

Principle: Security and Sense of Safety

| Strategy | Action |
|---|--|
| <p>Security system and fixtures Enhanced security system and fixtures add security layers to the building and provide women with a sense of security and peace of mind from possible violence.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Door deadbolt (CMHC, 2019a; Donnelly et al., 2022). <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Door peephole (CMHC, 2019a). <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Panic buttons in common area's hallway. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Prominent locations such as building front facades provide the most impact for locating security cameras (Donnelly et al., 2022); Security cameras on hallways of all floors and elevators. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Smart doorbells with video. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Secure intercom system with door and elevator access control. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Intercom without the unit's numbers and residents' names to protect women's anonymity. |
| <p>Limiting access Limiting number of entrances and access points to the building and floors where women with experiences of violence live enhances their sense of safety and control. For example, women stated that going through complicated and triggering conversations with visitors (e.g., ex-partner, social worker) has to happen somewhere outside the sanctuary of their homes.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Preferably do not allocate first floor units that are adjacent to public spaces to women and children with experiences of violence. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Allocate spaces that face and are at street level to shared indoor spaces. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Limit the number of entrances to the building to control security. One main entrance and one emergency exit were considered as safe options. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Allocate shared outdoor space on upper floors. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Underground storage/storage room in the building should only be accessed by residents. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Gated parking. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Neutral meeting space for visitor meetings (e.g., RCMP, social workers, and ex-partner) with an outside door with no access to the building. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Gated buildings, fenced space around building and metal gate that protects ground level units without feeling institutional (permeable gates). <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: In buildings with mixed tenants, dedicate one level to women and children with no amenity or common space on that floor. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: If a multi-unit housing provides a continuum of housing options in the same building (e.g., Long-Term Housing, Transition House, and Second Stage), ensure housing types/programs are allocated in different floors/spatially divided and have different fob access for improved safety. Women with lived experiences of violence in each housing/program are in different levels of vulnerability and their safety needs and supports vary. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Fire exit stair should only open onto ground level (locked towards other levels). |
| <p>Visual privacy Using elements of design for visual privacy enhances control and privacy of the building and units. When</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Window blinds to control privacy. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: When retrofitting existing buildings, plant more trees (without increased hiding spots) and add fences to increase privacy of building from the surrounding neighbourhood. |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>implementing these actions, enhanced privacy should not lead to increased hiding spots.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Reduce glass in the lobby for more privacy of who lives in the building. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Entry vestibule (i.e., buffer). <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Internalize more of the glass to inner courtyards (Zinni, 2019). |
| <p>Building location Building location can impact a woman and her children’s sense of safety as well as her access to amenities and services. It is important that affordable housing for women with children/dependants be located in safe neighbourhoods.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Connection with neighbourhood: Housing should be located in safe areas and away from major streets. <input type="checkbox"/> Connection with neighbourhood: For women living in remote and rural communities, consider housing with neighbours in close proximity (BC Society of Transition Houses, 2015). |
| <p>Lighting Natural and artificial lighting in areas that get dark, improves clarity and wayfinding¹ and as a result, one’s sense of safety.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Motion sensor lights for outdoor and indoor communal spaces (circulation spaces such as hallway) to navigate paths and doors when it is dark. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Stairway and hallways should have substantial lighting/cut-out windows (Grabowska et al., 2021). <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Appropriate lighting around and outside of the property and in the shared areas (e.g., stairways, parking lots, postbox room, garbage area). <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Vandal proof lighting outside and around the building. |
| <p>Space layout and details The way the spaces are arranged and where they are located in the building, and their dimensions impact feelings of safety.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Quick route to the outside (City of Toronto, 2022). <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Wide and short corridors and hallways with clear sightlines (City of Toronto, 2022; Grabowska et al., 2021). Wide hallways feel more spacious and allows for an increased sense of safety. They also provide more space for two strollers to pass by each other. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Clearly organized car park with direct access, without long corridors or overly complex gate setups (City of Vienna, 2013, p. 88). <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Conveniently located garbage collection area, accessible from units by a short and clear-cut route (City of Vienna, 2013, p. 89). <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: If the laundry machines could not be located within the units, the laundry room should be located on site in a high-traffic area (e.g., not in the basement or down the hallway), with preferably an entrance and exit door located at opposite ends of the room to ensure easy exit, if needed (CMHC, 2019a). <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Shared laundry should be located in the middle of hallways and in a central location in the building. |

