

Community Housing Futures:

Co-Designing Permanent Supportive Housing Through a Trauma-Informed Lens

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introduction

Research Questions

How can the field of interior design address housing insecurity?

How can designers develop equitable co-housing models for urban populations?

How can the built environment contribute to improved health and emotional wellbeing?

Housing has become an industry, rather than a right, which has made it increasingly difficult for marginalized communities to obtain and sustain viable housing. Housing insecurity is an ongoing crisis that intersects with the built environment by presenting a unique list of needs that interiors programming and design could better address through trauma-informed methods. By examining the unique needs of people who have experienced the trauma of housing insecurity, new projects have the potential to provide not only secure shelter but also provide supportive services, programming, and design-based elements that can improve the quality of life for users.

Griffith Gardens is a permanent, supportive co-housing facility theoretically located in West Philadelphia. The purpose of this residence is to provide a collaborative-living option for individuals exiting transitional housing in the Philadelphia area who desire a community-based home that provides ongoing support for their individual needs. The three-story building includes community-facing amenities, support services, and 14 residential apartments.

The floor plan, programming, materials, and other design elements were created with the consideration of trauma-informed elements that research has shown can benefit the intended population of residents. Utilizing principles outlined by *Housing Resources for Homelessness*, this design was developed to identify and address various areas of trauma-informed care that could be implemented from an interior design perspective. *Griffith Gardens* aims to create a supportive, long-term housing solution for individuals who could benefit from exiting transitional housing into a community living scenario.

literature review

Introduction

As William Morris speculated in his 1884 essay *The Housing of the Poor*, "as long as there are poor people they will be poorly housed."¹ Marginalized communities require access to equitable housing practices, services, and resources to avoid being cycled into ongoing housing insecurity. Housing insecurity stems from a range of long-term issues that are deeply embedded within modern society. The issues and implications of housing insecurity are broad and far-reaching, encompassing a wide variety of scenarios. The failures of late-stage capitalism are perhaps the main culprits of this crisis that perpetuates harmful socioeconomic disparities.² This unjust system governs modern society, especially in the United States. As a result, we do not have adequate services for addressing critical issues around being housed. While this notion alludes to many greater systemic issues, we must begin to consider the possibilities for transformative housing justice despite colonialist capitalism that still dominates the Western world. We must begin to consider many greater systemic issues and how they came into being, as well as possibilities for transformative housing justice.³

¹ Morris, William. "The Housing of the Poor." *Selected Articles for Justice*, 1884. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1884/justice/15hous.htm>.

² Schafer, Ashley, and Amanda Reeser. "AFTER-THOUGHTS." *PRAXIS: Journal of Writing Building*, no. 5 (2003): 4-5. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24328916>.

³ Goetz, Edward G.. 2018. *The One-Way Street of Integration: Fair Housing and the Pursuit of Racial Justice in American Cities*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. ProQuest Ebook Central.

The built environment has evolved into a crucial axis for accessing modern resources and services. It should therefore be the responsibility of architects and designers to re-imagine our built environments as equitable places that serve to create a better world. The capitalist ideology that being housed is a privilege and not a right has presented the need for alternative housing futures such as institutional interventions and autonomous, grassroots alternatives. Perhaps it requires substantial risk to escape existing housing systems and to dream up a different kind of living. What is the future of housing for all people, regardless of circumstance and socioeconomic background?

Inequity in Built Environments

A crucial point of entry into housing justice is the recognition that inequity exists within our society due to systemic oppression. An important distinction, inequity refers to systemic, preventable issues whereas inequality refers to the unbalanced conditions caused by inequities.⁴ In relation to housing, inequality "begins when a line is drawn that separates inside from outside."⁵ The commodification of space, especially as determined by the

⁴ Global Health Europe. "Inequity and Inequality in Health." Global Health Europe, September 2, 2020. <https://globalhealtheurope.org/values/inequity-and-inequality-in-health/>.

⁵ Martin, Reinhold, Jacob Moore, and Susanne Schindler. "Defining Inequality." In *The Art of Inequality: Architecture, Housing, and Real Estate: a Provisional Report*, 18-30. New York, NY: Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture, Columbia University, 2015.

business of real estate development, assumes that land can always be owned and occupied and that being housed should function as a transaction. It is apparent, however, that this imperial practice in the modern real estate and rental market causes ongoing harm perpetuating inequality and therefore becomes part of larger systemic inequity.

The acknowledgement of this problem is not new. Various groups have been examining this difficult intersection of being housed and the complexity of obtaining housing under oppressive systems. While public housing exists in most places in the United States, accessing it proves to be a huge hurdle for many underserved groups.⁶ For those who do access public housing, it is often overcrowded and under-maintained. What makes it so difficult for low-income people to be housed?

One example of the challenges faced by those seeking affordable housing is seen in the 31-year process of a Mount Laurel, New Jersey public housing community from conception to completion. In 1969, a group of lower-income, predominantly minority residents joined forces to seek an affordable housing solution for their community. They hoped to build thirty-six units of affordable clustered townhomes. Consistent with the history of racial and socioeconomic bias in the United States, town officials quickly vetoed the proposal due to suburban zoning

policies.⁷ This denial produced a prolonged legal battle that resulted in the decision that the state of New Jersey had an obligation to meet the need for low-income housing, known today as the Mount Laurel Doctrine.⁸ It was not until 1997 that the local planning board finally approved plans and construction was completed in 2000.⁹ While this case did create change for New Jersey residents, the process of obtaining affordable housing is still tedious and inaccessible for many people.

It is important to note the role of built environments themselves in the quest for accessible, affordable housing. In the infamous case of the Pruitt-Igoe housing project in St. Louis, Missouri, many critics cite modernist architectural style and public assistance programs for being inherently problematic.¹⁰ This further stigmatized predominantly Black residents rather than addressing the deeper issues surrounding the failure of this project. According to scholars and former residents, the real reason for its failure was high levels of unemployment, economic depression, racial segregation, cutting corners in construction, and a lack of building maintenance.¹¹ Social and economic problems cannot be solved by prescriptive architectural endeavors alone. Instead, built environments must consider holistic solutions: the intersection of social, economic, and design-related implications to create equitable solutions for housing and other crucial services. A process-oriented

⁶ Goetz, 92.

⁷ Massey, Douglas S., Len Albright, Rebecca Casciano, Elizabeth Derickson, and David N. Kinsey. *Climbing Mount Laurel: the Struggle for Affordable Housing and Social Mobility in an American Suburb*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013.

⁸ Massey, 3.

⁹ Massey, 8.

¹⁰ Wendl, Nora. "Pruitt-Igoe, Now." *Journal of Architectural Education* 67, no. 1 (2013): 106–17.

¹¹ Martin, 61.

solution is to involve the communities these structures will serve in the design process.

Equitable Design Processes

Expanded design processes have become a critical tool for the mission of creating equitable housing and providing related services for marginalized groups. *Participatory design* and *co-design* are terms that refer to design processes that involve cross-disciplinary collaboration, often specifically including potential end users. When decision-making in the design process is decentralized from the hierarchical methods of more traditional processes, participation is encouraged and celebrated, which provides agency to end users.¹² This methodology provides expanded possibilities for an “architecture of justice” that is directly informed by the needs, desires, and dreams of the end user.¹³ Future of equitable housing services depends on the ability of architects, designers, and policy-makers to incorporate the actual needs and desires of housing insecure populations rather than prescribing solutions based on conjecture and presumptions.

¹² Sanoff, Henry. “Participatory Design Programming.” The SAGE Encyclopedia of Action Research, 2014.

¹³ Smith, Dianne P., Marina Veronica Lommerse, and Priya Metcalfe. *Perspectives on Social Sustainability and Interior Architecture: Life from the Inside*. Singapore: Springer, 2016.

¹⁴ “About Trauma-Informed Design.” Design Resources For Homelessness. <http://designresourcesforhomelessness.org/about-us-1/>.

It is imperative that stakeholders in housing-based projects recognize that housing-insecurity has likely caused trauma that could be addressed in design-based solutions that better serve the end user.¹⁴ Trauma can be caused by emotionally damaging or life-threatening events that cause long-term harm to mental, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual health.¹⁵ When approaching design-based solutions to housing insecurity, the physical, psychological, emotional, and cultural well-being of survivors must be considered through a trauma-informed lens.¹⁶ One method of identifying focus areas for trauma-informed design is to consider ontological categories described by Design Resources for Homelessness. They are:

- Dignity and Self Esteem
- Empowerment and Personal Control
- Security, Privacy, and Personal Space
- Stress Management
- Sense of Community
- Beauty and Meaning.¹⁷

Transitioning from not being housed to being housed is a process that requires sensitivity to the lived experiences of survivors. It is the responsibility of the creators of built environments to advocate for marginalized communities to ensure that these projects utilize all possible resources and

¹⁵ Bassuk, L. (2017). Universal Design for Underserved Populations: Person-Centered, Recovery-Oriented and Trauma Informed. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, 28(3), 896–914. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hpu.2017.0087>

¹⁶ Bassuk, 900.

¹⁷ Pable, Jill, and Anna Ellis. Rep. *Trauma-Informed Design Definitions and Strategies for Architectural Implementation*. Tallahassee, FL: Design Resources for Homelessness, 2016.

processes to transform the lives of recipients most equitably.

The research on co-design and trauma-informed design is relatively new and constantly expanding in practice, but related methods of evidence-based housing design have shown to be beneficial in several case studies. The Skid Row Housing Trust in Los Angeles is an organization that provides supportive housing for post-homeless populations with additional services for individuals with chronic physical and mental health conditions. Skid Row Housing Trust uses a Housing First Model, which is based on the idea that providing a secure home can serve as an initial catalyst towards safety, security, and health for the individual.¹⁸

The \$36 million New Genesis Apartments project was completed in 2012 and is a supportive housing complex including affordable housing units for low-income families and artists in addition to housing and support services for formerly unhoused people. The seed of this project questioned if architecture could play a supportive role in recovery. Killefer Flammang Architects and Collaborative House Interiors implemented a variety of health-centered approaches in the design. Open sight lines to a central courtyard provide visibility from offices and community areas, as well as lots of natural light. A balcony-style open circulation plan promotes exercise and community engagement for residents. Another innovative

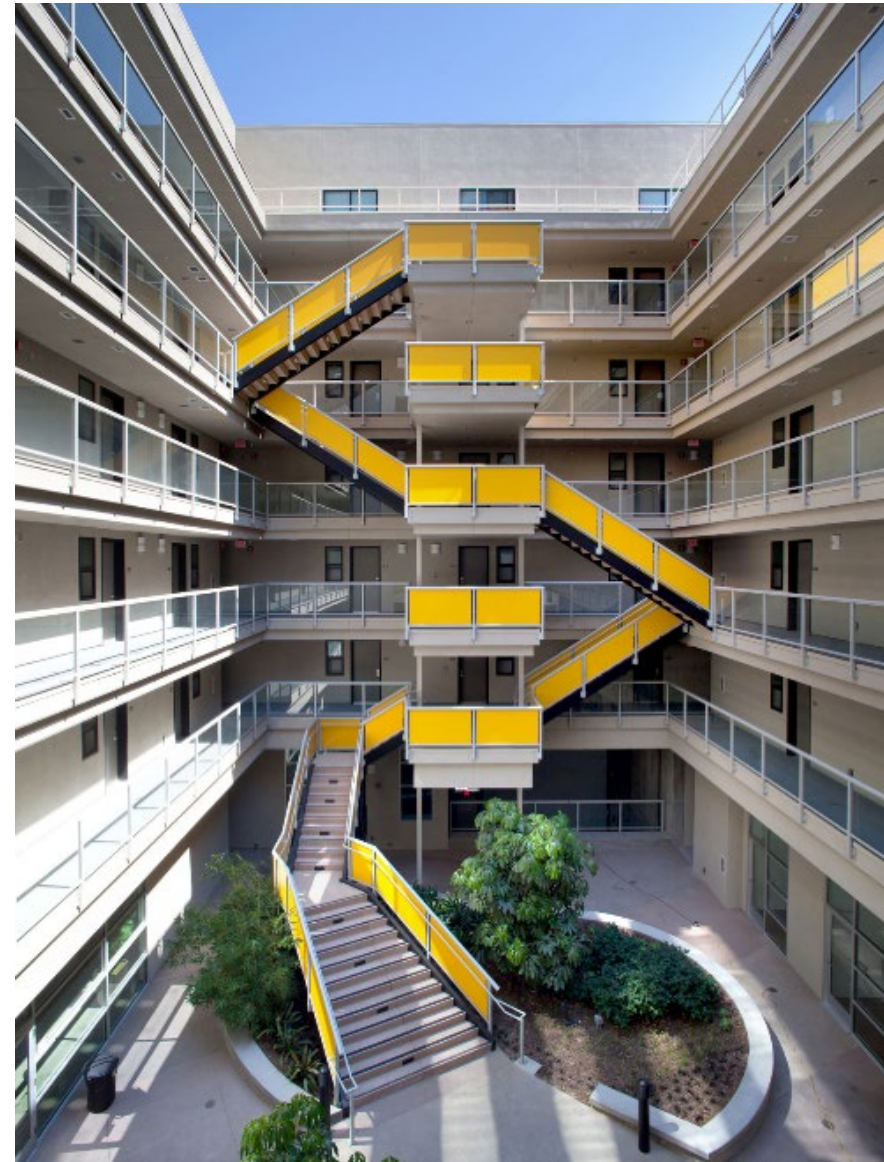


Figure 1: *The open sightlines of the New Genesis Apartments central courtyard encourage community interaction.* Photograph by Mary E. Nichols.

¹⁸ Haskins, Julia. "Housing First Model Gaining Momentum." *American Journal of Public Health* 108, no. 5 (05, 2018): 584.

approach in this project was scattering apartment types and people from different situations across the facility to avoid pockets of isolation for the elderly and chronically ill, since young families and artists also make up much of the resident population. Support services on-site include a health clinic, case management facilities, and mental health resources in addition to community-based amenities such as lounges, kitchens, and gardens.¹⁹



Figure 2: *The communal area interiors of New Genesis Apartments are carefully designed by Collaborative House Interiors.* Photograph by Mary E. Nichols.

From an interiors perspective, programming and design play a crucial role in making sure that supportive models are as successful as possible. At New Genesis Apartments, bare-bones, dormitory-style apartments are provided but it is unclear what support is provided to furnish units for people beyond the institutional furniture and appliances.²⁰ While the common areas and general programming are carefully considered, the blank slate of a studio apartment is likely a daunting starting point for individuals to cover their personal “Beauty and Meaning” needs.

Holistic, supportive approaches could be the future of permanent housing solutions for housing insecure populations.²¹ This approach does, however, rely heavily on government funding and resource allocation that still makes it inaccessible to many unhoused people across the United States. Additionally, housing insecure populations are not a monolith. While many houseless people are concentrated in urban areas, housing remains a challenge for marginalized people around the country.

¹⁹ “New Genesis Apartments,” 2016. http://designresourcesforhomelessness.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/LA_FINAL1_7_2017b.pdf.

²⁰ “New Genesis Apartments,” 18.

²¹ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, Health and Medicine Division, Board on Population Health and Public Health Practice, Policy and Global Affairs, Science and Technology for Sustainability Program, and Committee on an

Evaluation of Permanent Supportive Housing Programs for Homeless Individuals. “Permanent Supportive Housing: Evaluating the Evidence for Improving Health Outcomes Among People Experiencing Chronic Homelessness.” National Center for Biotechnology Information. National Academies Press (US), July 11, 2018. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/30148580>.



Figure 3: *New Genesis Apartments provides institutional furniture for living units without much added comfort or character.* Photograph by Mary E. Nichols.

Equitable Housing Futures

While systemic change and a dismantling of late-stage capitalism may be a dream of many for a true solution to housing insecurity, institution-based and grassroots methodologies that “subvert normative economics” might be our best hope for near-future transformation.²² Samuel Mockbee of the Auburn University School of Architecture Rural Studio believed that architects have a responsibility to challenge the status quo of how environments are built. Mockbee led groups of students in

²² Shafer, 5.

²³ Mockbee, Samuel. 1998. “The Rural Studio,” in *Architectural Design: Everyday and Architecture*.

socially engaged architecture projects in rural Alabama that not only produced functional built structures, but also provided students with a community-based learning approach. While this work was indeed made possible by the University, Mockbee strongly believed that architects should act on their ideas rather than waiting for politicians or corporations to lead.²³ For many Auburn students, their time at Rural Studio is their first encounter with poverty. Seeing hand-built shacks lacking adequate hygiene and electrical systems serves as an awakening for many.

