

Connected in Jane and Finch: A Story of the People

by

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Connected in Jane and Finch

A Story of the People

Abstract

The Jane and Finch neighbourhood in Toronto, Ontario has served as a crucial stepping stone to help new immigrants transition as they move to a new country. Initially, the community had essential services and support systems in place that would have made the transition easier. However, as the neighbourhood has grown and changed in the past fifty years, it has neglected to evolve these services and support systems to suit the needs of the current demographic. This thesis is an exploration of how to ensure that future generations living in Jane and Finch are set up for success. It is also a story of the people living in Jane and Finch and how to better serve them. By utilizing a methodology that relies on a creative narrative, a more personal connection to the people and neighbourhood is established, allowing for a sensitive design that targets the users' specific needs.

Keywords:

Transit-Oriented Design, Immigrants, Narrative, Jane and Finch, Gentrification, Community

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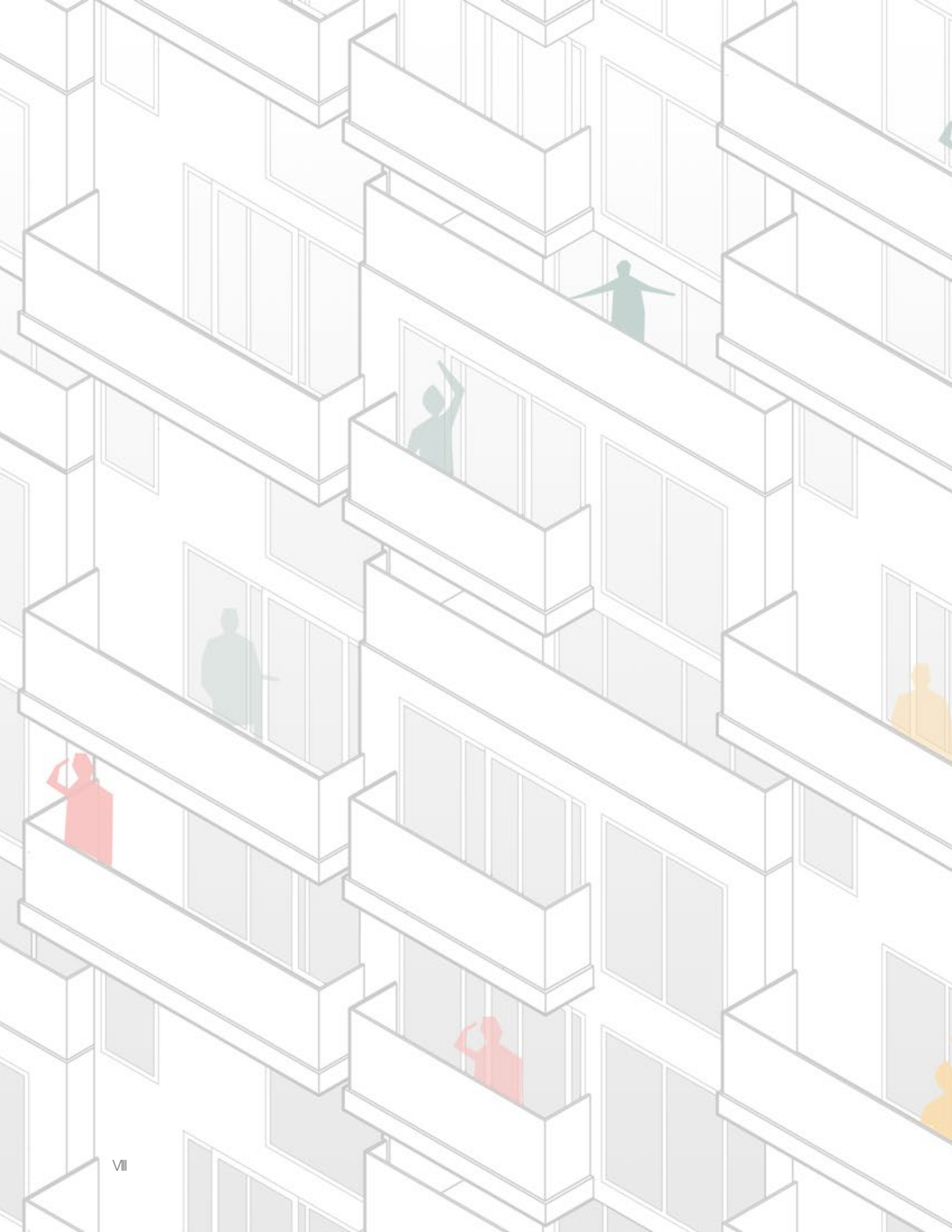


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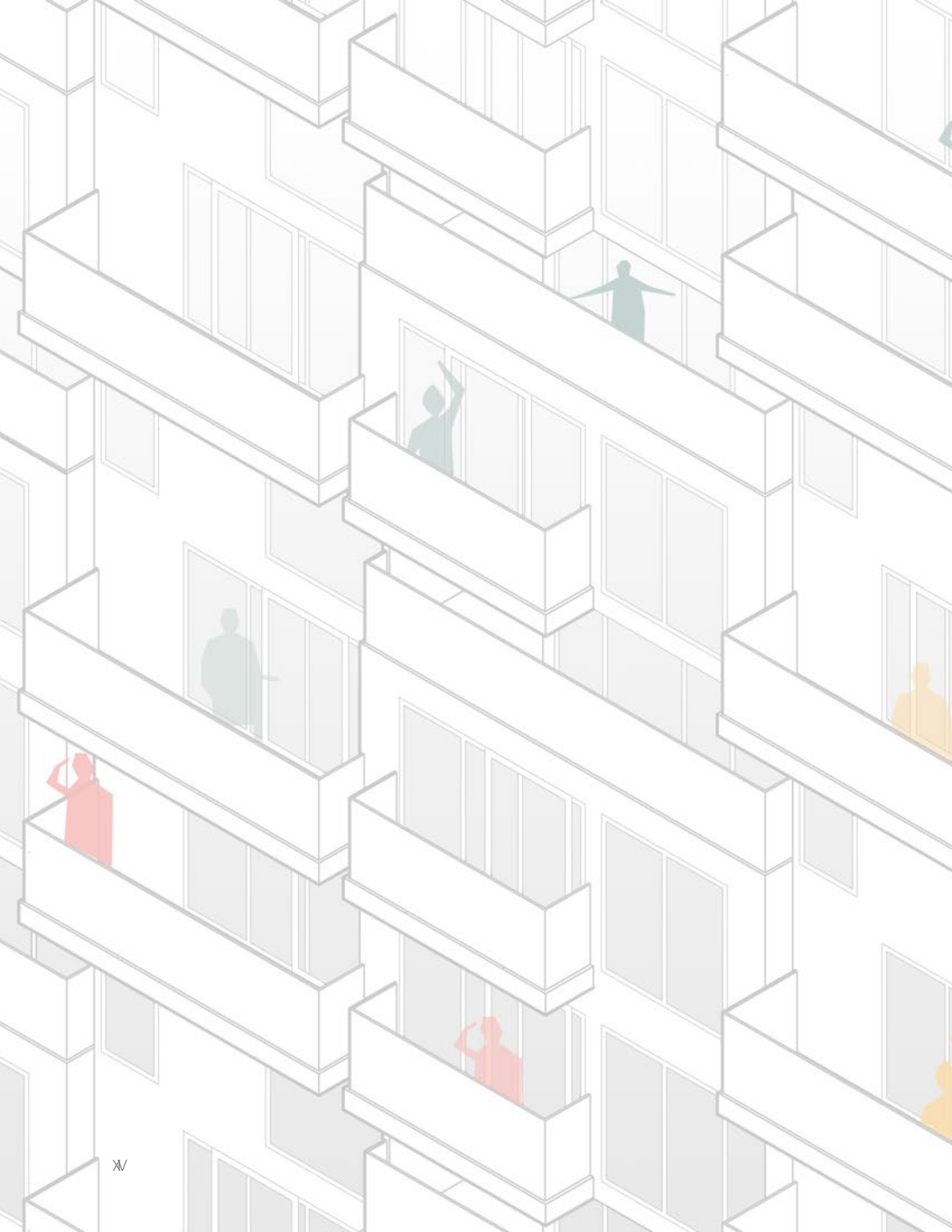
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Preface

The story of Jane and Finch is so much more than just statistics and data. The Jane and Finch that I grew up in was built on the stories and lives of the people who live there. While it would be impossible to tell the reader each and every story that make up Jane and Finch, I hope that this thesis would give readers a glimpse of it.



Figure 1: Typical apartment in Jane and Finch

Introduction

The Jane and Finch neighbourhood has historically been used by new immigrants as a place to settle roots. From the early 1700s to the early 1970s settlement usually followed the cyclical pattern of new immigrants moving into the area to establish roots. Upon finding success they would often move to other cities in the province, thus opening up space for new immigrants to move into. This method of using the Jane and Finch neighbourhood as a starting point and then moving on to find newer, better opportunities has been largely successful due to the resources and support systems that the community provided for new residents. However, since the 1970s this cycle has essentially broken down. This is mainly due to the fact that the infrastructure and resources that are needed to support a community failed to evolve as time went on or were not implemented at all. This resulted in a large group of already disadvantaged people, many who would not know how to access these resources becoming further disadvantaged. Overtime this has resulted in the Jane and Finch neighbourhood being labeled as a 'bad neighbourhood'.¹ The full effects of this lack of support and resources can be seen in the 2020 Toronto Strong Neighbourhood Strategy, a study that analyzed 140 neighbourhoods that make up the city of Toronto to identify neighborhoods that displayed a clear need for improvement. From this study the Jane and Finch community was identified as the worst performing neighbourhood out of the 140 neighbourhoods.²

Despite this, the residents have remained proud of their history and the many stories and lives that make up the identity of Jane and Finch. While the pressing needs of the community have been largely ignored by city officials or met with little success, residents have joined together to start their own programs to uplift the community they call home. An overwhelming number of these community-led programs and initiatives have been successful and if given the opportunity to continue, the neighbourhood could potentially rebuild itself back to its former glory. However, the newly announced Finch West LRT project which is expected to be completed in 2023 has many residents worried about the future of the community and their place in it. While the city has expressed repeatedly that the new LRT line would only improve

¹ ACT for Youth, "An Overview of Development in Jane-Finch - 1950s to Present," accessed March 23, 2023, <https://docplayer.net/64080931-A-overview-of-development-in-jane-finch-1950s-to-present-act-for-youth-cbr-presentation.html>.

² City of Toronto, "Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020" (City of Toronto, 2022), <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/9112-TSNS2020actionplan-access-FINAL-s.pdf>. Actio Committee, 2986), <http://jane-finch.com/history/longhouse.htm>.

the neighbourhood, residents fear that it would only act as a precursor to gentrification and push them out of their home. For the majority of residents in the community, Jane and Finch has been their only home and losing it would have negative effects. To fully understand the impacts of this it is essential for us to understand the everyday lives of the people who make up Jane and Finch. This was the driving force in developing a research method that prioritized understanding the stories that make up Jane and Finch and using them to form the final design.

Much of the research for this thesis is completed through the use of three imaginary characters who represent aspects of the various populations that live in Jane and Finch. These characters like the majority of the population in Jane and Finch are all immigrants coming from varying age groups and living situations. The three characters include, Samir, an international student who recently immigrated to Canada, Skylar, the oldest daughter in a single-parent home, and the Trans, a young Vietnamese couple who recently welcomed a new daughter. The stories and experiences of these characters are based on a mix of my own personal experiences living in Jane and Finch, the stories of friends and family, and strangers met in passing. While these characters can provide a general idea of what day-to-day life in Jane and Finch is like, it is important to note that this cast of characters cannot capture the whole story of life in Jane and Finch.

However, each character does provide the reader with a look at different aspects of their life. The first aspect looked at is 'home'. This aspect focuses on how each make a home for themselves and their family in Canada. For the sake of this thesis the three characters all live in the same apartment building. However, because of their unique living situations and backgrounds, how they use and occupy their home varies. The second aspect to be considered is 'movement'. This aspect focuses on how each character uses the public transit system to move through the community as well as pointing out popular locations the characters visit. For the sake of this thesis most of their recorded movement is on the 36 bus line, which will later be replaced by the new Finch West LRT. The last aspect to be considered is 'community'. As immigrants many of the character have lost their community and are in the process or have already formed new communities. This section will look at what community means for each of the characters. While these three aspects cannot capture the entire story of these characters' lives it can provide readers with a solid foundation that can help guide design decisions later.

Through this methodology the needs and wants of the residents become clear, in addition, it clearly points out positives and negatives of the site. Essentially, this led to an in-depth study of what life in the community is like while providing a study that remains close to the heart of the neighbourhood. The findings from this study were

then used to determine the final design. Ultimately, this thesis seeks to answer the question of how the Jane and Finch community can once again become a community that can successfully help new immigrants integrate themselves into a new country by providing the necessary support and resources they need. Where previous plans failed to acknowledge the needs of the people, this thesis uses the three characters to focus on the specific needs of the people.

Throughout this exploration the Finch West LRT remains a worry that occupies all of the characters' minds. Some are excited for the new addition, while others are wary of the future implications, meanwhile others are choosing to patiently wait and see where it might lead. Thus, the Finch West LRT line remains an important part of the design as it acts as the catalyst for much of the design. Upon completion the Finch West LRT line will completely revitalize the neighbourhood. Rather than seeing the LRT as a way to expedite the process of gentrification, it can be harnessed to address the needs of the pre-existing community. Throughout the thesis the three characters will share their own thoughts on the LRT line and how it may change their neighbourhood in the future.



Figure 2 : Aerial view of Jane and Finch



Figure 3 : Boundaries of Jane and Finch



Jane + Finch

The Jane and Finch neighbourhood, named after the intersecting streets Jane Street and Finch Avenue West, is commonly used to refer to the neighbourhoods located in the northwest end of Toronto, Ontario. The boundaries of the neighbourhood are roughly outlined by Steeles Avenue West on the north, Black Creek on the east, Finch Ave West on the south, and Highway 400 in the west. This area encapsulates two neighbourhoods, the Black Creek neighbourhood, commonly referred to as Jane and Finch North and Glenfield-Jane Heights, commonly referred to as Jane and Finch South.³ For the purpose of this thesis, much of the research data on Jane and Finch will use statistical and demographic data from the Black Creek neighbourhood.

The neighbourhood, previously called Elia, has existed since the early 1700s serving as the first home for many of the early settlers coming to Canada.⁴ From the 1700s to the mid-1900s the area remained as sparsely populated farmland for immigrants mainly from America and various European countries. At the time this was well suited for the residents, many who were predominantly immigrant farmers or labourers. As time progressed and families grew, residents who were able to find success in their new home typically moved out to larger cities, making room for new incoming immigrants.⁵ This cyclical pattern of immigrants settling in Jane and Finch, gaining the skills and tools necessary to succeed, and moving out to find new challenges has been crucial for the success of immigrant populations. However, starting in the 1960s during the cusp of the immigration boom this cycle broke down.

As the population in Canada boomed many larger cities like Toronto were experiencing an influx of new immigrants looking to settle in Canada.⁶ To meet the needs of the incoming population, cities began plans for rapid development, building up city centers with businesses, supporting infrastructure, tall towers, and new subdivisions to house incoming workers. Seeing the largely successful results, surrounding farming communities like Jane and Finch followed suit and began their own rapid development plans to capitalize on the incoming population. In fact, much of what is seen in Jane and Finch today is the result of the rapid development that happened between 1960-1980.⁷

3 City of Toronto, "2016 Neighbourhood Profile - Black Creek," February 1, 2018, <https://www.toronto.ca/ext/sdfa/Neighbourhood%20Profiles/pdf/2016/pdf/cpa24.pdf>; City of Toronto, "2016 Neighbourhood Profile - Glenfield-Jane Heights," February 1, 2018.

4 Inner City Outreach, "Our Neighbourhood," Inner City Outreach (blog), accessed March 17, 2023, <https://innercityoutreach.ca/history-of-our-neighbourhood/>.

5 Van Newell et al, From Longhouse to Highrise... Pioneering in Our Corner of North York (Downsview Weston Action Committee, 2986), <http://jane-finch.com/history/longhouse.htm>.

6 Statistics Canada, "150 Years of Immigration in Canada," Statistics Canada (blog), June 29, 2016, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-630-x/11-630-x2016006-eng.htm>.

7 City of Toronto, "2016 Neighbourhood Profile - Black Creek"; Newell et al, From Longhouse to Highrise... Pioneering in Our Corner of North York.

The era of rapid development saw the farmlands of Jane and Finch transform into what it presently looks like today. The rapid development plan began with the creation of new suburban subdivisions which were constructed in a matter of years, with plans for accompanying infrastructure like schools, public and social services, and parkland to be constructed in the future.⁸ However, the most iconic changes would be the construction of high-density housing projects along major roads that make up the present skyline. The construction of the towers in Jane and Finch would later become a key component in increasing the population. As major cities in Toronto increased in population, housing prices in the area also rose. While some residents were able to keep up with the rising prices, others, mainly new immigrants and pre-existing vulnerable populations could not. However, it was at this time that Jane and Finch completed construction on many of the new towers and consequently had hundreds of unoccupied units available. To strike at the opportunity many of the units were sold at cheap prices which were then turned into cheap rentable apartment units. For many new immigrants who were unable to compete with the housing prices in larger cities like Toronto, the cost of housing in Jane and Finch would have seemed like an undeniable opportunity to settle in Canada. Thus, Jane and Finch experienced its own boom in population, growing from 1,300 residents in 1961 to 33,000 in 1971.⁹

While the rapid development plan succeeded in its goal of increasing the population and adding housing stock to accommodate the new population, the plan failed to follow through with the infrastructure that would be needed to support the incoming population. By the 1970s about 90% of the development plan was completed and the majority of homes were filled with residents, however the rate of development outpaced the rate of community planning.¹⁰ By 1975 the effects of poor planning could be seen in the neighbourhood, schools soon became overcrowded, critical social services were often unavailable or inaccessible, and what recreational facilities did exist could not adequately serve the needs of the residents.¹¹ The lack of services affected the most vulnerable, mainly newly immigrated families and already existing vulnerable populations who would feel the brunt of this poor planning for years to come. This in turn would act as the prelude to Jane and Finch building its reputation as a ‘bad neighbourhood’

The precursor for the surrounding stigma is partly due to the neighbourhood’s classification as a high-poverty neighbourhood. This classification came to be in 1967 when 22.5% of the housing stock in Jane and Finch was designated as public housing. When compared to the surrounding North York region which only had 3% at the time, it clearly demonstrates that there was a higher population of low-income families in Jane and Finch that needed affordable housing.¹² While coming from a high-poverty neighbourhood

Figure 4 (right): Timeline of Jane and Finch

⁸ ACT for Youth, “An Overview of Development in Jane-Finch - 1950s to Present,” accessed March 23, 2023, <https://docplayer.net/64080931-A-overview-of-development-in-jane-finch-1950s-to-present-act-for-youth-cbr-presentation.html>.

⁹ Newell et al, From Longhouse to Highrise... Pioneering in Our Corner of North York.

¹⁰ ACT for Youth, “An Overview of Development in Jane-Finch - 1950s to Present.”

¹¹ ACT for Youth, “An Overview of Development in Jane-Finch - 1950s to Present.”

¹² ACT for Youth, “An Overview of Development in Jane-Finch - 1950s to Present.”

1700s

EAST-LAWN FARM



EARLY
Immigration

Rapid
Development
↓



1970s

Present
↓
Day



2000s



is nothing to be ashamed of, the label has only had negative impacts on many of the residents of Jane and Finch.¹³ For many residents that lived in the area breaking away from the stigma seems to be an almost impossible ordeal with the many setbacks and limitations placed on them. Many residents would try to find employment only to find themselves turned away due to racial biases or for being associated with the neighbourhood, unable to find assistance or resources from local social services parents were forced to work multiple jobs to pay for household expenses, this in turn would affect the youth in the community, who due to a lack of safe spaces and parental supervision often became involved in crime.¹⁴ For future generations this often meant that they were already placed at a disadvantage, making the goal of finding success even harder. It is this unbreakable cycle of hardship that resulted in Jane and Finch gaining the reputation as a “bad neighbourhood”.

The extent of the disadvantages that residents from Jane and Finch face can be seen in the Toronto Strong Neighbourhood Strategy (TSNS), which studied 140 neighbourhoods in the city of Toronto to identify which neighbourhoods needed improvement.¹⁵ From this study which analyzed a variety of factors such as economic opportunity, social development, physical surroundings, etc. The Black Creek neighbourhood scored 21.38 out of a possible 100 points, the lowest score of all the neighbourhoods in Toronto.¹⁶ Some of the most pressing concerns addressed in the grading system included, unemployment levels, poverty levels, high school graduation rates, chance of pursuing post-secondary education, and mental health.¹⁷ Despite many of the issues, very few city led initiatives have been taken to tackle these problems and even fewer have been successful. Many residents feel as though the neighbourhood and its people have been neglected and ignored. As a result, the residents have taken it upon themselves to improve their own neighbourhood, with as many as 30 community led grassroots organizations starting and implementing community led initiatives, many which have been largely successful.

This sense of community and belonging created in Jane and Finch despite difficult conditions is partly due to the solidarity many of the residents feel with each other. Today more than half of the population in Jane and Finch is made up of immigrants and refugees, often coming from low-income families.¹⁸ Despite the wide variety of cultures in the neighbourhood, many don't see their neighbours as different from themselves, one resident says, “It was so funny when you really think, I'm from Jamaica, you are from Vietnam, you are from India but the bringing up of our generation was the same! So

13 Ruth Marie Wilson et al, “Working Roughly, Living Poor: Employment and Income Insecurities Faced By Racialized Groups in the Black Creek Area and Their Impact on Health” (Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services, August 1, 2011), https://www.wellesleyinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Access-Alliance_Working-Rough-Living-Poor-Final-Report-June-2011-E-version.pdf.

14 Marie Wilson et al, “Working Roughly, Living Poor: Employment and Income Insecurities Faced By Racialized Groups in the Black Creek Area and Their Impact on Health.”

15 City of Toronto, “Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020” (City of Toronto, 2022), <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/9112-TSNS2020actionplan-access-FINAL-s.pdf>.

16 Social Policy Analysis and Research and City of Toronto, “TSNS 2020 NEIGHBOURHOOD EQUITY INDEX - Methodological Documentation” (City of Toronto, March 1, 2014), <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/97eb-TSNS-2020-NEI-equity-index-methodology-research-report-back-groundfile-67350.pdf>.

17 Social Policy Analysis and Research and City of Toronto, “TSNS 2020 NEIGHBOURHOOD EQUITY INDEX - Methodological Documentation.”

18 City of Toronto, “2016 Neighbourhood Profile - Black Creek”

I feel like we are not that much different except from the fact that we speak different languages, we are all human beings and we were all brought up with our values.”¹⁹ In truth, it is this sense of camaraderie between residents that makes Jane and Finch a resilient community, as one resident says, “What I like about Jane–Finch is that I feel more comfortable with different people of colour because I feel like they understand the same situation.”²⁰

As of late, Jane and Finch’s reputation as a ‘bad neighbourhood’ has begun to outweigh the efforts the residents have put in to improve their home. The most recent city led project, the Finch West LRT line is expected to help boost the community by improving public transit lines and boosting the economy.²¹ However, many residents feel as though the project only signals the beginning of gentrification.²² This worry is not without precedence as the nearby Eglinton LRT project resulted in a small ethnic neighbourhood being pushed out due to increasing housing costs, loss of income for local businesses, and land being bought out for new developments.²³ As a result, the previous residents were unable to experience any benefits that may have come with the Eglinton LRT. Many residents of Jane and Finch see the same situation repeating in their own home.

As previously stated, Jane and Finch has always been a community that served as the starting point for many immigrants, giving them the tools and resources they needed to flourish in a new country. This was particularly successful during the period of immigration from the 1700s to the early 1900s where immigrants were able to settle in Jane and Finch for a period of time, gain the necessary skills and tools needed to succeed and move on to other locations. This in turn would make room for new incoming immigrants, creating a cycle of residents who were able to receive the support and resources they needed to succeed. However, today due to a lack of planning and neglect, this cycle has been broken. The cause of this broken cycle is partly due to the fact that residents living in Jane and Finch today are living in a Jane and Finch made in the 1970s and not at all designed with the intent of supporting the present demographic. Despite this the community remains proud of their neighbourhood and is eager to face the future. While the future of Jane and Finch is hard to determine, the completion of the Finch West LRT line and the many changes it will bring is inevitable. However, the Finch West LRT project can also act as a catalyst to bring about the much-needed support and resources residents need to succeed.

19 Donya Ahmadi, “Diversity and Social Cohesion: The Case of Jane Finch, a Highly Diverse Lower-Income Toronto Neighbourhood,” *Urban Research & Practice* 11, no. 2 (April 10, 2017): 139–58, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17535069.2017.1312509>.

