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Taking Flight: An Independent Living Facility for Emancipated Foster Youth

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TAKING FLIGHT

an independent
living facility for
emancipated
foster youth

Design should be thoughtful, people-focused and inclusive.

Design should respond to its surroundings and contextual history.

Design should promote mental and physical well-being for the occupant.

Design should foster collaboration and community, prioritizing warmth over institutionalism.

Design should make the next generation feel valued and uplifted.

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RESEARCH

abstract

motivation

Many of us think about foster care in the context of younger children removed from home. However, little thought is given to youth that age out of the foster care system and the associated challenges and risks they face, namely in the area of housing.

Youth in foster care often receive minimal support in making the transition to independence and are frequently forced into instant adulthood. They are faced with an abrupt end of support at a time when they have not yet mastered the educational, social, or economic survival skills necessary to be independent in the community (Haas, Allen, Amoah, 2014).

Additionally, youth lose the formal support of the child welfare system when transitioning from out-of-home care to adulthood, contributing to difficulties finding safe and affordable housing (Daining & DePanfilis, 2007).

problem

Youth who transitioned from out-of-home care are at great risk of serious negative outcomes, including underemployment, low educational attainment, homelessness, early parenthood, criminal activity and mental health problems such as depression and psychological distress (Daining & DePanfilis, 2007).

These risks are exacerbated if youth exit care prior to age 19. In the United States, roughly 20,000 youth are emancipated from foster care annually and are not reunited with families (Kushel, Yen, Gee, & Courtney, 2007).

Strong social support is essential for youth transitioning out of the foster care system; yet many find that these needs are unmet at the time of their exit from care (Nesmith & Christophersen, 2014).

Interior design has the opportunity to establish a model for Independent Living facilities based on the needs of emancipated foster youth, and to do so in a way that inspires a sense of community, connectedness, and family, setting foster youth up for a successful transition into adulthood.

Research reveals scant information about the design of these types of facilities, in particular those designed for youth aging out of care.

methods

In order to fill in the gaps on this design issue and establish criteria for this type of facility, interviews have been conducted with a foster youth currently residing in an Independent Living program, as well as a current foster parent and a social case worker.

Conversations have also taken place with Fostering Acadia, the largest Independent Living Facility in Virginia, revealing the importance of personalization of residences.

Shopworks Architects has been interviewed to establish knowledge on trauma-informed design principles, as many foster youth are managing depression and anxiety due to their history of housing instability and other negative life experiences.

Shopworks Architects' Laurel House project in Grand Junction, CO, as well as David Baker Architects' Bayview Hill Gardens project in San Francisco are two precedents that have been studied to understand housing for both teenagers and the formerly homeless.

Dr. Rachel Rosenberg, Child Welfare Research Scientist at Child Trends, the nation's leading research organization focused exclusively on improving the lives of children and youth, has been interviewed due to her expertise on the specific issue of youth aging out of foster care.

results

Research indicates preparation for self-sufficiency is enhanced by the provision of several supports. These services include job readiness, educational support and tutoring, time and money management skills, career pathway exploration, access to community resources, parenting education and skills development, and education about sexual health and family planning (Daining & DePanfilis, 2007). Mental health resources are also of significant priority for foster youth.

As the planned programming of an Independent Living facility aims to meet these needs for youths' successful transition, it should do so with trauma-informed design in mind.

Trauma-informed design is defined as creating uniquely-designed space where all users feel a sense of safety, respect, connection and community, control, dignity, and joy (Shopworks Architecture, 2020, p. 4).

conclusion

There are over 5,500 children in foster care in Virginia, over half of which are ten years and older. Virginia is currently ranked 50th in the nation for the worst discharge from foster care (Foster VA, 2020).

The design of an interior centered on temporary independent living, financial literacy education, career and college application counseling, mentorship and transportation access might aid in the successful transition of older foster youth.

The facility will be designed in a 14,000 sq ft multi-story building in a mid-Atlantic city of 50,000. Programming will focus on temporary 1-3 year placements for 18-21-year-old foster youth.

Ideally, the proposed Independent Living facility would serve as vehicle for emancipated foster youths' transition to adulthood, as well as a means to re-frame youths' idea of home and promote healing.

To achieve these goals, this model would work to balance several dichotomies through design and programming, namely choice versus dictation, privacy versus supervision, support versus independence, and personalization versus pervasiveness.

research

identifying the problem

Many of us think about foster care in the context of younger children removed from home. However, little thought is given to youth that age out of the foster care system and the associated challenges and risks they face, namely in the area of housing. Youth in foster care often receive minimal support in making the transition to independence and are frequently forced into instant adulthood. They are faced with an abrupt end of support at a time when they have not yet mastered the educational, social, or economic survival skills necessary to be independent in the community (Haas, Allen, Amodh, 2014). Youth who transitioned from out-of-home care are at great risk of serious negative outcomes, including underemployment, low educational attainment, homelessness, early parenthood, criminal activity and mental health problems such as depression and psychological distress (Daining & DePanfilis, 2007). These risks are exacerbated if youth exit care prior to age 19. In the United States, roughly 20,000 youth are emancipated from foster care annually

and are not reunited with families (Kushel, Yen, Gee, & Courtney, 2007). More than 50% experience homelessness, unstable housing, or an episode of homelessness, especially during the 18 months following emancipation. Adding additional hurdles to the transition from foster care to adulthood, youth lose the formal support of child welfare when transitioning from out-of-home care, contributing to difficulties finding safe and affordable housing (Daining & DePanfilis, 2007). In the state of Virginia, this government subsidy (called *Fostering Futures*) ends at age 21. In other states throughout the US, child welfare is extended to age 23. Virginia is making improvements, but still ranks 50th in the nation for the worst discharge rate from the foster care system (Foster VA, 2020). Virginia's child welfare system is also county-administered, which lends itself to additional red tape and lost communication that can create gaps in care when youth cross jurisdictions (Rosenberg, 2021).

current measures

While *Fostering Futures* provides financial assistance to foster youth who commit to an agreed-upon pursuit of education and employment, the stipends can also be used to fund housing and services at Independent Living facilities for a select number of youth that opt to take this route. When participating in an Independent Living program, foster youth sign over their *Fostering Futures* stipend. The Independent Living program also receives additional funding from the state, which is especially important as the *Fostering Futures* stipend in Virginia is roughly \$700 per month and not enough for the foster youth to live from. Typically, the Independent Living program will oversee the lease of an apartment, pay utilities and give back a percentage to the youth weekly as a grocery and necessity allowance to help them budget. Mandated therapy and doctor appointment requirements are relaxed, but relationships with case workers

are maintained for safety purposes and the program typically has higher goals for youth (saving money, obtaining a drivers license, maintaining employment, finishing education). Ultimately, Independent Living programs and *Fostering Futures* is a trade-off. Many choose to forgo *Fostering Futures* and thus option an Independent Living placement, as they are no longer interested in following mandates set for them by adults and maintaining a social worker relationship through the Department of Social Services (Campbell, 2021).

There are conflicting reports on Independent Living programs. Research suggests that those offered under the Foster Care Independence Act are not effective, with youth reporting they are overly generic and do not provide concrete and specific information that would be useful in procuring services (Bender, K., Yang, J., Ferguson, K., & Thompson, S., 2015). However, a study conducted by child welfare expert Dr.

Rachel Rosenberg suggests that foster youth placed in an Independent Living placement (ILP) had fewer gaps in their occupational prestige (compared to those in their social network) than youth who had not been in an ILP. Youth who were placed in an Independent Living facility were more likely to have formal supports in their network, even if those connections become unavailable to them after leaving that particular placement (Rosenberg, 2018). Dr. Rosenberg elaborated that it is important for these facilities not to read like congregate care (group homes), as many youth have experienced trauma in those settings and carry triggering memories (Rosenberg, 2021).

independent living facilities

Strong social support is essential for youth transitioning out of the system; yet many find these needs are unmet at the time of their exit from foster care (Nesmith & Christophersen, 2014). There is a pressing opportunity to establish a model for Independent Living facilities based on these needs. Interior design has an important role in cultivating a sense of community, connectedness, and home while contributing to the successful transition of emancipated foster youth into adulthood. However, preliminary research has revealed limited information about the design of these types of facilities, particularly those designed for youth aging out of foster care.

In speaking to Rebekah Brown, Permanency Program Director at Fostering Acadia, an Independent Living program in the Richmond, Virginia area, the organization makes a concerted effort to personalize youth residences. These residences are typically established within existing apartment complexes that don't allow for modification to interior architecture, but

Brown cited that personalization of decorative selections based on youth intake forms has been a means for youth to feel a sense of home and assertion of their personal choice (Brown, 2021). For many, this is the first residence that has not been dictated by other adults, whether the foster care family, group home staff, or their biological families.

A conversation with a Fostering Acadia resident, who will remain anonymous, reiterated the importance of having a place of one's own where "no one can throw you out" and you can develop self-reliance without roommates (Anonymous, 2021). While the aforementioned social supports of staff and programming are crucial, he noted that living alone for the first time without the distracting presence of others has allowed for an inward focus on healing from past traumas, and a means for not being the same version of himself when he graduates as he was on move-in day.

charlottesville relevance

As we think about common trauma among youth that have aged out of foster care, we find a strong correlation between housing instability coupled with biological families' reliance on welfare and public housing (Fong, 2017). When investigating an Independent Living facility for Charlottesville, there exist connections to the public housing communities already in the immediate vicinity. In 1965, Charlottesville's largest black neighborhood was razed in the name of urban renewal. Vinegar Hill marked "an era of black prosperity that neither hitherto nor henceforth has been achieved by the black citizens of Charlottesville" (Smith, 2017, p. 1). The public housing substitution provided to many of these former residents, Westhaven, was built in a less vibrant area nearby.

By dismantling African American homes, businesses, and gathering places, the city of Charlottesville left black families isolated and alienated. Social and political institutions withered. Dispersed, they could not organize in their interests or support one another on a wider scale. This lack of community support, whether from a financial standpoint or through the perspective of communal care-taking, is

likely to have led to negative outcomes for families and ultimately interaction with the child welfare system. This hypothesis is supported by Charlottesville's 2019 Foster Care Study, citing that inadequate housing is one of the most common reasons for removal from home (Public Interest Data Lab, 2019, p. 25). Inadequate housing is defined by the study as facilities that are substandard, overcrowded, unsafe or otherwise inadequate. Related to Charlottesville specifically:

"Adequate affordable housing has been a long-running concern in the Charlottesville community, and with regards to children's welfare, seems to be impacting multiracial children in foster care more strongly. This is another reminder that the welfare of children in our community is tied to the health and well-being of our community more broadly. Improving child welfare is not strictly the responsibility of the Department of Social Services, but relies on the collective investment in and services to promote the economic security of all our citizens" (Public Interest Data Lab, 2019, p. 37).

needs of emancipated foster youth

Research indicates preparation for self-sufficiency is enhanced by access to several supports. These services include formal programming for job readiness, educational support (such as tutoring and college application advice), time and money management skills, career pathway exploration, access to community resources, parenting education and skills development, and education about sexual health and family planning (Daining & DePanfilis, 2007). Mental health resources are also of significant priority for foster youth, as many experience depression and anxiety (Campbell, 2021).

While every youth is different, many associate institution and programming with receiving support, and family with being rejected (Revis, 2021). Even "success story" youth that continue on to college do not have a true anchor or sense of belonging that follows them. This can translate to wondering where they might spend a holiday break when they go to college, as well as needing to rely on an Independent Living program to gain knowledge and skills traditionally passed on by a parental figure, such as how to navigate saving for a car, seeking medical care, or dressing for an interview.

proposal

Ideally, the proposed Independent Living facility will be an investment into the Westhaven community and 10th and Page neighborhood, serving as vehicle for emancipated foster youths' transition to adulthood and a means for re-framing their idea of home. Over time, we can hope that the demands on Independent Living facilities would decrease with increased investment in the affected communities most likely to contribute to kids entering foster care. Until then, a model should be explored for how interior design can foster increased autonomy in youth that are learning to stand on their own for the first time.

This model would work to balance several dichotomies through design and programming, namely choice versus dictation, privacy versus supervision, support versus independence, and personalization versus pervasiveness. While interviews reveal that foster youth crave their own private space and that healing can take place in those quieter settings, its also found that common areas can build relationships and are most utilized when staff zones are integrated or nearby. Social areas that provide degrees of engagement where youth can opt in

or out with a sense of safety but not of policing will be paramount. Dictating the location of mail or laundry areas outside of residences is an example of intentionally removing choice to encourage positive outcomes, such as more organic daily check-ins.

The concept behind this choice-driven space should also nod to the history of the Charlottesville site and its marginalized communities, as well as to the King Lumber building itself through materiality and concept. Most importantly, the design should eventually be informed by first-hand lived experiences, input and feedback from emancipated foster youth currently living in or "graduated" from Independent Living facilities.

The design of an Independent Living facility centered on longer-term temporary placement, financial literacy education, career and college counseling, mentorship and access to therapy and transportation aims to aid in the successful transition of older foster youth. The design of said facility, combined with a non-profit office and mentorship center will ultimately encourage self-governance and autonomy in foster youth as they transition to adulthood. Programming

will focus on temporary 1-3-year placements for 18-21-year-old emancipated foster youth, with the scope intentionally narrowed to exclude those that are parents themselves.

Interior design in this type of facility should allow for youth to personalize their living areas and feel ownership of common areas. The core user of this space has predominantly interacted or resided in interiors dictated by others. It is important for spaces not to read like yet another temporary stop on their journey, even if the facility is not their permanent home. Given the housing instability many foster youth have endured, a 1-3 year placement is likely to feel quite long-term to them. The major challenge will be designing a space that honors this and is able to be personalized to the resident despite its eventual transitory nature.

As we think about what the needs are for foster youth in independent residential settings, first impressions are of great significance. When youth walk through the door of their placement, they should feel important, valuable and safe but not policed (Rosenberg, 2021). While the focus of the program will be establishing independent living skills for emancipated

foster youth, the space should also cultivate interaction with mentorship and support spaces that involve other youth and staff. Locating corridors and passages near communal areas is an effective means for encouraging participation in programming (Vestbro, 2020), but as alluded to in the choice versus dictation dichotomy, it must be balanced with creating alternative routes for youth to meander around high-activity zones during instances in which they prefer not to engage with others, such as after a particularly difficult conversation with their social worker or therapist (Shopworks Architecture, 2021, p. 20).

Many foster youth have been let down by adults for much of their life and the Independent Living program requesting therapy attendance may be perceived as a more significant ask of youth if they are required to participate in vulnerable conversations in an unfamiliar setting. This learning gained from interviewing Fostering Acadia suggests the significance of informing programming space for optional therapy resources to meet youth where they are. This would include confidential meeting space with visiting psychologists of the youths' choice,

as well as discreet entry and exit points hidden from peer thoroughfares.

Design of communal space in the facility should encourage interaction and relationship building. This can be investigated through the positioning of circulation near areas of activity, as well as providing a larger community kitchen outside of individual residences. It will be important for communal programming to include areas for private and group studying and tutoring, inclusive of technology access and acoustical privacy. Areas to have approved guests visit and speak to their social and case workers outside of their private residences will also be beneficial. Some lounge and meeting spaces may overlap with more utilitarian spaces, such as the laundry space or mail room previously mentioned. Thinking of the design of these spaces as multi-functional can not only reduce the fear that residents may carry regarding potential theft of their belongings, but also encourage happenstance exchanges.

methods & considerations

Interior design can encourage a sense of community and support for foster youth preparing for transition in many ways. In looking for precedents, it has been important to investigate other communal projects designed specifically for this age group that may not be foster care driven. University dormitory suites and educational gathering spaces are one example; multi-family housing, including low-income housing specific to formerly homeless teenagers, such as the Laurel House in Grand Junction, Colorado, is another.

Most importantly, as the planned programming meets the aforementioned needs of emancipated foster youth for successful transition, it should do so with trauma-informed design in mind. Trauma-informed design is defined as creating uniquely-designed space where all users feel a sense of safety, respect, connection and community, control, dignity, and joy (Shopworks Architecture, 2020, p. 4):

“With a holistic, user-centered, trauma-informed approach to design – one that attends to higher-order needs such as love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization – we can not only prevent and mitigate further harm but actually promote healing.”

There is an unfortunate likelihood that foster youth will experience a secondary trauma while in the foster care system (Brown, 2021). Ultimately, trauma-informed design is not a one-size-fits-all solution and should always incorporate the lived experiences of the end user. This is best achieved through creating options – whether that mean multiple paths of travel through a space or giving residents the ability to reconfigure modular furniture in an otherwise universally-designed apartment. The design of an Independent Living facility should avoid unintentionally triggering its inhabitants, but more so, contribute to their healing and sense of security.

Since trauma lives and works through the body, and the body reacts to physical space before we cognitively process it, the built environment is integral to how one experiences trauma (Shopworks Architecture, 2021, p. 8). Practically speaking, trauma-informed design principles focused on sensory boundaries, nested layers and identity anchors should

address common triggers for emancipated foster youth (p. 10). Sensory boundaries may come in the form of modulating smells, sounds or sights for those with sensory sensitivity. Eliminating opaque space division where possible, as well as repeating doors and blind turns is also a means for de-institutionalizing space and mitigating paranoia through maintaining sight lines. In this way, trauma-informed design can inform wayfinding, gentle transitions, location of communal spaces adjacent to staff areas, visual delineation of public and private space and the provision of choice, control and personalization for a gradient of experience.

If the design of an Independent Living facility can foster an intimate and safe relationship with a building for its inhabitants, it can redefine the idea of home, and ultimately promote healing and the true future independence of its residents.

SITE
ANALYSIS

building history

King Lumber Company, c. 1909
608 Preston Avenue Charlottesville, VA

Built in 1909, the King Lumber Company is listed individually on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Charlottesville Multiple Resource Area.

The King Lumber Company was one of Charlottesville's principal industries at the turn of the century. Founded in 1899 by Walter King, the company manufactured building materials that were used throughout the United States, including in many buildings at the University of Virginia.

By 1920, the company was Charlottesville's largest employer, employing over 300 people with an annual payroll of over \$400,000. By the 1930s, the King Lumber Company had gone out of business as a result of the Great Depression, and the business owner taking his own life, leaving the company without leadership. This building is all that remains of that once large manufacturing operation.

Since the shuttering of the King Lumber Company, the building has served as storage for a plumbing/HVAC company, Napa Auto Parts, Oyster House Antiques, and is currently a multi-tenant commercial property, home to an engineering firm and a physical therapy facility.



