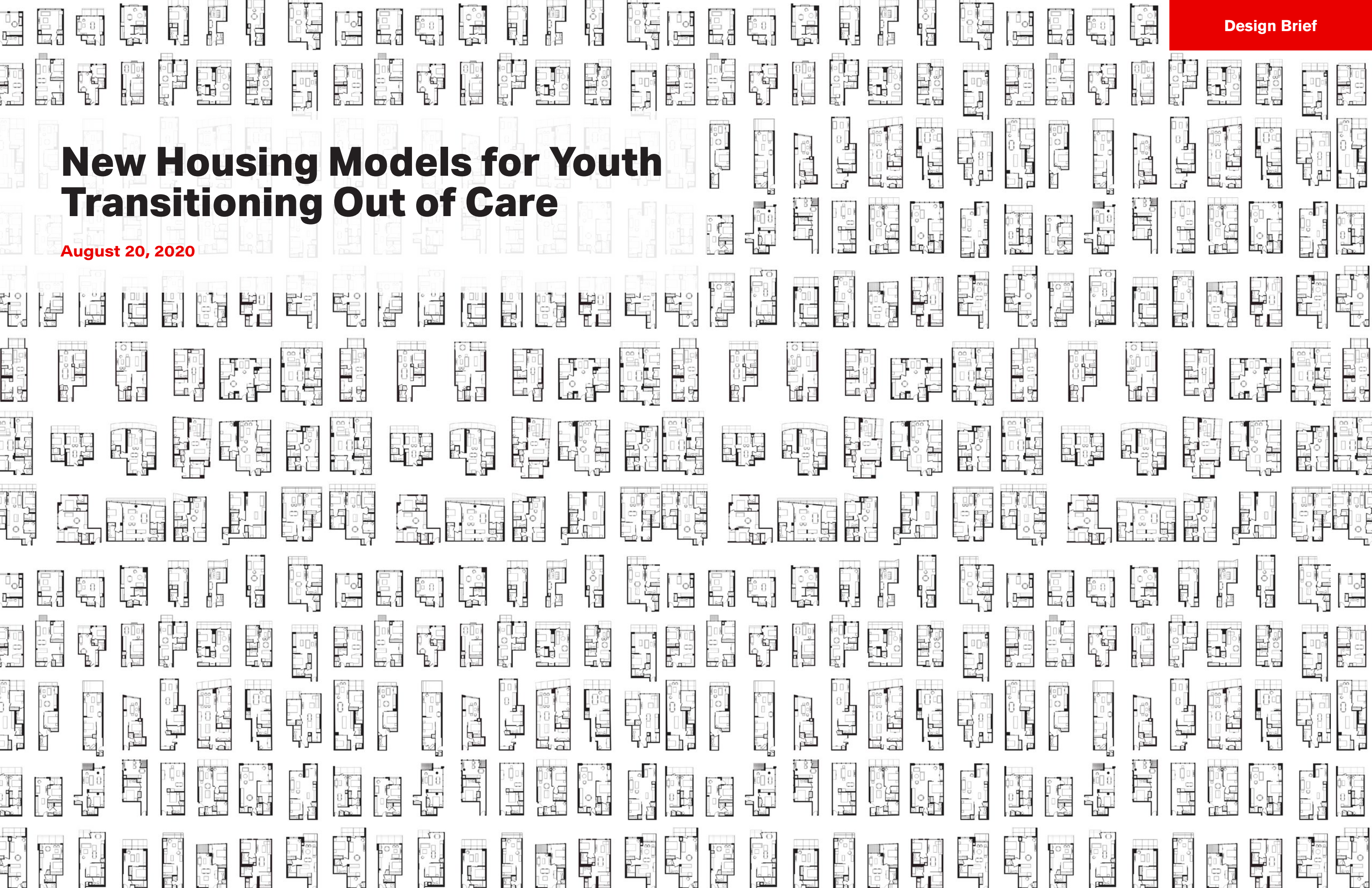


New Housing Models for Youth Transitioning Out of Care

August 20, 2020



The Team



CMHC's Solutions Labs bring experts and housing stakeholders together and gives them funding to incubate and scale potential solutions to complex housing problems using innovation methods and tools. The goal is to develop world-leading solutions to housing problems that can contribute to the National Housing Strategy's key priority areas.



The WoodGreen Innovation Lab supports the organization in creating and testing new approaches to create meaningful impacts for our clients. Our work is grounded in best practices, informed by research, data analysis, and co-design with key stakeholders. Using a human-centred approach, we engage staff, community partners, and most importantly service users with lived experience of the systems and services we are helping transform.

The Lab team is composed of a diverse team of skilled professionals who understand nuanced challenges and co-create practical solutions. We see a world where innovation is a catalyst to create a Toronto where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

PARTISANS

PARTISANS is an award-winning Toronto-based architecture studio that specializes in making the improbable possible, at all scales and project types. We are a diverse and nimble team of architects, artists, storytellers, entrepreneurs, and cultural enthusiasts devoted to a cause: smart, high-impact architecture combined with deft programming that subverts expectations and creates meaningful built experiences.

We mobilize technology, research, invention, and collaboration to achieve the highest standards of design excellence at every turn, on time and on budget. These practices keep our projects aligned with client ambitions and goals while ensuring high fidelity to the concept and vision all the way through implementation and construction.



PROCESS is a team of urban planners, designers and artists. Through collaborations and creative processes, our work transforms how we plan, design and experience places and communities. We provide stakeholder engagement, urban planning, cultural planning and public art services.

“Imagine you’re a child and you’re at home with your family and imagine someone comes into your front door, picks you up without saying anything, leaves, takes you to a stranger’s home and says, ‘this is where you live now, okay?’ How would you feel in that home? Well, in this world security is money for everybody. I feel like that, but more than that it’s, I guess, resources—safety and security is like consistency, which is important, and which can be very hard to find. And even just having a home like home is important. A sense of home because that’s the spatial version of who you are as a person. Everyone needs to have that to just know who they are. Home—you think it’s one thing until it’s not and it gets very difficult when the importance of your home is meaningless to everyone else. So at a certain point you start to realize home only exists to you. So it’s a very personal thing. So for a lot of people, for a long time, our bodies are our homes. That’s the one constant, especially if you’re living in a constant state of flux and transition. It’s like you and your TV screen are your only constant because those are the only things you see everywhere you go. And so home is something that is like what I was saying, creating your own space. Like that’s home. It’s pieces of you that you’re taking from inside yourself and exposing them out.”

—Youth interviewed for this project

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About This Project

Funded by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), this Solutions Lab aligns with the National Housing Strategy's priority area of housing for those in greatest need.

This Solutions Lab seeks to develop a set of key architectural design principles and solutions that could inform future built-for-purpose transitional housing sites for youth who are homeless or at risk of being homeless, with a focus on youth aging out of the child welfare system.

These particular youth have distinct and complex needs related to their ability to navigate life outside of the child welfare system: they often lack the essential life skills and social networks for successful transition into adulthood, and face a breadth of barriers related to trauma, experience with the criminal justice system, and mental health issues (Gaetz et al., 2016). Through essential wrap-around supports, including opportunities to build life skills and networks, future models that consider the built environment along with programmatic components could improve socioeconomic impacts for youth and the communities they live in.

Acknowledgements

This project is informed by a broad group of stakeholders. We would like to thank staff from the Free2Be Program: Erik Wexler, Vanessa Wu, and Rasheeda Guinn, as well as the members of our advisory committee Heather Millstein, Michael Braithewaite (CEO, Blue Door Shelter), Abigail Moriah (Senior Development Manager, New Commons Development), Bonnie Harkness (Director of Strategic Partnerships & Program Development, 360 Kids), Clare Nobbs (Director, Sprott House YMCA), Chana Weiss (Youth Representative), and a special thanks to Reshma Shiwcharran (Youth Representative) for her brilliant insights and valuable contributions to our research and engagement plans.

A special thanks also to the members of our Youth Research Group for sharing their experiences and invaluable insights—they are the experts and their expertise is at the heart of our work. And finally, we thank CMHC and the ECOH community for their guidance and support.

*This project received funding from the National Housing Strategy under the NHS Solutions Labs, however, the views expressed are the personal views of the author and CMHC accepts no responsibility for them.



Youth advisors during our youth engagement workshop in Fall 2019

The Challenge

During their late teens and twenties, most youth are attempting to establish their own identity and independence. Even with strong support networks, youth can struggle to clearly define their independence and many remain at least partially dependent into their 20s (Kovarikova, p5). Stability is especially important at this stage of life, as life skills are being honed, and the early stages of transitioning to financial independence are underway. For youth facing homelessness, stability is difficult to come by at this crucial point when their transition into adulthood begins.

Aging-Out-of-Care

For youth who have had experience with the child welfare system, this struggle is exacerbated. Instability can hinder education; for each move, youth lose four to six months of academic progress. Despite desires to complete high school and pursue post-secondary education, approximately half of Ontario Crown Wards drop out of high school (Kovarikova, p9-10). Youth aging-out of care face further difficulties. They are often unemployed or underemployed, experience homelessness or housing instability, become involved with the criminal justice system, become parents early, face greater health issues, and experience deep loneliness (Kovarikova, p6). This disconnection from the supportive networks, models for life skills, and overall wellbeing necessary to participate in the current world economies, means youth are far more likely to be poor and will face great difficulty accessing housing.

Housing plays a critical role in outcomes for youth aging-out of care.

Youth reporting experience with the child welfare system make up a disproportionate percentage of youth experiencing homelessness, accounting for over 40% of a total population ranging between 35,000 to 40,000 individuals in any given year (Youth Homelessness Survey & Transitions from Child Protection). With 800 to 1,000 youth aging-out of care every year (Exploring Youth Outcomes), the need for improved support systems to prevent and reduce homelessness is critical.

The aim is to envision architecture that is intentionally designed to shape the trajectory of youths' transitions into adulthood through wraparound supports and the innovative use of physical space.

800 to 1000

youth age out of care each year in Toronto

(Irwin Elman, 2016, qtd. in Kovarikova, J., 2017)

47%

of homeless youth have experience in foster care or group homes

(Gaetz, Stephen; Bill O'Grady, Sean Kidd, Kaitlin Schwan, 2016)

Youth shelters in Toronto:

543

beds

(City of Toronto, 2019)

850-2000

homeless youth per night

(B. O'Grady and S. Gaetz. 2002)

Context

WoodGreen began investigating the critical gap in services for homeless youth aging out of the child welfare system at the request of the Provincial Government in 2016. In partnership with Covenant House Toronto, the Toronto Children’s Aid Societies, and the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth, WoodGreen designed an evidence-based housing-first intervention. As this work progressed, WoodGreen was selected to be part of a national demonstration project led by A Way Home Canada and the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness that looked to prevent and end youth homelessness in Canada. As part of the research project, WoodGreen launched [Free 2 Be](#), a program to support more than sixty young people (aged 17-24) who have, or are in the process of, transitioning out of the child welfare system in Toronto.

Need for long-term transitional & supportive housing

During the development phases for [Free 2 Be](#), interviews with stakeholders and youth identified a pressing need for long-term transitional and supportive housing for youth who require more intensive supports. Grounding best practices for housing for youth (see [Transitional Housing Toolkit](#), Foyer Model, etc.) in physical spaces remains a critical component to addressing youths’ needs and integrating them into the broader community. Gaps in services when transitioning out of care leave youth vulnerable to housing instability as they often lack the resources and life skills to live independently and access private market rental units. Even without these barriers facing youth leaving care, housing affordability is a challenge across Canada, and especially for youth; over 40% of Canadians aged 20 to 29 live with their parents due to barriers to employment and the rising cost of housing. Housing instability and homelessness makes the already difficult process of transitioning out of care more difficult, jeopardizing opportunities for youth to make steps toward self-sufficiency (Gaetz & Dej, *A New Direction: A Framework for Homelessness Prevention*, 2017). By offering stabilizing, holistic supports at this critical stage in the lives of vulnerable youth, the model being developed through this Solutions Lab aims to become an effective intervention for reducing the rates of youth homelessness in Canada.

20%

of the homeless population in Canada is between the ages of 13 & 24

(Gaetz, 2016)

Homeless youth in Canada reported:

(Gaetz, 2016)



Youth experiencing episodes of homelessness aging out of care:

(Gaetz, 2016)



The Opportunity

Stabilizing youth as they build critical social and economic networks within their communities, and the skills to navigate them, will dramatically improve socioeconomic impacts for these youth. In our study, we have focused on the issues facing youth at risk of homelessness, with a particular focus on youth aged 17 to 29 who have had experience in the child welfare system. In addition to the great and growing need of youth transitioning out of the care system, there is a greater acknowledgement of the need for innovative housing models for unique sections of the population.

From a policy perspective, there is alignment from all levels of government including the Federal government's National Housing Strategy, the City of Toronto's Housing NOW program and the Provincial government's supportive housing strategy and Bill 108, promoting more homes and more choices.

From a design and programmatic perspective we're seeing promising models from around the world use innovative design, robust wrap-around programming, and innovative financing models to create new options.

The time is now to create new models of housing for youth transitioning from the foster care system.

Our Approach

WoodGreen, PARTISANS, and Process have partnered to develop a deeper understanding of the complex needs of youth transitioning out of the foster care system to put forth new solutions to support youth to thrive. We've adopted a mix of qualitative and quantitative research to explore potential solutions in social programming, architecture, and design. The Solutions Lab seeks to expand understanding of the issues and highlight new relationships and factors for consideration by bringing various participants to the table.