The predominantly Black Alabamians that Rural Studio serves are often skeptical of the involvement of an institution based on the bias and neglect they have faced from other bureaucratic powers. Peanut Robinson, a long-time resident of Newbern, Alabama, was doubtful that architecture as a field had any sort of investment in the well-being of poor, rural communities.²⁴ While in this case, Rural Studio students and professors seemed to change Peanut’s mind about the role architecture can have, reliance on institutional funding brings up additional issues about the autonomy needs of housing-insecure populations.

²⁴ Douglas, Sam Wainwright., Sarah Ann. Mockbee, and Jack Sanders. “Citizen Architect Samuel Mockbee and the Spirit of the Rural Studio,” 2010. <https://www.amazon.com/Citizen-Architect-Samuel-Mockbee-Spirit/dp/B07G9N2TV8>.



Figure 4: *The Bryant Family's former shack*. Photograph by Andrea Oppenheimer Dean. Rural Studio: Samuel Mockbee and an Architecture of Decency. New York: Princeton Architectural Press.



Figure 5: *The rebuilt Bryant House, the first home completed by Rural Studio*. Photograph by Andrea Oppenheimer Dean. Rural Studio: Samuel Mockbee and an Architecture of Decency. New York: Princeton Architectural Press.

During the summer of 2020 amidst the coronavirus pandemic, protests for Black Lives, and growing political divisions, over 200 unhoused people occupied two separate encampments near Center City, Philadelphia. People who were struggling on their own joined together along with community organizers, clergy, food workers, and medical professionals to create a self-sustaining “neighborhood” of tents where they spent the summer demanding affordable housing—but also found shelter, security, and community. The result of these protests is an agreement with the City to repair 50 government-owned homes and develop a land trust of affordable housing options including two tiny home villages.²⁵ While this is indeed an unprecedented arrangement, many camp residents do not see this as a sustainable housing solution. The space is very limited, relies on city renovation and upkeep, and will take months, if not years, to complete. For people seeking a non-hierarchical community as a solution to being housed, perhaps investigating various ways of communal living can provide a solution.

Cohousing communities, formally developed in Denmark in the 1960s, loosely resemble traditional European villages with an area of private homes clustered around a common area. Households generally have independent incomes but do contribute to the community through tasks such as event-planning, childcare, and cooking. These intentional communities primarily exist in

²⁵ Scott, Emily. “Housing Protest Leaders, City Agree to Terms for Disbanding Parkway Encampment.” *WHYY*, October 13, 2020. <https://why.org/articles/housing-protest-leaders-city-agree-to-terms-for-disbanding-parkway-encampment/>.

Europe in this specific context, but this model of communal living has been adapted all over the world.²⁶ The social and economic benefits of this style of living appeal to many people looking to maintain a level of privacy but also become part of a larger group unit.

Communal living situations range from groups of young people living together to cut costs to fully planned, intentional communes. People who seek these housing options often do so to pursue lifestyles that they do not feel are possible under capitalist expectations of independent or familial living.²⁷ Radical queer collectives, feminist living environments, artist colonies, and hippie farms all represent groups that have sought community through alternative living arrangements.²⁸ Counter-culture cohabitation models often focus on autonomy and an escape from the confines of capitalism. More and more, however, communal meeting rooms and similar amenities are appearing in high-end apartments.²⁹ Communal living opportunities should not be reserved for off-grid farms or luxury developments, but rather could serve as a model for integrating intentional community care into housing solutions for housing-insecure populations.

²⁶ McCamant, Kathryn, Charles Durrett, and Ellen Hertzman. *Cohousing: a Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves*. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 2003.

²⁷ Manzella, Joseph C. *Common Purse, Uncommon Future: the Long, Strange Trip of Communes and Other Intentional Communities*. Santa Barbara, Calif: Praeger, 2010.

²⁸ Vider, Stephen. "The Ultimate Extension of Gay Community': Communal Living and Gay Liberation in the 1970s." *Gender & history* 27, no. 3 (November 2015): 865–881.

Preliminary Conclusions

Housing is a human right that has been commodified and transformed into a privilege rather than a right. Housing insecurity is a critical issue that will only continue to worsen if it is not addressed on a systemic level to guarantee safety and service to all people, regardless of circumstance. There are, however, solutions and processes on the horizon that show hope of making a real change for unhoused populations and improving access to housing and housing-related services. Equitable design processes that include end users in development is a growing pedagogy, but it needs firmer footing to become part of established design norms. Trauma-informed data and behavioral analyses should be considered when developing housing solutions, and interiors play a critical role in discovering effective programming and design solutions that enhance quality of life for residents.

Projects are being completed and people are being housed, as shown by several successful programs including the Skid Row Housing Trust and Rural Studio, but the need is still great for more funding, development, and creativity focused on housing. The future of housing will allow personal preference in the ways we seek shelter and community in a more expansive way than oppressive

²⁹ Sisson, Patrick. "In the Apartment Amenity Arms Race, Service and Technology Win Out." *Curbed*. Curbed, March 26, 2019.

<https://archive.curbed.com/2019/3/26/18281713/rent-apartment-amenity-residential-real-estate>.

systems currently allow. If we, as designers, can begin to explore the larger goals of equitable housing, perhaps we can work with communities to transform housing insecurity into housing security. Within the extremely urgent housing crisis, how do housing-insecure people locate and secure these various housing options? How can unhoused people transition into a housing model that is the best fit for them and not the only option available? These, and many other questions, will depend on the future of public policy, city planning, resource allocation, and the creation of built environments themselves.

I am interested in exploring alternative solutions to centralized supportive housing structures. The interior design and programming of permanent, supportive housing should incorporate trauma-informed care with an emphasis on building community relationships and providing holistic rehabilitation. Designers must advocate for equitable housing solutions that aim to not only provide inclusive wellness-based solutions, but also discover the pressure points of housing insecurity and work to dismantle it from design perspectives.

precedent

Butterfly House

Rural Studio at Auburn University

Mason's Bend, Alabama

Named for the angled roof structure that aids in rainwater collection

250-square-foot porch was built with large family gatherings in mind

Accessible features including optional ramp entry, wider doorways, and ADA bathroom dimensions

Built using salvaged wood from the demolition of a local historic church



precedent



L.I.L.A.C.

Low Impact Living

Affordable Community

Leeds, United Kingdom

A co-housing community of 20 households

Homes and land are managed by residents through a Mutual Home Ownership Society, a financial model that maintains affordability

Emphasis on eco-friendly lifestyle with the goal of 0-net carbon

Homes are built using ModCell, a panel timber wall construction method insulated with strawbales

Uses solar panels and thermal heating systems

case study



Kate's Place Project H.O.M.E.

(Housing, Opportunity, Medical Care, & Education)
Philadelphia, PA

Residential Units

Fully furnished

144 units total, 104 for low-income households
40 efficiency apartments with integrated
support services for adults

Includes 5 for chronically homeless

Amenities

On-site service coordination and recovery
services

Education and job opportunity mentoring
Community Room, Kitchen, Library, Chapel
Personal storage units

trauma-informed design

“Trauma-informed design is grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma that emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both survivors and providers.”

-Hopper, Bassuk, Olivet

trauma-informed principles



*Dignity &
Self-Esteem*



*Security, Privacy, &
Personal Space*



*Sense of
Community*



*Empowerment &
Personal Control*



*Stress
Management*



*Beauty &
Meaning*

design agenda



Griffith Hall

University of the Sciences

600 South 43rd St.

Philadelphia, PA 19104

Building History:

Built in 1928

Original home of the Philadelphia
College of Pharmacy

Housed classrooms and a unique
central basketball court/auditorium

Current Usage:

Admissions building, administrative
offices, lecture halls, science labs, and
classrooms

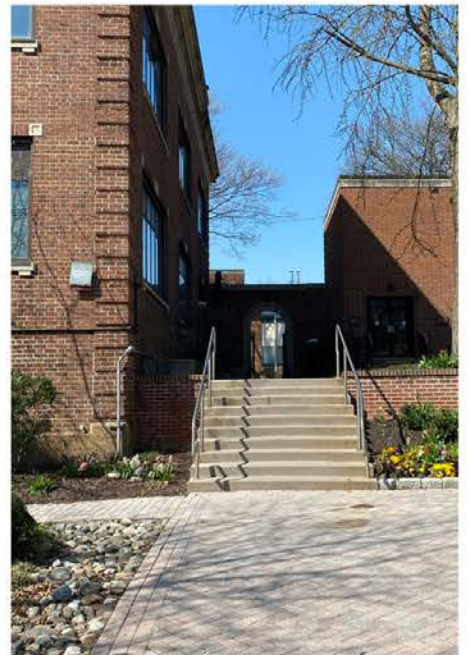
Lab specimen storage

Server room for campus

USciences Pharmacy Museum

Main Building Square Footage: 100,918





site context

Site Considerations:

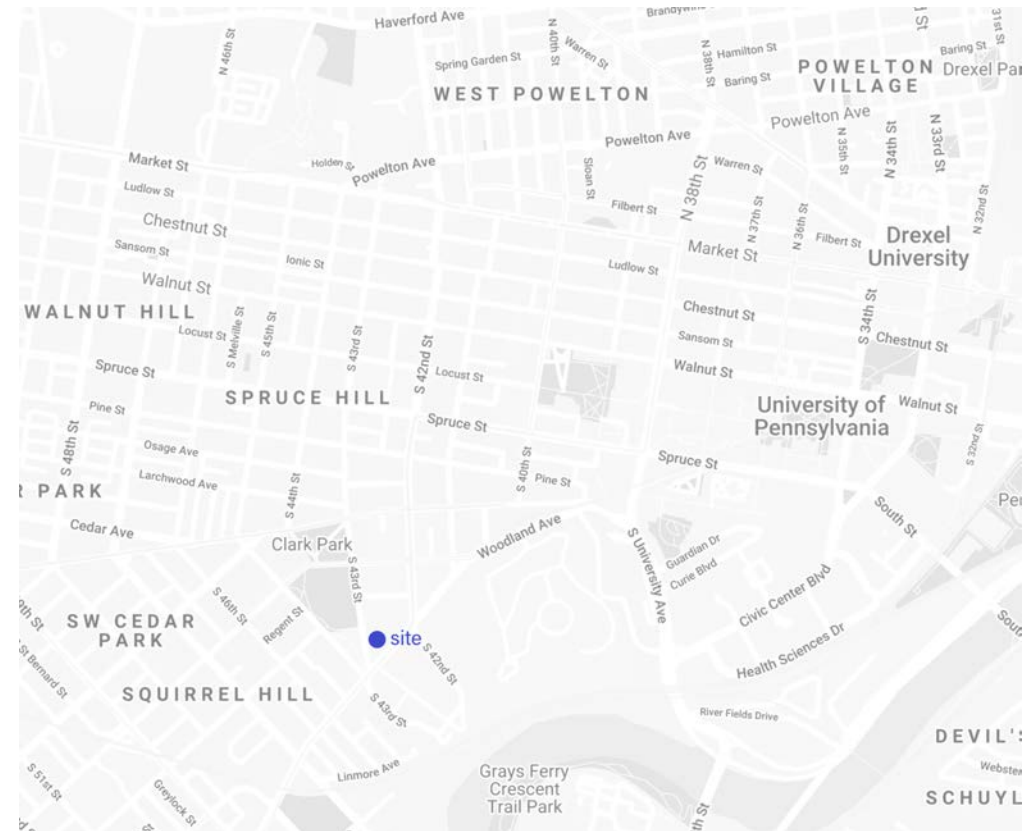
Located in West Philadelphia next to Clark Park

Close to community programming and resources

Mixed residential and commercial area

Close proximity to University of the Sciences, University of Pennsylvania, and Drexel University

