SPATIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR REFUGEE INTEGRATION

EXPLORING ARCHITECTURAL SOLUTIONS TO REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN WINDSOR, ON

MONA REDA MAKKI

UNIVERSITY OF DETROIT MERCY
SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE + COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

ARCH 5100-5200 | 5110-5210
MASTER THESIS STUDIO + MASTER THESIS SUPPLEMENT
FALL 2021 – WINTER 2022

MONA REDA MAKKI
THESIS CANDIDATE

CLAUDIA BERNASCONI
STUDIO ADVISOR

FATIMA FAKIH
EXTERNAL ADVISOR

DR. MOHAMAD AYOUB
EXTERNAL ADVISOR

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Reda Makki and Sohar Bazzi, who arrived in Canada in 1989 during the Lebanese Civil War. Fleeing from violence and persecution, they came to Canada as a young couple with a newborn baby. Against all odds, they carved a path for my siblings and I to excel in life. **This degree belongs to them as much as it does to me.**

The completion of this thesis was made possible with the support of my thesis advisor, Claudia Bernasconi, and supporting advisors Wladek Fuchs and Virginia Stanard, as well as my external advisors Fatima Fakih and Mohamad Ayoub. Additionally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my sisters, Madiha, Fatima, and Zeinab, and my fiancé, Ali, for their unwavering support and love.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

THESIS STATEMENT

01 INTRODUCTION + BACKGROUND

The Refugee Crisis
The Refugee Journey
Resettlement in Canada
Canada's Response to the Syrian Crisis

02 TOPIC + SCOPE

Research Questions & Framing Concepts
Refugee Integration
Resettlement in Windsor, Ontario

03 INVESTIGATIONS + FINDINGS

The Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP)
The Windsor Essex Local Immigration Partnership (WE LIP)
& The Windsor Resettlement Assistance Program (WRAP)
Refugee Resettlement Experiences
The Existing Resettlement Assistance Network in Ward 3

04 INTERVENTION

Architectures of Social Purpose
Windsor Refugee Welcome Centre (WRWC)
Urban-Scale Opportunities for Refugee Integration
Architectural Strategies for Refugee Integration
Site-Scale Opportunities for Refugee Integration

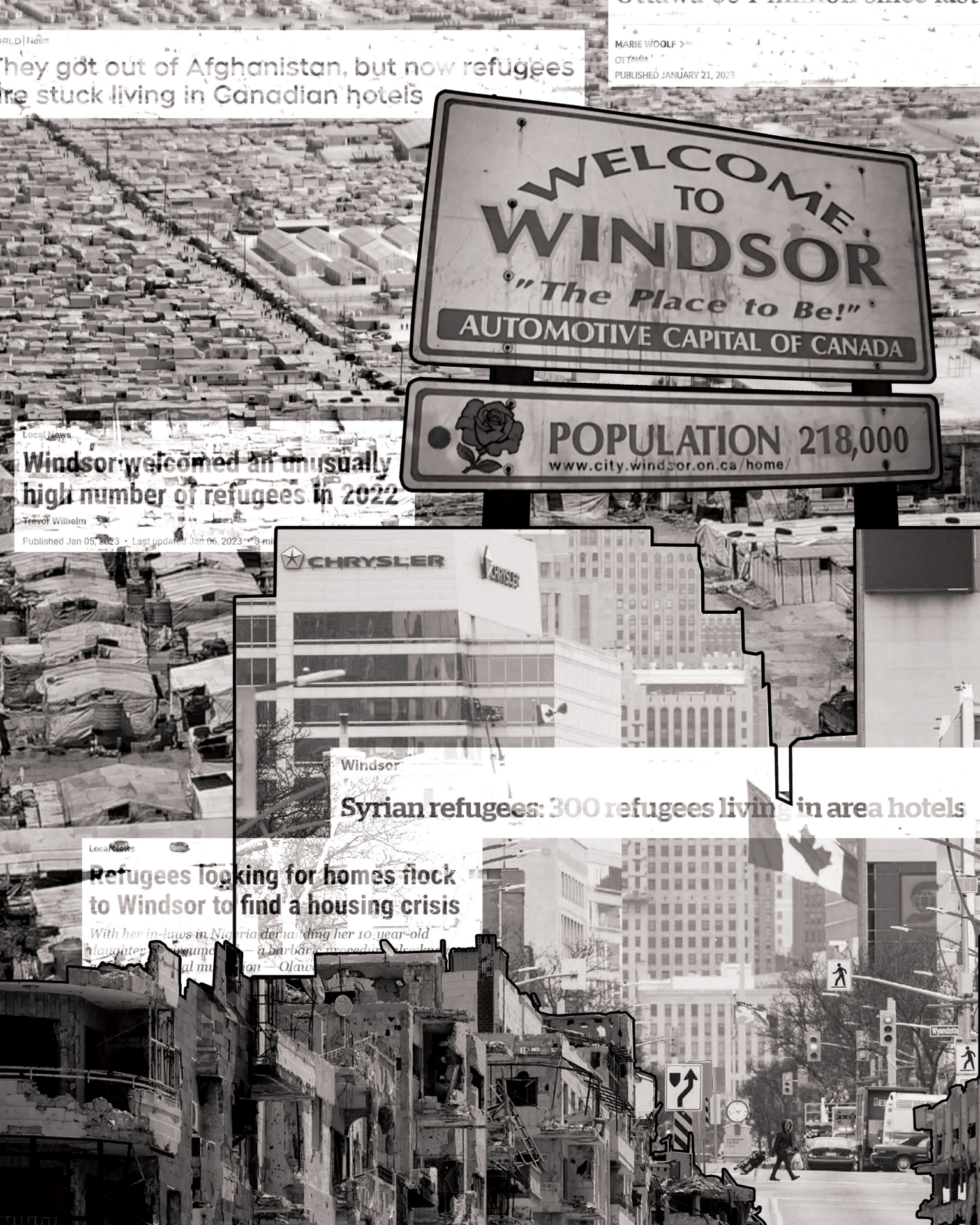
05 DISCUSSION + CONCLUSION

Framework for Intervention
Discussion
Conclusion

WORKS CITED

APPENDICES

A: Sketch Problem II
B: WRWC Programming Matrix


RLD | News
They got out of Afghanistan, but now refugees
re stuck living in Canadian hotels
MARIE WOOLF >
OTTAWA
PUBLISHED JANUARY 21, 2023
WELCOME TO WINDSOR
"The Place to Be!"
AUTOMOTIVE CAPITAL OF CANADA
POPULATION 218,000
www.city.windsor.on.ca/home/
Local News
Windsor welcomed an unusually high number of refugees in 2022
Trevor Wilhelm
Published Jan 05, 2023 • Last updated Jan 06, 2023 • 3 mi
CHRYSLER
Windsor
Syrian refugees: 300 refugees living in area hotels
Local News
Refugees looking for homes flock to Windsor to find a housing crisis
With her in-laws in Nigeria demanding her 10-year-old

ABSTRACT

An estimated 103 million people were forcibly displaced by mid-2022, "as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order" (UNHCR, 2022). The traumatic life of a refugee, from the beginning stages of displacement to the period of temporary settlement and beyond, makes resettlement in a new country challenging. Refugees resettling in Canada are faced with a new set of uncertainties: How will they navigate a new cultural and social system? Where are they to live and work? Will they be accepted into society? This study adopts an intersubjective/contextual framework to investigate the issue of refugee resettlement and aims to understand the spatial experiences of refugees during the process of integration in Canadian society. Through the identification of available resettlement programs in Canada, this study further investigates how the field of architecture can improve refugee experiences. The City of Windsor, Ontario is the focus of this study and was chosen due to its unique location as a international border city and major commercial corridor, as well as its large immigrant population and history of refugee resettlement.

The conceptual framework developed by Ager & Strang (2008) distinguishes ten core domains of integration which are used as a tool of analysis in this study. A qualitative/mixed methodology approach was used to understand refugee experiences and identify specific needs. First-hand accounts of Syrian refugees were a central tool in shaping the outcomes of the study. Other methods included the analysis and mapping of available refugee resettlement services in the City of Windsor. Further, successful refugee integration efforts, like those in Winnipeg, Manitoba, were analyzed to form a clearer understanding of how federal and provincial policies can be leveraged to assist in the integration and housing of refugees.

Findings from the research guided the proposal of an architectural and urban intervention for recently resettled refugees in the City of Windsor. By addressing the specific needs of refugees, the design proposal focuses on the domains of integration which are currently lacking in the city: Social bridges (the social connection between refugees), housing, education, and health (Ager & Strang, 2008). The proposed intervention is to be located within Windsor's city center, where majority of the refugee resettlement services exist, and near ethnic enclaves that are frequented by large immigrant populations. Trauma-informed and culturally sensitive design practices were used to ensure that the design addresses both physical/tangible and social aspects of integration, which lead to self-sufficiency, economic independence, and psycho-social belonging.

THESIS STATEMENT

By mid-2022, the UNHCR determined 103 million people had been forcibly displaced worldwide. Of these, 32.5 million are refugees; people that flee outside the borders of their country to find safety. Canada has a long history of refuge and has pledged to increase their resettlement efforts in the coming years. This pledge should prompt researchers and practitioners of all disciplines to analyze how their systems and processes support, or hinder, refugee integration into Canadian society. As Canada continues to resettle more refugees, the country and its citizens must be prepared to accommodate and support specific refugee needs to ensure that they pursue successful and fulfilled lives.

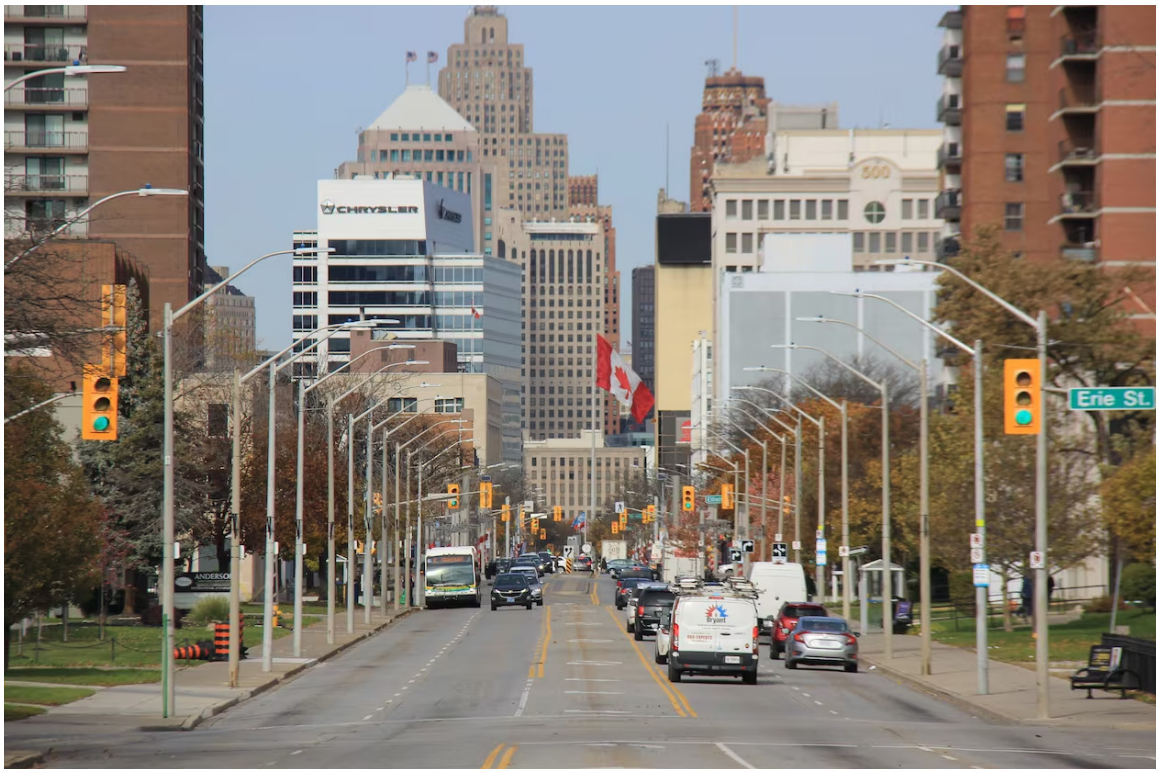
This thesis utilizes an intersubjective and contextual framework to investigate the experiences of refugees throughout their resettlement in Canada. The goal of this effort is to understand the gaps in refugee resettlement efforts, and how these gaps may be addressed spatially. Architectural interventions will be proposed to promote successful refugee integration into Canadian society and culture.

This thesis is framed around five concepts: resettlement, integration, self-sufficiency & economic independence, psycho-social belonging, and housing preparedness. Ager and Strang's model for refugee integration (2008) was key in informing this thesis. Rather than proposing a new framework, Ager and Strang's model is accepted in this thesis as a good understanding of refugee needs and an appropriate measure of successful integration. This model outlines ten domains which promote physical and tangible aspects of integration (self-sufficiency), and the social and intangible aspects of integration (psycho-social wellbeing).

The concept of dwelling as it relates to refugee integration is informed by numerous architectural case studies, like the work of 546 Architecture who designed Welcome Place, a refugee reception center in Winnipeg, and ISSofBC, who have spearheaded a new model for refugee integration through their LEED certified facility in Vancouver, BC.

Quantitative data sourced from Statistics Canada and other government sources were used to support the claims of unaffordable housing and refugee resettlement. Qualitative data from interviews confirmed that refugee's greatest struggle while resettling in the context of Windsor, Ontario, is finding appropriate and affordable housing. These interviews also revealed socio-cultural habits of Syrian refugees who resettled in Windsor from 2015-2016.

This thesis aims to address the primary research question: How can architecture aid in the integration of refugees into society? The investigations which were used to study this question are based on the understanding that integration is a desirable outcome and



is measured by the core domains of the integration model (Ager & Strang, 2008). Since this thesis utilizes a contextual approach, the following question was derived: What are the opportunities for intervention in the process of refugee resettlement to Windsor, ON? The goal of these investigations is to propose a contextually-sensitive architectural intervention in the City of Windsor which is informed by literature and first-hand refugee experiences. This intervention will promote the integration of refugees into society by fulfilling a refugee's need for self-sufficiency, economic independence, and psycho-social belonging.

Spatial design which is contextually-driven and informed by user feedback has the ability to improve the lives of the users that inhabit them. This thesis advocates for the thoughtful design of spaces as a means for suffering populations to improve their overall quality of life. In this particular thesis, the users are refugees which have specific needs and suffer from many external hardships that architecture cannot directly address but can indirectly improve on. For example, architecture can

directly support tangible aspects of integration by providing accommodating and affordable housing for the immediate shelter of refugees during their first few weeks in Canada. Further, architecture can support the intangible aspects of integration by creating space that allows for social programming. By focusing efforts on both physical and social needs, refugees will achieve self-sufficiency and psycho-social belonging more seamlessly than if these efforts were not provided.

The investigations were performed using a mixed-method approach. Mapping was used not only as a tool to analyze quantitative data, but also as a means to understand the qualitative aspects of the chosen site. Interviews of refugee families and community coordinators were conducted to gain a better understanding of refugee experiences and gaps in refugee resettlement efforts. These types of investigations uncovered specific struggles which were tied to the Windsor context such as housing affordability, access to mobility, and refugee isolation.

Opposing views may argue that refugees have resettled into Canadian society successfully in previous years. This view is supported by the data which proves that refugees over the span of 5 years tend to maintain employment and find better housing (Statistics Canada). While the long-term trajectory of refugees in Canada is positive, the focus of this thesis is on the initial phase of resettlement, the first year, when refugees are in their most vulnerable state.

The greatest obstacle in the research of this study was building trust with the refugee population and the government-funded resettlement organizations which serve refugees. Their hesitancy in providing information resulted in a greater amount of assumption by the researcher to fill in the gaps. These assumptions, while informed by literature and precedent, can be challenged.

Further, the design proposal and findings are influenced by the interviews done in the community. Although this information is valuable, only two interviews were completed; one from a Syrian refugee and one from a community organizer who regularly aided Syrian refugees from 2015-2016. The design proposal would have benefited from the completion of multiple interviews.

The process and findings of this study are valuable to the discipline of architecture because they promote the understanding that architecture impacts humans on more than just a physical level. Architecture can be a catalyst for change and can improve the psycho-social relations of people to themselves, to others, and to their surroundings.

01 INTRODUCTION + BACKGROUND

The Refugee Crisis

The mass displacement of people is not a modern issue. For centuries, humans have moved across the globe for various reasons, which can be broadly distinguished into two categories: people who willingly *choose* to move, and people who are *forced* to flee (Fig. 1.1).

The word "migrant" is an umbrella term which describes people who move geographically for many different reasons. Typically, these people choose to leave their homes in search of better economic opportunities. Many countries, like Germany, offer programs which incentivize immigration to their land with the intent of increasing population, promoting economic growth, or to fill workforce vacancies. For example, Canada relies on skilled immigrants for population and workforce growth, and provinces like Ontario continuously fund and grow their economic immigration programs.

While migration can be a positive endeavour, the displacement of people against their will or desire is much less sought after. Forcibly displaced persons (FDP) are forced to leave their homes because they are experiencing political unrest, armed conflict, persecution, economic disaster and/or loss due to natural disasters. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is an international agency which protects, "all people forced to flee and those denied a nationality," which includes the following; Internally Displaced Peoples (IDP) are those who flee but remain within the borders of their country; Refugees are those who flee and seek safety outside of the borders of their country; Asylum seekers are those who have applied for sanctuary; Stateless people are those who have been denied a nationality and thus have no protection; Returnees are those who repatriate voluntarily (UNHCR). The

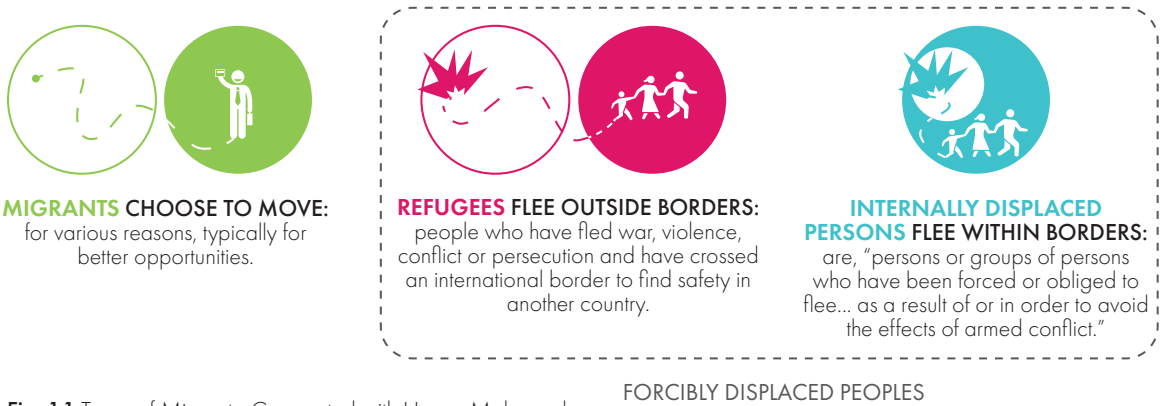


Fig. 1.1 Types of Migrants. Co-created with Hanen Mohamad.

mass displacement of these people is referred to as, “the refugee crisis.”

The refugee crisis is a complex grouping of circumstances which are directly and indirectly affected by the constantly-influx global political climate. As of mid-2022, the UNHCR has estimated that approximately 103 million people have been forcibly displaced worldwide (UNHCR). At the time of writing, the countries with the highest recorded number of refugees are Syria (6.8 million), Palestine (5.8 million), Venezuela (5.6 million), Ukraine (5.4 million), Afghanistan (2.8 million), and South Sudan (2.4 million). The countries hosting the highest recorded number of refugees are Turkey (3.7 million), Colombia (2.5 million), Germany (2.2 million), Pakistan (1.5 million), and Uganda (1.5 million) (Fig. 1.2). The displacement of people on a global scale is multidimensional and influenced by politics, geography, global economics and many other factors.

The legal designation of “refugee” was defined during the 1951 Refugee Convention in Geneva, Switzerland. The gathering was organized by the United Nations (UN) where twenty-six countries signed the convention. This resulted in the protocol which is described as, “the centrepiece of international refugee protection today” (UNHCR). The creation of the UNHCR was one of the greatest outcomes of the Refugee Convention and the organization is now recognized for leading the global aid of FDP.

When analyzed at a global scale, the refugee crisis is daunting and unsolvable. In this case, smaller-scale efforts that tackle specific issues within the crisis are needed. From the perspective of an architect, the question arises: **How can architects aid in the bettering of refugee experiences?**

The Refugee Journey

A refugee’s journey to safety is incredibly complex and varied. To understand this complexity, the journey can be generalized into four categories which explain the most common experiences of refugees seeking safety at designated camp:

Phase 01: Displacement + Registration (Fig. 1.4a)
This phase begins with an event which has forced a person to flee their home country and seek refuge elsewhere. The journey to find safety is unpredictable as it depends on many factors like the crisis one is fleeing from, their geographical location, their age and sex, their knowledge of routes and the severity of political unrest, etc. This phase ends once the FDP arrives at a convention-designated camp, which is typically run by the UNHCR and other governing bodies. They are then able to apply for refugee status.

During this phase, FDP are the most vulnerable and are not legally protected by their home country nor the UNHCR. Upon arrival and

registration, the person is temporarily protected by the Refugee Convention. Unfortunately, there are many people who flee from their homes who never make it to a convention-designated camp, and there are those who find shelter in "unofficial" camps around the world. These people are considered stateless and tend to suffer from abuse, persecution and discrimination in their place of settlement.

Phase 02: Assistance + Protection (Fig. 1.4b)
This phase describes the period of time when FDP live in camps awaiting the decision of their refugee applications. They typically live in shelters provided by the UNHCR which can take the form of tents or modular units, or a mix of the two like those seen in the Zaatari Refugee Camp in Jordan. During this phase, UNHCR workers conduct regular interviews to identify FDP with the greatest need to resettle abroad (See Phase 03: Assessment).

