From Crisis to Community:
A Suburban Response to Urban Homelessness

A non-degree-required thesis submitted to the
Master of Architecture Program
Department of Architecture

by

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advised by

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University of Virginia
School of Architecture

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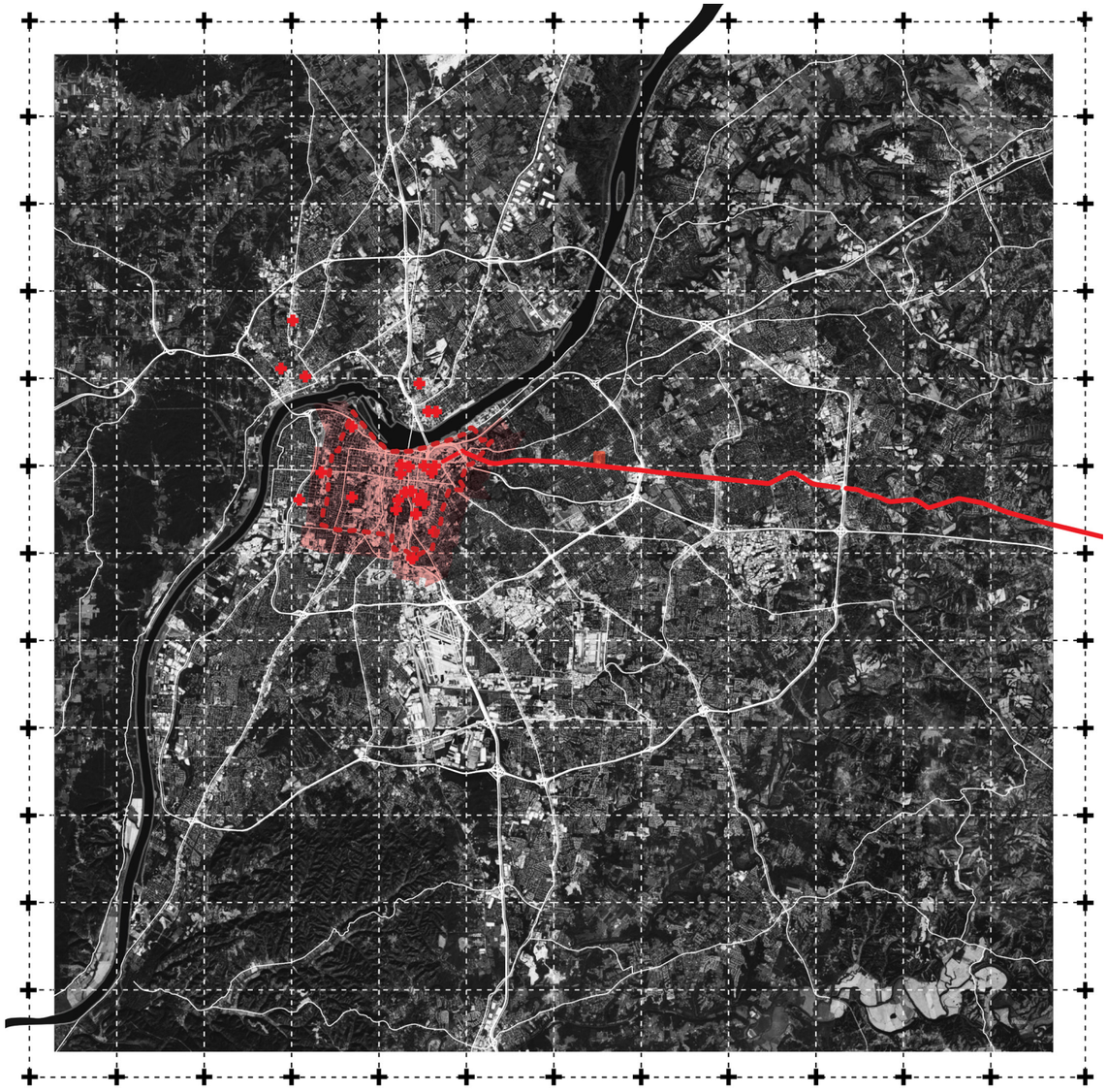
Abstract

"From Crisis to Community: A Suburban Response to Urban Homelessness" presents a new approach to addressing homelessness within the suburban context. The project is inspired by the evolution of cities and urban sprawl beyond the downtown core. This thesis, focused on Louisville, Kentucky, offers a case study applicable to cities across the United States.

Central to this initiative is the belief in housing as a fundamental human right, complemented by equal emphasis on access and opportunity. By analyzing and integrating job data and public transportation maps, the project strategically identifies key geographic points to optimize homeless individuals' access to employment, housing, and essential services.

Through this proposed suburban typology for transitional housing, the project aims to foster community on and off the site. In conclusion, "From Crisis to Community" proposes a holistic solution to transitional housing and homelessness, recognizing the interconnectedness of housing, employment, and community support. By prioritizing inclusivity and leveraging existing resources, this approach strives to empower individuals, promote social cohesion, and build a more compassionate society for all.



01. Louisville, Kentucky Homeless Shelter locations

02. Green Space and Community

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor Clayton Strange, for his invaluable guidance, support, and encouragement throughout this research. His expertise, patience, and insightful feedback have been instrumental in shaping this thesis.

I am also grateful to my thesis professors Leena Cho, Nana Last, and Sasson Rafailo, for their mentorship, expertise, and contributions to my academic journey.

I would like to thank my parents for their unwavering support, love, and belief in me. Their encouragement has been a source of strength throughout this journey.

I am thankful to my friends and colleagues for their support and understanding during the ups and downs of this research. Their camaraderie has made this journey memorable.

Project Limitations

This thesis, "From Crisis to Community: A Suburban Response to Urban Homelessness," proposes innovative solutions for addressing homelessness in the downtown core. However, several limitations are inherent in its design and implementation.

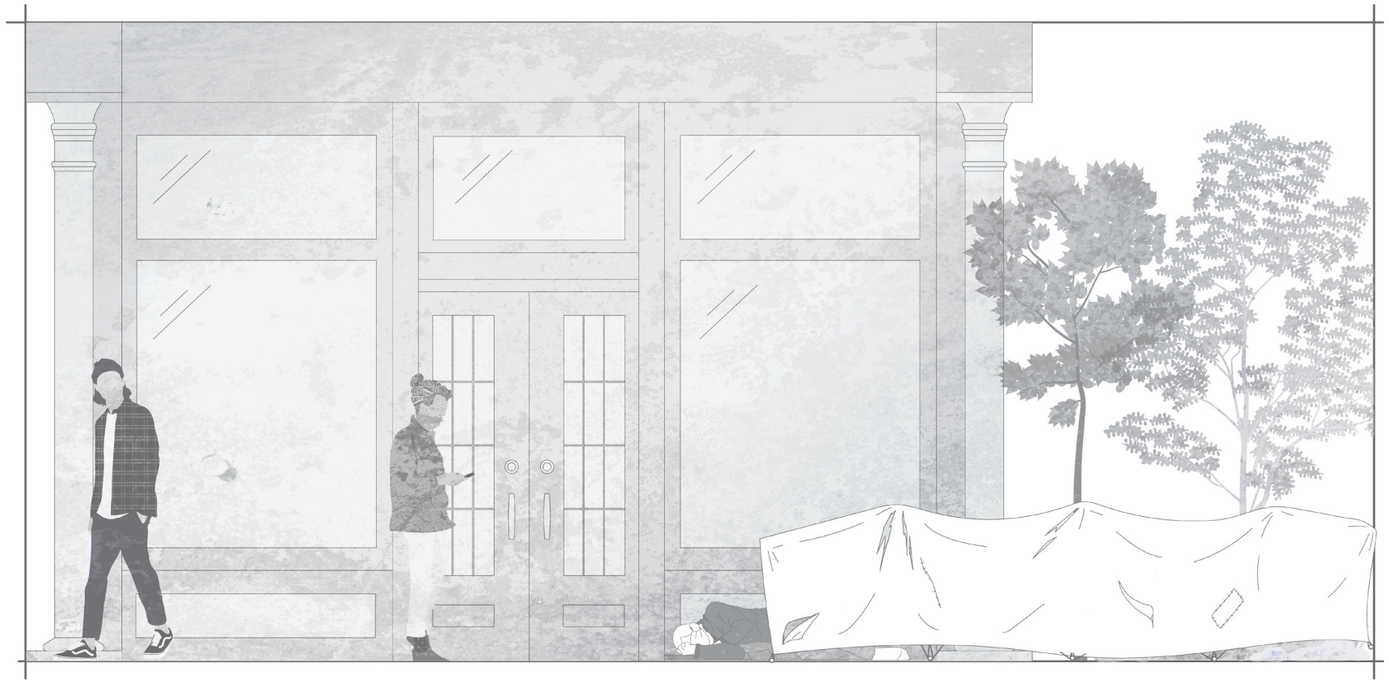
The project's development spanned two semesters, but the actual design and implementation were condensed into a four-month period. This limited time-frame may have impacted the depth of analysis and the level of detail in the proposed solution.

Additionally, the focus on a specific suburban context, Louisville, Kentucky, may limit the generalizability of findings to other suburban neighbourhoods in the United States. Variations in demographics, transportation networks, land-use, and policies may necessitate adaptations of proposed solution.

The reliance on existing datasets and infrastructure for spatial analysis may introduce limitations in data accuracy and comprehensiveness.

While the proposed suburban typology for transitional housing aims to foster community, the actual implementation of community-building initiatives may face challenges beyond the study's scope, such as funding and stakeholder engagement.

"From Crisis to Community" offers holistic solutions to homelessness, its limitations underscore the need for continued research and collaboration to address complex challenges in suburban communities.



03. "Life on the Streets 01"

04. "Life on the Streets 02"

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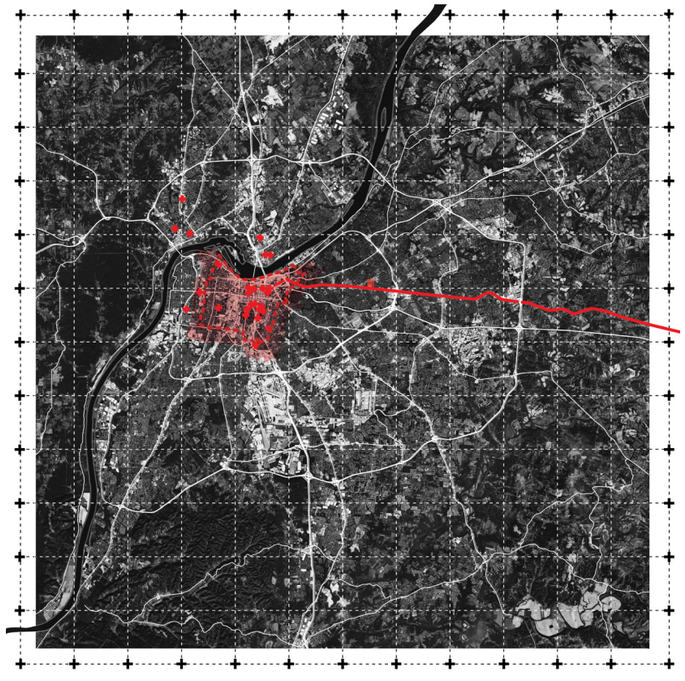
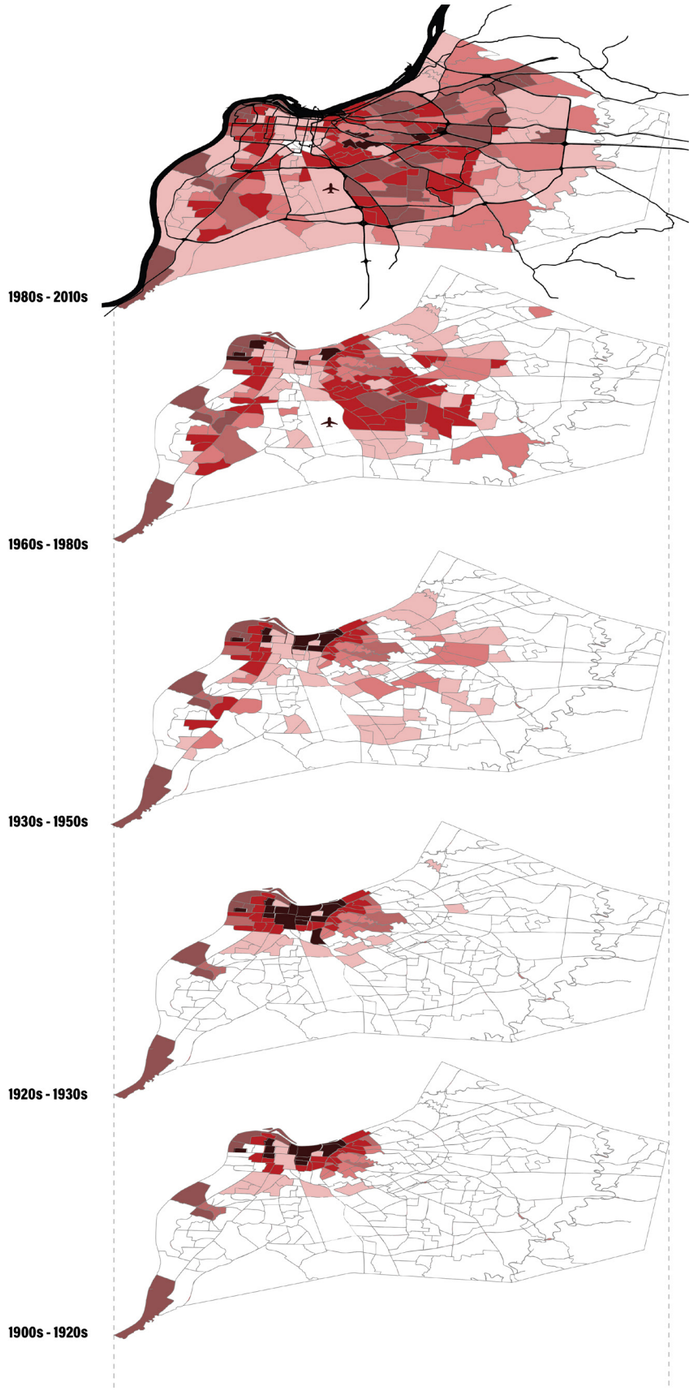
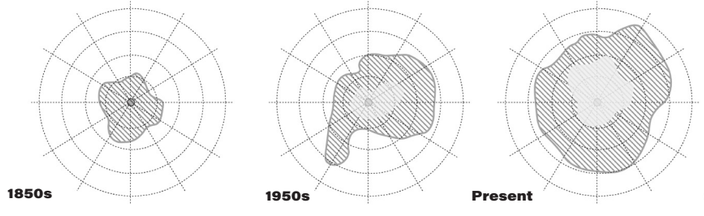
Introduction

Inspired by the evolving landscapes of cities and urban sprawl, this project, centered 4 miles east of downtown Louisville, Kentucky, along a primary artery, offers a blueprint applicable to communities and cities across the United States. By focusing on this specific location, the study aims to provide insights and solutions tailored to the unique challenges and opportunities present in suburban areas. The chosen site's proximity to downtown Louisville serves as an example to address the issues of homelessness in the city core and access to essential services. Thus, while the project's findings may not directly translate to every suburban context, they offer valuable lessons and methodologies that can be adapted to suit different cities and communities needs.