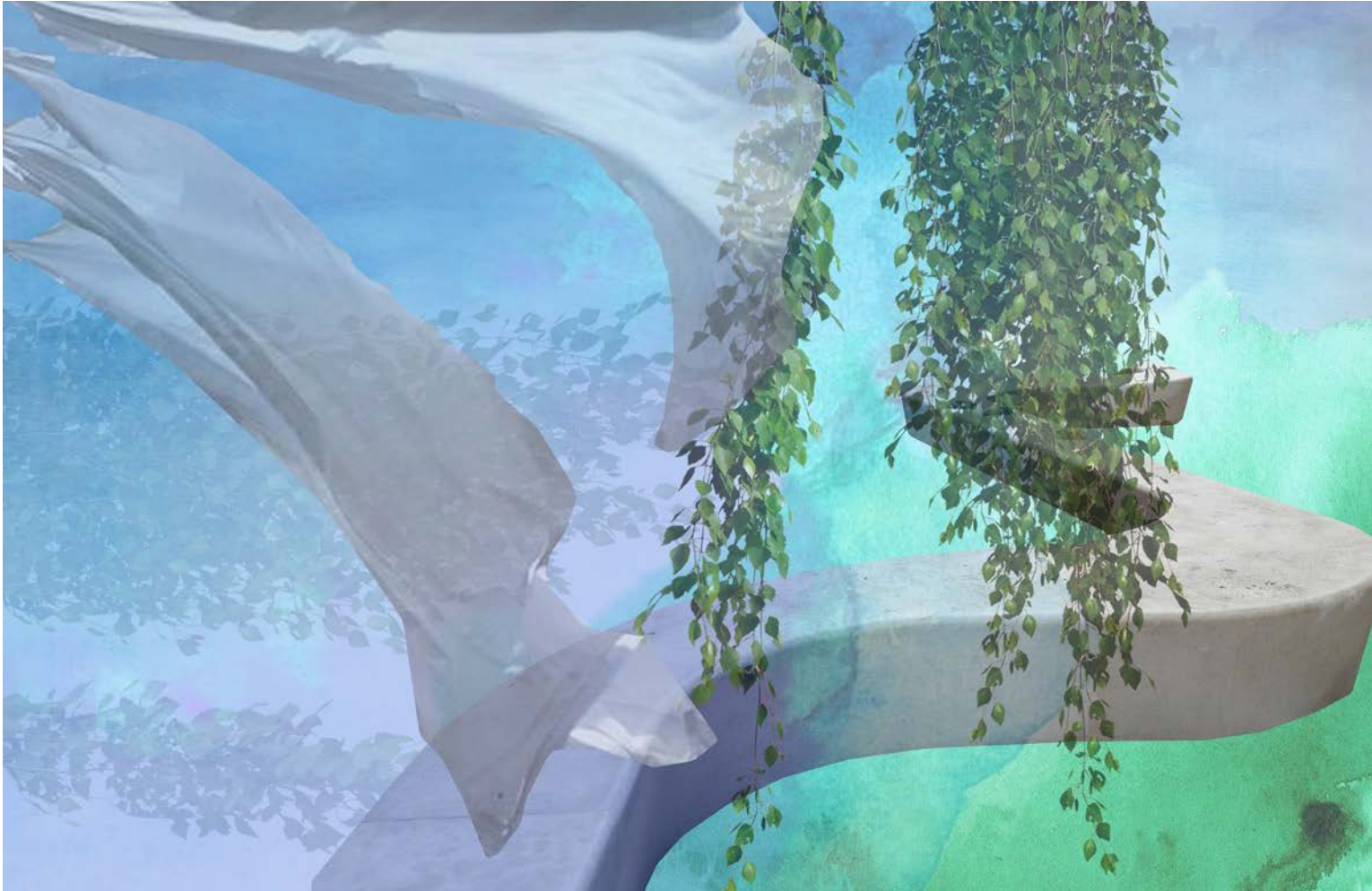
Close to public transit hubs



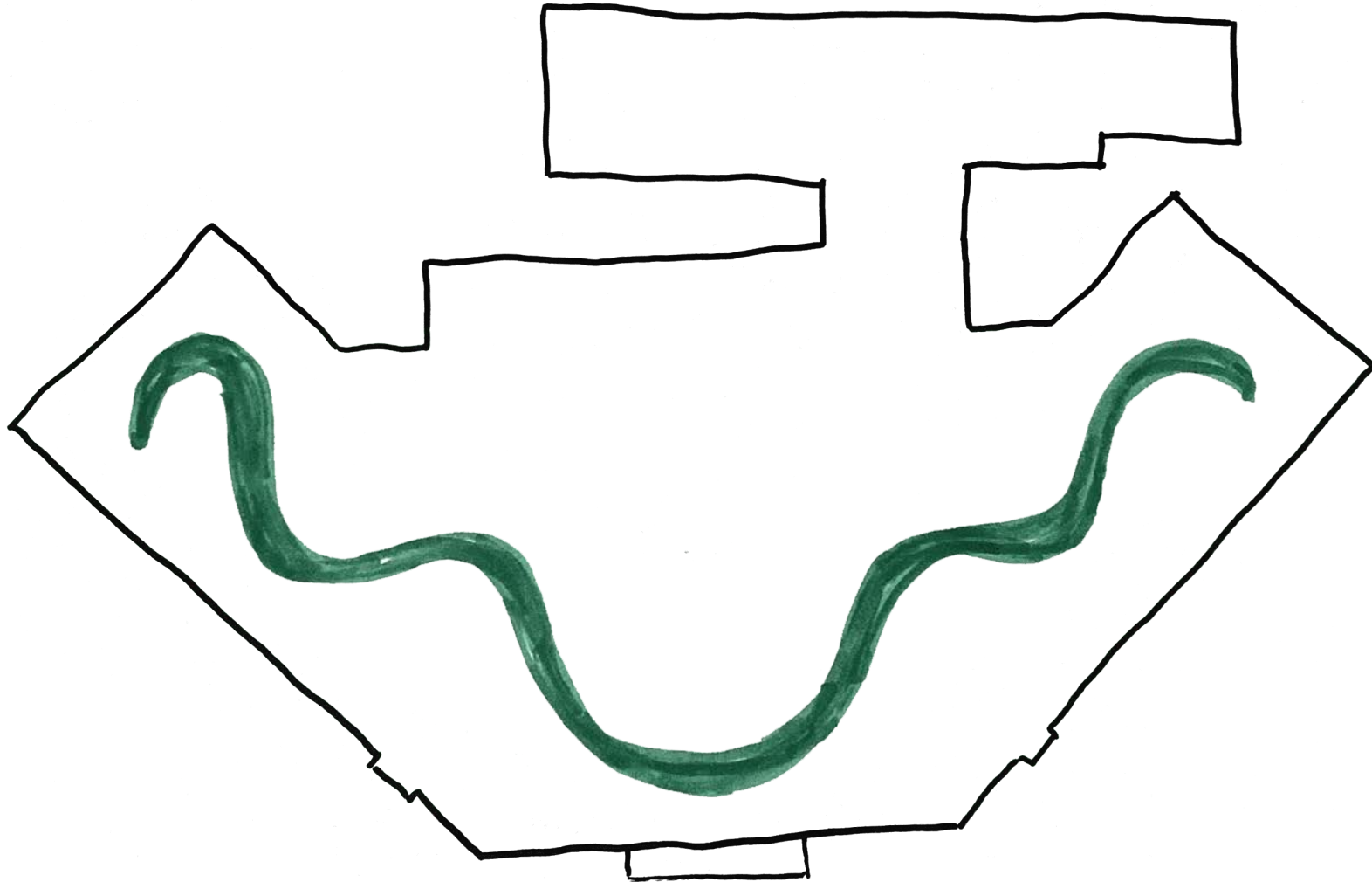
- SITE
- US SCIENCES BUILDINGS
- RESIDENTIAL
- MIXED COMMERCIAL/RESIDENTIAL
- GREEN SPACE
- TRANSIT STOP



concept



Concept Collage

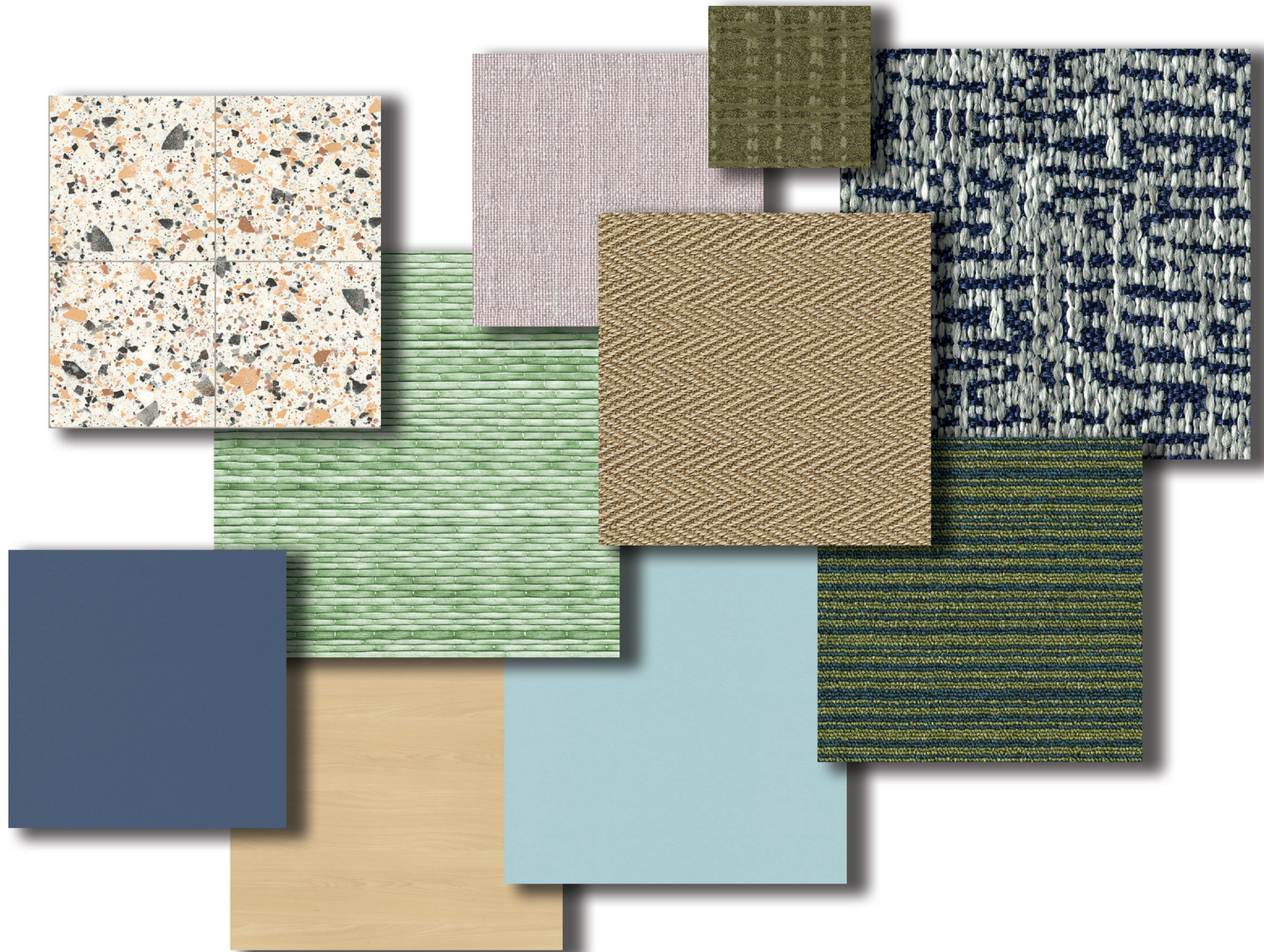


Parti Diagram

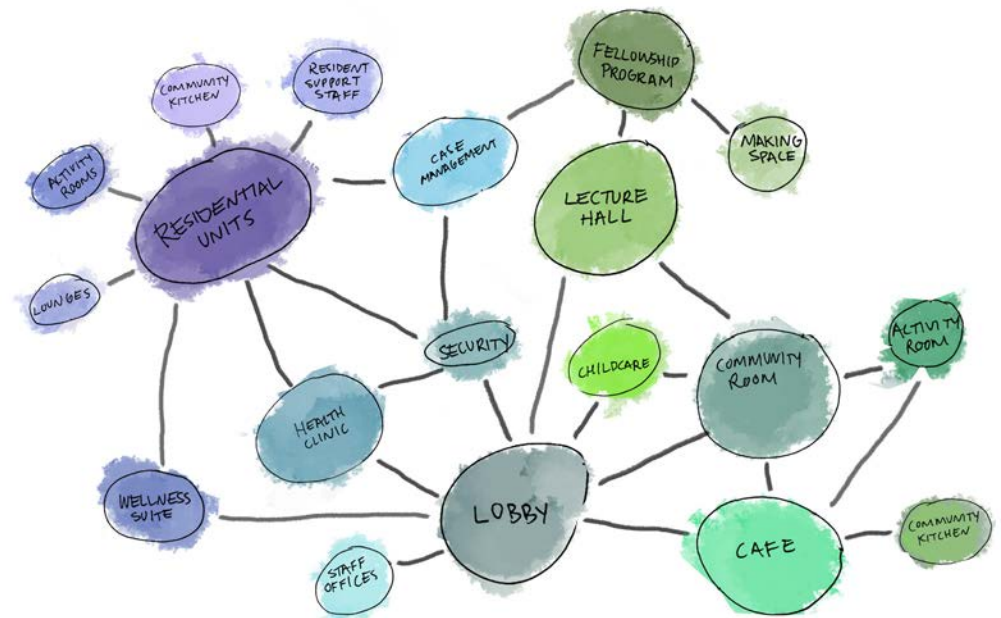
inspiration



materials inspiration



program



COMMUNITY

Lobby

Cafe

Lounge

Play space

Lecture hall

Mother's rooms

5,000 sq. ft.

WELLBEING

Mental health

Case management

Clinician offices

Quiet Room

Infirmary

Fitness Suite

Lounge areas

10,000 sq. ft.

FELLOWSHIP

Co-Working area

Ideation resources

Flex learning space

Co-op storefront

5,000 sq. ft.

RESIDENTIAL

Apartments

A/V room

Activity room

Co-housing kitchen

Support staff facilities

Private lounges

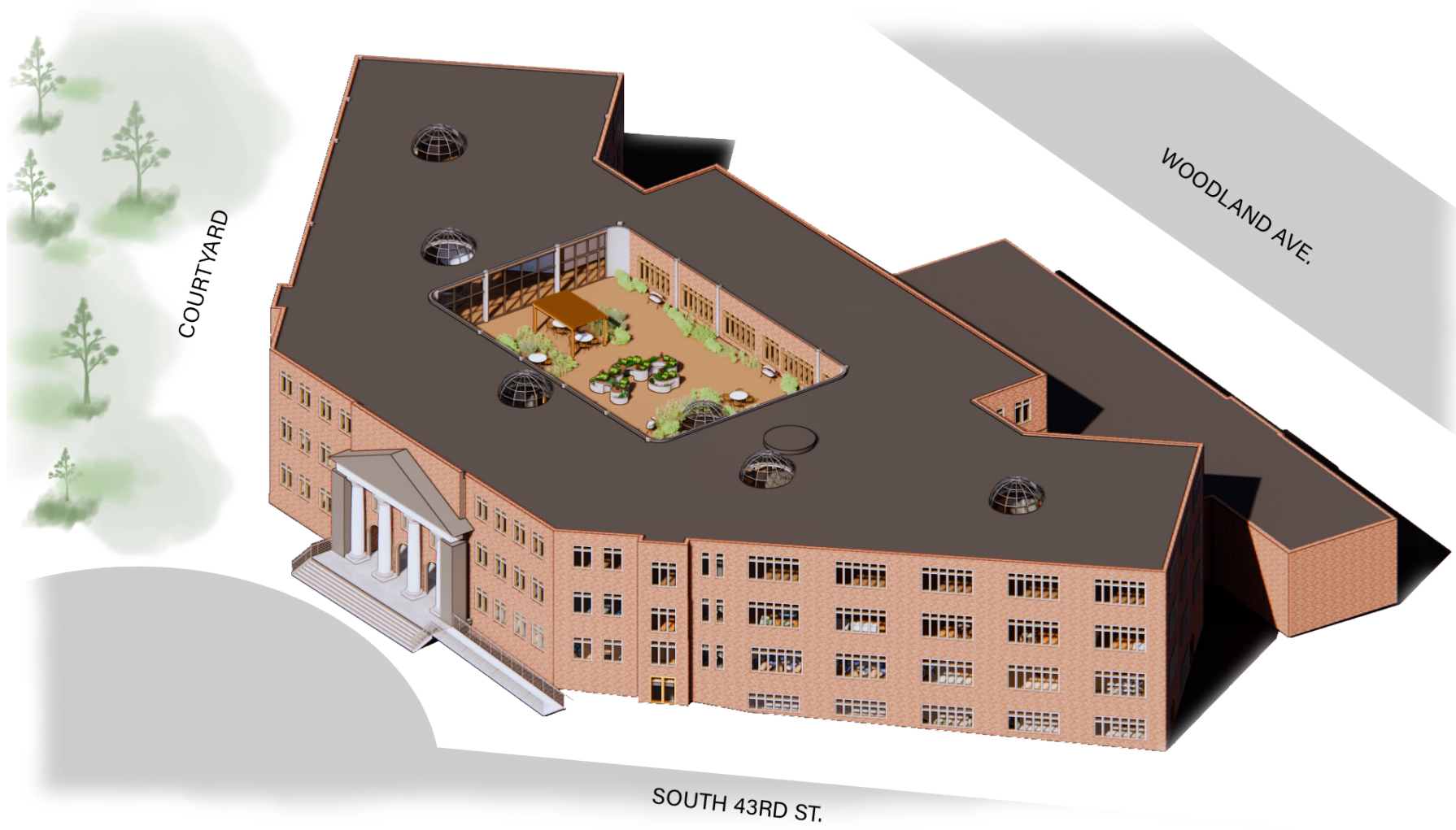
50,000 sq. ft.