King Lumber Company lumber yard, circa 1918
photo courtesy of current building owner



Blue Ridge Feed (date unknown)
photo courtesy of current building owner



King Lumber Company facade prior to renovation (2015)
photo courtesy of current building owner

exterior



Facade of 608 Preston Avenue



Rear facade of 608 Preston Avenue



South entrance custom storefront pays homage to former carriage house pass-through



Facade of 608 Preston Avenue

Important architectural features:

- Heavy timber construction with column grid
- Six-course American bond brick, painted red
- Three stories
- Industrial vernacular
- Segmental arched window and door openings
- Historic wheel windows centered on gables
- Six-over-six, double-hung windows
- Fixed single-light windows in center-bay openings
- Low-pitch stepped gable roof, corbeled cornice stops
- Terracotta coping at parapet walls
- Rectangular footprint, generally open interior
- Exposed brick interior walls, painted and unpainted
- Heart pine and concrete flooring
- Exposed wood columns and beams

exterior



Facing east from the rear parking lot



Northwest corner, facade faces Preston Avenue



Stair access to three floors on east elevation



Pedestrian breezeway connecting King Lumber & Random Row Brewing



Close-up of rubble stone foundation

interior
first floor



Original carriage house threshold and filled window on west wall adjacent to market



Filled door on west wall adjacent to market



Inside exterior carriage house storefront solution, adjacent to existing stairwell



Filled carriage house door beneath existing stairs



View from west breezeway entrance adjacent to filled carriage house door; tree column



Stone foundation married into exposed brick

interior
second floor



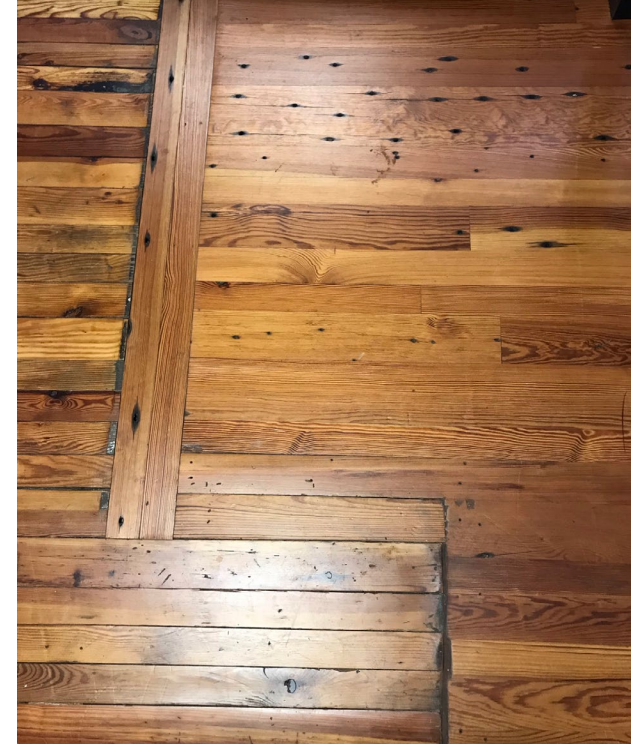
Original carriage house roof line



Original carriage house structure in stairwell



East-facing window partially obscured by market



Pine floor transition

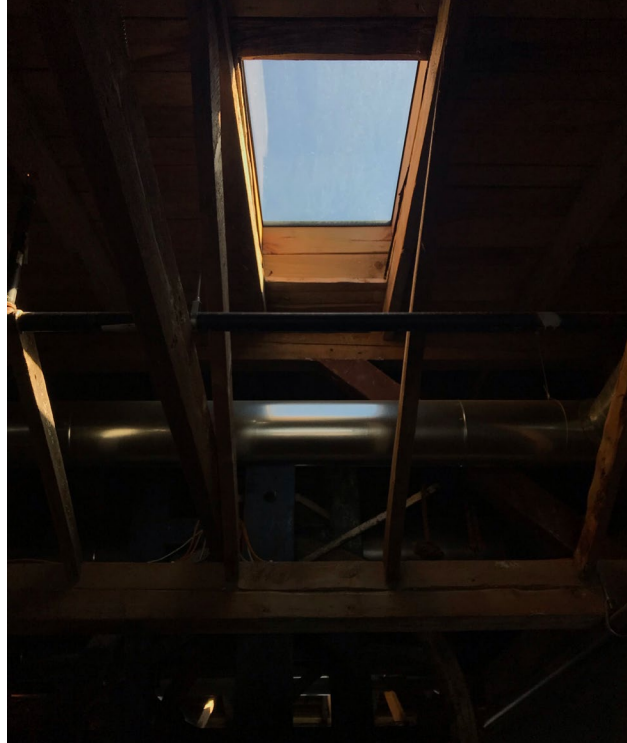


Exposed ceiling and heavy timber construction



Existing elevator (left), south exterior wall (right)

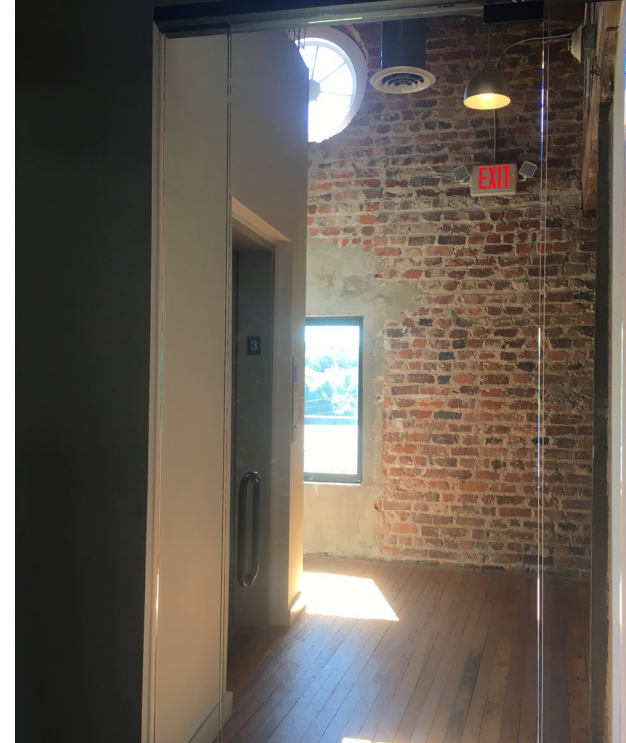
interior
third floor



One of six rectangular skylights



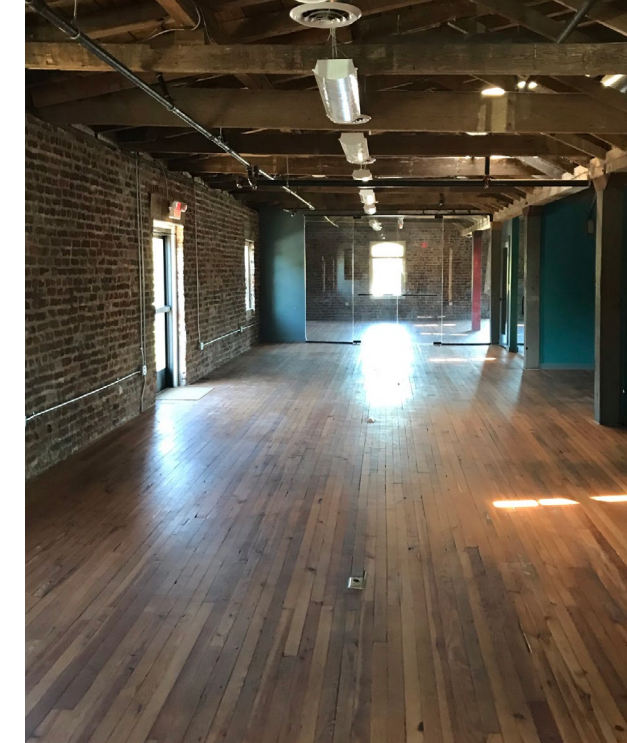
Exposed ceiling and heavy timber construction



Southern sunlight penetrates stairwell landing and is obscured by existing elevator location



Facing south, view of existing interior window overlooking open stairwell



Facing north, view of west fire stair exit



Original hoisting machinery with patched floor

neighborhood + surroundings

The King Lumber Company is centrally located on Preston Avenue in the **Starr Hill Neighborhood**, adjacent to the Norfolk Southern & Amtrak train tracks. The residential area of Starr Hill has historically been home to professionals, many of whom were, and are, African American. The area first began to be settled in the 1870s and continued to develop until 1959.

Starr Hill is neighbored by Vinegar Hill and 10th and Page. Vinegar Hill was a hub of black industry and residences, especially in its prime during the 1920s, but was razed in 1965 in the name of urban renewal. 10th and Page is home to Westhaven, the public housing to which many Vinegar Hill residents were displaced.

In the 1970s, Starr Hill was also the target for urban renewal. However, unlike the Vinegar Hill decimation, this development was focused on rehabilitation of existing buildings versus demolition. This was regarded as a more prosperous area and literally situated on higher ground adjacent to Vinegar Hill. Although some historic buildings have been lost, the Starr Hill neighborhood of Charlottesville retains a high level of architectural integrity as most of its buildings remain intact.



Facing east from Preston Avenue median under the Norfolk Southern / Amtrak train overpass



King Lumber prior to railroad overpass (1916)
photo courtesy of current building owner



King Lumber surroundings after railroad overpass (date unknown)
photo and annotations courtesy of Bridge Finder



Preston Avenue, King Lumber on the right (date unknown)
photo courtesy of current building owner

In addition to the 2015 rehabilitation of the King Lumber Building, the Monticello Dairy Market and the Coca Cola Building (pictured below) have been recently restored. Although the Central City zoning district limits new buildings to 50 feet, the City Council can grant a special-use permit to allow for heights up to 80 feet. Most rehabilitations in Starr Hill along Preston are brewery/restaurant-focused, maintaining a lower neighborhood profile than recently erected high rises on West Main Street. Starr Hill has maintained its connection to industry, much of which has spread to Harris Street in the Rose Hill neighborhood, perpendicular to Preston Avenue.

Intertwined with this history is the Jefferson School, located one block from the King Lumber Building in Starr Hill on the western edge of Vinegar Hill. Completed in 1926, Jefferson was one of only ten African American high schools in Virginia. Prior to this, African Americans above grade eight had to leave Charlottesville if they wished to continue their education. The Jefferson School now serves as a recreation center and focal point for the coming together of formerly segregated communities.



Top Left | The Jefferson School / City Center (built in 1926)
 Top Right | Monticello Dairy Market Building, 946 Grady Avenue (built in 1937)
 Bottom Left | Coca Cola Building, 722 Preston Avenue (built in 1939)
 Bottom Right | Silk Mills Building, 700 Harris Street (built in 1895), one block from KLB



View of Vinegar Hill from Jefferson School



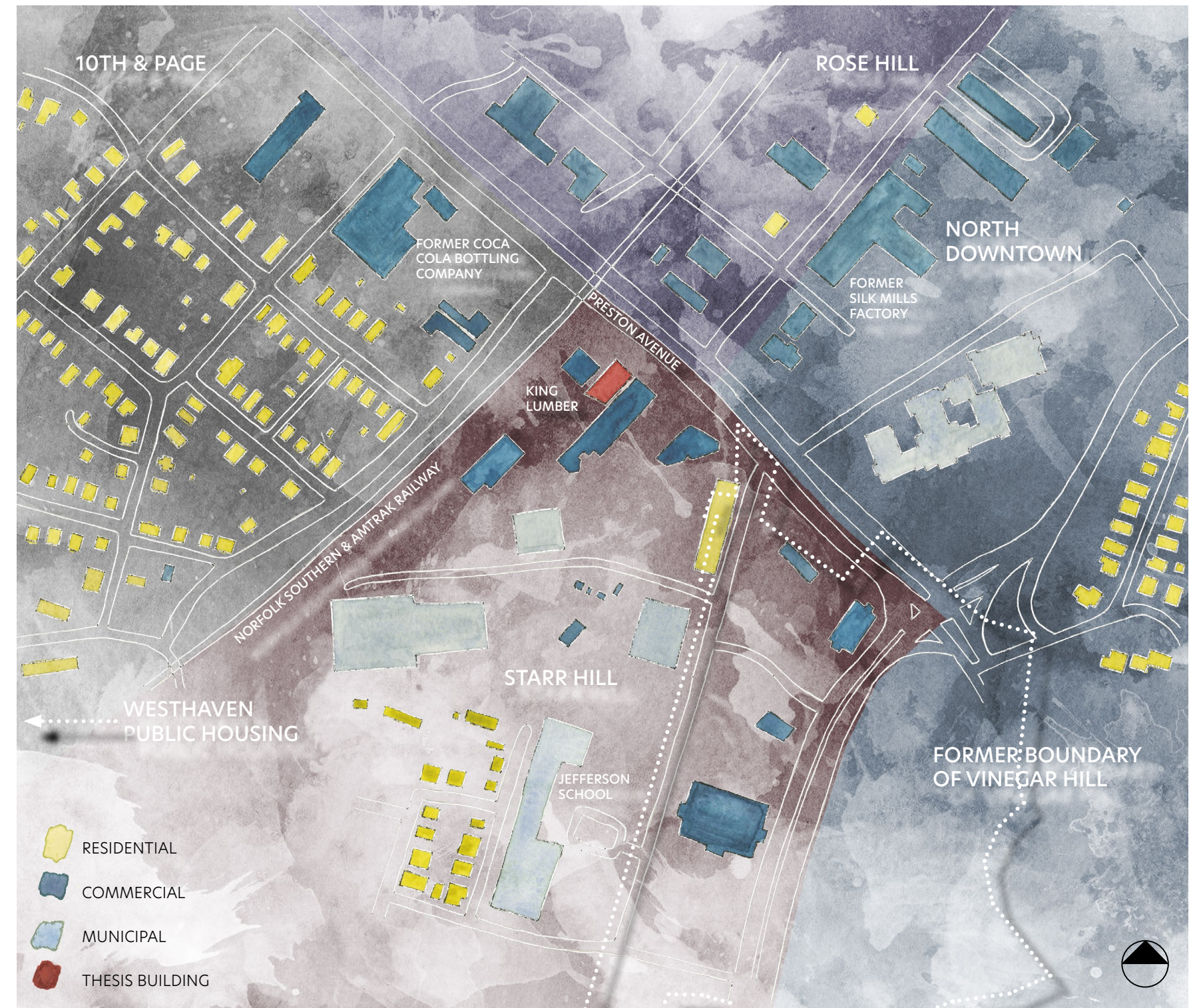
Intersection of industrial Harris Street and Preston Avenue

site maps + selection consideration

The King Lumber Company building is appropriate for the exploration of an Independent Living Facility, as it is walking distance to Downtown Mall employment and a grocery store, as well as community resources at The Jefferson School.

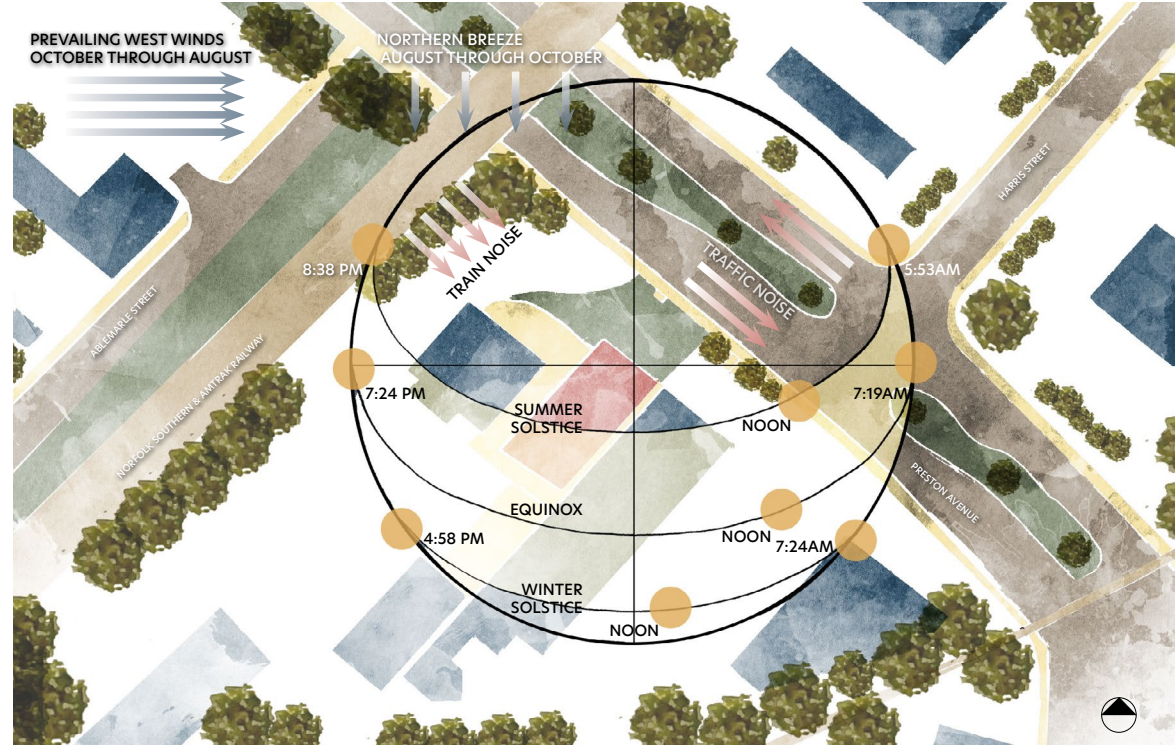
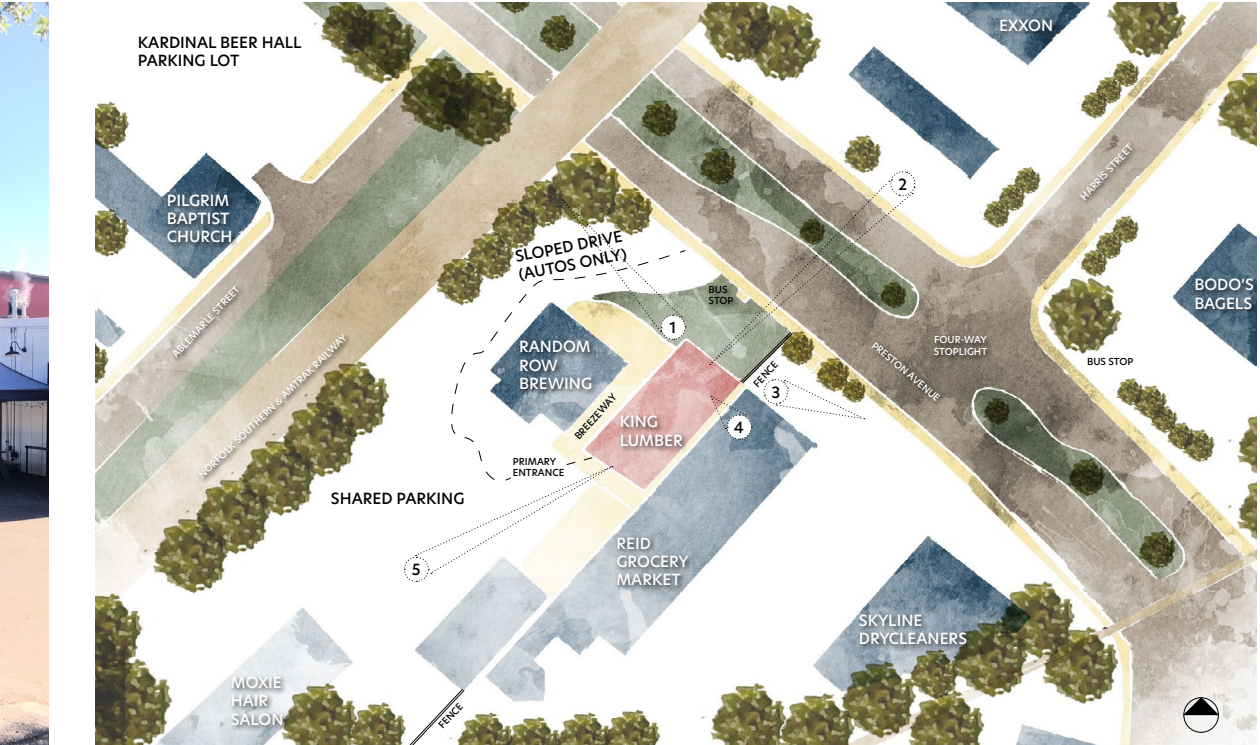
Public transit stops are easily accessible and the Amtrak station is nearby.

The column grid of the interior (three bays wide by five deep) lends itself to flexible organization of residential and communal programming.