¹ Wayfinding is knowing where you are physically in a space, and how to get to where you want to go in a safe and independent manner. Use of colour, texture, lighting, signage, landmark, and designing well-ordered spaces and clear sightlines are some of the design strategies to help people to orient themselves and navigate where they want to go (CMHC, 2018).

| | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Ensure that any shared washrooms are gender-inclusive for gender-diverse people. Use signs for clarity and inclusivity. |
| <p>Natural surveillance/Eyes on the street Natural surveillance increases visibility of the areas and provides sufficient opportunities for people to observe the space and activities around them. As a result, it improves clarity and sense of control over the spaces and reduces fear of the unexpected.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Unit and common area: Units that overlook outdoor play areas support mothers to keep an eye on their children. <input type="checkbox"/> Unit and common area: Internal courtyard facing the units with access to safe children play area facilitates natural surveillance. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Building entrances should be seen from the street and not hidden behind walls, building forms, or landscaping (Donnelly et al., 2022) Entrances that are positioned more than 2 meters inside the building or passageway reduce contact (by sight or earshot) (City of Vienna, 2013). <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Allocate space for on-site staff with interior facing windows to oversee the ins and outs of the building next to the main entrance and where women can chat privately with staff if they need to. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: In buildings with both long-term housing and Transition/Second Stage House units that only has one on-site staff space, this space should be located close to the entry or at a place where it is visible and accessible to all residents/guests. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Amenity spaces should be located close to the staff office. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Minimize hiding and blind spots in hallways and entrances and ensure clear sightlines. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Outdoor parking spaces should be visible to residents/on-site staff (i.e., eyes on the streets). <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Mailroom should not be located in enclosed rooms with walls on all sides. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Hard floor material near doors to signal that someone is near (Grabowska et al., 2021). <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Shared laundry room should have a window to the outside of the room. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Designated shared children’s room with glass doors allows for mothers to keep an eye on their children while attending other events or meetings in the shared space. |
| <p>Building model Some models and types of buildings have been perceived as safer by communities due to the size, density, orientation of units, and tenure mix.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Unit and common area: Balconies that open onto an internal courtyard rather than onto a public area (note: courtyard model is more expensive in development due to more external walls). <input type="checkbox"/> Unit and common area: Housing co-operatives² provide a safe environment due to the cooperative management by residents. |

² Co-operative housing is a housing model that residents own and operate the housing through a membership system (BC Housing, n.d)

| | |
|---|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Unit and common area: Multiplex³ housing is identified as a good option for women with children, women with disabilities, and women survivors of violence due to units’ relatively direct access to the street. Floors 2 to 6 is identified as the sweet spot for perception of safety for women with experience of violence who do not feel safe enough on the ground floor (City of Toronto, 2022). <input type="checkbox"/> Unit and common area: Non-segregated women/family only housing. Integrated housing⁴ was perceived as safer by some women. <input type="checkbox"/> Connection to neighbourhood: Having a mixture of housing options such as Transition House, Second Stage and Long-Term Housing in close proximity to each other allows for greater sense of community and safety for women (e.g., Prince George Elizabeth Fry – My Sister’s Place). Knowing that supports are available and close-by are important for people in long-term housing. <input type="checkbox"/> Connection to neighbourhood: Form of the building should not draw unnecessary attention and housing should be blended with the existing neighbourhood (Zinni, 2019). |
| <p>Community building Women feel safer when they know they can connect with others, that they have someone to talk to and that someone is looking out for them.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Please refer to “Community Support and Social Life” Section for strategies and actions to enhance community connections through design. |
| <p>Safety from physical hazards Many women have small children and are primary caregivers to care-dependant adults and older adults. It is important that they are safe from physical hazards especially in their units and building common areas.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Bars on the windows that do not feel institutional. <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Kitchen with a view into the living-room area to watch kids while doing household chores/working. <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Having the locks on the doors out of the reach of small children. <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Built-in childproofing on kitchen/bathroom cupboards drawers, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Provide lockable cupboard to store cleaning products, medication, and other hazardous materials out of reach of young children (Donnelly et al., 2022; Isthmus Group Ltd, 2018). <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Retractable built-in baby gate for kitchen. <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Built-in shelves out of reach of small children. <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Windows which open at the top are safer for children. Consider accessibility challenges for people with disabilities. <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Safe balcony (e.g., Juliet balcony for safety of windows). <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Temperature control on hot water. <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: For families with small children and people with disabilities, units with all rooms on the same floor are preferable (e.g., duplex not preferred). |

³ Multiplexes are buildings which include three or more units. Multiplexes are a way of delivering smaller scale ground-oriented housing on single lots in lower density areas (City of Vancouver, n.d.).