05. Location of Homeless Shelters and Site





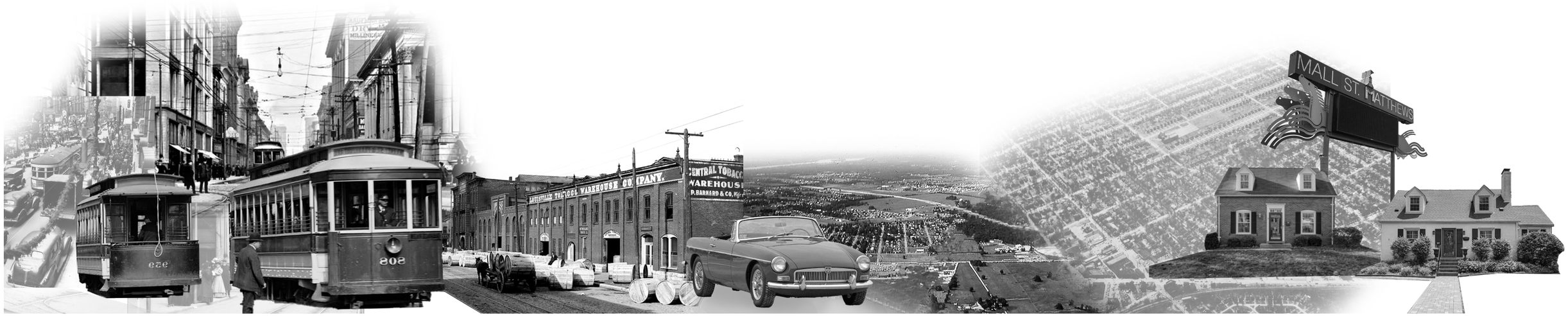
06. Louisville, Kentucky's Urban Sprawl

In the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, cities saw an increase in homeless shelters establishing themselves in downtown, often created within established neighborhoods. However, with the great migration to the suburbs, these downtown areas experienced a significant shift. As businesses and residents relocated, the downtown became more privatized, leaving behind a population that was economically disadvantaged.

This shift led to a spatial and social divide, as the downtown areas, including the shelters, became increasingly disconnected from suburban communities. Consequently, the homeless population started seeking refuge in various corners of the downtown core, which posed new challenges for service providers and policymakers.

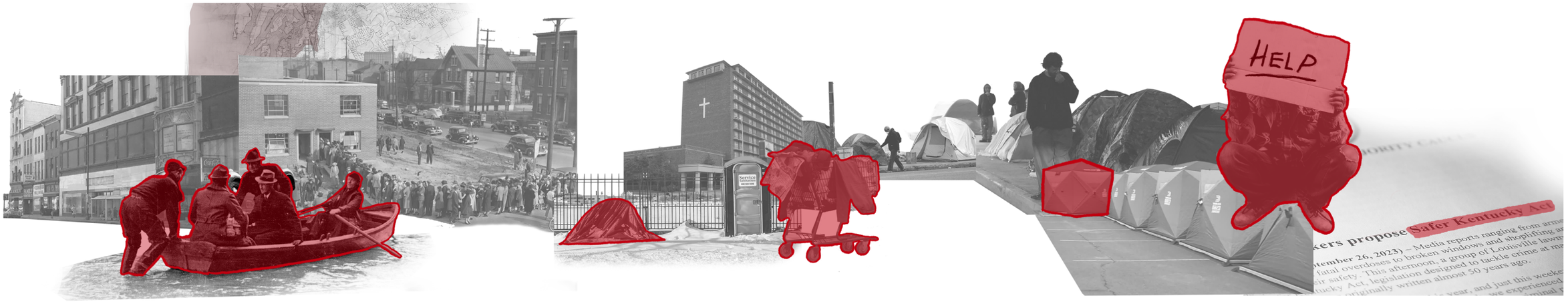
The privatization of downtown impacted the access of social services and entry-level jobs. With businesses and residents moving away, jobs suitable for individuals with little to no training left the downtown core.

06. The Great Migration to the Suburbs



As this transformation unfolded in the city core, it became apparent that higher levels of individuals were experiencing a cyclical pattern of homelessness, where they lost access to jobs, housing, and essential services.

07. The Great Migration to the Suburbs



The Great Flood of 1937

Accelerated the Migration to the Suburbs

Great Depression

Thousands line up for food and basic necessities

Wayside Christian Mission

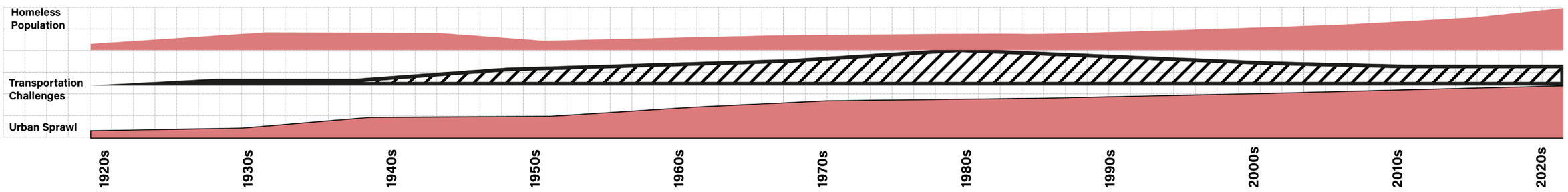
This twelve-story high-rise in downtown Louisville serves as a safe, clean transitional living shelter for women and families while providing rooms for tourists and business travelers.

“Transitional” Tents

48 tents on raised, wooden platforms. Some tents will be designated for couples.

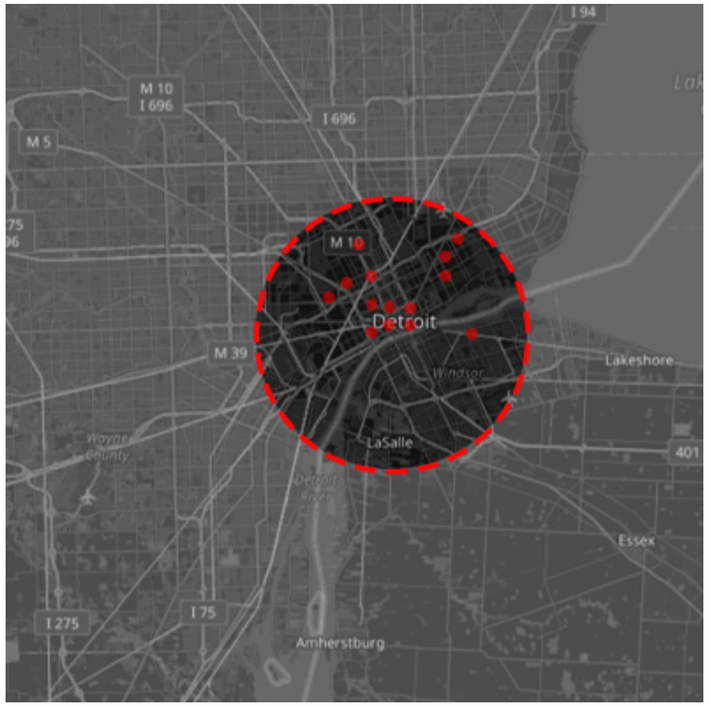
Safer Kentucky Act

Police would have to charge people trying to sleep or camp in specified public and private spaces that are not designated for camping, including on sidewalks or roadsides, under bridges, or in parks, parking lots, garages or doorways.

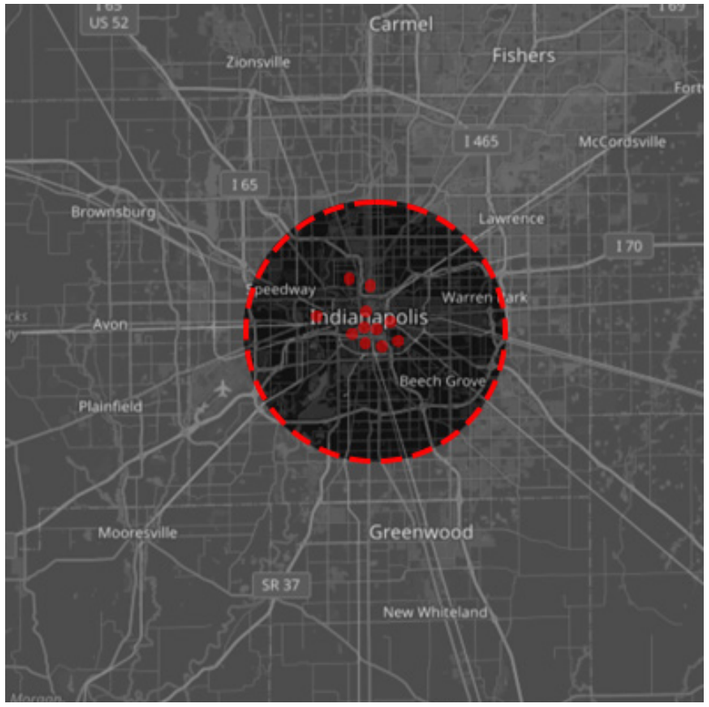


Presently, cities across the United States like Louisville, Kentucky due privatization these shelters have been disconnected from their supporting communities and left in an area without appropriate resources.

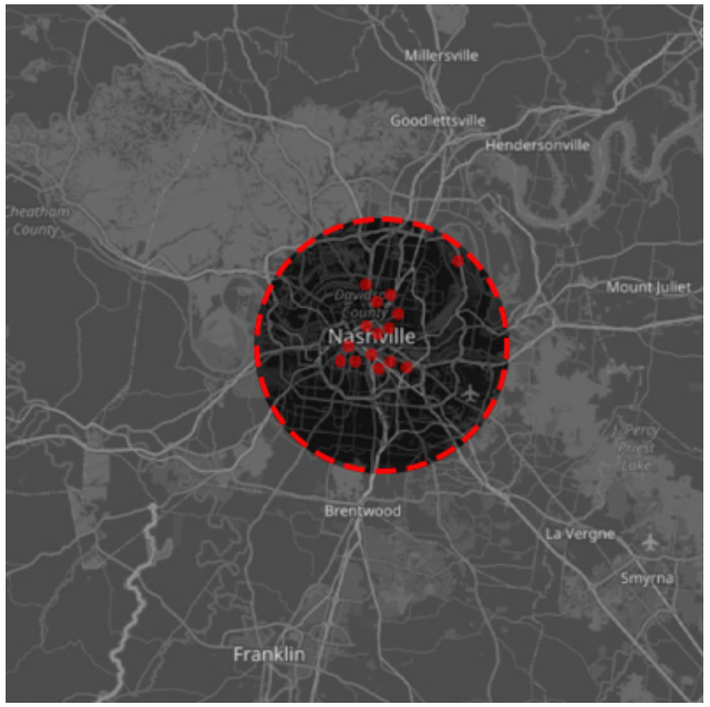
Cities of similar scale and population to Louisville exhibit comparable conditions. This thesis can be adapted to be implemented into these cities.



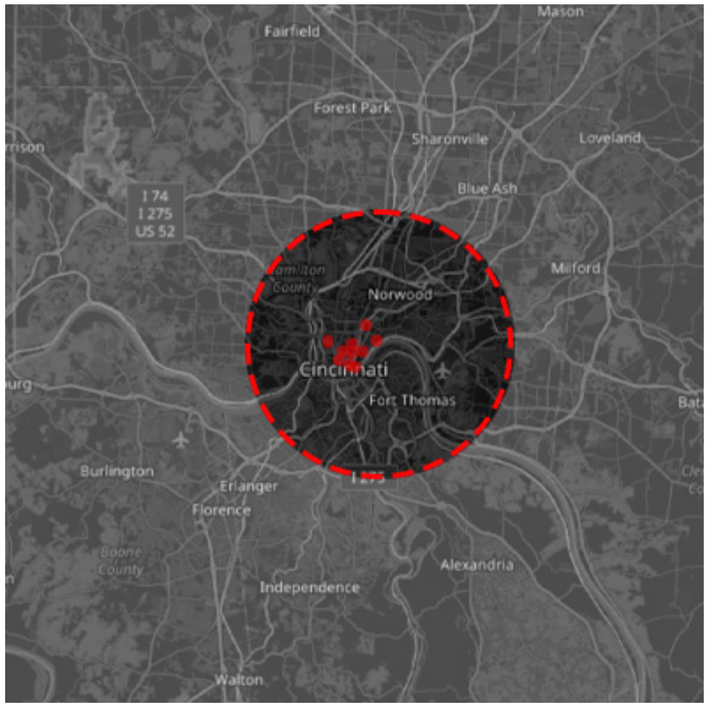
Detroit, Michigan



Indianapolis, Indiana



Nashville, Tennessee



Cincinnati, Ohio

Through meticulous analysis of job data and public transportation maps, I have strategically identified key geographic points to optimize access to employment, housing, and essential services for homeless individuals and families, as well as Area Median Income (AMI) renters and those in need of emergency short-term housing solutions.