UNHCR-established camps like Zaatari offer people with essential support like shelter, food, and healthcare. While basic needs are met, there are many socio-cultural issues within refugee camps that contribute to traumatization like inhumane living conditions due to poor infrastructure and overcrowding, the inability for economic stability or freedom, and the discrimination and control over people's autonomy.

Phase 03: Assessment (Fig. 1.4c)
This phase happens concurrently with Phase 02: Assistance + Protection. In camps, UNHCR workers assess individual claims and review the situations in a FDP's origin country. They determine the need for resettlement for those who cannot go back to their homes. This phase is time-consuming for those that do not display a great need, and can last anywhere from 10-26 years on average.

Phase 04: Resettlement (Fig. 1.4d)
After a FDP has been approved for refugee resettlement, the UNHCR approaches different countries to consider permanently resettling them. This is the referral process where countries can accept or deny the refugee based on their application and information gathered from interviews conducted in Phase 03. If a country accepts a referral, the refugee becomes permanently protected under their designation. Accommodations are then made for refugees to travel to their new host country and complete necessary orientations and health checks.

This four-phase journey best explains the process for those who arrive at a convention-designated camp run by the UNHCR. There are many other journeys which do not follow this route. The advantage of generalizing this process is that it allows practitioners, like architects, to identify specific issues they can address. The greatest potential for architects, designers, and planners to impact change is in Phase 02: Assistance + Protection and Phase 04: Resettlement. This is because urban planning, architectural design, and programming all

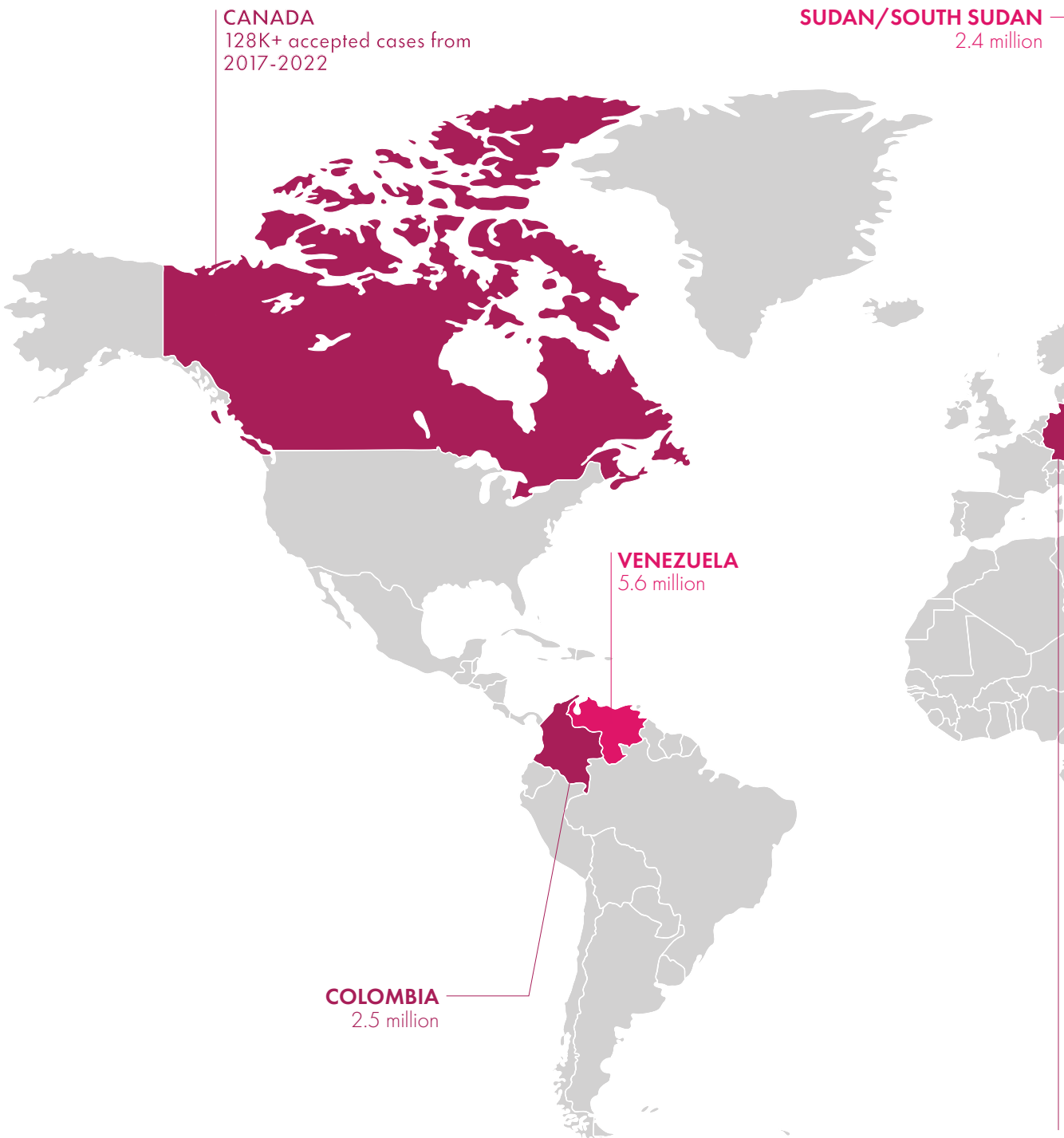
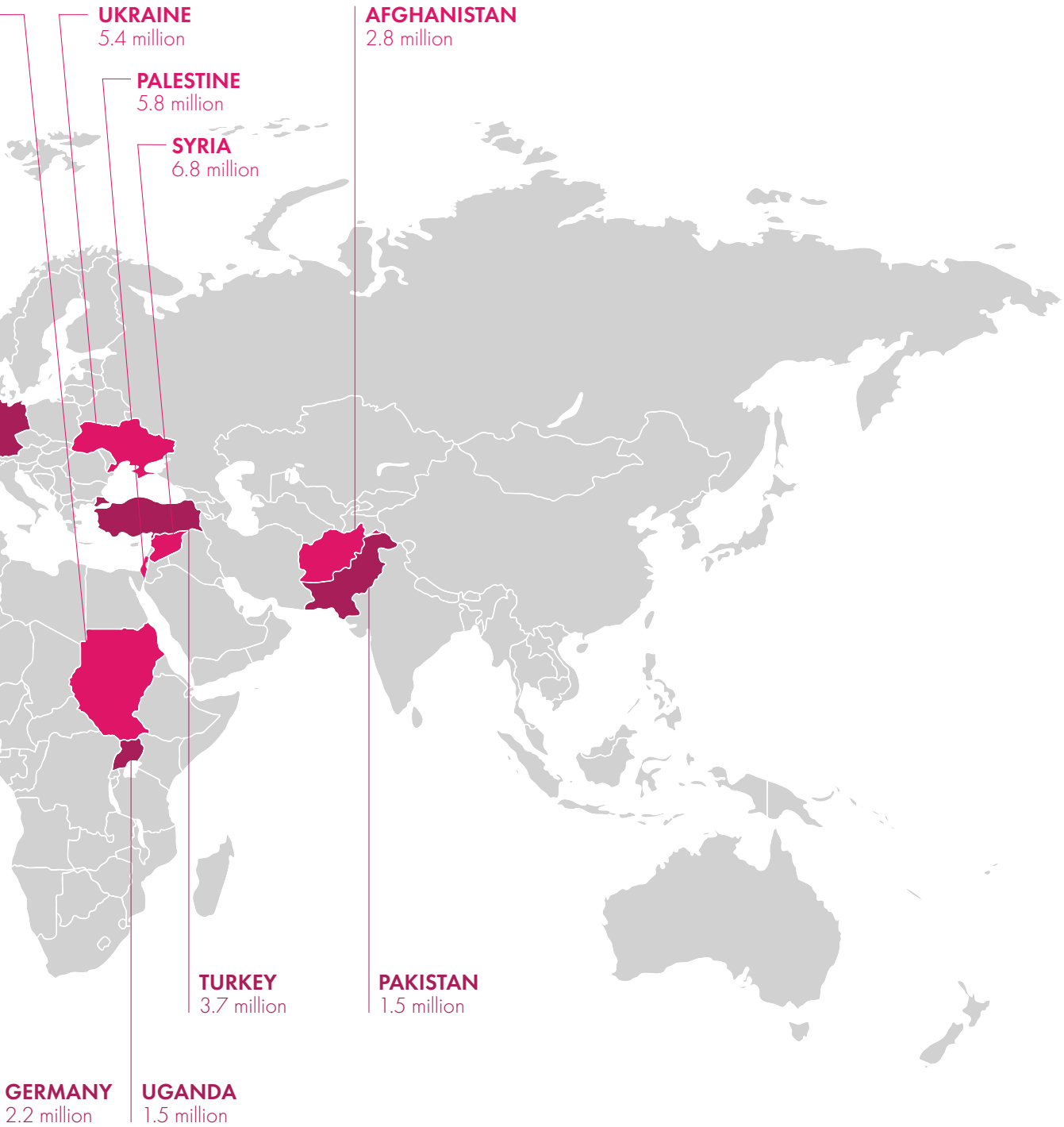


Fig. 1.2 The refugee crisis on a global scale. Co-created with Hanen Mohamad.


UKRAINE
5.4 million
PALESTINE
5.8 million
SYRIA
6.8 million
AFGHANISTAN
2.8 million
TURKEY
3.7 million
PAKISTAN
1.5 million
GERMANY
2.2 million
UGANDA
1.5 million

rely on a stable and relatively predictable environment in order to be successful.

One may argue that kinetic, movable or adaptable designs would be useful in Phase 01: Displacement and Registration. However, this phase is where FDP are experiencing the most urgency, and most in this situation do not have the time nor resources to plan ahead for their journey. There has been extensive discourse and proposed architectural interventions for Phase 02 and Phase 03 from practitioners like Shigeru Ban Architects and Architects for Society. The research related to this phase is rooted in analysis and is crucial for uncovering better solutions inside refugee camps. The value of research during these phases is that it has the ability to intercept active traumatization and lessen the negative experiences of FDP in the early phases of their long journey.

Ultimately, this thesis focuses on analyzing issues and proposing practical solutions to issues faced in Phase 04 because of the geographic and social connection that the researcher has to the chosen context of Windsor, Ontario, Canada. The ability for the researcher to conduct interviews, on-site observations, and other field-work was the deciding factor.

Resettlement in Canada

All countries have different processes for refugees and asylum seekers after they arrive on their land. When refugees land in Canada, they are greeted by government immigration workers who will explain to them where they are and what their next steps will be. At this point, refugees will typically stay in a hotel or hostel until their connecting flight. Once they arrive in their host city, they are greeted by the local resettlement Service Provider Organization (SPO's). These organizations are designated by the Canadian government and receive funding to operate. Organization workers will help refugees understand their options for short term accommodation and will explain to them the support they are going to receive for the first year of their lives in Canada.

The Canadian government categorizes refugees into three types: Government-assisted refugees (GAR's), privately-sponsored refugees (PSR's), and blended-visa office referred refugees (BVOR's). The key difference between these categories is the means by which the refugee is being financially supported, and by whom they are being socially supported. GAR's rely solely on the government for monetary support and have access to all Resettlement Assistance Programs (RAP). PSR's and BVOR's rely on their private group of sponsors, such as a group of individuals or an organization, for monetary support and have access to limited RAP (Refugees and Citizenship Canada).

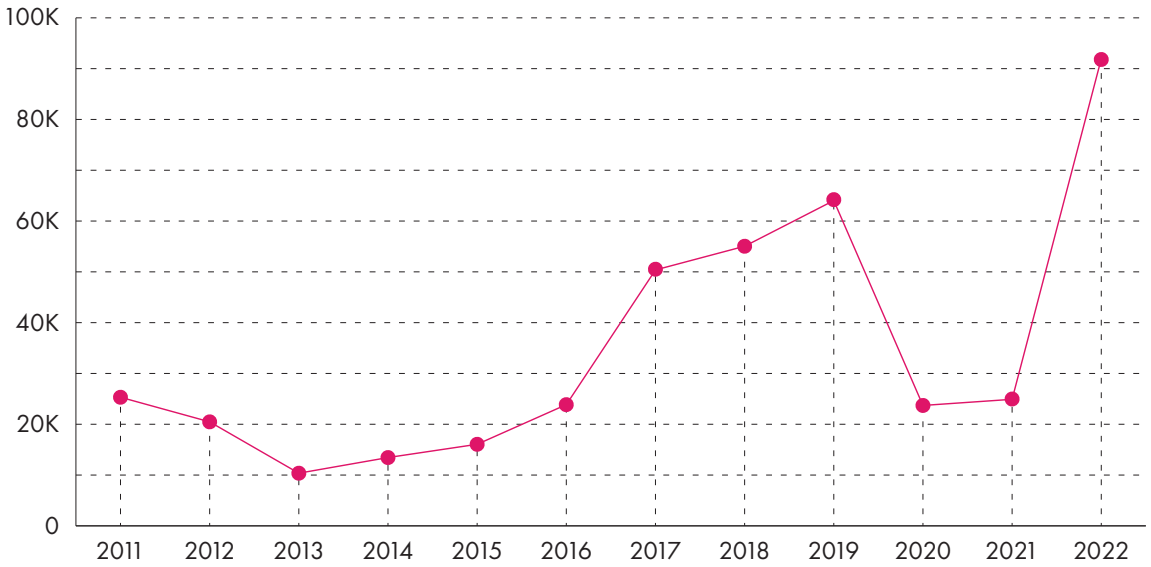


Fig. 1.3 People seeking asylum in Canada per year. Data accessed from the IRCC.

Canada has a long history of being a place of refuge and the number of people seeking safety on Canadian shores has trended upwards in recent years. As a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic, Canada accepted significantly fewer refugees in 2020 and 2021 than preceding years. However, the Canadian government pledged to accept over 200,000 refugees and protected persons in 2022-2023 (Refugees and Citizenship Canada). **This pledge provides an opportunity for architects and planners to analyze current efforts and propose new solutions to refugee resettlement.**

Canada's Response to the Syrian Crisis

Prior to the Ukrainian resettlement effort of 2022, which is ongoing at the time of this writing, Canada's most recent and most significant resettlement efforts were during the Syrian Crisis which began in March 2011. This was arguably the most well-documented resettlement effort in Canadian history. The resettlement of over 44-thousand Syrian refugees from 2015-2016 was made possible by the governmental designation of Syrians as prima facie refugees. This meant that refugee applications were moved forward under the assumption that Syrian applicants met the refugee criteria which made the process of resettlement into Canada significantly quicker

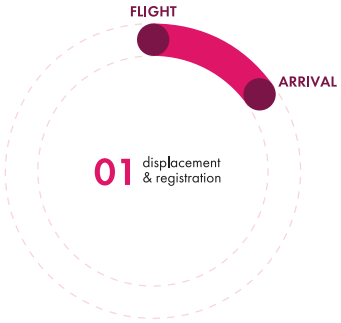


Fig. 1.4a Phase 01

Fig. 1.4b Phase 02

Fig. 1.4c Phase 03

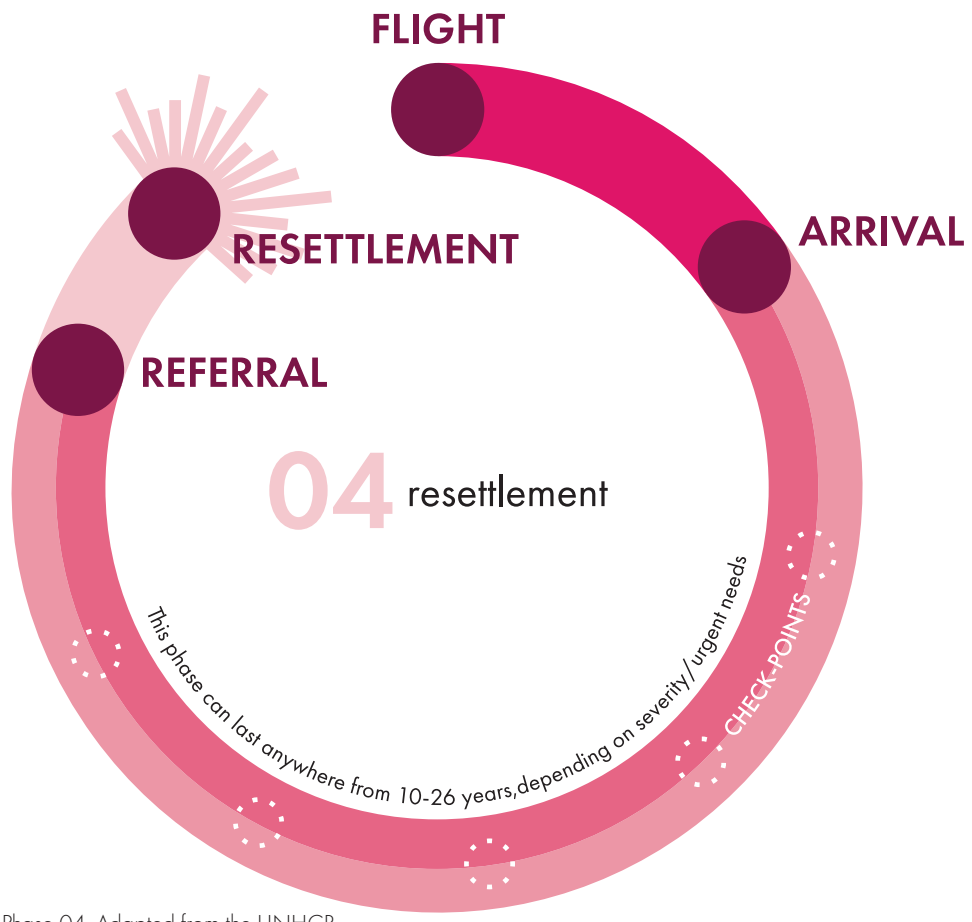


Fig. 1.4d Phase 04. Adapted from the UNHCR.

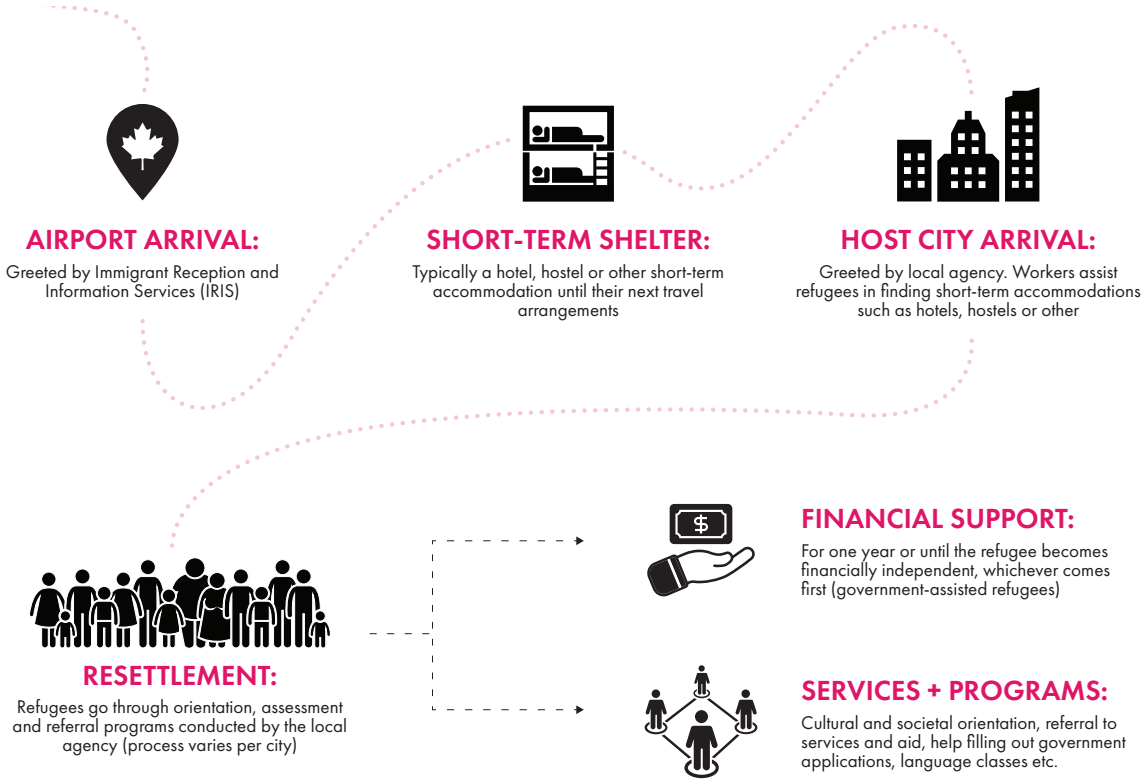


Fig. 1.5 The resettlement process in Canada

(Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2019). This thesis uses Canada's efforts of resettling Syrian refugees as a case study and will use lessons learnt from this effort to inform a future proposal.

While Canada's resettlement efforts during 2015-2016 were highly praised, they fell short on many fronts which were less publicized. The analysis of media, statistics, and first hand accounts from Syrian refugees uncovered the issue that Canada accepted large numbers of refugees during this time with no plan for their housing and accommodation. Refugees often spent weeks or months after their initial arrival living in hotels and motels across Canadian cities. These conditions were less than ideal and kept large refugee families in tiny hotel rooms with staff that didn't understand their sensitive situations and could not communicate properly with them. Large families and those with disabled individuals suffered the greatest as the struggle to find permanent housing was significantly more challenging due to their circumstances.

02 TOPIC + SCOPE

Research Questions + Framing Concepts

This thesis utilizes an intersubjective/ contextual approach as its primary framework, and a participatory approach as its secondary framework. The five framing concepts, as shown in Fig. 2.4 are: resettlement, integration, self-sufficiency & economic independence, psycho-social belonging, and housing preparedness.

This thesis aims to address the primary research question: How can architecture aid in the integration of refugees into society? The investigations which were used to study this question are based on the understanding that integration is a desirable outcome and is measured by the core domains of integration model (Ager & Strang, 2008). Since this thesis utilizes a contextual approach, the following question was derived: What are the opportunities for intervention in the process of refugee resettlement to Windsor, ON? The goal of these investigations is to propose a contextually-sensitive architectural intervention in the City of Windsor which is informed by literature and first-hand refugee experiences. This intervention will promote the integration of refugees into society by fulfilling a refugee's need for self-sufficiency, economic independence, and psycho-social belonging.

