



# Women-Centred Housing Design Toolkit

Principles, strategies, and actions to design long-term housing for women and children with experiences of violence

March 2023



BC Society of Transition Houses

# Table of Contents

---

- Acknowledgement 2
- About the BC Society of Transition Houses: Increasing Access to Housing 3
- Glossary of Terms 4
- 1. Introduction 7
  - 1.1 What is the problem and why is a women-centred housing design toolkit necessary? 7
  - 1.2 Process Of Developing Women-Centred Design Toolkit 10
  - 1.3 Who is the key audience of this toolkit? 15
  - 1.4 How to use the Women-Centred Design Toolkit? 16
- 2. Women-Centred Housing Design: Foundations 17
  - 2.1 Violence & Trauma-Informed Design 18
  - 2.2 Intersectional Design 19
- 3. Women-Centred Housing Design: Principles 21
  - 3.1 Women-Centred Housing Design: Spatial Scale 23
- 4. Women-Centred Housing Design: Principles, Strategies, & Actions 24
  - 4.1 Security & Sense of Safety 25
  - 4.2 Convenience & Efficiency 33
  - 4.3 Homelike & Healing Environment 41
  - 4.4 Physical Comfort 47
  - 4.5 Community Support & Social Life 52
- 5. Annotated Spaces & Floor Plans 57
  - 5.1 Housing Units 58
  - 5.2 Housing Common Area 67
- 6. Feasibility & Applicability 75
  - 6.1 Recommendations 77
- 7. Recommended Design Guideline Resources 78
- 8. Conclusion 79
- 9. References 80

**With Gratitude we recognize that the BC Society of Transition Houses' office is located on unceded Coast Salish territory, shared by the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), x mə kwəy əm (Musqueam) and səlilw əta / Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.**

---

As this work discusses the lack of safe, affordable and appropriate housing after violence, experienced by women throughout British Columbia, we recognize that this discussion includes all First Nations throughout the province. We understand that the displacement of Indigenous peoples from their lands and other ongoing effects of colonialism are foundational to the disproportionate number of Indigenous women and girls experiencing homelessness and violence. We recognize the importance of valuing the connection between all living things and all systems we have created. As such, we understand that the issues of homelessness and violence can only be fully addressed through sustainable systemic change.



*Cultural Room in the Elizabeth Fry's Amber House building.  
My Sister's Place, Prince George*

# Acknowledgement

## Writing & Editing<sup>1</sup>:

**Ghazaleh Akbarnejad**, BCSTH Women-Centred Design Project Coordinator  
**Louise Godard**, Member Support Consultant  
**Amy FitzGerald**, BCSTH Executive Director

This project would not have been possible without participation and contribution of women who shared their valuable lived experiences and time. We would also like to acknowledge the contributions and commitment of the housing and anti-violence sector experts, the National Occupancy Standards (NOS) Working Group, the Advisory Committee members, and the Rural Community of Practice members who offered their knowledge and expertise of suitable and culturally appropriate housing design.

Special thanks to the project's pilot sites, **Squamish Howe Sound Women's Centre Society** and the **Prince George and District Elizabeth Fry Society** for their contribution during the consultations and **YWCA Metro Vancouver** for their site visit tours. Appreciation to the workshop and pilot site sessions' co-facilitators who supported the co-creation sessions.

Thank you to Tanyss Knowles and Amy FitzGerald who recognized the need for, and necessity of, a women-centred approach to designing suitable long-term housing for women with experiences of violence. Sincere gratitude to the funders for supporting this project. This project was made possible with funding from the Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia, the Catherine Donnelley Foundation and Women's Shelters Canada.

