Community Threads:

Building Integration Networks for Refugee Claimants

by
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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

In recent years, the Canadian government has implemented the use of hotels as a provisional measure to address the influx of refugee claimants. Persistent global issues have resulted in prolonged stays, leading to what is termed the 'hotelisation' of refugee claimants. This living arrangement manifests a disconnect from normalcy and the broader community. With the lack of integration, issues of isolation arise, further affecting the mental and physical well-being of refugee claimants. Although hotels are utilised to quickly accommodate refugee claimants, this thesis asks: how can we balance urgency without compromising suitable living conditions that initiate a promising future?

The heart of the city—its neighbourhoods—is constantly changing, facing issues of gentrification and social equity. While the city of Toronto demonstrates commitment to creating inclusive neighbourhoods, there remains a notable gap in involving refugee claimants in existing strategies. An understanding of neighbourhoods through site analyses, mapping, and design precedents reveals sustainable approaches to integrate refugee claimants into the urban fabric. By emphasising the role of the community—collaborative efforts among policymakers, stakeholders, and locals—this thesis aims to redefine inclusive neighbourhoods to promote safe, suitable built environments for refugee claimants. The design proposal explores a network of interventions woven into the urban scale of neighbourhoods, encouraging local exchange and connectivity. In its entirety, this thesis argues that social infrastructure and a robust network of resources in the community is a catalyst to an easier transition to normalcy—the architecture itself cannot solve the refugee crisis, but it can however, initiate a sense of comfort and belonging.

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List of Abbreviations

CBSA	Canadian Border Service Agency
GTA	Greater Toronto Area
IRCC	Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
IPAS	International Protection Accommodation Services
NIA	Neighbourhood Improvement Area
NLT	Neighbourhood Land Trust
PPE	Parkdale People's Economy
PNLT	Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust
POF	Partnerships Opportunities Fund
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
TSNS	Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

INTRODUCTION



Fig.1 Photo of asylum seekers from Turkey approaching Lebos, Greece.

0.1 Who Are Refugee Claimants?

The term 'refugee' was defined in political literature within the 1967 Protocol of the 1951 UNHCR Convention created in the aftermath of the Second World War. The term refers to someone who has forcefully left their country due to political turmoil such as war and violence; persecution because of race, religion, nationality, and group discrimination. These issues and fears are so significant that returning home is no longer an option.[1]

The refugee determination process follows a primary objective: ensuring that an individual's need for asylum adheres to the UNHCR criteria for determining refugee status.[2] Although countries may have different administrative processes, there are two common pathways to obtaining refugee status: one as a sponsored refugee and the other as a refugee claimant (See figure 1.2). The former pertains to the UNHCR's Resettlement Program, which requires the partnerships of 14 UNHCR countries, including Australia, the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, to host and resettle refugees.[3] This process covers approved individuals with refugee status before their departure and a resettlement strategy already in place for their arrival. However, such pre-approval can only accommodate a limited number as it is by referral only with quotas and urgent cases prioritized.[4] An example of this is Canada's "Operation Syrian Refugees," where 25,000 Syrian refugees were resettled as the nation's response to the ongoing conflicts in Syria.[5]

What happens to everyone else who also needs protection? Most of these individuals, referred to as refugee claimants or asylum seekers, cross borders irregularly without legal status. In contrast to UNHCR-sponsored refugees, refugee claimants have legal obligations such as proceedings in the court of law to demonstrate

1. "What is a Refugee? Definition and Meaning," USA for UNHCR, accessed January 6, 2023, https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/what-is-a-refugee/.

2. "Determining Refugee Status under UNHCR's Mandate," UNHCR, accessed January 2, 2023, https://www.unhcr.org/resettlement-handbook/1-refugee-status-and-resettlement/1-2-determining-refugee-status-under-unhcrs-mandate/#:~:text=%E2%80%9Cowing%20to%20well%2Dfounded%20fear,or%20who%2C%20not%20havinga.

3. "Resettlement Country Chapters," UNHCR Resettlement Handbook, accessed January 2, 2023, https://www.unhcr.org/resettlement-handbook/resettlement-country-chapters/.

4. "Resettlement," UNHCR Help, accessed January 2, 2023, https://help.unhcr.org/faq/how-can-we-help-you/resettlement/.

5. "Canada's Response to the Conflict in Syria," Government of Canada, accessed April 1, 2024, https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/response_conflict-reponse_conflits/crisis-crises/conflict_syria-syrie.aspx?lang=eng.

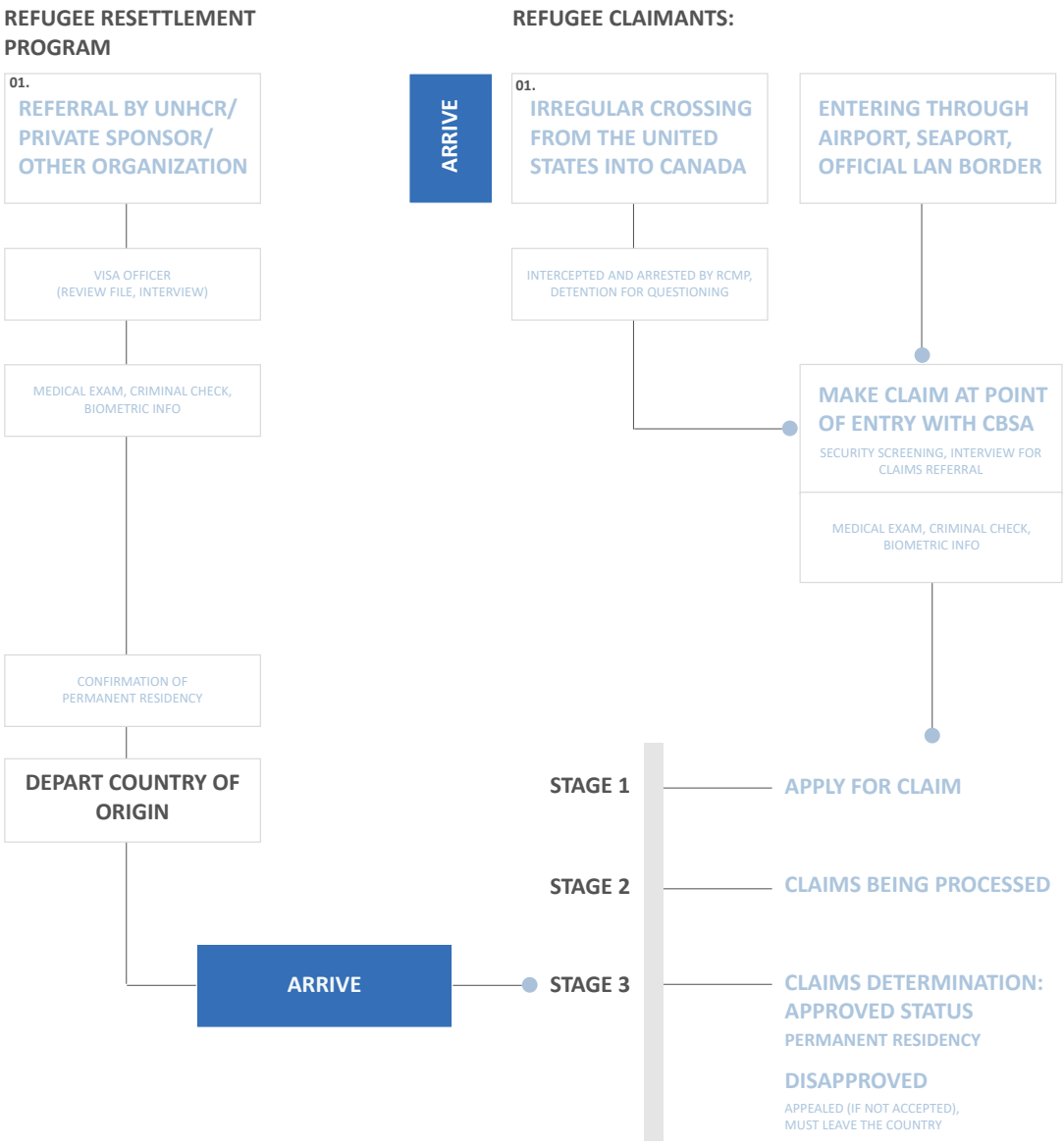


Fig1.2 Diagram of refugee status process.

that their need for asylum aligns with the UNHCR. During this process, refugee claimants have the right to temporary international protection and access to legal rights to remain in the countries of their claim while awaiting their claim of refugee status.[6] However, successful applications result in a deferral of application or deportation to their country of origin.

The journey of refugee claimants is often treacherous, with millions crossing seas in small boats and on land by foot, risking their lives as they seek asylum. In 2022, their population was recorded at 5.4 million.[7] This number continues to increase. For this group, there is a disconnect in the system. However, for all the unknowns and lack of clarity, the final result is that most applicants are approved. For example, 78% of applicants in Canada, totaling 37,222 individuals, were approved in 2022.[8] In the United Kingdom, 67% of applications (49,862 people) were given refugee status in 2023, suggesting that the transition period is analogous to resettlement.[9]

Henceforth, refugees are those whose claims have been approved and received refugee status by governing agencies. This status is a legal recognition for refugees, giving them the right to stay as long as they choose in the country in which they wish to stay. In addition, recognized refugees have the right to benefits such as social assistance, family reunification, official identity, and, most importantly, the right to apply for permanent residency and citizenship.[10]

6. "Rights and Duties," UNHCR Help (Canada), accessed February 2, 2024, https://help.unhcr.org/canada/rights-and-duties-3/rights-and-duties-2/#:~:text=legal%20rights%20such%20as%20the%20right%20to%20life%2C%20liberty%20and%20security%3B&text=equality%20rights%3B%20and%2C&text=language%20rights.,through%20a%20human%20rights%20commission.

7. "Open Doors, Open Hearts: What You Need to Know About Shelters for Asylum Seekers in Canada," UNHCR Canada, accessed January 2, 2024, https://www.unhcr.ca/news/open-doors-open-hearts-what-you-need-to-know-about-shelters-for-asylum-seekers-in-canada/#:~:text=In%202022%2C%20Canada%20received%20only,low%20to%20middle%2Dincome%20countries.

8. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, "Refugee Protection Division (RPD) - Statistical Highlights 2023," accessed January 2, 2024, https://irb.gc.ca/en/statistics/protection/Pages/RPDStat2023.aspx.

9. "Top 10 Facts About Refugees and People Seeking Asylum," Refugee Council, accessed May 2, 2024, https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/information/refugee-asylum-facts/top-10-facts-about-refugees-and-people-seeking-asylum/#:~:text=A%20total%20of%2049%2C862%20people,when%2014%2C370%20people%20were%20granted.

10. "Rights and Duties of Refugees," UNHCR Help (Canada), accessed January 2, 2024, https://help.unhcr.org/canada/rights-and-duties-3/rights-and-duties-of-refugees/.

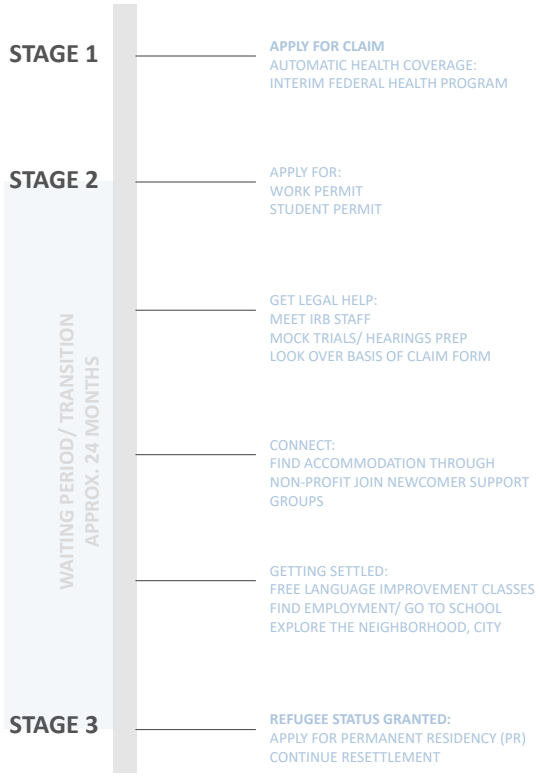


Fig1.3 Diagram of refugee claims process during the transition period.

Transition Period

The transitional phase mentioned earlier is a crucial and challenging period amongst refugee claimants because it is fundamental in rebuilding their lives and integrating into a new society.[11] A robust network of resources is needed to ensure refugee claimants a well-supported transition.

First, access to basic needs such as housing, education, healthcare, and employment is crucial. In addition, counseling services are essential during this period as refugees may have endured traumatic experiences.[12] Moreover, the transitional period is crucial for establishing financial security because resources for employment and financial literacy promote independence, including being part of the broader economy.

Furthemore, the transition period necessitates a resettlement plan in conjunction with the high success rate of applicants. This transition entails a humanitarian balance of urgency of the refugee crisis and the need for care, ensuring that refugee claimants have a roof over their heads and an equal chance for a promising future. Integration efforts are needed to ensure refugee claimants are not alienated, but rather, become integral parts of society.

11. "The Transitional Period Is Crucial for Refugees," Refugee Council, accessed May 2, 2024, https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/latest/news/4639_the_transitional_period_is_crucial_for_refugees/.

12. Ibid.

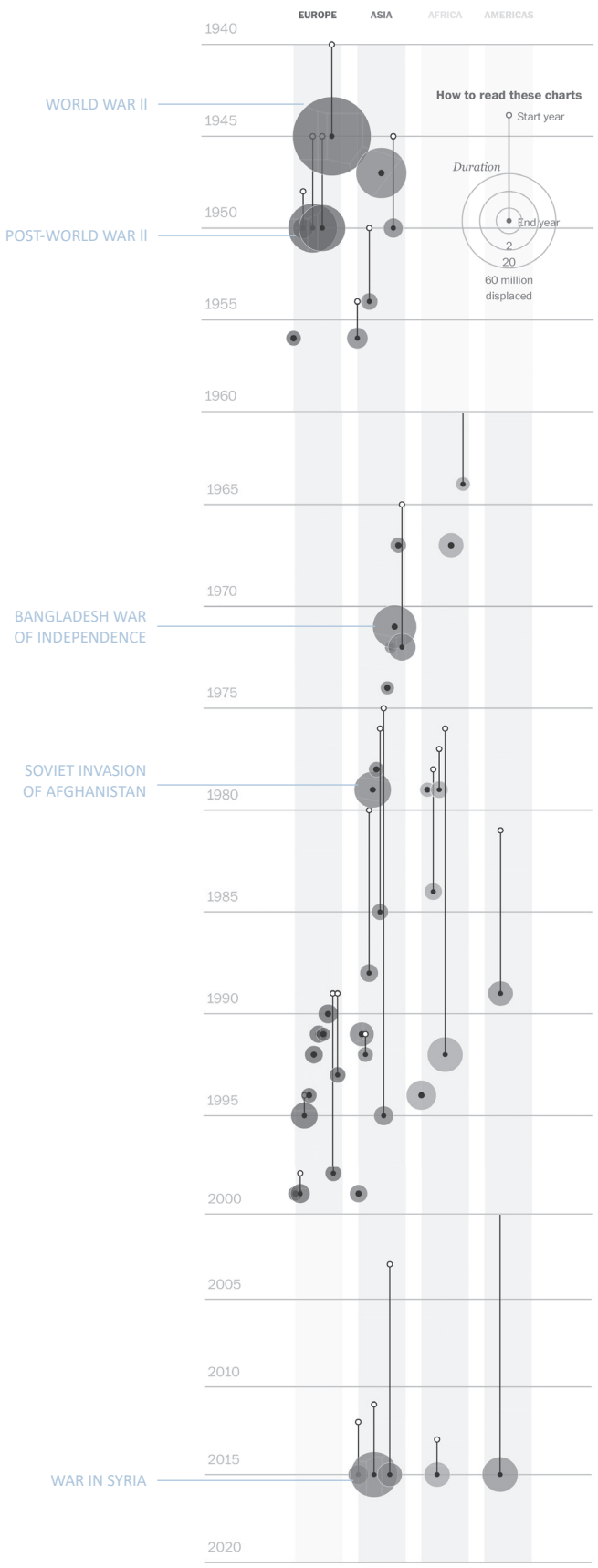


Fig1.4 A visual guide to 75 years of major refugee crisis around the world.

0.2 Global Trends

The refugee crisis is undoubtedly the result of global issues such as social, political, economic, and environmental calamities. However, it is far more complex than one singular reason; instead, a synergy of these factors create pressure, eventually leading to an influx of refugees. Figure 2.4 shows that the refugee crisis could occur at any moment in time, anywhere. In 2022, there were a total of 36.4 million refugees and 5.4 million refugee claimants around the world.[13]

As the number of conflicts continues to rise, 2.9 million new applications were submitted across 162 countries in 2022, an unprecedented increase of 68% from the previous year. However, 71% of these claims were made in only ten countries, including Canada, the United States, and Australia.[14]

The Global Backlog

In 2022, 92 countries, including Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States, were affected by an immigration backlog due to administrative delays. A combination of insufficient procedures, lack of staffing, and the influx of new applications caused these delays. In addition, the regulations placed during the COVID-19 pandemic have further stressed efficiency. According to the 2022 Global Trends Report, 5.4 million refugee claims were delayed that year.[15]

Furthermore, in the United Kingdom, only 31% of claims received decisions within six months in 2022, while approximately 40,000 people waited one to three years for a decision.[16] Similarly, in Canada, processing times for new applicants are 24 months, and pending claims have wait times of 27 months.[17] Henceforth, delays in processing times are very

13. "Global Trends At-a-Glance," USA for UNHCR, accessed May 2, 2023, https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/statistics/#:~:text=Global%20Trends%20At%2Da%2DGlance&text=This%20includes%3A,5.4%20million%20asylum%20seekers.

14. UNHCR, "Global Trends Report 2022," accessed May 2, 2023, https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends-report-2022.

15. "Global Trends At-a-Glance," USA for UNHCR, accessed May 2, 2023, https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/statistics/#:~:text=Global%20Trends%20At%2Da%2DGlance&text=This%20includes%3A,5.4%20million%20asylum%20seekers.

16. Migration Observatory, "The UK's Asylum Backlog," accessed May 2, 2023, https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/the-uks-asylum-backlog/.

17. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, "IRB Transparency - Public Accountability Documents," accessed April 2, 2024, https://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/transparency/pac-binder-nov-2020/Pages/pac8a.aspx.

concerning for refugee claimants because it puts risks to their mental and physical well-being. Subsequently, this backlog prevents refugee claimants from fully living a life of normalcy.

Arrival Cities and Urban Refugees

With the growth of global urbanization, cities have become pivotal in the journey of many refugee claimants, presenting economic growth, independence, and vital cultural diversity within their urban fabric. Intriguingly, the International Rescue Committee states, "The city is the new refugee camp."[18]

According to the UNHCR, 58% of refugees globally were residing in urban areas. In 2021, this increased to 60% of the world's 25.4 million refugees.[19] These patterns are significantly changing the urban fabric of cities as they become hubs for arrival and resettlement— denoted as Arrival Cities. These urban areas have necessary resources such as housing, education, healthcare, and legal aid. In addition, the experiences of living in urban cities could be reminiscent of home for refugee claimants. These experiences include familiar environments such as dense, bustling streets, and ethnic enclaves. Subsequently, the population density of these areas promotes a level of anonymity that could be deemed beneficial.

With increasing urbanization, pressures on cities' robust network of resources result in unequal demand and supply limitations. Existing city-led programs, such as affordable housing, have declined, making them inaccessible for everyone, including newly arrived refugee clients and those whose applications were affected by a backlog. Henceforth, cities are now more than ever simultaneously facing the challenges of influx, proven by an apparent disconnect

18. International Rescue Committee, "Urban Refugees: Foreword to ECHO Advocacy Event" (London: IRC, 2020), accessed May 2, 2023, https://www.rescue-uk.org/sites/default/files/document/986/201112urbanrefsforechoadvocacyevent0.pdf.

19. "Global Trends At-a-Glance," USA for UNHCR, accessed May 2, 2023, https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/statistics/#:~:text=Global%20Trends%20At%2Da%2DGlance&text=This%20includes%3A,5.4%20million%20asylum%20seekers.

between emergency resources and long-term strategies further detailed in the subsequent sub-chapters.

A Global Response to Housing Influx of Refugees

With thousands of refugee claimants continuing to arrive in cities, significant pressures on city-wide housing accommodations have been far beyond stretched out, leaving many refugee claimants in the streets. This humanitarian crisis has called for cities worldwide to act quickly and urgently. This has directed governments to resort to contingency hotels for their fast and simple administrative needs, which are only heavily dependent on funding.

Many cities have utilized contingency hotels, such as New York, which implemented the Hotel Vouchering Program. This program allows refugee claimants to stay in hotel accommodations for 28 days. In 2023, this program accommodated 223 families.[20]

In the United Kingdom, 47,000 refugee claimants are housed in 395 regional contingency hotels, a drastic increase from the 9,500 refugee claimants accommodated in October 2020.[21] However, because of the backlog, refugee claimants stay in these accommodations for longer periods than the government had anticipated. This has placed substantial pressure on the UK's budget, increasing the costs to £2.28 billion on hotels alone from 2022-2023.[22] A number of these contingency hotels are in Scotland and Ireland, and the following chapter will provide an analysis of living conditions in these hotels.

Although hotel accommodations are successful as an initial approach to emergencies, global patterns present the shift

20. "NYC Has Quietly Placed Immigrant Families with Children in Hotels Under 28-Day Stays," City Limits, accessed January 2, 2024, https://citylimits.org/2022/04/15/nyc-has-quietly-placed-immigrant-families-with-children-in-hotels-under-28-day-stays/.

21. Human Rights Watch, "'I Felt So Stuck': Inadequate Housing and Social Support for Families Seeking Asylum" (New York: HRW, 2023), accessed January 2, 2024, https://www.hrw.org/report/2023/09/14/i-felt-so-stuck/inadequate-housing-and-social-support-families-seeking-asylum#_ftn38.

22. House of Commons Library, "Asylum Accommodation: Hotels, Vessels and Large-Scale Sites," accessed May 2, 2023, https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2021-0130/.

toward suitable environments for prolonged stays. Hence, discussions for alternative accommodations with suitable environments for refugee claimants are needed. This argues for a balance between urgency and human dignity—that providing a roof over their heads is not morally enough to foster a healthy well-being.

The following chapter will provide an analysis of living conditions in these hotels.

0.3 **Canada In Context**

Canada's long history with the UN Refugee Agency started during the 1951 United Nations Convention On the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons. In 1989, the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada implemented processing procedures to serve refugee claimants better.[23] In 2022, 91,735 refugee claimants arrived in Canada, and by the end of 2023, this number had increased to 144,035 claimants.[24] Moreover, these individuals come from different parts of the world, but most recently, many have come from Mexico (17,490), Haiti (8,559), Turkey (7,706), Colombia (6,526), and India (5,178).[25]

Figure 1.2 shows that claims for refugee protection could be made first by speaking to officers from the Canadian Border Services (CBSA) at ports of entry and the IRCC for inland. However, for irregular border crossings, individuals may also encounter RCMP officials who will direct them to the CBSA. Officers from both agencies conduct general checks and decide if the claim is eligible; if so, they are referred to the Refugee Protection Division to start their refugee claim process.[26]

Furthermore, refugee claims are assessed at different points of interceptions where they are stopped and checked by authorities. These include airports, land (borders), marine, and RCMP interceptions at irregular ports of entry (See figure1.6). In 2023, a total of 143,865 claims were processed by both the CBSA and IRCC. Most were made in Quebec (65,530 claims) and Ontario (63,265 claims). The CBSA also reported that the most common interceptions were made through air ports of entry (41,355 claimants), followed by land ports of entry (29,455 claimants).[27] In addition, irregular land border crossings processed by the CBSA drastically increased from 20,896 to 31,475 individuals, a 50.62% increase from the previous

23. Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, "Canada's Refugee Determination System," accessed May 2, 2024, https://pier21.ca/research/immigration-history/canadas-refugee-determination-system.

24. Government of Canada, "Asylum Claims in Canada: 2023," accessed January 2, 2024, https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/asylum-claims/asylum-claims-2023.html.

25. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, "Refugee Protection Division (RPD) - Statistical Highlights 2023," accessed April 2, 2024, https://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/statistics/protection/Pages/RPDStat2023.aspx.

26. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, "Irregular Border Crosser Statistics," accessed May 2, 2024, https://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/statistics/Pages/Irregular-border-crosser-statistics.aspx.

27. Government of Canada, "Asylum Claims in Canada: 2023," accessed June 2, 2023, https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/asylum-claims/asylum-claims-2023.html.

28. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, "Irregular Border Crosser Statistics," accessed May 2, 2024, https://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/statistics/Pages/Irregular-border-crosser-statistics.aspx.

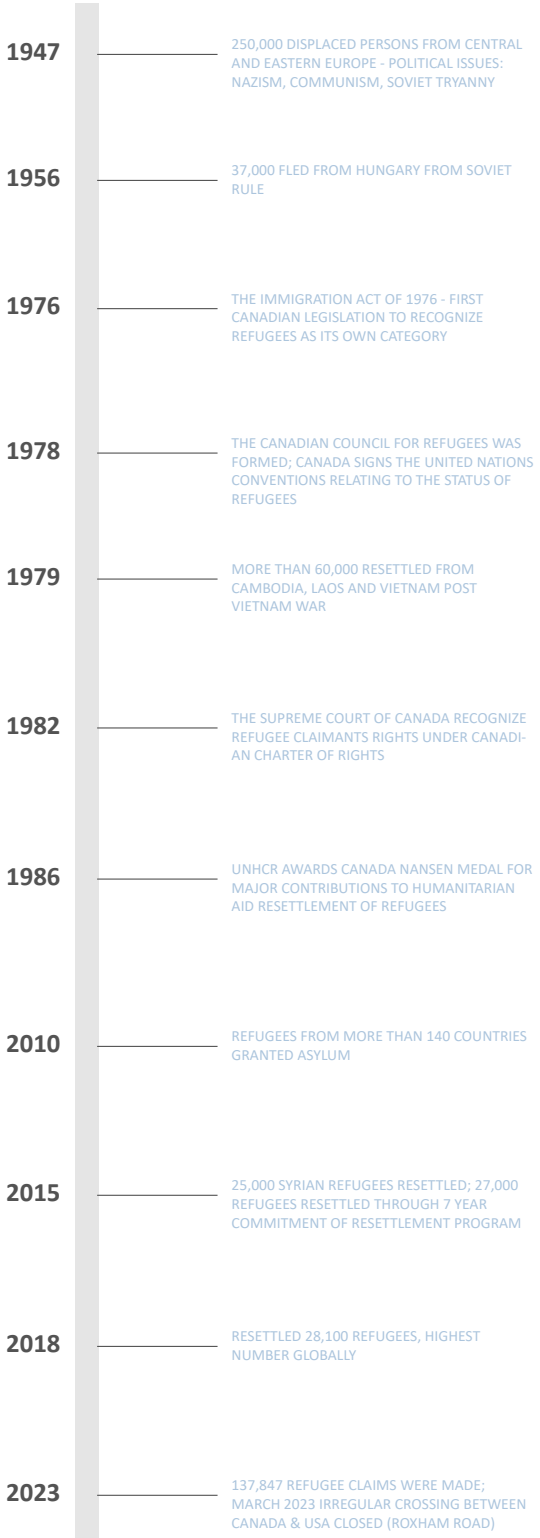


Fig1.5 A timeline of Canada's refugee humanitarian aid over the years. .

year.[28] Most irregular crossings were made in Quebec and British Columbia. However, with large volumes, government transfers of refugee claimants are being made from Quebec to Ontario and further out west.[29]

Contingency Hotels In Canada

Following the global trends mentioned earlier, Canada has resorted to utilizing IRCC funded hotels to deal with the refugee crisis, acquiring 23 hotels nationwide to accommodate the influx of refugee claimants.[29] There are 2,400 hotel rooms, mainly in Quebec, Greater Montreal, and Ontario. However, most of these hotels are outside of arrival cities. For example, contingency hotels are located on the outskirts of Montreal and in smaller cities such as Niagara Falls. Moreover, from April 2017 to September 2022, the IRCC accommodated 24,000 refugee claimants in contingency hotels. During this period, the IRCC spent $269.4M on accommodation, security, food, and health in response to the influx of refugee claimants arriving at irregular border crossings.[30] Moreover, city-wide shelter systems like Toronto, have also resorted to the use of contingency hotels to accommodate refugee claimants in the shelter system.

In conjunction with the immigration backlog, processing wait times in 2022 reached 24 months and more.[31] This has dramatically prolonged the duration of stays in contingency hotels, which, on average, could be between 30 days and three months.[32] Henceforth, impacts on mental health and the well-being of refugee claimants are apparent, similar to those experienced by claimants in the United Kingdom. Later, this thesis analyzes two contingency hotels accommodating refugee claimants in the Greater Toronto Area.

29. Government of Canada, "Hotels Used for Temporary Accommodation for Asylum Seekers," accessed May 2, 2024, https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/transparency/committees/cimm-nov-18-2022/hotels.html.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

32. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, "IRB Transparency - Public Accountability Documents," accessed May 2, 2024, https://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/transparency/pac-binder-nov-2020/Pages/pac8a.aspx?=undefined&wbdisable=true.

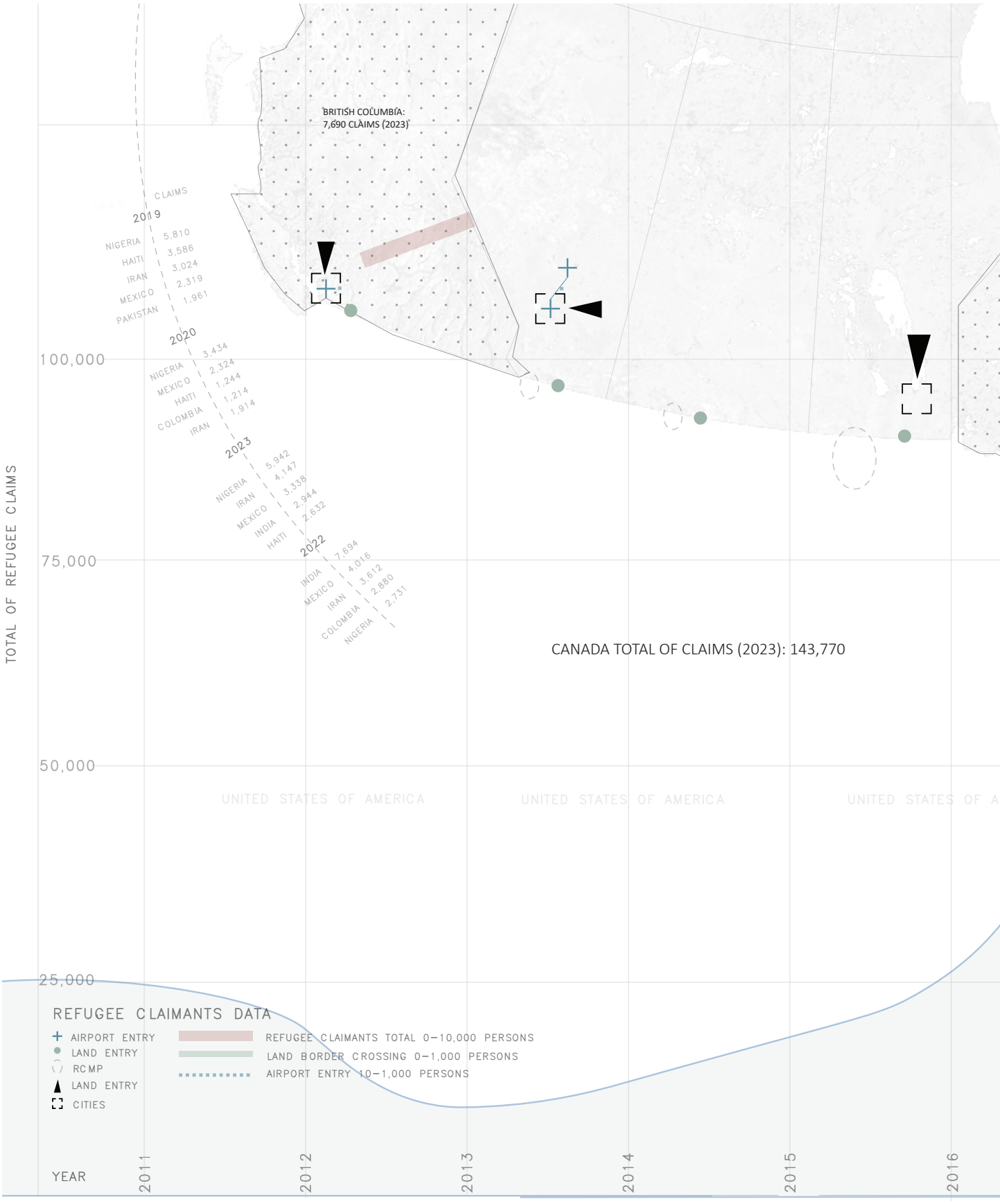
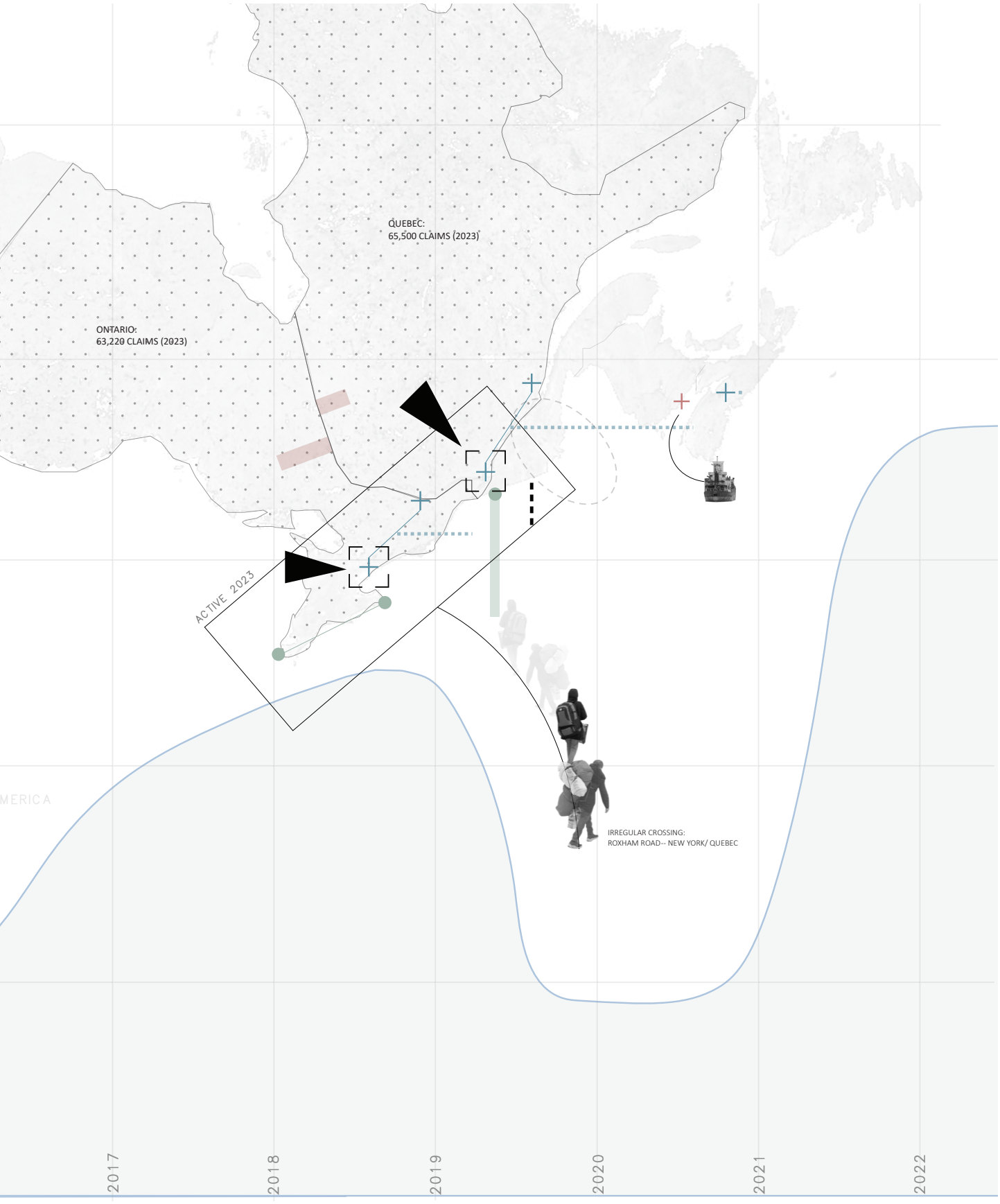


Fig1.6 Refugee Claimants flow in Canada.


QUEBEC:
65,500 CLAIMS (2023)
ONTARIO:
63,220 CLAIMS (2023)
ACTIVE 2023
IRREGULAR CROSSING:
ROXHAM ROAD-- NEW YORK/ QUEBEC
2017
2018
2019
2020
2021
2022

0.4 **Toronto: An Arrival City**

On October 14th, 2023, I first visited Streets to Home, an assessment and referral center at 129 Peter Street. I came across multiple refugee claimants, young men and women in their mid-20s who recently arrived in Canada; some came alone, and others with family members. Due to the sensitivity of their stories and the prospect of a long and uncertain journey in their refugee claim, many refused a formal interview. However, through multiple visits, I began to get to know them through conversations about their experiences. During this time, I learned that most arrived at the Toronto Pearson Airport, received a background check, and began their refugee claim process. Soon after their arrival, the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) provided them with limited guidance on housing resources in the city. An example of this is the city's Central Intake, a 24/7 telephone referral service that directs those experiencing homelessness to emergency shelters and other accommodations throughout the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

At the same time, city-wide shelters were at capacity city-wide. As a result, they found themselves sleeping in front of the referral center to receive food and bed space. I also attempted to contact other non-profit organizations specific to refugee claimants. However, they, too, were at capacity. With only a few layers of sweaters and no blanket in sight, with cardboard boxes to shield them from the wind, the setting was unbearable and cold. They told me they never imagined living in the streets, fearing for their safety and the uncertainty of what was yet to come. Ten days after my initial visit, I learned those I met were moved to contingency hotels.

Although it was a traumatic experience, I felt a sense of community among them as they looked out for each other, making sure that each one would receive help. As I have continued to stay

in touch with some of them, I have learned that the friends they made along the way have become their support system, sharing news of employment opportunities and legal paperwork and simply looking out for each other. When I visited Peter Street, the importance of community was a testament that is reminiscent of the narratives shared throughout this thesis.

As evident from the excerpt, Toronto's shelter system is under tremendous pressure and the needs have far exceeded the resources available. At the end of 2023, refugee claimants would occupy 50% of the shelter's total space.[33] Henceforth, Toronto has allocated funds for community churches and non-profit organizations supporting refugee claimants to ease some pressure from the shelter system. Many could find accommodations that simultaneously foster their intergenerational needs at this scale. However, in September 2023, 1,200 refugee claimants were in community-based accommodations, compared to 3,300 refugee claimants still residing in contingency hotels.[34] While contingency hotels serve as temporary accommodation, the global patterns discussed earlier have led to prolonged stays. As a result, living conditions have become unsuitable, putting the well-being of refugee claimants at risk.

33. City of Toronto, "Background File for [Title of the Document]" (City of Toronto, 2023), accessed May 2, 2024, https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2023/cc/bgrd/background-file-239033.pdf.

34. Ibid.

A Site Analysis of Contingency Hotels In the GTA

In the Greater Toronto Area, refugee claimants in the shelter system stay in contingency hotels funded by the City of Toronto and the Canadian Red Cross. In 2023, 250 beds were added to the city's hotel inventory, including the 207 hotel rooms under COSTI Immigration Services Hostel Program, a community-based agency providing resettlement resources to newly arrived individuals.



Fig1.7 Assessment and Referral Center at 129 Peter Street.

According to the city's daily shelter overnight occupancy data, COSTI's two fully functioning hotels were 100% capacity throughout 2023.[35]

55 Hallcrown Place, North York

The Radisson Hotel Toronto East is located in North York, 19.9km from Toronto's downtown core. The site became a municipal shelter in 2016 and continued to run as a fully functioning hotel until it closed down to the public in recent months. The hotel has 238 air-conditioned rooms and amenities such as a swimming pool, a gym, and a business center. However,it is not clear whether these amenities are available since becoming a full-capacity municipal shelter is unknown. In 2023, 148 rooms were designated as temporary refugee responses for families.[36]

In Figure 5, an aerial image shows the property adjacent to major Highway 401 and surrounded by large surface parking lots. Furthermore, the site and its premises are in the General Employment Area.[37] According to the Provincial Planning framework, employment areas are for 'business and economic activities' such as car dealerships, services, and retail.[38] In addition, general employment zones are on the periphery of core employment areas commonly used for industrial activities, indicating the site's lack of social infrastructure and neighborhood presence.

Moreover, the nearest community center is a 40-minute walk(2.8km), and the nearest public school is a 1hr 6-minute walk (4.8km), respectively, along high-traffic main roads. These conditions entail that the contingency hotel site is unsuitable for extended periods when access to these infrastructure and resources is needed.

35. City of Toronto, "Daily Shelter Overnight Service Occupancy & Capacity," accessed May 2, 2024, https://ckan0.cf.opendata.inter.prod-toronto.ca/dataset/daily-shelter-overnight-service-occupancy-capacity/resource/42714176-4f05-44e6-b157-2b57f29b856a/view/09a21864-57e6-40e5-b5ee-c7c6d6a86e43.

36. City of Toronto, "Daily Shelter Overnight Service Occupancy & Capacity," accessed May 2, 2024, https://open.toronto.ca/dataset/daily-shelter-overnight-service-occupancy-capacity/.

37. City of Toronto, "Communication File [File Number]" (City of Toronto, 2023), accessed May 2, 2024, https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2023/ph/comm/communicationfile-170118.pdf.

38. City of Toronto, City of Toronto Official Plan - Chapter 4: Land Use Designations (City of Toronto, 2017), accessed May 2, 2024, https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/97dd-cp-official-plan-chapter-4.pdf.

640 Dixon, Toronto

The Radisson Suites Hotel Toronto Airport is located West of Toronto in Etobicoke, 26.1km from Toronto's downtown core. It once accommodated refugee claimants and public guests together in 2018 but unknowingly closed down for public bookings in recent years. The hotel has 216 air-conditioned rooms and facilities such as a swimming pool, exercise room, and a restaurant/lounge area. Though similar to 55 Hallcrown Place, it is unclear if these amenities are open to residents under the shelter program. In 2023, 148 rooms were used for families and 56 rooms for mixed adults under the refugee temporary response program.[39]

Figure 6 presents the site near Highway 401, which neighboring hotels, food chains, events spaces, and car rentals surround. In addition, the hotel is a designated 'Employment Industrial Office Zone' for business and economic activities. This zone permits a variety of business establishments such as retail services, warehouses, hotels, and other forms of economic venture.[40] Furthermore, the nearest public school is 3.3km away (46-minute walk), and the nearest community center is 2.6km away (36-minute walk), signifying the site's isolation from such resources.

These analyses exhibit the lack of social infrastructure and residential connectivity in the contingency hotels' locations. However, an intriguing observation is the sites' proximity to Tim Horton's locations, an affordable cafe chain in Canada. Later mentioned in the narratives of this thesis, this establishment served as an informal social space amongst refugee claimants. Consequently, this entails a form of isolation from the broader urban fabric of neighborhoods, away from productive social

39. City of Toronto. "Daily Shelter Overnight Service Occupancy & Capacity." City of Toronto Open Data Portal, accessed May 2, 2024, https://open.toronto.ca/dataset/daily-shelter-overnight-service-occupancy-capacity/.

40. City of Toronto, "Zoning By-law Amendments - Chapter 60, Section 40," accessed May 2, 2024, https://www.toronto.ca/zoning/bylaw_amendments/ZBL_NewProvision_Chapter60_40.htm.

activities such as integration and local engagement. Implied by global patterns, these sites create challenging living conditions that are unsuitable for refugee claimants staying for prolonged periods. Consequently, this entails isolation from the broader urban fabric, where communities are encouraged to grow.

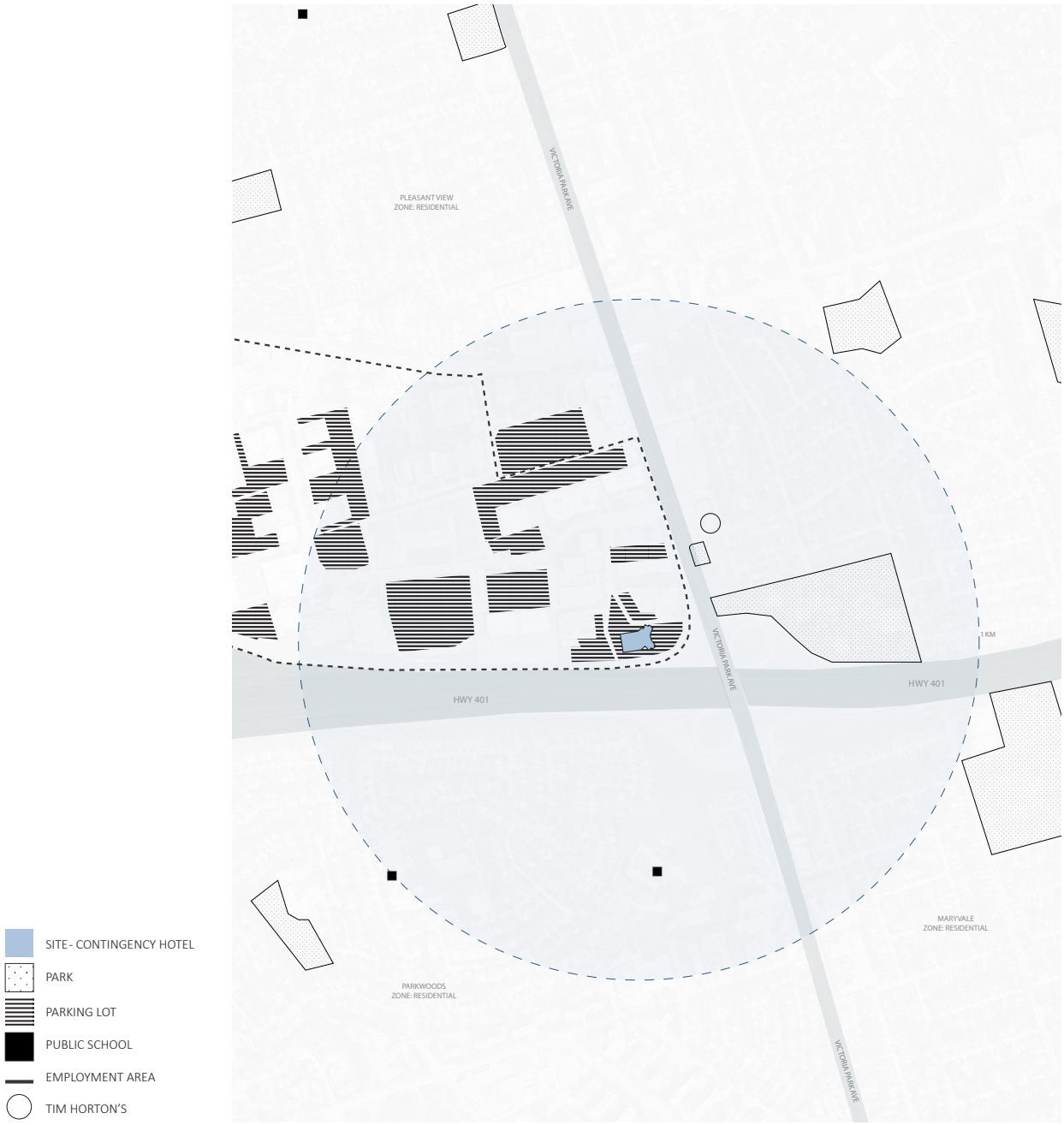


Fig1.8 Site Analysis of 55 Hallcrown Place.

