Play in the Everyday:
Infrastructures of Care for the Childless City

by

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

Contents

Abstract

This thesis mobilizes theories of play and care as methods of reimagining the childless city. Everyday existing elements in South Parkdale, Toronto (a streetcar, a brick wall, and an adjacent parking lot) are reimagined as an interconnected infrastructure of play and care. The streetcar is transformed from a mode of transportation into a community hub that provides access to basic health, education, and food services. An existing brick wall, the façade of an old car factory, is disassembled in parts and designed as a playful threshold. An existing parking lot becomes a network of social pavilions: a community kitchen and gardens, pedestrian and bike pathways, a childcare lookout tower, an outdoor classroom, and a pedestrianized street allowing for play. Along with unruly play, a design agenda that includes observation, discovery, and care contributes to social equity, publicly accessible amenities, and an emphasis on the routes of everyday life.

Acknowledgements

Chapter 1: Introduction

Small in the City

I remember childhood trips home from school on crisp fall days were about catching a streetcar, crunching the leaves beneath my feet, carefully balancing on the raised curbs, and stopping along the way to pick up a few everyday items from the local corner store. We would play "I Spy with my little eye…" looking for colours, objects or materials that could be observed while passing the time.

As a kid in the city, I was interested in playing and imagining, but I also remember observing the changes around me. Until the age of nine I grew up in the South Parkdale neighbourhood in Toronto, west of the downtown core. As I grew up, I witnessed the city grow up alongside me. My family would drive along the Gardiner expressway through the city centre, and each week we would count the new buildings that were under construction since the week before. The new developments continued to expand rapidly.

The development of Toronto in the past thirty years is not a figment of my own memories. Since the mid-1990s, Toronto has seen rapid urbanisation and population growth, primarily in the inner city, resulting in what some call the city's "condofication" (Lehrer and Wieditz 2009, 83). This condo boom and vertical urbanization over the years has engulfed the city, with even the CN tower's "vertical dominance" being outmatched by the rest of the city's development (White and Punter 2023, 5). The condo boom in Toronto can also be described as what geographers Gillad Rosen and Alan Walks describe as "condo-ism" which "represents the crystallization of a set of intersecting factors

characterizing the post-Fordist, postindustrial restructuring of the city, including financialization, deindustrialization, and gentrification" (Rosen and Walks 2015, 299). Exclusive amenities in vertical living emphasize the division between people who can afford the lifestyle and those who cannot (Rosen and Walks 2013 referenced in White and Punter 2023, 8). With the development of high-rise luxury living and the privatization of what should be public amenities, cities like Toronto are excluding a wide range of people from the equation, including children, families, and mixed-income residents.

Who Are Cities For?

Cities were not designed for or from the perspective of children. In his book *The Child in The City*, Colin Ward argues that cities such as Birmingham hold the "unspoken assumption" that they exist for one particular kind of citizen: "the adult, male, white-collar, out-of-town car user" (Ward 1978, 25). Forty-five years later, this statement still holds true in many large cities around the world. The erasure of children from public space, with the segregation of play in the confines of the playground, is the manifestation of who, and what, cities have been designed for. Unaffordability and rapidly gentrifying neighbourhoods, unsafe streets and inadequate public space, and lack of child-friendly amenities contribute to fewer young families being inclined to live in cities, let alone city centres.

The data shows that a future "childless" city might become the norm. Between 2019 and 2021, the number of children in Toronto decreased by almost 40,000 (Statistics Canada 2023, Table 39). Before 2019, the number of children in Toronto was increasingly on the rise (Statistics Canada
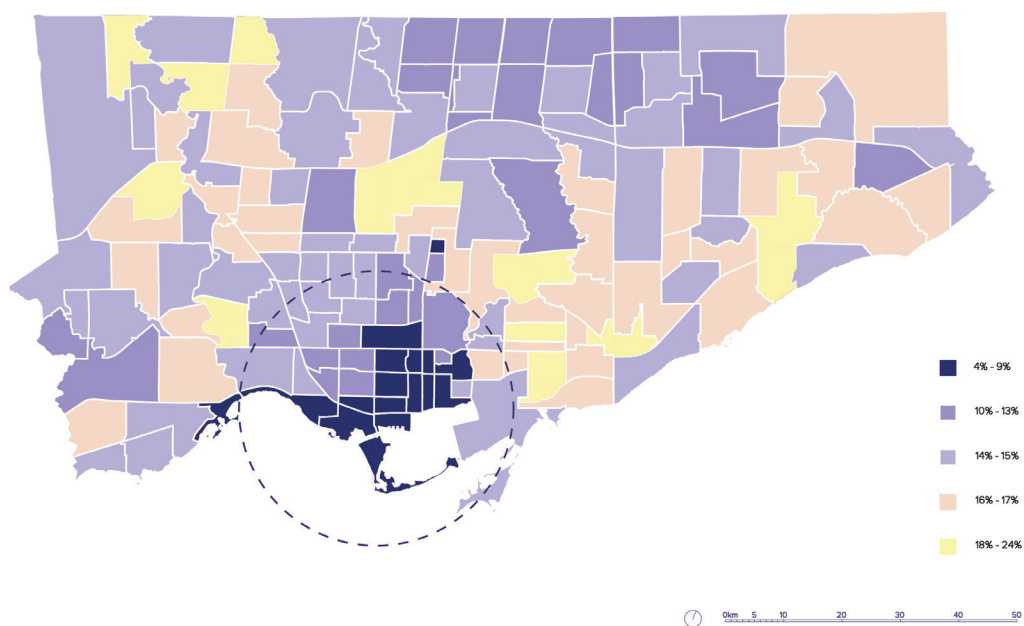
Map showing the "childless city" in Toronto. The map shows the population distribution of children aged 0-14 years old as a percent 0f the total population in each of the city's 158 neighbourhoods. (City of Toronto 2022)

2023, Table 39). Additionally, the population of children age four and under in particular declined by 16,000 people or 10.85 percent between 2002 and 2021, while the city's total population increased by almost 372,000 or 12 percent (Statistics Canada 2023; Bowden 2022). In other words, the population of young children has steadily decreased while the city's population in the whole has been on the rise.

Some articles have discussed this phenomenon as the prospect of the "childless city" as housing prices soar, and urban centres increasingly become "playgrounds for the rich" (Modarres and Kotkin 2013; Jacobs 2023). If the population of children continues to decline in urban centres, what are the consequences for the way we design urban space?

What would the city look like through the eyes of a child? Initiatives like 8 80 cities and Child Friendly Cities have advocated for playful, inclusive and safe cities for all. 8 80 cities advocates for the right to mobility, public space, and the right to participate. These initiatives create toolkits for creating more inclusive cities and highlight a need more for architects, designers and planners to innovate, test, and design.

Thesis Question

With the prospect of a childless city in mind, this thesis asks: how can a neighbourhood in gentrifying Toronto be reimagined through the lens of childhood play to foster inclusivity in architecture of the everyday?

Children offer an observant, playful, and caring lens, untainted by realities of adulthood. This thesis positions both play and infrastructures of care as modes of undoing

the political and spatial practices that neglect the social and physical needs of urban children and families. Observing, and then playing with everyday spatial occurrences in the city of Toronto, like a streetcar, or a brick wall, or a parking lot, offer opportunities for creating an infrastructure of care across the city.

The design reimagines three observed conditions in the neighbourhood (the streetcar, the brick wall, and the parking lot) into animated visions of a playful and caring city. The streetcar intervention proposes a mobile infrastructure of care through playing with the idea and spatial configuration of a streetcar, while introducing amenities that are socially driven, and that provide basic needs and services across communities. The design of the new streetcar allows it transform and unravel into new spatial configurations, creating possibilities for pop-up events and activities. An existing brick wall leading into a parking lot is played with to create fixed public pavilions and amenities that animate everyday activities. The programs introduced include a community kitchen and shared garden space, an outdoor classroom, a stage and moveable wall, a childcare lookout tower, and a pedestrianized street. The spaces unfurl around a series of routes on multiple ground planes, with micro-play interventions along the way. The thesis proposes that play can be intertwined throughout a neighbourhood block and beyond through a network of caring programs as an undoing of the "childless" city.

Chapter 2: Reimagining Childless Cities

The Neoliberal City

Neoliberalism

For David Harvey, neoliberalism is defined as:

> a theory of political economic practices that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. (Harvey 2005, 2)

In *Neoliberalism on the Ground*, Cupers, Gabrielsson and Mattson argue that Harvey's definition demonstrates how neoliberalism is "not an economic theory…but a political belief in the primacy of the market for governing human affairs" (Cupers, Gabrielsson, and Mattson 2020, 3). Further, they argue that neoliberalism "carries significance on the level of social organization, human relationships, and the conception of values—rather or perhaps more than in the discipline of economics" (Cupers, Gabrielsson, and Mattson 2020, 3). In other words, neoliberal theory provides a lens within which to analyze discourses beyond economics, in the social, political, and urban realm.

Unaffordability

According to the City of Toronto's website and 2021 Census data, thirty-two percent of homeowner and rental households experienced affordability issues (City of Toronto 2023). The issue of unaffordability in Canada, combined with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, are two likely contributing factors to the decline of children in Canadian cities.

The consequences of fewer children in cities like Toronto is likely to shape the "social fabric of cities that no longer cater to families, as a temporary population may not want to invest in the city and ensuring it remains vibrant" (Bowden 2022). In a Maclean's article on "The End of Homeownership" Michelle Cyca argued that Canadian cities are all grappling with the same realities: not enough housing supply, let alone affordable housing, too many investors driving price increases, "creating a rapidly widening divide between Canada's housing haves and have-nots" (Cyca 2023). Along with issues of unaffordability in Canadian cities, the physical aspects of the city also play into whether young families see cities as a good place to raise children.

Exclusive Amenities

There are few public spaces in cities that are welcoming to children and young people. Since the early 1900s, the playground has been the primary urban space for children to interact with public life. Jane Jacobs notably argued that playgrounds are not necessarily safer places for children to play than sidewalks, as they have moved from an area with a high ratio of adults to a place with a much lower ratio of adults (Jacobs 1961, 77). Where then, other than schools and playgrounds, are children welcome in the public realm? Children need to access to public places, outside of schools and playgrounds, such as doctors' offices, libraries, and corner stores. While they are most often accompanied by adults, they should still be able to access certain public amenities independently. Naturally, a neighbourhood with more schools, lower-crime rates, more community centres and parks will be considered more child-friendly; however, if families cannot afford these areas and children cannot
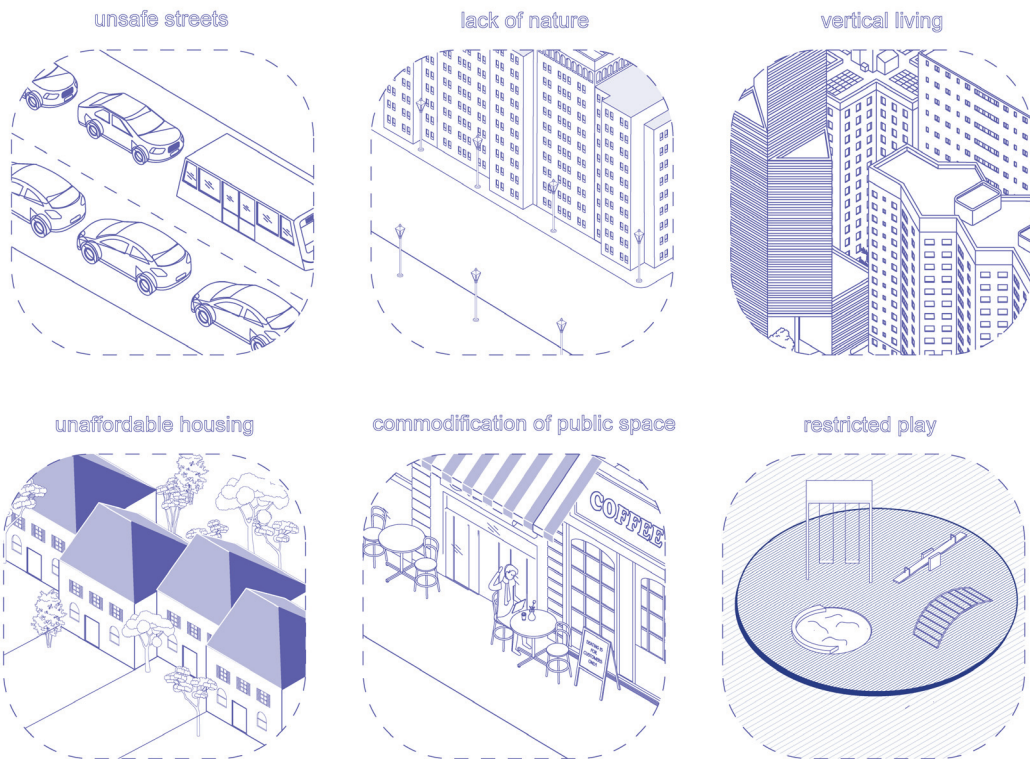
move freely within them, they will continue to cater to the wealthy and childless.

