

PATHWAYS TO HOME

The Bernard and Anne Spitzer School of Architecture
The City College of New York - CUNY

Design Solutions for Immigrant-Centered Housing



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By Valeska Abarca

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INTRODUCTION

Laura Wainer

Assistant Professor of Architecture & Urbanism, Spitzer School of Architecture

Finding Ways to Home is an advocacy tool born from a two-year collaboration between Make the Road New York (MRNY), the largest community-based organization representing immigrants and working-class people of color in New York State (NYS), and the Spitzer School of Architecture (SSA) at the City College of New York (CCNY, CUNY), the flagship public school of architecture in New York City (NYC). Throughout this period, CCNY students and faculty, alongside MRNY staff and members, engaged in dialogue to bring the immigrant perspective to the forefront of housing debates in Jackson Heights, NYC.

Through analyzing the neighborhood's living conditions, the housing challenges faced by immigrants, personal stories of MRNY members and students, and detailed studies of international models and local approaches, we produced a series of architectural, urban, and housing projects focused on the immigrant communities in Jackson Heights. These projects present innovative proposals for alternative models of affordability, densification, collective action, and production, incorporating ideas of intergenerational living, circular economies, community trusts, and networks of care.

At the core of our approach is the conviction that design and architecture can generate innovative solutions to address financial, social, and organizational needs and problems. This conviction is expressed through three principles:

- **Housing Justice must correlate with Spatial Justice:** We seek to enhance the links between new organizational models and new designs that express steep affordability, de-commodification, and democratic management of housing.
- **Architecture schools must promote an intellectual shift in knowledge production:** We aim to expand the horizons of knowledge in architecture and urbanism to encompass policies fostering social ownership, expansive financial schemes, tenants' rights, and democratic control of housing operation and management.

- **The outcomes of design thinking possess powerful political narratives:** Demonstration projects, case studies, maps, infographics, and visuals of the built environment can help transform the current political narratives about the so-called "housing migrant crisis" into a more inclusive and authentic public debate.

In this publication, you will find reflections and housing projects aimed at densifying and diversifying the production of social housing for immigrant communities in Jackson Heights. These innovative, design-based advocacy projects address important political agendas related to land, ownership, industries, regulations, and the preservation and development of housing.

While these projects are firmly rooted in the reality of Jackson Heights and conducted with rigor and context, the primary objective is to rethink how things can be done differently. Many of these projects would be impossible to implement without significant changes in regulations and protocols. Our intention is to challenge the constraints of what is currently feasible and contribute to a proactive agenda of systematic change in housing regulations and policy in NYC. With this, we hope to establish a collaborative model for SSA as a public architecture school serving its constituency, focused on design solutions for a socially engaged practice.

MAKE THE ROAD NY



“Caminante, no hay camino. Se hace camino al andar.”

“Searcher, there is no road. We make the road by walking.”

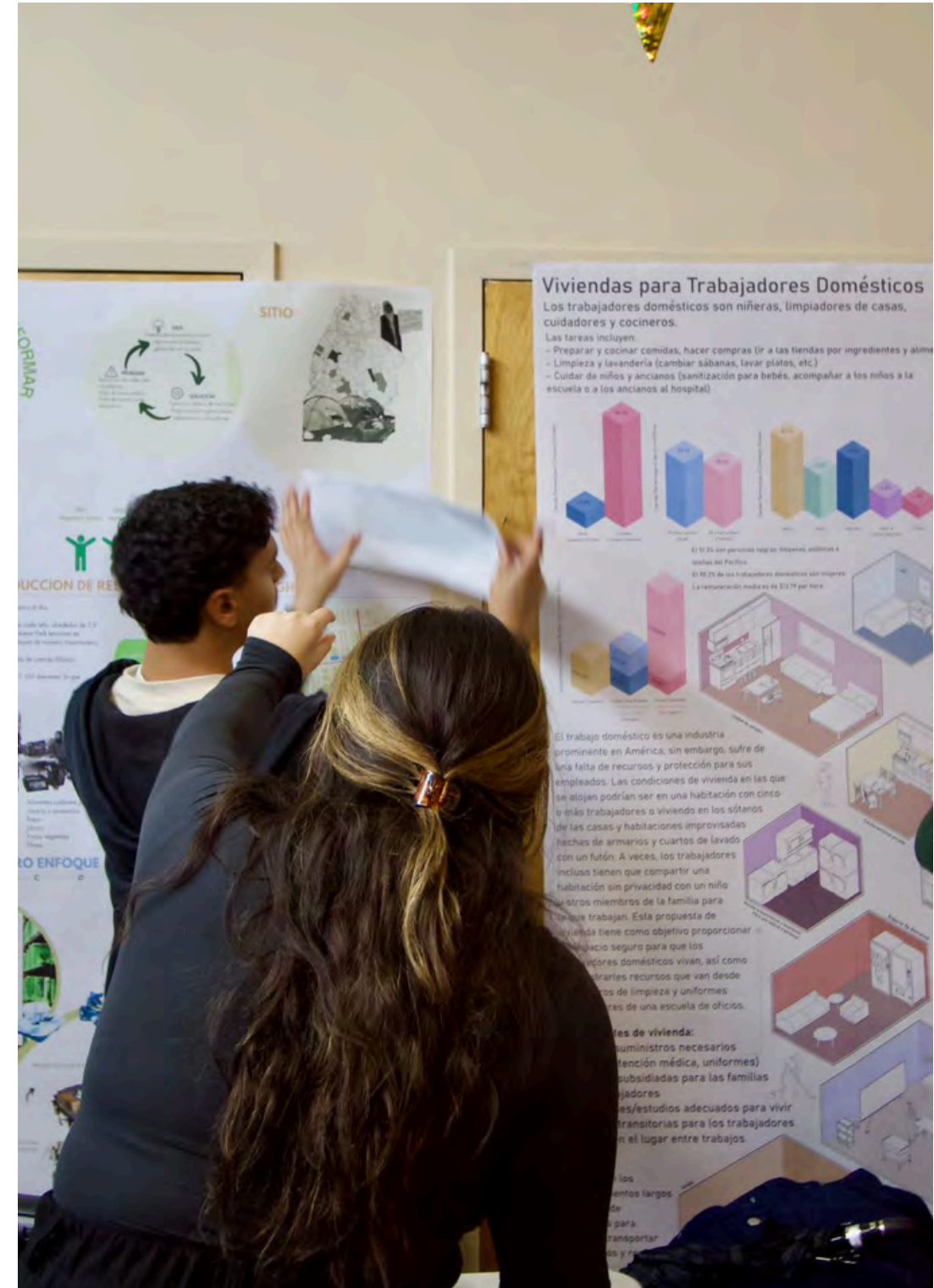
– Antonio Machado, *Proverbios y Cantares XXIX*

Make the Road New York (MRNY) is the largest progressive grassroots immigrant-led organization in New York State. MRNY’s agenda, opinions, experiences, and interests are our most valuable sources of knowledge. The organization works on issues of workers' rights; immigrant and civil rights; environmental and housing justice; justice for transgender, gender nonconforming, intersex, and queer (TGNCIQ) people; and educational justice. It has over 28,000 members and five community centers in Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, Long Island, and Westchester County.

Make the Road New York organizes and builds the leadership of community members who are eager to fight for housing equality and environmental justice. Members meet bi-weekly to discuss issues with landlords, their rights as tenants, and to organize for safe, affordable housing for their families. This effort led to the creation of the Alternative Enforcement Program, which ensures repairs in 250 of New York City’s worst buildings every year, along with other legislative wins in NYC and in NY State, to advance tenant rights.

As the largest community-based membership organization representing immigrants and working-class BIPOC in NYS, MRNY is uniquely positioned to identify and address pressing community needs. Members demand that MRNY advance its housing advocacy, collective action, and solution development, moving beyond the current case-by-case approach. Jennifer Hernandez, the housing initiative leader, is a Lead Organizer at Make the Road with several years of experience organizing in immigrant and faith communities. Jennifer leads the organization’s housing campaigns, organizing tenants across New York City and the Westchester County area.

Source:
maketheroadny.org



Make the Road NY, Jackson Heights:
Research Presentation

“Migrants are particularly vulnerable to human rights violations, the enjoyment of housing being among the most endangered rights. The duties of migrants to the host State are equal to those of locals from the moment that they enter the host community, as they are bound by its laws.” – United Nation’s Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing (A/65/261, para. 9)

IMMIGRANT CENTERED HOUSING

Housing Access in NYC

By Laura Wainer

In recent years, housing has emerged as a prominent factor in the escalating inequality in the United States. Lack of access to adequate housing perpetuates cycles of intergenerational poverty and segregation (Rognlie, 2018). Immigrant households, especially those headed by undocumented residents, are more likely to experience housing-based economic hardship, discrimination, and segregation (Steil et al., 2018). As immigrant origins become a crucial dimension of housing inequality, legal status is the primary source of disparities among Latinxs in the U.S. (Aiken et al., 2021; Chinchilla et al., 2022). Despite this evidence, significant knowledge gaps remain in understanding the immigrant perspective on housing in the U.S., particularly how immigrant families access housing solutions and what those solutions entail amid such barriers and hardships.

An immigrant perspective on housing acknowledges that the structural barriers and challenges migrants face in accessing adequate housing in the United States transcend affordability. These barriers include low wages from informal jobs, lack of guarantees, insufficient support systems, ethnic and racial discrimination in the banking system, language barriers, and limited access to information. Although no law prohibits homeownership based on immigration status, it is harder for migrants to secure financing, legal support, and tenure stability. Collectively, these barriers form a structurally exclusive system for migrant communities. According to our discussions with members of Make the Road New York (MRNY), immigrant families and communities have the willingness and capacity to invest. Still, their legal status, lack of guarantees, or reliance on informal economies prevent them from accessing affordable credit. While the broader housing crisis in NYC affects everyone, typical solutions like accessible credit, vouchers, and rent assistance often do not reach immigrant communities due to these additional factors.

Researchers such as Briggs and Turner (2006), Carr and Kutty (2008), Dell'Olio (2004), Galster and Sharkey (2017), and Goering (2007) emphasize the profound impact of inadequate housing on immigrant groups. These groups face discrimination in housing markets and multiple obstacles, from landlord bias to uneven housing regulation enforcement and local government restrictions designed to discourage immigrant settlement. Immigrant families are not only excluded from market options but also from public assistance primarily derived from federal policy. Only one in four eligible households receives federal housing assistance, and none of these efforts benefit non-U.S. citizens (Steil et al., 2017). Falling outside the policy spectrum places an extra burden on many migrant families, with legal status being the primary source of housing disparities among Latinx individuals in the U.S. Unauthorized Latinx immigrants experience persistent and unexplained disadvantages regarding housing cost burdens compared to authorized Latinx immigrants (Chinchilla et al., 2022; McConnell, 2015). Additional analyses reveal that this "penalty" for unauthorized Latinx immigrants persists even after controlling for indicators of immigrant assimilation, such as U.S. residence duration and multigenerational families (Diaz McConnell and Akresh, 2013). This is particularly important as empirical evidence shows that alleviating housing policy can play a crucial role in reducing inequality by enabling immigrant individuals to maintain stable employment, mitigating economic segregation, and shaping economic motivations with tax schemes (Acs and Johnson, 2015; Ray et al., 2004). Despite such vulnerability, the "migrant housing crisis" is not often at the forefront of policy interventions, and the burden of finding an "alternative housing arrangement" is often placed on the immigrant communities themselves (Halpert, 2023).

If immigrant status is an important dimension of housing inequality, changing the housing system's direction and characteristics involves broader social transformation as housing and inequality become "mutually constitutive" (James et al., 2022). Framing long-standing housing inequality as a self-reinforcing driver of further inequality positions this issue as a structural condition in resource distribution, alongside income, wealth, gender, and race. Housing justice demands further evidence and narratives about the situated knowledge, creativity, social networking skills, collaborative capabilities, and social entrepreneurship that are pivotal in integrating and stabilizing incoming families into urban areas at different stages of the immigration journey. This includes determining the specific advocacy efforts organized communities should champion and invest in, as well as changing political narratives around housing and immigration.

In light of this urgent scenario, our initiative with MRNY builds upon The City College's historical commitment to urban planning and architecture for the social good and the role architects and designers can play in developing ideas for alternative housing solutions for new families in New York City. By leveraging the expertise of MRNY and the academic resources at City College, we aim to create sustainable and inclusive housing models that address the unique challenges faced by immigrant communities. Our collaborative efforts will focus on integrating community input into the design process, ensuring that the solutions we propose are not only innovative but also practical and reflective of their real needs. Together, we can challenge the status quo and advocate for a housing system that truly serves all residents, regardless of their immigration status.

STUDIO CULTURE AT SSA

The Bernard and Anne Spitzer School of Architecture, a community of students, faculty, and administrative staff, seeks to uphold these Learning, Teaching, and School Culture Guidelines. These guidelines seek to promote education in design and allied fields through invention, research, respect, tolerance, and collaboration. In the spirit of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion, the Spitzer School embraces through all its activities the stated ideals of the City College of New York's mission. The Spitzer School promotes an atmosphere where ideas are tested and debated within a framework of kindness, mutual support, and intellectual rigor. It prepares students to enter the professions of architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, and related fields with advanced skills and empathy to effect change in the wider environments of the city, nation, and world.

Members of the Spitzer community, including students, faculty, administrative staff, and visitors, strive to:

- Remain committed to fostering collaboration, diversity, and respect, regardless of age, disability, financial barriers, gender, national origin, neurodiversity, passport positionality, preferred pronouns, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation.
- Maintain a professional and collegial demeanor.
- Be given the opportunity to take advantage of the School's communal environment and activities by attending and participating in lectures, exhibitions, joining clubs, as well as divisional and departmental committees as appropriate.
- Uphold the tenets of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion, which are central to the Spitzer School.

Source:
ssa.cuny.edu



Students Building their Housing Prototype:
Spring 2023

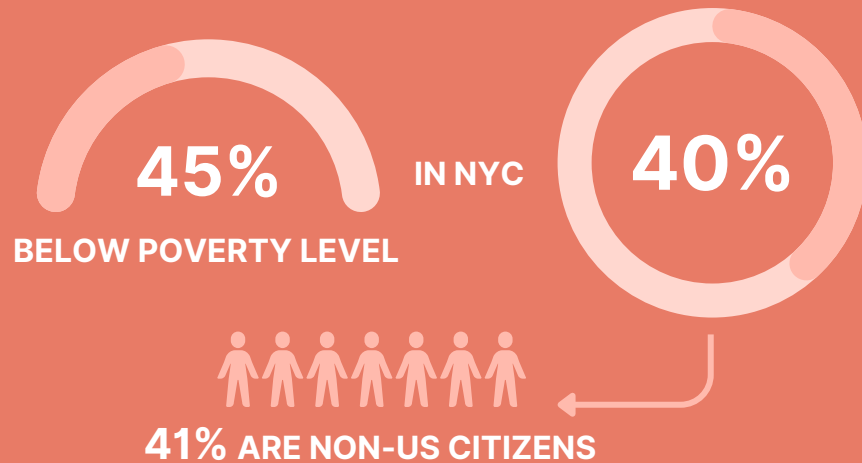
LATINX IMMIGRANTS

Housing Challenges in NYC

By Juan Giraldo & Valeska Abarca

General Facts on Immigrants

In 2020, **45%** of non-U.S. citizens living in NYC earned **incomes below or near the federal poverty level**, compared to **34%** of native-born citizens.



In 2021, foreign-born residents comprised **36%** of NYC's population. Of these, **41%** (about 1,257,000 individuals) were **non-U.S. citizens**.

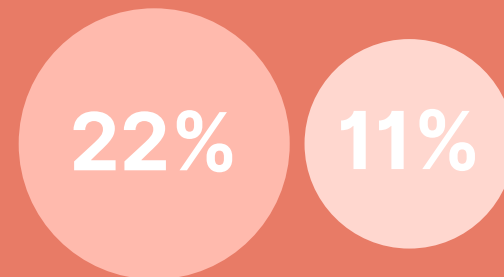


70%
70% of undocumented workers in New York are essential workers.

Immigrants & Housing

New York City's **overcrowded rental housing rate is 11%**.

Hispanic/Latinx non-citizen households experience the **highest rate at 22%**, double the city average.



Only one in four eligible households receive federal housing assistance, and **none of these public efforts go to non-US citizens**.



Policymakers estimate that **NYC needs about 560,000 new housing units by 2030** to accommodate population growth.

Effects of Housing Inequality

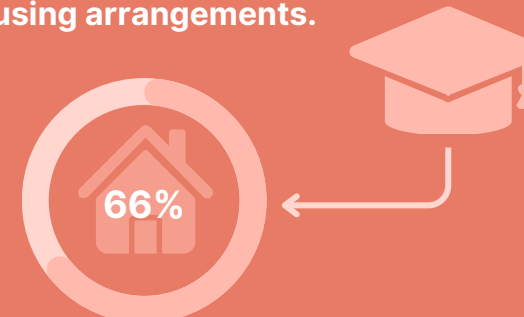


Over half of New York City's 1.7 million children live in households with at least one immigrant parent.



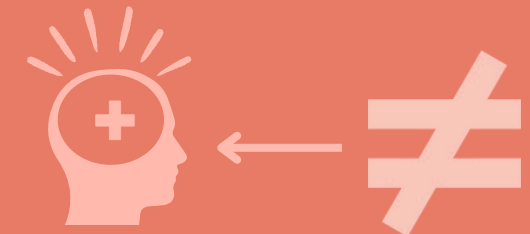
Among **immigrant-headed households with children**, **52% experienced rent burden**, affecting nearly **434,000 children experiencing three or more relocations within a year**, often referred to as "frequent mobility."

100,970 students attending public schools were found to be living in **temporary housing arrangements**.



Among these students, **66%** (equivalent to 66,167) reside in housing **shared with other families**.

Prolonged parental stress, especially **maternal stress**, and **untreated depression during early childhood can cause developmental delays and mental health challenges** in children.



Housing instability and poor conditions significantly affect younger generations, shaping their future opportunities and perpetuating cycles of poverty. **It is linked to adverse health consequences for both adults and children** and is more prevalent among those experiencing poverty.



Overcrowding and subpar living conditions correlate more strongly with pest infestations among children compared to households with middle or higher incomes.

Sources:

Christensen, P., Sarmiento-Barbieri, I., & Timmins, C. (2021). Racial discrimination and housing outcomes in the United States rental market (No. w29516). National Bureau of Economic Research.

Citizen's Committee for Children of New York (2022) Keeping Track of New York City's Children: 2022 available online at www.cccnewyork.org

PERSPECTIVES

Migrant voices about Housing

The workshops and presentations we held with the housing committee at Make The Road New York during 2023 and 2024 opened a window into the challenges immigrants face in New York City. Each story revealed a complex tapestry of hopes, obstacles, and the evolving nature of the housing crisis. It's clear that while the city remains a beacon of opportunity for many, in terms of freedom and job opportunities, it has also become a battleground of affordability, discrimination, and survival regarding housing access.

From our conversation with MRNY members, we learned that the challenges of finding housing have varied over the decades, becoming increasingly pressing. Even in a highly racialized society, there were once bonds of solidarity with newcomers in New York City. However, these bonds are now almost entirely overtaken by real estate agents in both formal and informal markets.

We also learned that the housing challenge involves not only affordability but also cultural, systemic, and discriminatory barriers. We found that community organizations provide advice and guidance in the face of predatory practices but fundamentally offer a sense of belonging and a life project. People work to survive and pay the rent, with visions of the future becoming scarce. Frustration grows as temporary solutions, poor living conditions, and vulnerability to real estate predators and abusive landlords become a permanent state of life. Community organizations are not only a source of support (emotional, legal, social) but also a possibility to advocate and fight for a stable, safe, and dignified home to become a reality. Below, we highlight some illustrative reflections from our interactions with MRNY members, reflecting the visions, fears, and hopes of those who are usually marginalized from public discourse and policy debates on housing challenges.

The Struggle for Housing: A Lifetime of Challenges

The market has transformed over the decades, particularly in neighborhoods like Jackson Heights, where real estate has become the dominant industry. Once, community connections based on origins, religion, and ethnicity could help

newcomers secure housing; now, the informal help networks are almost completely replaced by real estate agents, many of whom demand bribes and exercise predatory practices. *"Bribery has always existed,"* one member explained, *"whether it's giving something to the 'Super' to secure a place or paying off a real estate agent."* This informal but deeply entrenched system of "favors" and cash payments leaves many feeling exploited, especially since landlords often refuse legal payment methods like checks or money orders. *"It's not just difficult—it's an outrageous scam,"* the same member added in our conversations. For these families, meticulous record-keeping, like saving receipts or using text messages as evidence, becomes a form of self-defense.

For some, like a member who has lived in the same rented apartment for over 40 years, the story is one of slow but relentless erosion. He recalls a time when, through hard work and a second job, it was possible to save enough to send money home to family. Back then, the housing market, while never easy, offered a chance at stability. Today, finding an apartment requires paying "at least \$2,500 per month"—an amount that excludes a security deposit, real estate fees, and other hidden costs. *"In the past, people managed by saving up,"* the member explained, *"but now they have to dig deep just to have a place to live."*

Navigating Barriers: Language, Discrimination, and the Cost of Living

The challenges immigrants face extend beyond financial hurdles. Language remains a persistent barrier for many, complicating interactions with landlords and real estate agents. One MRNY member described the struggle to communicate with an English-speaking agent, which drove them to pay for language classes. Even after overcoming this barrier, they noted that many landlords speak with heavy accents, making communication a struggle even for those who are proficient in English. Others spoke about how technology itself can be a barrier. With housing information increasingly moving online, those unfamiliar with digital tools find themselves at a disadvantage. One member recounted getting a phone call from a scammer who

asked for \$150 just to help find an apartment, highlighting the vulnerability faced by those unfamiliar with digital networks.

The affordability challenge is not only a question of where to live but how to live. For some, that means enduring inadequate spaces like basements, where sunlight barely touches the rooms, or navigating strict rules that prevent them from having guests or pursuing hobbies. One resident shared their frustration over restrictions that keep his son from visiting or prevent them from playing the guitar. *"All I've been able to do,"* he said, *"is paint the walls chroma key blue for virtual meetings and work."* These compromises have become part of the "new normal" as temporary and often substandard solutions solidify into a way of life.

A Shattered Sense of Belonging: From Community to Isolation

The erosion of informal support networks over the years has made the city feel less like a sanctuary and more like a hostile landscape. In the 1980s, one member recalled, there were still strong bonds of solidarity among immigrant communities. Families from the same country looked out for each other, sharing leads on available apartments. When one member and their siblings arrived in the 1960s, they lived with American families who rented out rooms, and those arrangements were characterized by trust, kindness, and a sense of shared humanity. *"It was a family-like environment, full of trust—very different from how things are now,"* they reflected. But those systems of support have vanished, replaced by a market driven by profit and extraction.

The rise of real estate as the dominant force in neighborhoods like Jackson Heights has driven away many who can no longer keep up with skyrocketing rents. *"My perspective now is that it feels like we're heading toward a catastrophe,"* said one immigrant, fearing that the city is becoming uninhabitable for anyone outside the wealthiest circles. *"It seems our options are to either end up living under a bridge or to move to other states."* This feeling of displacement is further amplified by the

increasingly visible inequality across New York's neighborhoods, which many immigrants see as a warning sign of a deeper, more systemic problem.

A City of Contradictions: Between Survival and Hope

For some, like a member who is a political exile who arrived in the 2000s, New York City has been a harsh reminder of the gap between expectations and reality. After losing their job during the 2008 economic crisis, they arrived in the city without knowing anyone and ended up sleeping on the streets. Even now, living in a basement, they face uncertainty as their landlord pressures them to leave. *"All this city has given me is an ID,"* they said, pointing to the limited tangible benefits received in over a decade. Yet, despite the disillusionment, they have found a form of purpose in activism. Their journey has inspired them to explore more equitable ways to navigate the rental market, attending meetings with organizations that advocate for fairer payment methods.

Community organizations have become the lifeline for many, providing not only guidance but also a sense of belonging. They inform tenants about their rights, offer strategies to avoid scams, and create spaces for solidarity. For those involved, like a committee member who has been part of her organization for five terms, the work is as much about survival as it is about leadership and representation. *"This involvement has allowed me to fulfill one of my expectations of leadership,"* they said, seeing it as a way to channel her frustrations into action.

The narratives of immigrants arriving in New York tell a story of a city that, for many, remains both a promise and a challenge. It is a place where hope is interwoven with hardship, where the dream of a better future exists alongside the stark realities of inequality. Yet through their struggles, these immigrants continue to redefine what it means to make a home in a city that often feels out of reach—a testament to their resilience, resourcefulness, and unyielding spirit.

JACKSON HEIGHTS, NYC

An Insight into the Neighborhood

By Valeska Abarca

Jackson Heights, located in the borough of Queens, New York City, is known for its historical charm and cultural diversity. It is a highly densely populated neighborhood. Established in the early 20th century, it was one of the first planned communities in the U.S., featuring garden apartments and cooperative housing for the upper middle class. The historic district preserves its unique architectural style and community-focused design, with tree-lined streets, historic buildings, and community gardens offering a sense of tranquility in the urban environment. Today, Jackson Heights is celebrated for its multicultural population, with communities from South Asia, Latin America, and other regions contributing to its dynamic atmosphere. The neighborhood boasts outdoor markets, diverse cuisine, and annual cultural festivals that reflect its global heritage.

Growing up in Jackson Heights was like walking through the world; the neighborhood is filled with immigrant families from diverse cultures. Community life revolved around local parks, schools, garden apartments in historic buildings, and street fairs and cultural celebrations. However, Jackson Heights has changed significantly over the years. After the pandemic, gentrification and rising real estate prices introduced new businesses, altering the essence of the neighborhood. Additionally, challenges with trash and sanitation have impacted the quality of life for residents. Despite these issues, Jackson Heights remains a symbol of diversity and resilience, continuing to embrace and celebrate cultural differences.