20 Ahmadi, “Diversity and Social Cohesion: The Case of Jane Finch, a Highly Diverse Lower-Income Toronto Neighbourhood.”

21 Infrastructure Ontario, “Finch West Light Rail Transit,” Infrastructure Ontario (blog), accessed October 12, 2023, <https://www.infrastructureontario.ca/en/what-we-do/projectssearch/finch-west-light-rail-transit/>.

22 Christopher Hume, “Toronto to Repeat Gentrification History at Jane and Finch,” Storeys, July 18, 2022, <https://storeys.com/toronto-repeat-gentrification-history-jane-and-finch/>.

23 Aayesha Patel, “Transit-Led Development and Gentrification: A Case Study on the Eglinton Crosstown,” *Landmarks* 2 (2016), <https://landmarksjournal.geog.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Patel-2016-Transit-led-Development.pdf>.



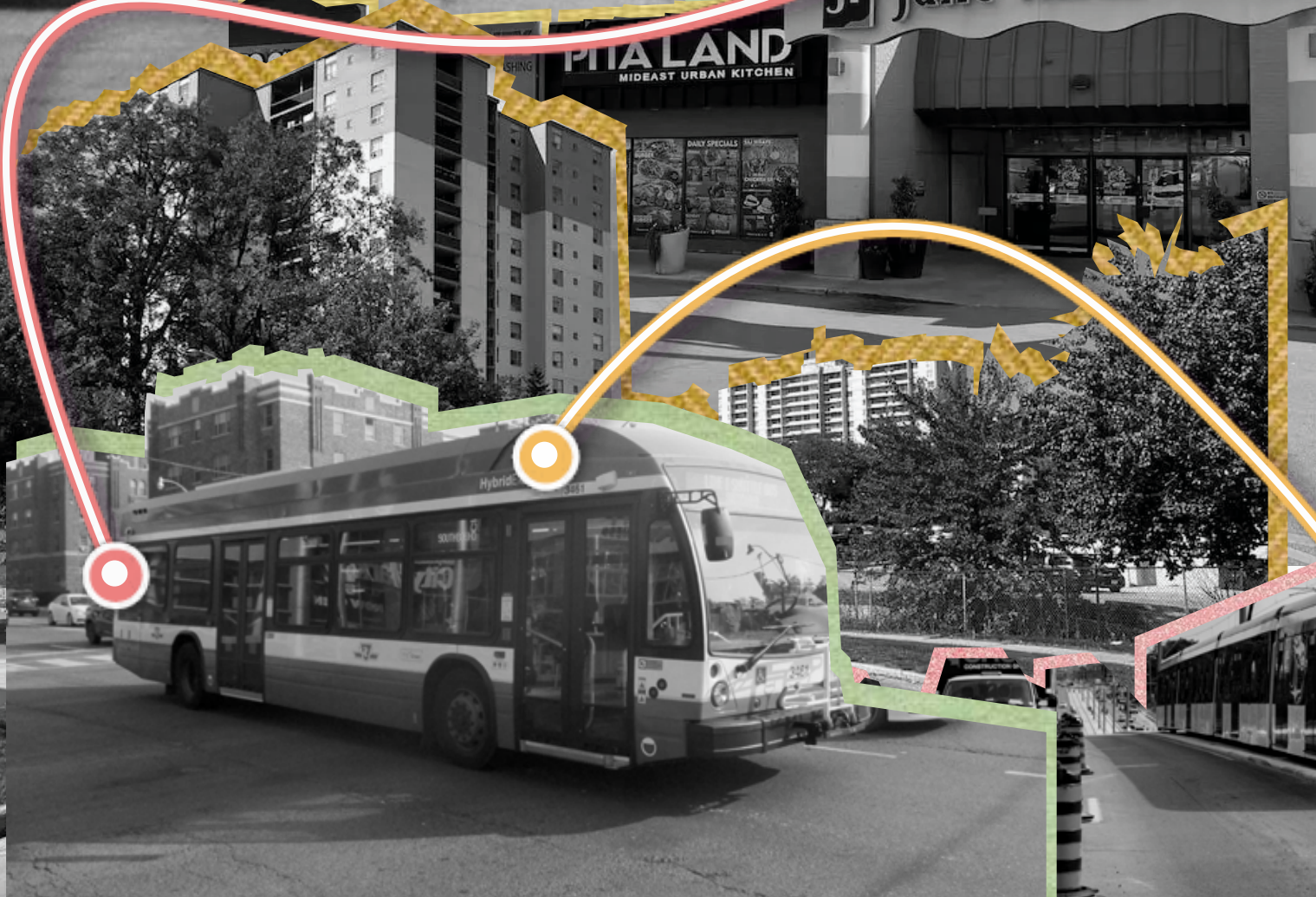
1 2 3 4
Subway lines
Streetcar routes
Express bus to Pearson Airport

Interchange station
Accessible station
Washroom



jane finch mall

PITA LAND
MID-EAST URBAN KITCHEN



Line 36 + Finch West LRT

For residents living in Jane and Finch the local transit system is a vital part of the city, being the lifeblood for many residents and the primary mover of the neighbourhood. This thesis will primarily focus on the 36 bus line which is one of the busiest bus lines in Jane and Finch.

The 36 line starts at the Finch Station located in downtown Toronto. This station offers connections to TTC buses and subway lines, GO buses, train lines, and York Region transit lines. The bus then travels west towards Jane and Finch before making its next major stop at the Finch West Station. This station offers connections to subway lines and TTC bus lines. The bus then continues along Finch Avenue West before making a stop at Humber College which offers connections to Mississauga and Brampton transit lines. The final stop is near the Humberwood Boulevard area where the bus then loops and returns back to its starting point.²⁴

Figure 5 : Tranist in Jane and Finch

²⁴ Toronto Transit Commission, "36 Finch West," TTC (blog), n.d., <https://www.ttc.ca/routes-and-schedules#/36/0>.



The 36 bus line services a great number of essential resources and support systems for local residents, as a result it is one of the most used routes. In the past 25 years the population in the Finch West area has exploded from 29,000 to 337,000, with the majority of these people being immigrants who generally come from low-income, working-class backgrounds and live in high density areas like Jane and Finch.²⁵ People from this background are generally more inclined to use the transit system, as shown in a study conducted by Statistics Canada which stated that 36% of immigrants who immigrated within the last 10 years are likely to use the transit. When compared to Canadian born populations who use the public transit system there is a 17-point difference.²⁶ For many of the residents the transit system is their only option to move within the city and gain social mobility. For example, parents use the transit system to drop children off at daycare before heading to a job interview, children use it to get to school or after school activities, it connects employees to education opportunities to make them more employable. Essentially, the transit system acts as a pathway to gain social mobility by connecting residents to tools, resources and support systems available in the community. For residents that live in Jane and Finch and use the transit system, the 36 line is a necessity that provides them with direct access to resources, support systems and opportunities for future success. As a result of high usage, the 36 line is often overcrowded and is considered to be one of the busiest lines in the city. This high volume of riders also leads to other problems within the city, namely increased traffic and congestion along Finch Avenue West.²⁷

However, the newly announced Finch West LRT may be the solution to tackle overcrowding and traffic problems. Current plans of the LRT line show that it would replace the majority of the 36 line. The Finch West LRT line, would start at the Finch West Station located on Finch Avenue West and Keele Street and will run along Finch Avenue West to Highway 27, from there it will head south towards the final stop at the Humber College north campus.²⁸ The line will span 10.3 kilometers and service 18 stops as well as provide connections to Peel and York Region local transit services.²⁹ In addition to the LRT line, a maintenance and storage facility (MSF) will also be constructed. The MSF is located just north of Finch Avenue West and Norfinch Drive is intended to serve as a maintenance facility, open air storage for 26 light rail vehicles, car wash facility, material storage, administrative building, and house a traction power station.

25 Steve Kupferman, "Is There Anything to Be Done about Overcrowded TTC Bus Routes, Such as 36 Finch?," National Post, January 21, 2012, <https://nationalpost.com/posted-toronto/is-there-anything-to-be-done-about-overcrowded-ttc-bus-routes-such-as-36-finch>.

26 Andrew Heisz and Grant Schellenberg, "Public Transit Use Among Immigrants" (Statistics Canada, May 1, 2004), <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2004224-eng.pdf?st=LkH5avPY>.

27 Kupferman, "Is There Anything to Be Done about Overcrowded TTC Bus Routes, Such as 36 Finch?"

28 Metrolinx, "Finch West LRT," Metrolinx (blog), accessed March 11, 2023, <https://www.metrolinx.com/en/projects-and-programs/finch-west-lrt>.

29 Metrolinx, "Finch West LRT."

While local residents understand that the LRT line will ultimately be beneficial to the neighbourhood, many feel that it will come at a cost, namely gentrification of the neighbourhood. This fear is not unfounded as similar events have unfolded nearby with the Eglinton Crosstown LRT construction. The Eglinton Crosstown LRT construction has been met with many setbacks and complications which has pushed back the completion of the project repeatedly. The project started construction in 2011 with an expected completion date of 2020 which was then pushed to 2022, however, presently no clear completion date has been given.³⁰ Predictably with construction spanning over a decade there has been significant impacts on the surrounding neighbourhoods, mainly low-income minorities. Many of these residents were forced to move out of their homes due to increasing housing prices. In addition, the constant construction drew potential business away, hurting many small business owners. As the original residents left, their homes and businesses were bought out by developers with plans to develop high-rises and make way for gentrification.³¹

Since the announcement of the Finch West LRT both Jane Finch Mall and Yorkgate Mall, local shopping malls, are both being considered for redevelopment, potentially displacing many small local businesses.³² In addition, the Jane and Finch area which historically had low-cost rental homes in comparison to the surrounding GTA has seen rental costs increase by as much as \$500, making rental cost almost on par with the average rental costs in the GTA.³³ Predictably, the recent events and changes have residents worried about their future in the neighbourhood or if a future still exists for them in Jane and Finch.

While gentrification is undeniable, the Finch West LRT should be seen as a catalyst to bring about positive change in the neighbourhood. The new LRT line will encourage developers to invest in the area by redeveloping the area. However, future development could work to reinvigorate the neighbourhood by providing many of the disadvantaged residents with the supporting infrastructure and resources that has been missing in the neighbourhood since the 1970s. Thus, similar to how the 36 line is essential in connecting residents to essential support and resources to ensure future success, the LRT project could also act as a connector to future success.

30 Jack Landau, "Toronto Hints That the Eglinton Crosstown LRT Could Finally Open This Summer," BlogTO, February 9, 2023, <https://www.blogto.com/city/2023/02/toronto-hints-eglington-crosstown-lrt-open-summer/#:~:text=The%20Crosstown%20line%20has%20developed,with%20an%20expected%202020%20opening>.

31 Patel, "Transit-Led Development and Gentrification: A Case Study on the Eglinton Crosstown."

32 Ahmar Khan, "Jane and Finch Residents, Shopkeepers Fear Gentrification through Redevelopment," Global News, July 11, 2022, <https://globalnews.ca/news/8982340/jane-finch-residents-shopkeepers-fear-gentrification-redevelopment/>.

33 Desmond Brown, "Residents Fear They're 'being Squeezed out' of Jane and Finch Due to Skyrocketing Rents," CBC News, October 19, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/jane-finch-rental-prices-1.6620321>.

well connected
to services,
resources,
support & **most
popular
route**
Line 36
Finch West LRT



10.3 km
18 stops
GO
connections
peel subway
york

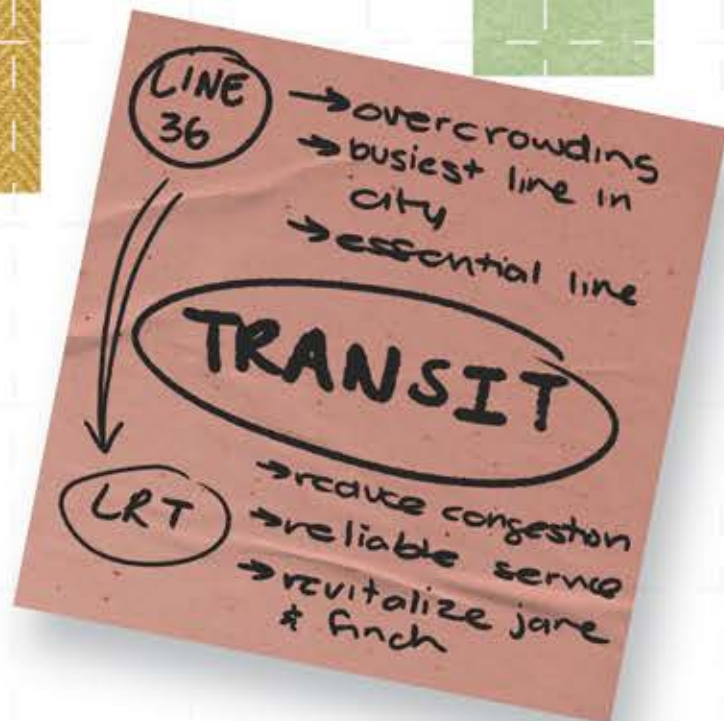


Figure 6 : Finch West LRT Line



The Faces of Jane + Finch

While basic facts about the neighbourhood can be gleaned from demographic data and statistics, the *real story* of Jane and Finch is best heard from the people of Jane and Finch. The following sections will introduce three characters and their families who will act as a general profile of the many people who live in Jane and Finch and provide readers with a glimpse of their living situation, their experience with the transit system, and what the Jane and Finch community means to them. While these people are not real, their experiences are based loosely on real events. A brief summary of the three characters is outlined below.

Samir is a young student from India who moved to Canada to attend Humber College.

Skylar is the eldest daughter of a single parent family who immigrated to Canada ten years ago.

The Trans are a young couple who immigrated to Canada two years ago, they



Samir

As a new immigrant Samir is particularly vulnerable, this is further highlighted by the fact that Samir is also a young student which comes with its own challenges. Samir's story will give a deeper look into the lives of many young adults as well as other new immigrants.

Samir's story is just one of many in Jane and Finch. On one hand he represents the 15% of youth and young adults that call the neighbourhood home.³⁴ However, his unique background as an international student sets him apart from many of his peers. As an international student he represents about 22% of the international student population that attend York University and Humber College.³⁵ In addition, as an international student the challenges that Samir faces are unique in the sense that he often either lacks the support and resources that other students may have, or he does not know how to access them. As a result, much of Samir's experience with the neighbourhood are from the perspective of someone who is unfamiliar with their new environment. Samir's unique position as a student also allows us to explore the needs of young adults living in Jane and Finch and how we can design a neighbourhood that both meets their needs and sets them up for future success.

34 City of Toronto, "2016 Neighbourhood Profile - Black Creek," February 1, 2018, <https://www.toronto.ca/ext/sdfa/Neighbourhood%20Profiles/pdf/2016/pdf/cpa24.pdf>.

35 York University, "Getting to Know YorkU," York University (blog), accessed March 18, 2023, <https://yorkinternational.yorku.ca/new-students/getting-to-know-yorku/>; Humber College, "Humber Global," accessed March 18, 2023, <https://international.humber.ca/>.

Unit 516

Samir currently lives in unit 516, a small one-bedroom apartment with three other roommates who are also students. While the unit is inadequate for himself and his roommates, they manage to make it work through some clever division of the living room and bedroom. The living room has been split to accommodate two twin size beds for Samir and another roommate, while the bedroom has two twin size beds for his other roommates. While this is an inconvenience, Samir does not mind. He is very rarely home and prefers to spend most of his time at his school. In addition, their unit offers them very little space for storage. Each roommate has their own personal belongings, however, the lack of storage space means they are often sharing what little space they have.

Samir's unit brings to light the most pressing problem that many of the residents in Jane and Finch face, a lack of suitable housing. Currently about 27% of the population in Jane and Finch live in unsuitable housing, when compared to the national average of 12% this is a significant issue in the neighbourhood.³⁶ The root of this problem is due to the fact that many of the apartment units offered in the neighbourhood are one- and two-bedroom units, however, the average family size is 2.95.³⁷ However, this data represents a large size of the population taking into account one-person households, young couples, roommates, and families with children and relatives. As a result, the average family size does not give an accurate estimate of the actual living situations of many people living in Jane and Finch. To further breakdown this data the average size of a couple family with children or relatives is 4.4, while the average size of a lone parent family is 3.4. Furthermore, this data also does not give an accurate average household size for the 5,660 people who are not in families, like Samir and his roommates.³⁸ However, this data does point out that the current housing stock is not at all suitable for the current demographic that live in Jane and Finch.

While Samir does not mind turning the living room into a bedroom, he does find the lack of amenities in his apartment to be an issue. As a student Samir is expected to complete work outside of school, however the lack of space in his apartment means that Samir often does not have space to do work. As a solution he often spends extended periods of time at school to complete his work. Ideally, Samir would like it if his apartment offered spaces for students and other residents to use as they please. Currently, the apartment he lives in only offers basic amenities like garbage disposal rooms, mail rooms, and laundry rooms. However, after speaking with some neighbours they all agree that additional amenity spaces like storage rooms, workspaces, and community meeting rooms would be a great addition to the apartment complex.

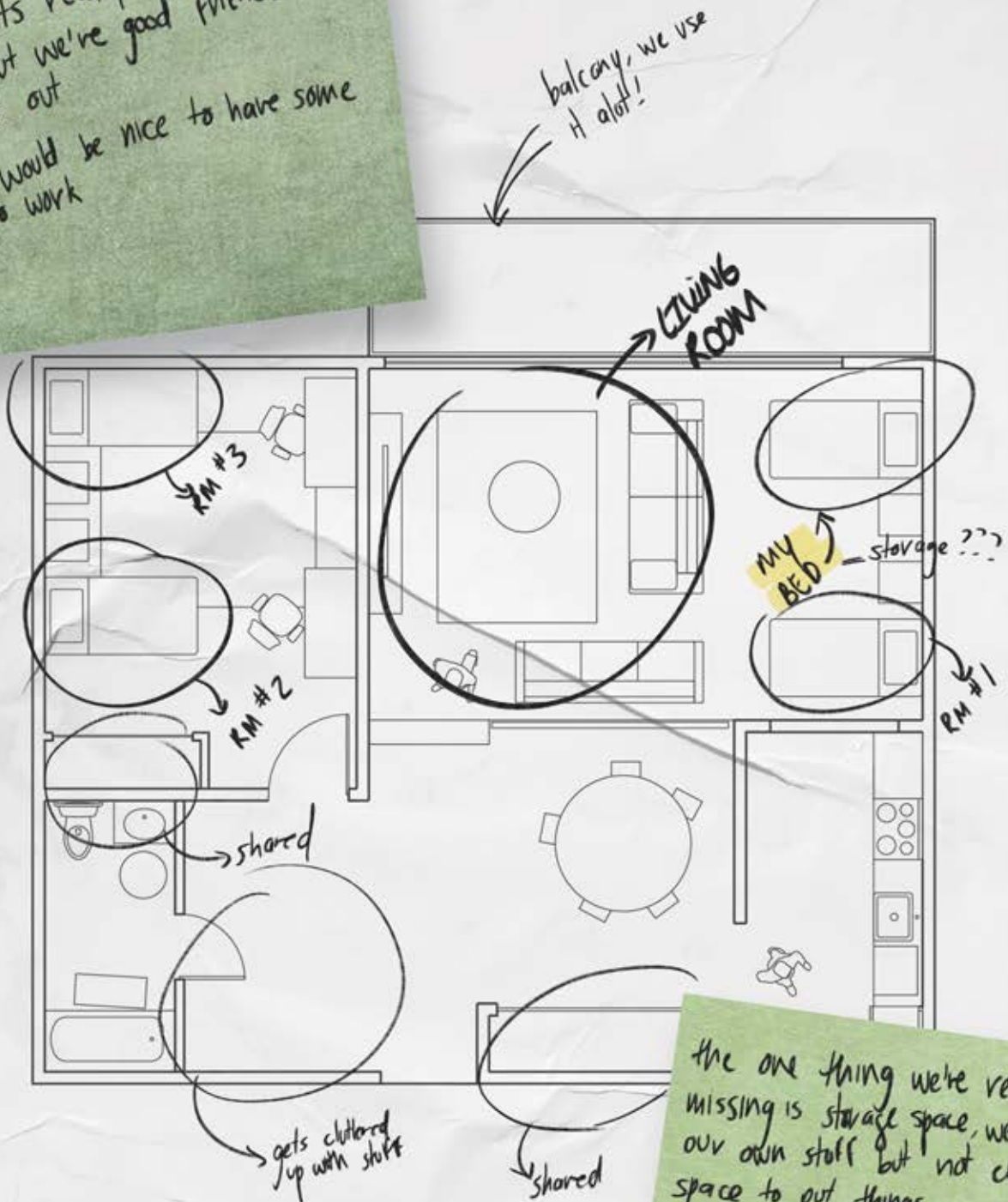
³⁶ City of Toronto, "2016 Neighbourhood Profile - Black Creek," February 1, 2018, <https://www.toronto.ca/ext/safa/Neighbourhood%20Profiles/pdf/2016/pdf/cpa24.pdf>.

³⁷ City of Toronto, "2016 Neighbourhood Profile - Black Creek."

³⁸ City of Toronto, "2016 Neighbourhood Profile - Black Creek."

UNIT 516

i live with 3 other roommates,
so it gets really cramped at
times, but we're good friends so it
all works out
but it would be nice to have some
space to work



the one thing we're really
missing is storage space, we all have
our own stuff but not enough
space to put things

NEED
STORAGE

Figure 7: Unit 516

NEXT STOP: *Humber College*

As a student Samir frequently uses the local transit system to go to school and he represents just one of the 600,000 students in the GTA that use public transit systems for their daily travel needs. For the average student the commute from home to campus takes roughly 45 minutes.³⁹ This is also true for Samir who lives about 17 km away from the school. If Samir had access to a car the commute would take roughly 30 minutes. However, the 36 bus line that Samir regularly uses to get to school runs along one of the most congested and busy streets, Finch Avenue West, making the commute at least an hour most days or even longer during rush hour.

The commute time takes out a significant portion of Samir's day, however, it is a necessary part of Samir's life and essential to ensure his success in the future. While the Jane and Finch neighbourhood has two major higher education institutions York University and Humber College, as well as some vocational colleges and training schools dispersed throughout the area it also has one of the lowest rates of post-secondary completion, with only 40% of the working population holding a post-secondary degree, diploma, or certificate.⁴⁰ This in turn affects their future outcome for success as it severely limits their options for employment opportunities. However, for students like Samir, the local transit system is a critical service as they allow young adults to access education, thus improving their chances of success in the future.



While Samir's school's primary goal is to provide education for their students, they also provide resources and support in other aspects of their life. In Samir's case, the school was able to guide and assist him while he tried to find a part time job. For new immigrants like Samir who are often unfamiliar with how employment work in an unfamiliar country, support systems like employment services can be beneficial. In Samir's case his school was able to help him prepare for employment by helping him make a resume, apply to jobs, and prepare him for interviews.

Although the heavy traffic on the 36 line is often troublesome, Samir relies on the transit system to access resources like education and support like assistance finding a job. However, the Finch West LRT may be the solution to alleviate some of the stress on the already congested streets. The new LRT line will replace the 36 line and dedicate a lane of traffic solely for transit. This will significantly reduce commute time and traffic in the area. For transit users like Samir, this allows them to have easier access to resources and support that is necessary for them to succeed.

Figure 8 : Samir's Commute

- 39 Raktim Mitra et al, "StudentMoveTO: From Insight to Action on Transportation for Post-Secondary Students in GTHA - 2019 Transportation Survey Findings" (StudentMoveTO, September 1, 2020), <http://www.studentmoveto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/StudentMoveTO-2019-Report-Final-5-Updated-October-15-2020.pdf>.
- 40 Social Policy Analysis and Research and City of Toronto, "TSNS 2020 NEIGHBOURHOOD EQUITY INDEX - Methodological Documentation" (City of Toronto, March 1, 2014), <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/97eb-TSNS-2020-NEI-equity-index-methodology-research-report-backgroundfile-67350.pdf>.



Community, Resources

Since arriving in Canada Samir's closest friends have been his roommates, but over time he's also begun to make friends with other students in his class. However, he still feels a lack of connection and fulfilment. After speaking to one of his friends they suggested joining the Black Creek Community farm.

The Black Creek Community Farm (BCCF) is one the greatest stories of community led initiatives that have contributed positively to the community. The BCCF located on Steeles Avenue and Jane Street has features such as organic vegetable fields, forest trails, greenhouses, outdoor classrooms, chicken coops, and beehives. Since it first opened in 2012 the BCCF has worked to improve food security, reduce social isolation, and improve employment and educational outcomes. Since then, BCCF has consistently strived to achieve these goals, providing fresh, organic food at accessible rates from June to November, creating community events and programming, and providing internship opportunities for youth and new graduates.⁴¹

The main reason the BCCF has been so successful is because it uses a leadership model with three assigned roles, the recipient, the assistant, and the facilitator. Each role has different responsibilities, and each allow members to gain something valuable in return.⁴² The recipient is the lowest position in terms of leadership and has the fewest responsibilities. The main duty of this role is to attend events, programs, meetings, and workshops. Because there is such a low risk and requires almost nothing from the participant other than participation, it is the ideal role for new members of the community. Often times when new members are trying to join a community, they seek to create value for themselves, or in other words a sense of purpose. When Samir first joined the BCCF as a recipient he is given the opportunity to interact with peers without the pressure of responsibilities or expectations. However, as he progresses to the role of assistant, he gains more responsibilities and well as some leadership skills by guiding newer members. Finally, as a facilitator Samir learns leadership skills as well as more responsibilities. All these roles work towards helping Samir gain the skills that are necessary for him to succeed. Essentially the BCCF provides Samir with connections to other residents in the neighbourhood and connects him to resources he needs to succeed.

