Queer Arrival:

Uncovering the Spatial Narratives of QTPOC Newcomers in Toronto

by
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A thesis
presented to the University of Waterloo
In fulfillment of the
thesis requirement for the degree of
Master of Architecture

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2025
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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

Toronto's urban landscape is continuously shaped by immigrants, queer, and marginalized communities. Historically, immigrants have established ethnic "Arrival Cities" to foster mutual support, and queer communities have carved out queer spaces like the Church-Wellesley Village to cultivate safety, belonging, and visibility.[1] Positioned at the intersectionality of marginalized identities,[2] Queer and Trans People of Colour (QTPOC) newcomers are also actively contributing to the evolution of the urban landscape, giving rise to a new spatial typology – the "Queer Arrival City".

Existing research on Arrival Cities and queer enclaves remains constrained within narrow conceptual boundaries, overlooking the broader spectrum of urban arrival. Arrival Cities are typically examined through an ethnic minority lens, focusing on neighbourhood dynamics, while queer enclaves are studied predominantly from a white, middle-class gay male perspective. These approaches neglect the intersectionality of race, gender, sexuality, and class in the production of diasporic spaces, leaving QTPOC newcomers underrepresented in both academic and public spheres.

This thesis addresses these gaps by uncovering the spatial narratives of Toronto's QTPOC newcomers in constructing their "Queer Arrival City". It specifically examines how QTPOC newcomers navigate Toronto's built environment and the role of the Church-Wellesley Village in their migration. Furthermore, it explores the design of a public space that materializes QTPOC newcomers' spatial narratives as a place of belonging and visibility.

1 Doug Saunders, *Arrival City: The Final Migration and Our next World*, First edition (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2010); John Grube, "'No More Shit': The Struggle for Democratic Gay Space in Toronto," in *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance*, ed. Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter (Seattle, Wash: Bay Press, 1997), 127–46.

2 Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," in *Feminism And Politics* (Oxford: University Press, 1998), https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198782063.003.0016.

This research employs a Queer of Colour Methodology (QOCM) integrated with Participatory Action Research (PAR) to foreground intersectionality and actively engage QTPOC newcomers in both the research and design process. Drawing on qualitative and quantitative data from three phases of community engagement - surveys, interviews, and focus groups, this thesis introduces the novel “Queer Arrival” framework, encompassing both infrastructural and individualized spatial typologies, while articulating a collective “Queer Diaspora Spatial Consciousness” in inhabiting public space. The research culminates in a design proposal shaped by the active contribution and lived experiences of QTPOC newcomers.

Ultimately, by positioning QTPOC newcomers as the primary holders of knowledge production, this thesis fosters an inclusive, community-driven research environment and design process, while prioritizing QTPOC newcomers’ empowerment and agency in shaping their future built environment.

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the unwavering support of everyone who stood by me throughout this year-long journey. I want to express my deepest gratitude to the educators, community members, friends, and family who have shaped this work that I will always be proud of.

To my supervisor, Adrian Blackwell - thank you for your steady guidance and encouragement. From the very beginning, you challenged me to engage deeply with theory, and through that process, I discovered an academic side of myself I hadn't known existed. I've genuinely enjoyed reading, writing, researching, and ultimately developing my own Queer Arrival theory through this work. Thank you for giving me the freedom to pursue a thesis that feels true to myself, and for believing in me and respecting every decision I made.

To my committee member, Linda Zhang - thank you for being a mentor and inspiration. Your community-oriented practice has shaped how I approach community engagement and create lasting social impacts through my work. Thank you for helping me "find my voice" as both a researcher and an emerging designer. I wouldn't be where I am today without your guidance.

To my internal reader, Quan Thai - thank you for standing by me. Queer research, much like being queer in academia, often feels like a lonely path. You have shown me a world where I am not alone in this fight, and inspired me to continue queering architecture far beyond this work. Thank you for being a role model I deeply admire.

To my external reader, Kelvin Kung - thank you for attending my defence and offering thoughtful feedback. Our conversation pushed me to reflect more critically on architects' role in building stronger communities.

I'd also like to thank Jane Mah Hutton and Tara Bissett for helping lay the foundation of this thesis. Jane, your guidance in TRD1 was instrumental in shaping my topic. Tara, you were the first person I ever pitched this queer thesis to two years ago, and you've supported me with enthusiasm ever since. Thank you both for believing in me since day one. I also would like to thank Stephanie and Elise at the Writing Centre for their constructive feedback and cultivating my written voice.

This thesis is grounded in the voices of Toronto's QTPOC newcomers. To the eight community members who participated in interviews and focus groups - Jon, Adam, Gael, Bob, David, Jason, Rania, and Pedro - thank you for sharing your time and your stories with me. Your generosity, patience, and openness made this research possible, and eased my nerves as I navigated community engagement for the first time. To the other community members I couldn't include due to time and capacity constraints - thank you for your interest and contributions. You all are the motivation behind this work, and continue inspiring me to retell our diasporic narratives.

To my friends in and out of school - thank you for being there through it all. And to my partner, Tristan - thank you for your companionship throughout grad school. From cooking dinners when I was buried in work, to accompanying me on numerous site visits and events, you've been by my side in every possible way. You offered insights when I was stuck in thought, and comfort when I felt alone. You've been the rock of my work - I truly couldn't have done it without you.

Finally, to my parents - no words can fully express my gratitude for your unconditional love. You've made countless sacrifices so I could build a life in Canada. Though you may not fully understand or agree with this work. I know you are proud of me. I hope that one day - soon - I will be able to share and explain everything in this thesis with you.

I also acknowledge the use of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in one implication in this thesis.

The artistic portraits of the eight participants in Chapters 3 and 4 were based on images generated using the AI platform *Fotor*. To create the portraits, I used broad descriptive prompts, such as “a South Asian man in his mid-30s”, ensuring that no identifiable features of the participants were included, except general tributes of ethnicity, genders, and age range. These AI-generated images served as references for me to make artistic illustrations of participants, further abstracting their original physical features.

Participants have consented to the use of these illustrations in representing their voices in this thesis. This process ensured an ethical and respectful research environment where participants’ privacy was fully protected.

Territorial Acknowledgement

As a settler, I acknowledge the benefits that accrue to me as a result of colonization and dispossession. I pay my respects to the diverse nations and peoples as the first custodians of the lands and waters where I live, work, and play.

To the Anishnaabe, Ininew, and Dakota peoples, and the Red River Métis, thank you for welcoming me to Treaty One Territory when I first landed in Canada 13 years ago. To the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples, and many First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, thank you for hosting me in my “queer home” Tkaronto in the immoral nature of Treaty 13. To the Neutral, Anishnaabe, and Haudenosaunee peoples in the Six Nations of the Grand River, thank you for inviting me to your land to complete this research and degree.

As a queer migrant, I also honour the resilience, strength, and wisdom of Two-Spirit people who have long held sacred roles in the communities. I acknowledge the ongoing impacts of colonization, which have disrupted and erased Two-Spirit identities and traditions, and I commit to uplifting and supporting Two-Spirit voices through my own work.

True reconciliation requires action and allyship. We must understand the path of reconciliation as citizens requires serious and continuous personal examination and growth. We call upon the elected leaders at all levels to act on the recommendations from the 94 Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. I stand in solidarity with Indigenous communities and Two-Spirit individuals, reaffirming our commitment to learning, unlearning, and fostering spaces of inclusion, respect, and empowerment.

Dedication

To my parents,
for your love, support, and sacrifices,
and for always providing me with the best you could.

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Chapter 1

Introduction


PAY PARKING ENFORCED
MON - SAT
8:00 AM - 9:00PM
SUN
1:00PM - 9:00PM
3802
SOFONDA
COX
BABY BEL
BEL
EBONI
DJ CORY
ACTIVATE
SOY BOYS
MAGIC MUSHROOMS
DYS
NORTH BROOKLYN

1.1 Prologue

I was 14, hiding in my room in China, hacking my way through the Great Firewall to watch *Queer as Folk* on a family computer, constantly glancing over my shoulder in case my parents walked in. The show, set in Pittsburgh, revolved around the dramatic lives of a group of white gay men in the early 2000s. Everything about it felt like a forbidden world, a place I was never supposed to step into.

As a closeted boy suffocating under the Chinese education system, *Queer as Folk* wasn't just entertainment, it was a portal that gave me a glimpse into a fantasy queer world – a world where gays were out, proud, and visible; a world where there was an entire neighbourhood with gay bars and fun things to do, like a gay Disneyland to me. This world was so radically different from mine. I would dream about being there, surrounded by friends, immersed in a world of sex, alcohol, and drama – everything the show so unapologetically celebrated. It was the kind of life I never thought I could have.

Until I did.

Years later, I had the privilege of moving to Canada. After spending several years in Winnipeg, I relocated to Toronto in 2019. Long before I arrived, I knew where I wanted to live – the Church-Wellesley Village, the very place where *Queer as Folk* was filmed. I was determined to experience the queer life I had long fantasized about.

I found a 300-square-foot studio in a postwar apartment building in the Village. To secure the place, I had to prepay half a year's rent, while the rent itself cost more than half of my monthly income. But I didn't care. I made it work by balancing my full-time architecture job and various side gigs. Once I moved in, the Village fulfilled every expectation I had built up in my

◀ **Fig. 1.1** Woody's and SAILOR in Toronto's Church-Wellesley Village. This well-known gay bar was prominently featured as a main queer hangout in the TV show *Queer as Folk*.

mind. Even the address became a statement. Dropping “I live at Church-Wellesley” into conversations was my subtle flex, a way of coming out without saying a word. I had everything that I had once only dreamed about – the friends, the lifestyle, the apartment. It was like reliving the life of the characters.

But this rainbow-painted life was so fragile.

COVID-19 hit and the neighbourhood that I worshipped emptied out overnight. Pride was cancelled. Bars, clubs, and restaurants were closed. People stayed six feet apart. The lockdowns trapped me in my shoebox for weeks and months, as my mental health spiralled downward. The very things that had drawn me to the Village ceased to exist.

Meanwhile, downtown rental prices plummeted as international students and office workers moved away. With a rare opportunity to upgrade my living situation, I left the Village for a luxury condo just two blocks away – double the space for nearly the same price. And just like that, my Village era came to an end.

Four years have passed since I left. As much as I once desired the Village, I’ve never regretted moving on. I still visit occasionally for events and nights out, but I no longer need it the way I once did. Over time, I have come to embrace more diverse and multicultural experiences across downtown – something that I was not aware of initially. I never deeply questioned why I left, why I don’t visit that much now, or why my attachment to the Village faded, until I began this thesis.

For me, a gay first-generation immigrant, the Village was once a beacon, a guiding light that shaped my understanding of queerness from the other side of the world. It was my Arrival City – a landing zone and stepping stone. It gave me a sense of belonging when I needed it most. It built me, and then, when I was ready, it let me go.

I know I am not alone.



▲ **Fig. 1.2** Author's home in the Village during summer 2020.

This thesis is born from my lived experience, but it is more than my story. It is for the many queer immigrants who, like me, arrive in this city or country and find themselves at a crossroads, wondering where to go next.

So now, I invite you to join me and the many voices in this research, on this journey of seeking queer futurity.


SEXO AT
媽媽我是酷兒
MoM
I'M
QUEER
媽媽我在這

1.2 What is Queer?

"Queer" is a multifaceted term whose definition has evolved significantly over time. Linguistically, it likely derives from the German "quer", meaning "oblique, across, perverse", or the Latin "torquere", meaning "to twist or wrench away".[3] Both origins suggest a flexibility to diverge from norms, crossing physical and conceptual boundaries. In early English literature, "queer" referred to anything "at odds with the normal, the legitimate, and the dominant".[4] However, by the early 20th century, it became a derogatory label for gay men, distinguishing them from their "normal men" counterparts.[5] Beginning in the mid-20th century, with the rise of 2SLGBTQI+ activism, sexual minority communities began to reclaim the term, transforming it into a positive and self-affirming identity that embraces diverse gender and sexual expressions.

Queer theory extended the meaning of "queer" beyond sexuality. Scholars often describe it as "unclear, fluid and multiple", encompassing non-normative gender expressions, desires, emotions, and ways of being that challenge, resist, or complicate social conventions.[6] Rooted in feminist and post-structuralist theory, queer theory critiques the notion of gender as a fixed, pre-discursive trait.[7] Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity argues that gender "is real only to the extent that it is performed", emphasizing its instability and socially constructed nature.[8] Similarly, "queer" is performative as it is available to anyone who feels marginalized due to non-heteronormative practices.

In this thesis, "queer" serves as an umbrella term encompassing a spectrum of identities and orientations that are counter to mainstream cisgender heterosexuality. It allows for an expansive exploration of diverse and non-normative experiences, reinforcing its role as a fluid and evolving identity.

3 "Queer, Adj.[1] Meanings, Etymology and More | Oxford English Dictionary," accessed January 29, 2025, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/queer_adj1.

4 Notably used from 1500s to 1900s. David M. Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 62.

5 George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Makings of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 31.

6 Jason Bryant, "The Meaning of Queer Home: Between Metaphor and Material," *Home Cultures* 12, no. 3 (2015): 262, https://doi.org/10.1080/17406315.2015.1084754; Ece Canh, "Notes from Transient Spaces, Anachronic Times An Architectural Exercise," in *Queering Architecture: Methods, Practices, Spaces, Pedagogies*, ed. Marko Jobst and Naomi Stead (London ; New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2023), 68; Catherine J. Nash and Kath Browne, "Queer Methods and Methodologies: An Introduction," in *Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research*, ed. Kath Browne and Catherine J. Nash (London: Routledge, 2016), 7.

7 Linda Alcoff, "Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 13, no. 3 (1988): 433, https://doi.org/10.1086/494426.

8 Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal (Washington, D.C.)* 40, no. 4 (1988): 527, https://doi.org/10.2307/3207893.

◀ **Fig. 1.3** A Pride parade banner at Berlin CSD on July 22, 2023, reads "Mom, I'm Queer", with the Chinese translation: "Mom, I'm here. Mom, I'm queer."


CIBC

1.3 Background & Research Questions

Canada takes pride in its reputation as a "safe haven" for 2SLGBTQI+ individuals and as a leader in the global human rights agenda. It was one of the first countries to legalize same-sex marriage, and provide comprehensive legal and social protections to sexual minorities.[9] Despite this progress, 64 countries continue to criminalize same-sex sexual activity, and many others subject individuals to risks, abuses, harassment and human rights violations based on their sexual orientation and gender identity.[10] Numerous studies have addressed the threatening realities faced by sexual minorities in the Global South due to systemic homophobia and transphobia.[11] Canada's inclusive immigration policies, combined with its stable economic and political environment, suggest a continued increase in both forced and voluntary migrations of individuals seeking safety, inclusivity, and freedom.

"Queer migration" refers to the displacement in response to the needs or desires of non-heterosexual identities, practices and performances.[12] This type of migration is driven by a variety of motivations, including educational, economic, and personal reasons, with sexuality playing a critical role. Past research on queer migration to Canada has primarily focused on refugees fleeing persecution from their home countries, emphasizing the bureaucratic, social, and economic dimensions of the refugee process. In recent years, scholarship has expanded to include a broader range of admission categories, exploring how queer migrants navigate post-migration resettlement barriers, such as access to social services, healthcare, education, housing, employment, and community belonging.[13] This thesis contributes to this growing field by focusing on a specific demography - Queer and Trans People of Colour (QTPOC) newcomers, and their spatial narratives in the built environment. The study

9 Government of Canada, "Federal Action for 2SLGBTQI+ Communities," May 16, 2024, https://www.canada.ca/en/women-gender-equality/free-to-be-me/federal-action-2slgbtqi-communities.html.

10 BBC News, "Homosexuality: The Countries Where It Is Illegal to Be Gay," March 31, 2023, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-43822234.

11 Edward Ou Jin Lee et al., *The State of Knowledge about LGBTQI Migrants Living in Canada in Relation to the Global LGBTQI Rights Agenda* (Montreal: Université de Montréal, 2017), 20.

12 Andrew Gorman-Murray, "Intimate Mobilities: Emotional Embodiment and Queer Migration," *Social & Cultural Geography* 10, no. 4 (2009): 443, https://doi.org/10.1080/14649360902853262.

13 Lee et al., *The State of Knowledge about LGBTQI Migrants Living in Canada in Relation to the Global LGBTQI Rights Agenda*.

◀ **Fig. 1.4** Toronto's Pride Parade, the largest in Canada, attracts millions of attendees and spectators annually. The event celebrates the city's multicultural and diverse queer communities while also serving as a platform for ongoing fights for equity and

demography includes racialized queer immigrants who have arrived in Canada within the past decade. Their immigration statuses may vary and include new Canadian citizens, permanent residents, and precarious statuses such as refugees and claimants, temporary foreign workers, and international students, etc.

Toronto has long served as a primary destination for both general and queer immigrants. While direct census data on queer immigrants admitted to Canada is unavailable, their mobility can be inferred from related studies. Statistically, Toronto is the most popular destination for recent immigrants in Canada, with over half of its population composed of visible minorities and born outside of the country.[14] Certain urban neighbourhoods within the city, such as the downtown core along Yonge St, the Waterfront area, Midtown, and North York, exhibit significantly higher proportions of recent immigrants compared to other areas.[15] These neighbourhoods where newcomers reside and establish new lives are known as Arrival Cities, and provide newcomers with essential social and economic resources.[16] Additionally, recent data suggest that queer individuals tend to reside in Canada's largest urban centres, particularly in downtown areas.[17] Based on these patterns, an initial hypothesis suggests that downtown Toronto might function as an Arrival City for QTPOC newcomers.

Against this backdrop, this research emerged from a fundamental question: Where and what is the Arrival City for QTPOC newcomers? – A concept I refer to as the "Queer Arrival City". A common assumption is that Toronto's Church-Wellesley Village is a destination for both domestic and international queer migrants.[18] Known as the Village, it is the largest queer enclave in Canada, and has historically provided refuge for queers seeking safety and belonging. Contemporary discussions have emphasized its importance as a safe place for QTPOC newcomers.[19] Many have pointed out that QTPOC newcomers prefer to live in the Village and embrace a queer identity that they couldn't have back home. However, the neighbourhood's challenges such as the high cost of living, mental health crises, increasing crime rates, the decline of queerness, etc., complicate this narrative. While the Village may serve as a destination for

14 Statistics Canada Government of Canada, "The Daily — Immigrants Make up the Largest Share of the Population in over 150 Years and Continue to Shape Who We Are as Canadians," October 26, 2022, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221026/dq221026a-eng.htm; City of Toronto, "Toronto at a Glance," City of Toronto (City of Toronto, November 14, 2017), Toronto, Ontario, Canada, https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/data-research-maps/toronto-at-a-glance/.

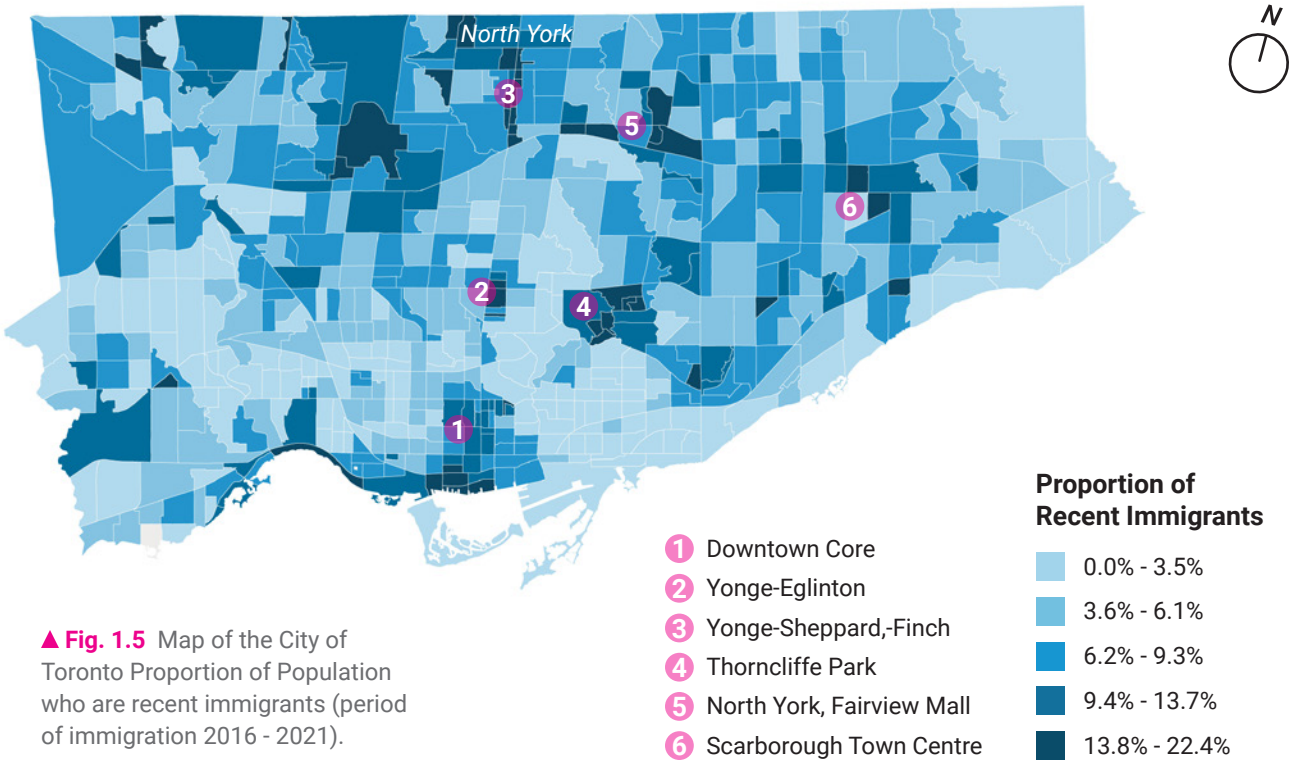
15 City of Toronto, "Toronto's Demographics, Economy & Labour Force," City of Toronto (City of Toronto, November 14, 2017), Toronto, Ontario, Canada, https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/data-research-maps/toronto-economy-labour-force-demographics/.

16 Doug Saunders, *Arrival City: The Final Migration and Our next World*, First edition (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2010).

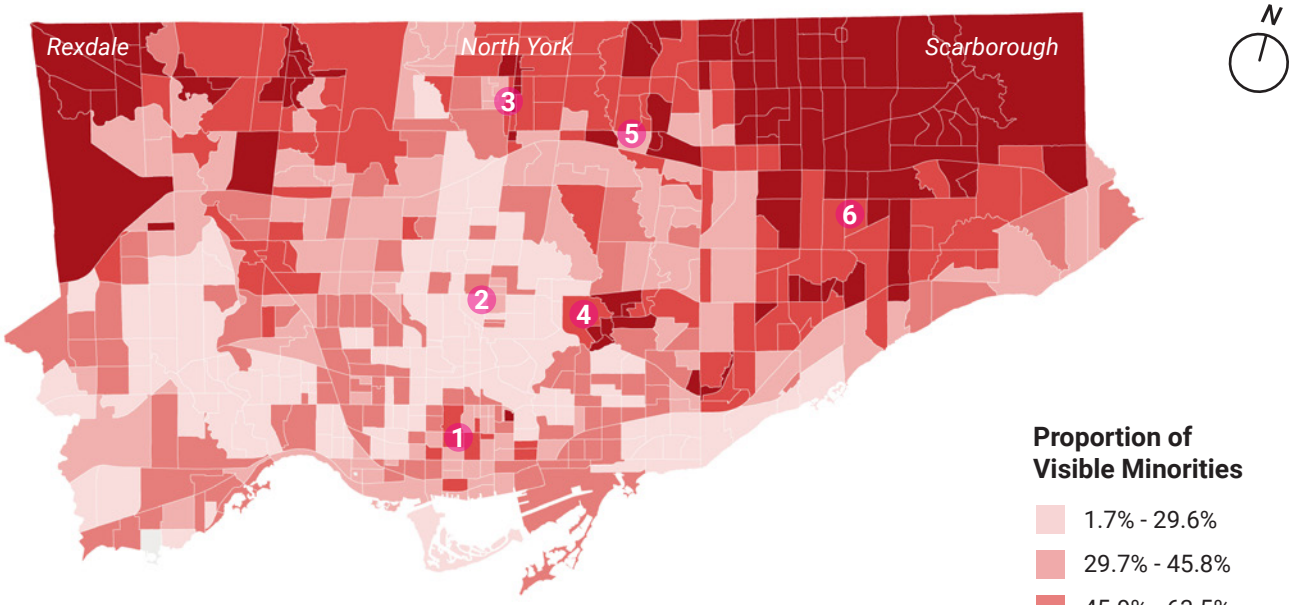
17 Statistics Canada Government of Canada, "The Daily — Canada Is the First Country to Provide Census Data on Transgender and Non-Binary People," April 27, 2022, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220427/dq220427b-eng.htm.

18 Greenberg Consultants et al., "Church Wellesley Village Neighbourhood Plan Phase Two Report" (Toronto: The 519, November 2013); Paniz Moayeri, "Toronto's Gay Village Built-Form as Container for Social Heritage," *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada / Le Journal de La Société Pour l'étude de l'architecture Au Canada*, no. 44(2) (n.d.): 3–20.

19 Greenberg Consultants et al., "Church Wellesley Village Neighbourhood Plan Phase Two Report"; Vidya Kauri, "What the Gay Village Means Today," *The Globe and Mail*, July 1, 2013, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/toronto/what-the-gay-village-means-today/article12904400/.



▲ **Fig. 1.5** Map of the City of Toronto Proportion of Population who are recent immigrants (period of immigration 2016 - 2021).



▲ **Fig. 1.6** Map of the City of Toronto Proportion of Population who are visible minorities.

some, it does not fully capture the diverse experiences and migration trajectories of QTPOC newcomers across Toronto's urban landscape. A deeper investigation is needed to examine the nature of the Queer Arrival City and the ways QTPOC newcomers navigate it.

Queer Arrival City is conceptualized through the combination of two spatial typologies: Arrival Cities and queer enclaves. This thesis first employs an in-depth analysis of Arrival Cities and queer enclaves to explore the intersections of migration and queer identities. As discussed in Chapter 2, existing research on urban arrival is often limited in scope, neglecting the intersectional identities of migrants and focusing narrowly on neighbourhood-scale exchanges without considering the city as an interconnected social whole. Within these spaces, marginalized narratives are often further obscured to make way for more dominant voices, a process referred to as "imperfect erasures" as explained in Section 2.5.[20] As a result, the experiences of QTPOC newcomers remain highly vulnerable and underrepresented.

Therefore, this thesis aims to uncover the spatial narratives of QTPOC newcomers in constructing their Queer Arrival City. To achieve this goal, the following Research Questions (RQs) will guide the investigation.

Research Questions

RQ1: How do QTPOC newcomers navigate Toronto's built environment?

RQ2: What role does the Church-Wellesley Village play in their migration?

RQ3: How can public space design support the Village as a Queer Arrival City?

20 Jinthana Haritaworn et al., "Marvellous Grounds: QTBIPOC Counter-Archiving against Imperfect Erasures," in *Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer*, ed. Stephanie Chambers et al. (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017), 219–23.



▲ **Fig. 1.7** Map of the area around the Village, Proportion of Population who are recent immigrants (period of immigration 2016 - 2021).

Each question takes one step further into revealing a hidden queer landscape, and eventually leads to the design of a public space that materializes QTPOC newcomers' spatial narratives as a place of belonging and visibility. Specifically, RQ1 explores the spatial experiences of QTPOC newcomers in Toronto and their placemaking practices in constructing the Queer Arrival City. Once a broader queer network is identified within the city, RQ2 narrows the focus to a specific neighbourhood – the Church-Wellesley Village, and examines its role in the migratory process. By this stage, this thesis will establish a clear understanding of the Queer Arrival City as a novel spatial typology. Finally, RQ3 experiments with the design of a public space in the Village to reflect newcomers' spatial narratives and equips the Village with necessary infrastructure to support queer migration, thus reinforcing its role as a Queer Arrival City.

1.

a queer crip future grows in the **UNDERLANDS**, the **WASTE-LANDS** and the **FALLOW LANDS**, out of sight and out of mind, Rooting, Spawning and Germinating under the soil, in that moist and fecund undergrowth where we have been forgotten. Limp, Lame and Sick bodies, Queer, Sexy, and Sexless bodies; marinating in the forgotten lands – the sisters of Anzaldúa's Borderlands and Irigaray's Lowlands. WE wait here, Growing and Shifting, Leaking and Mutating, Fucking and Decaying in the **WASTELANDS OF THE SICK**. under your dinner parties and your high houses, your club nights and your art shows, WE are breeding, building up our strength in numbers, pleaching our roots together to form Hybrid, Techno-Reinforced, Ism-Resistant **SUPER-CREATURES**.

WE are WORKING TOGETHER.
WE are KNOCKING.
WE are HAMMERING.
WE are READY TO COME IN.

2.

a queer future is a humble future.
a queer, crip, and sick future sees the body as it is: Weak, Vulnerable, Fallible, Ever-Changing, Ever-Moving towards SICKNESS DISEASE AND DEPENDENCY.

~~LET'S CELEBRATE DEPENDENCY!~~
~~LET'S HOLD EACH OTHER IN OUR WEAKNESS!~~
THERE IS NO SHAME IN YOUR WEAKNESS!
THERE IS NO SHAME IN YOUR SICKNESS!

1.4 Queer of Colour Methodology

"Does one have to be queer to undertake queer research? Do queer theorists have to live queer lives?" [21]

- Kath Browne

As the title "Queer Arrival" indicates, this thesis conceptualizes the arrival movement of queer migrants, pointing toward a collective future in the distant land. José Esteban Muñoz asserts that queer is inherently performative, describing it as "a doing for and toward the future". According to Muñoz, queerness allows us to envision what is "missing" somethings from the present world because the future is a utopian destination through which everyone achieves equality and freedom.[22] In this sense, a queer thesis demands a forward-looking methodological approach to capture the complex and evolving experiences of queer bodies. Thus, I propose a Queer of Colour Methodology (QOCM) integrated with the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, to reconstruct research practices and highlight the marginalized experiences of QTPOC newcomers as they navigate the built environment and imagine a collective futurity.

What does this queer methodology entail? Geographer Kath Browne emphasizes that queer research should involve radical "(re)thinkings, (re)drawings, (re)conceptualizations, (re)mappings" to "(re)make" bodies in relation to space.[23] In other words, queer methodology extends beyond the study of the subjects themselves; it critically engages with the synergies

21 Kath Browne, "Challenging Queer Geographies," *Antipode* 38, no. 5 (2006): 890, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2006.00483.x.

22 José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, Sexual Cultures (New York: University Press, 2009), 1.

23 Browne, "Challenging Queer Geographies," 888.

◀ **Fig. 1.8** A booklet titled Notes from the Underlands: A Manifesto for a Queer Future by Romily Alice Walden, displayed at Library Pride: A Rare Book Salon at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto.

and divergences that distinguish each subject's experience. Sociologist Jane Ward characterizes queer methodology as "intersectional; intimate, reflexive, and collaborative; erotic and sexual; interdisciplinary; and fluid and shifting".[24] Grounded in queer theory, this methodology acknowledges that subjects and subjectivities are fluid, unstable, and perpetually evolving.[25] Consequently, queer methodology seeks to capture the tenuous and fleeting subjects while embracing their endless possibilities of becoming.

Building upon Queer of Colour Critique (QOCC) as an epistemological foundation, the proposed QOCM adopts an intersectional perspective, emphasizing racialized queer identities and their experiential knowledge as the primary tool for inquiry. While Critical Race Theory and Queer Theory respectively challenge the social construction of racial and gender identities, QOCC advances beyond an exclusive focus on either race or sexuality by critically interrogating their intersections.[26] This interdisciplinary approach foregrounds racialized queer bodies, while recognizing their resistance to the power structure, aligning with feminist, antiracist, and postcolonial frameworks.[27] QOCC is widely applied in ethnographic research within the social science discipline, particularly in empirical fieldwork that centres the lived experiences of marginalized communities.[28] To spatially adapt this framework, I develop QOCC into a novel research methodology - QOCM - for investigating urban phenomena, uncovering hidden narratives of QTPOC newcomers amidst oppression and marginalization in the white-dominant built environment.

Traditional research methods often impose rigid frameworks that fail to account for the fluid and evolving nature of queer experiences, limiting their scope and applicability. To address this limitation and facilitate a vision for queer futurity, QOCM incorporates an intersectional perspective in applying Participatory Action Research (PAR). This approach critically engages QTPOC newcomers in the research and design process, leading to collaborative outcomes. PAR is a research approach that prioritizes the active involvement of people with lived experiences of the topic as co-researchers to generate new knowledge and act on findings to improve their lives.[29]

24 Jane Ward, "The Methods Gatekeepers and the Exiled Queers," in *Other, Please Specify: Queer Methods in Sociology*, ed. D'Lane R. Compton, Tey Meadow, and Kristen Schilt (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018), 51–66.

25 Catherine J. Nash and Kath Browne, "Queer Methods and Methodologies: An Introduction," in *Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research*, ed. Kath Browne and Catherine J. Nash (London: Routledge, 2016), 7.

26 Shreeta Lakhani, "Queer of Color Critique," *Lambda Nordica* 25, no. 1 (2020): 128, https://doi.org/10.34041/ln.v25.625.

27 Roderick A. Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique*, Critical American Studies Series (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); Lakhani, "Queer of Color Critique," 131; Nash and Browne, "Queer Methods and Methodologies: An Introduction."

28 Shamari Reid, "Using a Queer of Color Critique to Work toward a Black LGBTQ+ Inclusive K–12 Curriculum," *Curriculum Inquiry* 53, no. 2 (2023): 105–25, https://doi.org/10.1080/03626784.2022.2121594; Lorena Muñoz, "Brown, Queer and Gendered: Queering the Latina/o 'Street-Scapes' in Los Angeles," in *Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research*, ed. Kath Browne and Catherine J. Nash (London: Routledge, 2016), 55–68.

29 Stephen Kemmis, *The Action Research Planner: Doing Critical Participatory Action Research* (Singapore: Springer, 2014), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-4560-67-2.

Widely practiced in fieldwork that advocates social justice, PAR is more than a mere methodology, but "an epistemology – a theory of knowledge - that radically challenges who is an expert, what counts as knowledge and, therefore, by whom research questions and designs should be crafted".[30] By centering marginalized voices, PAR demonstrates the social and political potential to disrupt colonial relations and power dominance in research methodologies and ways of knowing.[31] This thesis infuses PAR within the QOCM framework, positioning QTPOC newcomers as the primary holders of knowledge production, and relying on their experiential knowledge in both research and architectural design. In doing so, this thesis decolonizes the white-centric approaches to understanding queer enclaves and Arrival Cities, while simultaneously challenging conventional design processes that often lack inclusivity and care.

Drawing insight from Black Participatory Research (BPR) - a strand of PAR that is explicitly antiracist and decolonial - this thesis is guided by four key principles: 1. Researchers who undertake research in QTPOC newcomer communities self-identify as a queer person of colour; 2. White perspectives are de-centred to make way for QTPOC perspectives; 3. Marginalized voices that foster QTPOC empowerment are prioritized; 4. "The normative underpinnings of PAR are suspect and subject to cultural and political critique".[32] This research is therefore initiated by, in collaboration with, and intended to benefit QTPOC newcomers, ensuring it remains collaborative, intersectional, and rooted in community needs.

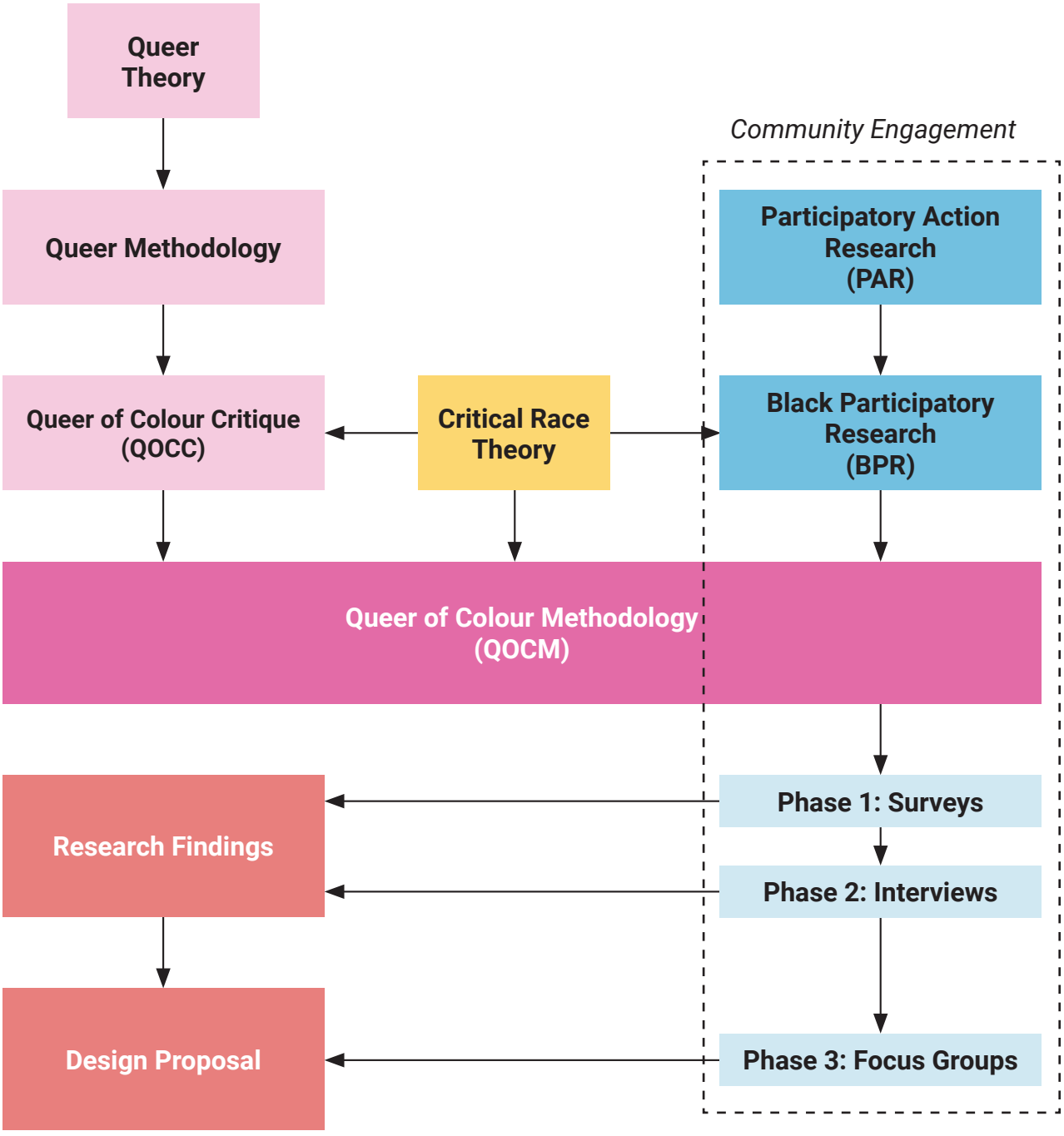
The intersectional lens of QOCM is first employed in Chapter 2 to reassess existing scholarship on queer migration, queer space, Arrival Cities, and queer enclaves, uncovering marginalized narratives often overlooked within traditional frameworks. Specifically, QOCM provides a critical perspective to investigate the competing interests of belonging within queer enclaves and Arrival Cities – where tensions often arise between marginalized queers, affluent white gay men, and heterosexual immigrant communities. By interrogating these typologies, this methodology helps identify research gaps regarding intersectional queer identities within spatial contexts.

30 Michelle Fine and María Elena Torre, "Critical Participatory Action Research: A Feminist Project for Validity and Solidarity," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (2019): 435, https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684319865255.

31 Caroline Lenette, *Arts-Based Methods in Refugee Research: Creating Sanctuary* (Singapore: Springer Singapore Pte. Limited, 2019).

32 Decoteau J. Irby and Elizabeth R. Drame, "Introduction. Black Bridges, Troubled Waters, and the Search for Solid Ground: The People, the Problems, and Educational Justice," in *Black Participatory Research* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2016), 6, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137468994_1.

Methodological Framework



Beyond theoretical analysis, QOCM is further utilized through the PAR approach in Chapters 3 and 4, engaging QTPOC newcomers through three phases of community engagement:

Phase 1: Surveys
QTPOC newcomers were invited to participate in an online survey through various recruitment channels. This phase collected quantitative data to assess generalized post-migration experiences and identify potential participants for subsequent phases.

Phase 2: Interviews
A subset of survey participants was invited to in-depth interviews, where they shared personal experiences as part of a collective exploration of the queer landscape. This phase, assisted by thematic coding analysis and research-creation techniques, culminated in key research findings and design recommendations to inform an architectural design proposal.

Phase 3: Focus Groups
Structured as design charrettes, this final phase facilitated direct collaboration between participants in shaping the design. The phase ensured that the proposal authentically reflected the lived experiences and needs of QTPOC newcomers.

These iterative engagements not only provide a structured process for addressing the Research Questions, but also reinforce the methodological commitment of this thesis – to prioritize QTPOC newcomers' voices in both academic research and public discourses. Throughout the process, QTPOC newcomers become active contributors to the research, collectively building a shared vision in the design proposal. QOCM centres the lived experiences of marginalized queer bodies with an intersectional perspective, while PAR critically engages them in fieldwork, positioning them as agents of knowledge production rather than passive subjects. Overall, this methodology ensures an ethical, community-driven, and inclusive research environment that prioritizes QTPOC newcomers' empowerment and agency in shaping their future built environment.

◀ **Fig. 1.9** Diagram: Methodological Framework. This thesis employs a novel Queer of Colour Methodology (QOCM) integrated with the Participatory Action Research (PAR) to critically inquire the spatial narratives of QTPOC newcomers.



1.5 Thesis Structure

This thesis is structured into three main chapters, each building upon the previous to develop a comprehensive understanding of the Queer Arrival framework and its role in QTPOC newcomers' spatial narratives and public space design.

Chapter 2 establishes the theoretical framework by engaging with the intersecting themes of "Queer" and "Arrival". Through an intersectional analysis of queer diaspora and urban arrival, it examines key concepts such as queer migration, queer space, the Arrival City, and queer enclaves. Applying the Queer of Colour Methodology (QOCM), this chapter highlights the placemaking practices of ethnic immigrants and queer communities, while revealing a significant research gap in the spatial narratives of QTPOC newcomers.

Chapter 3 uncovers QTPOC newcomers' spatial narratives in navigating Toronto's urban landscape, addressing RQs 1 & 2. Employing the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, this chapter centres marginalized voices through surveys and interviews. By drawing upon empirical data, this chapter conceptualizes key spatial concepts, including "Queer Arrival Infrastructure", "Queer Arrival City", "Queer Arrival Space", and a collective subconscious sensibility of "Queer Diaspora Spatial Consciousness". Through these investigations, this chapter identifies the urgent need for inclusive public spaces that better support QTPOC newcomers' post-migration life.

Chapter 4 builds on the empirical findings from previous chapters to investigate the design of public space in the Village as a place of belonging and visibility, addressing RQ3. Continuing the PAR, a preliminary design proposal is developed and shared with QTPOC newcomers through focus groups. These sessions aim to promote participants' empowerment and agency in shaping the built environment. Based on the feedback gathered from these discussions, the design undergoes further modifications to ensure it authentically reflects QTPOC newcomers' voices and lived experiences.

◀ **Fig. 1.10** The Rainbow Road at Hanlan's Point Beach.


2

Chapter 2

Queer & Arrival

Introduction 2.1

This chapter establishes the theoretical foundation for the "Queer Arrival City" and its associated spatial concepts in Chapter 3. Through interdisciplinary literature reviews and archival research in queer, migration, and urban studies, it examines the placemaking practices of ethnic immigrants and queer communities while identifying significant research gaps in understanding QTPOC newcomers' spatial experiences.

This chapter starts with a journey of home-seeking. Often rejected by their familial homes, queer migrants seek alternative forms of belonging, constructing a "queer home" through migration (Section 2.2).[33] Beyond aspiration, this homemaking process materializes as a spatial practice – "queer space" – a performative and imminent condition that emerged from queer spatial activism (Section 2.3).[34] Similarly, immigrant communities engage in spatial activism by creating diasporic spaces for mutual support and belonging, exemplified by the Arrival City (Section 2.4).[35] At the same time, queer communities have long reclaimed urban spaces for political power and visibility (Section 2.5).[36] However, dominant narratives of queer spatiality remain white-centric, often erasing racialized queer experiences. This raises a critical question: Where and what is the Arrival City for QTPOC newcomers?

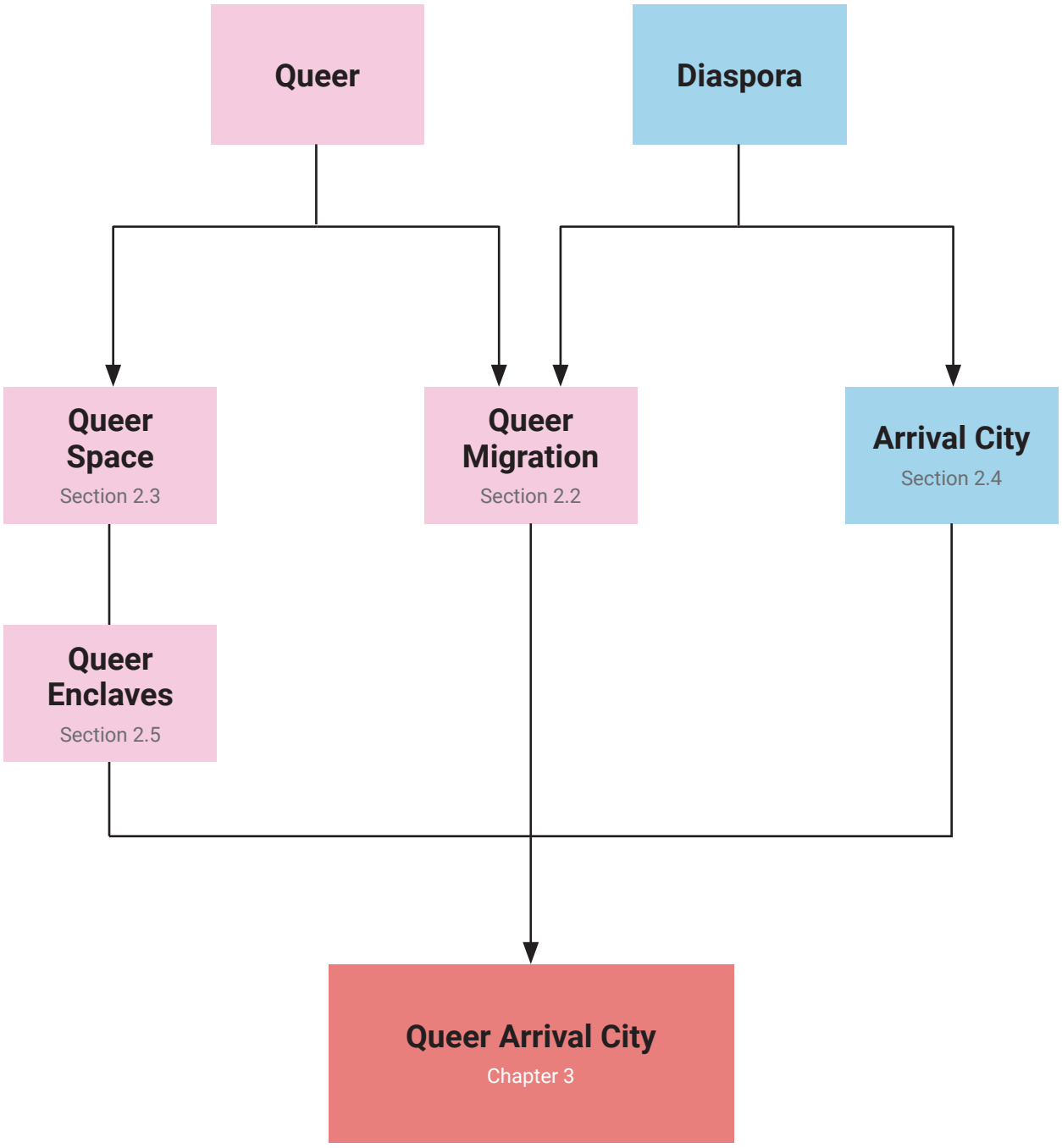
33 William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," *Diaspora (New York, N.Y.)* 1, no. 1 (1991): 83–99, https://doi.org/10.3138/diaspora.1.1.83; Alan Sinfield, "Diaspora and Hybridity: Queer Identities and the Ethnicity Model," *Textual Practice* 10, no. 2 (1996): 271–93, https://doi.org/10.1080/09502369608582247.

34 Christopher Reed, "Imminent Domain: Queer Space in the Built Environment," *Art Journal (New York. 1960)* 55, no. 4 (1996): 64–70, https://doi.org/10.1080/00043249.1996.10791788.

35 Doug Saunders, *Arrival City: The Final Migration and Our next World*, First edition (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2010).

36 Craig Jennex and Nisha Eswaran, *Out North: An Archive of Queer Activism and Kinship in Canada* (Vancouver: Figure.1 Publishing, 2020); Stephanie Chambers et al., eds., *Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer* (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017).

Theoretical Framework



▲ **Fig. 2. 1** Diagram: Theoretical framework.


PRESTO
PRESTO
Using PRESTO
PRESTO is the easy way to pay on the TTC. Just tap your PRESTO card or PRESTO Ticket on a reader to pay your fare as you go, or load a monthly pass to your card for unlimited travel.
PRESTO cards and PRESTO Tickets can be purchased at Fare Vending Machines in subway stations, at Shoppers Drug Mart locations, or online at prestocard.ca.
Two-hour transfer
Customers using PRESTO can hop on and off the TTC within two hours of their first tap, without being charged another fare.
39
FROM ARRIVAL TO THRIVAL
ASAAP'S Compassionate Support
امور مسکن | امور پزشکی | امور حقوقی
امور کاریابی | امور ترجمه | و سایر امور
از راه های زیر با ما ارتباط برقرار کنید
Scan the QR
settlement@asaap.ca
settlementfarsi@asaap.ca
settlementarabic@asaap.ca
ASAAP
ALLIANCE FOR SOUTH ASIAN AIDS PREVENTION
Funded by:
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
Financé par :
Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada

2.2 Queer Migration as Homemaking

"Home is the place you get to, not the place you came from." [37]

– Paul Monette, *Halfway Home*

Canada's reputation as a global queer safe haven, coupled with its stable economy and political environment, continues to attract international migrants seeking safety, inclusivity, and freedom.[38] Among the many types of diasporic mobility, "queer migration" stands out as a displacement shaped by the need and desire for non-heterosexual identities, alongside other motivations such as education and economic opportunities.[39] At the heart of the discussions of queer migration lies a recurring theme: "home".

Home deploys a relation between material and imagination: it is a manifested site of shelter, and a set of familiar feelings related to belonging.[40] For queer migrants, home is the place and life they left behind, yet it is also Canada, a place of promises and hopes. Sara Ahmed suggests migration is a process of disorientation and reorientation, as bodies "move away" from home, as well as "arrive" and reinhabit a new home.[41] Similarly, Anne-Marie Fortier contends that queer migration entails both homemaking and homecoming, where "home" serves as both origin and destination.[42] This section explores queer migration in the notion of a "queer home", and examines a queer diasporic futurity grounded in identity and belonging.

37 Paul Monette, *Halfway Home* (London: GMP, 1992), 262.

38 Government of Canada, "Federal Action for 2SLGBTQI+ Communities," May 16, 2024, https://www.canada.ca/en/women-gender-equality/free-to-be-me/federal-action-2slgbtqi-communities.html; Prime Minister of Canada, "Providing LGBTQI+ People with a Safe Home in Canada," Prime Minister of Canada, June 8, 2023, http://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2023/06/08/providing-lgbtqi-people-safe-home-canada.

39 Andrew Gorman-Murray, "Intimate Mobilities: Emotional Embodiment and Queer Migration," *Social & Cultural Geography* 10, no. 4 (2009): 443, https://doi.org/10.1080/14649360902853262.

40 Jason Bryant, "The Meaning of Queer Home: Between Metaphor and Material," *Home Cultures* 12, no. 3 (2015): 262, https://doi.org/10.1080/17406315.2015.1084754.

41 Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 9.

42 Anne-Marie Fortier, "Making Home: Queer Migrations and Motions of Attachment," in *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration*, ed. Sara Ahmed et al. (New York: Berg Publishers, 2003), 116.

◀ **Fig. 2. 2** A poster promoting Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention (ASAAP)'s newcomer programs is displayed at TTC Wellesley Station in Toronto.

The word "diaspora" comes from the ancient Greek "diaspeirein", meaning "to scatter, spread about".[43] Hence the word implies a centre, a "home" from where the dispersing movement occurs.[44] There is an implication that diaspora sustains a homeland desire, embedded as a collective consciousness of the minorities. William Safran outlines several key features of diaspora consciousness, including "memories of their homeland", "alienation" in the host country, and the "desire to return".[45] Robin Cohen refers to these features as intertwining "fibres" that strengthen the "diasporic rope".[46] For ethnic diasporas, displacements are often caused by traumatic events such as wars and natural disasters that are entirely outside the individual's control, or are self-initiated and driven by economic prosperities. Therefore, the memories of home remain as a site of comfort and familiarity, which facilitate a homecoming desire.

However, queer migrants experience a distinct form of diaspora, marked by a shared sexual-minority identity rather than a common ethnicity or culture. Andrew Gorman-Murray drew the link between queer desire and relocation through empirical studies of queer migration in the Global North. He observes that queer migration is driven by bodily desires and emotions, including yearnings for social acceptance and affirmation, new sexual identities, practices and ways of being, finding or leaving intimate relationships, and seeking communities of belonging.[47] Thus queer migration is embodied with hopes and expectations toward their destinations, rather than their emotional ties to the homeland. Hence the queer diaspora consciousness displays a more complex homeland desire.

Home is commonly associated with warmth and safety, but it may also signify danger and fears.[48] For queer migrants, the familial home may be a space of rejection, where sexuality is not accepted and even a source of emotional and physical abuse. Alan Sinfield observes that the "diasporic sense of separation and loss" experienced by queers is a product of being alienated from the "heterosexual culture" they grew up in. In this sense, the absence of home is a loss of the familial home, not a result of leaving home.[49] Anne-Marie Fortier proposes that "one has to move out in order to come out". She defies the assumption that homes as a space of comfort and familiarity, or a site in a static

43 "Definition of DIASPORA," October 27, 2024, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/diaspora.

44 Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (London: Routledge, 1996), 178, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203974919.

45 William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," *Diaspora (New York, N.Y.)* 1, no. 1 (1991): 83–99, https://doi.org/10.3138/diaspora.1.1.83.

46 According to Robin Cohen, diaspora exhibit several features: 1. dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically; 2. alternatively, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions; 3. a collective memory and myth about the homeland; 4. an idealization of the supposed ancestral home; 5. a return movement; 6. a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time; 7. a troubled relationship with host societies; 8. a sense of solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries; 9. the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in tolerant host countries. Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1997), 180, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203138762.

47 Gorman-Murray, "Intimate Mobilities."

48 Gloria Anzaldúa, "Preface (Un) Natural Bridges, (Un)Safe Spaces," in *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*, ed. Gloria Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating (New York ; Routledge, 2002), 3.

49 Alan Sinfield, "Diaspora and Hybridity: Queer Identities and the Ethnicity Model," *Textual Practice* 10, no. 2 (1996): 280, https://doi.org/10.1080/09502369608582247.

position.[50] In queer diaspora consciousness, the homing desire is not a return but a departure toward a new home, a place of safety and belonging that has long been denied.

Queer migration thus entails the reconstruction of a home in the promised land. Jason Bryant calls for the deconstruction of the home ideology within heterosexuality and domesticity to create spaces of queer safety and belonging. He associates "queer" with "be/longing", emphasizing their performativity in the actions and emotions that produce feelings of home. To "be" is to be present in the spatiality of a site, to "long" suggests the emotional imagination within the home relation. "Queer" can be understood as a concept of "be/longing". To "be" queer is to be the authentic self, and to "long" is to imagine and practice in ways that destabilize heteronormative constraints.[51] Queer migration, then, becomes a pursuit of "be/longing", a process of envisioning and building a new home.

This new home represents a collective future, filled with hope and new beginnings. José Esteban Muñoz describes this "queer futurity" as "utopian" which desires "a better world or freedom".[52] He invites us to think outside of straight time and imagine queerness as a future-oriented and profoundly utopian mode of being and doing in the world. For Muñoz, "Queerness is not yet here. Queerness is an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer".[53] Theorizing queer migration as a movement toward a queer utopian future allows us to envision a space outside of heternomativity, and opens up new possibilities for a queer homemaking process.

While we orient ourselves toward the utopian future, migration demands constant reorientation. Once leaving their familial homes, migrants are oriented in two directions: toward a home that has been lost, and to a place that is not yet home. Sara Ahmed describes this ongoing process as "migrant orientation", indicating the "out of place" or "out of line" effect of unsettling arrivals.[54] Queer migrants orient themselves toward Canada with the desire of a queer home and future. Upon arrival, the multicultural landscape of Toronto also presents more directions to reorient their bodies: toward an ethnic community where cultural identities are preserved, or a queer space where sexual

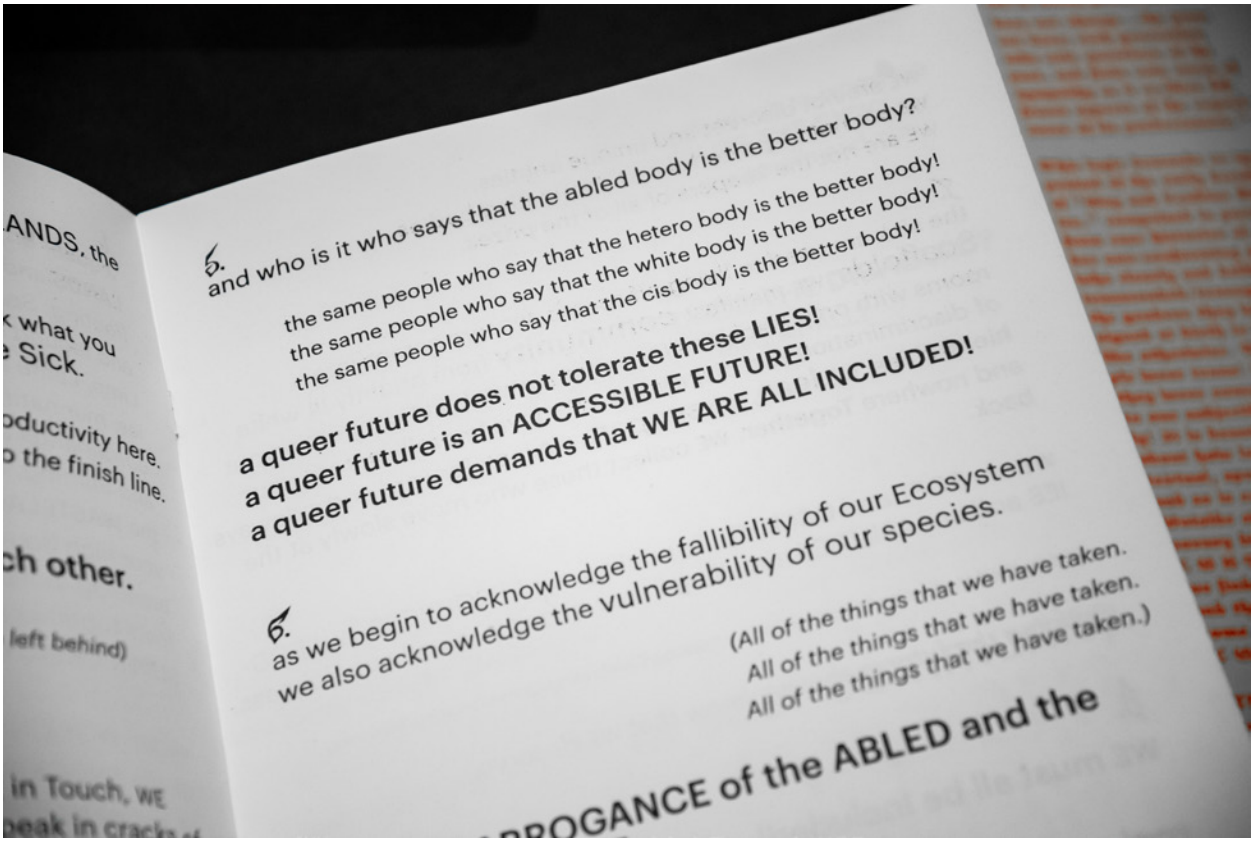
50 Fortier, "Making Home: Queer Migrations and Motions of Attachment," 116.

51 Bryant, "The Meaning of Queer Home," 263.

52 José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, Sexual Cultures (New York: University Press, 2009), 30.

53 Muñoz, 1.

54 Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 10.



▲ **Fig. 2. 3** A booklet titled Notes From the Underlands: A Manifesto for a Queer Future by Romily Alice Walden, displayed at Library Pride: A Rare Book Salon at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, on June 7, 2024.

identities are celebrated, or an intimate queer home carved out from the heteronormative urbanscape. Chapter 3 will examine how Toronto's queer newcomers negotiate between their identities and belongings, and reorient themselves to assemble a new home.

Ultimately, queer migration embodies a process of leaving, imagining, and making home. Queer migrants are motivated by a queer futurity embedded in a queer diaspora consciousness. They reorient themselves to Canada, a place that promises safety, acceptance, and freedom. The migration doesn't end upon arrival, it continues contributing to the making of the queer home. Home is a destination, a future that might delay or never come.



2.3 The Multiplicity of Queer (Public) Space

"There is no queer space; there are only spaces used by queers or put to queer use." [55]

– George Chauncey

Over the past few decades, the concept of "queer space" has gained increasing prominence in academic fields and public conversations, especially in urban planning and geography. "Space" is commonly defined as a loosely bounded dimensional extent occupied cognitively or physically.[56] Space is also gendered and sexualized, as Jon Binnie observes, "Space is not naturally authentically 'straight' but rather actively produced and (hetero)sexualized".[57] "Queer space" inherits the fluid and unbounded characteristics of both "queer" and "space", and has the ability to transgress across dimensions and locales. This term is often discussed in the context of how neoliberalism in Western societies has challenged the existence of queer-occupied spaces.[58] In recent years, "queer space" has also become a recurring theme in the architecture industry during Pride Month, as architects reflect on their roles in inclusive design.[59] Typically, these architectural interpretations focus on the physical structures that have housed queer individuals and facilitated queer activities. However, "queer space" is far more complex to define, given the multifaceted nature of "queer" as an identity, theory, and characteristic.

55 George Chauncey, "'Privacy Could Only Be Had in Public': Gay Uses of the Streets," in *Stud: Architectures of Masculinity*, ed. Joel Sanders, 1st ed. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 224.

56 "Definition of SPACE," November 18, 2024, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/space.

57 Jon Binnie, "The Twilight World of the Sadomasochist," in *The Margins of the City: Gay Men's Urban Lives*, ed. Stephen Whittle, Popular Cultural Studies 6 (Aldershot: Arena, 1994), 223.

58 Amin Ghaziani, *There Goes the Gayborhood?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

59 Aaron Pollock, "Op Ed: Building Queer Space," *Canadian Architect* (blog), June 24, 2024, https://www.canadianarchitect.com/op-ed-building-queer-space/; Evan Pavka, "What Do We Mean By Queer Space?," *Azure Magazine* (blog), June 29, 2020, https://www.azuremagazine.com/article/what-do-we-mean-by-queer-space/.

◀ **Fig. 2. 4** NightShift, a public art and lighting installation in the Church-Wellesley Village, designed by Dereck Revington Studio.

Past scholars have provided a rich historical context to understand queer space in domestic environments such as interiors, and enclosed semi-public venues, as seen in Aaron Betsky's analysis of middle-class interior aesthetics and gay bars, Joel Sanders' work in private residences, and Henry Urbach's theoretical exploration of the closet, etc.[60] This section shifts the focus to the publicness of queer space to understand the layered definitions of queer space in the built/unbuilt environment based on the three interpretations analyzed by Olivier Vallerand. By examining these perspectives, we can spatialize queer space as not only a physical structure, but also as an "alternate universe, a secret network" that reflects the diverse experiences, identities, and cultural contributions of queer communities.[61]

Queer Space as a Container for Queerness

The first interpretation suggests that queer space is the physical manifestation of the gay community, distinguished from the heteronormative territory.[62] Early studies on spatial sexuality primarily concentrate on mapping out urban gay landscapes, often focusing on places inhabited by white, middle- and upper-middle-class gay men.[63] In Manuel Castells' urban sociology studies, he identifies an inner "city" within the city, spatialized by a shared gay identity.[64] This "city" is commonly known as the "gay village", "gaybourhood", and "ghetto", characterized by the visible physical clustering of gay businesses and communities in the urban environment.[65]

The formation of these queer spaces was driven by the queer communities' needs for survival, solidarity, and political power during the times when they were marginalized by mainstream societies.[66] Castells argues that such territorial spaces were founded on men's desire for spatial superiority and domination to liberate them from cultural and sexual oppression. In contrast, women have fewer territorial aspirations. Lesbians tend to form more discrete networks that operate on societal levels,

60 Aaron Betsky, *Queer Space: Architecture and Same-Sex Desire*, 1st ed (New York: William Morrow & Co, 1997); Joel Sanders, ed., *Stud: Architectures of Masculinity*, 1st ed. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996); Henry Urbach, "Closets, Clothes, Disclosure," *Assemblage*, no. 30 (1996): 63–73.

61 Olivia Laing, "Foreword," in *Queer Spaces: An Atlas of LGBTQIA+ Places and Stories*, ed. Adam Nathaniel Furman and Joshua Mardell (London: RIBA Publishing, 2022), VIII–IX.

62 Olivier Vallerand, "Home Is the Place We All Share: Building Queer Collective Utopias," *Journal of Architectural Education (1984-)* 67, no. 1 (2013): 65.

63 Jasbir Kaur Puar, Dereka Rushbrook, and Louisa Schein, "Sexuality and Space: Queering Geographies of Globalization," *Environment and Planning. D, Society & Space* 21, no. 4 (2003): 384, https://doi.org/10.1068/d2104ed.

64 Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements*, California Series in Urban Development (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 139.

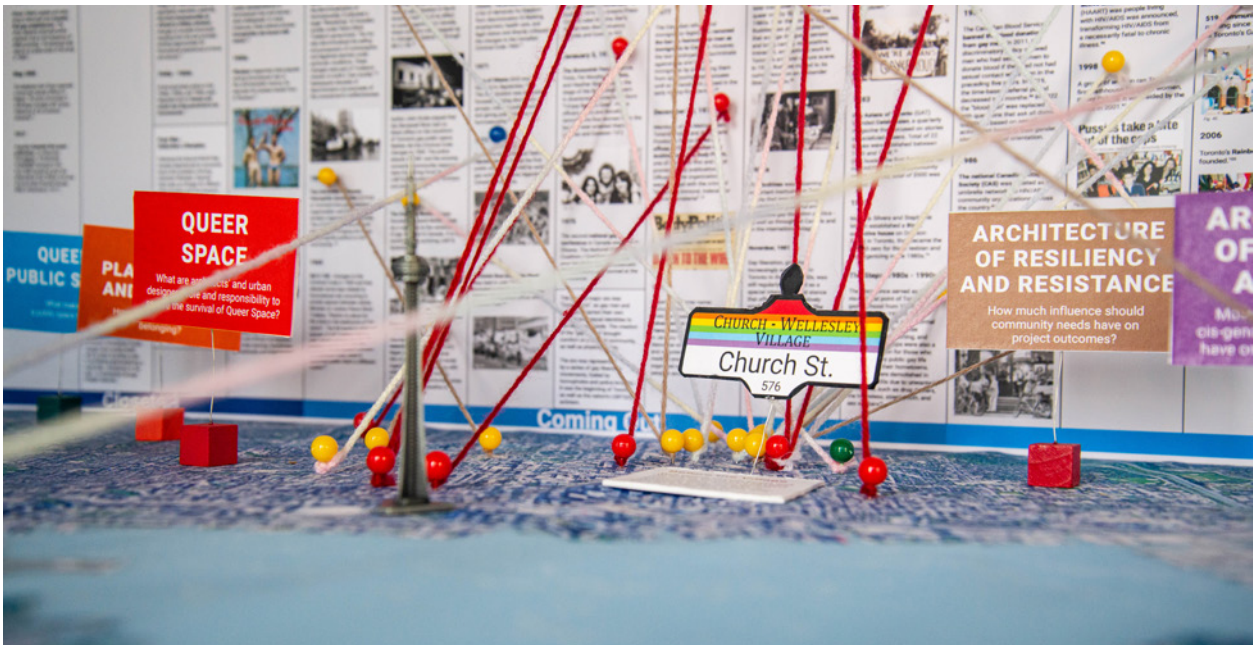
65 Alan Collins, "Sexual Dissidence, Enterprise and Assimilation: Bedfellows in Urban Regeneration," *Urban Studies (Edinburgh, Scotland)* 41, no. 9 (2004): 1789, https://doi.org/10.1080/0042098042000243156.

66 Tim Davis, "The Diversity of Queer Politics and the Redefinition of Sexual Identity and Community in Urban Spaces," in *Mapping Desire: Geog Sexuality* (Routledge, 1995), 259.

▶ **Fig. 2. 5** Toronto's Church-Wellesley Village serves as a tangible representation of the queer community.




Securing the Survival of
QUEER SPACE
Documenting the Resiliency of Toronto's Queer Communities
QUEER PUBLIC SPACE
QUEER PLACEMAKING AND IDENTITY
QUEER SPACE
QUEER GEOGRAPHIES
ARCHITECTURE OF RESILIENCY AND RESISTANCE
ARCHITECTURE OF SEXUALITY AND DESIRE
QUEER REFUGE
Church St.
Toronto, ON


QUEER SPACE
ARCHITECTURE OF RESILIENCY AND RESISTANCE
How much influence should community needs have on project outcomes?
CHURCH - WELLESLEY VILLAGE
Church St.
576

characterized by a "quasi-underground" nature and the absence of a formalized public subculture and territory.[67] In Toronto, these differing approaches in claiming urban space contribute to the geographical separation between queer subgroups. For instance, gay males historically occupied the apartment towers in the Church-Wellesley Village, and actively engaged in reclaiming the public realm through placemaking. Meanwhile, lesbians have been more prominent in residential neighbourhoods such as Leslieville and the East End, fostering intimate community networks within these areas.[68]

Understanding queer space as a queer-occupied space provides valuable insights into the evolution of queer communities. As illustrated in later sections, this type of queer spaces serves as tangible indicators of queer communal life, anchoring their presence within the urban fabric. However, this interpretation risks confining queerness to a fixed locality, isolating it from the broader heteronormative environment.[69] The mapping project on this page sheds light on queer activism and historical events intertwined with the built environment of Toronto. It becomes clear that past queer life was never exclusively centralized around the Church-Wellesley Village and the downtown core. Instead, the mobility and temporality of queerness enable its presence throughout the urban sphere, manifesting in diverse and often unexpected ways.

Nevertheless, this interpretation also reinforces historical biases. Narratives of non-white gay men and other minorities remain significantly underrepresented. Unlike fields that engage critically with topics in queer diaspora and racialized sexualities, queer spatial studies have been slower to address issues of race and class.[70] Spaces produced by BIPOC, lesbians, transgender, and non-binary individuals remain largely unexplored, as these groups often lack the resources and privilege to establish formalized physical territories. Further investigation into their spaces is essential for a fuller understanding of the diverse queer experience.

67 Castells, *The City and the Grassroots*, 140; Sy Adler and Johanna Brenner, "Gender and Space: Lesbians and Gay Men in the City," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 16, no. 1 (1992): 31, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.1992.tb00463.x.

68 Catherine J. Nash and Andrew Gorman-Murray, "Lesbian Spaces in Transition: Insights from Toronto and Sydney," in *Planning and LGBTQ Communities: The Need for Inclusive Queer Spaces*, ed. Petra L. Doan (New York: Routledge, 2015), 181–98; Catherine J. Nash, "The Age of the 'Post-Mo'? Toronto's Gay Village and a New Generation," *Geoforum* 49 (October 1, 2013): 243–52, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2012.11.023; John Grube, "'No More Shit': The Struggle for Democratic Gay Space in Toronto," in *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance*, ed. Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter (Seattle, Wash: Bay Press, 1997), 127–46.