Views to and from within the King Lumber Building



Reid Grocery Market obscures morning and midday sun from the east on the first floor of the King Lumber Building.

existing
conditions



Front Facade from Preston Avenue; Viewer Facing Southwest



Side Facade from Random Row Brewing; Viewer Facing South

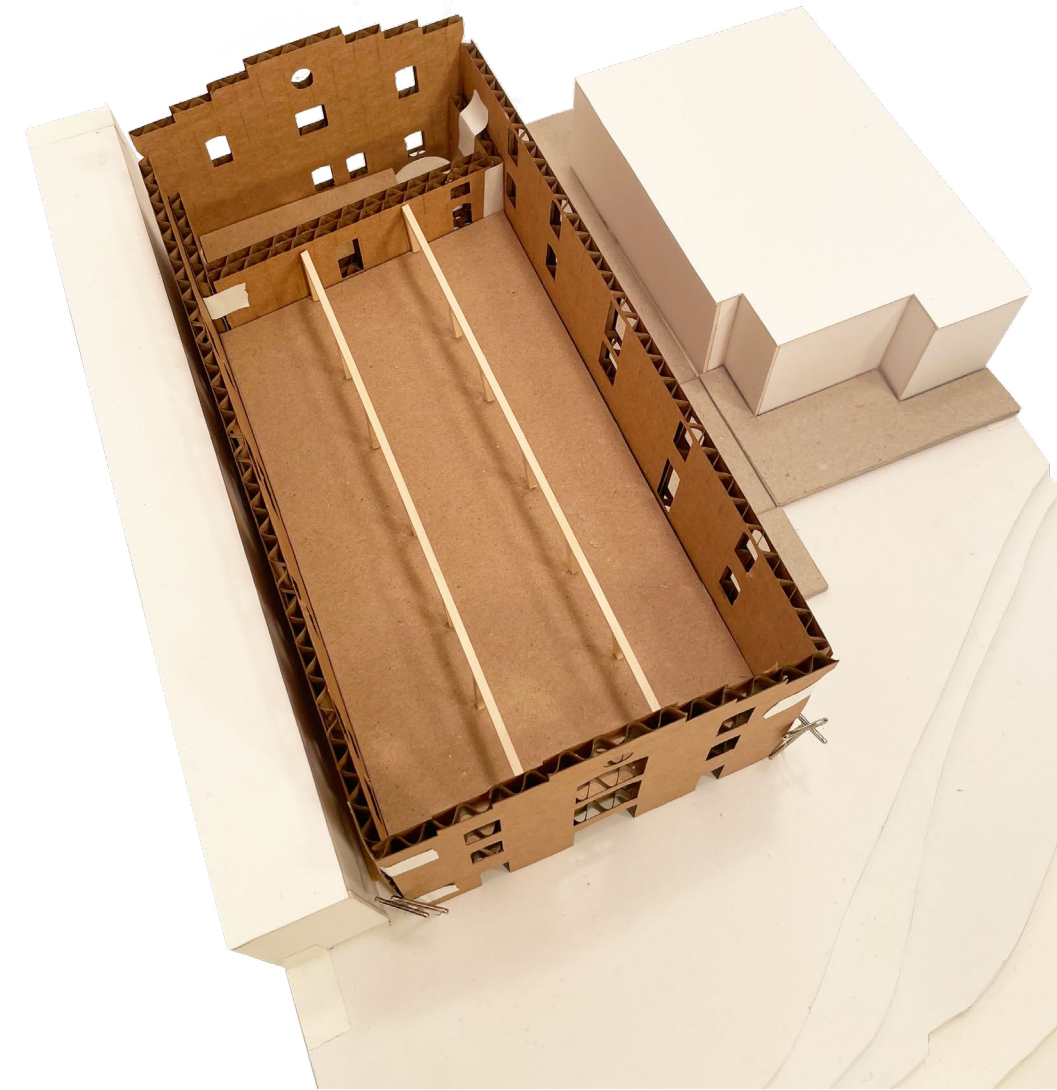


Rear Facade from Parking Lot; Viewer Facing Northeast

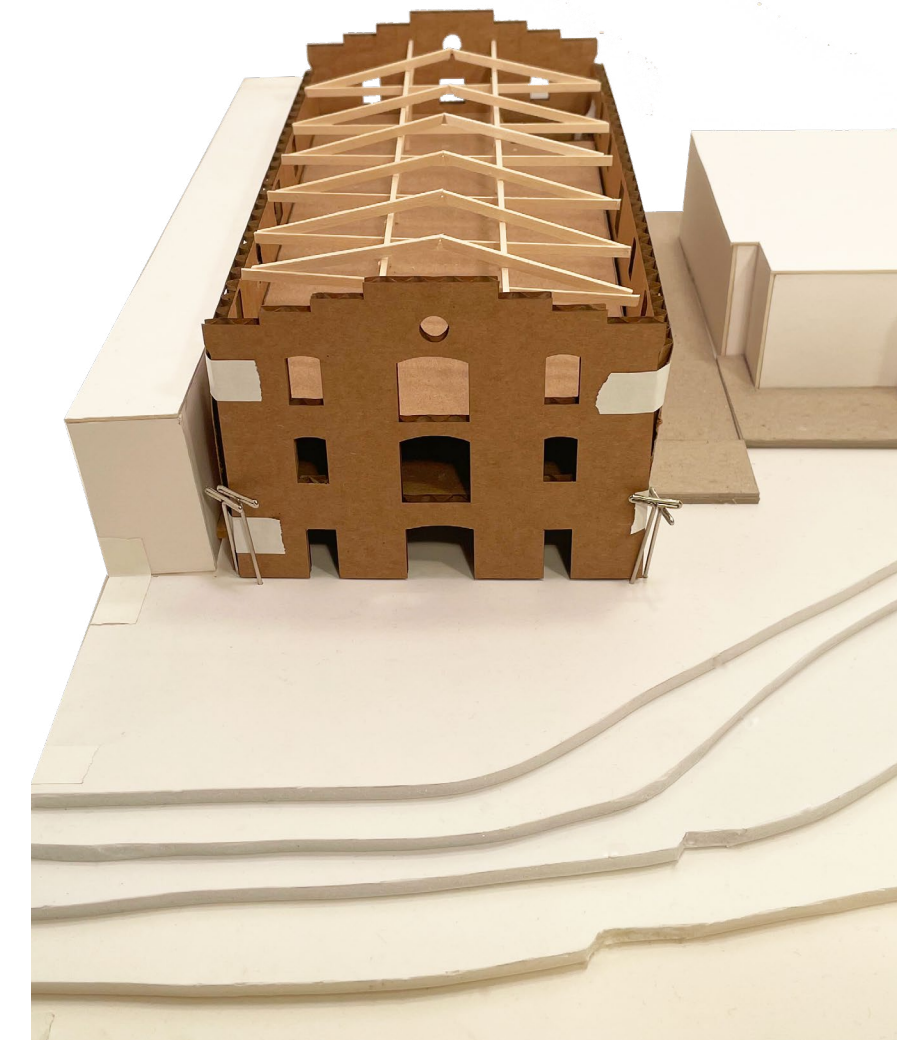
existing
conditions



First Floor



Second Floor



Third Floor

PROGRAM
REQUIREMENTS

residences

resident apartments

Six one-level and two two-level studio apartments are included in the project. Entries to individual units introduce distinct identity anchors, assist with wayfinding and create a sense of ownership for residents.

Units include a double bed and full kitchen and bathroom. Four of the eight are entirely accessible, including zero-entry showers and ample space for wheelchair turning and parking.

Walls are clad with custom wood slats that allow for the space personalization through swapping out modular storage elements.

inter-unit shared dining / lounge

Positioned between two independent apartment units, the inter-unit shared spaces include a dining table and television. This is one of the many spaces in the project that offers a gradient of experience for residents, presenting options that keep choice at the forefront when for easing into socializing with others.

As the units themselves don't have a true dining space, the position of this shared lounge intentionally forces some level of engagement and space negotiation. However, form and material language of pocket doors to the lounge disguise them unit slat walls, making them equally visually pleasing whether open or closed.

inter-unit semi-public front porch

Offshoots of corridors on the residential floors, semi-public front porches are accessible to all youth, but are ultimately dictated by the residents of the two adjacent units. Directly accessible from the shared lounges, this space is the most public space that speaks the language of the residential units through introduction of the modular wood slat walls.

Semi-public front porches vary, but consistently include soft seating and a window to the shared lounge, whether traditional or clerestory. Each is designed to allow residents to be privy to communal activities outside of their private units without fully engaging unless they so chose.

study + meeting

private meeting space

Accessible via an exterior entry and the shared staff office, this space is programmed to accommodate conversations between case workers, foster youth and facility staff. Designed with soft non-office seating, the private meeting space aims to eliminate triggers and facilitate difficult conversations.

private therapy office

The private therapy office is furnished with a sofa and lounge chair, as well as warm lamp lighting. Including this space on-site eliminates barriers for resident visitation with their psychologist of choice. The positioning of this space adjacent to an exterior fire exit prioritizes confidentiality and residents' privacy.

semi-public study space

Located near the elevator on the third floor and open to the corridor, the semi-public study space includes a single desk by a west-facing window, as well as a shared work table for two residents.

private study space

Adjacent to the conference room and workshop space on the first floor, as well as the laundry lounge and staff overnight area on the second floor, private study rooms include individual desks positioned near natural light. Doors to study rooms include glass to allow for residents to gauge occupancy without disturbing others.

common areas

welcome seating

Immediately visible upon entering the facility through the pass-through mail area/bike storage room, this space is open and adjacent to the television/game lounge on the first floor. Furniture is comprised of soft lounge seating, pendant lighting and a credenza positioned in front of the wallpapered elevator shaft wall that assists with wayfinding.

workshop area

The workshop area is intended to be a flexible space that can host a number of outside guests, such as those holding informational sessions on college and career preparation. This space is furnished with movable tables and chairs, A/V equipment and rolling whiteboards for collaboration. It is adjoined to the computer lab and adjacent to the under-stair soft seating for event overflow.

communal kitchen

The communal kitchen serves as a larger cooking space than in-unit kitchens, should residents choose to gather or host guests in the common area. It boasts all necessary appliances and has direct sight lines to the family style table in the communal dining, making it conducive to programmed group events.

communal dining

The communal dining area is made up of one long family-style table that seats twelve. The seating arrangement is meant to serve all eight residents and several staff members. It is positioned directly below the open atrium and serves as a gathering and touchdown spot when not in use for programmed group meals. Emphasis is placed on this area through unique drop pendants hanging from the underside of the stair landing above.

television / game lounge

There are two television/game lounges in the facility, one that seats four on the ground floor adjacent to the staff area and entrance, and another on the third floor that accommodates a larger group. Each is outfit with residential-style soft seating arrangements and a television, as well as coffee tables and credenza for board game storage.

computer lab / technology area

The computer lab/technology area has several desktop computers and printers to serve as resources for residents that may not have laptops of their own. This space works in tandem with a laptop check-out system residents can take advantage of by visiting the staff office. Adjacent to the workshop space with sight lines to the most public areas, residents can use this space to complete homework or college and job applications without being sequestered in their unit or challenged by technology access.

laundry lounge

With trauma-informed design in mind, the laundry lounge is designed to as a hang-out area for residents to combat common fears of clothing theft. This space maintains the warmth of exposed brick found in the facility entry, and offers televisions and soft seating for entertainment or study while waiting.

under-stair soft seating

The under-stair soft seating is an informal low-height space comprised of several movable ottomans. This space can assist with workshop overflow by shifting ottomans into the open area inside the north entrance, or can support private reading and lounging a step away from the public communal dining area.

stairwell landing perches

Positioned between levels, two stairwell landing perches offer bar-height or ottoman seats that overlook the common area below. Also giving sight lines to residential corridors and semi-public front porches above, these perches contribute to a gradient of experience for residents that allows them to make opt-in and opt-out decisions from afar.

public restrooms

There are two handicap-accessible restrooms outside of the residential units. One is located on the ground floor, and another is on the second floor adjacent to the laundry lounge and study rooms. Restrooms are comprised of a water closet and sink, as well as grab bars and ample wheelchair circulation space.

admin areas

staff overnight

The staff overnight area mimics the residential units but does not include modular slat walls. This space is meant as temporary sleeping quarters for staff working overnight shifts. The unit includes a kitchenette and full bathroom, as well as a double bed by a west-facing window.

conference room

The conference room is located plan north across from the workshop area. In contrast to the meeting room adjacent to the staff offices, this space can accommodate more formal interactions or presentations between staff, caseworkers and youth. The conference room is furnished with a conference table, rolling chairs and A/V equipment, and receives light from a glass door to the outside front lawn.

shared staff office

The shared staff office is located on the ground floor, with an entrance into the communal dining area and access to the private meeting room. This space includes two staff desks and a small coffee bar and refrigerator. Light enters the space through a translucent-glass infill of a large previously enclosed east entry. Most importantly, walls include glass windows to public spaces to prioritize support and safety without policing. Research indicates that residents are more likely to take advantage of communal space when staff are nearby.

pass-through entry / mail + bike room

The pass-through mail area is the first impression space when residents enter the facility. Maintaining the double arches and exposed brick or the original carriage house, this space evokes a sense of warmth over institution. Residents can collect mail and packages in this area, as well as store bicycles and equipment used in transit to work or school.

back of house

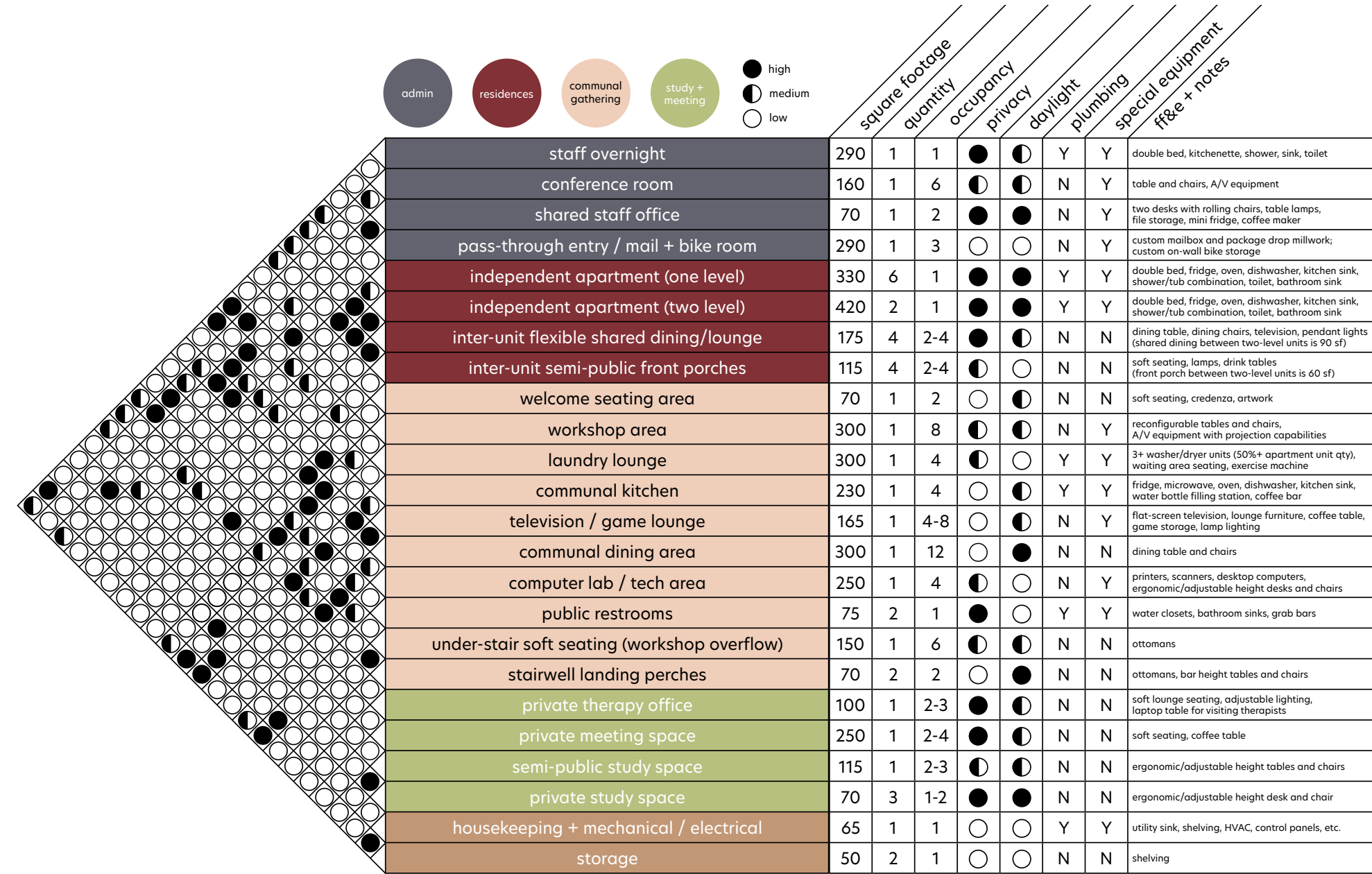
housekeeping / MEP

The housekeeping and MEP closet is located adjacent to the communal kitchen. This space includes a utility sink, panel boxes and other mechanical necessities for the facility.

storage

There are two storage closets in the facility. One is located on the ground floor between the communal kitchen and staff offices to store modular wall components for residential units, among other back of house necessities. Another is located on the second floor adjacent to the public restroom and laundry lounge as a second janitorial resource for housekeeping and staff.

adjacencies



occupant profiles

foster youth 1

John

20 years old

lover of video games and basketball

moved from congregate care

searching for friends

attends community college part-time

works in retail 15 hours per week

no relationship with biological family

several unsuccessful foster family experiences

saving for his first car

foster youth 2

Sadie

19 years old

avid reader

transitioned from a foster home

introverted

interested in applying to college

works at a daycare 20 hours per week

history of caring for siblings, nieces & nephews

sexual abuse survivor

relies on public transit daily

case worker

Beth

35 years old

bachelor's degree in social work

works for local department of social services

assigned to 40+ cases at any given time

visits the independent living facility monthly

performs routine house visits outside of the IL

counsels clients and biological/foster families

maintains progress reports, often in transit

collaborates with facility staff on placement

facility staff

Stephen

47 years old

history of non-profit volunteering

full-time staff, including one 24-hour shift weekly

transports youth to school and work

supervises visits as needed

interviews youth for placement in the IL

fields curfew check-in calls and texts

meets with youth monthly to review goals

organizes communal activities for residents

therapist

Anne

55 years old

PhD in psychology from an HBCU

one of ten therapists contracted by the IL

visits facility weekly with extended evening hours

fields meet and greets to ensure patient fit

counsels youth on coping against past traumas

assists youth with relationship building skills

refers patients to other specialists as necessary

on-call for crisis care for IL and other patients

CASE
STUDIES

the laurel house

Grand Junction, CO
Shopworks Architects
2020

The Laurel House is a trauma-informed supportive housing apartment for youth who have experienced homelessness. The 34 apartments are fully furnished and have full kitchens and single bathrooms. The building also has common space for cooking, art, community gatherings, and services.

Selection Rationale:

The Laurel House was selected as a precedent for programming for a teenage demographic based on the principles of trauma-informed design, which aim to promote healing, dignity and joy.

Critical Elements:

- Sight lines for security
- Sensory boundaries and identity anchors
- Gradient of experience through choice and nested layers



Photos courtesy of Shopworks Architects



Nested Layers

The loft provides sight lines so residents can choose when they prefer to socialize without having to enter the space. Mailboxes near the common area kitchen encourages participation.



Built-in nooks and niches to curl into and be alone allow for introverts to have proximity to social life. Multiple options for seating allow everyone to find their own temporary territory.



Sight Lines

There are easy connections between staff areas and the central space so youth feel a sense of safety in being close to those who care. This also increases resident use of common areas.



Identity Anchors

Variation in hue of each residents' doorway is a sensory boundary and wayfinding cue that creates an element of personalization and avoid the pitfall of space feeling institutional.



Gradient of Experience

Individual apartments include controls for temperature and light levels, as well as the opportunity to share a meal or host a friend in a more private setting.



Main Takeaways

The Laurel House strays from institutionalization through the use of varied materials, colors and textures. Interior windows create a sense of transparency while maintaining acoustical privacy where appropriate. Slatted railings also underscore visual transparency and clear sight lines. Long hallways are avoided for the same reason. Ownership and personalization is reinforced through identity anchors at residents' thresholds. The element of choice is paramount, as seen in the multiple options for seating and smaller intimate areas arranged in the context of a large common area.

bayview hill gardens apartments

David Baker Architects
San Francisco, CA
2013

Bayview Hill Gardens is a residential complex for formerly homeless families and youth aging out of foster care. The ground level sets a unique mixed-use precedent with social services offices, a lounge area connected to a laundry room and computer lab, and a community room that hosts an after-school program catering to 115 child residents.

Selection Rationale:

Bayview Hill Gardens was selected as a programming precedent as a result of it housing a similar end user as my thesis — emancipated foster youth — as well as providing support services such as after-school care and homework help.

Critical Elements:

On-site social and vocational services

Conceptually responsive to neighborhood culture and diversity

Visual transparency supporting safety and ease



David Baker Architects, photo by Matt Edge



Transparency

The resident lounge is connected to and visible from the laundry room and computer lab. This allows residents to multi-task without leaving their valuable belongings. This mitigates fear of potential theft without policing.



Dignified Space

Custom mail area conveys value of previously marginalized residents. Linear lighting highlights texture of elm, as well as supports a feeling of safety when partnered with a wider-than-required hallway.



Rhythmic Wayfinding

Floor-specific artwork visually cues residents. Consistent scale of murals from floor to floor creates rhythm. Smaller gathering areas in elevator lobbies of each floor allows residents to remain private as desired.



Personalization

Residents have the option to personalize the entrance and interior of their space, emphasizing a sense of ownership. High-quality finishes and furniture convey worth and longevity.

Protecting Vulnerable Conversations

Window decals allow light to permeate a social services office while maintaining privacy and leaning into the culture of Bostwonia that informs concept and relates to the neighborhood's population.