41 "Black Creek Community Farm - About Us," Black Creek Community Farm (blog), n.d., <https://www.black-creekfarm.ca/about-us/>.

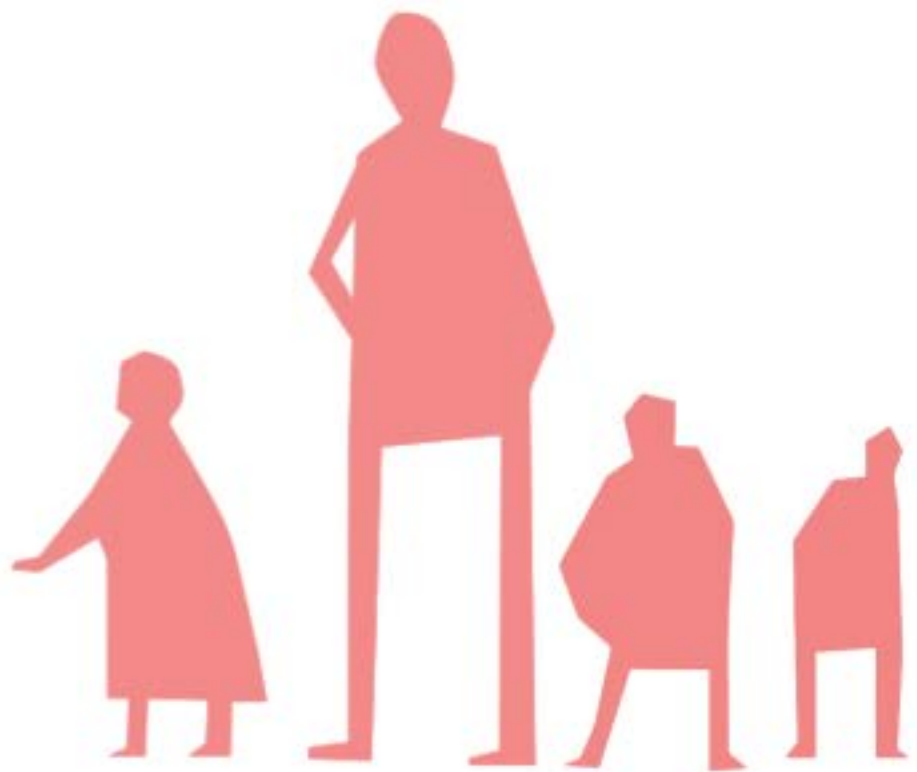
42 Akane Bessho, Toru Terada, and Makoto Yokohari, "Immigrants' Role Shift for Sustainable Urban Communities: A Case Study of Toronto's Multiethnic Community Farm" (MDPI, October 8, 2020), file:///C:/Users/Chris/Downloads/sustainability-12-08283-v2.pdf.

i've made a lot of friends volunteering here but the best thing about is the experience i get!



↖
Black Creek
Community
Farm

Figure 9 : Samir's Community



Skylar

Skylar's story, like Samir's is multi-faceted. Much of Skylar's story focuses on herself and sheds light on the lives of many of the youth in Jane and Finch aged 0-14 years, which represents about 21% of the population.⁴³ Thus, Skylar's story will focus on her experience as a youth living in Jane and Finch. This perspective is essential to consider as many youths have stated that they often feel overlooked in many discussions regarding the neighbourhood they call home..

Similarly, Skylar's two younger brothers also represent a much younger population that like Skylar will grow up in Jane and Finch. Like Skylar, they are also often disregarded when considering the future of the community. However, it is important to consider them as they represent a coming population that will need additional resources and infrastructure to support them as they grow.

A secondary story in Skylar's life is the story of her mother, a single immigrant mother caring for three young children. Throughout much of Skylar's story her mother remains a secondary figure, appearing as off handed mentions or in the background. However, from Skylar's perspective we can inference much of her mother's life. Single parents currently make up about 42% of the families in Jane and Finch, with single mothers like Skylar's mother making up 85% of the single parents.⁴⁴

⁴³ City of Toronto, "2016 Neighbourhood Profile - Black Creek," February 1, 2018, <https://www.toronto.ca/ext/sdfa/Neighbourhood%20Profiles/pdf/2016/pdf/cpa24.pdf>.

⁴⁴ City of Toronto, "2016 Neighbourhood Profile - Black Creek."

Unit 806

Skylar's home, like Samir's, is unsuitable for her large family. However, it also showcases the relationships that the residents in the apartments have built with one another. Skylar's story also introduces a new character, Mrs. Khan who runs an informal daycare a few floors down.

While Skylar's brothers are still too young to attend school Skylar's mother drops them off at Mrs. Khan's apartment. Mrs. Khan and her husband live in a two-bedroom unit, since the second bedroom and living room remain unused, she has turned them into an informal daycare space. While not shown in the figure there are also other forms of small informal businesses that residents run from their homes. For example, a unit on the third floor might offer prepared meals or catering services for residents, or a unit on the sixteenth floor could offer tailoring services specifically for ethnic clothing. For many residents who own these small informal businesses it is often a way to add additional income or is their only source of income. All these instances indicate that the residents of Jane and Finch are resourceful and with the right support and resources they could potentially open up small businesses to support themselves and their families.

Skylar's home also gives us insights on the financial situation of her family. As a single parent Skylar's mother might make about \$41,000 annually, however this number could be significantly lower as about a third of the population in Jane and Finch are classified to be living in poverty. This is clearly reflected in the average cost of rent in Jane and Finch which is \$975, while the average cost in the GTA is \$1,242. Despite housing costs being significantly lower, 40% of residents in the neighbourhood live in unaffordable housing.⁴⁵ For women like Skylar's mother this means that while rent in Jane and Finch is unaffordable, it is the only feasible option available for them.

However, since the announcement of the Finch West LRT project housing cost in the area have skyrocketed, increasing by as much as \$500 since 2019, and residents only expect the prices to continue increasing.⁴⁶ With increasing housing costs residents are already seeing the looming signs of gentrification, resulting in existing vulnerable populations being pushed out of their homes before they have had a chance to reap the benefits that the new LRT project would bring to the neighbourhood. As a result, Skylar's mother is rather fearful of what the future may bring.

Figure 10 : Unit 806

⁴⁵ City of Toronto, "2016 Neighbourhood Profile - Black Creek."

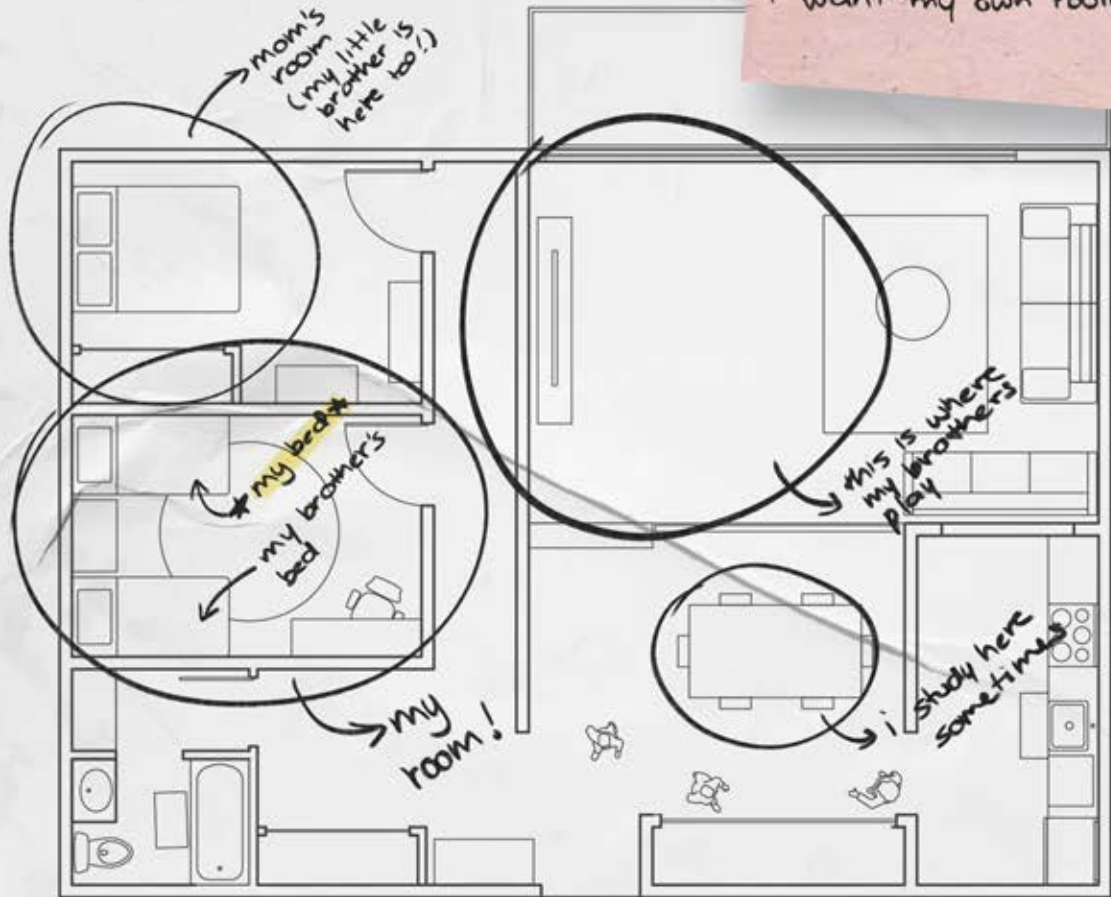
⁴⁶ Desmond Brown, "Residents Fear They're 'being Squeezed out' of Jane and Finch Due to Skyrocketing Rents," CBC News, October 19, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/jane-finch-rental-prices-1.6620321>.

UNIT 806 ☆☆

this is my apartment!
i live with my mom & two
brothers

i share a bedroom with one
of my little brothers which
is kind of annoying

if we get a new apartment
i want my own room!



Mrs Khan's Apartment!



Mrs Khan lives downstairs, she babysits my
brothers while mom goes to work & i go
to school



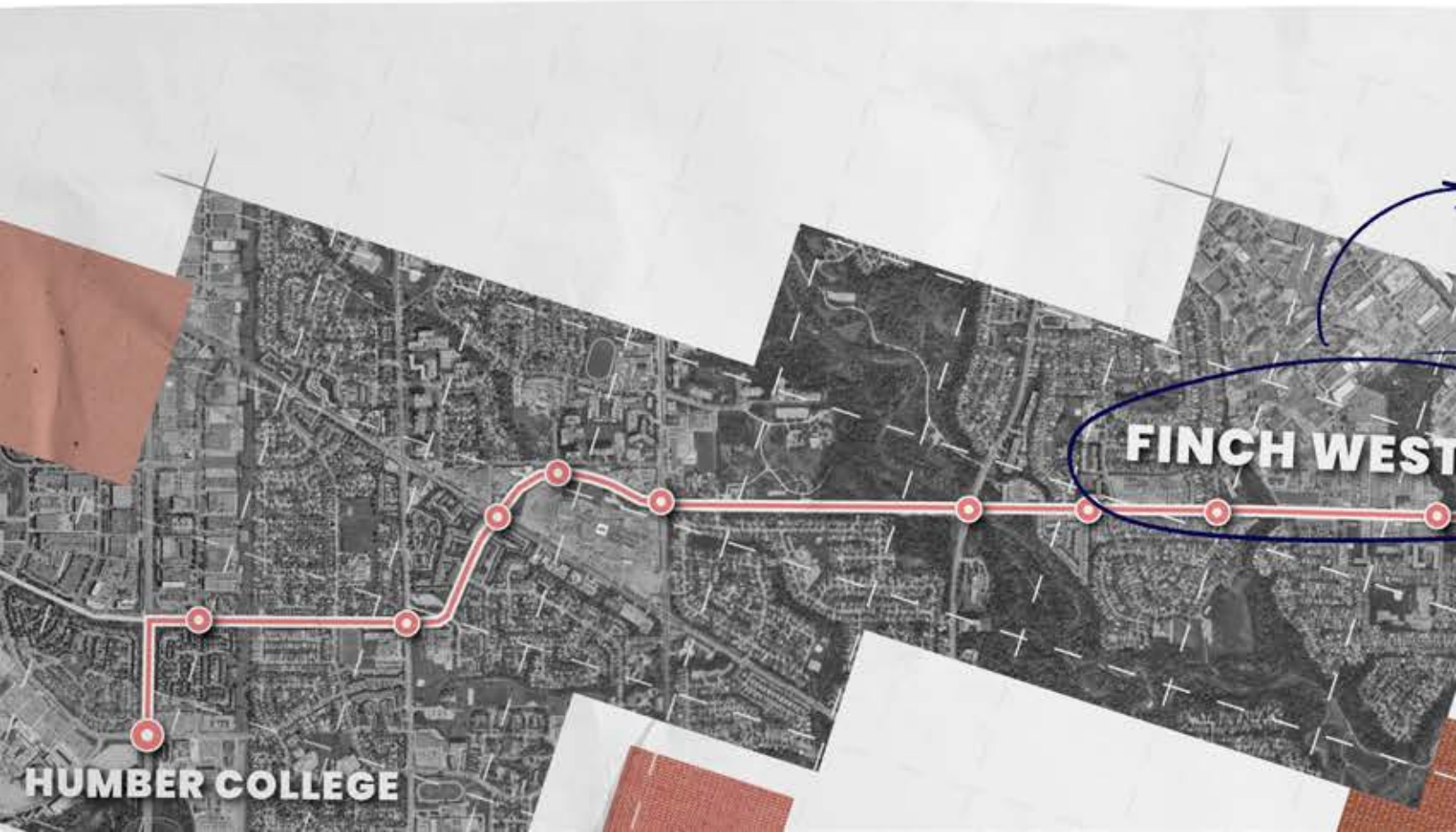
NEXT STOP: *Jane and Finch*

Skylar's range of movement is rather limited due to her age, thus her movement around the neighbourhood is limited to locations she can either walk to or places that are a short bus ride away. Skylar's most frequently visited location is the nearby elementary school which she attends. Due to the close proximity of the school to her apartment building she typically walks to school. Currently, she walks to school by herself and some friends who also live in the same apartment complex, but as she gets older her younger brothers will also attend the same school and will walk to school together. Another important location that Skylar visits regularly is the local library branch and community center, which will be further explored in depth in the next section.

The Jane and Finch area has plenty of green spaces available for residents to use, ranging from wooded forest trails to park spaces. However, these green spaces are seldom used by residents due to lack of safety and useability. Over time the parks have deteriorated from a lack of care resulting in no working street lights, torn fences, broken benches, and overflowing garbage bins, making them unsafe and in general an unwelcoming space.⁴⁷ Due to this, children like Skylar and her brothers seldom visit local green spaces or do not see them as welcoming public spaces. Instead, many children have taken to gathering in fast food restaurants and local plazas. In Skylar's case she and her friends often spend time in the local plaza after school. However, this is also a problem as owners of these businesses often see this as loitering.⁴⁸ While community

47 Vanessa Balintec, "Broken Benches, Overflowing Trash: Residents in These Toronto Neighbourhoods Calling for Change," CBC News, August 13, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/toronto-green-space-equity-1.6549483>.

48 Ruth Marie Wilson et al, "Working Roughly, Living Poor: Employment and Income Insecurities Faced By Racialized Groups in the Black Creek Area and Their Impact on Health" (Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services, August 1, 2011), https://www.wellesleyinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Access-Alliance_Working-Rough-Living-Poor-Final-Report-June-2011-E-version.pdf.



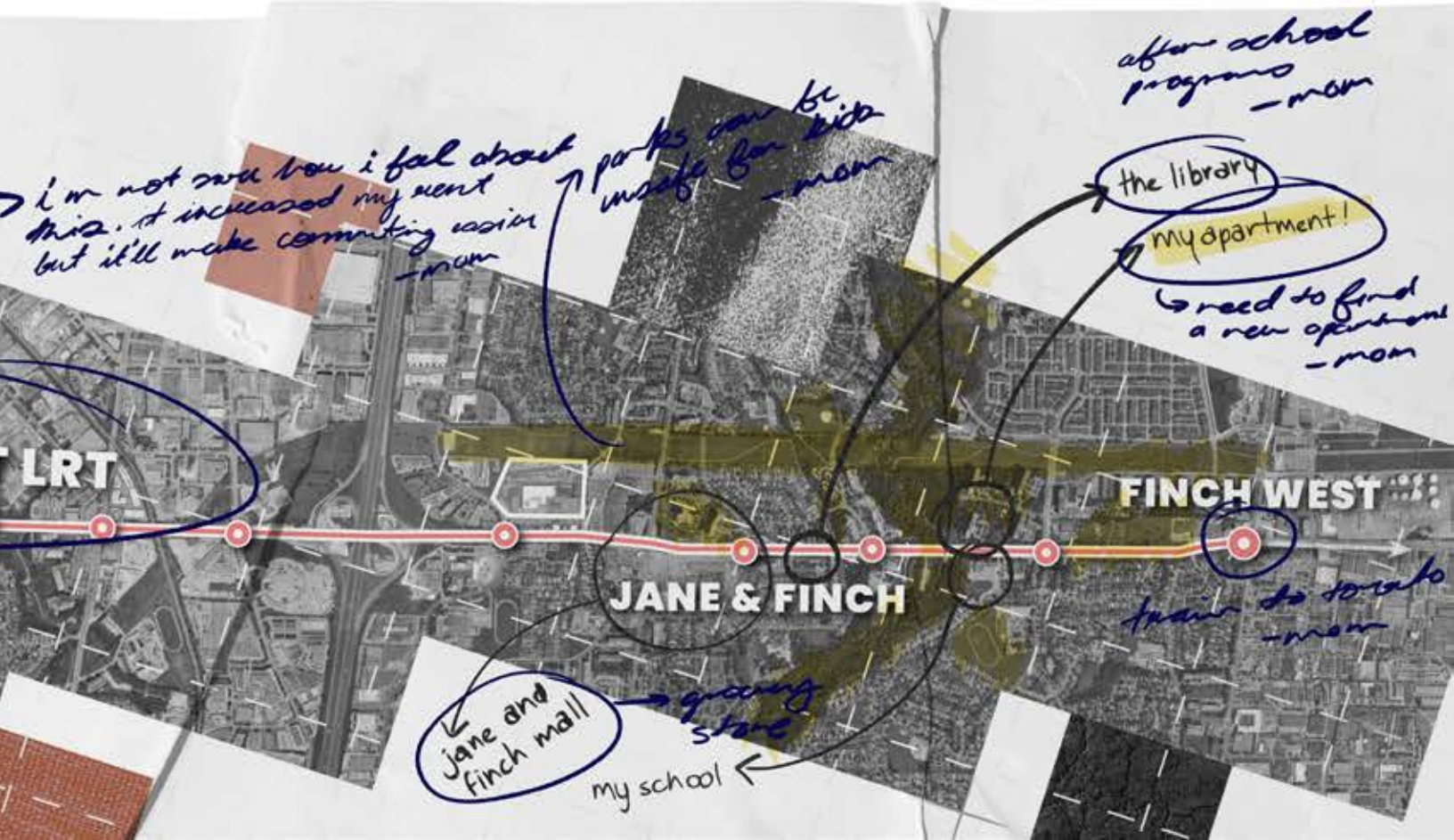
centers are available for residents to use, they often lack the facilities needed to engage in fulfilling social activities. Essentially, there are many public spaces in Jane and Finch, but they are rarely used by residents as they are often ill equipped or unwelcoming. For older residents this is often not an issue as they are able to freely move to find more suitable public spaces. However, for children like Skylar and her brothers who are limited to spaces close to home it severely limits their options.

In contrast, Skylar’s mother’s movements is a lot more varied and covers a greater distance than her children’s. Part of this is due to her lifestyle as she must travel out of the neighbourhood to go to work and as the primary caretaker of her family, she is responsible for providing for her three young children. Apart from her daily commute to Toronto for work, Skylar’s mother also frequently uses the transit system to access other important locations such as grocery stores, pharmacies, and clinics.

Skylar’s mother also represents the many women who rely on the transit system to move throughout the city. In Toronto about 30% of women use the public transit to commute to work, compared to the 20% of men who use the transit system. This difference is expressed even more dramatically in immigrant women with 45% of immigrant women using it for their daily commute.⁴⁹ For many immigrant women the public transit system is often the only way to move within the city, providing them access to jobs, services, and opportunities. For Skylar’s mother the new LRT line will provide more reliable service and improve her experience using the transit system. Although Skylar’s mother understands that the new LRT line will improve the local transit system, she is still fearful of what the coming changes could mean for her family.

Figure 11: Skylar’s Commute

49 Andrew Heisz and Grant Schellenberg, “Public Transit Use Among Immigrants” (Statistics Canada, May 1, 2004), <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2004224-eng.pdf?st=LkH5avPY>.



Community, Friends

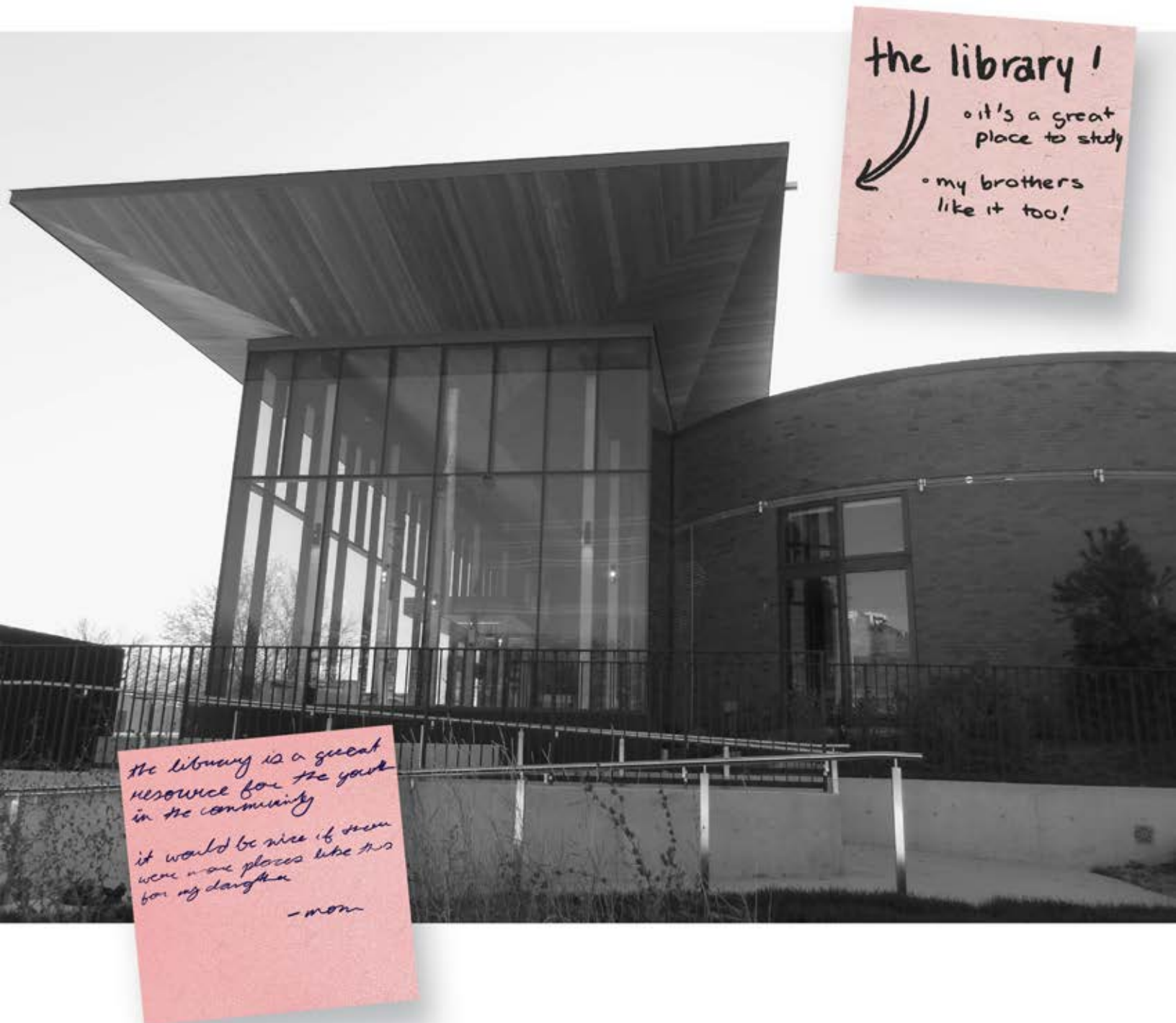
Skylar immigrated to Canada when she was just two years old, so for her, community has always been Jane and Finch. Skylar generally spends time with her friends after school but there is a lack of things to do or places to go. So, they usually spend time in the local library working on homework. Typically, students like Skylar would complete their homework at home, however Skylar's home is often hard to work in. With two younger brothers running around and a mother busy completing household chores it can often be difficult to focus. Skylar's friends are also in similar situations, so the library has been a refuge for them. This is a very pressing issue in the neighbourhood as many youths often claim that they are unable to complete work at home due to noise or distractions. This effect can be seen in the community as youth in the community have lower rates of high school graduation.⁵⁰ So, community centers and local libraries have started to offer dedicated quiet spaces for students to complete their work in hopes of improving high school graduation rates. Further efforts that could be implemented is the addition of dedicated quiet spaces in apartment complexes for residents to use as they please.