Timeline made by:
Valeska Abarca, Ismael Cajamarca, Annabelle Surya

THE GARDEN CITY

1900s-2022

URBAN GROWTH

Racial Group Majority 1990

Racial Group Majority 2021

Median % of Rent 2021

Household Income 2021

Queens Income: \$75k

Median Gross Rent 2021

IN JACKSON HEIGHTS

THE GOLDEN ERA

COVID

INFORMAL RENTING

PARKING IS A PRIVILEGE

1900s-2022

URBAN GROWTH

1930s

1960s

1990s

Vacant Housing Units 2016

Vacant Housing Units 2021

Timeline:

- 1900s: Farmland known as Trains Meadow.
- 1904: Opening of the interborough rapid transit.
- 1909: Opening of the Queensboro Bridge.
- 1910: Queensboro Corporation headed by Edward Archibald MacDougal becomes the main buyer of land naming it Jackson Heights.
- 1911: First buildings erected in Jackson Heights.
- 1914: First apartment building completed called Laurel Court.
- 1917: Roosevelt Ave. elevated subway completed connecting to Grand Central Station.
- 1919: Announcement of the construction of Linden Court, the first co-op development by Queensboro Corporation.
- 1920s: Creation of Hampton Gardens, The Chateau, The Towers, and others were completed. Population expanded with gay people settling in the neighborhood.
- 1930s: Queensboro Corporation expanded the development of single-family and multi-family homes.
- 1935: New transportation routes are established.
- 1938: Full Equality in Housing and Freedom of Equal Housing Opportunity signs.
- 1939: Construction of higher density housing prevailed over garden co-op.
- 1939: Immigration Reform Act is passed.
- 1940s: Post-war construction booms.
- 1948: Fair Housing Act enabled African Americans to settle in Jackson Heights.
- 1950s: Jackson Heights experiences economic crisis along with drug trade.
- 1958: Conversion of rental buildings to co-ops and condos booms.
- 1960s: Jackson Heights Beautification Group was formed, organizing walking tours and activities.
- 1963: Jackson Heights is recognized as a Historical District.
- 1970s: Jackson Heights begins to attract the attention for newly migrants for its quality of life and unique buildings.
- 1979: Jackson Heights has the highest amount of COVID-19 cases in NYC.
- 2021 Present: High amounts of vacant housing units appear above Northern Blvd, with numerous informal renting posted on flyers.

MATRIX

Projects & Variable Analysis

By Valeska Abarca

	APPROACHES				ORGANIZATIONS				ACTIONS			
	Supportive	Productive	Circular	Shared	Cooperatives	Intergenerational	Community Trust	Community Funds	Adapt	Increment	Expand	Flexible
2023	In Between Heights Valeska Abarca, Ismael Cajamarca, & Annabelle Surya			X			X	X		X		
	Community Air Trust Tingna Huang, Zixuan Lu, & Yongfei Zhu		X				X				X	X
3	Framing the Social Infill Insuida Gjergji		X	X						X	X	
	COF-Flexible Housing Sammantha Erhman, Klaudia Harizi, Alba Hysaj, & Florim Zharku	X			X				X			X
2024	Heritage Katherine Quito						X	X		X		
	In Heritage Plaza Valeska Abarca & Lorraine Colbert		X				X			X		
2024	Reclaiming the City Juan Giraldo				X						X	
	Childhood Nodes Mauricio Guidos & Genesis Soto	X			X		X					
2024	Grid Flex Evangelous Vasos							X	X		X	X
	Generation Haven Eshrat Khan	X			X		X	X				X
2024	Refuel on the Familiar Jackeline Aguiar						X		X		X	
	Revindication of Domestic Workers & Immigrant Families Sidney Mauricio	X	X		X							X
2024	Adaptive Shelter Systems Sara Luna	X			X	X						
	Gardening As Healing Onika Gregory	X			X							
2024	Housing in the Autonomous City Mouhamadou Dieng		X	X					X	X	X	X
	Make, Collective, Transform Fernanda Cadenillas & Bryan Hernandez	X	X	X		X						X

CHAPTER 1

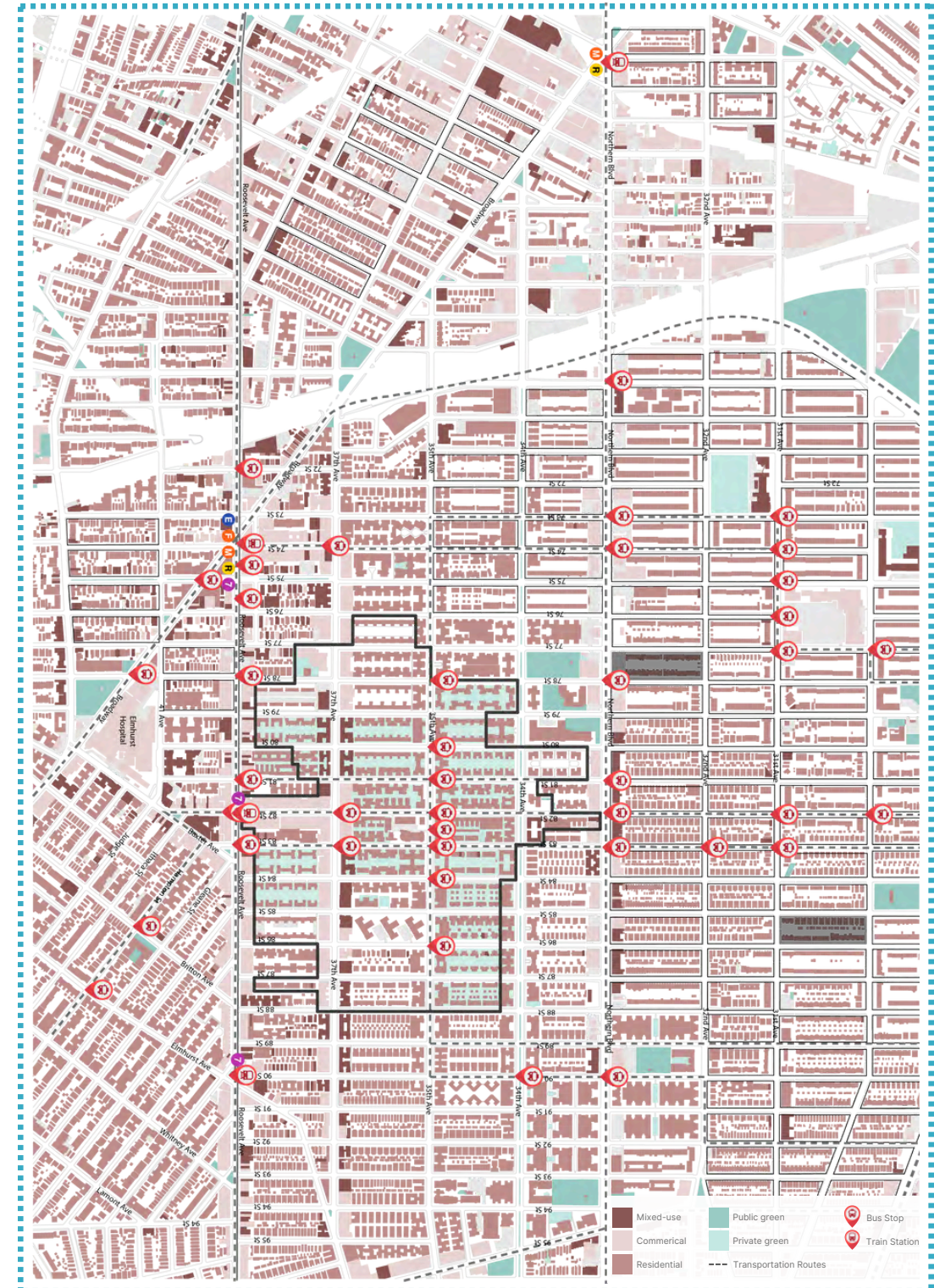
A Yes in my Backyard Strategy for Dense Neighborhoods in NYC

By Laura Wainer

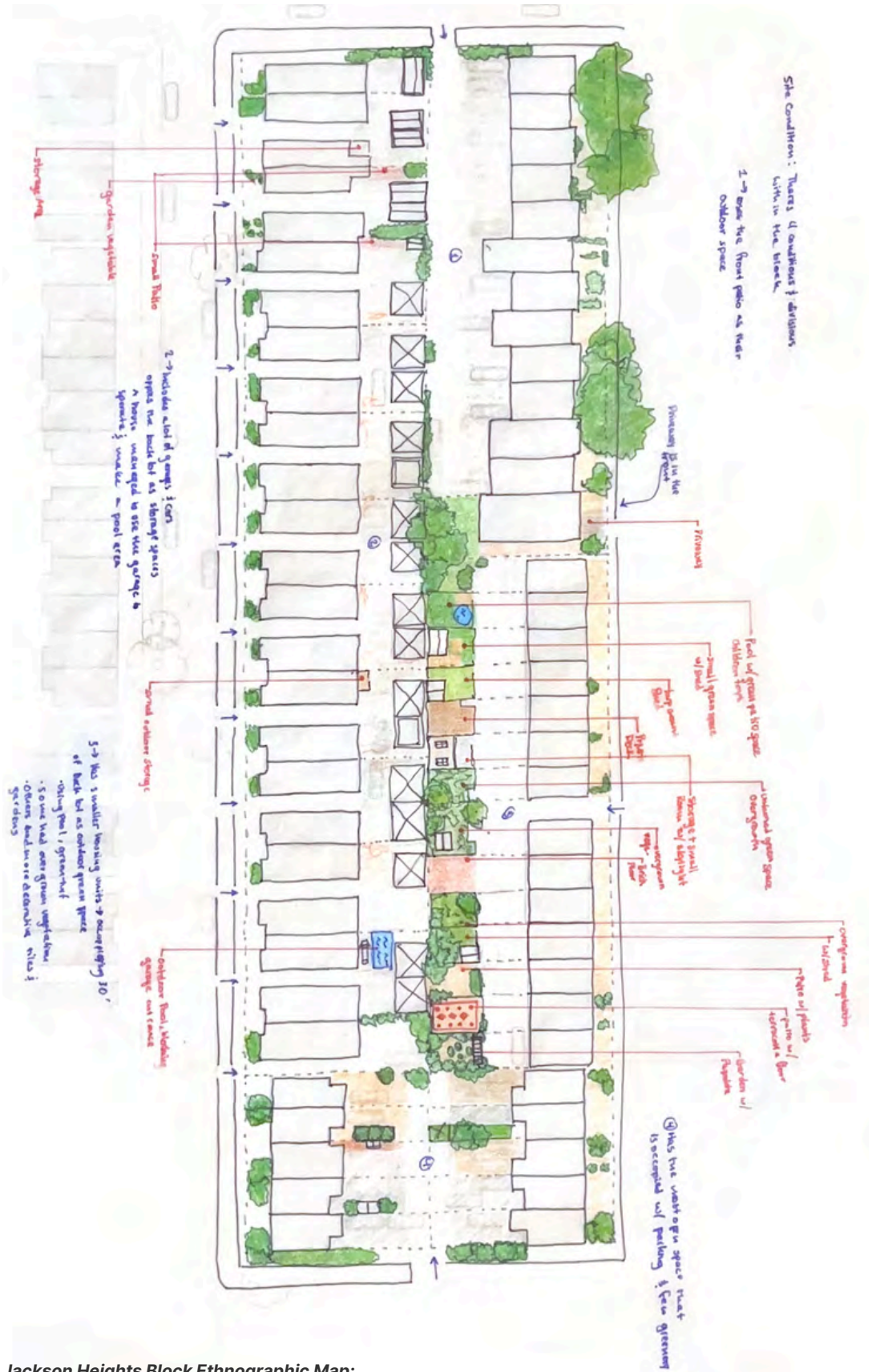
The critical housing situation for immigrants occurs within a broader housing crisis in NYC, a crisis with many sources. Traditional housing production actors are unable to meet the demand, which, according to local experts, is at least ten years behind. Policymakers estimate that the city needs to incorporate about 560,000 housing units by 2030 to accommodate population growth (AKRF, 2022).

In a city where homeownership or even market-rate housing is out of reach for many, diversifying housing production models to meet demand is a central goal for the coming decades. The need to diversify housing production models and actors arises not only from the quantitative mismatch between housing demand and supply but also from the need to find legitimate producers for communities historically marginalized by markets and policies. Given the unequal distribution of urban space production in NYC, communities at constant risk of displacement and eviction resist real estate development through organized actions to halt new construction and urban renewal. These resistance forms occur amidst a profound lack of public protection. Stopping housing production has become a paradoxical strategy that guarantees the right not to be displaced while simultaneously reducing the possibility of future generations remaining in their family neighborhoods.

Project: *In Between Heights: Yes! In my Backyard*
Project: *In Heritage Heights: In Heritage Plaza*
Project: *Heritage Incremental Community Trust*
Heritage, Community Preservation & Affordability



Map of Jackson Heights:
Valeska Abarca, Ismael Cajamarca, Annabelle Surya



Jackson Heights Block Ethnographic Map:
Valeska Abarca

As New York's public land becomes limited, affordable housing opportunities grow scarcer, and social contestation around development increases, the city faces an acute contradiction in the urban process: underutilized and degraded areas of well-located land exist alongside a dynamic that expels lower-income populations to the periphery, where their relocation incurs high social and urban costs. Additionally, as rents rise steeply and New Yorkers brace for an onslaught of evictions, residents facing development-led displacement need a housing strategy that includes economic empowerment.

Diversifying housing producers and production models involves communities participating in the development process and becoming central actors along the equitable housing value chain. This includes identifying and negotiating land and development opportunities, managing land and tenure schemes, leading design and construction, and managing the existing housing stock through maintenance, renovations, expansions, and refurbishment.

International experiences of mutual aid housing, self-managed, and incremental housing, such as the Montevideo Housing Cooperative in Uruguay, organize hundreds of housing producers. These models, aligned with community land trusts and incremental schemes, expand the housing supply, resolve conflicts in highly contested urban areas, and economically empower local communities by building their neighborhoods.

IN BETWEEN HEIGHTS

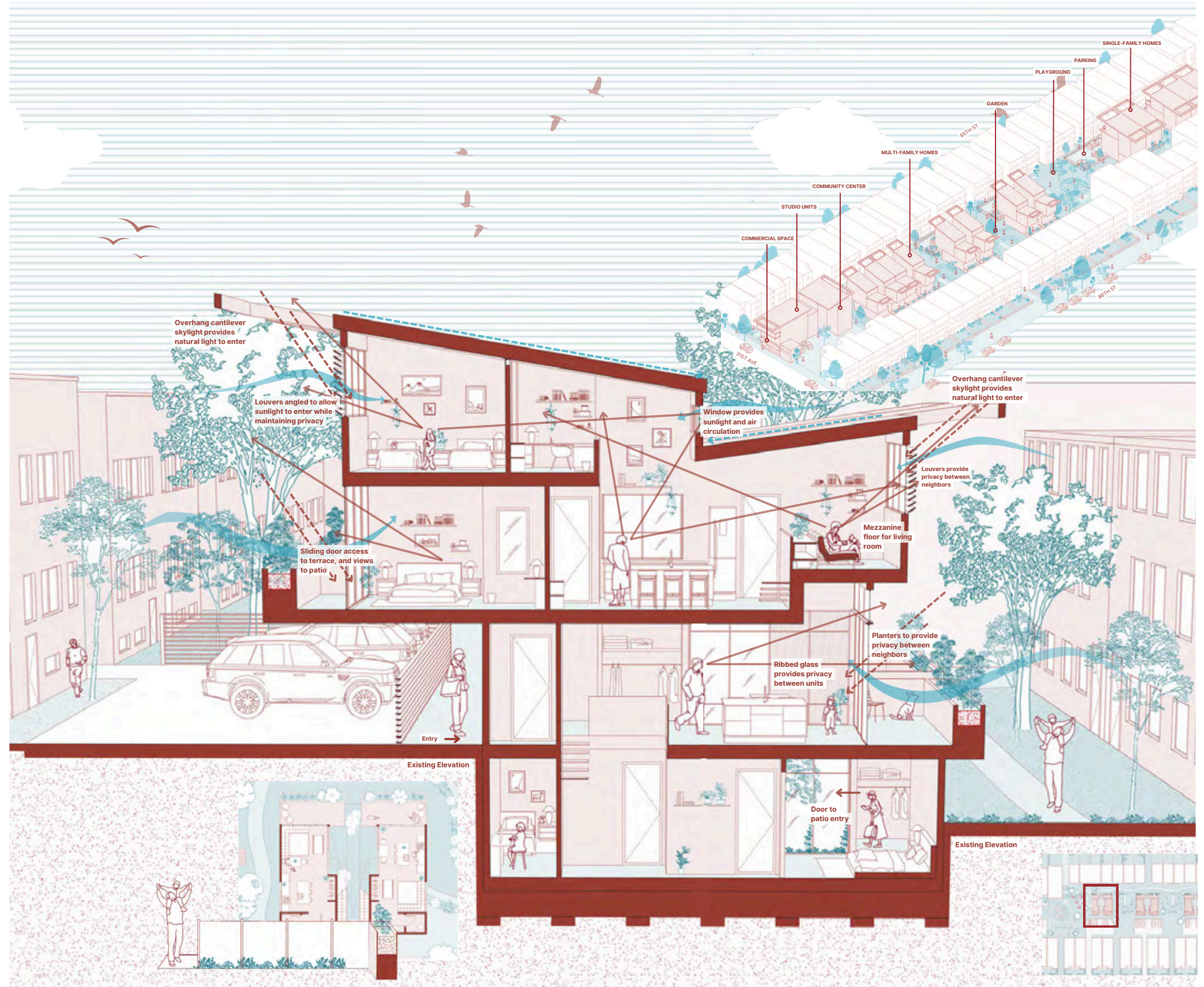
Yes! In my Backyard

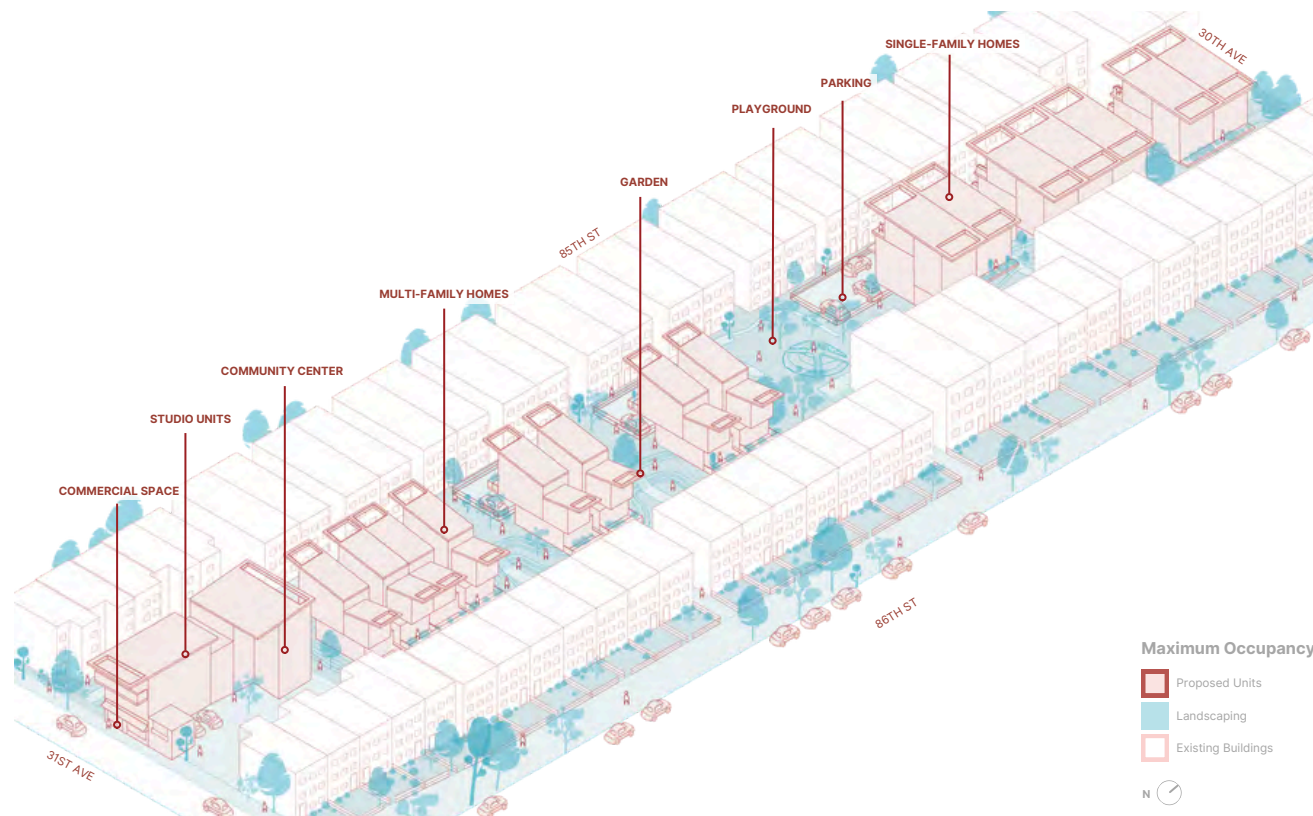
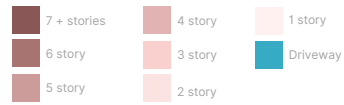
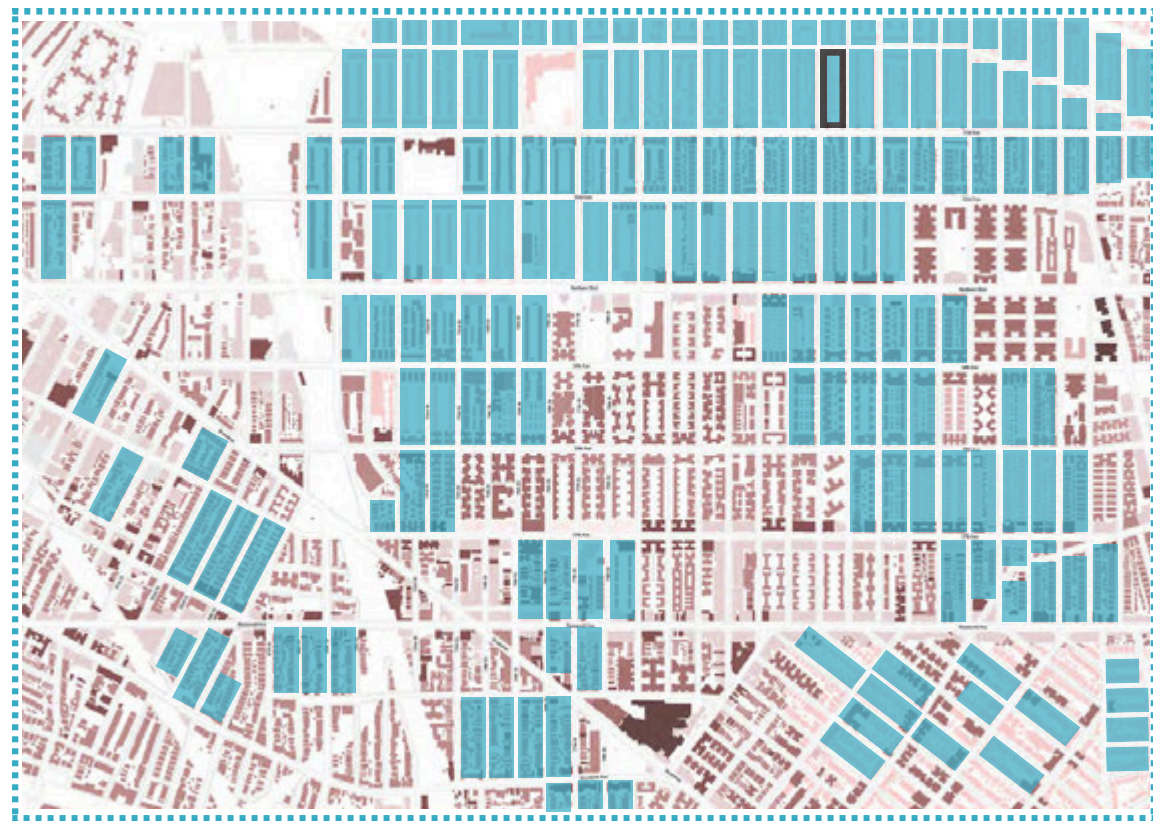
Students

Valeska Abarca, Ismael Cajamarca, & Annabelle Surya

The proposal aims to utilize inner blocks, driveways, and parking areas to increase density within each block gradually, featuring a series of detailed multi-story townhouse prototypes that can be developed when two neighboring property owners agree to release 25% of their backyard space, which is currently used for parking and storage. If multiple property owners within a block agree to this development scheme, the project can significantly optimize the use of a typical block in Jackson Heights, allowing residents and stakeholders to meet their needs through a Community Land Trust (CLT). This ensures long-term affordability and community control over housing, which enhances parking efficiency and adds green community spaces, playgrounds, and shared facilities such as lounge areas for gatherings and celebrations.

By partnering with Make the Road New York and landowners interested in new opportunities, the proposal seeks to establish a policy that benefits both landowners and the community, transforming the growth of affordable housing within the built environment.





Maximum Occupancy

- Proposed Units
- Landscaping
- Existing Buildings



Existing Context

1/32"=1.0"
Four site conditions divide the functions of driveway spaces that are defined based on elevation differences. These spaces include parking, vegetation, additional rooms, and terraces to the back facades

Low Occupancy

1/32"=1.0"
To gain an understanding of the development of the block, a low occupancy map shows single-family homes, multi-family homes, and studio apartments hold a total of 9 families with an estimate of 36 additional people living on the block.

Medium Occupancy

1/32"=1.0"
The medium occupancy map shows 15 families, with an estimated 60 additional people living on the block.

Maximum Occupancy

1/32"=1.0"
The maximum occupancy map includes 7 single-family homes, 8 multi-family homes, and 4 studio apartments, that hold 22 families, with an estimate of 88 additional people living on the block.

Vegetation Landscaping

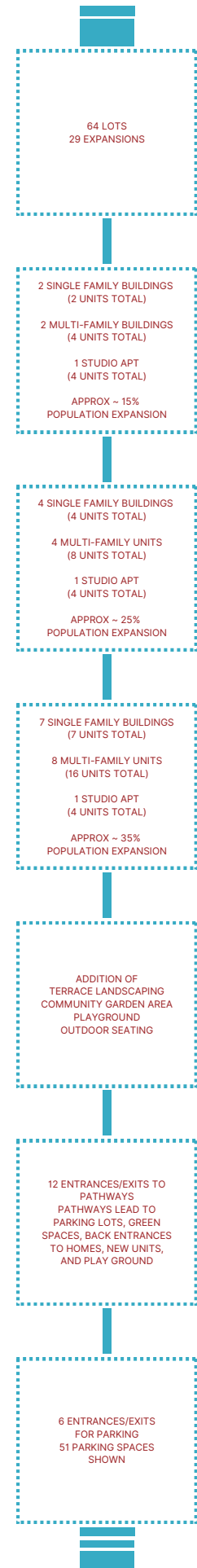
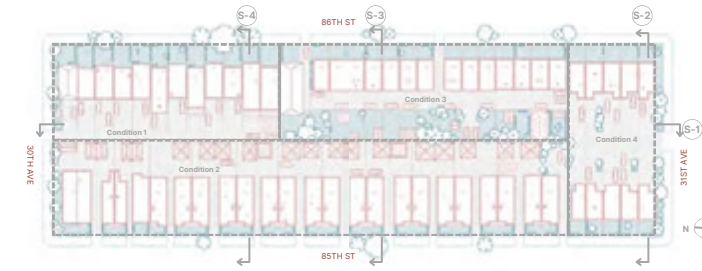
1/32"=1.0"
The transformation of the previous driveway and parking spaces evolves into a landscape that provides spaces for community engagement, urban parking, a central playground, and vegetative terraces that expand across the block.