Efficiency over Liveability

Most cities were not designed with features that are welcoming or safe for an eight-year-old. As a vulnerable group, children in cities face environmental, physical, and poor mental health in urban areas due to traffic danger, inactivity, air pollution and noise pollution (Gill 2021, chap.1). Cars in cities are a detrimental barrier to child-friendliness in cities and the key reason parents limit children's independant mobility (Freeman and Cook 2019, chap. 2). Freeman and Cook argue:

> Too many children encounter: Dangerous and inhospitable streets (cars, no footpaths, poor lighting, refuse). Features that hinder socialisation (high walls, security fences, aggressive animals). Unwelcoming spaces (no seats, no ball games signs, wind tunnels). Poor community ethos (unfamiliar people, no services – shops, doctors). Harsh landscaping (no green, drab architecture and colours). Key problems for children and their families are safety, isolation, unaffordable and unhealthy environments. (Freeman and Cook 2019, chap. 2)

Urban areas have been dominated by vehicular traffic and unsafe streets. This makes cities difficult to navigate for any pedestrian, let alone a child. Jan Gehl refers to what he calls "the human dimension" being neglected from cities (Gehl 2010, 1.1). Traffic, dangerous barren areas, loss of nature, and unsafe walking conditions make cities difficult to navigate (Chawla 2002). Additionally, safety issues have created what Freeman and Cook call "less than ideal scenarios for children" which include "reduced independent mobility, reduced play value in playgrounds, and fewer informal societal interactions" (Freeman and Cook 2019, chap. 2).

unsafe streets

lack of nature

vertical living

unaffordable housing

commodification of public space

restricted play

Spatial occurences in the "childless" city. Unsafe streets, lack of nature, increased vertical living, unaffordable housing, the commodification of public space, and restricted play space are spatial practices that make it difficult for families to stay in cities.

The Urban Core

In *Children and Planning* Claire Freeman and Andrea Cook describe the city center as the "economic, cultural and political heart of an urban agglomeration" where "major decisions are taken about, how urban society will develop, how resources will be allocated and where and how culture will be represented" (Freeman and Cook 2019, chap. 4). Due to its significance in everyday urban life, the authors argue that children should not be left out of life in the city center (Freeman and Cook 2019, chap. 4). They further argue that "If children are invisible in the city center they will also be marginalized in vital decision-making processes and excluded from the cultural capital of cities" (Freeman and Cook 2019, chap. 4). City centers are often the most accessible places for children, as they are walkable, they are hubs for public transport networks, and cycle and pedestrian routes often converge within the core (Freeman and Cook 2019, chap. 4).

The Neighbourhood: South Parkdale

South Parkdale, located just six kilometers west of downtown along the shores of Lake Ontario and nestled between Queen Street and the Gardiner expressway, has had a range of identities in the last 140 years. Once described as a suburban summer retreat in the 1880s, rapid industrialization brought dense apartment buildings and subdivided lots in the 1910s to the area (Whitzman 2009). The Gardiner Expressway, built between 1955 and 1964 was a sign of the city's economic progress, described by Tom Slater as "an elevated, futuristic construction hugging the lake, an attractive prospect at a time when the city's waterfront and

central port were suffering from deindustrialization, neglect and decay" (Slater 2005).

Parkdale is home to a mix of residents, from what Griffin Epstein refers to as:

> white-collar families; poor and working-class immigrants; homeless and street involved people; young professionals; artists; social workers; and psychiatric survivors, mad activists and other psychopathologized people (Epstein 2018, 708).

While it might not be considered the most "child-friendly" neighbourhood in the city, as a central neighbourhood with shops, proximity to the city's largest park, and access to many transit routes, South Parkdale has long welcomed a variety of residents.

A recent case of the signs of gentrification in South Parkdale is in a place that seems unlikely: the neighbourhood 24-hour McDonalds. In 2020, the McDonalds was demolished to make way for a new luxury condo building with 700+ units
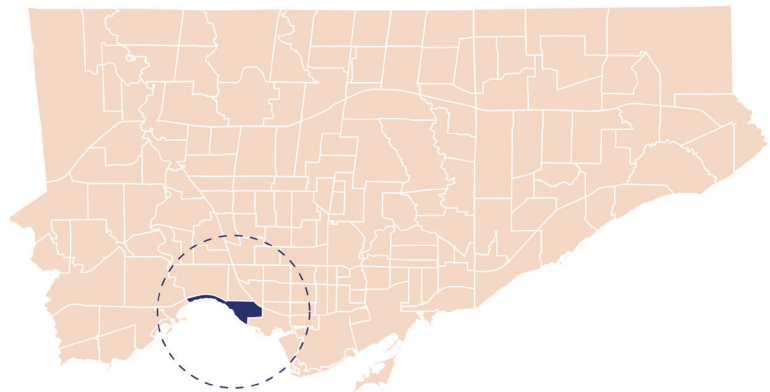
Map showing the location of South Parkdale in reference to the rest of the City of Toronto.

(Whyte 2020). The McDonalds at the corner of King Street and Dufferin Street was "an informal refuge" for vulnerable populations in the area cast away to the fringes of society, such as the houseless and mentally ill (Whyte 2020). Some have even referred to it as a neighbourhood community centre (Whyte 2020).

In another article, centering around the lens of lower-income Americans and McDonalds, the author argues that "for many of the poorest, for the homeless, and for people caught in an addiction, McDonald's are an integral part of their lives" (Arnade 2016). The fast food chain has that is cheap and filling meals, outlets to charge devices, free Wi-Fi, and clean bathrooms (Arnade 2016). Further, they often let people stay longer than other fast-food chains (Arnade 2016). This was the case for the notorious McDonald's in Parkdale, a 24-hour space for people of all walks of life to just be. Parents can also take their children to play, while getting a hot and affordable meal.
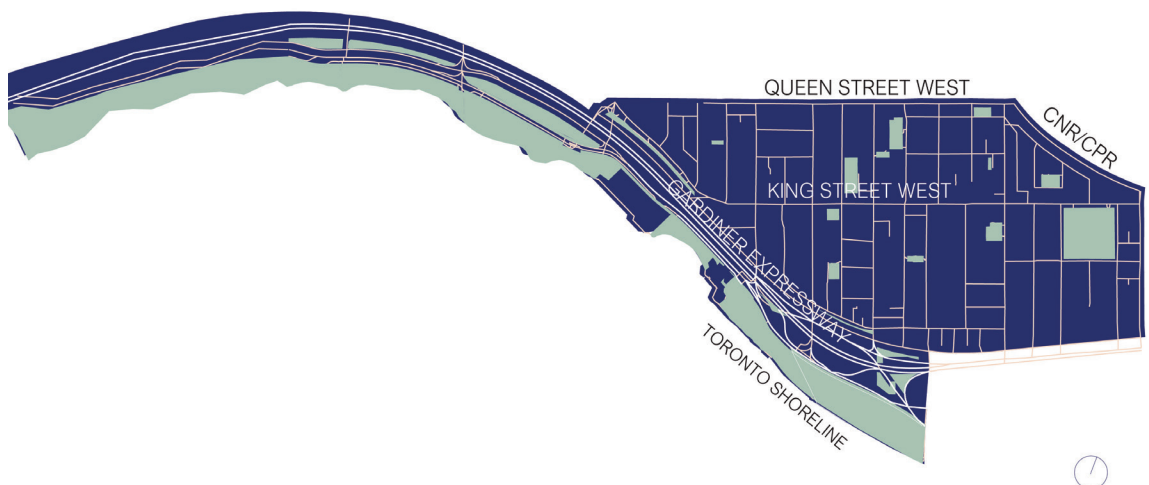
Map of South Parkdale, located in the west end of Toronto.

On a global level, the case of the McDonald's at King and Dufferin being torn down for a luxury condo building to take its place is not unique. As Whyte puts it: "Working class neighbourhoods in cosmopolitan cities all over the world have been transformed into urbane playgrounds for the moneyed set" (Whyte 2020). McDonald's are different than their hipster coffee shop counterparts since they cater to groups that have often been marginalized. As the blog This Parkdale Life put it, McDonald's are "egalitarian in a way that small and local cafes just aren't" (Parkdale Life 2020). The removal of spaces that are accessible to most people is a symptom of a global issue of who cities cater to.

A map of the neighbourhood context surrounding the design site at the corner of Dufferin Street and Liberty Street.

Chapter 3: The Playful City

Play Theorized

In understanding playful cities, one must first understand what we mean by the term play. Play is complex, yet simple. In the mid-twentieth century, two notable works defined key characteriestics of play (Zinguer 2015, 10). The concept of play was defined in Dutch Historian Johan Huizinga's 1938 work *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* and the 1958 work *Man, Play and Games* by the French sociologist and philosopher Roger Caillois (Zinguer 2015, 10).
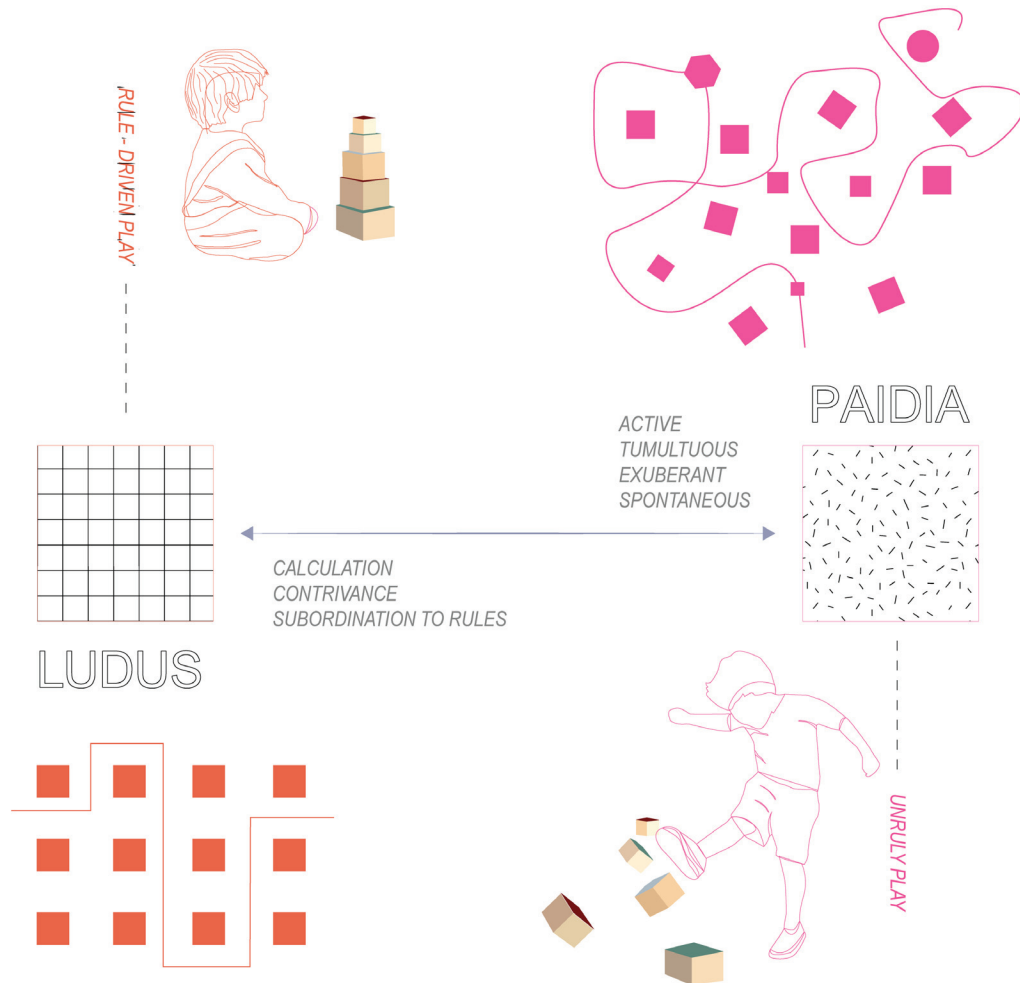
For Huizinga, play and culture are intertwined, and "genuine, pure play is one of the main bases of civilization" (Huizinga 1950, 5). Huizinga also describes play as being an action outside of "ordinary" life, and an activity that is voluntary (Huizinga 1950, 4, 7). Play is "distinct from "ordinary" life, both as to locality and duration" (Huizinga 1950, 10). Playing on a rug with building blocks, or playing within the borders of a playground, can both be considered free activities that are distinct from "ordinary" life, demarcated to a specific space and time (Huizinga 1950; Zinguer 2015, 11).