69 Vallerand, "Home Is the Place We All Share," 65.

70 Puar, Rushbrook, and Schein, "Sexuality and Space."

◀ Fig. 2. 6 Queer Space and History 3D mapping exercise. This model explores Toronto's queer history in relation to the urban environment. It reveals the downtown core as a key site closely associated with queer resistance events.

Queer Space as a Homoerotic Space

The second interpretation of queer space positions it as a sexualized space. The existence of this type of queer space is contingent on homoerotic desire and sexual acts, which both construct and dissolve the space.[71] However, this interpretation has largely emphasized queer space produced by gay men's sexual desires rather than its role in shaping the communal life of the diverse queer communities. Aaron Betsky claims that "the purpose of queer space is ultimately sex".[72] Long before the formation of gay enclaves in the city, in Betsky's view, the first queer spaces of the modern era were the cruising grounds where men sought intimate encounters, such as dark alleys, secluded corners, and hidden rooms found in the city.[73] Betsky's portrayal of queer space, however, is often criticized for focusing exclusively on spaces designed and used by middle-class gay men, as implied by the title of his work - *Queer Space: Architecture and Same-sex Desire*.

In contrast, Michael Warner's *The Trouble with Normal* provides a broader view of sexual queer space by examining public sex culture and queer publics. Warner defines queer space as sites of both sexual and social interactions for queer individuals. He contends that the demise of those places was driven not only by homophobic and sex-shaming regulations and policy, but also by the homonormativity attitude within the queer population itself.[74] For instance, middle-class white gay men, equipped with greater financial and political resources, have relocated public sex indoors, creating private queer space. This shift inadvertently marginalized other queer subgroups, acting as a type of policing and normalizing force to regulate public queer culture.[75] Consequently, queer spaces available to the marginalized queers have been further reduced.

Marginalization is a recurring characteristic in understanding queer bodies in relation to space. Sexual queer space is also a marginalized space. It operates as a counterpublic, forming a subaltern public sphere in contrast to the heteronormative ideology and spatial orders. Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner

71 Vallerand, "Home Is the Place We All Share," 65.

72 Betsky, ***Queer Space***, 20.

73 Betsky, 142.

74 Michael Warner, ***The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life***, Harvard University Press paperback ed (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 2000), 149–94.

75 Benjamin Shepard and Gregory Smithsimon, "Fences and Piers: An Investigation of a Disappearing Queer Public Space," in ***The Beach Beneath the Streets: Contesting New York City's Public Spaces*** (Albany, N.Y: Excelsior Editions/State University of New York Press, 2011), 99–126.

▶ **Fig. 2. 7** The Village's sexual queer space. A male dancer was performing an erotic routine in front of a gay bar on Church St during the 2024 Pride Festival.


S COFFEE

describe "queer counterpublics" as "an indefinitely accessible world conscious of its subordinate relation", exemplifying both "the inventiveness of queer world making" and the "queer world's fragility".[76] Moreover, Michel Foucault's concept of "heterotopias" provides further insight into queer space. Heterotopias, as defined by Foucault, are "counter-sites" in which the real sites are "simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted".[77] Hence heterotopias are real spaces of otherness that trouble dominant spatial orders. Sexual queer space functions as a heterotopia, subverting dominant spatial orders by embodying differences within a heteronormative society. Expanding on this, Angela Jones theorized "queer heterotopias" as places where individuals are free to perform their queerness without "fear of being qualified, marginalized, or punished" while challenging the heteronormative regime. In her view, queer heterotopias are materialized spaces that allow queers to explore new subjectivities through radical and unregulated behaviours.[78] This resembles Warner's understanding of a queer counterpublic as "no one is in the closet".[79] Queer space enables queers to cultivate alternative modes of being and contribute to queer identity formation.

Cruising is one form of counterpublic and spatializes a queer heterotopia. Warner describes cruising as embodying both a "world-making publicness" and a "world-excluding privacy".[80] Cruising is public in that it occurs outside of domesticity - characterized by openness, accessibility, and endless possibilities; it is also private as its locations are chosen for extreme discretion and rarely attract attention from passersby. Marcus McCann, a Toronto-based writer and lawyer, draws a distinction between "cruising" and "public sex". He describes cruising as an art of "looking", involving "coded signs – loitering, prolonged eye contact, a strategic tug" to indicate sexual availability to strangers, which is usually followed by sex, but not necessarily.[81] Thus, cruising emphasizes ephemeral elaborations in the public sphere rather than purely sexual acts.

Toronto has a long history of public stigma and police brutality towards sexual queer space. For instance, in popular cruising grounds such as Queen's Park, the Philosopher's Walk, and the ravines, authorities cut down bushes and installed extra lighting

76 Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "Sex in Public," ***Critical Inquiry*** 24, no. 2 (1998): 558.

77 Michel Foucault and Jay Miskowiec, "Of Other Spaces," ***Diacritics*** 16, no. 1 (1986): 24, https://doi.org/10.2307/464648.

78 Angela Jones, "Queer Heterotopias: Homonormativity and the Future of Queerness," ***InterAlia (Warszawa)***, no. 4 (2009), https://doi.org/10.51897/interalia/PQBF4543.

79 Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," ***Public Culture*** 14, no. 1 (2002): 86, https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-14-1-49.

80 Warner, *The Trouble with Normal*, 177.

81 Marcus McCann, *Park Cruising: What Happens When We Wander off the Path* (Toronto: Anansi, 2023).



▶ **Fig. 2. 8** The secluded bushes at Hanlan's Point Beach are a well-known cruising spot during the summer months.

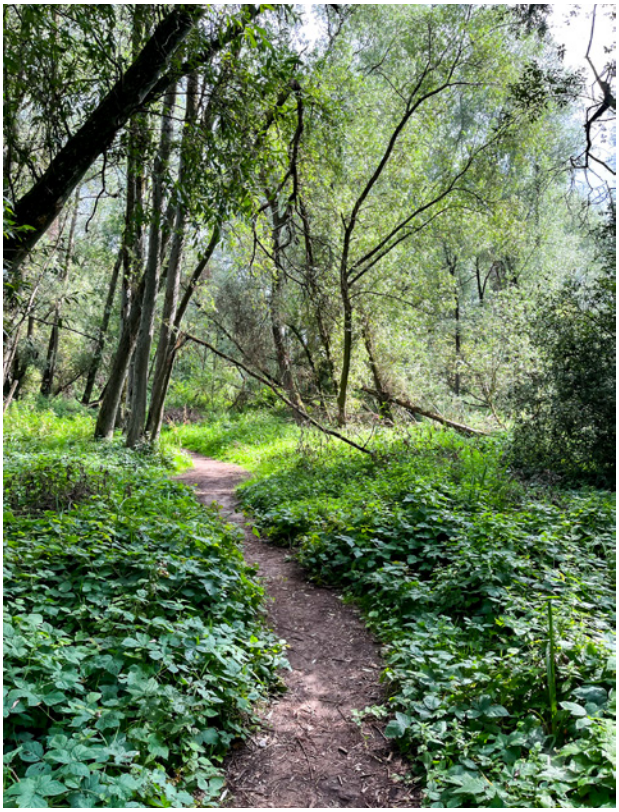
to deter cruising activities.[82] In 2016, "Project Marie", a police operation in Etobicoke's Marie Curtis Park, saw over 77 men charged for trespassing and indecent exposure only because they were seeking consensual sex.[83] Above all, the Bathhouse Raids of 1981 remains a pivotal moment in Toronto's queer history.[84] These state-led initiatives to regulate sexual behaviours were fueled by homophobic sentiments, and have further pushed public sex culture and sexual queer space deep under the urban landscape.

82 Grube, "'No More Shit': The Struggle for Democratic Gay Space in Toronto," 139.

83 McCann, *Park Cruising*.

84 Craig Jennex and Nisha Eswaran, *Out North: An Archive of Queer Activism and Kinship in Canada* (Vancouver: Figure.1 Publishing, 2020), 166–67.


DE OEVERLANDEN
OEVERLANDEN NIEUWE MEER
ARFMAN




Cruisegebied

In stark contrast to Toronto's restrictive policies, Amsterdam's Park de Oeverlanden offers an example of a legal, state-supported sexual queer space.[85] This park includes a designated area for cruising, separated from other park activities by fences and natural barriers like tall bushes, with clear wayfinding signage marking the entrances. Within the cruising area, visitors find open grasslands for socializing, nude sunbathing and voyeuristic plays. Then there is the maze of woods with intertwined paths offering a more intimate experience for unexpected encounters. On warm summer days, the park is packed with families enjoying lakeside leisure, while behind the rainbow markers and wild shrubs, naked men would find their pleasure safely and undisrupted. This coexistence of queer and heteronormative spaces demonstrates how societal acceptance and state support can enable queer spaces to flourish.

Sexual queer space is typically only visible to those "in the scene", and remains hidden from outsiders. John Grube's ethnographic research on Toronto's early gay life highlights the crucial role of cruising in connecting queers before the formation of the gay village. For outsiders, newcomers, and younger queer individuals, cruising offered sponsored entry into the local gay social scene, through a system of "younger protégés and older mentors".[86] Therefore, sexual queer space functions as much for socialization as for fulfilling erotic desires. It is a democratic space that breaks social hierarchies, allowing people of diverse backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses to connect.

To fully understand sexual queer space, we must view them as a space of social communities shaped by share identities, rather than solely sexual acts.[87] Past academic portrayals of gay spaces as "erotically charged, phallocentric", while labelling lesbian spaces as "sex-negative", enforce a false dichotomy between eroticism and communality in queer space.[88] While sexual desire remains one aspect of queer life, queer space is inherently complex, representing diverse relationships, coalition-building, and place-making practices.

85 Patrick Meershoek, "Cruisers hebben zorgen over toekomst ontmoetingsplek in De Oeverlanden," Het Parool, August 11, 2021, https://www.parool.nl/amsterdam/cruisers-hebben-zorgen-over-toekomst-ontmoetingsplek-in-de-oeverlanden~b7d0845b/.

86 Grube, "'No More Shit': The Struggle for Democratic Gay Space in Toronto," 130–39.

87 Olivier Vallerand, ***Unplanned Visitors: Queering the Ethics and Aesthetics of Domestic Space*** (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020), 19, https://doi.org/10.1515/9780228013778.

88 Yolanda Retter, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, and Gordon Brent Ingram, "Lost in Space: Queer Theory and Community Activism at the Fin-de-Millenaire," in ***Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance***, ed. Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter (Seattle, Wash: Bay Press, 1997), 9.

◀ **Fig. 2. 9** Park de Oeverlanden in Amsterdam has a legally designated, fenced area specifically for cruising.

Queer Space as an Imminent Performative Space

The last interpretation of queer space encompasses the previous perspectives and expands them, positioning queer space as an imminent space. Christopher Reed's definition of queer space is "imminent… ready to take place", and fundamentally, is "space in the process of, literally, taking place, of claiming territory".[89] This understanding of queer space emphasizes how queer people experience, inhabit, and reclaim urban space rather than a fixed locality where these interactions take place.[90] This perspective frames queer space as performative and ephemeral. Sarah Ahmed describes queer space as "fleeting", and it "follow(s) us when we come and go". Her queer phenomenology examines how people engage with the objects that slip away, and inhabit the space at the point at which things fleet.[91] This approach aligns with queer theory's critique of normative views, envisioning queer space as a realm constantly in the process of being constructed in opposition not only to heteronormativity but also to prescriptive norms.[92]

In constructing a queer space, Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* offers a useful framework to understand the dynamic relations between the creators of the space and its users. He defines "strategies" as actions organized by the place of power, where forces are distributed; and "tactics" are procedures determined by the absence of power, waiting for opportunities to take over. The flexibility of "tactics" allows users to seize the possibilities and create surprises in the "least expected" places. He argues that the creators have the power to define the dominant usage of space, but the users are able to develop "tactics" to use the space in alternative and oppositional ways.[93] In the context of queer space, the "tactics" represent the active participation of queers in appropriating spaces, and the "strategies" embody the pre-determined heteronormative norms, values, and rules that regulate spatial orders.

These "tactics" resembles the word "queer" as a verb in the sense of "queering". Judith Butler writes, that something becomes "queered" when it is "redeployed, twisted" from "a prior

89 Christopher Reed, "Imminent Domain: Queer Space in the Built Environment," *Art Journal (New York. 1960)* 55, no. 4 (1996): 64, https://doi.org/10.1080/00043249.1996.10791788.

90 Sarah Bonnemaison, "Queer Architecture," in *The Routledge Handbook of LGBTQ Identity in Organizations and Society*, ed. Julie Gedro and Tonette S. Rocco (New York, NY: Routledge, 2024).

91 Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 565–66.

92 Vallerand, "Home Is the Place We All Share," 65.

93 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 29–42.

usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes".[94] Similarly, Sara Ahmed contends that to queer is to disturb the order of things.[95] To queer a space, then, is to make use of the space in a queer way – in ways that rethink, trouble, and challenge foundational assumptions. These "tactics" could establish safe spaces, increase political power, and change culture and institutions through visibility and education.[96] The practice of promoting new reality and changing existing rules for collective and political goals is a form of activism. Thus queer space could be interpreted as a product of spatial activism.

Spatial activism is defined as a collective action that constructs the "(re)production of physical, social, cultural and symbolic space" in order to transform power relations among different groups in society.[97] Queer spatial activism manifests across various typologies, from neighbourhoods, streets, domestic spaces, to virtual and digital realms. Spaces are reappropriated for political, communal, and personal purposes. In this understanding, the aforementioned two types of queer spaces are all products of queer spatial activism. The Church-Wellesley Village represents the territorialization of queer liberation movement; the cruising grounds, bathhouses, and parks are contesting normative social orders and reconstructing one's sexual identity through fulfilling desires. Queer space derives from the act of spatial appropriation, and is sustained by ongoing queer occupation, yet, does it dissolve when the space is released?

Understanding queer space as a fleeting performative space raises questions about its durability. Christopher Reed posits that "no space is totally queer or completely unqueerable, but some spaces are queerer than others"[98], suggesting that queer space exists within a fluid temporal and spatial framework. Building on this, I conceptualize that queer space exists within a queer time, a parallel timeline distinct from the linearity of "straight time". Straight time dictates everyday life, reinforcing a heteronormative reality, while queer time operates beneath it, sustaining subversive activities through underground networks. Thus, all spaces are sustained within their parallel timelines, mostly undisturbed. A place becomes queer when the timelines intersect and overturn. This disturbance could be caused by

94 Judith Butler called for a critical review of the term "queer" that could initiate a resurgence of both feminist and anti-racist mobilization within identity politics and open up new possibilities: Judith Butler, ***Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*** (New York: Routledge, 1993), 228.

95 Sara Ahmed, "Orientations: Toward a Queer Phenomenology," *GLQ* 12, no. 4 (2006): 565, https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-2006-002.

96 Davis, "The Diversity of Queer Politics and the Redefinition of Sexual Identity and Community in Urban Spaces," 259.

97 Chen Misgav, "With the Current, Against the Wind: Constructing Spatial Activism and Radical Politics in the Tel-Aviv Gay Center," *ACME an International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 14, no. 4 (2015): 1211.

98 Reed, "Imminent Domain," 64.



▲ **Fig. 2. 10** Yonge Street was queered through rallies and parades, such as the March for LGBTQ+ Refugee Claimant Rights, organized by The 519 on May 16, 2024.



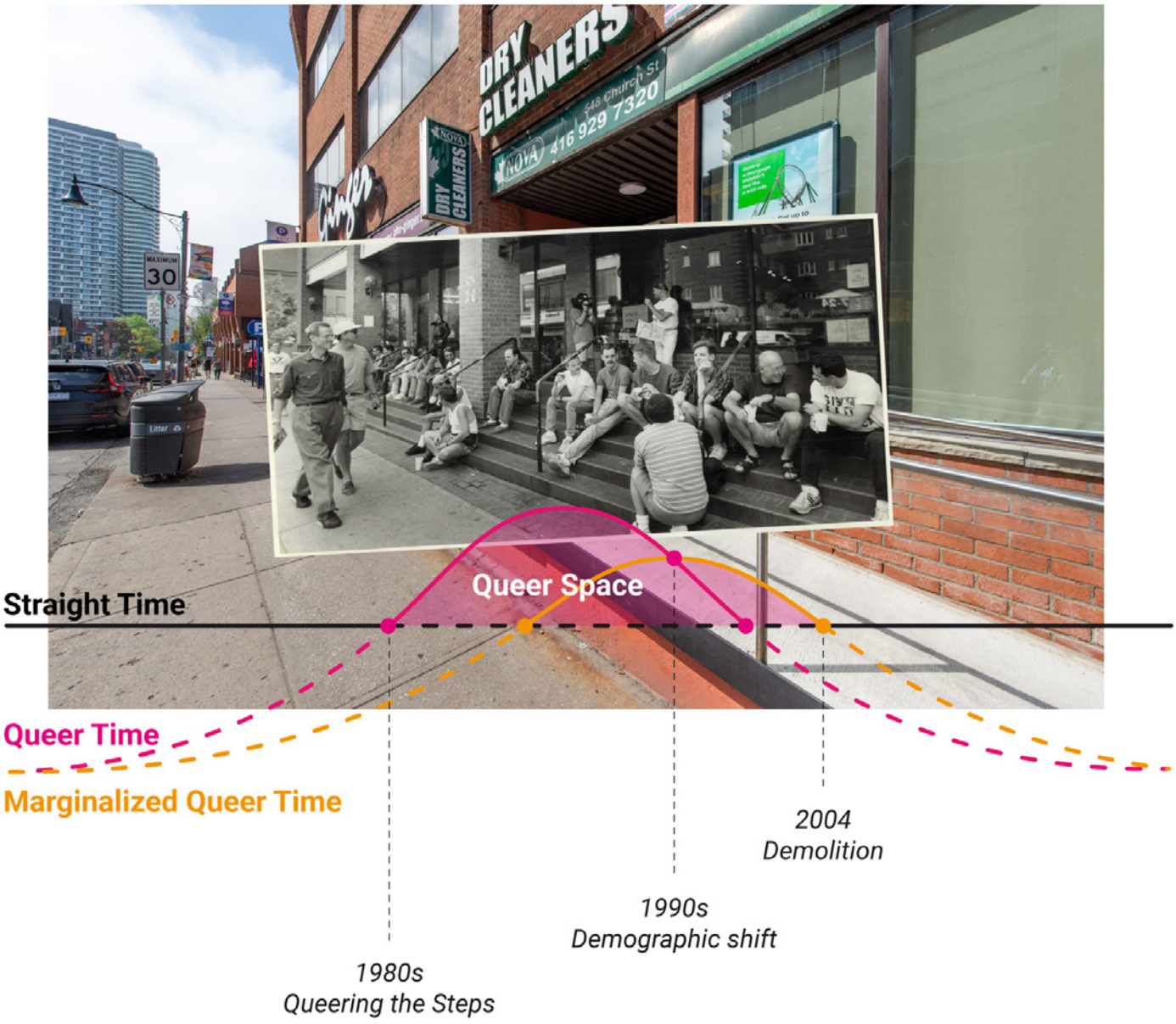
▲ **Fig. 2. 11** The Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) was queered through an exhibition of the AIDS Memorial Quilt on October 30, 2024.

external forces such as violence, discrimination, and systemic exclusion, or through queer communities' self-initiated actions such as protests, events, and performative acts of resistance. Therefore, any space has the potential to become queer if conditions align and queer time is activated.

To examine the interplay between queer time and the temporality of queer space, here I use the infamous "Steps" as an example to illustrate the tensions arising from the interchanging queer and straight time in spatial contextualization. From the 1980s to early 2000s, the Steps - a set of stairs leading up to a Second Cup café in the heart of Toronto's Church-Wellesley Village, was a hub for the queer communities and beyond. By the late 1980s, the Village had established itself as a queer enclave, gay bars began to own sidewalk presences, and queer placemaking increasingly claimed the public realm. The Steps became a local landmark where queers gathered organically to socialize, flirt, and go cruising. The iconic phrase "meet me at the Steps" symbolized its status as a site of communal connection.[99] While primarily recognized as a public queer space for gay men, the Steps also became a contested site. It was shaped by intersecting identities, where marginalized groups temporarily carved out spaces of belonging but oppressed by dominant voices.

During this era, most venues in the Village were consumption spaces catered to white middle-class gay men. The Steps was a rare public refuge for marginalized queers and people to find safety and belonging, particularly BIPOC individuals, street-involved youth, and those who couldn't afford to or simply couldn't go to gay bars and clubs. Throughout the 1990s, Yonge St's ongoing moral clean-up displaced more marginalized individuals, such as sex workers, unhoused people, and drug dealers, into the Village, and they began to occupy the Steps. This demographic shift drew wide complaints, leading to tensions over its use. In 2004, responding to safety concerns and pressure from local residents, the building owners walled off most of the Steps to evict these "unwanted occupants". This transformation reveals the fragility and contested nature of queer space. Although envisioned as inclusive, such spaces often become sites of competing narratives of belonging. The historical narratives of the Steps often centre white, middle-class

99 Allison Burgess, "Steps to Gentrification," in *Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer*, ed. Stephanie Chambers et al. (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017), 61; Shawn Micallef, "Town Squares and Spiritual Hearts," in *Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer*, ed. Stephanie Chambers et al. (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017), 45–50.



▲ **Fig. 2. 12** Conceptualizing a "straight time" and "queer time" in the production of queer space, using the Steps as an example.

gay men, exemplifying an "imperfect erasure" – a process that marginalizes the lived experiences of other minorities.[100] These groups operated within a more precarious queer time, their presence shaping the space in ways that remain undocumented. Today, a small portion of the Steps remains, but its communal importance to the queer communities and beyond is long gone.

The trajectory of the Steps highlights queer space's fragility, ephemerality, and the layered interplay of queer times. While the Steps provided a sanctuary for some, its evolution also reflects the challenges within queer communities. Different groups enact their own "tactics" to claim the space, often privileging certain identities over others. The Steps existed in the layered queer temporality of the Village, primarily shaped by the presence of white gay male identities. Marginalized queers, existing in a more precarious queer time, occupied the space more temporarily, making their presence more vulnerable to erasure. To fully understand queer space, we must interrogate whose narratives are centred and whose are obscured. The demise of one queer space can simultaneously give rise to another. In this sense, queer space is both ephemeral and permanent.

Being queer is a work in progress, and can "open mesh of possibilities".[101] Thus, queer space is the manifestation of queer bodies reimagining spatial possibilities for queer use. Whether in reclaimed urban neighbourhoods, reappropriated natural landscapes, or temporary sites, queer space reveals the tensions between visibility and discretion, permanence and ephemerality, and inclusivity and privilege. The multiple interpretations of queer space reflect the spatial activism of queer communities as they navigate and inhabit public spaces.

However, much of the existing scholarship on queer space has overlooked the contributions and experiences of QTPOC newcomers and other underrepresented groups. As illustrated in this section, queer space functions as a counterpublic – a site positioned at the margins. Yet, within these spaces, diverse queer bodies bring competing narratives of belonging that risk perpetuating further exclusions. Natalie Oswin advocates for the deconstruction of queer space to examine its deployments intersected with racialized, classed, and gendered identities.[102]

100 Jinthana Haritaworn et al., "Marvellous Grounds: QTBIPOC Counter-Archiving against Imperfect Erasures," in *Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer*, ed. Stephanie Chambers et al. (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017), 219–23.

101 As Sedgwick articulates, "queer" refers to: "the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically. See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, Series Q (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 8, https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822381860.

102 Natalie Oswin, "Critical Geographies and the Uses of Sexuality: Deconstructing Queer Space," *Progress in Human Geography* 32, no. 1 (2008): 89–103, https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132507085213.

▶ **Fig. 2. 13** Barbara Hall Park was queered by marginalized queer refugees and allies during a rally on May 16, 2024.



In the context of queer migration, we must first deconstruct the dominant narrative of queer space and then reconstruct a more inclusive queer home – "a space for queer folks to celebrate and be recognized for their identity".[103] In Chapter 3, I will illuminate the spatial practices of Toronto's QTPOC newcomers to shed light on the marginalized experiences that continue to shape the city's urban public spaces.

103 Katie Goldstein, "Queer Homes in a Non-Queer World," in *Mapping Queer Space(s) of Praxis and Pedagogy*, ed. Elizabeth McNeil, James E. Wermers, and Joshua O. Lunn, 1st ed. 2018., Queer Studies and Education (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 271, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-64623-7.


NO DIVING

2.4 Queer the Arrival City

"The crucial paradox of the arrival city is that its occupants all want to stop living in an arrival city." [104]

- Doug Saunders

The term "Arrival City", coined by Canadian journalist Doug Saunders, describes a transitional urban area where migrants temporarily settle to establish themselves economically and socially before integrating into the broader population.[105] These areas are known by various names: "immigrant neighbourhoods" and "ethnic enclaves" denote their demographic characteristics, while terms such as "slums", and "ghettos" are stereotypically used to reflect their economic conditions. In the context of Toronto, urban growth is intrinsically tied to Canada's political environment and immigration policies. Consequently, Arrival Cities evolve continuously and take different forms, shaped by diverse factors such as migrants' race, class, lifestyle preference, etc. This section examines two Arrival Cities to explore how urban neighbourhoods are appropriated by migrants and how queer communities carve out queer spaces within these marginalized environments.

Arrival Cities are much more than residential neighbourhoods for migrants; they are critical spaces that underpin the migration and resettlement process. According to Saunders, Arrival Cities perform four key functions. First, they serve as a hub for creating and maintaining social networks that connect migrants

104 Doug Saunders, *Arrival City: The Final Migration and Our next World*, First edition (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2010), 321.

105 Saunders, *Arrival City*.

◀ **Fig. 2. 14** St. James Town has a sizable queer resident population.

to their home countries, their new communities, and the larger established city. These networks comprise human relationships that provide social and political support. Second, Arrival Cities act as an entry mechanism for chain migration, facilitating successive waves of migrants to arrive. Third, these spaces enable migrants to secure financial and social stability. Lastly, they function as a social-mobility pathway, allowing residents to achieve middle-class status through higher-education, employments, businesses, and property ownership. Saunders further asserts that the ultimate goal of an Arrival City is to support residents in transitioning out of it.[106] Queer enclaves share some similarities with Arrival Cities, particularly in their role as spaces for social connection and political support through communal living. However, their functions may vary. An Arrival City or queer enclave specifically produced by queer migrants remains a largely unexplored field that requires further investigation.

Ernest Burgess' concentric zone hypothesis provides a parallel lens to understand the dynamics of Arrival Cities in North American urban contexts. Burgess identifies the "zone of transition" surrounding the city's central business district as a typical site for immigrant concentration. While often associated with poverty, degradation, and crimes, this zone also fulfils a dual role: it serves as a port of entry for newcomers, and a path to social mobility.[107] For many immigrants, especially those who are racialized, economically disadvantaged, or non-native English speakers, the transition to the new life is fraught with uncertainty and barriers. It is a common tactic to congregate in areas with people of similar lived experiences that could provide a sense of community and safety, while receiving support and guidance from predecessors. Urban neighbourhoods with low-cost housing and proximity to places of employment are deemed ideal as a landing pad for newcomers to establish themselves in a new country. Similarly, queer enclaves in North American cities often emerged in economically deprived areas.[108] Historically, both migrants and queers had been subject to systemic discrimination and exclusion by mainstream societies. Arrival Cities and queer enclaves have served as critical spaces of refuge and resilience for these marginalized communities.

106 Saunders, 20.

107 Ernest W. Burgess, "The Growth of the City: An Introduction to a Research Project," in ***Urban Ecology***, ed. Eric Shulenberger et al. (United States: Springer, 2008), 71–78, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-73412-5_5.

108 Manuel Castells, ***The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements***, California Series in Urban Development (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

The Ward: Toronto's First Arrival City

The concentric zone hypothesis is reflected in early Arrival Cities in Toronto's urban growth history. At the turn of the 20th century, Canada had primarily relied upon the British Isles and other European countries as the major suppliers of immigrants. Additionally, waves of Asian labourers were admitted to assist in the construction of major infrastructure projects.[109] During this period, the Ward, located in the heart of downtown Toronto, became the City's first immigrant neighbourhood, serving as a home to diverse immigrant and marginalized communities for over a century. From the mid-19th century onward, the Ward was first home to a thriving African-Canadian community, many of whom fled to Canada via the Underground Railroad. By the early 20th century, influxes of immigrants from Italy, Eastern Europe and China were drawn to the area due to its affordable accommodations and ethnocultural diversity. Over time, the Ward established itself as a working-class immigrant enclave.[110]

After WWI, the demographic composition of the Ward shifted again following the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1923. Many Chinese bachelor workers sought refuge in the area, and it eventually became Toronto's first Chinatown. However, the Ward also became a contested site, challenged by racism, and social and environmental inequity. Residents often lived in overcrowded and filthy rooming houses without basic sanitation, and the neighbourhood was plagued by poverty and disease. It was stigmatized as Toronto's most impoverished "slum".[111] Despite these hardships, for over a century, the Ward thrived as an Arrival City, welcoming generations of newcomers to Canada. The book *The Ward* vividly documents the forgotten history of this neighbourhood, highlighting the resiliency of the residents.[112] Amid precarious housing conditions, people supported one another, built communities, and created a sense of belonging. While the Ward was home to Toronto's first Little Italy and Chinatown, it was also the site of some of the city's earliest queer spaces.

109 Department of Justice Government of Canada, "Cultural Diversity in Canada: The Social Construction of Racial Difference," February 24, 2003, https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/csj-sjc/jsp-sjp/rp02_8-dr02_8/index.html.

110 John Lorinc et al., eds., *The Ward: The Life and Loss of Toronto's First Immigrant Neighbourhood*, First edition. (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2015).

111 John Lorinc, "Introduction," in *The Ward: The Life and Loss of Toronto's First Immigrant Neighbourhood*, ed. John Lorinc et al., First edition. (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2015), 11–25.

112 Lorinc et al., *The Ward*.

A lesser-known narrative is the Ward's significance to the queer communities. During the 1940s and 1950s, the intersection of Queen and Bay St, tucked into the Ward, emerged as a popular cruising spot and meeting point for queer individuals. Nicknamed "the Corners", this intersection was anchored by two venues - the Municipal Hotel and the Union House Hotel - both were frequented by queer patrons.[113] In the 1950s and 1960s, the Continental Hotel in old Chinatown played a vital role in providing a safe space for not only Chinese immigrant men, but also lesbians and queer women. The hotel had a women-only area that offered female patrons a safe space free of unwanted attention and harassment. During that time, Chinese men and lesbians were both marginalized by society, but they supported one another and established a mutually beneficial relationship at the Continental. According to historian Elise Chenier, Chinese men would often offer the women stable housing and money, and the women would return with sex occasionally.[114] These complex dynamics between marginalized communities across socio-cultural attributes and sexuality still remain largely undiscovered. Queer spaces in the Ward faced unique vulnerabilities, as queers encountered not only systemic oppression from the Protestant Toronto, but also conservatism within immigrant cultures. Nonetheless, both the queer space and broader Arrival City remain precarious components of the urban landscape.

The postwar era was marked by intensified slum clearance and urban renewal aimed at transforming declining areas. "Urban renewal" refers to a state-sponsored process of expropriating and demolishing extensive areas of run-down, privately owned housing and buildings, and replace with public housing, institutional, and commercial projects.[115] The Ward underwent successive phases of urban renewal well into the 1990s. During this long process of expropriation, much of the original Chinatown was razed to make way for the new City Hall and Nathan Phillips Square.[116] Many Chinese residents and businesses were displaced to Dundas St W and Spadina Avenue, forming what is now known as Chinatown West. Queer spaces within the Ward faded with the rest of the Arrival City.

113 Atticus Hawk, "This Is Halloween (On Church!) | LGBTQ Oral History Digital Collaboratory," accessed October 13, 2024, https://lgbtqdigitalcollaboratory.org/this-is-halloween-on-church/.

114 Elise Chenier has in-depth research on Toronto's lesbian community at the Continental Hotel: Elise Chenier, "A Place like the Continental," in ***Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer***, ed. Stephanie Chambers et al. (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017), 98–101; Elise Chenier, "Rethinking Class in Lesbian Bar Culture: Living 'The Gay Life' in Toronto, 1955-1965," ***Left History*** 9, no. 2 (2004): 85–118, https://doi.org/10.25071/1913-9632.5608.

115 Richard White, "Urban Renewal Revisited: Toronto, 1950 to 1970," ***The Canadian Historical Review*** 97, no. 1 (2016): 5, https://doi.org/10.3138/chr.3265.

116 Lorinc, "Introduction."



▲ **Fig. 2. 15** The site of The Ward has been transformed into a civic square. This photo captures the anti-Asian racism rally at Nathan Phillips Square on March 28, 2021.

Today, the site of the Ward has been entirely transformed into a civic public realm, characterized by government buildings, offices, hotels, and hospitals. The recent condo boom, driven by the robust real estate market and the demand for downtown living, has reintroduced residential typology. These new condo towers, particularly along the Bay St Corridor, attract many affluent international students and young professionals who are studying or working downtown. Remarkably, 19% of the area's residents are non-permanent residents, nearly four times the city's average.[117] This shift suggests the cultivation of a new Arrival City – this time, for those from a higher socio-economic class. Other downtown neighbourhoods, such as the Church-Wellesley Village, are experiencing similar transformations. Gentrification in the Village has been a heated topic for decades, raising concerns about the displacement of queer residents.[118] Yet, the new condo towers in the area have also become a popular housing option for affluent queer individuals and queer newcomers who can afford them. These competing dynamics of Arrival Cities catering to various economic groups highlight the complexities of urban development and demographic change.

117 According to 2021 census stats, Yonge-Bay Corridor has a much higher percentage (19.1%) of non-permanent residents, such as people with a work or study permit or who are refugee claimants, compared to the City's average of 5.3%. See more at City of Toronto, "Yonge-Bay Corridor Neighbourhood Profile Detail," City of Toronto (City of Toronto, April 12, 2022), Toronto, Ontario, Canada, https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/data-research-maps/neighbourhoods-communities/neighbourhood-profiles/find-your-neighbourhood/neighbourhood-profile-detail/.

118 Shawn Micallef, *Stroll: Psychogeographic Walking Tours of Toronto*, 1st ed (Toronto: Coach House Books : Eye Weekly, 2010), 253.

St. James Town: A Postwar Arrival City

The demise of the Ward was a direct consequence of urban renewal that led to later gentrification. While urban renewal is known to bulldoze Arrival Cities and displace marginalized communities, in some cases, it can also give rise to new Arrival Cities. The evolution of St. James Town exemplifies how diverse communities across race, cultural backgrounds, and sexuality shape different forms of Arrival Cities. Located on the northeastern boundary of Toronto's downtown core, St. James Town is a superblock with many distinctions. Upon its completion in the 1960s, it was Canada's largest housing development. Today, it is the country's most densely populated and culturally diverse community, while also remains one of Toronto's poorest neighbourhoods.[119] Its emergence as an Arrival City was not a deliberate outcome of planning, but rather a result of various factors, including urban renewal, postwar urbanism, immigration, and socio-economic forces.

In the late 19th century, the area now known as St. James Town was an upper-middle-class neighbourhood, characterized by Victorian houses. As wealthy residents left for the suburbs, their homes were converted into boarding houses to accommodate working-class and marginalized populations. However, the houses deteriorated quickly due to insufficient maintenance from absentee landlords. By the 1950s, the land was assembled by investors for speculation which later led to the redevelopment.[120] While archival evidence is scarce regarding its role as an Arrival City for immigrants, it likely functioned similarly to the Ward of the same period.

During the 1960s, the City launched the urban renewal at St. James Town that razed the entire neighbourhood in the name of "slum clearance", while also to accommodate urban growth through densification. The redevelopment featured 19 high-rise apartment buildings influenced by the European "garden city" concept and Le Corbusier's "Tower in the Park" model.[121] Each tower accommodated hundreds of units surrounded by vast green space, and surface parking. These buildings were originally

119 City of Toronto, "North St. James Town Neighbourhood Profile Detail," City of Toronto (City of Toronto, April 12, 2022), Toronto, Ontario, Canada, https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/data-research-maps/neighbourhoods-communities/neighbourhood-profiles/find-your-neighbourhood/neighbourhood-profile-detail/.

120 Ont. Development Dept. Toronto, *St. James Town - Toronto, Ontario; A Private Developer's Experience in Urban Renewal.*, 1970.

121 Barton Myers and George Baird, "Vacant Lottery," *Design Quarterly (Minneapolis, Minn.)*, no. 108 (1978): 1–51, https://doi.org/10.2307/4090990.

▶ **Fig. 2. 16** St. James Town.



intended to attract young professionals and the "swinging singles" who would enjoy the convenience of downtown living before moving to the suburbs and starting families. Thus, the complex was equipped with large luxury units with amenities that catered to the imagined affluent demographic. However, due to its isolation from the urban fabric, lack of retail and street life, and adjacency to working-class neighbourhoods, St. James Town was not attractive enough for the middle-class and the younger generation. Instead, the working class and immigrants started to move in. Within a decade, the buildings suffered from poor property management and inadequate maintenance. Businesses within the complex struggled, and amenities shut down. Over time, the neighbourhood became synonymous with crimes, drugs, and prostitution. These conditions drove rents lower, attracting more low-income populations, including new immigrants and refugees.[122] By contrast, one block away in the Church-Wellesley Village, similar apartment buildings constructed during the same era were well-maintained and became central to the establishment of the thriving queer communities.[123] Meanwhile, St. James Town's legacy of neglect continues to haunt residents, as seen in a 2024 flooding incident in one of the apartment buildings leaving hundreds of tenants without electricity for months.[124] St. James Town remains a contested site of stigmatization and systemic neglect.

Despite the troubled history, beneath the denigrated physical structure of St. James Town lies a successful Arrival City where racialized immigrants find shelter and belonging. Its role as an Arrival City was shaped indirectly by national and global socio-political changes. In the late 1960s when St. James Town was completed, Canada had just loosened its immigration regulations and introduced official multiculturalism, welcoming immigrants from diverse racial backgrounds.[125] For many immigrants and refugees who didn't come with large assets, St. James Town's low-cost housing options provided a vital foothold. Additionally, its proximity to the Church-Wellesley Village made it an alternative option for queer individuals seeking affordable housing near the queer enclave.

122 Carolyn Whitzman, "Social Infrastructure in Tall Buildings: A Tale of Two Towers: Carolyn Whitzman, MA, MCIP," in ***Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat*** (CRC Press, 2001), 62.

123 "City Park Co-Op," Queerstory, accessed September 22, 2024, https://www.queerstory.ca/project/city-park-co-op/.

124 Naama Weingarten and Muriel Draaisma, "St. James Town Tenants Affected by Flooding Won't Get Rent Break," ***CBC News***, July 30, 2024, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/no-rent-abatements-tenants-st-james-town-highrise-flood-storm-1.7280378.

125 Government of Canada, "Cultural Diversity in Canada."

126 According to 2021 census stats, the population of the North St. James Town neighbourhood consists of 52.8% immigrants, 13.8% recent immigrants, 10% non-permanent residents, 70.7% visible minority, 20.5% second generation, and 71.1% Canadian citizens. In comparison, the population of the City of Toronto: 7.2% recent immigrants, and 5.3% non-permanent residents. (Recent immigrants: people who immigrants within the last 5 years) See full information: Toronto, "North St. James Town Neighbourhood Profile Detail."

127 Nick Westoll, "'The Corner' Providing Key Social, Economic Supports for St. James Town Residents," ***CityNews Toronto*** (blog), January 26, 2024, https://toronto.citynews.ca/2024/01/26/st-james-town-the-corner-toronto/.



▲ **Fig. 2. 17** St. James Town is often referred to as "a world within a block" due to its culturally diverse community.

One of the defining features of Arrival Cities is the dominant presence of the immigrant population. Today, with over 180k residents living in St. James Town, over 70% are first-generation immigrants and temporary migrants of various statuses. The percentage of recent immigrants who landed in Canada within 5 years and non-permanent residents doubles the city's average. Most of the population are also racialized visible minorities, particularly from India and the Philippines.[126] Based on census information, St. James Town is a massive Arrival City with the most visibly concentrated immigrant population. This demographic diversity has earned St. James Town the name "a world within a block".[127]

Demographic diversity is only one dimension of Arrival Cities. The built environment is also critical in constructing a functioning Arrival City. Immigrants are actively shaping their surroundings, producing what is known as "arrival infrastructure". Lauren Berlant defines "infrastructure" as "the living mediation of what organizes life". She introduces infrastructure as more than the physical and organizational structures that support the built environment, but a connecting device that "binds us to the world in movement and keeps the world practically bound to itself". She argues that infrastructure is a symbolic network that supports life where capital and the state have failed, suggesting a new way of being together.[128] Similarly, "social infrastructure" emphasizes the network of services pertaining to people's socialization and the organization of society.[129] Examples of infrastructure range from state-supported facilities like community centres, schools, and hospitals, to grassroots initiatives like community gardens, social events, and informal markets. Thus, infrastructure could be both physical and fixed, transverse and mobile. Its flexibility resonates with the characteristics of queer space being fluid and fleeting, contingent on users' occupation to define its social functions.

Expanding on this, "arrival infrastructure" emphasizes the type of social infrastructure that is interacted by migrants. It constitutes "the urban fabric within which newcomers become entangled on arrival, and where their future local or translocal social mobilities are produced as much as negotiated."[130] In St. James Town, Arrival Infrastructure encompasses different scales and forms. For instance, The Corner, the official community centre of the neighbourhood, provides a wide array of services, including healthcare, housing assistance, employment support, and newcomer settlement programs. To serve the queer residents in the neighbourhood and beyond, the Corner also facilitates 2SLGBTQ+ Drop-in Groups, annual Pride-themed events, HIV prevention programs, and etc.[131] Its weekly LGBTQ+ Newcomers Program has initiated critical discussions on queer newcomers' wellbeing, and commits to upskilling communities and cultivating a sense of belonging.[132] Most recently in the spring of 2024, the Community Summit hosted by the St. James Town Residents Council brought together the neighbourhood's diverse residents for networking, performances, and workshops.

128 Lauren Berlant, "The Commons: Infrastructures for Troubling Times*," ***Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*** 34, no. 3 (June 1, 2016): 393, https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775816645989.

129 Whitzman, "Social Infrastructure in Tall Buildings," 60.

130 Bruno Meeus, Bas van Heur, and Karel Arnaut, "Migration and the Infrastructural Politics of Urban Arrival," in ***Arrival Infrastructures: Migration and Urban Social Mobilities***, ed. Bruno Meeus, Karel Arnaut, and Bas van Heur (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 1, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91167-0_1.

131 "The Corner – St James Town," accessed December 1, 2024, https://www.stjamestown.org/the-corner/.

132 Eduardo Dossantos, "Creative Corner: LGBTQ Newcomers Program – St James Town," accessed November 25, 2024, https://www.stjamestown.org/2022/10/15/12211/.

Queer newcomers and grassroots organizations like the True Colors 2SLGBTQ+ Creative Queer Collective have made great contributions to these initiatives.[133]

Beyond institutional support, St. James Town also demonstrates the production of liminal Arrival Infrastructures through placemaking practices. In his observation of St. James Town, Dominik Formanowicz introduces the concept of "cornerism" – a practice of embracing and facilitating the spontaneity of urban interactions that transcends the original spatial design and constraints of space. He argues that cornerism would produce "corners" as sites of resistance out of the normative space designed by white settler colonialism. These corners allow "cornered" users to defy the predetermined functions of space for interaction and exchange. In St. James Town, cornerism manifests in informal markets and impromptu gatherings on pedestrian streets.[134] Saunders also notes that such practice is typical in migrants' placemaking, which was created to resemble similar spaces known from their homelands.[135] This practice of reappropriating space resonates with the concept of queer space. As discussed in the previous section, queer space is performative and produced by queer spatial activism. Spaces are queered to achieve a queer sense of safety and belonging. Similarly, in Arrival Cities, migrants have queered the infrastructure to construct their places of community and fulfil their homeland desires. Within these Arrival Cities, queer newcomers have also cultivated their own "corners" forming a "queer home". This layered spatial reappropriation demonstrates the resilience of placemaking "tactics" that transcend ethnicity and sexuality.

This section has examined two Toronto neighbourhoods - the former Ward and St. James Town - as Arrival Cities. Both were shaped by economically precarious migrants and marginalized communities under different historical circumstances, resulting in divergent architectural typologies and urban forms. However, contemporary discussions on immigrant neighbourhoods and ethnic enclaves tend to focus narrowly on ethnicity, overlooking the broader intersections of migrants' identities. Consequently, Arrival Cities are often generalized as places for immigrants or new Canadians, and defined by ethnicity, without specificity

133 Fred Alvarado, "St James Town Residents Council Hosts Community Summit 2024: "Emerging Innovations & Ideas"," Community Media Portal, September 23, 2024, https://www.commediaportal.ca/web/en/media/st-james-town-residents-council-hosts-community-summit-2024-emerging-innovations-ideas.

134 Dominik Formanowicz, "A World Within a Block: Negotiating Space in Toronto's St. James Town," *New Sociology: Journal of Critical Praxis* 3 (2022), https://doi.org/10.25071/2563-3694.96.\\uc0\\u8221{} {\\i{}New Sociology: Journal of Critical Praxis} 3 (2022

135 Saunders, *Arrival City*.



▲ **Fig. 2. 18** St. James Town's community centre - The Corner.



▲ **Fig. 2. 19** The informal markets on the pedestrian streets of St. James Town.

of other dimensions of migrants' profiles, such as admission category, financial capacities, family compositions, and importantly, sexuality.

In the interrogation of queer space in the last section, I have highlighted the necessity of deconstructing queer spaces to uncover the intersected conflicts of racialized, classed, and gendered identities. Similarly, in examining Arrival Cities, I propose an expanded framework that emphasizes the full spectrum of migrants' identities, and deconstruct Arrival Cities by prompting the critical question: "whose Arrival City is it?" The choice of residence is deeply personal and influenced by myriad factors. For instance, the Ward was an Arrival City for successive waves of Black, Italian, Jewish, and Chinese immigrants, most of whom lived at the poverty line. St. James Town became an Arrival City for predominantly Indian and Filipino immigrants and other refugees with limited financial resources. In contrast, downtown Toronto's high-rise condos function as an Arrival City for affluent International students and temporary workers who can afford the proximity to schools and workplaces. GTA suburbs such as Markham and Richmond Hill cater to middle- and upper-middle-class Chinese immigrants who value the North American lifestyle combined with access to ethnic amenities, high-performing school districts, and other conveniences. Despite their varied built forms, these Arrival Cities share a common function: they serve as entry points, providing shelter, resources, and community support to newcomers, and ultimately integrating them into Canadian society. For queer communities, the Church-Wellesley Village has long been a destination for both domestic and international queer migrants, particularly white gay men and those from the higher socio-economic class.[136] To examine the arrival experiences of queer newcomers, it is critical to account for their full intersectional identities, including the interplay of race, class, and sexuality.

In addition to considering the intersectionality of migrants' identities, it is also essential to deconstruct the spatial boundaries of Arrival Cities. Migrants' arrival experiences are not limited to the neighbourhoods they inhabit, rather, these experiences are intertwined with the broader urban sphere. Ash Amin calls for a move away from the "telescopic urbanism"

136 Rae Rosenberg, "Psychic Geographies of Queer Multiculturalism: Reading Fanon, Settler Colonialism and Race in Queer Space," ***Environment and Planning. D, Society & Space*** 39, no. 6 (2021): 1129–46, https://doi.org/10.1177/02637758211035132.

that overemphasizes only parts of the urban landscape with no regard for the city as a social whole.[137] As illustrated in the section, queer communities' involvement and contribution within Arrival Cities are only part of the larger network that sustains queer life. For example, "the Corners" in the former Ward, contributed to a broader queer geography centred around Yonge St at the time. The vibrant queer community in St. James Town benefits from its proximity to the Church-Wellesley Village, fostering cross-neighbourhood interactions. To fully understand migrants' arrival experiences, we must see Arrival Cities as a network, encompassing both visible and intangible forms, rather than as an implied territory confined at a neighbourhood scale. Arrival Cities, therefore, are socially constructed "cities", a constellation of Arrival Infrastructure that facilitates various interactions and exchanges. Fully examining Arrival Cities requires both a macro and micro lens to map the trajectory of migration and settlement.

This section has provided a framework for understanding Arrival Cities and their associated infrastructures, highlighting the active contributions of queer communities alongside other marginalized groups in constructing these spaces. Diasporic communities have queered the white settler colonial urban landscape to construct their places of community and safety. Queer diasporas, drawing from both their queer and diasporic roots, are able to advance their placemaking "tactics" to further challenge conventional urban forms and create new urban spatial typologies. In Chapter 3, I will further investigate how QTPOC newcomers are constructing their Arrival Cities, characterized by infrastructural tentacles that permeate throughout the heteronormative urban environment.

137 Ash Amin, "Telescopic Urbanism and the Poor," *City (London, England)* 17, no. 4 (2013): 484, https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2013.812350.


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2.5

The Evolution of Toronto's Queer Enclaves

"Toronto's queerness is not an accomplished state of being, but rather a constant process of becoming." [138]

- Tatum Taylor & Rahim Thawer

Non-traditional sexual, gender, and spiritual identities have long been practiced by Two-Spirit people on Turtle Island before the arrival of Western settlers.[139] Toronto's earliest Western documentation on same-sex activities could be traced back to the 19th century, with records suggesting that the waterfront area might be Toronto's first cruising ground for colonial elites.[140] Prior to World War II, queer space was predominantly confined to private and discreet settings. Queers in the public realm only became more visible, and their existence became more tangible since the mid-century with the emergence of queer-oriented establishments.

This section examines the evolution of Toronto's queer enclaves in relation to the city's broader urban transformation. By focusing on four spatial typologies – a prominent thoroughfare, a major neighbourhood, smaller sinner-city pockets, and the emerging digital queer realm – this analysis illustrates how these spaces have developed, intersected, and influenced one another over time.

138 Tatum Taylor and Rahim Thawer, "Did Toronto Get Queer?," in *Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer*, ed. Stephanie Chambers et al. (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017), 351.

139 Dalie Giroux and Julie Depelteau, "LGBTQ Issues as Indigenous Politics: Two-Spirit Mobilization in Canada," in *Queerly Canadian: An Introductory Reader in Sexuality Studies*, ed. Scott Rayter and Laine Halpern Zisman, Second edition (Toronto: Women's Press, an imprint of CSP Books Inc., 2022), 222–37.

140 Edward Jackson and Jarett Henderson, "Sex, Scandal, and Punishment in Early Toronto," in *Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer*, ed. Stephanie Chambers et al. (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017), 86–90.

◀ **Fig. 2. 20** The Church-Wellesley Village.

A Queer Entertainment District on Yonge St

Yonge St in the mid-century is remembered for its vibrant entertainment scene, yet beneath the hustle and bustle, a forbidden queer landscape once flourished. The post-war era marked a profound shift in Canada's urbanism – the growing suburbs became the bedroom communities for heterosexual domesticity. For many men commuting into the city for work, the distance between those suburbs and downtown opened up possibilities for same-sex erotic experiences.[141]

In the late 1940s, Toronto's early queer public life emerged in the men-only beverage rooms of downtown hotels, particularly in the intersections of Yonge and King St, and Queen and Bay St. Notably, just off Yonge St, the King Edward Hotel was a popular gay cruising spot,[142] and the adjacent Letros Tavern had the city's first exclusively queer bar, "the Nile Room".[143] While these places were a refuge for gay men, they were also known to be discriminatory in other ways, denying entry to men of colour and men who didn't dress in conventional masculine fashion.[144] Women, BIPOC, and other minorities were largely excluded from this archival narrative.

In the following decades, cultural acceptance continued to present many challenges, but things were slowly starting to change. In 1969, changes to Canada's Criminal Code partially decriminalized homosexuality. In Toronto, above-ground queer businesses and organizations started to come out and congregate. The evolving sociocultural environment also allowed queer subcultures such as cross-dressing and drag performances to grow and become visible in the urban sphere.[145]

At the heart of this emerging community was the St. Charles Tavern, its signature clock tower – a beacon of Toronto's queer life from the 1960s. Its presence established an "entertainment district" along upper Yonge St between Gerrard and Bloor.[146] Best known for its annual Halloween Drag Balls that drew crowds of competing drag queens, the St. Charles Tavern also became the site for manifestations of homophobic violence for over a

141 Craig Jennex and Nisha Eswaran, *Out North: An Archive of Queer Activism and Kinship in Canada* (Vancouver: Figure.1 Publishing, 2020), 43–44.

142 John Grube, "'No More Shit': The Struggle for Democratic Gay Space in Toronto," in *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance*, ed. Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter (Seattle, Wash: Bay Press, 1997), 129.

143 Jennex and Eswaran, *Out North*, 54.

144 Steven Maynard, "'A New Way of Lovin': Queer Toronto Gets Schooled by Jackie Shane," in *Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer*, ed. Stephanie Chambers et al. (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017), 11–20.

145 Jennex and Eswaran, *Out North*, 54.

146 Christine Sismondo, "Halloween Balls: From Letros to the St. Charles," in *Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer*, ed. Stephanie Chambers et al. (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017), 102–4.

▶ **Fig. 2. 21** The site of the former St. Charles Tavern at 480-484 Yonge Street. The site has been redeveloped, with the original clock tower restored and incorporated into a new condominium.


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decade. In the late 1970s, thousands of angry spectators would gather outside during Halloween, insulting event participants and pelting them with bricks and eggs on the sidewalk while chanting "Kill the Queers".[147] Yonge St was so hostile that many queer patrons were forced to use the back alleys for safe passage.[148] On the other hand, there were also drag queens who insisted on their right to use Yonge St regardless of the jeers and missiles. The situation noticeably improved over the years thanks to the work of activists like George Hislop, who worked closely with local business owners to restrict the sale of eggs, and with police to set up designated viewing areas to mitigate queer-bashing violence.[149]

Throughout the 1970s, Yonge St between Gerrard and Bloor was the epicentre of Toronto's queer social life. Particularly, the areas around St. Joseph and Isabella St boasted an emerging queer music, arts, and fashion culture anchored by many influential establishments.[150] Most of the venues were located on the second floor of buildings, with only one door fronting Yonge St's sidewalk. Hidden behind these discreet facades was a queer world-making counterpublic in the disco dance halls and private patios. A 1973 map published by the Body Politic, a pioneering queer publication, highlighted this stretch of Yonge St as a cruising spot, with the adjacent Grosvenor and Grenville St as a hub for sex work.[151]

However, the end of Yonge St's queer era was on the horizon in the face of anti-gay police campaigns and social conservatism. Following the 1977 murder of a Portuguese shoeshine boy on Yonge St, the police launched an aggressive "clean-up" on the "Sin Strip", targeting businesses such as strip clubs, massage parlours, and inevitably, gay bars and clubs.[152] In 1981, these anti-gay sentiments peaked with the infamous Bathhouse Raids, also known as "Operation Soap", where hundreds of men were arrested.[153] These events effectively suppressed the queer public presence on Yonge St and pushed it eastward to a refuge that we now know as the Church-Wellesley Village.

147 Read more on the violent events at St Charles Tavern in 1968, 1977, and 1979: Jennex and Eswaran, ***Out North***, 80; Shawn Micallef, ***Stroll: Psychogeographic Walking Tours of Toronto***, Updated edition (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2024), 23.

148 Art Zoccole, "Agokwe," in ***Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer***, ed. Stephanie Chambers et al. (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017), 26–28.

149 The ArQuives, "Police Involvement · Halloween Balls at the Letros and St. Charles Taverns · The ArQuives Digital Exhibitions," accessed February 25, 2025, https://digitalexhibitions.arquives.ca/exhibits/show/halloween-letros-stcharles/police-involvement.

150 Denise Benson, "Then & Now: Domino Klub," ***Then and Now: Toronto Nightlife History*** (blog), November 21, 2014, https://thenandnowtoronto.com/2014/11/then-now-domino-klub/.

151 "Gay Toronto Advertisement," ***The Body Politic***, Winter 1973.

152 "Murder of Emanuel Jaques Changed the Face of Yonge Street and Toronto," ***CBC News***, June 22, 2017, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/emanuel-jaques-yonge-street-sex-work-1.4172511.

153 Jennex and Eswaran, ***Out North***, 166.

The Birth of the Church-Wellesley Village

While the demise of queer space along Yonge St in the 1970s contributed to the establishment of a queer enclave to the east, the Church-Wellesley Village had long been embedded in Toronto's queer landscape. The earliest association of queerness with this area dates back to a scandal in 1810 involving a Toronto merchant and Upper Canada officer, Alexander Wood, who owned land near Yonge and Carlton St. Wood became infamous for his scandalous handling of a rape investigation, during which he reportedly inspected suspects' genitals, earning the area the mocking name "Molly Wood's Bush".[154] Rumour aside, nearby parklands such as Queen's Park, Philosopher's Walk, Allan Gardens, and the Don Valley, had historically been gay cruising grounds long before the presence of any materialized queer space.[155]

Since the 1950s, the rise of postwar urbanism and the suburban migration of heterosexual families significantly reshaped the urban fabric east of Downtown Yonge St. In 1952, the City designated the area a "Redevelopment Area" due to perceived blight and slum conditions, laying the groundwork for urban renewal.[156] Between the 1950s to 1970s, numerous high-rise apartment towers replaced turn-of-the-century low-rise houses. As noted earlier, urban renewal often displaces marginalized communities, however, it can also create Arrival Cities, and in this case, a queer enclave. The birth of the Church-Wellesley Village as a major queer residential neighbourhood was a direct result of urban renewal that diversified the housing stock.

A pivotal development of this period was the City Park Apartments, completed in 1954. Built in response to the density allowances granted by the new Yonge subway line, City Park was Canada's largest residential project at the time and was the first to introduce the "Tower in the Park" design style, inspired by European modernist planning principles.[157] Designed to offer high standards of urban living, the apartments featured luxury-finished interiors, modern amenities, and state-of-the-art acoustic and HVAC systems – all catering to young

154 Edward Jackson, "Alexander Wood: The Invention of a Legend," in *Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer*, ed. Stephanie Chambers et al. (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017), 91–92.

155 Grube, "'No More Shit': The Struggle for Democratic Gay Space in Toronto."

156 Mark Osbaldeston, "Wood-Wellesley and the 'Mystery Block,'" in *Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer*, ed. Stephanie Chambers et al. (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017), 54–56.

157 Ted J. Kesik and Ivan Saleff, *Tower Renewal Guidelines for the Comprehensive Retrofit of Multi-Unit Residential Buildings in Cold Climates* (Toronto: Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design, University of Toronto, 2009), 6.



professionals and middle-class families.[158] Despite this targeted demographic, much like the nearby St. James Town of the 1960s, City Park became a unique typology that housed marginalized populations instead. While St. James Town became an Arrival City for precarious immigrants and refugees, City Park immediately became a refuge for queers from across Canada.

Several factors contributed to City Park's evolution into "the Queen's Palaces", an affectionate nickname for housing a large number of gay residents.[159] First, its inexpensive studio and one-bedroom units were the first introduced in Toronto, and ideal for queer individuals seeking independence and community after moving to the city from the suburbs, northern Ontario, the prairies, and beyond. Second, its proximity to Yonge St's entertainment district was appealing to establish a social life. Finally, employment opportunities in the nearby Financial District and at the newly opened CBC headquarters on Jarvis St provided economic stability for many working residents.[160]

Since the completion of City Park, additional high-rise developments transformed the Village's urban landscape over the following decades. These buildings contributed to a significant inventory of single-occupancy units for queers in need of affordable and safe housing. The construction boom also signalled rapid population growth, particularly among single-person households and young adults.[161] As a result of the urban renewal, the neighbourhood's built form drastically changed from a mostly low-rise to more diverse typologies comprising turn-of-the-century row houses, prewar low-to-mid-rise apartments, and postwar high-rise towers.

The social reformation in the 1970s and 1980s further solidified the Village as the heart of the queer community. The 1969 Stonewall Riots in New York City was a queer signal of hope in North America, and started the "great gay migration" that motivated queers to come out and flock to big cities for safety and community belonging.[162] Hundreds of miles away, the event also profoundly pushed Toronto's queer liberation movements. The Bathhouse Raids of 1981 led to massive demonstrations that manifested the importance of congregating in groups to create political power. These movements granted queers more

158 See the architect's own description of the project: Peter Caspari, "City Park Apartments," *Journal (The Royal Architectyural Institute of Canada)*, April 1957.

159 Irena Karshenbaum, "City Park: Mid-Century 2SLGBTQ+ Heritage," https://www.heritagetoronto.org/, June 17, 2022, https://www.heritagetoronto.org/explore/city-park-apartments-lgbtq/.

160 "City Park Co-Op," Queerstory, accessed September 22, 2024, https://www.queerstory.ca/project/city-park-co-op/.

161 During the 60s, the Village saw a rapid population boom and drastic demographic shift, with the proportion of people living alone nearly doubled to 34% compared to just 4.6% for the city overall, as well as an increase in the number of young adults. Michael Ornstein and Tim McCaskell, "The Evolving Demographics of Toronto's Gay Village," in *Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer*, ed. Stephanie Chambers et al. (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017), 66–70.

162 Amin Ghaziani, *There Goes the Gayborhood?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 16.

◀ Fig. 2. 22 City Park Co-operative Apartments at 484 Church Street. It was the first large-scale housing development in the Village and played a pivotal role in the establishment of the gaybourhood.

tools and platforms to practice freedom and non-normative sexuality, resulting in a stronger queer presence in the urban sphere.[163] Queers were no longer content to hide in hidden bars, secluded parklands, or private residences, they demanded visibility and inclusion. Since then, above-ground queer businesses and service organizations started to resurface.[164]

As Yonge St underwent continued moral clean-up in the 1980s, Church St, just one block east, emerged as a more affordable and safer alternative for queer establishments.[165] By the early 1990s, Church St had become the main artery of Toronto's queer life, featuring a diverse array of restaurants, bars, shops, and cultural institutions catering specifically to queer communities. This era marked the Village's golden years, with the opening of iconic gay bars such as The Barn, Bar 501, Woody's, Crews and Tangos, etc. Cultural amenities such as The 519 Community Centre, Glad Day Bookshop, and Buddies in Bad Times Theatre further solidified the area as a hub of queer communal life. Alongside these semi-public venues, public spaces were also queered through everyday placemaking practices. Most notably, the Steps at the intersection of Church and Wellesley St was an informal gathering spot for queer and marginalized communities, while Barbara Hall Park served as the "Town Hall" of the Village, anchored by the newly constructed AIDS Memorial.

Today, the Village remains a vital centre of Toronto's queer political and social life and plays a critical role in delivering queer-focused services. The neighbourhood has also gained international recognition as a global destination for queer tourism, drawing millions of visitors annually. Despite increasing social inclusivity, the Village continues to serve as a refuge for queer individuals seeking community and safety after escaping from their hometowns or home countries. For queer newcomers, past research has indicated that the Village is a desirable place to resettle after they land in Canada, functioning similarly to an Arrival City.[166] However, the Village's status as a traditional queer enclave and Arrival City for queer newcomers is threatened by the harsh reality of Toronto's rapid transformations. The following chapter will examine how queer newcomers navigate the Village amidst the various socio-economic barriers, and how they have constructed their own Queer Arrival City.

163 Anne-Marie Bouthillette, "Gentrification by Gay Male Communities: A Case Study of Toronto's Cabbagetown," in ***The Margins of the City: Gay Men's Urban Lives***, ed. Stephen Whittle, Popular Cultural Studies 6 (Aldershot: Arena, 1994), 68.

164 Grube, "'No More Shit': The Struggle for Democratic Gay Space in Toronto," 130–39.

165 Greenberg Consultants et al., "Church Wellesley Village Neighbourhood Plan Phase Two Report" (Toronto: The 519, November 2013).

166 Paniz Moayeri, "Toronto's Gay Village Built-Form as Container for Social Heritage," ***Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada / Le Journal de La Société Pour l'étude de l'architecture Au Canada***, no. 44(2) (n.d.): 3–20; Emma Teitel, "As the Queer Community Spreads out, Can the Gay Village Remain Vital?," Toronto Star, June 25, 2017, https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/as-the-queer-community-spreads-out-can-the-gay-village-remain-vital/article_62435f44-5ddb-5dba-9907-5abfe029bf84.html.



▲ **Fig. 2. 23** Village Green Apartments at 50 Alexander Street. Postwar high-rise developments like the one in the photo, significantly transformed the Village's urban typology by introducing a large inventory of apartment units.

The Queer Gentrification of Inner-City Neighbourhoods

Since the late 1950s, the influx of queer residents into apartment buildings established the Village as a major queer residential neighbourhood. This mobility was driven by the queer desire for independence and freedom, symbolizing a growing-up and out-of-closet phase. However, as the needs of queer communities evolved, new queer spaces began to emerge beyond the conventional queer enclaves.

In the late 1960s and 1970s, as the first generation of queer arrival who settled in the Village's apartments grew older, many of them started to pursue the Canadian middle-class ideology of single-family dwellings and moved into nearby neighbourhoods such as Cabbagetown and Riverdale.[167] During that time, these inner-city neighbourhoods were characterized by run-down single-detached and row houses that were not attractive enough for heterosexual families. White gay men, in particular, reinvested in these areas, undertaking extensive renovations that increased property values by the late 1970s – a process known as "gay gentrification" or "urban renaissance", a term coined by Anne-Marie Bouthillette. She reveals that queer communities have the power not only to reshape the landscape they inhabit but also to influence the social, political and economic systems.[168] Today, the lasting effects of gay gentrification remain visible. These neighbourhoods are known for meticulously preserved heritage homes which remain some of the most desirable in the city.

Gay gentrification through renovation echoes the production of queer space. Christopher Reed asserts that the act of renovation – literally by tearing down walls and creating a new space – implies a queer desire to challenge normative values and reclaim agency.[169] Similarly, Manuel Castell concludes gay men's artistic talents in renovation and decorations as a queer spatial expression, which was driven by a "twofold desire for exchange value and use value" – reflecting both masculine domination and feminine tenderness.[170] Under this lens, the Village becomes a queer space through the physical manifestation of queer communities, while neighbourhoods such as Cabbagetown

167 Bouthillette, "Gentrification by Gay Male Communities: A Case Study of Toronto's Cabbagetown," 73.

168 Bouthillette, 65.

169 Christopher Reed, "Imminent Domain: Queer Space in the Built Environment," *Art Journal (New York. 1960)* 55, no. 4 (1996): 68, https://doi.org/10.1080/00043249.1996.10791788.

170 Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements*, California Series in Urban Development (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 166–67.

▶ **Fig. 2. 24** White gay men were among the first gentrifiers in Cabbagetown. They meticulously renovated and preserved its heritage homes. Their presence and influence can still be observed today.



and Riverdale are transformed into a queer space through acts of queer spatial activism that both physically and figuratively reshapes the heteronormative built environment.

The mobility from the Village towards alternative neighbourhoods is also fueled by the non-homonormative desire for a queer way of being. "Post-gay" is a term coined by British journalist Paul Burston, describing an era, a collective identity construction, and a critique of queer politics that are not defined solely by sexuality.[171] This perspective is further exemplified in a controversial opinion of Toronto-based writer Paul Aguirre-Livingston. He introduces the concept of "post-modern homo", or "post-mo", referring to a more fluid self-identification - queers who are not interested in performing the rigid homosexual identities associated with previous generations. He argued that these "post-mo" gays had abandoned the Village, together with the stereotypes and limitations tied to the gay identity, in favour of more diverse and inclusive spaces across the city.[172] Historically, the Village has been associated with an exclusive gay identity in both reclaiming and operating the space. The neighbourhood's iconic landmarks, such as the "Queen's Palace" apartments and the strip of gay bars and clubs, symbolize this shared homosexuality, rather than a broad spectrum of marginalized identities. However, this homonormativity, which privileges gay men and assumes a default position of safety and acceptance, has, in some ways, rendered the Village as a metaphorical "closet" that isolates its residents from the broader urban sphere.

In contrast, these "post-mo" sensibilities have redefined "gay gentrification" as "queer gentrification" – profiling a group of gentrifiers with more diverse sexualities and identities. This has led to the emergence of alternative queer enclaves in Toronto's West End and East End, such as Queen West, Parkdale, Leslieville, etc.[173] Queen West, for instance, was once an affordable neighbourhood known for the burgeoning art and music scenes. During the 1970s, it attracted hipsters, artists, and queers who contributed to the development of cultural locations, including concert halls, bars and clubs, and art galleries. Since the early 2000s, the area has evolved into a celebrated queer space, home to venues such as the Gladstone Hotel, Sweaty

171 James Collard, "Leaving the Gay Ghetto," ***Newsweek*** 132, no. 7 (August 17, 1998): 53–54.

172 Paul Aguirre-Livingston, "The GridTO: Dawn of a New Gay," June 9, 2011, https://ontd-political.livejournal.com/8259206.html.

173 Catherine J. Nash, "The Age of the 'Post-Mo'? Toronto's Gay Village and a New Generation," ***Geoforum*** 49 (October 1, 2013): 243–52, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2012.11.023.

Betty's, Lipstick & Dynamite, and the Beaver, all catering to a broader queer clientele compared to the Village.[174] Today, a stretch of Queen St W is recognized as one of the "World's Coolest Neighbourhoods" and has become a trendy cultural destination.[175]

The mechanisms of "queer gentrification" are thoroughly discussed in Richard Florida's *Cities and the Creative Class*, which highlights the effect of the Creative Class on real estate values.[176] He discovers that the Creative Class, including queers and artists, are not only powerful gentrifiers, but also can contribute to the growth of a healthy vibrant city. Florida argues that this gentrification is achieved through two mechanisms: the "aesthetic-amenity premium", and "tolerance or open culture premium".[177] In the context of Toronto's inner-city neighbourhoods, queer residents have also made two significant contributions. First, they improved the aesthetic quality of buildings through renovation, and established social infrastructure such as shops, bars, and restaurants that enrich local amenities. Additionally, queer communities promoted an open culture of self-expression and inclusivity. These positive transformations thereby attract an influx of human capital, resulting in broader, large-scale gentrification.

However, queer gentrification also raises concerns about displacement and marginalization. Neighbourhoods such as Parkdale and Bloor/Lansdowne, historically home to BIPOC and other marginalized communities, now have seen increasing white queer residents and businesses due to queer gentrification, driving up property values and displacing long-time residents and local businesses.[178] Catherine J. Nash and Andrew Gorman-Murray argue that the migration of "post-mo" queers from the Village to pursue alternative neighbourhoods is rooted in their privileged positions in race, class and gender expression.[179] Nash further contends that the "post-mo" sensibility is afforded by homonormative positioning that grants queers the social and political freedom to practice their new self-identity in alternative queer landscapes, thus reordering Toronto's urban dynamics.[180] The impacts of gentrification on Toronto's queer enclaves will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

174 Avi Margolis, "Fifty Years of Queer Street West – Heritage Toronto," https://www.heritagetoronto.org/, accessed October 11, 2024, https://www.heritagetoronto.org/explore/queer-street-west-toronto/.

175 Nick Remsen, "Global Street Style Report: Mapping Out the 15 Coolest Neighborhoods in the World," Vogue, September 5, 2014, https://www.vogue.com/slideshow/fifteen-coolest-street-style-neighborhoods.

176 Richard Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class* (New York: Routledge, 2005), https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203997673.

177 Richard Florida and Charlotta Mellander, "There Goes the Metro: How and Why Bohemians, Artists and Gays Affect Regional Housing Values," *Journal of Economic Geography* 10, no. 2 (2010): 167–88, https://doi.org/10.1093/jeg/lbp022.

178 Jinthana Haritaworn et al., "Marvellous Grounds: QTBIPOC Counter-Archiving against Imperfect Erasures," in *Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer*, ed. Stephanie Chambers et al. (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017), 219–23.

179 Catherine J. Nash and Andrew Gorman-Murray, "Lesbian Spaces in Transition: Insights from Toronto and Sydney," in *Planning and LGBTQ Communities: The Need for Inclusive Queer Spaces*, ed. Petra L. Doan (New York: Routledge, 2015), 189.