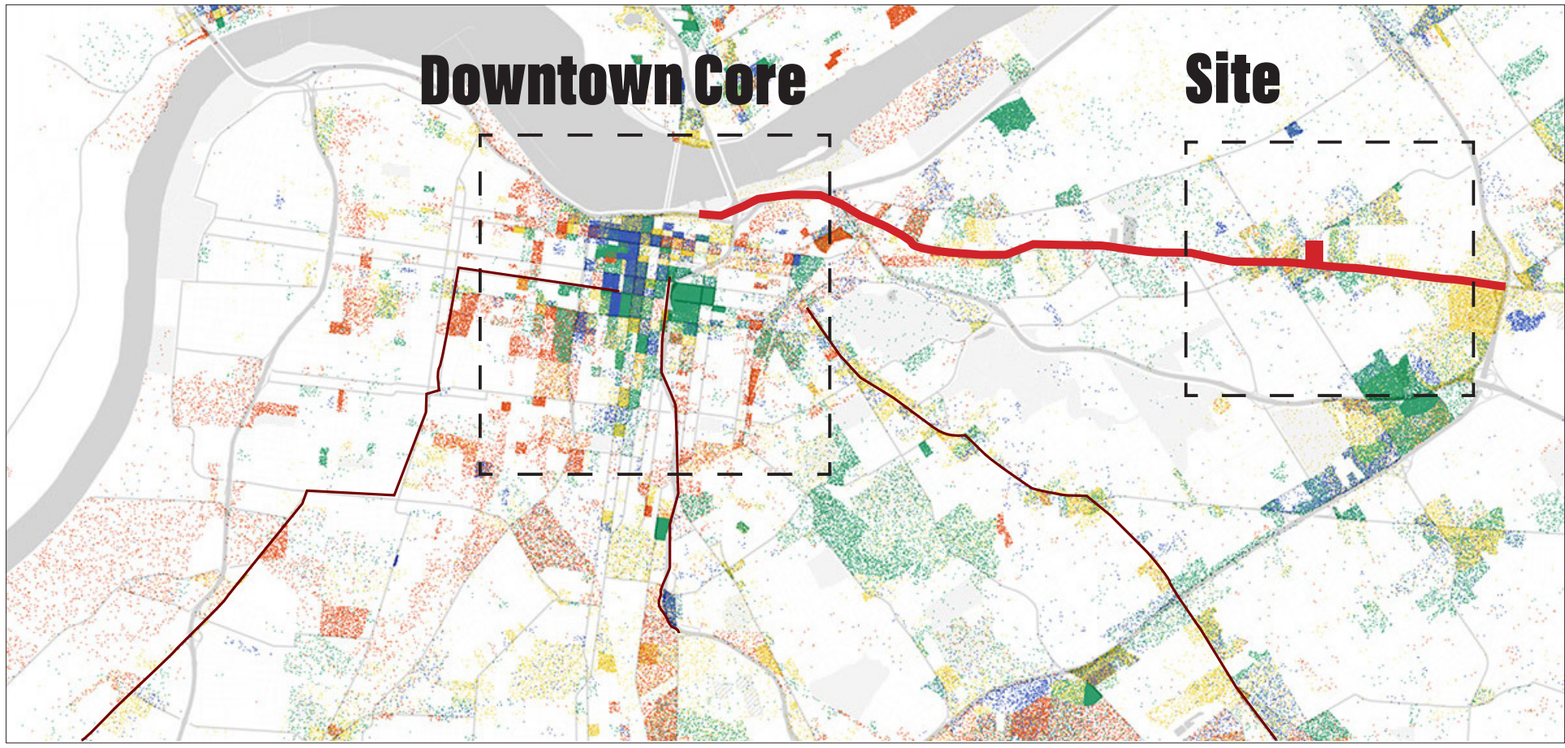
Job Types

- **Manufacturing and Logistics**
- **Professional Services**
- **Healthcare, Education, and Government**
- **Retail, Hospitality, and Other Services**

Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD)

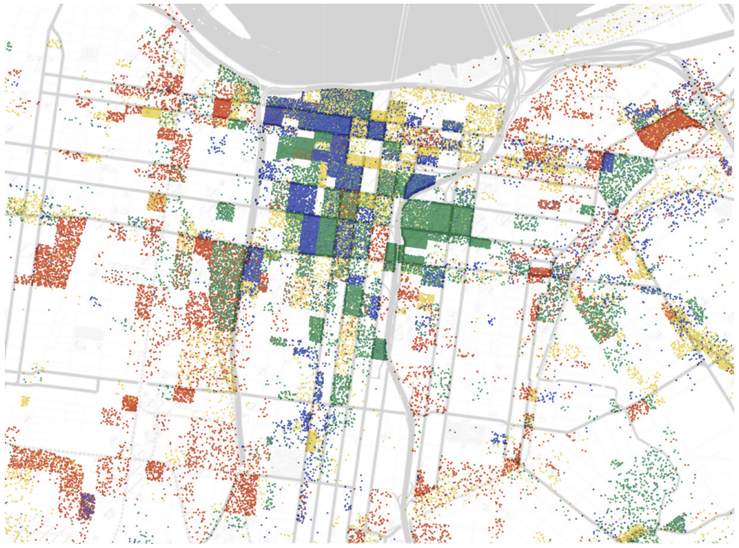
The LEHD program combines administrative data, additional administrative data and data from censuses and surveys. From these data, the program creates statistics on employment, earnings, and job flows at detailed levels of geography and industry and for different demographic groups.

U.S. Census Bureau is a quarterly database of linked employer-employee data covering over 95% of employment in the United States.



08 Louisville Job Data

Retail and hospitality sectors often provide a significant number of entry-level job opportunities. These industries are known for being accessible to individuals with varying levels of experience and education, making them popular choices for people entering the workforce or seeking part-time employment. St. Matthews serves a great location to implement the new typologies because of the variety of jobs, services, and programs.



09. Louisville's Downtown Job Data

Job locations in a downtown cores are typically diverse and can include a wide range of industries and sectors. Downtown areas are often considered central business districts and serve as hubs for economic activity. Mapping out the jobs in the downtown core emphasizes the disconnect for job opportunities for homeless.
This image shows the distribution of jobs in the downtown core, marking that there is limited to no entry-level jobs.

HOMELESS FAMILES

Fitness
Educational Workshops
Arts and Crafts
Community Gardening
Support Groups
Community Meals
Access to Schools
Access to Public Transportation
Access to Community

AMI FAMILIES

Fitness
Educational Workshops
Arts and Crafts
Community Gardening
Support Groups
Community Meals

AMI INDIVIDUALS

Fitness
Educational Workshops
Arts and Crafts
Community Gardening
Support Groups
Community Meals

HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS

Fitness
Educational Workshops
Arts and Crafts
Community Gardening
Support Groups
Community Meals
Access to Schools
Access to Public Transportation
Access to Community
Access to Clinic
Access to Jobs

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Meetings
Fitness Classes
Educational Workshops
Arts and Crafts
Youth Programs
Senior Activities
Cultural Events
Community Gardening
Support Groups
Community Meals

10. User Types

This drawing highlights the different programs that individuals on the site will utilize.

Homelessness does not have a one size fits all approach, but my project aims to meet the diverse needs of homeless individuals and families by providing them with critical infrastructures that creates community and a space for stability and access to financial independence and permanent housing.

11. "Community Connections"

This project is more than just a case study to me. On Because on November 5th, 2018, my family and I found ourselves homeless.

12. Childhood Home

During this time we turned to our community and family for support.

13. "Life of the Street 04"

This project aims to create the support that my family and I were given during a time of need.

14. "Life of the Street 05"

As a case study, I have focused my attention on one site located along Shelbyville Rd located in St. Matthews. Louisville.

15. St. Matthew's Louisville

Understanding the existing program typologies within the surrounding context is crucial for informing the design of a site. These typologies help establish the framework for how the site interacts with its surroundings and how people will engage site and community.

ST. MATTHEW'S URBAN CONDITIONS

01. RESTAURANT CORRIDOR

The Restaurant Corridor is a vibrant culinary hub offering a diverse array of dining experiences. This area offers potential employment for residence of the complex within a short walk.

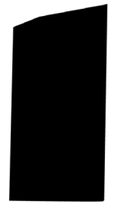
02. EDUCATION CORRIDOR

Trinity High School in Louisville offers the opportunity for children or teens to have education. This school is within a 5 minute walk from the site.

03. SINGLE FAMILY CORRIDOR

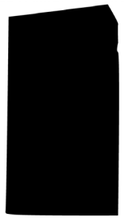
The single-family corridor located directly next to the site allows for community members to get involved and utilize the site. This corridor is within a 3 minute walk from the site.

04. BUSINESS CORRIDOR



Nestled between two single-family neighborhoods, the site's unique location seamlessly integrates commercial elements with residential living. This approach preserves the project's commercial viability while introducing housing options into the mix.

05. BUSINESS STREET FRONT/ SINGLE FAMILY HOUSING



Next to the site is situated along a business street front, flanked by two single-family housing neighborhoods. This juxtaposition allows the area maintain its commercial appeal while hiding the neighborhoods from Shelbyville Rd.

16. St. Matthew's Louisville Local Typologies

My proposal revitalizes an existing 4.5 acre grey field with critical adjacencies to educational and religious centers, commercial cores, and transportation networks.

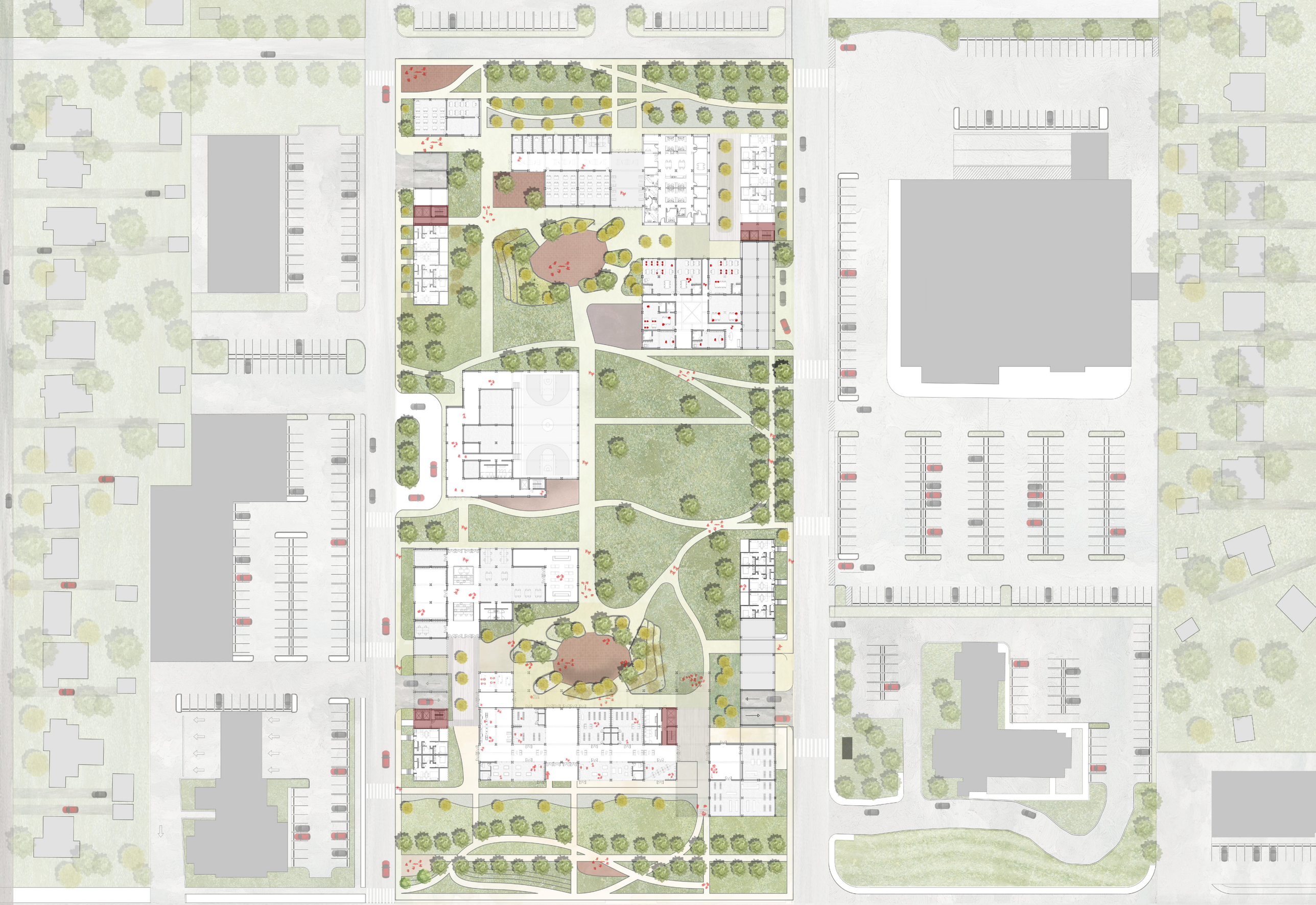
17. Existing Site Conditions

18. Existing Site Conditions

On this site, there's a strategic placement of programs and amenities that support these existing networks for the residents and members of the surrounding community. Offering a space for all people to utilize while challenging the stigmatizing towards homeless individuals.