To explore this complex challenge we are embarking on a four phased process to identify new housing solutions for youth transitioning from the foster care system.



Methodology

Research Approach



Building on research developed through WoodGreen’s [Findings Report on Voices from the Child Welfare System](#) and by the [Homeless Hub](#) (Canadian Observatory, S. Gaetz), WoodGreen, PARTISANS, and PROCESS researched best practices in youth housing design. Our multi-faceted Solutions Lab methodology encompassed a number of avenues of study, including: **Review of architectural precedents; Youth engagement workshops; Scan of youth support program types; Interviews with local and international experts; and site visits** to Toronto-based transitional housing. These are described in greater detail at right. Through our research we developed seven Key Research Themes which we have used to structure our work.

Each research thread has shed new light on the issues surrounding housing for youth aging-out of care. The sometimes conflicting information and opinions gathered portrays a complex network of operators, regulators, designers, builders, researchers, financiers, and innovators who, at the core, are working towards providing opportunities and support systems for youth. This document provides an overview of the findings uncovered through the various facets of our research.

Research Avenues & Methodologies



Review of 35 architectural precedents

We conducted more than thirty-five architectural precedent studies, encompassing specific transitional housing for youth projects as well as a broader selection of affordable housing projects. These broader affordable housing projects were selected based on a number of criteria, including direct applicability of design approaches, innovation, and design excellence. Geographically, the precedents for this study include Canadian examples, with a specific focus on Southwestern Ontario, as well as global innovators. Precedents were evaluated based on the Key Research Themes (at right).

3 Youth Engagement Workshops

We held three youth engagement workshops in November 2019 with a Youth Research Group comprised of youth from WoodGreen’s Free2Be program, the Pape Adolescent Resource Centre (PARC), and some who found out about the opportunity via word-of-mouth;

Scan of Youth Support Program Types

We assembled a scan of various transitional housing programs and types for youth through a literature review. This encompassed best practices in Canada, as well as innovative international approaches. Common critiques and challenges were also researched.

34 Interviews with local & international experts

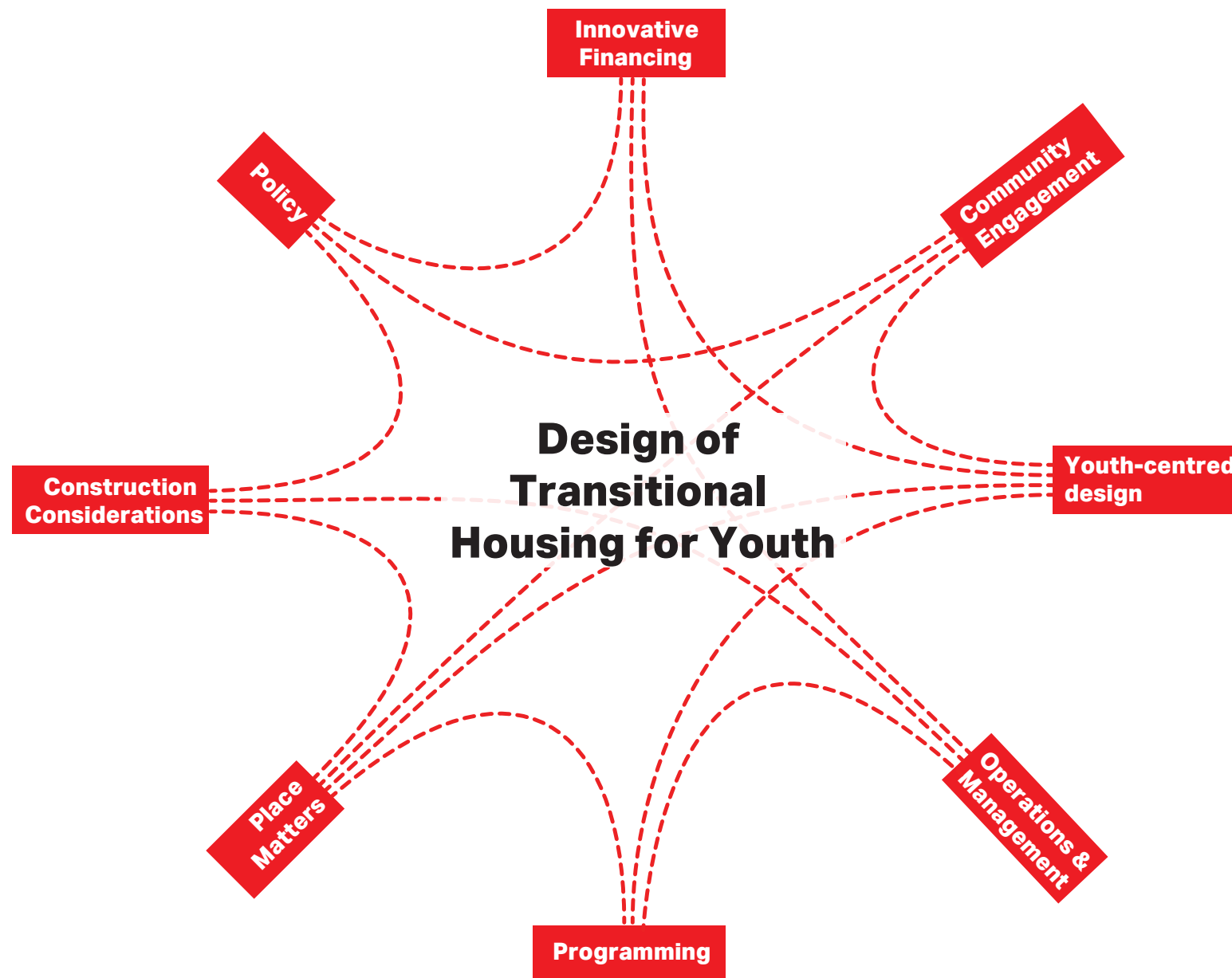
We conducted thirty-four interviews with experts in the field including youth with experience aging-out of care, affordable housing developers, support workers, directors and managers of agencies interfacing directly with at-risk youth, architects, and policy makers such as city councillors, municipal planning and housing office staff, and researchers and advocates in the area of youth support services and affordable housing.

Site Visits

We conducted a number of visits to three transitional youth housing in the Greater Toronto Area: Peel Youth Village, 650 Queen Street. E, and 249 Cosbourn Ave.

Key Research Themes

- 1** **Wrap Around Program Models Can Support Youth to Thrive**
- 2** **Youth Centered Design at the Core**
- 3** **Place Matters—Finding the Right Site for Youth Housing**
- 4** **Considerations for Construction**
- 5** **Designing for Operations & Maintenance**
- 6** **Innovative Financing Required**
- 7** **Community Engagement Is Key**



An Interdependent Approach

The Key Research Themes that inform this Solutions Lab represent an interdependent approach to the design of transitional housing for youth aging out-of-care. The themes are not to be taken as separate entities, but rather an interconnected set of design considerations that inform transitional housing design. Sweden's youth housing **Snabba Hus Vastberga** is an excellent example of the design implications of the collection of themes. Snabba Hus Vastberga was proposed to be sited on unused municipal land (Place Matters), was granted an innovative temporary building permit that allows youth housing on the site for 15 years to reduce the cost of the development by eliminating the cost of land while allowing the municipality future flexibility (Innovative Financing,

Policy). This triggered the need for fast construction (to make the most of the 15-year period) and a demountable structure resulting in a design decision to use standardized prefabricated units (Considerations for Construction). The particular arrangement of the units around an exterior courtyard protected from the adjacent busy street creates a space for community and recreation (Youth-Centred Design and Programming).

We hope that innovative approaches can be applied across all of the Key Research Themes to develop thoughtful, unexpected design solutions that make the provision of transitional housing more common, and more responsive to the unique challenges youth aging-out-of-care face.

"The architect who cares about these issues has to be working on two fronts. One, trying to design buildings... And secondly, to be working more from an almost policy and political level as advocates to be involved with city councils, planning departments, mayors and private development."

—**Michael Maltzan**
Design Principal, Michael Maltzan Architecture

Understanding Transitional Housing for Youth

What is Transitional Housing?

Definition of Transitional Housing

“Transitional housing refers to a supportive–yet temporary–type of accommodation that is meant to bridge the gap from homelessness to permanent housing by offering structure, supervision, support (for addictions and mental health, for instance), life skills, and in some cases, education and training.”

–Gaetz, S. (2014b)

For youth leaving care, transitional housing can act as an interim measure while they look for more permanent and stable housing. There are many models of transitional housing for youth. Typically, they incorporate a range of supports and services dedicated to helping youth not only find housing but also build life skills, provide employment and training opportunities and counselling and mentorship to help sustain independence. It is suggested that because the experience of adolescence is inherently transitional, transitional housing is appropriate for many young people who require the longer-term supports we generally consider necessary in helping them transition to adulthood, while building life skills that enhance their integrated community members (Gaetz and Scott 2012, p. 14).

The approaches and understanding of best practices for transitional housing for youth are evolving. Increased research on youth development, innovations in housing design and construction materials, and broader funding, policy and socioeconomic contexts impact new ways of thinking about transitional housing. This includes transitional housing models, forms of accommodation and programmatic and design needs.

Transitional Models

There are differing approaches to the programmatic elements of transitional housing. Most transitional housing models include intensive supports and a rigorous program.

The Foyer Model

The Foyer model, which started in Europe and has recently been adopted in Canada, often requires that the young person must agree to participate in education, training or employment to receive accommodation. There are often specific rules and eligibility criteria that youth must meet to maintain housing. In addition, there is often a time limit associated with their stay. For the most part, the Foyer model is deemed successful, because it is youth-centered, where supports and programmatic requirements can still be tailored to the youth's personalized needs (See Gaetz and Scott, 2012; Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2015). Because of the structure and support, the Foyer model is seen to be a good model for youth leaving care, with an understanding that all youth are different.

Housing First for Youth Model (HF4Y)

HF4Y does not demand preconditions to access housing. There are no time limits and there is an emphasis on social inclusion and community integration. Similar to Foyer and other transitional housing models, HF4Y models prioritize youth choice, voice and self determination and are focused on positive youth development (Gaetz, 2017).

While there are arguments in favour of either the H4NY or the Foyer model, there is agreement that having these myriad housing options is useful to prevent homelessness because ultimately, youth have a diversity of needs. Ensuring a youth-centric response should be prioritized.

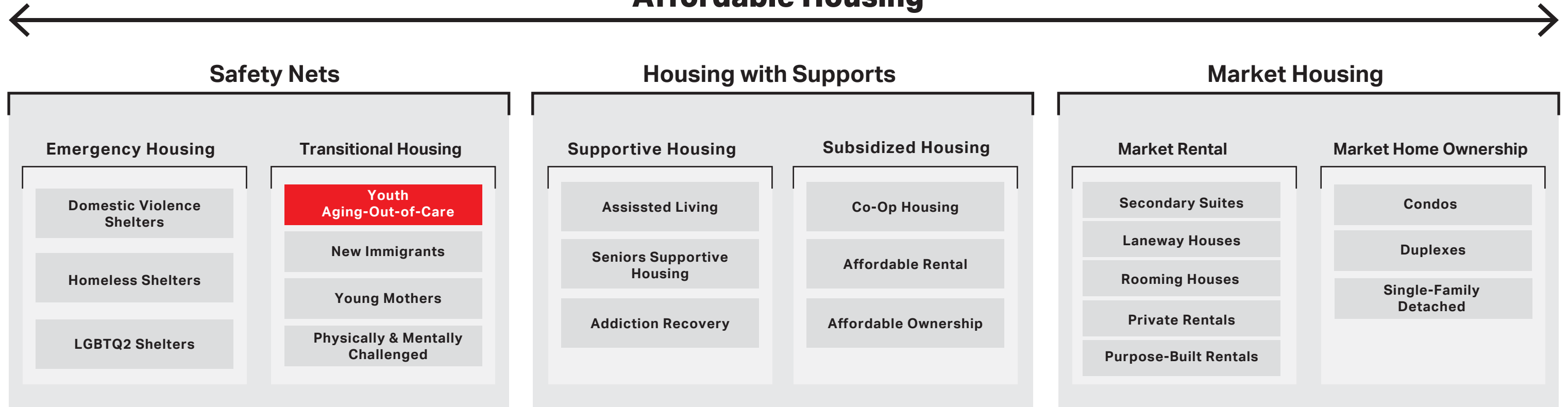
“The purpose of the building should be to help you transition. Transition is the key word because if they are living and they are not saving money, that is a problem, because they aren't prepared to transition out of that building.”

- Youth interviewed for this project

“The building should be an incubator for the individuals who get a two to five years incubation period where they are allowing themselves to catch up for all the development that's been fragmented, obstructed, during their life and just plan through what's next.”

- Youth interviewed for this project

Affordable Housing



*The lists of housing types indicated here are not exhaustive

Locating Transitional Housing for Youth

“An effective response to youth homelessness should give young people choices and options based on their age, experience, level of independence and need.”