Many thanks to the **Human Studio Architecture and Urban Design Ltd** for their architectural and design support, **ITS Consulting** for their design and tech support, and **Sweet Imagery** for their graphic design support in developing the Women-Centred Housing Design Toolkit. Images used in this Toolkit are provided by Ghazaleh Akbarnejad (BCSTH), Zahra Asghari (Human Studio), and YWCA Metro Vancouver. The annotated floor plans and annotated images have been prepared with architectural and design support of the Human Studio Architecture and Urban Design Ltd. The photos of units and common areas are from the YWCA Metro Vancouver housing sites, including the YWCA Cause We Care and the YWCA Pacific Spirit Terrace housing projects as well as the Prince George and District Elizabeth Fry housing projects including My Sister's Place housing site.

---

<sup>1</sup> How to cite this toolkit: Akbarnejad, A., Godard, L., FitzGerald, A. (2023). *Women-Centred Housing Design Toolkit: Principles, strategies, and actions to design long-term housing for women and children with experiences of violence*. BC Society of Transitions Houses.



# About the BC Society of Transition Houses: Increasing Access to Housing

---

The BC Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH) is a member-based, provincial umbrella organization that, through leadership, support and collaboration, enhances the continuum of services and strategies to respond to, prevent and end violence against **women**, children and youth. BCSTH provides support to **Transition Houses, Second Stage Houses, Third Stage Houses, Safe Homes** and **PEACE** (formerly Children Who Witness Abuse) and **Violence is Preventable (VIP)** programs in British Columbia through training, advocacy, research and resources.

In 2018, BCSTH began the **Getting Home Project** to understand the relationship between housing insecurity and women's experiences of violence. BCSTH member organizations identified a bottleneck to long-term housing for the women who access their services, which results in limited access to Safe Homes, Transition Houses, and Second and Third Stage Housing for women seeking these services. The Getting Home Project also identified the safety risks resulting from the lack of safe, affordable and appropriate housing for women who have experienced violence, as it was found that women often have to choose between housing and safety.

**BCSTH has become a leader in the province for research related to barriers to housing for women experiencing violence and the intersection between the anti-violence sector and the housing sector. It is BCSTH's goal to increase access to housing by:**

**Supporting BCSTH members** who are providing housing to women with experiences of violence and their children;

**Increasing capacity** within the anti-violence sector to provide affordable and women-centered housing options;

**Continuing research** on key barriers to housing for women who have experienced violence and potential solutions;

**Researching design solutions** to provide women-centered long-term housing;

**Knowledge translation** through delivering trainings and developing and sharing toolkits and resources with the anti-violence and housing sectors; and

**Facilitating partnerships and projects** between the anti-violence sector and the community housing sector.

To learn more about BCSTH's past and ongoing research and projects related to increasing access to housing, please visit the **BCSTH Housing Project** page.



# Glossary of Terms

**Accessibility:** Accessibility refers to the manner in which housing is designed, constructed or modified (e.g., renovation, modification), to enable independent living for persons with diverse abilities. Accessibility is achieved through design, but also by adding features that make a home more accessible (e.g., modified cabinetry, furniture) to improve the overall ability to function in a home (CMHC, 2022).

**Adequate Housing:** Housing is adequate if it is not in need of major repairs (e.g., defective plumbing or electrical wiring, or structural repairs to walls, floors, or ceilings) (CMHC, 2019b).

**Affordable Housing:** Housing is considered to be affordable when housing costs less than 30% of before-tax household income (CMHC, 2019b).

**Aging in Place:** 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).

**Appropriate Housing:** Is stable, safe, and affordable housing that meets different spatial needs of households (i.e., based on their material, psychological and cultural needs), and has easy access to services and resources (CMHC, 2019b; United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, n.d.).

**Bike Share:** 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.).

**BCSTH Member Programs and Services:** BCSTH Member Programs & Services include Transition, Second and Third Stage Houses, Safe Homes, PEACE and Violence is Preventable programs across BC.

**Co-creation:** Co-creation is a broad term and referred to any act of collective creativity (i.e., shared by two or more people) (Sanders & Stappers, 2008).

