The Mahler 4 Office Tower is located in a 160,000-square-meter (1,722,225-square-foot) mixed-use development in Amsterdam’s Zuidas district, an ambitious urban regeneration project located approximately halfway between the city center and Schiphol Airport. The master plan mandated a specific zoning envelope for each building in the development, resulting in the traditional base, shaft, and crown structure of high-rise buildings, here angled in plan to yield a more dynamic urban composition. Rafael Viñoly Architects’ design sought to reinvent this tripartite building structure, unifying the three tower volumes into a singular, dynamic composition through the use of an exterior stair and vertical aluminum mullions.

Subtracting a narrow, spiral volume from the building mass to animate each elevation, the exterior fire escape wraps the structure and enlivens the façades. This staircase provides a fair-weather alternative to the two elevator cores and creates exterior spaces that office workers can use for informal gatherings, or that can be programmed as small gardens and outdoor plazas.