Summer 7-27-2023

# CoLiving: Bringing Social Spaces Back Offline

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## Recommended Citation

# CoLIVING:
## BRINGING SOCIAL SPACES
## BACK OFFLINE

Approval of Thesis Research
Project Book is Presented to:

## Marietta Monaghan

and to the
Faculty of the Department of Architecture
College of Architecture and Construction Management

by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree:

**Bachelor of Architecture**

Kennesaw State University
Marietta, Georgia

July 28, 2023

# SECTION 1

In the face of an ever more isolated and divided American society, this **thesis seeks to utilize Coliving explored at various urban densities** as a means to facilitate more integrated interaction between residents through the analysis and integration of successful social spaces found in cohousing communities.

**The resulting typology** will then be applied in the design of a **dense urban mixed-use coliving community** located in **Midtown Atlanta.**

### 1.1.1 Abstract

The way in which we construct our built environment defines how our community will engage with one another. Social spaces are the key to creating a healthy community. However, today, we are in crisis. In a society which is built on the pillars of freedom and independence, our social spaces are dying out. Social isolation is on the rise, a problem only accelerated by the recent pandemic. Today, many Americans (and much of the world) seek social connection through a screen. Instead of getting to know our neighbors, we spend more time watching videos of or talking to people who live halfway across the world. In this becoming our reality, we are rapidly losing a sense of cultural identity and unity.
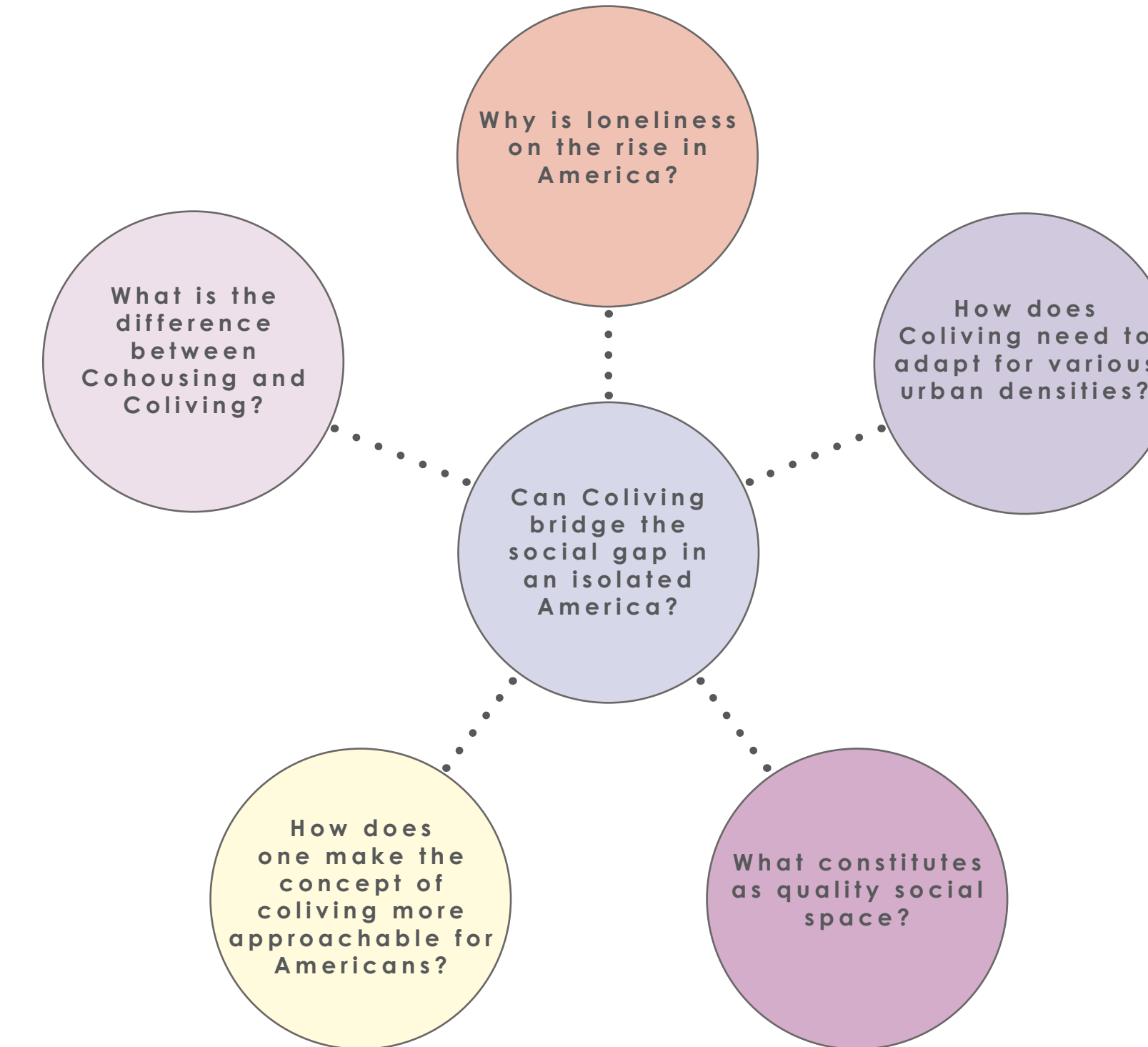
To combat this, my thesis develops a typology for designing successful coliving communities through the analysis and application of social spaces in successful cohousing communities of various urban scales and densities to then be applied to a mixed-use urban density coliving community in Midtown, Atlanta. In taking this approach, the vision is to create a system robust enough that developers may use it with confidence in a variety of social conditions in America.

Coliving, while taking heavy inspiration from cohousing, is not the same. Cohousing is as much about building the community as much as it is building for it, whereas coliving purely focuses on designing community architecture, and has as much an obligation to engage the surrounding neighborhood as it does to foster those social spaces for theresidents inside.

The outcome of my research is to prove it is easily possible to incorporate spaces that will maximize opportunities for neighbors to engage one another.

### 1.1.2 Research Questions

- Why is loneliness on the rise in America?
- What is the difference between Cohousing and Coliving?
- How does Coliving need to adapt for various urban densities?
- Can Coliving bridge the social gap in an isolated America?
- How does one make the concept of coliving more approachable for Americans?
- What constitutes as quality social space?

### 1.1.3 Outcomes

1. Establish a timeline of the social history of American housing to understand the context
2. Analyse cohousing examples in America at different urban densities to understand scale, proportion of residents to shared spaces
3. Create a methodology for designing Coliving residents in different urban scales (urban, suburban, small town/rural)
4. Apply this methodology and design a coliving community at the dense urban scale.

### 1.1.4 Hypothesis

It is difficult to change the set routine of individuals, and even more difficult for schedules to line up for making plans with neighbors. And so, as designers, it is our duty to incorporate opportunities for social engagement that flow into residents' natural routines and circulation.

To engage residents with social spaces that do not directly intersect these paths, it may be necessary to either downgrade or relocate certain ammenities within the individual units so residents will be more inclined to move through those spaces, such as laundry facilities or offering a better shared kitchen.

Not all sites are ideal for coliving communities, and not all building owners will be on board with sacrificing space for fully involved coliving design. However, through some simple adjustments in spatial organization, one can improve the social qualities of their residential complex.

### 1.2.1 In Recognition of the Isolating American Dream

In my sophomore year of college, I was working on a group project with a classmate of mine who grew up in Mexico, As we worked, I asked, "What was your biggest culture when you came to America?" To this, he responded "It's how little people care or bother to get to know their neighbors." In Mexico, even if you did not like your neighbor, if you failed to see them for a few days you would still go check on them." This response struck a chord inside of me, as I came to recognize how little I would interact with my neighbors, be it back before I began university or while living in the dormatories. Sure I had neighbors I considered to be friends, but I would often go long stretches of time without seeing or talking to them.

I have been a people person my entire life, taking a fascination in observing the behaviors of people from all different backgrounds, trying to understand the push and pull of the tides that bring people together and drifts them apart. Since starting university, this has taken the form of everything from organizing events for various groups, to quietly noticing how vastly different communities are in different dormatories on campus. I always am looking for opportunities to spend time with people, finding particular joy in meeting a new individual only to end up having a quality, meaningful conversation with them. However, in recent years these moments have become all the more infrequent, a problem only exacerbated by the recent pandemic. Many of those moments have been traded for doing so in virtual spaces instead of face to face.

According to a research study from Boston University School of Public Health[1], depression rates tripled in the early 2020 months of the pandemic, jumping from 8.5 percent before the pandemic to a staggering 27.8 percent. It was expected that after the lockdown was over, we would see depression rates begin to drop back down to normal rates. However, these expectations could not have been further from the truth. The elevated rate of depression has persisted into 2021, and even worsened, climbing to 32.8 percent, and affecting 1 in every 3 American adults.

So the question we are left to ask is, "Are these issues of isolation an American problem or are these just common themes that are happening all over the post-pandemic world in the age of the internet?" In reality, the roots of this isolation extend far deeper into American ideals and history than one might expect, with the concepts of freedom, independence, and pursuing the American Dream at the frontline.

*"America is pushing the individual toward that line separating proud independence from pitiable isolation, for it affords insufficient opportunity and encouragement to voluntary human contact. Daily life amid the new urban sprawl is like a grammar school without its recess periods"*
-Oldenburg, The Great Good Place

### 1.2.2 A Historical Progression to Seperation

To broaden my understanding of this issue, I looked to Gwendolyn Wright's "Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America" to understand the history of how housing evolved to get us to this point of isolation. It is quite how the peculiar phenomena because the the first settlers, the Puritans, maintained the belief that no individual should live on his/her own. Should they be a bachelor or a widow they would be moved into another household to work for the residents. All home and family activities would occur out of what was usually a single roomed house. It was not until Jefferson's National Survey began in 1785 that we would begin to see these societal concerns of personal freedoms reflected in the dwellings people lived in.

This idea eventually lead to the rise of Victorian Suburbs to prevent the women and children from being exposed to the evils of the city. Once apartment living was picked up again in the late 1800s and early 1900s, the way of community living had already started to fade. This was followed by the rise of planned communities to combat the dire economic situation of the 1920s and 1940s, was the primary catalyst for social segregation and the loss of community engagement opportunities.

Suburbanization was only exaggerated when the federal government began developing the highway systems, making commutes more tolerable to the common man. Building the Dream ends just past the rise of public housing, set forth by the Fair Housing Act of 1968- yet another disaster to a socially engaging environment.



3    Photo: time life pictures/getty images

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1    McKoy, Jillian. Depression Rates in US Tripled When the Pandemic First Hit—Now, They're Even Worse

## Puritan Society
## (1600s)

In Puritan society, people did not live alone. If you became widowed, you would live under someone else's roof as part of their family unit. There was usually only one room in the houses with an attic, at most a second room at the back. But the main central parlor room was the center of all social and family interaction. This communal living ensured socialization and community building

## Victorian Suburbs
## (1800s)

Shift to the city being viewed as a dangerous and wicked place that corrupts the minds of women and children. Themes of suburban salvation and security. Marked the end of suburbs only being for the wealthy of the ante bellum years and were now available for working class middle class families.

Ornamentation of the home became more common place to the average American in the face of industrialization making it easier to access such materials. During this time we begin to see the emphasis placed on well manicured lawns and beautiful homes as a direct representation of one's freedoms and independence.

## Rise of Social Housing
## and Planned Communities
## (1920s-1940s)

1920: Census data showed only 46% of all American families were homeowners. For the first time, the majority of Americans were either urban or suburban.Developers began to plan suburban neighborhoods, setting street widths, lot sizes, house sizes.

Cluster Housing: The grouping of residential properties to use the extra land as open space for recreation.

1937: Public Housing Act- pushed for sanitary, safe dwellings for the poor. New Deal public housing resulted in 99 built communities, 40 of which were suburban or rural. The goal of this was to bring people together.

## Mixed-Use Developments
## (1976-Present Day)

While mixed use was the standard practice before zoning and land use practices, housing, commerce, work and school were kept segregated. From 1910-1950s mixed use developments were rare.

1976- ULI Defines Mixed use to be structures containing 3 or more significant uses containing significant integration of project components developed in conformance with a coherent plan. (Robert E. Witherspoon).

Integrating Live Work Play Spaces activates cities, and are a key component of Transit Oriented Developments (TODs).

## American Nationalism
## (Late 1700s-Early 1800s)

Jefferson's National Survey marked the beginning of Homesteading to settle the west in 1785. There were shared societal concerns to not interfere with personal freedoms.

Types of housing during this time:
  Rural: small cottages for farming families
  Southern Plantation: "Big House" and slave quarters
  Cities/Urban: Rowhouses and Boarding Houses

## Urban Residencies and
## The Rise of Apartment Living
## (Late 1800s - Early 1900s)

With middle class families moving out of cities influx of new and larger ethnic populations

Tenements: Dwellings designed to accomodate 3 or more seperate sets of tenents under a single roof. The tenements made for these ethnic groups were often cobbled together from old factories, warehouses and the like.

The first apartments were designed as luxury spaces, with public kitchens either on the top floor or basement, lobby level dining halls, cafés, and restraunts.

These units had very few ammenities, instead opting for common facilities for laundy and bathrooms.

## Public Housing for the
## Wealthy Poor (1950s)

The 1950s saw the clearing of slums around the country, calling it urban renewal. These slums were replaced by high rise affordable housing, with massive waitlists and extremely strict living conditions. The units were small, they shared common bathing facilities, and the hallways were dark and dangerous. Landscape around the units was expansive but barren. Without activating these outdoor spaces they saw little use.

## A Social Future of
## Housing in America

In the wake of the pandemic, depression from isolation has shed light on just how important social involvement within a community is. With Mixed-Use developments on the rise, we are slowly becoming a more connected society again. However, much like malls were a band-aid for isolation in the suburbs, I believe it is necessary to take social integration a step further, to push for the incorporation of better social spaces within the residential developments themselves.

1    Traditional Puritan House https://connecticuthistory.org/whats-a-puritan-and-why-didnt-they-stay-in-massachusetts/
2    Row Houses in Baltimore (Wright, Building the Dream, pg 28)
3    The American Home, Safeguard of American Liberties" painting in 1893 (Wright, pg 101)
4a   97 Orchard St. https://www.tenement.org/explore/97-orchard-street/
4b   97 Orchard St. typ floor plan https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Floor-plan-of-the-four-apartments-on-the-upper-four-floors-of-97-Orchard-Street-when_fig1_322573009

5    Low income housing camp in Robstown Texas, 1938 (Wright, pg 224)
6    Cedar Apartments, a 14 story tall public housing tower in Cleveland Ohio, 1950 (Wright, pg 235)
7    The Battery, Atlanta GA

### 1.2.3 On the Importance of Social Spaces

In the 1980s and 1990s, suburban malls replaced town centers, leading to the decline of community gathering spaces. Shopping centers and big-box stores replaced social spaces like public squares and community centers, leading to a lack of opportunities for socialization and community building. The shopping malls were ultimately just a temporary fix to a much larger problem, and even Victor Gruen, the architect who designed the first enclosed shopping mall[1]. admitted that some of the requirements for social spaces, but not all. The biggest failures come in Oldenburg's first point about Neutral Ground, and his third point about Leveler spaces. Malls ultimately needed a large amount of income to stay open, meaning there is not a lot to do there unless you are there to purchase something. The focus should be on conversation, but in a mall, that is usually about shopping. A good third space should feel equal, but malls will always favor the rich. Eventually, malls got tired of America's youth freeloading in their space without buying anything, and so they started getting kicked out. This was what began the decline of the American shopping mall, but there is one more thing that put the nail in the coffin: The Dawn of the Internet.

A mall requires transactions, shopping to thrive, and the rise of E-commerce has essentially killed business in malls. In 2018, still around 90% of all purchases still happened in store according to the Federal Reserve3. But during the pandemic, we saw these numbers spike to as high as 30%. Additionally, we started digitally accessing our relationships and connections as well. More than three in four people in the United States have a smartphone. Many argue that websites like Twitter and Facebook have become a digital third space. However, there are multiple research studies that have shown that these spaces can have a negative impact on your mental and even physical health.[2]

At this point, America is left with a major question about what to do regarding the lack of social spaces. The problem with many of the proposals that have been put forth to reintroduce social space is many of them still try to follow in the footsteps of the mall through an abundance of retail space or are simply unfeasible from a cost perspective as they would require funding from the city and have no means of income whatsoever. Therefore, I push that we turn to cohousing. There is opportunity to bring in some retail into the space without overwhelming the site and building a complete dependence but ultimately the tenants will be paying for the upkeep of the property. Social spaces can be introduced to the space without them being centered completely around retail.

1       The first mall was Southdale Center in Minnesota in 1956. (Waters)
2       Shakya & Christakis. A New, More Rigorous Study Confirms: The More You Use Facebook, the Worse You Feel.

The housing crash of the late 2000s highlighted the ongoing need for affordable housing in America. Policymakers and advocates have explored new approaches to address the challenges of housing affordability and social equity, such as inclusionary zoning, community land trusts, and co-living arrangements. These approaches promote social interaction and community building, but they still face obstacles in implementation.

In recent years, mixed-use developments have become popular, offering a combination of residential, commercial, and community spaces. This trend is a step towards creating more walkable and interconnected communities that prioritize social interaction and community building.