**Core Housing Need:** Core Housing Need is a measurement created by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to assess how well housing needs are met. It uses the 3 indicators of affordability, adequacy, and suitability. If a housing does not meet one of these 3 criteria and the household can't afford alternative housing in the local market, the household is considered in core housing need (CMHC, 2019b).

**Emergency Shelter:** Immediate, short-stay housing for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless (BC Housing, n.d.-a).

**Experience of Violence:** There are many terms used within violence prevention services in relation to women who have experienced violence. "Women who experience/have experienced/fleeing violence" are used throughout this toolkit to capture all forms of violence inclusive of, but not limited to, Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), Gender-Based Violence (GBV), sexual violence, and domestic violence (Ashlie et al., 2022).

**Flexible and Adaptable Space:** According to Steven Groák (1992), flexibility in a space is achieved by modifying the physical arrangements and form of the building to make it suitable and appropriate for the needs of occupants. Adaptability refers to using a space in a variety of ways for different social uses without making extreme physical changes (Schneider & Till, 2005). In the context of this toolkit we do not differentiate these two concepts. We use them interchangeably and as the ability to modify a space for suitability and appropriateness for different uses with minimum need to technical resources and structural changes.

**Heat Treatment Room:** 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).

**Homelessness:** Homelessness describes the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it (Gaetz et al., 2012). This study suggests that this term should not only be used to refer to chronic homelessness but has to incorporate the hidden aspect of homelessness experiences (e.g., living in temporary housing/ programs, couch surfing).

**Housing Continuum:** It is a concept used to describe the broad range of housing options and services available to help a range of households in different tenures (CMHC, 2022). The housing continuum is fluid, as individuals enter and exit services at any point and it is not a linear step-by-step process to securing long-term housing (Ashlie et al., 2022).

**Indicative Design:** Graphics, images, and floor plans with levels of details and annotations which visually show suggestions for design principles, strategies, and actions discussed in this toolkit. These design representations aim to provide inspirations to the audience of the toolkit. Toolkit audience are expected to customize and alter these examples and decide what design best fits their specific context.

**Integrated Housing:** 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.

**Long-term Housing:** Long-term housing refers to permanent and stable housing including within community housing and the private market housing. Community housing refers to community-

based housing that is owned and operated by non-profit housing societies, housing co-operatives or public (social) housing owned by provincial, territorial or municipal governments (CMHC, 2018). Co-operative housing is a housing model that residents own and operate the housing through a membership system (BC Housing, n.d.-a). “Long-term housing” is used in this toolkit to distinguish between the other short-term programs that women access after leaving violence.

**Multiplex:** 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.).

**National Occupancy Standards:** 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).

**Natural Surveillance:** Natural surveillance means maximizing visibility by designing areas with sufficient opportunities for people to observe the space and activities around them. Natural Surveillance is one of the strategies in the “Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design” approach to improve safety and reduce and eliminate criminal behaviour.

**PEACE:** The Prevention, Education, Advocacy, Counselling and Empowerment (PEACE) program provides free, confidential individual and group counselling for children and youth aged 3 to 18 experiencing violence, (formerly Children Who Witness Abuse) across BC.

**Remote or Isolated Community:** Remote or isolated is defined as a community or geographic location with a population of less than 5,000 and/or at least 100 km from a city of >29,000, or a community or geographic location without year-round road access. The project recognizes that geographic isolation can become compounded by lack of access to social networks, internet and cellphone service, and financial resources.

**Safe Homes:** Safe Homes are community-based networks of private homes that shelter women and their children. They typically offer short stay placements, but can be longer if needed. Safe Homes provide outreach services in small rural communities that are often far from larger towns.

**Second Stage Houses:** Second Stage Houses provide service-enhanced affordable temporary housing for women, children and youth who have recently experienced violence. They offer women, children and youth secure, affordable housing for 3 to 12 months, as well as support and programming while women and families make decisions about their future. Second Stage Houses deliver varying levels of support, but are not generally staffed 24 hours a day or 7 days a week.