⁴ Refers to housing that is accessible to a wide group of individuals and families (e.g., different income, ability) and is not exclusive of a certain population.

- Unit:** If women with small children live in duplex or loft units, ensure safe stair design.
- Unit:** Non-slip flooring in the bathrooms (Donnelly et al., 2022).
- Unit and common area:** Decks and patio spaces allow safe spaces for children to play that can also be monitored by parents.
- Common area:** Outdoor play areas should be separated from parking areas.
- Common area:** When car parking occurs adjacent to communal amenity spaces, install visually permeable fencing between the two spaces (Isthmus Group Ltd, 2018).
- Common area:** On-site outdoor fenced-in child play area with age-adequate playing equipment (City of Vienna, 2013, p. 89; CMHC, 2019a; Isthmus Group Ltd, 2018).
- Common area:** In the elevated outdoor space, ensure high guards for (non-climbable) for increased security and safety.
- Connection to neighbourhood:** Priority space in front of building for pick up and drop off.

Other resources: See [Section 3-Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design \(CPTED\) in BC Housing Design Guidelines and Construction Standards](#) for more ideas to improve safety through design of built environment.

Principle: Convenience and Efficiency

| Strategy | Action |
|---|--|
| <p>Access (proximity) to essential services</p> <p>Access to neighbourhood services is an important factor in housing design for women and their children due to additional transportation costs and inconvenience when they are not close by. Location concerns are also particularly heightened in rural and remote communities where increased transportation barriers exist (CMHC, 2019a).</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Unit (childcare): Having units large enough to accommodate a family/private day-care in the building. <input type="checkbox"/> Unit (child/healthcare): Caregiver studio units in the building so that those in need of consistent care can have their caregiver close by. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area (food services): Tuck shop⁵ or other essentials available on-site/in close proximity for easy access. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area (transportation): Provide space for car share programs on-site (e.g., Modo). <input type="checkbox"/> Common area (transportation): Provide affordable and secure on-site parking. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area (transportation): Ensure ample parking spots are allocated in housing in urban, rural and northern communities. In many of the rural and remote communities there is a lack of public transportation system and car share programs. Also, the weather conditions can make walking and use of transit difficult for women and children. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area (transportation): Transit board (e.g., live transit times/time table) to provide updated information of the transportation options available nearby. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area (transportation): Provide bike repair space in the building. <input type="checkbox"/> Connection to neighbourhood (food services): Walkable affordable grocery options. <input type="checkbox"/> Connection to neighbourhood (childcare/school): Proximity to affordable childcare and school. <input type="checkbox"/> Connection to neighbourhood (transportation): Access to bus stop. <input type="checkbox"/> Connection to neighbourhood (transportation): Access to bike path. <input type="checkbox"/> Connection to neighbourhood (transportation): Bike share program⁶ close to the building (e.g., Mobi by Shaw Go). <input type="checkbox"/> Connection to neighbourhood (transportation): Community bikes in the neighbourhood to offer free bikes to those in need. <input type="checkbox"/> Connection to neighbourhood (transportation): Provide affordable housing in transit-oriented areas. <input type="checkbox"/> Connection to neighbourhood (transportation): Shuttle services. <input type="checkbox"/> Connection to neighbourhood (transportation): Support safer/larger/better lit bus stops. |

⁵ A small retailer or store that sells foods and snacks and is located in close proximity, or within, an apartment complex, schools and other facilities.

