

Rebuilding the Edge

The Ferrovia dei Parchi

Project Team

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Scale

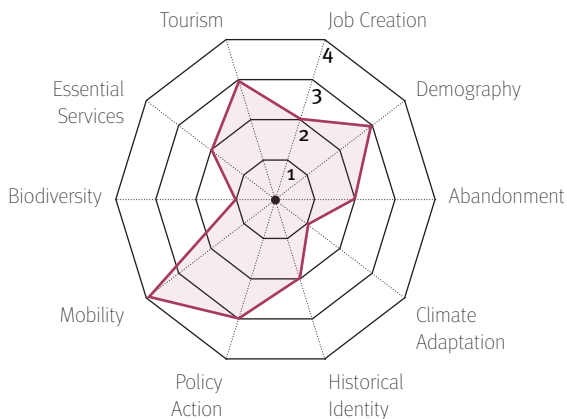
Town, Public Space

Location

Castel di Sangro



A Hub Under Development



- 1 Not addressed
- 2 Somewhat addressed
- 3 Minor focus area
- 4 Major focus area

Castel di Sangro, is a small city of approximately 6,000 residents in the region of Abruzzo. It serves as a center for surrounding towns that provides educational, medical and other basic services. It is also a resource center for touristic and seasonal recreation in the area. Stakeholders in the city mentioned that during peak seasons the population of Castel di Sangro can rise to over 30,000 seasonal residents.

The city is currently in the process of re-configuring a train station to connect two rail lines in a single point and remove rail lines that divide the station from the city today. The station is currently served by the seasonal Ferrovia dei Parchi, which links to the Roma–Pescara regional service, and will soon be served by the Ferrovia Sangritana that will take travelers down to the Adriatic sea. These opportunities raise questions about how Castel di Sangro can prepare for more visitors and better serve current commuters.

After attending meetings with stakeholders and walking the city by foot, the team identified opportunities to connect the town’s main transport access points—the bus plaza, the hospital’s bus stop, and the train station—to the broader urban fabric. The project explores potential interventions at both the urban and architectural scale that can contribute to this. The team focused on the activation of unused spaces, prioritizing better pedestrian traffic that responds to local and regional programmatic needs, and maintains the city’s traditional urban and architectural character.



Castel di Sangro is particular because of its geographical location: a central point in Abruzzo, midway between the Mediterranean and Adriatic seas, atop snowy mountains with ski slopes, but also an hour away from the beach. Castel di Sangro is a service town that many nearby towns depend upon, and remains a point of passage for freight just like it was centuries ago.

—Castel di Sangro
Stakeholder

Existing Everyday Routes

- A** Bus Station–Town Center (15 minutes)
- B** Bus Station–Train Station (15 minutes)

Everyday Routes Under Development

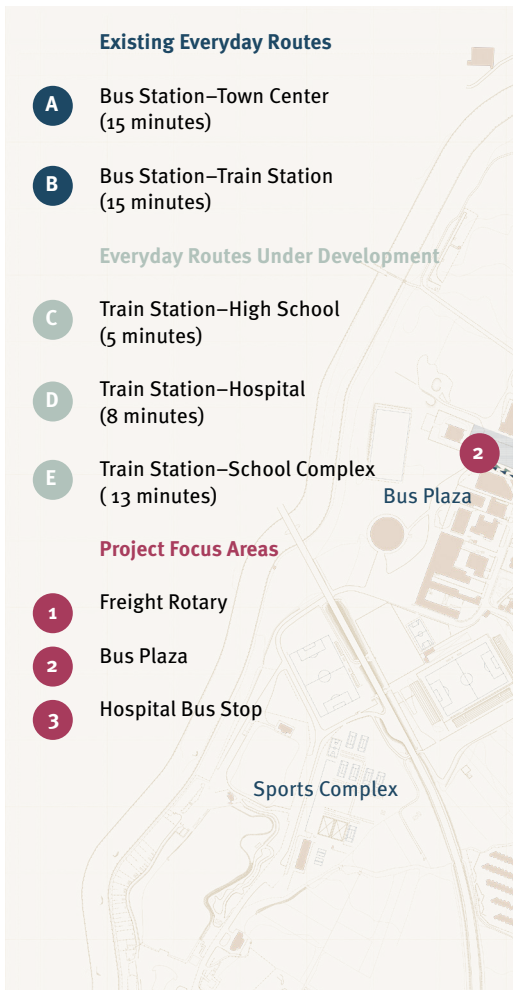
- C** Train Station–High School (5 minutes)
- D** Train Station–Hospital (8 minutes)
- E** Train Station–School Complex (13 minutes)

