



COMMUNITY BRIDGE

Emily Olson | Arch 772 | Spring 2022

THEORETICAL PREMISE

ABSTRACT

The **traumatizing** effects of homelessness on families can have long lasting consequences, especially for children who often miss considerable amounts of school due to their newly **disrupted** life. Without a solid education, these children may struggle in the future to secure stable jobs which then places them at risk of entering back into homelessness. Additionally, homelessness in the United States comes with an attached **stigma** of being lazy, amoral, or even delinquent, so for parents or single mothers, the shame of being homeless can prevent them from seeking assistance and creates a **barrier** between them and the surrounding community. This project seeks to explore and develop strategies that facilitate the creation of a dignified living situation as a means of breaking down the barrier of homelessness by dismantling preconceived perceptions of homelessness.

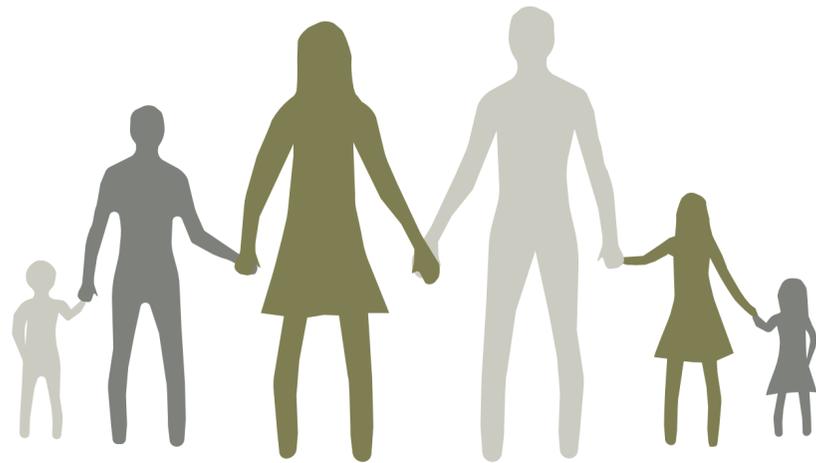


The word homeless often conjures images of ragged men wearing dirty clothes and skulking under bridges, panhandlers with cardboard signs, or even endless stretches of tent cities where drug abuse is rampant. This is not the life that everyone without a home experiences and those who might be stuck in those situations don't always want to be. Due to our misconceptions about homelessness, I think we often miss the full extent of the problem and lose sight of those who may be struggling in life and who may be at risk of entering into homelessness.

Presently there are several hundred people experiencing homelessness in Fargo. None of their stories are the same; some stay at shelters, some stay in their cars, some are living with friends or relatives, some are in hotels, and others are on the streets. Contrary to the prevalent idea that homelessness is caused by poor money habits, drug abuse, or laziness by not working, many of these individuals have lost their homes from events outside of their control. Economic downturn, divorce, abuse, cost of living all contribute to the problem. Unfortunately, access to the help they need comes at the cost of their dignity and exposure to a judgemental public eye.

This project seeks to address the stigma of homelessness through the design of a transitional housing center for homeless families. To ensure a successful response to the current need, I believe research into the history and origins of the stigma in the United States is necessary. Additionally, to gain a better understanding of the local need, I will acquire and examine recent published stories of homelessness from people in the Fargo area. Finally, I hope to gain additional insights and ideas from analysis of written works and exploration of case studies.

Community Bridge hopes to be a place of safe and beautiful spaces for homeless families to not only find shelter but also to heal as they progress in their journey to find permanent housing. The design of Community Bridge allows residents to customize and personalize their individual living spaces but also provides places to build connections with other residents allowing them to start friendships, share knowledge, and empathize with each other. Children living in prolonged homelessness lose important academic and social opportunities which make it difficult for them when they reach adulthood. Single mothers also face potentially more abuse in situations of prolonged homelessness. This project will offer these families an escape from homelessness and a chance to have a brighter future.



NARRATIVE

USER FOCUS

This project would like to highlight the needs and sensitivities of homeless parents and their children. Parents, especially single parents, may struggle with the dual responsibilities of work and childcare. Single mothers may also be working through the effects of previous abusive relationships which often trickles down into their childrens' lives causing future hurt. Other hardships homeless families may be experiencing include loss of loved ones, prolonged separation of family members, as well as irregular bedtimes and meals. Despite common experiences, these families are not a homogenous group. They may have vastly different backgrounds and values which must not be discounted. In order to meet the needs of this diverse group, the design of the project must be comforting, versatile, and accommodating.

SITE

The proposed site is located in north Fargo in a community known as Northport neighborhood, named after the northport shopping center that sits on the corner of 25th Ave and Broadway. The current use of the site is 6 small apartment buildings and their adjacent parking lots. Across the street to the south is McKinley Elementary School and just beyond the apartments to the west is the North Fargo Dog Park. As a former resident of the Northport neighborhood, I know first hand that it is a quiet, friendly, and walkable area.



RESEARCH

HISTORICAL
CONTEXT

LOCAL
EXPERIENCES

NIMBY

LITERATURE
REVIEW

COLONIAL ERA

The dominant religions of the time, including the Puritans and Quakers, placed a **high value on the individual's moral responsibility to work**. This view led many prominent leaders across different religions and aspects of society and culture to condemn homeless vagrants who frequented their towns. As the colonies became more settled and towns grew larger, homeless populations also grew and the need for aid prompted community members to arrange methods of providing relief. Aside from those escaping disaster, escaped slaves, and roaming free spirits were primary members of the small community of homeless individuals.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

CIVIL WAR ERA

In his book *Down and Out on the Road: The Homeless in American History*, Kenneth Kusmer writes about the rise of train usage during the American Civil War. These trains connected not only the tramps to remote parts of the country, but also the newspapers and the sensationalism of the stories the newspapers reported. Tragically, the **exploits of a few** unruly tramps reported in the news caused tramps across the country to become the enemies of everyone and they subsequently **took the blame** for all ensuing wrongs and mishaps.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

GREAT DEPRESSION

The time of the Great Depression saw a **sudden influx** of homeless people needing shelter and threatening to overwhelm community homeless services. Inadequate services and lack of employment saw many people persistently staying only for a brief time before trying their luck in the next place. Some organizations dedicated to aiding homeless people really began to grow at this time expanding beyond merely food and shelter and beginning to offer health services and indoor spaces where people could remain during the day. It would seem, the fearful hysteria of the late 1800s had been replaced by a **mutual understanding of financial woes** in the early 1900s.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

20TH CENTURY

The second half of the 20th century saw many individuals forced out of city slums and coupled with the release of residents from government mental hospitals, the need for shelter was extremely high. Around this same time, homelessness was undergoing a **significant demographic change**. Increasing independence among women as well as escalating numbers of divorces led to the immense number of single parent households. Many single mothers ended up in shelters. As during the days of the tramp, newspapers and other media helped to spread damaging reports on homeless people. Even today, the **news media holds considerable power over shaping the perceptions of society** and making it either the homeless advocate's biggest ally or enemy.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

SINGLE MOTHER: SHEYENNE RODRIGUEZ

In January, 2018, Sheyenne Rodriguez found herself living in her car with 3 young children. Temperatures in January in Fargo can often be well below 0 degrees Fahrenheit. Generous strangers helped her get a hotel room where she stayed until she was able to get a place at the YWCA women's shelter. Sadly, this was **not the first time** for Shayenne Rodriguez to be homeless. In the late 90s, when she was only 15 years old, Rodriguez was living on the streets of Minneapolis. Her family had previously lived in Bullhead, SD on the Lakota Standing Rock reservation until they moved to Minneapolis. Not long after, her parents split up and Rodriguez and her siblings were taken to Kansas where they ended up in foster care. After fleeing an **abusive foster home**, Rodriguez found herself back in Minneapolis. Without parents and unable to stay with her aunts, Rodriguez was forced to survive on the streets. During this time, Rodriguez developed a drinking problem which eventually led to her going to jail for several years. Another time Rodriguez experienced homelessness was with her husband sometime in the 2010s. Rodriguez's experience being a homeless single mother has been incredibly difficult. Her children need significant medical assistance, her car is in terrible shape, and the **high cost of childcare** is daunting. In order to effectively help local women like Rodriguez, considerable changes need to happen in Fargo to provide adequate support systems and to assist women in accessing those support systems.

COVID-19: WILLIAM JACKSON

Up until only recently, William Jackson has never been without a job. When he could no longer afford the price of housing, Jackson was forced into a shelter in Moorhead Minnesota. Jackson and his school age daughter have struggled not only with distance learning, as a Covid-19 precaution, but also from car troubles. Although Jackson is optimistic about his and his daughter's future as he makes plans on finding an apartment for them, many others in the Fargo/Moorhead area are still facing destitution. Rising costs, low wages, and ongoing quarantines have placed many members of the community in a precarious position. As reported in the November 25th edition of the Fargo Forum, many shelters and aid providers have noted an increase in the number of people requesting assistance. Need in the winter, especially in Fargo and Moorhead, has always been greater than other times of the year, however, precautionary measures, such as social distancing, has created an additional challenge for everyone. Another issue facing these organizations is an inadequate number of workers. The Forum also reported on the mental strain taking place among those dependent on the shelters for survival. According to Sue Koesterman, who is a pastor and the director of Churches United, "Isolation has taken a tremendous toll on people who are in shelters and don't have a robust support system". (as cited from the Fargo Forum Nov. 25, 2021). The Covid-19 virus has taken an immense toll on the homeless population and will likely be a turning point in future policies regarding aid distribution.

NIMBY

Originally a movement by middle class neighborhoods to protect the land value of their neighborhoods and properties from inconvenient and intrusive government or social building programs, NIMBY, (Not In My Back Yard) has more recently become associated with a general disinclination by community members to allow homeless shelters to be built in local neighborhoods. However, some claims of the movement cannot be ignored. Bringing shelters and similar buildings into an area can increase both intrusion of sounds, such as alarms from ambulances, as well as just a general sudden influx of strangers into an established neighborhood.

