An Architecture for Social Participation

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

A large and growing number of Canadian seniors are socially isolated. People's appetite for group activities remains unfulfilled due to a lack of convenient and compelling opportunity. Introducing small-scale, locally relevant gathering places within existing neighbourhoods would support seniors aging in place and contribute toward an age-friendly community. Research into Ray Oldenburg's concept of third place informs the creation of a best practices guide for the design of local destinations for social participation. The guide is then referenced for my design proposal of a gathering place in my Toronto neighbourhood.

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Dedication

To all the people making our third places possible.

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Preface

As a consequence of having a dog, I've spent a lot of time walking around my neighbourhood. From late spring to early autumn, I regularly see groups of seniors gathered in the park rehearsing dances, playing cards, tending to children, and simply chatting. But where do they go when the weather is too cold or hot or wet? I thought perhaps there should be an alternative place to gather indoors. And that thought eventually led this thesis.

prologue

"People are the source of most of life's joys and pleasures."

— Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place*

Community and social connection are well-established essential ingredients to human well-being. Yet despite our increasingly interconnected world, more than one in ten adults are found to be socially isolated.[1] The prevalence of social isolation increases with age, hence older adults are most likely to be socially isolated.

Chapter one examines the issue of social isolation in the context of Canada's senior population. I analyse the factors contributing to seniors' vulnerability to isolation and discuss architecture as a potential tool for encouraging social participation.

Chapter two explores Ray Oldenburg's concept of the *third place*. Though I disagree with his descriptions of the essential characteristics of third places, I appreciate the foundation of his argument: that people, and by extension society, need informal

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1 Susanne Röhr et al., "Social Factors and the Prevalence of Social Isolation in a Population-Based Adult Cohort," *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology* 57, no. 10 (October 2022): 1959, https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-021-02174-x.

places for hanging out. I am primarily concerned with the benefits of third place participation for older adults, a topic Oldenburg has written very little on.

Chapter three is a case study on one of the great third places of Chinese society, the teahouse. The most common teahouse typology in contemporary Western imagination is the neighbourhood teahouse of southern China. It has been popularized in recent years by a book duology from Di Wang, the former of which claims to be the first book on the history of Chinese teahouses in either English or Chinese, and, I suspect, the Chinese government, as part of ongoing efforts to extend soft power through attractive cultural displays. This chapter is explicitly not about the teahouses of southern China. Wang has written extensively on the subject in his books, though he never directly characterizes the teahouse as a third place. Instead, the focus of this chapter is the theatre teahouses of nineteenth century Beijing. These establishments hosted Peking opera performances and were the social hubs of the city. Their wide customer base, ranging from the common peoples to the wealthy and political elite, can be largely credited to the unique layout of the buildings.

Chapter four is a best practices guide for designing a potential third place. The common characteristics I have observed in third places through studying precedent third places and the works of Oldenburg, Vikas Mehta, William H. Whyte, and Lyn H. Lofland, among others, are concisely presented here.

Chapter five puts into practice the ideas of chapter four in the design of a gathering space for my local neighbourhood in Toronto. My community's demographic profile, showing a high proportion of seniors and Chinese minorities, is a major consideration in the development of my project. I also examine applicable zoning by-laws and potential funding sources as part of the feasibility study for this project.

There is not a clear solution to reducing social isolation, but here I present my contribution to the collective effort toward its prevention.

01

social isolation of seniors

"Where third places exist within residential neighborhoods, and are claimed by all, they remain among the very few places where the generations still enjoy one another's company."

— Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place*

People who lack frequent and meaningful social experiences are said to be socially isolated.[2] In quantitative terms, a socially isolated person typically participates less than once per week in community events, recreational activities, neighbourhood associations, and other voluntary pastimes in social settings.[3] Social isolation is not to be conflated with loneliness. Though the two topics are often studied and discussed in tandem, social isolation is determined objectively through tracking a person's social interactions, while loneliness is a person's subjective feeling of dissatisfaction with oneself's social experiences.[4]

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2 Röhr et al., "Social Factors and the Prevalence of Social Isolation," 1963.

3 Heather Gilmour and Pamela L. Ramage-Morin, "Social Isolation and Mortality Among Canadian Seniors," *Health Reports* 31, no. 3 (June 2020): 28, https://www.doi.org/10.25318/82-003-x202000300003-eng.

4 Penny MacCourt, *Social Isolation of Seniors — Volume 1: Understanding the Issue and Finding Solutions* (Gatineau, QC: Employment and Social Development Canada, 2016), 5, https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2017/edsc-esdc/Em12-12-1-2016-eng.pdf.

Neither topic is an exact science as they lack standardized methods and thresholds for diagnosis. Both also rely heavily on self-reporting by study participants. However, social isolation has consistently demonstrated correlation with early mortality and there are clear actionable solutions to ameliorate the condition.[5] On the other hand, research on the connection between loneliness and longevity is inconsistent and the psychological aspects of loneliness require expertise beyond the study of architecture. Thus, this thesis is primarily concerned with the issue of social isolation; it is an increasingly important topic to study as Canada's population ages.

According to the 2021 Canadian Census, there are over seven million people aged 65 or older in Canada, comprising nearly one fifth of the country's total population.[6] By 2035, the number of seniors is projected to be over ten million and around one

5 Ryo Naito et al., "Social Isolation as a Risk Factor for All-Cause Mortality: Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Cohort Studies," *PLoS ONE* 18, no. 1 (January 2023): 1–16, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0280308.

6 "In the Midst of High Job Vacancies and Historically Low Unemployment, Canada Faces Record Retirements from an Aging Labour Force: Number of Seniors Aged 65 and Older Grows Six Times Faster Than Children 0-14," *The Daily*, April 27, 2022, 2, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220427/dq220427a-eng.htm.

quarter of the total population.[7] Compare these figures to 2001, when there were less than 4 million seniors in the country. Clearly, Canada's senior population is growing exponentially (Table 1), but services for the demographic have not kept pace.

Census Year	Number of People Aged 65 Years and Older	Total Population	Percentage of People Aged 65 Years and Older
2001	3,888,550	30,007,094	13.0
2006	4,335,255	31,612,895	13.7
2011	4,945,065	33,476,688	14.8
2016	5,935,630	35,151,728	16.9
2021	7,021,430	36,911,981	19.0

Table 1. Canadian population aged 65 years and older for the years 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016, and 2021. Adapted from Statistics Canada Catalogues no. 93F0053XIE , no. 92-591-XWE , no. 98-316-XWE, no. 98-316-X2016001, and no. 98-316-X2021001.

As a rapidly growing and influential proportion of the population, any factor negatively affecting seniors' health quickly becomes a concern of broader public health. Social isolation is one such issue, carrying serious implications for the seniors affected and for their immediate communities.

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7 Statistics Canada, "Table 17-10-0057-01 Projected Population, by Projection Scenario, Age and Sex, as of July 1 (x 1,000)," August 22, 2022, https://doi.org/10.25318/1710005701-eng.

Research shows a positive correlation between age and social isolation, making seniors the most vulnerable demographic.[8] A 2020 study published in Statistics Canada's journal Health Reports found nearly a quarter of Canadian seniors are socially isolated.[9] It may be that entering older age comes with many life changes, such as retirement, death of loved ones, relocation, and declining health, that disrupt the social circles with which people are familiar. No matter the cause, social isolation is associated with increased mortality at rates on par with traditional risk factors such as smoking and obesity.[10] Therefore, it is only logical that reducing rates of social isolation is prioritized to a similar level.

Left unchecked, social isolation can become a vicious cycle, quickly eroding seniors' quality of life, damaging the well-being of their communities, and further reducing opportunities for socialization. Isolated seniors, in comparison to their socially connected peers, make more visits to healthcare practitioners. As a result, they are a greater cost to the public healthcare and social services systems.[11] They are also a lost resource for local associations, which have historically benefited greatly from the knowledge

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8 Röhr et al., "Social Factors and the Prevalence of Social Isolation," 1963.

9 Gilmour and Ramage-Morin, "Social Isolation and Mortality," 30.

10 Gilmour and Ramage-Morin, "Social Isolation and Mortality," 27.

11 MacCourt, *Social Isolation of Seniors— Volume 1*, 14.

and volunteerism of seniors. For seniors, being isolated strips them of the sense of belonging and personal satisfaction that may be derived from participating in their communities.[12] They are deprived of the basic human need for social interaction. It is important to identify and rectify social isolation in a timely manner, since prolonged isolation atrophies social skills and reintegration into social settings may grow more difficult the longer someone is isolated.[13]

In the 2019 Canadian Health Survey on Seniors, approximately one in five seniors expressed wanting to participate more in social, recreational, or group activities.[14]

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12 Mark W. Rosenberg, John Puxty, and Barbara Chow, *Enabling Older Adults to Age in Community* (Gatineau, Quebec: Employment and Social Development Canada, 2022), 21, https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2022/edsc-esdc/Em12-87-2022-eng.pdf.

13 National Seniors Council, *Scoping Review of the Literature: Social Isolation of Seniors, 2013–2014* (Gatineau, Quebec: Employment and Social Development Canada, 2014), 7, https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2015/edsc-esdc/Em12-7-2014-eng.pdf.

14 "Canadian Health Survey on Seniors, 2020," *The Daily*, October 1, 2021, 1, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/211001/dq211001b-eng.htm.

RISK FACTORS FOR SOCIAL ISOLATION

Special attention should be paid to the groups of seniors considered at elevated risk of social isolation. These are typically already vulnerable segments of the population, such as seniors with chronic health issues, immigrant seniors, and low-income seniors.

Limitations on an individual's physical and mental capabilities may prevent that person from attending social gatherings with any frequency. However, the higher rate of mortality among socially isolated people is not simply due to the higher likelihood of unhealthy individuals to become socially isolated. Both healthy and unhealthy individuals experience increased risk of mortality when they are socially isolated.[15]

Immigrant seniors may be more vulnerable to social isolation due to cultural differences, language barriers, and discrimination. Particularly at risk are newcomer seniors (in Canada for five years or less) and visible minority seniors.[16] The vast majority of new immigrant seniors arrive through family sponsorships

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15 Julianne Holt-Lunstad et al., "Loneliness and Social Isolation as Risk Factors for Mortality: A Meta-Analytic Review," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10, no. 2 (March 2015): 233, https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691614568352.

16 Shanthi Johnson. *Social Isolation of Seniors — A Focus on New Immigrant and Refugee Seniors in Canada* (Gatineau, QC: Employment and Social Development Canada, 2018), 12, https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2018/edsc-esdc/Em12-52-2018-eng.pdf.

and cannot speak English nor French.[17] Their lack of language skills is an impediment to forming social networks beyond their homes.

Furthermore, living with low-income introduces several barriers that may contribute to social isolation. Low-income seniors may not have the finances nor transportation reliably available to consistently participate in social activities. They may also live in areas where safety concerns dissuade them from venturing outside or where the availability of relevant social activities is low.[18] Unfortunately, each additional risk factor an individual possesses compounds the likelihood for social isolation.[19]

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17 Statistics Canada, "Table 98-10-0362-01 Immigrant Status and Period of Immigration by First Official Language Spoken, Labour Force Status and Highest Level of Education: Canada, Provinces and Territories, Census Metropolitan Areas and Census Agglomerations with Parts," May 3, 2023, https://doi.org/10.25318/9810036201-eng.

18 National Seniors Council. *Who's at Risk and What Can Be Done About It?: A Review of the Literature on the Social Isolation of Different Groups of Seniors* (Gatineau, Quebec: Employment and Social Development Canada, 2017), 21–22, https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2017/edsc-esdc/Em12-26-2017-eng.pdf.

19 National Seniors Council, *Report on the Social Isolation of Seniors 2013–2014* (Gatineau, Quebec: Employment and Social Development Canada, 2014), 9, https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2015/edsc-esdc/Em12-6-2014-eng.pdf.

PREVENTING SOCIAL ISOLATION

Many organizations and governments across Canada recognize social isolation of seniors as an issue of concern for their communities. In response, initiatives such as age-friendly communities, seniors' social groups, and intergenerational learning programs have been trialled or established. These projects have reported positive outcomes for seniors in expanding their social networks and strengthening intergenerational relationships and respect.[20] Similar initiatives should continue to be launched across the country to keep pace with Canada's growing senior population. This thesis is my contribution to the collective effort countering social isolation among seniors.