180 Nash, "The Age of the 'Post-Mo'?"

This section reveals the complexities of queer gentrification and the competing narratives of belonging within queer spaces. As queer enclaves evolve, new generations of queer arrival risk erasing the cultural and social legacies of their predecessors. The transformation of inner-city neighbourhoods into trendy, desirable areas may solidify their status as queer enclaves but also threatens to perpetuate exclusion and displacement, raising critical questions about whose identities and memories are prioritized in the making of queer urban landscapes.

We're here, We're queer. Where are we now?

Toronto's queer enclaves have evolved in multifaceted ways, shaped by various factors including built forms, socio-political conditions, and the diverse identities within the queer communities. This evolution is neither linear nor uniform; it is multidirectional, unfolding across different spaces simultaneously. Amin Ghaziani categorized the evolution of queer spatial developments into three key stages – "closet, coming out, and post-gay" eras – each reflecting shifts in visibility, acceptance, and identity.[181] In Toronto, the closet era refers to the pre-WWII period when queers had to conceal their identities out of shame, guilt, and fear in discreet places such as parks, and beverage rooms around Yonge St. The coming-out era emerged in the postwar years through the 1980s, characterized by intensive fights for visibility and equality through reclaiming urban space and establishing the Village as a home base for queer activism and social life. The post-gay period began in the 1990s, as legal protections and broader social acceptance allowed queer individuals to experiment with new modes of identity and belonging. Each stage corresponds to distinct spatial forms – ranging from private, underground spaces, to semi-public venues, expansive public spaces and large urban neighbourhoods.

These historical developments are well-documented in archival materials and primary data of researchers. Queer

181 Ghaziani, *There Goes the Gayborhood?*, 8.



▶ **Fig. 2. 25** An example of "rainbow-washing" in Toronto's Financial District during Pride Month 2024

spatial dynamics continue to shift in response to rapid urban transformations fuelled by neoliberalism and technological advances that reshape how humans interact with space. Reliable census data on queer populations remain limited, making it difficult to comprehensively map the emergence and movement of queer enclaves. Alternative ways to investigate contemporary queer landscape is essential to understand how queer communities navigate urban space in real time.

One of the most recognizable indicators of queer spaces is the display of rainbow motifs and Pride flags. In Toronto, the Village and West Queen West neighbourhood both incorporate rainbow colours into their street signage, signalling their identities as queer enclaves. Alex Bitterman conducted a visual assessment of rainbow motif usage across nine Toronto neighbourhoods to track the movement of queer communities in the urban sphere.[182] He discovers that community-oriented neighbourhoods with small local businesses and adjacent residential density, such as West Queen West, Parkdale, and Roncesvalles, have a steady increase in rainbow display. By contrast, business-oriented districts with lower residential density, such as Downtown Yonge St, Fort York, and Liberty Village, show seasonal spikes in rainbow motifs primarily during Pride months. While the rainbow motif signifies queer visibility, suggesting the likely presence of queer individuals and potential emerging queer enclaves, its increasing use by businesses also raises concerns about "rainbow washing" for the financial gain of the business.

182 The nine neighbourhoods assessed include: 1. Roncesvalles, 2. Parkdale, 3. Bellwoods/Trinity/West Queen West, 4. Liberty Village, 5. Fort York, 6. Queen St W, 7. Church St, 8. Yonge St/Central Business District, 9. Bloor/Yorkville. Alex Bitterman, "The Rainbow Connection: A Time-Series Study of Rainbow Flag Display Across Nine Toronto Neighborhoods," in *The Life and Afterlife of Gay Neighborhoods : Renaissance and Resurgence*, ed. Alex Bitterman and Daniel Baldwin Hess (Springer Nature, 2021), 117–38, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-66073-4.

Beyond using the built environment as a queer marker, digital platforms provide unique insights into queer communities' spatial reclamation and mobility. The advent of smartphone technology and online dating culture introduced location-based apps such as *Grindr*, *Scruff*, and *Jack'd*, which have fundamentally changed how gay, bisexual, and curious straight men seek social and sexual interactions. These platforms create a virtual queer space that transcends physical barriers and geographic limitations while maintaining anonymity. Andrés Jaque conceptualizes this phenomenon as "*Grindr Archiurbanism*", proposing that these apps have redefined "urbanity" by enabling queers to construct a digital society through self-editing profiles and participation.[183] The apps become a "city" and "a form of architecture" that replaces the necessity of physical buildings and intimacy to foster social and sexual connections, thus raising questions about the role of traditional queer enclaves in the digital era.

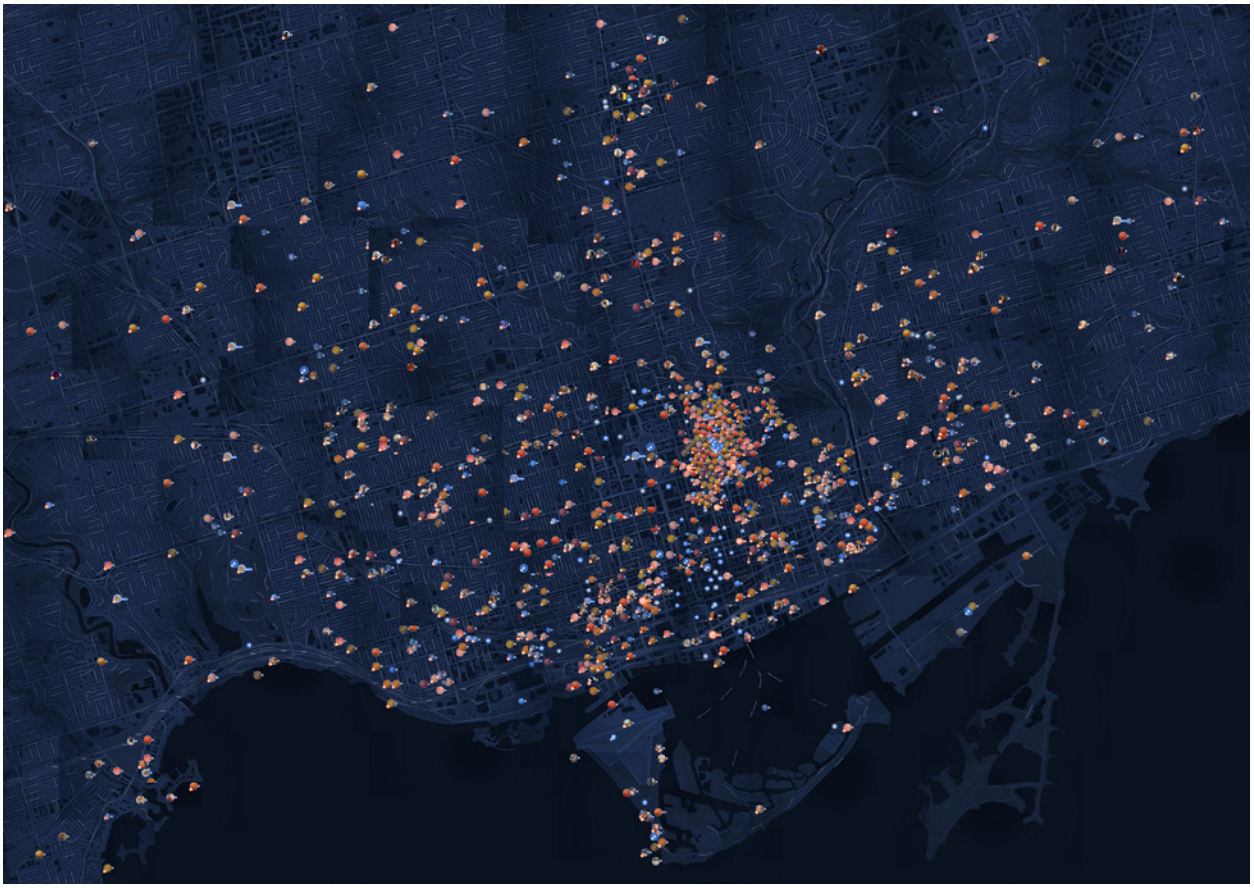
The shift from physical queer venues to the digital realm is often cited as a factor in the displacement, movement, and deconcentration of queer spaces, resulting in the decline of queer enclaves.[184] Yet, digitalization has also created new possibilities for queer interaction beyond the confines of established enclaves. Sam Miles argues that gay dating and hook-up apps hybridize online and offline encounters, fostering a "hybrid reality, landscape, or place" where physical locations gain new meanings through their association with potential queer connections.[185] This perspective aligns with early discussions of queer space in Section 2.3, emphasizing that all places are queerable when a queer timeline is active through spatial practices.

This virtual queer world-making practice allows queer space to exist anytime and anywhere, thus providing a different angle to investigate the evolution of queer enclaves and the mobility of queer communities. *Sniffies*, another geo-based gay hookup app, focuses exclusively on same-sex erotism as the bond for queer connections. The app presents users with an interactive map that highlights not only the real-time locations of users but also cruising spots and public sex venues. The uncensored explicit profiles invite users to take pleasure in the anonymous sexual

183 Andrés Jaque, "Grindr Archiurbanism," ***Log (New York, N.Y. 2003)***, no. 41 (2017): 74–84.

184 Ghaziani, ***There Goes the Gayborhood?***; Nash, "The Age of the 'Post-Mo'?""

185 Sam Miles, "Let's (Not) Go Outside: Grindr, Hybrid Space, and Digital Queer Neighborhoods," in ***The Life and Afterlife of Gay Neighborhoods : Renaissance and Resurgence***, ed. Alex Bitterman and Daniel Baldwin Hess (Springer Nature, 2021), 203–20, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-66073-4.



▲ **Fig. 2. 26** The interface of *Sniffies* displays real-time user locations. This screenshot was captured on a summer weekend during peak hours.

desires and indulge their "curiosity".[186] While primarily catering to cisgender men who have sex with men (MSM), *Sniffies* illustrates how queer spaces can emerge spontaneously and ubiquitously following individual mobility.

In contrast to *Sniffies*' production of sexual queer space based on homoerotism, *Queering the Map* offers a more inclusive and reflective approach to mapping queer narratives. This digital platform invites users to anonymously pin their queer moments and memories to specific locations around the world.[187] The platform features a pink interface where users share stories of love, loss, and celebration, mapping queer life onto diverse spaces – from urban streets to uninhabited natural areas. In this cartographic archive, queerness becomes both private and public, individual and collective.

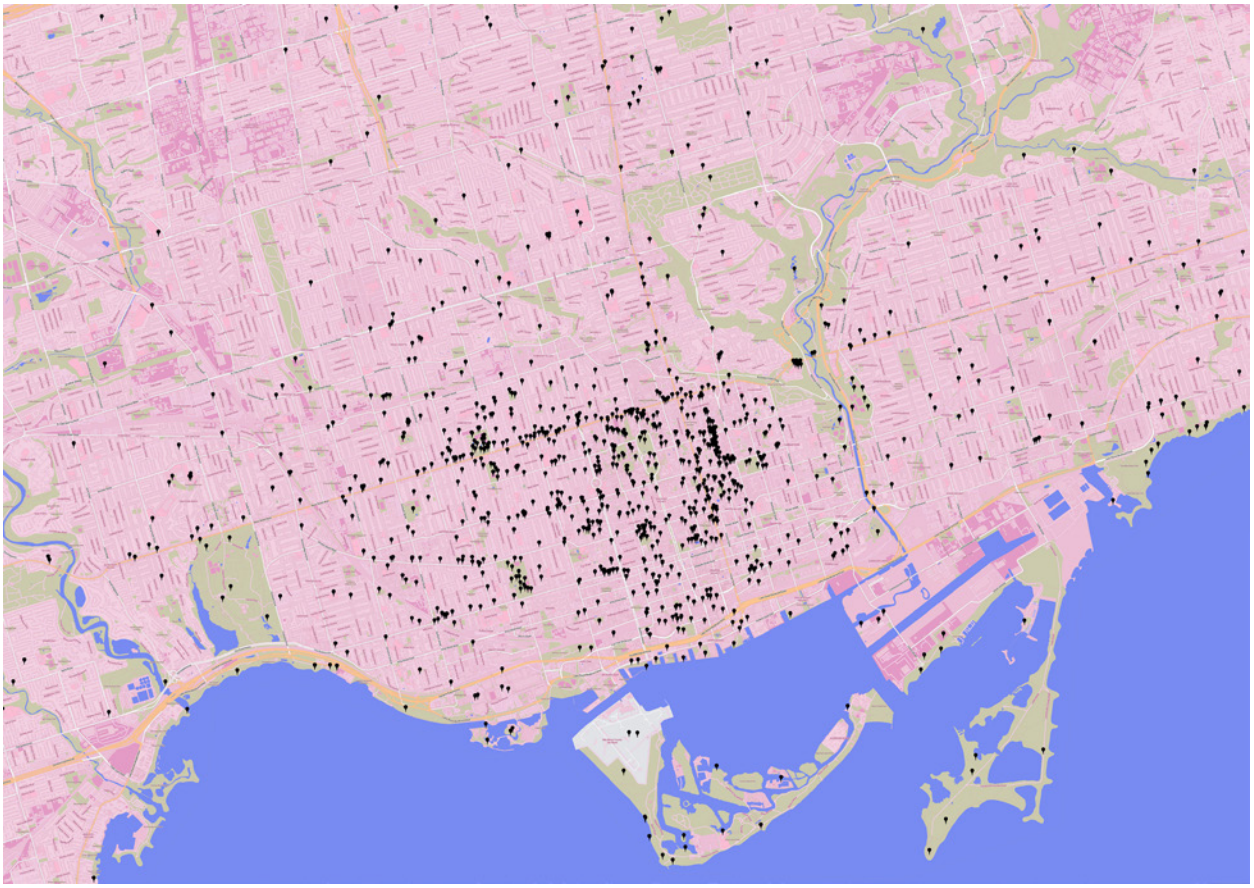
This platform is a useful tool to make sense of a queer spatial landscape. By zooming into the map of Toronto, a clear spatial narrative emerges.[188] The largest concentration of pins appears along Church St, reflecting the Village's longstanding role as a hub for queer life. Academic institutions such as the University of Toronto and the Toronto Metropolitan University also feature prominently, with pins demonstrating young queers finding chosen families in schools. Public spaces such as Trinity Bellwoods Park, Christie Pits Park, the Art Gallery of Ontario are associated with many memories of romantic dates, group outings, and moments of self-discovery. Notably, the West End of the City shows a denser queer presence than the East or North, suggesting the emergence of queer enclaves consistent with earlier observations. The range of stories on *Queering the Map* also reveals a diversity of queer identities and cultural backgrounds, challenging the historical dominance of white gay male narratives. By amplifying marginalized voices, the platform contributes to a more nuanced understanding of queer spatial landscape.

The examples above illustrate new approaches to investigating the evolving queer landscape and community mobility. These insights reinforce the notion that Toronto's queerness has shifted away from the traditional "gaybourhood" of Church-Wellesley Village. As previously discussed, to fully understand

186 Patrick Kindig, "Queer Curiosity," *Critical Inquiry* 51, no. 1 (2024): 50–70, https://doi.org/10.1086/731572.

187 Emma Kirby et al., "Queering the Map: Stories of Love, Loss and (Be) Longing within a Digital Cartographic Archive," *Media, Culture & Society* 43, no. 6 (2021): 1043–60, https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443720986005.

188 "Queering The Map," Queering The Map, accessed January 13, 2025, https://www.queeringthemap.com/.



▲ **Fig. 2. 27** The interface of *Queering the Map* allows users to archive their queer narratives anywhere in the world. This screenshot was taken in June 2024.

Arrival City, we must deconstruct its spatial boundaries, and treat it as a network of Arrival Infrastructure to avoid "telescopic urbanism".[189] Similarly, in examining queer enclaves, it is useful to expand our attention beyond the Village and examine queer spaces through the network of queer social infrastructure interwoven throughout the urban sphere. Queers are everywhere, so are queer newcomers. But, where are they now and where are they headed in the future?

189 Ash Amin, "Telescopic Urbanism and the Poor," ***City (London, England)*** 17, no. 4 (2013): 484, https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2013.812350.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has laid a critical foundation for understanding the intersecting themes of "queer" and "arrival". Through an intersectional analysis of queer diaspora and urban arrival, it has examined key concepts such as queer migration, queer space, the Arrival City, and queer enclaves. Applying the Queer of Colour Methodology (QOCM), this chapter takes an intersection approach to highlight the placemaking practices of ethnic immigrants and queer communities, while revealing a significant research gap in the spatial narratives of QTPOC newcomers. The existing frameworks have largely neglected the intersectionality of marginalized communities' spatial narratives.

Therefore, this chapter challenges these narrow conceptualizations by proposing a reframing of the Arrival City as a network of Arrival Infrastructure, at the same time advocates for a deconstruction of queer space to reveal the intersecting conflicts of race, class, and gender.[190] It further suggests that QTPOC newcomers are able to draw from both queer and diasporic roots, and advance their spatial practices. This confluence of experiences and identities requires a new urban typology – "Queer Arrival City" – as a network of places, connections, and experiences that facilitates queer arrival, which will be discussed in Chapter 3.

190 Bruno Meeus, Bas van Heur, and Karel Arnaut, "Migration and the Infrastructural Politics of Urban Arrival," in *Arrival Infrastructures: Migration and Urban Social Mobilities*, ed. Bruno Meeus, Karel Arnaut, and Bas van Heur (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 1–32, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91167-0_1; Natalie Oswin, "Critical Geographies and the Uses of Sexuality: Deconstructing Queer Space," *Progress in Human Geography* 32, no. 1 (2008): 89–103, https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132507085213.


3

Chapter 3

Queer Arrival City

Introduction 3.1

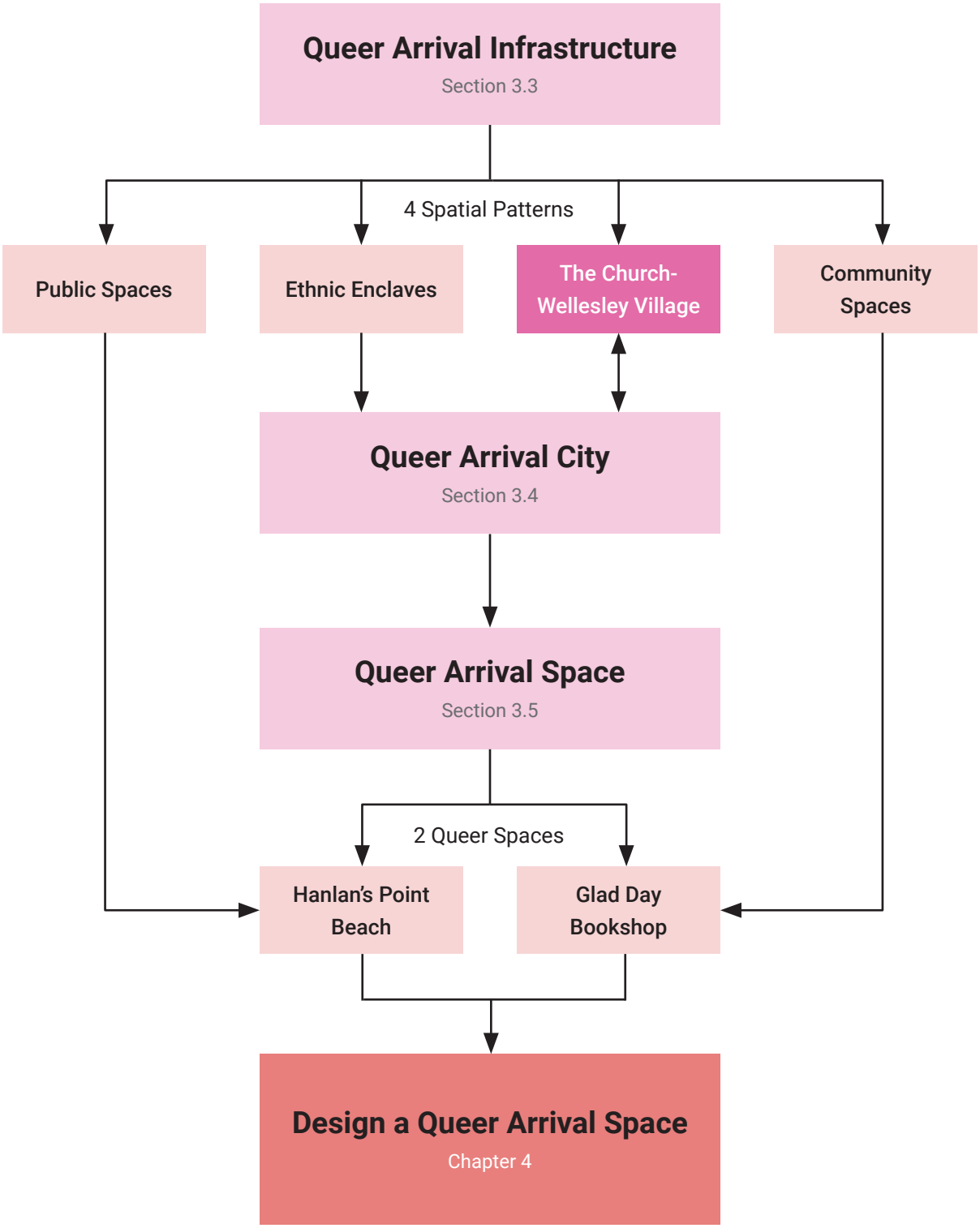
This chapter explores QTPOC newcomers' spatial narratives in navigating Toronto's built environment. By employing the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach within the Queer of Colour Methodology (QOCM) framework, this research recentres the marginalized voices of QTPOC newcomers, and relies on their lived experiences as a primary holder of knowledge. Drawing from empirical data from Phase 1 Surveys and Phase 2 Interviews, this chapter seeks to answer the first two Research Questions (RQs):

RQ1: How do QTPOC newcomers navigate Toronto's built environment?

RQ2: What role does the Church-Wellesley Village play in their migration?

To address these questions, this chapter starts with a broader contextualization of QTPOC newcomers' lived realities, revealing the multifaceted migration journeys, challenged by systemic barriers and social exclusions (Section 3.2). Despite the hardships, QTPOC newcomers actively carve out their own queer spaces, forming a spatial network of "Queer Arrival Infrastructure" (Section 3.3). Within this network, the Church-Wellesley Village emerges as a focal point, offering places to live, socialize, and build communities. However, hidden narratives challenge its assumed inclusivity, complicating its function as a "Queer Arrival City" (Section 3.4). To critically examine these limitations, this chapter further analyzes three key queer spaces – The 519, Glad Day Bookshop, and Hanlan's Point Beach – revealing a subconscious sensibility "Queer Diaspora Spatial Consciousness" in navigating the built environment. QTPOC newcomers' lived experiences also address the limitations within conventional queer spaces, leading to the conceptualization of "Queer Arrival Space" (Section 3.5).

Queer Arrival Framework



▲ **Fig. 3.1** Diagram: Queer Arrival Framework.


Jon
Adam
Gael
Bob
David
Rania
Pedro
Jason

3.2 Participatory Action Research Design

Understanding the lived experiences of QTPOC newcomers requires a research methodology that is intersectional, participatory, and critically reflexive. This thesis employs a Queer of Colour Methodology (QOCM), integrated with Participatory Action Research (PAR), to centre the voices and lived experiences of QTPOC newcomers. This methodology aims to create a community-driven, interdisciplinary, and inclusive research environment, ensuring that participants are not passive subjects but active co-creators of knowledge. By positioning QTPOC newcomers as experts of their own narratives, this approach challenges colonial research paradigms and promote a queer spatial justice.

This section outlines the three-phased research design, which applies the PAR approach to engage QTPOC newcomers – **Phase 1: Surveys, Phase 2: Interviews, and Phase 3: Focus Groups**. Additionally, this section outlines the recruitment process, the researcher's positionality, and the analytical methods guiding this research.

◀ **Fig. 3.2** Artistic portraits of the 8 interview participants.

Recruitment

Participants were primarily recruited through social media and public bulletin boards. Interested individuals were invited to complete an online survey (Phase 1) and indicate interest in participating in the paid sessions (Phases 2 & 3). While a common recruitment practice is through organizational "gatekeepers", I deliberately chose to deviate from this approach for two reasons: its limitations in demographic diversity and my lack of pre-existing relationships within the organizations.

A widely-used recruitment method relies on "gatekeeper" or "key informant" – individuals who hold leadership positions within communities or organizations and can provide internal referrals and connections to other members. This approach is particularly effective in gaining entry into hard-to-reach populations.[191] In the context of this thesis, relevant gatekeepers would typically include organizations offering queer-focused resettlement services, such as The 519, Rainbow Railroad, and the Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto (MCC). However, without institutional support or established partnerships with these organizations, collaborating with them as a sole researcher presented challenges related to privacy and legitimacy. Furthermore, these organizations primarily serve queer refugees and refugee claimants, representing only a subset of the broader QTPOC newcomer population targeted in this project.

To ensure a more diverse recruitment outcome, a multi-faceted outreach strategy was implemented. Mass advertising was conducted through social media platforms, including Facebook and Instagram, as well as public bulletin boards located in streets and local establishments. Particularly, Asian Community AIDS Services (ACAS) and the AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT) have tremendously helped the outreach through their channels. Additionally, local businesses in the Village and online queer social groups had also contributed to the recruitment. As a result, the research received wide interest from the QTPOC community, yielding a total of **156 eligible respondents**. The demography information of all respondents is attached in the Appendix.

191 Mignon R. Moore, "Challenges, Triumphs, and Praxis: Collecting Qualitative Data on Less Visible and Marginalized Populations," in ***Other, Please Specify: Queer Methods in Sociology***, ed. D'Lane R. Compton, Tey Meadow, and Kristen Schilt (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018), 169–84.

▶ **Fig. 3.3** Recruitment was partially achieved through poster advertisements on public bulletin boards.


ntre
WORKMAN ARTS
Are you a
2SLGBTQIA+
newcomer, immigrant, refugee, foreign worker, or international student?
You are invited to participate in a study of 2SLGBTQIA+ newcomers' experiences in the Church-Wellesley Village. We want to better understand how queer newcomers access, engage, and shape the spaces around them.
Your participation would involve up to 3 sessions:
Session 1: Online Survey
Everyone is welcome to fill in the survey. Participation to Session 2 & 3 will prioritize queer newcomers who migrated to Canada within the past 10 years.
Session 2: Interview
Online, up to 1 hour to discuss your experience and visions for the Church-Wellesley Village. You will receive a $30 gift card.
Session 3: Focus Group
Online, up to 1 hour to review and discuss an architectural design proposal developed from the research findings. You will receive a $30 gift card.
Please scan QR code to sign up, or contact:
Simon Liao (he/him)
Student Investigator, School of Architecture, University of Waterloo
Queer Arrival
UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO
This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board.
FLAMINGO MARKET PRESENTS
JUNE 1-2
11AM-6PM
@ THE PARKDALE HALL
PRIDE EXPO
FREE SWAG BAG FOR THE FIRST 30 GUESTS EACH DAY!
PIERCINGS BY HOLEY POKES, JACK
FREE ENTRY
ALL AGES
FEATURING 100+ 2SLGBTQIA+ SMALL BUSINESSES, ARTISANS AND NONPROFITS
INDOOR & OUTDOOR MARKET
pizza pizza

Phase 1: Surveys

The first phase of engagement involved online surveys, which were disseminated during the recruitment process described above. The objective of this phase was twofold: to capture a broader range of migration experiences through quantitative data, and to identify potential participants for subsequent phases. Historically, there has been a shortage of quantitative research on queer topics due to the social stigma and the uneven dispersion of queer populations.[192] In Canada, progress has been made by including questions of gender diversity, sex at birth, and sexual orientation in the national census.[193] However, there is still a knowledge gap in understanding queer experiences on regional and identity-specific scales. To address this gap, the surveys were structured in five sections, each designed to provide insights relevant to the 3 Research Questions (RQs) with secondary datasets for comparative analysis.

Phase 2: Interviews

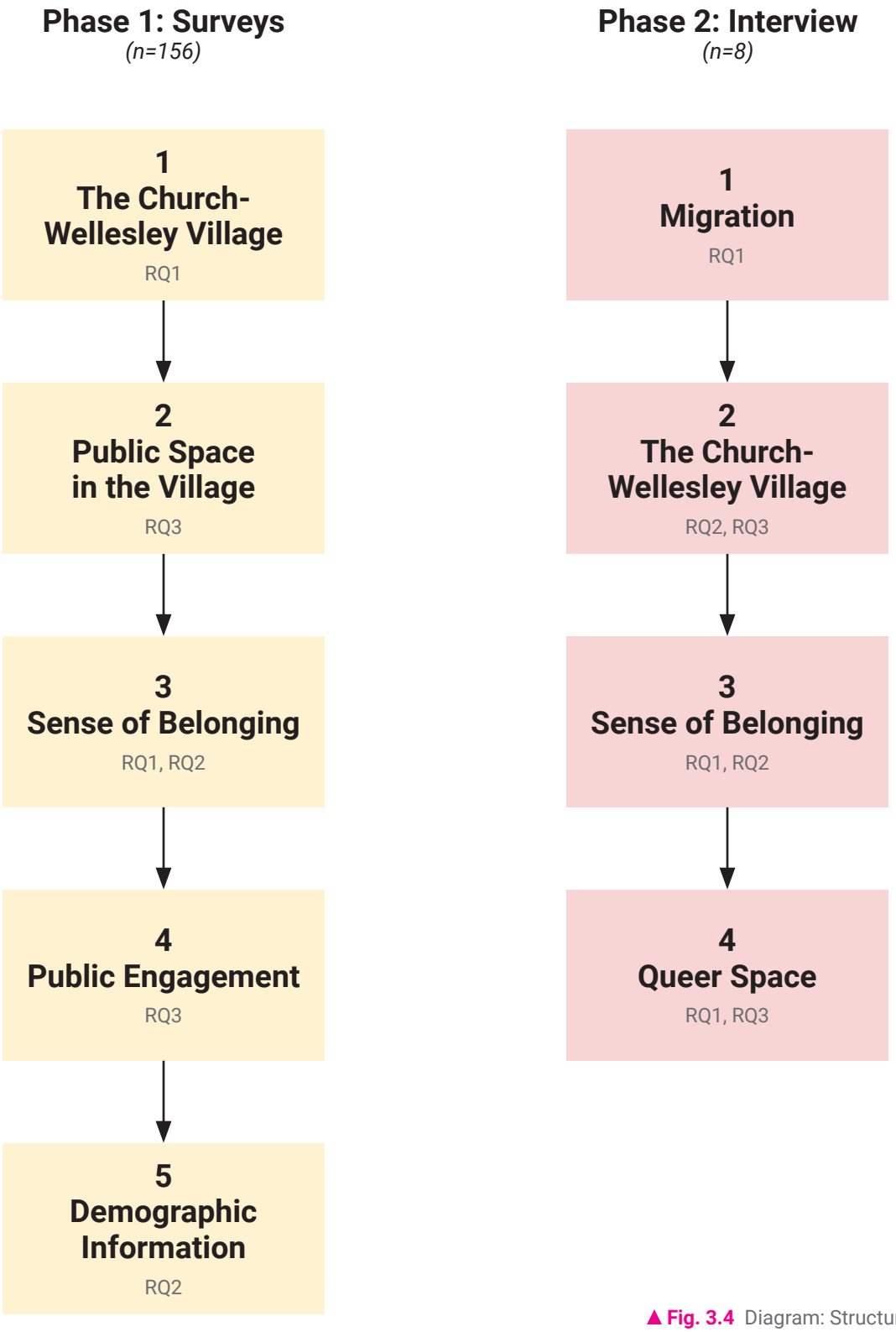
The second phase was interviews. Given the constraints of the project timeline and personal capacity, a total of **8 participants** were selected from the 156 eligible survey respondents. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and followed a semi-structured guide, employing a conversational approach to facilitate flexible and inclusive communication.

The selection process followed principles of maximum variation sampling, striving to acquire representation across identities.[194] Selection criteria considered intersectional factors, including genders, sexual orientations, immigration statuses, and time since arrival. This approach was intended to ensure an equitable research process and diversify the research findings. Additionally, given the RQs focus on the Church-Wellesley Village, preference was given to participants with direct interactions with the neighbourhood, ensuring relevant lived experiences were represented.

192 D'Lane R. Compton, "How Many (Queer) Cases Do I Need? Thinking Through Research Design," in ***Other, Please Specify: Queer Methods in Sociology***, ed. D'Lane R. Compton, Tey Meadow, and Kristen Schilt (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018), 188.

193 Statistics Canada Government of Canada, "The Daily — Canada Is the First Country to Provide Census Data on Transgender and Non-Binary People," April 27, 2022, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220427/dq220427b-eng.htm.

194 Michael Quinn Patton, "Sampling, Qualitative (Purposeful)," in ***The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*** (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2015), https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405165518.wbeoss012.pub2.



▲ **Fig. 3.4** Diagram: Structures of Phase 1 Surveys and Phase 2 Interviews.

Positionality

While the interviews followed a structured framework to address the RQs effectively, I am aware of the potential hierarchical dynamics introduced by the researcher-participant relationship through the binary "insider" and "outsider" positionality and subjectivity.[195] Thus, I develop my practices following QOCM epistemology by continuously reflecting on my positionality and reassessing the progress.

As a first-generation gay Asian immigrant, I acknowledge the advantages of my insider positionality in establishing rapport with QTPOC newcomers.[196] However, this "experiential sameness" was constantly challenged by the fluid queer ways of being and the diverse lived experiences of participants.[197] As we started the interviews, both myself and the participants entered the conversations from the perspective of our own subjectivities determined by societal norms, such as gender, sexuality, age, ethnicity, and class.[198] The participants brought vastly different backgrounds, spanning a spectrum from homeowners to the unhoused, remote workers to unemployed individuals, and sobriety to those with compromised health conditions. These variations complicated my initial assumption of shared identities, positioning me as both an insider and an outsider within the research process.

To navigate these complexities, I critically rethink my positionality and reshape existing practices. Gordon Waitt suggests exploring the various possibilities derived from the conversations rather than following the pre-established system.[199] Similarly, Dowling Robyn proposes that "critical reflexivity", a self-conscious scrutiny of oneself and the social nature of the research, is an effective strategy for dealing with subjectivities.[200] These thoughts informed my approach, allowing for an adaptive and iterative interview process that balanced power relations and fostered reciprocal outcomes.

In the fieldwork, the PAR is translated into a semi-structured interview that allows a flexible switch of positionality. Each interview began with a personal reflection on my journey as

195 Catherine J. Nash, "Queer Conversations: Old-Time Lesbians, Transmen and the Politics of Queer Research," in ***Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research***, ed. Kath Browne and Catherine J. Nash (London: Routledge, 2016), 134.

196 Robyn Dowling, "Power, Subjectivity, and Ethics in Qualitative Research," in ***Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography***, ed. Iain Hay, 2nd ed (South Melbourne, Vic. : New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 26.

197 Nash, "Queer Conversations: Old-Time Lesbians, Transmen and the Politics of Queer Research."

198 Andrew Gorman-Murray, Lynda Johnston, and Gordon Waitt, "Queer(Ing) Communication in Research Relationships: A Conversation about Subjectivities, Methodologies and Ethics," in ***Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research***, ed. Kath Browne and Catherine J. Nash (London: Routledge, 2016), 98–99.

199 Gorman-Murray, Johnston, and Waitt, 100–101.

200 Dowling, "Power, Subjectivity, and Ethics in Qualitative Research," 25–26.

▶ **Fig. 3.5** Table: Demographic information of participants in Phases 2 & 3.

Demographic Information of Participants in Phases 2 & 3

Pseudonym*	Pronouns	Age	Ethnicity	Place of Origin	Immigration Status	Year of Arrival	
 **Jon**	*he/him*	39	South Asian	USA	Temporary Worker	2023	●
 **Adam**	*he/him*	35	East Asian	China	Permanent Resident	2019	● ●
 **Gael**	*they/them*	31	Latin	Chile	International Student	2017	●
 **Bob**	*he/they*	33	Arab, Latin	South America	Refugee Claimant	2023	● ●
 **David**	*he/him*	41	Arab, Middle Eastern	Lebanon	Permanent Resident	2023	● ●
 **Jason**	*he/they*	33	South Asian	Pakistan	Permanent Resident	2022	● ●
 **Rania**	*she/her*	26	Black	UAE	Canadian Citizen	2011	● ●
 **Pedro**	*he/him*	22	Latin	Brazil	International Student	2021	● ●

● Participated in Phase 2: Interview

● Participated in Phase 3: Focus Group

* Participants have consented to the use of pseudonyms and artistic portraits.

a queer newcomer and my motivations for conducting this research, reinforcing the conviction "No research on us without us".[201] This transparency enabled participants to evaluate our shared experiences and reposition me accordingly, fostering mutual trust and understanding. By actively addressing the purpose and application of the research, participants felt compelled to act on emerging findings as part of a democratic social change process, thus positioning themselves as co-researchers of the project. This flexible approach allowed for organic interactions, enabling participants to elaborate on topics of personal significance. Furthermore, participants were encouraged to ask questions about my experiences, further democratizing the knowledge production process.

Locations

The choice of interview locations played a crucial role in building relationships and promoting effective communication. Participants were given the option to choose between online or in-person interviews at a public location of their preference. Ultimately, 3 out of 8 participants were accommodated to meet in person in a park and patio in the Village. These physical settings served as "spatial prompt", enabling participants to draw connections between lived experiences and the built environment.[202] They were able to draw on memories associated with the Village, and elaborate on how spatial arrangement impacts the way they inhabit space. Additionally, face-to-face interactions forge a stronger co-research relationship with participants.

201 Michelle Fine and María Elena Torre, "Critical Participatory Action Research: A Feminist Project for Validity and Solidarity," ***Psychology of Women Quarterly*** 43, no. 4 (2019): 435, https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684319865255.

202 Gorman-Murray, Johnston, and Waitt, "Queer(Ing) Communication in Research Relationships: A Conversation about Subjectivities, Methodologies and Ethics," 107.

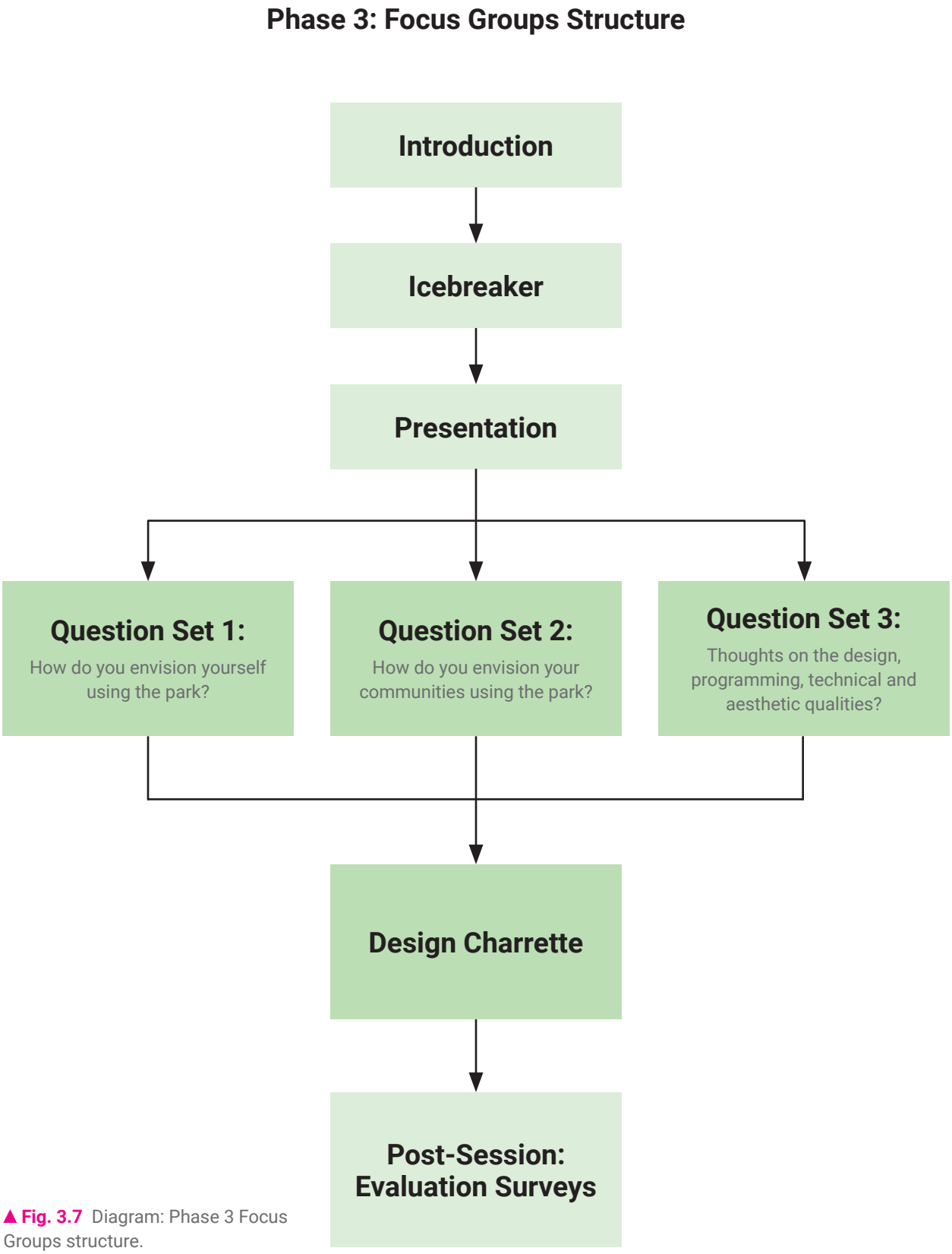


▲ **Fig. 3.6** One of the locations of in-person interviews - James Canning Gardens.

Phase 3: Focus Groups

The final phase is Focus Groups. The previous phases co-produced knowledge on QTPOC newcomers' experiences in navigating Toronto and the Village, addressing RQ1 and RQ2. This data allowed me to conceptualize and define a Queer Arrival City and uncover the hidden spatial narratives of QTPOC newcomers. Informed by the key findings, a preliminary design proposal was developed to investigate RQ3: How can public space design support the Village as a Queer Arrival City? The primary objective of the focus groups was to present this proposal to participants in the form of design charrettes, fostering collaboration and further building a collective vision for the final design.

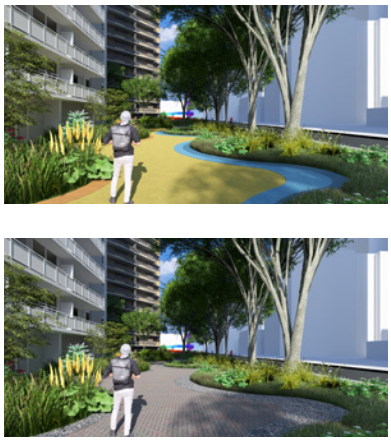
All 8 participants from Phase 2 are invited to Phase 3, with **6 ultimately joining the focus groups**. To optimize collaboration, each focus group was limited to 3 participants, to ensure sufficient time for discussions and interactions. Participants were strategically grouped to achieve diversity while fostering an inclusive group dynamic. Each session started with an introduction to my background and motivations, followed by an icebreaker activity designed to familiarize participants with one another and create a comfortable atmosphere. After the initial introductions, I provided an overview of the research findings and a presentation of the design proposal, and then addressed how previous phases had informed the design decisions. The majority of the session time was allocated to group discussions guided by 3 sets of questions.



▲ **Fig. 3.7** Diagram: Phase 3 Focus Groups structure.

Design Charrette

To promote participation, the focus groups were formatted as design charrettes, allowing participants to actively and creatively engage in the discussions. Various design solutions were presented to the group, followed by quick polls to gauge preferences. Participants were encouraged to articulate their reasoning behind their choices, often leading to lively discussions and debates in which they advocated for design elements that best aligned with their lived experiences. This iterative process positioned participants as active contributors, leveraging their knowledge to shape the design outcomes.



▲ **Fig. 3.8** Examples of the design options presented at the design charrettes.

Accessibility

Recognizing the diverse backgrounds and knowledge levels of the architecture design process among participants, accessibility was prioritized throughout the sessions. To facilitate a clear understanding of the proposal, realistic renderings were extensively used to illustrate the design's functionality and aesthetic quality. Additionally, a virtual walkthrough video offered participants an immersive first-person perspective of the proposed design. While technical and construction-related topics emerged occasionally, they were not the primary focus of discussions. All practices were to ensure meaningful interactions without confusing architectural jargon.

Final Design

By incorporating all the participants' feedback, the design proposal is further revised and finalized to embody a collective vision that encapsulates the aspirations and needs of QTPOC newcomers. Thus, all 3 RQs were addressed, with participants actively involved at every stage of the process – from identifying design objectives to shaping the final outcomes.

Data Collection and Analysis

This research employs a mixed-method approach, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data across 3 phases to capture the lived experiences of QTPOC newcomers. Quantitative data was collected during Phase 1 and Phase 3's evaluation surveys to provide insights into participants' generalized experiences and perceptions. The Phase 1 survey data is visualized and compared with secondary datasets that often lack a specific focus on QTPOC newcomers, with these comparisons further validated through personal narratives presented in Chapter 3. The quantitative data from Phase 3's evaluation surveys served as a measure of empowerment within the participatory design process, offering insights into the impact and effectiveness of community engagement.

Qualitative data, on the other hand, was gathered through in-depth interviews and focus groups in Phases 2 and 3. These data provided a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of QTPOC newcomers. Both types of data contribute to a holistic overview of newcomers' spatial narratives.

To start the qualitative analysis, all audio-recorded conversations from the interviews and focus groups were transcribed into textual format. Transcription, as an interpretive process, introduces potential risks of misrepresentation due to the researcher's subjective understanding. 7 out of 8 participants were non-native English speakers, with varying levels of language proficiency. The interpretive process demands particular attention to ensure their voices are represented authentically and respectfully.

To preserve the integrity of participants' narratives, the transcription process was conducted with a commitment to high fidelity, avoiding unnecessary tidying up their speech. This transcription approach retained key conversational features, including abbreviations and contractions, verbal fillers, pauses and hesitations, and repetitions.[203] This detailed transcription process ensures that participants' voices were accurately interpreted, maintaining the richness and complexity of their lived experiences.

203 Graham R. Gibbs, *Analyzing Qualitative Data* (SAGE Publications Ltd, 2018), 17–36, https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526441867.

For qualitative analysis, thematic coding was employed to systematically organize and interpret the data. I implemented the Analytic Coding approach to generate codes that not only capture the participants' lived experiences, but also reveal deeper intentions.[204] When identifying the codes, I focus on people's strategies and behaviours by using gerunds (e.g. pursuing career developments, seeking social support) rather than simple codes (e.g. job, community), allowing for a more nuanced understanding of their lived realities.

Through these mixed methods, new narratives were synthesized by analyzing the commonalities and differences in participants' lived experiences. These text-based narratives were further validated through a visual, research-creation process, reinforcing findings from multiple perspectives.

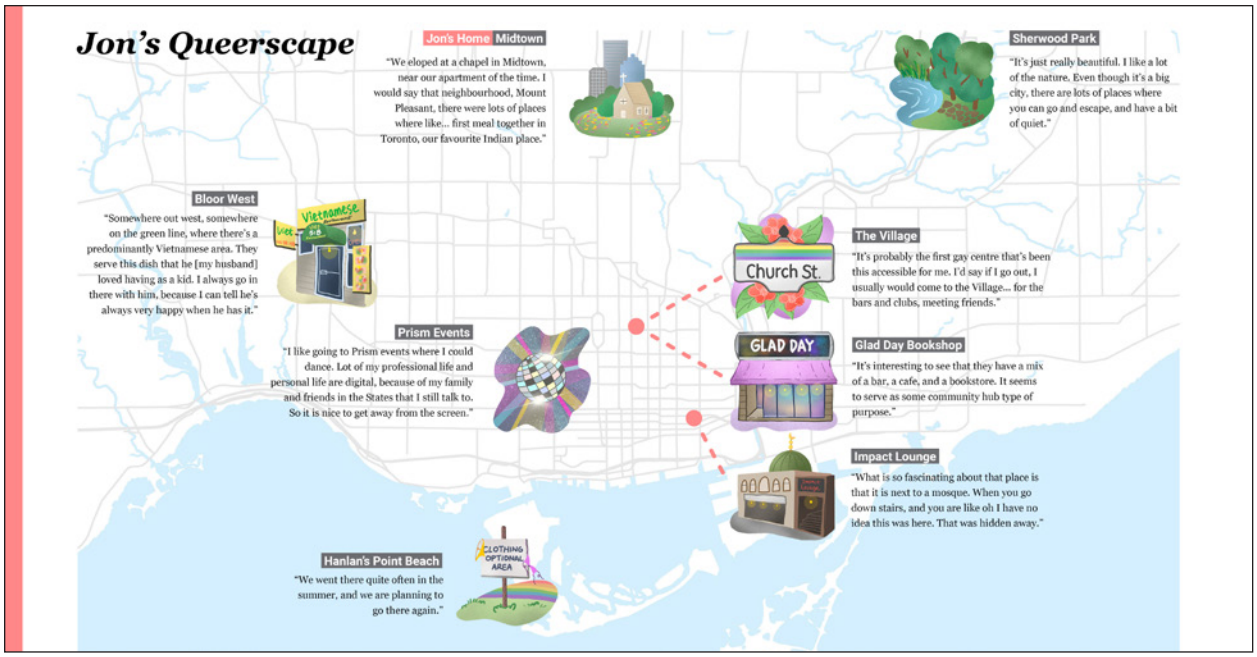
Research-Creation: Queerscape Mappings

Cartography is more than a tool for documentation and direction – it is an act of resistance and reclamation. During hostile times, maps were produced to identify queer spaces where queer individuals could visit safely with precautions.[205] Today, geo-based platforms like those discussed in Section 2.5, are claiming queer existence across geographic boundaries and archiving personal narratives that disrupt the heteronormative built environment. However, these mapping practices often overlook marginalized QTPOC newcomers. Thus, to uncover the hidden narratives of QTPOC newcomers, we must first "unmap" the white-centric logic, and create counter-narratives to recentre the marginalized voices – a process referred to as "queer urban justice".[206] To investigate the RQs, this thesis employs counter-mapping as a research-creation method. Counter-mapping challenges traditional spatial narratives by foregrounding subjective lived experiences rather than heteronormative spatial structures.

204 Gibbs, *Analyzing Qualitative Data*, 54–60.

205 "Gay Toronto Advertisement," *The Body Politic*, Winter 1973.

206 Jinthana Haritaworn et al., "Introduction: Queering Urban Justice," in *Queering Urban Justice: Queer of Colour Formations in Toronto* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 3–26.



▲ **Fig. 3.9** Examples of the queerscape mapping. The complete set is attached in the Appendix.

Queer space is counterpublic, likewise, this counter-mapping process also produces unique queer spaces. According to Gordon Ingram, queerscape is a landscape of "cumulative interactions and the associated environmental constraints and opportunities". It is a set of queer spaces that embodies layers of spatial subjectivities intersecting dimensions of power, community, lust and love.[207] As a framework, queerscape offers a powerful lens to examine the collective spatial experiences of marginalized queer bodies. Building on this framework, Chapter 3 constructs queerscapes by mapping out QTPOC newcomers' lived experiences, using data from Phase 2 Interviews. These queerscape mappings unfold across two scales: first, a global scale that traces participants' migration journeys across continents, accompanied by personal profiles (Section 3.2); second, a city scale that highlights key locations shaping their post-migration lives (Section 3.3). These mappings serve as visual evidence of QTPOC newcomers' spatial narratives. While each mapping is highly individualized, collectively they form a broader infrastructural network, offering insights into patterns of queer mobility, displacement, and placemaking. The queerscape maps for the 8 participants, along with their profiles, are included in the Appendix.

207 Gordon Brent Ingram, "Marginality and the Landscapes of Erotic Alien(n)Ations," in *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance*, ed. Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter (Seattle, Wash: Bay Press, 1997), 28–29.


Queer & Now Queer
the village
CHURCH-WELLESLEY
one properties
Bernard NOVACK
DEFEND LGBTQ+ REFUGEE RIGHTS
REFUGEE RIGHTS
SUPPORT LGBTQ+ REFUGEES

3.3 From Migration to Belonging

> *"It would be a blatant lie to pretend there's a burgeoning queer community in Toronto, especially a city that is so used to inheriting so many queer folks on a daily basis."* [208]
>
> - Jason, Interview Participant

208 Jason, Interview with Jason, interview by Simon Liao, July 3, 2024.

As discussed in Section 2.2, queer migration is a pursuit of safety, identity, and belonging in constructing a new home. The first part of this section examines the diverse migration trajectories of QTPOC newcomers, unpacking the motivations, perceptions, and challenges that shape their journeys. Through first-person testimonials, it reveals the layered realities of queer migration – some filled with hope and newfound freedom, others fraught with systemic barriers and uncertainty.

Yet, queer migration does not guarantee belonging. Upon arrival, Toronto's multicultural landscape presents both possibilities and exclusions. Counter-mapping and interview data demonstrate that QTPOC newcomers often face isolation and exclusion within diverse communities. The second part of this section explores these struggles, revealing the complexities of navigating belonging in a city that prides itself on diversity.

Together, these discussions provide a broader perspective on queer migration, laying the foundation for further investigation of QTPOC newcomers' spatial narratives within the built environment in the following sections.

◀ **Fig. 3.10** The March for LGBTQ+ Refugee Claimant Rights walking down on Wellesley St on May 16, 2024.

Canada: Navigating Immigration

As discussed in Section 2.2, queer migration refers to the movement of individuals to fulfill the needs or desires of non-heterosexual identities, practices and performances. It is driven by emotional embodiment and displays three patterns: Coming-out Migration, Gravitational Group Migration, and Relationship migration.[209] Through global queerscape mappings (attached in the Appendix), these patterns emerge clearly in participants' lived experiences, revealing the intricate relationship between migration, queerness, and spatial belonging.

Coming-out Migration: Discovering and Constructing a New Identity

The common perception of Canada as a "Queer Safe Haven" has been attracting queer individuals worldwide seeking safety and freedom.[210] This desire for self-affirming and identity-building is categorized as Coming-out Migration.[211] Both Bob and Gael emphasize the significance of their queer identities in shaping their migration choices. Bob reflects: *"The biggest reason for me (to move here) has to do with the* ***queer spaces****, with the kind of the ability to safely exist"*.[212] Similarly, Gael shares that Toronto was particularly appealing because of *"a more* ***respectful kind of feeling - being queer, being myself in general****"*.[213] While sexuality is not the sole determinant of migration, it plays a crucial role alongside educational and career opportunities, as well as access to queer-specialized healthcare.

Gravitational Group Migration: Pursuing Belonging and Building Community

A second pattern, Gravitational Group Migration, reflects the desire to be near the queer communities, particularly for those who have experienced isolation in previous environments.[214] For some, migration is not just about finding personal safety but also about building connections within a larger queer social fabric. David, for instance, describes his past life in the American

209 Andrew Gorman-Murray, "Intimate Mobilities: Emotional Embodiment and Queer Migration," *Social & Cultural Geography* 10, no. 4 (2009): 441–60, https://doi.org/10.1080/14649360902853262.

210 Prime Minister of Canada, "Providing LGBTQI+ People with a Safe Home in Canada," Prime Minister of Canada, June 8, 2023, http://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2023/06/08/providing-lgbtqi-people-safe-home-canada; Matthew Sherwood, "Canada: A Safer Haven for LGBT Refugees," *The Globe and Mail*, June 22, 2014, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/worldpride/article19285991/.

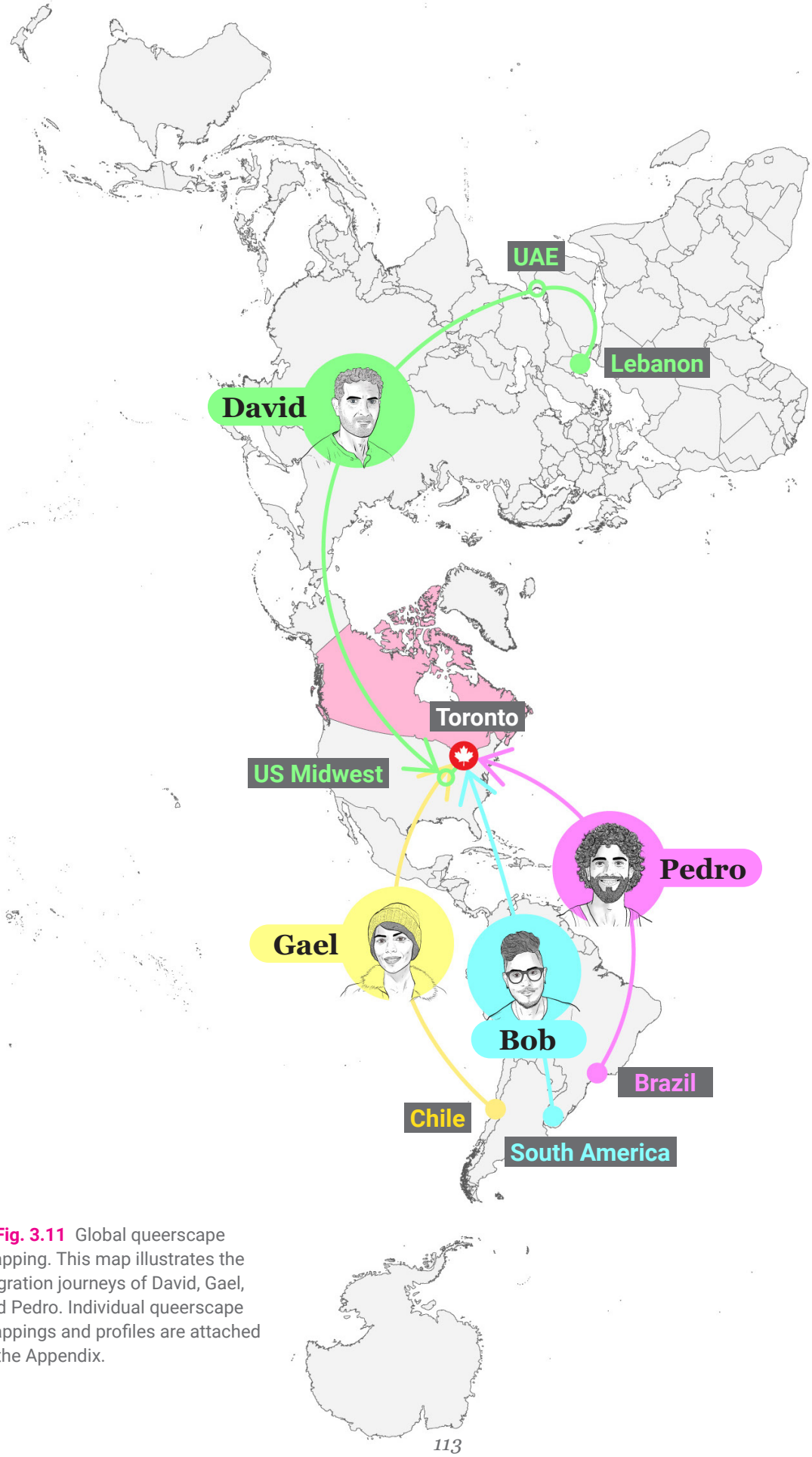
211 Andrew Gorman-Murray defines Coming-out Migration as "moving for self-reinvention as non-heterosexual and to explore bodily sexual desires in the process". Gorman-Murray, "Intimate Mobilities," 446.

212 Bob, Interview with Bob, interview by Simon Liao, June 24, 2024.

213 Gael, Interview with Gael, interview by Simon Liao, June 18, 2024.

214 Andrew Gorman-Murray defines Gravitational Group Migration as "moving to be near a neighbourhood with a gay and lesbian presence". Gorman-Murray, "Intimate Mobilities," 446.

215 David, Interview with David,



▲ **Fig. 3.11** Global queerscape mapping. This map illustrates the migration journeys of David, Gael, and Pedro. Individual queerscape mappings and profiles are attached in the Appendix.

Midwest as isolating, noting that *"people were more family-oriented. They spent time either with their kids or their parents. As a single person, I couldn't fit in."* He sought out Toronto for its diversity and inclusivity, stating that it offered a ***"more balanced lifestyle**, where you can have your sports interests, social interests, and **queer lifestyle** all available"*.[215] Similarly, Jason, who grew up in Pakistan, emphasizes the need to connect with the wider queer communities: *"I'm gonna die alone if I had stayed in Pakistan. Unfortunately, not because there aren't other queer people there, but largely because that's not a thing in terms of culture that queer folks think about"*. He further addresses, *"One of the big drivers of my choice to move to Toronto was also, well, **where's the greatest concentration of queer folks in Canada?**"*[216] Queer migration, therefore, is more than finding an individual "queer home" to fulfill personal desires, but also being part of a larger community where different ways of being could be possible.

Relationship Migration: Pursuing Love, Escaping Home

The third pattern, Relationship Migration, involves moving either to consolidate a relationship or to escape from one.[217] For Jon, who met his then-boyfriend in Vancouver, relocating to Toronto was a pragmatic decision: *"**My husband was already living here**"*.[218] Conversely, Adam's migration from China was motivated by the urgent need to escape familial pressures and the arranged marriage: *"I didn't want to go back to China, because, you know, **I feel depressed** (around the family)."*[219] This reflects the twofold nature of queer migration as homemaking - it is both a pursuit of a queer home, but also an abandon of the hostile familial home.

Beyond Queer Migration: The Complex Forces Behind the Move

Beyond these patterns, some participants' migration journeys were not driven by queerness but rather shaped by other dominant forces. Rania, for example, immigrated with her family as a teenager, with the decision primarily influenced by

interview by Simon Liao, July 2, 2024.

216 Interview with Jason.

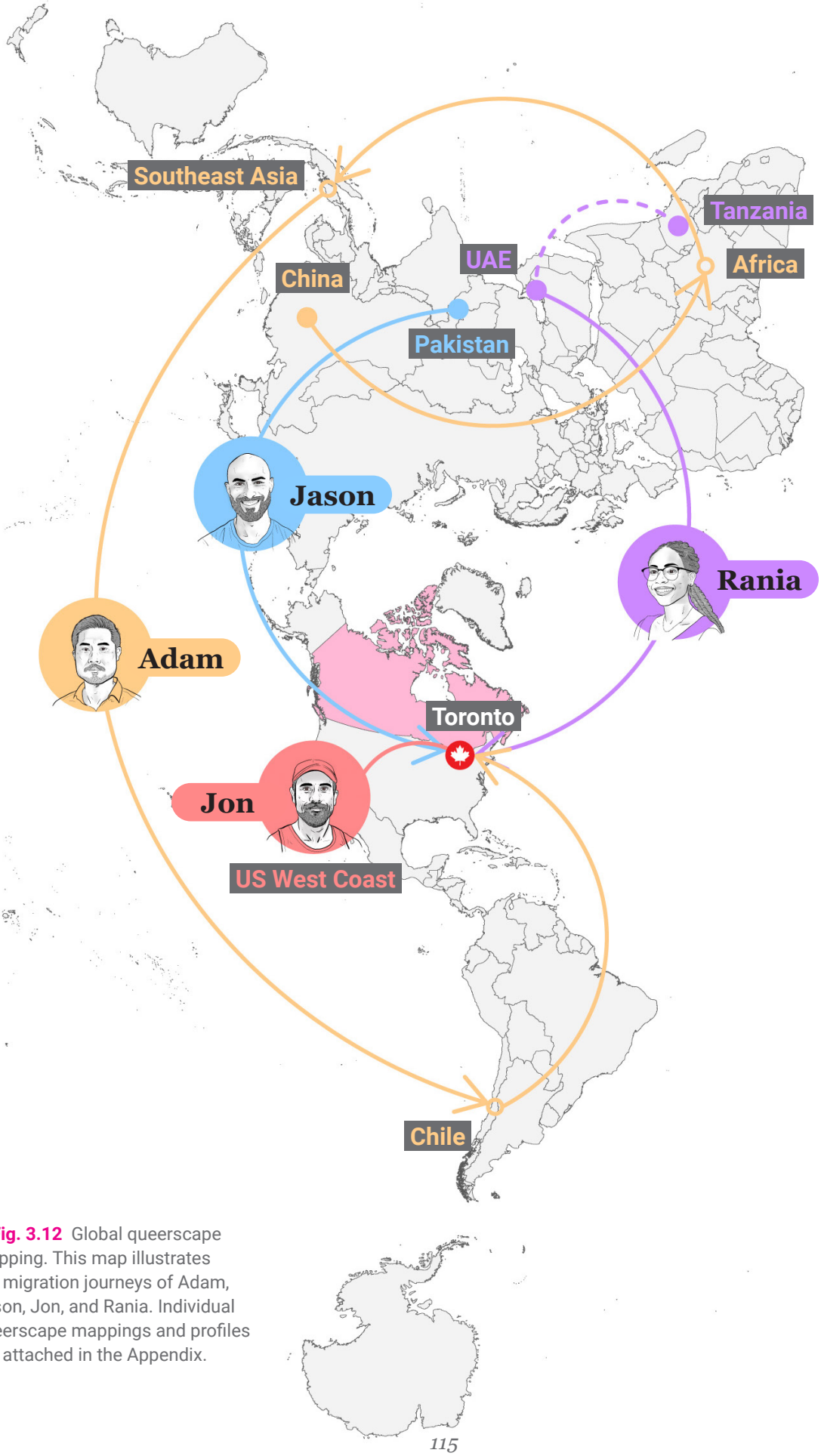
217 Andrew Gorman-Murray defines Relationship Migration as "moving with a partner to consolidate a same-sex relationship – or conversely, moving away after relationship breakdown". Gorman-Murray, "Intimate Mobilities," 446.

218 Jon, Interview with Jon, interview by Simon Liao, May 31, 2024.

219 Adam, Interview with Adam, interview by Simon Liao, June 6, 2024.

220 Rania, Interview with Rania, interview by Simon Liao, July 18, 2024.

221 Interview with Adam.



▲ **Fig. 3.12** Global queerscape mapping. This map illustrates the migration journeys of Adam, Jason, Jon, and Rania. Individual queerscape mappings and profiles are attached in the Appendix.

parental aspirations for a better future.[220] Adam, his migration journey was much more than simply escaping from the arranged marriage. He ventured across continents for job opportunities, and ended up in South America where he was tested HIV+. With the tremendous stigma and fear that came with the diagnosis, he was crushed by the reality and was looking to *"**go to a country that no one would know about me, and then die alone there**"*. Canada came into his mind because *"the land is vast, and with so little population."* – that was what brought Adam to Canada. He was not seeking a queer new beginning, instead, an end to life. However, upon arrival, it was the queer communities that made Adam stay and settle down in Canada, where he received support, education, and friendships through HIV-focused organizations.[221]

Migration is an inherently complex process, shaped by intersecting social, political, and economic forces. While these testimonials reveal key patterns of queer migration, they also emphasize Canada's role as a major immigration hub. However, participants' diverse migration process is also mediated by immigration policies depending on their admission categories, legal status, and personal backgrounds. For some, the process is relatively smooth, facilitated by institutional support and accessible pathways. Yet, for many others, migration is a prolonged struggle, marked by bureaucratic hurdles, systemic barriers, and emotional tolls.

Accessible Immigration Pathways

For some QTPOC newcomers, Canada is appealing for its relative accessibility. David, for example, acknowledges that *"**I was invited to come here** by the immigration system"*.[222] Similarly, Jason notes that Canada *"was the only place on the planet that was like, hey, **we will give you the permanent residence, just show up**."*[223] Pedro and Rania echo this sentiment, citing Canada as an easier and more affordable option than other countries.[224]

222 Interview with David.

223 Interview with Jason.

224 Interview with Rania; Pedro, Interview with Pedro, interview by Simon Liao, July 22, 2024.

Facing Bureaucratic Barriers

However, for others, such as refugees and international students, entry into Canada has been fraught with legal and financial obstacles. Bob, who is currently navigating the refugee application process, describes the system as overwhelming: *"I knew it was gonna be hard, but **I didn't know it was gonna be this hard**."* Despite the *"enormous struggle"*, he affirms, *"Yet I still wouldn't change it for anything"*.[225] Gael, an international student aspiring to permanent residency, addresses the challenges of proving their financial capacity as an artist: ***"It's very difficult to prove all the things that I have to prove** in order to become a permanent resident."*[226]

Adam, who successfully transitioned from refugee status to permanent residency, is currently sponsoring his boyfriend from Venezuela – a process that has been emotionally and financially exhausting. *"Because we are gay, we couldn't provide the marriage certificate, but we didn't have a chance to get married."* After five years of long-distance relationship, they still couldn't see each other because Adam lacks a valid passport as a former refugee. Reflecting on this prolonged waiting, he admits, ***"If I knew** (this process), **I wouldn't move to Canada at all**."*[227]

These narratives illustrate that queer migration is a multifaceted process. For some, the journey is straightforward, hopeful, and filled with opportunities; for others, it is a struggle against systemic barriers and uncertainty. The global queerscapes maps in this section present an overview of individual queer migration journeys, laying the foundation for further investigation of their well-being and experiences in the built environment.

225 Interview with Bob.

226 Interview with Gael.

227 Interview with Adam.

Toronto: Navigating Belonging

As discussed in Sections 2.4 and 2.5, both Arrival Cities and queer enclaves fulfill a sense of belonging by creating spaces of congregation where people with similar backgrounds and lived experiences come tougher to form community. In urban migration studies, sense of belonging is a key measure of immigrants' social integration and well-being, referring to the feeling of acceptance and inclusion.[228] This section examines QTPOC newcomers' social well-being navigating various scales of belonging in Toronto.

A City of Diversity and Inclusivity

For many QTPOC newcomers, Toronto's multiculturalism provides a broad foundation for belonging. Bob describes Toronto as his "queer home" and shares an emotional moment: *"I went to Pride last year, and I literally started crying. I've never felt this way. You know, this* ***sense of coming home*** *to someplace that has never been my home."*[229] Similarly, Pedro finds comfort in the city's diversity, noting that *"****you do feel you are not from there, but not alone****. You feel there's a community of people who immigrated also face similar situations"*.[230] As a non-binary individual, Gael also appreciates the respect for queer identities: *"****I don't get questioned as much about my gender identity and my sexual orientation*** *in Toronto. It doesn't happen the same way in my country of origin."*[231]

The Hidden Realities of Exclusion

Despite Toronto's progressive reputation, many participants experience discrimination exclusion, and even racism. Jon, a second-generation South Asian diaspora from the States, compares his experiences in Toronto, and contends that being South Asian means *"****a different social status****"* in Canada. *"The US is more restrictive in immigration. So if you are from India, you have to generally be very educated and such"*, he then comments on the recent waves of South Asian immigrants in Canada, *"whereas here, it's very broad-based.* ***There's a***

228 Zheng Wu, Feng Hou, and Christoph M. Schimmele, "Racial Diversity and Sense of Belonging in Urban Neighborhoods," *City & Community* 10, no. 4 (2011): 373–92, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6040.2011.01374.x.

229 Interview with Bob.

230 Interview with Pedro.

231 Interview with Gael.

232 Interview with Jon.

233 Interview with Jason.

234 Interview with Adam.

235 Interview with Gael.

236 Interview with David.

bit of sentiment and apprehension *(from Canadians), I would say. Because, you know, Canadians are known for being tolerant and progressive, but they are still human beings. If the economy is not doing good, how long will that tolerance last?"*[232] His observations are shaped by both personal experiences and what he witnesses on social media, challenging the idealized notion of Canada as an unconditionally inclusive society.

Jason takes the critique further, arguing that Canadian politeness often masks a deeper exclusivity: *"I think* ***people who have lived here for a very long period of time look at people who come in as a venom****"*, he illustrates this through an example of spatial inhabitation: *"Anytime if people talk about a space that's like, oh my god that place is really cool and blah blah... The minute someone who's not a regular starts showing up, people dissipate to another place. What they are trying to say is,* ***they are letting these new people in now, and it's not exclusive anymore****."*[233] His reflection points to the underlying conflicts of inclusion, social boundaries, and spatial inequity.