*"Both the joys of relaxing with people and the social solidarity that results from it are disappearing for want of settings that make them possible."*
*-Oldenburg, The Great Good Place pg 26*

Social space is the outlet for which social pleasure and engagement are achieved. According to Ray Oldenburg's The Great Good Place, "Our lives are lived in 1 of 3 places, the home, the workplace and the 'third place', which is anywhere outside of those two." He then goes on to identify 8 qualities[1] of a good third place, which are as follows:

1. **Neutral Ground**: No one person feels a greater sense of ownership over a space than another. Everyone should feel like an equal here.
2. **Accessibility**: Anyone can access the space regardless of disabilities
3. **Conversation:** Spaces should be designed to facilitate conversations
4. **The Regulars:** An established group of people that frequent the space
5. **Leveler:** Anyone is welcome in the space. They should be a place where a lot of time can be spent without spending a lot of money
6. **Playful Mood:** Designed to facilitate relaxation and lightheartedness in people entering the space
7. **Home away from home:** should be close to home but still be a separate space that one can enter with a mindset freed from the other two spaces.
8. **Plainness:** Neutral designs so the focus to be on the interactions with the people one engages with.

Oldenburg argues that these informal public gathering places, such as **cafes, parks, and community centers**, are **essential for creating a sense of community and belonging**. He highlights the importance of these third places in fostering social interaction and reducing social isolation, which he sees as a growing problem in modern society. Oldenburg's book presents a compelling case for the value of third places in promoting well-being and social capital and calls for greater attention and investment in creating and maintaining them.

1       Oldenburg, Chapter 2 The Characteristics of Third Spaces

## 1.2.4 Community Oriented Residential Design

Despite America's foundational roots centering around communal living, modern housing patterns in America have veered away from fostering meaningful connections and vibrant communities. Suburbia, with its sprawling neighborhoods designed around car dependency, has created a landscape of isolation and disconnection. The prioritization of individual autonomy and the lack of thoughtfully designed public spaces have left many residents yearning for a sense of belonging and community. Public housing, once envisioned as a solution for affordable living, often succumbs to the pitfalls of high-density living without fostering community engagement. These developments, characterized by rows of anonymous apartment buildings and underutilized landscapes, fall short of providing residents with a true sense of place nor spaces to create positive interations with their neighbors. Housing development (and city planning for that matter) are seated in a fear and misunderstanding of the fellow man, and seeks to remove the individual from their fellow man as much as possible.

Post-pandemic, internet enthralled America has left us with large amounts of vacant office buildings, commercial spaces, and empty parking lots. In this era of rapid urbanization and technological advancement, we have the opportunity to reimagine housing as a tool for building stronger communities and promoting sustainable lifestyles. Community oriented residential designs present innovative solutions that emphasize the importance of shared spaces, shared resources, and decision making.

In the 1970's, the Danes began exploring this type of design under the term "Cohousing." According to cohousing.org[4], "Cohousing is community designed to foster connection. Physical spaces allow neighbors to easily interact with others just outside private homes. Common areas such as kitchen, dining space and gardens bring people together. Collaborative decision-making builds relationships."It is an intentional community where individuals or families live in separate private dwellings, but share common spaces, resources, and responsibilities.

Coliving and cohousing are similar in nature with a few key moments where their scopes extend different ways. Cohousing is as much a social concept as it is a physical architectural concept, working with the residents who wish to live in these planned communities from the start, meaning these types of dwellings can only ever be resident owned.

Meanwhile, *coliving focuses exclusively on community architecture*, the design of spaces which will promote community living. The design of these spaces do not involve the same level of communal decision-making and governance as cohousing. This opens up coliving as a more viable option for developers who wish to create rentable dwellings.

Additionally, coliving seeks to improve the connectivity of more than just the residents within the units by offering opportunities for the greater neighborhood to engage in these created social spaces.

*"Cohousing focuses on community building, while Coliving focuses on community architecture"*
*-Bas Hoppenbrower*

## 1.2.5 Privacy Gradience

When I started my research, I quickly noticed the spaces people inhabited in the context of cohousing and coliving exhibit a range of how open they are to different groups of people. A term I initially coined as "Selective Transparency." Some spaces, such as plaza spaces and land trusts, are fully open and engage with the surrounding community, while others, such as individual residences, offer complete privacy for the individual. In between these two extremes, there are spaces that offer varying degrees of privacy, such as shared living areas, communal kitchens, and semi-private workspaces. Later on, in an interview with Greg Ramsey[5] explained that phenomena as Privacy Gradience.

**Extended Neighborhood**          **Residential Community Space**          **Private Spaces**



Parks and Shared Outdoor Space

Resident Common Courtyards and Outdoor Spaces

Indoor Resident Common Spaces

Resident Children's Play Spaces

Small Scale Common Spaces

Private Residences

4    What is Cohousing? https://www.cohousing.org/what-cohousing/cohousing/

5    The architect behind Lake Clair Cohousing, see Section 2.1.2 for a more complete analysis.

### 2.2.1 Urban Context:

**Requirements of the Site:**

1) The site should have some preexisting social spaces in the surrounding context. It is critical to the success of the community to integrate the surrounding neighborhood into the circulation of one's site.
2) The site must have the opportunity to activate sidewalks.
3) The site must be located near some form of public transportation such as a bus stop or a train station.

**Scope of Selecting an Urban Site:**

1) Barriers between privacy gradients will be more concrete to ensure safety
2) Integration of pocket park(s)
3) More focus would be placed on the financial benefits of CoLiving
4) Cohousing typology would be denser, allowing for more tenants in a smaller space.
5) If the site is large enough mixed use is a must to facilitate more opportunities to engage the surrounding community

### 2.2.2 Sub-Urban Context:

**Requirements of the Site:**

1) As of its current state, the surrounding community must not have many options for 3rd space
2) The site must be large enough to incorporate a more in depth set of spaces to engage the community or be located near a preexisting opportunity to do so, such as a community center, a public pool, or a park.
3) Locating the site near a school, town center, or park to encourage walking/ biking.

**Scope of Selecting a Sub-Urban Site:**

1) Spaces will be much more interwoven with the outdoor environment and the definition between indoor and outdoor space will become blurred
2) Inclusion of a greater variety of 3rd spaces will be incorporated, allowing for involvement from the rest of the neighborhood.

### 2.2.3 Rural/Small town Scale Context:

**Requirements of the Site:**

1) Being in a rural community, there will likely be no 3rd spaces nearby, with the exception of relating near an old town square.
2) The site must be large enough to incorporate a greater range of spaces for the surrounding neighborhood, such as taking up a community center.
3) Locating the site near a school, town center, or park to encourage walking/ biking.

**Scope of Selecting a Sub-Urban Site:**

1) Spaces will be much more interwoven with the outdoor environment and the definition between indoor and outdoor space will become blurred
2) Inclusion of a greater variety of 3rd spaces will be incorporated, allowing for involvement from the rest of the neighborhood.



Coliving suburb scale concept art developed with Midjourney AI.

### 1.3.1 Methodology

1. Analyze Social Spaces in housing of all types. Note practices which result in more engagement between residents, where these engagements occur.
2. Study New Urbanism of methods to activate spaces within the city.
3. Site visit: document the experiences of people surrounding the site, where they tend to gather, what kind of people are around, how they circulate through the site.
4. Establish the organization for the privacy gradience the project needs to achieve on the site
5. Organize building forms to amplify natural movement through the site soas to create moments where regular commuters will encounter social spaces in their regular routines
6. Refine floor plans and establish ground condition.
7. Finalize design

### Social Life of Small Urban Spaces - William H. Whyte

1. **Sittable Space**: Multiple and flexible sitting choices, with a direct view to the urban life is critical. A good rule of thumb is 1 linear foot per 30 sqft, double width so as to maximize the number of potential places to sit. Encorporate sitting spaces via stairs, planters, and ledges that are of a comfortable height.
2. **Street**: A good public space starts at the street corner where the flows of people are. It is inviting from the street and easily connected to it. It is not to sit too high or to low above the street, and it shall not be disconnected by fences as to create a sense of entrapment.
3. **Sun:** People like to sit in the sun or its reflection on the building's facades.
4. **Food:** Street vendors, cafes, and restaurants which engage the street are an integral part of public spaces.
5. **Water:** Waterfalls, sprays, fountains, and pools: people love the look, sound, and feel of water. Make it accessible and touchable.
6. **Trees:** Trees can create a sense of enclosure without entrapment. People can enjoy the shade and observe the flow of people easily under the tree's shelter. Plant them in clusters with places to sit integrated around them.
7. **Triangulation:** This describes the phenomena of external stimuli providing a linkage between strangers and encouraging interaction as though they were not.
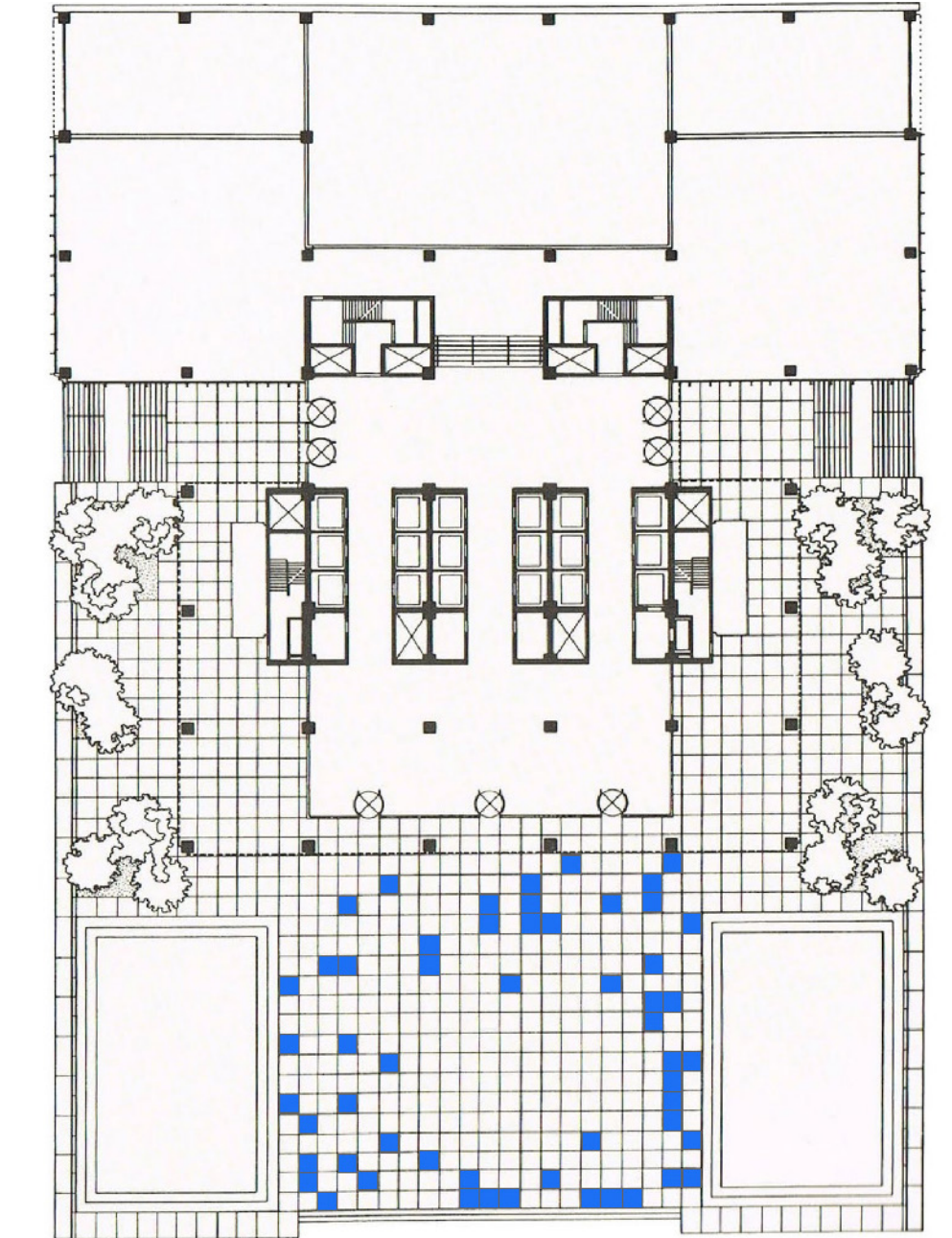


**Fig 1.2** Gathering zones in Seagram Plaza (1 week survey)

## 2.1 Precedent Analysis
*A Comparison of Cohousing at Different Scales*

2.1.1. Saettedommen
2.2.2. Lake Clair Cohousing
2.2.3. Capitol Hill Urban Cohousing
2.2.4. Additional Projects; Self-Designed CoLiving Communities

## 2.2 The Importance of Place
*When a Site is Suitable for Coliving*

2.2.1 Urban Density Site Selection Process
2.2.2 Suburban Density Site Selection Process
2.2.3 Rural Scale Site Selection Process
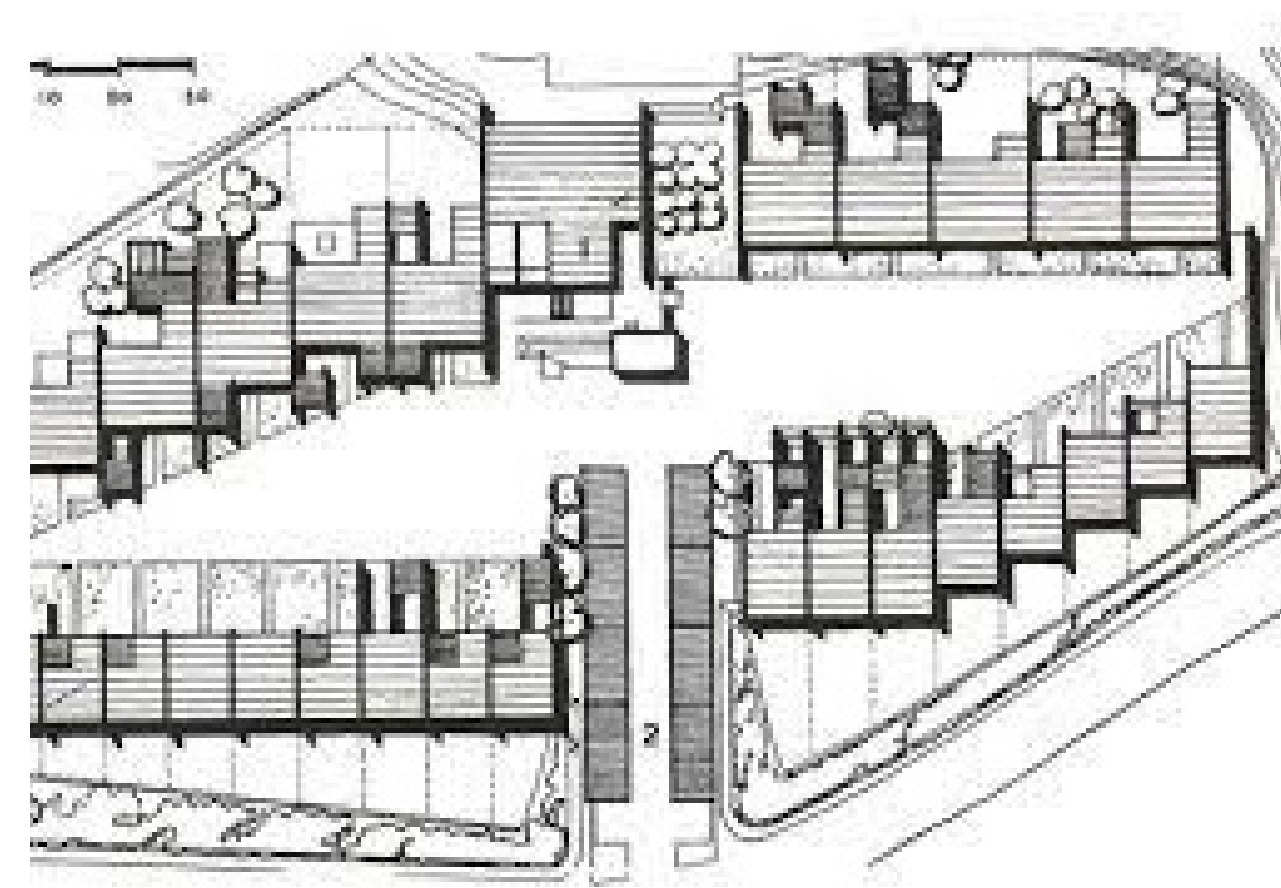
## 2.3 Contextual Site Analysis
*Placeholder for better subtitle here*

2.3.1 Neighborhood Overview
2.3.2 Site Selection

## Rural Scale: Saettedamen



Saettedammen is the first Cohousing project in the world. Constructed in the 1970s, the goal was to create a new model for living together in which people would still own their own homes, but would share activites with their neighbors.