Walkways

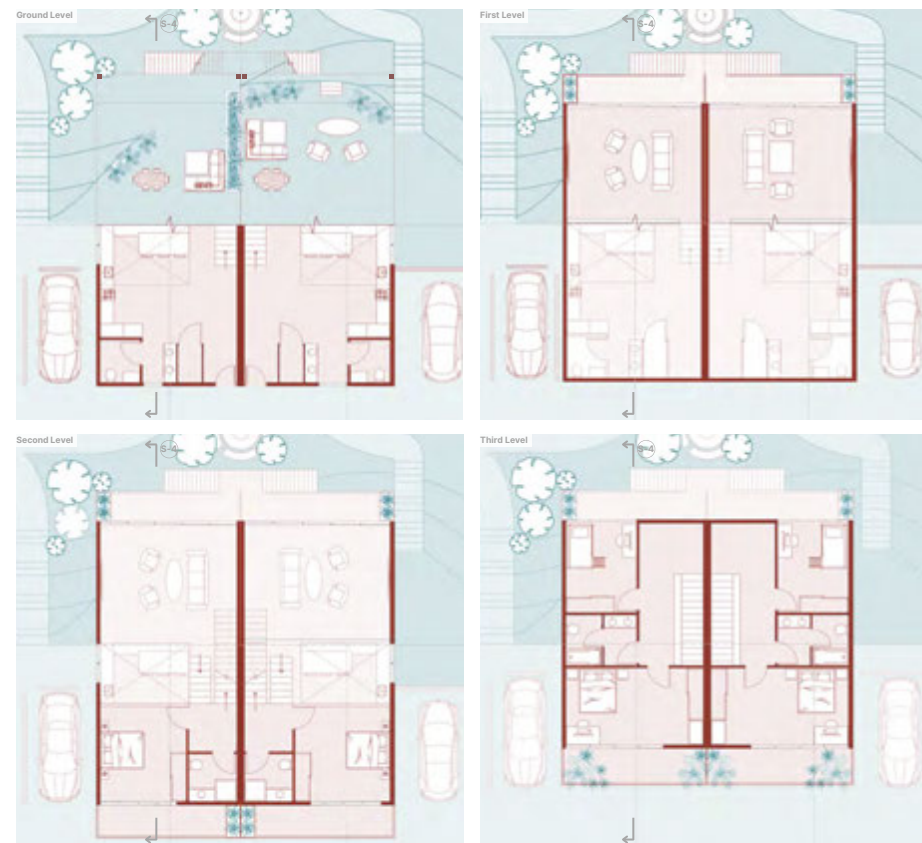
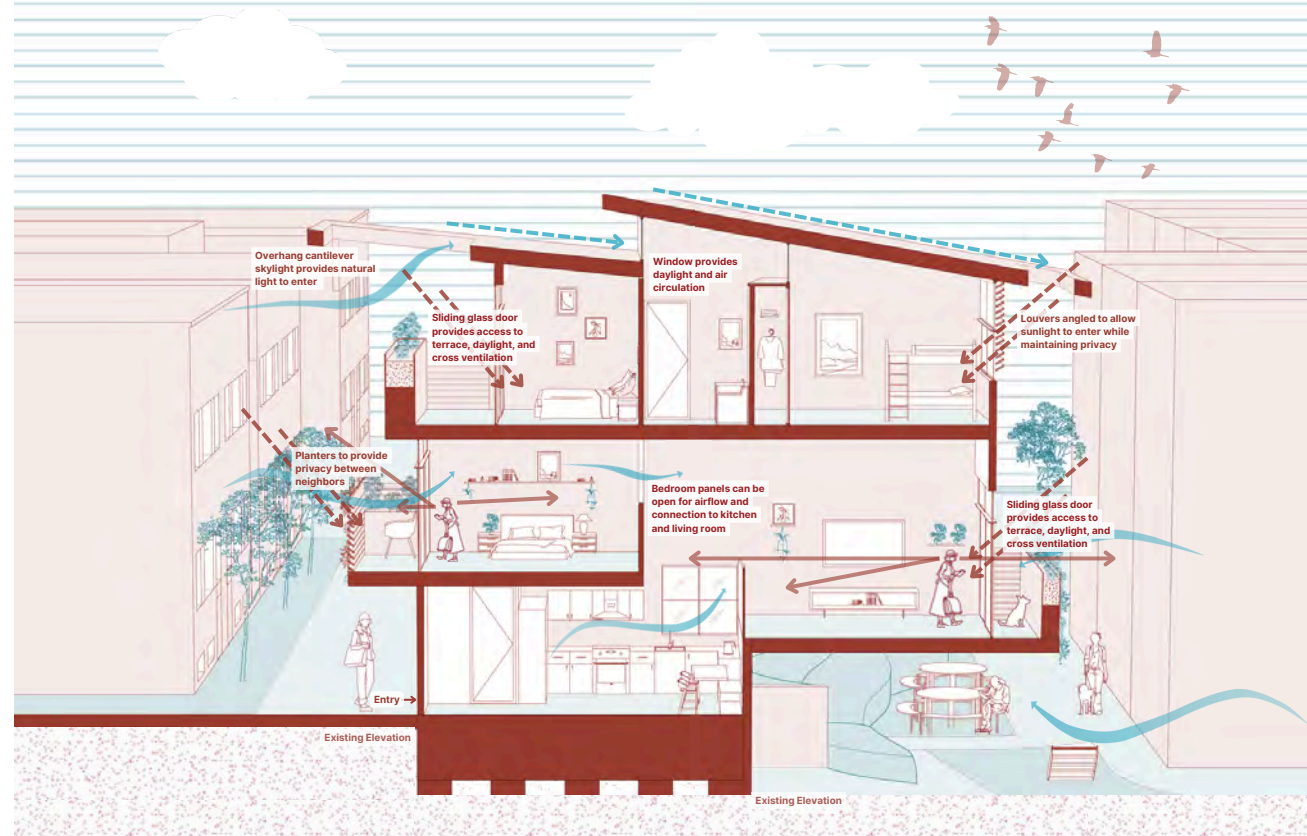
1/32"=1.0"
To provide entrances to the new urban landscape, entrances are placed in locations that were previously used as a driveway, separated from car entrances for safety.

Parking

1/32"=1.0"
To provide entrances to the new urban landscape, entrances are placed in locations that were previously used as a driveway.



Single-Family Units



IN HERITAGE PLAZA

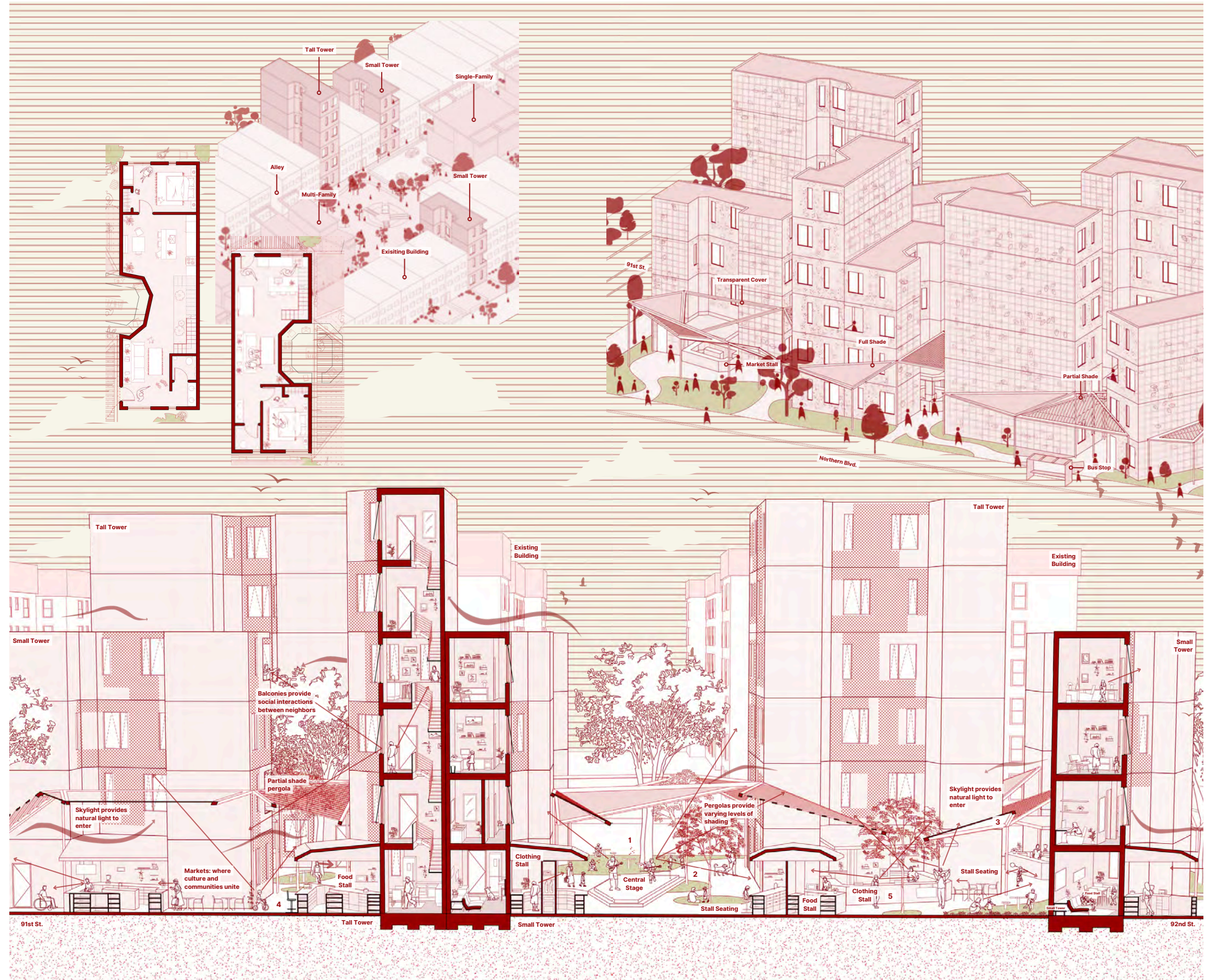
In Heritage Heights

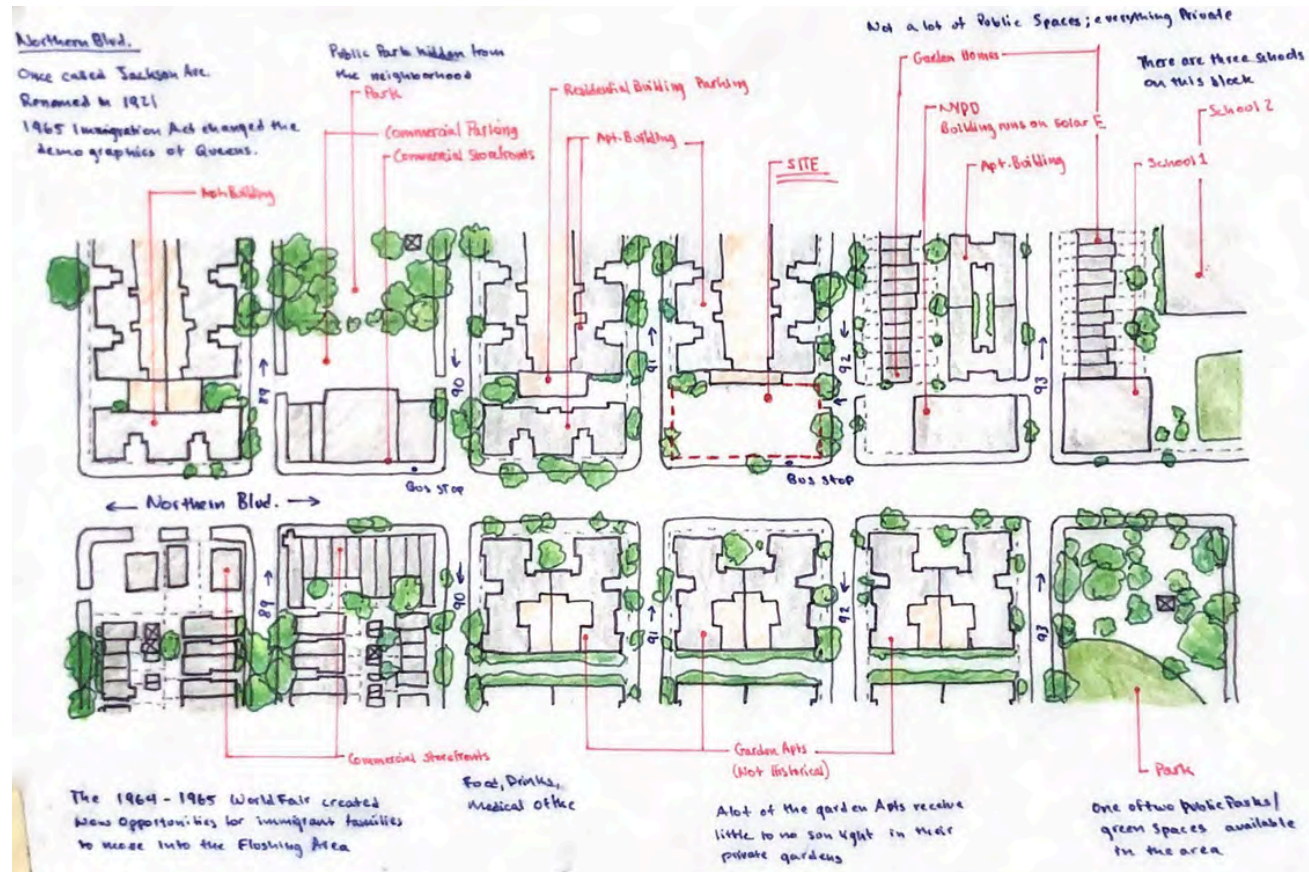
Students

Valeska Abarca & Lorraine Colbert

This project serves as both a mixed-use development proposal for New York Police Department parking lots and a housing prototype designed to infill the existing urban fabric in Jackson Heights. Conceived as a "mini" tower, the two architecture prototypes offer co-living and intergenerational living arrangements that fit seamlessly into Queens's existing interstitial spaces, lanes, and driveways. Once the prototypes are integrated into existing blocks, the design ensures that all rooms receive adequate ventilation, natural light, and vertical circulation.

As a "real-life showcase" of this urban infilling strategy and an example of how these towers can be adapted for vacant lots of the NYPD, the urban proposal includes integrating the mini towers with a ground-floor marketplace for small businesses and community gatherings. With shared amenities and public spaces in a central "agora" that enhance social interaction and community engagement, the prototype aims to transform the urban landscape, improve the quality of life for all residents, and create a vibrant, inclusive community in Jackson Heights.

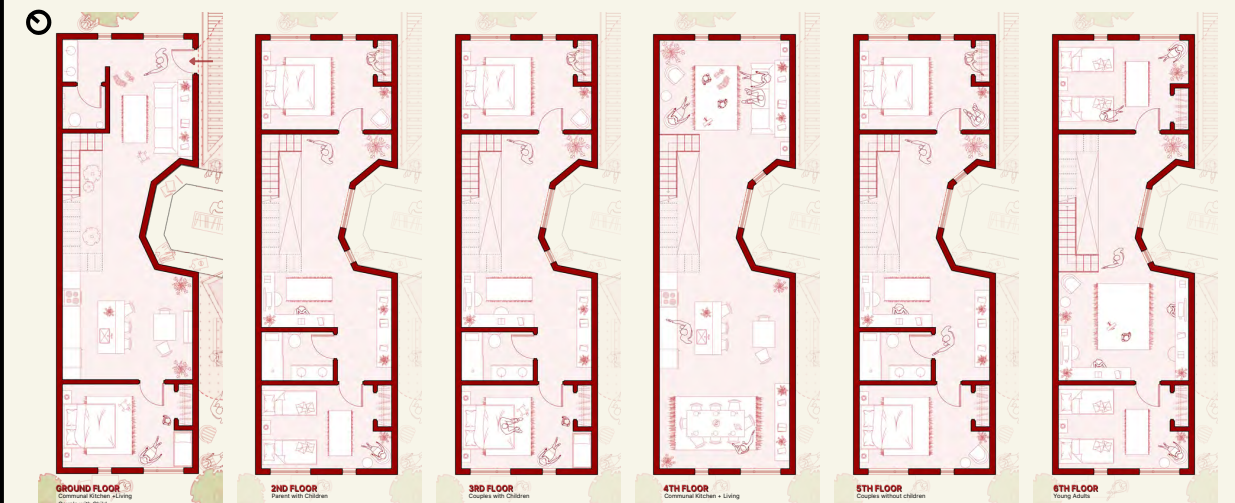




TALL + LONG TOWER PROTOTYPE

1/4" = 1'

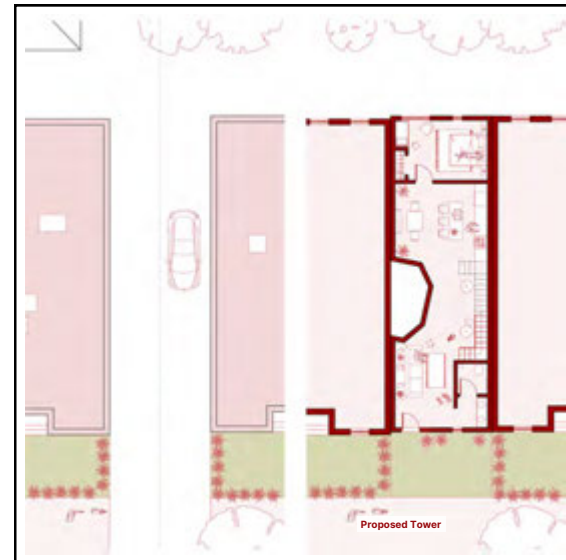
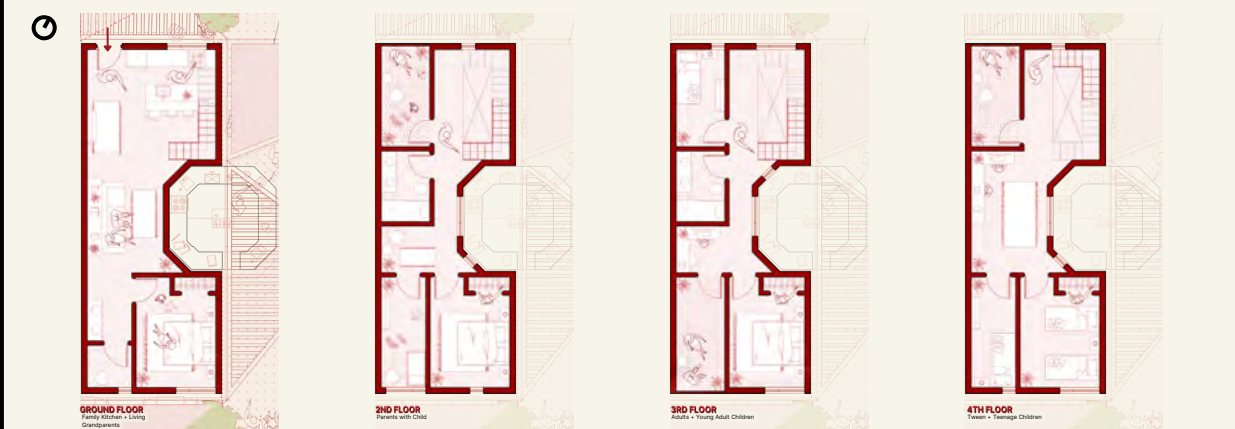
Tall towers for co-living between distant families, friends, and individuals, with shared communal kitchens and living areas. 16 feet wide by 50 feet long to accommodate longer alleys.



SMALL + SHORT TOWER PROTOTYPE

1/4" = 1'

Small towers for intergenerational living between parents, grandparents, and children, with shared balconies. 16 feet wide by 40 feet long to accommodate shorter alleys.

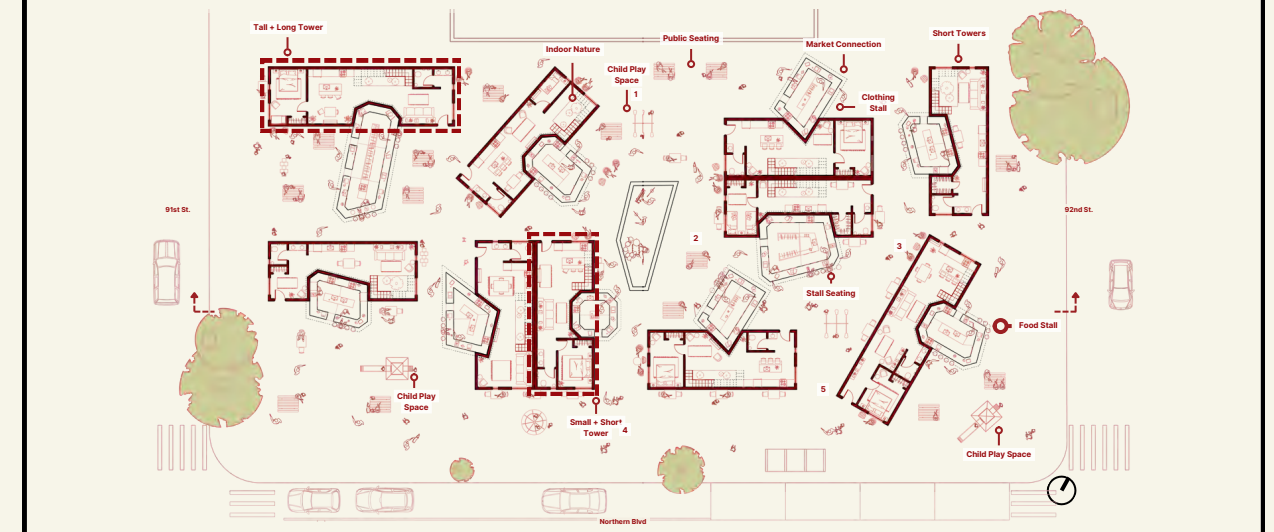


Alley Proposal: Before & After Building Between Buildings

2024 Proposal: Building Between Buildings

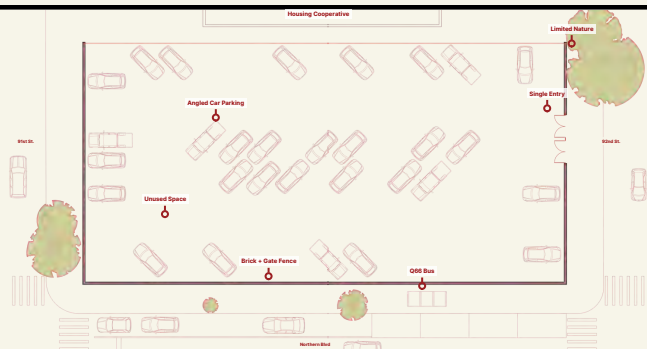
2023 Proposal: Building Between Backyards

- 2024 Heritage Towers
- 2023 Multi + Single Family
- 2023 Beautification
- Existing Buildings



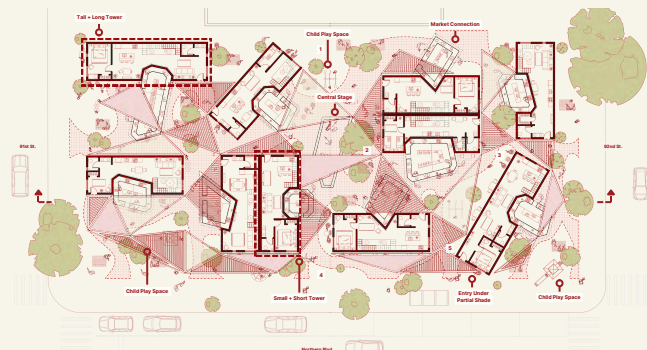
EXISTING CONTEXT
3/32" = 1"

The secondary parking lot owned and occupied by the NYPD 115th Precinct.



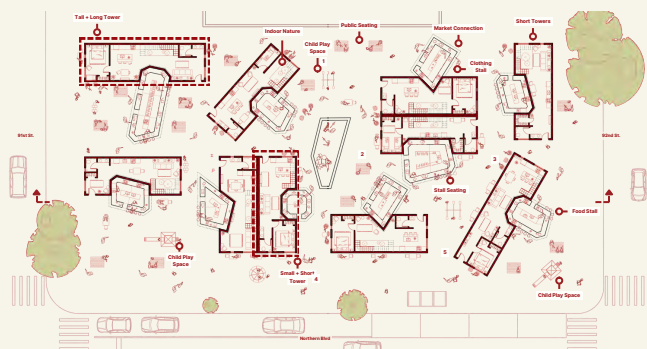
URBAN CLT
3/32" = 1"

Urban community land trust model that preserves the spatial heritage of markets as a public space for living, business, and expression.



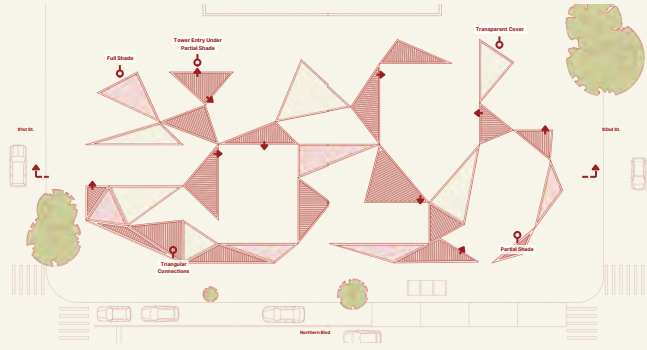
HOUSING + MARKET
3/32" = 1"

Mini Urban City Prototypes: small towers for co-living, tall towers for families, and market space for small businesses.



PERGOLA
3/32" = 1"

Different degrees of shade to control sun exposure for transparent visibility, partial sun, and full cover.



CIRCULATION + LANDSCAPING
3/32" = 1"

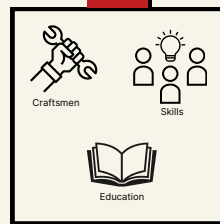
Merging flow from the sidewalk to the property to create publicly accessible space.



