Lost and Found:
Anchoring Infrastructures of Queer Belonging in Hamilton, Ontario

by

Adria Starr Maynard

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Dalhousie University is located in Mi'kmaq'i,
the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq.
We are all Treaty people.

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Abstract

LGBTQ2+ people have long used queer spaces to orient themselves in the world and create a sense of belonging in a community. Years of systemic oppression have formed inequities within and outside the LGBTQ2+ community that has created barriers to the establishment of safe, visible, and consistent spatial footholds. This has resulted in a placelessness that restricts spatial agency for queer people, deepens disparities within the community, and disrupts the continuity and creation of narratives, relationships, and resources between generations and factions. This thesis draws on Sara Ahmed's notion of queer "orientation", Ben Campkin's idea of "queer infrastructure", and José Esteban Muñoz's concept of "concrete utopias" to imagine and design an architectural anchor in Hamilton, Ontario that catalyzes a resilient LGBTQ2+ social system, supports a sense of collective belonging, and fosters expansive imaginaries of queer futurities in urban landscapes.

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And lastly to all of the people who have fought to allow me to openly queer and proud. I know there is much work still to do, and I hope I can spend my life carrying on your fight and sharing your stories.

Chapter 1: Introduction

I knew from a very early age that I didn't fit into the categories I was supposed to. Growing up in Hamilton, Ontario, I didn't see a place in the world where I fit, so I imagined dream worlds of belonging for myself instead. It was through this sense of placelessness and my process of finding a place for myself in the world that I came to understand myself as a queer person. Growing up, this feeling was isolating and confusing, and with nowhere to go and no one to ask to guide me, over time I found myself lost and exhausted by this disorientation.
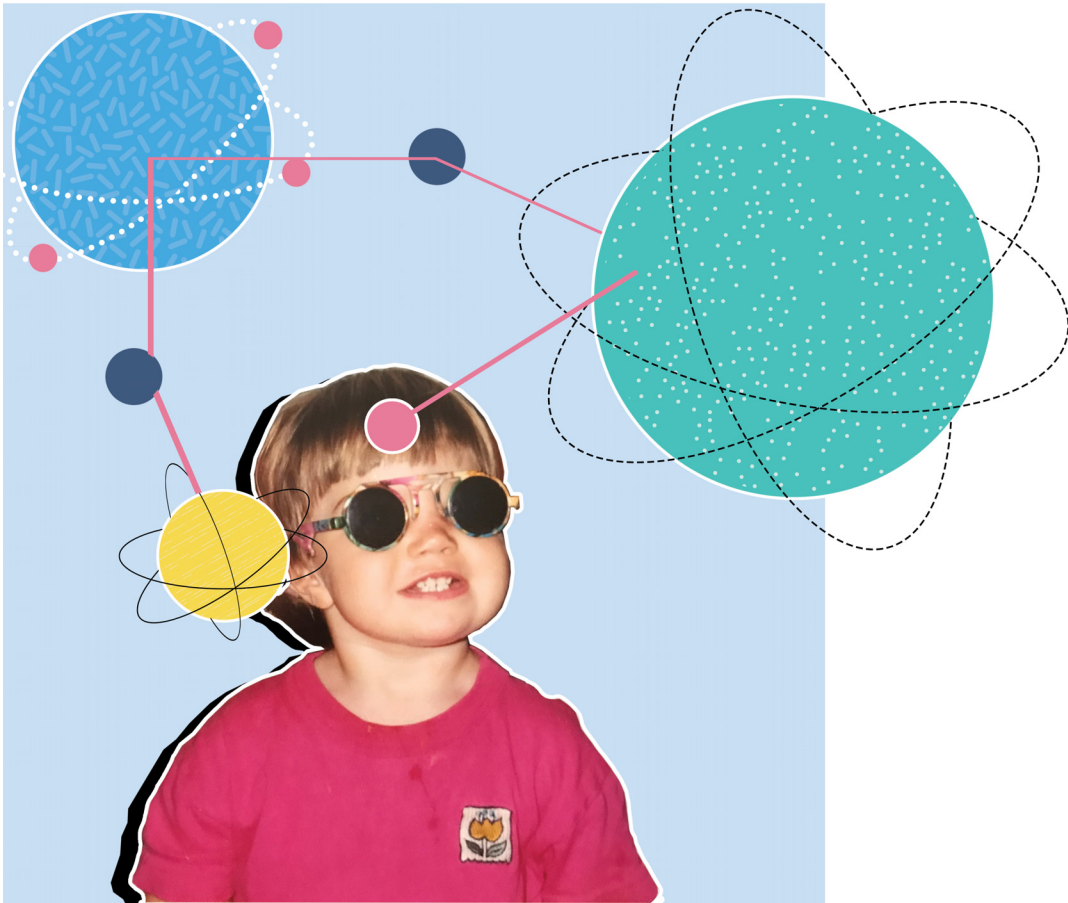
Dream worlds collage

Over time I was fortunate enough to find other queers who were lost like me, and together we created ways to orient each other toward the sense of belonging we had once abandoned hope of finding. We didn't know a place for kids like us in the city, so we made our own places in our school hallways, parents' basements, and online group chats. It was through this formation of a collectivity, and the spaces we made together, that we were able to look beyond the constraints of suppression and placelessness and envision a queer futurity of joy and belonging.

Finding belonging with friends

Understanding the relationship between space and queerness is key to understanding the existence, movement, and culture of queer people in Hamilton, and the world. The oscillation between placelessness and orientation is a constant process in queer life, but the creation and sharing of queer spaces allows for wayfinding and place-making in a world that LGBTQ2+ people are so often told has no room for them. Formations of queer space in Hamilton have also been influenced by the perception of queer life as a threat to existing cis-heteronormative structures and practices around sex, gender, and identity. This has resulted in a historic and ongoing adversarial and violent relationship between the LGBTQ2+ community and state authorities.

The need for queer space is reflected in the built environment of Hamilton, with LGBTQ2+ venues forming and relating to one another as a larger urban ecosystem of infrastructure. Queer infrastructure are queer spaces that are physical, materially layered places that bring people and services together (Campkin 2020). Networks of queer infrastructure are a collectivity of LGBTQ2+ venues that serve multiple purposes: they act as wayfinding devices for orientation, create a sense of community and inclusion among queer people, and provide services that support vulnerable parts of the community. The queer infrastructure in Hamilton has developed over time across many venues and sites, weaving queer traces and histories throughout the urban landscape.

However, during my lifetime, the queer infrastructure in Hamilton has steadily declined, and few dedicated full-time spaces remain. Local organizations plan events for the community to converge, but they occur temporarily within appropriated spaces, mostly concentrated in the downtown

core. The events facilitate some community connections, but do not support those in need of other resources.

The rapid change of downtown over the past 20 years has reduced Hamilton's queer infrastructure. The last dedicated bar and community centre closed in 2016, while increasing gentrification has made housing and commercial rents unaffordable, and the financial burden of the COVID-19 pandemic has made it difficult for new venues to open and survive. This process of displacement and fragmentation has contributed to divisions within the LGBTQ2+ community, isolating people from each other.

This thesis focuses on how an architecture of queer space can help queer people resist placelessness and orient themselves in the world, and ultimately imagine new futures in which they can thrive as a part of a community. I argue that an architectural intervention is necessary in Hamilton's queer infrastructure network, in the form of a community anchor that provides consistent visibility, resources, and belonging for the city's LGBTQ2+ people. The anchor mobilizes José Esteban Muñoz's concept of "concrete utopia" (Muñoz 2009) as a design methodology to imagine an architectural expression of queer futurity that supports the formation of community collectivity and the imagination of brighter queer horizons. The proposed design for this anchor reimagines a block of heritage buildings in downtown Hamilton as a queer community hub that combines affordable housing, a community centre, and event space to support community interaction and intersection, orient queer people who may feel out of place, and support vulnerable community members who need resources and supports.

The following chapter of this thesis expands on the experience of placelessness and orientation (Ahmed 2006) in queer lives, and how these sensations relate both to one's relationship with oneself and one's place in the world. The chapter relates the act of orientation as a means of moving beyond the constraints of the present towards what Muñoz refers to as 'queer futurity (Muñoz 2009), and it shows how queer space can act as orientation devices for LGBTQ2+ people to find their way and make place for themselves in the world.

The third chapter explores the relationships between queer spaces in the urban fabric, and how physical LGBTQ2+ venues serve as queer infrastructure that support community wellbeing and collaboration. This section further examines how economic and social urban factors contribute to a queer sense of placelessness through development that literally displaces queer infrastructure from the city.

Chapter 4 examines the idea of a queer infrastructure anchor as an architectural intervention that resists such displacement. This idea draws from what Petra Doan's calls queer 'solar systems' (Doan 2019), which organizes queer infrastructure around a cultural core, or anchor, which provides visibility, resources, and consistency in an otherwise unstable system of spatial agency and occupation. The section concludes with the analysis of some precedent case studies of formal queer infrastructure anchors located in Toronto, San Francisco, and Melbourne.

Chapter 5 develops the anchor concept into a design methodology by interpreting it through Muñoz's notion of "concrete utopia", proposing that such an anchor may serve as an architectural expression of queer hope and futurity

by utilizing performance, traces, intersection, blurring, and collectivity as design tools.

The sixth chapter examines queer infrastructure in Hamilton, Ontario to better understand the current state of the queer community and their claim over space in the city. This section will analyze downtown Hamilton, and explore the Gore Block and Gore Park as an ideal site for a queer infrastructure anchor in the city.

Chapter 7 details the program of the anchor, utilizing recent survey data (Pike 2018; Mills et al. 2019) to identify key programmatic categories to incorporate in the design: affordable housing, health care and social services, education and storytelling, and event and gathering space.

Chapter 8 outlines the design proposal for Hamilton's queer infrastructure network, a community hub called Horizon House.

The final chapter concludes by summarizing and situating this thesis project within the context of existing community organizing and advocacy currently happening in Hamilton, and how this research can potentially contribute to future community endeavors in the city.

Chapter 2: Queer Orientation and Spatiality

José Esteban Muñoz refers to queerness as a sixth sense that "lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing" (Muñoz 2009, 1). For some, this sense manifests as a small nagging awareness of feeling out of place, that something about them does not quite fit or belong in the world. For others, this feeling is overwhelming and unavoidable, and fuels a drive for self-discovery and belonging where their life is unencumbered by normative constraints. This feeling of being out of place is a sense of loss that Muñoz argues is inherent to a queer experience:

> We can understand queerness itself as being filled with the intention to be lost. Queerness is illegible and therefore lost in relation to the straight minds' mapping of space... To accept loss is to accept queerness... To be lost is not to hide in a closet or to perform a simple (ontological) disappearing act; it is to veer away from heterosexuality's path… To accept the way in which one is lost is to be also found and not found in a particularly queer fashion. (Muñoz 2009, 72)

To be lost is a shared feeling that bonds queer experiences together, which rejects the constraints of cis-heteronormativity, and embraces the journey of discovering and creating new worlds and possibilities of being. This process of being both lost and found can be described as placelessness.

Placelessness

Sara Ahmed describes queer placelessness as a dichotomy between orientation and disorientation. In this case, orientation is about transforming what is strange into something familiar through the extension of the body into space, and disorientation is what occurs when that extension fails or is impeded. She argues that, "some spaces extend

certain bodies and simply do not leave room for others…. In such moments that bodies do not extend into space, they might feel 'out of place'" (Ahmed 2006, 12). This feeling, which affects marginalized bodies most acutely, is a visceral experience of being actively and passively destabilized and excluded. These spaces that lack 'room' for certain bodies do not follow limitations that are determined naturally, these limitations are instead designed in by those who do not consider, or wish to accommodate, other ways of being. In this way, through intention and repetition, cis-heteronormative perceptions of gender and sexuality become authoritative and rigid "contours of ordinary experience" (Ahmed 2006, 159) and, through repetition of such hegemonic scripts, space becomes and remains 'straight' (Bell and Valentine 1995, 16). The result for queer people is a sense of placelessness, not seeing themselves in a place, and not belonging,

In North America, the struggle over visibility in, and control of, public space has served as a foundation for queer politics and culture throughout the twentieth century. According to George Chauncey, queer life has been seen as a threat to existing cis-heteronormative structures and practices around class, sex, and gender (Chauncey 1996). This has resulted in a marginalization of queer people from the public sphere, which has developed the process of appropriating or reclaiming cis-heteronormative space for queer use as a tactic of resistance and survival. This has led to a historic and ongoing adversarial and violent dynamic with the state and police authorities who try to dictate and restrict queer spatial age. In his essay about the spatial tactics of gay men in early twentieth century New York City, Chauncey writes:

> The efforts of the police to control gay men's use of "public"

> space, then, were part of a much broader effort by the state to (quite literally) police the boundaries between public and private space…. Gay men's strategies for using urban space came under attack not just because they challenged the heteronormativity that normally governed men and women's use of public space, but also because they were part of a much more general challenge to dominant cultural conceptions of those boundaries and of the social practices appropriate to each sphere. (Chauncey 1996, 259)

The sustained effort to displace and erase the presence of LGBTQ2+ people has forced spaces of congregation to be ephemeral, nomadic, and hidden, located through codes and whispers. Without consistent and dedicated space of their own, queer people must instead appropriate heteronormative space, compensate with online platforms, and use space nomadically across scattered sites.

This fight for spatial agency and inclusion is further reflected within the LGBTQ2+ community itself. Although many queer communities are seen as welcoming environments that provide freedom of expression for some, this is not always extended to all LGBTQ2+ people (Doan 2015). Gender, racial, and class privilege persists in many of these circles, with wealthy white gay cisgender men remaining at the top of the social pyramid, often rendering others, such as sex workers, those who are racialized (particularly Black and Indigenous people), and persons with lower incomes unwelcome. Similarly, narrow understandings of gender or sexual orientation exclude transgender people and bisexuals. As a result of such double marginalization — from heteronormative society in general, and due to internal social hierarchies within queer communities — placelessness is experienced more acutely by some queers than others, or as Ahmed states, "disorientation is unevenly distributed: some bodies more than others have their involvement in the world called into crisis" (Ahmed 2006, 159).

Although it is felt disproportionally, disorientation is an integral and inevitable aspect of queer existence and mobility in the world. However, Ahmed argues that there is potential in these moments of disorientation to find hope and new directions. Through this experience of being out of place, we develop the impetus, the need and the desire to create spaces where queer people can feel safe in the world.
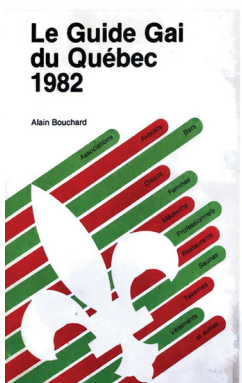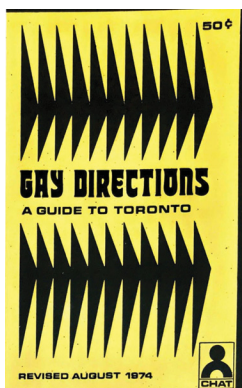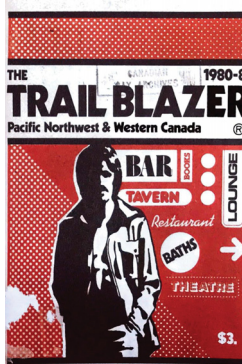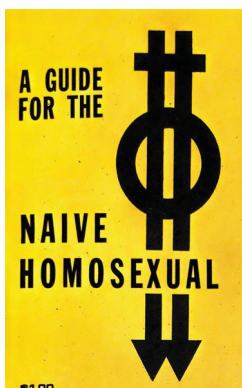

Police strike a protestor at a demonstration following Bathhouse Raids in Toronto, June 20 1981 (Jennex and Eswaran 2020, 167)

Anti-LGBTQ2+ protestors clash with Pride-goers at Hamilton Pride in 2019 (Carter 2019)

Marsha P. Johnson (left) and Sylvia Rivera (right) march in the streets of New York following the Stonewall Riots of 1969 (Jackman and Smith 2018)

Orientation

The quest of many queer people is finding oneself while being lost, which is the process of orientation. There are two intertwined dimensions to orientation: the first being the relationship one has with oneself in terms of one's own body, identity, and desires, while the second involves one's relationship with the world in terms of location, mobility, condition. It is a relationship that is directional in space, yet always in relation to oneself and one's desires. This orientation toward queer desire is what Ahmed calls a "queer phenomenology", which is a way that queer people inhabit and move through the world. Lines of desire generate a landscape, "a ground that is shaped by the paths that we follow in deviating from the straight line" (Ahmed 2006, 179). Lines extend across space and time to compose overlapping networks of individual and communal queer sites.

Jen Jack Geiseking refers to these networks of nomadic and ephemeral queer sites as "stars" within "constellations", which represent spatiotemporal configurations of queer life. In constellations, stars are spaces that hold meaning for queers, shining as guiding beacons to help them "find their way when the [cis-heteronormative] sociophysical landscape fails them" (Gieseking 2020, 947). Stars can be produced individually or communally, and can take the form of people (e.g., a lover or mentor), places (e.g., a bedroom or park), objects (e.g., a book or memento), or memories (e.g., a celebration or first kiss). They accumulate mass and luminosity through a concentration of different experiences, ideas, and desires overlapping, and identify points of cultural and political bonds. Stars do not simply disappear when they 'burn out', but instead linger through memories and relationships, and hold the possibility to act

"Gay Guidebooks" c. 1970s and 80s (Jennex and Eswaran 2020, 245)

as "maps towards the queer utopian horizon" (LaRochelle 2020, Paragraph 17).

Every queer person has a unique constellation of stars, places where they have felt belonging as a queer person. The number of these stars, their proximity to each other in space or time, and the ease of reaching them, all represent one's degree of mobility through, and access to, queer-affirming space. Such constellations of queer experiences reveal the barriers queers must overcome to orient themselves in the world, with additional factors such as race, class, and gender often contributing to fewer and more fragmented stars (Gieseking 2020, 952–953). Perhaps by creating more inclusive stars, more visible ones, they may become more luminous — perhaps attracting and guiding a queer "lost in the dark".

This idea of spatial configurations of queer experiences and memories is illustrated in Lucas LaRochelle's queer digital archive, *Queering the Map*, which captures a tapestry of ephemeral queer moments across the world. It is through this act of finding hope and solidarity through the ubiquity

Collected and mapped queer memories in Montreal (Queering the Map, n.d.)

of queerness that reveals new mediums for orientation, and potentialities for futures where queerness can flourish spatially and socially.

Futurity

It is in the future, beyond the constraints of the present, and informed by the hardships of the past, where the idea and practice of queerness may have the promise of reaching its greatest potential. In the view of José Esteban Muñoz, queerness resides in the domain of the "not yet here" (Muñoz 2009, 1), it is only an ideal, something that we cannot yet experience but may feel as the warmth of hope on the horizon. In this sense, queerness is a mode of desire that allows one to see and feel beyond the "here and now", which Muñoz refers to as a "prison house" that is "impoverished and toxic for queers and other people who do not feel the privilege of majoritarian belonging" (27). This focus on the future resists what Muñoz calls "today's hamstrung gay pragmatic agenda" (10), which still idealizes homonormativity (for example, by positioning state-sanctioned legitmacies, such as marriage equality as the pinnacle of LGBTQ2+ progress). To embrace queer futurity is to move away from normalization and mainstream integration as a goal, and to instead understand queerness as collectivity that will always be pushing for greater acceptance of what is not normal, what is new, more inclusive, more creative, more possible. Such queer futurity welcomes any disruption to the artificial divisions between people because of race, gender, sexual orientation, class, or other polarity imbedded within hegemonic power structures. Space plays an important role in helping people to visualize a more inclusive shared future, where diverse desire lines may converge to open new windows onto what might be.

Queer Space

To explore the contribution of space to queer identity and agency, we return to concepts of placelessness and orientation. The oscillation between these two experiences is a constant reality of queer life, but it is by creating and sharing queer spaces that LGBTQ2+ people can find their way and make place for themselves in the future. Sara Ahmed describes queer spaces and objects as sites that

> support proximity between those who are supposed to live on parallel lines, *as points that should not meet.* A queer object hence makes contact possible. Or, to be more precise, a queer object would have a surface that supports such contact. The contact is bodily, and it unsettles that line that dives spaces as worlds, thereby creating other kinds of connections where unexpected things can happen. (Ahmed 2006, 169)
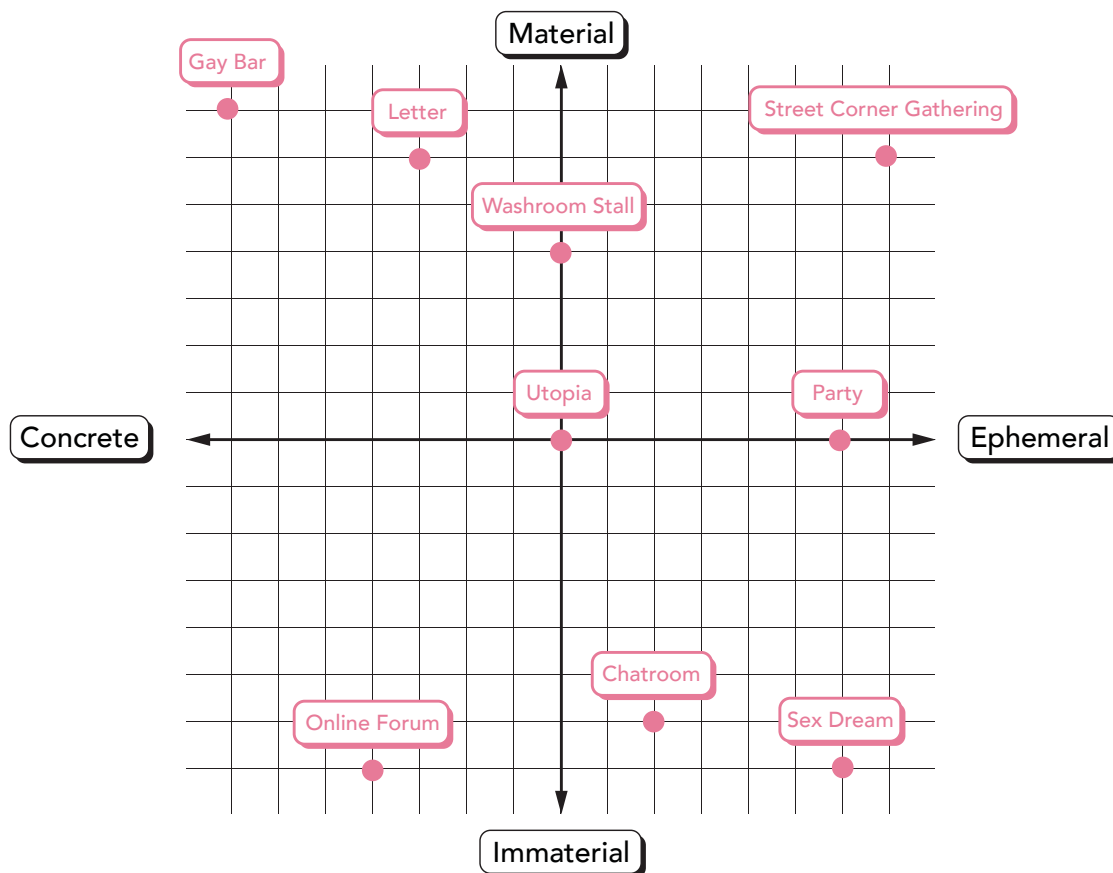
Bookmark
(130)

Buttons
(209)

Dance Poster
(115)

Matchboxes
(79)

Vintage Ephemera from Canadian queer spaces (Jennex and Eswaran 2020)

Material

Gay Bar

Letter

Street Corner Gathering

Washroom Stall

Utopia

Party

Concrete ← — — → Ephemeral

Chatroom

Online Forum

Sex Dream

Immaterial

Spectrum of various queer space across states materiality and temporality

Queer spaces are not just determined by material or temporal properties, but also by the relations and actions that unfold within them and the possibilities they produce. Such spaces of performance and imagination provide opportunities to move beyond isolation, connect with past narratives, and break out of the constraints of the present. Although each queer space has its own "unique and specific circumstances, its own story, urban and architectural contexts, needs, aesthetics, tribulations, and joys" (Furman and Mardell 2022, x), they have shared qualities. We look at four of these here: 1) spaces that are produced through action, 2) spaces which challenge and twist everyday orders, 3) space that are formed through human relations, and 4) spaces that are created for self-discovery and survival.

Queer Space is Produced through Action

No space is inherently queer. Queer space, like queerness itself, is performative because "it is not simply a being but a doing for and toward the future" (Muñoz 2009, 1). This is supported by Judith Butler's concept of 'performativity', which argues that identity is not pre-existing, but is rather created through repetitive social performance (Butler 1990, 192). An example of this is a Pride Parade, which transforms a typical street or park into a colourful and boisterous celebration of queer joy and resistance. It is only through being "put to queer use" (Chauncey 1996, 224) that space becomes queer.