## Suburban Scale: Lake Clair Cohousing
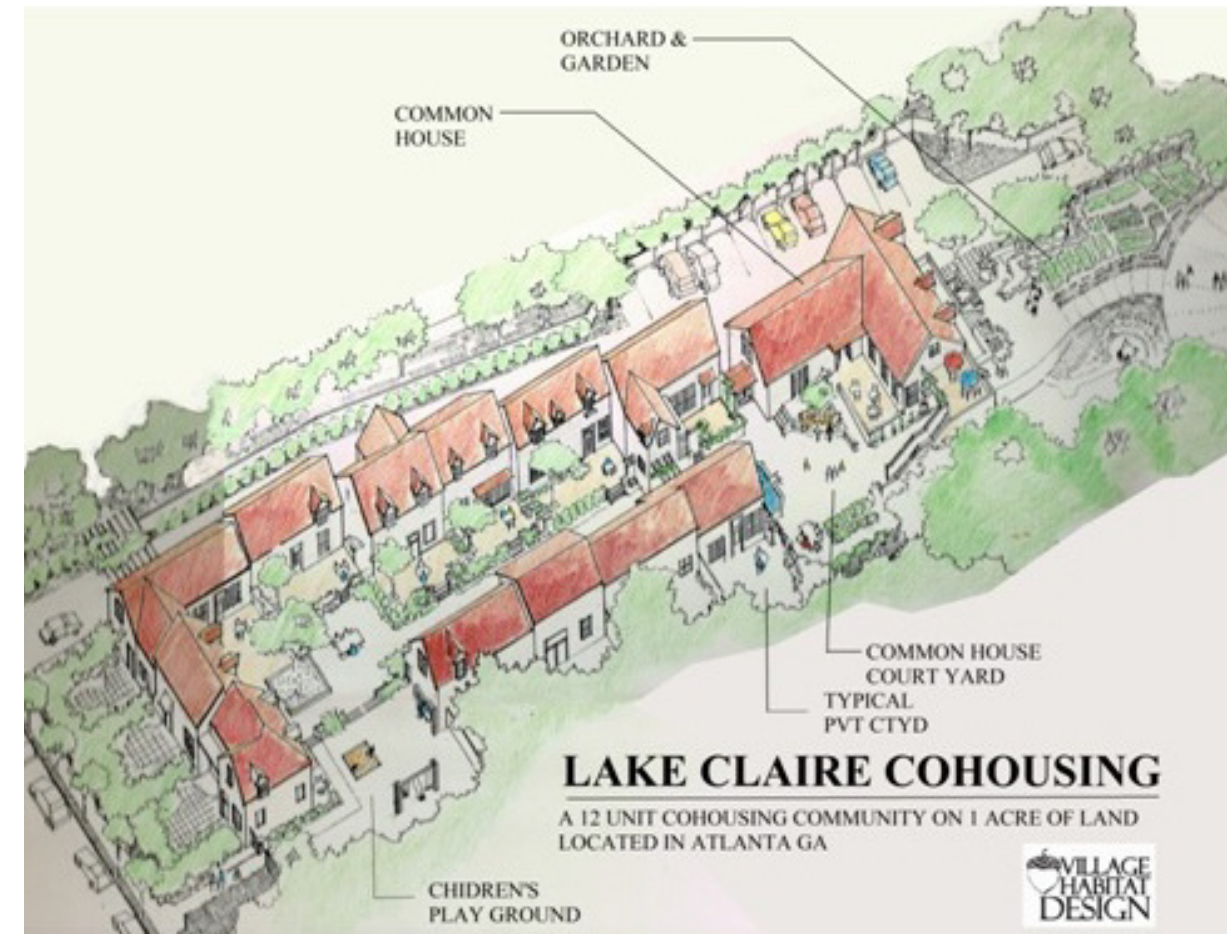


Lake Clair Cohousing is a suburb scale project consisting of 13 town home and a community house surrounding two interior courtyards. The project additionally takes advantage of the neighboring land trust to garden, as well as to engage and participate with the greater neighborhood.

## Urban Scale: Capitol Hill Urban Cohousing



On its exterior, Capitol Hill Urban Cohousing appears no different from other apartments. The project consists of 11 typical apartments surrounding a central courtyard. However, it stands out as unique with its common dining hall & kitchen, with a central circulation which overlooks the courtyard, maximizing opportunities for residents participating in their typical routines to engage with neighbors.

## Additional Projects: Self-Designed Coliving Communities



Throughout my time in university, I have continuously taken interest in the design of community driven residential architecture. I will be focusing on two projects: OPPORTUNITY, a dense urban scale mixed-use coliving community centered around rehabilitation of homeless in the Sweet Auburn District, and APERTURE, a suburban scale community which sought to integrate augmented reality into community architecture.

Saettedommen is where the idea of cohousing was founded in the 1970s in the rural town of Hillerod, Denmark. The core concept of Saettedommen was to create a new model for living together in which people would still own their own homes, but would share activites with their neighbors such as eating together regularly.

Because it is the first cohousing development in the world, it has since become the foundation for future developments designing for a similar typology. The project consists of 27 units surrounding a large parallelogram-shaped courtyard. The townhomes themselves are designed to be modular, allowing for residents to move the walls and completely customize their floorplans to their own needs. Most critically of all, Saettedommen introduced the idea of a seperate common house, which could accomodate for communal facilities.

## Integration of Social Spaces:

### 1) Common House



The Commonhouse features a mixture of both indoor and outdoor facilities, including a large outdoor patio on the front of the house, and inside: the community kitchen and dining hall, a children's playroom, a laundry facility, and TV and sitting lounge. One of the interesting aspects about Saettedommen is that the plans to construct the project were developed with the to-be residents participating in the design process from beginning to end. The residents all purchased land on the site prior to breaking ground, and so the community was able to tailor the design exactly as needed.

### 2) Communal Dining Hall and Kitchen



Saettedommen was the first development to foster this idea of eating together builds a strong community. This idea of shared dining is one of the the most central features of cohousing to be found in any of these communities today.

### 3) Central Courtyard



The central courtyard serves a multitude of functions for the cohousing community. For starters, they grow crops on the property. Pedestrian paths stretch across the courtyard, and the site features a multitude of social spaces, such as having a plethora of sitting areas, and spaces that invoke play. Situating the playground in the center of the courtyard gives ease of mind to the residents with children as it gives them a safe place where they can rest easy knowing their neighbors are able to help keep an eye on them.

Because Saettedommen is located in a rural community, the units are able to envelope very large courtyards. However, it is noticed that in order for these community courtyards to be successful, the land must be divided



-Common Space
-Private Space
-Circulation

## Takeaways:

-Large courtyards can be used as long as they are subdivided into multiple sets of program

-Parking is situated in such a way that residents must go through the common space to enter their units
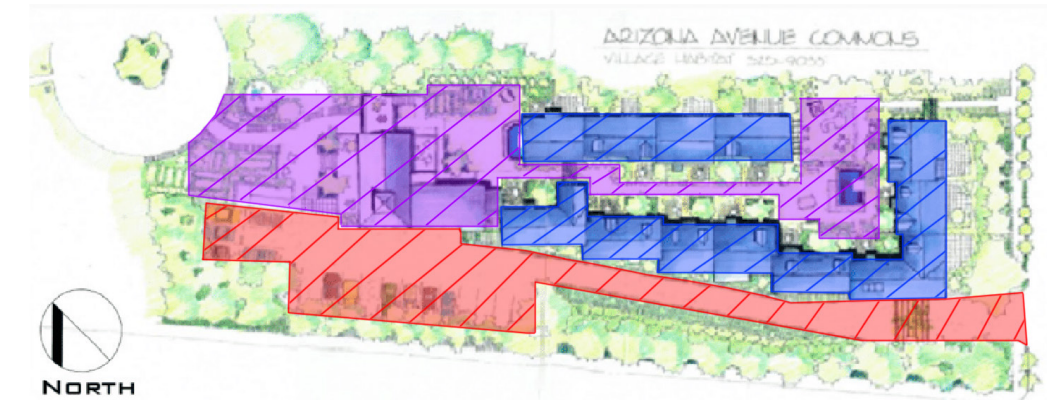
In looking at the suburban scale case study, it's easy to believe there is not much difference between it and the rural small town scale project. It also consists of townhome residences surrounding courtyard spaces, but with some distinct differences, primarily surrounding the courtyard spaces. The courtyards in Lake Clair serve a much more limited range of functions, allocating the other necesseties of these spaces to occur in the neighboring land trust. In a landtrust, people can own/rent small plots of land and use that space for whatever function they want: from gardening, to keeping farm animals, to a mini nature perserve, or playground, or cafe, etc. The project itself consists of 12 townhomes/13 units on a single acre of land. A small pedestrian lane seperates 2 courtyards, and the 2000sqft common house services the community with a common kitchen and dining hall, a living room, laundry, storage, a play room, and an upstairs activity space.
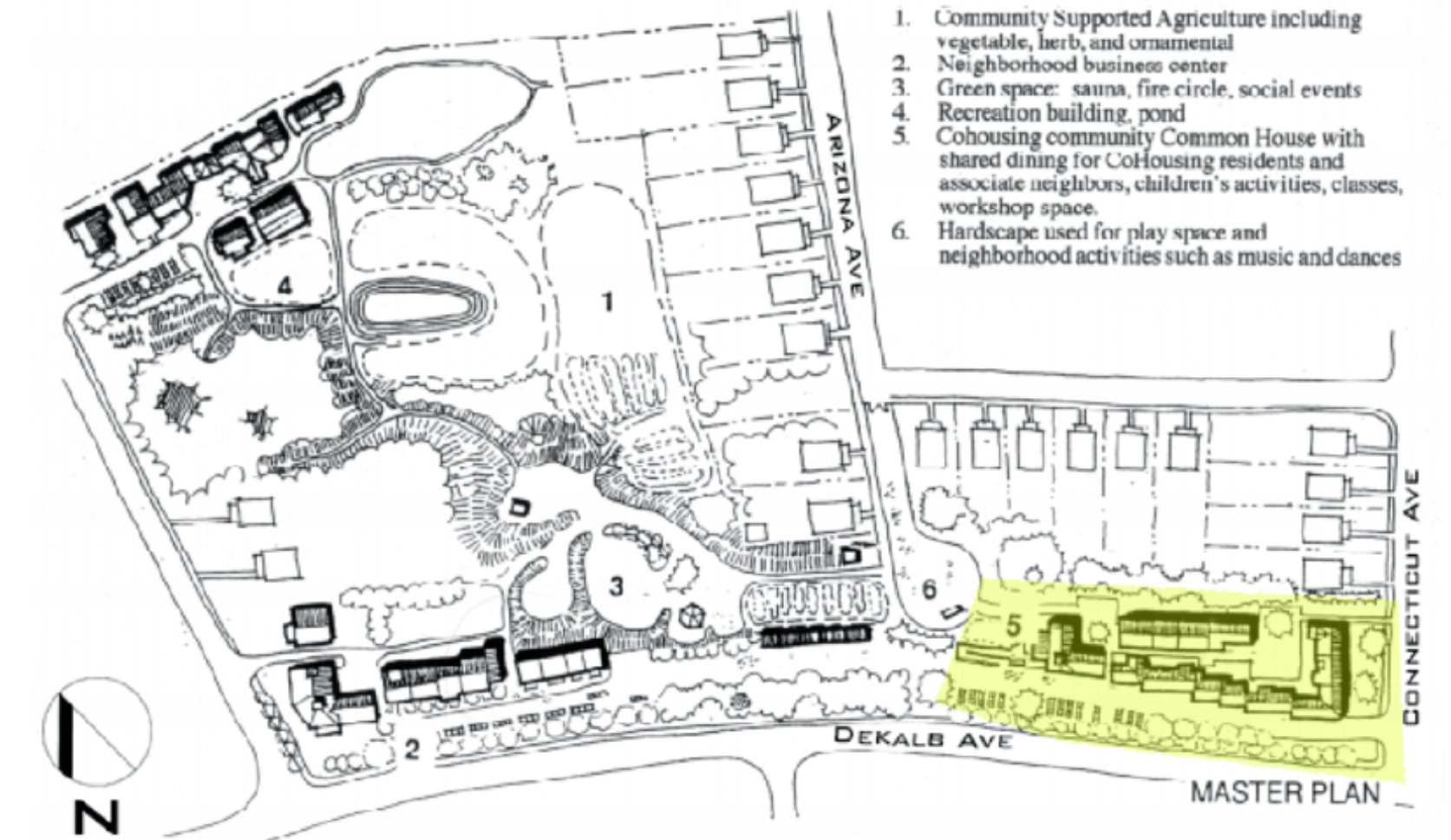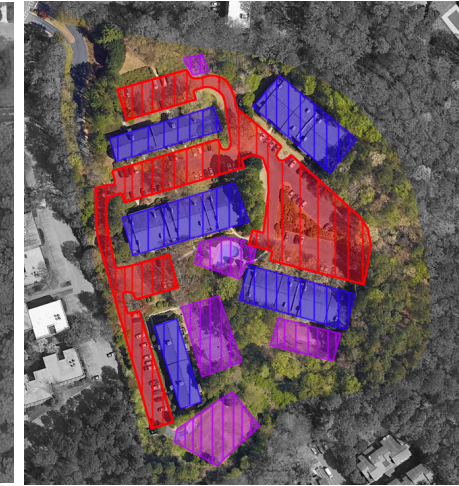


1. Community Supported Agriculture including vegetable, herb, and ornamental
2. Neighborhood business center
3. Green space: sauna, fire circle, social events
4. Recreation building, pond
5. Cohousing community Common House with shared dining for CoHousing residents and associate neighbors, children's activities, classes, workshop space.
6. Hardscape used for play space and neighborhood activities such as music and dances
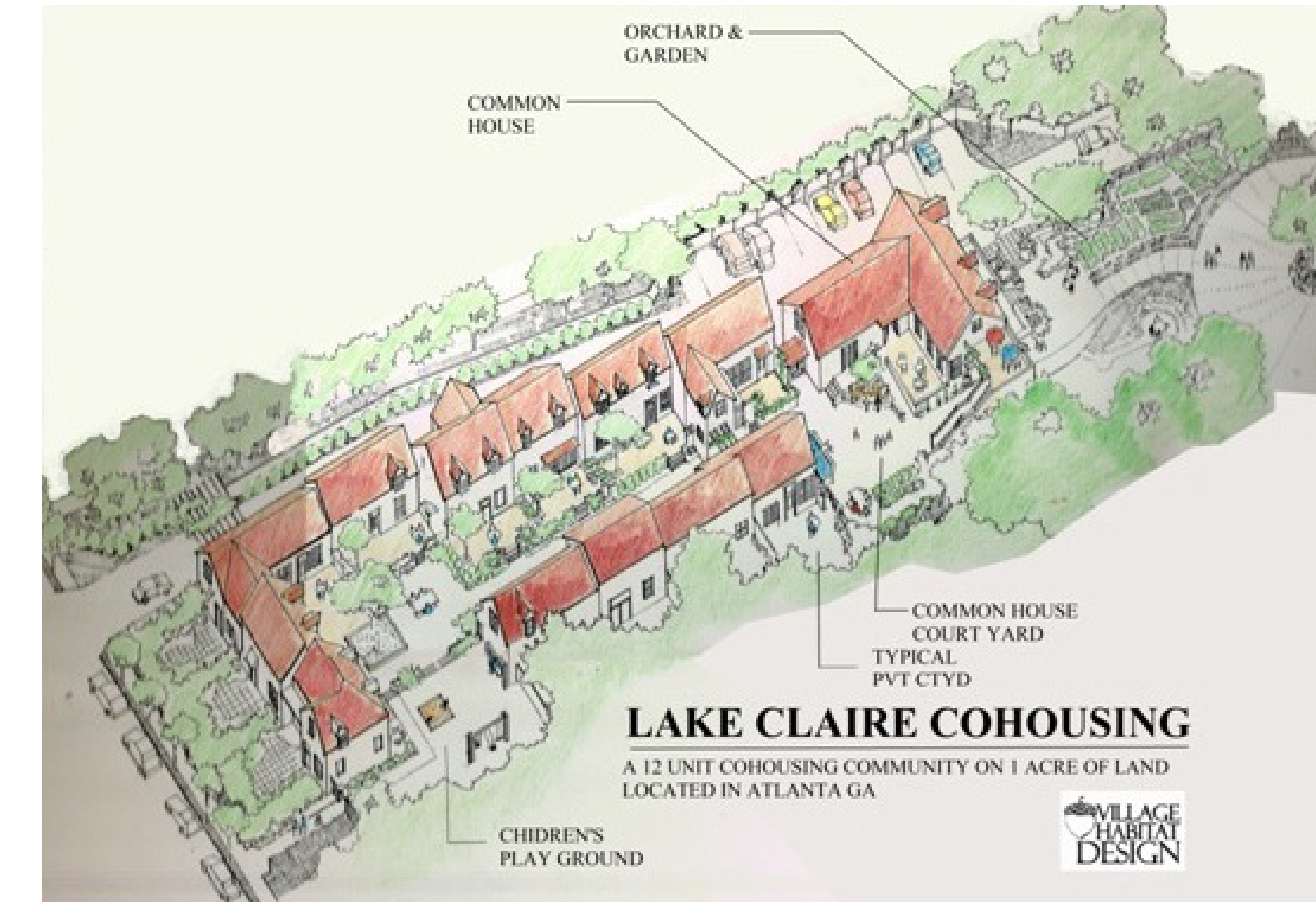


North



Cluster Housing
Sample A

Cluster Housing
Sample B

In comparing Lake Clair Cohousing with cluster housing units in Atlanta, we can see how more socially successful units create pedestrian pathways seperating the buildings as opposed to parking between the units as seen in sample B.



ORCHARD & GARDEN

COMMON HOUSE

COMMON HOUSE COURT YARD
TYPICAL PVT CTYD

CHIDREN'S PLAY GROUND

**LAKE CLAIRE COHOUSING**
A 12 UNIT COHOUSING COMMUNITY ON 1 ACRE OF LAND LOCATED IN ATLANTA GA

VILLAGE HABITAT DESIGN

To maximize engagement, parking is located at the south of the project, and residents must enter the space through a staircase next to the common house at the western courtyard. Additionally, laundry facilities are exclusively located within the common house, meaning residents must go through shared spaces as a part of their regular routine.

