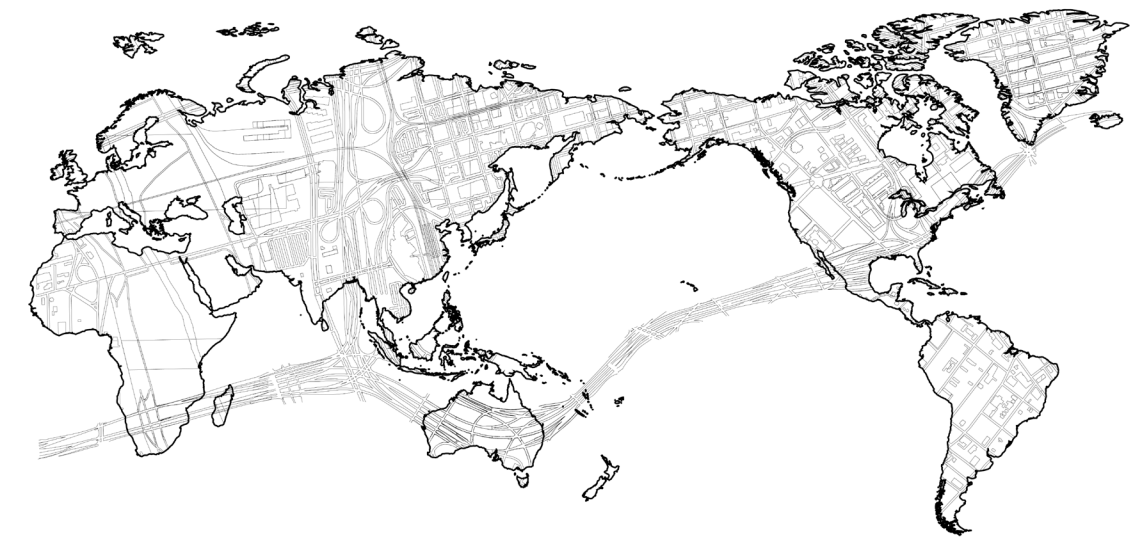


UNITED

DALLAS REFUGEE INTEGRATION CENTER
M. ARCH FINAL STUDY | SPRING 2018

WILLIAM
SHEFFIELD



UNITED | DALLAS URBAN REFUGEE INTEGRATION
WILLIAM SHEFFIELD | SPRING 2018

This FINAL STUDY was submitted to a faculty committee at TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY for approval in fulfillment of a primary requirement for the degree of **MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE**.

Spring 2018

Koichiro Aitani | Committee Chair

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contents

the issue

problem + research

the requirments

program + precedents

the site

downtown Dallas

the process

project generation

the output

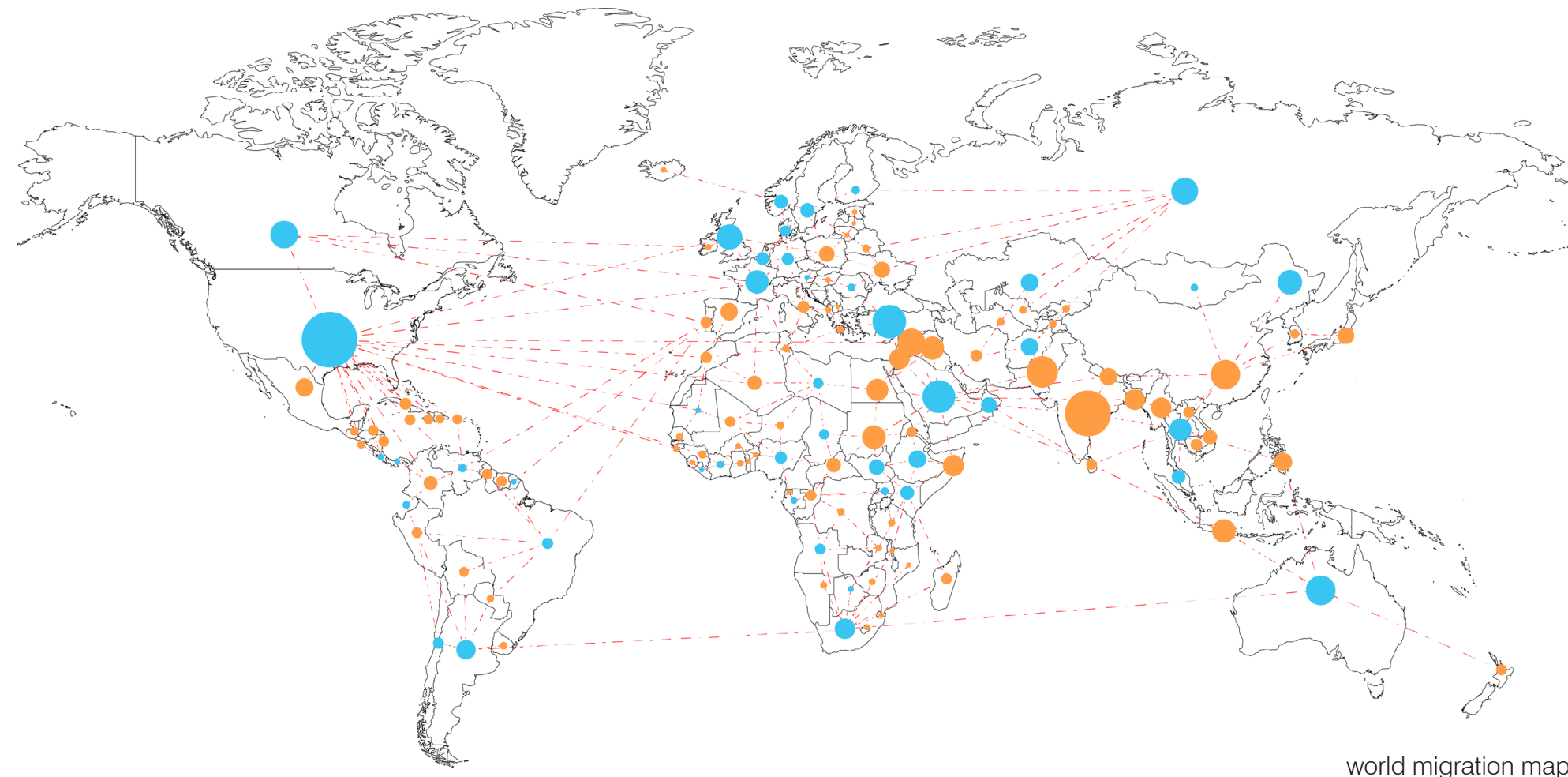
project deliverables

conclusions

afterward + bibliography

the issue





world migration map

- “A refugee is someone who has been **forced** to **flee** his or her country because of **persecution, war, or violence**. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of **race, religion, nationality, political opinion**, or membership in a particular **social group**.”

-UNHCR

- Other displaced peoples
 - Development Displacee, Environmental and Disasters Displacee, Trafficked Person, Smuggled Person, Asylum Seeker, Internally Displaced Person
- 65.3 million displaced people, of which there are...

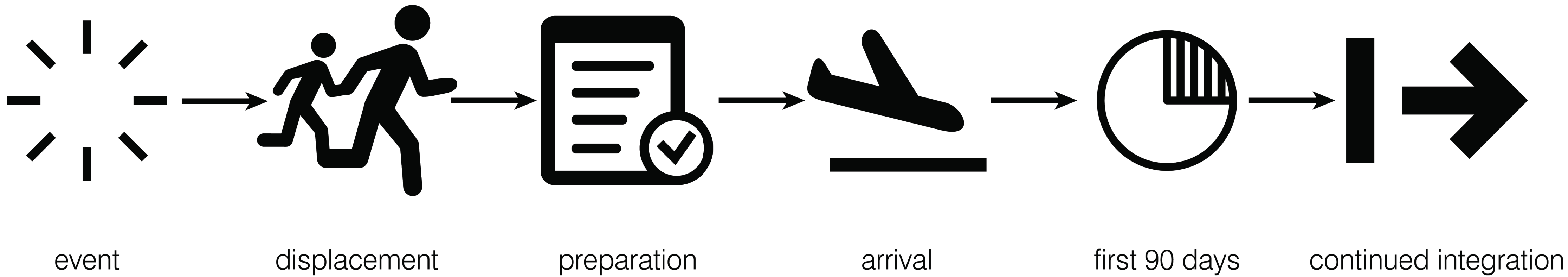
21.3 million refugees

- Texas brought in **4500** refugees in the last year

The refugee crisis is perhaps the most pressing humanitarian concern of our time. In 2016, there were over 21 million refugees worldwide ranging from Syria to Somalia to Burma to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. While efforts have been made across the world of architecture in terms of camp redevelopment, temporary shelters, and public housing, very few attempts have addressed the need of integration between these displaced people and the citizens of the foreign nations they reside in. This is quickly becoming a pressing need in Europe and the US as well, as more refugees will continue arriving for the foreseeable future and tensions between locals and their new neighbors rise as well. With people groups continuing to divide themselves and sides being taken and assigned everyday, solutions to actively unite are needed just as much as practical needs of housing.

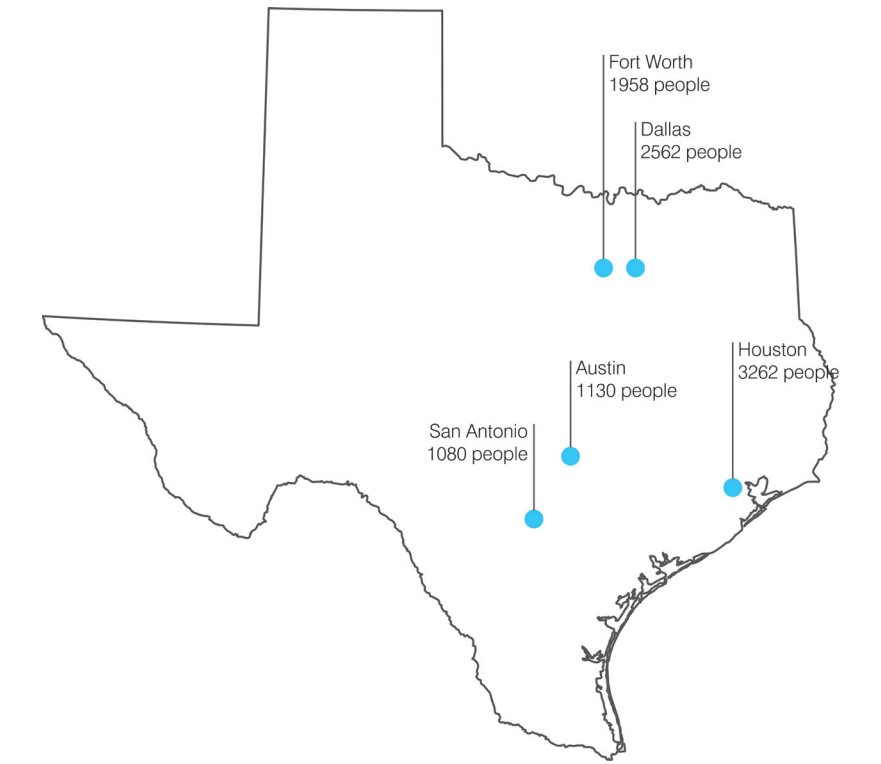
Refugees entering the United States currently go through an extensive process in order to apply for residency, arrive in the US, and maintain residency.

This does not take into account the arduous and potentially traumatic experience of having to leave their home and make their way to their first port of refuge. Once they are cleared for resettlement with the US, the government works with one of nine national resettlement agencies that operate as NGOs (Non-Governmental Organization) who become responsible for overseeing the process for the refugees. Typically, NGOs will place refugees in cities with established refugee communities, whether those be comprised of relatives, friends, or like people groups. Factors such as cost of living, medical services, and availability of education are also taken into account. However, as refugees are classified as legal US residents, they ultimately have a choice as to where they are resettled. In preparation for travel, refugees are required to agree to reimburse the government for travel and other costs accrued, attend culture classes regarding US laws, language, health benefits, and other topics, and submit to a final security and medical evaluation. Upon arriving, usually at an airport, refugees are met by their paired resettlement agency who then provides for things such as housing, basic furnishings, food, and other immediate assistance. The first 90 days are crucial in this process. During this, the NGO works heavily with the refugee, introducing them to the local healthcare system, enrolling them in English classes, providing trauma/PTSD support, and finding schooling options and providing supplies for children. Refugees receive a stipend during this period, but they are encouraged to find work quickly and the NGOs work with local employers and support the refugees in applications, resumes, and interviews. After this 90-day period, refugees still meet regularly with their paired NGO, are enrolled in things like the IRC New Roots Program, and begin the process of working to become full citizens of the US.

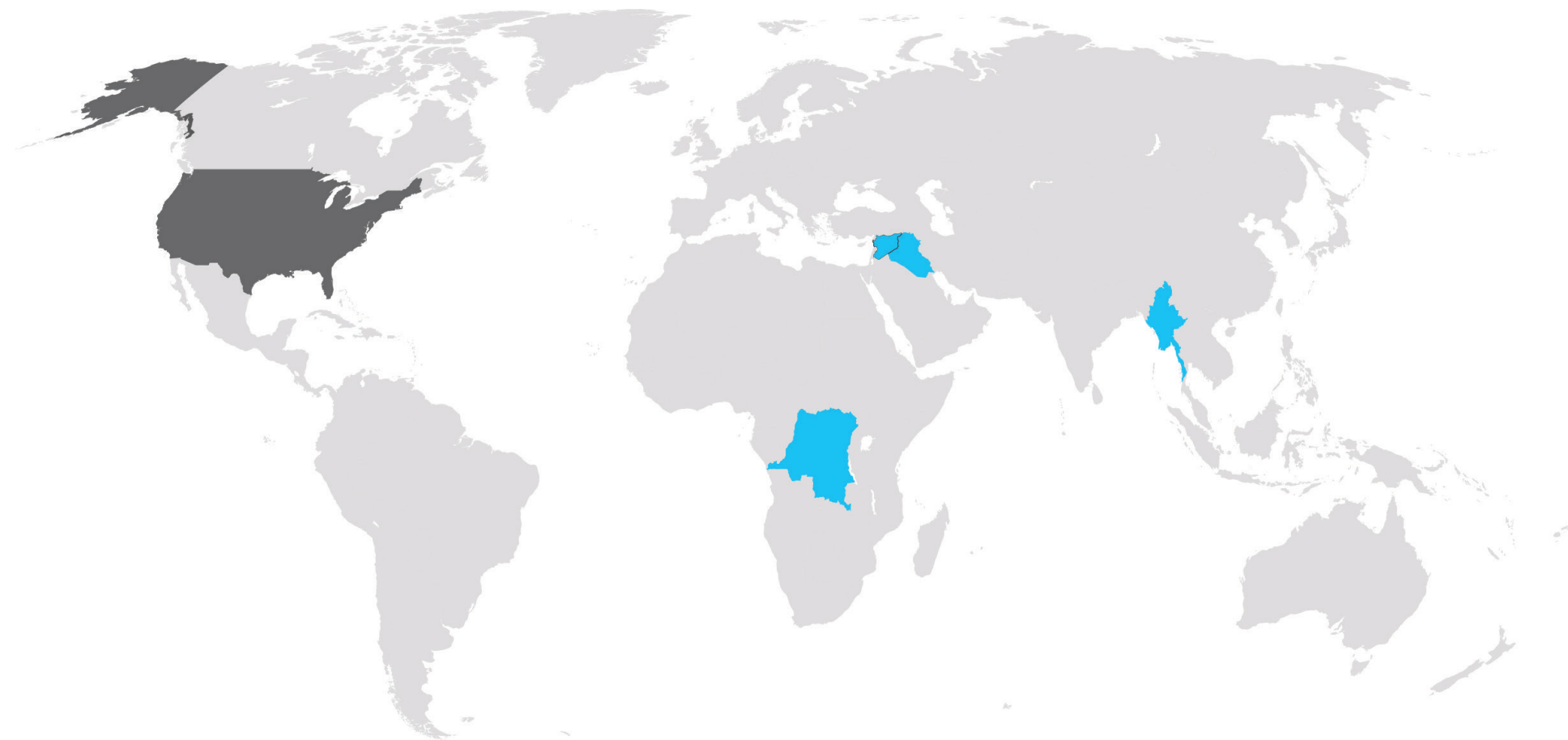


Texas routinely takes in more refugees than almost any other state in the US, and already has five established hubs for resettlement. Its cities' costs of living, favorable economic conditions, and access to health and education make it a preferable option over more expensive resettlement cities like Paris, New York, London. Although European cities tend to see a greater immediate impact from the direct influx of refugees, places like Texas that are away from the frontlines generally make for better long-term resettlement locations.

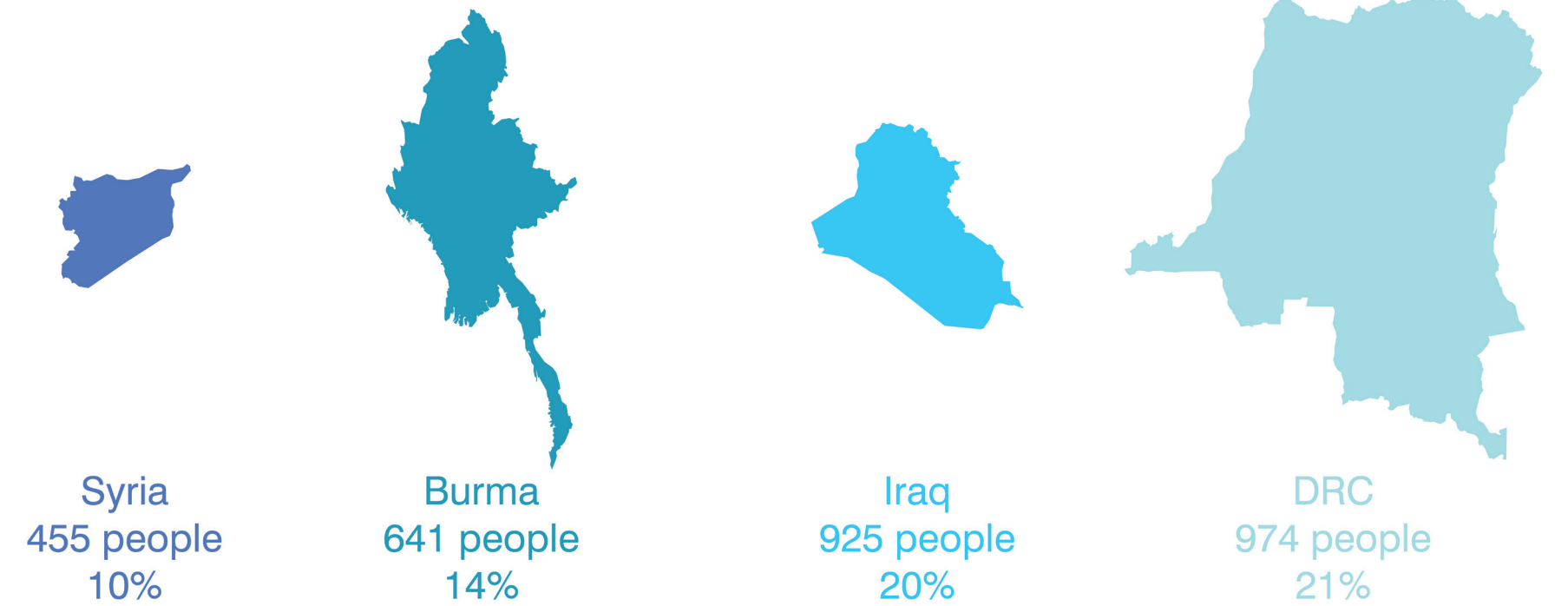
The refugees Texas takes in the most come from the DRC, Iraq, Burma, and Syria. Each of these people groups come from varying circumstances and require different accommodations that present unique opportunities and challenges for developing a specialized and centralized hub for housing and integrating newly-arrived refugees.



