

Malini Foobalan



# architecture community. for

redefining social architecture in an urban context

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by Malini Foobalan

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for the Degree of

Master of Architecture

architecture for community  
redefining social architecture

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v	abstract
1	problem statement
2	statement of intent
4	proposal
7	program document
15	research results
21	typological research
37	historical context
45	site analysis
59	program requirements
63	design solution
71	personal identification
68	reference list

# table of contents.

# abstract.

This thesis investigates the question: can architecture create a sense of place and dignity amongst the homeless community? The typology for examination of this problem will be a hybrid of a transitional housing facility, and a community development center. The guiding idea behind this research is "by taking a look at the built environment, we should realize that architecture creates an emotional connection between human and building for a life satisfying experience." The justification for this project is that, "using architecture as a facility for the homeless to develop a sense of place and create an identity for themselves." A facility that can provide these psychological characteristics is essential for the service of the homeless community in South Lake Union, Seattle. The facility uses 60,000SF of area.

**keywords:** homeless, psychological, emotional, sense of place, identity



# problem statement.

can architecture create a sense of place and dignity  
amongst the homeless community?

# statement of intent.



project typology  
Extended Stay Motel

claim

The built environment is capable of creating a sense of place in individuals and positively impacting their well-being.

premises

For most people the self is a fragmental and vulnerable entity; we wish therefore to envelop ourselves in a symbol-for-self which is familiar, solid, inviolate, and unchanging (Davis, 2004).

Regardless of which social system prevails in the world or its parts, a softening human touch is needed to mold societies, cities, buildings... into something positive to the human psyche (Alto, 1929).

All buildings built should serve the liberation of mankind, liberating the lives of individuals (Wright, 1957).

theoretical premises/unifying idea

By taking a look at the built environment, we should realize that architecture creates an emotional connection between human and building for a life affirming experience.

project justification

This project aims to use architecture to design a facility for the homeless to not only enhance their mental health but also develop a sense of place and create an identity for themselves.



## narrative

Everyone deserves the right to a home, a basic life necessity. However, certain individuals, due to some unfortunate reasons, have no access to this basic life need. According to McKinney-Vento(2002) in the National Center for Homeless Education, a homeless person is defined as an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, or a public and private space that is not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation. Their statistics shows that on average, there are approximately 700,000 to a 1,000,000 homeless folks scattered throughout the United States.

An individual may become homeless for any number of reasons, according to the National Coalition for the Homeless; people are homeless for reasons, such as domestic and sexual abuse, troubled behavior, disrupted and abusive home environment, and substance abuse.

The homeless phenomenon is not only a social and cultural problem, but it is an economic problem that is possibly at its worst state ever in the United States.

# the proposal.



Unemployment and the major economic downturn are the major contributors to homelessness. People can not afford a permanent home because they do not have a job. Therefore, they resort to living on the streets. Most of their income from previous jobs has been used to raise their family, and they live in temporary shelters, transitional housing, or extended-stay motels.

Statistics shows that most of those who live on streets are typically single adults and those who typically opt for transitional housing or motels are families or women who have suffered from domestic abuse.

We know that in order to live with dignity, people need to live in a place that caters to a positive and inspiring environment. But how can architecture create such a connection with humankind? Not only that, but how can architecture help one find solace in a place that they can call home, even if it is temporary?

We have seen different solutions to homelessness, including temporary tent cities, homeless shelters, and long-term stay motels. However, these places do not provide for what we could call a “positive environment.” Most of these places have dilapidated living conditions and bring no sense or feeling of being at home. They have become merely a room enclosed by four walls and a door.

With no space for any activity, such as playing, reading, or gathering, people who live in such places often lose their social connections, expose their family to negative environments, and become isolated from the community. They often lead lives that are violent, harsh, and humiliating. Children in these situations grow up not knowing what the meaning of an actual home is and are often times exposed to the worst living conditions possible, which continually affect their up-bringing in a negative manner and eventually affect the community as a whole.

However, proper living environments, even though temporary, could provide for a more positive lifestyle. A proper environment not only promotes a positive lifestyle, but it should also provide a safer environment for everyone, help them improve their self-esteem and dignity, as well as give them hope to survive the harsh reality.

Most traditional homeless shelters are suitable only for a certain profile of people, typically single men. These shelters often leave no comfort space for women, children, youth, and families that are homeless. Therefore, this proposed facility will be opened to a broader clientele that will include the above mentioned groups to create balanced community demographics within the facility. Besides demographic diversity, this facility will also advocate for a more mixed-use program, compared to a typical homeless shelter.

Previous efforts realized that the homeless community found it difficult to prosper in a decent environment in the absence of proper skills, clothes, or even an address to call home. Hence, it only makes sense that this project considers spaces for an individual to not only call home, but also develop different living skills, and share creative ideas.



## user + client description

The user/client for this project will be the homeless population in the downtown Seattle area. The intention of this project is to show how architecture can affect humankind at a psychological level. The facility will focus not only on living provisions but also a place to enhance the wellness and skills of different individuals. This project will help improve on the potential lifestyle of a typical homeless person in the Seattle area and help them return to the social norm.

## major project elements

This project will have elements to support basic dwelling needs, as well as elements to improve different wellness aspects. This includes:

### (Dwelling)

Bedroom  
Bathroom  
Kitchen Space  
Green Space

### (Wellness)

Worship + Counseling  
a place for people to worship and meditate to help with their psychological healing.

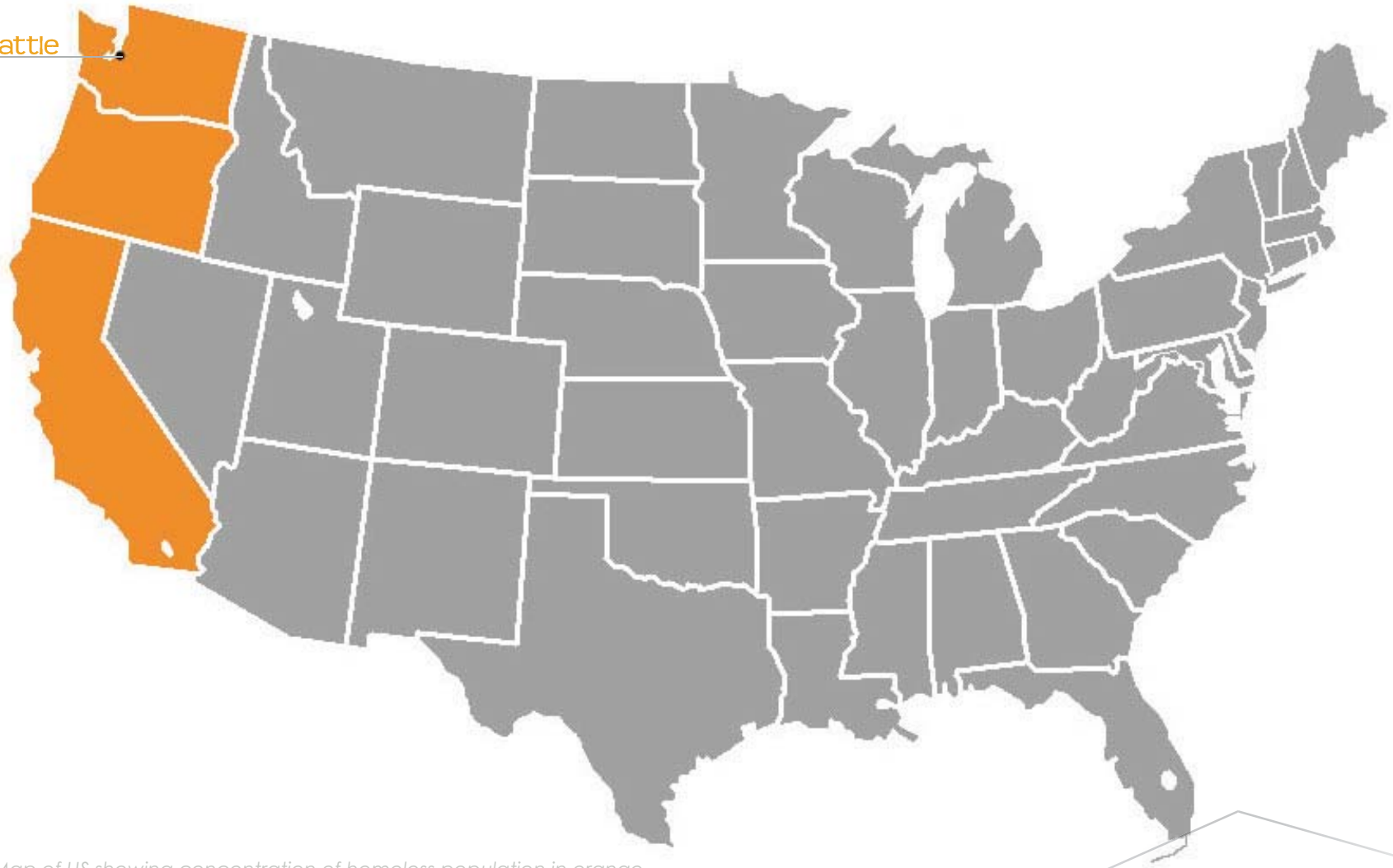
Play area  
a safe area for children and adults to play and be physically active.

Educational spaces  
a combination of multiple spaces that will encourage people to educate themselves and others.

Creative space  
a unique entity to this project where people can gather and do different activities as a community.

Additional Modules  
other elements include:  
Green Space  
Circulation

Seattle



1 Map of US showing concentration of homeless population in orange.

site information





## site information

The selection of site for this project is located just outside the downtown area of Seattle, precisely located south of Union Lake. Sitting in an urban setting provides great views of the city skyline, as well as Union Lake. It is located in an area with a high homeless population. This site is also located along public transportation routes and is relatively close to commercial zones of Seattle.

2 Google Sketchup image showing site selection ( South Lake Union )





## project emphasis

The emphasis of this project is to improve physical and psychological well-being for homeless families and youth population in the downtown Seattle area, by understanding the connection between architecture and humankind. The simple principle is that every human has the right to a home. The goal is to create an emotionally, psychologically, and economically improving living environment.





## plan for proceeding

### *research direction*

The research focus will carry out a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical premise/unifying idea. This research will entirely comprehend the project typology, historical context, site analysis, and programmatic requirements.

### *design methodology*

The technique used for the complete design will be a mixed method prototypical, which involves both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Both the methods will be implemented in a concurrent manner to aid the design decisions. Research will be made known throughout various points of this project book and presentation, as shown through text and graphics. The strategy will be guided by the theoretical premise/unifying idea.

Research will be made known throughout various points of this project book and presentation, as shown through text and graphics.

Quantitative data will include statistics and scientific data analyzed or gathered directly.

Qualitative data will be gathered through direct observations, local surveys, archival searches, and direct interviews with individuals and groups.



## *design methodology*

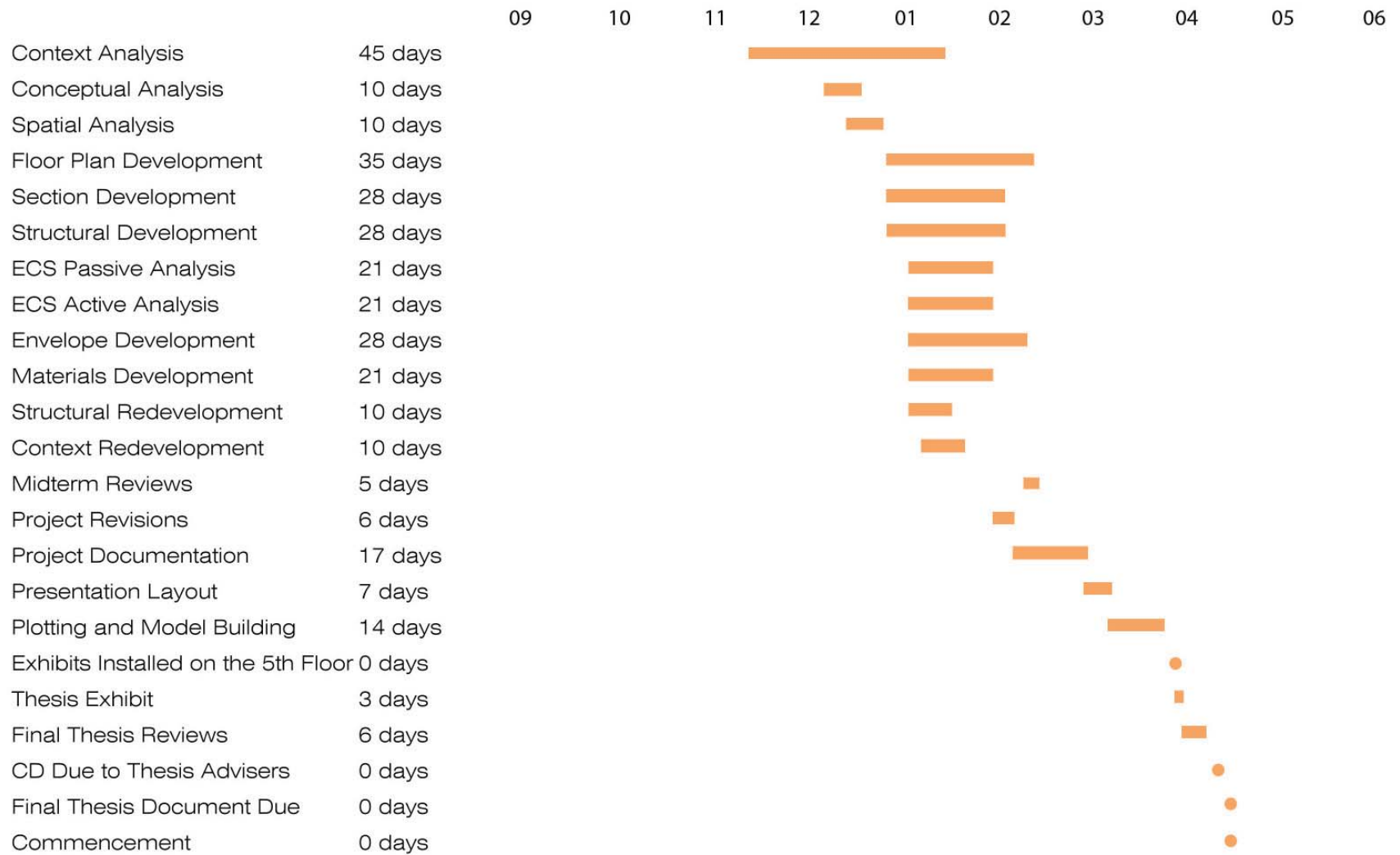
Documentation will be compiled digitally and presented through the thesis book. Copies of it will be made available through the North Dakota State University digital repository.

This project will be presented in sequence of an introduction to the topic and decision to pursue topic as an architectural design solution, followed by possibilities that helped my research and design. Following the described possibilities, I will explain the chosen site and proceed further with the overall design through graphic presentation that will include drawings and models.

Data collection and documentation will be done in certain intervals of time.