In terms of recognizing the privacy gradience in this project, the most public space which engages the surrounding neighborhood is the landtrust. The common house has a front porch which can serve as a buffer space between public and the residential common spaces. A gate to the north of the common house buffers into the first courtyard. The second courtyard acts as a playspace for children, and is seperated by a pedestrian alley at the far end from with as much seperation from the extended neighborhood space as possible.

-Courtyards cannot be too big
-Place parking in such a way that one must walk through social spaces to get to their house
-Privacy Gradience

1       Master Plan of Lake Clair Cohousing and Neighboring Land Trust
2       Central circulation highlighting integration into common spaces. All images originate from the above website.
3       Typical Floor Plan
4-6     Pictures of common spaces

## 2.1.3 Urban Scale: Capitol Hill Urban Cohousing
### Schematica Workshop | Seattle, WA

For the urban density case study, we see some very different applications of the same elements presented in the rural and suburban scale projects. The complex consists of 11 units again centered around a courtyard, but this time a much smaller courtyard that serves multiple functions. The apartments themselves are typical, with no ammenities relocated or downsized. However, the bread and butter of this project that makes it stand out is how the designers handled the circulation and relating different sized units near eachother. The central stairs lead residents to look over the courtyard as they enter their apartments, also being offered enough space in the breeze way to treat it as a porch that the 3 units on each floor can share.The project also integrates many elements from the common house and garden spaces discussed in the previous two case studies.





Capitol Hill Urban Cohousing
Schemata Workshop
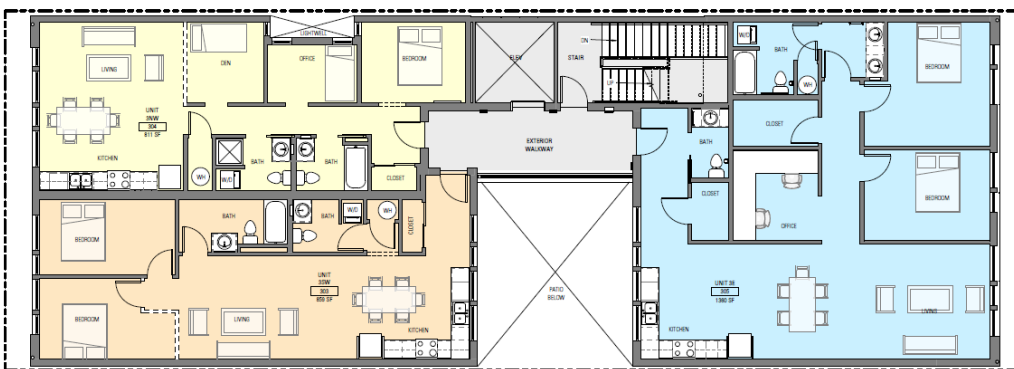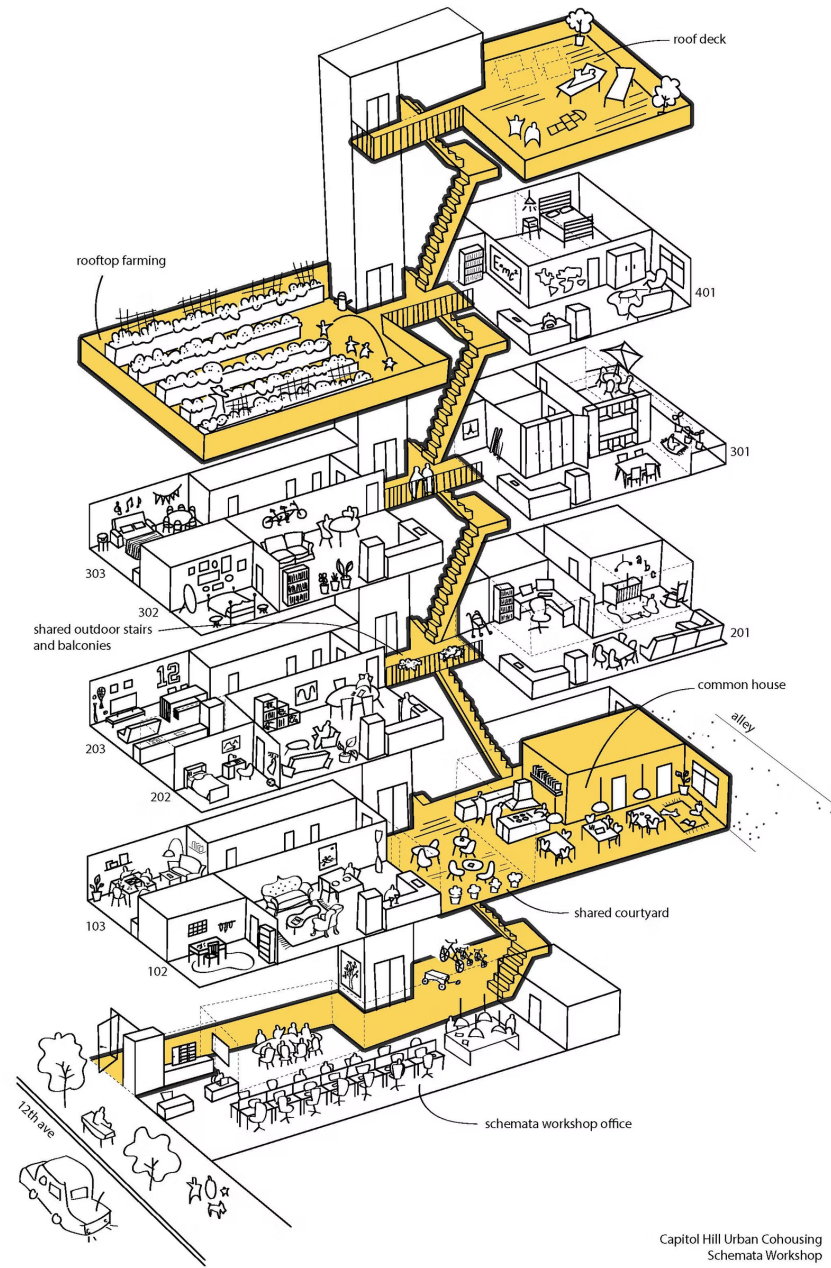


1    Section through Capitol Hill Urban Cohousing. Schemata Workshop.
     https://www.schemataworkshop.com/chuc
2    Central circulation highlighting integration into common spaces. All images originate
     from the above website.
3    Typical Floor Plan
4-6  Pictures of common spaces

## Social Space Integration

### 1) Courtyard



Urban density cohousing projects require efficiency to be a main priority. The courtyard is only 18'x20' and serves multiple functions in the same space, from outdoor dining, to hosting an exercise class, to being a play space for the children. Residents working in their kitchens or leaving their units will always know what activities are happening.

### 2) Common Kitchen & Dining Hall



The common kitchen and dining hall extend off the courtyard, where the community gathers to share meals together 3 times a week. Architect Grace Kim says communal dining is the way she gauges communitas and the success of a cohousing community.

### 2) Rooftop Garden
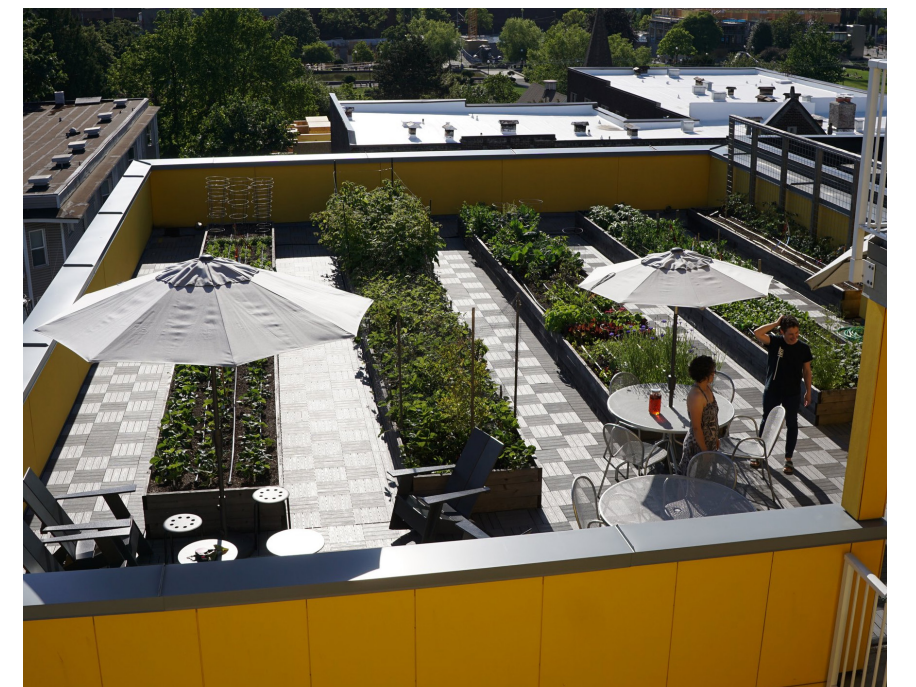


Since this project does not have access to large amounts of land to spread out, nor a pocket park or landtrust nearby, it integrated the garden component onto the roof of the structure. Herbs and crops grown up here are often used in the community's shared meals.
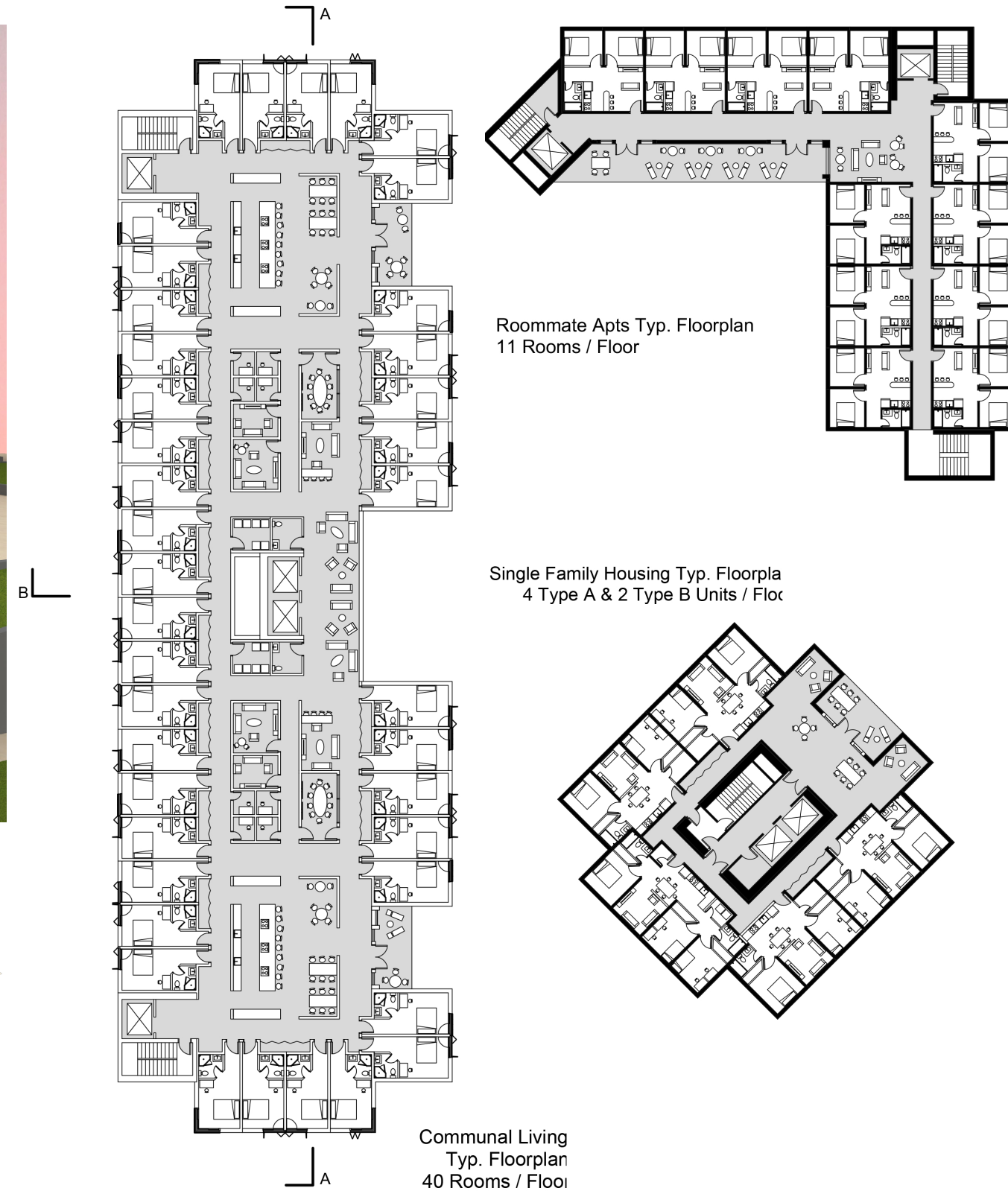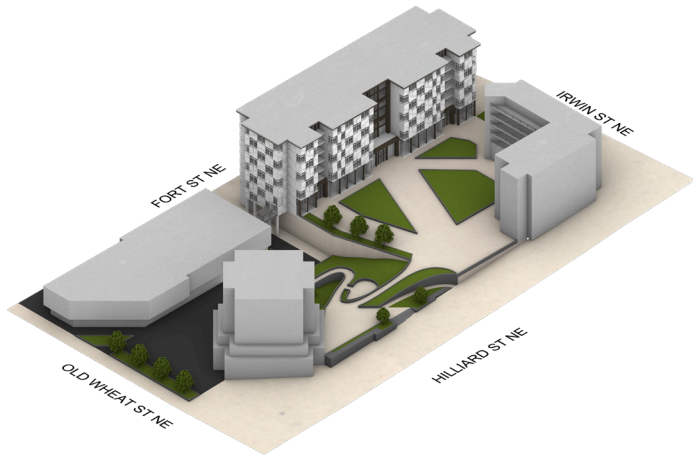
## Takeaways:

-maximizing common spaces to be multipurpose
-common house clusters
-Communitas

Community is the foundation upon which Opportunity is built. This project was my introduction to designing Coliving, a mixed use voucher coliving program with a vocational school on site as a means to rehabilitate the homeless/low income of the Sweet Auburn District. The Project consisted of three towers, each focusing on a different housing type.



Roommate Apts Typ. Floorplan
11 Rooms / Floor

Single Family Housing Typ. Floorpla
4 Type A & 2 Type B Units / Floc

Communal Living
Typ. Floorplan
40 Rooms / Floor

APERTURE was a suburban density Cohousing complex located on the outskirts of Buckhead Atlanta. The twist to this project was that It involved an added layer of privacy gradience through the integration of AR technologies into the space.
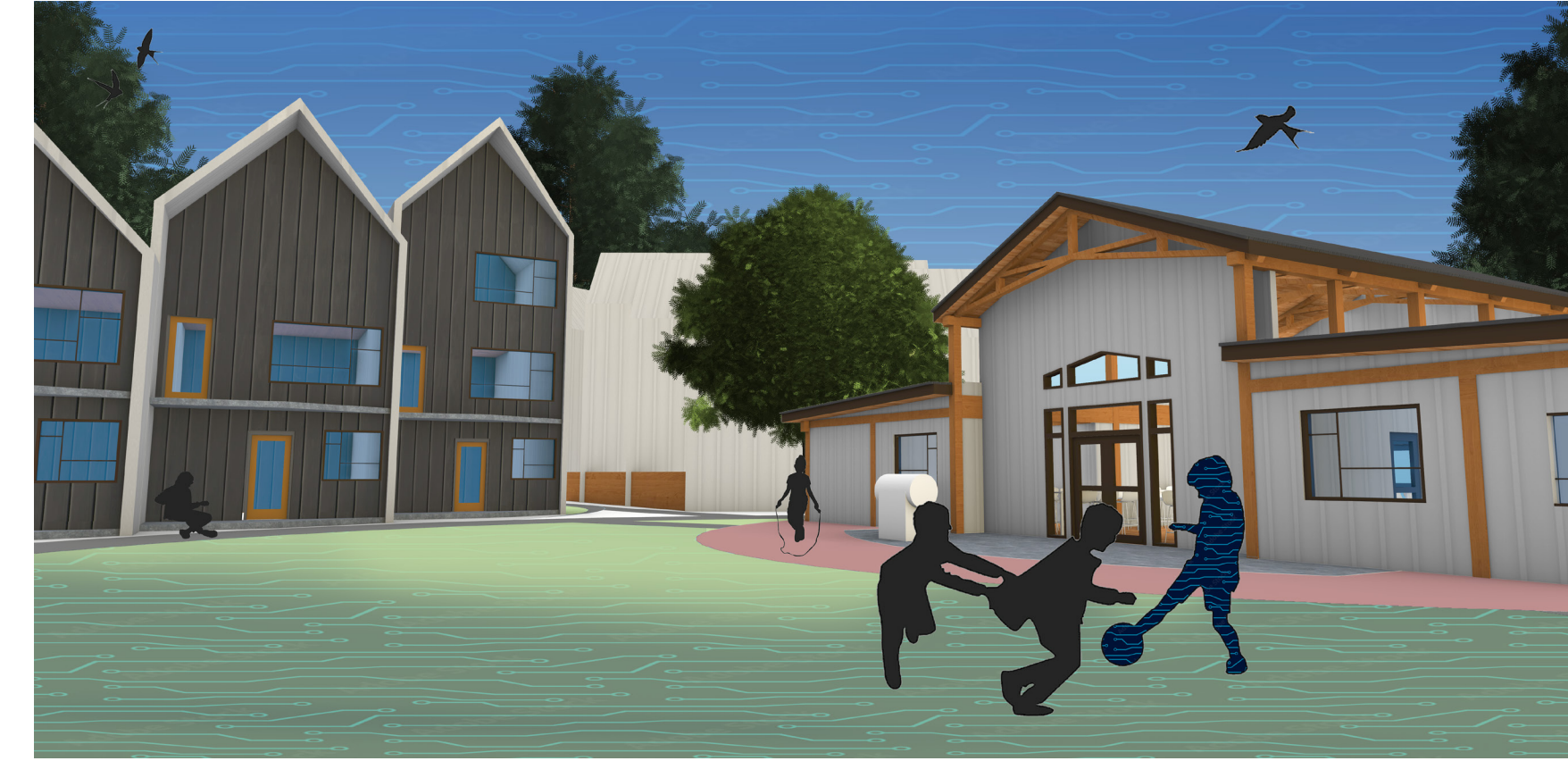