Main Takeaways

Dignity is conveyed to residents of public housing through furniture, fixtures and finishes that do not have institutional qualities. Bayview Hill Gardens finds creative and conceptually relevant ways to let light into spaces that require visual privacy.

In common areas, interior transparency is paramount and is achieved through storefront systems and clear sight lines.

In private areas, personalization is offered through individual display shelves at residence thresholds and providing autonomy in selecting apartment furnishings.

northtown apartments and library

Perkins & Will
Chicago, IL
2021

On the street level of Northtown, a community room and a learning lab for teens bookends a double-height glazed library. Perched above, two floors of affordable senior apartments occupy a volume that curves around an outdoor terrace on the library's roof.

Selection Rationale:

Northtown was selected as a precedent as it combines public housing for seniors with a community resource — in this case, an all-ages library. It also introduces the ability to see into a lower public space from a private residential area above.

Critical Elements to Thesis:

Rooms within a room

Light penetration in a building core

Flexible programming



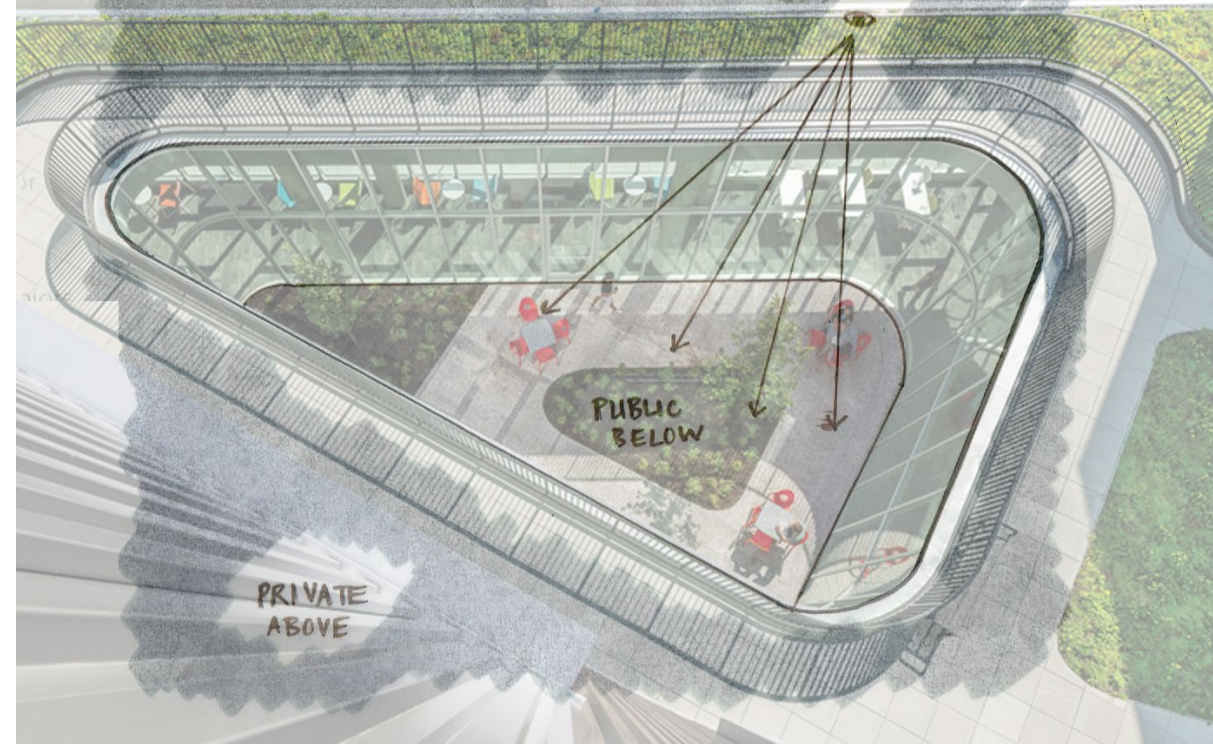
Flexible Space

Furnishings in homework/study areas of the library are meant to be moved and reconfigured. The idea of furniture having multiple optimal layouts is ideal for common areas that will host computer lab resources as well as guest speakers for workshops.



Room Within a Room

Intuitive zoning and distinct pathways are fostered in an open area through floor material transitions and dropped lighting elements. Semi-enclosed space created by custom casework that mimics the lighting above creates destinations visible from across the space.



Daylighting
 Introducing an interior courtyard connects two differently-programmed ends of the library floor of this multi-use project, while allowing light to penetrate deep into the interior space. It also creates a connection from the more private residential area above.

Main Takeaways
 Northtown demonstrates an effective means for marrying ceiling language with elements below, delineating activity zones in an open-concept space with a large footprint. The location of an interior courtyard in this project serves as a connector from different but similarly programmed spaces that may be relevant to varied zones in an independent living facility's public area. The impact of inner light within the core of the building serves as a strong precedent for a potential atrium or light-well in the King Lumber Building, given that one-third of the thesis structure's windows are obscured by its neighbor.

tribeca loft

Andrew Franz Architect PLLC
New York, NY
2021

Andrew Franz Architect cut through the roof of a six-story 1884 warehouse once used for caviar storage to create a mezzanine and courtyard that lead up to a planted roof through a retractable skylight. The glazed mezzanine lets light travel deep into the formerly dark space, and to reach this mezzanine from main living space, you walk up a custom steel stair that features treads made from ceiling joists that were salvaged from the roof of the old warehouse.

Selection Rationale:

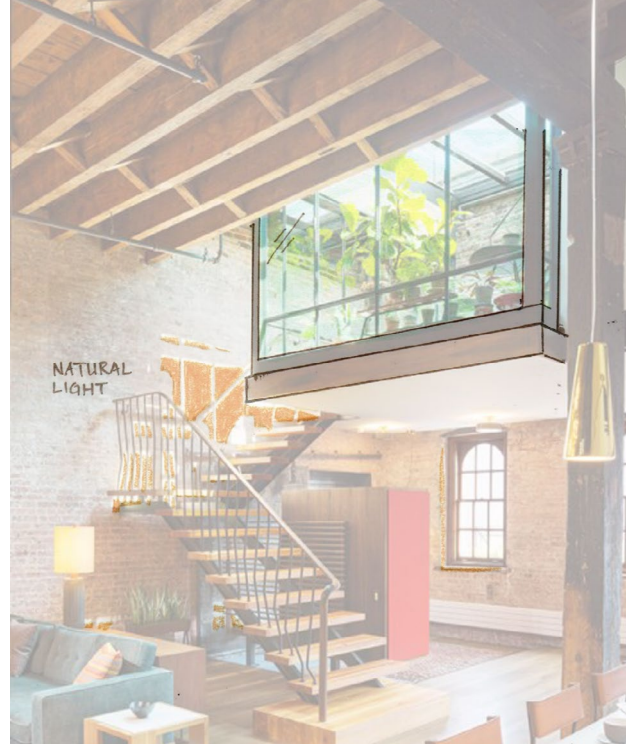
Tribeca Loft was selected based on its architectural similarity to the King Lumber Building. Exposed brick walls and original timber beams are a commonality. Andrew Franz introduces a unique solution to a formerly dark interior.

Critical Elements to Thesis:

Industrial architectural language

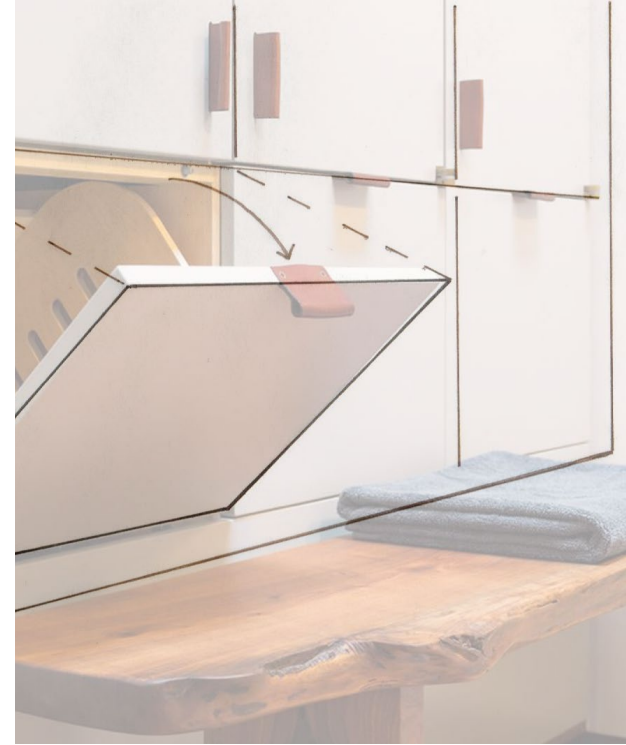
Restoration and reclaimed materials

Light penetration in a building core



Architectural Language

The loft celebrates its history by restoring beams and columns back to their original condition and maintaining an exposed brick interior.



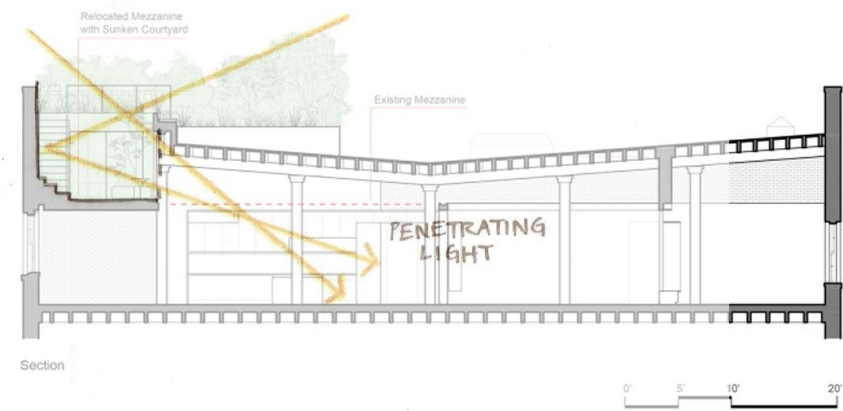
Maximizing Space

Custom casework creates visually streamlined storage in small spaces. Adjacency to the loft's bathroom creates convenience for daily dressing.



Reclaimed Materials

Custom fabricated stairwell leverages steel and re-purposed timbers from the old roof joists. This is similar in language to King Lumber and should be leaned upon in materials chosen for residences.



Daylighting

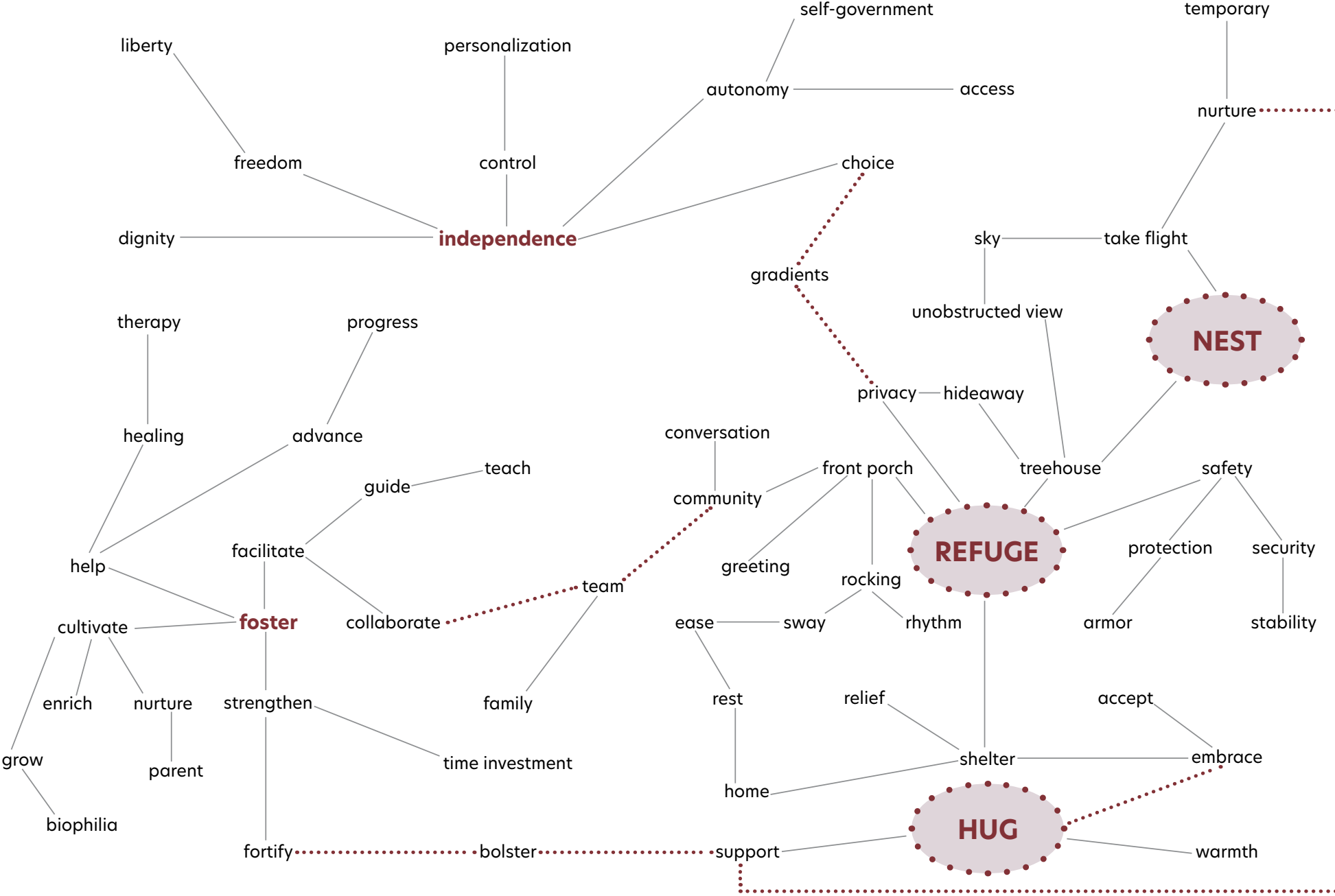
A sunken mezzanine connects indoor to outdoor and fills the previously dark loft with natural daylight, taking advantage of a double-height space and makes outdoor green space accessible from primary living quarters.

Main Takeaways

Tribeca Loft provides a relevant precedent for bringing natural light and the outdoors into independent living apartments, should they span two levels of the King Lumber Building. Light can penetrate a structure in a meaningful way through ceiling and roof piercings versus just relying on traditional windows. Material language of new interior architecture should nod to existing elements in a space being adaptively reused.

CONCEPT

conceptual
mind-mapping



conceptual drivers

Users	choice and autonomy	personalization and sense of ownership/identity	privacy and connection	belonging and respect	anti-institutional support and nurture
Designer	invoke trauma-informed design	respond to history and surroundings	infuse value and dignity	foster a healing environment	avoid the generic
Program	efficient, flexible space encouraging run-ins and opt-outs	support of independent living	sensitive and non-triggering (healing environment; clear site lines; generous circulation)	safe and non-policing; anti-institutional	community building through gathering
Building	light penetration to mitigate obstructions and promote health	response to rhythmic timber grid	healthy interiors	response to history	introduction of softness

conceptual narrative



The lives of foster youth aging out of care are a series of intersections.

They can take multiple paths as they transition into adulthood.
The world is not always in their favor.

Their needs parallel a **bird in a nest**.

Each nest has a personality. Nests are inherently made up of intersections themselves.
Unique accumulations of varied materials. Appearing chaotic, but maintaining a predictability.

Nests are built to **support** the young.
But nests are **temporary**. Designed for a stage of nurture.
Providing a hideaway from full exposure to life's risks and rewards.

Nests are safe, but the expanse of sky beckons for departure. For **self-actualization**.

Nests themselves do not push the young out. An authority does that.

The nest must be a facilitator for growth until it is time to **take flight**.



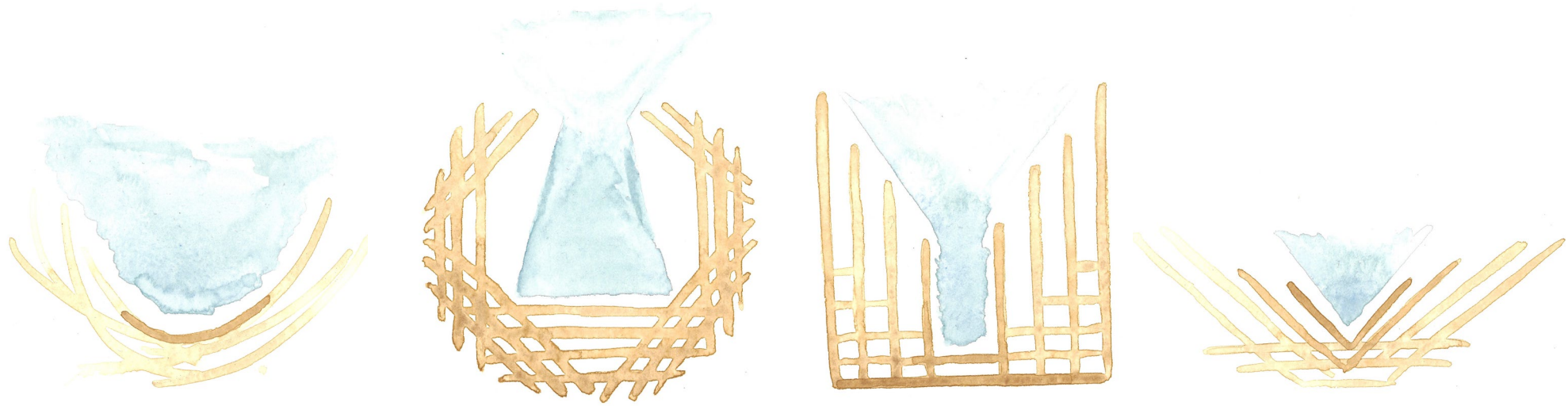
compression ↔ expansion
introversion ↔ extroversion
gradient of experience

trauma-informed design

nested layers

By adding well-ordered
spatial complexity,
people can choose
their level of
social, physical ↔
sensory engagement.
Healing from trauma
means finding the
gray space between the
extremes of black ↔
white thinking

physical
concept work



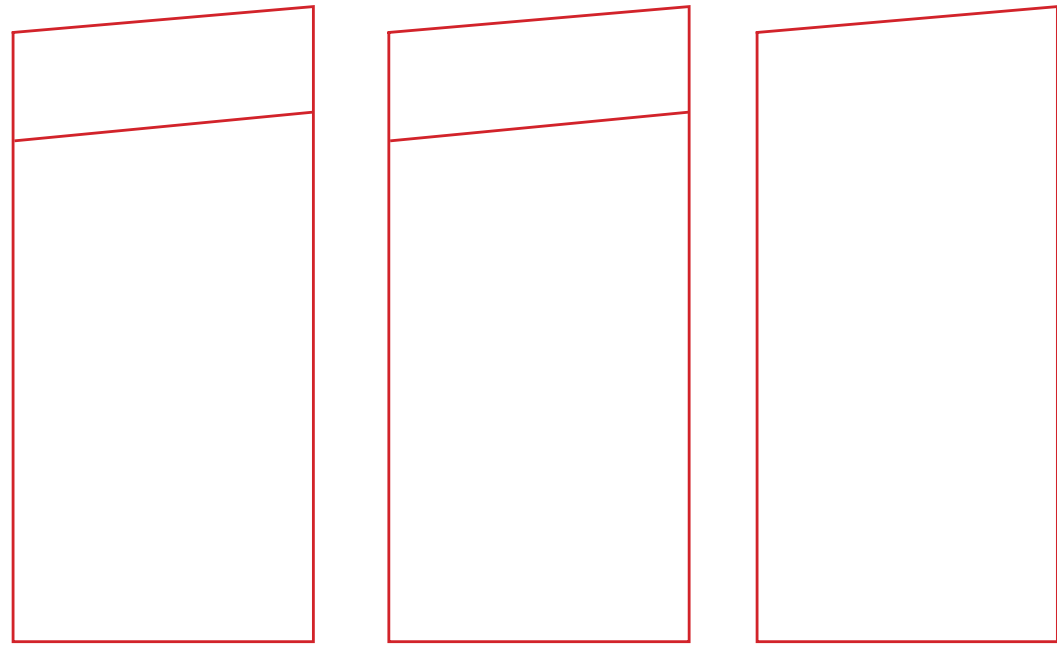
Watercolor study exploring section cuts and sky view from nest interiors for abstract translation to architectural atriums