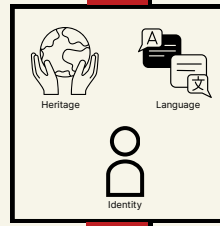
Preservation



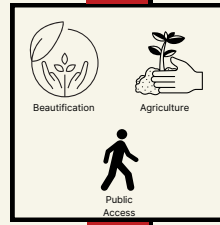
Affordability



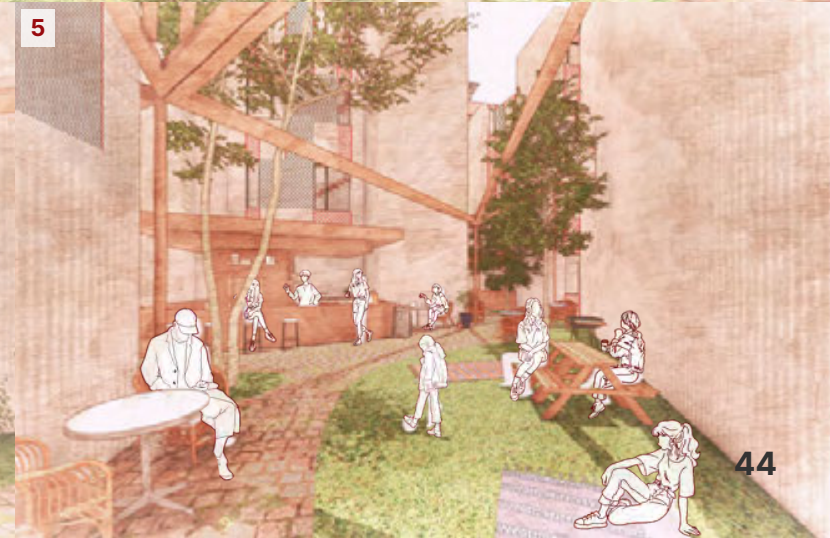
Work

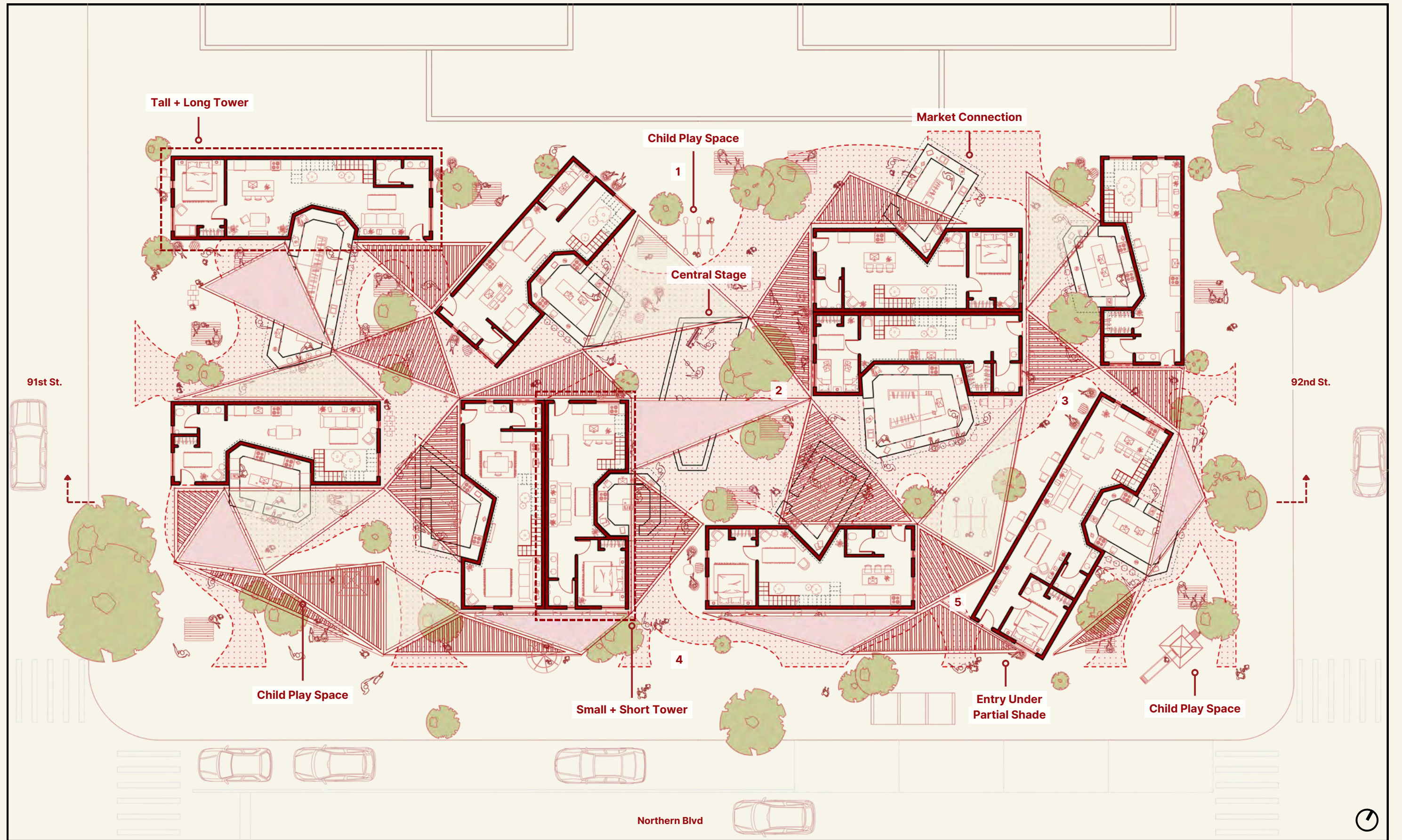


Connect



Rehabilitate





HOUSING IN HERITAGE

Intersticios Sociales

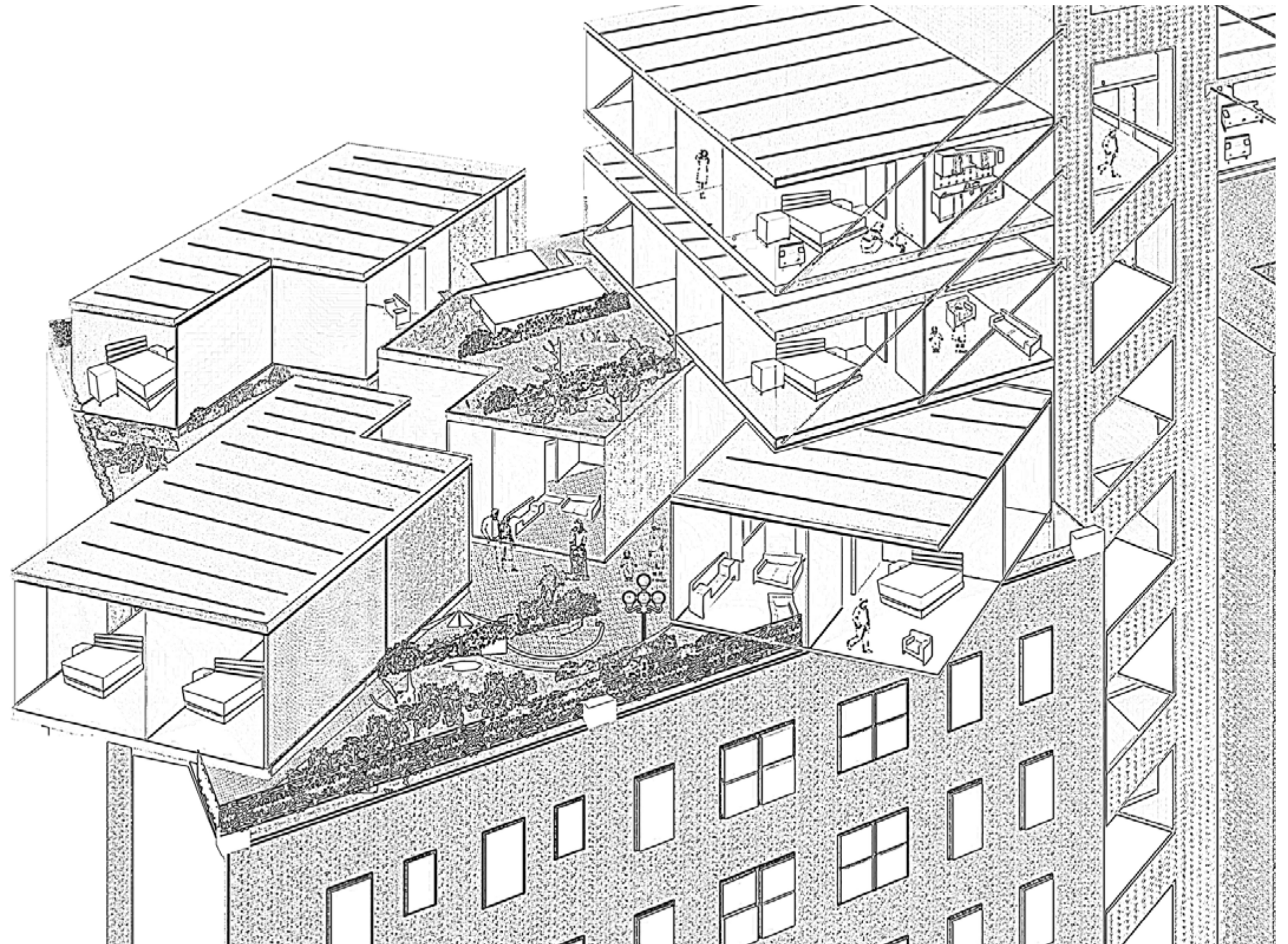
Student

Katherine Quito

This proposal aims to provide an interstitial densification solution for the heritage area of Jackson Heights, which has been significantly impacted by rising prices and gentrification in Queens. The proposal focuses on utilizing the terraces and interstitial spaces of the historic brick buildings without affecting their structure or architectural integrity.

The design introduces a T-shaped typology. The vertical module acts as a large structural column, offering vertical ventilation and accommodating small units (studios). This module is inserted between two existing buildings. The horizontal module of the T expands over the terraces of the existing buildings but remains structurally independent, hanging from the vertical module.

The new units on the terraces respect the heritage value of the buildings, add several units to the existing fabric, and develop a system of green terraces that contribute to the environmental quality of the neighborhood.



INCREMENTAL

Incremental housing, or incrementing, proposes solutions for building new housing without the financial capacities to develop a complete house at its inception. Rather, with the partial construction of a house that includes the necessities of cooking, sanitation, and sleep spaces, the remaining space is left unconstructed and open to small or major expansions in the future. Incrementing builds on self-construction practices in parts of Latin America, which many families take with them as they immigrate to the United States. In Latin American towns with larger building areas, it is typical for families to construct their own houses on plots of land. Whereas Latin American families in cities such as New York adapt these practices to their apartments through altering the sizes and number of rooms to fit their needs.

This model works to replace equitable financing with an incrementally planned construction system, which, when mixed with their self-construction practices, gives inhabitants freedom and leeway over design decisions. Incrementing is a long-term housing solution but is fully adaptable to meet immediate needs and match the current capabilities of residents.

Examples of incremental housing are:

- Belapur Housing designed by Charles Correa in Belapur, India
- Proyecto Experimental de Vivienda designed by Aldo Van Eyck, Atelier 5, Georges Candilis, and James Stirling in Previ, Peru
- Quinta Monroy designed by ELEMENTAL in Iquique, Chile
- Empower Shack designed by Urban-Think Tank in Cape Town, South Africa

COMMUNITY TRUST

A community land trust, or CLT, is a form of collaborative housing that rethinks home ownership as a community operation that separates the ownership of land and housing on said land. Land ownership belongs to non-profit organizations, and housing ownership belongs to individual residents, making the non-profit organization the developer and subsequent administrator of housing and facilities. But the matter of these facilities and housing - which can be varied depending on shared resident needs, wants, or plans for the future betterment of the community - is democratically voted for among a board of community residents and public representatives that are providing the capital assets. The objectives of community land trusts are to ensure land affordability, grant residents the power of collective bargaining, and manage the construction and design of housing to accommodate the collective interests of its members. The principles of CLTs lie in its name: to move land as private property outside of the housing market and into the hands of an entity destined to be its perpetual custodian; to build trust in the perpetual custodian to act in a manner of common interest; and to support the organization and operation of communal ownership.

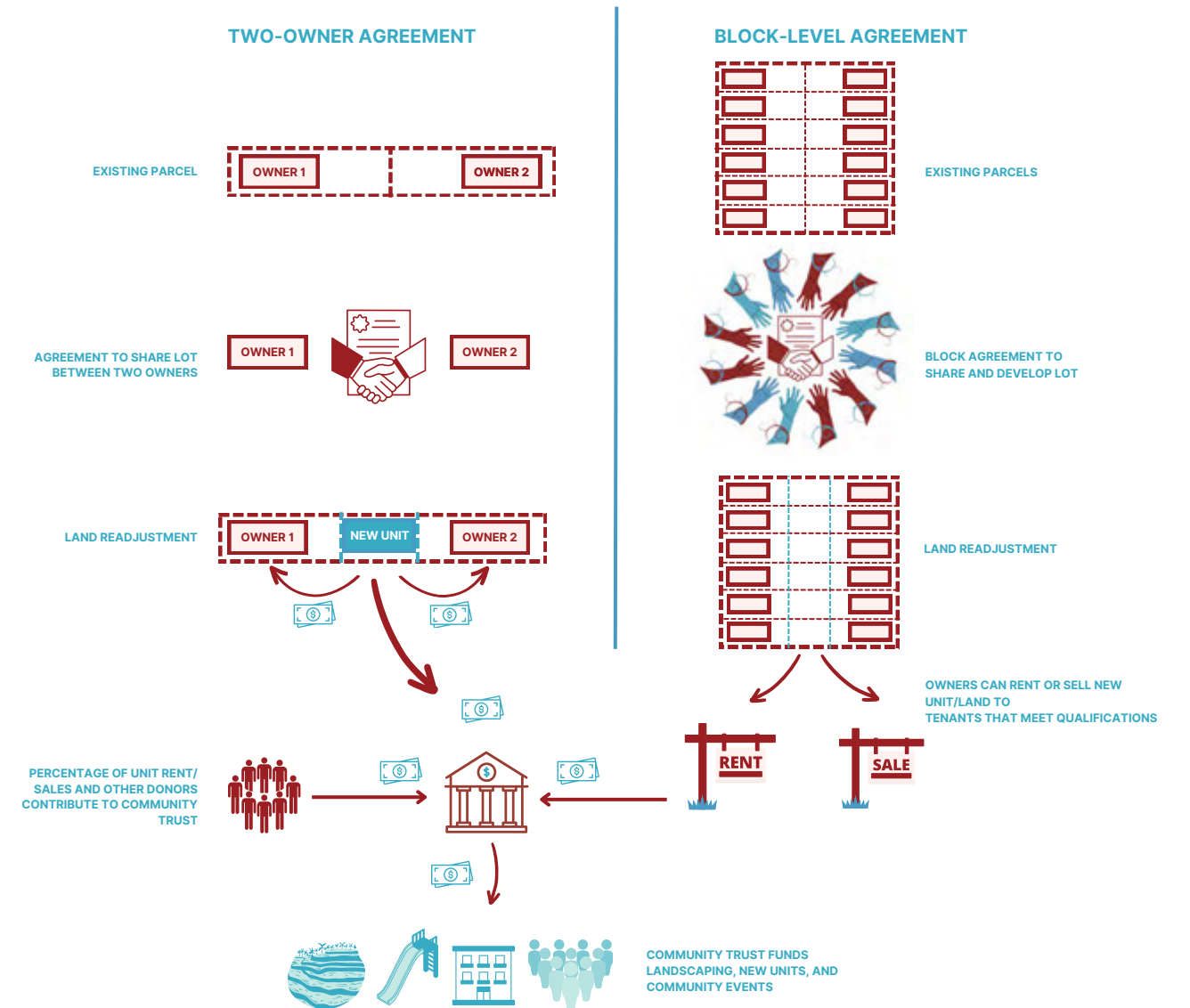
CLTs begin as the ownership of several parcels of land spread over a specific geographic area that is held by a non-profit corporation. These lands are taken off of the private market and are managed on behalf of a community, and any buildings on these lands are sold or leased to housing cooperatives, other non-profit organizations, corporations, or individuals looking to join the community. The ownership of buildings is heritable and mortgageable, allowing residences or commercial buildings to obtain private financing to build or improve their structures. The non-profit owner, that is, the community land trust itself, has a corporate membership that is open to anyone living in the organization's service area. The body of this membership elects the majority of the CLT's board of directors that consist of residents living on the CLT, residents who do not live on the CLT but in the CLT service area, and people representing public interest.

This housing model first emerged across the United States and Europe, and is now even applied to non-residential projects, such as neighborhood parks, community gardens, commercial buildings, and community service centers. But it can also be applied to affordable housing by allowing a family or individual resident to purchase a house for an affordable price on CLT land for a long-term lease and then restricting the resale price of that house to both allow the current resident to accumulate capital but also keep the house affordable for the next resident.

Examples of community land trusts are:

- Cooper Square CLT in New York City
- Termo Territorial Coletivo in favelas across Brazil

Proposed CLT Block Organization: Land Use



In Between Heights CLT:
Annabelle Surya

HERITAGE, COMMUNITY PRESERVATION, & AFFORDABILITY

By Lorraine Colbert

Housing is a vessel for history and heritage, and inner-city housing occupied predominantly by residents of color is at the highest risk of losing its cultural presence to displacement. Each season, the market for housing rentals and purchases in New York City increases and is shaped around gentrifying hotspots in Black and Latinx communities through property buyouts of local businesses, commercial chains that serve their clientele, rent-stabilized housing units, and public housing properties. This process of gentrification and renewal strips cultural expression away from historic communities of color.

In neighborhoods such as Elmhurst, Corona, Woodside, and Astoria, where the skyline was once limited to low-rise mixed residential and commercial buildings, new mid-rise housing units now dominate. These new developments are financially inaccessible to the neighborhood's residents, who face overcrowded living conditions. In the center of these neighborhoods is Jackson Heights, where the skyline has remained relatively unchanged in part because of the designation of the Jackson Heights Historic District in 1993. This landmark designation by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission has protected the architectural integrity of the once-planned garden city for over 30 years. Originally intended as a getaway community for middle-class white families, it promoted exclusive land development outside of Manhattan.

YOUR WORK AND YOUR HOME!

POPULATION

- 45,289,690 Immigrant U.S. residents
- 13.6% of the U.S. population are immigrants
- 17.1% of the U.S. labor force are immigrants
- 9,736,978 Undocumented immigrants in the U.S.
- 88.2% of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. are of working age

OVERCROWDING

- 67.8% of building maintenance immigrant workers live in overcrowded housing (27.8% are undocumented)
- 74.8% of farming, fishing, and forestry immigrant workers live in overcrowded housing (41.7% are undocumented)
- 63.3% of construction immigrant workers live in overcrowded housing (32.6% are undocumented)

NYC HOUSEHOLDS

- 4% (≤ 2 people)
- 6% (3 people)
- 18% (4 people)
- 42% (5 people)
- 61% (6 people)
- 74% (≥ 7 people)

34.8% of building maintenance workers in the U.S. are immigrants (13.7% are undocumented)

42.2% of farming, fishing, and forestry workers in the U.S. are immigrants (22.6% are undocumented)

28.9% of construction workers in the U.S. are immigrants (13% are undocumented)

WEEDPATCH CAMP
HISTORIC + COLLABORATIVE + SUPPORTIVE

Also known as the Arvin Farm Labor Supply Center and the Sunset Migratory Labor Camp, Weedpatch Camp is located in Bakersfield, California. It is designated under the National Register of Historic Places for its significance as a federal housing facility for migrants displaced by the Dust Bowl in 1930s.

2022 County Population: Not a Citizen 30.7%, Naturalized Citizen 7%, Citizen 62.3%

2022 Foreign Born Population: Guatemala 5.2%, Mexico 54.6%

Migrating by: Four farming practices, Migrating by boat, Migrating by foot, Migrating by age and growing olive culture, Migrating by foot, Migrating by foot, Migrating by foot, Migrating by La Bestia, Temporary grape farmers

SAN SALVADOR HISTORIC CENTER
HISTORIC + COLLABORATIVE + SUPPORTIVE

Inspired by FUCVAM, the FUNDASAL Mutual Aid Housing Cooperative Program has 13 cooperatives in El Salvador's Historic Center. They have been supported by FUCVAM, FUNDASAL, FESCOVAM, and other local and international organizations to improve and create new housing for low-income and at-risk families while restoring historic architecture since 2008.

Bar chart showing population by neighborhood: Nueva Trinidad, Altamira, Nuevos Horizontes, San Juan, Las Flores, El Pajaro.

Images: Library of Congress US National Archives, Uruquayan Federation of Housing Cooperatives for Mutual Aid, Salvadorian Foundation for Development and Adequate Housing, Salvadorian Federation of Mutual Aid Housing Cooperatives, Self-Help and Incremental Housing: Likely Directions for Future Policy, FUNDASAL, UCA, UES, Acovichs Cooperative, FUNDASAL.

Infographics:
Lorraine Colbert

Today, however, families from Latin America and Southern Asia have settled in the neighborhood, and Jackson Heights is labeled as “the most diverse place in the world” as it retains its cultural integrity through mixed-use interventions such as street markets, in-home small businesses, and adapting land rights to accommodate its growing population. These strategies of engaging public thoroughfares and property lines have allowed residents of Jackson Heights to merge their heritage with their relationship to housing. The legal regulations of the Jackson Heights Historic District have maintained the neighborhood’s architectural character and prevented new, out-of-character developments from imposing on this relationship and displacing residents. Rather than demolish existing buildings to make way for new development, there is an opportunity in the affordable and environmental solution of rehabilitating existing infrastructure for new uses.



Cultural Preservation Collage in Jackson Heights:
Valeska Abarca & Lorraine Colbert

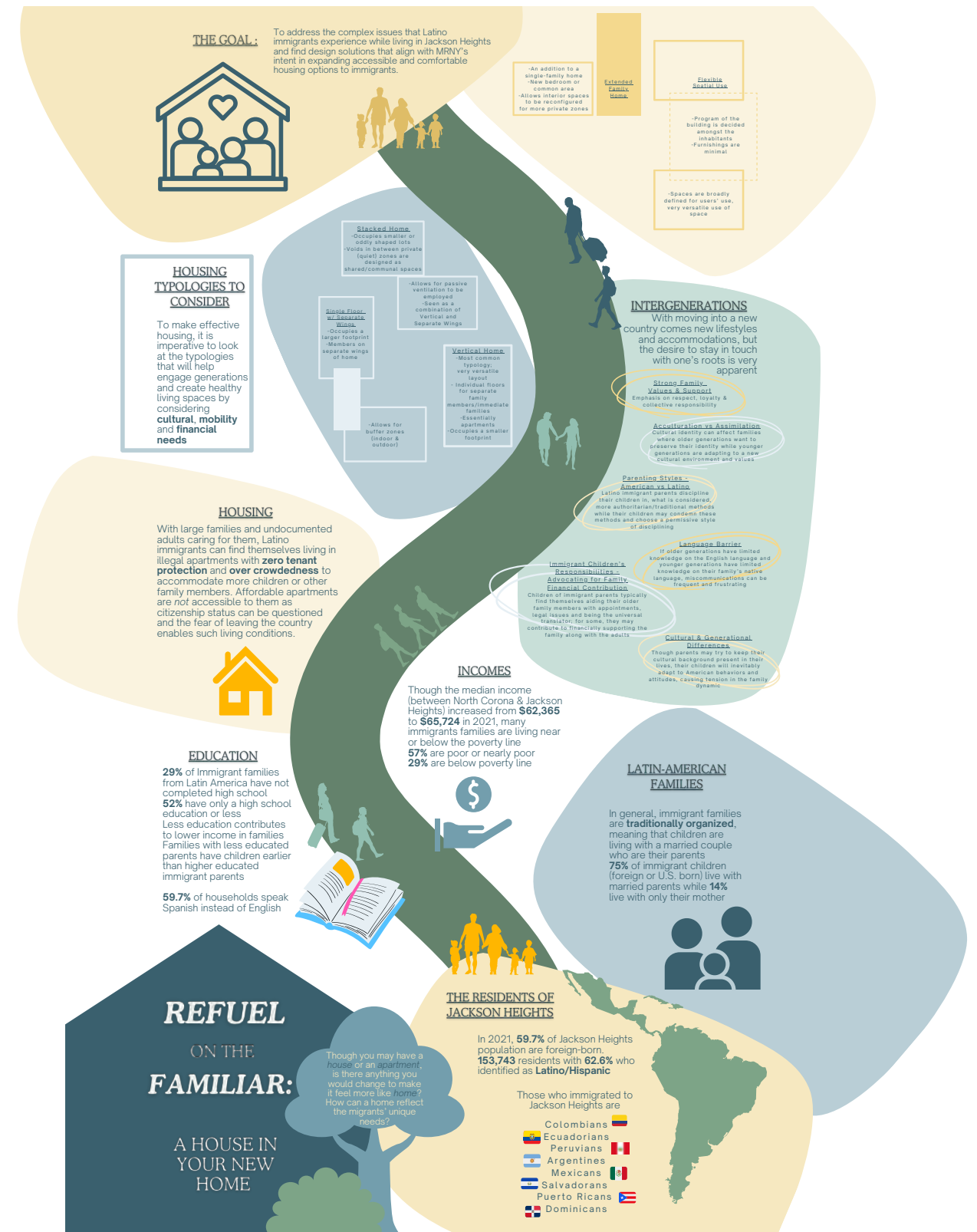
CHAPTER 2

Collective Strategies for Housing Ownership & Production

By Laura Wainer

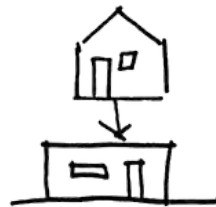
New York City has significant social capital, organized communities, experience in cooperative housing management, and non-profit organizations that can be leveraged for a productive-based role. Additionally, there is a growing movement for cooperative economics rooted in racial and economic justice, ecological sustainability, and informal housing practices that have gained popularity due to the lack of affordable market options. However, these alternative housing models often do not scale up for systemic change and do not consider the specific realities of immigrants in their implementation and feasibility analysis.

Although there is no law against homeownership based on immigration status, immigrants face difficulties securing financing, acquiring legal backing, and achieving tenure stability. The challenges vary depending on diverse legal statuses (foreign nationals, permanent residents, green card holders, refugees, asylum seekers, and DACA recipients). Without targeted solutions, these models will fail to address the challenges faced by communities excluded from both the market and state policy. Advocates are pushing for rent-to-purchase models and community land trusts, specifically designed for families with purchasing and organizational capacity but lacking documentation or legal guarantees.



Refuel on the Familiar Research: Jackie Aguiar

- Project: *Reclaiming the City: Homeownership through Urban Cooperatives*
- Project: *Community Air Trust*
- Project: *Framing the Social Infill: Incremental Approach to Live & Work*
- Project: *Refuel on the Familiar: Stacked Homes*
- Cooperatives of Mutual Aid
- Adaptation of Existing Structures
- The Spatial Form of Collective Organization



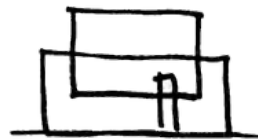
UN CUARTO +, MEXICO



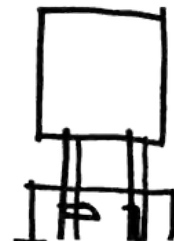
DWELLITO, NYC USA



PLUG-IN, CHINA



**CASA CHORIZO,
ARGENTINA**



**RENOVATIONS
REURBANO, MEXICO**

International evidence on housing cooperatives, community land trusts, and other forms of social organization around property and housing demonstrates that collective models help immigrants overcome barriers to accessing housing opportunities, such as lack of credit, institutional discrimination, and legal status. In NYC, housing collective action has provided participants with a vehicle to secure long-term homes and become more integrated members of the political community. For example, Picture the Homeless (PTH) established a new cooperative form of land ownership and housing (Cahen et al., 2019). The community land trust (CLT) model enhances community control of land, sustaining permanent affordable housing and providing an organizational structure that allows the community to collaboratively determine the best use of the land according to their needs (DeFilippis et al., 2018). Based on the long tradition of community organization and the political momentum of social housing models, collective action-based housing models, if accurately targeted and designed, can help immigrant communities overcome barriers to housing, affordability, and stability.