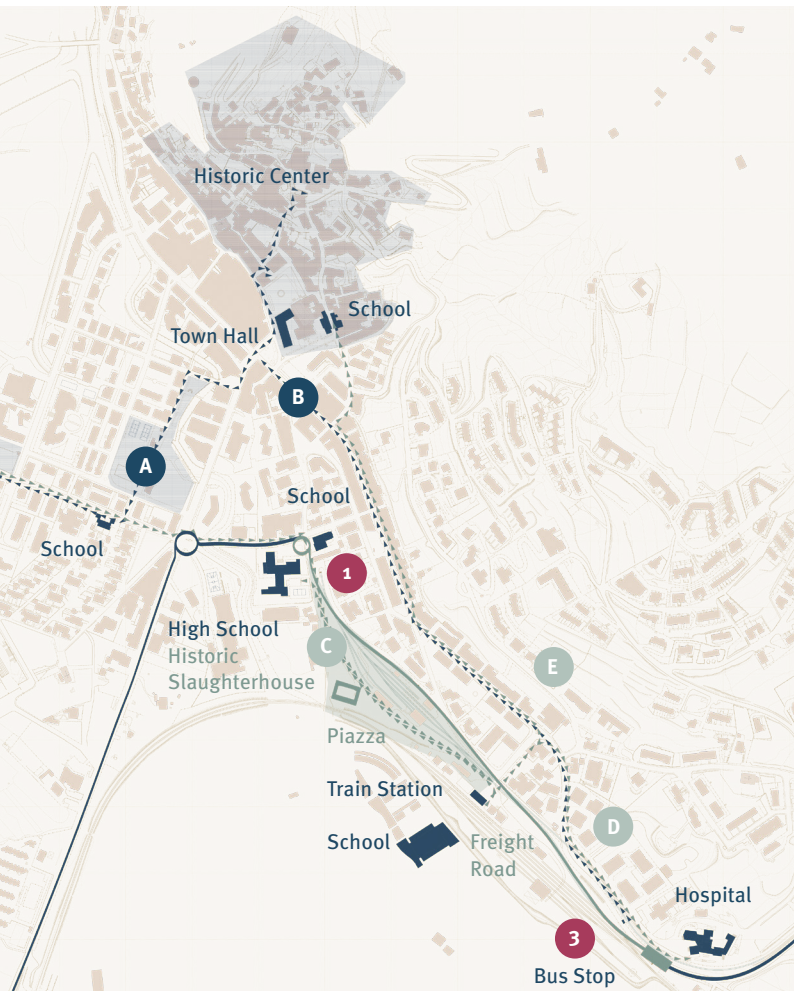
Project Focus Areas

- 1** Freight Rotary
- 2** Bus Plaza
- 3** Hospital Bus Stop

Castel di Sangro currently has several proposed and under construction projects, including a new pedestrian path that connects schools to a new bus station, and faster routes from the train station to key areas of the city.

These projects are all in preparation of linking Castel di Sangro to returning railroad traffic. Even though rail services will be touristic, there is desire to use these initiatives to catalyze passenger service in the near future.