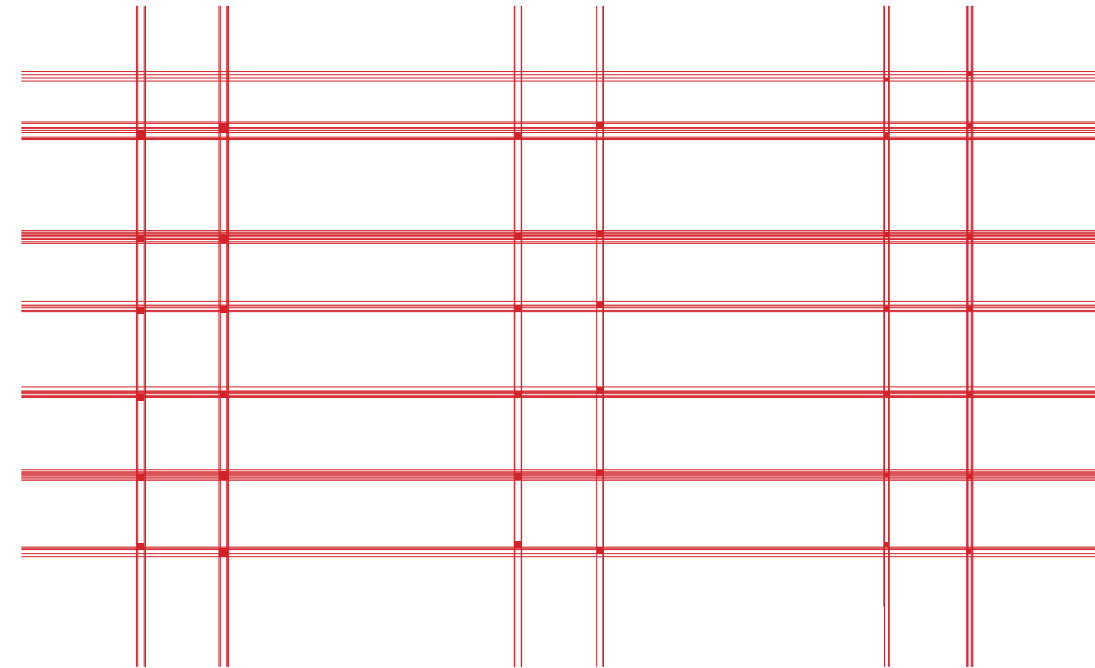
Concept models exploring nest construction and intersections

SCHEMATIC
DESIGN

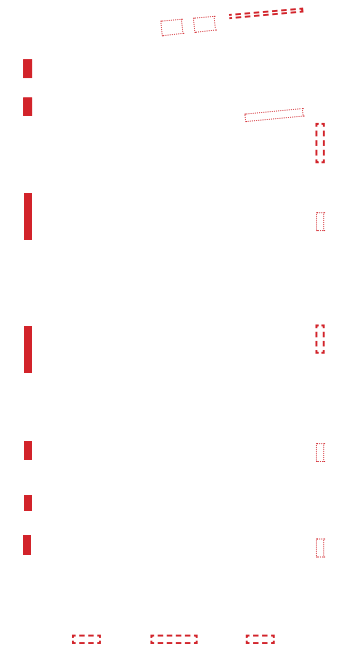
parti
diagrams + models



Building parti, representing King Lumber Company building onto an original carriage house structure

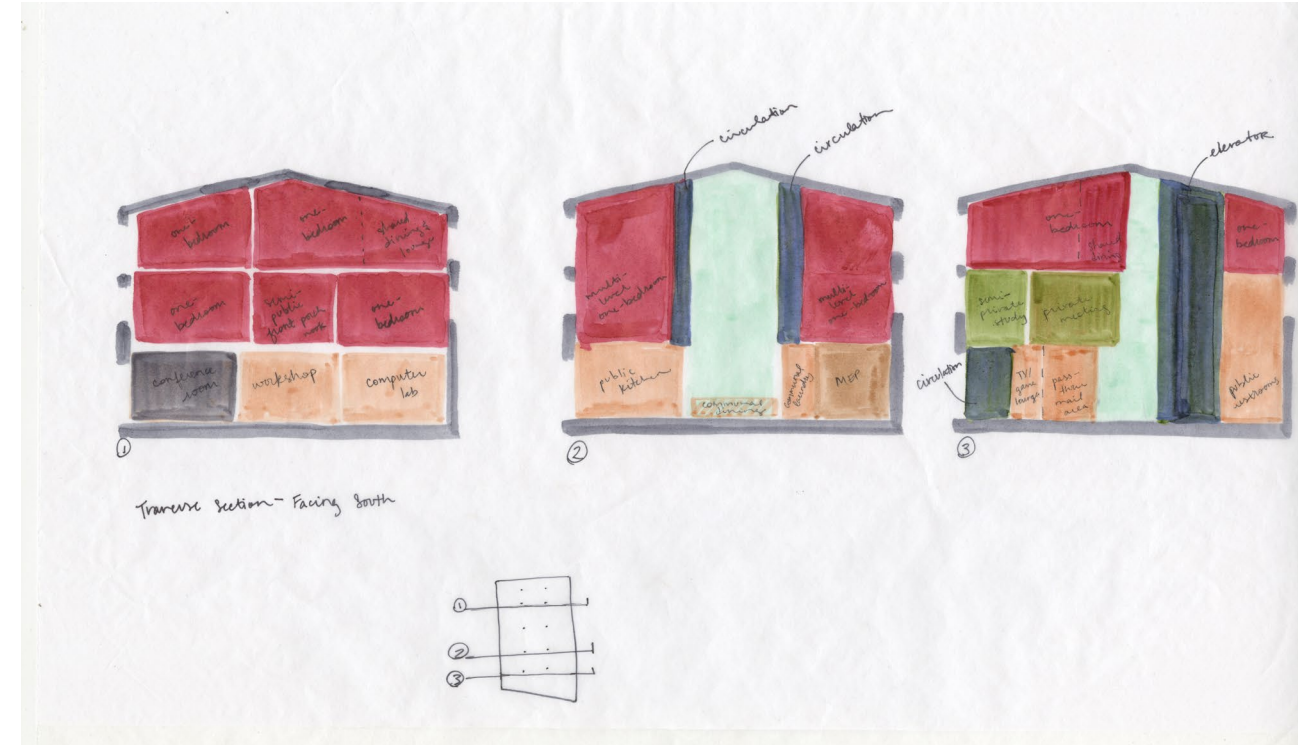


Column grid parti, representative of slight misalignments within timber column grid



First floor fenestration parti, inclusive of several infilled windows facing the neighboring market.

schematic
scheme 1



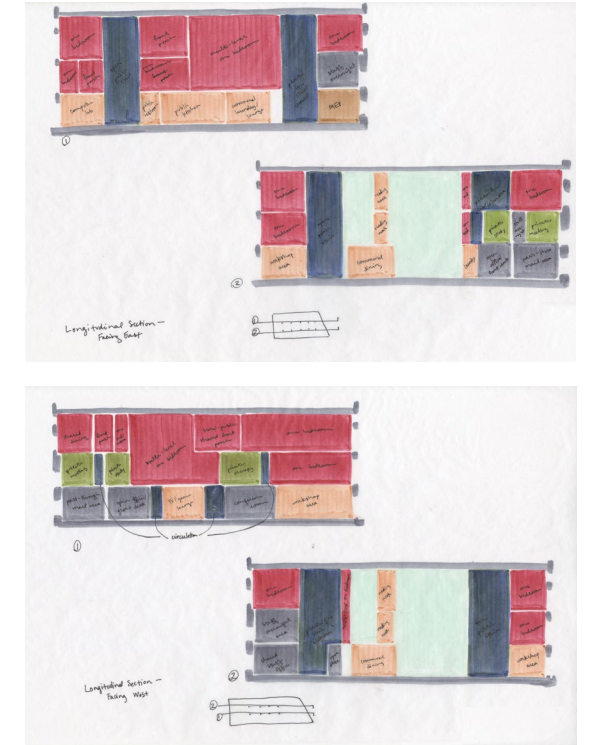
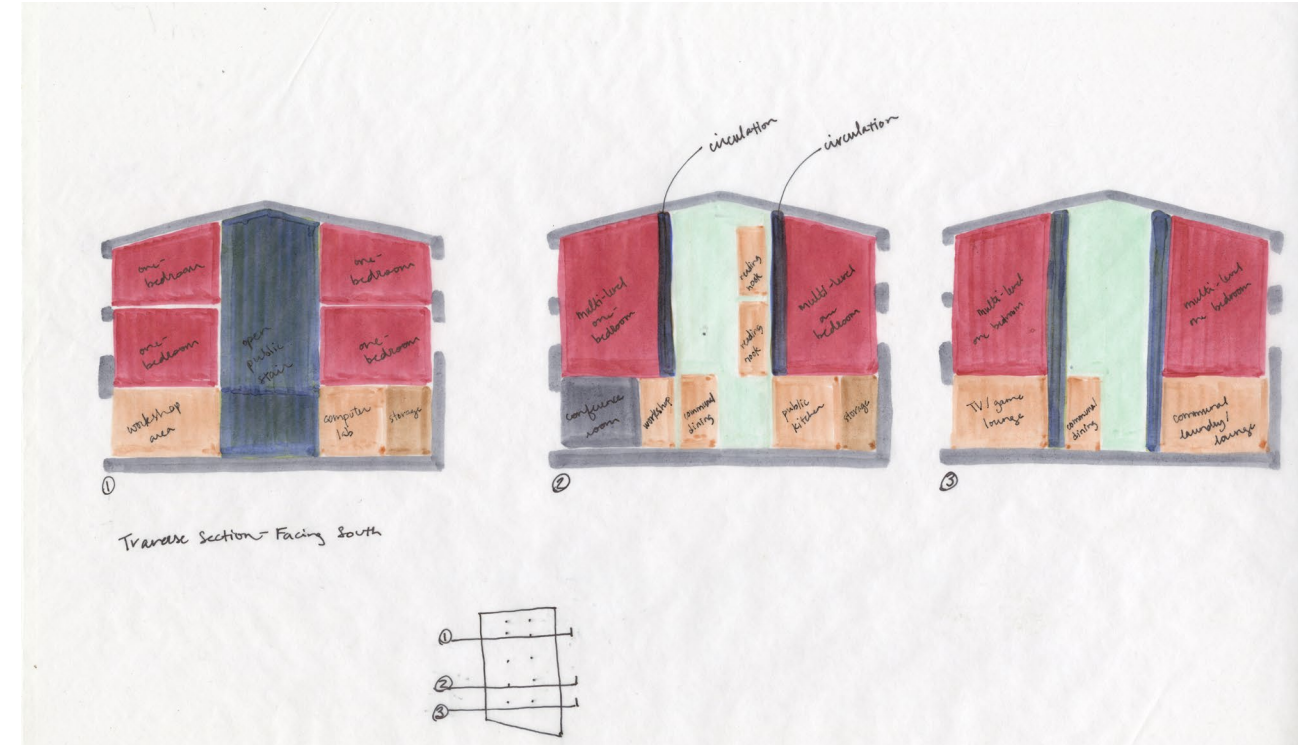
admin

residences

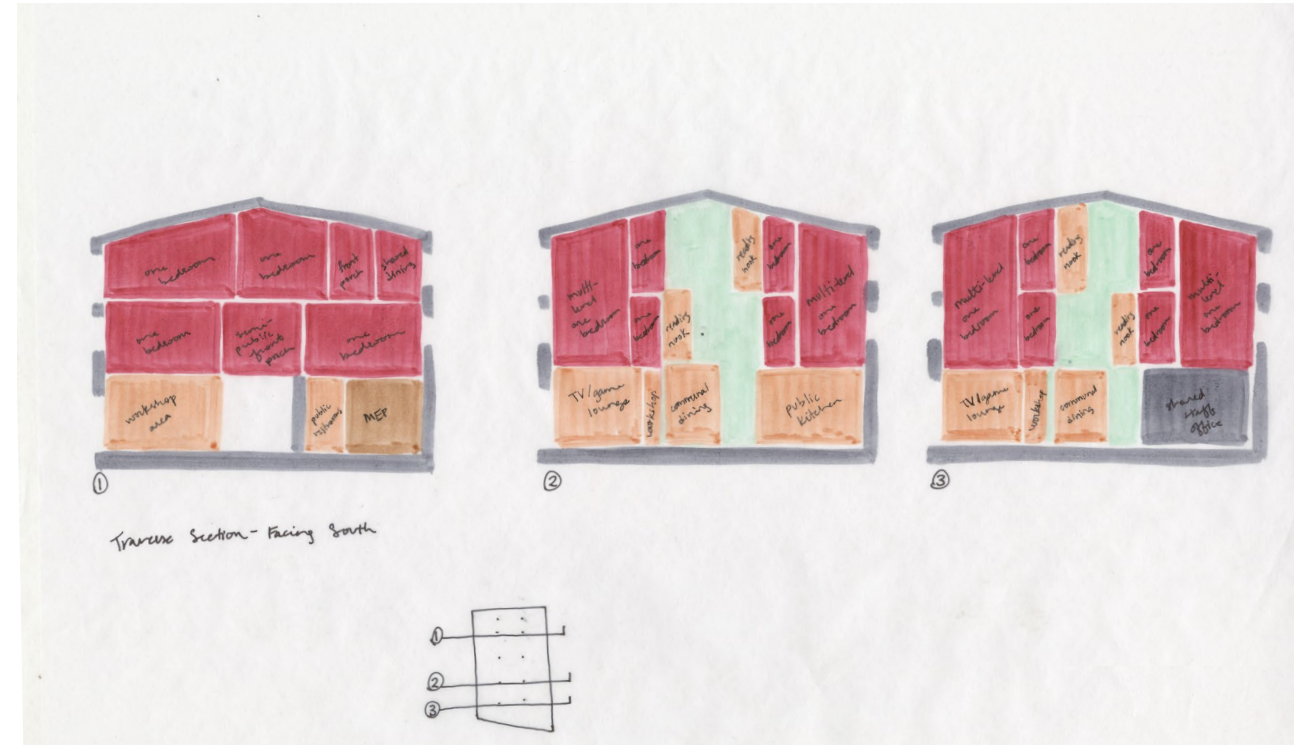
communal
gathering

study +
meeting

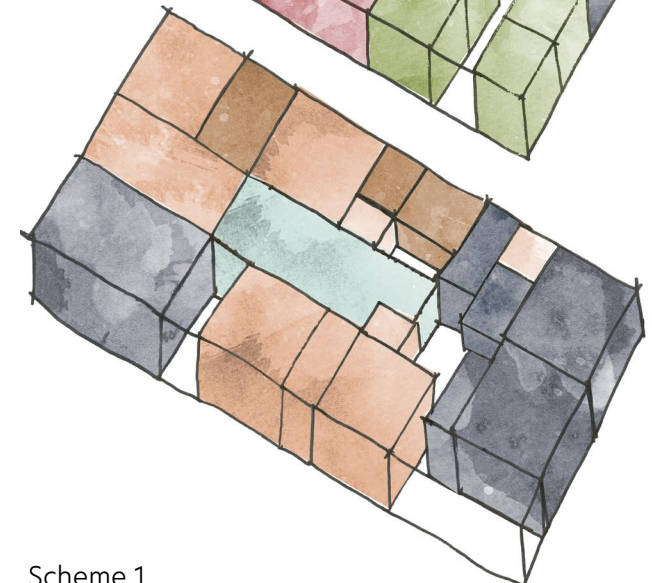
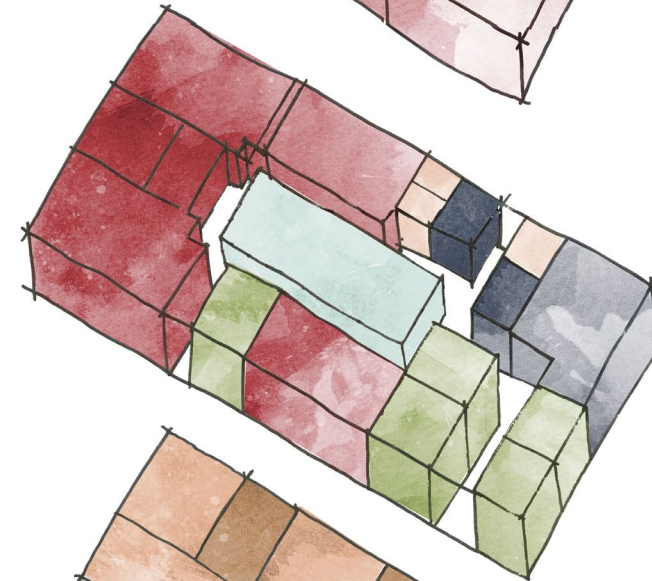
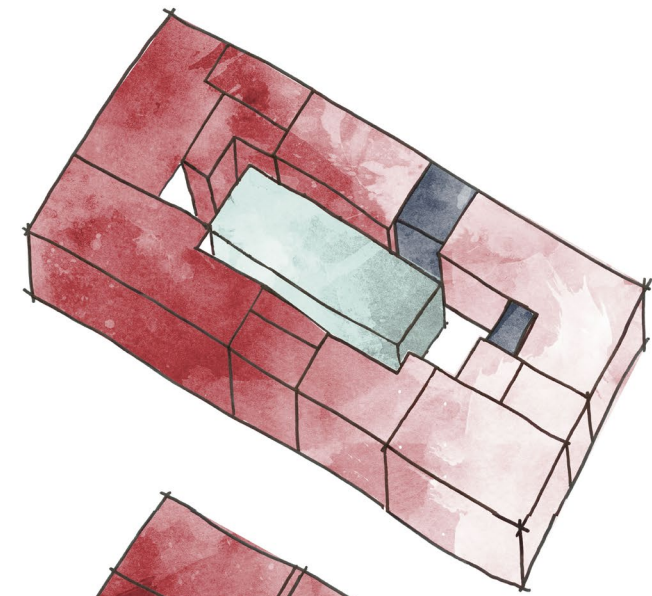
schematic
scheme 2



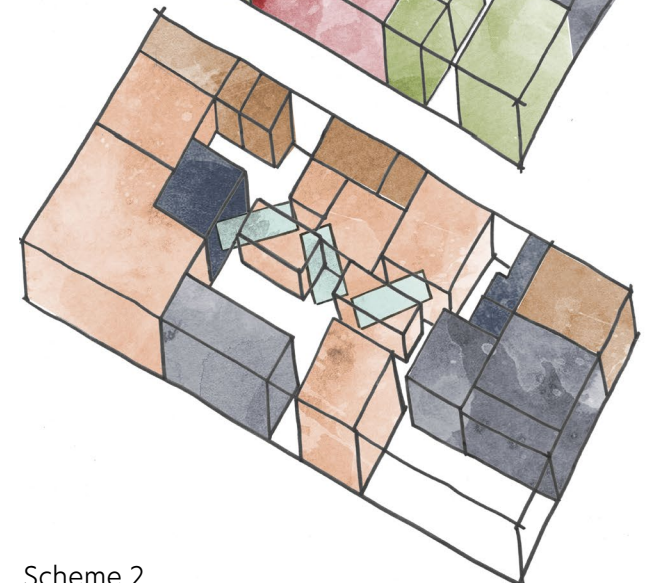
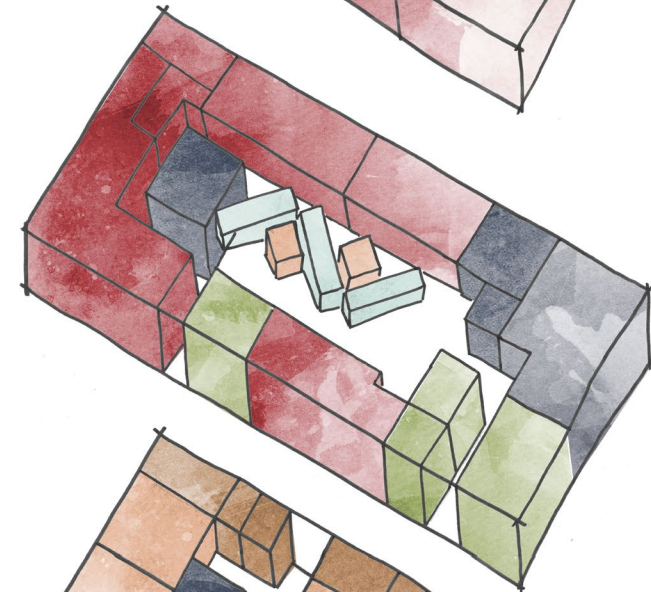
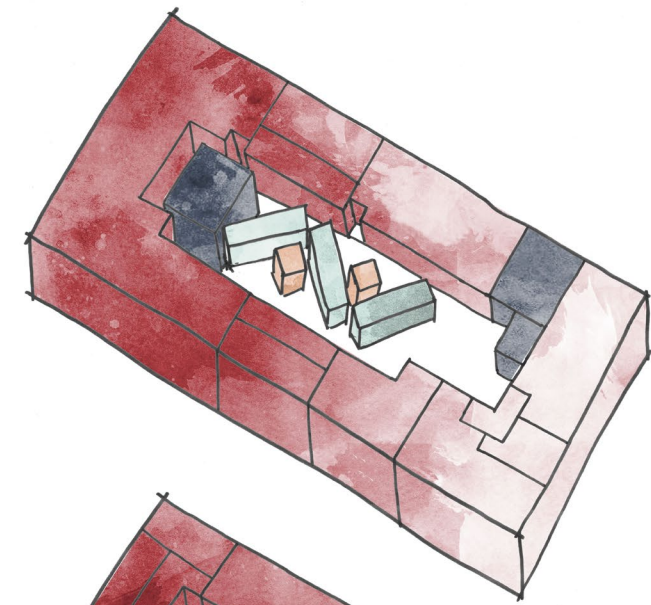
schematic
scheme 3