Missing Deep Connections

Beyond the subtle racism and xenophobia experienced by participants, most noted their challenges in forging meaningful social connections in Toronto. ***"The biggest challenge is loneliness"***, Adam asserts, *"It's difficult to have really good friends. It's always easy to have or make some friends, but it's not like the friends that I had in my past. People are very polite, but they keep their distance."*[234] Similarly, Gael compares the cultural differences in forming friendships: *"Chileans tend to be more direct, and also they become friends in a way that is easier for me. For example, in a couple of meetings, you can invite a person to your home, and over* ***here it takes a little bit longer****."*[235] David identified two key barriers in forging connections, firstly *"because people are busy, busy for both work and social life, so you have to plan ahead of time"*, secondly, ***"people already have their close friends and circles"***.[236] These cultural differences pose challenges for QTPOC newcomers to develop deep and lasting relationships, even within Toronto's seemingly welcoming environment.

The Contested Belonging within Ethnic Communities

Traditionally, ethnic minority groups tend to congregate for community belonging and mutual support based on a shared cultural identity and language. Statistically, Canada's visible minorities have a stronger sense of belonging to their ethnic groups than non-visible minorities.[237] However, most participants admit they have difficulties connecting with their ethnic communities. David reflects on his social circles: *"My friends were not from a single cultural identity. I had friends from everywhere, even* ***less friends from my own background****."*[238] Similarly, Jon notes the *"cultural difference"* between American and Canadian South Asian diasporas, *"****It is relatable*** *(here)****, but there's a limit****."*[239] Pedro, an international student from Brazil, attributes his distance from the Brazilian community to geographic separation: *"I don't frequent places like Midtown, St Clair and Dufferin - the Brazilian, Mexican, and Columbian areas" where "you will find more Brazilian events"*.[240] Bob, on the other hand, expresses a more existential detachment from his roots: *"There are things about my country, my culture that I inevitably miss, but* ***I never felt that I belonged there****"* because *"we are not on the same page. I don't like their way of thinking"*.[241]

Various factors influence the degree to which migrants feel connected to their ethnic communities – age of immigration, length of residence, lifestyle preferences, and geography all play a role.[242] Yet, a more complex and often unspoken barrier is the intersection of ethnicity and queer identities. While none of the participants explicitly cited their queer identity as a reason for disengaging from ethnic groups, Jon hints at an underlying tension: *"****If it's a bunch of Indian people around*** *(me),* ***I would not act, you know, as uninhibited****"*.[243] This statement suggests a hidden spatial narrative derived from conflicts between ethnicity and sexuality, which will be further discussed in later sections.

▶ **Fig. 3.13** Survey results from Queer Arrival Phase 1 measuring the sense of belonging among QTPOC newcomers in various Toronto communities (n = 156). These findings are compared to the Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan survey. The results show comparable trends, with no significant concerns or notable disparities.

237 Refugees and Citizenship Canada Immigration, "Sense of Belonging: Literature Review," April 18, 2017, https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/reports-statistics/research/sense-belonging-literature-review.html.

238 Interview with David.

239 Interview with Jon.

240 Interview with Pedro.

241 Interview with Bob.

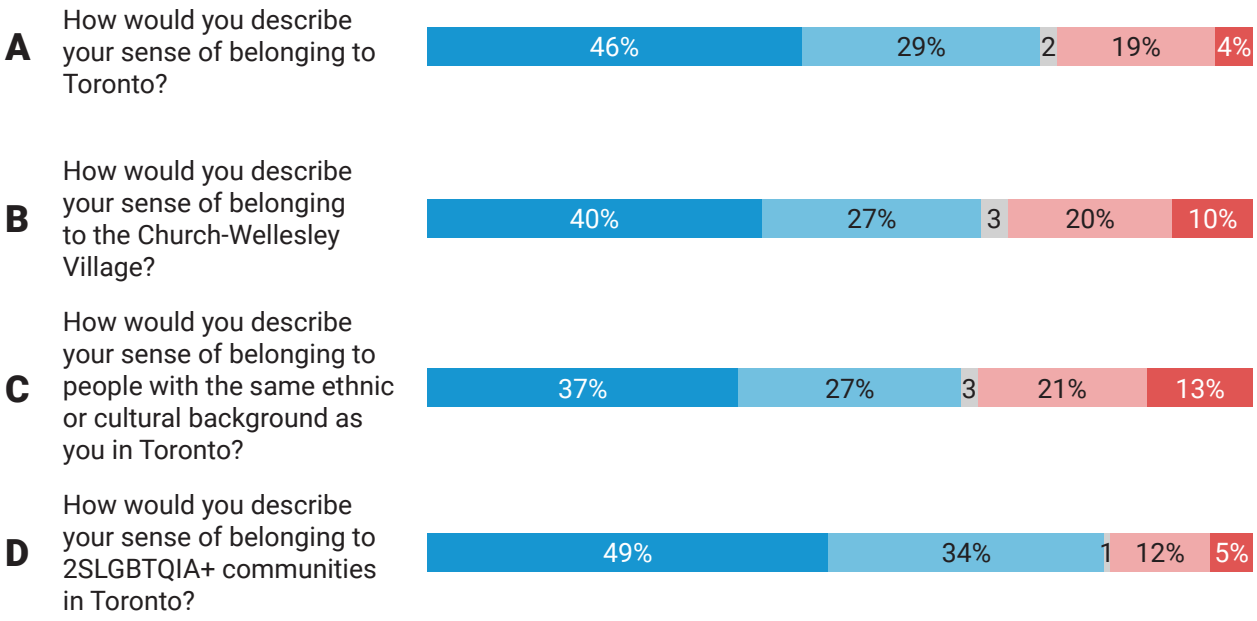
242 Refugees and Citizenship Canada Immigration, "Sense of Belonging."

243 Interview with Jon.

▶ **Fig. 3.14** Survey results from the Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan survey conducted by the Government of Canada (n = 25,636).

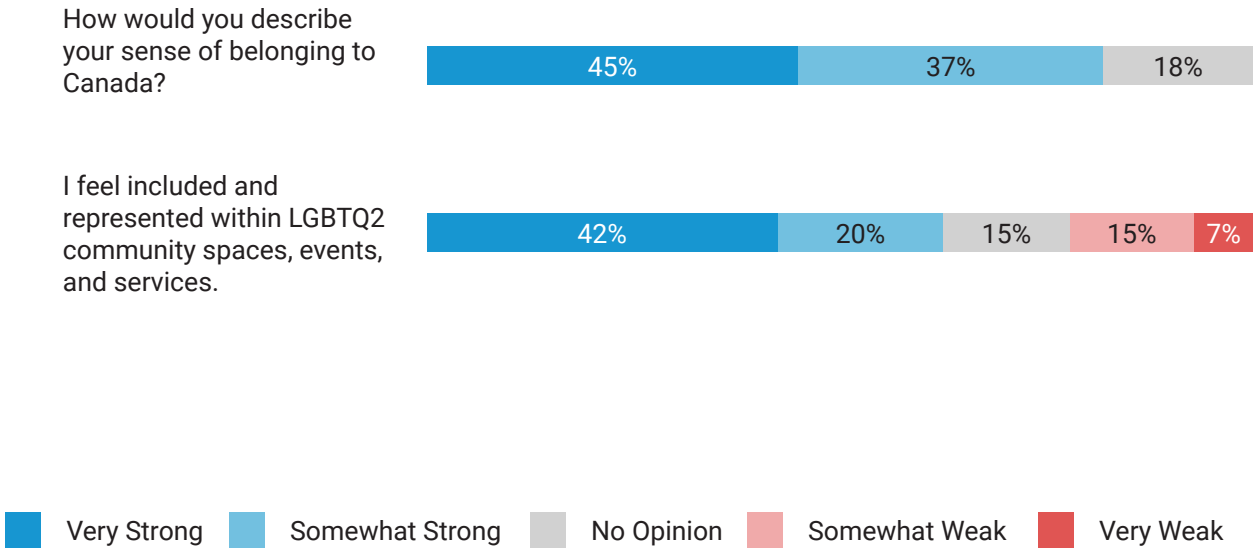
Sense of Belonging

Queer Arrival Survey, n=156



Sense of Belonging

Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan Survey (2022), n=25,636



Gravitating to Racialized Queer Communities

If QTPOC newcomers experience barriers to belonging in ethnic groups, do they instead find belonging within local queer communities? The answer is not straightforward. David, for instance, describes his queer social circles as ***"surface level"***: *"They are interested to know you only a little bit, but not to get to know much more about you."*[244] This sentiment echoes early observations of difficulties in forming deep social bonds in Toronto discussed in Section 3.2. Other participants, however, emphasize stronger connections within racialized queer communities. Rania, a young black queer woman, shares, *"The queer communities that I come across are usually white people"*, and expresses a desire to be in a community with ***"people who look like me - black queer people"***.[245] Gael, also finds comfort in the shared cultural background with queer communities, noting: ***"Most of my friends are queer Latinos. I tend to connect easier with them"***.[246] For many QTPOC newcomers, racialized queer networks provide a supportive space for belonging, bridging the gap between ethnic and queer identities in ways the typical white queer spaces often fail to do.

Yet, not all interactions with queer communities are welcoming. Jason firmly critiques the exclusivity and social fragmentation within Toronto's queer scene: ***"queer folk in this city are very cliquey - closed borders"***. He elaborates: *"Largely because it's very hard to build a community here. So when someone works very hard to build their own community, they close ranks immediately, and that is what I have come up against, over and over again."* Two years since he moved to Toronto, Jason has experienced repeated "alienation" within his newfound communities.[247]

The testimonials above illustrate the complex and harsh reality of QTPOC newcomers finding belonging. Their social integration is shaped by layered barriers – from isolation and exclusion to racism and xenophobia. The Canadian promise of a "Queer Safe Haven" might have granted physical safety for queer migrants, but it requires much deeper changes from societal levels to truly create a queer safe space.

244 Interview with David.

245 Interview with Rania.

246 Interview with Gael.

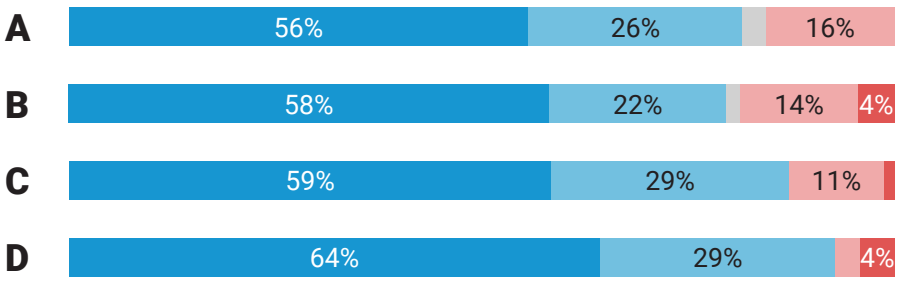
247 Interview with Jason.

▶ **Fig. 3.15** Queer Arrival Phase 1 Survey results measuring QTPOC newcomers' sense of belonging in various Toronto communities, categorized by racial groups. Among visible minority groups, Black respondents (n = 70) reported the strongest sense of belonging, while East Asian respondents (n = 21) reported the weakest.

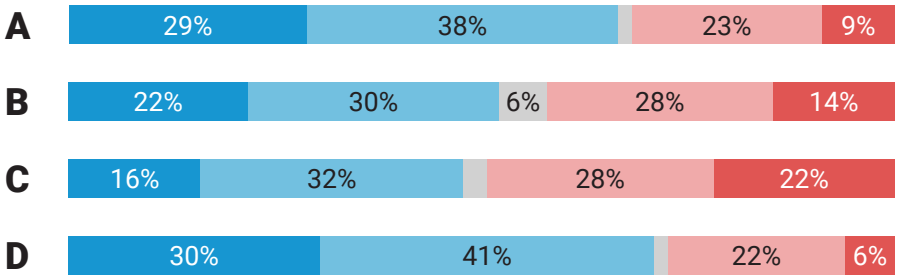
Sense of Belonging by Racial Groups

Queer Arrival Survey

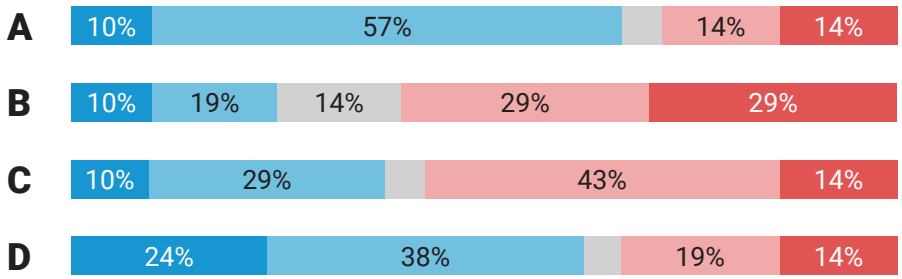
Black n=70

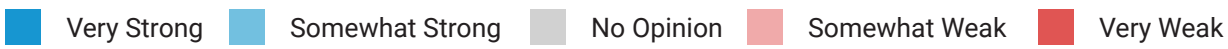


Neither White or Black n=69



East Asian n=21






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GIN

3.4 Queer Arrival Infrastructure

"I still don't feel this (Toronto) is my city. I feel I am a visitor. I just want to keep going to the same place so I can feel the connection to the place. Because I need to create those links step by step, later when I link them together, then it becomes my city." [248]

- David, Interview Participant

Both immigrants and queer communities rely on various forms of social infrastructure to support community-building and identity formation. As discussed in Section 2.4, "Arrival Infrastructure" refers to a network of services pertaining to migrants' socialization and organization of society.[249] Similarly, Ben Campkin introduces the concept of "queer infrastructure", describing it as a network of dynamic relations allowing queers to "connect and sustain themselves into the future, through material connections with the past and the messy, contradictory present". Campkin argues that queer infrastructure is produced through queer communities' creation of venues, networks and events, which generate new ways of bringing queer individuals together.[250] Expanding upon these perspectives, I propose the concept of **"Queer Arrival Infrastructure", which encompasses the spatial and social networks that QTPOC newcomers navigate, negotiate, and engage with throughout their migration journeys**.

248 David, Interview with David, interview by Simon Liao, July 2, 2024.

249 Carolyn Whitzman, "Social Infrastructure in Tall Buildings: A Tale of Two Towers: Carolyn Whitzman, MA, MCIP," in *Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat* (CRC Press, 2001), 10; Bruno Meeus, Bas van Heur, and Karel Arnaut, "Migration and the Infrastructural Politics of Urban Arrival," in *Arrival Infrastructures: Migration and Urban Social Mobilities*, ed. Bruno Meeus, Karel Arnaut, and Bas van Heur (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 1–32, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91167-0_1.

250 Ben Campkin, *Queer Premises: LGBTQ+ Venues in London since the 1980s*, First edition. (London [England: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), 24, https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350324886.

◀ **Fig. 3.16** The Church-Wellesley Village.

As illustrated in the queerscape maps (attached in the Appendix), QTPOC newcomers interact with a diverse range of spaces across Toronto, shaping and being shaped by the urban fabric. These places, though varied in built from and function, collectively serve as a critical infrastructure that support newcomers' daily lives. They facilitate the ongoing negotiation of identities – not only queer identities but also those tied to migration, cultural heritage, and broader community affiliations.

When examined as a collective network, these places form an interconnected Queer Arrival Infrastructure, support QTPOC newcomers' social, cultural, and personal integration into Canadian society. By categorizing this infrastructural network based on spatial typologies—neighborhoods, public spaces, and communal spaces—four key patterns emerge:

The Church-Wellesley Village

The Focal Point of Queer Arrival Infrastructure

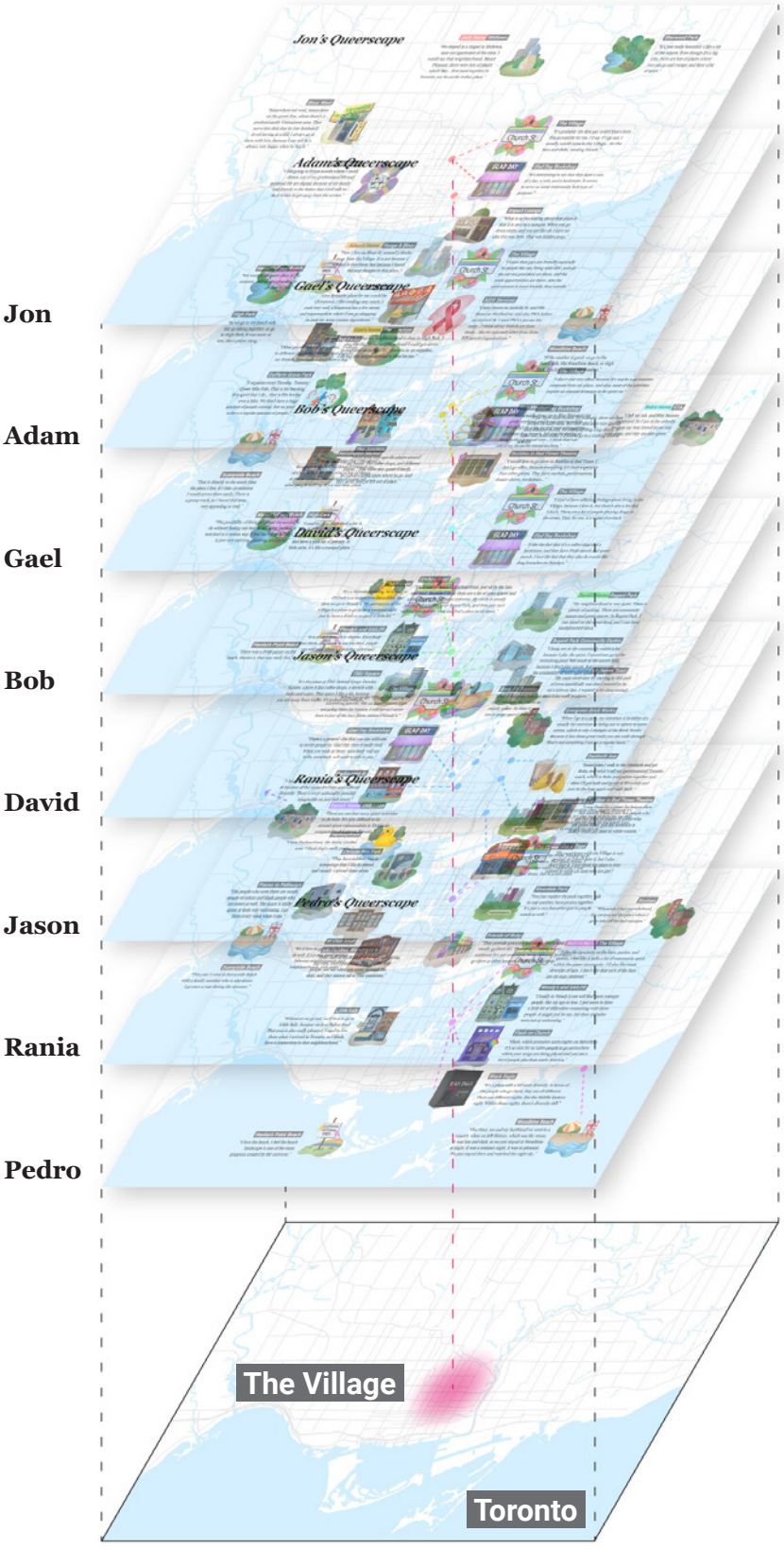
The Village represents the most concentrated Queer Arrival Infrastructure within Toronto's urban landscape, particularly in terms of physical queer venues and specialized services. This neighbourhood remains central to queer social life, fostering a sense of belonging while also providing access to essential services that QTPOC newcomers might not find elsewhere.

For instance, Jon and Pedro frequent gay bars for entertainment and socialization, while Adam's engagement with the Village extends beyond leisure.[251] He accessed HIV-related healthcare services, immigration support, and educational resources within the neighbourhood. In turn, he volunteers and works part-time at HIV organizations, reflecting, *"A lot of my friendships were starting there"*.[252] However, despite its significance, the Village is not without its limitations. Concerns regarding safety and internal inclusivity diminish its role in the Queer Arrival Infrastructure, a topic that will be further explored in subsequent sections.

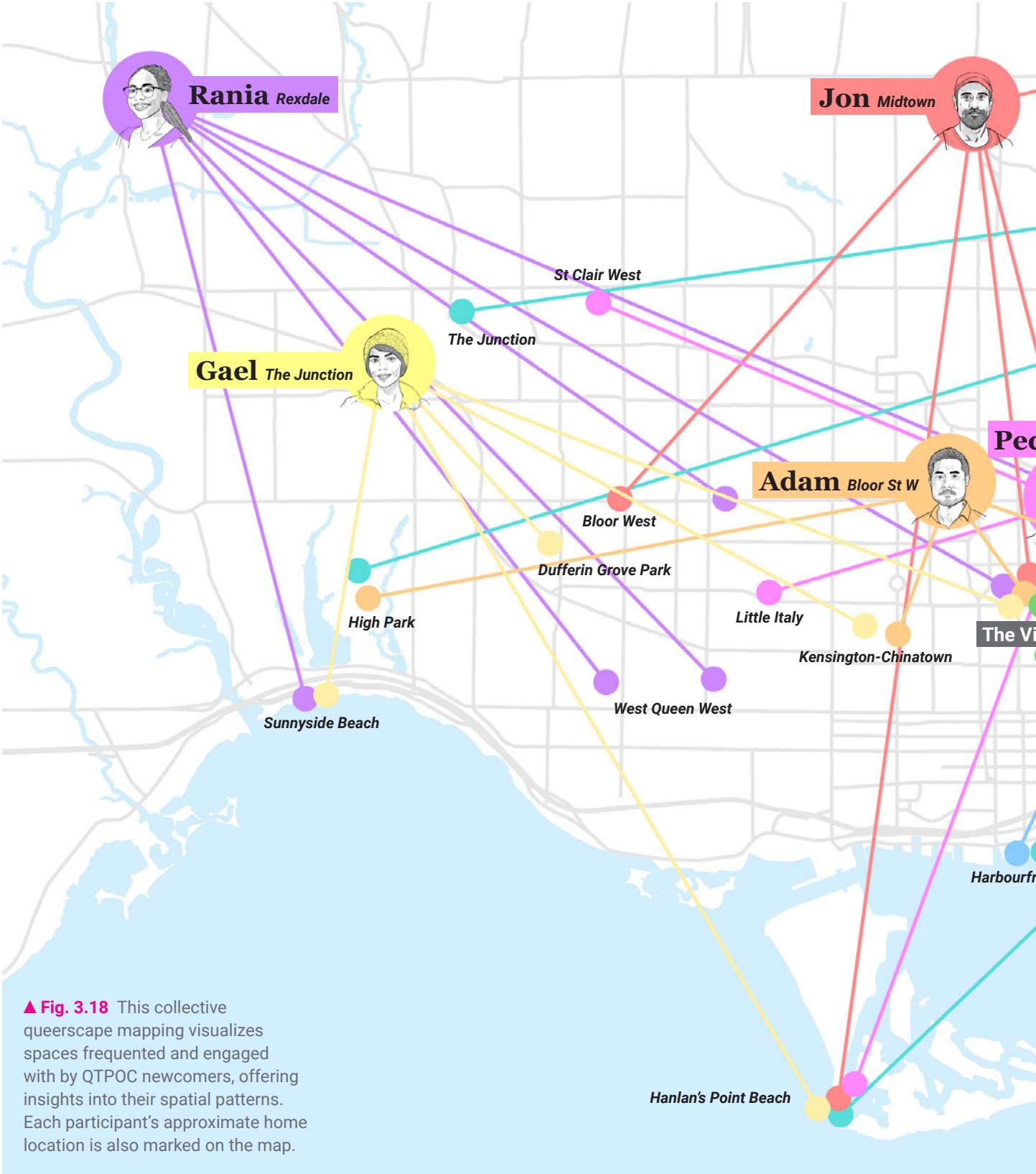
251 Jon, Interview with Jon, interview by Simon Liao, May 31, 2024; Pedro, Interview with Pedro, interview by Simon Liao, July 22, 2024.

252 Adam, Interview with Adam, interview by Simon Liao, June 6, 2024.

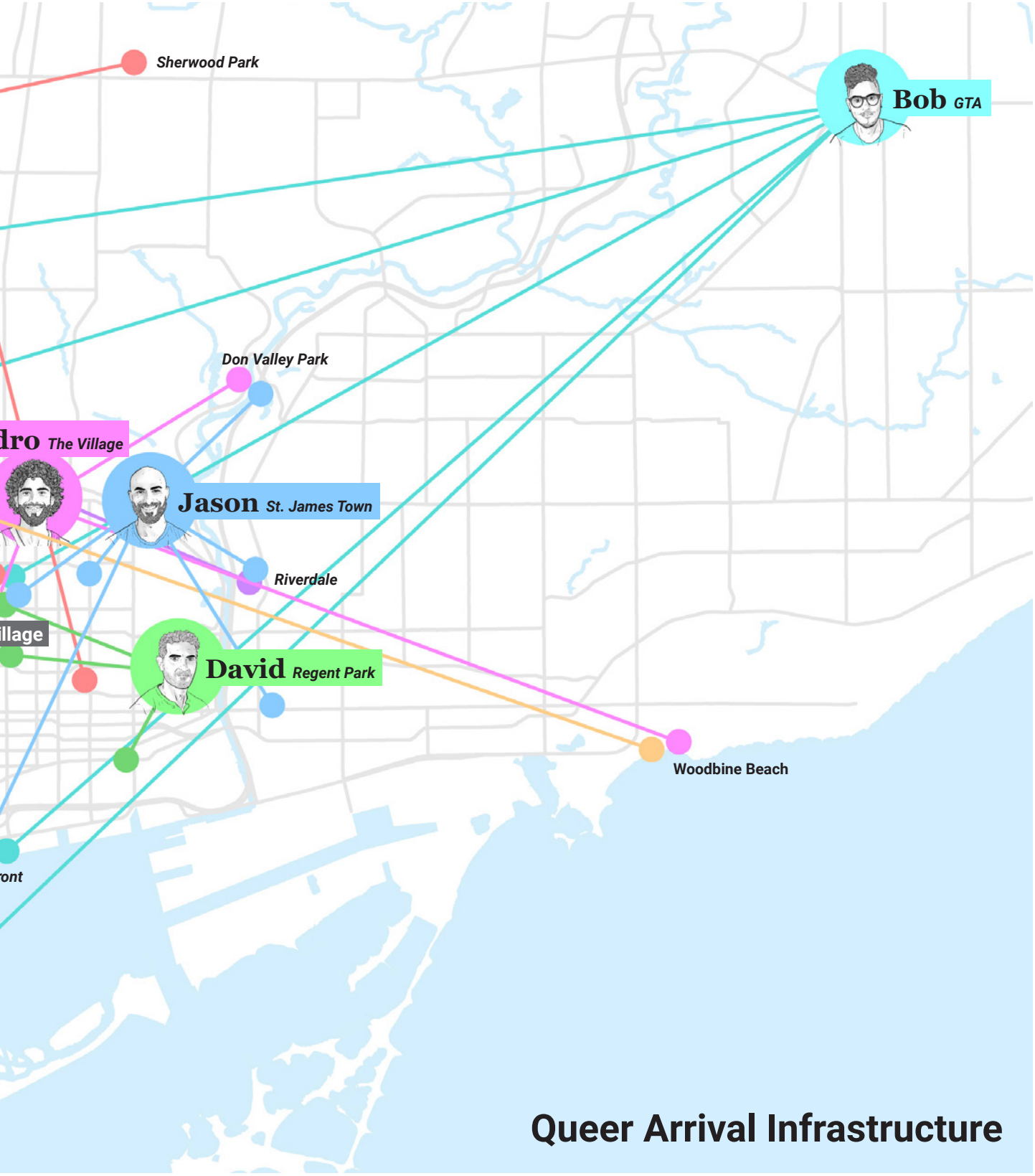
Collective Queerscapes



▲ **Fig. 3.17** Collective queerscapes. Individual queerscape mappings (see Appendix) were overlaid for analysis, creating a collective Queer Arrival Infrastructure network. The Church-Wellesley Village emerged as the area with the highest concentration of identified locations.



▲ **Fig. 3.18** This collective queerscape mapping visualizes spaces frequented and engaged with by QTPOC newcomers, offering insights into their spatial patterns. Each participant's approximate home location is also marked on the map.


Sherwood Park
Bob GTA
Don Valley Park
dro The Village
Jason St. James Town
Riverdale
illage
David Regent Park
Woodbine Beach
ront
Queer Arrival Infrastructure

Ethnic Enclaves

Reconnecting with Cultural Identity

Characteristic urban areas such as Chinatown, Kensington Market, and Parliament St, provide culturally specific amenities that help QTPOC newcomers reconnect with their homelands, fulfilling a Diaspora Consciousness. These areas serve as a bridge between past and present identities.

For example, Adam regularly visits Chinatown for groceries, explaining, *"**I feel like home**, because of the food and ingredients. You cannot find it anywhere else. It reminds me of China. I mean, the food part, not the other part."* Meanwhile, Jon shares a sentimental moment with his husband at a Vietnamese restaurant in the West End: *"**They serve this dish that he** (my husband) **loved having as a kid**. I always go in there with him, because I can tell he's always very happy when he has it."*[253] While these places are categorized as part of Queer Arrival Infrastructure due to their contribution to QTPOC newcomers' everyday lives, they are less critical to queer identity formation. Instead, their significance lies primarily in material and cultural resources, rather than in fostering explicit queer belonging.

Urban Public Space

Fostering a Queer Communal Life

Parks, beaches, and other urban public spaces facilitate both individual and communal queer life, particularly when they are situated near the homes of QTPOC newcomers. These spaces foster everyday interactions, allowing casual social engagement and community-building activities.

For instance, Gael, a bike polo enthusiast, organizes weekly games in a West End park, attracting queer players from across the city. Connecting with people through sports has become a key aspect of their social life.[254] Similarly, Bob's favourite spot is the Harbourfront, where he enjoys leisurely walks with friends while indulging in BeaverTails.[255] These public spaces

253 Interview with Jon; Interview with Adam.

254 Gael, Interview with Gael, interview by Simon Liao, June 18, 2024.

255 Bob, Interview with Bob, interview by Simon Liao, June 24, 2024.

are generally inclusive and accessible, positively contributing to newcomers' social and physical well-being. However, unlike permanent queer venues, these sites often require queer presence and active participation to function as Queer Arrival Infrastructure.

Community-based Institutions

Building Community and Belonging

Although not explicitly queer-focused, cultural institutions and community centres play a crucial role in fostering community belonging for QTPOC newcomers. These spaces offer inclusive programming, creating opportunities to build relationships beyond conventional queer spaces.

For example, David is a regular at his local community centre, where he plays ping pong while getting acquainted with other players. He reflects, *"**At first we were strangers, and now we are friends**, because some of the people come there all the time."* The community centre is one of the reasons that keep him in the neighbourhood.[256] Likewise, Rania actively participates in a peer-led harm reduction program in the West End. She shared: *"I go there every week when I can. **That's a place to just meet people**, talk to queer people, and eat some good food."*[257] These community-oriented venues function as tangible social infrastructure, benefiting both QTPOC newcomers and the broader public by facilitating informal networks of care and support.

These four patterns provide a more comprehensive understanding of QTPOC newcomers' spatial narratives, illustrating the expansive queer presence across diverse urban environments. Unlike earlier waves of queer arrival which were confined to specific neighbourhoods and largely hidden from the public sphere – QTPOC newcomers today exhibit a similar quality with the "post-mo"[258] queers – both are visible and integrated into a wide-ranging infrastructural network that extends far beyond the traditional queer enclave.

256 Interview with David.

257 Rania, Interview with Rania, interview by Simon Liao, July 18, 2024.

258 Catherine J. Nash, "The Age of the 'Post-Mo'? Toronto's Gay Village and a New Generation," *Geoforum* 49 (October 1, 2013): 243–52, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2012.11.023.


CHURCH - WELLESLEY
VILLAGE
Church St.
445

3.5 Queer Arrival City

"It (The Village) is like in wintertime with the fire. You don't want to get away from the fire because you need it to keep you warm. You don't want to get too close too, because it will hurt you." [259]

- Adam, Interview Participant

The Church-Wellesley Village has long been regarded as a vital point in queer migration. In both academic and mainstream narratives, queer migration is often portrayed as a transformative and liberating experience, with the Village celebrated as a welcoming space that provides belonging and safety.[260] This prevailing perspective, however, tends to obscure the socio-economic barriers, racialized exclusions, and spatial inequities that shape the lived realities of QTPOC newcomers. Over time, this framing also has led to the assumption that the Village functions as an Arrival City for newly arrived queers - an assumption that requires deeper investigation.[261]

As discussed in Chapter 2, Arrival City describes an urban area where migrants temporarily settle to integrate themselves into mainstream society.[262] Meanwhile, queer enclaves emerge as refuges where queer communities congregate for safety and belonging. However, both typologies are studied within narrow frameworks and demonstrate limitations when applied to QTPOC newcomers. To bridge this gap, I introduce the novel concept of the Queer Arrival City, roughly defined as the urban area where QTPOC newcomers settle when they land in Canada.

259 Adam, Interview with Adam, interview by Simon Liao, June 6, 2024.

260 Vidya Kauri, "What the Gay Village Means Today," *The Globe and Mail*, July 1, 2013, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/toronto/what-the-gay-village-means-today/article12904400/; Rianna Lim, "'It Just Makes Me Feel Home': LGBTQ+ Newcomers Celebrate First Pride in Canada," thecanadianpressnews.ca, June 29, 2024, https://www.thecanadianpressnews.ca/ontario/it-just-makes-me-feel-home-lgbtq-newcomers-celebrate-first-pride-in-canada/article_57b9502b-a753-5043-b012-ae58ffb11c47.html.

261 Greenberg Consultants et al., "Church Wellesley Village Neighbourhood Plan Phase Two Report" (Toronto: The 519, November 2013); Paniz Moayeri, "Toronto's Gay Village Built-Form as Container for Social Heritage," *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada / Le Journal de La Société Pour l'étude de l'architecture Au Canada*, no. 44(2) (n.d.): 3–20.

262 Doug Saunders, *Arrival City: The Final Migration and Our next World*, First edition (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2010).

◀ **Fig. 3.19** The street sign of the Church-Wellesley Village.

This section first critically examines the Village as a Queer Arrival City, using the lived experiences of QTPOC newcomers to challenge its assumed role as a destination, and the preliminary definition as a fixed locality. By foregrounding marginalized narratives, I propose to reconceptualize the Queer Arrival City through the lens of Queer Arrival Infrastructure to capture the evolving reality of QTPOC newcomers.

What does the Village offer?

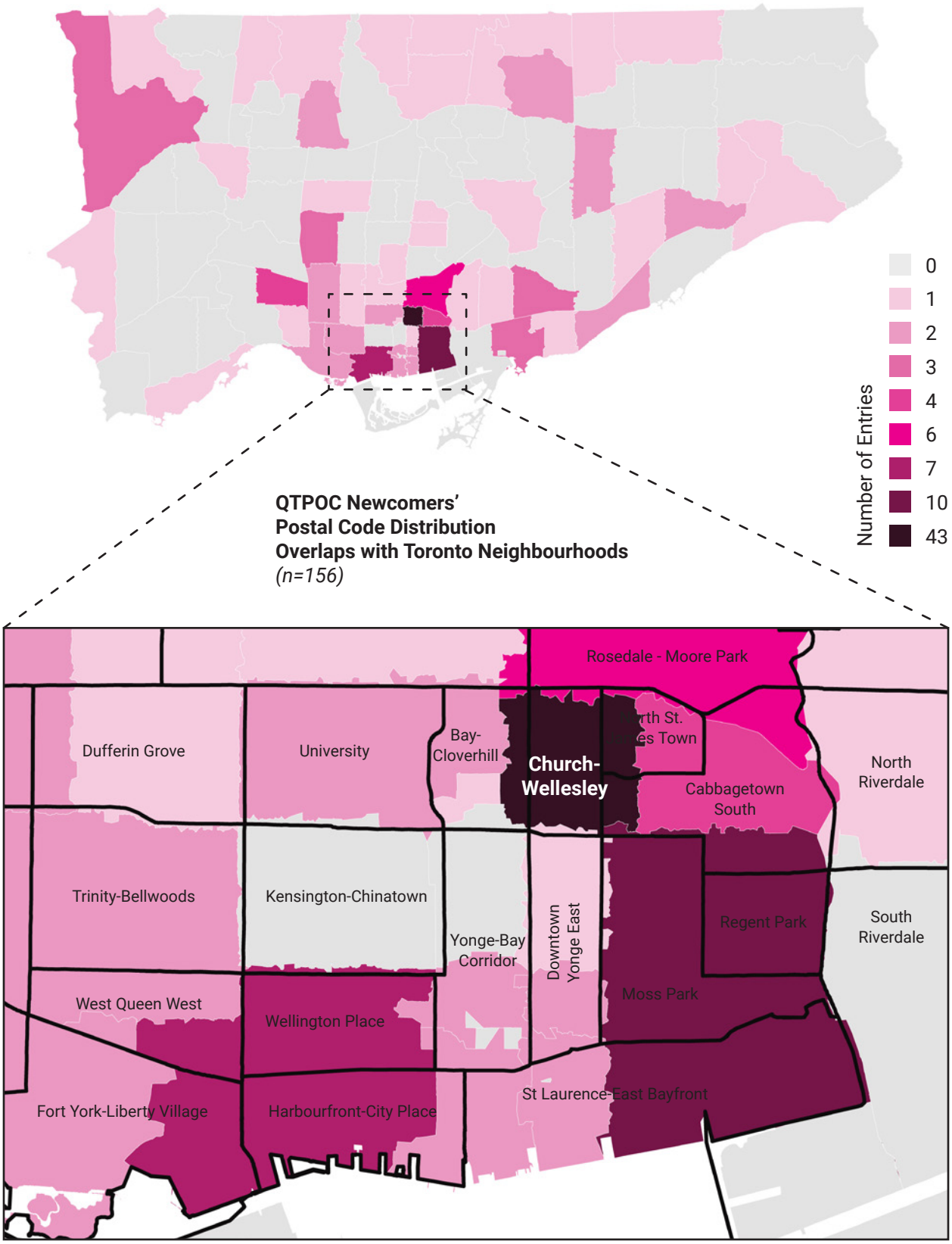
1. A Place to Live

One of the fundamental functions of the Arrival City is to provide a place to live, often serving as the first point of contact for immigrants. Similarly, in conceptualizing the Queer Arrival City, I first investigate the geographic distribution and mobility of QTPOC newcomers to identify patterns in their residential choices. This initial analysis is based on quantitative data collected in Phase 1 surveys, offering insights into where QTPOC newcomers tend to settle.

According to 156 partial postal codes collected in the surveys, QTPOC newcomers are overwhelmingly concentrated in Toronto's Downtown core. The highest concentration is found in the area surrounding the Village, bounded by Bay St to the west, Sherborne St to the east, Bloor St to the north, and College St to the south. Additionally, the West End and Downtown East rank as the second most common areas of residence, while inner-city neighourhoods and suburbs show only a sparse distribution of QTPOC newcomers. Notably, half of the interviewed participants live in or near the Village. Although their motivations vary, they are all engaged in the Queer Arrival Infrastructure of the Village. Within the context of this thesis, this data suggests that the Village appears to fulfill a residential function of the Queer Arrival City.

However, this quantitative analysis has several limitations. First, the small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings. Second, the data is influenced by the locations of

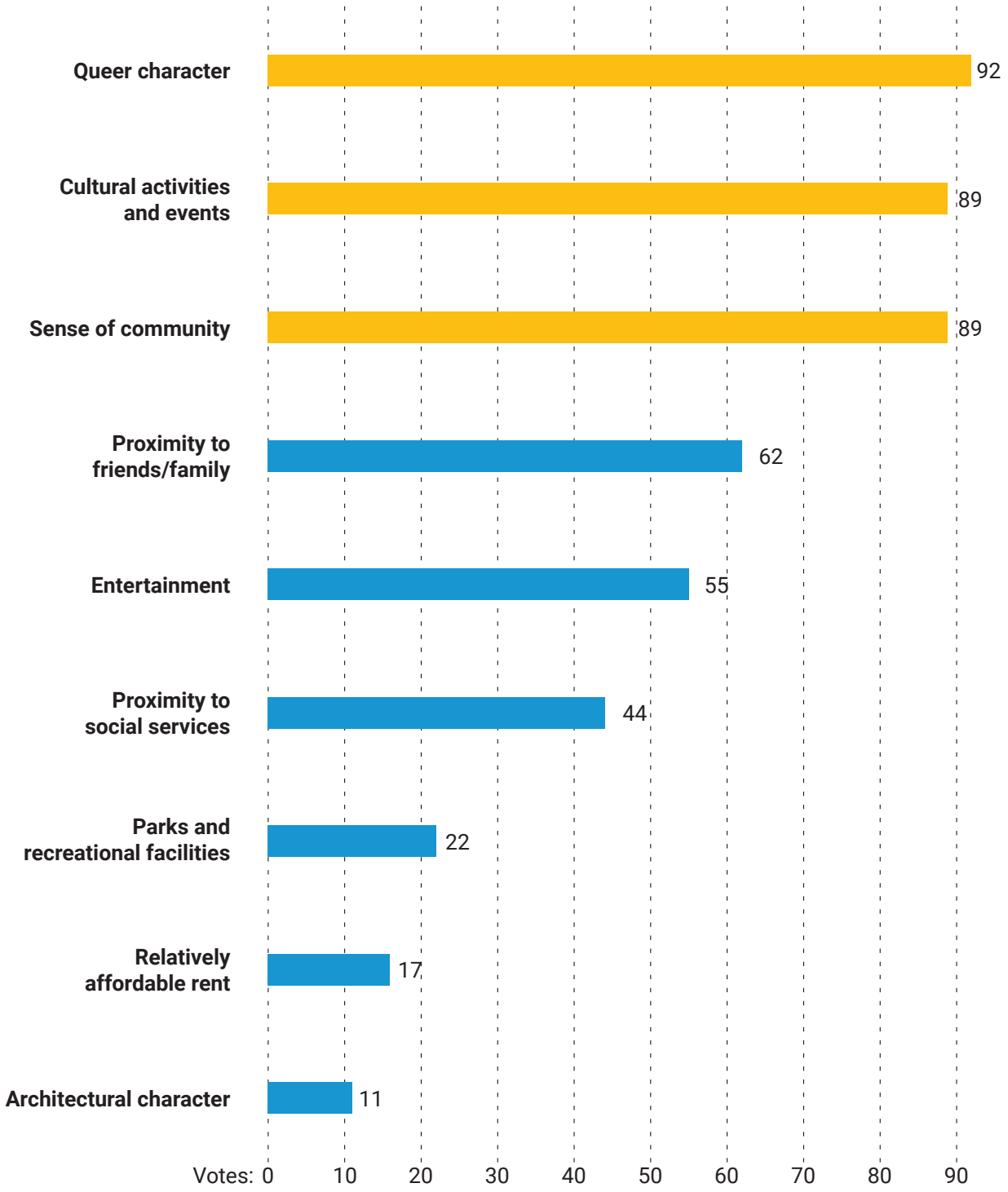
▶ **Fig. 3.20** QTPOC newcomers' postal code distribution overlaps with Toronto neighbourhoods. This map shows that Toronto's downtown core has the highest concentration of QTPOC newcomers, particularly in neighborhoods surrounding the Church-Wellesley Village.



QTPOC Newcomers' Postal Code Distribution Overlaps with Toronto Neighbourhoods *(n=156)*

What do you value most about living in or visiting the Village?

n=156



recruitment agencies, many of which are based in the Village. Since recruitment channels tend to attract participants from their immediate locations, this could overrepresent QTPOC newcomers residing in the Village. Without access to comprehensive census data, it is difficult to accurately capture the full spectrum of QTPOC newcomers' mobility patterns. Despite these limitations, the findings do reveal a notable presence of QTPOC newcomers in the Downtown core, aligning with broader census trends on recent immigrant settlement patterns, as illustrated in Section 1.2.

Survey data also provides insight into why QTPOC newcomers are drawn to the Village. The top three reasons cited for either living in or visiting the neighbourhood are: its queer character, cultural activities and events, and the sense of community. Conversely, aspects such as public space, housing conditions, and architectural character rank among the least attractive factors. This suggests that while the Village remains symbolic and socially significant for many QTPOC newcomers, its infrastructural conditions may be less compelling.

For those who do live in or around the Village, their motivations are often complex and layered with hidden narratives that challenge the assumption of the Village as a residential destination. Pedro, who resides in a high-rise apartment in the neighbourhood, acknowledges its convenient location, rather than a conscious desire to live in the queer enclave: ***"I didn't move to the Village with the intention to enjoy the bars more**, but that was a consequence."*[263] Jason, who lives in St. James Town, admits that proximity to the Village factored into his relocation choice, but he clarifies: ***"I didn't want to be in it** (the Village)."*[264] Similarly, Adam, who previously lived at the intersection of Church-Wellesley, has since moved a few blocks away, explaining: ***"I want to be around here, but I don't want to get too close to it."***[265]

These perspectives complicate the assumption of the Village as a Queer Arrival City. Instead, they hint at ambivalent relationships with the neighbourhood – where proximity to the Village matters, but full immersion is not always desirable. The reasons behind these sentiments will be explored in the later part of this section.

263 Pedro, Interview with Pedro, interview by Simon Liao, July 22, 2024.

264 Jason, Interview with Jason, interview by Simon Liao, July 3, 2024.

265 Interview with Adam.

◀ **Fig. 3.21** Survey results of respondents' most valued things about the Village. The results indicate that the top three factors attracting QTPOC newcomers to the Village are its queer character, cultural activities and events, and sense of community.

2. A Place to Play

The queer character of the neighbourhood is one of the biggest draws for QTPOC newcomers. This appeal can be understood from two perspectives: the presence of physical queer spaces and the broader inclusive atmosphere that cultivates queer belonging. The following discussions focus on both the material and intangible queer character in the Village to understand how they shape newcomers' experiences and negotiation of space.

For many participants, the Village serves as a primary destination for entertainment and socialization. As David describes: *"It's a Saturday evening, let's meet at O'Grady's or somewhere for a drink, and then we go to Woody's"*. He continues with his perception of the Village: *"**It's a place to go to on a weekend night** - just to have a drink or to party a little bit."*[266] Similarly, Jon addresses the importance of queer venues in shaping his social life: *"I'd say **if I go out, I usually would come to the Village** - for the bars and clubs, meeting friends."*[267] This perspective is also exemplified in the surveys which suggest that the Village's cultural activities and events are a major draw. These venues provide essential social infrastructure, but they also come with limitations, which will be discussed in the subsequent section.

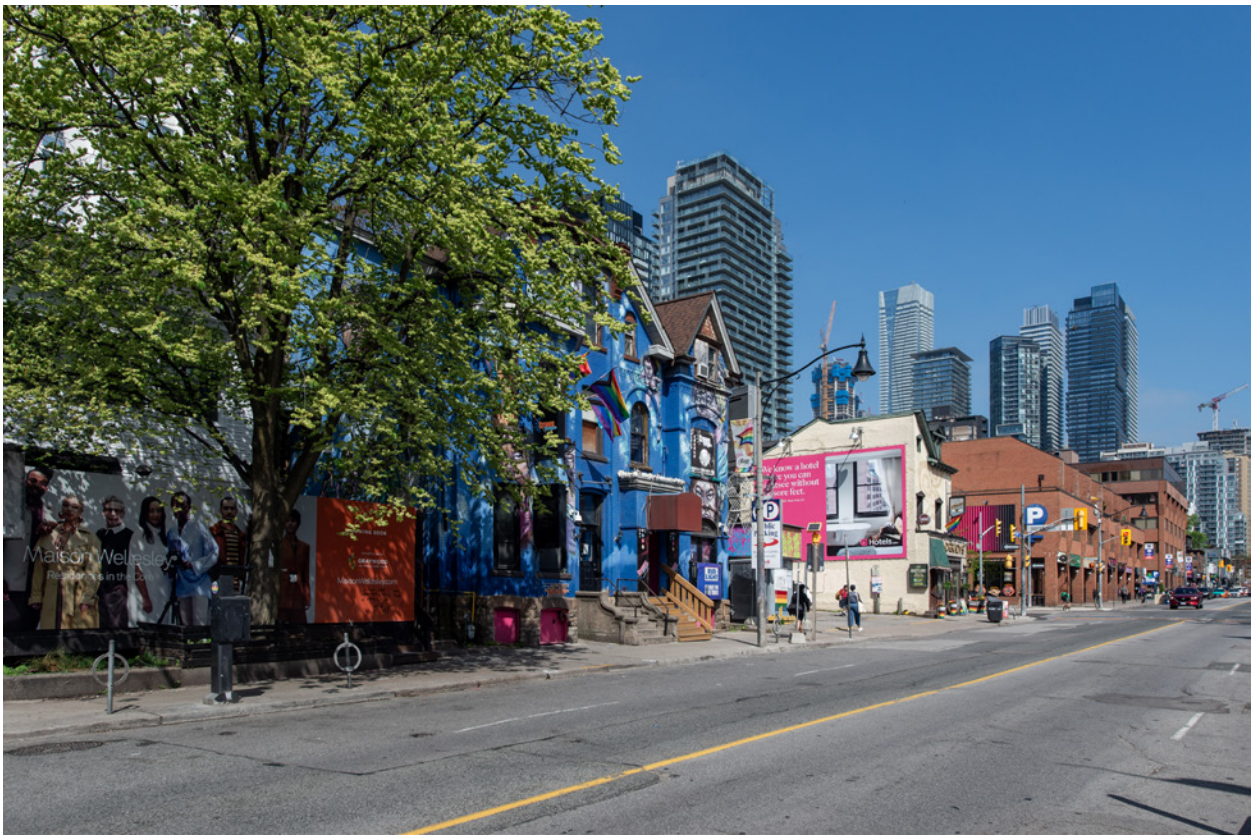
3. A Place to Belong

Beyond the physical queer venues, the Village fosters a sense of queer visibility and community. Both survey results and interviews indicate that many participants perceive the Village as an inclusive space, welcoming individuals of diverse identities and backgrounds. Bob reflects, *"walking through Church St during Pride, and just seeing all the vendors and the people, and **that was the first time where I actually felt like at home.**"*[268] Pedro similarly describes a unique sense of safety in the Village: *"If I go out to other neighbourhoods, holding hands with my boyfriend, people would most likely be respectful, but **enforcing that you are queer and that's fine, it's mainly***

266 David, Interview with David, interview by Simon Liao, July 2, 2024.

267 Jon, Interview with Jon, interview by Simon Liao, May 31, 2024.

268 Bob, Interview with Bob, interview by Simon Liao, June 24, 2024.



▲ **Fig. 3.22** Church Street features a variety of businesses, bars, and restaurants that cater to the queer communities.

here".[269] For many, the Village is a safe space for queers to freely perform non-heteronormative identities and practices.

Toronto's ethnic diversity is also visible in the Village, reinforcing a sense of belonging for racialized queers. Jon shares his experiences navigating the gay communities in San Francisco and New York, and finds that the Village is more racially diverse. *"The US is more racially segregated among gays"*, he adds, *"To the extent that I got involved with South Asian activism, I felt pressured to just stick with them, because that was 'my kind'."* By contrast, his experience in Toronto's Village has been markedly different: ***"I have not felt marketed to, or visible as a second-generation diaspora South Asian, except here**. Like in those gay parties, there are South Asian Go Go Dancers and bartenders."*[270] Jon's perspective suggests that Canada's multiculturalism has extended into the Village, influencing both social dynamics and representation.

269 Interview with Pedro.

270 Interview with Jon.

The sense of community is further evidenced in the surveys. The diagram compares QTPOC newcomers' perceptions of the Village, and Torontonians' perceptions towards their own neighbourhoods.[271] The results suggest that the Village is largely conceived as a safe, inclusive, and supportive place. Particularly, the Village appears to be more close-knit than other parts of Toronto. As Jon puts it: ***"It's a big city, but if you get into the queer community, it's actually kind of a small town"***.[272] This closeness differentiates the Village from the heteronormative urban environment, making it a resilient community. However, a close-knit community does not necessarily signal a welcoming and inclusive neighbourhood. While some experience a strong sense of participation within the community, others may encounter exclusion as outsiders. These tensions and contradictions are explored further in this section.

The contrast between the Village and the conservative suburbs is particularly evident in Adam's relocation experience. Having previously house-shared in Scarborough, Adam was evicted by the landlord due to his HIV status. Seeking a more accepting environment, he moved into the Village: *"I know* ***gays are friendly especially to people like me, living with HIV. The environment is more friendly than outside****."* However, despite escaping the discrimination of the suburbs, Adam has developed a complex relationship with the Village: *"It's kind of a strange feeling.* ***You don't want to be inside, but you also don't want to stay far away from the Village****. Because, you know, as long as you are getting out of the community, it is not safe for you."*[273] But what is it about the Village that, despite offering protection, still makes some QTPOC newcomers want to distance themselves from it?

For many QTPOC newcomers, the Village provides basic protection for their intersectional identities, yet it is not enough to keep them around. The following discussions reveal the hidden narratives that complicate the Village's role as a Queer Arrival City and challenge the assumption that the Village is an inclusive and safe space for all queer individuals.

271 Andrew Parkin and Steven Ayer, "Toronto Social Capital Study 2022" (Toronto Foundation, 2022), 58, https://torontofoundation.ca/socialcapital/.

272 Interview with Jon.

273 Interview with Adam.

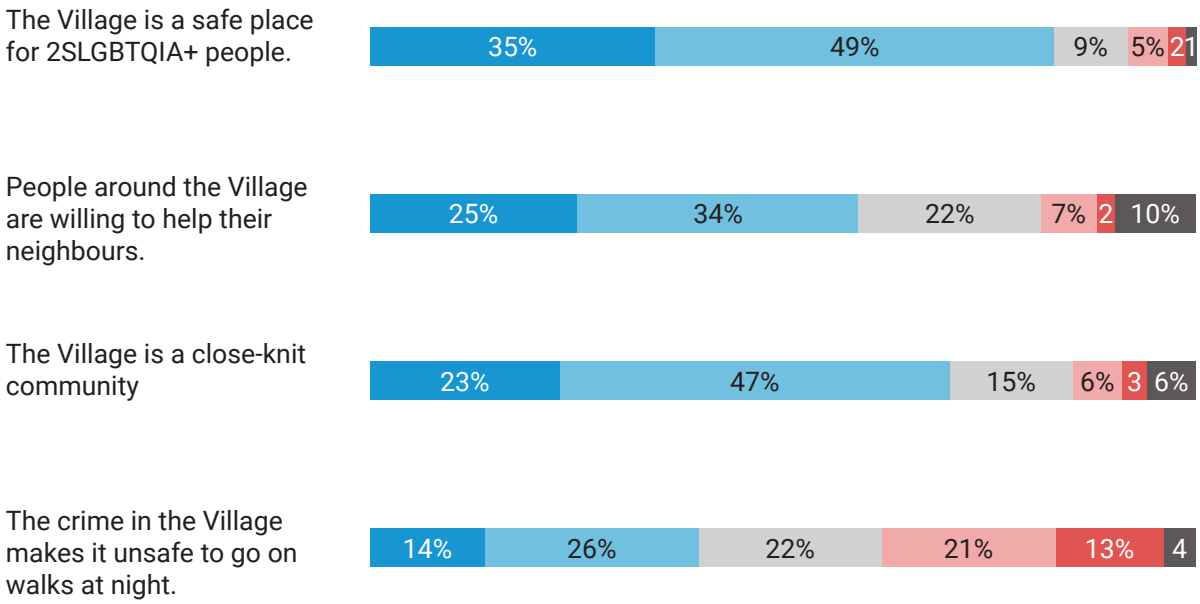
▶ **Fig. 3.23** Queer Arrival Survey results assessing QTPOC newcomers' perceptions of the Village, compared with findings from the 2022 Toronto Social Capital Study, which measured residents' perceptions of their neighborhoods. Results suggest that the Village is perceived as a more close-knit community than the average Toronto neighborhood but also has a higher level of safety concerns.



▶ **Fig. 3.24** Survey results from the 2022 Toronto Social Capital Study.

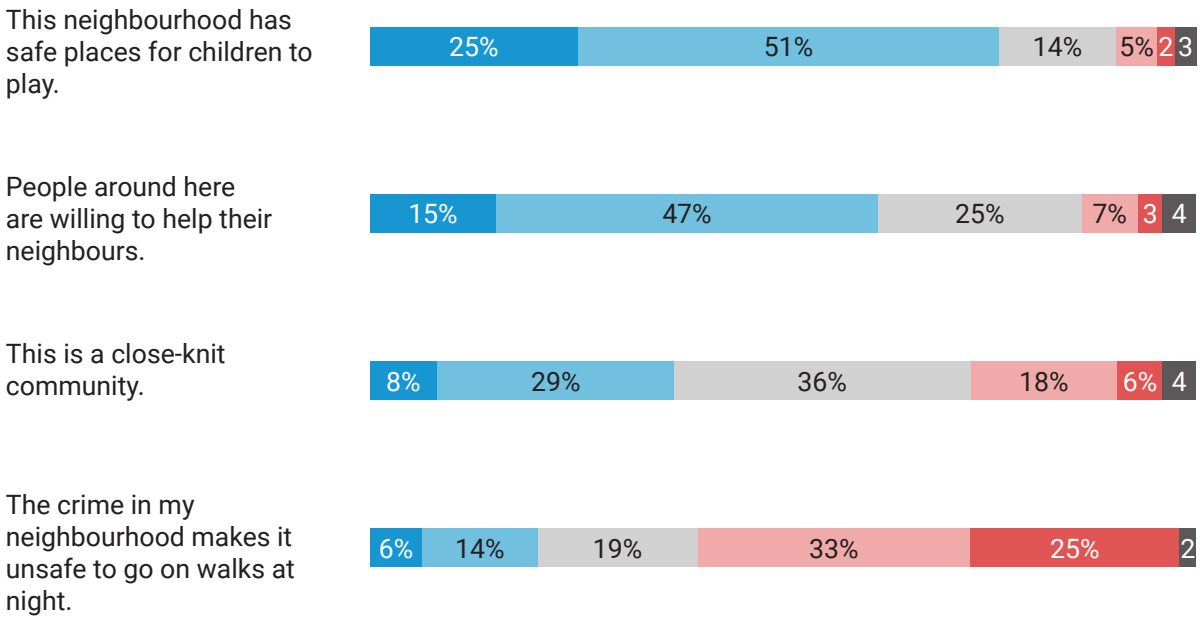
Perceptions to the Village

n=156



Toronto's Neighbourhood Perceptions

The Toronto Social Capital Study (2022)



What is missing in the Village?

As discussed in Section 3.3, Toronto is perceived as an inclusive city for QTPOC newcomers. However, lived experiences reveal that systemic social barriers complicate this narrative. Similarly, while the Village provides visibility and safety, underlying forces restrain many newcomers from fully engaging with the built environment. This section uncovers these spatial narratives, deconstructing the assumption that the Village is a Queer Arrival City.

1. Inclusivity and Diversity

Much like Canada's national branding as a "Queer Safe Haven", the Village has been marketed as a beacon of inclusivity by the City, local associations, and organizations seeking to attract investment and tourism.[274] However, this idealized image does not always align with lived realities.

This practice is referred to as "homonormalization", a process that normalizes gay identities to emulate the neoliberal heteronormative behaviours of consumerism and domesticity.[275] As discussed in Section 2.3, homonormativity is produced by gay men's desire to demonstrate their similarities to the heterosexual majority in order to achieve political recognition.[276] Thus, "homonormalized" spaces are typically produced and accessed by white middle-class gay men who actively participate in capitalist practices of consumption, such as the gay bars mentioned earlier.

274 Tim McCaskell, *Queer Progress: From Homophobia to Homonationalism* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2016), 421–54.

275 Lisa Duggan, "The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism," in *Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalized Cultural Politics*, ed. Russ Castronovo and Dana D. Nelson, New Americanists (Durham [N.C: Duke University Press, 2002), 179, https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822383901.

276 Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*, Harvard University Press paperback ed (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 2000).

Catering to White Cis Gender Gay Men

For QTPOC newcomers, homonormalization has led to exclusion rather than inclusivity. Survey data highlights that one of the top reasons QTPOC newcomers feel disconnected from the Village is racial and cultural exclusion. Specifically, many cite discrimination based on ethnicity, as well as the demographic homogeneity of the neighbourhood. Rania, a black queer woman, expresses her frustration: *"The events in the Village are not very community oriented. It's mostly just parties, and* ***most of the people who attend the parties are white queer people. It's not as welcoming for me.***"[277] Similarly, Pedro wishes for more diversity in venues. "***I don't like that 99% of the bars are cis-man centred***", he adds, *"I had people asking me like where's the nice lesbian bar in the Village? I didn't know it existed. I feel that's a bit concerning."*[278] The lack of inclusive spaces in the existing social landscape has prioritized certain identities while leaving others marginalized.

Marginalized by Hypersexualization

Another major point of exclusion is the homogeneous sexual culture that dominates the Village. Both Jason and Adam feel uncomfortable with the Village's hypersexualized environment. *"It's too open for me sometimes in the Village"*, Adam explains, *"I know, as gay people, we want to express ourselves, but* ***I don't want the whole gay community to only focus on sex.***"[279] This perception aligns with the reality that most venues in the Village – bars, clubs, and bathhouses – are designed to cater to a specific type of lifestyle and identity. For QTPOC newcomers who do not conform to this particular form of queer expression, the Village may feel alienating rather than affirming.

These testimonies challenge the dominant assumption that the Village is an inclusive and diverse place. While the neighbourhood provides visibility, safety, and social connections, it also reproduces barriers to the full participation of QTPOC newcomers.

277 Rania, Interview with Rania, interview by Simon Liao, July 18, 2024.

278 Interview with Pedro.

279 Interview with Adam.

2. Community Events and Public Spaces

Beyond the homogeneous social culture, the Village lacks spatial diversity, limiting the ways QTPOC newcomers build community and foster belonging. As noted earlier, both the Village and Toronto's broader social dynamics present significant barriers for QTPOC newcomers in forming relationships. The consumer-based spaces in the Village are an example of spaces which foster belonging for some, but, are exclusionary for others.

Excluded by Consumer Culture

Several participants express concerns over substance culture and the lack of alternative spaces. Bob, who is maintaining sobriety, reflects on his experience walking down Church St: "*I know there're a lot of really good queer bars, but for me,* ***I try to avoid anything that has to do with substances****."*[280] Pedro, while enjoying certain aspects of the bar scene, also acknowledges its embedded drinking culture: *"****It's just a place that makes you feel like drinking****"*, he continues, *"Of course, you have your free will to do it or not. But the truth is, most of the time, if everyone is drinking, and you can drink, then you will drink."*[281] Many participants note that the Village's entertainment scene is overwhelmingly centred on drinking and partying, limiting options for those seeking substance-free spaces or alternative venues for community-building.

Furthermore, Jason emphasizes: *"I think,* ***as a queer community, we should build spaces or have options of spaces that are not built around drinking and partying all the time.*** *I don't have the stamina for that anymore."* He expands on the broader consequences of lacking public queer spaces: *"We need to have options for people, not just for sober folks, but for people who are just not into that. What other options are there?* ***How do we actually meet new people without going to a bar or getting on an app?"*** For Jason, being aware of what's happening in the community is essential for belonging: *"If I don't know what's happening, if I don't even*

280 Interview with Bob.

281 Interview with Pedro.



▲ **Fig. 3.25** Gay bars on Church St. Interview participants frequently noted that these venues primarily cater to a gay clientele.

know how many queer people live across for me, what am I gonna do? There's no community that's gonna be built."[282] His perspective amplifies the importance of community-driven programming and spaces in bringing people together.

Building Communities Beyond Consumption

Several participants have expressed frustration at the lack of community-oriented events and accessible spaces that foster connections beyond nightlife culture. Bob continues his thoughts on what being sober means in the Village: *"Since I stopped going to bars, **it's hard to meet new people and interact with people that don't include any substances**."*[283] Jon, who lives in a condo in Midtown, calls for a *"**third space**"* beyond bars and sex-oriented establishments in the Village. *"If you are living in a condo neighbourhood, what are you gonna do, meet people in the common area of the condo? That's kinda weird"*, he continues, addressing the financial burden of visiting these queer space: *"Then lots of the other bars you have to spend money. Going out for lunch or dinner with people after a couple times, you are just like, I don't know if I can afford it."*[284] Both Pedro and Gael echo these concerns, emphasizing that consumption-based venues in the Village create economic barriers for newcomers seeking affordable and accessible ways to socialize.[285]

Thus, there is an urgent need for inclusive and accessible public spaces in the Village to accommodate people's diverse interests and experiences. Gael, a non-binary artist and avid bike polo player, expresses frustrations: *"I don't think I belong there yet, because **I haven't felt like the activities are matching with my preferences and my identity**"*.[286] Instead, they find their neighbourhood in the Junction more appealing than the Village, suggesting that queer spaces outside the Village may be more inclusive of subcultures and diverse interests. Similarly, Rania and Pedro advocate for more free public events, such as outdoor film screenings and art exhibitions.[287]

These perspectives reveal a paradox within the Village: while many participants appreciate the queer venues, its Queer Arrival Infrastructure does not fully accommodate the diverse

282 Interview with Jason.

283 Interview with Bob.

284 Interview with Jon.

285 Interview with Pedro; Gael, Interview with Gael, interview by Simon Liao, June 18, 2024.

286 Interview with Gael.

287 Interview with Pedro; Interview with Rania.

288 Interview with Jon.

289 Interview with David.

290 Interview with Bob.

needs, lifestyles, and socioeconomic realities of QTPOC newcomers. The dominance of nightlife culture and the lack of non-commercial spaces leave many struggling to build social connections.

Seeking Incidental Public Space for Spontaneous Connection

Beyond events, the physical infrastructure of the Village itself is inadequate. Many QTPOC newcomers express desires to have open public spaces that facilitate spontaneous and financially accessible social interactions.

Jon reflects on how the lack of public space in the Village has impacted his social life. *"It is very tough when I make plans with friends, especially with new friends, we have to go find this restaurant, and it's gonna be expensive, and it's very time-bound"*, he elaborates on how cost and time constraints create barriers, "***I would much rather have parks**. It's not contingent on me spending $20, and then someone tries to push me out after 1 hour."*[288] David echoes this, and prefers places where people could *"**go there even without a purpose**, and eventually decide what they want to do at day or night"*.[289] These perspectives prove that the absence of flexible public spaces in the Village has limited the possibilities of community-building. Unlike events, these incidental spaces allow for a more spontaneous and inclusive form of queer social life.

In addition to the lack of events and public space, some participants highlight physical accessibility issues in the Village's streetscape. Bob reflects: *"I use a mobility aid, and I can't walk for too long. Unless I go into a store or something, **I can't actually find a lot of public open spaces to just sit down and relax**."*[290] His experience exemplifies how the built environment directly impacts the ability of people to participate in community life. The absence of basic infrastructure further alienates disabled and mobility-impaired individuals.

3. Safety

Beyond the need for community events and public space, the Village does, in fact, have a decent-sized park that holds the potential to fulfill these needs. Barbara Hall Park, situated next to The 519, has long been serving as the "town hall" of the neighbourhood and hosting various community events.[291] However, despite its cultural significance, the park is also widely associated with drug use and street violence, raising serious safety concerns among both local residents and visitors.[292] Many QTPOC newcomers point directly to the park as a site of tension between personal security and public accessibility.

Feeling Unsafe due to Mental Health and Addiction Crisis

"I feel unsafe", Adam reflects, *"I walked past Barbara Hall Park,* ***too many people were using drugs****. Sometimes, people harassed me or asked me if I had money."*[293] Pedro, who lives in the neighbourhood, argues that the safety issues are the consequence of the high cost of living and the inadequate government in providing mental health support and other social services. *"I still feel very safe"*, he comments, *"The only moments that* ***I don't feel safe is when I see someone who is going through crises****, like yelling at the streets."*[294]

Competing Interests of Seeking Safety

Bob admits it's a conflicting reality to maintain a safe space for himself and other marginalized individuals in a shared environment: *"I know* ***it is a safe space for them****, but at the same time, I wish I had a place where I could enjoy that without the interaction of any substance, because that makes me feel unsafe."*[295] These testimonials reveal a critical paradox: the Village is regarded as a safe space for being queer, but not necessarily a safe place for everyday life. While QTPOC newcomers may feel protected in terms of gender and sexual identities, their overall sense of security is still shaped by the wider societal disparity.

291 Shawn Micallef, "Town Squares and Spiritual Hearts," in *Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer*, ed. Stephanie Chambers et al. (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017), 45–50.

292 Sarah MacMillan, "Safety Concerns at Toronto Park That Averages 1 Police Call a Day," *CBC News*, August 13, 2024, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/toronto-barbara-hall-park-police-calls-1.7290222.

293 Interview with Adam.

294 Interview with Pedro.

295 Interview with Bob.

▶ **Fig. 3.26** Barbara Hall Park has long been associated with illegal activities such as drug dealing and substance abuse.


NALOXONE

4. Housing

Housing is a fundamental element that shapes both Arrival Cities and queer enclaves, yet its relationship with the Queer Arrival City is far more complex and ambiguous. While the surveys indicate that housing-related issues remain the top reasons QTPOC newcomers' feel disconnected from the Village, relatively few interview participants explicitly address how housing impacts their migration journeys.

Strategizing to stay near the Village

Some participants find ways to manage high rental cost and personal lifestyles. Pedro, who currently lives in a postwar apartment building within the neighbourhood, describes the economic sacrifices required to sustain his living situations: *"I always wanted to live on my own. **It's expensive, but might be doable**, let me just get more hours and start working."*[296] For Jason, price and location are the two major factors in his housing decisions. After viewing several units in the Village, he finds a better balance in St. James Town.[297] Similarly, Adam moved away from the Village for cheaper options among other factors previously discussed.[298] These experiences demonstrate that while some QTPOC newcomers can navigate the housing crisis, many have sacrificed other aspects to maintain proximity to the Village.

Housing affordability in the Village is deeply tied to systemic issues of gentrification and homonormalization. As discussed in Section 2.5, the "queer gentrification" has transformed the Village from an affordable area to a desirable neighbourhood that attracts a wider demography. Currently, there are over two dozen condo projects being proposed or already under construction within the precinct.[299] The direct consequence is the changing demographic, rising property values, and the displacement of queer residents and businesses, resulting in the "de-gaying" of the Village.[300]

296 Interview with Pedro.

297 Interview with Jason.

298 Interview with Adam.

299 Church Wellesley Neighbourhood Association, "CWNA - Development Committee," CWNA - Church Wellesley Neighbourhood Association, accessed February 7, 2025, https://www.cwna.ca/development.html.

300 Amin Ghaziani, *There Goes the Gayborhood?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

301 From Phase 1: Surveys.



▲ **Fig. 3.27** Gentrification and development pressures pose risks of displacing local residents. For example, the rental apartment building at 88 Isabella Street is set to be demolished and replaced by a 62-story condominium.

Competing Interests of Living in the Village

In addition to gentrification-driven displacement, there are also competing interests among queer residents, revealing a generational and class-based divide. The older generations of queer arrival secured housing while it was still affordable, many of them couldn't afford to move out. On the other hand, wealthy queer newcomers are still able to move into the Village, effectively constructing their own version of an Arrival City. However, for the majority others, entering the Village is more difficult than ever, as one of the survey participant wrote *"(I wish there were)* ***More affordable housing because I feel so safe there I would like to move there****"*.[301] The Village is increasingly becoming a space of privilege, shaped by economic inequalities that disproportionately affect lower-income QTPOC newcomers. As discussed in Section 2.4, the class differences in constructing Arrival Cities are often overlooked. In examining the Village as a Queer Arrival City, it is essential to consider how newcomers' economic standing influences their mobility.

Conceptualizing Queer Arrival City

At the beginning of this section, I provisionally defined Queer Arrival City as the urban neighbourhood where QTPOC newcomers resettle upon arriving in Canada. Through empirical fieldwork, this section has examined how the Village function as a Queer Arrival City while uncovering the hidden forces that complicate this assumption.

For some QTPOC newcomers, the Village provides spaces to live, play, and belong. However, for many others, the Village remains insufficiently inclusive and lacks adequate infrastructure to accommodate their diverse needs and migration experiences. These limitations are further exacerbated by safety concerns and the housing crisis as part of the larger societal issues.