As this is primarily a social issue, it may not be immediately obvious what role architecture can play in reducing social isolation. However, our built environment holds great influence over our social experiences. A well-designed gathering space can better facilitate social activities and interactions. Also, despite the growing dominance of digital communication methods, they are still no substitute for the experience of face-to-face communication.[21] Studies consistently show face-to-face interactions

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20 MacCourt, *Social Isolation of Seniors— Volume 1*, 20–35.

21 Stefan Steiger, David Lewetz, and David Willinger, "Face-to-Face More Important Than Digital Communication for Mental Health During the Pandemic," *Scientific Reports* 13, (May 2023): 1–5, 10.1038/s41598-023-34957-4.

are more positively associated with personal well-being and interpersonal bonding than digital communication methods.[22] Architects, as designers of the built environment, should be aware of the potential psychological impacts of their work and be knowledgeable on how architecture can encourage specific human behaviours and emotions.

22 Steiger et al, "Face-to-Face More Important"; Lauren E. Sherman, Minas Michikyan, and Patricia M. Greenfield, "The Effects Of Text, Audio, Video, And In-Person Communication On Bonding Between Friends." *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace* 7, no. 2 (2013), 10.5817/CP2013-2-3.

02

the third place

"Indeed, the majority of public places in our society fail to become actual third places."

— Ramon Oldenburg and Dennis Brissett, "The Third Place"

In recent years, discourse on social gathering spaces often include mentions of the third place, a term that has gained widespread recognition due in part to the COVID-19 global pandemic. The consequent work-from-home policies and cost-of-living crisis brought many Canadians' attentions to the dearth of local, casual, and affordable social gathering spaces in their communities. It is a problem seniors have faced since long before the pandemic. A commonly proposed solution by news media, social commentators, and designers is finding a third place, but what exactly does that mean? In this following chapter, I explore the meaning of the third place and how people may benefit from having one.

WHAT IS THE THIRD PLACE?

The concept of the third place is credited to Ramon (Ray) Oldenburg, who first shared the idea at a regional sociological conference in 1977 and

later wrote several articles and books on the topic.[23] In the 1982 article, "The Third Place," co-authored by Oldenburg and Dennis Brissett, they described the third place as a place outside the home and workplace, "where people gather primarily to enjoy each other's company."[24] Such places existed long before Oldenburg coined the phrase, but his work was pioneering in framing these spaces as uniquely conducive to personal and societal well-being.

Oldenburg conceived of the third place in response to an observed malaise among the American people that the people themselves were struggling to solve. Heavily inspired by the ideas of Joseph Addison and Georg Simmel, Oldenburg posited the cause of malaise was partially due to a lack of non-purposive socialization (more commonly called "hanging out").[25] The unique joys and relief to be gained through socializing for socialization's sake was considered a better cure for one's discontent than social services or psychotherapies.[26] The term third place was then used to easily reference the settings in which non-purposive socialization flourished.

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23 Ray Oldenburg. *The Great Good Place : Cafés, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts At the Heart of a Community* (New York: Marlowe & Company, 1999), x.

24 Ramon Oldenburg and Dennis Brissett, "The Third Place," *Qualitative Sociology* 5, no 4 (December1982): 269, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00986754.

25 Ramon Oldenburg and Dennis Brissett, "The Essential Hangout," *Psychology Today* 13, no 11 (April 1980): 82.

26 Oldenburg and Brissett, "The Third Place," 267.

Oldenburg's early writings on the third place reveal his fondness for Joseph Addison's characterizations of coffeehouse sociability in early eighteenth century England. Addison was a writer and editor for The Spectator, a publication he co-founded in 1711. His writings portray the coffeehouse as the ideal public realm where polite, rational, and civic sociability can be found and cultivated. It was to be the site and catalyst for social reform.[27] In Issue 9 of The Spectator, Addison shares his optimistic expectations of such establishments:

When Men are thus knit together, by Love of Society, not a Spirit of Faction, and do not meet to censure or annoy those that are absent, but to enjoy one another: When they are thus combined for their own Improvement, or for the Good of others, or at least to relax themselves from the Business of the Day, by an innocent and chearful Conversation, there may be something very useful in these little Institutions and Establishments.[28]

Addison, however, was not oblivious to the chaotic realities of human gatherings and cognisant that mere

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27 Markman Ellis, "Sociability and Polite Improvement in Addison's Periodicals," in *Joseph Addison: Tercentenary Essays*, ed. Paul Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 143, https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198814030.003.0008.

28 Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, "The Spectator No. 9," in *The Spectator: A New Edition Reproducing the Original Text Both as First Issued and as Corrected by Its Authors*, ed. Henry Morley, (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1888), 18.

decades prior, coffeehouse culture was frequently criticized for enabling idleness and gossip. As such, he often contemplated the necessity of an arbiter to regulate discourse and behaviour in the coffeehouse.[29] On the other hand, establishments shielded by restrictive rules were antithetical to the unregulated discussions central to coffeehouse sociability and Addison spoke of such places with sarcastic derision.[30]

The other great influence on Oldenburg's concept of the third place was Georg Simmel's early twentieth century musings on pure sociability. Simmel described pure sociability as human association without ulterior motives in an artificial state of equality. Participants should tactfully set aside personal statuses, values, and feelings lest the illusion of equality breaks and the association becomes motivated by egoistic interests. Moreover, an individual's enjoyment of the interaction must not be gained at the contrary experience of others. It is a delicate act that perhaps only exists in theory. Simmel himself acknowledged, "all human associations are entered into because of some ulterior interests," and considered pure sociability as an abstraction of association analogous to art as an abstraction of reality.[31]

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29 Ellis, "Sociability and Polite Improvement," 143, 151–153.

30 Addison and Steele, "The Spectator No. 9," 18.

31 Georg Simmel, "The Sociology of Sociability," trans. Everett C. Hughes, *American Journal of Sociology* 55, no. 3 (November 1949): 254–258.

The third place is a merging of coffeehouse sociability and pure sociability. Conversation is the main activity through which participants and subsequently their communities may derive many benefits. Each member of the group must also maintain an effort toward pure sociability. Only when both elements are present can an establishment be considered a third place.

BENEFITS OF THE THIRD PLACE

Although the concept of the third place was framed around working-age adults, Oldenburg has expounded on the benefits as they relate to youth and retirees as well.[32] Beyond the personal benefits to be derived from regular social participation, seniors who frequent a third place can also affect positive change for their communities.

The third place can be a source of novel experiences for seniors, which recent research has positively associated with overall well-being and life-

32 Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place*, xx, 162–283; Ray Oldenburg, "Our Vanishing 'Third Places'," *Planning Commissioners Journal* 25, no 1 (January 1997): 9.

satisfaction.[33] It presents opportunities to connect with diverse individuals whom one might never otherwise encounter. In addition, activity in the third place is typically loosely scheduled and mostly self-directed. These factors encourage organic and spontaneous self-expression, which make for varied conversations and encounters. In the familiar setting of one's neighbourhood and surrounded by the familiar faces of regulars, novelty is a comfortable thrill. The unexpected is never guaranteed; nonetheless, a sense of unpredictability anticipates each visit.[34]

The third place can also aid in efforts to combat ageism, an issue with wide-ranging negative effects on the health and well-being of older adults.[35] In a recent study on intergenerational relationships, older adults consistently noted contemporary society is more age-segregated than the societies of their

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33 Leyla Bagheri and Marina Milyavskaya, "Novelty–Variety as a Candidate Basic Psychological Need: New Evidence Across Three Studies," *Motivation and Emotion* 44, no. 1 (February 2020): 32–53, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-019-09807-4; David González-Cutre et al., "Testing the Need for Novelty as a Candidate Need in Basic Psychological Needs Theory," *Motivation and Emotion* 44, no. 2 (April 2020): 295–314, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-019-09812-7.

34 Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place*, 44–48; Oldenburg and Brissett, "The Third Place," 273–279.

35 David Burnes et al., "Interventions to Reduce Ageism Against Older Adults: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," American Journal of Public Health 109, no. 8 (August 2019): e1–e9, https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2019.305123.

youths.[36] Oldenburg had shared similar observations decades prior and encouraged older adults to connect with younger generations in the third place for mutual benefit.[37] Interestingly, he pointed to ethnic enclaves for remaining vestiges of all-ages gathering spaces.[38] The voluntary, collaborative, and regular social interactions definitive of the third place are qualities that can increase levels of intergenerational engagement, which has a demonstrated impact on reducing ageism.[39]

CONCLUSION

For the aforementioned reasons of introducing novelty and reducing ageism and for the benefits of social participation, I contend that having a third place

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36 Andrew Steward and Kimberly McDevitt, "'Otherwise We Would Be like an Island': A Phenomenological Understanding of Intergenerational Engagement Aimed at Reducing Social Isolation," *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships* 21, no. 2 (2023): 223–225, https://doi.org/10.1080/15350770.2021.1997870.

37 Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place*, xx–xxi; Oldenburg, "Our Vanishing 'Third Places'," 7–10.

38 Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place*, 272.

39 Shannon E. Jarrott, Andrew J. Stremmel, and Jill J. Naar, "Practice that Transforms Intergenerational Programs: A Model of Theory and Evidence Informed Principles," *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships* 17, no. 4 (2019): 491–497, https://doi.org/10.1080/15350770.2019.1579154.

can increase the quality of life of older adults. Thus, it is my recommendation that seniors have access to a third place.

This chapter has primarily addressed the third place in its abstract form. Architecture, while both a study and practice, best creates meaningful societal impact through the translation of its theoretical principles into the physical forms of our built environment. As such, I shall next examine the third place through preexistent precedents.

03

the teahouse

"All great cultures have had a vital informal public life and, necessarily, they evolved their own popular versions of those places that played host to it."

— Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place*

The idea that any publicly accessible space can be a third place seems to be often misunderstood, and at times wilfully misconstrued, to mean any space is a third place so long as someone deems it as such. Not so; the third place is more elusive than one might assume. Oldenburg's 1989 book, The Great Good Place, examined several popular settings of the third place in Western cultures for what made them frequently successful as third places. This chapter expands upon the limited geographical scope of his studies and applies similar scrutiny to a common setting of the third place in China, the teahouse.

The Chinese teahouse has evolved numerous forms throughout its millennium of history.[40] This chapter examines one relatively recent typology: the theatre teahouse of Beijing. I argue these establishments were frequently host to the third place and analyze the factors contributing to that success. I have selected to study Beijing's theatre teahouses to contribute a differing cultural context to the existing

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40 Paul Jakov Smith, *Taxing Heaven's Storehouse: Horses, Bureaucrats, and the Destruction of the Sichuan Tea Industry, 1074-1224* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 53.

literature on third places and for their relevance as precedents for the space I am designing as an intended third place in my local community.

BEIJING'S THEATRE TEAHOUSE

During the nineteenth century, theatre teahouses in Beijing flourished as third places. These establishments held daily performances by Peking opera troupes and were popular sites of entertainment for men. Shows typically began in the morning and lasted until sundown, but customers were not expected to stay its entire duration or even pay attention to the stage.[41]

Inside the teahouse, people sat around long rectangular tables, chatting loudly and enjoying refreshments (Figure 1). Snack vendors, tea pourers, and hot-towel sellers strolled through the hall, hawking their goods at customers. Without artificial lighting and audio equipment to enhance performances, opera actors struggled to be noticed and heard above the din of the crowd. Engaging in conversations and

41 Andrea S. Goldman, *Opera and the City: The Politics of Culture in Beijing, 1770–1900* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 28, 64-65.



Figure 1. Late-Qing dynasty photograph taken inside a Beijing teahouse. Circa 1898. Photo No. 207 by Sanshichiro Yamamoto.

activities off-stage was just as integral to the teahouse experience as watching the entertainment on-stage (Figure 2).[42]

This unusual dynamic between the performances and the patrons was reflected in the local language. The terms "guest" (客人) and "tea guest" (茶客) were used for patrons of the theatre teahouse, not "audience" (观众). In addition, people visited the teahouse to "hear the opera" (听戏), not "watch the opera" (看戏).[43]

Patrons could expect the unexpected during a visit to the teahouse. Peking opera during the nineteenth century was derived from older dramas and novels, so most customers were well familiar with the narratives presented on stage.[44] However, Peking opera is peculiar in that dramas are typically not presented in whole. A day's performance could be a selection of unrelated scenes from various stories or

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42 Joshua Goldstein, *Drama Kings: Players and Publics in the Re-creation of Peking Opera, 1870–1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007) 31, 69–73; Colin P. Mackerras, *The Rise of the Peking Opera 1770-1870: Social Aspects of the Theatre in Manchu China* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 201–202.