Refugee Integration

The success of refugee integration is typically measured by the ability for refugees to secure housing, their contributions to the economy through employment, and whether they rely on government aid like welfare to survive. In their 2008 article, Ager and Strang proposed a conceptual framework to analyze refugee integration that looks beyond tangible measures (Ager and Strang). Their ten-core domains of integration are organized into four categories: foundation, facilitators, social connection, and markers and means (Fig. 2.2). This holistic perspective is what distinguishes the concept of integration from the concept of assimilation. Successful integration, as outlined in the following text, is when refugees and immigrants achieve self-sufficiency, economic independence, and psycho-social belonging without sacrificing their cultural and religious values.

Foundation:
In this category is one domain of integration: *rights and citizenship.* Ager and Strang describe this domain as understanding the rights and responsibilities associated with the citizenship (or permanent residency in the case of Canada) given to a refugee by their host country. This is the foundation because all of the domains of integration rely on this understanding, which includes the cultural identity of the nation (Ager and Strang).

Facilitators

This category is comprised of two domains: *language and cultural knowledge*, and *safety and stability*. These are the facilitators because successful integration cannot occur if these domains are not fulfilled. If refugees do not know the language of their host society, or understand the cultural norms, they cannot communicate their needs effectively. This also isolates them from the greater society, which makes it inherently impossible for integration to occur. Likewise, refugees have to feel safe and stable in their new homes and neighbourhoods. This includes physical safety, perceived safety, and the absence of verbal and non-verbal threats including racism and discrimination.

Social Connection

This category describes three domains relating to social infrastructure: *social bridges, social bonds,* and *social links*. Social bridges describe the relationships of refugees with 'like-ethnic groups' (Ager and Strang) which are important because they are able to support one another within their cultural knowledge and background. Social bonds describe the relationships of refugees with other cultural groups in their host societies. This breaks cultural isolation, allowing for integration to occur at a community level. Finally, social links describe the access refugees have to services like government programs. These allow them to advance both socially and economically.

Markers + Means

The largest category in the conceptual framework is comprised of four domains: *employment, housing, education* and *health.* These domains best describe the tangible aspects of integration which yield self-sufficiency and economic independence.

The domains describe both the physical, tangible aspects of integration and the intangible, social and perceptual aspects of integration. Ager and Strang emphasize the importance of approaching refugee integration from two perspectives:

1. Refugee Perspective: Refugees must be willing to learn and adopt the customs of their new society. They must intentionally pursue all of the domains in order to achieve successful integration.

Fig. 2.1 Reality of resettlement in Windsor.

2. Host Society Perspective: The host society, including the government, must accept the circumstances of refugees with the understanding that the process may take longer for some than others, and will require physical resources, monetary aid, social support, and access to services.

Ager and Strang's conceptual framework for refugee integration is used in this thesis as a tool for analysis. The domains of integration are conceptual buckets which need to be filled in a given context in order for successful integration to occur.

Resettlement in Windsor, Ontario

Located across the Detroit River, Windsor, Ontario is the southernmost city in all of Canada (Fig. 2.3). Its geographic location makes it an important commercial border crossing, but it is also known as the *automotive capital of Canada*. The City of Windsor has historically housed refugee populations above the national average (Statistics Canada). With a population of 422K, Windsor has seen over 7.7K refugees settle in between 2016 and 2021. These refugees account for 55.1% of the population of recent immigrants (Statistics Canada).

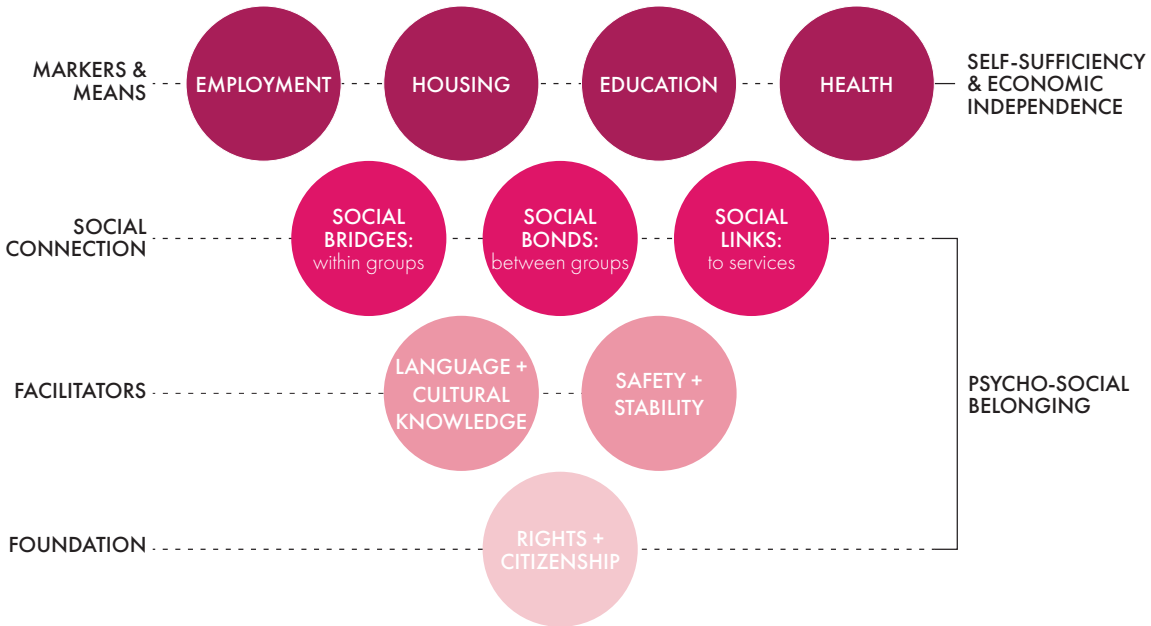


Fig. 2.2 Conceptual Model for Integration (Ager and Strang, 2008).

Windsor's unique location as a border city and a vital port of entry for commercial goods makes it seem more promising for a stable life in comparison to larger Canadian cities like Toronto and Montreal that have higher costs of living. However, Windsor's "small town" narrative is deceptive, and the promise to find affordable housing is not true. On average immigrants spend 50% of their income on housing, which indicates a core housing need (Statistics Canada). Refugees and immigrants come to Windsor with high hopes of small-city success, but the harsh reality is that refugees without pre-planned accommodations end up living in hotels, motels and emergency shelters for long periods of time before they can find permanent housing (Fig. 2.1).

Fig. 2.3 Windsor and Detroit key map.

The long journey of a refugee doesn't end once they reach Canadian shores. The second half of the battle is finding their place in a new western society. Windsor's approach to housing refugees is similar to how the city deals with homelessness- those who cannot afford housing are directed to emergency shelters. The housing issue is especially difficult for larger refugee families and those with disabilities who often settle for housing which does not accommodate their needs. If they are lucky enough to find shelters with proper accommodations, they are likely not affordable. Refugees are also more likely to be renting homes than the general population (Statistics Canada) which will likely become a larger issue as cities across Canada face an unprecedented housing shortage and a shocking increase in inflation.

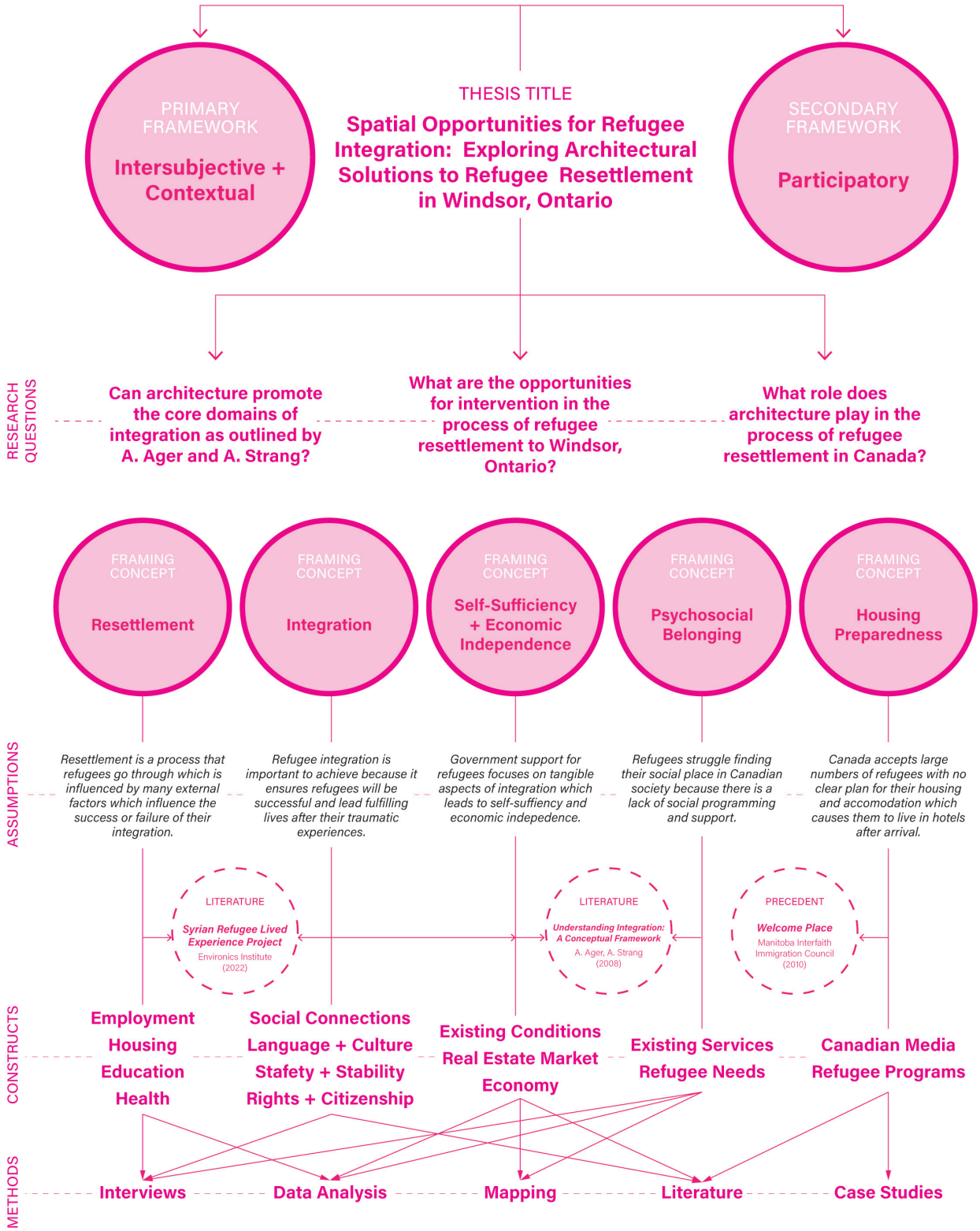


Fig. 2.4 Research methods and framing concepts chart.

03 INVESTIGATIONS + FINDINGS

A series of methods were utilized in this thesis to understand the existing refugee resettlement experience, and to uncover the shortcomings in their integration. The researcher had the advantage of local knowledge and experience, which influenced the understanding of urban conditions in the context of Windsor. Data-driven methods were used to uncover gaps in tangible aspects of integration, and perceptual methods, like interviews, were used to uncover gaps in the intangible aspects of integration.

The Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP)

The Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) provides refugees with essential support immediately upon their arrival in Canada. Designated Service Provider Organizations (SPOs) in different cities across Canada receive government funding to administer RAP services. RAP helps GARs and BVORs in two ways:

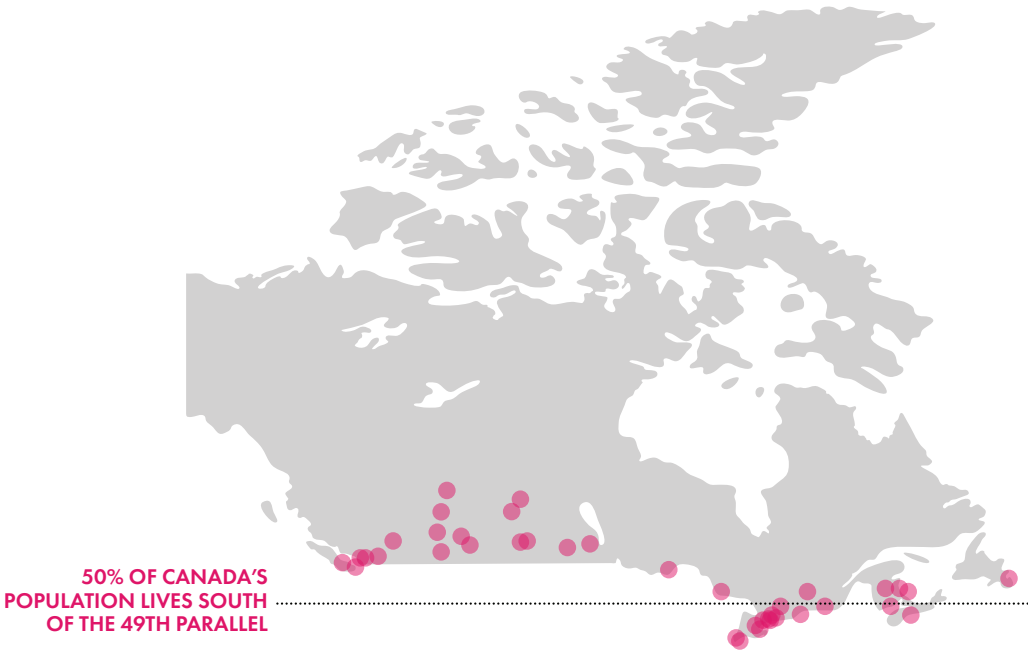


Fig. 3.1 Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) Service Provider Organizations (SPOs) across Canada.

1. Financial support for up to one year after arrival

2. Access to services and programs like temporary housing, help opening a bank account, language training, job referrals, life skills training and other social services.

As of 2023, there are 39 SPOs across Canada (not including the province of Quebec) (Fig. 3.1) and 15 of them are located in the province of Ontario. The City of Windsor has two SPOs, the Multicultural Council of Windsor and Essex County (MCC) and the New Canadians' Centre of Excellence Inc. (NCCEINC). This is significant because Toronto, the largest and most populated city in the province of Ontario, also has two SPOs. This further signifies that Windsor is attracting refugees and immigrants at rates that are comparative to larger Canadian cities, and thus should be studied and analyzed to ensure that the systems in place are properly supporting the integration of newcomers.

The Windsor Essex Local Immigration Partnership (WE LIP) & The Windsor Resettlement Assistance Program (WRAP)

The Windsor Essex Local Immigration Partnership (WE LIP) is an amalgamation of organizations which provide government-funded resettlement assistance to refugees and immigrants in the city. In order to understand the existing state of resettlement assistance in Windsor, these organizations are analyzed through Ager and Strang's core domains of integration (Fig. 3.4).

For example, the Multicultural Council of Windsor (MCC) is one of Windsor's designated service provider organizations (SPOs), which means they are responsible for managing incoming refugees to the city and receive funding from the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to provide services and aid. The MCC also disperses funding and partners with other programs within the city to administer the Windsor Resettlement Assistance Program (WRAP). At their facilities, the MCC provides programs like NAARS (Needs and Assets Assessment), orientation and referral to other community programs. These programs contribute to the following domains of integration: Rights and citizenship (orientation), Safety and Stability (Needs and Assets Assessment), and Social Links (referral).

Through the analysis of the WE LIP and WRAP, it can be said that Windsor supports the integration of refugees through almost all of the domains. Certain domains like Rights and Citizenship, Language and Culture, Safety and Stability, Social Bonds and Social Links, are fulfilled exceptionally well. The domains which are poorly addressed in this existing network of refugee resettlement assistance are Social Bridges, Housing, Education and Health.

By mapping the locations of the 13 agencies in the WE LIP network, it was found that the majority of programs were located in Windsor's Ward 3 electoral district. Further, 70% of the WRAP in Ward 3 is located on Ouellette Avenue, a major street which serves as the main connector between the south of Windsor to the city center and the Windsor-Detroit Tunnel (Fig 3.2). Not only does this area experience high vehicular traffic, but it is also the heart of Windsor's downtown area, characterized by mid-rise offices, apartment and hotel buildings, and vacant small shops and restaurants on the ground floor.

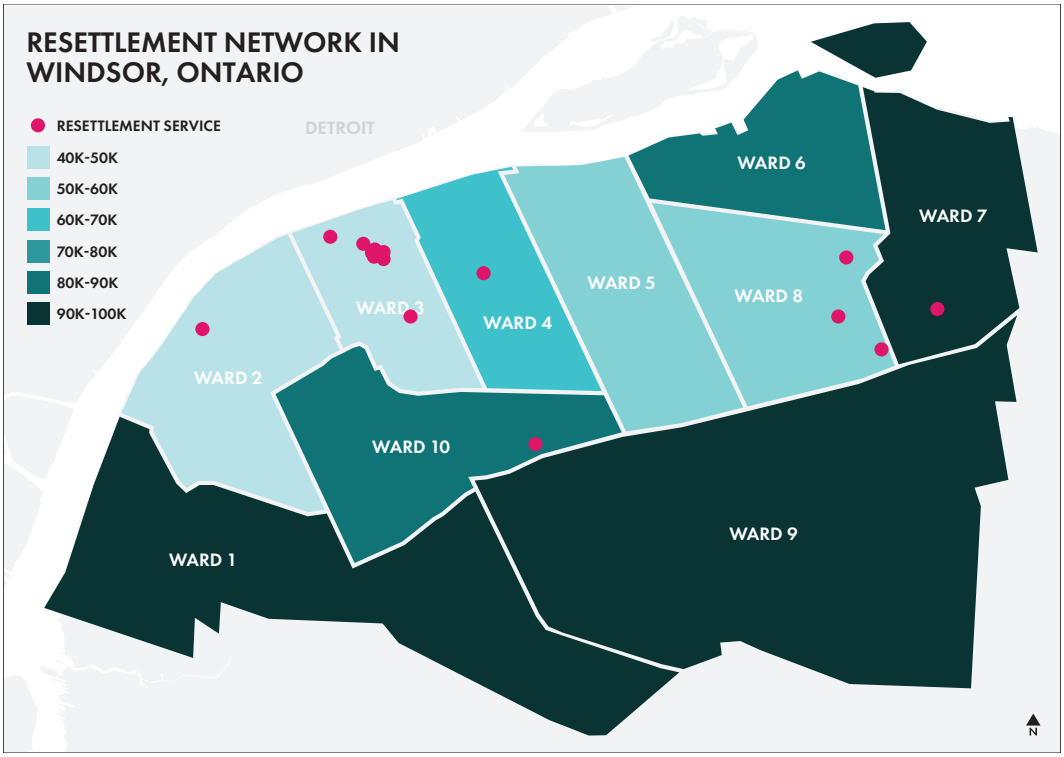


Fig. 3.2 Resettlement services across Windsor, overlayed with income data.