⁶ Bike share is a service that makes public bicycles available for shared use to individuals on a short-term basis. The bikes can be unlocked from one station and returned to any station in the system, making bike share ideal for short, one-way trips (Vancouver Bike Share, n.d.).

| | |
|---|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Connection to neighbourhood (transportation): Prioritize active transportation design (e.g., walkable and bikeable neighbourhoods). <input type="checkbox"/> Connection to neighbourhood (transportation): Pedestrian calmed streets and safe access between schools/childcare and housing. <input type="checkbox"/> Connection to neighbourhood: Mixed-use building development. <input type="checkbox"/> Connection to neighbourhood (parks and recreation): Walkable parks and green space. <input type="checkbox"/> Connection to neighbourhood (healthcare): 24-hour pharmacy nearby. <input type="checkbox"/> Connection to neighbourhood (healthcare): Counselling nearby. <input type="checkbox"/> Connection to neighbourhood (healthcare): Drug treatment nearby. <input type="checkbox"/> Connection to neighbourhood (healthcare): Doctors and nurses nearby. |
| <p>Access to complementary spaces One of the problems that women identified was lack of enough space for their families in current affordable housing options. Spaces in the units need to be used efficiently and avoid leftover spaces (e.g., long hallways). Also, allocating complementary spaces outside units that are shared (e.g., bookable work space) or assigned to each unit (e.g., storage room) can be an additional resource for women and their family to use when needed.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Ample cupboards in the kitchen. <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Consider full height wardrobe and cupboard doors, or shelving, to maximize vertical storage space (Isthmus Group Ltd, 2018). <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Built-in shelves for toys and books. <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Storage space for stroller, mobility aids in the entrance of units. <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Storage room/closet for kids' accessories. <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Storage/closet dedicated for vacuum cleaners, mops, buckets, and brooms (Donnelly et al., 2022). <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Space for coat and shoe storage at the unit entrance (Donnelly et al., 2022; Isthmus Group Ltd, 2018). <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Deep-freeze in units for households living in remote communities. <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Affordable rentable guest suites and space to have guests who stay for a while (in-law suites). <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Space to have in-home care for aging/elderly women (Vaccaro & Craig, 2020). <input type="checkbox"/> Unit and common area: Having a storage room in the unit and having a storage room for big items in the shared storage area in building. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Access to private covered outdoor space. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Bookable studio/workspace for women to use for work with access to computer, internet, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: One to one unit to storage; Basement storage with accessibility considerations; Adaptable storage and bike storage in the parkade. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: A bike hub/bike collective in the building that has a collection of children's bikes in a variety of sizes in shared storage for children to use without adding expenses; Space to share tools and equipment (e.g., camping chairs, bike pump) and toys. Tool/gear library builds collective use and can help families enjoy time together without extra costs. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Community pantry and shared meal spaces including food prep and food storage for community bulk buys. |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Study spaces on each floor (not one big room in the whole building). <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Emergency support hub for post-disaster (with food, air conditioning, backup power, communications). |
| <p>Flexibility, adaptability, and accessibility Flexible and adaptable spaces allow for longer-term thinking and enables different uses and adjustments based on the needs of family and their life phases. As a result, it provides women and children with choice and autonomy over what is suitable and appropriate for them while allowing for privacy and separation. This strategy will lead to mitigating the negative impacts of NOS⁷ and over housing and under housing restrictions on women and their families. The reason is that when the family size and composition changes over time, women can re-configure/use their homes according to their new needs. Also, accessibility of housing provides features for the needs of people with disabilities and supports aging in place⁸.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Diverse unit sizes and layouts (e.g., studio, 1-, 2-, 3-, 4-bedrooms) to accommodate different family sizes and compositions (e.g., units for women with children, women without children, multigenerational families, for women who are roommates). <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Allocate some units for residents with pets and some units as non-pet-friendly for people who are allergic to pets or not interested. <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Having bedrooms large enough to accommodate the furniture for more than one adult (Butler et al., 2017). Some families want to share bed/bedroom so they want a larger bedroom space rather than multiple small bedrooms. <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Larger kitchen components for traditional food preparation (Butler et al., 2017). <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Lock-off doors to adjacent units to allow families to increase/decrease in size (e.g., having 3-bed and 1-bed/studio units adjacent for expansion). <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Sliding doors to save space. Sliding doors often require more maintenance than slab doors. It is suggested they will be used when needed (e.g., laundry closet/room as their doors take so much space). <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: If in-unit laundry is not provided, allocate washer/dryer hookups in the units for future adaptation. <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: In open concept plans provide options for separating kitchen and living room zones with sliding screen and internal walls for privacy choice, and heating efficiency in winter (Donnelly et al., 2022). <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Balconies as extension of indoor living space. <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Loft beds/murphy beds to provide floor space for playing. <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: In-suite storage unit combined with laundry or flex space to be used for home office. |