Montreal Pride Parade, 2018 (Jennex and Eswaran 2020, 243)

Queer crowd taking over a street corner in Buenos Aires (Bianchi and Revuelta 2022, 215)

A person dressed in drag at a Vancouver Pride Parade (Jennex and Eswaran 2020, 243)

Queer Space Challenges and Twists Everyday Orders

The production of space through performance and action often comes as a result of challenging and transforming conventional practices. According to Aaron Betsky, "queer space often doesn't look like an order you can recognize, when it does, it seems like an ironic or rhetorical twist on such an order" (Betsky 1997, 18). This 'rhetorical twist' is an act of queer orientation through rendering a hegemonic image or practice disorienting in the eyes of cis-heteropatriarchy and familiar in the eyes of a queer person. An example of this can be found in the art of drag, which appropriates, exaggerates, and reimagines performances of sexuality, gender, identity, and the body. Betsky argues that queer space "functions as a counterarchitecture, appropriating, subverting, mirroring, and choreographing the order of everyday life in new and liberating ways" (26).


Apartment of Dan Friedman, 1982-88 (Furman and Mardell 2022, xi)

Restroom at the Palladium in New York City (Munuera 2022, 136)

Queer Space is Formed through Relations

The concept of queer space may conjure a vision of a certain kind of aesthetic, perhaps involving bright colours or homoerotic imagery. In reality, however, queer space is not constituted by any particular aesthetic, materiality, or design feature, but by the relationships it enables and is shaped by. Queer space can, and does, appear anywhere and everywhere — from a bedroom or online chatroom, to a street corner or a washroom stall. Lucas LaRochelle believes that relations produce these spaces: "We use what's there, because what's there is less important than what unfolds when we are together" (PSoA 2022).
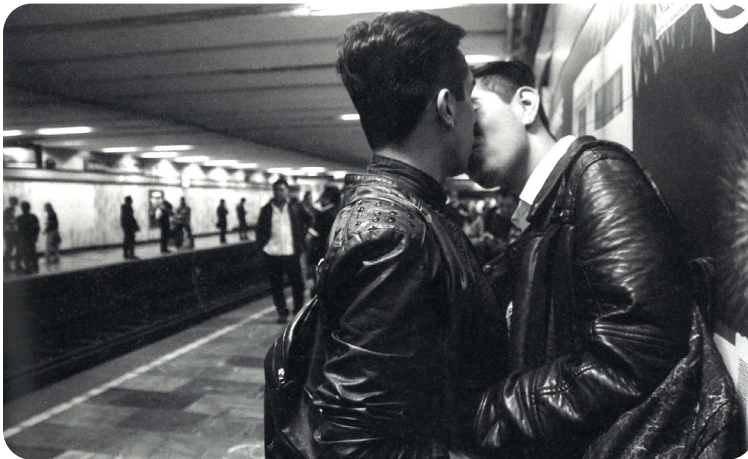
A couple kissing in the Mexico City Metro (Daniel 2022, 165)

Gathering at the Black Lesbian and Gay Centre in London, c. 1993 (McKenzie 2022, 69)

Two lovers dancing at Kitty Su nightclub in New Delhi, India, a safe space for queer people to be intimate together in public (Singh 2022, 103)

Queer Space is Created for Self-Discovery and Survival

Olivia Laing describes queer identity as "the idea of a hidden self, a mysterious creature that can emerge from a chrysalis, given the right conditions" (Laing 2022, viii). She argues that queer people demonstrate the ingenuity and skill to create these conditions for themselves, whether they are spaces for solitude and self-discovery (i.e. the "closet" as defined by Betsky 1997, 21), or spaces where they can commune and support each other. However obvious or unassuming such spaces may be, they are in many instances "life-giving, and often life-saving" (Furman and Mardell 2022, x), allowing people learn to survive, belong, and understand themselves as queer. Ged Ribas-Goody (2020) describes this process as learning to become an "extremeophile", an organism that adapts to living in extreme or hostile environments through sharing knowledge, resources, and stories. Queer spaces offer shelter in a cis-heteronormative world, granting the support and skills for queer people to grow, survive, and perhaps even thrive in their journey.

AIDS Action Now! demonstration, Toronto c. 1980s (Jennex and Eswaran 2020, 174)
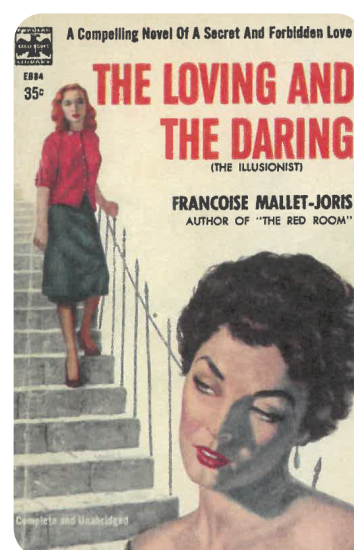
Pulp novel cover (Jennex and Eswaran 2020, 95)

Queer people have always found ways to exist and come together, therefore queer spaces will always be needed (Furman and Mardell 2022, xi). This thesis focuses on how queer space creates opportunities for queer people to resist placelessness and orient themselves in the world, and through this process imagine new futures where they can thrive. This project looks specifically at the role that architecture can play both as a guiding beacon for lost queers, and as a catalyst to anchor a network of queer spaces across an urban landscape. The next chapter analyzes the role of queer venues in maintaining the health of LGBTQ2+ communities.

Chapter 3: Queer Infrastructure

So far, we have looked at queer space as an abstract concept, and the role that it plays in the development of orientation and hope for placeless queers. Next we explore how queer spaces function as a system in the broader built environment. Olivia Laing believes that queerness requires an ecosystem to survive and flourish, and that physical buildings and spaces serve not only as places to hook up or hang out, but as a door to "an alternate universe, a secret network that runs right around the world" (Laing 2022, viii). This chapter focuses on this idea of networks of queer spaces, and the conditions they create within and across cities and towns.
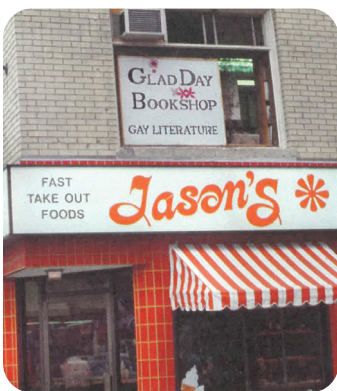
Queer Infrastructure

The idea of queer ecosystems calls on Eric Klinenburg's concept of "social infrastructure", which describes the network of physical places and conditions that shape human interaction, develop social capital, and foster community well-being (Klinenburg 2018, 5). These conditions influence mundane but consequential quotidian patterns, such as the way people move around a city, and the opportunities they have to interact with strangers and friends. Social infrastructure can include buildings (e.g. schools and libraries), outdoor spaces (e.g. parks, courtyards, and sidewalks), organizations and businesses that have physical places for the community to assemble (e.g. churches or cafés), or means of shared transportation (e.g. buses or subways). Such spaces allow opportunities for a wide variety of interpersonal encounters, potentially disrupting expectations of difference between people, and fostering tolerance of diversity and unexpected behavior, and

Front view of El Hanger en Santruce in San Juan, an alternative space for queer world-making, art, music, dance, agriculture, and activism (Ramos 2022a, 95)

Street view of Campy! Bar in Tokyo (Sadachi 2022, 132)

Street view of Toronto's Glad Day Bookshop in the 1970s (Jennex and Eswaran 2020, 93)

eventually cooperation and trust (18). Social infrastructure is especially important for vulnerable people such as children, the elderly, and those with limited resources or mobility. Klinenburg argues that social infrastructure does not occur naturally, but requires intentional investment and maintenance to be sustained, otherwise the material foundation of social and civic life will erode.

Ben Campkin extends this idea to 'queer infrastructures', (QI) which are "highly charged symbolic networks that bring people and services together. They are physical, fixed, and materially layered… [and are] characterized by replaceability, adaptiveness and extendibility" (Campkin 2020, paragraph 11). Networks of queer infrastructure are composed of LGBTQ2+ venues that act as wayfinding devices for orientation, create a sense of community among queer people, and foster inclusion and support for more marginalized parts of the community, such as trans, racialized, and low-income individuals. The presence of these infrastructures attribute political and economic agency to LGBTQ2+ communities, granting more visibility in society and the urban fabric, and supporting the formation of community political organizing to influence planning and policy. These networks enable "dynamic interactions between technologies, subjectivities, forms of collectivity, care, and urban space" (paragraph 11), and open possibilities for more expansive futures and geographies for queer ways of being.

Healthy Queer Infrastructure Networks

Healthy queer infrastructure networks are able to support bonds because people are engaged in sustained and recurrent interaction, contributing to a sense of collective

memory, exchange, and shared experiences. This is enabled through three attributes of a healthy and robust QI network: 1) venue diversity, 2) a reciprocal relationship between material and immaterial sites, and 3) a balance between heritage and mutability.

A Diversity of Venues

No one space can serve and support every need in a community, which is why it is essential to have a diversity of venues across multiple sites. This should also involve venues that have a variety of financial requirements for engagement, providing a mix of commercial and free or low-cost public amenities. Such diversity improves network resiliency by helping to protect against community displacement when venues close, and increases the likelihood that new venues will emerge. Venue diversity acknowledges that not all kinds of queer people move through or inhabit space the same way. Although queer space in a city is commonly associated with a few typical forms, such as gay bars in a 'gay village' or 'gaybourhood' (often dominated by gay men), in reality "queer spaces defy expressions of singularity and uniformity" (Ghaziani 2019, 6).

A Reciprocal Relationship Between Material and Immaterial Sites

Networks of queer spaces cannot sustainably thrive without material (physical) and immaterial (virtual) sites informing and strengthening each other. This relationship is not only a means of mobility and communication across multiple sites, it is also key to establishing and maintaining community organizing, networking, and activism (Beaujot and Macias-González 2020). A dialogue between material and immaterial sites allows multiple avenues for engagement, opening

opportunities for people across varying levels of anonymity, or 'out-ness', to engage and inform themselves, and even improve their means to 'come out' publicly. This can look like a connection between a flyer or a tweet and a parade or protest, or an online community page advertising weekly events at a series of local venues.

A Balance Between Heritage and Mutability

Queering space involves what José Esteban Muñoz calls a "temporal arrangement", where the past informs actions in the present that work in service of envisioning new futurities and ways of being (Muñoz 2009, 16). This involves both uncovering and preserving queer social and spatial histories while also adapting to new forms of queer sociability and spatiality. This highlights what Gorman-Murray and Nash (2021) identify as two contrasting but complimentary dimensions of queer geographies. The geographies of LGBTQ2+ spaces can change unexpectedly and rapidly, which prompts the commemoration of certain sites of significance — such as important venues, neighbourhoods, or events (i.e. a protest or riot). However, the focus must also acknowledge that the formations and locations of queer space will continue to adapt into shapes we have not yet seen, as new contexts of constraints and freedoms emerge.

Although it is useful and important to understand what constitutes a healthy network of queer social spaces, the reality is that these conditions are not always met or maintained due to systems of marginalization that are both continuing and evolving.

Precarious Queer Infrastructures

Queer spaces always have, and always will, find ways to exist, because there will always be a need for them. However, there are forces in the world that work to resist the formation and longevity of queer spatial footholds, forcing queer geographies into a constant push-and-pull between development and displacement. Petra Doan and Ozlem Atalay describe this as a battle between 'centering' and 'decentering' forces (Doan and Atalay 2021).

'Centering' or 'centripetal' forces exert positive inward pressure toward a central point or area, which can attract both queer people and new venues to a certain geographical area. This draw can come from a feeling such as longing for a safe space for queer people, or a sense of place within a welcoming environment. It can also come from larger systemic sources, such as a city's progressive reputation for accepting LGBTQ2+ people, which may draw queers from less accepting places. Additionally, affordable housing options, and queer-friendly venues such as bars or bookstores offer opportunities for socializing and placemaking as attracting forces.

This is opposed by 'decentering' or 'centrifugal' forces which exert negative outward pressure that causes LGBTQ2+ people and venues to move away from certain areas. This can be caused by the rising cost of rentable housing and commercial spaces, which may discourage new queer residents or organizations from settling in certain areas. It can also result from concerns for safety and belonging, caused by increases in hostility toward queer culture, or changes in the built environment that increase isolation

+

Individual
- Longing for safe space
- Ability to love partners openly
- Cultural dimensions like identity, belonging, and experiences of marginalization

Neighbourhood
- Availability of affordable housing (buy or rent)
- Opportunities to socialize (e.g. bars, and venues)
- Employment opportunities
- LGBTQ2+ organizations
- A sense of place

City
- Progressive or tolerant reputation
- City-wide events, such as Pride Parade
- Inclusive urban planning decisions

National
- Positive LGBTQ2+ rights, laws, and policies enacted on a national level, such as discrimination protection

-

Individual
- Changing life conditions
- Vulnerability of financial situations

Neighbourhood
- Gentrification pressures
- Rising cost of housing
- Changes in social and cultural make-up of neighbourhood
- Negative changes to built environment

City
- Exclusive urban planning decisions
- Rising intolerance
- Harmful local policies such as local "zero tolerance" policies

National
- Harmful LGBTQ2+ rights, laws, and policies enacted on a national level, such as sodomy laws
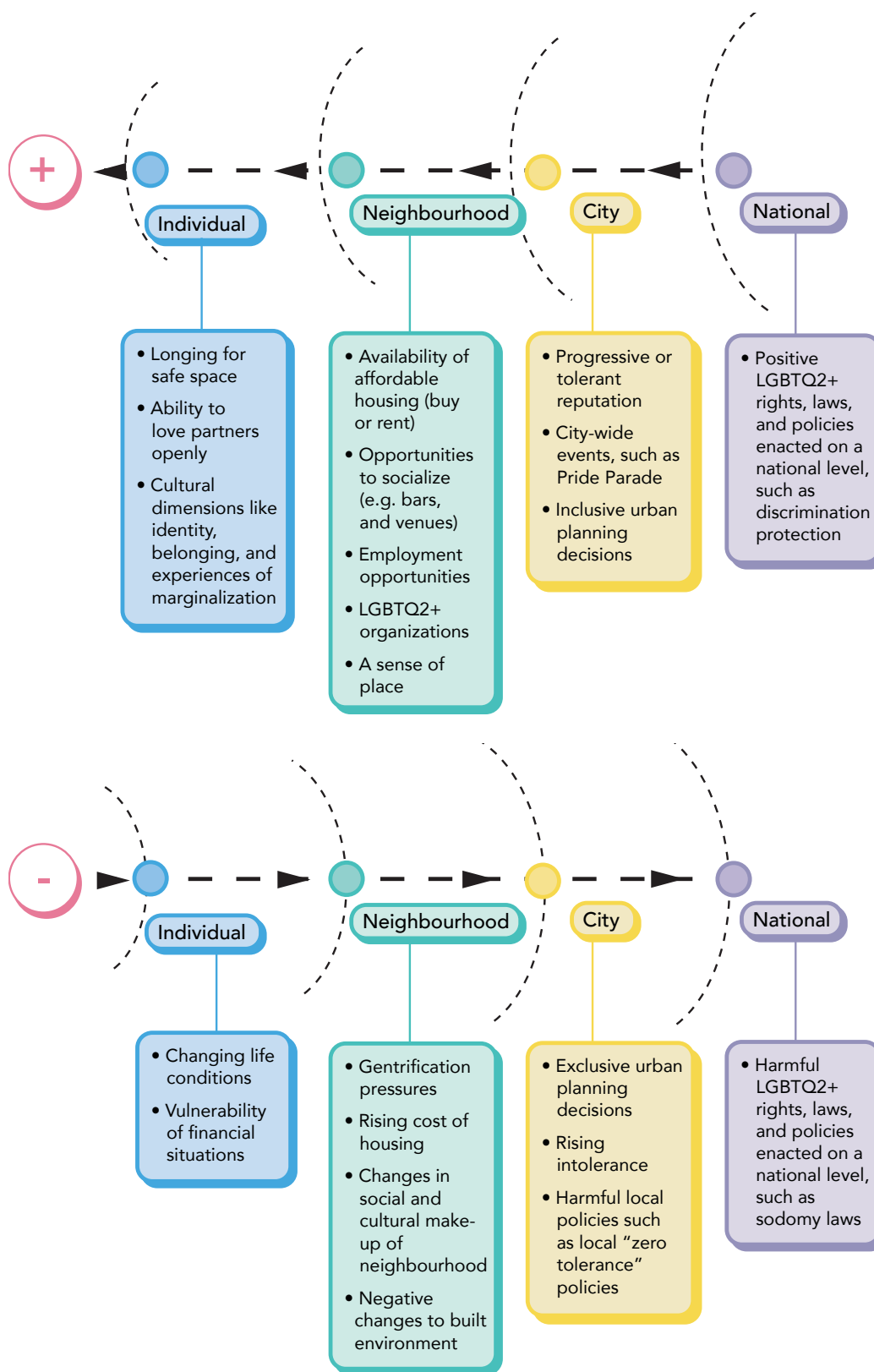
Diagram of 'centering' / 'centripetal' forces and 'decentering' / 'centrifugal' forces (adapted from Doan and Atalay 2021)

and displacement, such as the demolition of a beloved community space for a new large-scale development.

Although the push and pull between centering and decentering forces is not unique or exclusive to queer geographies, queer infrastructures tend to struggle due to decentering forces generally outweighing centering forces over time. This imbalance requires many queer spaces to be short-lived and mobile, which impedes robust networks from forming and repairing themselves when encountering hardships. Regner Ramos (2020) notes that highly nomadic and temporary spaces have the advantage of not having to rely on a permanent venue, which may open opportunities to appropriate a wide variety of heteronormative sites across a city. However, he concedes that these practices also leads to a queer community that lacks legitimate and consistent claims over physical space, forcing those communities to rely on outside stakeholders, such as straight business owners. This can contribute to a situation where queerness is displaced, leaving communities without a "solid nucleus" and ownership over architectures, which means that they can "easily be rendered unwanted, uninvited, and excluded – or even harassed…back into the street by people who might, could, and do get away with it" (Ramos 2020, fragment 6, paragraph 7).

Cycles of Development and Displacement

LGBTQ2+ venues and enclaves are often located in precarious or neglected sites and buildings that are left vacant during temporary breaks in urban redevelopment cycles (Campkin 2020). For example, many of the major gay villages in North America, such as Church and Wellesley Village in Toronto, or Greenwich Village in New York City,

were developed during the queer migration to major cities in the decades following World War II when many urban centers were abandoned by the upper and middle class for suburban living (Ghaziani 2019; Jennex and Eswaran 2020; Gorman-Murray and Nash 2021). However, such sites are vulnerable to changes in economic and social cycles. Even more well-established queer social centers are currently going through what some call a process of "de-gaying" (Doan and Higgins 2011; Gorman-Murray and Nash 2021; Miles 2021). There are three dominant contributing factors to this shift from development to displacement: 1) gentrification and commodification, 2) the proliferation of social media, and 3) the changing spatiality of queer communities.

Gentrification and Commodification

Since many centres of queer infrastructure develop in neglected or marginalized spaces, they are often threatened with displacement through processes of gentrification. The development of once derelict areas into socially vibrant and desirable queer enclaves can make these neighbourhoods more attractive to developers and non-LGBTQ2+ residents (Doan and Higgins 2011). The resulting rising property values eventually make it difficult or impossible for less affluent queer people and venues to remain in these areas. This process also supports the survival of queer venues that prioritize consumption and commodification at the expense of venues that address inclusive community needs, creating a context of homogenized rather than diverse venue types. The proliferation of spaces that are commercially-focused can exclude community members without capital, such as youth, seniors, and newcomers, deepening inequality and upholding hierarchical divisions between classes (9). Petra Doan argues that the gentrification of queer areas "is not an

inevitable process, but one which is triggered by neo-liberal planning interventions to cleanse neighborhoods and make them safe for capital investment" (Doan 2015, 5).

Social Media and Digital Platforms

Digital spheres, including social media and online dating apps have become inseparably imposed upon and integrated with contemporary lifestyles and environments. In queer communities, the internet has created alternative avenues for LGBTQ2+ people to meet and connect (platonically or sexually) outside dedicated queer venues (Gorman-Murray and Nash 2021). Most LGBTQ2+ people now begin relationships virtually, with 65% of same-gender couples in the US meeting their partners online rather than in-person (versus 39% of heterosexual couples) (Rosenfeld, Thomas and Hausen 2019). Digital platforms allow virtually any physical site to be utilized, meaning that venues such as gay clubs or bathhouses are not necessarily required for queer people to meet each other. Although queer venues serve many roles beyond meeting sexual partners, Sam Miles argues that the rapid and widespread shift to online partner-seeking "generates significant implications for offline gay neighbourhoods [and venues], compounded by the economic impact of the 2020-21 coronavirus pandemic on what are, in many cities, already struggling queer commercial and community venues" (Miles 2021, 204–205).

Shifting Spatial Needs and Forms

Through a combination of gentrification pricing out many community venues, and digital platforms shifting the relationship between queer social patterns and physical spaces, formations of queer spaces in urban geographies are evolving beyond the precedent of the centralized gay

enclave or village. This is also compounded by a general increase in acceptance of queer culture (albeit conditional, precarious, and regional) in North America, which has increased popularity of LGBTQ2+ venues among cis-heterosexuals, causing social spaces such as bars to become more mixed and less centralized (Gorman-Murray and Nash 2021). Additionally, some LGBTQ2+ people, particularly youth, perceive historic formations of gay villages as enforcing spatial representations of outdated essentialized identity politics (241) that conceptualize the city as a strict dichotomy of exclusively "gay/straight spaces" (Ghaziani 2019, 16). However, this diffusion and blending of many queer spaces into a broader urban culture has resulted in a dearth of spaces that provide essential and specialized services and supports for marginalized community members, such as queers who are sex workers, transgender, homeless, racialized, elderly, disabled, or living in poverty.

As the formations of 20th century queer infrastructure erode and shift, scholars debate the fate of queer space in the city. Some argue that queer communities will integrate into the mainstream, causing gaybourhoods and other queer enclaves to disappear entirely (Collins 2004), while others argue that queer populations will disperse across the city and form a new network of smaller and interconnected communities and neighbourhoods (Ruting 2008). Ultimately, we do not know what forms queer infrastructures will take in the future, however, it is clear that the current cycles of development and displacement are not a strong foundation on which to build a flourishing queer landscape in the future.

Chapter 4: Queer Infrastructure Anchors

The forms and components of queer infrastructures will inevitably continue to evolve and shift with economic, political, and social changes. The precarious and volatile cycles of development and displacement experienced by queer infrastructure networks have hindered the maintenance of sustainable and consistent access to affordable and affirming community space for LGBTQ2+ people. This thesis argues that an intervention is necessary in the current QI models, in the form of an anchor for queer infrastructure. This model would function similar to what Petra Doan calls a queer 'solar system' (Doan 2019), with "little planets of gays" (Ghaziani 2019, 18) rotating around a centripetal anchor. Each planet, which are enclaves or iconic queer spaces somewhere in the city, has its own unique environments, histories, and inhabitants, and may be positioned at varying proximities to the centre, while holding relationships with the other planets around them.

