

**ESTABLISHING A Foothold:**  
AN ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL  
MODEL OF INTEGRATION FOR NEW CANADIANS

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## **AUTHOR'S DECLARATION**

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.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.



## **ABSTRACT**

With Canada's rapidly aging population and low birth rate, immigration is critical to the future of the country and Toronto, as a gateway city and one of the most multicultural and multiracial cities in the world, is a prime destination for these newcomers.

However, due to rising rents within the city, many recent immigrants are being pushed out towards the inner suburbs in search for affordable housing and they often find themselves living in the residential towers which were built during the post-war years throughout the country. Unfortunately, majority of these towers are deteriorating, both physically and socially, due to lack of social infrastructure such as public transport and close proximity to amenities and services and as such, they are not meeting the needs of their tenants.

Combined, these factors create significant difficulties for new Canadians and can prevent them from becoming healthy active citizens within the community. Consequently, this creates areas of low income and high poverty, resulting in a fragmented city.

This thesis, looking specifically at the Bangladeshi community located in Oakridge, Scarborough, Toronto, explores and investigates ways in which physical infrastructure and urban design strategies can promote economic resilience and social and cultural integration, within the society, for new Canadians. The goal of this thesis is to create a socially inclusive and dynamic model of community engagement and public space activation through urban intensification and the leveraging of economic opportunities and cultural capacities of an existing tower neighbourhood.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this with love, affection and gratitude to my parents without whom everything I have accomplished thus far would not have been possible.





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

iii	Author's Declaration
v	Abstract
vi	Acknowledgements
vii	Dedication
x	List of Figures
1	<b>Chapter 1 - Introduction</b>
7	<b>Chapter 2 - Challenge of Immigration</b>
	2.1 Migration & Recent Immigrants
	2.1.1 A Brief History
	2.1.2 Current Trends
	2.2 The Importance of Integration
	2.2.1 Health Impacts
	2.3 Ethnoburbs: A Brampton Case Study
19	<b>Chapter 3 - Place Making Strategies</b>
	3.1 Affordable Housing
	3.2 The Tower Renewal Project
	3.3 East Scarborough Store Front
	3.4 A Case Study of Thorncliffe Park
	3.5 Thorncliffe Community Center & Childcare
	3.6 Savonnerie Heymans Public Housing, Brussels
	3.7 Bijlmermeer, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
	3.8 Wilhelmsburg, Hamburg, Germany
	3.9 Lessons Learnt: Key Principles for Creating Complete & Cohesive Tower Neighbourhoods
39	<b>Chapter 4 - Synthesis</b>
	4.1 Design Approach
	4.2 Site Selection
	4.3 Program
	4.4 Design Proposal
77	<b>Chapter 5 - Conclusion</b>
83	<b>Bibliography</b>

# LIST OF FIGURES

All illustrations, maps, and photographs have been produced by the author unless otherwise sourced in this list.

## Chapter 1

- 1.1** Number and proportion of foreign-born population in Canada, 1871 to 2036. Graph. 2017. Statistics Canada, <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/dai/btd/othervisuals/other006>. 2
- 1.2** Solli, Martin. *Ethnic neighbourhoods*. Photograph. 2009. *Business Insider*, <https://www.businessinsider.com/the-best-ethnic-neighborhoods-in-new-york-city-2015-7>. 2
- 1.3** Martin, Brendan. *Tower apartments surrounded with underutilized spaces and isolated from the rest of the community and required services and retail spaces*. Photograph. 2008. *Flickr*, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/towerrenewal/albums/72157619492602046>. 3
- 1.4** Jackson, Jesse Colin. *Tower apartments surrounded with underutilized spaces*. Photograph. 2009. *Tower Renewal Guidelines: For the Comprehensive Retrofit of Multi-Unit Residential Buildings in Cold Climates*, <https://www.daniels.utoronto.ca/sites/daniels.utoronto.ca/files/old/TowerRenewalGuidelines.pdf>. 4
- 1.5** Map showing the percentage of recent immigrants across the City of Toronto. Map. 2016. Statistics Canada, [https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/94fc-Toronto\\_Geographic-Trends\\_Web-Version.pdf](https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/94fc-Toronto_Geographic-Trends_Web-Version.pdf). 4

## Chapter 2

- 2.1** Distribution of Foreign-Born Population, by Region of Birth, Canada, 1871 to 2036. Graph. 2017. Statistics Canada, <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/dai/btd/othervisuals/other009>. 9
- 2.2** Country of Birth of Foreign-Born Ontarians by Period of Immigration. Pie Chart. 2017. Ministry of Finance, <https://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/economy/demographics/census/cenhi16-8.html#ch1>. 9
- 2.3** Population Distribution of the Top Four Visible Minority Groups in the City of Toronto. Map. 2016. Statistics Canada, [https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/94fc-Toronto\\_Geographic-Trends\\_Web-Version.pdf](https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/94fc-Toronto_Geographic-Trends_Web-Version.pdf). 10
- 2.4** Delara, Mahin. *Factors affecting the mental health of immigrants*. Diagram. 2016. In "Social Determinants of Immigrant Women's Mental Health," *Advances in Public Health*, <https://doi.org/10.1155/2016/9730162>. 13
- 2.5** Proportion of Total and Recent Immigrant Population with Income below Low Income Cut-Off (LICO). Graph. 2011. In *Healthy Toronto by Design, Toronto Public Health*, <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/9621-TPH-healthy-toronto-by-design-report-Oct04-2011.pdf>. 13

- 2.6** *The migration process and health outcomes.* Diagram. 14  
 Accessed September 2019. *International Organization for Migration*, <https://www.iom.int/social-determinants-migrant-health>.
- 2.7** Perry, Nick. *Local residents celebrate the Bengali New Year with a parade along Danforth Avenue.* Photograph, 2016. *DurhamRegion.com*, <https://www.durhamregion.com/news-story/6499192-toronto-bengali-new-year-festival-celebrations-set-for-danforth-avenue/>.
- 2.8** Edited by Author. *Map of the Greater Toronto Area locating Brampton.* Map. 2008. *Wikipedia*, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Greater\\_toronto\\_area\\_map-de.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Greater_toronto_area_map-de.svg).
- 2.9** *Chalo Fresh Co grocery store, that carries South Asian groceries to serve the community in Brampton.* Screen capture. 16  
 Accessed September 2019. *Google Maps*.
- 2.10** *CeleBrampton kicks off summer with a wide variety of food, activities, and entertainment, all celebrating Brampton's diverse cultures, history, and family-friendly community.* Photographs. 2017. *City of Brampton*, <http://www.brampton.ca>.

### Chapter 3

- 3.1** *Canada contains a significant stock of high-rise housing constructed for the most part during the nation-wide economic and population expansion of the 1960s and 1970s.* Photograph. 20  
 Accessed September 2019. *Tower Renewal Guidelines: For the Comprehensive Retrofit of Multi-Unit Residential Buildings in Cold Climates*, <https://www.daniels.utoronto.ca/sites/daniels.utoronto.ca/files/old/TowerRenewalGuidelines.pdf>.
- 3.2** Jackson, Jesse Colin. *Empty parking lots surrounding the towers highlights the importance given to automobiles when they were initially built.* Photograph. 2009. *Tower Renewal Guidelines: For the Comprehensive Retrofit of Multi-Unit Residential Buildings in Cold Climates*, <https://www.daniels.utoronto.ca/sites/daniels.utoronto.ca/files/old/TowerRenewalGuidelines.pdf>. 21
- 3.3** Jackson, Jesse Colin. *Open spaces surrounding the towers are underused and create a negative impact on the street life for its residents.* Photograph. 2009. *Tower Renewal Guidelines: For the Comprehensive Retrofit of Multi-Unit Residential Buildings in Cold Climates*, <https://www.daniels.utoronto.ca/sites/daniels.utoronto.ca/files/old/TowerRenewalGuidelines.pdf>. 21
- 3.4** Martin, Brendan. *'Park' areas used as junkyards instead of effective public spaces.* Photograph. 2009. *Tower Renewal Guidelines: For the Comprehensive Retrofit of Multi-Unit Residential Buildings in Cold Climates*, <https://www.daniels.utoronto.ca/sites/daniels.utoronto.ca/files/old/TowerRenewalGuidelines.pdf>. 22

<b>3.5</b>	<i>Aerial view of the urban fabric which clearly shows the 'tower in the park' design of the buildings and highlight the dominance on automobiles. Photograph. Accessed September 2019. Tower Renewal Guidelines: For the Comprehensive Retrofit of Multi-Unit Residential Buildings in Cold Climates, <a href="https://www.daniels.utoronto.ca/sites/daniels.utoronto.ca/files/old/TowerRenewalGuidelines.pdf">https://www.daniels.utoronto.ca/sites/daniels.utoronto.ca/files/old/TowerRenewalGuidelines.pdf</a>.</i>	22
<b>3.6</b>	<i>Distribution of Apartment Tower Neighbourhoods throughout Toronto. Map. 2014. The Centre for Urban Growth and Renewal, <a href="http://towerrenewal.com/mapping-tower-renewal-areas-of-opportunity-priority/">http://towerrenewal.com/mapping-tower-renewal-areas-of-opportunity-priority/</a>.</i>	23
<b>3.7</b>	<i>Impact areas which need to be addressed to achieve the set goals. Images. Accessed September 2019. Tower Renewal Partnership, <a href="http://towerrenewal.com/impact-areas/">http://towerrenewal.com/impact-areas/</a>.</i>	23
<b>3.8</b>	<i>Rotsztain, Daniel. As of October 2016, five hundred apartment tower neighbourhoods in the City of Toronto acquired the ability to reconceive the social and economic character of their communities. Illustration. Accessed September 2019. Tower Renewal Partnership, <a href="http://towerrenewal.com/initiatives/rac-zone/">http://towerrenewal.com/initiatives/rac-zone/</a>.</i>	25
<b>3.9</b>	<i>Requirements for different types of structures and the timeline to attain these programs. Diagram. Accessed September 2019. Tower Renewal Partnership, <a href="http://towerrenewal.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/RAC_diagram2-1.jpg">http://towerrenewal.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/RAC_diagram2-1.jpg</a>.</i>	25
<b>3.10</b>	<i>ESS is situated between the two residential towers and this provides a platform for social engagement between the towers. Screen capture. Accessed September 2019. Google Maps.</i>	26
<b>3.11</b>	<i>The site plan indicates the implemented changes on the site to provide a community kitchen, kitchen garden and an outdoor multipurpose sports court. Screen capture. Accessed September 2019. Google Maps.</i>	26
<b>3.12</b>	<i>The community kitchen, known as the Eco-Food Hub, provides as space for learning and interaction. Photograph. Accessed September 2019. East Scarborough Storefront, <a href="https://thestorefront.org/where/eco-food-hub/">https://thestorefront.org/where/eco-food-hub/</a>.</i>	27
<b>3.13</b>	<i>The community garden provides access to fresh healthy produce which can be shared among residents. Photograph. Accessed September 2019. ERA Architects, <a href="http://www.eraarch.ca/project/east-scarborough-storefront/">http://www.eraarch.ca/project/east-scarborough-storefront/</a>.</i>	27
<b>3.14</b>	<i>The innovative green-roof shade structure known as the Sky-o-Swale acts as a green-roof pavilion that filters rainwater to irrigate the adjacent gardens as well as seating and a stage for the community. Photograph. Accessed September 2019. ERA Architects, <a href="http://www.eraarch.ca/project/east-scarborough-storefront/">http://www.eraarch.ca/project/east-scarborough-storefront/</a>.</i>	27
<b>3.15</b>	<i>Site plan of Thorncliffe Park. Map. Accessed September 2019. Wikipedia, <a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thorncliffe_Park">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thorncliffe_Park</a>.</i>	28

- 3.16** *Thornccliffe Park is a multicultural neighbourhood but with a ethnic dominance of South Asian immigrants.* Photograph. Accessed September 2019. *Thornccliffe Park Women's Committee*, <http://www.tpwomenscomm.org/>. 28
- 3.17** *The community market is used a place making strategy which reduces social isolation, supports cross-cultural exchange and creates socio-economic opportunities.* Photograph. Accessed September 2019. *Thornccliffe Park Women's Committee*, <http://www.tpwomenscomm.org/>. 29
- 3.18** *Various programs are offered to the community members to encourage community participation and enhance interaction and socialisation.* Photograph. Accessed September 2019. *Thornccliffe Park Women's Committee*, <http://www.tpwomenscomm.org/>. 29
- 3.19** *The community center is located centrally within the tower neighbourhood allowing easy access to its residents.* Screen capture. Accessed September 2019. *Google Maps*. 30
- 3.20** *The aerial view of the community center shows the renovations and additions infilled onto the site.* Screen capture. Accessed September 2019. *Google Maps*. 30
- 3.21** *The use of glass on the facade creates a transparency with its surroundings which creates an indoor/outdoor relationship that is inviting and encourages engagement.* Photograph. Accessed September 2019. *LGA Architectural Partners*, <http://lga-ap.com/project/community/thornccliffe>. 30
- 3.22** *The use of a wooden ceiling creates a warm and welcoming space while also providing acoustical advantages which allows multiple uses for the space.* Photograph. Accessed September 2019. *LGA Architectural Partners*, <http://lga-ap.com/project/community/thornccliffe>. 31
- 3.23** *Creating spatial variations within the building allows for flexibility where smaller events can take place in cosier one-storied spaces. Additionally, creating a transition from indoor to outdoor space engages the surrounding context and enlivens the space with nature and light.* Photograph. Accessed September 2019. *LGA Architectural Partners*, <http://lga-ap.com/project/community/thornccliffe>. 31
- 3.24** *The use of transparency between different levels within the structure ensures visual engagement and diminishes feelings of isolation while also drawing in natural light into the maximum amount of spaces.* Photograph. Accessed September 2019. *LGA Architectural Partners*, <http://lga-ap.com/project/community/thornccliffe>. 31

- 3.25** Public Spaces: 32  
*The design is a sustainable oasis of 42 middle-income rentals grouped around three private courtyards which provides natural light and ventilation along with spaces for social interactions. Diagram. Accessed September 2019. Archdaily, <https://www.archdaily.com/220116/savonnerie-heyman-mdw-architecture>.*
- 3.26** *Ground Floor Plan. Drawing. Accessed September 2019. Archdaily, <https://www.archdaily.com/220116/savonnerie-heyman-mdw-architecture>.*
- 3.27** Heritage: 32  
*The project retains the industrial flavor of the property, which dates back to the 18th century. Whenever possible, existing buildings and structures have been retained and reused. These are marked on the plan in corresponding colours. Diagram. Accessed September 2019. Archdaily, <https://www.archdaily.com/220116/savonnerie-heyman-mdw-architecture>.*
- 3.28** Dujardin, Filip. *The balcony overlooking the courtyard provides a transitional space between the indoor and outdoor which can be used as social gathering spaces. Photograph. Accessed September 2019. Archdaily, <https://www.archdaily.com/220116/savonnerie-heyman-mdw-architecture>.*
- 3.29** Dujardin, Filip. *The existing fabric is seamlessly integrated into the new while still retaining its original character which gives the architecture a sense of place within the contemporary as well as history. Photograph. Accessed September 2019. Archdaily, <https://www.archdaily.com/220116/savonnerie-heyman-mdw-architecture>.*
- 3.30** Dujardin, Filip. *The transparency of the facades create a sense of porosity while the more solid elements define an edge which holds the courtyard in place as a central gathering space. Photograph. Accessed September 2019. Archdaily, <https://www.archdaily.com/220116/savonnerie-heyman-mdw-architecture>.*
- 3.31** *Figure ground plan. Drawing. Accessed September 2019. Growth and Resiliency in Tower in the Park Sites across the GGH, <http://towerrenewal.com/research-reports/growth-and-resilience-in-tower-in-the-park-sites-across-the-ggh/>.*
- 3.32** *Infill building viewed from street demonstrating the creation of a street edge and merging with the existing context. Photograph. 2009. Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/towerrenewal/5204659975/in/album-72157625336610639/>.*
- 3.33** *Improved connectivity by designing bicycle paths through towers while also encouraging a more inclusive neighbourhood. Photograph. 2009. Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/towerrenewal/5205256410/in/album-72157625336610639/>.*

<b>3.34</b>	<i>Building site analysis highlighting the permeability through the site and, through the creation of a street edge, useful inner courtyard spaces which can be utilised successfully as community gathering areas.</i> Diagram. Accessed September 2019. <i>Growth and Resiliency in Tower in the Park Sites across the GGH</i> , <a href="http://towerrenewal.com/research-reports/growth-and-resilience-in-tower-in-the-park-sites-across-the-ggh/">http://towerrenewal.com/research-reports/growth-and-resilience-in-tower-in-the-park-sites-across-the-ggh/</a> .	34
<b>3.35</b>	<i>Figure ground plan.</i> Drawing. Accessed September 2019. <i>Growth and Resiliency in Tower in the Park Sites across the GGH</i> , <a href="http://towerrenewal.com/research-reports/growth-and-resilience-in-tower-in-the-park-sites-across-the-ggh/">http://towerrenewal.com/research-reports/growth-and-resilience-in-tower-in-the-park-sites-across-the-ggh/</a> .	35
<b>3.36</b>	<i>Apartment block with covered walkway and public plaza.</i> Photograph. Accessed September 2019. <i>Growth and Resiliency in Tower in the Park Sites across the GGH</i> , <a href="http://towerrenewal.com/research-reports/growth-and-resilience-in-tower-in-the-park-sites-across-the-ggh/">http://towerrenewal.com/research-reports/growth-and-resilience-in-tower-in-the-park-sites-across-the-ggh/</a> .	35
<b>3.37</b>	<i>Building site analysis highlighting the permeability through the site and connectivity to the public plaza and commercial activities.</i> Diagram. Accessed September 2019. <i>Growth and Resiliency in Tower in the Park Sites across the GGH</i> , <a href="http://towerrenewal.com/research-reports/growth-and-resilience-in-tower-in-the-park-sites-across-the-ggh/">http://towerrenewal.com/research-reports/growth-and-resilience-in-tower-in-the-park-sites-across-the-ggh/</a> .	35
<b>3.38</b>	Joosten, Hanns. <i>The lines of benches provide a framework for the plaza's use as a market place allowing the space to be flexible.</i> Photograph. Accessed September 2019. <i>Landezine</i> , <a href="http://www.landezine.com/index.php/2015/12/bera-kroger-plaza-by-relais-landschaftsarchitekten/">http://www.landezine.com/index.php/2015/12/bera-kroger-plaza-by-relais-landschaftsarchitekten/</a> .	35

## **Chapter 4**

<b>4.1</b>	<i>Location of Toronto within Canada</i>	41
<b>4.2</b>	<i>Location of Ward 35 within Scarborough</i>	41
<b>4.3</b>	<i>Location of Oakridge within Ward 35</i>	41
<b>4.4</b>	<i>Location of Site within Oakridge</i>	41
<b>4.5</b>	<i>Visible minority distribution comparison</i>	42
<b>4.6</b>	Edited by Author. <i>Map of recent Immigrants distribution within Oakridge.</i> Map. 2016. <i>Statistics Canada</i> , <a href="https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/94fc-Toronto_Geographic-Trends_Web-Version.pdf">https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/94fc-Toronto_Geographic-Trends_Web-Version.pdf</a> .	42
<b>4.7</b>	<i>Oakridge demographics indicating occupancy of house type, dominant birth country of immigrants and qualification level of the total population within the neighbourhood. (Data source: Statistics Canada 2016 Census of Population)</i>	42
<b>4.8</b>	<i>Fences obstruct flow of ground plane creating segregation.</i>	43

<b>4.9</b>	<i>No street furniture provided for social interaction.</i>	43
<b>4.10</b>	<i>Empty green lots create poor public realms because they act as dead spaces.</i>	43
<b>4.11</b>	<i>The mosque on site is a place of cultural and social gathering.</i>	43
<b>4.12</b>	<i>Excluding the apartment towers, detached and semi-detached houses are the dominant housing typology of the neighbourhood.</i>	43
<b>4.13</b>	<i>Automobile dominance can be seen in the street character.</i>	43
<b>4.14</b>	<i>Street activity can be found at the intersection near commercial spaces.</i>	43
<b>4.15</b>	<i>Ethnic influences found in retail on site.</i>	43
<b>4.16</b>	<i>Along Danforth Avenue, to the west of the site, many businesses and retail shops highlight the concentration of Bangladeshi people in the community. It can be identified in the products marketed as well as the style of marketing.</i>	43
<b>4.17</b>	<i>Existing Site Fabric and Zoning</i>	44
<b>4.18</b>	<i>Figure-ground Plan of Existing Conditions</i>	46
<b>4.19</b>	<i>Distance of Selected Site in Relation to Other Towers in Vicinity: 5 minute, 10 minute and 15 minutes walking radius to highlight the accessibility of the site from areas with large populations such as other tower neighbourhoods.</i>	46
<b>4.20</b>	<i>Creating a network between cultural influences to enhance the vibrancy of the neighbourhood.</i>	48
<b>4.21</b>	<i>Exploring relationships to create an economically resilient and social and culturally rich design proposal.</i>	48
<b>4.22</b>	<i>A noticeable pattern that can be found in the urban fabric of many Islamic countries in the Middle East and South Asia is the relationship between the market and the mosque. Souqs were built in close proximity to mosques because large public gatherings for prayer were economically prosperous for local businesses.</i>	48
<b>4.23</b>	<i>Textiles &amp; Crafts: Small scale production which can be used to showcase skills and create jobs for local residents.</i> Hassan, Olinda. Photograph. 2012. <i>Olinda's Blog</i> , <a href="https://olindahassan.com/2012/01/25/my-tailor-in-banani-bazaar-anwar-bhai/">https://olindahassan.com/2012/01/25/my-tailor-in-banani-bazaar-anwar-bhai/</a> . Salomonsson, Annika. Photograph. Accessed September 2019. <i>Userlike</i> , <a href="https://www.userlike.com/en/blog/tailor-store-ecommerce-story">https://www.userlike.com/en/blog/tailor-store-ecommerce-story</a> .	48



<b>4.24</b>	<i>Food Market &amp; Carts: Space for cultural and social integration and showcasing cuisine skills which can be produced in the community kitchen and enjoyed by the community and these spaces can also be used to sell locally grown produce.</i>	48
	Photograph. Accessed September 2019. <i>Park Record</i> , <a href="https://www.parkrecord.com/news/business/restaurants-worry-how-food-trucks-will-affect-business-in-park-city/">https://www.parkrecord.com/news/business/restaurants-worry-how-food-trucks-will-affect-business-in-park-city/</a>	
	Photograph. Accessed September 2019. <i>FoodShare</i> , <a href="https://freshroots.ca/fresh/uploads/2015/04/Rethinking-School-Food-Cultivating-a-Healthy-School-Food-System-Vancouver-April-2015.compressed.pdf">https://freshroots.ca/fresh/uploads/2015/04/Rethinking-School-Food-Cultivating-a-Healthy-School-Food-System-Vancouver-April-2015.compressed.pdf</a> .	
<b>4.25</b>	<i>Pedestrian Friendly Streets &amp; Performance Spaces: Streets creating permeability through the ground plane invite the inhabitants of the area and the wider community into public spaces where festivals, performances and social events can take place.</i>	48
	Photograph. Accessed September 2019. <i>Utsavpedia</i> , <a href="https://www.utsavpedia.com/weddings-festivals/festivals/poila-baisakh-new-year-in-west-bengal/">https://www.utsavpedia.com/weddings-festivals/festivals/poila-baisakh-new-year-in-west-bengal/</a> .	
	Agaz, Kazi Tahsin. Photograph. 2009. <i>Wn.com</i> , <a href="https://ecdn9.wn.com/pd/c2/05/3d09c18977e9eb0eea58f64e0c02_large.jpg">https://ecdn9.wn.com/pd/c2/05/3d09c18977e9eb0eea58f64e0c02_large.jpg</a> .	
<b>4.26</b>	<i>Initial Program Deployment in Relation to Site: Exploring connections that can used to facilitate cohesion and smooth transitions between different programs whilst encouraging social and cultural interaction.</i>	49
<b>4.27</b>	<i>Proposed Zoning &amp; Program</i>	50
<b>4.28</b>	<i>Ground Floor Plan</i>	53
<b>4.29</b>	<i>Second Floor Plan</i>	55
<b>4.30</b>	<i>Section AA'</i>	56
<b>4.31</b>	<i>Section BB'</i>	58
<b>4.32</b>	<i>Section CC'</i>	59
<b>4.33</b>	<i>Section DD'</i>	60
<b>4.34</b>	<i>Existing: Built Form</i>	60
<b>4.35</b>	<i>Proposed: Built Form</i>	60
<b>4.36</b>	<i>Existing: Street Network</i>	61
<b>4.37</b>	<i>Proposed: Street Network</i>	61
<b>4.38</b>	<i>Existing: Pedestrian Network</i>	62
<b>4.39</b>	<i>Proposed: Pedestrian Network</i>	62
<b>4.40</b>	<i>Journeying through the Site: The Child</i>	64

<b>4.41</b>	A representation of the type of activities and atmosphere a child will experience when playing outside.	65
<b>4.42</b>	Journeying through the Site: The Mother	66
<b>4.43</b>	A representation of the type of activities and atmosphere a mother will experience when walking to the community kitchen.	67
<b>4.44</b>	Journeying through the Site: The Visitor	68
<b>4.45</b>	A representation of the type of activities and atmosphere a visitor will experience when walking through the market plaza adjacent to the subway.	70
<b>4.46</b>	A representation of the type of activities and atmosphere a visitor will experience when walking through the neighbourhood during a festival.	70
<b>4.47</b>	Network of Open Gathering Spaces	71
<b>4.48</b>	Incremental Planning: Existing	72
<b>4.49</b>	Incremental Planning: Phase One	73
<b>4.50</b>	Initially the market place can be a temporary event with one small structure for the basic necessities such as the Cambridge Farmer's Market which takes place every Saturday of the year. Photograph. 2006. Flickr, <a href="https://www.flickr.com/photos/explorewr/9474726572/in/album-72157634996292943/">https://www.flickr.com/photos/explorewr/9474726572/in/album-72157634996292943/</a> .	73
<b>4.51</b>	Incremental Planning: Phase Two	74
<b>4.52</b>	The Open Air Market in Tower Neighbourhood, East London, UK is an example of a permanent frame structure with flexible stalls within that can be moved and altered according to the users needs. Photograph. 2006. Flickr, <a href="https://www.flickr.com/photos/towerrenewal/5205262668/in/album-72157625336610639/">https://www.flickr.com/photos/towerrenewal/5205262668/in/album-72157625336610639/</a> .	74
<b>4.53</b>	Incremental Planning: Phase Three	75
<b>4.54</b>	The Pacific Mall in Markham, Ontario, Canada is an example of a flexible market space but with a much more substantial structure. Photograph. Accessed September 2019. Yelp, <a href="https://www.yelp.ca/biz_photos/pacific-mall-markham-2?start=0">https://www.yelp.ca/biz_photos/pacific-mall-markham-2?start=0</a> .	75





# CHAPTER 1

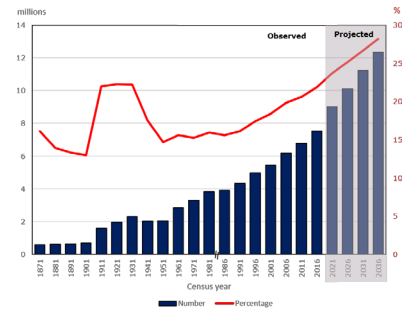
## INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

The City of Toronto is one of the most multicultural and multiracial cities in the world with over half the population belonging to a visible minority group<sup>1</sup>. According to the 2016 census data, the City is home to more than 17 percent of all recent immigrants to Canada, even though less than 8 percent of the country's population lives in Toronto. If this trend continues, the City could be welcoming nearly 170,000 new immigrants over the next three years<sup>2</sup>.

Toronto is a leading example of how successful Canada has become as a cultural mosaic that embraces diversity. Contained within its boundaries is some of the largest immigrant communities in the country, and this fact alone is a strong attraction for many to immigrate to Toronto<sup>3</sup>. Every year, roughly 260,000 new immigrants come to Canada, and approximately 30% choose to settle in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Moreover, immigration is more important to Canada's prosperity than ever before due to the country's rapidly aging population and low birth rate<sup>4</sup>. Thus, it is vital to implement strategies that will allow the successful cultural, social and economic integration of these families and individuals into the City, to ensure that together, the City and the newcomers, benefit from this decision both economically and culturally.