RECLAIMING THE CITY

Homeownership through Urban Cooperatives

Student

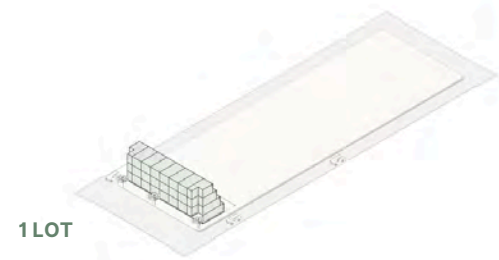
Juan Giraldo

Over the past decade, the United States has faced rising levels of homelessness and housing insecurity. Local governments, particularly in cities like Los Angeles and New York City, often shift the blame onto migrants entering the country, thereby diverting attention from their own responsibilities to provide more fair and equitable housing solutions.

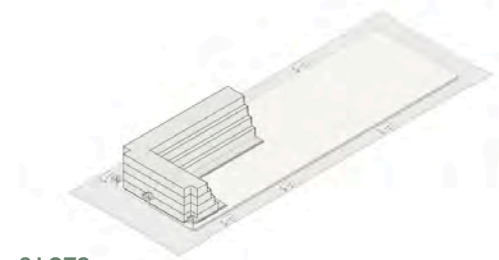
This project challenges conventional building and housing norms by exploring alternative approaches through cooperatives and mutual aid. Within this framework, cooperatives or organizations receive government support to access land, and through financial investment—whether public or private, a new housing methodology is established. The core principles of this typology include cooperativism, shared open spaces, greenification, quality housing, and economic activation. The proposal is a speculation on alternative housing models for land acquisition, building methodologies, and spatial distribution, offering a distinct approach to housing that emphasizes collaboration and community well-being.



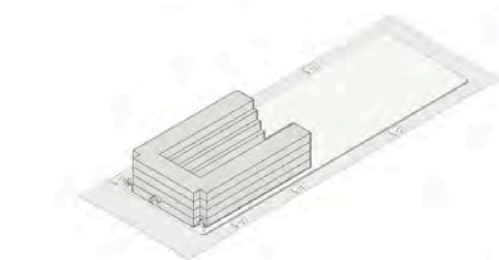
COOP OF COOPS IN COLLABORATION



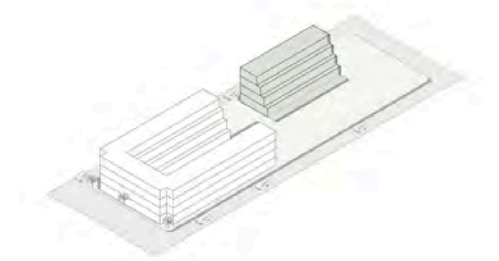
1 LOT



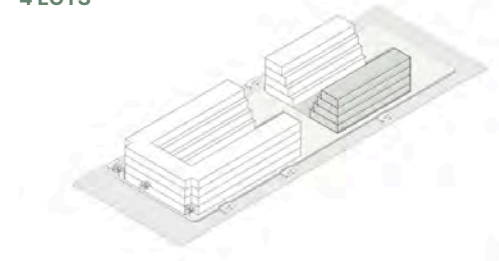
2 LOTS



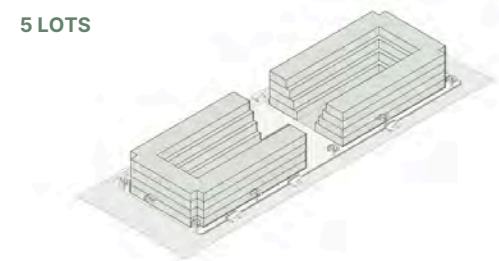
3 LOTS



4 LOTS

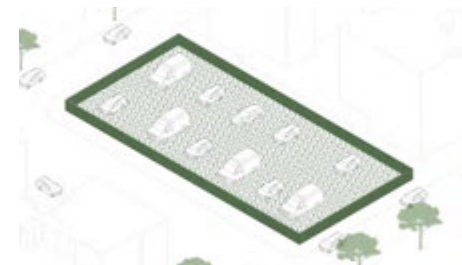


5 LOTS



6 LOTS

NORMATIVE VALUES



EXISTING LOT



LOT SUBDIVISION



SHARED COMMUNAL SPACES



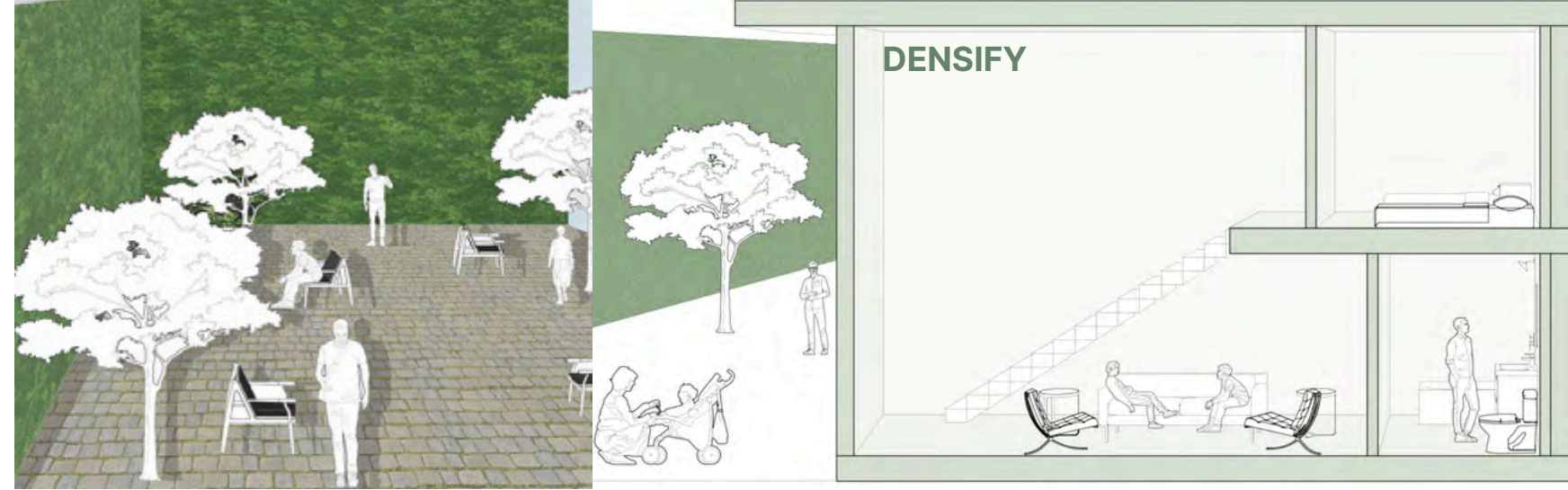
DENSIFY



OPEN CORNERS



POPS SPACES



COMMUNAL SPACES



SHARED POPS

ENLARGE



COMMERCIAL ARCADE

ACT!

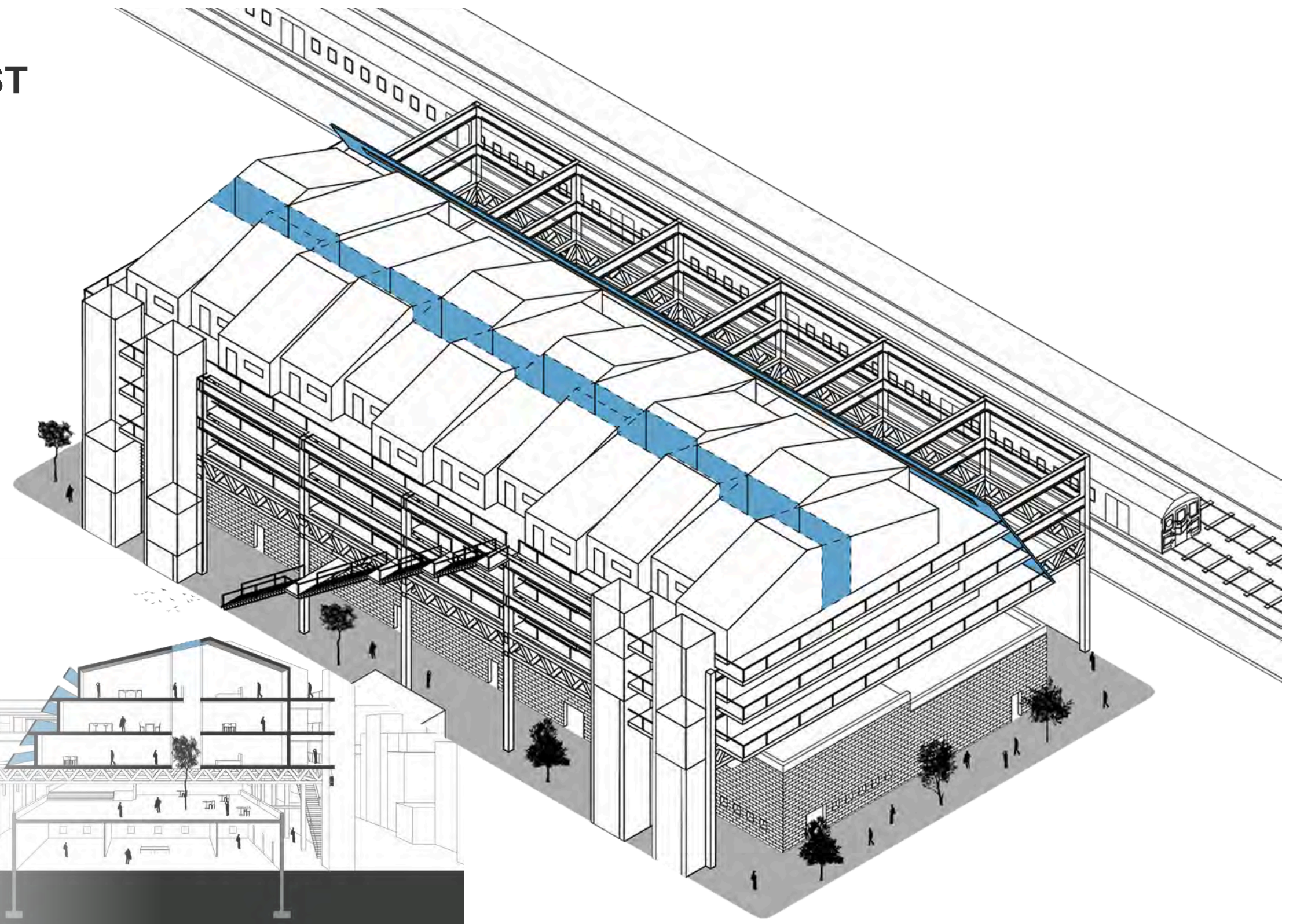
AIR COMMUNITY TRUST

Students

Tingna Huang, Zixuan Lu, & Yongfei Zhu

ACT! is an innovative, affordable housing development that leverages air rights to create a sustainable blend of residential and commercial spaces. The project introduces a novel approach where owners of underdeveloped yet highly valuable land can utilize air rights, allowing for increased density without sacrificing rental income or disrupting the neighborhood's small business ecosystem. Located along the 7 train line, ACT integrates seamlessly with the surrounding urban fabric, enhancing connectivity and preserving the local economy by retaining the existing small property structures, which are typically less monopolistic.

This approach enables affordable housing development while maintaining vitality for local economic activities. The project also offers a range of flexible housing units designed to accommodate diverse family and group structures, ensuring that the community's needs are met as the neighborhood grows and evolves.





FIRST FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN



THIRD FLOOR PLAN



UNIT TYPE A
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



UNIT TYPE B
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



UNIT TYPE C
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



UNIT TYPE D
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



FRAMING THE SOCIAL INFILL

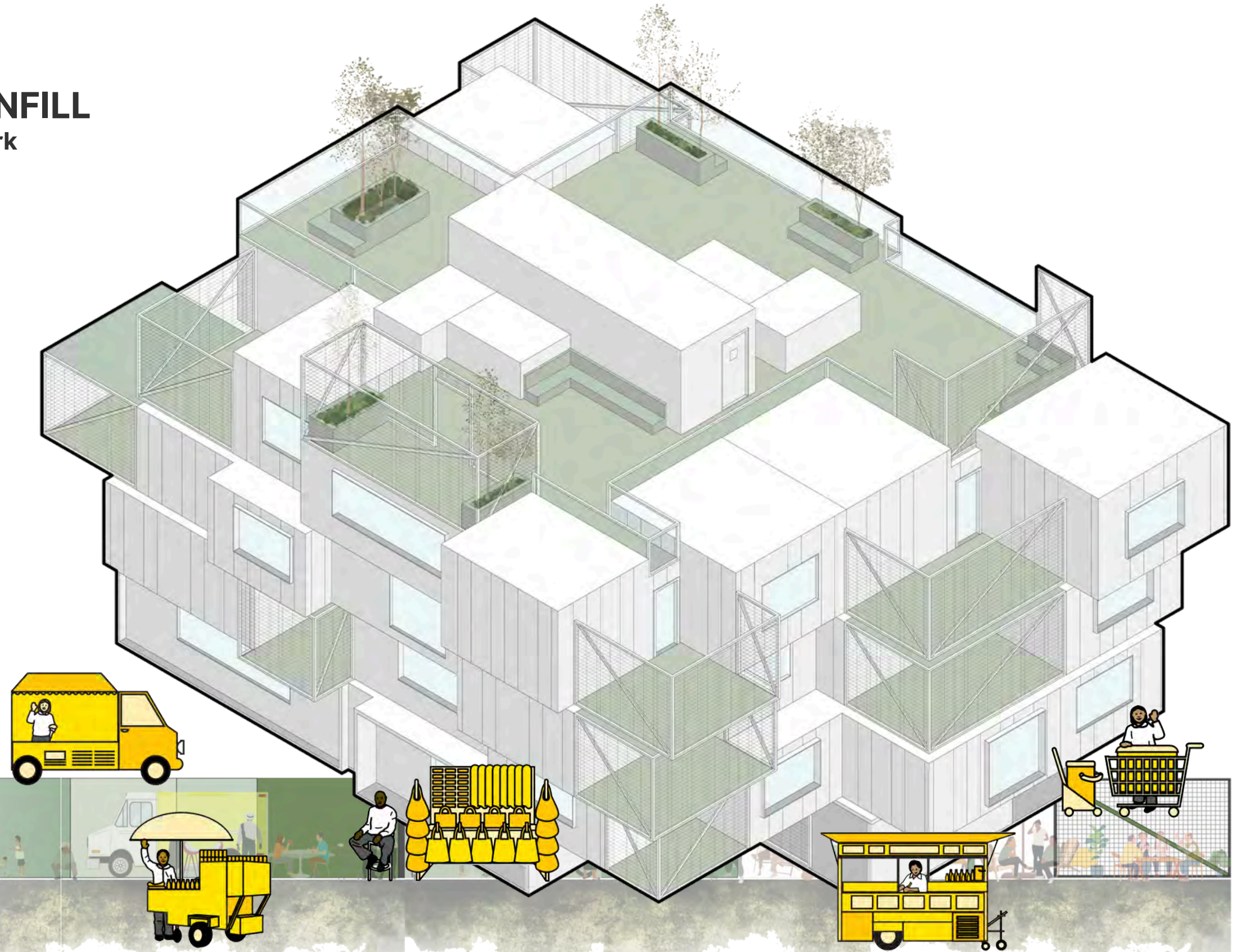
Incremental Approach to Live & Work

Student

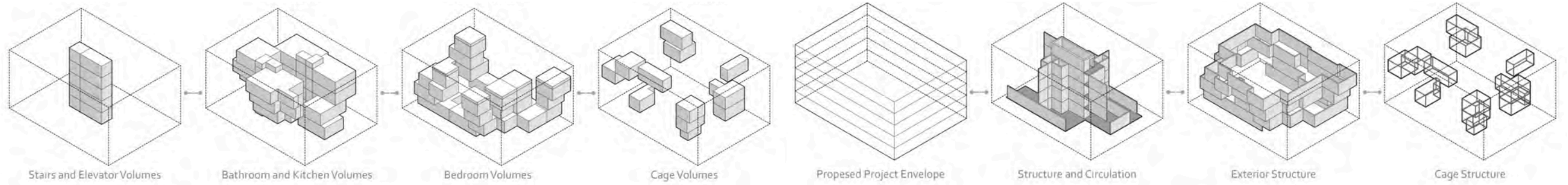
Insuida Gjergji

The project is a mixed-use development designed to meet the evolving needs of urban communities. Its goal is centered on creating a dynamic environment where housing and vendor spaces coexist, fostering economic growth and social cohesion through an incremental design approach. The proposal aims to address the challenges of urban density and economic disparities by providing affordable housing alongside flexible spaces for small vendors, allowing for the expansion of living spaces over time.

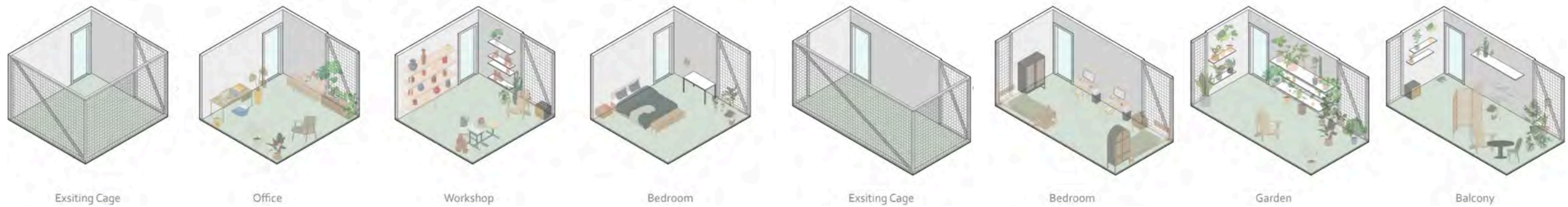
Organized with a "logic of parts"-core, static, and dynamic- the building promotes a system of terrace cages where each family can decide whether to use the spaces as open areas, enclosed rooms, bedrooms, or workshops. The building, which expands and contracts through these terraces, features a ground floor with an open plan, where only the core modules structure a series of infrastructure islands. These islands allow the area's ubiquitous food trucks to connect and disconnect from the building's electrical and water systems, enabling various activities and services to be configured on different days of the week.



COMPONENT



IMPERMENANCE TO INCREMENTAL



REFUEL ON THE FAMILIAR

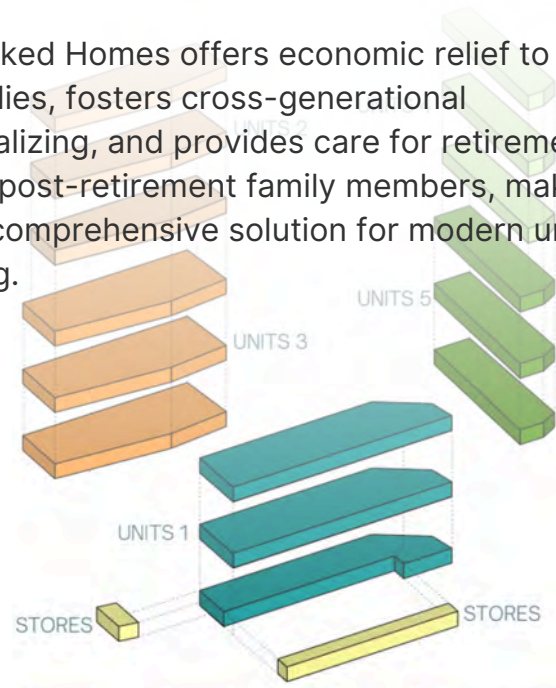
Stacked Homes

Student

Jackeline Aguiar

Stacked Homes combine multi-family and intergenerational townhouse units, stacking them to maximize lot occupancy and increase density using a typology highly valued by immigrant families. By reimagining the traditional NYC townhouse layout and incorporating well-designed exterior circulation, the project introduces a secondary street access at the fourth level. This elevated backstreet ensures accessible units for the three-level stacked homes, allowing intergenerational families to live both independently and together.

Stacked Homes offers economic relief to families, fosters cross-generational socializing, and provides care for retirement and post-retirement family members, making it a comprehensive solution for modern urban living.



COOPERATIVES OF MUTUAL AID

Co-ops are democratically led organizations that ensure every party affiliated with the co-op has a fair say in any decisions made by the cooperative. The main objective of co-ops is to provide mutual benefit for shareholders; therefore, all members of co-ops are treated equally and have equal rights to vote and make decisions. The fundamental principles of cooperatives are based on camaraderie and focus on prioritizing the organization's interests. Throughout history, co-ops have been created in diverse sectors such as housing, finance, worker, and market co-ops. One of the most common forms of cooperatives is found in the housing sector. Co-ops became very popular during the second half of the 20th century, in a postwar period in need of housing.

Mutual Aid Cooperatives developed rapidly in the 1970s in Uruguay as a model consisting of supportive cooperation where the government and the organizations worked together to ensure housing for all cooperative members. Mutual aid co-ops are differentiated from the rest as they imply the equal collaboration of their members in developing the project. All organization members are recognized as equals and are expected to put the same time and effort into the construction process as every other member.

Another clear example of a mutual aid cooperative is the Wohnregal in Berlin, built in 1984 under the model of cooperative mutual aid. This building was constructed with the intention of housing low-income families while creating a sense of ownership for these families. As in Uruguay, the comparison can be made as a response to the social and economic need for housing that is affordable and accessible for everyone.

ADAPTATION OF EXISTING STRUCTURES

Adaptive housing, or the adaptation of existing structures, can be defined as the process by which a house, building, or dwelling is transformed to meet the needs of its occupants. Adaptive architecture aims to adjust to the users of a space by evolving and changing as required, redesigning itself through the modification, removal, or addition of elements. These changes enable a building to maintain its functionality while also providing the flexibility to be used in various ways, adapting to the changing lifestyles and needs of people at different stages of life. Adaptive housing focuses on the reformation of existing structures to make them compatible with the needs of the families who will live in these units.

Adaptive housing methodologies can be categorized as flexible, incremental, and expandable. These are different typologies of housing where dwellings are either transformed by adding an extra room or reconfiguring the layout to meet the occupants' needs. Alternatively, the space can be rearranged to accommodate more than one occupant. The goal of this housing methodology is to adapt existing units, whether large or small, to fit the diverse needs of the people who inhabit them.

Spanish architect José Antonio Coderch designed a project that allowed residents to expand their homes either vertically or horizontally, depending on their family's needs. For example, a single person living in an apartment could expand their home as they moved in with a partner or started a family. Conversely, if someone no longer needed all the space, it could be reallocated to a neighbor who required more. Adaptive housing encourages the exploration of different housing typologies that are not only more participatory but also more flexible, allowing for different uses and adaptations as time passes and human needs evolve.

THE SPATIAL FORM OF COLLECTIVE ORGANIZATION

By Juan Giraldo

One in every 500 Americans is homeless (USAFacts, 2024). As shocking as this statistic may sound, it reflects the harsh reality that many people face daily. The most alarming part is that these numbers are not decreasing. From 2022 to 2023, the rate of homelessness grew by 12% (Picchi, 2023). Living conditions are worsening every day, pushing more people to the brink of homelessness, with approximately 22.1 million people in the U.S. facing rent burdens, with more than 30% of household income going toward rent (Kaysen, 2024). Additionally, housing is becoming increasingly unaffordable as interest rates rise.

Our intrinsic desire to preserve the status quo and maintain traditional development methodologies, where landlords profit while tenants struggle, is catching up with us. The discourse around building affordable housing—which, to be clear, is a crucial strategy for mitigating homelessness and supporting those who cannot afford homes—has often become a convenient pretext for not exploring alternative housing models that might threaten the financial interests of the market and developers. In a way, we have stigmatized different housing typologies because our market, government, and investors have conditioned us to do so. There is so much freedom and diversity in these alternative housing models, yet they have gained a negative connotation simply because anything that isn't highly profitable is deemed undesirable.

While the housing crisis may seem like a contemporary issue, there have been times in history when people came together to create new housing development typologies. During the second half of the 20th century, cooperativism gained popularity worldwide. Many places in the U.S. were developed through organized efforts, and in countries across Latin America and Europe, cooperative systems were established to guarantee housing for working-class citizens. Unfortunately, these organizations later failed due to the disinvestment of governments and banks, which found it less profitable to support cooperative housing compared to dealing with individual clients.

When considering strategies for ensuring high-quality housing and land ownership in cities like New York, practices like cooperativism should be revisited. The only way people can gain control over their housing decisions is by asserting their agency. Although navigating the market can be challenging on an individual basis, cooperativism and collective organizational practices empower communities to take control of their housing. While the road ahead is long and complex, there is a pressing need for people to organize and challenge the system on their own terms. The spatial form of collective organization is achieved through the agency people are willing to assert, and this can be accomplished by supporting our neighbors, investing collectively, and taking responsibility for our shared interest in preserving what is ours.

CHAPTER 3

Equitable Temporary Solutions

By Laura Wainer

Living in a "land of immigrants" carries profound significance for housing opportunities and challenges. The narrative that NYC is a city built by and for immigrants should translate into tangible support for those who continue to arrive and contribute to its growth. However, the reality is often one of exclusion and marginalization, particularly in the housing market. Changing this narrative requires a shift in policy priorities to recognize and address the specific housing needs of migrants at every stage of their journey. By doing so, we can begin to dismantle the barriers that prevent migrants from fully participating in and benefiting from the city's opportunities.

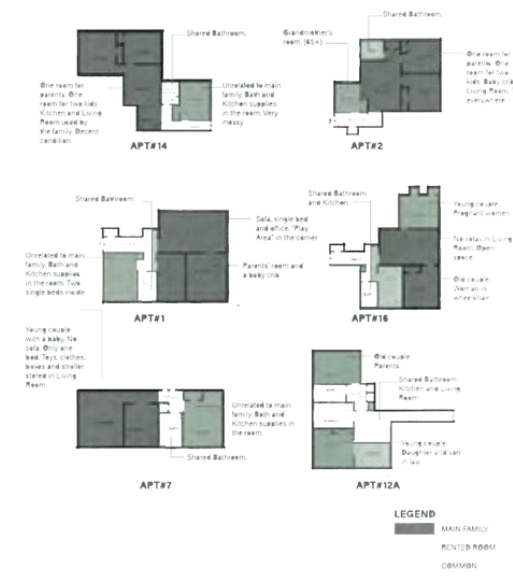
Reflecting on the housing challenges faced by immigrants at various stages of their integration process in New York City reveals a complex landscape of needs, opportunities, and systemic shortcomings. Immigrants' experiences with housing are shaped by their journey through different phases of integration—arrival policy responses. Understanding these challenges and incorporating immigrants' perspectives into broader housing policies is crucial for creating a more equitable and inclusive city.