In an architectural sense, the anchor acts as a cultural core of a queer infrastructure network, providing visibility, resources, and consistency in an otherwise unstable spatial system. The anchor supports growth around the city as it's QI morphs over time, and allows for a common point of intersection between otherwise isolated factions in the queer community. An anchor can take many forms, and its design and function is determined by cultural and built context, but an anchor overall must meet certain conditions in order to survive and support its community: it must 1) be familiar and easily accessible, 2) be easily identifiable by its community, and 3) support a diverse set of community needs.
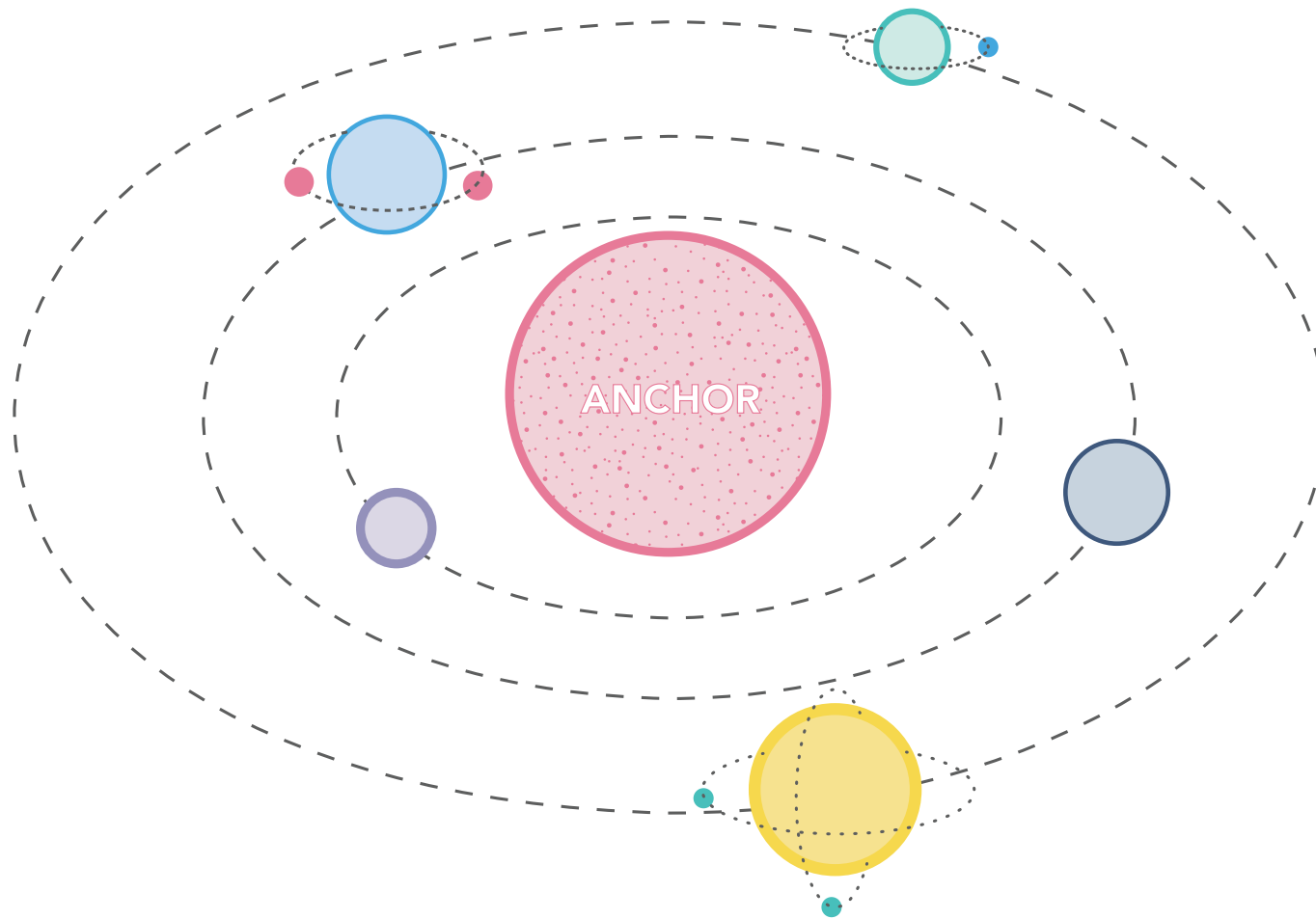
Diagram of the anchor situated as the core of a 'queer solar system', in which the anchor acts as a sun that lights, powers, and orients the system, holding the planets, stars, and moons (queer venues) around it in balance.

A Familiar and Accessible Site

The anchor cannot simply reside anywhere in a city with available space, but must rather be located in an area that is familiar and has meaning to the queer community. If LGBTQ2+ people do not feel safe or trusting of where the anchor is located, or if they feel no emotional connection to its site, then its use will be limited and may exclude more vulnerable community members. The anchor must also be located so that it is easily accessible by multiple means of transportation, such as on foot and by public transit. This allows people who do not live in a nearby neighbourhood, or live outside the city to access the site, and reduces barriers to those with limited mobility.
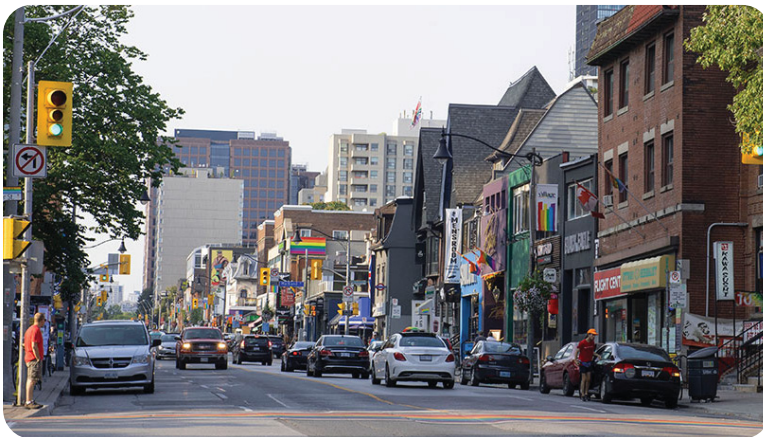
Church and Wellesley Village, a hub of LGBTQ2+ culture and history in Toronto (Ling 2017)

Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village, New York, 2016, the iconic the site of the Stonewall Riots of 1969 (Edgecomb 2022, 173)

Flamboyant entrance to *Killjoy's Kastle* in Toronto, October 16 2013 (Jennex and Eswaran 2020, 261)

Easily Identifiable by the Community

It is important that the anchor acts as a beacon for queer people through its use but also through its presentation within the urban fabric. The level and method of visibility will vary depending on the context and how safe it is to be visibly queer, but the anchor must use clear aesthetic and sensory codes to distinguish itself from its surroundings, and signal to both existing community members and to those who may be newly-out or questioning queer people.

Amsterdam's Homomonument creates a public square for celebration and mourning using the symbol of the pink triangle. The triangle on the top right represents the future and is raised to function as a stage. The triangle on the left represents the past, which steps down toward the canal and acts as a space for memorial for those lost loved ones. The bottom triangle represents the present, as a moment of suspension between past and present. (Back2Stonewall 2021)


View of the cute and colourful of Loverbar in San Juan, the writing on the garden in front reads 'Your gaze violates us.' (Ramos 2022b, 110)

Supports Diverse Uses and Needs

An anchor must have multiple uses and functions to support a diverse set of needs and abilities within its community in an affordable and accessible way. It is especially important to cover the needs essential for community wellbeing during periods where there are limited queer community spaces available in the city. Specific needs will depend on the community, but an anchor should support the means for a community to gather, organize, share resources, and support those who are most vulnerable. The anchor also has a responsibility to engage with its broader urban environment, and provide a means for the queer community to interact and appropriate space beyond the building envelope, as well to allow the broader public to engage with queer culture on the community's terms.

The decorative front facade of the Centro Cultural Guanuca in Matagalpa, Nicaragua, an alternative community gathering space, for rural and urban feminists, progressive activists, and queer people. The space included a library, workshop, a café-bar, performance space, and therapy space. It was forced to close in 2021 after thirty years of service due to a repressive political climate (Dixon and Dixon 2022, 135).
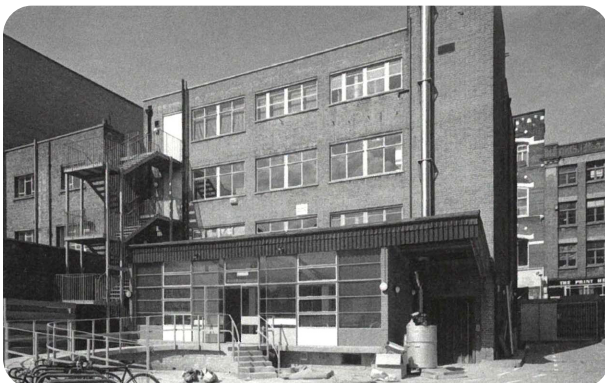
Exterior view of the London Lesbian and Gay Centre in 1985. Adapted from a poultry packing factory, the community centre included a variety of uses such as a disco bar, café, bookshop, meeting and workshop rooms, and an archive. It remained open until 1992 (Campkin 2022, 151).

Case Studies

The 519, Toronto

Located in Toronto's Church and Wellesley Village, a historically queer neighbourhood, The 519 is Canada's largest LGBTQ2+ community centre, acting as a hub for Toronto's queer community and beyond. Built in 1906, the building was converted into a community centre in the 1970s, and expanded in 2014 (The 519 n.d.a.; ACO n.d.). The 519 has been home to LGBTQ2+ community organizations since its beginning, and is now home to a wide spectrum of community programming, ranging from social and financial support services, to arts, culture and recreational programs. The building is next to Barbara Hall Park which includes a trans memorial and AIDS memorial, and hosts outdoor gatherings and events for the community. As the Village has changed and gentrified over the 21st century, The 519 has provided a consistent public institutional base for the community, providing affordable and accessible community space for queer people in the city (Gorman-Murray and Nash 2021).

Performance in the Barbara Hall Park Green Space Festival (The 519 n.d.b.)

The 519 kitchen being used by the Cooking with Trans People of Colour Program (The 519 n.d.b.)

Public square at Barbara Hall Park (Johnson 2014)

Exterior view of The 519 from Church Street (Kohn Schnier Architects, n.d.)

Atrium space (ECB n.d.)

Street view of the illuminated glass facade at night (Ward 2002, 79)

SF LGBT Center, San Francisco

Opened in 2002, the SF LGBT Center stands at the crossroads of three prominent LGBTQ2+ neighbourhoods in San Francisco: the Mission, the Castro, and the Tenderloin. The 40,000-square foot design unites a restored heritage building with a modern glass addition, which provides space for LGBTQ2+ communities to gather, find support, and organize (Cee Architects n.d.). The building offers affordable space for local community organizations, and houses a café, senior, youth, and child care centres, a gallery, and meeting space. The Center presents a spatial configuration that differs from the queer spaces of bars and clubs historically seen in the city (Ward 2002, 73), and was instead conceived by the architects as a kind of community classroom (Cee Architects n.d.). Although the building's envelope is constrained by surrounding streets and buildings, the interior is a fluid layout with rooms designed to be multi-use and shared circulation and common areas encouraging intersection and interaction between people.

People dancing together (Cee Architects n.d.)

Exterior view from Market Street of the renovated heritage building and its glassy new addition (ECB n.d.)

Amoebic atrium at the building's heart (BAU n.d.)

Precast concrete portal frames (BAU n.d.)

Victoria Pride Center, Melbourne

Opened in 2021, the Victoria Pride Centre (VPC) is Australia's first purpose-built LGBTQ2+ centre. The building is located in St. Kilda, an inner-suburb of Melbourne, an area with queer community roots (Cheng 2021). The VPC's 6200 square meters provides tenancy space for a range of LGBTQ2+ community organizations, as well as co-working, commercial, and cultural spaces (Moore and Braun 2021). The design is derived from a series of extruded ellipses with subtractions made to fit internal programs. These precast concrete portal frames create a language of porous thresholds between the building's programs, providing liminal space undetermined uses that may resist strict categorization and reproduction of social norms. An "amoebic atrium" frames the heart of the design, connecting all of the floors and programs around a central stair. The raw finish and column-and-beam structure leaves room for unforeseen future uses, and embraces a fluidity of spatial identity and use (Moore and Braun 2021).

Exterior view of the Victoria Pride Centre from Fitzroy Street, with balconies overlooking the annual summer Pride March (Cheng 2021)

Chapter 5: Anchors as Concrete Utopias

This thesis considers the idea of the queer infrastructure anchor as an expression of Muñoz's (2009) concept of "concrete utopia". The anchor not only functions as a means of supporting spatial access and autonomy within the city, but it also acts as queer hope and futurity embodied through architecture, allowing queer people in the community to connect with their past and dream of brighter futures of collectivity. Muñoz describes concrete utopias as dreamlike but educated hopes of a collective, which are informed by a relationship to historical struggles and triumphs. Rather than "abstract utopias" that are suspended from reality and lived experience, and "akin to banal optimism", concrete utopias are collectivities that are "actualized or potential" (Muñoz 2009, 3). This kind of utopia permits queer people to conceptualize and realize new worlds that both acknowledge and move beyond the grim constraints of queer suffering at the hands of state homophobia (35). Concrete utopias are the result of a critical investment in hope by mobilizing queer futurity to critique "what is, by casting a picture of what can and perhaps will be" (12). A queer infrastructure anchor is an architectural expression of this critical investment in utopian possibility of what queer realities and futures can be.

Designing a Concrete Utopia

The idea of concrete utopias can be interpreted and utilized as a design methodology for a queer infrastructure anchor. This translates into five fundamental elements which are expressed both socially and architecturally: 1) performance 2) traces, 3) blurring, 4) intersections, and 5) collectivity.
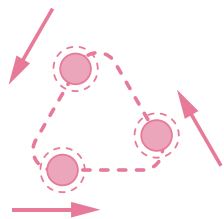
Element 1) Performing and Appropriation

A person lets loose on the dance floor at a pop-up dance party in Dhaka, Bangladesh (Abdin 2022, 147)

Performing and Appropriation

Concrete utopias, like queerness itself, involve performance and action that Muñoz calls "utopian performativity", which is a "manifestation of a "doing" that is in the horizon" (Muñoz 2009, 99). These performances, particularly sites of mass public gatherings, contain what he calls an "anticipatory illumination" of existing queer worlds that reveal the possibilities of queer futurity within a "stultifying heterosexual present" (49). These sites, such as sweaty dance floors and theatrical stages, become transformed through collective queer action into something greater than the sum of their parts where actors, acts, and architecture become intertwined. Katarina Bonnevier refers to this as "performative architecture", which is an architecture that appears in the event of actors, actions, and their physical container performing together to transform reality beyond its normative constraints (Bonnevier 2007, 374). Through this view, an expression of a concrete utopia weaves architecture and the queer collective together into a dynamic dialogue of acts that appropriates normative space, reinterprets reality, reveals possibilities, and repositions limits.

Comparsa Drag and other LGBTQ2+ activists march through the streets at the first Plurinacional *Travesti*-Trans Pride Parade in Buenos Aires' (Bianchi and Revuelta 2022, 214)
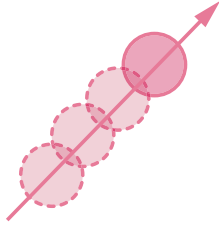
Element 2) Traces and Temporality

Traces and Temporality

One cannot consider the act of performance without also considering the period after a performance has ended. To Muñoz, queer performance is a highly temporal phenomenon, which leaves rippling traces in its wake that he refers to as "ephemeral evidence." This evidence is the remains of queer acts that are embedded in stories and gestures, which layer over time through memory and material to inform further queer acts. Muñoz frames queerness as a "temporal arrangement in which the past is a field of possibility in which subjects can act in the present in the service of a new futurity" (Muñoz 2009, 16), mobilizing the past as a fuel for acts of utopian performativity. In this sense, the performance of queerness takes place on a stage that is both temporal and spatial, layering historical, social, and material traces to imagine new forms and futures. A concrete utopia is composed of layering of these traces that create access points to a shared and evolving history that link queers across identity markers and generational lines (47).

Flowers left at the Toronto AIDS Memorial (Jennex and Eswaran 2020, 215)
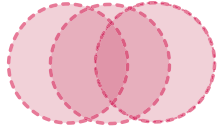
Element 3) Blurring and In-Betweenness

Blurring and In-Betweenness

To draw from and mobilize traces is to blur the boundaries between traditional temporal lines that divide the past, present, and future. A concrete utopia is a means of critiquing and disrupting the boundaries and constraints imposed by cis-hetero norms and categories, inviting the possibility to explore and blur the space in between. Muñoz describes this as a "stage of in-between-ness" that is "on the threshold between identifications, lifeworlds, and potentialities" (Muñoz 2009, 105), which imagines and creates new spatialities by removing, altering, or inhabiting the divisions between zones. A common expression of this in queer space is the blurring of boundaries between public and private, where acts associated with quiet shame are expressed publicly, such as through acts of public sex, or visible queer gatherings in public spaces.

Interior view of E.1027, designed by Eileen Gray, where private spaces are nestled between, and overlap with, public spaces (Norimatsu and Bougot 2021)
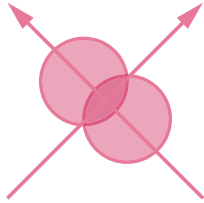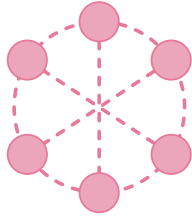
Element 4) Intersections and Relations

Intersections and Relations

To blur is not only to intervene in the separation between two entities, but it is also to create a new entity that results from their intersection. The disruption and blurring of social and spatial boundaries involves an examination, critique, and experimentation with new the relationships that arise between entities that were previously separate. Muñoz argues that "imagining a queer subject who is abstracted from the sensuous intersectionalities that mark our experience is an effectual way out" (Muñoz 2009, 96) of the oppressive constraints of the present, and that "opting out" of the complexities and challenges of relationality frames "queerness as a singular abstraction" that is "isolated from a larger social matrix" (94). It is the role of a concrete utopia to facilitate intersections between queers and categories that would not otherwise meet, create opportunities for new deep and complex relationships between them, while resisting a futurity that reproduces hierarchical divisions along lines such as race, class, and gender.

View of the public square at Glorieta de los Insurgentes transit hub in Mexico City. The subway station serves as an intersection point between middle-class white-collar workers, tourists, youth, expats, and working- and lower-middle-class queer people. At night, the station also acts as a gateway to the nearby gaybourhood, where gays from all different backgrounds overlap as they prepare for their nightlife adventures (García 2022, 201).

Element 5) Collectivity

A mass crowd dances together at the Palladium nightclub in New York, 1985-1997 (Munuera 2022, 137)
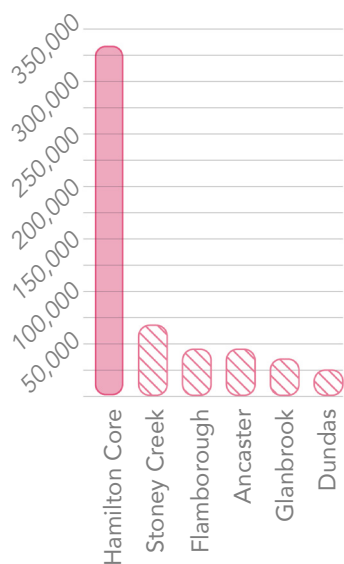
Collectivity

To facilitate intersections and complex relations between queer people is to resist the isolation from, and distortion of, queer collective spheres. Sara Ahmed argues that queerness does not reside alone in a body or an object, but instead is realized through moments of contact and the mutual support and action that result (Ahmed 2006, 170). Queerness does not exist in a vacuum, but as a collectivity of bodies, experiences, expressions, and hopes. The greatest tool to suppress queerness is to keep queers from knowing themselves and their collective numbers by cutting up and isolating performances of queerness from each other in order to obscure "the whole" (Muñoz 2009). For Muñoz, enabling opportunities for queer moments of contact resists the privatization of queerness, and allows the development of a group identity, a means of glimpsing, imagining, and making queer worlds (55). A concrete utopia is an expression of collective queer hope and struggle that is actualized into a vision of futurity where queers can know themselves as a part of a larger whole.

Protestors march on Parliament Hill in Ottawa for the We Demand Rally in 1971, the first large-scale public demonstration for LGBTQ2+ in Canada (Jennex and Eswaran 2020, 123)

Total 2016 Population:
539, 917

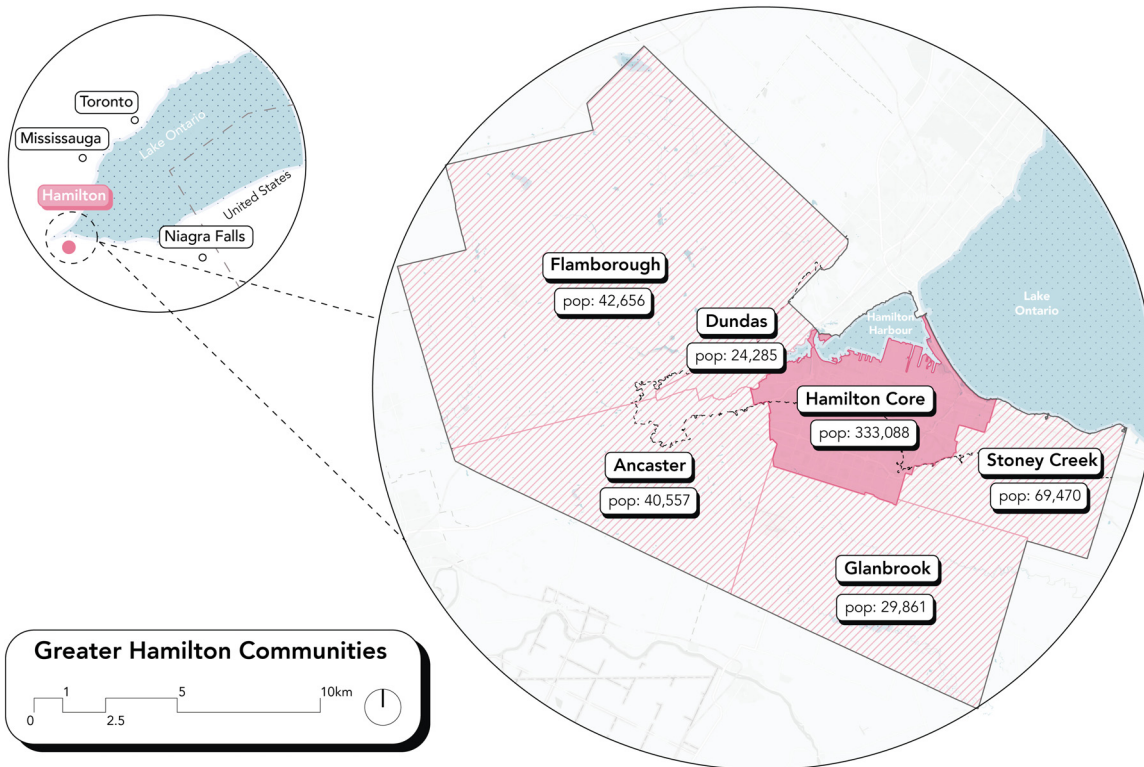Hamilton 2016 Population
by Community
(Data: Buist 2018)

Chapter 6: Situating the Anchor in Hamilton, Ontario

Formerly known as the steel capital of Canada, Hamilton, Ontario is a mid-sized industrial port city on the southern tip of Lake Ontario, situated on the traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee, and Mississaugas. Although Hamilton has long been proud of its status as a blue-collar working town, it has also long been stigmatized and looked down on by other wealthier municipalities in southern Ontario. The city experienced its economic peak in the early to mid-twentieth century when it was a prolific steel producer and manufacturing hub, earning its reputation as a prosperous industrial town. In the latter-half of the twentieth century, many of the steelworks and factories shut their doors or moved elsewhere, causing

Map of Hamilton Communities with 2016 Population (Data: Buist 2018)

a significant shift from a manufacturing-based economy to a serviced-based one, leaving city officials with the challenge of addressing the employment vacuum (Jakar and Dunn 2019). The collapse of Hamilton's industrial base had a devastating impact on the city's middle class, entrenching steep social and economic divisions in the city that are still felt today. Despite its wealth of green spaces, character, and passionate citizens, this economic decline, combined with its legacy of industrial pollution has earned Hamilton the title of "Ontario's ugly duckling community" (Shkimba 2020, 26).

Hamilton has slowly worked to recover from economic ruin, and now resides at an interstitial position between its gritty working-class roots, and the city's efforts to 'renew' areas abandoned following its industrial collapse. As the city looks starry-eyed into visions of a new prosperous future of glassy condos and white-collar knowledge-based industries, Hamilton's passionate base of grassroots activists are fighting for those who may be swept away by the growing waves of gentrification.