**Smudging:** 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).

**Suitable Housing:** A household is living in a suitable home when there are enough bedrooms for the size and make-up of the residents according to the National Occupancy Standards (CMHC, 2019b).

**Third Stage Houses:** Third Stage Houses provide supportive housing for women who have left violent relationships and who no longer need crisis service support. They offer independent housing with lengths of tenancy from 2 to 4 years and deliver varying levels of support, but are not staffed 24 hours a day or 7 days a week.

**Transition Houses:** Transition Houses provide short- to long-term shelter and related support services to women, children, and youth who have experienced or are at risk of violence. They offer temporary safe shelter and support to enable women to make decisions about their future. They are staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**Tuck Shop:** 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.

**Universal Design:** Universal design is the design of an environment that can be accessed, understood and used by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability. It also recognizes that peoples' needs can change over time (CMHC, 2023).

**VIP:** Violence Is Preventable (VIP) is a free, confidential, school-based violence prevention program for students in grades K-12. VIP Presentations, delivered by PEACE counsellors, increase awareness of the effects that domestic violence has on students while connecting those experiencing violence to PEACE Program counselling.

**Wayfinding:** 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).

**Women:** The term "women" refers to and is inclusive of all self-identified women. BCSTH recognizes that while gender-based violence has significant impacts on cis-gender women and girls in Canada, 2SLGBTQQIA+ and gender diverse people are disproportionately impacted by experiences of violence.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 What is the problem and why is a women-centred housing design toolkit necessary?

Violence is the leading cause of **homelessness** and housing precarity for women<sup>2</sup> in Canada (Schwan et al., 2021). Research shows that young women, Indigenous women, gender diverse and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, women with disabilities, women living in rural, **remote**<sup>3</sup>, and Northern communities, women of colour and newcomer women to Canada are disproportionately affected by gender-based violence (Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2022). The BC Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH) **Getting Home** project shows that affordability, discrimination, and poverty are only a few of the barriers to accessing stable **long-term housing**<sup>4</sup> for women and their children/dependents with **experiences of violence**. Another important barrier is the severe lack of **appropriate** and accessible long-term housing and services which causes women to stay longer in the temporary and transition programs (i.e., **Emergency Shelters, Safe Homes, Transition Houses, Second and Third Stage Housing**) or return to their abusive partners (Ashlie et al., 2021). Figure 1 shows the **continuum of housing** and programs that are available to a woman after violence and where long-term housing stands within this continuum.

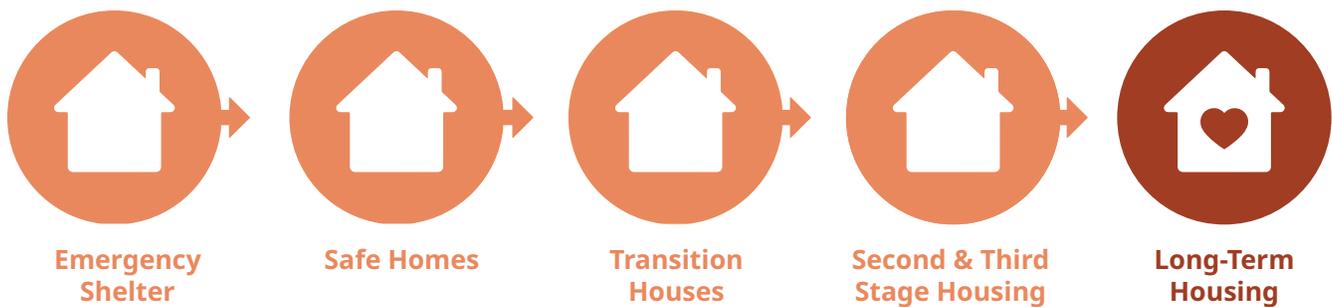


Figure 1: Continuum of housing for women leaving violence

<sup>2</sup> The term “women” refers to and is inclusive of all self-identified women. BCSTH recognizes that while gender-based violence has significant impacts on cis-gender women and girls in Canada, 2SLGBTQQIA+ and gender diverse people are disproportionately impacted by experiences of violence.