## schedule



## studio experience

2

fall 08' arch 271

*Darryl Booker*

Tea House  
Boat House

4

fall 10' arch 471

*Bakr Aly Ahmed*

San Francisco Highrise

spring 09' arch 271

*Megan Duda*

Dance Academy  
Dwelling

spring 11' arch 472

*Malini Srivastava*

University of Minnesota Faculty Cabin  
(Design Build - Passive House)

3

fall 09' arch 371

*David Crutchfield*

Agricultural Museum & Information Center  
Library

5

fall 11' arch 771

*Mark Barnhouse*

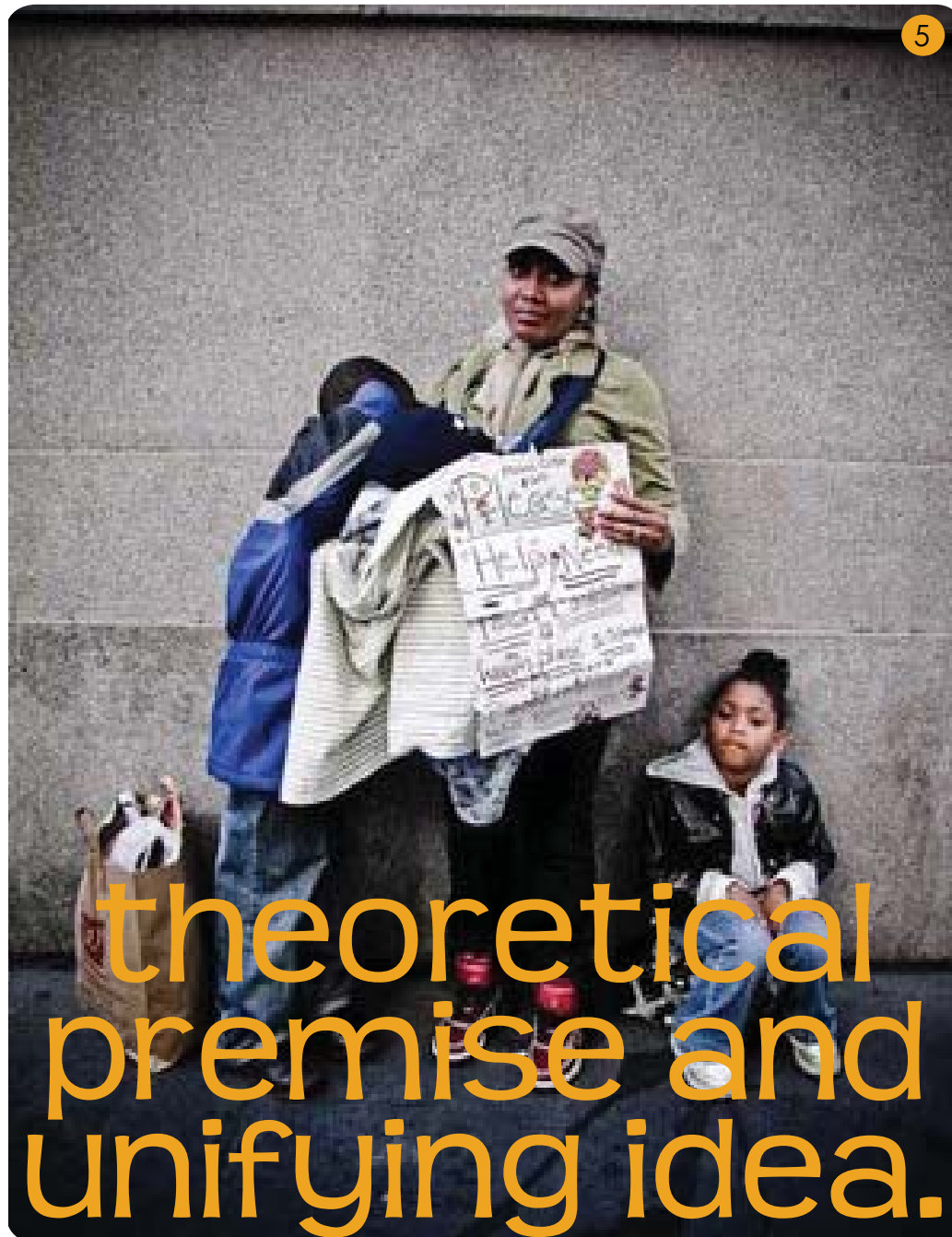
Water Resource Experiment Station

spring 10' arch 372

*Cindy Urness*

Bus Rapid Transit  
Community Swimming Pool





## *homeless - the phenomena*

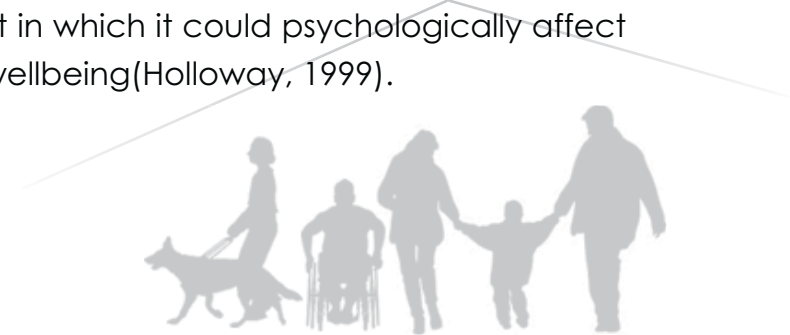
What is homelessness? Who are they and why are they homeless? These are questions that linger in the minds of many people when we talk about homeless people.

According to the McKinney-Vento Act(2002) in the National Center for Homeless Education, a homeless person is defined as an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, or a public and private space that is not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation. This definition also summarizes what a “home” is, or should mean to a person.

The homeless population is comprised of every possible type of person. This includes single men, women, children, teenagers, families, veterans, people with jobs, people with no jobs, addicts, as well as mentally ill people. However, it is imperative to not believe that all homeless people are typical drug and alcohol abusers, or jobless lazy people. In today's economy, people with jobs are also left homeless, especially if they are just getting by with the minimum wage, and yet have a large family.

Every homeless person is in this situation for a reason. This could vary from person to person. According to the National Coalition for the Homeless (2009), people have come to such a condition, due to eroding job opportunities, lack of affordable housing, poverty, domestic abuse, mental illness, addiction disorder, etc.

Taking all these factors into consideration, one can only imagine the psychological pressure these people go through on a day to day basis. Previous research has found that individuals affected by homelessness may experience a great deal of pressure, which eventually results in them falling into a state of deep depression(Holloway,1999). This phenomenon further affects their surrounding environment – families, children and friends. What one does on a daily basis and the choices they make to resolve problems in their life is a personal matter. However, it is not puerile to say that architecture can impact one's environment in which it could psychologically affect a person's wellbeing(Holloway, 1999).



## *humans and environment*

It is essential to understand that individuals are often surrounded by environments that were once natural. In today's surroundings, most of what we occupy, live in, work at, or visit, are creations of humankind or have been altered or affected by other people. In an urban setting, such as downtown Seattle, much of what we see are results of human intervention. We have slowly taken over the natural world, leaving few fragments of what we could consider natural to the environment.

In these circumstances, each individual will have a different perception of what is a natural atmosphere. And each of their perceptions brings a different kind of joy, delight, and excitement to them. To understand this, let us observe the following examples of what I perceive as my natural environment:

- a) the sunlight that filters through my bedroom window every morning
- b) people's sporadic activity around my apartment
- c) books, tools, music, computer that provides me things to do on a day to day basis

This should tell you that my natural environment in the morning, creates a lively morning for myself, and people's activity around my apartment tells me that I am not isolated. With these facts, I automatically perceive an environment for myself that I personally enjoy.

Tying this back to other people, especially the homeless, we should recognize the fact that they have had their fair share of uncomfortable environments while on the street. However, over time, and due to the lack of options, they are pushed to accept their street lifestyle and shelters become natural. The presences of other homeless people, the rush to stand in line to get into shelters, and the stress to get a job are all natural situations to them. As a human being, we all know that such situations or environments are going to affect one's state of mind to be more negative than a normal or steady individual.

## *environmental psychology and architecture*

According to the State of Homelessness in America, the number of homeless people in the United States has increased by 3% from the year 2007 to 2009. This number represents single adults, single youth, as well as families. In certain states the numbers have doubled (National Alliance to End Homeless, 2011).

A growing number of cities, including Los Angeles, Atlanta, and Seattle are forbidding the activities of the homeless. According to the National Coalition for the Homeless, cities are making it illegal to sit in a bus shelter for more than an hour, illegal to beg, sleep on streets, or even walk through a parking lot if they do not have a car parked there. The lack of proper shelters and housing are keeping people on the streets and in some cases bringing them back to the street.

This literature research considers whether architecture can help cure the already injured homeless society, by responding to the following questions:

- a) What does home mean to the homeless?
- b) Can architecture provide a sense of place for the homeless?
- c) Can architecture psychologically affect an individual?
- d) Can architecture restore a sense of dignity to the homeless?

Understanding that architecture has implications on a person's emotional behavior highlights the complexity of social housing. A homeless shelter, regardless of its type—extended stay motels, single room occupancies, or transitional housing—does not need to be merely four walls and a bed. It underscores the importance of having a shelter that is an economical solution, yet delightful and psychologically effective .



## *What does home mean to the homeless?*

"This is the true nature of home – it is the place of peace: the shelter, not only from injury, but from all terror, doubt, and division. In so far as it is not this, it is not home...it is then only a part of the outer world which you have roofed over..." (Ruskin, 1865)

In a recent HBO released documentary, called the *Motel Kids of Orange County*, one of the cast in the documentary, about 8 years old, was asked what the meaning of a home was to him. His reply was that he did not know what that really meant. The number of children that have not lived in an actual home has increased to an alarming state. Many of them do not know what it is like to live in a protected and secure environment, to have the proper atmosphere to play, or understand what privacy means (*Motel Kids of Orange County*, 2011).

These attributes could eventually evolve into social problems. Just as discussed earlier, the environment these children and families continue to grow and survive in, will have a negative impact on their mental and physical welfare. Therefore, it is important to understand what a home really means to the homeless people. Is it merely a shelter, or is it more than that. What elements of architecture can affect individual characteristics of a human being in a positive manner?

A home can be characterized along six dimensions: It should be a haven, providing security, refuge and protection. It should have order, both spatially and temporally, it should express identity, which would be a result of the transformation from house to home, it should provide connectedness: to people, place, past, and future, it should radiate warmth both symbolically and interpersonally, and finally it ought to be physically suitable in order to match the psychological needs of its users (Strumse, 2008).



## *Can architecture provide a sense of place for the homeless?*

When a person is homeless but not houseless, the residence would have little or no meaning, security, order, identity, or connectedness. Behind the state of being both houseless and homeless lies, at least in affluent societies, a process of increasing marginalization and exclusion, starting with the loss of family support, continuing with the loss of support from friends, and ending up with the loss of support from home community. Humane solutions to homelessness should include the provision of both housing and social support. Integrated plans aimed at restoration of housing and support, could, for example, cover the following aspects: a) basic services: food, clothing, showers, b) physical and mental care, c) shelter, d) employment, and e) permanent housing.

It is imperative to believe that homeless people know what it feels like to be in different environments. A young child not knowing what it is like being at a play area, or a teenager not knowing what it is like being in a school, or a family not knowing what feels like having dinner together are a few things that tell us that a dorm-like shelter will not help reinstate a sense of pride and dignity to these people. Homeless people are often in the eyes of the general public, and they can become shut off from the rest of the world, leaving them in isolation. Therefore, architecture that replicates the typical shelter will not create any connection between those who live within the four walls of a shelter, and those who live outside those four walls.



MacDonald(1996) shares stories of homeless families in the extended stay motels, where some people, although aware of the consequences of negative housing conditions, have no choice but to live together in a small room with no space for anything but bickering at each other. Children can not go outside, because some places just do not have the security to provide kids with proper play area that is secluded from drug abusers, prostitutes, or alcoholics (MacDonald,1996).

In this case, the social condition has forced people to live within their given space. On top of that, the “motel” architecture leaves people with no options. The failure to respond to the needs of a typical person is driving the homeless people into a deeper state of depression, seclusion,

### *Can architecture restore a sense of dignity to the roofless?*

Cruz(2010) reported that architecture that contributes to the social well-being of a community is “less about the physical building, and more about social flows”. He states that density is not just about the size of the area, but the number of social and economic exchanges. In a social climate, like today's, especially in large Metropolitan Statistical Areas, social exchanges are more on the negative side than the positive (Cruz,2010).

This simply means that humanism is lacking in such places. Tina (not real name), who is 15, lives on the street because she ran away from her abusive father. To her, there is nothing more demeaning and morally degrading than living on the street and having nowhere to call home. Tina represents the nearly 1 million homeless Americans who live on the street and seek a proper shelter to be able to return to normalcy. Tina says that people's perception of her is that she is lazy and irresponsible.

However, she says it is difficult for her to do anything to change her life, if she does not have the resources to do so. She finds it difficult to be confident in a society that is already looking down on her. I believe architecture has the capability of making an impact in such situations. Creating spaces that could provide for self-reflection, skill-building, and communication, would physically and psychologically impact a person. Davis (2004) says that architects have the power to provide homeless people with options. And these options are meant for people to take, so that they could gain some dignity for themselves.

According to Davis, in his book, *Designing for the Homeless*, homelessness is an economic and social issue. But he denies that architecture cannot help the homeless survive their hardship while they try to return to their true selves (Davis, 2004).

Davis says that architecture reflects social attitudes, aspirations, and values. He claims that much of the history of architecture in respect to housing has suffered a negative attitude that those at the lower end of the economic scale deserve little, and certainly not a well-designed building (Davis, 2006).

However, in the 1960s, many architects began to evaluate how a dwelling reflects identity, both to the individual who inhabits there and to others. "Architects began to realize that good buildings can improve the quality of life both physical and emotional", (Davis, 2006). He continues to say that perhaps the biggest challenge for architects is to restore some pride into the lives of the homeless.



## *summary*

As the research took place for this thesis, my findings revealed that designers have taken building design one step further, by taking human interaction as a major consideration in the design. Shelters, or social housing, especially after the turn of the millennium, are evidently distinguishable from those of yesteryears.

Michael Maltzan, in an interview with the New York Times, explains that the purpose of this new approach to social housing is not to create a show out of the lives of homeless people. Instead, it is to put a face on the homeless, and to show that they are real.

It is crucial to understand what the implications of living on the street could have on one's continued survival. When placed at a shelter or any kind of assisted living environment, most of those who are being served would have already gone through a great deal of psychological pressure. Therefore, their new environment should function as a friendlier and psychologically more settling space. It should indicate the following:

## *Stability*

The sense of stability in the life of a homeless person can change their behavioral expectations dramatically. Having one less thing to worry about, tells them that they could pay more attention to other important things for a continuous life improvement.

## *Security*

For single parents or families, there is nothing more worrying than the safety of their children. The concern of not having the proper environment to play, and being exposed to negative social activities, puts parents and families in difficult situations, while looking for either looking for a job or living out on the streets. Therefore, this design should reflect and provide some sense of security to those who would occupy this facility.