TOTAL SQUARE FOOTAGE: 70,000 +/- 30% circulation

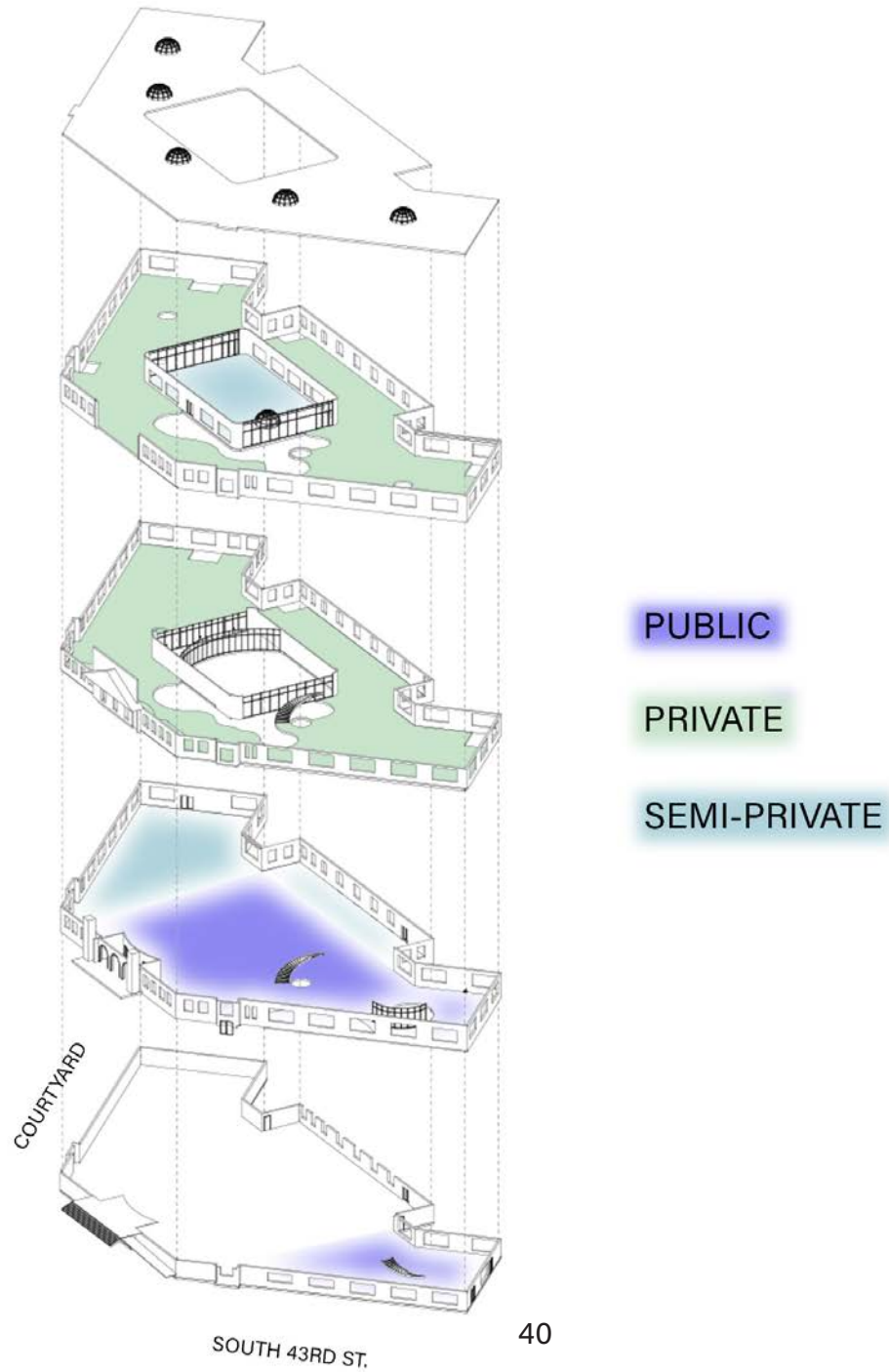


griffith gardens
Residence & Community Center

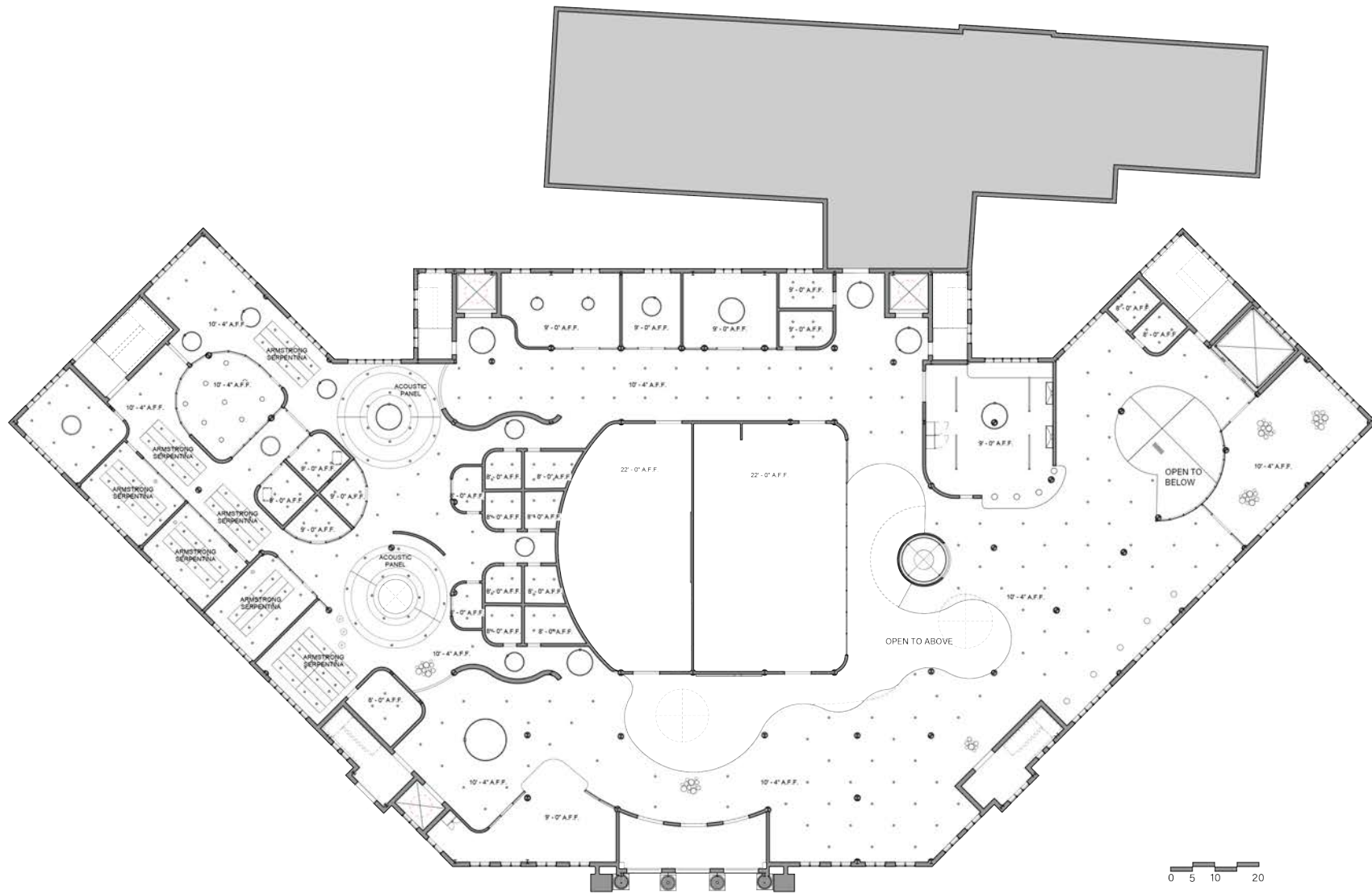
exterior axon



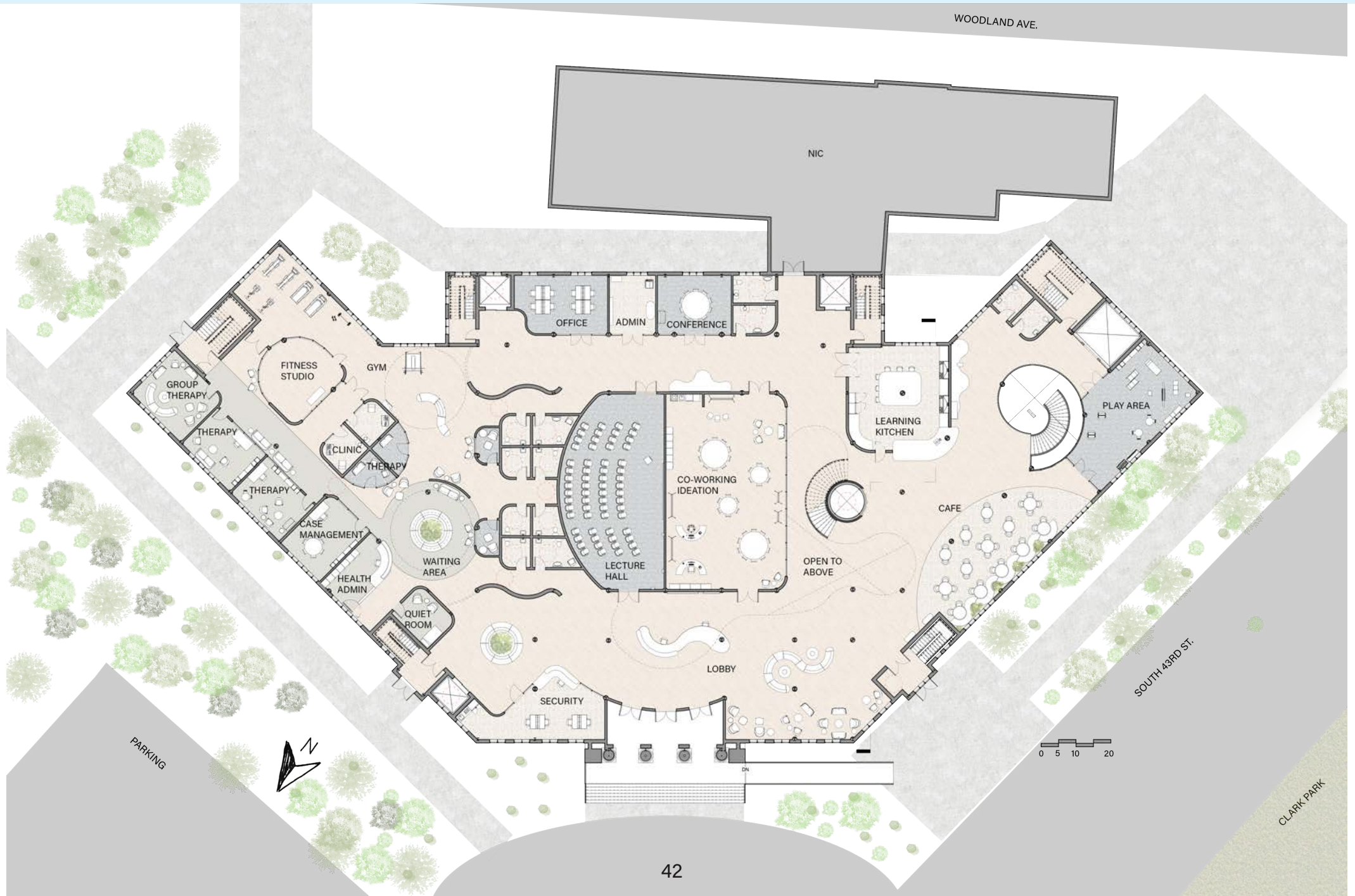
privacy axon



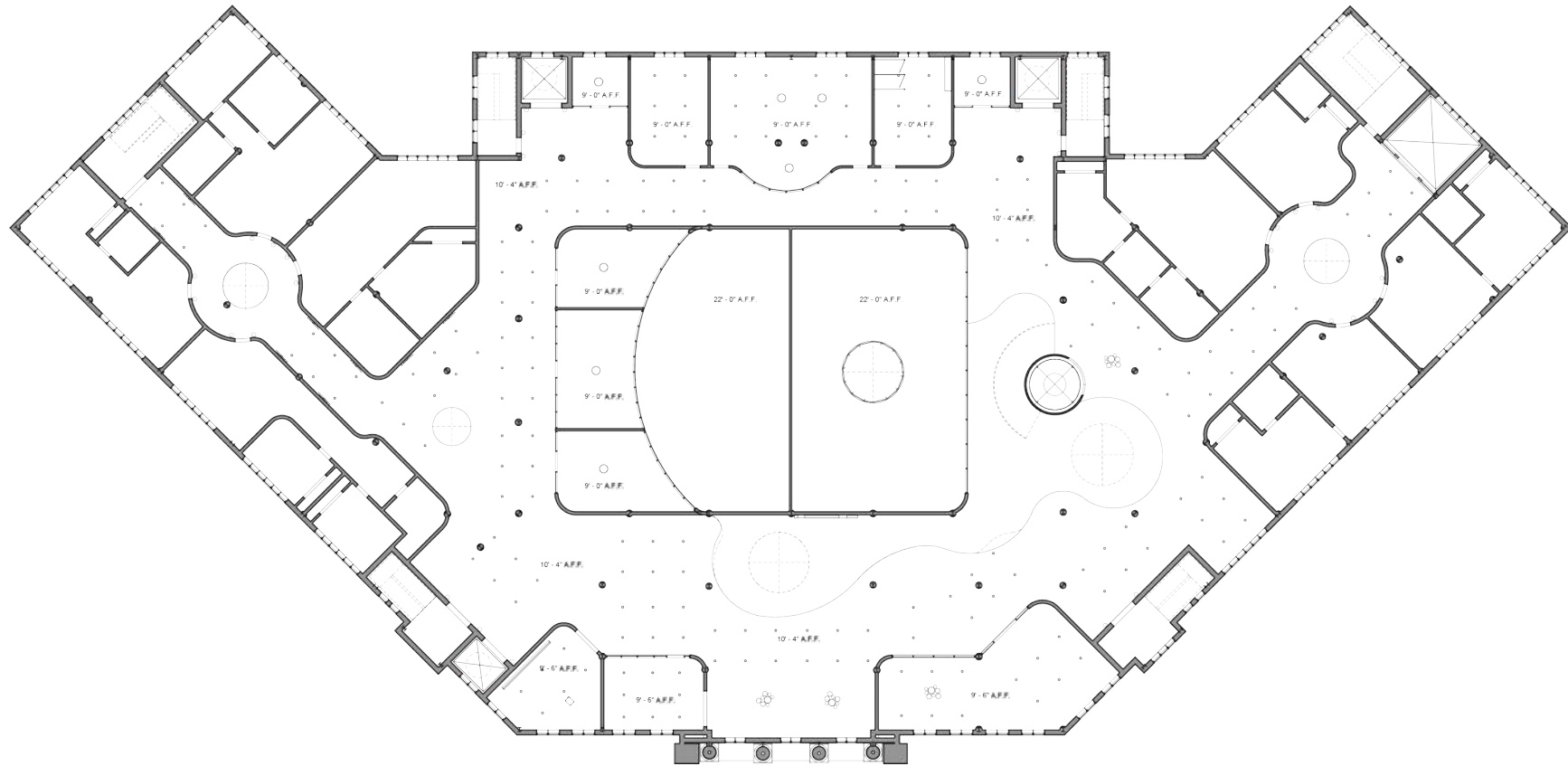
level one reflected ceiling plan



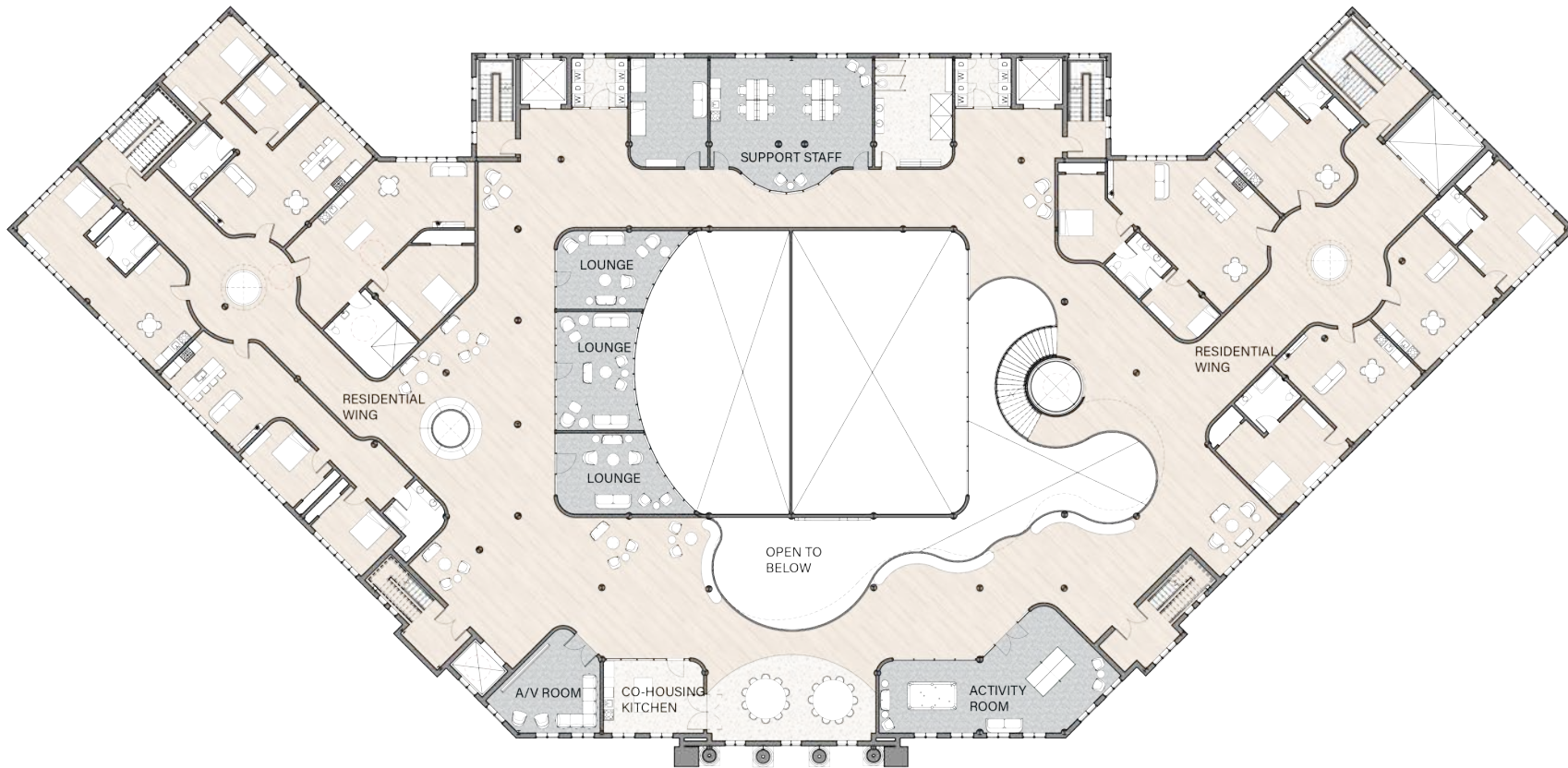
level one



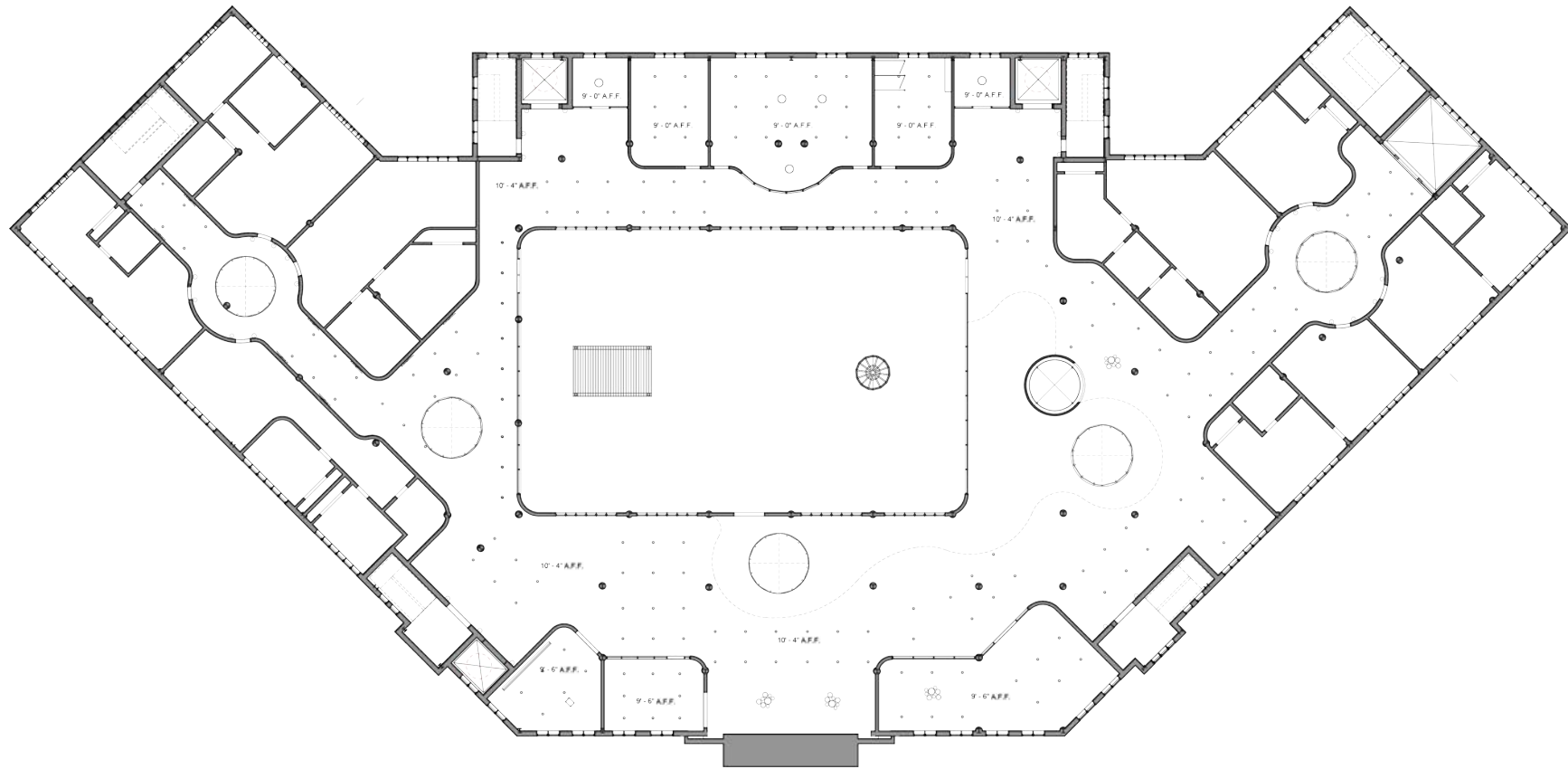
level two reflected ceiling plan



level two



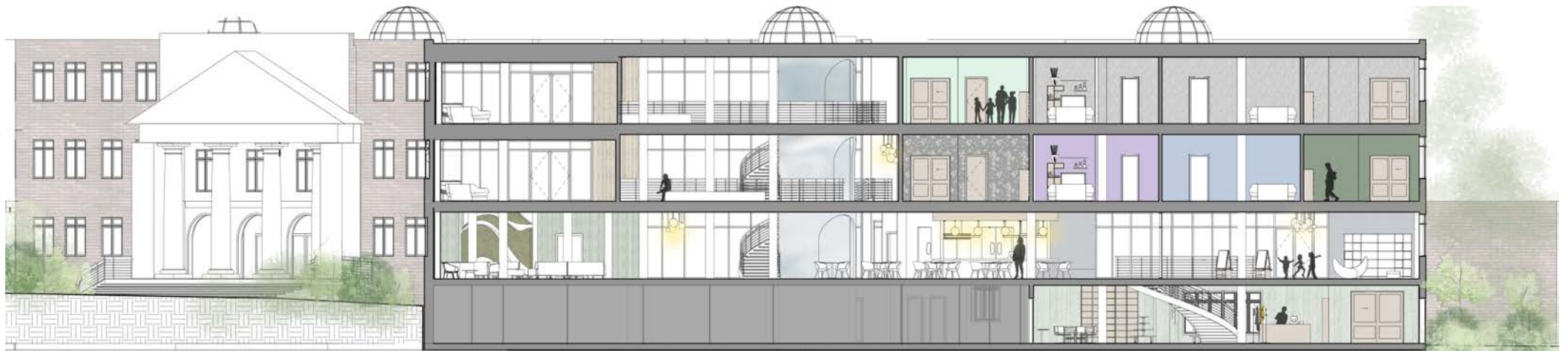
level three reflected ceiling plan



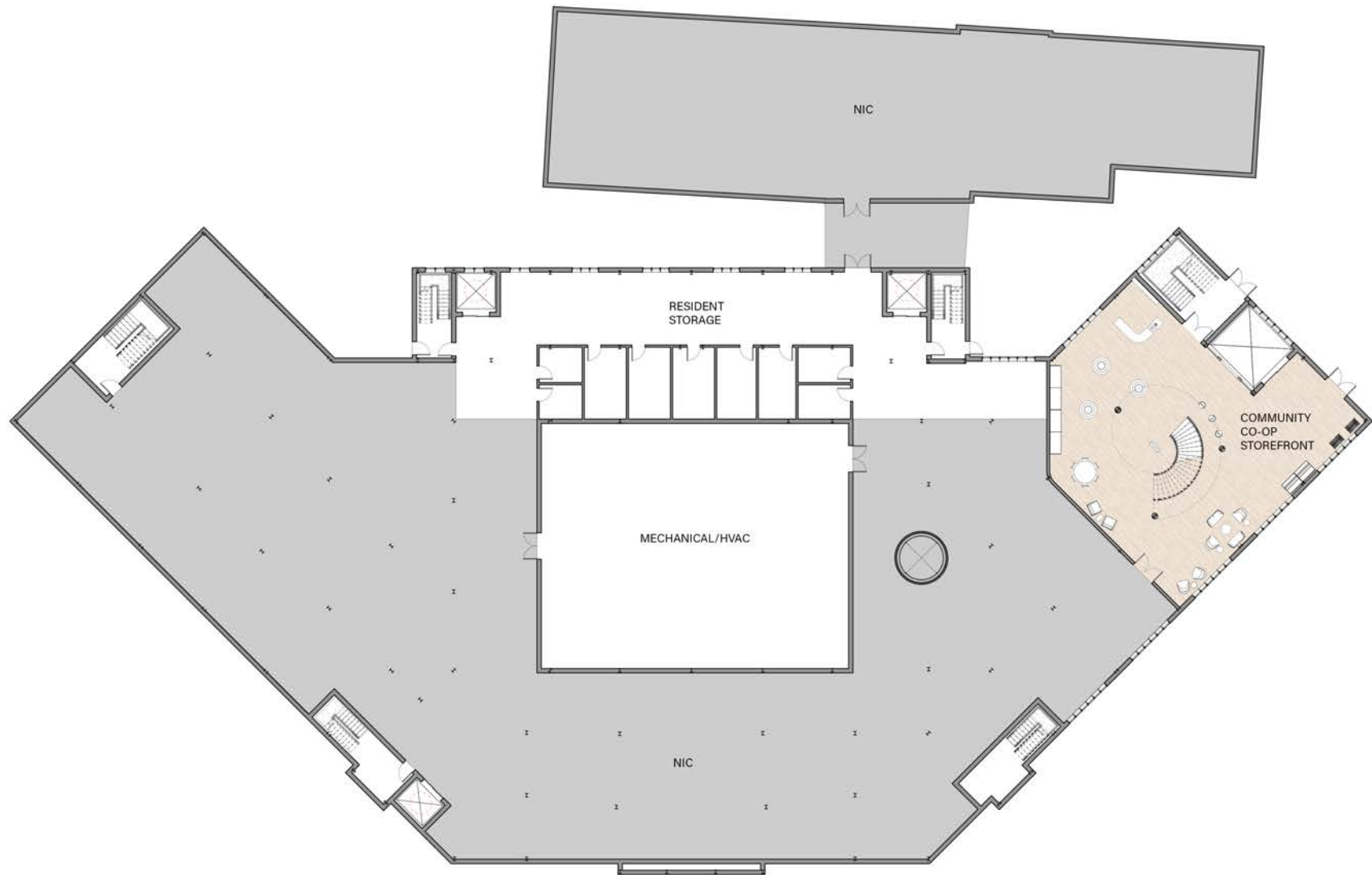
level three



section



sub-basement



reception



atrium



health & case management services



fitness area



co-housing activity area



community garden



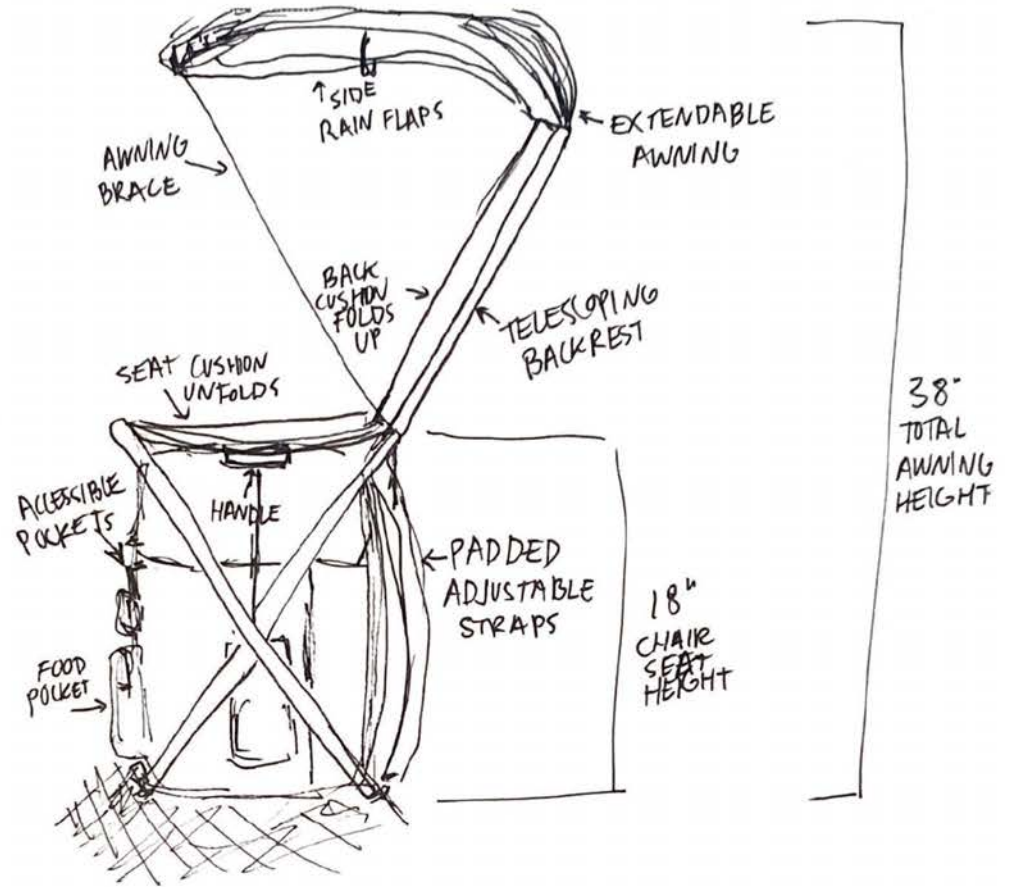
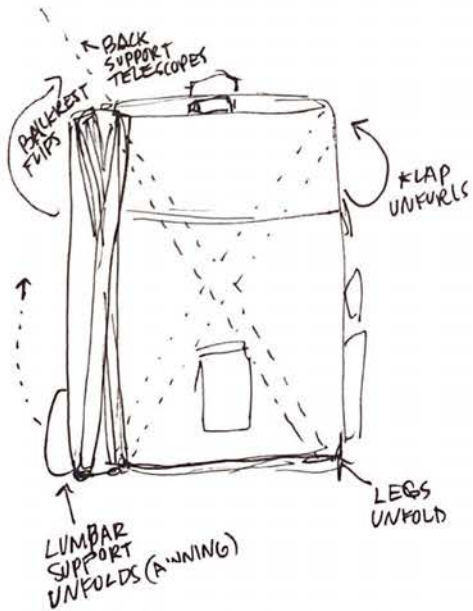
appendices

design probe I: scale



BACKPACK FILL WITH:

- FOOD
- WATER
- BLANKET
- CLOTHES
- SCARF/HAT/GLOVES
- TOILETRIES/TOWEL
- BOOK/ENTERTAINMENT
- RESOURCE LIST
- PHONE + PHONEBANK CHARGER