Hamilton still struggles with poor health outcomes, poverty (Buist 2019), and vast stretches of neglected "brownfields", parking lots, and buildings in need of major repair. Yet it has also become a desirable place for those priced out of the Toronto market, making the city one of the most rapidly unaffordable cities in North America (Mitchell 2021; Weinburg 2020). This has exacerbated existing inequalities within Hamilton and helped fuel the displacement of the city's most vulnerable people, including its LGBTQ2+ community.
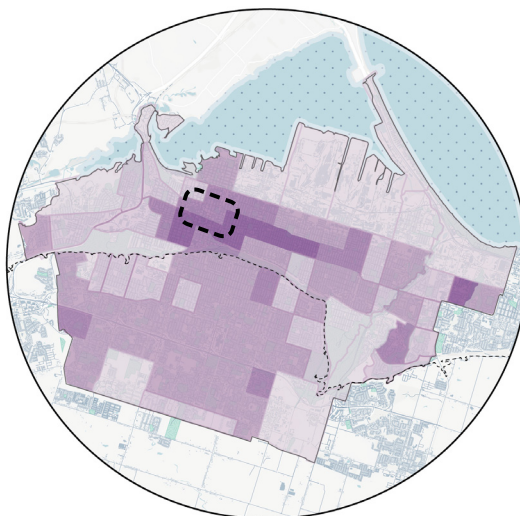
Median Household Income

- $120,000+
- $100,000 - $119,999
- $80,000 - $99,999
- $60,000 - $79,999
- $40,000 - $59,999
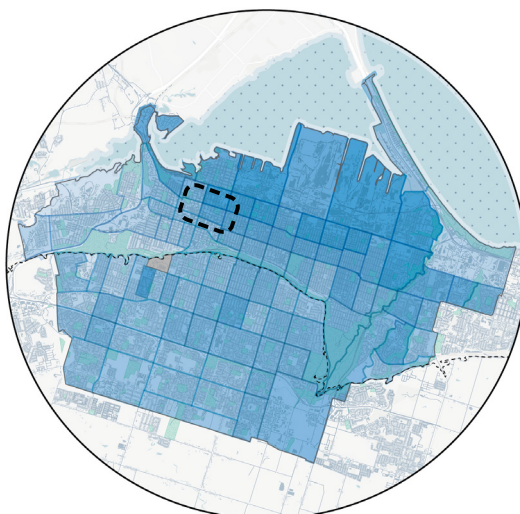- $20,000 - $39,999
- Insufficient population
- Downtown Hamilton
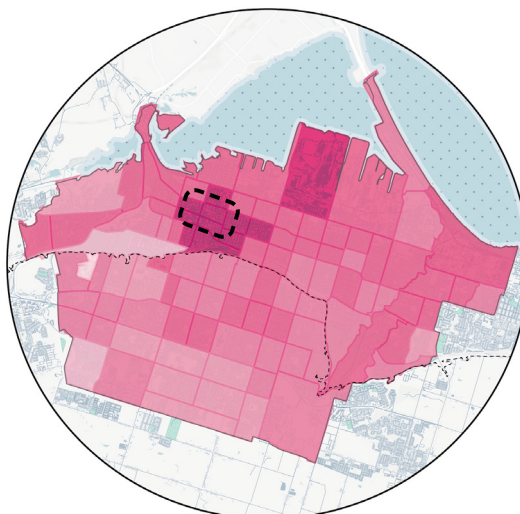
Population Density (People/SqKm)

- ≤1500
- 1501 - 3000
- 3001 - 4500
- 4501 - 6000
- ≥6001
- Downtown Hamilton

Rate of Post-Secondary Education

- >80%
- 70 - 79.9%
- 60 - 69.9%
- 50 - 59.9%
- 40 - 49.9%
- 30 - 39.9%
- Insufficient population
- Downtown Hamilton

Maps of Hamilton Core demographic data, highlighting high density and low income in the downtown core (Data: Buist 2018)

The State of Queer Infrastructure in Hamilton

Hamilton has a rich queer cultural and spatial history that is deeply embedded within the city's urban fabric. The queer community has had its share of queer venues over the years, but LGBTQ2+ people there have never consistently had a place of their own. This is due a variety of factors, including unstable economic climates, acts of hostility from the public such as violent hate crimes (Gulliver 2008; Craggs 2015; Craggs 2019a), and protestors crashing the annual Pride celebration in 2019 (Carter 2019). This violence and suppression has also been exhibited from the city government, such as through police raids on LGBTQ2+ venues (Gulliver 2004) and cruising spots, and lack of protection during instances of violence (Mitchell 2020; Taekema 2019).

Collage of LGBTQ2+ community celebrations and events mixed with headlines of violent incidents again queer people in Hamilton

Hamilton was home to a diversity of LGBTQ2+ venues in the 1990s and early 2000s, including a feminist bookstore, several gay bars and event venues, and even a community centre. However, the LGBTQ2+ community in the city has experienced dramatic spatial losses over the last decade, with the last gay bar, Steel Lounge, and community centre, The Well, closing their doors in 2016. Rising costs from the gentrification of downtown, increasing unaffordability of housing and commercial units, and the financial burden of the COVID-19 pandemic has made it difficult for new venues to open and survive, such as queer-friendly venue Sous Bas, which announced its closure in 2022.

Steel Lounge - Closed 2016
(Google Maps 2016)

Embassy Club - Closed late 2010s
(Dhesi 2019)

The Werx bar - Closed mid 2000s
(Google Maps 2011)

Sous Bas - Closed 2022
(Dhesi 2019)
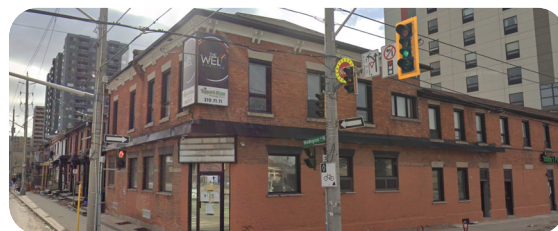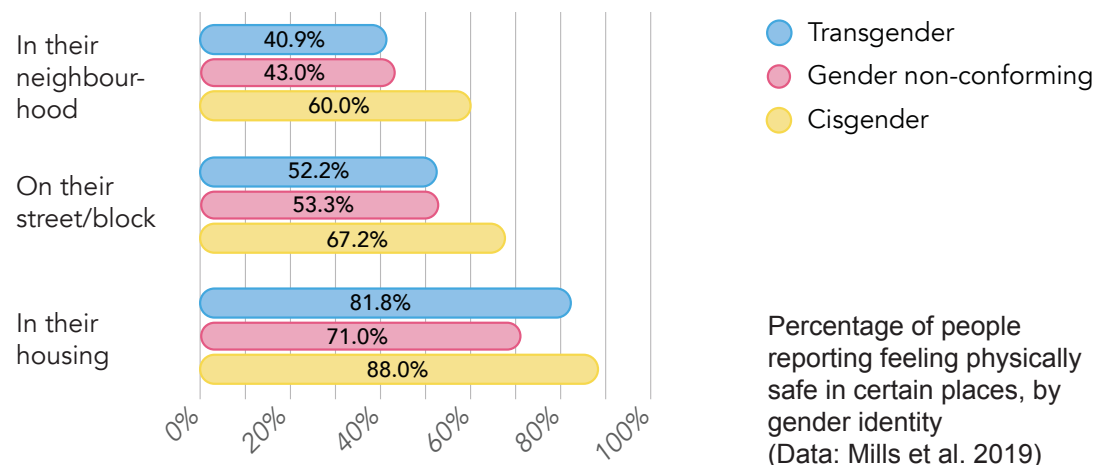

The Well Bar - Opened 2022
(Google Maps 2022)

5.0%
27,000
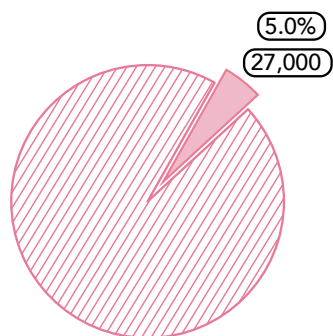
● LGBTQ2+ Pop.

Estimated LGBTQ2+
population in Hamilton
(Data: Mills et al. 2019)

34.5%
65.5%
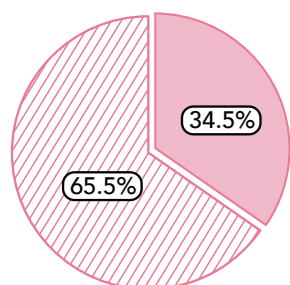
● Yes ⊘ No

Percentage of people who
feel a part of the LGBTQ2+
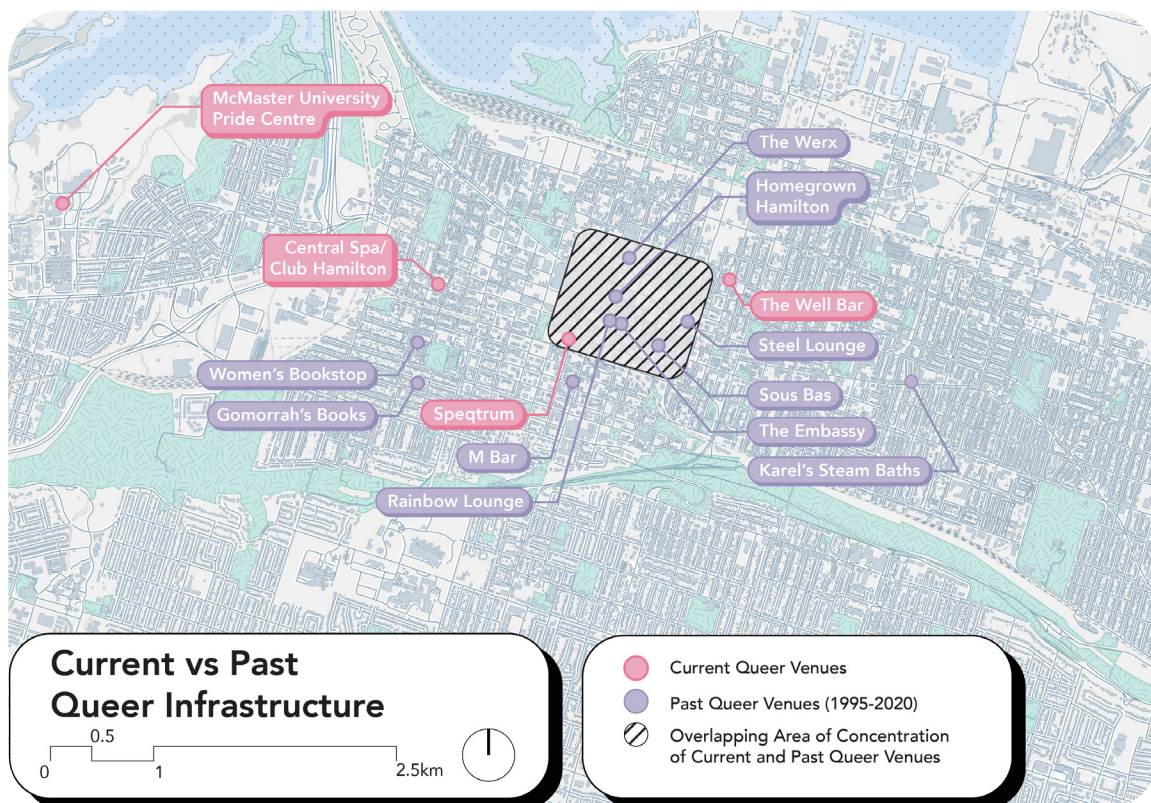community in Hamilton
(Data: Mills et al. 2019)

The city is currently home to an estimated 27,000 LGBTQ2+ people, and although most of those people know there is a queer community in the city, over two thirds of them do not feel a part of it (Mills et al. 2019). This sense of placelessness has contributed to segregation within the community, isolating people from each other, particularly along lines of race, class, age, and gender (Dhesi 2019). This displacement has decreased visibility of LGBTQ2+ people in the public realm and has pushed more vulnerable community members further to the margins. The majority of queer residents feel unsafe outside of their homes, particularly trans residents (Mills et al. 2019). This is unsurprising given Hamilton's infamously high hate crime rates (Craggs 2019a; Watson 2020), and long-standing hostility from far-right groups, police, and the municipality itself. Local organizations plan events for the community to converge, but they occur temporarily within appropriated spaces, mostly concentrated in the downtown core. The events allow for some community connection, but do not support those in need of other resources. Although socially valuable, these momentary instances of resistance do not meaningfully disrupt or intervene in the chronic cycles displacement and fragmentation that grips the community.

In their neighbour-hood
40.9%
43.0%
60.0%

On their street/block
52.2%
53.3%
67.2%

In their housing
81.8%
71.0%
88.0%

● Transgender
● Gender non-conforming
● Cisgender

Percentage of people
reporting feeling physically
safe in certain places, by
gender identity
(Data: Mills et al. 2019)
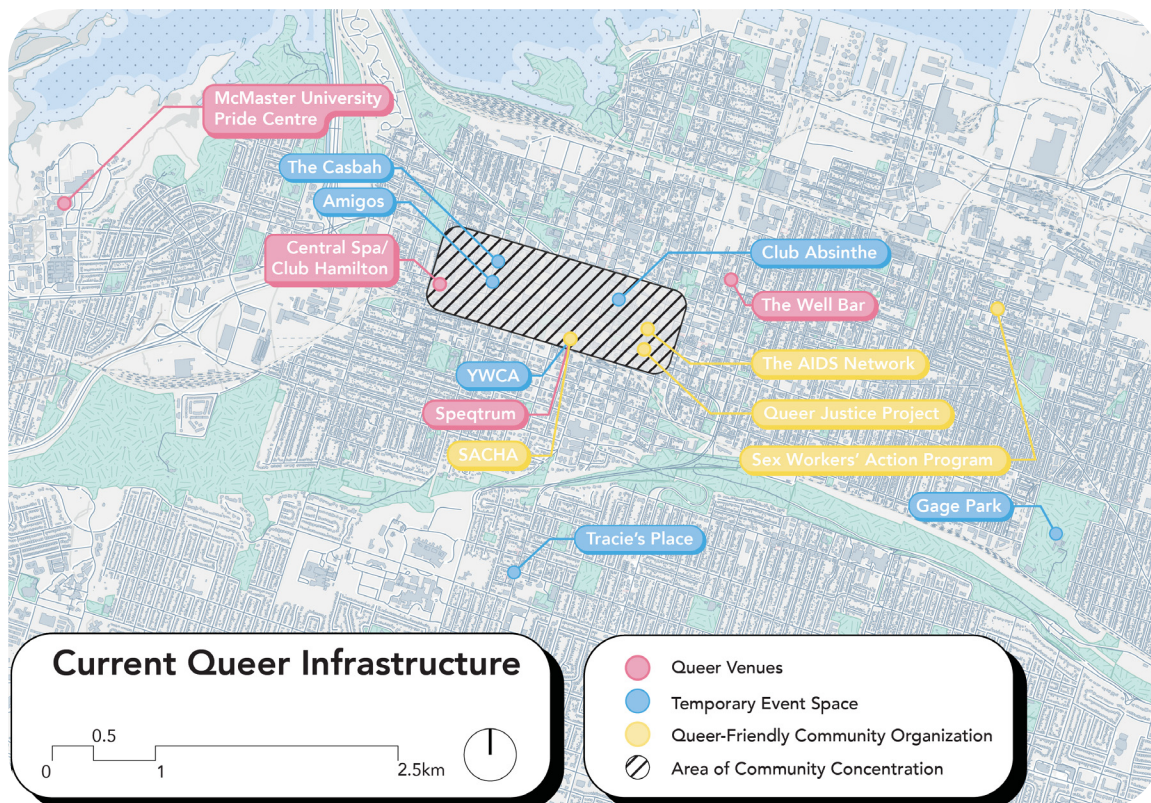
Map of current queer infrastructure in Hamilton

Map of current and past queer infrastructure venues in Hamilton (Data: Points of Pride n.d.)

It is already widely acknowledged that Hamilton is in desperate need for an LGBTQ2+ community centre to provide consistent and affordable gathering space, essential specialized social and health services, and the means to preserve and share community history (Pike 2018; Mills et al. 2019; Craggs 2019b). While many queer people in the city feel a strong connection to Hamilton as their home, they feel disconnected from the queer community and struggle with feelings of isolation (Mills et al. 2019). There is an obvious need for an anchor in Hamilton that can combat feelings of placelessness and isolation, provide communal space for the community exchange and congregation, support essential services for vulnerable community members, and ultimately act as a "big bang" (Doan 2019) to initiate a vibrant solar system of queer spaces throughout the city in the future.

Locating the Anchor: Downtown Hamilton

To locate the anchor, we can look to downtown Hamilton, which is not only the heart of the city, but also the point of highest intersection between the city's various social and economic groups. This area has also been home to the majority of the community spaces for the queer community in the past, and the location of many current event places and organizations. Downtown currently exists in limbo as both a site embodying the remnants of the city's industrial and economic collapse in the late 20th century, and as the epicentre of Hamilton's rapid development and gentrification.

The design and state of Hamilton's downtown has long served as a representation of the city's successes and failures as it has attempted to battle its inferiority complex with nearby Toronto (Rockwell 2009). This area of Hamilton

has especially struggled to achieve social and economic success following mid-century modernist planning efforts that have pushed pedestrians off the streets in favour of superblock malls and highways in the city's core. Hamilton's deeply rooted car culture is reflected in its downtown fabric, with the main streets functioning as noisy and speedy one-way traffic corridors rather than walkable and bike-friendly pedestrian avenues with welcoming storefronts and sidewalks. Numerous depressing parking lots litter the downtown streets, leaving substantial and unfriendly voids between shopfronts. Cars are encouraged to race through downtown rather than pause and visit, which has contributed to the decline of neighbourhoods and retail areas (Weinburg 2020, 108).

View of King William Street in downtown Hamilton, facing south toward the Stelco Tower and Jackson Square (right) (Downtown Hamilton BIA n.d.)
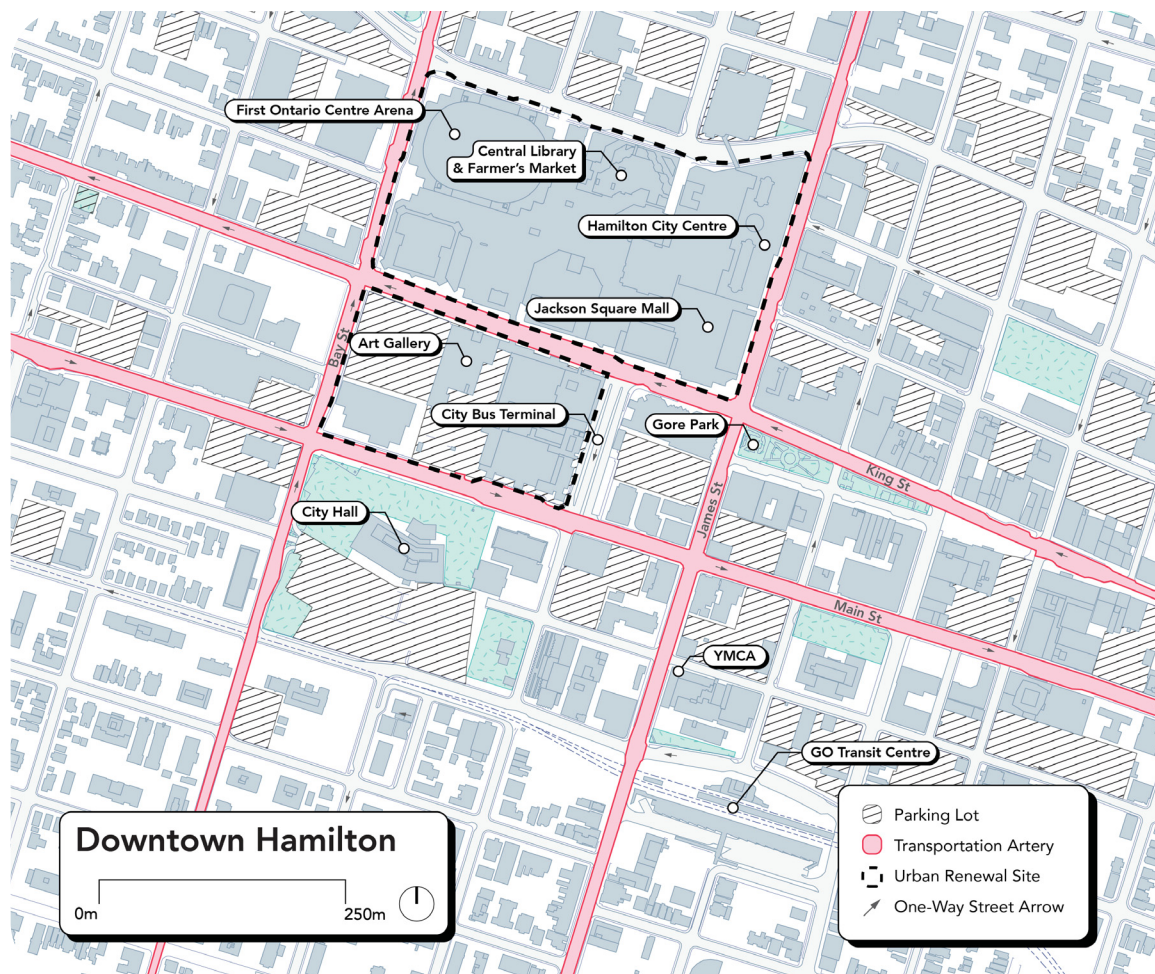
Map of downtown Hamilton, between James St and Bay St showing traffic arteries, major amenities, and parking lots

Nowhere is this more apparent than on King Street East and Main Street between James and Bay Street. Despite being the most highly concentrated area of public and civic amenities in the city, this area lacks a pedestrian presence on the street. This has resulted from a "ruinous urban renewal process" (105) in the 1970s, which demolished entire city blocks of historical low-rise retail and residential buildings to make way for a superblock containing a mall, library, convention centre, hotel, and sports arena. The superblock is introverted by design, intentionally moving people off the streets by providing few shopfronts or gathering places outdoors. A paved and neglected public plaza is located

on the roof of the Jackson Square mall and is rarely used due to its limited visibility and access from the street. What was intended as a planning move to revitalize downtown and symbolize Hamilton's prosperity and modern ambitions resulted in the further decline of the city's core, driving away the "democratizing force of different people and classes on the street" (Rockwell 2009, 57).

The late 20th and early 21st centuries have been spent reckoning with the legacy of Hamilton's "ambitious city" planning. Many of Hamilton's queer communities were able to establish spatial footholds in the city during this period, with the state of downtown providing opportunities to rent

North side of King Street West, between James and MacNab Streets, 1968. This part of the street was demolished and replaced by Jackson Square in 1969 (Rockwell 2009, 56).

North side of King Street West, between James and MacNab Streets, 2008. Small shopfronts and pedestrian streets have been replaced by a superblock mall and car-dominated streets (Rockwell 2009, 60).

affordable units, or appropriate abandoned sites. In the late 2000s and early 2010s, grassroots community groups and artist collectives organized to breathe new life into the James Street North neighbourhood (a block north of Jackson Square), creating a bustling environment filled with galleries, art crawls, and spaces for communities to gather. This period came to be known as a renaissance for Hamilton where art was considered 'the new steel'. However, the success of the city's burgeoning arts scene in the downtown core began to draw the attention of developers and prospective buyers priced out of the Toronto market, setting in motion a state of gentrification that has displaced many of the people that orchestrated the area's revitalization, pushing the most vulnerable of them further to the margins (Carter 2018; McKay 2020). This included the loss of many notable LGBTQ2+ venues and gathering spaces, such as Steel Lounge and Homegrown Hamilton. Many of these spaces have now been replaced by expensive restaurants and shops, or have been demolished to make way for new high-rise developments, resulting in a dearth of accessible and affordable community spaces for Hamilton's queer community and other marginalized populations.