## *Dignity*

Everyone has the right to be treated respectfully. However, in today's society, homeless people are often shunned because they lack a sense of worthiness. However, with some privacy, reflection, and personal space, one can seek pride in themselves. Design in social housing should always pay attention to details of their occupant's lifestyle. Little details can enhance an individual's dignity.

## *Delight*

What can be better than living in a place that would make one feel joyful, excited, and happy? The feeling of walking into a place that gives one continuous hope and joy comes from not just the people around their atmosphere but also the environment most importantly. The capability of architecture to affect the well-being of an individual and a community is often times underestimated.



6



la quinta monroy  
housing

7



boyd hotel  
single room occupancy

8



fort york  
transitional residence

# typological research.

*case studies*

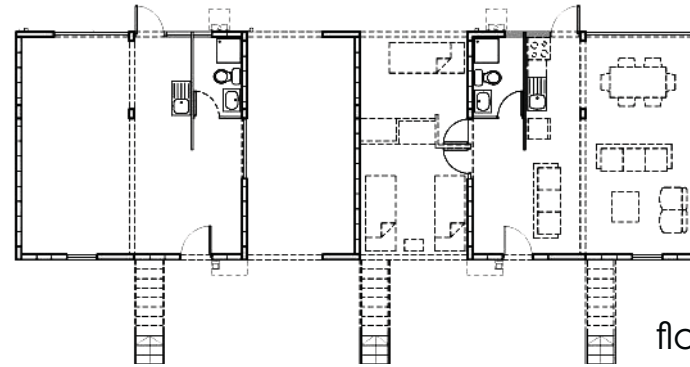




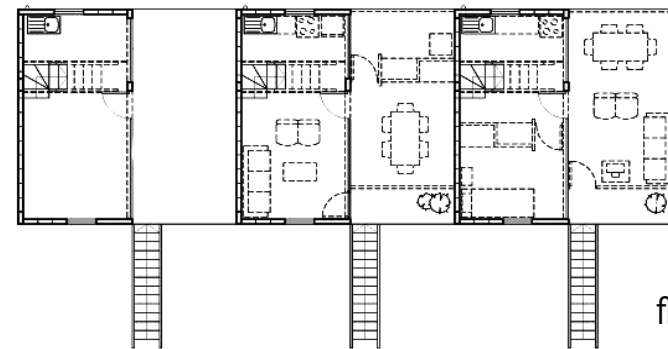
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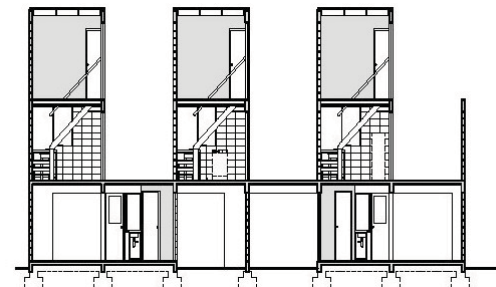
la quinta monroy housing  
Iquique, Chile  
2005



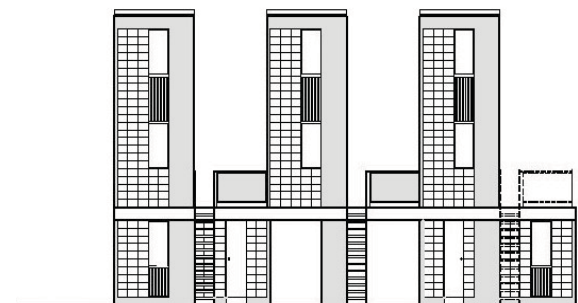
floor plan 1



floor plan 2



section



elevation

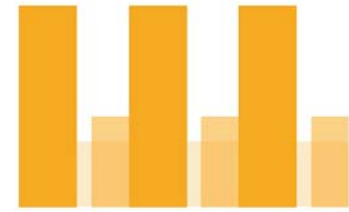




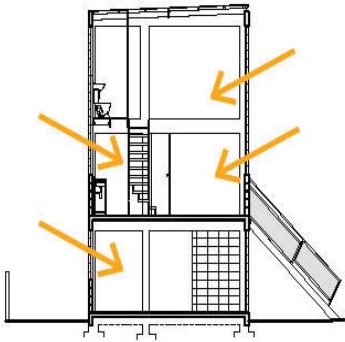
structure



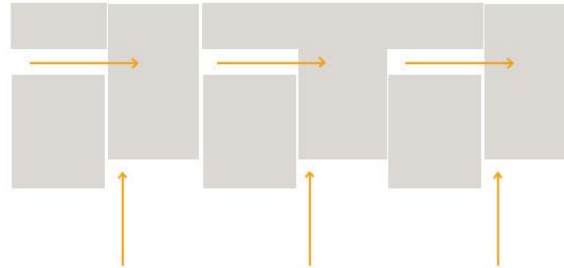
plan to section



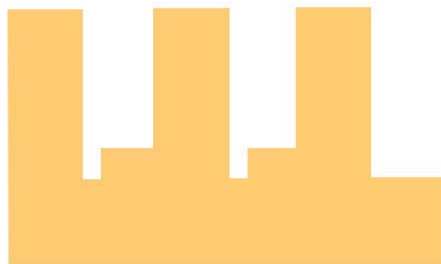
hierarchy



natural lighting



circulation to use-space



massing



geometry





*The intermediate space filled with self constructed expansions*



project type: slum development

location: Iquique, Chile

size: 3500sqm

La Quinta Monroy housing project is unique to itself that it was built on land that was illegally occupied by those who this project was built for. The plan was to compress 100 families in the project without overcrowding. However, due to the characteristics of slums, the designers had to accommodate for the growing number of people that will begin to add on to the spaces created. Therefore, this project was designed such that there were intermediate spaces left between lots to allow for self-expansion (Saieh, 2010).

The new expansions created by the later crowd will not affect the existing design, by blocking natural lighting, and ventilation. Hence, void spaces were created intermediately. Structurally, the project was intended to use the main or fixed installation as the supporting structure, allowing for the self-constructed spaces to gain support from the fixed design (Saieh, 2010).

The design of the project indicates an intended hierarchical fashion. However, as the voids between the lots get filled up, the line that distinguishes the hierarchy disappears. This is important to note, as the order created remains, while chaos intervenes in what could arguably be called “chaotic order” (Saieh, 2010).

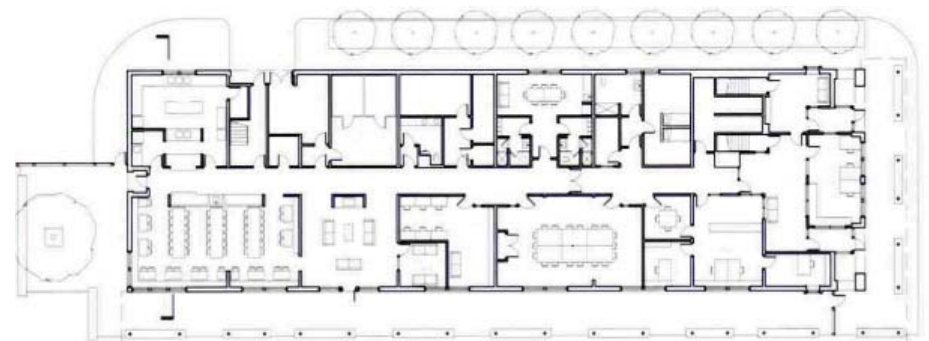
This project also reflects equality in many ways; from the apartment sizes, shapes, up to the collective form of the project. Each of the lots replicates the others, creating a sense of unity and equality, which is essential in social housing. Creating social differences, can negatively impact a growing community, especially for those who had fight for their plight (Saieh, 2010).



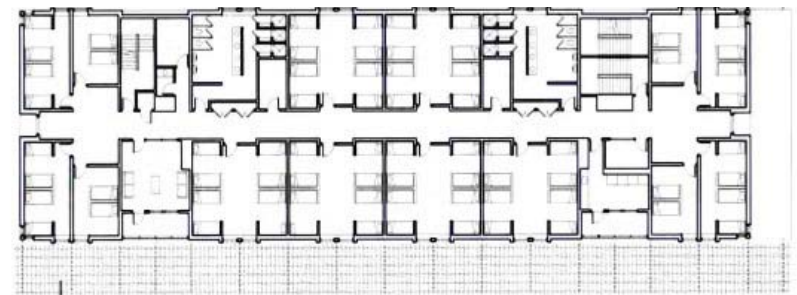
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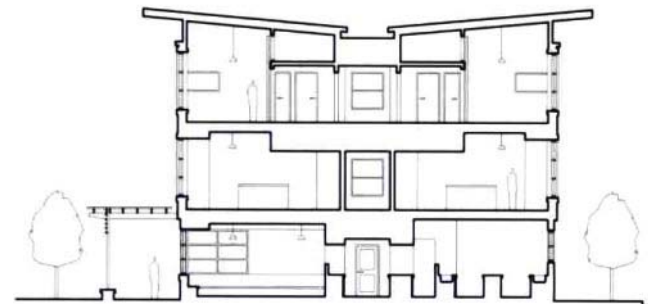
fort york transitional residence  
toronto, canada  
2003



floor plan 1



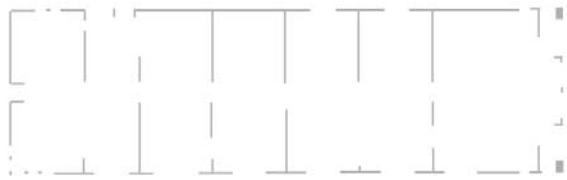
floor plan 2



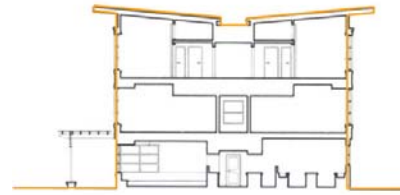
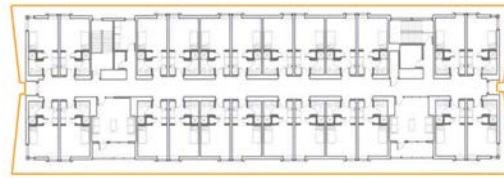
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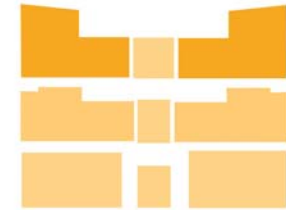
elevation



structure



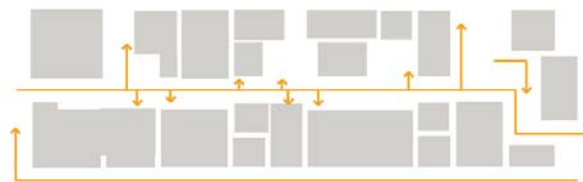
plan to section



hierarchy



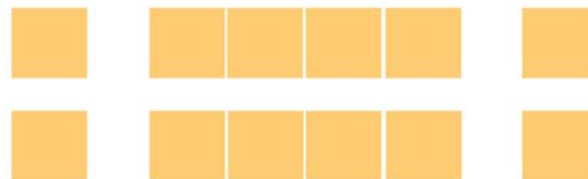
natural lighting



circulation to use-space



massing



geometry





12

project type:  
transitional residence

location: Toronto, Canada

size: 3916sqm



13



The Fort York Transitional Center is designed for homeless adult men in Toronto. The project consists of apartments, as well as community spaces and services for employment assistance and health care. The project was designed with the involvement of the residents. The project provides for great views out of the building, with view of Lake Ontario on the South and Toronto's Downtown to the east (Raynes-Goldie, 2008).

The floor plan indicates a more dormitory-like living on the second floor, and as they progress in employment and independent living, residents could be moved up to a more private single occupancy unit on the third floor. What sets this design apart from the La Quinta Monroy project is the effective use of hierarchy. Here, the use of hierarchy is more dominant and positively used. The progress upwards in the plan indicates success to the residents (Raynes-Goldie, 2008).

The idea of bringing daylight into interior spaces was crucial in this project. The building section indicates that living spaces, such as the apartments and dormitory shelter, are placed on the outside edges of the plan with circulation place centrally. This allows for plenty of natural daylight into living spaces, which enhances the atmosphere, and most importantly, influences a person's mood and livelihood on a daily basis (Raynes-Goldie, 2008).

Programmatically, this project is very functional. The design methodology followed the client's goals for the residents which were:

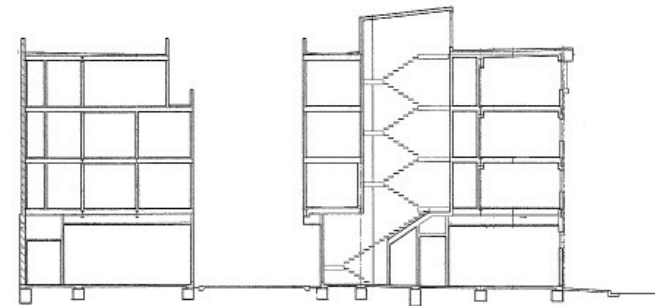
shelter-employment-affordable  
housing.



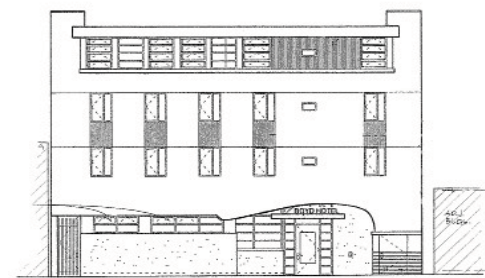


7

boyd hotel  
los angeles, ca  
1996



section

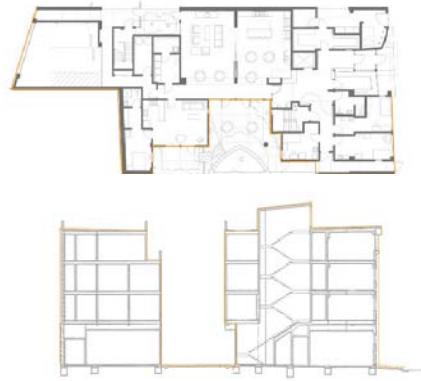


elevation





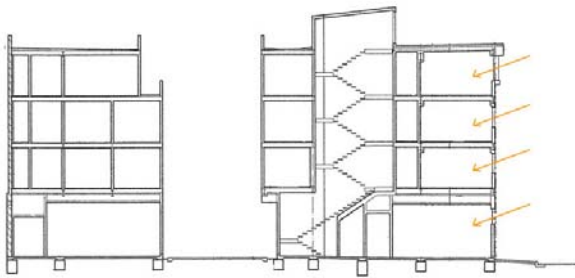
structure



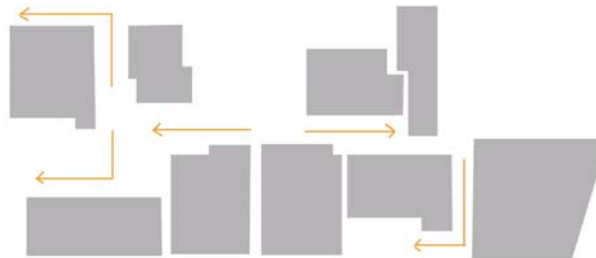
plan to section



hierarchy



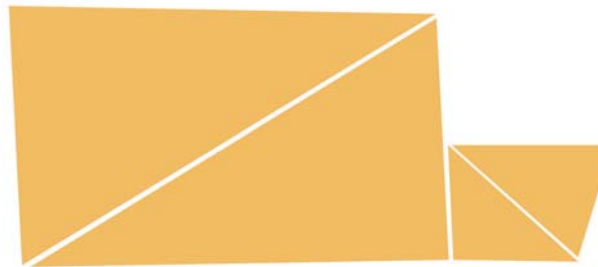
natural lighting



circulation to use-space



massing



geometry





project type:  
Single Room Occupancy Motel

location:  
Los Angeles, CA

size:4 storeys

The Boyd Hotel project was a restoration project, whereby the existing hotel was turned into essentially what we see as a homeless shelter. However, this type of shelters is called Single Room Occupancy (SRO's). The idea behind this kind of project is to provide some degree of privacy for individuals. Comparatively to both the La Quinta Monroy housing project and the Fort York Transitional Residence, this project is similar in terms of client or occupant type. Therefore, similar design decisions have been made in terms of programmatic value. Community spaces, exterior courtyard, and shared public spaces, encourage social connections between the residents. This avoids isolation and encourages community building.