Texas refugee hubs

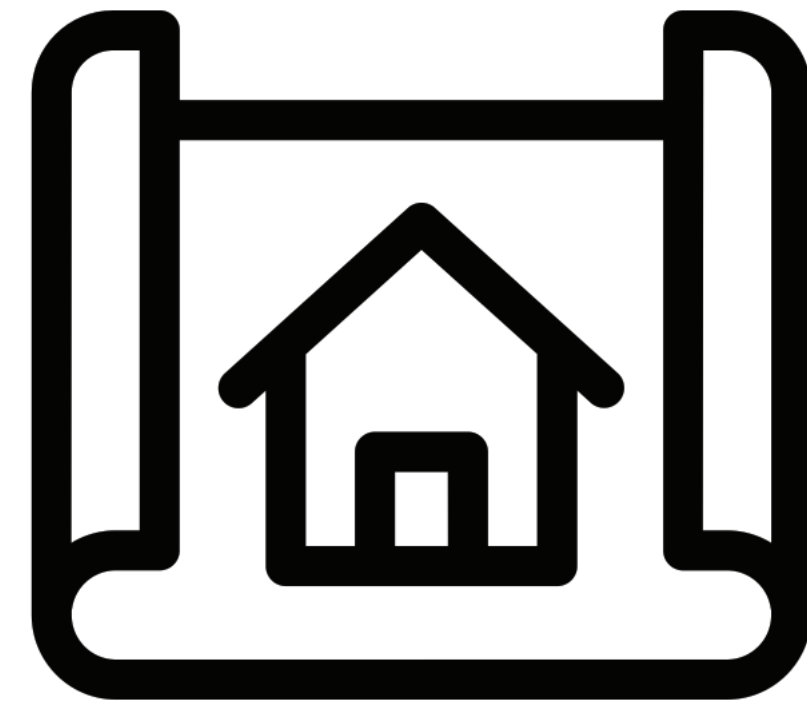


countries with the most refugees in Texas



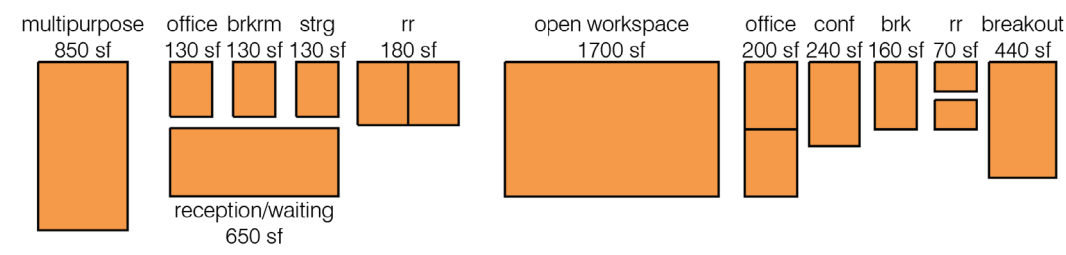
Texas top refugee distribution

the requirements

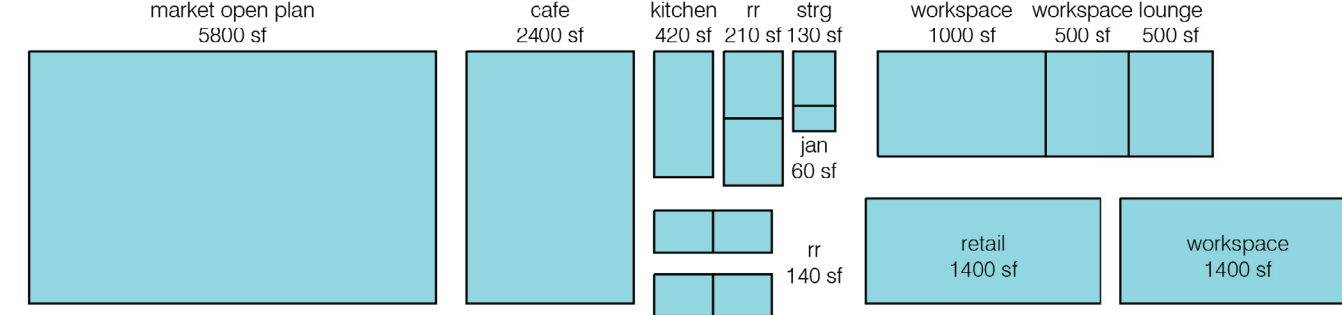


program

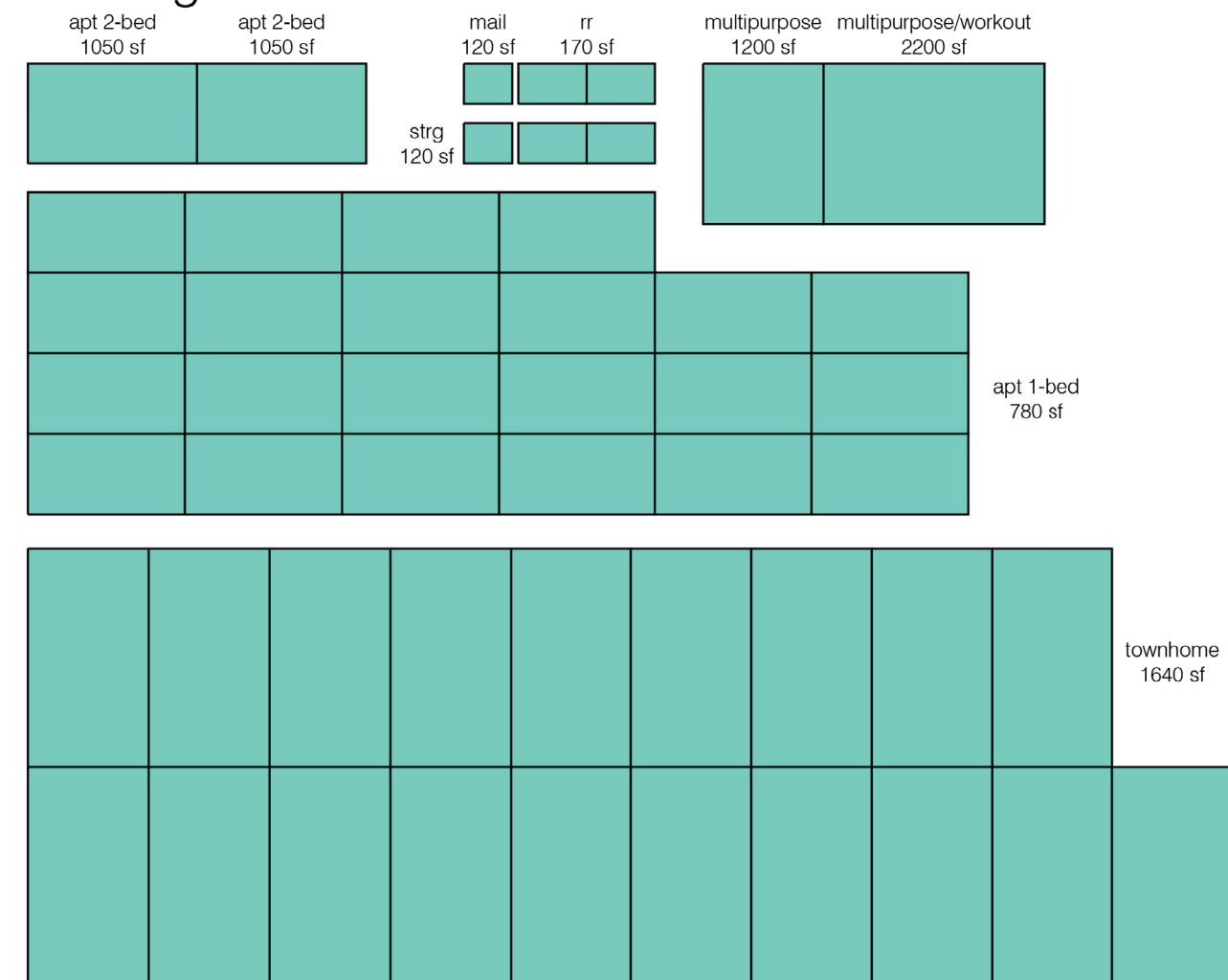
admin



culture center



housing



The determined program for this project encompasses three areas, housing and relevant support for the refugees, an administrative center for an NGO that would be located here, and space for a “culture center” that would serve as the central hub for interactions between refugees and the local population. In total, the program required 140,000 square feet of building along with additional room for green space and other outdoor criteria. The site chosen for this project is 330,000 square feet, which allows for ample green space, an important secondary objective of this project, as well as for potential future growth.

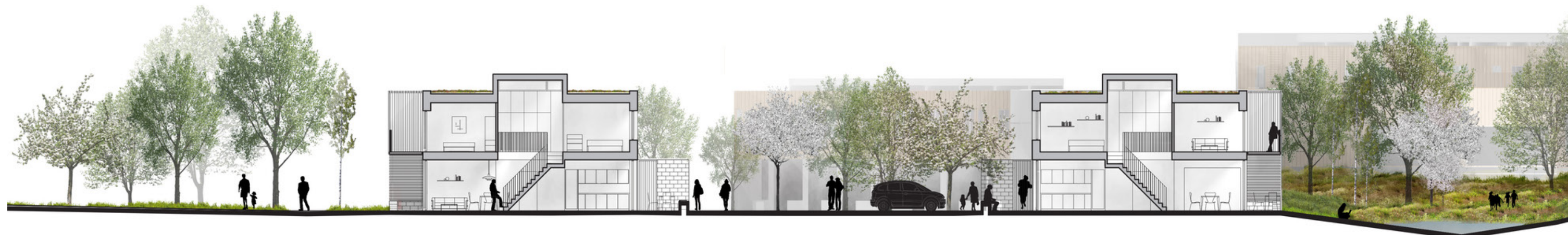
The administration area required typical components such as offices, conference rooms, and supports spaces, but due to the specialized interactions with refugees, additional elements were required as well. Flexible multipurpose space was needed for classes, pop-up clinics, and social gatherings. Office themselves required a fair amount of flexibility and options as well, resulting in different configurations between open and private offices and use of breakout rooms with moveable partitions. The admin space itself was later divided into a private suite at ground level and an open but restricted-access area upstairs to encourage a more receptive area for meeting with refugee and other clients. This whole area required restricted access for the NGO employees and the residents.

The culture center consisted of what became known as “market space.” With this project acting as an informal extension of the Dallas Farmers

Market, this program sought to convey a similarity in space design and function. Large area was accounted for in serving as “flex space” that could be utilized as needed in functions such as market set-up, large meetings, and other indoor events. The rest of the market was dedicated to more structured spaces. While the generic configuration was that of open workshops and retail space, these spaces would also be targeted to refugees who wished to set up a semi-permanent space for carrying out “business.” As many refugees actually have professional backgrounds such as medicine or law, it is essential to provide a place that allows them to continue to function in a structured, professional manner. While these people could not typically carry out full versions of their professions that require licensure and other citizenship criteria, they are still encouraged to maintain networking relations, work for advocacy in these areas, and find other means of continuing their work. This culture center would also contain a medium-sized café and would be open to the public, especially during designated market days and events.

The housing itself consists of one and two-bedroom apartments above the main building and larger two to three-bedroom townhomes on the more private half of the site. The apartments are geared more towards singles and small families that are more acquainted or prefer urban living conditions, while the townhomes are designed for larger families with more open space and clusters that promote outside interaction even in an urban space. These areas would have varying elements of restricted access.

precedent studies



Most precedents for refugee housing either focus on interim camps or public housing that is better as a temporary building or not designed for the specific needs of refugees. White Arkitekter's conceptual social housing project is one of the few projects that is designed for non-local residents and seeks to take into account their needs over typical local ones. Much of the project's objectives was to integrate the housing units with nature as much as possible. Natural site lines and elements influenced building layout and design and in turn created natural gathering spaces with private, semi-private, and semi-public conditions. This type of layout and public space design was essential to this final study in providing places for refugees to use both personally with privacy as well as having options for more public spaces to gather together in as well as with locals who would come to the site.

The units themselves helped play a basic role in laying out a base design for apartment square footages and layouts. They also included a terrace design that allowed for semi-private to private use by the refugees. In applying this concept to the final study project, moveable partitions were integrated, giving greater control over the space by the residents. The concept was also carried out on the lower levels in an inverted sense of creating a "cave" which would provide a sense of security and shelter to the residents and also provide a relatable element to the common Middle Eastern practice of utilizing basements and lower floors during the day to avoid excess heat and light.

The limits of White Arkitekter's project came in the seclusion of the residents from the rest of the community. No public functions were integrated to encourage interaction between residents and their neighbors, which became a major element in this final study. The project itself was also much larger in scope than this study, and did not allow for as intimate interaction or management from the housed NGO.

precedent studies



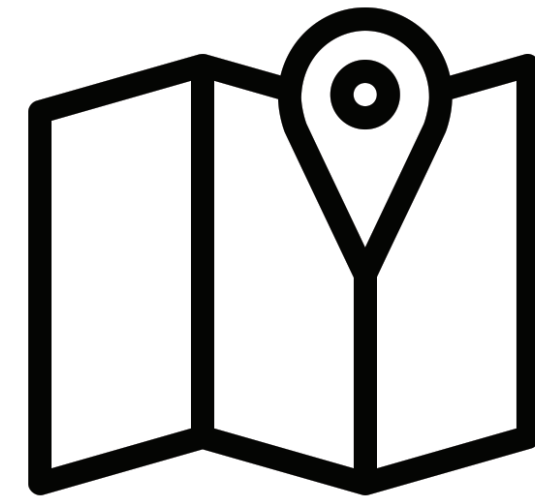
IDOM's Parque de Gare in Brazil provided layout and program requirements for implementing a farmers market-like center with an equally important outdoor plaza design. Similar to the final study's program requirements, IDOM's project contained different restaurant and cafe areas, market space, and workshop space. These spaces, along with their layout in reference to each other, contributed to the arrangement of the culture center portion of the final study project.

Its landscape design was equally important. IDOM utilized different materials and paving to organize outdoor spaces as well as ensuring each space had a dedicated purpose even if it was something as small as connecting to functional points. Special attention was paid to sustainable elements. Terrain was shaped and surfaced to encourage efficient drainage. Extensive shading was provided in the form of natural elements as well as man-made pavilions and accessory elements.



Qb Modular's office design in New Zealand contributed greatly to inspiration for the administration areas as well as the "structured" market spaces. Qb Studios is the product of their prefabricated methods in practice within an existing warehouse building. The space itself is intended for commercial mixed use by small and medium-sized businesses. The modular layout allows for ample circulation and community space for the tenants and the materiality allows for workable design in constrained conditions. The final study sought to create a similar office space with multiple vertical layers of interaction directly and indirectly with visuals and communication. Even though the office and farmers market buildings would be new, their overall structure hoped to mirror that of existing "warehouse" buildings adjacent to the site. This modular design allowed for independent elements to be placed easily within a larger context and still maintain a connection to each other.

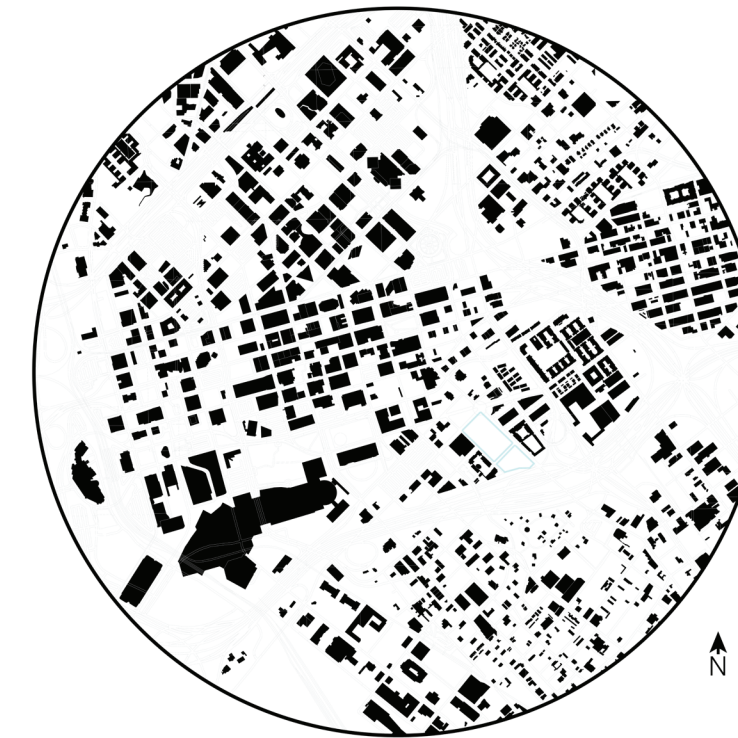
the site



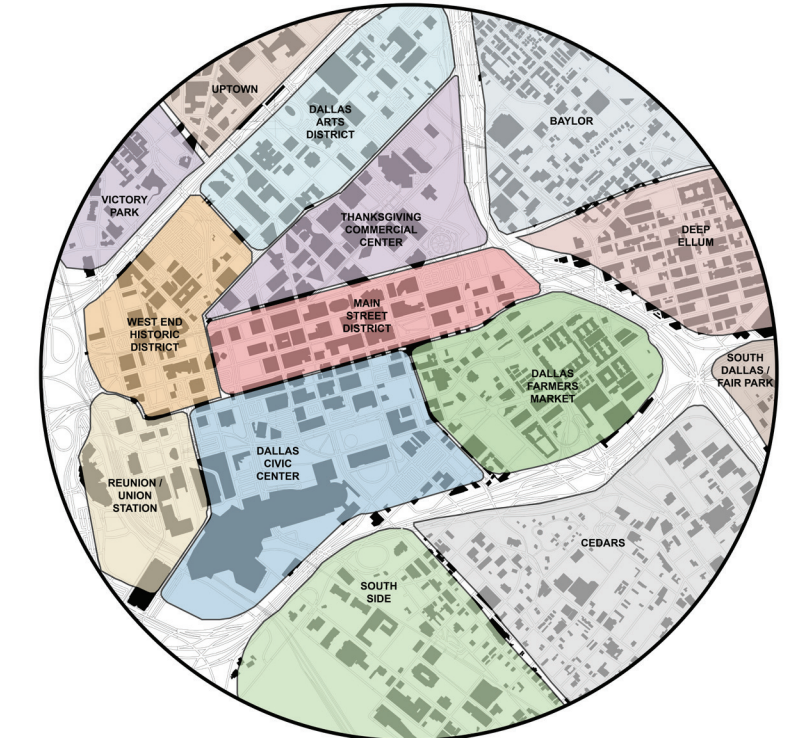
site selection + analysis

In determining a site for this project, special attention was given not so much as to the specific site conditions but to its proximity to things refugees and NGOs would need for long-term operations and settling. With Texas being chosen earlier as a very good area in general for refugee resettlement in terms of economic conditions and access to support, the selection narrowed to urban or rural and from there which city specifically. An urban site encouraged better interaction with surrounding communities and provided better access to things like healthcare and education. In choosing a specific city, Dallas rose to prominence very quickly. Already, it is becoming (and has been) an international hub for business and travel and has one of the best economies in terms of job market in the US. The recent emphasis placed on renewing its downtown shows a strong desire by the city and the community to support urban regeneration. DFW is home to the largest group of refugees in the state as well, providing an established support community for new arrivals.