Critical first steps in the immigration settlement process are securing reliable employment and having access to adequate and affordable housing. Without these basic necessities finding a foothold in their new lives can become very challenging for new Canadians and so upon arrival, obtaining these is the main target. A pattern seen with immigrants is, initially when they arrive in a new country which has a different culture and understanding than the one they are familiar with, they gravitate towards areas which can provide some familiarity of home. As a result, areas are created that have diversity but also an ethnic dominance which prevails, and these are seen as 'ethnoburbs'. Another term that can be used to define these areas is 'Arrival City' which was introduced by Doug Saunders (a British and Canadian journalist and author, and columnist for The Globe and Mail) in 2010. The term is used to describe places where comparably affordable living spaces can be found along with possible access to the City, to its society and to its functions for rural-urban migrants as well as for



1.1 (Above) Number and proportion of foreign-born population in Canada, 1871 to 2036



1.2 (Above) Ethnic neighbourhoods

1 Julia Whalen, "Census 2016: More than Half of Torontonians Identify as Visible Minorities," *CBC News*, October 25, 2017, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/census-visible-minorities-1.4371018>.

2 Lauren Pelley, "Toronto Could Welcome Almost 170,000 Immigrants over the next 3 Years — Are We Ready?" *CBC News*, November 5, 2017, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/toronto-immigration-1.4383867>.

3 Ana Krneta, "Why Toronto Is a Top Destination for New Immigrants," *TorontoRentals.com*, July 13, 2017, <https://www.torontorentals.com/blog/life-in-toronto-for-new-immigrants>.

4 "Income Per Capita." *The Conference Board of Canada*, accessed September 9, 2019, <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/provincial/economy/income-per-capita.aspx>.



1.3 (Above) Tower apartments surrounded with underutilized spaces and isolated from the rest of the community and required services and retail spaces

the existing urban poor<sup>5</sup>. These areas can be a very welcoming as a reception point for recent immigrants, but this also means that they need to be equipped with the appropriate services and supports to allow them to become fully functional citizens within the Canadian economy and community. Thus, allowing their skills to be utilized to their fullest potential.

With the rising rent rates in the City, many newcomers are pushed out towards the inner suburbs in search for affordable housing, and many find themselves in the postwar multi-unit apartment towers which are scattered throughout the urban fabric of Ontario. Over the decades, most of these towers have emerged as the most affordable housing stock, providing key housing to the most vulnerable. Unfortunately, the reason for its affordability is due to poor housing location and quality of the apartments. In many cases, due to inadequate funds, maintenance, and capital repairs have been postponed<sup>6</sup>. Additionally, as a result of the original zoning of these towers as purely residential, and the heavy reliance of automobile culture from the 1950s onward, these communities were based on the assumption that their tenants would drive to wherever they need to be<sup>7</sup>. However, as the City continued to grow, these "towers in the park" began to deteriorate, both physically and socially, due to lack of social infrastructure. In many of these neighborhoods, residents experience barriers to lifestyle and economic opportunities, poor access to nutritious food, inadequate transit connections, and limited commercial and community amenities<sup>8</sup>. Today, these towers are aging and inefficient, and the open space that surrounds them is often underused, creating urban spaces which are void and provide no benefit to its users.

Many new Canadians already face numerous hardships and challenges upon arrival, such as finding housing or a job while also coping with the mental stresses of leaving their homes behind. If they are only able to find shelter in areas that are segregated and underserved, it will further compound the difficulties that they have in settling into their new lives. They may become isolated and limited in scope for personal growth and utilizing their skills for the betterment of their own lives as well as the Canadian economy. It can also cause adverse health impacts which can then reverberate to other parts of their lives,

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5 H. Taubenböck, N. J. Kraff, and M. Wurm. "The Morphology of the Arrival City - A Global Categorization Based on Literature Surveys and Remotely Sensed Data," *Applied Geography* 92, (Mar, 2018): 150-167, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apgeog.2018.02.002>.

6 "Affordability," Tower Renewal Partnership, accessed September 10, 2019, <http://towerrenewal.com/impact-areas/affordability/>.

7 Andrew Cara, "The Tower Renewal Project In Toronto Led By ERA Architects," *Houseporn.ca*, accessed September 10, 2019, [http://www.houseporn.ca/real\\_estate/article/tower\\_renewal\\_project\\_in\\_toronto\\_led\\_by\\_era\\_architects](http://www.houseporn.ca/real_estate/article/tower_renewal_project_in_toronto_led_by_era_architects).

8 "Tower Renewal Partnership: Revitalizing Communities through Research, Advocacy, and Action," ERA Architects, accessed September 10, 2019, <http://www.eraarch.ca/2016/tower-renewal-partnership-revitalizing-communities-through-research-advocacy-and-action/>.

such as obtaining employment, and eventually, it could even lead to a high risk of homelessness. As such, it becomes critical to ensure that these residential areas are equipped with the necessary services and supports needed to allow people to flourish and reach their full capacity because it is integral to the process of them becoming an established and successful resident of Canada.

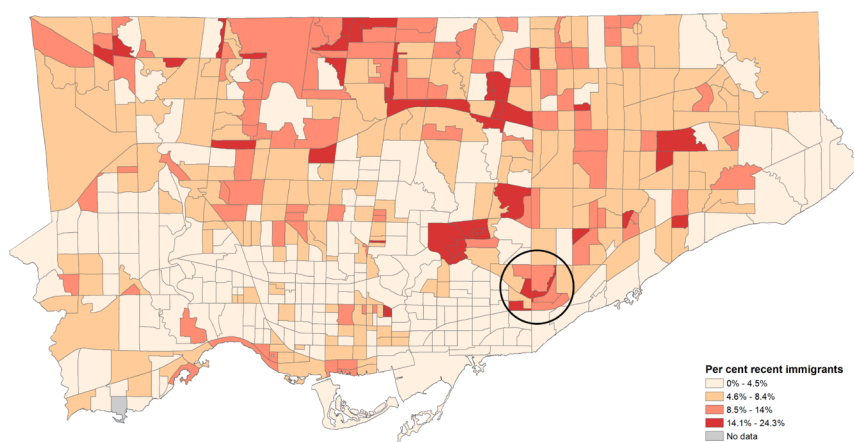
The thesis research aims to establish the various challenges that recent immigrants are faced with when migrating to a foreign land and highlight the importance of integration and social cohesion for a successful new beginning. Through my thesis research, I will be exploring and investigating various urban design and city-making strategies to be implemented for the betterment of the lives of the residents within these towers as well as for the surrounding neighborhood.

I will be studying the towers in relation to its surroundings, and as such, I will be looking at the relationship between tower revitalization models and the economic diversification and amplification of the zones around these towers. A significant project which is very relevant to this thesis is the Tower Renewal Project. Tower renewal is based on three components: the rezoning of the site on which the towers are built, tower recladding and energy retrofits and finally, the incremental, small scale economic opportunities and community spaces that creates a more cohesive and integrated community<sup>9</sup>. My project builds on the Tower Renewal Project by proposing an extension of the proposition of the rezoning of the site.

My model aims to provide a more diverse and economically resilient urban environment through urban intensification of the ground plane and the leveraging of social and cultural capacities of the site to create diverse economic opportunities as well as various platforms for social and cultural integration. This thesis explores the opportunities



1.4 (Above) Tower apartments surrounded with underutilized spaces



1.5 (Left) Map showing the percentage of recent immigrants across the City of Toronto (Statistics Canada -2016 Census of Population)

<sup>9</sup> "What Is Tower Renewal?" Tower Renewal Partnership, accessed September 10, 2019, <http://towerrenewal.com/opportunity/>.



for recent immigrants to gain economic empowerment through the leveraging of cultural capacities. It goes beyond a single group. It is a model which can be manipulated to the needs of any relevant immigrant group.

For this model and design proposal, I am going to look specifically at the Bangladeshi community, located in an apartment tower neighborhood in Scarborough, Toronto named Oakridge. A significant reason for the selection of this site is the ethnic demographics of the population. According to the 2016 census data, 73 percent of Scarborough's population is of a visible minority, and this indicates that a large proportion of immigrants have moved into this area. Moreover, Oakridge has a visible minority percentage of 69 of which over 60 percent are from Bangladesh, indicating a South Asian majority within this neighborhood and also other defining characteristics of an ethnoburb and arrival neighborhood as indicated by a high percentage of recent immigrants choosing to settle in this area (Fig.1.5). Additionally, as I am from Bangladesh, it is an appropriate demographic to focus on as I have more of a personal connection with the culture and perhaps a better understanding of the needs of the inhabitants on the site, as well as a higher capacity of engaging in participatory design through the ease of communication with the inhabitants.

The goal of the design proposal is geared towards providing a denser and economically resilient urban environment which can be better utilized to serve the community. The project creates a network of socially inclusive public spaces which are active and engaging. This is achieved through sensitive urban infill that leverages cultural aspects of the community to promote socio-economic opportunities. Furthermore, it aims to provide recent immigrants with an initial landing pad where they can stabilize themselves socially, culturally and economically through the various opportunities and services that are being provided such as, scope to set up small businesses, involvement in community activities or jobs within the production sector of textiles and crafts. Social and cultural gathering spaces such as a market place, exhibition spaces, a public library, a mosque, day-care services, community gardens, and open parkland will be used to promote social and cultural integration among the tenants themselves as well as with the larger community. By activating the surrounding areas around the towers, the design engages with the wider community and allows the towers to become integrated within the urban fabric.



# CHAPTER 2

## CHALLENGE OF IMMIGRATION

## 2.1 MIGRATION & RECENT IMMIGRANTS

Migration is defined as the geographic movement of people across a specified boundary to establish a new permanent or semi-permanent residence or simply as the movement of people from one place live in another<sup>1</sup>. Various reasons are responsible for the decision to migrate, and these are known as push and pull factors. These factors have a broad range and can be economic, environmental, social, and political. Push factors are the reasons why a person may choose to leave their current place of residence such as lack of services, lack of safety, high crime, flooding, poverty, war, and many more. Pull factors are defined as the reasons for moving to a particular area, and this may include higher employment, better education, more wealth, better services, less crime, and political stability. A commonly cited reason for an economic immigrant is because they are looking for a better lifestyle, education, and greater economic opportunities for themselves and their families. Migration not only affects the individuals who are moving but also has a significant effect on the country to which they are moving. Immigrants are a source for the labor market, which helps to continually develop and improve the country's economy and it also increases the cultural diversity within the country to create vibrant cultural mosaics that everyone can enjoy.

### 2.1.1 A BRIEF HISTORY

Known by many as the "land of immigrants," Canada has a colorful history when it comes to immigration. The Great Migration which occurred between 1815 and 1850 and involved over 800,000 immigrants<sup>2</sup>, mainly British and Irish immigrants, was the first major wave of newcomers encouraged to settle in Canada after the War of 1812. This was followed by a second wave of immigration from 1890-1920 coming mostly from continental Europe which peaked prior to World War 1 and a third wave from Europe after the Second World War, peaking at 282,000 in 1957. It was at Pier 21 in Halifax, Nova Scotia that these tens of thousands of European immigrants began their new journey<sup>3</sup>. Today, the single most important port of immigrant entry into Canada is Toronto's Pearson International Airport. Considering that more than a third of all immigrant arrivals choose to stay in Toronto<sup>4</sup>, it makes Toronto not only a gateway city but also an immigration destination.

Along with a shift in the point of entry to Canada, there has been a shift in who is allowed admission into Canada. The creation of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration in 1950 gave the minister

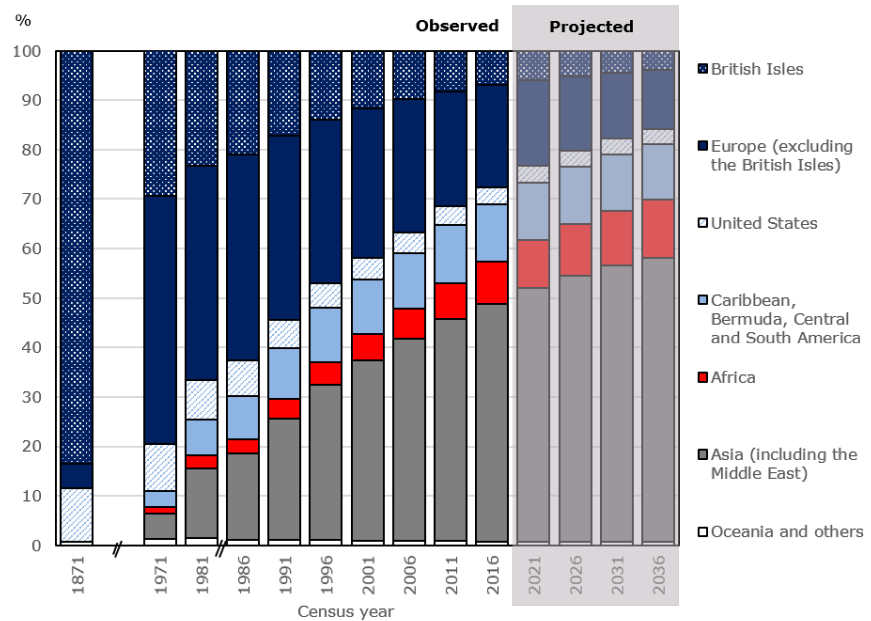
1 Joyce Etim, "Migration: Meaning, Types, Causes, Effects and Economic Importance of Migration," Jotscroll, accessed September 10, 2019, <https://www.jotscroll.com/forums/3/posts/208/migration-meaning-types-causes-effects-and-economic-importance.html>.

2 "The Colonies Grow Up," The History of Canada and Canadians, accessed September 10, 2019, <https://www.linksnorth.com/canada-history/thecolonies.html>.

3 Harold Troper, "Becoming an Immigrant City: A History of Immigration into Toronto since the Second World War," In *The World in a City*, edited by Paul Anisef and Michael Lanphier (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 19-62.

4 Troper, "Becoming an Immigrant City", 19-62.

2.1 (Right) Distribution of Foreign-Born Population, by Region of Birth, Canada, 1871 to 2036



**Note:** // refers to a break in the time series.  
**Sources:** Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 1871 to 2006, 2016; National Household Survey, 2011; Immigration and Diversity: Population Projections for Canada and its Regions, 2011 to 2036 (reference scenario).

of immigration considerable power to draft regulations governing admission to Canada. A set of preferential categories was established that remained in force until 1962 when race or nationality ceased to be used as selection criteria. By 1966, there was a growing recognition of the need to relate immigration to labor force requirements and, following the publication of a white paper, a new Department of Manpower and Immigration was created. The selection of immigrants was now geared to economic needs through the adoption of a points system that gave considerable weight to education, occupational qualifications, and a knowledge of the official languages, English and French. Family reunion also continued to be a high priority for churches and ethnic communities and, as a gesture to these bodies, applicants could earn extra points if they had relatives in Canada. Changes made in 1967 to the 1952 Immigration Act ended the last remnants of racial and ethnic discrimination in Canada's immigration policies and opened the door to a massive shift in Canadian immigration patterns<sup>5</sup> as shown in Figure 2.2.

There are two clear stages in Toronto's post-WWII immigrant geography: (1) a period of primarily European settlement in central Toronto between 1945 and 1980 and (2) the emergence of a multi-ethnic suburban immigrant landscape following 1980<sup>6</sup>. Since then, Third World countries have become an increasingly important source

2.2 (Above) Country of Birth of Foreign-Born Ontarians by Period of Immigration

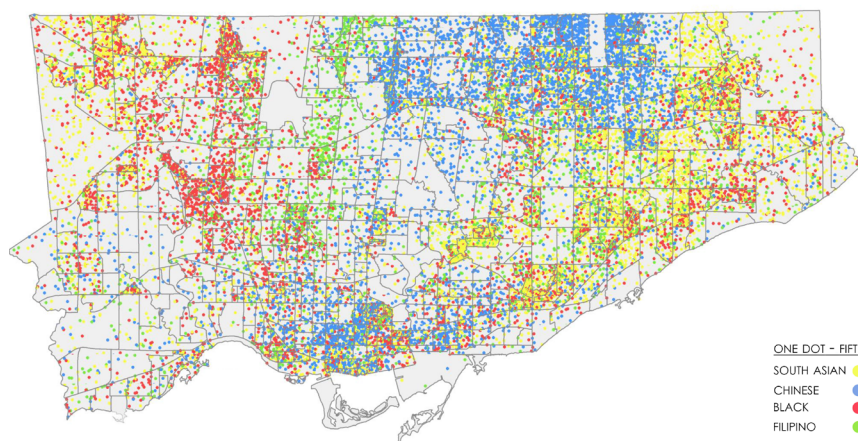
5 Troper, "Becoming an Immigrant City", 19-62.

6 Robert Murdie and Sutama Ghosh, "Does Spatial Concentration always Mean a Lack of Integration? Exploring Ethnic Concentration and Integration in Toronto," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36, no. 2 (2010): 293-311, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830903387410>.

of temporary and permanent workers admitted to Canada, and this is reflected in the 2016 Census released by Statistics Canada which shows that in 2016, the majority of newcomers were born in Asia (Figure 2.2). Figure 2.3 represents the country of birth of foreign-born Ontarians, and this also indicates the shift from European to Asian immigrants.

### 2.1.2 CURRENT TRENDS

Within North American cities that have a significant immigrant population, certain settlement patterns can be identified and have emerged due to various economic, social, and cultural influences. These spaces are often identified as ethnic neighborhoods or 'ethnoburbs' which are areas with a concentration of a particular ethnic group, along with various commercial and or institutional activities affiliated with the members of that ethnic group<sup>7</sup>. Subsequently, when immigrants arrive in a new country which has a different culture, context, and understanding to the one they are familiar with, they gravitate towards such areas as it can provide some familiarity and comfort of home in a foreign land. A leading example of a city where this pattern can be seen dominantly is the City of Toronto. Along with the shift in countries of recent immigrants, there has been a shift in settlement patterns as well. Between 1945 and 1980, the significant areas of recent immigrant settlement were immediately east and west of the downtown core. Relying heavily upon chain migration, European groups such as Italians and Portuguese settled in spatially defined immigrant reception areas where they went on to establish their own ethnic businesses and cultural and religious organizations<sup>8</sup>. However, in the early 1970s, there was increased gentrification in the inner-city neighborhoods due to the post-industrial economic restructuring that took place.



2.3 (Left) Population Distribution of the Top Four Visible Minority Groups in the City of Toronto

7 Shuguang Wang and Jason Zhong, *Delineating Ethnoburbs in Metropolitan Toronto*, CERIS Working Paper, CERIS - The Ontario Metropolis Centre, 2013, <http://deslibris.ca/ID/237830>.

8 Murdie and Ghosh, "Does Spatial Concentration", 293-311.

Consequently, housing in these traditional immigrant reception areas became unaffordable to lower-income newcomers. As a result, by the 1990s, many new immigrants settled directly in the inner and outer suburbs of Toronto including Mississauga, Brampton, Vaughan and Markham<sup>9</sup>, forming new ethnic neighborhoods across the city.

An observation to be noted is that with the changes in immigration policy, immigrants arriving after 1980 represent a wide range of immigrant classes with different economic status and as such, the residential geographies of these groups are a reflection of this. For example, Chinese from Hong Kong and Mainland China arriving as skilled workers or business immigrants have settled in the north-eastern part of the City of Toronto and Markham, primarily in high-status suburban enclaves characterized by large owner-occupied homes and multi-store Asian-theme malls. In contrast to this well-off group, Bangladeshis - who are among the most impoverished of Toronto's recent immigrants - have settled in high-rise rental apartments in the inner suburbs, especially the eastern part of the City of Toronto<sup>10</sup>.

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9 Murdie and Ghosh, "Does Spatial Concentration", 293-311.

10 Murdie and Ghosh, "Does Spatial Concentration", 293-311.

## 2.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF INTEGRATION

Upon arrival to a new country, immigrants have to gain a place within that new society. This is achieved physically through obtaining a place to live, but it must also be acquired in the social and cultural sense as well. Integration is the process by which immigrants become accepted into society, both as individuals and as groups<sup>1</sup>, and become part of the social, cultural and institutional fabric of said society. The process is a two-way exchange between the newcomer group and the host society where each party has its own targets that they would like to accomplish through this arrangement. For the immigrant group, it is the fulfillment of its needs and interests upon resettlement<sup>2</sup>. These may range from immediate short-term concerns such as housing, learning a new language and employment, to long-term interests such as the development of a subcommunity of people from a similar background and representation of collective interest in associations and government<sup>3</sup>. For the receiving society, official indicators of integration may be the acquisition of citizenship, financial contribution to state through taxes, and relatively low rates of welfare use<sup>4</sup>. Ultimately, it is the interaction between these two parties that determines the direction and the eventual outcome of the integration process. However, the receiving society has much more say in the outcome of the process, in regards to its institutional structure and the way it interacts with newcomers<sup>5</sup>, because it determines what services and opportunities are available to these individuals and the type of urban environments they will be living in.

For the majority of cities, attempts to reduce social polarization and manage diversity depend on the social policies of health care, public education, and income support that are often the responsibility of the different levels of governments including national, state, provincial or regional<sup>6</sup>. However, social inclusion is also determined by the quality of the innumerable interactions that occur within a city, among the variety of individuals, social groups, and institutions. It is essential to develop local policies that manage diversity and integrate newcomers and long-established residents into dynamic social, economic, and political environments while also mitigating practices of exclusion and segregation that are so often felt in the places where people live<sup>7</sup>. This can be achieved through the provision of required services and supports in the appropriate places and by ensuring that the urban fabric of the city allows for a cohesive and integrated community.

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1 Rinus Penninx, "Integration: The Role of Communities, Institutions, and the State," Migrationpolicy.org, accessed September 09, 2019, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/integration-role-communities-institutions-and-state>.

2 Paul Anisef and Michael. Lanphier, *The World in a City* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 5.

3 Anisef and Lanphier, *The World in a City*, 6

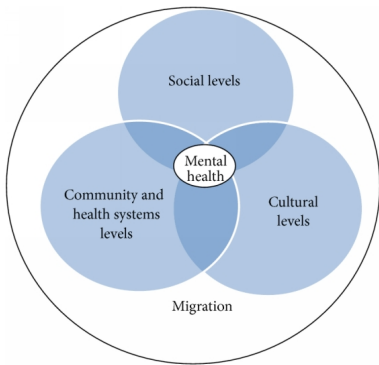
4 Anisef and Lanphier, *The World in a City*, 6

5 "Integration: The Role of Communities, Institutions, and the State."

6 Brian Ray, "The Role of Cities in Immigrant Integration," Migrationpolicy.org, accessed September 09, 2019, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/role-cities-immigrant-integration>.

7 "The Role of Cities in Immigrant Integration."



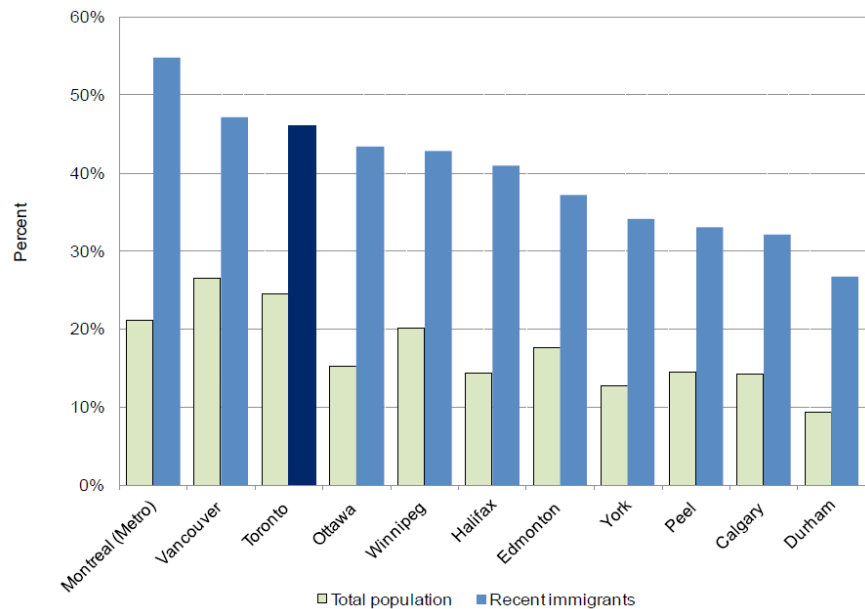


2.4 (Above) Factors affecting the mental health of immigrants

Newcomers have various needs that require fulfillment to access jobs distributed across large metropolitan areas. These range from housing and efficient public transportation to education and language instruction. However, because of where immigrants live within these metropolitan areas, these needs can pose significant integration challenges, and these challenges are found within the City of Toronto. There has been an increasing spatial mismatch between the distribution of employment opportunities and housing locations of less-well-off residents, many of whom are newcomers<sup>8</sup>. As a result, many recent immigrants may face difficulties in gaining a foothold within their new surroundings because they are unable to find the basic necessities of housing and employment within adequate distances. Additionally, if they are unable to access the transit system or drive, they are further impaired. To allow immigrants to adapt and integrate within their new homes, so that they can become active citizens, it is critical for these factors to be addressed through urban street design, local policies and appropriate allocation of resources.

### 2.2.1 HEALTH IMPACTS

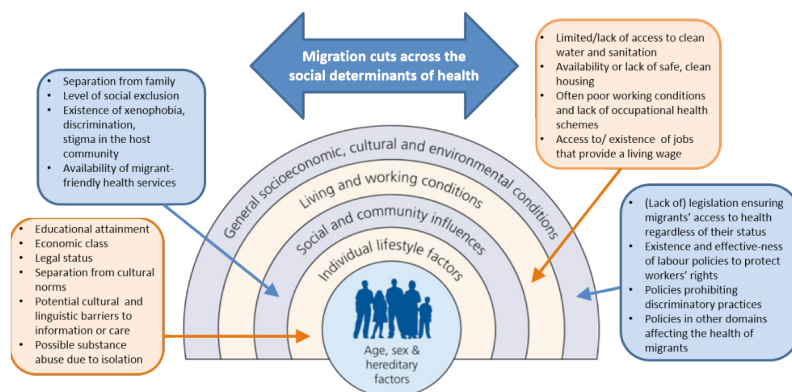
It is also very important to understand that being able to successfully integrate into their environment plays an important role in the mental health and well-being of the newcomer. There are numerous environment and socio-economic factors that affect health such as, air and water quality, housing, income, employment, education and



2.5 (Right) Proportion of Total and Recent Immigrant Population with Income below Low Income Cut-Off (LICO), 2006

Source: Federation of Canadian Municipalities Quality of Life Reporting System. Ottawa, Ontario.  
Prepared by: Toronto Public Health

8 "The Role of Cities in Immigrant Integration."



2.6 (Left) The migration process and health outcomes

culture<sup>9</sup>. Additionally, the process of immigration and settlement is inherently stressful<sup>10</sup>, and the mental and emotional well-being of recent immigrants is of particular concern, especially when migration is coupled with additional risk factors or post-migration stressors such as unemployment, separation from family, discrimination and prejudice, language barriers and lack of social support<sup>11</sup>. Mental health status is linked with a variety of integration outcomes, including educational attainment, social networks and relationships, economic outcomes, and physical well-being, and can significantly impact an immigrant's ability to adjust to life in a new country<sup>12</sup>. Negative outcomes, coupled with a lack of social support and resources, may adversely impact psychological well-being and could possibly lead to low self-esteem or depression<sup>13</sup>.

Research findings indicate that for immigrants, protective factors that exert a positive effect on stress and overall well-being include fluency in the host country language, ethnic pride, and social resources, such as family and ethnic community support<sup>14</sup>. These enhance coping abilities, moderate the impact of stressors and promote health<sup>15</sup>.

9 Toronto Public Health, *Healthy Toronto by Design*, Toronto, Ontario, October 2011.

10 Mary J. Levitt, Jonathan D. Lane, and Jerome Levitt, "Immigration Stress, Social Support, and Adjustment in the First Postmigration Year: An Intergenerational Analysis," *Research in Human Development* 2, no. 4 (2005): 159–77, [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15427617rhd0204\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15427617rhd0204_1).

11 Anne-Marie Robert and Tara Gilkinson, *Mental Health and Well-being of Recent Immigrants in Canada: Evidence from the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada*, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012, <http://deslibris.ca/ID/238203>.