## Takeaways:

1) Opportunity
The takeaway experiences I would correct today would be to incorporate unit types into the same shared spaces instead of seperate towers

2) Apperture
To be honest, I think this project followed the methodology established for suburban scale cohousing quite well. The biggest challenge to overcome with this project was to design vernacularly while still making common spaces modular so they could be replicated in other AR Coliving communities
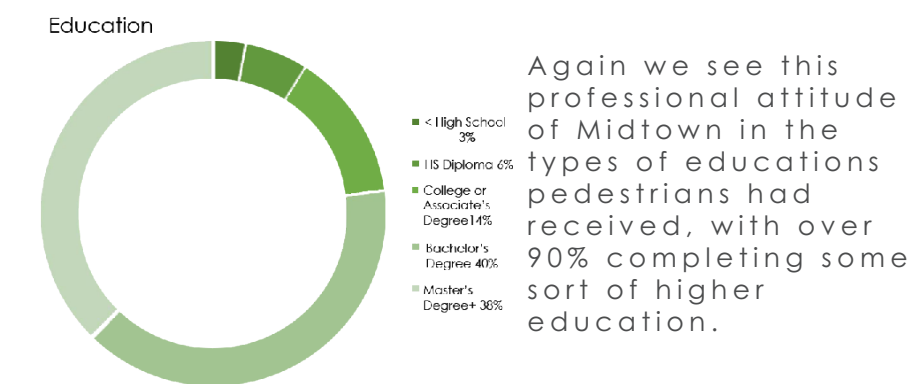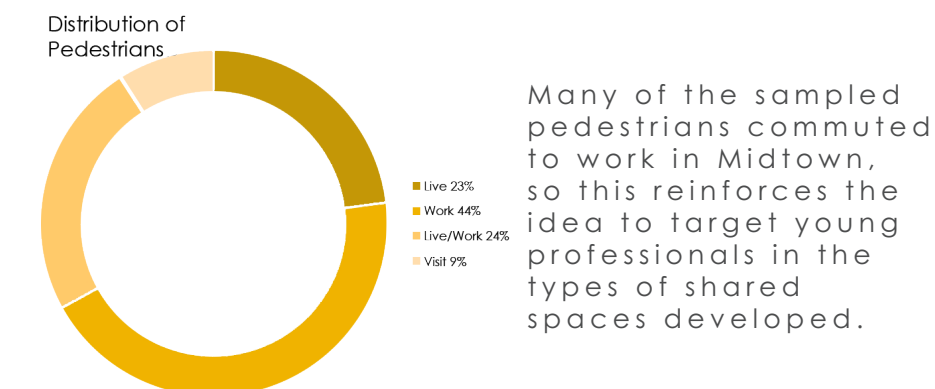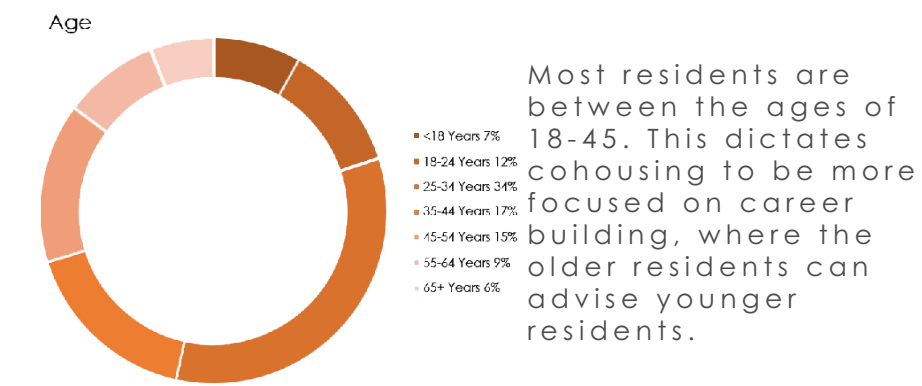
### 2.3.1 Neighborhood Overview

Midtown is a high-density commercial and residential neighborhood of Atlanta, GA. It boasts having the highest density of art and cultural institutions in the Southeast, including The High Museum of Art, The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, The Fox Theater, Woodruff Arts Center, and the Museum of Design Atlanta. Midtown also ties into the Marta system, and has access to Piedmont Park.

### Demographics:

Age

Most residents are between the ages of 18-45. This dictates cohousing to be more focused on career building, where the older residents can advise younger residents.

Distribution of Pedestrians

Many of the sampled pedestrians commuted to work in Midtown, so this reinforces the idea to target young professionals in the types of shared spaces developed.

Education

Again we see this professional attitude of Midtown in the types of educations pedestrians had received, with over 90% completing some sort of higher education.

### 2.3.2 Site Selection

The site itself is centrally located within Midtown, sandwhiched at the dead center between Marta Station and Piedmont Park, located next to the Federal Reserve Bank on 10th Street. In meeting the requirements for a dense urban Coliving site, the space is more than accomodating for creating a large mixed use complex, it sits along the path between the Marta Station and a large amount of office and residential to the North of the site, encouraging circulation, and the site contains a small dog park and a bus station at Peachtree and 10th, maximizing circulation.

11th Street

Peachtree St.

Juniper St. NE

10th Street

990 Juniper St NE
Atlanta GA 30309

**Address:**
990 Juniper St. NE Atlanta, GA 30309

**Zoning:**
SPI-16 Zoning Regulations

**Lot Size:**
400'x400'
(3.08 acres without the park)

**Points of Interest:**

1) 10th Street Dog Park

2) Marta Bus Stop
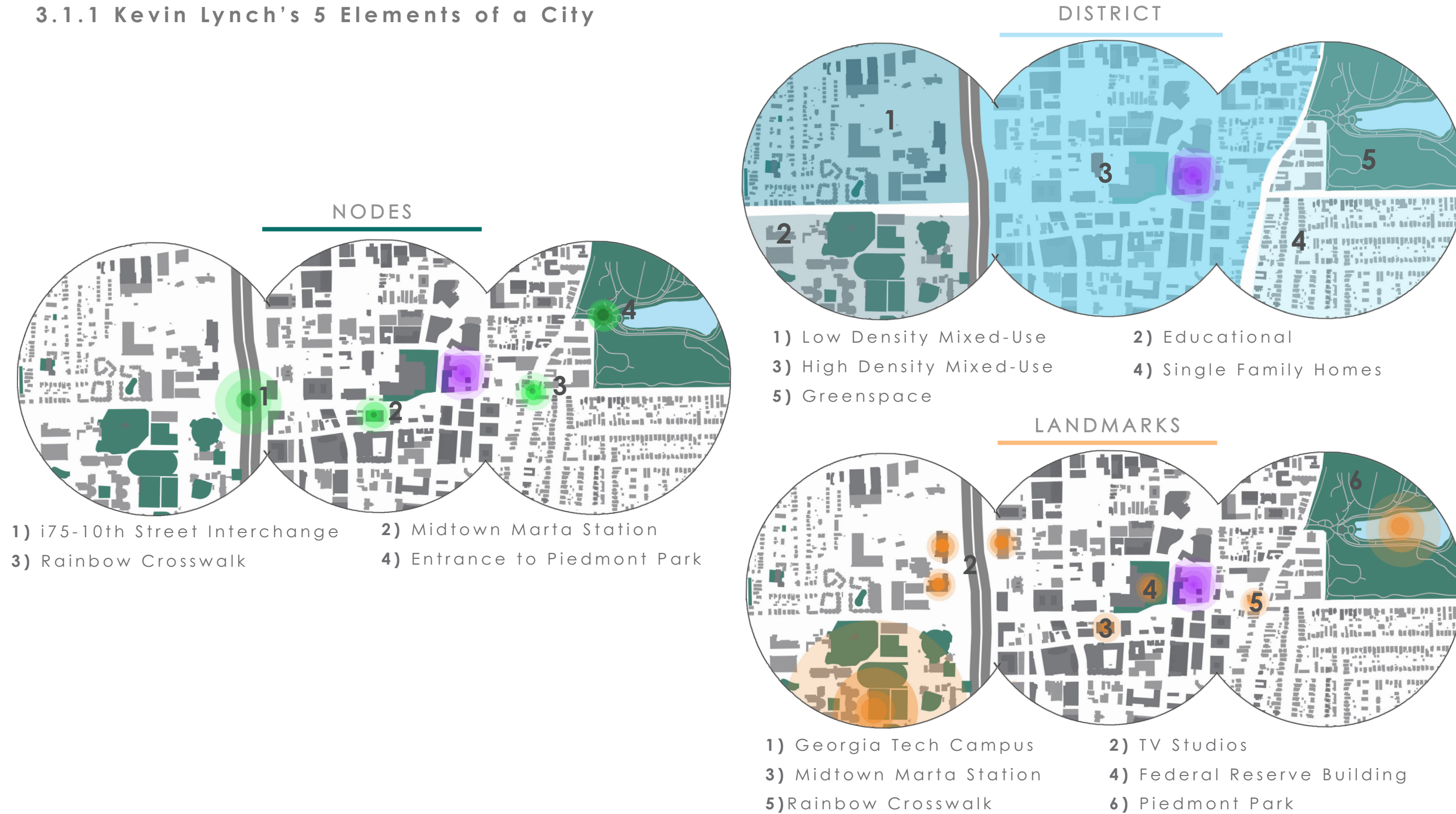
3) Federal Reserve

4) Henry's

## SECTION 2

## 3.1.1 Kevin Lynch's 5 Elements of a City

### DISTRICT



1) Low Density Mixed-Use    2) Educational
3) High Density Mixed-Use   4) Single Family Homes
5) Greenspace

### NODES



1) i75-10th Street Interchange   2) Midtown Marta Station
3) Rainbow Crosswalk             4) Entrance to Piedmont Park

### LANDMARKS



1) Georgia Tech Campus    2) TV Studios
3) Midtown Marta Station  4) Federal Reserve Building
5)Rainbow Crosswalk       6) Piedmont Park

### PATH



### EDGES



## 3.1.2 Pedestrian Density map

WEEKDAY
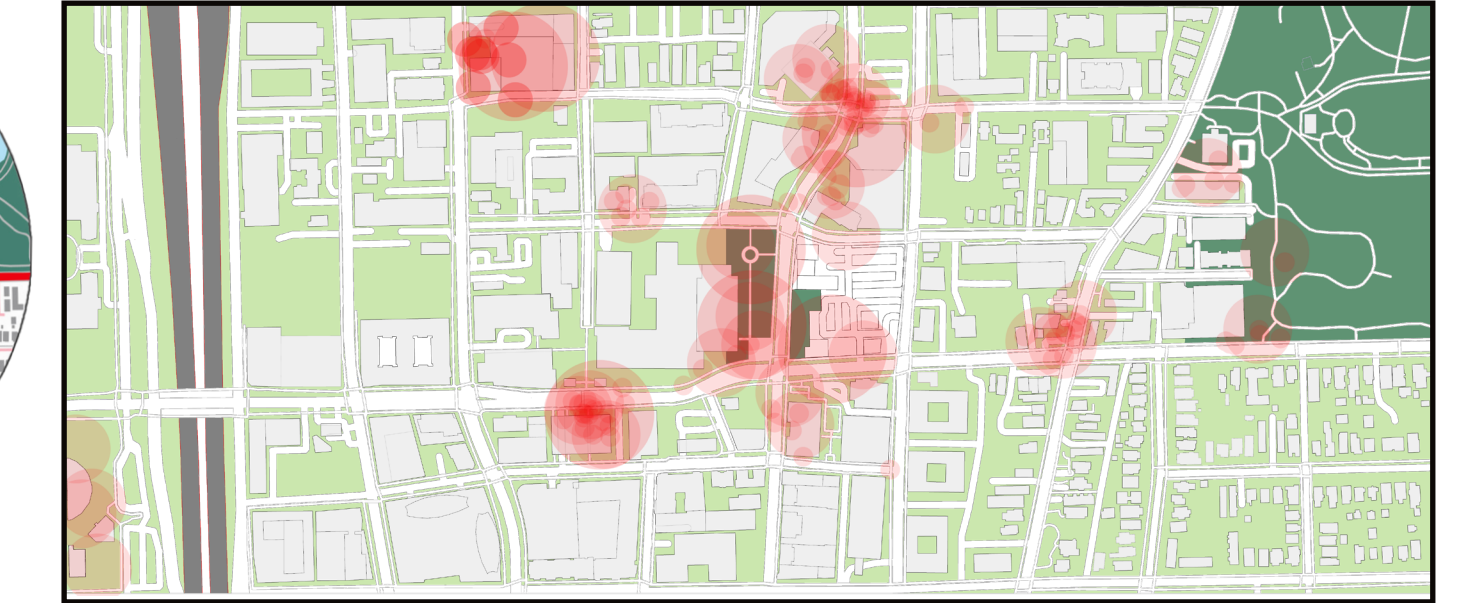


WEEKEND
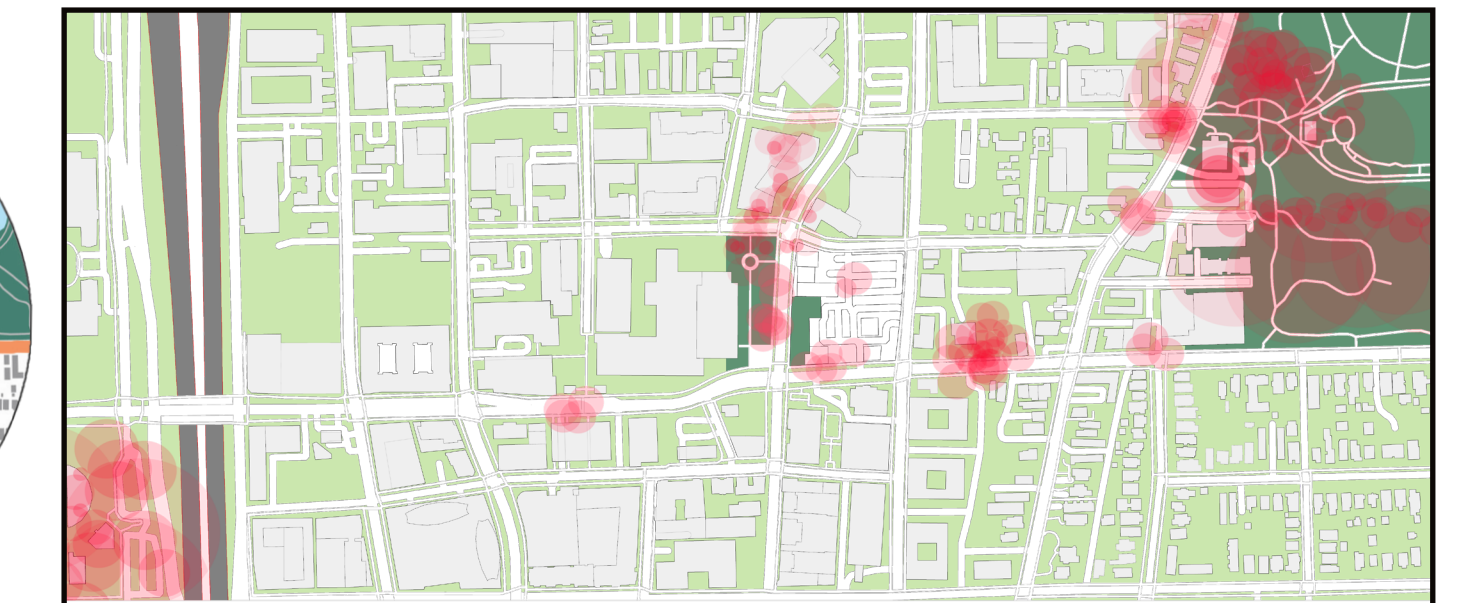
### 3.1.3 Pedestrian Circulation



— Leisure Path
— Commuter Path

### 3.1.4 Building Usage Site Model



— Housing      — Hotel      — Public Function
— Mixed Use    — Office      — Retail

The biggest challenge to overcome with this project was understanding how to pivot circulation in tall buildings to integrate through community spaces. When approaching the program, I looked to the levels of transparency I needed to explore for each, as depicted to the right.