New condo developments opening among historical storefronts on King William St (Dale 2021)

Installation at SuperCrawl, the Hamilton's annual street art festival on James St N (Carter 2018)
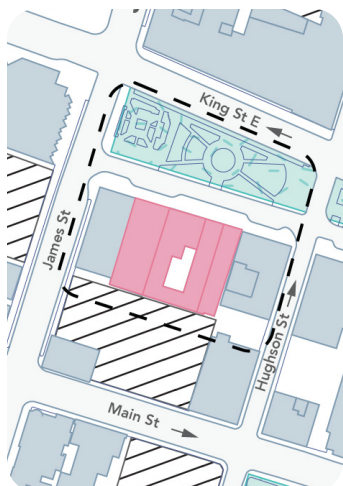
Site plan of Gore Park and the Gore Block

The Gore Block

In the wake of downtown's rapid transformation and gentrification, it is clear that a community anchor is desperately needed. When searching for where to situate this anchor, Gore Block and the adjacent Gore Park stand out as an opportune site to intervene in the harmful cycles of displacement occurring in downtown. The Gore provides a rare moment of pause and greenery for pedestrians along King Street, and has stood as a recognizable architectural icon of downtown Hamilton for over a hundred years. The site straddles the intersection of four traffic arteries, and
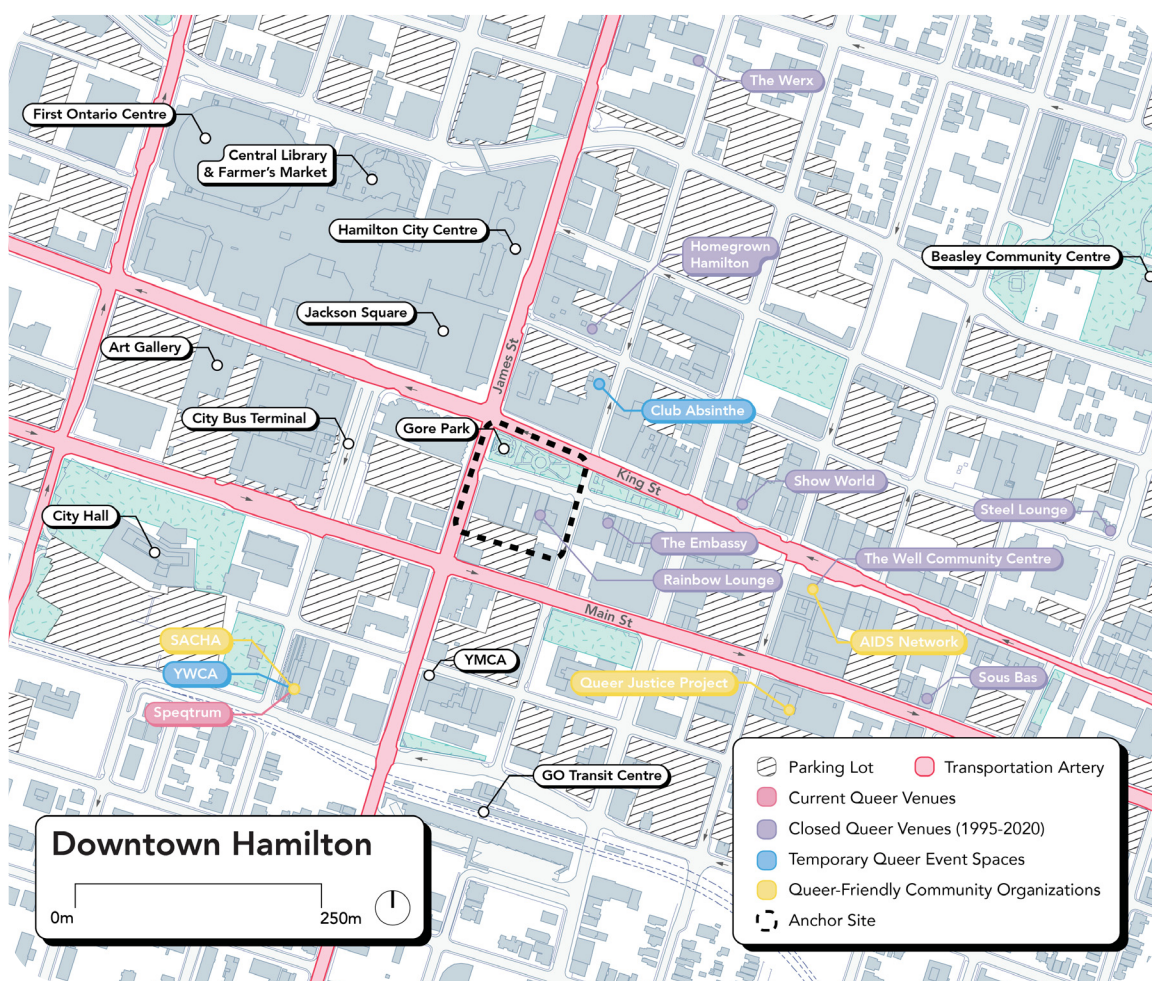

Map of downtown Hamilton showing the location of current and past queer venues, and major public amenities

Gore Park fountain with Stelco tower and King St E in the background

neighbours many of the city's public amenities and civic sites, including the central train and bus terminals, City Hall, art gallery, and the urban renewal project which contains the public library, farmers market, and Jackson Square mall. It has been the location of many protests, festivals and gatherings for Hamiltonians, including the LGBTQ2+ community. The park is a contested site, standing both as a symbol of the city's wishful hopes for prosperity and order, while also embodying the nefarious reputation of much of downtown's decay. After many years of serving as a popular pedestrian strip, the Gore Block has decayed significantly due to neglect after being purchased by a developer, and now
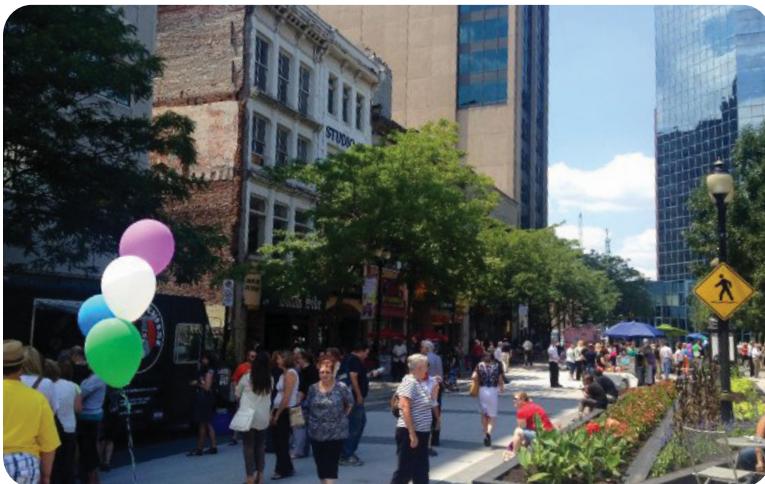

View of the Gore Park pedestrian promenade and Gore Block in 2012, before tenants were removed (Leach 2012)

View of the Gore Block in 2022. After sitting vacant for years, the pedestrian life in Gore Park has dwindled

waits for demolition and replacement (Selway 2020). This site, which encapsulates the social, economic, and spatial complexities of downtown, is rich with potentiality to imagine a world where Hamilton's displaced and invisible LGBTQ2+ community has a home in the heart of the city. Reimagining and repurposing the Gore as a queer community hub not only draws from a long history of queer people appropriating and repurposing neglected places into sites of collectivity and safety, but it also resists Hamilton's now established pattern of displacing pedestrians and communities from the streets through reckless demolition and development.
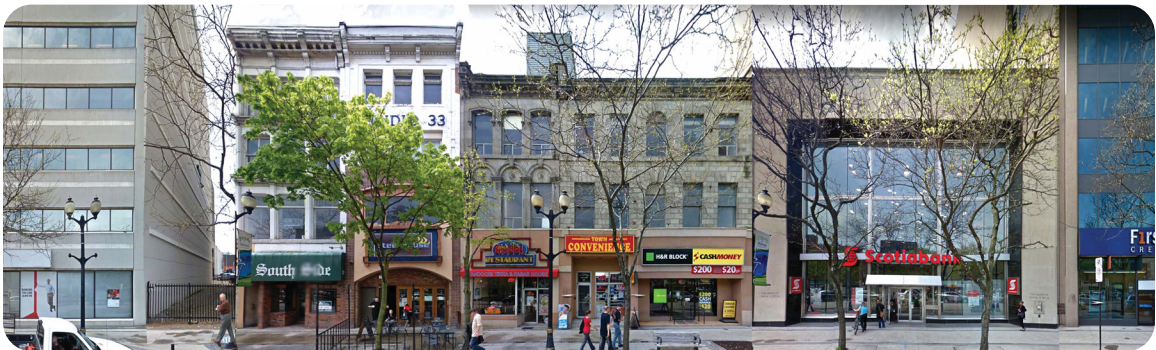
Gore Block elevation, Spring 2016

Gore Block elevation, Winter 2022

Chapter 7: Program

The most fundamental function of a queer infrastructure anchor is supporting the specific the needs of its community. To determine the program of the anchor in Hamilton we can look to feedback from recent surveys (Pike 2018; Mills et al. 2019) conducted to highlight the needs of the city's LGBTQ2+ community. While all queer people need access to space to find belonging and connect with their community, this thesis acknowledges that some LGBTQ2+ people face greater barriers to spaces that support their needs, and therefore require more consideration when designing a public community space. This is echoed by Mills et al., who state that "while some members of our communities – notably affluent, white, able-bodied, middle-class lesbians and gay men – may not feel that they need dedicated community spaces, that is not true for many others – particularly those who are transgender, racialized, Indigenous, living with disabilities, and/or living in poverty" (Mills et al. 2019, 8). It is therefore essential that the program of the anchor accommodates the needs of the most vulnerable LGBTQ2+ people, and that it also creates avenues for these factions to meaningfully engage with parts of their community they may otherwise be isolated from. The program of the anchor is designed to accommodate multiple ways to engage, support a variety of needs, and combine services and uses to promote overlap and interaction between different factions of the community. The anchor is divided into four main program groups: 1) affordable housing, 2) health care and social services, 3) event space, and 4) education and storytelling.

Affordable Housing

According to Doan and Higgins, access to safe and affordable housing near queer community spaces or neighbourhoods is essential to encouraging engagement and inclusion of more marginalized LGBTQ2+ people (Doan and Higgins 2011, 21). In addition to the existing barriers and discrimination that existing for LGBTQ2+ people when finding a residence, housing costs continue to rise in Hamilton, exacerbating barriers faced by lower-income queer people to living in safe and affirming neighbourhoods. Housing supports for queer people were previously offered by The Well – Hamilton's LGBTQ2+ community wellness centre – but since its closure in 2016 there has been a void for this kind of service in Hamilton (Mills et al. 2019, 26). Affordable housing was identified as a high priority in the survey results, with desire for a model of community housing for LGBTQ2+ seniors and youth (Pike 2018, 13). Many seniors face barriers when seeking housing that support their aging needs, and experience discrimination that creates the fear of having go back in the closet or be separated from a loved one (13). Additionally, queer and trans youth represent a disproportionally high percentage of youth experiencing unstable housing, with between 25 and 40% of homeless youth in Canada identifying as LGBTQ2+ (Abramovich 2016). The anchor therefore includes a mix of affordable supportive and accessible housing units for LGBTQ2+ seniors, and transitional housing units for queer and trans youth experiencing unstable housing, as well as a housing services office to support finding connections to safe and affordable housing in the city.

Health Care and Social Services

Barriers to health care and mental health services is one of the most significant obstacles experienced by LGBTQ2+ people. In Hamilton, health care providers who are educated in LGBTQ2+ affirming health practices are in high demand, and the unique needs of trans and older LGBTQ2+ people are severely under-addressed (Pike 2018, 12). This gap in services is also seen in mental health care, such as counselling and support groups. Rising economic inequality in Hamilton has exacerbated income disparity within LGBTQ2+ communities, meaning that the most vulnerable community members who experience the greatest need for mental health services, particularly transgender people, often experience the greatest barriers to accessing the mental health care they need (Mills et al. 2019, 61). The anchor includes a health clinic that offers access to both physical and mental health services.

Education and History

In the survey conducted by Pike, older adults expressed a need to gather LGBTQ2+ history and share these experiences with youth and the larger population (Pike 2018, 22). The anchor includes a variety of programs that facilitate education on queer narratives, knowledge, and histories, as well as multiple means of sharing these resources. Providing several types of mediums for sharing and engaging with queer narrative resources and education allows for a wider spectrum of stories to be gathered and told. This accommodates a kind of 'counter-archiving', which is a means of remembering and sharing histories and narratives that resist and challenge colonial models of archiving, creating opportunities for racialized queer and trans people

to tell their stories in mediums appropriate to them and share them across generations (Haritaworn et al. 2018, 11). Many of the most vulnerable factions of the LGBTQ2+ community, such as sex workers, and transgender and racialized people, have not had the same resources to document their histories through material ephemera, and instead transfer their stories through oral histories or other mediums (Ware 2017). It is important to acknowledge that what we remember, and the way we remember it, impacts the kind of futures we are able to imagine, and who is included in those futures. Therefore, the anchor includes multiple means of engaging in queer education and histories, including a book store, sex shop, skills lab, archive, gallery, and an artist-in-residence studio.

Event and Gathering Space

Most queer people in Hamilton currently feel disconnected from their community, and with the lack of dedicated community spaces in the city many LGBTQ2+ people have to look outside the city for events and services (Mills et al. 2019, 56). There is a strong desire for dedicated event space for building and strengthening a sense of community, such as spaces for partying and celebrating (e.g., bars and clubs), as well as spaces for alcohol-free events for all ages (e.g. cafés, art studios, and workshop spaces) (56). The anchor houses multiple kinds of gathering spaces for the queer community, including an event space and club for performances, a café for casual gathering, and a shared kitchen and multi-use program rooms for community workshops and small-group events.

The design of the queer infrastructure anchor incorporates programs for social gathering which encourage social

interaction and intersection, and as well as programs that promote access to material resources and emotional supports. Through programmatic combinations and adjacencies the anchor will facilitate human interaction, develop social capital, foster community collaboration, and provide support for those who otherwise might feel strange or out of place in Hamilton. It will also contribute to creating more resilient LGBTQ2+ social systems, establish a narrative continuity with the collective queer past, and foster future imaginaries.

Chapter 8: Design

Using concrete utopias as a design method, the Gore Block is reimagined into a community hub called Horizon House. The five distinct buildings in the centre of the block are joined together as a cast of characters that work together to set the stage for a queer urban performance in downtown Hamilton. The design proposal adapts the existing Gore Block buildings and introduces exterior and interior interventions to create temporal layers of past and present that work together to allow queer people to imagine and realize future potentialities of queer space.
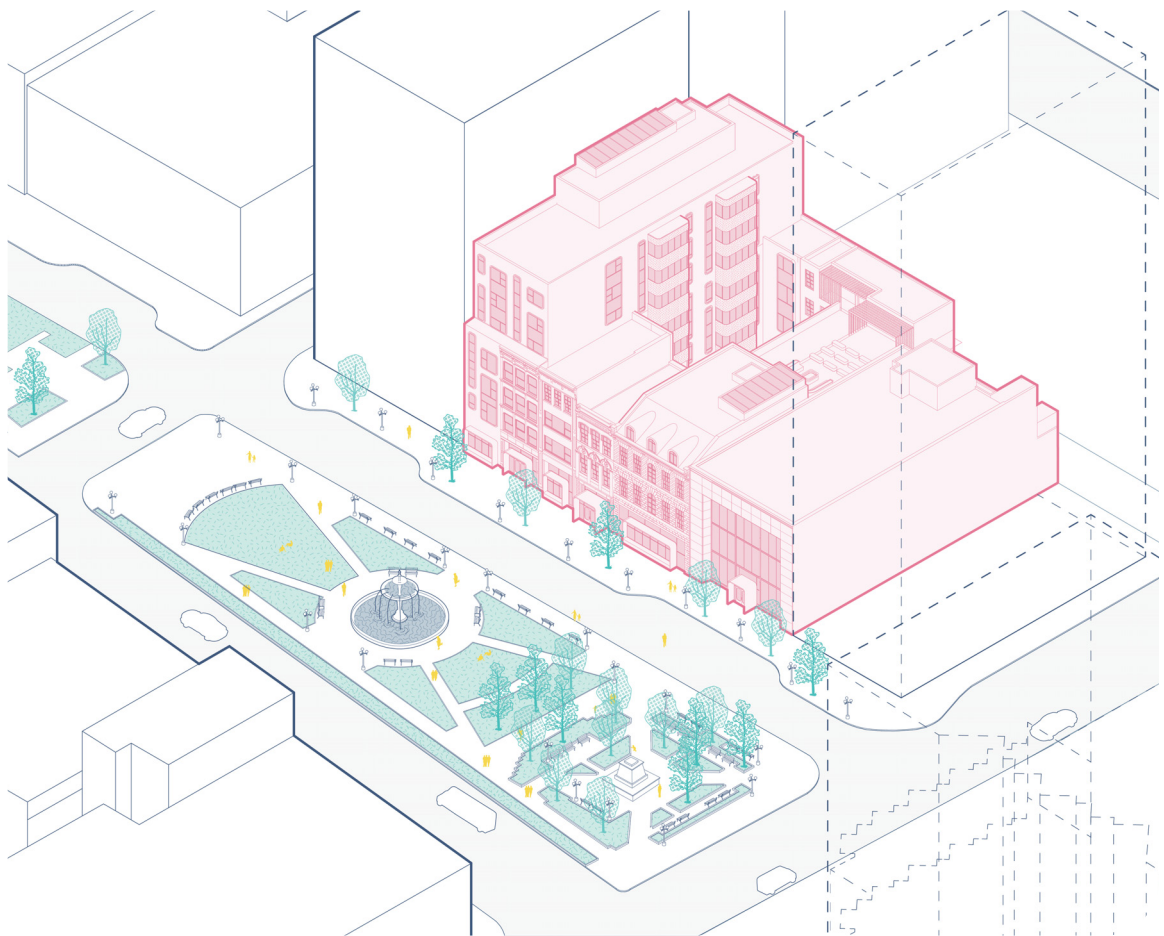
3D view of Horizon House and Gore Park from the northwest

Facade

On the exterior, the building acts a beacon through is presentation to the street to signal its presence to established community members and to those who may be newly-out or questioning queer people. Volumes protrude through the facades to disrupt the boundaries of the existing building and beckon to the park and pedestrians from the street. A building addition is introduced in the vacant lot on the east side (left) to complete the void in the block. The facade of the addition draws from the order of the existing facade and twist it into a new playful composition. New and existing architectural elements are collaged together to create a playful, welcoming, and interactive streetscape.
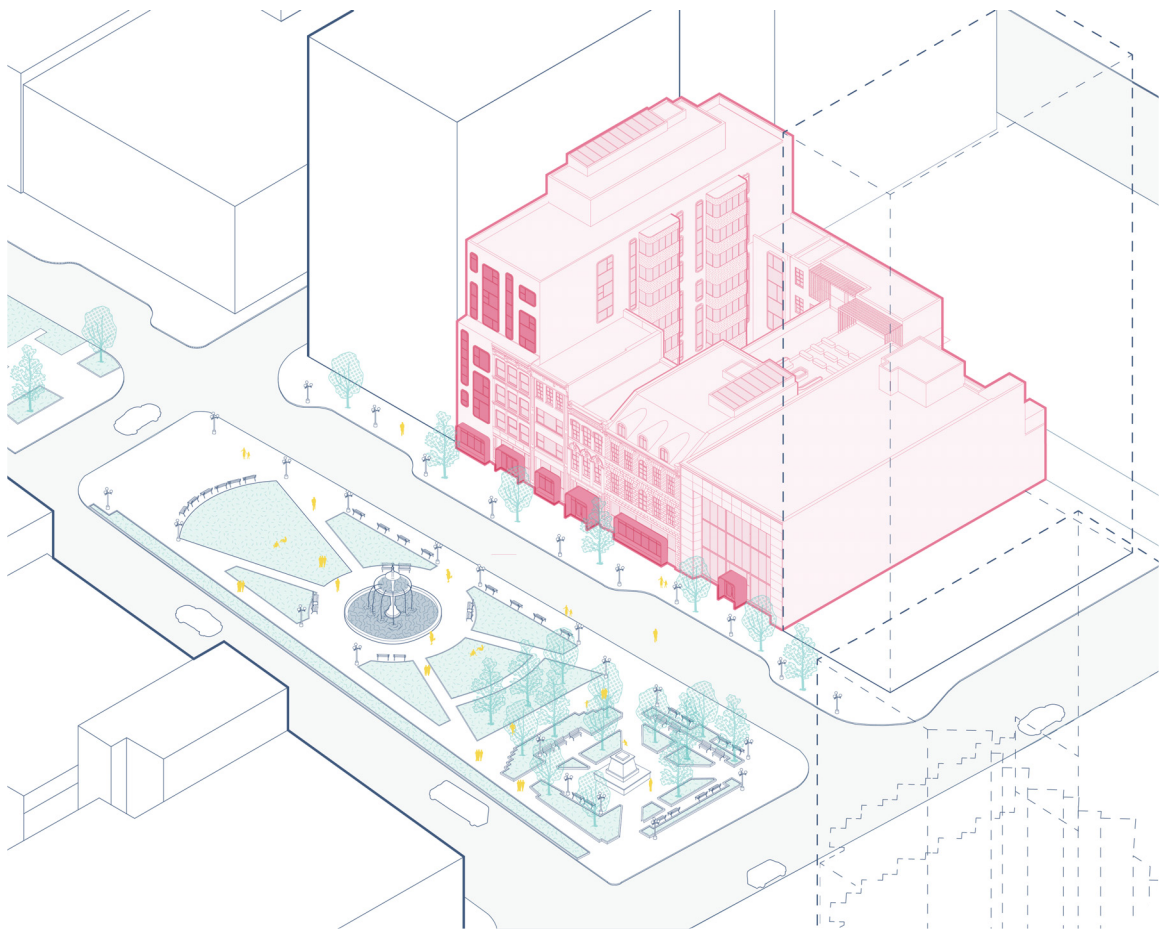
3D site diagram highlighting the facade interventions on the existing Gore Block buildings, and the windows on the new addition in the vacant lot to the east (left).
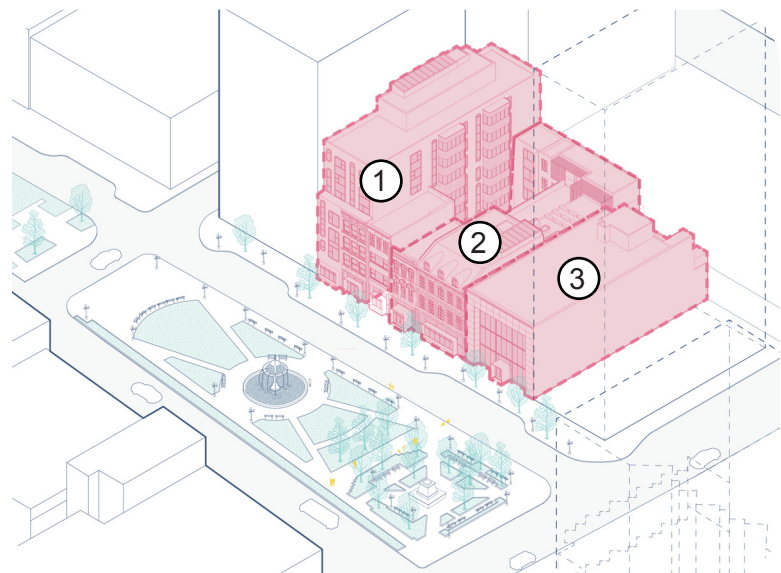
Exterior view of the front facade of Horizon House. Volumes are inserted through the existing glass openings on the ground floor to disrupt the flat boundary between inside and outside. The new addition to the building (on the left) both blends in and twists the order of the existing facade.
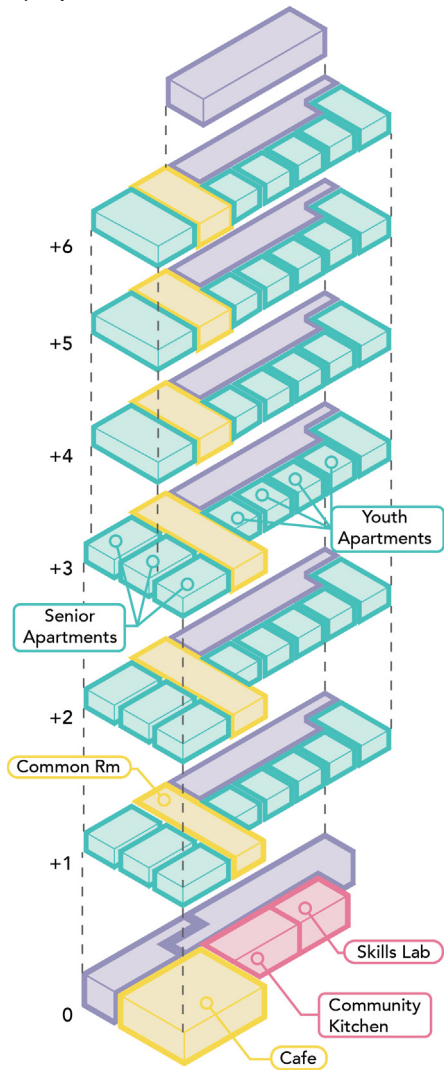
Program