- Project: Adaptive Shelter Systems
- Project: Care
- Project: GRID Flex: Smart Housing for All
- Flexible Housing
- Social Rental Housing
- Learning from International Experience in Shelter Provision

35-58 97TH STREET

This property contains 18 residential units ranging from 1 to 3 bedroom apartments. The majority of the 18 bedroom apartments had more than one family living together. Typically the main family would occupy the living room, kitchen and one of the bedrooms and the spare room was rented out.

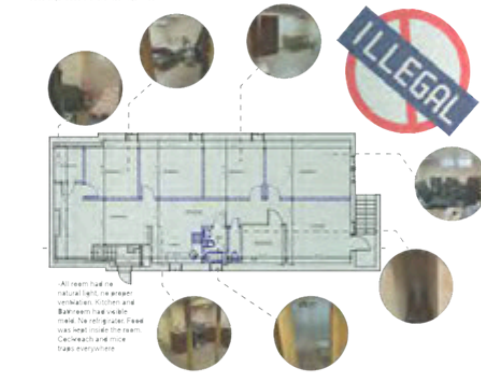
This area was converted to 18 units, residents can convert apartments to 3 or 4 bedrooms. The majority of the units are currently occupied by 2 or 3 families. The majority of the units are currently occupied by 2 or 3 families. The majority of the units are currently occupied by 2 or 3 families.



37-50 75TH STREET

This is a prime example of an illegal cellar conversion seen all over overcrowded neighborhoods. In this particular case the open cellar was converted into an apartment with a full bath, kitchen with gas stove and 5 bedrooms. All rented to different tenants.

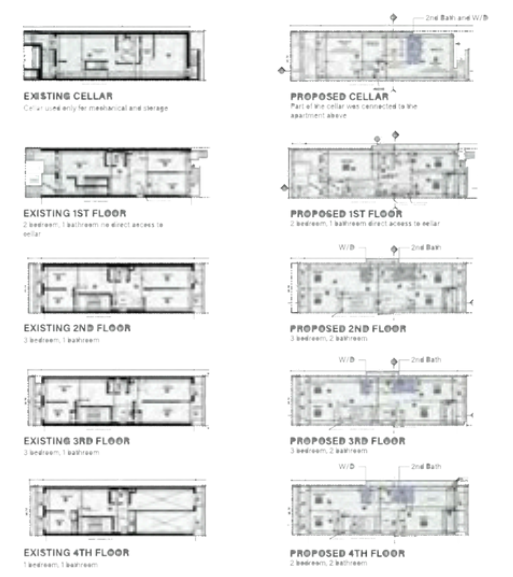
This unit was converted from an open cellar into an apartment with a full bath, kitchen with gas stove and 5 bedrooms. All rented to different tenants. This unit was converted from an open cellar into an apartment with a full bath, kitchen with gas stove and 5 bedrooms. All rented to different tenants.



30-59 38TH STREET

Quick interior renovation to increase comfort and ease to the tenants add value to the property. Prior to the renovation the building was generating approximately \$2000 per unit for a total of \$20,000. After the renovation with the addition of a second bathroom and an in-unit washer/dryer, the monthly income generated by the property increased by more than 30% for a total income of \$26,000.

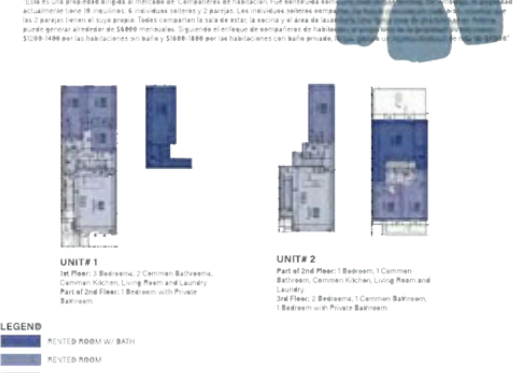
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14-24A 31ST ROAD

This is a property targeting the "roommate" market. It was built as a two-family house. However, the property currently has 18 tenants, 6 single individuals and 2 couples. The single individuals share the bedrooms and bathrooms on each floor, while the 2 couples have their own. They all share the common kitchen and laundry area. A typical two-family house in Astoria can generate about \$2000 monthly. By using the roommate approach, the property owner can charge \$1200-1400 for the rooms with no bathroom and \$1600-1800 for the rooms with a private bathroom, bringing in a monthly total income of \$26,000.

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Informal Overcrowding Housing Research: Evangelos Vasos

Arrivals: Shelter Systems and Their Shortcomings

Under a landmark 1981 ruling, New York City is required to provide shelter to all homeless individuals—men, women, children, and families. Recently, however, new asylum seekers, designated "New Arrivals" (those entering the U.S. after March 15, 2022), are introduced into a complex system initially designed for addressing homelessness and emergency response. Upon arrival, these individuals first go to the Arrival Center at the Roosevelt Hotel (45 E 45th Street, near Grand Central Station), where families with minor children can typically stay for up to 60 days. Singles and families without minors are often directed to one of the city's seventeen Humanitarian Emergency Response and Relief Centers (HERRCs), each providing various shelter types:

- Respite Centers: Short-term, congregate shelters where residents sleep in shared rooms with large groups.
- DHS Shelters: Managed by the NYC Department of Homeless Services, this is the city's largest shelter network, with separate facilities for single men, single women, adult families, and families with children.
- Faith-Based Shelters: Some religious institutions offer night-only accommodations for short stays.

• Although the shelter system offers immediate aid, it often struggles to meet the unique needs of immigrant populations. Additionally, under the recent "60-day rule," asylum seekers in City shelters now face a time limit, restricting their stays to 60 days.

Source:
Documented. Available online at documentedny.com

Transitions: Moving Toward Long-Term Housing

The transition from temporary shelter to long-term housing is one of the most critical and challenging phases of an immigrant's experience. NYC's current systems often fall short in facilitating this transition, leaving many immigrants in a precarious housing situation for extended periods. Affordable housing is scarce, and competition for these units is fierce, which can leave immigrants trapped in a cycle of instability.

After the 60-day shelter period, the city offers case management services to assist migrants in finding permanent housing. However, with New York City's rental vacancy rate at a mere 1.4%, immigrants often face significant obstacles as rental candidates due to lacking credit scores, formal employment, guarantors, and other prerequisites. In response to the Adams Administration's push for "alternative" housing arrangements, many migrants are navigating a challenging "triage" housing landscape. This often leads to overcrowding, shared or doubled up living arrangements, basement apartments, informal rentals, and, for some, homelessness.

Source:
Meko, H. (2023, September 23). For migrants in New York shelters, 60-day limit creates more confusion. The New York Times. Available online at www.nytimes.com

Settling and Integration: Building a Welcoming City

Immigrant households, especially those headed by undocumented residents, are more likely to experience housing-based economic hardship, discrimination and biases, and segregation (Steil et al., 2018). MRNY members report suffer discrimination according to age, family size, and immigration status. Without a fixed address, immigrants can struggle to access essential services such as healthcare, banking, education and employment. Despite this evidence, there are significant knowledge gaps in understanding the strategies that immigrant individuals and families develop to cope with such barriers and hardship conditions. Similarly, although social organizations advocate for the inclusion of immigrants in state

housing policy agendas, there is little understanding of what a immigrant perspective on housing policy should encompass.

An integral housing agenda rooted in inclusivity and a deep understanding of the unique circumstances that immigrants face must consider cultural sensitivity, language accessibility, community support, education and outreach, and partnerships. The following approaches propose paths to establishing such agenda:

Intergenerational: The role of the family in immigration is increasingly recognized as crucial, often being the primary factor influencing relocation decisions and significantly contributing to the settlement process. Intergenerational housing highlights the benefits of diverse age groups residing together, pooling their expertise and time to foster social connections among individuals who might otherwise feel isolated. Within a shared building, various generations and cultural backgrounds mutually learn from and assist each other, fostering communal decision-making. Associated themes include caregiving systems, healthcare, extended family support networks, communal living arrangements, secure housing, and interactions between younger and older individuals.

Supportive: Supportive housing refers to cost-effective accommodation supplemented by essential social services for individuals and families facing homelessness or its imminent risk. These residential complexes typically feature a rental subsidy tied to the apartment, ensuring highly affordable rent for occupants. Tenants are accountable for allocating a percentage of their earnings towards rent and utilities. On-site social services personnel craft tailored support strategies for each household. Additionally, these teams curate social and educational initiatives for the entire community within the building, actively involving tenants in program evolution. Associated areas encompass health and education, initiatives for youth, community services, vocational training, as well as guidance and counseling services.

Collaborative: Models that emphasize various facets of affordability and community development, such as collaborative housing in its diverse forms—ranging from cohousing to community land trusts—act as catalysts for civic engagement. They foster social unity within urban areas by embracing lower-income households that might otherwise be excluded from gentrified neighborhoods. These models promote involvement, resource sharing, and community construction while acknowledging the universal desire for privacy, security, and financial independence in each household. By facilitating cost-sharing and resource pooling among residents, collaborative housing has the potential to reduce the expenses associated with purchasing or renting a home. Related concepts include cohousing, co-living, cooperatives, and land trusts.

Productive: Live-work units represent one of the oldest housing configurations. Throughout history, our urban and rural areas have featured shophouses, often recognized as the original live-work units, where work, commerce, and residence coexisted within the same premises. Robust economic, demographic, and household trends indicate a significant latent desire to utilize residences for work purposes, exerting pressure on the market to accommodate various forms of live-work units. However, over the last fifty years, live-work units have largely become either prohibited or discouraged in most locations. Revisions in zoning regulations, building codes, as well as administrative and licensing procedures, are necessary to facilitate the resurgence of a wide array of live-work options.

ADAPTIVE SHELTER SYSTEMS

Student

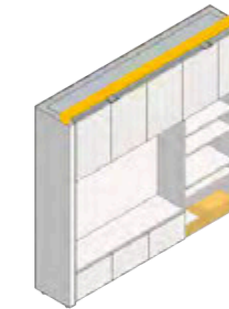
Sara Luna

The proposal introduces a housing system that mirrors the dynamic nature of its inhabitants as they transition and adapt to a new environment, reinventing the shelter system to enhance safety and accommodation for residents. The units are designed to be flexible, much like Tetris pieces, allowing for different arrangements to merge and evolve as needs change.

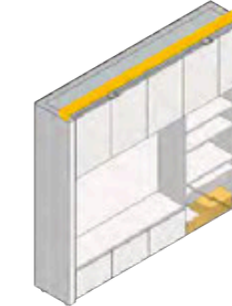
The goal is to propose a housing system that reflects the adaptability of its residents as they navigate their new environment. The design involves reimagining shelter systems to better accommodate newcomers' safety and needs, inspired by common relationship patterns observed among immigrant families. By allowing the modules to move freely, with shared walls that can be adjusted for desired configurations, and incorporating features like a moving storage system on a track, the design can accommodate various daytime and nighttime arrangements, including storage and sleeping or work areas, aiming to create a living space that evolves with its occupants, providing both comfort and adaptability.



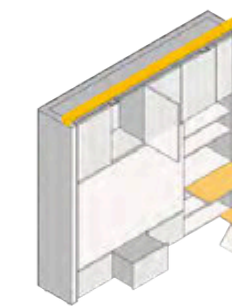
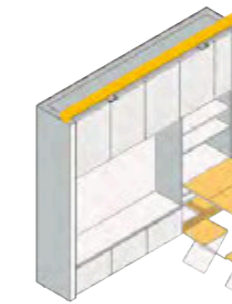
LIVING ROOM - CLOSED



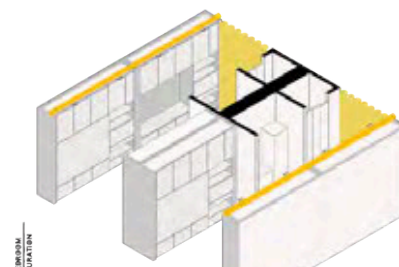
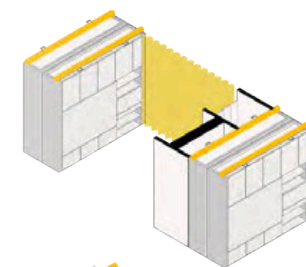
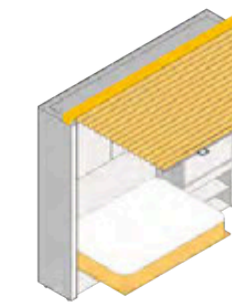
LIVING ROOM - OPEN



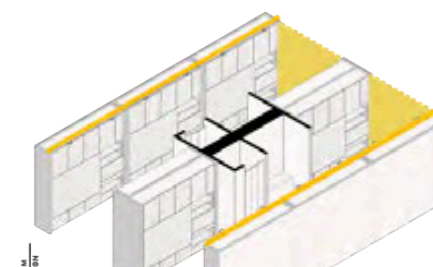
LIVING ROOM - OPEN



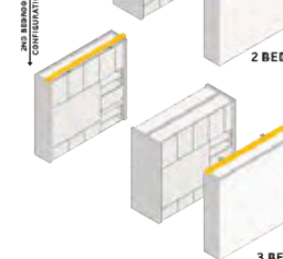
BEDROOM - NIGHT TIME



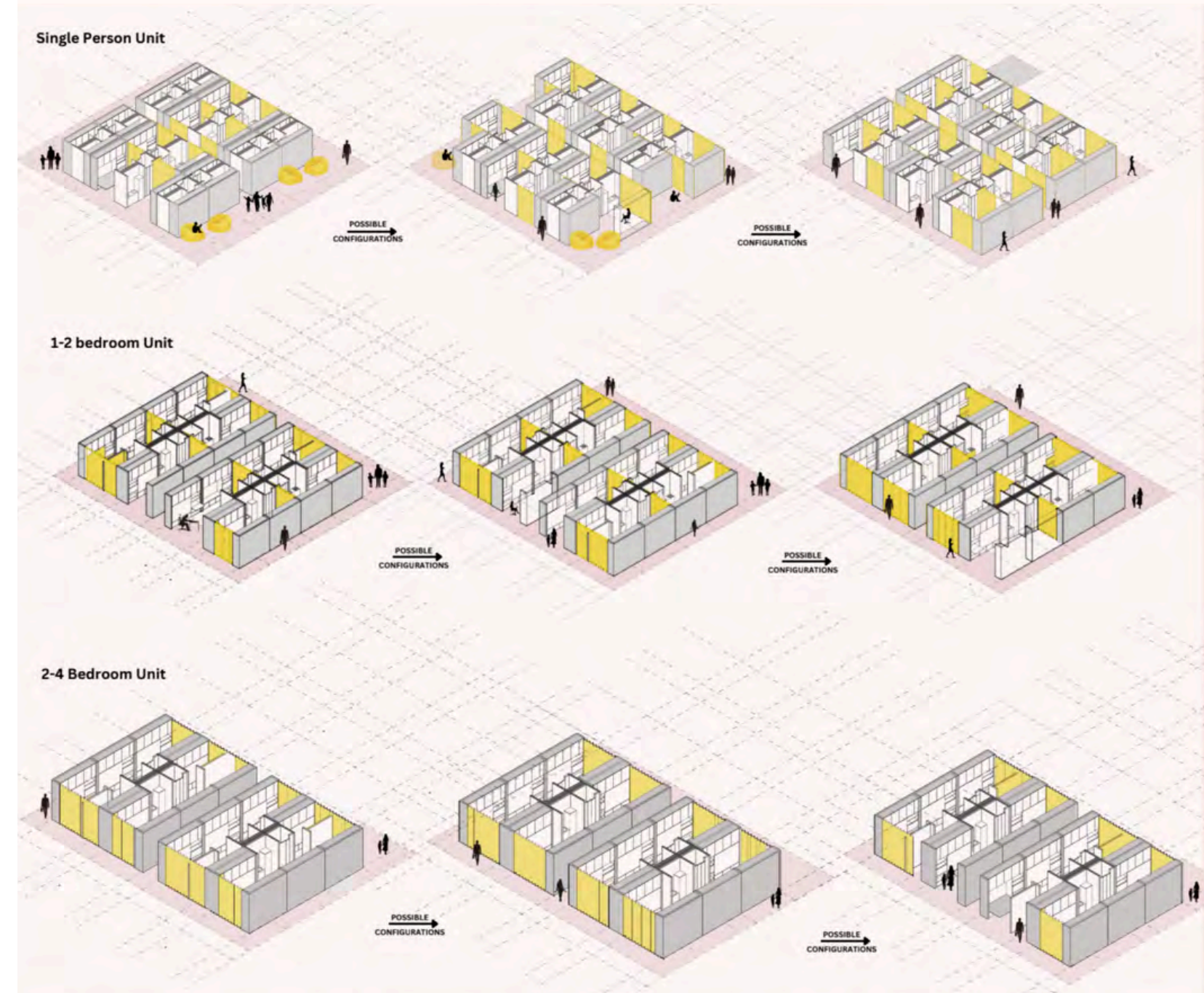
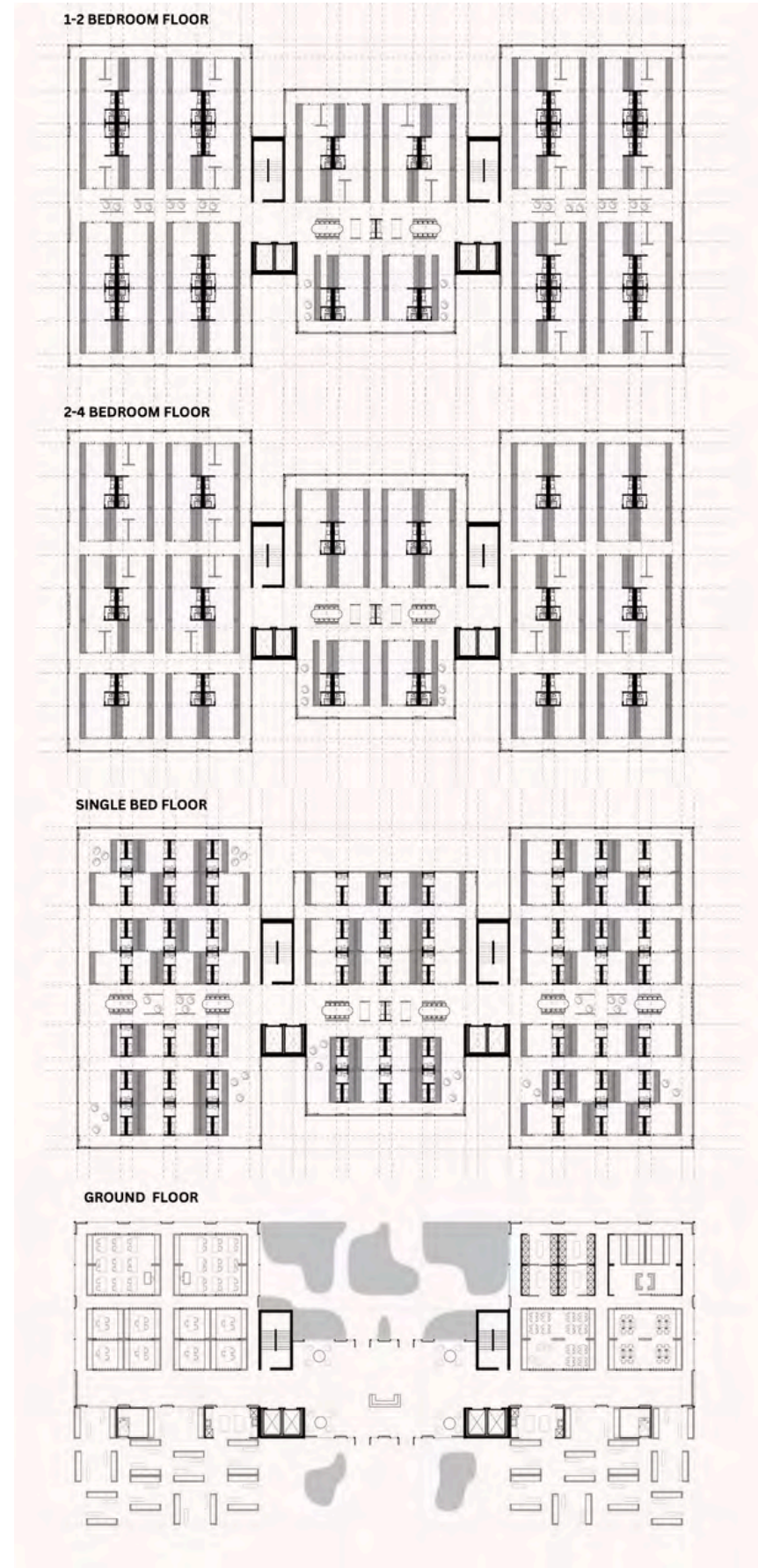
TWO ONE BEDROOMS



2 BEDROOM AND 2 BEDROOM



3 BEDROOM AND 2 BEDROOM



CO-FLEXIBLE HOUSING

Care

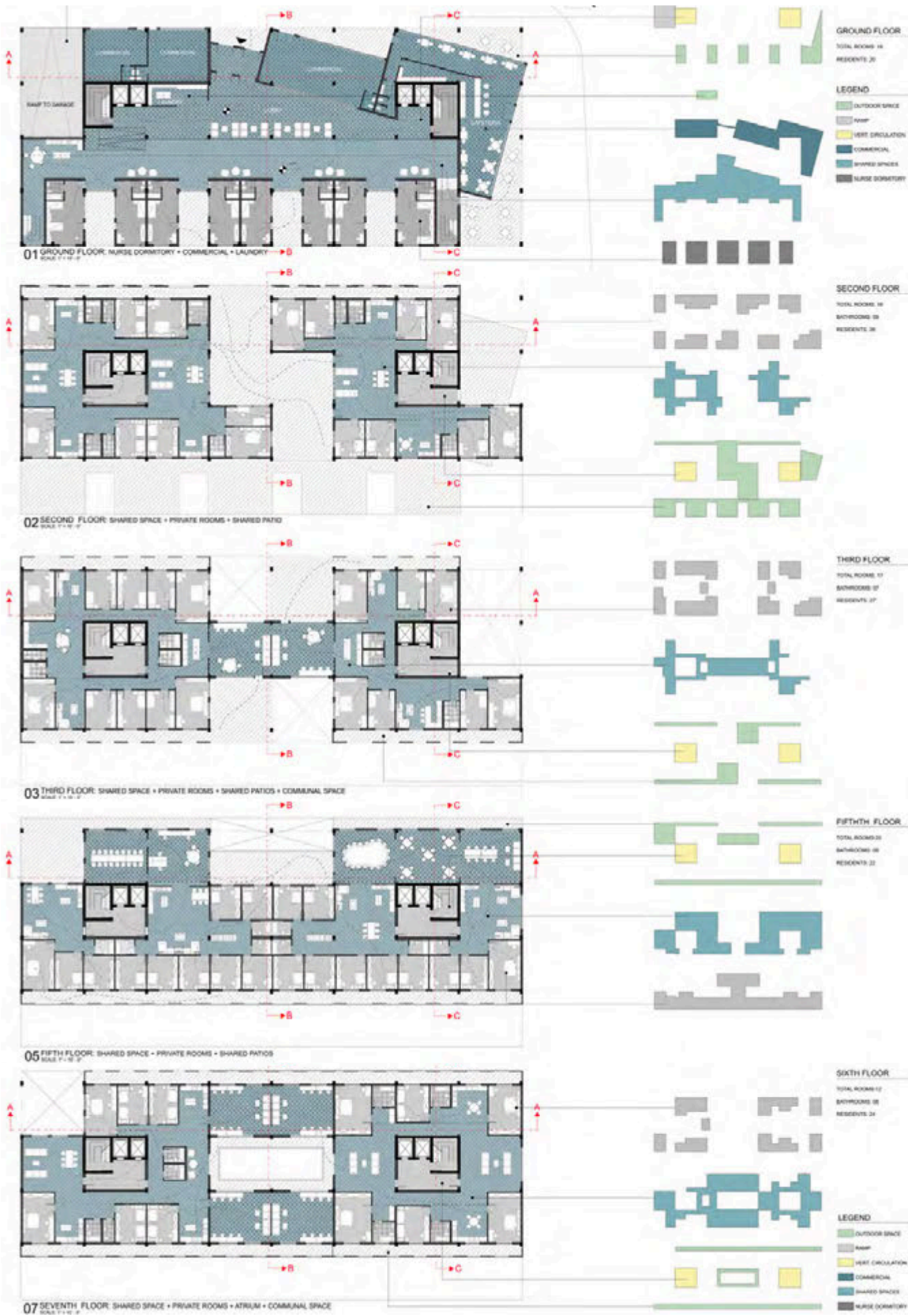
Students

Sammantha Erhman, Klaudia Harizi, Alba Hysaj, & Florim Zharku

The Co-Flexible Housing design concept is centered around the theme of family care, responding to the healthcare challenges and COVID-19 struggles faced by this densely populated community. Given the high concentration of healthcare workers and the overwhelming strain on Elmhurst Hospital during the pandemic, our design prioritizes the needs of both permanent and temporary residents. The goal is to provide affordable housing and a robust support system for the community. Permanent residents will form the core support network, while temporary residents, including hospital workers and patients, can lease temporarily.

The flexible, adaptable floor layouts offer privacy while fostering a sense of community, ensuring the building remains versatile and responsive to the evolving needs of its occupants. By designing a rigid and precisely calibrated framework, each floor can be configured in various ways, giving each level the feel of a standalone building. Additionally, the building includes dormitory-style units for hospital staff on call and for relatives of patients, providing convenient and supportive accommodations.