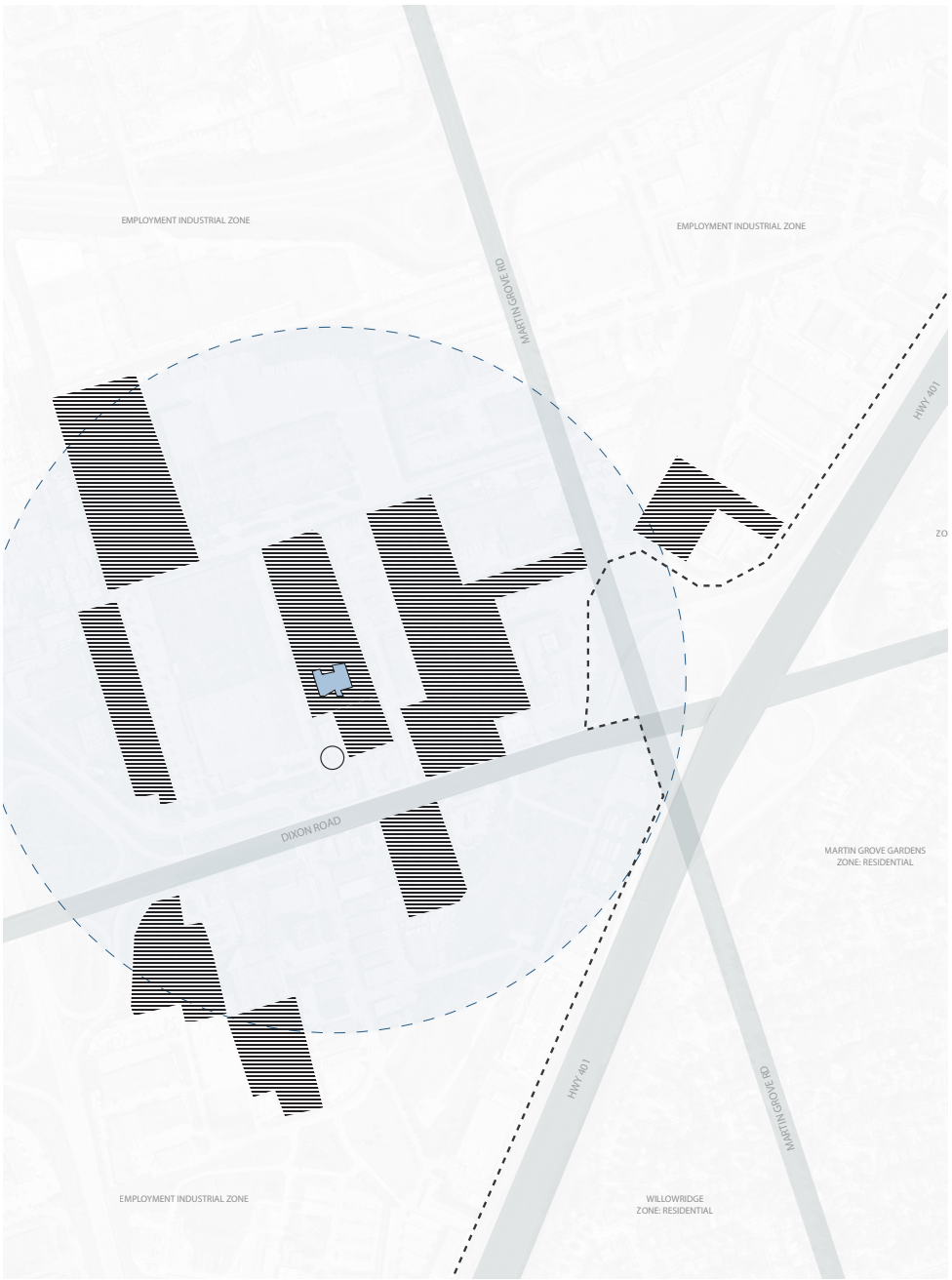


Fig1.9 Site analysis of 640 Dixon road.

0.5 Research Methods

This thesis follows three primary research methodologies at different scales of discussion. Because the research focuses on a constantly changing topic, a synergy of methodologies was used to navigate and simplify themes.

First, a quantitative method deciphers broader topics and contextualizes the thesis on a comprehensive urban scale. This method involved analyzing data represented by bar charts, numerical data sheets, and statistics. This approach mainly presented findings such as global trends and patterns indicated in the introductory sections.

Evaluative site visits were a second methodology for observing and recording the surrounding built environment through photographs and note-taking. Furthermore, site visitations resulted in informal interactions with locals and refugee claimants. This user-experience strategy identified community and social factors in the scale of neighborhoods, which is significant in the design process.

Furthermore, informal interviews, denoted as conversations, ground the specific themes and topics covered in chapters 1, 2, and 3. The Initial strategy of this method included interviews with guides and questionnaires. However, these interviews intend to provide a personal perspective of experiences, resulting in informal conversations with open-ended discourse suggestions. This encourages individuals to discuss topics and experiential details within their comfort zone, resulting in themes between the three discussions. A synthesis of these serves as introductory excerpts of the chapter it belongs to and strategies to ground its topic. In Chapter 1, the interviewee recollected her experience living in hotels, and the chapter further details the topic of 'hotelisation.' This strategy continues in the subsequent chapters.

Conducting informal interviews brought a deep human perspective to the vast scale of the refugee crisis. These shared experiences present a narrative to the overwhelming qualitative data associated with the refugee crisis: those numbers are people, too. Moreover, there is an evident contrast in scale between the broader topic and the design objectives of the thesis; thus, this method serves as a continuous reminder of the position of the thesis. This thesis does not intend to solve the refugee crisis fully but rather to listen to those who have experienced it and explore new opportunities and strategies on a smaller, more tangible scale.'

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 **The Hotel Lobby**

In 2023, thousands of refugee claimants crossed irregular borders on foot between the United States and Canada. "NI," aged 27, embarked on her journey alone, fleeing the Middle East in search of a more stable future for herself and her family. She was among the last individuals to cross Roxham Road before its indefinite closure, and like others, were taken to IRCC hotels across the country.

Upon reaching the Canadian border, "NI" encountered various accommodations arranged by the government. Initially, she was detained at an outpost with bunk beds behind chained walls for several nights before being transferred to a hotel near Montreal. However, this arrangement was short-lived, as she was abruptly awakened in the middle of the night to pack her belongings and subsequently taken to her final accommodation. "NI" expressed that she was unaware of their whereabouts, eventually sharing her phone location with family members who later informed her that she had been relocated to a hotel at Niagara Falls.

"NI" was provided a hotel room to herself, later learning that others shared 2-bed rooms. She expresses this time as scary and unwelcoming, but as time flies by, you begin to get used to it. In the following excerpts, "NI" shares her experience living in a contingency hotel for more than a month, before finding her own means of accommodation.

Nowhere To Go, Not Even The Hotel Lobby

When we think of hotels, we see people moving through its spaces in a timely manner; visitors checking in and out, straight to their hotel rooms and out to explore. However, how does one experience this space with the nuances of being stagnant? "NI" quotes "I spent most of the time in my or others' rooms. We had the tiniest lobby with only 2 chairs. There was the occasional hallway chat but we didn't feel as comfortable since it was still a functional hotel. A lot of men would love to spend their time outside at the parking lot or at a Tim Horton's."

Dietary Restrictions

Considering there was little to do almost all day for the majority of their stay, mealtime became one of the most exciting parts of the day. A typical meal rotation included waffles or sausages, fruits, juice, and water for breakfast; lunch consisted of burgers, fries, or chicken with salad, juice, and water; dinner options were rice or stew with protein, accompanied by juice and water. However, one of the challenges for Muslims was not being provided food during their fasting times. They would often save breakfast to eat in the middle of the night before fasting or skip it altogether. With the same scenery and routine every day, "NI" expressed how her wellbeing began to suffer, leading to feelings of depression. She also noted feelings of isolation, exacerbated by the cold weather; in fact, she hadn't realised she was within walking distance of Niagara Falls.

Throughout her stay, activities or programs were not set in place to ease their transition. Instead, IRCC officers provided general information and pamphlets about the next steps. "NI" had a cellular device to connect to the hotel wifi for research, but many others lacked resources. Financial support was limited, with only $300 received from Ontario Social Assistance, most of which went toward housing she had to find herself. These connections were crucial for refugee claimants like "NI" to find stability. During her time at the hotel, she made close friends, some of whom even lent her money.

Although IRCC hotels provide meals and beds, they lack integration opportunities and support for refugees' future. "NI" expressed, "I didn't believe it helped me much with the transition except for acclimating to the weather, getting creative with the language barrier, and strengthening my independence." When asked about her vision for a proper transitional space, she suggested private bedrooms, communal spaces, computer rooms, and a community kitchen.

Spaces that promote integration foster a sense of belonging and community, aiding refugee claimants' transition into their new lives. As the premise of this thesis, we continue to understand the value and impact of integration during times of transition

1.1 The Consequences of Hotelisation

Many cities worldwide have utilised contingency hotels to deal with the influx of refugee claimants needing housing accommodations. As discussed earlier, unforeseen global issues, such as administrative backlogs, have resulted in prolonged stays in temporary accommodations. Hence, what happens to those living in these spaces for months? This chapter analyses the consequences of 'hotelisation' to the well-being of refugee claimants.

What is 'hotelisation'? This term refers to utilising hotels as shelters resulting from the housing crisis that many cities experience.[41] There are many reasons this occurs, but primarily, it is due to the shortage in the city's shelter system to accommodate those experiencing homelessness. By definition, hotels are transient spaces that provide lodging, food, and other services to guests commercially.[42]

The contrast between hotel design for luxury and hospitality and the use of emergency shelters raises significant issues identified by Dr. Mel Nowicki, an expert on topics of housing inequality. The marketing functionality of hotels, like luxurious spas and amenities, elegant interiors, exclusive locations results in an "out-of-place-ness" experience amongst refugee claimants. Moreover, Dr. Nowicki argues that the hotel typology provides breaks from their guest's everyday, mundane tasks. For example, standard hotel rooms lack fully functioning kitchens and living areas, preventing refugee claimants from "performing everyday tasks and establishing domestic or familial life."[43] Therefore, affecting cultural and religious dietary requirements. Furthermore, limited hotel room spaces could negatively impact its residents' social and physical well-being. For example, Dr. Nowicki's findings show that hotels with limited crawl space have declined a child's ability to crawl.[44]

41. Katarzyna Nowicki, Jessica Brickell, and Helena Harris, "Hotelisation of the Housing Crisis" (Oxford Brookes University, 2019), accessed May 2, 2024, https://radar.brookes.ac.uk/radar/file/b133565e-958b-47fe-9269-13d9e8e29915/1/Hotelisation%20of%20the%20housing%20crisis%20-%202019%20-%20Nowicki%20Brickell%20Harris.pdf.

42. "Hotel," Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed May 2, 2024, https://www.britannica.com/topic/hotel.

43. Phil Hubbard and Robina Mohammad, "Hotelisation of Housing: Homelessness, Poverty, and Urban Marginality in Post-Olympic London," The Geographical Journal 181, no. 4 (2015): 383-394, https://doi.org/10.1111/geoj.12307.

44. Ibid.



Fig2.1 Image of Hotel Iveria as a refugee camp for 800 people.

Dr. Nowicki's research emphasizes that prolonged hotel accommodations provide inadequate living conditions for refugee claimants.

An example of this is the Hotel Iveria, a luxurious hotel transformed into an emergency shelter for displaced persons during the conflict between the Republic of Abkhazia and the Soviet Union in 1990. Between 1992 and 1993, thousands of ethnic groups from the South moved into central Tbilisi. Towering over the skyline of Georgia's capital city, Hotel Iveria was once the city's most prominent hotel, but because of the political issue, guests declined and it was then transformed into emergency housing for displaced persons for nine years.[45] The UNHCR described the living conditions as unsuitable, stating, "Eight people live in one tiny room. In another, a young mother feeds her 1 1/2-year-old son one piece of chocolate and one sip of water for breakfast. Dinner will consist of bread and potatoes. There are no elevators, little light, and pensioners are trapped permanently like prisoners in their rooms. Winters are unbearably cold, and the stifling summers are even worse for the 500 inhabitants."[46] In 2006, the hotel was left in ruin, and a renovation plan began to bring back the hotel to its original state.

Although discussed briefly, Hotel Iveria serves as a reminder that the hotelisation of refugees is not unprecedented. In the following sections, recent cases in Glasgow and Belfast show evidence of these poor living conditions, and the call to action demonstrates the political stance surrounding this issue.

45. Carlotta Gall, "In a Sad Hotel, Caucasus War Refugees Make Do," The New York Times, April 16, 2002, accessed May 2, 2024, https://www.nytimes.com/2002/04/16/world/in-a-sad-hotel-caucasus-war-refugees-make-do.html.

46. UNHCR, "Refugees Magazine Issue 117: IDPs – A Particularly Complex Problem," accessed May 2, 2024, https://www.unhcr.org/publications/refugees-magazine-issue-117-idps-particularly-complex-problem.

Glasgow, Scotland

In 2021, Glasgow accommodated around 5,000 asylum seekers, 8.4% of the total in the United Kingdom.[47] In the same year, Positive Action in Housing surveyed 230 asylum seekers living in hotels in Glasgow. The findings state that "several people referred to the hotels as prisons" due to the restrictions on food and bottled water, the lack of privacy, and not being allowed to cook.[48] In addition, 83 asylum seekers noted deteriorating mental health caused by the inability to have control over their own lives, resulting in feelings of hopelessness, which resulted in 14 asylum seekers suffering suicidal thoughts upon being placed in a hotel.[49]

Further, a research team from Edinburgh University worked closely with 50 asylum seekers, understanding their perspectives and lived experiences in hotels. The team found that the relocation of asylum seekers in hotel-type accommodations impacted their health and well-being, failing to provide for the spatial needs of each individual adequately. For instance, rooms did not have the proper furniture and space for families with children. Aside from physical restrictions, the accommodation failed to accommodate their religious and cultural needs.[50] Andy Hewett, UK Refugee Council's Head of Advocacy, explains these limitations by quoting, "... there are no cooking facilities on site so the hotel prepares all of their food. You can imagine for any of us living in a hotel for weeks and months, that could be very challenging…"[51]

47. Scottish Government, "Use of Hotels to Accommodate Asylum Seekers: Correspondence with UK Government," accessed May 2, 2024, https://www.gov.scot/publications/use-of-hotels-to-accommodate-asylum-seekers-correspondence-with-uk-government/.

48. Positive Action in Housing (PAIH), "One in Three Glasgow Asylum Seekers Suffering Depression and Anxiety," accessed May 2, 2024, https://www.paih.org/one-in-three-glasgow-asylum-seekers-suffering-depression-and-anxiety.

49. Ibid.

50. "Asylum seekers' accommodation report," Edinburgh Napier University, accessed May 2, 2024, https://www.napier.ac.uk/about-us/news/asylum-seekers-accommodation-report.

51. "How can we help people seeking asylum during C19?" Facebook video, Accessed May 2, 2024, https://fb.watch/rP0CoTLjIQ/.

Belfast, Ireland

The International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS) reported that in June 2021, 1,186 asylum seekers, including 174 children, were housed in hotels and bed and breakfasts. By November of the same year, IPAS acquired 41 hotels, accommodating 4,782 refugee claimants.[52] In November of 2022, Northern Ireland's MP, Claire Hanna, challenged these measures in a debate presented to the UK Parliament regarding contingency accommodations. Hanna argued that the backlog of processing protection applications has further complicated the housing conditions of asylum seekers, "creating bottlenecks in the use of contingency hotel accommodation."[53]

During her speech, she recalls the story of Mustafa and his family, who experienced living in hotels upon arriving in Belfast in January. Mustafa, including his wife and their three boys, aged five, six, and thirteen, shared a one-bedroom hotel where they spent most of their days. Through the implementation of hotel regulations, the family was restricted from leaving the place and were given planned meals to eat. Hanna described this as "close to imprisonment as is possible without actually being incarcerated."[54]

Furthermore, Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government Shona Robison called for action to address the rising concerns of housing refugee claimants in hotels.[55] Robison explains that "hotel use for asylum seekers is not comparable to its use for other groups supported in temporary accommodation because there are fundamental differences in agency, support options, and long-term outcomes. The time people may be accommodated in unsuitable hotel settings is also a

52. Asylum Information Database, "Types of Accommodation," accessed May 2, 2024, https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/republic-ireland/reception-conditions/housing/types-accommodation/.

53. House of Commons, "Asylum Seekers Contingency Accommodation, Belfast," Hansard, November 22, 2022, https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2022-11-22/debates/4FA43319-579E-4292-A19F-9653D1A55375/AsylumSeekersContingencyAccommodationBelfast.

54. Ibid.

55. University of Glasgow, "Migration, Refugees and Asylum Seekers: Challenges and Opportunities for Higher Education Institutions in Scotland," University of Glasgow, accessed May 2, 2024, https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/Media_69608_smxx.pdf.

significant concern. I accept the continuing need for suitable quarantine space, but extended and unknown periods of time spent in a hotel with restricted support is dangerous and entirely counter to integration principles."[56]

56. Scottish Government, "Use of Hotels to Accommodate Asylum Seekers: Correspondence with UK Government," Gov.scot, accessed May 2, 2024, https://www.gov.scot/publications/use-of-hotels-to-accommodate-asylum-seekers-correspondence-with-uk-government/.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 **Living in the City**

'LA' was born and raised in Saudi Arabia to two Yemeni migrants who moved there at a young age. Her mother fled Yemen as a political asylum, and her father, as an immigrant, wanted better opportunities. 'LA' moved to the United States to pursue higher education and later obtained a Bachelor's degree from the University of Maryland. However, in 2017, the political climate of the United States resulted in Donald Trump's "Muslim Ban," preventing 'LA' from visiting family in Saudi Arabia. In 2019, she, along with her mother, sought refuge in Canada due to the political circumstances in the United States and rising unrest between Yemenis and Saudis in Saudi Arabia. 'LA' and her mother were among the thousands who crossed through Rodhram Road that year.

Life In Two Cities

Although Lamees sought refuge from Saudi Arabia, political turmoil cannot diminish that it was, and still is, home, where culture, memory, identity, and family hold great value. Through my conversation with Lamees, she shared recollections of her childhood and how she perceives different cities in North America compared to the dense, hustling life of Saudi Arabia.

"I think there's a misconception that refugees come from undeveloped countries, and that's it. But even if the countries or cities we came from are much poorer, third-world countries, they are still very lively. Saudi Arabia was always busy, full of so much life, so many people, and so many things to do. Unlike Montreal where I lived, it did not compare. The same thing goes for a lot of smaller cities in Ontario. When I was in Montreal, I was going insane. There was a huge cultural shock of getting used to how calm the city is compared to Saudi Arabia. That is why many refugees [claimants]

prefer busier cities like Toronto. Most of us are used to very busy cities. I've come to terms with the fact that Canada itself as a country is very calm and not as loud, concentrated, and active as I was used to, and that is something I had to get used to for the first couple of months of living here [Canada].

Life back in Saudi Arabia was fun, lively, and social. Throughout my childhood, each weekend consisted of visiting family and going somewhere fun, like an amusement park. I can say with confidence that during the first ten years of my life, we never missed a weekend outing. But also, life can be limiting. We didn't have movie theaters, and after puberty, girls couldn't play in public or partake in public activities like ice skating or cycling. This has changed since. Furthermore, schooling was rigorous, and we were held to high standards. By the time I sat for the SATs, I had scored 1790 when the US average was 1490."

Lamees, now a twenty-eight-year-old, is pursuing further education in Ontario. She continues to be a voice for the unheard, an activist for women, Yemenis, and refugees.

2.1 Case Studies: Architecture of Integration

This section analyses three housing precedents that accommodate community integration and transition themes for newly arrived refugee claimants. These projects are located in city centres, presenting how micro-solutions could create meaningful, long-term impacts. The following case studies highlight strategies that address inclusivity, support, and integration at different levels of governance, including various scales of urban and architectural design interventions.

+ A Gateway to the City: Bellevue di Monaco [Munich]
+ Haus Märkisches Ufer [Berlin]
+ An Integrative Framework: Caracol [France]



Fig2.2 Aerial image of Bellevue di Monaco.

A Gateway to the City: Bellevue di Monaco [Munich]

Bellevue di Monaco is a three-storey, residential building renovation located in Munich's downtown. It is a social cooperative that provides housing and support for refugees and spaces for the community. It is a place where immigrants, refugees and locals are well engaged through job opportunities and social events.

In 2015, an alliance of activists, creatives and citizens called Goldground Group challenged the City of Munich's plans of demolishing Mullerstrasse 6.[57] As a call to action, this group spearheaded a superficial renovation, sparking public attention to saving the corner block. As a result, the city rented the buildings to a youth organisation housing refugees, leading to a greater project, the Bellevue di Monaco. Companies willing to work with refugees became involved, allowing refugees to participate in the building process where they were given a professional apprenticeship certification. Together with volunteers, refugees, organisations and the city government, the Bellevue di Monaco was established.

The site comprises three buildings providing housing for fifty refugees, a cafe and a cultural hub open to the city. One building (Mullerstrasse 6) with six floors is dedicated for young male refugees sharing apartment units. The space helps each individual transition into independence, with the help of on-site social workers. The second building (Mullerstrasse 4) consists of eight apartments intended for housing refugee families and single mothers with children. This building does not consist of any public spaces, as families are more concerned

57. "Umbau denkmalgeschützter Massivbau, Berlin," Making Heimat, accessed May 2, 2024, http://www.makingheimat.de/en/refugee-housing-projects/database/umbau-denkmalgeschuetzter-massivbau-berlin.



Fig2.3 Interior of Bellevue di Monaco cafe.

with privacy. In contrast, the Mullerstrasse 2, the smallest building of the three, is dedicated to communal spaces such as halls, seminar rooms, offices for legal advice.[58]

Located on the first floor of the Mullerstrasse 6, the Cafe Bellevue di Monaco provides jobs for the residents of Bellevue works. Described as the 'gateway to the city', the cafe allows for residents and locals to have casual conversations over a shared meal and a cup of tea. It also has a rotating menu to reflect the diverse culinary influences that are brought by the different backgrounds of those who work there.

In addition, customers are not obligated to pay a fixed amount, but are asked to pay what they can afford. A bike repair shop is also located on-site to provide another means of living for the residents whilst engaging with other locals. In addition, Bellevue di Monaco runs concerts, sports courses and other social events to highlight community integration and help refugees feel confident and welcomed in their new environment. Personal support is also provided with on-site immigration consultants, lawyers, employment, education and German language courses.

In response to "how do people want to live in the city?", Bellevue di Monaco captures the long term benefits of providing refugees the proper means of housing and support to transition into their new environment; a means through which long term benefits can be created for both refugees and the community.

58. Guiding Architects, "Bellevue di Monaco, Munich," Guiding Architects, accessed May 2, 2024, https://www.guiding-architects.net/bellevue-di-monaco-munich/.



Fig2.4 Outdoor meeting area.



Fig2.5 Rooftop basketball court.



Fig2.6 Outdoor cafe patio where lcoals gather.


2



Fig2.7 Exterior view of Bellevue de Monaco at night time.


BELLEVUE



Fig2.8 Exterior facade from the street.

Haus Märkisches Ufer [Berlin]

Haus Märkisches Ufer is a privately owned townhouse located in one of Berlin's prime locations:the Spree Canal, overlooking the City Palace and Berlin's Fernsehturm. The townhouse was renovated as a home of transit for asylum seekers: six families and thirty single men.

The scale of the Haus Märkisches Ufer is that of a small to medium size residential complex, a feasible number of units that allow for co-inhabitation. Twelve residents inhabit each floor, sleeping in three bedrooms furnished with beds and additional bunk beds for families. They share a bathroom and a fourth, recreational room where children could do their homework and play. In the heart of the building, is the communal kitchen and a dining area where families prepare food together and interact with each other. The functionality of the building is such that it serves beyond its means. It is a space for engagement and support that enriches a sense of community amongst its residents.

In addition to its low occupancy scale, Haus Märkisches Ufer takes pride in providing proper furnishings.[59] Although a place for transit, the architects aimed to provide a sense of permanence through its interior design. Bastian Sevilgen from MUF Architects states "Often, the government thinks we have to put only rough furniture in shelters because it will get destroyed…I don't like this idea of making things really sturdy so people don't break [them]. I thought, let's just make it really nice so they will appreciate it."[60] These furnishings are most effective in the communal spaces like the communal

59. "Dreigegeneinen," Baunetz Architekten, accessed May 2, 2024, https://www.baunetz-architekten.de/dreigegeneinen/4992801/projekt/4992967.