⁷ National Occupancy Standards (NOS) were developed by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) through consultations with provincial housing agencies in the 1980s. They are used by CMHC to measure housing suitability and crowding. NOS stipulate that family size and composition should determine the number of bedrooms required by the household. According to the NOS, there shall be no more than 2 or less than 1 person per bedroom; Spouses and couples share a bedroom; Parents do not share a bedroom with children; Dependents aged 18 or more do not share a bedroom; Dependents aged 5 or more of the opposite sex do not share a bedroom (BC Housing, n.d.-b; CMHC, 2019b).

⁸ The ability to remain in one’s home safely, independently and comfortably, regardless of age, income or ability level throughout one’s changing lifetime (CMHC, 2018).

- Unit:** Accessible features for people with disabilities and older adults: showers instead of tubs (Vaccaro & Craig, 2020); Grab bars (Vaccaro & Craig, 2020); Two levels of door peepholes; Side by side laundry machines instead of stacked washer and dryer.
- Unit:** Allocating units on the lower levels to older adults and people with disabilities.
- Unit:** Step-free connections and good contrast between doorways and walls to ensure easy navigation for those with low vision and access issues (Donnelly et al., 2022).
- Unit:** Enough room at the entrance for a stroller, wheelchair, and other mobility aids.
- Unit:** If safe, provide cooking appliances (e.g., microwave/oven) that are accessible to the height of small children so they can get engaged with cooking.
- Unit:** Detachable shower heads for washing while sitting down and for when carers need to aid showering (Donnelly et al., 2022).
- Unit:** Built-in bench at the unit entry space.
- Unit and common area:** All shared washrooms should have taps kids can reach; no automatic flushing; no loud hand dryers.
- Unit and common area:** Adaptable furniture that has dual functions.
- Unit and common area:** Nook under the stairs.
- Unit and common area:** Moving walls/dividers to make more bedrooms, larger living or multifunctional spaces.
- Common area:** Allocate some raised garden beds which are structurally stable and have edges for resting for older women to minimise bending and assist in ease of garden maintenance. These can be located under the fixed outdoor furniture (Donnelly et al., 2022).
- Common area:** Change tables in the shared washrooms.
- Common area:** Utility sink in the shared rooms.
- Common area:** Ensure washrooms are gender inclusive and accessible for small children and people with disabilities.
- Common area:** Party room that can be converted to workspace when needed (Newinhomes, 2019).
- For more design actions on adaptable, flexible, and accessible housing, please see [CMHC's Accessible Housing by Design Factsheets](#) and [Universal Design Guide](#).**

High quality material and appliances

One of the strategies to achieve convenience and efficiency in housing spaces for women and their children is use of high quality material and appliances (built to last). These will reduce the needs

- Unit:** In-unit laundry has challenges and costs; however, for 3+ bedroom units it is reasonable and recommended to provide it for the convenience of large families.
- Unit:** Dishwasher in the units save women time and energy.
- Unit:** Provide a dedicated area in the kitchen that stores general garbage, compost and recycling bins, preferably concealed within a cupboard or under-bench and close to the sink area (Donnelly et al., 2022).

and costs for purchasing and maintaining them, and improves cleanliness of housing. Also, this strategy aims to ensure people have the ability to use and decorate their space without damaging the property/losing their damage deposits.