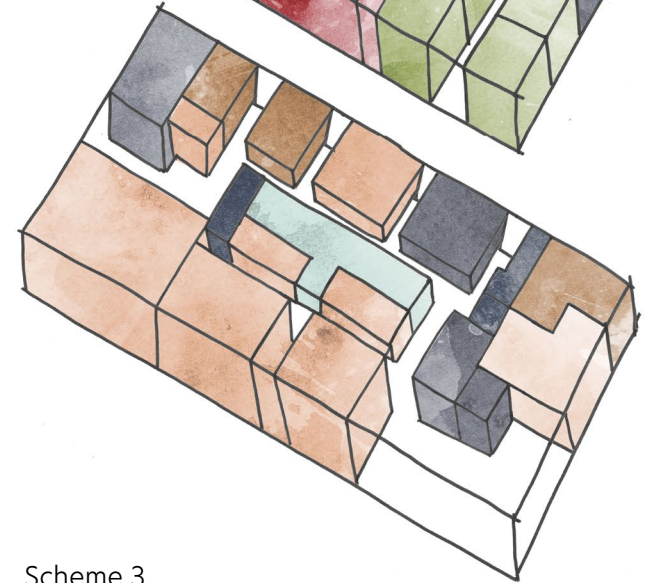
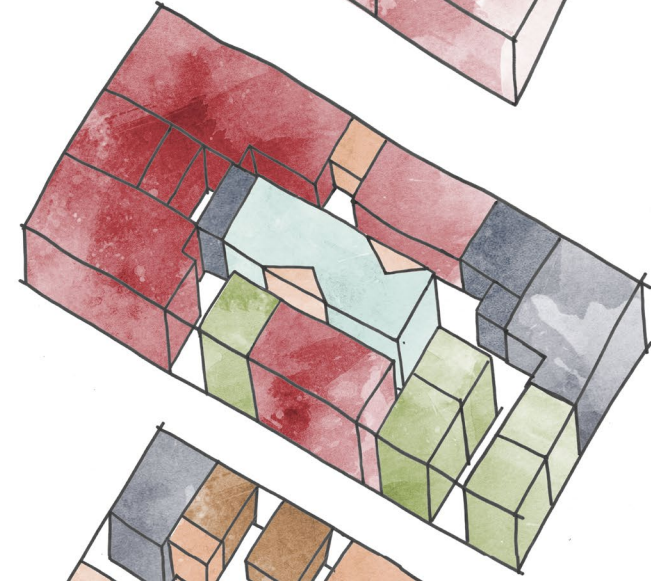
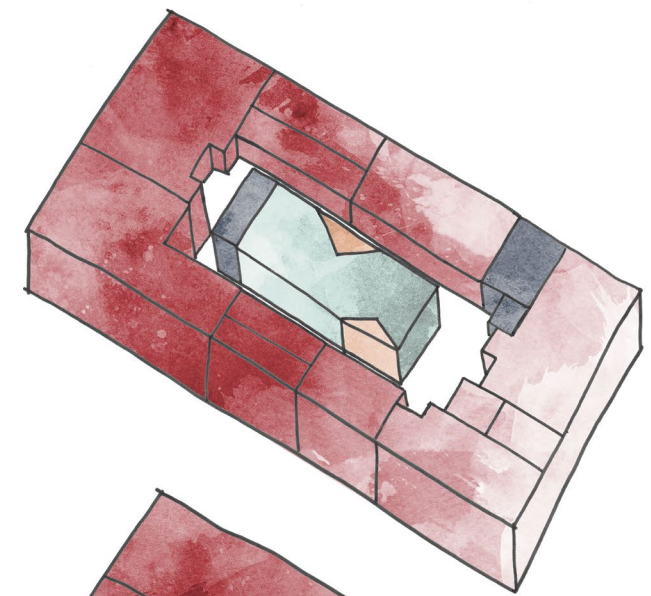
axonometric
block diagrams



Scheme 1

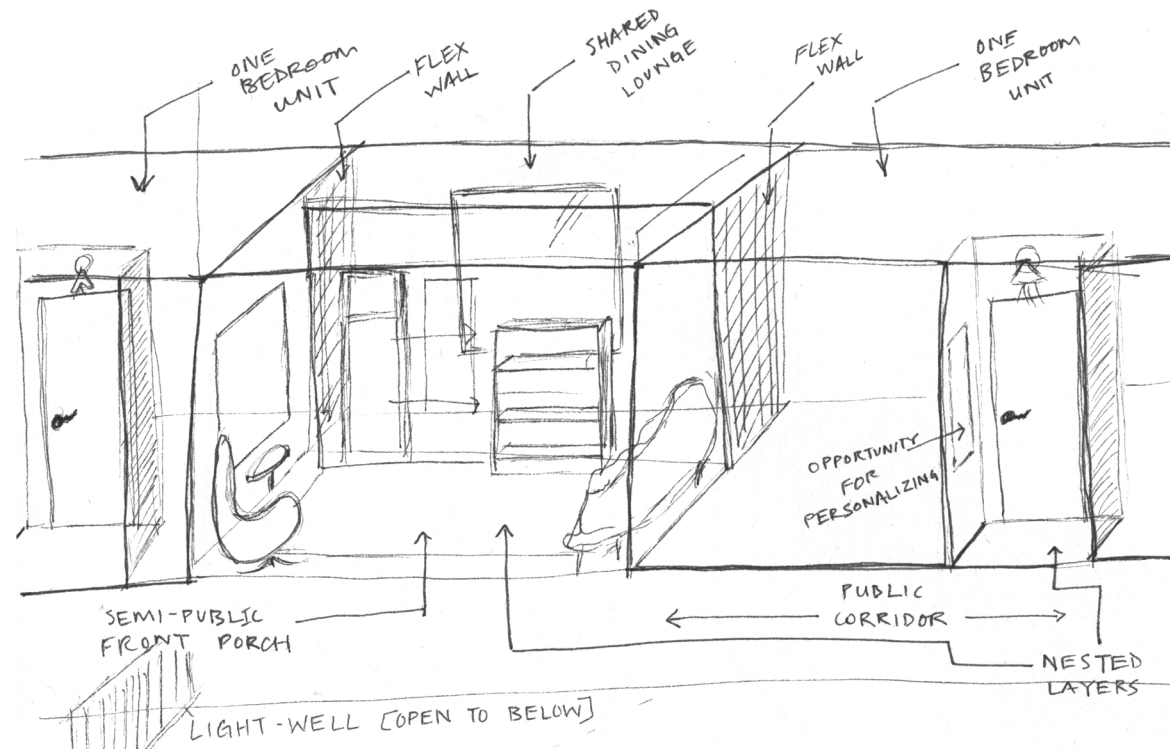


Scheme 2

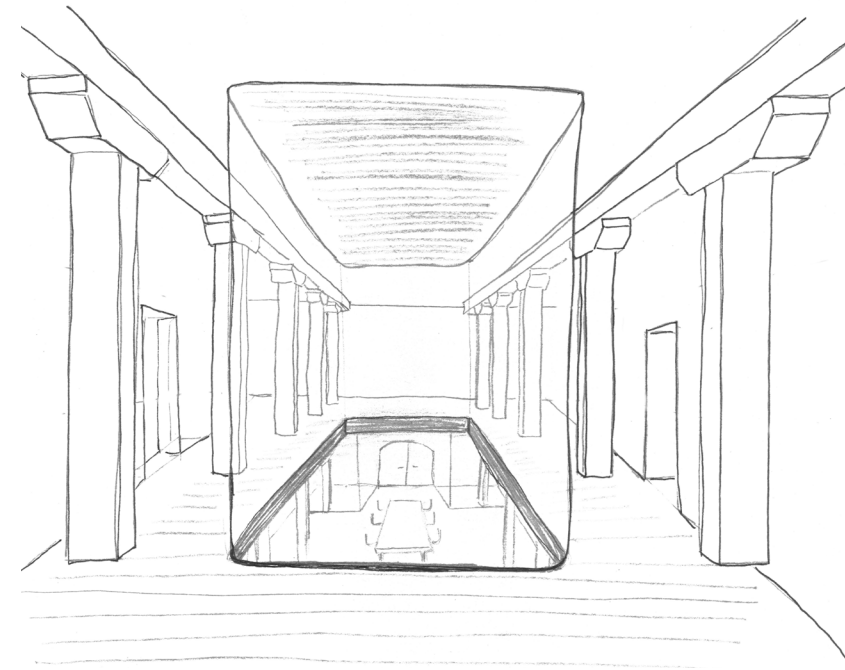


Scheme 3

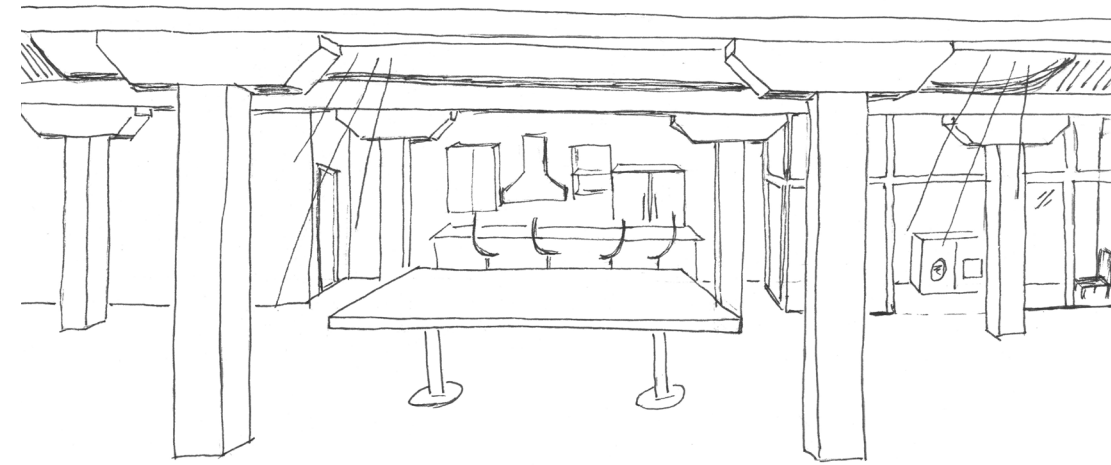
perspective sketches



Schematic sketch of unit front porch and shared dining lounge nested between residences



Schematic sketches of atrium relationship to common area below



DESIGN
DEVELOPMENT

common area
kitchen iteration



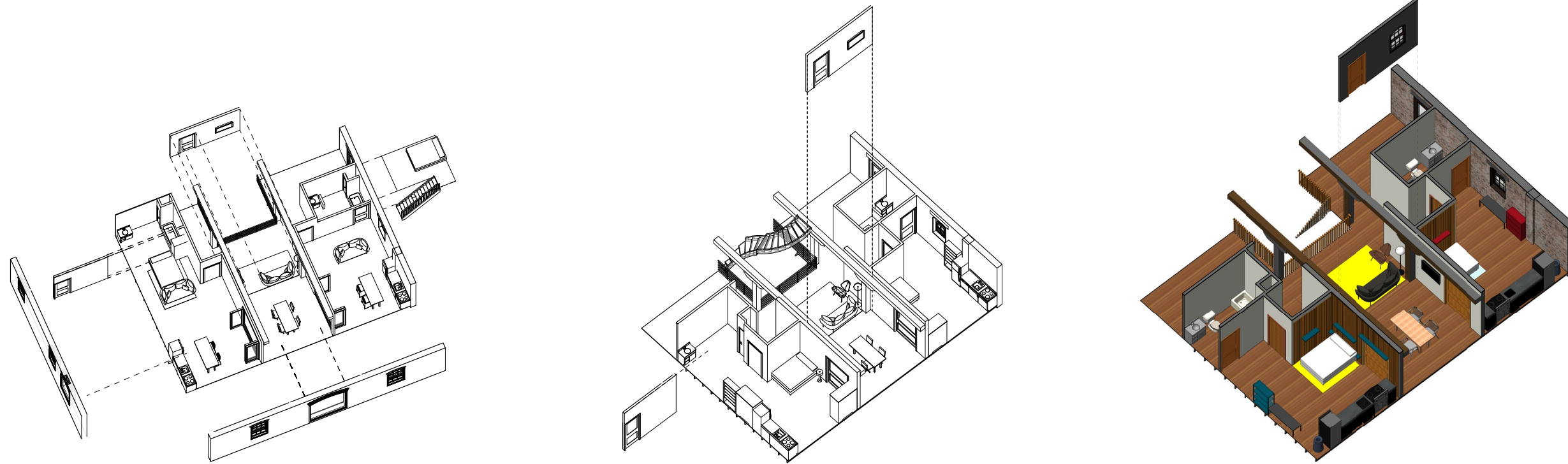
Stair and railing language, kitchen location and seating for dining shifted locations over time.

pass-through entry /
mail + bike room iteration



The entry remained exposed brick through every iteration to invoke warmth. Bike and mail storage was continually revisited, and a security desk was eliminated in favor of a more residential vignette.

residential unit iteration



Unit entry and kitchen was relocated over time. Dining was consolidated to the shared lounge, and a modular slat wall was introduced for space personalization.



development of
semi-public front porch
+ laundry lounge



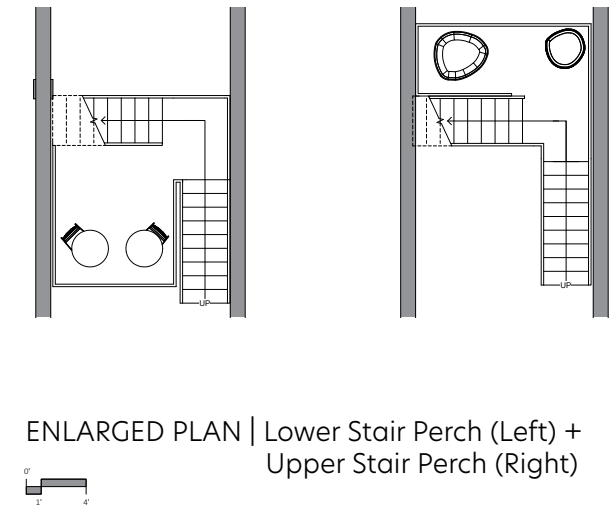
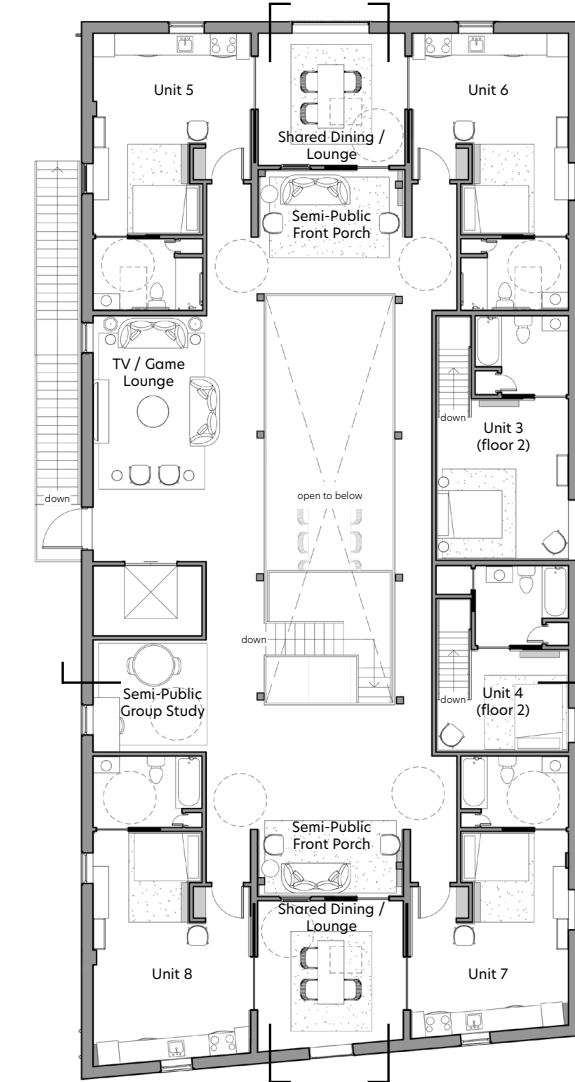
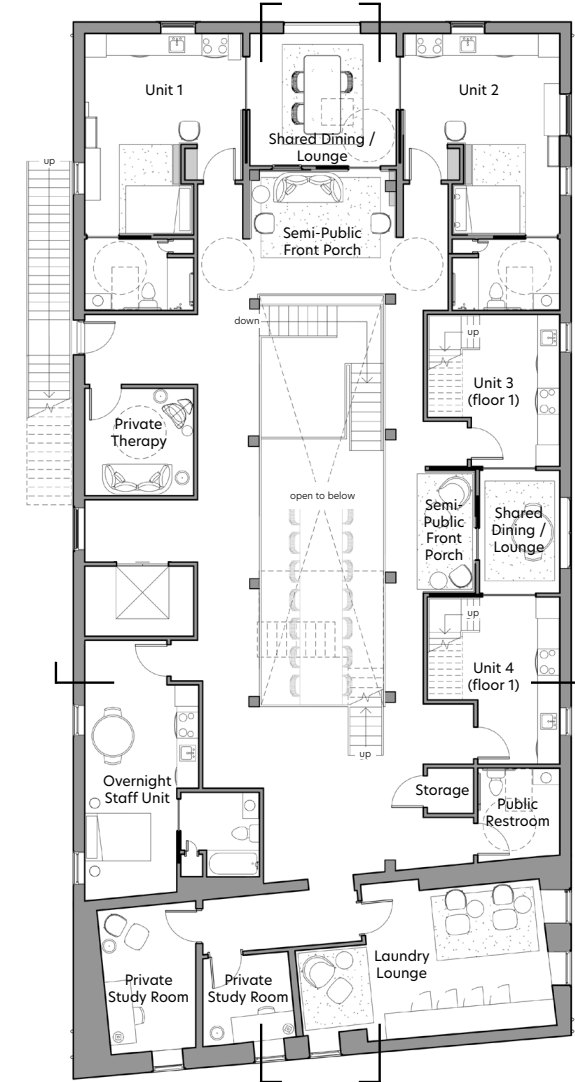
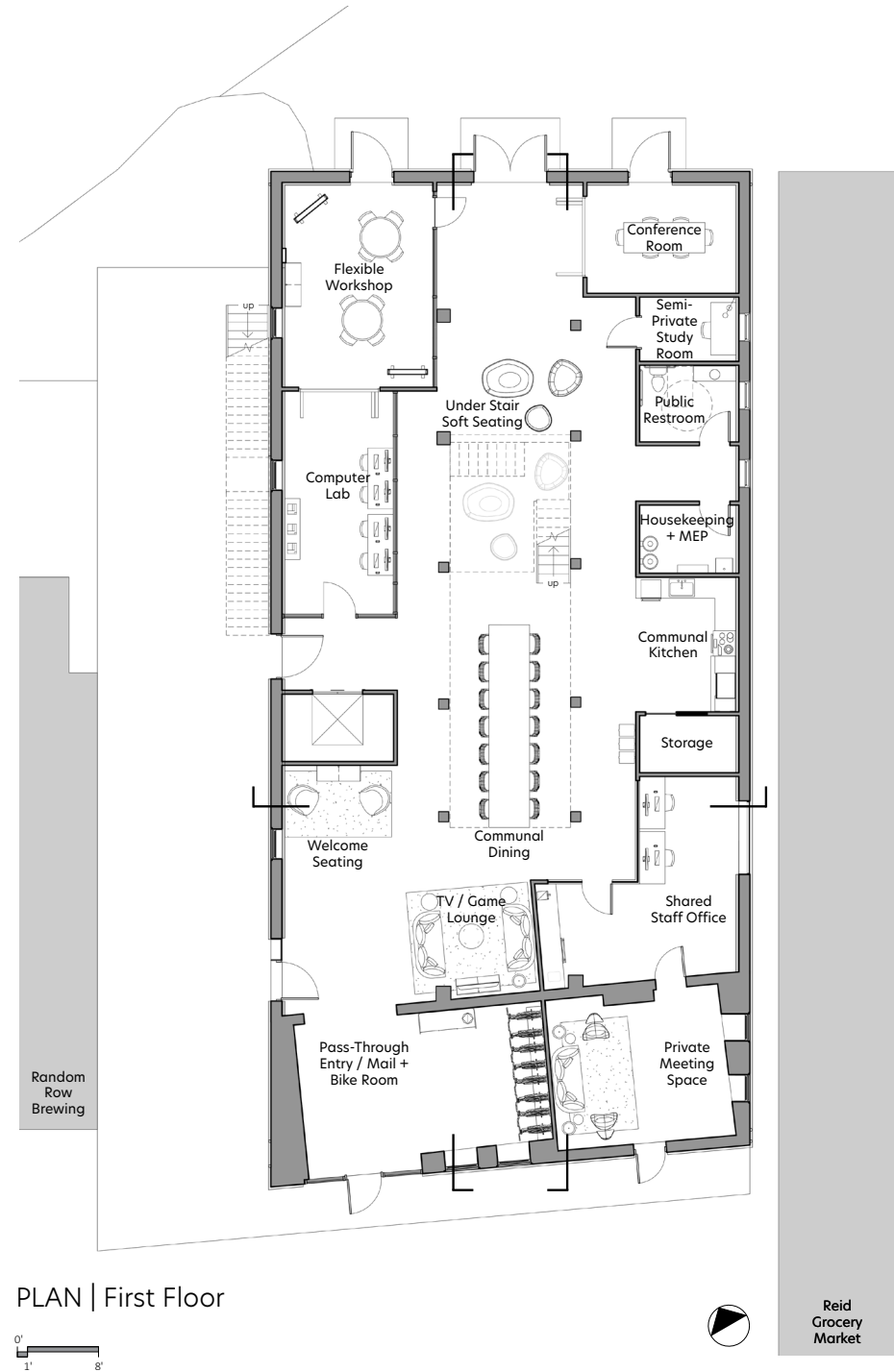
Semi-public front porches were developed in tandem with stairwell perches between levels.



