

POWER, ARCHITECTURE, TRANSITION

Creating a Safe Space for Victims of Domestic Violence

by

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I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis including any required final revisions as accepted by my examiners.

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Abstract

This thesis examines issues of poverty and homelessness in Toronto, specifically focusing on the needs of women and children who are the most vulnerable group and are homeless as a result of being victims of domestic violence. The thesis reflects on the power of architecture, relating to the limits of a physical environment created by an institution and how this effects rehabilitation and empowerment for shelter residents. This is a polemical thesis which creatively engages in the discussion of how informed design paired with an enlightened service model can create a positive implication on residents' recovery.

The traditional and institutional notion of the shelter, with its objective of correction, is not capable of extending beyond offering accommodation, to address the questions of fundamental concerns to our society. Violence against women is a crime that exists in secrecy. Survivors of domestic violence remain invisible, without a visible place to speak, without a place to tell their own stories. *Dialogue is transformative. Telling invokes transformation.*ⁱ In this context, a shelter can become a space of resistance.

This thesis proposes a model for designing a shelter that is based on transformation, rather than adaptation. A model that openly instills invention and dialogue. A model that can question the relationship between personal and public. The aim of this project is to allow for architectural affordance created through affect and syntax. By looking at program possibilities, such as thresholds and gradients of privacy, this thesis proposes an approach that mediates the relationships between shelter residents, their community, and the surrounding neighborhood.

ⁱ Silverman, Tami, and Chris Taylor. "Shelter: A Place of the Telling a Chimerical Cookbook." *Shelter, Women, and Development: First and Third World Perspectives*. By Hemalata C. Dandekar. N.p.: George Wahr, 1996. 367.

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*to my grandmother, mother, and sister
the most powerful women by my side*

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Introduction

This is a polemical thesis which creates tension between power, architecture, and dialogue through the lens of feminist theory. Currently, there is little to no research on design principles for domestic violence shelters, nor design directives on how they might typically look. The thesis illustrates some of the existing Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters in Toronto and takes a principal position on essential spatial arrangements for achieving empathic and dignified design.

The first chapter looks at the issue of homelessness in Toronto in general, focusing on the recently emerged trend of increased numbers of women and children on the street. Understanding the specificity of the issue of domestic violence and of the service delivery model for victims of violence helps to realize the distinction of VAW shelters and services from other homeless assistance in the housing continuum as a whole.

The second chapter looks at institutions and the affect space has on a person's rehabilitation. The chapter describes different architectural typologies, syntax relations and effects the institution produces on its residents at the different stages of their trauma, ranging from crisis care to transition. The institution is viewed as a Control tool, and this thesis questions the latter's ability to create support and provide agency for incoming users. The ultimate goal is to understand how the architecture of a VAW shelter could help in fostering empowerment and autonomy for its residents.

The third chapter looks closely at the issue of violence against women in general and speculates on the effect of an operational model for various domestic violence shelters, and on this model's expression within the architecture of those shelters.

This chapter asks such questions as when secrecy is appropriate and necessary, as well as what the social and spatial implications of silence are. Through this chapter, it becomes evident that an ability to inform the community and educate society on the topic of violence allows the breaking of stigma around victims of violence, in turn bringing awareness to their plight. Dialogue plays an important role in a person's rehabilitation and could be fostered through specific design strategies.

The fourth chapter introduces the idea of Transition & Liminality as a tool to address the issues discussed in the previous chapters. Through my interpretation of those discussed concepts, I create a design proposal which suggests an alternative to an institutional model of care. The project is meant to be a provocation intended to create a dialogue and to re-envision the domestic violence shelter, as well as its model of service delivery within the context of Toronto's urban fabric. The developed design proposal intends to bridge the gap between the city and the shelter through architecture. The thesis posits that this can foster community at different levels. It aims to illustrate what architecture can bring to the goal of creating an effective and welcoming shelter for women fleeing domestic violence. It serves to show how a sensitive and informed design can create the physical environment required to help women and children transition to a life free from violence. This goal is repeatedly sought through a specific design strategy and parti. The design strategy promotes self-determination through the multiplicity of spaces and uses in architecture, which creates a dynamic community of women and social bonds.

As there is no ultimate point of view on how to design the best possible domestic violence shelter, I based my informed position on the research I have done, and I thereby produced a set of principles which guided my design decisions. As the issue of domestic violence is vast and intricately complex, I am only focusing on the aspects discussed in this thesis. My goal is to address major issues by creating a gradient of public and private through the site strategy, and through syntonic

programmatic relations at the scale of the building. Programmatic relationships within the building and its program overlaps create a platform for different user groups to interact. The scale, architectural character, and proximity of those spaces become crucial to the design proposal, as they get informed by the principle position of using a domestic model for crisis and transitional care.

The method of research consisted of collecting data through visits to, and observations of facilities, as well as interviews with professional architects and shelter staff, and with specialists and social work professionals in Domestic Violence. Literature reviews helped to gain a deeper understanding of the base issues. Precedent analysis fostered to create design principles which I tested through an iterative design process so as to arrive at a speculative design proposal.

This polemical thesis looks at what has been done in the past to support the transition of women and children caught in the cycle of violence, and its research reflects on why previous architectural models have not been successful. It reflects on the power of architecture to relate to the limits of a physical environment created by an institution and responds to how this affects rehabilitation and empowerment for shelter residents. This thesis creatively engages in the discussion of how informed design, paired with an enlightened service model, can create a positive implication on residents' recovery.

The aim of the thesis is to establish the role of the domestic violence shelter in our society, asking questions like:

- Should the shelter to be an institution or a household?
- Who is the client? and, What is the continuum of care?
- How can a balance between agency and security be achieved? and,
- What architectural qualities allow for autonomy, control, and choice to foster self-determination and connection with others?



“Domestic violence did not threaten my childhood. Nor did it intrude into my world until ten years ago, when, on an assignment for a magazine, I saw a man hit his wife. I was unprepared for his violence - it shattered the belief I’d been raised with that home is a refuge from the chaos of life.”¹

Fig. 1. Bengt & Elisabeth

Part 1.

UNDERLYING ISSUES

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence (also named domestic abuse, battering, or family violence) is a pattern of behavior that involves violence or other abuse by one person against another in a domestic setting, such as in marriage or cohabitation. Intimate partner violence is violence by a spouse or partner in an intimate relationship against the other spouse or partner. Domestic violence can take place in heterosexual and same-sex family relationships and can involve violence against children in the family.

Domestic violence can take a number of forms, including physical, verbal, emotional, economic, religious, and sexual abuse. Globally, the victims of domestic violence are overwhelmingly women, and women tend to experience more severe forms of violence. Domestic violence is among the most underreported crimes worldwide.

In abusive relationships, there may be a cycle of abuse during which tensions rise and an act of violence is committed, followed by a period of reconciliation and calm. Victims of domestic violence may be trapped in domestic violent situations through isolation, power and control, cultural acceptance, lack of financial resources, fear, shame, or to protect children. As a result of abuse, victims may experience physical disabilities, chronic health problems, mental illness, limited finances, and the inability to create healthy relationships. Victims may experience psychological problems, such as post-traumatic stress disorder. Children who live in a household with violence often show psychological problems from an early age, such as dysregulated aggression, which may later contribute to continuing the legacy of abuse when they reach adulthood.

Family violence statistics in Canada are staggering, leaving some families in crisis, according to a new report from Canada's Chief Public Health Officer.² The effects of family violence can be long-lasting and often invisible to others. Women are often unable to identify that they are involved in domestic violence relationships. When they do, it becomes very difficult to break free from those relationships for various and complex reasons, but often because their life or the lives of their children will be in danger.³



Fig. 2. Toronto Street Sleeper.

Urgency of the Issue

every 6 days, a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner ⁴

87,820 victims of family violence in Canada in 2013⁵

2.5% of the population reported family violence ⁶

26% of crimes are family related⁷

70% of spousal violence is not reported to the police ⁸

15,657 annual number of admissions of women to shelters in Ontario in 2014 ⁹

1 in 4 women residents had sought shelter at the facility before ¹⁰

41% of women were not accommodated as shelters were over capacity ¹¹

On any given night in Canada, **3,491** women and their **2,724** children sleep in shelters because it isn't safe at home ¹²

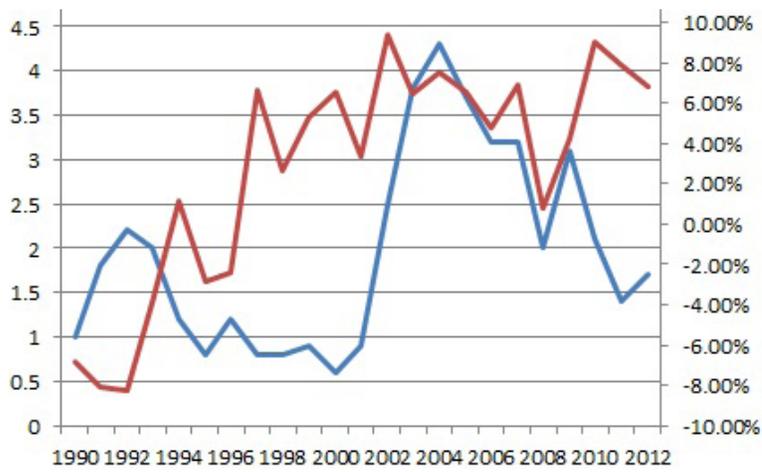


Fig. 3. Vacancy Rate vs %Price Growth. Housing market Toronto.

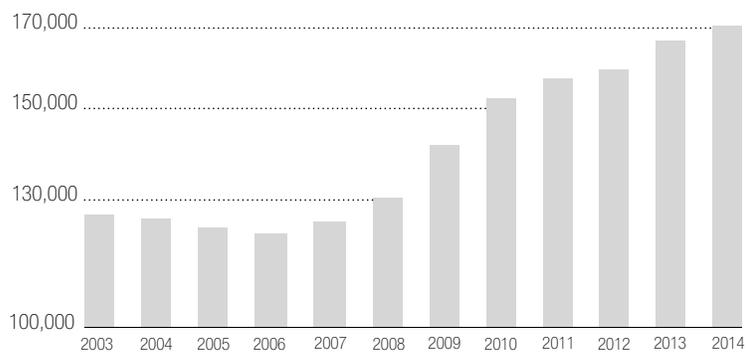


Fig. 4. Rent Geared to Income Trend Toronto. The number of Active Households on Waiting List.

Housing Crisis and Homelessness

In the past decade, Toronto has experienced a rapid growth of homelessness. The most unusual trend among these statistics is the increasing number of women and children on the street. Although women's and children's homelessness is a complex issue, domestic violence is often a trigger for many women to abandon their home in search of safety.¹³ Currently, Domestic Violence shelters for women become a means of emergency, short-term support in these situations. However, eventually, they must move on and find a permanent home.

The combination of high rent and lower income does more than create economic instability for marginalized women: these conditions create vulnerability to violence. After the shelter, many can't find an affordable place to go.¹⁴ Lack of affordable housing options is the number one reason women return to abusive relationships.¹⁵ As a result, a significant number of these families end up on the street.¹⁶

While Toronto is facing a housing crisis and rent prices are rapidly growing each year, fewer social or subsidized housing projects have been built. This creates conditions in which particular groups of women, such as low income, single women, women with large families and seniors, have difficulty finding suitable housing or a subsidized housing unit to fit their situation.¹⁷ Since rental vacancy rates are historically low in Toronto¹⁸ and the wait for a social housing unit is on average 1.4 years, few women are able to access appropriate housing after leaving a shelter.

Many emergency shelters for women and children fleeing violence and abuse allow a stay of up to 12 months, while others only offer a couple of weeks. After leaving a shelter, women are provided with municipal financial support to subsidize housing of their choice. They are also priority listed for social housing¹⁹, decreasing the wait from the typical 6.7 years to 1.4 years depending on the area within the GTA.

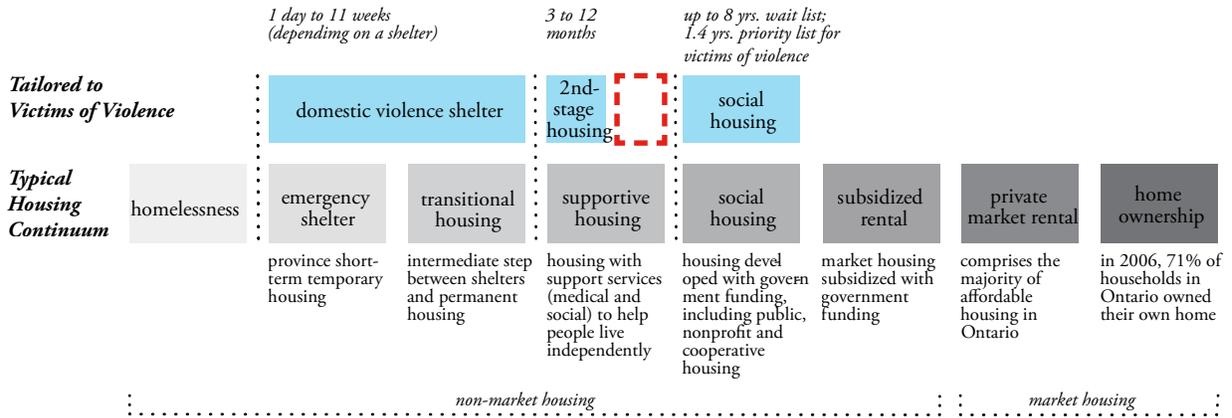


Fig. 5. Ontario Housing Continuum. Identified Gap in Service Delivery Model Tailored to Victims of Violence.

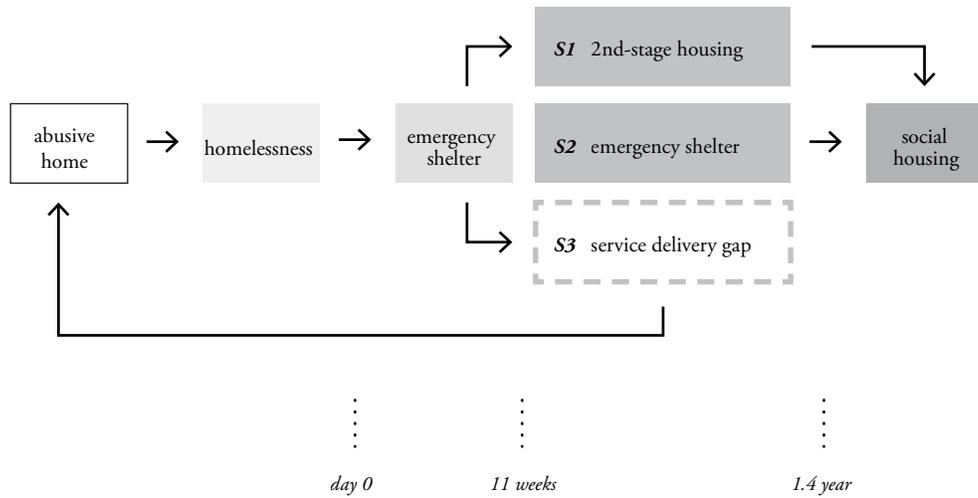


Fig. 6. Service Delivery Model for Victims of Violence.

However, within the constraints of the current housing market and proportionally low subsidies to rental prices, women have to compromise between cost of living, quality and size of a unit, as well as its location and accessibility to services, amenities, and schools.²⁰ It becomes very hard to find suitable rental options as landlords generally choose not to rent out apartments to people without a stable job or a bank account.²¹ Therefore, often areas that these women can afford are unsafe and targeted by drugs and crime²², becoming undesirable for raising children or 'getting back on your feet'. These conditions often make the transition of women particularly difficult.

According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), a person moves through the offered services continuum from emergency shelter to transitional and potentially supportive housing²³. This continuum becomes a link between homelessness and permanent home. In cases of survivors of violence those services differ, as a person would be referred to a domestic violence shelter instead of a typical homeless shelter. Even though the Province of Ontario defines very specific timing for each service to take place²⁴, in the paradigm of the current housing crisis in Toronto, one of the following three scenarios typically occur.

In the first scenario, the CMHC housing continuum suggests that the person should be moved to 2nd stage housing after emergency care took place. In this case, transitional programs become the next step, providing this person with a stable housing option. This scenario is the ideal situation. However, in Toronto these programs are very limited and admit fewer qualified candidates, meaning not widely available to all in need.

In the second and most common scenario, shelters allow residents to stay until they secure permanent housing, which is on average from 1 year to 1.4 years. Therefore, the shelter is not able to accept new residents, turning away 41% of clients seeking services.²⁵ In this case, the emergency shelter performs a double role of emergency and transitional care, covering a service delivery gap such as the absence of transitional housing. Ultimately, this limits providing assistance to only a few clients.

In the third scenario, shelters have strict guidelines in terms of time allowed to stay, and residents are asked to move after 11 weeks. The difficulty in finding affordable housing and making rent payments often forces women back onto the streets, or back to the abusers they fled in the first place. This scenario makes clear how the gap in service delivery in conjunction with the Toronto housing crisis adds to the cycle of violence and homelessness.

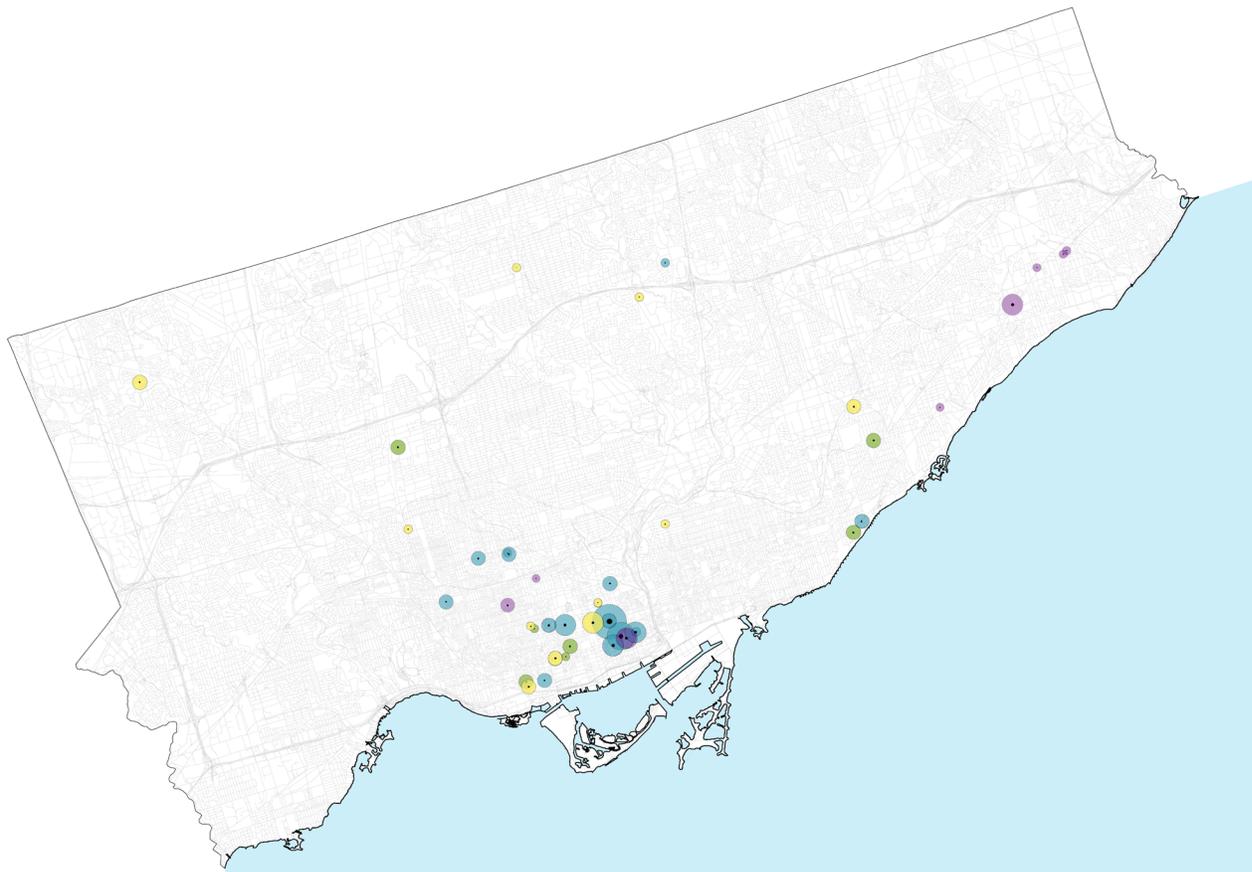


Fig. 7. Homeless shelters location and capacity map, Greater Toronto Area.

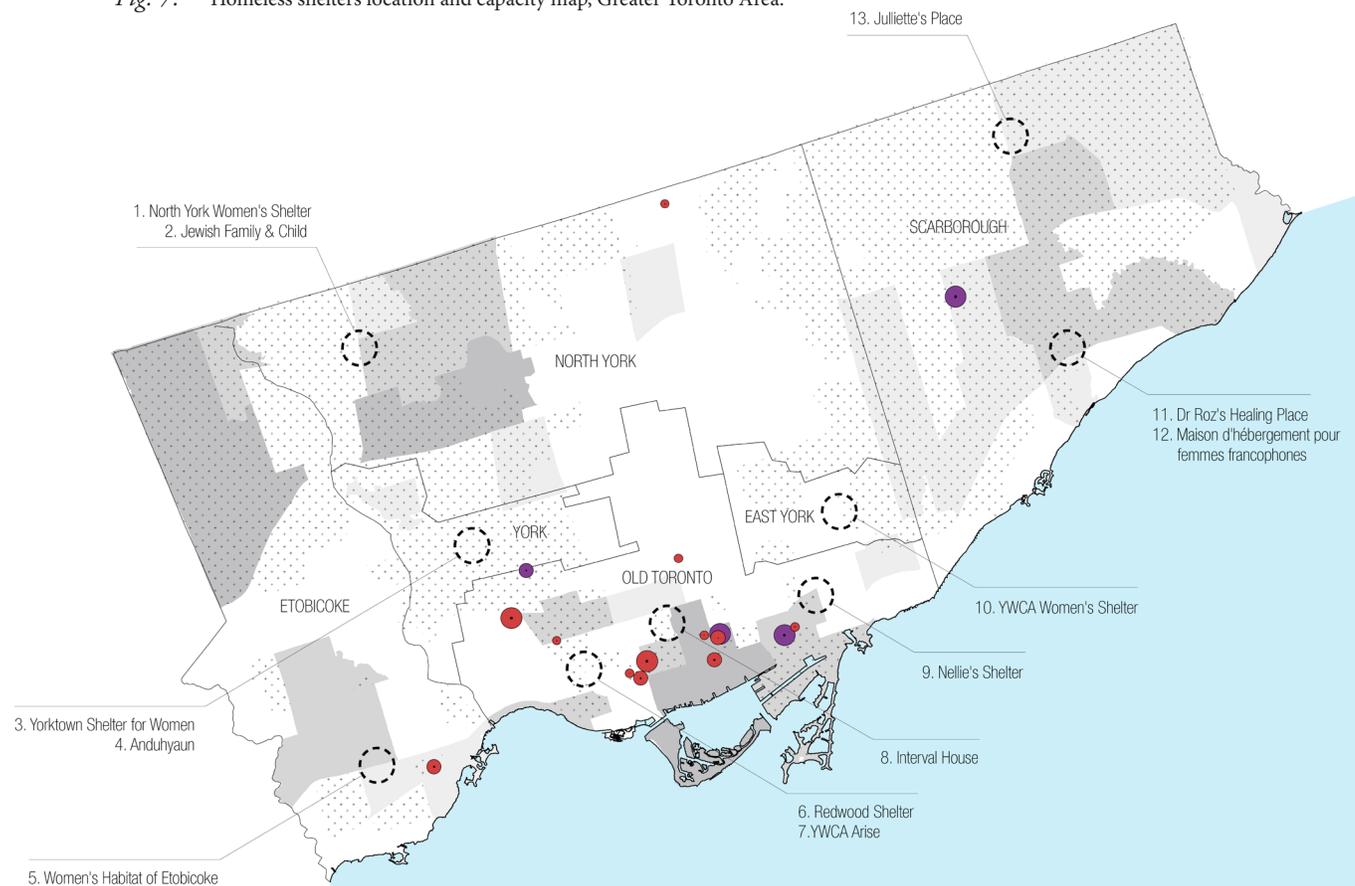


Fig. 8. Homeless shelters location and capacity in relation to poverty and crime levels map, Greater Toronto Area.

Homeless Shelters Toronto

Depending on the user group homeless shelters are classified in several categories: Single Women shelters, Single Men shelters, Mixed Adult shelters, Family shelters, Youth shelters, and Violence Against Women (VAW) often known as Domestic Violence shelters.²⁶

Among 59 government regulated homeless shelters in Toronto, only 12 shelters are dedicated specifically to women with a total capacity of 534 beds, with the largest shelter having a capacity of 100 beds. The number of men's shelters is much greater; there are 16 in total, with a total capacity of 1653 beds. The largest shelter for men can accommodate 580 people. Overall, the number of VAW shelters is the lowest. There are 13 shelters with 351 beds in total, meaning each one of them fits 25-30 people, children included.²⁷

This map shows homeless women shelters, which also could provide accommodation to victims of domestic violence. Although the exact location of the domestic violence shelters is kept secret, this map shows the approximate areas where they are located which are available at Find-help Information Services.²⁸ Through this exercise in mapping, it becomes evident that many of these shelters are located in the poorest areas of the city as well as the areas with the highest crime levels.

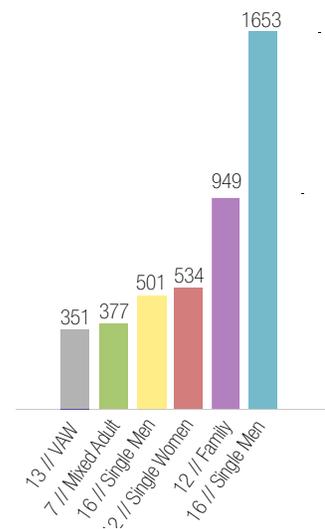
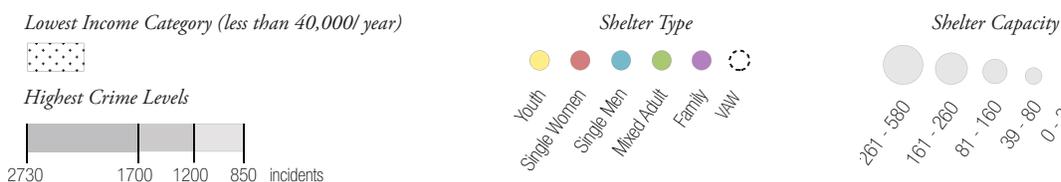


Fig. 9. Shelters capacity comparison.