GRID FLEX

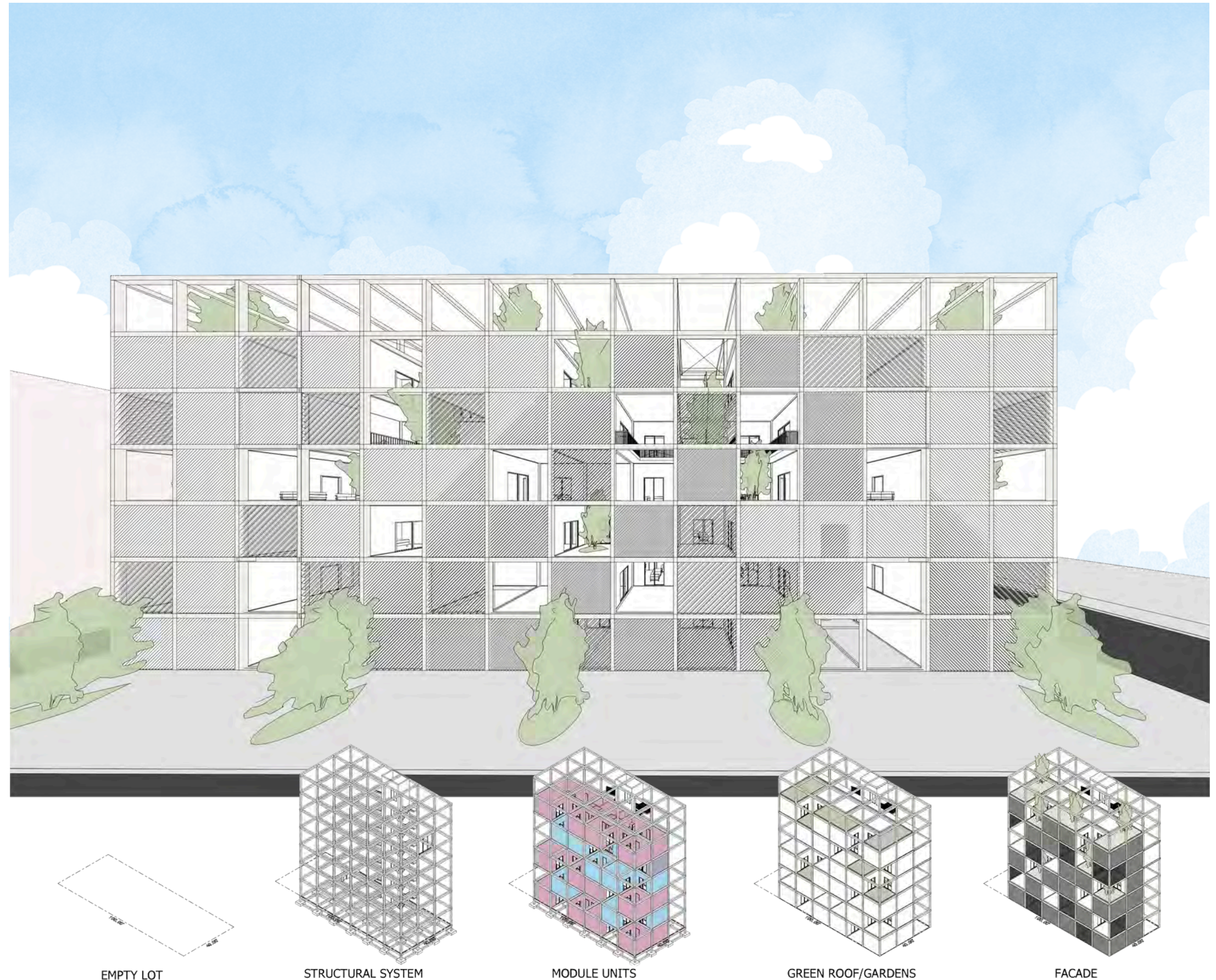
Housing for All

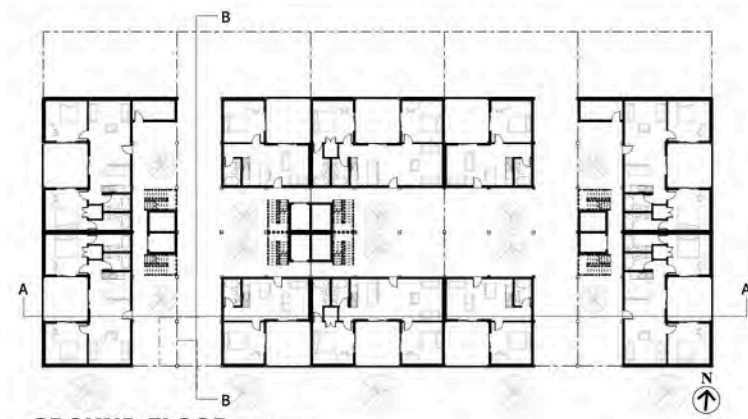
Student

Evangelos Vasos

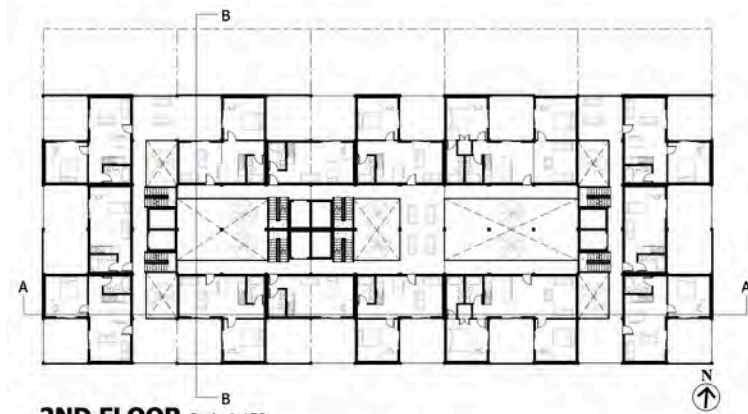
The project builds upon research into how landlords in Queens and Brooklyn modify apartments to subdivide and informally rent them to multiple families. The subdivision methods vary but often involve sacrificing common areas like living rooms, balconies, and dining spaces, leaving only sections of the kitchen and bathroom as shared spaces. Based on the concept of this invisible market, the proposal is an alternative rental model based on the idea of a "rental unit" rather than renting an entire apartment without the possibility of modification.

In this model, the owner of a building or a floor within it can choose from a series of combinations to rent out squared "units" tailored to the needs of each family. Apartments would be composed of assembled squared units, allowing each tenant to select the number of units their apartment requires. This approach ensures that landlords can always have all units rented while adapting the product to different configurations. Additionally, landlords would aim to rent out these units beyond their basic arrangement, discouraging the development of minimal units solely because they are the most profitable real estate option.

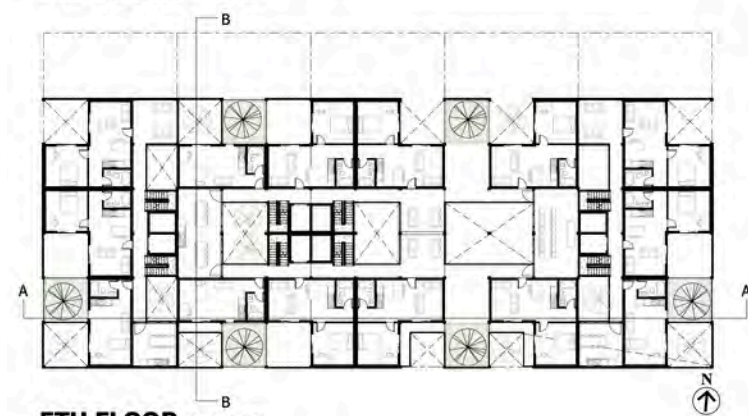




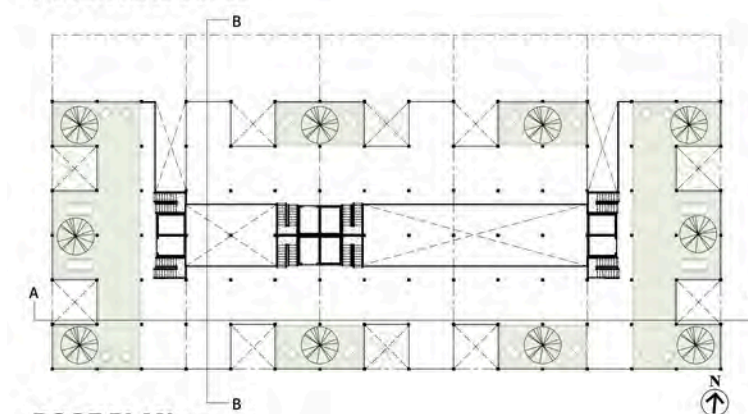
GROUND FLOOR Scale 1:150



2ND FLOOR Scale 1:150

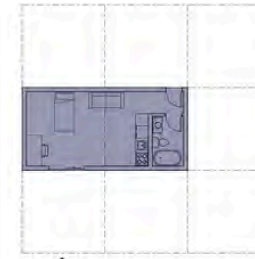


5TH FLOOR Scale 1:150



ROOF PLAN Scale 1:150

ADAPTABILITY



B0
STUDIO



B1
1 BEDROOM



B2
2 BEDROOM

RENTING MODEL



ADDITION

+1 ROOM



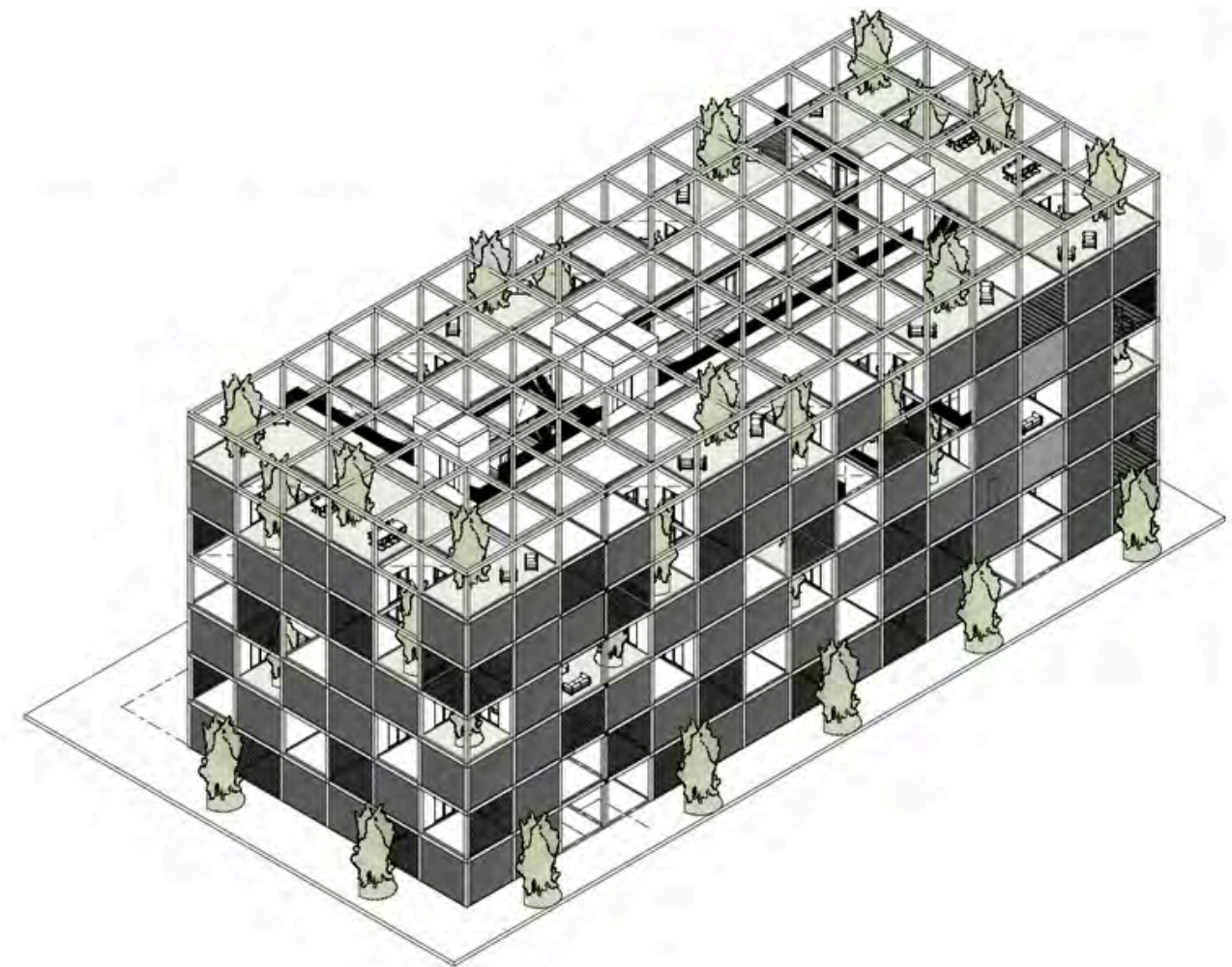
SUB-DIVISION

+1 ROOM



TRANSFER

+1 ROOM



FLEXIBLE HOUSING

Flexible housing, or flexibility, provides housing models that can be adapted to different resident and community needs over time. This includes interchangeable living and public spaces that address the needs of multi-generational families. Instead of confining living into one house, flexible housing rethinks shared space by allowing families to have "many houses in one," which is an optimal solution for affordable renting systems.

This model reduces investment costs and respects the living habits and choices of each resident family. Rather than each family unit having personal facilities that can be costly to operate and maintain, flexible housing provides shared facilities such as kitchens, laundry rooms, and living rooms, thus reducing costs per unit. While these shared spaces can remain as the core of the housing system, connecting multiple residents, personal living spaces can also be modified to implement temporary solutions to addressing resident needs. These solutions can be implemented quickly and do not require large investments, labor, or time to modify.

Examples of flexible housing are:

- Apartments in La Playa, Colombia
- Superlofts designed by Marc Koehler Architects in the Netherlands
- Patch 22 designed by Tom Frantzen et al in Amsterdam, the Netherlands

SOCIAL RENTAL HOUSING

Social rental housing is a form of supportive and affordable housing regulated by governmental institutions rather than the free market. It can be implemented either exclusively in an entire building or complex or as part of mixed developments. One example of this is in South Africa, where the Social Housing Regulatory Authority (SHRA) oversees these initiatives. This national government entity subsidizes up to 65% of the capital costs of housing projects, allowing subsidized units to be offered to tenants with specific monthly family incomes, including those with informal labor statuses. Social rental housing is successful when there is an established framework for housing applications and when budget allocations align with government policies that ensure effective institutional capacity, resourcing, management, and the provision of additional subsidies to meet the needs of lower-income households.

The pricing of social rental housing is regulated to remain affordable for the target population, and the residential units cannot be sold. While the primary function of social rental housing is to develop and manage the housing stock, it also involves community and neighborhood projects that help residents address social and economic challenges. The process begins with the provincial government, which acts as the regional regulator and allocator of funds and is responsible for implementing housing policies. The national budget is allocated proportionally based on provincial development needs, with key functions including approving housing project applications, disbursing grants, and monitoring and evaluating housing delivery. The local government facilitates the execution of housing delivery, provides land, and ensures that projects adhere to urban and territorial development guidelines. The housing projects are financed through a combination of government funds, debt, and a maximum of 10% for-profit equity.

PERMANENT, TRANSITORY, AND SHELTER HOUSING IN NYC

By Lorraine Colbert

New York City's housing landscape encompasses various approaches, each addressing different needs and challenges faced by its diverse population.

Permanent, transitory, and shelter housing all play critical roles in the city's efforts to provide adequate housing solutions, but each comes with its own set of strengths and limitations.

Permanent Housing: This approach is the cornerstone of stability and security for many New Yorkers. It includes affordable housing developments, rent-stabilized and rent-regulated apartments, and first-time homeownership opportunities. Permanent housing provides residents with a sense of belonging and community, which are essential for long-term personal and financial stability. Public housing programs and municipal departments such as the New York City Housing Authority and the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development aim to create and preserve hundreds of thousands of affordable units to ensure that low- and middle-income families have access to safe, long-term housing. However, the demand far exceeds the supply, leading to long waitlists and competition for available units. Additionally, gentrification and rising property values continue to threaten the affordability and availability of permanent housing, particularly in historically marginalized neighborhoods with Black, Latin American, and immigrant residents.

Transitory Housing: This includes short-term rental options and transitional housing programs, serving as a bridge for individuals and families experiencing temporary displacement or economic hardship. Designed to provide immediate relief and support while residents work towards securing permanent accommodations, NYC's transitional housing programs, such as rehabilitation programs and halfway houses, offer not just a roof over one's head but also access to services like job training, mental health counseling, and financial planning. These programs are vital for helping residents regain stability and independence. However, their effectiveness is often hampered by limited funding and resources, leading to overcrowded facilities and

long wait times for entry. Moreover, the temporary nature of this housing can create instability, as residents may have to move frequently, disrupting their lives and making it harder to achieve lasting stability.

Shelter Housing: This represents the emergency response to homelessness, providing immediate, albeit temporary, refuge for those with no other options. NYC operates one of the largest shelter systems in the country, offering a safe haven for many individuals and families every night. However, the city's shelter system lacks the resources to address the underlying issues contributing to homelessness, such as mental health, substance abuse, and chronic unemployment. This often results in repeat residents if they manage to meet the shelter's strict curfews, storage limitations for personal belongings, and long wait times to obtain a bed each night. Conditions in shelters can be challenging, with overcrowding, lack of privacy, and limited access to comprehensive support services, which can impede individuals' efforts to transition out of homelessness.

A comprehensive and effective housing strategy in NYC requires integrating permanent, transitory, and shelter housing approaches. Permanent housing provides the foundation for long-term stability, transitory housing offers critical support during periods of transition, and shelters ensure immediate safety for those in crisis. To address the housing crisis effectively, NYC must increase investment in affordable permanent housing, enhance the capacity and quality of transitory housing programs, and improve conditions within shelters through rethinking government policy and funding and challenging the social stigma of supportive housing. Additionally, supportive services that address the root causes of housing instability must be integrated across all housing approaches. By learning from the successes and shortcomings of each housing approach, NYC can work toward a future where every resident has access to stable, safe, and affordable housing, ensuring that no one has to endure prolonged homelessness in one of the richest cities in the world.

CHAPTER 4

Housing Plus: Supportive, Intergenerational, Circular

By Laura Wainer

The role of housing policy in shaping the integration of immigrants is highly significant, as the location, quality, and type of housing play a crucial role in influencing their educational and economic opportunities, as well as their overall health and well-being. Immigrants frequently encounter multiple obstacles when seeking housing, including ongoing bias from landlords, uneven enforcement of housing regulations, and legal barriers that exclude them from specific housing markets and public assistance primarily derived from federal policy (Dell'Olio, 2004). The ability of immigrants to secure housing significantly impacts their integration into their new urban environment, particularly regarding their access to employment, accumulation of wealth, and utilization of educational and other social resources (Ray, 2004). One in four eligible households in the U.S. receives federal housing assistance, but none of these public efforts go to non-U.S. citizens (Steil et al., 2017). This is particularly important, as there is empirical evidence that housing policy alleviation can play a crucial role in reducing inequality by enabling individuals to maintain stable employment, mitigating economic segregation through zoning regulations, and shaping work and income generation motivations with tax schemes (Acs & Johnson, 2015). Immigrants' legal status is a primary source of housing disparities among Latinos in the U.S., with unauthorized Latinx immigrants experiencing persistent disadvantages regarding housing cost burdens compared to authorized Latinx immigrants. Immigrant households, especially those headed by undocumented residents, are more likely to experience housing-based economic hardship and difficulty earning a living wage in cities like New York.

- Project: *Childhood Nodes: Perspective from Migrant Families*
- Project: *Revindication of Domestic Workers & Migrant Families*
- Project: *Gardening as Healing*
- Project: *Make, Collective, Transform*
- Reflection



Circular Economy Research:
Fernanda Cadenillas & Bryan Hernandez

Combined with discriminatory and exploitative practices in the housing market and the absence of supportive public policies, immigrant families are left vulnerable to the harmful consequences of poverty. These families must address their housing needs in unregulated spaces characterized by predatory practices, poor living conditions such as overcrowding, and informality. Although multi-generational households can yield advantages for familial well-being and are more prevalent within immigrant communities, crowded living conditions can adversely affect health and overall welfare. Housing instability is connected to adverse health outcomes for both adults and children and tends to be more prevalent among those experiencing poverty. These housing situations have been linked to negative health outcomes, including asthma, cardiovascular diseases, and mental health issues (Evans, 2004; Krieger et al., 2002; Rauh et al., 2002). Young children in such living conditions are particularly prone to setbacks in socio-emotional skills, language acquisition, and motor abilities compared to their peers. Additionally, prolonged stress among parents, particularly maternal stress, as well as untreated depression during early stages of a child's development, can lead to developmental delays and mental health challenges for the children (Weckesser, 2022).

Latinx immigrants often reside in ethnic enclaves, communities that are sometimes perceived as risky environments, neglecting the potential resources they can offer to alleviate the effects of low socioeconomic status (Martins et al., 2014). This segregation may arise from a combination of housing discrimination and immigrants' deliberate choice to settle in ethnically homogeneous neighborhoods. While immigrants might feel more secure in their day-to-day interactions within ethnic enclaves, they may encounter hurdles in accessing essential services and resources and face linguistic and social isolation (Davis, 2000). Consequently, living in segregated communities may inadvertently foster additional institutional discrimination and potentially result in individual-level discrimination, manifesting as microaggressions—everyday language or behaviors conveying prejudice—when immigrants venture beyond the enclave. Immigrant families often lack the tools to address or openly discuss discrimination among themselves.

Immigrant parents might struggle to navigate conversations on this subject with their children while simultaneously dealing with their own experiences of discrimination. In this context, parents may find it challenging to motivate and guide their children toward pursuing goals and excelling academically, particularly amidst elevated stress levels, psychological strain, and social isolation (Ayon, 2015).

CHILDHOOD NODES

Perspective from Migrant Families

Students

Mauricio Guidos & Genesis Soto

Childhood Nodes is focused on seamlessly integrating Latinx immigrant families into the U.S. while providing their children with a safe and supportive environment. The project is designed from the perspective of children and young people, organized around a series of internal courtyards surrounded by housing units that overlook these spaces and are closed off from the street. This design allows children to play and spend time safely while being monitored by their caregivers from different parts of the building (residences or common rooms). The external courtyards offer a shared space for neighborhood children, fostering social interaction.

The program also includes study rooms, libraries, infant care facilities, and spaces for continued education for adults and teens, with amenities like vocational schools, trade schools, daycare facilities, community kitchens, and community gardens. Children are centrally located at the nodes, enriching the community and creating a space for safe informal and formal play. At its core, the project addresses not only the safety of migrant children but also the housing needs of their families.





REVINDICATION OF DOMESTIC WORKERS & IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

Student
Sydney Mauricio

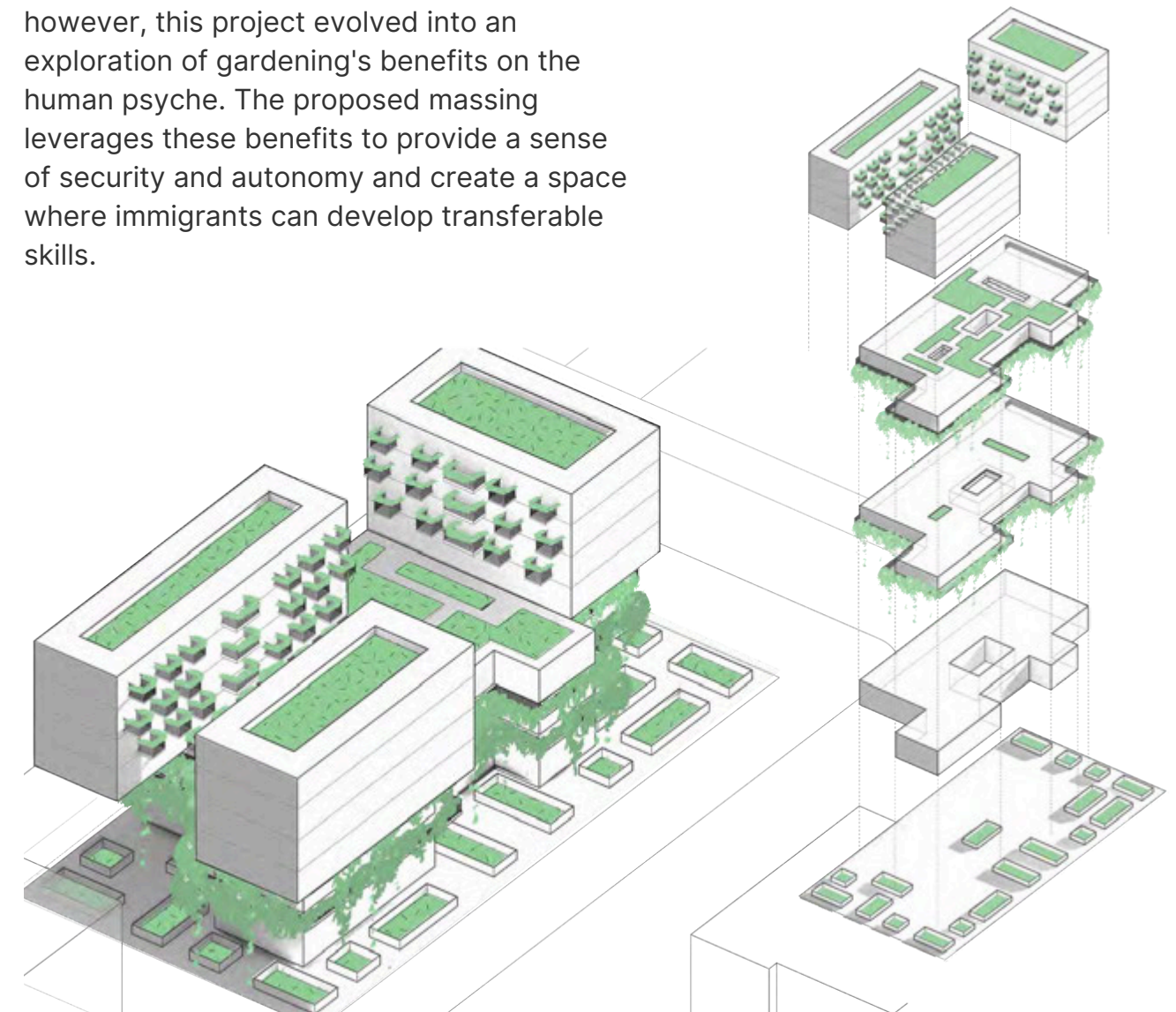
Domestic workers suffer from a lack of resources and protection for their employees. Live-in housing conditions can be rooms with five or more workers living in basements, makeshift rooms, and laundry rooms. This proposal aims to provide a safe space for domestic workers to live in and supply them with resources, from cleaning supplies and scrubs to workshops from a trade school.



GARDENING AS HEALING

Student
Onika Gregory

The proposal of Gardening as Healing aims to serve as a safe haven for struggling immigrants in Jackson Heights. Over time, however, this project evolved into an exploration of gardening's benefits on the human psyche. The proposed massing leverages these benefits to provide a sense of security and autonomy and create a space where immigrants can develop transferable skills.