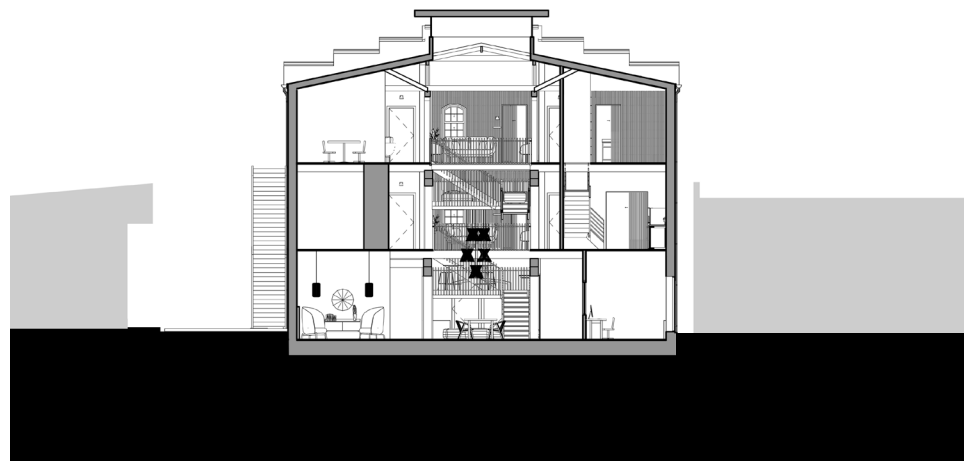
The laundry lounge was developed on the second level of the original carriage house. Exposed brick was maintained for consistency with language of the carriage house entry.

DESIGN
REALIZATION

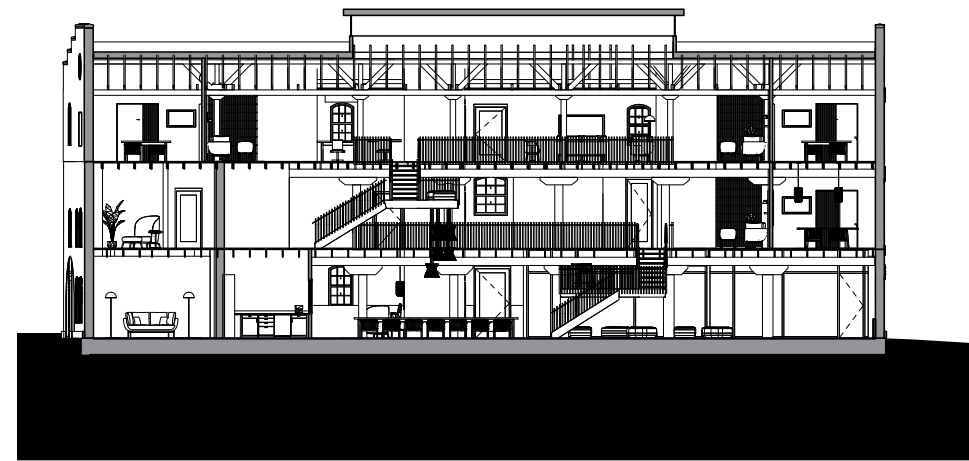
floor plans



sections



TRANSVERSE SECTION | Facing North



LONGITUDINAL SECTION | Facing West



Unit 5 & 6
Shared Dining

Unit 1 & 2
Shared Dining

Conference Room
Adjacent to
Under Stair
Soft Seating

Unit 7 & 8
Shared Dining

Hallway to
Laundry Lounge &
Private Study Rooms

Pass-Through Entry /
Mail + Bike Room

SECTION PERSPECTIVE | Vertical Wayfinding Assisted by Gradating Railing Hues
*Third floor mural by Charlottesville artist, Christy Baker

warm welcome

Original carriage house brick is exposed in the entry to combat feelings of institution. This area also serves as a mail room with bike storage.



fostering community

Centralized below the atrium, a family-style dining table serves as a public gathering point and supports overflow of workshop events.



light + sight

An open atrium combats lack of natural light and allows for opt-in and opt-out decisions to be made from public perches and semi-public porches above before engaging below.



designing in safety

The laundry is designed as a lounge to introduce comfort in waiting and to relieve anxieties surrounding theft of clothing.



gradient of experience

Semi-public front porches adjacent to inter-unit shared dining lounges provide options of interaction and withdrawal for those with a history of traumatic experiences.

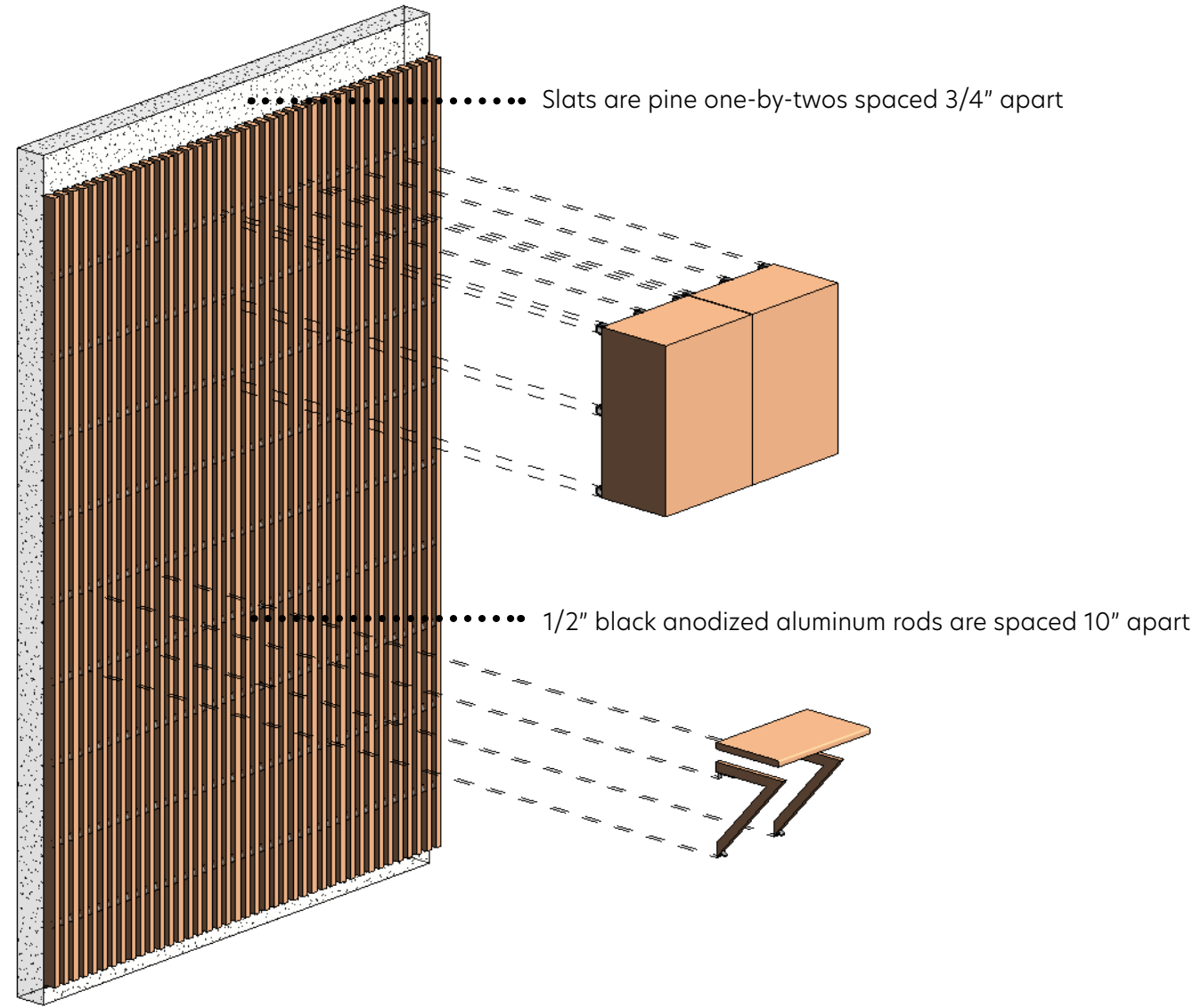


sense of ownership

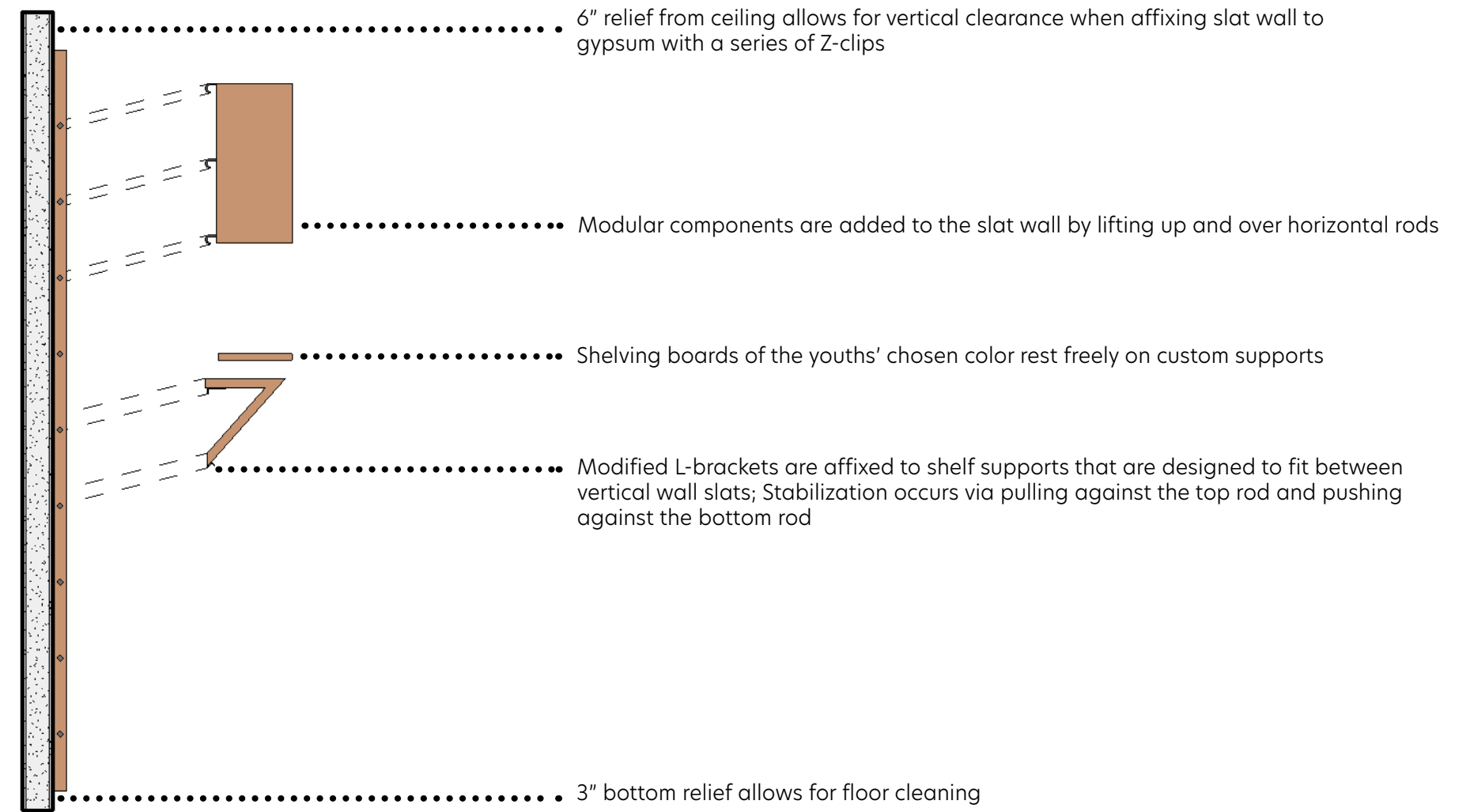
Youth are provided a similar kit of parts that include options for adjusting modular storage and accent hues to personalize the space during their temporary placement.



personalization



DETAIL AXONOMETRIC | Modular Slat Wall



DETAIL SECTION | Modular Slat Wall

investigative
prototype



- ① Custom brackets and shelving
- ② Modular slat wall
- ③ Modular slat wall with brackets affixed
- ④ Modular slat wall with shelving in place
- ⑤ Head-on view of modular slat wall assembly

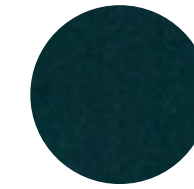


unit identities

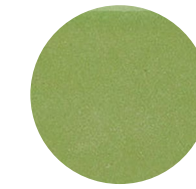
Unique thresholds assist with wayfinding and create a sensory boundary that reinforces feelings of privacy and personal home over institution.



Unit 1



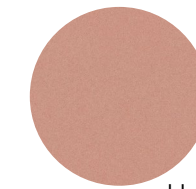
Unit 2



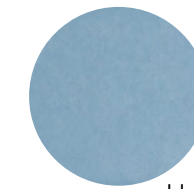
Unit 3



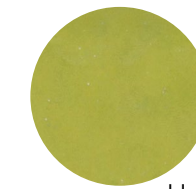
Unit 4



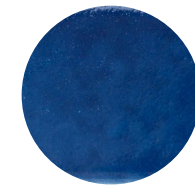
Unit 5



Unit 6



Unit 7



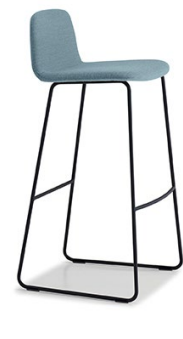
Unit 8

unit identities

- ① Tech Lighting
Bowman Wall Sconce
- ② ECOS Zero-VOC Paint
Arizona Stone
- ③ Fireclay Tile
Caspian Sea
- ④ Hightower
Nest Low Lounge Chair



MATERIALS
+ FF&E



product name colours ottomans - 4832, 4833, 4834

pedersen lounge chair

cantata lounge chair

mezzo barstool

nest low lounge chair & ottoman

arlo lowback sofa

nest easy chair

manufacturer bernhardt

bernhardt

bernhardt

bernhardt

hightower

hightower

hightower

product category furniture; seating

furniture; seating

furniture; seating

furniture; seating

furniture; seating

furniture; seating

furniture; seating

materiality fabric upholstery

oak wood veneer
chrome

solid oak wood

oak wood veneer
chrome

fabric upholstery
powder-coated black tubular steel

fabric upholstery
powder-coated black tubular steel

fabric upholstery
powder-coated black tubular steel

selected finish COM knoll textiles
vibe II zesty

m71 blonde
matte black powder coat

845 black

m71 blonde
matte black powder coat

COM knoll textiles
vibe II - various

COM knoll textiles
vibe II tattoo

COM knoll textiles
vibe II zesty / vibe II tattoo

dimensions 4832 - w 32-7/8" d 31-5/8" h 16-1/2"
4833 - w 43-3/4" d 38-3/8" h 16-1/2"
4834 - w 61-1/2" d 45-7/8" h 16-1/2"

w 32" d 31" h 30"
seat height: 15"

w 24-1/2" d 22" h 27"
seat height: 15-1/8"

w 18-3/4" d 18-3/4" h 38-1/4"
seat height: 30-1/8"

w 23-1/2" d 23" h 30"
seat height: 19-1/4"

w 80" d 30" h 30"
seat height: 17"

w 35" d 36" h 47-1/4"
seat height: 17"

application upper perch seating;
workshop overflow soft seating

private meeting;
private therapy

common area dining;
shared unit dining

lower perch seating

laundry lounge; large study room;
residential units; tv/game lounge;
semi-public front porches

tv/game lounges; private meeting;
private therapy;
semi-public front porches

welcome area;
laundry lounge;
semi-public front porch (unit 3+4)

sustainability BIFMA Level 1-2
Indoor Advantage Gold
Greenguard Gold

BIFMA Level 1
Indoor Advantage Gold
Greenguard
FSC

BIFMA Level 1
Indoor Advantage Gold
Greenguard
FSC

BIFMA Level 1
Indoor Advantage Gold
Greenguard
FSC

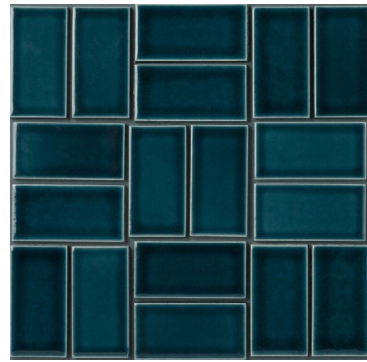
Red List Free
8% pre-consumer recycled content,
12% post-consumer recycled content

Indoor Advantage Gold
Red List Free
1% pre-consumer recycled content,
2% post-consumer recycled content