—Gaetz, S. (2014b)

Transitional housing for youth is one approach to housing for homeless youth and youth aging out-of-care, and represents one of a large number of approaches to affordable housing specifically, and housing generally in Canada (see diagram above, derived from CMHC, 2018). It’s important to note however that even though transitional housing for youth has a particular place in the larger approach to housing for homeless youth generally, it is not typologically specific. Transitional housing for youth comes in many forms, scales, and programs, and, based on our research,

has a number of relationships to affordable housing more generally. For instance, while congregate models of transitional housing are often typologically distinct, scattered models of transitional housing are more diffuse, often locating in other forms of affordable housing via partnerships with developers (Gaetz, S. & Scott, F., 2012b, see more details in “Transitional Housing Accommodation Types,” next page). Additionally, drawing on Stephen Gaetz’s statement at the start of this section, the provision of a diversity of housing approaches is advantageous in responding to the diverse needs of homeless youth and youth aging-out-of-care. In this way, the location of Transitional Housing for Youth in this research is seen less as a part of a housing continuum, but rather as a component of a diverse number of housing options. For these reasons, this study looks at both transitional housing for youth specifically, as well as affordable housing broadly, as there are useful strategies for transitional housing for youth across the affordable housing spectrum.

“I hope there isn’t a typology around supportive housing because that would almost necessarily start to siloize that type of community into one type of housing. One of the things that is very clear with working with the homeless community is that it’s an extremely diverse, heterogeneous community.”

—Michael Maltzan

Design Principal, Michael Maltzan Architecture

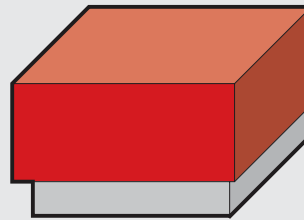
Transitional Housing Accommodation Types

Both **Foyer** and **Housing First** models can adapt their programs to be suitable for a diversity of accommodations. There are a range of transitional housing options, including dedicated **Congregate**, **Scattered**, and the **Hub & Spoke** model. Transitional housing programs have typically followed the Congregate model, where everything is located in a dedicated building, including common space and private dwelling spaces. As the concept has evolved, new models have been developed including scattered housing.

In addition to these broad types, there are a number of innovative approaches possible within each. For the Scattered type for instance, transitional housing can be offered with convertible leases, where youth are able to take over the lease from the housing provider and maintain the housing in their own name. This is more common with Scattered accommodation types, as the decentralized provision of services normalizes long-term tenancy, rather than being co-located with existing services. There are also host home/supportive roommate approaches, where housing providers work with families, private households, or even educational and elderly institutions to host youth.

Where Scattered or Hub & Spoke types are co-located within larger, non-transitional developments, some housing providers indicate that it is difficult to find landlords who are willing to participate. Covenant House has proactive agreements with Daniels Corporation and Hollyburn Properties to support their transitional housing programs. Hollyburn Properties subsidizes market rents, requiring youth to only pay \$300-375 (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2015, p.68). Calgary's Infinity Project similarly has partnerships with developers (Harrison & Scott, 2013). While this initiative is seen to be easier to develop in larger cities with more rental housing stock (and larger companies), there are possibilities in smaller communities. Individual landlords who have few units may want to support homeless youth and can take advantage of tax receipts (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2015, p.70).

The combination of program model and accommodation type will drive architectural approaches as each has significantly different spatial needs, often at very different scales of development. Additionally, external constraints of financing, land-use policy, urgency of need, opportunity, among others, may drive the selection of program model and accommodation type. In types where Scattered or Hub & Spoke types are co-located in larger developments, the agency of housing providers to have youth-specific design influence may be limited.



Congregate Housing

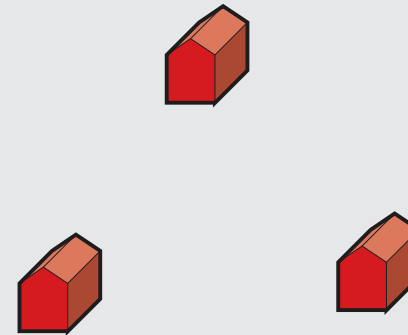
Congregate, or Fixed-Site housing is designed as one single building with several private units (either shared or individual) or clustered units in a single building in which a certain percentage of units are set aside for youth. There are typically intensive supports on site, including counselling, case-workers and mentors, as well as shared amenities, including kitchens, recreational and vocational opportunities and spaces for counselling.

Pros: Works well for youth who benefit from a sense of community and day-to-day support.

Cons: For some, congregating housing can feel institutional and foster a sense of a lack of independence.

Target Youth: Typically youth who want support and a sense of community.

Costs: High capital investment. Operating and programming costs are also high to maintain and offer space and supports.



Scattered Housing

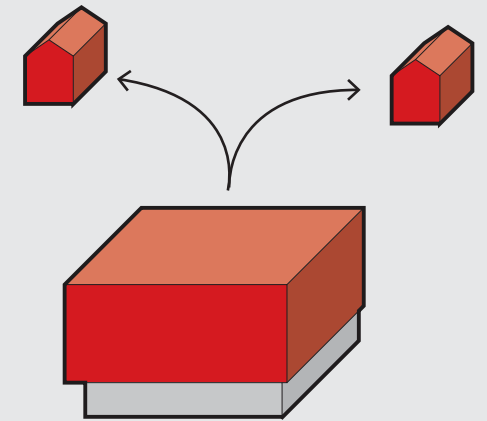
Scattered housing is dispersed throughout a community. Units are typically rented from private landlords but may also be rented from non-profit housing providers. This approach is seen to provide youth an opportunity to transition from homelessness in a way that reduces stigma and offers more opportunities to integrate into the community compared to congregating-site housing.

Pros: Smaller housing units are more easily integrated into communities. Some youth prefer this as it is less stigmatizing, and does not "ghettoize" people deemed to have significant social, income or health problems.

Cons: Has been associated with loneliness and isolation for youth, because it lacks opportunities to come together.

Target Youth: Youth wanting more independence with fewer day-to-day needs.

Costs: Low capital cost, but operating costs depend on market rents. In the GTA, this model is difficult to maintain due to the affordability crisis. Partnerships with developers and property managers helpful.



Hub & Spoke

Understanding the diverse needs of youth, many housing providers are beginning to utilize a blended approach which offers both congregating and scattered approaches. 360 Kids and Covenant House both utilize this method. There are situations where a two stage model exists, where in the first stage youth live in Congregating settings and in the second stage are moved to Scattered settings. Youth who participate in Covenant House's Right of Passage Program (within the fixed site) often move to community apartments after, which can have advantages to those moving to community apartments directly from shelters or streets (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2015, p.67).

Pros: Supports different approaches

Cons: Potentially challenging from an administrative approach

Target Youth: Diversity of options for youth

Approaches to Program: A Youth-Centered and Youth-led Approach

Youth, for the most part, voice the desire for choice, independence and a sense of community as important factors to consider. At the same time, every youth is different, with different levels of need. For instance, youth who have active substance abuse or are in recovery often require more support compared to youth who don't. Therefore, a client centered case management model must be flexible and responsive to young person's needs and abilities. This includes adopting a Positive Youth Development framework, with Wrap-Around support, which focuses on positive development and assets, instead of solely on risks and deficits (Gaetz 2012). Supports typically included in both Foyer and HF4Y models are summarized below.

Supportive Staff and Mentors

Based on research, it is important for supportive staff to be willing to let the youth lead. Staff should also reflect youth experiences (be trained in anti-oppression, trauma-informed support or have lived experience). Similarly, staff must also be supported, through management and an organizational structure. This is especially the case in scattered-site models. As identified in an evaluation of Haven's Way, live-in-staff are supported by a dedicated full-time Program Coordinator (Turner Research and Strategy 2015). In addition, peer mentorship is seen as an important part of supports.

Thorough Intake Process

A thorough and thoughtful intake process is required to determine the best program and location for youth entering transitional housing. This will help determine what type of education or training program is needed as well. Eva's, Covenant House and 360 Kids housing providers all mentioned the importance of the Intake Process. Similarly, there are often consistent check-ins with youth through supportive case-workers, housing-workers and other supports to ensure they are on the right path, with clear goals.

After Care

Once youth leave, many housing providers focus on the need for After Care, to ensure the youth are continuing to excel. This is an aspect that is sometimes lacking in programs and should be better incorporated, especially due to the lack of affordable housing that exists today.

Education, Employment and Life Skills training

The research and interviews show that providing supports such as education, employment and life skills training are fundamental for transitional housing for youth. Youth in care often don't have the life skills (independence) so this is a focus for many programmatic models. While some programs require youth to be in school or employed, others are more flexible.

Opportunities for youth engagement, with their community and with recreational activities

Research and interviews identify the need to incorporate opportunities for youth to be involved in recreation, art and engage with the broader, surrounding community.

Systems of Care to integrate youth within their community

Research suggests that there is a need to not only focus on supports offered by the housing providers, but to also better integrate youth within a broader "system of care." For instance, when Eva's Phoenix's housing workers help youth finding permanent housing, they also help to develop relationships within the neighbourhood, such as with local community centres, libraries, grocery stores, restaurants etc.

Unlimited or flexible length of stay

A key element defined in both research and interviews is that unlimited, longer, or flexible stay is preferred. Currently, transitional housing for youth typically has a time limit of several months to two years. There is a push to shift these limits to allow for more flexibility or to eliminate them altogether. Covenant House Vancouver for instance recently shifted their timeline to allow youth to stay until the age of 25, which is seen as a positive step (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness 2015). Haven's Way and Calgary Infinity Program, which are seen as successful programs in Calgary, provide flexible time limits.

"If you're trying to create home for a young person, I'm convinced young people would say, 'Well, you don't create a home and then tell young people when they have to leave. That's not a home. Don't even pretend.' If there's going to be an expectation that people leave after a certain period of time, it's not a home and let's not pretend. It's home-like, it's comfortable, it's safe, but it's not a home."

—Irwin Elman

Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth

"[Transitional housing] is like a resting spot when you are climbing a mountain. You would stop at a ledge to take a break but you wouldn't turn back down. You get the rest you need to continue your journey going up."

- Youth interviewed for this project

Accommodating Specific Demographic Needs

Housing providers also emphasize the importance of specialized housing for specific demographics:

2SLGBTQ Youth

Homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, and associated discrimination profoundly impact 2SLGBTQ youth. They may also have greater difficulties accessing housing when compared to their peers and are overrepresented in the homeless youth population in Canada (Abramovich 2012). It is accepted in our culture that home is a safe refuge with primary caregivers supposed to love us unconditionally. However, this is not the case for many young people coming out as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer and questioning to an unsupportive family. Approximately 25-40% of homeless youth are LGBTQ, while only approximately 5-10% of the general 13 population identifies as LGBTQ (Josephson & Wright, 2000). Factors for successful housing strategies include: supporting youth choice, affirming their identities, and protecting youth from discrimination (BC Housing Research Centre, 2018).

Sprott House is one of the first 2SLGBTQ+ transitional housing programs for youth in Canada. Sprott House provides one year of supported residential living (with the option of extending for 3-12 months) for up to 25 young people between the ages of 16 to 24.

Black Youth

Black youth are disproportionately represented in Canada's child welfare system. Data released from the Children's Aid Society of Toronto shows that African Canadians represent 40.8% of children in care, yet are only 8.5% of the Toronto population. Canadians of African descent report facing disparities after leaving the child welfare system such as being treated differently than their White counterparts, not having access to culturally appropriate services, and experiencing poorer outcomes than their White counterparts (Turner, 2016). Recognizing specialized needs, Eva's Phoenix is launching YOUth Belong, which will include specializing housing for black youth, in a scattered-site model.

Indigenous Youth

Indigenous youth are disproportionately affected by homelessness. In Vancouver, Indigenous youth represent only 2% of the city's overall population, but were 30% of its youth experiencing homelessness (Patrick, 2014, as cited in Thistle, 2017).

It's important to recognize that specific culturally appropriate responses to Indigenous homeless youth must be considered. As Jesse A Thistle (2017) writes, how we define homelessness for Indigenous youth is different from Canada's conventional definition. He says, "For Indigenous youth, homelessness is not defined by the common colonialist definition of lacking a structured habitation; rather, it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews. Considerations of different youth needs is essential when considering the model, design and program for transitional housing." (p. 6)

Therefore, factors to consider for successful housing include holistic frameworks, a trauma-informed healing lens and other culturally relevant services and opportunities for cultural reconnection (BC Housing Research Centre, 2018). Dave Pranteau Aboriginal Children's Village is an excellent example of successful housing, as described above.

Victims of Sex Trafficking

Covenant House in Toronto and Vancouver estimates that 30% of youth they work with have been involved in the sex trade and/or subject to sexual exploitation. Understanding that this population requires a trauma-informed response specific to sexual exploitation, Covenant House Toronto has partnered with Daniels Corporation to expand its programming, including the creation of a specialized program for women who are victims of human trafficking (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 2015).

Critiques & Challenges of Transitional Housing

In general, there are a number of overarching critiques of transitional housing programs. Common critiques include:

Strict programming requirements

Programmatic requirements can be strict and those who do well in the programs are rewarded by moving on (potentially before they are ready/have appropriate housing established); and

Time restrictions

The inflexible time limit does not work for many youth. Many programs limit stay to a few months to one year. Some have extended stay for up to four years. No matter what the limit is, there are some youth that may need support for longer. While flexible time limits are increasingly recommended by some, others feel that the time limit helps to serve more youth. Many interviewed reference that there are often waitlists of approx. 6 months.

Systemic barriers to permanent, affordable housing

Programs are effective if affordable independent housing is available to move to afterwards. In a country, and in particular in Toronto, with an affordable housing crisis, it is increasingly difficult for youth to find and maintain permanent housing. This was identified through literature and through interviews with youth and housing providers.