STRATEGIES FOR OVERCOMING NIMBY

One of the most successful strategies for overcoming NIMBY in the case of homeless shelters and social housing is informing the community of the reality of the need for housing and laying out the positive impact of the project. In an article written for the Journal of Affordable Housing and Community Development, Tim Iglesias notes several important methods of gaining public approval for a project.

1. STAY ON THE OFFENSIVE WHEN ADDRESSING THE COMMUNITY

2. PROMOTE POSITIVE PERSONAL STORIES AND ACCOUNTS

3. UTILIZE STRATEGIC PROBLEM SOLVING

4. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE MEDIA

House as a Mirror of Self: Exploring the Deeper Meaning of Home

In her book, Clare Cooper Marcus explores the psychology behind the choices and emotions each individual experiences as they navigate the development of their homes. Marcus seems to promote ideas such as **control** over one's living situation as well as **personal investment**, such as taking the time to care for a space or item. In the 3rd chapter of her book, she mentions a study completed by one of her former students into the yard care efforts of several homeowners and how higher levels of care correlated to owners with more restricted finances. (Marcus, 2006).

Polarity or Integration? Towards a fuller understanding of home and homelessness

In her article in the Journal of Architectural and Planning Research, Jeanne Moore proposes to demonstrate the inadequacies of pitting home against homelessness. **Home**, Moore points out, **is an imaginative idea**. We do not call any four walls with a roof home because we demand it to fulfill our desire for beauty, or to be located in a particular region. (Moore, 2007). Contrastingly, as Moore makes note, a homeless individual is likely to be understood as a person without those four walls and a roof. (Moore, 2007). Another common illogical perception about home and homelessness that Moore presents in her article concludes that home is simply a place of perpetual sanctuary, when in fact, **a home can contain danger and unrest**. (Moore, 2007).

SITE & ANALYSIS

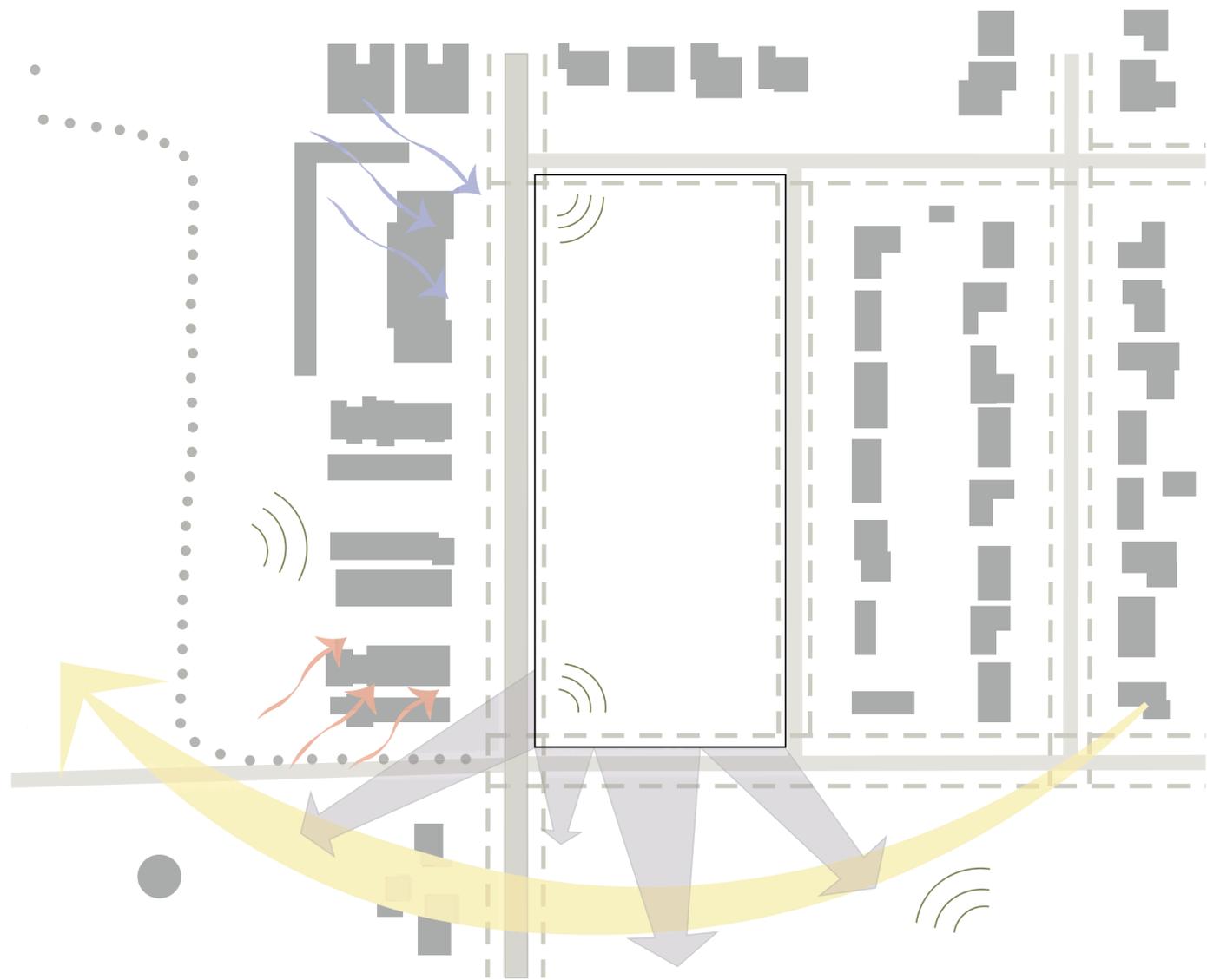
TYPOLOGY: TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

Transitional Housing is a vital step for individuals and families struggling with homelessness to regain their feet. Contains services on site and semi independent living. Transitional housing could provide shelter anywhere from a couple months to a couple years.

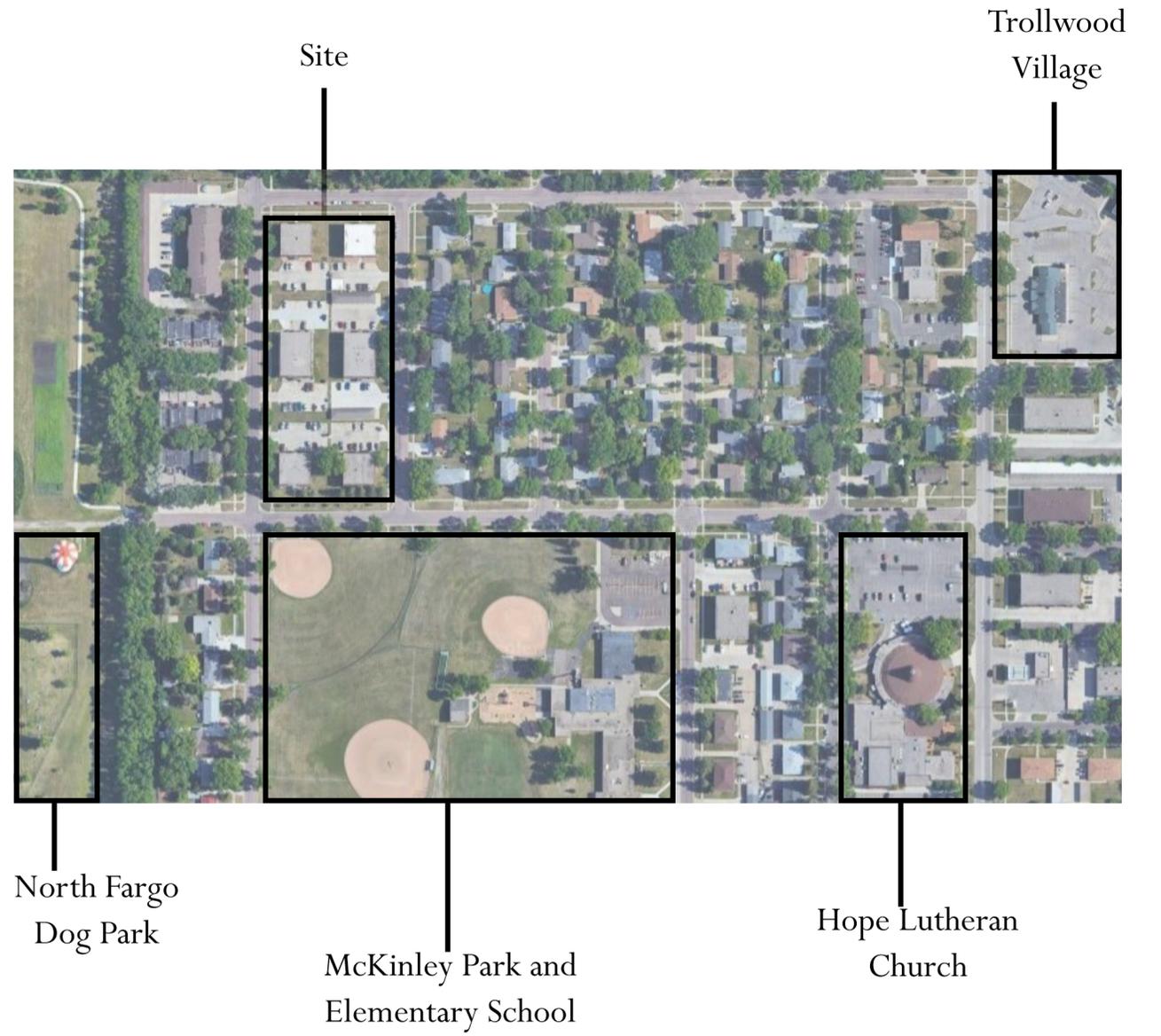
PROGRAM

- Private Living Spaces
- Communal Kitchen and Dining
- Laundry Room
- Study Rooms
- Sensory Garden
- Security Office
- Social Services Office
- Nurse's Office
- Chapel
- Coffee Shop
- Parking