43 Maurycy Gawarski, "Beijing-Theatre-Tea: The Habit of Tea Drinking in Theatres of Beijing from the 17th Century to the 1950s," *Art of the Orient* 4, (2015): 83, https://doi.org/10.11588/ao.2015.0.8910.

44 Colin Mackerras, "Peking Opera before the Twentieth Century," *Comparative Drama* 28, no. 1 (1994): 28, https://doi.org/10.1353/cdr.1994.0001.



Figure 2. Late-Qing dynasty painting of Beijing teahouse. Image from The People's Government of Beijing Municipality website.

several unconnected scenes from the same story. Some dramas were performed in segments over several days. Apart from which acting troupe would be performing at which teahouse, customers knew little else about a day's scheduled entertainment.[45] The secretive schedules created anticipation among customers hoping to catch their favourite actors perform.

Only the most popular actors could expect to receive the boisterous crowd's undivided attention. Loud shouts of "bravo!" (好!) would erupt across the teahouse as famed actors appeared on stage. Similar exclamations would follow an exquisitely sung aria or an impressive acrobatic display. On the other hand, people had no reservations about voicing their disapproval through jeers either.[46]

The popularity of Beijing's theatre teahouses among men of various backgrounds was an enduring source of unease for the Qing court. Throughout the nineteenth century, Qing emperors issued numerous edicts attempting to stamp out teahouses from the Inner City and control the clientele and performances of teahouses in the Outer City (Figure 3).[47] Of particular concern was the large number of government and military officials found in frequent attendance at teahouses. The legitimacy of Qing rule lay in the purported superiority of the Manchu people and

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45 Mackerras, *The Rise of the Peking Opera,* 209–210.

46 Goldstein, *Drama Kings*, 73–74.

47 William Dolby, *A History of Chinese Drama* (London: Elek Books Limited, 1976), 157–160.

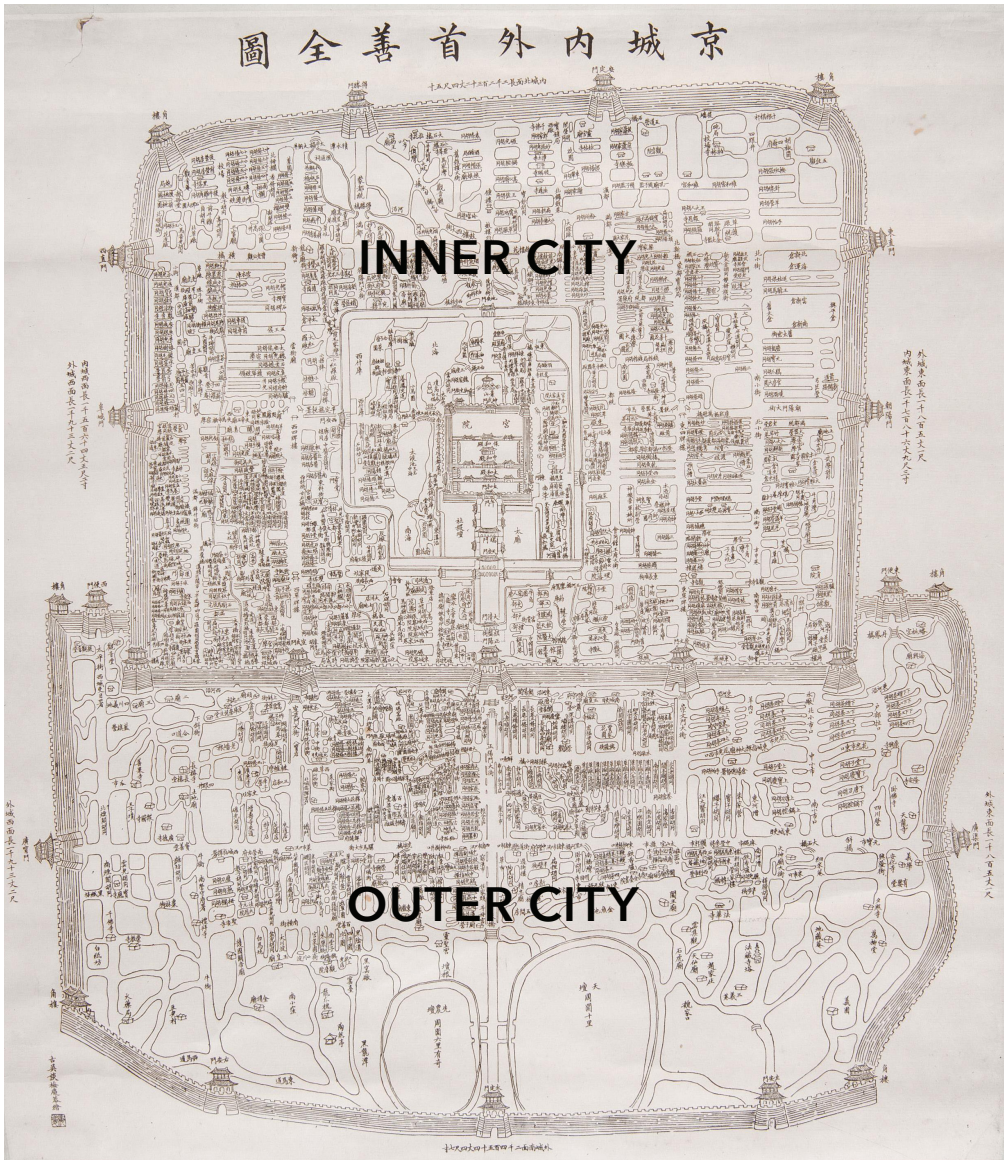


Figure 3. Late-Qing dynasty map of Beijing. Adapted from image by The Philadelphia Museum of Art.

culture, a pretence enforced by de jure segregation. Therefore, Manchu officials sneaking out of the Inner City to visit teahouses and engaging in Han cultural practices alongside the common Han peoples greatly undermined the Qing dynasty's authority. Since the officials responsible for enforcing imperial law were often themselves patrons of teahouses, enforcement of prohibitions was unsurprisingly lax.[48] The court's persistent preoccupation with regulating teahouses rather affirms the incorrigible popularity and influence of these establishments in the lives of the Beijing people.

Inside the teahouse, men of different backgrounds gathered, but did not mix. Though customers nominally paid for tea, the price of a cup varied greatly by the location of one's seat. The architecture of teahouses provided a myriad of seating conditions that distinguished customers' social strata. Wealthy patrons could enjoy tea on the mezzanine in semi-private box seats while the common peoples sat along benches in the hall below (Figure 4). Proximity to the stage and distance from the orchestra also factored into the price of a seat. This fragmented seating arrangement appeased those who were peeved to share their places of leisure with men of inferior statuses and likely contributed to teahouses' commercial successes.[49]

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48 Goldman, *Opera and the City*, 69-76.

49 Goldman, *Opera and the City*, 22, 81.

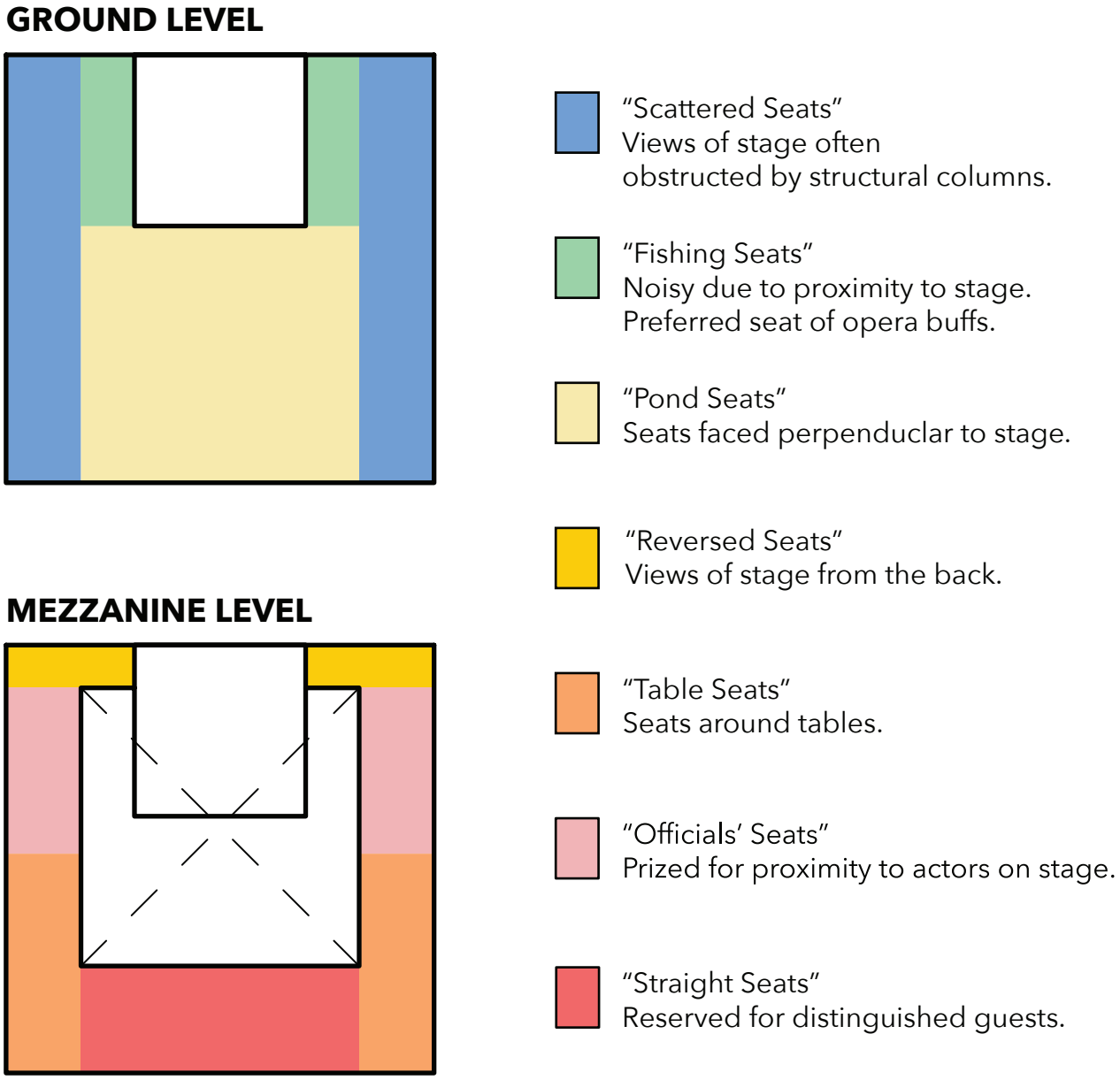


Figure 4. Diagram of seating areas inside teahouse, from least prestigious to most prestigious. By author.

As societies change, so do their third places. Thus our study of Beijing's theatre teahouses ends at the turn of the twentieth century. Around this time, complex social and cultural influences so fundamentally changed people's opera-watching habits that the teahouse and theatre could no longer operate as one. Peking opera, one of the main draws of the teahouse, came to be performed in establishments similar to contemporary Western theatres. Teahouses, though they may very well have continued to be third places, had lost their prominence as the social hubs of the city.

An evening at the new theatre was a much more subdued affair. Gone were the long tables around which people would chatter and sip tea. Electric spotlights and neat rows of seating now compelled audience attention toward the stage. People were no longer permitted to talk amongst themselves nor shout praise and jeers at the actors. Eating was similarly banned.[50] The new theatre was a place for opera, not anyone's third place.

CONCLUSION

The above study of theatre teahouses illustrates their role as third places in nineteenth century Beijing. Against the backdrop of Peking opera, teahouse customers enjoyed light refreshments and endless hours of lively conversations. Teahouses had an unparallelled ability to attract patrons of all backgrounds and classes. Though some men were

50 Goldstein, *Drama Kings*, 76–80.

loath to gather with those of lower statuses, they remained civil in favour of continued indulgence at the teahouse. The Qing court's repeated attempts to regulate these establishments further confirms the great influence teahouses held over society.

Undeniably, the success of the teahouse as a third place was due in large part to a serendipitous confluence of social, cultural, and political factors that cannot be artificially replicated. However, certain aspects of the teahouse's architectural design and business strategy may be applicable to the development of a contemporary third place. In the next chapter, I consider these factors in conjunction with literature on public spaces to develop best practices for the design of third places.