12 Andrés J. Pumariega, Eugenio Rothe, and Joanne B. Pumariega, "Mental Health of Immigrants and Refugees," *Community Mental Health Journal* 41, no. 5 (2005): 581–97, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10597-005-6363-1>.

13 "Mental Health and Well-being of Recent Immigrants in Canada: Evidence from the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada."

14 Haile Fenta, Ilene Hyman, and Samuel Noh, "Determinants of Depression Among Ethiopian Immigrants and Refugees in Toronto," *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 192, no. 5 (2004): 363–72, <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.nmd.0000126729.08179.07>.

15 Laura Simich, Jacqueline Scott, and Branka Agic, "Alone in Canada: A Case Study of Multi - Lingual Mental Health Promotion," *International Journal of Mental Health Promotion* 7, no. 2 (2005): 15–23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623730.2005.9721863>.

2.7

(Right) Local residents celebrate the Bengali New Year with a parade along Danforth Avenue



It has also been found that social support not only has protective effects but it also empowers individuals to manage the challenges in their lives and overcome them<sup>16</sup>. Therefore, providing recent immigrants with a place where they can find some familiarity of home, such as an ethnic neighbourhood while also ensuring that they have access to the required supports and services needed for integration can greatly assist them in the settlement process.

Canada has been a country of immigrants for centuries. For the past 70 years, while Ontario has received the highest number of immigrants of any province or territory, Toronto has been the hot spot for these newcomers. In addition, immigration is more important to Canada's prosperity than ever before due to the country's rapidly aging population and low birth rate<sup>17</sup>. According to Statistics Canada projections, the proportion of working-age members of the population will continue to decline until 2036, by which point the number of seniors in the country will likely be more than double the figure in 2009<sup>18</sup>. Therefore, since immigration is the future of the city and of the country, it is immensely important to implement strategies that will allow the successful cultural, social and economic integration of new immigrants to ensure that together the city and the newcomers benefit from this decision both economically and culturally.

<sup>16</sup> "Mental Health and Well-being of Recent Immigrants in Canada: Evidence from the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada."

<sup>17</sup> "Income Per Capita." The Conference Board of Canada, accessed September 9, 2019, <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/provincial/economy/income-per-capita.aspx>.

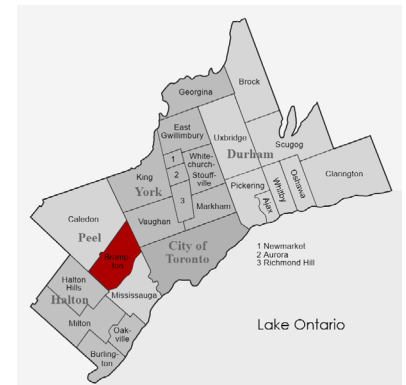
<sup>18</sup> Dakshana Bascaramurty, "Canada Aims for Immigration Boost to Buttress Economy as Population Ages." *The Globe and Mail*, November 1, 2017, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/canada-to-admit-40000-more-immigrants-a-year-by-2020-under-liberals-new-three-year-plan/article36800775/>.

## 2.3 ETHNOBURBS: A BRAMPTON CASE STUDY

In many North American cities, immigrants and ethnic minorities have become facilitators of societal change. Where, once, suburbs were majorly composed of middle-class whites, they are now transforming into areas with a rich mix of diverse backgrounds, making suburbs new multicultural places where immigrants' place-making is forming new social spaces. Li Wei coined the term ethnoburb (meaning ethnic suburb) in 1998<sup>1</sup> when describing a new pattern of ethnic settlement and since then it has become widely used<sup>2</sup>.

By definition, ethnoburbs are suburban clusters of ethnic residential areas and businesses in large metropolitan regions<sup>3</sup>. In ethnoburbs, a substantial amount, or key components, of local businesses are owned by ethnic minorities and they are also more actively involved in mainstream politics. While the words ghetto and enclave conjure up images of involuntary segregation with deteriorating living environments, ethnoburb implies voluntary congregation, where there is no urban decay<sup>4</sup>.

Brampton, Ontario is such a case. Brampton is a city, which by many, has been dubbed a 'ghetto,' but perhaps the word that should be used is 'ethnoburb.' In Brampton, visible minorities represent 73.3% of the population, the second highest in Ontario and of that 44.3% are of South Asian descent. When there is a dominant ethnic group present within a community it follows that various businesses and services provided within this area also become geared to this major demographic because the businesses want clients and customers to buy their product and therefore, they will tailor their ads in such a way as to entice the majority of the population.



2.8 (Above) Map of the Greater Toronto Area locating Brampton

2.9 (Right) Chalo Fresh Co grocery store, that carries South Asian groceries to serve the community in Brampton,

For example, a supermarket was opened in the centre of Brampton called "Chalo Freshco," or "Let's Go, Freshco," advertising it as the first Canadian grocery store designed for "desis," or those of South Asian descent, selling a wide range of ethnic foods from spices to Indo-

1 Wei, Li, "Anatomy of a New Ethnic Settlement: The Chinese Ethnoburb in Los Angeles," *Urban Studies* 35, no. 3 (1998): 479–501, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0042098984871>.

2 Wang and Zhong, *Delineating Ethnoburbs in Metropolitan Toronto*.

3 Wang and Zhong, *Delineating Ethnoburbs in Metropolitan Toronto*.

4 Wang and Zhong, *Delineating Ethnoburbs in Metropolitan Toronto*.

centric vegetables which can be found at an Indian grocery store<sup>5</sup>. While this tactic is effective as it appeals to the largest consumer market, it can have the ability to make other groups within the area feel marginalized and pushed out, and it appears this is what is occurring in Brampton. Kristin Good, an associate professor of political science at Dalhousie University suggests that local governments should help communities cope with the racial tensions that may arise as a community changes from being multiracial to more biracial.

Prof. Good says, "as Brampton transitioned from a more diverse multicultural immigration base to a more concentrated South Asian population, that concentration creates a perception of cultural takeover in a municipality among long-standing residents and can lead to particular kinds of multiculturalism challenges. My theory predicts that you will see more of a backlash when there is concentration. Part of it is the perception that the immigrant group does not want to integrate. Part of it is the sense of cultural takeover and the loss of being the majority in the place. And, part of it is that certain types of developments are perceived to cater to particular ethnic groups, and sometimes that makes long-standing residents feel excluded<sup>6</sup>."

2.10 (Below) CeleBrampton kicks off summer with a wide variety of food, activities, and entertainment, all celebrating Brampton's diverse cultures, history, and family-friendly community.



The key lessons to take away from this case study is understanding that ethnoburbs are not areas which are destructive to the diversity of the community. However, when there is an ethnic dominance in an area, it is very important to foster social interaction and engagement with all residents of the community to ensure people from all backgrounds feel like they are part of that community. This can be achieved through multicultural events and public gathering spaces which encourage and initiate social interactions.

Ethnoburbs are a welcoming reception point for most new immigrants who have just arrived in a land foreign to them. They often look for a piece of home which can provide comfort and a sense of safety. Perhaps food, perhaps conversation or even cultural events and these are exactly what these ethnic neighborhoods, formed over generations, provide. On the other hand, if the neighbourhood has no diversity or multiculturalism because all other groups have been pushed out through seclusion, is this somewhere new immigrants should be? They came for a new beginning, and that means they want to have new experiences and this is only possible when there is a diversity among the masses which can provide exposure to different cultures and norms and thus, allow these newcomers to successfully integrate into their new surroundings. Therefore, the question then becomes how can individuals be integrated into their new surroundings while still providing them with a sense of their own culture?

5 Noreen Ahmed-Ullah, "How Brampton, a Town in Suburban Ontario, Was Dubbed a Ghetto," *The Globe and Mail*, June 3, 2016, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/toronto/brampton-a-story-of-political-importance-power-and-ethnic-enclaves/article30273820/>.

6 Ahmed-Ullah, "How Brampton, a Town in Suburban Ontario"



# **CHAPTER 3**

## **PLACE MAKING STRATEGIES**

### 3.1 AFFORDABLE HOUSING



3.1 (Left) Canada contains a significant stock of high-rise housing constructed for the most part during the nation-wide economic and population expansion of the 1960s and 1970s.

Presently, with the continually rising rent rates in the City of Toronto, many newcomers are pushed out towards the inner suburbs in search for affordable housing and many find themselves in the post-war apartment towers which are scattered throughout the urban fabric of Ontario.

The majority of these tower blocks are not social housing but were privately developed under Federal incentive programs, providing a flood of moderately priced rental accommodation through the 1960s and 70s. When built, these towers were designed with the intention to promote social progress, reduce pressures on infrastructure and services in crowded downtown cores, and provide residents with access to green space<sup>1</sup> and the target tenant base was the upper-middle-class families who owned cars and were able to travel for their needs.

However, over the decades much of this private housing has emerged as the most affordable housing stock, providing accommodations to the most vulnerable and making these Apartment Neighbourhoods home to dense populations of thousands<sup>2</sup>. Unfortunately, the reason for its affordability is due to poor housing location and quality of the apartments. As the city has grown, these areas have become disconnected due to inadequate transit connections making it

1 "Tower Renewal Partnership: Revitalizing Communities through Research, Advocacy, and Action," ERA Architects, accessed September 10, 2019, <http://www.eraarch.ca/2016/tower-renewal-partnership-revitalizing-communities-through-research-advocacy-and-action/>.

2 Graeme Stewart and Jason Thorne, *Tower Neighbourhood Renewal in the Greater Golden Horseshoe: An Analysis of High-Rise Apartment Tower Neighbourhoods Developed in the Post-War Boom (1945-1984)* (Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2010), accessed September 2019, <http://cugr.ca/tnrgh/>.





3.2 (Above) Empty parking lots surrounding the towers highlights the importance given to automobiles when they were initially built

difficult for residents to access employment in the city especially, when majority of the residents do not own cars. Additionally, many Apartment Neighbourhoods lack access to services and retail such as healthcare, immigration consultants, groceries and clothing stores which means residents have to travel long distances for basic necessities and employment while also having to rely on public transit for travelling which is insufficient in these neighbourhoods. As a result, many communities remain isolated from the city at large<sup>3</sup>.

These neighbourhoods are predominantly home to new Canadians due to their affordability and yet they are not meeting the needs of these diverse communities. In recent years, many have been identified as suffering from chronic neglect, disinvestment and growing poverty. They are generally underserved in terms of community facilities, amenities, retail and employment opportunities and other features that make communities thrive. These areas are not working for the people who live there.

Moreover, poor site planning and lack of upkeep are preventing these buildings from performing as they could. The quality of public space in these neighbourhoods is often in decline. The hectares of land surrounding these towers are largely relegated to surface parking, and for the most part, are currently surrounded by chain-link fences. The 'park' areas adjacent to the worst of these buildings are abandoned



3.3 (Right) Open spaces surrounding the towers are underused and create a negative impact on the street life for its residents

3 Ted Kesik and Ivan Saleff, *Tower Renewal Guidelines: For the Comprehensive Retrofit of Multi-Unit Residential Buildings in Cold Climates* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2009), accessed September, 2019, <https://www.daniels.utoronto.ca/sites/daniels.utoronto.ca/files/old/TowerRenewalGuidelines.pdf>

spaces cluttered with unused swimming pools and clusters of disorganized dumpsters rather than the communal green space that was envisioned<sup>4</sup>. These buildings are not providing the quality of life that was intended. Today, these towers are aging and inefficient and the open space that surrounds them is often underused, creating urban spaces which are void and provide no benefit to its users.

Taking into consideration the numerous challenges that many newcomers already face upon arrival such as finding housing or employment, while also coping with the mental stresses of leaving their homes behind, it is important that they are able to find a home in an area that is supportive and caters to their needs. However, if they are only able to afford housing in areas which are disconnected from the city and its services and opportunities, such as many of these residential buildings are, they are likely to become isolated and limited in scope for personal growth and will be unable to utilize their skills for the betterment of their own lives as well as the Canadian economy. Moreover, if they are not able to find adequate employment and services which improve skills needed for survival, such as language classes, they may be unable to stabilise themselves sufficiently and could even become at risk of homelessness.

Consequently, there is a pressing need for the rehabilitation and renewal of these towers in a way which allows them to be integrated into the urban fabric of the city and also, taking into account the need of its residents, allows for the provision of required amenities and services. Due to the fact that these towers represent nearly half of the region's affordable housing stock and house nearly one million Canadians, the government has recognized the importance in taking major steps to rehabilitate these structures.



3.4 (Above) 'Park' areas used as junkyards instead of effective public spaces

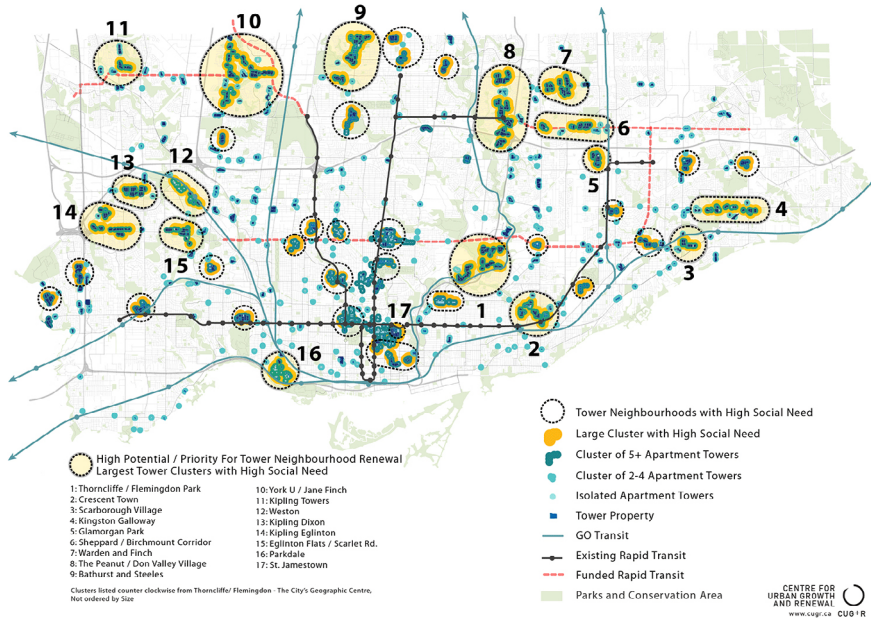


3.5 (Left) Aerial view of the urban fabric which clearly shows the 'tower in the park' design of the buildings and highlight the dominance on automobiles

4 Kesik and Saleff, *Tower Renewal Guidelines: For the Comprehensive Retrofit of Multi-Unit Residential Buildings in Cold Climates*.



### 3.2 THE TOWER RENEWAL PROJECT



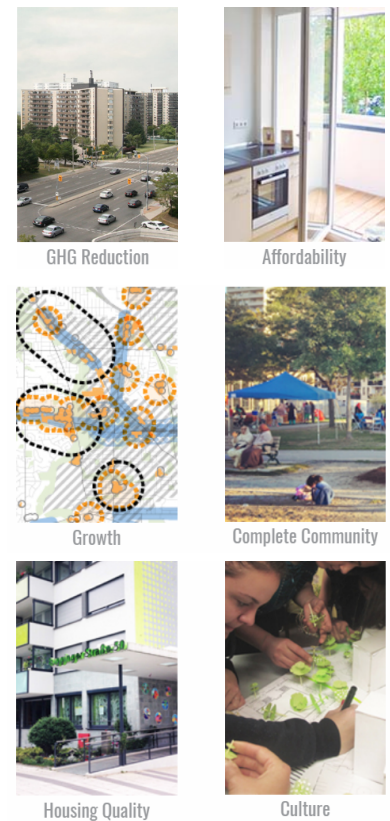
3.6 (Left) Distribution of Apartment Tower Neighbourhoods throughout Toronto

The Tower Renewal Partnership is an initiative working to transform Southern Ontario’s stock of post-war apartment towers into more complete communities, resilient housing stock and healthy places, fully integrated into the growing cities. The Tower Renewal Project, led by ERA Architects in collaboration with the Centre for Urban Growth and Renewal, Maytree and DKGI, combines architecture, urban design and social analysis to improve the lives of the tenants within the towers<sup>1</sup>.

The major goals of the Tower Renewal Project are:

- Rehabilitate our aging rental housing supply to meet modern standards of comfort, health and energy performance while maintaining affordability.
- Expand opportunities for community-led economic diversification, social infrastructure and cultural production to enable post-war tower neighbourhoods to become more healthy and complete communities.
- Leverage the legacy of postwar tower urbanism toward regional growth, sustainability and transit connectivity, building more resilient and thriving urban regions<sup>2</sup>.

The aspect of this project that is very significant to understand is the expansion of economic opportunities and urban intensification through an alteration of zoning laws which is what my thesis is building upon. The new Residential Apartment Commercial Zoning



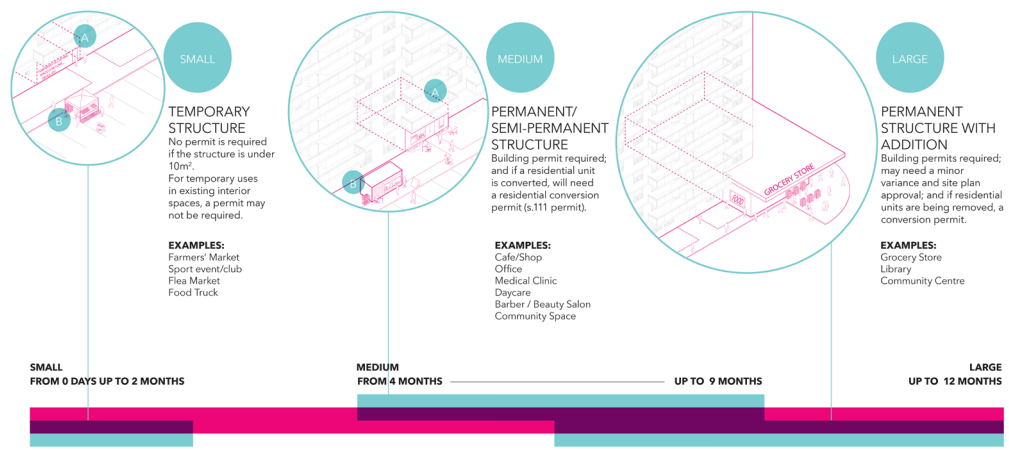
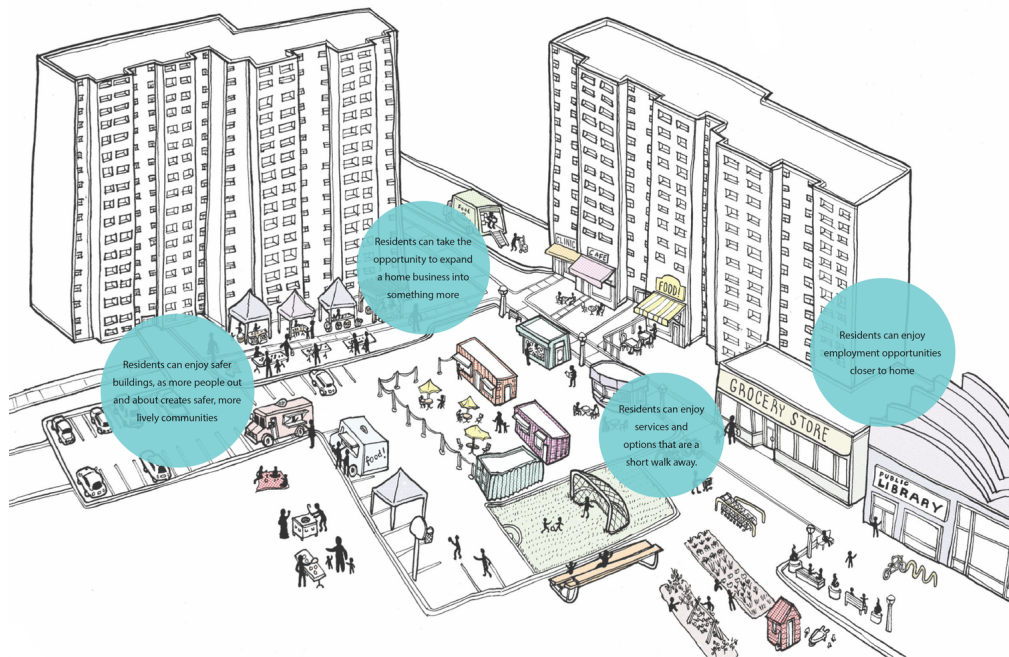
3.7 (Above) Impact areas which need to be addressed to achieve the set goals

1 Andrew Cara, "The Tower Renewal Project In Toronto Led By ERA Architects," Housepom.ca, accessed September 10, 2019, [http://www.housepom.ca/real\\_estate/article/tower\\_renewal\\_project\\_in\\_toronto\\_led\\_by\\_era\\_architects](http://www.housepom.ca/real_estate/article/tower_renewal_project_in_toronto_led_by_era_architects).  
 2 "What Is Tower Renewal?" Tower Renewal Partnership, accessed September 10, 2019, <http://towerrenewal.com/opportunity/>.

allows for a range of commercial activities and retail services to be built on the site such as food markets, small businesses, community services and other enterprises creating new scope for communities, social innovators, service providers and the city to work together toward creating more complete, convenient and healthy communities across Toronto<sup>3</sup>.

A major limiting factor within the tower neighbourhoods is the lack of socioeconomic infrastructure because the towers are zoned purely residential and do not contain any commercial or retail services. By allowing these sites to be rezoned so that the base of these towers can be integrated with spaces for small businesses and other commercial activities as well as community amenities, it will create the much-needed access to services and products that have been unavailable while also creating opportunities for community interaction and building of social capital.

3.8 (Right) As of October 2016, five hundred apartment tower neighbourhoods in the City of Toronto acquired the ability to reconceive the social and economic character of their communities.



3.9 (Left) Requirements for different types of structures and the timeline to attain these programs

OTHER POSSIBLE REQUIREMENTS FOR NEW USES:  
SIGN PERMIT (10 days); SIGN VARIANCE (up to 90 days)

3 "What Is the RAC Zone?" RAC Zone, accessed September 10, 2019, <http://raczone.squarespace.com/#what-is-it-1>.

### 3.3 EAST SCARBOROUGH STOREFRONT

The East Scarborough Storefront (ESS) is an example of the RAC zoning in action. It is a community centre which provides numerous programs and services to the communities of East Scarborough. This project is a great example of adaptive reuse of space and materials within an existing tower neighbourhood. It demonstrates how parking lots can be successfully converted into effective community space, providing programs which are effective and successful in catering to the needs of the community<sup>1</sup>.

Using a collaborative approach, ERA Architects along with the local residents of Scarborough, converted previously under-utilized land into a dynamic campus of community spaces<sup>2</sup> which includes a community kitchen, a kitchen garden and an outdoor multipurpose sports court. By providing public spaces for events and interaction, a new lively public realm has been created which attracts not only the tower residents but also visitors from surrounding areas, creating a dialogue with the wider community.

The community kitchen is an effective program to provide because it becomes an anchor in the community where residents and organizations can connect to each other. Food culture is a popular way to communicate and interact with one another and by providing a space where individuals can come together to share their knowledge and skills and learn from one another encourages community bonding<sup>3</sup>. Additionally, by providing a community garden in conjunction with the kitchen it allows the residents to learn new skills while also creating activities which encourage social interaction and participation.

This project also clearly indicates that using the participatory method for creating these spaces is not only insightful but empowers the local residents and increases their engagement within the community.



3.10 (Left) ESS is situated between the two residential towers and this provides a platform for social engagement between the towers

3.11 (Right) The site plan indicates the implemented changes on the site to provide a community kitchen, kitchen garden and an outdoor multipurpose sports court

1 "East Scarborough Storefront," ERA Architects, accessed September 10, 2019, <http://www.eraarch.ca/project/east-scarborough-storefront/>.

2 "East Scarborough Storefront."

3 "Eco Food Hub," East Scarborough Storefront, accessed September 10, 2019, <https://thestorefront.org/where/eco-food-hub/>.

3.12 (Right) The community kitchen, known as the Eco-Food Hub, provides a space for learning and interaction



3.13 (Right) The community garden provides access to fresh healthy produce which can be shared among residents



3.14 (Right) The innovative green-roof shade structure known as the Sky-o-Swale acts as a green-roof pavilion that filters rainwater to irrigate the adjacent gardens as well as seating and a stage for the community.



### 3.4 A CASE STUDY OF THORNCLIFFE PARK

An interesting tower neighbourhood to look at is Thorncliffe Park which is located in central east Toronto, Ontario, Canada, in the former Borough of East York. It is a densely populated, multicultural neighbourhood which is dominated by immigrant population<sup>1</sup>. According to the 2016 census data, it has a visible minority population of 79% of which nearly 50% are South Asian<sup>2</sup>. Although many religious backgrounds are represented in Thorncliffe Park, Islam is the most common religion represented, reflected by the presence of a mosque, halal grocery stores and after school Quranic teaching (Madrassah)<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, the large number of recent immigrants, 18% of the total immigrant population, that arrive here implies that this neighbourhood acts as a reception point for many newcomers. These demographics makes this neighbourhood very relevant to my thesis project as I am also looking at a South Asian dominant ethnic neighbourhood where many recent immigrants initially choose to settle, for the implementation of my design.

The Thorncliffe Park Women’s Committee’s is a very active grassroots organization within the neighbourhood and they have successfully transformed RV Burgess Park into the heart and soul of the neighbourhood with the help of the local residents. The park is used as a space for numerous events such as the community market which is used as a place making method in an urban centre. By transforming R.V. Burgess Park into a vibrant and inclusive neighbourhood hub, the community market program addresses the pressing issue of social isolation faced by community members by facilitating connections to be forged between members of marginalized groups and bringing residents together in collaborative ways. It supports cross-cultural exchange by providing a vibrant gathering place for individuals of a multitude of cultures, ethnicities, economic classes, and genders to



3.15 (Above) Site plan of Thorncliffe Park



3.16 (Left) Thorncliffe Park is a multicultural neighbourhood but with an ethnic dominance of South Asian immigrants

1 "Thorncliffe Park," Wikipedia, accessed September 10, 2019, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thorncliffe\\_Park](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thorncliffe_Park).

2 Social Policy, Analysis & Research Neighbourhoods, *Neighbourhood Profile: Thorncliffe Park* (Toronto: City of Toronto, 2018), accessed September, 2019, <https://www.toronto.ca/ext/sdfa/Neighbourhood%20Profiles/pdf/2016/pdf1/cpa55.pdf>.

3 "Thorncliffe Park."



share and exchange cultures by selling diverse traditional clothing, jewellery, wares, and foods. Finally, it creates socio-economic opportunities for the members of the community and allows them the opportunity to advance the skills and knowledge they already possess, as well as acquire new ones that can translate into better employment opportunities<sup>4</sup>.

In addition, the Thorncliffe Park Women's Committee's provides various programs that the community can get involved in such as gardening programs, ravine walks, senior's programs, arts in the park, sewing and cooking studios and many more. The success of the programs and the engagement and collaboration that can be seen among the community of Thorncliffe Park highlights the strong potential these small interventions can have in creating a place which is inclusive and welcoming and how it can provide individuals with a sense of belonging. Therefore, if these projects and programs are taken and intensified further and on a larger scale it follows that it would foster communities which are inclusive, engaging, welcoming and economically resilient.

3.17 (Right) The community market is used a place making strategy which reduces social isolation, supports cross-cultural exchange and creates socio-economic opportunities



3.18 (Right) Various programs are offered to the community members to encourage community participation and enhance interaction and socialisation



4 "Our Community Market," Thorncliffe Park Women's Committee, accessed September 10, 2019, <https://www.tpwmenscomm.org/our-community-market>.

### 3.5 THORNCLIFFE COMMUNITY CENTER AND CHILDCARE



3.19 (Left) The community center is located centrally within the tower neighbourhood allowing easy access to its residents

3.20 (Right) The aerial view of the community center shows the renovations and additions infilled onto the site

Located within Thorncliffe Park’s tower neighbourhood, the Jenner Jean-Marie Community Centre went through a renovation and expansion designed by LGA Architectural Partners. This case study is an example of the urban intensification that can occur on a site with an existing structure and highlights certain considerations that have to be taken into account when it comes to urban infill such as climatic considerations as well as the most appropriate method of construction.