Historic Center

Town Hall

School

B

A

School

School

High School
Historic
Slaughterhouse

1

C

Piazza

Train Station

School

Freight
Road

E

D

Hospital

3

Bus Stop

overview



Project

**Ferrovia dei Parchi
Historic Train Line**

**Sangritana
Historic Train Line**

Train Station Hub

**Rotary to Redirect
Freight Traffic**

Culinary Academy

**Bike Path to the
Adriatic Sea**

Piazza

**Rebuilt Schools and
Bus Stops**

Legend

- Existing Key Areas
- Key Areas Under Development
- ⋯ Existing Everyday Pedestrian Routes
- ⋯ Proposed Everyday Pedestrian Routes

Castel di Sangro Project Pipeline

Description	Status
Historic seasonal rail line run by Fondazione FS Italiane between Sulmona and Carpinone	Complete
Historic rail line to be run by Ferrovia Sangritana between Castel di Sangro and the Adriatic	Under Construction
Hub connecting two historic train stops at a single point, removing rails that obstructs city connection	Under Construction
New road adjacent to railway and rotary to redirect passing freight traffic away from the historic center	Under Construction
Adaptive reuse of an old slaughterhouse for a cooking school by local 3-star Michelin chef	Under Development
Underused rural road transformed into a cycling route down to the Adriatic (users can return up the Apennines using the Ferrovia Sangritana)	Under Development
3-section plaza that connects the train station to the slaughterhouse, a high-school and other nearby services	Under Development
Upgraded town schools and increased accessibility through new school bus stops closer to the train station	Under Construction

Observing the Town



The team conducted tours and site visits in Castel di Sangro to understand the environment, talk with local residents and see projects under development



fieldwork



The team met with the mayor and local council members at the municipality's office to learn about the history of the town and its current planning efforts



Observed an urban environment lacking in quality adjacent to railroad infrastructure





The team also saw a lot of construction projects in progress and other services under implementation to improve livability in the town



The team saw a deficient relationship between new buildings and their adjacent urban/street quality. Even though this was otherwise present in historic areas of the city, the center was poorly signaled and hard to find

How can Castel di Sangro build upon its historic urban and architectural traditions to improve the urban quality of recent or upcoming public spaces and streets?

Analyzing Key Urban Junctures

The team examined three key locations in the town related to mobility and accessibility. They sketched the areas, outlined existing conditions and documented issues with these spaces.



1 Freight Rotary

A new rotary to help redirect passing freight traffic and other trucks away from the historic center



2 Bus Plaza

The main stop for all buses to enter and exit Castel di Sangro

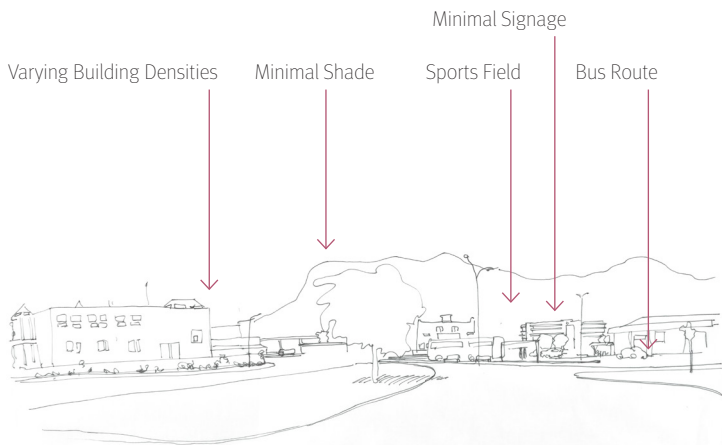


3 Bus Stop

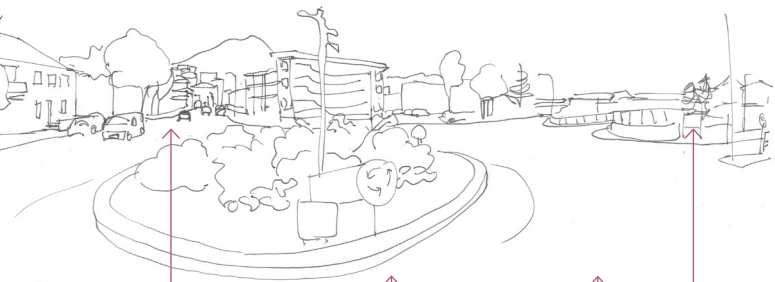
The closest bus stop to the hospital, which is far and difficult for pedestrians to access, particularly during winter



