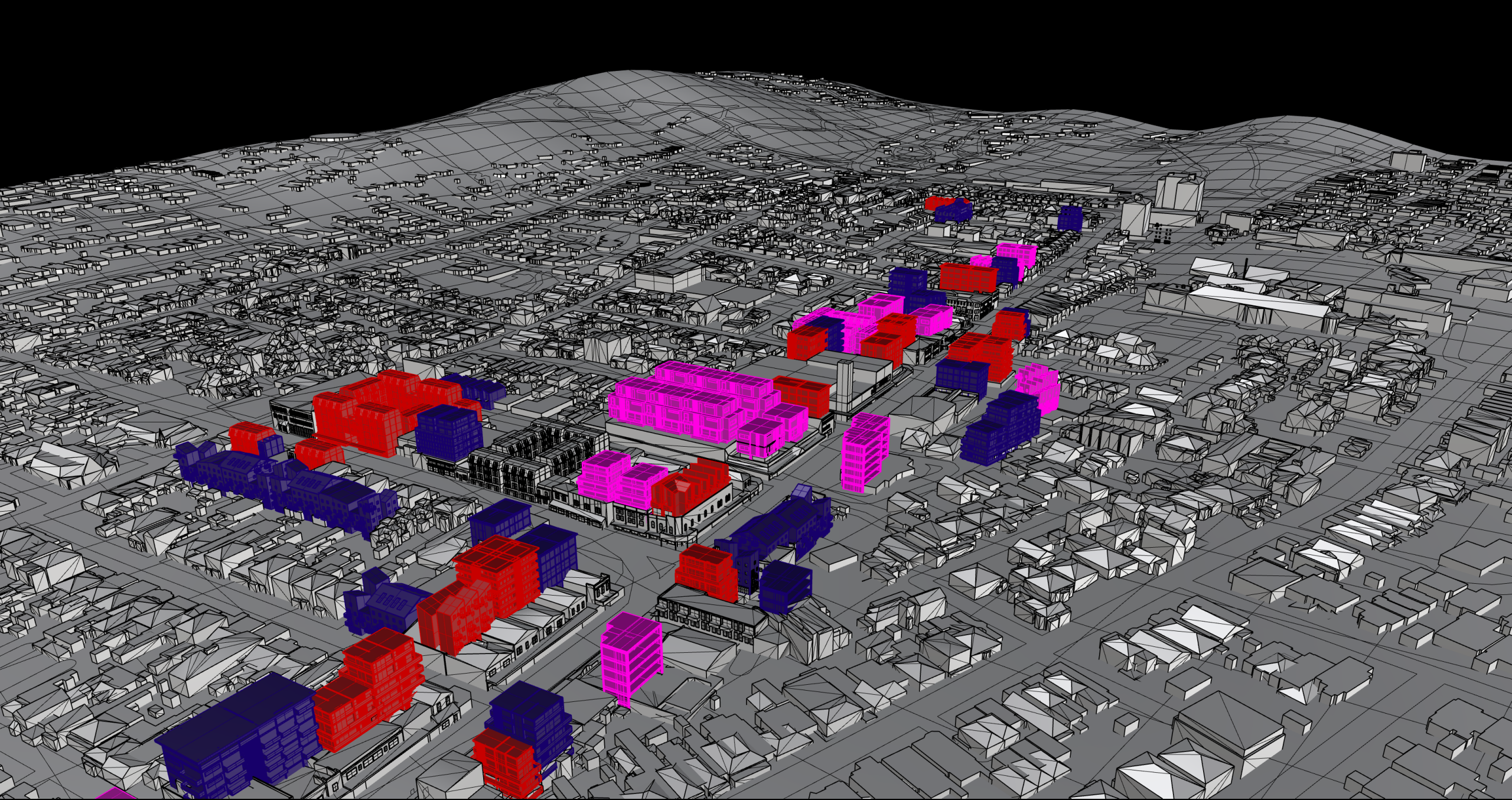
At Wilson and Constable Streets towards the Zoo