- Unit:** Provide built-in lighting in each room to prevent additional costs for women and their family.
- Unit:** Provide child safe blinds to prevent additional costs.
- Unit:** Bathroom with bathtubs to bathe small children.
- Unit:** Provide materials and fixtures that reduces damage to the building (e.g., pre hanging system/command strips, built-ins, removable tiles).
- Units:** Use low-cost and energy efficient heating systems to keep bills low.
- Unit and common area:** Shoe dryers for large family units.
- Unit and common area:** Use durable and washable surfaces and less carpet for ease of cleaning and maintenance (e.g., colours/surfaces that do not show dirt).
- Common area:** Provide corner guards in the hallways to prevent damage, especially during moving in/out.
- Common area:** Shared laundry provides opportunity for multiple laundry units at the same time which can save time when women need to do multiple loads.
- Common area:** If women and children in a housing project come directly from emergency shelters, provide a space for a “heat treatment room⁹” so that women can do a bed bug treatment of their belongings and furniture before living in their units (e.g., [YWCA’s Cause We Care Housing project](#)).

⁹ Heat treatment is a way of bed bug removal and decontaminating against pests by heating the space/items in a certain heat level (about 120 degrees Fahrenheit) for about 20 minutes which does not harm the belongings. The heat treatment room is a space with a heating unit and a staging area that can be allocated in a building with a high risk of bed bug contamination (e.g., emergency shelter).

Principle: Homelike and Healing Environment

| Strategy | Action |
|---|--|
| <p>Personalization of space Providing space for self-expression and having the choice and autonomy of how to decorate their living space enhances sense of home for women and children.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Built-in shelves for plants, frames, etc. inside the unit. <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Identifiable front door (e.g., different door/doorframe colours). <input type="checkbox"/> Unit and common area: Rotating art display space (e.g., chalk boards, pin-up boards) so that women and children can express themselves, post on them and communicate with other neighbours. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Allow for art works on the walls in the hallways and other shared spaces to avoid institutional feelings of plain walls. |
| <p>Cultural expression Providing opportunities for women and children to express their identity and culture in their housing spaces empowers them. To allow for cultural expressions, each housing provider should work with their resident community to reflect their cultural needs in their housing spaces.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: On-site garden to support cultural/medicinal plants. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Outdoor space to accommodate cultural activities (e.g., sweat lodge or fire ceremony) (CMHC, 2019a). <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Allow for smudging¹⁰ using a safety protocol. Please see an example of a Smudging Protocol in this resource by McMaster University. |
| <p>Nature and natural elements Connection to nature and natural elements (e.g., greenery, natural light) has been an important factor in improving mood and contributing to a sense of home.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Access to a balcony or private patio with space for plants and small gardening beds and experience the fresh air and sunshine in a private outdoor space. <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Easily used private open space (e.g., balcony) that allows for easy furnishing in terms of geometry and dimensions (City of Vienna, 2013, p. 89; Donnelly et al., 2022). <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Allocate on-site gardens and integrate storage of equipment, potting mix, and gloves into the courtyard or garden space (Donnelly et al., 2022). <input type="checkbox"/> Connection to neighbourhood: Access to green spaces and parks. |
| <p>Material, colour, texture, light One of the strategies to improve homelike and healing environment is through lighting, and using materials, colours, and texture that are non-institutional.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Unit and common area: Colour can be one of the easiest and most cost-effective ways to freshen a space. Selecting the proper colour requires an understanding of how a space is to be used (e.g., low- or high-traffic area), what mood the space should evoke, and whether the space is intended for social or group purposes or for quieter, more reflective uses (Light et al., 2022). <input type="checkbox"/> Unit and common area: Options for different colour themes in the suites and common areas. Use joyful colours in the common areas and children's playrooms but avoid using bright colours in the units as they may be |

¹⁰ It is a ceremony performed by many different First Nations peoples, which involves the burning of one or more of the Sacred Medicines collected from the Earth (e.g., Sage, Cedar). Smudging is done to purify the space and to ensure thoughts and words that are spoken come from a good place (McMaster University, 2022).

overstimulating for some people. Also, avoid large areas of white wall to prevent institutional feelings.

- Unit and common area:** Too many warm colours result in hot tempered psychological state whereas too many dull colours triggers depression and anxiety (Rian & Sassone, 2012).
- For more inspiration about the impacts of colours and how to use them in the space, please see the [*“Paint and Colour” Section of the Trauma-Informed Design for Homeless Population*](#) publication by [**HOK**](#).**
- Unit and common area:** Cozy, warm, and natural materials (e.g., wood).
- Unit and common area:** Textured material to stimulate visual curiosity. Avoid too much complexity in the texture of materials as they may be overstimulating.
- Unit and common area:** Warm lighting for a welcoming environment.

