

The Floating Grid



PAEGA BUILDING

Office Building
Thessaloniki, Greece
15.000 m²
Architectural Design
Adaptive Reuse
Completed
2024-2026

South view of PAEGA, with the city of Thessaloniki in the background.







The architectural proposal transforms the historic PAEGA building in the Port of Thessaloniki into a contemporary mixed-use business center that combines offices with commercial spaces. Constructed between 1927 and 1928 and extending over approximately 15,000 m², the former warehouse and light-industrial building is preserved through a comprehensive programme of restoration, structural reinforcement, energy upgrading and functional reorganisation. The intervention retains the building's characteristic typology, geometric order, central passage and recognisable industrial identity, while adapting it to contemporary standards of use, comfort and environmental performance.

Positioned at the meeting point between Thessaloniki and its waterfront, the building maintains a direct relationship with both the urban fabric and the sea. The proposal responds to this dual orientation through two symmetrical contemporary stoas: one facing the city and the other facing the port. These covered spaces extend the building towards its surroundings, encourage movement and gathering around its perimeter, and allow visitors and occupants to experience the two contrasting aspects of its setting.





Top view of PAEGA and its context



West view

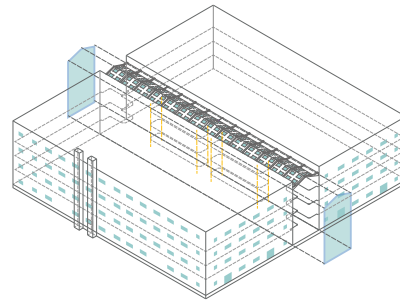
Before & After



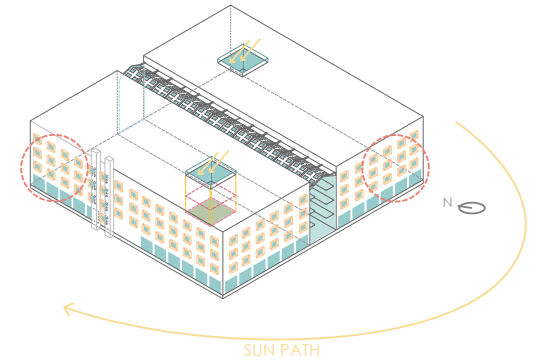
The design is developed around the concept of “exelixis”, the ancient Greek word for evolution. Rather than concealing the building’s past, the proposal introduces new architectural elements that reinterpret its original characteristics in a contemporary language. The historic structure and the new interventions remain clearly distinguishable, yet form a unified composition that respects the heritage of the port while preparing the building for future patterns of occupation.



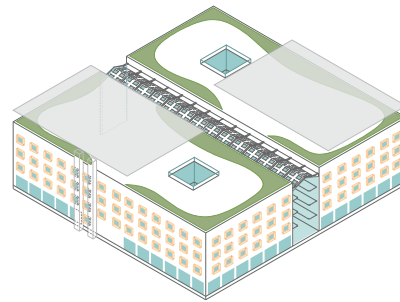
The transformation is based on a balanced dialogue between the historic structure and the contemporary interventions. Rather than concealing or replacing the building's past, the proposal preserves its original typology, principal geometric organisation, central atrium passage and industrial identity, while reinterpreting these features through a new architectural language. The contemporary stoas recall the perimeter canopies of the former industrial building, while their lighter material expression contrasts with the darker existing façades. This distinction allows the new elements to remain clearly recognisable without dominating the historic structure. Similarly, the perforated grid applied to the new pergolas reflects the square openings of the central atrium roof slab, creating a consistent design language that connects the building's past with its contemporary transformation.



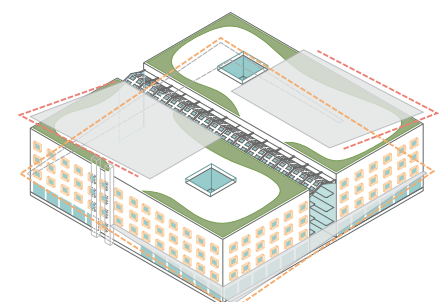
Preservation of the existing structure and the central stoa. Addition of curtain walls in the ends. Re-establish the skylights of the roof.



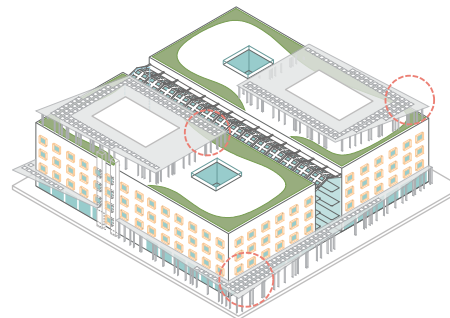
Natural lighting and ventilation. Enlarge the openings and open up the ground floor. 2 new atriums in symmetrical places.