“Shelters provide a supportive environment where women and children can obtain immediate refuge as well as helpful information and services. Many women who enter shelters go on from there to make a new start for their families. Unfortunately, there are still millions of women who live nowhere near a shelter. There are far more animal shelters in this country than shelters for women and children.”²⁹

Fig. 10. Battered Women’s Shelter.

Violence Against Women Services

Violence against women is understood to be the intentional and systematic use of tactics to establish and maintain power and control over women's thoughts, emotions, beliefs, and behaviors. Shelter services in Ontario were created as a response to domestic violence and the systemic inequality experienced by women. These services are intended to be women-centered, to support the safety of women and dependents fleeing violence, and to focus on each woman's immediate and long-term needs.³⁰

The first Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters appeared in the 1970's and were created by women survivors to provide a safe house for ones who might need it. While the movement was growing, and greater numbers of beds were needed, the shelters became more centralized and regulated, as they were receiving federal and provincial funding.³¹ Toronto shelters are not responsible for providing services within a particular catchment area, but rather existing shelters represent a network which services the entire city as a whole. Generally, to be referred to as a VAW shelter, women have to contact the Central Intake Service first, and then they will be forwarded to an available location.

VAW shelters differ from homeless women shelters or family shelters, which generally will not accept families fleeing violence. Victims of domestic violence are isolated in the sheltering system due to the potential threat or danger they might attract, affecting other homeless shelter' residents. To receive support from the shelter women must comply with access criteria - "experiencing, threatened by, and/or affected by violence and/or abuse"³². VAW shelters have higher levels of security to protect residents from potential violence from an abuser. Security cameras, bulletproof glass, secure entrance areas, reflective glass, and high walls are a few of the protective elements present in many shelters. However, not all residents of a VAW shelter are under the threat of violence from their partner, some women are more in need of temporary housing rather than protection.

There are three types of shelters available to women who have experienced abuse in Canada: emergency shelters, second-stage housing, and transitional housing. Emergency shelters are generally the first line of response for individuals who are looking for a safe place to stay. Those shelters are not designed for a long-term stay and perform an emergency function only. However, due to a shortage of affordable housing and the inability of women to find suitable options in a short period of time, often they are compelled to stay at the shelter for a longer term than anticipated. These shelters become the place where women gain protection, support, as well as knowledge and strength to move on with their lives.

Arriving at the shelter is chaotic. Women arrive with few possessions or none at all. They are traumatized and uncertain if they will only stay overnight or for a much longer time period. Usually leaving an abuser is a long process that involves a series of previous break-ups. On average, a woman will return to the shelter up to 3 times before she ultimately leaves her partner. The goal of the shelter is to support her choice as well as provide necessary resources. Although a therapeutic community is necessary for women's empowerment and transition, the shelters encourage all of the residents to leave for a second-stage housing or market housing as soon as possible.

Second-stage housing is designed for a secure long-term stay. The number of second-stage housing units is very low in Toronto and it has been decreasing the past few years due to reduced funding. Generally, large associations such as the YWCA (Beatrice House) or Woodbine, own a separate facility to house people who were staying at their particular shelter for longer periods of time. However, due to the housing crisis in Toronto those facilities rarely have new units available.

Transitional housing offers long-term accommodation and on-site services, such as daycare and educational spaces. They are available to women who are enrolled in a transitional program, such as Woodbine Homebound, and require commitment from their residents. The housing is available to women while they are program participants and they are expected to move out after they finish.

Most shelters in Canada offer a standard range of services for women: safety and protection planning, transportation services, advocacy on behalf of women, housing referrals, and individual short-term counseling. Shelters rarely have on-site day-care facilities; generally agreements are made with local schools and day-care centers. Although all of the shelters perform outreach work, most of the shelters will not allow on-site visits of non-residents or former residents.

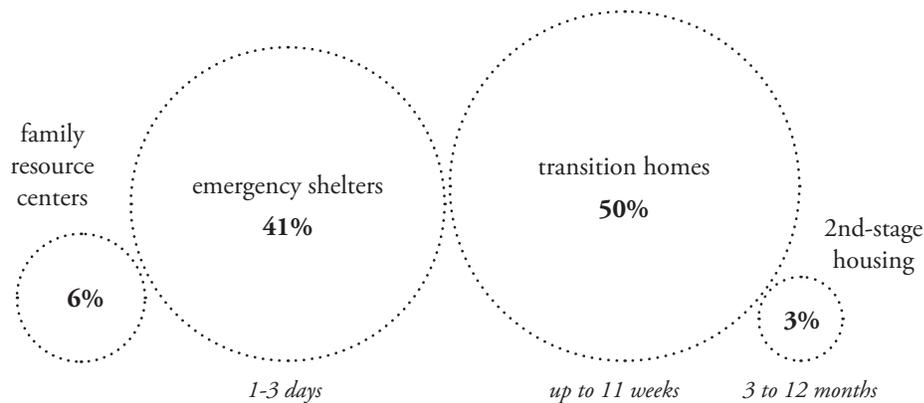


Fig. 11. Types of Support for Women and Children Fleeing Violence.

Fig. 12. VAW Shelters Toronto Statistic.

VAW Emergency Shelters		
<i>Name</i>	<i>Capacity (people)</i>	<i>Length of Stay</i>
1. North York Women's Shelter (closed down for renovation)	30	3 months
2. Jewish Family & Child	1	short-term
3. Yorktown Shelter for Women	30	n/a
4. Anduhyaun	18	n/a
5. Women's Habitat of Etobicoke	25	12-14 months
6. Redwood Shelter	33	short-term
7. YWCA Arise	27	3-6 months
8. Interval House	30	n/a
9. Nellie's	36	n/a
10. YWCA Women's Shelter	33	n/a
11. Dr Roz's Healing Place	33	n/a
12. Maison d'hébergement pour femmes francophones	n/a	n/a
13. Juliette's Place/Homeward Family Shelter	35	3 months



St Vincent De Paul Mary's Home



Street Haven at The Crossroads



Fred Victor Center Women's Hostel



St Vincent de Paul - Amelie House



YWCA 1st Stop Woodlawn



St Vincent de Paul - St Clare's Residence



Savards Women's Shelter



The Salvation Army Florence Booth



Women's Residence Bellwoods House



The Salvation Army Evangeline



Women's Residence



Society of St Vincent de Paul - Elisa House

Fig. 13. Typological study of homeless single women's shelters, Toronto.

Architectural Typologies of Women's Shelter

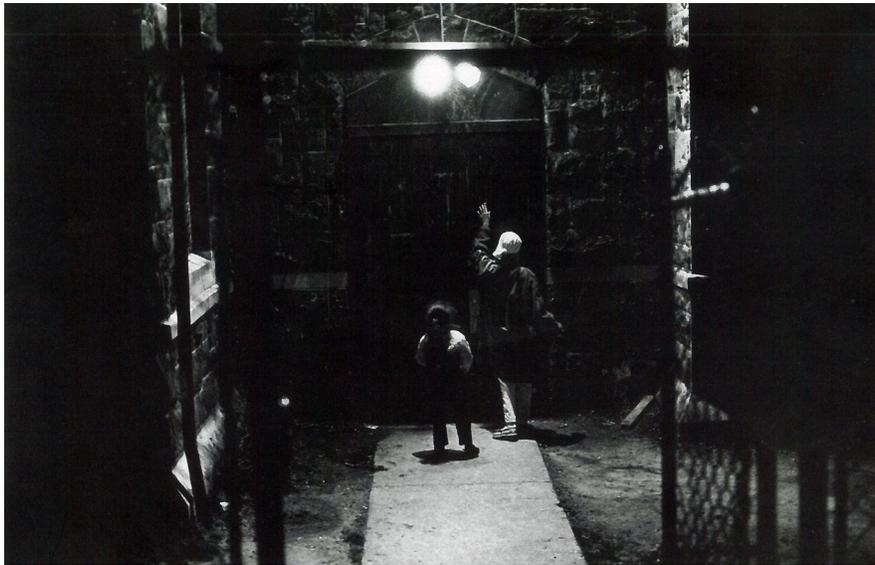
The architectural typology of VAW shelters is very recent and not fully established, as many shelters have re-purposed existing buildings. However, some elements are very common, such as a secure courtyard or backyard, offices and administrative spaces facing the street, and the typical organization of the intake area and entrances. Joan Sprague speaks of five housing types found as VAW shelters: “built as houses”, “built as apartments”, “built for temporary lodging” (hospitals, hotels, dormitories), “not built for dwelling” (churches, schools, industrial buildings), and “built for the purpose.”³³

The building type and its structural characteristics have a direct effect on the new uses. Existing structures are adaptively re-used to become shelters. While some houses are not designed to be shared by strangers, many of these accommodate households who have never met before and who are from different backgrounds. Temporary lodging is not designed with children in mind, and schools and factories are not suitable for residential purposes at all. In many cases, a building needs to be redesigned and altered to become a successful shelter project. Built for the purpose shelters usually have a greater flexibility and allow for more program-specific design. Geography of the place plays a considerable role in determining opportunity structure and situating within the city. Then the scale of the building will define the quality of community in the shelter.

Considering that all the VAW shelters in Toronto have a confidential location, their appearance should not reveal their program. Fig. 13 illustrates building typologies of twelve emergency shelters servicing single homeless women in the GTA. The wide range of building types is present from residential houses and apartment buildings to institutional buildings and warehouses. Based on my research, VAW shelters building typology follows a similar pattern.

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- ⁵ "Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile, 2013." *Government of Canada Publications*, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 15 Jan. 2015, www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2014001/article/14114-eng.pdf.
- ⁶ "Statistics: Domestic Violence." *Ministry of the Status of Women / Ministère De La Condition Féminine*, Government of Ontario, www.women.gov.on.ca/owd/english/ending-violence/domestic_violence.shtml. Accessed December 2017.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ "Table 2. Annual Number of Admissions of Women to Shelters, by Type of Shelter, Provinces and Territories, 2013/2014." *Government of Canada*, Statistics Canada, 30 Nov. 2015, www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2015001/article/14207/tbl/tbl02-eng.htm. Accessed December 2017.
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- ¹³ Gaetz, Stephen, et al. "The State of Homelessness in Canada 2014." *The State of Homelessness in Canada 2014 | The Homeless Hub*, Canadian Observatory on Homelessness; Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, 2014, www.homelesshub.ca/resource/state-homelessness-canada-2014.
- ¹⁴ "Housing First: a Special Report. Women/Children Fleeing Abuse ." *NPR*, 2002, www.npr.org/news/specials/housingfirst/whoneeds/abuse.html. Accessed December 2017.
- ¹⁵ "How Women Facing Violence Struggle to Access Safe Housing." *Torontoist*, 18 July 2016, www.torontoist.com/2016/07/how-women-facing-violence-struggle-to-access-safe-housing/. Accessed December 2017.
- ¹⁶ "Housing First: a Special Report. Women/Children Fleeing Abuse ." *NPR*, 2002, www.npr.org/news/specials/housingfirst/whoneeds/abuse.html. Accessed December 2017.
- ¹⁷ "Response to the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy Consultation." *Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH)*, December 2009, <http://www.oaith.ca/assets/files/Government%20Submissions/Affordablehousing.pdf>.
- ¹⁸ Gaetz, Stephen, et al. "The State of Homelessness in Canada 2014." *The State of Homelessness in Canada 2014 | The Homeless Hub*, Canadian Observatory on Homelessness; Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, 2014, www.homelesshub.ca/resource/state-homelessness-canada-2014.
- ¹⁹ "Special Priority Household Category." *Housing Connections - Housing Info / Special Priority*, www.housingconnections.ca/HousingInfo/SpecialPriorityHousehold.asp. Accessed December 2017.
- ²⁰ "Response to the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy Consultation." *Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH)*, December 2009, <http://www.oaith.ca/assets/files/Government%20Submissions/Affordablehousing.pdf>.
- ²¹ Harris, Matthew. "The YWCA Elm Centre to Provide Housing for the Most Vulnerable Toronto Residents." *BlogTO*, 23 May 2010, www.blogto.com/city/2010/05/the_ywca_elm_centre_to_provide_housing_for_the_most_vulnerable_toronto_residents/. Accessed December 2017.

- ²² “Response to the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy Consultation.” *Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH)*, December 2009, <http://www.oaith.ca/assets/files/Government%20Submissions/Affordablehousing.pdf>.
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- ²⁴ “Shelters for Abused Women in Canada, 2014.” *Government of Canada*, Statistics Canada, 30 Nov. 2015, www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2015001/article/14207-eng.htm. Accessed December 2017.
- ²⁵ “Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile, 2013.” *Government of Canada Publications*, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 15 Jan. 2015, www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2014001/article/14114-eng.pdf.
- ²⁶ “Emergency Shelters.” *Service Guides - Shelter, Support and Housing Administration | City of Toronto*, City of Toronto, 2017, www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=e29dd4b-4920c0410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD. Accessed December 2017.
- ²⁷ *211 Toronto. Ca*, www.211toronto.ca/. Accessed December 2017.
- ²⁸ “Shelter for Abused Women Located in Toronto.” *211 Toronto. Ca*, Findhelp Information Services, www.211toronto.ca/topic/Central%20Region/ORGANIZATION/fht261/Toronto.
- ²⁹ Ferrato, Donna. *Living with the Enemy*. Aperture, 1991. 48.
- ³⁰ “Violence Against Women (VAW) - Emergency Shelter Standards.” *Violence Against Women (VAW) - Emergency Shelter Standards | Ministry of Community and Social Services*, Government of Ontario, 16 June 2016, www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcss/open/vaw/vaw_Manual.aspx. Accessed December 2017.
- ³¹ Walker, Lenore E. “Safe Houses.” *The Battered Woman*, Springer Publishing Company, 2017. 191–193.
- ³² “Violence Against Women (VAW) - Emergency Shelter Standards.” *Violence Against Women (VAW) - Emergency Shelter Standards | Ministry of Community and Social Services*, Government of Ontario, 16 June 2016, www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcss/open/vaw/vaw_Manual.aspx. Accessed December 2017.
- ³³ Sprague, Joan Forrester. *More than Housing: Lifeboats for Women and Children*. Butterworth Architecture, 1991.



“Women seeking refuge often arrive at a shelter in the middle of the night, suffering from exhaustion, fear, stress, and physical injury. ... It’s ironic that these women – the victims of crime – are made to live like criminals, hiding in homes with bars on the windows, sleeping among strangers, donning disguises to go out in public, and always having to watch their back. Their husbands or boyfriends – dangerous, assaultive men – are the ones who remain safe at home.”³⁴

Fig. 14. Outside of shelter.

Part 2

INSTITUTIONALIZATION

Institutions and Rehabilitation

Building typologies such as offices, libraries, houses, suburbs are the embodiments of the social logic of space. This means that they are not only linked to specific social institutions, but also the spaces are structured in such a way that they become reflections of those institutions.³⁵

Architecture holds the potential to offer a range of spaces in its fundamental role as the organizer of social relationships. If change is to be fostered in the creation of institutional spaces, then two questions must be addressed: “what kinds of agencies are enabled and constrained by the particular building type?” and “whose interests are served?”

The existing model of shelters follows an institutional typology, meaning that an atmosphere of control is used as a means of security, rather than an atmosphere of self-growth and healing. Institutions create a sense of powerlessness among users.³⁶ In typical communal shelters, women often feel the opposite of empowered because they have to conform to many restrictions on their most basic activities, from how they deal with their children to how they interact with the outside world. The way these shelters are set up forces people who are already in a fragile state into potentially conflicting situations. The result is a tightly regulated and sometimes counterproductive environment.³⁷ The goal of this chapter is to rethink the spatial arrangements of women’s shelter design to allow for the empowerment and autonomy of the residents.

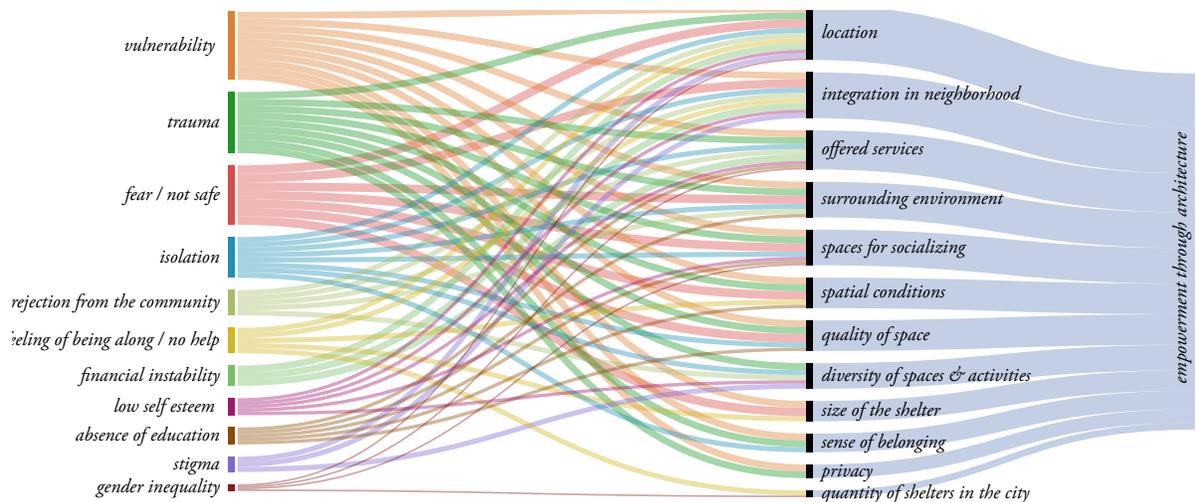
This thesis questions the existing architectural typology of the women’s shelter as an institution and seeks to inspire a discourse of what architecture can do to improve rehabilitation from trauma without becoming an institution of control. This is a polemical thesis that engages creatively in the discussion on the power of architecture and the limitations of the physical environment in affecting residents’ rehabilitation and empowerment.

Interdependence

Given that the human state of being and spatial qualities of an institution are engaged in a complex relationship, there is a correlation between feelings of isolation and architectural design.³⁸ Since social exclusion impacts the number of opportunities for transition, the architectural environment can have a positive or a negative effect on a person's rehabilitation. Trauma-Informed Design theory describes how spatial experience can enhance one's vulnerability, fear, isolation or trauma. Thus, experiential factors such as the sense of belonging, diversity of spaces, and integration into the neighborhood can be addressed through architectural syntax and atmosphere.

Although women's shelters provide the quintessential "safe" house, they rarely restore the true experience of home that the women have lost. For many women, feelings of safety and security are closely tied to the idea of "home." Despite the complexity of meaning and the difficulties and disruptions surrounding this idea, women retain deep attachments to their domestic space as the place where they and their children belong. The definition of home is associated with the notion of possession of objects, which are associated with self-identity. When these are destroyed, this can have a powerful impact on women's sense of security and place.³⁹

Upon arrival at the shelter, the main difficulties encountered include overcrowding, shared amenities, poor standards of hygiene, lack of privacy, a behavior of other residents, the lack of regulations for women with older male children.⁴⁰ For many women, the act of going to a shelter is viewed as a step-down in status, a loss of independence and autonomy. They feel fearful and terrified when they make the choice to come to the shelter. They often don't know what to expect, and poor conditions of a shelter have a direct impact on their transition and ability to break free.



“Imagine being at one of the most frightening and confusing points in your life, then being thrown suddenly into a roommate situation with several strangers who are also in crisis, all the while feeling like you are in hiding and isolation from the larger community around you.”⁴¹

Fig. 15. Interrelation of a psychological state, spatial atmosphere, and architectural design.

The ability to customize her environment, or control her own movements through the building, puts a person in control and makes them feel that they have free agency.⁴² VAW shelters have high levels of security to protect residents from violence from previous abusers. Security cameras, bulletproof glass, secure entrance areas, reflective glass, and high walls are a few of the protective elements found in many shelters. When a woman has just arrived at the shelter, disoriented and threatened, that level of security will reinforce her feeling of safety. However, when she stays at the shelter for an extended period of time, having to report her every step and needing to request access to the common spaces, her perception can change. Those feelings of safety and protection can quickly shift to feeling controlled and manipulated.

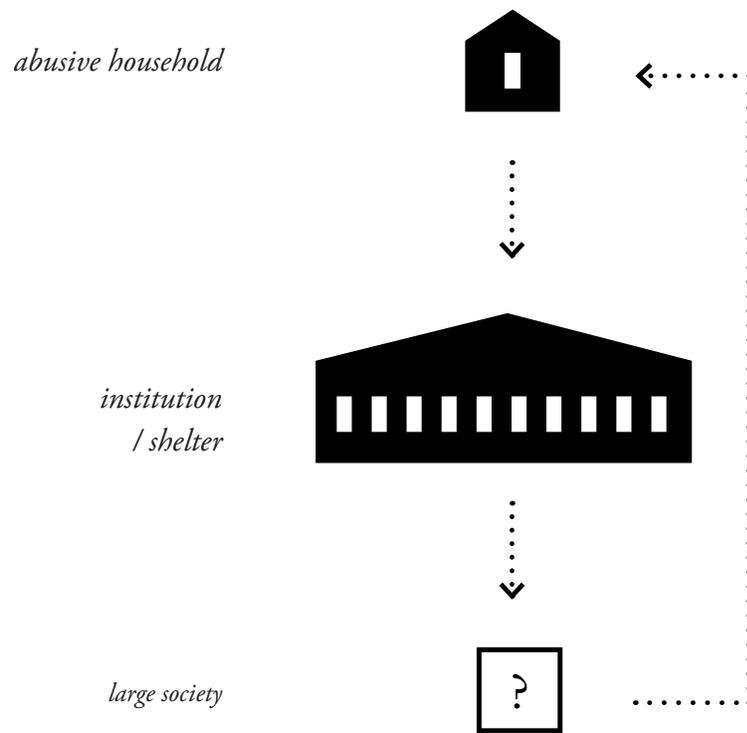


Fig. 16. Cycle of Control.

Cycles of Control

Women who have experienced domestic violence are often stigmatized. Unfortunately, these women, not the abuser, are the ones who are blamed in our society.

The traditional, institutional notion of the shelter, with its objective of correction, is not capable of extending beyond offering accommodation to address the questions of fundamental concern to our society.⁴²

Control is at the core of the dynamics in a relationship that results in domestic violence. Battering is only one of many symptoms, and it is also the most visible and the easiest to define. However, extreme forms of control and domination are the most damaging and traumatic, leaving lifelong traces of trauma and defining women and their families' ability to cope, transition, and become empowered, ultimately perpetuating a cycle of violence.⁴³

Emergency shelters are a form of societal response to the violence against women, intended to provide a refuge for ones whose lives are in danger. The need to treat domestic violence as a disease is usually overlooked by society who is naive to the root problem. The atmosphere of control in existing institutional shelters is no different from the abusive household women are fleeing from. To break the circle of violence we need to break the patterns of control and allow a person make their own choices. Shelters as an institution do have an ability to create an empowering environment, as opposed to perpetuating these dynamics of control. The spatial atmosphere and architectural syntax play a key role in this process.



Fig. 17. Battered Women's Shelter.

VAW Shelters in Toronto

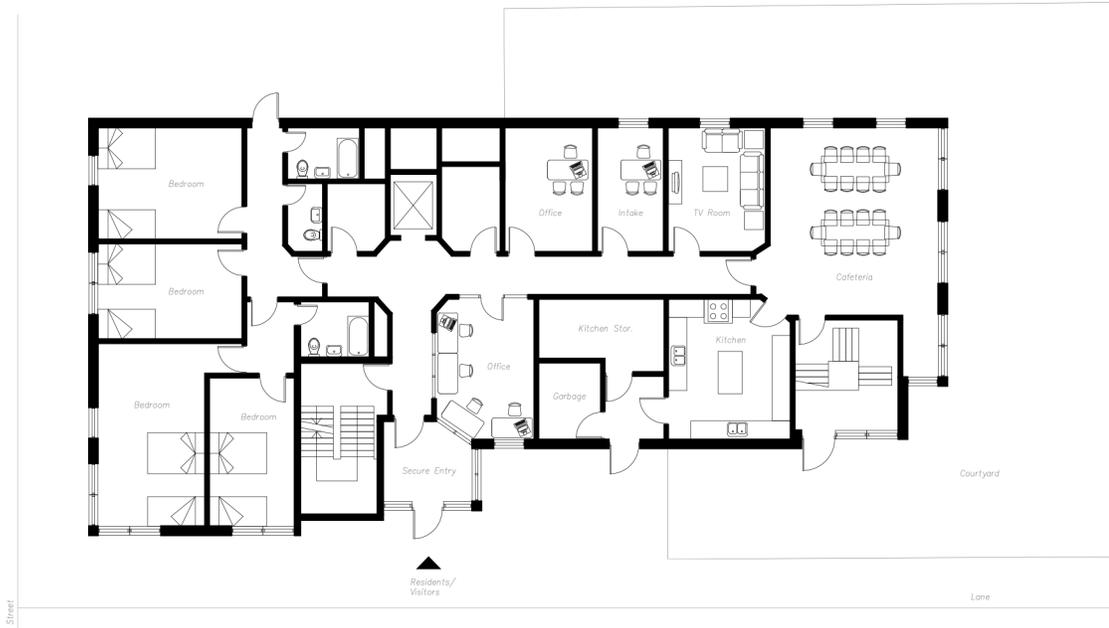
To analyze the effect of existing institutions on people's rehabilitation and transition I have selected four different VAW shelters located in Toronto to visit and document through sketches and photographs. This is the first time that the floor plans for case studies 1, 2 and 3 have ever been published. In the case of VAW shelters in Toronto, no documentation of the shelter layouts exists because of the need for secrecy. In order to understand and analyze the typology, I have had to extrapolate plans and information using drawings sourced from the shelters, GIS data, hand sketches, and personal observations. The only exception is Robertson House, as those floor plans were published in 1999 in *The Canadian Architect* (vol. 44, no. 3). In order to maintain the privacy of each shelter, the location and the names of organizations have been removed. All of these case studies are renovations of residential building typologies that were re-purposed as shelters. However, the vision of each organization running the institution varies, and this is reflected in spatial organization and the way the building operates.