The extended neighborhood would have access to retail and restaurants, parks and green spaces, a makers space, and an underground parking deck as it was deemed important enough to the area to try to maintain the already limited parking in some sort of way. Coliving buildings would have street furniture outside their entrances before transitioning into the Coliving community spaces. It was realized quickly that in order to maintain the correct proportions of residents to common areas, It would be necessary to organize each building into little "Community Clusters" of about 12-16 units per group.
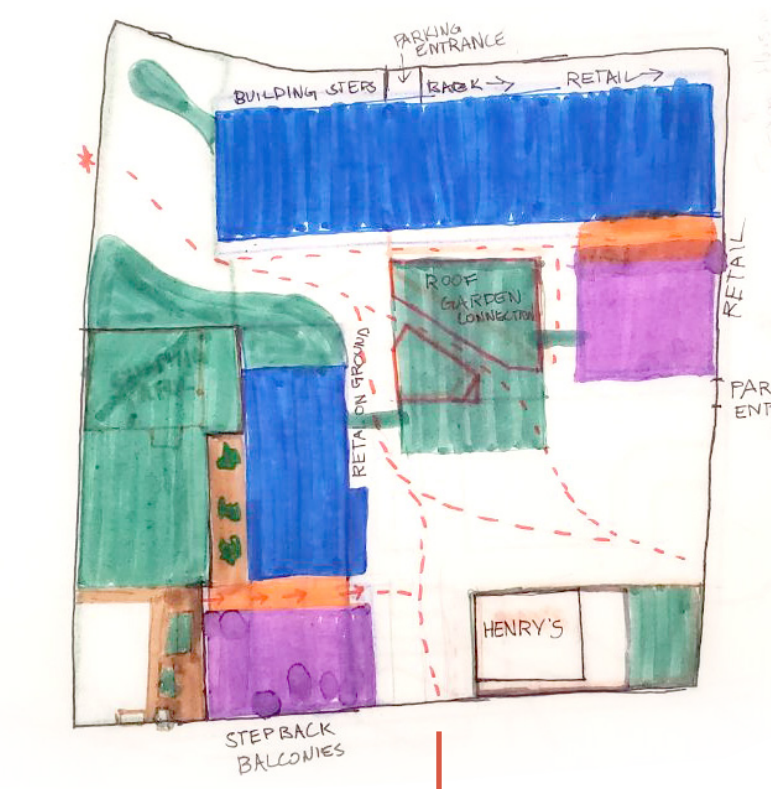
At first, I explored these spaces with the idea that there would be two different types of community clusters: one family oriented and one not, since play spaces add to the amount of common space necessary for each cluster and at the time of writing, family house holds only make up 27% of Midtown households.
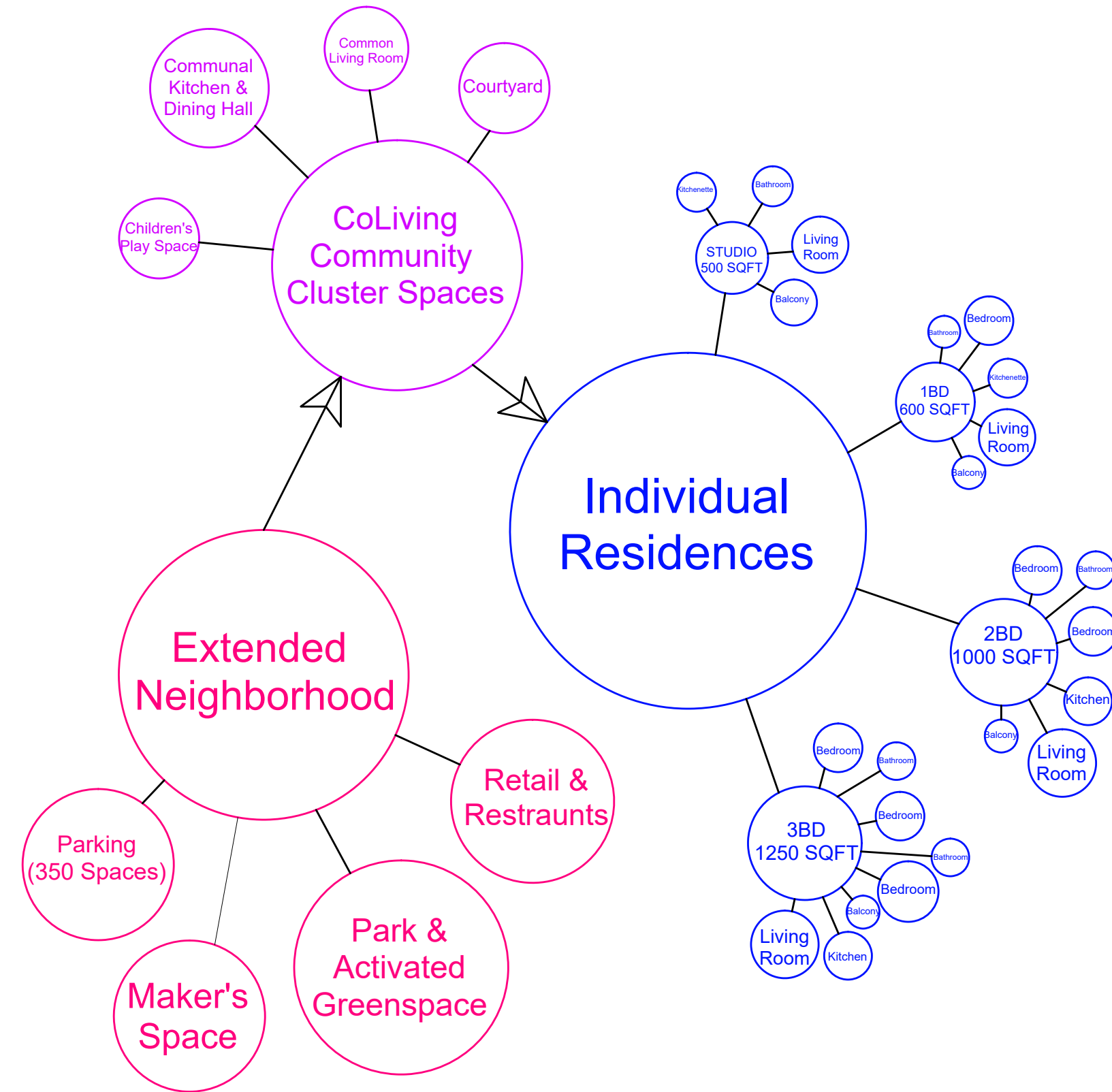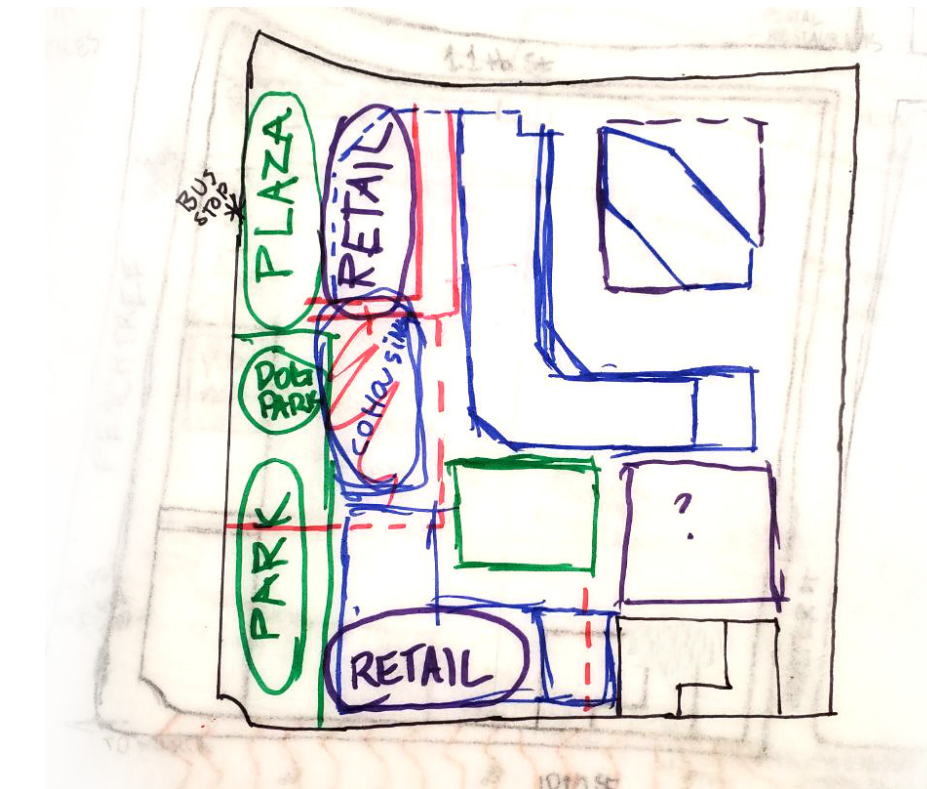
The initial iterations focused heavily on leveraging off the pocket park and creating an access walk onto 10th street from Henry's, but these forms weighed more heavily on traditional residential forms, meaning they left a lot to be desired for creating circulation through social spaces. The two buildings were then fused to create a large central courtyard that would create an engaging environment for the surrounding neighborhood and Coliving residents alike. However, this new iteration argued for terraces facing the park which stepped back, also making it a form which would be hard to create circulation through shared spaces.
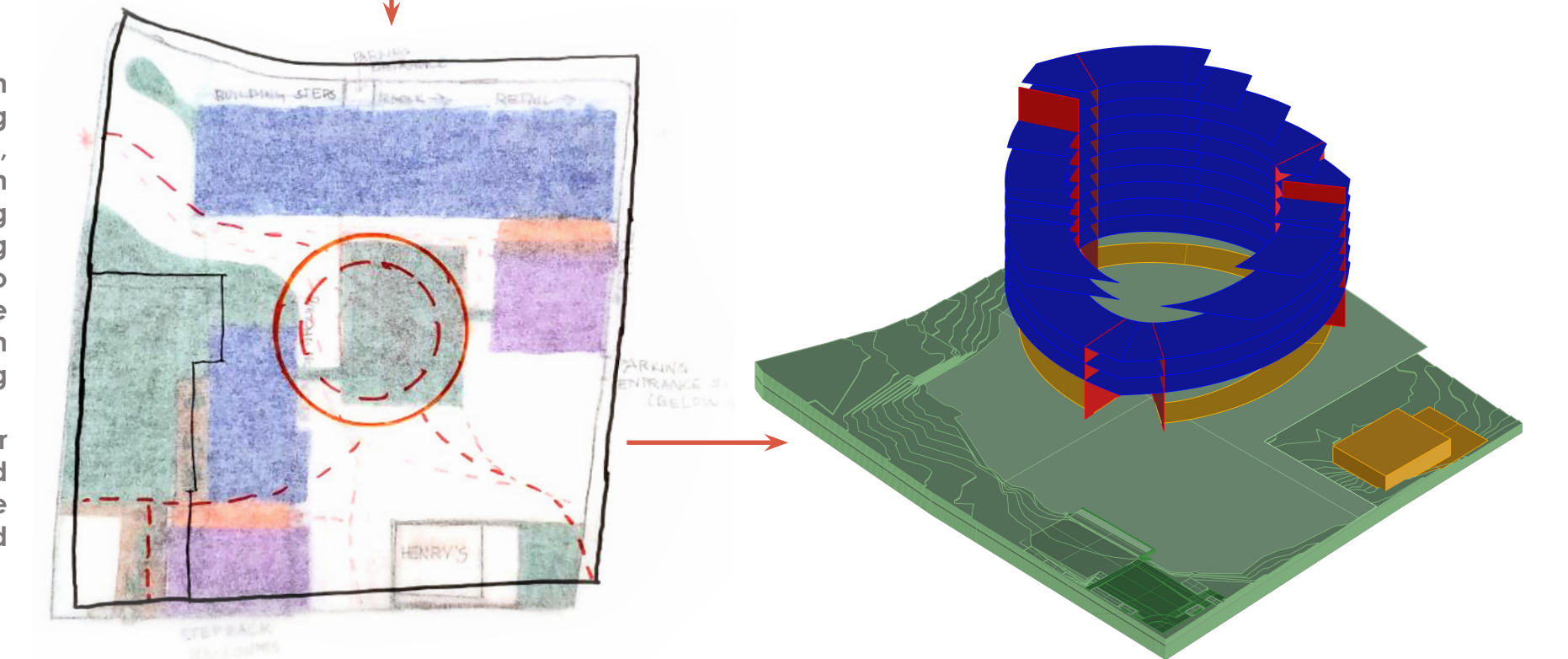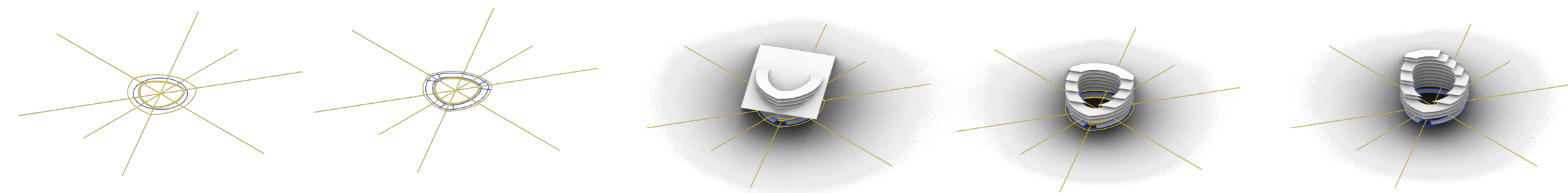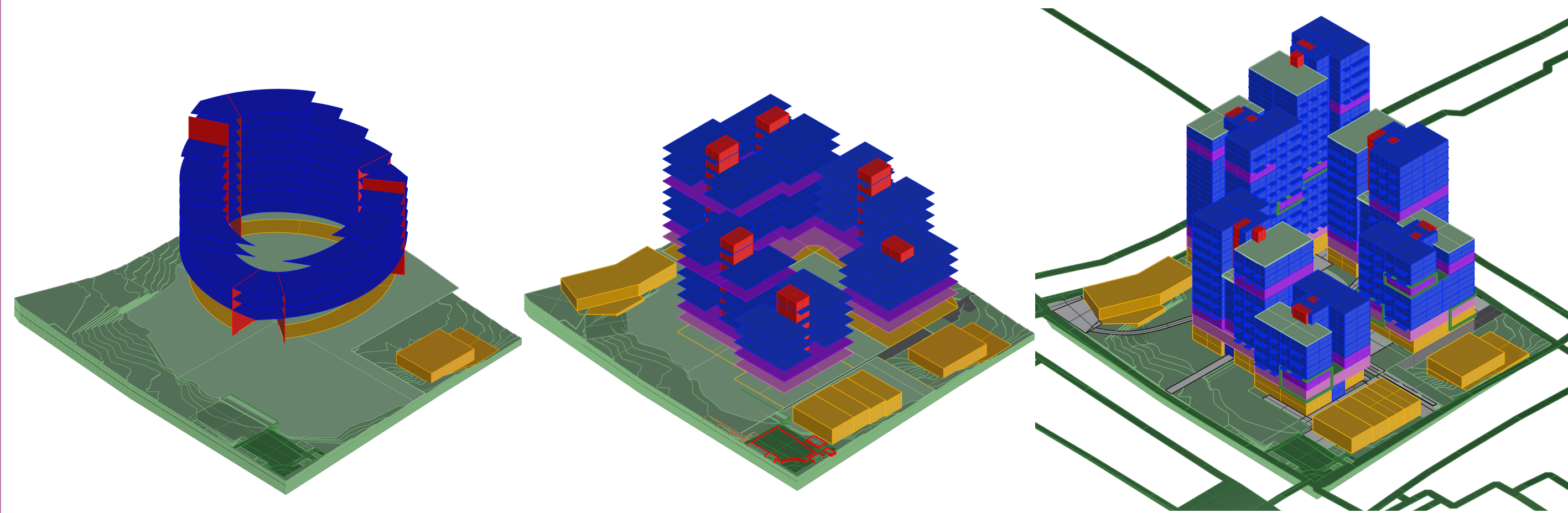
## Master Plan