04

best practices

"Third places, we would insist, are only partially amenable to rational planning. Their key ingredients seem to remain elusive and emergent and these no doubt change with the shifting patterns of life style."

— Ramon Oldenburg and Dennis Brissett, "The Third Place"

The phenomenon of the third place occurs where people voluntarily and regularly gather for social activities. There is a vast array of potential locations, in theory anywhere outside one's home and work, yet our paucity of third places is evidence that few spaces permit and suit such gatherings. Though the ingredients of the third place remain nebulous and largely outside the purview of architecture, their settings have been observed to share several key characteristics. This chapter presents those findings in the structure of a best practices guide. It is intended to aid designers, developers, and proprietors during the planning and design phases of a potential third place.

Location and Function

The third place is best located in a busy mixed-use neighbourhood and within walking distance of commercial and residential areas. The people who live and work nearby are all excellent candidates to become regular patrons since they may easily drop by as part of their typical routines. A location with heavy pedestrian or cyclist traffic is preferred; people travelling in vehicles are unlikely to make a spontaneous visit and ample parking space is antithetical to pedestrian-friendly environments.

The space must serve a primary function apart from its role as the third place. The function of the space should prioritize social interactions and be specific. As friendly conversations are a defining element of the third place, it is necessary that socializing is allowed and encouraged in the space. Moreover, a specific function ensures the people who gather have shared interests or values and everyone is cognisant of the group's commonalities. Sharing common ground is crucial to developing interpersonal relationships, since people instinctively gravitate toward similar others.[51] Similarities are particularly important during the early stages of an

51 Angela J. Bahns et al., "Similarity in Relationships as Niche Construction: Choice, Stability, and Influence Within Dyads in a Free Choice Environment," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 112, no. 2 (February 2017): 329–355, https://doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000088.

acquaintanceship when mutual interests and values will move conversations beyond superficial topics. Friendships and acquaintanceships among patrons engender feelings of belonging and may encourage people to become regular visitors who will consider the space their third place.

Project Context

The design of the third place must reflect the physical, social, and cultural context of its neighbourhood. Its appearance should be familiar and inviting to the local people because this is their place. The location need not aim to become a mainstream destination.

It is best practice to consult with area residents and other potential end users to understand their visions for the space. User feedback should be sincerely considered to avoid defaulting to personal design preferences that neglect the local identity. In addition, participating in the project's design may engender feelings of attachment and make contributors more inclined to use and care for the space.

The Street Front

The third place should have a vibrant street presence that attracts and welcomes passersby. This is essential during the early years of an aspiring third place, before there is a stable and sizable user base to recommend the space through word-of-mouth. Focus on attracting locals who may become regulars rather than tourists and one-time customers. A lively third place will improve the streetscape, which in turn may lead to more pedestrian traffic and more visitors.[52]

The primary function of the space should be immediately evident to the public so that any potential patrons will be aware of its existence. In addition to using visual indicators, allow scents and sounds to seep out onto the street. Where the third place is located within a building, there should be clear sight lines into and out of the space through large windows framing interior activity or product displays. Design exterior components as an extension of the interior to smoothly transition visitors from the public realm into the third place.

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52 Vikas Mehta and Jennifer K. Bosson, "Revisiting Lively Streets: Social Interactions in Public Space," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 41, no. 2 (June 2021): 166–171, https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456X18781453; Vikas Mehta, *The Street: A Quintessential Social Public Space* (London: Routledge, 2013), 119.

Lingering and Gathering

Lingering visitors beget the gatherings so fundamental to third places. The space must entice people to linger by providing ample seating options and a comfortable environment.

Seating must accommodate people of various ages and preferences. Options might include from high stools to low benches, hard surfaces to plush cushions, recliners for lying in to ledges for leaning against. In key gathering areas, consider densely grouping seats to compel proximity and contact among visitors. Conversations flow easier when people are seated facing each other and can easily make eye contact.[53] It is also important to have movable furniture so that people may customize the space to suit their needs.[54] Fixed layouts restrict group sizes and can lead to people feeling left out.

The environment of the third place should be protected from weather extremes and be well-

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53 Sally Augustin, *Place Advantage: Applied Psychology for Interior Architecture* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 73.

54 Whyte, William H., *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (Washington D.C.: The Conservation Foundation, 1980) 34–37, 53; Mehta, *The Street: A Quintessential Social Public Space*, 1–64.

lit. Interior spaces should have operable windows for natural ventilation and lighting in addition to the building's mechanical lighting, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems. Where the third place is located outdoors, the space should be shaded from harsh sunlight and be sheltered from the rain and wind. During the summer when ambient temperatures are high, reducing solar radiation will be the greatest contributor to occupant comfort. Conversely, when ambient temperatures are low, reducing wind speeds should be prioritized. Lastly, artificial lighting should be available for safety and to enable the space for use after sundown. Extending operating hours allows visitors to linger longer and permits people with varied schedules to access the space.

05

a gathering place

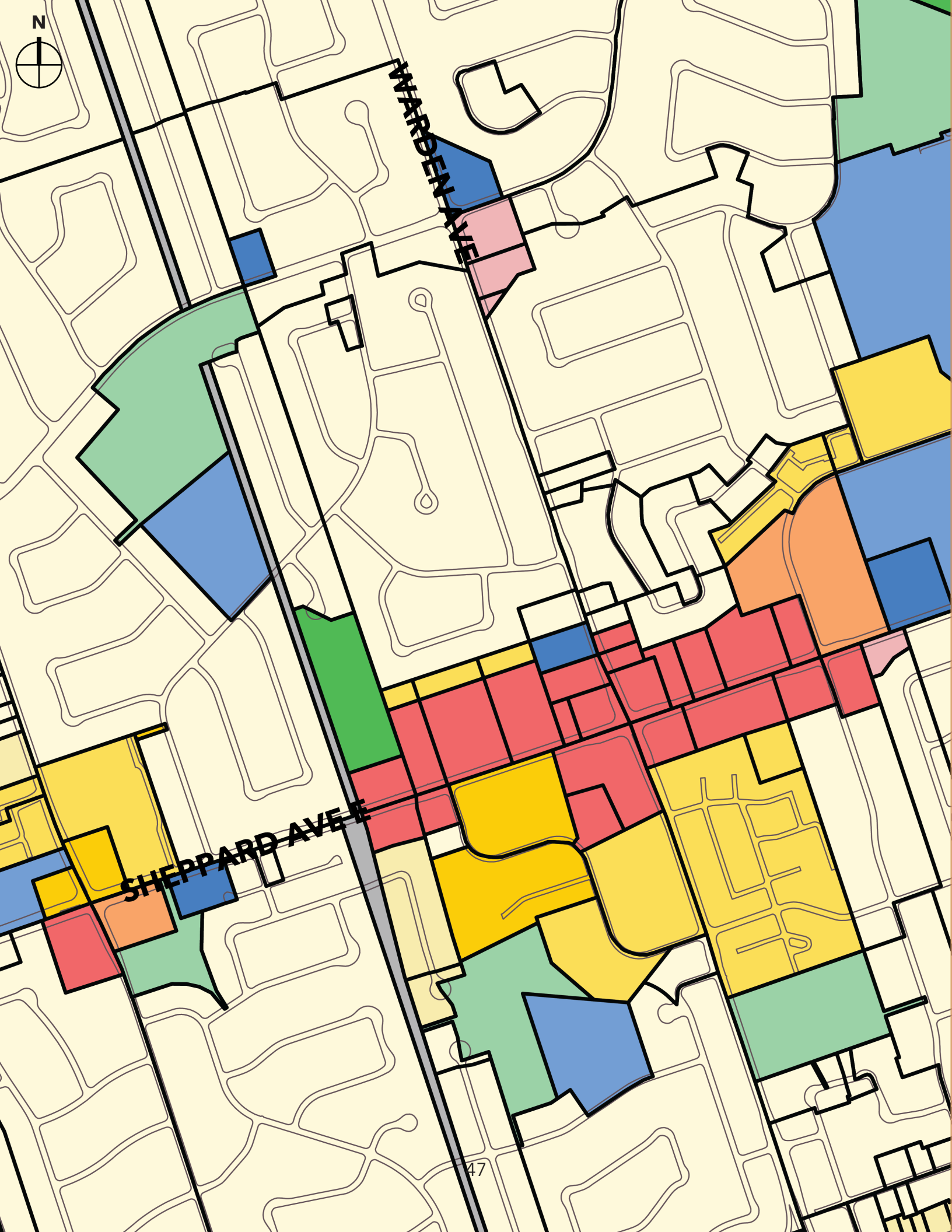
"Experiences occur in places conducive to them, or they do not occur at all. When certain kinds of places disappear, certain experiences also disappear."

– Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place*

Canadian communities are in need of local gathering places. People have appetite for greater social participation, yet are often limited by the lack of opportunity. Having more gathering spaces within close proximity to home would facilitate people's access to social activities and help satisfy local residents' social needs. In this chapter, I propose a new gathering space in my Toronto neighbourhood: an intervention against social isolation and a potential third place.

SITE SELECTION

The project should be located in a mixed-use, pedestrian-heavy area and ideally within a ten minute walk from my home. The greatest concentration of pedestrian traffic is naturally found at the nearby major intersection of Warden Avenue and Sheppard Avenue East, where four transit stops, a supermarket, several high-rise buildings, numerous restaurants, and many small businesses are clustered. I focus my site selection to the vicinity of this intersection and begin by


N
WARDEN AVE
SHEPPARD AVE E

ZONING MAP LEGEND

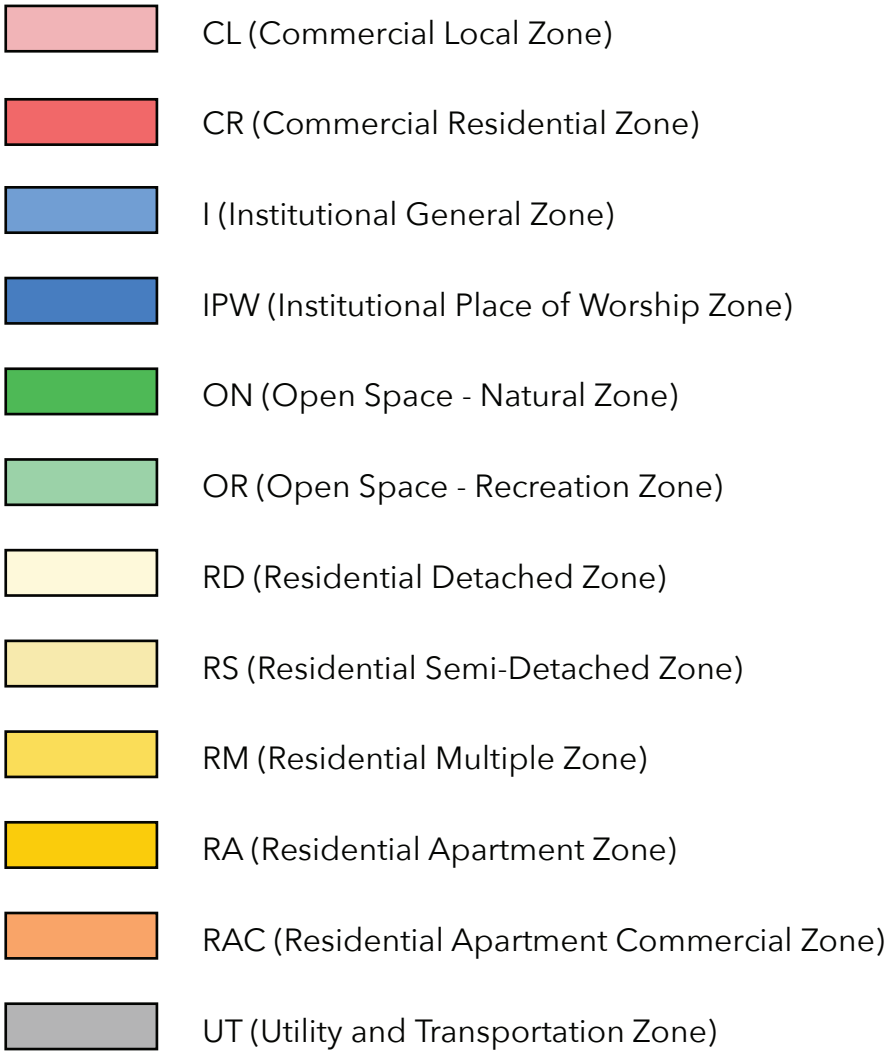


Figure 5. (Opposite) Map of zoning near intersection of Warden Avenue and Sheppard Avenue East. By author.

examining the applicable zoning by-laws to determine which sites would permit commercial usages (Figure 5).[55]

During my review of the area, I am immediately drawn to the two-storey mixed-use building at 2190 Warden Avenue, situated on a lot designated Commercial-Residential Zone. Many businesses currently lease space within this building, including a dental clinic, pet groomer, tutoring centre, fishing tackle shop, and massage spa. I am most interested in locating the gathering space within the few ground floor units along Warden Avenue (Figure 6, Figure 7, and Figure 8).