<sup>3</sup> Remote or isolated is defined as a community or geographic location with a population of less than 5,000 and/or at least 100 km from a city of >29,000. Or a community or geographic location without year-round road access. The project recognizes that geographic isolation can become compounded by lack of access to social networks, internet and cellphone service, and financial resources.

<sup>4</sup> Long-term housing refers to safe and stable housing including community housing and co-operative and private market housing. It means living in a home as long as one is willing to without worrying or being forced to leave. This term is used in this toolkit to distinguish between the other programs that women access after leaving violence.

Census data supports the finding regarding the lack of **appropriate housing** for women and their children. The 2021 census data shows that 41% of renter female lone parent led households in BC live in **Core Housing Need**<sup>5</sup>. It means that their housing is not **affordable**, or **adequate** (i.e., in need of major repairs), or is not **suitable** (i.e., does not meet the requirements of **National Occupancy Standards**<sup>6</sup>) and these households can't afford alternative housing in the local market. 2021 census data also shows that 25% of renter female lone parent-led households in BC live in unsuitable situations. These numbers are expected to be even higher for women and children with experiences of violence.

Lack of appropriate, suitable, and affordable long-term family housing options for women and their children/dependents after violence heightens the necessity of exploring the impacts of gender and violence on women's housing experiences, their priorities, and finding tangible solutions to address these issues. Currently, the National Occupancy Standards (NOS) defines the suitability of housing for families, including a woman and her children/dependents, merely as having the appropriate number of bedrooms.

Strict adherence of the NOS limits women's choices to access affordable and safe housing which heightens the housing vulnerabilities that they are already subject to. To learn more about the negative consequences of the NOS on women and their children leaving violence, please see the article **The Housing Tell: No Room for National Occupancy Standards** by the BCSTH and University of British Columbia housing researchers.

While there is a need for reducing barriers and improving housing policies and programs (e.g., flexible NOS policies), the Women-Centred

Housing Design (WCD) project discusses that housing experiences and outcomes can be also positively impacted by improving housing quality and suitability and meeting women and children's spatial needs. More suitable and appropriate housing needs to be designed and built according to the specific needs of women, including empowering them to decide and define what suitability means to them.

As the anti-violence sector is expanding their mandate to provide long-term housing for women and their children after violence (e.g., through the **Women's Transition Housing Fund Program**), there is an opportunity for supporting these new developments with intentional women-centred design guidelines. Consultations during the development of the WCD Toolkit revealed that BCSTH members often do not have the financial or human resources, nor the time necessary, to carry out thorough consultation activities to guide the design and development of suitable and appropriate long-term housing for their community. Also, many architecture and development teams do not have experience designing gender-sensitive, and violence- and trauma-informed housing for women and their children with experiences of violence. Anti-violence housing providers indicated that an accessible WCD Toolkit would support their critical housing design and development work. Therefore, this toolkit offers guidelines for the housing and anti-violence sector to explore opportunities for designing new housing, design improvements in their existing housing and retrofitting through a women-centred design lens.

---

<sup>5</sup> Core Housing Need is a measurement created by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to assess how well housing needs are met. It uses the 3 indicators of affordability, adequacy, and suitability.

<sup>6</sup> According to NOS "1. There shall be no more than 2 or less than 1 person per bedroom; 2. Spouses and couples share a bedroom; 3. Parents do not share a bedroom with children; 4. Dependents aged 18 or more do not share a bedroom; 5. Dependents aged 5 or more of the opposite sex do not share a bedroom." (BC Housing, n.d.-b; CMHC, 2019b).