Due to the fact that financing for this project was limited, passive design strategies were implemented including cross ventilation, exterior window

shading, and natural day lighting. This is a similar approach in previously discussed cases, where passive design strategies were not compromised.

The most distinguishable design characteristic of this project is its clever use of courtyard space in the center of the two buildings. The courtyard creates a more open atmosphere by breaking the strong mass appearance one gets from the building façade. Courtyard and shared public spaces break strong massing in the project. Voids create openness, and interesting spaces in the design. Creating voids can also create different psychological effects. Voids, to me personally, indicate a non-hostile environment. It signifies freedom and this is essential to people who have lived on the streets. It is important that they do not feel isolated in an architecture that is overpowering to their already timid souls.



## *summary*

All of the case studies have strongly attempted to resolve social housing issues in different approaches. The basic principle used is to consider those living and working these environments as the client. Understanding what their needs are and how it differs from the general public makes a difference in how the programmatic requirements for the project is written.

### La Quinta Monroy

This project entails liveliness and equality. The project creates order in what use to be a slum. This consequently gives people who have lived there no choice but to conform to what has been built. However, the clever decision to leave out intermediate spaces, returns that freedom to the people to create unique space just as they use to , but in a more orderly fashion.

### Fort York Transitional Residence

The Fort York project speaks to me as a more holistic project, as a whole. It provides spaces that encourage progress, and it also provides more visible, and intentional public spaces for people to come together. I find this characteristic to be most appealing. Most social housing lacks this aspect of community building, even if done, they are typically mundane and have no life.

### Boyd Hotel

Boyd hotel, despite having been built in the 10th century, carries important details that most social housing do not offer these days. One of the criteria in Boyd Hotel, is its internal courtyard. The courtyard is essentially what makes the project lively, and delightful to live in. It strays away from what a typical homeless motel would have provided.

As a whole, I think the case studies work as a great starting point for program development. However, there are still certain architectural details that could be developed. For instance, creating spaces for collaborative efforts with businesses and corporations. And also, playing with materials and light quality in different spaces, rather than utilizing the same materials.

Most shelters are designed modestly suggesting what a typical homeless housing should be - boring. I am not advocating for a Disneyland of homeless housing, instead a more powerful design that would not only make greater impacts on the individuals who live there, but also the growth of the welfare of this people.

Michael Maltzan mentioned, that good humanitarian architecture, with respect to form and function, could attract more investors and more corporations to collaboratively fund programs, and be involved in the development of the center (Maltzan, 2012).

Most importantly, it is of utmost importance to echo what Harry Hoffman, the Executive Director of the Seattle Housing Consortium said about homelessness during a personal interview, stating that affordable housing should become part of infrastructure from the beginning and not added on as a temporary solution. He says that homelessness is a condition that you can not stop forever, but you could find resolutions to ease it (Hoffman, personal communication, Nov. 28).



# historical context.

Homelessness grew in the United States when it was hit by a housing crisis in the early 1980s. Cities began realizing that there were a lot more people sleeping on the streets compared to a few years before. Some of these people included alcoholics and drug addicts who had remained more or less invisible in skid-row parts of town until the fifty-cents-a-night flophouses were torn down to give way to urban development. The rest were Vietnam veterans, and aging bits and pieces of the hippie generation, who were longing to escape from poverty and responsibility. Not only did they have no place to go, but when they were stabilized from their inconsistent addiction and habits, due to the insufficient funding for residential treatment facilities, they were forced to live on the streets.

Over time, two groups were new to the streets. Both of which were increasing rapidly. One consisted of the working poor who could not afford market-rate housing, and the other were single parents, especially mothers, who could not work due to the lack of day-care facilities, and who could not keep up with the rising cost of housing.

After 1990, these two groups were further joined by a rising number of people who lost their jobs, and whose benefits were inadequate. This mostly consisted of family breadwinners, which caused the entire family to be thrown onto the street.

Responses to this crisis called for emergency overnight lodgings, and grimy rooms in so-called homeless or welfare hotels. These homeless hotels are not what one would typically expect. The term 'hotel' does not equate to be the typical tourist hotels. Instead, it was as good as a homeless shelter with rows and rows of cots instead of individual rooms

These hotels were mostly in the nastiest part of town, which are typically infested with drugs, prostitution, and violence. Dwellers were often afraid to step outside their door, despite the miserable conditions they had to tolerate inside their hotel rooms. MacDonald shares a report from the Junior League of San Francisco on what it was like for a woman who stayed in one of the hotels with her four children:

"They had all lived in just one small room and there was a bathroom...There was just one doubled bed. The ants, mice and roaches shared the place, too... There was no phone, no refrigerator, and no place to laundry (Donald, 1996)

"The landlord had said the halls were off limits. But there was nowhere else to go. Where were the children supposed to play? there was no yard, and it was dangerous to play outside because of the tenderloin traffic and the weirdo's" (Donald, 1996).

Further investigation into homeless hotels revealed even worse conditions. At one place for instance, many of the rooms had no windows, no water; neither did they have locks on the doors. People seeking a room had to be at the hotel at a given time, otherwise they would be turned down (Donald, 1996).



Donald MacDonald elucidates, that the architecture profession's traditional devotion to designing monumental buildings and homes for the wealthy has resulted in very little attention being paid to the housing needs of the great majority of people. According to MacDonald, there are four principles he uses to rectify that imbalance. (1996).

The first is that every human being has a right to a home-not just merely a shelter, but a private, secure and friendly place to live that they can afford. Countless American families spend so much of their income for rent or mortgage payments that they have little left over for other necessities (Donald, 1996).

Secondly, the primary goal of residential design is to satisfy the need and desires of the people who will live in a building. We have seen these days where many buildings are designed with no regard for those who occupy the building on a daily basis. (Donald, 1996).

Thirdly, he describes that the decision on where and how to build should at every effort prevent damage to environment. In his reference to Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, published in the early 1960s, she explains that the built environment is gradually eating up the environment, with ruthless decisions taken by people in the industry that have no consideration for the natural environment (Jacobs, 1960).

Lastly, he claims that design aesthetics should reflect the diversity of society, not some ideal of perfection. MacDonald suggests that buildings should uniquely resemble the culture, lifestyles, and aspiration of those who occupy them. He defies the expression of Philip Johnson, "The job of an architect is to create beautiful buildings. That's all". MacDonald feels that architects have a bigger responsibility to do what we can to create a humane society. (1996).



Following what had happened for more than a decade in the history of homeless shelters, service providers and investors started looking at different options for housing. Part of this was due to the fact that the traditional shelters do not cater to the major portion of homeless people. This includes children, families, single parents, as well as veterans.

Most of the efforts today undeniably provide for predominantly single adults. However, the nature of the situation is such that shelters cannot combine multiple demographic of homeless population into one. Many of the single adults, as per research with the National Coalition for the Homeless (2011), claims that they are mentally ill, and placing them with young children could infuse a very negative developing environment.

As a result of that, service providers, as well as architects, began designing transitional housing, supportive housing, assisted housing, single room occupancies (SRO), as well as extended stay motels. Most of them did not require rent payment, except for extended stay motels, and in some cases SRO's.

These institutions were mostly set up as a response to the growing number of homeless people. Unfortunately, due to the rush to have them up and running, very little thought was put into the design of these places. Due to the wear and tear from the high homeless population, these places soon became gloomy, dark, and filthy places.



At the turn of the century, architects and service providers began to look at shelters more seriously. Realizing that these places are not only failing to resolve their homeless problem, but it is also driving these vulnerable people towards worst mental situations. Thanks to psychological research efforts, studies have shown that homeless shelters, as typically designed, have continually had a negative impact on those who lived there (Altman and Chemers, 1980).

These results indicate that shelters were not conditional living spaces a normal person or the general public could live in. However, the research does not imply if lack of financing could have potentially been the cause of poor maintenance. Today, most design efforts involving the homeless in particular, are looking towards more positive efforts. Designs today focus on creating congenial space for people. Efforts include better work and living environment for those who volunteer at these places, as well as for those who live there.





Essentially, homeless or social housing providers should come to terms that it is people that they are serving. And it is only humane to cater towards what a person in the right-state-of-mind would do given the circumstance. I think homelessness should be given a positive face, and a chance for a positive revival. And, architecture undeniably is capable of being part of that transformation. After all, architecture occupies most of what we interact, move, and live in. Therefore, it is only fair to take precedents in good architecture to create a humane architecture.



## *academic*

I have always had an interest in architecture that serves the larger majority of people. This is especially true in trying to resolve issues of architecture pertaining to the human psychology and social issues. I am intrigued to understand how architecture could affect a person's behavior. Therefore, with this thesis, I hope to find some answers that could lead to further questions in the development of my interest. I also expect to be able to use the accumulated courses taken during the duration of my education, to come up with a fine design that will satisfy this thesis.

# goals.

### *personal*

As an individual who has personally witnessed different social hardships, not just through my experience in the United States, but also through exploration during my childhood, I find myself unconsciously trying to resolve such problems. This thesis would not only be a set of achievements from my educational experience, but it will also be a pursue of joy that I can relate to, and intend to pursue further.

### *professional*

Through this thesis, I hope to be able to take this social pursuit further. Since there has been a growing interest amongst architects and investors towards social architecture, I want to share my opinions in the real world in an effort to be able to resolve socialy complicated architecture equations.







Site Analysis.

## *narrative*

I was given two options for my project site when I visited Seattle in November. The options were a consolidated list of areas where homelessness is prevalent, neighborhoods that already have homeless housing, as well as abandoned sites, that typically have a lower market value.

I came down to two options, one which was a playground that sat on top of a hill. However, that site did not appeal to me due to its restricted and constrained views. I was experiencing Seattle for the first time, and I was very impressed with the great views of the city one could get from anywhere. Therefore, I wanted this project to focus on views. I want my clients to experience views that homeless people do not usually get and enjoy.

Although this site was situated in a relatively quiet area, I did not enjoy the surroundings as much; I felt that the architecture of this project could get lost in the clutter of its surroundings.

My second option, which I eventually chose, was a vacated furniture store plot. The store is running out of business, which means it will soon be vacant, and this would give me an opportunity to work with what is already there and add on to it. I took the opportunity to climb to the roof of the existing building. Lo and behold, the views of Lake Union were just spectacular. I could almost imagine someone sitting by their window and enjoying that same splendid view. Not only could one embrace the beauty of Lake Union but the beautiful Queen Anne Hill too.



Even though it is located at a busy intersection, this site offers great opportunities for collaboration, access to public transportation, as well as employment. Amazon, a large IT corporation, is located just next door, and there is a cancer research institute, as well as restaurants close by too. After discovering the diverse uses around the site, I saw an opportunity for a potential collaborative effort. I envisioned the different entities being part of this community that I want to create a new meaning for.

The site is also strategically located close to the Seattle street car stop, as well as the local bus stop, which would make travelling to jobs and other services easier for those who would occupy the facility.

The views out to Lake Union and Queen Anne Hill, are possibly two of the best views of the city one could get. The site had some degree or level of noise that could be too loud. However, this could be remediated with proper design to control the surrounding acoustics.

Nonetheless, the site is very closely located to two other homeless housing providers, and this creates for a more diverse community rather than a secluded, all homeless or poor community.

I find that this location for a homeless facility will not only create a diverse community, but it will be architecturally challenging as to respect all those around and who will occupy the building. Lastly, it will essentially change how homelessness is perceived.



19



20



21



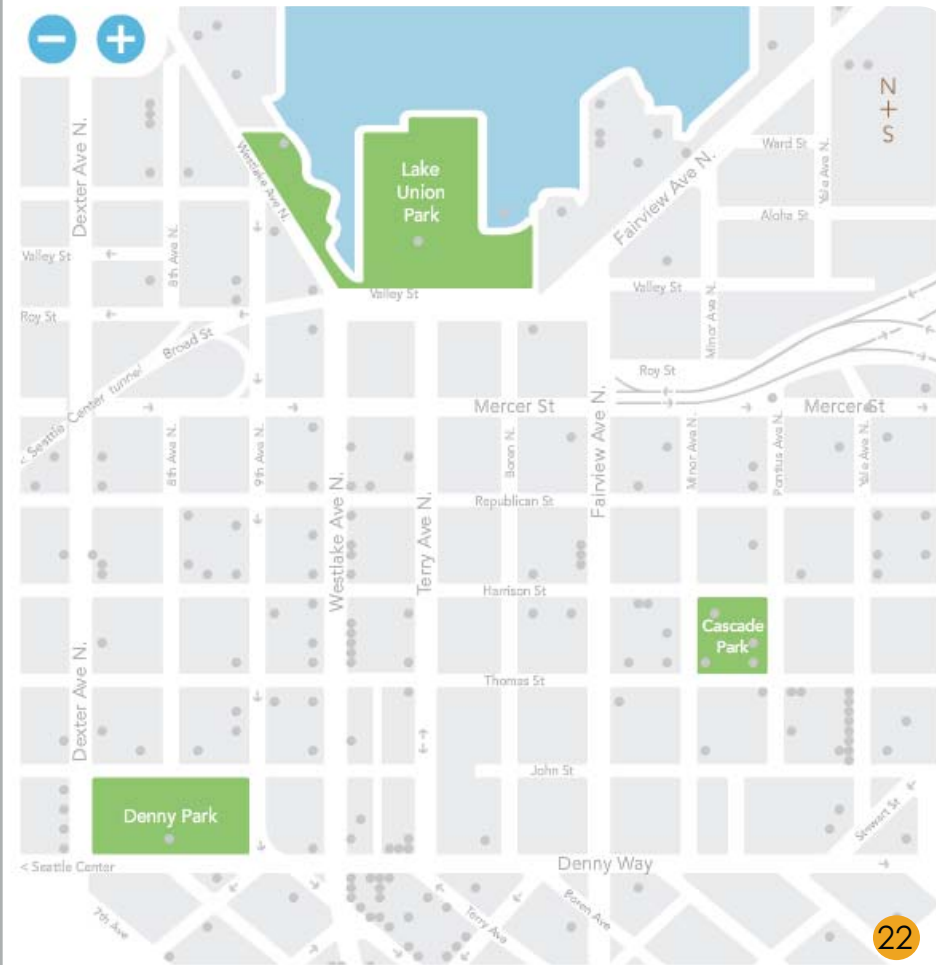
## views

This site brings great views of Union Lake to the north, as well as Queen Anne's hill to the west. The new entrance to the interstate is being constructed and upon completion will provide great views of the high traffic flow at night.