Horizon House is designed to accommodate a diversity of people within the local LGBTQ2+ community, and cover fundamental programmatic needs to support community wellbeing during periods where there may be no other queer venues available in the city. The anchor includes three main program areas. First, the east buildings combines supportive housing for queer seniors and transitional housing for queer youth in unstable or unsafe living situations. A cafe, community kitchen, and skills lab are located downstairs and are shared between the residents and visitors. Second is a community centre that occupies the middle buildings, which includes program rooms, a book store, sex shop, community archive, gallery, artist-in-residence, and a social services centre with housing supports, and a health clinic. Last is an event space and night club that has been inserted into the former-bank on the west side. Gore Park is also used as a mediary space where the events from inside can spill out into the street and appropriate the surrounding urban environment to queer use.
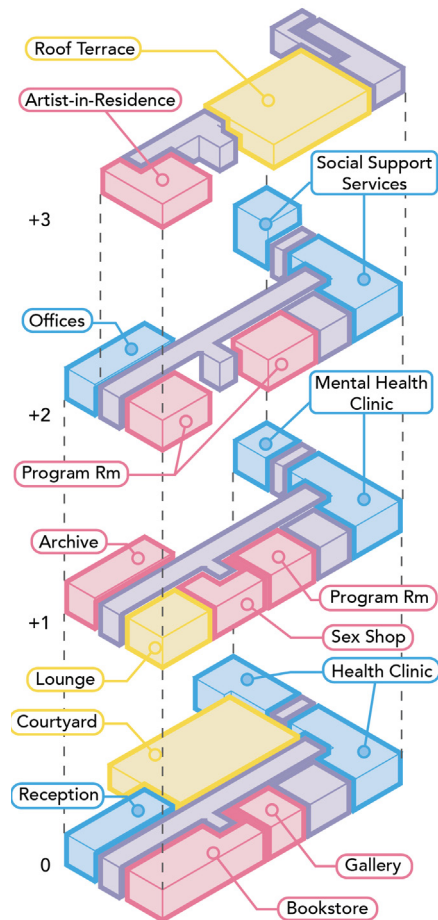
3D site view of the four general program areas of Horizon House: 1) apartments, 2) community centre, and 3) event space
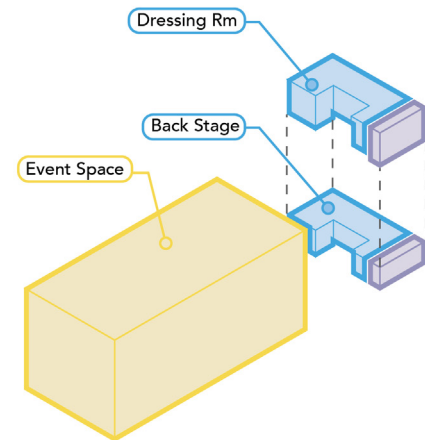
1) Apartments

+6

+5

+4

Youth Apartments

+3

Senior Apartments

+2

Common Rm

+1

0

Skills Lab

Community Kitchen

Cafe

2) Community Centre

Roof Terrace

Artist-in-Residence

Social Support Services

+3

Offices

Mental Health Clinic

+2

Program Rm

Archive

Program Rm

+1

Sex Shop

Lounge

Health Clinic

Courtyard

Reception

0

Gallery

Bookstore

3) Event Space
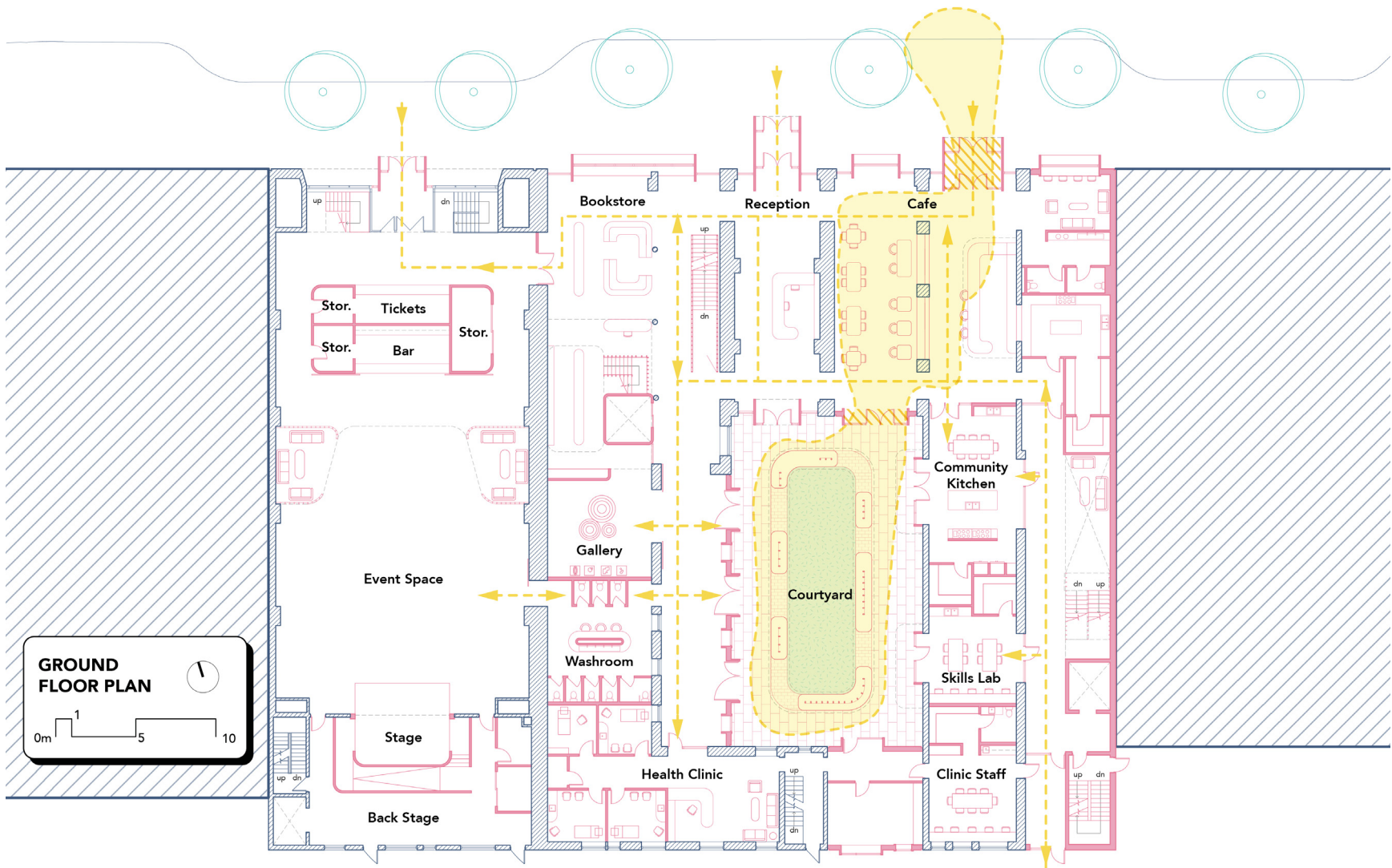
Dressing Rm

Back Stage

Event Space

Exploded 3D view of the program spaces within the three main program sections.

Cross-Programming and Porous Thresholds

In plan, cross-programming is utilized to patch-work different uses across the building to encourage intersections between different users and uses. Programs are arranged on a gradient from most public to most private, with shared circulation connecting them to create a fluid (rather than strictly separate) relationship between them. For example, the most public programs, the cafe, bookstore, and event space, encourage activity on the busy street level, while the health clinic is located toward the quieter back street to allow for privacy and a discrete back entrance for those who may be in distress. These areas are linked by a shared circulation spine, that opens to the courtyard, and can be used for gallery display.

Openings are introduced in the thick brick walls that delineate between previously separate buildings to create dramatic and porous thresholds that blur the boundaries between programs, creating a gradient across different spaces. Volumes protrude through the façade on the street level, which act as seating or points of transition between spaces, and blur the divide between inside and outside.

Washrooms, which are visible from the hallway through existing windows, are a shared space for all genders, and acts as a free-flowing space around a floating mirrored vanity for washing up and checking yourself out too.

GROUND
FLOOR PLAN

0m   1   5   10

Bookstore

Reception

Cafe

Stor.   Tickets   Stor.

Stor.   Bar

Event Space

Gallery

Community
Kitchen

Courtyard

Washroom

Skills Lab

Stage

Health Clinic

Clinic Staff

Back Stage

Ground floor plan diagram showing intersections and porosity across programs

Collectivity and Common Spaces

Common spaces are introduced throughout the design to provide informal opportunities for gathering. Horizon House combines a dense and complex array of programs, and common spaces are utilized to create moments of collectivity and cohabitation between them. These spaces are placed along main circulation routes, to allow users to encounter unexpected events during their visit.
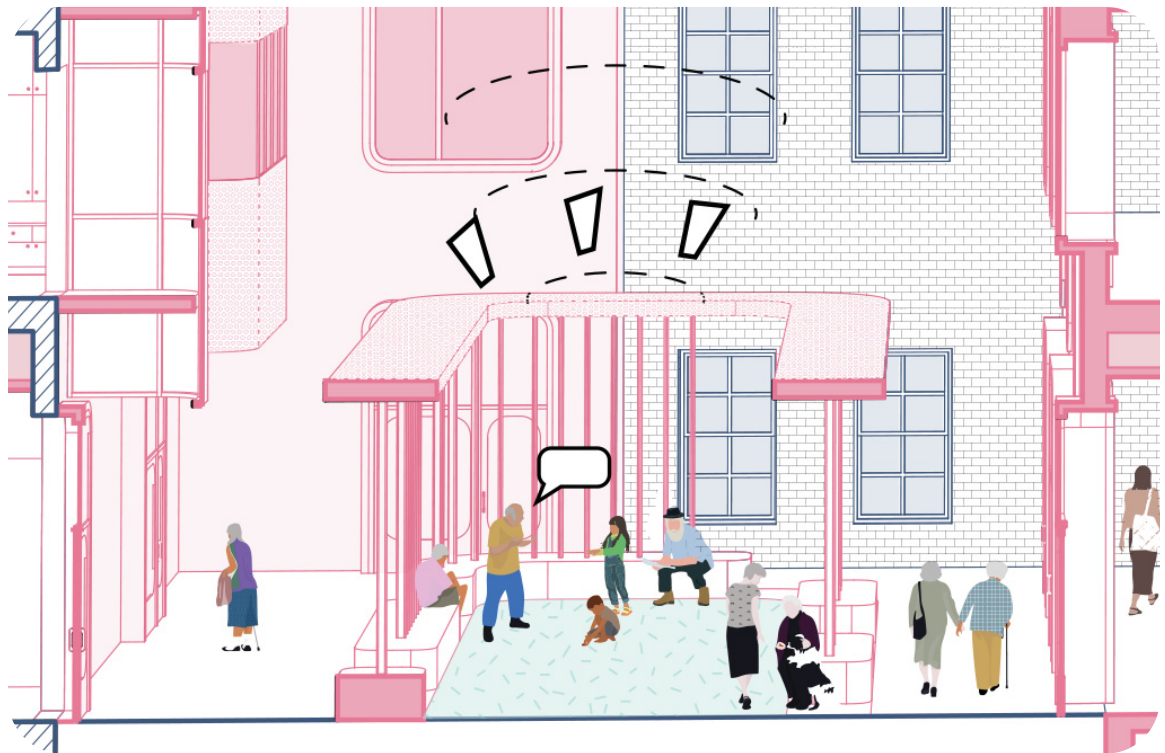
Courtyard

A central courtyard acts as a shared common space providing a collective heart that unifies the many programs and people within the building. A porous ring of benches and floating canopy act as a space of shelter and communion, and can be used as a place of private retreat, or shared celebration. The benches act as a threshold between the hardscaped outer ring of the courtyard the more intimate and grassy inner ring, allowing for free movement around the perimeter of the courtyard, while framing a more defined gathering space in the centre.
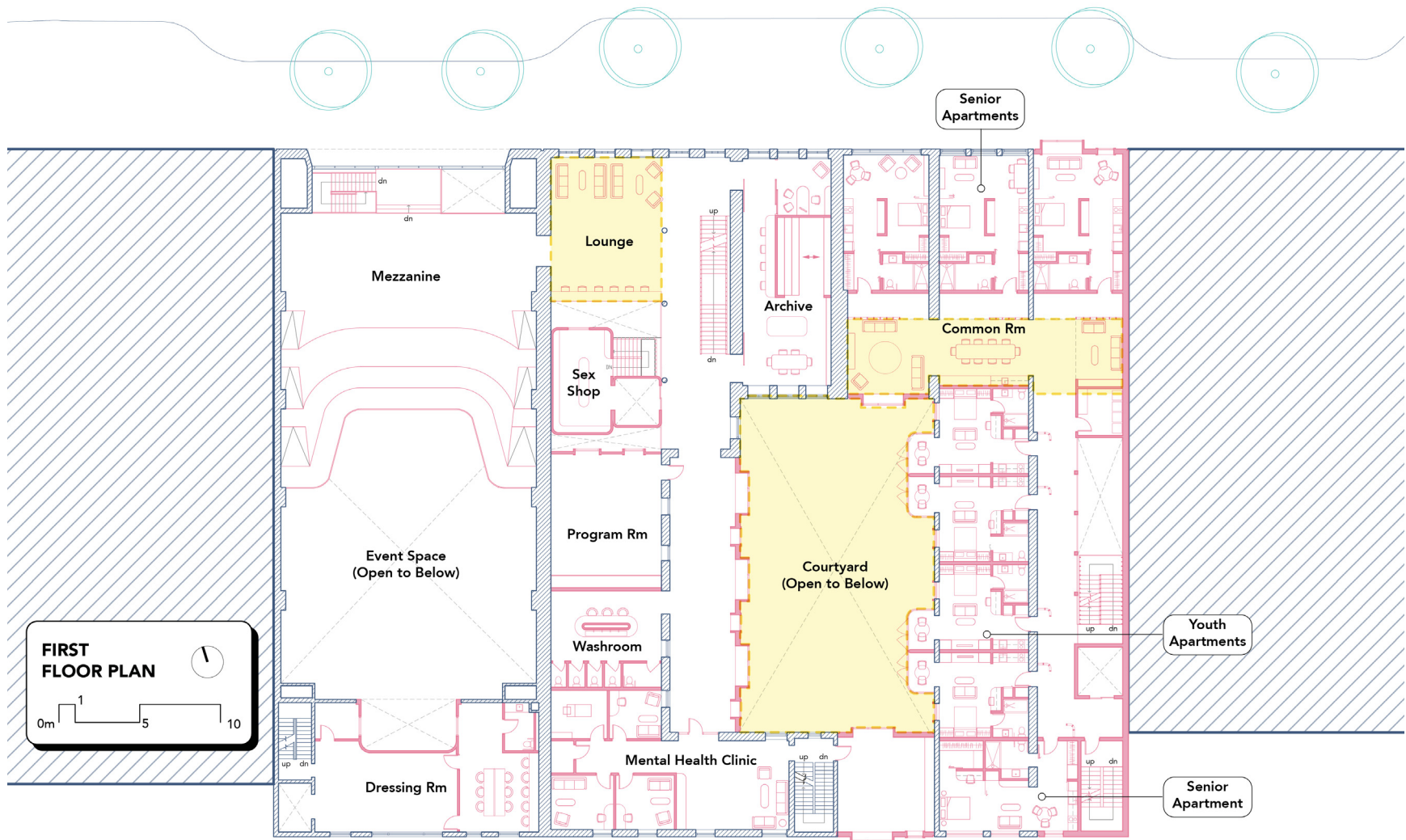
The courtyard can be accessed from all sides, and creates visual, auditory, and programmatic connections between adjacent uses. This shared common space allows certain programs to expand beyond the boundaries of their program space. For example, the gallery could extend into the courtyard for an installation or performance, or visitors to the cafe could enjoy a coffee outside while the bookstore hosts a public poetry reading.
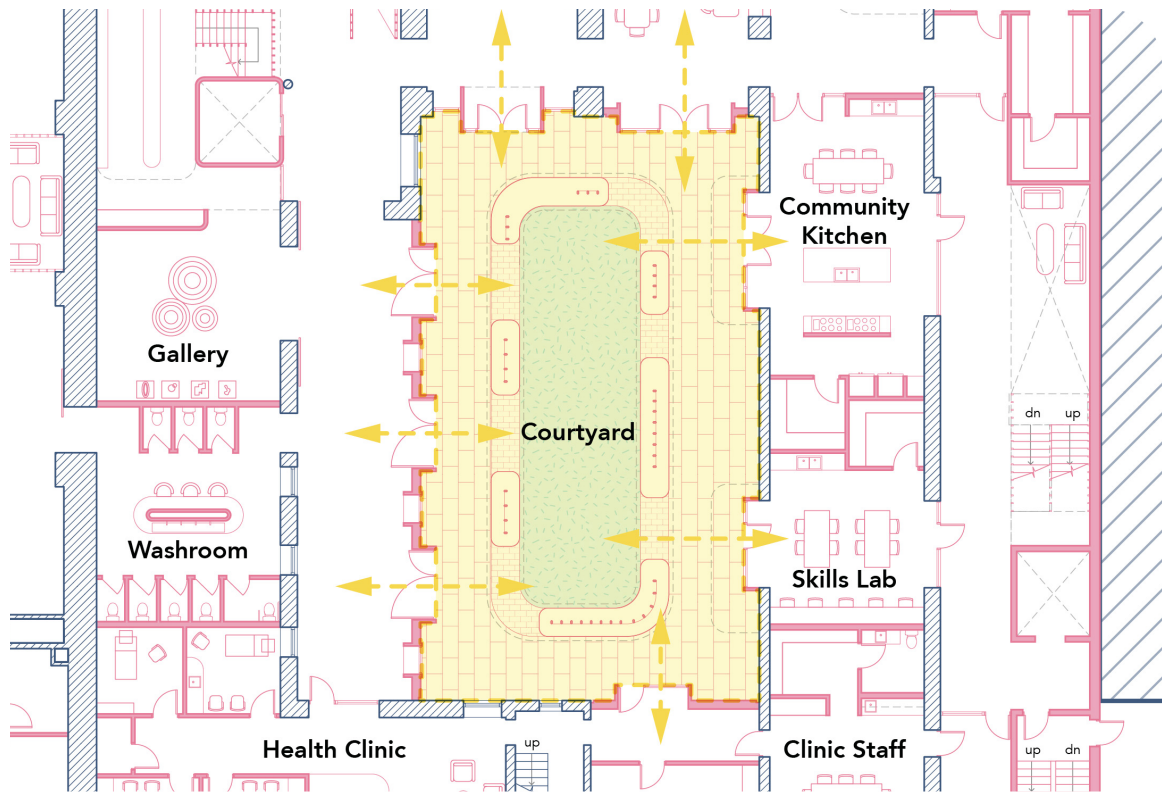
Floor plan of courtyard showing the porous thresholds between the indoor programs and the shared outdoor space.


The courtyard is the porous heart of the building. Visitors and residents can gather in the private inner sanctum, while others move freely circulate around the outer ring.

FIRST
FLOOR PLAN

0m 1 5 10

Mezzanine

Lounge

Archive

Senior
Apartments

Common Rm

Sex
Shop

Event Space
(Open to Below)

Program Rm

Courtyard
(Open to Below)

Youth
Apartments

Washroom

Dressing Rm

Mental Health Clinic

Senior
Apartment

First floor plan, with common spaces highlighted 1) community centre lounge, 2) the central courtyard, and 3) the residential common rooms

Common Rooms

Common areas are also introduced in the residential area of the building, which encourages the development of familiarity, fostering relationships between senior and youth residents. These residential common rooms are inspired by a history of queer people coming together with their found families over kitchen tables and in living rooms to share meals and stories. Rather than being relegated to a closed room, the common room is an open space that residents pass through every day, facilitating encounters between people as they go about their daily life. Sound from activity in the common room can be heard down the hallway, inviting the curious to participate. Metal mesh screens are placed by apartment entrances to increase privacy between the communal spaces and more private dwellings.
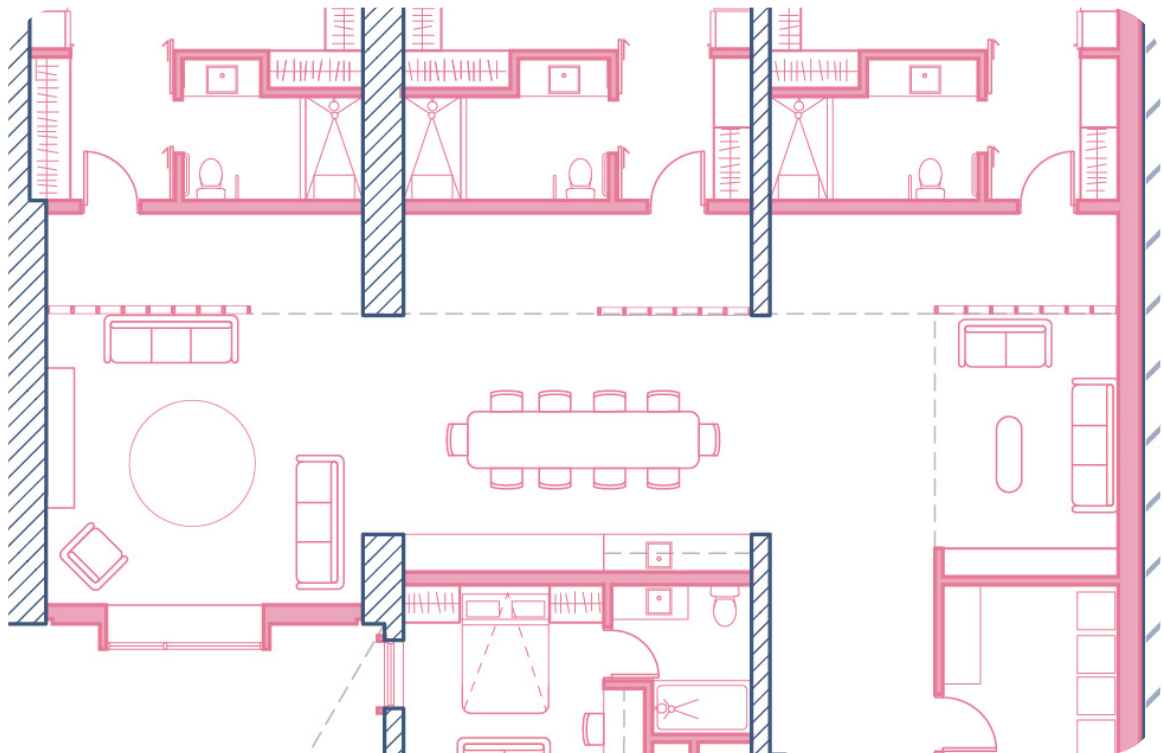
Floor plan of residential common room

Blurring Public and Private

The design of Horizon House utilizes cross-programming, porous thresholds, and common spaces as three architectural tools to blur the divide between public and private across each floor of the building. This is also accomplished vertically through voids that connect programs across floors, which is seen through the exterior courtyard and the interior atrium in the community centre.

Courtyard Void

The courtyard forms an void space through the upper floors of the building, providing natural light and acting as a shared space. The void allows for cross-views between the community centre and apartments, creating visual and auditory connections and interaction between public and private spheres. Enclosed apartment balconies are habitable thresholds where residents can observe daily activities in the community centre. These balconies can be personalized by each resident with plants or decorations, projecting their personal identity into the public courtyard. Sounds from the gathering space below and the rooftop terrace echo across the courtyard to invite people to participate in or observe the activity.
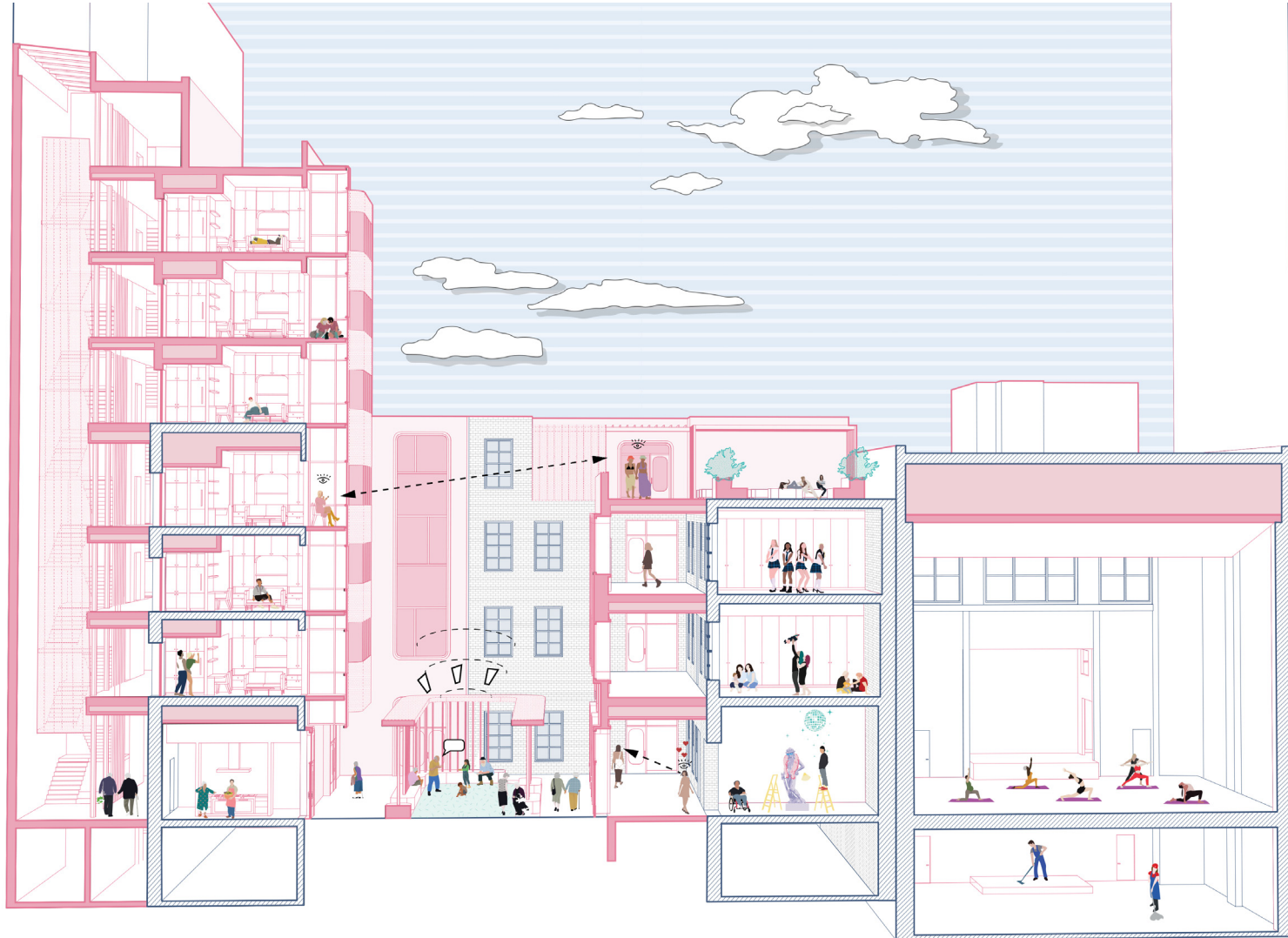
Cross section through all three program areas (apartments, community centre, and event space). Activity from the courtyard can be heard and seen from the upper levels, and cross-views between the apartments and community centre blur boundaries between public and private.