Key Research Themes

Emerging Trends

Emerging Trends

1 / Wrap Around Program Models Can Support Youth to Thrive

An in-depth analysis of programming considerations, compiled in the programmatic scan completed as part of this Solutions Lab, is briefly summarized in the “Understanding Transitional Housing” section. Interviewees, including youth, and a review of precedents and literature revealed a wide variety of forms of programming from full-scope services integrated into housing developments to scattered or periodic provisions for supports. A diversity of youth-centric approaches is seen as essential to address the heterogeneity of youths’ needs.

A further distinction in programming was made between, broadly, **congregate** versus **scattered** housing. Programming types have important architectural implications. Congregate housing typically provides for intensive on-site supports, including counselling and health care. Shared amenities such as kitchens, recreation and learning spaces, counselling rooms, are often incorporated into the housing site. The congregate housing approach can work well for youth who benefit from day-to-day support, providing a sense of community and shared experience. However, some perceived the larger, more structured sites as institutional and lacking in opportunities for independence. Scattered housing is composed of housing units dispersed throughout a region. These can provide more opportunities to integrate into the community and are generally seen to be less stigmatizing. However, the geographic dispersion is an obstacle for youth to come together and has been associated with loneliness and isolation.

Other key considerations for programming included thorough intake processes to determine the best program and location for youth entering supportive housing; time restrictions which should address spectrum of support duration that youth may need; youth-centric approaches to staff interactions with youth; employment, education, and life-skills training for youth who may not have had the opportunity to engage in these previously; specialized housing for certain subgroups such as Black, LGBTQ2S+, and Indigenous youth and victims of sex trafficking; and the need for care beyond the program to ensure youth continue to excel.

In addition to the wrap around programs described here, our team also reviewed other approaches to housing and programming that support youth to thrive, including intergenerational housing, peer mentorship, and co-living.



“The idea of peer mentorship would be just to have them linked to someone else. So, they have that consistent person even after they leave our services.”

—**Michael Braithwaite**
CEO, Blue Door Shelters

“It’s about creating a cyclical ecosystem of youth; senior youth helping freshmen youth because you have to create this cycle that’s going to perpetuate itself.”

—Youth interviewed for this project

Emerging Trends



VinziRast Mittendrin in Austria brings together students & homeless youth. The first floor of the building hosts a popular coffee shop open to the surrounding community



Bikuben Kollegiet in Denmark provides student housing with 10% of the building's units dedicated to youth leaving homelessness.



Dave Pranteau Aboriginal Children's Village's in Vancouver provides intergenerational housing for indigenous peoples, with 3 units of transitional housing for youth.

Consider Symbiotic Partnerships

1. Intergenerational Housing

There are multigenerational housing precedents that are seen as successful models for both the youth and adults who live in the homes (See Garland's review of intergenerational housing models in the US, 2018). There are a few transitional housing models for youth integrated with housing for other age groups. For example, Chelsea Foyer in New York integrates 40 units of youth housing within a larger 207 unit permanent supportive housing complex for low-income and formerly homeless adults (Good Shepherd Services, n.d). At Haven's Way in Calgary, live-in 'parents' provide support for groups of three to six young women. Happipad in Kelowna pairs students with adult and senior homeowners seeking companionship and support with house care.

2. Co-Living with Students

Bikuben Halls in Denmark dedicates 10% of their housing units to homeless youth who are in a housing-first case management program. Bikuben Hall is owned by a philanthropic foundation and any student can apply. (Bikubefonden, 2012).

3. Peer Mentorship

Peer mentorship programs such as Mentor/Mentee Canada provide homeless youth with personal mentors who have had lived experience and have overcome challenges similar to those faced by homeless youth. Mentors provide their knowledge of accessing resources and navigating support systems, making themselves available to the youth through a personal relationship maintained over time. Mentoring can be aimed at 'filling the gaps' by complimenting case management and counselling supports. The direct relationship provides youth with a personal example, offering encouragement towards self-sufficiency.

Flexible Program Structure

1. Flexible Programming Requirements

Programmatic requirements for transitional housing tend to be strict and those who do well in the programs are 'rewarded' by moving on, potentially before they are ready or have appropriate housing established. Acknowledging youth agency and capability is critical for youth working to establish their independence and identity. While very structured programs are helpful for some youth, others may benefit from flexibility in choosing their own approach to education or forms of employment, pacing their own timeline for harm reduction, and allowing them the opportunity to develop and nurture intimate relationships.

2. Relax Time Restrictions

The inflexible time limit does not work for many youth. Many programs limit stay to a few months to one year. Some have extended stay for up to four years. No matter what the limit is, there are some youth that may need support for longer. While flexible time limits are increasingly recommended by some, others feel that the time limit helps to serve more youth. Many interviewed reference that there are often waitlists of approximately 6 months.

"Remember that people like to rent and it sounds odd, but 'It's my place now, it's not a handout. I'm contributing'. It's a home rather than a shelter. And I think that's something for your psyche and your state of mind."

—**Michael Braithwaite**
CEO, Blue Door Shelters

Emerging Trends

2 / Youth Centered Design at the Core

When we asked youth to describe transitional housing spaces and programs that would enable youth to stabilize and successfully transition into adulthood, their responses highlighted the fact that youth with experience in the child welfare system are in no way a homogenous group. Their needs, experiences, aspirations, personalities, and ways of being day-to-day are diverse and unique. A one-size-fits-all approach will not work; transitional housing models should be designed through a diversity of approaches, and should be flexible and adaptable to the diverse and changing aspects of the youth living in them.

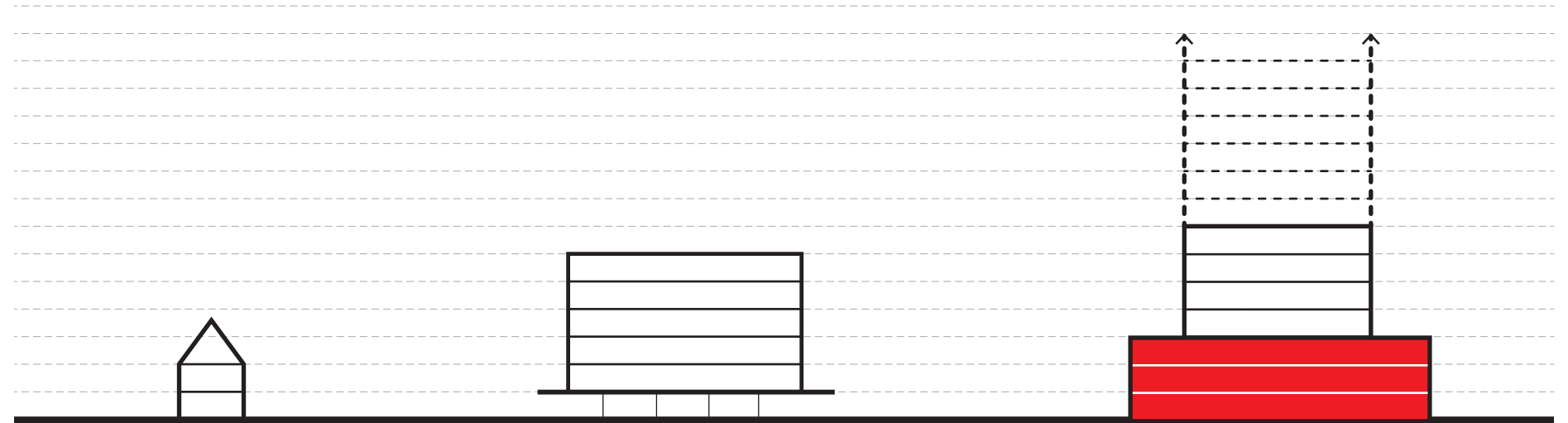
Interviewees from each facet of expertise, but particularly youth, service providers, and architects, voiced the importance of including a variety of private and social spaces within housing to accommodate ranges of desire to engage in encounters, experiences, and contemplation. Both rest and stimulation are critical to maintaining a life balance.

While communal kitchens, gardens, and other amenity spaces offer the opportunity for more structured socialization, service providers and architects noted the benefit of unplanned, casual encounters both among residents and with staff for sparking conversations and staying engaged with the broader community. Spaces for these types of encounter most prominently took the form of open, common, circulation spaces including courtyards, wide single-loaded corridors, generous entry spaces, etc. On a more granular level architects noted the success of design moves such as, the positioning of laundry rooms with windows or the arrangement of a unit with a kitchen near the corridor allowed for visibility between residents with a range of opportunities to engage socially.

Connections to the broader community were reinforced in discussions on design. Architecture sympathetic to its context was seen as successful, with some interviewees noting that the designs should feel “normal” and “not fancy” and should not stand out noticeably from the surroundings (e.g. preference for no signage identifying buildings as supportive housing). This was not, however, an acceptance that the design should be sub-par in any sense. Several youth as well as residents of supportive housing (as relayed by the interviewed architects) voiced a preference for more visible and unique designs, noting the potential for a sense of pride and ownership. From all angles, the mandate that new transitional or supportive housing needed to contribute to the city and should strive for excellence in design was reinforced again and again.

Scale

Transitional Housing for youth can be delivered at a number of different scales, from very small duplexes to buildings with up to 50 units. Across our interviews fifty units was indicated as a ‘sweet-spot’ for providing services while retaining a cohesive and supportive community. Within these limits, there are a number of different approaches depending on the scale of the development its located within, amenities offered, community integration, among many factors.



S

Housing Here

Small scale housing for youth
Example: Haven’s Way, Calgary (6 Units)

M

Housing Now

Temporary modular construction
Examples: Eva’s Phoenix, Toronto (50 units),
Peel Youth Village (48 units)

L

Housing +

Housing and additional use / co-living
Example: 360 Kids Hub, Richmond Hill, ON

“We need to be really careful because the way that we design a building, design a public realm, design our shelters—it’s not just bricks and mortar—it actually facilitates the social interaction of whoever uses that space. We need for people to say, ‘This is important.’ It’s not only about looking pretty, it’s about being functional and contributing to the social outcomes that we want.”

— **Ana Bailão**

Toronto City Councillor & Deputy Mayor
Chair of Toronto’s Affordable Housing Committee

“Lots of the people who live in these spaces aren’t brilliant at turning up to formal meetings and discussions, but they’re great if you catch them crossing the courtyard. The unplanned encounter made possible by the architecture.”

— **Peter Barber**

Founder, Peter Barber Architects

Emerging Trends



Architect Peter Barber's Holmes Road Studio in London surrounds an open courtyard intended to be developed into a communal garden by the residents.



Eva's Phoenix in Toronto uses unique interior townhouses, which reduce the 50 unit institution into 5-person houses. The townhouses are highly porous to an internal street.



Providing accessible recreation was identified as important for youth. Peel Youth Village in Mississauga features a full enclosed gymnasium visible from the street and entrance.

Common Areas

Through interviews and research, these are key design elements to consider to ensure the design is youth centered:

1. Entrance and Circulation

Design of circulation should allow for 'unplanned encounters' where residents and staff can be visible without an obligation to engage—allowing youth to explore their comfort levels over time. Generous circulation helps mitigate the feeling of living in an institutional building.

2. Amenity Spaces

Provide amenity spaces tailored to the needs and interests of youth such as common kitchens, digital facilities, and flexible activity areas. Amenities such as communal gardens and learning spaces (e.g. teaching kitchens) can aid youth in developing life skills. On site child-care facilities allow youth with children to pursue personal development.

3. Staff Areas and Health Facilities

Where on-site staffing and health facilities are provided, accessibility and privacy must both be considered. The spaces staff or health professionals occupy must be approachable but also offer rooms which shelter youth from any unwanted attention.

4. Entrepreneurial Spaces

Social enterprise spaces can provide youth with the opportunity to develop personal and career skills. Youth run cafes are common, but flexible spaces could allow for wider possibilities. They can also be used by the larger community where they become an interface between the workings of the housing and the local community.

5. Accessible Recreation

Recreational spaces provide youth with important opportunities for exercise, social activities, and play.

Personal Spaces

1. Kitchen

While common kitchens may be more suited to youth with higher needs, a personal kitchen can allow youth the opportunity to develop their own approach to cooking and to be responsible for personal grocery management and cleaning habits.

2. Study Space

Youth transitioning out of care need time and space to contemplate their goals and set their own course. A dedicated private space where they can read, study, think, and create in a calm atmosphere can help them formulate a sense of themselves.

3. Bedroom and Storage

Housing for a variety of family and relational structures will be important in addressing youth's needs. The possibility of accommodating overnight guests and/or youth with children play a large role in determining unit sizes and storage needs.

4. Personalization

Youth transitioning out of the care system may not have previously had much room in the spaces they've lived for freedom of personal expression. While the necessities of structure or density may limit reconfiguration of the unit itself, the potential for youth to personalize their space can be an important outlet for the development of their independence and identity

5. Degrees of Privacy

A range of spaces with varying degrees of privacy should be provided to accommodate youth with different needs and those at different stages of their development.

Materials and Building Design

1. Exterior

The building must respond to its context, contributing to the improvement of the neighbourhood and city at large by thoughtfully addressing the character and scale of the street, regardless of whether it is a visibly unique design or a more staid 'background' building.

2. Accessibility

No one size fits all. Youth housing must accommodate the spectrum of physical, mental, and emotional realities that youth face. Best practices beyond AODA and code minimums must be considered to ensure that youths' needs are met.

3. Variety

The intensity of a tall, densely populated building may appeal to some youth but others may desire to live in smaller buildings with fewer housemates. A variety of sizes and styles of housing will be needed to address the heterogeneity of the youth population.