- WALLET/CASHAPP CARD
- UMBRELLA/PONCHO
- PAPER TOWELS
- MEDICINE/FIRST AID KIT



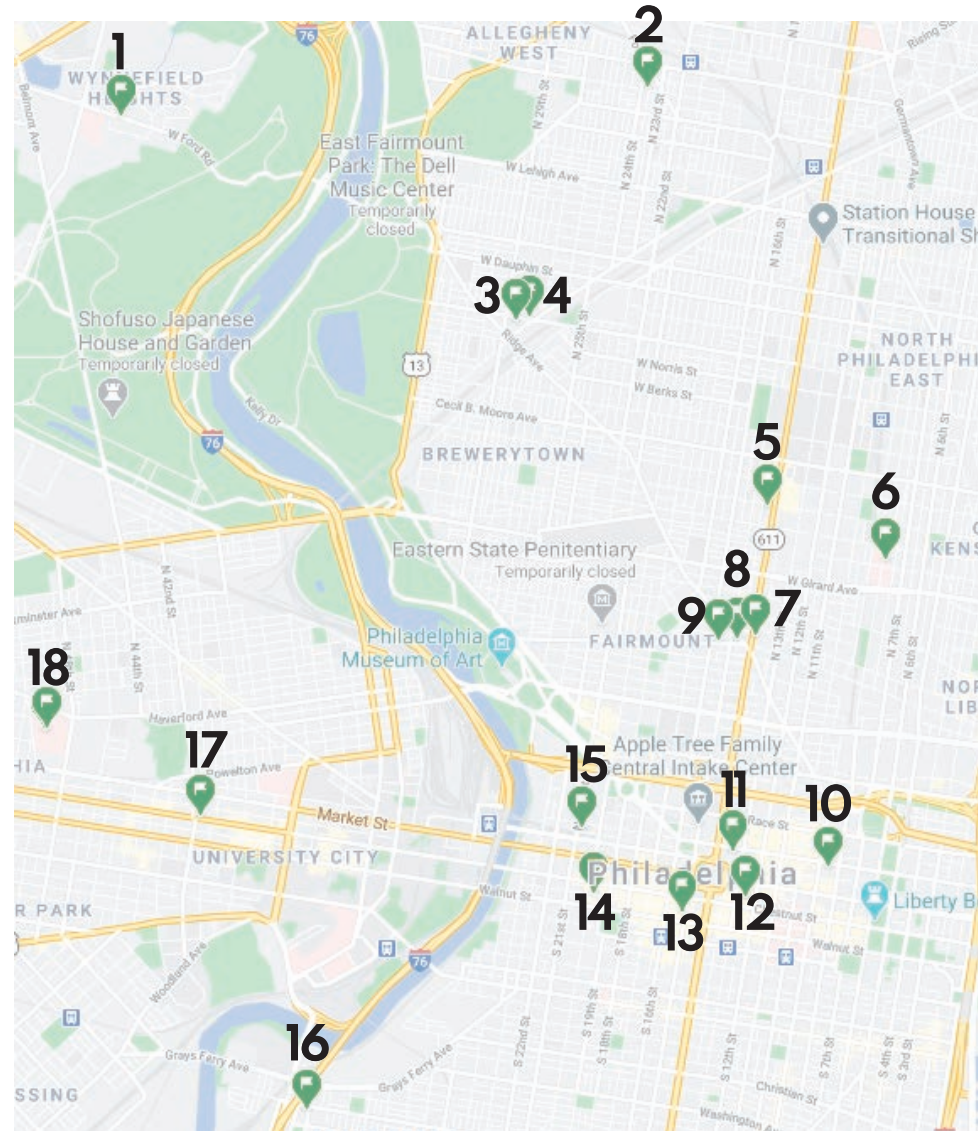
SERVICE GROUPS KEY:

- WOMEN
- WOMEN WITH CHILDREN
- ALL FAMILIES
- MEN
- LGBT+ SUPPORT
- YOUTH
- SENIORS
- ADDICTION RECOVERY
- CHRONIC HEALTH
- MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING LOCATIONS

1. SALVATION ARMY IVY RESIDENCE
2. ROWAN HOMES JUDSON
3. HOPE HAVEN I & II
4. ROWAN HOMES DIAMOND
5. KAIROS HOUSE
6. GLORIA CASAREZ RESIDENCE
7. SALVATION ARMY RED SHIELD FAMILY CENTER
8. JBJ SOUL HOMES
9. 1523 FAIRMOUNT
10. FRANCIS HOUSE OF PEACE
11. SALVATION ARMY ELIZA SHIRLEY HOUSE
12. CONNELLY HOUSE
13. VALLEY YOUTH HOUSE
14. KATE'S PLACE
15. WOMEN OF CHANGE
16. SALVATION ARMY REED HOUSE
17. ST. COLUMBA
18. GAUDENZIA HOUSE OF PASSAGE

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING IN PHILADELPHIA



design probe II: materiality



Design Agenda

Trauma-Informed Design

- Privacy
- Security
- Comfort
- Tactility
- Flexibility



design probe III: experience

Housing Insecurity

Who is impacted?