Survey data reinforces these findings, revealing the primary reasons why many QTPOC newcomers struggle to develop a strong sense of belonging in the Village. The most commonly cited barriers include the high cost of housing, the lack of adequate infrastructure and community-oriented spaces, systemic discrimination, and the neighbourhood's demographic makeup. While many non-migrant Torontonians express little interest in seeking community belonging within their neighborhoods, QTPOC newcomers exhibit a strong desire to connect with their new communities.[302] However, the structural and spatial realities of the Village have restricted their ability to do so, complicating its role as a Queer Arrival City.

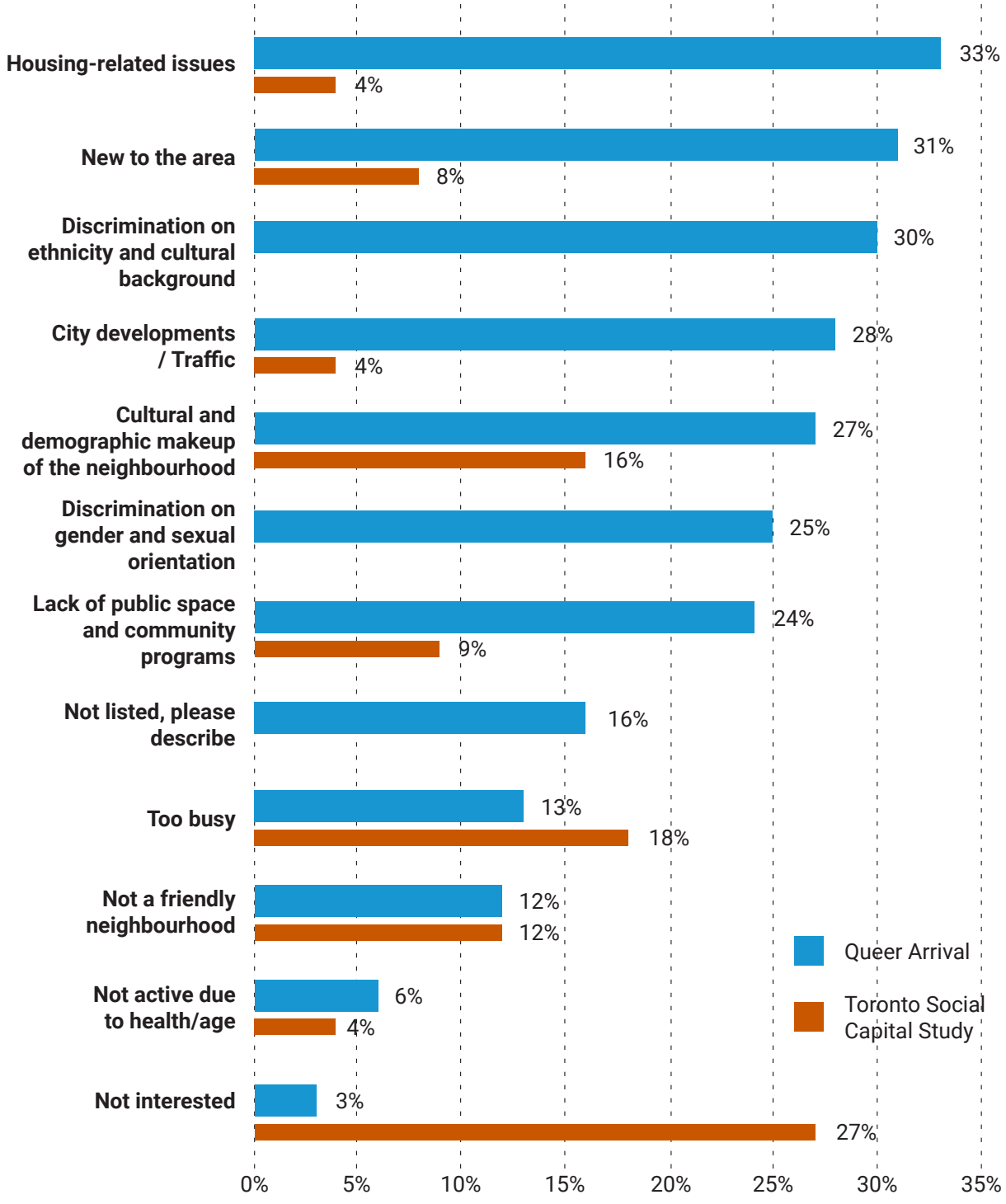
Just as the "post-mo" have sought alternative neighbourhoods outside the Village, QTPOC newcomers are also dispersed across the city. Their spatial patterns, as illustrated in the earlier section, indicate that their presence is not confined to the Village but extends throughout the urban sphere. Factors such as ethnicity, sexuality, and class shape these divergent migration trajectories. Thus, the earlier definition of Queer Arrival City, and the assumption that it's the Village, fail to capture the complexity of queer migration.

302 Parkin and Ayer, "Toronto Social Capital Study 2022."

▶ **Fig. 3.28** Phase 1 Survey results identifying key reasons why QTPOC newcomers do not feel a stronger sense of belonging to the Village, compared with the 2018 Toronto Social Capital Study.

What would you say is the main reason or reasons you do not have a stronger sense of belonging to the Village?

In comparison: Toronto Social Capital Study 2018 - What would you say is the main reason or reasons you do not have a stronger sense of belonging to your local community?



Therefore, I propose to redefine the Queer Arrival City, moving beyond a fixed geographic space to an emerging typology that exists both spatially and relationally. To do so, I draw on the methodological frameworks of urban sociologist Amin Ghaziani, who conceptualizes queer enclaves through geography, culture, residences, and organization.[303] A similar approach is also visible in Doug Saunders' analysis of Arrival Cities.[304] Adopting this framework, I conceptualize the Queer Arrival City across four interrelated dimensions, illustrating its intersections with, and divergences from, queer enclaves and Arrival Cities.

303 Ghaziani, *There Goes the Gayborhood?*, 273–74.

304 Saunders, *Arrival City*, 20.

Geography

Both queer enclaves and Arrival Cities are typically spatialized in specific neighbourhoods. However, the Queer Arrival City does not have a fixed geographic location. As indicated by the queerscape maps, QTPOC newcomers exhibit fluid mobility patterns, forming a network of Queer Arrival Infrastructure rather than a single settlement zone. While certain geographic patterns emerge, the Queer Arrival City cannot be pinned down to a defined space. Its location is dynamic, shifting, and in need of further study.

Culture

The cultural identity of both queer enclaves and Arrival Cities is often reflected in visible spatial markers, such as street banners, storefronts, and public events, as well as in the social and demographic composition of the community. For QTPOC newcomers, however, these cultural markers are fragmented. While events within the Village may occasionally cater to queer people of colour, there is no consistent emphasis on immigration status, racial diversity, or the unique needs of QTPOC newcomers. A Queer Arrival City built upon shared cultural attributes has yet to be fully recognized or established.

Residences

Statistically, queer enclaves often have a high concentration of queer residents, while Arrival Cities typically house large proportion of ethnic recent immigrants. As illustrated in Section 3.4, the preliminary geography study of QTPOC newcomers' mobility demonstrates that Downtown Toronto, particularly the area surrounding the Village, has a significantly higher concentration of QTPOC newcomers. As explored in this research, the Village does play a residential role for some QTPOC newcomers. However, given the limitations of available data, it is difficult to determine the extent of their residential presence. Additionally, broader economic inequalities play a large role in shaping where QTPOC newcomers can and cannot afford to live.

Organizations

Queer enclaves typically feature a dense cluster of queer commercial spaces, cultural institutions, and community organizations, while Arrival Cities contain ethnic stores, restaurants, and migrant-focused services. In the Queer Arrival City, such organizations often overlap with existing queer infrastructure. Several community organizations, such as The 519, Asian Community AIDS Services (ACAS), Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention (ASAAP), and Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention (Black CAP) offer targeted services for QTPOC newcomers. Additionally, immigration-focused organizations, such as the African Centre for Refugees, provide support for Black queer refugees. These organizations were not originally founded on the premise of supporting QTPOC newcomers, however, their presence has created a web of intersectional infrastructure that support the Queer Arrival City. Notably, while many of these organizations are not directly located within the Village, they maintain strong geographic and institutional ties to the area, reinforcing the Village as a focal point of the network.

Following this framework, it becomes clear that a **Queer Arrival City that meets these measures does not currently exist. Given that the Village fulfills some of the roles, it is likely the closest spatial typology to this concept**. However, the lived experiences of QTPOC newcomers counter this assumption, shifting our attention away from a single geographic location and toward a broader interconnected infrastructural network.

Therefore, I propose to deconstruct the confined spatial boundaries of the Village, and conceptualize Queer Arrival City through the lens of Queer Arrival Infrastructure to reveal the relational dimensions of queer spatial experiences. Catherine J. Nash and Andrew Gorman-Murray propose a "mobilities approach" to extend beyond the bounded locations in examining queer enclaves instead of emphasizing fixed places or neighbourhoods.[305] They argue that, despite the decentralization of queer life beyond the Village, the area remains part of Toronto's queer "central spatial imagery", forming complex linkages to the broader urban sphere. Similarly, as illustrated in the queerscapes, QTPOC newcomers demonstrate spatial mobility patterns that extend across Downtown Toronto and beyond. While the Village still emerges in their narratives – not necessarily as a place of residence, but as a significant symbolic and functional space. By deconstructing the Village in order to reconstruct the Queer Arrival City, this approach highlights the movements, social networks, and interconnections between locations.

In this understanding, the Queer Arrival City is conceptualized as a larger network of Queer Arrival Infrastructure, encompassing physical locations, social connections, and intangible experiences that collectively support QTPOC newcomers' post-migration life. Thus the Queer Arrival City is a flexible and fluid concept. It is a spatial typology derived from QTPOC newcomers' spatial narratives, materializing at various scales and built forms - from the Village and public spaces, to social networks and even digital platforms. Ultimately, the **Queer Arrival City is not a singular place, but a fluid and evolving constellation of queer spaces, shaped and produced by the spatial narratives of QTPOC newcomers**.

305 Catherine J. Nash and Andrew Gorman-Murray, "Lesbian Spaces in Transition: Insights from Toronto and Sydney," in *Planning and LGBTQ Communities: The Need for Inclusive Queer Spaces*, ed. Petra L. Doan (New York: Routledge, 2015), 185.

▶ **Fig. 3.29** The intersection of Church and Wellesley St.


Church St
Queer & Now Queer & Now
the village
#VILLAGELOVE1D
Queer & Now Queer
NOVACK DRUGS
Take Care
AMOR
FUSION DONER & KEBAB


CW HEALTH
CW HEALTH
GLAD DAY
BOOKS ▼ COFFEE ▼ COCKTAILS
ABSOLUT.

3.5 Queer Arrival Spaces

"I feel safe, but not as comfortable. I can't truly fully be myself in spaces that are mostly white." [306]

- Rania, Interview Participant

306 Rania, Interview with Rania, interview by Simon Liao, July 18, 2024.

The queerscape mappings reveal the spatial narratives of QTPOC newcomers, identifying patterns in how they navigate the urban environment and collectively form a Queer Arrival Infrastructure. This section examines three key sites within this infrastructural network: The 519, Glad Day Bookshop, and Hanlan's Point Beach, to uncover lived experiences and hidden narratives embedded within these spaces.

By integrating interview participant testimonials with theoretical discussions, this section conceptualizes Queer Arrival Space within the Queer Arrival framework – as a spatial ideal where safety and inclusion are fully realized for QTPOC newcomers. Furthermore, based on the lived experiences of QTPOC individuals in queer spaces, I propose the concept of Queer Diaspora Spatial Consciousness - a collective, subconscious sensibility that shapes how QTPOC individuals assess, navigate, and reposition themselves within the built environment.

◀ **Fig. 3.30** The Glad Day Bookshop at 499 Church St.

The 519

No discussion on queer migration is complete without acknowledging the role of The 519, Toronto's primary queer community centre and cultural hub at the heart of the Church-Wellesley Village. Beyond serving the local queer communities, The 519 is widely known for its support of queer newcomers and refugees, assisting them in their resettlement in Canada.[307] This section explores The 519's role in queer migration through the lived experiences of QTPOC newcomers.

The history of The 519 is deeply intertwined with Toronto's legacy of queer resistance and activism. Originally slated for demolition in 1975, the building was saved through the united efforts of local residents, transforming it into a community centre. Since then, The 519 has served as a gathering place for advocacy groups fighting injustice, playing a pivotal role in guiding queer communities through the HIV/AIDS epidemic and police brutality in the 1980s and 1990s.[308] For racialized queer communities, The 519 has historically provided a sanctuary for community belonging and visibility. Notably, in 1983, it hosted the first "CelebrAsian", a community-led cabaret organized by Gay Asians of Toronto (GAT) to celebrate queer Asian identities.[309] Similarly, in 1988, it was the venue for the first Desh Pardesh, an event that celebrated South Asian fashion, food, and culture.[310]

Today, The 519 continues its commitment to serving marginalized communities in Toronto and beyond. Through innovative and engaging programs and partnerships with other organizations, it provides space and support for families, seniors, newcomers with a particular focus on queer individuals. For QTPOC newcomers, The 519 offers comprehensive programming and services ranging from legal clinics, education and training, housing support, and employment services.[311] Bob, one of the participants, speaks highly of the EarlyON program, which focuses on early childhood learning. He contends that education is key to eliminating discrimination, emphasizing: *"The 519 has days and spaces where kids can go. I love the fact that it is happening. You can't expect people to just know certain*

▶ **Fig. 3.31** The 519, a community centre located at 519 Church St.

307 CBC News, "Toronto's The 519 Welcomes Hundreds of 2SLGBTQ+ Refugees at Special Event," ***CBC News***, February 14, 2024, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/love-in-action-unity-day-for-lgbtq-refugees-the-519-1.7114171; Brittany Rosen, "Pride Month: Toronto's The 519 Offers Support to 2SLGBTQ+ Refugees - Toronto | Globalnews.Ca," Global News, accessed February 5, 2025, https://globalnews.ca/news/9779367/pride-month-the-519-support-2slgbtq-refugees/.

308 Shawn Micallef, "Town Squares and Spiritual Hearts," in ***Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer***, ed. Stephanie Chambers et al. (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017), 47–49.

309 Vince Ha, "The Invisible Visibles and CelebrAsian," in ***Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer***, ed. Stephanie Chambers et al. (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017), 224–25.

310 Sharon Fernandez, "Desh Pardesh: A Cultural Festival with Attitude," in ***Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer***, ed. Stephanie Chambers et al. (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017), 158–61.

311 "Home - The 519," 519, accessed November 5, 2023, https://www.the519.org/.

▶ **Fig. 3.32** The 519 is recognized for its New to Canada programs, which provide support and resources to assist queer newcomers with their resettlement.




THE 519
New to Canada
REGISTRATION FOR NEW TO CANADA SETTLEMENT SERVICES IS TEMPORARILY UNAVAILABLE
REFUGEE HEARING PREPARATION GUIDE
NEW TO CANADA BOOKLET
OR

things."[312] However, while The 519's institutional role in queer migration is well-documented, the lived experiences of QTPOC newcomers present a more complex reality.

Despite being aware of The 519 and its services, none of the interviewed participants had directly accessed them. Jason, for instance, describes the administrative hurdles that deterred him from engaging in its programs. He elaborates: *"I know The 519 is going to say, we have those programs. Obviously,* ***those programs are not accessible enough****. There are roadblocks and roadblocks. If I have to email a person, and then send them my passport, and then do this and that, I'm not gonna show up. I don't bother because I have enough things to worry about."* In contrast with his previous experience accessing newcomer services in Washington DC, Jason finds The 519 is not doing enough to cultivate an inclusive and accessible environment.[313] This perspective raises an important critique: while The 519 offers extensive services on paper, bureaucratic barriers may prevent actual engagement and participation, particularly for newcomers navigating multiple challenges.

Similarly, Rania describes her experience at The 519 as *"not welcoming"*, especially in interactions with staff members: *"(They are)* ***not as inviting*** *in terms of helping you out when you ask for directions as much. (They are) Just trying to get through people as much as possible when it comes to answering questions."* Beyond personal interactions, Rania also critiques the spatial environment of The 519, suggesting that it lacks the warmth and openness expected of a community centre: *"It doesn't feel like a community centre. When I think of a building that's very welcoming,* ***I want it to be more open and more sunlight, and welcoming staff at the desk. But it's not like that****"*. In contrast, she describes another community organization she frequently visits, highlighting the importance of intentional space-making: *"The people who were there are mostly people of colour and black queer people. They are very welcoming. The space is really great. They have a kitchen, an open space where you can hang out, chairs everywhere to sit down, chat with people, and eat food."*[314]

312 Bob, Interview with Bob, interview by Simon Liao, June 24, 2024.

313 Jason, Interview with Jason, interview by Simon Liao, July 3, 2024.

314 Interview with Rania.



▲ **Fig. 3.33** The second-floor ballroom of The 519 serves as a multi-functional event space.

While the 519 holds a historic and institutional significance within Toronto's queerscape, its actual impact on the lived experiences of QTPOC newcomers appears to be limited. Its bureaucratic structures, service accessibility challenges, and even spatial design all influence how individuals navigate space. These insights reveal a broader reality: a space does not automatically function as a queer space by design or reputation. Its effectiveness relies not just on the infrastructure itself but on the interactions, relationships, and operations that shape it.



Jason *he/they*

*"The 519, I feel like they tend to be **really cold**, and probably because of the kind of folks they are dealing with on a regular basis... My experience with them wasn't necessarily the most helpful... **Nobody was willing to actually make the connection**."*



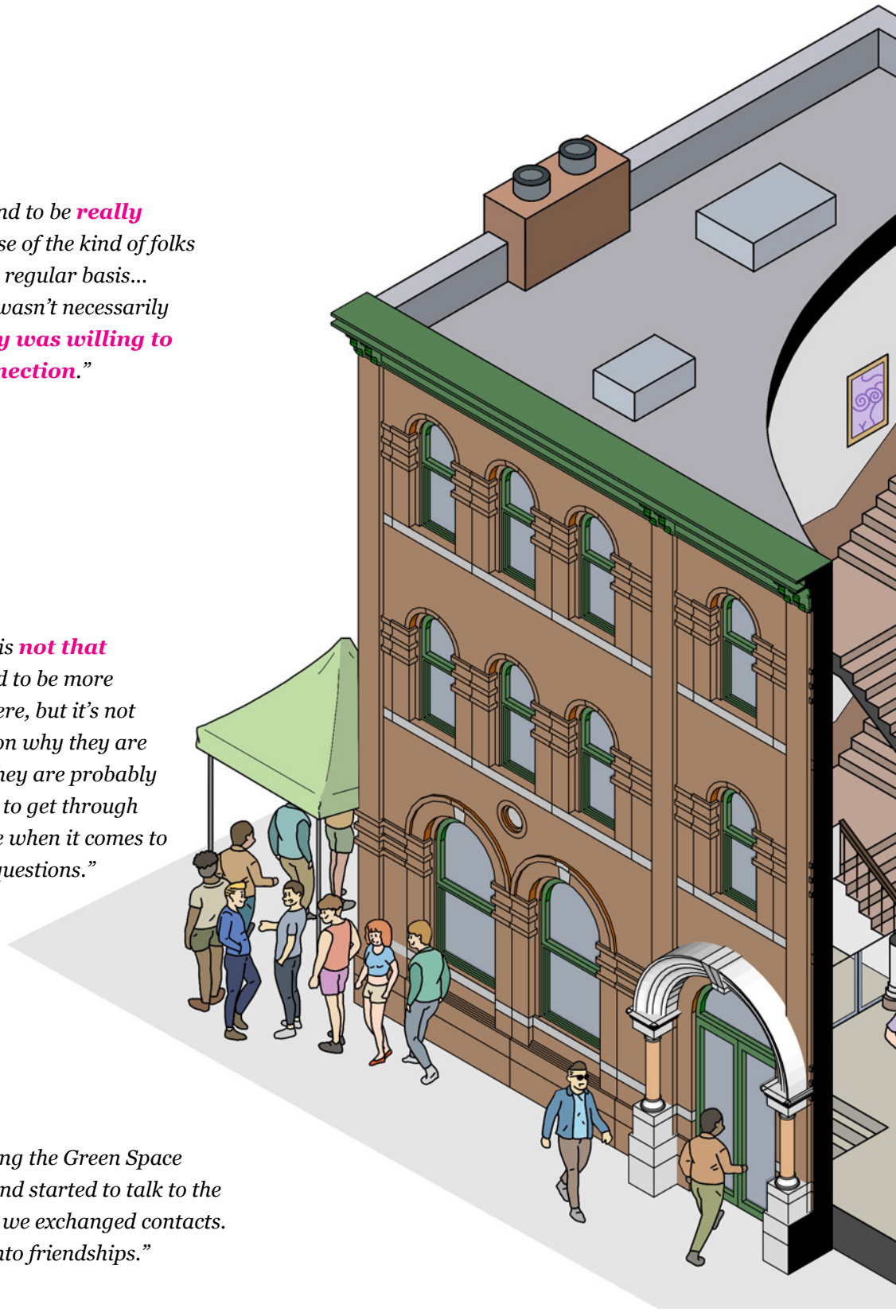
Rania *she/her*

*"I feel the staff at the desk is **not that welcoming**. I just wanted to be more comfortable when I get there, but it's not like that... I think the reason why they are not as welcoming is that they are probably understaffed... Just trying to get through people as much as possible when it comes to like asking or answering questions."*

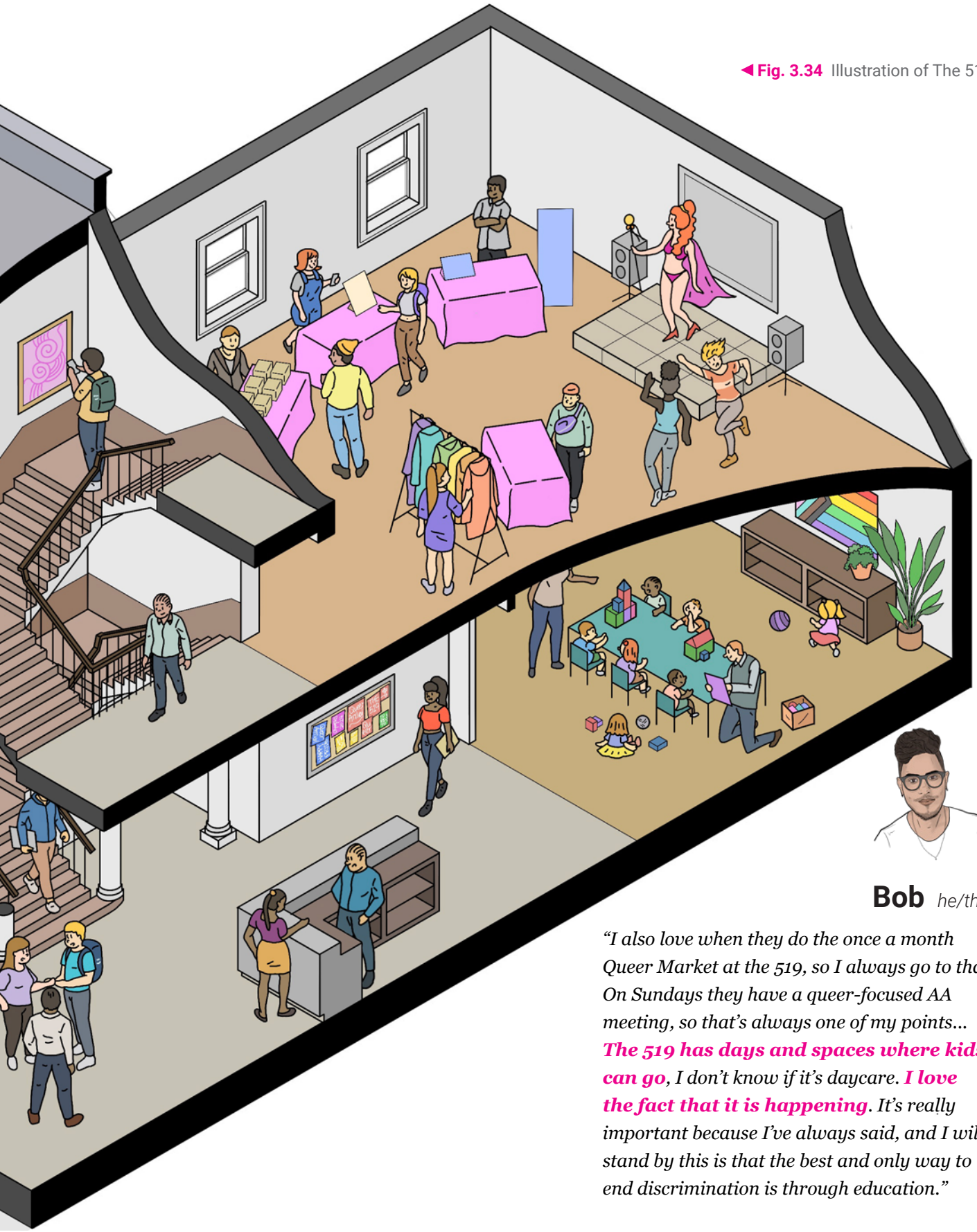


David *he/him*

"I only visited the 519 during the Green Space festival... I was queuing, and started to talk to the person in front of me, and we exchanged contacts. Sometimes this develops into friendships."



◀ **Fig. 3.34** Illustration of The 519.



Bob *he/they*

*"I also love when they do the once a month Queer Market at the 519, so I always go to that. On Sundays they have a queer-focused AA meeting, so that's always one of my points... **The 519 has days and spaces where kids can go**, I don't know if it's daycare. **I love the fact that it is happening**. It's really important because I've always said, and I will stand by this is that the best and only way to end discrimination is through education."*

Glad Day Bookshop

Glad Day Bookshop is the world's oldest 2SLGBTQ+ bookstore and has long functioned as an unofficial community hub for Toronto's queer communities. More than just a bookstore, Glad Day supports and organizes a range of activities and services, including performances, literary events, community meetings, and workshops. Founded in 1970 as a mobile bookshop carried in its founder's backpack, Glad Day has since evolved, relocating multiple times before settling in its current Church St location in 2016, solidifying its status as a staple of the Village.[315] However, since the pandemic, Glad Day has been struggling with finances and facing eviction. Most recently, in 2024, the bookstore launched a fundraising campaign to secure its physical space temporarily while navigating an uncertain future.[316] The following discussion explores QTPOC newcomers' experiences at Glad Day, examining its role in fostering inclusivity, accessibility, and community well-being.

Many participants express positive experiences at Glad Day, appreciating its inclusive programming, flexible space, and welcoming staff. The bookstore's diverse events cater to queer individuals across different backgrounds and identities, fostering a sense of belonging. Gael visits Glad Day for art-related events, particularly those that emphasize gender inclusivity. They reflect: *"Even though I haven't bought any books, but being surrounded by books written by and for queer people,* ***is very interesting and delightful****."*[317] Similarly, Bob describes it as more than just a bookstore: "*I like the fact that it's a coffee shop and a bookstore, and they have Pride merch and queer merch. I love the fact that they also do events like drag brunches on Sundays."*[318] Others participants emphasize the flexible and multifunctional space. Jason notes that unlike many other venues, Glad Day encourages social engagement without financial pressure: *"It's not just about the books. There's a little cafe. There you can actually meet people,* ***they encourage you to hang out, and not necessarily spend money****."*[319] These testimonials illustrate how Glad Day's physical space and programming contribute to a more inclusive and accessible experience.

▶ **Fig. 3.35** The storefront of the Glad Day Bookshop.

315 Jearld Moldenhauer, "A Literary Breakthrough: Glad Day's Origins," in *Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer*, ed. Stephanie Chambers et al. (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017), 158–61.

316 "Glad Day," Glad Day, accessed February 5, 2025, https://www.gladday.ca.

317 Gael, Interview with Gael, interview by Simon Liao, June 18, 2024.

318 Interview with Bob.

319 Interview with Jason.

▶ **Fig. 3.36** Glad Day was hosting a book launch and a film screening.


GLAD DAY
BOOKS ▾ COFFEE ▾ COCKTAILS
ABSOLUT.
OPEN
416-923-204



Beyond events and spatial arrangements, participants also highlight the importance of Glad Day's staff in shaping their experiences. Bob, for example, describes how the presence of queer-identifying employees fosters a heightened sense of safety and authenticity: *"The people that work there are queer. For me, there are different degrees. I can go to someplace and just mask up or hide a bit of myself, and there are other places where I can let my queerness show. Then there are places like Glad Day where* ***I can literally just be myself, and not feel anxious or scared, or feel conscious about what I am doing and how I am looking****."*[320]

Compared to his experiences at The 519, Jason finds that Glad Day is a good example of how a queer space should be operated. *"Everybody will say things like, yes, our business is very inclusive, and we welcome everyone. And yes, it's run by queer people. So obviously, everyone is welcome. But how it actually transpires in real life is very different"*, he explains, *"Glad Day does it really well. When you walk in there, somebody will say hello, somebody will want to talk to you.* ***There's a general vibe that you can cultivate to invite people in****."*[321] This distinction illustrates the active role that community-driven businesses can play in creating a welcoming and affirming environment.

However, others express concerns about representation within the space. Rania, for instance, shares her discomfort upon visiting: *"When I entered the space the first time, I felt very uncomfortable"*, Rania elaborates, *"mostly because* ***I didn't see any black people in there, and I didn't see any queer people of colour****. So it's just mostly white people in the bookshop."*[322] Rania's experience reflects broader discussions around the white-centric demographic of the Village, reinforcing the notion that even within queer spaces, marginalization can persist. Despite Glad Day's commitment to inclusivity, it may still struggle to represent the full spectrum of queer identities.

As revealed in Section 3.4, the lack of inclusivity, diversity, and community spaces is some of the main forces that drive QTPOC newcomers away from the Village. From the above testimonials,

320 Interview with Bob.

321 Interview with Jason.

322 Interview with Rania.



▶ **Fig. 3.37** A drag brunch at Glad Day.

it is evident that Glad Day has, to some extent, filled this gap, offering an alternative queer space that prioritizes community engagement and belonging, thus playing a critical role in the Arrival Infrastructure. However, achieving true inclusivity requires systemic changes at a societal level. While Glad Day provides a strong example of how a consumer-based queer venue could centre community benefits, ongoing work is necessary to ensure broader representation and accessibility for all members of the queer communities.



Gael *they/them*

"I usually go to Glad Day Bookshop. I tend to go to musical events over there, or events for all genders, and not specifically for gay men or lesbians. ***As a non-binary person, I feel better with events for all genders****."*



Jon *he/him*

"You can go in there and drink, but you don't have to. You can go read a book, or get a coffee. I can go in and browse if I am by myself, or I could meet someone there."



Bob *he/they*

"I'll just be at Glad Day, hang out, talk to people, work on my computer, have some coffee, and stop by Craig's Cookies. Basically, for me, it's a place where ***I feel completely comfortable*** *to hang out and just spend all day and talk to people that I don't know and* ***not feel any anxiety****. Even if I don't do anything specifically, just the fact that I am hanging out there is enough."*



Rania *she/her*

"When I entered the space the first time, I felt very uncomfortable, mostly because I didn't see any black people in there, and I didn't see any people of colour who are queer in there. So it's just ***mostly white people in the bookshop****."*

▲ **Fig. 3.38** Illustration of the Glad Day Bookshop.



Pedro *he/him*

"They were hosting a gaming night, like board games. I saw everyone playing, and it seemed to be a really cool place. I also love bookshops, and libraries."

Jason *he/they*

*"**When you walk in, somebody will say hello**. If you are looking at a book, they'll be like, is there any kind of specific thing you're looking for? And can I help you find something? Etc. If you ask them specific questions about books that they could possibly procure for you. It's not just about the books. There's a little cafe space. **There you can actually meet people, they encourage you to hang out, and not necessarily spend money**."*

Hanlan's Point Beach

Located on the western shore of the Toronto Islands, Hanlan's Point Beach is Toronto's only clothing-optional beach and has served as a summer gathering place for queer communities for over a century. Since the early 1900s, people were drawn to the privacy of the beach at the margins of the city. By the 1940s, Hanlan's had become an established queer space, with nearby cottages owned by gay men. In 1971, it hosted the "Gay Day Picnic," often regarded as Canada's first Pride event and a critical moment in the city's queer history.[323] Today, Hanlan's remains a vital part of Toronto's queer social life and a pivotal link in the Queer Arrival Infrastructure.

Many QTPOC newcomers perceive Hanlan's as an inclusive and affirming space. Gael, a non-binary individual, describes the experience of queer freedom at Hanlan's as profoundly liberating: *"The possibility of doing whatever we wanted to do without feeling our bodies are being policed or watched in a certain way.* ***I feel like the possibility is just very calming, soothing, and joyful.***"[324] Similarly, Pedro, who often goes to Hanlan's with his boyfriend and queer friends, characterizes Hanlan's as ***"a place where you feel free to be yourself"***.[325] Jon highlights the strong sense of community at Hanlan's, particularly through collective efforts to maintain and protect the space. As a volunteer involved in beach cleanups, he reflects: ***"It is a good way to meet new people"***.[326] These testimonials reveal Hanlan's functions as a space for self-expression and also a social hub for community resilience.

However, contradictory narratives complicate Hanlan's inclusive perception. Bob, a trans man, expresses discomfort and a sense of vulnerability at the beach: ***"There are people just kind of lurking around and being nosy. I just don't feel comfortable."*** He continues: *"If there were a beach where it was exclusively for queer folks. That would be different. I think I would definitely go more than I do now."*[327] Despite its reputation as a queer space, Hanlan's has never been entirely safe. Throughout the 1970s and 1990s, queer beachgoers faced persistent threats, including police attacks and harassment from

▶ **Fig. 3.39** Hanlan's Point Beach.

323 Friends of Hanlan's, "Queer History of Hanlan's Point," Hanlan's Point Beach, accessed February 5, 2025, https://www.hanlans.ca/queer-history-of-hanlan-s-point; Edward Jackson, "Hanlan's Point," in *Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer*, ed. Stephanie Chambers et al. (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2017), 130–33.

324 Interview with Gael.

325 Pedro, Interview with Pedro, interview by Simon Liao, July 22, 2024.

326 Jon, Interview with Jon, interview by Simon Liao, May 31, 2024.

327 Interview with Bob.

▶ **Fig. 3.40** A pathway leading to Hanlan's Point Beach.





heterosexual visitors.[328] Even today, instances of homophobia, transphobia, bigotry and harassment still exist.[329] This reality raises the critical question of the conditionality and temporality of queer space.

Hanlan's role as a refuge for Toronto's queer communities is increasingly challenged by external forces, including ecological degradation, development pressures, and systemic neglect. Erosion has significantly reshaped Hanlan's landscape. The site of the "Gay Day Picnic" is now submerged, and large portions of the original shoreline have been lost to the lake. In response, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) has implemented restoration projects, including sand dune reconstruction to mitigate further erosion. Additionally, a new beach near Gibraltar Point has been reconstructed to expand Hanlan's shoreline.[330] While these interventions offer some relief, they also raise concerns about the sustainability of Hanlan's as both a natural habitat and a queer cultural landmark.

Urban development poses another existential threat to Hanlan's. In late 2022, the Toronto Island Master Plan proposed an outdoor concert venue. The plan, driven by capital interests, disregarded concerns raised during the community consultations. In response, grassroots organization Friends of Hanlan's launched a campaign opposing the proposal, arguing that the project would endanger local queer heritage, compromise the physical safety of queer beachgoers, and disrupt the fragile ecological balance. The campaign quickly gained momentum, applying significant political pressure that ultimately led to the withdrawal of the proposal.[331] This victory also heightened public and political awareness of Hanlan's importance. In 2023, the City of Toronto extended the clothing-optional area to encompass the entire beach and formally recognized Hanlan's as "Canada's oldest surviving queer space."[332]

However, challenges persist. In 2024, Ports Toronto proposed a public road linking the Island Airport pedestrian tunnel with Hanlan's Point Ferry Docks. This development would transform Hanlan's into the primary access point for the entire island, increasing traffic and further eroding the privacy that originally defined it as a queer space.[333]

328 Friends of Hanlan's, "Queer History of Hanlan's Point."

329 CBC News, "Victim of Toronto Island Beating 'somewhat Comforted' Police Have Made Arrest in Attack," ***CBC News***, June 21, 2021, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/victim-david-gomez-hanlans-point-aggravated-assault-arrest-comforted-1.6074245.

330 Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, "Gibraltar Point Erosion Control Project," Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), accessed February 9, 2025, https://trca.ca/conservation/infrastructure-projects/gibraltar-point-erosion-control-project/.

331 CBC News, "City Drops Plan for Permanent Festival Space on Hanlan's Point after Pushback from LGBTQ+ Community," ***CBC News***, February 28, 2023, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/hanlans-point-dropped-city-master-plan-decision-1.6763490.

332 Julia Lawrence, Amanda Seraphina, and Anita Li, "Toronto's Hanlan's Point Recognized as Historically Queer Space," ***CityNews Toronto***, June 23, 2023, https://toronto.citynews.ca/2023/06/23/torontos-hanlans-point-recognized-as-historically-queer-space/.

333 Friends of Hanlan's, "Queer History of Hanlan's Point."



▲ **Fig. 3.41** The Community Planting Site at Hanlan's was completed with the help of communities and volunteers.

As one of the few explicitly queer public spaces in Toronto, Hanlan's holds undeniable significance for queer communities and QTPOC newcomers. As previously discussed, the lack of inclusive and accessible public spaces remains a critical gap in the Queer Arrival City. Hanlan's not only serves as a site of liberation and community-building but also stands as a testament to the resilience of Toronto's queer communities. However, its future remains precarious, contingent on sustained advocacy, careful environmental stewardship, and continued recognition of its cultural and historical importance.



Pedro *he/him*

"We usually go to the clothing optional beach, which is the more queer area. Yeah, it's pretty cool. Sometimes I go there on Sundays, sometimes on Mondays. Weekends are always way packed compared to weekdays... When we are there, we are usually with our queer friends, playing music. It's queer and welcoming. ***It's a place where you feel free to be yourself****."*



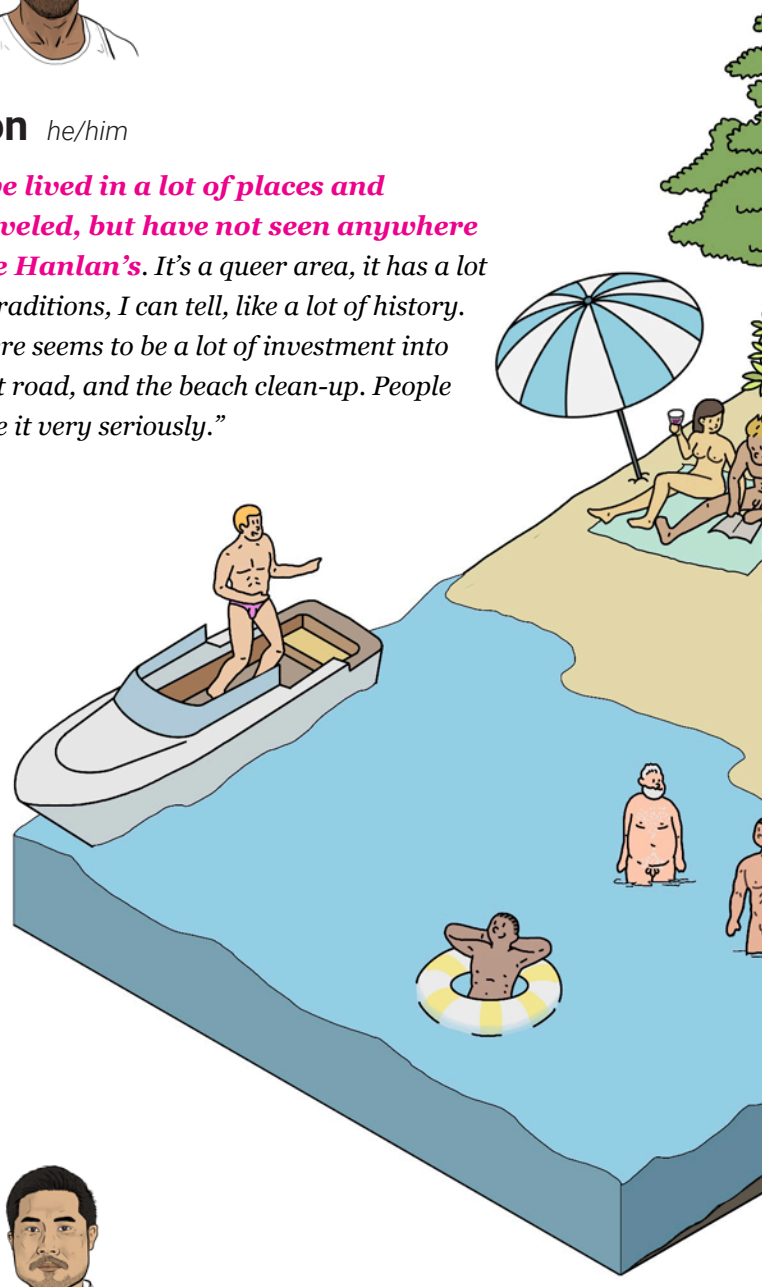
Bob *he/they*

"There was a Pride picnic on the beach, Hanlan's, that was really fun... Last year when we went to Hanlan's Point, you know how it's clothing optional, but I still didn't feel safe. Because we still have ***people just kind of lurking around and being nosy****. I just don't feel comfortable. So I really just don't go. If there were a beach where it was exclusively for queer folks. That would be different. I think I would definitely go more than I do now. But just having that mix and match, and seeing some people that are kind of giving you the eyes and looks, it's just... I don't wanna feel uncomfortable already all my life. So I just avoid those spaces."*



Jon *he/him*

*"****I've lived in a lot of places and traveled, but have not seen anywhere like Hanlan's****. It's a queer area, it has a lot of traditions, I can tell, like a lot of history. There seems to be a lot of investment into that road, and the beach clean-up. People take it very seriously."*



Adam *he/him*

"Hanlan's I went there once, a bit too far. I spent a whole day."

◀ **Fig. 3.42** Illustration of Hanlan's Point Beach.



Jason *he/they*

"I was there for like 10 minutes before I went to the other side. Only because we didn't have that much time. It was closer to dusk. So we were just doing rounds. That was more of a touristy thing."



Gael *they/them*

"I went this weekend. I found the typical symbol of the rainbow, and there is a sign that says it's a historical place. But for me, what made me come was an event. Because a friend of mine was organizing a party, and we had a bonfire and DJs. It was a place where people could be naked or not. Most people were in clothes. But ***the possibility of doing whatever we wanted to do*** *without feeling our bodies are being policed or watched in a certain way. I feel like* ***the possibility is just very calming, soothing, and joyful****."*

Queer Arrival Space

The above discussions illustrate QTPOC newcomers' experiences within three key sites of Queer Arrival Infrastructure: The 519, Glad Day Bookshop, and Hanlan's Point Beach. These venues are widely recognized as queer spaces. However, despite their reputation as inclusive spaces, competing interests and concerns over representation persist, challenging the conditionality and temporality of queer space. As demonstrated in QTPOC newcomers' lived experiences, it is problematic to claim these spaces as universally queer without critically asking: Whose queer space is it? And whom does it truly serve?

Imagining a Utopian Dimension to Queer Space

QTPOC newcomers frequently describe queer spaces as more than a safe environment; it is a liberating, collective space of belonging, where diverse identities and expressions are not just accepted, but actively celebrated. Rania describes it as *"**places to come together, and build stronger connections**"*.[334] David notes the performative nature of queer space: *"It is an **instinct space**, and cannot be created out of nowhere."*[335] Bob further distinguishes "queer space" from "queer-friendly space", emphasizing the qualitative difference between tolerance and true safety: *"Queer-friendly still means that you might encounter some homophobic or transphobic, sort of discrimination. It's safer, but it's not safe. Whereas a queer space is literally just a **dedicated space where you can really fully just be yourself, without fear or hesitation**."*[336] These perspectives align with academic theories on queer space in Section 2.3, which identifies queer space as an imminent and performative environmental condition derived from queer spatial activism.

However, the lived experiences of QTPOC newcomers reveal a gap between these conceptual ideal and conventional queer spaces. Many existing queer spaces fail to fully reflect the aspirations of marginalized queer identities, often reinforcing dominant queer narratives that do not always align with the

334 Interview with Rania.

335 David, Interview with David, interview by Simon Liao, July 2, 2024.

336 Interview with Bob.

specific needs of QTPOC newcomers. As a result, the queer space designed and desired by the queer majority do not necessarily match those envisioned by QTPOC newcomers.

To address this disconnect, I conceptualize **"Queer Arrival Space" – a spatial ideal that differentiates itself from conventional queer spaces by envisioning a utopian dimension where safety, inclusivity, and intersectionality are fully realized for QTPOC newcomers**. In this sense, the Queer Arrival Space exists within the broader queer space framework, but demonstrates a specificity in its function and intent to support and centre QTPOC newcomers in ways that traditional queer spaces often do not.

Queer Diaspora Spatial Consciousness

As discussed in Chapter 2, migrants exhibit a Diaspora Consciousness in their construction of Arrival Cities, driven by a desire for homecoming and cultural continuity.[337] Similarly, queer migrants develop a Queer Diaspora Consciousness, envisioning a queer home within the host country — a space where their sexuality, gender identity, and racial identity can coexist without conflict.[338] To situate QTPOC newcomers within the built environment, I introduce the concept of **"Queer Diaspora Spatial Consciousness" – a collective subconscious sensibility through which QTPOC newcomers navigate white-dominant societies and the multicultural landscapes**. Queer Diaspora Spatial Consciousness captures the unique ways in which QTPOC newcomers inhabit space, shaped by their intersectional identities and lived experiences. This concept highlights how spatial belonging is not merely about physical design and programming, but also about the perceived social and cultural dynamics of space.

337 William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," *Diaspora (New York, N.Y.)* 1, no. 1 (1991): 83–99, https://doi.org/10.3138/diaspora.1.1.83.

338 Alan Sinfield, "Diaspora and Hybridity: Queer Identities and the Ethnicity Model," *Textual Practice* 10, no. 2 (1996): 271–93, https://doi.org/10.1080/09502369608582247.

Instinctively Seeking Racialized Queer Presence

Queer Diaspora Spatial Consciousness becomes most visible when QTPOC newcomers navigate conventional white-centric queer spaces, where they subconsciously seek the presence of other QTPOC individuals to assess their level of safety and belonging. This subconscious spatial awareness informs their decision to engage with or avoid certain environments based on perceptions of racial representation and social inclusion.

Rania's experiences at Glad Day exemplify this consciousness. As a young black queer woman, she is sensitive to the racial demographics of a space and the individuals who occupy it. She address the whiteness of the Village and its queer spaces: *"Whenever there's an event, I noticed it's usually white, which is why I don't interact with certain queer events in Toronto. I want to be around more people of colour, and more black people."* Although she acknowledges feeling safe in these spaces, she admits that she ***"can't truly fully be myself in spaces that are mostly white"***.[339] This preference has led her to actively seek out spaces where she can connect with other QTPOC individuals, particularly within community-based organizations that cater to younger and more racialized demographics. These spaces offer her a greater sense of belonging and opportunities to build meaningful connections.

339 Interview with Rania.

Similarly, Jason describes his immediate recognition of white queer spaces without even stepping inside them. He explains: ***"I am walking by those bars and looking at those white dudes and like, I don't need to be in there****. I know I am not gonna find anything that I am going to enjoy."* Although living near the Village, Jason has never visited a gay bar on Church St in the two years since moving to Toronto. He explicitly expresses his "discomfort" with white-centric queer spaces *"that are not officially for them (white gay men), but are occupied by them most of the time"*. He critiques the lack of spatial awareness among patrons in these venues, arguing that respect and self-awareness are not always guaranteed in these



▲ **Fig. 3.43** The bars and clubs along Church Street exemplify consumer-driven spaces within the queer community.

340 Interview with Jason.

341 Interview with Pedro.

bar settings. Jason firmly asserts: *"If a space is just going to make you feel less than anyway, so why would you bother?"*[340] His perspective reveals a subconscious instinct to assess space before engaging with it, demonstrating how Queer Diaspora Spatial Consciousness shapes interactions within the built environment.

Rather than engaging with white-centric queer spaces, Queer Diaspora Spatial Consciousness often shifts QTPOC newcomers toward spaces that provide fuller representations of queer identities and cultural practices. Unlike Jason, who avoids the gay scene in the Village, Pedro strategically chooses venues that are more racially diverse, such as Black Eagle and Flash. He describes his experiences: ***"It's so nice for us Latin people to go somewhere where your songs are being played and you see a lot of people also from Latin America**. It kind of has a community spirit."*[341] Pedro's deliberate selection

of spaces reflects a desire for cultural familiarity, reinforcing the idea that Queer Diaspora Spatial Consciousness does not merely function through avoidance but also through the intentional pursuit of spaces that foster belonging.

These testimonials demonstrate the racial conflicts within queer communities, where QTPOC newcomers are positioned as the counterpart to dominant white queer bodies at a subconscious level. This embodied awareness aligns with "double consciousness" - a psychological experience unique to people of colour in white-dominant countries who "are forced to view themselves from, and as, the negative perspectives of the outside society".[342] Queer Diaspora Spatial Consciousness, then, serves as the spatial manifestation of double consciousness, where QTPOC newcomers must navigate tensions between ethnicity, colonialism, and sexuality within the built environment. Unlike the mainstream perception of queer space as inherently inclusive, this framework reveals how space itself can reproduce racial exclusions, compelling QTPOC individuals to develop spatial awareness as a survival tactic.

342 Marc Black, "Fanon and DuBoisian Double Consciousness," *Human Architecture* 5, no. Special Issue (2007): 394.



Spatial Homophily Through Shared Experiences

Yet, Queer Diaspora Spatial Consciousness is not solely based on ethnicity; it also reflects a collective desire to seek communities of similar sexuality, gender identities, cultural backgrounds, and lived experiences. This intersectional aspect of spatial belonging is evident in how QTPOC individuals gravitate toward spaces that offer both cultural and identity-based affirmation. As previously mentioned, Bob, a trans-man, finds the queer-identified staff at Glad Day essential for fostering an inclusive environment. Similarly, Gael, a non-binary artist from Chile, actively seeks out gender-inclusive events that also maintain a strong Latino presence. Adam, on the other hand, feels a deeper connection within HIV service organizations, emphasizing the importance of shared experiences in shaping belonging: *"**I am more connected to people who are living with HIV** because we have similar experiences and can find topics, **especially those immigrants with similar struggles**."*[343] These patterns of spatial affiliation align with the sociological concept of "homophily" – the tendency for individuals to form connections with others who share similar backgrounds, identities, and experiences.[344] Thus, Queer Diaspora Spatial Consciousness is also a spatial reflection of homophily, shaped by shared cultural, behavioural, and material traits that influence how QTPOC newcomers locate and construct their own queer spaces.

Queer Diaspora Spatial Consciousness equips QTPOC newcomers with the instinctive tool to distinguish spatial environments, assessing whether a space is safe or exclusionary. This perceptual skill resembles "gaydar" – an intuitive sensibility among queer individuals to detect others' sexual orientation based on indirect cues in appearance and behaviours.[345] Similarly, a spatial gaydar operates through various environmental and sensory indicators, such as posters on storefronts, clientele demographics and QTPOC representation, music and cultural elements, and lighting and spatial layout. These cues collectively shape the spatial and social conditions of the environment while also serving as

343 Adam, Interview with Adam, interview by Simon Liao, June 6, 2024.

344 Amin Ghaziani, *There Goes the Gayborhood?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 257.

345 Nicholas O. Rule and Ravin Alaei, "'Gaydar': The Perception of Sexual Orientation From Subtle Cues," *Current Directions in Psychological Science : A Journal of the American Psychological Society* 25, no. 6 (2016): 444–48, https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721416664403.

◀ Fig. 3.44 Casey House, located at 119 Isabella Street, is a specialty hospital providing care for individuals living with and at risk of HIV. It is where Adam accesses specialized medical support and builds social connections.

measurements to assess the potential for QTPOC inclusion. The development of gaydar is motivated by the desire to remove feelings of isolation many have experienced growing up queer, and the basic human need for association with similar others.[346] Similarly, Queer Diaspora Spatial Consciousness emerges from QTPOC newcomers' lived experiences and even traumas that inform their perception of space. However, because it is deeply subjective and shaped by personal histories, the way individuals interpret and assess space varies significantly from person to person.

The subjectivity within Queer Diaspora Spatial Consciousness further complicates the production of Queer Arrival Space. As Christopher Reed argues: "No space is totally queer or completely unqueerable, but some spaces are queerer than others".[347] Similarly, in queer space, no environment is entirely safe or universally inclusive, yet every space has the potential to cultivate greater inclusivity and representation. This complexity is evident in the varied lived experiences in the 3 sites mentioned in this section. Glad Day, despite its reputation as a celebrated queer space, presents challenges in racial representation, as illustrated by Rania's discomfort with its predominantly white demographic.[348] Hanlan's, while recognized for its inclusivity of gender expressions and body types, remains an ambiguous site for trans individuals, as seen in Bob's discomfort with the presence of onlookers.[349] Both places are integral to the Queer Arrival Infrastructure, yet their limitations reveal the conditionality of queer space.

346 Scott G. Shelp, "Gaydar: Gaydar," *Journal of Homosexuality* 44, no. 1 (2003): 2, https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v44n01_01.

347 Christopher Reed, "Imminent Domain: Queer Space in the Built Environment," *Art Journal (New York. 1960)* 55, no. 4 (1996): 64, https://doi.org/10.1080/00043249.1996.10791788.

348 Interview with Rania.

349 Interview with Bob.

350 José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, Sexual Cultures (New York: University Press, 2009), 26.



▲ **Fig. 3.45** Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, located at 12 Alexander Street. It has hosted gender-inclusive events that celebrate and support queer individuals of diverse identities.

Thus, I propose Queer Arrival Space as a utopian ideal of queer space, where not only QTPOC newcomers but individuals of diverse identities and backgrounds are fully included in spatial narratives of belonging. As José Esteban Muñoz articulates: "queerness is utopian". He asserts that queer utopianism is not exclusive to sexuality, but embraces "experimental modes of love, sex, and relationality".[350] In this sense, Queer Arrival Space exists as an aspirational vision – a space where intersectional inclusivity is fully realized. However, until this utopian world is actualized, Queer Arrival Space remains fragmented and temporal across the Queer Arrival Infrastructure. For now, it can only be partially realized in spaces such as The 519, Glad Day Bookshop, Hanlan's Point Beach, and other contested queer spaces throughout the city, where the possibility of queer inclusivity continues to be negotiated and reimagined.

Conclusion 3.7

This chapter has uncovered QTPOC newcomers' spatial narratives in navigating Toronto's urban landscape, illustrating how they access, interact with, and engage with the built environment. By employing the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, this chapter has drawn primary data on QTPOC newcomers' lived experiences to reveal the challenges of post-migration life and to conceptualize key spatial concepts:

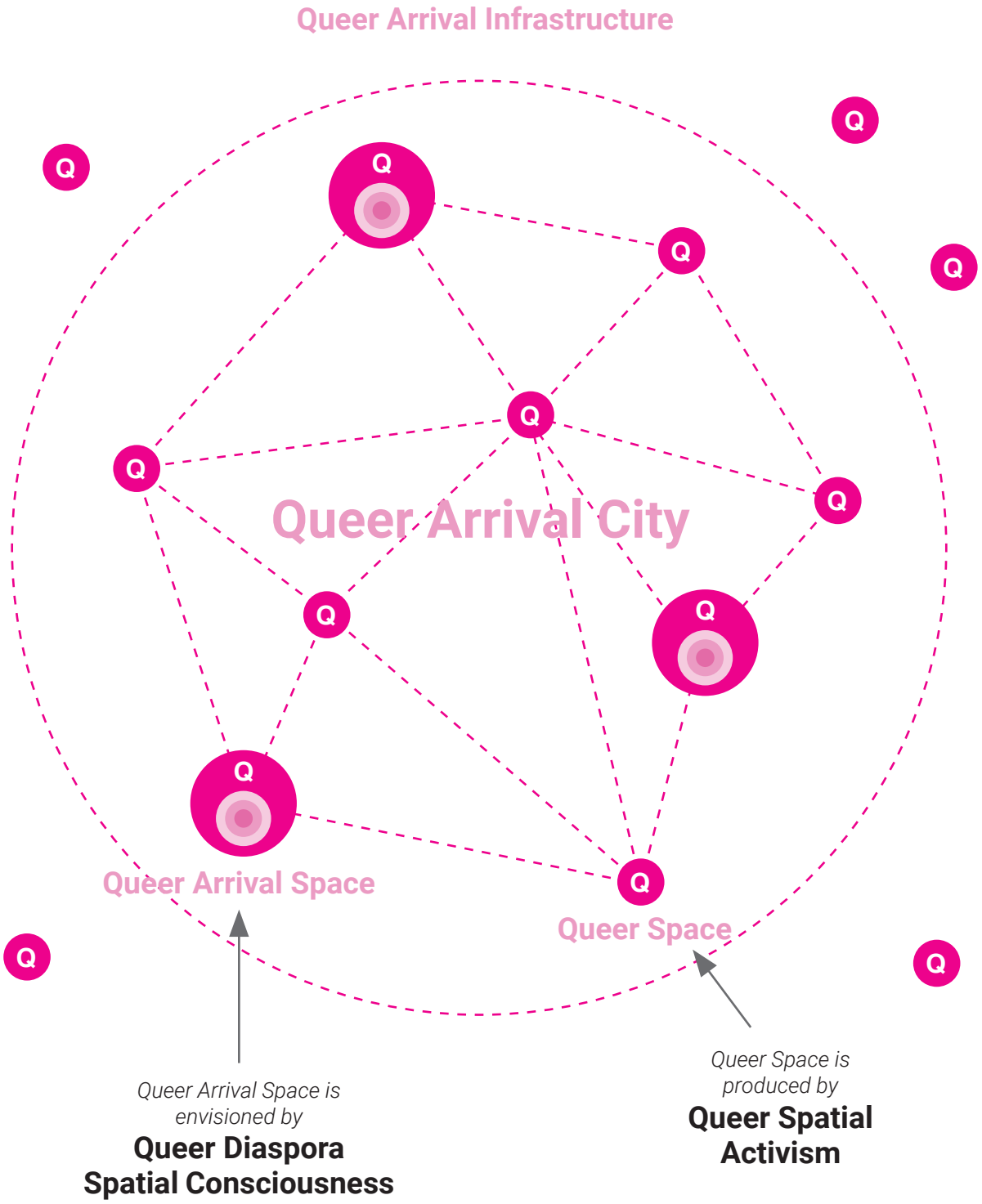
Queer Arrival Infrastructure
The spatial and social networks that facilitate queer migration.

Queer Arrival City
A novel concept for QTPOC newcomers, emerging from Arrival Cities and queer enclaves. It is conceptualized through the Queer Arrival Infrastructure, and indicates the fluid interconnected urban network that is inclusive of both an invisible and a fixed locality.

Queer Arrival Space
An aspirational vision of queer space where intersectional inclusivity is fully realized.

Queer Diaspora Spatial Consciousness
A collective subconscious sensibility that shapes how QTPOC newcomers assess and navigate space.

Through these concepts, this chapter has addressed the first two Research Questions (RQs), and laid the foundation to investigate RQ3 in Chapter 4.



▲ **Fig. 3.46** Diagram: relationship between queer space and key concepts.

RQ1: How do QTPOC newcomers navigate Toronto's built environment?

Through the collective queerscape mapping analysis, an invisible Queer Arrival Infrastructure emerges as a spatial and social network that facilitates queer migration. This infrastructural network spans the entire urban sphere, taking various forms across **four major spatial patterns**:

1. **The Church-Wellesley Village** contains the highest concentration of Queer Arrival Infrastructure, particularly in the form of physical queer venues and specialized services.

2. **Ethnic enclaves** provide culturally specific amenities, bridging QTPOC newcomers' past and present identities.

3. **Urban public spaces** facilitate both individual and communal queer life, fostering everyday interactions through casual social engagement and community-building activities.

4. **Cultural institutions and community spaces** provide inclusive programing, creating opportunities to build relationships beyond conventional queer spaces, thus fostering a sense of belonging within the wider society.

Within these spatial patterns, Queer Arrival Spaces emerge as idealized spaces where intersectional inclusivity is fully realized. However, lived experiences demonstrate that true inclusivity remains elusive, even within celebrated queer spaces. This is reflected in the collective subconscious sensibility of Queer Diaspora Spatial Consciousness – a navigational instinct that shapes how QTPOC newcomers assess safety, representation, and potential inclusion. This consciousness is particularly evident in white-centric queer spaces, where they seek the presence of other racialized queers as a means of gauging safety and belonging.

RQ2: What role does the Church-Wellesley Village play in their migration?

The Village plays a critical role in QTPOC newcomers' migration, both symbolically and functionally, as an anchor in the Queer Arrival Infrastructure. For some, the Village provides spaces to live, socialize, and belong. However, for many others, the Village remains inaccessible and exclusionary. Through interviews, participants have identified the following shortcomings:

1. **Lack of inclusivity and diversity**: QTPOC newcomers often feel marginalized within white-dominated queer spaces.

2. **Inadequate infrastructure**: The Village does not provide enough community-oriented programming and public spaces that accommodate diverse experiences.

3. **Systemic barriers**: Housing insecurity, safety concerns, and economic barriers further shape the exclusion.

Given these realities, this chapter deconstructs the assumption that the Village serves as an Arrival City for queer migrants. Instead, I propose a reconceptualization of Queer Arrival City as a larger Queer Arrival Infrastructure network that encompasses physical locations, social connections, and intangible experiences that support QTPOC newcomers' migration. Thus, the Village becomes one critical node within a larger ecosystem of Queer Arrival Infrastructure.


4

Chapter 4

Design


Church St
LOADED PIEROGI
NOVA

4.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the final Research Question, **RQ3: How can public space design support the Village as a Queer Arrival City?** The previous chapter highlights the urgent need for safe, accessible, and inclusive spaces to facilitate QTPOC newcomers' post-migration life. Building on the research findings, this chapter explores the design of a public space in the Village that reflects QTPOC newcomers' spatial narratives and lived experiences. By employing the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, this chapter continues to engage QTPOC newcomers in the research process, promoting their empowerment and agency in shaping the final design.

This chapter starts with an overview of "queer architecture" precedents and an analysis of empirical data to establish design recommendations for the Queer Arrival Space (Section 4.2). Through a comprehensive site analysis of the Village, this chapter then identifies the site for intervention (Section 4.3). The design concept derives from the "queer beachscape", drawing inspiration from Hanlan's Point Beach and Glad Day Bookshop. A preliminary design is developed in this stage (Section 4.4). The proposal was then shared with QTPOC newcomers through focus group sessions, leading to refinements based on collective feedback, ultimately shaping the final design (Section 4.5).

This chapter not only explores the design of the Queer Arrival Space, but also addresses the importance of community engagement in the design process to create an ethical, community-driven, and empowered environment.

◀ **Fig. 4.1** The Church-Wellesley Village.



4.2

Design a Queer Arrival Space

"If we're just building queer spaces for the same kind of queers, that's all we're gonna get. How do we make it easier for (queer) people who never had access to a queer space? If someone doesn't know how to ride a bike, they're not gonna ride a bike." [351]

- Jason, Interview Participant

Conceptualized as a utopian ideal, the Queer Arrival Space envisions a condition where safety, inclusion, and intersectionality are fully realized. However, similar to queer space, Queer Arrival Space is ephemeral and contingent, dependent on the subjective spatial consciousness of QTPOC newcomers. Earlier discussions have demonstrated that one person's queer space may be another's hostile space, raising a critical question: How can we design a Queer Arrival Space when architecture, as a discipline, is traditionally concerned with durable, containable and solid structures, yet queerness is inherently fleeting and fluid?

"Queer architecture", the architectural manifestation of queer space, has yet to fully establish itself as an architectural typology. Sarah Bonnemaison describes it as the built environment created by queer architects or designs serving the queer communities.[352] However, as revealed in Section 2.3, the extreme diversity of queer space resists categorization, spanning across temporal, geographic, and cultural contexts. There is no queer architectural style or aesthetic. It is produced by the relational interactions of people and space rather than by architects and designers.

351 Jason, Interview with Jason, interview by Simon Liao, July 3, 2024.

352 Sarah Bonnemaison, "Queer Architecture," in *The Routledge Handbook of LGBTQ Identity in Organizations and Society*, ed. Julie Gedro and Tonette S. Rocco (New York, NY: Routledge, 2024).

◀ **Fig. 4.2** The 2SLGBTQI+ art installation at George Hislop Park in the Village. It celebrates the queer history and community presence in the neighbourhoods.

By evaluating key precedents of Queer Architecture, this section ultimately proposes design recommendations for a pubic space in the Village. These recommendations aim to address existing infrastructural inadequacies within the neighbourhood and guide the design of inclusive, accessible, and community-oriented spaces that better support QTPOC newcomers' needs.

Homomonument

The Homomonument in Amsterdam commemorates queer victims of persecution, both those who lost their lives during WWII and those are still facing oppressive regimes worldwide. The monument consists of three massive pink granite triangles, interconnected by lines cutting through the pavement, forming a larger triangle. The triangles resemble the pink fabric triangles used by the Nazis during WWII to publicly mark homosexuals, reclaiming the shape as an international queer symbol.[353]

The design exemplifies the concept of the imminent queer space. Its queerness is only visible upon recognition. To the passerby, the monument blends into the urban fabric, but for those who step closer and recognize the triangular geometry, its queer symbolism becomes visible.[354] This interplay between visibility and subtlety reinforces the nature of queer space - contingent on activation, otherwise hidden in plain sight.



▶ **Fig. 4.3** The Homomonument in Amsterdam. It consists of 3 granite triangles integrated into the urban landscape. One triangle extends into the canal, serving as a platform for memorials and a dock.

353 Jeroen van Dijk, "Homomonument," in *Queer Spaces: An Atlas of LGBTQIA+ Places and Stories*, ed. Adam Nathaniel Furman and Joshua Mardell (London: RIBA Publishing, 2022), 178–79.

354 Christopher Reed, "Imminent Domain: Queer Space in the Built Environment," *Art Journal (New York. 1960)* 55, no. 4 (1996): 65, https://doi.org/10.1080/00043249.1996.10791788.

Author's Notes:

Symbolism is a powerful tool in memorial design, as exemplified by the triangles in the Homomonument. However, in designing a Queer Arrival Space, the vast diversity of sexual and cultural identities among QTPOC newcomers means that no single universal symbol can fully represent everyone's experiences.

◀ **Fig. 4.4** The Homomonument in Amsterdam. One of the granite triangles is raised to create a platform and seating area.

▶ **Fig. 4.5** The Homomonument in Amsterdam. One of the granite triangles is engraved into the pavement, seamlessly blending into the urban landscape.


HOMOMONUMENT



Toronto AIDS Memorial

Located in Barbara Hall Park, the AIDS Memorial began as a series of temporary activist-led memorials in the mid-1980s before a permanent installation was constructed in 1993.[355] Designed by architect Patrick Fahn, the memorial features 14 triangular concrete pillars, each mounted with stainless steel plaques engraved with the names of individuals who have died from AIDS and related illnesses.

A narrow pathway guides visitors through the pillars, leading them on a journey of remembrance and grief, surrounded by a rose garden. At the centre of the memorial, a low concrete podium serves as both a stage for events and a site for reflection. Today, the AIDS Memorial continues to be a critical site of remembrance, hosting the annual AIDS Candlelight Vigil during Pride Month and serving as a backdrop for community gatherings. However, due to ongoing safety concerns, much of the original landscaped garden was removed to maintain a clear sightline for security purposes. The Memorial is also facing uncertainty as the park undergoing a major renovation.[356] The tensions between public safety, queer heritage, and interventions remain a conflict in preserving queer spatiality.



▶ **Fig. 4.6** The AIDS Memorial consists of 14 concrete pillars positioned along a raised pathway.

Author's Notes:

Two key spatial factors contribute to safety concerns at the AIDS Memorial: Firstly, it's located deep within the park, where trees and shrubs obstruct sight lines from the street; Secondly, the memorial's design intended to create an intimate experience along the path, but also creates blind spots. Since safety is a primary concern in this proposal, the design must incorporate "eyes on the street" principles to enhance natural surveillance and visibility.

355 Craig Jennex and Nisha Eswaran, *Out North: An Archive of Queer Activism and Kinship in Canada* (Vancouver: Figure.1 Publishing, 2020), 214.

356 City of Toronto, "Barbara Hall Park Improvements," City of Toronto (City of Toronto, February 8, 2023), Toronto, Ontario, Canada, https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/construction-new-facilities/park-facility-projects/barbara-hall-park-improvements/.

▶ **Fig. 4.7** The annual AIDS Candlelight Vigil honours those lost to HIV/AIDS. It provides a space for remembrance, solidarity, and community healing.

◀ **Fig. 4.8** The AIDS Memorial. Each concrete pillar is mounted with stainless steel plaques engraved with the names of individuals who have died from AIDS and related illnesses.




519
519
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George Hislop Park

Part of the Yonge St Linear Park project, George Hislop Park was recently completed in 2024, located on the western edge of the Village. The project intends to enhance the public realm by creating a continuous accessible pathway and providing the neighbourhoods with a safe green space. Named after George Hislop, a pioneering queer activist and advocate, the park design was shaped by local residents and queer communities through two phases of community engagements. Notably, 2SLGBTQI+ public art and Indigenous placekeeping elements were embedded in the design that reflects the cultural and historical significance of the site.

A prominent queer-themed art installation, "The Dance" by Stanislav Jurkovic, features a series of steel arches along the pathway, strategically angled and mirrored against the pink ground plane, forming a central gathering space for events and celebrations. The materials and elements in the park are transformed in non-normative ways, such as aggregated pavers, manipulated arches, polished boulders, and pink lighting, all reflecting the architect's intent to "queer the park".[357]

▶ **Fig. 4.9** The Dance features a series of angled steel arches that illuminate and reflect off the pink ground plane.

357 City of Toronto, "Yonge Street Linear Park Improvements," City of Toronto (City of Toronto, August 19, 2020), Toronto, Ontario, Canada, https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/construction-new-facilities/improvements-expansion-redevelopment/yonge-street-linear-park-improvements/.

Author's Notes:

Given the close proximity of George Hislop Park to this proposal, it is essential to create a continuous walking experience between these parks. The design language should differentiate each other but also establish a sense of connection and harmony, through paving, materiality, and colour, etc.



▶ **Fig. 4.10** Steel arches in George Hislop Park are positioned along the pathway, guiding visitors through the linear park.

◀ **Fig. 4.11** Park elements are queered through non-normative expressions, reflected in the surfaces of polished boulders.





Sugar Beach

Designed by renowned landscape architect Claude Cormier, Sugar Beach transformed a former parking lot in Toronto's East Bayfront into an artificial urban beach, next to the Redpath Sugar Refinery. The diagonal promenade divides the site into grassy mounds and a sandy beach, offering both active and passive leisure spaces. The playful, candy-inspired design elements contribute to the site's unique sensory experience. Pink fibreglass umbrellas, white wooden chairs, and granite rocks with candy-striped patterns create a visual and textural interplay.[358] On certain days, when ships dock to unload fine-grained sugar, the air is filled with a sweet mist, further immersing visitors in a sensory environment.

While not explicitly designed as a queer space, Sugar Beach is celebrated by the local queer communities. It hosts dance parties during Pride Month and is a popular destination for queer sunbathers. The beach's bright colour palette, symbolic elements, and whimsical atmosphere suggest Cormier's queer sensibility in creating a public space for everyone.

The above projects demonstrate a wide spectrum of queer public spaces, ranging from memorial sites to celebratory places. While their intentions vary, they are all inviting the public to remember, rethink, and interact with queerness in a respectful and meaningful way. A common theme among them is their approach to honouring queer heritage and celebrating queer presence - achieved through colours, symbolism, materiality, and performative activation. There are no guidelines to design a queer space, yet these projects demonstrate how queerness can be embodied through design gestures, operations, and occupation over time.

By analyzing these projects, in conjunction with data collected from Phases 1 and 2, the following subsections present recommendations for specifically designing a Queer Arrival Space that reflect QTPOC newcomers' spatial narratives.

▶ **Fig. 4.12** Sugar Beach features numerous pink umbrellas scattered across an artificial beach.