Each precedent is evaluated in six categories: 1. the level of controlled access; 2. institutional organization of space; 3. agency given to residents and level of their independence in inhabiting the building; 4. level of privacy; 5. quality of the communal environment; 6. quality of space dedicated to staff. Though evaluation of each shelter is subjective, based on my observations and informed opinion, it is important as a tool to help analyze these case studies on a comparable scale. The following statistical information is provided to support evaluation criteria assessment.

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B



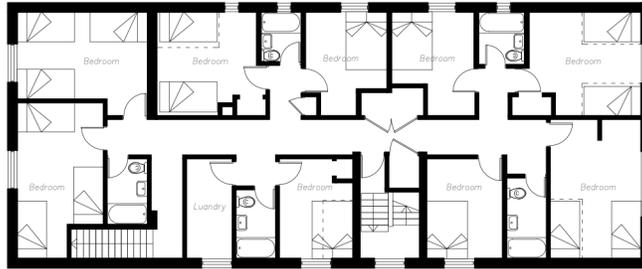
Fig. 18. Case Study 1. Floor Plans 1:250

Case Study 1

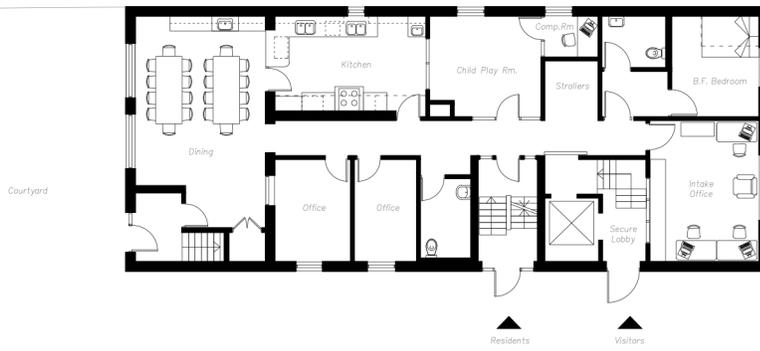
Controlled Access	● ● ● ○ ○
Institutionalization	● ● ● ○ ○
Agency/ Independence	● ● ● ○ ○
Privacy	● ○ ○ ○ ○
Communal Environment	● ● ● ○ ○
Inclinable Staff Area	● ● ● ● ○

Length of Stay	3 months	Total Interior	925 sq.m.
Number of Beds	35	Dining	37 sq.m.
Number of Rooms	12	Kitchen	19 sq.m.
Shared Bathrooms	Yes	Living	30 sq.m.
Independent Cooking	Yes	Bedroom (average)	19 sq.m.
Program Space	No	Child	48 sq.m.
Flexible Sleeping Units	No	Program	n/a
Bridging with Neighborhood Program (on-site consultations for returning clients)	Some	Staff Area	105 sq.m.
		Service	160 sq.m.
		Outdoor	270 sq.m.

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B

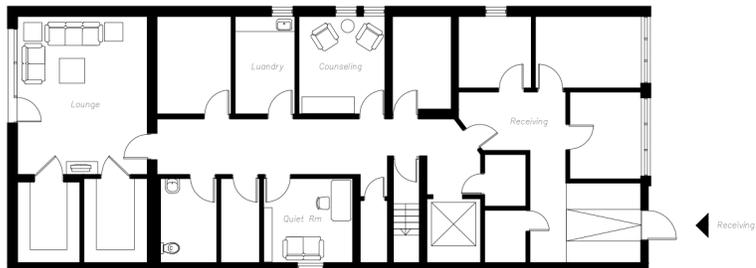


Fig. 19. Case Study 2. Floor Plans 1:250

Case Study 2

Controlled Access	● ○ ○ ○ ○
Institutionalization	● ● ○ ○ ○
Agency/ Independence	● ● ○ ○ ○
Privacy	● ● ○ ○ ○
Communal Environment	● ● ● ○ ○
Inclinable Staff Area	● ○ ○ ○ ○

Length of Stay	14 months	Total Interior	510 sq.m.
Number of Beds	25	Dining	28 sq.m.
Number of Rooms	10	Kitchen	16 sq.m.
Shared Bathrooms	Yes	Living	31 sq.m.
Independent Cooking	Some	Bedroom (average)	10 sq.m.
(the kitchen is unavailable to residents in the certain hours)		Child	12 sq.m.
Program Space	No	Program	n/a
Flexible Sleeping Units	No	Staff Area	43 sq.m.
Bridging with Neighborhood Program	No	Service	85 sq.m.
		Outdoor	240 sq.m.

+2



+1



Fig. 20. Case Study 3. Floor Plans 1:250

Case Study 3

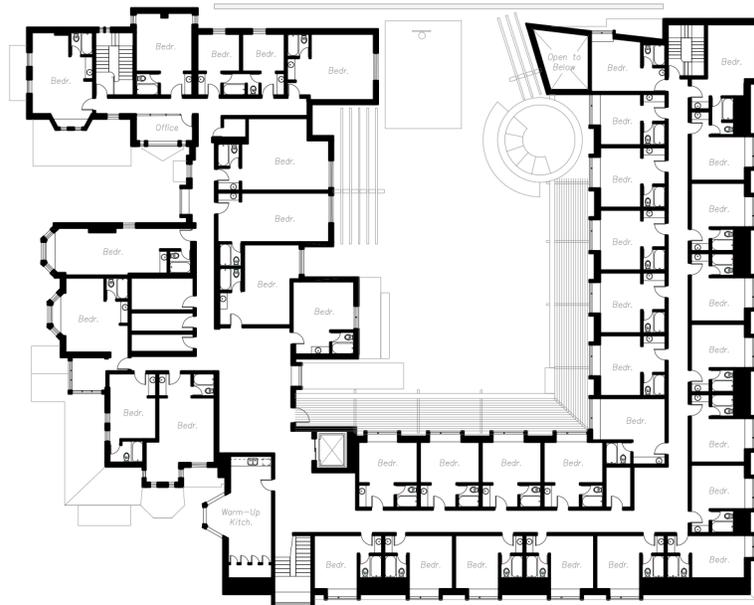
Controlled Access	● ○ ○ ○ ○
Institutionalization	● ○ ○ ○ ○
Agency/ Independence	● ● ● ● ○
Privacy	● ○ ○ ○ ○
Communal Environment	● ● ● ● ○
Inclinable Staff Area	● ● ○ ○ ○

Length of Stay	9 months
Number of Beds	27
Number of Rooms	9
Shared Bathrooms	Yes
Independent Cooking	Yes/
Program Space	No
Flexible Sleeping Units	No
Bridging with Neighborhood Program	No

Total Interior	350 sq.m.
Dining	31 sq.m.
Kitchen	19 sq.m.
Living	22 sq.m.
Bedroom (average)	17 sq.m.
Child	n/a
Program	n/a
Staff Area	16 sq.m.
Service	15 sq.m.
Outdoor	240 sq.m.

Note: the mansard space is adapted as livable space and follows a similar layout to the second floor with four bedrooms, two bathrooms, and laundry space.

+2



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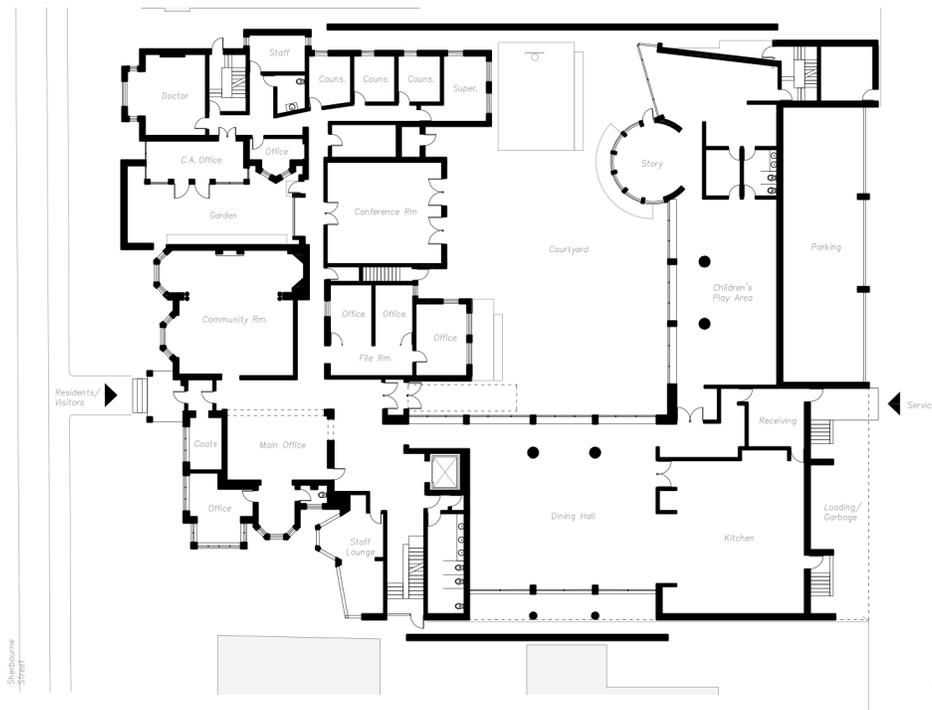


Fig. 21. Case Study 4. Floor Plans 1:500

Case Study 4

Controlled Access	● ● ○ ○ ○
Institutionalization	● ● ● ● ○
Agency/ Independence	● ○ ○ ○ ○
Privacy	● ● ● ● ○
Communal Environment	● ○ ○ ○ ○
Inclinable Staff Area	● ● ● ● ○

Length of Stay	3 months	Total Interior	2050 sq.m.
Number of Beds	90	Dining	140 sq.m.
Number of Rooms	37	Kitchen	100 sq.m.
Shared Bathrooms	No	Living	70 sq.m.
Independent Cooking (meals served 3 times daily)	No	Bedroom (average)	17 sq.m.
Program Space (child area program dedicated)	Some	Child	170 sq.m.
Flexible Sleeping Units	No	Program	---
Bridging with Neighborhood Program	No	Staff Area	305 sq.m.
		Service	60 sq.m.
		Outdoor	340 sq.m.

Note: Robertson House. Designed by Hariri Pontarini Architects in 1998 as a domestic violence shelter, the building has been reconstructed, changing original architectural design intent. Presented floor plans include those changes and show the current built condition at the moment of documentation. The most significant change is a modification of the daycare space into a child play area (1) and the residential lounge into a staff conference room (2). Today, the building is run as a family shelter and does not house victims of violence. However, architectural character and spatial syntax are very similar to the initial design.



Fig. 22. Policeman with binoculars.

Disciplinary Society and Society of Control

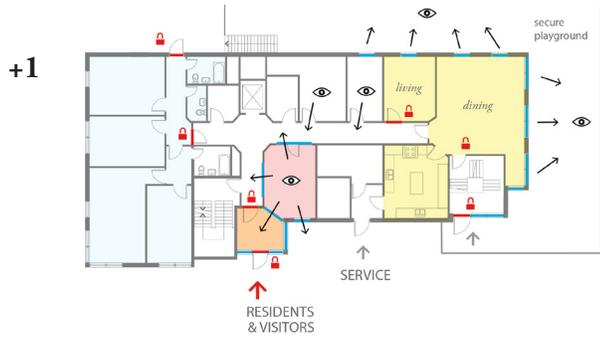
This thesis is an opportunity to determine an architecture that resists becoming a diagram of social and institutional structure. Design has the potential to offer and enhance various spatial experiences and to allow for different outcomes, free from existing social views.

Michel Foucault describes boarding schools, psychiatric hospitals, prisons, and retirement homes as “heterotopias.” Heterotopias refer to, but differ from, other spaces in mainstream society. They are reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis or deviation, as they do not belong to the required norm.⁴⁴ In this sense, a shelter can be considered a heterotopia as well. Abused women who no longer form a part of a family become vagrants and are perceived as a threat to society who must be institutionalized and controlled.

Following Foucault’s ideas on “disciplinary societies”, Gilles Deleuze describes the concept of “societies of control”, which questions how control, freedom, and our orientation to control and freedom function within an insistently interconnected technological and surveilled world.⁴⁵ While disciplinary societies require the concentration of population to be within structural boundaries, in the societies of control there is a shift from enclosed structures to entangled systems. Due to evolved technologies, there is no need to erect walls in order to create surveillance.

With regards to a VAW shelter, a different architectural typology can, therefore, be established in order to protect its residents. This typology prevents the building from becoming a rigid closed system only responding to worst case scenarios. The relationship between resident and institution can be restructured to hand “*power-to*” instead of allowing the building to have “*power-over*,”⁴⁶ thereby reversing the position of power so that the resident is in control, rather than being controlled.

C1.



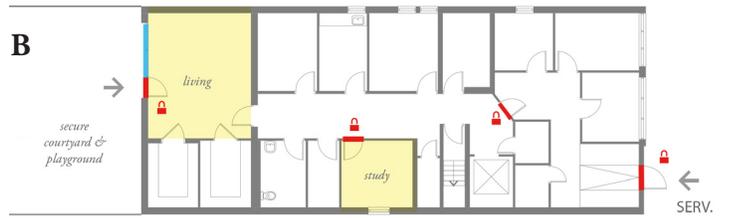
B



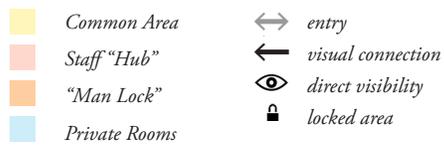
C2.



B



C3.



C4.

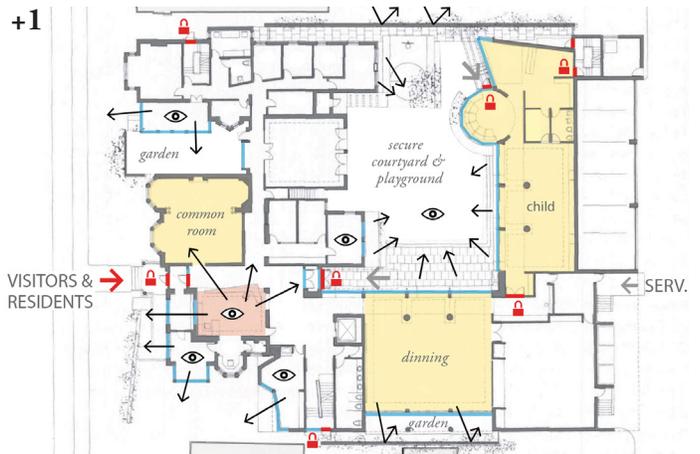


Fig. 23. Surveillance and visibility in relation to a building program in case studies diagrams.

Control as Security

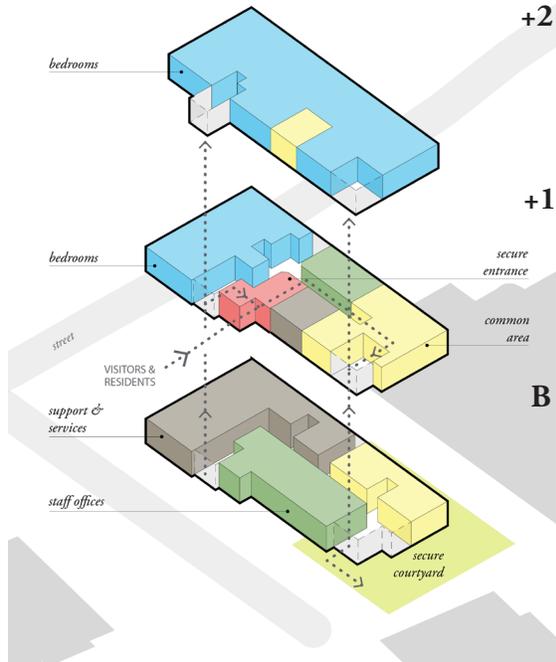
Physical constraints, flexibility, responsiveness, privacy, spatial syntax, defensible space, and certain symbolic elements are key design concepts salient to control. Physical constraints that reduce choice or behavioral options can produce or exacerbate stress. Prolonged experiences with uncontrollable environmental conditions have also been associated with learned helplessness.⁴⁸

Control and restriction mechanisms become even more evident when looking at security measures set within the building. The diagrams on the opposing page illustrate various control dynamics between the institution and its residents within previously discussed case studies.

In these examples, two distinct restraining types are present. The first disciplinary mechanism is created by limiting access of residents to common areas of the building and includes “man-lock” types of entry. Restricted access compromises and limits residents’ agency, creating the atmosphere of control. “Man-lock” is a process where a visitor is locked in a secure entry space until their identity is verified. Similar entry types are used in prison designs and cause particular psychological effects on its detainee.

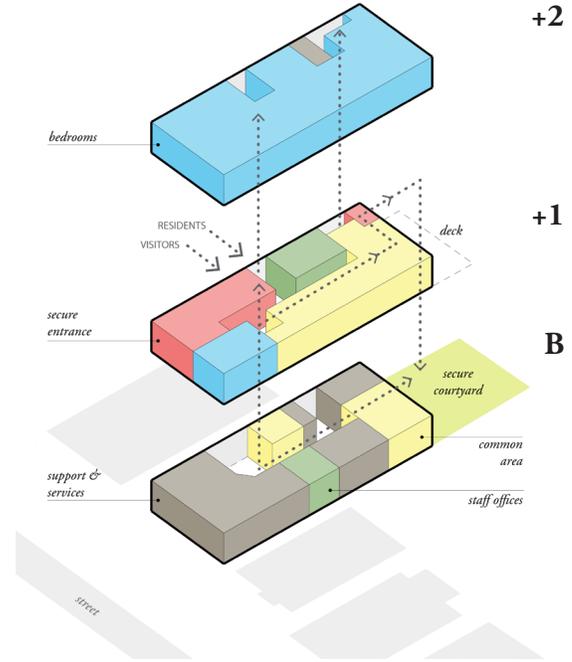
The second restraining mechanism is visual surveillance, which functions as a reflection of a control-based society. The orientation of staff spaces and the strategic placement of windows or glass partitions are used to overlook certain areas that require additional surveillance, such as entryways and enclosed outdoor areas. In some examples, residents’ common areas will be observed by staff at all times, compromising residents’ freedom of movement and potentially causing stress.

C1.



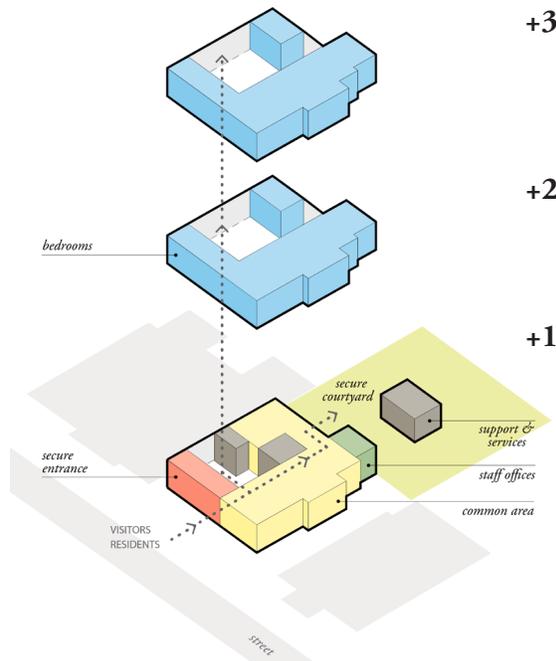
35 residents
25% residential area
14% common space

C2.



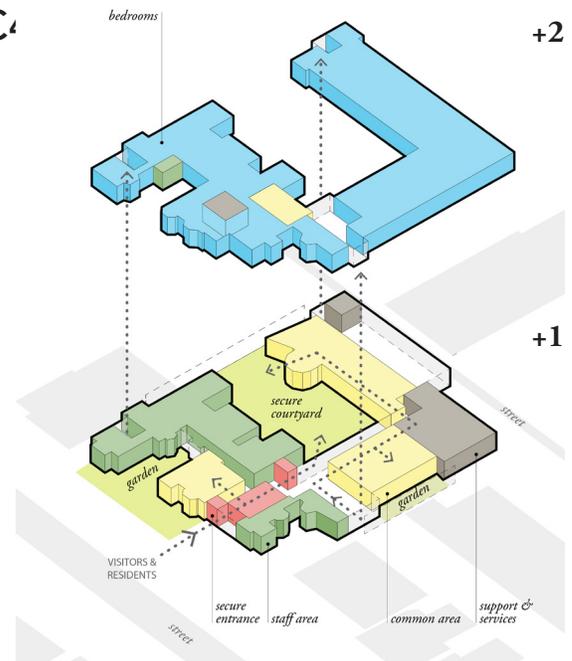
25 residents
22% residential area
17% common space

C3.



27 residents
47% residential area
21% common space

C4.



90 residents
35% residential area
16% common space

Fig. 24. Programmatic interrelation in case studies diagrams

Programmatic Interrelation

Regardless of the architectural form of the building, or the type of construction (new build, renovation, or occupancy change) the documented shelters shared a common spatial organization. The ground floor serves more public program, including an intake, kitchen and dining, and staff offices. The upper floors are primarily dedicated to bedrooms. Common spaces are rarely the focal point of shelters due to the lack of space or the priority to provide a greater number of sleeping units. Spaces such as the living room or common room, kids playroom, and teens area are placed either on the ground floor where they are monitored by staff for easy security visibility, or in the lower/ basement level, often requiring a staff to allow access or to “sign off” the space.

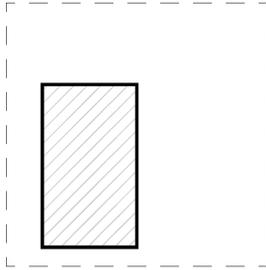
Common areas are essential for community building and bonding among the residents. By creating an atmosphere of surveillance, and locating those spaces in areas with limited daylight or absence of outside views, the residents may feel reluctant to use those spaces.⁴⁹ Depending on the size of the shelter, allocating sleeping areas and common spaces on different levels within the building create a discrepancy in the program and in the way the building is inhabited.

Spatial Analysis

The following diagrams are a collection of common principals drawn from analyzing approximately 50 design projects of VAW shelters. Buildings were divided into several categories, each describing existing design approaches and illustrate their correlation to context. The list is not extensive and principles described have room for interpretation.

There is no ideal approach for each typological category, as an appropriate type is dependent on the surrounding context. Even with the varied opinions on the proper way of delivering services in the community of domestic violence shelters, some principles could be seen more preferable than others. However, often the views themselves become contradictory, ultimately making the principles subjective. Thus, the goal of this spatial analysis is to create the basis for an informed opinion. These principals are not meant as prescriptive guidelines, but rather a catalog of approaches to draw syntaxes for my thesis design intervention.

Building Type



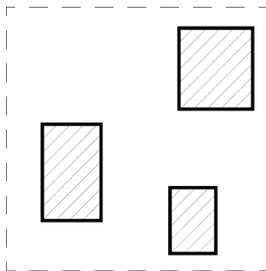
Single building (fortress)

Individual building with a controlled entrance, which could consist of single house, houses with addition, or adjacent houses

institutional

somewhat defensive

safe inner-community interactions



Clusters (campus)

Number of buildings enclosed by a fence

less institutional

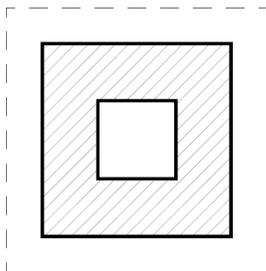
less defensive

privacy within each cluster

different control levels

allows split program into clusters

some clusters might serve the neighborhood



Courtyard

Inward looking building with enclosed outdoor space

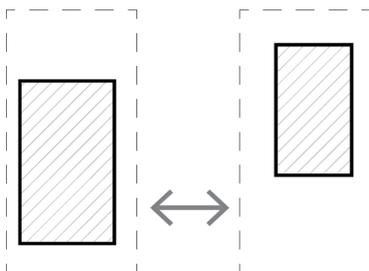
very institutional

defensive

isolates program from the neighborhood

the most secure

too inclusive



Scattered Plans

Each building is dispersed through the neighborhood and has its own type of protection

less institutional

non-defensive

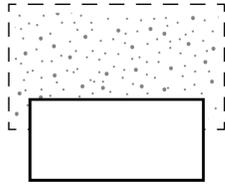
lacking a physical symbol

buildings' community is integrated within the fabric of the neighborhood

safe communication between buildings can be compromised

Fig. 26. Building Types.

Courtyard Configurations

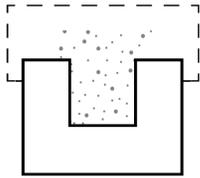


Semi-Enclosed

less privacy

open to the surrounding neighborhood

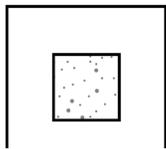
semi-secure



Enclosed

offers privacy and openness at the same time

secure

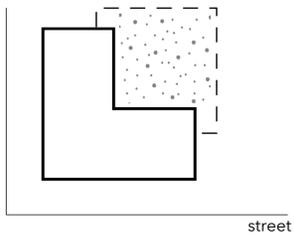


Fully Enclosed

too inclusive

increased privacy

the most secure

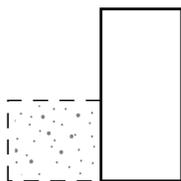


Corner Semi-Enclosed

semi-private

less open

semi-secure

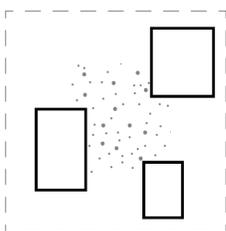


Fenced

less private

open and vulnerable due to its relation to the street

less secure



Surrounded ("eyes on the street")

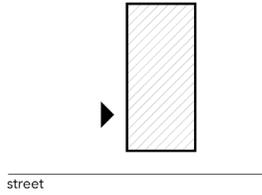
less inclusive

each cluster has the privacy of their own

semi-secure

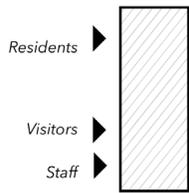
Fig. 27. Courtyard Configurations.