Atrium

An atrium is introduced in the community centre, to create another kind of interior courtyard bringing in natural light to the darkest portion of the building, and creating visual connections between the many program spaces. Sound from activity on the rooftop can echo down into the lower floors, drawing people upwards to join in the festivities.

The sex shop, which is accessed through the book store, floats in this void as a mysterious object, inviting the curious to ascend and explore their desires. The sex shop, which is often hidden or associated with shame in other contexts, is positioned in the core of the community centre as a symbol of curiosity and sensuality. The floating volume allows for intimacy while browsing, but maintains a visual connection to the sky and bookstore below, acting as a liminal space between public and private domains.
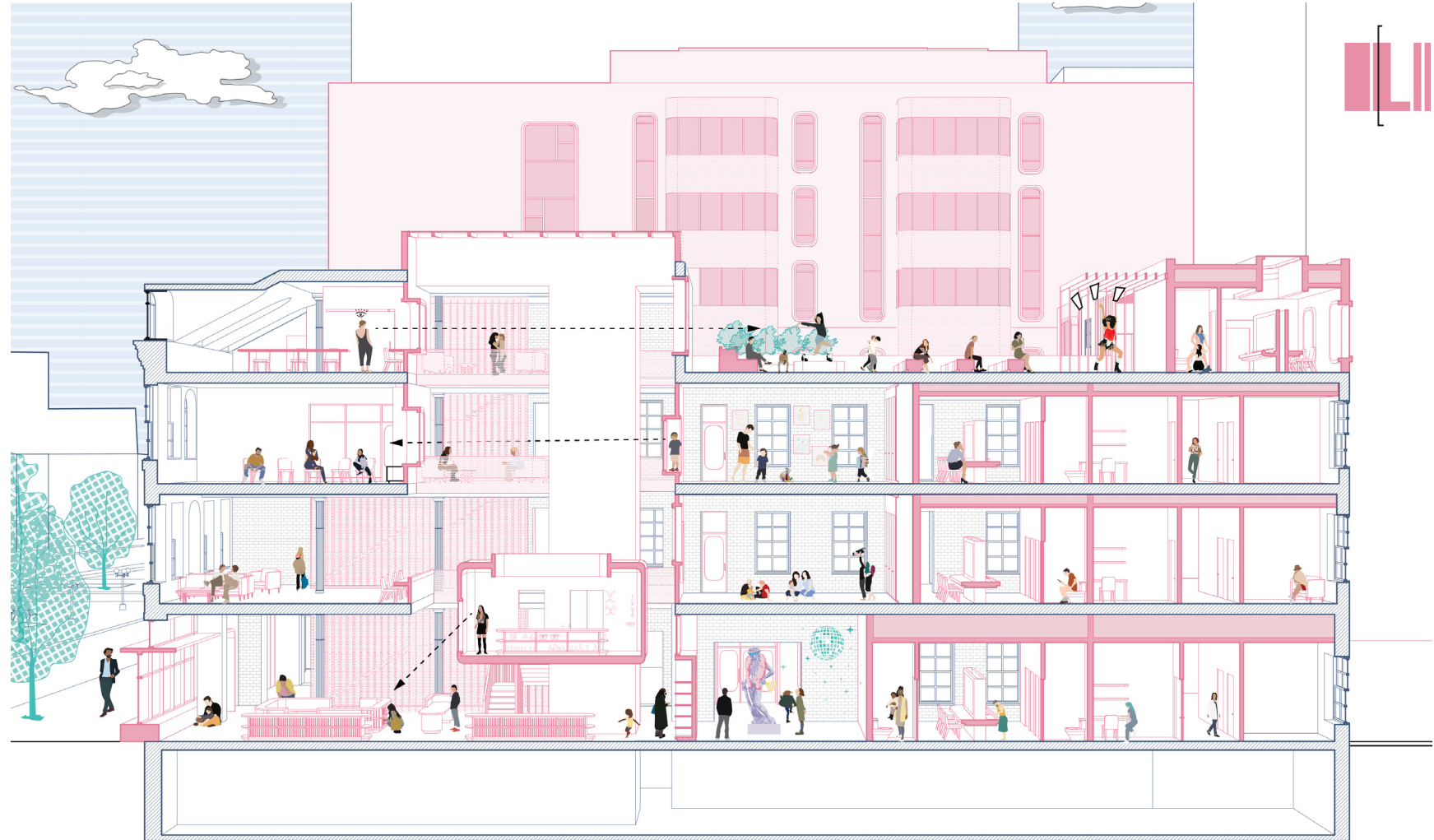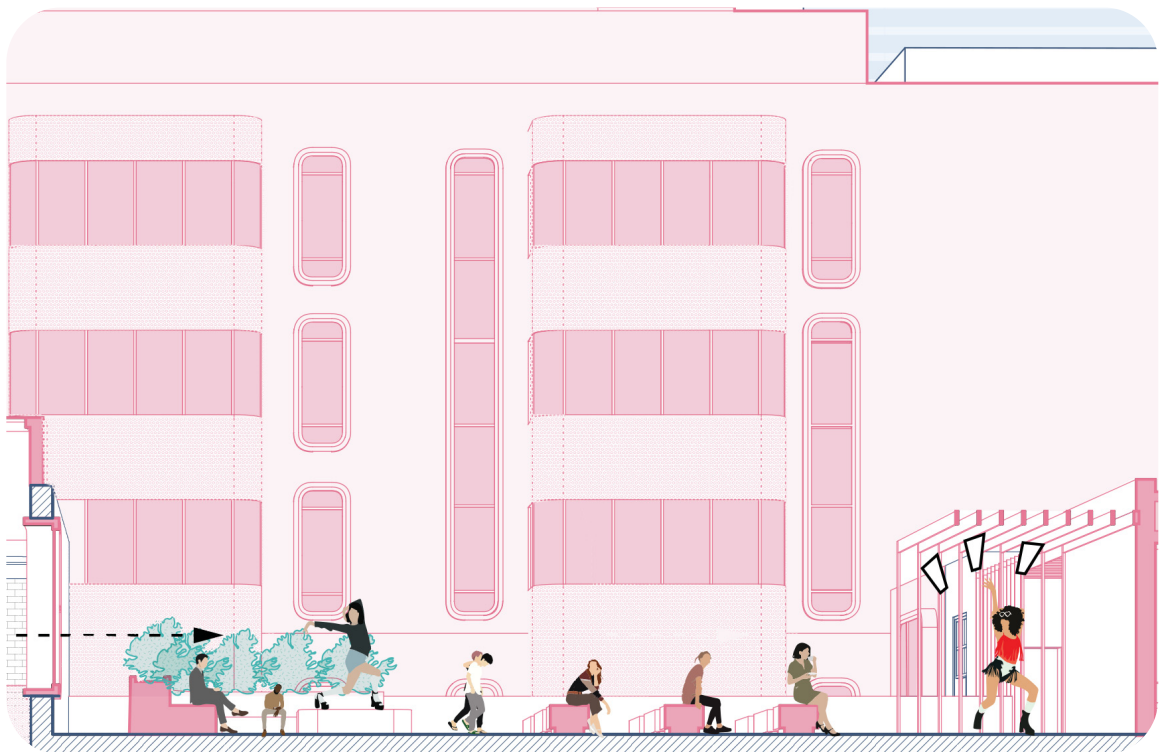
Longitudinal section through the community centre, showing cross views across the atrium
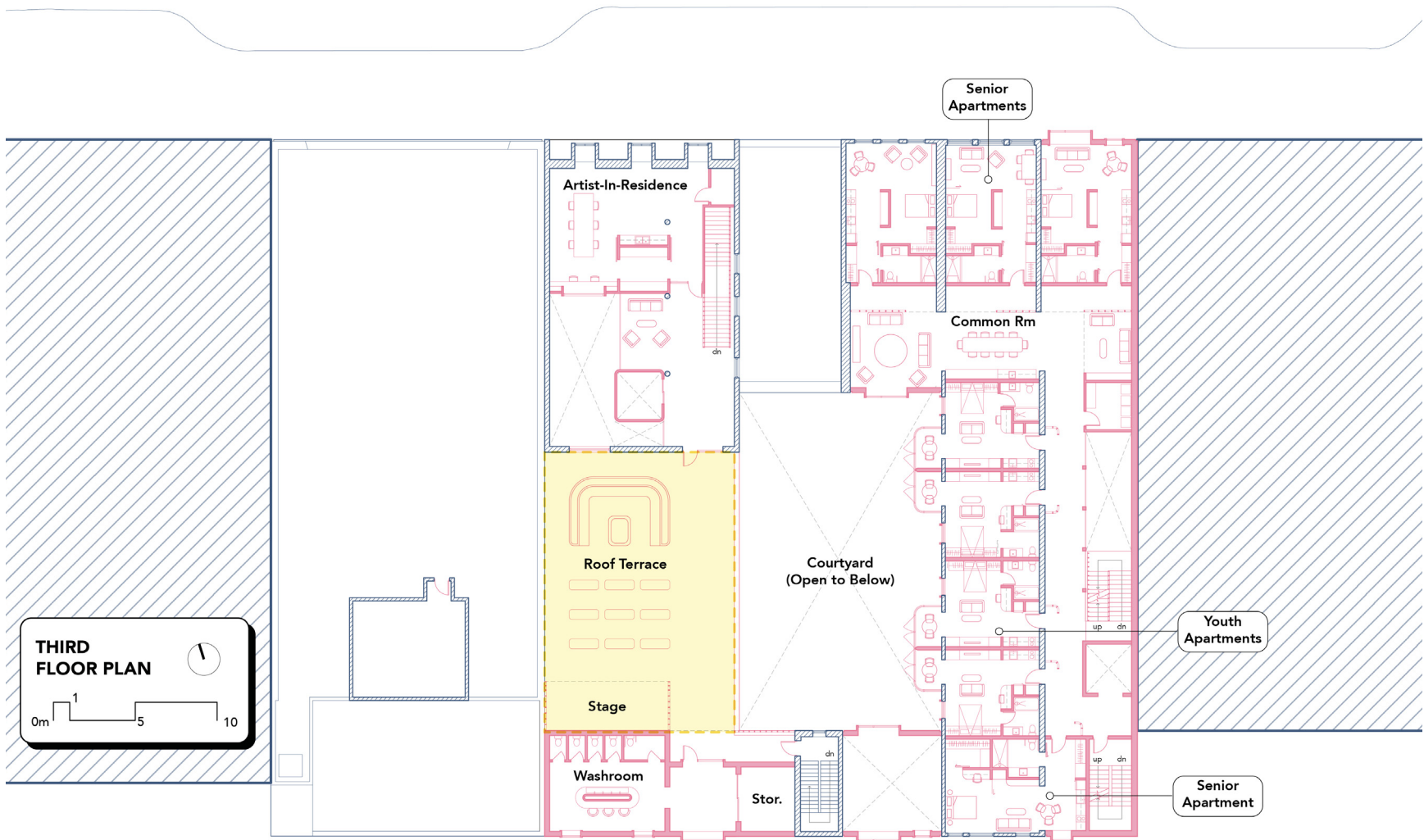
Performance and Appropriation

Horizon House is intended to act a stage for the performance and enactment of queerness. Spaces are designed to be flexible, and can be rearranged as the community sees fit. Fixed elements are introduced sparsely, and are used to frame areas where flexible furniture can be moved and adapted to allow for multiple uses. This is exemplified through the rooftop terrace, and the event space

Rooftop Stage

The rooftop terrace is an outdoor common space open to visitors, with a community flower garden and performance space for outdoor events. It is a flexible space that can be adapted to host various activities, such as art installations, communal meals, outdoor yoga classes, or small concerts and film screenings.

Visitors gather on the rooftop to watch a performance

Senior
Apartments

Artist-In-Residence

Common Rm

Roof Terrace

Courtyard
(Open to Below)

THIRD
FLOOR PLAN

0m   1   5   10

Stage

Youth
Apartments

Washroom

Stor.

dn

up   dn

up   dn

Senior
Apartment

dn

Third floor plan, highlighting the rooftop terrace and performance space on top of the community centre

Event Space

The event space and club are inserted into the former bank building, appropriating a space of capitalism and commerce into a shared place of queer celebration and revelry. During the day it can be used for community events, such as an art market, while at night it can transform into a venue for dancing and performing. A new mezzanine provides more dance space and a viewing platform, and also lowers the ceiling over the entry, heightening the drama of arrival through the sense compression and expansion. At nighttime, a glass curtain wall appears from the street to be a giant projection screen — offering silhouettes of dancing revelers, or public screening of films by queer artists. This extends the activities of Horizon House into the larger public realm of Hamilton, an into greater public awareness of the queer community.
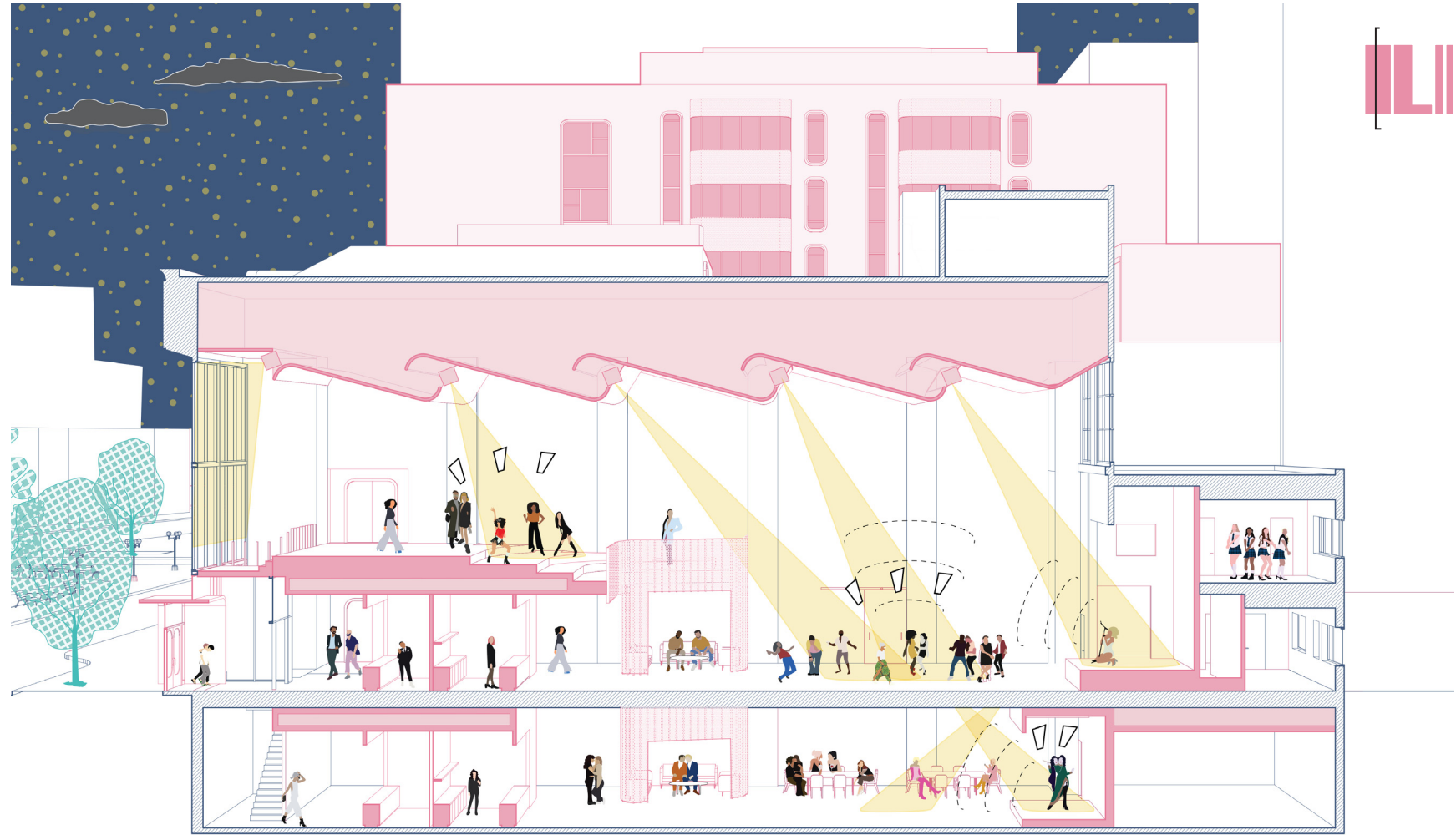
Longitudinal section through the event space at night, showing a dance party inside

Characters

The design and programmatic principles of Horizon House are reflected in the experience of the users and their interaction with each other. This will be explored through a series of fictional characters
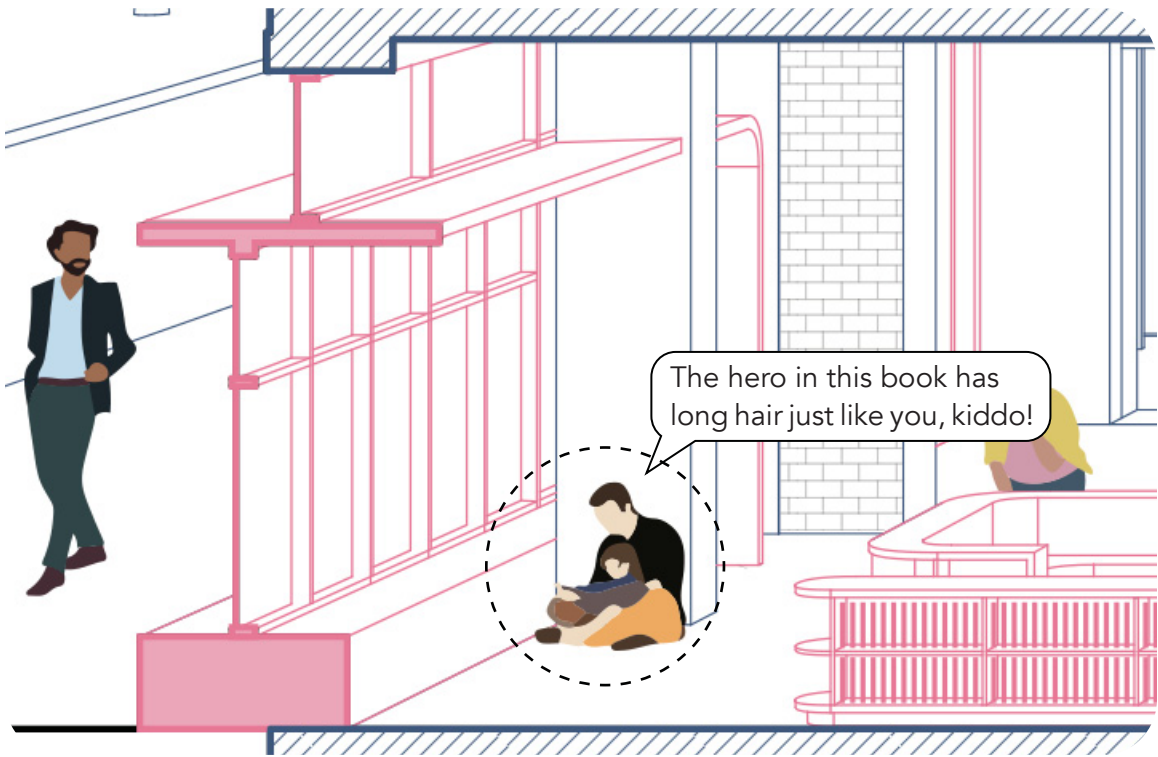
Craig and Aiden

For example, Craig is a single parent with a child, Aiden, who is struggling with his identity and is being bullied at school for not fitting in. Given his limited knowledge of LGBTQ2+ terms and experiences, Craig is unsure of how to best support Aiden and identify his needs. Without other friends to turn to for help, Craig tries to learn more online, but much of what he reads overwhelms him or makes him fear for child's safety as he grows up. Meanwhile, Aiden feels misunderstood and isolated at school, and feels shame for expressing who he is. Through Horizon House, Craig and Aiden are able to find educational resources from the bookstore, and access LGBTQ2+-friendly health care to help develop a plan to support Aiden as he grows. Craig is able to join a support group for parents with LGBTQ2+ children, where he can connect with other parents with shared experiences. Aiden is able to join an after-school youth group where he can spend time with other queer and questioning children his age.
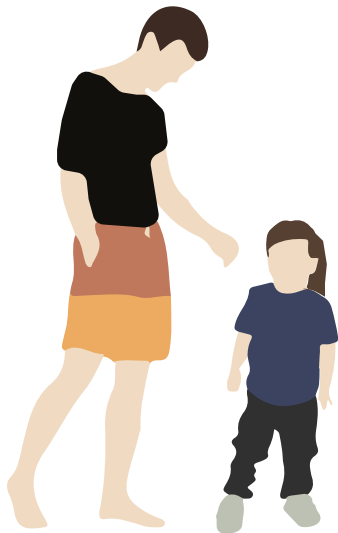
Craig and Aiden
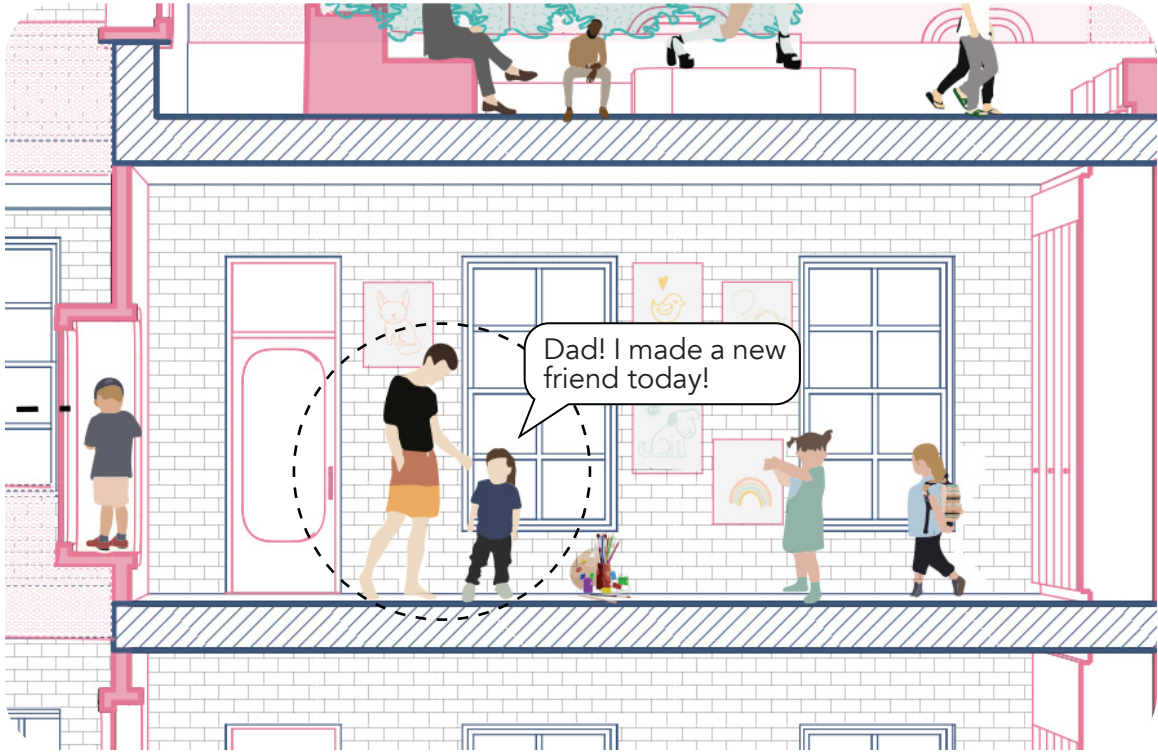
Craig picking Aiden up from his after school arts program in one of the multi-program rooms.