In terms of a specific location, perhaps the greatest draw was the emerging presence and use of its Farmers Market district in downtown. This area of downtown has been home to warehouses in recent decades and had developed a different culture than the rest of a downtown that had begun to thrive. The redesign of the farmers market in 2013-14 changed this with a new culture and allure to the area. Since then, several quality apartment complexes have been built in the area and locals from all parts of Dallas converge on the area on weekdays for lunch or on weekends for larger events at the market. This area of downtown is still in renewal, and the opportunity for an urban catalyst like the proposed refugee center seeks to promote the ever-changing diversity of the space. If the primary objective of this project is to integrate refugees with the people who already live where they are moving, then few sites could offer the opportunity for interaction like this one.

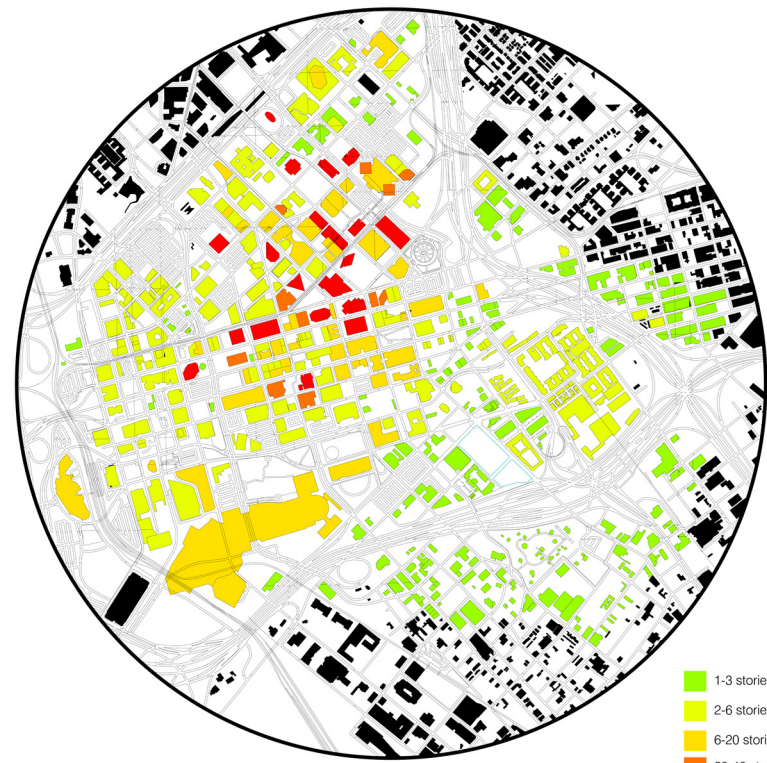


vicinity plan



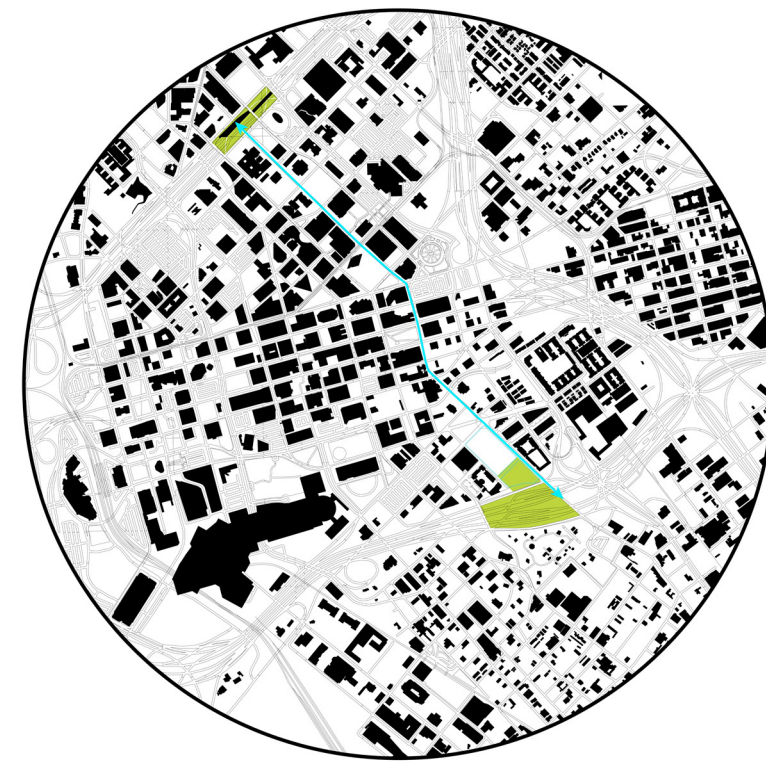
district map



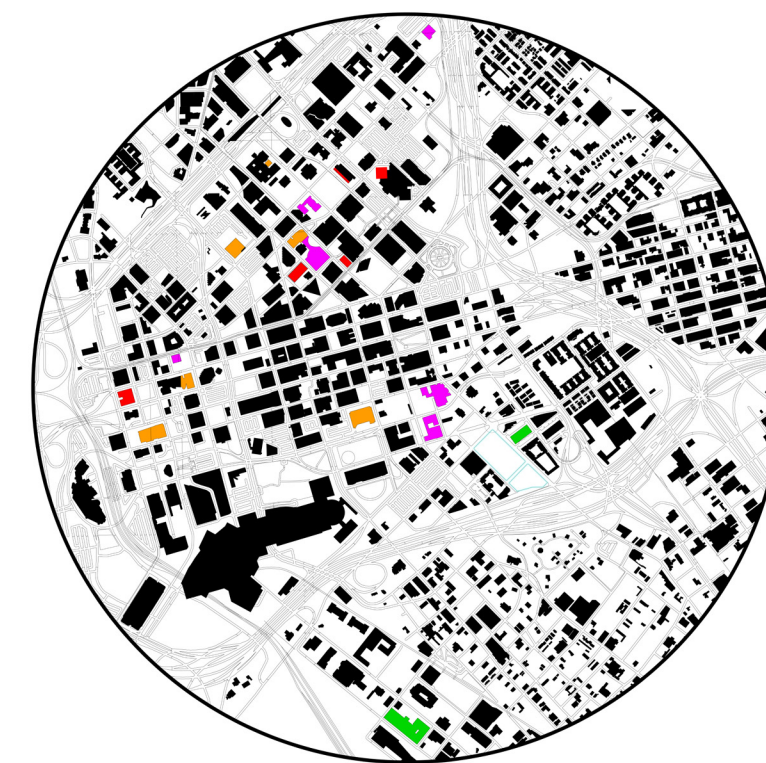


1-3 stories
2-6 stories
6-20 stories
20-40 stories
40+ stories

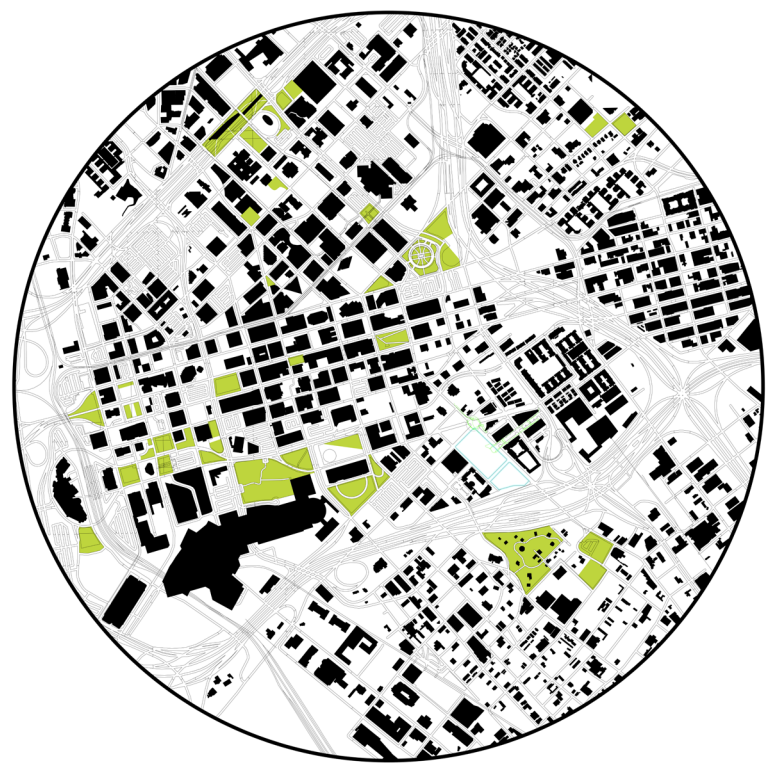
building heights



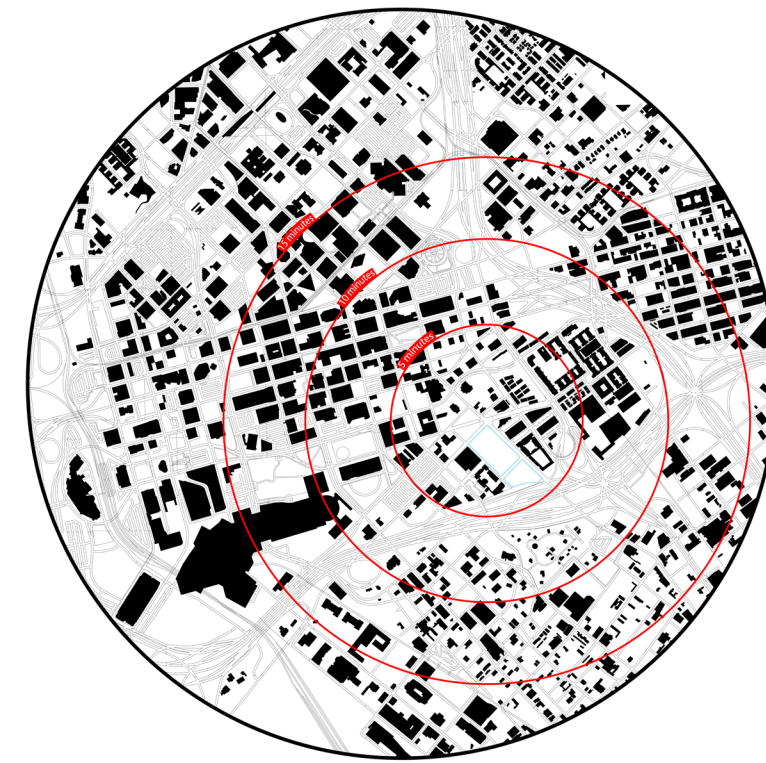
harwood link



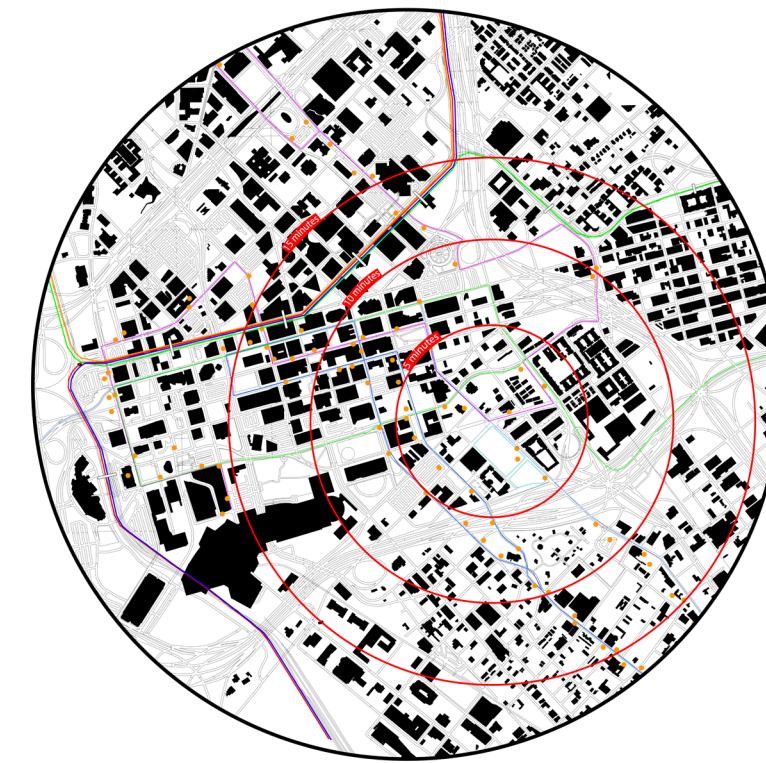
points of interest



green space



walking radius



transit lines

In performing analysis for this specific site, many favorable conditions were present, as well as several that provided guiding constraints that allowed for design to be pushed to its limits within its context.

While downtown Dallas is typically thought of for its iconic skyline comprised of many high-rise buildings, portions of it, including the Farmers Market district, do not have buildings that extend more than six stories and often are only 1-3. In staying consistent with the surrounding buildings, this limited design to an established four-stories.

Downtown is marked by multiple grids creating a somewhat confusing layout at times. One of the only fully through-streets is Harwood, which runs from Uptown through Klyde Warren Park in the north, down through the business district, and between the site and the farmers market as it passes over I-30 out of downtown in the south. This connection provides a unique opportunity for the center to its surroundings in downtown and outside of it. It also encouraged a master planning design of a large green space similar to that of Klyde Warren that marked a gateway into downtown.

Downtown is home to many important points of interest for refugees and the NGO housed at the center. There is a multitude of civic buildings, education centers, healthcare providers, groceries, and places of worship of multiple religions. The majority of downtown is within a 15-minute walking distance and the major transit lines connecting to the rest of the city are at most 10 minutes away and closest at bus stops along the street of the site. Future plans for the DART transit system include lines that run adjacent to the site, allowing for even more ease in transportation to and from the site.

Downtown Dallas has a surprising amount of green space throughout it in both public and private forms. However, one of the major concerns for the Farmers Market district is the lack of green space and public gathering space within it. Paired with the idea of mirroring Klyde Warren in the north, it became apparent early that a large portion of the site should be dedicated specifically to green space. Much of it would need to be public with its relationship to the farmers market and surrounding apartments, but there also was the need for private and semi-private spaces for the residents themselves to use.

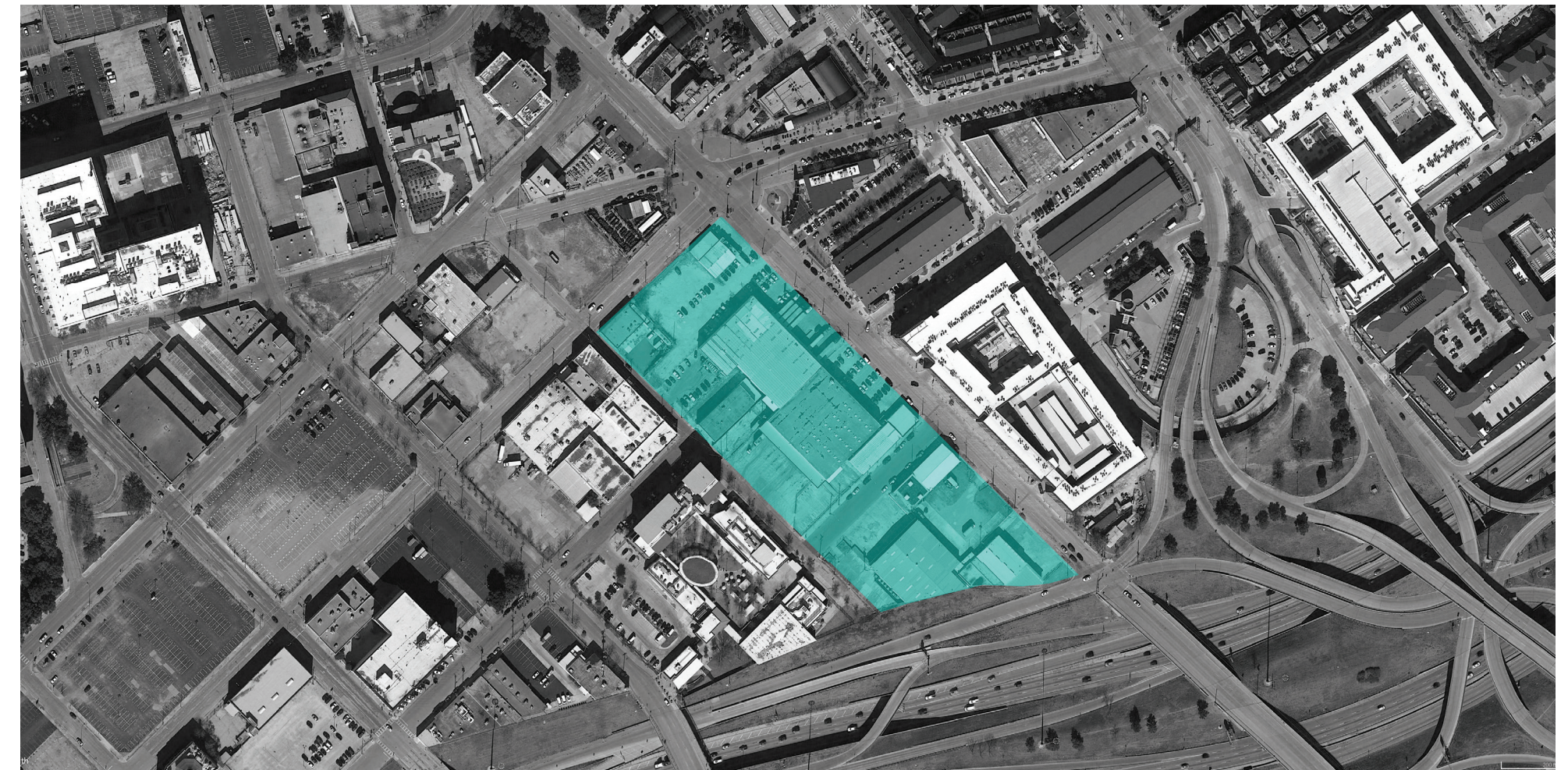


The Dallas Farmers Market has seen dramatic change in the past 5 plus years. A redesign by GFF architects created a more friendly and permanent atmosphere and allowed for greater use during the week when the market was closed for “off” days. Since then, it has attracted people from all over Dallas during market days and is filled throughout the midday as well by people working and living in downtown. Aside from typical open space for vendors, one building has been converted to an enclosed structure that houses permanent vendors with regular hours. These range from niche retailers to standard cafes to specialty ice cream shops. The addition of these businesses not only creates an alternative attraction for the market days, but also allows for the space to be utilized almost constantly throughout the week.