Roger Caillois expands on Huizinga's theory of play, by agreeing that play is both voluntary and is "essentially a separate occupation, carefully isolated from the rest of life, and generally is engaged in with precise limits of time and place" (Caillois 1961, 6). However, following Huizinga's earlier findings, Caillois expands on this definition by analyzing distinct characteristics of games. For Caillois, play can essentially be defined as "free, separate, uncertain, unproductive, governed by rules, and make-believe" (Caillois

An illustration showing various definitions of play. Play as freely chosen, spontaneous play, active play, and play demarcated within specific space and time.

1961, 9-10). Caillois classifies games into four distinct categories: agon (competition), alea (chance), mimicry (simulation) and ilinx (vertigo) (Caillois 1961, 14). Each of these categories can then be placed on a continuum. On one end of the spectrum is *paidia*, marked by "spontaneous manifestations of the play instinct" and on the other extreme is ludus, driven by rules and structure (Caillois 1961, 28). *Paidia*, the classical Greek educational system, was redefined by Caillois as a means of representing turbulence, improvisation, exuberance, and joy, one exhibited in child's play (Caillois 1961). In an analysis of Caillois' definition,

RULE - DRIVEN PLAY

PAIDIA

ACTIVE
TUMULTUOUS
EXUBERANT
SPONTANEOUS

CALCULATION
CONTRIVANCE
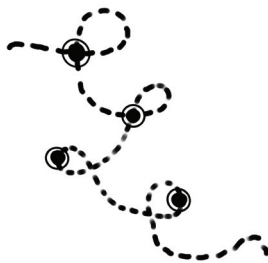SUBORDINATION TO RULES

LUDUS

UNRULY PLAY

A diagram showing a spatial interpretation of the differences between Roger Caillois' definition of ludus and paidia.

Rodrigo Pérez de Arce argues that "childhood play is both informal and devoid of stable rules" (Pérez de Arce 2018, 157).

Play as a Journey

According to Scott Eberle author of *The Elements of Play: Toward a Philosophy and a Definition of Play*, play theorist Brian Sutton-Smith defines play through the references of "adaptive variability" and "selective simulations" (Sutton-Smith 1997; Eberle 2014, 220). In unpacking a definition for play, Scott Eberle argues that Sutton-Smith's references to play might suggest that it is "best not to think of play as a thing, at all – like a car that speeds or a rose that smells sweet – but a series of connected events." (Eberle 2014, 220). Additionally, according to Eberle, "play resembles a revolution, or a journey, or growth, or acceleration, or other processes that unfurl and move along varying rates" (Eberle 2014, 220). It is this aspect of play, as an unfolding of events, that relates to the way children play as well, and how Caillois viewed child's play. Play is not linear, it is spontaneous and turbulent, occuring along a winding path.

Perry Else offers a definition for play with four key aspects, similar to Sutton-Smith and Eberle: play as a process, play as freely chosen by the player, play as personally directed, and play engaged in for its own sake (Else 2009, 11). Else describes play as self-directed: "play is often what we choose to do for ourselves when we want to do it" (Else 2009, 7).

The Value of Play Throughout Life

How does play manifest in different stages of life? In *The Play of Animals* Karl Groos argued that "Animals cannot be

A sketch depicting play as a non-linear series unfolding of events.

said to play because they are young and frolicsome, but rather they have a period of youth in order to play" (Groos 1898, 75). Play is essential to human development.

What is the value of play, and why should we care about incorporating play into our cities? Play is for people of all ages, but play becomes more organized as we age (Else 2009, 8). Playing is important for children's long-term development, sense of self, health and well-being as well as their relationships (Else 2009, 8). If play is so important, why don't we value it as much as we age? According to Perry Else, "when we grow up we become serious, rational and logical, and we start to think that children and young people's play is not important because it looks frivolous, irrational, 'just playing'" (Else 2009, 8).

Childhood Play Through the Theory of Affordances

Children explore their environment through play. While play is also a way for adults to decompress, have fun, and engage in competition, it is one of the most essential aspects of childhood life.

One aspect of childhood play that is unique can be described through the concept of affordances. James Gibson's theory of affordances takes both the environment and animal into consideration when explaining the way animals interpret space (Gibson [1979] 2015, 119). Gibson defines the affordances of the environment as "what it offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill" (Gibson [1979] 2015, 119). Affordances can also be described as "playability" values or "functionally significant" properties of an environment (Heft 1988, 29; Aziz and Said 2015, 94).

Another way to describe affordances is through a consideration of the transactional approach, following Gibson's invention of the theory (Aziz and Said 2015, 93). According to Aziz and Said:
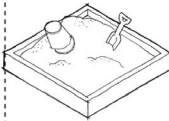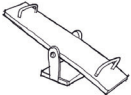
> "The transactional approach is crucial in studies of children's environments since children's views and preferences toward the environment differ from those of adults as they have different needs, aspirations and behaviours" (Aziz and Said 2015, 93).

The relationship between children and their environment is understood as transactional since the relationship is dynamic and interactive, where each component depends on its environment (Aziz and Said 2015, 93). In transactional studies, "both the person and the environment play an active role in an interactive relationship, while the context includes physical and social phenomena, which 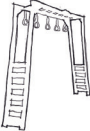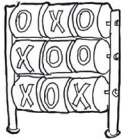are referred to as the material and sociocultural reality" (Aziz and Said 2015, 92). People and their environments therefore are mutually defined (Aziz and Said 2015, 93).
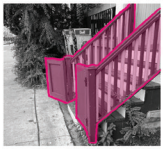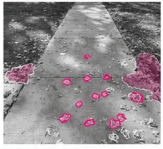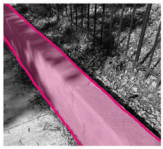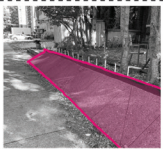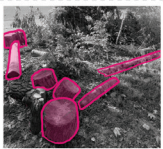
In his studies of the functional properties of children's outdoor environments, Heft proposes a preliminary functional taxonomy (Heft 1988, 36). Heft's classification includes ten environmental categories and their affordances (Heft 1988, 36). For example, a "climbable feature" affords "exercise and mastery, looking out from, passage from one place to another" (Heft 1988, 36). Features like the ones listed in Heft's taxonomy appear in the formal territories of childhood such as home, school, and playground; but they also appear in the everyday spaces in between.

ENVIRONMENT - PLAYGROUND
PERSPECTIVE - CHILD

AFFORDANCE TYPE

TYPICAL CONTEMPORARY PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT

EQUIPMENT	PHYSICAL	PLAY	SOCIAL
	climb up slide down	speed motion - horizontal + verttical	interact with observer / guardian / peer
	sit - swing stand - swing spin	speed repetitive motion - horizontal + vertical competition	interact with adjacent user
	feel sift build mold dig	speed repetitive motion - horizontal + vertical competition	build with problem solve share
	sit bounce push	motion - horizontal + vertical balance rhythm	tandem exploration of balance + control between two users
	climb up jump down grasp fall	motion - vertical challenge + risk	interaction between user + observer
	climb grasp twist lift fall	motion - horizontal + vertical challenge + risk	interaction between user + observer
	stand walk jump sit lay fall	balance speed test challenge + risk	interaction between user + observer physical + emotional support
	touch spin	test competition	interaction between two players
	spin push	motion - circular	interaction between users

A matrix of playground equipment in relation to what they afford both physically and socially.

ENVIRONMENT - STREET
PERSPECTIVE - CHILD

AFFORDANCE TYPE

SIDEWALK CONDITIONS ALONG A ROUTE

OBJECT	PHYSICAL	PLAY	SOCIAL
	touch smell	sensory	interact with observer / guardian / peer
	run jump spin cartwheel	motion speed	play with others
	slide climb	motion (horizontal + vertical) speed challenge + risk	climb with others perform
	kick throw bury hide	rhythm test	play with others
	hide climb	hide + seek solitary play	hide from climb with
	stand walk sit	balance speed	support from another (physical + emotional)
	run up slide down	speed challenge + risk	race with
	stand walk hop	motion (horizontal) balance	hop with others support from another (physical + emotional)
	touch move uncover build	test	build with others problem solve

A matrix of street items, found on a walk around South Parkdale, that afford play and social functions, similar to the playground.

Play Formalized

The Zoning of Play

The prescriptive nature of playgrounds and their limitations in size are indicative of the de-valuing of play and childhood in urban space. In *Ground-up City: Play as a Design Tool* it is argued that "playgrounds offer little playing space", with restricting "the essence of play as a part of human nature" (Lefaivre and Döll 2007, 28). Playgrounds hinder a child's imagination with their prescriptive objects (Lefaivre and Döll 2007, 28). Further, that a small change in language from "playground" to "play space" offers something that is "for all ages and all places" (Lefaivre and Döll 2007, 28). Liane Lefaivre argues that Johann Huizinga valued play as not only the essence of human nature, but also critical to human culture and civilization. In *Homo Ludens* written in 1938, he said "…It was not my object to define the place of play among other manifestations of culture, but rather ascertain how far culture itself bears the character of play" (Huizinga as quoted in Lefaivre and Döll 2007, 27).

Formal and Informal Play Spaces

Research on children's outdoor play refers to both formal and informal play spaces (Helleman et al. 2023). Formal play spaces include areas such as playgrounds, school yards or sports fields; often enclosed and designated for specific groups (Helleman et al. 2023, 323). Then there are informal play areas, such as "sidewalks, shrubs, bushes, lawns and residual spaces" (Helleman et al. 2023, 323). Alexandra Lange argued that the segregation of play from the flow of urban life causes problems: "The playground, like the playpen, eventually becomes restricting" (Lange 2018).

> Children in cities need a variety of place in which to play and learn. They need, among other things, opportunities for all kinds of sports and exercise and physical skills – more opportunities, more easily obtained, than they now enjoy in most cases. However, at the same time, they need an unspecialised outdoor home base from which to play, to hang around in, and to help form their notions of the world. It is this form of unspecialized play that sidewalks serve – and that lively city sidewalks can serve splendidly. (Jacobs 1961, 81)

In reference to Moore's 1986 Childhood Domain study, Heft refers to spaces that afford play to children, that children tend to seek out, as "micro-habitats" (Heft 1988, 34). Children are drawn to these spaces "because they simultaneously afford a shelter from wind, traffic, and at the same time afford a measure of privacy – a special 'children's only' place" (Heft 1988, 34). Bushes, for example, allow for children to look out while being private spaces (Heft 1988, 34). The simultaneous affordance of looking out while being protected is the concept of prospect/refuge, often used in architectural design (Heft 1988, 34).

Playful Architectures

In surrealist art and errance, the "flânerie" could be considered a certain type of drift and play to escape the "bourgeois boulevards and squares" allowing for the discovery of "another, more mysterious Paris" (Lefaivre 2007, 39). The derive and psycho-geographic mapping of the 1950s, inspired by the errance, provided "an alternative to the oppression of stiflingly conventional bourgeois urban life, of consumer culture and the world of work, and replace it with a strange, unfamiliar, quirky one that allows one to imagine a possible alternative" (Lefaivre and Döll 2007, 39).

The Situationist Internationale movement of the 1950s was directly inspired by surrealist art and errance (Lefaivre and Döll 2007, 39). Based mostly in Paris, it was founded by a

small group of artists in 1957 (Hemmens and Zacarias 2020, 3). The review, Internationale situationniste, published from 1957 to 1969, "became the main organ for the diffursion of its revolutionary ideas and practices" (Hemmens and Zacarias 2020, 3). The Situationist Internationale was a "radical critique of capitalist society" led by founding situationist Guy Debord (Hemmens and Zacarias 2020, 3). According to Michael E. Gardiner, Guy Debord and the situationists held the belief that an umbrella organisation like SI "had considerable potential to realize fully the earlier promise of Surrealism: namely, a synthesis of art and daily life, and the actualisation of the creative potential of each and every human being" (Gardiner 2020, 237).