Author's Notes:

The colour pink holds significant meaning within queer communities. Queer Architecture often incorporates pink to signal queerness. Over time, it risks reducing pink to a mere aesthetic choice in queer design. So what makes Sugar Beach queer beyond the pink umbrellas and Claude Cormier? I argue that its playfulness, openness and even the transformation impact on industrial land are visual and psychological appeal for queer placemaking.

358 Susan Herrington, "The Beauty of Serious Fun," in *Serious Fun: The Landscapes of Claude Cormier*, ed. Marc Treib and Susan Herrington, First edition (Novato, California: ORO Editions, 2021), 172.

▶ **Fig. 4.13** The pink fibreglass umbrellas create a vibrant and playful waterfront space.





Design Recommendations:

Safety

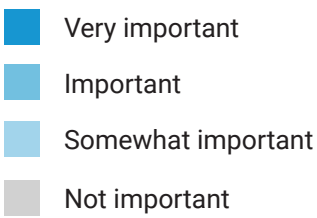
Safety is a fundamental requirement for any public space. Safety is not just about physical protection, it also entails emotional and psychological well-being. In practice, safety could be achieved through strategic urban design interventions, such as ample lighting, clear sightlines, non-hostile street furniture, trauma-informed design approaches, and following Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles. Survey data reinforces these priorities, with lighting ranks among the top preferred design features for a new park in the Village. By integrating thoughtful safety measures, a Queer Arrival Space can foster an environment where QTPOC newcomers feel protected, both physically and emotionally.

Inclusivity and Accessibility

As discussed in Section 3.5, to fully support the Village as a Queer Arrival City requires addressing two pressing challenges faced by QTPOC newcomers: the lack of inclusivity and diversity within its social culture, and the insufficient infrastructure in the built environment to foster social connections. A Queer Arrival Space must be designed to actively counter this reality, ensuring it is welcoming, inclusive, and accessible to individuals of various racial, gender, socioeconomic, and mobility backgrounds. As Jason emphasizes: ***"It's for everyone, it's meant for everyone."***[359]

Inclusivity in the spatial design could be achieved through mobility-friendly and barrier-free design to improve physical accessibility; free programming and non-commercial venues to promote economic accessibility; and design elements that reflect cultural and queer heritage to increase cultural diversity. These measures bring larger representations into the space, thus accommodating the Queer Diaspora Spatial Consciousness to foster further engagement of QTPOC newcomers.

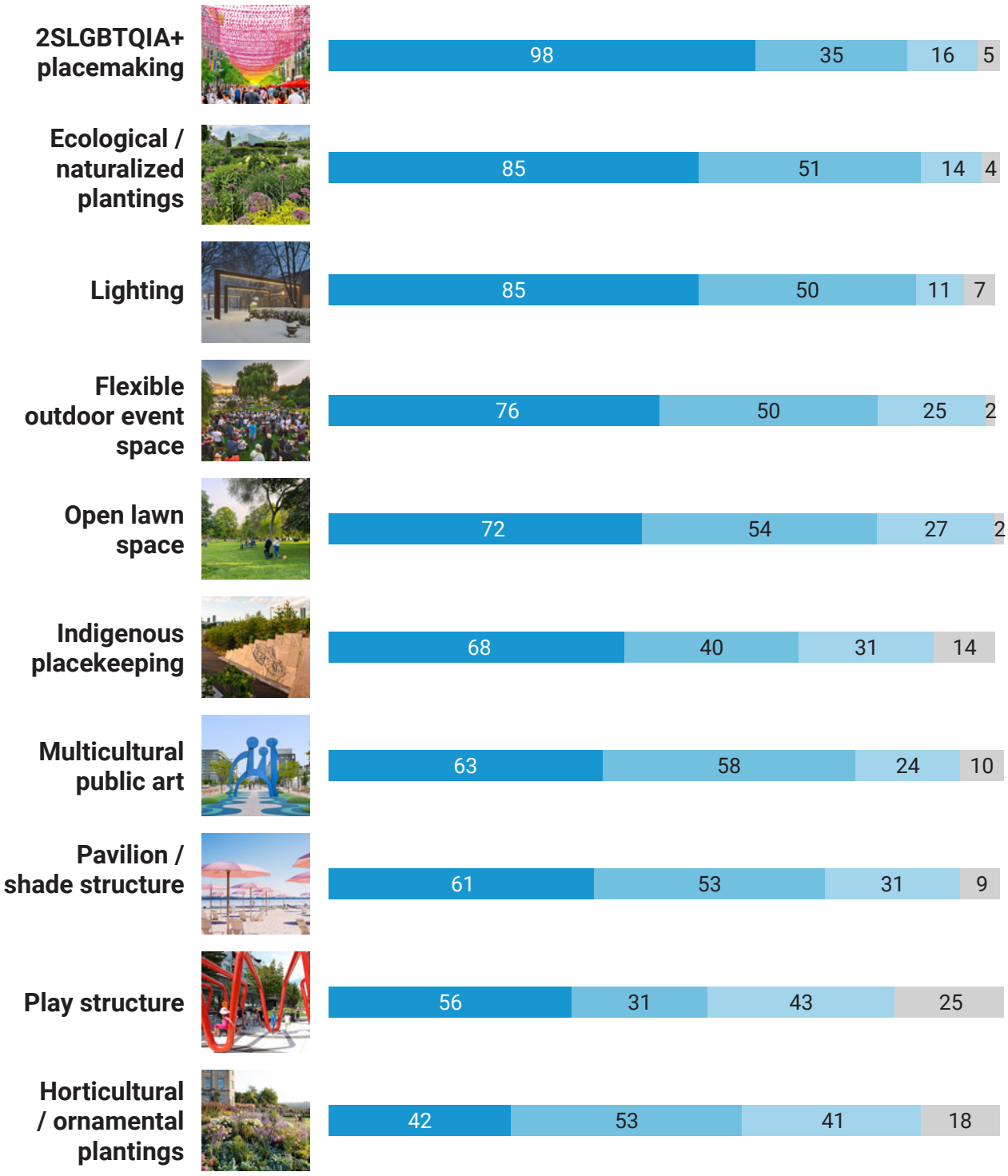
359 Interview with Jason.



▶ **Fig. 4.14** Survey results asking participants about their preferred design features for a potential new park in the Village. The top choices included queer placemaking, ecological plantings, and lighting elements.

Park Design: Preferred Design Features

If a new park was planned in the Church-Wellesley Village, how important are the following design features to you and your household?



Flexibility and Fluidity

A sense of belonging is deeply tied to how space facilitates social connections. As previously discussed, many participants express a strong preference for multifunctional spaces, where different modes of inhabitation are possible. Both Gael and Pedro reflect on how they miss the vibrant street life of their home countries, where music, markets, and events coexist in the dynamic public space.[360] Similarly, surveys suggest that the two most desired characteristics of a new park are eventful, the ability to host community events and activities; and flexible, allowing different uses among groups. The spatial fluidity can be achieved through movable and modular seating options that allow for users' configurations, and large open spaces for programming and gatherings. Implementing these measures supports both structured and spontaneous forms of queer placemaking, ensuring that the space can continue to evolve based on QTPOC newcomers' needs.

Visibility and Celebration

The Queer Arrival Space is also a place to be seen, to celebrate, and to embrace the authentic self. For QTPOC newcomers from less tolerant countries, seeing visual markers of queerness serves as a form of affirmation and empowerment. As Bob reflects: *"Coming from a place where you have to hide your flag, **I love the fact that everywhere you can see pride flags.**"*[361] Similarly, Gael recalls: *"The rainbow motif was really something that **helped me feel welcome** when I was younger."*[362] Survey data further supports this need, with queer placemaking elements ranking as the most preferred design feature for the new park. Visibility extends beyond surface-level rainbow motifs, it could also be embedded into the spatial experience, such as bold colour palettes, symbolic design elements, art installations to highlight queer diasporic experiences, etc.

360 Gael, Interview with Gael, interview by Simon Liao, June 18, 2024; Pedro, Interview with Pedro, interview by Simon Liao, July 22, 2024.

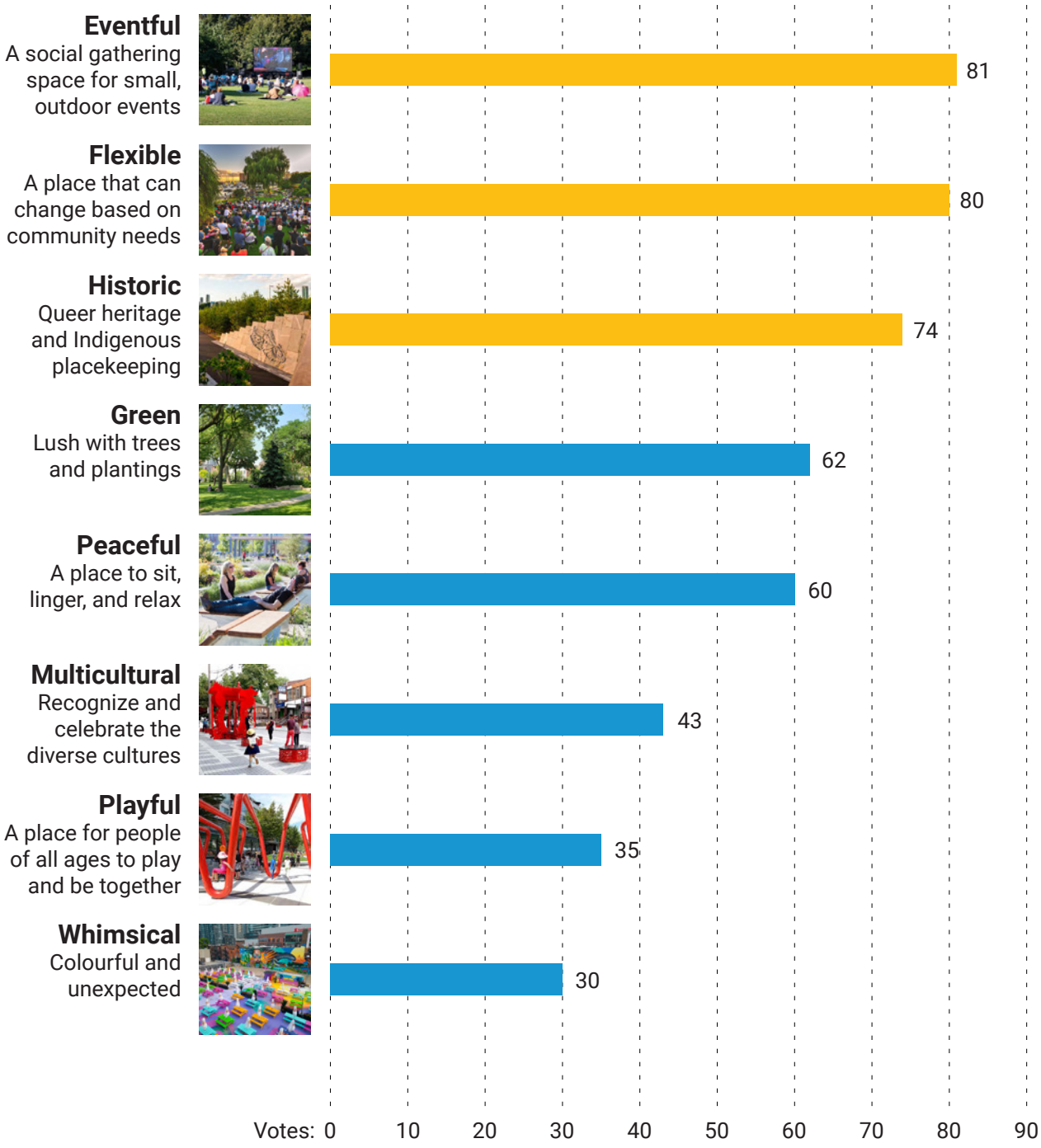
361 Bob, Interview with Bob, interview by Simon Liao, June 24, 2024.

362 Interview with Gael.

▶ **Fig. 4.15** The survey asked participants about their preferred characteristics for a potential new park in the Village. The top three choices were eventful, flexible, and historic.

Park Design: Preferred Characters

If a new park was planned in the Church-Wellesley Village, what would you like the character of the new park to be?



Design a Queer Arrival Park

These four design recommendations derive directly from QTPOC newcomers' spatial narratives, reflecting both the barriers and aspirations they encounter in existing public spaces. A Queer Arrival Space demands systemic, societal-level changes to be fully realized, depending on every user within its ecosystem. Thus, while these design recommendations do not guarantee the creation of a Queer Arrival Space, they serve as a framework to cultivate an inclusive and welcoming environment that invites active participation and continuous reclamation.

Building upon these discussions, I have developed a Vision Statement to identify the park's goals and objectives, alongside guiding principles to streamline the design process.

Vision Statement:

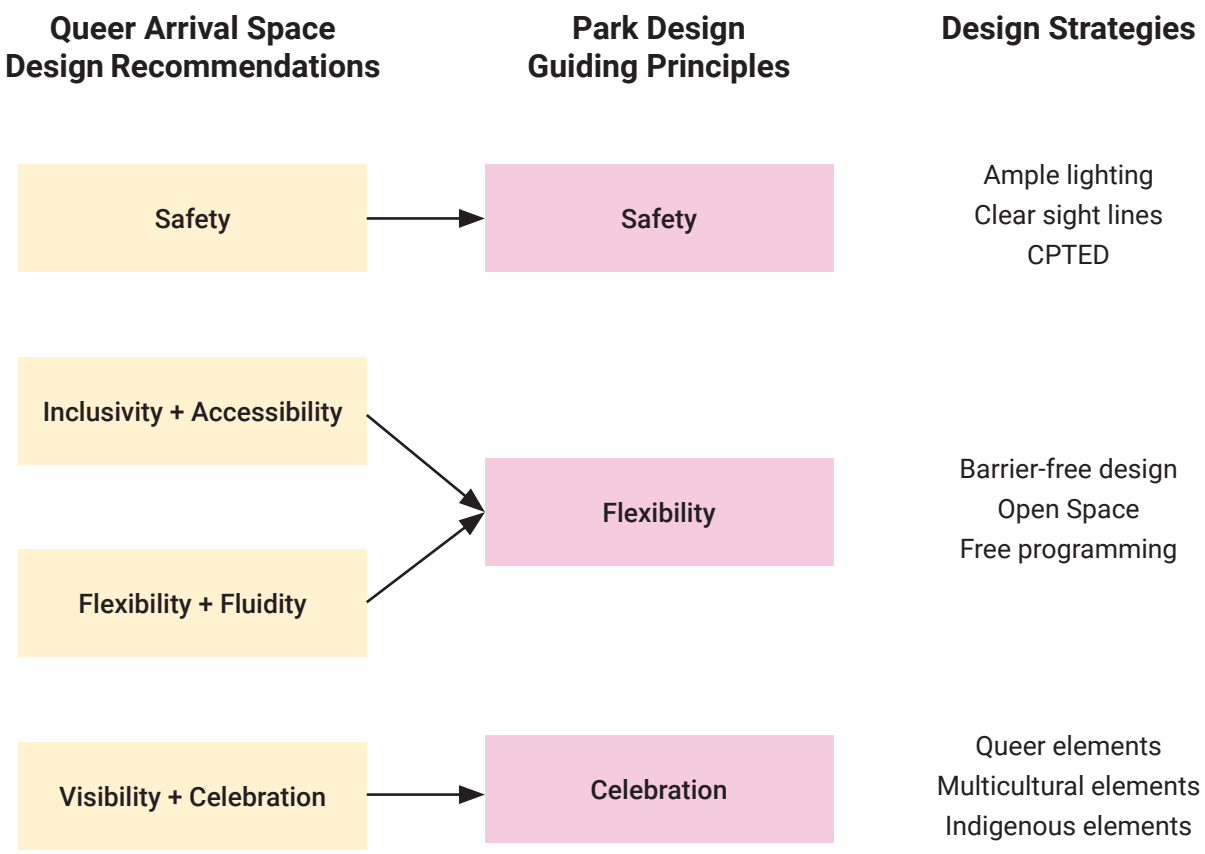
A welcoming urban oasis for community members to relax, connect, and celebrate. The design honours the diversity of Toronto's QTPOC newcomers and the broader queer communities, encouraging both structured and spontaneous gatherings.

Guiding Principles:

Flexibility: The design should be flexible and multifunctional, empowering visitors to queer the space themselves, allowing for diverse ways of inhabiting and engaging with the park.

Safety: The design should be a safe and affirming environment for queers of different backgrounds and life stages.

Celebration: The design should safeguard local queer heritage, while celebrating the lived experiences, memories, and joys of QTPOC newcomers, reinforcing their presence and contributions to the city.



▲ **Fig. 4.16** Diagram: Design Recommendations for the Proposal.



4.3 Situating the Village

This section presents a preliminary site analysis of the neighbourhood through mappings and photographs. It examines both the urban fabric and community context to identify potential locations for intervention.

While the Village's skyline is increasingly dominated by tower-podium-style condominiums, its primary residential typology remains unchanged since its establishment. As discussed in Section 2.5, postwar urban renewal projects played a crucial role in shaping the Village as a queer enclave. The postwar apartment buildings in the neighbourhood have been continuously housing the local queer communities. Today, this building typology is also commonly associated with being a landing pad for recent immigrants.

Architecturally, postwar apartment buildings are characterized by vast landscaped lawns and surface parking lots on the ground level, and large setbacks from the sidewalk. However, these spaces are often disconnected from the urban fabric and remain underutilized. This presents a unique opportunity to revitalize their open spaces to enhance street life, urban connectivity, and resident engagements.

With these factors in mind, I evaluated three potential sites attached to postwar apartment buildings in the Village. Through a comparative analysis, I ultimately selected a linear open space along Isabella St, between Church and Yonge St. This site offers flexibility to serve a diverse demography, and presents the potential to integrate into the existing urban landscape.

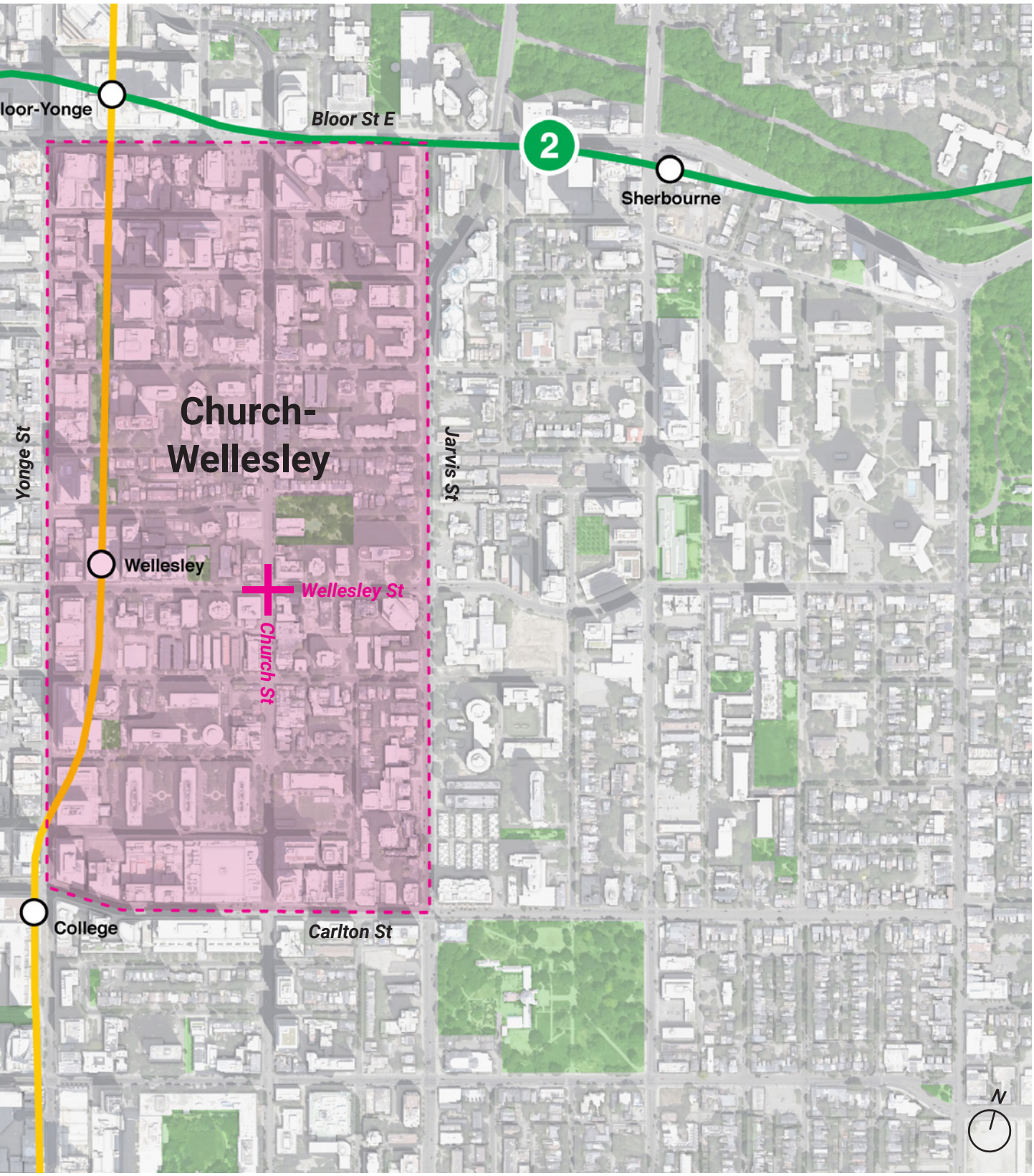
◀ **Fig. 4.17** The design proposal is located within a linear space on Isabella Street in the Village.

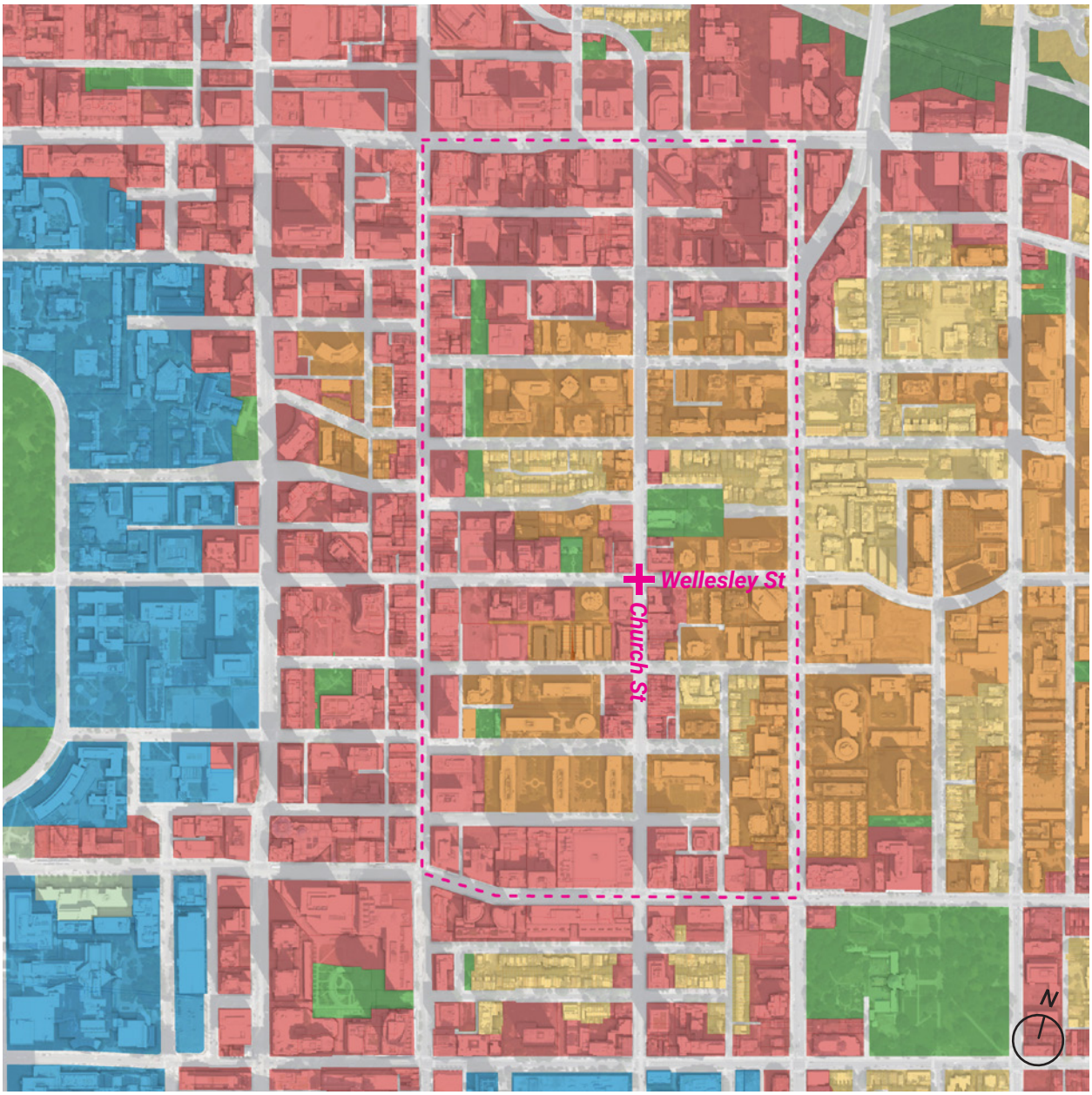
The Village

The Village is located at the north edge of Toronto's Downtown Core, bordered by Bloor St E to the north, Carlton St to the south, Yonge St to the west, and Jarvis St to the east. Conveniently located near two subway lines, the area is a popular residential neighbourhood - not only for queer communities but also for many residents who value its central location and convenience. The neighbourhood is named after the intersection of Church St and Wellesley St, which is a prominent corner filled with nightlife, restaurants, and shopping.



▶ **Fig. 4.18** The Village is conveniently located around two subways lines, centred around the intersection of Church St and Wellesley St.


loor-Yonge
Bloor St E
2
Sherbourne
Church-
Wellesley
Yonge St
Jarvis St
Wellesley
Wellesley St
Church St
College
Carlton St
N

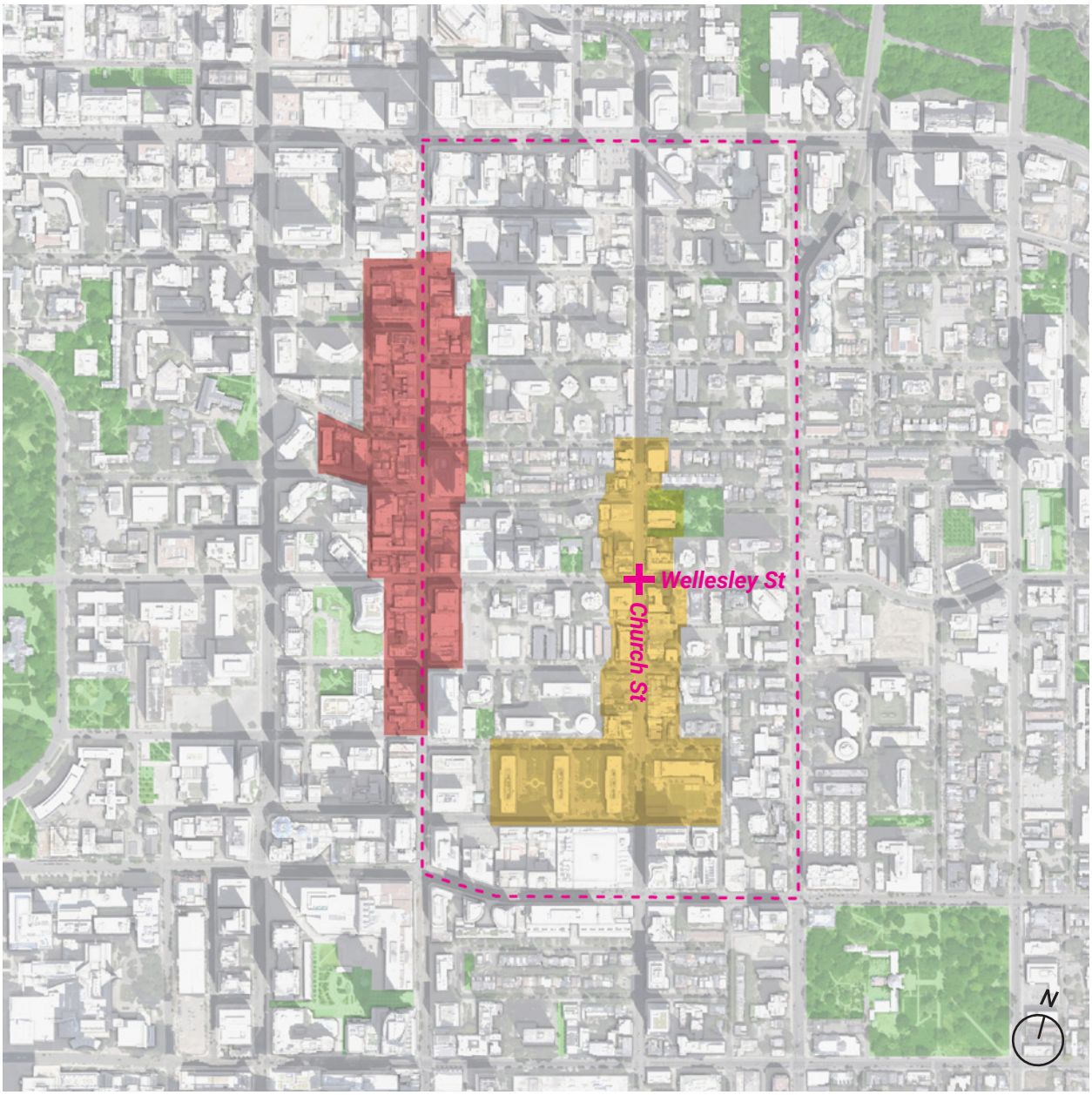


Land Use Plan

According to the Toronto Official Plan, the Village is primarily a mixed-use residential neighbourhood, where Yonge St and Church St serve as the main commercial thoroughfares. The area features a blend of low-rise heritage homes, and mid-rise and high-rise apartment towers, creating a divers urban form.

▲ **Fig. 4.19** Land Use Plan.

- Neighbourhoods
- Apartment Neighbourhoods
- Mixed Use Areas
- Institutional Areas
- Natural Areas
- Parks
- Other Open Space Areas



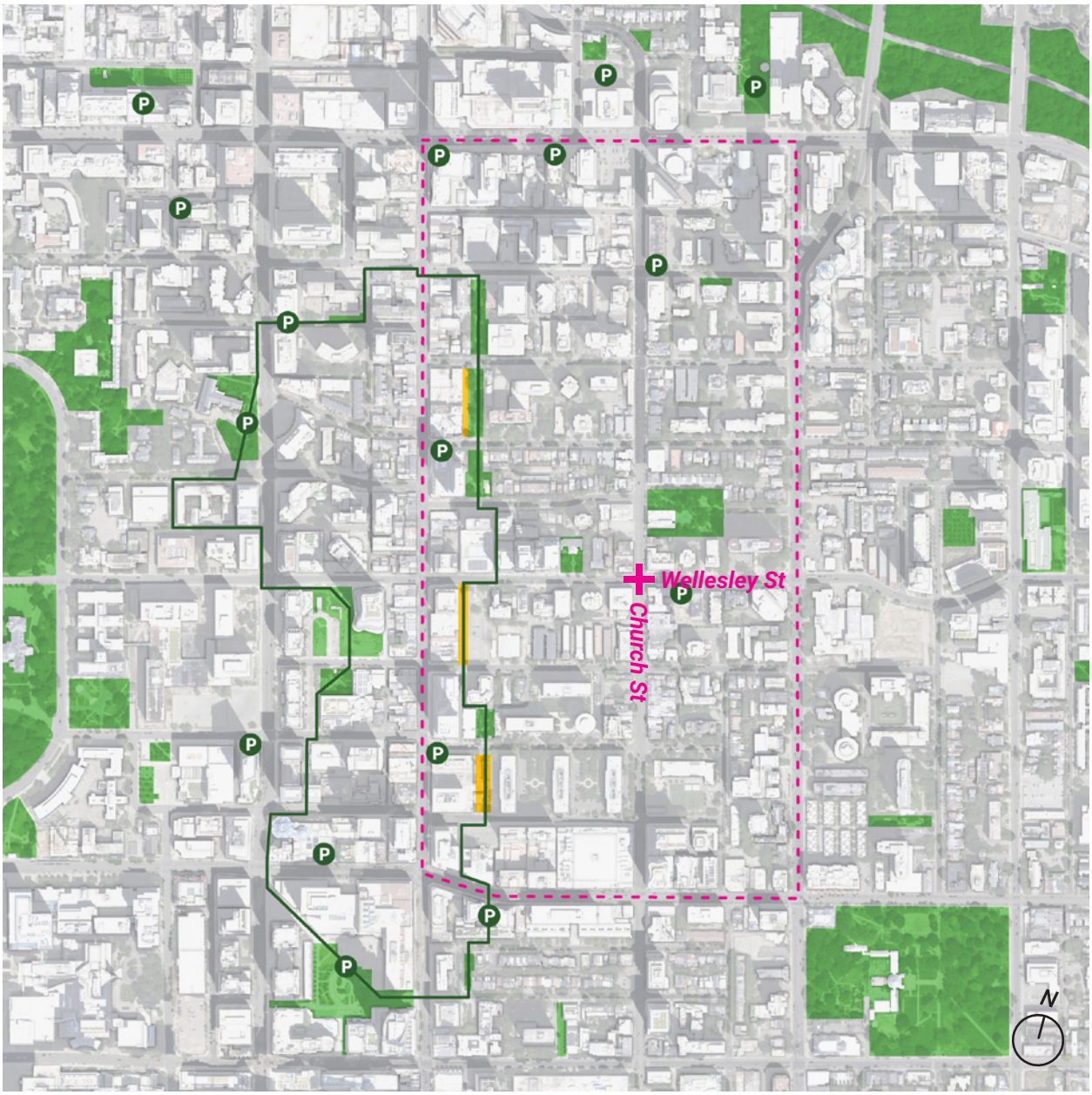
▲ **Fig. 4.20** Official Study Areas within the Village proper.

Yonge St HCD

BIA Streetscape Master Plan

Official Study Areas

The Village is currently the focus of two planning studies: the Church-Wellesley Village Business Improvement Area (BIA) Streetscape Master Plan and the Historic Yonge Street Heritage Conservation District (HCD) study. These studies provide a framework for future projects to enhance the public realm and preserve neighbourhood characters.

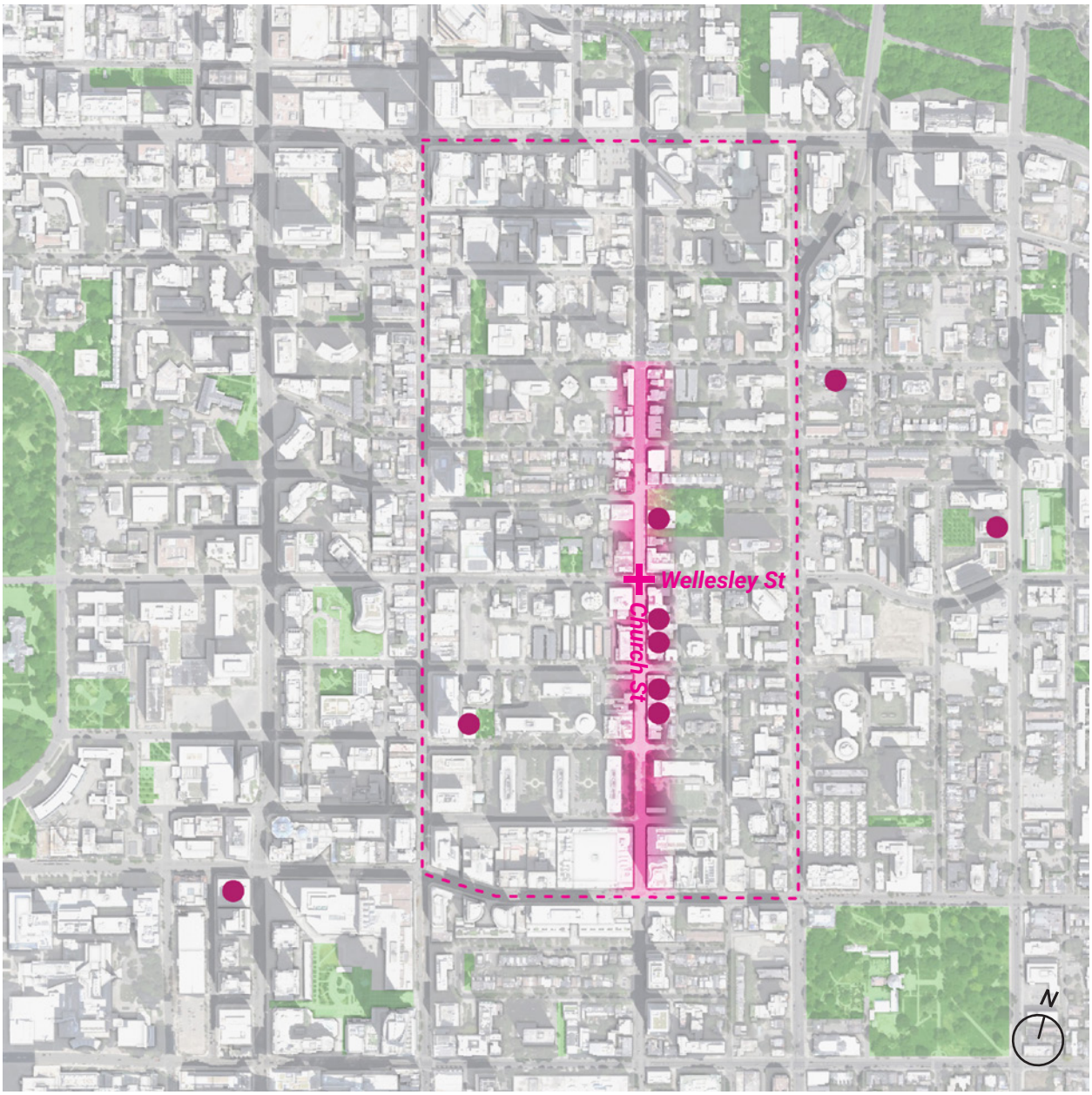


▲ **Fig. 4.21** Parks & Public Spaces in the Village.

Parks & Public Space

The Village is surrounded by Toronto's extensive ravine system and the interconnected network of parks and green space. In recent years, the City has been developing the Clock Tower Trail, a green pedestrian loop designed to enhance the public realm. This initiative integrates urban parks and pocket green spaces along the path.

- Parks / Green Space
- New Parks in Progress
- Clock Tower Trail
- Privately-Owned Public Accessible Spaces (POPS)

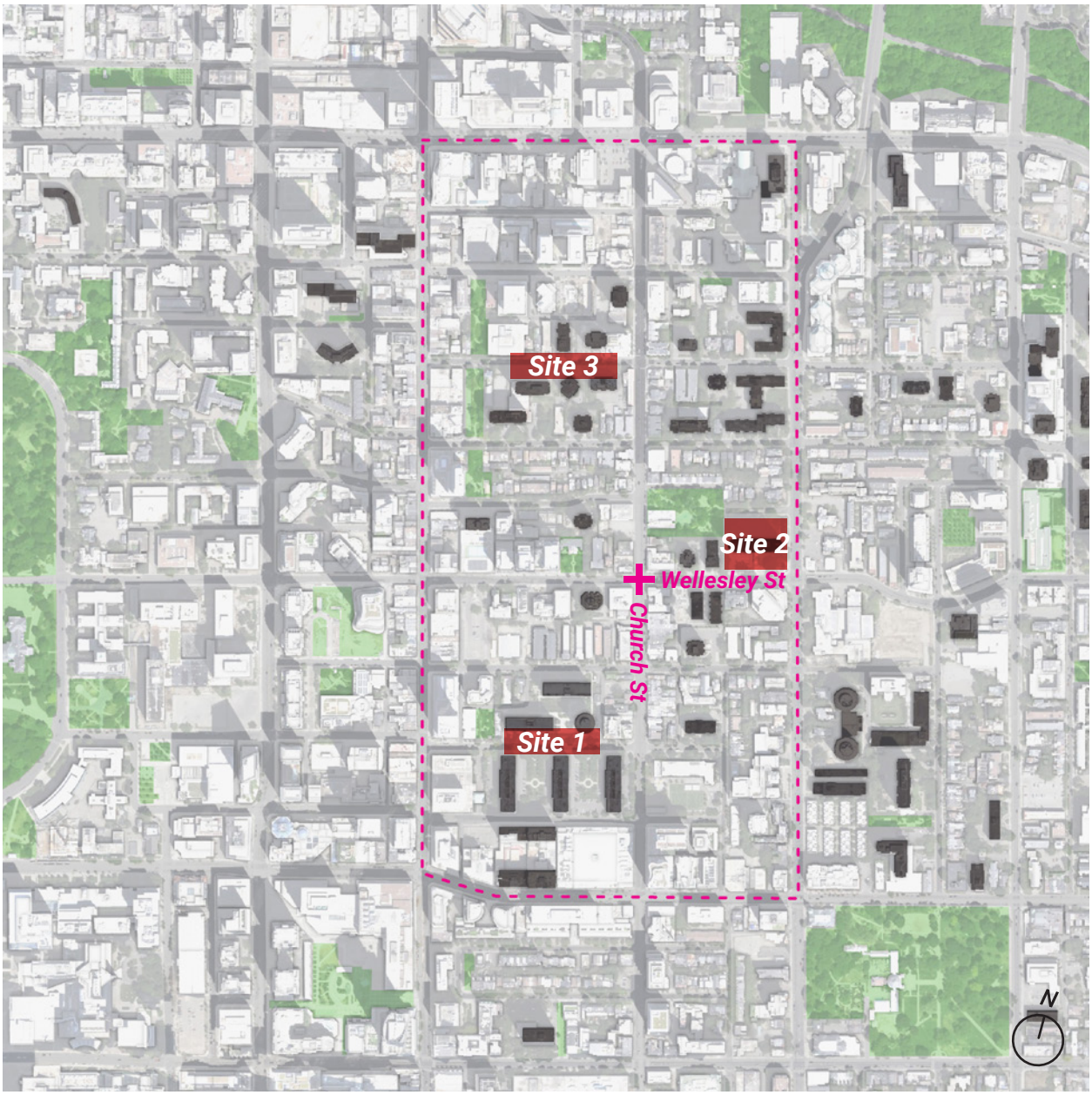


▲ **Fig. 4.22** Queer Arrival Infrastructure around the Village.

Queer Arrival Infrastructure

Based on data collected from Phase 2 Interviews, the Village is key part of the Queer Arrival Infrastructure network which provides essential amenities and services to support QTPOC newcomers' post-migration life. These resources are primarily concentrated along Church St.

- Queer Arrival Infrastructure sites
- Church St is generally interacted by QTPOC newcomers



Postwar Apartment Buildings

▲ **Fig. 4.23** Inventory of postwar apartment buildings in the Village.

The Village's built form is largely characterized by postwar apartment buildings from the 1960s and 1970s, designed in the "Tower in the Park" style. Due to outdated urban design, many of these towers feature underutilized ground-level spaces, presenting opportunities for revitalization.

- Apartment Neighbourhoods
- "Tower in the Park"
- Potential Sites



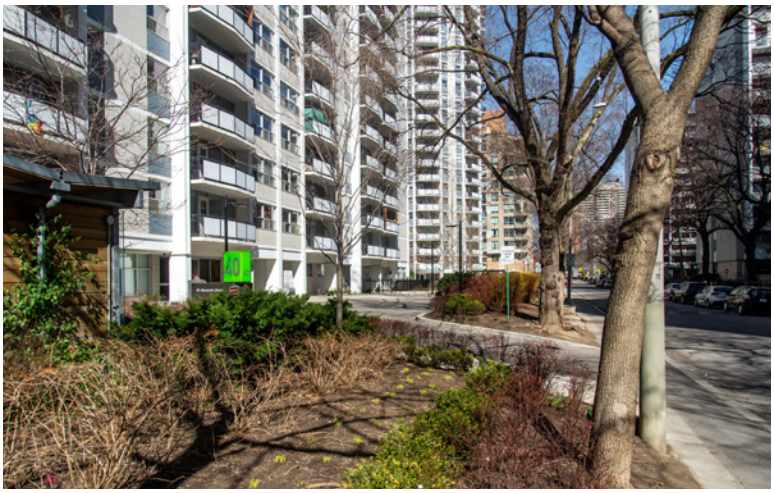
▲ **Fig. 4.24** A collage of postwar apartment buildings in the Village.

Site 1: Alexander St

Site 1 is situated between the Village Green Apartments and City Park Coop Apartments, both of which have historically housed a significant queer community and played a pivotal role in the early development of the Village. The site has a linear form and offers potential connections to Buddies in Bad Times Theatre and Alexander Street Parkette. While the existing streetscape is well-landscaped and maintained, it offers limited opportunities for further activation.



◀ **Fig. 4.25** Site 1: Alexander Street, situated between City Park Co-op and Village Green Apartments.



◀ **Fig. 4.26** Site 1: The streetscape of Alexander Street is well-maintained, featuring driveways and landscaped gardens.

Site 2: Wellesley & Jarvis

Site 2 is located at the northwestern corner of Wellesley St E and Jarvis St, on the lot of the Wellesley Apartments building. The northern edge of the site offers potential connections to Barbara Hall Park, though this link remains uncertain due to the park's upcoming renovations. On the eastern side, facing Jarvis St, existing planters and seating areas are frequently used by street-involved individuals. While a new public space could transform the area, careful consideration is needed to ensure that any changes are inclusive and mindful of the needs of vulnerable populations.



▶ **Fig. 4.27** Site 2: 100 Wellesley St E Apartments features a well-landscaped entrance, complete with benches and planters, enhancing its welcoming and communal atmosphere.



▶ **Fig. 4.28** The east-facing side of 100 Wellesley St E Apartments. The benches are frequently utilized by street-involved individuals and other vulnerable communities.

Site 3: Isabella St

Site 3 spans a long stretch of Isabella St between Yonge St and Church St, in a predominantly residential area. The street features five postwar apartment buildings alongside a low-rise Art Deco building. On the other side, much of the ground level remains underutilized, consisting mainly of lawns and driveways. Additionally, key institutions such as the ArQuives and the Children's Aid Society of Toronto are located along this corridor. This site offers an excellent opportunity to connect with the Yonge St Linear Park system, enhancing public space and accessibility in the neighbourhood.



◀ **Fig. 4.29** Site 3: The ground space in front of 33 Isabella Street features a large lawn area.



◀ **Fig. 4.31** Site 3: The lawn and driveway in front of 59 Isabella Street.

▶ **Fig. 4.30** Isabella St houses a diverse mix of residential typologies and cultural institutions.



Site Selection: Isabella St

Site 3 was chosen for intervention based on the following reasons:

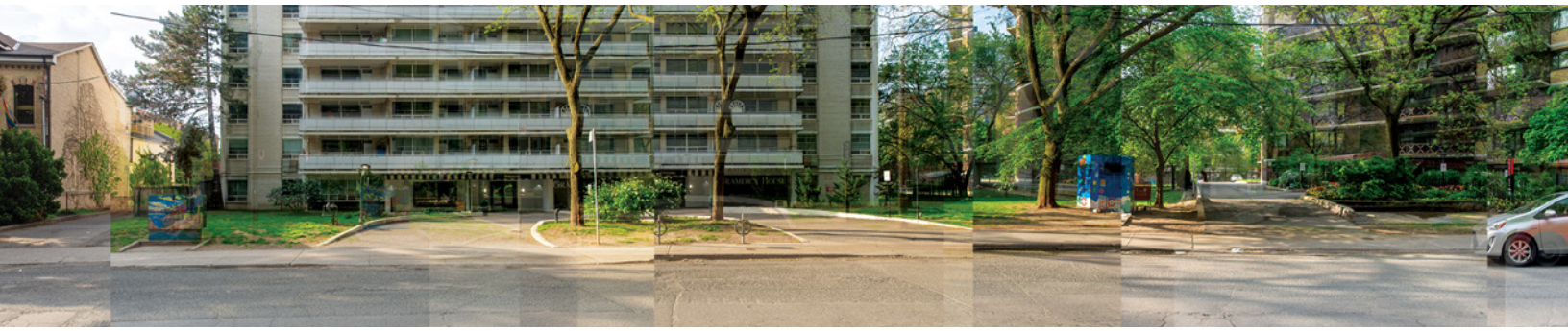
Architectural Diversity: Isabella St features a rich architectural mix, including prewar and postwar apartment buildings, and heritage-listed single detached houses. These typologies serve as a living archive of the neighbourhood's evolution over time.

Demographic Diversity: The residential buildings along Isabella St house a diverse population spanning various socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The area offers a wide range of housing options, from older, affordable apartments to renovated units and newer condos, making it accessible to a broad spectrum of residents. The demography includes seniors, queers, university students, young professionals, and recent immigrants, creating a unique social dynamic.

Strategic location and urban connections: Positioned across from the ArQuives and closely linked to the Yonge St Linear Park system, this site offers opportunities for seamless urban connections. Serving as a local thoroughfare between Church St and Yonge St, the site presents the potential to enhance the public realm and foster cross-neighbourhood exchanges.

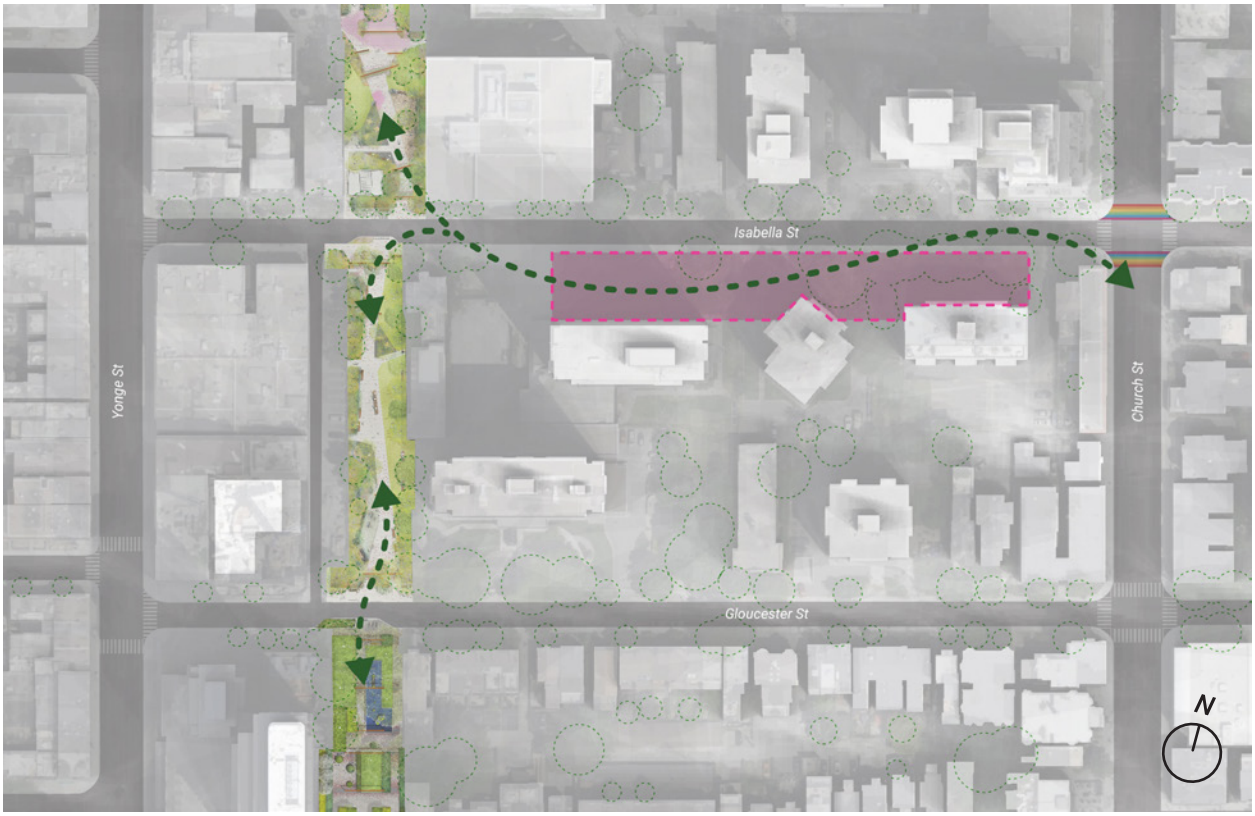
▶ **Fig. 4.32** Map: The site within the Village context.

▼ **Fig. 4.33** Collage: Panorama street view of the site.




Yonge St
Church St
Bloor St W
Bloor St E
The ArQuives
Isabella St
Site
Yonge St Linear Park
Barbara Hall Park
The 519
Wellesley St W
Wellesley St E
N
Yonge St
Church St
Jarvis St





Green Connections

▲ **Fig. 4.34** Green connections of the site.

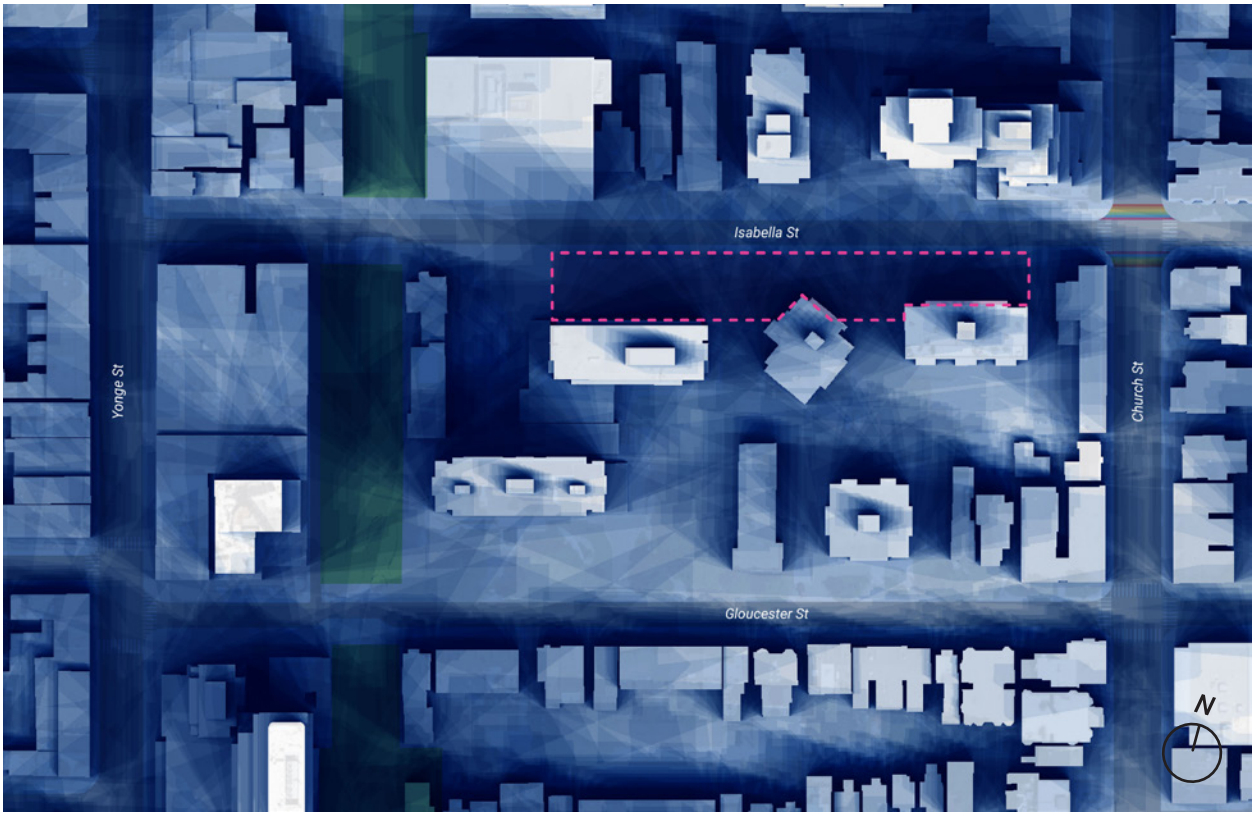
Situated near the Yonge St Linear Park, the site is well connected to the Clock Tower Trail and the city's larger park system. This strategic location presents an opportunity to enhance the local ecosystem and biodiversity through thoughtful landscape design



▲ **Fig. 4.35** Pedestrian movements of the site.

Pedestrian Movements

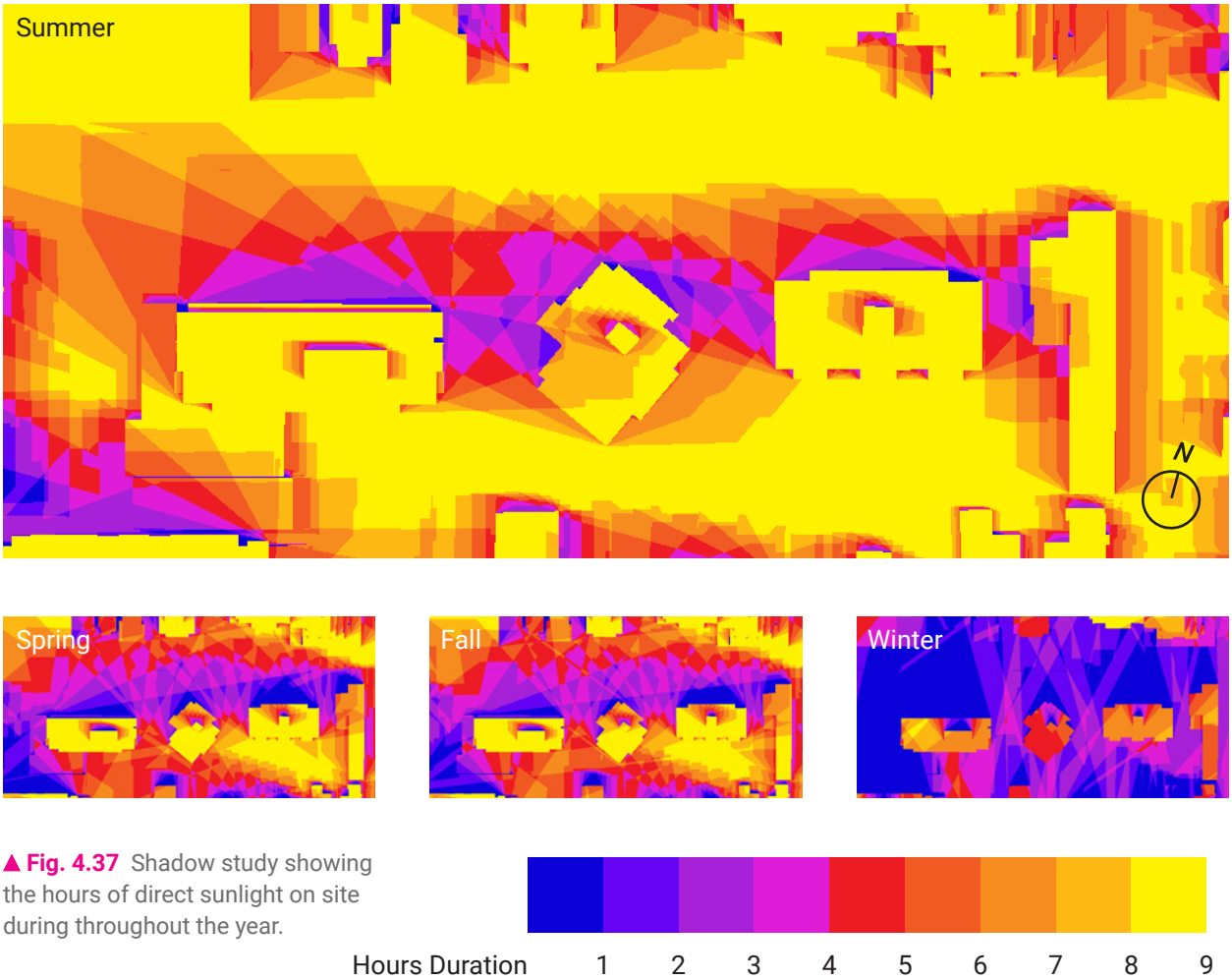
Located in front of three apartment towers, the site experiences heavy foot traffic from local residents. It also functions as a key thoroughfare linking two busy main streets, and guiding pedestrians into the Village.



Shadow Study

▲ **Fig. 4.36** Shadow study of the site.

Surrounded by tall buildings, the site remains heavily shadowed for most of the year. This unique lighting condition will play a critical role in shaping both spatial programming and landscape design, requiring strategic approaches maintain user comfort and biodiversity.



▲ **Fig. 4.37** Shadow study showing the hours of direct sunlight on site during throughout the year.



4.4 Queer Beachscape

The beach is more than a spatial typology defined by water and sand; it is an inclusive and democratic space where differences are negotiated, and spatial boundaries are blurred. As a site of leisure and interaction, the beach fosters engagement between people and the environment, while also challenging conventional divisions between the built and unbuilt.

Eduardo Aquino introduces the concept of "beachscape" as a design framework that reveals the complex relationship between fluid human movement and the fixed urban landscape. He argues that the "fluidity, mobility, spontaneous feedback, and non-linearity" of the beachscape create an alternative reality to the "stability, predictability, or rationality of architecture and infrastructures".[363] In this way, beachscape as a way of design thinking disrupts urban stagnation and generates new possibilities for public space.

This thesis reimagines a queer beachscape in the Village as a place of belonging and visibility for QTPOC newcomers. Drawing inspirations from two queer spaces: Hanlan's Point Beach and Glad Day Bookshop, this project translates their spatial and sociocultural conditions onto an urban street. The design envisions a beach without water and a bookshop without books, as metaphors to raise awareness of local queer spaces and emphasize their communal significance to not only QTPOC newcomers but also the broader communities as well. This section details the conceptual framework, thought process, and design decisions, all of which were shaped by the active participation of QTPOC newcomers, ensuring the project reflects their lived experiences.

363 Eduardo Aquino, "Beachscape," in *Complex Order: Intrusions in Public Space, 1998-2009*, ed. Eduardo Aquino and Karen Shanski (Winnipeg, Man., Brighton: Plug In ; Roundhouse [distributor], 2012), 42–47.

◀ **Fig. 4.38** Hanlan's Point Beach is a summer retreat for Toronto's queer communities.

Toronto's Beachscape

Bordered by Lake Ontario, Toronto is home to several natural beaches within the city proper. In addition to these, contemporary urban design projects has introduced artificial urban beach parks, offering city dwellers an accessible beach experience, while activating the city's urban fabric. Building on these existing beach typologies, this project introduces a new kind of beach - a queer beachscape, to bring the beach spirit into the heart of the city, reimagining it as an inclusive and celebratory public space.



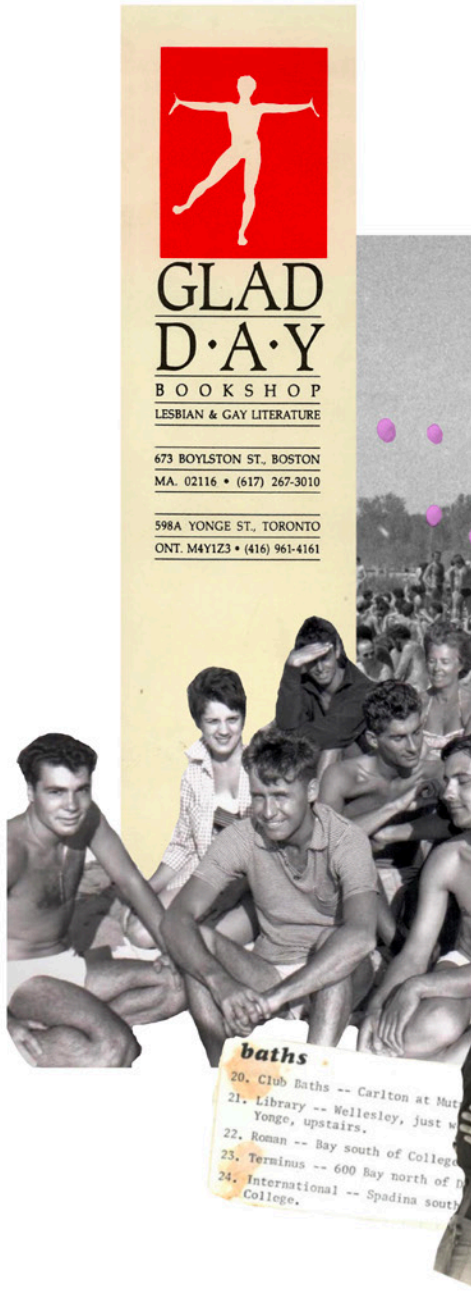
▶ **Fig. 4.39** Toronto's beachscape includes both natural shorelines and artificial urban beaches.


Queer Beachscape
HTO
Sugar Beach
Leslie Slip Lookout
Woodbine Beach
Cherry Beach
Ward's Island Beach
Centre Island Beach
Beach
N

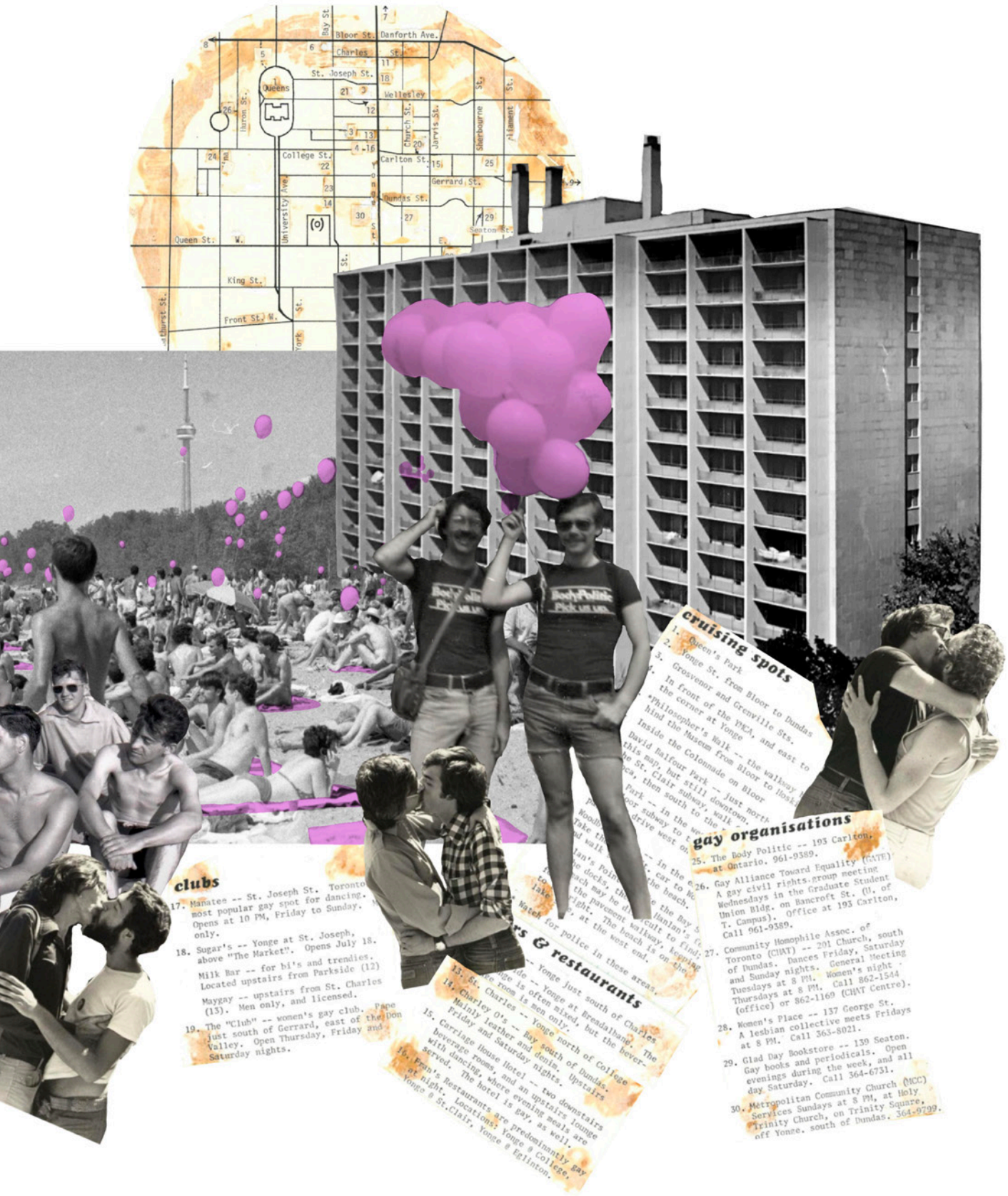
Reconceptualize Hanlan's

Hanlan's Point Beach holds deep significance for both QTPOC newcomers and the local queer community. Historically, it has served as a vital space for queer leisure, activism, and community-building, and was the birthplace of Canada's first Pride events.

The collage on this page merges Hanlan's "Gay Day Picnic" with elements of Toronto's early queerscape, including City Park Apartments, the old bookmark from Glad Day Bookshop, and a 1970s "gay map" of the city. By blending spatial typologies and illustrating the interactions between people and the built environment, this composition offers a lens through which to reimagine a queer beachscape in an urban context.



▶ **Fig. 4.40** A collage reimagining Hanlan's Point Beach through the lens of Toronto's queer history.