Skylar's mother on the other hand, immigrated from Jamaica when she was 26 so she often feels as though she's split between two communities, the one she grew up with and the new one she made in Jane and Finch. When she first came to Canada, she often felt isolated as she knew no one and had a hard time making friends. However, over time she, like Skylar had made her own community in Jane and Finch. Most of Skylar's mother's friends come from the apartment complex she lives in through chance encounters in the elevators or conversation in the mail room. She was initially worried about being unable to connect with some of her neighbours due to wildly varying cultures, however everyone in the apartment complex seems to have bonded together over the shared experience of being immigrants. Now Skylar's mother is proud to say that like her daughter she has also found a community in Jane and Finch.

50 Social Policy Analysis and Research and City of Toronto, "TSNS 2020 NEIGHBOURHOOD EQUITY INDEX - Methodological Documentation" (City of Toronto, March 1, 2014), <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/97eb-TSNS-2020-NEI-equity-index-methodology-research-report-backgroundfile-67350.pdf>.

However, while she has many friends, she finds it hard to remain in contact with many of them. This is due to the fact that there are very few public spaces for them to gather and socialize. She could host her friends in her apartment, but the apartment is already crowded with three young children running around. Public gathering spaces are also not a viable option as many are unsafe or unwelcoming. Presently, she and the other residents use various parts of their apartment complex to socialize, for example the small waiting room near the front entrance, the stairwells, and the back parking lot. However, more amenities that act as social spaces would be a welcomed addition to the apartment.

Figure 12 : Skylar's Community





The Trans

The Trans represent the many young immigrant families that have settled in Canada. As new immigrants who recently moved from Vietnam to Canada, the Trans are in a unique position where they can begin to build a life in Canada. However, the addition of their daughter has thrown the young family off balance. While they are thankful for their daughter, it brings a whole new scope of problems and questions that the Trans haven't considered yet or have answers to. The following sections will explore some of these problems and questions that the Trans have started to consider and if there are any solutions.

Unit 1203

The Trans live in unit 703, a one-bedroom apartment in the McMaster. Currently, the apartment unit they live in meets all their needs, it has ample space for the young couple, is in close proximity to local ethnic grocery stores they frequently visit, makes their daily commute to work easier, and is close by to the local church. However, upon the birth of their daughter the Trans have begun to question if their one-bedroom apartment is right for them. Currently, the Trans share their bedroom with their daughter with her crib taking up a small corner of their room. In the future their daughter will grow up and will need her own room, and if their family grows in the future, the need for a larger home will also grow. While moving into a two-bedroom unit is certainly a possibility to consider, it will also mean paying more rent. Currently, the Trans are unable to afford increased housing expenses, however this may change in the future.

In addition, the Trans have also used the balcony in their apartment as a small garden, similar to the one they had in Vietnam. The balconies in the apartment complex are often used as an extended space in many apartment units. Some residents use it as an outdoor garden like the Trans, others use it to dry clothes in warmer weather, it also serves as a storage of larger items, and lastly is serves as a private outdoor space for many residents.

The Trans are also hesitant to move away from their home, partly due to the friends and community they have formed in the neighbourhood, and this is their first home since moving to Canada. But Mr. Tran also believes that the new LRT project will bring positive changes to the neighbourhood and he would like his daughter to experience them.

Figure 13 : Unit 1203

Unit 1203

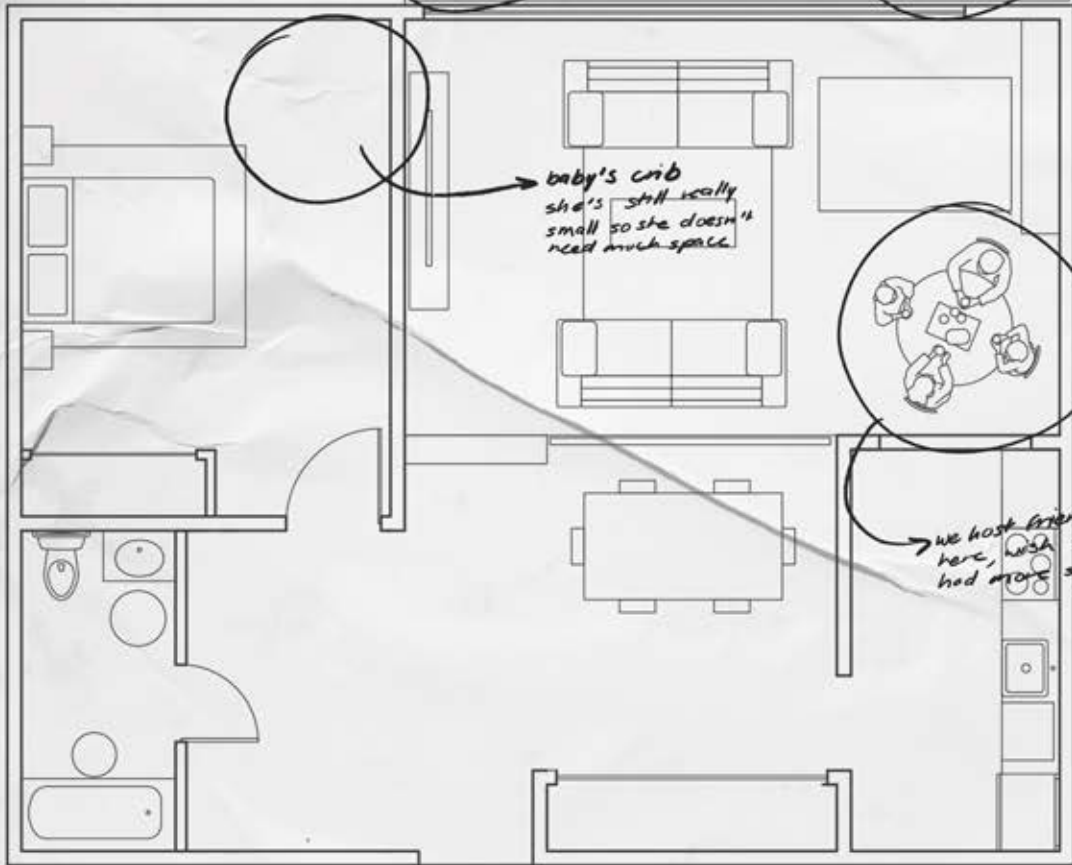
we live in a one bedroom unit. it's perfect for us because we're not a big family

the best part is the balcony where we garden
wished we had more space though!

our garden!

- tomatoes
- cucumbers
- chili peppers

we want to try growing kale next year!



our new baby doesn't have a room yet, so she sleeps in our bedroom
when she gets older she'll need her own room

→ maybe more rooms for more kids?

NEXT STOP: *Jane and Finch*

While the need to get a bigger apartment as their daughter grows is a pressing issue, Mr. Tran cannot ignore the fact that their apartment in Jane and Finch is optimally located for their lifestyle. Their home is conveniently located near bus stops that make both Mr. and Mrs. Tran's commute to work easier. Their home is also close by to many ethnic grocery stores that sell specialty Vietnamese food that they have missed since coming to Canada. Lastly, moving away from their home would mean they would lose some of the important relationships and support systems they have made since coming to Canada. Essentially, the Trans are reluctant to move away from Jane and Finch.

There are a variety of factors that make the Trans reluctant to move, the most important one is accessibility to their jobs. Currently, Mr. Tran is the only person working while his wife is on maternity leave. His job in Toronto requires him to take the 36 bus line to the Finch West Station. From there he takes the line 1 subway down to Toronto to head to work. The commute takes roughly an hour for Mr. Tran. If he were to move closer to his workplace the commute time would be significantly reduced, but it would also increase his wife's commute time when she returns to work. In addition, many of the areas that he has been looking to potentially move to are wildly out of their price range. So, for now, Jane and Finch will be their home.



In addition, now that they have a daughter the Trans also have to consider locations that would be suitable for their child as she grows up and any future children they may have. Their current apartment is close by to local elementary schools and high schools that their daughter could attend as she grows up. If she chooses to attend a college or university in the future, there are also options available close by. While the neighbourhood does have a bad reputation the Trans believe that growing up in the area would be a good experience for their daughter. The Trans love the resiliency of the community and the support that residents provide each other. While many think that Jane and Finch is a bad neighbourhood, the Trans believe in seeing all the good things about their home.

Another worry that the Trans have to consider is the new LRT line. The Trans understand that the Finch West LRT line will undeniably make traveling in the neighbourhood easier and improve the neighbourhood, they can't help but listen to their neighbours' worries. The Finch West LRT line has been a hotly debated topic in the community since it was announced. Many of their friends and neighbours have been saying that the LRT will only push people like them out. However, Mr. Tran is trying to remain optimistic for his family's future in Jane and Finch.

Figure 14: The Tran's Commute

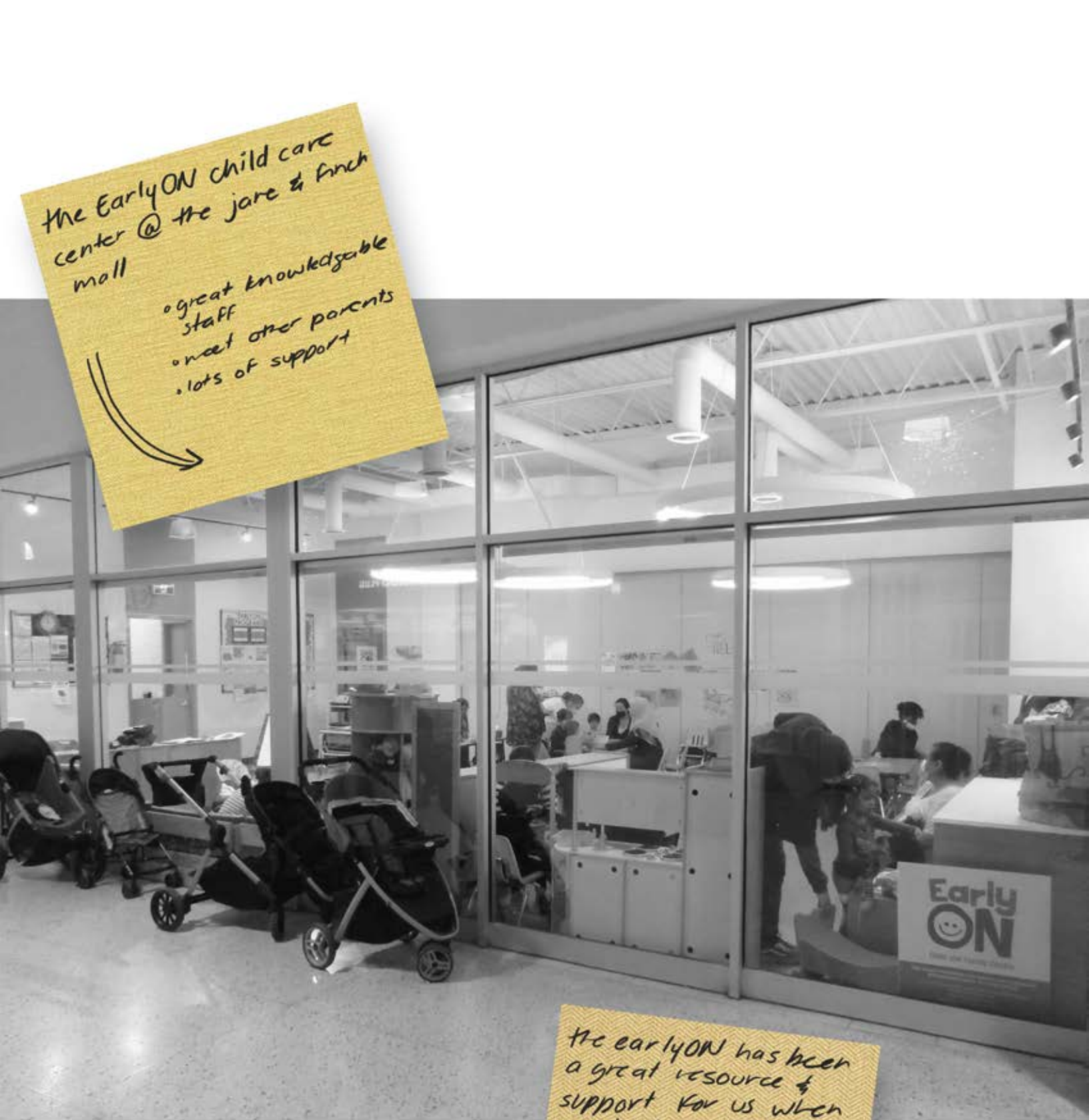


Community, Support

For the Trans who are still considered to be new immigrants their community is made up of a mix of the ones they had in Vietnam and the new ones they're making in Jane and Finch. They still keep in frequent contact with their friends and family in Vietnam but the distance between them makes it difficult to be as close as they used to be. At the same time their ties to their community in Canada are becoming stronger.

Initially, the community they formed in Jane and Finch was relatively small, comprising mainly of the co-workers they met at their workplace. However, over time as they got more settled, they had the opportunity to connect with the other sub-communities in the neighbourhood. For example, both Mr. and Mrs. Tran have made good friends from the local church. In addition, during Mrs. Tran's weekly grocery trips to the local ethnic grocery stores she has bumped into other Vietnamese immigrants who have helped her to feel more at home. Mr. Tran on the other hand has made many new acquaintances during his daily walks in the local park.

However, the most important community for the Trans recently has been the free childcare clinics that operate in the neighbourhood. If the Trans still lived in Vietnam, they would have been able to rely on close friends and family to help them as they adjust to their new life as a family of three. Being new immigrants the Trans are often unfamiliar with the services that local, provincial, and federal governments can offer for new parents and young children. In Jane and Finch there are various childcare services, but the EarlyON Child and Family Centers which have been extremely popular for new parents offer free government-led programs for new parents. The Trans have frequently been using these services to help them navigate this new chapter in their lives. In addition, it helps the Trans connect with other new immigrant parents who are also going through similar situations. Like this the Trans are able to find a new sub-community within Jane and Finch.



The EarlyON child care center @ the Jane & Finch mall

- great knowledgeable staff
- meet other parents
- lots of support

The earlyON has been a great resource & support for us when we had our baby

it can be hard to have a child in a new country but the staff & visitors really supported us

Figure 15: The Tran's Community



Figure 16 : Tower Facade in Jane and Finch

Case Studies

This section will look at a variety of case studies. The first section will focus on studying one of the towers in Jane and Finch, the McMaster. This section will look at what makes the towers in the area so successful despite being rather ill suited for the residents. The following sections will look at other housing projects outside of Jane and Finch. The projects selected for this section all reflect aspects of the previous study on the McMaster, however, they look at unique ways the traditional tower design has been altered. The projects being studied in this section are 60 Richmond Housing Co-operative and Unité d'habitation.

The McMaster

The Jane and Finch area features various housing typologies including single-detached houses, semi-detached houses, row houses, duplexes, and apartments. However, apartment units make up roughly 64% of the housing stock, with the majority of them being rented to tenants. As mentioned previously, the bulk of the apartments were constructed in the early 1970s and intended to house a typical small nuclear family. As a result, the units constructed during the development boom are mainly one- and two-bedroom units. Today, a very different demographic occupies the neighbourhood, thus, the apartment units are inadequate for the current population.

The following case study will take an in-depth look at the benefits and drawbacks of the towers in Jane and Finch, with a particular focus on the McMaster. The McMaster is a 23-storey apartment complex located in the heart of Jane and Finch. It primarily has one- and two-bedroom units, limited amenities, and is enclosed by the surrounding green space. Although, the McMaster has many drawbacks, it also has plenty of positive points which make it a desirable location for its residents. These features will be discussed in the following sections.

Three aspects will be considered, location, form, and flexibility. Location will focus on the location of the McMaster and how it relates to the three characters' movements. Form will focus on the shape of the building and how it aids in the spatial design of the building. Finally, flexibility will examine all the creative ways some residents use the limited space in their units to fit their families.

Figure 17: The McMaster



Location

The majority of the towers built in the neighbourhood are located along major roads which also serve as the routes for many of the bus lines in Jane and Finch. The new LRT line which will replace the 36 line serves roughly 20 apartment buildings along its route. The McMaster is also conveniently located along this route. For residents like Samir, Skylar and her family, and the Trans it means that traveling using public transit is often the most accessible transportation option. In addition to being in proximity to line 36 the McMaster also services other bus lines. The McMaster is also in close proximity to the Finch West Station, a central station that is a major stop for other local bus lines, has connecting subway lines, and services transit lines from other regions. For Mr. Tran specifically this is especially beneficial as his workplace is located in Toronto, therefore his apartment's proximity to the Finch West Station allows him to easily access connection subway lines to downtown Toronto.

For youth like Samir, Skylar and her brothers, and in the future the Trans' young daughter, the location of schools is a very important factor to consider. For very young children like Skylar's toddler brothers and the Trans' new baby, daycare locations are also an important aspect to consider. The McMaster offers informal daycare businesses run by residents, which is a popular and cheaper alternative for many parents. However, many businesses and organizations also offer childcare services. However, for older children like Skylar, the McMaster is close by to several elementary and high schools. As Skylar grows older, she may choose to pursue post-secondary education like Samir. Samir attends Humber College, which is about a 40 min bus ride away from the McMaster. Some of his roommates, however, attend York University which is within walking distance from the McMaster.

The McMaster is close by to other essential services such as grocery stores, shopping complexes, and clinics. The Trans rely on the nearby ethnic grocery stores to remain connected to their Vietnamese roots. Samir on the other hand enjoys taking walks through the nearby green spaces. Skylar and her brothers also frequently walk to the local library to access the children's programs that are offered. Essentially, the location of the new design is a critical component to consider when designing the building. As seen by the characters' experience, much of their lives is dependent on the location of their home. Therefore, future design decisions should take care to ensure that the new site will not cause any disruptions to the daily lives of the residents.

Figure 18 : The McMaster Case Study: Location

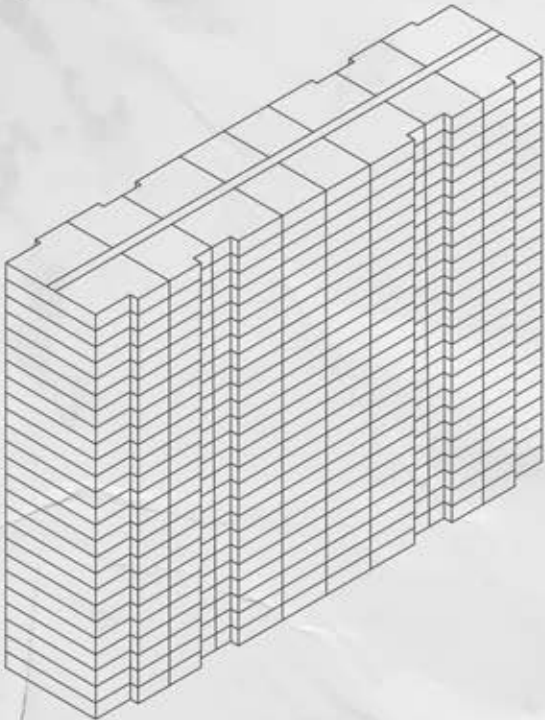
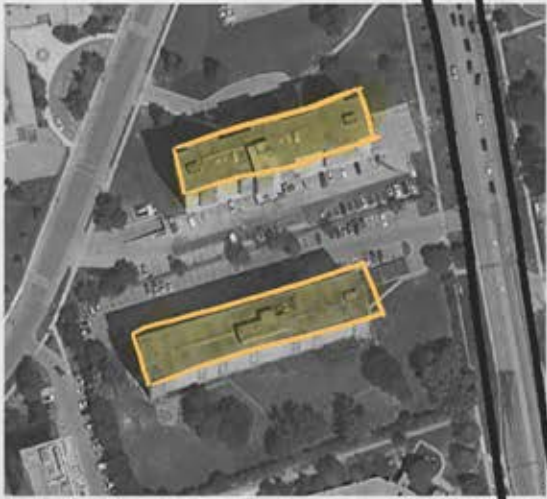
Form

The majority of towers in the Jane and Finch area were built along major roads, therefore, designers often had to work within the lot size constraints and limitations, while meeting predetermined design requirements. At the time of construction, the most defining design requirement was to design homes that would significantly increase the population. As mentioned previously, the majority of the towers in Jane and Finch were constructed to meet the population boom of the 1960s, thus, there was an urgent need to meet the housing demands that would come with the incoming populations. The most appropriate building typology that would suit the design requirements were high density apartment buildings which could house large groups of people in a relatively small footprint. Therefore, over 60% of the housing stock in Jane and Finch are apartment buildings, with apartments over five storeys making up about 55% of the total housing stock. This housing typology proved to be highly successful because the population in Jane and Finch grew from 1,300 residents in 1961 to 33,000 in 1971.

The success of this can be traced back to the form of the building, which optimized the maximum number of units while working in small lot sizes. The majority of the apartments in Jane and Finch follow a rectilinear form. This is partly due to the lot sizes, many which are pieces of land the stretch alongside a major road. To fit within these lots and maximize space the building footprint often followed the shape of the lot, resulting in a rectangular shape. Due to the rectangular shape, the McMaster as well as other surrounding towers utilize a double-loaded corridor, maximizing the number of units. While the narrow corridors can often discourage residents from socializing outside their apartment units, it maximizes the amount of space the small units have. In addition, the rectangular shape of the units maximizes the number of windows each unit has, making the small spaces feel much larger as well as bringing in natural daylight.

While the rectangular form of the towers in Jane and Finch has some drawbacks, the form also has many positive aspects which should be integrated in the new design proposal.

Figure 19 : The McMaster Case Study: Form



Flexibility

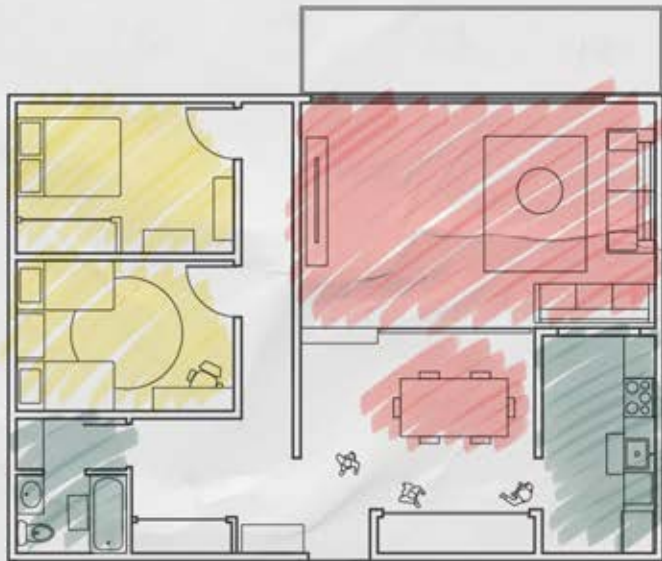
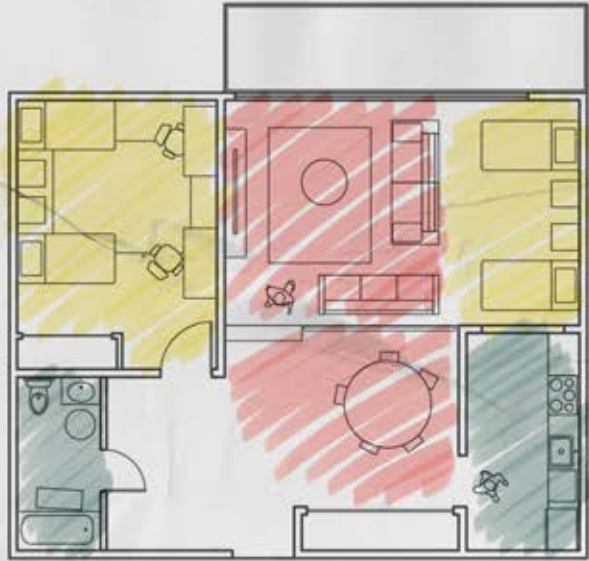
The majority of apartment units offered in the area are one- and two-bedroom units. However, due to the form of the building as well as the open floorplan many of the residents have altered their units and living arrangements to suit their changing needs. These changes can vary anywhere from splitting a living room into a bedroom or turning a second bedroom into an informal daycare.