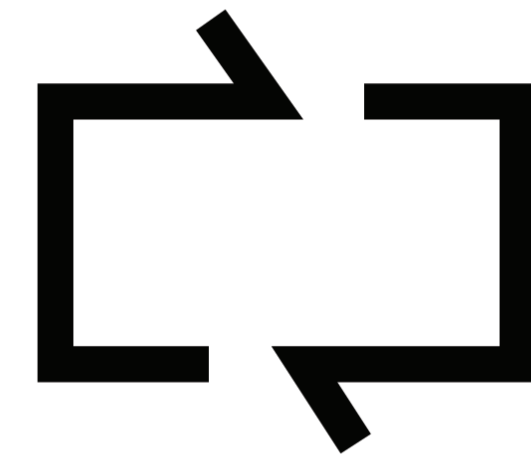
Part of the redesign initiative also saw the completion of a large mid-rise apartment complex next door to the remaining farmers market. This

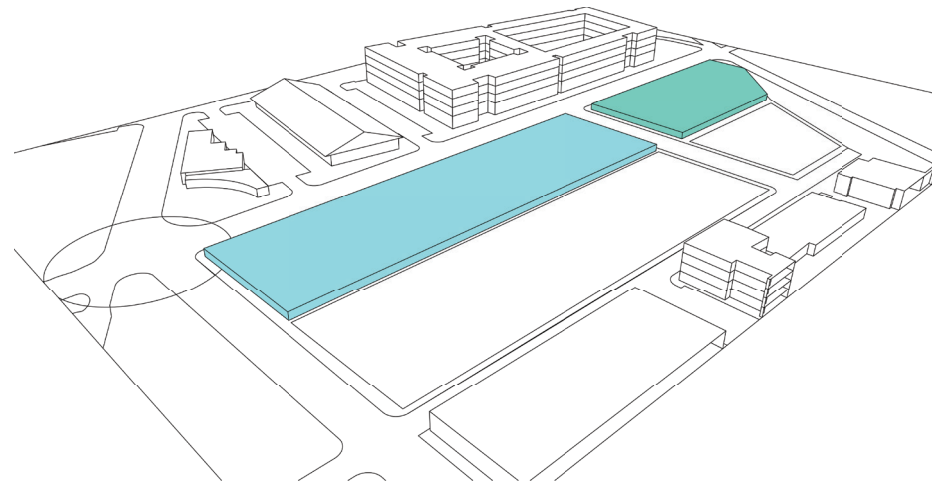
building, along with several other that have been constructed and occupied over the last several years, has brought new permanent residents to this area of downtown and with it a more present and established community ready to make use of its environment.

The materiality of the market provided inspiration for the direction the refugee center would take. Exposed structure and systems were dominant features paying homage to the original farmers market and old buildings from this district. On a more theoretical level, the material and structure presented itself as it was, without hiding anything or creating misconceptions. In the interactions between refugees and locals, the hope is that the two would come together in authentic community and break down unnecessary walls. The design of the existing farmers market and the proposed refugee center would seek to inspire this type of interaction in an effort to better create community between the two groups.



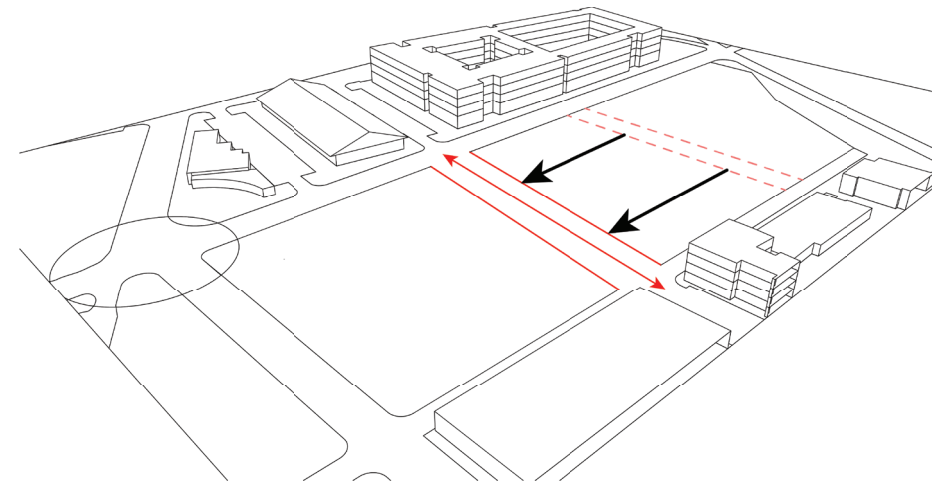
the process





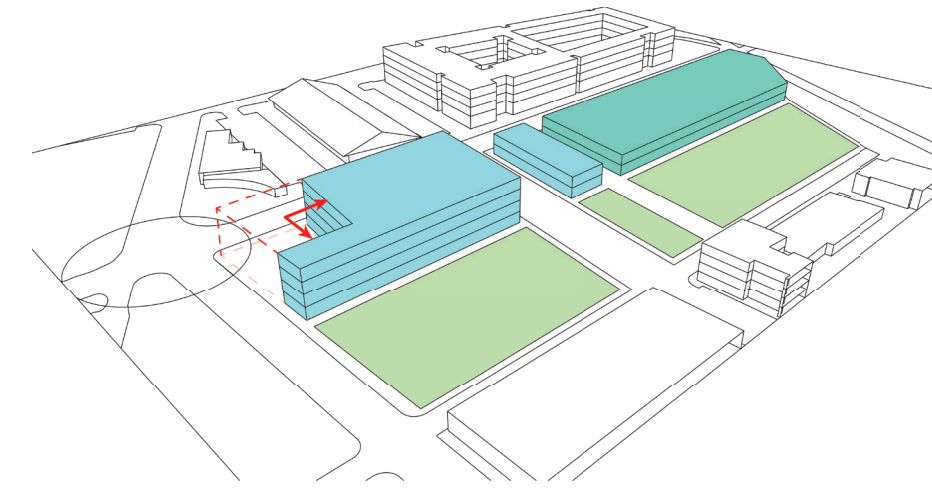
Lay out the primary program

The initial program is split into admin/market spaces and housing. This is originally split by an existing road through the site.



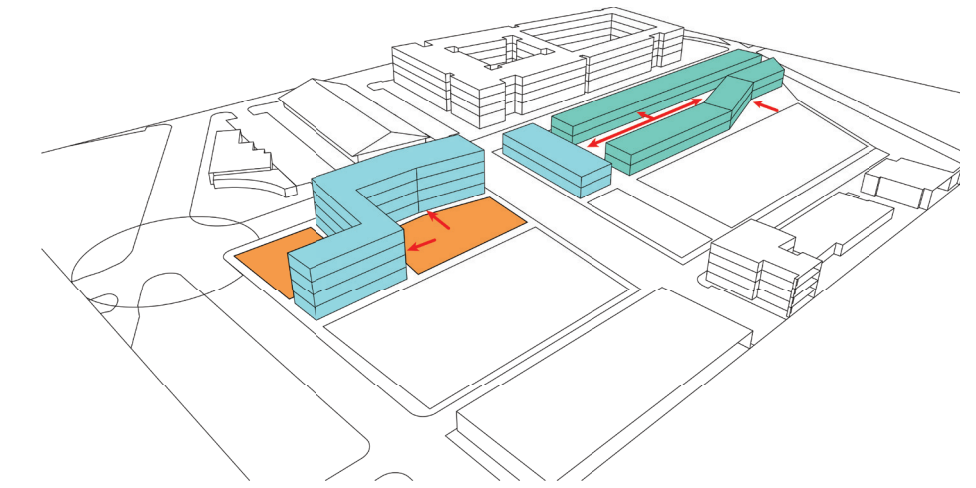
Shift street intersecting the site

The existing street currently dead-ends at both ends of the site due to new construction on adjacent blocks. It is shifted to connect two other streets and provide an established axis with the farmers market.



Address major intersection at corner

The main entrance to the site lies at an intersection that is master planned to be a central hub in future development. In creating an entrance and addressing this node, the building is cut away at the corner to provide a public plaza and defining entrance.

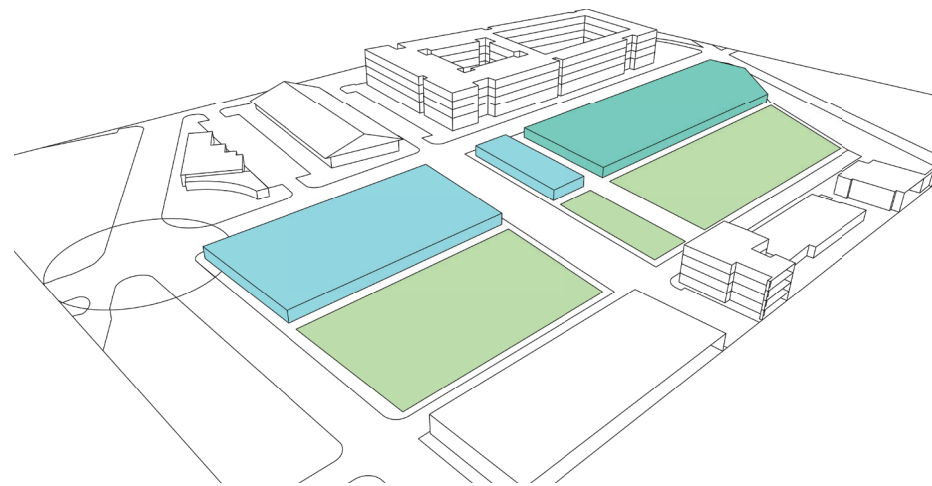


Create exterior spaces within site

In similar moves throughout the rest of the site, portions of the buildings are pushed in and extruded to produce public and private gathering spaces with a focus on exterior interaction.

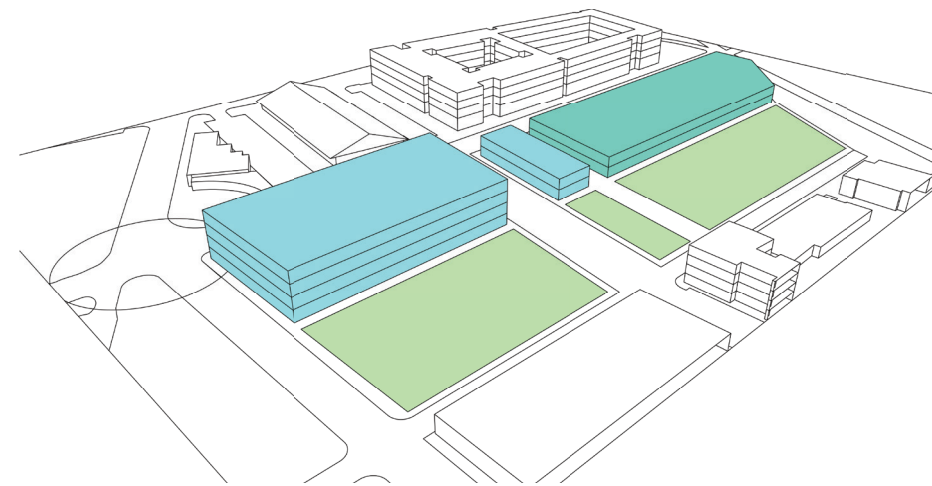
Adapt layout around axis created by the street

The program is adjusted to center around the axis created by the new street. This primarily involves dividing the market space into two elements around it. green space is also accounted for.



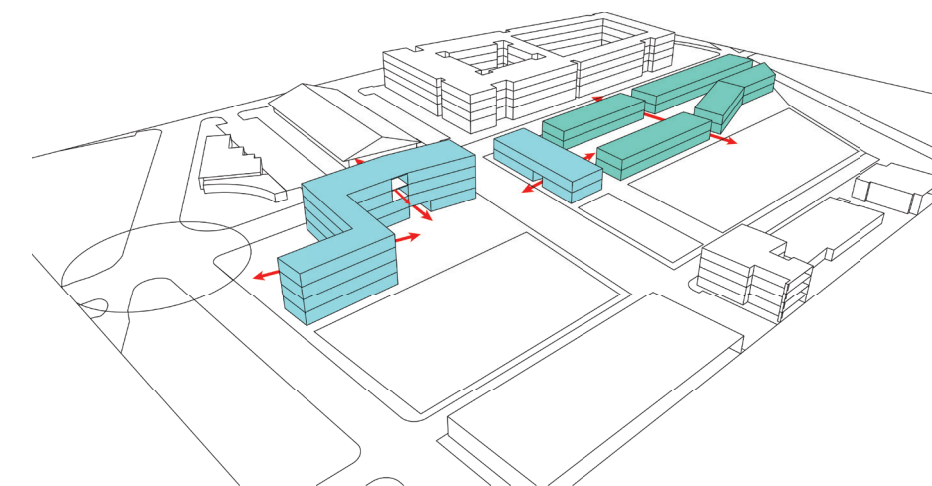
Stack program to match required sf

The program is stacked on an established footprint to account for required square footages and functions. This involves the main building becoming four stories to accommodate admin, housing and market, and doubling the size of the other market and remaining housing.



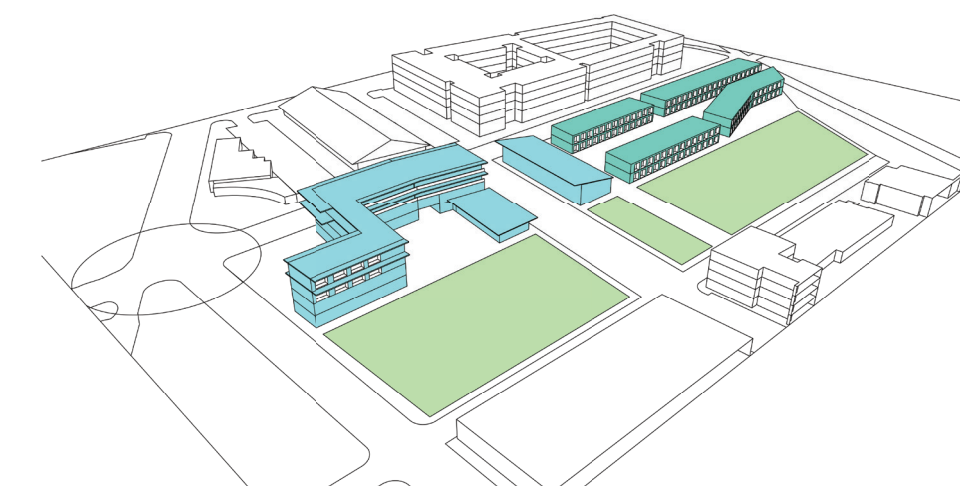
Create circulation through site and buildings

To further connect within and outside of the site, circulation corridors are created along major axes and towards places of interest. Several of these also take advantage of prevailing winds to help circulate air within the buildings as well as the outdoor spaces.