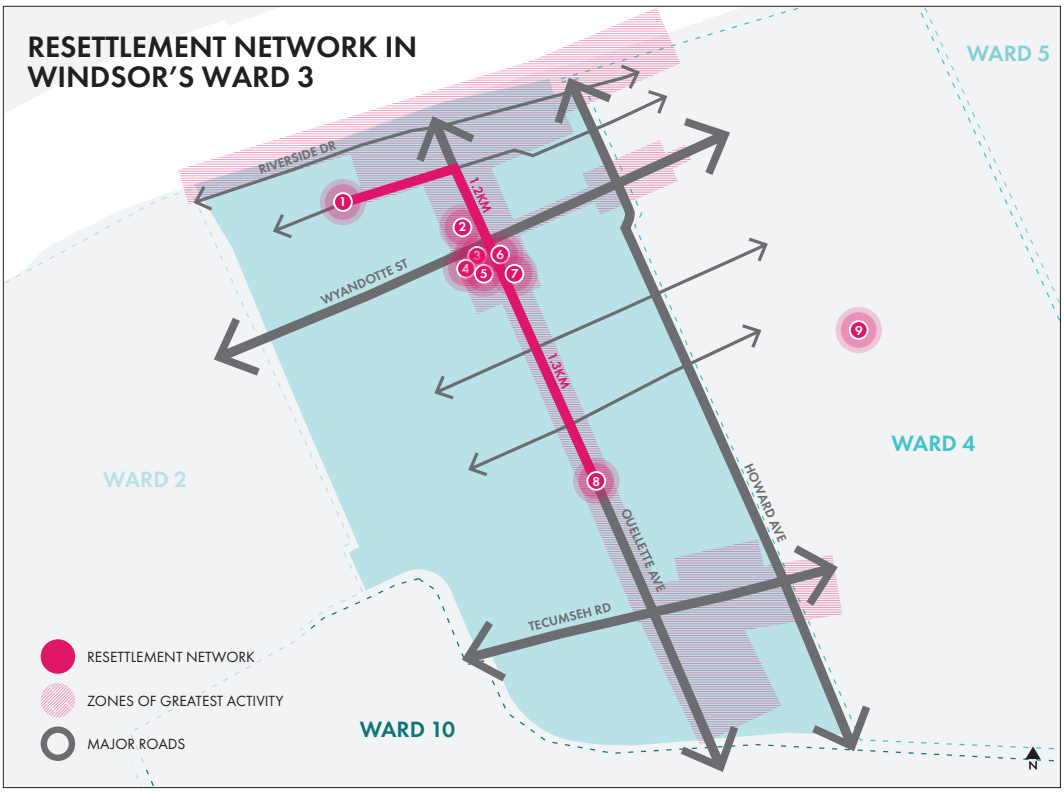
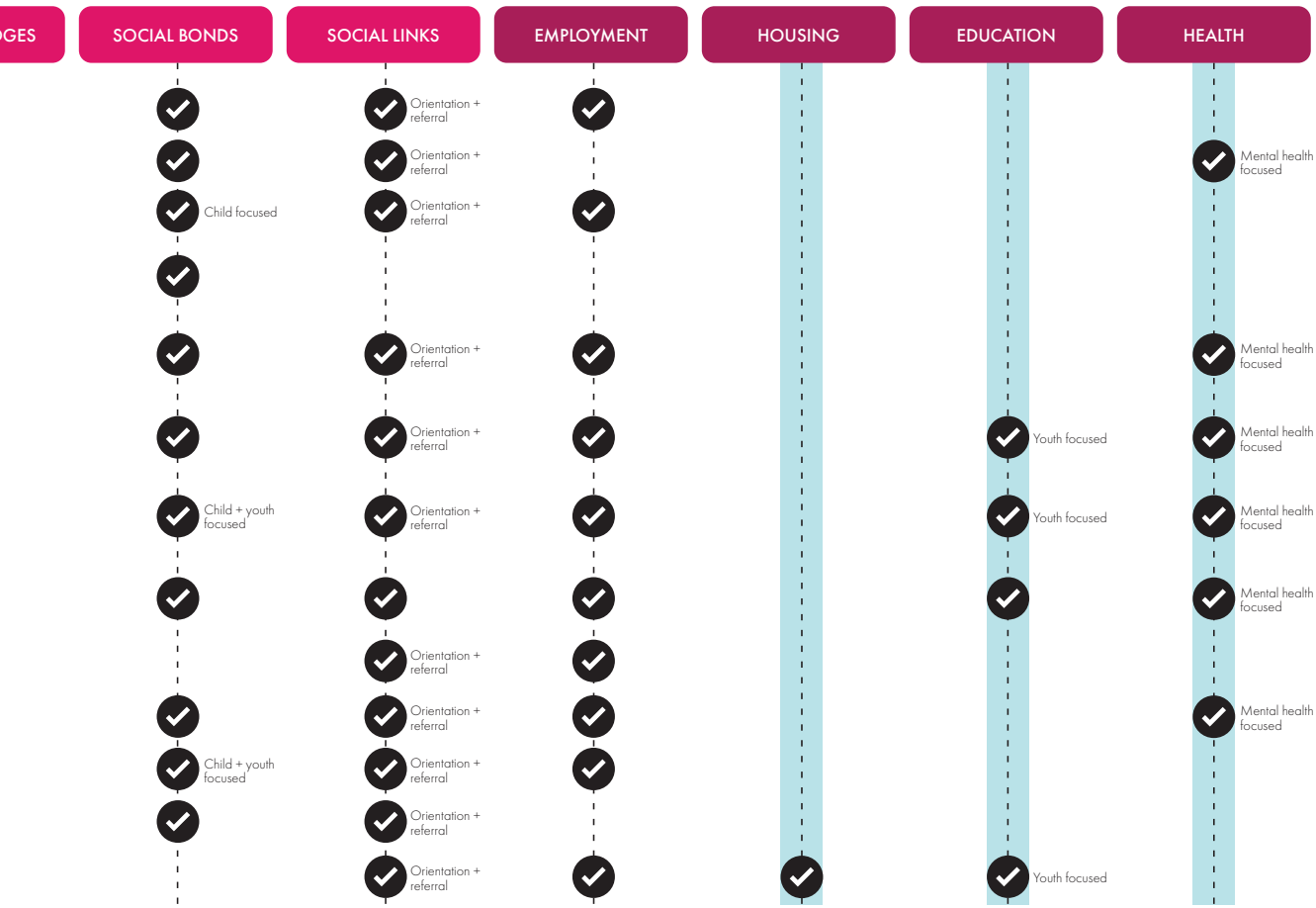


Fig. 3.3 Location of resettlement services in Ward 3 which form a network.

Fig. 3.4 Windsor Essex Local Immigration Partnership (WE LIP) organization chart analyzed through Ager and Strang's core domains of integration.


GES
SOCIAL BONDS
SOCIAL LINKS
EMPLOYMENT
HOUSING
EDUCATION
HEALTH
Child focused
Child + youth focused
Child + youth focused
Orientation + referral
Orientation + referral
Orientation + referral
Orientation + referral
Orientation + referral
Orientation + referral
Orientation + referral
Orientation + referral
Orientation + referral
Orientation + referral
Youth focused
Youth focused
Youth focused
Mental health focused
Mental health focused
Mental health focused
Mental health focused
Mental health focused
Mental health focused

Refugee Resettlement Experiences

While data analysis and mapping can give us hard facts about refugee resettlement, there is a human experience and perceptual aspect to the issue which also needs to be addressed. An early exploration of the intangible aspects of the refugee experience included an installation which studied the perception of refugees on a national scale. A more significant study included interviews which revealed contextually-relevant information.

Let's Be Honest Installation

The installation pictured in fig. 3.5a and fig. 3.5b was created to gather information about the attitudes and opinions towards refugees across Canada. The structure accommodates one seated viewer, who is meant to experience the installation in a secluded environment. The vellum expressions on the walls of the installation express positive and negative attitudes and opinions about refugees. Underneath these expressions is a real refugee success story which will dispel or support the expression that the viewer just read (Fig. 3.6a-h). After the experience, viewers are asked to confront their own attitudes and opinions towards refugees via an anonymous form.

The installation explanation which viewers read before the experience:

> *The trauma and distress that refugee's experience throughout their journey doesn't end once they reach safety. In the West, refugees face many challenges. The expectation to begin a new life and move on from their past is unhealthy and unreasonable. One of the greatest struggles for a resettled refugee is their experience maneuvering through a new country that has different ideals and customs- and the attitudes and opinions of the society they have integrated into.*
>
> *This installation aims to confront the assumptions, attitudes, and opinions that people in the west have towards refugees. The structure is engulfing its viewer with harsh (or sometimes kind) opinions. It's meant to be experienced individually, so that the viewer can be honest with themselves- which of these opinions do I also hold? Underneath these opinions are real stories of refugees in Canada that are meant to dismantle or question the overlaying*

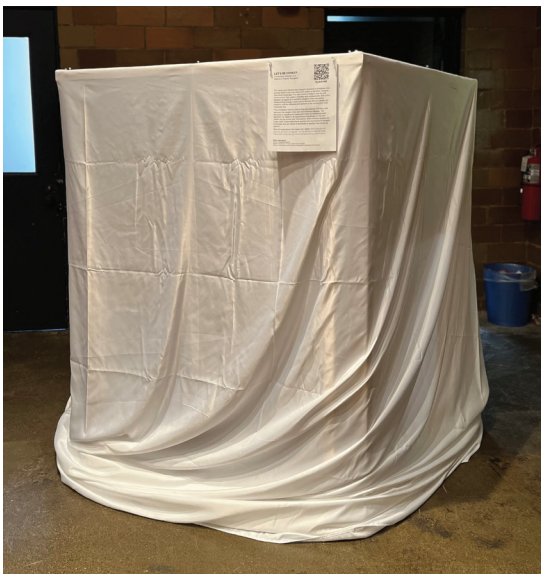


Fig. 3.5a Let's Be Honest installation.

Fig. 3.5b Let's Be Honest installation.

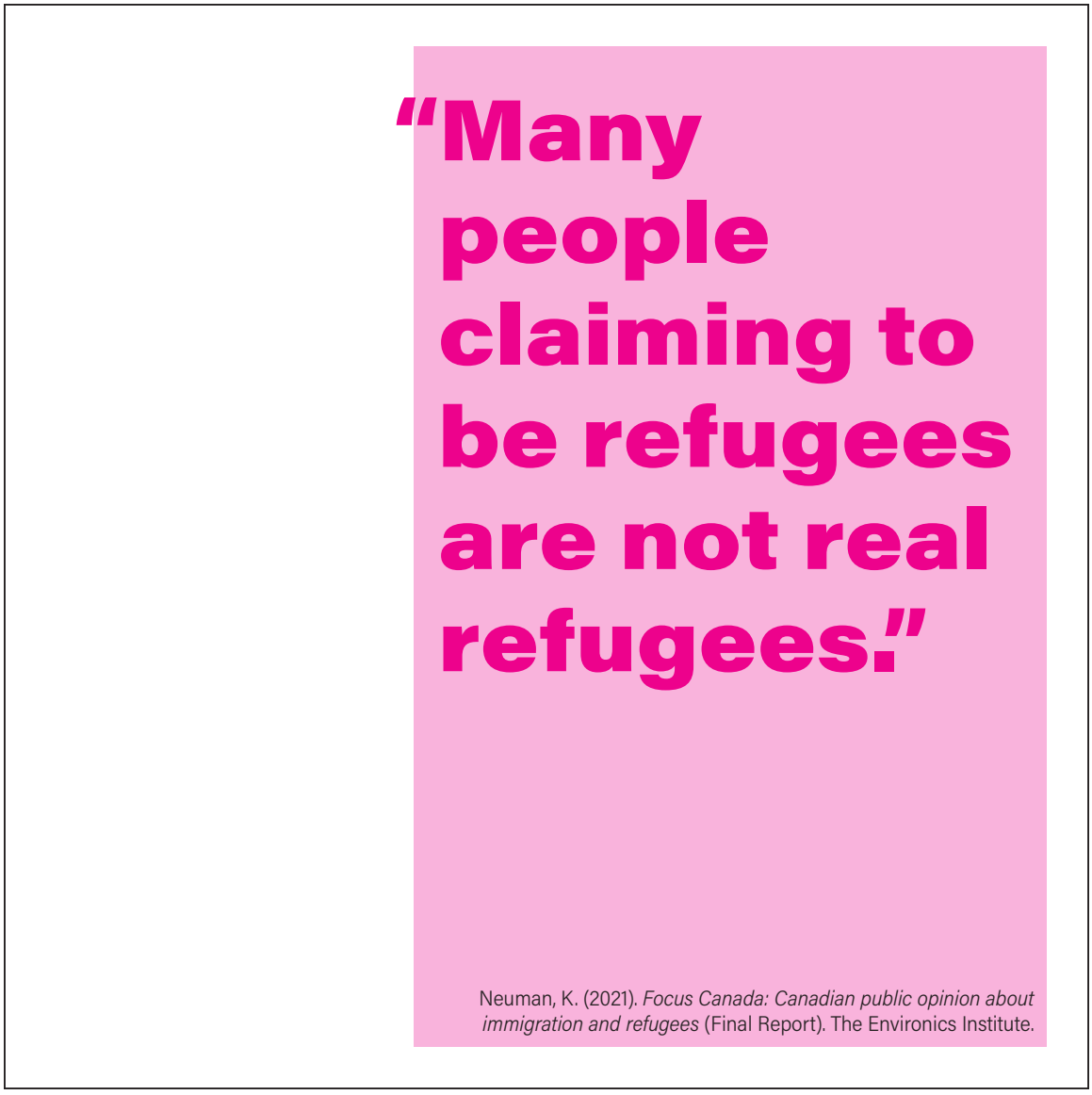


Fig. 3.6a Refugee attitude/opinion.

Hello, I'm Sayed and I'm going into 6th grade.

If we stayed a few more days in Afghanistan, I'm not sure we would be alive. We lived in Pakistan for 3 years after leaving home.

I had never been to school before coming to Canada. So I was nervous because I didn't know what it was going to be like. After a few days, I made friends who showed me around. I'm thinking about my future now and getting a good job. I wanted to be a policeman but my uncle told me that doctors save people's lives and they make more money.

"We didn't want to go to war because if we went to war, I'm sure that my family would not be alive yet."

Fig. 3.6b Refugee story.

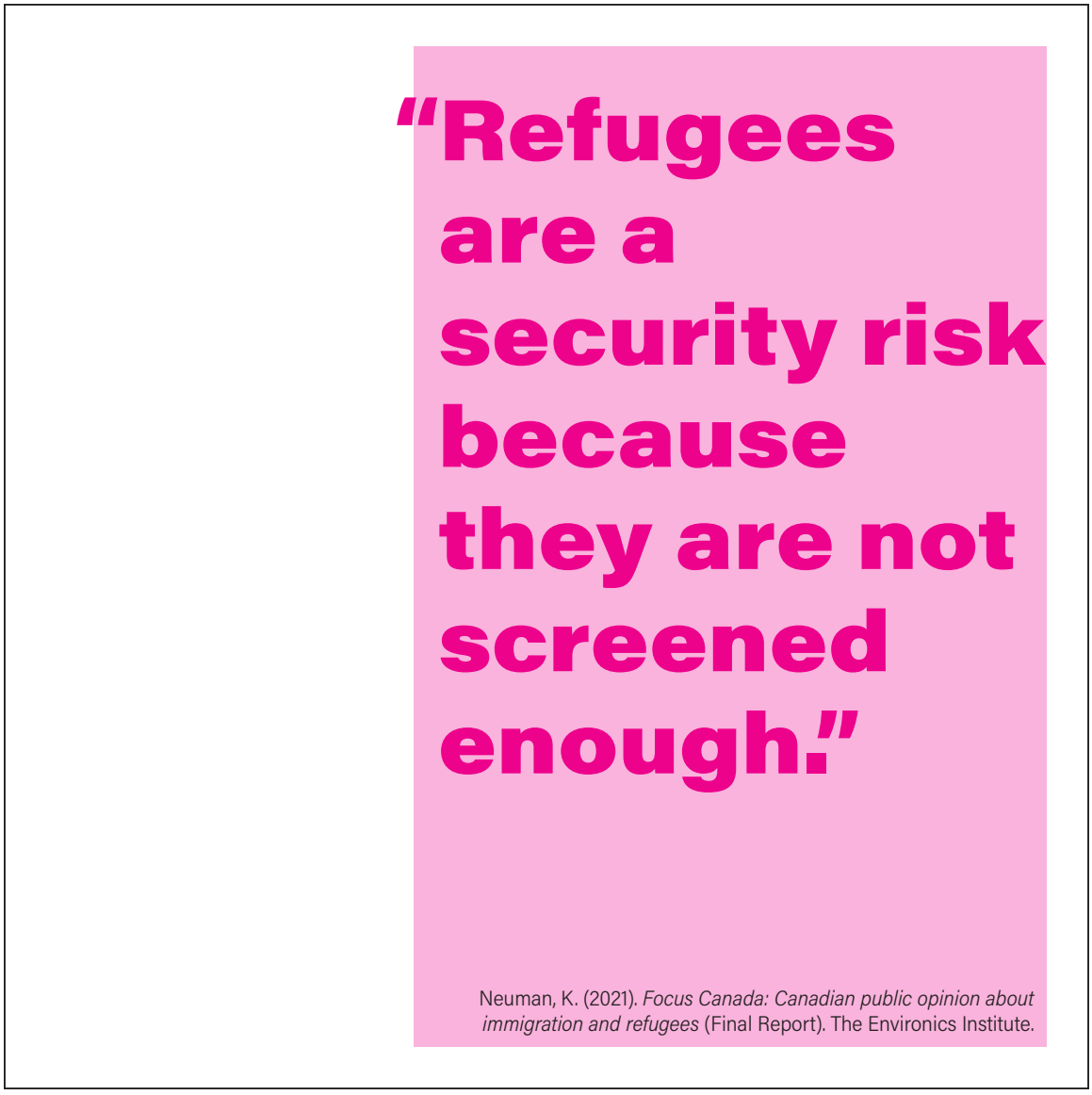


Fig. 3.6c Refugee attitude/opinion.

Salam, I'm Mohammed Hakmi and I'm a 26-year old Syrian refugee.

My family and I fled from our home in Syria to Lebanon, where I stayed for 8 years.

I resettled in Canada through the Talent Beyond Boundaries (TBB) project which is an economic immigration program that pairs skilled refugees with employers. I'm now working as an IT developer for a company in Kitchener, ON. I'm excited to contribute to the team, and begin a new journey.

"They have knowledge, they have skills, but these skills and knowledge are disabled. They can make a positive impact on communities. So why could we not use this power, the power of refugees?"

Fig. 3.6d Refugee story.

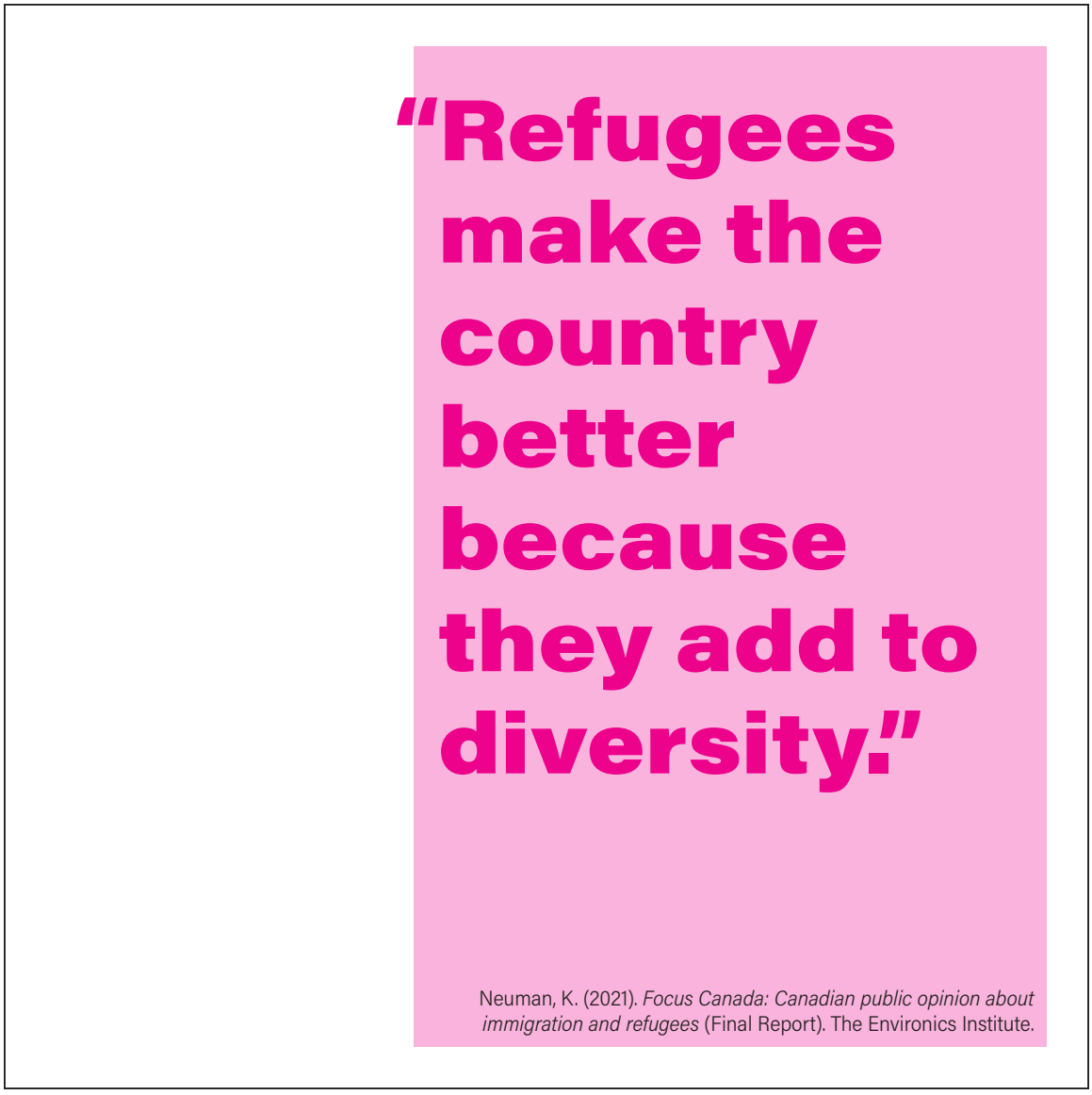


Fig. 3.6e Refugee attitude/opinion.

Hi, my name is Nour Abdullah and I'm a 21-year old Syrian refugee.

I left my home in Aleppo, Syria 3 years ago in search of a better life. I came to Ottawa, Canada with my brother. My parents and older sister remain in Syria.

Since resettling I have been enrolled at Carleton University. I am a swimmer, a basketball player, and I love playing the piano. In my free time, I volunteer in a sports organization for low-income children, and I teach arabic in a language program.

"In 2011, a tragic war broke out in Syria that destroyed every hope and dream I ever had. My father was kidnapped, I watched friends die, I was displaced from my home, and was forced to stop professional swimming for more than four years."

Fig. 3.6f Refugee story.

opinion. After the experience, the viewer can reflect- What attitudes and opinions do I have of refugees? Are my opinions a reflection of the media that I consume, my cultural background, my political views?

The value of this effort is that it brought a human perspective to the issue of refugee resettlement and also served as a reminder that while architecture, design and planning can support refugees in tangible ways, there are social, intangible issues which it cannot solve.

Refugee and Community Interviews

In order to confirm the earlier findings about unfulfilled domains (such as Social Bridges, Housing, Education and Health) and to uncover issues that are not addressed through data, a series of interviews were conducted. Ager and Strang's model emphasizes approaching refugee integration from two perspectives: the refugee and the host society. Interviews were conducted with both a Syrian refugee and a community leader who was heavily involved in the Syrian refugee resettlement effort in 2015. The intent was to understand, from a first hand perspective, how resettlement efforts in Windsor were successful and/or unsuccessful at that time. **What are lessons learned from that time which can influence change for the next influx of refugees to Windsor?**

Participants were asked questions related to the services they received/provided, their feelings and reservations towards government aid, and how the system worked and where it was failing. Both the refugee and the community member expressed that the greatest need during resettlement was finding housing which was affordable and could accommodate large family sizes and individuals with disabilities. As a result of poor planning by the government, Syrian refugees that arrived in 2015 stayed in Windsor hotels for weeks to months after arrival. Participant B said, "I don't think anybody expected them to be in the hotel for months on end. I don't think I would be comfortable being there for the long amount of time that they were there," and participant A, "we used bunk beds for all of our kids. We had four bunk beds in one room to fit all of the girls. The bathroom was the biggest problem. Only one bathroom in the house for eight people."

Both participants talked positively about their social experiences especially in relation to the willingness of the surrounding community to help. They both emphasized the importance of relying on the existing Syrian community in Windsor for support. For example, participant A said, "We had friends in Windsor who really helped us. They found us a house and helped us with everything. They taught us what to do, where to come and go, what to buy, what to wear, where to rent a home, the areas where we should live and how close they were to the arabic stores." Lastly, the responses related to language and cultural knowledge and safety and stability talked about the struggles of refugees during initial arrival and the

"It is okay if refugees take time to integrate into society."