SITE & ANALYSIS



SITE ANALYSIS



SITE CONTEXT

SITE & ANALYSIS



SITE VIEWS

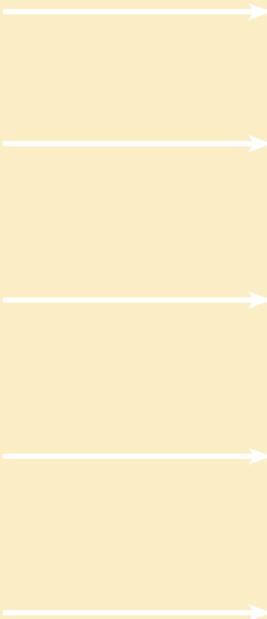


DESIGN PROCESS



DESIGN GOALS

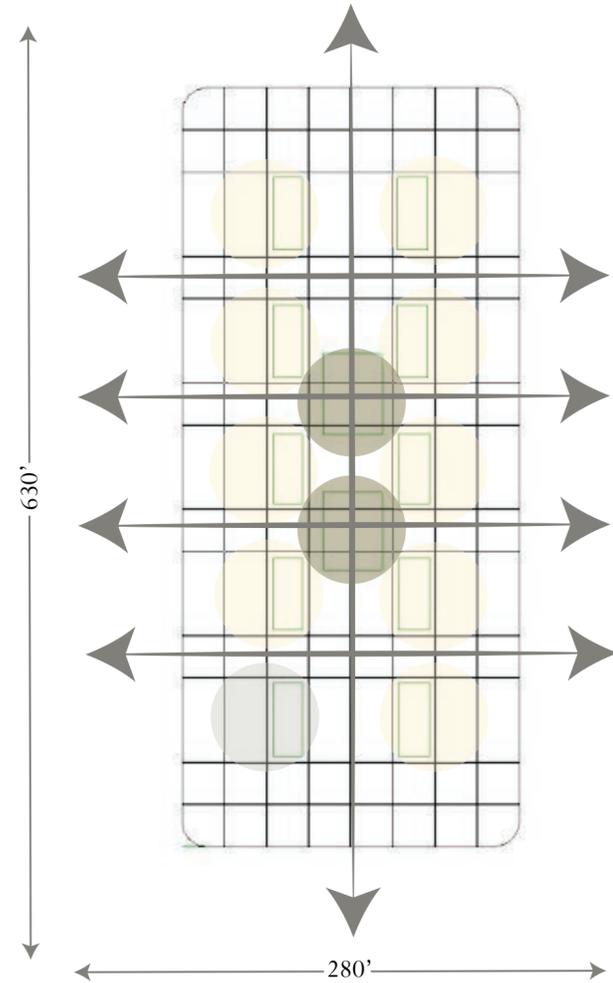
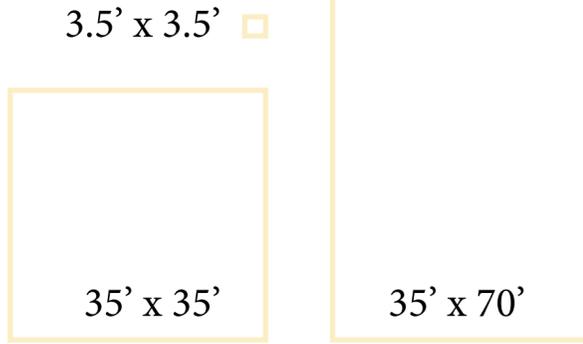
- Provide a healing environment to address physical and emotional homelessness
- Create a beautiful setting to promote a positive image of the users
- Create opportunities for learning useful life management skills
- Provide for inclusion of elements that facilitate familiarity and comfort
- Offer users a degree of control in domestic decision making



STRATEGIES

- Wholistic design of site focusing on human experience and inclusion of sensory garden
- Deliberate and thoughtful choice of materials, plantings, and consideration of human scale
- Spaces dedicated to instruction, communal cooking and dining rooms, community planting beds, and study rooms
- Focus on opportunities to grow familiar plants and traditional furnishings in common spaces
- Design of flexible living spaces to be easily adjusted per user need