4. Finishes and Materials

Durability and cost must be considered carefully alongside the necessity of providing warmth and comfort to residents. Furnishings and finishes that appear institutional or cheap can undermine the aim of providing youth with dignified housing which can help them develop their independence and reinforce their self-worth..

Emerging Trends

3 / Place Matters: Finding the Right Site for Youth Housing

Control over site selection is a critical but elusive component to developing supportive housing. No amount of good design or programmatic support can overcome a poorly chosen site. There are two broad considerations for finding sites for transitional housing:

1. Policy Drivers

Government housing policies can permit, actively discourage, or inadvertently limit where housing can occur, control its form, and drive affordability. We looked at a number of innovative examples of government responses to land-use policies that have direct influence on finding sites for affordable housing broadly. In short, having transitional housing identified as a key component of affordable housing initiatives (or advocating for its inclusion), can create new possibilities for locations and approaches to housing which has downstream effects on the nature of the housing and achieving the goals and qualities outlined in this research program.

2. Site Specific Requirements

While anecdotal considerations of site selection criteria such as proximity to transit, amenities, jobs, and education are important, special consideration must be made for the specific needs of youth aging-out-of-care. These include the importance of maintaining existing social and support networks, retaining a sense of place by remaining close to their childhood communities (sometimes superseding the importance of transit), and the expense of transit usage, among others. Spatial and locational upheaval, and added financial stresses and logistical difficulties (ie. getting groceries) of public transportation, can be avoided with thoughtful site selection. Youth aging-out-of-care generally voiced preferences to stay in the communities they grew up in and suggested housing be available in a variety of contexts, dispersed across the city and suburbs, rather than consolidated into fewer, larger developments. Many housing providers prioritize helping youth find permanent housing in locations where they will thrive. This includes either helping to establish a system of care and support in the area, or building upon existing networks.



One of the youth engagement workshops where we worked with youth to understand their desires and needs for the location of their housing.

“You can’t build something in the middle of nowhere where kids can’t get to it and where kids aren’t connected to jobs and other things. We want them to be connected to the community, but then we say not in our backyard and put them up north”

—**Bonnie Harkness**

Director of Program Development, 360 Kids

“We think about site in terms of not just public transportation, but also employment centers and proximity”

- Developer

Emerging Trends



Snabba Hus Vastberga in Sweden was built with a temporary building permit on a municipal site (valid for 15 years) after which time the prefab youth housing must be (re)moved.



Affordable housing at Carmel Place was built on public land that was released for affordable development, and special approvals processes were used to allow unique design strategies (including micro units)



Toronto's Yellow Belt (single family detached zoning) is the site of new initiatives for increasing density and affordability, including lot severances, laneway housing, secondary suites, duplexes, triplexes, and rooming houses

Land-Use Policies

As we heard throughout the interviews and research, one of the key factors in addressing youth homelessness is having an adequate supply of affordable housing. Incentivizing private, nonprofit, and public sector affordable housing development with policy tools at all levels of government are crucial. Land-use policies in particular have significant implications on the availability, location, and design possibilities of transitional housing for youth. This includes matters of land-availability, scale, programming possibilities, community engagement, and typological implications, among others. The approaches outlined below represent both clever solutions to existing policies and structures, to comprehensive government-led and supported plans.

1. Develop Coordinated Land-Use Policy Frameworks and Action Plans that Directly Support Affordable Housing

Developing a coordinated, comprehensive framework for affordable housing initiatives creates a thorough, holistic approach to land-use policy that can create measurable housing goals, and support affordable housing and transitional housing development from all sides. Examples include Toronto's HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan (2019), and New York City's Housing New York (2014).

2. Update Official Plans and Neighbourhood Policies

Updating neighbourhood policies can support more density in neighbourhoods and therefore an increased supply of housing. Some jurisdictions around North America, such as Minneapolis and California, have begun to change zoning by-laws and policies to allow for more density in previously designated detached housing areas.

3. Provide Density Bonusing

Re-zoning or allowances for greater densities to make developments, with provisions for transitional and affordable housing more attractive to developers.

4. Update Rooming House Policies

Improvements in rooming house policies, licensing, and regulation to support protection for existing rooming houses as well as the integration of new developments at a range of scales into existing neighbourhoods. Much of the scattered-approach to transitional housing is similar to that of a rooming house. Changes to rooming house licensing could impact and benefit scattered-site approaches described above.

5. Expedite Approvals

Expediting approvals and strengthening collaboration between jurisdictional authorities and funding agencies to increase the speed at which new projects are built,

6. Reduce Development Barriers

Provide financial relief in the development approval pipeline for affordable housing projects. Toronto's Open Door Affordable Housing Program for instance provides for the waiver of fees, charges and property tax exemptions for affordable rental and supportive housing projects.

7. Temporarily Release Municipal Lands

Municipalities are often the largest land-owners in a given city, and often have large undeveloped lands. These lands could be leased to nonprofits outright, or through innovative interim means such as temporary building permits, to reduce financial barriers to development. Snabba Hus Vastberga in Sweden for instance leveraged an arrangement for a temporary building permit on municipal land that reduced the cost of landownership for the housing provider, while allowing the city flexibility of land-use in the long-term.

Find Productive Partnerships

There may be mutually beneficial relationships between affordable, transitional, and/or supportive housing and civic institutions, such as libraries, community centres, arts collectives, educational institutions, among many others. Doing so has a number of potential land-use benefits:

- **More appealing to local residents**
Perceived negative connotations of affordable or transitional housing can be 'offset' with a community benefit, or otherwise integrated within a larger development.
- **Opportunities for better integration within the community.**
Proximity to civic services and institutions can lower barriers to entry for youth, and provide greater interactions with a larger community.
- **May have better access to prime sites and/or transit**

Select Good Sites

1. Leverage data-rich mapping tools

There are a plethora of excellent, data-rich mapping tools available to planners, architects, and developers that can be used to identify opportune sites relative to a wide range of criteria. Ratio.City of Toronto is one example of such a system.

2. Provide housing in different contexts

Provide housing options in different contexts and communities to cater to diverse youth needs. Some youth prefer to stay in or near the communities they grew up in.

3. Consider proximity to transit, jobs, and amenities

Consider the balance of providing housing in different contexts with locating near transit, jobs, and amenities (ie. community centres, grocery stores etc.). In some instances youth aging-out-of-care may find the expense of transit prohibitive for frequent use.

Emerging Trends

4 / Considerations for Construction

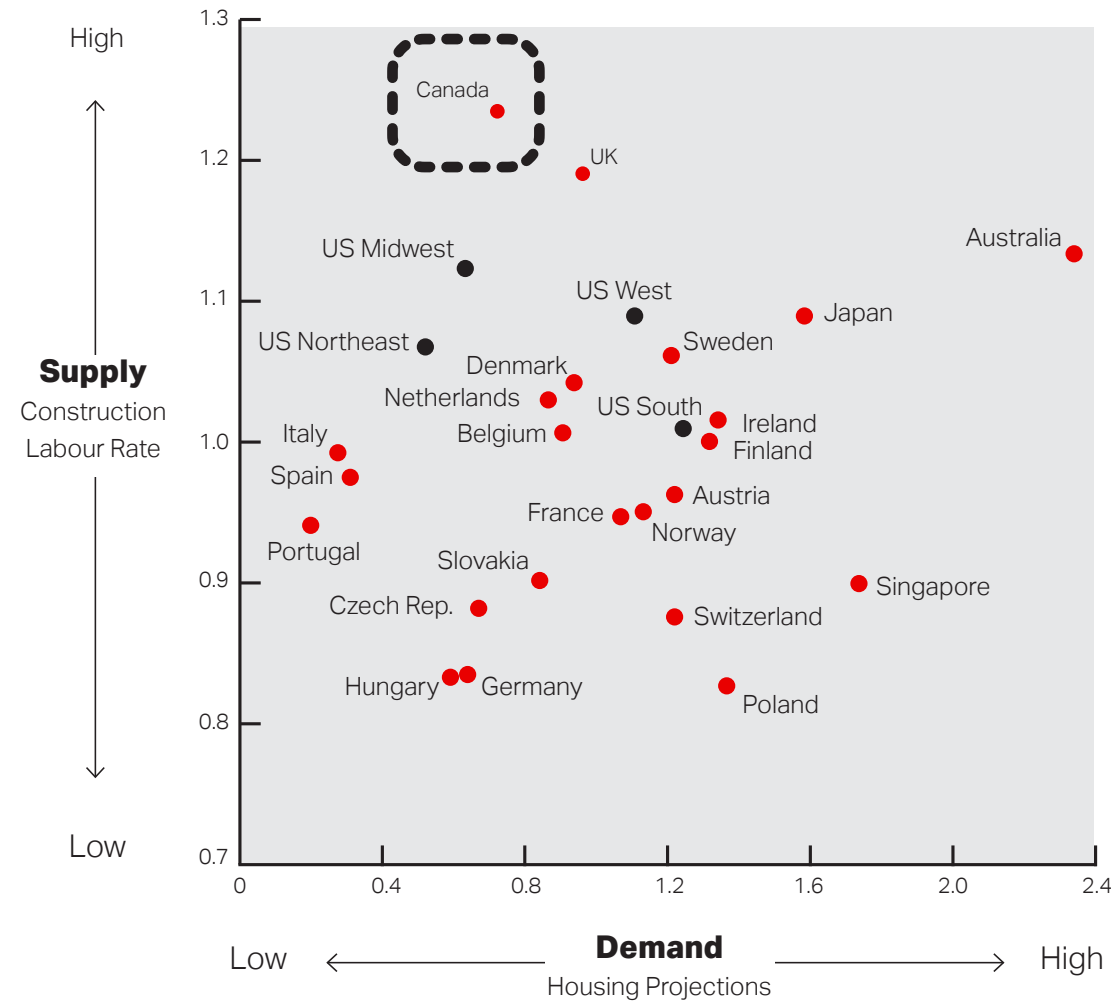
The affordable housing challenge, which transitional housing for youth aging-out-of care falls within, has been complicated by the limitations of the construction industry. **It simply costs too much and takes too long to build housing.** Even if land is available and proper incentives and financing mechanisms are in place, these alone will not address construction fundamentals that slow housing delivery. Architects have an important role to play in this regard. Architects must advocate and design for smart construction approaches that can speed up housing delivery. A number of these strategies are outlined on the following page. Ultimately, design and construction methodology are interdependent—there must be consideration for fast construction practices early in the design process.

In addition to addressing speed, architects can also address the significant cost implications of construction through innovative design strategies. **Construction is the largest cost in affordable housing.** In Canada, construction costs are driven by three major factors: poor productivity, rising labor costs, and the unpredictable prices of commodities. There are many reasons for stagnant or declining productivity: a highly fragmented industry with a large number of small companies, and many subcontractors, that operate on thin margins and have little capital to invest in equipment, technology, or training. Traditional construction methods are increasingly expensive because they're very labor intensive—and Canada has the highest labor rates in the world (Woetzel, 2019). In traditional construction, which can take years, movements in prices for materials also pose a significant risk which puts a huge risk on developing affordable housing and often results in cancellation.

Tackling these constraints requires new and innovative thinking at all levels. Architects and engineers need to be advocates for innovative approaches to construction, and work closely with the construction industry as part of that process. Additionally, employing standardized design approaches and reducing unnecessary complexity can have a significant impact. Construction companies need to shift from the traditional Design-Bid-Build process to Integrated Project Delivery to allow for better collaboration and innovation. Most importantly, the government needs to invest in innovation in design and construction companies. Currently Canada is behind in supporting the industry and there are only limited resources available.

Near-term new housing demand vs. construction labor rates

Source: McKinsey Global Institute Analysis, Modular construction: From projects to products, 2019.



Current offsite construction share for housing (%)

Source: McKinsey Global Institute Analysis



“I see a lot of architects having a tough time designing affordable housing. They say it’s low budget and it’s impossible to be creative. I think it’s super sad to hear this. We learned that we needed to not use normal solutions because the normal cheap was still too expensive. It forced us to look for solutions that were cheaper than normal cheap. The most important part was to standardize the design process. If you can work with the limited elements in a creative way, you can actually do a lot.”

—Finn Nørkjær
Partner, Bjarke Ingles Group (BIG) Architects

Emerging Trends



Snabba Hus Vastberga is designed with minimum finishes and standardized materials. The superstructure allows for each modular pre-finished unit to be nested quickly. The interior utilities such as kitchen and washroom are constructed off-site to speed-up delivery.



Carmel Place in New York used prefabrication to deliver affordable micro units quickly as part of a pilot project with the city and its housing authority.



The Dortheavej Residence by Bjarke Ingles Group (BIG) in Copenhagen employs a modular precast concrete system to achieve a unique undulating form.

Transition to Housing Production

There are a number of advantages to a 'housing production' approach for transitional and affordable housing for youth aging-out-of-care, and affordable housing in general. Unlike traditional on-site construction, housing production leverages industrialization, economies of scale, and prefabrication to achieve faster construction, lower cost, and higher quality. A housing production model has significant implications on design, such as repeatability and standardization. Capacity for housing production exists in southwestern Ontario that is appropriate to some scales of development. A whole-sale industry shift towards housing production would be advantageous, though requires government support.

1. Off-Site Construction / Prefabrication

Canada has some of the world's highest labor costs—off-site construction can reduce on site labor (Woetzel, 2019). Off-site construction allows continuous production, free site constraints. Many building elements including structure, kitchens, and bathrooms can be produced off-site and delivered as finished components.