60. "German Refugee Housing," Azure Magazine, accessed May 2, 2024, https://www.azuremagazine.com/article/german-refugee-housing/.



Fig2.9 Typical room for refugee families.

kitchen and the dining hall. In addition to details, the exterior of the Haus Märkisches Ufer is intact with its Rococo facade, unrecognisable as a housing complex for refugees, keeping its anonymity intact in the urban context.

Although operated by a private owner, a renewable contract was made with the city district. The Haus Märkisches Ufer is a precedent of a manageable framework that could be implemented throughout cities like Toronto, where 'prime' properties' could be negotiated by cities and landlords to accommodate asylum seekers in centralized, well-connected locations.

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Fig2.10 Communal kitchen amongst residents.



Fig2.11 Exterior view of Haus Märkisches Ufer..

An Integrative Framework: Caracol [France]

Caracol is an organisation leading an innovative framework of co-housing throughout major cities in France. The organisation provides sustainable, temporary, affordable housing for locals and refugees. As stated by Caracol, the purpose of their flatshares is "to offer the opportunity to people with different cultures and backgrounds to build together a comfortable and enriching co-housing project".[61] Their framework brings together homeowners and residents to acquire and rebuild vacant buildings, aiming to equally benefit both parties.

Flatshares are a new way of co-living in cities where there is a lack of housing affordability and availability. The organisation works with homeowners who own vacant buildings that have stable structures and functioning water, heating and SSI. [62] Homeowners then turn their property over to Caracol for a temporary period of 12 months, saving them on security, management and maintenance costs. During this duration, Caracol and its partners fully finance the project, whilst property owners may be able to receive a tax exemption.[63]

Like many co-housing projects, residents are provided a room and share living spaces with each other. However, with Caracol, refugees and locals come together to repair and maintain their space, creating a ground of responsibilities and a sense of care for their new home. These spaces prosper a sense of community and create an opportunity to integrate refugees within French society where they receive insight into the local culture and language. A Caracol resident states "I finally didn't have to go out of my way to find the locals, because this time I was living with them".[64]

61. "Habitants," Caracol Colocation, accessed May 2, 2024, https://caracol-colocation.fr/habitants/.

62. "Propriétaires," Caracol Colocation, accessed May 2, 2024, https://caracol-colocation.fr/proprietaires/.

63. Ibid.

64. Teman Sasha, "Innovative Housing in France: Caracol Housing," The City Magazine, accessed May 2, 2024, http://thecitymag.concordia.ca/innovative-housing-in-france-caracol-housing/.

The rising living costs in Paris have made it difficult for locals and most especially those who have just obtained or are awaiting for their refugee status. Caracol is a solution to this crisis by operating with a sensitive approach to serving its diverse residents. Since 2018, Caracol has established 22 flatshares of varying sizes and locations mainly in Paris. Flatshares not only provide shelter, but an opportunity for integration, building relationships and creating communities for locals and refugees who need to rebuild their lives and their future.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 Finding Community

"AJ" was born and raised in Saudi Arabia to Chadian parents, and he identifies as African. As a foreigner in the Middle East without a permanent residency, he felt that he may never have a stable future. At the age of 18, he migrated to Chad to pursue post-secondary education and felt similarly out of place there. A year later, at the age of 19, he sought asylum at a Canadian border crossing.

In my interview with AJ, he shares moments of resilience through this journey. He first paid $15,000 CAD to obtain a US visa and relocated there as a stepping stone to entering Canada. Despite feeling isolated and navigating many challenges on his own, especially the language barrier, he persevered. Recalling one occasion, he said, "It was difficult because I barely knew English. I remember taking a taxi in the States and not understanding that the hotels needed credit cards. Eventually, the front desk realised my dire situation and took a cash deposit instead".

Finding Housing

Upon arriving in Montreal, AJ found shelter at the YMCA and was later directed to other organisations, such as PRAIDA. Resources such as connections to legal aid, food banks, and refugee centres were made available for him. He met a diverse group of volunteers and employees and many refugee claimants from different origins and backgrounds. However, AJ was obligated to find housing independently after thirty days and relocate immediately. During this point, many refugee claimants still relocate to other accommodations made available within the shelter system due to the lack of affordable housing and resources. However, the community of refugee claimants played a crucial role in helping AJ navigate this problem, often living together and sharing resources

As experienced by AJ, he mentioned, "It is almost impossible to find housing on your own and with no connections in Canada. – If you do not have cash in hand, of course. What usually happens is that people find others, usually within their race, and try to solve these issues together. You have nothing to do at the shelter except share your stories, questions, and advice with others."

AJ eventually found housing through word of mouth– he found a two-bedroom apartment shared with five others from different backgrounds: Yemenis, Chadians, Saudis, Syrians, and Palestinians. They all spoke Arabic, which helped with communication and cultural connectivity. Over time, a community requiring transitional housing passed through this apartment. As time progressed, the community began to flourish. He mentions, "It slowly became our community's transitional housing complex with sometimes many guys crashing in the living room at a time. But it was affordable, costing 200 per person."

Building Community

Community, for AJ, was crucial in helping him navigate his way through his new environment. It gave him a road map of networks, resources, and a sense of belonging. AJ mentions that this "community made such a powerful impact on me. Imagine getting advice on everything because it was already tried and true. Which cellular company is best for buying that first SIM Card? What time is the best time to visit an organisation? Who are the incompetent lawyers to avoid? As for housing, people can guide you through word of mouth, WhatsApp groups, and Facebook groups." Community and relationship building revealed these anecdotes of knowledge that are impossible to learn from elsewhere but from those who hav

lived through it. Through soccer games, impromptu barbecues, and small social gatherings at his apartment, this community grew and gave AJ a sense of home. Since this community was created by those he met at the shelter, it had taken AJ a long time to establish contacts outside of that. He stated, "I wish there were more integration classes and trips around the city to understand our new reality instead of just pamphlets and presentations. I wish we had organised meetups with locals because little did I know that it would take me years to even befriend a non-immigrant/refugee.".

Community played a vital role in AJ's adaptation, offering networks, resources, and a sense of belonging. He emphasised the importance of integration classes and social events to foster relationships with locals, highlighting the potential for diverse communities to strengthen and enrich society.

3.1 Toronto: Places of Support

Upon arrival, refugee claimants can access first contact sites such as the Red Cross, welcome centres, and other non-profit organisations for healthcare, housing, and legal aid (Figure 3.1). Once they acquire a work or study permit, claimants can receive the city's employment resources. Legal Aid Ontario (LAO) is also located in the heart of downtown Toronto, where legal advice and lawyers are available to assist with the refugee claimants' legal status. The Refugee Board of Canada is also nearby, where claimants can attend their scheduled trial. Most other services are accessible through the city's public transportation system.

Toronto provides a diverse selection of support at varying scales. Urban centers have legal and medical aid and job opportunities. Communities adjacently have initiatives to strengthen and support integration that hotel accommodations cannot recreate. Henceforth, redirecting funding and attention towards community-based projects enriches the long-term trajectory of refugee claimants living in Toronto. Providing them with a transition where they are given not only resources but networks of societal relationships would inevitably lead them to the right footing where they feel valued and appreciated as members of society.

Non-Profit Organization: Romero House

Located in the heart of Toronto, Romero Housing is a charitable organization that helps refugee claimants find transitional housing and settlement support.[65] The organization is composed of a diverse group of people in the community, and volunteering with care, mutuality, and dignity is at the core of its philosophy.66 Romero House offers legal assistance, housing, healthcare, education, and events for community building.

65. Romero House, accessed May 2, 2024, https://romerohouse.org/.

66. Ibid.

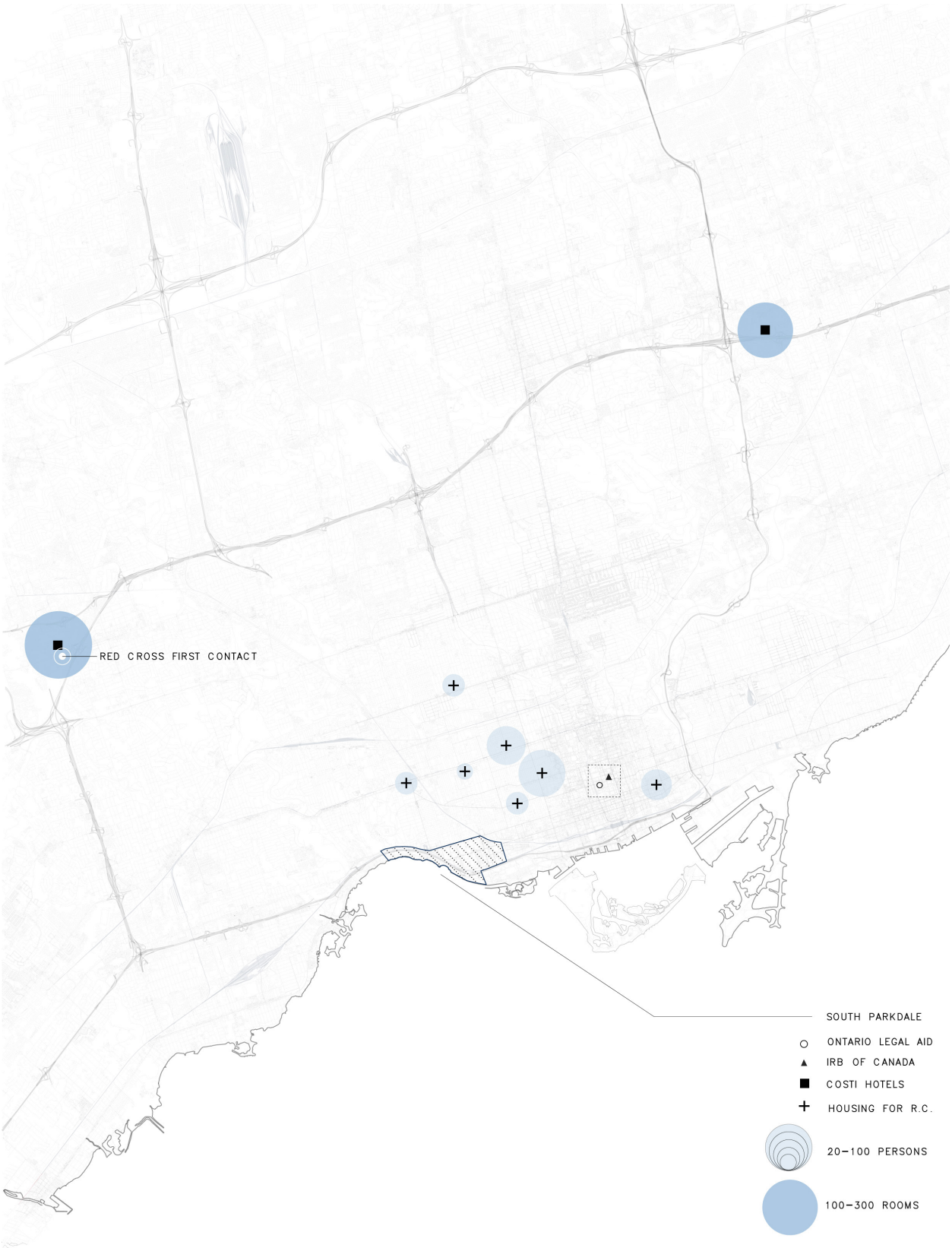


Fig3.1 Map of Toronto showing accommodations for refugee claimants

While other COVID restrictions were being lifted, Canadian borders remained closed for most of 2021. During this time, Romero House spearheaded campaigns to advocate for and educate other groups to fight for the rights of refugees. The united voices of all these organizations caused the border to be reopened in November 2021.

However, this influx caused Toronto to experience a significant demand for shelter space for the newly arrived refugee claimants, and in trying to accommodate COVID shelter protocols, the city could not provide adequate housing for refugee claimants. To alleviate the problem, Romero House established the Community Host Program, allowing community residents to open their homes to those needing shelter. As a result, 80 people were housed between October 2021 and March 2022, and hosts provided spare rooms for refugee claimants for a period ranging from a few days to a few months.

Community engagement is one of Romero House's significant values, along with its mission to support the hundreds of refugee claimant families who arrive in Toronto each year. Their community events are possible due to the help of local volunteers and staff who organize outdoor and indoor events like art clubs, field trips, gardening, sports, and other activities.

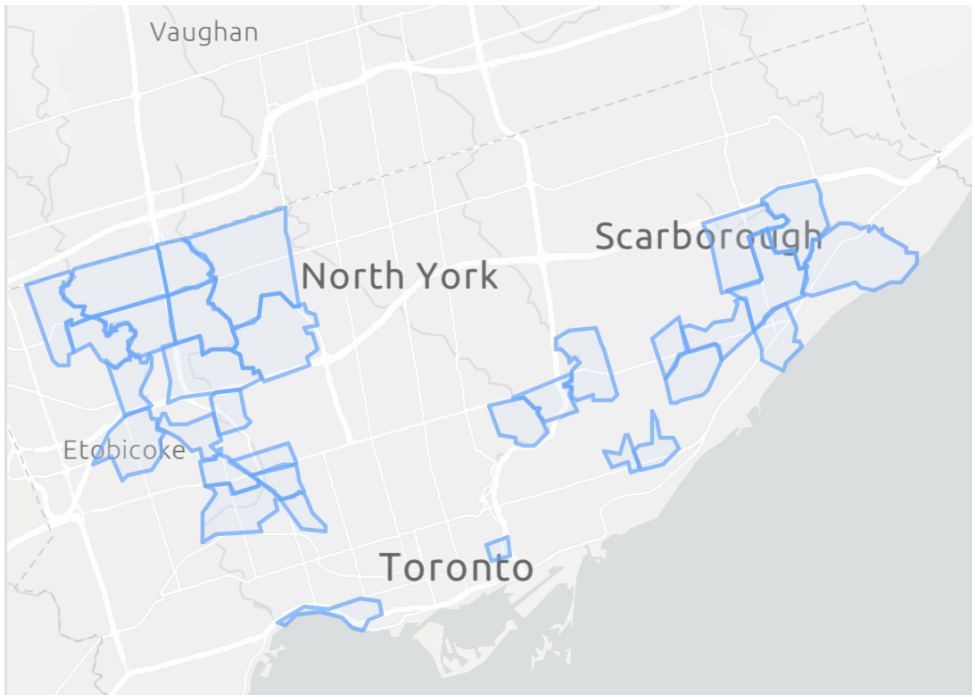


Fig3.2 Map of Neighborhood Improvement Areas in the GTA.

3.2 Resilient Neighbourhoods

Cities reflect communities threading together the relationships of all levels of society within the city's urban fabric. Strong neighbourhoods simultaneously support residents' needs while strengthening the community's social dynamics.[67] They promote a sense of security of needs (e.g., housing and food) and a sense of belonging (e.g., integration and trust). Resilient neighbourhoods create social networks for refugee claimants to access resources and local knowledge that would help them thrive in the broader society of Toronto. These neighbourhoods open opportunities for local impacts toward city-wide changes; similarly, this scale impacts the trajectory of the lives of many refugee claimants.

67. "Building Strong Neighborhoods," Mercatus Center, accessed May 2, 2024, https://www.mercatus.org/research/policy-briefs/building-strong-neighborhoods#:~:text=Strong%20neighborhoods%20host%20institutions%20and,and%20different%20types%20of%20residents.

68. Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods 2020 Action Plan, City of Toronto, 2017, https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/9112-TSNS-2020actionplan-access-FINAL-s.pdf.

69. "Neighbourhood Information Area (NIA) Profiles," City of Toronto, accessed May 2, 2024, https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/data-research-maps/neighbourhoods-communities/neighbourhood-profiles/nia-profiles/.

70. Ibid.

Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy

The Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy (TSNS) represents the city's effort to foster equal opportunities across all neighbourhoods. It serves as an action plan towards active connections and ensure communities' thriving growth. According to TSNS, robust neighbourhoods highlight five fundamental objectives: physical infrastructure, economic prospects, public health, social cohesion, and civic engagement.[68] However, 31 out of Toronto's 158 neighbourhoods fell short in these areas, leading to their classification as Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIA) (See Figure 3.2).[69]

Investment in neighbourhoods is a paramount priority in cultivating resilient communities. To this end, the city has earmarked dedicated funding through the Partnerships Opportunities Fund (POL) to improve community infrastructure.[70] This funding is directed towards a variety of initiatives, including, but not limited to, community hubs, community kitchens, recreational spaces, youth



Fig3.3 7 Working Groupds of Parkdale People's Economy.

centers, and cultural facilities. Proposals for such projects are driven by the community itself, ensuring high levels of local involvement and empowering residents as key decision-makers.

Moreover, the strategy has established the Toronto Neighborhood Funders Network, facilitating collaboration among private, public, and community-based funding organizations.[71] This collaborative effort aims to align policies, initiatives, and priorities, maximizing resources and support for the Improvement Neighborhood Areas (NIA). This alignment is critical in leveraging resources effectively and ensuring that strategies from funding partners activate appropriate support for NIAs.

South Parkdale Neighborhood

The South Parkdale Neighborhood is an Improvement Neighbourhood Area located in the southwestern part of Toronto's downtown core. It is known as one of the few remaining affordable inner-city regions characterised by its diverse population. The neighbourhood's affordability accommodates many low-income and marginalised residents. Despite this, the neighbourhood is experiencing transformations due to escalating real estate values and gentrification, resulting in pressure across all community levels. In an ongoing attempt to fight against gentrification, the South Parkdale Neighbourhood has further gained the involvement of the local community through the Parkdale People's Economy, a collaborative effort involving over 30 community-based organisations and members. Together, they work towards a well-connected and developed neighbourhood, with a primary focus: ensuring that low-income community members benefit from rather than suffer from neighbourhood inniatives.

71. "Neighbourhood Information Area (NIA) Profiles," City of Toronto, accessed May 2, 2024, https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/data-research-maps/neighbourhoods-communities/neighbourhood-profiles/nia-profiles/.



Fig3.4 PNLT objectives diagram.

Parkdale Neighborhood Land Trust

Within the framework of the Parkdale People's Economy, the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust (PNLT) was established as a corporation, subsequently incorporating a charitable entity, the Neighbourhood Land Trust. These two organisations collaborate to ensure the availability of permanent affordable housing. While the Neighbourhood Land Trust (NLT) oversees property ownership and acquisition, the PNLT focuses on conducting vital community research to identify housing requirements, community spaces, educational resources, and services.

Within the Parkdale People's Economy framework, the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust (PNLT) was established as a corporation, subsequently incorporating a charitable entity, the Neighbourhood Land Trust. These two organisations collaborate to ensure the availability of permanently affordable housing. In contrast, the Neighbourhood Land Trust (NLT) oversees property ownership and acquisition, and the PNLT focuses on conducting vital community research to identify housing requirements, community spaces, educational resources, and services.

During an interview with James Partanan, community development coordinator at Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust, it emphasised that throughout each project phase, PNLT ensures community involvement by actively engaging community representatives who collaborate closely with both the board of directors and NLT. The PNLT implements the Social Procurement Strategy early in the process, forming partnerships with locally owned businesses, equity groups, and consultants. During renovation stages, PLT prioritises contractors with supportive employment programs, which assist

72. Interview with Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust.

73. "Community Land Trust (CLT)," Prince Edward Island Poverty Reduction Action Plan (PNLT), accessed May 2, 2024, https://pnlt.ca/clt/.

individuals in developing trade skills.

Following this, PNLT identifies Operating Partners to manage projects effectively. For instance, a women's housing project might require the involvement of a nonprofit organisation dedicated to providing support and management. These partners oversee property maintenance, fund collection, administrative tasks, and service provision.

NLT and PNLT, together with their partners and volunteers, progress through project phases with a unified commitment to community investment. As they advocate for community members, their network expands, enhancing their ability to support refugee claimants and further integrate them into the community.

CHAPTER FOUR

Premise

In the aftermath of a global backlog and other various underlying issues outlined in the Introductory chapter, many refugee claimants live in contingency hotels for prolonged periods. As discussed in Chapter 1, the hotelisation of refugee claimants raises long-term consequences that affect their physical and mental well-being. Challenges of integration and sustainable living conditions have transpired in these types of accommodations, shown in the analysis of Toronto contingency hotels: 55 Hallcrown Place and 640 Dixon Road—highlighting a lack of social infrastructure and connectivity to the local community.

Mentioned in Chapter 3, the City of Toronto is continually mitigating its funding towards non-profit organisations and community churches to ease pressures off the city's shelter system; together with Toronto's Strong Neighbourhood Strategy, this opens opportunities of leveraging the roles of communities in the transitioning of refugee claimants in Toronto. It is in context that this thesis aims to reimagine a collaborative strategy involving policymakers, stakeholders, community leaders, locals, and refugee claimants that benefits the neighbourhood as a whole. Hence, this thesis conceptualises how neighbourhoods can become inclusive for refugee claimants by exploring design methods and approaches that implements this into practice.

In context, this thesis serves as a call to action that hopes to be an integral part of the Toronto Neighbourhood Strategy.

Towards a New Typology

The name "Community Threads" alludes to the idea of weaving individuals into the existing urban fabric of neighbourhoods, where refugee claimants could rebuild their lives and become integral parts of the community. The project intersects the importance of support and local exchange through socio-economics, urban reform, and sociocultural connections.

The architecture of integration is conceptualised at the urban scale by placing different nodes of exchange throughout the neighbourhood. Instead of a single architectural project, a network of social and support spaces emerges at various sites and scales, including parks and residential homes. These sites form a metabolic network, adapting to the evolving needs of refugee claimants and integrating seamlessly with the existing urban fabric of the neighbourhood.

Situated in the South Parkdale Neighbourhood, Community Threads is a practical and a feasible solution that addresses three key points: housing, support, and integration, presenting a cohesive network of three transformative sites that interact with each other. Through a negotiation of scale, subtle design proposals ensure a smooth integration without disrupting the neighbourhood's urban fabric and built environment—How could pockets of exchange transpire throughout the neighbourhood? How might a backyard be transformed into informal children's spaces? How can a single house become a meeting place for legal aid? Could an existing retail space become a venue for cultural exchange? These questions inform the importance of re-imagining spaces not as singular elements but as part of a collective, collaborative network of architectural and urban design that too fosters inclusivity.

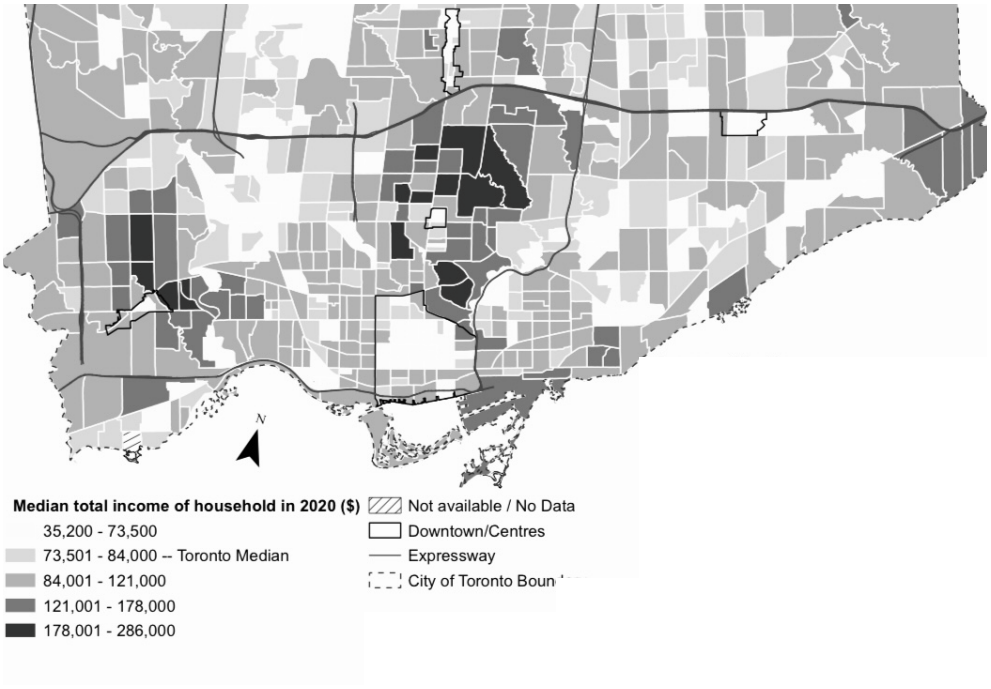


Fig4.1 Map of Toronto's median income per area/ neighbourhood.