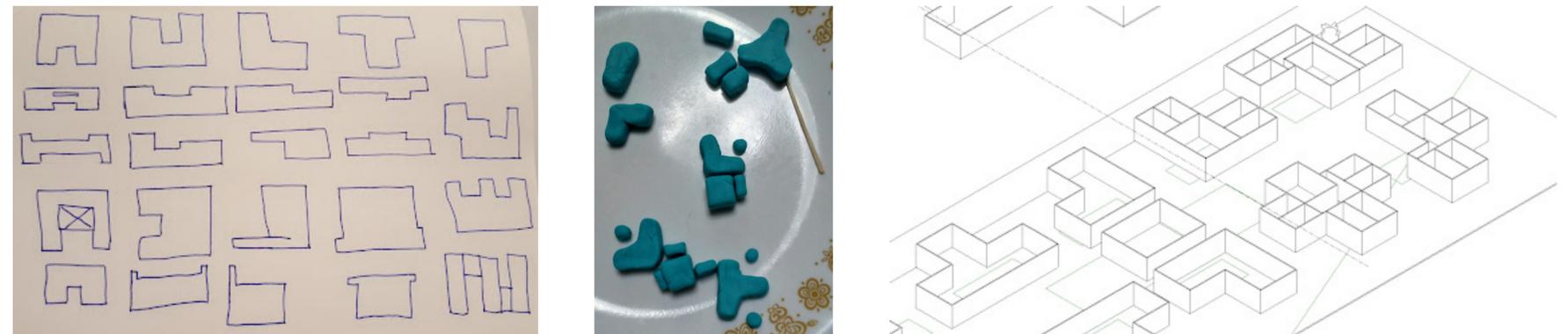
SPATIAL GRID



SPATIAL IDEATION FOCUSING ON POSITIVE ELEMENTS

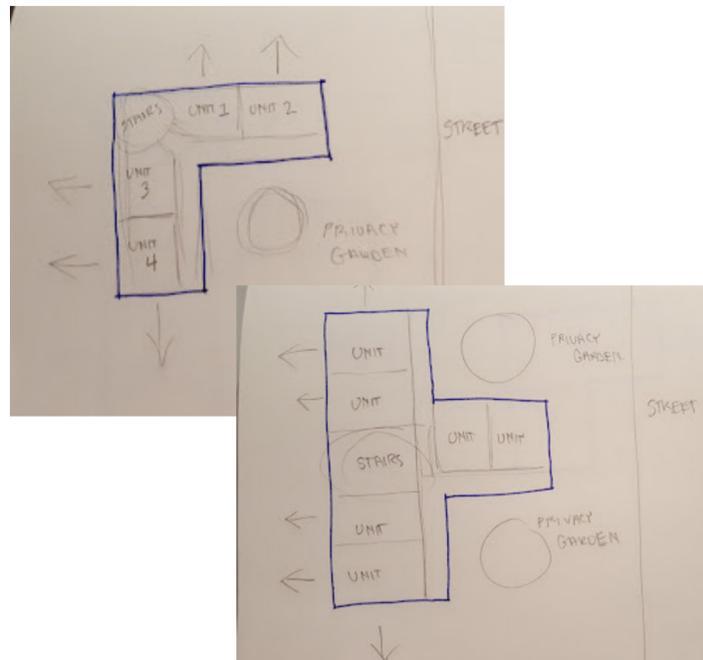


SPATIAL IDEATION FOCUSING ON NEGATIVE SPACE

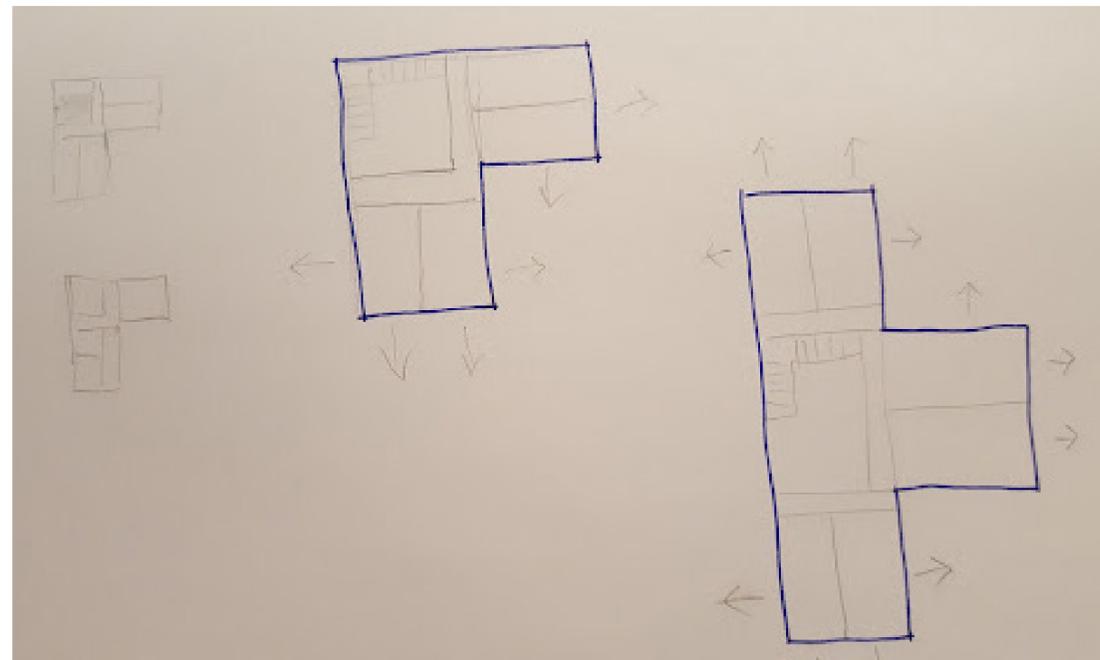


FORMATION OF INTERLOCKING L-SHAPED HOUSING

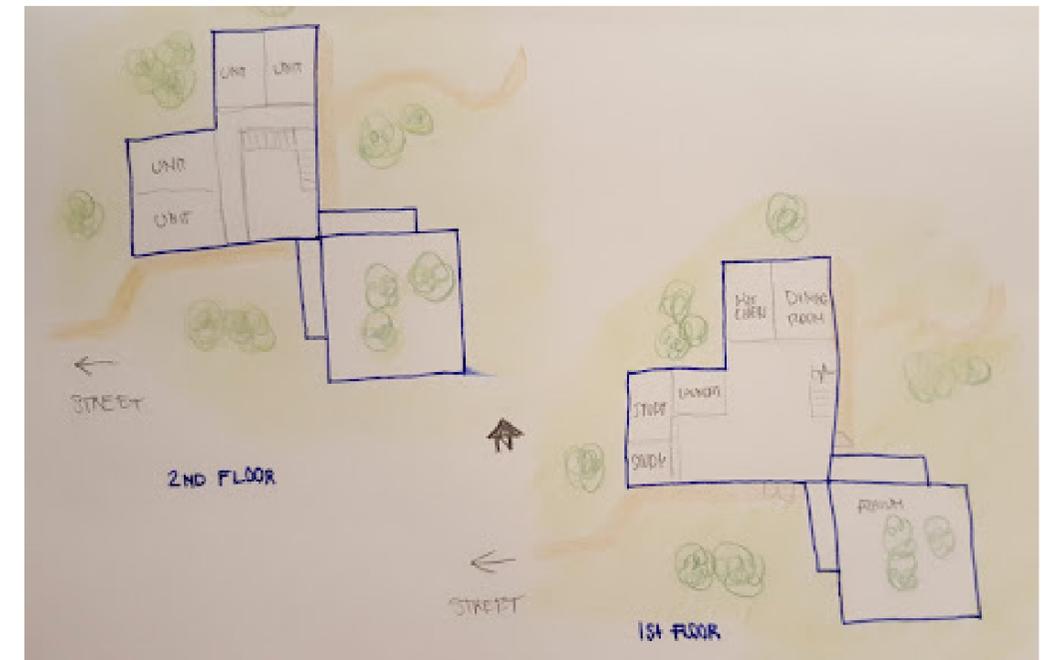
FLOOR PLAN CONSIDERATIONS



Initial sketches exploring different layout iterations of L-shaped housing



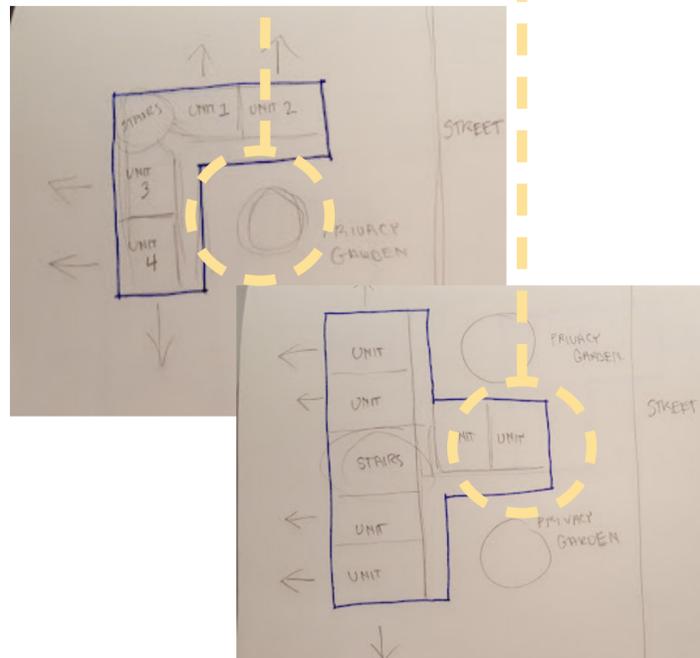
Further exploration into design which maintains two outward facing walls allowing for increased natural light and views to the exterior



Sketch focused on highlighting the connections between the 1st and 2nd floor and the 1st floor and the site

Units to be completely open to have space for whatever furnishings residents desire

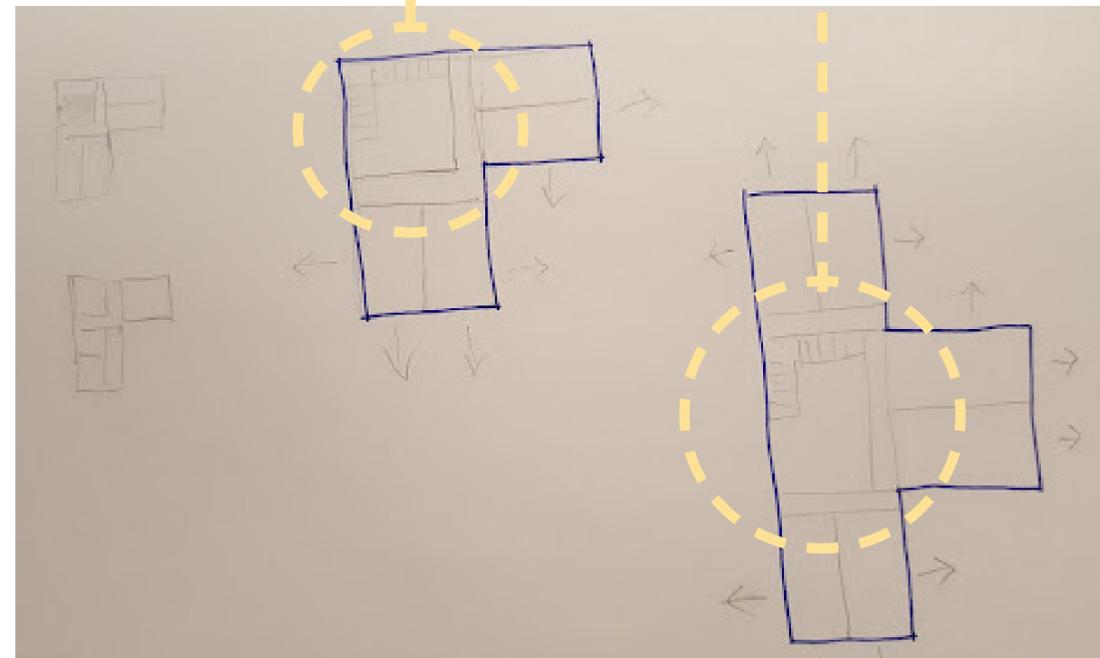
Inclusion of space for vegetation to shield residents from visual contact



Initial sketches exploring different layout iterations of L-shaped housing

Use of open stairs for increased light and improve connection between the 1st and 2nd floor

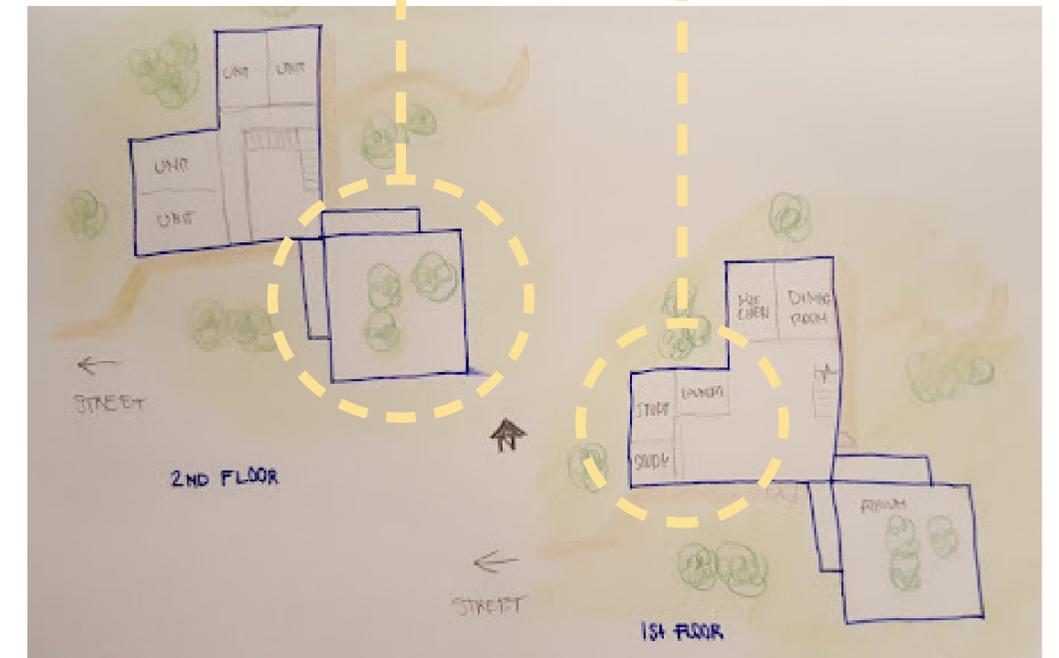
Avoiding dark and frightening corridors by having hallways end in windows or border the open stair