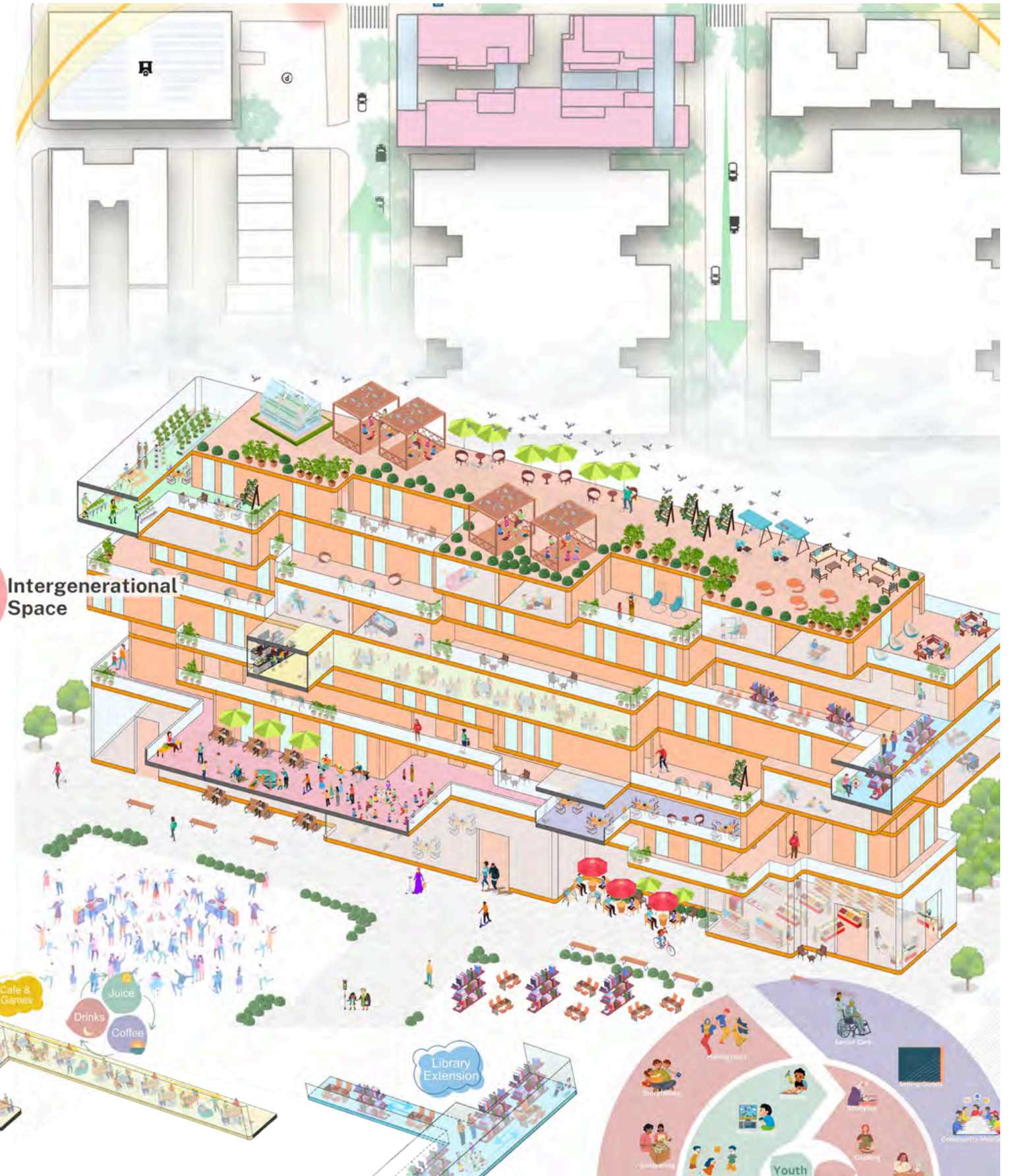
GENERATION HAVEN

An Intergenerational Space for All

Student
Eshrat Khan

Generation Haven is a mixed-use development designed to create an inclusive, intergenerational community where people of all ages can live, work, and thrive together. This project embodies a holistic approach to urban living by seamlessly integrating residential, commercial, and communal spaces that encourage meaningful interactions between the elderly and the youngest members of society.

Rooted in the belief that fostering connections between generations enhances community well-being and resilience, Generation Haven offers spaces that cater to the diverse needs of families, young professionals, and children. Key features include a library that also serves as a childcare center, a community garden that provides food security education, and a café that doubles as a play area. These spaces of encounter are thoughtfully located on bridges that link family residences, half apartments for the elderly, and nursing facilities.



MAKE, COLLECTIVE, TRANSFORM

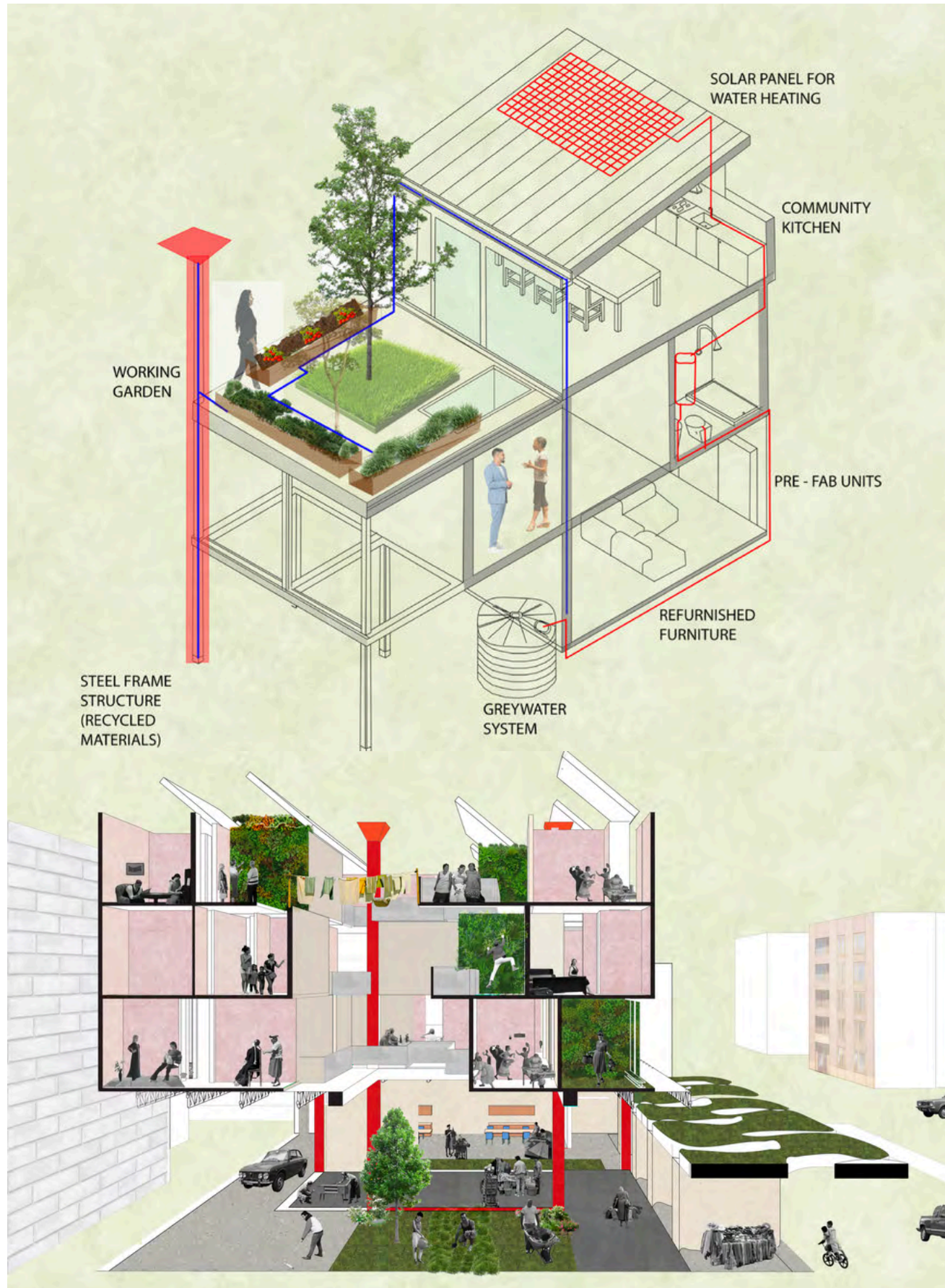
Students

Fernanda Cadenillas & Bryan Hernandez

New Yorkers discard over 10,000 tons of garbage each day, yet only 14% of it was recycled in 2009. Additionally, 18% of all waste consists of food waste annually. In Jackson Heights alone, 10,889 participants contributed to the collection of 88,799 pounds of food scraps and 111,000 pounds of textiles through GROWNYC. In a sense, NYC is rich in waste, from furniture, clothing, and books to toys and technology products, all of which could become part of a circular ecosystem of recycling, design, and innovation.

This project envisions a residential building combined with a specialized recycling center, repurposing hub, and commercial training center focused on the circular economy.





A PERSONAL REFLECTION

Drawing on the Experience of Immigration

By Juan Giraldo

Immigration perspectives vary widely, shaped by individual experiences. In the United States, about 41 million people are foreign-born (Moslimani and Passel, 2024). Over the past century, people have come to this country for many different reasons and through various means, but they share a common goal: the pursuit of opportunity. Whether seeking professional growth, academic advancement, or simply a fresh start, immigrants have long viewed the U.S. as a beacon of possibility. Regardless of where you are in this country, you likely need only look to your grandparents or great-grandparents to trace your family's immigrant roots. No matter how American you may feel, at some point—perhaps not in your lifetime—your family was once new to this land.

Though we come from diverse backgrounds—European, African, Asian, South American—we often overlook the struggles that our ancestors faced upon arriving here. Immigration is seldom easy. While some may find the transition smoother than others, most face significant challenges. Adapting to a new culture, language, way of life, and methods of communication and movement is daunting. Yet, the hope persists that the sacrifices we make today will pave the way for a better life for our children and grandchildren.

We have all either experienced or witnessed the challenges of immigration. Whether it happened to us directly, to someone we know, or through the experiences of our parents or relatives, immigration is an inescapable part of our collective narrative—especially in a nation built by immigrants. Despite this, many people view immigration negatively, treat it as a topic best avoided, or even demonize the idea of welcoming newcomers. Some talk about immigrants as though they are the worst thing to have ever happened, forgetting that their own ancestors once walked a similar path.

During my time in the United States, I have encountered a wide range of experiences and met people from diverse backgrounds. I've met politicians, leaders, businesspeople, educators, and dreamers just beginning their journeys. I have close friends with both right-wing and left-wing views, and despite our differences, we can still call each other friends.

Unfortunately, the United States has been tainted by a longstanding disdain for those who are different. For centuries, we have struggled with prejudice against those who don't look or act like us, even though we all share the commonality of being descendants of immigrants. People are not intrinsically bad, as Hobbes suggested, or at least, that's not what I believe. The issue lies not in the "government this" or "government that" narrative, but in our tendency to view others with suspicion simply because they don't resemble us.

The United States is as much a land of opportunity as it is a land of immigrants. The day we learn to embrace one another not for our differences but for our shared humanity, we will make our country—and our world—a much better place.

LIVING MACHINE

Housing as Infrastructure

By Mouhamadou Dieng

New York City has a rich history of insurgent “informal settlements,” and political unrest and action for housing justice. Squatting, for example, was prominent in the 1980s, particularly in the Lower East Side, in which Black and Brown people physically occupied space to protest the inequities in the housing market. These occupations took place with sledgehammers, makeshift encampments, and collective action. Disruptions within the city took place because of a material and cultural agency. These makeshift encampments suggest a lack of temporality, that housing itself is constantly in flux. There are lessons to be taken from these informal occupations and propose a new system of autonomy and self-management for housing.

Squatters’ settlements functioned with a larger scale of autonomy that should be more ever present in our current living situations. Jackson Heights is no stranger to “informality”; Roosevelt Avenue is a cultural and commercial corridor full of vendors who occupy the street. Many new migrants often take up these informal occupations; selling candy in trains, selling food on the streets, or various goods, to make ends meet. The way they live is also informal space-making and is not something that is new to Jackson Heights. Most of these street vendors live and work within Jackson Heights, but typically are not homeowners or formal renters.



Picture 1
“Squatting, for example, was prominent in the 1980s, particularly in the Lower East Side,”
Photo via Peter Spagnuolo

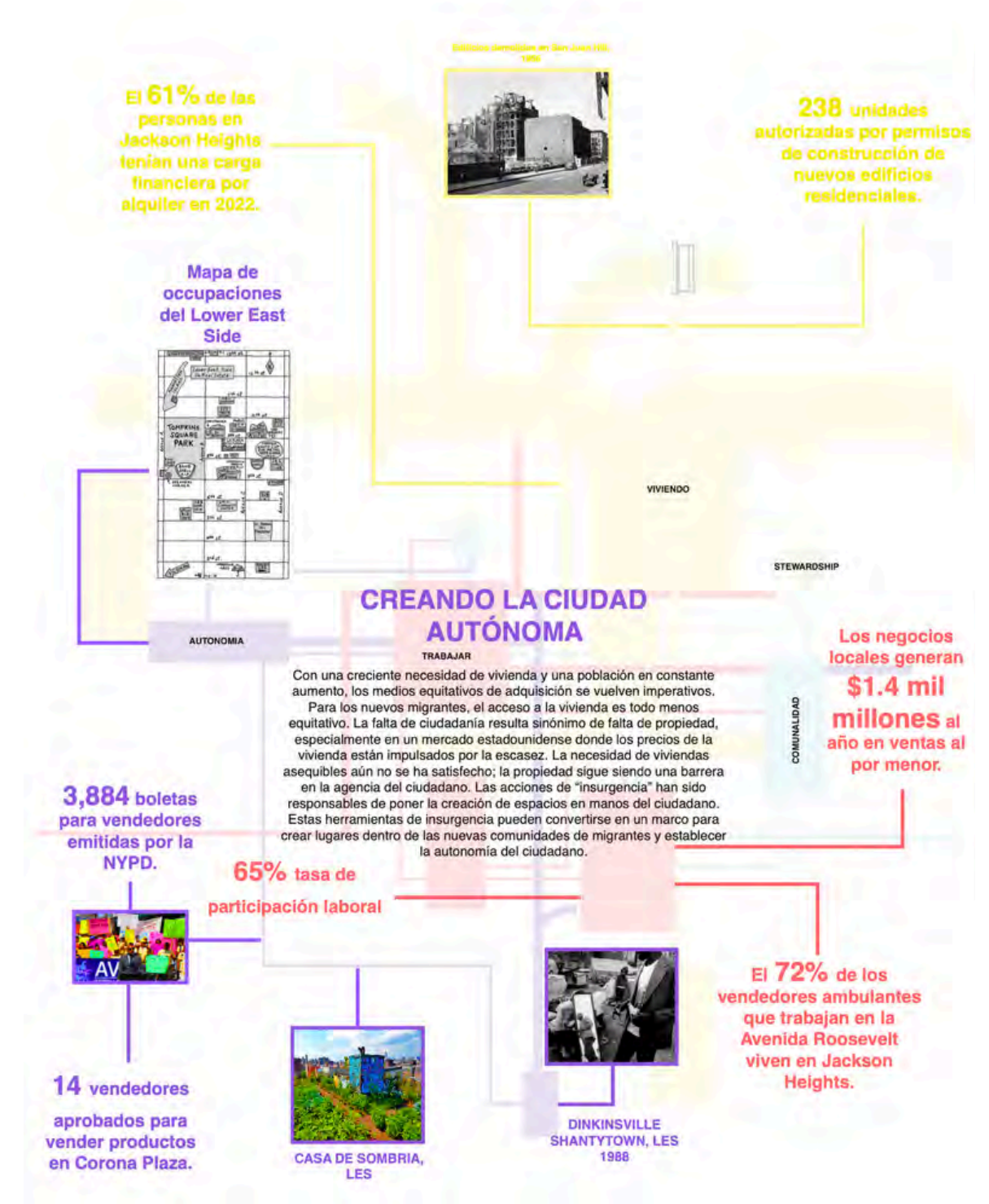


Picture 2
Many new migrants often take up these informal occupations, selling candy in trains, selling food on the streets, or various goods in order to make ends meet. The way they live is also informal space-making, which is not something new to Jackson Heights.
Photo via New York Times

The city's response to the influx of immigrants is quite informal as well. The Roosevelt Hotel in Manhattan for example, is a sort of makeshift solution; yet it's at full capacity and is not a prime condition for new arrivals in the mid- and long term. Could this informality be democratized to create a more equitable situation? During this research process I questioned the incrementally built process of the squatter's house, because the capital and sweat equity needed to bring a squat to code is not necessarily available for the migrant community in the forms of credit. In this sense, informality is worth exploring in a systematic way. There are examples of systems or "packages" of housing with the speculative works of Reyner Banham and Francois Dallegret, *A House is Not a Home*, in which the home is redefined as a bubble with a mechanized kit of parts, or an amalgamation of the mechanical parts.

Instead of mechanizing a housing building, this is a system of various agencies and services, from comfortable living space to the materials needed to facilitate work and productive activities. My project adapts to the idea of the formless house and deconstructs the housing unit into a kit of parts, composed of several modular components with various functions. These functions are established as various *follies* on the site, incrementally building to larger structures that build a much more cohesive organization of living parts. In a city with increasingly limited space, these parts should be deployable to different parts of the city, as part of a larger system intended to create more fluid housing situations. In-between the courtyards of two adjacent buildings, or on a defunct rooftop. These parts include living "bubbles" to be inflated by large mechanical pumps. The bubbles could act as a temporary living enclosure; pumps house electrical and plumbing services in which maybe a stove, sink, or toilet could be grafted on. Perhaps these pumps could be used as auxiliary electrical or plumbing stations, or used to inhabit or nest used infill space. Work *dollies* and movable walls can be unfolded, plastered over, used to hang clothes.

All parts start within a basic module, and can grow, shift, or shrink to accommodate different types of structures. With a kit of parts language, numerous types of living structures could be built; one that is more like a typical townhouse, filled with mechanical, or another that is denser to accommodate more of the living units. On a larger scale, the site in Jackson Heights has the potential to house larger infrastructure, primed with the services necessary to function. At the site would be the facilities and situations necessary, an incubator of sorts to deploy the system. As with a cooperatively owned building, this project comprises a “living machine,” in which the migrant actively takes part in the organization, and adapting of these parts, as a contributor, not a bystander. Although the machine provides a finite set of services and opportunities, it is within this system that greater autonomy can be developed. All these parts are intended to serve as the structure(s) for a growing self-managed, autonomous system in which the citizen (no matter their migration status) becomes the primary agent of living, and the notion of a “house” itself becomes amorphous, dynamic, and adaptable to the temporal needs of living in the city.



HOUSING IN THE AUTONOMOUS CITY

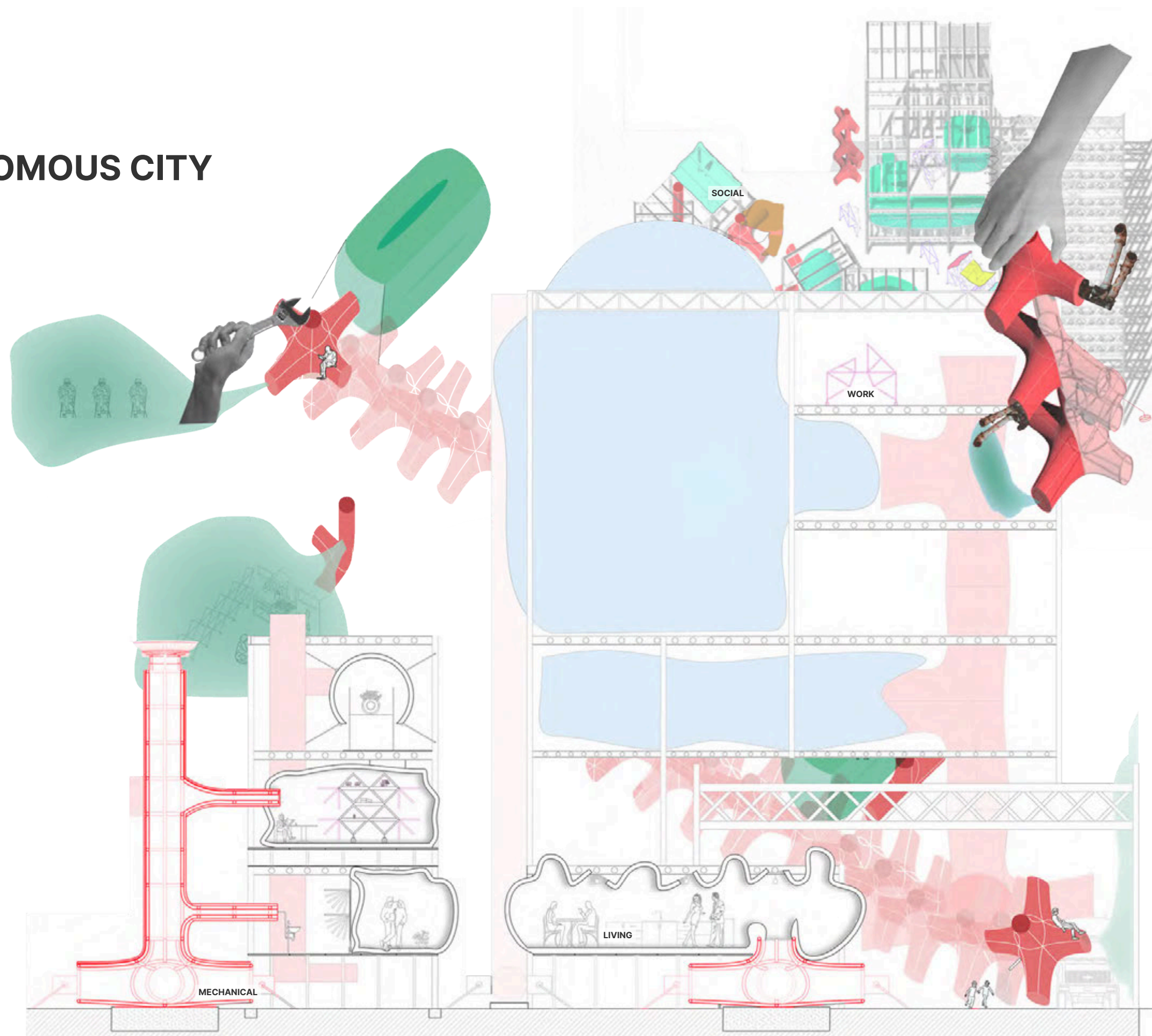
Citizens and Urban Machines

Student

Mouhamadou Dieng

The project adapts the idea of the formless house and deconstructs the housing unit into a kit of parts composed of several modular components with various functions. These functions are established as various follies on the site, incrementally building to larger structures to build a cohesive organization. These parts can be deployed to different parts of the city as part of a larger system intended to create more fluid housing situations. These parts include living "bubbles" to be inflated by large mechanical pumps. The bubbles can act as a temporary living enclosure. All parts begin within a basic module that grows, shifts or shrinks to accommodate different types of structures.

In Jackson Heights, the site has the potential to house a larger infrastructure with services necessary to function. This comprises a "living machine," in which the migrant actively takes part in the organization and adapts to these parts as a contributor, not a bystander. Although the machine provides a finite set of services and opportunities, it is within this system that a greater autonomy can be grown. All these parts are intended to serve as the structure(s) for a growing system of informality in which the citizen becomes the primary agent of living, and the notion of a "house" itself becomes amorphous.



STUDENTS

Advanced studio Spring 2023 and 2024

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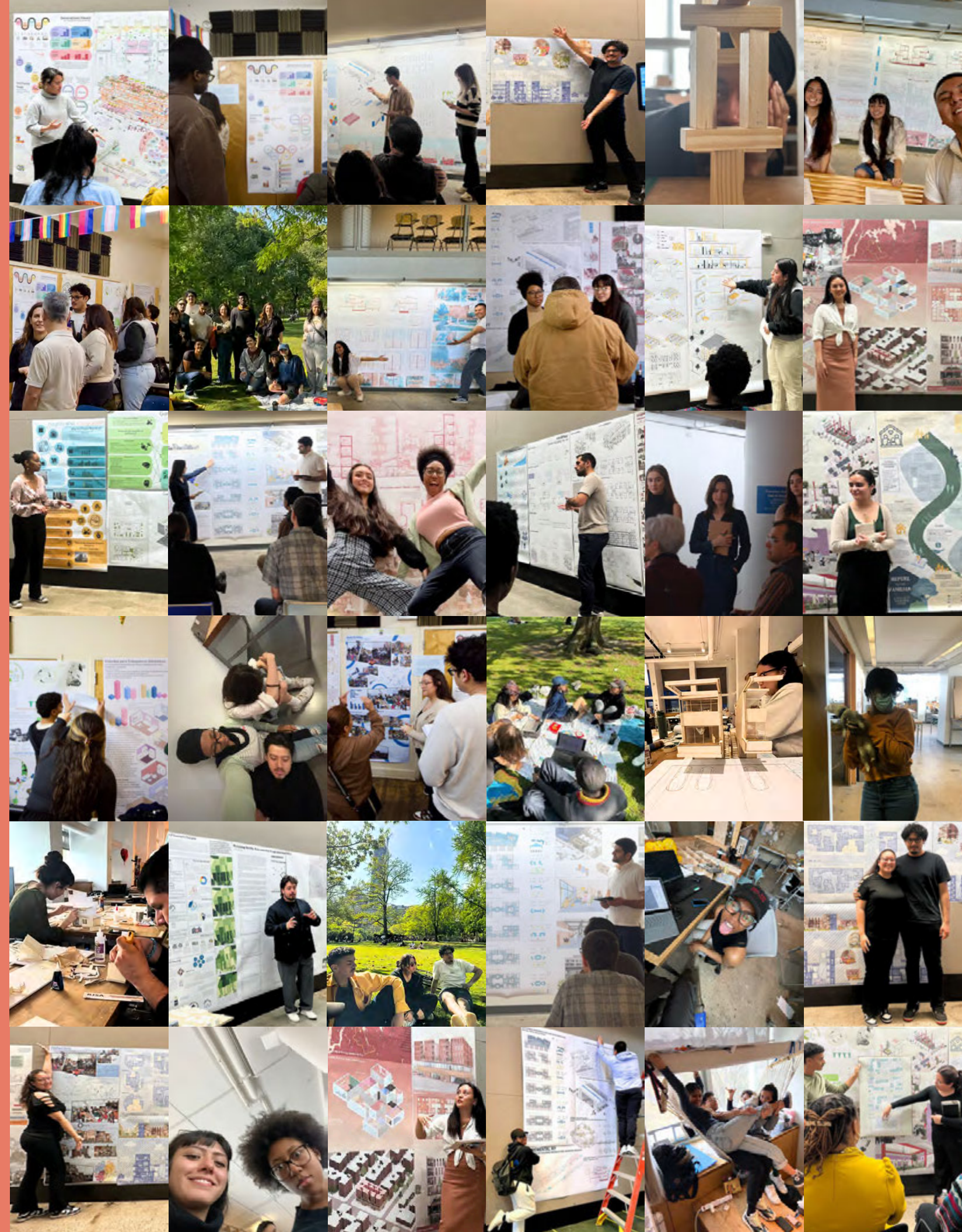
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Mauricio Guidos
Bryan Hernandez
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PATHWAYS TO HOME

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PATHWAYS TO HOME

The Bernard and Anne Spitzer School of Architecture
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Design Solutions for Immigrant-Centered Housing