Entry Type



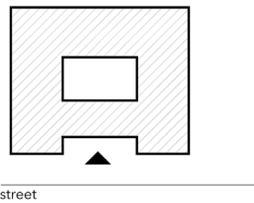
Side Entry (Discrete)

single entry
very institutional, the most intrusive
very secure
semi-hidden, greater privacy in entering the building



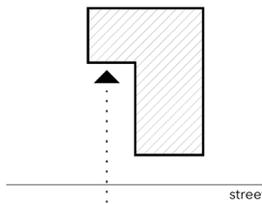
Split Entry

less institutional, greater resident's agency
private, non-intrusive
hard to secure



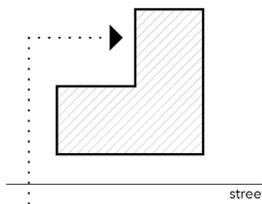
Front Entry

very open, non-discrete, presence in the neighborhood
ideal for the public program, visitors, and outreach
non-private
security through direct visibility



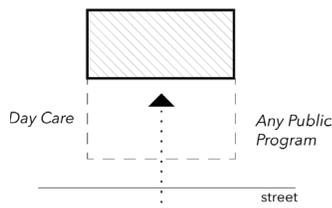
Controlled

single entry, institutional
semi-hidden
security through suspended direct visibility
semi-private



Hidden

discrete single entry
ideal for crisis services
maximum privacy
very secure

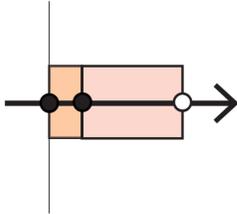


Shield

semi-private, semi-discrete through a gradient of public program
semi-open, secure
ideal for long-term residency such as transitional housing

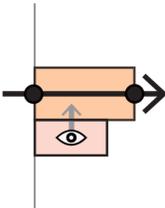
Fig. 28. Entry Types.

Surveillance Type



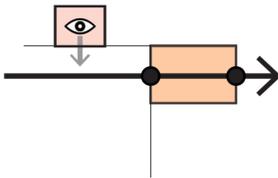
Secure Entry - High Surveillance

very institutional
intrusive
agency compromised
maximum security



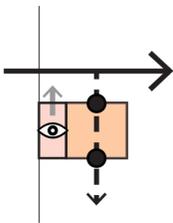
Secure Entry - Direct Surveillance

institutional
intrusive
less agency
secure



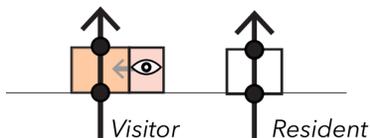
Secure Entry – Indirect Surveillance

less institutional
non-intrusive
less agency
greater privacy
secure



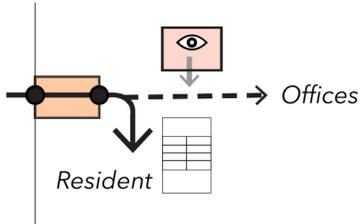
Semi-Secure – Direct Surveillance

non-institutional
non-intrusive
maximum agency
semi-private
security compromised



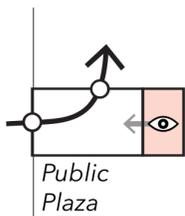
Split Entry – Direct and Removed Surveillance

less institutional
non-intrusive
maximum agency
semi-secure



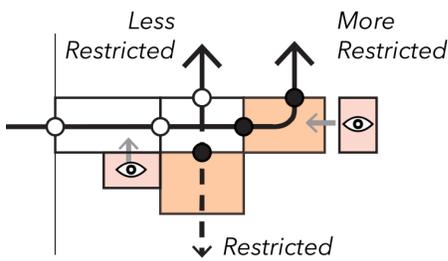
Secure Entry – Removed Surveillance

less institutional
less intrusive
some agency
greater privacy
secure



Semi-Secure Entry – Direct Surveillance

non-institutional
non-intrusive
maximum agency
semi-private
security compromised



Split Entry – Gradient of Security and Surveillance

semi-institutional
semi-intrusive
agency varies based on the program
semi-private
security level increases as needed by the program

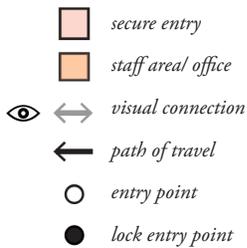
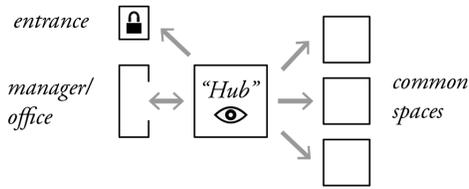
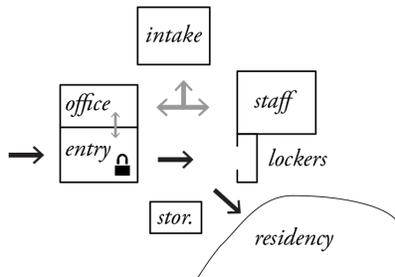


Fig. 29. Surveillance types.

Visibility



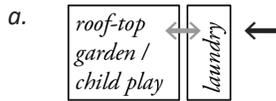
Staff Supervision – Central Hub
security through visibility of all common areas
maximum control
minimum privacy
intrusive



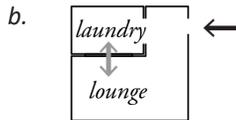
Staff Supervision – Segregate Zone
security through visibility only around entry area
less control
greater privacy
less intrusive

Approximation of Laundry and Common Areas

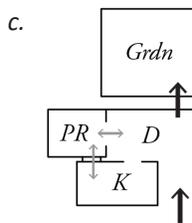
allows for supervision and social interactions link with domestic work, similar when kitchen allocated in direct relation to common areas or outdoors



a) *laundry is self-unit*
isolation is leveled through direct relation to common program

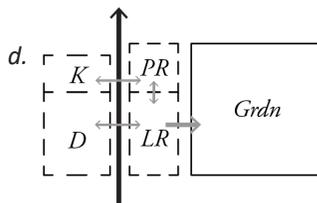


b) *laundry as a component of the common area*
non-isolated, included in a larger activity

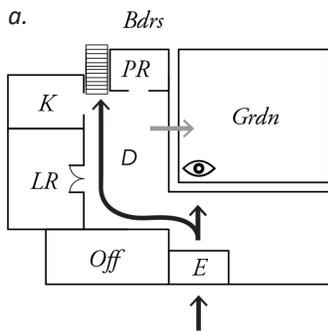


Kitchen and Common Areas

c) *each activity separated and more private*
have a regulated direct relation to common areas
the kitchen is isolated



d) *each activity is exposed and less private*
separation of each activities from each other is blurred
the kitchen is a part of the greater communal gathering



Entry through the Building

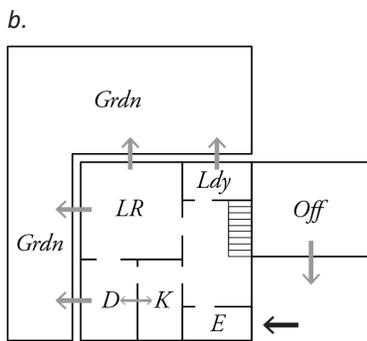
a) common program on or tangent to the path of travel from entry to private rooms; staff area is integrated into the common area

less isolated

allows engagement with the community

less private

institutional



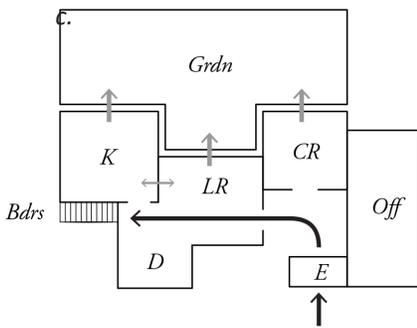
b) path to common areas and private rooms split into two, staff area is separated from the residential zone, but in direct relation to the entry

greater isolation

greater privacy

disconnected from communal activities

less institutional



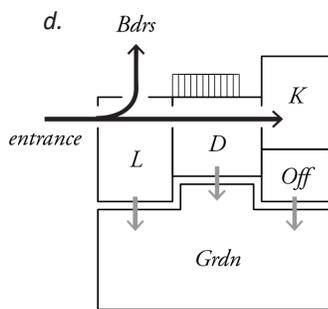
c) common program on the path of travel from entry to private rooms, staff area is separated from the residential zone, but in direct relation to the entry

less isolated

allows engagement with the community

less private, less intrusive

less institutional



d) path to common areas and private rooms split into two, staff area is integrated into the common area

greater isolation

less privacy

disconnected from communal activities

institutional, intrusive

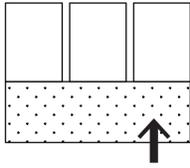
Legend

LR Living Room
 D Dining
 K Kitchen
 PR Playroom
 Bdrs Bedrooms
 Ldy Laundry
 CR Common Room
 Grdn Garden

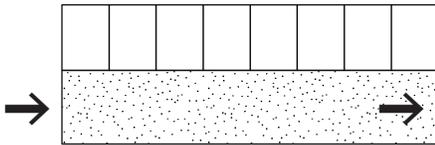
E Entrance
 Off Office
 ↔ entry
 ← visual connection
 👁 direct visibility
 🔒 locked area

Fig. 30. Visibility diagrams.

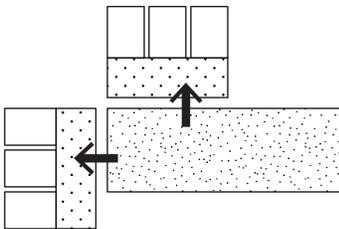
Gradient of Privacy



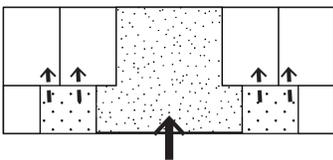
"House"
domestic
greater privacy
greater neighbor's intimacy
stronger community



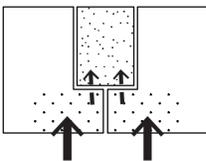
"Dormitory"
institutional
minimal privacy
minimal neighbors familiarity
weaker community



"Apartment"
domestic quality within an institutional setting
greater privacy
greater neighbor's intimacy
breaks residents into community clusters



Shared Living Room and Kitchen
domestic, two families share the common area
less isolating
some privacy
might cause conflict in the common area



Swing Room (Living or Kitchen)
domestic, each family has its own private unit
greater flexibility
greater privacy
semi-isolating for each family

Legend

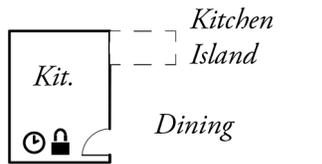


Note: corridors are intentionally wider than typical residential corridor; as inhabited space the corridor allows for multi-functioning activities to accrue to foster community building.

Fig. 31. Gradient of privacy types.

Agency

Types of Kitchen



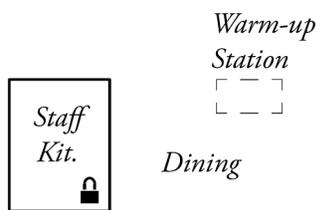
Multifunctioning

the kitchen is not available to residents during certain hours of the day

some agency

less flexible

successful if there are fewer residents

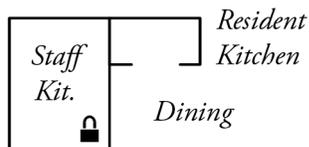


Exclusive

residents are not allowed to prepare their own meals

minimal agency

used at the facilities with too many residents



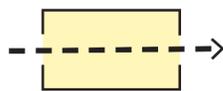
Split Kitchens

residents have a choice of preparing their own meals and not interrupted

by activities in the industrial kitchen

maximum agency

maximum flexibility

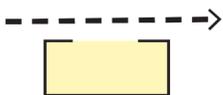


Interrupted

on the path of travel

intrudes activities

minimal privacy

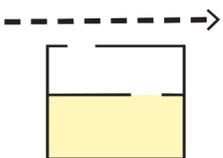


Introductory

tangent to the path of travel

introduces communal activities without interrupting them

greater privacy



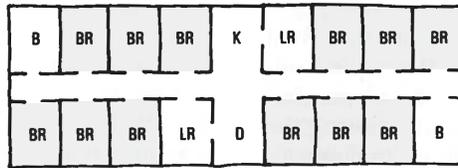
Isolated

not on the path of travel

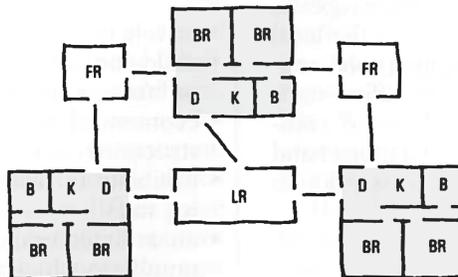
communal activities are isolated and hidden

very private

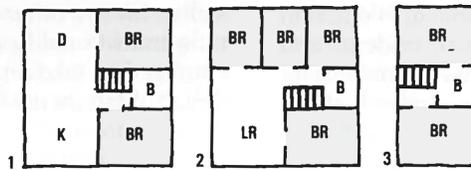
Fig. 32. Types of agency.



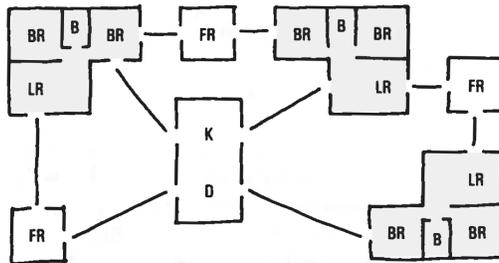
A dormitory scheme is most appropriate for single women. If children are included, doors *between* bedrooms can give some family privacy. Bathrooms in this scheme must be compartmentalized.



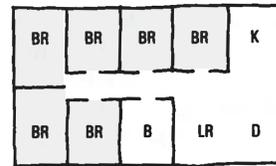
In this innovative approach, each family can have a mini-apartment with their own bedrooms, bathroom, and kitchen/dining area, sharing living space with other families. Flexible rooms (FR) can provide additional bedrooms for larger families or temporary private living or study spaces.



A shared house can provide community living space on one floor and the community kitchen/dining space on another floor. Or it might have more than one kitchen and living area.



Using an alternative approach, each family can have a bed-sitting apartment, including bedrooms, bath and living space. These bed-sitting apartments share the kitchen/dining space. Flexible rooms (FR) can also be included here.



A shared apartment can include up to six bedrooms housing two or three small families. With that number, a compartmentalized bathroom is necessary.

Fig. 33. Spatial diagrams of alternatives for shared and private spaces. These diagrams, the result of MIT studio analyses, were prepared for *A Manual on Transitional Housing* (1986).

Layout Configurations

Joan F. Sprague presents a vocabulary of ways that private and shared spaces can be combined, ranging from separate apartments to dormitory-like designs (Fig.33).⁵² The hatched areas represent private spaces and the white areas indicate shared spaces. *FR* stands for “flexible room”, space that can be used for larger families (bedrooms), visitors, and private living room areas at different times. A full spectrum of levels of privacy, for both interior and exterior space, is exhibited. Multi-unit shared spaces provide continuity between the larger shared areas and the private space, resulting in a gradient of privacy. Paired units that share some common spatial elements allows for a “buddy” system whereby mutual support is created. A private apartment fosters more independence than a fully shared house.⁵³ These diagrams of layout configurations define five housing types.

Type 1. Dormitory

Spatial syntax causes challenges and conflicts due to limited privacy, especially in crisis care.

Type 2. Multi-Apartment, private cooking, shared living

Ideal for transitional care as it offers maximum privacy. However, it also does not guarantee communal interactions. Isolation of each individual family might be created.

Type 3. Shared House

The most typical model for VAW shelters in Toronto. Privacy is compromised, and communal interactions are forced upon the residents. Upper-level rooms are isolated from the communal program.

Type 4. Multi-Apartment, shared cooking, private living

Creates greater interactions among residents than Type 2, especially in the kitchen and dining areas, where the most essential family ritual takes place. The space is shared, however, this may cause a conflict if used by many families.

Type 5. Shared Apartment

Similar to Type 3 communal program is less isolated as it is located on the same level with bedrooms, thereby encouraging interactions.

Privacy

Private territory contains and reinforces personal space through acoustic and visual separation. Sleeping is the most personal activity, requiring the most privacy. When members of a household share a single room, private territory for each individual is reduced to a bed and the area around it. The privacy within the family is compromised. With an absence of communal space, family members are confined to limited territory and there is no relief from constant personal confrontation. For family members going through a crisis this confrontation becomes rather harmful to rehabilitation and personal relationships.⁵⁴

Another essential element of privacy is tied to personal hygiene. The bathroom is expected to be completely private space, one that is off-limits to others while it is in use. Sharing a bathroom amongst more than one family member is not only inconvenient but also creates the potential for quarreling among residents.

Personal privacy includes the path between the sleeping and bathroom space. Bathrooms can be located off a hallway that separates household space from the corridor to create an entry buffer between private and community space.

- a) Shared – privacy compromised*
- b) Semi-Shared – minimal privacy*
- c) Semi-Private – privacy compromised if shared by two different families*
- d) Private – the most preferable, as it provides the dignity and comfort critical to crisis care*

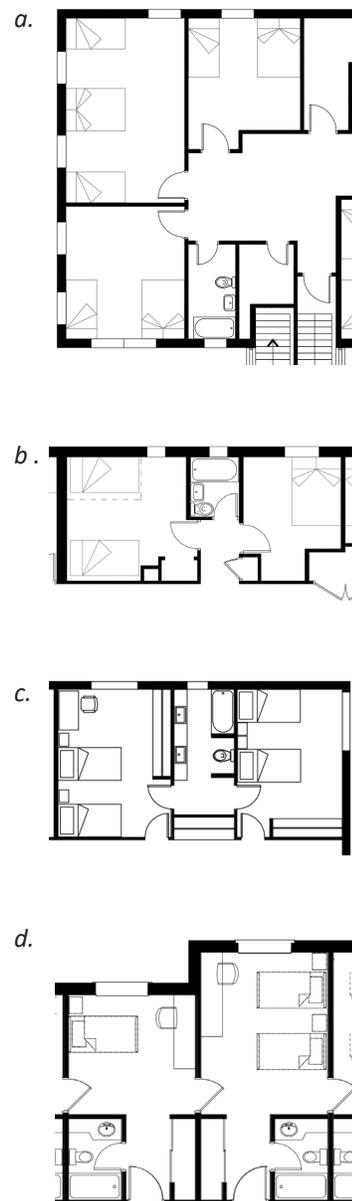
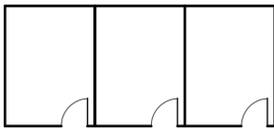


Fig. 34. Typical shelter washrooms and bedrooms arrangements.

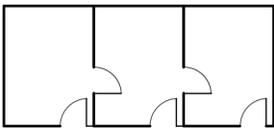
Bedrooms



Individual

(less flexible)

privacy is compromised if one family shares several rooms

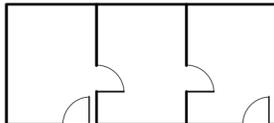


Interconnected

(most flexible)

allows for privacy when joining two rooms together

preferable for the short-term stay of crisis care, when residents change often and greater flexibility is required



Swing Room

(flexible with greater privacy)

offers privacy and flexibility simultaneously

preferable for the long-term stay, such as transitional housing, when residency is more permeable

flexibility is created by joining the swing room to either unit as needed

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- ⁵¹ Roberson, Julia. "Type as a question, the group home as a subject." *The Question of Type*. 187.
- ⁵² Sprague, Joan Forrester "Two Cases of Transitional Housing Development in Boston." *New Households, New Housing*. By Franck, Karen A., et al. VNR Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1989. 187–207.
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- ⁵⁴ "Five Days at Haven House." *Why Rebuild Haven House*, Women's Crisis Services of Waterloo Region, 22 Nov. 2012, wcswr.org/rebuild-haven-house-campaign/why-rebuild-haven-house/. Accessed December 2017.



Part 3

SILENCE AS VIOLENCE

Violence against women is a crime which exists in secrecy. Just as domestic violence is often seen as a private matter, the issue itself is reinforced by the stigma which keeps its discussion out of the public light. Society is uncomfortable when confronted by the issue, and chooses to turn away. For shelters to be secret and hidden, is a reflection of how society currently views them. Declassifying the location of these shelters helps to allow for the embracement of domestic violence as an issue in the community. A shelter that becomes public, ultimately leads to taking ownership within the community, such that everyone within the latter feels responsible for the well-being of the survivors.⁵⁵

Fig. 35. Unnamed.

“Silence will not protect us from our fears. We must challenge our fears beginning to search for women as story-teller, visible and no longer shamed by her story or visibility. In the moment of the telling, the woman begins to wave the found/ mined fragments visibly, creating for herself a place and an identity, unrestricted. Shelter is defined in the moment of telling.”⁵⁶

There is a need to embrace a mentality that is neither shameful nor pejorative, an architectural language that includes and defines the shelter within the public realm. This chapter investigates the elements that allow the shelter to be discrete while simultaneously sending a message of presence to the community.



Fig. 36. VAW shelters in their context.

Location as Secrecy

The location of all Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters in Toronto is confidential. A secret and non-discrete shelter is considered essential. It becomes impossible to identify and locate one within the city fabric.

However, it might actually be more dangerous for staff, residents and the neighborhood to maintain a nominally secret shelter over many years.⁵⁷ Secrecy keeps resources out, and it keeps the community at a distance. The confidential nature of these facilities often provides a false sense of security. Even though the shelter does not explicitly publicize itself in the neighborhood, there are always signs suggesting something unusual happening behind its doors. Some of these features include numerous security cameras, notably high fencing, windows obstructing views inward, residents which often change, a constant stream of taxis and delivery trucks in the driveway. These are only a few of the elements which caught the eye of the neighborhood residents.



Fig. 37. Robertson House in its context.

Camouflage as Tactic

Based on my research, it is typically hard to distinguish a shelter building from other houses on the street. To increase the safety of women under its care, the design of a typical shelter will seek a seamless integration into the surrounding neighborhood. Thereby, the role of architecture is to blend-in and avoid attracting attention. The shelters I visited in Toronto were discretely blended into the context of their surrounding urban fabric, rendering their camouflaged appearance completely effortless. A small building size aids to that process but sacrifices the quality of communal spaces, size of bedrooms and number of residents.



*Survivors of domestic violence have remained invisible,
without a visible place to speak, without a place to tell their story.
Dialogue is transformative. Telling invokes transformation.⁵⁸*

Dialogue as Transformation

There is a need to explore a model for making a shelter that is based on transformation, rather than adaptation. A model which openly instills invention and dialogue. A model which questions the relationship between personal and public. A shelter is a place of resistance defined in the moment of telling.

Fig. 38. Méditation 1.

“Shelter strives to release her from the dependency on the institution by imparting the tools for mining her own identity. ... Shelter becomes a place for the telling, a place for the under-mining.”⁵⁹

A dialogue needs to be established between the shelter and the city. Bringing a shelter to the public such that it be known in the community, creates a very particular impact on our society, on the issue of violence against women, as well as on a person's rehabilitation and transition. This notion implies that the design and architectural form of a shelter should be transformed. Ultimately, the question of the relationship between a neighborhood, and a shelter's community can be addressed by defining various threshold conditions and mediating movement through the building and through its varying levels of privacy.



Fig. 39. She Deserves It.

Contesting the Stigma

Stigma around issues of domestic violence and their victims is deeply rooted in our society. The preconceived image associated with victims of abuse often stops many women from seeking help. The shame associated with violence needs to be addressed by educating the public.

“Through time, his-story has been considered fact, documentable truth, denying interpretation. Her-story has been seen as a fiction, hysteria, old wives tales. The woman has remained invisible ... Because she cannot tell, because she is given neither an opportunity nor the vehicle. She keeps.”⁶¹

The three-word slogan “She Deserves It” is the fundraising campaign for the rebuilding of Haven House, a women’s shelter in Cambridge. The goal of the provocative campaign is to grab public attention by having viewers question their immediate opinion towards domestic violence. Thus, a controversial ad becomes key for engaging the public in the conversation.

Madland: New DAIS shelter in Madison brings domestic violence out of the shadows

by CATHERINE CAPELLARO
APRIL 29, 2014



ELIZABETH KLAUS/DAIS

"This building will serve as a beacon to victims and survivors and will say, 'This community cares about you. You are worthy of support, love, healing and safety. The violence wasn't your fault and we honor you.' It also sends a strong message to batterers that this community believes what they are doing is wrong and that we will care for those they hurt."

Fig. 40. Newspaper Article on the publicizing an address of DAIS shelter in Madison, USA.

Public Address

In some cases, the idea of keeping the shelter a secret has been abandoned. Modern technologies make it almost impossible to keep anything secret without making it really oppressive.⁶² A shelter meant to be public, is an opportunity for the community to come together collectively, and tell victims that they will be cared for, and deserve to have a place that is comfortable and safe for their healing process. Shelters which choose to “go out” in public have tight security, and believe that it is less likely the batterers will show up in a public location; batterers “don’t want to be known for who they are, ... showing up admits a certain level of culpability”⁶³. When an institution such as that of a domestic violence shelter adopts a visible presence in the community, this sends a really strong message to domestic violence victims that they don’t have to be ashamed of what happened to them.⁶⁴

Changing the ways in which shelters are integrated into the community (not hiding, not shaming) has the ability to create a different kind of safety. Having a more transparent entry through a very public location allows for “neighborhood watch”. At the same time safe and accepting environment is created where she is no longer forced to hide, but now is a part of a bigger community. Some other associated benefits include: bringing issues of violence against women out of the shadows, and accentuating public awareness of it happening in the here and now. Starting a dialogue, and undermining a stigmatized social opinion, informs victims of available support, and makes the latter easily accessible. In addition, this breaks the stigma that shelters are very unpleasant spaces, thus freeing women from a fear of leaving their home. Community involvement is also increasing, as communities feel a need of taking ownership surrounding issues of violence against women, and thereby creating supportive and healing environments. Having a “street address” allows bridging services offered at the shelter to the public, visitors, outreach clients, as well as former residents. This serves to fill the missing link in service delivery that was specifically observed in Toronto locations.

A shelter whose presence is not hidden to the public allows freedom and experimentation in design - a possibility to design spaces differently; designs which seek to be more open, less “prison-like”, secure, but not invasive. Secrecy and confinement of mobility directly relate to the loss of autonomy, and thereby impacts the ability to make decisions. Regaining control, the very thing the abusers take away from their victims, is essential for the process of empowerment.