Ahlan, I'm Abdul Fatah Sabouni and I'm a Syrian refugee.

My family business was destroyed in Aleppo, Syria because of the war. We fled the country a few years later.

After resettling in Calgary, AB, Canada, I quickly learned English and launched a new soap company with 2 partners. Making and distributing this world-famous soap is my way of giving back to this country and it's citizens. Every time someone uses my soap, they are rebuilding the dreams of a once-broken Syrian refugee.

Fig. 3.6g Refugee attitude/opinion (Above).

Fig. 3.6h Refugee story (Below).

miscommunications between them and people in the community: "They didn't know how to use a shower curtain, for example. I remember that there would always be water all over the floor. The hotels didn't have Arabic speaking staff, so they would just start yelling at them like, "What are you guys doing?" They're trying to tell them to start using these shower curtains and they didn't understand that shower curtains prevented water from leaving the bathtub." Another key struggle was mobility, as most refugees do not own cars and are hesitant to use public transportation. Instead, they relied on their relationships with Syrian community members for transportation.

This interview effort confirmed that the greatest need for refugees in Windsor is immediate, safe and accommodating housing. While programs related to education, health and social bridges are also lacking, these are less urgent compared to housing. Therefore, any intervention should place utmost importance on the immediate sheltering of refugees, and then provide supplementary programs which address other domains of integration.

The Existing Resettlement Assistance Network in Ward 3

Windsor's Ward 3 is characterized by Windsor's downtown. The major street, Ouellette Avenue, is the main connector from the South of Windsor to the Windsor-Detroit Tunnel and the highly coveted Riverside park which stretches along the entire coastline of the Detroit River. Ouellette Avenue is also where a large cluster of resettlement services are located. Within a 25-minute walking distance, eight WE LIP organizations and over fifty WRAP programs and services can be accessed (Fig. 3.8).

Through extensive mapping of WE LIP organizations and community assets in Ward 3 like education buildings, leisure, hotels/motels/emergency shelters, etc. an existing network of refugee resettlement assistance emerges. This network is centered in the heart of Windsor's downtown core, on Ouellette Avenue, a few blocks away from Windsor's Arabic ethnic enclave on Wyandotte Street which is lined with Middle Eastern grocers, butchers and bakeries.

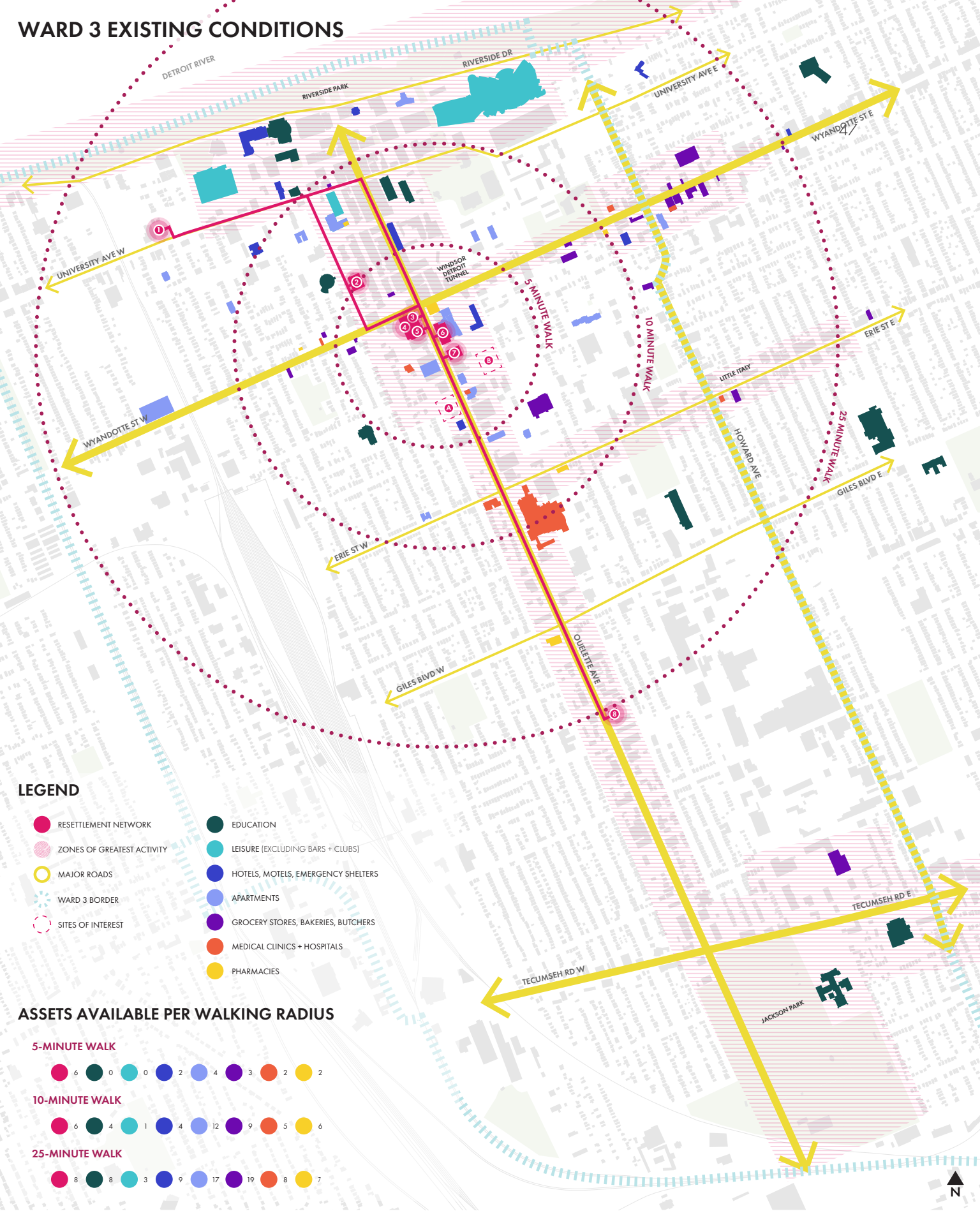
Fig. 3.7 Images of refugees/refugee families in various living conditions in Canada.

Research about ethnic enclaves supports the resettlement of refugees within communities where there are like-ethnic groups, rather than opposing views that support refugee resettlement in communities surrounded by non-refugees and non-immigrants. In a conversation with Chris Friesen, COO of Immigrant Service Society of British Columbia, he provided his expert opinion in support of locating refugees where they are nearest to services because it removes barriers to access like transportation. For these reasons, this thesis supports interventions within the City of Windsor which are located within or near the existing refugee resettlement assistance network.

Through field research and mapping, two sites within the ward 3 network were identified as potential opportunities for an architectural intervention. These sites will be discussed further in the next chapter however, it is important to note here that these sites were chosen due to their ability to support the existing WRAP network through both physical location and programming (Fig. 4.2 and Fig. 4.3).

Fig. 3.8 Ward 3 mapping analysis of resettlement network and community assets (right).

WARD 3 EXISTING CONDITIONS



LEGEND

- RESETTLEMENT NETWORK
- ZONES OF GREATEST ACTIVITY
- MAJOR ROADS
- WARD 3 BORDER
- SITES OF INTEREST
- EDUCATION
- LEISURE (EXCLUDING BARS + CLUBS)
- HOTELS, MOTELS, EMERGENCY SHELTERS
- APARTMENTS
- GROCERY STORES, BAKERIES, BUTCHERS
- MEDICAL CLINICS + HOSPITALS
- PHARMACIES

ASSETS AVAILABLE PER WALKING RADIUS

5-MINUTE WALK

6 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 2

10-MINUTE WALK

6 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 12 | 9 | 5 | 6

25-MINUTE WALK

8 | 8 | 3 | 9 | 17 | 19 | 8 | 7

04 INTERVENTION

Architectures of Social Purpose

Three precedent projects were identified as successful examples of architecture that supports the integration of refugees. These buildings, all located within Canada, provide this thesis with a deeper understanding of programs for refugees, adjacencies and square-footages, and exterior/interior architectural strategies (Fig. 4.1).

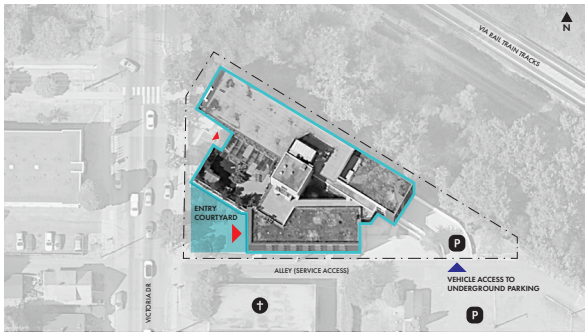
Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia (ISSofBC) Welcome Centre

Chris Friesen, COO of Immigrant Service Society of British Columbia, describes their Welcome Centre facility as a new typology for refugee social housing and assistance in Canada. This building and its programming serves as a model for other national and international cities that have large refugee and immigrant populations. Beyond the thoughtful architectural and sustainable design efforts conducted by Henriquez Partners Architects, this building distinguishes itself from other social housing projects in Canada because of the deliberate placement of essential services and programs on the ground floor. Located in one of Canada's largest cities, the Welcome Centre promotes integration by removing transportation as a barrier to accessing services. The all-in-one approach allows refugees to easily seek essential services like medical care, legal aid, child support and banking, just below their place of shelter. The analysis of the ISSofBC Welcome Centre greatly influenced the outcomes of this thesis and exemplifies the power of thoughtful design, combined with comprehensive programming, to support the integration of refugees into Canadian society.

Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council (MIIC) Welcome Place

Winnipeg is a city located in the province of Manitoba and has a population about twice the size of Windsor. Similarly to Windsor, Manitoba housed a significant number of Syrian refugees during the nation-wide effort in 2015-2016. However, in contrast to Windsor, Manitoba successfully resettled these refugees without temporarily housing them in hotels, hostels or other public short-term accommodation. The Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council (MIIC), the designated receiver of refugees in Winnipeg, achieved this by significantly increasing their organizational infrastructure and physical infrastructure by leasing two buildings in addition to their main reception center to temporarily house refugees and refugee families of all sizes. Another crucial aspect of their success was the use of existing rent supplement policies which allowed them to permanently house refugees within ten days of their arrival.

MIIC workers led a considerable effort to work with landlords and government offices to get units approved for the rent supplement program, which helped refugees access affordable subsidized housing quickly after



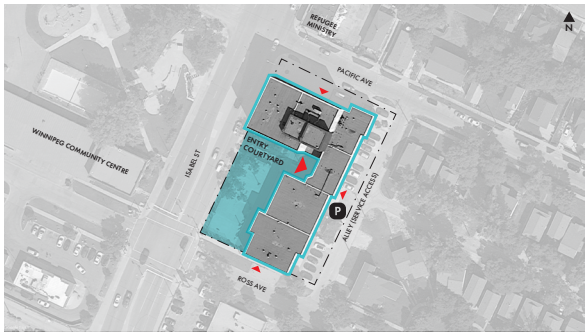
IMMIGRANT SERVICES SOCIETY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA (ISSofBC) WELCOME HOUSE

LOCATION: Vancouver, British Columbia

AREA: 58,500 SF (6 floors)

BUILDING PROGRAM:

- Temporary Housing: 18 flexible living units (138 beds)
- Medical Clinic
- Trauma Support and Treatment Centre
- Child-Minding Space: Playground and Family Area
- Newcomer Youth Hub
- Food Bank
- Community Kitchen
- Law Clinic
- Preschool and Childcare Centre
- Refugee and Asylum Seeker Service Office
- Flexible Meeting Spaces
- Language and Teaching Support Offices
- Corporate Offices



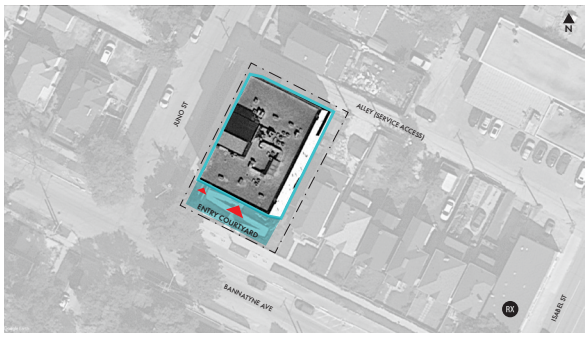
IMMIGRATION & REFUGEE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION OF MANITOBA (IRCOM) HOUSE

LOCATION: Winnipeg, Manitoba

AREA: N/A (7 floors)

BUILDING PROGRAM:

- Transitional Housing: 60 apartment units
- (Studio, two, and three bedroom options)
- Classrooms
- Offices



MANITOBA INTERFAITH IMMIGRATION COUNCIL (MIIC) WELCOME PLACE

LOCATION: Winnipeg, Manitoba

AREA: 25,000 SF (5 floors)

BUILDING PROGRAM:

- Temporary Housing: 30 self-contained units (120 beds)
- Landscaped Entry Courtyard
- Multipurpose Room
- Indoor Lounges: Public and Quiet
- Assembly and Seminar Rooms
- Offices
- Rooftop Terrace

Fig. 4.1 Precedent analysis.

arrival. This was the primary permanent housing strategy utilized by the MIIC at the time. Secondary to this was the rent-assist program, which was utilized less frequently because of time constraints. Further, MIIC's main reception centre, Welcome Place, is a facility which has 30 fully furnished apartments which can be modified to temporarily accommodate smaller or larger families. This was one of the facilities used for transitional housing in their 2015-2016 efforts. The MIIC was able to achieve their goal of permanently housing refugee families within ten days of arriving in Winnipeg.

Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba (IRCOM) Isabel House

Although not run by MIIC, IRCOM House is a great example of a more permanent housing effort in Winnipeg which is specifically geared towards refugees and newcomers. The two facilities, ISABEL House and ELLEN House, offer transitional housing for up to 3 years from the date of acceptance. The facilities offer a wide range of apartment types and sizes which can house individuals, small or large families. In addition to this, IRCOM facilities offer programming which directly supports the integration of refugees into society. The intention is to provide support to refugees so that they can pursue longer-term permanent housing by the time their lease is up.

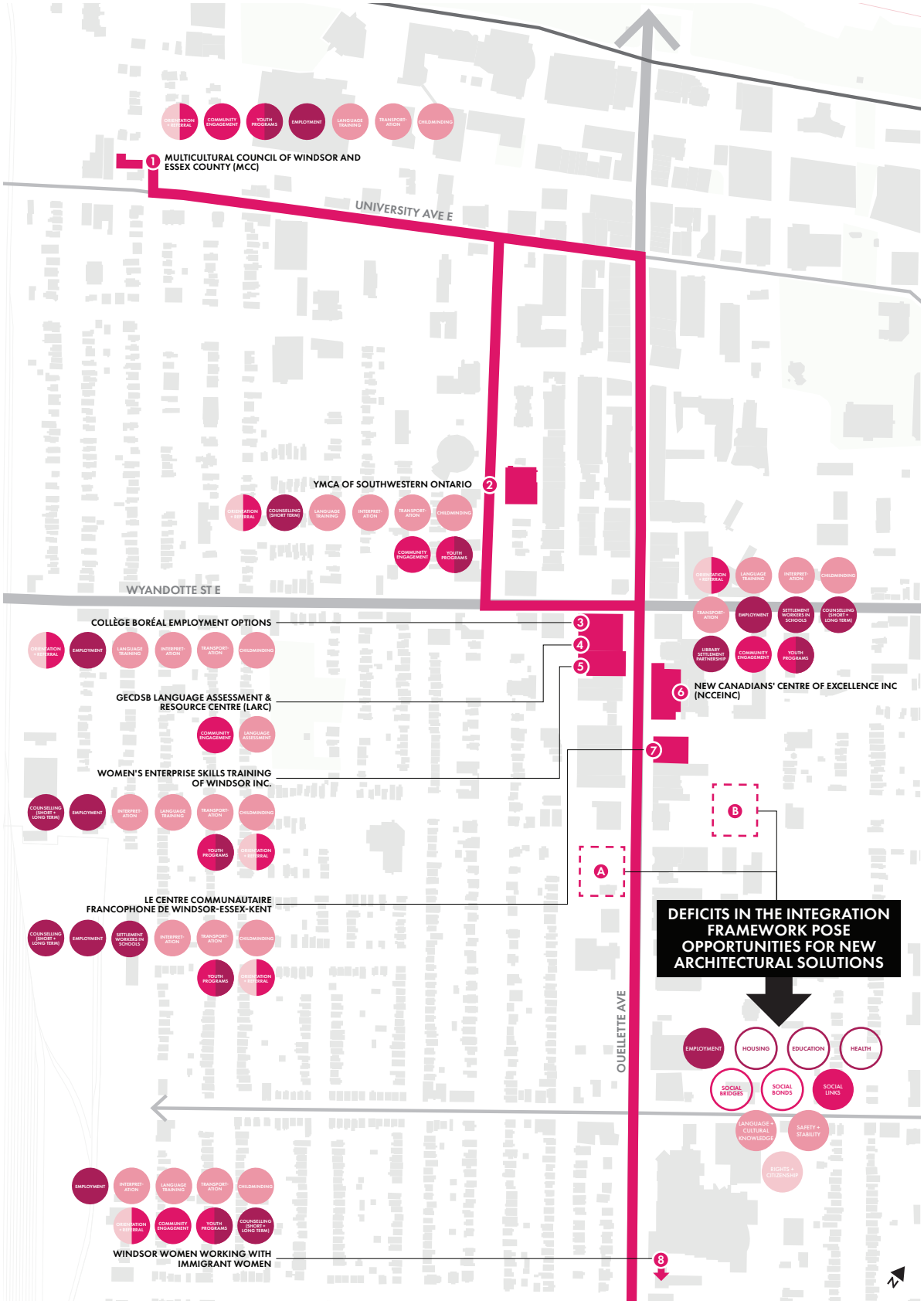
Windsor Refugee Welcome Centre (WRWC)

The previous chapter outlined a series of methods which were used to determine the gaps in refugee integration in Windsor. The findings of those efforts confirmed that spatial solutions are necessary to address the greatest tangible need of immediate housing. Further, the investigations suggest that any intervention meant to address said gaps should be located within Windsor's Ward 3, specifically its downtown core. It is crucial for proposed interventions to make physical and programmatic connections with the existing WRAP network which is composed of eight WE LIP organizations and over fifty WRAP services.

To address the identified gaps in housing and other programs, this thesis proposes an architectural intervention titled, the Windsor Refugee Welcome Centre (WRWC). The mission of the WRWC is to embrace incoming refugees to Windsor and Essex County by providing immediate shelter and programs which support their integration into Canadian life. The WRWC envisions a future where refugees can integrate seamlessly into Windsor and achieve self-sufficiency, economic independence and psycho-social belonging.

The specific programs to be included in this proposal are influenced by the earlier studies in WE LIP and WRAP analysis, information

Fig. 4.2 Identification of Site A and Site B as prime sites for intervention.
Fig. 4.3 Program analysis of the existing network on an urban scale (right).