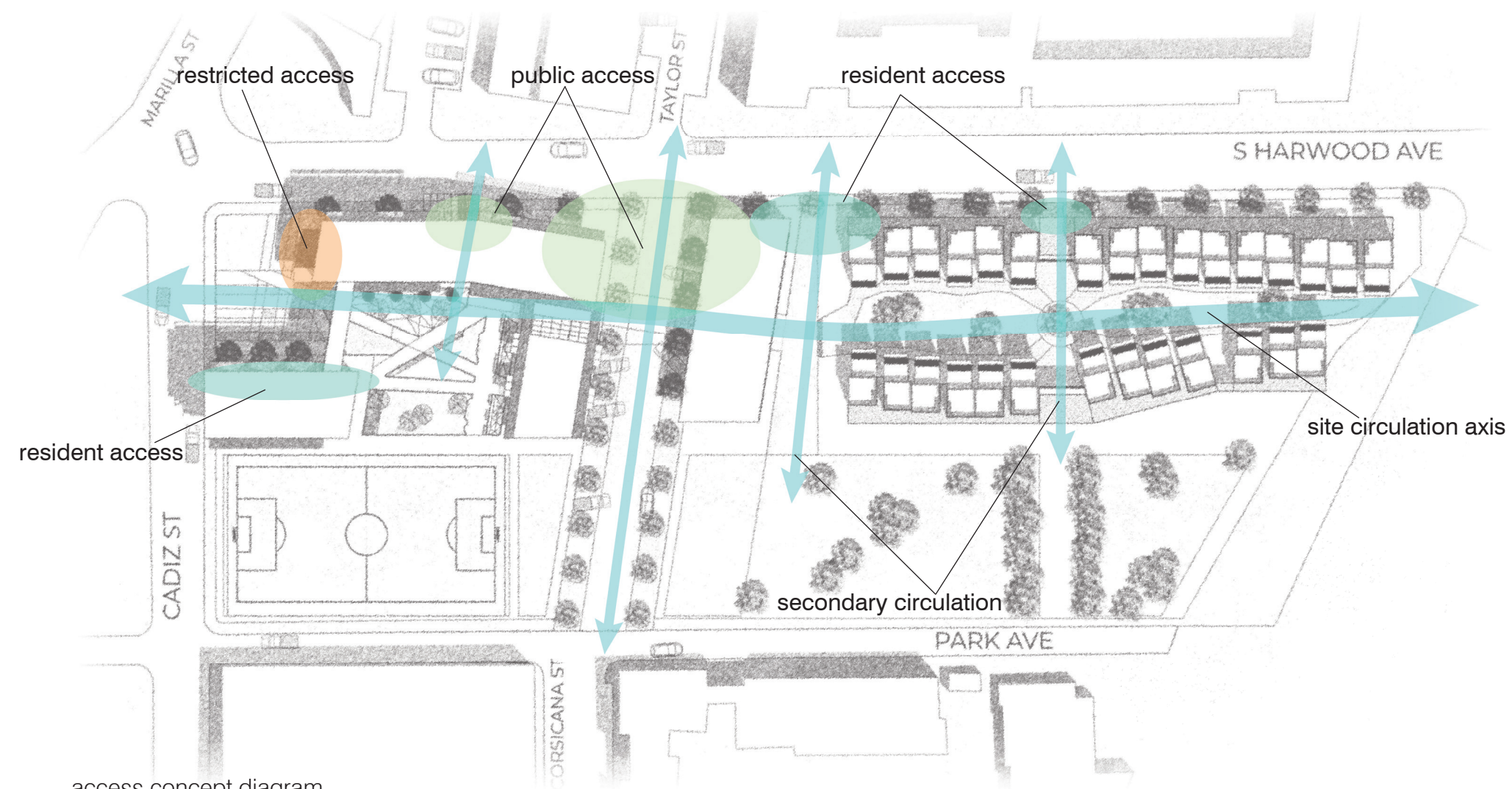
Final refinements

The building is finalized with smaller adjustments including shading, access, sustainability, code requirements.





circulation concept sketch



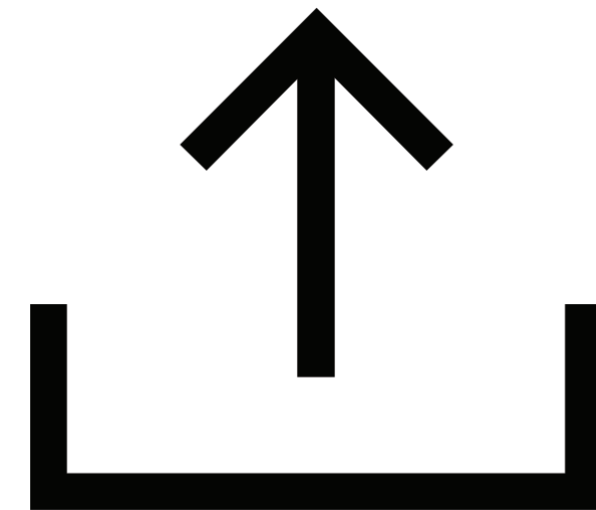
access concept diagram

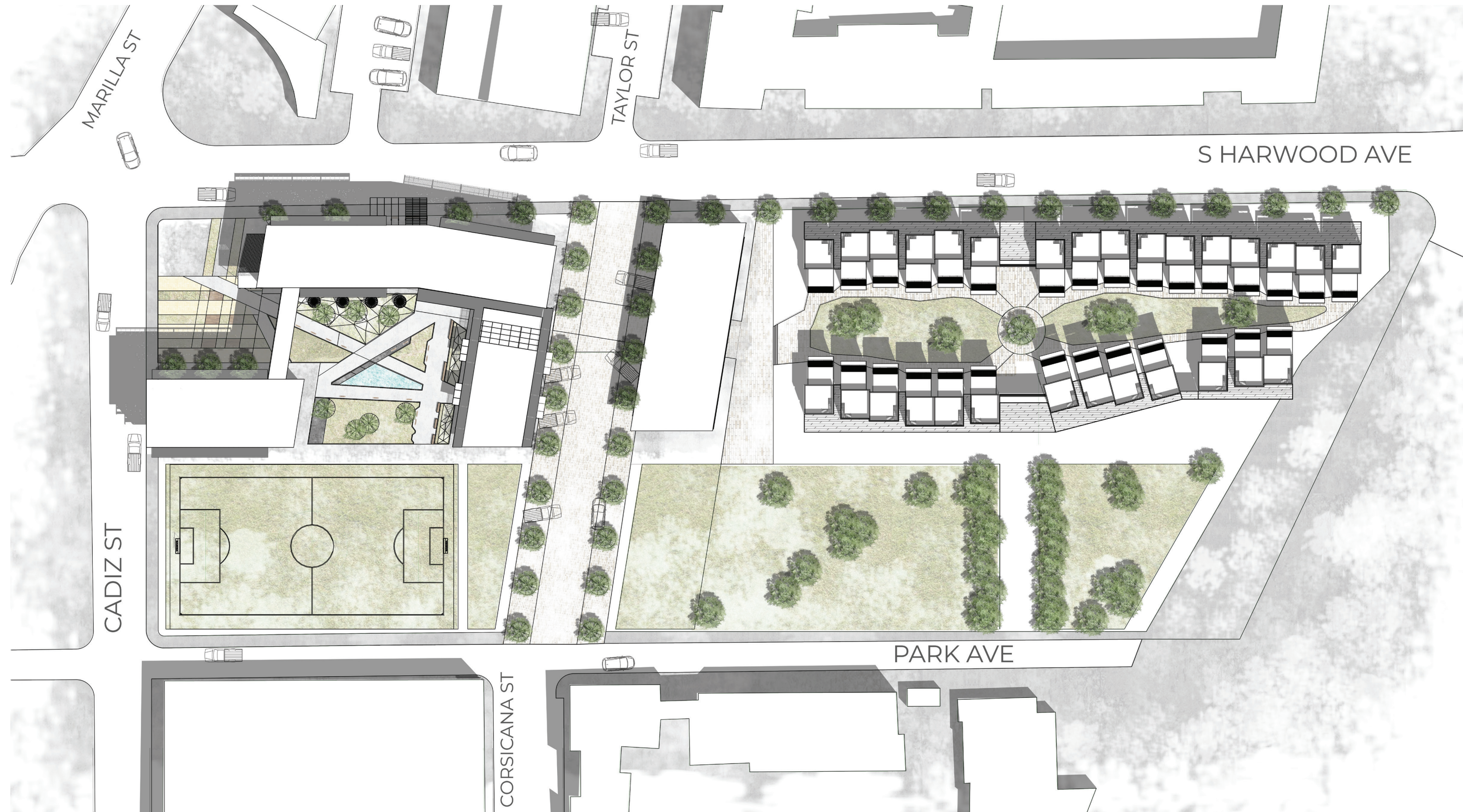
One of the major concepts for site layout came from the establishment of several axes throughout the site connecting to points at adjoining blocks and then points within the site. Each axis would eventually become its own circulation corridor providing specific access dealing with the program it corresponded with.

Two primary axes existed, one running vertically through the site in plan with relation to the farmers market, and one running horizontally which tied the individual pieces of the site together. Along this, attention was paid to assigning specific paving and features to emphasize this route. Even in places where it intersects the main building, it was represented either through interior adjustments to the architecture or more dramatic exterior punctures through the building. The vertical axis became a central pedestrian-friendly street that would extend from the farmers market through the site.

The secondary axes related mostly to connecting specific site program to each other and their points of access from the edge of the site. This meant restricting access to admin and housing areas and allowing for more public access in market areas. Semi-public access was also needed in portions of the market and housing. These varying conditions required separate design features, from architectural elements suggesting public/private movement to security features like card readers at entrances to buildings.

the output

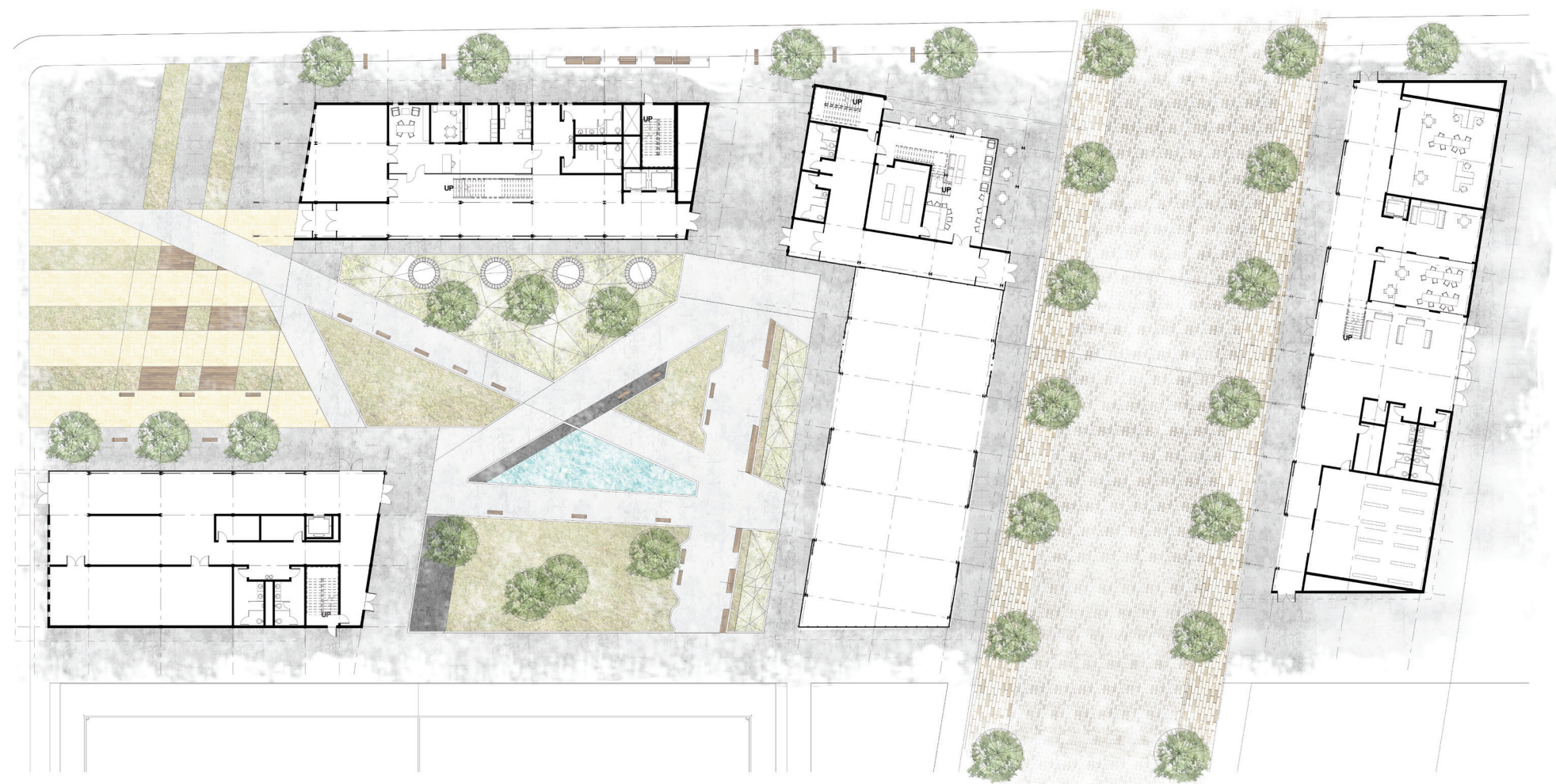




In the final deliverable of the project, the site became divided into two main portions, the more public side with admin, apartment housing, and market space; and the more private side consisting of townhomes and their semi-private green space. The public side was further subdivided around three exterior spaces, the entrance plaza, the semi-public feature plaza inside the building's perimeter, and the public market street. These three areas became the focal point for design and represented the portions of the project taken well beyond master planning into detail.

The main entrance is located at the most accessible point of the site where new residents would most likely be arriving from. This provides immediate access to the administration areas as well as housing and support that most residents would be placed in. The rest of this building houses a public cafe and the open market space. It is centered around a plaza defined by paths connecting the entrances to the building and different types of green space. Moving right along the plan shows the market street with both market types flanking it. This street connects with the farmers market to the north and another through-street to the south. East of the market is the townhome area. This area has restricted access for the residents. The arrangement of units creates smaller community clusters and allows for smaller outdoor spaces that branch off from the main central one.

The southern strip of the site was reserved only for green space. One corner houses a medium-sized soccer field with semi-public access designed to be used by residents and guests alike. The rest of the green space was master planned to include walkable park space, a large community garden, and buffer space from the nearby highway. Original master planning for this project included extending this green space over the highway to form a connection with the district south of downtown. As the highway condition is similar to that of Woodall Rodgers on the north side of downtown, the intent was to create a mirrored version of Klyde Warren Park on the south side of downtown to create a strong link between downtown and the surrounding districts.

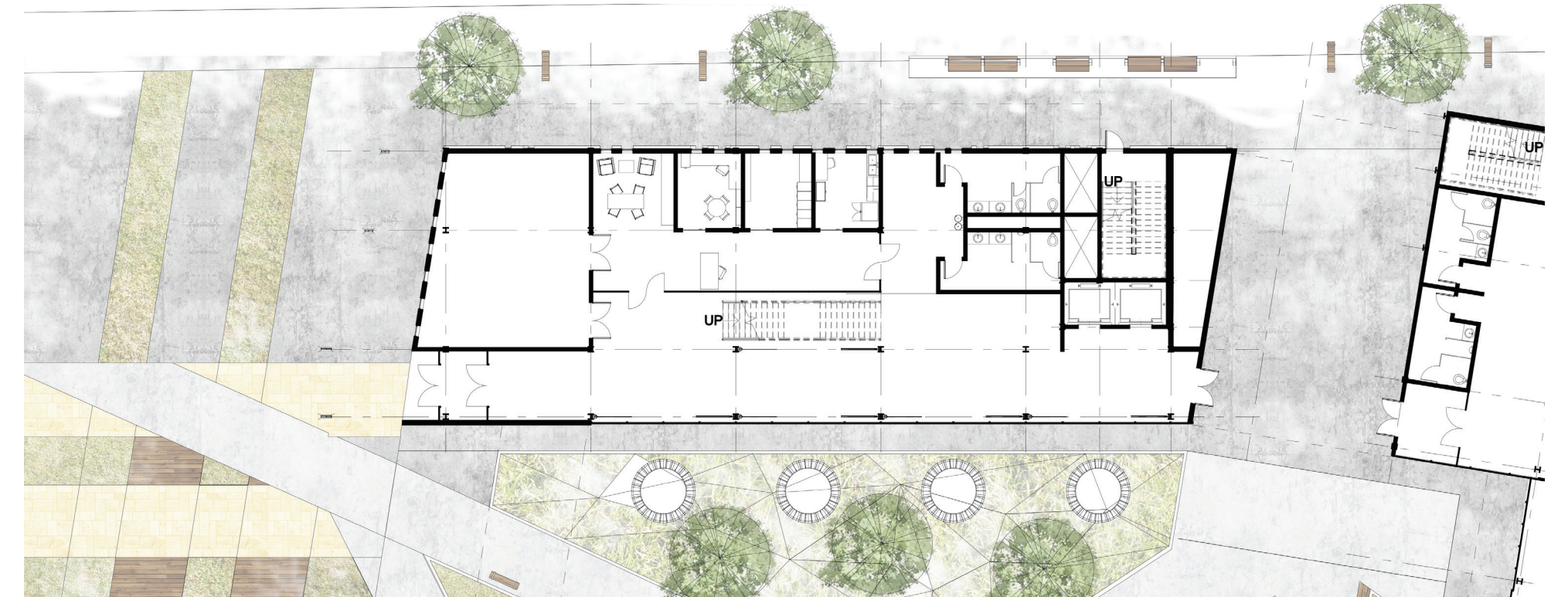


first floor

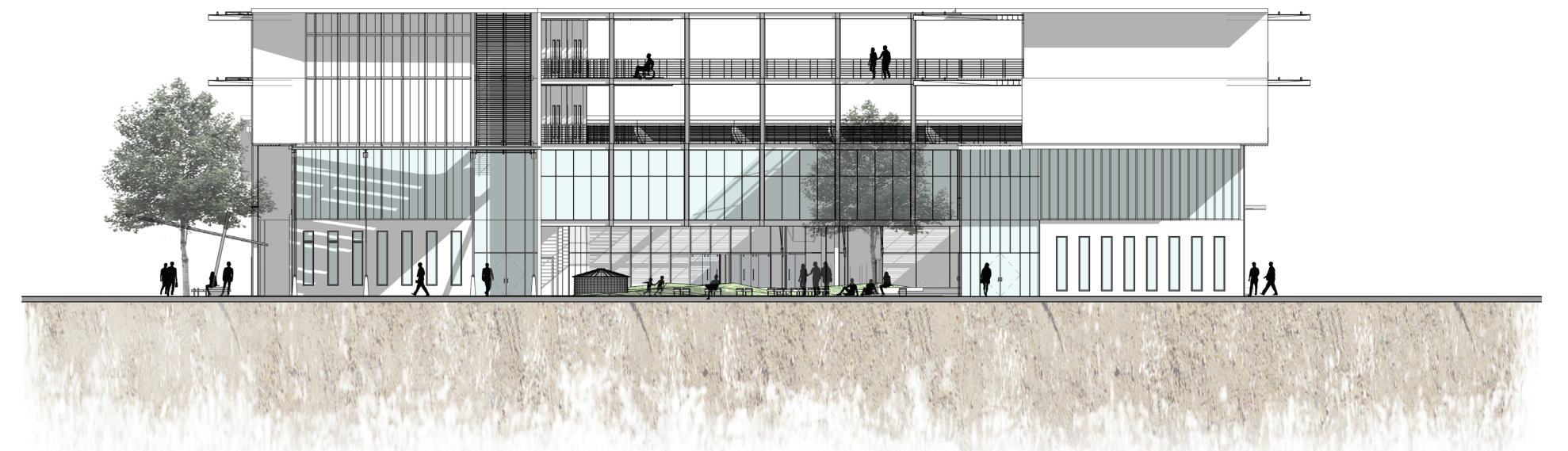
As a refugee arrives at the center, they would enter the main entrance and be greeted by reception and directed onward from there. There are two separate paths to where their initial checking in could occur. Many would proceed upstairs to an elevated, open office. This space contains multiple types of meeting spaces to provide for different types and sizes of meetings. The elevated space gives the refugees a sense of importance in

their meeting, that it requires a special place to be held, as well as security from being separate from public movement outside and on the lower floor of the building. The openness visually allows for a sense of security and connection to space outside their immediate surroundings. The alternate path would direct the refugees to a private and secured suite downstairs. This area is intended for people with PTSD who would

require special counseling before anything else or for more private matters that people would be uncomfortable discussing in a more open environment. The lower suite also contains a medium-sized multipurpose room designed to accommodate events and gatherings specific to the residents and the operations of the NGO such as clinics, classes, and registration events. This allows for the space to be monitored by the staff.