Craig and Aiden sitting in the bookstore reading a book together

Jo and Shauna

Jo and Shauna

Jo and Shauna are a senior lesbian couple who have lived together in Hamilton for decades. They are reaching an age where they need to relocate to a new home that will allow them to age-in-place and receive homecare support, but they are struggling to find an affordable unit in Hamilton that suits their needs. They fear that the limited housing options will force them into a living situation where they will be isolated from their support network, or forced to go back into the closet. Jo and Shauna are able to move into an accessible and affordable apartment in Horizon house where they can live independently and receive in-home care while staying close to community spaces that are familiar to them. Having been an active member of Hamilton's queer and art scene for many years, Jo is able to work in the archive to help collect oral histories from the community to pass on to younger generations, and assist with coordinating installations in the gallery. Shauna teaches cooking and sowing classes to youth in the community kitchen and skills lab.
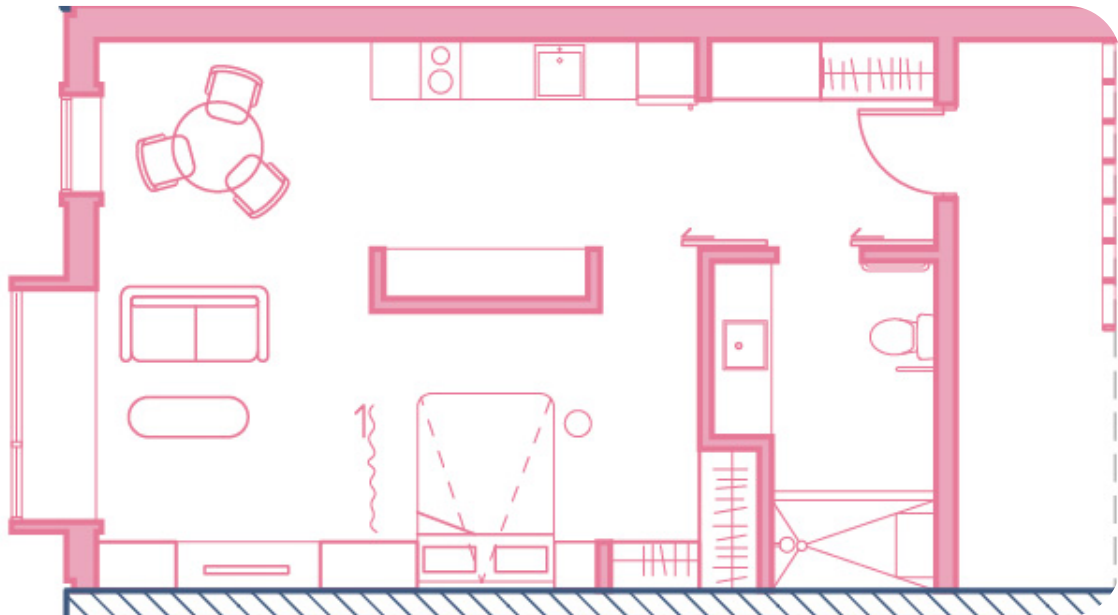
Floor plan of Jo and Shauna's apartment (rotated 90 degrees counterclockwise)
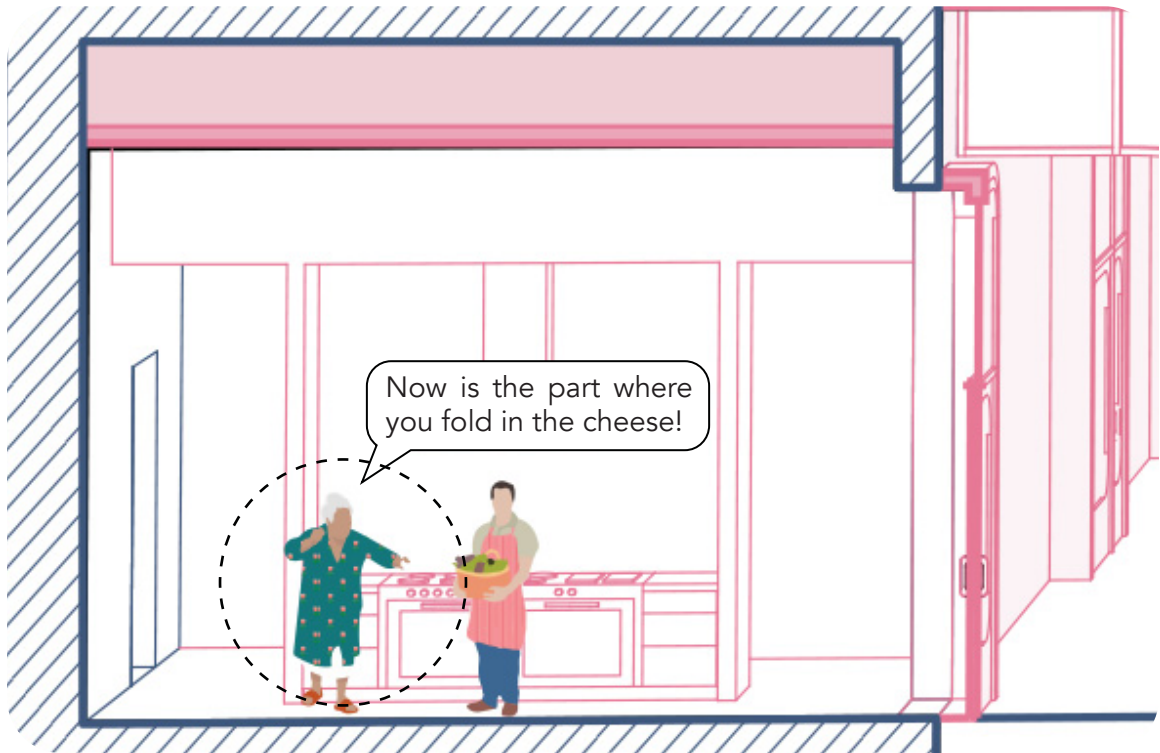
Shauna teaching a cooking class in the community kitchen to some of the youth residents
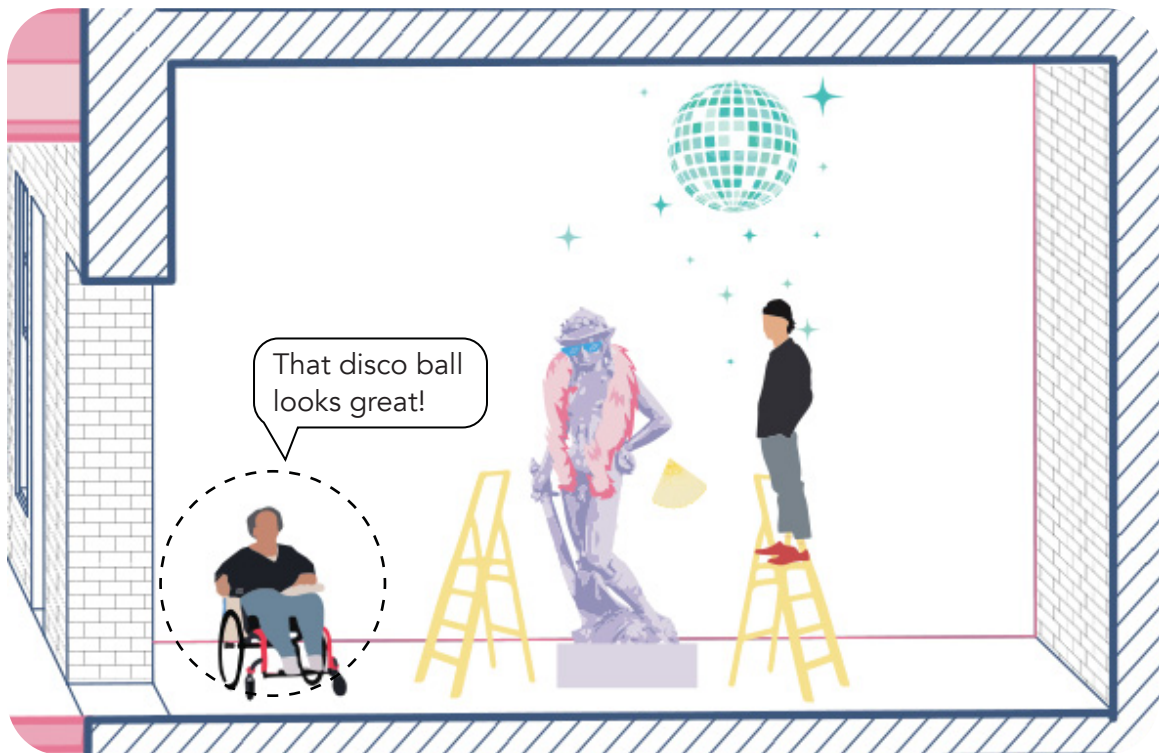
Jo works with the archive team to coordinate a new installation in the gallery

MJ

MJ is a trans teenager who has been homeless for the last year after being forcefully outed to their parents. They have dropped out of high school and are trying to stabilize on their own, but are struggling to support themselves during this traumatic time in life. After being referred to Horizon House, MJ moves into a transitional apartment where they can have a roof over their head and mental health support while they get back on their feet. They are able to gain work experience through part-time work at the cafe downstairs, and work towards getting their high school diploma through tutoring in the skills lab and the nearby library. After a couple of years living in this apartment, MJ gets their high school diploma and moves into their own apartment with friends made at the community centre. They continue to visit Horizon House often to see old friends, and attend community events.

MJ
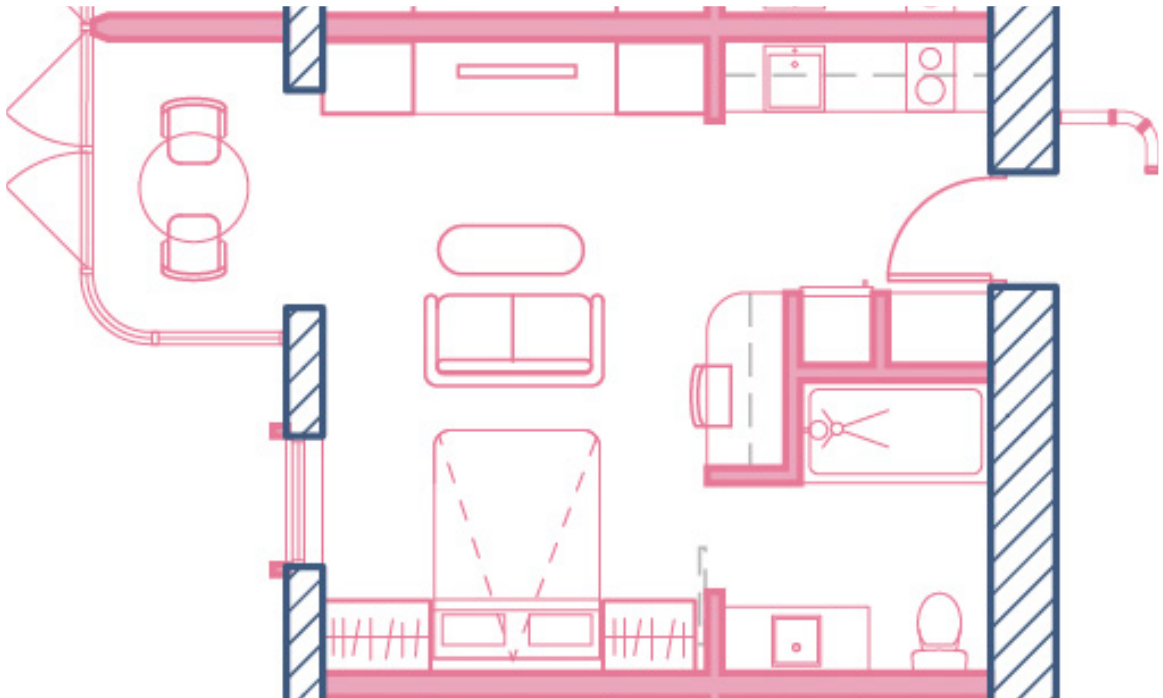
Floor plan of MJ's transitional apartment
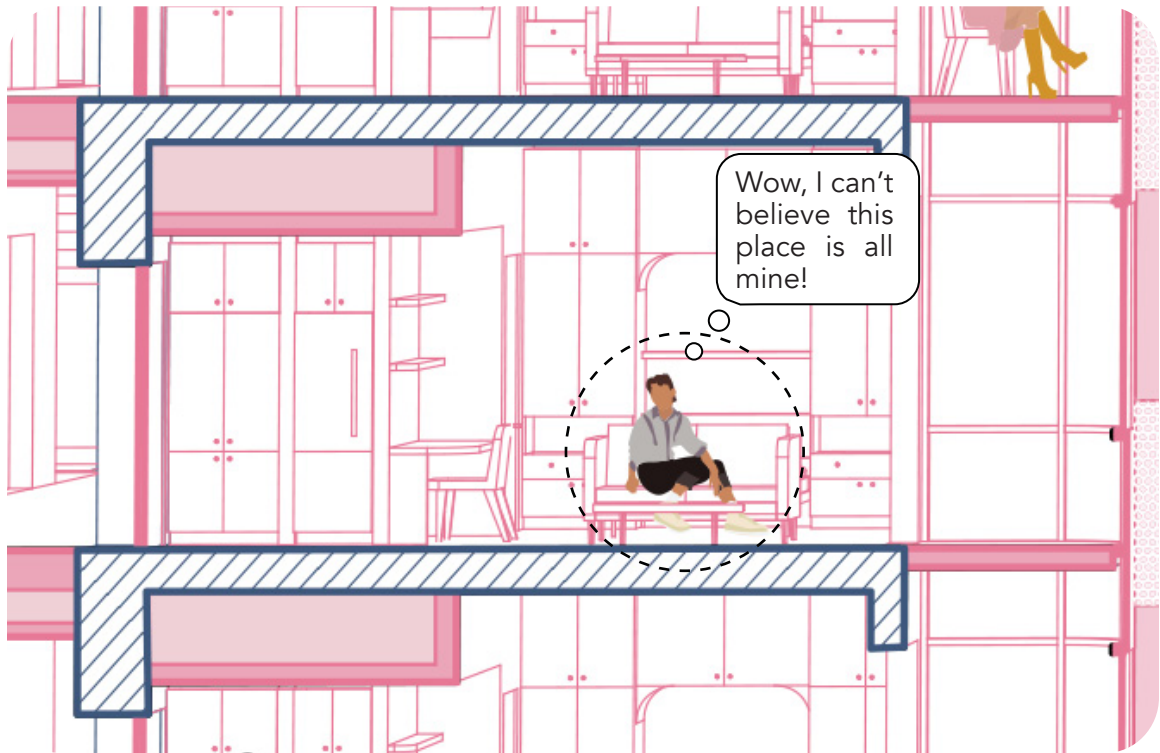
MJ settles into their new apartment
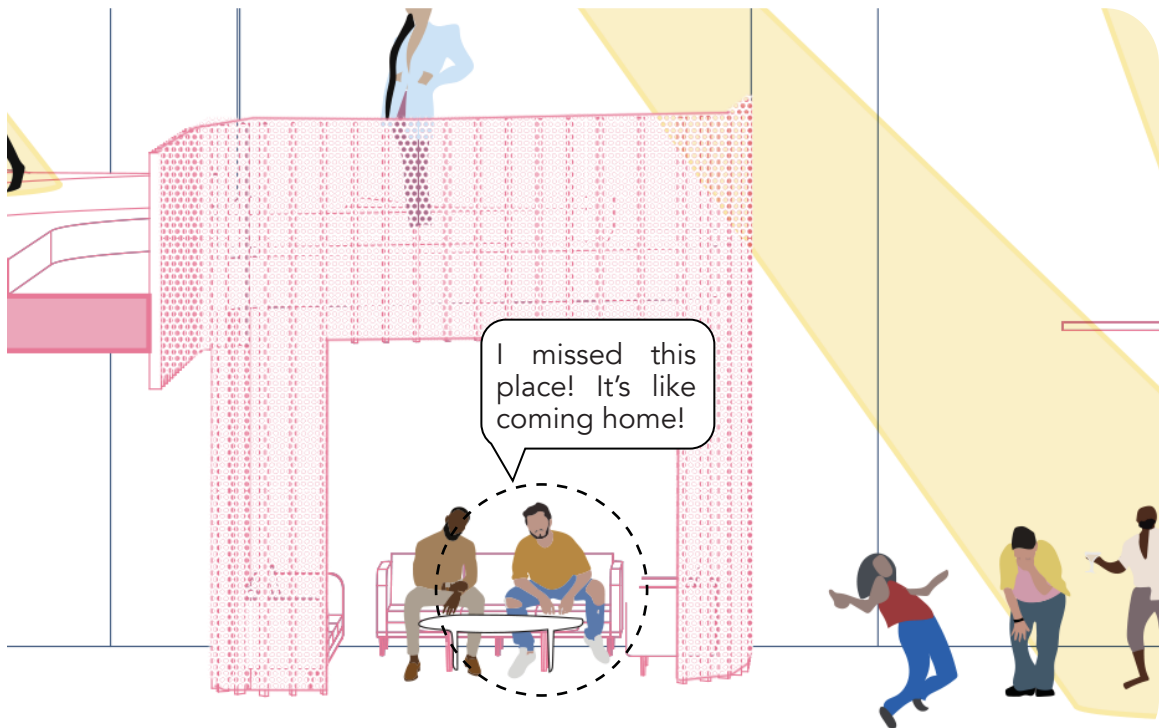
After moving out of Horizon House, MJ often returns frequently in the following years to attend events with their boyfriend and friends

Pride

Every June, Horizon House becomes the hub of Hamilton's Pride celebration, where the building and park come alive to queer the urban landscape, and invite the city to join in the festivities. Floats line up on King Street as they prepare to depart for the Pride Parade, as the park and rooftop are animated with performances and community gatherings. The presence of a queer infrastructure anchor provides a home for LGBTQ2+ people in the heart of the city, inviting queers who may feel lost or out of place to find belonging and imagine new futures of queer utopian possibility in Hamilton.
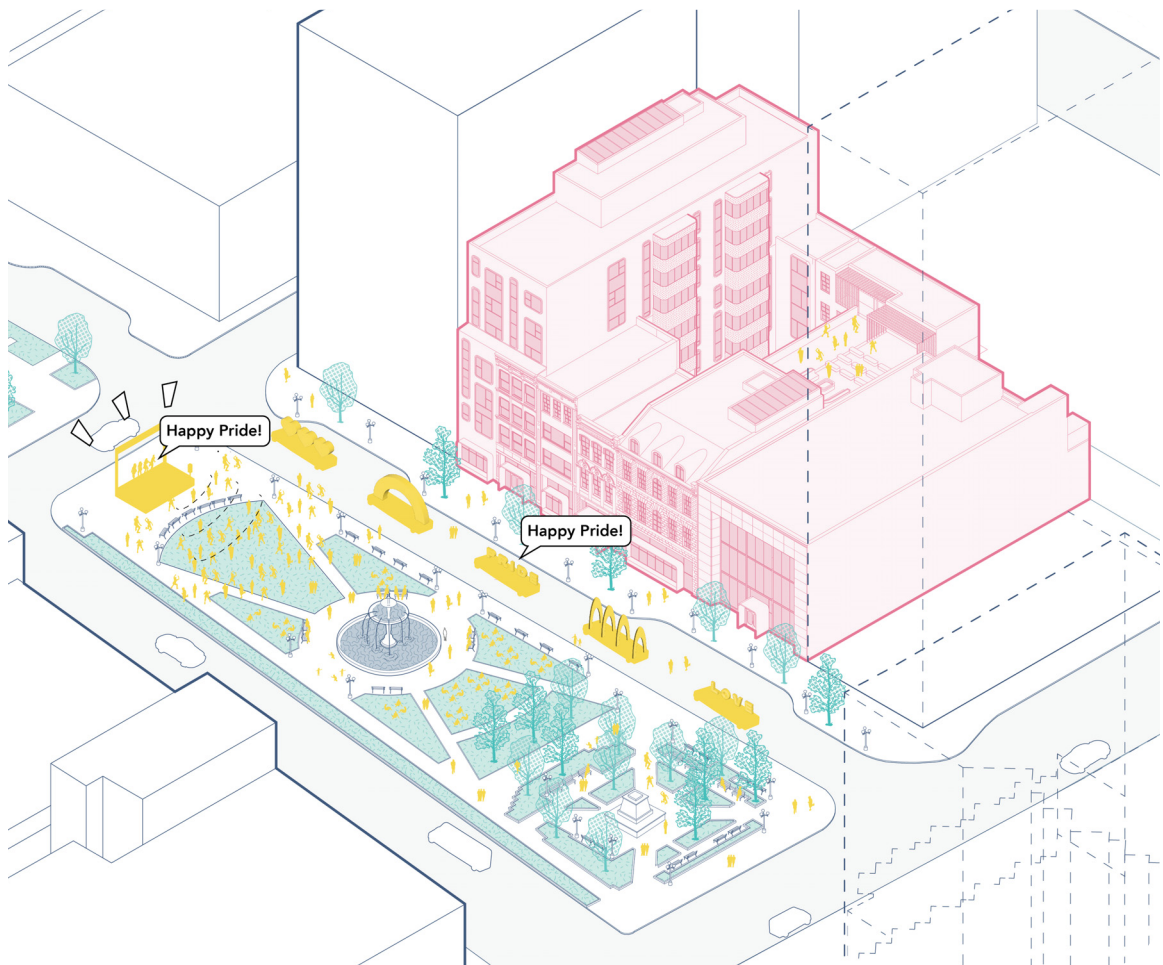
3D view of Horizon House and Gore Park during Hamilton's annual Pride Parade

Chapter 9: Conclusion

This thesis explores the role that architecture and the built environment play in the processes of orientation and place-making that allow queer people to find belonging in a community and assert a place for themselves in the world. The project is a reflection of my experience of placelessness while growing up as a queer person in Hamilton, Ontario, and frames an analysis of the patterns of social and economic factors that have contributed to the displacement and exclusion of LGBTQ2+ people, spaces, and infrastructures in the city's current urban fabric. The thesis imagines an architectural intervention that can catalyze and stabilize Hamilton's queer infrastructure network — a community anchor called Horizon House. This anchor would provide the queer community with access to material and social resources, be a durable and visible icon of queer culture in the heart of the city, and serve as a beacon of queer joy and belonging. It proposes a place for queer people to find each other and come together, to see and be seen, and to recognize each other and their right to the city. Building on Muñoz's concept of "concrete utopias", Horizon House reimagines the heritage Gore Block in downtown Hamilton into an architectural embodiment of a hopeful queer politics of belonging and futurity, one which supports the formation of community and the imagination of brighter queer horizons. The anchor is not intended to be a panacea that addresses all needs in Hamilton's LGBTQ2+ community, but rather is intended to imagine a space to support the community's existing organizations and community leaders, and serve as an instigator for the growth of a diverse network of queer spaces and venues throughout the city.

This work was conducted alongside current efforts in Hamilton to document and honour narratives of LGBTQ2+ history. This includes the newly opened Michael Johnstone Collection at the Hamilton Public Library, the city's "most extensive 2S-LGBTQIA+ documented archive" (Pride Hamilton; Hamilton 2SLGBTQ+ Community Archive), as well as the recent Points of Pride digital exhibit, which documents Hamilton's queer spatial heritage and oral histories (Points of Pride n.d.). The project also considers the ongoing efforts of community businesses and organizations that work with limited resources to address the needs and vulnerabilities of Hamilton's queer people, (such as Speqtrum, the Queer Justice Project, and the newly opened queer bar, The Well), and organize events for the community to come together, (such as Adam and Steve, and Fruit Salad Hamilton). Research and advocacy is already in motion to identify unmet spatial and programmatic needs of Hamilton's LGBTQ2+ community (Pike 2018; Mills et al. 2019), and call on the city to provide meaningful support towards the development of a community hub for Hamilton's marginalized communities (City of Hamilton 2019; Craggs 2019). This thesis serves as a contribution to the work already taking place, and aims to utilize architectural scholarship to synthesize past narratives and current efforts in Hamilton's LGBTQ2+ community through speculative design to reveal potentialities of a more inclusive collective queer future that "allows other ways of gathering in time and space, of making lines that do not reproduce what we follow, but instead creates wrinkles in the earth" (Ahmed 2006, 179).

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