1 Freight Rotary

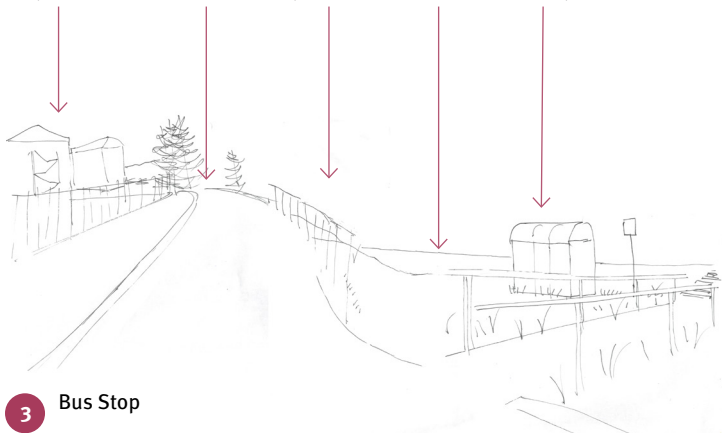


2 Bus Plaza



Crosswalk Distant from Intersection Lacking Bus Route to Train Car Routes Park

Hospital Car Dominated Road Sports Field Bus Route Bus Stop



3

Bus Stop



Brainstorming Tactical Interventions



1 Freight Rotary

Liner Building

Excess Growth Removed

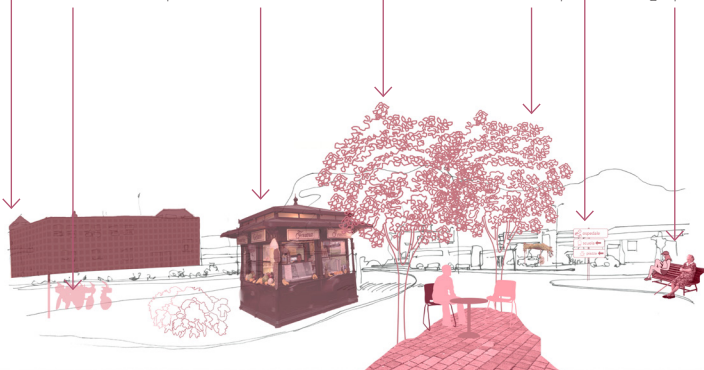
Improved Signage

New E-Bike Stop

Cafe Kiosk

Diversified Landscape

Resting Spots

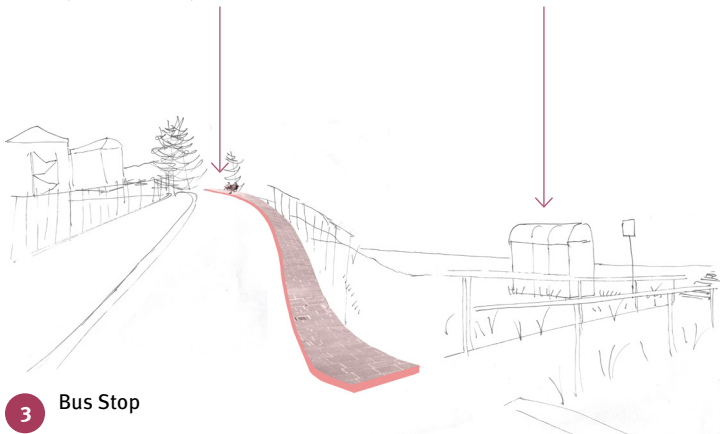


2 Bus Plaza



Crossing Lights

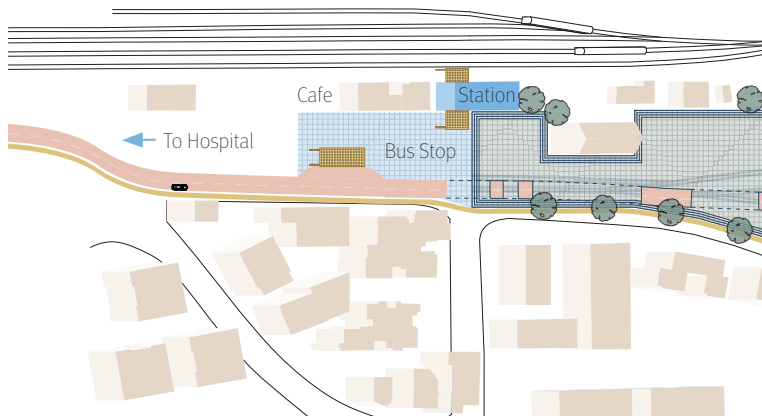
Bus Stop Closer to Hospital Crosswalk Closer to Intersection Bus Route to Train Station