19. Existing Site Conditions

20. Existing Site Conditions



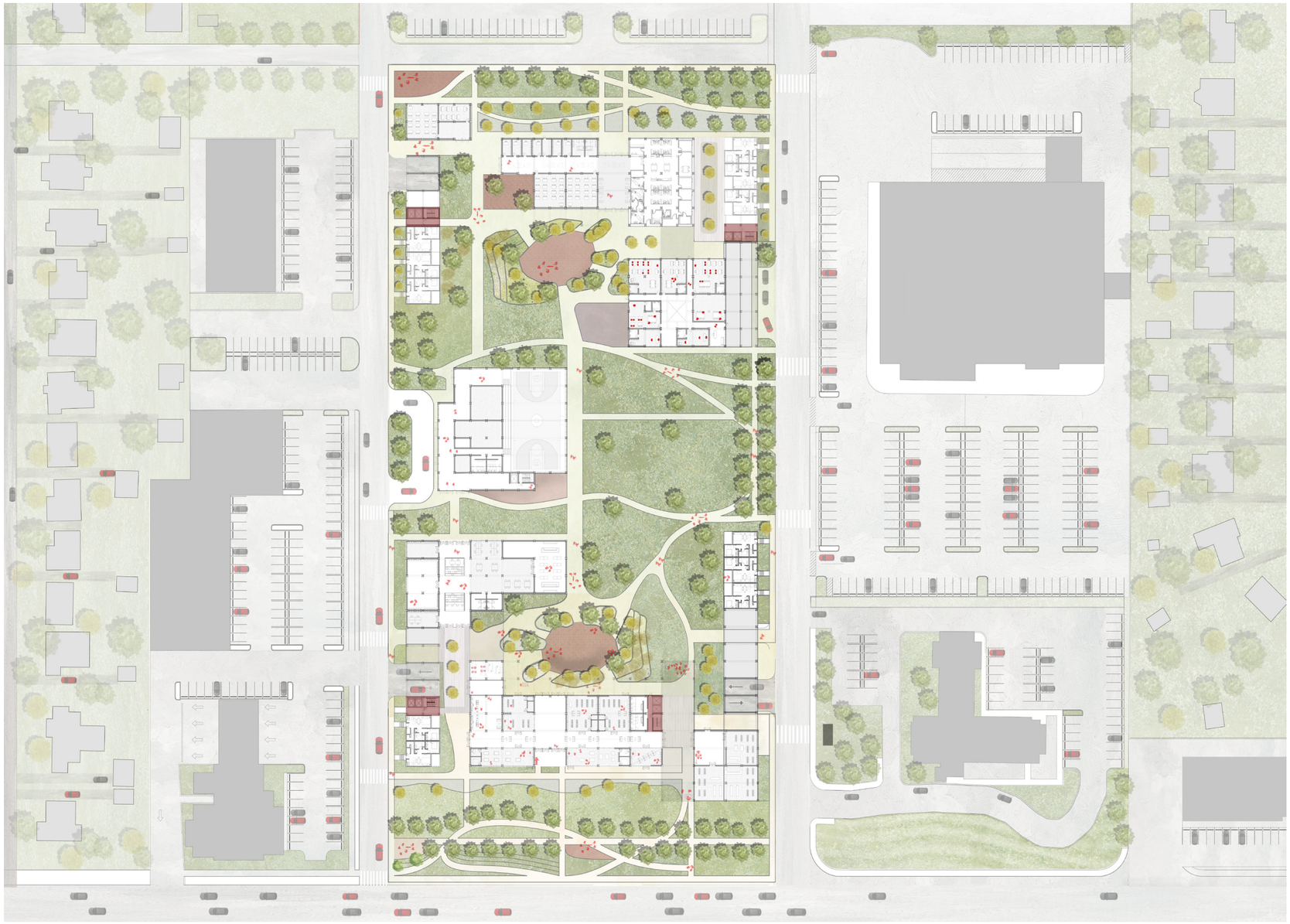
Creating a dynamic space through a thoughtful public/private gradient, my project integrates zones that cater to diverse interactions, from vibrant community engagement in public areas to tranquil private spaces. This approach ensures versatility allowing the site to evolve with changing needs of the people living on the site and members of the community.

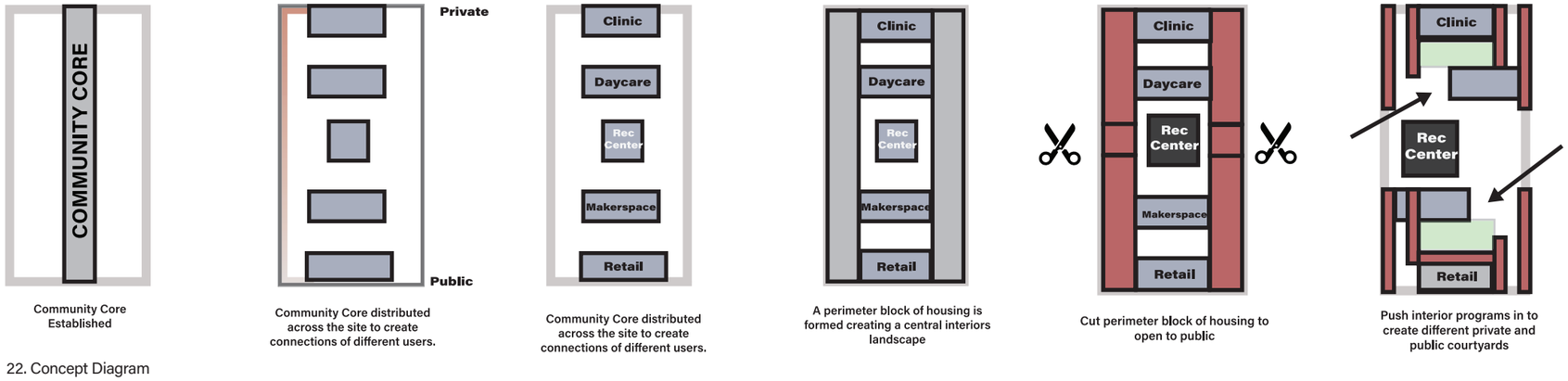
PROGRAMS:

- **Daycare : 8,000 - 10,000 sqft (100 sqft per child)**
- **Clinic + Offices : 8,000 - 10,000 sqft (For number of people on site)**
- **Maker space + Community Kitchen : 10,000 sqft**
- **Community Recreation Center : 20,000 sqft**
- **Retail : 10,000 sqft**

HOUSING/ USER TYPES:

Homeless Families - 50 Units - 1,000 sqft 2 Bedroom **AMI Rental Families - 50 Units - 1,000 sqft 2 Bedroom**	**300- 350 People**
Homeless Ind. - 50 Units -600 sqft 1 Bedroom **AMI Ind. - 50 Units - 700 sqft 1 Bedroom**	**100-150 People**
Emergency 1/2 Bedrooms Families/Individuals **AMI/ Homeless : Studios - 450sqft**	**Up to 25 People**





Community Core Established

Community Core distributed across the site to create connections of different users.

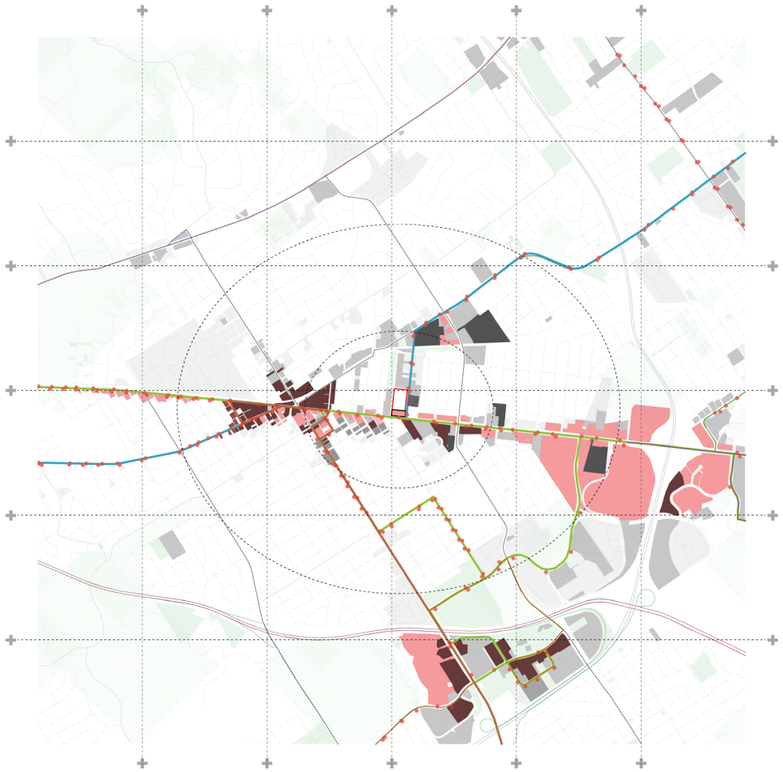
Community Core distributed across the site to create connections of different users.

A perimeter block of housing is formed creating a central interiors landscape

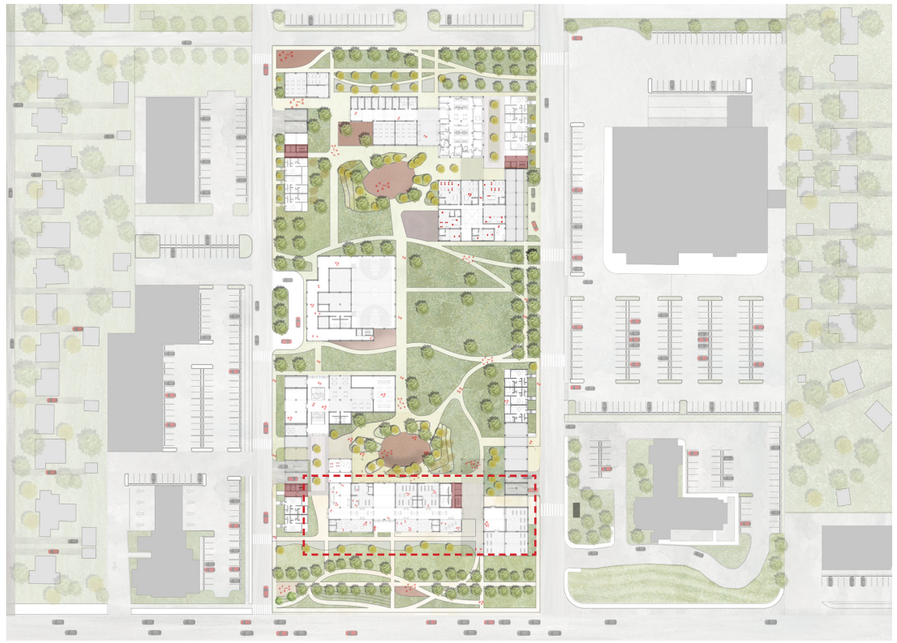
Cut perimeter block of housing to open to public

Push interior programs in to create different private and public courtyards

22. Concept Diagram



23. Job Access Diagram

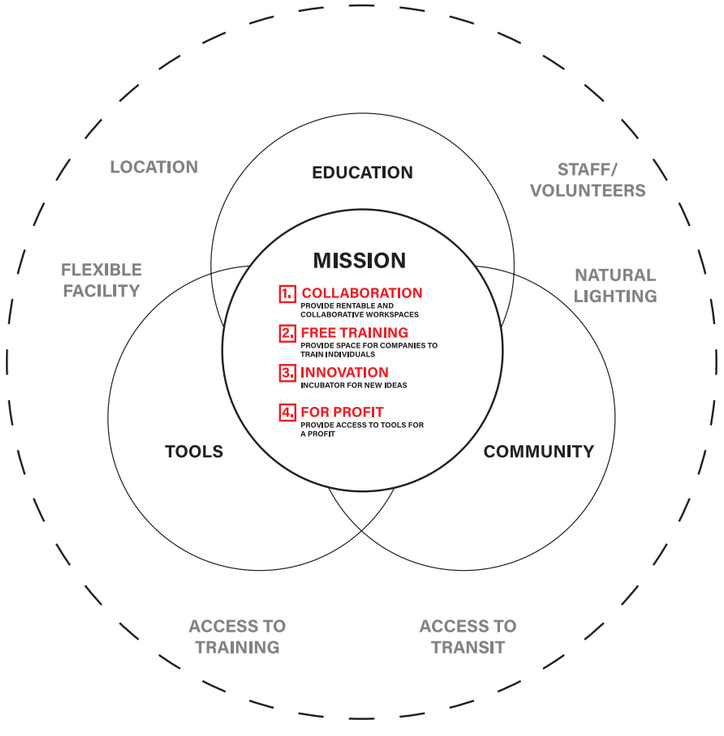


The most public condition is along the Southern section of the site towards the busy street of Shelbyville Rd supports Retail spaces that offer potential employment opportunities.

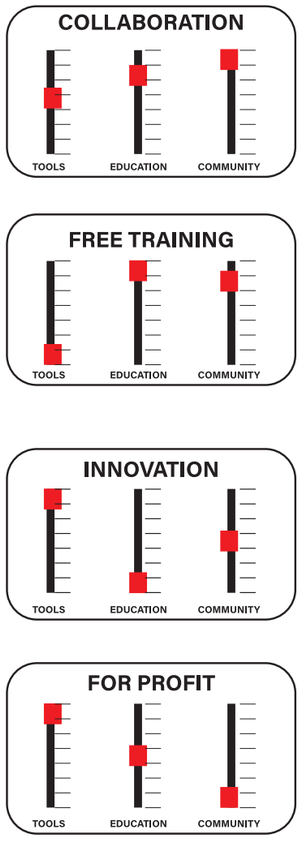
24. Retail Section Drawing

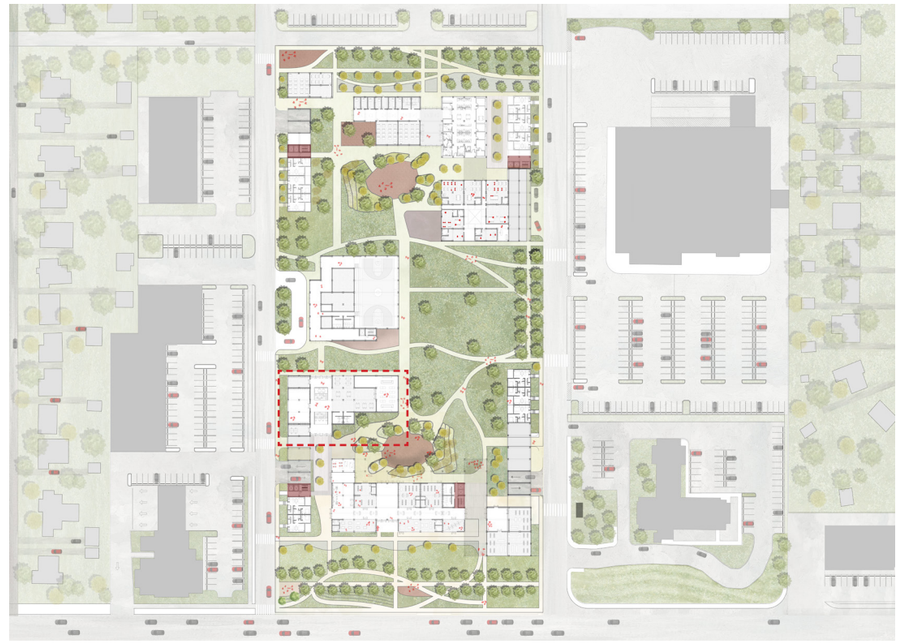
As we move toward the center of the site there is the Community Makerspace and Community Kitchen. This space offers flexible workspaces and training programs that equip residents with the skills they need to secure meaningful employment and achieve Finacial independence.