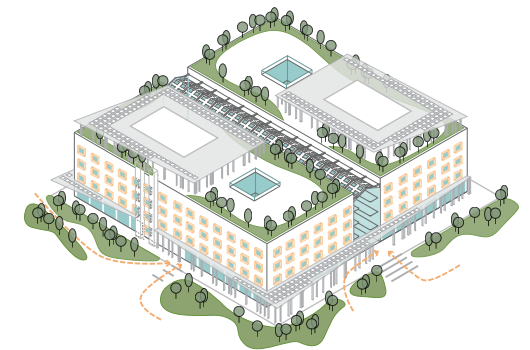
Activation of the roof. Small building volume, semi-open multifunctional spaces, sun-protected areas. Roof-garden.



Architectural refurbishment. Metal structure at the ground level. Passive sustainable design. Offset borders and acuted angles. Symmetrical design along both vertical axes.



Unifying elements. Repetition of Stoa's roof pattern. Voids and blinds for maximum exploitation of natural sunlight.



Unifying elements. Smooth flow of pedestrian movement and indication of the entrances. Enrichment of natural elements. Planting areas at outdoors spaces, atriums and roof.



Building view highlighting the ground floor canopy

Sustainability is approached as an integrated architectural and technical strategy rather than as an isolated technological feature. The decision to restore and reuse the existing building preserves its cultural, material and architectural value while extending the life of a structure approaching a century of operation. Repairing and strengthening the existing fabric instead of replacing the building with an entirely new construction forms the foundation of the project's environmental strategy. The restoration is combined with functional flexibility and technical upgrading, enabling the historic structure to respond to contemporary requirements while remaining relevant over time.

At ground-floor level, two symmetrical pergolas conceived as contemporary stoas form a permeable outer layer around the historic building, providing shade, weather protection and comfortable spaces for circulation and gathering. Their light, fluid expression contrasts with the darker existing façades, making the upper volume appear to float while strengthening the building's connection with the surrounding public space. A perforated grid, inspired by the square openings above the central atrium, is repeated across the ground- and roof-level structures, creating a unified architectural language and filtering daylight into shifting patterns of light and shadow.

The central atrium passage is preserved as one of the building's defining spatial elements and enhanced through new curtain walls, roof glazing and additional upper-floor atriums that bring natural light deep into the office spaces. Electrically operated roof windows support ventilation, while fixed external aluminium louvers regulate solar exposure by admitting reflected light during winter and limiting intense summer radiation. Together, these measures improve visual comfort, reduce glare and overheating, and decrease dependence on artificial lighting and mechanical cooling. The windows, curtain walls and skylights are designed as integrated aluminium systems with high levels of airtightness, watertightness, wind resistance, acoustic performance and mechanical reliability, supporting stable interior conditions and protecting the building within the demanding port environment. This coordinated approach to environmental performance, occupant comfort and adaptive reuse has contributed to the project's LEED Gold certification.