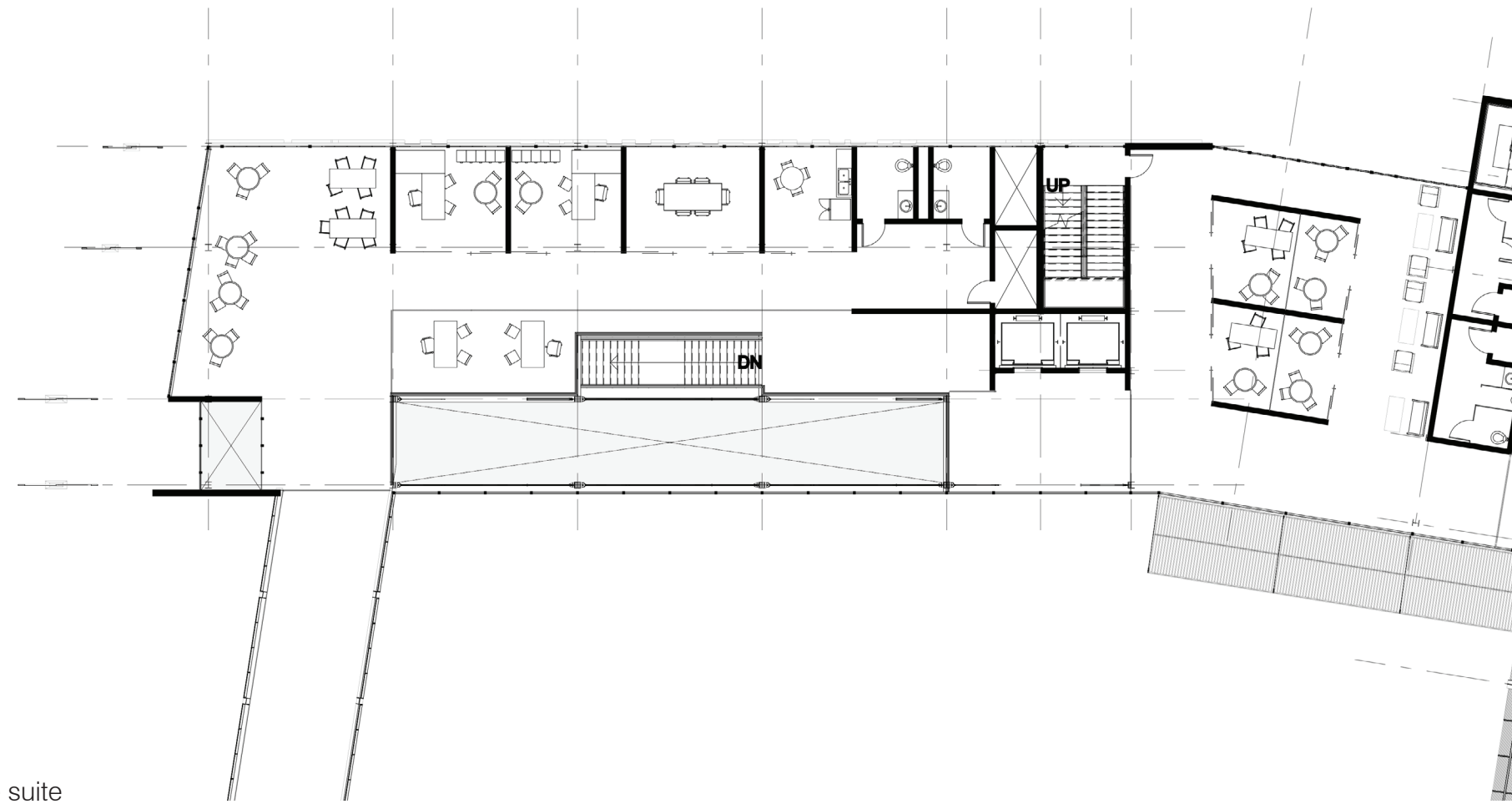


office enlargement

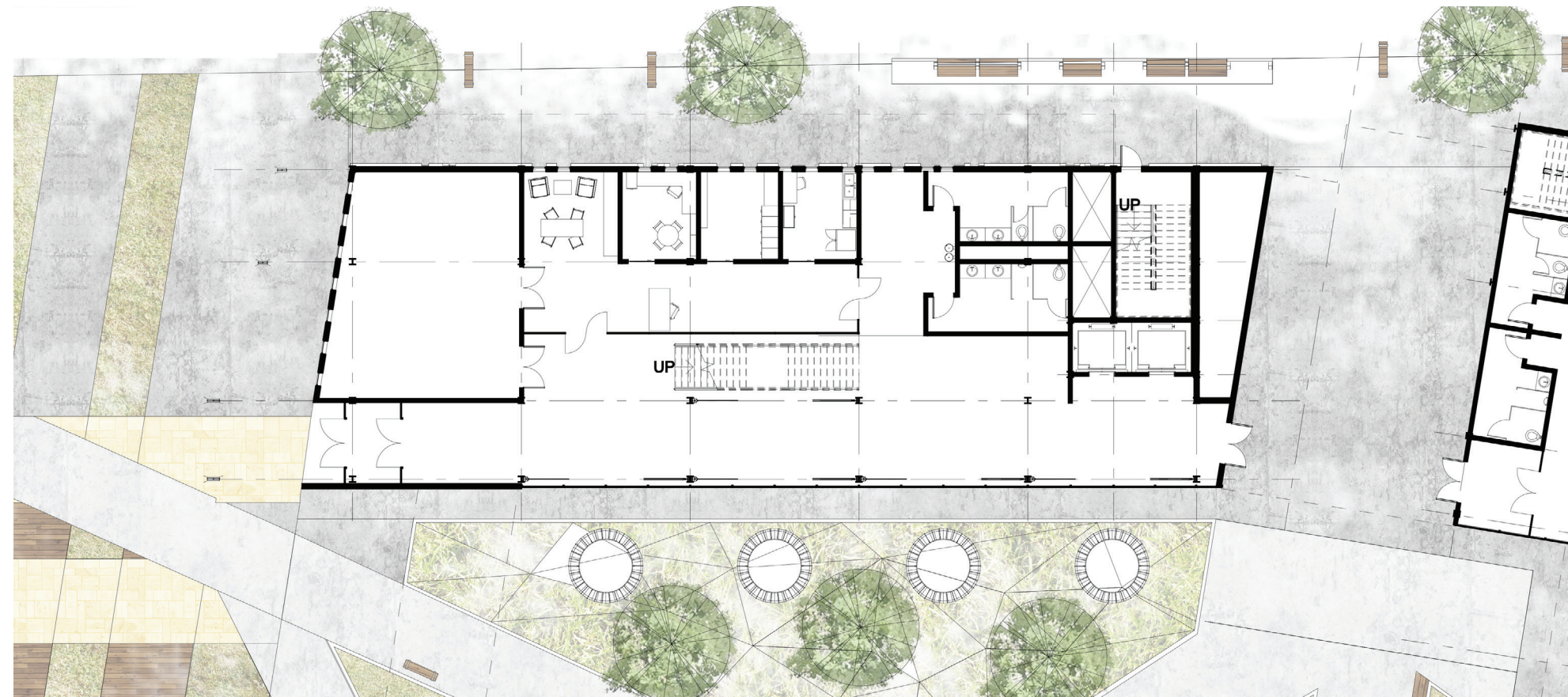


west elevation

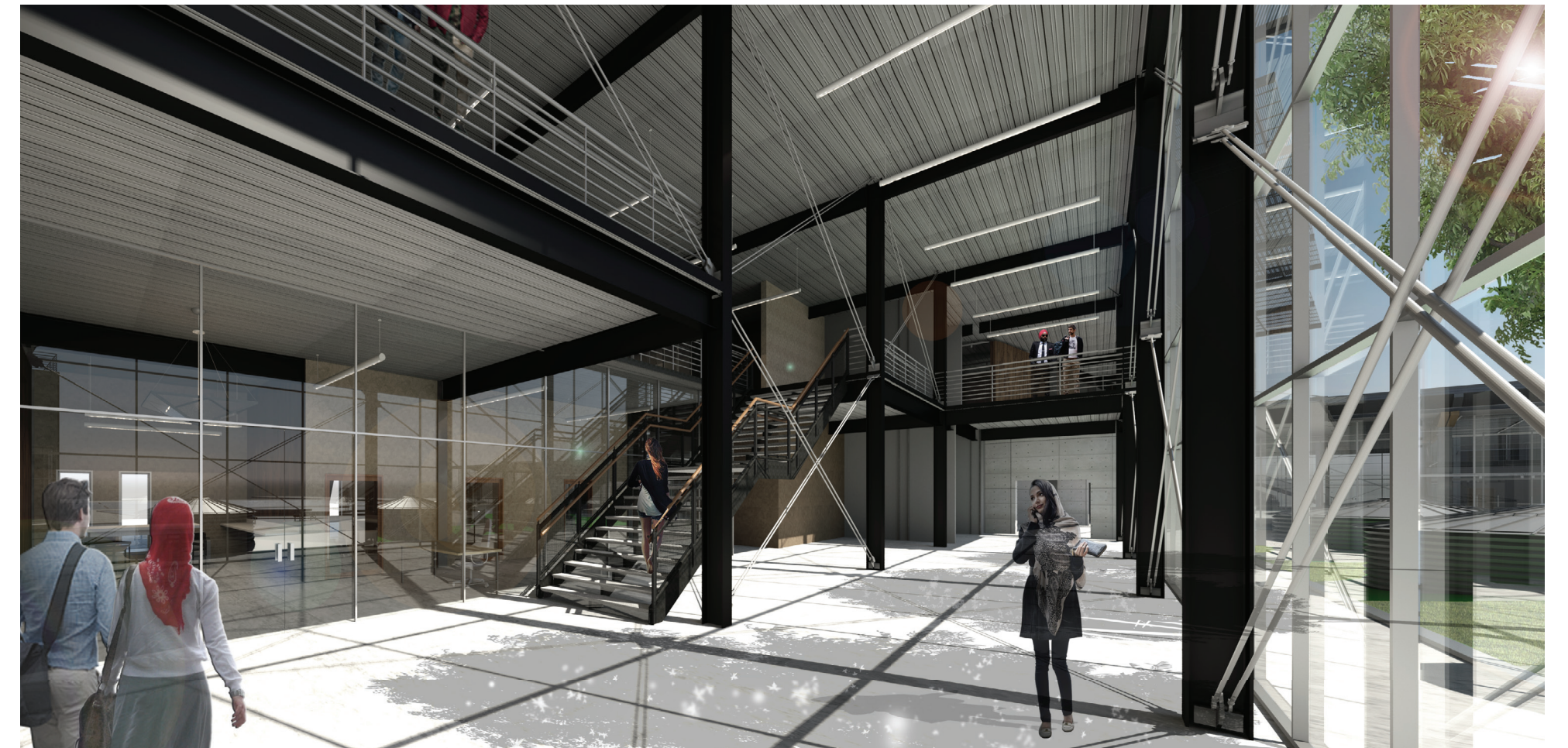


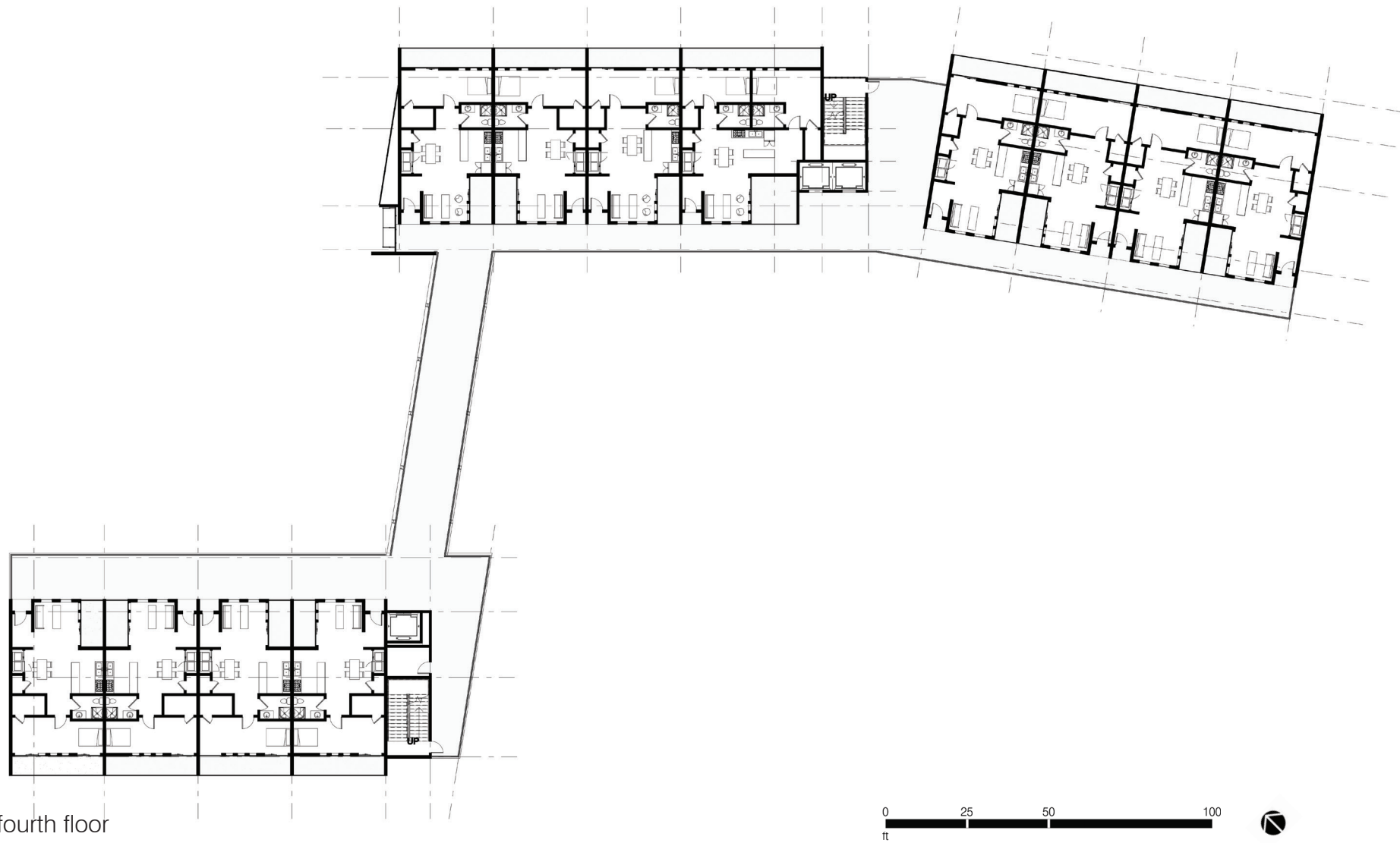


open office suite



private office suite





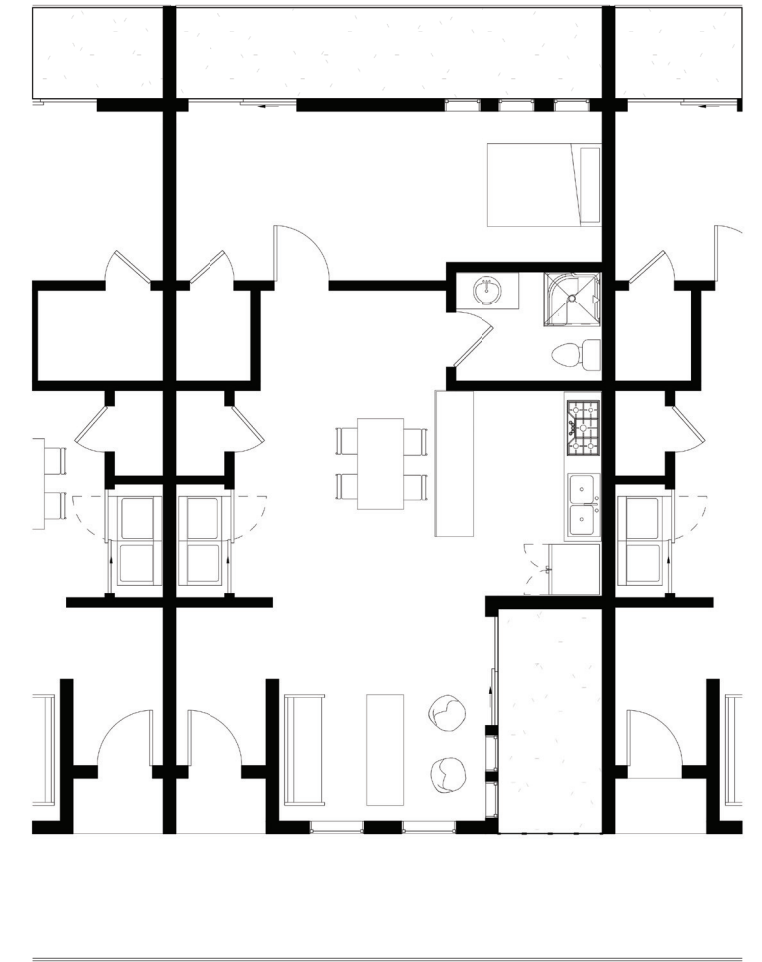
third/fourth floor

The apartments are located on the third and fourth floors of the main building. There are one and two-bedroom options that each contain living, dining, kitchen, and laundry. Providing all of these features allows for more independence for the refugees in being able to provide for daily needs themselves. Each has access to a terrace on both sides, one on the entrance side which can be opened up to other residents passing by, and a balcony on the street side.

The layout draws inspiration from Muslim housing concepts as a majority of refugees come from countries with predominant Muslim architectural design. Although these concepts are touched upon in the apartments, they are more prevalent in the townhomes shown later. The entrance to the apartment is indirect, providing privacy inside the space. The apartment is also layered by terms of intimate spaces,

beginning with the living area, then dining, and then cooking. The bedroom is the most private space and located at the back of the space and is closed off from the rest. Other considerations include the use of shading screens and material choice.