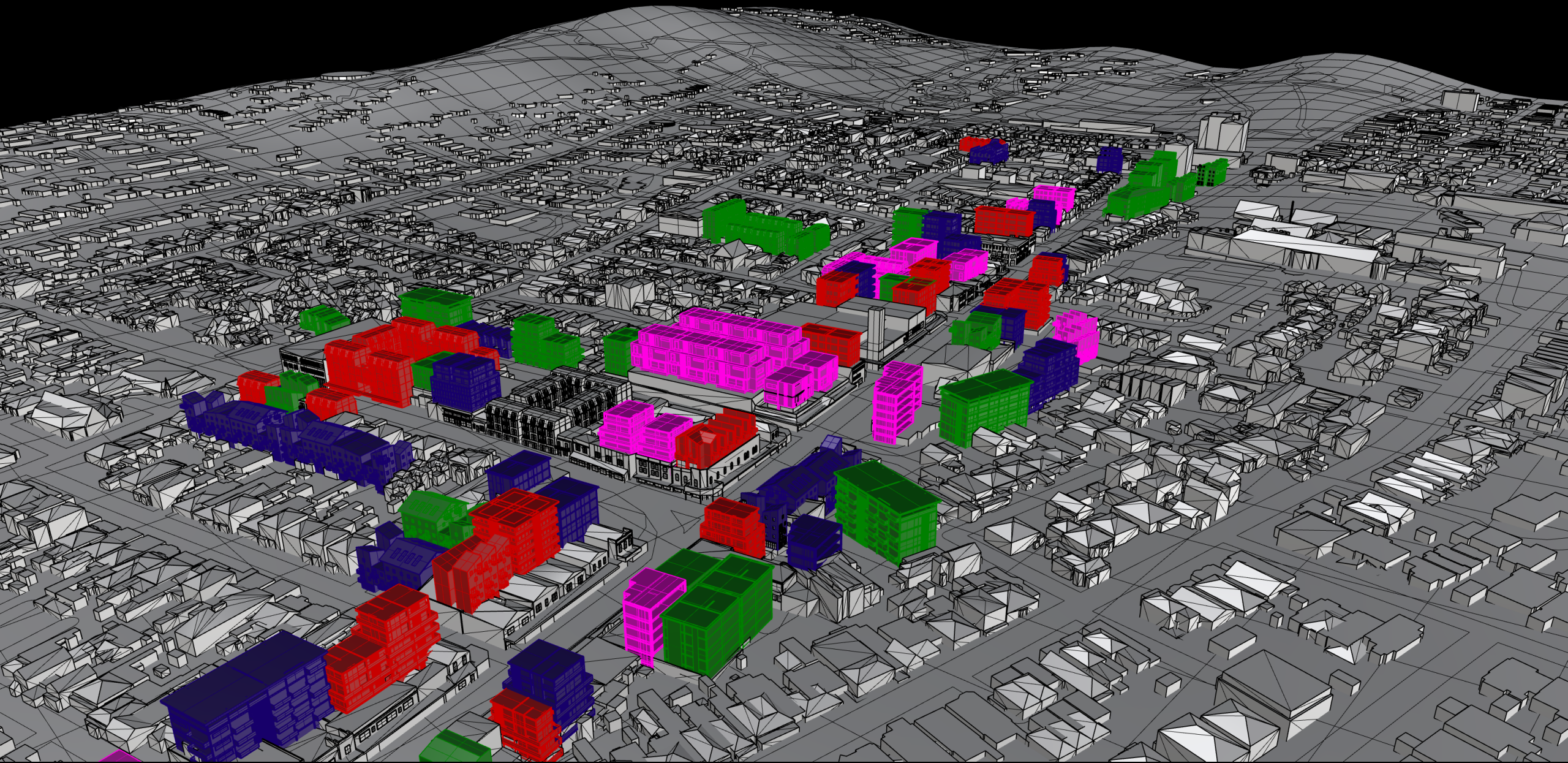
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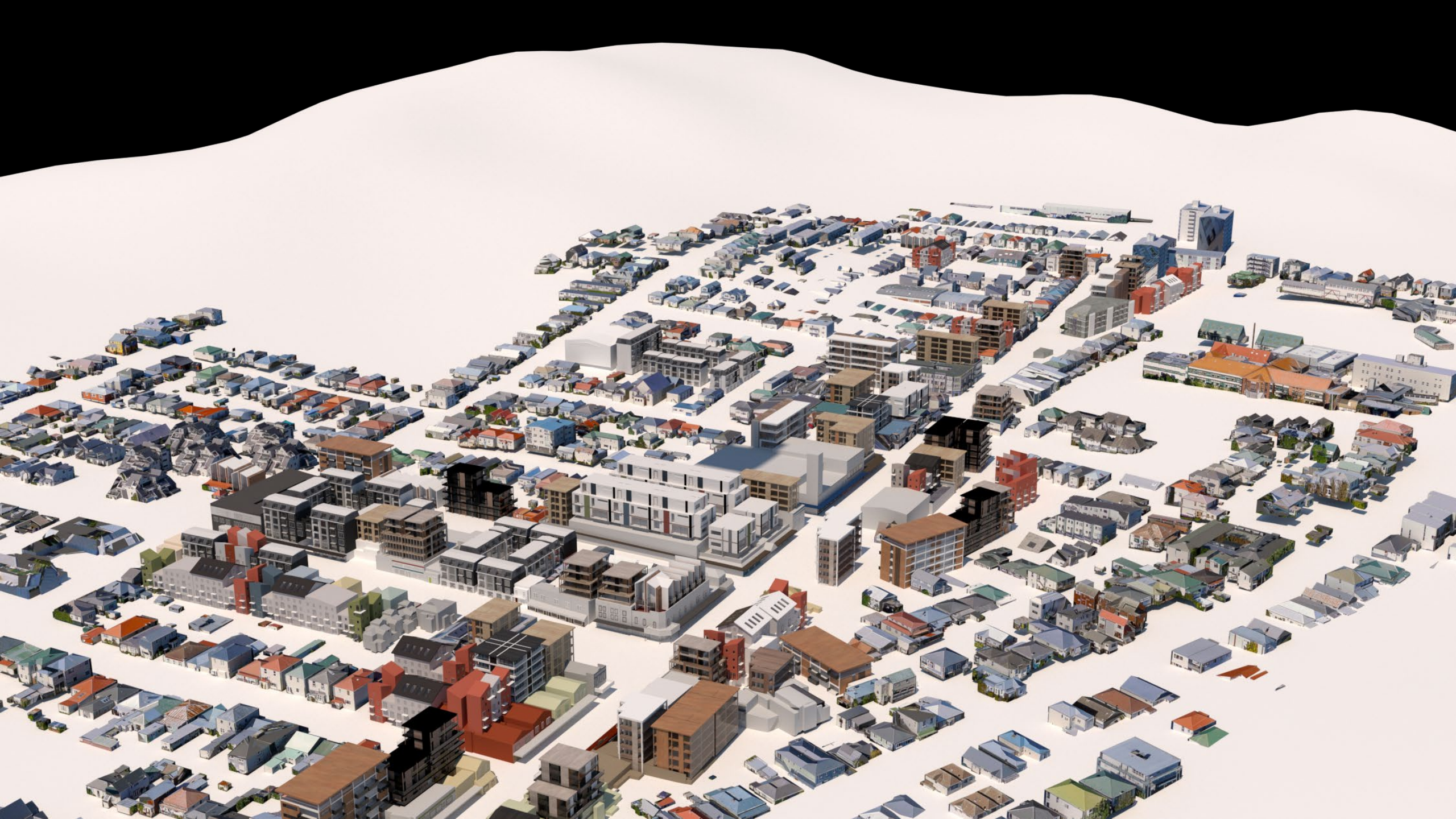
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In 40 years