Personal space and privacy

To feel a sense of home, women and their families need to have access to their private, personal, quiet, and comfortable space where they can rest, meditate, or focus on a task/work if they want to.

- Unit:** Study space/desk space to support working from home, homework, and hobbies.
- Units:** Duplexes work well for a woman with older children and multigenerational families by providing personal space for them.
- Unit:** Control over visual connection.
- Unit:** Built-in niche/nook/alcove for escape in both the shared spaces and in the units.
- Unit:** Spaces to store personal and confidential paperwork (e.g., legal documents) that can be locked and out of reach of children.
- Unit:** When the units are on the courtyard level, divide it from the shared space using panels for more privacy.
- Unit and common area:** Acoustic considerations in units and common areas (Please refer to the [*“Physical Comfort”*](#) Section to learn more about the design actions to enhance privacy and comfort through “Noise and acoustic control”).
- Unit and common area:** Units’ front doors can be recessed in a niche to provide a feeling of privacy.
- Unit and common area:** Ritual spaces to journal, smoke, and meditate (Grabowska et al., 2021). For example, the Cultural Room at Amber’s House building of EFry in Prince George is a holy and quiet room for women to mediate, pray and have a healing session.
- Common area:** Smoking was identified as a reality for many of the women with experiences of violence. By having a designated smoking area we increase safety in the units and eliminate the need for residents to leave the premises to smoke. One of the most feasible and cost-effective ideas for smoking space is an outdoor space (preferably covered such as a gazebo) which does not require ventilation. The outdoor smoking space should be located away from the children’s play area and the units’ windows.

Principle: Physical Comfort

| Strategy | Action |
|--|--|
| <p>Noise/acoustics control Sound-proofing is important for privacy, safety and comfort in common spaces as well as in units. This is particularly important when women live with small children and/or pets. Proper acoustic considerations gives women and their children freedom to express themselves without disturbing other neighbours.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Entry doors should be acoustically sealed to help reduce noise ingress into unit (Donnelly et al., 2022). <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Prevent noise transmission from the kitchen and living areas between units (Donnelly et al., 2022). <input type="checkbox"/> Unit and common area: Wood and natural fibers/fabric for absorbing sound (Grabowska et al., 2021). <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Acoustic considerations in the shared amenity adjacent to apartment units. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: When retrofitting an existing building, plant more trees and fences to increase soundproofing outside noise. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Textured walls and floors to absorb sound (Grabowska et al., 2021). <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Carpeted stairs for soundproofing (Grabowska et al., 2021). |
| <p>Lighting control While access to natural and artificial light in indoor spaces is important, considerations are needed to reflect the amount of light needed at different times of day and night and based on residents' comfort level.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Control over natural light using black out windows/blinds for bedrooms for light control and to support good sleep patterns. <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Manually operated lights for units. Sensors take away the level of control and should be avoided or have a manual override option (Donnelly et al., 2022). Provide “dimmers” for more choice on the intensity of the light. <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Provide task lighting in the kitchen for working areas, like benchtops, in addition to overhead lighting (Donnelly et al., 2022). <input type="checkbox"/> Unit and common area: Ample natural lights in units and common spaces. In north facing units, ensure allocation of larger windows. <input type="checkbox"/> Unit and common area: In the shared spaces of the units (e.g., living room) and common area where people spend time, do not use motion-sensitive lights. Motion-sensitive lights reduce the autonomy and comfort of the space for those people who are spending time in a dark (non-bright) space. Motion-sensitive lights are more useful in the transitioning/circulation spaces (e.g., hallway) and bathrooms and laundry rooms for enhanced sense of safety. <input type="checkbox"/> Unit and common area: Provide pergolas, shade sails, or mobile screens to control direct sunlight and reduce heat load in adjacent indoor spaces (Donnelly et al., 2022). <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Shaded outdoor play space. |
| <p>Climate control Ventilation and temperature are important factors to be controlled to provide fresh air, air circulation, and prevent overheating and uncomfortable cold temperatures in the housing spaces for women and their children.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: In-unit cooling/AC for hot seasons and heat waves. <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Provide units with good ventilation and natural lights for mould mitigation (Butler et al., 2017; Donnelly et al., 2022). <input type="checkbox"/> Unit and common area: Thermostats in each room to keep the temperature comfortable at all times (it also saves energy). <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Water spray system for heat waves in the courtyard/rooftop garden. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Communal rooms should have good ventilation (City of Vienna, 2013, p. 89). <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Provide covered outdoor space for use in rain and snow. |