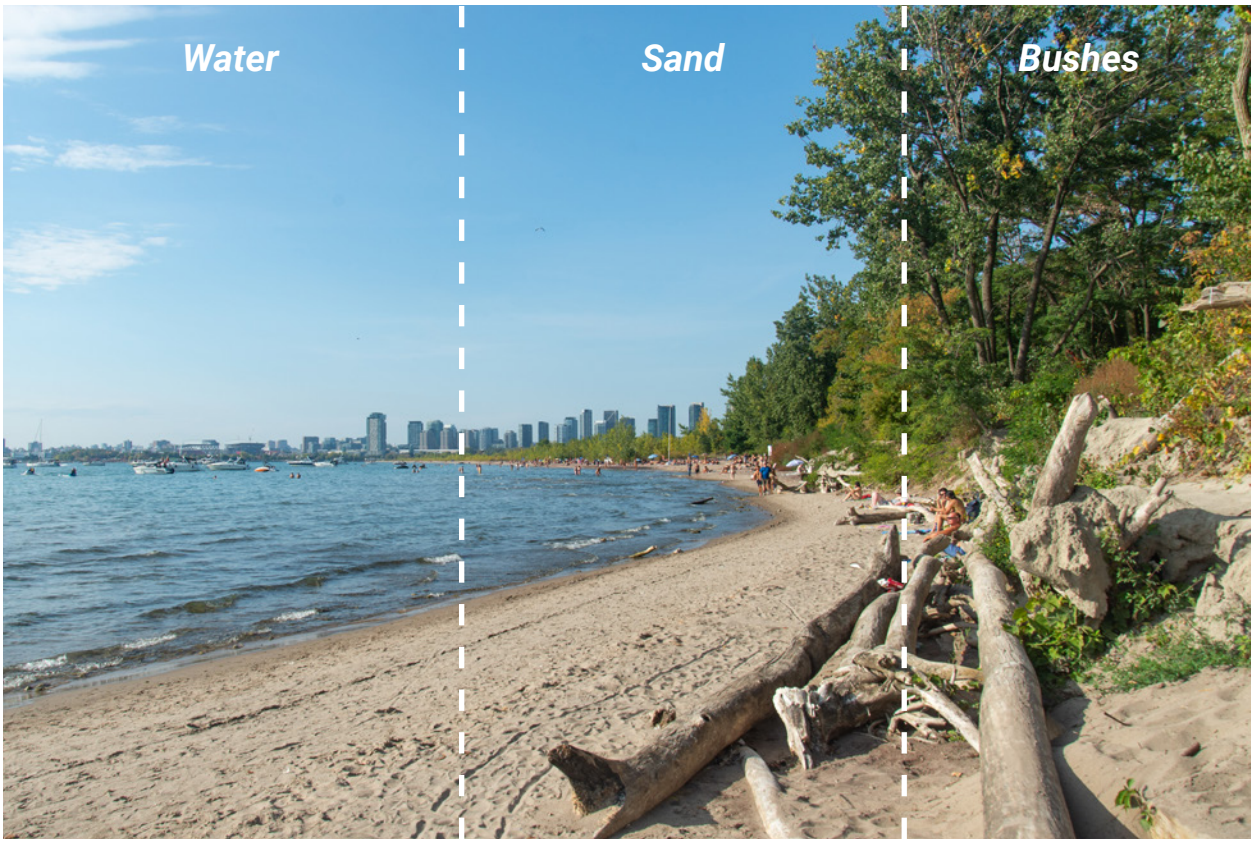

Bay St.
Bloor St.
Danforth Ave.
Charles St.
St. Joseph St.
Queens
Wellesley
Huron St.
Church St.
Jarvis St.
Sherbourne
College St.
Carlton St.
Gerrard St.
Dundas St.
University Ave.
Queen St. W.
King St.
Front St. W.
Spadina
Seaton St.
cruising spots
1. Queen's Park
2. Yonge St. from Bloor to Dundas
3. Grosvenor and Grenville Sts.
4. In front of the YMCA, and east to the corner at Yonge
"Philosopher's Walk -- the walkway behind the Museum from Bloor to Hoskin
Inside the Colonnade on Bloor
David Balfour Park -- Just north this map, but still downtown.
St. Clair subway, walk
Park -- in the
drive west on
clubs
17. Manatee -- St. Joseph St. Toronto's most popular gay spot for dancing. Opens at 10 PM, Friday to Sunday. Men only.
18. Sugar's -- Yonge at St. Joseph, above "The Market". Opens July 18.
Milk Bar -- for bi's and trendies. Located upstairs from Parkside (12)
Maygay -- upstairs from St. Charles (13). Men only, and licensed.
19. The "Club" -- women's gay club. Pape just south of Gerrard, east of the Don Valley. Open Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights.
Yonge Just south of Charles
Yonge at Brendalbank. The
Yonge is often mixed, but the bever-
Yonge is men only.
Yonge north of College
Bay south of Dundas.
Mainly leather and denim. Upstairs
Friday and Saturday nights.
13. St. Charles
14. Charley O's --
15. Carriage House Hotel -- two downstairs
beverage rooms, and an upstairs lounge
with dancing, where evening meals are
served. The hotel is gay, as well.
16. Fran's Restaurants are predominantly gay
at night. Locations: Yonge & College,
Yonge & St.Clair, Yonge & Eglinton.
gay organisations
25. The Body Politic -- 193 Carlton, at Ontario. 961-9389.
26. Gay Alliance Toward Equality (GATE) -- A gay civil rights group meeting Wednesdays in the Graduate Student Union Bldg. on Bancroft St. (U. of T. Campus). Office at 193 Carlton, Call 961-9389.
27. Community Homophile Assoc. of Toronto (CHAT) -- 201 Church, south of Dundas. Dances Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights. General Meeting Tuesdays at 8 PM. Women's night Thursdays at 8 PM. Call 862-1544 (office) or 862-1169 (CHAT Centre).
28. Women's Place -- 137 George St. A lesbian collective meets Fridays at 8 PM. Call 363-8021.
29. Glad Day Bookstore -- 139 Seaton. Gay books and periodicals. Open evenings during the week, and all day Saturday. Call 364-6731.
30. Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) Services Sundays at 8 PM, at Holy Trinity Church, on Trinity Square, off Yonge, south of Dundas. 364-9799.

Deconstruct Hanlan's

Hanlan's Point Beach is a space of bodily pleasure. Its natural environment is shaped by three essential elements: water, sand, and bushes. While water and sand serve as public elements that provide relaxation and leisure, the dense bushes form a hidden, counterpublic space. These heavy plantings act as a natural barrier, shielding clothing-optional beach from the rest of the Centre Island, offering a sense of privacy from other park users. Yet, within these wooded enclosures, a thriving sexual queer space emerges. Visitors are invited into the narrow, winding paths to cruise through the foliage, exchange glances with passersby, and experience fleeting moments of intimacy under the natural canopy.

▶ **Fig. 4.41** The bushes at Hanlan's.

▼ **Fig. 4.42** Three spatial elements of Hanlan's: water, sand, and bushes.





Spatial Organization

Building upon Hanlan's spatial organization and its interplay between public and counterpublic spaces, this project applies a similar logic to the linear-shaped park, structuring it into three metaphorically spatial tiers: water, sand, and bushes. This segmentation transitions from the public street on the outer edge to a counterpublic inner park, and finally, into the queer domesticity within the adjacent apartment buildings. Although the park as a whole exists as a queer space, it is layered with varying degrees of queerness and visibility, reflecting different levels of publicness.

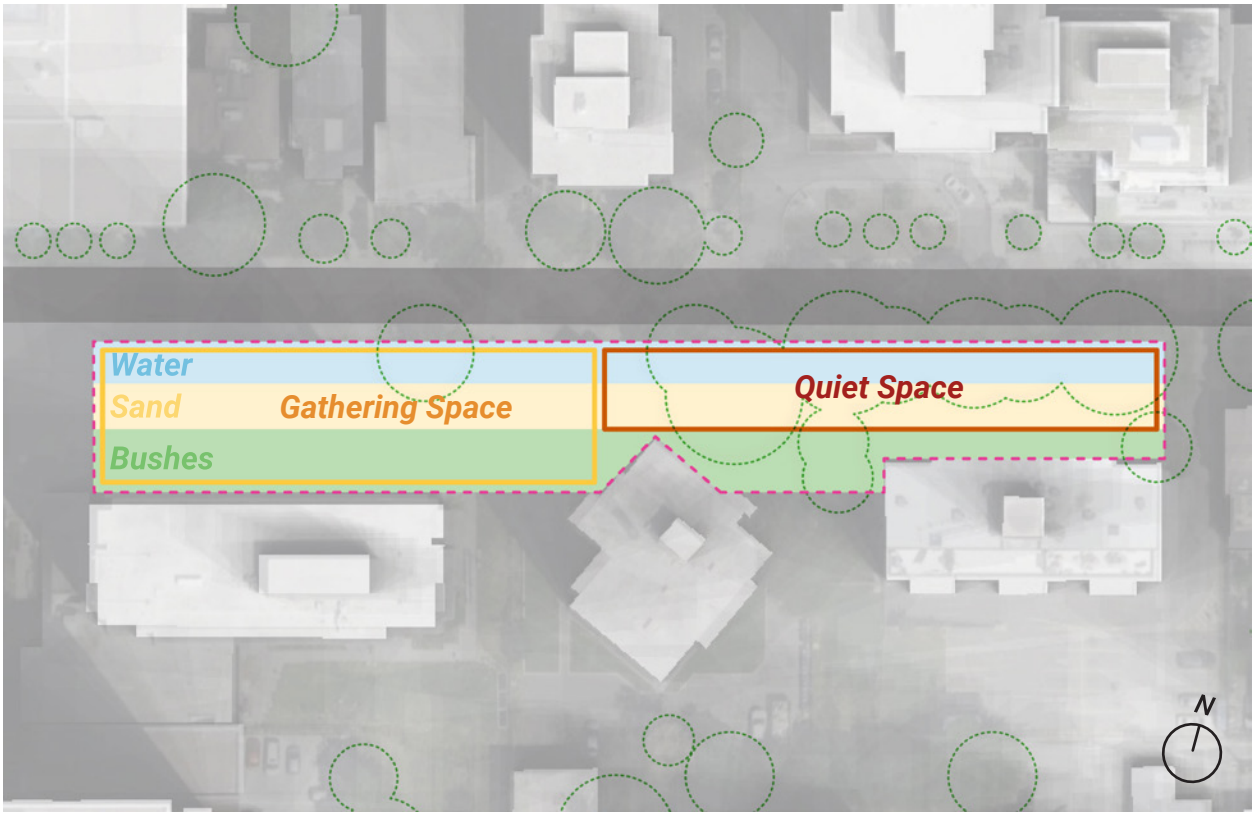
▼ **Fig. 4.43** The spatial organization is conceptualized as a queer counterpublic.



Programming

The park's spatial experience is further shaped by existing site conditions. The more open and sunlit western section is designed as a primary gathering space, encouraging community activities, while the shaded and narrower eastern section offers a more intimate and enclosed setting for quieter social interactions.

▼ **Fig. 4.44** The site is separated into three elemental areas: water, sand, and bushes.

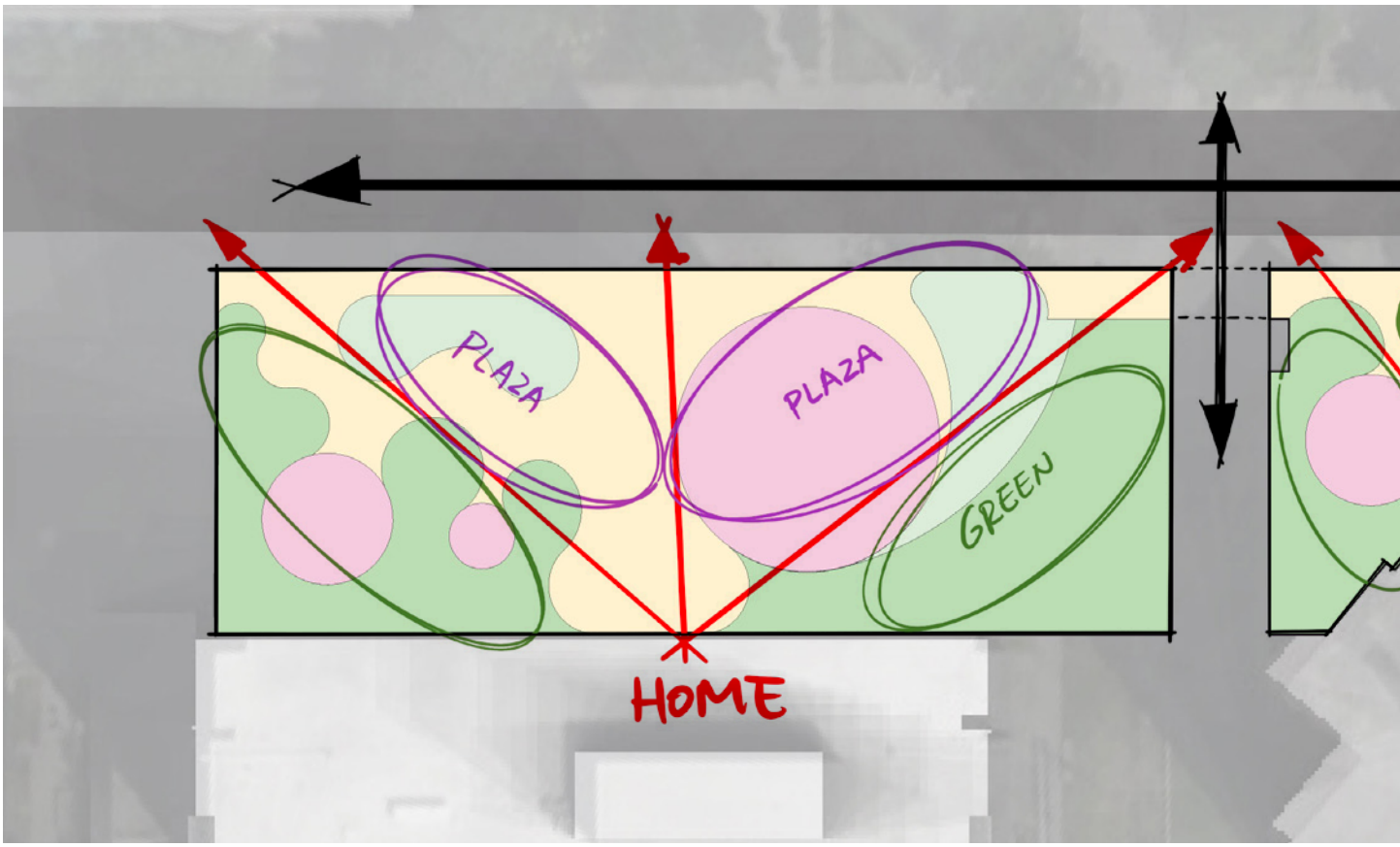


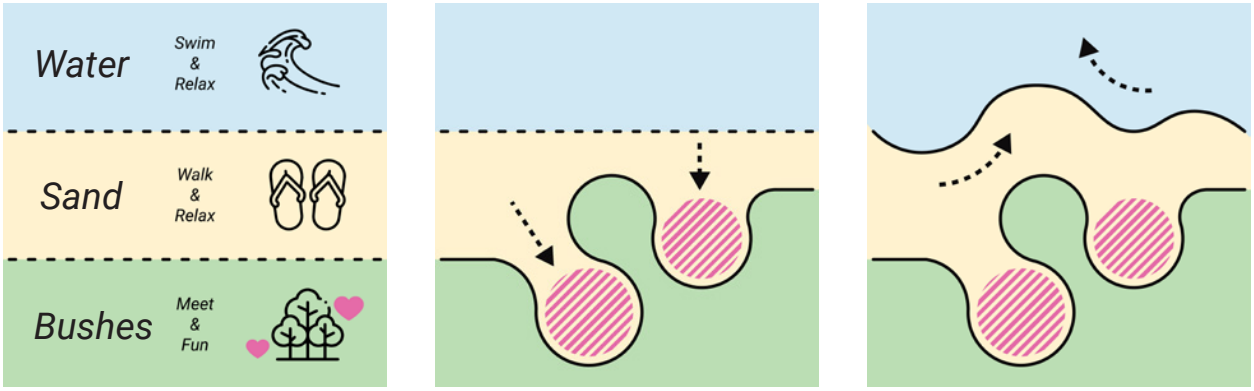
Movements & Flow

The linearity of the tiered spatial organization is intentionally "queered" to carve out pockets of intimate spaces, disrupting the rigidity of traditional spatial divisions. The transformation from straight-lined separation to fluid forms is a literal and conceptual interpretation of queer space.

As discussed in Section 2.3, all spaces exist within the parallel timelines of straight time and queer time. A space becomes queer when its straight time is overpowered by queer occupation. In this design, the rigid separation between spatial elements is reorganized and softened, creating conditions where queer spaces can emerge and flourish organically.

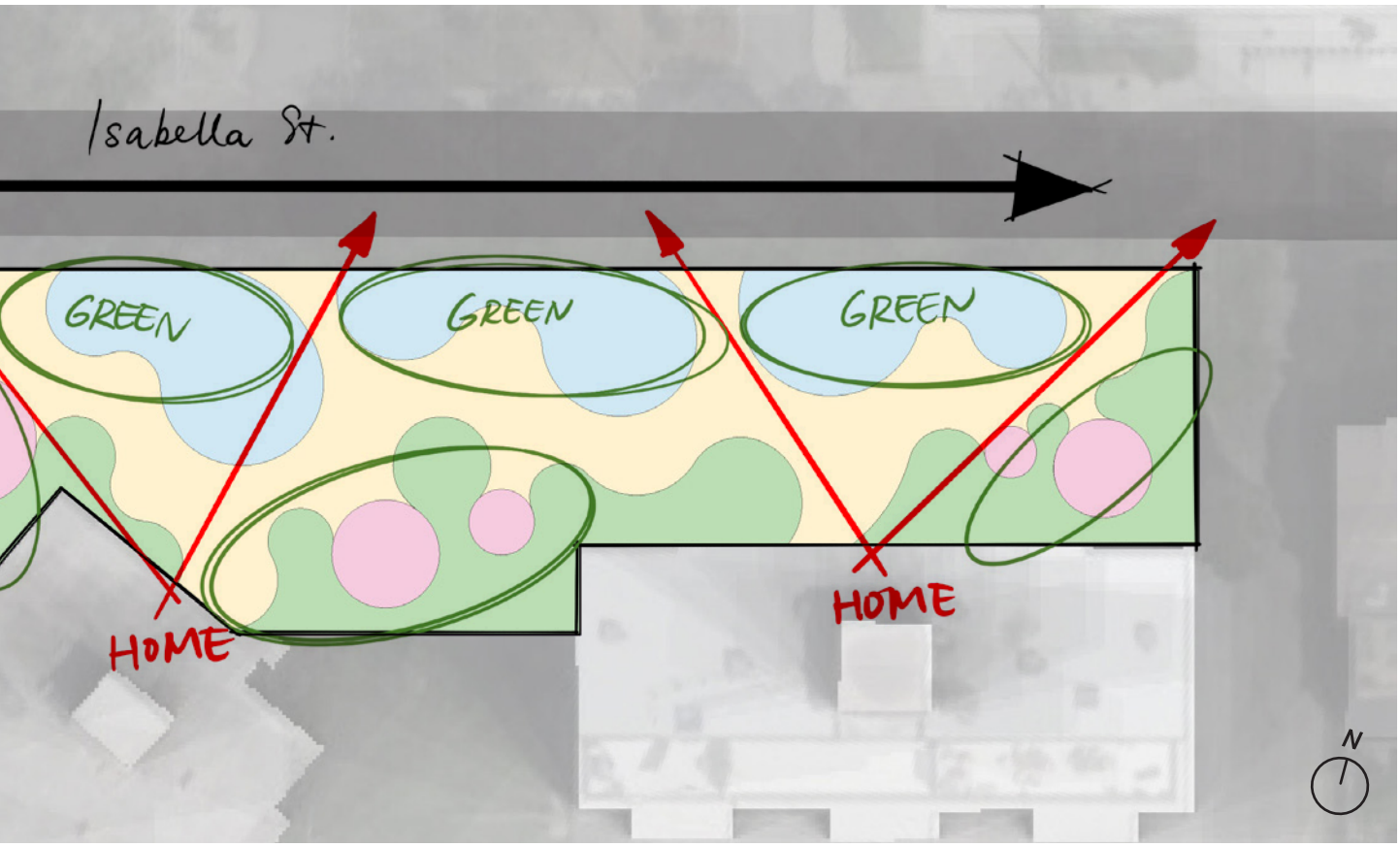
Additionally, the fluid shapes are shaped by pedestrian movement patterns, responding to how people navigate in and out of the adjacent apartment buildings.





▲ **Fig. 4.46** Queer space is carved out from the linear shapes.

▼ **Fig. 4.45** Pedestrian movements create bubbles of different functions.



Reimagine Glad Day Bookshop

Glad Day began as a bookshop, and since has evolved into the "unofficial community centre" of Toronto's queer communities. It functions as a bar, club, restaurant, event venue, and many more. As a commercial establishment, Glad Day has been a vital gathering space for many marginalized queer individuals. For QTPOC newcomers, Glad Day is one of the first places where they find an inclusive and welcoming environment, offering something for everyone. What makes Glad Day truly unique is its ability to bring people together, fostering connection, solidarity, and resilience, especially in times of challenge.

Glad Day's community-oriented spirit echoes that of historical queer spaces such as St. Charles Tavern (1960s-1970s), and the Steps (1980s-1990s) - both of which were landmarks of Toronto's queerscape, providing safety (though not always entirely so) and communal spaces. The collage on this page explores the social significance of these spaces, capturing their role as meeting points and beacons of hope for queer individuals navigating difficult times.

Yet, queer spaces are inherently temporal and vulnerable. Over the years, Glad Day has had to relocate multiple times to adapt to growth and financial struggles. Most recently, it launched a fundraising campaign to secure rent and sustain itself amid financial uncertainty. While Glad Day is likely to survive, its future form remains unknown.

▼ Fig. 4.47 A collage illustrates Toronto's "unofficial queer community centres" throughout history. It highlights key spaces that have served as gathering places for the city's queer communities.



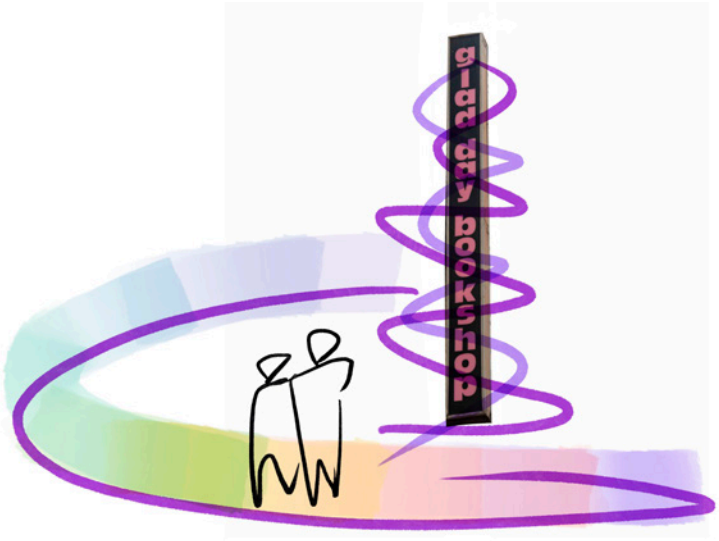

glad day bookshop
"MEET ME UNDER THE CLOCK"
St. Charles

The Rainbow Tower in honour of Glad Day

The reimagined Glad Day takes shape in the public realm through a central plaza in the park - the Rainbow Tower. This fluid, circular structure rises to crown the old Glad Day signage at its peak, symbolizing a journey of queer freedom, resilience, and joy. The barrier-free ramp allows visitors to climb up and observe the space from above, offering a unique vantage point for visibility and inclusivity. Beneath the tower, a sunken plaza forms a gathering space for community events, performances, and programming, further enforcing Glad Day's legacy in bringing people together.

▼ **Fig. 4.48** The Rainbow Tower form a circular plaza beneath.





▶ **Fig. 4.49** A conceptual sketch illustrating a fluid structure wrapping Glad Day's signage.

▼ **Fig. 4.50** The plaza provides a centralized space for gatherings.

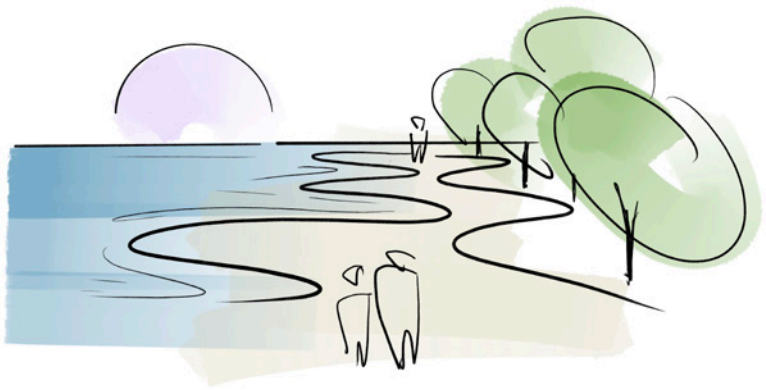


The Meeting Nooks in honour of Hanlan's

Hanlan's Point Beach is reflected not only in the overall spatial organization of the park but also in the design of its individual meeting nooks. These intimate pockets, surrounded by lush vegetation, offer a sense of privacy and seclusion, paying tribute to Hanlan's cruisy bushes. However, to balance intimacy with safety, the plants are strategically arranged at waist height, maintaining clear sight lines from a distance. Some meeting nooks are furnished with movable street furniture, featuring fluid shapes reminiscent of beach towels caught in the wind. Other nooks house custom designed installations for playful interactions. With various sizes and layouts, the nooks accommodate different types of social gatherings, from cozy, private corners for quiet moments to larger seating arrangements for group outings.

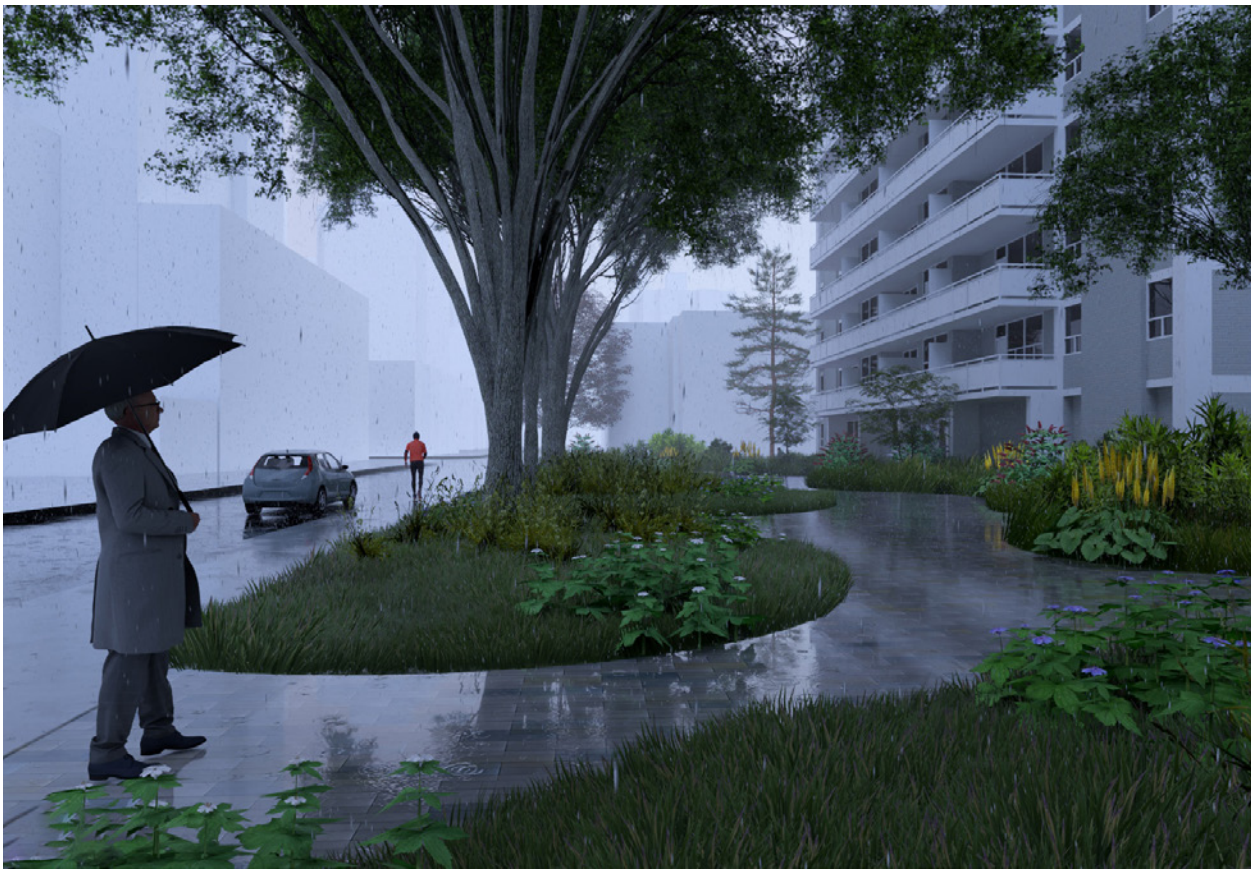
▼ **Fig. 4.51** The meeting nooks feature modular benches forming flexible meeting spaces.





▶ **Fig. 4.52** A conceptual sketch illustrating Hanlan's fluid spatial organizations.

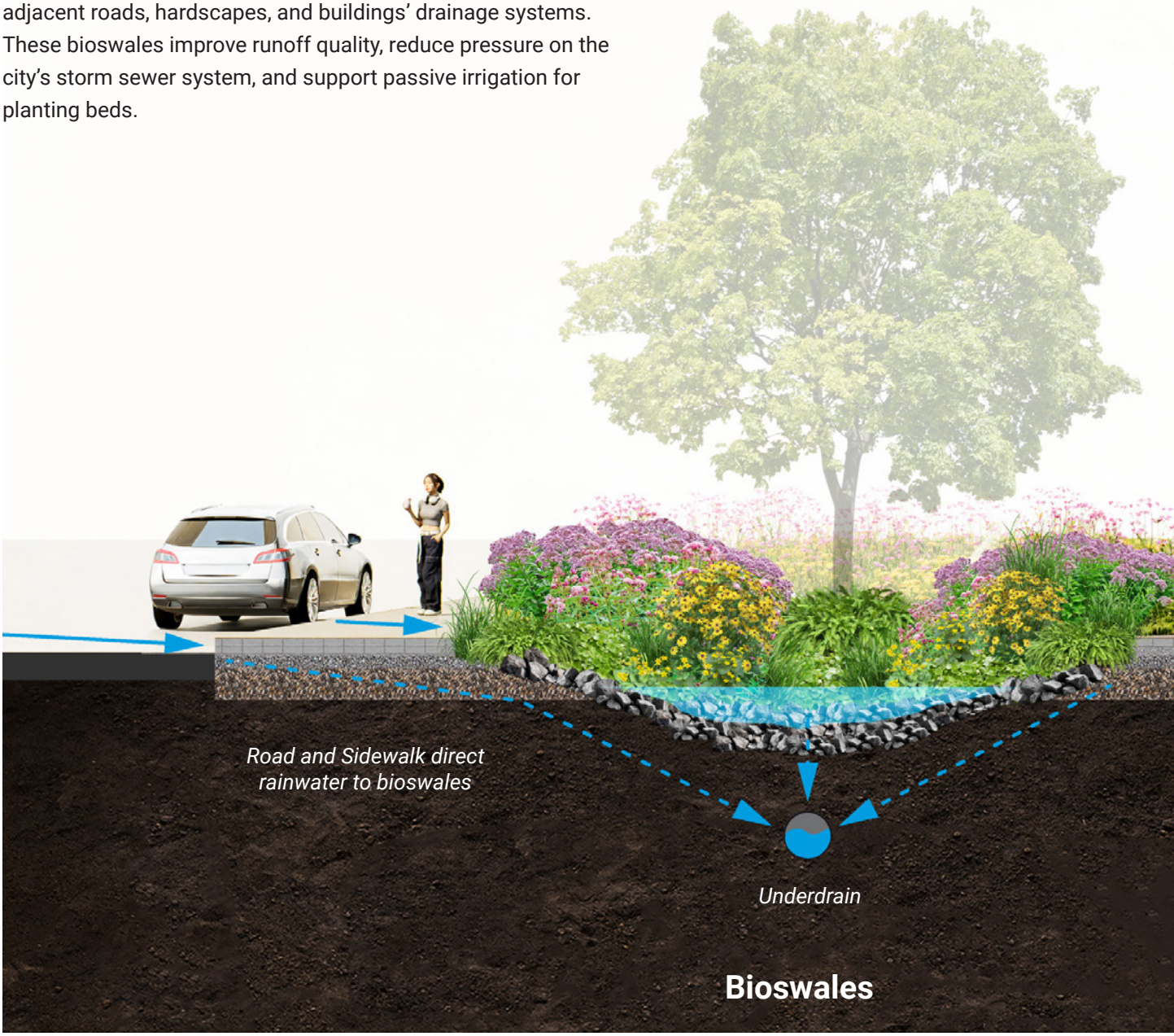
▼ **Fig. 4.53** Bioswales symbolize the water element, promoting biodiversity on site.



Sustainability: Stormwater Management

This project achieves a high level of sustainability by implementing low-impact development practices and incorporating green infrastructure throughout the site, aligning with the Toronto Green Standard. It proposes a long stretch of bioswales along Isabella St to treat and infiltrate runoff from adjacent roads, hardscapes, and buildings' drainage systems. These bioswales improve runoff quality, reduce pressure on the city's storm sewer system, and support passive irrigation for planting beds.

▼ **Fig. 4.54** Stormwater management diagram

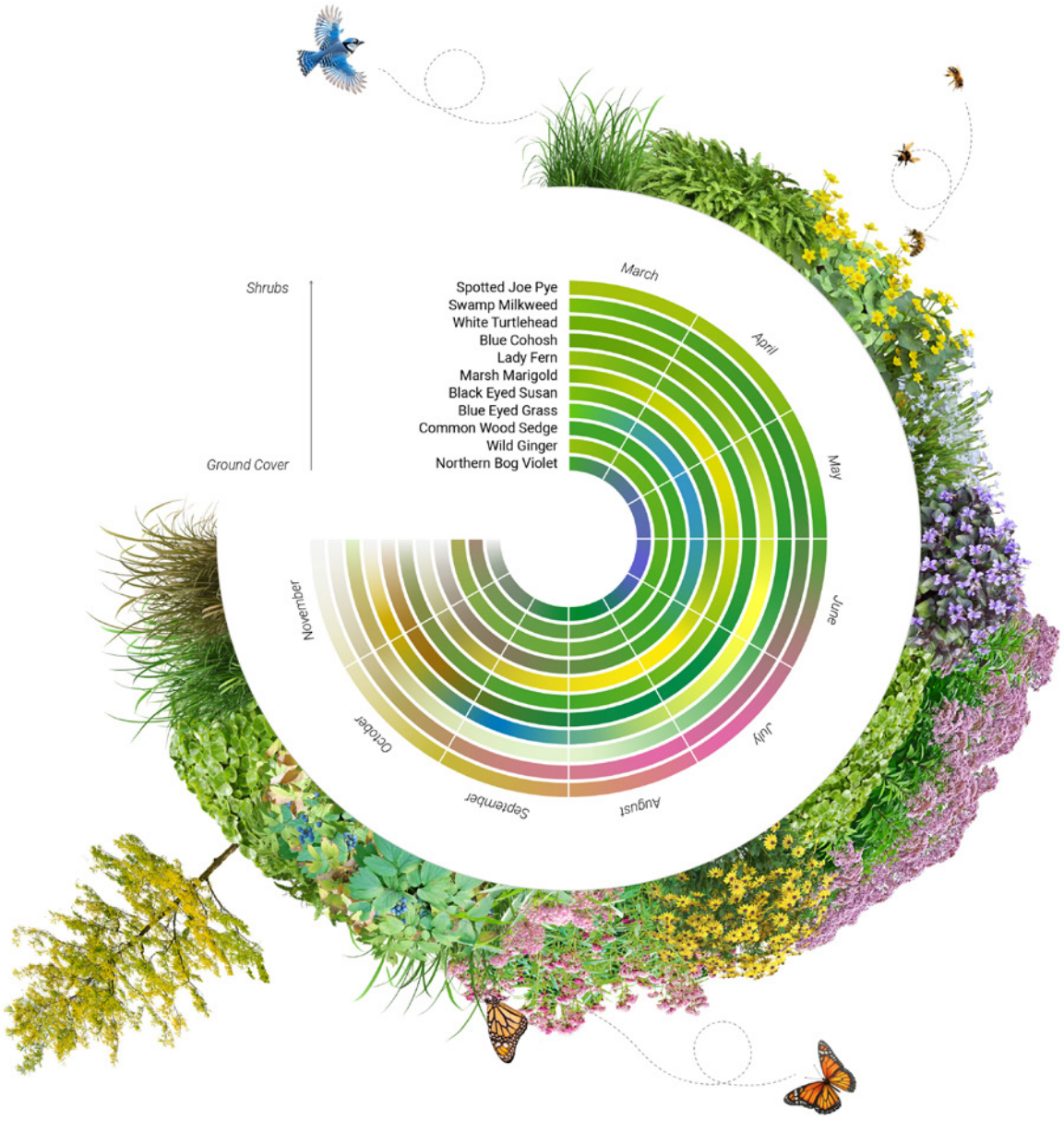



Permeable paving
Infiltration
Building drainage directs rainwater to bioswales
Natrualized Gardens

Biodiversity

The planting strategy prioritizes biodiversity and native ecology. Existing trees are preserved, and conventional lawn grass is replaced by carefully selected native species. A variety of wildflowers were planted to ensure visual interest throughout the seasons. These landscape interventions enhance both the aesthetics and the ecological performance of the public realm.

▼ **Fig. 4.55** Native plants for bioswales



▼ **Fig. 4.56** Native plants for gardens



Focus Groups

4.5

To further refine the design direction and develop detailed elements, the proposal was presented to 6 participants across 2 focus group sessions. These discussions were guided by 3 sets of questions, prompting participants to reflect on their personal and community-based envisioned use of the park, and their feedback on design-related elements.

Overall, the design was well-received, with participants expressing appreciation for the thoughtful integration of local queer spaces and the joyful aesthetic the park would bring to the neighbourhood. Many also noted its multifunctionality which could facilitate their diverse social needs.[364]

364 Participants, Focus Groups, October 30, 2024.

A Convenient Pit Stop

The park's location was particularly praised by participants who live nearby. Jason, a resident of St. James Town, reflected: *"**It's so on my path to places** that I would probably use it for a little stroll or a sit before I need to go somewhere."* Pedro, who lives in one of the apartment buildings on Isabella St, expressed excitement about having a functional green space right outside his door: *"Sometimes in summer days, I just wanna go down and sit and have some sunlight, but it's quite hard as there are no benches, or sitting zones, or anything proper. I can definitely see how **it would be nice to have some use to this green space that's in front of the buildings**."*

A Multifunctional Public Space

Participants also saw the park's great potential for hosting events and activities. Adam suggested that, given its proximity to Yonge St, the park could serve as a small stage during Pride festivals, adding another dimension to the city's queer celebrations. Pedro, inspired by the park's emotional connection to Glad Day, proposed that it could host literary events such as book readings and theatrical performances, offering a unique experience by bringing these activities into an outdoor setting.

Safety and Privacy Concerns

Alongside the positive feedback, privacy emerged as the biggest concern, given that the park is located directly in front of residential buildings. Jason noted that such proximity might deter him from spending long periods there. David raised concerns about the perceived ownership of the space, questioning *"Would it feel as if the visitors are intruding the space of the apartments? Or, on the other hand,* ***would the buildings feel that this is their own backyard*** *in a sense?"* Bob connected this concern with existing issues of drug use and safety in the Village, pointing out: *"If you imagine it functions in the same way as Barbara Hall Park, people are gonna have an issue.* ***If they can look right out their windows, and there's someone using substances****. That's gonna be a big issue."*

Maintenance and Durability Concerns

In addition to privacy concerns, many have addressed the importance of long-term maintenance in ensuring the park remains safe and functional for everyday use. Bob's concerns about safety resonated with Adam, who stressed that the design should not only be aesthetically pleasing but also practical and resistant to damage. Other participants suggested prioritizing durable materials to ensure longevity and reduce maintenance efforts.

Following these discussions, a design charrette presented participants with various design options for materiality, aesthetics, and spatial elements. This participatory exercise allows individuals to vote on their preferences and further promote their engagement in the design process, thus collectively shaping the final outcome. The following pages illustrate participants' perspectives on the proposed design options, their arguments for their choices, and the group dynamics that fueled these discussions.

Pavement: What do you prefer?

Interlocking pavers v.s. Coloured rubber paving



Rania *she/her*

*"I think the interlocking pavers might be **difficult for someone who's using a wheelchair**, because it might be every bumpy for them, so it might not be as accessible."*



*"It looks like it can **sustain for a very long time**, possibly after 5 years it will still look good."*

"I would definitely say interlocking pavers, although you could also just paint them instead of making them rubber."

*"Given how dull the city can be at times, I think that having lots of colours and contrast is nice. You can also **give queer artists the opportunities to design or paint a mural**."*



Adam *he/him*



Bob *he/they*

▲ **Fig. 4.57** Design charrette: comparing design options for the pavements.

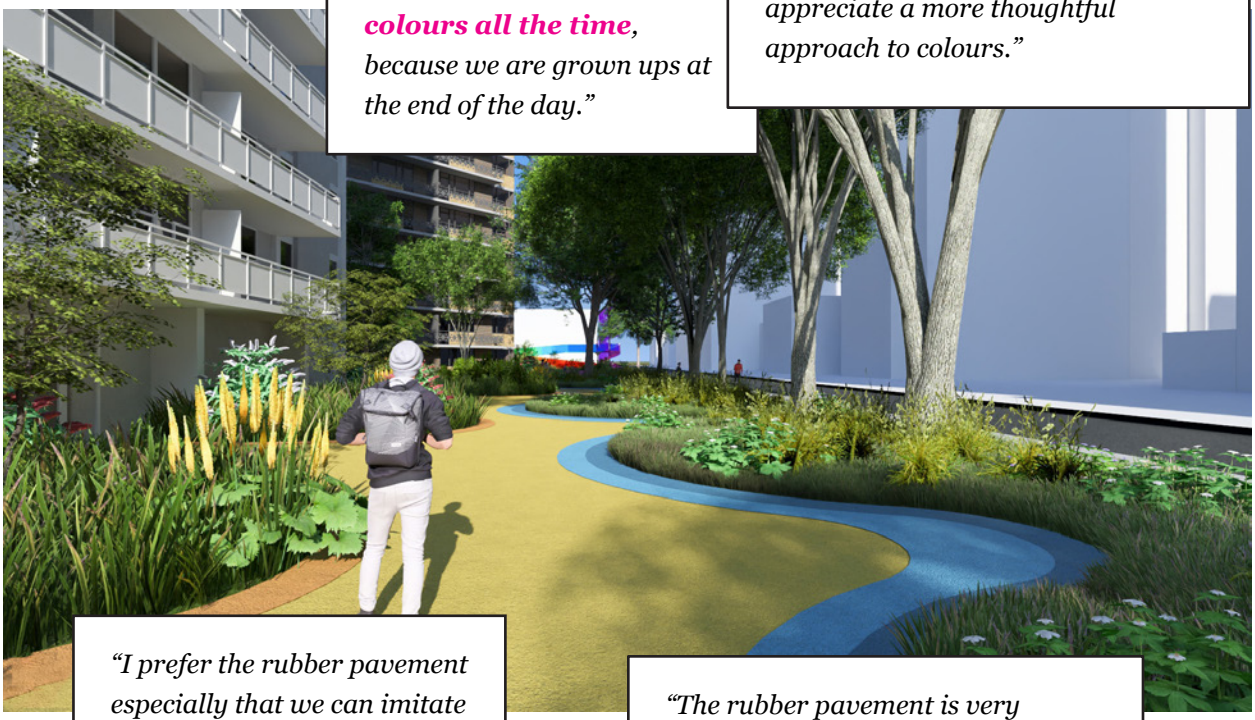


Jason *he/they*

"I generally prefer the rubber just for walking purposes, it's ***nice on the feet****."*

"I actually like the colours, they are essential for the Hanlan's concept. But at the same time, I'm always a little ***unenthused when queer spaces are just flashy colours all the time****, because we are grown ups at the end of the day."*

"What could be really cool is to have an ***indigenous artist or someone come in to paint a very specific mural*** *along the pathway. I would appreciate a more thoughtful approach to colours."*



"I prefer the rubber pavement especially that we can imitate the beach colours, and it's indeed ***softer and nicer****."*

"The rubber pavement is very ***comfortable*** *for jogging. It really looks good, but I don't know if it will last after one year or two years."*

"I agree (with Jason). ***If you are putting colours everywhere, it's probably too much****. If you have the Rainbow Tower highlighted as colourful, I think that is enough."*



David *he/him*



Adam *he/him*

Nooks: What do you prefer?

Circular concrete benches v.s. Colourful soft benches



Pedro *he/him*



Jason *he/they*

*"I like this concept of having little **circular nooks for people to face each other**, and actually have a conversation, eat and do whatever."*

*"I've seen the natural and hard one in multiple places here. I think it would be nice to see **something different**."*



*"It looks **uncomfortable** to sit in, especially if it's cold and wet."*

*"If you can **change the colour to pink**, and it is a good option. Now it is a bit boring."*

*"People can **sit together** and have chit chat, and it allows more people to enjoy this area."*



Bob *he/they*



Adam *he/him*

▲ **Fig. 4.58** Design charrette: comparing design options for the meeting nooks.





Adam *he/him* **David** *he/him*

"Because this is a queer space, we need to reflect elements of the colours. It also looks ***more modern, more sleek and just more lively****."*

"It's ***difficult for people to sit close*** *to each other because the distance is there."*



"I like it for comfort. I feel like Toronto is somehow averse to having spaces for people to sit comfortably. So anything to make sitting more ***comfortable****. I am all for."*

"It seems ***more welcoming****. I just really like how colourful it is as well."*





Jason *he/they* **Rania** *she/her*

Plaza: What do you prefer?

Flexible open space *v.s.* Small fountain



Jason *he/they*

"I personally prefer the open space. It ***lends itself so many iterations****. When I first looked at the tower and this whole space together, my impression was that'd be cool to have folks in the middle performing."*



"The open space is definitely better because there's ***so many things that you can do with that space****."*

"The circular space with elevated area around it for viewing, I think this is a ***versatile space*** *that can be used for all sorts of events."*



Bob *he/they*



David *he/him*

▲ **Fig. 4.59** Design charrette: comparing design options for plaza.

"I think the space is small overall, so adding too many elements might **over complicate it**."



David he/him



Pedro he/him

"I think the purpose would change a lot if we put the water feature, unless the **water feature was on control**, like it is only on on certain days and times of the week."



"It will be amazing if you have a small fountain in the middle of that circle. People might be going to the Tower to take photos."

"He (Bob) echoed my idea, I mean, we want the space, the little square space, but also a fountain to make it **more lively**."



Adam he/him

"The water feature, it's gonna gather garbage, and then **it has to be cleaned constantly**, and if it's not really upkept, it just becomes kind of a nasty source of water."

"If there was a fountain like the dog fountain in downtown. Maybe there could be something like that in terms of making it a bit unique."



Bob he/they

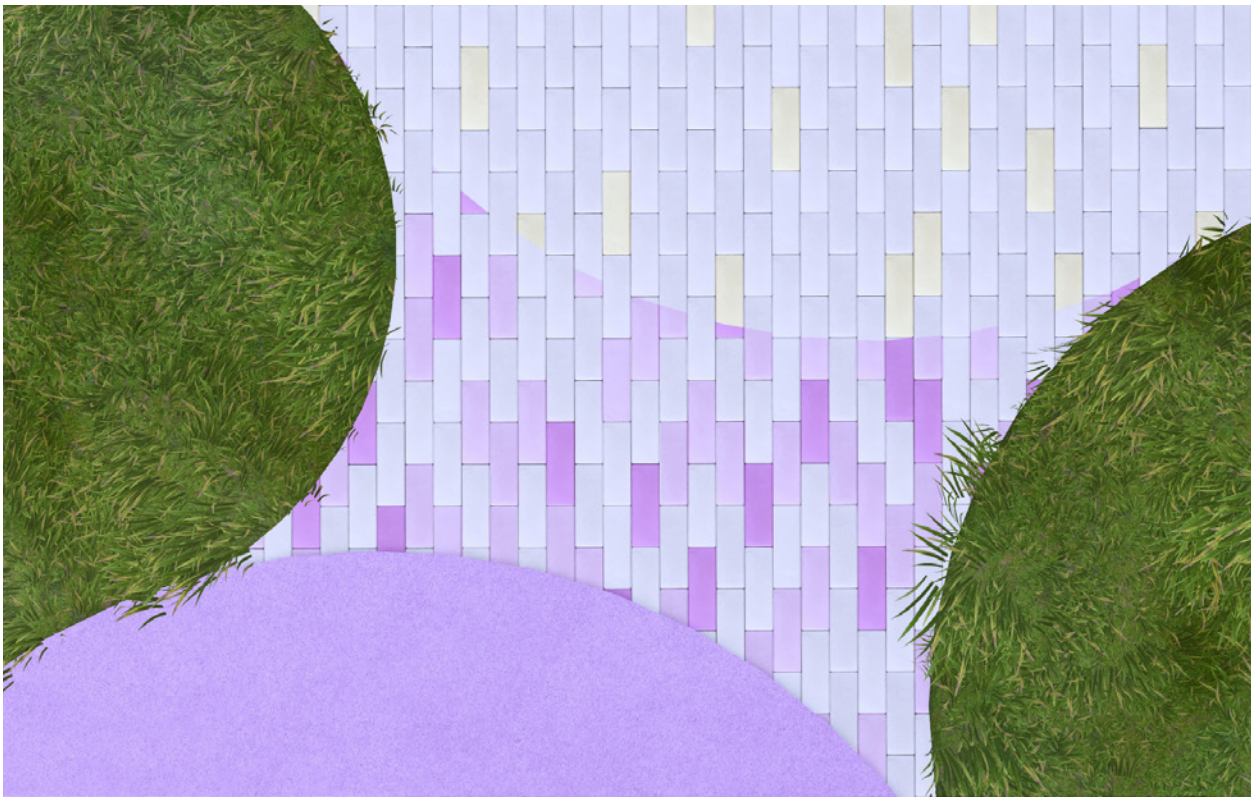
Design Modifications

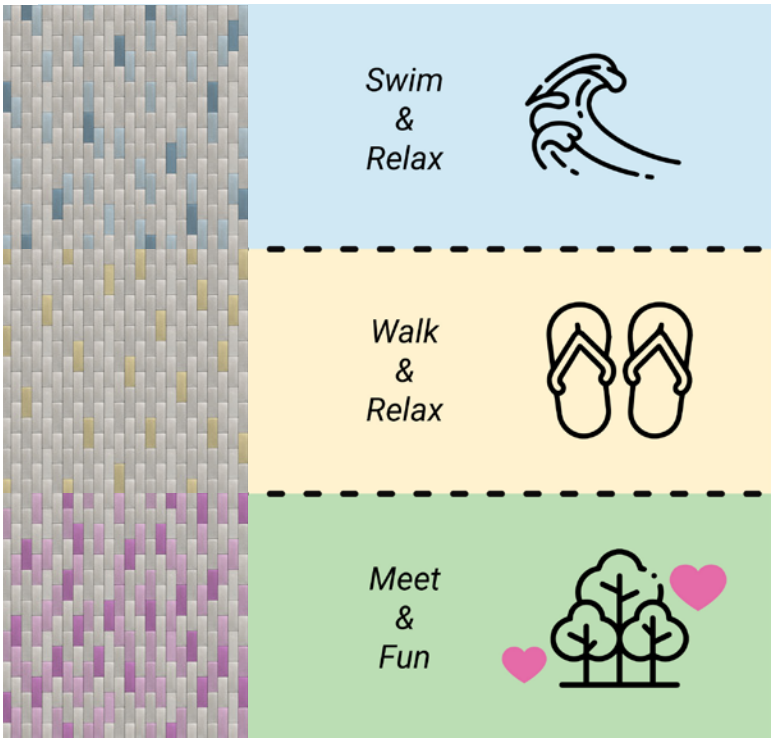
Based on feedback from the focus groups, I've implemented two key design modifications to further refine the proposal.

1. Paving Materials

Participants expressed concerns about the durability of rubber paving and the overuse of bold colours on the ground surface. In response, I have opted for a more subtle colour gradient to imply the 3 spatial organizations. The ground pavers will feature colour-tinted and aggregated compositions that reflect the thematic elements: blue paves near the streets, symbolizing the public nature of water; yellow pavers along the pathway, evoking the sandy beach; and pink paves marking the entrance to queer spaces.

▼ **Fig. 4.60** Colour-tinted aggregated pavers: transition from meeting nooks to the walkway.



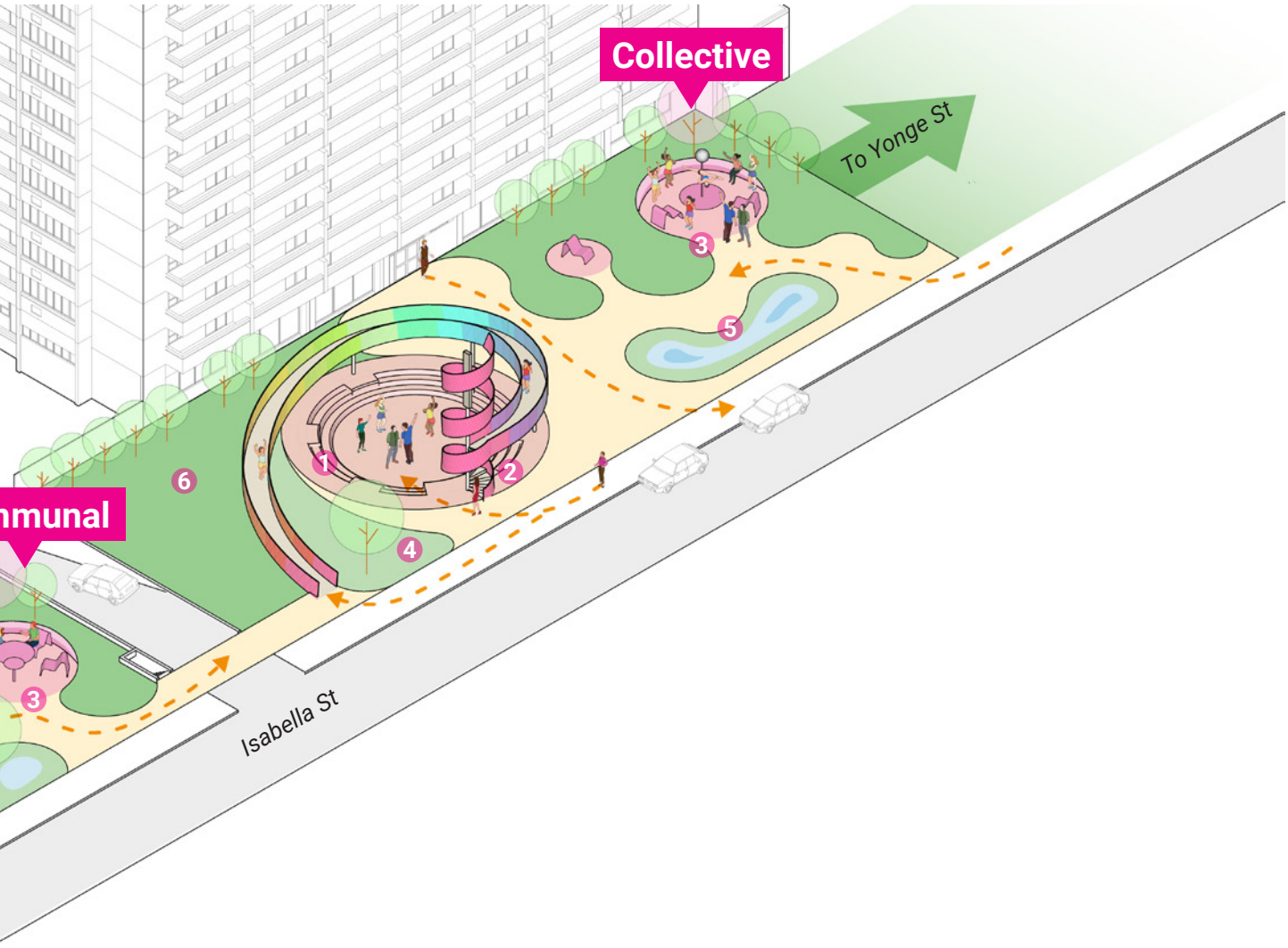


▶ **Fig. 4.62** Each colour represents one spatial element.

▼ **Fig. 4.61** Colour-tinted aggregated pavers: transition from the sidewalk into the park.




Com
Intimate
3
6
5
Individual
3
To Church St

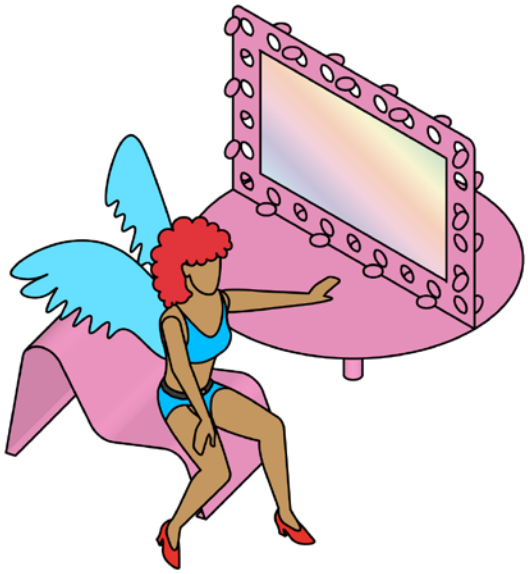


1. Plaza
2. Rainbow Tower
3. Meeting Nooks
4. Open Lawn
5. Bioswales
6. Naturalized Gardens

▲ **Fig. 4.63** Proposed park isometric view

2. Queer Diaspora Artifacts

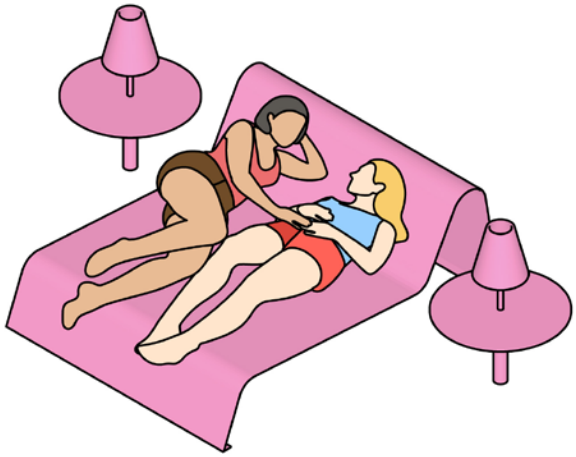
Further analysis of QTPOC newcomers' migration journeys revealed four recurring themes of lived experiences: **individual**, **intimate**, **communal**, and **celebration**. To honour and represent these narratives, the design will incorporate 4 distinct art installations, each serving as functional public furniture within the meeting nooks. The creation of these pieces will be facilitated through a design competition, inviting local and international queer artists of colour to contribute designs that reflect their diasporic experiences and cultural identities.



◀ **Fig. 4.64** Design concept of "individual" installation.

▼ **Fig. 4.65** Rendering of "individual" installation.

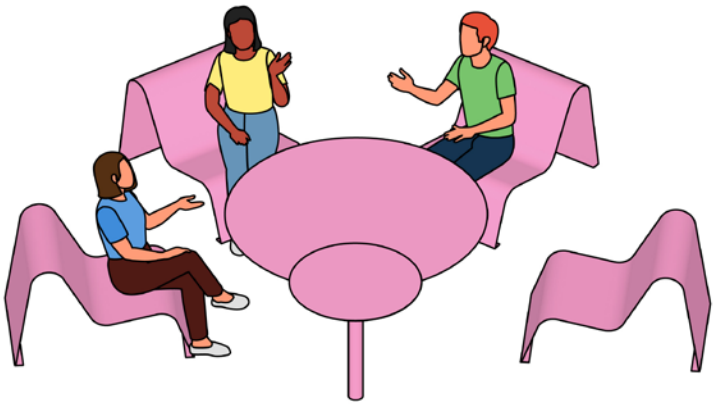




▶ **Fig. 4.66** Design concept of "intimate" installation.

▼ **Fig. 4.67** Rendering of "intimate" installation.

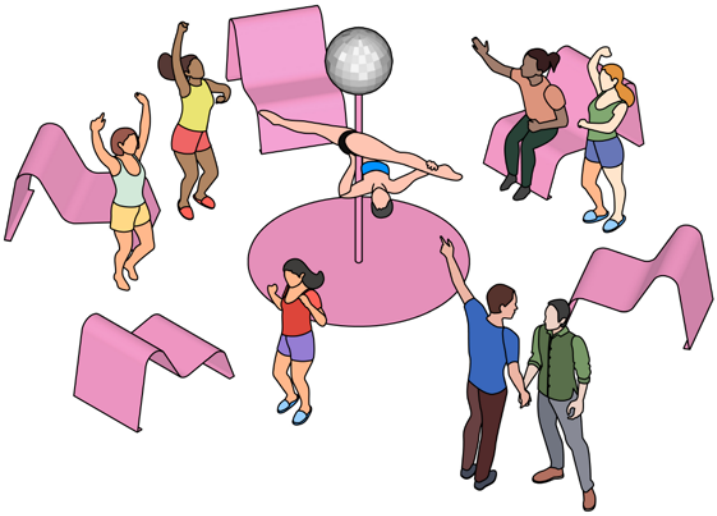




◀ **Fig. 4.68** Design concept of "communal" installation.

▼ **Fig. 4.69** Rendering of "communal" installation.





▶ **Fig. 4.70** Design concept of "collective" installation.

▼ **Fig. 4.71** Rendering of "collective" installation.



Final Design Plan View



1. Plaza
2. Rainbow Tower
3. Meeting Nooks
4. Open Lawn
5. Bioswales
6. Naturalized Gardens

▶ **Fig. 4.72** Proposed park plan view.


Isabella St
5
3
3
3
Communal
Intimate
Individual
N


giga dav bookstore

4.5 Conclusion

RQ3: How can public space design support the Village as a Queer Arrival City?

This chapter has proposed a public park in the Village, offering a much-needed space for social gatherings and community activities. By doing so, the design allows QTPOC newcomers to cultivate belonging and visibility in the contested queer enclave. Yet, a hypothetical design remains a utopian vision, and is not sufficient on its own to transform the Village into an inclusive neighbourhood to welcome generations of QTPOC newcomers. A single design proposal cannot answer the research question nor dismantle the systemic barriers that impact marginalized communities.

What design can do is to facilitate the spatial conditions that foster meaningful connections between people and space. Ultimately, it is the endless spatial possibilities that bring queer space to life. As David emphasized on the importance of community programming in this proposal: *"If this space would be primarily dedicated to queer newcomers, why don't we turn it into a 365 days thing? With businesses in the Village having days dedicated to them where they do outposts. They can* ***have a day to present themselves, host an event, and introduce their business, but also organize an event for the community.***"[365] This perspective aligns with the core intention of this project - to create a flexible, adaptable public space that allows users to define their own experiences, and queer the space themselves, rather than being limited by predetermined rules imposed by architects and property owners.

365 David, Interview with David, interview by Simon Liao, July 2, 2024.

◀ **Fig. 4.73** The Rainbow Tower, plaza, and meeting nooks.

Post-Session Evaluation

▶ **Fig. 4.74** Survey responses from the post-session evaluation surveys. 3 out of 6 participants filled out this survey.

In addition to designing a public space, this research also aims to create an inclusive process where users are positioned as co-creators of the space. To assess the effectiveness of Phase 3 Focus Groups and their social impact on participants, a post-session evaluation survey was distributed. Ultimately, 3 out of 6 participants responded.

The survey results were compared to the City of Toronto's Public Engagement Review, which measures Torontonians' participation in civic decision-making.[366] This comparison revealed that the focus groups provided a more structured and empowering environment than typical municipal engagement efforts. Participants felt they had a clear understanding of the subject matter and could actively contribute their knowledge and skills to shape the project. More importantly, they could see how their input directly influenced the final outcomes. Given the small sample size, it is too early to draw concrete conclusions on the effectiveness of these sessions. However, the results still offer valuable insights into the potential power of PAR approach in engaging marginalized communities in the design process.

366 City of Toronto, "Public Engagement Review," City of Toronto (City of Toronto, July 11, 2022), Toronto, Ontario, Canada, https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/get-involved/public-engagement-review/.

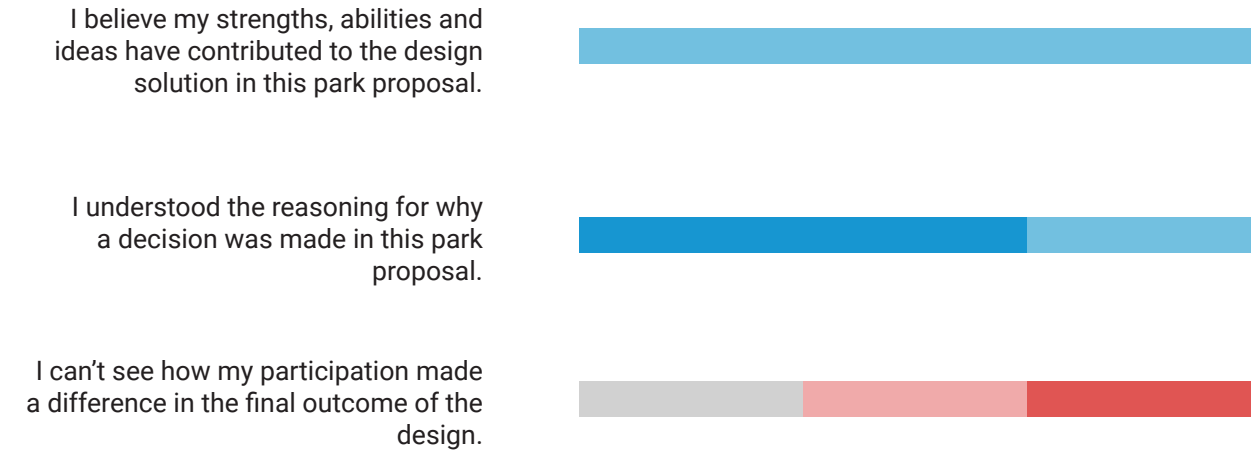
▶ **Fig. 4.75** Survey responses from the City of Toronto Public Engagement Review, 2022.

The surveys also assessed participants' opinions on the focus group process, facilitation, and overall impact. Results indicate that the sessions were well-received and had fostered an inclusive and comfortable environment, encouraging participants to share feedback, interact with others, and learn from different perspectives.

However, two key concerns emerged from the evaluation: the lack of demographic diversity among focus group participants, and the limited measurable social impact post sessions. Given the limitations in this research, these concerns are valid and will be further addressed in Chapter 5. Nonetheless, the community engagement throughout this thesis successfully demonstrates the potential of the PAR approach as a tool for engaging marginalized communities in co-creating a shared vision for their built environment.

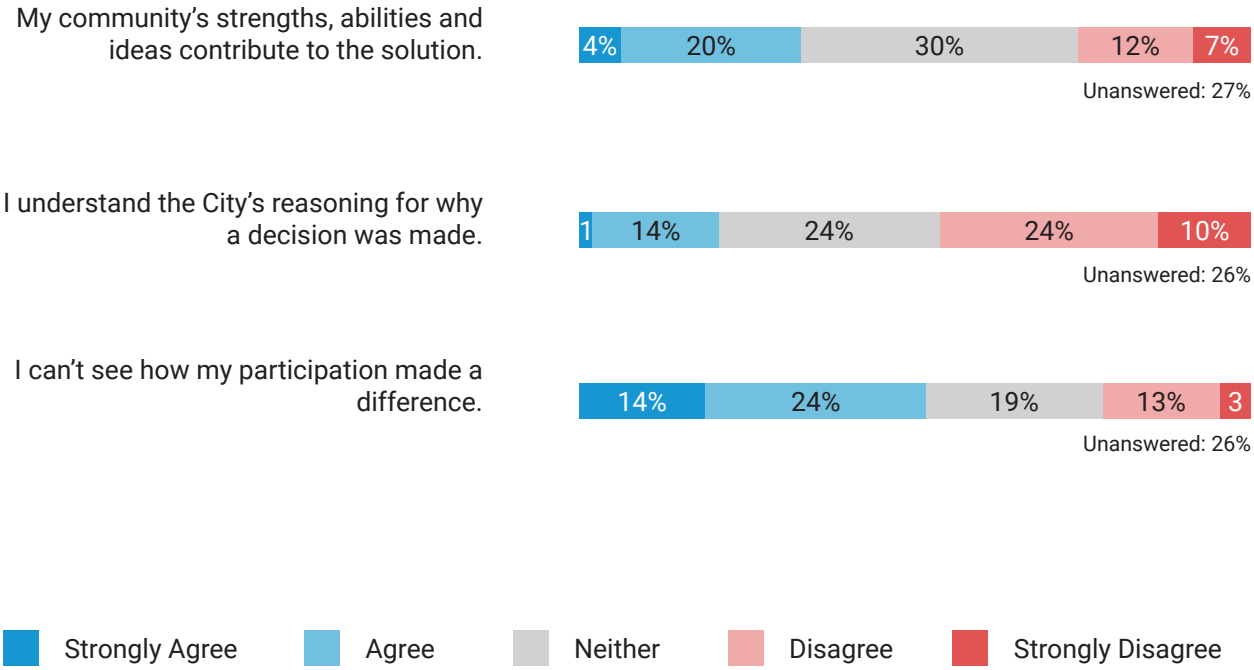
Perceptions of the Park Design Proposal

Queer Arrival Evaluation Survey, n=3



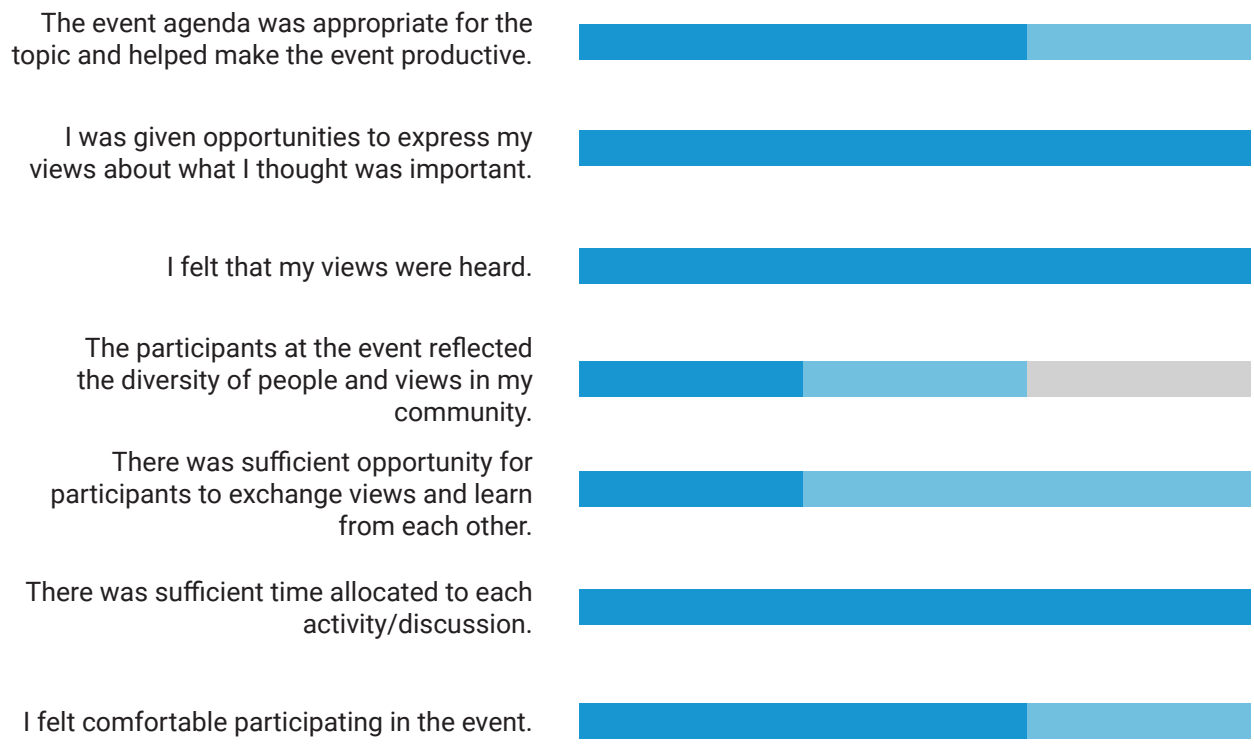
City of Toronto Public Engagement Review

The survey was conducted by the City of Toronto in 2022, n=962



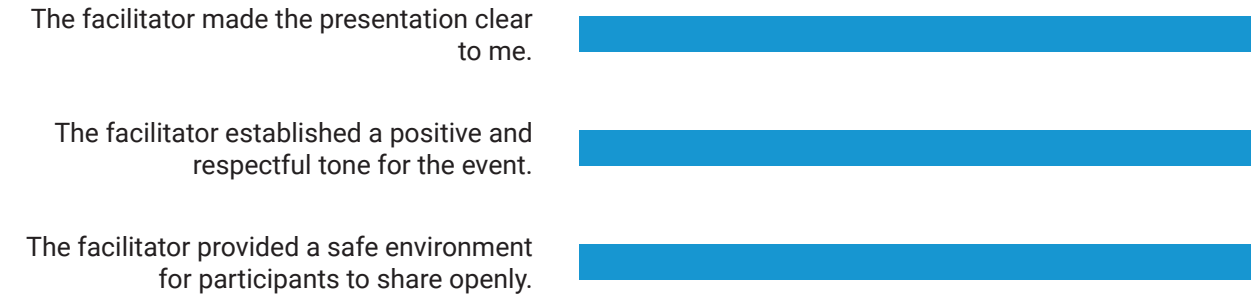
Evaluation Survey Results

Opinions on the Focus Group process.