Design Proposal: The Strategy

The design proposal includes two parts: "The Strategy" and "Activating Networks." First, "The Strategy" is a primary design phase, identifying the parameters for housing refugee claimants in neighbourhoods— outlining the proper sites, and building a new collaborative framework. Organised into three consecutive stages: The Neighbourhood, A New Framework, and The Sites. Set parameters also addresses issues of gentrification and work within the capacity of the neighbourhood without compromising existing initiatives, funds, and goals. This section includes applying the framework to the project context— The South Parkdale Neighbourhood.

Stage 1: Finding the Neighbourhood

The first and integral stage is finding the proper neighbourhood to support and sustain the transition of newly arrived refugee claimants. Discussed in the introductory chapter, refugee claimants experience various challenges of marginalisation, such as language barriers, discrimination, financial insecurity, limited access to resources and psychological traumas. These issues are very complex and require a design approach of both architectural solutions and inclusive urban planning of neighbourhoods— building opportunities for social connections, diversity, cultural exchange and support that helps refugee claimants feel empowered, belong and thrive.

With cities constantly changing, it is inevitable that neighbourhoods begin to shift, however, this does not always benefit everyone. In reality, cities like Toronto have become a "divided city" segregated between wealthy and disadvantaged neighbourhoods.[74] Affluent neighbourhoods and those experiencing gentrification are led by investors rather than the community itself; leveraging off of

74. Sobhan Sarbandi, "Gentrification in Parkdale: The Process and Impact on Tenants," Landmarks Journal (2018): 44, accessed January 15, 2019, https://landmarksjournal.geog.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Sobhan-Sarbandi-2018-Gentrification-Parkdale.pdf.

75. Emily Doe, "Examining the Negative Impacts of Gentrification," Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law & Policy Blog, April 12, 2023, accessed May 3, 2024, https://www.law.georgetown.edu/poverty-journal/blog/examining-the-negative-impacts-of-gentrification/.

STAGE 1
FINDING THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

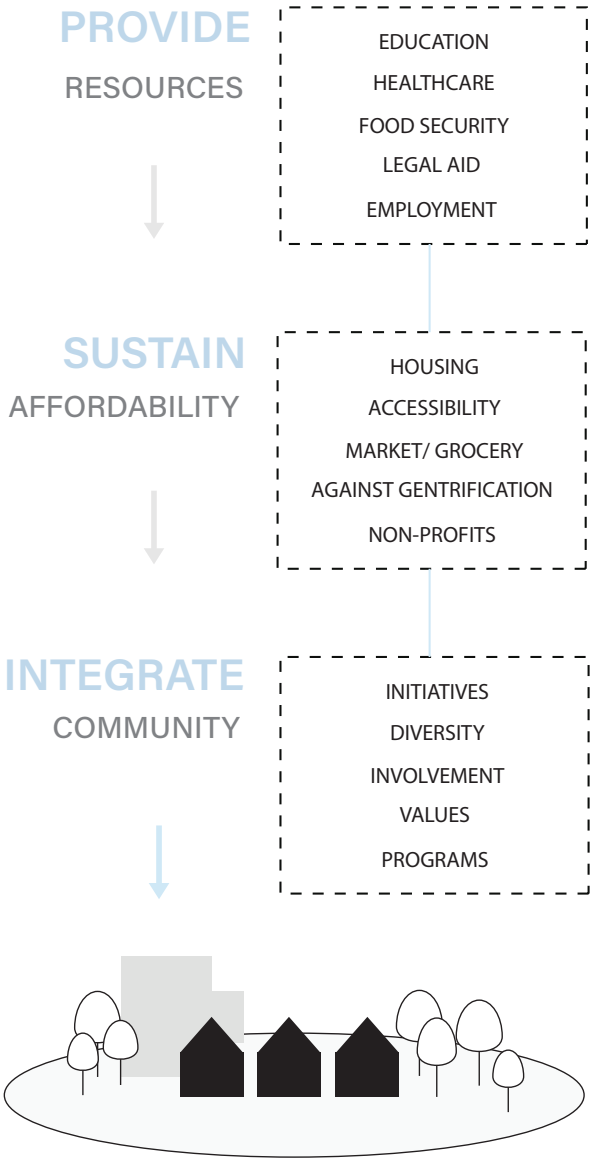


Fig4.2 Diagram of finding the proper nieghbourhood

high taxes, properties, targeting a specific income demographic.[75] Infrastructures and developments are not meant to be accessible to low-income households, including marginalised individuals like refugee claimants– presented by high-rise condominiums, private schools and high-end grocery stores. Henceforth, a process of elimination is done to prevent a neighbourhood displacement amongst refugee claimants.

According to the City of Toronto 2021 Census, the median total household income is $84,000.[76] The map (figure 4.1) shows that high median incomes reside mostly in neighbourhoods bounded by Bloor Street, the Don Valley, Wilson Avenue and Bathurst Street. Lower medium incomes ($35,200 - $73,500) scattered in clusters throughout the city, mainly found in the downtown's core, Scarborough and north east of Toronto.[77] Noted earlier, changes to cities and neighbourhoods are inevitable and implications of gentrification may have already begun. However, discussed in chapter 3, resiliency against this issue is present in many of the city's Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIA), which is a pivotal starting point of the strategy.

Inclusive Neighbourhoods

Inclusive neighbourhoods for refugee claimants should have three domains: to provide, sustain and integrate (figure 4.2). Neighbourhoods should be able to provide, by offering resources such as access to education, healthcare, food security, legal aid and employment services. Secondly, neighbourhoods must sustain the presence of refugee claimants by ensuring affordability, giving access to resources such as housing, food and non-profit organisations. Lastly, neighbourhoods must be equipped to integrate refugee claimants to society, which could be achieved through community

76. City of Toronto, City Planning 2021 Census Backgrounder: Families, Households, Marital Status, Income (Toronto: City of Toronto, 2022), accessed May 3, 2024, https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/9877-City-Planning-2021-Census-Backgrounder-Families-Hhlds-Marital-Status-Income.pdf.

77. ibid.

enhancement initiatives and programs that fosters diversity and cultural exchange.

Situated in the west-end of Toronto, the South Parkdale Neighbourhood is lively, and diverse, with a significant population of low income and marginalised residents, including a notable amount of affordable housing and community services.[78] Figure 4.3 presents social infrastructure in the South Parkdale Neighbourhood, categorised into three domains: ***provide, sustain, and integrate.*** This existing social infrastructure is beneficial to refugee claimants because this suggests opportunities where their needs are met without facing displacement from the broader community. The first domain, "to provide" is presented by nearby various fundamental resources: public schools, medical clinics and legal aid such as the Parkdale Community Legal Services. The second domain, "to sustain" are those that ensure refugee claimants could comfortably live in the neighbourhood such as affordable grocery stores and accessible housing. Lastly, the third domain, "to integrate" ensures that refugee claimants feel a sense of belonging, social engagement and cultural exchange such as community centres.

78. Parkdale People's Economy, "About Parkdale," accessed May 3, 2024, https://parkdale-peopleseconomy.ca/parkdale/.

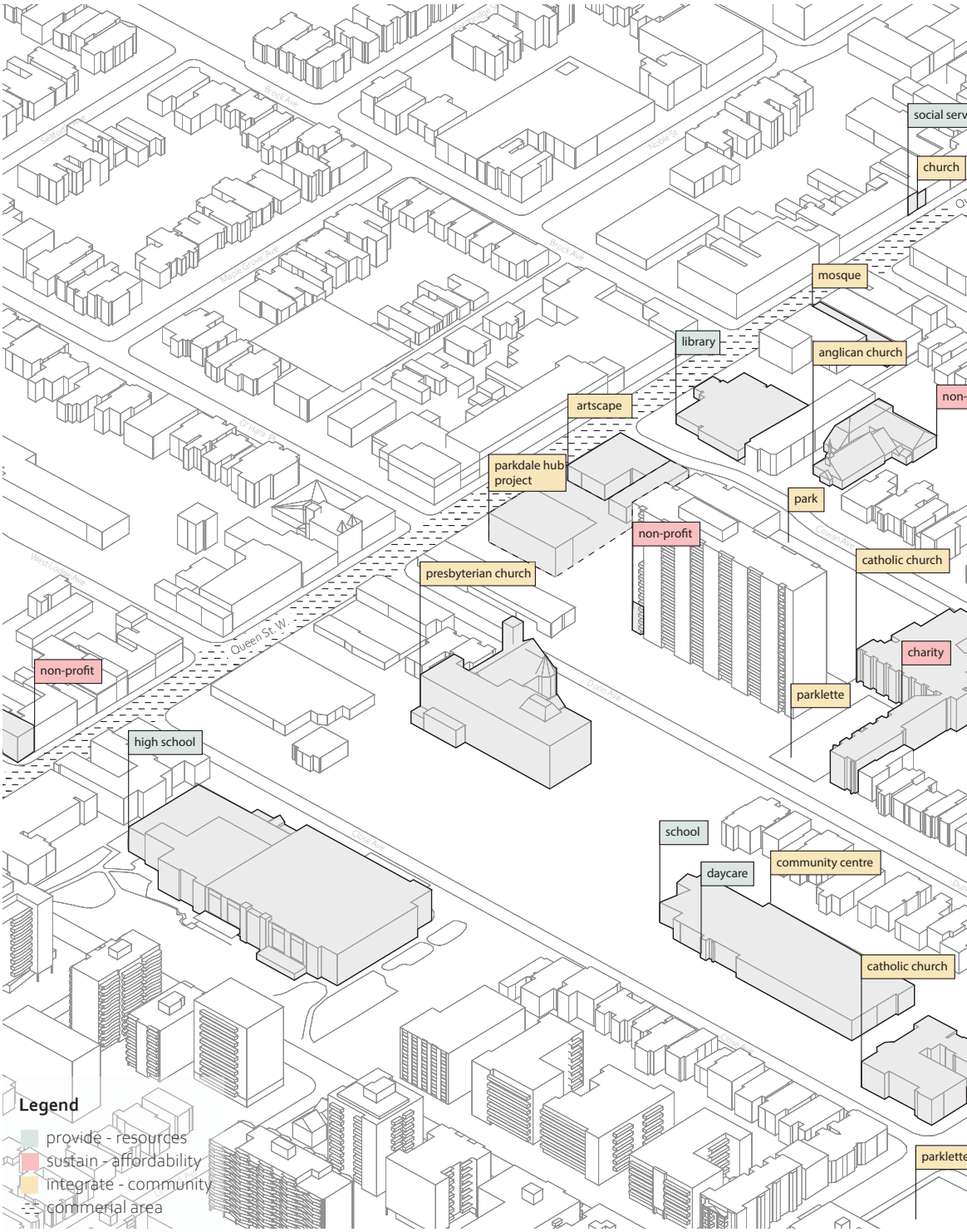


Fig4.3 South Parkdale Neighbourhood Social Infrastructure.

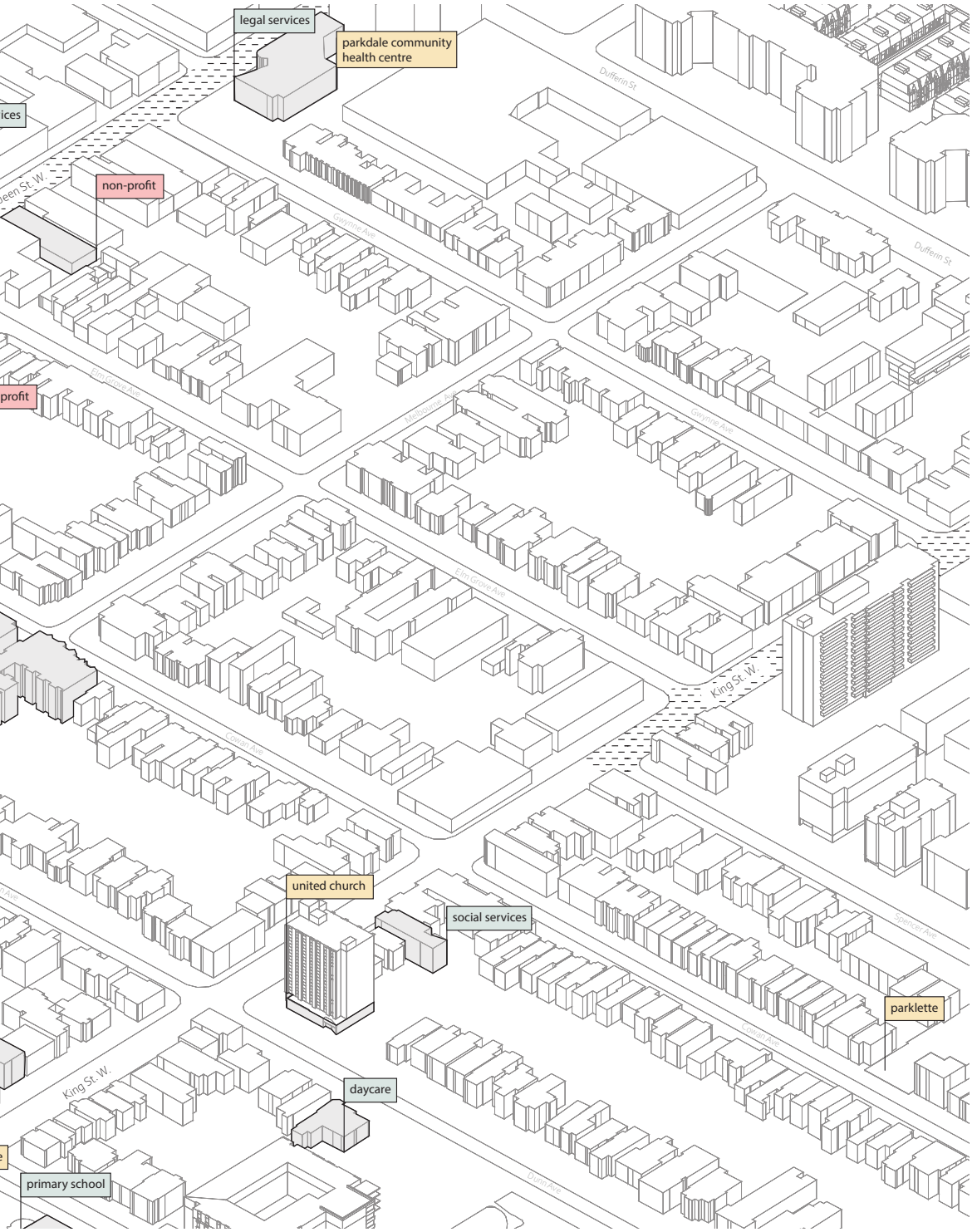

legal services
parkdale community health centre
non-profit
profit
united church
social services
daycare
primary school
parklette
Dufferin St
Gwynne Ave
Elm Grove Ave
King St. W.
Cowan Ave
Spencer Ave
Dunn Ave



Fig4.4 Masayrk Park Community Garden.



Fig4.5 Milky Way Community Garden.



Fig4.6 Masaryk-Cowan Community Centre.



Fig4.7 Photo of Parkdale Collegiate institute basketball court.

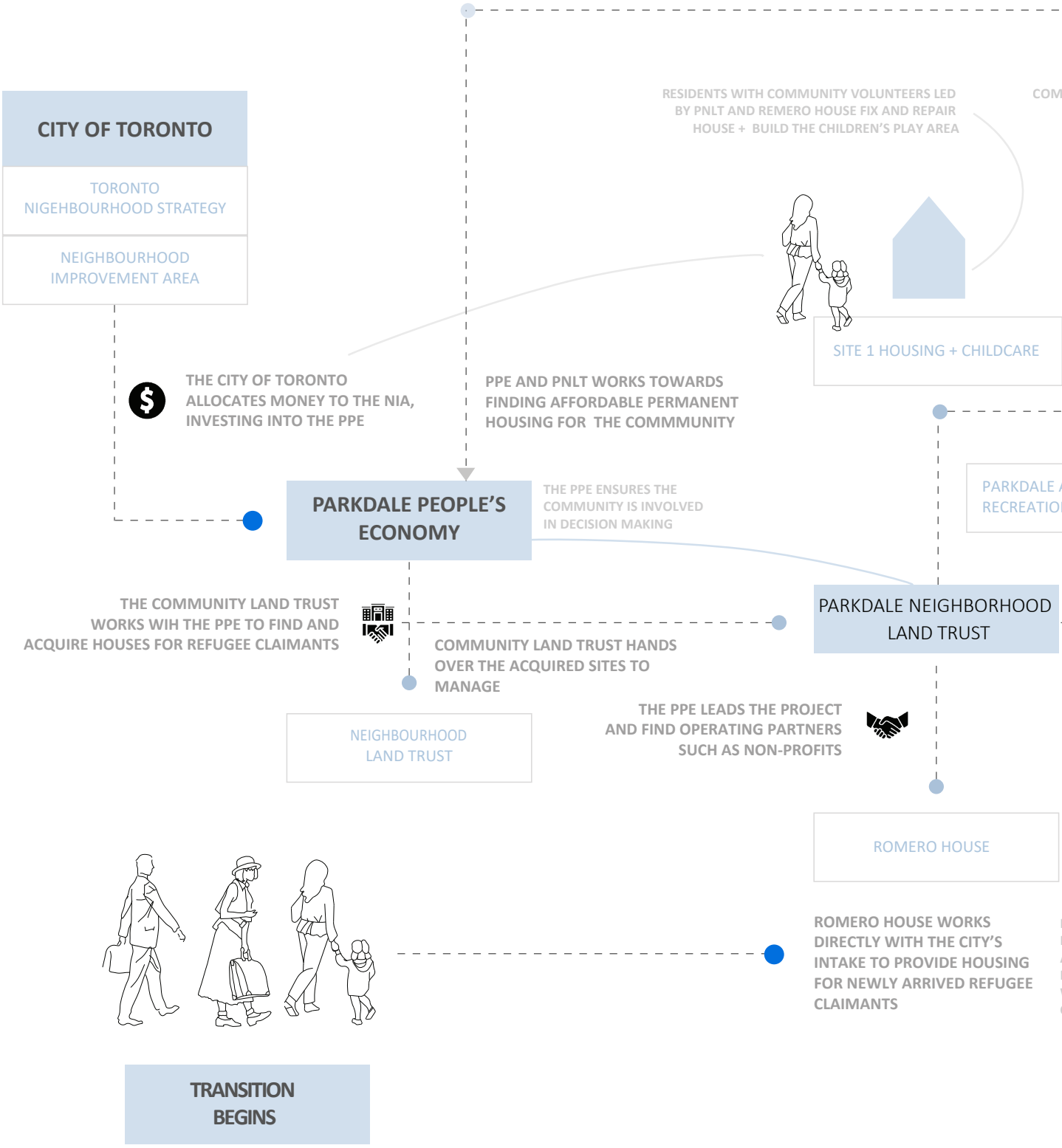
Stage 2: Towards A Collaborative Framework

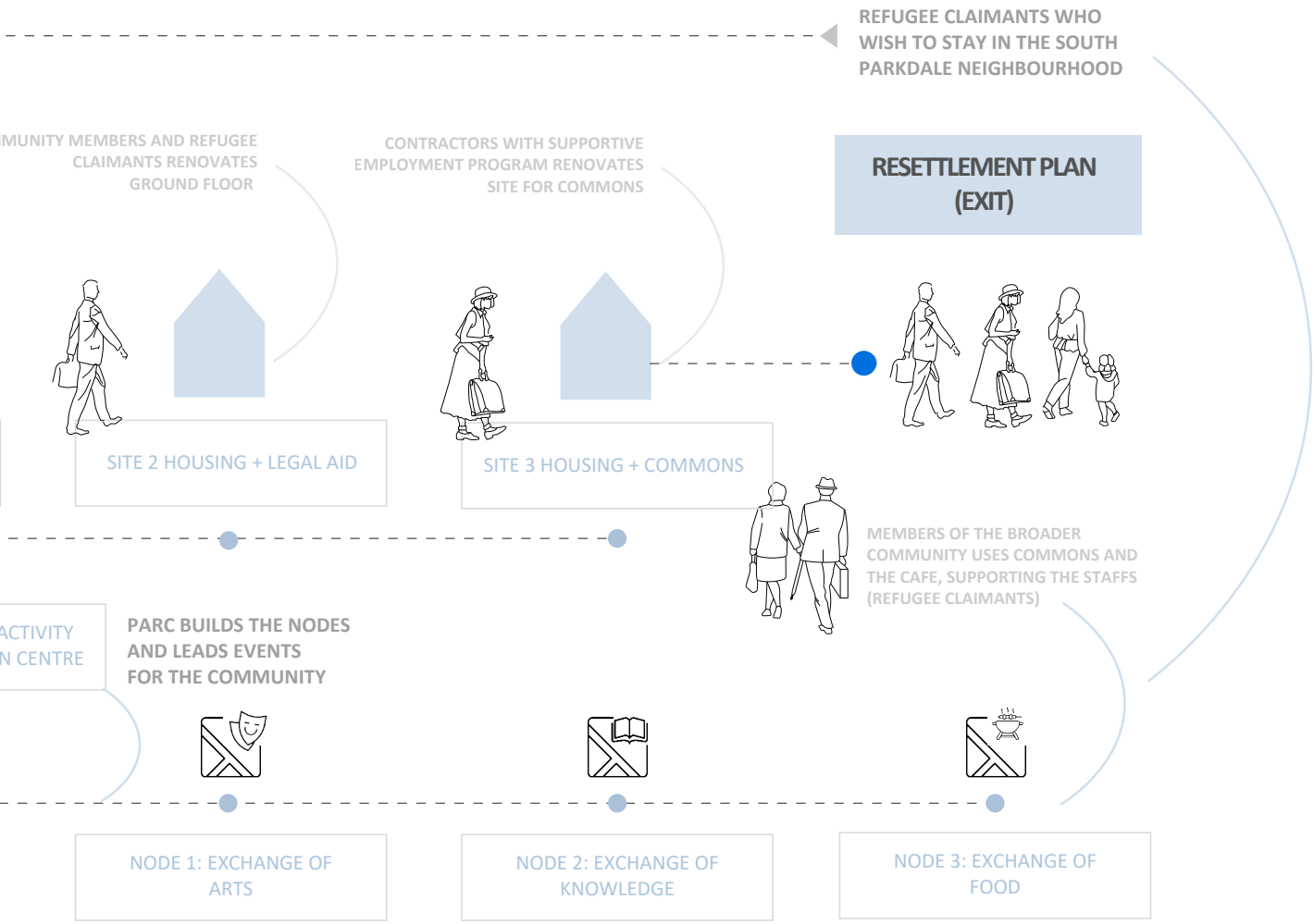
A collaboration between stakeholders, policymakers, locals, and refugee claimants is essential for creating inclusive neighbourhoods because different perspectives offer further understanding of the community's needs, issues, and challenges. The inclusivity of a neighbourhood is truly a reflection of those who live in it. Furthermore, giving refugee claimants a voice encourages a sense of belonging and integration in society that benefits them both presently and in the future. Collaborative decision-making ensures that future investments align with the community's evolving needs and is, itself, a manifestation of resiliency against issues of gentrification and inequality.

In the context of this thesis, a new collaborative strategy envisions the timeline of refugee claimants from arrival, transition and preparation for resettlement. Figure # presents a timeline that begins with the arrival of refugee claimants in Toronto, where they receive temporary, emergency accommodations like contingency hotels through the Canadian Red Cross and the city's shelter system. These accommodations are meant to be temporary (1-3 days) to ensure they receive immediate support at any time of arrival. Transition begins when refugee claimants arrive at Community Threads where they receive supportive housing and resources as they await for their refugee status and or until they feel established for permanent resettlement.

The governing strategy of Community Threads begins with Toronto's Neighbourhood Strategy, where funds are allocated for Improvement Neighbourhood Areas, including the South Parkdale Neighbourhood. Financial support is allocated through the Parkdale

People's Economy and the Community Land Trust (discussed in Chapter 3), facilitating the acquisition of various residential sites. These sites are then overseen by the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust and nonprofit organisations such as Romero Housing, providing support and resources for refugee claimants. In addition, community enhancement programs through the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust and PARC spearhead the development of cultural exchange nodes throughout the neighbourhood. As refugee claimants prepare to leave the transitional housing, their resettlement plan offers an opportunity to find affordable housing through the Community Land Trust which allows them to stay within the South Parkdale Neighbourhood, where they further become an integral part of a functioning society.