Some of the skills like teaching formally homeless individuals how to become a sue chef or we can partner with local trade organizations to teach people hands on skill. Additionally, this space works as a community hub for residents in the surrounding neighborhood to utilize. Fostering a sense of community both on and off-site.



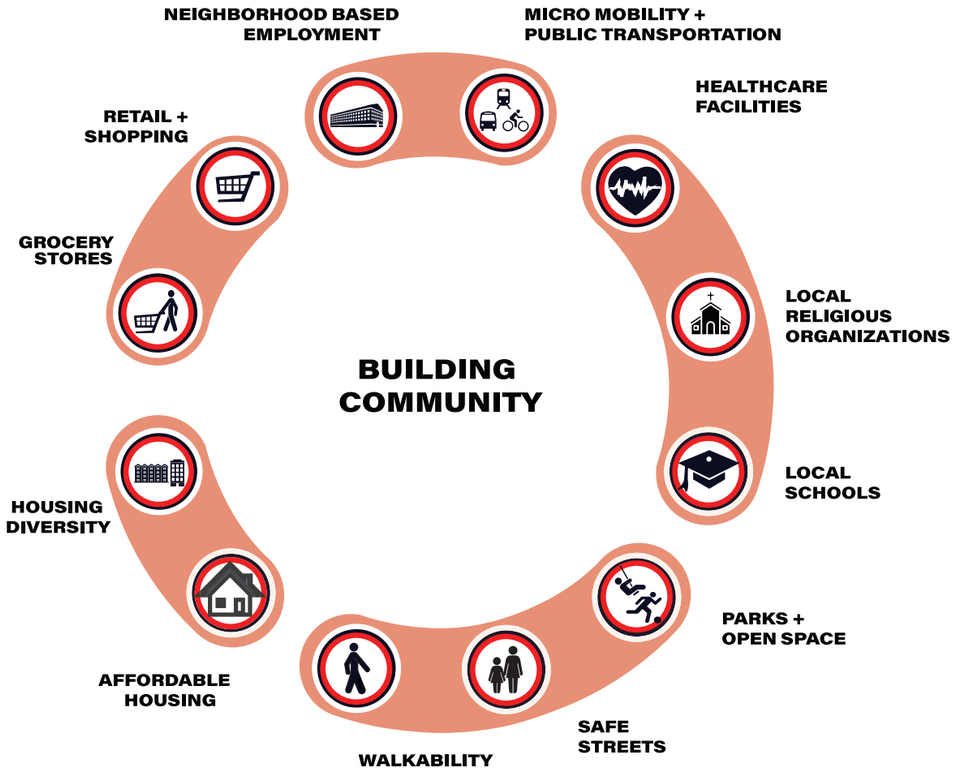
25. Community Makerspace Concept



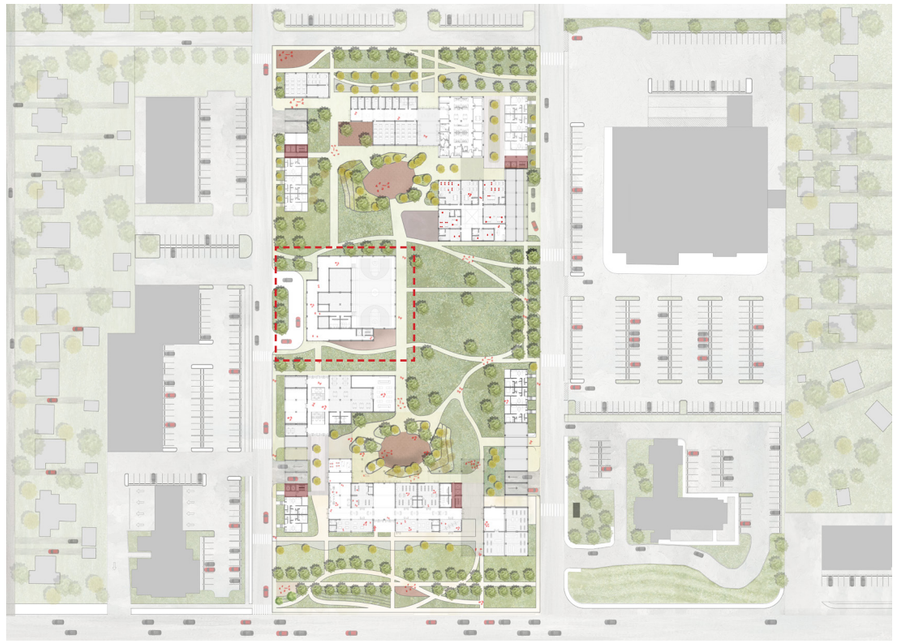


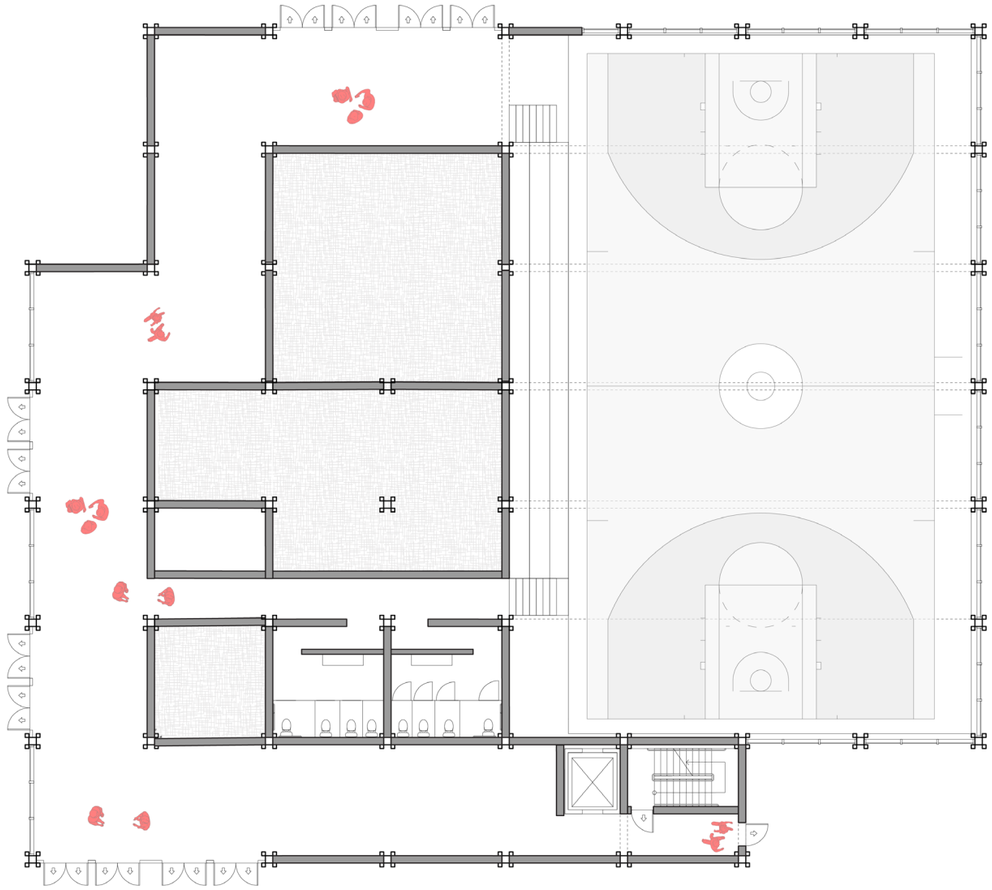
26. "Job Secured"

The community recreation center at the site's center welcomes all members and provides a space for social interaction. The space has a full gymnasium and flexible spaces to workout, gather, and spectate games.

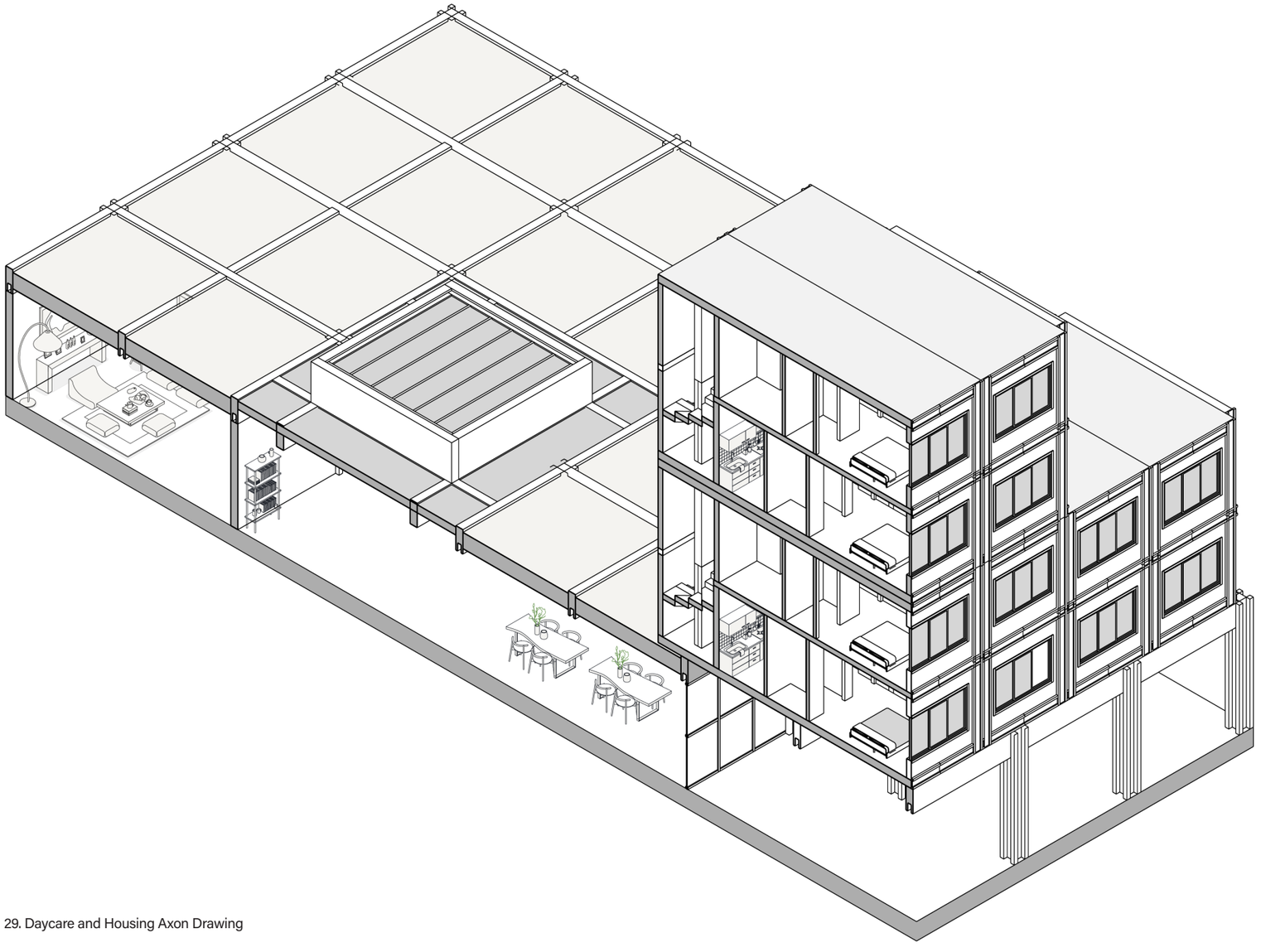


27. Building Community Diagram

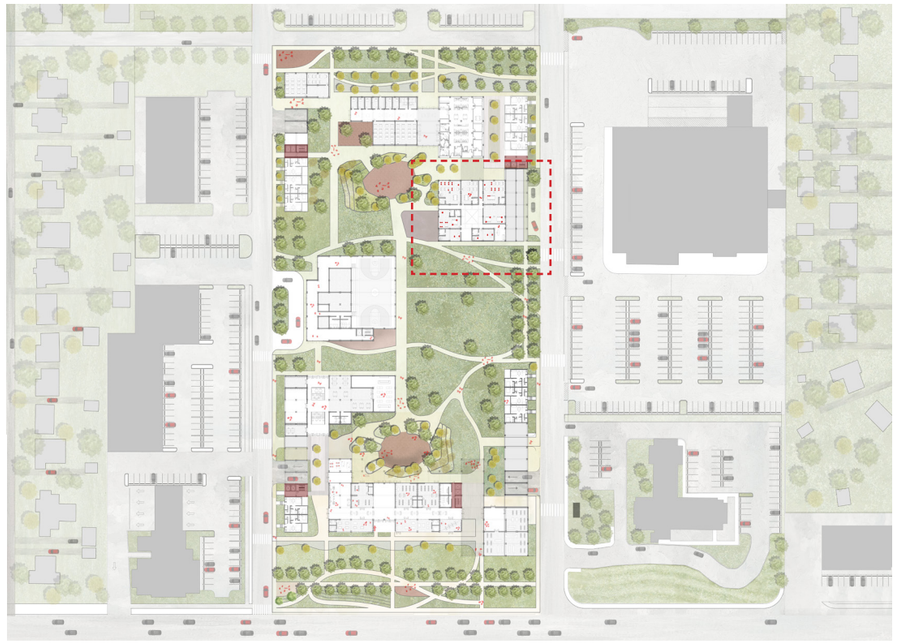




28. Community Recreation Center Plan



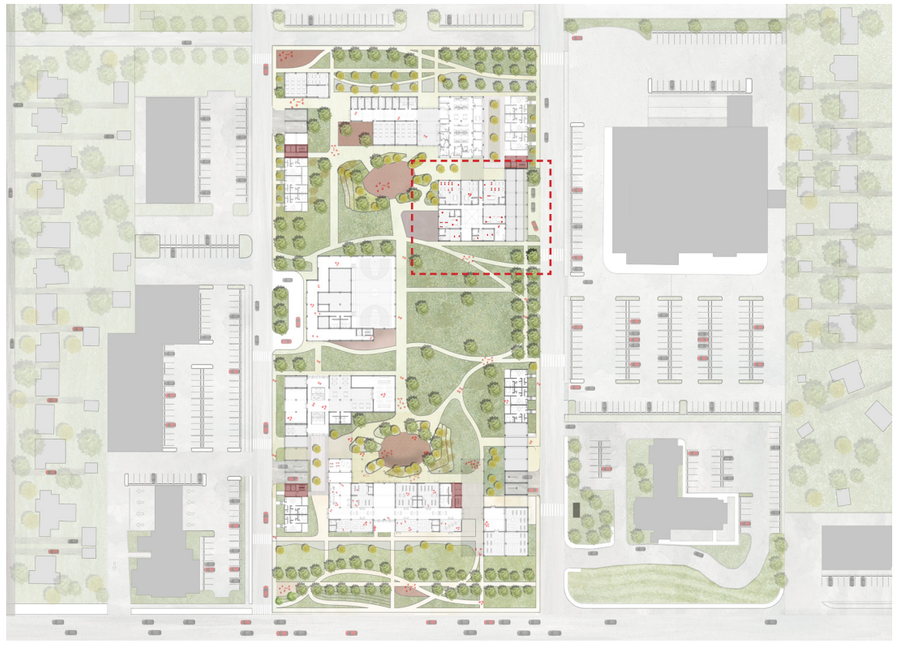
29. Daycare and Housing Axon Drawing



Moving towards the north section of the site, the program types shift towards more private and residential use.