Situationist ideals are also closely linked to early theories of play. According to Gabriel Zacarias, the situationists concept of play was strongly influenced by their reading of Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* (Zacarias 2020). Zacarias argues that Guy Debord "read Huizinga's work and closely drew upon it when he was formulating the idea of the constructed situation" (Zacarias 2020, 171). The situation "is defined by these three central characteristics: spatial isolation, temporal limitation and self-referentiality" has "meaning only within its own borders" and that play then, is defined by "its form and not by its objects" (Zacarias 2020, 171).

One of the most notable architects of the twentieth to use playfulness in his designs is Cedric Price (Lefaivre and Döll 2007, 42). Price, known for hist rejection of typical modernist thinking, came into the architectural scene in the late 1950s, pairing "humor and playfulness with complete conviction" (Riley et al. 2002, 56). With projects like *Fun Palace* (1961), *Potteries Thinkerbelt* (1964) and *Magnet City* (1990s), Price used play as a tool for political commentary, as well as

socialism and surrealism (Lefaivre and Döll 2007, 42-43). Price's *Nonplan* (1969) produced alongside urban planner Sir Peter Hall and sociologist Paul Barker, "argued that cities were over-regimented and permitted no element of play" (Lefaivre and Döll 2007, 43).

Whether it be art, architecture, urbanism or new ways of thinking, play has been a method used to provide commentary, critique, and reflection on contemporary society. Current discourses around play and urbanism include global projects such as 8 80 cities and Cities 4 Children advocate for healthier, safer, and more equitable cities (8 80 Cities n.d.; Global Alliance 2024).

Play as a Social Connector

Many of the playful architectures mentioned throughout this chapter are speculative proposals. But play, when taken seriously at the level of policy and architecture, can be paired with programs that offer real ways of tackling the issues of the contemporary neoliberal city. Play is a social connector: it "improves community relationships, and increases social capital and social connections" (Hartt 2023, 2). Playgrounds, for example, offer space for children to interact and play with one another, but also foster social connections between the adult guardians. However, play should not be confined to the borders of the playground, and instead can be intertwined in unexpected places open to all people.

Play as an Infrastructure of Care

With play being an essential part of human nature, human health, and well-being, our societal view of play as being just fun or frivolous must shift to being a real way of caring for the people and places around us. By positioning play

theories alongside contemporary discussions surrounding care, the contemporary city becomes a place of that is re-centered around those who have often been left out of the public realm.

The current discourse on care in architecture and urbanism is rooted in feminist thought (Fitz and Krasny, 2019). In T*oward a Feminist Theory of Caring* Berenice Fisher and Joan Tronto in 1991 developed the following definition of care:

> On the most general level we suggest that caring be viewed as a species activity that includes everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweve in a complex, life sustaining web. (Tronto and Fisher 1990, 40)
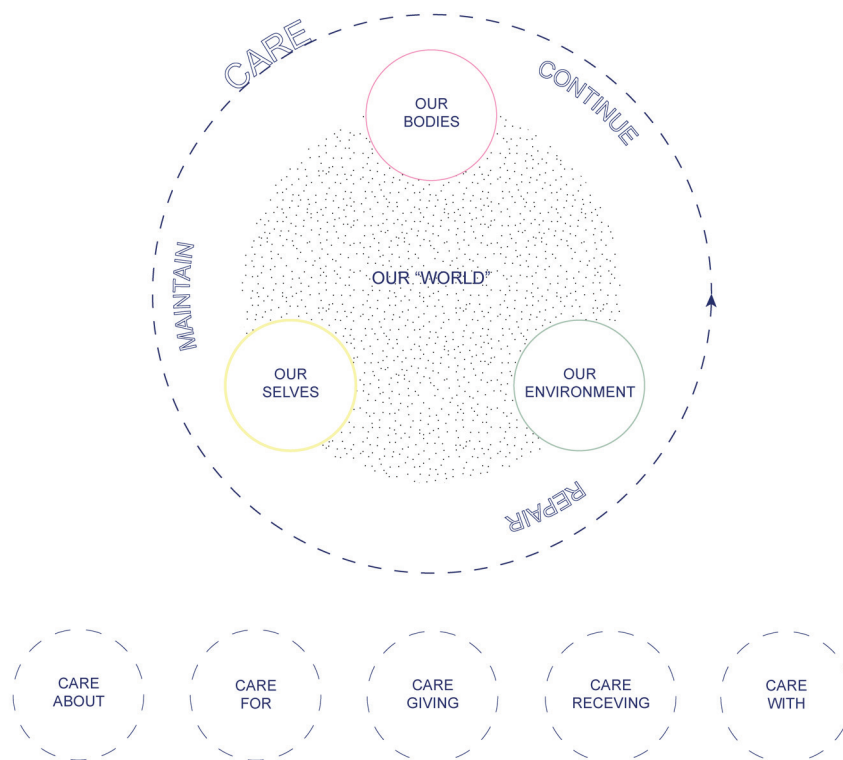
A diagram illustrating Fisher and Tronto's definition of care.

Tronto argues that contemporary architects and planners are not uncaring, but "they are caring wrongly" (Tronto 2019, 27). Tronto further argues that "when feminists began writing about care, they often started from the frames of caring that they knew best: about caring for (usually) vulnerable people such as children, people with illnesses, elderly people" (Tronto 2019, 27). But care became about a male-centered version of bringing home a paycheck as a form of care (Tronto 2019, 27). Further, Tronto argues that while buildings "protect people from the elements," "by themselves, they do not provide care; what happens within the buildings, how the building fits within its location and context, how it was built, who it will house or displace" are all aspects that "vitally affect the nature of the caring that the building does" (Tronto 2019, 27). Tronto and Fisher also identified four aspects of care that help define care practice: *caring about, caring for, care giving* and *care receiving,* with a fifth *caring with* identified by Tronto in 2013 (Tronto 2019, 29; Tronto and Fisher 1990). Care is undoubtedly tied to children lives, in how they receive care, but also in how they care about and care for others. To care for children, and to care through the eyes of a child offers a way of thinking about what programs to include in public spaces, and who benefits.

Following Fisher and Tronto's definition of care, amenities and public services that are caring could include anything that allows us to "maintain, continue, and repair our 'world'" which includes "our bodies, our selves, and our environment" (Tronto and Fisher 1990, 40). Thus, caring public architectural programs could include: food hubs, community gardens, access to nature as well as childcare centres, public amenities such as washrooms and laundry

facilities. Further, access to mental and physical health services, education, technology and publicly accessible art and entertainment are all amenities that care for, with and about. Power and Mee offer a definition of infrastructures of care as "the infrastructural forms that pattern the organization of care within society" emphasising that physical and social infrastructures shape each other (Power and Mee 2020, 489; Traill et al. 2024, 193). Traill et al. position this definition in the relation to the "care crisis" arguing that "alternative infrastructures of care have emerged that promote a revaluing of care as a pathway to social renewal" (Traill et al. 2024, 191). In the article, Traill et al. analyze a case of an "alternative infrastructure of care that is motivated by implicit politics of care: supporting everyday survival whilst not tied to an explicit reimagining of care" (Traill et al. 2024, 191). The article looks at what they call "The Park," a community food hub that responds to "the loss of public space, specifically, a children's park due to regeneration in the area in the run up to hosting an international sporting event" and is located in a deprived neighbourhood in the UK (Traill et al. 2024, 191).

I argue that the approach of creating "alternative infrastructures of care" proposed by Traill et al. can be also be translated into a way of integrating play into cities (Traill et al. 2024). A network of play interwoven within everyday freely accessible neighbourhood amenities, including food hubs, childcare facilities, health facilities, and transit reimagines the "childless" city as a playspace for everyone. Playful cities *are* caring cities.

Chapter 4: Methodology

The Child's Lens

The methodology posits that children have a unique view of urban life that resists against the reality of current urban conditions in cities like Toronto. For the purposes of this thesis, I argue that the keys ways in which children see the urban condition is through observation and discovery, play and imagination, and empathy and care. This lens offers an urban architectural agenda that emphasizes programs that contribute to social equity and publicly accessible amenities for all people. Play, imagination and discovery offer avenues for designing playful architecture, and playful places in the interstitial spaces of the everyday.

Observation and Discovery

Children learn by observing and discovering the world around them. "I Spy" or Hidden Picture books, and Where's Waldo, that grew in popularity in the 1990s exhibit the curiosity and satisfaction of finding a hidden object within a complex illustration or photograph. A simple game of "I Spy" is indicative of how children learn to notice the world around them. Not only in book form, "I spy" is a classic visual game that can be played anywhere. It's often played on walks to school, road trips, or a way to pass time waiting for a bus.

Play and Imagination

> The child, whose perception had not been shaped by a prior knowledge of absolutes, became an agent of change. The adult could learn from the child, who, with fresh eyes, would play, build, and establish new connections, material organizations, and assemblies of forms. (Zinguer 2015, 208)

Think back to how you played as a child. Did you observe the world around you? Ask endless questions? Play with

anything in sight? Children are often inhibited in their methods of play; they view the world around them as one endless playground.

Child's play, as inhibited, exuberant, joyful, and inquisitive, as in Caillois's definition of *paidia,* offers an avenue for a methodological approach to playing the city (Caillois 1961). The modes of operation of familiar childhood games, such as "I Spy," in combination with recognizable and tangible playthings lead to an uncovered city, disassembled, and re-assembled again with a new perspective.

Empathy and Care

Children are caring and empathetic, and often notice and question things that adults have chosen to accept as reality. In Sydney Smith's children's book *Small in the City*, which beautifully illustrates Toronto from a young child's perspective, a boy who looking for his lost cat and empathizes with her feelings of being "small in the city" (Smith 2019). The book illustrates how children navigate the city by seeking refuge in ordinary places, and how children are also more empathetic that we realize.

Children's empathy and care for their environment has also been demonstrated in studies conducted in Toronto. In a study conducted from nine schools in the fall of 2018, children were asked to name things that are child-friendly in their neighbourhood, as well as things that were not child-friendly (City of Toronto 2018). The children were also asked to wish for one thing to make Toronto more child-friendly (City of Toronto 2018). In the study, children were found to care about safety, the environment and nature, walkability and public transportation, community programs and spaces fit for children, and wished for a Toronto that would be

healthy for all (City of Toronto 2018). One child said "I would wish to make more affordable housing and make more food banks" (City of Toronto 2018).

In another study, a child-friendly cities initiative and participatory design project in Boulder, Colorado, titled "Growing up Boulder," children were shown to care deeply about people, animals and the environment (Derr and Tarantini 2016). The children participating in the project were particularly interested in creating a sanitation station for the homeless (Derr and Tarantini 2016, 1537). These examples show how children exhibit empathy and care for the people, animals, and environment that surrounds them.

Looking at the city through the lens of observation, like in "I Spy," leads to new interpretations of everyday architecture. Playing with architectural toys, like building blocks, by building up and knocking down, can re-shape the structured

Collage referencing children's drawings from the City of Toronto study. (City of Toronto 2018).

and ordered city grid to create unexpected and spontaneous relationships between buildings, routes, and people. Applying a caring lens to others and the world around offers a way to re-center everyday infrastructure around fostering social connections, and providing equitable access to amenities and services that support daily life. Observe, play, and care are verbs that, if used more frequently and seriously in architectural design and discourse, offer a way forward for better cities for all people. Together, they provide an activity box for adult architects, planners, and designers to think about how to design from a child-like perspective.

I Spy With My Little Eye...