Everyone: all people need shelter/housing

Privilege greatly changes the impact of “being housed” when there is risk for not being housed

What experiences inform their perceptions/attitudes? (formative and day-to-day)

Trauma: insecurity/lack of access to stable housing causes long-term side-effects

The intersections of homelessness, substance abuse, mental health, employment, education, food security, physical health, etc.

Health impacts of inadequate housing (Nicholas and Michaels, TJP Design for Social Impact)

Day-to-Day Experience:

Basil (name has been changed) is a Black, disabled, gender-nonconforming 22-year old living in West Philadelphia. They have been seeking an apartment with two friends, also in their early 20s, since mid-July when the lease of the place they were staying, under another person’s name, ended. Stayed with a friend in a cramped 3-bedroom apartment during this search. They do not keep in contact with any family members due to unkind responses to their gender identity and expression. One of their roommates has a job as a food delivery driver and makes fluctuating income, the other provides childcare under the table, and Basil is unemployed due to their disability. They have connected with a case-worker to try to get social security benefits, but so far they haven’t qualified. They were rejected from eight apartments over the past five months to low or no credit scores, low or non-verifiable incomes, and their ages until they found a white, wealth-privileged co-signer with a high credit score and stable yearly income. A mutual aid group, Housing Reparations Philly, is supporting them through crowdfunding initiatives to help cover their rent and recoup expenses from their many months in the AirBnB. Mutual aid was able to transform Basil’s housing situation by providing them with funds and resources that they otherwise could not have accessed. This further proves that the systems of obtaining housing are extremely difficult for those who do not have proximity to privilege in a variety of intersecting ways.



code

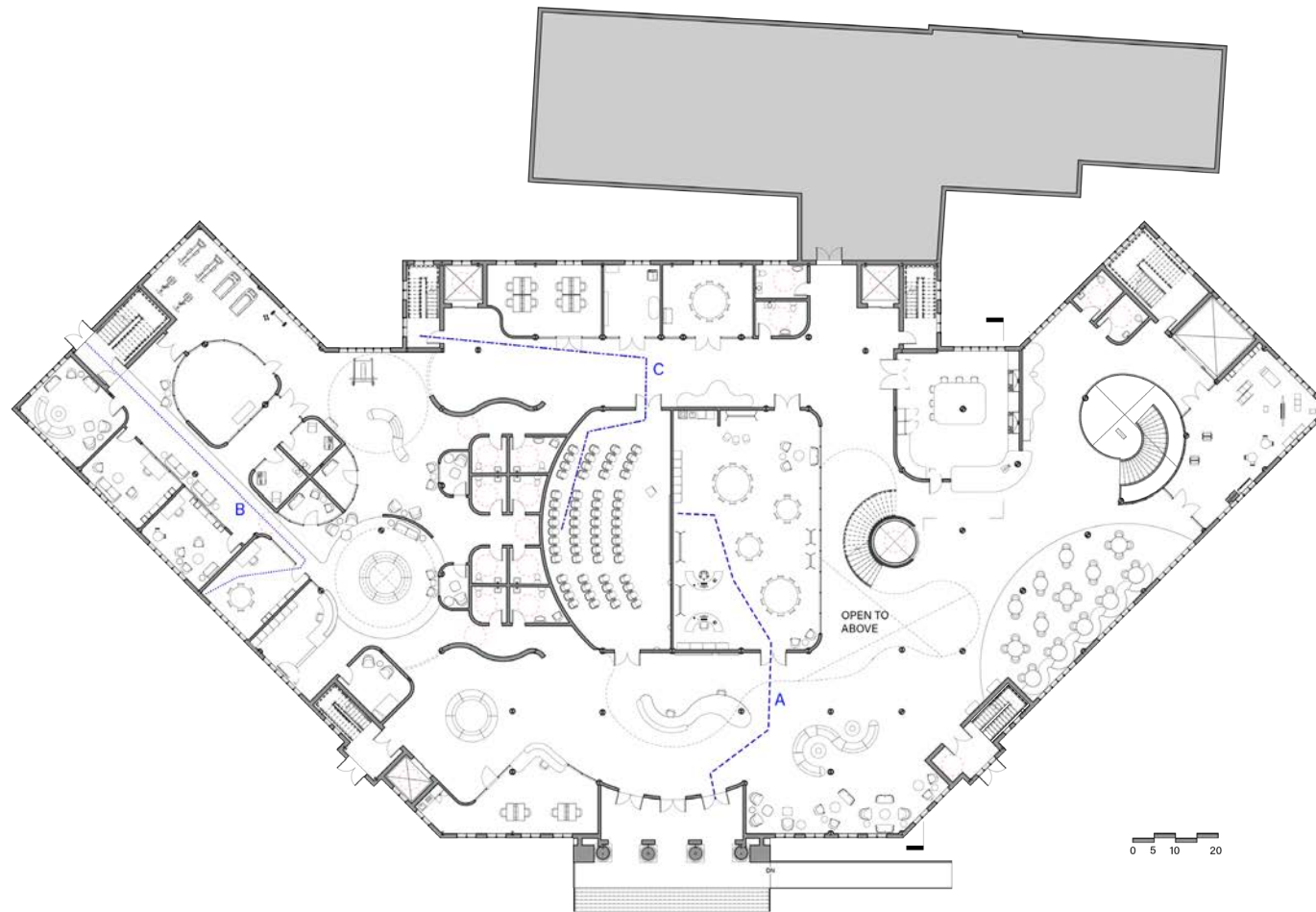
Occupancy

Basement & First Floor

SPACE	USE GROUP	SQUARE FOOTAGE	LOAD FACTOR	OCCUPANCY
Community Co-op	M	2886	60 gross	48 people
Lobby	A	2076	5 net	413 people
Security/Admin	B	500	150 gross	3 people
Wellness Suite	B	3908	150 gross	26 people
Case Management	B	318	150 gross	2 people
Therapy 1	I	287	100 gross	2 people
Therapy 2	I	285	100 gross	2 people
Group therapy	I	347	100 gross	3 people
Fitness Studio	B	408	200 gross	2 people
Flex Lounge	B	2184	150 gross	14 people
Cafe	A	1793	15 net	119 people
Learning Kitchen	E	836	50 net	16 people
Play Area	A	760	35 net	21 people
Ideation Lab	B	1917	150 gross	12 people
Lecture Hall	A	1466	68 gross	21 people
Offices/Admin	A	1010	150 gross	6 people
Plumbing Fixtures Required:			TOTAL OCCUPANCY:	710 people
Unisex Restrooms: 12 minimum (unisex)				
Lavatories: 8 minimum				
Drinking fountains: 7 minimum				

egress

Level One



Use Group: A Fully Sprinklered: 250' max travel dist to exit, 75' common path of travel

Path A: 98'

Use Group: B Fully Sprinklered: 300' max travel dist to exit, 100' common path of travel

Path B: 86'

Use Group: I Fully Sprinklered: 250' max travel dist to exit, 75' common path of travel

Path C: 96'

code

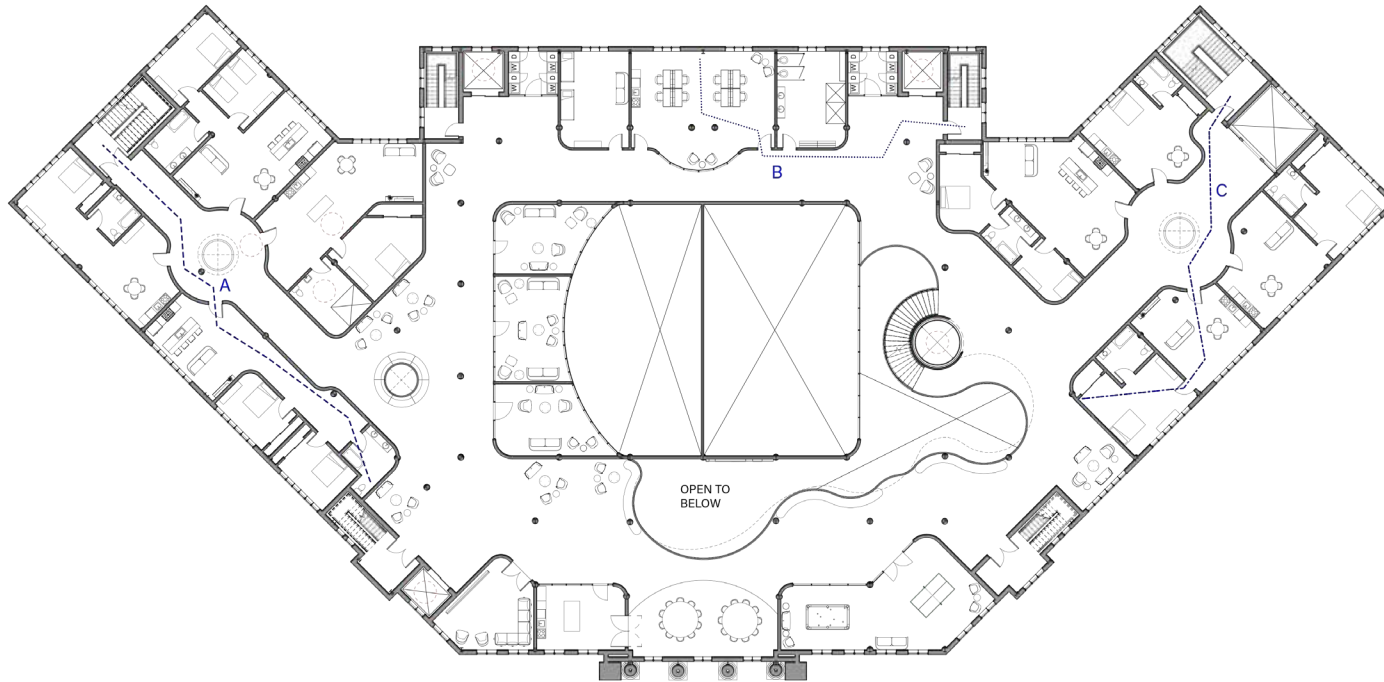
Occupancy

Second Floor

SPACE	USE GROUP	SQUARE FOOTAGE	LOAD FACTOR	OCCUPANCY
Open Lounge/Circulation	B	9181	150 gross	771 people
A/V Room	B	323	150 gross	2 people
Community Prep Kitchen	B	283	150 gross	1 person
Community Dining Area	A	484	15 net	32 people
Game Room	B	763	150 gross	5 people
Lounge 1	B	324	150 gross	2 people
Lounge 2	B	343	150 gross	2 people
Listening Lounge	B	374	150 gross	2 people
Staff Lounge	R-1	325	200 gross	1 person
Support Staff Office	B	753	150 gross	5 people
Studio Apartment 1	R-3	473	200 gross	2 people
Studio Apartment 2	R-3	646	200 gross	3 people
1-Bedroom Apartment 1	R-3	812	200 gross	4 people
1-Bedroom Apartment 2	R-3	832	200 gross	4 people
1-Bedroom Apartment ADA	R-3	1101	200 gross	5 people
2-Bedroom Apartment 1	R-3	1064	200 gross	5 people
2-Bedroom Apartment 2	R-3	1064	200 gross	5 people
2-Bedroom Apartment 3	R-3	1055	200 gross	5 people
Plumbing Fixtures Required:			TOTAL OCCUPANCY:	856 people
Staff Restrooms: 2 minimum (unisex)				
Residential Restrooms: 1 per unit				
Lavatories: 1 minimum				
Drinking fountains: 1 minimum				

egress

Level Two



Use Group: A Fully Sprinklered: 250' max travel dist to exit, 75' common path of travel

Path A: 88'

Use Group: B Fully Sprinklered: 300' max travel dist to exit, 100' common path of travel

Path B: 68'

Use Group: R Fully Sprinklered: 125' max travel dist to exit, 125' common path of travel

Path C: 75'

code

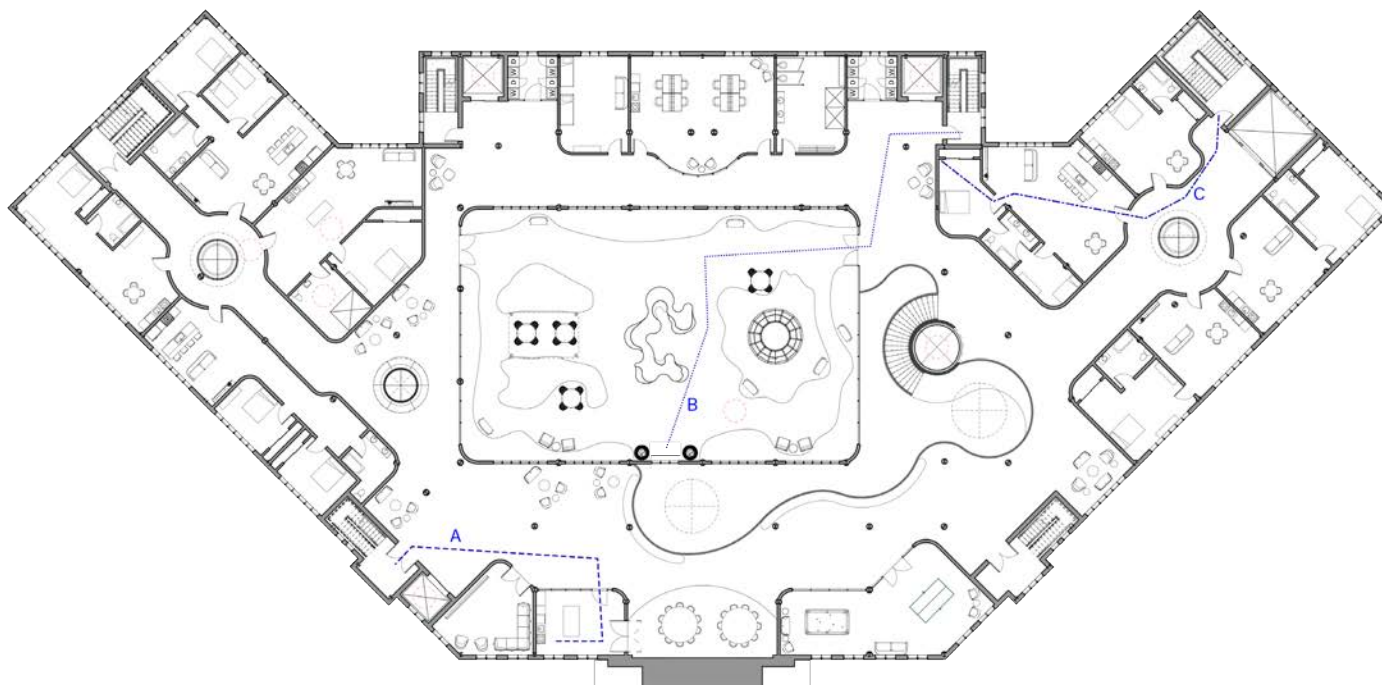
Occupancy

Third Floor

SPACE	USE GROUP	SQUARE FOOTAGE	LOAD FACTOR	OCCUPANCY
Open Lounge/Circulation	B	8311	150 gross	55 people
Rooftop Garden	B	4838	15 net	322 people
A/V Room	B	323	150 gross	2 people
Community Prep Kitchen	B	283	150 gross	1 person
Community Dining Area	A	484	15 net	32 people
Game Room	B	763	150 gross	5 people
Staff Lounge	R-1	325	200 gross	1 person
Support Staff Office	B	753	150 gross	5 people
Studio Apartment 1	R-3	473	200 gross	2 people
Studio Apartment 2	R-3	646	200 gross	3 people
1-Bedroom Apartment 1	R-3	812	200 gross	4 people
1-Bedroom Apartment 2	R-3	832	200 gross	4 people
1-Bedroom Apartment ADA	R-3	1101	200 gross	5 people
2-Bedroom Apartment 1	R-3	1064	200 gross	5 people
2-Bedroom Apartment 2	R-3	1064	200 gross	5 people
2-Bedroom Apartment 3	R-3	1055	200 gross	5 people
Plumbing Fixtures Required:			TOTAL OCCUPANCY:	451 people
Staff Restrooms: 2 minimum (unisex)				
Residential Restrooms: 1 per unit				
Lavatories: 1 minimum				
Drinking fountains: 1 minimum				

egress

Level Three



Use Group: A Fully Sprinklered: 250' max travel dist to exit, 75' common path of travel

Path A: 72'

Use Group: B Fully Sprinklered: 300' max travel dist to exit, 100' common path of travel

Path B: 114'

Use Group: R Fully Sprinklered: 125' max travel dist to exit, 125' common path of travel

Path C: 83'

expert interview

Bill Maroon

Director of Business Development

Resources for Human Development (RHD)

Q: How would you describe any successful supportive housing models you have seen in action?