The space divisions are created using a mix of formal and informal division methods. Formal divisions refer to any permanent methods that are used to divide a space and assign rooms. For example, walls that separate the kitchen from the dining room, or doors that indicate the crossing of one threshold to another. The units in the McMaster utilize three different types of formal divisions, walls, doors, and level changes. Wall divisions are very clearly used to separate the kitchen from the dining room, but it is still easily accessible. However, door divisions enclose a space and make it more private and are typically reserved for spaces like bedrooms and bathrooms. Level changes are the most unconventional use of formal divisions in the apartment buildings. However, in apartments like the McMaster which utilize a very open floorplan, level changes are necessary to clearly separate one space from another.

Informal divisions refer to any non-permanent divisions that are used to divide a space. In many cases these are constructed by the residents and often can be moved and rearranged. For example, in Samir's unit the living room also functions as a bedroom for two of his roommates. The division of this space is completely informal, with the only separation being the couch which can be moved around to change the space division. Skylar's family uses a mix of both formal and informal divisions. Since Skylar's unit is a two-bedroom apartment she is able to draw clear divisions between the two bedrooms. However, her own room uses informal divisions to separate her space from her younger brother's. In contrast, the Trans do not utilize any informal division methods in their home. For the time being their newborn daughter shares their bedroom, however as she gets older, they may have to employ a similar method that Samir uses in his unit. However, the Trans take full use of the formal division separating exterior spaces from the interior spaces as seen by the small garden they've grown in their balcony.

Figure 20 : The McMaster Case Study: Flexibility

- Bedrooms
- Social spaces
- Essential spaces



Outside Jane and Finch

The following sections will focus on analyzing case studies outside of Jane and Finch. These projects were selected to understand how to better incorporate the needs of the three characters.

60 Richmond Housing Co-operative

The 60 Richmond Housing Co-operative designed by Teeple Architects is an 11 storey, mixed-used building that served as housing for residents who were displaced during the Regent Park social housing project in Toronto, Canada. The co-operative was created from the collaboration between the local city councilor, the hospitality workers' union, and Toronto Community Housing. This unique collaboration ensured that residents who were relocated during the Regent Park social housing project would be able to both live and work at 60 Richmond.⁵²

The project's success can be attributed to the small self-sustaining economic system that exists within the building. The building features 85 units which are used to house primarily hospitality workers, who are employed in the resident-owned and -operated restaurant in the building. The restaurant gets the majority of its produce from the rooftop garden which is irrigated using collected stormwater. Lastly, the organic waste generated by the restaurant and kitchens is used as compost for the gardens.⁵³ This ecosystem works extremely well as it provides many of the residents who are often from disadvantaged backgrounds with work training and experience to use in future endeavors. Essentially, the building has all the programming necessary to provide residents with the resources and support needed to lead successful lives.

⁵² Arch Daily, "60 Richmond Housing Cooperative / Teeple Architects," November 2, 2010, <https://www.arch-daily.com/85762/60-richmond-housing-cooperative-teeple-architects>.

⁵³ Arch Daily, "60 Richmond Housing Cooperative / Teeple Architects."

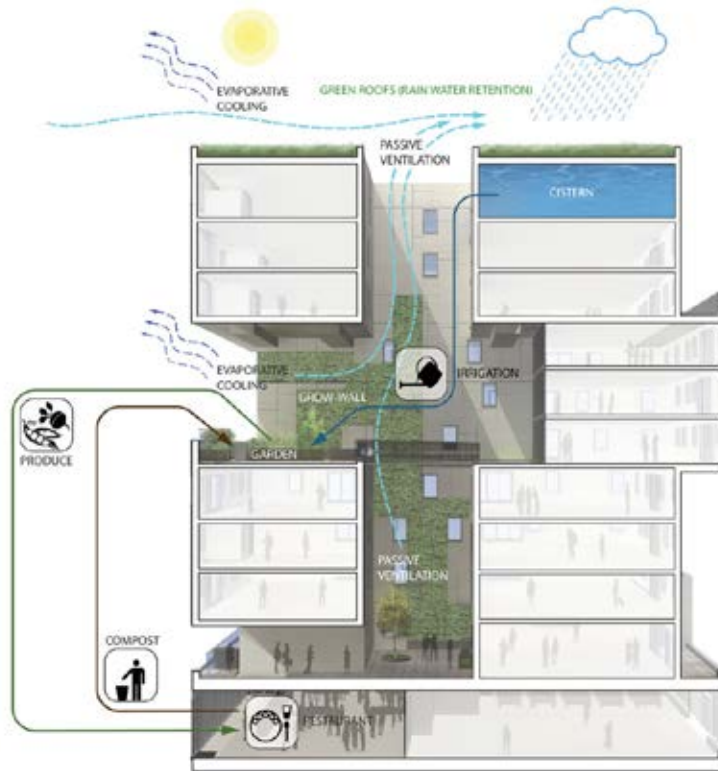


Figure 21 (top left): Exterior of 60 Richmond

Figure 22 (top right): Exterior of 60 Richmond

Figure 23 (top bottom): Section of 60 Richmond

Unite d'habitation

Unité d'habitation is a housing typology designed by Le Corbusier in collaboration with architect Nadir Afonso. The building was designed to house displaced victims following World War II. The project's main focus was to create a communal living space where all inhabitants could live, shop, play, and socialize together. Similar to the McMaster, Unité d'habitation also employs a rectangular form to accommodate a high volume of residents.⁵⁴

The 'living' aspect of the housing typology occurs with the housing units which house about 1,600 residents. However, the social aspects have been moved to the upper rooftop level. The rooftop level includes amenities such as a running track, a club, a kindergarten, a gym, and a shallow pool. In addition to private amenities for residents there are a number of public amenities such as shops, medical facilities, and a small hotel in the interior of the building.⁵⁵ The merging of public and private facilities is essential to integrate the residents with the broader community, creating a city within a city. Essentially, providing facilities for both residents and the public is important to ensure that residents are integrated within the community.



Figure 24 :xMap showing the boudaries of the Jane and Finch.

⁵⁴ Andrew Kroll, "Architecture Classics: Unite d' Habitation / Le Corbusier," Arch Daily (blog), February 10, 2024AD, <https://www.archdaily.com/85971/ad-classics-unite-d-habitation-le-corbusier>.

⁵⁵ Kroll, "Architecture Classics: Unite d' Habitation / Le Corbusier."

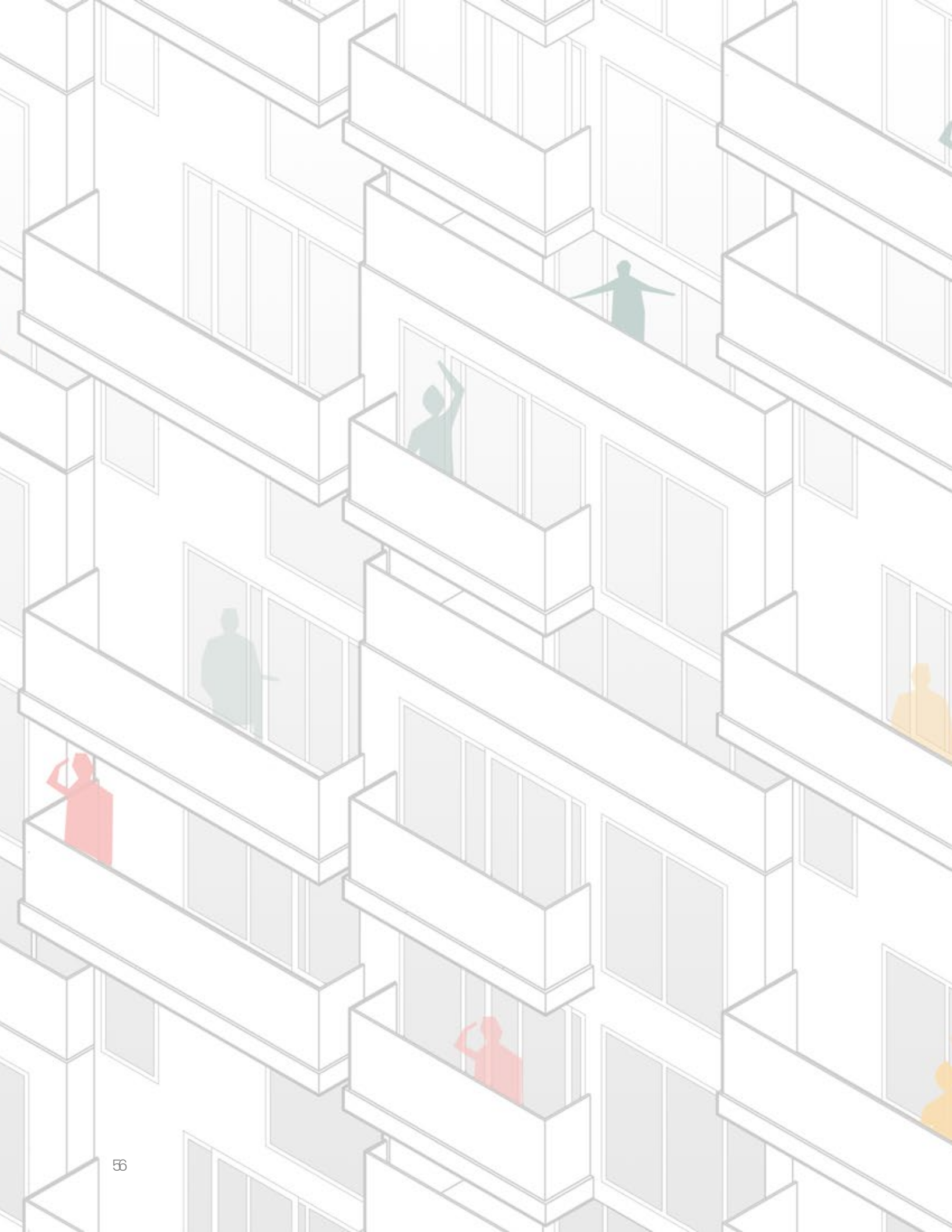


Clockwise starting from top left

Figure 25: Map showing the boudaries of the Jane and Finch.

Figure 26: Map showing the boudaries of the Jane and Finch.

Figure 27 : Map showing the boudaries of the Jane and Finch.



Design Proposal

Site Analysis

Much of the site analysis for the neighbourhood was completed and documented in the prior sections based on the stories and comments from the three characters, however, a condensed overview of basic information is shown in figure 28. Based on the study completed of the three characters a few main criteria were identified. The most important factor that is considered is the proximity to local transit services. Many of the residents rely on the public transit services to move, therefore, proximity to transit services takes top priority when choosing a site. Secondly, the site must be within close proximity to essential services and resources that serve the residents. These services can be a variety of things such as education, grocery stores, community outreach programs, health clinics, etc. Essentially, these services must be able to support a wide variety of ages and lifestyles ranging from a newborn child to an elderly person. Finally, the spaces must be able to foster a sense of community and belonging for the residents, the majority who are immigrants. This aspect will be integrated with the new building design.

Based on these identified criteria, a small strip of land just south of the MSP station was chosen as the site. This site upon completion of the Finch West LRT project will be donated to the community. Future plans for the site primarily focused on community centered designs such as arts centers and community centers. However, this thesis will focus on creating a new tower framework that would connect the residents of Jane and Finch to the three important criteria that were analyzed in-depth in the previous sections, home, transit, and community.

To meet the criteria of creating homes for the residents of Jane and Finch it was essential to address the previous failures of the old tower designs, namely the unsuitability. Therefore, the newly designed tower will primarily have 4-,3-, and 2-bedroom units to suit the average family size of 4.4. The new site is also located in front of a future LRT stop, ensuring that current residents will have access to the transit services they depend on. The transit services are essential in connecting current residents and future residents to critical support systems and services, these are show inn figure 29. Lastly, the community aspect will be fulfilled due to the site's close proximity to services and resources. However, it will also be further integrated into the design of the new tower, which will be explored in depth in the following sections.

Figure 28 : Site and Program Requirements



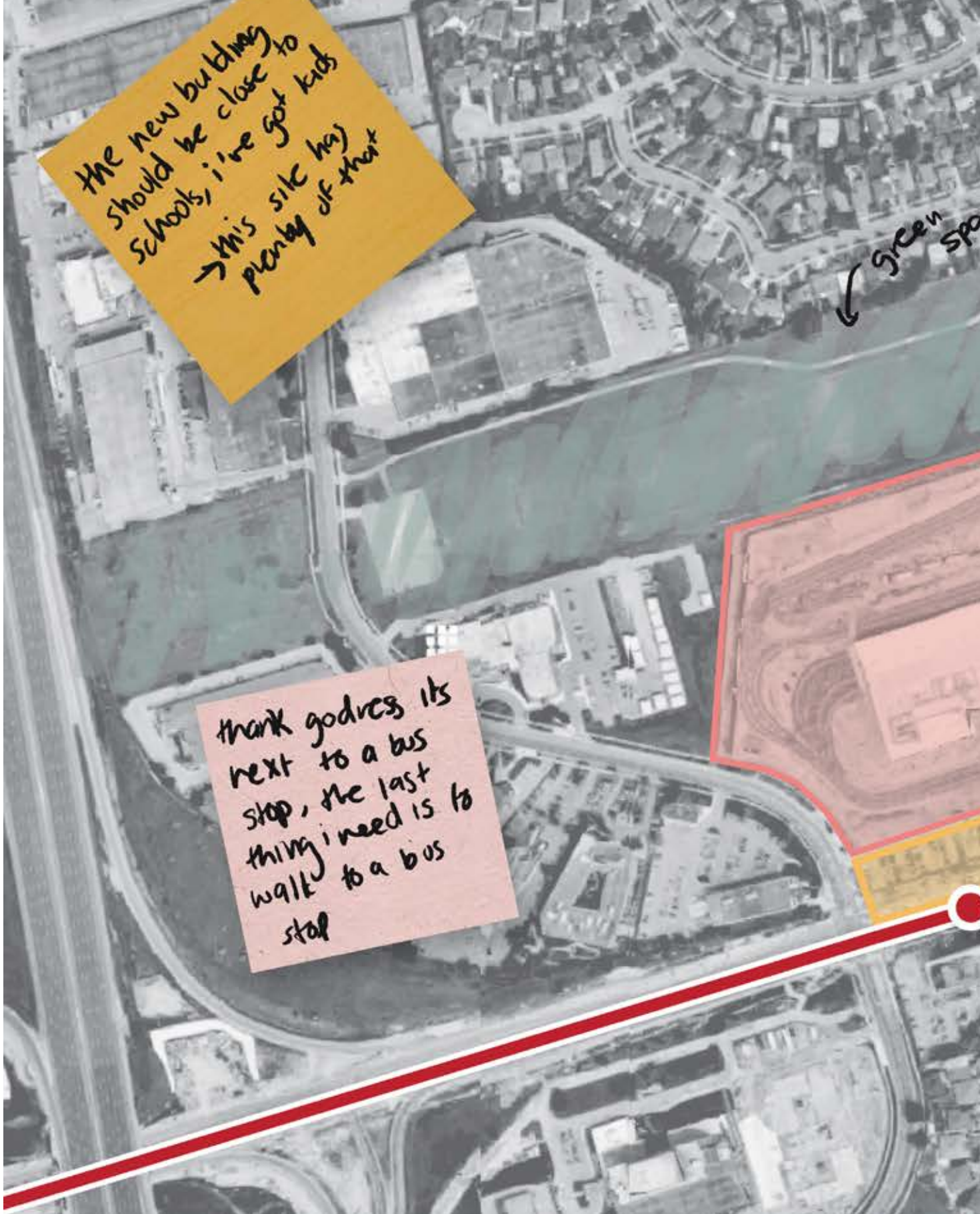
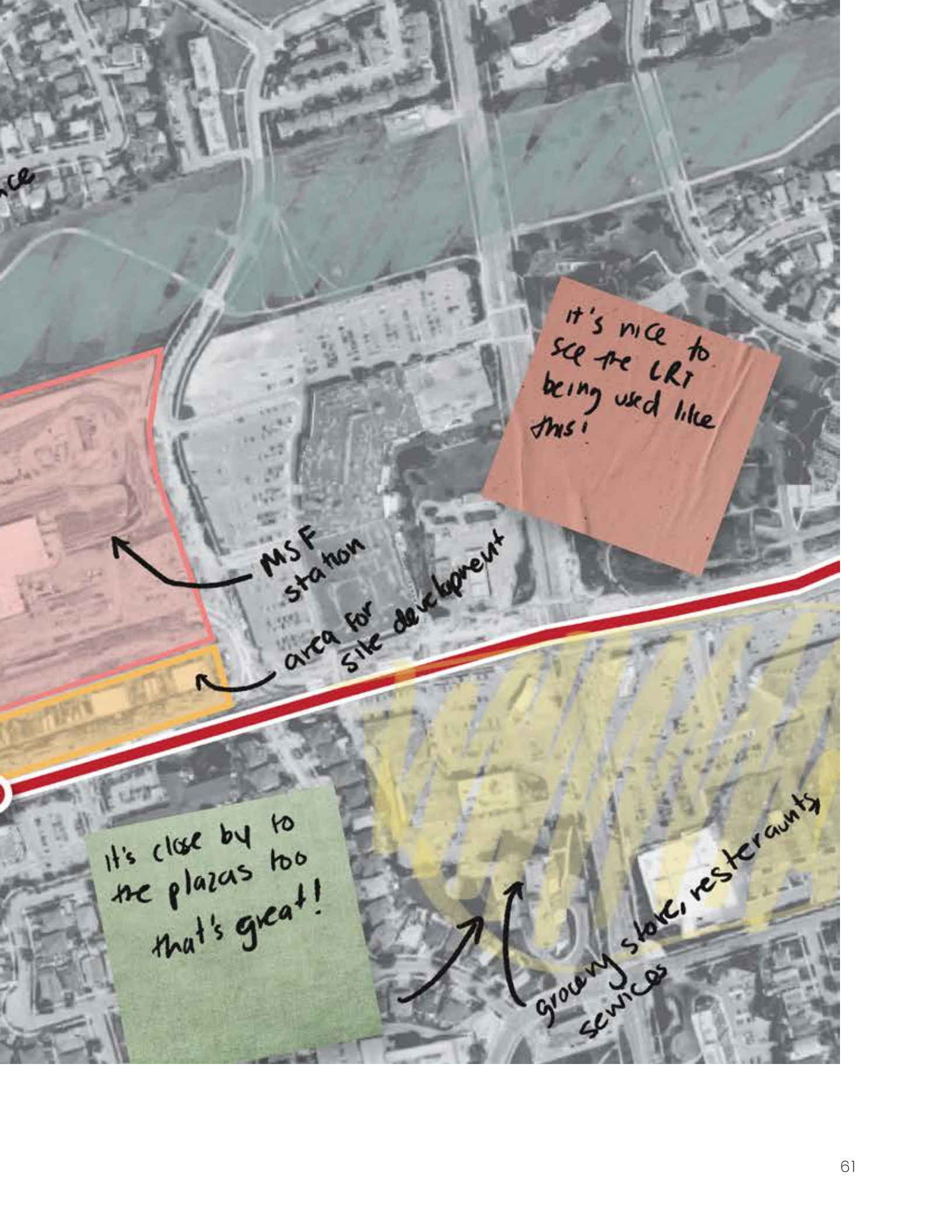


Figure 29 : Site Analysis



it's nice to see the LRT being used like this!

it's close by to the plazas too that's great!

MSF station
area for site development

grocery store, restaurants services

The Proposal

The new development is conveniently located across the new Norfinch Oakdale LRT stop. Upon exiting the stop both residents and visitors are brought to the heart of Jane and Finch. For many residents that get off at this stop it may be their final stop for the day. However, for visitors it would act as one of many possible stops along their journey. Figure 32 illustrates a street section which shows the connection the new tower has to the LRT line. Due to the close proximity of the LRT line to the new tower design, the tower should be treated as a destination for visitors and residents of the area. To encourage this, a small green space, as seen in figure 31, has been placed in between the two towers. Some of the previous problems stated by the characters were that parks often felt unsafe. However, this park offers high visibility, creating a much safer space. In addition, the lower level of both towers have been designed to serve as a public space, this will be further explored in the following section.