## *grids*

The selected site is located on a strong city grid layout. Sitting on the edge of a typical city block, and with an important intersection to and from the interstate at a close proximity, the site slightly deviates from the regular box like grid, making it more dynamic than other sites.



## *water*

This site was chosen mainly for its beautiful views out to the grand Union Lake. The lake is surrounded mostly by restaurants. It is also used for different water sports. This might create an opportunity for the development of the design to integrate collaborative uses into the program.







## *surroundings*

The site currently houses an existing business that is vacating. It is surrounded by office buildings to the west, medical and healthcare services to the west, and restaurants to the north. The site is also served by bus as well as the Seattle street car. As the city of Seattle continues to develop the Mercer Corridor into a more pedestrian friendly location, this project will also incorporate this aspect into the design.



### *light quality*

Facing north, and unobstructed, the site gets plenty diffused northern lighting.

The south side is sufficiently shaded by other structures and vegetation, but still gets southern light exposure too

### *topography*

The site cuts through an interesting topographic elevation. Sloping north at about \_\_\_\_ %. The site seems flat, because of grading that has been done for previous development of the site.

### *vegetation*

Seattle is one the greenest cities in the United States. During the site visit, it was evident that vegetation was present on the site, mostly located the east side of the site allowing for nice shade from the southern sun, while waiting for the bus.



### *wind*

The site experiences mostly southern wind, but is well protected by surrounding structures. Mild northern winds come mostly from Union Lake.

### *human*

#### *characteristics*

The site is currently occupied by a furniture business, and has clearly already been altered by humans. However, the building sitting on the site as of now, will be vacated soon, due to the clearing out of business, and will become vacant and unattractive with a big warehouse sitting on this major intersection.

#### *distress*

The site, per say, does not have major distress, except for some cracks in the parking lot. Otherwise, the only other two distresses are trees that have shed their leaves for the fall season and the soon to be vacating business.



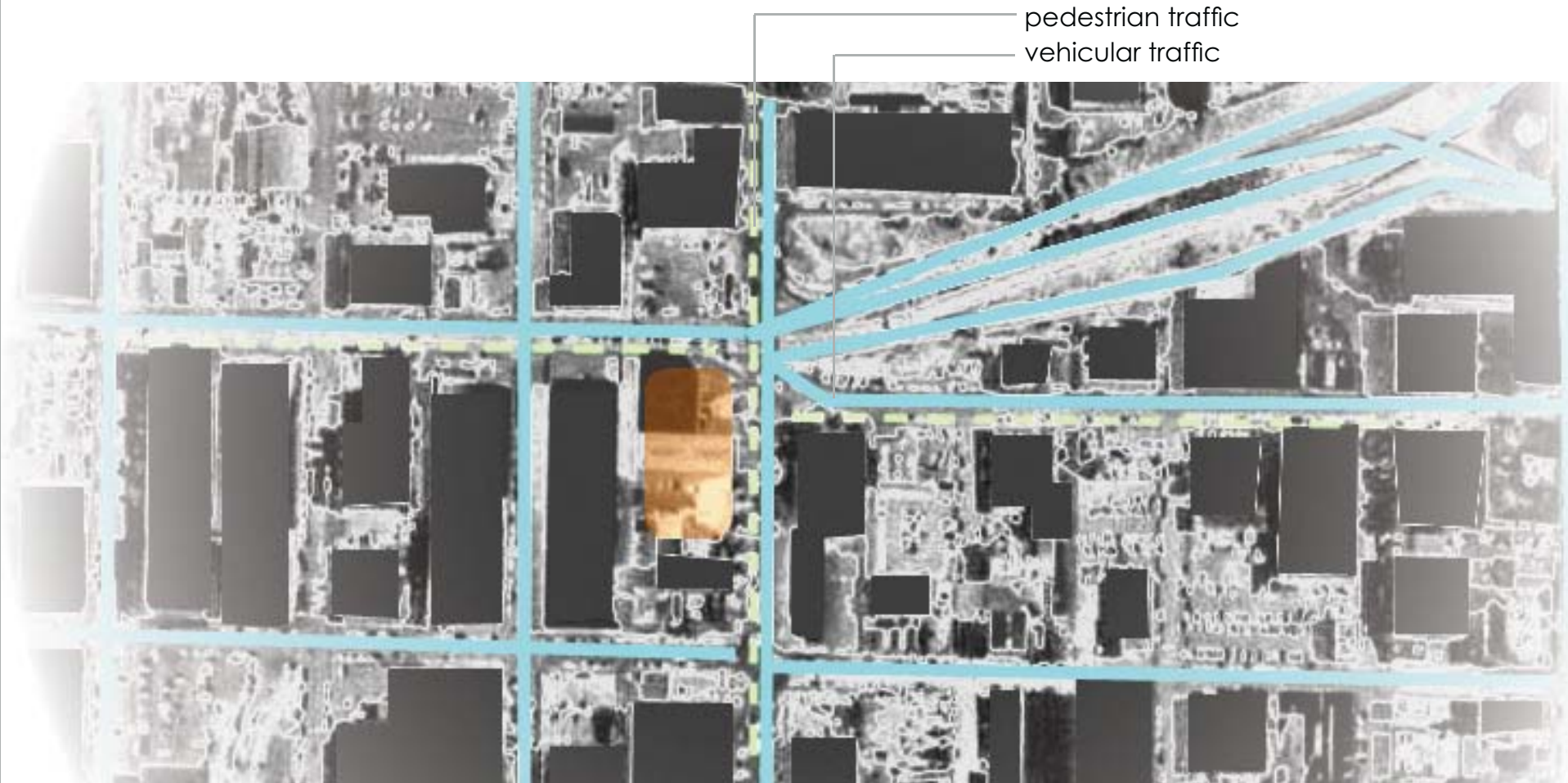


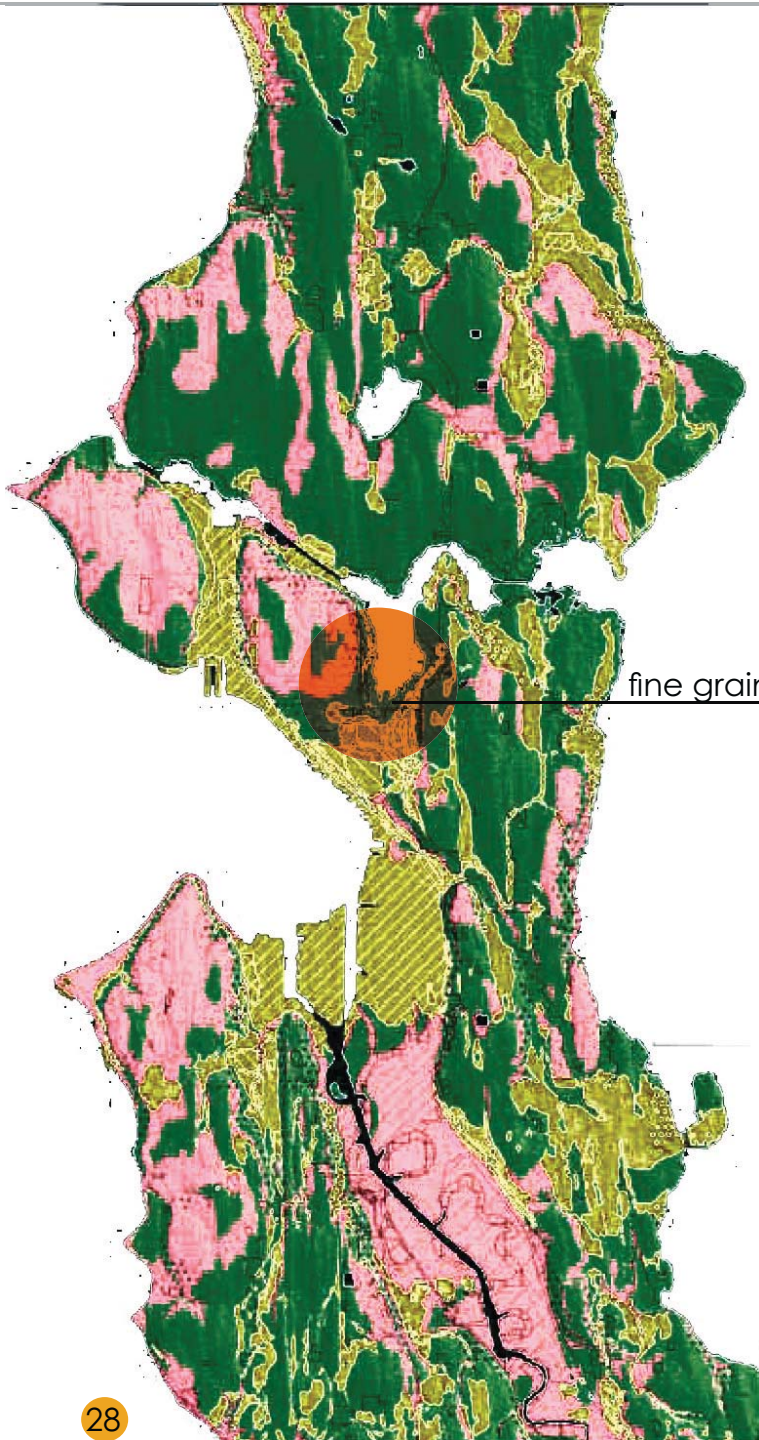
### *utilities*

Due to previous development in the area, the site is already equipped with modern utilities. This makes the site a good option to reduce infrastructure cost, especially since the project revolves around social housing.

### *traffic*

Traffic around the site is mostly vehicular. There are facilities, such as walkways, for pedestrians. However, due to the major intersection situated at the corner of the site, pedestrian traffic is reduced. On the other hand, the site is located very close to two main public transportation hubs: a local bus stop and the Seattle street car station.





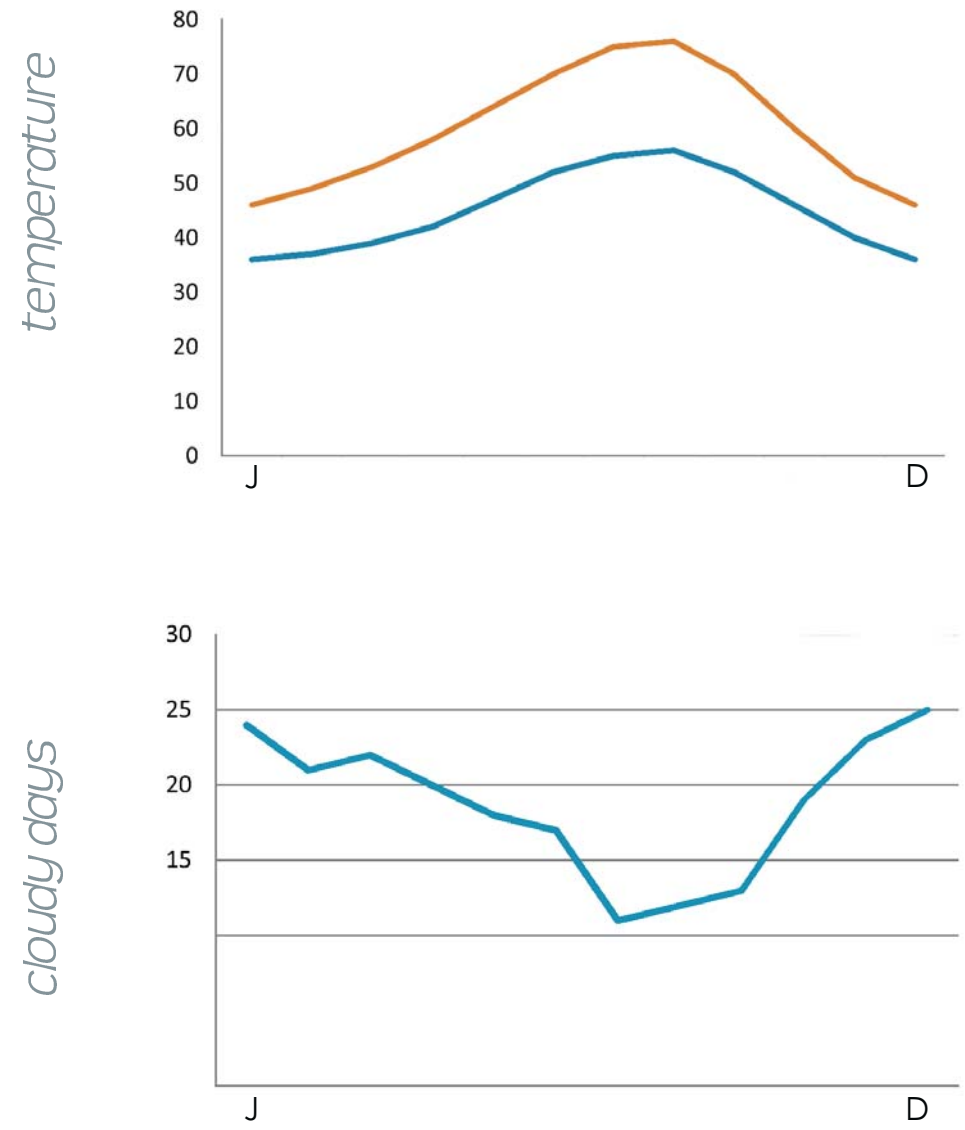
## *Soils*

The state of Washington is rich with 'tokul' soils, mostly found south from Seattle up to the Canadian border in the north. Tokul soils are among the most productive in the world. They support conifer trees, which are predominantly found in the state of Washington. However, this soil is not recommended for steep slopes as it becomes unstable.