The community centre is made up of three key programs: a gymnasium, a public library and a childcare centre.<sup>1</sup> Due to the constraints of the site, the gymnasium had to be placed at the north edge of the site which led to limitations in drawing in natural light into the space. The strategic move made to ensure this was possible was to incorporate a central courtyard into the design. The spaces within the building were also designed to allow for flexibility and multipurpose use so various community events could take place as well. This was achieved through the layout of the programming of spaces and also the appropriate use of materials and finishes to allow for an easy transition from an athletic facility to an event space.

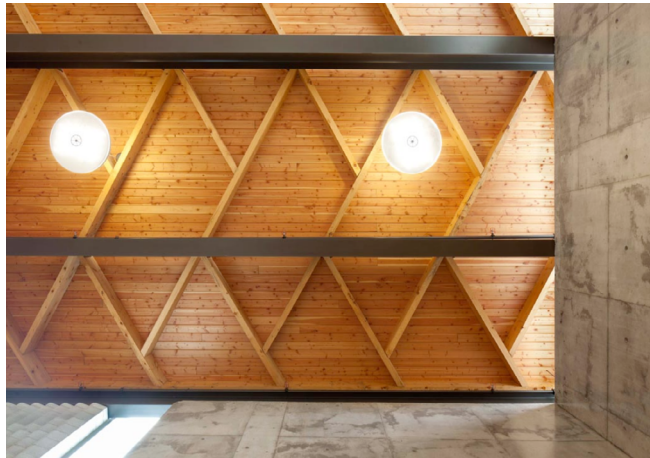
Finally, the design included phasing of construction to accommodate the group’s operational schedule which allowed parts the community centre to be used while it was still under construction. This concept can be translated to a larger scale project where phasing can be used to balance concerns such as sustainability and budget.



3.21 (Left) The use of glass on the facade creates a transparency with its surroundings which creates an indoor/outdoor relationship that is inviting and encourages engagement

<sup>1</sup> “Thorncliffe Community Centre & Childcare,” urbanNext, accessed September 10, 2019, <https://urbannext.net/thorncliffe-community-centre-childcare/>.

3.22 (Right) The use of a wooden ceiling creates a warm and welcoming space while also providing acoustical advantages which allows multiple uses for the space



3.23 (Right) Creating spatial variations within the building allows for flexibility where smaller events can take place in cosier one-storied spaces. Additionally, creating a transition from indoor to outdoor space engages the surrounding context and enlivens the space with nature and light



3.24 (Right) The use of transparency between different levels within the structure ensures visual engagement and diminishes feelings of isolation while also drawing in natural light into the maximum amount of spaces



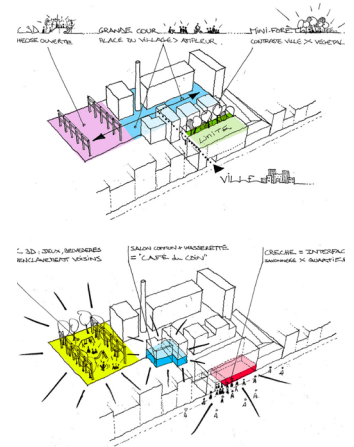
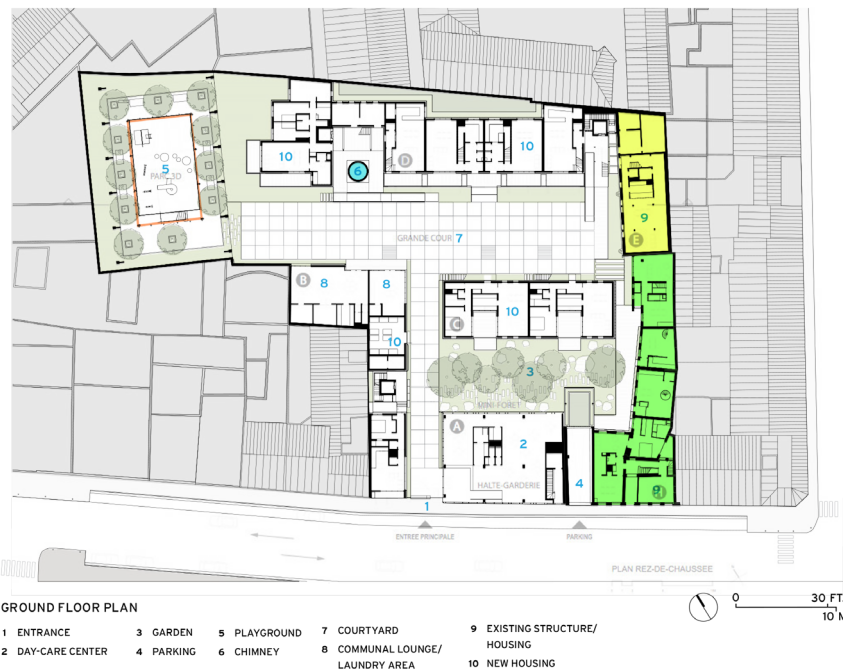
### 3.6 SAVONNERIE HEYMANS PUBLIC HOUSING, BRUSSELS

The Savonnerie Heymans is a public-housing complex situated in a dense but underserved neighbourhood in Brussels that is populated by a mix of young people and immigrants, mainly from North and Sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern Europe. This project is an interesting departure from the previous few cases that I have referenced because it is not looking at residential tower buildings and its surrounding area. However, it is significant because it is a case of urban intensification and repurposing of the urban fabric and it highlights various strategies of program, integration of existing fabric and creation of public and social spaces.

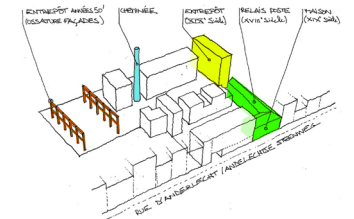
The site of this housing complex formerly belonged to a soap factory and this industrial site was repurposed to create 42 sustainable accommodations of different types along with a series of private outdoor spaces allowing its occupants to interact easily with each other and creating a welcoming, village-like atmosphere<sup>1</sup>.

The design features high density accommodations equipped with amenities such as a room for social meetings and events, a public Ludothèque (game library) and extensive public space: the “Mini-forest” garden, the 3D landscaped park and playground and the main promenade<sup>2</sup>. Consequently, these areas bring the residents together to organize social meetings and fun events encouraging community building and engagement.

3.26 (Below) Ground Floor Plan



3.25 (Above) Public Spaces:  
The design is a sustainable oasis of 42 middle-income rentals grouped around three private courtyards which provides natural light and ventilation along with spaces for social interactions



3.27 (Below) Heritage:  
The project retains the industrial flavor of the property, which dates back to the 18th century. Whenever possible, existing buildings and structures have been retained and reused. These are marked on the plan in corresponding colours

1 Krihana Ross, "Savonnerie Heymans / MDW Architecture," ArchDaily, accessed September 10, 2019, <https://www.archdaily.com/220116/savonnerie-heyman-mdw-architecture>.

2 "Savonnerie Heymans / MDW Architecture."

All the existing valuable historic buildings and elements such as the chimney, the main 19th century house on the street and the postal relay were retained and integrated into the complex. This method allows the character and history of the neighbourhood to survive while ensuring that the urban fabric is updating to the needs of a growing city as well.

Due to the diversity of its program the Savonnerie Heymans provides a variety of spaces which resonates with the diversity of the people living in the very heart of Brussels. This aspect is very important because if the urban fabric is unable to cater to the needs of its inhabitants then the likely outcome is that these individuals will be dissatisfied with their living conditions. If the place one refers to as home is not comfortable and accommodating it may cause mental unrest which can affect other areas of their lives such as their employment status.

3.28 (Right) The balcony overlooking the courtyard provides a transitional space between the indoor and outdoor which can be used as social gathering spaces



3.29 (Right) The existing fabric is seamlessly integrated into the new while still retaining its original character which gives the architecture a sense of place within the contemporary as well as history



3.30 (Right) The transparency of the facades create a sense of porosity while the more solid elements define an edge which holds the courtyard in place as a central gathering space.



### 3.7 BIJLMERMEER, AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS

The Bijlmermeer is a large postwar neighbourhood that was planned on the edge of the Amsterdam region in the 1960s and 70s. Although it was designed as tomorrow’s idealistic city, it soon became known for all its problems<sup>1</sup> eventually, leading to the demolition of nearly half of its dwellings. In the 1990s, the neighbourhood went through urban renewal which involved selective demolition, refurbishment, and infill of various housing forms<sup>2</sup>. Initiated by the expansion of the Metro, a finer grain ground plane was created, using the districts’ mid and low-rise housing forms, to frame streets and open space by adding new housing forms adjacent to, or directly connected with older modern housing. This also increased housing tenures and opportunities for mixed-uses<sup>3</sup>. New building forms were creatively used to frame a program of pedestrian and cycle networks through modern housing complexes and along newly formed ‘complete streets’, clearly defining the public realm<sup>4</sup>.

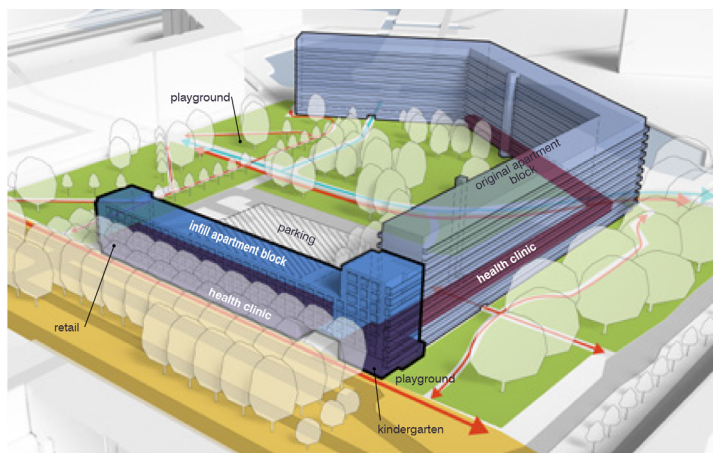


3.31 (Above) Figure ground plan



3.32 (Left) Infill building viewed from street demonstrating the creation of a street edge and merging with the existing context

3.33 (Right) Improved connectivity by designing bicycle paths through towers while also encouraging a more inclusive neighbourhood



3.34 (Left) Building site analysis highlighting the permeability through the site and, through the creation of a street edge, useful inner courtyard spaces which can be utilised successfully as community gathering areas

1 Willemijn van de Klundert, *Bijlmermeer Regenerated* (London: Westminster University London, 2014), accessed September, 2019, <http://www.veilig-ontwerp-beheer.nl/publicaties/bijlmermeer-regenerated/view>.

2 Centre for Urban Growth and Renewal, *Growth and Resiliency in Tower in the Park Sites across the GGH* (Toronto: Tower Renewal Partnership, 2018), accessed September, 2019, <http://towerrenewal.com/research-reports/growth-and-resilience-in-tower-in-the-park-sites-across-the-ggh/>.

3 Centre for Urban Growth and Renewal, *Growth and Resiliency in Tower in the Park Sites across the GGH*.

4 Centre for Urban Growth and Renewal, *Growth and Resiliency in Tower in the Park Sites across the GGH*.

### 3.8 WILHELMSBURG, HAMBURG, GERMANY



3.35 (Above) Figure ground plan

The Berta Kröger Plaza is the main commercial hub of the Wilhelmsburg quarter established by the Luna Center Mall and the Wilhelmsburg S-bahn Station (Rapid Transit Hub) and it is surrounded by several blocks of modern housing<sup>1</sup>. The area has been transformed into an integrated hub through a program of building refurbishment, public space investment and new commercial infill at the towers' ground floor<sup>2</sup>.

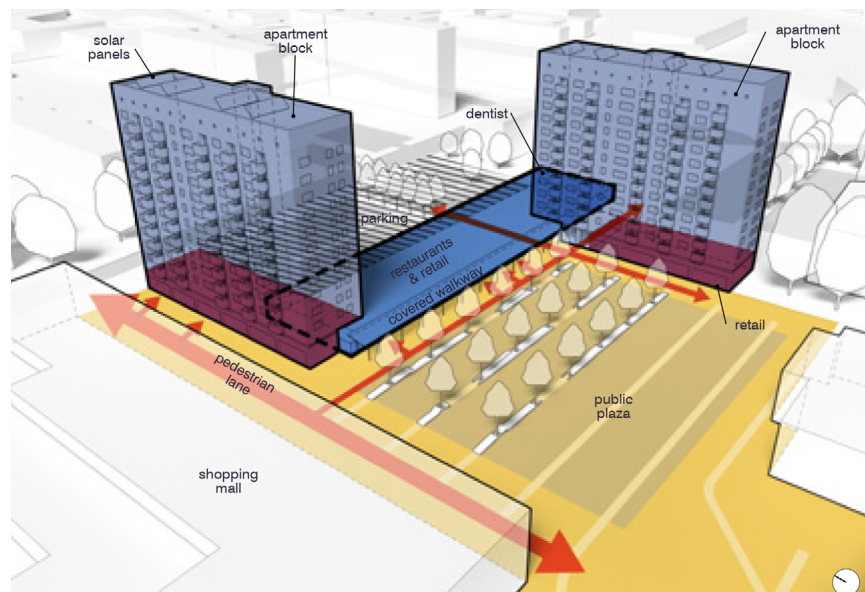
Two existing towers were connected with a single storey mixed-use podium to expand commercial and community uses within the neighbourhood, and define the network of public space<sup>3</sup>. This podium activates the site's interior public space by providing small scale commercial spaces facing the plaza<sup>4</sup> as well as spaces for social engagement. By locating the parking and servicing along the exterior arterial edges, the internal public realm still acts as a cohesive link between the different commercial typologies and the semi-private courtyard spaces nearby<sup>5</sup>.



3.36 (Above) Apartment block with covered walkway and public plaza

Furthermore, through the provision of seating that can be utilised in several ways, the plaza becomes a flexible space which can be manipulated to the users' needs empowering them to be creative and allowing the plaza to become a space of identity within the community.

3.37 (Right) Building site analysis highlighting the permeability through the site and connectivity to the public plaza and commercial activities



3.38 (Above) The lines of benches provide a framework for the plaza's use as a market place allowing the space to be flexible

1 Centre for Urban Growth and Renewal, *Growth and Resiliency in Tower in the Park Sites across the GGH.*  
 2 Centre for Urban Growth and Renewal, *Growth and Resiliency in Tower in the Park Sites across the GGH.*  
 3 Centre for Urban Growth and Renewal, *Growth and Resiliency in Tower in the Park Sites across the GGH.*  
 4 Centre for Urban Growth and Renewal, *Growth and Resiliency in Tower in the Park Sites across the GGH.*  
 5 Centre for Urban Growth and Renewal, *Growth and Resiliency in Tower in the Park Sites across the GGH.*

### **3.9 LESSONS LEARNT: KEY PRINCIPLES FOR CREATING COMPLETE & COHESIVE TOWER NEIGHBOURHOODS**

Building from the analysis of these national and international examples, the following key principles have been derived. These can be implemented to help create tower neighbourhoods which are economically resilient and socially and culturally integrated, enhancing the lives of its residents, and the wider community, positively through the creation of a vibrant and cohesive environment:

**1. Connectivity**

– increasing walkability within the neighbourhood by creating connections via pedestrian and bicycling networks allows the inhabitants to access different areas with ease while permeability through the ground plane also encourages visitors to walk through and utilise the services provided and engage with the community within

**2. Economic Opportunities**

– establishing a network for economic growth through strategic placement of programs and services, provides residents with the scope to find jobs and open businesses close to home, allowing them to become economically established while also fostering strong bonds within the community through increased engagement and collaboration

**3. Establishment of an Identity**

– providing spaces which are flexible and can be appropriated to the needs of the community by the local residents themselves empowers them and generates a sense of belonging and importance within the broader urban fabric

**4. Integrated Network of Open Public Spaces**

– designing a variety of open public spaces, ranging in size and atmosphere, creates dynamic and animated spaces which can cater to the diverse needs of the community and the larger society while also providing a platform for social interaction, cross-cultural exchange and community bonding







# CHAPTER 4

## SYNTHESIS

## **4.1 DESIGN APPROACH**

The goal of this design proposal is to create a socially inclusive and dynamic model of engaging and active public spaces through urban intensification and the leveraging of economic opportunities and cultural aspects of an existing neighborhood. Taking lessons from the previous Chapters, it is important for this design project to address issues of limited opportunities and social isolation of newcomers from the rest of the community due to living in housing which is not integrated into the urban fabric of the city and does not have the supports and services required for the successful integration into their new home. Using city and place-making strategies, the design will combine a variety of commercial, public, and cultural elements onto an existing residential tower site.

Through the provision of various public gathering spaces and diverse programming of the site, to allow for economic development and social and cultural integration, the design aims to foster a vibrant and economically resilient urban environment which welcomes and provides stability to newcomers as they adjust to their new beginning.

## 4.2 SITE SELECTION



4.1 (Above) Location of Toronto within Canada



4.2 (Above) Location of Ward 35 within Scarborough



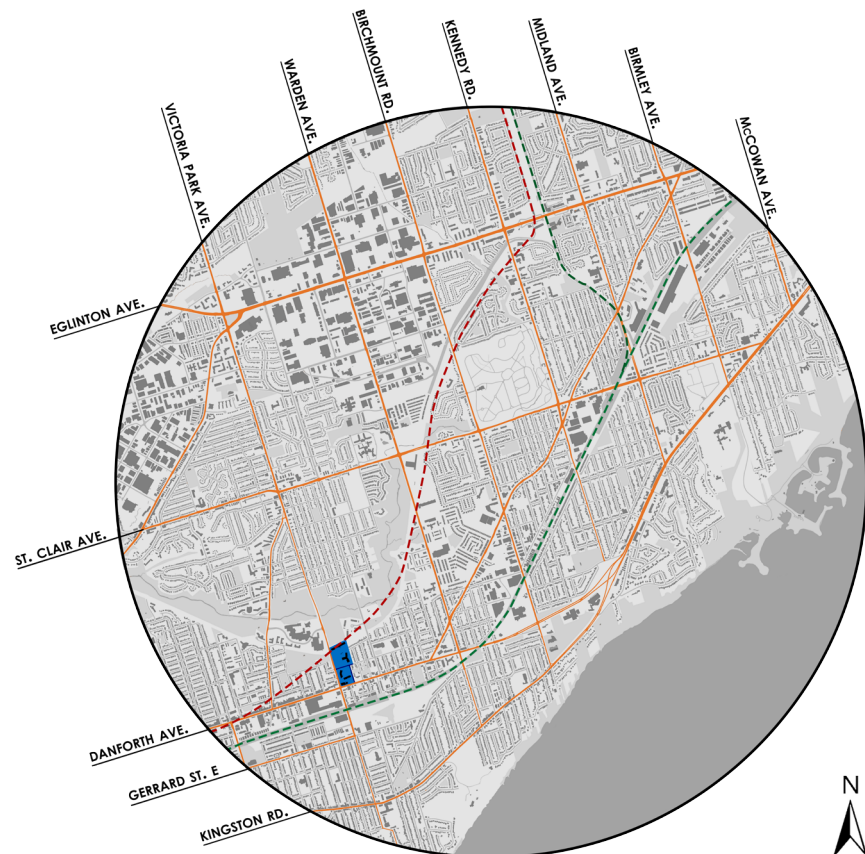
4.3 (Above) Location of Oakridge within Ward 35

4.4 (Right) Location of Site within Oakridge

Locating an appropriate site for the design proposal is an essential step in the design process because it needs to cater to the selected demographic which, in this case, is the recent immigrant population who are underserved due to their housing location. As such, for my site, I have chosen to focus on a residential apartment tower block in a neighborhood in the inner suburbs of the City of Toronto.

Oakridge, located in the South-West corner of Scarborough, is bound on the north by ravine and parklands and on the south and east by the CN railway line and industry. The neighborhood contains a varied mix of older houses, residential towers, a commercial strip along Danforth Avenue, several schools, a few recreational, cultural and religious facilities and parkland such as Oakridge Park. Another noteworthy aspect is the strong interconnectivity with the city via the transport system. Bus routes on Victoria Park and Warden Avenues, and Danforth Road connect passengers to stations on the Bloor-Danforth subway line, and Danforth Road provides motorists with an east-west arterial roadway that leads right into the center of Toronto.

Surprisingly, despite being well integrated into the transit system and the road network of the city, the inhabitants of this area struggle to make ends meet. This neighborhood is designated as a high priority area by the City of Toronto due to the fact that it is one of the areas of lowest-income within the city. The area has limited services and support for the newcomers that arrive here as well as for the large immigrant population that already resides within.



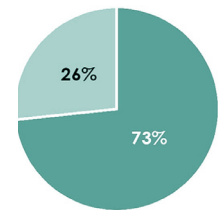
Furthermore, there is a lack of open public spaces where people can gather to socialize and interact with each other to improve community bonding, create a sense of belonging and feel safe and secure. The built environment around these towers are uninviting and desolate, and this compounds the sense of isolation and segregation that is experienced by the tenants of these buildings. This suggests that although having ease of access to the city is important to communities within a tower neighborhood, it is just one aspect of a larger problem which needs to be addressed to ensure that these residents can become inclusive members of the society. However, this location will allow a demonstration of the full potential an apartment tower neighborhood can achieve when successfully integrated into the transit system.

Furthermore, a significant reason for the selection of this site is the ethnic demographics of the population. According to the 2016 census data, 73 percent of Scarborough’s population is of visible minority, and this indicates that a large proportion of immigrants have moved into this area. Oakridge has a visible minority percentage of 69 of which over 60 percent are from Bangladesh indicating a South Asian majority within this neighborhood. This data shows that this area is an ethnic neighborhood.

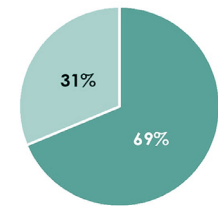
This theory is supported by the fact that of the recent immigrants, 14.1-24.3 percent have moved into the residential towers in Oakridge and with a significant proportion of recent immigrants being South Asian, it tracks that they want to live in a community where they can be more comfortable and feel safer because they are able to find their own home culture around them. The fact that the ethnic dominance is one that I relate to personally has also guided my choice as I feel that I will be able to connect to the site better and with a fuller understanding of its inhabitants and their cultural needs.

It is seen, from observing the existing urban fabric on the site that, as shown in previous examples of the apartment tower neighbourhoods, the residential towers are isolated from the rest of the community and surrounded by areas of empty green space which have no purpose. Even though these towers are situated along the main streets and have a subway station in close proximity, there is minimal interaction with the urban street fabric, and driveways and fences obstruct the ground plane. Additionally, except for a few businesses scattered along Danforth Avenue within Oakridge, there is very little activity taking place in the streets which creates a very poor public realm and limits chances of community interaction and social cohesion. It also implies a lack of employment opportunities in close proximity to the towers.

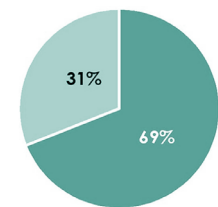
4.5 (Below) Visible minority distribution comparison



SCARBOROUGH

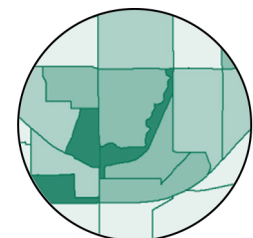


WARD THIRTY-FIVE



OAKRIDGE

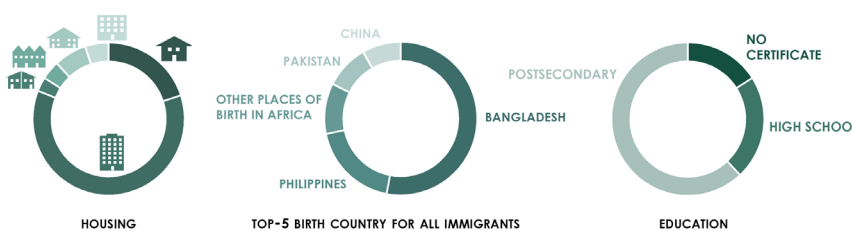
CAUCASIAN & ABORIGINAL  
VISIBLE MINORITY



Per cent recent immigrants

0% - 4.5%  
4.6% - 8.4%  
8.5% - 14%  
14.1% - 24.3%

4.6 (Above) Map of recent Immigrants distribution within Oakridge



4.7 (Left) Oakridge demographics indicating occupancy of house type, dominant birth country of immigrants and qualification level of the total population within the neighbourhood (Data: Statistics Canada 2016)

4.8 Fences obstruct flow of ground plane creating segregation



4.9 No street furniture provided for social interaction



4.10 Empty green lots create poor public realms because they act as dead spaces



4.11 The mosque on site is a place of cultural and social gathering



4.12 Excluding the apartment towers, detached and semi-detached houses are the dominant housing typology of the neighbourhood



4.13 Automobile dominance can be seen in the street character



4.14 Street activity can be found at the intersection near commercial spaces



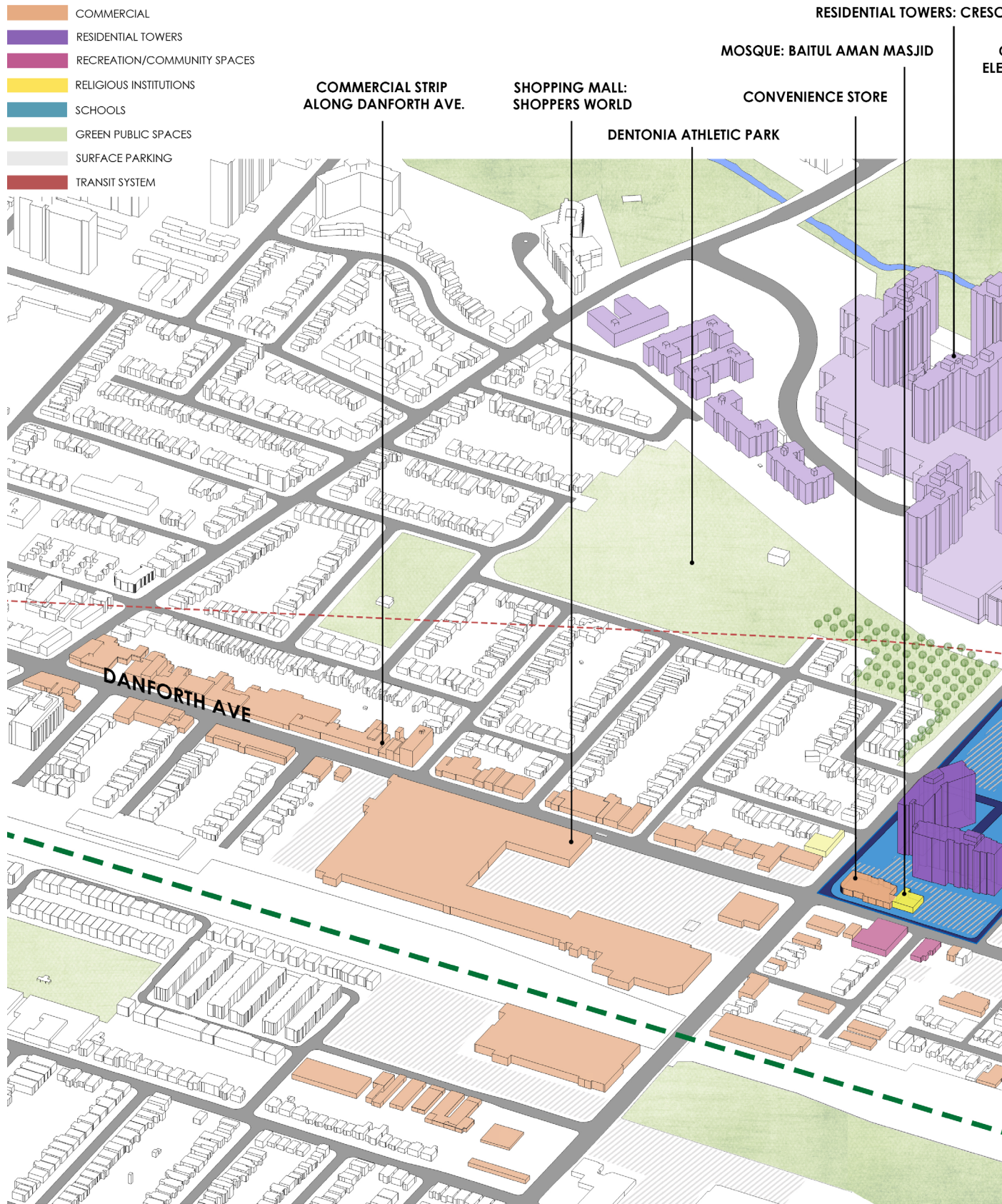
4.15 Ethnic influences found in retail on site



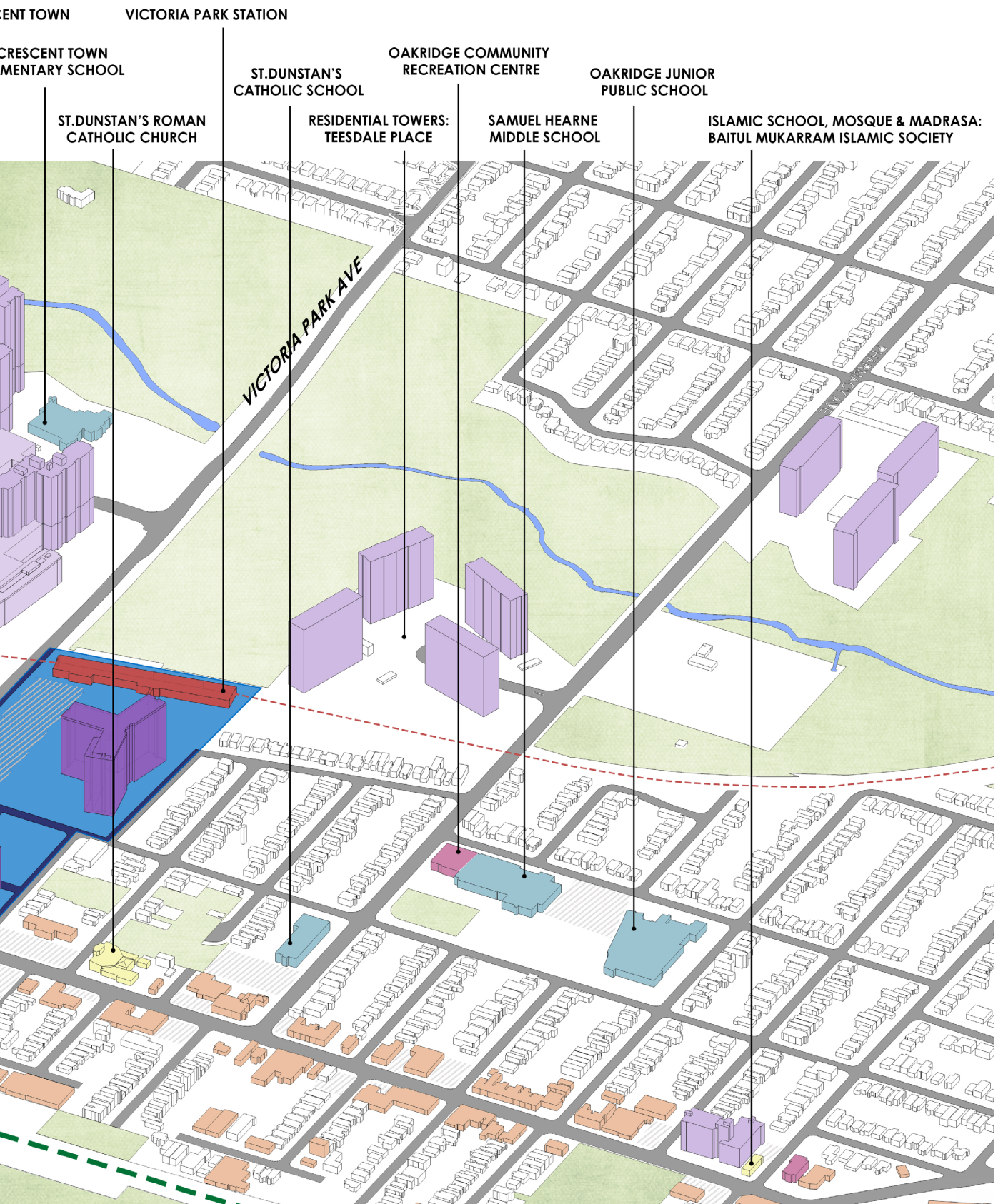
4.16 Along Danforth Avenue, to the west of the site, many businesses and retail shops highlight the concentration of Bangladeshi people in the community. It can be identified in the products marketed as well as the style of marketing.