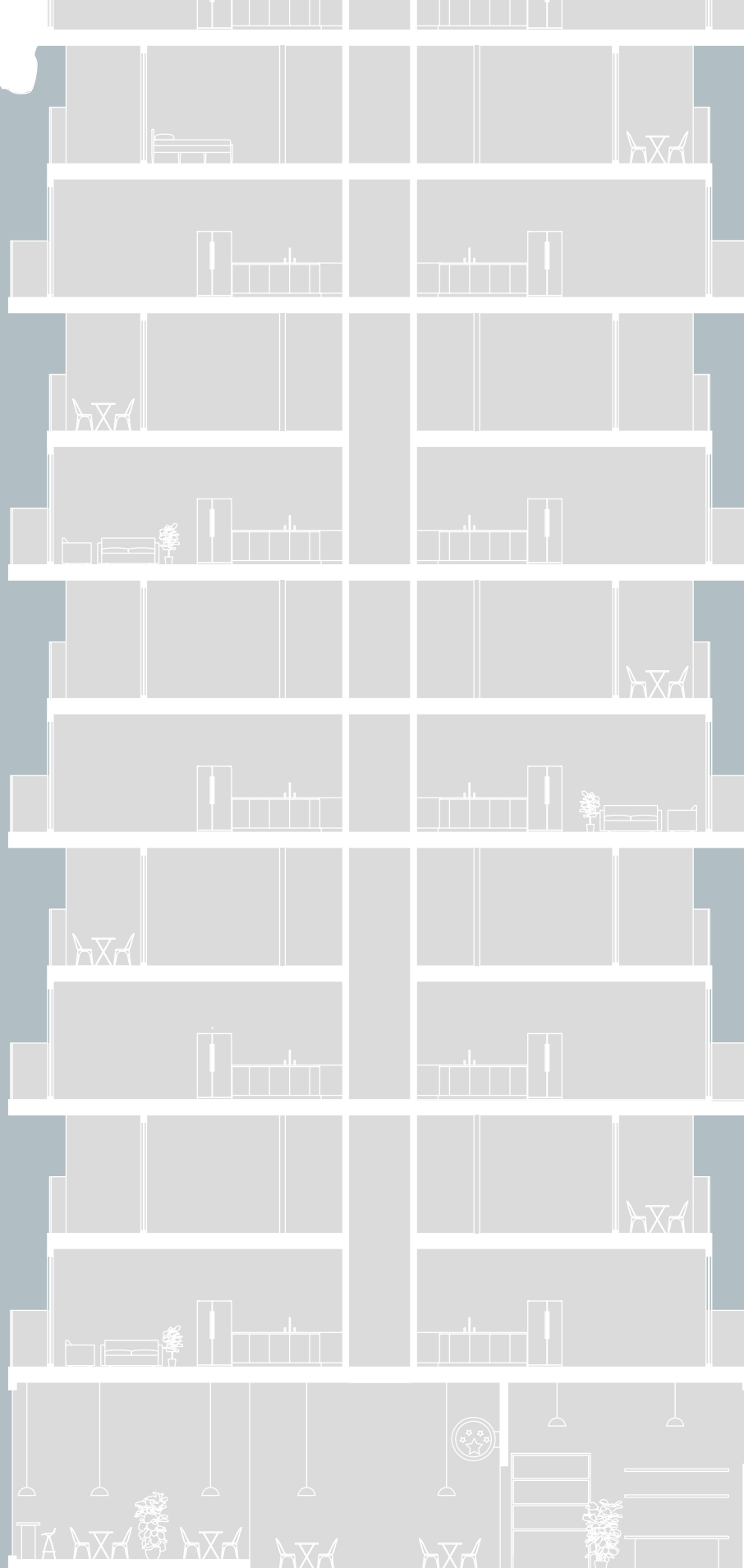


Figure 30 : Street Section



Metrolinx LRT Maintenance and Storage Facility

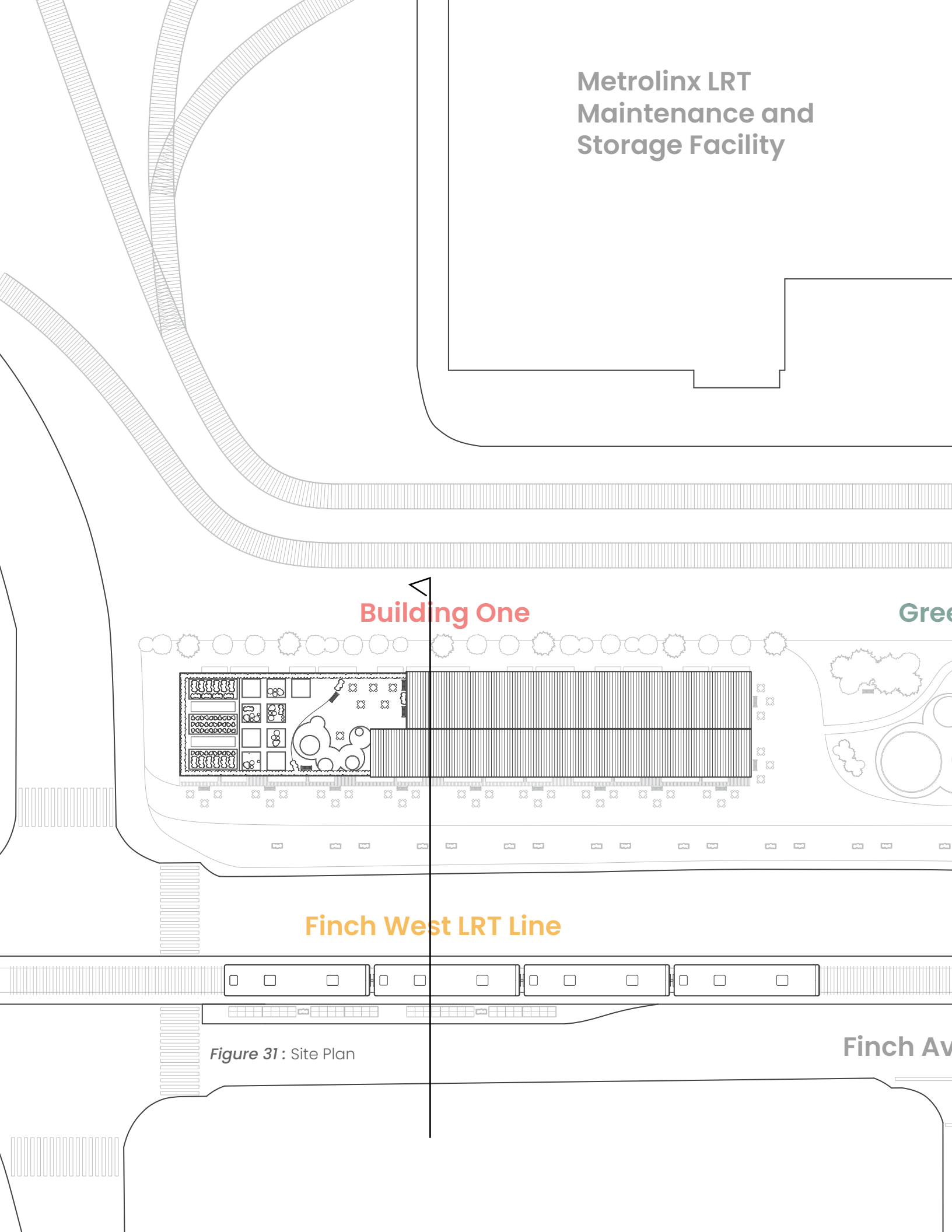
Building One

Green

Finch West LRT Line

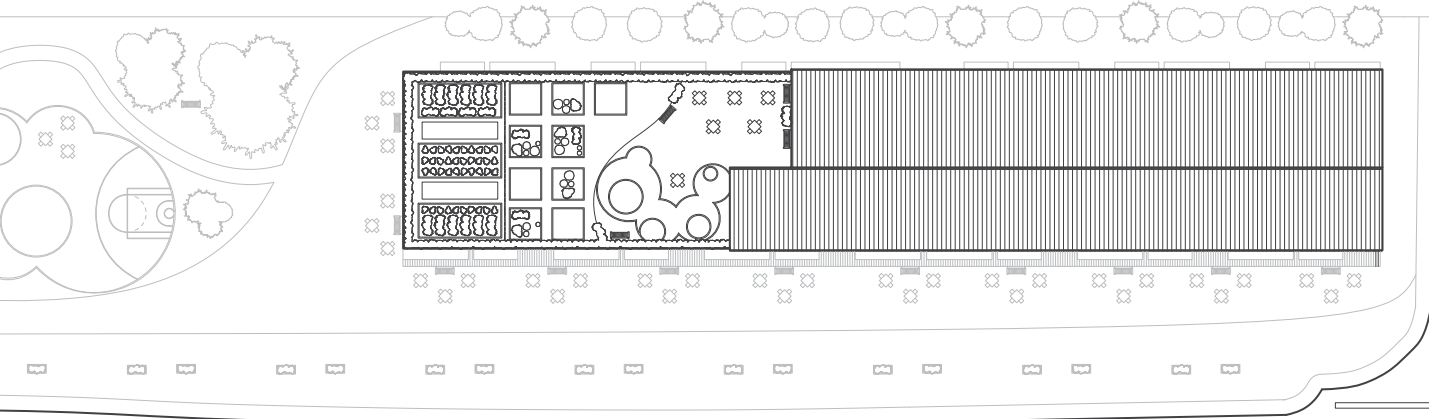
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Figure 31 : Site Plan



Open Space

Building Two

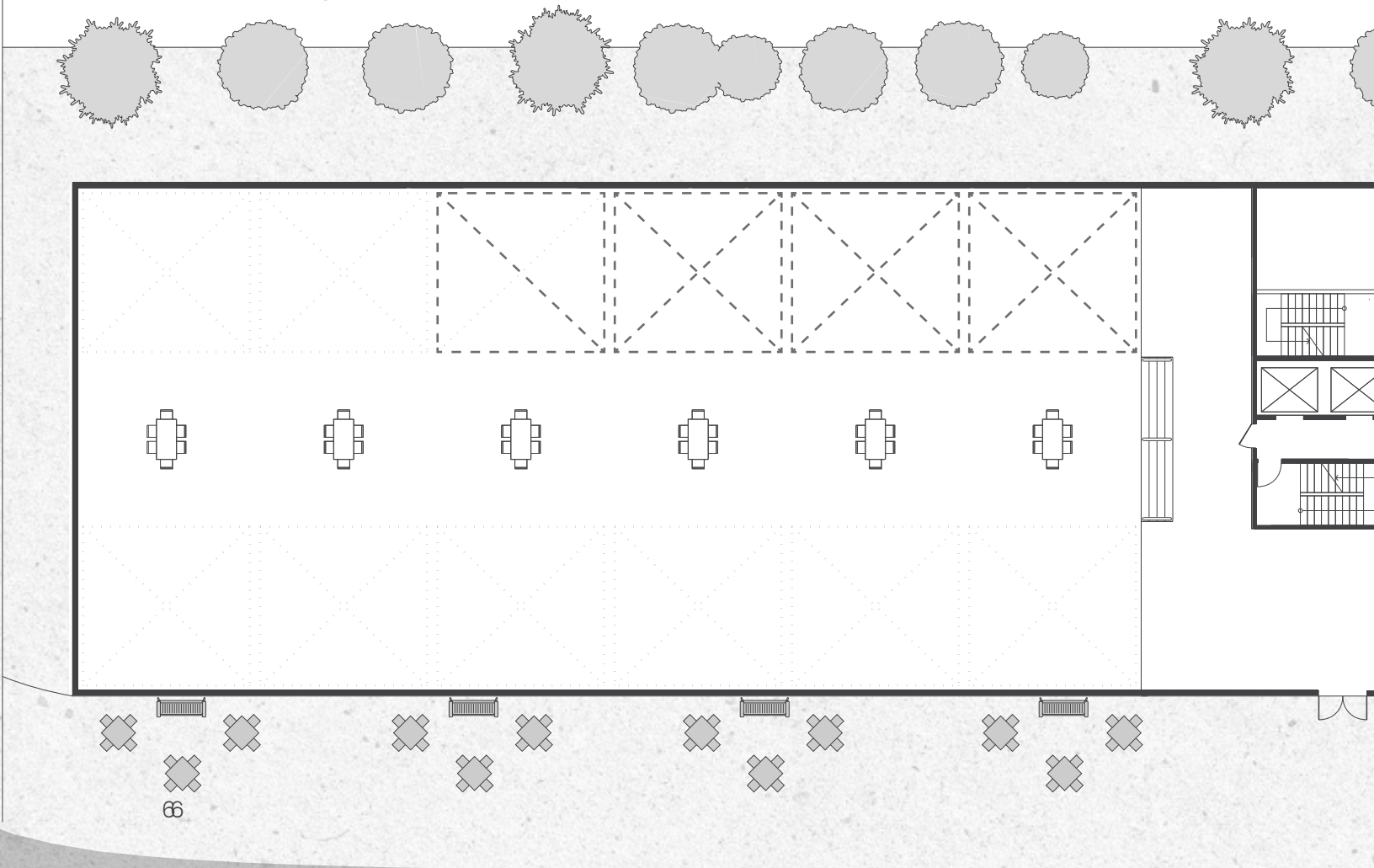


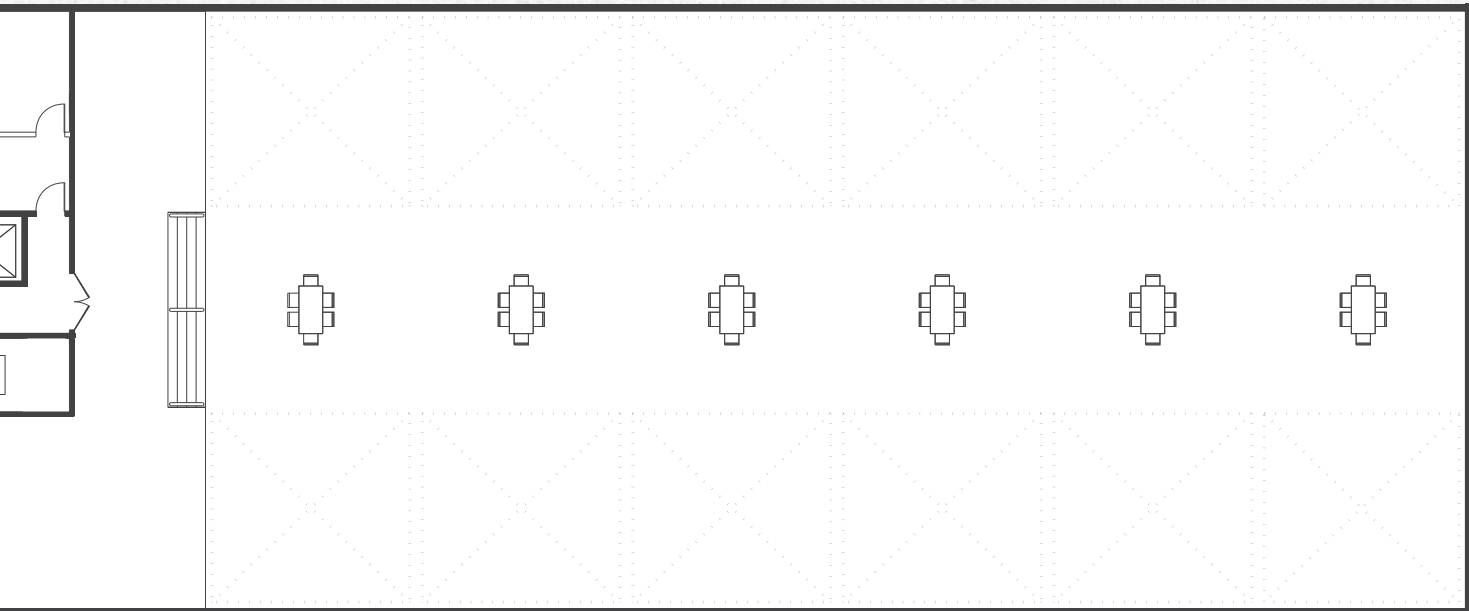
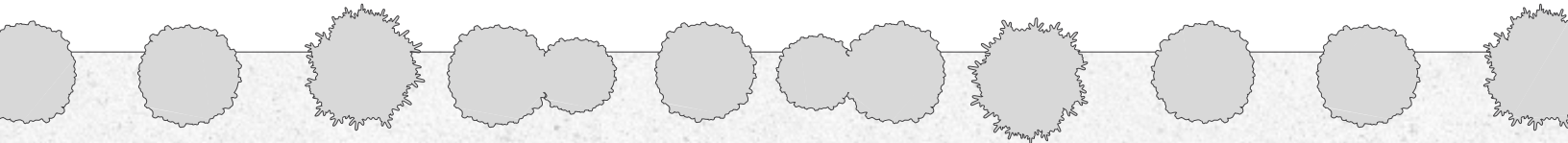
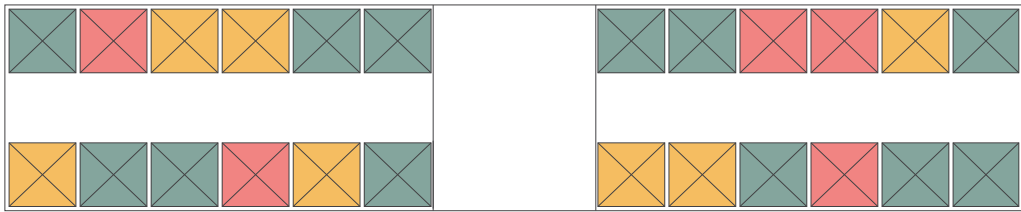
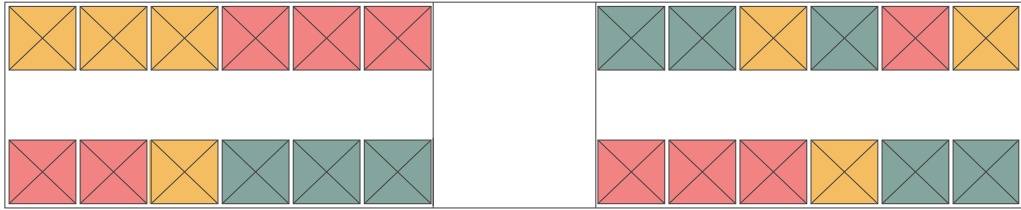
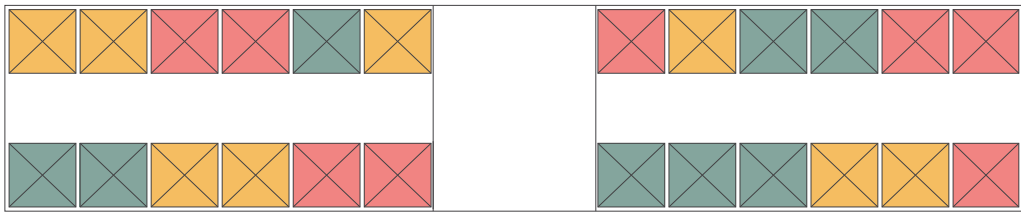
avenue West

The main level is a dedicated public space that offers both indoor and outdoor public spaces. Upon exiting the LRT line visitors and residents can cross the street, arriving at the newly designed towers. The majority of the first level is open to the public and is intended to be used as a marketplace, similar to the nearby local shopping plazas in the area. The center of the floorplan features the entry way, which is dedicated to allowing residents access to their units. This space features an elevator, mailroom, and storage space. The east and right wings of the public space is elevated from the entry to differentiate it from the market space. The market space upon complete of the project would essentially be an empty space that would provide the basic structure for business owners to setup their businesses.

This section of the building is directly inspired by many of the residents in the older towers who set up informal business in the homes, like Mrs. Khan who was mentioned in Skylar's story. Each wing of the market space offers twelve base units that business owners can rent as business space. Each space is roughly 40m². Owners can choose to rent one space or rent more than one space to make a larger space. For example, the new apartment that the characters live in Mrs. Khan rents two units to run her daycare business, however, the Chowdhury's who run a very successful restaurant have rented three units. Alternatively, Mr. Lee, who run a small accounting office only requires one unit to run his business. The image also shows that there are four units that are still rentable allowing other residents to have the opportunity to run a business.

Figure 32 : Conceptual Market Space Plan





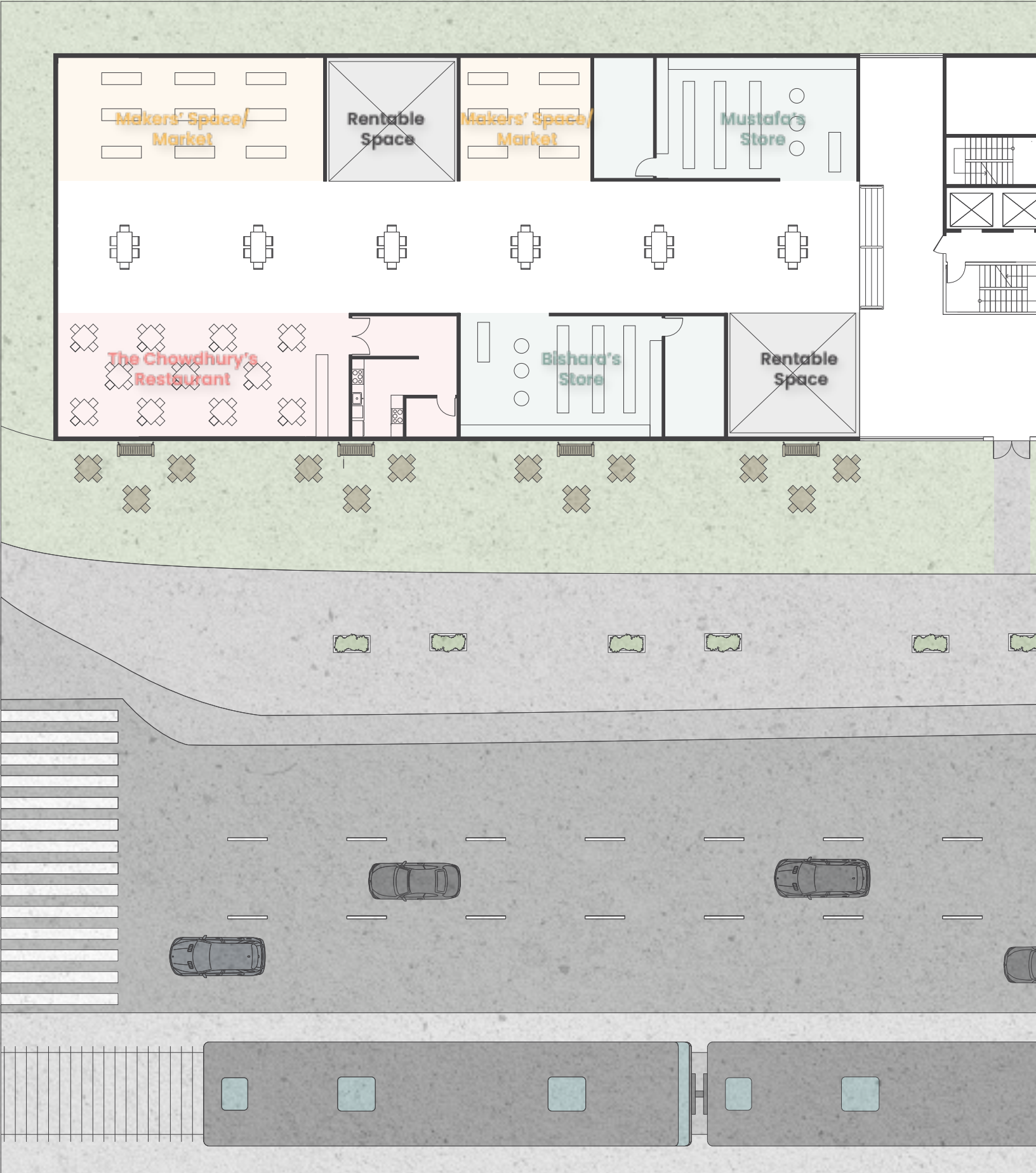
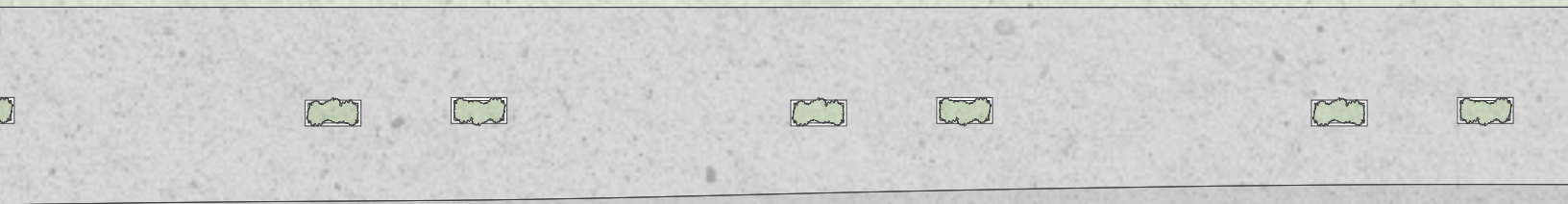


Figure 33 : Market Space Floor Plan

68 **Norfinch LRT Stop**



Above the market space there are twenty levels of residential space, making up a total of 312 units. One of the main issues regarding the previous towers was that they were not suitable for the existing population. To address this problem roughly 66% of units are made to occupy larger families.

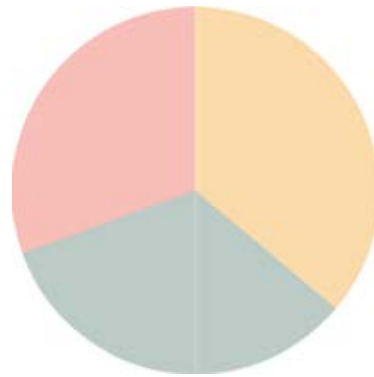
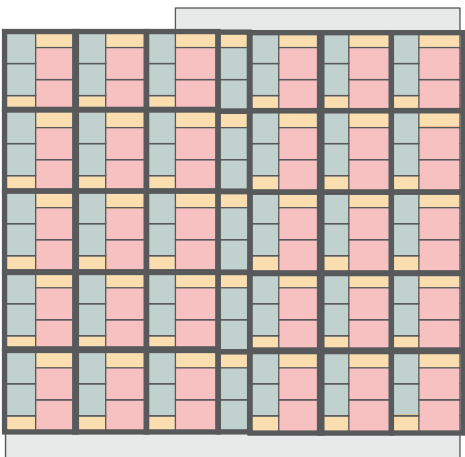
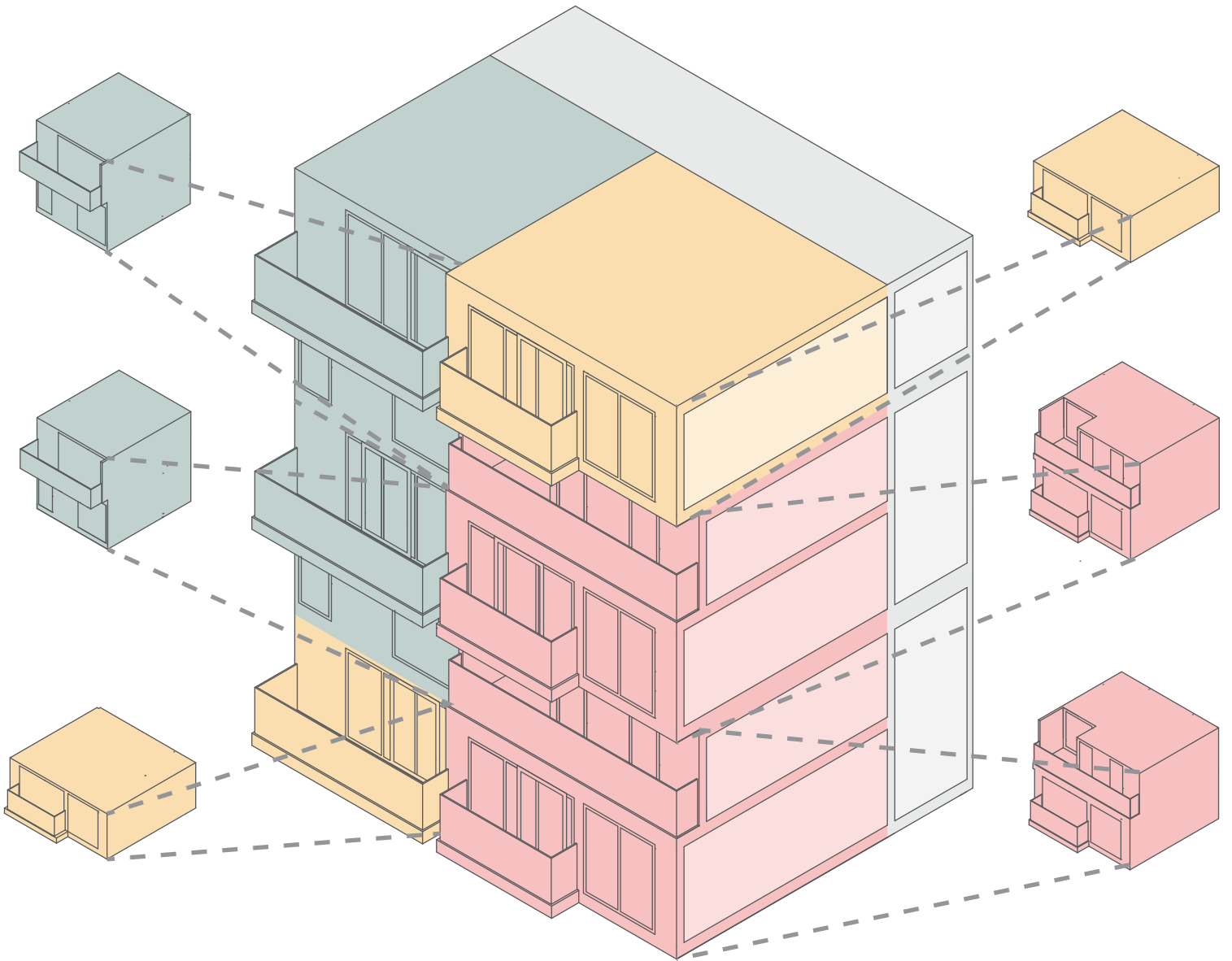
The design of the apartment is based on a 6-unit module, as seen in figure 36, which comprises of two 3/4-bedroom units, two 2-bedroom units, two 1-bedroom units. This module is repeated throughout the length of the apartment, apart from the units located near the apartments. Due to the design of the units, two unit styles, the 3/4 bedroom and 2-bedroom units are units that occupy two levels. Due to this, the hallway to access the units alternates between levels. Based on the studies of the McMaster the new towers also utilized a long double corridor method to access the units. This method allowed units to receive the maximum window coverage as well as increase space within the units.