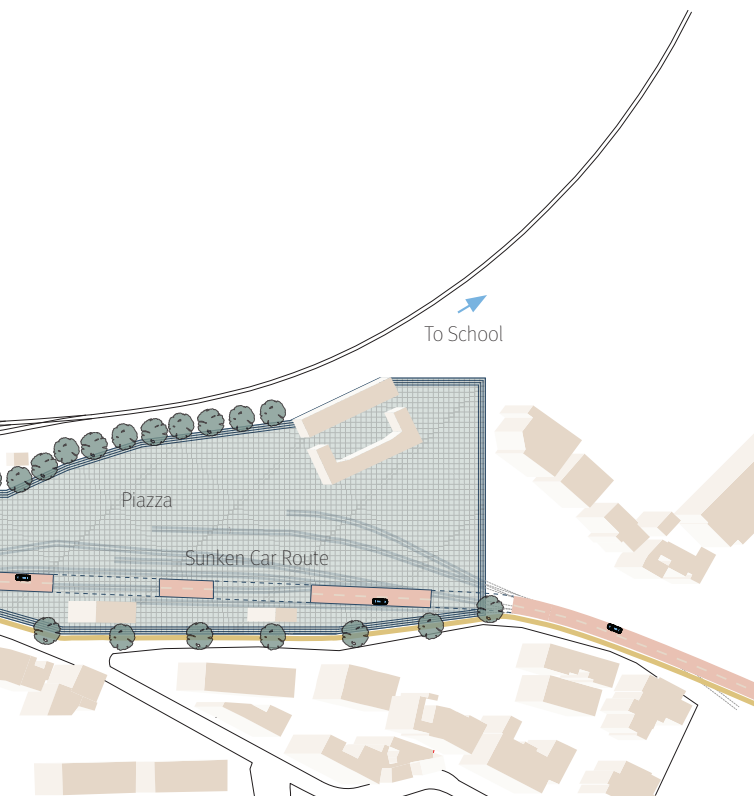


3 Bus Stop

Re-imagining the Station Plaza

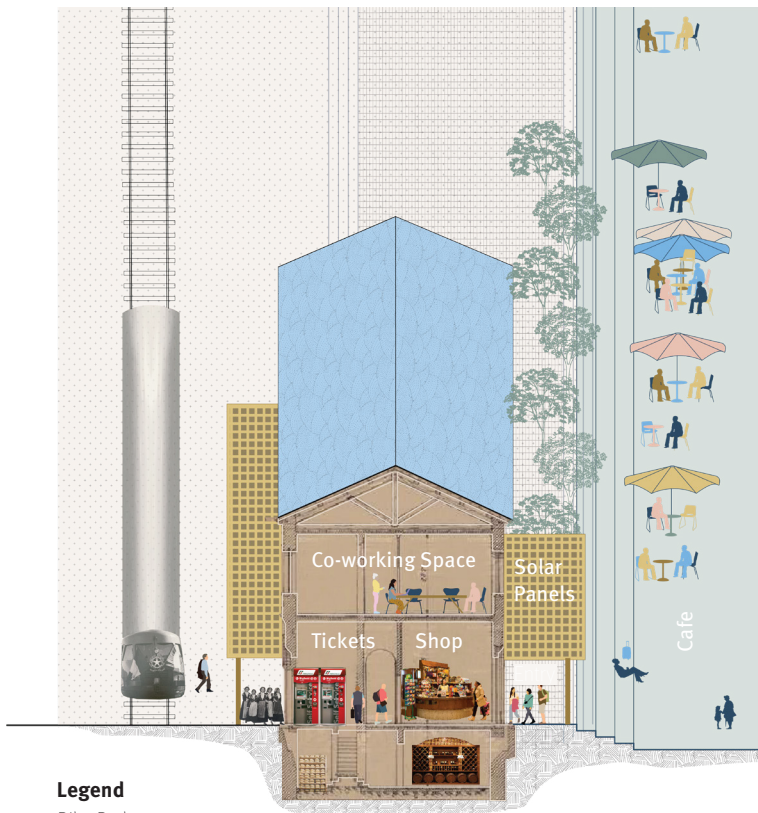
Reconnecting the Ferrovia dei Parchi historical line with the Sangritana historical line and building the connection of the two railroads at the Castel di Sangro train station has been one of the major projects of the town. The team explored how one might envision the train station's connection with the proposed pedestrian plaza and other programs brought together by this urban space.