### 4.17 Existing Site Fabric and Zoning:







VENT TOWN

VICTORIA PARK STATION

CRESCENT TOWN  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

ST.DUNSTAN'S ROMAN  
CATHOLIC CHURCH

ST.DUNSTAN'S  
CATHOLIC SCHOOL

RESIDENTIAL TOWERS:  
TEESDALE PLACE

OAKRIDGE COMMUNITY  
RECREATION CENTRE

SAMUEL HEARNE  
MIDDLE SCHOOL

OAKRIDGE JUNIOR  
PUBLIC SCHOOL

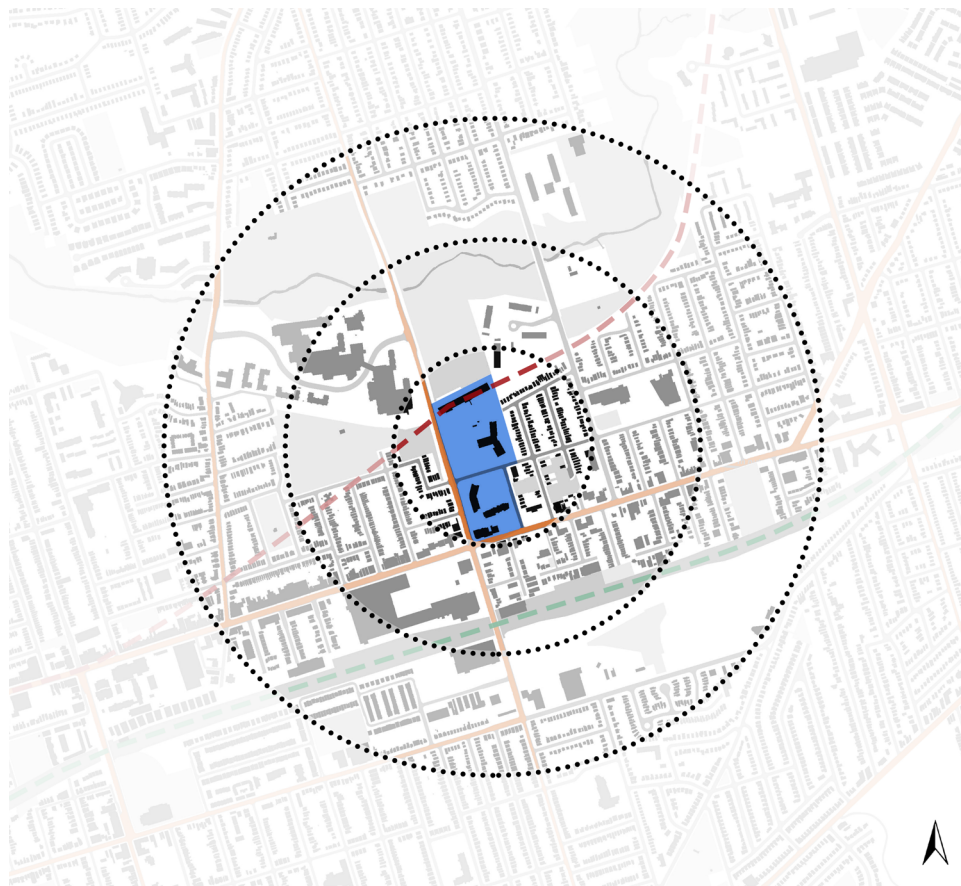
ISLAMIC SCHOOL, MOSQUE & MADRASA:  
BAITUL MUKARRAM ISLAMIC SOCIETY

VICTORIA PARK AVE

**4.18 Figure-ground Plan of Existing Conditions:**



**4.19 Distance of Selected Site in Relation to Other Towers in Vicinity:**



4.19 (Left) 5 minute, 10 minute and 15 minutes walking radius to highlight the accessibility of the site from areas with large populations such as other tower neighbourhoods

MAJOR STREETS ——— GO TRANSIT ——— SUBWAY LINE ———

## 4.3 PROGRAM

The goal of the design is to provide a solution that promotes a denser and economically resilient urban environment. The proposal will provide infrastructure for socio-economic opportunities, community engagement and public space activation for the betterment of the lives of residents within the towers as well as the surrounding neighborhood.

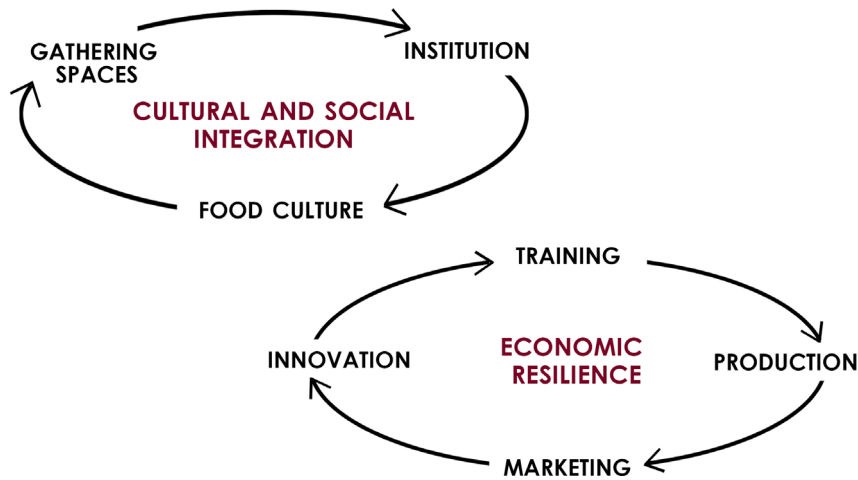
Observing the ethnic inflections within the neighborhood, the presence of the Bangladeshi community is prominent, and as such, it follows that building upon the cultures of this ethnic group would be beneficial to the design of the programs and spaces as the majority of its inhabitants would understand its significance. Consequently, the programming has been centered on three important elements of Bangladeshi culture and also, in a broader sense, South Asian culture. With the garments industry playing a vital role in Bangladesh and its economy, textiles and crafts are an important cultural component to integrate into the design. Also, there are various noticeable cultural practices within this community such as a strong presence of the Islamic religion and colorful festivals to celebrate important dates such as Eid and Pohela Boishak (the Bangladeshi New Year). Lastly, the third element is food, and this plays a significant role in all cultures and acts as a point of social and cultural engagement across all ages, races, and genders.

However, although the programming is centered on traditional elements of a particular ethnic group, the cultural leveraging should be done in a way that is open to interpretation and not exclusive to the Bangladeshi population alone. Programs should be flexible and deployed in a way which encourages interaction and cross-cultural exchange to ensure the inclusion of all the diverse backgrounds within the neighborhood.

Taking into account the lessons and design strategies learned from the previous chapters, the design proposal aims to achieve this target through the provision of various opportunities and services such as scope to set up small businesses, partake in community activities such as a community kitchen or finding a job within the production sector of textiles and crafts. Gathering spaces such as a market place, exhibition spaces, a public library, a mosque, day-care services, community gardens, and open parkland will be used to promote social and cultural integration among the tenants themselves as well as with the larger community. By activating the surrounding areas around the towers, the design intends to engage with the wider community and allows the towers to become integrated within the urban fabric.

The objective is to provide recent immigrants with an initial landing pad where they can stabilize themselves socially, culturally and economically in a diverse and vibrant urban environment which also affords a sense of familiarity, safety, and comfort due to influences of their home country.

**Creating Connections:**



4.20 (Above) Creating a network between cultural influences to enhance the vibrancy of the neighbourhood

4.21 (Left) Exploring relationships to create an economically resilient and social and culturally rich design proposal

**MARKET ↔ MOSQUE**

4.22 (Above) A noticeable pattern that can be found in the urban fabric of many Islamic countries in the Middle East and South Asia is the relationship between the market and the mosque. Souqs were built in close proximity to mosques because large public gatherings for prayer were economically prosperous for local businesses.



4.23 **TEXTILES & CRAFTS:**

Small scale production which can be used to showcase skills and create jobs for local residents



4.24 **FOOD MARKET & CARTS:**

Space for cultural and social integration and showcasing cuisine skills which can be produced in the community kitchen and enjoyed by the community and these spaces can also be used to sell locally grown produce

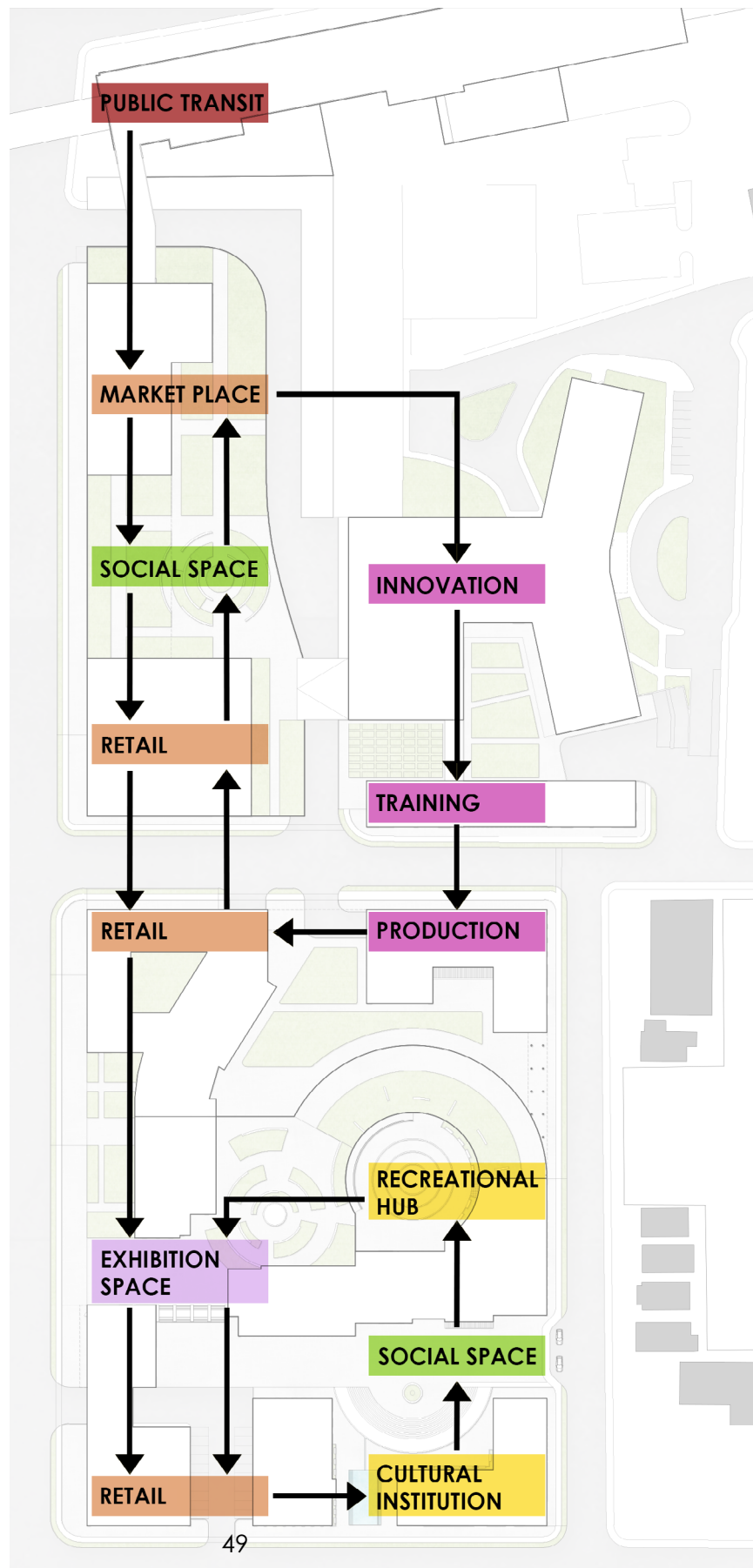


4.25 **PEDESTRIAN FRIENDLY STREETS & PERFORMANCE SPACES:**

Streets creating permeability through the ground plane invite the inhabitants of the area and the wider community into public spaces where festivals, performances and social events can take place

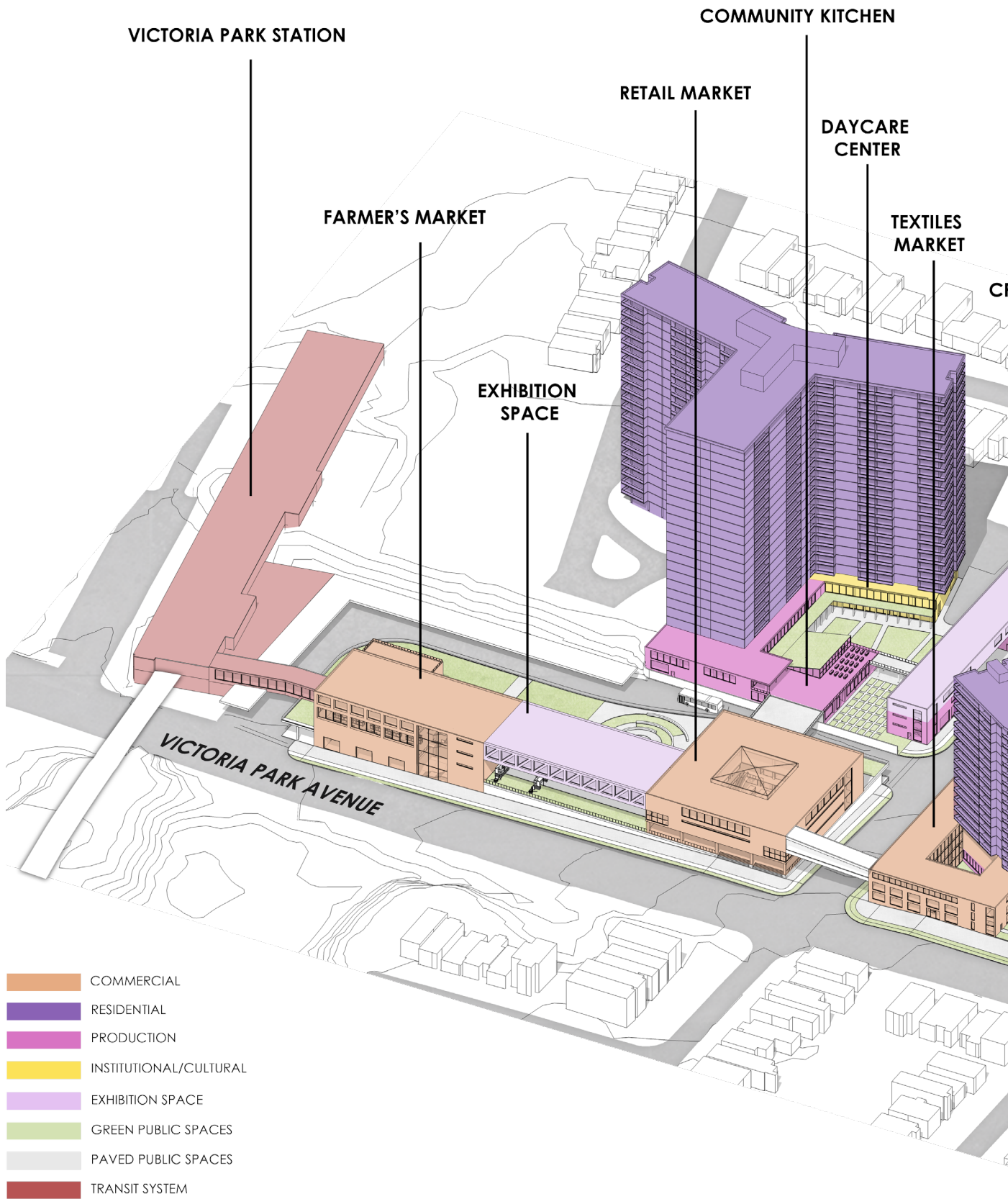
#### 4.26 Initial Program Deployment in Relation to Site:

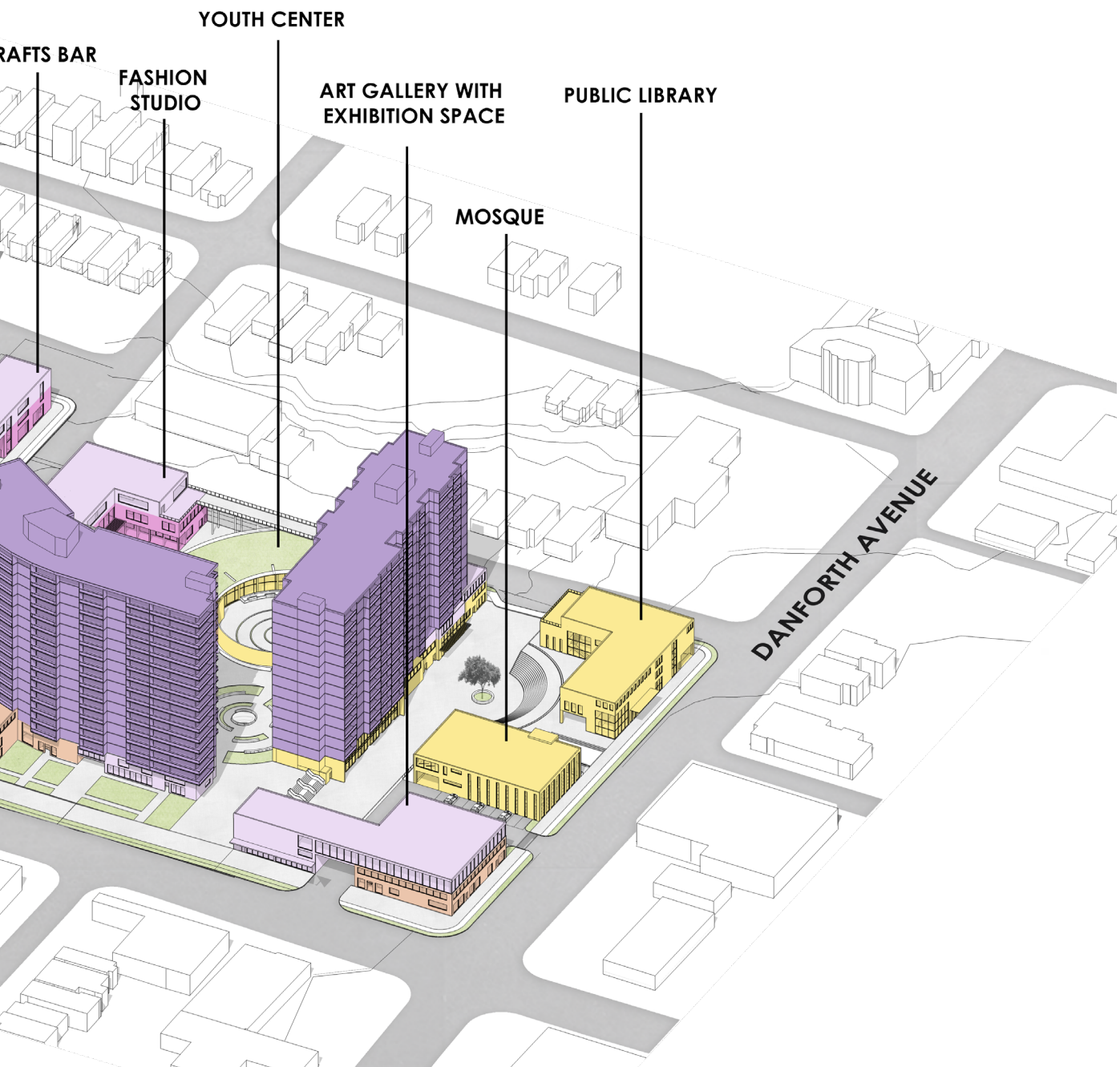
4.26 (Right) Exploring connections that can be used to facilitate cohesion and smooth transitions between different programs whilst encouraging social and cultural interaction



# 4.4 THE PROPOSAL

## 4.27 Proposed Zoning & Program:





#### 4.28 Ground Floor Plan:

- 01 Convenience Store
- 02 Bakery
- 03 Mosque - Men's Prayer Hall
- 04 Public Library - Service Ontario
- 05 Recreation Court
- 06 Art Gallery
- 07 Art Studio
- 08 Performance Plaza
- 09 Residential Entry of Tower
- 10 Youth Centre - Entry
- 11 Youth Centre - Cafe
- 12 Youth Centre - Music Studio
- 13 Youth Centre - Drama Studio
- 14 Youth Centre - Game Room
- 15 Youth Centre - Gymnasium
- 16 Youth Centre - Yoga Studio
- 17 Youth Centre - Dance Studio
- 18 Textiles Market- Production Workshops
- 19 Textiles Market - Food Court
- 20 Fashion Studio - Cafe
- 21 Fashion Studio - Production Workshops
- 22 Crafts Bar - Production Workshops
- 23 Recreation Court
- 24 Daycare Centre - Classroom
- 25 Daycare Centre - Cafe
- 26 Community Kitchen - Office
- 27 Community Kitchen - Storage & Service
- 28 Community Kitchen - Party Hall
- 29 Community Kitchen - Food Hall
- 30 Community Kitchen - Vegetable Garden
- 31 Public Parking
- 32 Supermarket
- 33 Victoria Park Station





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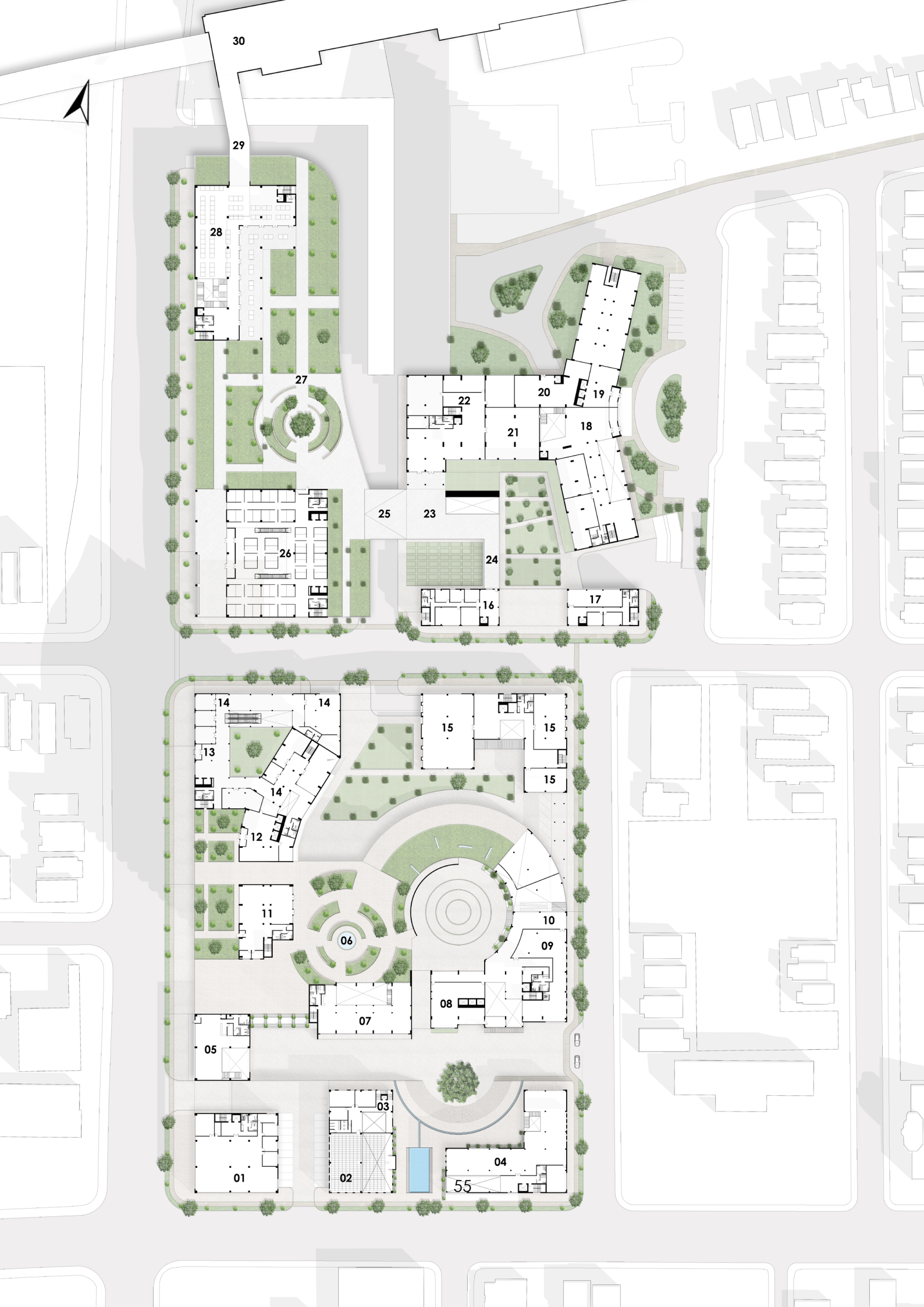
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#### 4.29 Second Floor Plan:

- 01 Rentable Office Space
- 02 Mosque - Women's Prayer Hall
- 03 Mosque - Madrasa
- 04 Public Library
- 05 Art Gallery
- 06 Public Square
- 07 Art Studio
- 08 Youth Centre - E-Resources
- 09 Youth Centre - Collective Work Space
- 10 Youth Centre - Lounge
- 11 Textiles Market - Exhibition Space
- 12 Residential Entry of Tower
- 13 Textiles Market - Entry
- 14 Textile Market - Clothing Shops
- 15 Fashion Studio - Teaching Studios
- 16 Crafts Bar - Teaching Studios
- 17 Crafts Bar - Collaborative Space
- 18 Daycare Centre
- 19 Residential Entry of Tower
- 20 Community Kitchen - Storage & Service
- 21 Community Kitchen - Innovation Hub
- 22 Community Kitchen - Classrooms
- 23 Community Kitchen - Rooftop Garden
- 24 Bridge to Crafts Bar
- 25 Ramp to Market Plaza
- 26 Retail Market
- 27 Market Plaza
- 28 Farmer's Market
- 29 Bridge to Subway
- 30 Victoria Park Station



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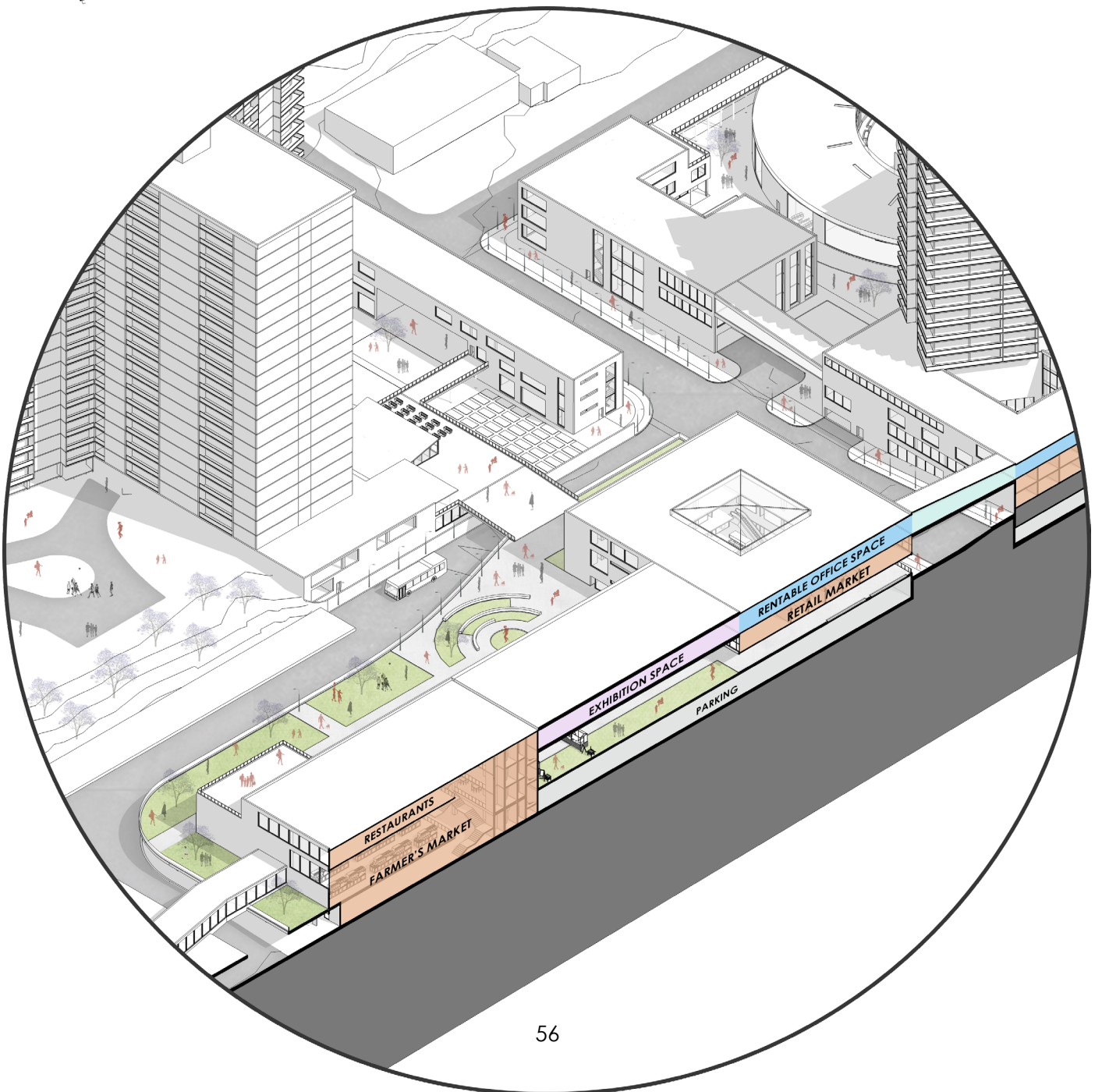
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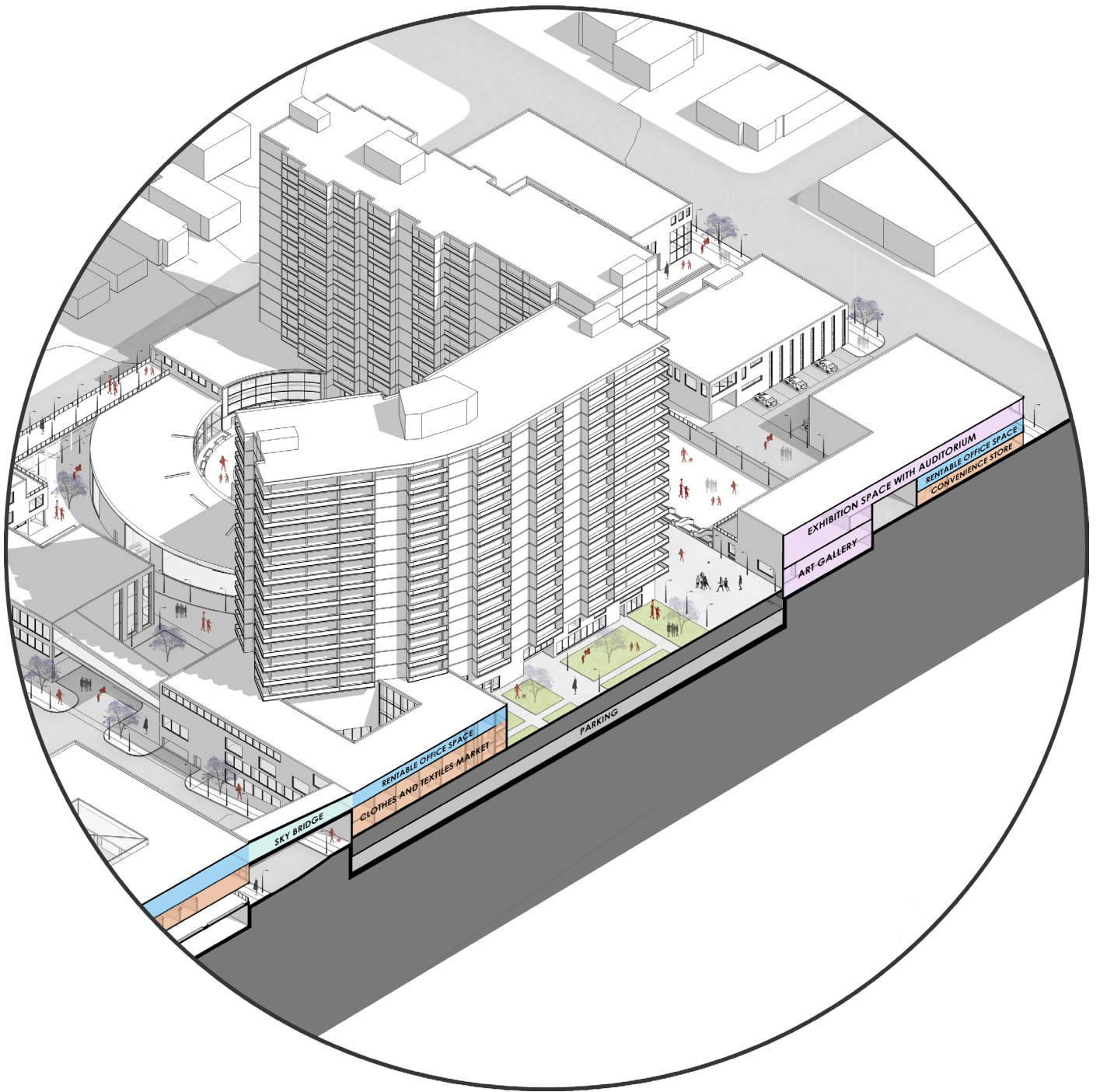
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4.30 Section AA'

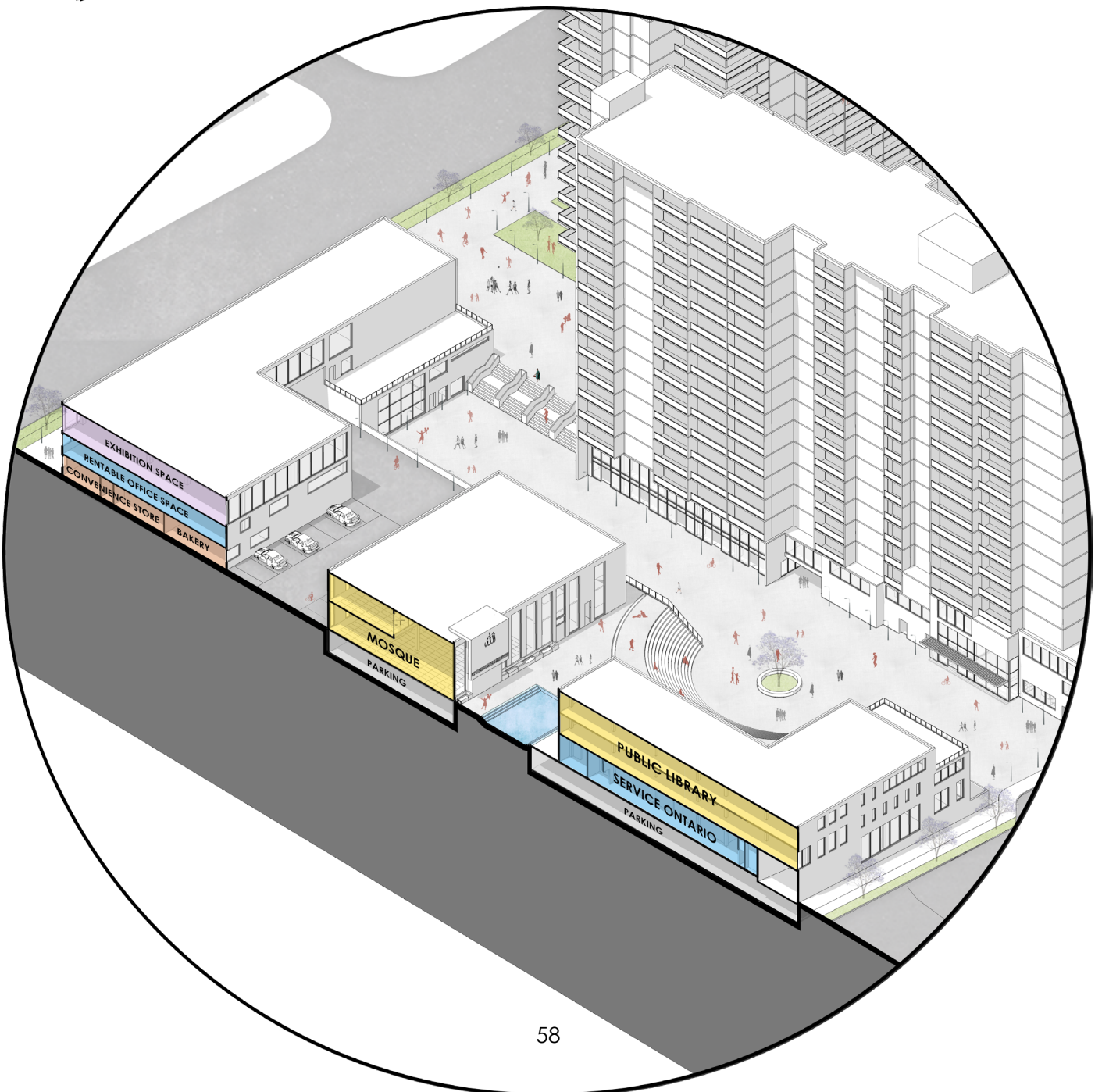




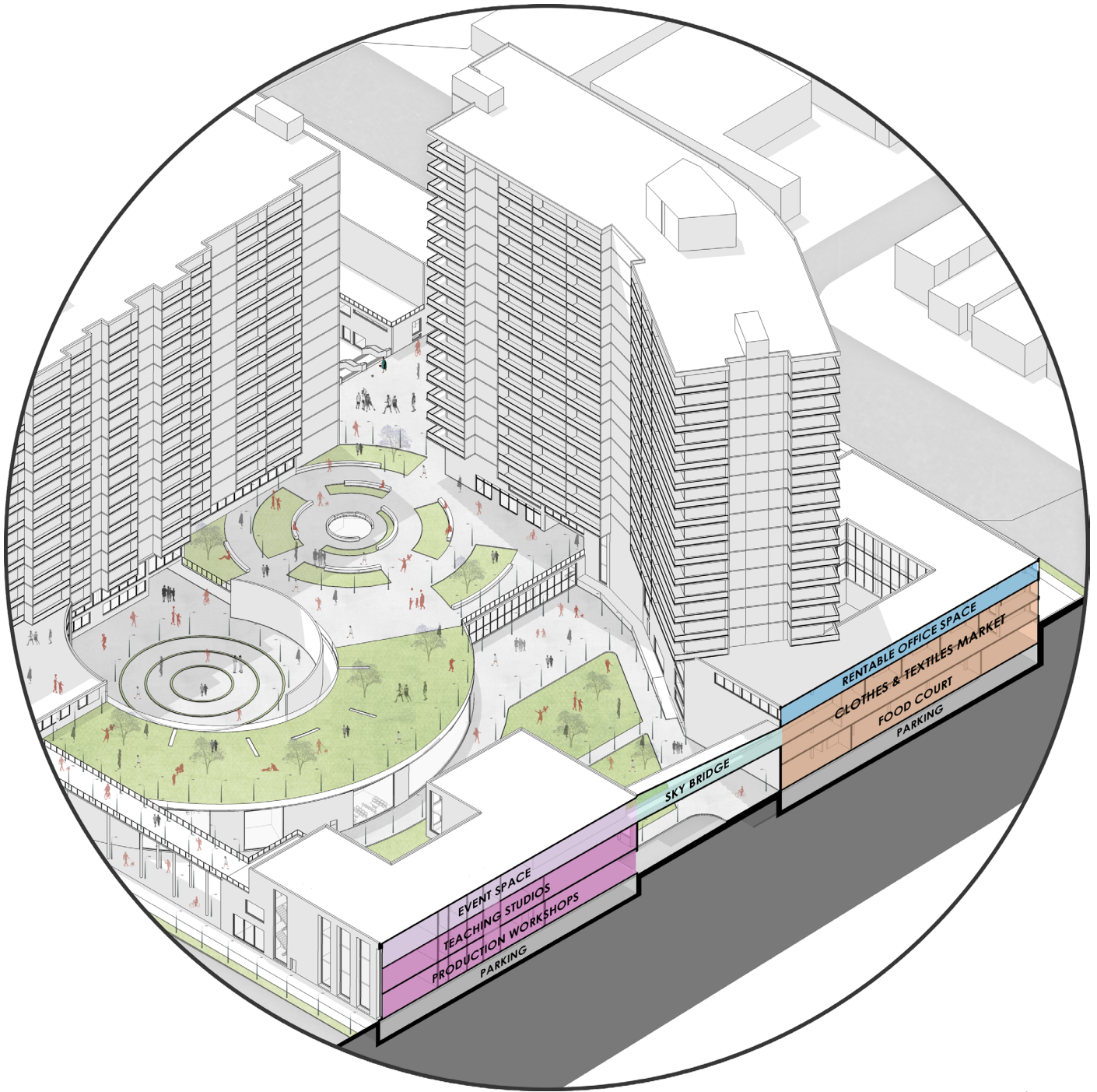
- COMMERCIAL
- RENTABLE OFFICE SPACE
- EXHIBITION SPACE
- GREEN PUBLIC SPACES
- PAVED PUBLIC SPACES
- TRANSIT SYSTEM

4.31 Section BB'

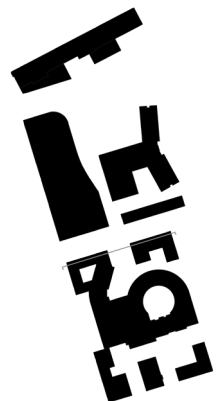
SECTION BB'



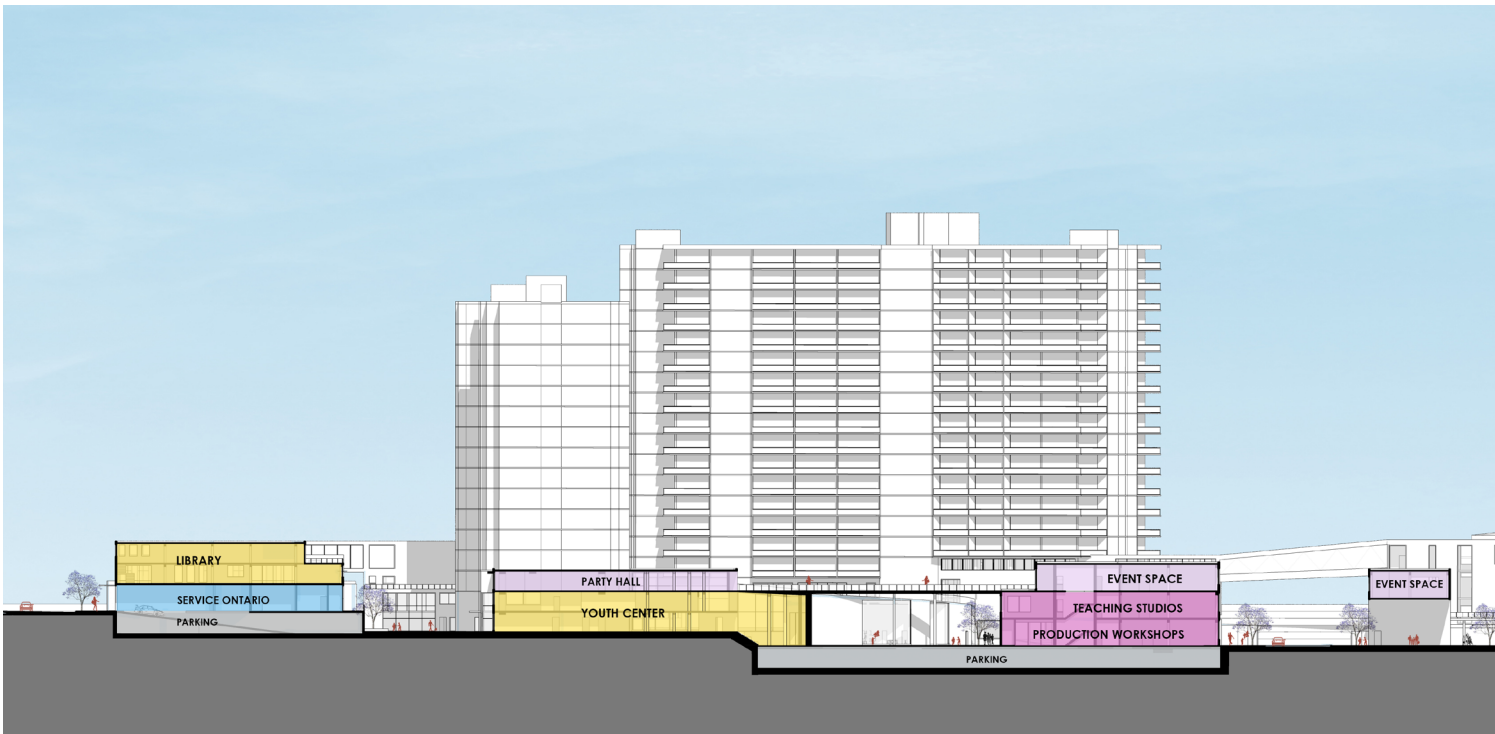
4.32 Section CC'



- COMMERCIAL
- RENTABLE OFFICE SPACE
- PRODUCTION
- INSTITUTIONAL/CULTURAL
- EXHIBITION SPACE
- GREEN PUBLIC SPACES
- PAVED PUBLIC SPACES



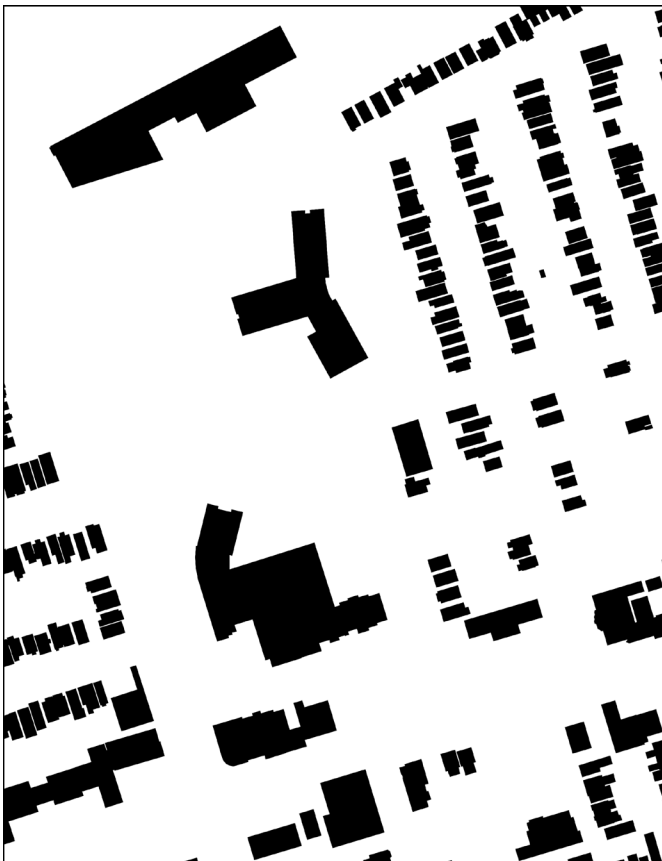
4.33 Section DD':



RENTABLE OFFICE SPACE    PRODUCTION    INSTITUTIONAL/CULTURAL    EXHIBITION SPACE    TRANSIT SYSTEM

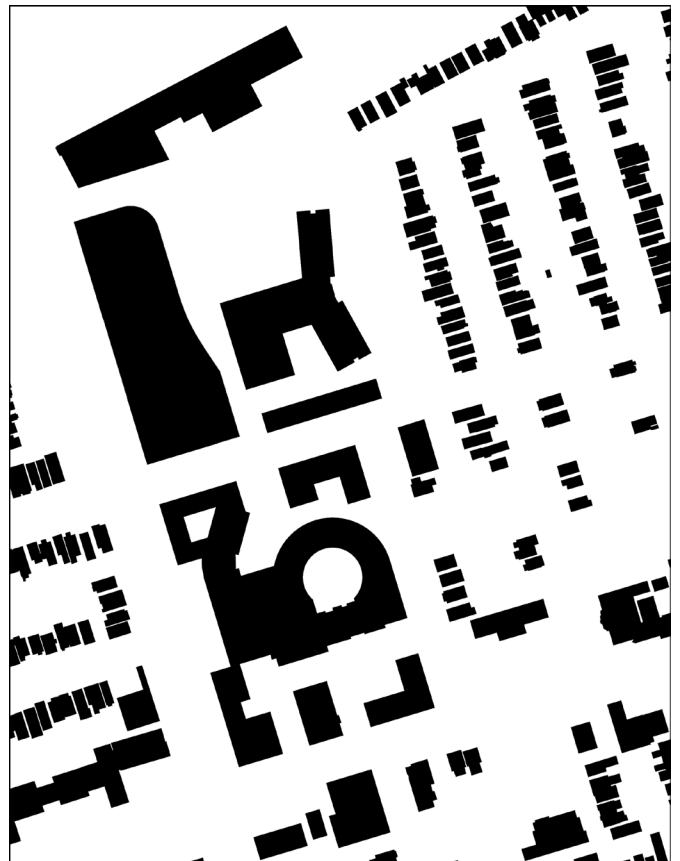
4.34 Existing:

Built Form

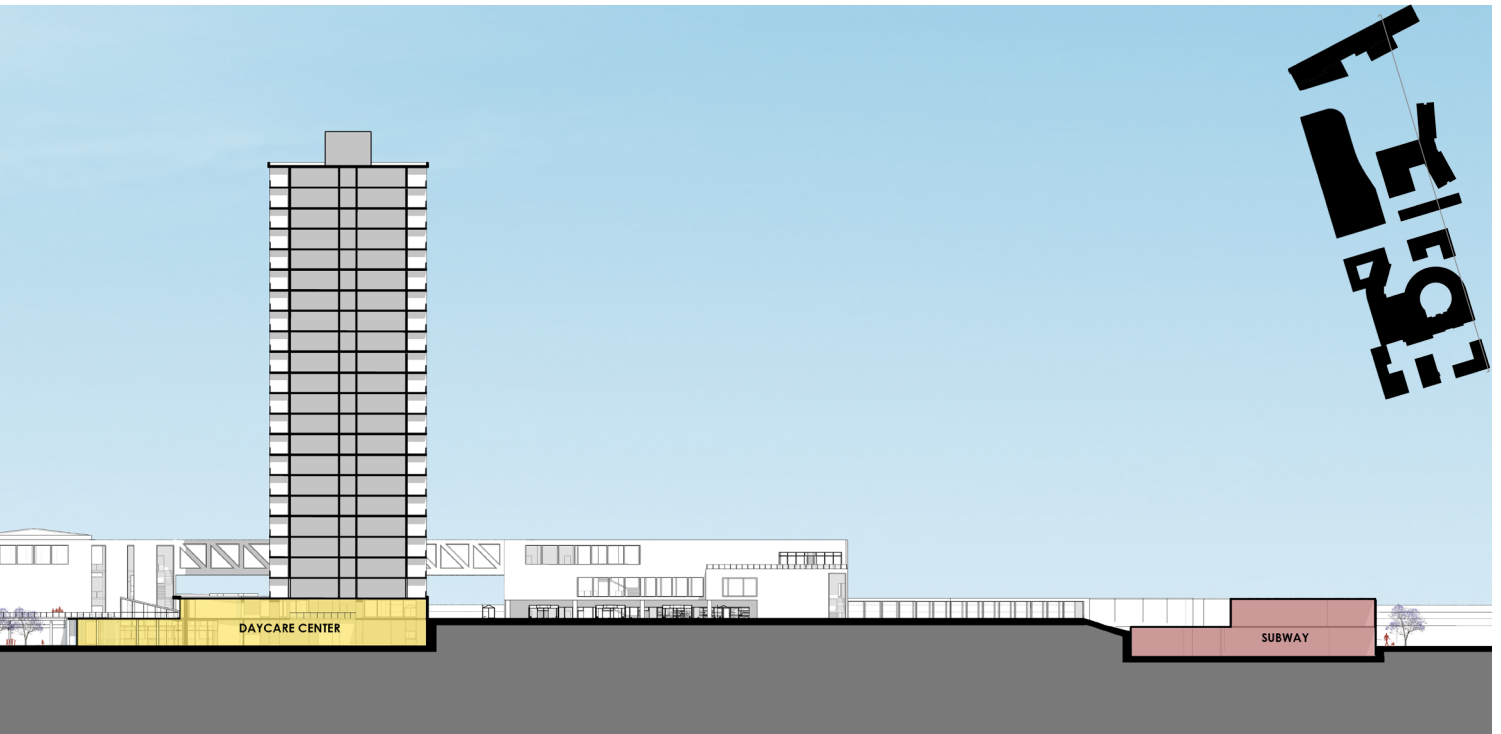


4.35 Proposed:

Built Form







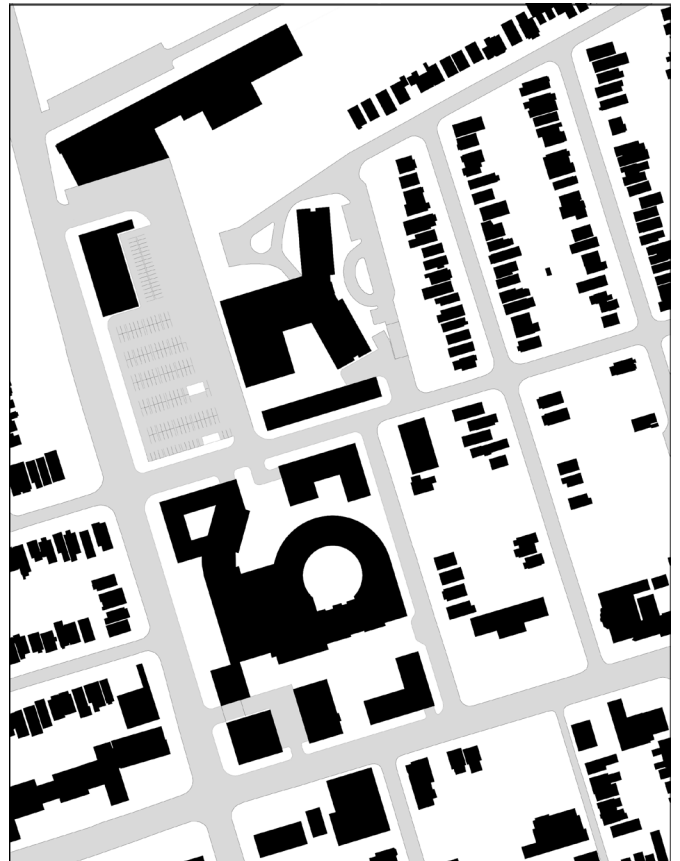
**4.36 Existing:**

Street Network



**4.37 Proposed:**

Street Network



#### 4.38 Existing:

Pedestrian Network



#### 4.39 Proposed:

Pedestrian Network



Numerous urban design strategies and have been implemented throughout the project to achieve the key principles set out in the previous chapter:

#### **Connectivity:**

The market plaza, which is situated next to the subway station, is conveniently located so it can be accessed easily by commuters as well as the residents of the towers alike. Also, by providing improved pedestrian and cycling networks throughout the site, the neighbourhood's walkability has significantly improved. This not only generates a greater sense of community but also benefits the local businesses and services as they will have increased exposure to potential consumers. Additionally, through the creation of a street wall which is permeable at the ground level and contains retail spaces or amenities such as a youth centre or community kitchen, the street becomes activated as pedestrians began to utilise the services provided. This creates vibrancy in the public realm while also encouraging residents and visitors to interact with each other.