ORIENTATION + REFERRAL
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
YOUTH PROGRAMS
EMPLOYMENT
LANGUAGE TRAINING
TRANSPORT-ATION
CHILDMINDING
1 MULTICULTURAL COUNCIL OF WINDSOR AND ESSEX COUNTY (MCC)
UNIVERSITY AVE E
2 YMCA OF SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO
ORIENTATION + REFERRAL
COUNSELLING (SHORT TERM)
LANGUAGE TRAINING
INTERPRET-ATION
TRANSPORT-ATION
CHILDMINDING
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
YOUTH PROGRAMS
WYANDOTTE ST E
ORIENTATION + REFERRAL
LANGUAGE TRAINING
INTERPRET-ATION
CHILDMINDING
TRANSPORT-ATION
EMPLOYMENT
SETTLEMENT WORKERS IN SCHOOLS
COUNSELLING (SHORT + LONG TERM)
LIBRARY SETTLEMENT PARTNERSHIP
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
YOUTH PROGRAMS
COLLÈGE BORÉAL EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS
3
4
5
ORIENTATION + REFERRAL
EMPLOYMENT
LANGUAGE TRAINING
INTERPRET-ATION
TRANSPORT-ATION
CHILDMINDING
GECDSB LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT & RESOURCE CENTRE (LARC)
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT
6 NEW CANADIANS' CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE INC (NCCEINC)
7
WOMEN'S ENTERPRISE SKILLS TRAINING OF WINDSOR INC.
COUNSELLING (SHORT + LONG TERM)
EMPLOYMENT
INTERPRET-ATION
LANGUAGE TRAINING
TRANSPORT-ATION
CHILDMINDING
YOUTH PROGRAMS
ORIENTATION + REFERRAL
B
A
LE CENTRE COMMUNAUTAIRE FRANCOPHONE DE WINDSOR-ESSEX-KENT
COUNSELLING (SHORT + LONG TERM)
EMPLOYMENT
SETTLEMENT WORKERS IN SCHOOLS
INTERPRET-ATION
TRANSPORT-ATION
CHILDMINDING
YOUTH PROGRAMS
ORIENTATION + REFERRAL
DEFICITS IN THE INTEGRATION FRAMEWORK POSE OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW ARCHITECTURAL SOLUTIONS
EMPLOYMENT
HOUSING
EDUCATION
HEALTH
SOCIAL BRIDGES
SOCIAL BONDS
SOCIAL LINKS
LANGUAGE + CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE
SAFETY + STABILITY
RIGHTS + CITIZENSHIP
OUELLETTE AVE
EMPLOYMENT
INTERPRET-ATION
LANGUAGE TRAINING
TRANSPORT-ATION
CHILDMINDING
ORIENTATION + REFERRAL
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
YOUTH PROGRAMS
COUNSELLING (SHORT + LONG TERM)
WINDSOR WOMEN WORKING WITH IMMIGRANT WOMEN
8

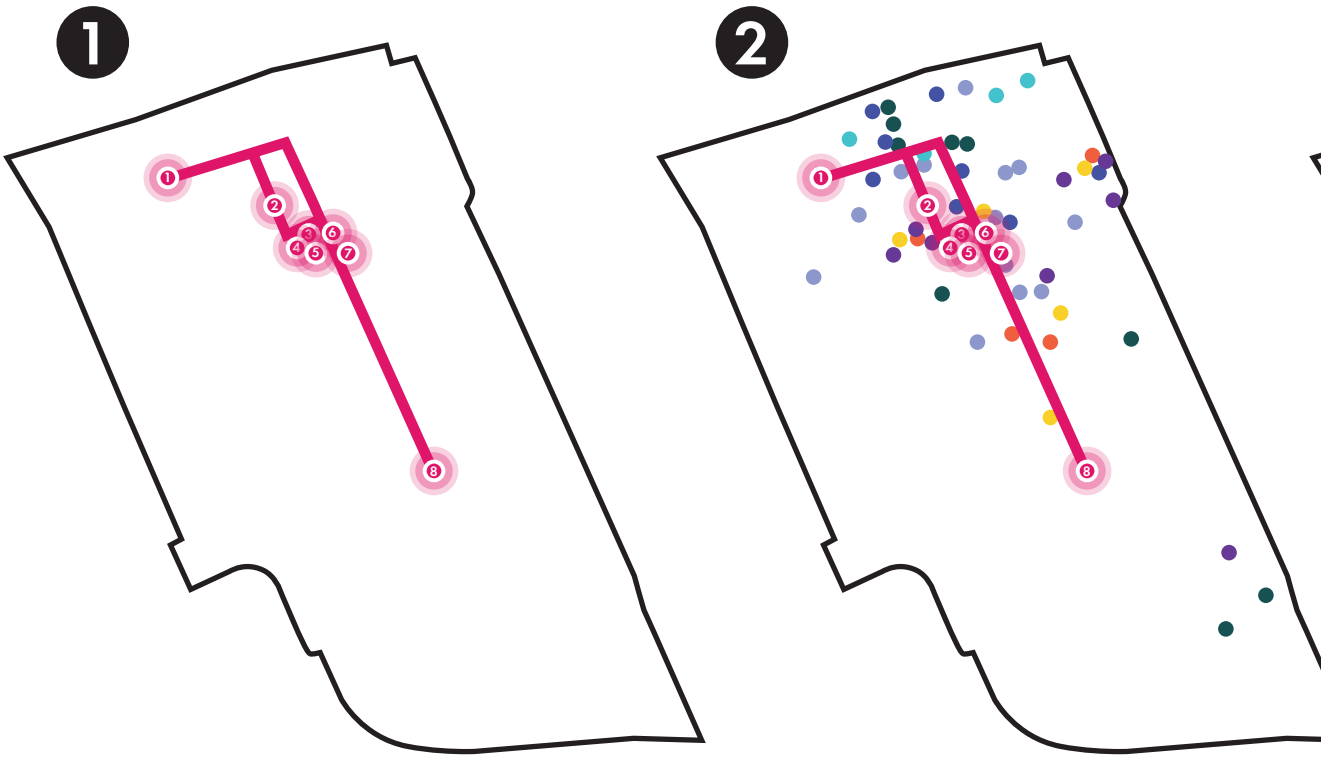
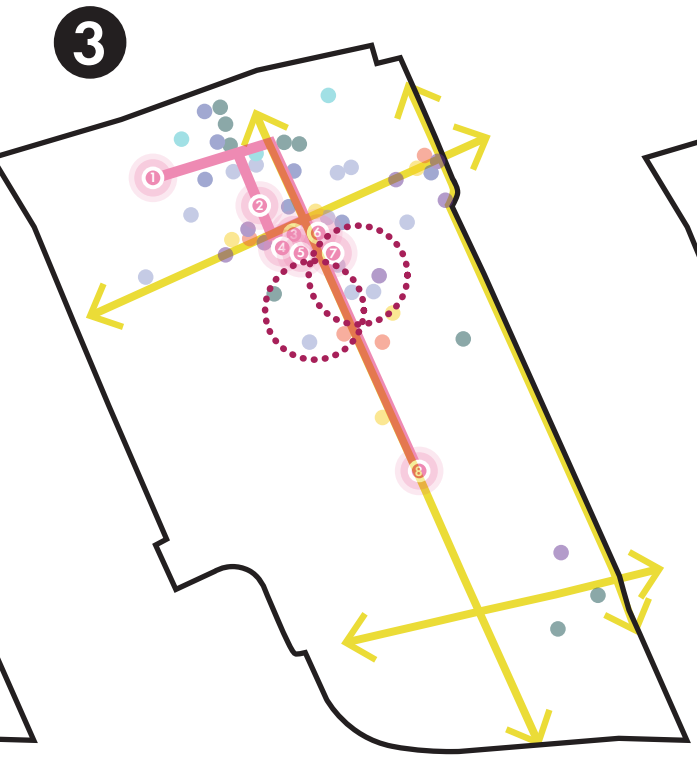
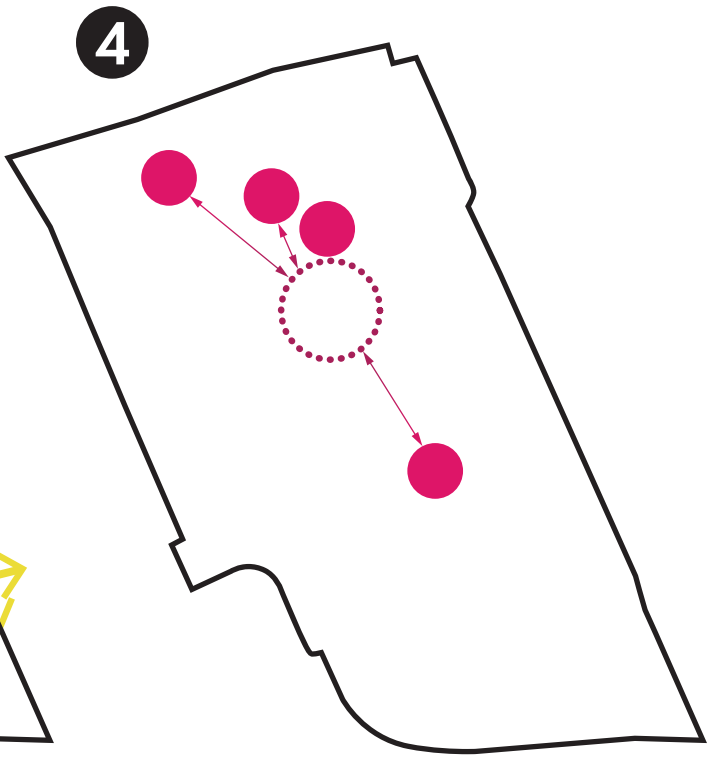


Fig. 4.4 Urban strategy for refugee integration.



IDENTIFY SITES WITH ACCESS TO RESETTLEMENT NETWORK, COMMUNITY ASSETS + PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



IDENTIFY PROGRAMMING DEFICITS ON AN URBAN SCALE

from interviews, and precedent studies. Fig. 4.2 and fig. 4.3 are a visual representation of how the WRWC plugs into the existing network through its proximity to other services and also how the WRWC can fill programmatic deficits in this area of Windsor.

Urban-Scale Opportunities for Refugee Integration

Four steps were taken to determine how the WRWC can influence integration on an urban scale (Fig. 4.4):

1. ***Locate resettlement services and map the existing network***

This effort was extensively discussed in previous chapters. In summary, the majority of Windsor's resettlement services are clustered in one area of the city, Ward 3. This ecosystem of resettlement assistance can be described as a network which is easily accessed through public transportation and comfortable walking distances.

2. ***Map community assets near the existing network***

Community assets, which are not explicitly stated in the integration model by Ager and Stang, were mapped to ensure that all basic needs could be met within a short walking distance if a new intervention were to be proposed. These assets include basic and essential programs that would be accessed daily by refugees like schools, grocery stores, butchers, pharmacies, medical clinics, etc.

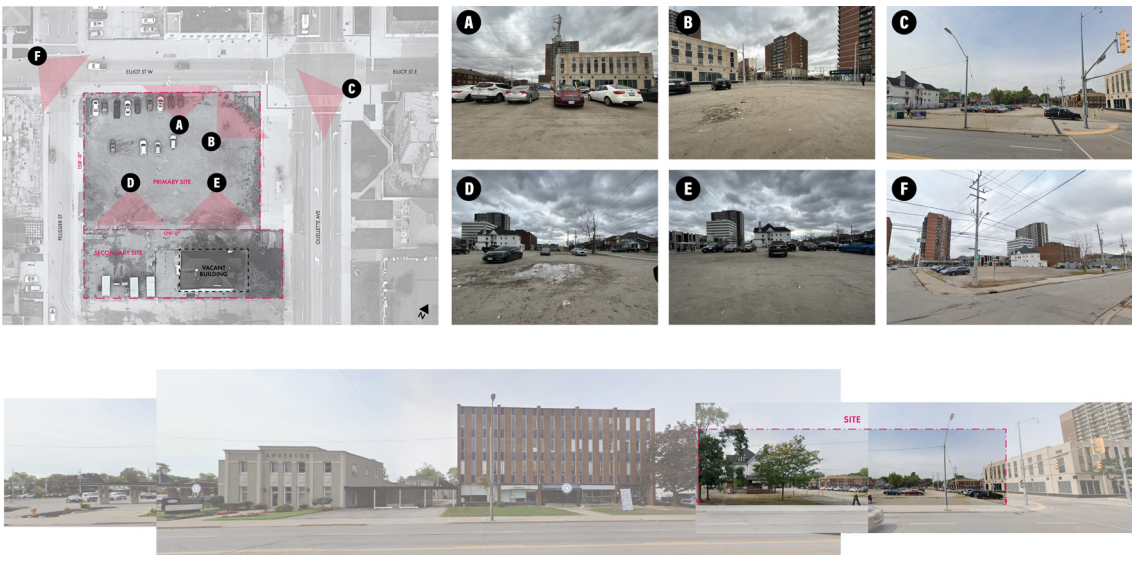


Fig. 4.5 Analysis of chosen Site A.

Fig. 4.6 Architectural guidelines for refugee integration.

3. ***Identify potential sites for intervention***

Through field work and mapping, vacant lots adjacent to the network were identified as potential sites for intervention. Preference was given to lots that were located directly adjacent to bus stops, and were within a short walking distance to essential needs. Two sites, A and B, were identified as prime for a new proposal. This thesis moved forward with site A because of its location on the main road, Ouellette Avenue (Fig. 4.5). However, site B is suggested as the back-up plan for this proposal if site A was found unfit due to funding or other factors not addressed in this thesis.

4. ***Identify programmatic deficits on an urban scale***

Fig 4.3 shows the analysis of programs in the network and identifies the following domains as unfulfilled in this area: Housing, Education, Health, Social Bridges and Social Bonds. This analysis, along with information gathered from interviews and precedent studies were used to suggest a building program for the WRWC (See Appendix B for full program).

Architectural Strategies for Refugee Integration

The suggested best practices for refugee integration, shown in fig 4.6, are presented as a gradient of interior to exterior strategies, and spatial/architectural to programmatic strategies. This method is used because these suggestions bleed into and influence one another greatly. For example, "design a communal space on each residential floor" can be adapted for sites with limited floor area to include one central communal area, to be easily accessed and shared by all residential floors. The importance of these suggestions is about how they can influence the lives of building users.

The suggested best practices are heavily influenced by the precedent studies of refugee welcome centres across Canada like the ISSofBC Welcome House in British Columbia, the MIIC Welcome Place and the IRCOM Isabel House in Manitoba, which were discussed earlier in this chapter. All three buildings feature a significantly recessed entry which allows for an entry courtyard. This influenced the suggestion to, "dramatically recess the main entry to allow for an entry courtyard to engage the sidewalk and avoid abrupt entry."

The built environment is influenced by a multitude of factors like climate, policy, culture, etc. A building of the same typology may look completely different in one context versus another because the design and programs respond to site-specific clues. For those reasons, architectural strategies in this thesis are not presented in a strict one-size-fits-all approach, but rather as a suggested best practice which can be modified and adapted to fit contextual needs.

Site-Scale Opportunities for Refugee Integration

The previous sections, *Urban-Scale Opportunities for Refugee Integration* and *Architectural Strategies for Refugee Integration* outline steps that can be used in most Canadian contexts, however this section describes the programming, planning and design of an intervention that is specific to the context of Windsor. This conceptual design is intended to test the strategies outlined in fig. 4.6. It's important to note that the building design, specifically the public facing ground floor, would require an extensive participatory-design and community-engagement effort with refugees and community members of Ward 3. Thus, the following conceptual proposal recognizes its limitations and humbly presents itself as a suggestion of what could possibly exist (Fig. 4.7-4.11).

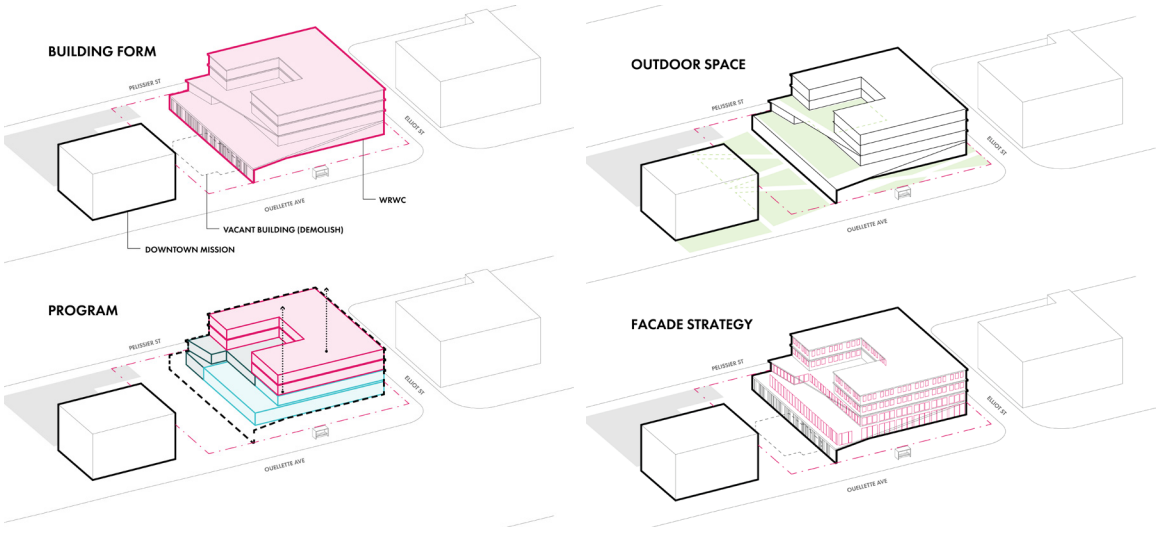
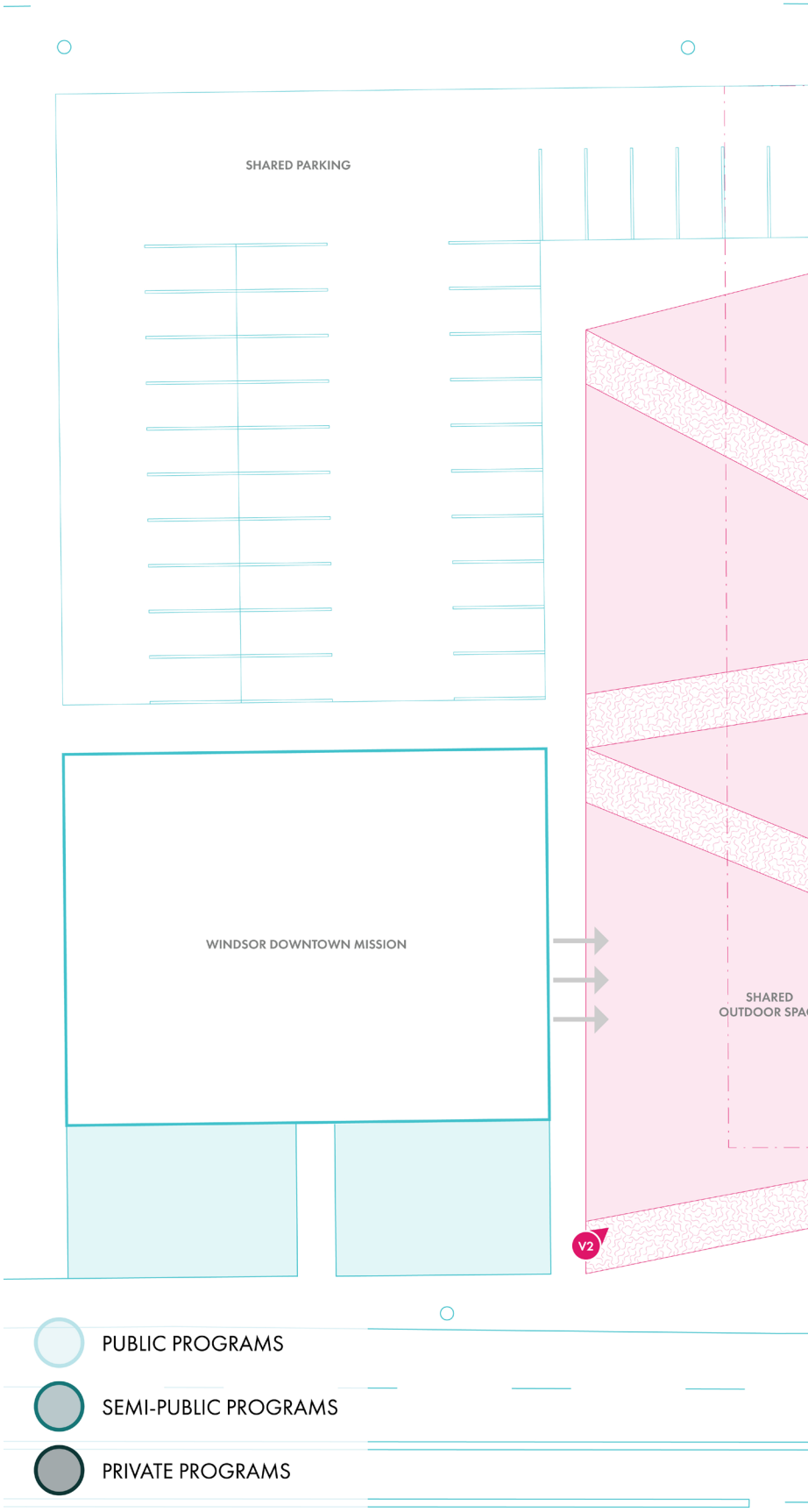
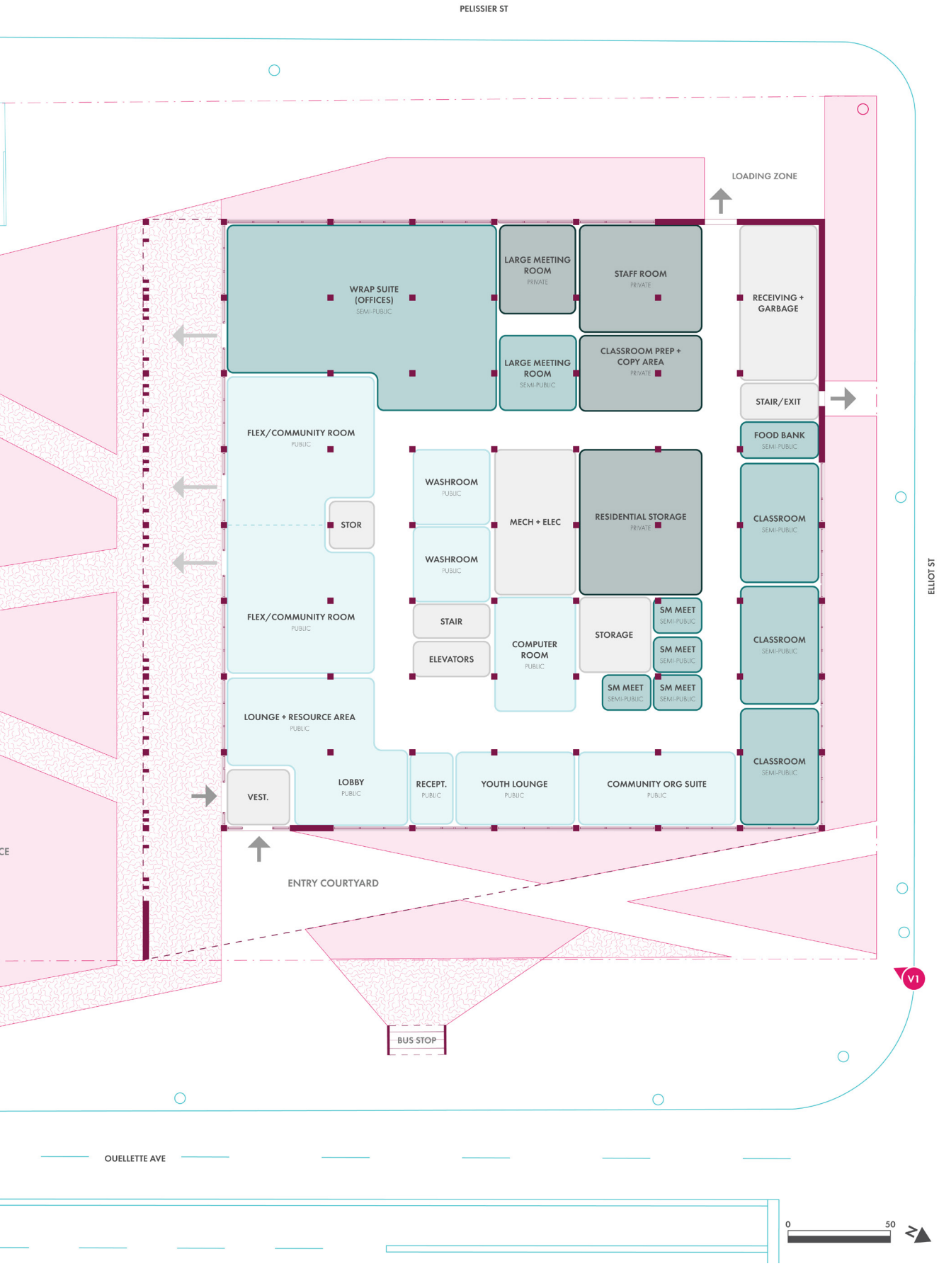


Fig. 4.7 WRWC building form and design strategies.