CITY OF TORONTO
TORONTO NIGEHBOURHOOD STRATEGY
NEIGHBOURHOOD IMPROVEMENT AREA
RESIDENTS WITH COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS LED BY PNLT AND REMERO HOUSE FIX AND REPAIR HOUSE + BUILD THE CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA
SITE 1 HOUSING + CHILDCARE
THE CITY OF TORONTO ALLOCATES MONEY TO THE NIA, INVESTING INTO THE PPE
PPE AND PNLT WORKS TOWARDS FINDING AFFORDABLE PERMANENT HOUSING FOR THE COMMMUNITY
PARKDALE PEOPLE'S ECONOMY
THE PPE ENSURES THE COMMUNITY IS INVOLVED IN DECISION MAKING
PARKDALE NEIGHBORHOOD LAND TRUST
THE COMMUNITY LAND TRUST WORKS WIH THE PPE TO FIND AND ACQUIRE HOUSES FOR REFUGEE CLAIMANTS
COMMUNITY LAND TRUST HANDS OVER THE ACQUIRED SITES TO MANAGE
NEIGHBOURHOOD LAND TRUST
THE PPE LEADS THE PROJECT AND FIND OPERATING PARTNERS SUCH AS NON-PROFITS
ROMERO HOUSE
ROMERO HOUSE WORKS DIRECTLY WITH THE CITY'S INTAKE TO PROVIDE HOUSING FOR NEWLY ARRIVED REFUGEE CLAIMANTS
TRANSITION BEGINS



ROMERO HOUSE IAS AN OPERATING PARTNER ENSURES ALL FUNDS, ADMINASTRIVE AND SUPPORT IS MANAGED PROPERLY. INCLUDING PROVIDING SUPPORT AND WORKING DIRECTLY WITH REFUGEE CLAIMANTS

Fig4.8 Diagram of Community Threads Collaborative Framework.

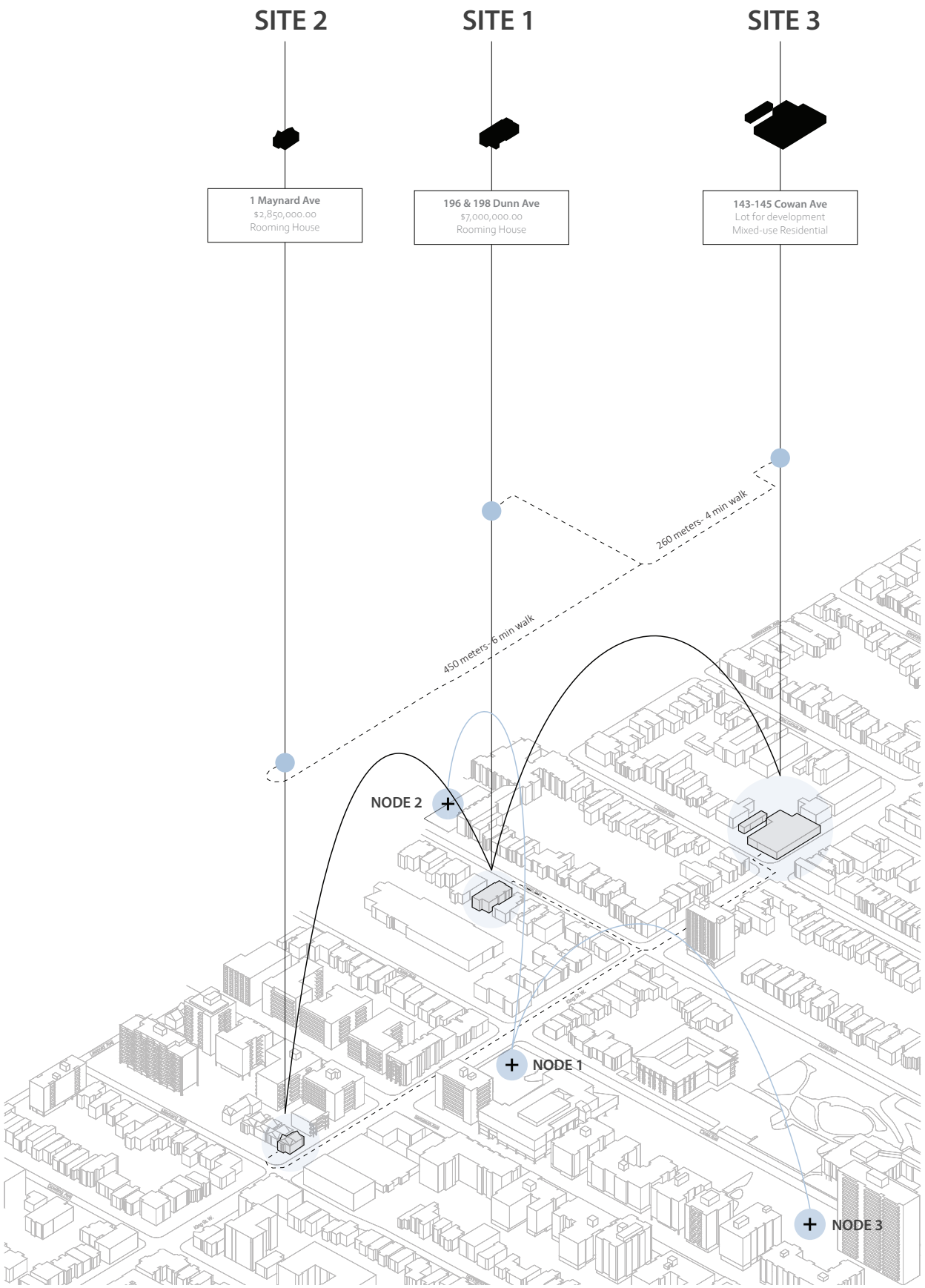


Fig4.9 Common Threads site locations.

Stage 3: Site Parameters

Community Threads comprises three housing sites and three nodes of exchange spread throughout the neighbourhood. The housing sites work within set parameters: they are part of the housing market and could be acquired by the Community Land Trust, they require little to no effort for renovations and are located a walkable distance from each other. Minimal need for renovation makes it easier for Romero House, volunteers and refugee claimants (residents) to maintain and fix in a manner of time that is needed to be used. However, one of the residential sites should be large enough in size to accommodate a space for the broader community. On the other hand, the three nodes of exchange follow a much simpler parameter: they must be situated at the intersections of social infrastructure such as parklets and parks. An application of these parameters are presented in figure 4.10.

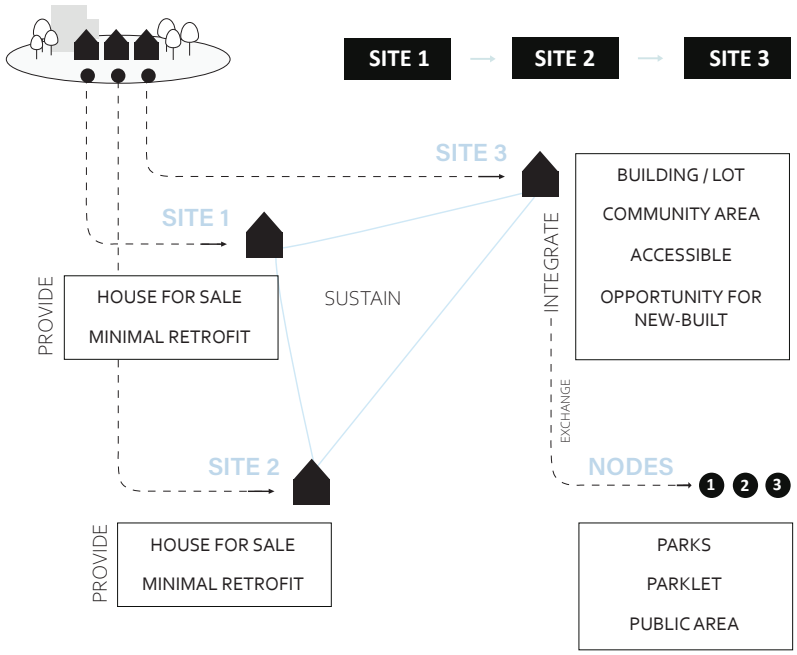


Fig4.10 Diagram of site parameters.



Fig4.11 Photo of Site 196 Dunn (site 1) backyward.



Fig.12 Photo of 1 Maynard Ave. (site 2) from the street.



Fig4.13 Street image of King St. and Cowan.



Fig4.14 Existing site photo showing abandoned apartment (left).

site 1 housing + *informal childcare*

RESIDENTS	+PROGRAM	MODIFICATION	PROGRAM USERS
families with children	drop-off babysitting	backyard enhancement	refugee claimants within community network

site 2 housing + *legal guidance*

RESIDENTS	+PROGRAM	MODIFICATION	PROGRAM USERS
adults	mock-trial legal aid	ground floor renovations	refugee claimants within community network

site 3 housing + *community exchange*

RESIDENTS	+PROGRAM	MODIFICATION	PROGRAM USERS
youth	computer lab cafe, market	retrofit + new addition	refugee claimants + community

node 1 exchange of *arts*

TYPE	PROGRAM	SITE	PROGRAM USERS
urban stage	performances	parklette	neighbourhood

node 2 exchange of *knowldege*

TYPE	PROGRAM	SITE	PROGRAM USERS
outdoor library	reading	parklette	neighbourhood

node 3 exchange of *food*

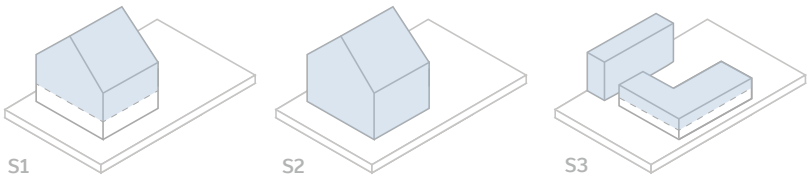
TYPE	PROGRAM	SITE	PROGRAM USERS
tables	cook-out	park	nieghbourhood

Fig4.15 Diagram of site programs, site and uses.

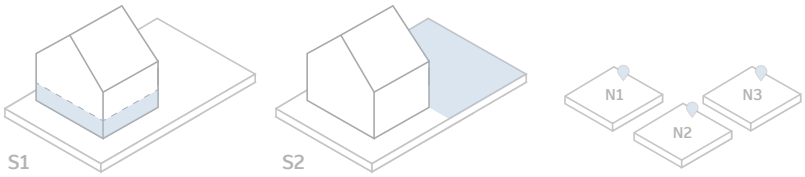
Design Proposal: Activating Networks

The second part of the design, "Activating Networks," puts the strategy into action– transforming residential properties to support the needs of refugee claimants better and creating opportunities for integration through different means of exchange. Furthermore, "Activating Networks" highlights the specific programs at each site and how these sites engage with each other and the broader community. Additionally, the phasing of these sites developed into three phases: the first phase focuses on providing housing, the second phase includes adding support spaces at residential sites and nodes of exchange in the neighbourhood, the third phase is transforming the third site into community spaces to promote both support and cultural exchange to the broader community.

Phase 1: Housing



Phase 2: Support + Nodes



Phase 3: Community Commons

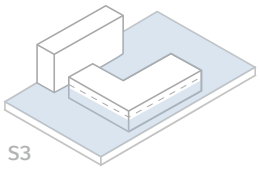


Fig4.16 Digram of project phasing showing three phases of sites.

Phase 1: Housing

Although integral to the project, this phase does not require any design application because Stage 1 has already ensured that these residential sites are existing houses that could already accommodate refugee claimants. However, minimal renovations may be necessary to ensure that spaces are in livable conditions. Renovations are to be done by volunteers, non-profit organisations, and refugee claimants for maintenance of the property. Hence, within the context of this thesis, existing architectural drawings of these housing units are not necessary, and assumption has been made that existing dwelling units follow the standards of the city's building codes.

Phase 2: Support

The second phase implements a programmatic design for spaces of support and nodes of exchange. Spaces of Support are the physical design additions to residential properties and are used by the residents of Community Threads (See figure). In site 1, the ground floor is transformed to provide legal assistance where consultants could hold appointments and an inner community amongst refugee claimants regarding legal aid is encouraged such as mock trials. In site 2, the backyard is transformed into a playing area as an informal childcare drop off for when parents need to attend to legal aids, employment and other obligations.

Phase 2: Nodes of Exchange

Nodes of Exchange are minor physical manifestations of cultural exchange strategically placed throughout the neighborhood (as

mentioned in the Design Strategy). These nodes serve as informal meeting spaces where locals and refugee claimants can engage with each other and learn about each other's culture (See figure 4.13). First, an exchange of knowledge is in the form of a tiny library where cultural books are accessible. The second node facilitates an exchange of arts—a stage that encourages locals and refugee claimants to perform cultural music and dances. Lastly, the third node facilitates an exchange of food, a simple arrangement of protected picnic tables designed for a neighbourhood "cook-out." These nodes of exchange address cultural differences, and promoting the use of these spaces aims to create a safe environment for refugee claimants, where differences in backgrounds are celebrated rather than alienated and discriminated against within the broader community.

Phase 3: The Broader Community

The last phase of the design focuses on adding formal community spaces for the broader neighbourhood. This phase serves as a way of giving back to the neighbourhood that has embraced and accepted refugee claimants in the heart of its community. Implemented in site 3, existing retail spaces on the ground floor are transformed into a community commons. A cafe is located at the corner of the site, where refugee claimants work and locals could try an evolving menu featuring different cultural food. Furthermore, an adaptable interior space serves as a meeting area and different events such as an indoor community market. Additionally, a computer lab promotes individual use for education, research and employment.

The transformation of these spaces are applied by a subtle design intervention, working within the already existing built form of the building. At this scale, volunteers and non-profit organizations,

including the Parkdale People's Economy could implement design interventions without affecting neighbourhood funding and other initiatives. Thus, the strategic use of spaces is what holds meaning to the project, it is not the architectural design itself, but rather, the programs of these spaces that promote integration and connectivity amongst refugee claimants to the broader community.

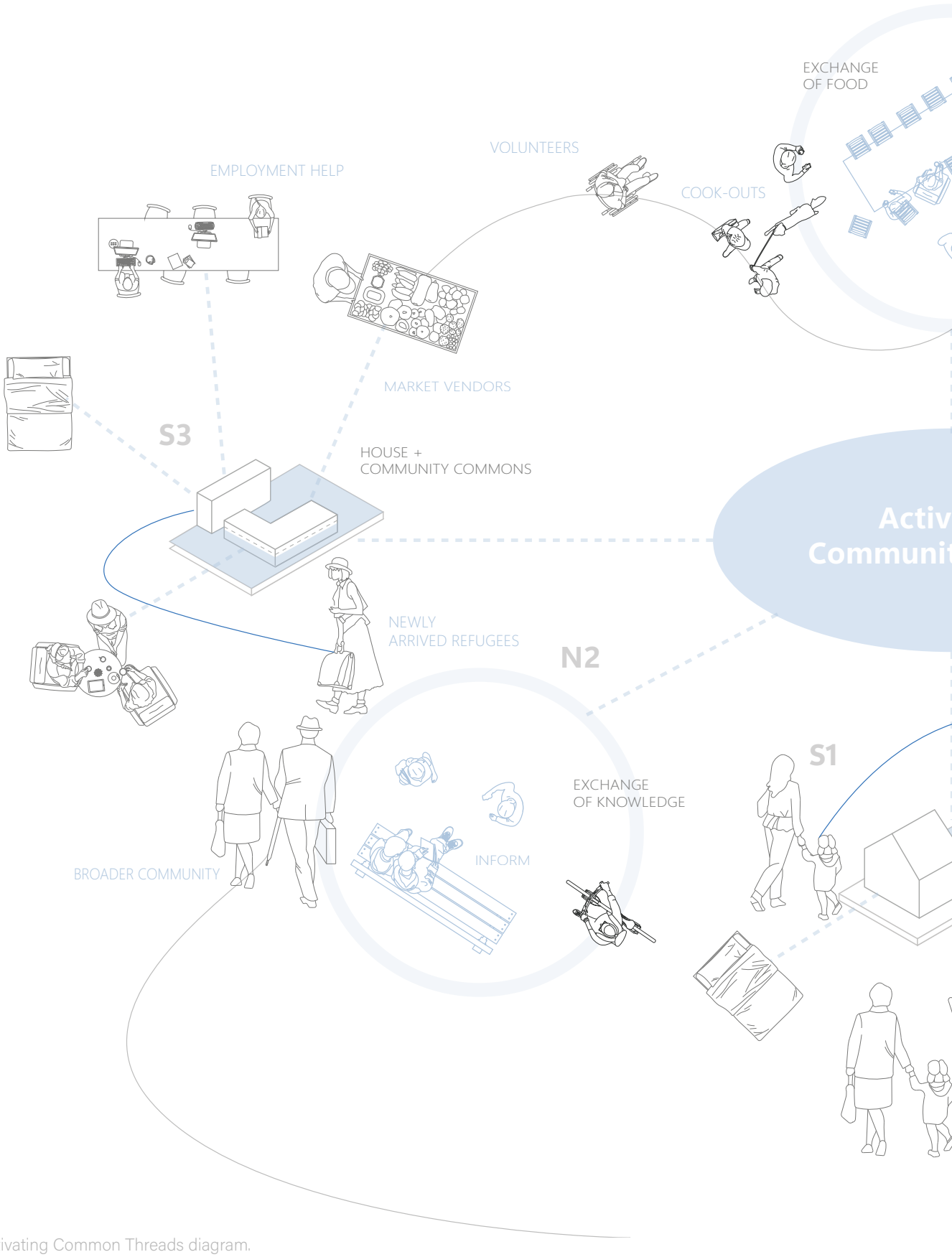
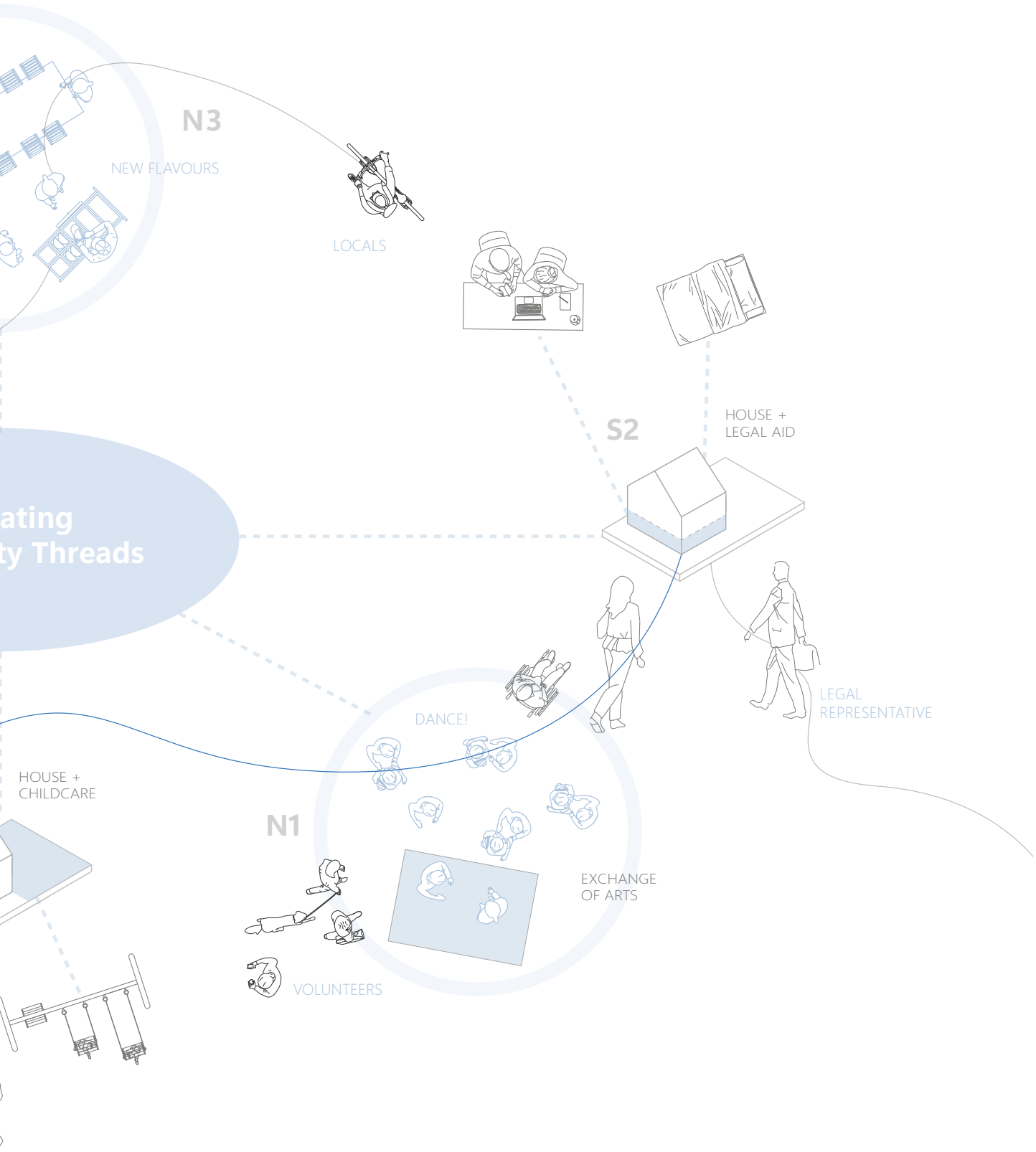


Fig4.17 Activating Common Threads diagram.