As an activity of observation, I Spy can be a way to notice minute or overlooked objects, details, colours, with a fresh set of eyes. In an I Spy analysis of a neighbourhood, there are endless possibilities that can be explored. The following prompts are applied to the I Spy game below:

I Spy with my little eye…

- Something I see everyday in my neighbourhood
- Something that is mysterious
- Something that is mobile
- Something that is stationary

From this activity, the highlighted elements act as clues for further investigation. A forgotten brick façade…a streetcar…a vacant lot. How can these elements be transformed into new playful elements of the city, creating a series of animated and connected routes that celebrate and emphasize everyday events?
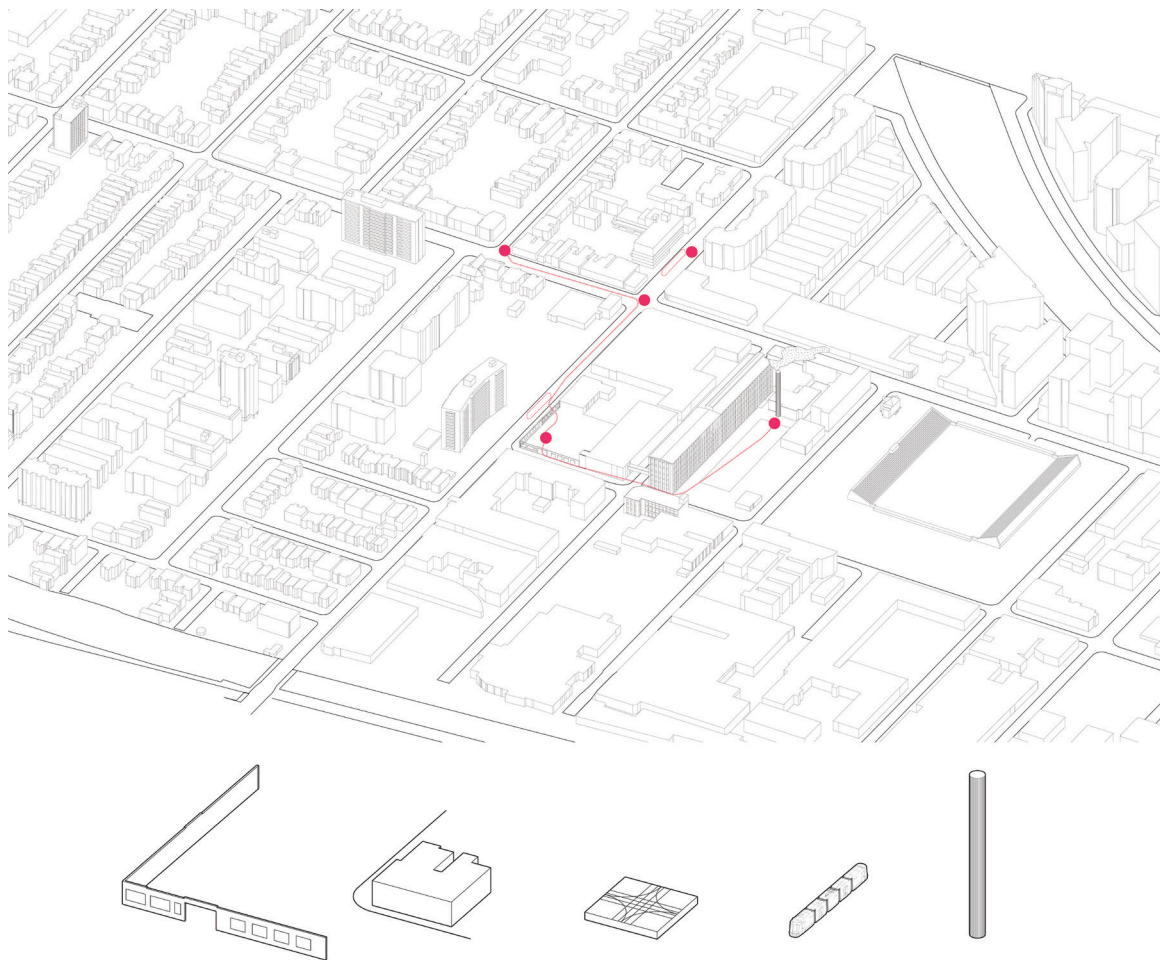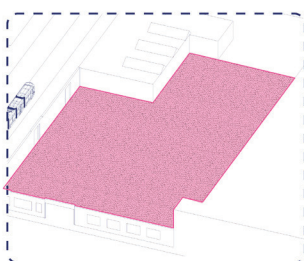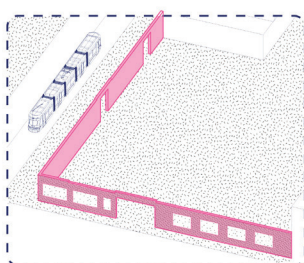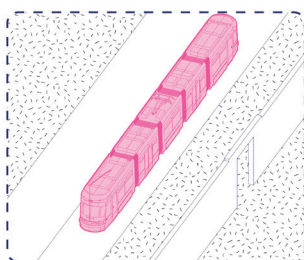
I Spy axonometric drawing highlighting elements that might be observed in the neighbourhood.

I Spy…A Streetcar

> Toronto's streetcars…remain a very distinctive feature of the old city, much celebrated, complained about, photographed, and painted. (Relph 2014, 42)

Transit systems assemble people from all age groups, economic class, and cultural backgrounds, all within a cramped environment with the purpose of getting from point A to point B. I have many childhood memories of riding the streetcar home from school, waiting at the bus stop or running to catch a subway train. It was always just a means of to getting to school, going home, or meeting up with friends. In the city, a large portion of the day is spent in transit. Similar to other transit systems, the Toronto streetcar is a place where individuals move through their day to day life, unaware of the stories or lived experience of the person a seat away.

If you grew up in any other city in North America or around the world, the streetcar seems like a relic of the past that has remained in cities few and far between. Buses, subways, and streetcars make up the network of transit options in the TTC, the Toronto Transit Commission. But in Toronto, the streetcar is a clear and ever-present symbol of the city. Streetcars have been a fixture in Toronto since the 1860s, beginning as horse-drawn streetcars relegated to streets that were flat and avoided hills (City of Toronto n.d.). In 1890, electrified streetcar service was introduced (City of Toronto n.d.).

The streetcar is an iconic landmark of everyday infrastructure, but also of Toronto's ever changing economic, political, and social landscape (Doucet and Doucet 2022). In their visual analysis of the Toronto streetcar through time, Brian and

Three moments "spied" in the neighbourhood.

Michael Doucet argue that streetcar photography is "about more that just nostalgia" and recognize that "the city's streetcars are themselves political" and use photography from streetcar enthusiasts as a means of demonstrating the city's changes over time (Doucet and Doucet 2022, 3).

I Spy…A Brick Wall

At the intersection of Dufferin Street and Liberty Street, there is a curious brick wall that creates a border between the sidewalk and a parking lot, representative of a building that once stood in its place. The old window locations are boarded up with concrete fill, indicating there was once a window to peer out of and into. A child walking past the wall might be ask questions about the wall. What was the purpose of this wall? Why does it remain? Why are so many Toronto walls made of brick? It's only purpose today is to demarcate the sidewalk from the parking lot, with a sign at a large opening in the wall that reads "Park Here."

In 1915, this wall was the façade of the Russell Motor Car Company factory. During the first world war, the company manufactured fuses for bomb shells, as seen in the archive photo below (Liberty Village Business Improvement Area n.d.). According to the Liberty Village Business Improvement Area, the many of the company's 4,000 employees were women, and the factory was open all hours of the day (Liberty Village Business Improvement Area n.d.).

Bricks play a pivotal role in Toronto's architectural history. In 1882, William Taylor discovered that clay from his farm in the Don Valley baked into a bright red brick (Marsh 2013; Evergreen Brick Works n.d.). In 1889, Taylor and his two brothers opened the Don Valley Brick Works and in 1904, a great fire destroyed much of downtown Toronto, resulting

in new by-laws that required masonry construction for most of the city's buildings (Evergreen Brick Works n.d.). In 1984, the factory closed and today it "consists of 16 remaining heritage buildings and an adjacent 16-hectare public park known as Weston Family Quarry Garden that includes wetlands, hiking trails, and wildflower meadows" (Evergreen Brick Works n.d.).

In 2010, Evergreen Brickworks, a national not-for-profit, transformed the abandoned Brick Factory into "Canada's first large scale community environmental centre" with public markets, children's gardens and emphasizes "loose parts and risk" in children's play (Evergreen Brick Works n.d.). The centre is a great example how an old factory can be transformed into a place for social connections, play, discovery and care. Toronto needs more micro-interventions, like Evergreen Brick Works, scattered throughout the city, to cater to neighbourhoods that provide closer access to play and social amenities to the communities that need them the most.

I Spy…A Vacant Lot

Like a blank canvas, or a rug where kids play, a vacant lot provides space for the imagination. A surface parking lot, on the other hand, while a necessity of modern life, is wasted space that could be used for the things that support survival and well-being: food, shelter, play, health and social connections. The lot being observed is located behind the brick wall, where the Russell Motor Car Company factory once stood. Today, it's a space for cars themselves to park in the same location that their predecessors were once manufactured.

Like a playground, the parking lot exists for a specific purpose: the "park here" sign specifically indicates the purpose of the space, and while the playground, for example, says it through physical boundaries. In *Cities for People*, Jan Gehl argues that "modernism's planning requires dedicated playgrounds: 'Please play here'" (Gehl 2010, 4.5). Many vacant, parking or underused areas in the city are used to make way for large unaffordable condo developments. In February 2024, the City of Toronto greenlit a plan to convert 130 parking lots into affordable housing and community sites (City of Toronto 2024). One of the city's building objectives in the report is in "supporting city services and facilities: providing land and buildings for City programs such as parks, libraries and community centers" (City of Toronto 2024).

If we could envision parking lots as spaces that offer new possibilities of public amenities, rather than for developers to create high-end luxury condo buildings or trendy restaurants and cafes, these spaces can be occupied as hubs of equitable social amenit. Using building blocks as a metaphorical tower, and the parking lot as a child's rug, we can build up the tower, only to knock it down and investigate the spatial formations that arise in the aftermath.

Assemble, Disassemble, Repeat

> In play, parts can be assembled into familiar architectural ensembles, but also into unknown combinations, potential architecture that has yet to happen. So while play involves manipulating historical bits and pieces, and presents materials and technologies not yet implemented in full-scale design, play happens in the present; play takes time in the here and now. (Zinguer 2015, 17)

Using play as a tool for design can first involve tinkering with existing elements of the city. From the "I Spy" activity, three elements of the city were identified: a streetcar, a brick wall, and a parking lot. First, we can disassemble the streetcar

An experiment with blocks, building them up in order to knock them back down. Spatial relationships arise in the aftermath.

Knocking down the blocks on a model of the site to discover potential unexpected site configurations.

to understand its parts and their functions. Second, we will assemble a towers out of blocks, and knock them down to find spatial relationships that have the potential to break down the urban grid. And then, in the context of the site, we can build the towers again, and knock them down as a programmatic study to see where the pieces scatter.
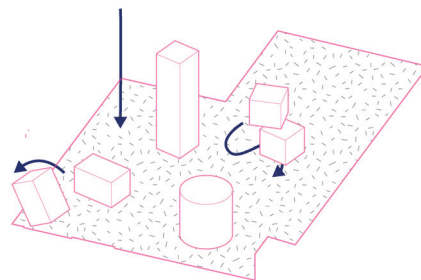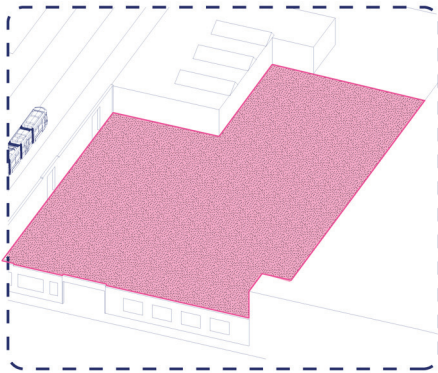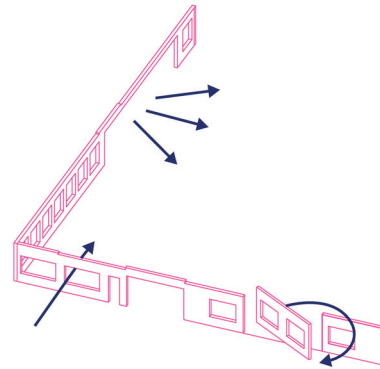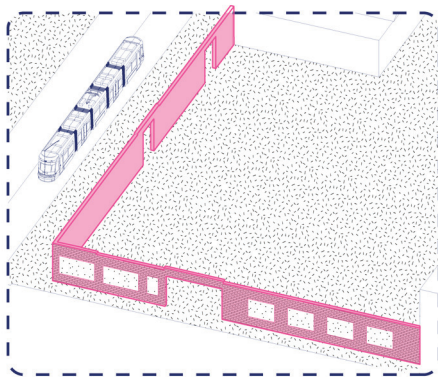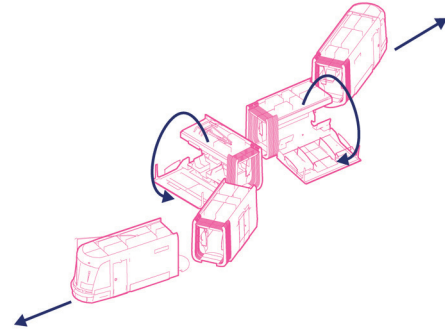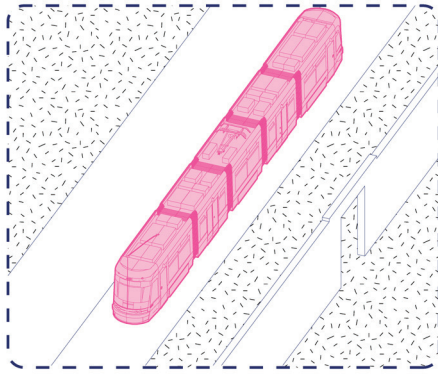
Interpreting the "spied" elements into playful moments.