USER DEMOGRAPHICS

The general target audience of my proposed gathering space is area residents within an approximate ten minute walk from 2190 Warden Avenue. I reference the walking travel time estimates from Google Maps to roughly determine the geographical areas within a ten minute walk.

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55 City of Toronto, By-law No. 569-2013, *Zoning By-law for the City of Toronto* (July 2023); Corporation of the City of Scarborough, By-law No. 10717, *Sullivan Community* (August 2017); Corporation of the City of Scarborough, By-law No. 12360, *Tam O'Shanter Community* (June 2014); Corporation of the City of Scarborough By-law 12466, *L'Amoreaux Community* (January 2017).



Figure 6. Photograph of 2190 Warden Avenue. View from across the street. 2023. By author.



Figure 7. Photograph of 2190 Warden Avenue. View from the sidewalk north of the building. 2023. By author.



Figure 8. Photograph of 2190 Warden Avenue. View from the sidewalk south of the building. 2023. By author.

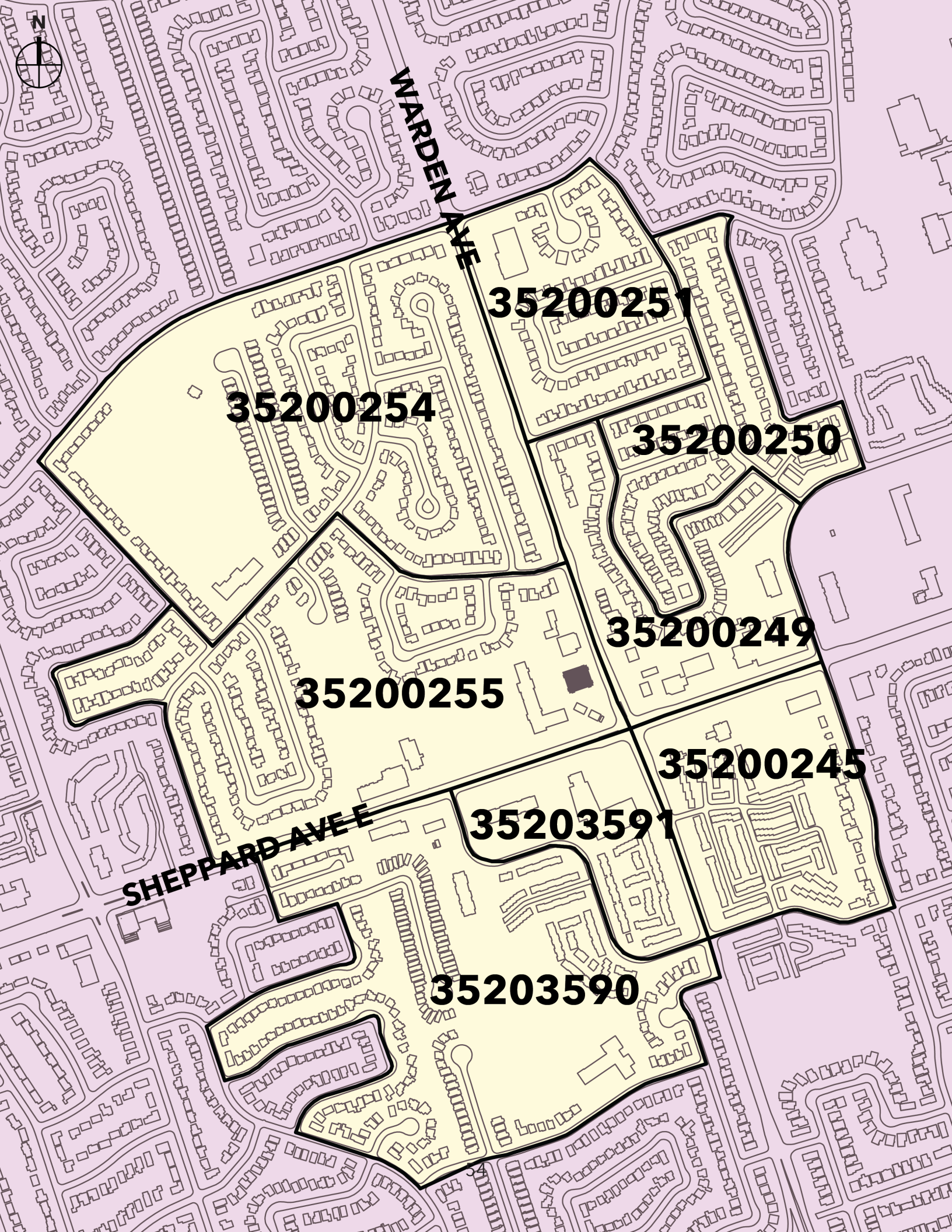
Then, I examine data from the 2021 Canadian Census for the dissemination areas in which my target audience resides. I pull census data from the Statistics Canada website for following dissemination areas (Figure 6):

35200245	35200249	35200250
35200251	35200254	35200255
35203590	35203591	

Then I pull data for the city of Toronto, the province of Ontario, and country of Canada. I compile all the datasets together and compare my local census data to the city, province, and country census data.

This exercise produces a neighbourhood profile to help inform a locally relevant design and program for my project. I am particularly interested in any local demographic characteristics that vary significantly from the wider population. Large-scale government programs may lack the nuance to meet the specific needs of outlier populations. Such groups are better served by local initiatives tailored specifically for the social and cultural conditions of the community.

Figure 9. (Opposite) Map of dissemination areas containing residences within a ten minute walk of 2190 Warden Avenue. By author.


N
WARDEN AVE
35200251
35200254
35200250
35200249
35200255
35200245
35203591
SHEPPARD AVE E
35203590

My analysis of the census datasets reveals the local population varies greatly from the wider population in several key areas:

Higher Average and Median Ages
The local average age is 44.7 years. The average ages of the city, province, and country are between 41.5 and 41.9 years.

The local median age is 47.3 years. The median ages age of the city, province, and country are between 39.6 years and 41.6 years.

Higher Rate of Dwellings Occupied by Usual Residents and Lower Rate Of People Moving Dwellings
97.6 percent of local private dwellings are occupied by usual residents. In comparison, only 92.0 to 92.6 percent of private dwellings are occupied by usual residents in the city, province, and country.

In the past five years, only 25.3 percent of local residents moved dwellings. In comparison, 36.9 to 39.0 percent of residents in the city, province, and country moved dwellings.

Third places thrive by the presence of regular patrons, so having a stable local population is an asset.

Higher Rate Of Visible Minorities
The rate of visible minorities in the local area is 75.1 percent. The rate of visible minorities in the country, province, and country is between 25.5 to 55.7 percent.

In particular, there is a higher rate of Chinese visible minorities. 28.4 percent of the local population are

Chinese visible minorities. In comparison, only 4.7 to 10.7 percent of the city, province, and country are Chinese visible minorities.

Higher Rate Of People Who Know Neither English Nor French

7.3 percent of the local population know neither English nor French. In comparison, only 1.9 to 4.5 percent of people in the city, province, and country know neither English nor French.

77.8 percent of the local population who know neither official language have a mother tongue that is a Chinese language. This is approximately 315 people.

Higher Rate Of Immigrants

57.3 percent of the local population are immigrants. In comparison, only 23.0 to 46.6 percent of people in the city, province, and country are immigrants.

In particular, there is a higher rate of immigrants whose birthplace is China. 27.2 percent of the local immigrant population were born in China. In comparison, only 8.5 to 10.1 percent of immigrants in the city, province, and country were born in China.

As discussed in Chapter One, older adults and visible minorities are demographics at higher risk of social isolation. Since both groups reside in the local neighbourhood at higher than average rates, my project will place particular emphasis on appealing to and encouraging social participation among seniors and Chinese peoples.

Table 2. Population, Age, and Household Data for local dissemination areas, the city of Toronto, province of Ontario, and country of Canada. Adapted from Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001.

Topic	Characteristic
Population and Dwellings	Population, 2021
	Total private dwellin
	Private dwellings oc
Age Characteristics	Total - Age groups o
	0 to 14 years
	15 to 64 years
	65 years and over
	Average age of the
	Median age of the p
Household Characteristics	Total - Private house household maintain
	15 to 24 years
	25 to 34 years
	35 to 44 years
	45 to 54 years
	55 to 64 years
	65 to 74 years
	75 to 84 years
	85 years and over
Mobility Status 1 Year Ago	Total - Mobility statu
	Non-movers
	Movers
Mobility Status 5 Years Ago	Total - Mobility statu
	Non-movers
	Movers

	Local Area [Dissemination Areas Combined]		Toronto [City]		Ontario [Province]		Canada [Country]	
	Counts	Rates	Counts	Rates	Counts	Rates	Counts	Rates
	5575	-	2794356	-	14223942	-	36991981	-
gs	1964	-	1253238	-	5929250	-	16284235	-
cupied by usual residents	1916	97.6	1160892	92.6	5491201	92.6	14978941	92.0
f the population - 100% data	5580	100.0	2794355	100.0	14223945	100.0	36991980	100.0
	750	13.4	384295	13.8	2251795	15.8	6012795	16.3
	3730	66.8	1933075	69.2	9334440	65.6	23957760	64.8
	1080	19.4	476985	17.1	2637710	18.5	7021430	19.0
population	44.7	-	41.5	-	41.8	-	41.9	-
opulation	47.3	-	39.6	-	41.6	-	41.6	-
holds by age of primary ers - 25% sample data	1970	100.0	1160890	100.0	5491200	100.0	14978940	100.0
	15	0.8	34350	3.0	126385	2.3	424695	2.8
	110	5.6	202225	17.4	727305	13.2	2077895	13.9
	320	16.2	210570	18.1	930410	16.9	2600000	17.4
	410	20.8	204790	17.6	1013210	18.5	2646945	17.7
	480	24.4	215740	18.6	1149345	20.9	3046560	20.3
	295	15.0	158850	13.7	876960	16.0	2432140	16.2
	245	12.4	90900	7.8	481250	8.8	1292805	8.6
	70	3.6	43455	3.7	186330	3.4	457900	3.1
s 1 year ago - 25% sample data	5600	100.0	2736910	100.0	13904805	100.0	35986480	100.0
	5225	93.3	2382090	87.0	12295685	88.4	31600930	87.8
	375	6.7	354820	13.0	1609120	11.6	4385555	12.2
s 5 years ago - 25% sample data	5335	100.0	2637900	100.0	13349180	100.0	34504330	100.0
	4000	75.0	1664210	63.1	8361770	62.6	21061090	61.0
	1350	25.3	973695	36.9	4987410	37.4	13443240	39.0

Table 3. Language and Ethnicity Data for local dissemination areas, the city of Toronto, province of Ontario, and country of Canada. Adapted from Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001.