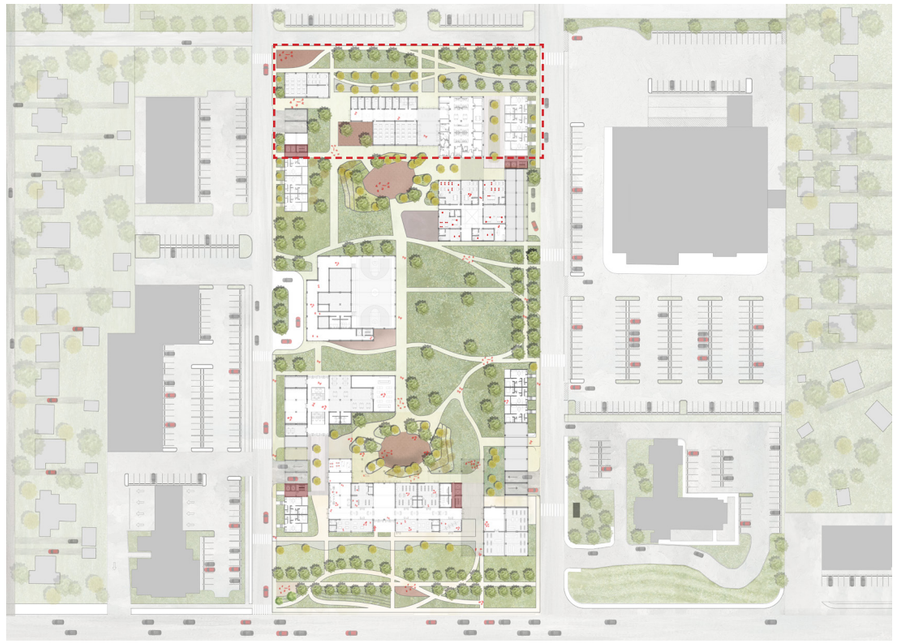
A full-time daycare is designed to meet residents' essential needs, offering a safe and nurturing environment for children, accommodating a diversity of work schedules.

30. Daycare Interior Rendering



31. Schools and Hospitals Network

Tapping into a robust healthcare network supported by the University of Louisville to establish a Satellite Clinic on-site. This flexible facility, equipped with classrooms and offices, offers a range of health services, including mental health resources, primary care physicians, and dental care. This provides educational opportunities for aspiring healthcare professionals, while supporting the community.

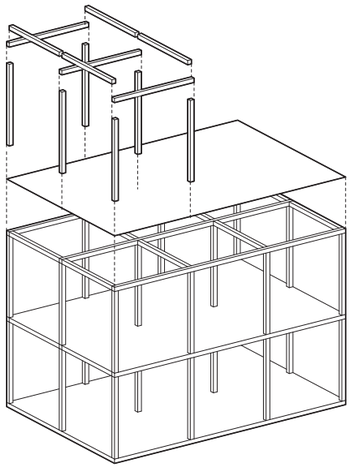


32. University of Louisville Medical Campus

Housing

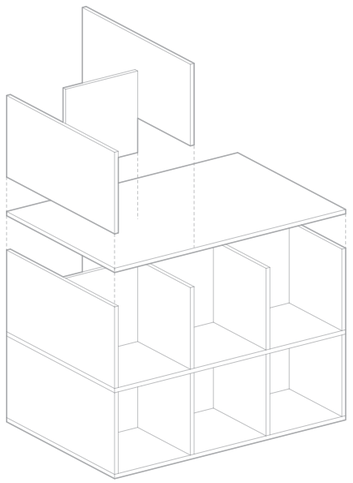
Transitional housing forms the cornerstone of the approach, providing a haven and a pathway to stability for individuals and families from diverse backgrounds. With flexible lease options ranging from one month to two years, this project aims to accommodate varying needs and circumstances.

33. "Moving and Opportunity"



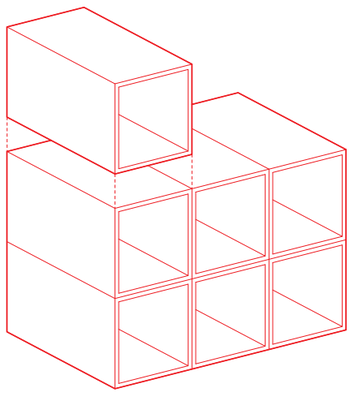
Skeletal Frame Structure

Span Capacity
Off-Site Construction
Plan Flexibility



Flat Panel Structure

Span Capacity
Off-Site Construction
Plan Flexibility

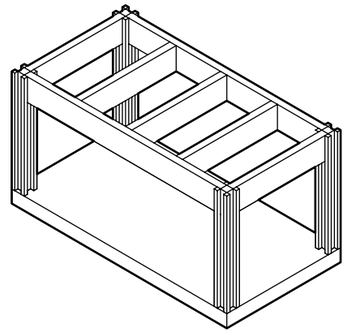


Volumetric Structure

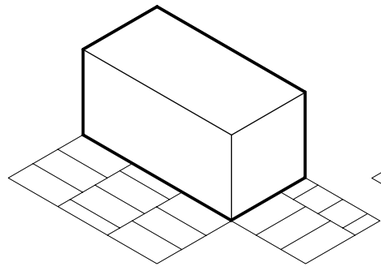
Span Capacity
Off-Site Construction
Plan Flexibility

34. Modular Types

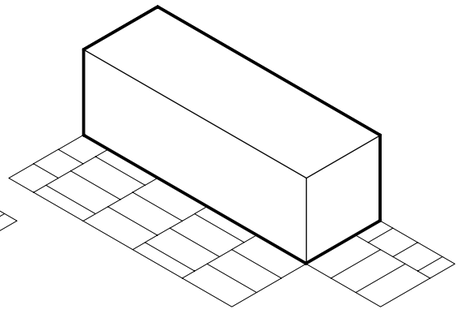
Integrating a modular system into the design enhances flexibility and reduces costs. By manufacturing units in Louisville, we not only support the local economy but also ensure adaptability over time. This modular approach allows for seamless adjustments to the project, accommodating evolving needs in the future as the site and connections develop.