Chapter 5: Design

Moments of Play

The elements that were "spied" in the last chapter are everyday moments that are reimagined through a playful and caring lens. An unexpected combination of programming, like a streetcar turned into a mobile community hub, is an example of how to combine theories of play and care within an existing physical infrastructure. Playful moments are interwoven into the design within public community amenities that reflect the seriousness of today's urban conditions, including food insecurity, lack of access to basic health services, lack of natural elements, and commodified public space.

The existing brick wall that was "spied" is on the corner of Liberty and Dufferin street. It acts as a threshold into a parking lot, a mundane feature that you might not notice at first when walking by. The wall is an element that is played with and reimagined allowing for new programs to be plugged in. By punching out the filled in windows, the concept of playing with the wall comes from the idea of pulling apart the pieces and opening the window into another world. The southern part of the wall was rebuilt for creating opportunities for play to expand from the lot to the street, blurring the boundaries in between. A pink brick road cuts through the street, leading into a network of pavilions that provide social and playful programming.

Transit of Care

The new streetcar acts as a mobile element and transit of care that can travel along existing streetcar tracks, providing social amenities for the neighbourhood and
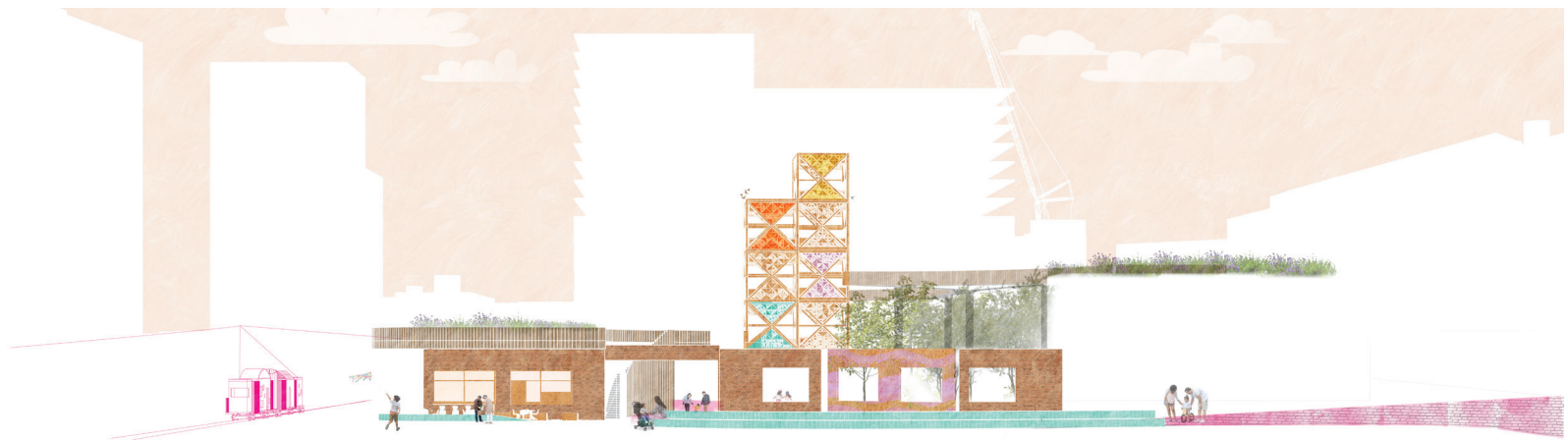
Perspective elevation drawing of the design, looking North. It shows a transformed Liberty Street, and the threshold between the wall and what is currently a parking lot.

the city. The streetcar is a mobile infrastructure of care, providing amenities that are essential to human health and well-being, and are often costly, or inaccessible. The lack of public amenities within contemporary neoliberal Toronto are positioned within a new interpretation of the streetcar as a social infrastructure.

The programs provide health, education and food services including a circular library, a counselling pod, and a fresh meal service. A social passenger pod allows friends from different parts of the city to meet up and take a ride, or for solo travellers to meet new people.

The concept for the streetcar utilizes individual cars that are mounted onto the main structure. When in motion, the new streetcar resembles a toy train, and when expanded, is like the aftermath of pulling it apart. A central spine expands and contracts, like a giant slinky, creating opportunities for new programs to emerge when it unravels. When the individual cars are offloaded, new spatial arrangements arise, creating opportunities for programs like outdoor movie screenings, art exhibitions, and outdoor reading nooks.

track   *base*   *spine*   *cars*   *spill out*
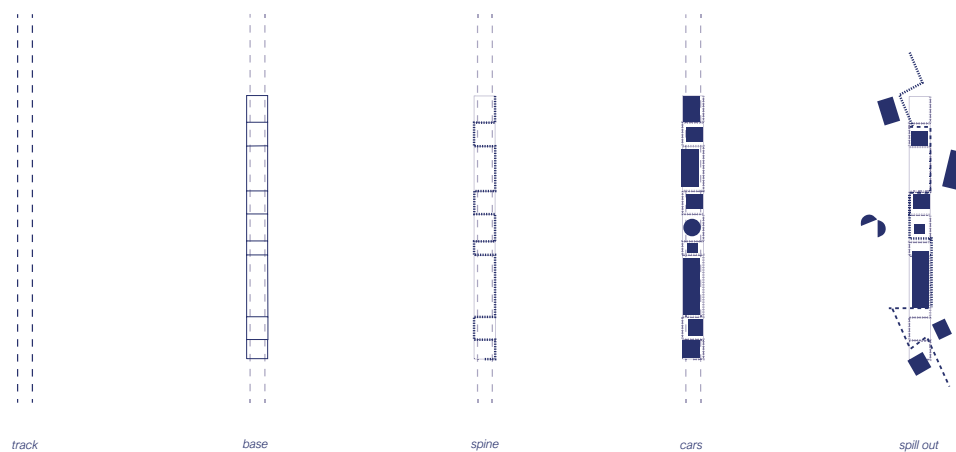
Concept diagram of the streetcar.
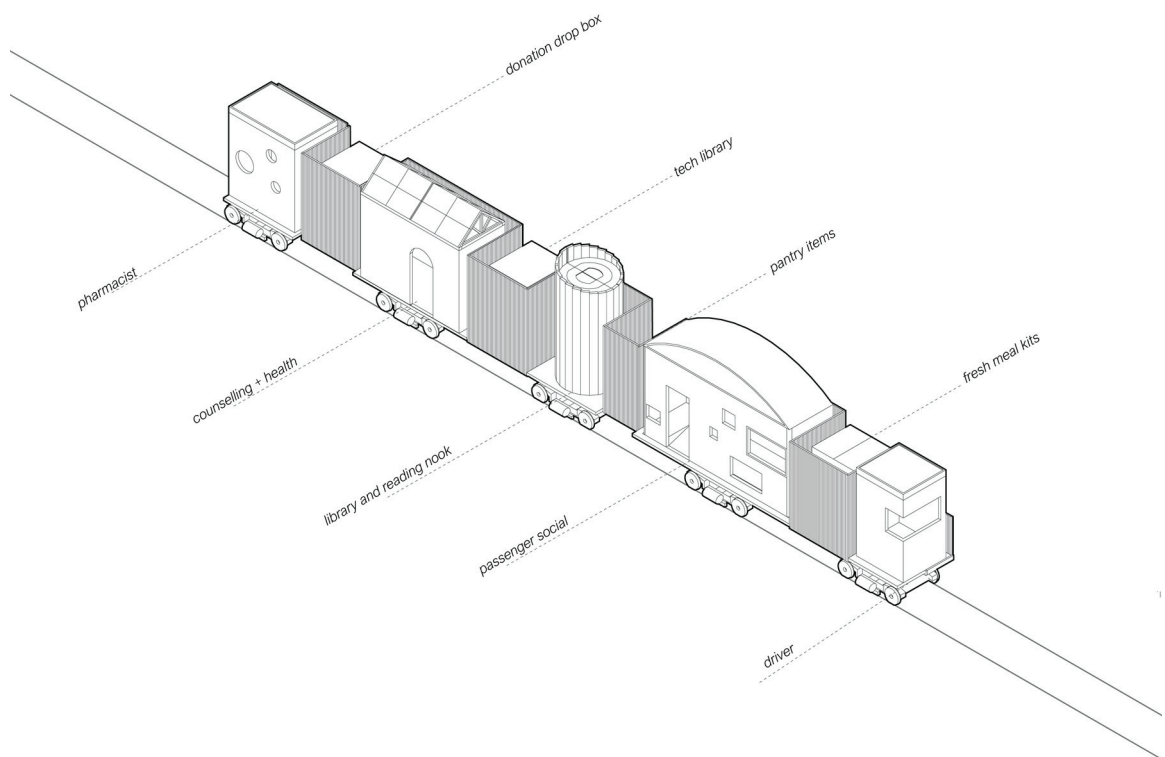
An axonmetic of the streetcar in motion. The individal cars sit on the spine and can dismount when at rest.
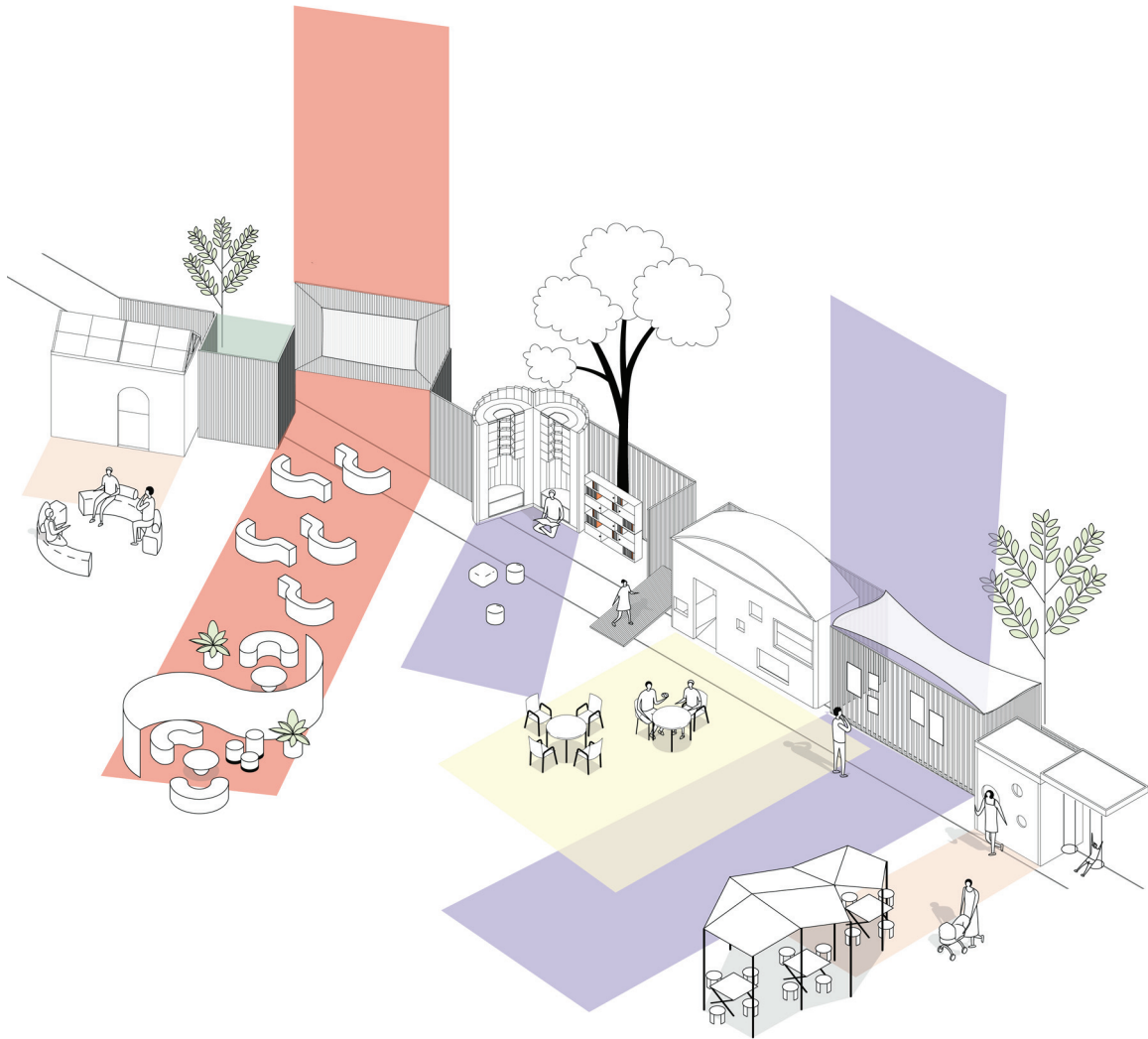
An axonometic of the streetcar at rest. When it unravels, it creates opportunities for playful social space.