2. Modular Construction

Mass production is the key to reducing the cost and time of a project. This is possible with standardization. Repeatability is the main factor in modular construction. Architects and engineers need to study and understand the limits and opportunities in modular construction and work closely with manufacturers.

3. Large Quantities

Housing Production allows for economies of scale that could change the supply and demand of materials, leading to more competition and standardization of procurement channels. This would reduce the risk of delivery and cost of the construction materials.

Design-to-Value

Design-to-Value is an approach to design and construction that seeks to reduce costs and complexity by relying on standardized design approaches and elements. This can be seen as a unique design challenge—a space for innovation—to develop systems and construction techniques that are durable, adaptable, uncomplicated, and beautiful.

1. De-Specification

De-specification is the process of reducing customization on projects, and relying on standardized design approaches. It involves clear rules regarding space usage, structural systems, facade dimensions, and connectivity to site infrastructure. This removes unnecessary detailing and confusion in delivery, and reducing cost and time significantly.

2. Standardization

With standard and reusable product catalogs, modular designs, and construction drawings, savings can be realized across construction processes and building materials. This would streamline and reduce the maintenance cost for the future of the building. Standardization need not mean cookie-cutter design. Facade elements, balconies, and color schemes can be modified to give each project a distinct character and feel. Further, public spaces can be designed uniquely per need of the project and site to enhance livability, and ambiance of affordable housing communities.

3. More Collaboration with Integrated Project Delivery (IPD)

Design-to-Value requires an integrated effort by architects, suppliers, construction companies and fabricators to agree on product and process design. Without an integrated perspective across suppliers as well as clients, the project will be too risky and expensive. All the players need to work together from the start to the end, sharing the information seamlessly using building information modeling (BIM) tools.

“Our goal was to provide housing and reduce its cost through more fundamental means in terms of scale, size, land costs and not using subsidized models which were just not available.”

—Jonathan Tate

Founder, Office Jonathan Tate

“To say, ‘If it’s affordable housing then I just needed to do it as cheap as possible’—I think it’s wrong. You need to start with finding new qualities, for example that you can treat materials in another way and make them beautiful. You can actually add texture and colours and show materials that you normally don’t see.”

—Finn Nørkjær

Partner, Bjarke Ingles Group (BIG) Architects

Emerging Trends

5 / Design for Operations & Maintenance

The design of transitional housing for youth aging-out-of-care should integrate design considerations for operations and maintenance (O&M). Transitional housing has unique needs and operating conditions that require special design consideration—from building operations and maintenance, to the design of spaces to best manage staff and programming resources. Some transitional housing models provide high levels of support with case management or treatment strategies which may require 24/7 staff coverage, on-site support workers, or daily support staff. Other less-intensive models provide lower levels of support and may provide 24/7 connection to staff. In both instances design can have influence on staffing needs. Additionally, finding utilities efficiencies can help the financial viability of these affordable housing projects, redirecting capital to programming or future housing projects.

1. Design for Durability

Durability and cost must be considered carefully alongside the necessity of providing warmth and comfort to residents. Furnishings and finishes that appear institutional or cheap can undermine the aim of providing youth with dignified housing which can help them develop their independence and reinforce their self-worth. Youth in our interviews indicated its better to have no couch than a broken one.

2. Mandate Energy Efficiency & Sustainability

Keeping operational costs low is advantageous for service providers as it allows money to be allocated to services rather than utilities.

3. Design for Longevity

Because of the nature of non-profit housing institutions, financing available for maintenance, repair, and upkeep may not be seen as essential to the primary goals of server provider, and therefore be given less importance, causing a backlog of problems over the long term. Designing for longevity from the outset using high-quality, robust materials, systems, and design strategies, these challenges can be reduced.

20% - 30%

of housing costs are Operations & Maintenance costs. This percentage is much higher for transitional housing.

(Woetzel, Jonathan, et al, 2014)

"We had incredible programs in the 60's, 70's and 80's where a lot of our social houses that we have today were built. And so we need to maintain that stock because even though it was built in the past, it is essential we need to keep it in good condition. So a lot of the money in the housing strategy is going to that. Because for years and years, they were disregarded for maintaining that stock. So the city itself is investing \$1.6 billion, and the federal government also announced another \$1.3 billion."

— **Ana Bailão**

Toronto City Councillor & Deputy Mayor
Chair of Toronto's Affordable Housing Committee

Emerging Trends



The Six in Los Angeles features supportive housing for homeless veterans. Employing passive design strategies made it 50% more energy efficient than a conventional structure.



In Bordeaux, France, architects Lacton & Vassal renovated a 1960's era affordable housing block with a new exterior balcony structure. Reinvigorating and maintaining existing buildings is a key to ensuring the availability of affordable housing over time.

Reducing Operations Costs

Energy costs represent a significant component of operations. Mandating energy efficient strategies in design and/or renovation can reduce operations costs. Using sustainable and Net-Zero building approaches is critical to reducing operating costs, improving long-term affordability, and ensuring the future of affordable housing.

1. Establish Stringent Sustainability Targets

This requires innovative approaches from architects and builders to develop low-energy, or even net-zero solutions that can positively impact operations costs of affordable and transitional housing. Also consider leveraging symbiotic incentives (ie. density bonusing) as encouragement to offset any potential associated capital costs. It's crucial to spend more at the early stages to design and construct a better building than to try to fix later during operation.

2. Retrofitting Existing Buildings with Energy-Saving Components

Retrofitting existing buildings for energy savings can be a difficult undertaking, though the long-term benefit is significant. Integrated teams of architects, energy consultants, and mechanical and electrical engineers can find holistic solutions to building energy retrofits. Existing programs like the Sustainable Technologies Evaluation Program (STEP) offers an outreach initiative which involves assessing buildings for environmental impacts related to energy, water and waste, and quality of life related to community, safety and operations. STEP builds a culture of continuous improvement. STEP analysis has been completed on more than 50 projects in the GTA.

Designing for Durability

1. Material Selection

While sometimes having higher initial costs, selecting durable materials will save money in the long run. Special consideration should be given for material durability requirements as they differ throughout a building. Shared spaces, including lobbies, kitchens, hallways, and high-traffic areas.

2. Building Systems

Designing robust, efficient HVAC systems is important for overall occupant comfort, as well as to reduce the likelihood of expensive future repairs. Employing design approaches such as environmental analysis and energy modeling, building systems can be optimized, or even reduced in size.

3. Reduce Risk of Lock-In

Invest in the design of expensive, complex building components to get them 'right,' as retrofitting or repairing them later can be very expensive.

“There is higher wear and tear—you’d expect that—but it’s just from the situation of people living there. They are transitional in nature, so you have more people coming in and out. But the populations that they’re serving come with emotional physical traumas and that will take a toll on the building as well. Building maintenance is something that transitional housing providers definitely have to struggle with more than a traditional or a typical nonprofit housing provider.”

—Jacob Larsen

Housing Development Officer, City of Toronto

6 / Innovative Financing Required

Transitional housing for youth aging-out-of-care falls within the broader territory of affordable housing (CMHC 2018), and like affordable housing, is subject to similar financing challenges. While there are ways to lower construction costs (discussed in previous sections), innovation in financing strategies is an important consideration, and one which has architectural and design implications. In our review of architectural precedents and our interviews we found a number of innovative projects that take their unique form because of their underlying financial logic.

Innovation in Financing can occur across the spectrum of affordable housing financial approaches. The four major approaches we looked at for this solutions lab are:

1. Public Support & Funding

The public sector in Canada, at all levels of government, has a wide range of financing options at its disposal for supporting affordable and transitional housing. These include **indirect support**, including tax credits, incentives, priority approvals processes, housing policies, as well as **direct support**, including subsidies, grants, incentives, tax credits, financial support, the ability to provide low-cost land through donations, long-term leases, air-rights, zoning-uplifts, among many others. The public sector can also offer to co-locate public institutions with affordable housing, lowering financing and construction costs.

2. Private Development

Private sector developers can develop affordable housing given the right conditions and/or government support. Examples of government support include incentives, actively supporting development through direct investment, low-interest loans, reduced land costs, priority approvals streams. Financing costs represents 5% to 10% of total development costs, depending on prevailing interest rates and project risk. Governments can help developers access financing and reduce financing costs by reducing project risks. These interventions can be less costly than direct support. For example, the period between acquisition of land and start of construction is often the most risky—accelerating the permitting process is a no-cost benefit to developers.

3. Non-Profit Development

Non-profits have a number of funding options available, including leveraging existing assets, leveraging government owned land or assets, and developing partnerships with the government and the private sector. Non-Profit developers are also often service providers—the ones who can work with clients and developing programming strategies—they ensure the wrap around services are accessed. Across our research, interviewees spoke of the importance that non-profit developers being treated differently than for-profit developers because of their different users and different approaches. Examples of this include reducing red tape in development approvals, as well as fast-tracking applications.

4. Alternative Financing

We also looked at new start-up approaches to reducing financing costs which are part of a changing economic, technological, and housing delivery landscape. These can be divided into two distinct approaches: **Impact Funding** (an intention to generate a measurable, beneficial social or environmental impact alongside a financial return), and **Crowdfunding** (funding a project by raising small amounts of money from a large number of people). These approaches may be best suited to smaller developments, and require developers to provide a ROI to investors.

In most cases affordable and transitional housing development may use a combination of these approaches. Government provision of incentives and removal of barriers are forms of indirect support that can create more favorable development conditions. Additionally, a number of the precedents we looked at provided on-site revenue generation with arrangements for youth employment, such as coffee shops or community rental spaces.

“Sometimes you also need to learn and accept that if you want to do cheap stuff as an architect, you actually need to spend more time on it.”

—Finn Nørkjær

Partner, Bjarke Ingles Group (BIG) Architects

“We need so many thousands of units ready quickly—we need to open the door to the private sector as well, to have partnerships between the private and the nonprofit sector again. Because if we, as we are producing the units, and can at the same time strengthen our nonprofit sector, it’s a double win.”

—Ana Bailão

Toronto City Councillor & Deputy Mayor
Chair of Toronto’s Affordable Housing Committee

Emerging Trends



Snabba Hus Vastberga in Sweden was built with a temporary building permit on a municipal site (valid for 15 years) which reduced the land cost of the development while preserving options for the municipality for future development or alternative uses.



Chicago Mayor Emanuel persuaded federal officials that public libraries could be co-located with public housing projects without putting federal subsidies at risk which freed-up streams of money. This was partly strategic, as combining the two institutions budgets and resources gave the private developers an attractive concept to invest in.



For Carmel Place, New York City provided a host of incentives through an innovative Design-Build-Finance RFP. Incentives including tax credits, cheap land, and allowing micro units. Without incentives and zoning overrides, the site could have only supported luxury apartments to make a return on the construction costs.

Direct Support—Public

1. Provide Equity Contributions

By increasing equity for developers, and by reducing the need for financing, cities can increase a project's attractiveness to financiers. Increasing developer equity can include both direct and indirect non-refundable cash contributions such as grants or tradeable tax credits developers can sell to raise capital. Equity contributions, either direct or forgone tax revenue, are the most expensive form of subsidy and should be used judiciously.

2. Rent Subsidies

Government can provide subsidies to cover difference between market rent and rent for affordable housing units.

3. Land donation / lease

Government can support the development by leasing public land at low cost or for free for long periods.

4. Infrastructure connectivity

Providing infrastructure connectivity (utilities, roads, public transit) to under-valued and under-utilized land.

5. Social Infrastructure

Provide support for building social infrastructure (schools, clinics, etc.)

Indirect Support—Public

1. Provide Tax Relief

Governments can reduce development costs through targeted tax-exempt bonds or tax abatement schemes. Tax abatements are offered to encourage development of affordable housing by offering a full or partial exemption to property taxes for eligible properties.

2. Fast-Track Permits

Some affordable housing development risks can be reduced with government support. These can be far less costly than direct support. By accelerating the permitting process, governments offer a no-cost benefit to developers, as the period between acquisition of land and start of construction is often the most risky.

3. Cross-Subsidization Through Mixed Development

Allow commercial development on residential land to cross-subsidize affordable housing. Mixed development divides risk.

4. Land Parcelization

Allow parcelization of large plots of land and issue separate title deeds without developing the entire land. This approach will significantly reduce the risk as the land and development can be phased.

5. Inclusionary Zoning (IZ)

IZ are municipal and provincial ordinances requiring new construction to include affordable housing. In April 2018, the Province of Ontario adopted an IZ regulation which allows cities to mandate affordable housing in new residential developments. When an increase in density is sought, residential developments on sites greater than 5ha in size are required to include 20% of the additional units as affordable housing.

“Capitalism is a feature, not a bug. Rising income unaffordability, housing unaffordability, is the product of the reality that one price doesn't clear two markets. And there is a market for a property as an investment value and the market for a property as a shelter.”

— Jonathan Woetzel

Director, McKinsey Global Institute

Emerging Trends

7 / Community Engagement Is Key

There are three main concepts of community engagement:

1. Design to create internal communities

The design of transitional housing for youth should encourage the development of an internal community. Many interviewees identified the need to allow for formal and informal encounters for youth as one means of encouraging community formation. Additionally, programs such as encouraging youth to be involved in the continued maintenance and design of the spaces can help create a sense of community.