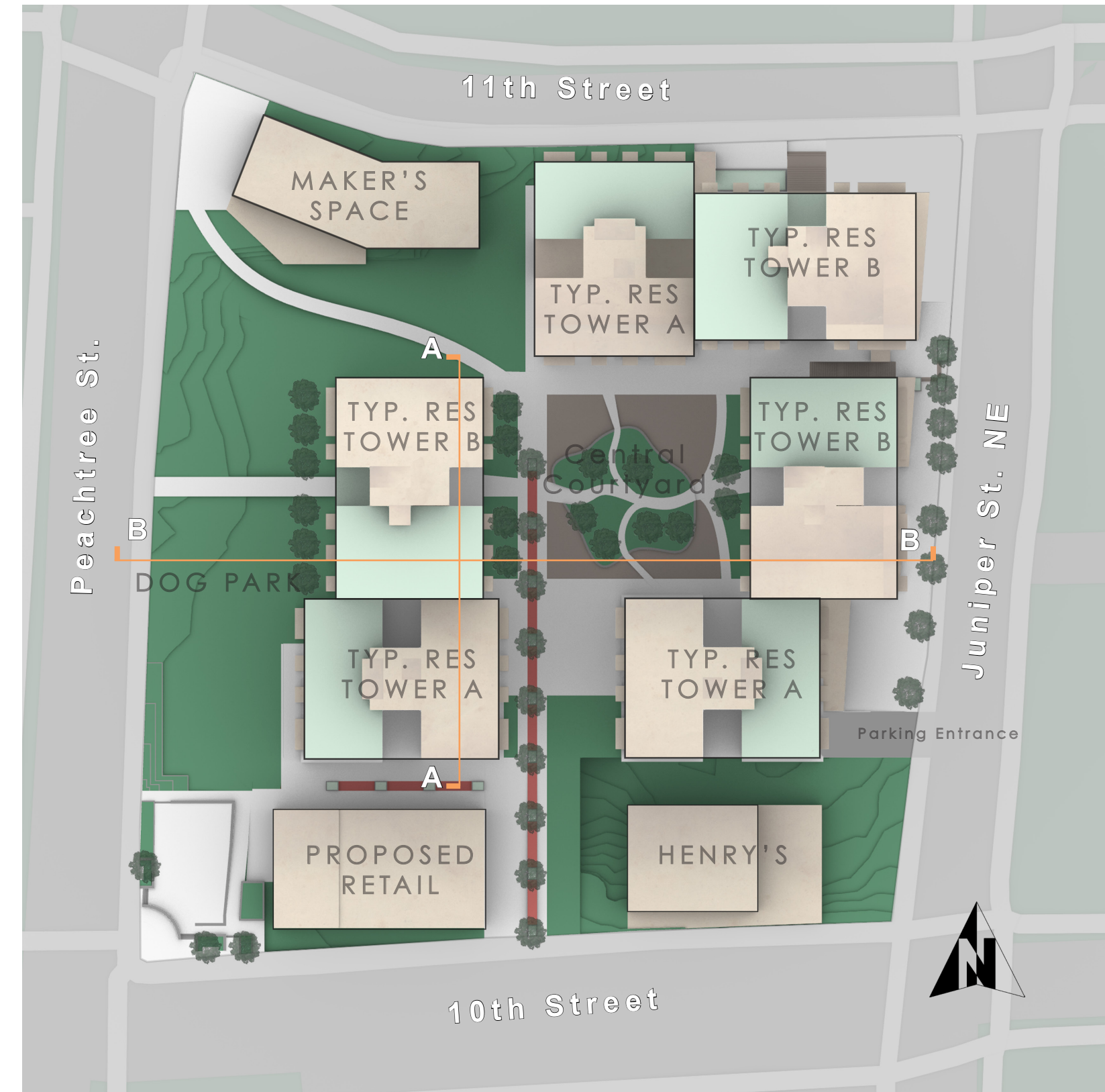1) Residential Units A & B: The units have all been designed to function off of 1 of 2 typical unit designs. The ground floor on all towers are used for retail space or restaurants, with central cores that bring residents up into the Coliving communities. The 2nd floor contains office space but on every 3rd floor, there will be a community cluster space, with one small courtyard for each of these common spaces.
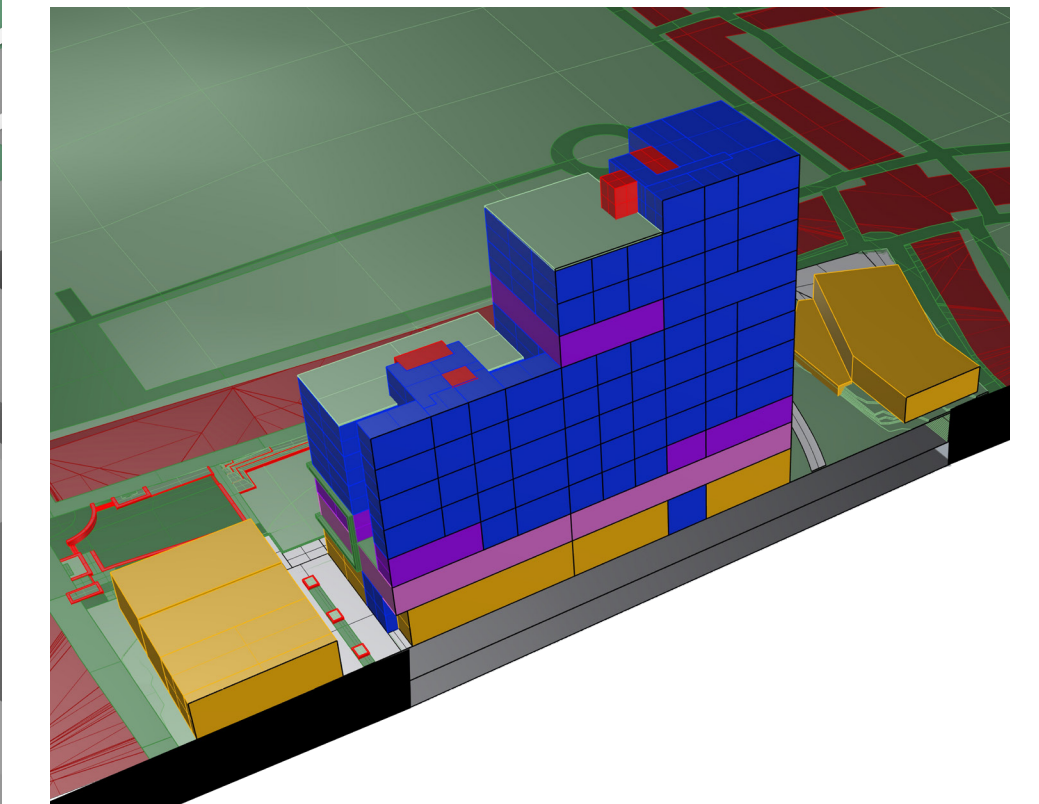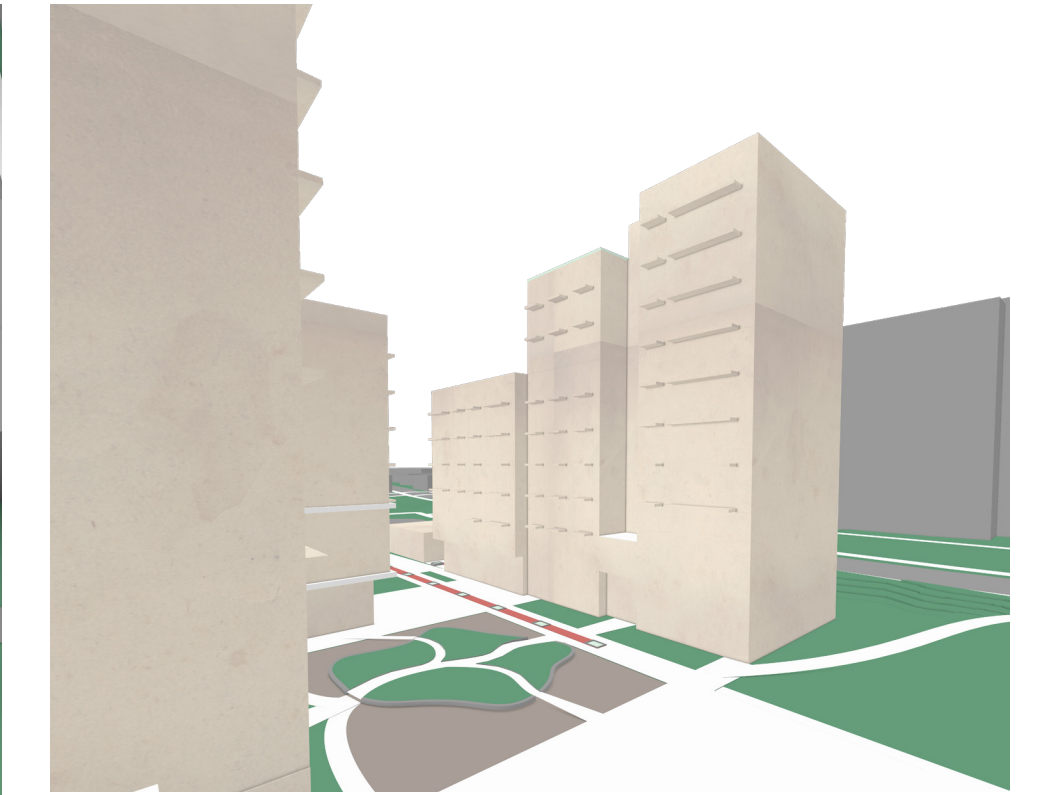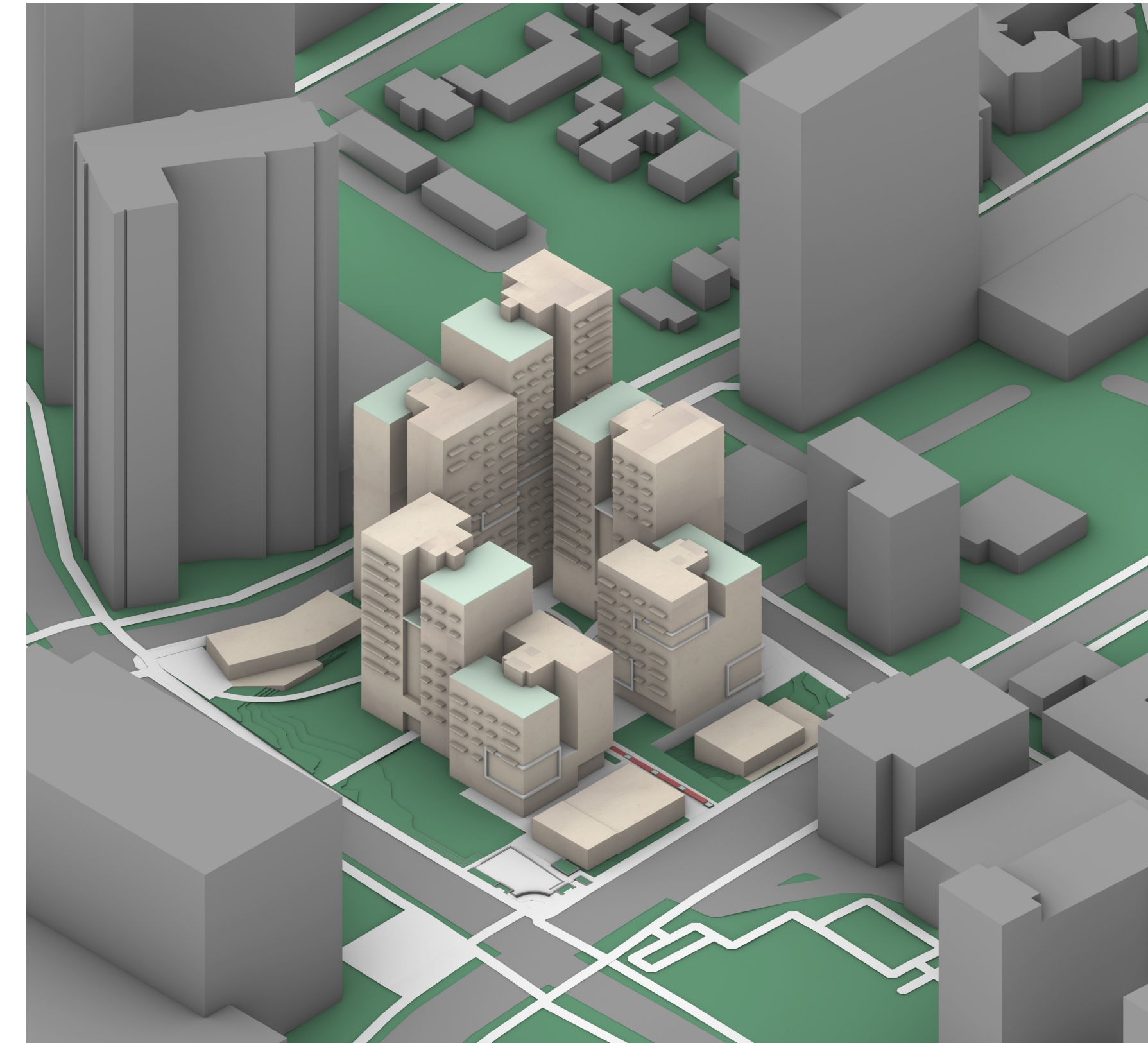
2) Central Courtyard: The central courtyard is broken up by a small grove of trees serving as a public 3rd space. Paths seperate the green space into smaller pieces so as to create a more intimate scale. Paths reach out to connect all of the major points of interest established in the initial site analysis.

3) Maker's Space: The maker's space creates an opportunity for city residents to get easy access to a woodshop and fabrication lab.

4) Additional Retail Plaza: A new retail strip has been added to the north eastern face of the project to stimulate more foot traffic through that area (aside from the commuters heading to and from the Marta 2 times a day.)

5) Henry's: Henry's is a restaurant of importance to many of the locals of Midtown. It is the last of the original 3 restaurants featuring outdoor dining spaces known as a common place to propose amongst the local LGBT community.

6) 10th Street Dog Park receives a bit of an extension in this project, following the removal of the old abandoned shopping strip.
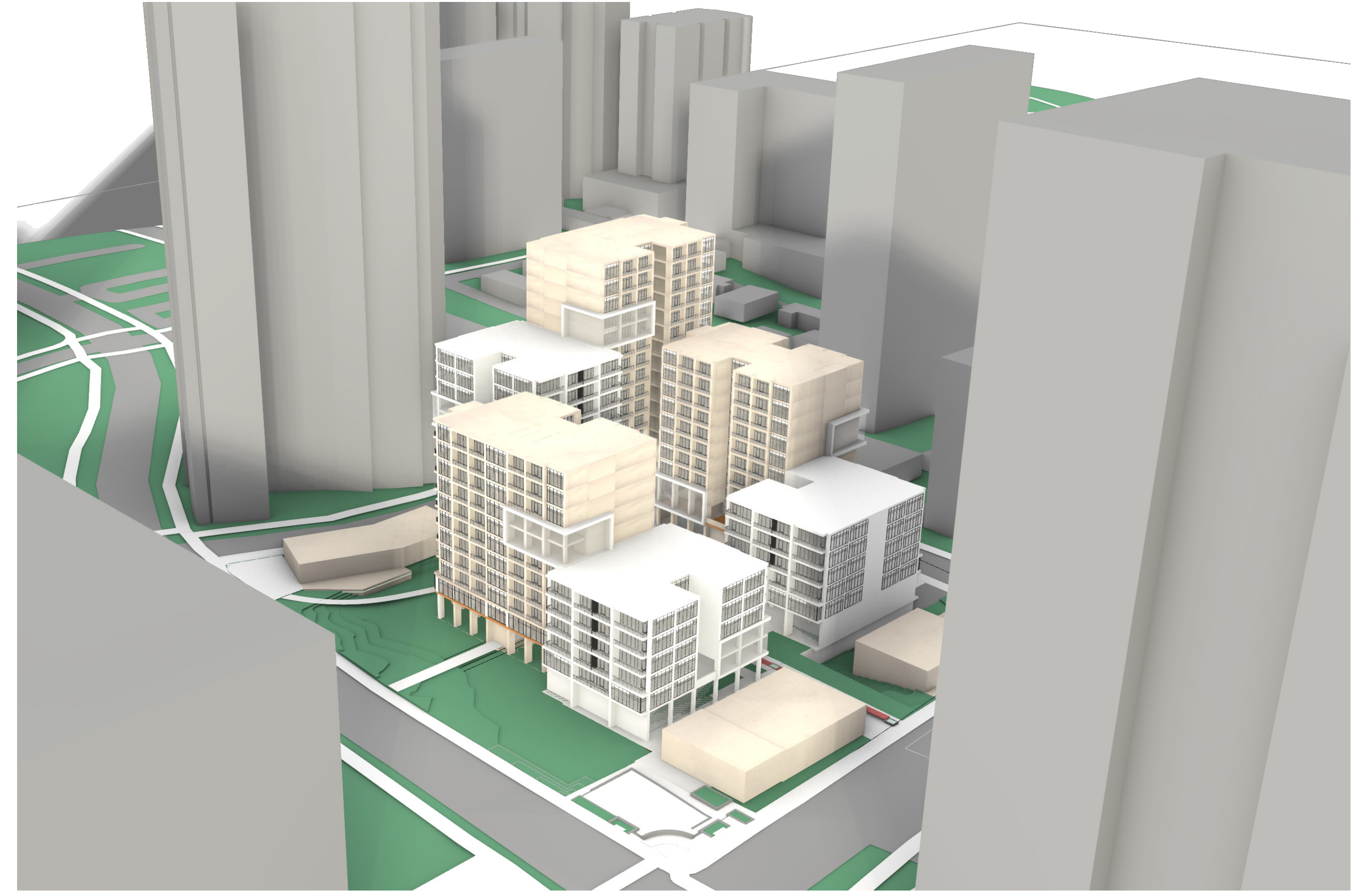
East Elevation

North Elevation

Section B

Section A

# Typ. Residential Tower A



25'-0" | 16'-0" | 16'-0" | 25'-0"

20'-0" / 20'-0" / 20'-0" / 20'-0" / 20'-0"

OFFICE

OFFICE | OFFICE

25'-0" | 16'-0" | 16'-0" | 25'-0"

3 BD | 1 BD | 2 BD

3 BD | STUDIO | STUDIO | 2 BD

25'-0" | 16'-0" | 16'-0" | 25'-0"

2 BD | 1 BD | 1 BD | 2 BD

2 BD | STUDIO | STUDIO | 2 BD

# Typ. Residential Tower B



18'-0" | 22'-0" | 18'-0" | 18'-0"