### **Economic Opportunities:**

The zoning and program layout of the site was designed to create a network of economic growth and resilience. The zoning was carefully thought through in relation to physical site factors such as topography and the need for vehicular access in the production zone for delivery of required materials and goods. By placing the production workshops at the lowest level at grade, easy vehicular access was achieved. Also, by placing the production and learning workshops on the interior of the site, the exterior edge along the arterial roads was free to be used for retail and exhibition spaces which means increased exposure and easy access to prospective consumers. Finally, by forming a cyclic system, both physically and through program layout, between training, production, marketing, and innovation, a framework for producing economic stability and resilience is attained.

### **Establishment of an Identity:**

A strong sense of belonging is generated through provision of spaces which are flexible and allow users to manipulate their surroundings to their needs thus, empowering and enabling them to transform spaces into an identity of the neighbourhood. An example is the retail market which contains customizable kiosks. In addition, the Market Plaza, Public Square, and Performance Plaza are public stages for celebrations and festivals of cultural events allowing peoples heritages to be shared and enjoyed with the wider community and mark a place within the multicultural fabric of the City of Toronto.

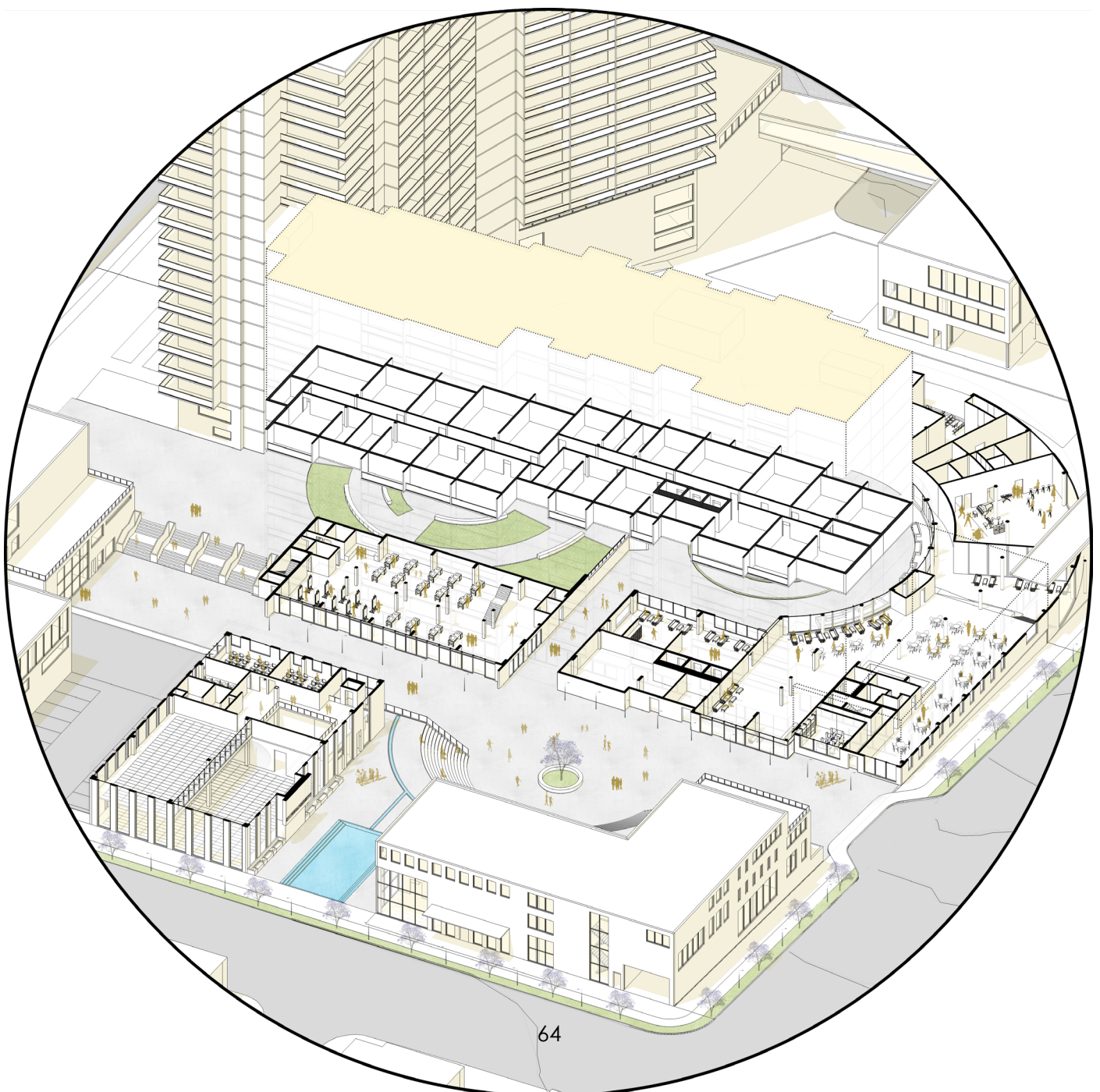
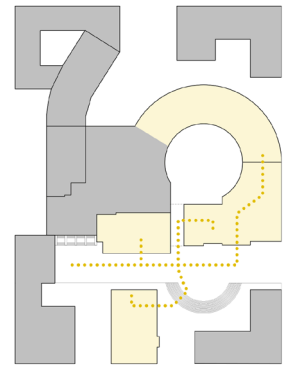
### **Integrated Network of Open Public Spaces:**

Sensitive infill massing is used to frame the larger open spaces on-site producing smaller interior courtyards that can be used as playgrounds and breakout spaces for personnel working on site. Larger public spaces such as the Market Plaza and Performance Plaza are located in areas where there is potential for more significant gatherings. By providing a selection of public open spaces which are linked together through pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure, the neighbourhood is able to accommodate the needs of a diverse community. It becomes an area which is welcoming, populated with lively street character and attractive to both, the local inhabitants and the broader society.

To further describe these principles, the following series of diagrams have been created, highlighting particular routes and spaces that several types of people would frequent. They attempt to convey the feel and atmosphere of the different spaces and activities that residents and visitors will experience as they journey through the site.

#### 4.40 Journeying Through the Site: The Child

This diagram is an attempt to describe the experience that a child could have growing up in a well-integrated, socially inclusive and diverse tower neighbourhood. Living within a Muslim community it is common practice that the child would have to go to Arabic classes on the weekend like many of his friends and so he wakes up in the morning and walks to the local mosque where the madrasa is located. After class, everyone walks down to the amphitheatre steps and there they sit while trying to decide what they want to do for the day. They can play cricket or tag in the street or go to the art studio or the youth centre or the library. The choices are limitless.





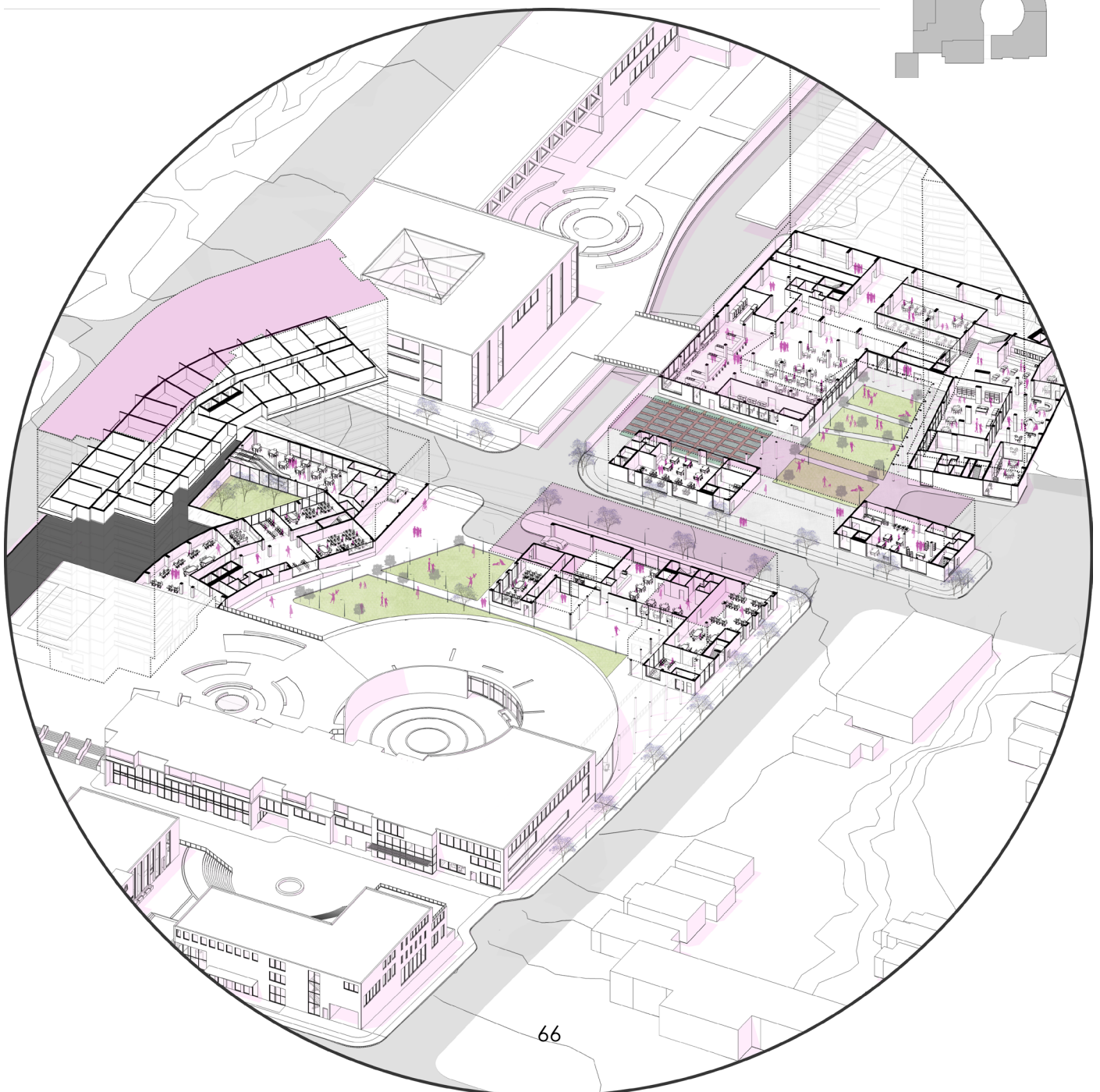
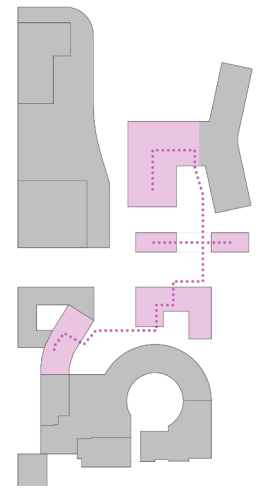
4.41 (Above) A representation of the type of activities and atmosphere a child will experience when playing outside

In its current existing conditions, the possibility of a mother allowing her child to play outside by the apartment tower is very unlikely. There is no playground or vehicular free streets for a child to play safely in and there is very limited activity on the street due to the poor quality of public realm.

Ground plane permeability and vibrant street character is essential in creating an engaging and enticing public realm and the design proposal addresses this by creating a pedestrian-only street below the residential tower which has amphitheatre steps that connect to the local mosque as well as the public library, allowing residents easy access to these programs while also providing an outdoor public gathering space where residents and visitors can play, interact and socialise. Furthermore, a youth centre has been integrated into the base of the tower which provides various activities and events for the youth to enjoy and learn from. Additionally, by providing balconies and windows which look out onto the streets, engagement is created among the pedestrians on the streets and the users within the building thus, creating a safer neighbourhood due to increased 'eyes upon the street'.

#### 4.42 Journeying Through the Site: The Mother

This diagram represents the experience a mother can have. On a weekday, she wakes up, sends the children to school and then heads off to work at the textile and crafts production workshops which are located at the base of the residential tower, across the inner courtyard in the Fashion Studio and across the street in the Crafts Bar. There are various breakout spaces within the workshops to sit and relax during lunch breaks as well as an outdoor inner courtyard, to be used during beautiful summer days. Once the day is over, the children are home and all the chores are complete, the mother can walk over to the community kitchen to participate in an ongoing event or just to socialise, relax and engage with other members of the community.





4.43 (Above) A representation of the type of activities and atmosphere a mother will experience when walking to the community kitchen

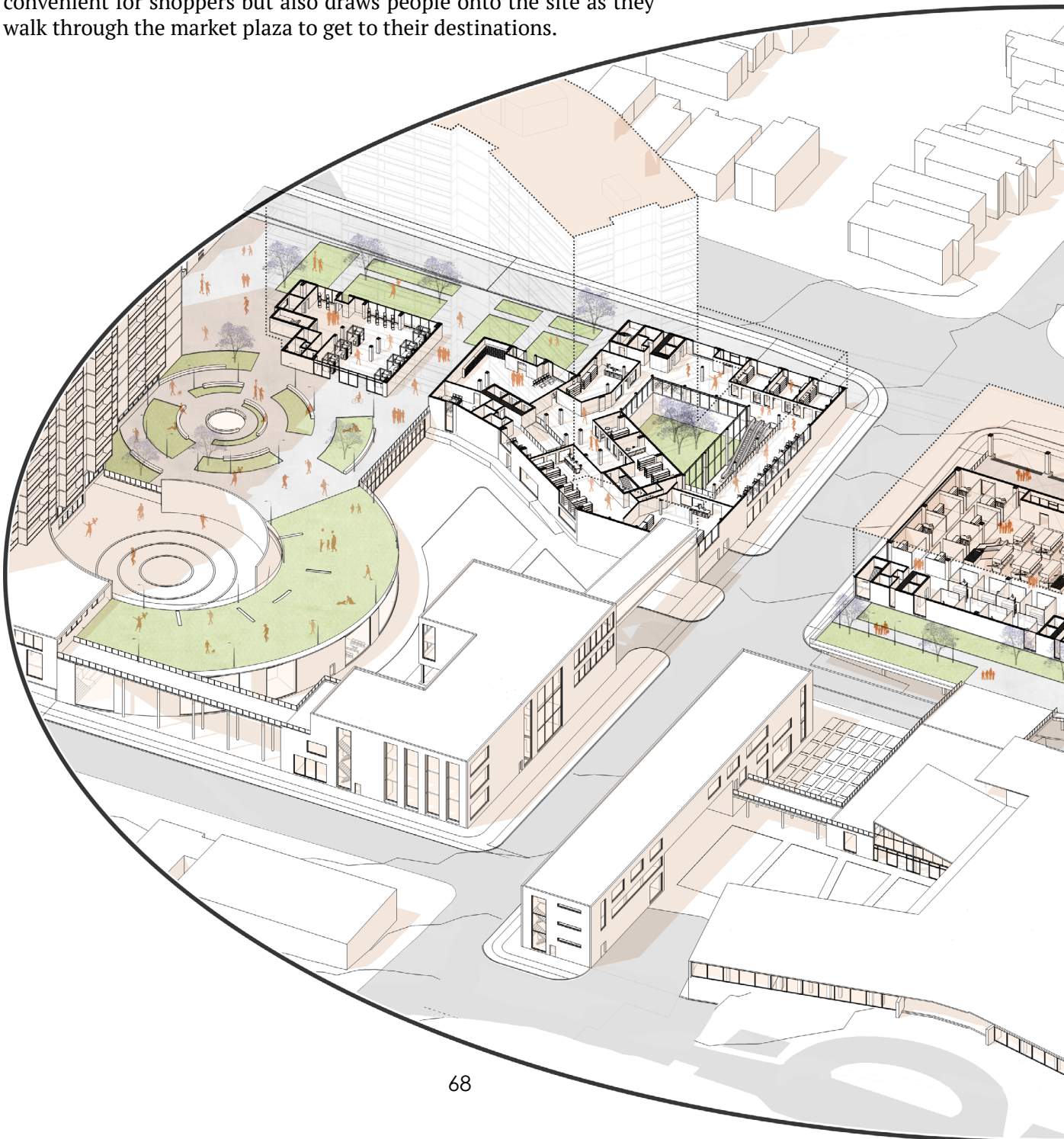
The mother is an important character to cater to when designing space for a community. They are the individuals who spend the most time living in the community and in the towers as they are most often the home caretakers within the family. Currently, within these towers are a multitude of different activities that are taking place in the apartments within because people are unable to afford or find space close to home to conduct their small businesses such as beauty parlours, tailoring services, day care services, food catering services etc. This means their sole form of marketing is word-of-mouth and most probably only members of the community they live in know about it.

However, by providing spaces on site such as retail shops, day care facilities, a community kitchen and live/work spaces, they are able to share their business with the wider society and their scope of success and reaching economic stability is greatly enhanced because they are able to cater to a much larger group of potential users. Within a community that is struggling to gain a foothold in the economic field these opportunities are of great significance. Finally, by creating an environment which is beautiful and vibrant with animated streets and numerous opportunities for social interaction, a strong united community can be nurtured and this can be welcoming for new Canadians when they initially arrive as they are able to turn to their neighbours for support when needed.

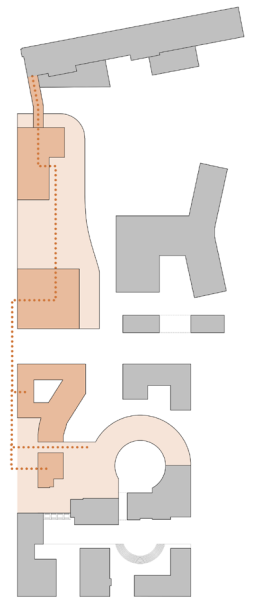
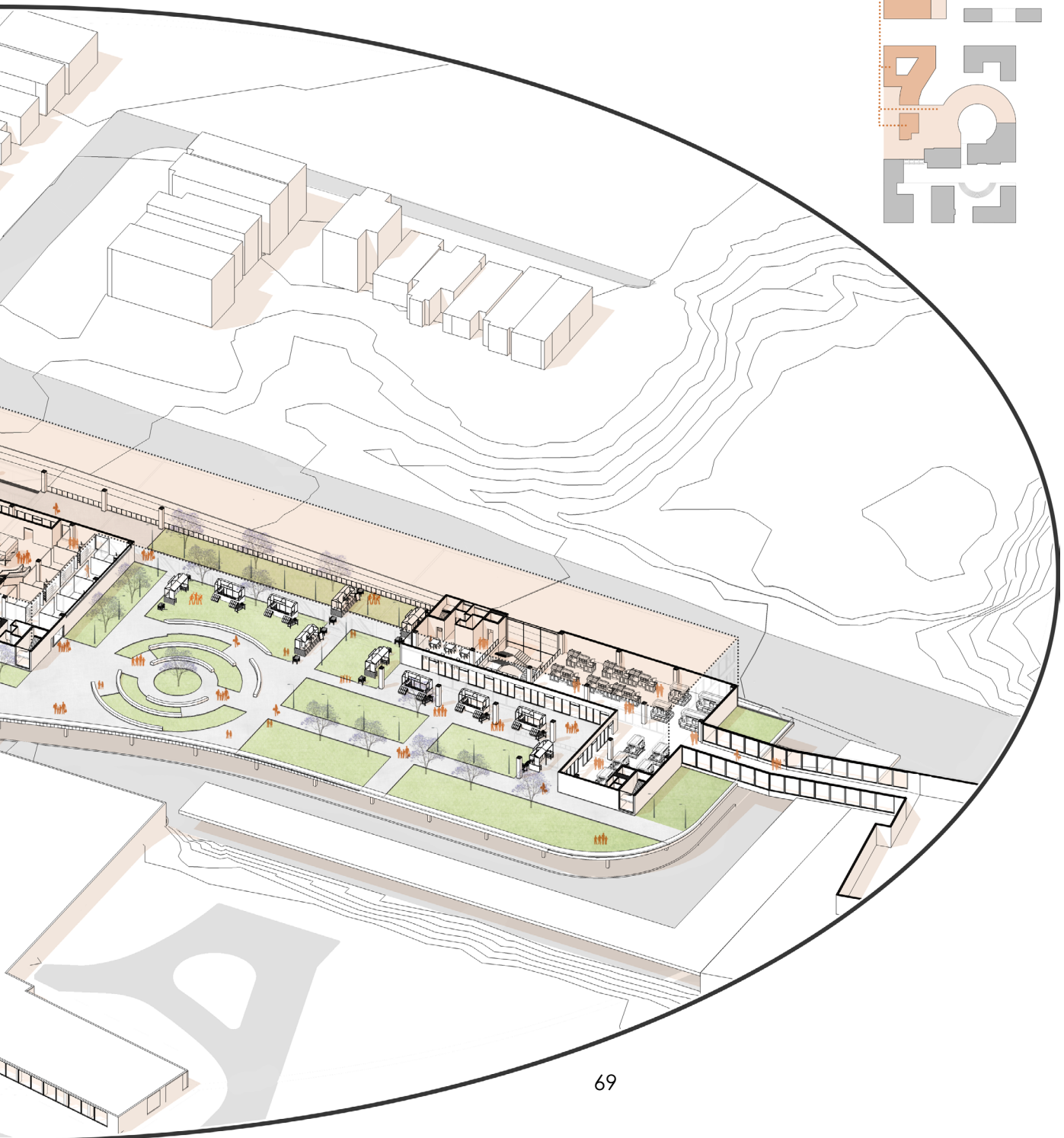
#### 4.44 Journeying Through the Site: The Visitor

A visitor in this scenario is defined as someone who does not reside in the residential towers on site. The diagram below highlights the activities and spaces which would appeal to a person who is just passing through. Today, if a person was to come to this location, they would just walk along Victoria Park Ave. with nothing to engage them or even notice that they are walking by an entire community of thousands. The design proposal attempts to address this.

The market place is directly adjacent to the subway which is not only convenient for shoppers but also draws people onto the site as they walk through the market plaza to get to their destinations.









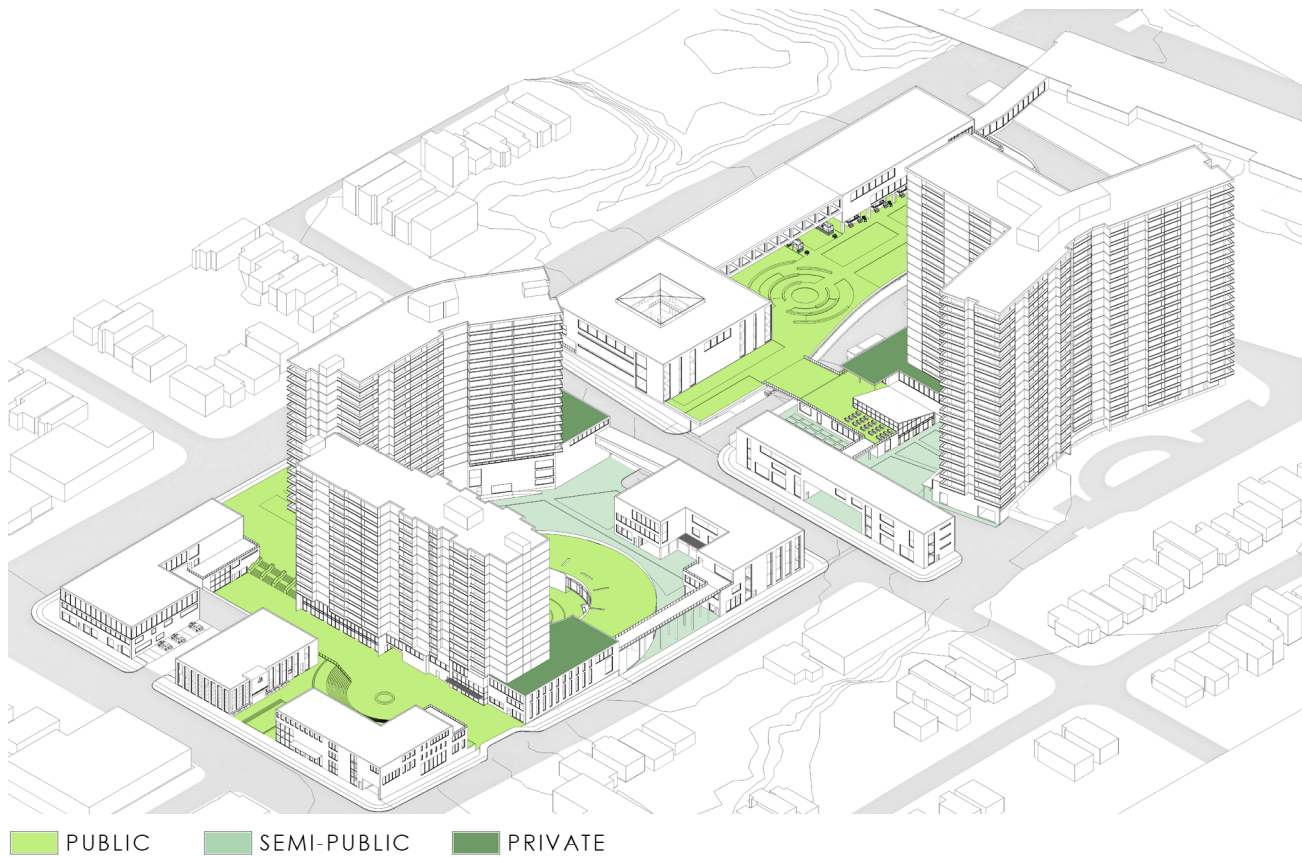
4.45 (Above) A representation of the type of activities and atmosphere a visitor will experience when walking through the market plaza adjacent to the subway



4.46 (Above) A representation of the type of activities and atmosphere a visitor will experience when walking through the neighbourhood during a festival

As they walk through the plaza, they are surrounded by a rich variety of shops and ethnic foods as well as a social public space with seating and green spaces where they can enjoy themselves with friends and family. Furthermore, as they walk along Victoria Park Ave. they are pulled further into the site as they enter the Textiles Market for a different variety of clothing shops or walk into the Public Square which looks over into the Performance Plaza. The visual and physical permeability of the street allows visitors to engage with the site as it gives them glimpses of activities they might find interesting and then choose to investigate further. Finally, the public and commercial activities and enterprises are placed along the west edge of the site with clear accessible points which can be helpful to visitors who are unfamiliar with the area, making them less hesitant to enter an unknown space.