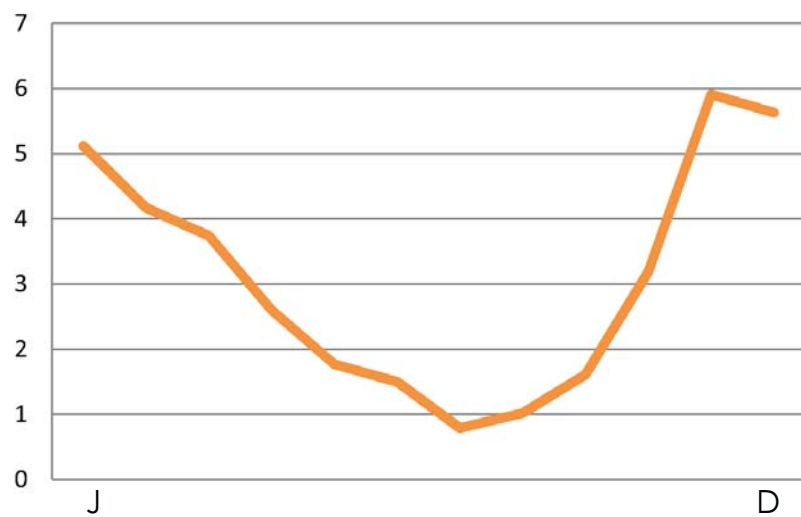




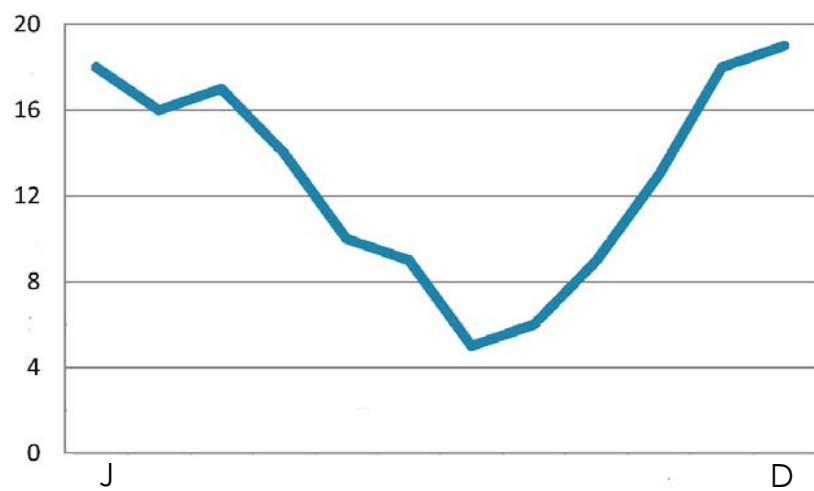
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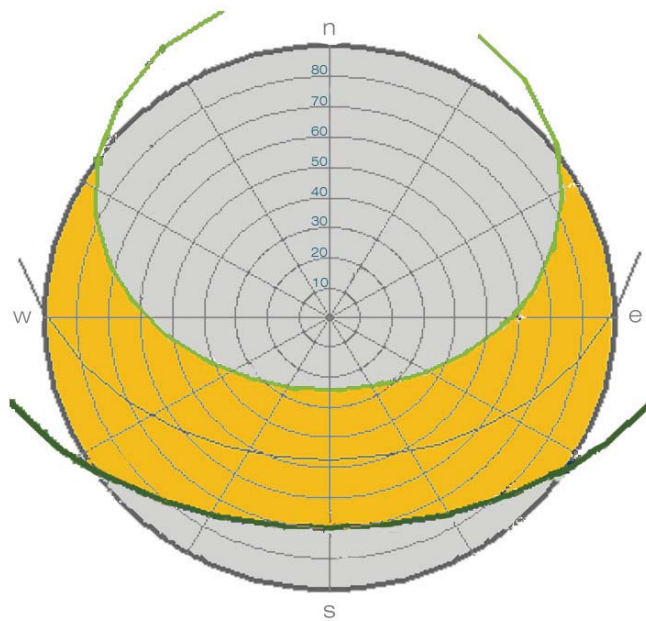
*percipitation*



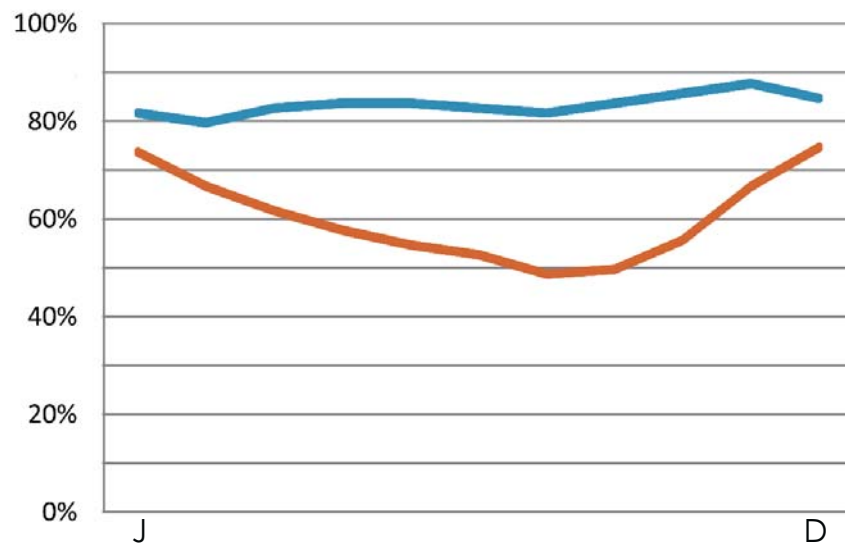
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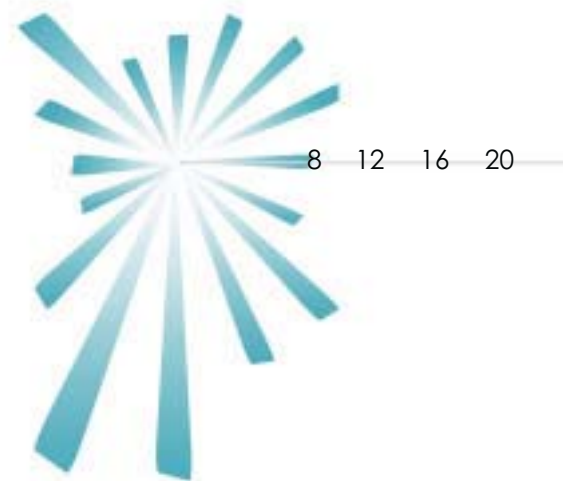
sun path

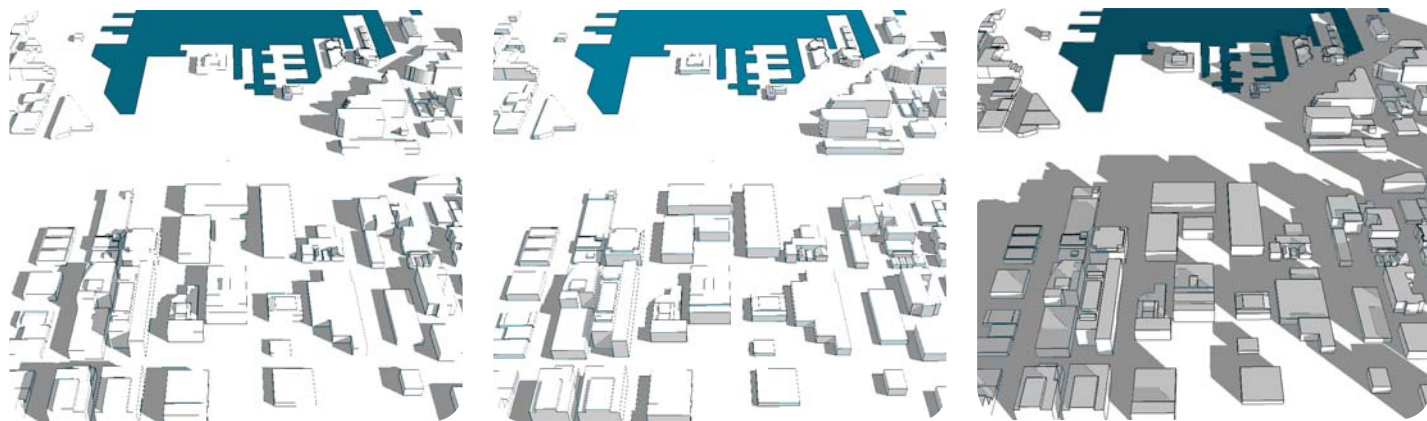


humidity

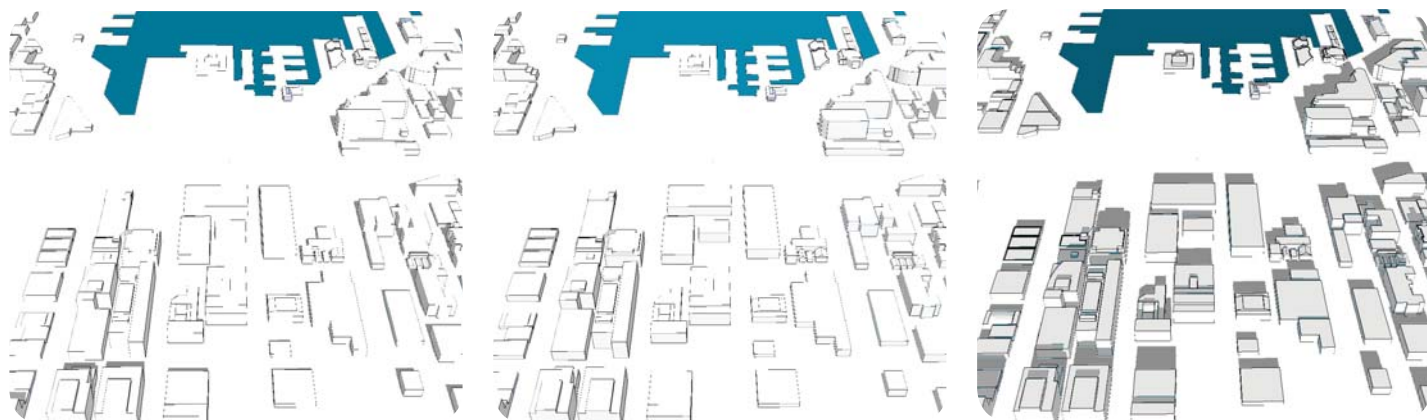


wind

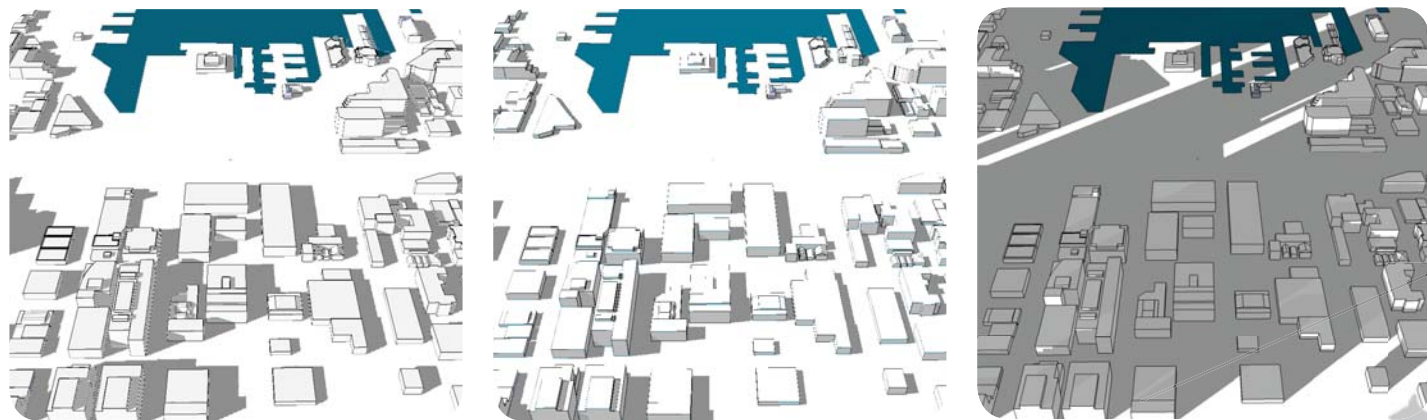




9 am



12 pm



4 pm

*solar study*

spring equinox

summer solstice

winter solstice



# programmatic requirements.



site: *27,700 SF*

**3bedroom 2 bathroom (1000SF) \* 10 units**



sleep : *400SF*



eat: *100SF*



live: *150 SF*



bath: *100 SF*

**2bedroom 1 bathroom (460SF) \* 12 units**



sleep: *250 SF*



eat: *100SF*



live: *150 SF*



bath: *50 SF*



## work



offices: 400SF



reception: 20SF



mailroom: 80SF



public restroom: 50SF



lounge: 700SF



community center: 800 SF



## learn + play



child care: 1000SF



reading room: 1000SF



bakery school: 2500SF



cafe: 1350SF



spiritual room: 1000SF



counseling: 300SF



green space: undefined



24HR day center: 800 SF

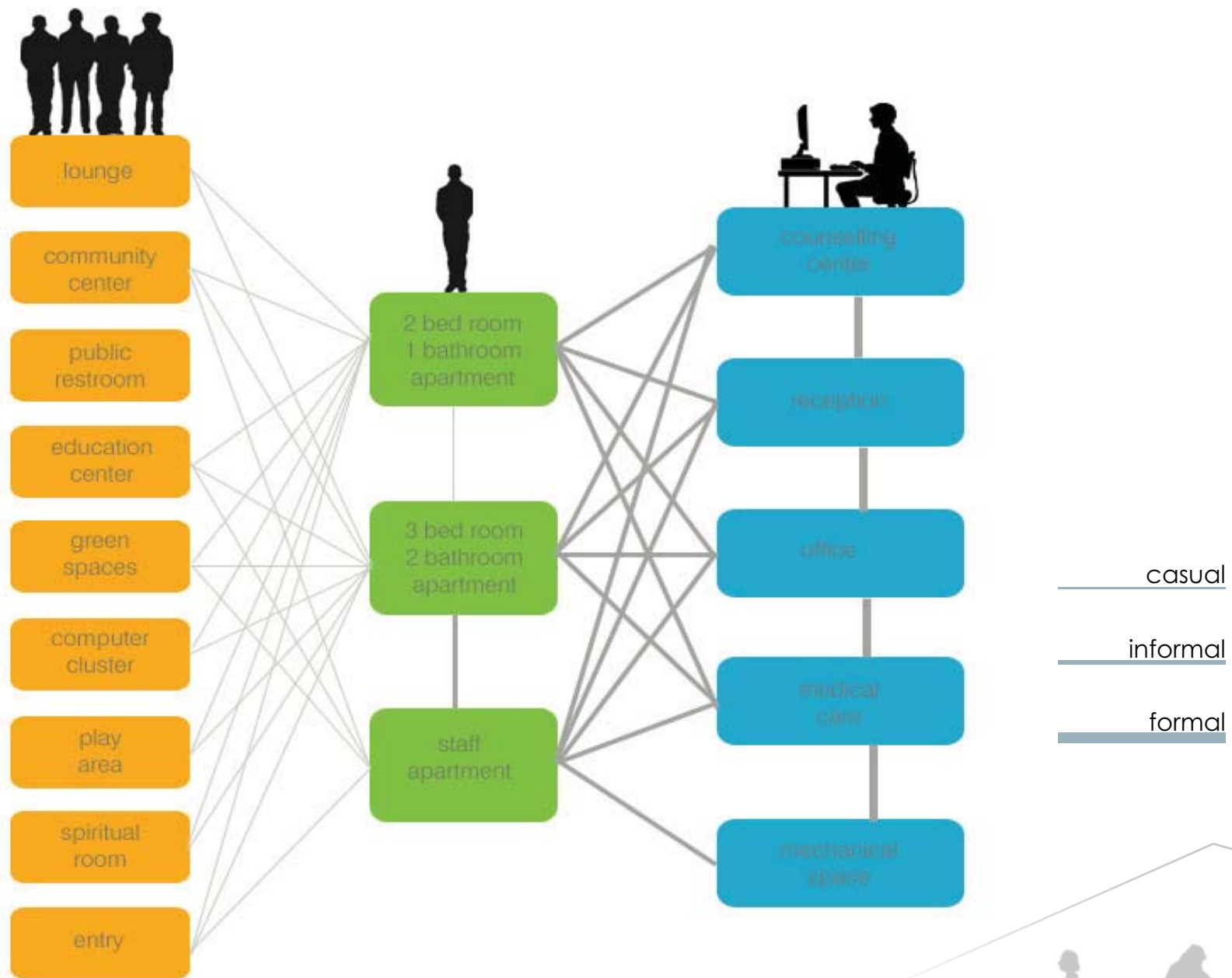




# interaction matrix

	3 bed 2 bath	2 bed 1 bath	staff apartment	lounge	counselling	reception	office	mailroom	public restroom	community center	medical care	green spaces	computer room	play area	education center	spiritual room	entry	mechanical space
3 bed 2 bath	○	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
2 bed 1 bath	■	○	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
staff apartment	■	■	○	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
lounge	■	■	■	○	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
counselling	■	■	■	■	○	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
reception	■	■	■	■	■	○	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
office	■	■	■	■	■	■	○	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
mailroom	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	○	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
public restroom	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	○	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
community center	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	○	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
medical care	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	○	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
green spaces	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	○	■	■	■	■	■	■
computer room	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	○	■	■	■	■	■
play area	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	○	■	■	■	■
education center	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	○	■	■	■
spiritual room	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	○	■	■
entry	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	○	■
mechanical space	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	○





interaction net.