Figure 34 : Residential Level Floor Plan



The one-bedroom unit would ideally be used by singles or young adults like Samir. While there was not a pressing need for single bedrooms in the neighbourhood, the presence of the local universities and colleges indicate that housing for young adults cannot go ignored. The two-bedroom apartment features two bedrooms and a small office space that could potentially be used as a third bedroom. This unit would ideally be used by young families like the Trans. Finally, the 3/4-bedroom units offer three formal bedrooms and an additional office space that can be converted to a bedroom. This unit type





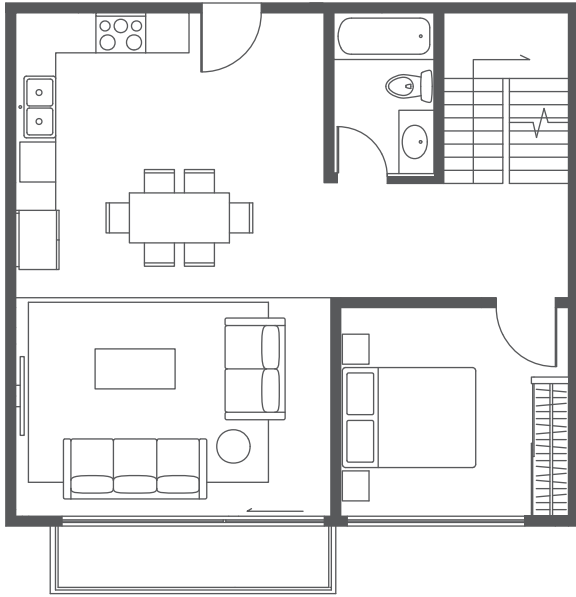
1 BEDROOM - 33%

2 BEDROOM - 36%

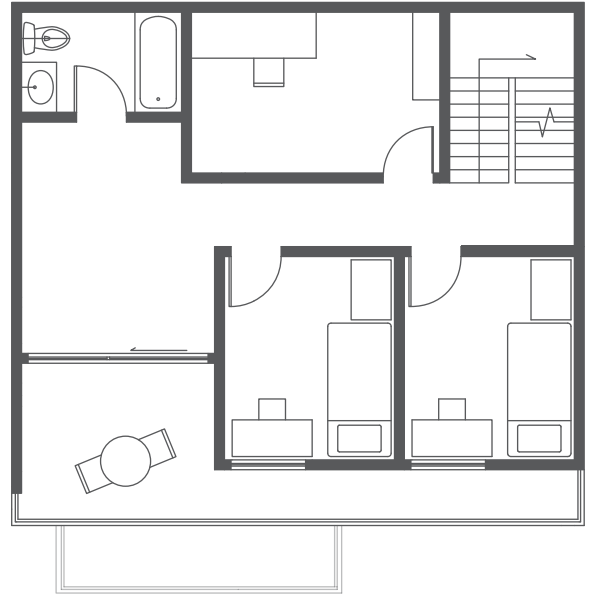
3/4 BEDROOM - 30%

Figure 35 : Unit Floor Plans

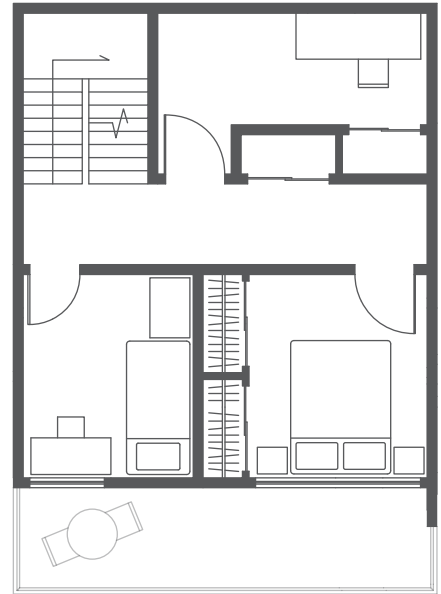
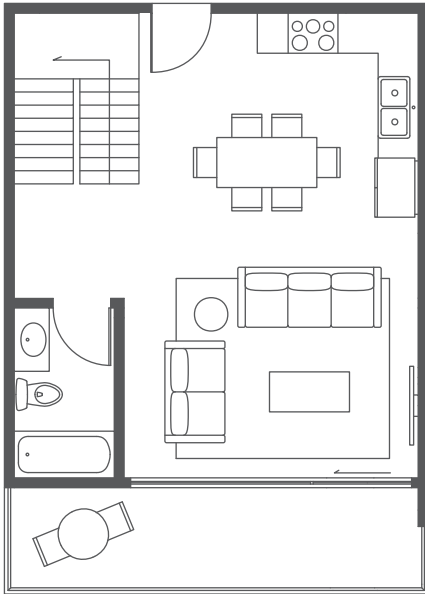
3/4 BEDROOM



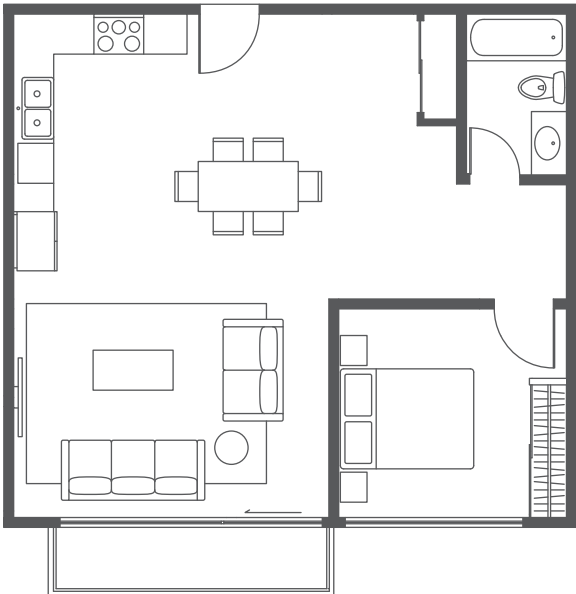
Level 2



2 BEDROOM



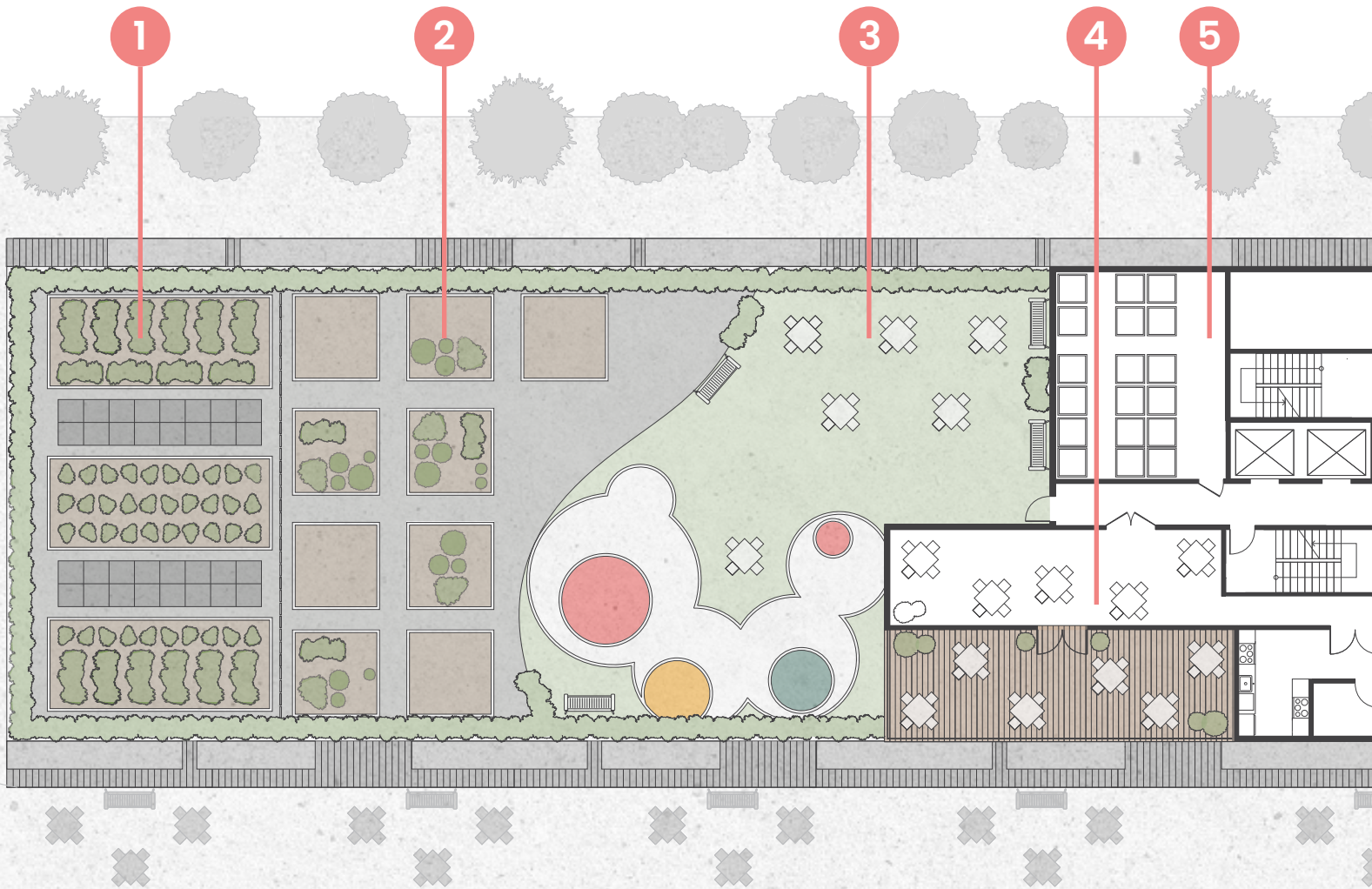
1 BEDROOM



The upstairs amenities level feature facilities that only residents can access. Most of the programs available upstairs are based on the facilities that the three characters have expressed a need to have. Starting from the west and moving eastwards, the first amenity offered for residents is the Restaurant Garden. The Restaurant Garden allows restaurant owners from the public market space or the rooftop restaurant to grow produce that may be used in their restaurants. The Restaurant Garden then transforms into the Resident Gardens which allow residents to rent a plot of land to garden. This feature would especially be enjoyed by the Trans who can expand their small balcony garden. Continuing, residents can use the Rooftop Green Space for socializing and play. This space features seating areas, open green space, and a children's playground. This space would be popular among all three characters. Samir and his roommates can use the area for socializing, and hosting rooftop parties. Skylar and her brothers can use the playground, while Skylar's mother can invite her friends to the rooftop to socialize. On the other hand, the Tran's daughter will have a safe playground for her to play in as she grows older.

Continuing eastward from the Rooftop Green Space residents enter the interior amenities. The first amenity offered is the Rooftop Restaurant. This space, unlike the Public Market space, is a dedicated retail space intended to be used as a restaurant. This space works in unison with the Restaurant Garden which provides produce for menu items. In addition, the restaurant provides

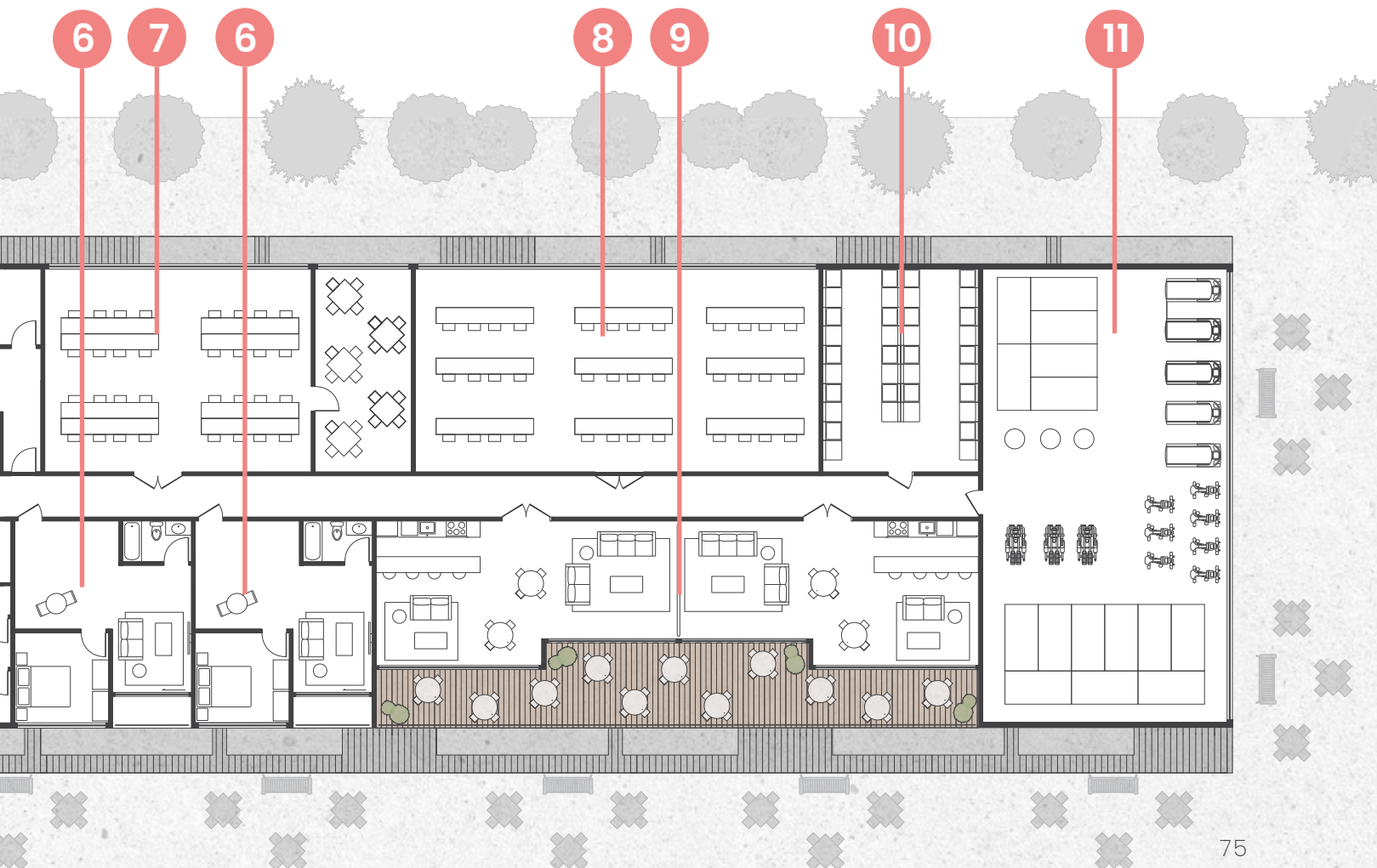
Figure 36 : Upper Ammenities Floor Plans

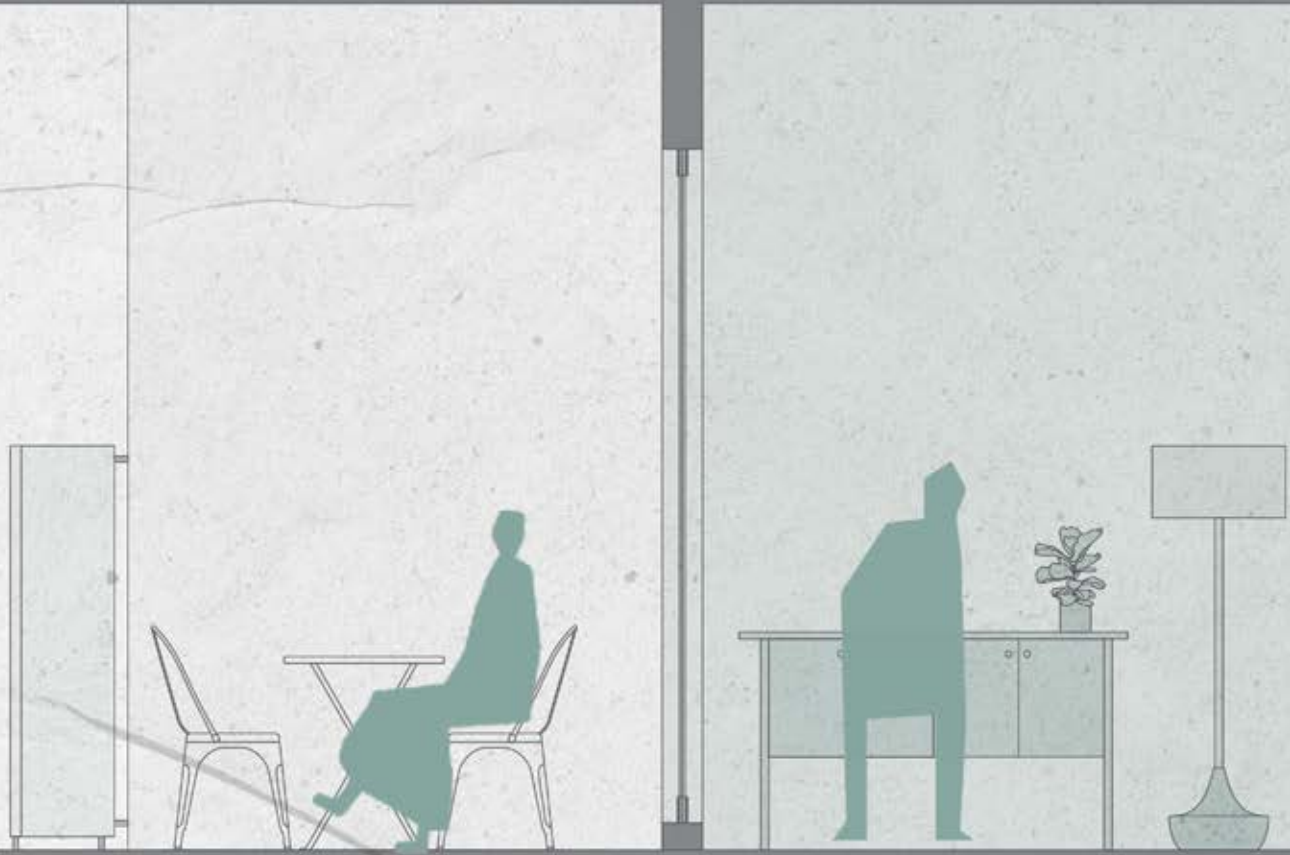


job opportunities for residents. Students like Samir who live in the towers can find employment with the restaurant. Another amenity offered is the Storage Space for residents who require more space to store their belongings. The Hotel Rooms feature small units that function as short-term hotel rooms. These units can be booked by residents who want a space to host guests overnight. The Community Room allows residents to host meetings and events. When not in use for meetings and events, students like Skylar and Samir can use the space to study in. For more privacy and quiet, a small attached dedicated quiet room is also provided. The Flex Space is intended for residents to alter and use as they wish. Depending on the needs of the residents its function and purpose can be altered. For example, parents can make it into an indoor play space for young children, or residents can use it as an extra space to host events. The Event Space features a double room that can be expanded into one large room. This space can be used by residents who need a larger space to host parties. This space also features a kitchen to prepare food and indoor and outdoor seating. Lastly, the gym allows residents to easily access exercise equipment.

Essentially, the new design proposal, unlike the pre-existing towers is made with thoughtful consideration of the residents who currently inhabit the neighbourhood. The following section will go more into depth of how residents may use the new development by following the characters introduced in the previous sections as they adapt to their new life in the newly designed towers.

- 1 Restaurant Garden
- 2 Resident Garden
- 3 Rooftop Green Space
- 4 Rooftop Restaurant
- 5 Storage Space
- 6 Hotel Room
- 7 Community Room
- 8 Flex Space
- 9 Event Space
- 10 Laundry
- 11 Gym





Samir

Samir and his roommates were able to move into one of the four-bedroom units. This unit allows all four of them to live comfortably. Alternatively, Samir can also choose to live in one of the one-bedroom units available in the building. Location wise, the new development doesn't make many changes to Samir's daily life apart from dramatically reducing his daily commute time. Samir now relies on the new LRT line to get to school, complete his errands, and explore the city. However, previously Samir might have had to take the local transit system to go to his job, now he can be employed at one of the businesses in the market space. In addition to providing Samir with a means for employment, the new tower also helps Samir to grow his community. The upstairs amenities offer Samir plenty of space to meet friends and have social gatherings. Previously, Samir noted a lack of quiet spaces for him to work, however, the new apartment offers dedicated quiet spaces for people like Samir to work. Overall, the new apartment has improved Samir's living conditions, provided employment, and helped to foster his community.