A: Scattered site programs, compared to a single site where folks in recovery all live concentrated together, seem to have more successful long-term outcomes and can avoid “systemology,” or the process of being enabled by others in their same situations. When people leaving transitional housing or addiction recovery are blended into a pre-existing community, often mixed together with market-rate housing in the same building or block, they are more likely to feel empowered to say “Hey, my neighbor goes to work, maybe I could do that too.”

Q: What are the major housing issues you have observed in Philadelphia? Why do they exist?

A: Philadelphia has plenty of housing available but not enough vouchers for housing or resources to house people. Once people have vouchers, it’s usually quite a quick process to find an apartment for them. A lot of the issues in other places are caused because there is no housing stock. That’s not the issue in Philly, but it’s still difficult to go through the process of getting the vouchers and then being placed in housing.

Q: Tell me more about how RHD provides services to people who need supportive housing.

A: We support residential recovery programs, like Morris Home, as well as provide services for dual-diagnosis clients including life skills and job training. Most people who are being placed in their own apartments are leaving transitional housing of some kind or a health-related facility. We have teams of around 10 people that provide care to a number of individuals at a time. There are usually weekly check-ins to make sure the person is settling in and also to deliver groceries and toiletry items. If the resident would like to run errands, we usually set up a vehicle to go get them with a case worker. It can be a lot of running around so we try to set up a consistent schedule to make sure the residents’ needs are met.

Q: What are some new tools or models that you think could improve supportive housing?

A: There are some great services, such as the Furniture Bank in Kensington, that can provide logistical support for moves such as furniture and kitchen supplies. There are also some new programs, like one through Temple, that redirects homeless people to support services to reduce their emergency room visits. It has also shown great promise in placing people in housing rather than having people resort to checking into a hospital for inpatient treatment. It creates prevention rather than a reaction to the health-issues of homeless Philadelphians.

data collection interview I

Maiga

yoga teacher, mother of 1 child aged 20 mos.

Who lives in your home with you? Ages? Relationships?

My husband, who is 37 and our 20-month-old daughter.

What kind of home do you live in? Do you own your home or unit, or do you rent?

We own our suburban twin.

Do you like where you live? Is there anything you feel your home or local neighborhood is lacking that would benefit your family?

I actually love it. We're in Pennsauken, NJ. I moved here from West Philly. When I moved here I didn't have any roots and the concrete and strip malls really depressed me. Over the years, I've found the places with character (like Collingswood) but I've also come to appreciate my own neighborhood. It's incredibly safe. I never worry about packages sitting on my steps. I'm on a dead-end street where it's safe for my cats to go outside. When I had my daughter, my neighbors knew how to connect with me and they all were so sweet. We had deliveries of spaghetti and meatballs and gift cards. Our neighborhood is solidly working class but racially diverse and there's a playground across the street and several parks within walking distance. I really appreciate how truly diverse and safe this area is. We actually are moving to be closer to family but I do think so much about this area is great for raising kids.

Do you have help with childcare, meal prep, or chores? Who helps you? Do you hire someone to do these tasks? How has covid impacted these tasks or their completion, if at all?

Zero. Which is why we're moving. I mean, I order EveryPlate? That helps a bit. On my birthday or a holiday, I pay for a house cleaning. I was trying to set up childcare exchanges and babysitters but covid has complicated all of that. I'm starting to create a few options, but I'm exhausted at having to always create. There are many days when my toddler didn't sleep through the night, my husband has to work, I'm fried, and there's literally no one to call. It's a bad scene.

What are some challenges you face? Do you feel that you have the necessary access to resources? Has a financial limitation or other barrier ever prevented you from completing tasks the way you would like?

Yeah. We don't have enough money. That's what it boils down to. I taught yoga, trained yoga teachers, and officiated weddings before having my daughter. The bulk of my money was leading the training. In some shady dealings, when I went on maternity leave my contract was not renewed (in a truly shocking way-- I really thought I had everything in order). Since then, I can't afford to work. Teaching yoga doesn't pay enough to cover childcare. I still officiate weddings, and am paid per wedding. I was trying to get my bearings again with my worklife but then covid hit. My previous work life can't support me in the current conditions. My husband is a Catholic school teacher. He took the job because it includes a free masters of education at St Joes. We could afford his low salary if I worked too, as was planned. When I lost my job, he was bound to his job due to the masters, which is part of our plan to move **closer to his** family and make him a more desirable candidate. So, I've applied for all the covid relief, gotten a fair amount, and we're just trying to keep our heads down and get by until we move. But yes, if money wasn't so tight, I would do all the things. I would hire a house cleaner, because that would help. If things were open, I would go to mom and me classes to break up the day and have community. I would pay for childcare here and there to have the space to move my work life forward.

Do you participate in any regular trading with other families, such as swapping clothes/toys or rotating meal prep? Do you provide support for any other families in a specific way?

I've had so much passed to me so I try to pass on. I keep an eye on Facebook mom groups and try to pass on what we no longer need. I don't have an official trade. Before covid, I went to a lot of mom and me classes at the village and it was natural to meet people and swap things there. If not for covid, that would probably be happening and trade might be somewhat more formal.

Does the idea of living in a community with shared responsibilities appeal to you? Would you be comfortable having your child/ren supervised in a group with other local children? Would you want to live closer to family (but still in your own homes) if that was an option?

Having lived in activist communal homes in West Philly, no, it doesn't appeal! :) Having personal space is crucial. I think these ideas are amazing but they require a LOT of groundwork. I think most people aren't very good at communicating and a situation like that requires pretty advanced communication skills. People also have different values around collaboration, housework, responsibility, etc. So again, it's important to get clear on all of that because generally, one person does more than their share, others do less, and resentments and conflicts build. Throw kids into the mix and things get intense! And, in my experience, kids amplify everything. Like, my own stresses, my own fears. So it's a hard time to learn the skill of parenting alongside the skill of effectively cohabitating.

I would be comfortable having my child supervised if I vetted that person and my child connected to them. I'm developing childcare relationships based on that criteria.

I am moving closer to my inlaws and extended family. I do think we may ultimately cohabit with my mom and my inlaws as they age and that will be really challenging. I do think eldercare is important and I think it's important for my daughter to participate in that. We're actively working on effective communication and boundaries so the adult relationships are healthy and supportive of my daughter.

Do you have any other thoughts about communal living or skillsharing? Is there anything else you would like to share?

Communal living is a skill. I was very idealistic about it when I was younger. I didn't know myself well and I felt like I should be comfortable with things that I wasn't comfortable with. Now, I know better my preferred levels of privacy, personal time, communication style, level of cleanliness and neatness, etc. It's all highly subjective and I think it's really important to spell it all out.

Also, I would imagine parenting styles would show up here. I wouldn't be comfortable with overly permissive, unboundaried people-- that would be hard for me. And, really authoritative parenting would be hard too. I would hope to communicate with parents and find a middle ground that worked for all of us, but that's hard!

data collection interview II

Mary

therapist, mother of 2 children aged 20 mos. and 12 years

Focus points:

Mary is 29 years old. She lives with her husband and two children. They own their home but feel the mortgage is difficult to maintain. Mary relies on a local “mom group” of friends that she met doing pre- and post-natal classes and support groups at “The Village” in Collingswood, NJ. She relies on these friends for moral support, trading clothes and kid supplies, and before covid, play dates for her 20-month-old daughter. “The Village” was a helpful place for resources and support for Mary but they do have membership and class fees so it’s not accessible to everyone.

Now that both Mary and her husband work from home due to covid-19 they feel okay with cooking, cleaning, and housework but when they were both working full time it felt impossible to keep up. They rely on family help from both sets of grandparents for childcare aid, especially her husband’s mom who is retired. Mary was 17 when she had her oldest son and her mother was very a important part of assisting with raising him. Mary likes the idea of a “college experience” living scenario in close proximity to her friends but for raising kids. She dreams of a place where you can live next to your best friends and everyone can pitch in with childcare and meal prep. It would be nice to have more garden and outdoor space for the kids and easier access to playmates and social opportunities.

data collection interview II

Bevin

therapist, mother of 2 children aged 1.5 and 3.5 years

Focus points:

Parents, step-parents, and partner's parents live nearby along with a sister who all helped with childcare before covid. Now Bevin feels somewhat overwhelmed with chores, work, and childcare but doesn't want to put vulnerable elderly family members at risk so they haven't been helping in-person as much. A grandparent does watch the baby every other day while parents work from home.

She enjoys cooking so that "chore" is respite for her. Her husband enjoys being outside so he handles yardwork and repairs. If she could afford it, Bevin would hire someone to clean and grocery shop for them.

Bevin appreciates in-person support with motherhood through classes at The Village, a breastfeeding support group, a clothing trading group, a fitness group, etc. Some of these are free and some have fees but Bevin feels they are worth it.

Free groups seem a lot more socio-economically diverse and often cover a larger geographic area. Facebook groups are interesting to observe who is giving what away—in local New Jersey towns there are groups that have designer strollers but they aren't necessarily giving those away to people who can't afford any kid gear. It seems disproportionate to level of need.

Bevin feels lucky to have had natural births and a supportive partner because she has seen women who require c-sections or have very minimal support really struggle after having a baby. She thinks there should be more pre-natal and post-partum support for moms whether they give birth in a hospital, birthing center, or home and that would provide a better community for women with young children.

Bevin also mentioned being interested in a "college-like" community for raising families. She thinks socialization with other adults and children would be great for her kids. She would appreciate being able to hang out with other moms in-person while kids play in a common area.

design research inquiry

Abstract

Housing insecurity in the US, a byproduct of late-stage capitalism, has become a rampant and often unavoidable issue for low-income and otherwise marginalized communities. Gentrification and the emphasis on living in owned single-family homes has removed many affordable housing options from available housing. Utilizing co-housing and co-design strategies in community and housing development has the potential to transform disjointed, marginalized communities into collaborative living groups. Designing purposeful co-housing communities that incorporate communal living social strategies with co-designed built environments could be a solution to the housing crisis and provide essential community supports for many families. Marginalized communities can benefit from co-designing social organizations in addition to the built environments in which they inhabit. The implications will be that the current model of gentrification and “community development” will have to detach from a

Ethics

Housing is a human right that has been commodified by capitalism which has created many barriers for access, especially for marginalized populations. It is imperative to keep the quality of life, health, and autonomy of end users in mind at all times. Housing equity is a huge social, economic, and health-based issue that co-operative housing models are only a small part of. Co-housing is a potential community housing model that already exists, but current communities often have economic barriers that must be addressed before it can become a viable solution.

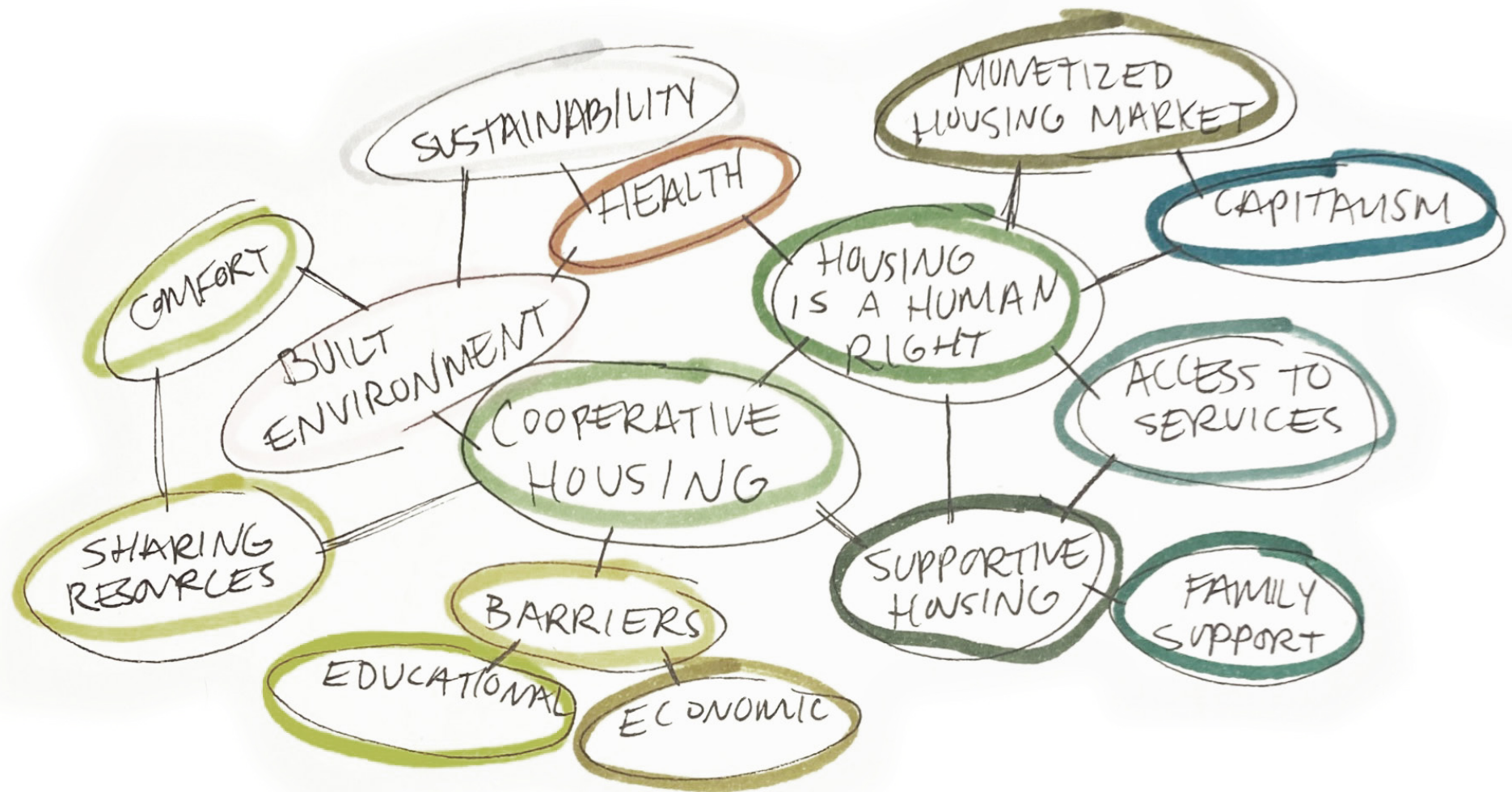
Positionality

My position on this topic is that co-housing could be a beneficial solution for social, economic, and health-based challenges of housing. I believe that all types of housing in all areas should be more accessible and not only defined by economic restraints. A bias that I have is that I would be open to living in this type of community, but I understand that many people do not have the desire to live communally.

Hypothesis

American culture often prioritizes individualism and personal prosperity over community-based lifestyles. Many people, especially parents of young children, require more support with homemaking and childcare tasks due to busy jobs to make ends meet. Parents might be open to a home and lifestyle that would allow more skillsharing rather than paying a babysitter, house cleaner, or shopper and/or relying on family and friends for assistance. Achieving this lifestyle would be difficult due to financial constraints of finding or creating such a community.