Fig. 4.8 Conceptual ground floor plan.




PELISSIER ST
LOADING ZONE
WRAP SUITE (OFFICES)
SEMI-PUBLIC
LARGE MEETING ROOM
PRIVATE
STAFF ROOM
PRIVATE
RECEIVING + GARBAGE
LARGE MEETING ROOM
SEMI-PUBLIC
CLASSROOM PREP + COPY AREA
PRIVATE
STAIR/EXIT
FOOD BANK
SEMI-PUBLIC
FLEX/COMMUNITY ROOM
PUBLIC
WASHROOM
PUBLIC
MECH + ELEC
RESIDENTIAL STORAGE
PRIVATE
CLASSROOM
SEMI-PUBLIC
STOR
WASHROOM
PUBLIC
FLEX/COMMUNITY ROOM
PUBLIC
STAIR
ELEVATORS
COMPUTER ROOM
PUBLIC
STORAGE
SM MEET
SEMI-PUBLIC
SM MEET
SEMI-PUBLIC
SM MEET
SEMI-PUBLIC
SM MEET
SEMI-PUBLIC
CLASSROOM
SEMI-PUBLIC
LOUNGE + RESOURCE AREA
PUBLIC
VEST.
LOBBY
PUBLIC
RECEPT.
PUBLIC
YOUTH LOUNGE
PUBLIC
COMMUNITY ORG SUITE
PUBLIC
CLASSROOM
SEMI-PUBLIC
ENTRY COURTYARD
ELLIOT ST
V1
BUS STOP
OUELLETTE AVE
0
50

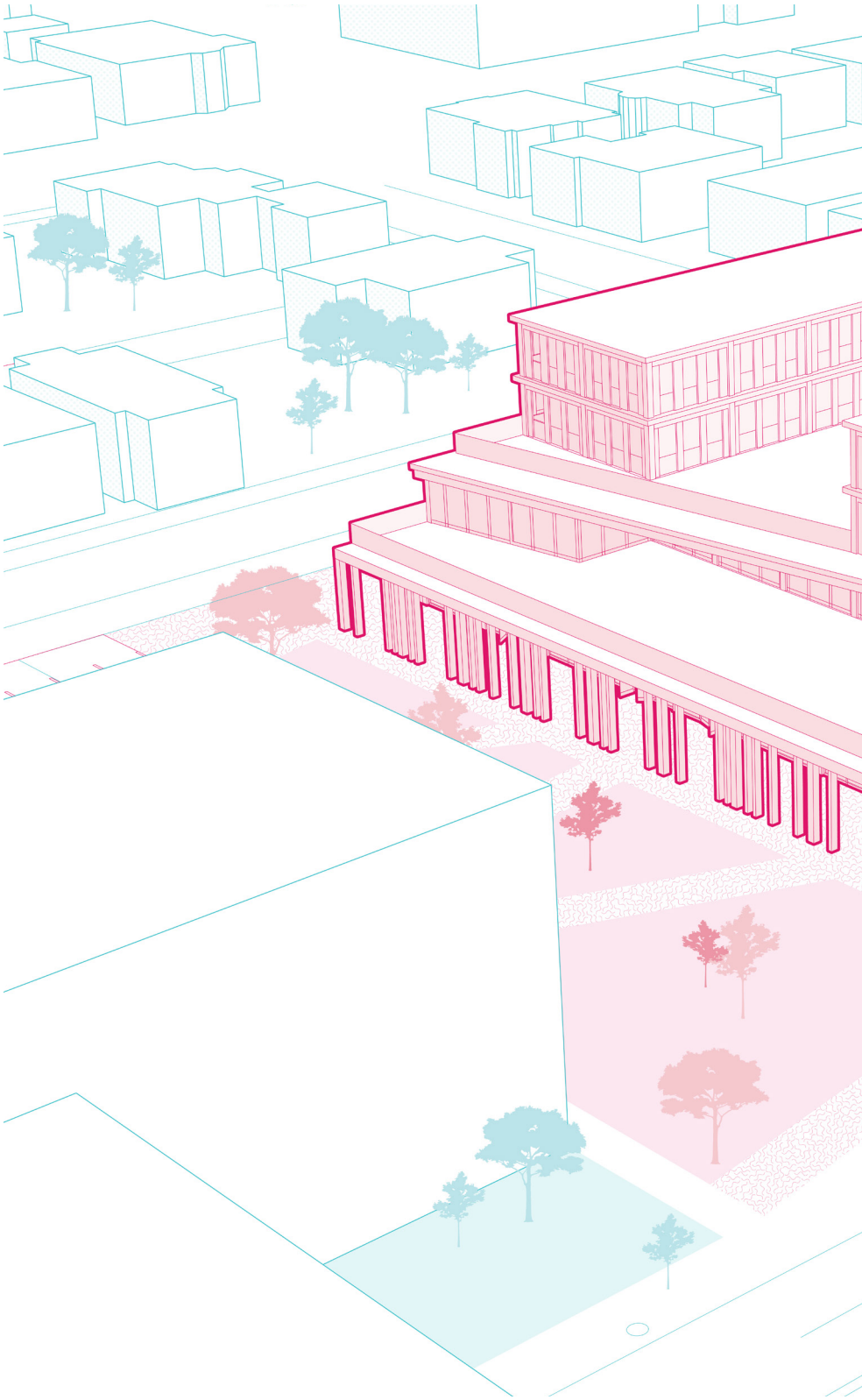
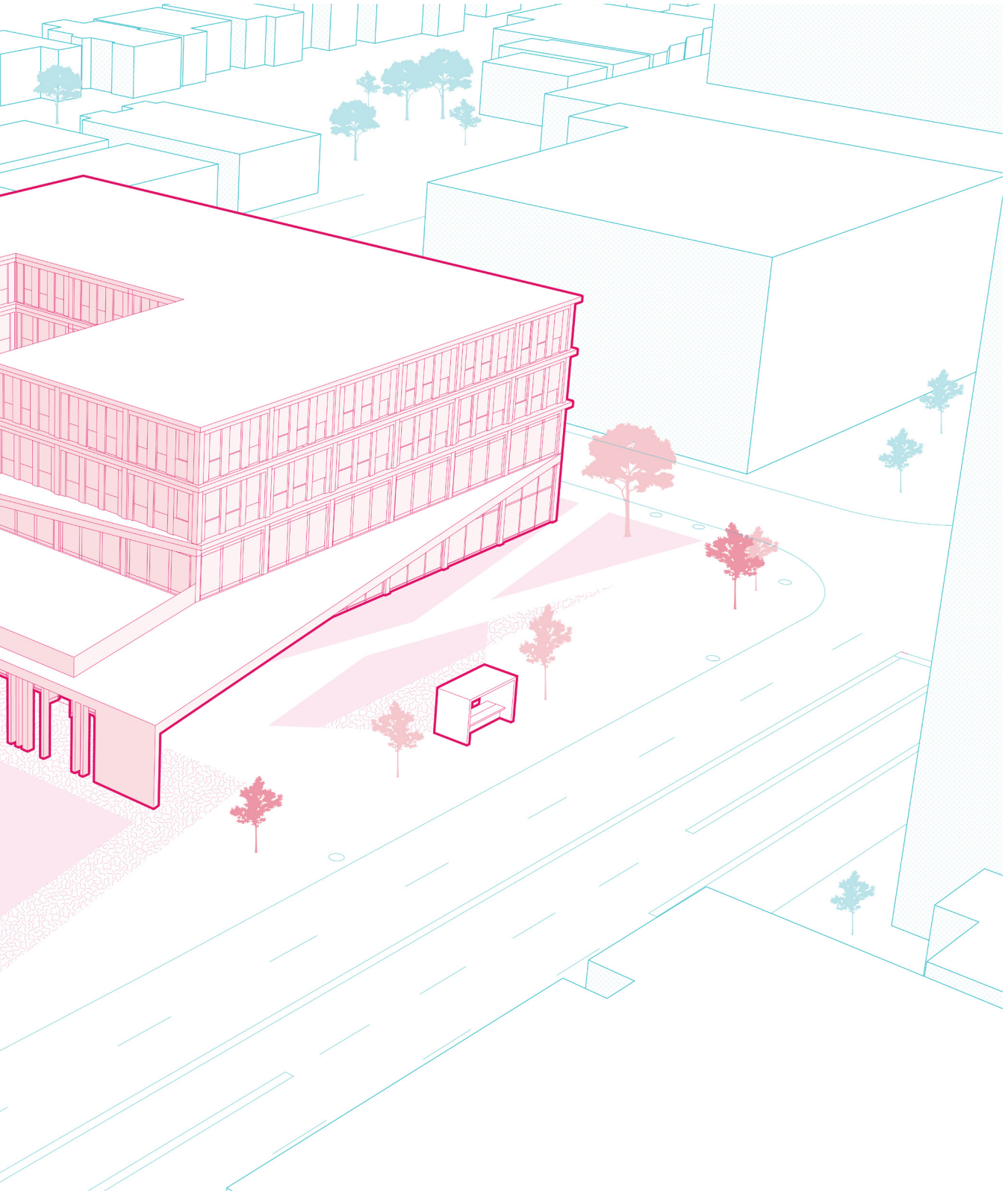


Fig. 4.9 Conceptual axo.



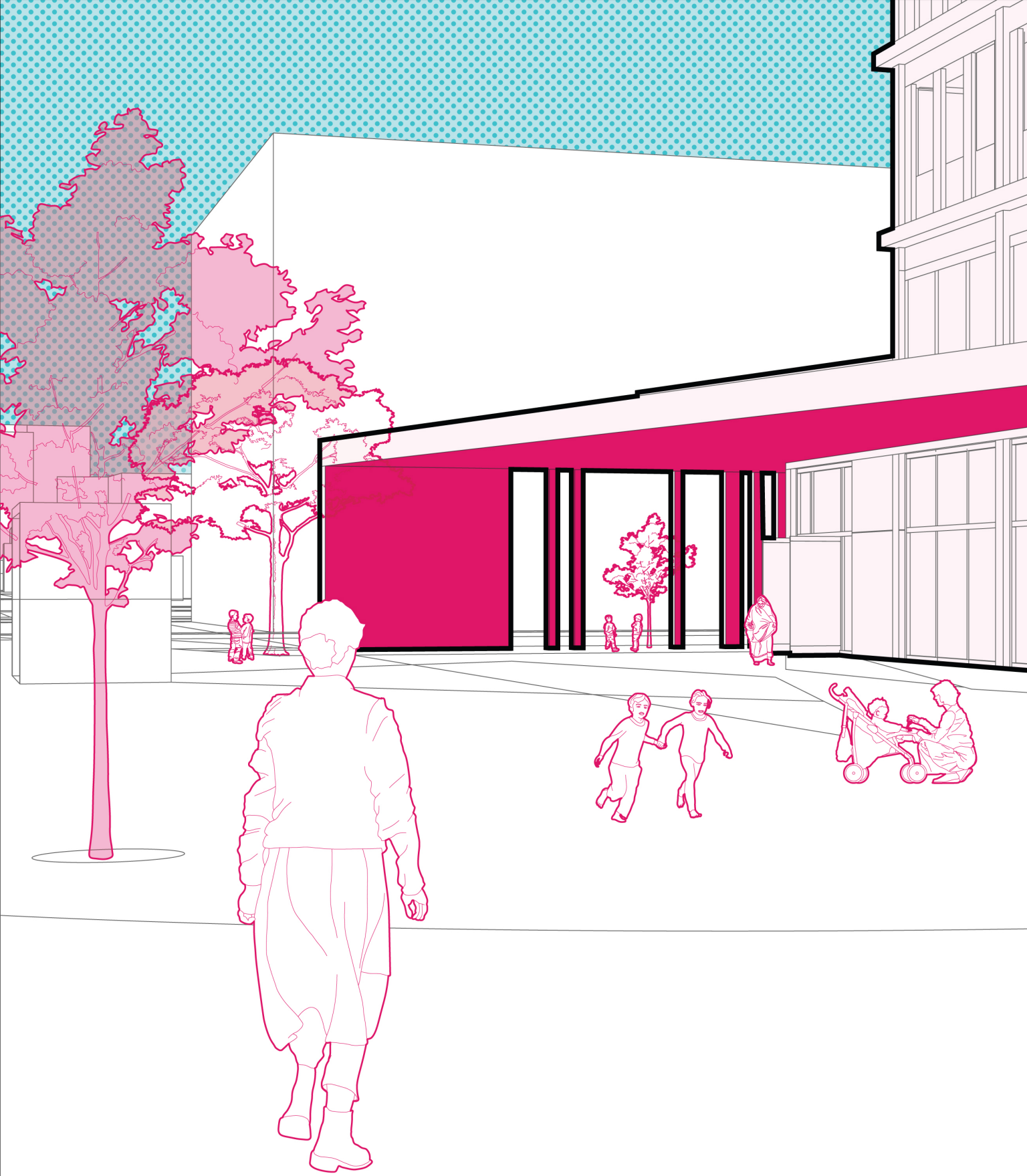


Fig. 4.10 Vignette 1, pedestrian view walking towards WRWC north-bound from Ouellette Avenue.

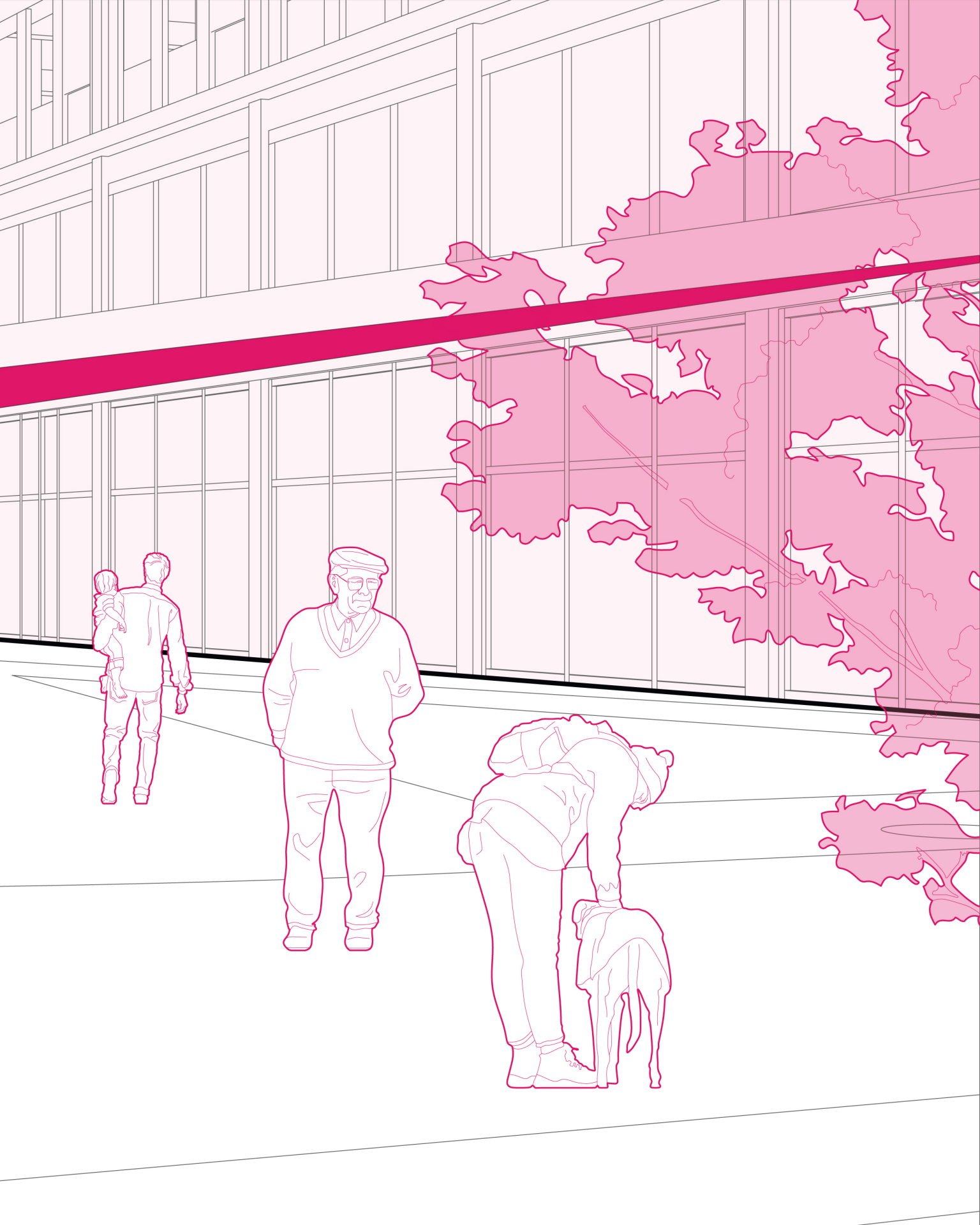
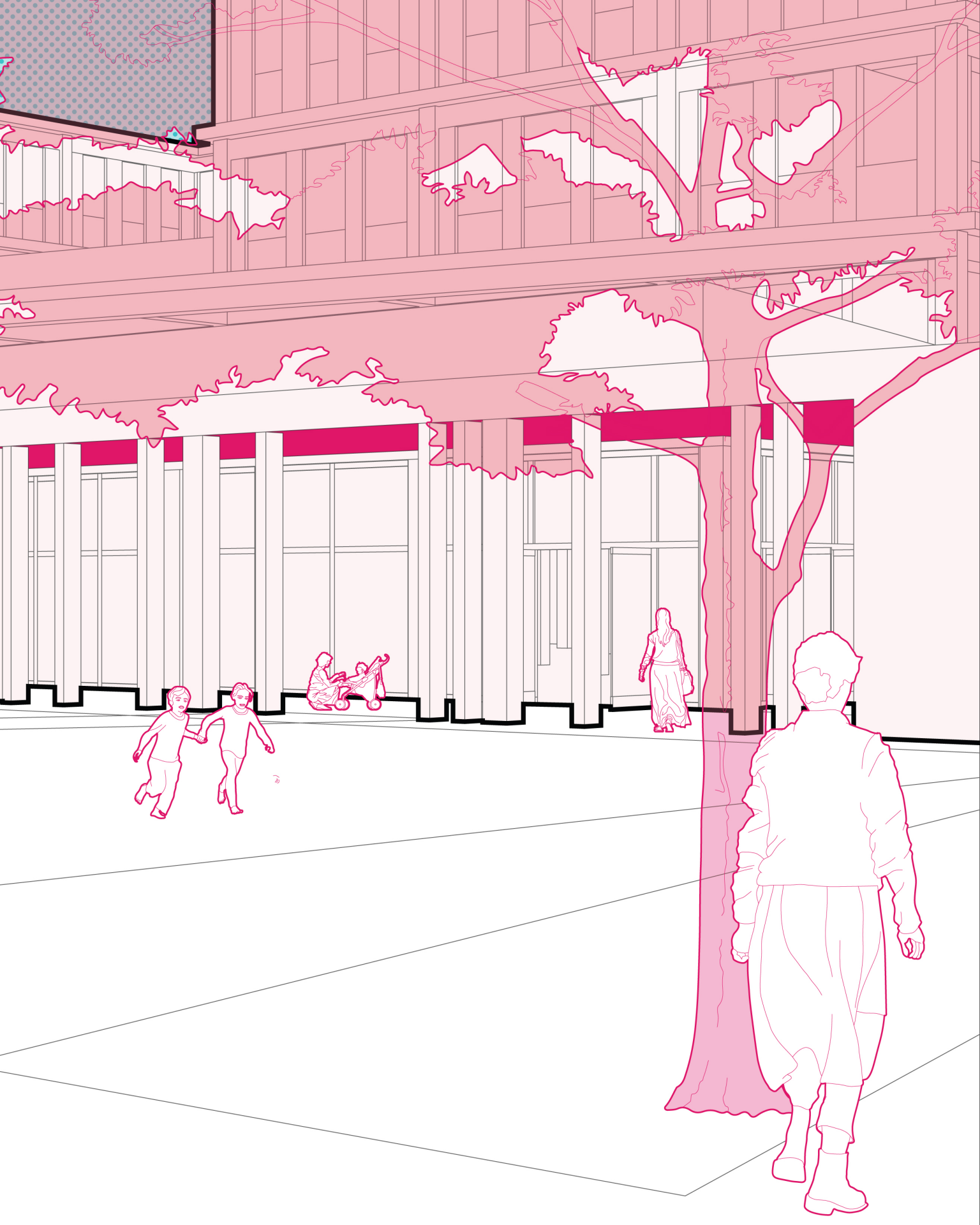


Fig. 4.11 Vignette 2, pedestrian view walking towards WRWC outdoor space south-bound from Ouellette Avenue.



05 DISCUSSION + CONCLUSION

Framework for Refugee Integration

The value of the process of this research and proposal is that it can be defined in a set of steps. The resulting framework can be documented and used by non-profit organizations or community leaders in other Canadian cities as a method for determining the gaps in refugee integration, and if spatial solutions are appropriate to solve issues in their specific context. The ultimate goal is to propose a well-informed project, like the WRWC, which connects to existing resettlement networks on an urban scale and provides programs that are underdeveloped on a human scale. With proper planning and design, architecture can help people in tangible and intangible ways by promoting self-sufficiency, economic independence, and psycho-social belonging.

Discussion

Throughout this research, there were multiple opportunities for the researcher to receive feedback and guidance on the content of the methods and proposal, and also their research process. The grounding and narrowing of the research topic was an important process which sets the stage for the final conceptual proposal at the end of this book. However, in hindsight, more time could have been spent on crafting the conceptual proposal. The final design would have benefited from completing more interviews and conducting a participatory design effort with participants for the ground-floor of the facility.

Feedback from critics during benchmark reviews emphasized the need for a more robust design which challenges western design practices. Rather than designing a building which looks like most social housing projects, the final proposal could have taken inspiration from other cultures and precedents worldwide. This would have resulted in a conceptual proposal which was well-informed in terms of programming, and could aesthetically connect to people from different backgrounds.