Streetscape Close ups

Options of possible apartments

Central Newtown Looking North Along Riddiford Street



NEW WORLD
Newtown

NEWTOWN



In 10 years



In 20 years

Streetscape Close ups

Options of possible apartments

Adelaide Road at John St

With Wellington Hospital on the left









Travelling North

Russell Terrace past Rintoul Street to John Street











Newtown as it might be....

Renders and snapshots from
the 3D Digital Modelling of:



Key

Newtown Suburban Centre and Commercial Zoning ———

New Home Types:

- Two apartment units per floor**
= 12 homes on 6 storeys
= 10 homes on 5 storeys above shop / cafe
Each 84sqm apartment has windows on at least 2 opposite sides for sun and outlook
- Two apartment units per floor**
= 6 homes on 3 storeys
- Co Housing Apartment Complex**
= 20 homes on 5 storeys above shop / cafe
With open space & some shared amenities
- Town House Apartment Complex**
= 70 homes on 5 storeys above shop / cafe
= 56 homes on 4 storeys above shop / cafe
With central shared open space

Where new apartments are set back from the street it is to preserve character shopfronts and to allow more sun and light at street level

Mapping where over 2,000 homes could be built in the next 30+ years

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The Urban Activation Lab would like to thank:

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- Alan Clayton, Graduate Architect
- Historic Places Wellington
- Newtown Residents' Association
- The Research Trust of Victoria University of Wellington
- VUW School of Architecture
- Guy Marriage, Senior Lecturer
- Emelie Clarke, architecture student
- Sienna Wells, architecture student
- We Are Newtown