A section showing the interior relationships within the streetcar.

Social Pavilions

The parking lot is transformed into a network of social pavilions, occupying prime urban space for communal amenities. Using Roger Caillois' theory of *paidia* or unruly play, a vacant lot offers space for buildings things up but then knocking them down to create unexpected spatial relationships. Thinking about play along as a nonlinear occurrence, a winding pink brick road interrupts the 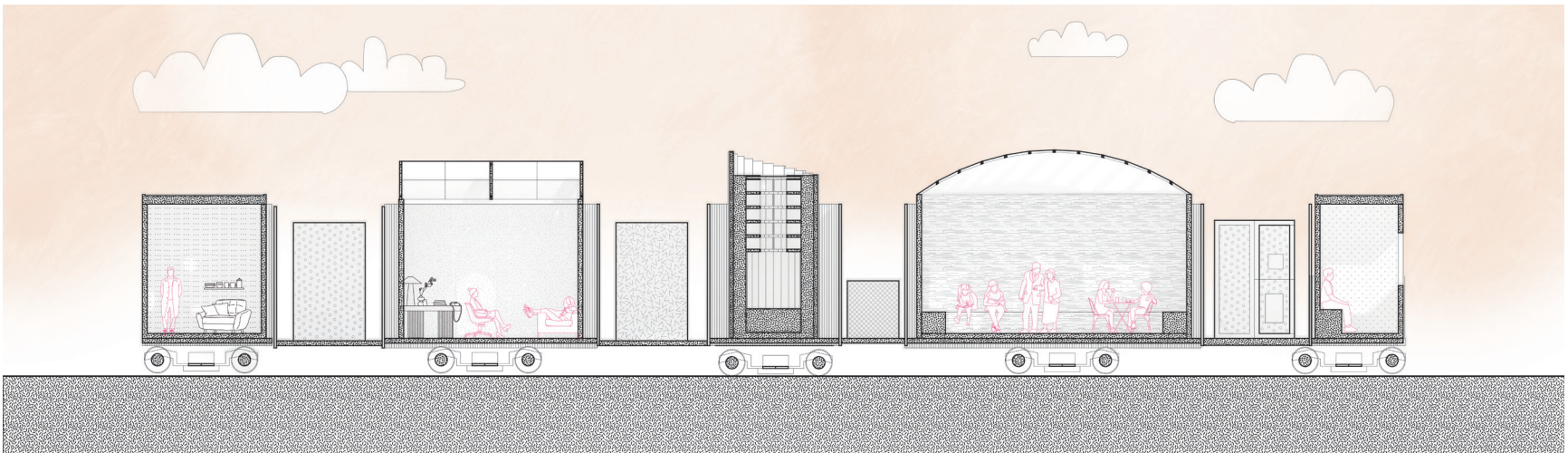sidewalk and Liberty Street, with the pavilions branching off to create nodes of opportunities for families to access daily activities while playing along the way. The parking lot is occupied with pavilions that hug the pink brick road, so that when you follow its path you can discover the programs along the way. Multiple planes of routes create spaces for running, biking, or strolling. Walking on the pink brick road, the first element you might come across is the community kitchen.

The kitchen is open to everyone for teaching events, to get a hot meal, or just to have a place to socialize. Sitting on the busy public corner of Liberty Street and Dufferin Street, the Kitchen acts as a space that provides spaces to eat, connect, play and rest. In a nod to the McDonald's that was torn down on the adjacent block at the corner of King and Dufferin, the Kitchen is a space for anyone to take their family to get a hot meal and a place to sit and just be in the city. The program spills out onto the street with a community fridge and pantry designed into the existing window, outdoor seating and a transparent connection into the building's interior. The design includes a teaching kitchen for group learning, and another kitchen that provides daily fresh and healthy meals. The fridge allows people to come and take what they need, while their child is playing on the sidewalk or street, creating informal social interactions within everyday space.
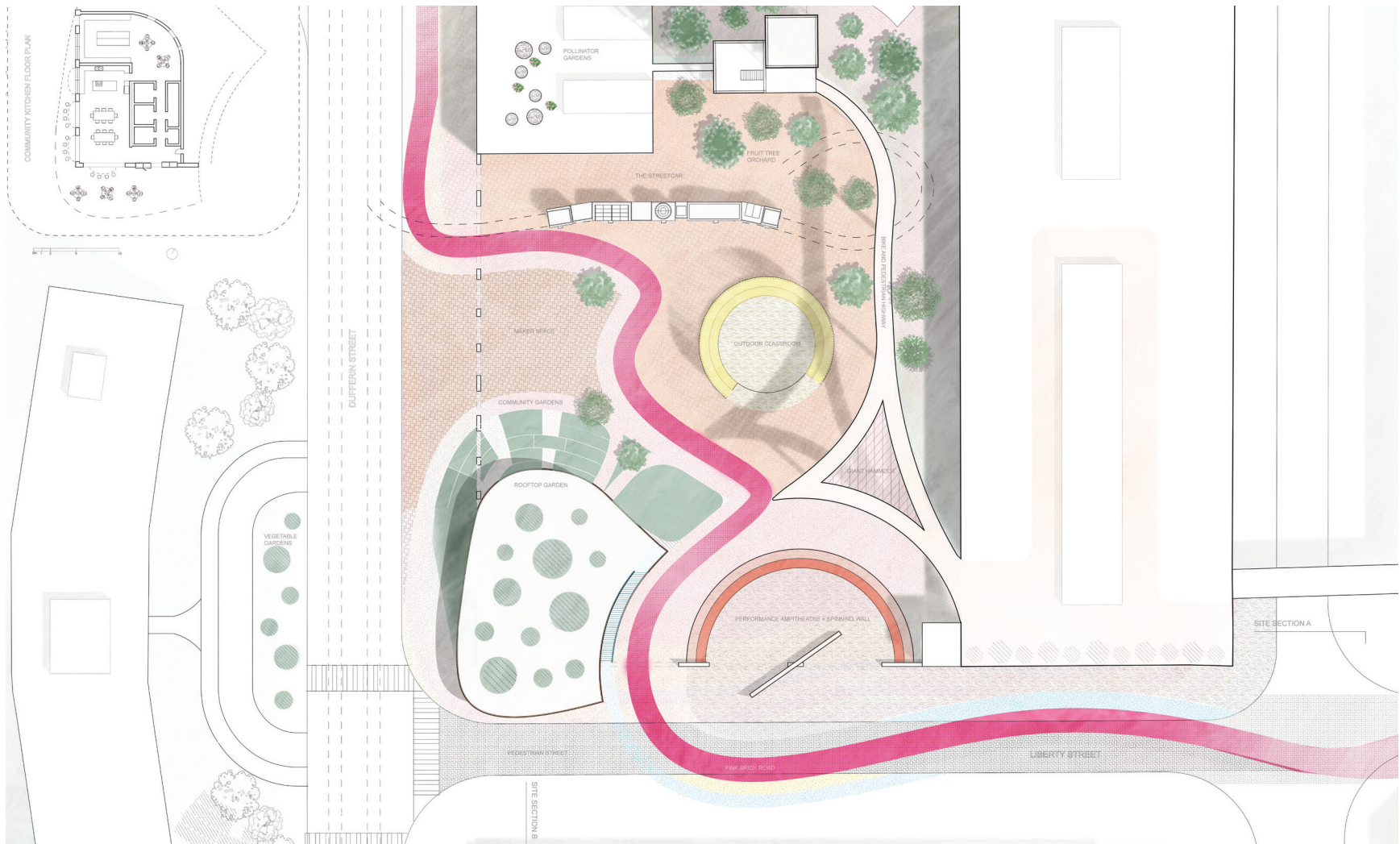
A site plan showing the final design amd its relationships to the surrounding context. The streetcar can be seen entering from King Street on its way to unravel and further animate the space. A pink brick road cuts through the site, with the suggestion of connecting to the neighbourhood and city beyond.

Entering from Liberty street to the south, a curved staircase leads up to the roof of the community kitchen, with vegetable garden beds and spaces to sit in and play between. Along the path you come across garden beds that offer space for people to grow their own food, creating interactions between multiple users.

Running down the staircase, the second element you discover along the way is a sunken performance space, for spontaneous or planned performances. A spinning stage wall, assembled within the existing brick wall, blurs the boundaries between the interior and exterior of the wall. Moving toward the outdoor classroom, wood slats create a nest-like space for teaching and learning. Along the pink road you discover the streetcar, on its way to stop and unravel.