2. Design for on-going community engagement to help and support youth integrate with society.

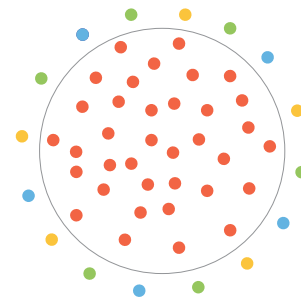
Community engagement is critical to helping youth integrate with society. Interviewees had diverging and nuanced perspectives on how open and frequent engagement needed to be. Graduated thresholds of engagement from very private to public are key, as is the ability to control access to the housing. Control over when, where, and how residents engage with the neighbourhood is paramount. Most architects and service providers were adamant that the housing not turn inward. Several interviewees suggested housing developments should directly engage and contribute to the community, offering opportunities or amenities that could facilitate positive interactions between youth and neighbours. Positive experiences between youth and the community could provide youth with examples of independence and provide opportunities to establish support networks. Interviewees voiced a desire for the community to embrace residents—to find a sense of pride and partnership in helping residents find their identity and independence.

3. Proactive neighbourhood engagement in the design and construction process

Opposition to new transitional and affordable housing developments prior to and during the course of construction was noted as an issue. One interviewee suggested socializing the idea of a new development by engaging with members of the neighbourhood one-on-one in a pop-up market setting. Digital engagement platforms such as [coUrbanize](#) and [Neighborland](#) offer an alternative approaches to typical town halls, providing online engagement tools for working with communities to build support, and provide updates for projects. Many service providers and nonprofit developer noted that once the development is built, there are typically few issues with neighbours. Proactively addressing issues, such as outdoor amenity maintenance, noise and privacy concerns, can help create positive relationships with neighbours.

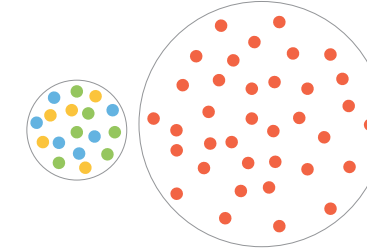
Towards Inclusivity

Facilitating youth aging-out-of-care's transition towards inclusion with their broader communities is an important design and programming considerations for transitional housing. Below the general process is outlined, and represents steps towards inclusivity that must be designed for.



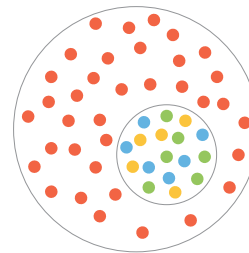
Exclusion

Youth aging-out of care are faced with obstacles to accessing housing including unemployment or underemployment, involvement with the criminal justice system, and health issues. As they age-out of the care system, in order to access supports, they are faced with minimum requirements and conditions that are insurmountable.



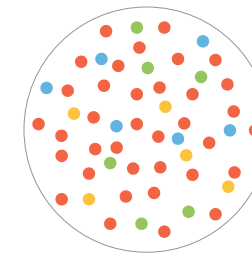
Separation

Support networks are created for youth but they are kept separate from society. The difficulty of establishing independence exacerbated by systems which keep youth temporarily supported but prevent direct engagement with the broader community and do not necessarily assist them in growth.



Integration

The youth are integrated into mainstream society but are required to conform to standardized requirements to maintain their supports.



Inclusion

Youth are wrapped into society, with agency to choose how and with whom they interact. They are positioned to engage with mentors and peers and the community at large and can develop independence on their own terms.

"Integrating housing within the community is important. People are transitioning into 'normal' life. So the feeling that you can come and go easily, that it's a building that doesn't scream institutional, that it's physically integrated into the look of the neighbourhood as well, is very important."

—Jacob Larsen

Housing Development Officer, City of Toronto

"One of the goals of trying to create a permanent supportive community within the building is literally to produce community for individuals who have largely been isolated on their own, out on the street; to create the opportunity to begin to reacquaint themselves and get reconnected to a community."

—Michael Maltzan

Design Principal, Michael Maltzan Architecture

Emerging Trends



Mississauga's Peel Youth Village provides a community centre that serves its youth, as well as the surrounding neighbourhood, through interactive recreation activities and programming, including a basketball half-court.



Chicago's Branching Out: Building Libraries, Building Communities plan co-located libraries and affordable housing



Vienna's VinziRast-Mittendrin houses students and homeless youth, has 3-person housing units with small kitchens, as well as large communal kitchens on each floor.

Designing Community

1. Active Common Areas (Internal Community)

Provide adequately sized amenity rooms such as common kitchens, exercise rooms, digital facilities, flexible activity areas, where youth can participate in group learning activities or gather informally.

2. Passive Common Areas (Internal Community)

Design of circulation and general use of the building should allow for the 'unplanned encounter' where residents and staff (if on site) can be visible to one another without being obligated to engage. A variety of these types of spaces will let youth explore their comfort levels over time.

3. Active Neighbourhood Engagement (External Community)

Facilities such as communal gardens or a cafe run by the agency where neighbours can be invited in to interact with the youth on the youth's terms can help the youth develop a broader social network and gain exposure to a wider variety of examples of identity and independence. Similarly, entrepreneurial spaces provide a means for youth to exercise their creativity and develop career skills.

4. Passive Neighbourhood Engagement (External Community)

The design of the building itself must take a thoughtful approach to the existing neighbourhood context. Signs and other elements which mark the building as supportive housing have been noted to exaggerate the stigma some youth feel and tend to draw unnecessary attention. Conversely, a well-designed building that contributes to the street and to the city can help improve a neighbourhood's sense of civic value.

Community Buy-In

1. Renovate/Re-use Existing Facilities

Invest in existing structures. Rehabilitation of existing buildings provides a visible benefit to a neighbourhood, revitalizing properties that may have fallen into disrepair or disuse.

2. The Soft Sell

Socialize the development proposal within the community with less aggressive techniques. By approaching neighbours on a one-to-one basis (e.g. through door-to-door canvassing, or more subtly, through events not ostensibly focused on the development such as a pop-up market), concerns can be addressed more directly and personally prior to larger community engagements mandated by planning processes.

3. Engage Digitally

Online platforms can provide the opportunity for community members who might otherwise be excluded from the traditional public engagement process (who might not have the time or the inclination to attend a public town hall) to voice their opinions.

4. Incorporate Community Amenities

Provide facilities that are open to the community and address existing civic shortfalls. New supportive housing developments could incorporate public amenities such as libraries or community centres.

"It's important to keep youth homes integrated into our neighborhoods. You can't put these people off to some area. It is good that they're integrated with their peers, with other youth and other families. Communities are diverse, Communities are here to help each other, to learn from each other. That's how you build a good community."

— **Ana Bailão**

Toronto City Councillor & Deputy Mayor
Chair of Toronto's Affordable Housing Committee

"We want the community to own that home, like 'These are our kids.'"

— **Michael Braithwaite**

CEO, Blue Door Shelters

“ Here is not that bad, but personally we need independence. We need to be independent because we are not kids to be inspected all the time. It’s a weird age to have someone come and do room checks. They do room checks once a month. It’s not that bad, but we need to start our life. I don’t expect to stay there for four or five years. I feel that I should leave—I should plan on my own. Like you, I want to be independent. I guess the earlier you do it, the better you are. You may get to a point where it becomes even harder for you to stabilize because the way the rent in Toronto is shooting up. Oh yeah—it’s absolutely nuts. It’s crazy. ”

—Youth interviewed for this project

Next Steps

A Sustainable Approach

The next phase of our project needs your input and expertise to synthesize and build on this research through a collaborative design exercise with other experts in the field facilitated by WoodGreen and PARTISANS. Youth with experience in care, city councillors and policy advisors, directors, managers, and front-line workers from service agencies, and academics with research focused on youth aging-out of care will be invited to participate in a series of digital charrettes.

Contributions at this stage will sharpen our focus on the emerging trends and help identify blindspots and opportunities to allow for rapid development of youth housing prototypes to be collected in our roadmap report. Our research, findings, and proposed models will be collected in a report to be distributed by CMHC. We have confidence that the models developed through this study will be both practical and inspiring and will spur much needed action to address the current youth housing crisis.

The Brief

Overall Approach

3 Charrettes, 3 Prototypes

Each charrette will be dedicated to one prototype. The prototypes have been structured based on scale (small, medium, large) and represent a number of different programmatic approaches. The Prototypes are as follows:

a) *Housing Here*

Avoiding stigmatization and providing housing for youth in their childhood communities are important considerations in the design and development of transitional housing for youth. Housing Here considers opportunities for small-scale transitional housing for youth located in yellow-belt neighbourhoods using infill and densification strategies.

b) *Housing Now*

Today's youth need housing now, not five or ten years from now when they'll no longer be youth. Housing now looks at how modular construction techniques can be employed to deliver new congregate transitional housing quickly, while employing design strategies that support youth aging-out-of-care.

c) *Housing +*

For youth who need fewer supports, Housing + investigates how transitional housing for youth can be co-located with other uses or occupants in large-scale developments, and how design can encourage beneficial partnerships that support of youth aging-out-of-care.

Designing for Unique Youth Needs

We've developed a set of 'personas' representing fictional youth aging out-of-care who are either currently housed in transitional housing, or are in need of transitional housing. The idea is to design housing that is appropriate to their specific needs.

Format

The charrettes will be conducted virtually, for social distancing given COVID-19 considerations, as well as to enable participation from international experts. Each charrette will take the form of a structured discussion where five or six important topics will be proposed to the group to identify challenges, opportunities, solutions, and best practices for the development of design prototypes. Our team will then use these findings to develop prototype designs.

Objectives

- Share information/inform charrette participants about lessons learned from initial phases;
- Develop key design and programmatic elements;
- Develop promising practices;
- Share different user perspectives.
- Bring together interdisciplinary voices (youth, service providers, etc.) to collaboratively design new transitional housing models.
- Build interest and support for transitional housing development.

Outputs

- 3 Prototypes at three different scales
- All prototypes will focus on elements of the programmatic elements, insights from user journeys, and design considerations.
- All prototypes will consider financial constraints and opportunities; planning policy and initiatives; construction innovations.

Appendix

Appendix

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Interviewees

Andrea Adams

Executive Director
St. Clare's Multifaith Housing

Andrea is the Executive Director of St. Clare's Multifath Housing, a charitable foundation and landlord responsible for 413 rental units in five buildings across Toronto to help get the homeless and hard-to-house into their own home to give them privacy and dignity.

Ana Bailão

Councillor & Deputy Mayor, City of Toronto

Deputy Mayor Ana Bailão serves as City Councillor for Ward 9 (Davenport). She has been a member of Toronto City Council since 2010 and was re-elected in 2018. Following re-election, Ana was re-appointed as Deputy Mayor as well as a member of the Mayor's Executive Committee and as Chair of the Planning and Housing Committee. She was also re-appointed as the City's Housing Advocate and serves on the boards of the Toronto Community Housing Corporation and "CreateTO," which manages all of the City's real estate assets. She served on the City's Special Committee on Governance, represents the City at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and is Chair of the FCM Social Economic Development Committee.

Peter Barber

Architect, Peter Barber Architects

Peter Barber established his own practice in 1989, and is currently a lecturer and reader in architecture at the University of Westminster. He has lectured about the work of his practice at many institutions, including the Royal Institute of British Architects, the Architectural League in New York, and numerous international and domestic schools of architecture including Helsinki, Pretoria, Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Burma, Munich, Genoa, Istanbul and Colombo as well as Oxford University and The Bartlett-University College London. He has been invited by the Government to lead a discussion on "Designing for Better Public Spaces." He has been described by The Independent as one of the UK leading urbanists.

Karin Brandt

CEO, coUrbanize

Karin holds a MA in city planning from MIT and began her career in urban development working at Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. As a planner, she frequently saw development opportunities stymied by NIMBYism at community meetings. Determined to make an impact on how cities grow, Karin launched coUrbanize in 2013 and joined the TechStars Boston accelerator. She has supported over 250 projects across the US and Canada to help residents and project teams build better communities together.

Michael Braithwaite

CEO, Blue Door Shelters

Michael is an established Non Profit Executive with a focus on motivating staff, communities and boards to find ways both strategically and operationally to improve our communities for children, youth and families. He specializes in fundraising, government relations, innovation, strategic partnerships & planning, program development, and housing. Michael is the past CEO of Raise the Roof, which provides national leadership on long-term solutions to homelessness through partnership and collaboration with diverse stakeholders, investment in local communities, and public education. He's also past Executive Director of 360°kids.

Mitchell Cohen

President, Daniels Corporation

Mitchell Cohen is president of the Daniels Corporation and has managed the firm's day-to-day operations since 1984. Committed to community, Daniels offers innovative programs that help people achieve home ownership, and supports numerous charities and non-profit organizations. Prior to joining The Daniels Corporation, Cohen developed co-operative housing in the not-for-profit sector in Montreal and Toronto. He brought this experience to Daniels and spearheaded the creation of 3,600 units of affordable housing between 1987 and 1995. He has a Masters in Social Psychology from the London School of Economics, and a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from McGill. In 2010, Cohen was honoured with an Award of Merit from the St. George's Society, and is a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal.

Irwin Elman

Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, Province of Ontario

Irwin has worked as an educator, counsellor, youth worker, program manager, policy developer and child and youth advocate. He has created innovative approaches for others in Ontario, Jamaica, Hungary and Japan. Prior to becoming the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, Irwin was the Manager of the Pape Adolescent Resource Centre in Toronto (PARC), an award-winning organization that supports young people as they leave child welfare care, for more than 20 years. He later served as the Director of Client Service at Central Toronto Youth Services, a children's mental health centre. Irwin obtained his Master of Education and Bachelor of Education from the University of Toronto, and a Bachelor of Arts Degree (Honours) in political science from Carleton University.