Case Study 5. Anselma House

Women's Crisis Services of Waterloo Region

Controlled Access	● ○ ○ ○ ○
Institutionalization	● ● ○ ○ ○
Agency/ Independence	● ● ● ● ○
Privacy	● ● ● ● ○
Communal Environment	● ● ● ● ●
Inclinable Staff Area	● ● ● ● ●

Length of Stay	3 months	Total Interior	2140 sq.m.
Number of Beds	45	Dining	150 sq.m.
Number of Rooms	30	Res. Kitchen	22 sq.m.
Shared Bathrooms	No	Commercial Kitchen.	31 sq.m.
Independent Cooking	Yes	Living	135 sq.m.
(commercial kitchen is separate from residents' kitchen)		Bedroom (average)	17 sq.m.
Program Space	Yes	Child	60 sq.m.
Flexible Sleeping Units	Yes	Program	132 sq.m.
Bridging with Neighborhood Program (outreach offices and community program spaces with separate entry)	Yes	Staff Area	310 sq.m.
		Service	345 sq.m.
		Outdoor	770 sq.m.

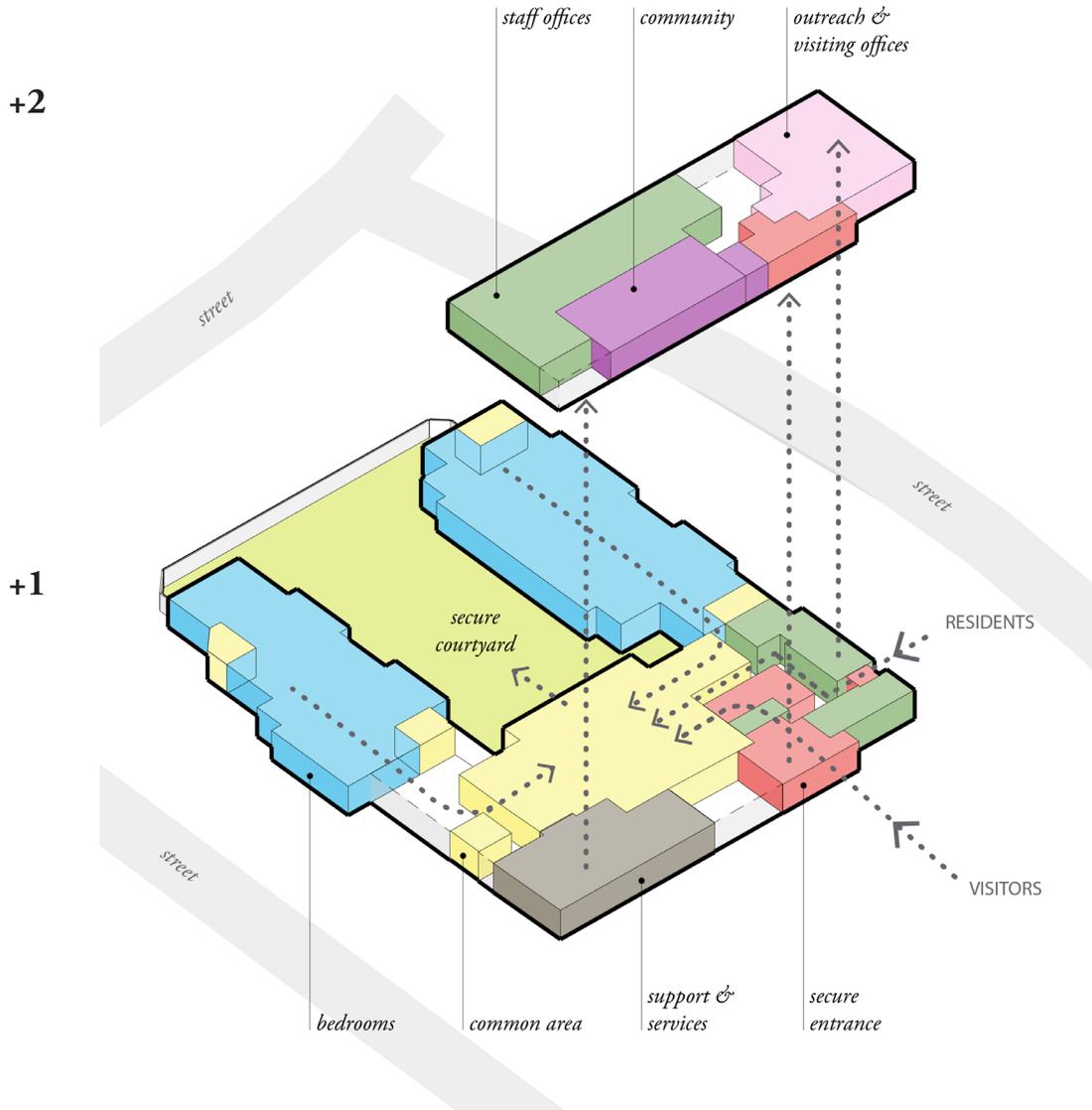


700 Heritage Dr, Kitchener

The new Anselma House opened its doors in May 2011. With 45 beds, this is the largest women's shelter in Ontario. Located in a suburban area of Kitchener, this VAW shelter has a public address. Hiding and blending it within the context of Kitchener's residential city fabric becomes impossible. The shift toward publicizing the shelter location led to obtaining a bigger lot, thus a newer and much more spacious facility got to be built.



Fig. 42. Anselma House in its context.



45 residents
 24% residential area
 19% common space

Fig. 43. Programmatic interrelation. Anselma House.

By accommodating outreach offices and public program in the same building, the services offered by the shelter are bridged with the surrounding neighborhood. This strategy allowed to enhance and facilitate community partnerships “focused on education and intervention, and serve as a catalyst to help break the intergenerational cycle of domestic abuse”.⁶⁵

The shelter has two separate entries - a public entry for staff and visitors, and a private one for residents. Each area has its own security levels. A resident’s entry is separated from administration areas in order to provide enhanced safety, privacy and security.

The project’s design focused on creating an environment conducive to healing. The program was split into two zones, where residential spaces are on a separate level, from those of staff and visitors. Assumptions on features appropriate for creating a healing environment inform the shelter’s intake capacity, and its program distribution. To avoid isolation, residential bedrooms and common spaces were intentionally allocated on the same level. This also served to create greater communal engagement.

The big accent is placed on common areas, with a large gathering room, a child’s play area, a dining room and communal kitchen, and designated program spaces for youth, music therapy, spiritual care, and medical care.

Different scenarios and greater comfort and privacy are created through a gradient of space sizes, and variations in layouts. Spaces such as Family room or Quiet room will differ from common gathering spaces and could allow for the intimacy required by occupants. A large dining space able to accommodate all residents, and a smaller dining area for single or elderly women free to eat from noise and constraints, provides all residents with space for peace and dignity.

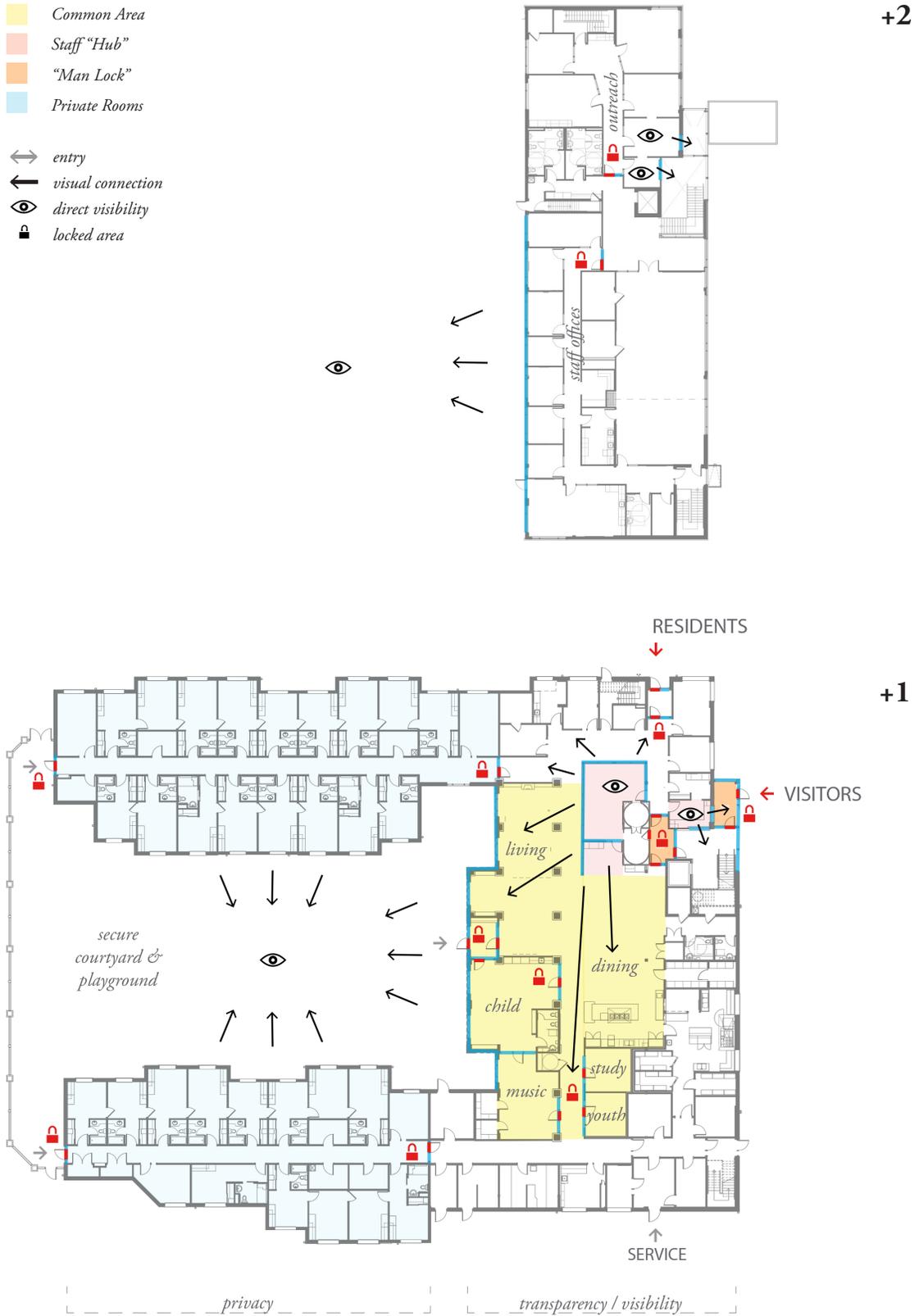
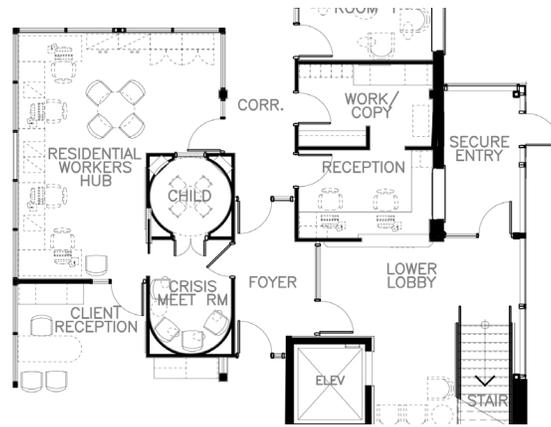


Fig. 44. Surveillance and visibility in relation to the building program. Anselma House.



Cooking activities were separated into a commercial kitchen and servery, with independent communal residential kitchen areas. This provides residents with a greater agency, and likewise, it supports education and life skills programs.

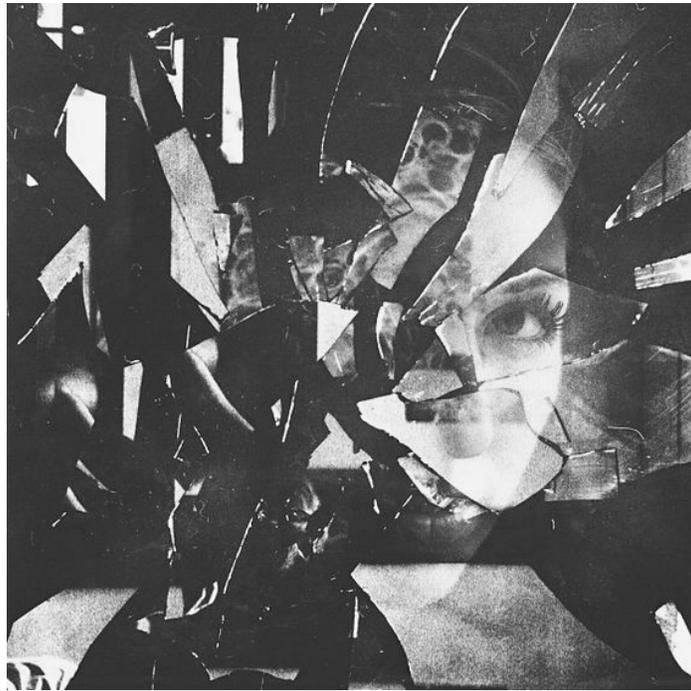
Fig. 45. Intake area. Floor plan fragment. Anselma House.

Privacy is an important aspect of the design. Dignity and privacy are enhanced by creating flexible bedroom layouts, which allow for expanded space as required, and for private washrooms in each room. With a much more favorable housing market in the Waterloo Region than in that of Toronto, residents typically leave the shelter for a permanent home within 2- 3 months. Thus, spaces are designed to accommodate short-term residency. The bedroom layout and their relation to common areas are similar to hotel typology.

An innovative approach was taken in redefining the shelter’s staff area by creating a “Hub” and accommodating a private meeting area for women who walk in, whilst in a state of crisis. This has been called the “Intake area”. The “Hub” is strategically placed to have full visibility of the residents’ entry, staff offices, residents’ common area, and in direct relation to the Intake area and public lobby.

Anselma House design was so successful in its operation, that in 2016, a second Haven House shelter was built in Cambridge using the same design strategy. Fundraising was critical in realizing the Haven House project. Being a publicly open facility gives an opportunity to visibly establish a need for services to the community. In the case of these two shelters, fund-raised funds allowed for liberation from federal policy and constraints defining the way services should be delivered. This created a much more generous and innovative design approach to help women and children transition from violence, for both residents at the shelter and for the greater community as a whole.

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- ⁵⁵ Rivedal, Karen. "Building a Better Domestic Violence Shelter." *McClatchy - Tribune Business News*, Aug 11, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.lib.uwaterloo.ca/docview/1419204965?accountid=14906>. Accessed December 2017.
- ⁵⁶ Silverman, Tami, and Chris Taylor. "Shelter: A Place of the Telling a Chimerical Cookbook." *Shelter, Women, and Development: First and Third World Perspectives*. By Hemalata C. Dandekar. George Wahr, 1996. 366.
- ⁵⁷ Rivedal, Karen. "Building a Better Domestic Violence Shelter." *McClatchy - Tribune Business News*, Aug 11, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.lib.uwaterloo.ca/docview/1419204965?accountid=14906>. Accessed December 2017.
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- ⁶⁰ Monteiro, Liz. "She Deserves It: Campaign on to Rebuild Women's Shelter." *TheRecord.com*, 10 Sept. 2014, www.therecord.com/news-story/4841775-she-deserves-it-campaign-on-to-rebuild-women-s-shelter/. Accessed December 2017.
- ⁶¹ Silverman, Tami, and Chris Taylor. "Shelter: A Place of the Telling a Chimerical Cookbook." *Shelter, Women, and Development: First and Third World Perspectives*. By Hemalata C. Dandekar. George Wahr, 1996. 368.
- ⁶² Goodyear, Sarah. "Fighting Domestic Violence With Architecture and Design." *CityLab*, 25 Mar. 2013, www.citylab.com/equity/2013/03/fighting-domestic-violence-architecture-and-design/5076/.
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- ⁶⁴ Rivedal, Karen. "Building a Better Domestic Violence Shelter." *McClatchy - Tribune Business News*, Aug 11, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.lib.uwaterloo.ca/docview/1419204965?accountid=14906>. Accessed December 2017.
- ⁶⁵ "Design Plans." *Women's Crisis Services of Waterloo Region*, wcswr.org/rebuild-haven-house-campaign/design-plans/. Accessed December 2017.



Part 4

TRANSITION & LIMINALITY

Trauma as Liminality

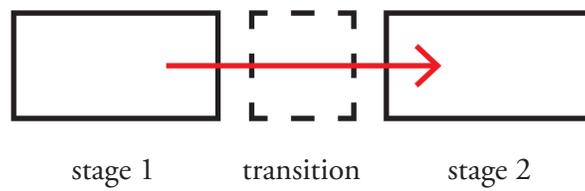
Survivors of violence often develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). People who have experienced trauma in the past are especially prone to heightened sensitivity, as a result of violence, and might exhibit negative responses to certain approaches of service delivery. Experiences with trauma have been linked to difficulty with trust and relationships, which affects service access and engagement.

Fig. 46. Unnamed.

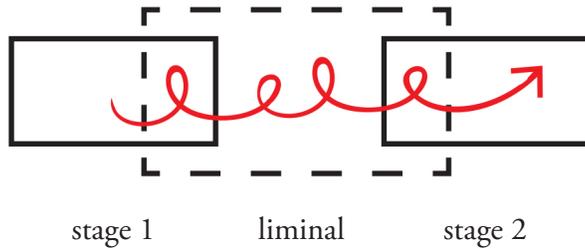
Liminality

“Being on the threshold means a state or process which is betwixt and between the normal, day to day cultural and social states. ... Since liminal time is not controlled by the clock it is a time of enhancement where anything might or even should happen.”⁶⁶

The liminal state is a paradox of pure becoming. It exists when the present is eluded in the act of becoming, as it is equally connected to the past and the future. This notion creates a paradox of infinite identity and contests the idea of personal identity as a fixed state.⁶⁷ While in a state of trauma, a person is in a liminal state rather than in transition. This liminal character renders it impossible to address trauma effectively using only a fixed, single-stage, transitional approach. There is a need to allow for flexibility within the service delivery model so that women and their families can define for themselves what is appropriate for them, and when. That is why providing housing without a support mechanism does not end the impact of domestic violence, substance abuse, or teen motherhood on the lives of women and children.⁶⁸ It does not foster self-empowerment and self-sufficiency for those who need a community of support. The current service delivery model does not provide the proper environment for the survivors and their families to overcome their trauma because residency at the shelter is limited, and the support is only accessible while at the shelter.



***Transition** is a passage from one state to another.* ⁶⁹



***Liminality** is a condition of occupying a position on both sides of a boundary or threshold.* ⁷⁰

Fig. 47. Comparison of Transitional and Liminal states.

In addition, while the therapeutic community created at the shelter is necessary for women's empowerment and transition, an extended stay at the shelter does not guarantee the achievements of these long-term goals and might encourage further dependence.⁷¹ At the same time, women who have left the shelter might experience a need to return to the community to regain their momentum. Often a person who is going through trauma or depression will become reluctant to seek the help they need or distance themselves from an outreach worker.⁷² Therefore, the liminal character of one's journey needs to be reflected in service delivery and in the shelter's architecture.

Interaction within the shelter between the former residents and community is necessary, and this can be accommodated with specific program spaces. A "community hub" can bring together not only current and former residents, but also create a bridge between a shelter and the hosting neighborhood.

It is important to separate crisis emergency care from families in transition, as the first involves short-term residency and the latter deals with long-term residency. It is common for women going through the cycle of doubt to come back to the shelter several times before they leave an abuser for good. There is a great difference between crisis and transitional periods in the recovering process. This notion exists in the physiological state of mind and is reflected in the daily routine, and in turn, informs the type and amount of support needed. Families in transition ideally need to be separated from the chaos of crisis in order to create a stable environment and community with which to move forward. At the same time, women in crisis need to have an opportunity to interact with ones who have successfully moved on, which can foster role-modeling and mentorship.



Fig. 48. Speculative design section. The gradient of privacy through the spatial program.

Lifeboats

Architecture has an ability to become a vehicle for emotional and spiritual growth. In the context of this thesis, it takes the form of an environment that fosters the transition to some sense of individual empowerment.

Impoverished families without decent affordable housing, or an effective support system, require more than a roof for household stability. Joan F. Sprague describes new building types that have started to emerge, which effectively transform the lives of its residents. The new models are seen as “*lifeboats*,” integrating social and economic supports with the housing to fortify residents in both practical and physiological terms. Some of the illustrated projects include on-site daycare, services, communal and public program, libraries, shops, work and educational spaces. These arrangements strive to re-integrate home and work by allowing for personal independence and equality supported by new housing forms.⁷³

Community plays a key role in this model. A woman coming from the shelter system finds herself in isolation, with limited support, and dependent on welfare. Being previously “institutionalized”, she sees herself “as aberrations, helpless in the world, and identified with failure.”⁷⁴ Lifeboats allow women to define other ideas of normalcy in a supportive community, where she has the potential to define personal empowerment on her own terms. The physical environment is designed to put people at each other’s disposal, not to separate them. Just as the heart of the house is often the space that is shared, this approach sees housing as a means of empowerment, not just as a service.⁷⁵



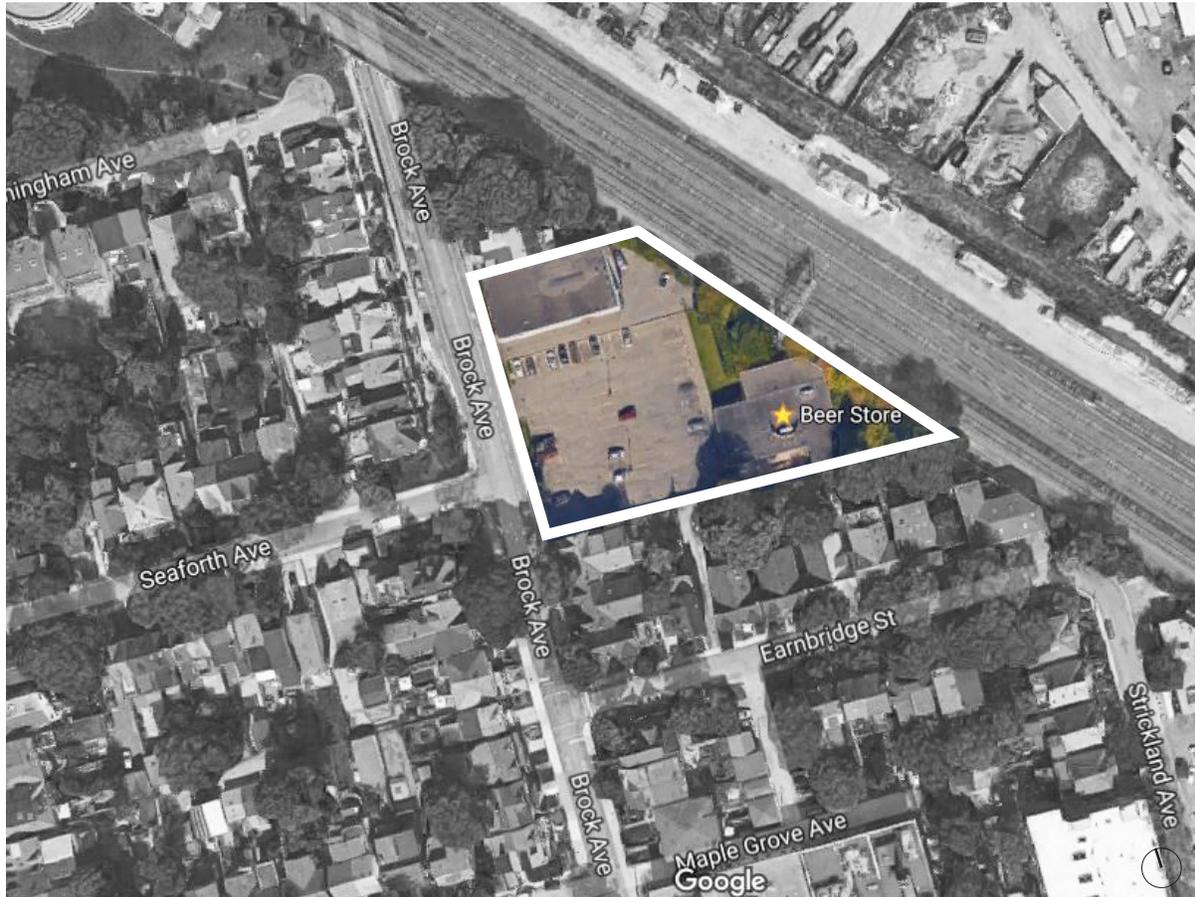
Fig. 49. Program possibilities and gradient of privacy through “zones of use”.

Zones of Use

This thesis attempts to mediate the different degrees of relationship between residents, community, and neighborhood by looking at architectonic possibilities in a program, such as thresholds and the gradient of privacy. Joan Sprague defines four “zones of use”, and suggests that intermediate zones are needed to create in-between relationships that allow for greater integration and gradients of privacy.⁷⁷ Several different zones are the focus here: Personal, Household, Community, Neighborhood, and the interstitial areas. By defining these zones, liminal spatial relationships are created in the program. Gradients of intensity between zones are shaped by atmospheric relations and through spatial syntax. These zones are integrated into the proposed model for the architecture of a domestic violence shelter.

The developed design proposal posits that connecting the shelter with the city can foster community at different levels. It aims to illustrate the tools that architecture can bring to make an effective and welcoming domestic violence shelter, and show how sensitive and informed design can create the physical environment to help women and children transition to a life free from violence. This goal is repeatedly expressed from the *parti* through to design development. The design strategy promotes self-determination through a multiplicity of spaces and program, which in turn creates a dynamic community of women and social bonds. The following domestic violence shelter combines an emergency shelter with transitional housing for single-women led families, accompanied by public spaces that bridge the residents to the larger community and neighborhood.