Next, you discover a colourful tower that functions as a giant play structure, a vertical garden, and a day care. While a parent goes to access their daily needs, their child can go to discover the butterflies at the top. Like a giant urban treehouse, the tower attracts butterflies with gardens planted in the façade. Running to the top of the tower, kids and families can discover different plants along the way. A mini fruit tree orchard is planted around the tower, allowing fruit to be picked from the second or third levels. Walking up the tower, you discover bridges that lead to existing rooftops. One bridge acts as a pedestrian highway, allowing for people to walk, bike or run along the top to the adjacent rooftop. Along the way, a giant tensile hammock creates a node for rest. Liberty street becomes a pedestrian play street, closed for car traffic and open instead children's play, events and everyday activities that are centered around people.
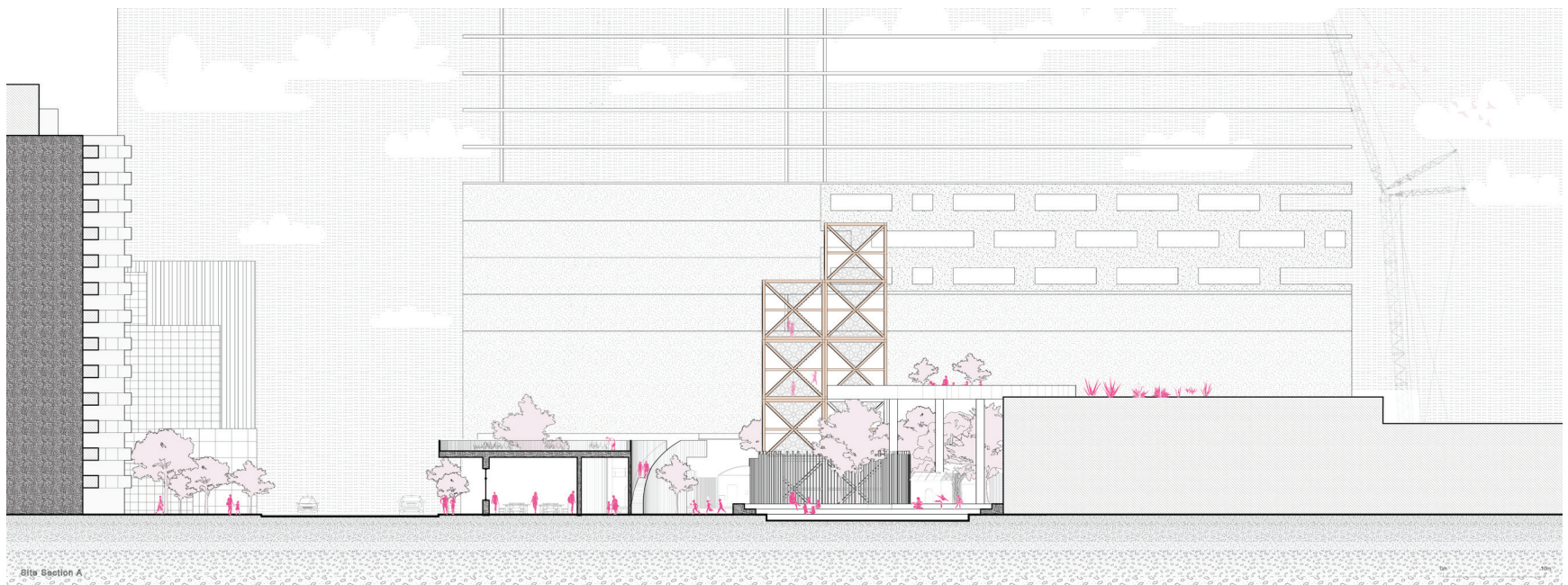
Site Section A.
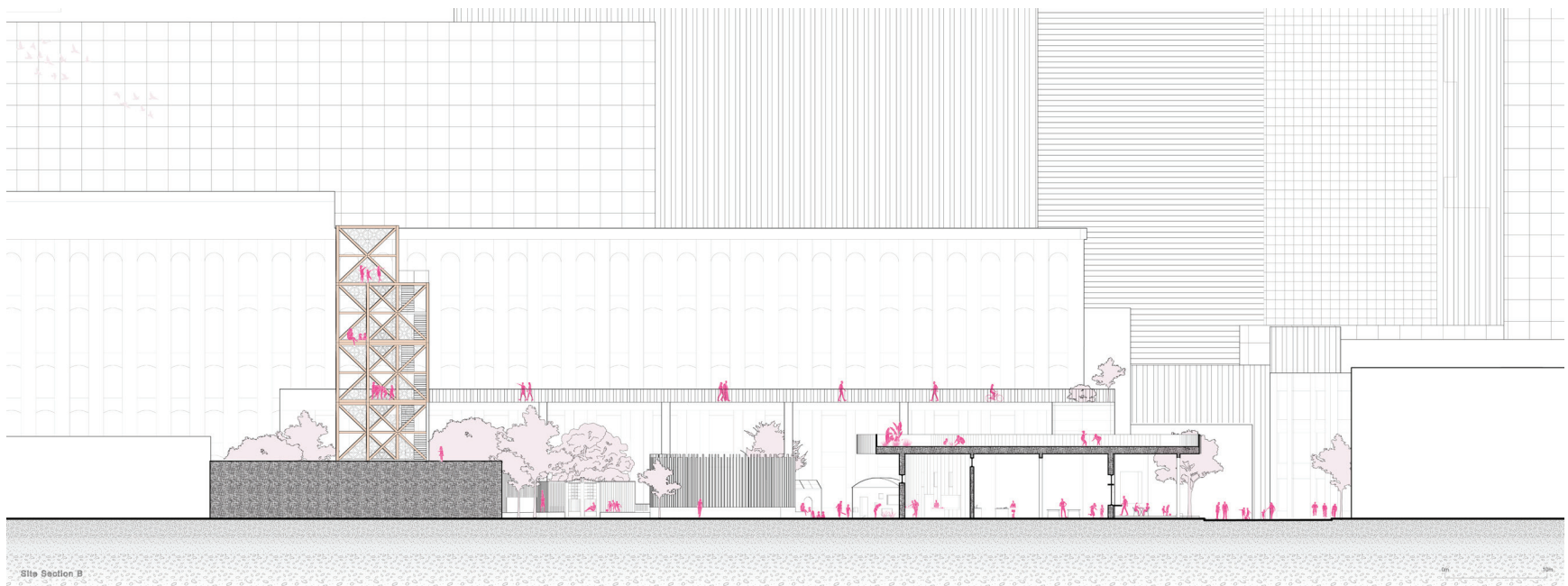
Site Section B.

Interactions outside of the kitchen.

Playing with butterflies at the top of the childcare tower.

Following the pink brick road.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

> The childhood experiences that determines spatial practices later develops its effects, proliferates, flood private and public spaces, undoes their readable surfaces, and creates within the planned city a "metaphorical" or mobile city, like the one Kandinsky dreamed of: "a great city built according to all the rules of architecture and then suddenly shaken by a force that defies all calculation." (Kandinsky as quoted in de Certeau 1971, 110)

Throughout the process of rediscovering childhood and play in relation to architecture and urbanism, I have uncovered more questions than answers. Why do humans play? Why is play prevalent in childhood, but lost as we age? How does play shape space? What lessons can be learned from looking into theories of play and childhood to reclaim our cities?

One lesson that I have learned throughout the design process is that play is not quantifiable. In designing space, we are often tasked with determining quantities and specificities: room dimensions, clearances, floor to floor heights. These are rule-driven devices, that serve an important purpose, but tend to take away from deviating from the things we know to be true. As discussed in Caillois' definition of play, ludic play is driven by rules, while *paidia*, the unruly play of childhood, embodies a more tumultuous type of play (Caillois 1961). Rule-driven play has its place and purpose, in board games, sports, and instruction-based building sets. But there is a beauty in messy play, that at times can be difficult to harness in a world driven by rules. Building a tower out of blocks just to knock it down is one type of unruly play, done for the sheer enjoyment of watching the pieces fall. Play is qualitative: play is done for its own sake, not as a means to an end. Play is about freedom, choice, and discovery.

This freedom of choice and access to play within everyday spaces becomes increasingly important as cities like Toronto become playgrounds for the affluent. There is very little room for unstructured or frivolous play in today's world. Perry Else describes this phenomenon:

> In the increasingly market-led economy that we call society in the West, the pressure on children and young people to be responsible and make economic contribution leads to parents and other adults expecting more work from children and this leave less time for play. (Else 2009, 10)

We need spaces in cities, apart from playgrounds, that allow for room for unstructured play, led by choice and discovery. Mixed within spaces that address fundamental human needs like food and shelter, play becomes a part of everyday life, for all people. These spaces can create opportunities for unexpected social connections between different age groups and people. Streets and sidewalks offer the ability to serve this purpose well, as argued by Jane Jacobs in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Jacobs 1961). Within the proposed design, pavilions blur the boundaries between sidewalk and street, interior and exterior.

In the process of developing this project, certain limitations in my own ability to play became evident. By definition, a project needs to be driven by some rules. How do we balance play that is carefree and uninhibited with the realities of what is needed to make space function? Part of this balance might lie in tethering between logic and creativity and expanding our understanding of what is possible within existing building fabrics. Children have an amazing ability to expand the possible through play, that I have discovered is challenging to tap into as an adult. Digital tools have limitations in their support of unruly play as they often require the user to determine specific outputs. Play is not as concerned with

the outputs, but the process itself. Reflecting on my own process, moments where I focused on moving away from the screen, playing and working with my hands allowed for more freedom and unexpected design opportunities. Artists, rather than architects or urbanists, are often the ones who take on playful urban design, and they are more actively engaged in this process (Lefaivre 2007, 37). This suggests that the process undertaken by architects and urbanists, driven by rules and regulations, makes it difficult to engage in the playful freedoms that artists are allowed.

Another way to support limitations to designing for more playful and caring cities is to involve children in the design and planning process. The childrens' drawings from the City of Toronto's study on making a child-friendly city offered insights into what a group of urban children care about: making safe and healthy cities for people, animals, and the environment (City of Toronto 2018). But children's drawings also hold an absurd nature that is difficult to harness as a rational adult. People and objects are drawn out of scale, but they hold a certain beauty and simplicity of our understanding of space.

With the prospect of the "childless city" discussed in the introduction, I wondered how fewer children and families living in cities would further fuel cities that centered around what Colin Ward called "the adult, male, white-collar, out-of-town car user" (Ward 1978, 25). I proposed the child's playful, caring and observant lens as a way of reshaping the way we design community space in gentrifying neighbourhoods like South Parkdale. A pink brick road acts as a both a physical and metaphorical manifestation of creating a playful and socially connected city. A streetcar reimagined becomes a mobile community space for play, socializing, and everyday

necessities. These simple gestures could translate into a way of thinking about other modes of creating connections throughout cities, either speculative or real. In play, anything is possible.
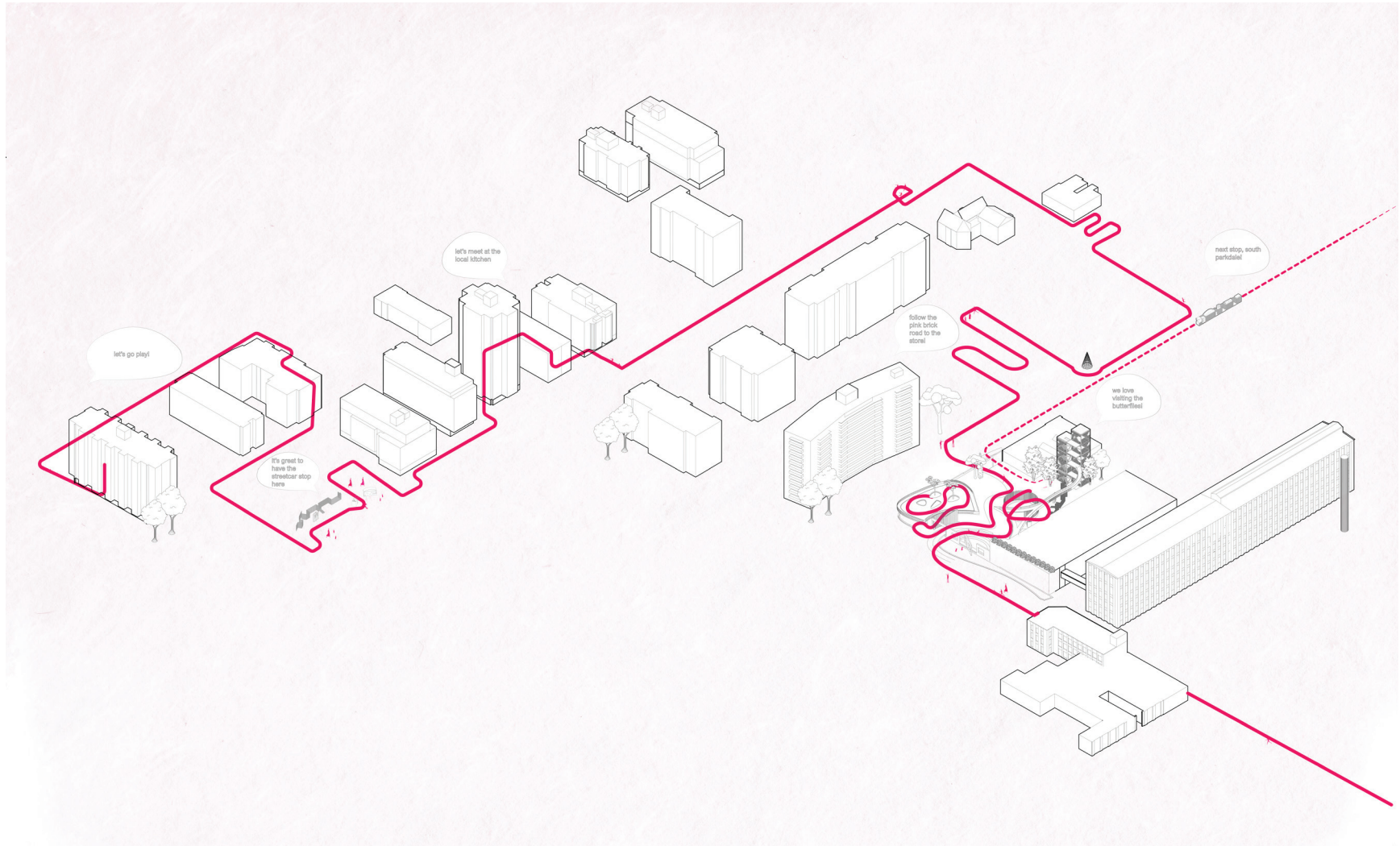
An interpretative drawing that assesses how to connect the neiighbourhood, the city and beyond as an infrastructure of play and care.

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