Topic	Characteristic
Visible Minority	Total - Visible minori households - 25% sa
	Total visible minorit
	Chinese
	Not a visible minori
Ethnic or Cultural Origin	Total - Ethnic or cultu private households -
	Chinese
Knowledge of Official Languages	Total - Knowledge o population excludin data
	English only
	French only
	English and French
	Neither English nor
	Mother tongue is
Knowledge of Languages	Total - Knowledge o private households -
	Official languages
	English
	French
	Non-official langua
	Chinese language

	Local Area [Dissemination Areas Combined]		Toronto [City]		Ontario [Province]		Canada [Country]	
	Counts	**Rates**	**Counts**	**Rates**	**Counts**	**Rates**	**Counts**	**Rates**
ty for the population in private ample data	5670	100.0	2761285	100.0	14031750	100.0	36328480	100.0
y population	4260	75.1	1537285	55.7	4817360	34.3	9639205	26.5
	1610	*28.4*	*296225*	*10.7*	*820245*	*5.8*	*1715770*	*4.7*
ity	1435	25.3	1224000	44.3	9214395	65.7	26689275	73.5
ural origin for the population in - 25% sample data	5670	100.0	2761290	100.0	14031755	100.0	36328475	100.0
	1650	29.1	297725	10.8	821835	5.9	1713870	4.7
f official languages for the total g institutional residents - 100%	5575	100.0	2772630	100.0	14099790	100.0	36620955	100.0
	4800	86.1	2409655	86.9	12196575	86.5	25261655	69.0
	0	0.0	2555	0.1	39310	0.3	4087895	11.2
	355	6.4	236915	8.5	1519365	10.8	6581680	18.0
r French	405	7.3	123505	4.5	344545	2.4	689725	1.9
a Chinese language	*315*	*5.7*	*51745*	*1.9*	*121915*	*0.9*	*244370*	*0.7*
f languages for the population in - 25% sample data	5665	100.0	2761290	100.0	14031755	100.0	36328480	100.0
	5250	92.7	2637775	95.5	13688615	97.6	35644660	98.1
	5225	*92.2*	*2635255*	*95.4*	*13650230*	*97.3*	*31628570*	*87.1*
	390	*6.9*	*238505*	*8.6*	*1550545*	*11.1*	*10563235*	*29.1*
ges	3760	66.4	1536605	55.6	5058180	36.0	10724700	29.5
es	1525	26.9	267745	9.7	734190	5.2	1528860	4.2

Table 4. Language and Ethnicity Data for local dissemination areas, the city of Toronto, province of Ontario, and country of Canada. Adapted from Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001.

Topic	Characteristic
Citizenship	Total - Citizenship fo households - 25% sa
	Canadian citizens
	Not Canadian citize
Immigrant Status and Period of Immigration	Total - Immigrant sta for the population in sample data
	Non-immigrants
	Immigrants
	Before 1980
	1980 to 1990
	1991 to 2000
	2001 to 2010
	2011 to 2021
	2011 to 2015
	2016 to 2021
	Non-permanent res
Age at Immigration	Total - Age at immig population in private
	Under 5 years
	5 to 14 years
	15 to 24 years
	25 to 44 years
	45 years and over
Selected Places of Birth for the Immigrant Population	Total - Place of birth private households -
	China
	Hong Kong

	Local Area [Dissemination Areas Combined]		Toronto [City]		Ontario [Province]		Canada [Country]	
	Counts	**Rates**	**Counts**	**Rates**	**Counts**	**Rates**	**Counts**	**Rates**
r the population in private ample data	5675	100.0	2761285	100.0	14031755	100.0	36328475	100.0
	4655	82.0	2284055	82.7	12633260	90.0	33143225	91.2
ens	1010	17.8	477230	17.3	1398490	10.0	3185250	8.8
tus and period of immigration n private households - 25%	5675	100.0	2761285	100.0	14031755	100.0	36328475	100.0
	2260	39.8	1329905	48.2	9437320	67.3	27042120	74.4
	3250	57.3	1286140	46.6	4206585	30.0	8361505	23.0
	525	*9.3*	*222935*	*8.1*	*860305*	*6.1*	*1540610*	*4.2*
	365	*6.4*	*156460*	*5.7*	*506195*	*3.6*	*924320*	*2.5*
	645	*11.4*	*273985*	*9.9*	*852765*	*6.1*	*1511475*	*4.2*
	900	*15.9*	*290400*	*10.5*	*941630*	*6.7*	*1930525*	*5.3*
	795	*14.0*	*342360*	*12.4*	*1045695*	*7.5*	*2454570*	*6.8*
	420	*7.4*	*144320*	*5.2*	*461010*	*3.3*	*1126330*	*3.1*
	380	*6.7*	*198040*	*7.2*	*584680*	*4.2*	*1328240*	*3.7*
sidents	155	2.7	145240	5.3	387850	2.8	924850	2.5
ration for the immigrant e households - 25% sample data	3250	100.0	1286140	100.0	4206585	100.0	8361505	100.0
	160	4.9	91030	7.1	375395	8.9	748265	8.9
	460	14.2	203840	15.8	734680	17.5	1438440	17.2
	510	15.7	247955	19.3	840165	20.0	1594290	19.1
	1725	53.1	605575	47.1	1851675	44.0	3783335	45.2
	390	12.0	137730	10.7	404670	9.6	797180	9.5
for the immigrant population in - 25% sample data	3250	100.0	1286140	100.0	4206585	100.0	8361505	100.0
	885	27.2	129755	10.1	355955	8.5	715835	8.6
	175	5.4	36850	2.9	108480	2.6	213855	2.6

All data for the preceding observations and select related data have been compiled into three tables. Table 2 contains basic age and household information. Table 3 and Table 4 contain topics for which responses from my neighbourhood differed significantly from responses from the wider populations. I extracted these particular datasets as they are the most relevant for informing culturally and socially appropriate programming for the local residents.

BUILDING PROGRAM

The project occupies building unit G4 and expands the building's existing footprint in the southeast corner (Figure 10). It is located on the ground floor of the building and directly accessible from the street. The interior usable area is 275 m² and there is an exterior covered patio measuring 30 m². The room schedule is provided in Table 5.

Currently, the south façade of the second floor protrudes approximately 5 metres past the south façade of the ground floor and creates a dark and low exterior space that is unappealing and underutilized (Figure 11). Direct sunlight cannot reach the ground floor units facing this area recessed area. Building up this space creates more interior usable area and minimizes disruption to existing businesses in the building.

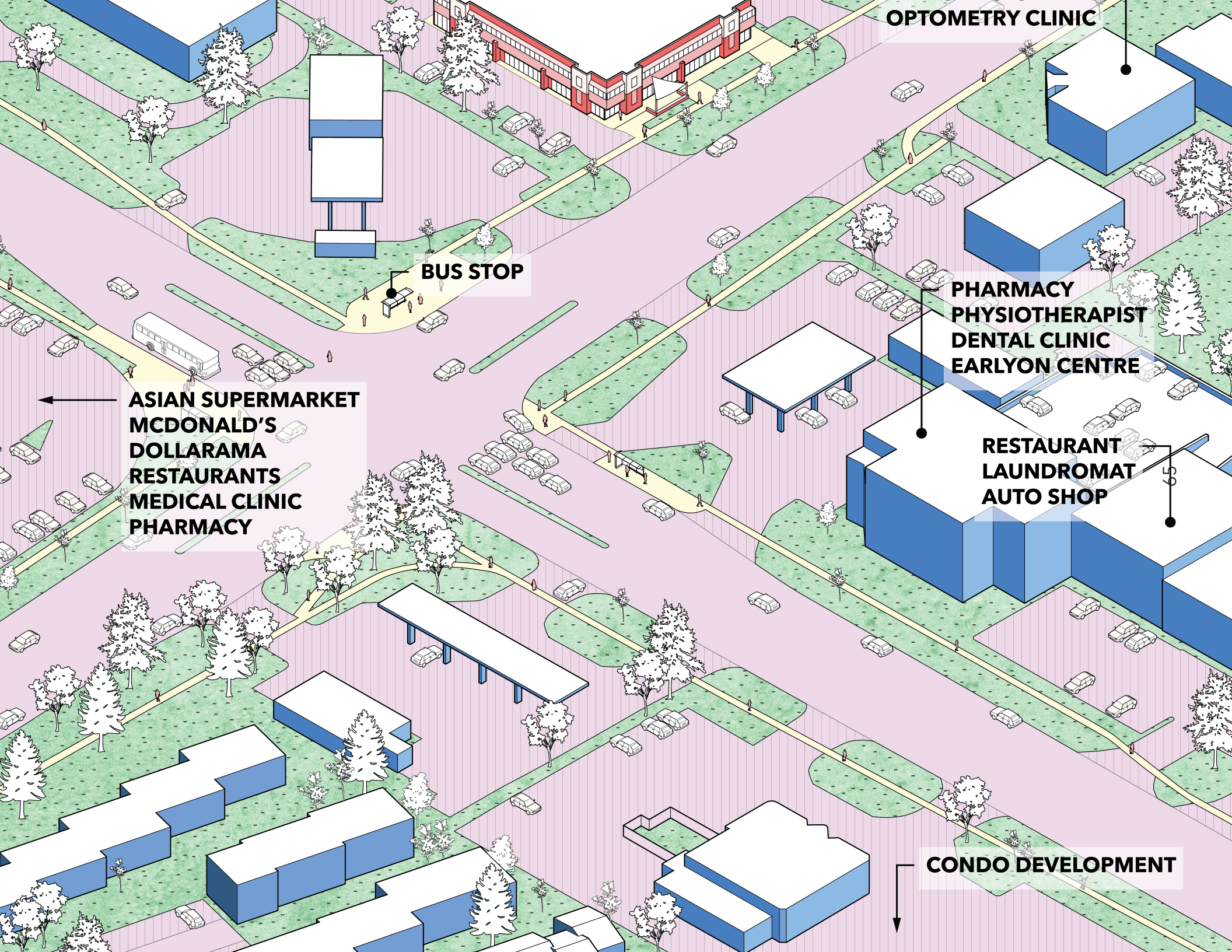
The primary function of this gathering space is a teahouse (Figure 11). It shall be licensed as an

Space	Gross Area (m²)
Vestibule	9
Seating Area	92
Kitchen	42
Service Counter	12
Universal Washroom 1	9
Universal Washroom 2	9
Multi-Purpose Room	42
Storage 1	9
Storage 2	9
Corridor	42
Patio	30
Total	**275**

Table 5. Key program areas in the gathering space. By author.

Eating Establishment with the City of Toronto to serve light refreshments such as tea and Chinese pastries. Customers have a variety of seating options available. They may take tea at the sofas and lounge chairs, while playing games at the tables, along the window-side bench, or outside on the Patio (Figure 13 and Figure 14). In the Seating Area, there is opportunity for a small stage to be set up for live music, comedy, and other performances.

The Patio is protected from rain and sun by a tensile canopy and illuminated in the evenings by new exterior lighting, extending the times customers may


OPTOMETRY CLINIC
BUS STOP
PHARMACY
PHYSIOTHERAPIST
DENTAL CLINIC
EARLYON CENTRE
ASIAN SUPERMARKET
MCDONALD'S
DOLLARAMA
RESTAURANTS
MEDICAL CLINIC
PHARMACY
RESTAURANT
LAUNDROMAT
AUTO SHOP
65
CONDO DEVELOPMENT

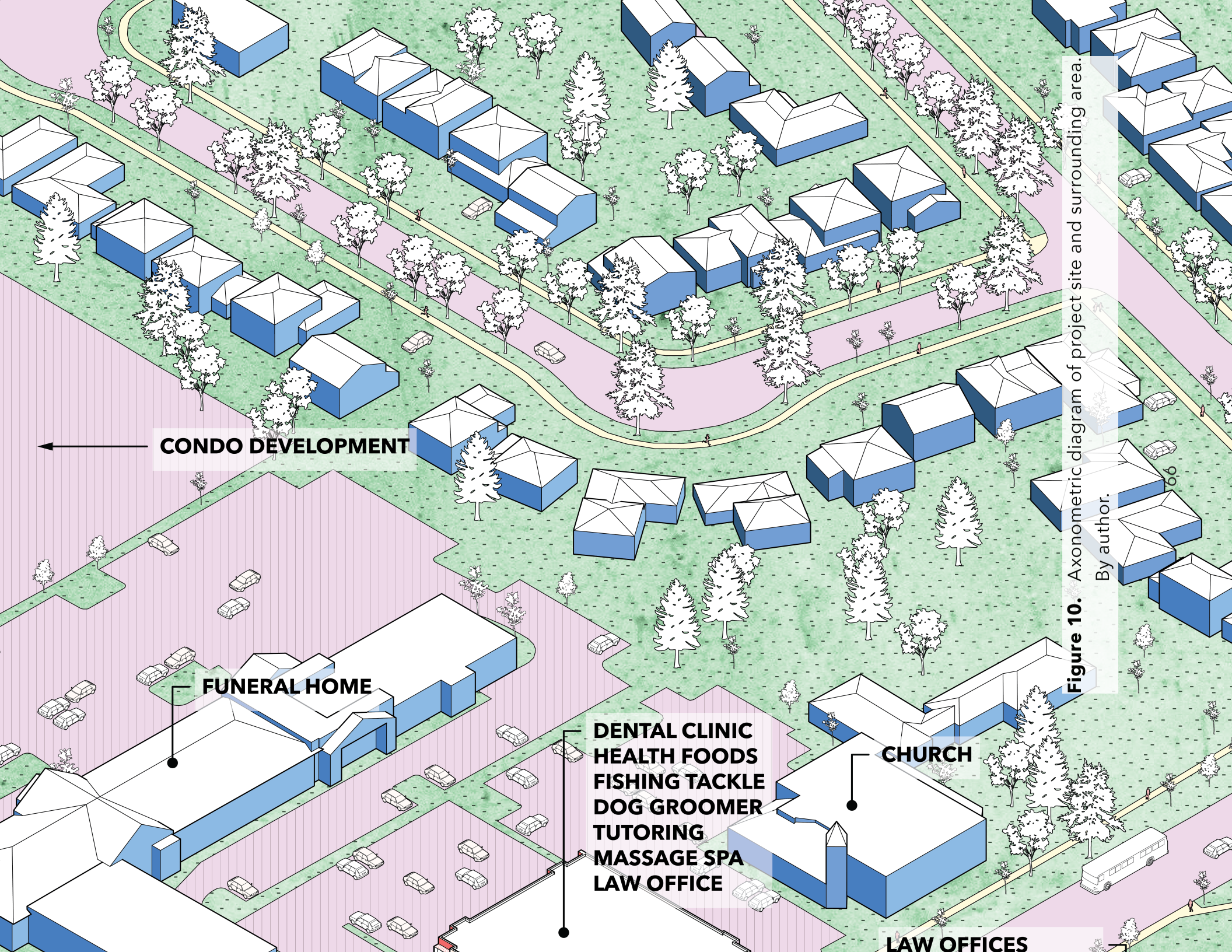


Figure 10. Axonometric diagram of project site and surrounding area. By author.

comfortably be seated outdoors. Inside, games and magazines are available for customers to freely peruse and borrow, enticing people to linger longer.