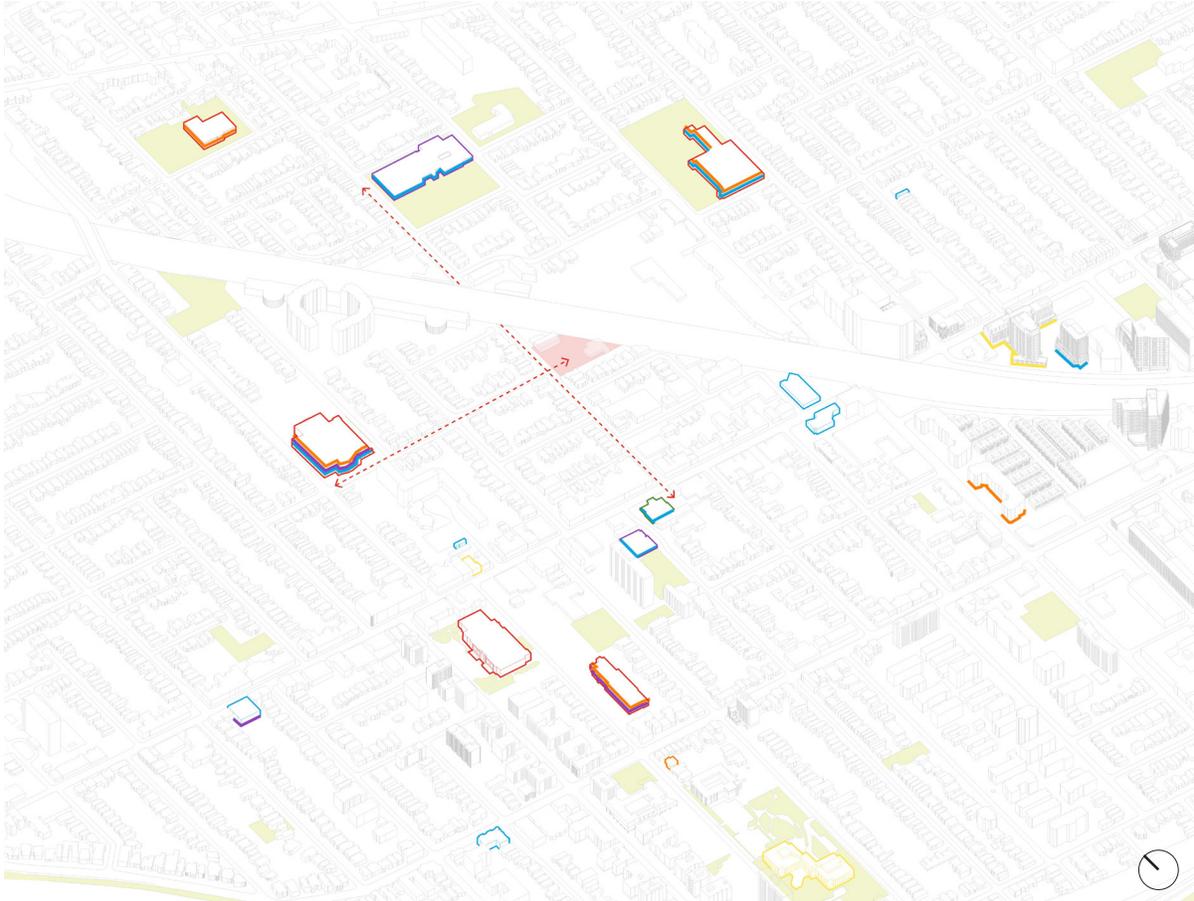
Site & Urban Context



The site selected for design experimentation is located in Parkdale. The area is known for its diverse demographic and reputation for being safe, relative to other Toronto neighborhoods. This residential working-class neighborhood has a high proportion of lower income and immigrant families.⁷⁸ The wide ranges of services for various income levels are already present in the community and are complemented by a vibrant storefront commercial strip along Queen Street West. The area is pedestrian and family-friendly with access to green space, making this the ideal location for a design intervention related to women's shelters.

Fig. 50. Design Site.

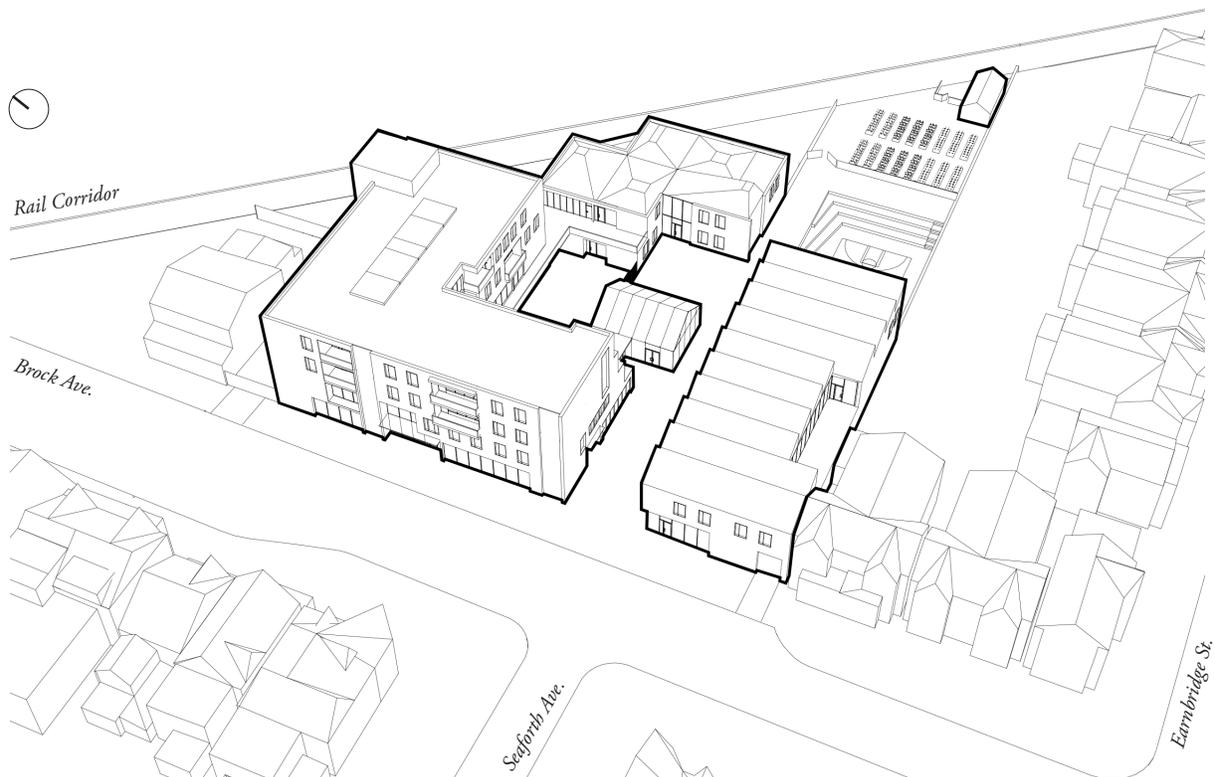
Fig. 51. Downtown East Toronto.



The site consists of two lots. The advantage of having a large site provides the potential of a community component to be incorporated into the building program. The rail corridor at the back of the site creates a safe buffer. Brock Avenue is a relatively busy street leading to McCormick Arena from Queen Street West. By locating the front entry and façade at Brock Avenue, there is the opportunity to make an architectural statement and solidify a presence in the neighborhood. Another site strategy is the extension of Seaforth Avenue into the site, creating a pedestrian promenade with a market. This gesture connects the site with Parkdale Public School and contributes to the family-friendly services network of Parkdale. This walkway becomes a metaphorical and literal connection linking the community and the issue of violence.

- Schools
- Child Care Centers
- Medical Care
- Recreation
- Library
- Human Services
- Site
- Parks
- - - Implied Connections

Massing, Relation to the City & Building Program

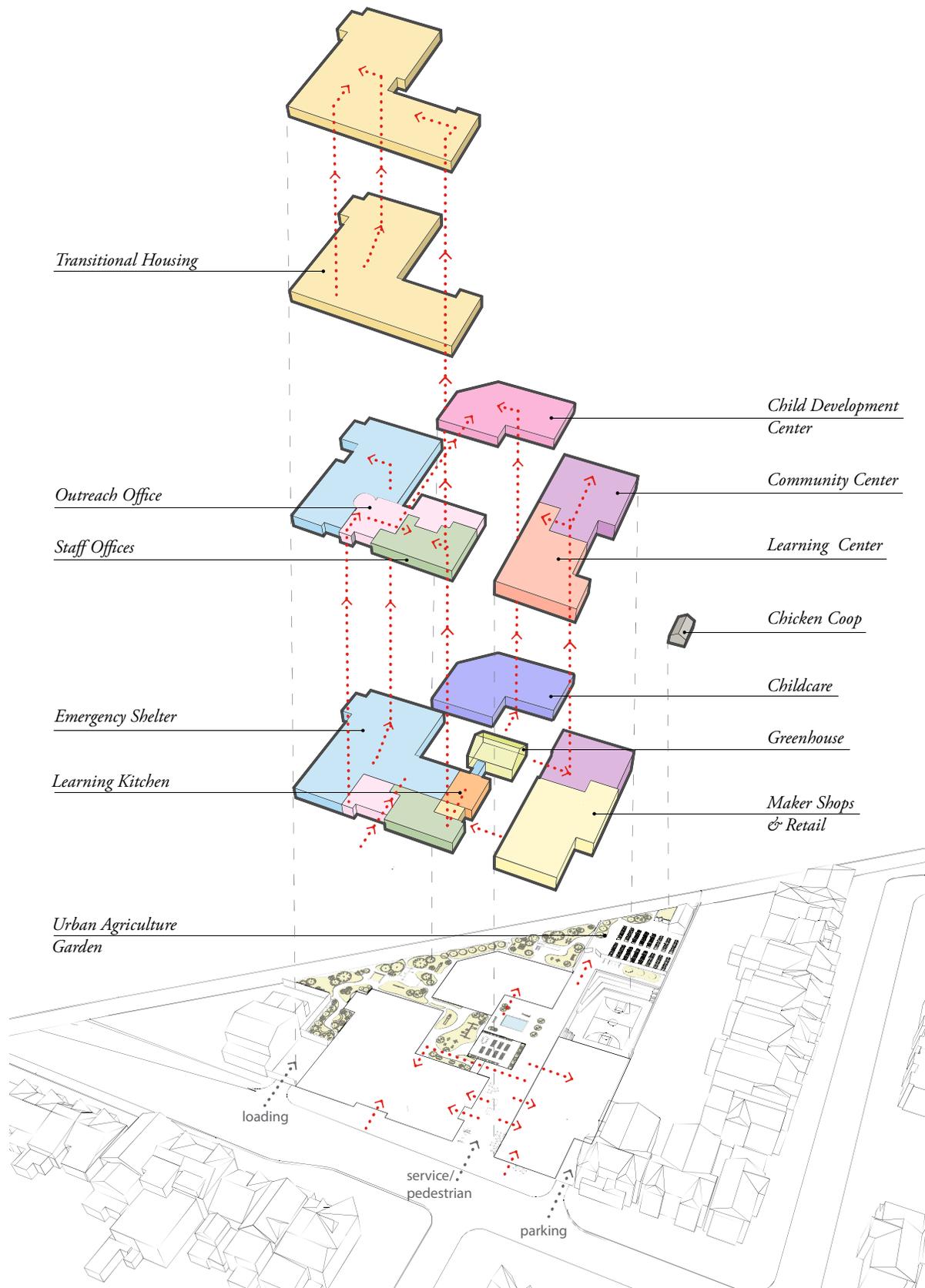


Brock Avenue in Parkdale is a historic street lined with old Victorian homes. The goal of the project is to maximize the parkland on the site while creating a physical mass that is in harmony with the local context.

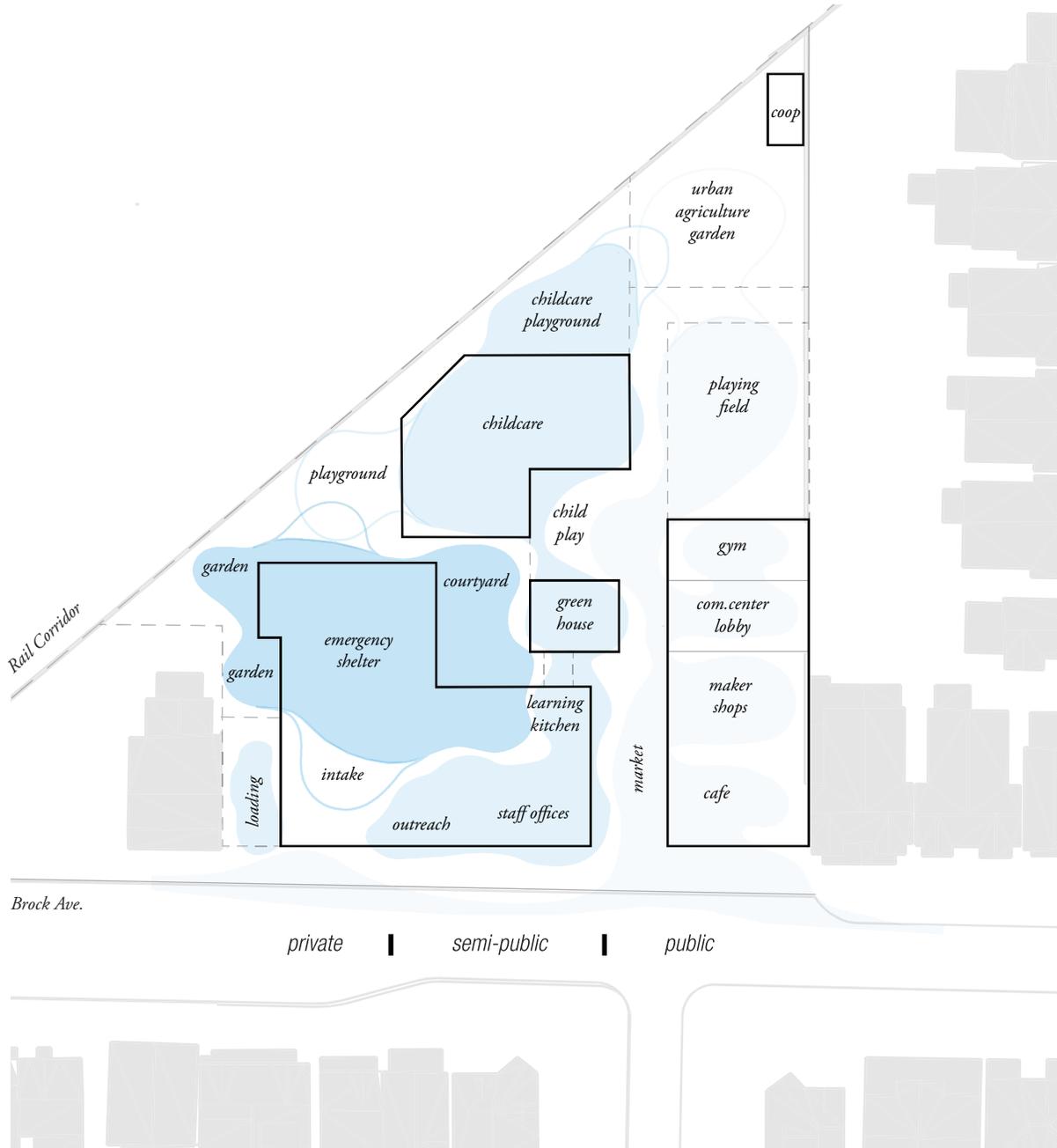
Fig. 52. Massing model.

Fig. 53. Building program.

The building program's intent is to attract and to draw in the surrounding community, in order to create a bridge between the residents of the complex and the hosting neighborhood. This bridge allows for greater economic stability, increase in safety, and healthier interactions that are critical for the victims of abuse.



Security through the Gradient of Public to Private



The vibrancy of the programmatic components around the pedestrian promenade aides in creating security filters. These filters are established by moving from most public program to most private along the path of travel, constructing zones of use.

Fig. 54. Gradient of privacy.

Liminal Programmatic Interrelations



Carefully selected programmatic elements support each other and work in conjunction as a part of the larger network. The rich experience and wide range of possibilities on the site are created through liminal programmatic interrelations.

Fig. 55. Programmatic interrelations.

Entry Points and Security



Entry Type

- ① Front Entry
- ② Controlled Entry
- ③ Hidden & Controlled
- ④ Shielded Entry (after-hours for transitional housing residents)

Surveillance Type

- ① Split Entry - Direct and Removed Surveillance
- ② Secure Entry - Indirect Surveillance
- ③ Secure Entry - Direct Surveillance
- ④ Semi-Secure - Direct Surveillance

- Common Area
- Staff Area
- Secure Entry
- Intake
- Public Spaces

- Secured After-Hours
- Visual Connection
- Non-Permanent supervision (help desk type-like; free flow)

TRANSITIONAL FILTERS

A series of transitional filters for pedestrians passing from public spaces to the private domain of the dwelling. *Fig. 56. Entry points and security.*

- The degree of privacy is increased by creating a progression from front gate to front porch or patio.
- Series of thresholds increase levels of security for various uses.
- Real or symbolic barriers help to separate general public from spaces intended for use by residents only. These include gates, programmatic orientation on site, series shielded gardens, and physical semi-transparent barriers such as a greenhouse.
- Transitional points are a front gate, a private front path, a porch, and a foyer and an entrance lobby.
- Entry threshold created by bringing the entrance path through a transitional space marked with a change of light, sound, direction, surface, level, view and enclosure.

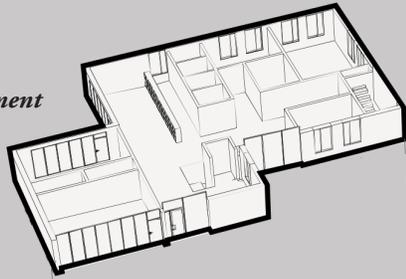
NEIGHBORLY SURVEILLANCE

A delicate balance between designing for privacy and ease of surveillance.

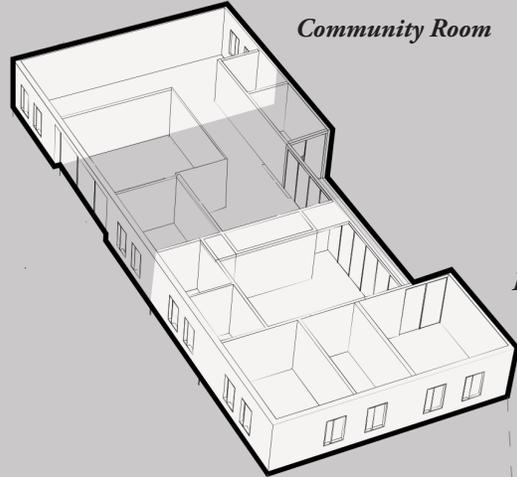
- Windows are located so that surveillance of semi-public open spaces and foot-paths is possible from frequently used rooms, without permitting close views into those areas.
- Transparency of the pathways and “controlled entry” when entering secure parts of the building allow for additional surveillance.

+2

Child Development Center

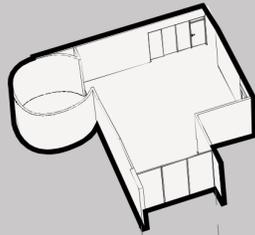


Community Room



Learning Center

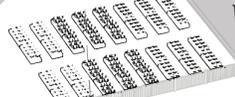
Outreach Event Space



Chicken Coop

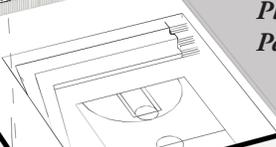


Urban Agriculture Vegetable Garden

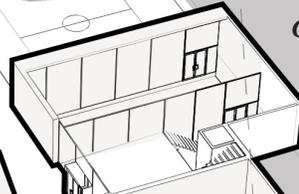


+1

Playing Field & Performance Space



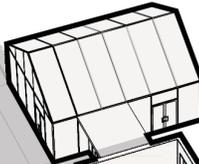
Gym



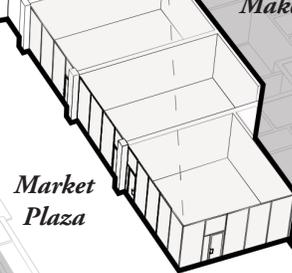
Childcare



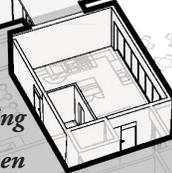
Playground



Maker Shops



Greenhouse



Learning Kitchen



Market Plaza



Cafe

Community Promenade

The role of the pedestrian promenade is to draw the community into the site, creating a bridge between residents of the complex and the hosting neighborhood. The promenade is the first step in addressing the stigma around victims of violence. Through creating a non-judgmental public space, the difference between residents of the complex and visitors on the site is blurred.

Fig. 57. Community Building Program and Pedestrian Promenade.

In this context, the café space activates the street corner by attracting attention. The presence of retail, parking, and rentable space on the site allows for the shelter to make a profit and subsidize its own services and needs. Thus, this shelter model can gain more independence from provincial and federal funds.

Childcare and the child development center are open to the city, not only to the shelter residents, and can form a partnership with programs such as the George Brown Annex Early Childhood Education⁷⁹. Programs such as the urban agriculture garden, greenhouse, and learning kitchen can serve as platforms for The Stop⁸⁰, while Community Center can host Artscape⁸¹. By inviting forward-thinking organizations in the city to partner with the shelter, particularly those that promote skill building and stability for women, the benefits extend to the entire community.

The urban agriculture garden not only provides resident families and the shelter with fresh vegetables, it also provides nutritional education. Working in the garden can also be a part of a stress relieving strategy. The close proximity of the garden to the childcare also allows the center to host some of the classes in the garden itself.

The playing field provides a space for teenagers to hang out. The integrated performance steps allow the space to transform into a stage to host community movie nights or other events in the summer and to serve as seating around the small skating ring in the winter.

- 1 Transitional Housing Lobby
- 2 Greenhouse
- 3 Urban Agriculture Vegetable Garden
- 4 Chicken Coop
- 5 Shed
- 6 Lobby
- 7 Childcare
- 8 Play Room
- 9 Childcare Office
- 10 Staff Room
- 11 Kitchenette
- 12 Washroom
- 13 Storage
- 14 Change Rooms (level -1)

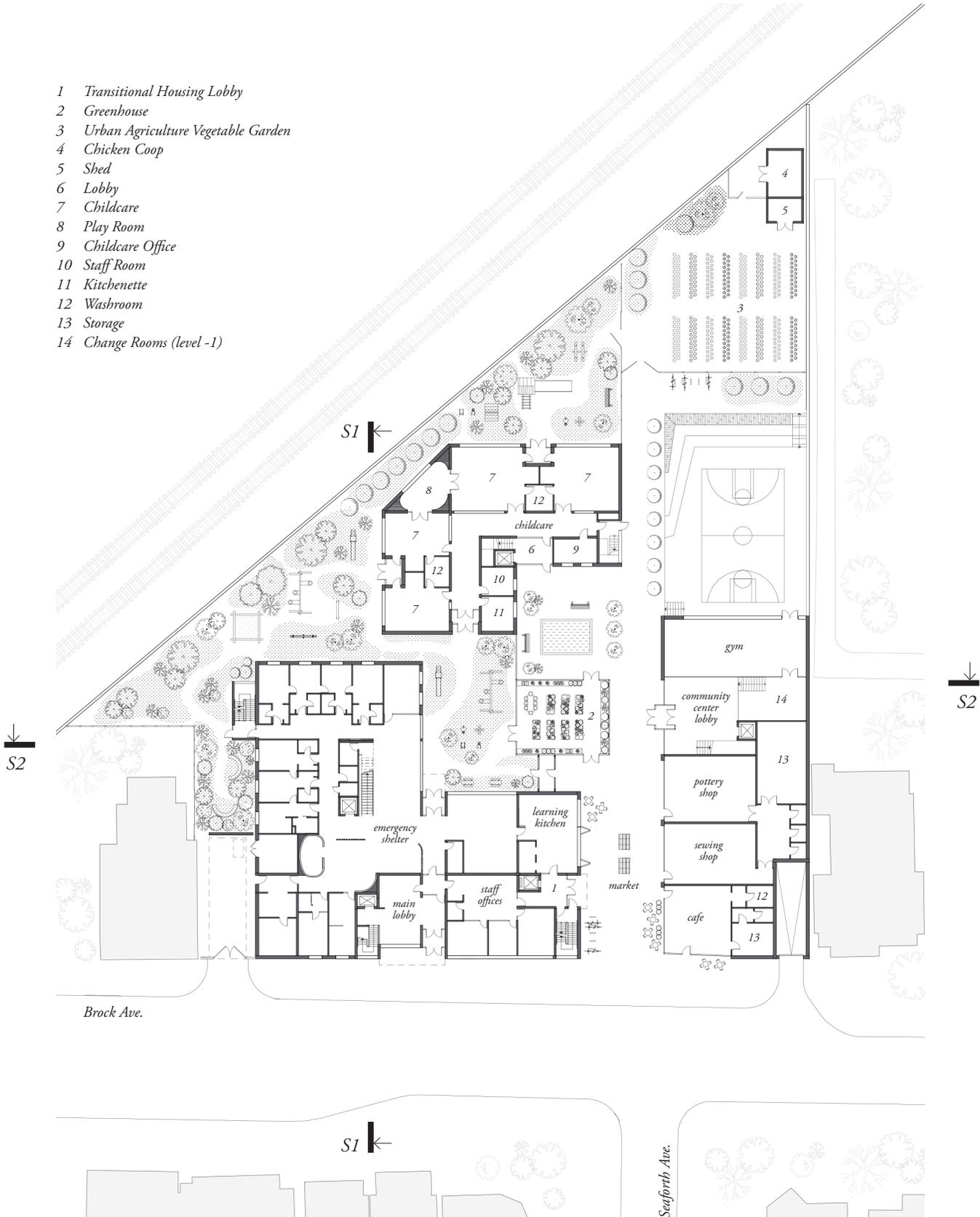


Fig. 58. Ground Floor Plan 1:500



- 1 Lounge
- 2 Play Therapy
- 3 Arts & Crafts
- 4 Storytelling
- 5 Multi-Sensory Room
- 6 Consultation Room
- 7 Music Therapy
- 8 Staff Office
- 9 Washroom
- 10 Co-working Space
- 11 Classroom
- 12 Office
- 13 Cloak Room
- 14 Staff Lounge
- 15 Küchenette

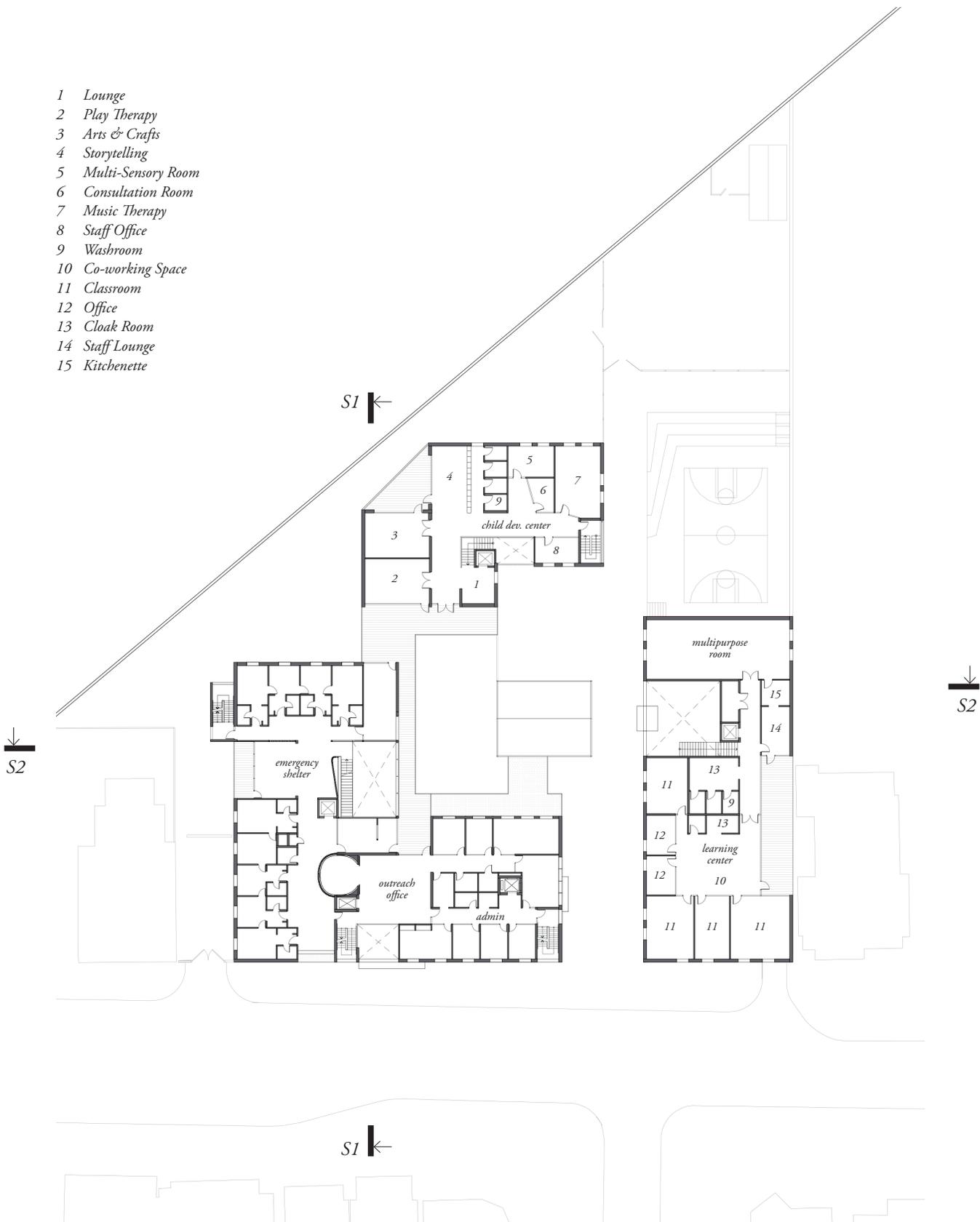


Fig. 59. Second Floor Plan 1:500





Fig. 60. Community Promenade.