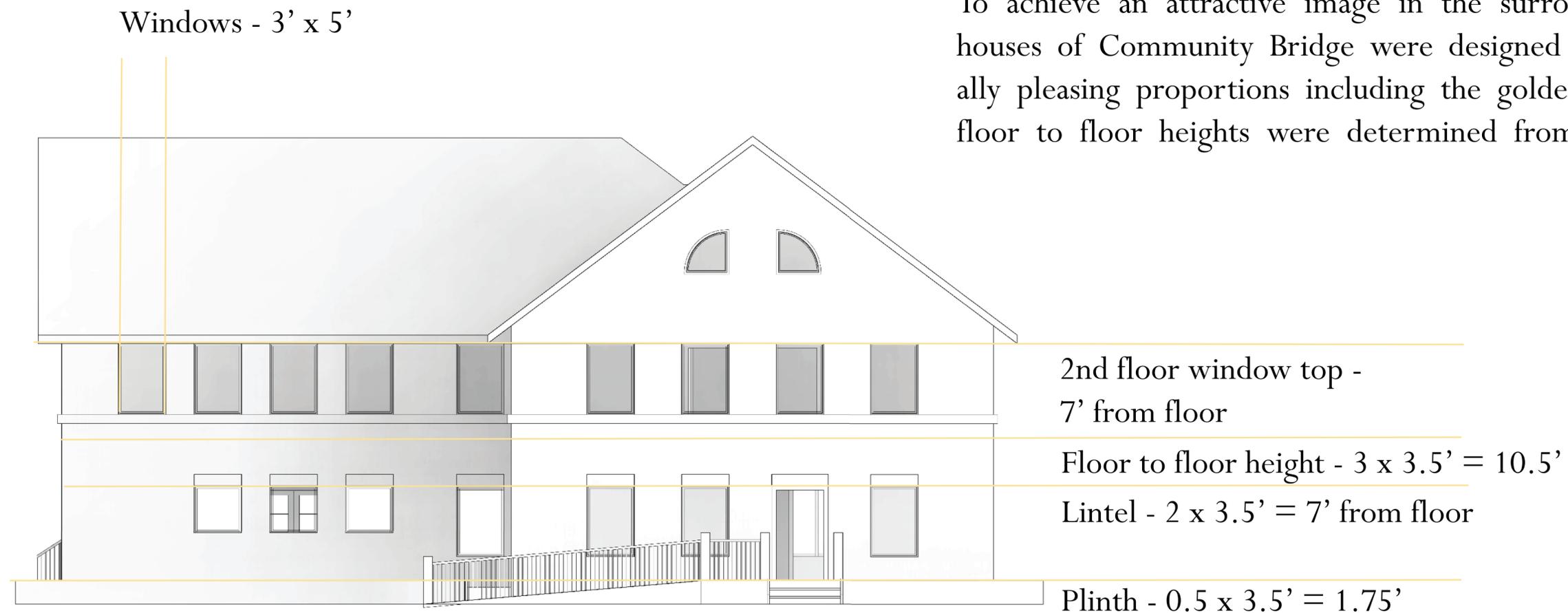
Further exploration into design which maintains two outward facing walls allowing for increased natural light and views to the exterior

Attached greenhouse to provide opportunities to grow flowers or medicinal herbs throughout the year

Shared facilities to promote natural and sympathetic interactions between residents

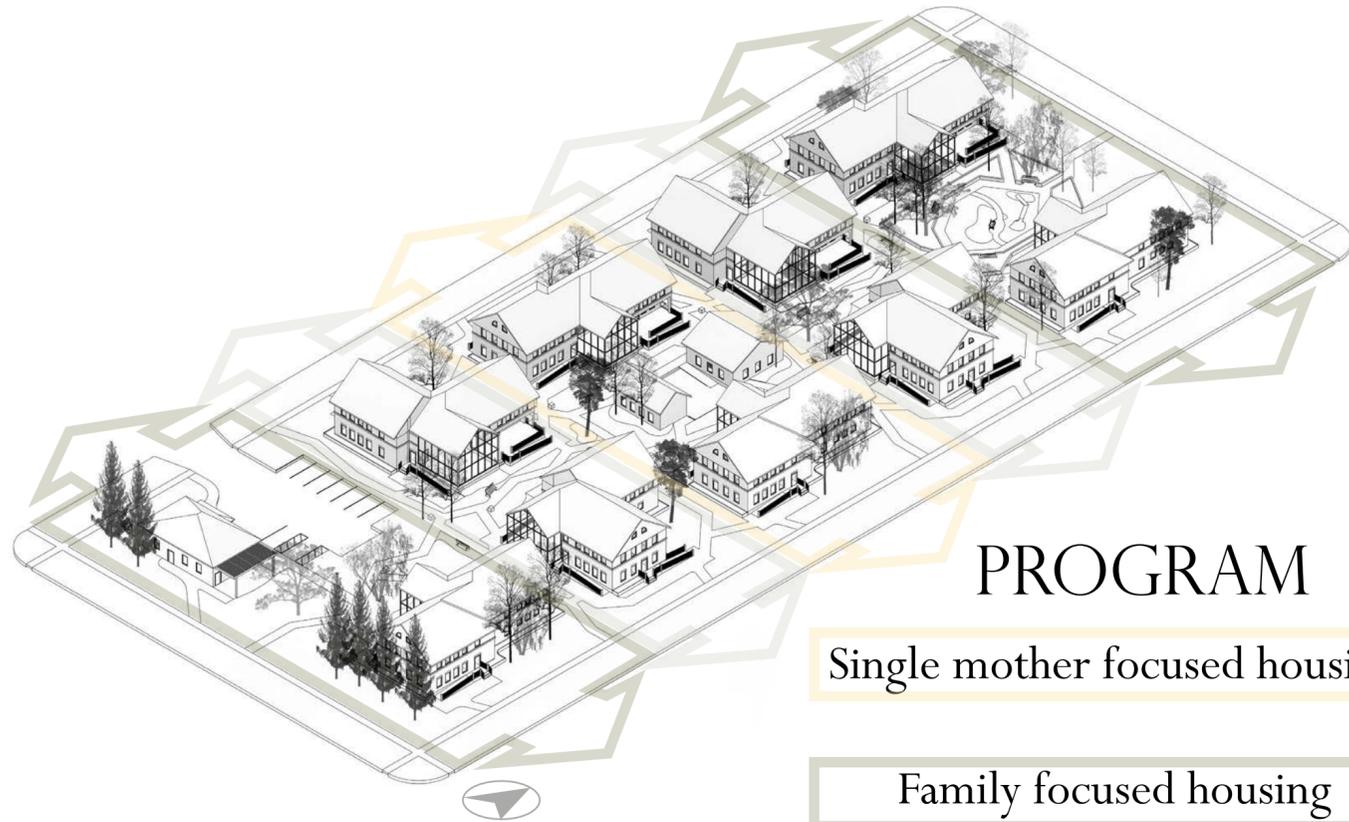


Sketch focused on highlighting the connections between the 1st and 2nd floor and the 1st floor and the site



PROPORTIONS

To achieve an attractive image in the surrounding neighborhood, the houses of Community Bridge were designed with respect to traditionally pleasing proportions including the golden ratio. Plinth, lintel, and floor to floor heights were determined from a base unit of 3.5 feet.



PROGRAM

Single mother focused housing

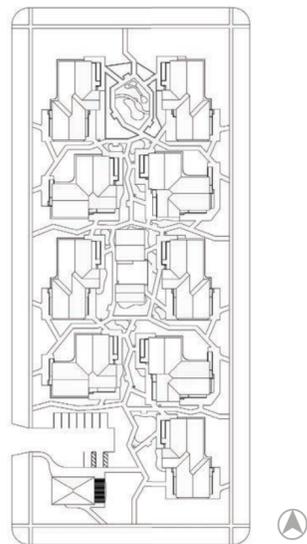
Family focused housing

Mix single mother and family



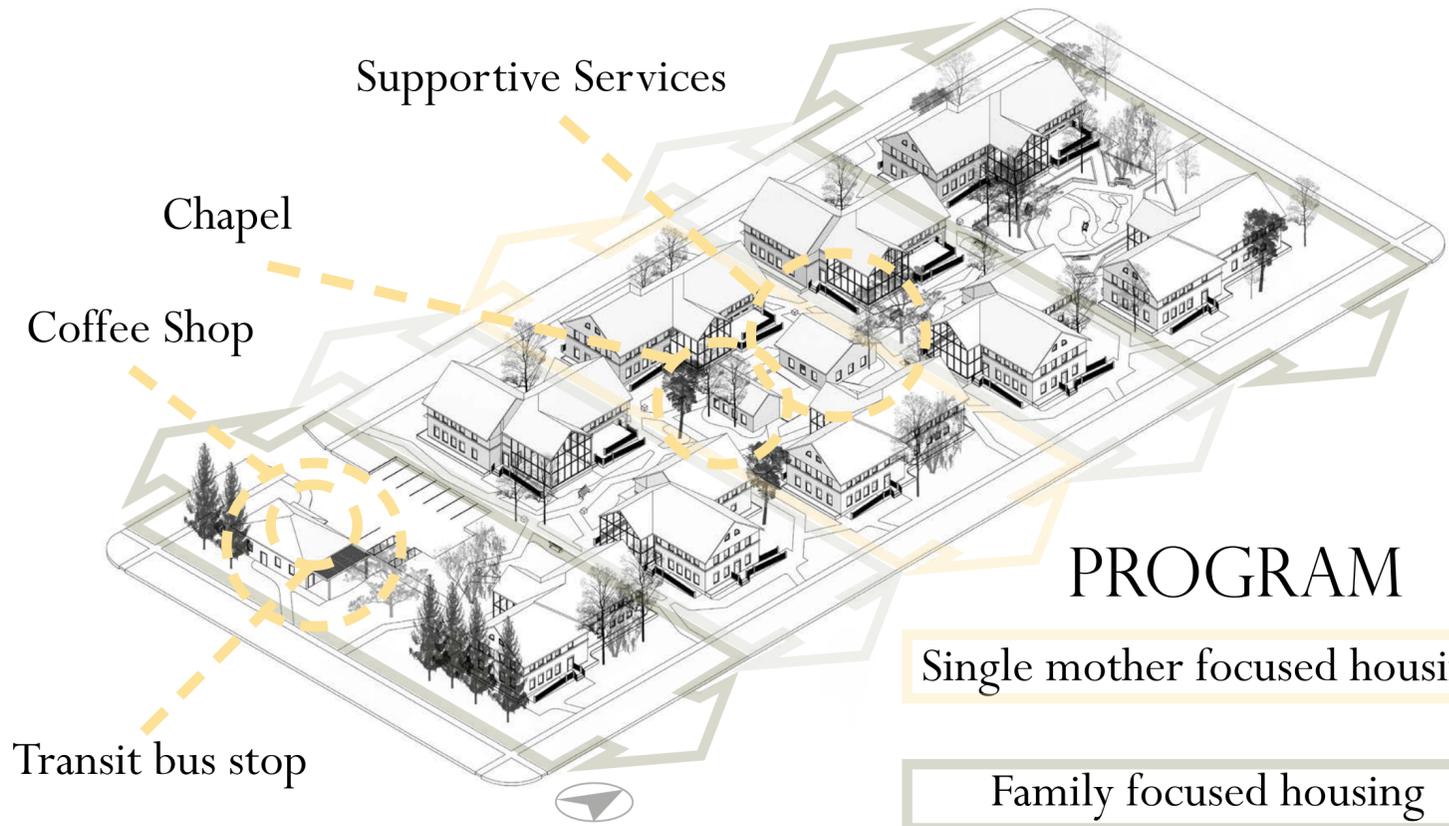
GARDENS

The spaces between the buildings on the site are organized into parklike gardens and courtyards connected by a meandering path. Brick pedestals are scattered throughout the site providing residents a place to create and display artwork.