Conclusion

While the global praise for Canada's refugee resettlement efforts is well-deserved, there is always room for improvement. As global politics continuously shift, more and more people are being forcibly displaced per year (UNHCR). While the refugee crisis is heavily influenced by factors out of reach for the regular person (ex. politics and global economics), the refugee journey is an individualized experience with many potentials for intervention. In the four phases of a refugee's journey, architects are most likely to impact positive change in phases 02 and 04. This thesis focused on the latter, and chose a context which was within reach for the researcher so that on-site observations and fieldwork could be done.

This thesis aims to intervene in the resettlement phase of a refugee's journey and better their experience through a spatial, architectural and urban perspective. This thesis calls for further research into the experiences of refugees resettling in Canada and the betterment of spaces that aid in their integration.

you have to understand,

that no one puts their children in a boat

unless the water is safer than the land

An excerpt from *Home*, by Warsan Shire

WORKS CITED

Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). Understanding integration: A conceptual framework. Journal of Refugee Studies, 21(2), 166–191. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fen016

Blackmore, R., Boyle, J. A., Fazel, M., Ranasinha, S., Gray, K. M., Fitzgerald, G., Misso, M., & Gibson-Helm, M. (2020). The prevalence of mental illness in refugees and asylum seekers: A systematic review and meta-analysis. PLOS Medicine, 17(9). https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1003337

Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba. (n.d.). About IRCOM House. IRCOM. https://ircom.ca/housing/about-ircom/

Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISSofBC). (2023, January 27). Vancouver Welcome Centre. https://issbc.org/vancouver-welcome-centre/

Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council Inc. (n.d.). Settlement services. Welcome Place. https://www.miic.ca/settlement-services

Neuman, K. (2021). Focus Canada: Canadian public opinion about immigration and refugees (Final Report). The Environics Institute.

Refugees and Citizenship Canada. (2019, October 17). Welcoming 25,000 Syrian refugees in 100 days. Canada.ca. Retrieved December 16, 2022, from https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/welcome-syrian-refugees/how.html

Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Government of Canada. (2022, February 14). Notice – Supplementary Information for the 2022-2024 Immigration Levels Plan. https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/notices/supplementary-immigration-levels-2022-2024.html

Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Government of Canada. (2019, January 21). Syrian Refugee Resettlement Initiative – Looking to the Future. https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/welcome-syrian-refugees/looking-future.html

Silvius, R. (2017). What Does it Take to House a Syrian Refugee?: Supporting Refugee Housing and Resettlement Beyond the Syrian Refugee Crisis. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

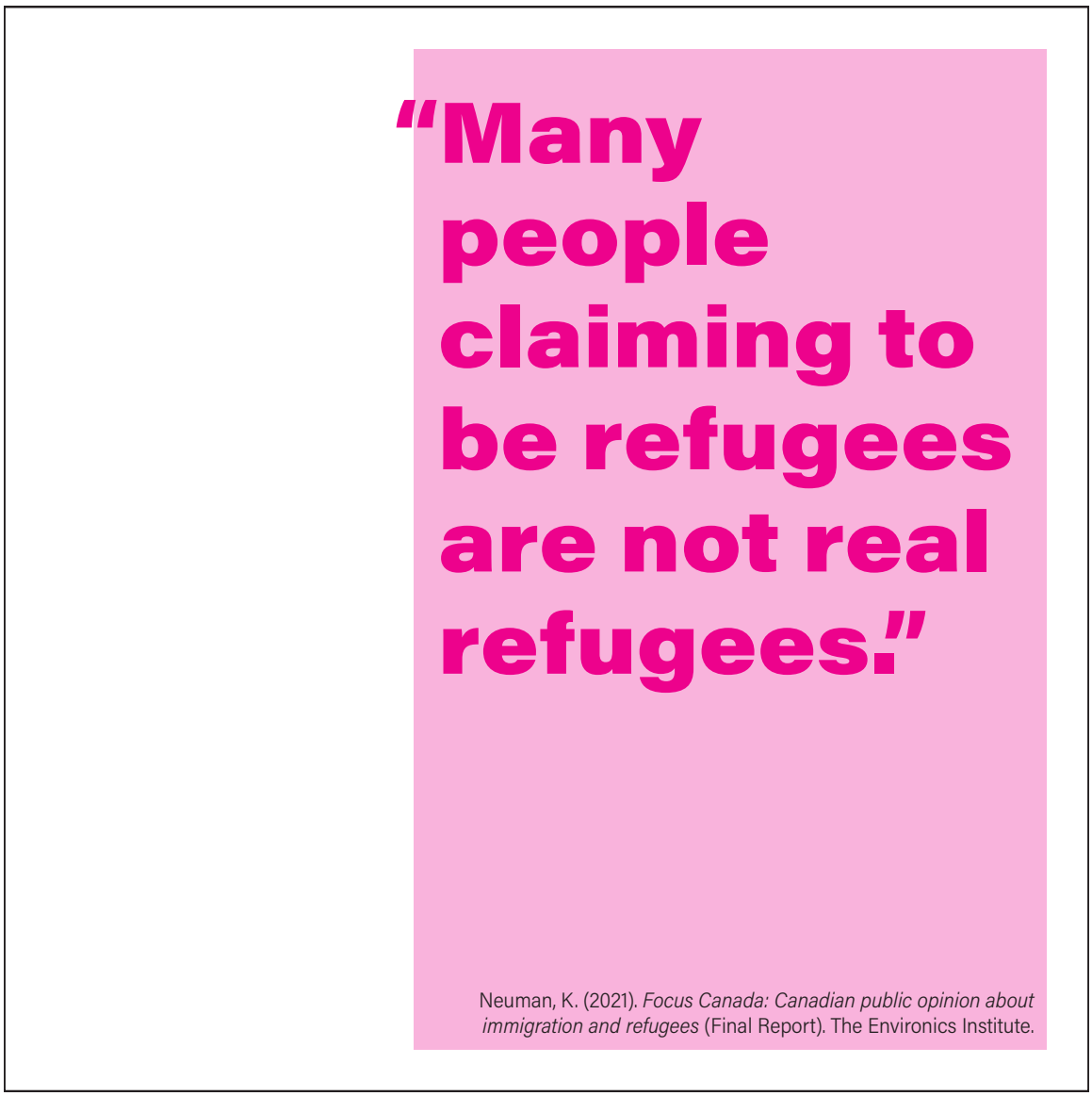
Statistics Canada. (2022, November 10). Data Products, 2021 census. 2021 Census of Population. Retrieved December 16, 2022, from https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/index-eng.cfm

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2022, June 16). Figures at a glance. Retrieved December 1, 2022, from https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2022, June 16). Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. Retrieved December 1, 2022, from https://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10

APPENDIX A

Sketch Problem II.



Salam, our names are Mohammad and Sahar and we are a privately-sponsored Syrian refugee family with 4 small children.

We fled from our home in Syria to Lebanon, where we lived on a farmer's field in a makeshift tent-home for 4 years.

Since resettling 2 months ago in Kelowna, BC, Canada, we have spent time with our sponsor families learning English, filing for child support, and enrolling our children in public school. We want to provide a better life for our children. We hope to find jobs in the near future.

"We had no idea who was going to be there waiting for us at the airport. Then we saw the people standing there waiting and clapping for us." - Mohammad

"Too many refugees do not adopt western values and practices."

Neuman, K. (2021). *Focus Canada: Canadian public opinion about immigration and refugees* (Final Report). The Environics Institute.

Hi, my name is Nour Abdullah and I'm a 21-year old Syrian refugee.

I left my home in Aleppo, Syria 3 years ago in search of a better life. I came to Ottawa, Canada with my brother. My parents and older sister remain in Syria.

Since resettling I have been enrolled at Carleton University. I am a swimmer, a basketball player, and I love playing the piano. In my free time, I volunteer in a sports organization for low-income children, and I teach arabic in a language program.

"In 2011, a tragic war broke out in Syria that destroyed every hope and dream I ever had. My father was kidnapped, I watched friends die, I was displaced from my home, and was forced to stop professional swimming for more than four years."

"Refugees hurt the economy and take jobs from citizens."

Neuman, K. (2021). *Focus Canada: Canadian public opinion about immigration and refugees* (Final Report). The Environics Institute.

Hello, I'm Ibrahim Musa and I'm a 21-year old refugee from Iraq.

I was only 3 years old when I came to Canada with my parents. We arrived just after the attacks of 9/11, and I remember my parents feeling afraid of being unwelcome.

I started a foundation called Cuts For Kids where I provide empowering mentorship and access to opportunities and essential services. My mission is to break barriers affecting refugee and immigrant youth.

"I can remember the airplane, it was my first time on an airplane, we arrived in Ottawa in the middle of winter. We arrived in 2002 when it was a very dangerous time in Iraq, both at home and in Canada because people didn't really have a good outlook on Iraqi, there was a lot of stigma around Arabs in general."

“Refugees weaken a country’s identity and culture.”

Neuman, K. (2021). *Focus Canada: Canadian public opinion about immigration and refugees* (Final Report). The Environics Institute.

Hello, I'm Mouhamed Al-Aarab and I'm a 22-year old Syrian refugee.

My family and I lived in a tent at a refugee camp in Lebanon after fleeing from the war in Syria. I was only in the 9th grade when I left my home. I never had the chance to complete highschool.

Since resettling in Ottawa, ON, Canada 4 years ago, I have enrolled in Carleton University's Aerospace Engineering program. In 2018, I was awarded the Academic Perseverence Award by Youth Ottawa. My dream is to work for the Canadian Space Agency.

"Refugees cost the government too much and drain public finances."

Neuman, K. (2021). *Focus Canada: Canadian public opinion about immigration and refugees* (Final Report). The Environics Institute.

Marhaba, I'm Kameel Nasrawi and I'm a 46-year old Syrian refugee.

My family and I fled from our home in Damascus, Syria because of war and violence.

I feel that it is my mission to inspire other refugees. Since resettling 2 years ago in Etobicoke, ON, Canada, my wife and I have started Canada's first Syrian newspaper, The Migrant. Our goal is to shed light on the refugee experience, foster hope for those who are struggling, and feature success stories.

“Refugees are a security risk because they are not screened enough.”

Neuman, K. (2021). *Focus Canada: Canadian public opinion about immigration and refugees* (Final Report). The Environics Institute.

Hi, my name is Tareq Hadhad and I'm a Syrian refugee.

My family and I fled from our home in Damascus, Syria because of war and violence.

I needed to rebuild my life after resettling in Canada. I started an initiative called Peace by Chocolate, which turned into a profitable company. I've travelled coast-to-coast speaking to Canadians about my mission and experiences. I am so grateful for the opportunities this country has given me. During the Fort McMurray wildfire in 2016, Peace by Chocolate donated all profits to relief efforts.

"From counting down to death there to being given another life in this country."

"The influx of refugees contributes to over-population."

Neuman, K. (2021). *Focus Canada: Canadian public opinion about immigration and refugees* (Final Report). The Environics Institute.

Ahlan, I'm Abdul Fatah Sabouni and I'm a Syrian refugee.

My family business was destroyed in Aleppo, Syria because of the war. We fled the country a few years later.

After resettling in Calgary, AB, Canada, I quickly learned English and launched a new soap company with 2 partners. Making and distributing this world-famous soap is my way of giving back to this country and it's citizens. Every time someone uses my soap, they are rebuilding the dreams of a once-broken Syrian refugee.

“Refugees are generally uneducated.”

Hello, my name is Karina Hayat and I'm a refugee from Guatemala.

I fled my country as political refugee over 20 years ago.

After resettling in Canada, I started a business with my husband. We had very little experience and virtually no help. Our company slowly grew with the help of programs like the Scientific Research & Experimental Development program. My experience inspired me to start FIT-Youth, an employment program that caters to refugee and immigrant youth.

"Refugees make the country better because they add to diversity."

Neuman, K. (2021). *Focus Canada: Canadian public opinion about immigration and refugees* (Final Report). The Environics Institute.

Hi, my name is James Madhier and I'm a refugee from South Sudan.

At the age of 15 I left my home and relocated to the Kakuma Refugee Camp in North Kenya.

I came to Canada to study at the University of Toronto through a student refugee program. I created a non-profit organization called Rainmaker Enterprise that explores solutions to the issues my people face. In 2016, I won a competition that allowed me to implement a solar-powered irragation system in South Sudan. I'm committed to helping and empowering South Sudanese people, because most do not have the resources and support that I do.

“Refugees have skills that help the economy grow.”

Neuman, K. (2021). *Focus Canada: Canadian public opinion about immigration and refugees* (Final Report). The Environics Institute.

Hello, my name is Feras Nejebagh and I'm a government-assisted Syrian refugee.

My family and I fled from our home in Syria to Turkey, where we stayed for 5 years.

Since resettling in Canada, the community has helped me lease a small space to continue my career as a tailor. The government awarded me a $1000 grant to buy a sewing machine and kick-start my business. I'm happy to give back by helping out local clothing stores with tailoring and alterations.

"This is our family history. This is my passion; it's in my blood. Since I was a kid I always liked to draw sketches of clothing."

“Refugees appreciate and respect their host country.”

Neuman, K. (2021). *Focus Canada: Canadian public opinion about immigration and refugees* (Final Report). The Environics Institute.

Marhaba, I'm Jalal Gneid. My family and I are government-assisted Syrian refugees.

We fled from our home in Syria to Lebanon, where we lived for 5 years. My daughter and grandchildren remain in Syria, separated from me, her mother and her 3 brothers.

Since resettling over 2 years ago in London, ON, Canada, my son and I have both secured good jobs at Toyota. He has helped me in purchasing our first family home in Canada. I've also been able to get my driver's licence. I'm happy with my life here.

"So you have Syria war, no eat, no everything, so we went to Lebanon. It's good Canada now, we bought this house, and now me and son works at Toyota Boshko."

“Refugees have a moral and legal right to be treated properly.”

Goodman, S., & Kirkwood, S. (2019). *Political and media discourses about integrating refugees in the UK*. European Journal of Social Psychology.

Salam, I'm Mohammed Hakmi and I'm a 26-year old Syrian refugee.

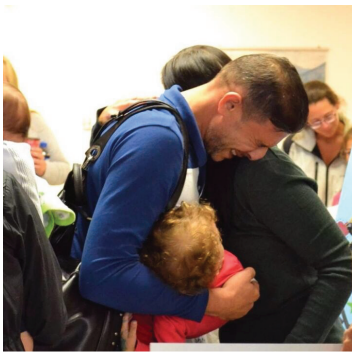
My family and I fled from our home in Syria to Lebanon, where I stayed for 8 years.

I resettled in Canada through the Talent Beyond Boundaries (TBB) project which is an economic immigration program that pairs skilled refugees with employers. I'm now working as an IT developer for a company in Kitchener, ON. I'm excited to contribute to the team, and begin a new journey.

"They have knowledge, they have skills, but these skills and knowledge are disabled. They can make a positive impact on communities. So why could we not use this power, the power of refugees?"

“Refugees fleeing war are a priority over economic migrants.”

Goodman, S., & Kirkwood, S. (2019). *Political and media discourses about integrating refugees in the UK*. European Journal of Social Psychology.



Marhaba, I'm Isam Sharkiye and I'm a privately-sponsored Syrian refugee.

My family and I left our home in Syria and fled to Turkey. I have a wife and three young children.

Since resettling 5 months ago in Fort Nelson, BC, Canada, I have started to learn English. I picked up an old passion of mine and with the help and encouragement of my new community, I believe I can make my hammered copper art-work into a viable career. The support I've recieved from the community has been tremendous, and I'm ready to start a new chapter.

“Refugees are strong, resilient people.”

http://runnermag.ca/2017/08/refuge-in-surrey-stereotypes-survival-and-sanctuary/

Salam, Iman and Zaher and we are a privately-sponsored Syrian refugee family with 2 young daughters.

We fled from our home in Syria and sought refuge in Lebanon. We are grateful that 38 people have come together to sponsor our resettlement.

Since resettling 6 months ago in Ottawa, ON, Canada, we have spent time studying English. Iman has registered for college and Zaher has secured a job with a local landscaping company.

"I feel so lucky there was a group waiting for us. They are so nice. Whenever we need something, they come. They make me feel Canada is my country now."

"Refugees are needed to keep the population from decreasing."

Neuman, K. (2021). *Focus Canada: Canadian public opinion about immigration and refugees* (Final Report). The Environics Institute.

Hi, my name is Mustafa and I'm in the 10th grade.

My father fled from Syria in the 80's and settled in the UAE where he found a good job. I was born in the UAE and in the late 90's we recieved a letter telling us we had 2 months to leave the country.

We came to Canada with no help. It was a hard journey filled with sadness and distress. I remember crying before boarding our first flight. After arriving in Windsor, a friend of my dad helped us register in a public school. I've been here for 3 years and I'm still trying to adjust and fit in here.

"I hope and pray for peace all around the world, with no more killing and bloodshed so we can all have a better life."

“It is okay if refugees take time to integrate into society.”

Hello, I'm Sayed and I'm going into 6th grade.

If we stayed a few more days in Afghanistan, I'm not sure we would be alive. We lived in Pakistan for 3 years after leaving home.

I had never been to school before coming to Canada. So I was nervous because I didn't know what it was going to be like. After a few days, I made friends who showed me around. I'm thinking about my future now and getting a good job. I wanted to be a policeman but my uncle told me that doctors save people's lives and they make more money.

"We didn't want to go to war because if we went to war, I'm sure that my family would not be alive yet."

APPENDIX B

WRWC Programming Matrix.

	PROGRAM TYPE	QTY	SF	SF TOTAL	ADJACENCIES	DOMAINS
GROUND FL						
	Entry Vestibule	1	150	150 SF	Lobby	-
	Lobby	1	1000	1000 SF	Reception, Lounge	Social Bridges/Bonds/Links
	Reception	1	150	150 SF	Lobby	Safety + Stability
	Lounge + Resource Area	1	1000	1000 SF	Lobby	Social Links, Lang. + Culture
	Youth Lounge	1	500	500 SF	Lobby & Lounge	Social Bridges/Bonds
	Computer Room	1	500	500 SF	Youth Lounge	Education, Safety + Stability
	Community Org Suite	1	600	600 SF	Lobby	Social Bonds
	Flex/Community Room	2	800	1600 SF	Lobby, Outdoor Space	Social Bridges/Bonds, Education
	Classroom	3	500	1500 SF	-	Education, Lang. + Culture
	Classroom Prep + Copy	1	500	500 SF	WRAP Suite	-
	Food Bank	1	200	200 SF	-	Safety + Stability
	Small Meeting Room	4	150	600 SF	-	-
	WRAP Suite	1	2500	2500 SF	-	Social Links
	Large Meeting Room	2	300	600 SF	WRAP Suite	-
	Residential Storage	1	1500	1500 SF	-	Housing, Safety + Stability
	Staff Room	1	600	600 SF	WRAP Suite	-
	Main Storage	1	300	300 SF	-	-
	Misc. Storage	1	150	150 SF	Flex/Community Room	-
	Washrooms	2	400	800 SF	-	-
	Mechanical + Electrical	1	800	800 SF	-	-
	Receiving + Garbage Room	1	800	800 SF	Loading Zone	-
	Circulation Including Stairs + Elevators	-	2000	2000 SF	-	-
	TOTAL AREA			**18,350 SF**		
SECOND FL						
	Reception	1	150	150 SF	Elevators	Safety + Stability
	WRAP Service Offices	6	300	1800 SF	-	Social Links, Safety + Stability

	Child-Minding Suite	1	3000	3000 SF	-	Safety + Stability, Education
	Health Clinic Suite	1	3000	3000 SF	-	Health
	Immigration Law Suite	1	2000	2000 SF	-	Safety + Stability, Rights + Citiz.
	Misc. Suite (For Future Tenant)	1	1400	1400 SF	-	-
	Break Room	1	300	300 SF	-	-
	Copy Area	1	150	150 SF	Reception	-
	Classroom	3	500	1500 SF	WRAP Service Offices	Education, Lang. + Culture
	Storage	2	150	300 SF	-	-
	Washrooms	2	150	300 SF	-	-
	Janitor	1	100	100 SF	-	-
	Mechanical + Data	1	300	300 SF	-	-
	Circulation Including Stairs + Elevators	-	2000	2000 SF	-	-
	Rooftop Green Space	1	2000	2000 SF	Break Room, Child-Minding Suite	Health, Social Bonds
	TOTAL AREA			**18,300 SF**		
THIRD FL						
	2-Bedroom Apartments	3	600	1800 SF	-	Housing, Safety + Stability
	3-Bedroom Apartments	5	800	4000 SF	-	Housing, Safety + Stability
	4-Bedroom Apartments	3	900	2700 SF	-	Housing, Safety + Stability
	5-Bedroom Apartments	3	900	2700 SF	-	Housing, Safety + Stability
	Shared Laundry Room	1	300	300 SF	-	-
	Shared Social Space	1	500	500 SF	Elevators	Social Bridges
	Mechanical	1	100	100 SF	-	-
	Circulation Including Stairs + Elevators	-	1500	1500 SF	-	-
	Rooftop Green Space	1	2000	2000 SF	Shared Social Space	Health, Social Bonds
	TOTAL AREA			**15,600 SF**		
FOURTH FL						
	2-Bedroom Apartments	3	600	1800 SF	-	Housing, Safety + Stability
	3-Bedroom Apartments	5	800	4000 SF	-	Housing, Safety + Stability
	4-Bedroom Apartments	3	900	2700 SF	-	Housing, Safety + Stability
	5-Bedroom Apartments	3	900	2700 SF	-	Housing, Safety + Stability
	Shared Laundry Room	1	300	300 SF	-	-
	Shared Social Space	1	500	500 SF	Elevators	Social Bridges
	Mechanical	1	100	100 SF	-	-
	Circulation Including Stairs + Elevators	-	1500	1500 SF	-	-
	TOTAL AREA			**13,600 SF**		
	TOTAL BUILDING AREA			**65,850 SF**		
SITE						
	Entry Courtyard	-	-	-	Loggia	Social Bridges/Bonds
	Loggia	-	-	-	Outdoor Space	Social Bridges/Bonds
	Shared Outdoor Green Space	-	-	-	Loggia, Downtown Mission	Health, Social Bridges/Bonds
	Shared Parking	-	-	-	Outdoor Space, Downtown Mission	Safety + Stability
	Loading Zone	-	-	-	Receiving + Garbage Room	-