N3
NEW FLAVOURS
LOCALS
S2
HOUSE +
LEGAL AID
ating
ty Threads
DANCE!
LEGAL
REPRESENTATIVE
HOUSE +
CHILDCARE
N1
EXCHANGE
OF ARTS
VOLUNTEERS

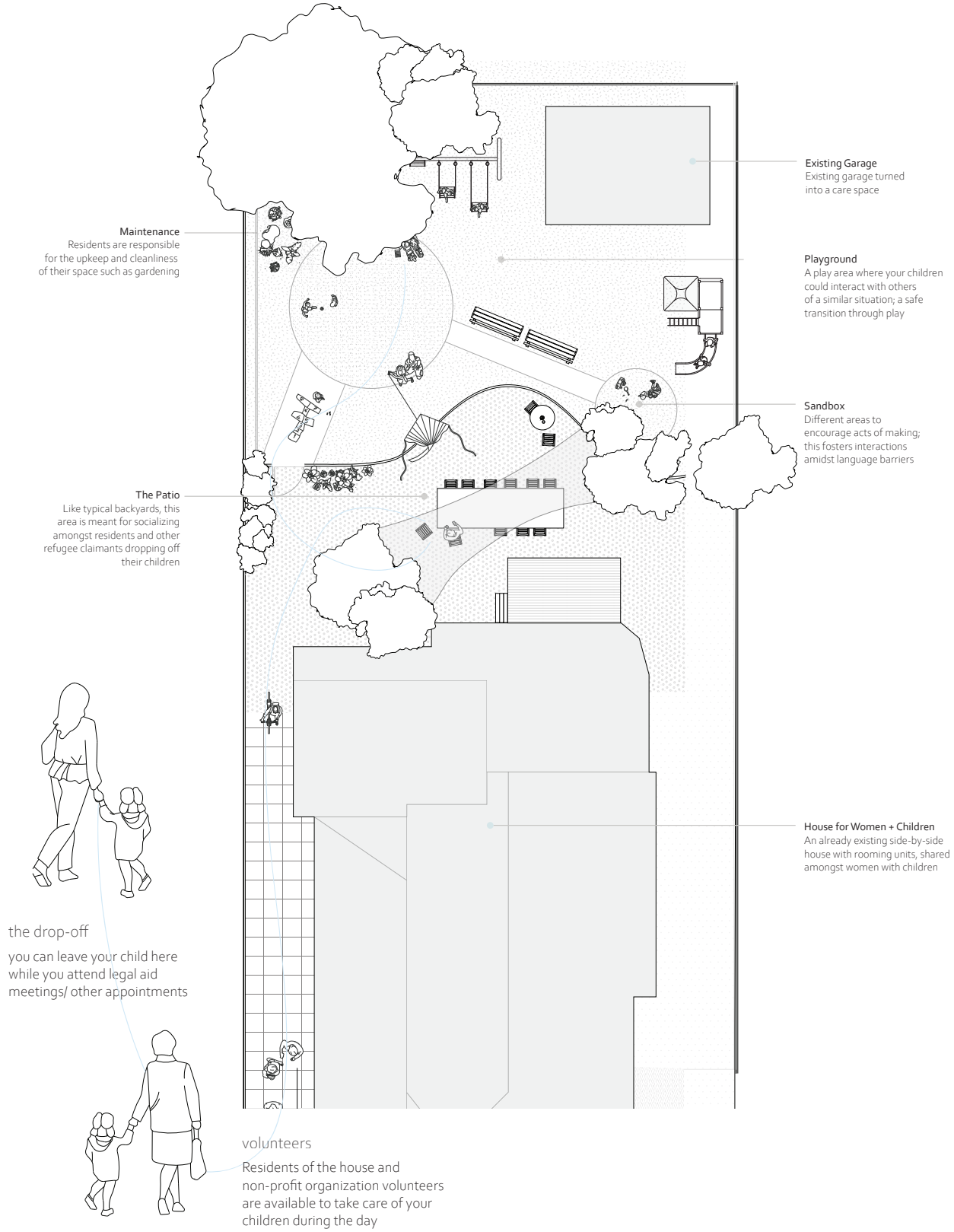
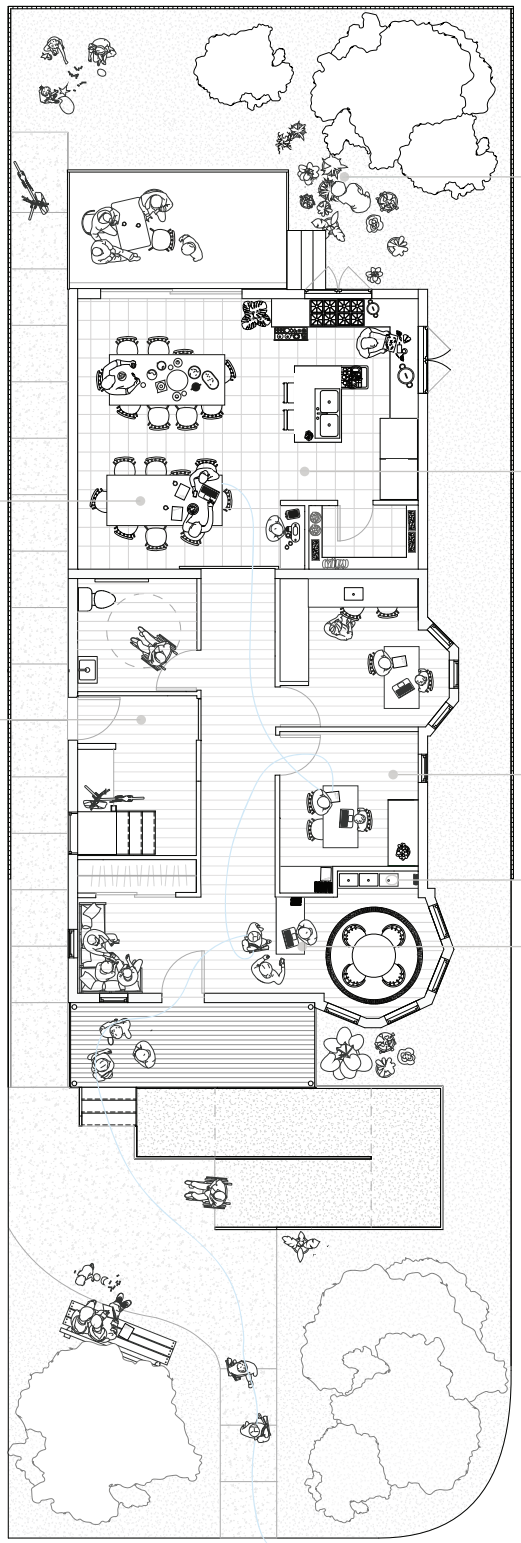


Fig4.18 Common Threads Site 2 Floor plan.



The Table
This is where you could expect to join many informal mock trials facilitated by other refugee claimants or volunteers

Separate Unit Entrance
The upper floors are private units and shared living spaces for refugee claimants with family members

Maintenance
Residents are responsible to keep their space clean, including landscaping

Communal Kitchen
A shared kitchen for residents but during the day, you are welcome to join them for snacks and coffee

Private Meeting Room
Legal aid representatives are available to meet with you

Laptop Kiosk
Available for on-site use

Front Desk
This is where you check-in and ask general questions



...a 7 minute walk later...
arrive at site 2
for your legal services appointment

Fig4.18 Common Threads Site 1 Floor plan.

SITE 3

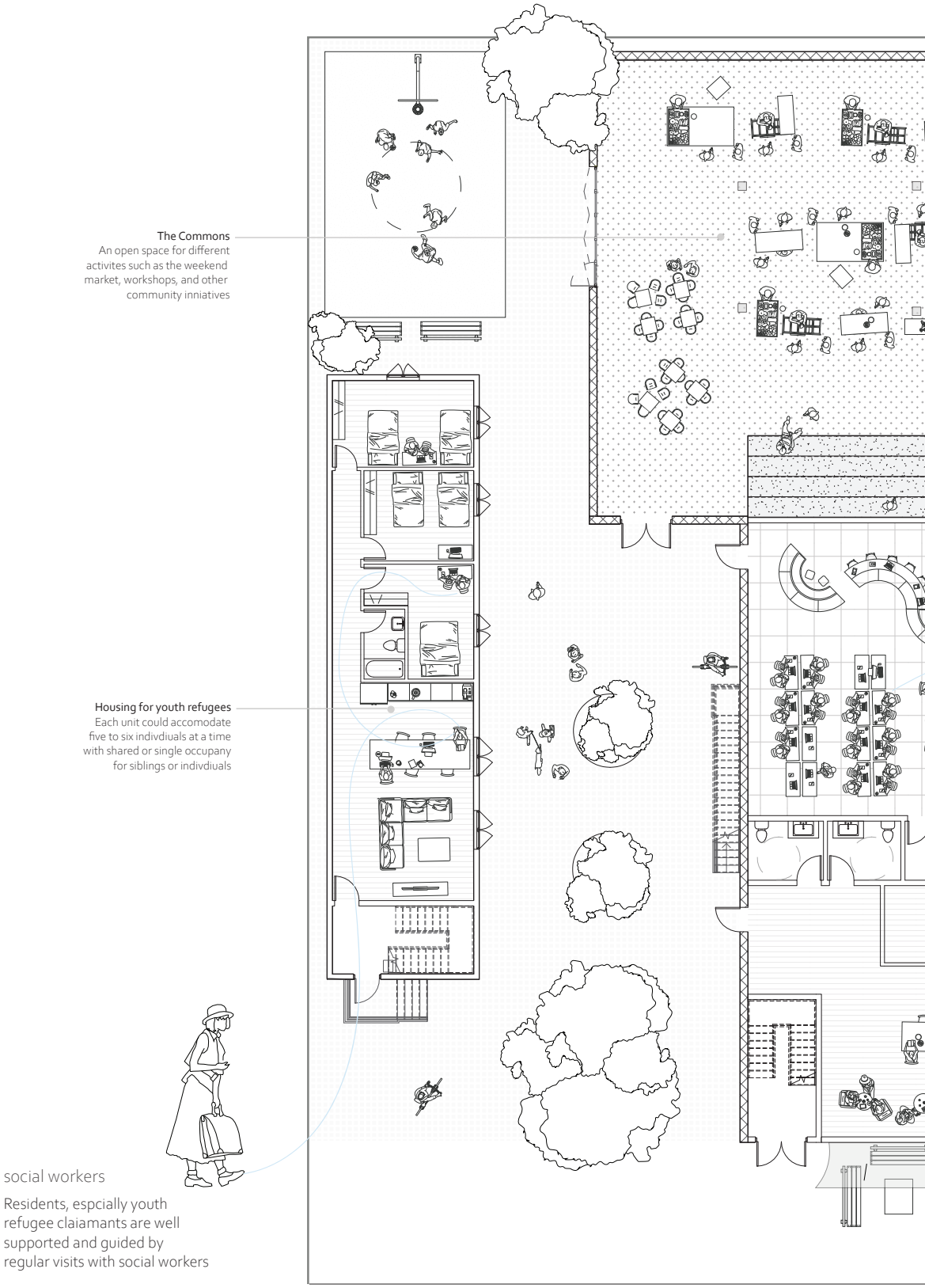
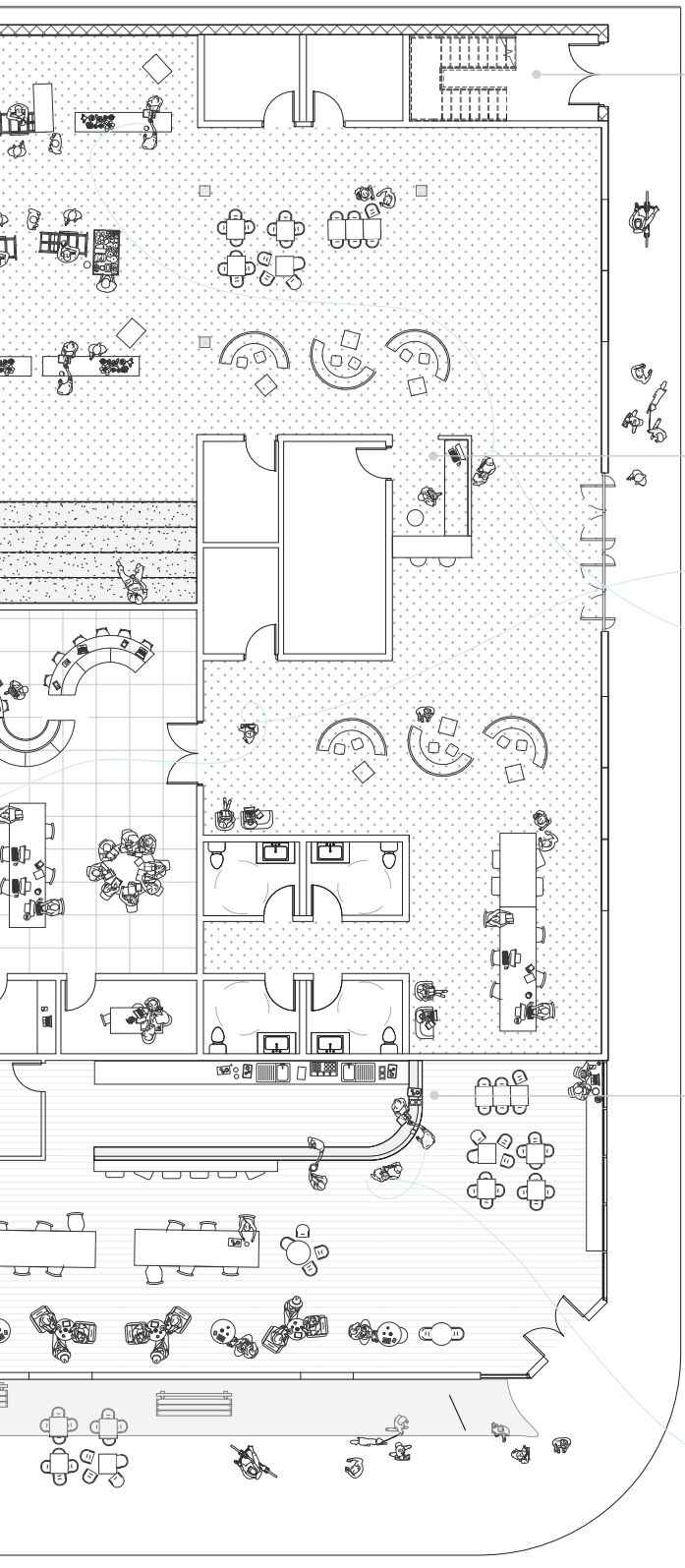


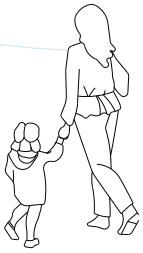
Fig4.19 Common Threads Site 3 Floor plan.



Housing unit Entrance
Upper floors are existing living units for single or 1+1 refugee claimants

Reception Area
This is where you could check-in, ask general questions and make workshop/ space bookings





Weekend Market

You can find diverse cultural food and art pieces sold by individuals of the community

learning studio

Neighbourhood locals and refugee claimants are able to use the computer lab for research and employment

Threads Cafe
A cafe facilitated by refugee claimants. Here, you could expect a rotating cultural menu and meet new locals



locals

This space invites locals to engage with refugee claimants, promoting cultural exchange and knowledge

SITE 1



Fig4.20 Site 1 drawing showing the backyard's play area.

SITE 2

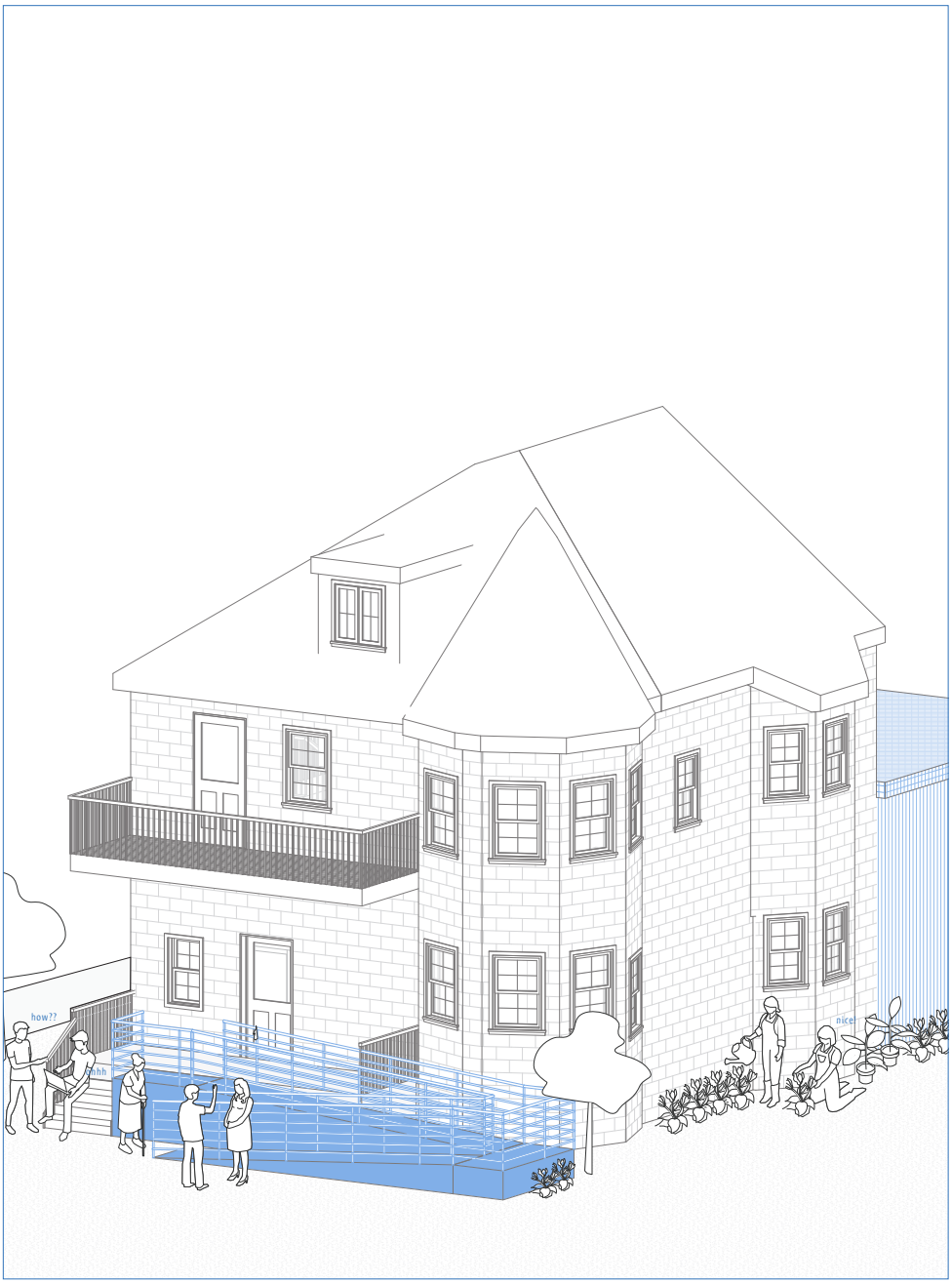


Fig4.20 Site 2 porposal showing exterior interventions.

SITE 3

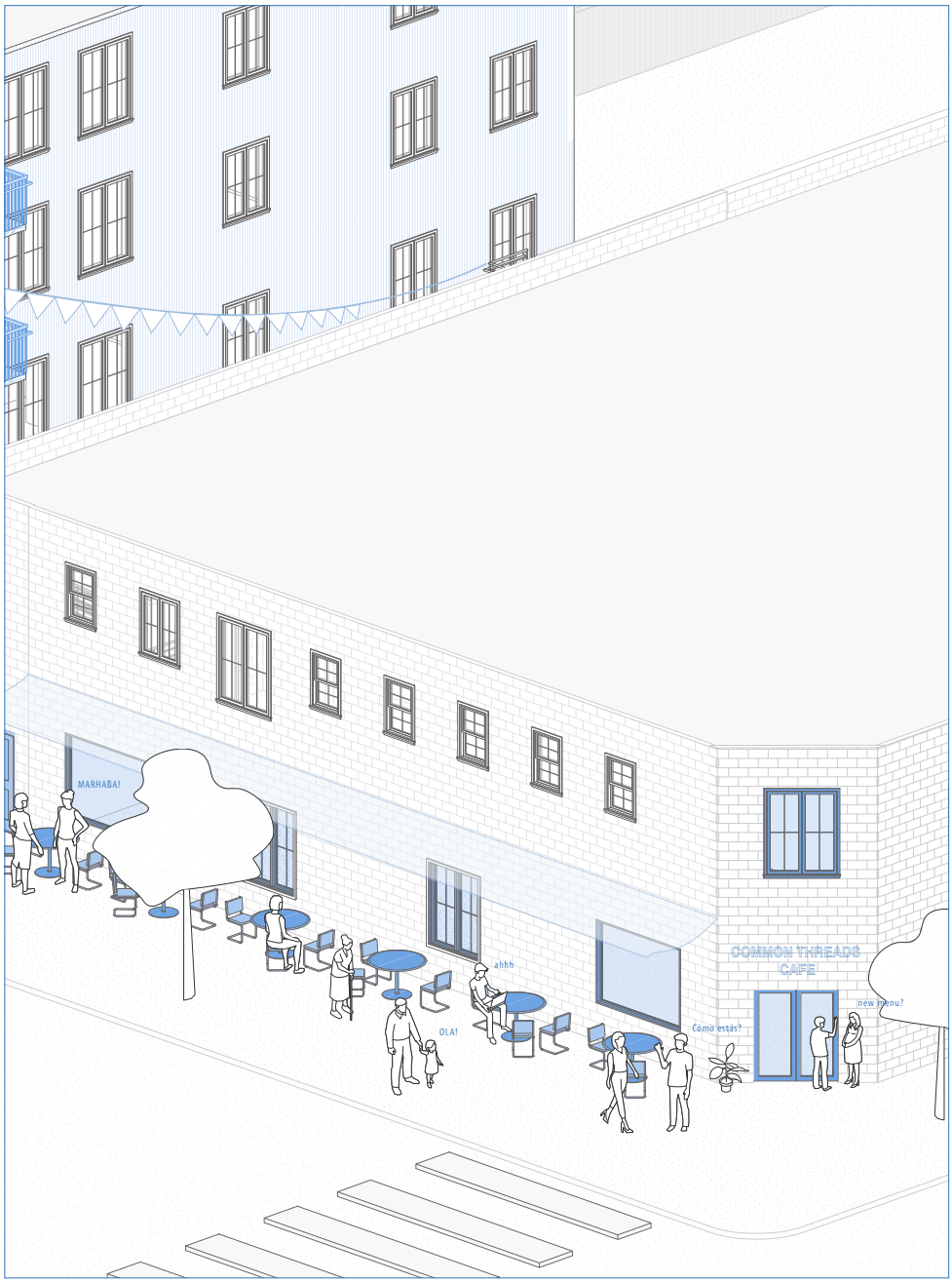


Fig4.22 Site 3 drawing showing Community Threads cafe.

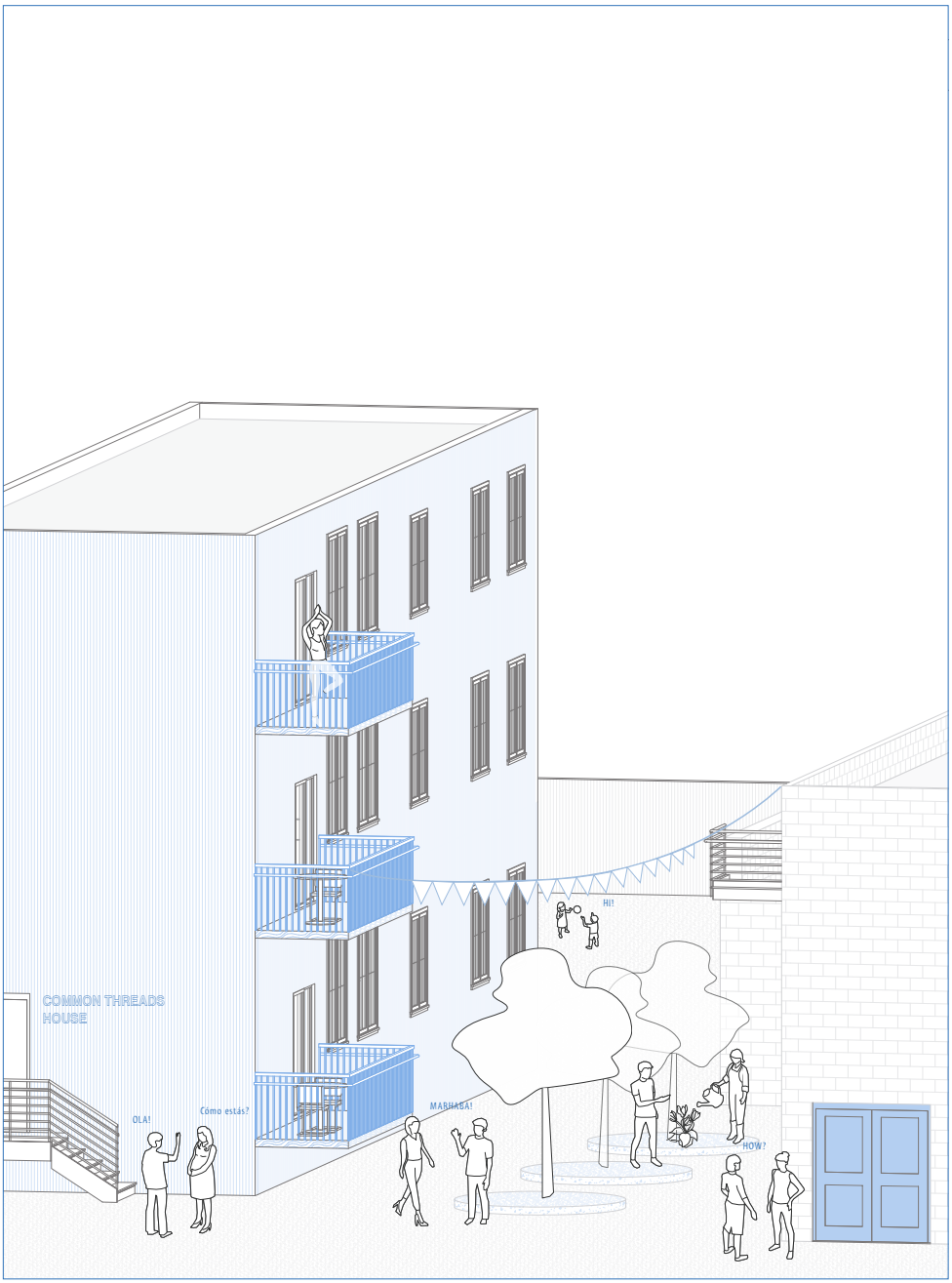


Fig4.23 Site 3 drawing showing housing and local engagement.