Red List Free
4% pre-consumer recycled content,
7% post-consumer recycled content



product name	heya lockers	curling table	kai pendant	syrma pendant	daydream wallpaper	soapstone	southern yellow pine
manufacturer	ofs	materia	tech lighting	tech lighting	hygee and west	alberene soapstone company	n/a
product category	furniture; storage	furniture; tables	lighting	lighting	finish	finish; surfaces	finish; surfaces
materiality	molded plywood; wood veneer; powder-coated steel + aluminum	powder-coated tubular steel frame lacquered MDF surface	machined aluminum metal rods	machined aluminum metal rods	screen printed coated paper	stone	wood
selected finish	linen on beech (solid beech veneer) onyx powder coat	black	nightshade black	matte black	PS-JRO-064 light gray	honed	semi-gloss clear varnish on natural; various ECOS Zero-VOC paint
dimensions	w 66" d 24" h 42" (custom)	w 19-1/2" d 19-1/2" h 23-1/2"	w 20-1/2" d 12" h 12" max hanging height: 165"	w 21-1/2" d 21-1/2" h 19" max hanging height: 163"	w 27" h 30'0" (double roll) 36" repeat	n/a	n/a
application	pass-through entry / mail room	laundry lounge; tv/game lounges; private therapy; private meeting; semi-public front porches	welcome area; shared unit dining	common area dining (underside of upper perch)	entry vignette laundry lounge	public restrooms; unit restrooms; common area kitchen; unit kitchens; laundry lounge	painted stair railings; modular slat walls + shelving
sustainability	BIFMA Level 3 USGBC & LEED membership FSC COC WELL Cornerstone member	FSC	Integrated dimmable LED	Integrated dimmable LED	eco-friendly ground paper is FSC certified and manufactured carbon neutral	impermeable natural surface quarried in Sterling, Virginia	carbon capturing during its fast growth; wide US distribution (lower carbon footprint than more exotic, imported woods)



product name recycled ceramic tile

recycled ceramic tile

recycled ceramic tile

manufacturer fireclay

fireclay

fireclay

product category finish

finish

finish

materiality glazed clay

glazed clay

glazed clay

selected finish overcast

slate blue

varies per unit (see right)

dimensions w 6" h 3" d 5/16"

w 2" h 2" d 5/16"

w 6" h 3" d 5/16"

application public restrooms

common area kitchen

unit bathroom walls and floors

sustainability recycled clay body
environmental product declaration
health product declaration
100% lead free glaze
LEED eligible

recycled clay body
environmental product declaration
health product declaration
100% lead free glaze
LEED eligible

recycled clay body
environmental product declaration
health product declaration
100% lead free glaze
LEED eligible



haystack | unit 1



caspien sea | unit 2



spruce green | unit 3



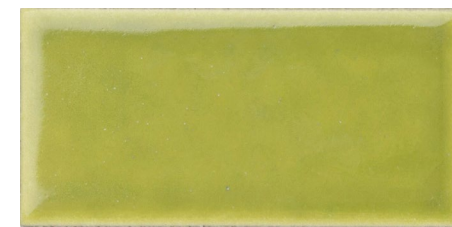
mandarin | unit 4



mesa | unit 5



caribbean | unit 6



palm tree | unit 7



lake tahoe | unit 8



product name 24" wide counter-depth top-freezer refrigerator

5.3 cu. ft. freestanding electric range

amana 24" dishwasher with soilsense

30" e-series transitional drop-down door microwave oven

30" transitional induction range

cove 24" dishwasher

24" designer under-counter refrigerator/freezer with ice maker

manufacturer whirlpool

whirlpool

whirlpool

wolf

wolf

wolf

wolf

product category equipment

equipment

equipment

equipment

equipment

equipment

equipment

materiality metal; glass; plastic

metal; glass; plastic

metal; glass; plastic

metal; glass; plastic

metal; glass; plastic

metal; glass; plastic

metal; glass; plastic

selected finish stainless steel

stainless steel

stainless steel

stainless steel

stainless steel

stainless steel

stainless steel

dimensions w 24-1/4" d 28-1/4" h 61-1/2"

w 29-7/8" d 27-3/4" h 47-7/8"

w 23-7/8" d 24-1/2" h 34-12"

w 29-7/8" d 20" h 17-7/8"

w 29-7/8 d 28-1/4" h 35-1/2"

w 23-5/8" d 23-1/4" h 34-1/2"

w 24" d 23-1/8" h 34-1/2"

application unit kitchen

unit kitchen

unit kitchen

common area kitchen
private staff office

common area kitchen

common area kitchen

common area kitchen
private staff office

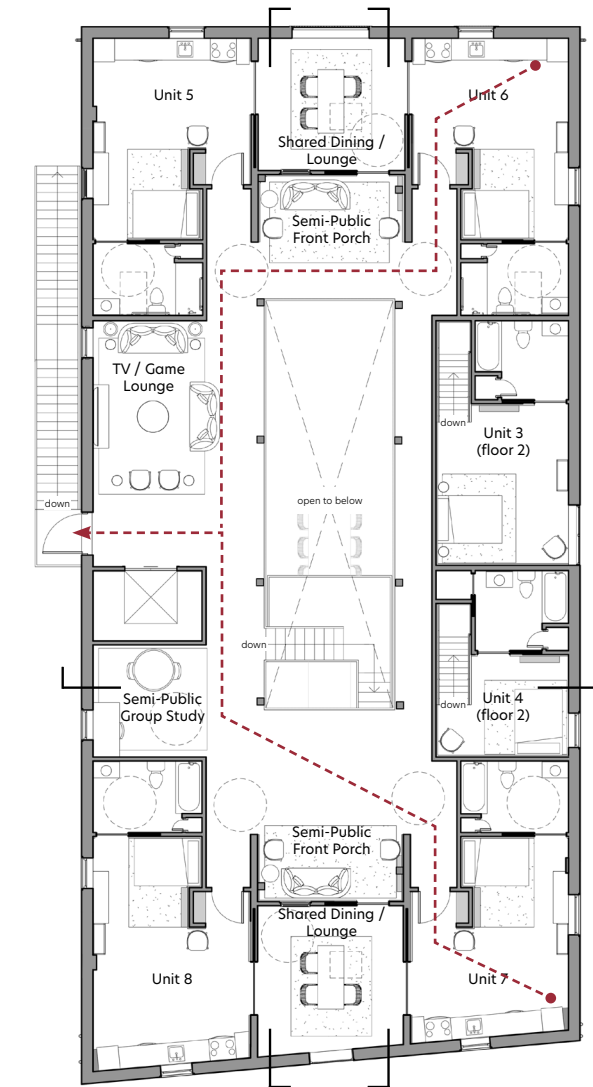
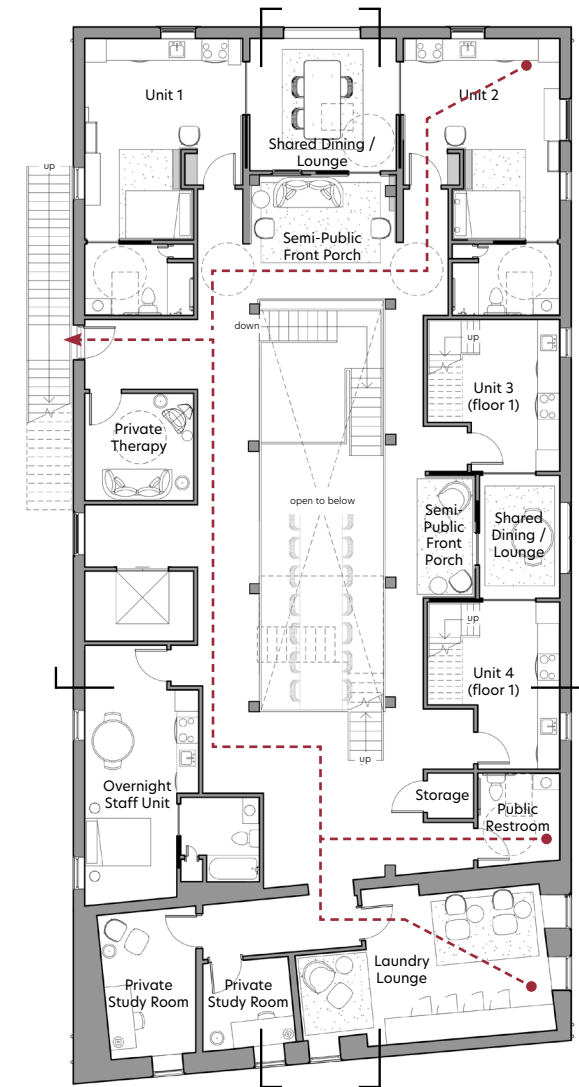
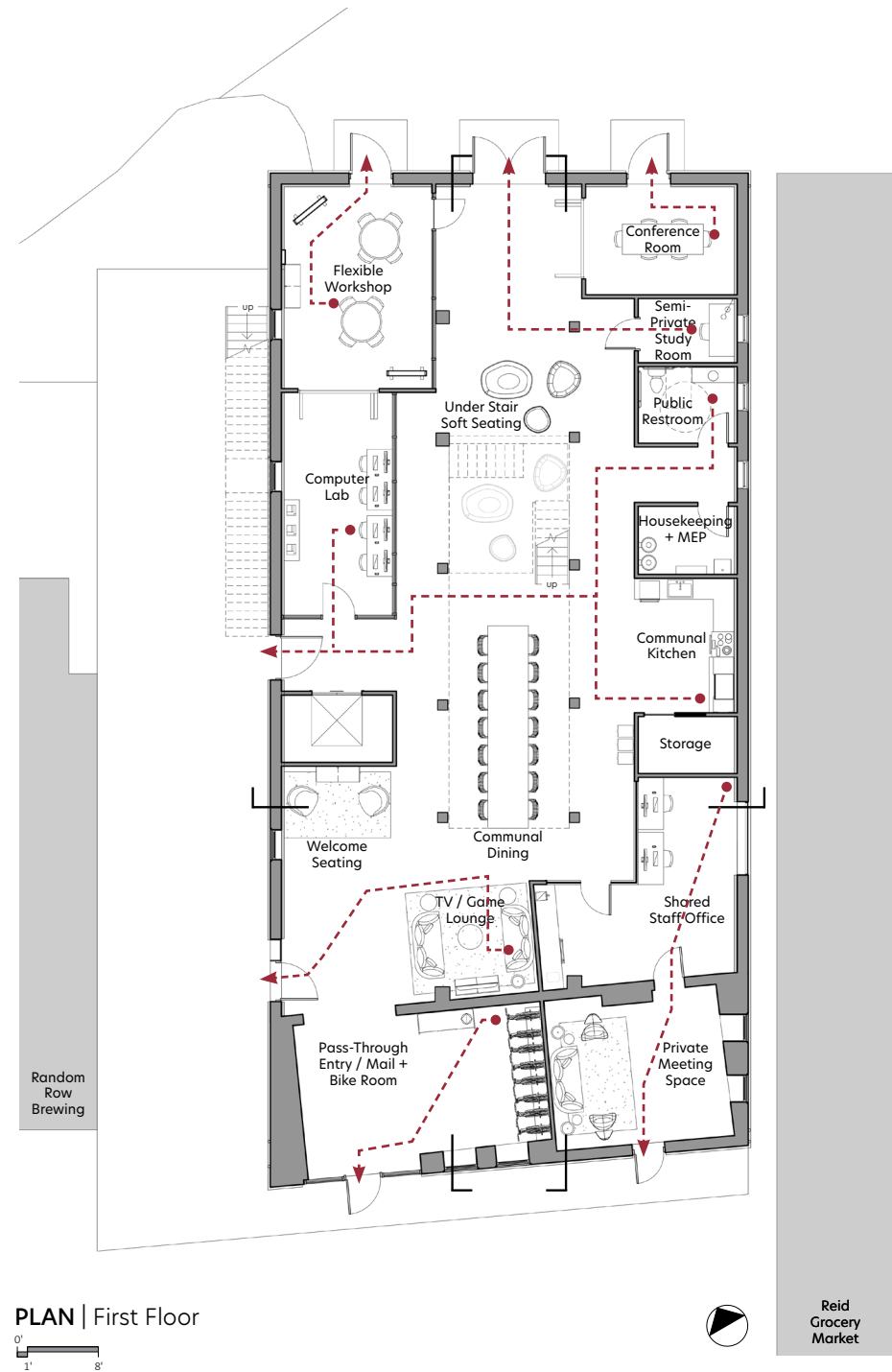
sustainability energy star certified

energy star certified

energy star certified

EGRESS +
BUILDING CODE

means of egress



building occupancy code

Table 1006.3.4 of 2021 IBC: Stories with One Exit or Access to One Exit for R-2 Occupancies

story: basement, first, second or third story above grade plane
occupancy: R-2
maximum number of dwelling units per story: 4
maximum exit access travel distance: 125 feet

Spaces Classified R-2:

staff overnight area: 290 sf
pass-through mail area: 290 sf
independent apartment (one level): 330 sf x6
independent apartment (two level): 420 sf x2
inter-unit flexible shared dining: 175 sf x4
inter-unit semi-public front porches: 115 sf x4
welcome seating area: 70 sf
laundry lounge: 300 sf
communal kitchen: 230 sf
television / game lounge: 165 sf x2
communal dining area: 300 sf
stairwell landing perches: 70 sf x2
housekeeping/MEP: 65 sf
storage: 50 sf x2

total R-2 square footage: 6,095
total occupancy: 67
total unique occupancy: 15

Spaces Classified B:

conference room: 160 sf
shared staff office: 70 sf
workshop area: 300 sf
computer lab / tech area: 250 sf
public restrooms: 75 sf x2
under-stair soft seating (workshop overflow): 150 sf
private therapy office: 100 sf
private meeting space: 250 sf
semi-public study: 115 sf
private study: 70 sf x3

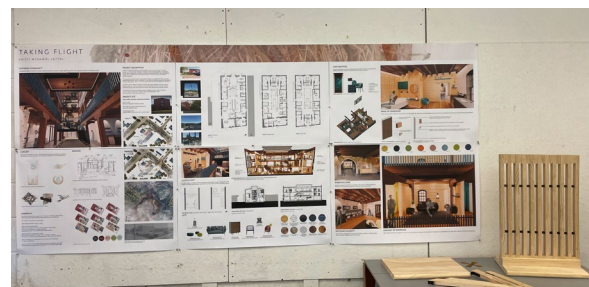
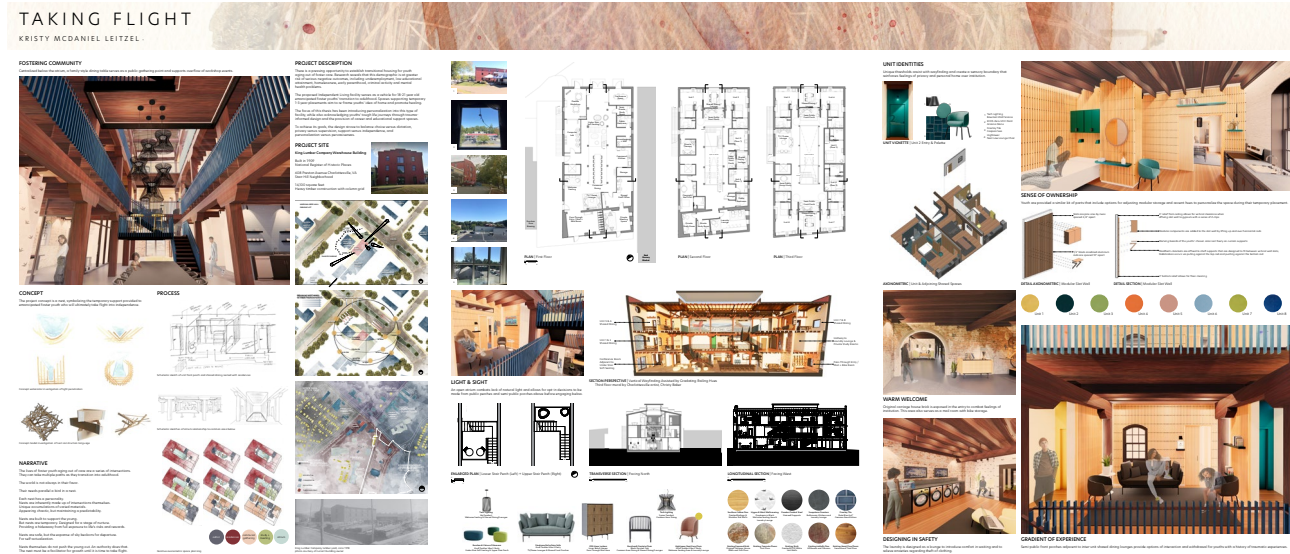
total B square footage: 1,755
total occupancy: 39
total unique occupancy: 15

1,755 / 100 occupancy load factor
= 18 people max occupancy

1 restroom per 25 for the first 50 = 1 ADA restroom
(design exceeds minimum requirement)

REFLECTIONS

thesis defense reflections



Reflecting on the thesis defense, it was the least nervous I've been for a critique in the last two years. I arrived to the presentation early, prepared and well-rested. Running through my talking points one last time beforehand, it was strange to finally feel more ready than anxious. To be able to share my work — which became more of a passion project than I ever expected — with Roberto, Sara, Emily, Camden, Lexy and Kristin was a full-circle experience. The project would not have been feasible without them, and it's not lost on me that this group helped build my design skillset from scratch over the last two years. I am grateful for their instruction, mentorship and authenticity inside and out of the studio environment.

The faculty and I spent a bit of time discussing the programming that takes place in the communal areas. It was agreed upon that the final configuration including a family-style table was effective in creating an immediate sense of home for foster youth, but it may need to be balanced with feelings of exposure from those overlooking the open atrium from above. In contrast, there may be potential for that space to expand and the stairwell perches to contract to allow for additional occupancy for the community. The workshop space adjoining

this common area may also have the opportunity to become more flexible through retracting walls, making the programmed overflow space during events more easily accessible and useful.

Above the common area dining table where featured pendant lighting is located, there was a suggestion to make the atrium railing on either side continuous to form the underside of the perch. This was probably my favorite recommendation, as I think it has consistencies with the nest design concept. While the painted pine railings were an abstraction of a nest's construction, designing moments where they change direction, versus remain the same throughout, is more analogous to the concept.

While it was not wrong to use the general idea of a nest for concept, given more time, the project may have benefited from investigating the language of several different kinds of nests. Each residential unit could have reflected a different type. However, this approach may have compromised the modular nature intended to allow occupants to operate on their space and "build their own nest." Universal versus unique design would need to be thoughtfully balanced. Dutch architect Herman Hertzberger was referenced for further study of spaces that are left intentionally incomplete.

With respect to the residential units, Camden made helpful remarks on how to craft the supports of the modular shelves to be more discreet and less of a violation to the wood slat wall. He also made suggestions on how to allow the modular wall language to change when it met brick above the residential unit kitchen counters. This fostered a robust discussion around how kitchens could be designed to assist those learning to cook on their own.

I was happy that I remembered my talking points regarding trauma-informed design, as this research supported many of the project's design decisions. A question arose regarding whether the research led the design or whether the design was born from the space. I feel confident that the project struck the right balance between letting the building dictate versus allowing the research to strong-arm the design. For instance, an atrium was included in the King Lumber Building as a result of neighboring buildings obstructing sunlight, but it also served to create clear sight lines and introduce gradients of experience and choice, all of which top the list of trauma-informed design strategies I hoped to implement.

The question of copying this design and applying it in another US city also arose from Emily. While the material language was inspired by and dictated by the King Lumber Building, I conceded that the design's connection to Charlottesville was more loose. Aside from the pine used throughout to nod to existing materials, design concept and the building's historic usage, there were other finish selections that could have made a stronger tie to Virginia. It will be important moving forward to focus on infusing a sense of place in my design projects. Despite this, I'm choosing to frame it as a positive that many elements of this thesis could be easily applied elsewhere, including projects where the target audience hasn't necessarily experienced trauma. While trauma-informed design isn't always overt, the design strategies can benefit anyone.

In conclusion, learned so much during this process. Not only about design, but about myself and what's important to me as a designer. I'm ultimately proud that the final design reflected my intent to not only do no harm, but to promote healing and support for emancipated foster youth.

CREDITS

thank you

"We need to share responsibility. It's easy to say
'It's not my child, not my community, not my problem.'
Then there are those who see the need and respond.
I consider those people my heroes."

- Fred Rogers

This project would not have been possible without the support of . . .

Colton Leitzel, my husband and support system

Family, friends, and studio mates who became sisters

VCUarts IDES faculty, most especially Roberto Ventura, Kristin Carleton & my thesis mentor, Emily Smith

Whitney Campbell, Principal at ENV, Fostering Acadia board member and my thesis mentor

Anonymous resident of Fostering Acadia

Rebekah Brown, Fostering Acadia Program Director

Caitlin Revis, Florida Social Worker

Dr. Rachel Rosenberg, Child Welfare Research Scientist at Child Trends

The King Lumber Company building owners

Jeff Bushman, Bushman Dreyfus Architects

Laura Rossbert, Shopworks Architects

Mimi Sadler, Sadler & Whitehead historic preservation

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