This establishment will also host regular workshops targeted toward older adults and Chinese minorities in the Multi-Purpose Room. Workshop topics will be selected based on community interest, but may include calligraphy, yoga, and language classes. Local groups and members of the public will be permitted rent the room for private functions such as parties and meetings.

ZONING BY-LAW CONSIDERATIONS

During the design phase of the gathering space, I reference the zoning by-laws applicable to my site to ensure my project would be permitted. The following excerpts from the former City of Scarborough zoning by-law 10717 are the standards most relevant to my project.

Under Clause VI, sub-clause 15 Lands Not Covered by Buildings:

> "In areas designated in Schedule 'A' as "CR", the lands not covered by permitted buildings, structures and **parking spaces**, shall be used only for **landscaping**, 50% of which shall be **soft landscaping**. **Outdoor patio** areas **ancillary** to a permitted non-residential use



Figure 11. Photo of the existing recessed ground floor area at the southeast corner of the building. 2023. By author.

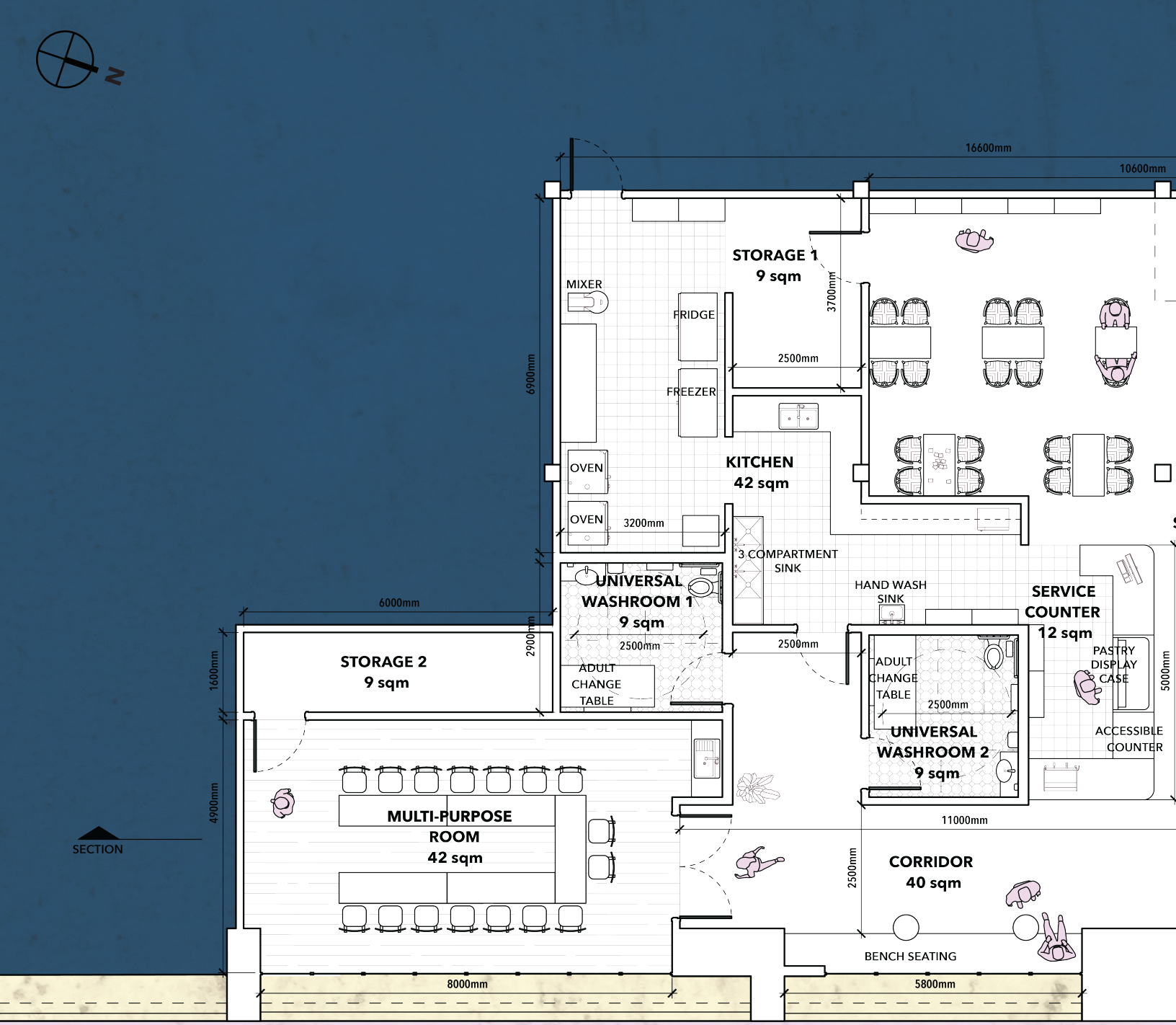


Figure 12. Ground floor plan at 1:100 scale. By author.



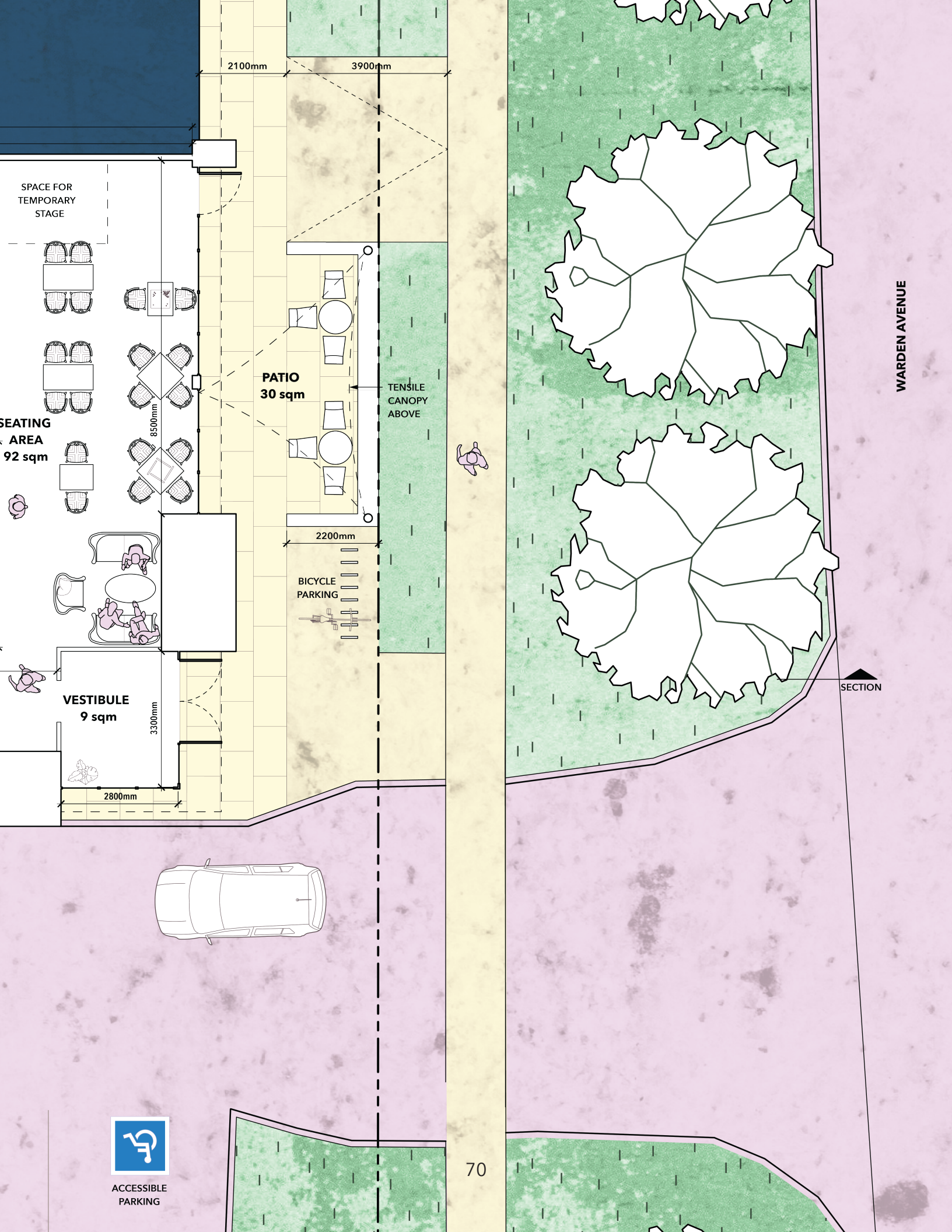

2100mm
3900mm
SPACE FOR
TEMPORARY
STAGE
PATIO
30 sqm
TENSILE
CANOPY
ABOVE
SEATING
AREA
92 sqm
8500mm
2200mm
BICYCLE
PARKING
VESTIBULE
9 sqm
3300mm
2800mm
WARDEN AVENUE
SECTION
ACCESSIBLE
PARKING



Figure 13. East elevation at 1:100 scale. By author.