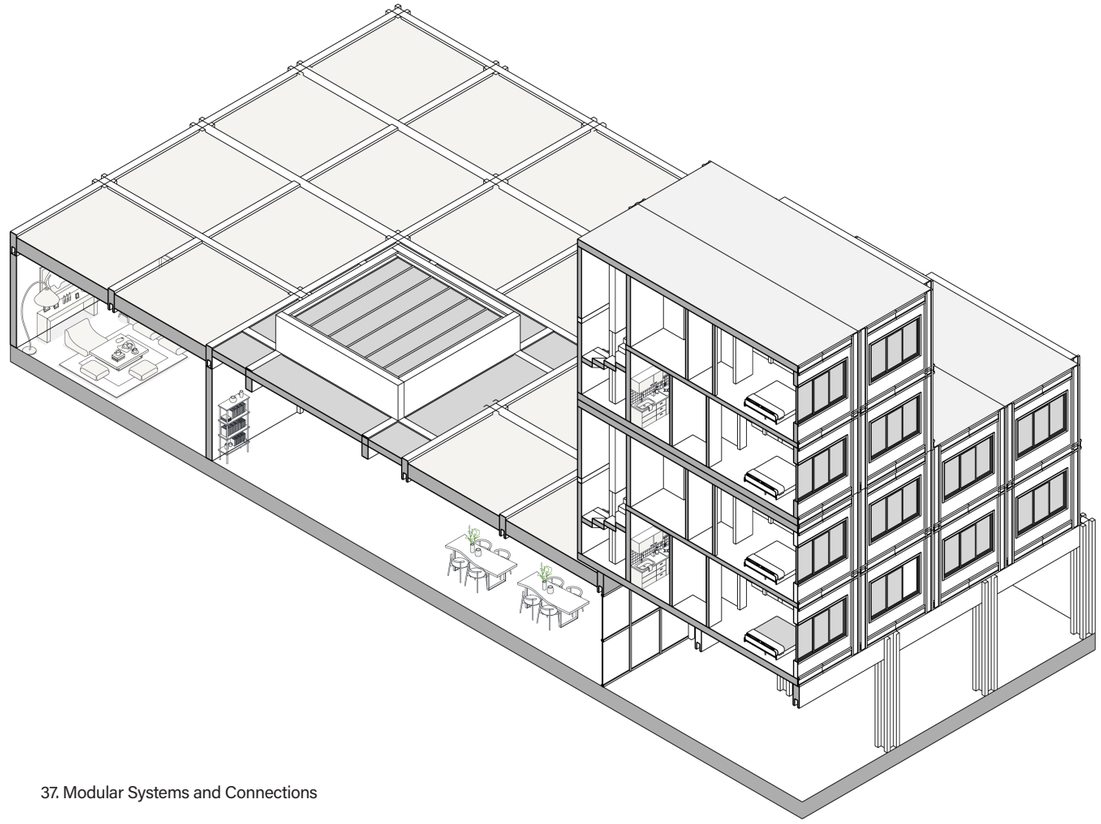


35. Modular Base System



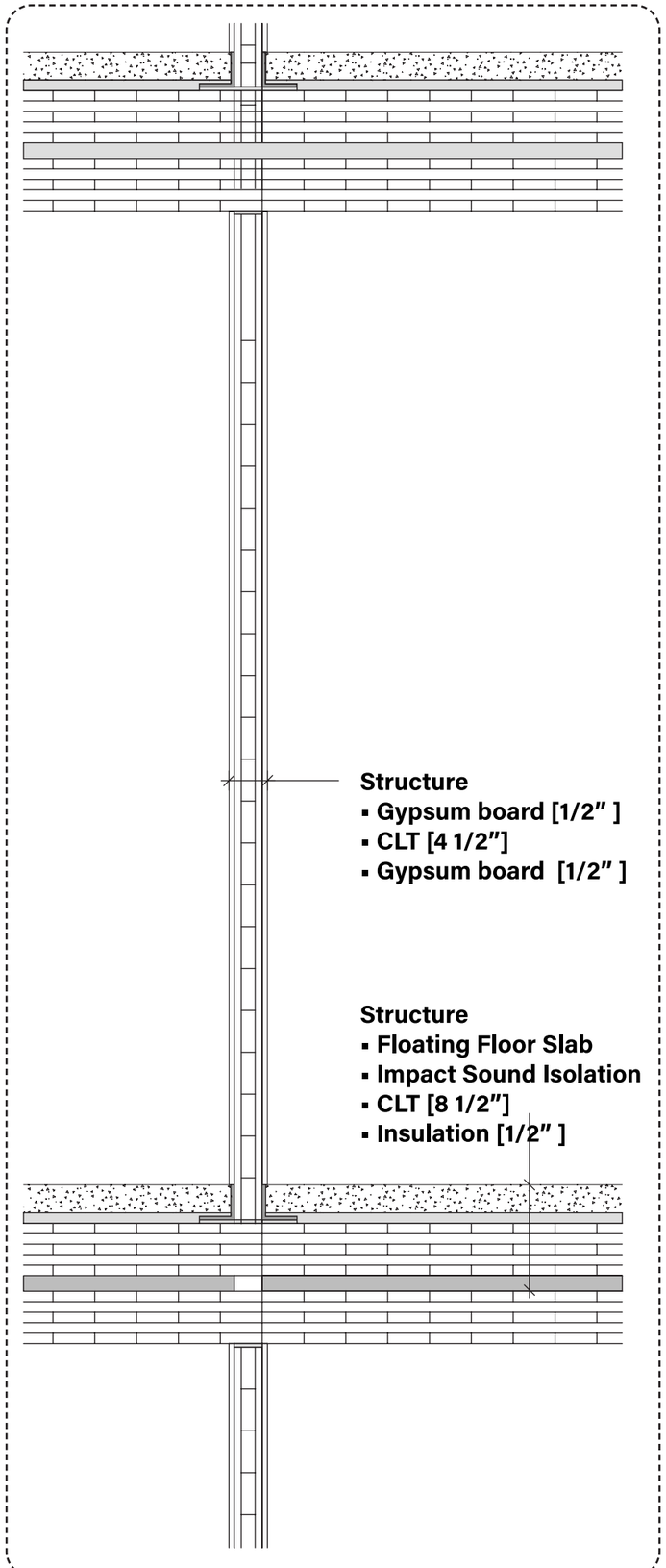
36. Modular Housing System



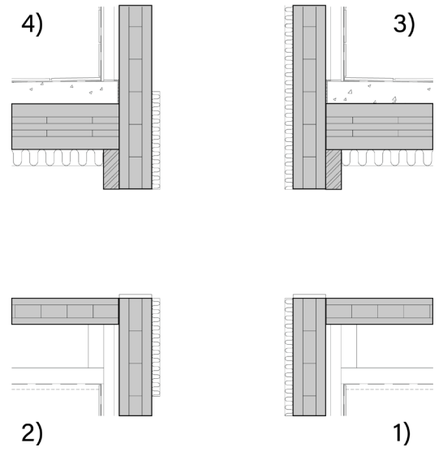


37. Modular Systems and Connections

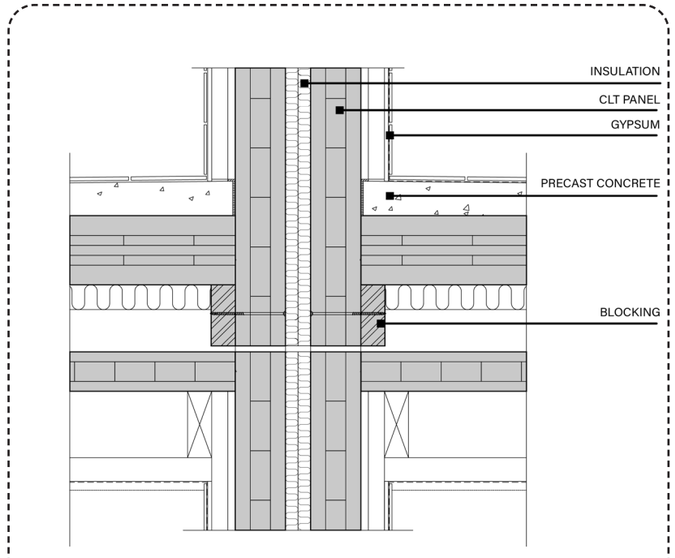
Details



38. Section Details @ Interior Wall Condition



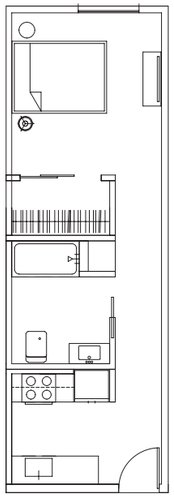
39. Section Details of Unit Components



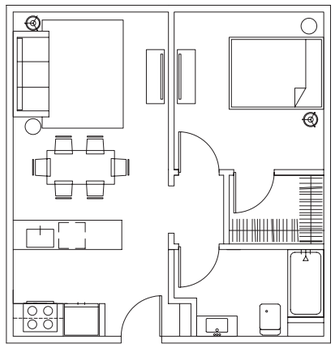
40. Section Detail at Unit Connections

41. Building Section

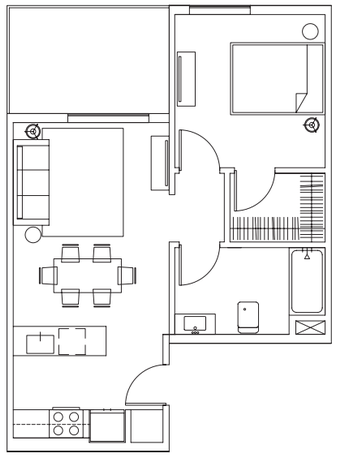
STUDIO



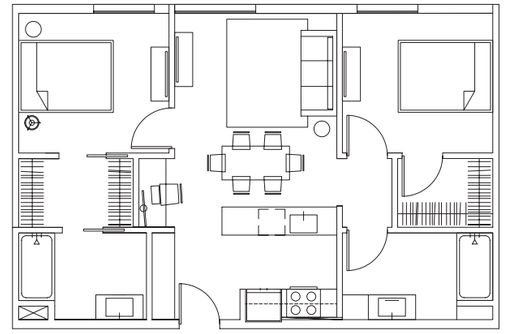
1 BEDROOM TYPE 01



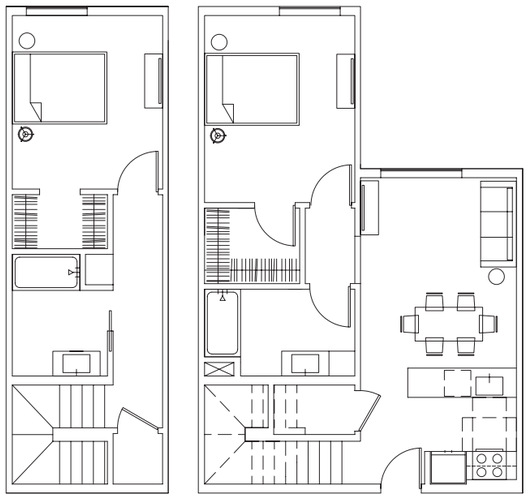
1 BEDROOM TYPE 02



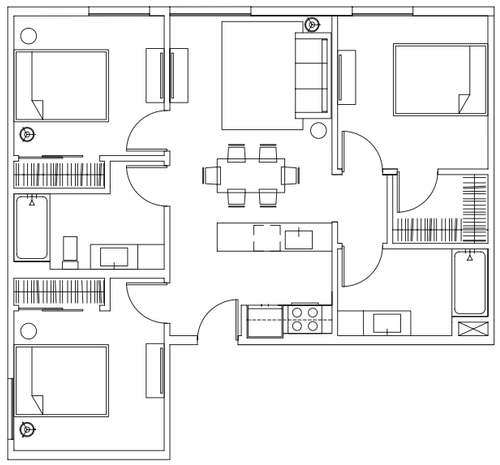
2 BEDROOM TYPE 01



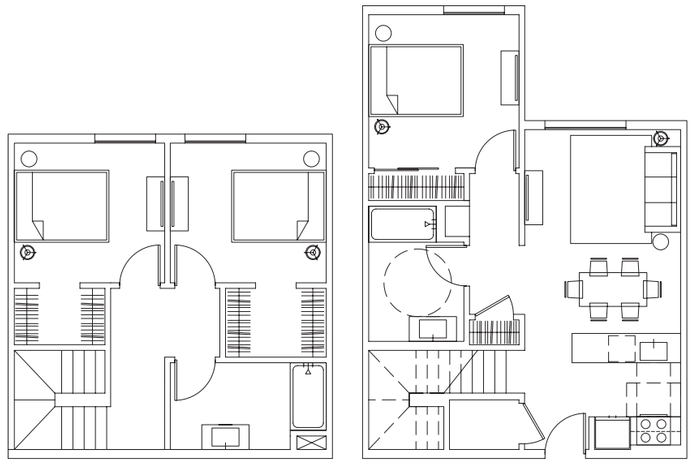
2 BEDROOM TYPE 02

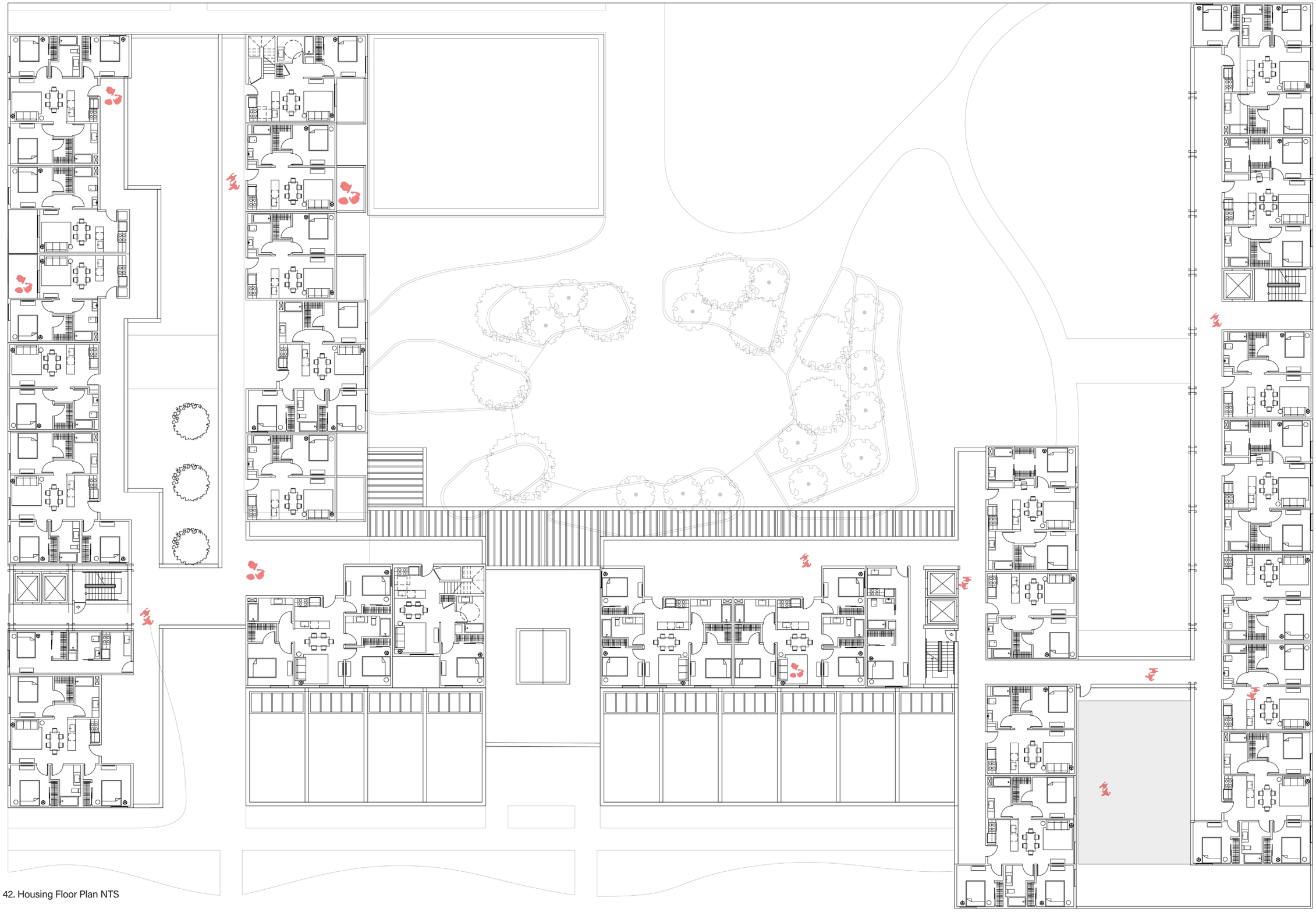


2 BEDROOM TYPE 01



2 BEDROOM TYPE 02





42. Housing Floor Plan NTS

SITE

BUS ROUTE TRANSPIRATION TIME

10 MINUTES

10 MINUTES

WALKING TIME

20 MINUTES

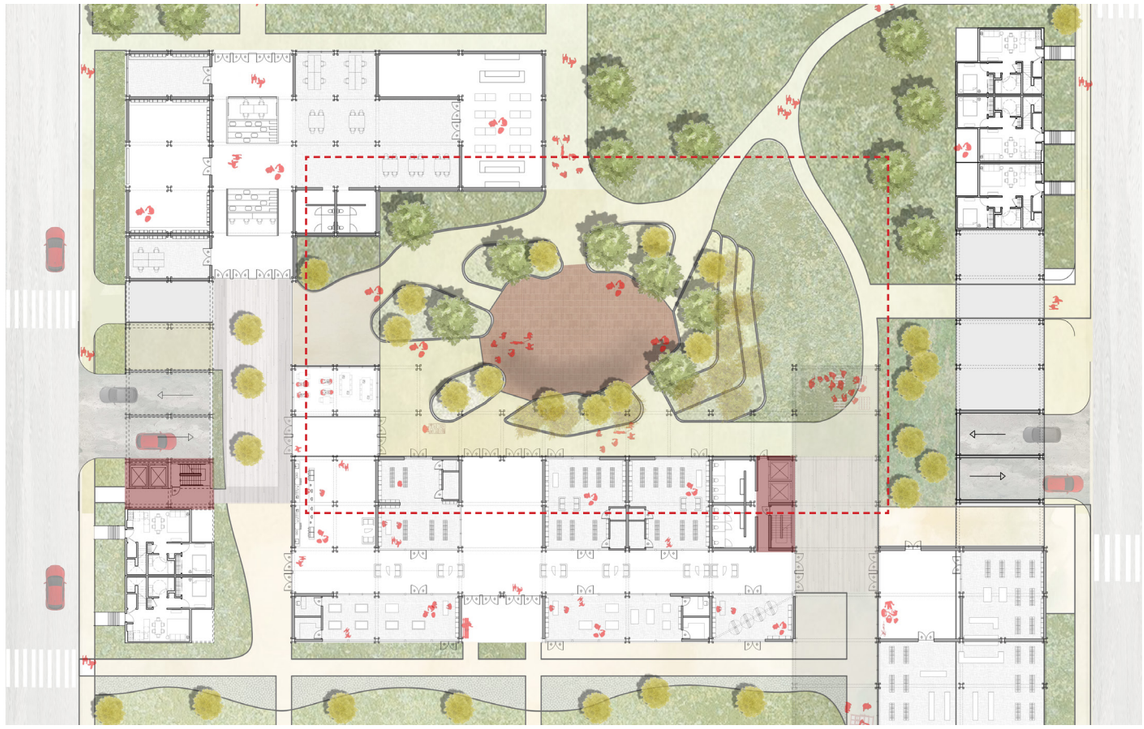
20 MINUTES

PARKS AND GREEN SPACES

BROWN PARK
SENECA PARK
ST. MATTHEWS COMMUNITY PARK
RESERVOIR PARK
WARWICK PARK
EMERSON PARK
BROWN PARK DOG RUN

Incorporating the site into a broader network of parks extends its impact beyond its immediate boundaries, creating accessibility and connectivity for the surround neighborhoods. By redesigning the site with landscape in mind ,the project ensures that residents are within walking distance of open green spaces, promoting physical activity and well-being.