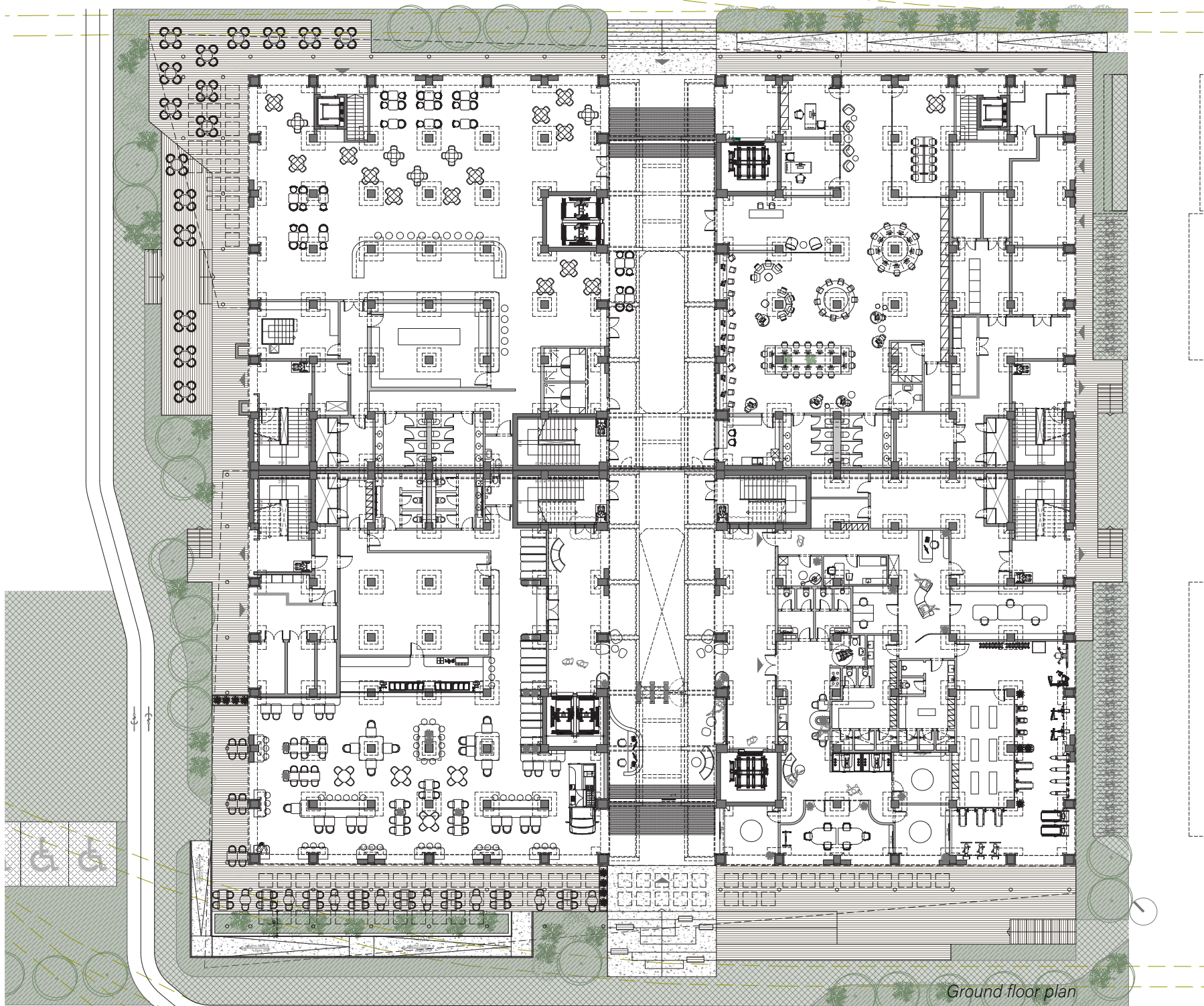




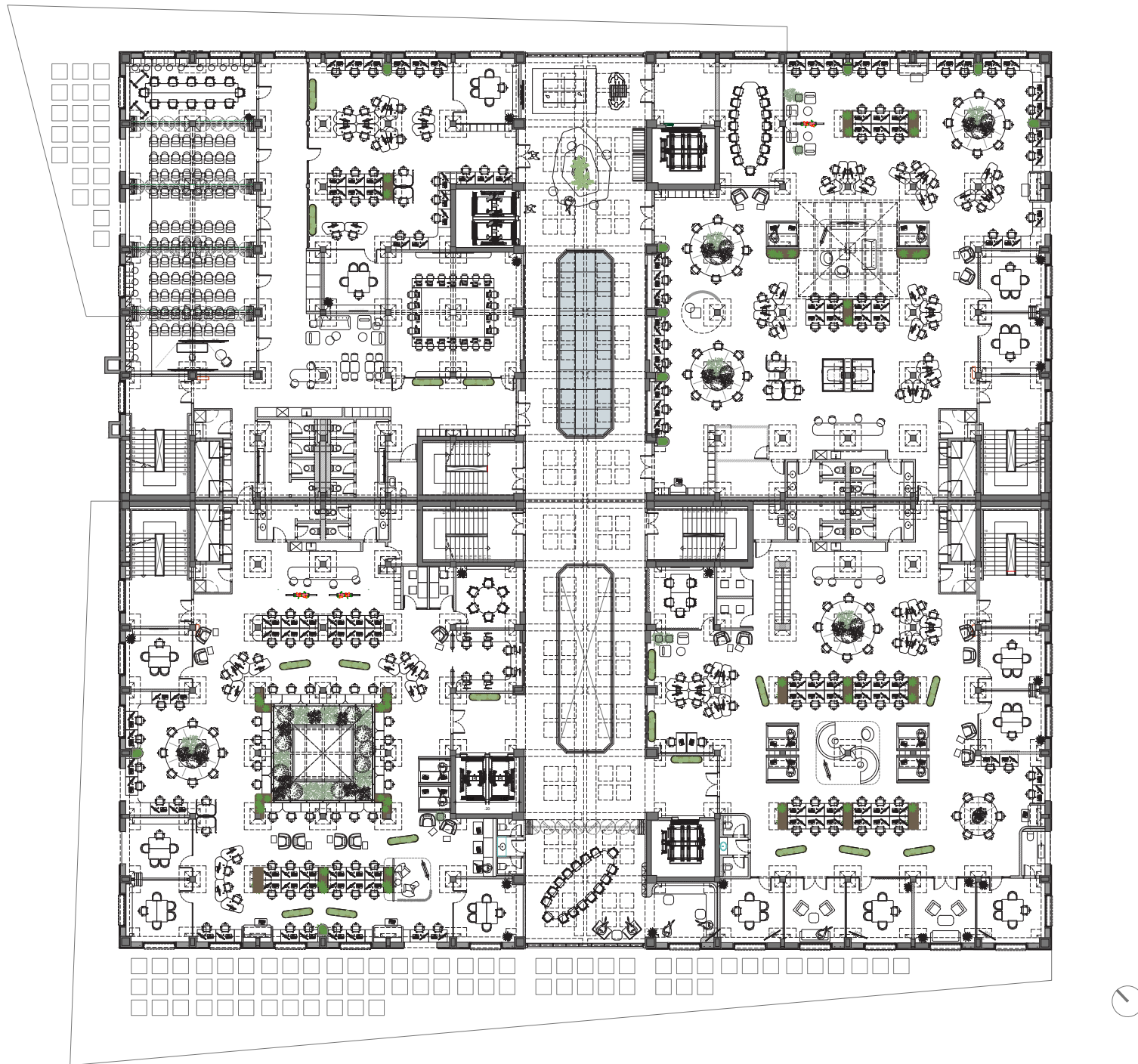
South façade in morning view



South façade in night view



Ground floor plan



Third floor plan

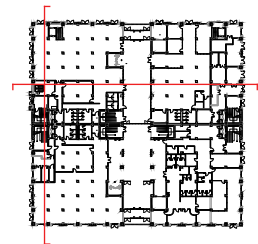


Transverse section



Longitudinal section

The central atrium passage, one of the building's defining spatial elements, is preserved and enhanced through the introduction of new glazed surfaces. Curtain walls at its ends and horizontal roof glazing allow natural light to penetrate deep into the building, creating a welcoming interior environment. The upper floors are organised as a flexible business hub, with additional atriums ensuring that the office areas receive sufficient daylight.





Upward view of the atrium



View of the atrium

The central atrium passage, one of the building's defining spatial elements, is preserved and enhanced through the introduction of new glazed surfaces. Curtain walls at its ends and horizontal roof glazing allow natural light to penetrate deep into the building, creating a welcoming interior environment. The upper floors are organised as a flexible business hub, with additional atriums ensuring that the office areas receive sufficient daylight.

Fixed external aluminium louvers, extensive glazing, atriums and roof openings work together to maximise natural light while controlling solar exposure. By admitting reflected daylight in winter and limiting intense summer radiation, the system reduces glare, overheating, cooling demand and reliance on artificial lighting. The windows, curtain walls and skylights are designed as integrated aluminium systems with high levels of airtightness, watertightness, wind resistance, acoustic performance and mechanical reliability, supporting energy efficiency, stable indoor conditions and long-term protection within the demanding port environment.

Interior view