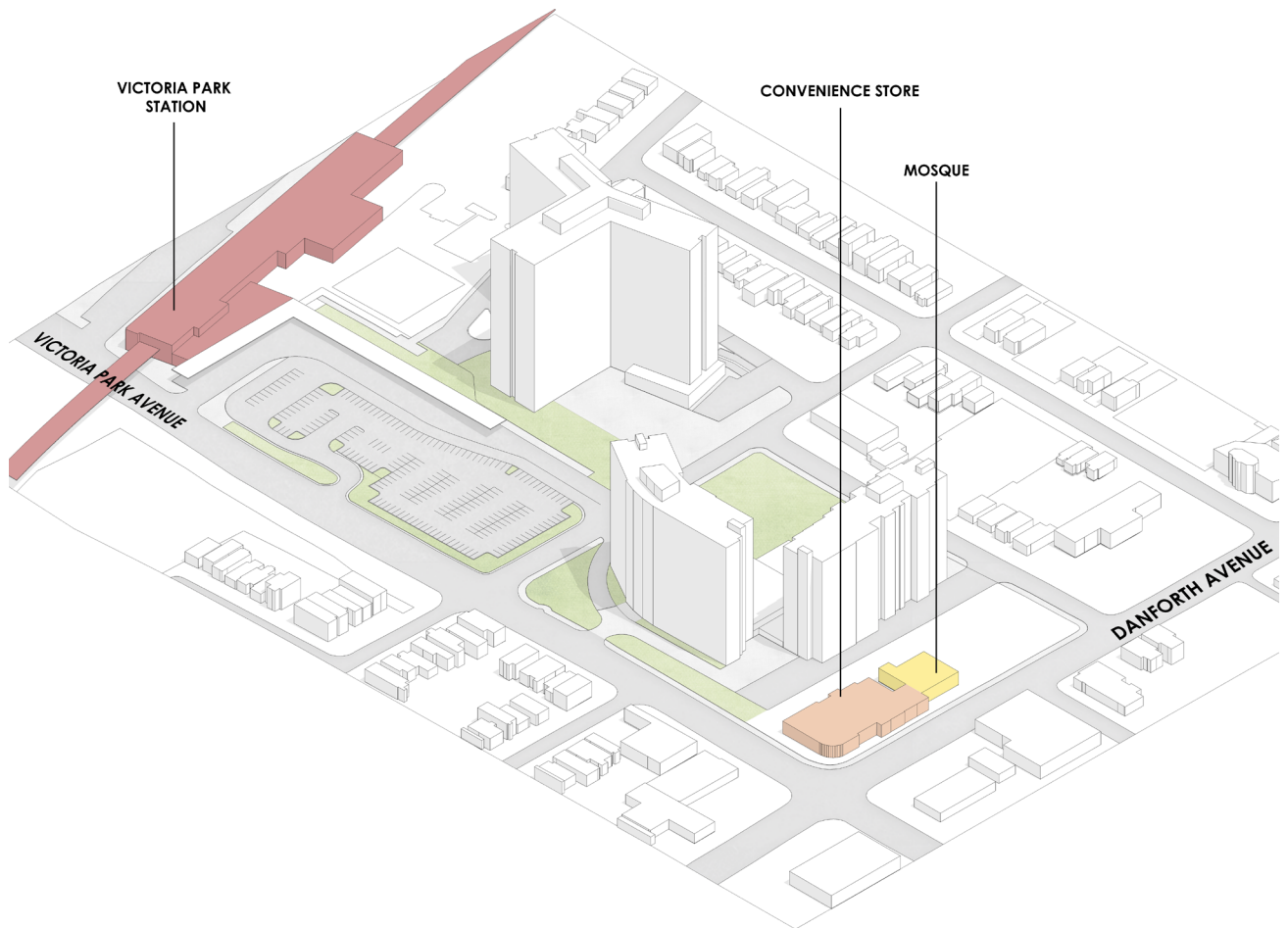
#### 4.47 Network of Opening Gathering Spaces:



Within the network of open gathering spaces there is a hierarchy within which the major public gathering spaces are areas which are designed for the largest groups coming together. These are found in spaces such as the market plaza and the cultural hub; the youth centre, the mosque and public library. These spaces are easily accessible and have strong connectivity through the site to ensure that these spaces remain active and well utilised. The interior courtyards are quieter spaces which are still fully accessible but are designed as playgrounds for children as well as breakout spaces for employees working within the buildings and family and community events. The temporary gathering spaces are spaces such as parking lots which can be transformed to event spaces during festivals. The private gathering spaces are the accessible rooftops of the infill massing which are to be used by the residents only and can become party spaces or even skill labs for community gardening.

Finally, by creating a physical and visual network between the various public gathering spaces a symphony can be envisioned where each space provides the user with a different, tailored experience, ensuring the active engagement of the individual travelling through the neighbourhood while also designing an environment which is cohesively integrated within the wider city fabric but has its own clear identity.

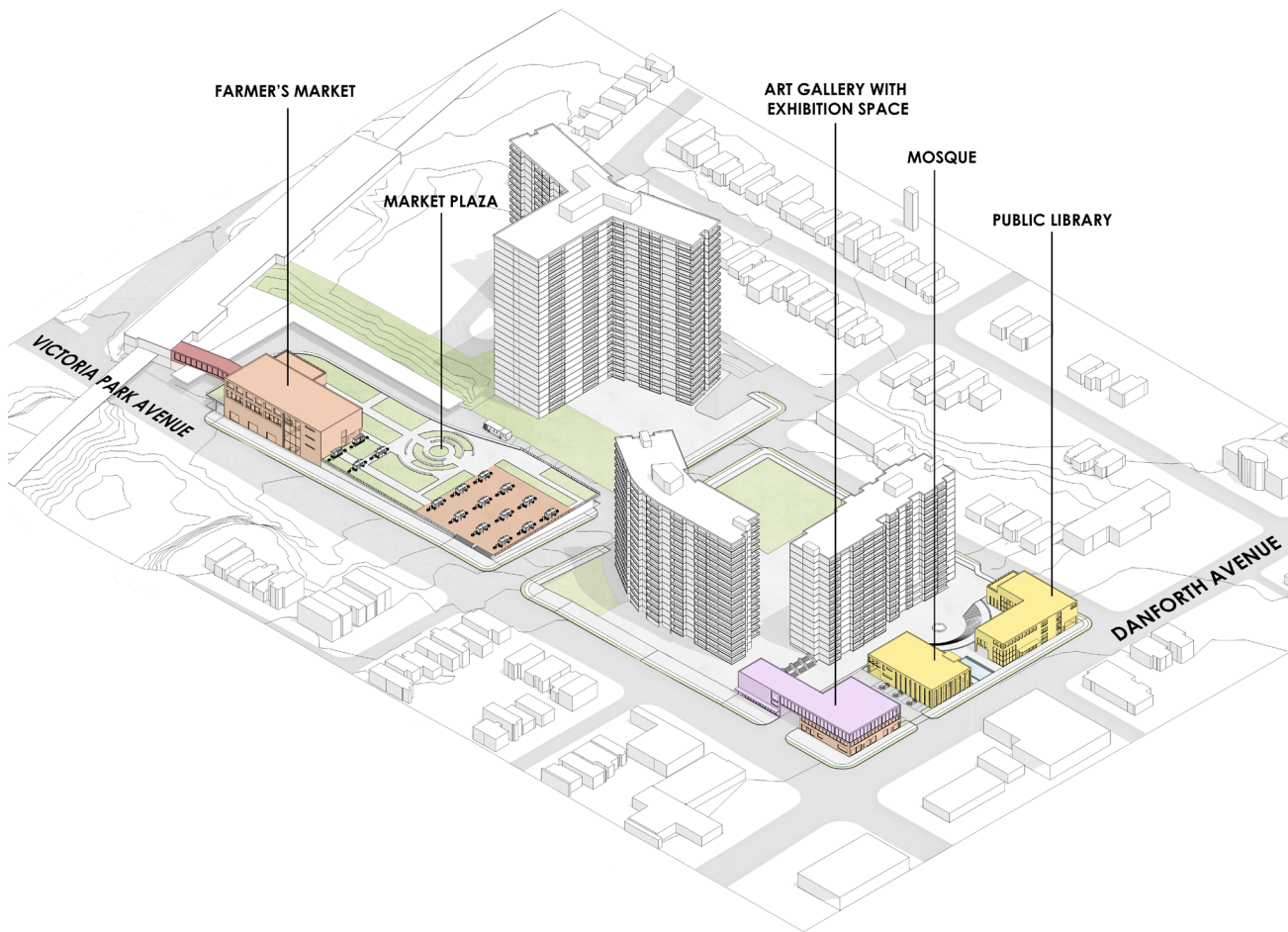
#### 4.48 Incremental Planning: Existing



A very important consideration is the implementation of the project. This large scale urban redevelopment, of an area within a high priority neighbourhood, requires substantial funding, support and collaboration across all levels government as well as local residents, landowners, businesses, social innovators and service providers. It is a vast undertaking which will take many years to come to full fruition and being aware of this allows us to strategically develop the project incrementally over time.

The very initial stage of the design is to form public and private partnerships along with a community organization to identify the needs and wants of the community. Once and design has been completed and approved the implementation process can begin.

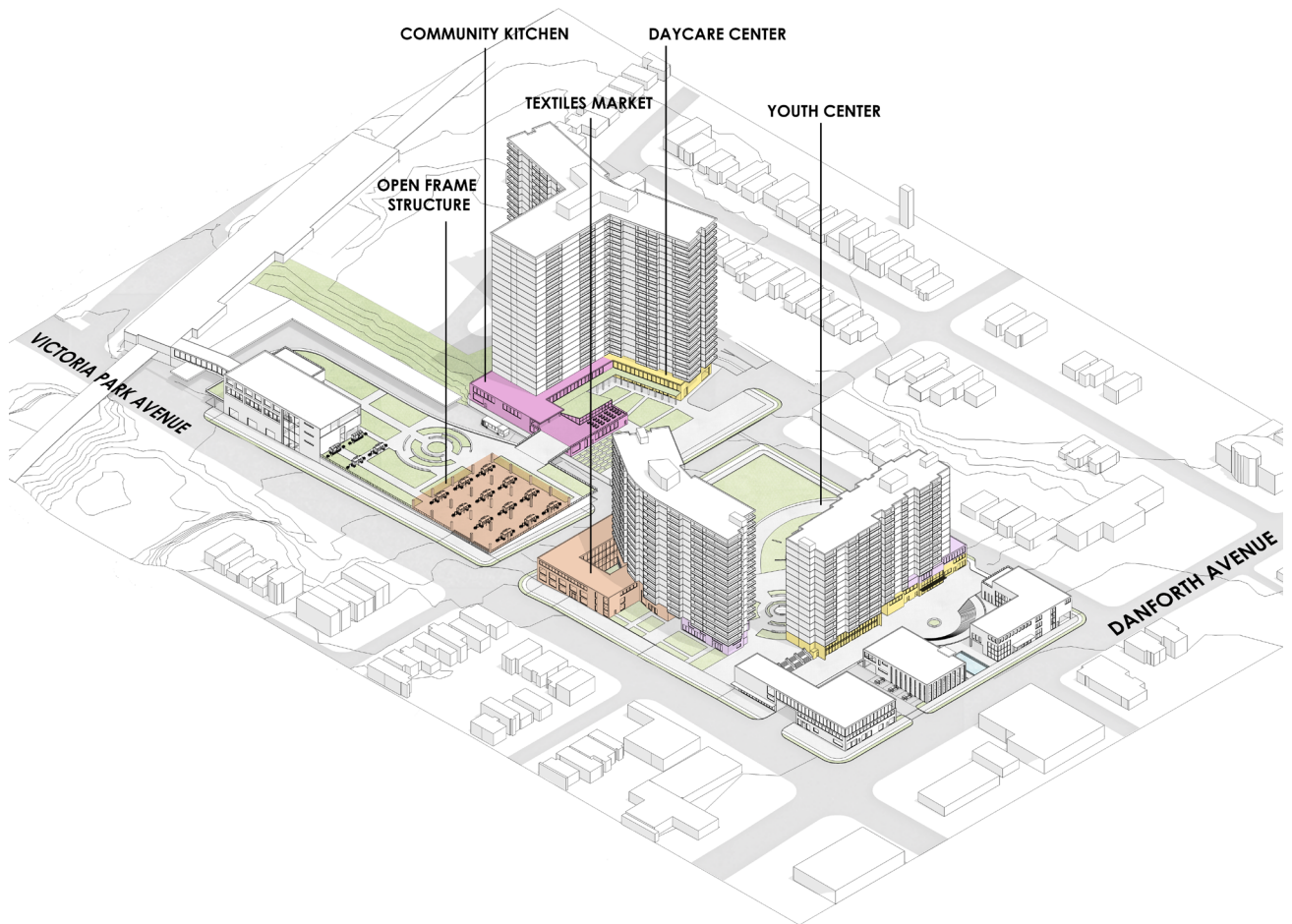
#### 4.49 Incremental Planning: Phase One



4.50 (Above) Initially the market place can be a temporary event with one small structure for the basic necessities such as the Cambridge Farmer's Market which takes place every Saturday of the year.

Phase one of the design proposal implementation focuses on establishing the economic and cultural programming within the neighbourhood as these are interdependent and essential in creating economic resilience within the site. By placing the commercial activities and exhibition spaces, such as the art gallery and convenience store, near areas where there is a gathering of people, such as the mosque or public library, the probability of sales increases. Also, by ensuring that the local economy is able to stabilize itself by providing the residents with a platform, such as the farmer's market, to showcase and implement their creative entrepreneurial skills (which they are presently still engaging in but are hidden within the towers themselves) can encourage future investments into the neighbourhood allowing for further improvements. Finally, developing the commercial activities along the main arterial roads provides easy access to all, encouraging the wider community to use these services.

#### 4.51 Incremental Planning: Phase Two

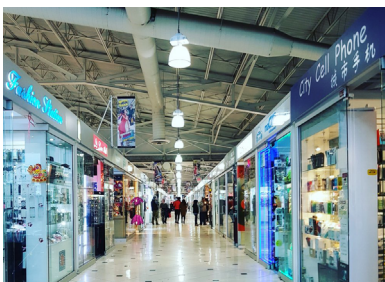
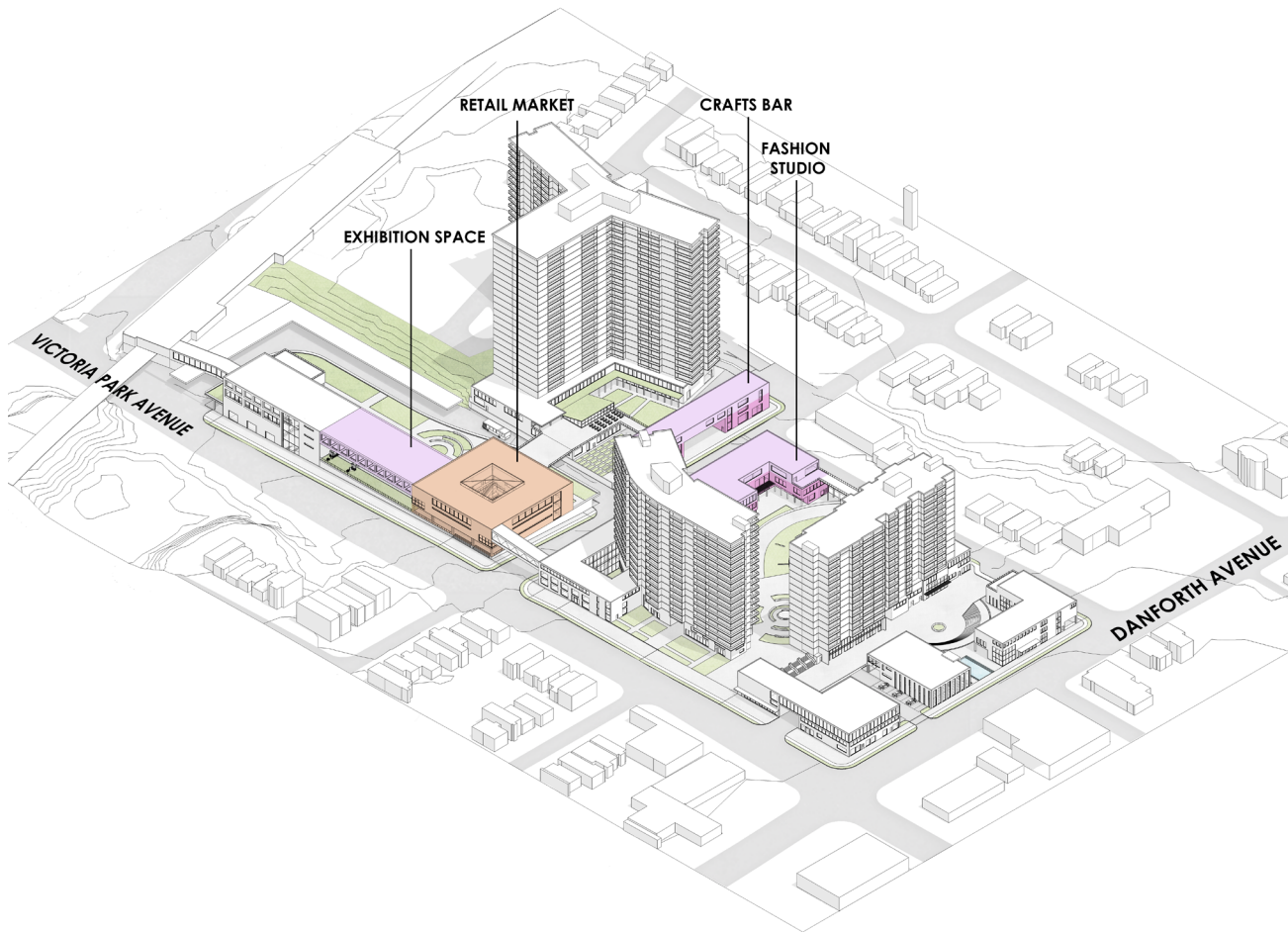


Phase two looks at the towers themselves and attempts to integrate them more physically into the urban fabric of the city. Creating a more permeable façade at the ground level by renovating it to become public retail or amenity spaces while also integrating a network of pedestrian and cycling infrastructure through the towers and interior courtyards will improve the connectivity of tower sites greatly. Additionally, through the design of sensitive infill massing the large open spaces can be framed, creating useful interior courtyard spaces which can be landscaped and used successfully as community gathering spaces as well as spaces which can be transitioned for different uses during different times of the year. Also, the rooftops of these additions can become useable semi-public/private spaces for the tower residents and can also be used for rooftop farming. Furthermore, the market plaza can be further developed by adding a frame structure which can be used to create stalls and small kiosks which are able to stay for a longer period of time depending on the time of year.



4.52 (Above) The Open Air Market in Tower Neighbourhood, East London, UK is an example of a permanent frame structure with flexible stalls within that can be moved and altered according to the users needs

#### 4.53 Incremental Planning: Phase Three



With phase 3 the design proposal implementation is completed. In this phase further infill massing is provided to house growing businesses or the needs of more amenities as the neighbourhood grows and becomes prosperous over time. The new infill is an opportunity for the entrepreneurs, for example, the women who are involved in the garments and textiles sector, to come together and work under one roof, creating light industry as well as a space for social interaction and cultural exchange. The market plaza in this phase can be taken to its completion by creating a much more permanent structure which still allows for flexibility but can incorporate more amenities and services for the residents and the wider community.

4.54 (Above) The Pacific Mall in Markham, Ontario, Canada is an example of a flexible market space but with a much more substantial structure.





# CHAPTER 5

## CONCLUSION

## CONCLUSION

With forty-seven percent<sup>1</sup> of its population consisting of immigrants, the City of Toronto is one of the most multicultural and multiracial cities in the world and a prime immigration destination. Today, however, the process of settlement and integration in contemporary Toronto is more difficult for recent immigrants than it was for those arriving in previous decades<sup>2</sup>. Studying the residential patterns of newly settled immigrants, it is seen that often, unable to afford housing in the City, they settle in the postwar residential towers in the inner suburbs. Unfortunately, these areas are isolated and underserved and pose numerous challenges for newcomers, including access to public transport, employment, healthcare, economic opportunities, and community services. In a metropolitan city such as Toronto, where a substantial proportion of the population are recent immigrants, the question of successful integration of these individuals and families becomes very important for the prosperity of the City's economy as well as the social and cultural atmosphere of the neighborhoods and communities.

This thesis explores how the built environment can positively influence the process of integration for New Canadians. The design proposal creates a vibrant and diverse urban environment which promotes economic opportunities, social acceptance, engagement and cross-cultural exchange among inhabitants of these residential apartment towers and the larger society, through the leveraging of cultural capacities, within the community, for socio-economic empowerment. The site chosen for the application of this thesis is a low-income neighborhood in the Toronto suburb of Scarborough named Oakridge, as it embodies the characteristics of many of the current recent immigrant reception areas throughout the City. One such dominating characteristic is that it is an ethnic neighborhood or 'ethnoburb' with the dominant ethnicity being Bangladeshi. Other defining characteristics of this area is the poor public realm due to limited businesses and activities, underutilized open spaces which are void and provide no benefits to its users and lack of supports and services for new immigrants. However, this area is unique in the aspect that it has good transit connectivity, including the Victoria Park subway station which is easily accessible to the residential towers on site. These factors provide both challenges and opportunities for developing an economically resilient, healthy, and socially and culturally inclusive community.

Through the selection and analysis of several national and international case studies, four key principles have been derived

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1 Statistics Canada, 2016 Census: Housing, Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity, Aboriginal peoples (Toronto: City of Toronto, 2017), accessed September 10 2019, <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/8ca4-5.-2016-Census-Backgrounder-Immigration-Ethnicity-Housing-Aboriginal.pdf>.

2 Paul Anisef and Michael. Lanphier, *The World in a City* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

that can help create tower neighborhoods that are prosperous and successfully integrated into the City:

- 1     **Connectivity:**  
Increasing walkability within the neighborhood by creating connections via pedestrian and bicycling networks
- 2     **Economic Opportunities:**  
establishing a network for economic growth through strategic placement of programs and services
- 3     **Establishment of an Identity:**  
providing spaces which are flexible and can be appropriated to the needs of the community by the local residents
- 4     **Integrated Network of Open Public Spaces:**  
designing a variety of open public spaces, ranging in size and atmosphere that provide a platform for social interaction, cross-cultural exchange, and community engagement

The proposed design demonstrates how each of these principles can be implemented within an existing tower neighborhood to enhance the lives of its residents, and the wider community, positively through the creation of a vibrant and cohesive environment.

Finding a solution to the limited economic opportunities available to the inhabitants of this community is a driving factor in the design approach. In my investigations into the community that resides within these residential towers, I met with the leader of a grassroots organization named South Asian Women's Rights Organization (SAWRO). They are a community-based and community-led association of immigrant women living in the neighborhood of Oakridge, and since 2007, SAWRO has worked for the empowerment and integration of immigrant women and the reduction of poverty within the community<sup>3</sup>. I was informed that one of the primary reasons for the economic instability faced by many within this community is the inability to gain a foothold in the economic field. Underemployment has been identified as the root cause of the community's low-income status, and as such, it becomes an important issue to address.

The design proposal leverages the cultural capacities of the community (the knowledge and skills that many Bangladeshi residents have on textiles, crafts, and food) for economic empowerment. This is achieved by establishing a network of spaces within the site which allows for the cyclic relationship between training, production, marketing, and innovation to create a system of economic growth and resilience.

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3     "Who We Are," SAWRO, accessed September 10, 2019, <https://sawro.wordpress.com/who-we-are/>.

Furthermore, by placing each program strategically on the site in relation to visibility, accessibility, topography, and climate, the design maximizes exposure of commercial activities and exhibition spaces to the broader community by placing them along the arterial roads (Victoria Park Ave. & Danforth Ave.) and next to the subway station (Victoria Park Station), while providing production workshops, training spaces and innovation hubs at the base of the residential towers and on the interior of the site. These create live/workspaces which are easily accessible to residents, and they are also physically connected to the commercial spaces, such as the Farmer's Market & Textiles Market, via ramps and bridges to allow easy transport of goods from production to market. Additionally, by providing spaces for businesses, light industry, and community amenities, at the base of the apartment towers, it creates an active environment and engaging public realm that nurtures constant interactions within the community, allowing stronger bonds to be created to build a more inclusive, diverse and vibrant neighborhood.

Also, the proposed design aims to socially and culturally integrate the community into the larger society through the provision of a cohesive network of open public spaces. Placing the major public gathering spaces such as the Market Plaza, Public Square, and Performance Plaza, adjacent to the commercial activities and exhibition spaces on site, invites and encourages the use of these spaces by the wider society and reduces the segregation and isolation currently experienced by the residents of the towers. Moreover, the design capitalizes on the relationship between cultural institutions such as the Mosque, Public Library, and the Youth Centre and connecting public space. These platforms for social and cultural engagement provide opportunities for interaction and cross-cultural exchange, and it enables this community to become celebrated for its culture and recognized within the multicultural fabric of Toronto. This empowers the local residents by providing them with a sense of acceptance and belonging while also creating a rich, dynamic, and lively ground plane. Also, through the use of sensitive urban infill, the underutilized open spaces surrounding the towers are activated by defined street edges and interior courtyards spaces which can be used for community events and as playgrounds for children.

Finally, the design proposal illustrates the potential that an 'ethnoburb' has if it is well integrated into the urban fabric and has the appropriate supports and services required by newcomers. It becomes a welcoming and supportive environment for recent immigrants to begin their journey. Not only are they able to take advantage of the economic opportunities available to them within close proximity to their homes, but they are also surrounded by a culturally familiar community. The community can provide the mental and emotional support, needed by many newcomers, to reduce stress levels and adverse health impacts that the process of immigration

and settlement can have. While the design proposal attempts to demonstrate the potentials an existing tower neighborhood has to become a complete, healthy, cohesive community and a thriving 'arrival city' for recent immigrants, its level of resolution is limited by the ambitious scope and complexity of issues it takes on, beyond the disciplinary boundaries of architecture and beyond the scope of a master's thesis. This work is just the first iteration of a vision for an economically sustainable, socially cohesive reception area for New Canadians. Further development is required through extensive site and planning studies and community participation.

It should also be understood that a community cannot be created through architecture. The sense of community is intangible and defined by the members of the group. However, architecture and the built environment can support a community by providing infrastructure and programming that encourages economic resilience and social cohesion and mitigates segregation and isolation, and this is what the thesis has attempted to illustrate. Additionally, there is a multitude of questions that surface in regards to public and private property and scope of design when proposing urban infill. There are numerous stakeholders that need to work together effectively including the government, city planners, architects, the community, landowners, developers, local businesses and enterprises, social innovators and service providers to name a few. Other questions that remain unanswered are the social and political aspects of perception and policies related to this topic that are unable to be addressed through architectural intervention.

If immigration truly is the future of the City of Toronto, and we are aware of the spatial patterns of recent immigrants, it becomes vital to look into these areas and ensure that they are well equipped to accommodate and support these newcomers to allow them to integrate into their new surroundings successfully. Individuals and families that have chosen to migrate to a new country have done so because they hope to improve their lives and thus, they are motivated to make the best of any opportunities that are available to them. Consequently, if the area in which they arrive is welcoming, socially and culturally engaging, and provides economic opportunities, these new Canadians will soon become active citizens within the Canadian economy and together, the City and the newcomers will prosper.



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