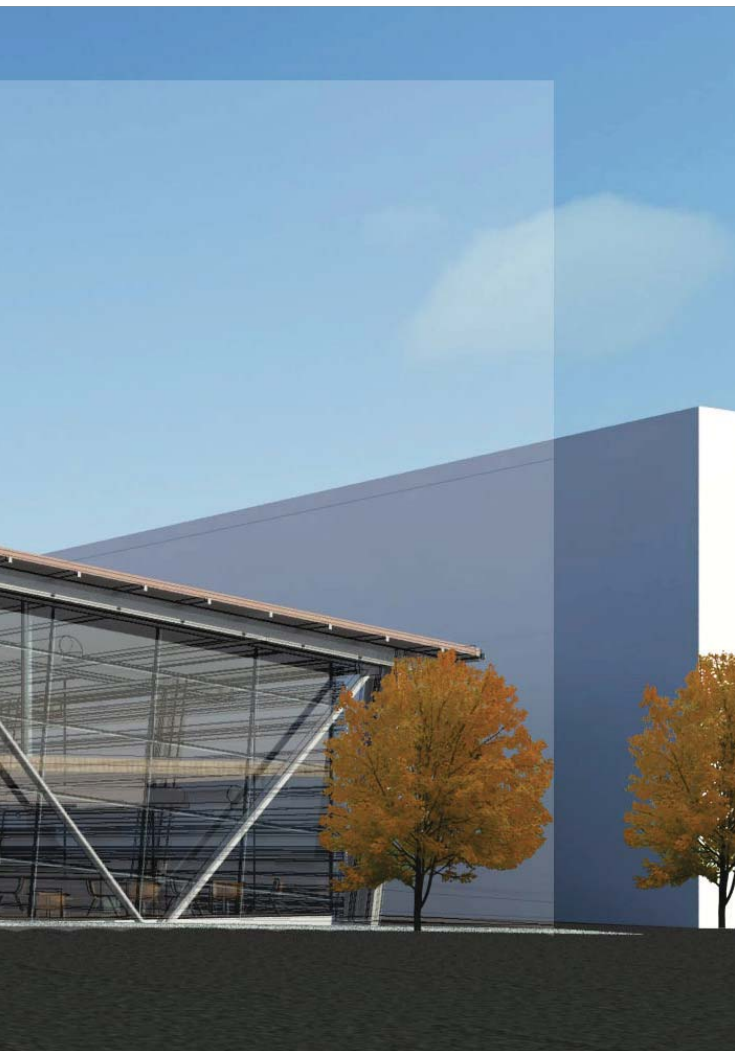
design  
solution.











North perspective view looking at residential tower on the left and development center on the right.

*dignity.*





*South approach perspective with view of bike storage and bus waiting area.*

*security.*

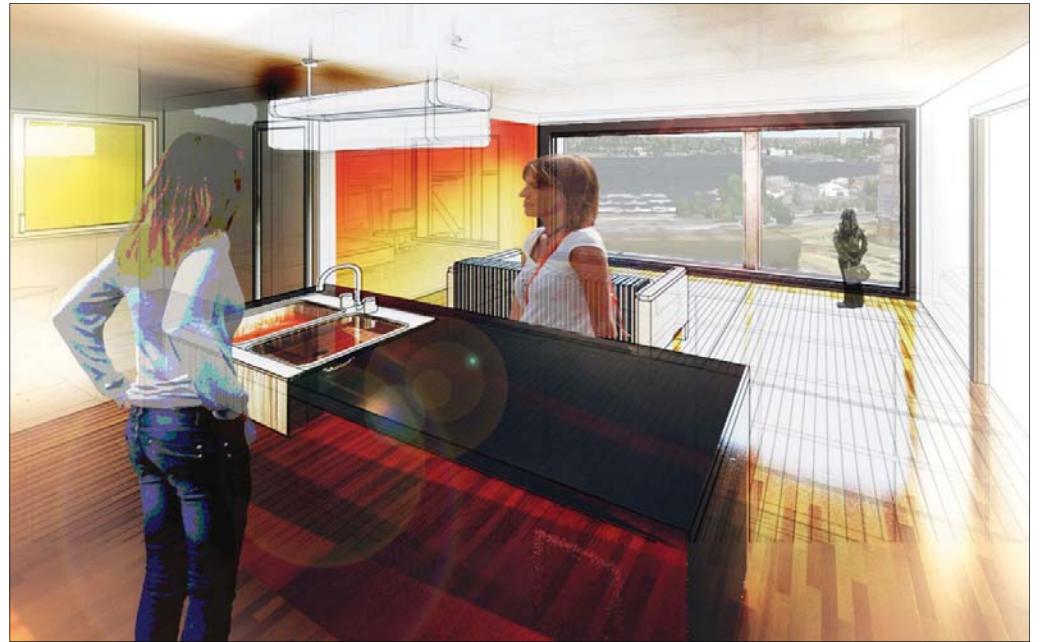


*entrance lobby view*



View of 3 bedroom apartment, ,  
showing views of Lake Union.

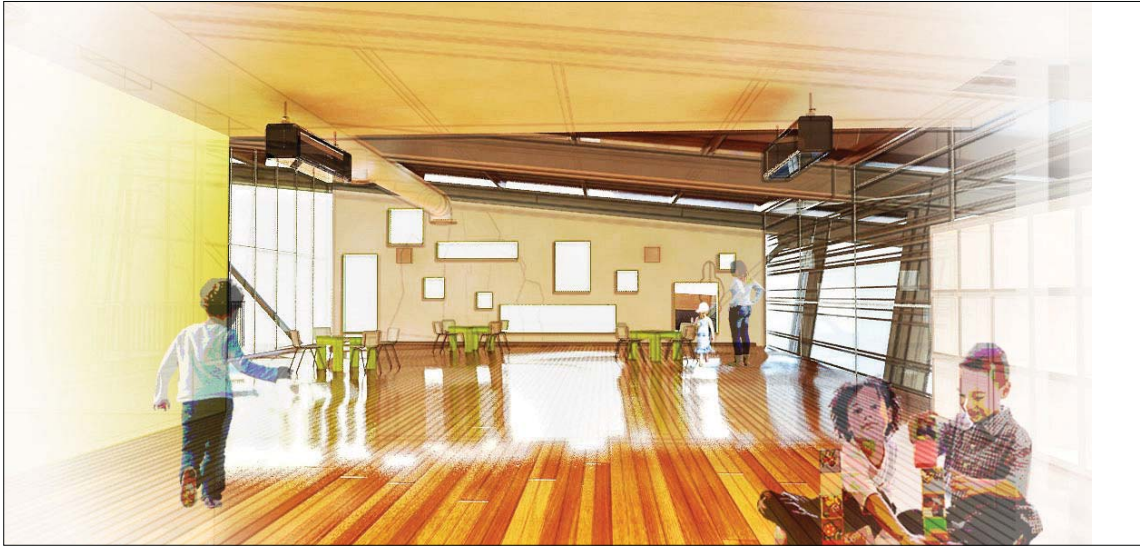
*stability.*



24 Day center with space to relax and also shower & locker facility.





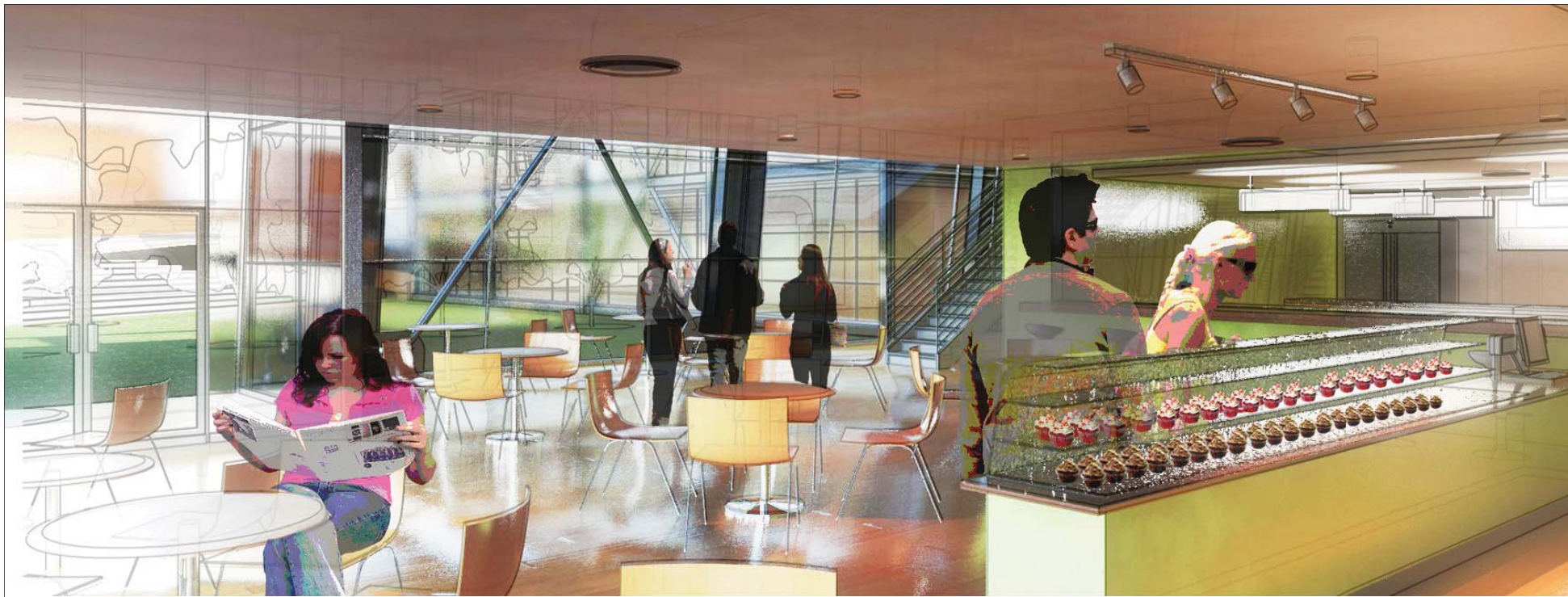


View of day care center

*delight.*



View into reading room with computer facilities.