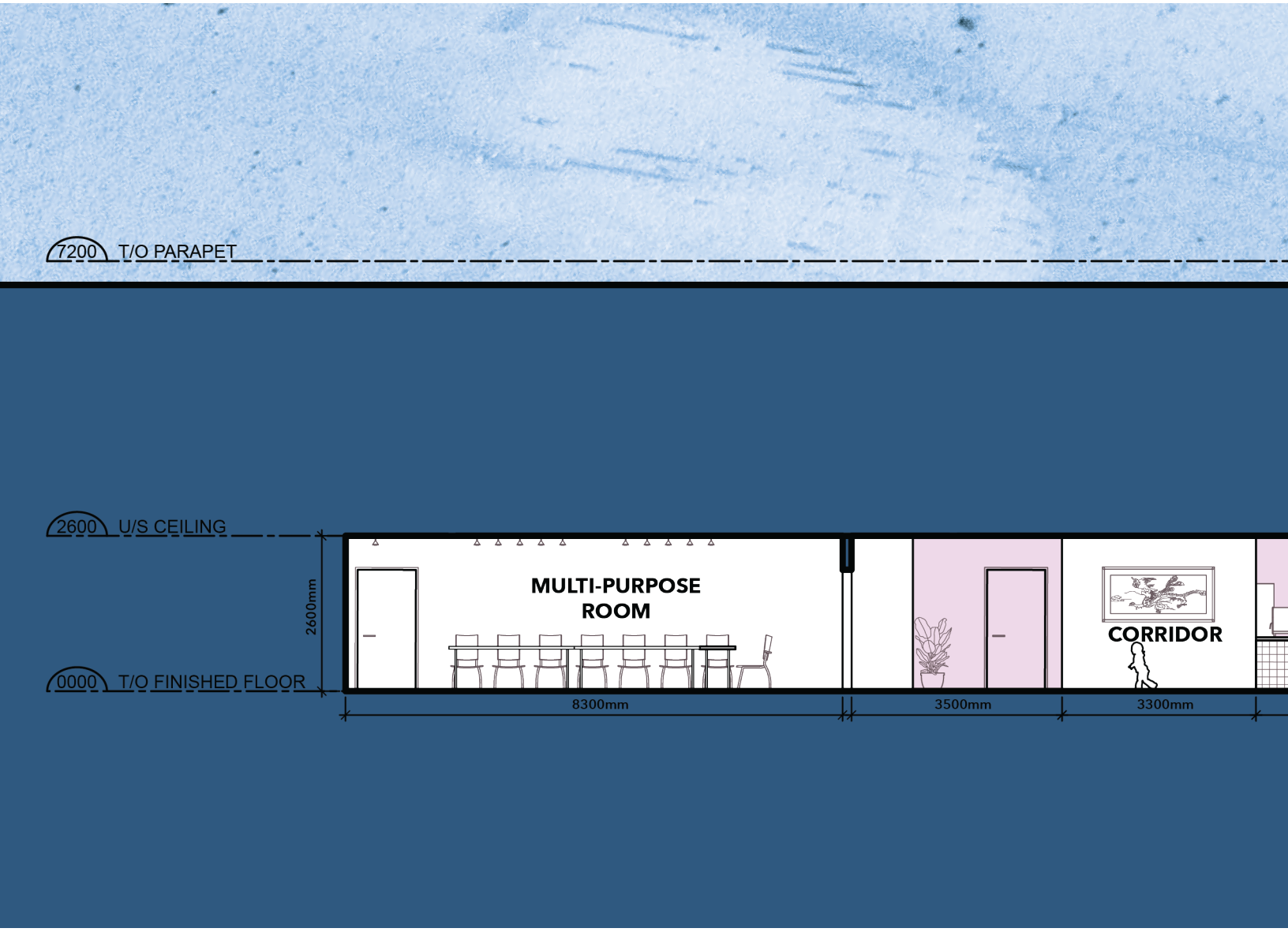
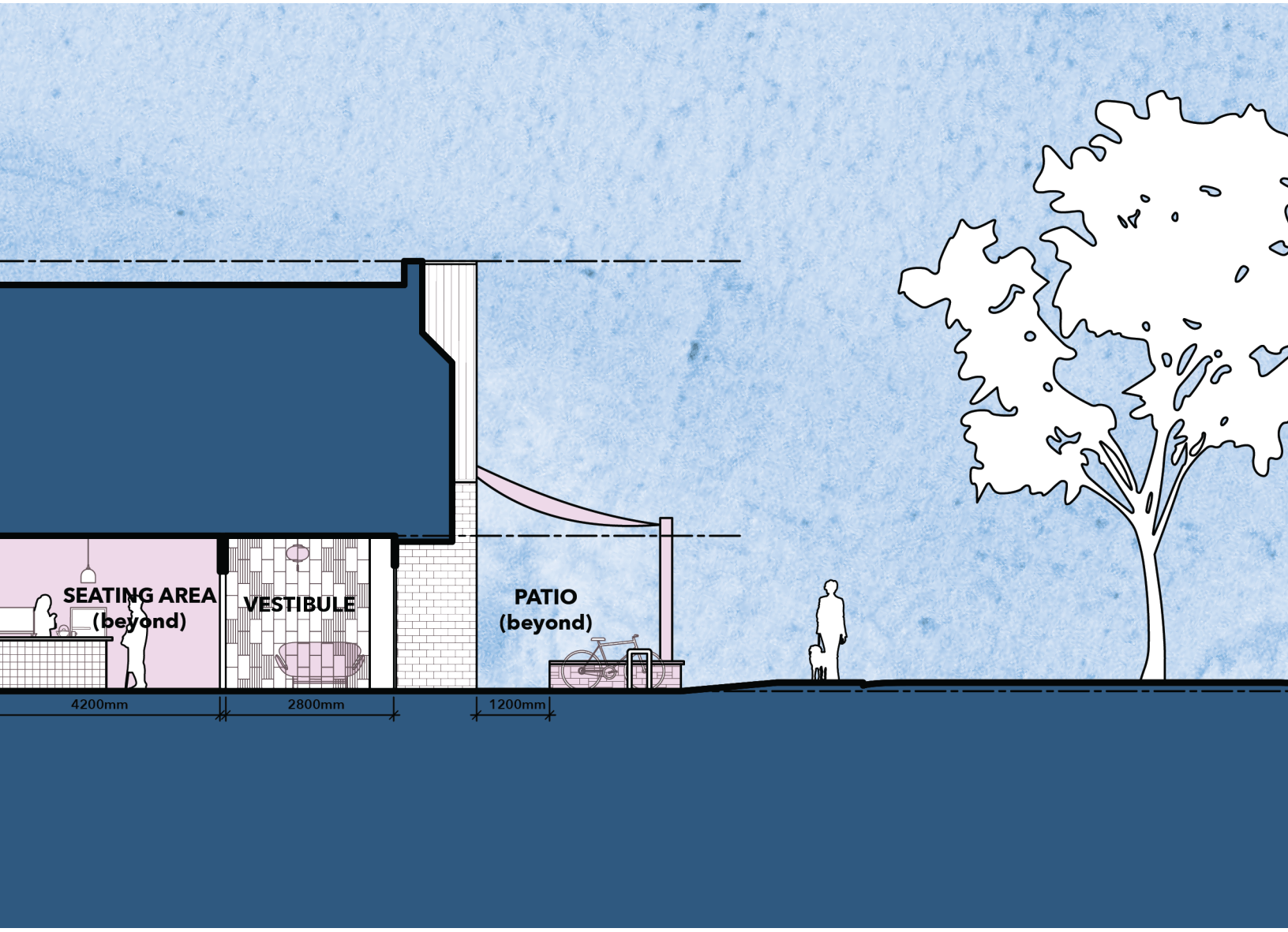


Figure 14. East-west section at 1:100 scale. By author.


SEATING AREA
(beyond)
VESTIBULE
PATIO
(beyond)
4200mm
2800mm
1200mm

in the "CR" Zone shall not be considered **landscaping** and shall be permitted, provided the **outdoor patio**:

a) is located between the front wall of the building or structure housing the principal uses and the **front lot line** of the lot;... and

c) has a maximum area the greater of:

i) 30 square metres; or

ii) 30% of the interior floor area of the premises it is associated with;

d) is not used to provide entertainment uses such as music and dancing, whether as an **ancillary** use or associated with the principal use;..."

The patio area of my project is 30 m², so it is permitted under the zoning by-law regardless of the interior floor area.

Under Clause VIII, sub-clause 16 Commercial-Residential (CR) Zone, permitted uses include Educational and Training Facilities, Places of of Entertainment, Recreational Uses, and Restaurants. The teahouse and educational/recreational workshops are therefore permitted under the zoning by-law.

ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

This project is designed in accordance with the Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines to reduce potential barriers to access.

The exterior area east of the building is raised to meet interior finished floor level, eliminating the step originally located at the entrances. Two new accessible parking spots are installed where there were previously three regular parking spots.

Inside the unit, there are two universal washrooms, each equipped with an adult change table. The washrooms accommodate a 2500 mm diameter clear turning space and the clear floor spaces necessary for the lavatories, water closets, and change tables.

All doorways have a minimum clear width of 950 mm and all doors are equipped with power door operators. Interior accessible paths of travel are minimum 1100 mm wide, with 2500 mm diameter clear turning spaces provided at entrances and at the ends of corridors.

SELECT USER PROFILES

Workshop Attendees
Local residents often attend the workshops on offer in the Multi-Purpose Room. Many hang out together in the Lounge before and after their scheduled workshops.

Gamers
Local friend groups meet up in the Lounge to play cards, weiqi (Go), mahjong, and the various other games available.

Waiting Guardians
Parents and grandparents pick up drinks and snacks at the teahouse while waiting for their children to finish attending tutoring classes and dentist appointments in other units of the building. Pet owners also wait here for their dogs to finish grooming appointments.

Bus Riders
The Patio is 60 m away from the nearby bus stop. People rest against the low Patio wall while watching and waiting for the 68 Warden Southbound bus.

REVENUE AND FUNDING

The primary objective of this project is to establish a gathering place for local residents. The project's success in meeting this objective and reducing social isolation is partially determined by the architectural design, but heavily dependent on the commitment of the owner/operator. Turning a

profit must never prioritized above the interests of the community, but realistically, the establishment must generate enough revenue to sustain its operations.

Earnings from selling refreshments, workshop registrations fees, and Multi-Purpose Room booking fees will be the primary sources of revenue. In addition, the establishment may be eligible for several government grants to help with building renovation and workshop expenses.

The Toronto municipal government offers annually the Commercial Façade Improvement Grant Program. This grant is available to fund half the costs of commercial building façade improvements, up to a maximum of $12500. My project at 2190 Warden Avenue would qualify for the grant program, because it involves a minimum of three façade improvements, faces a public road, and has commercial use at grade. The façade improvements introduced as part of my project include replacing existing windows and doors, constructing a new façade at the building's southeast, installing a tensile canopy, and installing two exterior power door operators.

The Ontario provincial government offers annually the Seniors Community Grant Program. This grant offers between $1000 to $10000 to fund local community groups providing "opportunities for greater social inclusion, volunteerism, and community

engagement for older adults."[56] The workshops offered through my gathering place project match the three program priorities of the grant: 1. providing opportunities for older adults to stay active and connected in their communities, 2. reducing older adults' social isolation by increasing access to programs and services, and 3. increasing access to information and supports for health prevention and promotion. One of the grant program's priority target populations is older adults who are ethnic minority immigrants, which also aligns with one of the primary user groups of the workshops provided through my project. Funding from this provincial grant would help cover material and instructor costs for workshops, such as craft supplies, recreational equipment, laptops, and staff wages.

The Canadian federal government offers annually the New Horizons for Seniors Program for Community-Based Projects. This grant offers up to $25000 for senior-led and volunteer-based projects empowering seniors in their local communities. The workshops offered through my gathering place project meets the grant program objective of "supporting the social

56 Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, "Form no. on00490 2024-25 Seniors Community Grant Program Guidelines," https://forms.mgcs.gov.on.ca/en/dataset/on00490.

participation and inclusion of seniors."[57] My project also meets several of the key priorities, such as addressing social isolation, promoting intergenerational mentoring and engagement, and serving people who primarily speak languages other than English and French. Funding from this federal grant would help cover costs associated with the workshops.

CONCLUSION

This gathering space is designed to encourage social participation among older adults and Chinese minorities, but use of the space is not restricted to only these demographics. As stated in Chapter Two, the possibility of having novel encounters and forming intergenerational connections are, in addition to increasing social participation, two of the main benefits of third places for seniors. Welcoming all peoples into the space is beneficial for its intended users and for the wider community.

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57 Employment and Social Development Canada, "New Horizons for Seniors Program – Community-Based Projects (Up to $25,000): Who Can Apply," October 2023, https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/funding/new-horizons-seniors-community-based-2023/who-can-apply.html.

epilogue

"Where third places remain vital in the lives of people today, it is far more because they are prolific than prominent."

– Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place*

It can be concluded that one of the roles of architecture in preventing social isolation is in the planning and design of the third place. Locating opportunities for gathering within people's usual geographical range improves access to social activities and increases the likelihood of participation. As such, frequent distribution of small and hyper-local gathering spaces is recommended over large-scale projects targeted to the general public. Projects responding to the cultural and physical site context will be most relevant to the local community and best encourage local engagement.

LIMITATIONS OF ARCHITECTURE

Good architecture makes for good gathering places, but undeniably, the primary factor in the success of the third place is the owner/operator. An architect's role in a project decreases as design is completed and there is little further involvement following substantial completion of construction. However, this marks only the beginning of a potential third place; a space that has yet to be occupied and used cannot be anyone's third place.

The existence of the third place is fundamentally dependent on the owner/operator permitting use of the space for activities conducive to casual conversations and informal social interactions. Lingering and gathering quickly becomes loitering and trespassing from the perspective of those who oppose it. And the unfortunate reality is that a great majority of publicly accessible spaces do oppose such activities.

The success of a third place also depends on the owner/operator's abilities as a moderator. As suggested by Joseph Addison, there should be regulation of user behaviours to ensure interactions remain civil. Too strict and the people will feel stifled. Too lax and the frustrations of human interaction overwhelm its joys. A competent owner/operator who can walk the fine line of good moderation is indispensable to the third place.

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