Pavel Getov

Architect & Professor

Pavel Getov received his Diploma of Architecture from HIACE, Sofia in his native Bulgaria and holds a Master of Architecture degree from SCI-Arc. Prior teaching positions include a Visiting Professor of Critical Practice at CALA, University of Arizona. From 1991 to 2007 he worked with Richard Meier & Partners, NBBJ and Morphosis leading large scale complex projects from initial concepts to final completion, including an affordable housing project in Madrid's Carabanchel neighbourhood. He founded Studio Antares A + E as an alternative practice seeking integration between architecture, arts and environment.

Dean Goodman

Architect, Levitt Goodman Architects (LGA)

Dean Goodman co-founded LGA in 1989. His 30 years of practice have been driven by a love and an insatiable curiosity for design, construction and technology. He specializes in working collaboratively with clients to translate their ideas and goals into innovative designs. Dean's honest and straightforward approach allows him to form strong client relationships and bring clarity to complicated issues. From a child's play space to social housing project, his goal is always the same: to make architecture that fundamentally enriches the lives of the people who use it.

Interviewees

Alexander Hagner

Architect & Professor

Alexander Hagner co-founded the architecture studio gaupenraub+/- in 1999. He's worked as an external lecturer for various Universities and Institutes, such as the Vienna University of Technology, holding workshops at Vienna's BOKU, NDU St. Pölten, TU-Graz and KTH-Stockholm. Alexander's studio has received numerous awards for design excellence, including a nomination for the Mies van der Rohe Award, and the ETHOUSE Award. For the past ten years gaupenraub has engaged in social projects, such as Memobil furniture for people living with dementia or "VinziRast-mittendrin", where students and formerly homeless people live together, which has been granted the Urban Living Award 2013.

Irwin Elman

Founder, Pape Adolescent Resource Center (retired)
Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth

Irwin has an extensive background as an educator, counsellor, youth worker, program manager, policy developer and child and youth advocate. He served to create innovative approaches for others in Ontario, Jamaica, Hungary and Japan. Prior to becoming the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, Irwin was the Manager of the Pape Adolescent Resource Centre in Toronto (PARC), an award-winning organization that supports young people as they leave child welfare care, for more than 20 years. He later served as the Director of Client Service at Central Toronto Youth Services, a children's mental health centre. Irwin obtained his Masters of Education and Bachelors of Education from the University of Toronto, and a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Carleton University.

Jacob Larsen

Housing Development Officer, City of Toronto

Jacob is a professional planner and land economist with experience in development, community-led planning, and active transportation in the GTA and the Canadian North. As the Housing Development Officer at the City of Toronto, Jacob delivers affordable housing through activation of public lands, development incentives, pre-development, and fostering collaboration between public, private and non-profit entities. He previously worked for the City of Hamilton where he managed the development approval process and public consultation for infill and intensification in one of the GTA's fastest growing municipalities.

Bonnie Harkness

Director of Program Development, 360Kids

Bonnie is an experienced Director of Operations with a demonstrated history of working in the individual and family services industry. She is skilled in nonprofit organizations, youth development, program evaluation, volunteer management, and fundraising. Bonnie has a Masters Certificate in Public Sector Management from University of Ontario Institute of Technology. She is the past Executive Director of United Way Ajax, Pickering, & Uxbridge, as well as Big Brothers and Sisters of Ajax-Pickering. She also held the position of Program Director at Pathways for 10 years.

Brock James

Architect, Levitt Goodman Architects (LGA)

Brock James is a partner at Levitt Goodman Architects. With over 25 years of practice, he has specialized in making child care centres, schools, universities and libraries that foster learning and are inspired by the realities of each place and its people. As head of operations for the firm, Brock ensures that each new project builds on the knowledge of previous work, so that every LGA client benefits from the complete value of the firm's experience. Brock is a guest critic, lecturer and sits on the provincial steering committee for Wood Works Ontario. He recently led the team that authored the Child Care Design and Technical Guidelines for the City of Toronto - a resource guide for the construction and renovation of licensed child care centers.

Atticus LeBlanc

Founder, Pad Split

Atticus is the founder of PadSplit, Inc and co-founder of Stryant Investments, and Stryant Construction & Management. He has been an affordable housing advocate and investor since 2008, when he began acquiring distressed single-family homes in Southwest Atlanta. Stryant Investments has owned and managed 9 apartment complexes, over 100 single family homes, and several adaptive re-use commercial projects. Atticus serves on the board of trustees for Campfire GA and the advisory board for The Creatives Project. He is an active member of the Buckhead Rotary Club of Atlanta and volunteers regularly with ULI's Urban Plan Education Initiative and TAPs Committee. He graduated from Yale University in 2002 with a BA in Architecture and Urban Studies and was a 2017 graduate from ULI's Center for Leadership.

Carol Howes

Director of Service at Covenant House Toronto

Carol has been in the field of social work for the last 40 years. After getting her start at the Toronto Children's Aid Society, she continued her work on the frontlines working with vulnerable children and youth. Since joining Covenant House Toronto in 1995, Carol has held a variety of positions at the agency, all centred on managing programming for youth including the crisis shelter program, the drop-in centre, transitional housing, the health care clinic, education services, job training, life skills, spiritual care and anti-human trafficking initiatives. Throughout her career, Carol has shared her expertise with various committees and networks including the Ministry of Children and Youth Services' Policy Director Advisory Committee, A Way Home Canada's National Learning Community, and the Toronto Shelter Network, among others.

Monika Jaroszensk

CEO, Ratio.City

Monika Jaroszonek is the Co-Founder and CEO of RATIO.CITY, an early-stage tech startup that helps real estate industry professionals access information, evaluate their options and make better decisions. She has over 15 years experience working in architectural firms in Toronto and is leveraging that experience to create a comprehensive urban analytics platform for planning and building great cities. Monika holds a Masters of Architecture from the University of Waterloo.

Björn Lindgren

Associate Director, jagvillhabostad.nu

Bjorn Lindgren is the Associate Director of jagvillhabostad.nu, a Swedish non-profit, youth-led association that works for a better housing situation for young people.

Interviewees

Louis

Youth from Care

Louis is a refugee from Uganda who came to Canada to seek a better life. He has been in Canada for half a year now, living off of welfare and is attending a highschool to fulfill his credits for university. He has already attended highschool and this is his second time through the latter half of the program. Louis took on some part-time jobs during his time at school through available agencies provided by the shelter. Through working hard to accumulate his credits and go to university, his goal is to eventually afford a place for himself in Toronto. Louis sees the issue of the housing industry at hand and believes that there are ways to lower the cost of homes for people like him to live in.

Michael Maltzan

Architect, Michael Maltzan Architecture

Michael Maltzan, FAIA, founded Michael Maltzan Architecture, Inc. in 1995. Through a deep belief in architecture's role in our cities and landscapes, he has succeeded in creating new cultural and social connections across a range of scales and programs. Michael received a Master of Architecture degree with a Letter of Distinction from Harvard University's Graduate School of Design and he holds both a Bachelor of Fine Arts and a Bachelor of Architecture from the Rhode Island School of Design where he received the Henry Adams AIA Gold Medal. His designs have been published and exhibited internationally and he regularly teaches and lectures at architectural schools around the world. He is a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects and a recipient of the American Academy of Arts and Letters Architecture Award.

Cheryl Mangar

Supervisor, Children's Aid Society of Toronto

Cheryl Mangar has 30 years of experience in the areas of Child Welfare and Child and Youth Care. Cheryl has been at CAS of Toronto for 16 years and is currently the Supervisor for the Pape Adolescent Resource Centre, a preparation for Independence Centre for youth transitioning from Child welfare to adulthood. Cheryl is a strong advocate and champion of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; youth engagement and strongly committed to building partnerships with the community to ensure youth are empowered to reach their full potential.

Andreas Martin-Lof

Architect, Andreas Martin-Lof Arkitekter

Award-winning Swedish architect Andreas Martin-Lof founded his practice in 2008. His practice specializes in temporary affordable housing constructed of prefabricated units.

Nicky

Youth from Care

Nicky lived in foster care for most of her upbringing, bouncing between different homes before the age of 18. She sought the help of Free2Be, which helps youth in transition from foster care to adulthood. In 2019, Nicky moved out on her own to Oregon for six months, before returning to Canada. Due to her upbringing and financial situation, Nicky was unable to sustain living on her own and now lives in a family friend's home with nine other people. Nicky spends most of her time at home creating art, with a focus on crochet and drawing. She hopes to turn her passion for art into a full time job, and has begun publishing and selling her work online. Nicky is having difficulty moving out due to the current housing market in Toronto. She also voiced her frustrations with the city of Toronto's laws on homelessness.

Nicolas

Youth from Care

Nicolas studied fashion design at Seneca for four years. During his studies, he took classes for youth assistance. He has seen a huge disconnect towards what he experienced as a youth and what was being taught in the classes. Like his mother and his four other brothers, he was taken into foster care when he was born and had to move through many different homes before he could live independently. He has been recording his own podcast and sharing it on multiple platforms to bring awareness to his experiences as a foster kid and how this could be fixed in context to other youth experiencing something similar. He currently works at a print shop and hope to find a better job in the near future.

Clare Nobbs

Director, YMCA Sprott House - Walmer Road Centre

Clare is a skilled, compassionate leader in the field of mental health and housing. She develops and nurtures relationships with municipal, provincial and federal policy-makers, is responsible for building strategic partnerships to end homelessness for 2SLGBTQI young people, and mitigates the impact of housing instability on mental and physical health. She has worked as a community development professional with over 17 years of experience building programs in social and community services. Clare is committed to anti-oppression/anti-racist practice. She has in-depth experience with the needs of 2SLGBTQI spectrum youth, focusing on housing, mental health, advocacy, employment and social and material supports.

Finn Nørkjær

Architect, Bjarke Ingles Group

Finn Nørkjær has collaborated with Bjarke Ingels since he won the competition for the Aquatic Centre in Aalborg in 2001. Finn is instrumental in materializing BIG's visionary architecture by bringing his extensive experience to the table. Finn has been deeply involved in most of BIG's built projects, including VM Houses, The Mountain, The Danish Pavilion for the 2010 Shanghai Expo, Gammel Hellerup High School, TIRPITZ Museum and LEGO House. Most recently, Finn has worked on the Glasir – Torshavn College on the Faroe Islands, world's best restaurant noma in Copenhagen and affordable housing Dortheavej Residence.

Eve Picker

Founder, SmallChange.com

With a background as an architect, city planner, urban designer, real estate developer, community development strategist, publisher, and instigator, Eve has a rich understanding of how cities and urban neighborhoods work—and how they can be revitalized. Amongst her many urban (ad)ventures, Eve has developed a dozen buildings in blighted neighborhoods, and taught urban design and participated in Sustainable Design Assessment Teams for the American Institute of Architects in cities from Los Angeles to Springfield, helping to set a strategic course for downtowns and housing developments. Now Eve has leads Small Change, a real estate equity crowdfunding portal to help fund transformational real estate projects. Small Change connects every day investors with developers to help them build projects that make cities better.

Interviewees

Tony-Saba Shiber

Project Manager, nArchitects

Tony was an Assistant Project Manager & Designer at nARCHITECTS, where he oversaw the construction of Carmel Place (formerly My Micro NY), New York City's first modular, micro-housing building also achieving a LEED Silver rating. He was also part of the design team for M2, a mixed-use project in Calgary, Sai Yuen Lane, a 250-unit micro housing tower in Hong Kong, and the Wyckoff House Museum located in Brooklyn, New York. In addition to his professional work, he is a returning guest reviewer and lecturer at Pratt Institute and Cornell University. Tony holds a Bachelor of Architecture degree from the University of Kentucky and a Master of Architecture degree from Cornell University.

Stephanie

Youth from Care

Bio not provided

Liza Stiff

Director, Research & Program, TAS Developers

Liza leads expert & visionary research into solutions that address TAS priorities: approaches to long-term affordability, food systems and environmental sustainability ensuring implementation through design from the inception of a project and brought into reality through construction.

Jonathan Tate

Architect, Office Jonathan Tate

OJT (Office of Jonathan Tate) is an architecture and urban design practice located in New Orleans. Our work includes large scale, urban research and strategic planning initiatives, client-based architectural commissions for a range of building types (commercial, residential, cultural), as well as our own self-developed projects (often as part of a larger applied research investigation).

Shequita Thompson-Reid

Senior Site Manager, Eva Phoenix

Shequita has experience in program development with a demonstrated history of working in the public & non profit industry. She has strong community and social services background with skills in nonprofit organizations, youth development, crisis intervention, government, and program evaluation.

Jonathan Woetzel

Director, McKinsey Global Institute

Dr. Jonathan Woetzel is a director of the McKinsey Global Institute, leads McKinsey's Cities Special Initiative, and is responsible for convening McKinsey's work with city, regional, and national authorities in more than 40 geographies around the world. Jonathan has led numerous research efforts on global economic trends, including growth and productivity, urbanization, affordable housing, energy and sustainability, and e-commerce. Jonathan's public sector work is extensive—he has advised national governments in Asia on improving the environment for foreign investors, national energy policy, and economic development strategies. He also leads work with local governments, having conducted more than 60 projects throughout China to support local economic development and transformation.

Yasmin

Youth from Care

Bio not provided