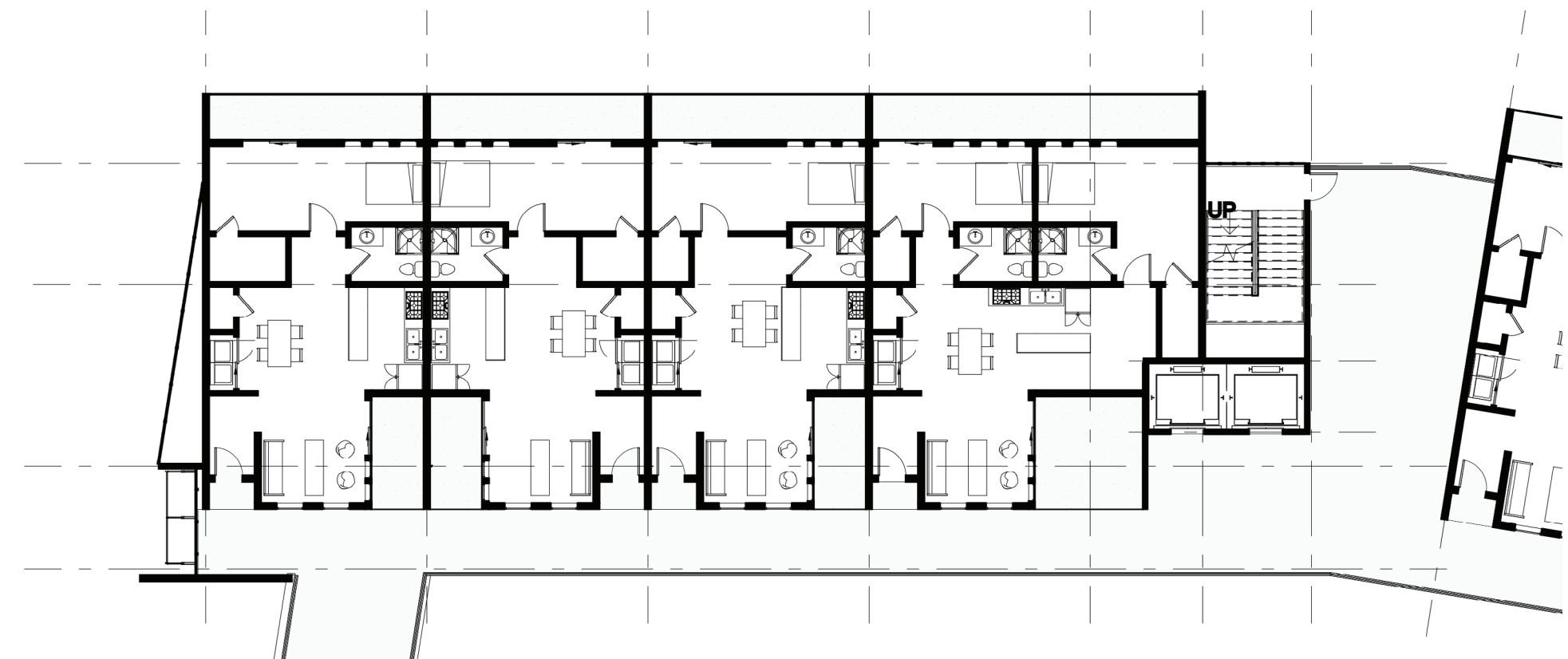
The apartments are clustered as well into groups of four. This helps promote community between residents and providing a better sense of place. There also is the concern of conflict not just between refugees and locals, but between different refugees, especially between people groups. Clustering is one step in addressing this issue, as it allows the NGO to place people with groups that would be the most supportive of them and avoiding conflict. Further separation could occur by diving between floors and restricting access between the walkways bridging the northern and southern parts of the building.



typical apartment plan



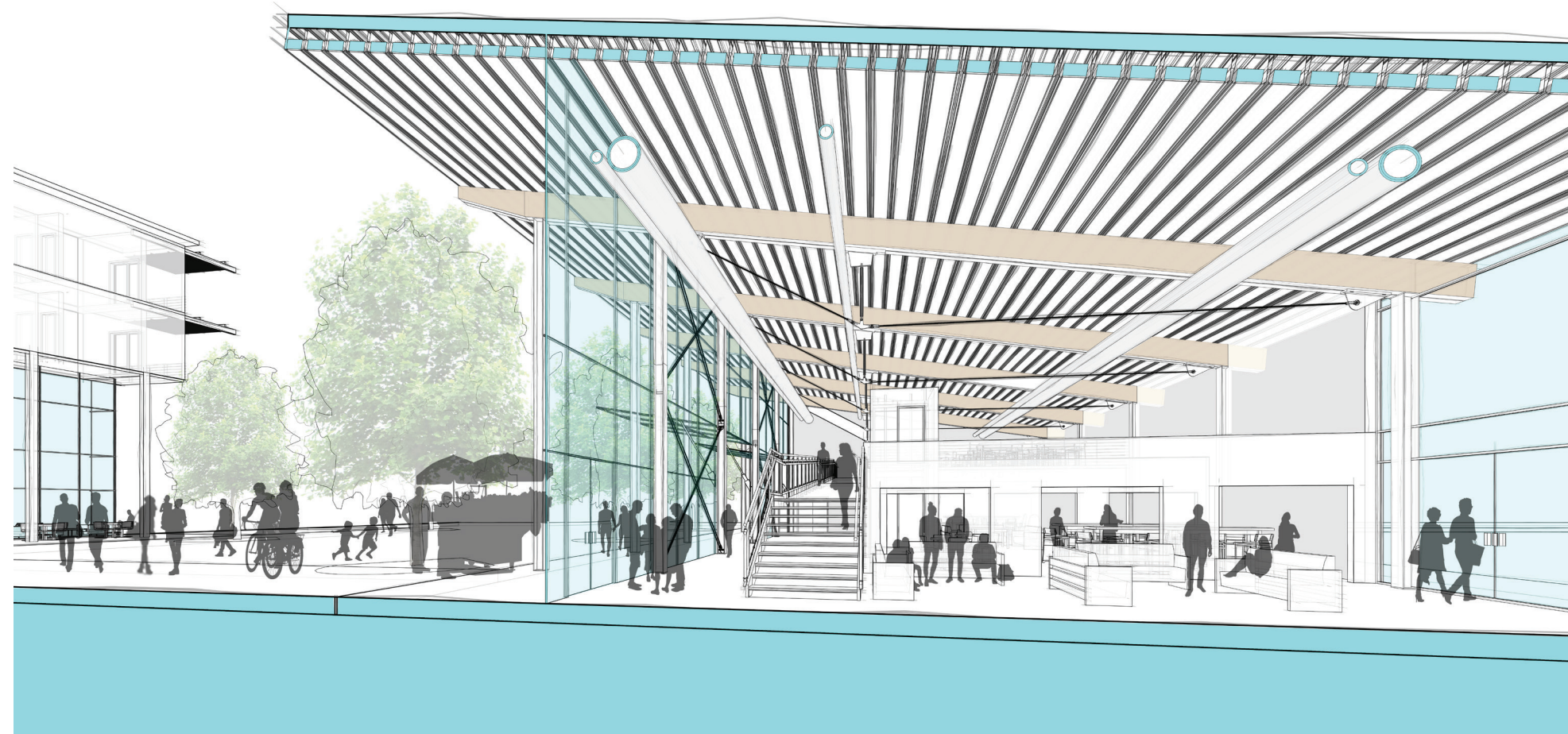
west-east section perspective



apartment grouping



second floor



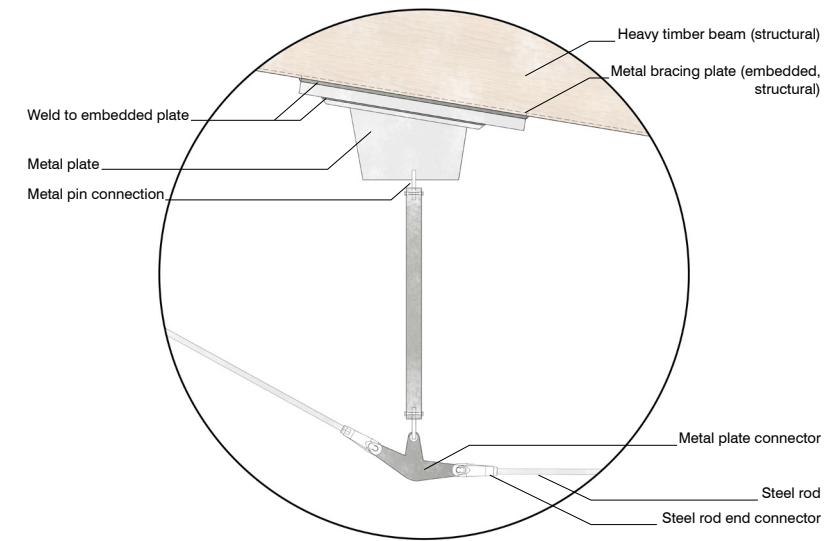
market section perspective



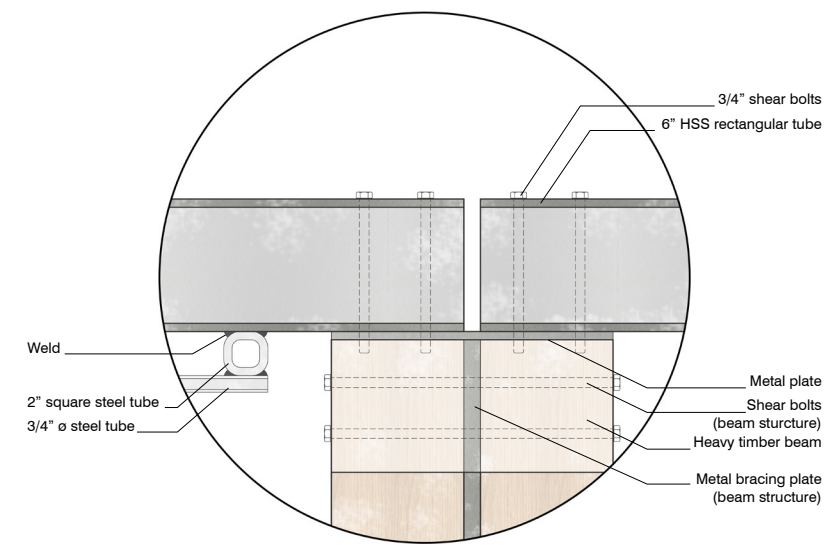
Exposing the structure was important to the overall concept of breaking down walls and also contributed to personal strengths of design in working with details. Special care was taken in ensuring wherever major structure was exposed, it was designed so as to be featured.

Material also played a key role in this project. There was a balance between providing

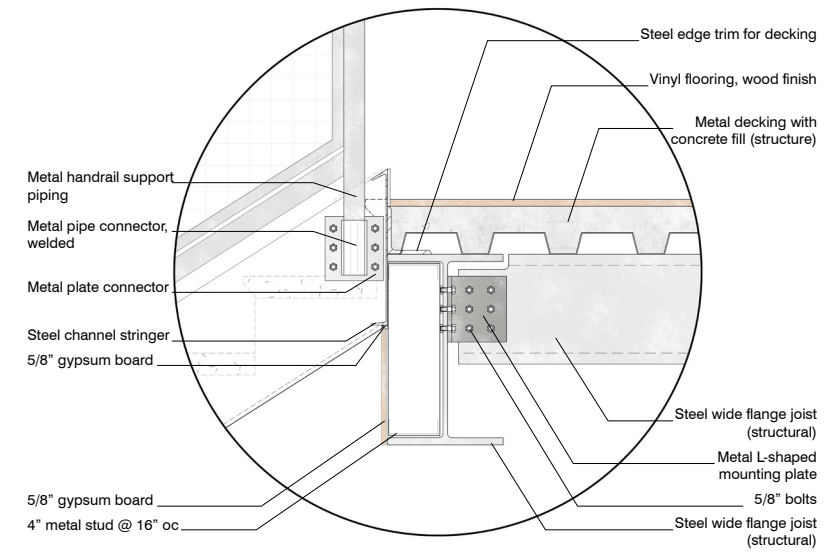
material that would relate to the context but also provide a sense of familiarity to the refugees. Common elements like plaster and stone helped bridge these two sides. Natural elements were also used, especially in housing areas, to provide a comfortable atmosphere for the residents. Materials also corresponded to similar elements in the existing farmers market creating continuity between the two buildings.



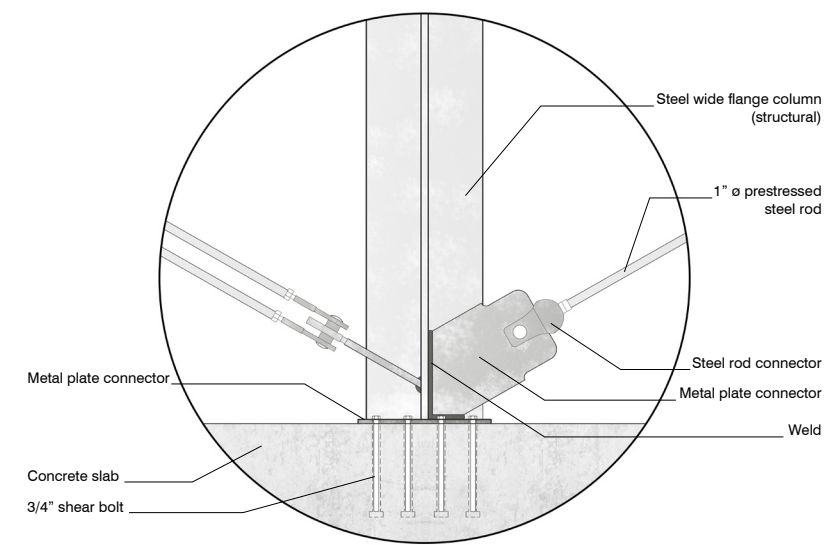
market truss detail



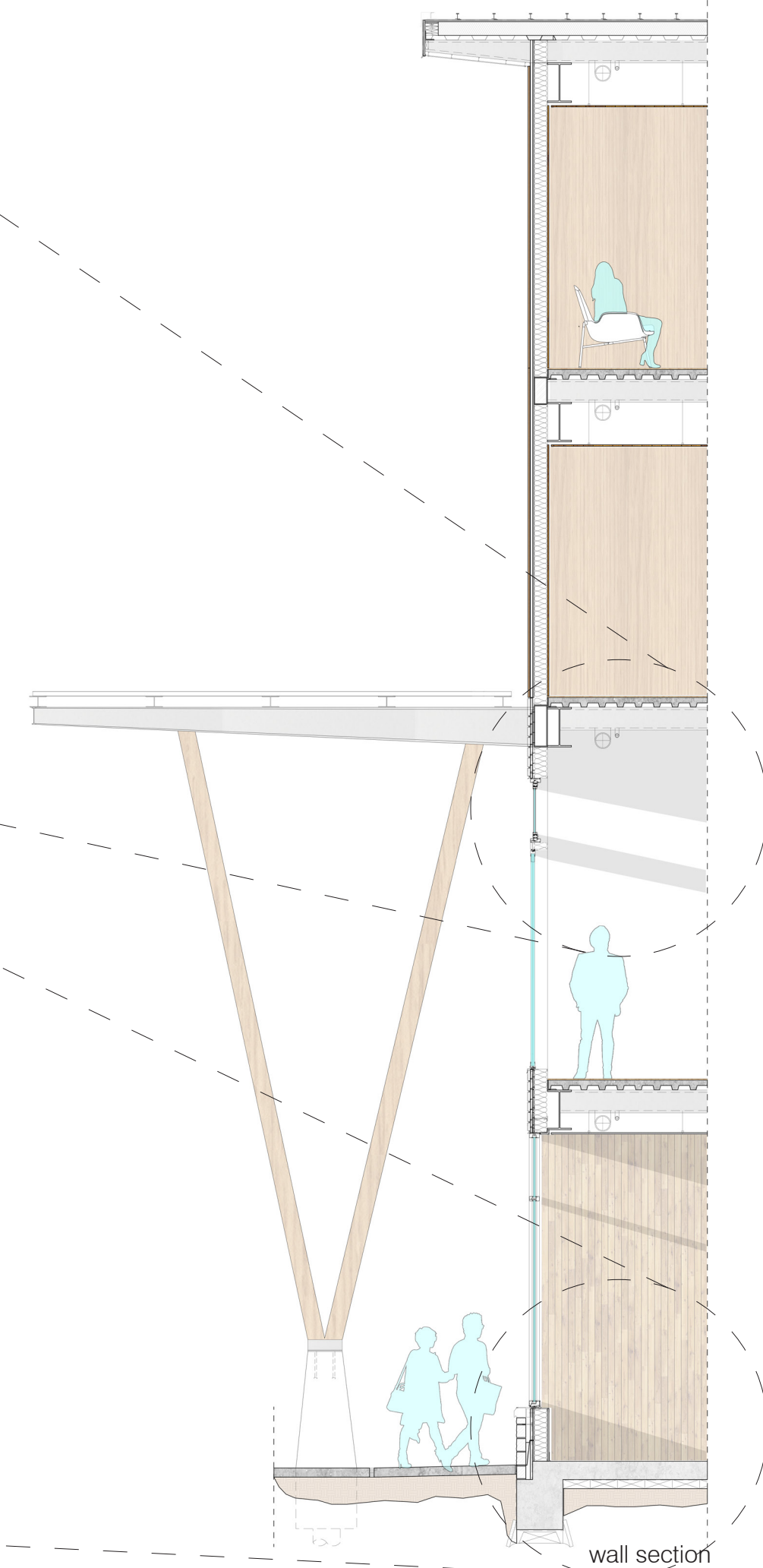
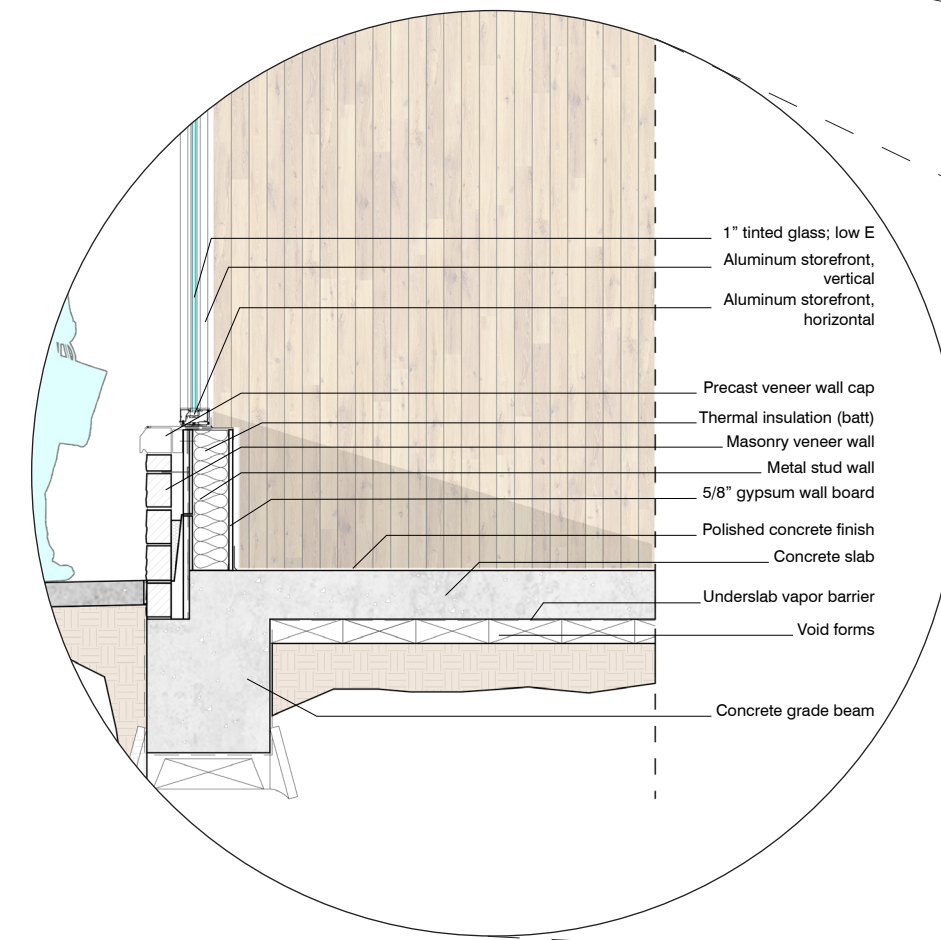
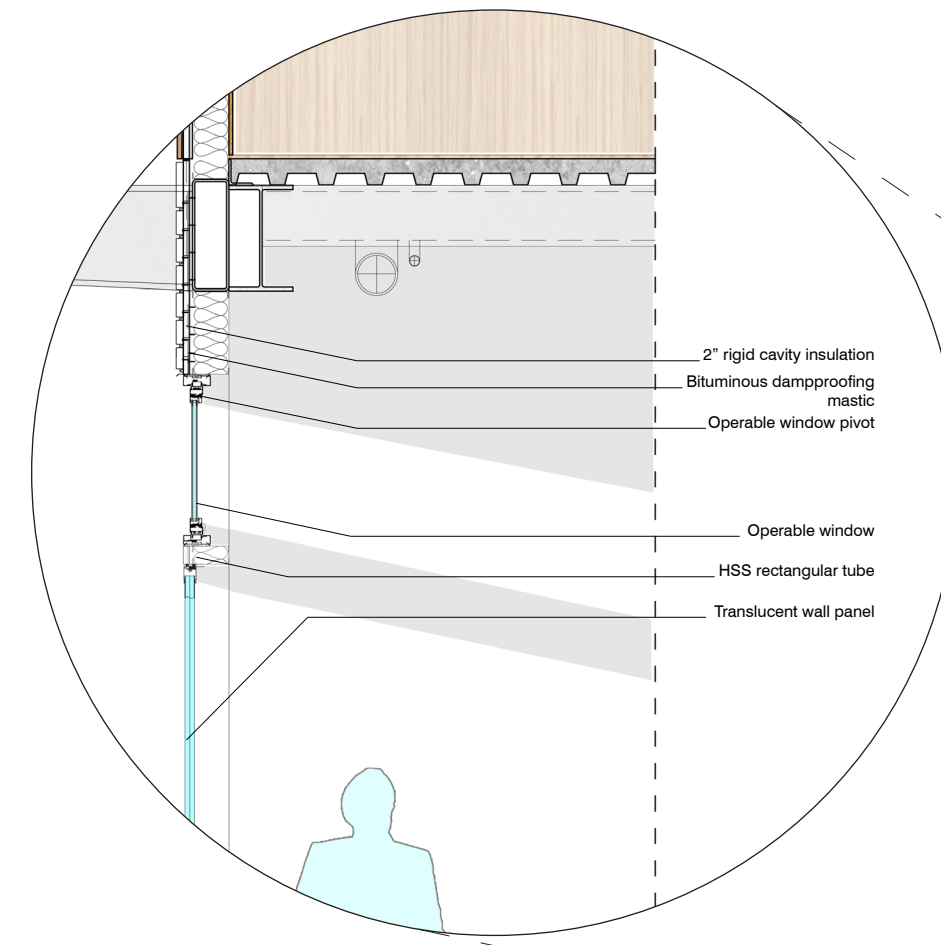
shading structure detail