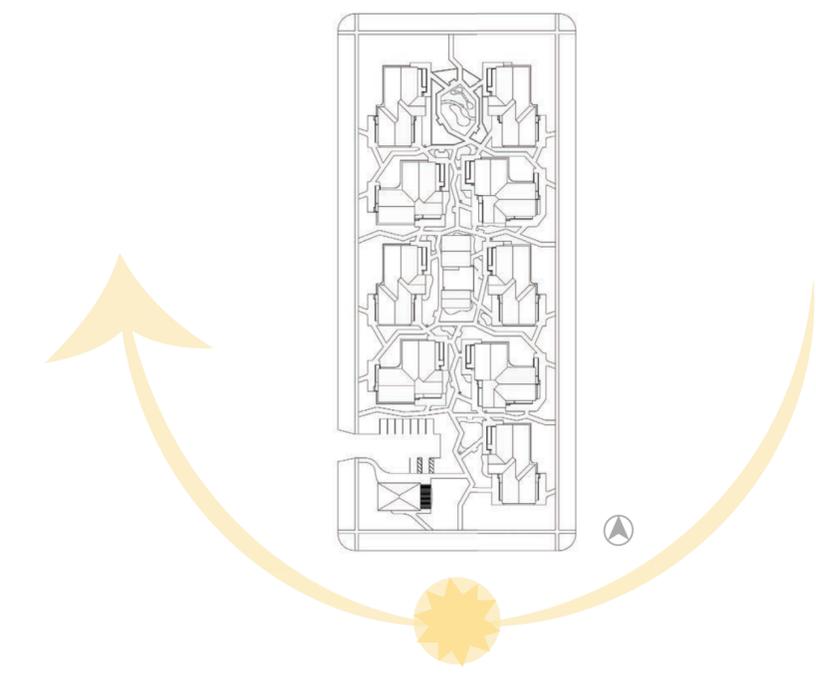
SOLAR ORIENTATION

The horizontal emphasis of the site's spatial organization as well as the spacing between buildings allow for greater opportunities for natural daylight penetration into gardens and interior spaces



PROGRAM

- Single mother focused housing
- Family focused housing
- Mix single mother and family

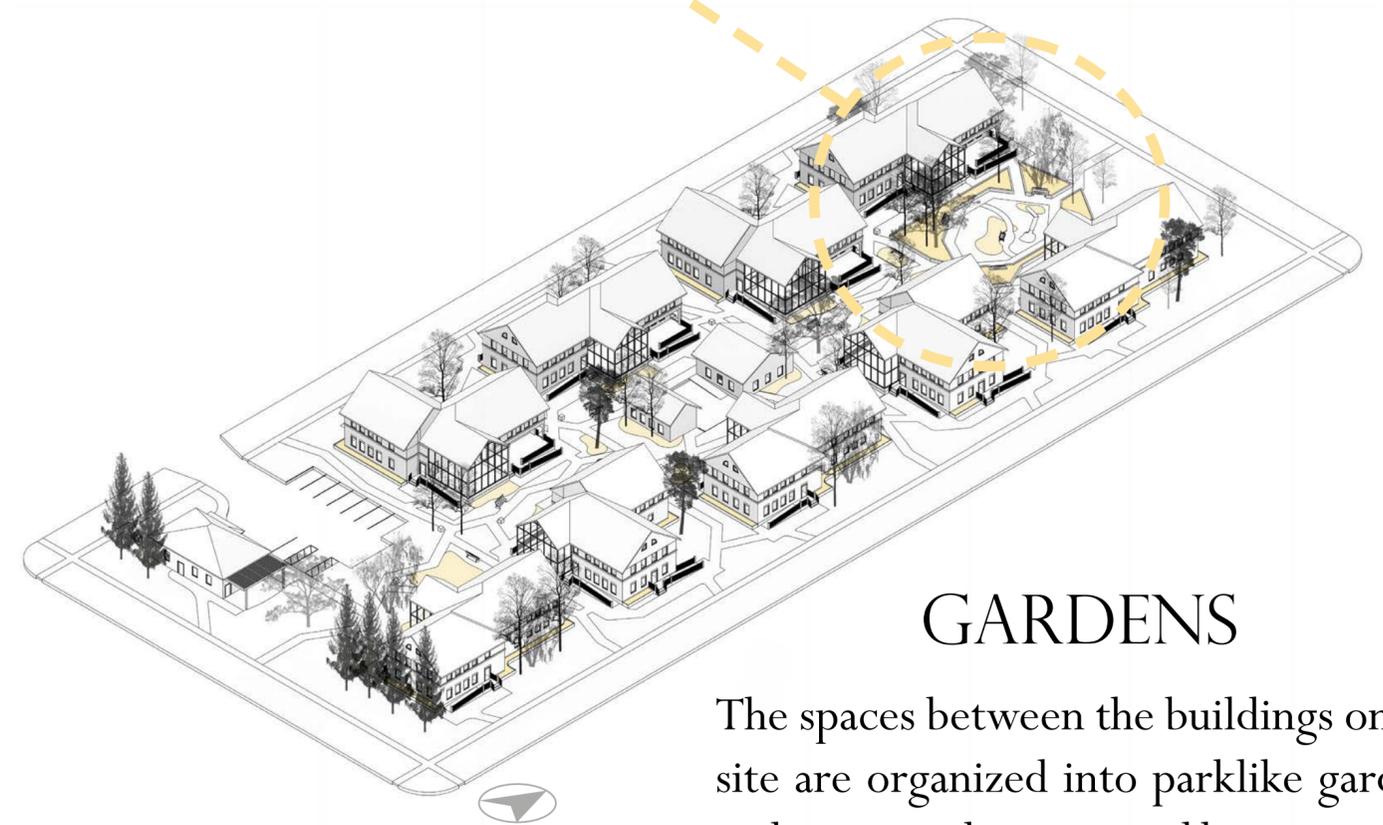


SOLAR ORIENTATION

The horizontal emphasis of the site's spatial organization as well as the spacing between buildings allow for greater opportunities for natural daylight penetration into gardens and interior spaces

SENSORY GARDEN

A sensory garden offers residents a calming place to relax and heal from any stress or trauma they may have experienced.



GARDENS

The spaces between the buildings on the site are organized into parklike gardens and courtyards connected by a meandering path. Brick pedestals are scattered throughout the site providing residents a place to create and display artwork.