43. Green Space Network Connections

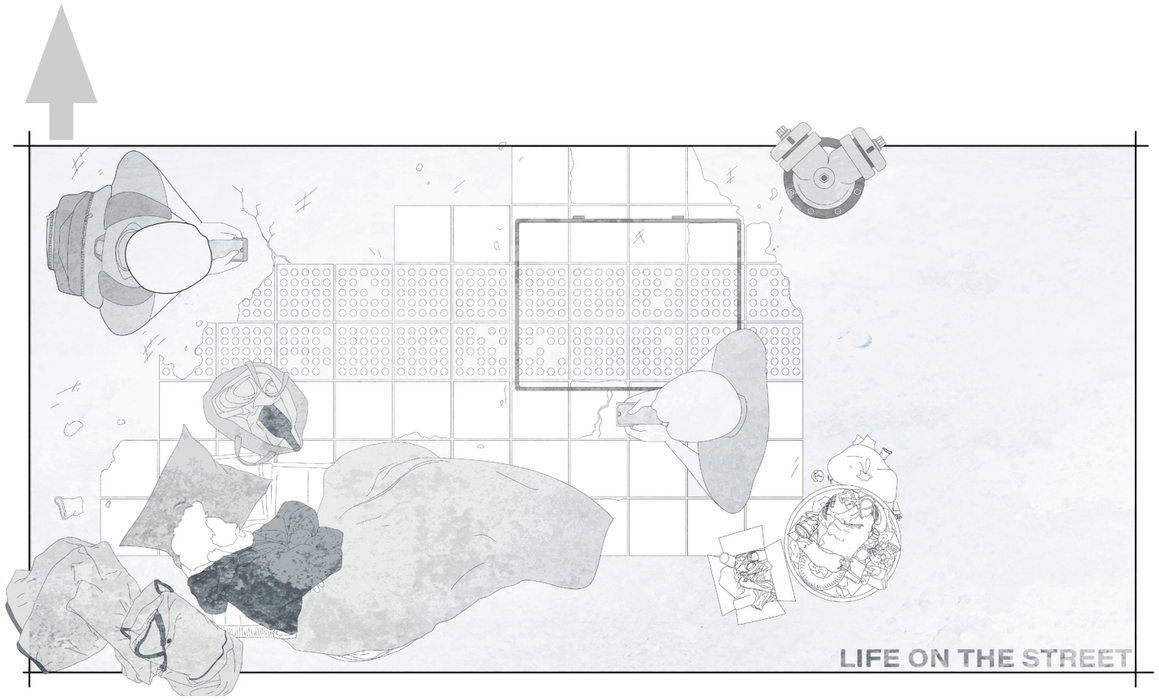


44. Visitor Quad Floor Plan

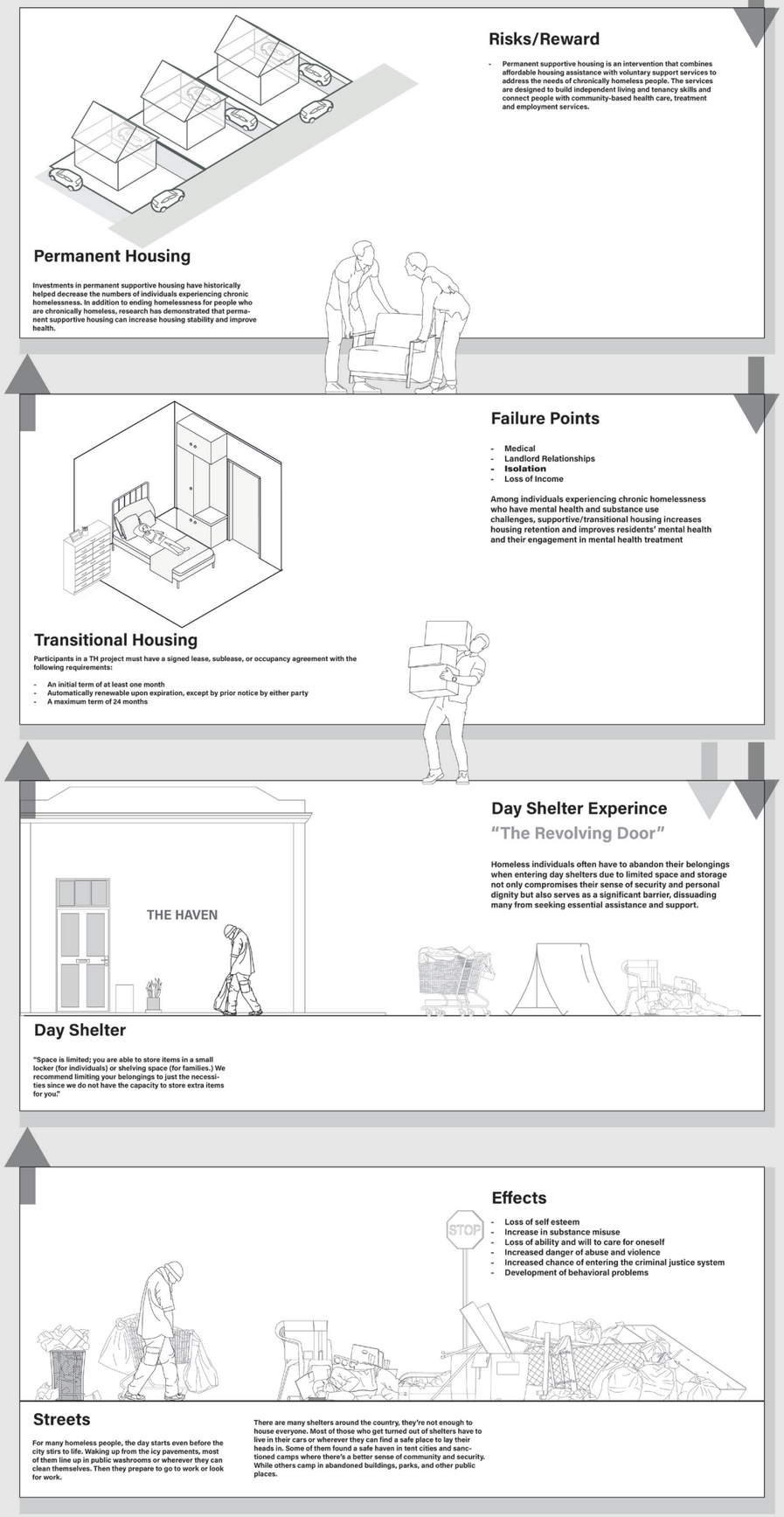
45. Visitors Quad Rendering

46. "Job Secured"

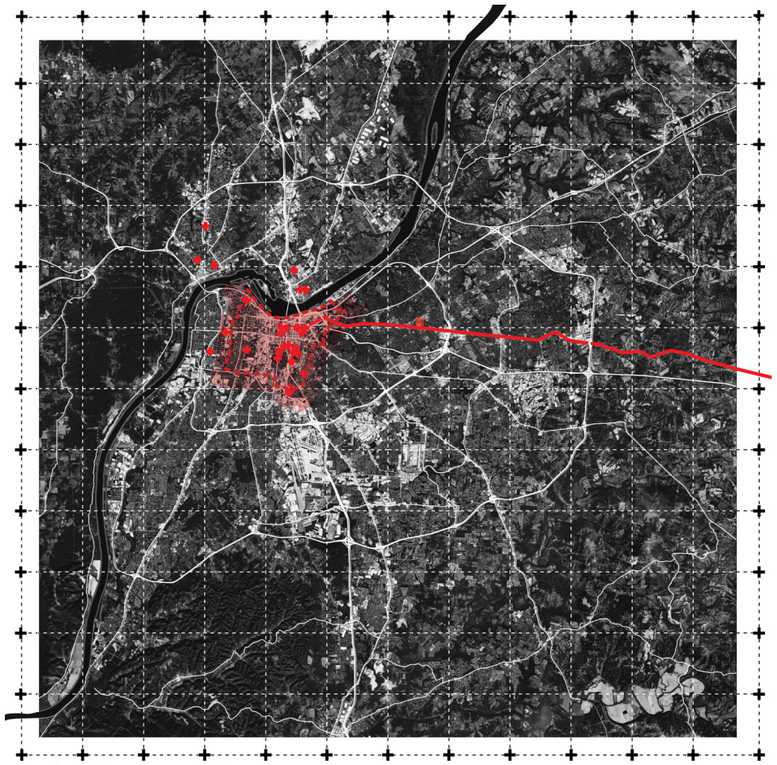
For individuals experiencing homelessness the existing system of rehabilitation has several failure points that prohibit restoration back to permanent housing. This existing system perpetuates a cycle of homelessness with minimal opportunity to employment, housing, and social services.



47. "Life on the Streets 06"

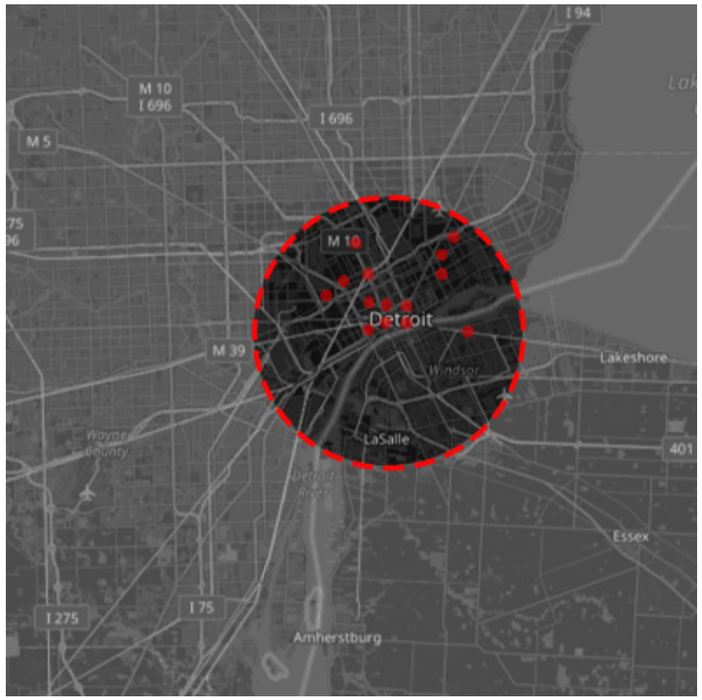


48. Existing Cycle of Homelessness

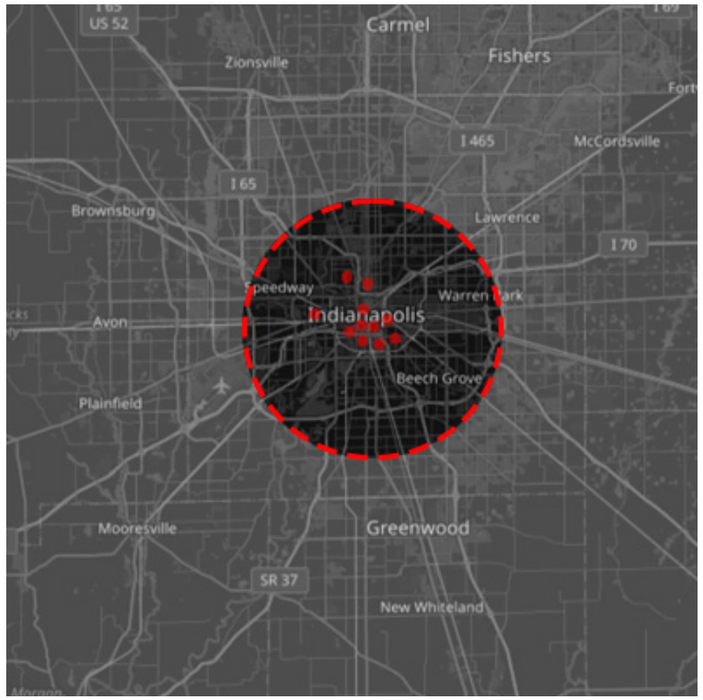


Louisville, Kentucky

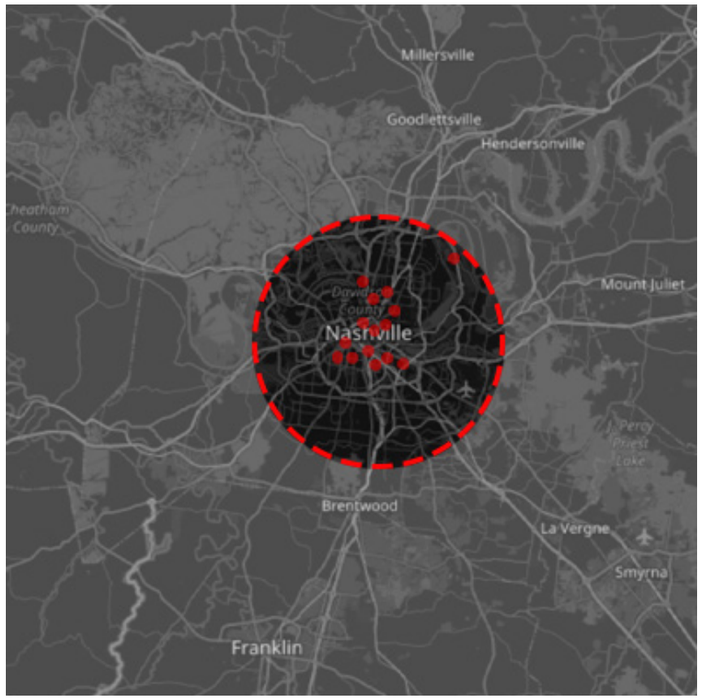
This cycle has been exacerbated because of the growth and urban sprawl of cities with high congregation of shelters in the downtown core, with no access to job, housing, or essential services.



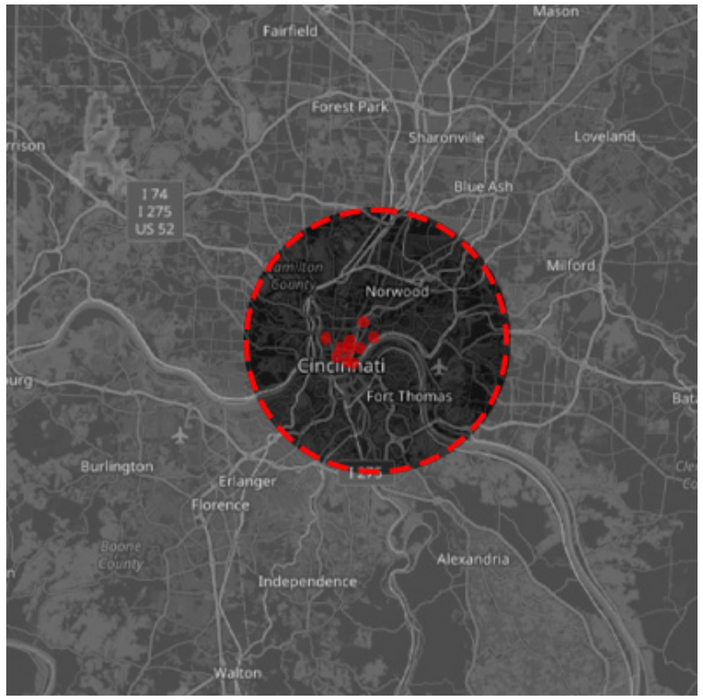
Detroit, Michigan



Indianapolis, Indiana



Nashville, Tennessee



Cincinnati, Ohio

Conclusion

Through this proposed suburban typology for transitional housing, the project aims to foster community on and off the site. In conclusion, “From Crisis to Community” proposes a holistic solution to transitional housing and homelessness, recognizing the interconnectedness of housing, employment, and community support. By prioritizing inclusivity and leveraging existing resources, this approach strives to empower individuals, promote social cohesion, and build a more compassionate society for all.

49. "Access and Opportunity"

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