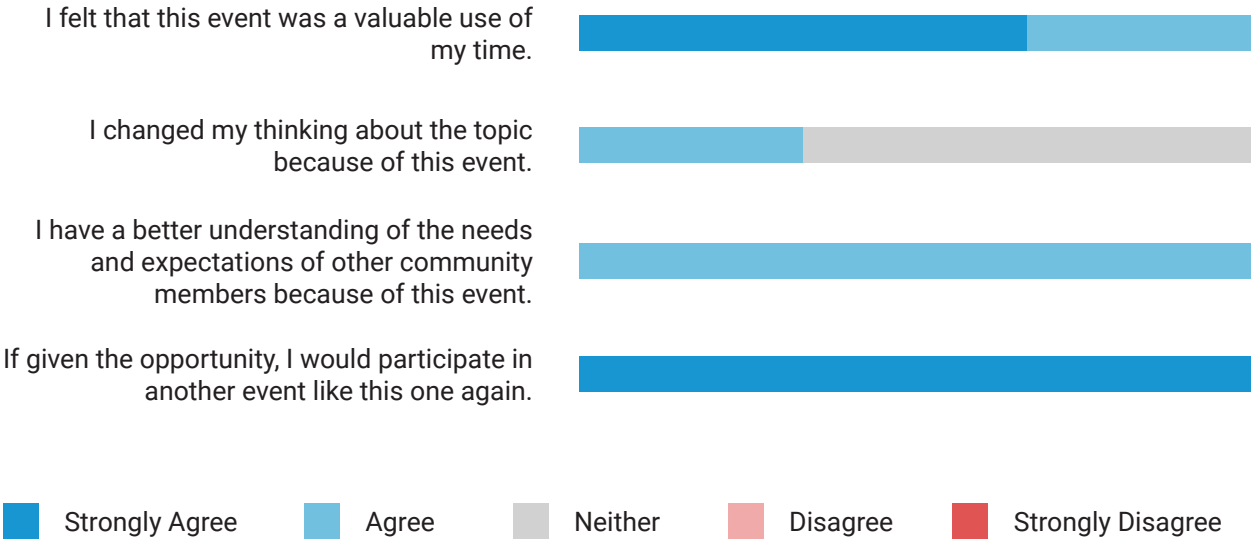


▲ **Fig. 4.76** Survey responses indicating that the focus group sessions were well-received, and made positive impacts.

Opinions on the Focus Group facilitation.



Opinions on the Focus Group outcomes.




5

Chapter 5

Conclusion


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5.1 Conclusion

This section discusses the strengths and contributions of this research, alongside its limitations, and future recommendations.

What worked

By adopting the Queer of Colour Methodology (QOCM) integrated with Participatory Action Research (PAR), this thesis has recentred the voices of marginalized others and uncovered the hidden narratives of QTPOC newcomers navigating Toronto's urban landscape. Grounded in QTPOC newcomers' lived experiences as the primary holder of knowledge production, this research has introduced a novel Queer Arrival framework, encompassing these spatial concepts: Queer Arrival Infrastructure, Queer Arrival City, and Queer Arrival Space. These ideas initiate new academic discourses on queer migration and urban arrival, establishing a foundation for future intersectional research on queer identities, ethnicity, and spatiality.

The collaborative approach employed in this research has demonstrated its effectiveness in investigating marginalized communities while fostering an inclusive and empowering environment. Particularly, the interview process positioned participants as co-creators of knowledge, rather than passive subjects. The interviews took a conversational approach and allowed both the researcher and participants to contribute to the topics. By consistently reflecting on my own positionality and subjectivity, the interviews reinforce the conviction "No research on us without us", encouraging participants to further engage with the topics that are meaningful and beneficial to them as well. This process fostered an ethical and inclusive co-research relationship.

◀ **Fig. 5.1** The rainbow crosswalk at the intersection of Church St and Isabella St.

The focus groups extended this co-creation process, positioning participants as co-designers of the proposal within a collaborative framework set out by the researcher. Structured as design charrettes, these sessions actively invited participants to brainstorm ideas and exchange perspectives. The process not only validated their lived experiences but also equipped them with the agency to shape the design outcomes and build a shared vision.

These engagement methods reveal the transformative potential of PAR in engaging marginalized communities in the research and design process. It is tangibly proven that this process has created an empowered and inclusive environment for participants to learn new knowledge and take action on civic issues.

As an outcome of the community engagement process, this design also offers a fresh perspective on locating and revitalizing underutilized spaces to enhance the public realm in dense population centres. For the many postwar apartment buildings across the city, their ground-level open spaces hold great potential for revitalization. They could be transformed into functional public spaces to support various programming and outdoor amenities, while simultaneously enhancing biodiversity and sustainability through landscape design and stormwater management. Similarly, for the burgeoning condo developments, this project serves as a model for integrating Privately-Owned Publicly Accessible Spaces (POPS) within new developments.

As discussed in the thesis, both postwar apartment buildings and the new condo towers tend to house higher proportions of immigrants, recent immigrants, and non-permanent residents, many of whom navigate socioeconomic barriers to accessing quality public space. This project has demonstrated the potential of public space in promoting marginalized communities' social integration and well-being.

Design Challenges

1. Queer Space is Beyond Design

As explained in Section 4.6, the success of the design proposal relies on the active participation of queer individuals and communities, as well as the ongoing efforts of those who maintain and sustain the space. Unlike conventional spatial typologies, queer space is fluid and performative – it is produced through lived experiences rather than imposed design interventions.

The proposed design cannot directly solve the structural inequalities and systemic barriers that QTPOC newcomers face in Toronto and the Village. However, it serves as a platform for visibility and solidarity, offering an opportunity to address concerns and amplify voices within the design process. Thus, rather than treating design as a solution, this project functions as an experimental inquiry into queer futurity where we envision a future of queer freedom and inclusivity.

2. Balancing Collaboration and Consultation

The participatory nature of the design process presents a delicate balance between community voices and architectural aspirations. While architects typically approach design with aesthetic and experiential intentions, feedback from QTPOC newcomers revealed that their primary concerns lie in functionality, long-term maintenance, and safety. This raises questions about the extent to which community feedback can be integrated into design decisions without compromising architectural vision.

In this thesis, participants played a significant role in shaping the final outcome, yet certain design decisions were still made without their direct involvement. This dynamic sometimes positioned them more as consultants than as equal collaborators, challenging the participatory process. A full collaboration and co-design model should be explored to promote further engagement.

3. Envisioning or Imagining a Future

Due to the experimental nature of this thesis, the design proposal remains a conceptual vision rather than a tangible project with immediate implementation prospects. It posed significant challenges in motivating participants to engage in discussions based purely on speculative imagination.

For example, participants who lived near the site demonstrated higher engagement, as they recognized the necessity of such a vision and were aware of the potential positive impact if it were to be realized. However, for those not physically or socially connected to the site or the neighbourhood, the design felt abstract and less relevant to their lived experiences. This reality addresses the importance of grounding hypothetical design in tangible community needs, allowing participants to envision rather than imagine.



◀ **Fig. 5.2** A memorial garden "The Garden of Lost Boys" in the Village, created and maintained by a local resident, in honouring those lost to AIDS/HIV.

PAR Challenges

1. Diversity and Representation

This research has critically engaged QTPOC newcomers through 3 phases of community engagements. While I strive to maintain a wide representation through various recruitment channels, there are certain limitations to achieving true diversity.

First, the sample size is small compared to typical social science research, thus limiting the generalizability of findings. Second, despite the diverse ethnic and sexual diversity among participants, there was an imbalance in female-identified voices. This may be caused by that queer females are traditionally less engaged and excluded in the daily exchanges of the Village. Lastly, there is an underrepresentation of participants from specific immigrant communities. For instance, India has become Toronto's top source country for new immigrants, yet this research saw low engagement from South Asian communities.[367] Due to these limitations, the research does not represent the full spectrum of newcomer experiences. Instead, it offers an in-depth and partial perspective, which could be expanded through future studies.

2. Funding and Resources

This research was conducted without funding, relying instead on non-research-based scholarships to compensate participants. This financial limitation restricted the number of paid sessions, thereby limiting wider participant engagement and more diversified findings.

In addition, the lack of institutional support and pre-existing relationships with local communities have also caused challenges in recruitment and further engagement. As an independent researcher, I was not able to fully collaborate with certain organizations due to privacy and legitimacy concerns.

367 Statistics Canada Government of Canada, "Focus on Geography Series, 2021 Census - Toronto (Census Subdivision)," July 13, 2022, https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/fogs-spg/page.cfm?lang=e&topic=9&dguid=2021A00053520005

3. Planning and Schedules

The 3 phases of community engagement took place over a relatively short period (May to October 2024). While all activities were successfully executed, a longer timeline with sufficient planning would have allowed for a more integrated PAR approach.

Ideally, this research could have incorporated a co-design framework throughout the entire process, from conceptual design, to the design development phase. However, due to time constraints, the Vision Statement and Guiding Principles of the design were developed by myself alone, informed by research findings from Phases 1 and 2. While these guidelines were grounded in participants' lived experiences, the interpretation of data was embedded with my own subjectivity as a researcher and designer. Consequently, the final design may not fully reflect the unfiltered aspirations and personal preferences. Future research could integrate more sessions at each stage of the design process, further promoting participants' agency through continuous collaboration.

Moreover, there are opportunities to design interactive activities and in-person workshops to facilitate cross-cultural and intergenerational relationships. Given that social isolation and well-being were among the key challenges raised by participants, these sessions could serve as both a research tool and a vehicle to foster community resilience and social change.

4. Long-Term Impact

The short-term impacts of this project are evident in the evaluation surveys, which indicate that participants felt empowered and engaged in this research, and expressed strong interest in attending similar activities in the future. However, due to the limited duration of their involvement, it is difficult to assess the long-term impact of this project. Future research could benefit from extending the PAR framework as discussed above, and partnering with local organizations to continue the engagement through their programming.

Recommendations

The learning from this thesis has produced recommendations for both academia and the public sphere, offering guidance and suggestions on better engaging with and supporting marginalized communities through research and design.

For Academic Research

1. Intersectional Approach

Research on marginalized communities, such as sexual and ethnic minorities, should take an intersectional and anti-colonial approach to deconstruct existing white-centric narratives and recentre the voices of the marginalized others. This could be achieved through empirical fieldwork that critically engages community members, thus creating counter-narratives to uncover hidden experiences.

2. Insider-Outsider Positionality

In conducting empirical research, the research team should recognize the advantages and limitations of the insider and outsider positionality. Researchers should also remain reflexive and constantly assess and reposition themselves in response to the evolving researcher-participant relationship, and consider the fluidity of identities that could pose unexpected challenges and outcomes.

3. Testing Theory in Fieldwork

Theories should be grounded in real life and tested through lived experiences. The Queer Arrival framework in this thesis is built upon the existing studies in Arrival City and queer urbanism, but conceptualized through the lived experiences of QTPOC newcomers, using data collecting, analysis, and validation. Future research on marginalized communities should prioritize primary data rather than solely relying on existing literature, ensuring that theories remain relevant to the diverse lived realities.

For Design Professionals

1. Clear Boundary-Setting

In designing with communities, designers must clearly communicate the extent of communities' involvement and influence in the decision-making of the design process. It is challenging to balance the voices of communities, architects, owners, and other stakeholders, while accounting for by-laws, financial constraints, and technical limitations. This complex reality requires careful boundary-setting and transparent communications to ensure mutual respect and realistic expectations from all parties.

2. Accessibility in Consultations

Effective public consultation requires accessibility in communication, visual materials, and technical explanations. Participants often come from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and may have varying levels of familiarity with the architectural design process. For example, during fieldwork for this thesis, one participant mistakenly believed the design proposal would be realized and built, rather than a hypothetical project. It is extremely important to create accessible, equitable, and clear communication strategies to minimize barriers.

3. Prioritizing Contextual Realities

Design projects should be grounded in contextual realities and take into account various socioeconomic factors in the site analysis. In this thesis, despite implementing safety and inclusivity as primary design principles, the final design still raised safety concerns among participants. It is the designer's responsibility to address such issues and conflicts through intentional and responsive design strategies.



▲ **Fig. 5.3** Safety concerns remain a significant issue in the Village. A police officer was delivering a public message in the neighborhood.

4. Guidelines for Designing Public Spaces

The design guidelines analyzed in Chapter 4 are also applicable to designing public spaces for the wider communities. While the design proposal emphasized QTPOC newcomers' lived experiences and celebrated the diverse queer communities, its core principles of safety and inclusivity are universally valuable in public space design. Other projects could benefit and adapt these frameworks to better serve the diverse communities with varying needs.

5. Design as a Platform for Social Change

This thesis has emphasized design as a platform for community empowerment and agency, rather than solely as a spatial solution. By prioritizing participation and collaboration, the design process itself can generate meaningful impacts long before a project is realized. This thesis demonstrates one possible pathway for leveraging design to drive social change through PAR. Future explorations should examine alternative perspectives and methods to benefit the wider communities and expand this platform.



▲ **Fig. 5.4** Berczy Park, designed by Claude Cormier is a beloved public space in downtown Toronto. It is known for its playful design, safe and friendly atmosphere.

For Public Sectors

1. Targeted Outreach Strategies

Service providers and government agencies should take proactive steps to reach QTPOC newcomers and other marginalized communities. As demonstrated in this thesis, targeted outreach strategies, both online and in-person, are effective in locating and contacting hard-to-reach communities. Working in partnership with grassroots organizations, online social groups, and professional networks can help bridge accessibility gaps.

2. Wider Resource Allocation

To better serve QTPOC newcomers, public resources and attention should go beyond the typical organizations that offer resettlement services and the conventional queer enclave. As discussed in this thesis, such organizations and the Village play a limited role in participants' post-migration life, and often present various barriers. Instead, QTPOC newcomers are dispersed across the city and deeply engaged in the wider network of social infrastructure. Public sector efforts must expand the scope of services, ensuring a more inclusive, city-wide approach rather than concentrating resources on a few specialized organizations.

THE 'SIN STRIP'

Queer Yonge

The street was a hotbed of early queer life but has never entirely been a safe space

BY SIMON LIAO



Yonge Street in the mid-century is remembered for its vibrant entertainment scene, yet beneath the hustle and bustle, a forbidden queer landscape once flourished. The postwar era marked a profound shift in Canada's urbanism — the growing suburbs became the bedroom communities for heterosexual domesticity for many men commuting into the city for work, the distance between these suburbs and downtown opened up possibilities for same-sex erotic experiences. In the late 1950s, Toronto's early queer public life emerged in the only beverage rooms of downtown streets. The anthology Toronto Gay Queer around the King

home after their downtown queer ture. But while these places were re es for gay men, in other ways they w known to be discriminatory, denying entry to men of colour and men who didn't dress in conventional masculine fashion. Women, BIPOC and other minorities were largely excluded from this archival narrative. In the following tural acceptance to many challenges of

5.2 What's Next

As I started this thesis in 2023, and throughout the process of researching, engaging, designing, and writing, I am constantly asking myself: How can I disseminate this research? How can I use this academic work to benefit communities and bring positive changes? Where is my voice as a future architect, urban designer, and advocate?

Because I know for certain: if I don't have answers to these questions, then this two-year-long pilgrimage, along with the thoughts and experiences that people shared with me, will eventually end up buried in a university database, collecting dust on a library shelf. Maybe, years from now, another student who is doing another queer thesis will stumble upon this document, reading it as part of their academic inquiry. But beyond that, the thought of this work becoming a silent digital file without real-world impact, is the last thing I want. That outcome would not only diminish the value of my work, but it would be disrespectful to all the people and communities who have generously contributed their voices to this research.

This thesis was never just an academic assignment to fulfill the requirements for the degree, it was always about myself, and something bigger. In this journey of documenting and revealing QTPOC newcomers' experiences, I carefully executed every stage of the process, knowing that it would lay the foundation for something more impactful. Now, having completed this first step, and approached the end of my professional degree in architecture, I start to wonder again: Where does this research lead me? What's next?

To truly benefit the communities through academic work, we must acknowledge the massive disconnect between academia, the architecture industry, and the public sphere, and then work actively to dismantle those barriers. One of the most profound lessons I have learned through this process is that the ways we

◀ **Fig. 5.5** Author's article, "Queer Yonge", which explores Toronto's early queer spaces on Yonge St, was recently published in ***Spacing Magazine*** (Issue 69) in February 2025.

speak, write, and think within academic circles drastically differ from how the world actually operates. While many scholars aspire to contribute to the social good, the actual impact of their work and its effectiveness often remain unclear and unproven.

To address this gap and bring positive changes to the communities it was meant to serve, I am committed to the following three pathways for disseminating and building upon this work:

1. Writing for the Public

As illustrated through this thesis, queer diasporic narratives in both archival and contemporary discourse remain largely underrepresented. Writing for the public audience is one of the most direct and practical ways to share my research findings and lived experience as a member of the queer diaspora.

A first step in this direction has already taken shape: part of my writing on Toronto's queer spatial history was recently published in *Spacing Magazine* (Issue 69). Moving forward, I am actively seeking further platforms to extend the reach of this work to raise awareness, and initiate conversations.

2. Designing for the Public

Throughout this thesis, I have established relationships with two local neighbourhood associations around the Village - the Church-Wellesley Neighbourhood Association (CWNA) and the Bay Cloverhill Community Association (BCCA). Both organizations have ongoing public realm projects, including the Clock Tower Trail, Church St streetscape improvements, and the activation of miscellaneous green spaces.

My involvement with these groups has allowed me to contribute my insights on living and designing in the neighbourhood, applying the knowledge gained from the thesis to real-world projects that directly impact local residents. This is just the first step in using my professional skills and research experience to create a shared vision and help build stronger communities.



▲ **Fig. 5.6** Queer Space Community Activation by the Toronto Society of Architects (TSA) at Pride 2024. TSA has initiated the conversation on preserving and archiving queer spaces in the built environment. During Pride festivals, they hosted a booth on Church St, inviting visitors to write down and pin their queer spatial memories onto a map of Toronto.

3. Engaging with the Public

The most challenging yet essential path forward is direct engagement with marginalized communities. One of the most surprising findings from my research was that East Asian queer newcomers reported the lowest sense of belonging among other ethnic groups. However, due to the scope of this thesis, I was unable to investigate the reasons or resurface those narratives.

In future projects, whether academic or community-based, I am committed to engaging further marginalized individuals and collaborating with grassroots organizations, such as the Asian Community AIDS Services (ACAS), to prioritize the underrepresented voices. Such organizations often exist to serve gaps in our society. Incorporating my work into their usual programming could further address these gaps, benefiting their work and service users.



▼ **Fig. 5.7** An exhibition "Black Diasporas Tkaronto-Toronto" by the Museum of Toronto in early 2025. The exhibition invites visitors to explore Black diasporic narratives through visual and audio materials, and share their own origins on a world map.

Looking Ahead

Looking back, I am deeply grateful for my decision to conduct the ethnographic study and centre real people's experiences. The fieldwork is not only driving the research process, it also opens up endless queer possibilities. While I was not able to address and explore them due to various constraints within the thesis, they demand further attention, care, and action. The three action points outlined above are only the most immediate and tangible steps that I can take after my degree.

To dismantle systemic social barriers, we must unlearn existing practices, and rethink how we perceive the world. This thesis is full of new ideas and ways of thinking about our social structures and how they influence our navigation through the built environment of the past, and how we can build for the present and future.

Regardless of my future research direction or career path, I now know with absolute certainty that I have found my voice through this thesis - as a designer, an advocate, and a global citizen. I know that whatever I do in the future, it will be rooted in people, in lived experiences, in the power of hidden narratives, and in the brave pursuit of a better future.

Personal Reflection 5.3

Towards the end of this thesis, someone asked me:
"What have you learned from your conversations with people?"

I thought for a moment before answering:
*"I learned that **I was never alone**."*

And yet, for most of my life, I feel alone.

The 14-year-old boy in China, eyes glued to the computer screen, was watching *Queer as Folk*, fantasizing about a life in a gaybourhood. Back then, queerness felt distant and scary - something that only existed in another world, in another language.

Upon landing in Canada, I remained closeted throughout university, navigating life as a foreigner and immigrant. Even when I finally moved into the Village, living a gay life that I had longed for, I still felt alone. Although I have found belonging in the city, and in this country, loneliness is so deeply ingrained in me that it feels like part of my identity.

But deep down, I knew I wasn't the only one. Of course, there are others who share similar feelings - other immigrants, queers, and those who never quite fit in. I just didn't know where to find them, until this thesis.

The incredibly kind and intelligent people I've met through this thesis, have taught me so much. Being queer means endless possibilities of living. For years, I chased a version of queerness that had been fed to me, obsessed with fitting into a prescribed and curated ideal of what a gay man should be - what we now call "homonormativity". I spent so much time seeking acceptance and validation, as if queerness had a roadmap I had to follow.

But through the long conversations I've had with people like me, and people vastly different from me, I finally have a chance to reflect on my relationship with my queer identity. I start to understand why I drifted away from the Village, from the very things I had once desired so badly. Because queerness is not tied to a place, a lifestyle, or a set of expectations. Queerness is fluid as it shifts and evolves around us. Queerness is the future, a future that might never arrive, but when it does, we will recognize it.

So to my 14-year-old self, and to every other curious, scared queers who might be reading this thesis in the future:

"There are queer spaces all around us. Some may look like the neon-lit bars on Church St, pulsing with music and bodies moving under the rainbow flags. Others may look like a quiet park or a sandy beach, where we simply exist together.

You may hesitate to step in, and you may wonder who you will meet, and how others will perceive you. And that's okay. It's okay to embrace the place that calls to you. It's okay to leave them behind. It's okay to build something entirely your own.

Because ***there is no one way to be queer, any other way is okay. And no matter where you go, or who you become - you are never alone****."*



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Appendix

QTPOC Newcomer Profiles and Queerscapes Survey Participants Demography



Jon

Pronouns	*he/him*
Age	*39*
Ethnicity	*South Asian*
Country of Origin	*USA*
Year of Arrival	*2023*
Residency	*Temporary Worker*
Occupation	*Non Profit Worker*

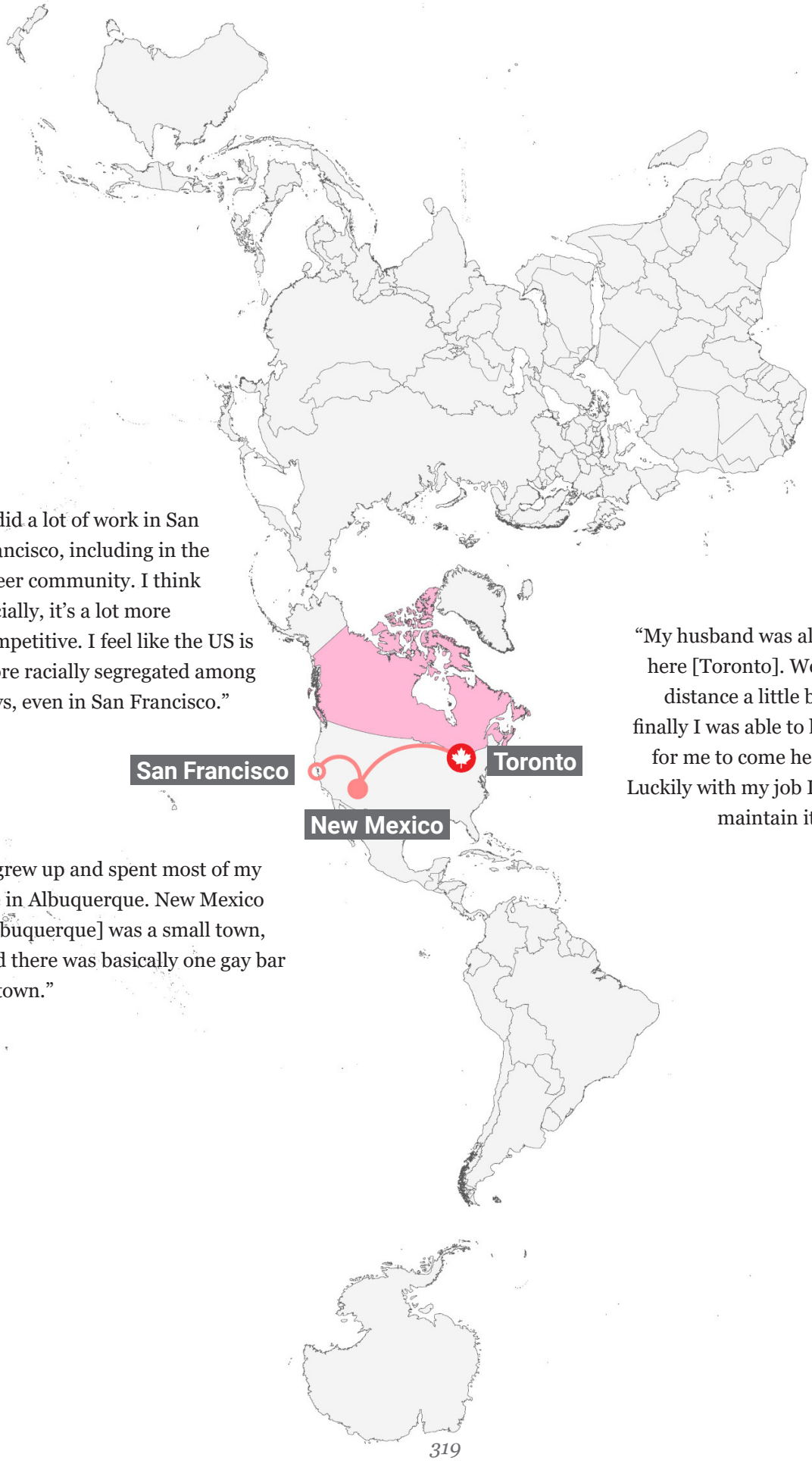
Jon is a second generation South Asian diaspora from New Mexico and spent much of his adult life working in California. But it was love that ultimately guided him north of the border. Just over a year ago, Jon packed up his life and moved to Toronto to reunite with his husband after a few years of long-distance relationship.

Midtown, the neighbourhood he and his husband calls home, is full of the couple's cherished memories. It was here that they exchanged vows, shared their first meal, and explored their favourite restaurants, parks and trails. For Jon, the streets are not just pathways but memory lanes, each corner holding a piece of their shared memory.

A short subway ride away lies the Village, where Jon frequently finds himself. Whether he's unwinding quietly at Glad Day Bookshop, or dancing to the beats at the local bars and clubs, Jon relishes the sense of community that permeates the neighbourhood. When summer rolls around, Jon and his husband often head to Hanlan's for a beach day - a unique queer space that he hasn't seen anywhere else.

Queer Space...

"[is] a place where you can be yourself... You don't need to worry about having to filter your behaviours or conversations for the general audience."



2

"I did a lot of work in San Francisco, including in the queer community. I think socially, it's a lot more competitive. I feel like the US is more racially segregated among gays, even in San Francisco."

3

"My husband was already living here [Toronto]. We were long-distance a little bit, and then finally I was able to kinda set up for me to come here full-time. Luckily with my job I was able to maintain it over here."

1

"I grew up and spent most of my life in Albuquerque. New Mexico [Albuquerque] was a small town, and there was basically one gay bar in town."

Jon's Queerscape

Jon's Home Midtown

"We eloped at a chapel in Midtown, near our apartment of the time. I would say that neighbourhood, Mount Pleasant, there were lots of places where like... first meal together in Toronto, our favourite Indian place."



Bloor West

"Somewhere out west, somewhere on the green line, where there's a predominantly Vietnamese area. They serve this dish that he [my husband] loved having as a kid. I always go in there with him, because I can tell he's always very happy when he has it."



Prism Events

"I like going to Prism events where I could dance. Lot of my professional life and personal life are digital, because of my family and friends in the States that I still talk to. So it is nice to get away from the screen."



Hanlan's Point Beach

"We went there quite often in the summer, and we are planning to go there again."







Sherwood Park

"It's just really beautiful. I like a lot of the nature. Even though it's a big city, there are lots of places where you can go and escape, and have a bit of quiet."



The Village

"It's probably the first gay centre that's been this accessible for me. I'd say if I go out, I usually would come to the Village... for the bars and clubs, meeting friends."



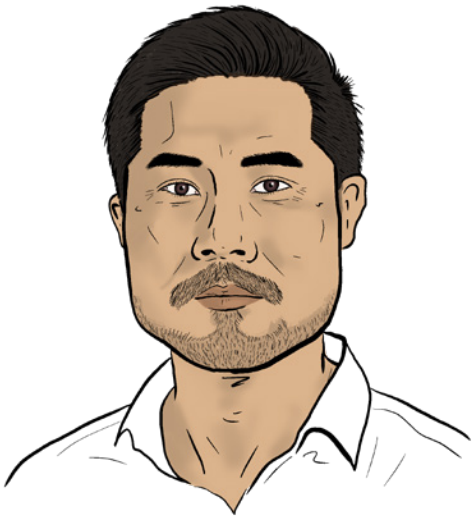
Glad Day Bookshop

"It's interesting to see that they have a mix of a bar, a cafe, and a bookstore. It seems to serve as some community hub type of purpose."



Impact Lounge

"What is so fascinating about that place is that it is next to a mosque. When you go down stairs, and you are like oh I have no idea this was here. That was hidden away."



Adam

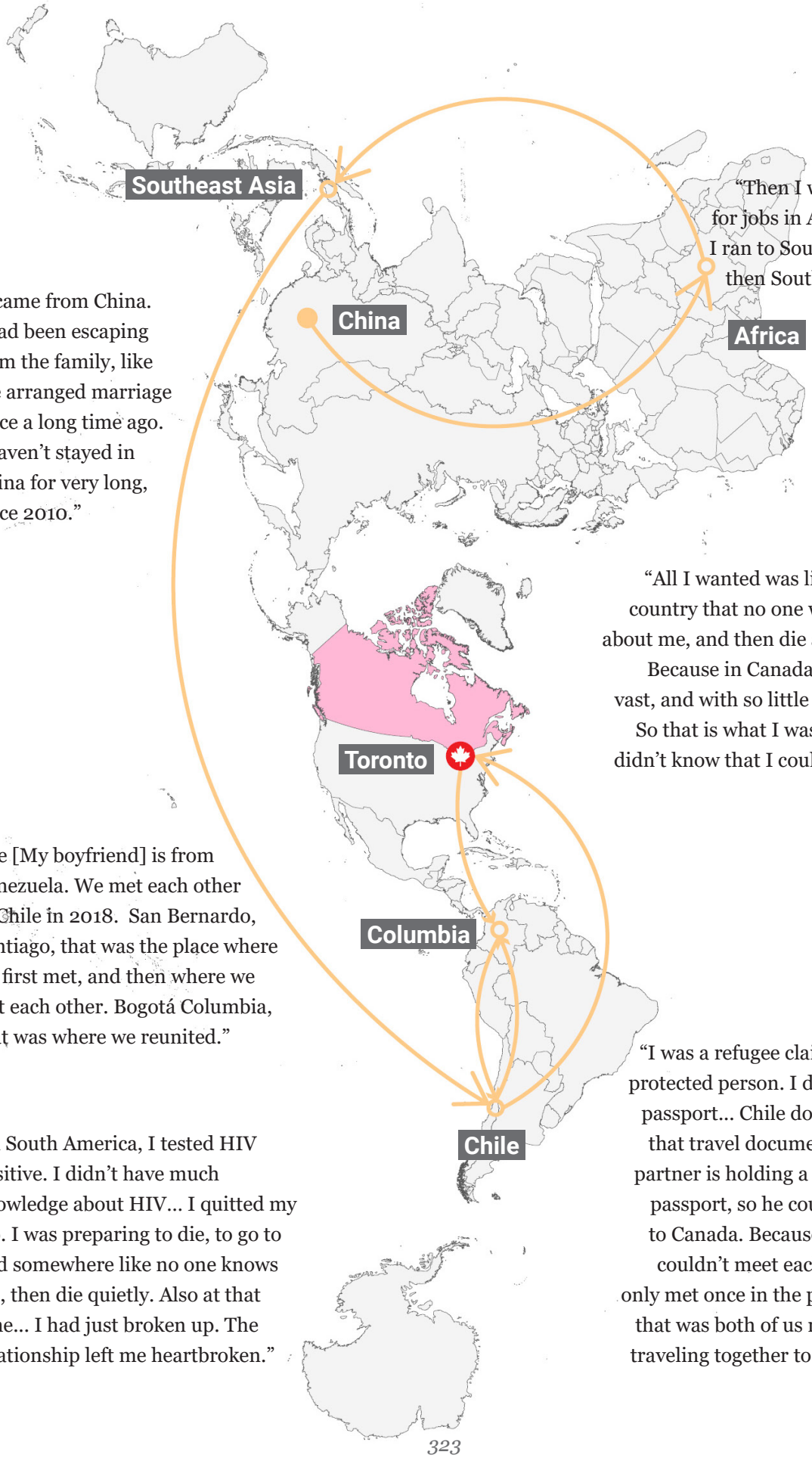
Pronouns	*he/him*
Age	*35*
Ethnicity	*East Asian*
Country of Origin	*China*
Year of Arrival	*2019*
Residency	*Permanent Resident*
Occupation	*Peer Support Worker*

Born and raised in China, Adam left his roots behind in his early 20s to escape from arranged marriage. What followed was a decade of life as a migrant worker, moving across Africa, Southeast Asia, and eventually South America. It was there that he met his boyfriend, and where he received his HIV diagnosis that would change everything. With the strong stigma that came with the diagnosis, Adam left his job and moved to Canada. In his mind, Canada was a place of vast landscapes and sparse population - a country where he could disappear, where no one would know his story, and where he could, in his own words, “die alone”.

But Canada offered Adam something he hadn’t anticipated: a second chance. Upon arriving, he connected with local AIDS organizations that not only provided him with education and support but also shattered the stigma that had followed him. In return, he is dedicating much of his time to volunteering as a peer worker at the organizations to help others just like him, patients and marginalized newcomers, to access services and adapt to the new country.

Queer Space...

“is like safe for queer people or a safe space.”



1

"I came from China. I had been escaping from the family, like the arranged marriage since a long time ago. I haven't stayed in China for very long, since 2010."

2

"Then I went to look for jobs in Africa. Then I ran to Southeast Asia, then South America."

3

"He [My boyfriend] is from Venezuela. We met each other in Chile in 2018. San Bernardo, Santiago, that was the place where we first met, and then where we lost each other. Bogotá Columbia, that was where we reunited."

4

"In South America, I tested HIV positive. I didn't have much knowledge about HIV... I quitted my job. I was preparing to die, to go to find somewhere like no one knows me, then die quietly. Also at that time... I had just broken up. The relationship left me heartbroken."

5

"All I wanted was like... go to a country that no one would know about me, and then die alone there. Because in Canada, the land is vast, and with so little population. So that is what I was thinking. I didn't know that I could get help."

6

"I was a refugee claimant and a protected person. I didn't have a passport... Chile doesn't accept that travel document. Also my partner is holding a Venezuelan passport, so he couldn't travel to Canada. Because of this, we couldn't meet each other. We only met once in the past 5 years, that was both of us made a plan traveling together to Columbia."

Adam's Queerscape

Adam's Home **Yonge & Bloor**

"Now I live on Bloor St, around 3 blocks away from the Village. It is not because I wanted to live there, but because I found the rent cheaper in this place."





High Park

"So we go to the beach side, like go biking together, or go to High Park. It was more or less, like a picnic thing."

Chinatown

"One favourite place for me would be Chinatown. I like cooking very much. I cook very well. Chinatown has a few stores and supermarkets where I can go shopping to look for Asian cuisine ingredients."



Dog Parks

"Other places that I go very often... I will go to different dog parks. I take care of dogs for my friends. Personally I don't have a dog."





The Village

"I know that gays are friendly especially to people like me, living with HIV, and all the service providers are there, and the work opportunities are there. Also the environment is more friendly than outside."



AIDS Services

"Casey House on Isabella St, and Fife House at Sherbourne, and also PWA before on Gerrard St. I used PWA's service the most... I think all my friends are from those... like we met each other from those HIV service organizations."



Woodbine Beach

"If the weather is good, we go to the beach side, like Woodbine Beach, or High Park. You know, enjoy the weather."



Gael

Pronouns	*they/them*
Age	*31*
Ethnicity	*Latin*
Country of Origin	*Chile*
Year of Arrival	*2017*
Residency	*International Student*
Occupation	*Student*

Gael is a non-binary international student from Santiago, Chile. They moved to Canada 7 years ago in search of family reunion, better career opportunities, and a more inclusive environment. With a background in filmmaking and visual development, they are channeling their creative energy into an illustration program in Toronto, with plans to apply for permanent residence after graduation.

After first settling in Little Portugal, Gael now resides in the Junction, a neighbourhood that provides them quick access to cultural and recreational destinations. Gael is very passionate about sport and art. They organize a weekly queer bike polo event at Dufferin Grove Park that attracts queer sport lovers from across the city. They also enjoy musical and artistic events at the Glad Day Bookshop and Buddies in Bad Times Theatre.

In their downtime, Gael shares simple pleasures of life with friends through park picnics and beach outings while sharing food and laughter. They particularly like Kensington Market - the eclectic streets evoke memories of their bustling hometown of Santiago.

Queer Space...

"is a place where queer identities can develop and do activities... without feelin that they are being watched. They just can do it without thinking."



1

"In Chile, my circles were also queer, but we didn't have a specific place where we gathered. I did know some parties that were very specific... but I feel like finding a queer party is kind of easier than finding a queer activity in those areas."

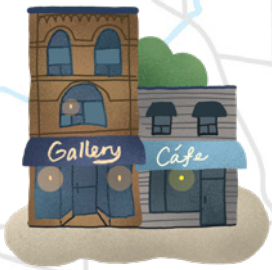
2

"I've been coming and going with different visas in different situations. My sister lives here in Toronto."

3

"I came here to study, but I also have family here. Economically, in the artist field, it's way better working here in Toronto. I do feel a sense of more respectful kind of feeling - being queer, being myself in general. Here, specifically in Toronto, not in other cities in Canada."

Gael's Queerscape



Gael's Home **The Junction**

"I love that my neighbourhood is close to High Park, I also like that in my neighbourhood I could get access to essential shoppings like groceries or art supplies... I do feel this neigubourhood is ideal for me."

Dufferin Grove Park

"I organize every Tuesday, Toronto Queer Bike Polo. That is for learning this sport that I do... that is like hockey over a bike. We don't have a huge amount of people coming, but we tend to have a regular amount of people."







Kensington Market

"One of the things that I like about Kensington Market and kind of reminds me of Chile is that it's a mixture of lots of things at the same time. The mixture of music, art, sales, people walking. It's a very busy place."

Sunnyside Beach

"That is directly to the south from the place I live. If I bike 20 minutes I would arrive there easily. There is a pump track, so I found that area very appealing as well."



Hanlan's Point Beach

"The possibility of doing whatever we wanted to do without feeling our bodies are being policed or watched in a certain way. I feel like the possibility is just very calming, soothing, and joyful."



The Village

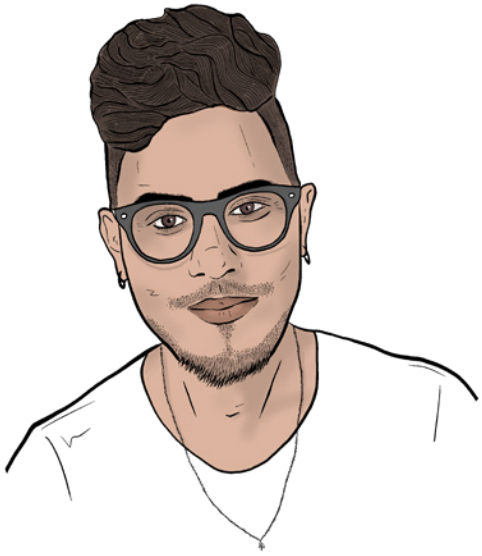
"I don't visit very often, because it's maybe a 40 minutes commute from my place. And also, most of the activities require an amount of money to be spent on."

Glad Day Bookshop

"They have some events, for example, there are bear events for hairy men. But they also have very specific and different events, for example, drag king shows, or open mic, even crafts. I'd love to go to a crafting kind of activity."

Buddies in Bad Times Theatre

"I would love to go more to Buddies at Bad Times. I don't go often, because everything it's more expensive than other places. They have markets, performances, theatre shows, workshops..."



Bob

Pronouns	*he/they*
Age	*33*
Ethnicity	*Arab, Latin*
Place of Origin	*South America*
Year of Arrival	*2023*
Residency	*Refugee Claimant*
Occupation	*N/A*

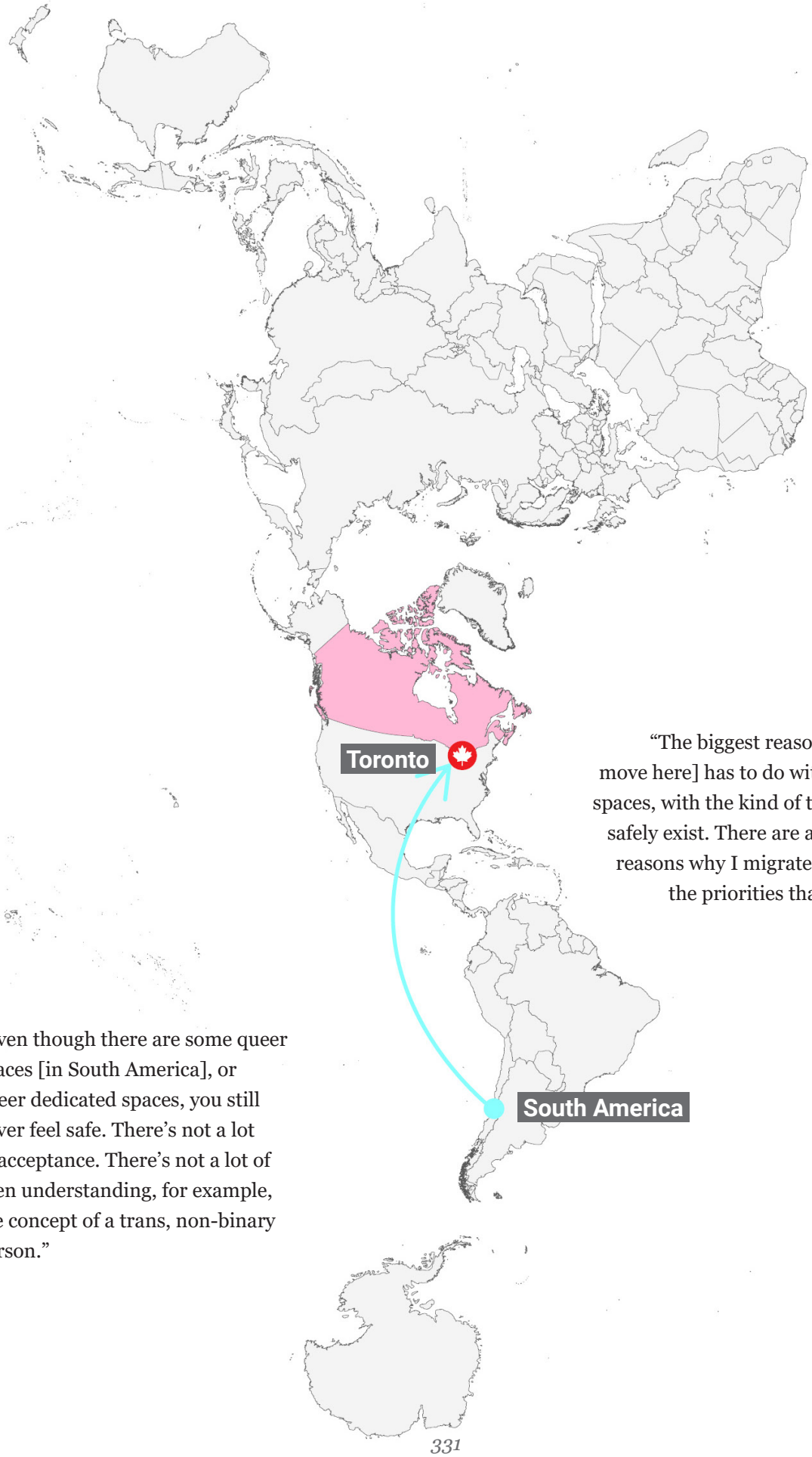
Bob moved to Canada a year ago from South America. As both a refugee claimant and a trans individual, safety has always been a priority for him. Once a resident of the Junction, Bob's current reality is marked by housing instability and now he stays with his queer friends in the suburbs which provides him with a sense of community and safety that he values deeply. Recently completed a college program in Toronto, Bob is taking a significant step toward building his life.

Bob has a complex relationship with the Village. He adores its queer spaces, such as Glad Day Bookshop, where he often spends time doing work and socializing. However, the ongoing substance and housing crises in the Village present challenges which test his sobriety and safety.

In the warmer months, Bobs enjoy strolling along the Harbourfront and savouring his favourite Beavertails. The snowy Canadian winters also hold a special place in his heart. One of his cherished memories was a Pride weekend at Blue Mountain, filled with snowy adventures, pure queer joys, and fabulous drag brunches.

Queer Space...

" is literally just a dedicated space where you can really fully just be yourself, without having to hold back because of fear of anything. "



1

"Even though there are some queer spaces [in South America], or queer dedicated spaces, you still never feel safe. There's not a lot of acceptance. There's not a lot of even understanding, for example, the concept of a trans, non-binary person."

2

"The biggest reason for me [to move here] has to do with the queer spaces, with the kind of the ability to safely exist. There are a lot of other reasons why I migrated, but that's the priorities that came up."

Bob's Queerscape



The Junction

"There were very specific places around my house, like coffee shops, and different places... they were very queer-friendly. So I always kinda knew where to go, and they never kind of felt out of place."





High Park

"I used to go to High Park a bit. I like that it's so big that you can find places to sit down and be alone, and have a little bit of privacy. It feels calm, it's like a tranquil place."

Harbourfront

"I will just go down to Harbourfront, just sit by the lake and read. Because I think there are a lot of open spaces and a lot of places for different interests. My circle is usually just to grab a coffee, grab BeaverTails, and then just start walking towards the west and find a place to sit down."





Hanlan's Point Beach

"There was a Pride picnic on the beach, Hanlan's, that was really fun."



Blue Mountain

"We actually drove up to Blue Mountain for pride weekend, and it was just incredible. We didn't do a lot, we just went tobogganing, and then drag brunch, but just the feeling of being with a group of very... I think that was one of my favourite memories here."

Bob's Home GTA

"I left my job, and then became unhoused. So I am in the suburbs because my best friend let me stay with them, and they are also queer."

The Village

"I kind of have afflicting feelings about living in the Village, because I love it, but there's also a lot that I don't. There are a lot of people abusing drugs in the street. That, for me, is a major drawback."

Glad Day Bookshop

"I like the fact that it's a coffee shop and a bookstore, and they have Pride merch and queer merch. I love the fact that they also do events like drag brunches on Sundays."



David

Pronouns	*he/him*
Age	*41*
Ethnicity	*Arab, Middle Eastern*
Country of Origin	*Lebanon*
Year of Arrival	*2023*
Residency	*Permanent Resident*
Occupation	*Not Working*

Born and raised in Lebanon, David is no stranger to being an expat. After spending a decade in Dubai and 2 years working in the manufacturing industry in the Midwest, USA, he decided it was time for a change. Drawn by the allure of the Canadian lifestyle, promising career opportunities, and the chance to reunite with his family, he moved to Toronto just last year at the age of 40, with the intention of becoming a Canadian citizen.

Settling in Regent Park, David has found the neighborhood more than just a place to live - he's discovered a community that resonates with him. The neighbourhood's easy transit connections, abundant public space, and tranquil residential vibe have provided him ease and comfort. Specifically, he is a regular at a local community centre, where he stays active through sports and also make new friendships. On weekends, David enjoys visiting the Village and grabbing drinks with friends at O'Grady's and Woody's, while exploring the entertainment scene.

Queer Space...

"is a space where queer people can be their own self, can be comfortable and have a higher level of freedom. It is a place where queer people gather, so it is an instinct space, and cannot be created out of nowhere."



1

"I grew up in Lebanon. I spent 10 years in Dubai. A lot of people would say it is not allowed to be gay in Dubai. It is not the case. As long as you know a little bit about how to do it, there are not many restrictions on being gay."

2

"I was in the US for two years before I came here [Toronto]. Moving from Dubai to the US... it was mostly job-related reasons. With the Midwest, I was not happy there, both the general lifestyle and queer lifestyle. The lifestyle was very monochrome. As a single person, I couldn't fit in."

3

"I didn't want to go back to Dubai at this stage. I wanted to stay in this part of the world for now, for career purposes, and also for long-term life planning, obviously, immigration, and become a citizen here eventually."

David's Queerscape



The Village

"It's a Saturday evening, let's meet at O'Grady's or somewhere for a drink, and then we go to Woody's. My perception of the Village is a place to go to on a weekend night just to have a drink or to party a little bit."

Woody's and SAILOR

"It is always busy. It is diverse. Everybody goes there. The music is not too loud, people can still talk. There's a dancing space and sitting space. It's a nice mix."

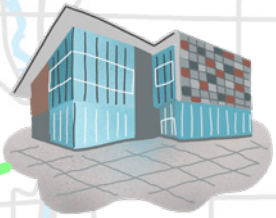
TMU Square

"It's the plaza at TMU behind Yonge Dundas Square, where it has coffee shops, a stretch with rocks and water. That space I like a lot, because you are away from traffic, it's pedestrian friendly."



David's Home **Regent Park**

"My neighbourhood is very quiet. There is plenty of parking. There are community spaces and green spaces. In Regent Park, I can stand on the street level, and I can have unobstructed views."



Regent Park Community Centre

"I hang out at the community centre a lot because I play the sport. I sometimes go to the swimming pool. Not much to the soccer field, because I don't play soccer, but I appreciate the availability of such open space in the city."



Body Fit Training

"One of the gyms that I go to, the customers happen to be mostly queer. So does it turn into a queer space? Probably."



Jason

Pronouns	*he/they*
Age	*33*
Ethnicity	*South Asian*
Country of Origin	*Pakistan*
Year of Arrival	*2022*
Residency	*Permanent Resident*
Occupation	*Non Profit Worker*

Jason's journey begins in Pakistan, where he was born and raised. His path, however, has been far from linear. After living in his home country and Nepal, Jason headed to the US for school, and spent a decade studying and working along the East Coast, with Washington D.C. as his primary base. It was 2 years ago that Jason embarked on his most recent adventure in Toronto, a city that offers the perfect blend of diversity, accessibility, and cosmopolitan vibe that he had come to appreciate in American metropolises.

Today, Jason calls St. James Town home, where he found it more than just a place to live, but a community mix with vibrant cultures that's as rich as the exotic ingredients he picks up along Parliament St. He also likes to wander through Toronto's neighbourhoods, each with its own unique flavour. Riverdale Park's sweeping views and the ravines' natural beauty provide him with a quick escape from the city's hustle. And then there's Glad Day Bookshop in the Village, a place that's more than just a bookstore for Jason - it's a queer sanctuary. The staff's warmth and the welcoming atmosphere make it a place where he feels truly at home.

Queer Space...

"It's for everyone, it's meant for everyone... Nobody walks in here should be made to feel uncomfortable just because they don't look like you, or have the same body type as you, or talk like you, or whatever the cause."



1

"I was raised in Pakistan. One of the reasons I wanted to not live in Pakistan was that I'm gonna die alone if I had stayed in Pakistan. Unfortunately, not because there aren't other queer people there, but largely because that's not a thing in terms of culture that queer folks think about, again not in the realm of possibility."

2

"I was in DC for grad school, and then worked there for quite a while. From 17 to 27 I lived in the US, but before then it was Pakistan and Nepal largely... I feel like DC, Toronto, and New York, are very similar in terms of what queerness is like, which is that it's very prescribed."

3

"Canada, largely because it has one of the few immigration systems in the world that actually like brown people. One of the big drivers of my choice to move to Toronto was also, well, where's the greatest concentration of queer folks in Canada?"

Jason's Queerscape



The Village

"When I go to the Village, I am going for something specific, like an appointment. I am not going there for funsies. I still haven't never been to any of the bars there, minus O'Grady's."

Glad Day Bookshop

"There's a general vibe that you can cultivate to invite people in. Glad Day does it really well. When you walk in there, somebody will say hello, somebody will want to talk to you."

Parliament St

"I have come to really appreciate Parliament St because of the racial diversity and cultural diversity. There's every nationality possibly imaginable on just that street."

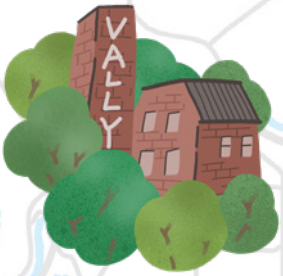
Harbourfront

"I love Harbourfront, the Music Garden area. I think that's really pretty."



Jason's Home **St. James Town**

"My main motivator for moving to this part of town specifically was that I wanted to be on a subway line. I wanted to be close enough that I can walk to places."



Evergreen Brick Works

"When I go to a park, my intention is to either it's usually for exercices or being out in nature to some extent, which is why I thought of the Brick Works. Because it has those great trails you can walk through. That's not something I see on a regular basis."



Danforth Ave

"Sometimes I walk to the Danforth and get Boba, and what I call my quintessential Toronto snack, which is Boba and patties together and then I'll get both and go sit at Riverdale and just do the loop again and walk back."



Riverdale Park

"I go to Riverdale often, mostly because it's right there. It's also really helpful for me that it completes a specific loop for me where I am located, so I can get my run in."



The Opera House

"Last year for Pride, I ended up at a party there. The Opera House, I remember when I walked in, I was like, damn, this is a nice place."



Rania

Pronouns	*she/her*
Age	*26*
Ethnicity	*Black*
Country of Origin	*United Arab Emirates*
Year of Arrival	*2011*
Residency	*Canadian Citizen*
Occupation	*Non Profit Worker*

Rania moved to Canada 13 years ago from the United Arab Emirates. Though born in the UAE, her familial roots are East African. Having moved in her early teens, she completed her secondary and post-secondary education in Toronto and currently lives with her family in Etobicoke.

Since moving to Canada, Rania cherishes any opportunity to connect with other queer people of colour around her age. Programming at Pieces to Pathways, a peer-led substance use support group serving 2SLGBTQIA+ youth in Toronto's west end has allowed her to do just that. Here, she's made new friends by attending events and socializing with others. She has grown fond of the organization's welcoming staff, its diverse community members, caring support programs, and its welcoming interior spaces.

In her spare time, Rania enjoys hanging out with her friends and family in parks, particularly Riverdale Park and High Park. She also fancy a lone night at the outdoor movie screening at Christie Pits Park during the summer.

Queer Space...

"means a place where you can be who you are, express however you want, and community... places to come together, and build stronger connections."



1

"I don't really consider UAE my home, it was more so a place where I was born. My ethnic background is East African, so I'm more connected with that culture."

2

"They [my parents] picked here [Canada] because they wanted the citizenship. Our original citizenship was not that strong. And just to have a better education here and more opportunities for jobs."

3

"I don't regard myself as a Torontonian, just because I don't have a strong community. I wanna have mostly people who look like me, so like black people who are queer."

Rania's Queerscape



Rania's Home **Etobicoke**

"There are not that many queer activities to do here. It's very difficult to be around queer communities in Etobicoke compared to downtown Toronto."

Christie Pits Park

"They have outdoor movie screenings that I like to attend, and usually I attend those alone."



Pieces to Pathways

"The people who were there are mostly people of colour and black people who are queer as well. The space is really great. It feels very welcoming. I go there every week when I can."





SKETCH Working Arts

"Their staff at the front desk is very welcoming, like very, very welcoming. They are the first people you see when you enter through the door, and they answer all of your questions."



Sunnyside Beach

"This year I went to Sunnyside Beach with a family member who is also queer. I go once a year during the summer."



Buddies in Bad Times Theatre

"I was there for a queer burlesque show last month. There's very few people who are like black or people of colour who are queer there, and the audience is mostly white gay men or white women."



The Village

"My experience with the Village is very neutral, so I don't hate it, but I also don't love it. I just think the place is very catered to white cis men who are gay."



Riverdale Park

"You can explore the park together, talk to one another, have picnics together. It's just a very beautiful spot to people watch as well."



Friends of Ruby

"They provide groceries and meals, that's what I mostly go there for. Their programming is very scattered. It's not consistent, in my opinion. So I don't go there as often because it's also very far away."



Pedro

Pronouns	*he/him*
Age	*22*
Ethnicity	*Latin*
Country of Origin	*Brazil*
Year of Arrival	*2021*
Residency	*International Student*
Occupation	*Service Industry*

Pedro is a 22-year-old International Student from São Paulo, Brazil. He moved to Canada to pursue higher education 3 years ago. Initially trained in leisure and tourism management back home, Pedro pivoted his career towards IT and recently graduated from a local college.

Living independently was always on Pedro's agenda; and Toronto's vibrant city life offered him the perfect backdrop. He found a cozy one-bedroom apartment in the Village and has been enjoying the convenience and sense of community the building has to offer. He is a regular at Black Eagle and Woody's that introduced him to a world of fun events and new friendships. The venue's diverse mix of people and inclusive atmosphere are what keep Pedro coming back.

When Pedro isn't busy with school or work, he and his boyfriend are out exploring Toronto's many charms. They love filling their days with culinary adventures in Little Italy, a lazy beach day at Hanlan's, and a walk through the ravines that provides the natural recharge he craves.

Queer Space...

"It's a place where historically there were political and social movements, related to queer movements. It's a place that has importance to the queer communities somehow."



1

"I lived in Brazil until I was 20 years old. I lived in the suburbs back home in São Paulo. It was mostly older and religious people there. Definitely I wouldn't feel comfortable being my queer self out in the air."

2

"When you hear Brazilians immigrating to other countries, it's usually to the US, Canada, and Ireland. Canada and Ireland are more common because they are more affordable and the immigration paperwork is easier than the US. Also I heard here the laws were more aligned with the laws in Brazil in terms of gun control."

Pedro's Queerscape

St Clair West

"We'd love to go to St Clair West as well. It's a very good balance between establishments and neighbourhoods, very quiet."



Little Italy

"Whenever we go out, we'd love to go to Little Italy, because we love Italian food. That area is also really pleasant, I used to live there when I arrived in Toronto, so I kinda have a connection to that neighbourhood."



Hanlan's Point Beach

"I love the beach, I feel the beach landscape is one of the most gorgeous created by the universe."





Ravines

"Whenever I feel overwhelmed, the ravines are the place where I go to take off the bad energies."

Pedro's Home The Village

"I like the proximity to the bars, parties, and events. I feel like it lacks a bit of community spirit within the queer community. I'd also like more diversity of bars. I don't like that 99% of the bars are cis-man centered."

Woody's and SAILOR

"Usually in Woody's you will find more younger people, like my age or less. I just seem to have a little bit of difficulties connecting with those people. It might just be me, but their attitudes were not as welcoming."

Flash on Church

"Flash, which promotes Latin nights on Saturdays. It's so nice for us Latin people to go somewhere where your songs are being played and you see a lot of people also from Latin America."

Black Eagle

"It's a place with a bit more diversity in terms of... the people who go there, they are all different. There are different nights, like the Middle Eastern night. Within those nights, there's diversity still."

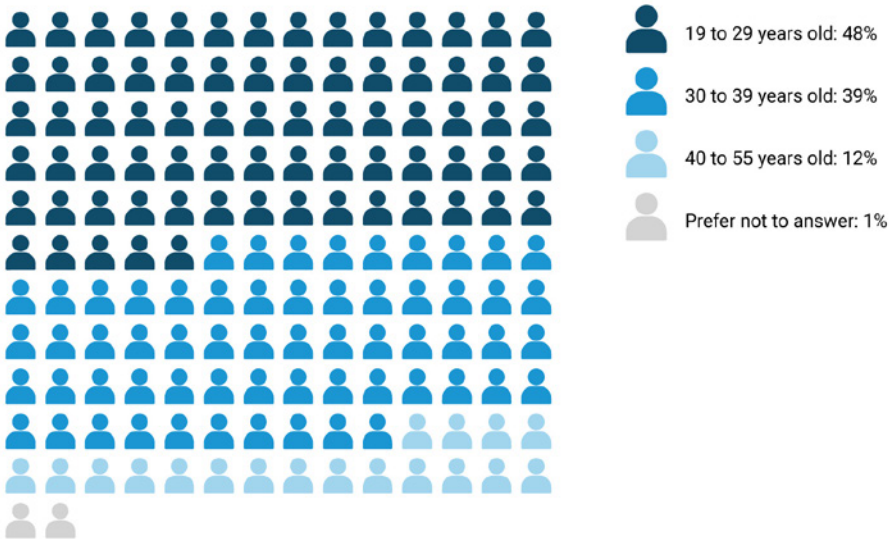
Woodbine Beach

"One time, me and my boyfriend we went to a concert, when we left History, which was the venue, it was late and dark, so we just stayed at Woodbine at night. It was a summer night, it was so pleasant. We just stayed there and watched the night sky."

Survey Participants Demography

Age Groups

n=156

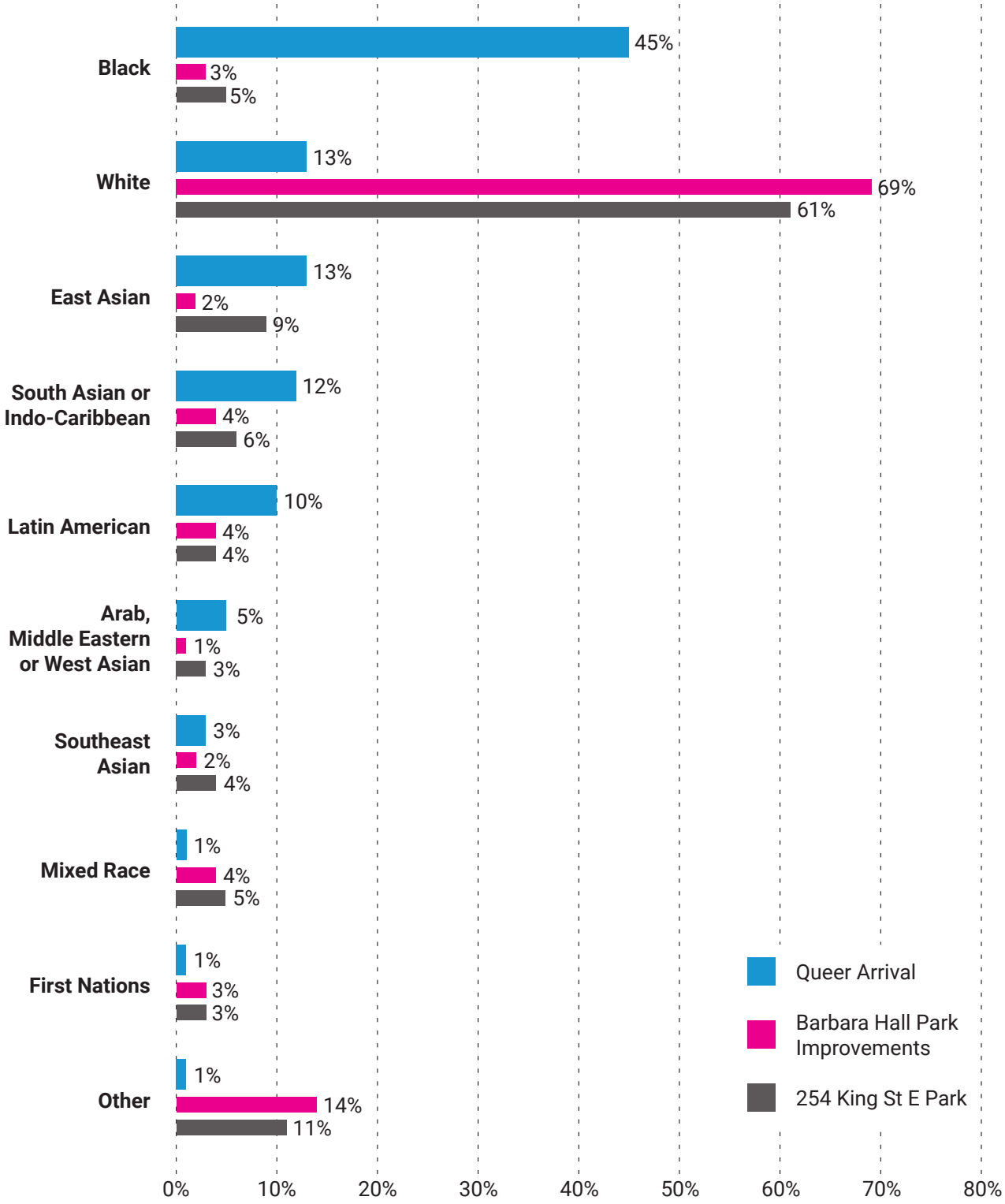


The demographic data from Phase 1 Surveys is compared with two public consultation surveys conducted by the City of Toronto: The Barbara Hall Park Improvements, largely serving the local queer communities in the Village; and the new park at 254 King St E, a park project designed to honour the Black history of the neighbourhood.

An initial comparison of the demographic data suggests that this thesis has a more balanced result from a broader range of marginalized individuals across various identities.

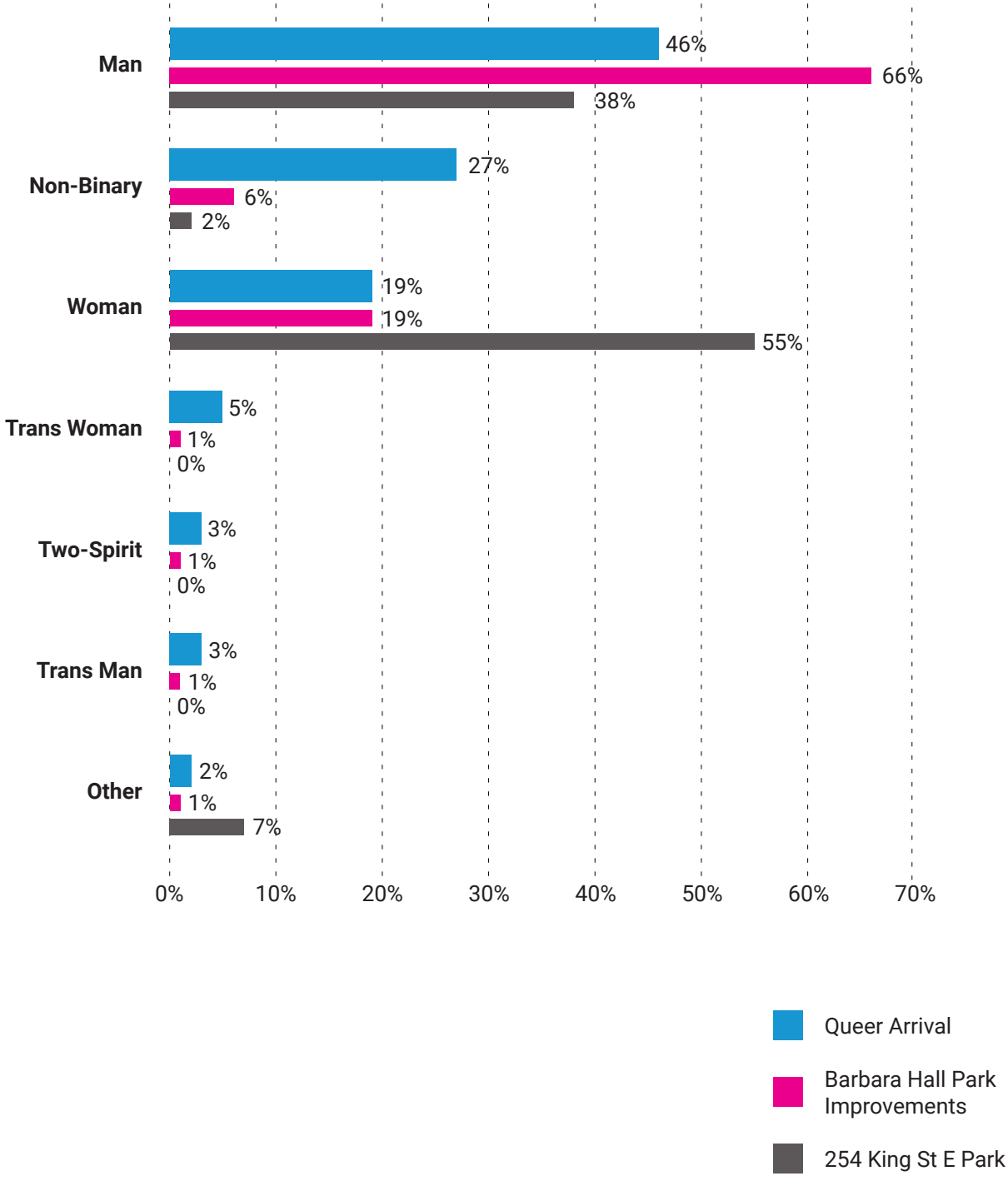
Racial Background

Racial backgrounds of survey participants among 3 projects.



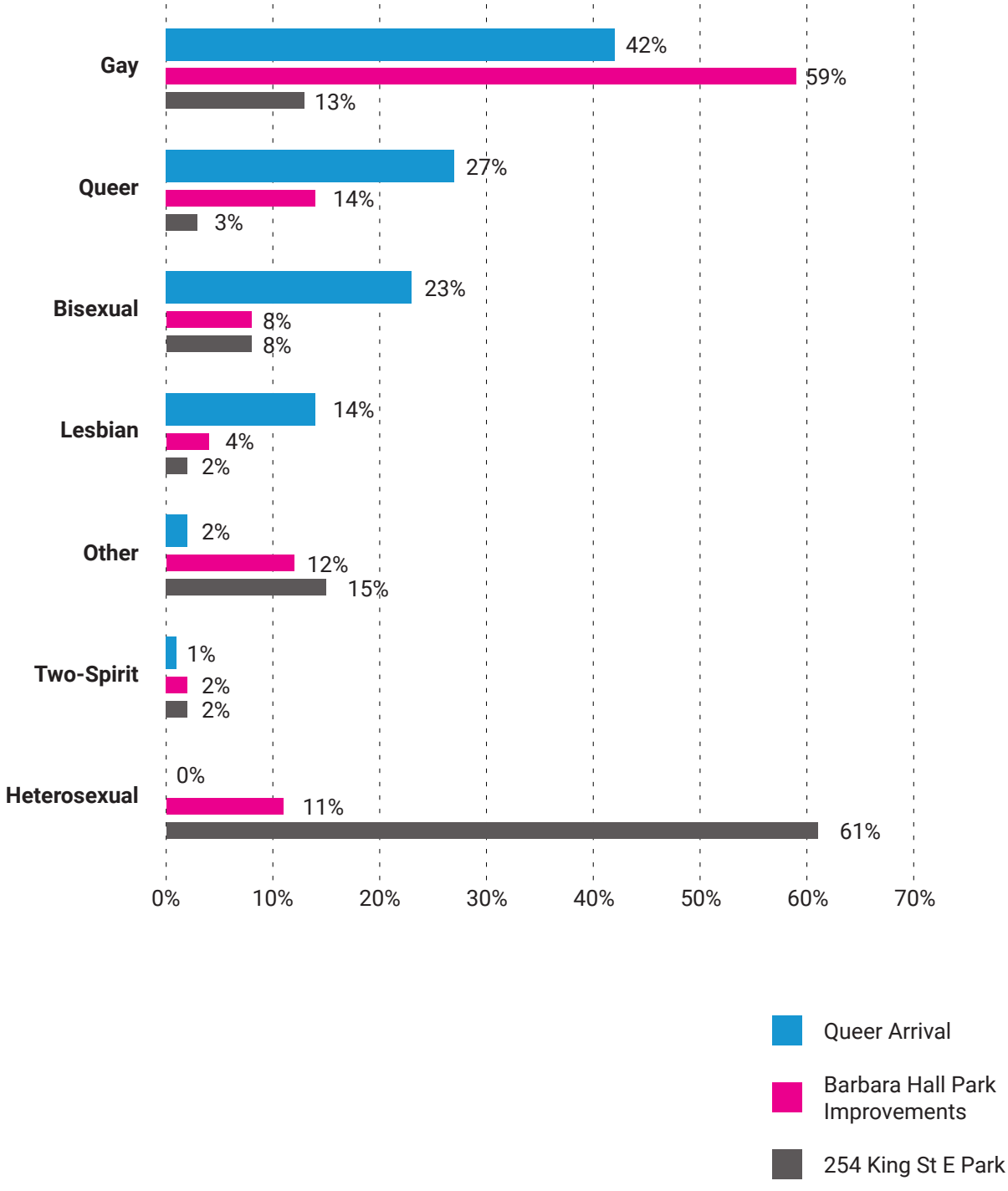
Gender Identity

Gender identities of survey participants among 3 projects.



Sexual Orientation

Sextual Orientations of survey participants among 3 projects.



Housing Situation

Housing situations of survey participants among 3 projects.