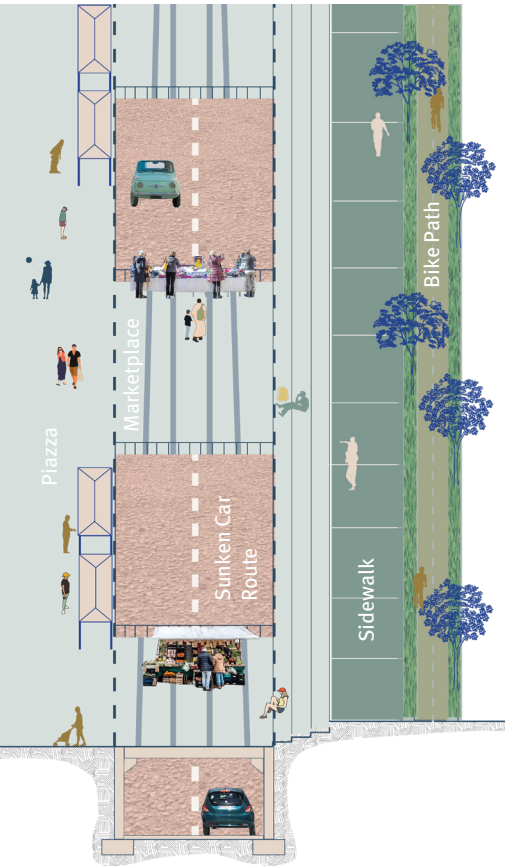
proposal

Proposed Train Station Cross Section



Legend

- Bike Path
- Sunken Car Route
- Train Station
- Plaza
- Solar Canopy



This cross section illustrates how the Castel di Sangro train station and nearby plaza could be revitalized

Moving Forward



1. Develop a manual of architectural and urban best practices based on examples in history city center
2. Present manual to local authorities and discuss its importance for future touristic development in the city
3. Engage engineers working on ongoing programmatic interventions to affect their impact on urban quality

An Issue of Urban Quality

When the team arrived in Castel di Sangro, they thought that they were walking into yet another town undergoing severe demographic and socio-economic distress. However, they discovered that Castel di Sangro was actually a local hub where, despite continued emigration of younger generations, local migration from smaller nearby towns and an active tourist economy fed the city. This was enhanced by an administration clever at intercepting funding for infrastructural interventions that can increase the viability of the private and business life of citizens of the small city. Some citizens described that well-being was supported by subsidies to ski stations nearby that have never been run properly or profitably by operators, but nonetheless the team felt Castel di Sangro was in a favorable position that could help it reactivate the territory more broadly.

Seeing major public works in the way—olympic pools, modified rail tracks, public spaces, roads and tunnels—the team realized that the need was not to devise catalytic programs, but rather understand ways in which these ongoing interventions could be reconsidered to maximize urban quality for residents and urban character for visitors that seek out Castel di Sangro as a place for leisure, sport and family time.

It seemed to the team that the socio-economic project was well underway in Castel di Sangro, and more strategic design operations where the most relevant contribution that they could maximize the relationship between public funds spent and aspirational community goals achieved.

Workshop

Liminal, Associazione di Promozione Sociale

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MIT Digital Structures Group

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