The upper floors are organised as a flexible business hub capable of responding to different tenants, organisational models and future requirements. Movable glass partitions, folding partitions, sliding systems, raised floors and multi-zone climate-control installations allow office layouts and building services to be reorganised without extensive alterations to the structural frame or external envelope. This adaptability extends the building's functional life and allows its internal organisation to evolve over time. It also reduces the need for future demolition, material replacement and large-scale construction work when new spatial requirements arise.

Sustainability is approached as an integrated architectural and technical strategy rather than as an isolated technological feature. The decision to restore and reuse the existing building preserves its cultural, material and architectural value while extending the life of a structure approaching a century of operation. Repairing and strengthening the existing fabric instead of replacing the building with an entirely new construction forms the foundation of the project's environmental strategy. The restoration is combined with functional flexibility and technical upgrading, enabling the historic structure to respond to contemporary requirements while remaining relevant over time.



The transformation of the PAEGA building creates a contemporary business and social destination while preserving the industrial heritage of Thessaloniki's port. Through the concept of "exelixis", the project establishes a balanced relationship between past and future, using contemporary additions to reveal and strengthen the character of the historic structure rather than replace it. The new stoas, perforated grid, roof terrace, naturally illuminated atriums and adaptable interior spaces form a coherent architectural identity that responds to the city, the sea and the changing needs of the building's users. Combined with the restoration of the existing fabric, the energy-efficient envelope and the wider sustainability strategy, these interventions ensure that the building remains functional, resilient and relevant over time.

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