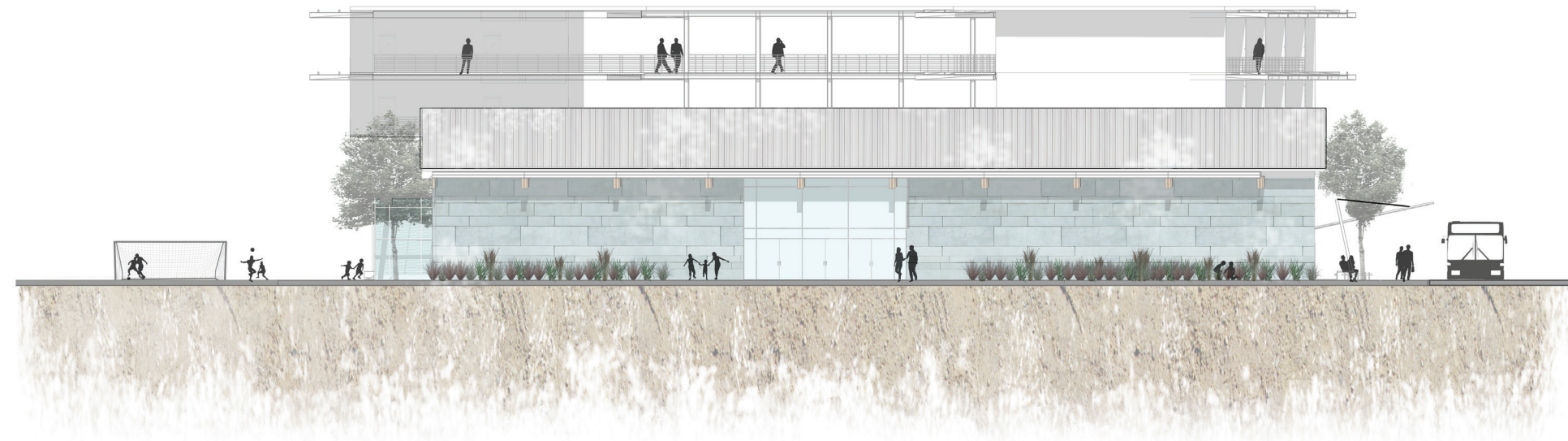


feature stair detail



x-bracing detail





east elevation



north elevation



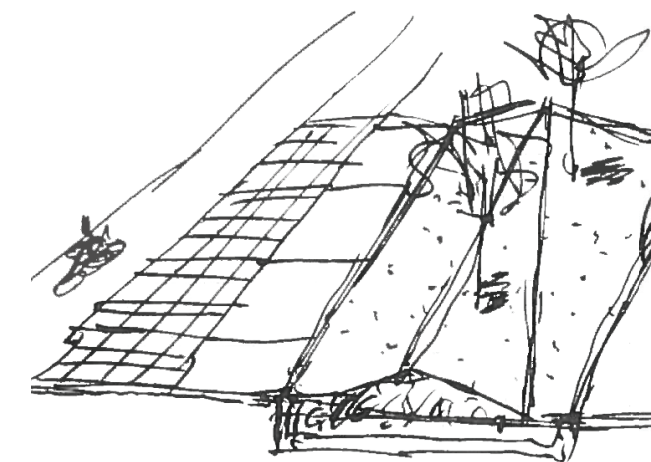
south elevation

In dealing with a project of this scope and scale, sustainability must play a key role. With much of the project being landscape design, this area presented much opportunity to integrate sustainable elements. With this area of downtown featuring a very flat terrain, water runoff was a primary concern. Passive systems were also featured in helping with building heating/cooling loads as orientation of the site resulted in some sides facing west and south.

Much of the plaza design incorporates some of these elements. Softscaping was preferred to assist with drainage. In particular, several "mini" bioswales were included along the edges of the feature plaza to help alleviate stormwater runoff as well as providing a buffer space between the building and pedestrian access. Paving was considered so that pavers chosen would drain well and not hold water like solid concrete, which

was used sparingly. Large water collection cisterns were also placed in the plaza to collect runoff water from both the plaza and the building itself. In coordination between the building and the plaza, tree placement played a part in reducing heating load on the building. With several of the facades featuring curtain walls while still facing southwest, cooling the building would typically take a large amount of energy. To combat this, in conjunction with shading structures over most glass on the building, trees tall enough to cover two stories are placed to provide additional shade to the buildings.

The buildings themselves also utilize passive systems. Several "dogruns" pierce through the building to take advantage of prevailing winds, and most windows, including ones in the office spaces, are operable to utilize passive cooling.

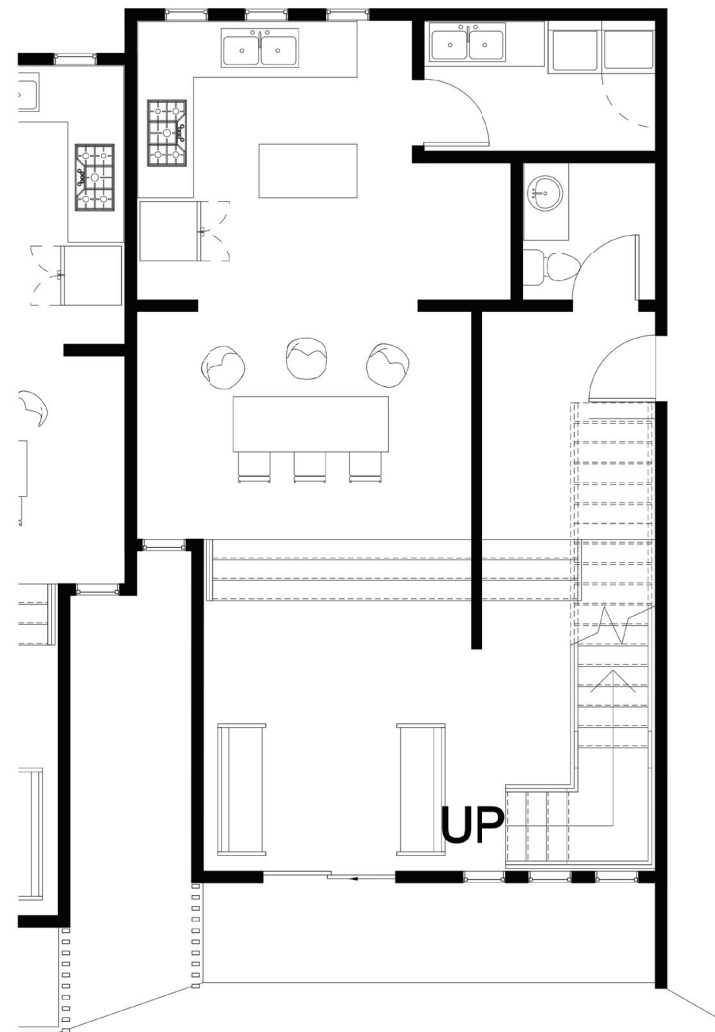


paving + terrain concept sketch

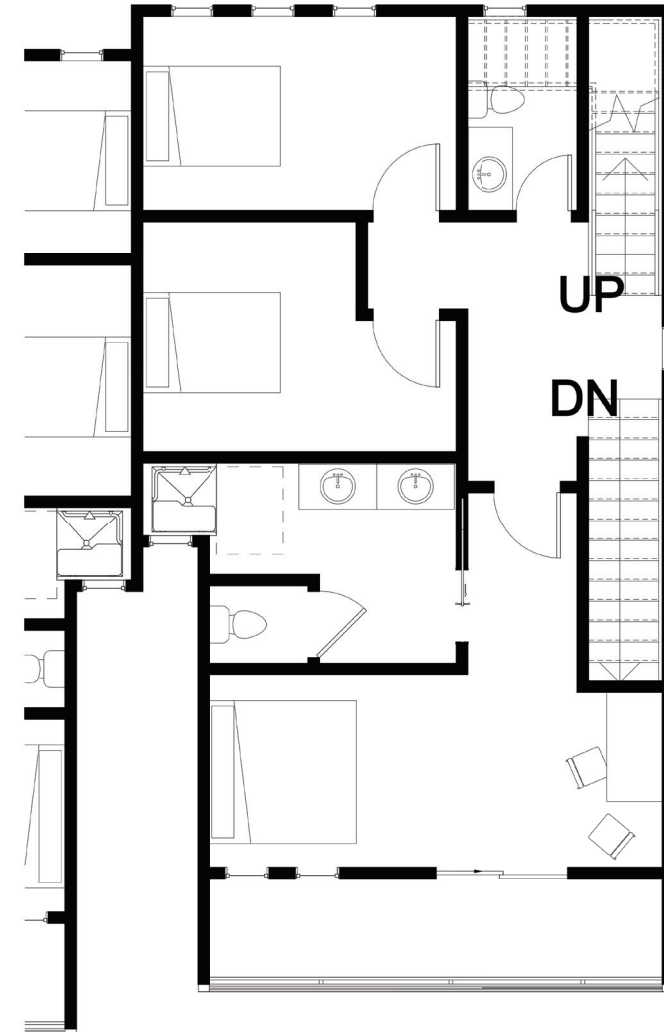


sustainability + landscape





townhome first floor



townhome second floor



The eastern portion of the site contains the larger residential units. These townhomes are designed for larger groups, typically families, of 3-6 people, and offer a more relaxed atmosphere than that of the apartments.

The influence of Muslim housing design is stronger here than in the apartment, with layouts being a bit more defined than implied. Again, the entrance is not direct. For one, it cannot be viewed from the street as it runs perpendicular to it. Once you enter, you must make your way down a brief hallway before you enter the living area, the most public of spaces. This living area is recessed down a few feet in order to simulate basement living spaces utilized regularly in desert climates. While the overall effects on climate are relatively small compared to a full basement, the psychological effect is still present. The stairway separating it from the dining space creates a visual and physical barrier. The living space also opens up an outdoor terrace that is sunken a few feet as well from the main ground level

outside. This condition adds to a “cave-like” effect that conveys a sense of security and intimacy by being lower in the living space. From here, the dining and kitchen areas are layered as in the apartments, but again with stronger barriers between. Windows are minimized, and those that are present are located above eye level to enhance privacy. The upstairs area is the most private of all with the bedrooms. They offer separation between parents and children as well as between boys and girls. The master bedroom also has access to a private balcony that utilizes moveable screens to accommodate privacy as seen fit. These balconies offer easy interaction with the semi-public outdoor space that the units share if they are opened. The balconies also make use of other shading and screens to reflect Muslim architecture and its use of screens for privacy as well as controlling heating load.

In developing architectural elements and techniques that would be characteristic of ideals from Muslim architecture as well as Texas architecture, a strong need to alleviate

heated conditions seemed to be at the basic root of the two. And while Texas architecture and culture tends to require less privacy than Muslim architecture the adaptability of the screens, shades, and partitions used allow for seamless flow between the two even where they are different. Elements like the Texas dogrun also have similar instances in Middle Eastern architecture, whether it be similar to an arcaded garden or an alley between two urban buildings.

These homes are laid out to promote more community between the units. Their “backyards” flow into one larger park as they move away from the house and encourage people to move from their private quarters to a semi-private and then semi-public space while still maintaining comfort and security. All of their activity, if they choose to show it, is directed towards one another. This keeps families off of the public street and in a more structured, relaxed, and safe area. This portion of the project was left much to master planning as the scope increased, leaving more room for further development.





conclusions

afterword

I began thinking about what form this project would take during the summer of 2016 during one of the heights of the civil war in Syria. I had been following the refugee crisis for a while and now faced coming closer to it with a study abroad opportunity to Italy that coming fall. I had begun involving myself with groups and organizations seeking to provide aid and assistance for those people, and I realized that I could utilize my time in graduate school to apply my architectural skills toward the issue. Although limited in my time and ability as a student, I began to wonder how I could align my classes to learn more about this and if my final study could touch on the issue somehow.

While in Italy, I had the opportunity to devote some time to research studying urban growth and renewal especially in regards to influences from refugees and differing people groups. However, greater than this experience was meeting some people who were themselves refugees. I could see the impact of their migration in nearly every city I visited, inside and out of Italy, but I learned much more during the simple conversations I would have with some of them. Many had left behind family, jobs, their whole lives, to escape to a place they hoped would be better. Several were passing through Italy with intentions of settling in a more northern country and reestablishing their lives. What impacted me the most was getting to see firsthand that these were real people with real needs.

By the summer before my Final Study was to start, I knew I wanted my project to explore a way to help these people. I had seen a few

projects from students looking into ways to better develop temporary camps and construct efficient shelters, but none really touched on what I thought was one of the looming larger issues. This huge number of people was beginning to move out of camps into more permanent dwellings in countries, and many had intentions on staying as long as they could. There seems to have always been a housing crisis, but now there was the added issue of mixing two very different cultures. In the US at that time, tensions seemed to be high between peoples of all kind, from political leanings to races to genders. How would a continued influx of refugees pile on to this? I decided my project would tackle this issue head on, and seek to create a space for direct interaction between refugees and the local population of whose city they were coming to.

I do not seek to provide specific political solutions through this project. While I believe architecture can and should make political statements, I do not intend for this project to take any side. I have seen a need and issue arise, and through the laws, regulations, and circumstances as they are, I have sought to explore a way to provide assistance to those who need it and establish a platform for dialogue and real interaction between two people groups who will have to face each other sooner than later. Refugees seeking resettlement are people believing the place they are coming to will be better to them than their home. It takes a willingness on their part to respect the culture they are arriving to, and it takes a willingness on the part of the locals to adapt to change and offer an

opportunity to someone less fortunate than themselves.

I have learned a lot from this past year working on this final study. I have been able to research and learn more about refugees and the process and needs they experience in coming to a new country. I have learned the part architecture can play in providing for a need and facilitating a place for interaction. I have experienced the benefit a committee of experts can have in guiding me and my project to places I had not expected it to go. Although my work in the professional practice of architecture will not likely cover this area for the foreseeable future, I believe this project has still helped prepare me not only in the technical abilities of producing architecture, but also by learning more so how to design spaces to impact people for the better.

Perhaps the greatest lesson I have learned from architecture is that regardless on the design of a space, what famous architect worked on it, or what materials it is constructed with, if people do not benefit from it and live their lives within it, it accomplishes nothing. Because of this, I know I will have a much greater impact on people with how I live my life and my interactions with them than by the way I design a building with which to interact with them in. I am called to love others in the same manner my God loves them. Architecture is a part of that. But if this project were carried out, and I come to it as a true local of Dallas, I hope that my actions towards these people would be of love that is apparent of my God's love for me and them.

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Spring 2018

“And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you,
just as you did to one of the least of these who
are members of my family, you did to me.’”

Matthew 25:40