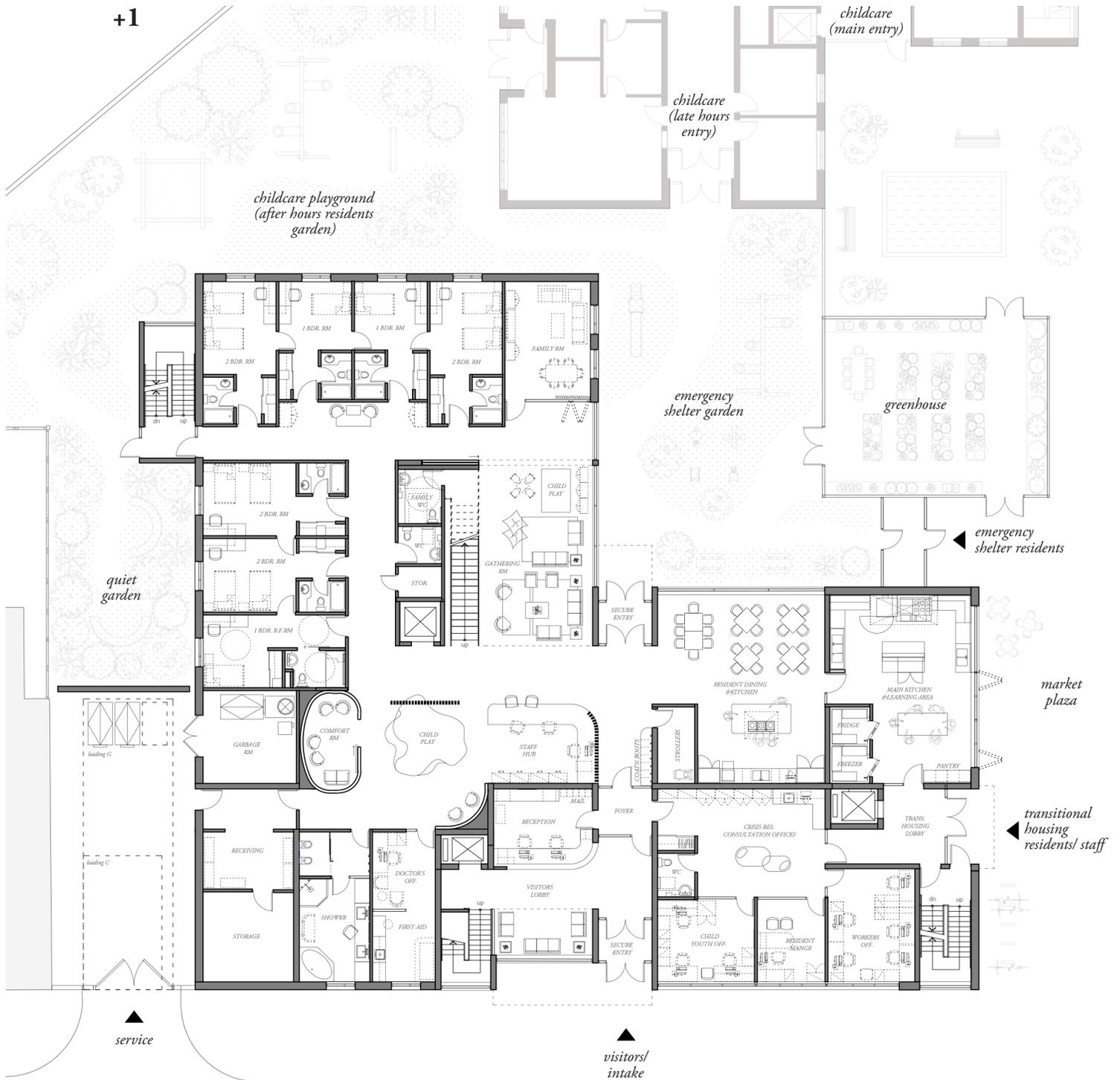


Fig. 61. Ground Floor Plan 1:250



Fig. 62. Emergency Shelter Entry.



Fig. 63. Second Floor Plan 1:250





Fig. 64. North-West Bird's-Eye View.

+

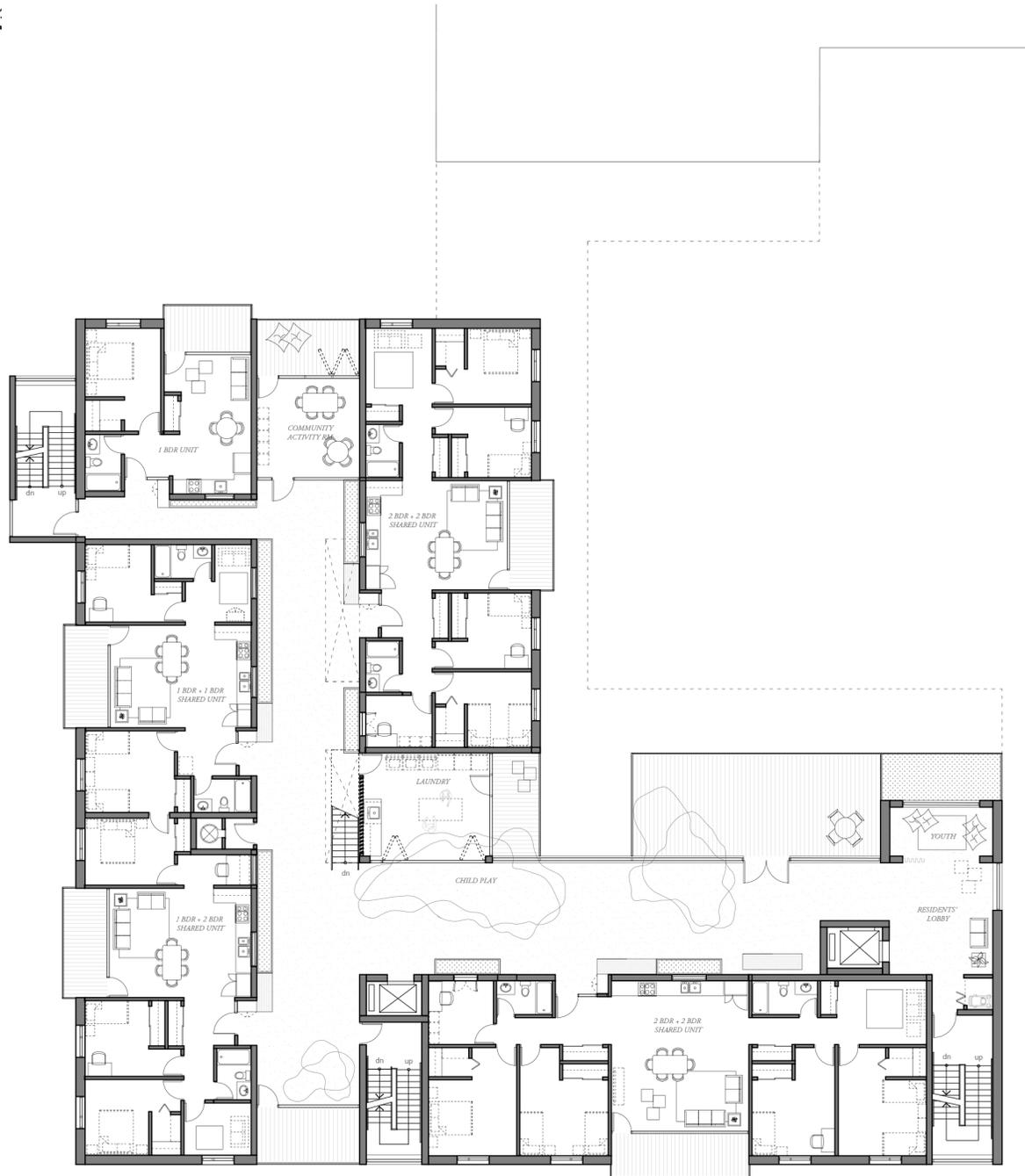


Fig. 65. Third Floor Plan 1:250





Fig. 66. Transitional Housing Terrace.

+4



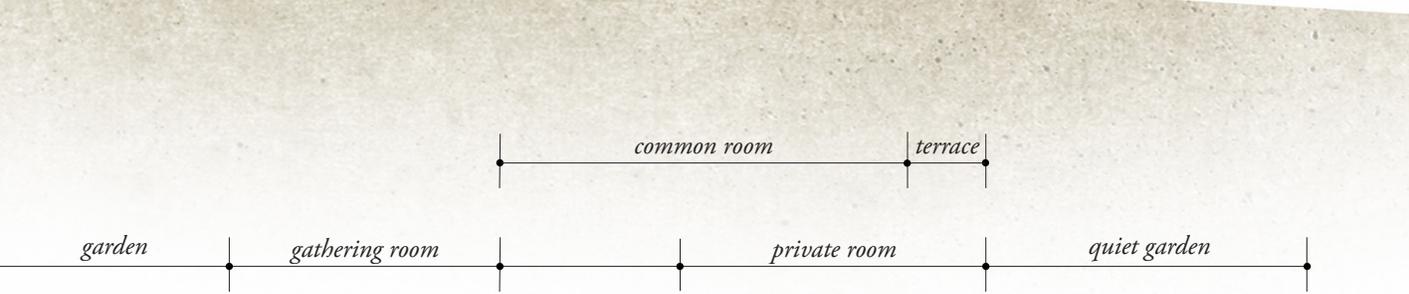
Fig. 67. Fourth Floor Plan 1:250



S1



Fig. 68. South-North Cross Section.



S2



Fig. 69. West-East Cross Section.



private unit



quiet study

terrace

child development center

terrace

family room

childcare

childcare garden

rail corridor



Fig. 70. Emergency Shelter Entrance - Interior View.

Emergency Shelter

“The first phone call home can be dangerous. ... The man cries, “Baby, where are you? I’ve been going crazy without you. You’ve got to come home, baby. Baby, I love you.” Hearing things she wants to believe, a woman may be overwhelmed with confusion. Her resolve to stay away may weaken.”⁸²

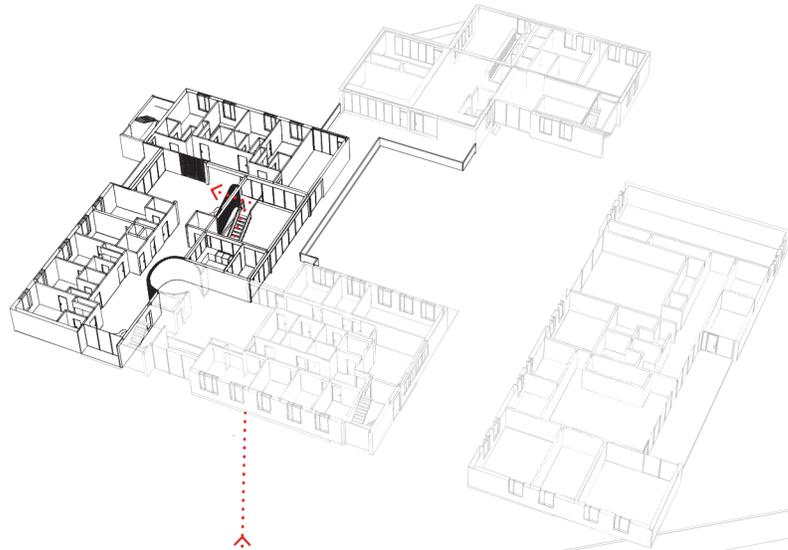
The role of the emergency shelter is to provide short-term accommodation and care for 1 night to 3 months, while allowing women to make their own choices in the supportive community. Due to the specificity of the situation, the shelter is designed for communal living with private “hotel-like” bedrooms. Rooms are interconnected by a swing door and can be joined together into one larger family room. The bedrooms are split into clusters to limit the number of bedrooms feeding into a corridor, to emulate the syntax of a house and create a domestic atmosphere.

The shelter spaces are located on two levels. To avoid an isolation of the top level and increase interaction among residents, the program spaces were distributed on both floors to create circulation flow between the two. Visual connection was created through surrounding the main gathering room with the common room, laundry, and study space.

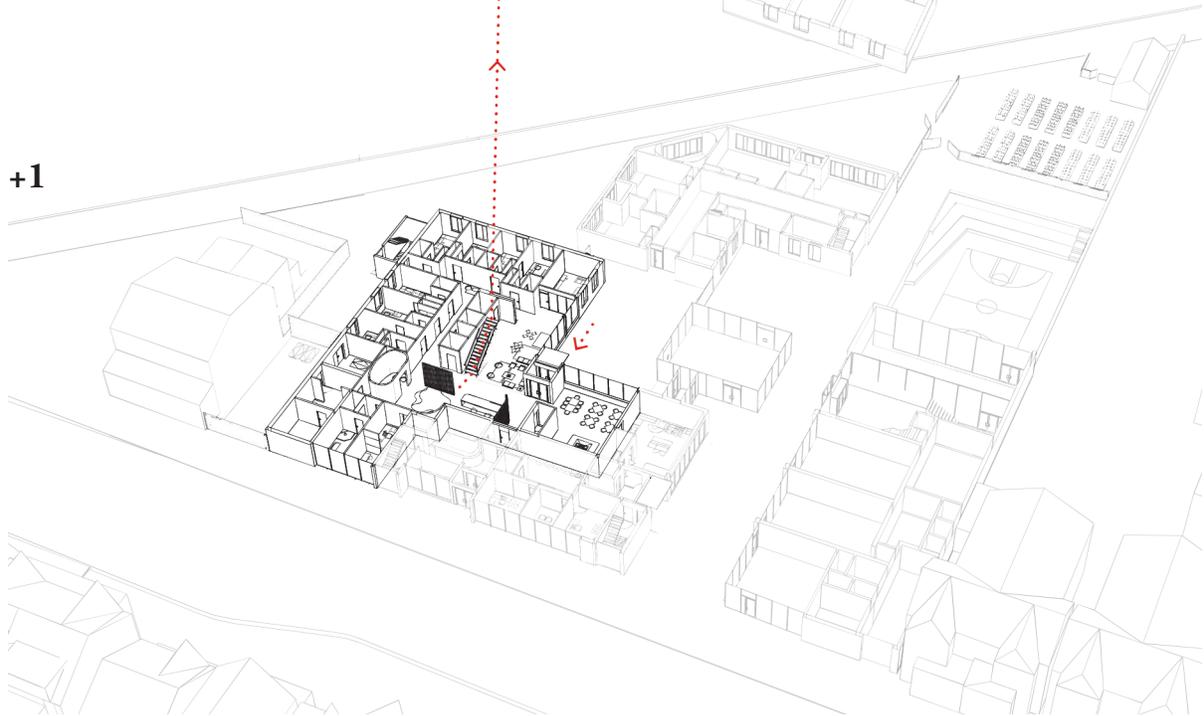
Staff offices are separated to create a less institutional environment and are linked to the shelter spaces through the main reception. The staff hub is a working station for the staff members to engage with clients “on the floor”. It is a more casual and flexible space that functions as part of the communal area of the ground floor.

The main intent of the design is to provide maximum agency and dignity while allowing for spatial flexibility to accommodate various possible scenarios and client groups. The number of residential beds is optimized to allow for the best service delivery without overcrowding the space.

+2



+1



25 residents
28% residential area
25% common space

Fig. 71. Emergency Shelter Axo.

Controlled Access	● ● ● ○ ○
Institutionalization	● ○ ○ ○ ○
Agency/ Independence	● ● ● ● ●
Privacy	● ● ● ● ○
Communal Environment	● ● ● ● ●
Inclinable Staff Area	● ● ● ● ●

Length of Stay	3 months	Total Interior	1 130 sq.m.
Number of Beds	25	Dining, Kitchen	60 sq.m.
Number of Rooms	16	Living	190 sq.m.
Shared Bathrooms	No	Bedroom (average)	17 sq.m.
Independent Cooking	Yes	Child	30 sq.m.
Program Space	Yes, part of Outreach	Staff Area	138 sq.m.
Flexible Sleeping Units	Yes	<i>(admin is separate)</i>	
Bridging with Neighborhood Program	Yes	Service	65 sq.m.
		Outdoor	860 sq.m.
		<i>(some shared with childcare)</i>	

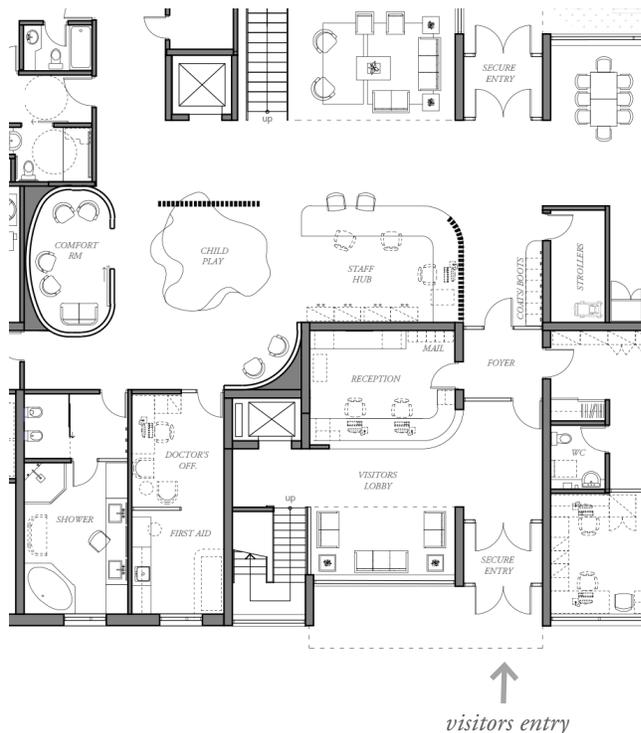


Fig. 72. Emergency Shelter Intake - Interior View.

Intake

The new resident intake happens at the main reception, where a person will be lead through the foyer to the shelter's intake area. This area is placed to the side of the public program to provide necessary privacy. However, the intake area also has a close relation to the gathering room and kitchen to support potential needs of the incoming family. The intake is a slow process and might take up to several hours. The big family bathroom and the doctor's office are directly adjacent to the intake area. In a crisis situation, the comfort room will be used as a crisis room since it has a direct visual connection with children's play area and can be supervised by the staff hub. In the precedents, the comfort room was also called an intake office. In this project, a different name is used to express the flexibility of purpose of this room. When there is no crisis, the residents of the shelter can use it as a quiet room, and the child play area will become a part of the larger communal space.

Fig. 73. 1st Floor Plan Fragment.



+2



+1



-  Circulation
-  Program Space

Fig. 74. 1st and 2nd Floor Plans.

Varying Spaces

Flexibility within communal spaces stimulates and encourages a variety of uses.

- A series of connected medium-sized spaces of varying shape and appearance allow for greater flexibility than one large or several identical spaces.
- Soft boundaries and varied furniture layout accommodates people of different ages and with a variety of needs in different scenarios.
- Spreading out public spaces between two connected floor layouts encourages paths to cross and fosters a livelier community.
- Wider outdoor and indoor pathways are provided for strolling or leisure walking.

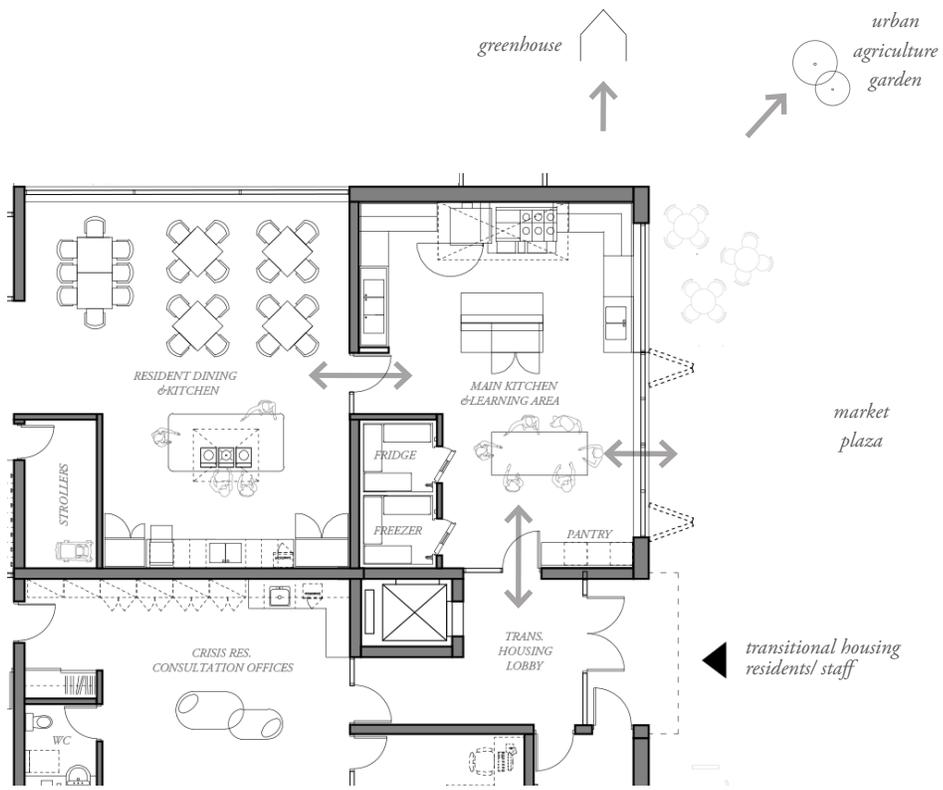


Fig. 75. 1st Floor Plan Fragment.

Empower

Making one's own decisions, reclaiming the autonomy and dignity by allowing agency in use of spaces.

- Cooking zone is split into residents' kitchen and commercial kitchen, allowing residents to cook their own food with access to prepared meals when needed. A warm-up station is located on the second floor for the emergency shelter residents. The commercial kitchen is separate from residents' kitchen and connected to the neighborhood, providing affordable meals for pick-up to transitional housing residents, as well as community cooking classes and nutritional programs.
- Functional, welcoming, and comfortable communal spaces create a context for supportive interaction, making parenting easier and minimizing conflicts between residents.
- Visual access throughout the building enhances autonomy by permitting sightlines into a communal space before entering it. Choosing when to interact and with whom is an essential component of self-determination.
- Quiet spaces outside residents' rooms increase options for privacy.
- Alcoves allow residents to retreat from larger group situations.
- Provided community workshop space and tool loan services are beneficial to the entire neighborhood.
- Residents are provided with an opportunity to have an access to communal vegetable garden and greenhouse.



Fig. 76. Emergency Shelter - Second Floor Lobby.