16'-0" / 16'-0" / 16'-0" / 20'-0" / 16'-0" / 16'-0"

OFFICE

OFFICE | OFFICE

18'-0" | 22'-0" | 18'-0" | 18'-0"

2 BD

1+ BD

1+ BD | 1 BD

1+ BD | 1 BD

1 BD

18'-0" | 22'-0" | 18'-0" | 18'-0"

2 BD | 2 BD

STUDIO | 1 BD

STUDIO | 1 BD

1+ BD | 1 BD
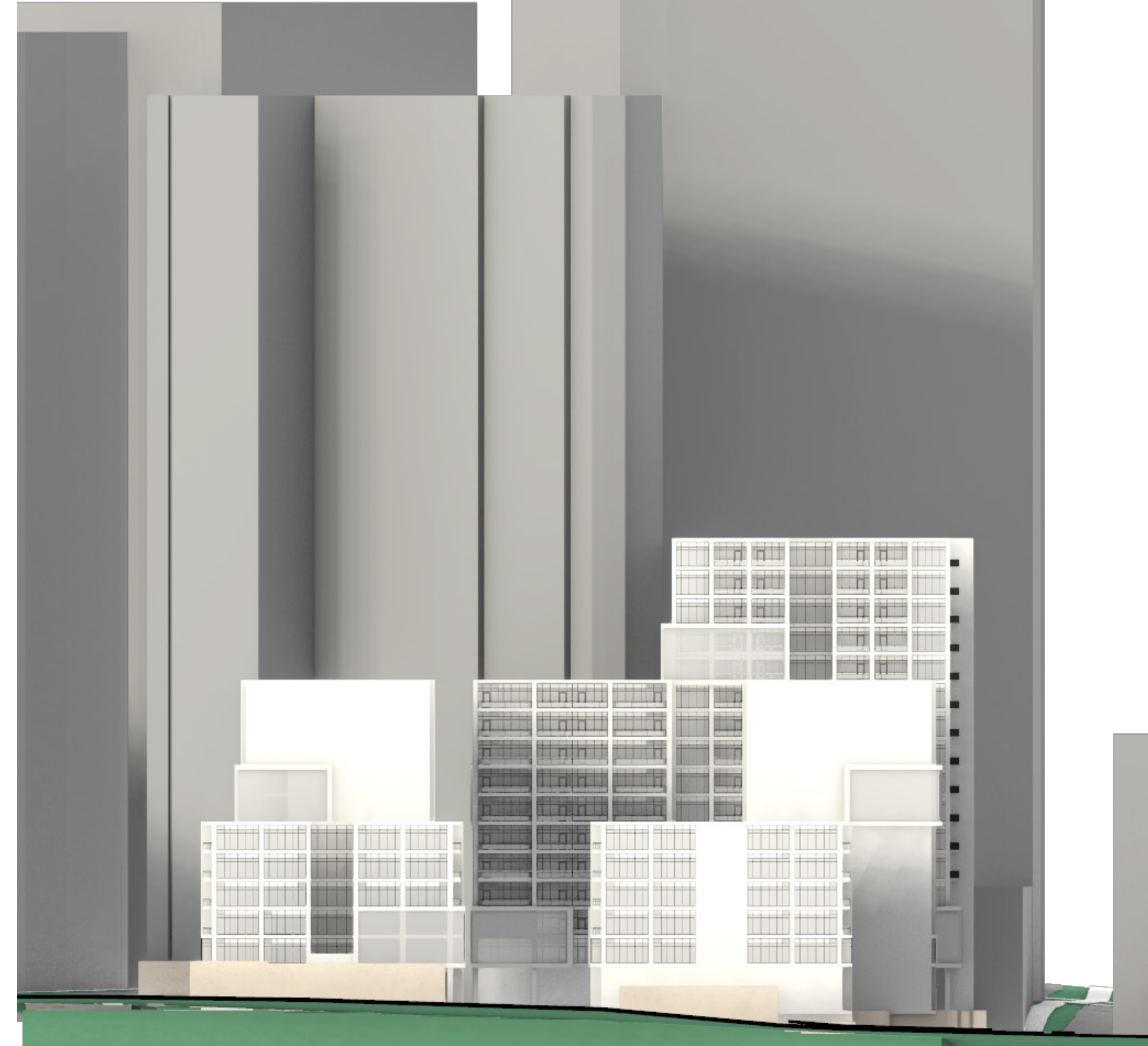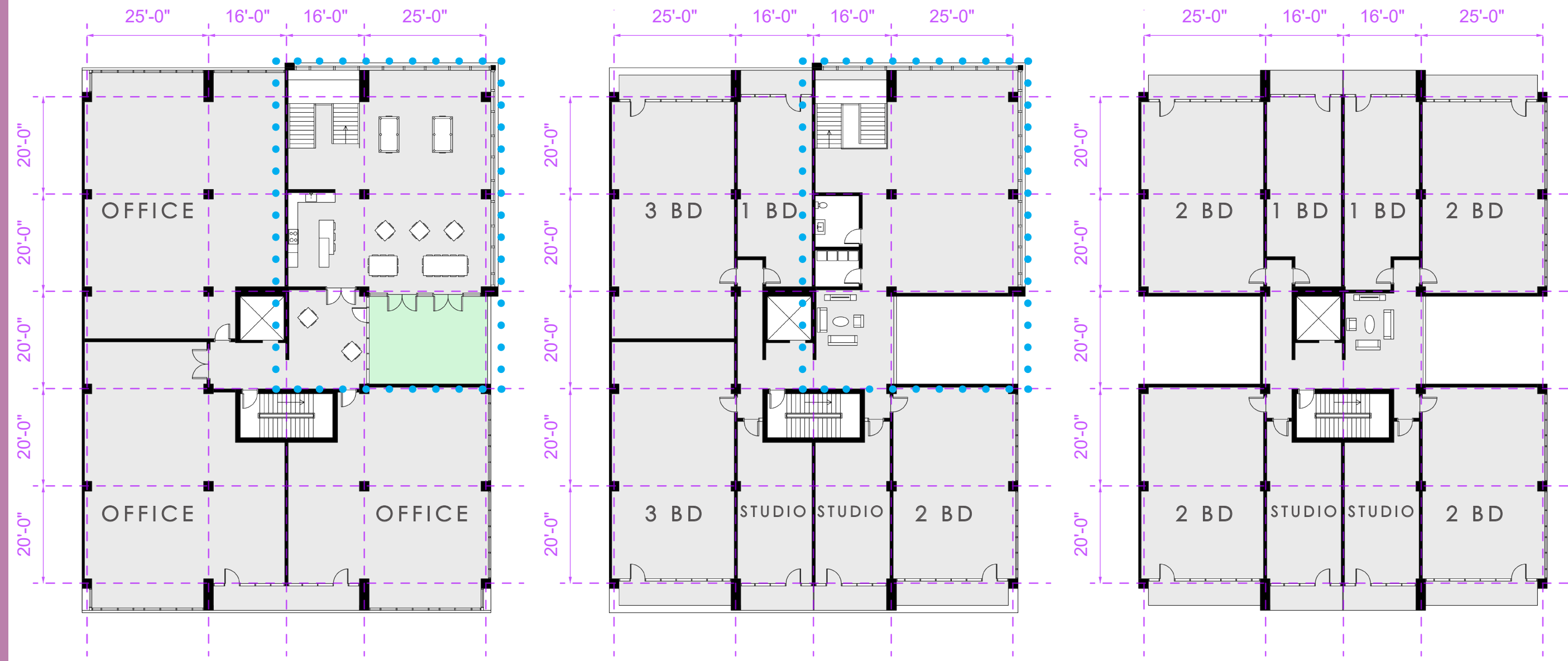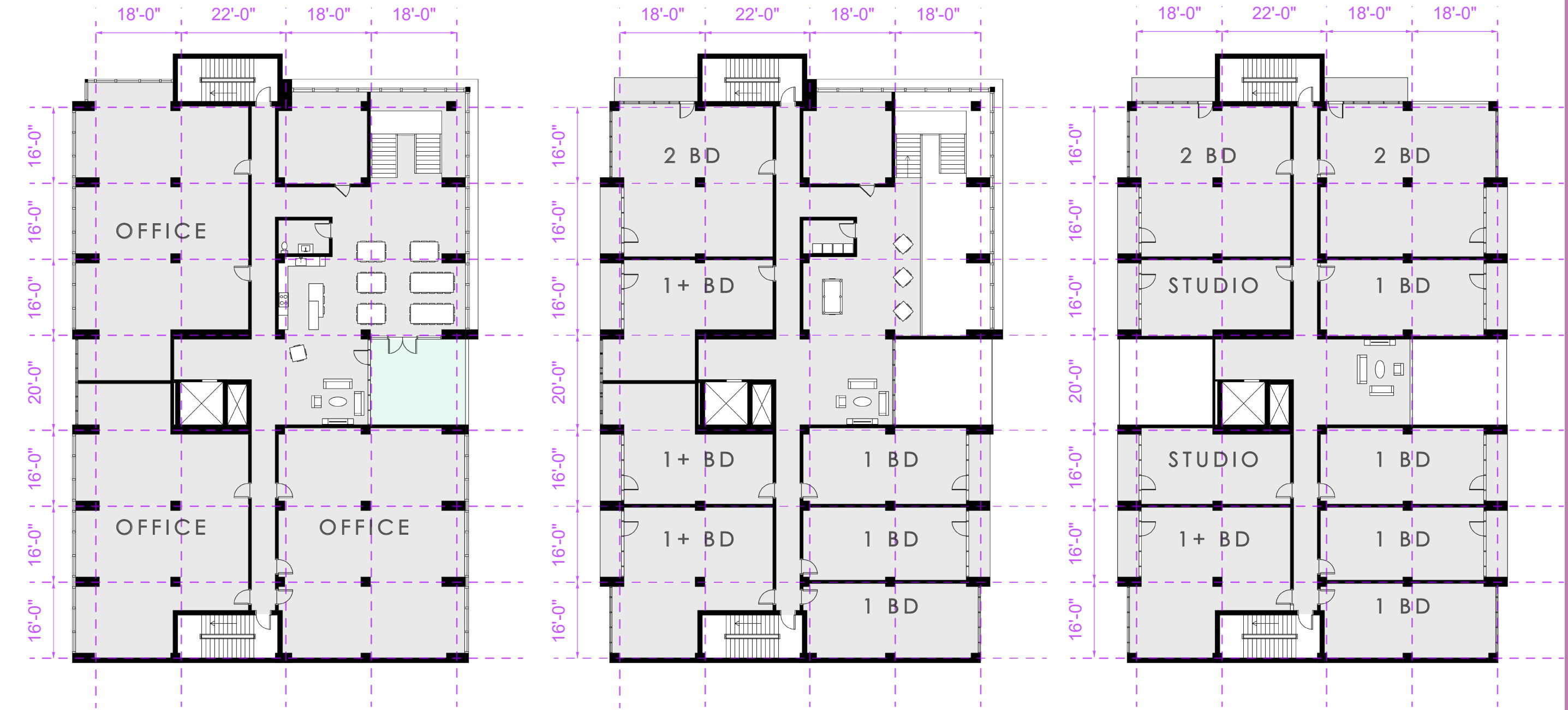
## Reflection

The creation of communities, and the design of social architecture has been a concept which has fascinated me my whole life. The earliest I can remember trying to design such spaces was in 2009 when I was 10 years old, trying to create fun hang out spaces for my friends in an online game called Free Realms. In recent years, this idea of bringing people together has taken on a much deeper meaning for me. I have dedicated my life to community building, and this thesis serves as a component of a greater understanding of that concept. During my time researching Coliving, I had a deeply personal experience that ended up tying this project to a much deeper part of my identity, and suddenly I found myself having to answer questions about myself that I was far from being ready to answer to be able to continue this project. A deep anxiety became tied to the creation of this project since I had tied it so closely to my own identity.

In the early formulation of this thesis, I asked myself what a purely social architecture may look like, with the intention of utilizing Virtual Reality spaces to explore this concept. As someone who has grown up during the dawn of the internet, I have been able to see the full variety of social spaces it has created, and how integral they are to society now. And in this new explosion of digital social spaces, something else rose to the surface within our society: loneliness. Then as the pandemic began, and I was able to connect with the neighbors in my dad's neighborhood, followed up with moving into a neighborhood with almost no social interactions among us at all, I experienced a major revelation about the communities I would create: communities created online are often done around some central common interest (either a game or hobby) which, after one loses interest in that topic, it takes no time at all for that individual to fizzle out away from the group.

With the communities created face to face, bonds tend to stretch much deeper. In the case of my neighbors at Lakemoore colonies: we all come from vastly different age groups, backgrounds, professions, and political affiliations, and yet each person in our community cares deeply for each other and sets aside our differences. The idea that the component of a fixed place that is not so easy to just leave on a whim could be such a catalyst to keep people together resonated deeply within me. However, as someone pursuing architecture for her career, I cannot sell you the formula for community building as it is not within our control to decide how people will use our spaces. However, *as designers of the built environment around us, it is our responsibility to build the stepping stones that our fellow neighbors may use to find each other.*

**Hoppenbrouwer, Bas. "The Community Effects of Co-Living," Radboud University. Samsura, Ary. 2019.**

Hoppenbrouwer's thesis serves as a means to study the effects of community building on residents. Hoppenbrouwer offers a unique definition on what he defines CoLiving to be, calling it out as a seperate typology from what Cohousing is. It is stated that while Cohousing is built typically from the bottom up, with developers working closely with the to be residents to custom tailor a project to suit the community's needs, Co-Living is "developer-led and a product for commercial sale or rent." In other words, CoLiving extends to where residents have not been actively involved in the building process.

To study these effects, Hoppenbrouwer compared and analyzed the effectiveness of social spaces in 3 different projects by taking surveys on how the spaces were being used.

He found that in all case studies, that not many residents were interested in organizing large neighborhood events. Through digital group chats, the neighborhood would break down into like minded people who would then take advantage of the smaller social spaces on the site.

**Grace, Kim. Capitol Hill Urban Cohousing. Schemata Workshop, 2019. https://www.schemataworkshop.com/chuc.**

This is the main webpage for the Capitol Hill Urban Cohousing precedent study. It contains links to many articles and is where I obtained the pictures and diagrams of the project.

**Grace, Kim. How cohousing can make us happier (and live longer) | Grace Kim. TED, August 7, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mguvTfAw4wk&amp;t=479s&amp;ab_channel=TED**

**Oldenburg, Ray. The Great Good Place: Cafés, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community. Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2005.**

In "The Great Good Place," Ray Oldenburg argues that Americans have become increasingly isolated and disconnected from their communities, and he proposes that third places - informal gathering places outside of work and home - can play an essential role in restoring social connections. The book provides a historical perspective on the decline of third places, such as the corner bar, coffeehouse, and general store, and discusses the importance of these spaces for community life. Oldenburg suggests that third places foster a sense of community and belonging, provide a platform for civic engagement, and enhance individual well-being. This book has been widely influential in urban planning and community development and offers valuable insights into the role of informal gathering places in building social connections.

After establishing what social spaces are and providing some context to the direness of their status, he lists the eight traits he believes define a quality social space from the bad.

**Midtown Alliance. Only in Midtown Magazine. June 22, 2021. Accessed Jan 29, 2023. https://issuu.com/midtownatl/docs/ma_only_in_midtown_6-22?fr=sNWY2YzUxMDIyNjQ.**

Midtown Alliance is a fantastic tool to understand the Midtown area, balancing technical information about the economics of productivity of the area

Ramsey, Greg. Interview on the Construction of Lake Clair Cohousing. Helen Dymek, and Keif Schleifer. October 26, 2022.

I got an opportunity to directly talk with the architect responsible for the Lake Clair Cohousing Complex, and in this conversation he talked a lot about the importance of subdividing spaces. Through carefully choreographing shared spaces on a site to allow for turns into spaces and these subdivisions it creates much more intimate spaces that are more inviting.

Ramsey additionally harked a lot on the concept I had been referring to as "Selective Transparency" which he referred to as Privacy Gradient, or the importance of having a slow transition from the most public spaces to the most private.

Finally, he also gave a good rule of thumb for how densly populated these communities should be for different population densities.

Ramsey, Greg. Lake Clair Conservation Community. www.VillageHabitat.com. 2005.

This document shows the project drawings along with pictures from when the community was first completed in the 1990s. This document was referenced during the interview with Ramsey, and will be utilized in the case study analysis.

Wright, Gwendolyn. Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America. Cambridge (Mass.): London, 1989.

Gwendolyn Wright composes an in depth comprehensive history of how different housing movements shaped the social relations between Americans today.

Mckoy, Jillian. "Depression Rates in US Tripled When the Pandemic First Hit-Now, They're Even Worse." The Brink. Boston University, October 7, 2021. https://www.bu.edu/articles/2021/depression-rates-tripled-when-pandemic-first-hit/.

Mckoy discusses how the mental health crisis has worsened since the pandemic, even though it was expected depression rates would go back down when the lockdown was lifted.

Waters, Carlos. "What America's Shopping Mall Decline Means for Social Space" YouTube. Vox, April 6, 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oooVC3zfDc8 .

This video talks about the mall's role in acting as a temporary fix to the lack of social spaces in suburbia. Now in the face of the internet, malls are dying, leaving a huge gap for social spaces with nothing that really makes up for it as of right now, aside from the internet.

Whyte, William H. The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces. New York: Project for Public Spaces Inc. 1980.