FINAL DESIGN



WEST ELEVATION

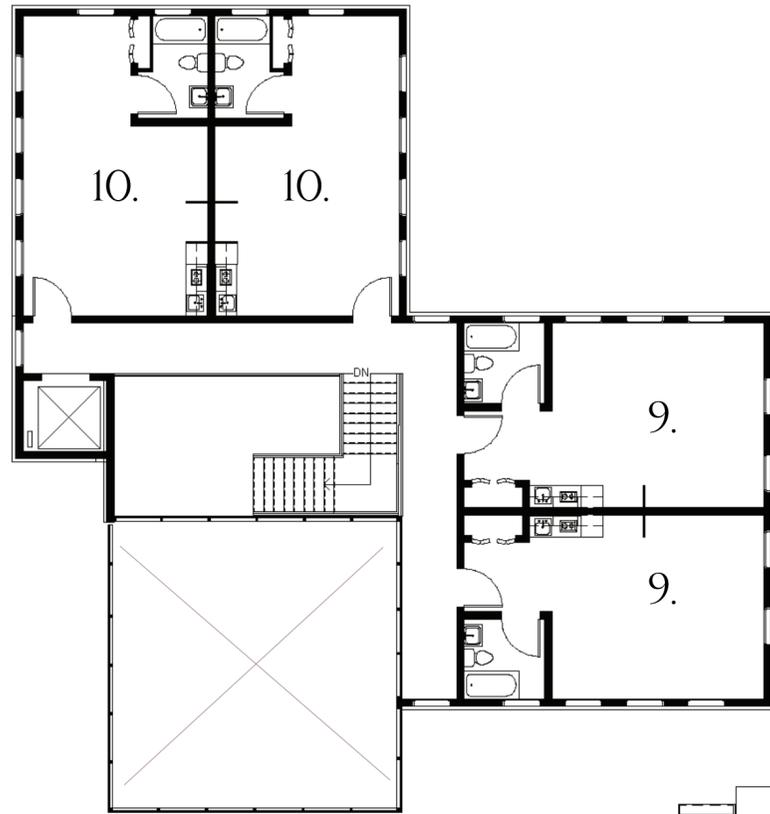


SOUTH ELEVATION

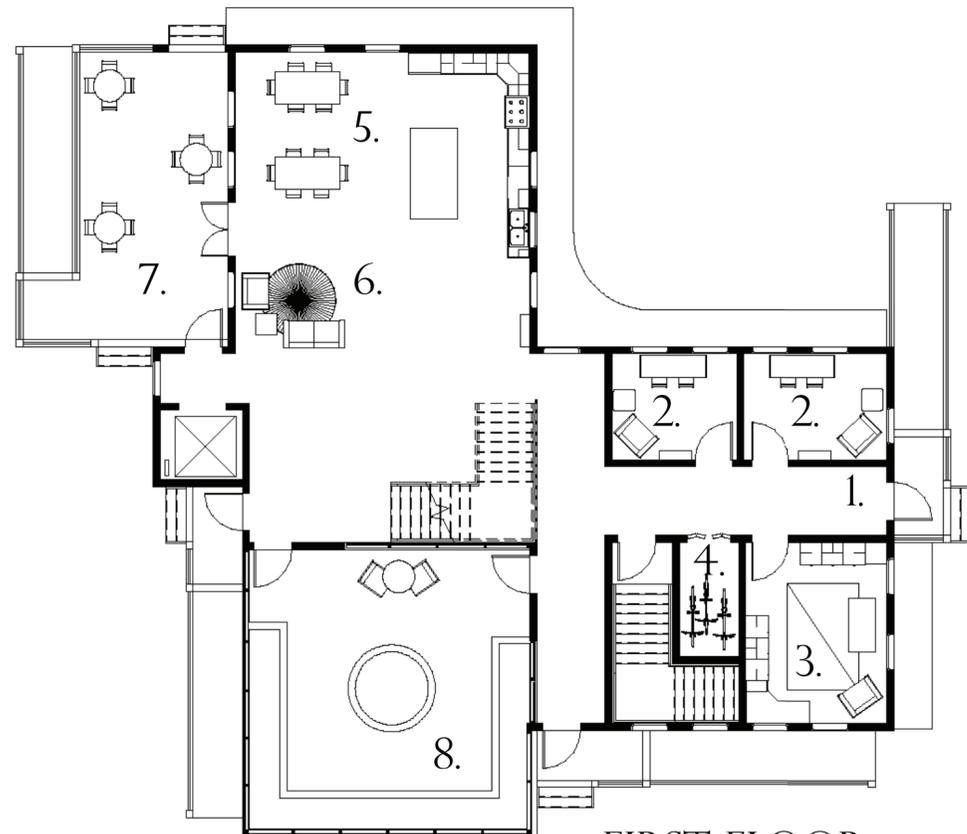


EAST ELEVATION

NORTH ELEVATION

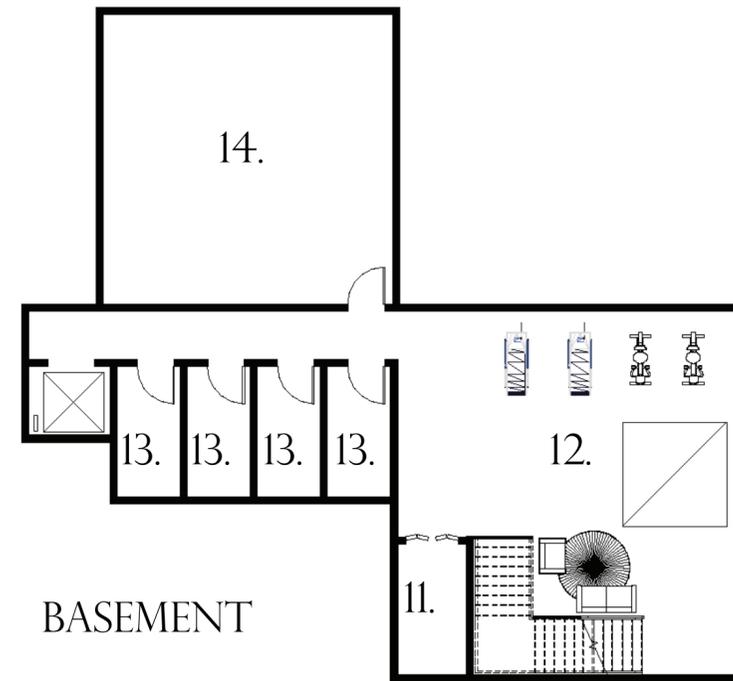


SECOND FLOOR

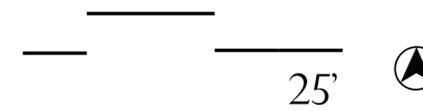


FIRST FLOOR

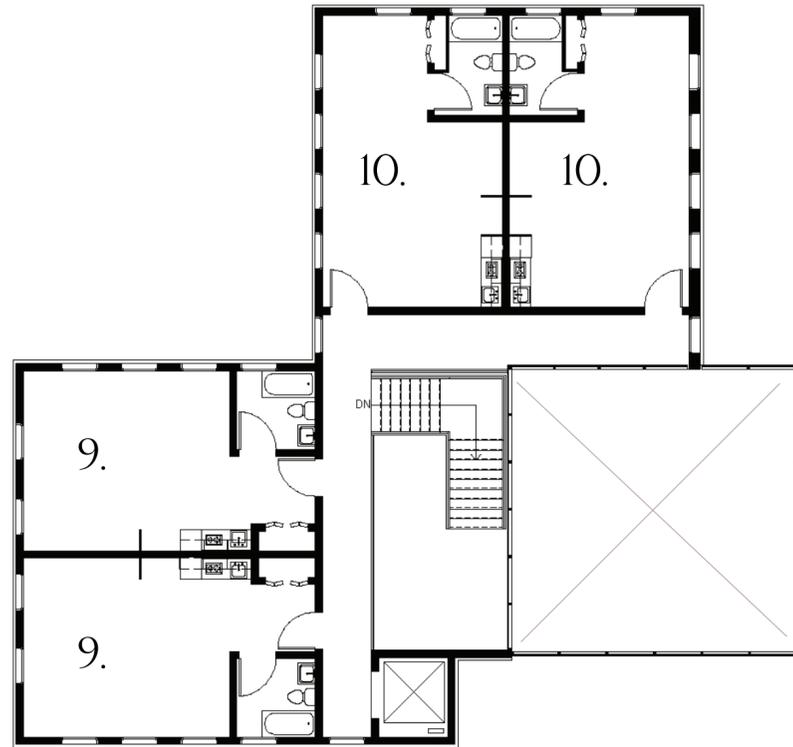
HOUSE TYPE 1



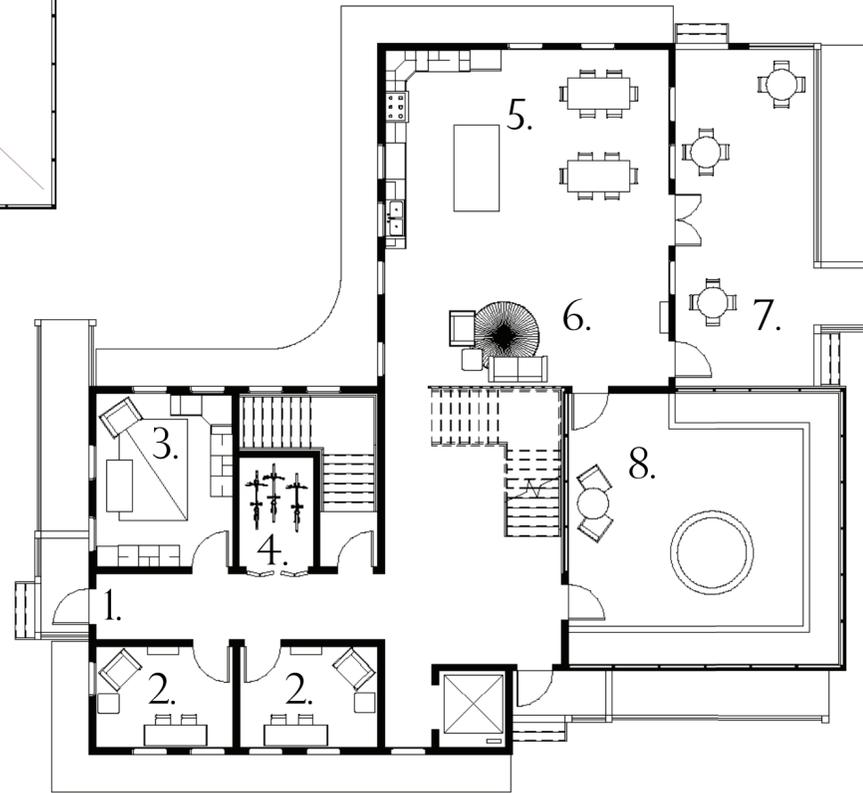
BASEMENT



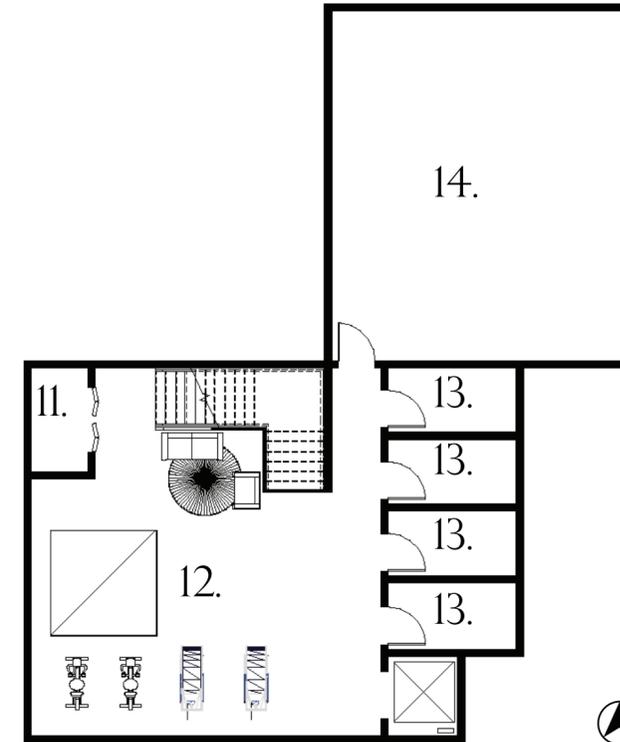
1. FRONT ENTRY
2. STUDY ROOMS
3. LAUNDRY ROOM
4. BIKE STORAGE
5. KITCHEN/DINING
6. LOUNGE
7. PATIO
8. GREENHOUSE
9. UNIT TYPE A
10. UNIT TYPE B
11. PANTRY
12. WORKOUT ROOM
13. PRIVATE STORAGE
14. MECHANICAL/FURNITURE STORAGE