Storytelling and Dialogue

“Often, after experiencing traumatic events, a battered woman feels too humiliated or terrified to tell anyone what’s happened to her. She thinks no one will help her. In the shelter, women discover there are many other women in a similar situation. Together they discuss their experiences and they help one another. A new solidarity develops and some of the friendships last a lifetime.”⁸³

Common spaces allow reconnections and exchange with others and break the isolation of abuse. Those spaces create an opportunity to interact with one another in a casual intimate setting. That is when stories are shared and healing begins.

Private gathering spaces allow residents to come together. Smaller spaces suggest a more intimate setting and invite dialogue and sharing, while larger spaces could appear more intimidating.

Communal spaces allow opportunities to engage with a few people in an intimate setting over some common activity such as gardening, cooking, ironing, laundry, and others.

+2



+1



- Visitors Lobby
- Visitors & Counseling Space
- Outreach Office
- Shared by Visitors and Staff
- Administrative Area
- Shelter's Staff
- Shelter's Staff Hub

Outreach, Visits, Staff Offices

Staff areas are split into three zones – a crisis recourse consultation office with office space for the shelter staff, administrative area, and outreach area. Ground floor staff area provides security, monitoring, and support to shelter residents. This zone is connected to the emergency shelter through main reception. Staff offices are accessible for emergency shelter residents to receive consultations, which are especially relevant during first months at the shelter.

Fig. 77. 1st and 2nd Floor Plans.

In the outreach area, consultation rooms vary in size and layout. Meeting rooms, ritual space, event space and outreach staff office are all examples of these spaces. Each space can accommodate various needs and convey different spatial atmospheres. On-site visits can take place in any consultation room in the outreach area. It is further connected to the child development center through the terrace, in order to extend and consolidate trauma-related program space. Typically, the outreach office is disconnected from main service delivery program and located off-site. Reconnecting these services and bringing in former residents allows them to maintain the community and continuation of support. Having a public address and the main entry with various services on-site gives an opportunity for clients to keep the reason for their visit discreet.

The staff lounge and kitchenette serve all the staff members and is a part of the administrative area that provides staff with privacy away from clients. However, the staff entry is through the same lobby as the transitional housing entry to allow for informal contact between former emergency shelter residents and staff members.



Fig. 78. Outreach Waiting Area and Event Space.

Event Space

The second floor lobby is designed as a waiting area for the outreach office. This space incorporates a child play area and a small resource library. Due to the generous size of the space, it can be used as an event space to bring the greater public in, including former residents. Being connected to the ritual space and outdoor terrace, the event space has a wide programmatic potential.

Fig. 79. 2nd Floor Plan Fragment.

Programmatically and symbolically, the event space becomes a mediator between quiet space of healing, which is the shelter and its garden, and the public sphere, the city.



Transitional Housing

The clients who will need longer accommodation than emergency care will move into transitional housing. The emphasis is made on creating greater privacy and, at the same time, maintaining ties with the community. The design typology is similar to co-housing and specific to this type of user group.

GROUP TERRITORY

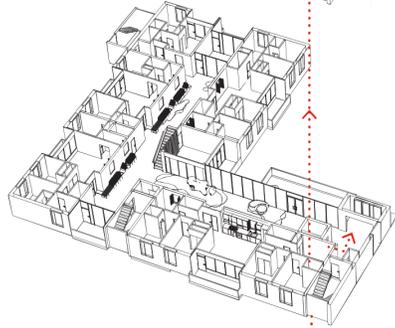
Common open space provides a territory for a group of units to create a sense of place and belonging.

- Smaller numbers of families build stronger support community. The optimal number is 6 to 10 households shearing same floor area, and 20 to a 100 people sharing common outdoor area⁸⁴.
- Gradient of privacy is created through transitioning from public zone (communal, used by all the residents), to semi-public zone (used by few households), to semi-private zone (used by members of one household or only two families), to private zone (used by one family or only one individual family member).
- Brief encounters are enhanced when a limited number share a common space creating a dwelling cluster.
- Each communal area is clearly the territory of a specific group of dwellings.
- Pathways are tangential to common areas so socializing activities are not interrupted by circulation, but still, invite the option of participation.
- Semi-alcove space for a chat is allowed where residents commonly passing through.
- Communal areas are broken into zones clearly dedicated to a particular group of users. Potentially conflicting activities are not placed next to each other.
- Residential environments within the unit are subdivided into specific territorial zones by giving spatial clues, such as furniture arrangements, and semi-transparent barriers.

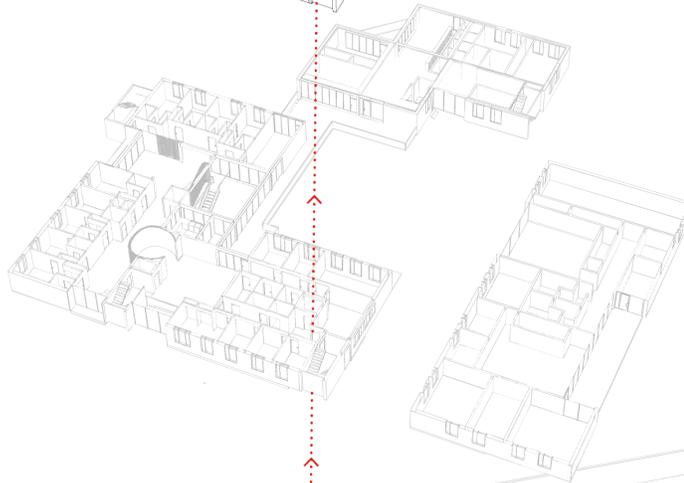
+4



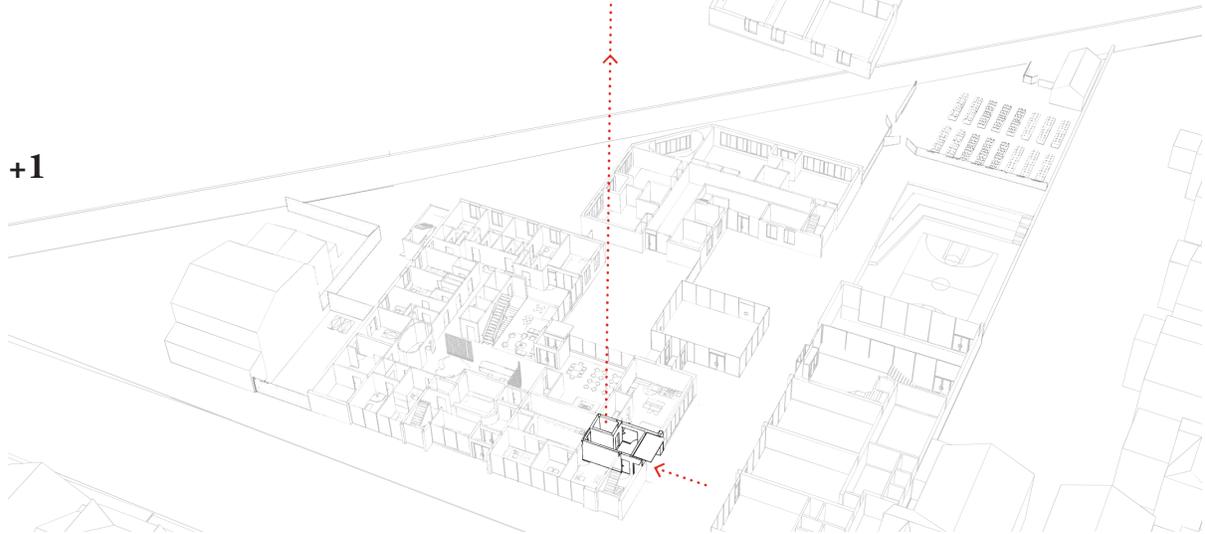
+3



+2



+1



44 residents
 50% residential area
 7% common space

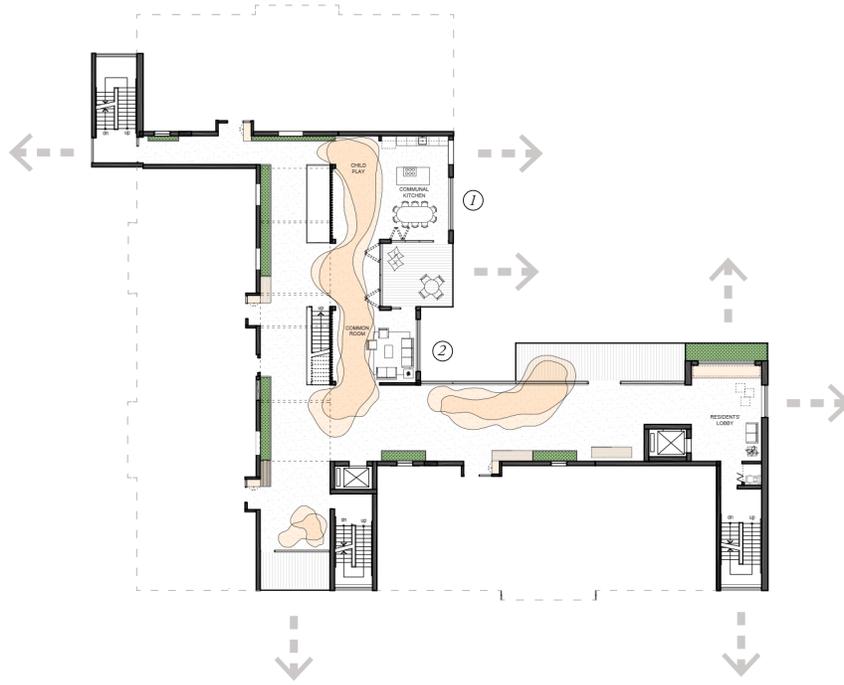
27% "interior street"
 8% outdoor terraces

Fig. 80. Transitional Housing Axo.

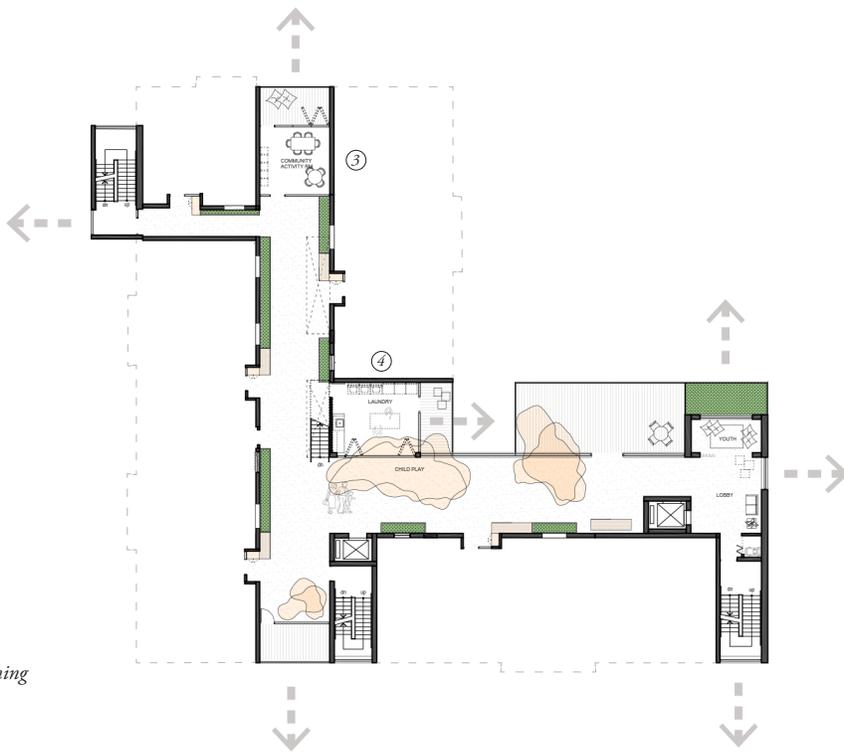
Controlled Access	● ○ ○ ○ ○
Institutionalization	● ○ ○ ○ ○
Agency/ Independence	● ● ● ● ●
Privacy	● ● ● ● ●
Communal Environment	● ● ● ● ●

Length of Stay	1.5 year	Total Interior	1 660 sq.m.
Number of Beds	44	Communal Dining	37 sq.m.
Number of Rooms	27	Communal Living	19 sq.m.
Number of Units	9	Bedroom (average)	14 sq.m.
Shared Bathrooms	No	Child	75 sq.m.
Independent Cooking	Some	Program	14 sq.m.
Program Space	Yes	Staff Area	n/a
Flexible Sleeping Units	Yes	Terraces	100 sq.m.
Bridging with Neighborhood Program	Yes	Interior Street	420 sq.m.

+4



+3



- 1 Kitchen and Dining
- 2 Living Room
- 3 Activity Room
- 4 Laundry

Fig. 81. Interior Street.



STREET ACTIVITIES OFF THE GROUND

Designed off-ground access ways allow to accommodate as many activities as possible that would normally occur on the street, sidewalk, or front porch or path. Sharing a common pedestrian open space, such as Interior Street, enhances the potential for neighborly social contact and allows for casual encounters outside of the home.

- Wide access ways (3.8m and 4.2m) with adjacent semi-enclosed “eddy space” accommodate needs of play and adolescent socializing.
- Socializing and play areas with seats in “neutral” territories are located at the ends of the interior street.
- Recessed entries to dwellings with planter box or seat activate the corridor and invite socializing.
- Passages are kept short and generous in shape, much like a room, with daylight and windows at the end of each dead-end corridor.

SPACES OF PROXIMITY

Places where people are able to bump into each other, to pause, to be semi-sheltered, and to feel comfortable to engage in a conversation create stronger communities and put people at each other’s disposal, which is crucial in the situation of single-parent families.

corridors/ pathways, outdoor space, entrance lobbies, elevator, convenient stair, entrance door nook, “dutch” door, kitchen window are examples of those spaces.



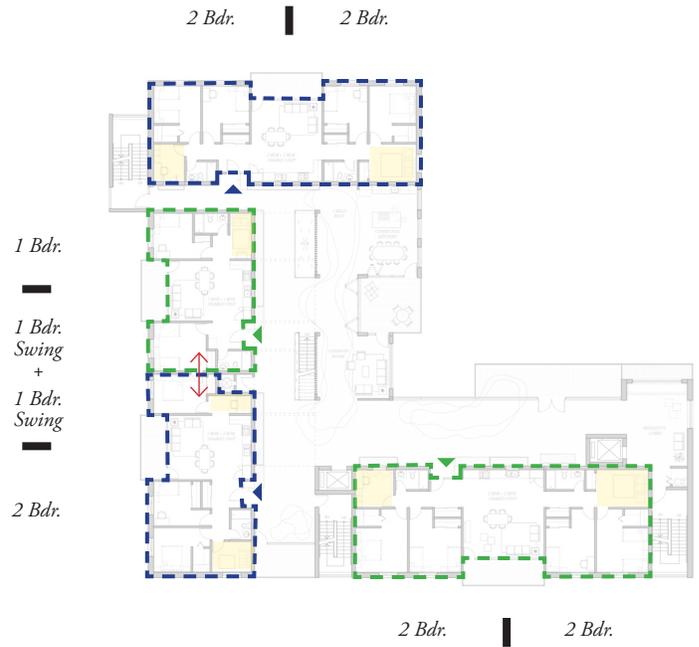
Fig. 82. Transitional Housing Interior Street View.

Design with Children in Mind

By addressing unsupervised safe child's play and providing space for challenging and interesting activities for teens to minimize the likelihood of boredom, parents are given time free of stress.

- Direct, safe access to an area for communal outdoor play or private open space paired with direct visual sightlines from the kitchen allows for easy supervision.
- Children's playing area is roughly square or rectangular to enable supervision with reasonable auditory and visual privacy. Spaces varying in size and layout for different age groups of children, teens, and sibling play are created.
- "Doorstep entries" with benches accommodate doorstep play within defined group territory.
- A sense of enclosure for younger children's play is created by furniture elements and alcove spaces.

+4



+3



Fig. 83. Transitional Housing 3rd and 4th Floor Plans.

Floor Layout

The maximum number of families per floor is 9. This creates a strong sense of support within the internal community. All the units are “Apartment” type (p.54) and can be shared between two families. In this case, the kitchen, dining, and living room will be shared (p.54). Each unit has an additional den space with a window facing the “interior street.” This space allows for additional private family space within the shared unit and can be used as child playroom, study room, or a storage space. Since women moving to shelters carry a lot of belongings with them, storage is included in the design. Each side of the unit has its own private bathroom. The units are designed to accommodate maximum flexibility. Several units include a swing room (p.59), which can be joined to either apartment.

There are fewer common spaces in this housing typology compared to the emergency shelter. Communal kitchen and dining, communal living room, laundry and activity room – these spaces are similar in purpose to ones in co-housing projects. Their role is to bring residents together through activities. The community activity room can be used as children’s arts and crafts space, quiet study space, or to host some programs which need more privacy (could be visual or audio related). Minimization of common spaces on the residential level was offset by creating a wide corridor which becomes the interior street and the center of communal life.

9 units in total:

8 “Shared Living” units + 1 Individual Unit

or

6 “Shared Living” units + 3 Individual Units

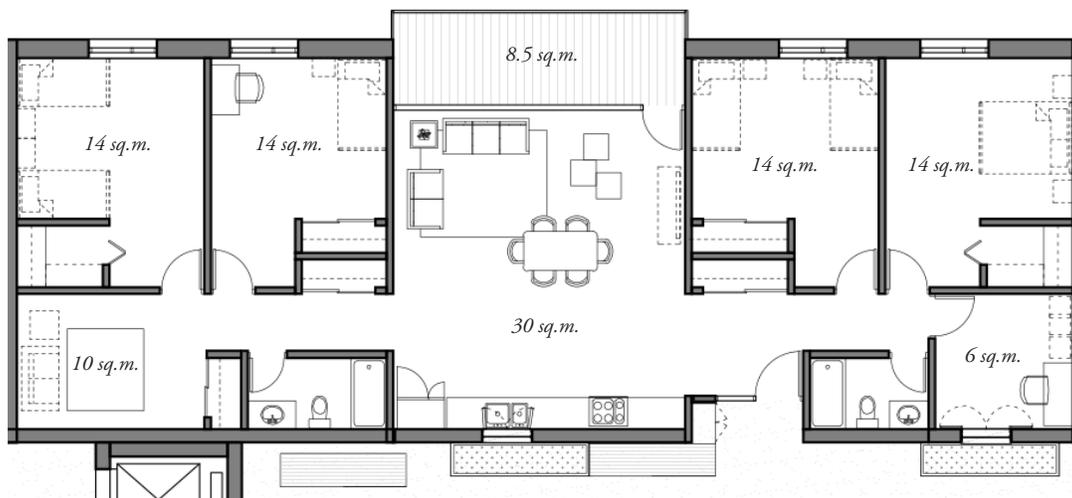
Variations:

1-Bedroom Units: 7 units

2-Bedroom Units: 10 units + (1)unit

3-Bedroom Units: 2 units

4-Bedroom Units: 4 units + (1) unit



▲
 2 Bdr. + 2Bdr.
 shared unit
 118 sq.m.

Fig. 84. Transitional Housing Typical Unit Floor Plan Fragment.

quiet ←-----→ *loud*

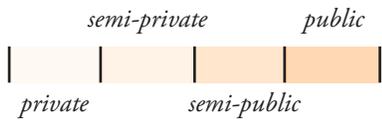
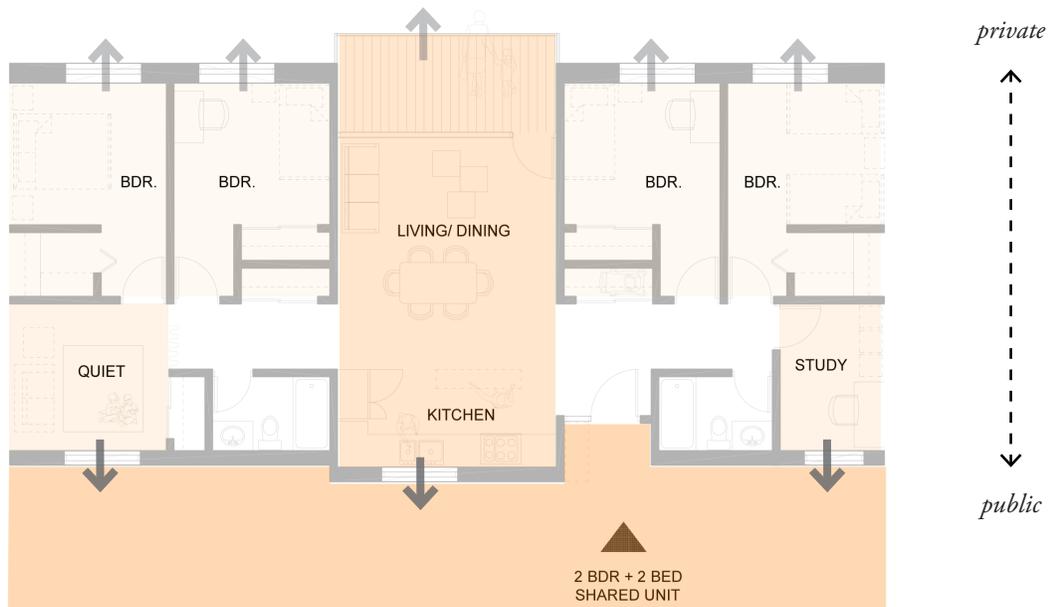


Fig. 85. Transitional Housing Typical Unit Floor Plan Fragment.

Privacy

Private spaces are integral to healing from trauma, regaining autonomy, and reclaiming parenting.

Privacy is essential in the context of crisis and allows leveling out potential conflicts.

- Private bedrooms and washrooms are essential to allow dignity for each family.
- Swing rooms allow for greater flexibility with larger families given the unpredictability of residents' occupancy type (large families, multiple smaller families, or several individuals).
- The flexibility of furniture arrangements allows residents the choice to be together or separately.
- "Family room" with typical domestic dimensions and furniture layout allows for family time and activities outside of the residential room in the emergency shelter.
- Homework/ study space sheltered from noisy activities provides privacy for quiet activities.
- Flexibility and greater privacy of units in transitional housing layout allow for potential accommodation of opposite sex residents within the same supportive care facility, recognising that the issue of domestic violence takes many forms (LGBTQ couples, female violence towards male, parental violence, violence against elderly).
- Private balconies for longer-term residents allow additional outdoor space.
- Privacy alcoves afford opportunities to retreat from larger group settings.
- "Quiet nooks" in outdoor spaces allow retreats from child's play or larger group gatherings.
- Appropriate scale is important when configuring shared living quarters in the communal living setting; planning for multiple, simultaneous users.
- Use planting to enhance the privacy of ground-level units or units facing Interior Street.
- Entries to private spaces, "dutch" doors, front door shades and kitchen window shutters allow residents to control their environment and level of social engagement.

Emergency Shelter

25 beds

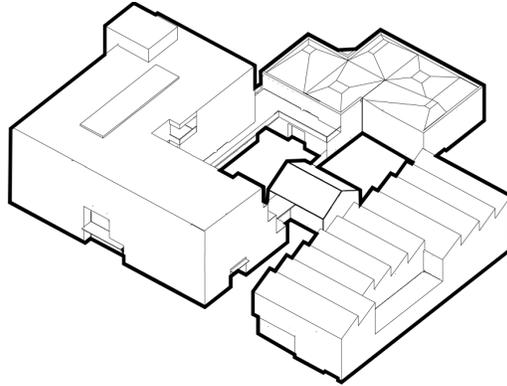
16 rooms

Transitional Housing

44 beds

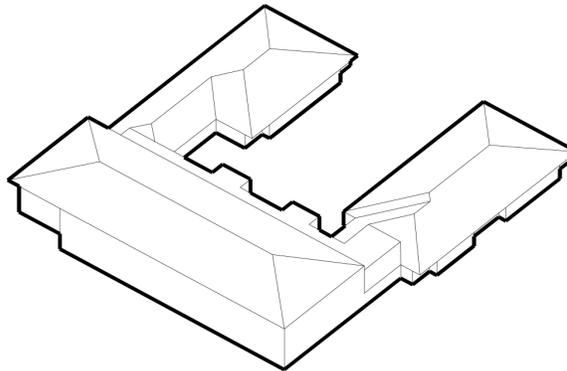
27 rooms

9 units



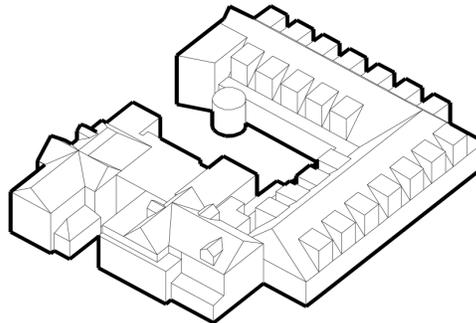
45 beds

30 rooms



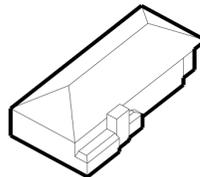
90 beds

37 rooms



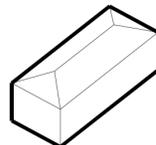
35 beds

12 rooms



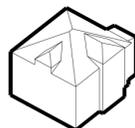
30 beds

10 rooms



22 beds

9 rooms



Conclusion

While the silence and stigma surrounding the issue of violence against women is a social problem and cannot be solved solely through architecture, a thoughtful design strategy can support a service delivery model and allow for a shift in social views. This thesis creates a design model that can become a part of the advocacy. As we have seen through case studies, neither the architecture alone nor a single service delivery model has enough influence to make a significant difference. This thesis illustrates how informed and appropriate spatial design paired with an enlightened service model can create a positive impact on residents' recovery. The collaboration of the two is essential to success.

Fig. 86. Shelters Massing Comparison.

VAW shelters and transitional housing for single women-led families should understand the socio-political and economic struggles that these women go through, and therefore should also be prepared to provide the necessary support. With this goal in mind, the intent of this thesis is to design a model for housing that enhances a sense of family, encourages positive interaction and bonding between residents, and fosters mentorship and support. The design also provides a secure physical environment that supports both collective and private activities, which stimulates emotional growth and economic self-sufficiency. Community commands a key role in the design of the physical environment and shared spaces, which connects rather than separates people. This approach sees housing as a means of empowerment, and not simply as a service.

This thesis takes a strong position on the essential spatial arrangements that are required to allow for empathetic and dignified design. The proposed design project is specific to its site and the context of the urban fabric of Toronto. However, the strategy of fostering community and integrating, not isolating, the shelter and its services from the city are universal and can be applied to any domestic violence shelter or transitional housing design.

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