Principle: Community support and social life

| Strategy | Action |
|--|--|
| <p>Diversity of on-site amenities (e.g., size, function, softness, furniture)</p> <p>In order for shared spaces to be utilized to their full potential, they need to be inclusive of diverse ages, abilities, and other identity groups. Also, there should be amenity options that can be used in different weather conditions. The more shared spaces are utilized, the more opportunities for socializing.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Large shared living room; playroom/game room to share after school care. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Party room to enable affordable birthday parties. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Volunteer space for sharing skills and empowering women. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Shared kitchen/communal cooking; Lounge/amenity room with a full kitchen. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Courtyard/rooftop garden. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Spaces to support artwork, hot-desking, yoga, and other activities. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: On-site children’s play space with space for adults to mingle. A mix of both outdoor play space (including a shaded/covered area) and indoor play area enables their use in different weather conditions and seasons. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Benches and picnic tables and a variety of seating options for different group sizes and activities. <input type="checkbox"/> Communal area: Provide both built-in (fixed) furniture for dual uses (storage) and free standing seating options (Donnelly et al., 2022). <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Space for older children (pre-teens and teens) to be active (e.g., basketball, skateboarding in the complex). |
| <p>Residents’ involvement</p> <p>Involvement of women and children in shaping the shared spaces of their buildings provides a sense of ownership over these spaces and facilitates opportunities for connections, collaboration, and exchanging resources and skills with other neighbours.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Keep the shared amenities incomplete in order to let residents engage in shaping the space according to their needs and interests (e.g., choosing/making art). <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Shared library/tool library builds community. For example, provide built-in shelving in shared spaces to enable book sharing among neighbours. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Chalkboard walls for messaging among residents. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Community pantry and shared food space. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Clearly defined community garden areas with access to tools, materials and water; Engaging women and children in choosing the plant types (Donnelly et al., 2022). |
| <p>Safe amenities</p> <p>The safer the shared amenities are, the more women and their children/dependants will be interested and comfortable in using them. As a result, there will be more opportunities for connections with others.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Please refer to “Security and Sense of Safety” Section to learn the strategies and actions for designing safe and secure spaces. |
| <p>Community Size</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Community in block/buildings of more than approx. 30 units may become anonymous, and hinder social control (City of Vienna, 2013, p. 88). |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Research suggests there is an optimal community size that has the potential for enhanced sense of community and safety.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Units: Comparing 6-storey multiplexes to high-rise towers, a sense of community and safety is better achieved in a multiplex (City of Toronto, 2022). <input type="checkbox"/> Common areas: In most multi-family housing settings, residents report feeling less crowding and greater connection with neighbours when semi-private common spaces are shared by no more than 12 adults and their children (Happy Cities, n.d.). |
| <p>Space layout Where the different spaces in the unit and common areas are located and the ways they are arranged next to other spaces impacts the potential for socializing among the residents.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Unit: Visual connections between the kitchen and living/dining area allows for socializing between family members while carrying out different tasks. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Amenity space next to the shared laundry where people can hangout, watch children play for connections and usability at the same time. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Amenity spaces that open into shared courtyard. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Glass doors/windows to communal rooms so people can see who is in there and what is happening and can decide whether they want to join. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Allocate space for on-site staff near shared amenity or next to the entrance. <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Communal space should be centrally located and accessible to all residents (Donnelly, et al., 2022). |
| <p>Access to community centers and supports Women stated that having support nearby in proximity of their housing provides them with the choice to reach out when they need to.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Common area: Allocate space for on-site staff to promote a sense of community building and support when needed. <input type="checkbox"/> Connection to neighbourhood: Locate housing close to cultural, spiritual and religious centers and supports (CMHC, 2019a; Vaccaro & Craig, 2020). |

Other resources: See Happy Cities' [Happy Homes Toolkit](#) and the [Hey Neighbour Collective's work](#) for more design and programming ideas to enhance social connectedness in multi-unit rental housing.