SECOND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR

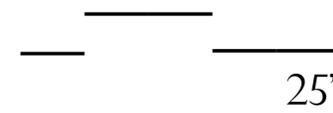


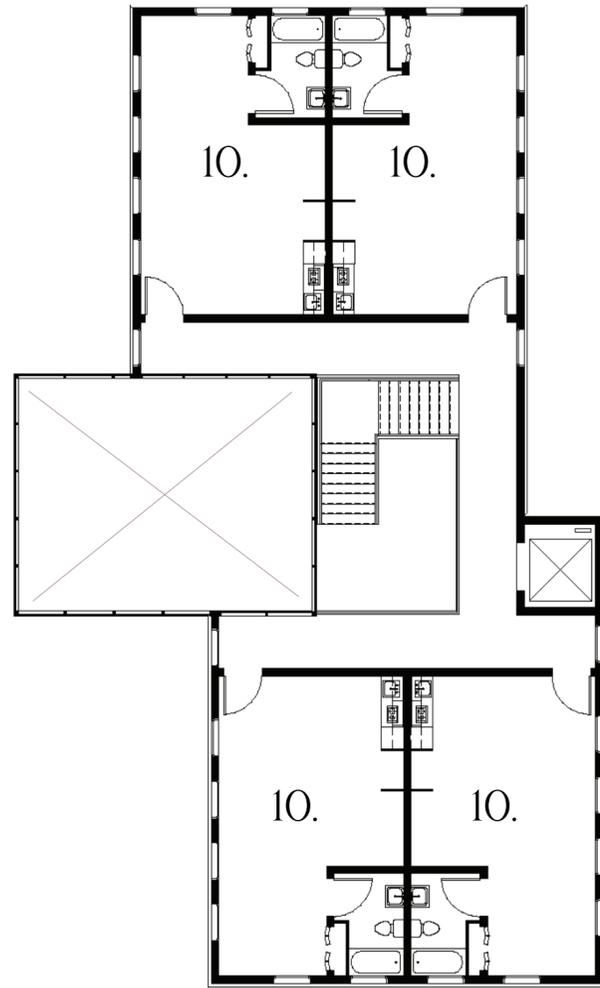
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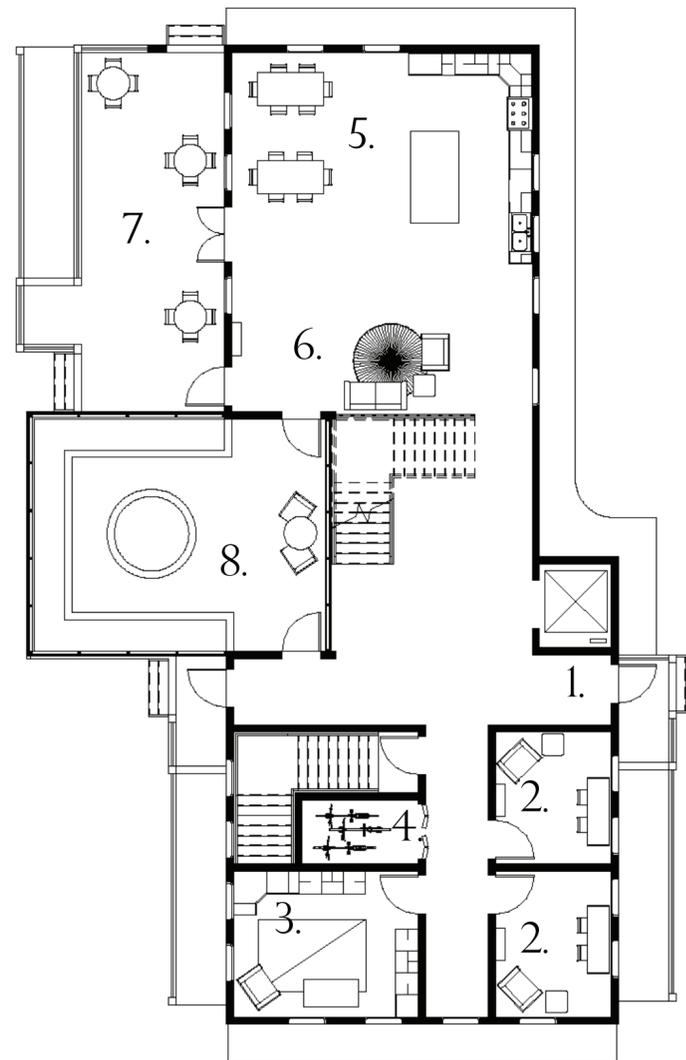
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HOUSE TYPE 2

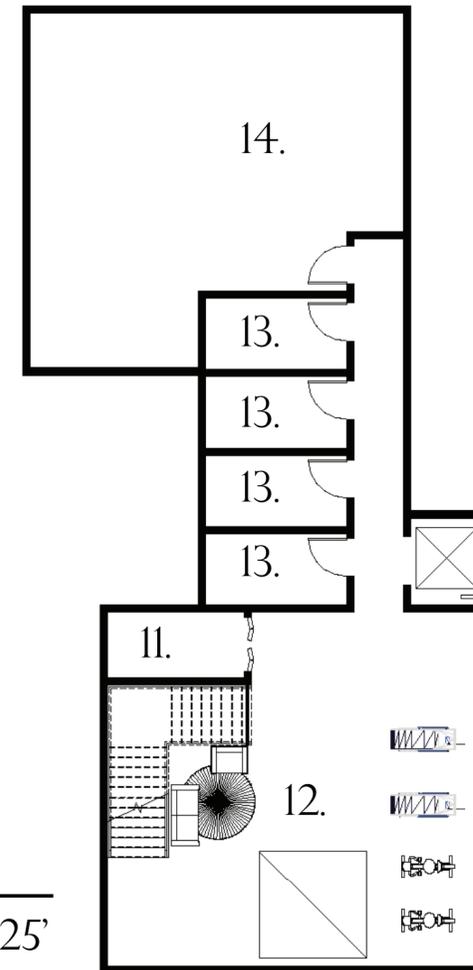




SECOND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR

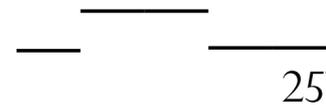


BASEMENT



1. FRONT ENTRY
2. STUDY ROOMS
3. LAUNDRY ROOM
4. BIKE STORAGE
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9. UNIT TYPE A
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14. MECHANICAL/FURNITURE STORAGE

HOUSE TYPE 3





UNIT TYPE A:
SINGLE MOTHER
+ BABY



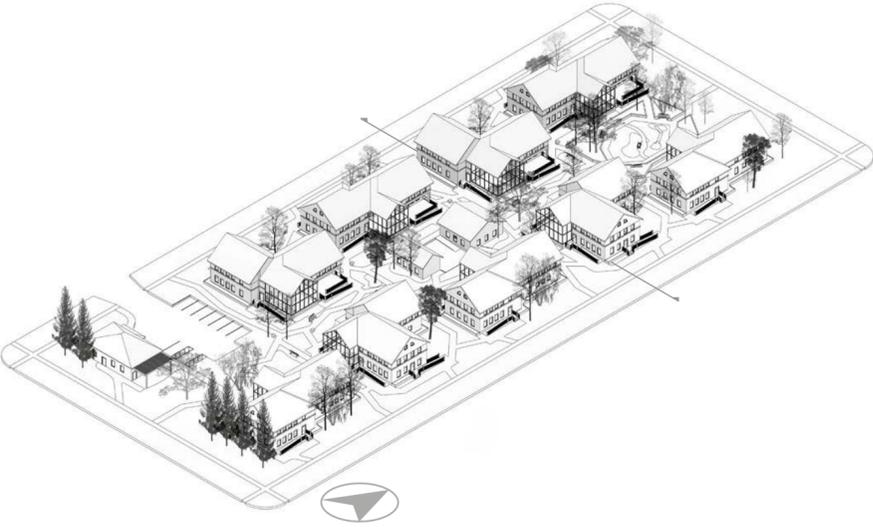
UNIT TYPE A:
SINGLE MOTHER
+ CHILDREN



UNIT TYPE B:
FAMILY



UNIT TYPE B:
FAMILY + BABY



TRANSVERSE SECTION



To the west of the site is a block with multi-story, multi-family apartment buildings

Each private dwelling unit contains basic built-in house-hold pieces while retaining open, customizable space

Private storage rooms are provided for residents for personal items that cannot be fit into their living units

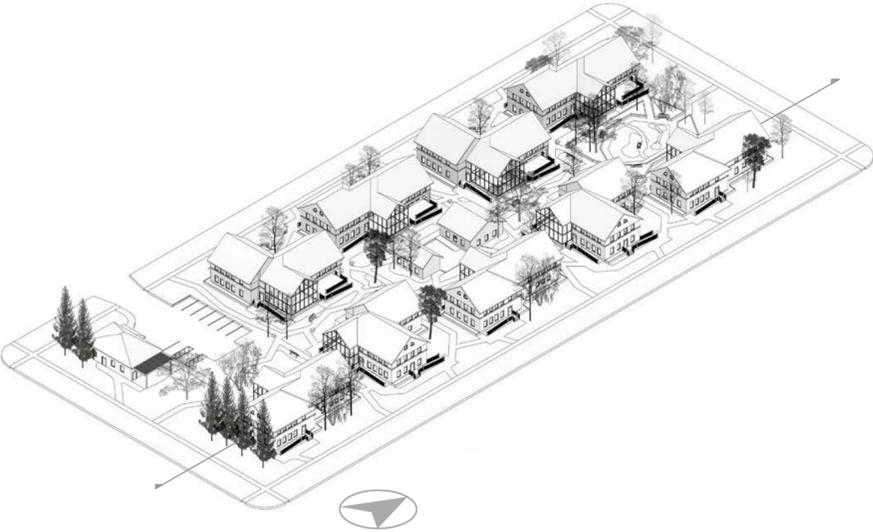
To help residents maintain personal health, a space for working out is provided in the basement

To the east of the site are several blocks of single story, single family residences



TRANSVERSE SECTION

50'



LONGITUDINAL SECTION

50'

Brick pedestals are scattered throughout the site providing residents a place to create and display artwork.

Communal kitchen and dining space where residents can share knowledge and experience along with their meals

If residents do not own any furniture, they may borrow what they need from the facility's furniture storage which acquires pieces through donations. If they wish, they also have the opportunity to buy these pieces from the facility through completion of chores or odd jobs.

A shared laundry room where chores can facilitate bonding with family and neighbors

A small pantry which residents can utilize for shared meals

Greenhouses are connected to the dwelling spaces to provide space for residents to grow flowers and medicinal herbs year long.



LONGITUDINAL SECTION



GREENHOUSE



LAUNDRY ROOM



LOUNGE



STUDY ROOM



THANK YOU!