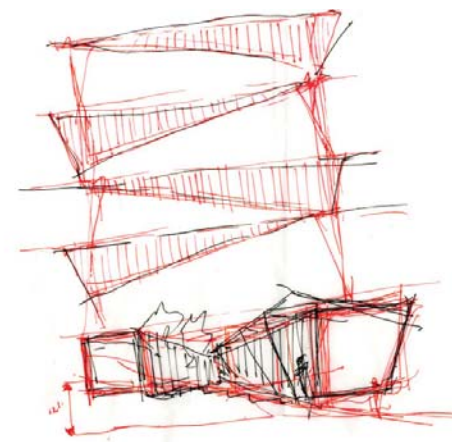
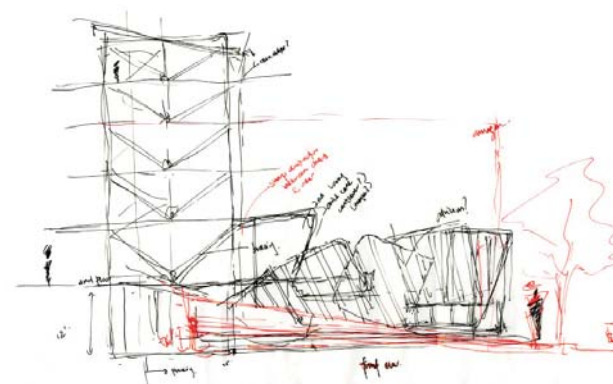
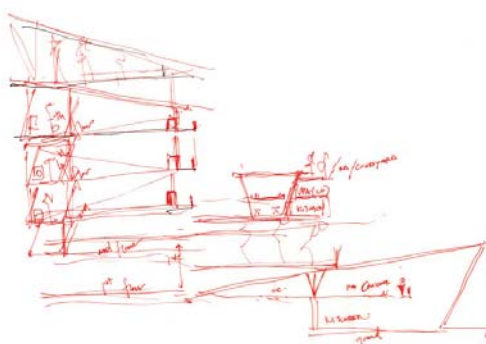
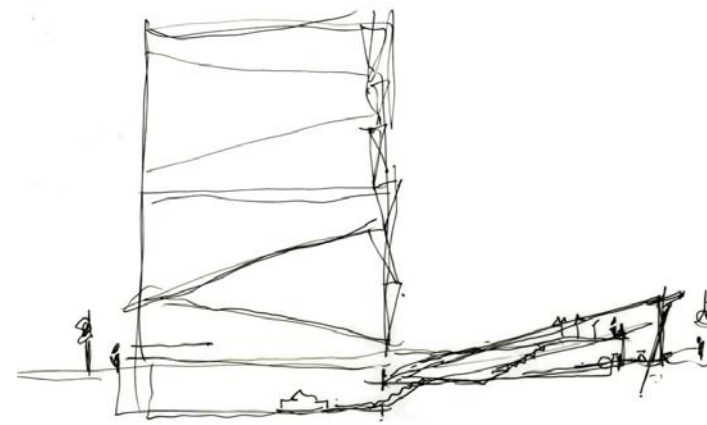
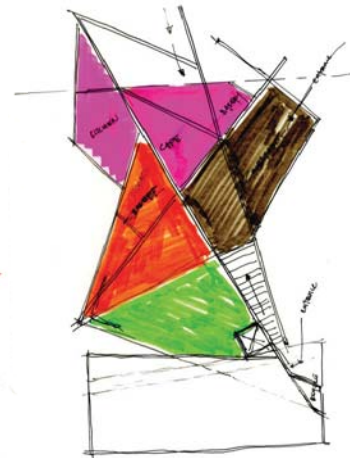
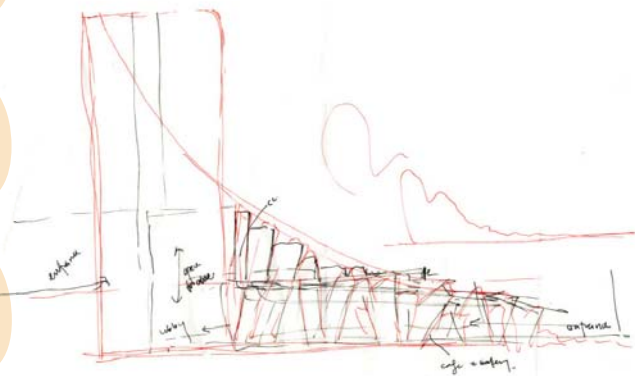
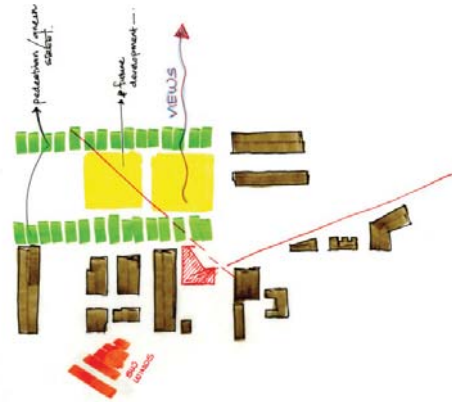
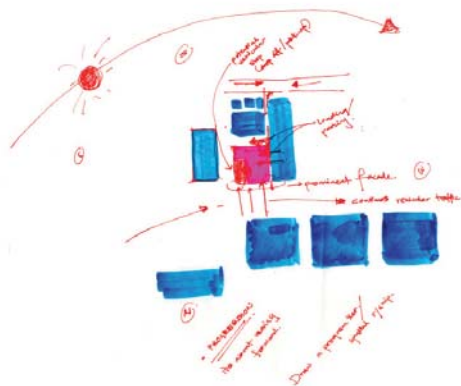
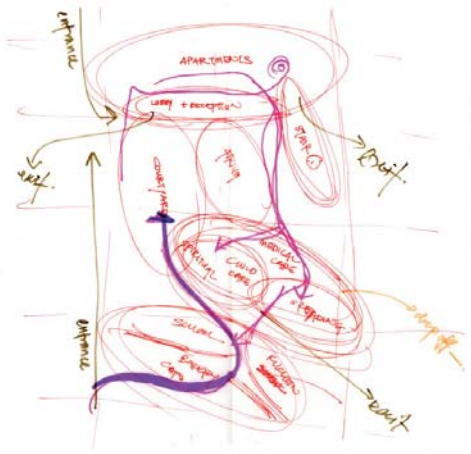
*Baking school and cafe.*

*ability.*



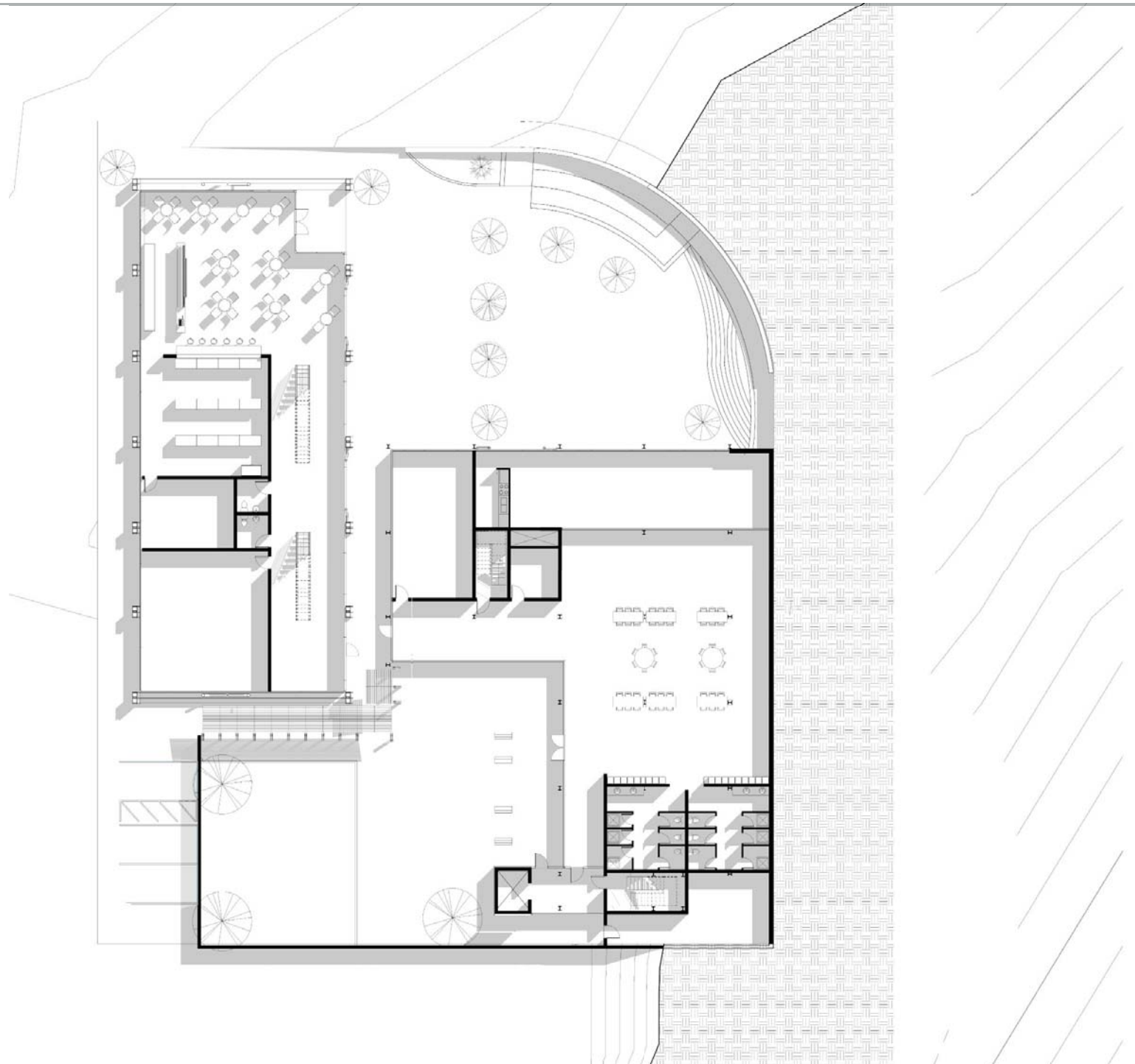


# process.

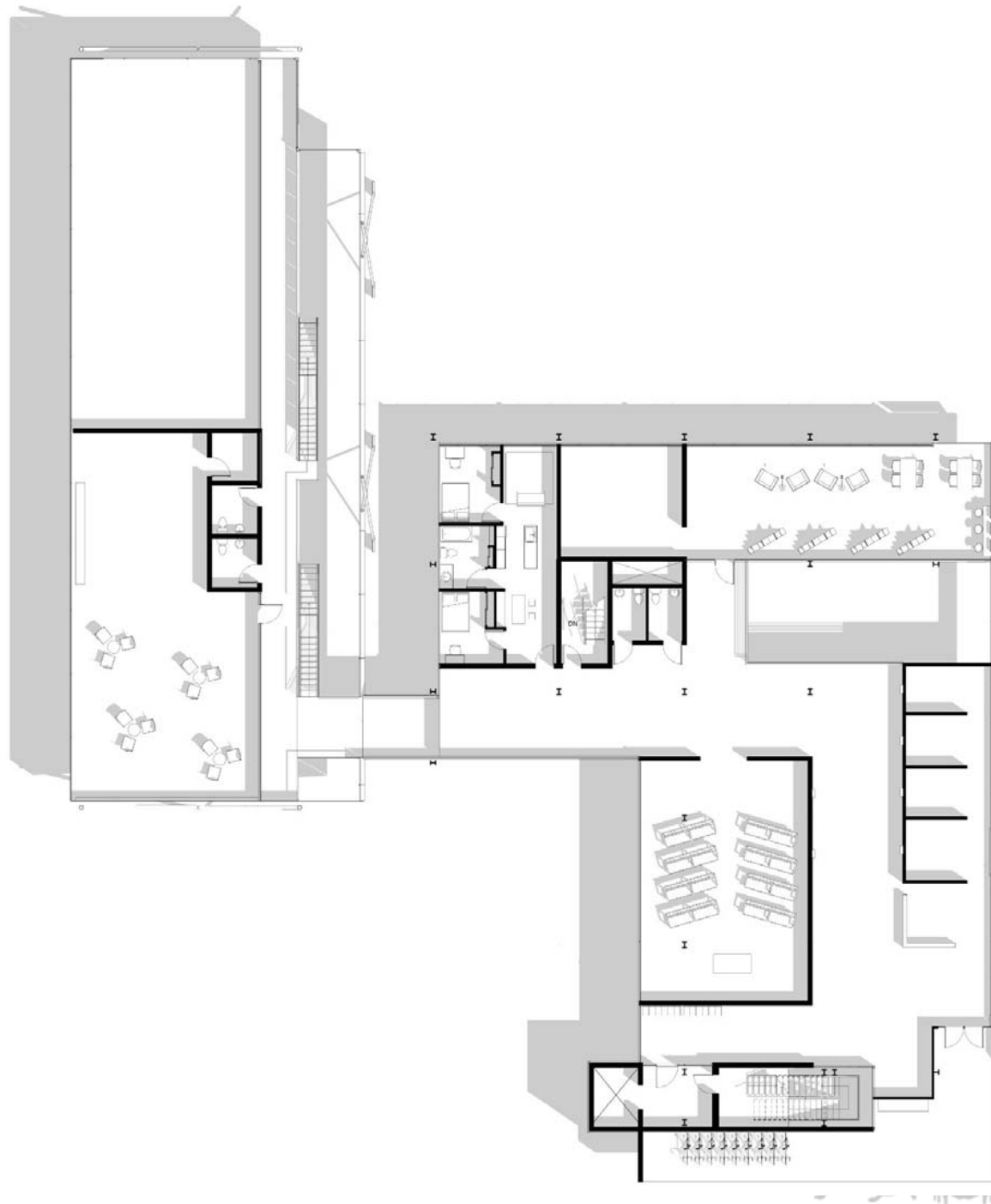




  
*site plan*

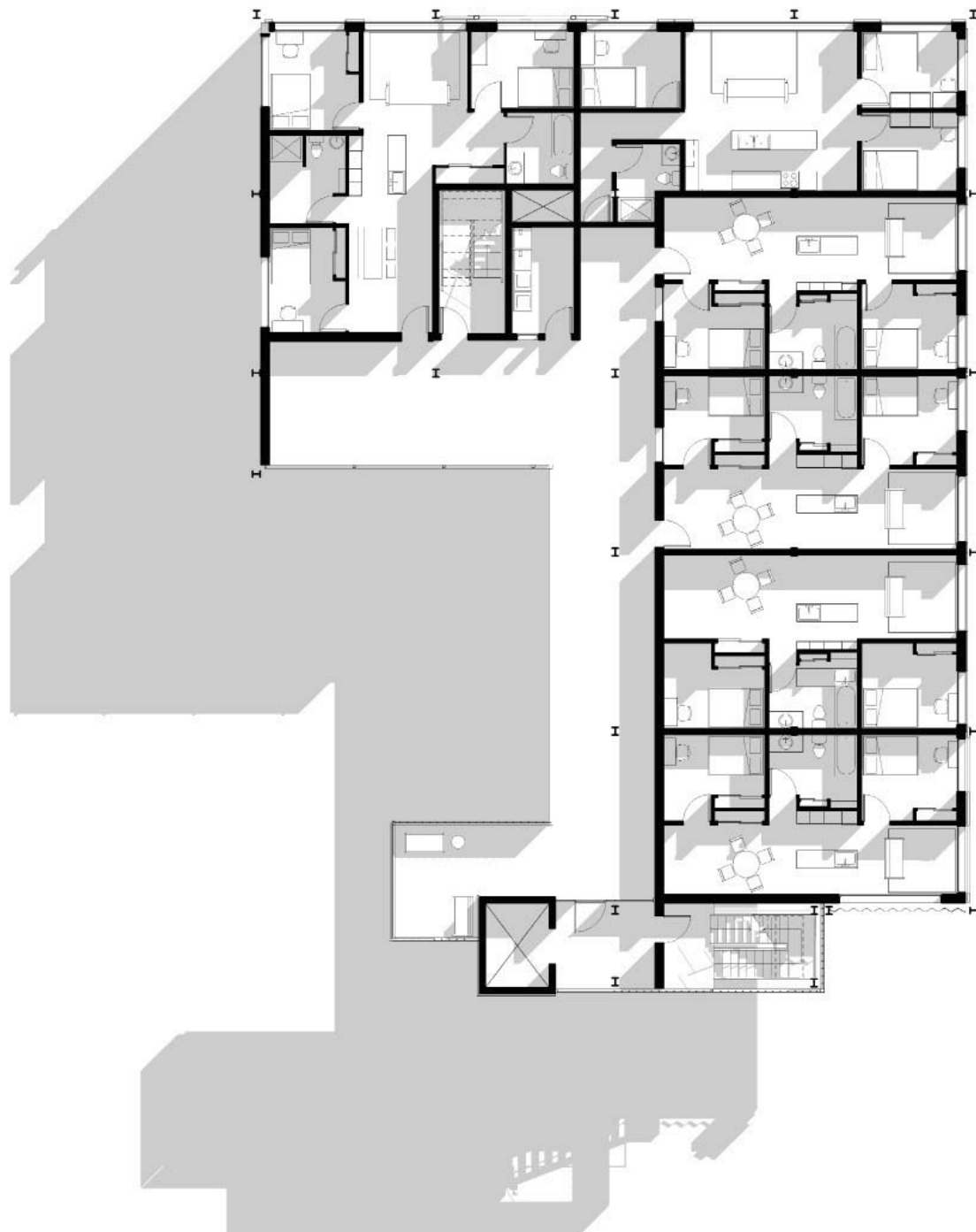


*floor 1 + site plan*



*floor 2*





*floor 3*





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# ANNA TIBAIJUKA

“With over one billion poor people living without adequate services in slums and squatter settlements, the challenge of the urban millennium is to improve the living environment of the poor ... we must all dedicate ourselves to the task of ensuring that, one day, we will live in a world of cities without slum,” - Executive Director of UNCHS (United Nations Center for Human Settlements - Habitat).





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- "never seen a friendlier place!"

# personal identification.