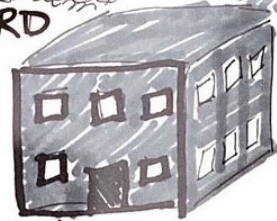
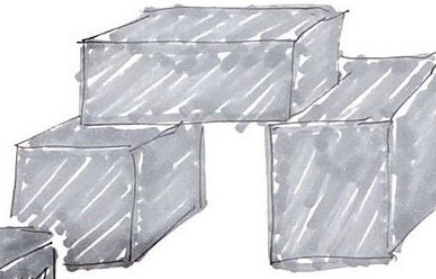
topic mapping



topic sketchnotes



INTERVIEW WITH
LINDSAY BEDFORD

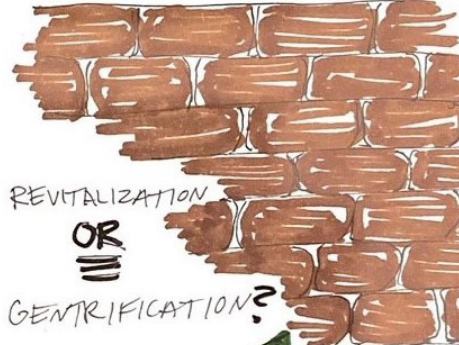


GRAY
RECTANGLE
INVASION



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

VS. GENTRIFICATION!



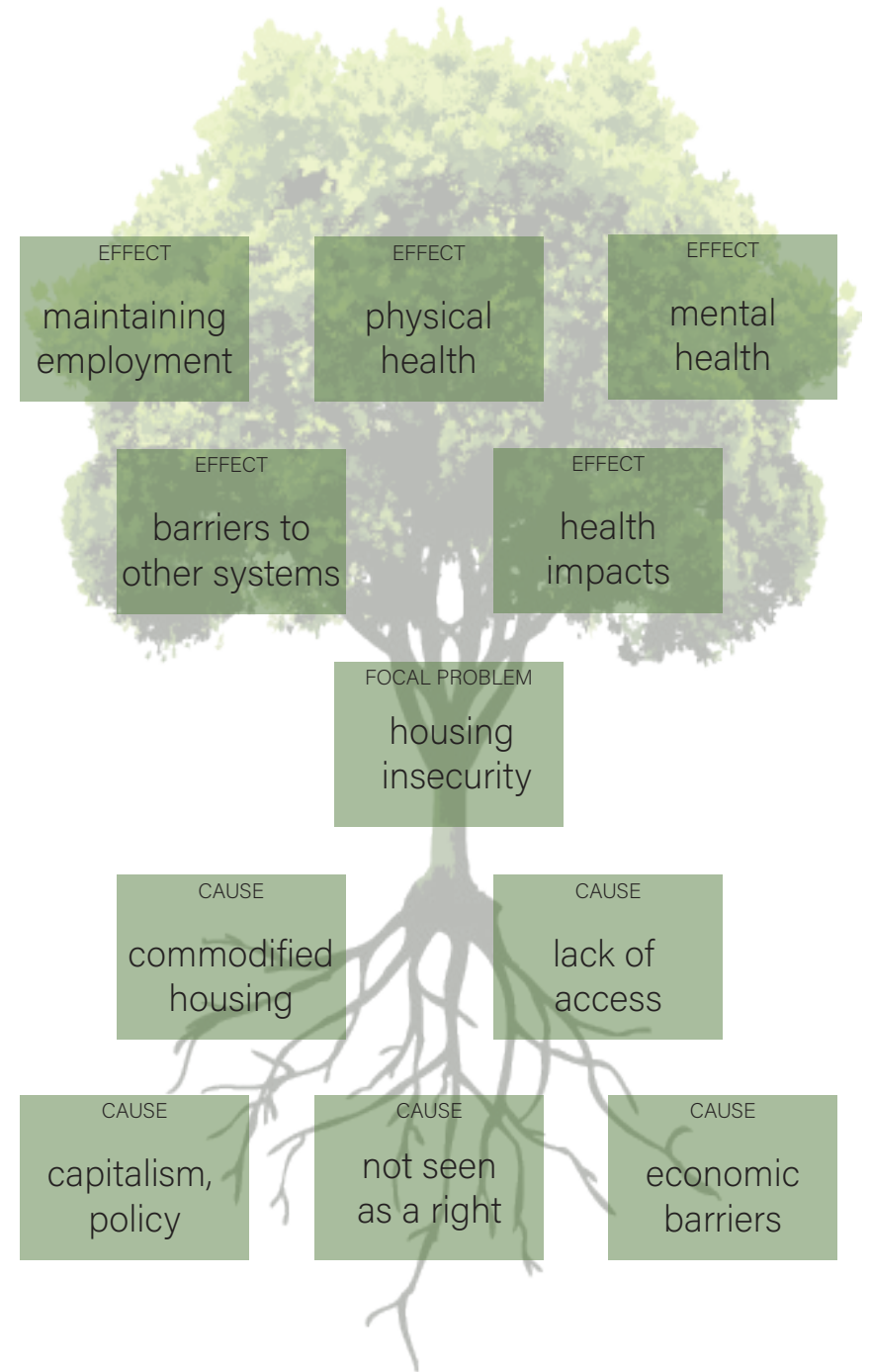
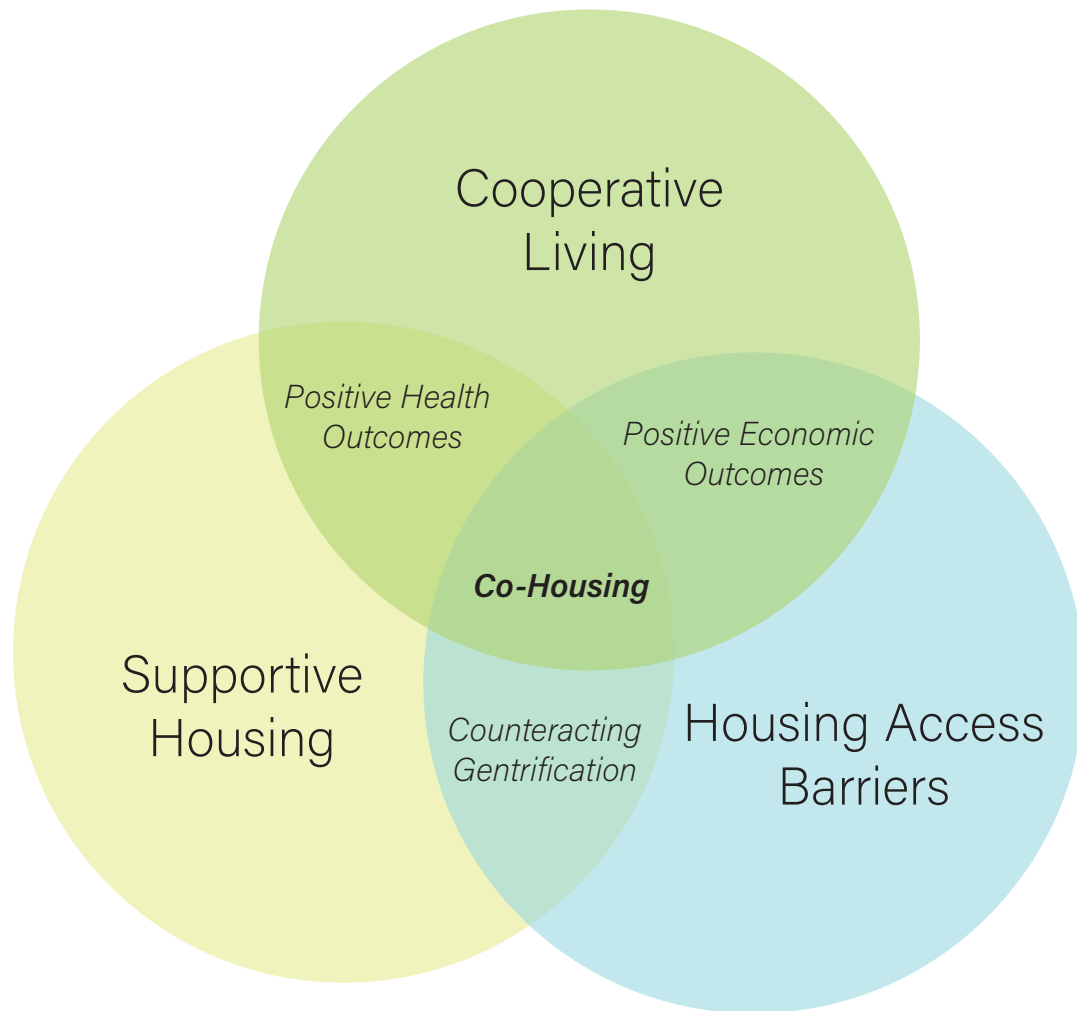
REVITALIZATION
OR
GENTRIFICATION?

WHAT RETAINS THE
ESSENCE OF A PLACE
WHILE IMPROVING IT?

CULTURAL
SIGNIFICANCE

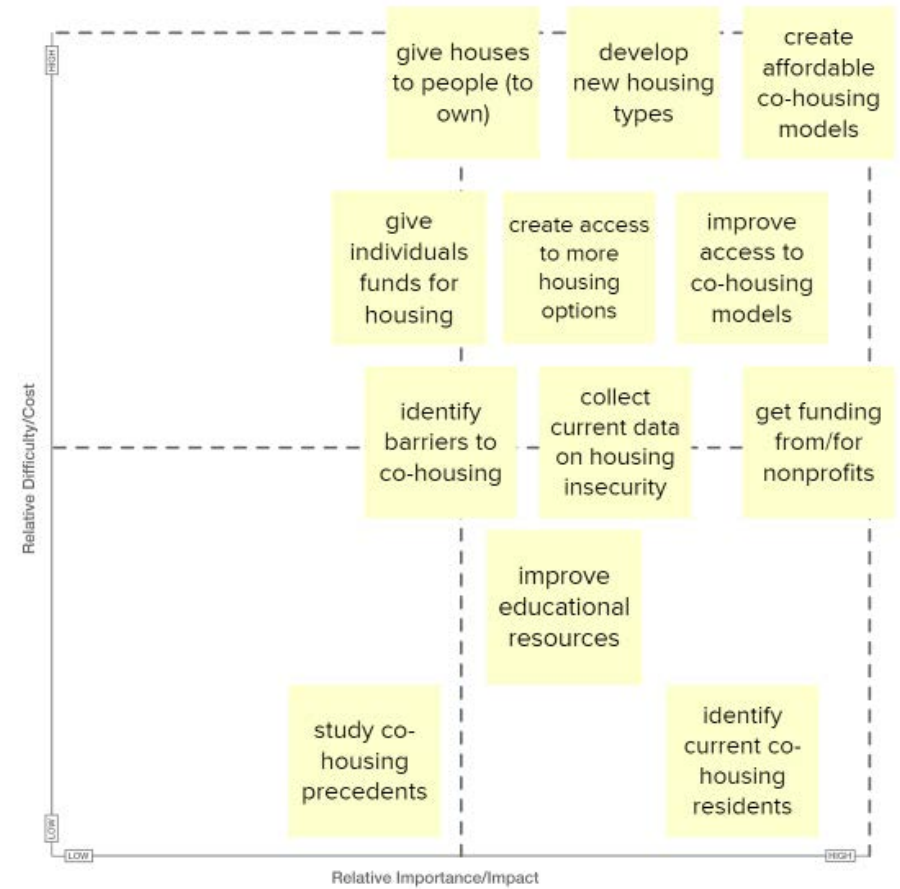


topic analysis



topic mapping

Challenges	Solutions	Fears	Dreams
Difficult to meet neighbors and new people	Living with friends & family	Not enough space in the home	Living in a community like a college dorm but for families
Overwhelmed with chores	Hiring more helpers	Chores cause un-needed excess stress	Children will help out more around the house
Supervising children 24/7	Assistance from family members	Not being a good parent or family member	Childcare responsibilities balanced allowing alone time
Financial limitations	Making more money	Running out of money	U.S. improves financial situations



personae




 **Jean** SHORT NAME
J

IMAGE 	OCCUPATION Hairdresser
AGE 28	NATIONALITY American
GENDER Female	MARITAL STATUS Single
MOOD IMAGES 	QUOTE I need extra support during my pregnancy and for caring for my children after the new baby is born. I want to live somewhere with a close-knit community and hopefully mentorship opportunities from older women and other moms.
	DESCRIPTION Jean is pregnant with her second child and recently single. She doesn't have any family in the area and is concerned about managing childcare and other chores after the baby is born and she has to go back to work. She would be happy to live in a community that shared some responsibilities and she would gladly offer hair salon services to her neighbors.




 **Charlotte** SHORT NAME
C

IMAGE 	OCCUPATION Retired Teacher
AGE 63	NATIONALITY American
GENDER Female	MARITAL STATUS Widowed
MOOD IMAGES 	QUOTE My husband passed away and my three children live far away, but I would still like to be in a community with others. I love children! I also enjoy gardening and cooking.
	DESCRIPTION Charlotte is a retired teacher who longs for more interpersonal relationships. She loves gardening and cooking and would like to share her passions with others.



 **Benji** SHORT NAME
B

IMAGE 	OCCUPATION Toddler
AGE 3	QUOTE I love my mommy and Ms. Charlotte because they let me play! I am excited for my new baby sibling.
GENDER Male	DESCRIPTION Benji is Jean's son. He goes to the childcare center to be cared for by Charlotte while his mom works. He loves to play on the playground equipment with his friends.

journey map



	Jean and Benji wake up and...	Jean drops Benji off with Charlo...	Jean goes to work as a hairdress...	Jean comes home and goes to c...	Jean and Benji go home for playt...
	Charlotte wakes up and has...	She meets Jean and other paren...	Charlotte leads fun and educatio..	Charlotte brings the children to t..	Charlotte takes a walk around th..
	Benji wakes up and eats br...	Benji meets Ms. Charlotte at the...	Benji play outsides with his frien...	Benji is tired from playing but ex...	Benji gets to spend time with his...

Jean JEAN'S JOURNEY

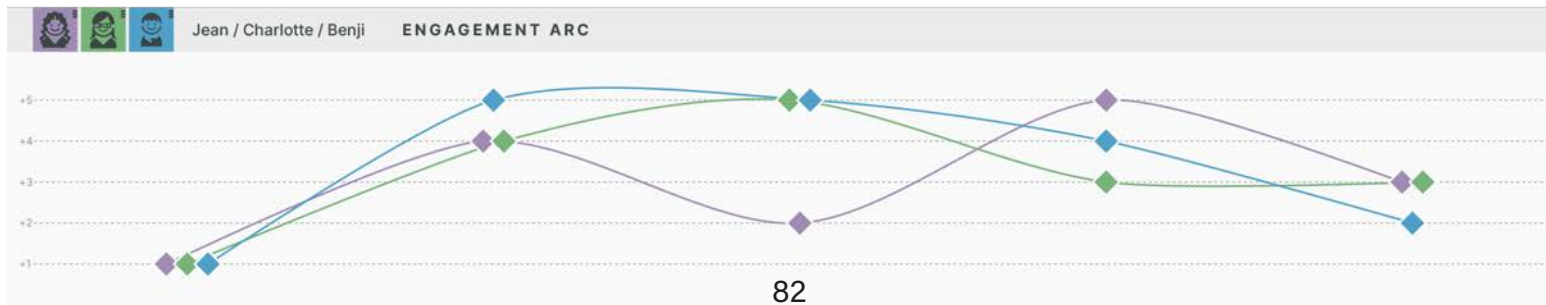
Jean and Benji wake up and have breakfast.	Jean drops Benji off with Charlotte at the childcare area.	Jean goes to work as a hairdresser.	Jean comes home and goes to community dinner where she reunites with Benji and Charlotte.	Jean and Benji go home for playtime then bed.
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Charlotte CHARLOTTE'S JOURNEY

Charlotte wakes up and has breakfast on her front porch.	She meets Jean and other parents at the childcare area to start the day.	Charlotte leads fun and educational activities for the children in her play group.	Charlotte brings the children to the community house and returns them to their parents.	Charlotte takes a walk around the vegetable garden before heading home to bed.
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Benji BENJI'S JOURNEY

Benji wakes up and eats breakfast with his mom.	Benji meets Ms. Charlotte at the childcare center and sees his friends there!	Benji play outsides with his friends and Ms. Charlotte.	Benji is tired from playing but excited to see his mom!	Benji gets to spend time with his mom and she tucks him into bed.
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