Figure 37: Samir's New Apartment At The New Towers

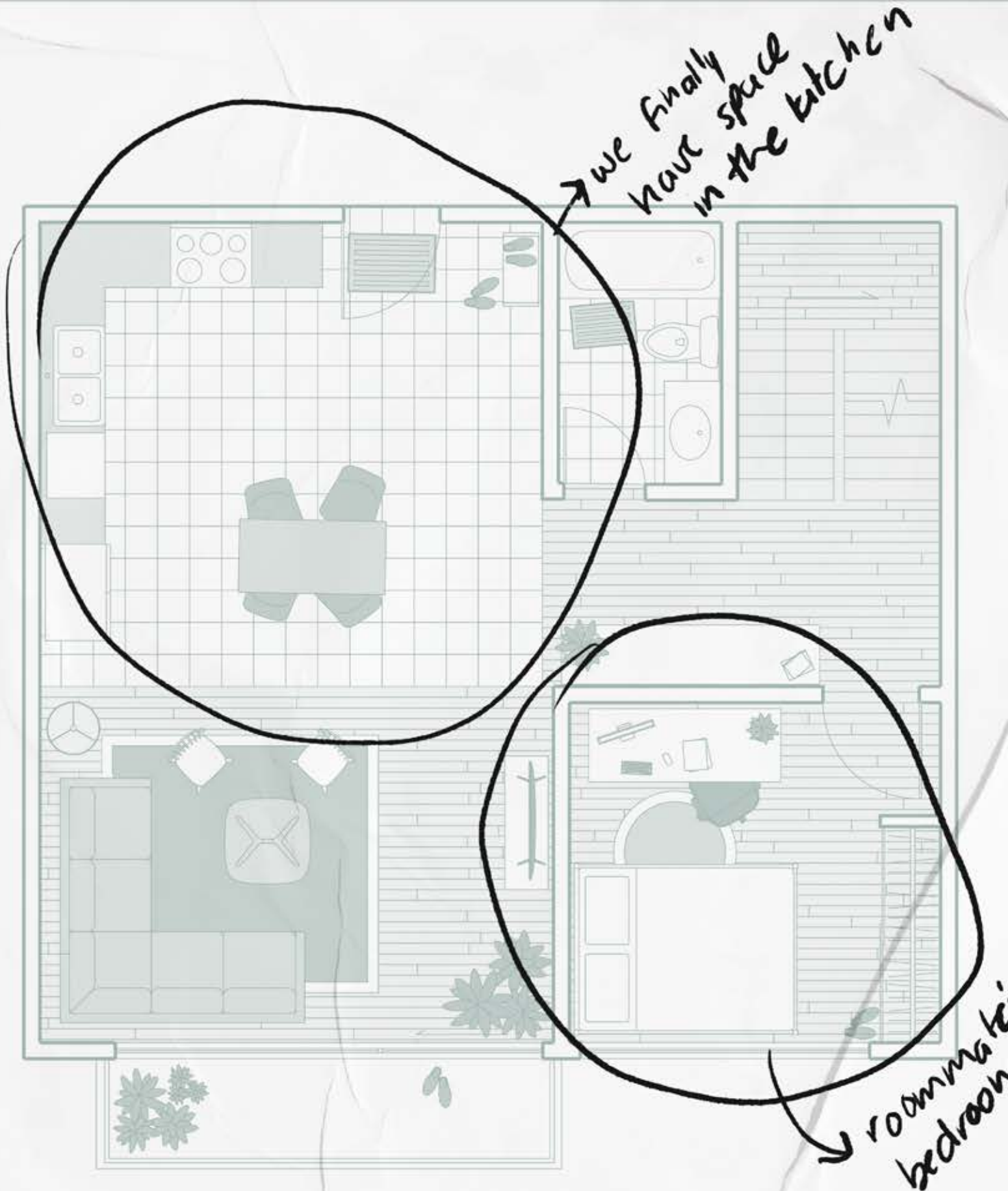
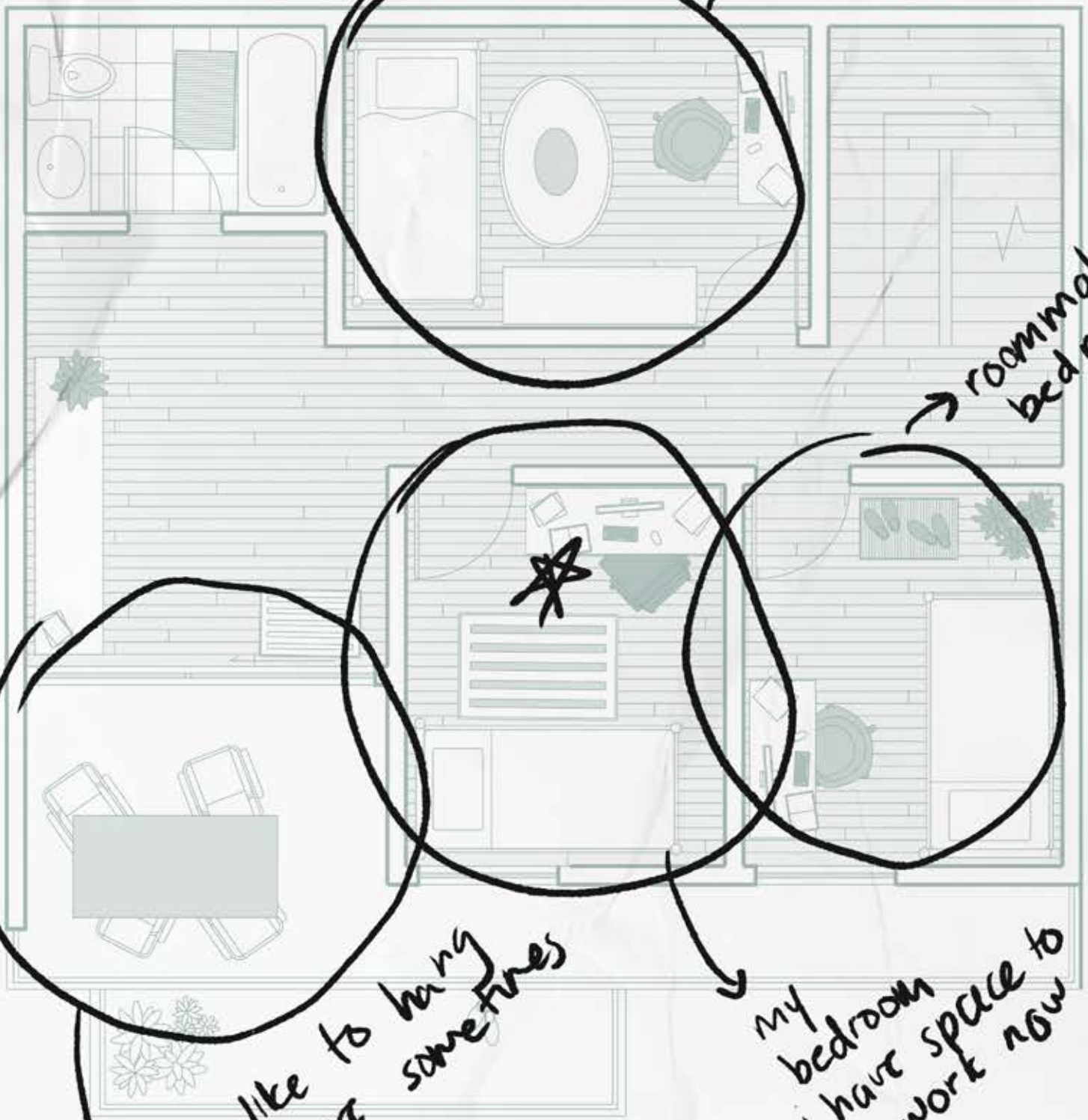


Figure 38 : Samir's New Unit



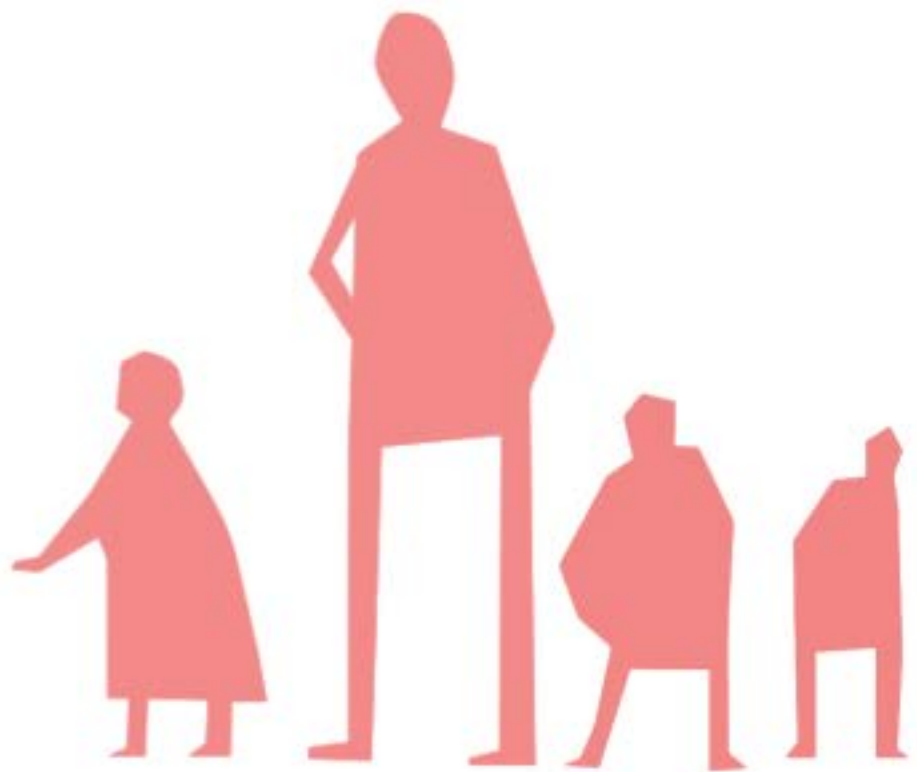
roommate's bedroom

roommate's bedroom



my bedroom
i have space to do work now

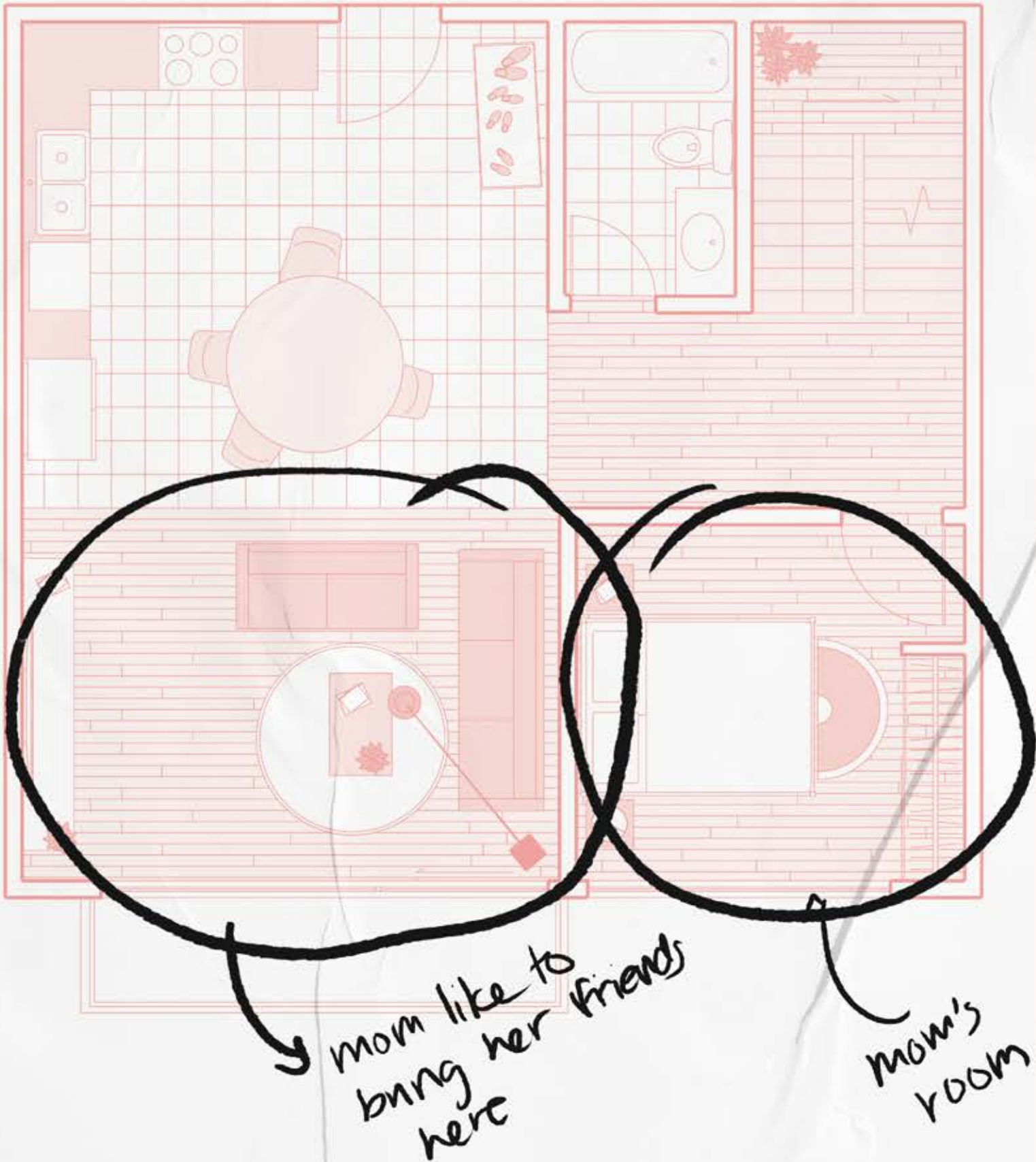
we like to bring out here sometimes



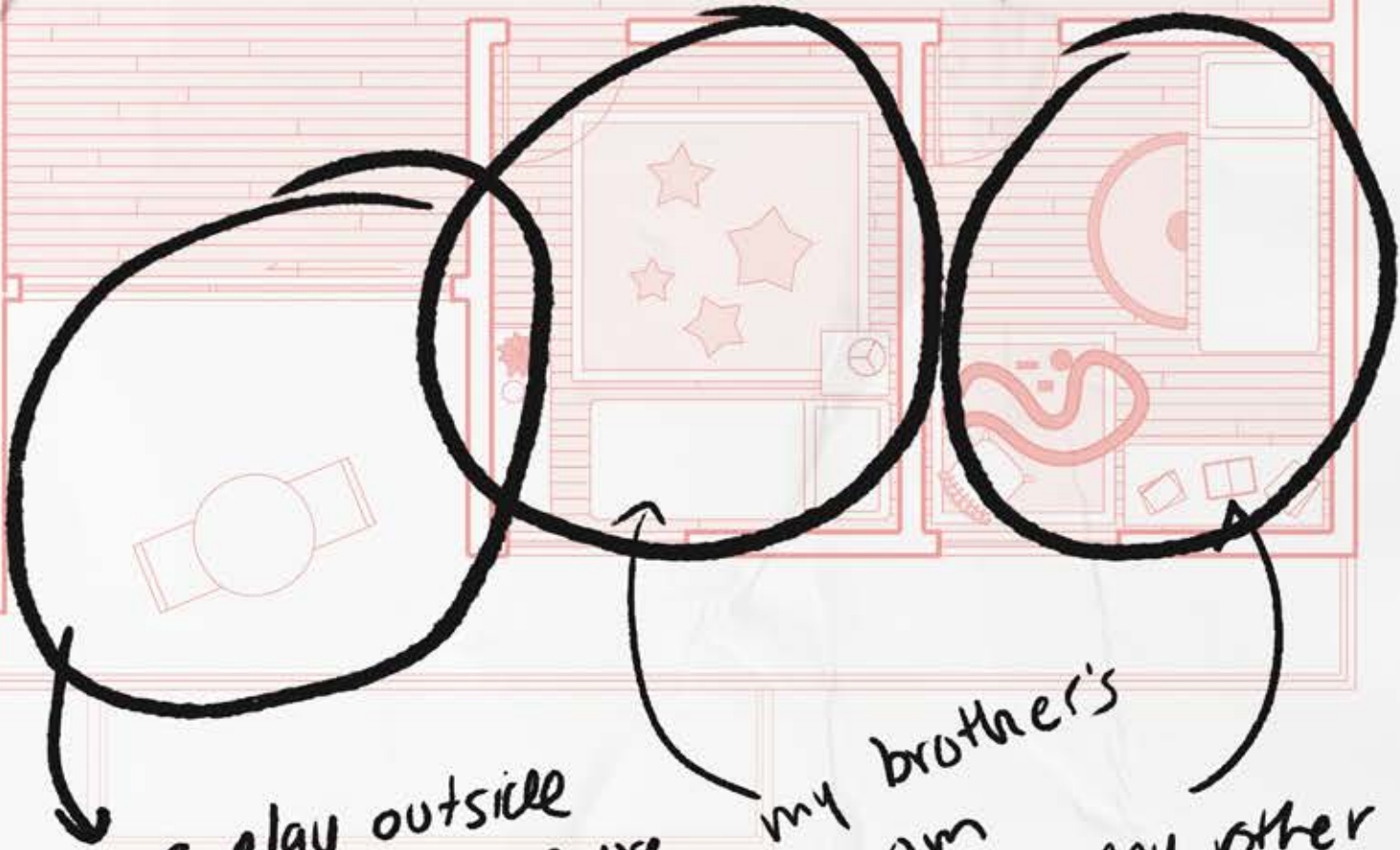
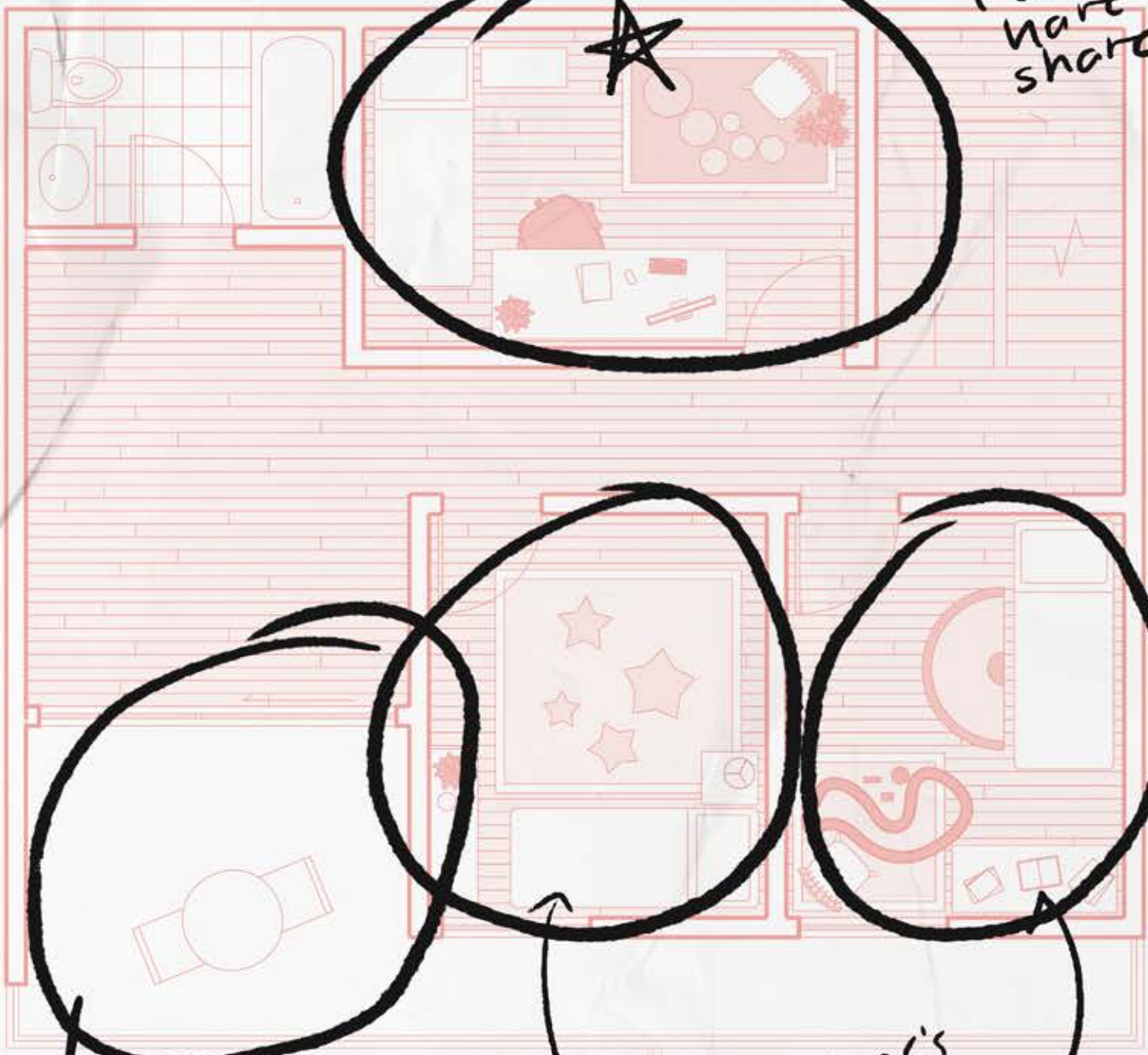
Skylar

Skylar and her family also moved into a four-bedroom apartment. The ample space means that Skylar and her brothers each have their own separate rooms. Mrs. Khan, who used to run a daycare from her apartment now owns a business space in the lower public market space. The space has been transformed into a fully functioning daycare that takes care of many young children who live in the apartment. In addition, Mrs. Khan is able to make use of the upstairs amenities that are catered toward children for special activities. Skylar's mother also continues to use Mrs. Khan's daycare services. Since the completion of the LRT line Skylar's mother's daily commute has been greatly improved. The public market has become a popular spot for the youth in the area, Skylar and her friends can often be spotted in one of the many restaurants in the market space. Skylar's mother is a fan of the rooftop garden and the event space which she occasionally uses to host friends and parties.

Figure 39 : Skylar's New Unit



→ my room!
it has so much
space &
i don't
have to
share!



we play outside
sometime or we use
it when we had
friends over

my brother's
room

my other
brother's
room

20



HARRY

The Trans

The Trans, for the time being, have chosen to move into a two-bedroom apartment which would provide enough room for their growing baby as well as themselves. Once Mrs. Tran's maternity leave finished, she enrolled her daughter into the small resident-owned daycare that runs downstairs. Since the daycare is located within the apartment, she doesn't have to take any transit services to drop her daughter off at a daycare. The LRT provides both Mr. and Mrs. Tran with reliable transportation to their workplaces and makes their commute shorter. After moving to the new apartment, the Trans have rented out one of the resident garden spots to grow crops they used to grow in Vietnam. The Trans have also begun to use the open makers space in the public market space in the summer to sell excess crops they grow. Both Mr. and Mrs. Tran often visit the rooftop green space as it is a safe space for their daughter to play. In addition, Mrs. Tran along with some of the other parents in the apartment complex have decided to use the flex space once a week to host playdates for the young children in the apartment. Mr. Tran on the other hand is a frequent user of the gym.

Figure 40 : The Tran's At Resident Garden Space in The Upper Level

Figure 41: The Tran's New Unit



we do some gardening
here, but the upst
garden is very good

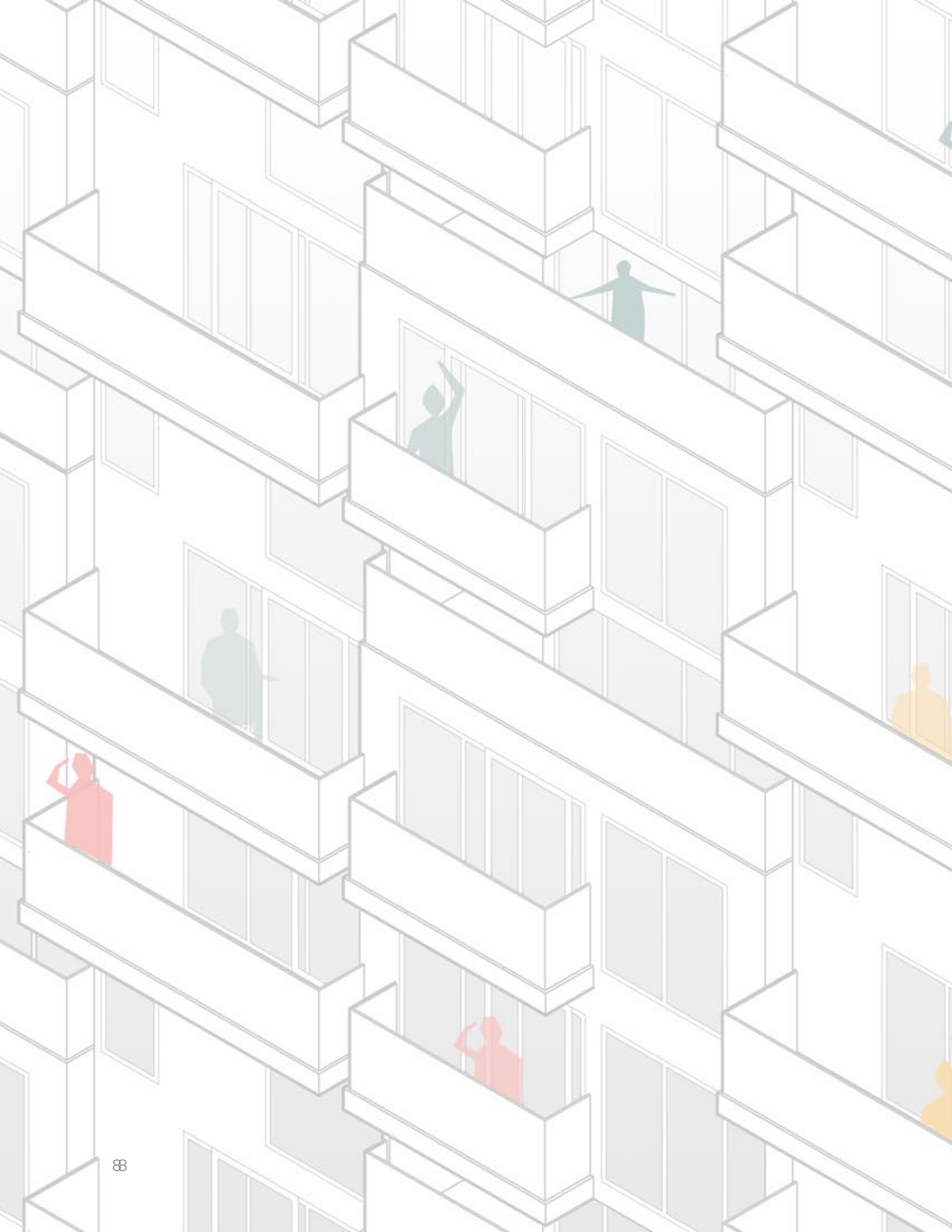
We use this
as an office,
space, but
we could
turn it into
another
bedroom in
the future.



baby's room,
perfect for when
she gets older

Gur
room

g
Mrs
:-



Conclusion

The Finch West LRT line will undeniably bring about changes to the Jane and Finch community. This thesis explored ways that the new LRT line could be used to the advantage of the residents rather than against them. For many of the residents currently living in the neighbourhood the LRT line project is seen as a means to push them out, thus removing the stigma of a “bad neighbourhood.” However, as discussed earlier the citizens have already undertaken efforts to improve their own neighbourhood. Many of these efforts have been successful largely because they came from a place of understanding and deep connection to the people it will potentially help.

Likewise, this thesis also used a similar method to design a space that is sensitive to the people who it is intended for. Using the three characters as a research method to understand the needs and wants of the residents allowed the final design to be directly informed by the residents. Although the characters used in this thesis are not based on real people, they represent the needs of a large portion of the population in Jane and Finch, in particular the ones most vulnerable to changes brought about by the LRT line. However, by delving deeper into each character’s backgrounds and concerns the final design was able to become a building that suited their needs. For example, knowing that residents often run informal businesses would not have been known without understanding Skylar’s life, or how students like Samir often need extra assistance when they move to a new country. As a result of these findings, the design evolved to include business areas for residents, or places for employment and socializing.

Future design interventions should take into account the lifestyles and needs of pre-existing residents before making design decisions. As exhibited by the thesis, even using imaginary characters can assist in the design process as it allows designers to fully integrate themselves into a neighbourhood, essentially becoming part of the neighbourhood.

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