NODE 1



Fig4.24 Node 1 showing exchange of arts through a perfoamnce.

NODE 2

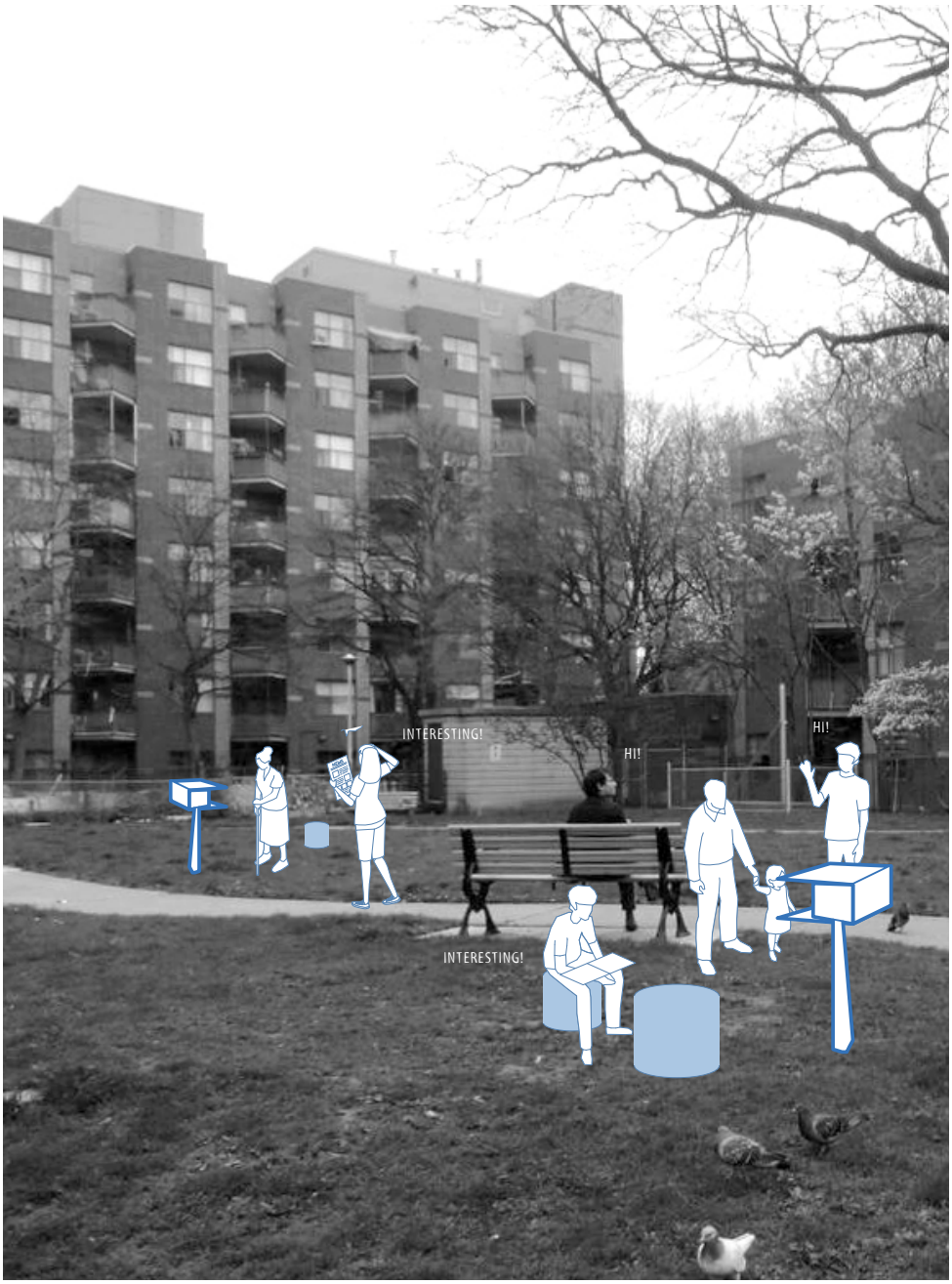


Fig4.25 Node 2 showing echange of kknwodlege through 'tiny' libraries.

NODE 3



Fig4.26 Node 3 showing exchange through food.

A City's Hotel Lobby

The design adapts existing structures with minimal physical changes in respect to the current built environment of the existing neighbourhood and a response to the constraints of resources and time associated to the refugee crisis. Hence, the architectural design and the architect serve as catalysts to create programs for already existing spaces, focusing not solely on facade design but rather, on transforming spaces into livable, safe, and community-oriented homes. In the context of this thesis, designing these structures is not just about the architectural details but about ensuring they are well adapted to becoming homes for those in need of refuge.

Community Threads aims to integrate into the city's urban fabric not only by creating connections and community but also by manifesting these changes physically in an urban scale. By replacing suburban hotels with Community Threads, the neighborhood nodes are crucial to the thesis, acting like the city's hotel lobbies—areas where locals and refugee claimants can meet and a cultural exchange can flourish.

CONCLUSION

Towards Larger Networks

How can we work towards scalable solutions to this problem? The findings of this thesis reveal that part of the solution lies in collaboration and proper management, as no single architectural scale or typology can comprehensively address the needs of refugee claimants arriving in Canada. Expanding from the concept of Community Threads, partnerships with the federal government and other sectors become imperative. A broader approach involves recognizing that many immigrants and newcomers in Toronto reside in residential towers located across the city's more affordable neighborhoods. Principles and strategies found in Common Threads could be adapted by utilizing apartment towers as co-housing for refugee claimants and implementing larger exchange nodes throughout the city. Activating all forms of housing means utilizing all scales of dwelling types, from Common Threads housing to larger city-led facilities and affordable housing towers, all aimed at facilitating a smoother transition for refugee claimants towards normalcy.

An Ode to the Perfect Hotel Site

Mentioned in the introduction and Chapter 1, it can be concluded that the failures in housing refugee claimants lie more in poor management rather than the building type itself. For example, issues mentioned in "The Hotel Lobby," such as unmet dietary needs, stem from inadequate management by those responsible for caring for refugee claimants at hotel sites. Additionally, housing refugee claimants in hotels far from the broader community is influenced by various factors, including the affordability of large hotels for the government when they are situated outside cities.

What happens when a hotel is located in the city core? In 2022, the City Council reportedly approved the transformation of the Novelo Hotel in Toronto's North York area (Willowdale neighbourhood) into 600 refugee shelter spaces (260 rooms).[79] However, the city was unable to secure a lease for the building, and plans to convert Novelo into refugee housing fell through. How could we reimagine this hotel if the plans had not fallen through? How could this thesis research be utilised to bring its community-oriented objectives into practice? How can we prevent the consequences of hotelization?

79. Asha Tomlinson, "New shelter spaces for refugees coming to Toronto's Novotel hotel," CBC News, October 15, 2021, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/new-shelter-spaces-refugees-novotel-hotel-1.6551742.

This thesis does not reject the hotel typology but rather critiques the poor management and strategies implemented by the government, which result in negative experiences with hotelization. Case studies mentioned in Chapter Two reveal that success is not solely dependent on architecture but also on the strategies that initiate aid. For instance, the Caracol Housing model as a case study in Chapter 2 demonstrates how locals and refugee claimants live together to address the housing market and provide mentorship to refugee claimants. Bellevue di Monaco aslo highlights the potential of transforming apartment blocks into a type of co-housing.

Building upon these precedents, the Novelo Hotel could be transformed into a form of co-housing, with existing facilities repurposed to better meet the practical needs of refugee claimants, including legal aid and educational rooms, common spaces, and childcare facilities. Community Threads could still play a role in this project to ensure a connection from the hotel tower to the broader community. This could be achieved through different nodes of exchange designed to promote community engagement and integration, all the more developing inclusivity in the Willowdale neighbourhood.

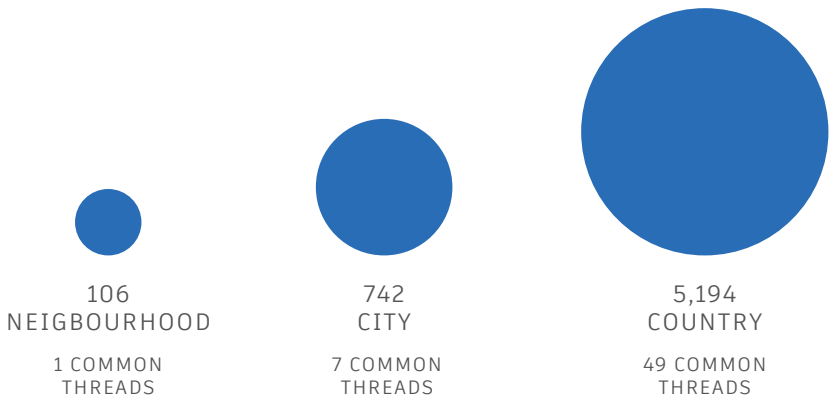


Fig5.1 Digram showing approximate amount of Common Threads.

Furthermore, the Novelo hotel could be part of the assemblage of housing networks for refugee claimants, including Common Threads, facility-type centers and hostel-type accommodations (women's housing, hospices, senior homes).

Using Statistics and Limitations

One may argue that the design falls short of addressing the scale of the refugee crisis itself, and from a logistical standpoint, this may be the case. As an exercise, the housing capacity of Common Threads can be compared with contingency hotels. Common Threads can accommodate approximately 106 refugee claimants, including children. In contrast, COSTI's hotel program (368 occupied rooms) could accommodate an estimated of 736 adults, assuming two adults per room, excluding children. Therefore, Common Threads could only accommodate about 14% of COSTI's capacity, indicating the need for 6-7 Common Threads neighbourhoods around the city.

Expanding on this exercise, based on 2023 reports, 2,400 rooms (approximately 5,000 refugee claimants) were occupied across all IRCC hotels in Canada. In this context, Common Threads would only cover 0.0212% of the total occupancy and 47 Common Threads neighbourhoods are needed across the country. If we were to distribute this number through major cities in Canada, there would be on average 6-7 neighbourhoods in each city, including Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, and Winnipeg. Henceforth, not only do Common Threads work within the capacity of the neighbourhood, but having 6 host communities is a sustainable and practical number for cities to maintain.

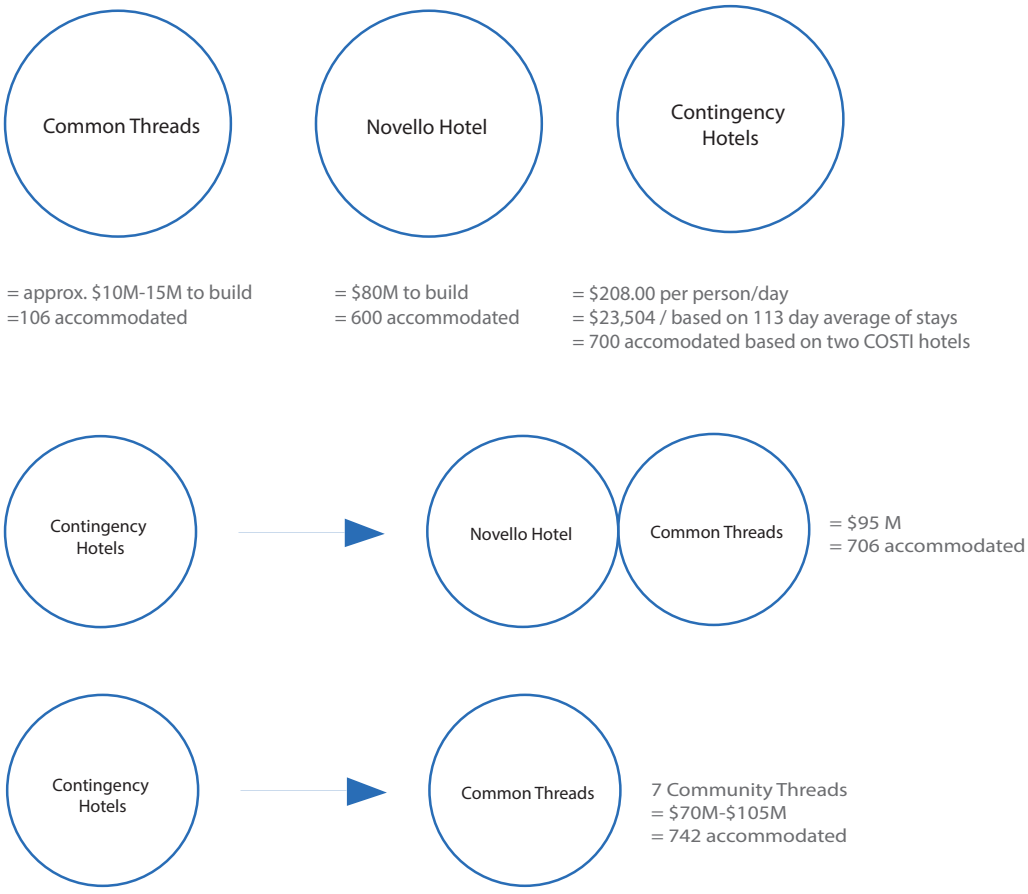


Fig5.2 Diagram showing cost and accommodations; how much it would cost to replace the two COSTI hotels.

Using Statistics and Limitations

According to the City of Toronto, it is estimated that providing refugee-specific shelters in 2023 will cost approximately $157 million, with $97 million funded by the Canadian government and $60 million to be covered by the city alone. [80] Considering these existing costs and funding sources, we can speculate on how these funds could be allocated within the Community Threads network. First, it was proposed that the Novelo hotel was to be an 80 million dollar project.

80. "City of Toronto Council Decision Background File," City of Toronto, February 2023, https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2023/cc/bgrd/backgroundfile-238458.pdf.

By leveraging the federal government's funding of $97 million, approximately $17 million could remain available for investing in Community Threads projects within the city. This estimate aligns with the housing costs observed in South Parkdale; an estimate of $9,852,850 on sites 1 and sites 2 alone in which renovating and building site 3 may cost more due its current state. As a result, the Novelo Hotel project and one Community Threads neighbourhood could accommodate an estimate of 706 refugee claimants altogether, which could replace COSTI's hotels (600-700 refugee claimants). However, this solution is still not able to provide adequate housing to the 1,100 refugee claimants left in the city's shelter system.

In 2023 alone, there were 137,947 refugee claimants across the country. Compared to the 106-person capacity of Common Threads and its 5,000-person capacity across Canada, these numbers underscore the disparity in addressing the magnitude of refugee influx. As a continuation of this thesis study, I propose a discussion on utilizing other architectural typologies that can adapt the principles of Community Threads throughout the city.

This network ranges from smaller-scale hostel-like approaches, as seen in the case studies from Chapter Two, to larger, more facility-oriented projects that may require federal government involvement. For example, the British Columbia Welcome Centre is a five-storey, multi-use building providing transitional services for newcomers, incorporating a health clinic, daycare, learning spaces, and housing with 138 beds. Despite its success in program implementation, the facility still falls short in accommodating the numerous refugee claimants in need of proper accommodations.

Reflection

How can we balance urgency without compromising quality of life? How can we break barriers and bridge the gap between refugee claimants and locals? These questions encompass different views from all levels of society, including UNHCR leaders, politicians, policymakers, and community members. The refugee crisis alone is so complex, that one solution does not suffice. Rather, it requires efforts of ongoing discussions from different perspectives and approaches that aim to respond to the crisis—a principle central to the thesis.

The thesis argues that while contingency hotels may be a practical, emergency solution, they are not suitable for housing refugee claimants. Global trends such as immigration backlogs and ongoing influx of refugee claims result in prolonged stays of refugee claimants in temporary accommodations. Furthermore, the analysis of two Toronto contingency hotels highlights urban disconnection–inadequate access to community amenities and social infrastructure that raises issues of isolation among refugee claimants from the broader community.

Chapter 1 provides further insight into the consequences of housing refugee claimants in contingency hotels. Dr. Nowicki's research concludes that spatial characteristics of hotels disrupt everyday mundane tasks, which can be challenging when experienced for extended periods. Studies conducted in Ireland and Scotland support these conclusions, identifying the negative impacts on the mental and physical well-being of refugee claimants living in such accommodations. The lack of supportive spaces and activities, as simple as being able to eat food from one's culture, further exacerbates the gap between claimants and locals. Hence, the thesis highlights the pivotal role of resilient communities in overcoming this barrier. Case studies such as Monaco di Bellevue exemplified

how promoting integration and local exchange within the built environment, can empower refugee claimants in rebuilding their lives.

Micro-solutions can transpire to larger impacts, into successful stories to be told for generations. The story, Peace by Chocolate follows a Syrian refugee family whose chocolate factory was destroyed in 2012. The family shares "Since Peace By Chocolate was founded at the beginning of 2016, we have been fortunate to share our passion for chocolate with new friends in our community of Antigonish, with people all across the province of Nova Scotia, and now around the world." Today, Peace By Chocolate continues to share their culture, and consequently, 3-5% of profits go toward peace-building projects around the world. This story is one of many to show that being part of a community provides refugees and refugee claimants alike, an equal opportunity to rebuild their lives and be integral parts of society.

To conclude, the thesis aims to initiate discussion on responding to urgency without compromising quality of life. The thesis study, including its design, highlights the need for collaboration— a network of individuals who may offer diverse perspectives but share a commitment to prioritising the well-being of refugee claimants. While some may argue that the outcomes of the thesis do not compare to the magnitude of the refugee crisis, it seeks to catalyse a call to action for cities like Toronto to change their Neighbourhood and City Strategies to better adapt and serve the needs of refugee claimants. Prolonged stays in contingency hotels are no longer unprecedented, but rather a global pattern that requires cities to adapt to. The investment towards creating resilient and inclusive neighbourhoods act as a groundwork to provide refugee claimants the equal chance of rebuilding their lives.

Different means of cultural exchange exemplified in the thesis' design create opportunities for reconciliation. Community Threads as the city's "hotel lobby' in Canadian cities, plays a role in bridging refugees to Indigenous communities, including their culture, history and practices. Educating refugees of Truth and Reconciliation is pivotal in bringing awareness towards injustice created by racism and divisions. Furthermore, Indigenous Peoples and many refugees have experienced great impacts of white settler-colonial society; to which reconciliation is truly a process, a journey of healing, understanding and empathy. Community Threads acknowledges that cultural exchange is pivotal towards Reconciliation as understanding our similarities and differences strengthens relationships between refugees, Indigenous people and all members of society; to work together against all forms of injustice.

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Finanzamt München Abt. Körperschaften: StNr. 143/238/01046

Mitglied im Genossenschaftsverband Bayern e.V. und im PARITÄTISCHEN Wohlfahrtsverband Bayern e.V.

> Am 29.04.2024 um 08:38 schrieb Katrin Graenitz <graenitz@bayzent.de>:

Re: Permission to Use Photos for Thesis

Nina Röder <info@ninaroeder.de>
Fri 2023-05-26 7:37 AM
To:Nurielle Ann Gregorio <nurielleann.gregorio@uwaterloo.ca>

Hi Nurielle,
Yes you can use my images. Please do also mention the office "dreigegeneinen"
Thanks and good luck!

Am 23.05.23 um 08:46 schrieb Nurielle Ann Gregorio:

> Hello,
>
> I hope you are doing well. My name is Nurielle, a Master of Architecture Student from the University of Waterloo. Upon my research, I had found images taken by you titled "Haus Markisches Ufer" on the architect's website: https://www.baunetz-architekten.de/dreigegeneinen/4992801/projekt/4992967#footer/. I would like to ask permission if I could use these images for my thesis as I feel it best fit the case study that I am doing. It would be great to have your work included in my thesis.
>
> Please feel free to contact me for any questions. I have also attached a permission copyright consent form if you do agree (second page of file).
>
> Thank you and I hope to hear from you soon.
>
> Nurielle Gregorio
> nagregor@uwaterloo.ca
> 204-891-2228

--

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NINA RÖDER

photographic artist

webpage: www.ninaroeder.de

insta: www.instagram.com/ninaroeder/

galleries: www.galerie-eigenheim.de & www.galerieburster.com

Re: Images Copyright Permission for School Thesis

Regina Recht <mail@reginarecht.com>

Mon 2023-05-22 5:58 AM

To:Nurielle Ann Gregorio <nurielleann.gregorio@uwaterloo.ca>

1 attachments (158 KB)

Regina Recht Permission Copyright.pdf;

Hello Nuriel,
Thank you for your request and yes I am the holder of the rights of the Photos from „Bellvue di Monaco" on my website.
However I would suggest to look up the architects website, because the building got a Football field on top and have made big progress.
https://www.hirnerundriehl.de/biennale-venedig/#more-9955

Actually since the yesterdays opening of the Architecture Biennale di Venezia Matthias Marschner, the main Architect of the project is present there at the German Pavillion (you can see on the website)
Wish you all the Best an good succuss for your thesis!
Regina Recht

P.S.
I give you the permission to use the images of „Bellvue di Monaco" on my Website www.reginarecht.com for you thesis and it's puplication on the website www.uwspace.uwaterloo.ca

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University of Waterloo, School of Architecture

204-891-2228, nagregor@uwaterloo.ca

APPROVED / PERMISSION GRANTED:

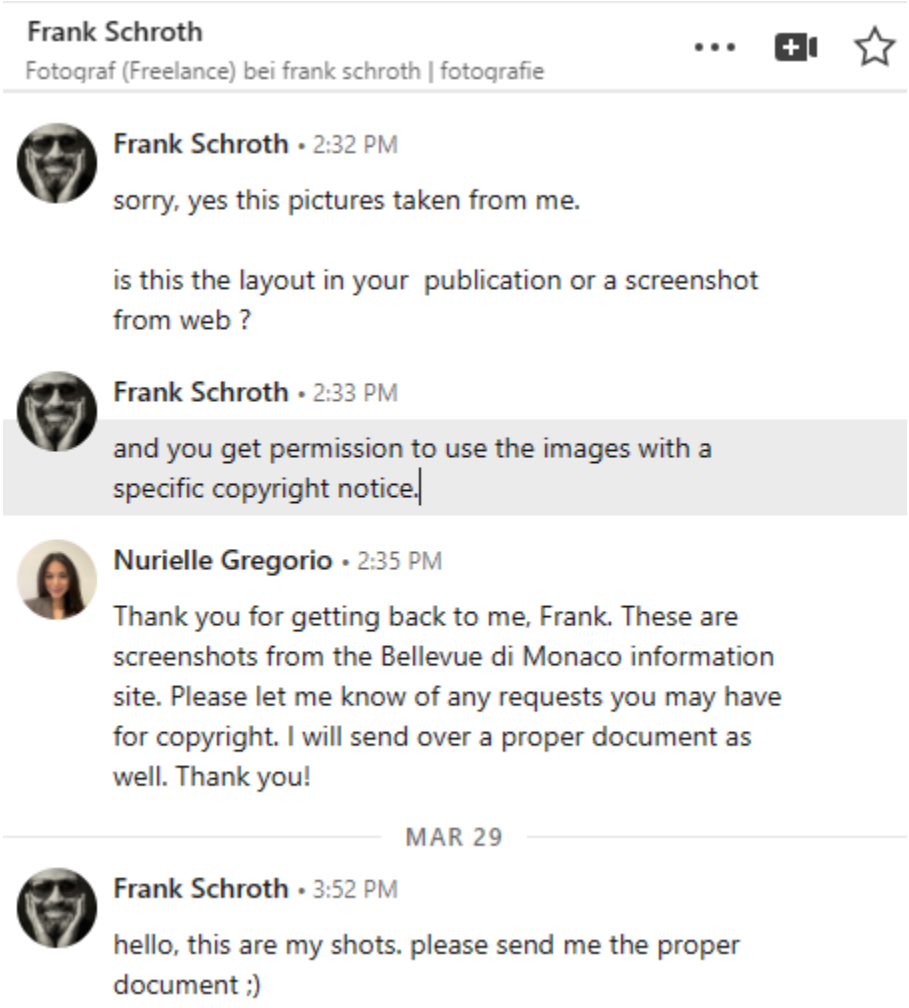
Name: Nina Röder

Signature 

Date: 30.05.2023

Company:

Address: Lehrter Straße 5D, 10557 Berlin



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