**The WCD Toolkit aims to inform the design of appropriate and accessible long-term housing with a focus on intersectional gender-sensitive and violence- and trauma-informed design.**

---

This toolkit seeks to improve the development of housing with efficient, safe, and accessible features. Although one size does not fit all, this toolkit provides design strategies and elements that can be adjusted for better relevancy to the housing needs of women and their children/dependents after violence. Moreover, spaces that are designed and built through an empathic, caring, equitable, and violence- and trauma-informed process are more likely to be successful in meeting the needs of all occupants and not only women and children with experiences of violence.

# 1.2 Process Of Developing Women-Centred Design Toolkit

The process of developing the WCD Toolkit involved 3 main steps (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Women-Centred Housing Design Toolkit: Development Process

## Discovery & Creation

The first step of developing this toolkit was to engage women with lived experiences of gender-based violence as well as housing experts in an online setting to help create a set of design ideas and actions. To inform this engagement, we consulted with BCSTH’s housing projects’ advisory committees and working groups. We facilitated a **co-creation** workshop with 14 women with lived experience and another workshop with 14 experts in housing development and operations, architecture and design, and **BCSTH Member Programs**. Figure 3 shows one of the activities of the online workshop with women with lived experience using **Mural** boards.

Lack of space, need for efficient design, security and safety, amenity space preferences, access to

neighbourhood services and housing location were some of the main topics that were discussed. The result of this engagement process has turned into an **Interim Report** available on the BCSTH website.

These results were then complemented by a review of the literature and best practices in Canada and elsewhere. These resources focus on trauma-informed design guidelines, intersectional and gender-sensitive design guidelines, and those that highlight the housing needs of women and children with experiences of violence and homelessness (please see **Recommended Design Guideline Resources** and **References** sections for a list of resources). Resources also include other BCSTH housing projects (e.g., **Keys to Home Gaps Analysis**) reports, articles, and design guidelines and toolkits.

## Breakout Group 1: Activity 1 (25 minutes overall)

### Challenges and needs (25 minutes)

Think and reflect collectively about the challenges and needs. Please spend 3-4 minutes for each category to add comments on sticky notes. After that spend 1-2 minutes in each category to vote for the top three challenges.

Figure 3: Mural board example, used in the online workshop with women with lived experience

## Piloting

Once the first iteration of toolkit design recommendations was drafted, it was presented and tested with BCSTH members and experts who are involved in design, development, and operation of housing for women with experiences of violence. The purpose of this step was to refine the first draft of the design recommendations and to understand the extent to which the strategies and design ideas are relevant and applicable in both rural and urban communities. The goal of this step was to also understand what was missing in the recommended design principles and strategies from the perspective of various stakeholders.

Two consultation sessions and conversations regarding the first draft of the WCD Toolkit were facilitated with 2 BCSTH Member Programs who have developed, or are in the process of developing, Second Stage and long-term housing. Consultations on the WCD Toolkit were facilitated with [Howe Sound Women's Centre Society \(HSWC\)](#) in Squamish (rural site) and [Elizabeth Fry Society \(EFry\)](#) of Prince George and District (urban site). Figure 4 shows the group activity in consultation with the Prince George and District Elizabeth Fry.

### Howe Sound Women's Centre Society (HSWC)

Howe Sound Women's Centre Society (HSWC) provides a variety of programs and services (e.g., crisis support, sexual assault response, safe housing options) for individuals with shared experiences of gender marginalization including cis and trans women, Two Spirit, trans and/or non-binary people, children and youth impacted by violence in the Sea to Sky Corridor including the communities of Pemberton, Whistler, Squamish and the Skwxwú7mesh, Lilwat7úl, and Lower Stl'at'imx Nations. HSWC's short-term housing options and programs include [Transitional Housing](#), [Safe Homes](#), [Homeless Prevention Programs](#), and [Short-Term Affordable Housing/Second Stage Housing](#).

11 people participated in the consultation with the Squamish HSWC, bringing their planning, development, and construction perspectives as well as their experiences of working in the anti-violence sector (e.g., Transition House Support Worker).

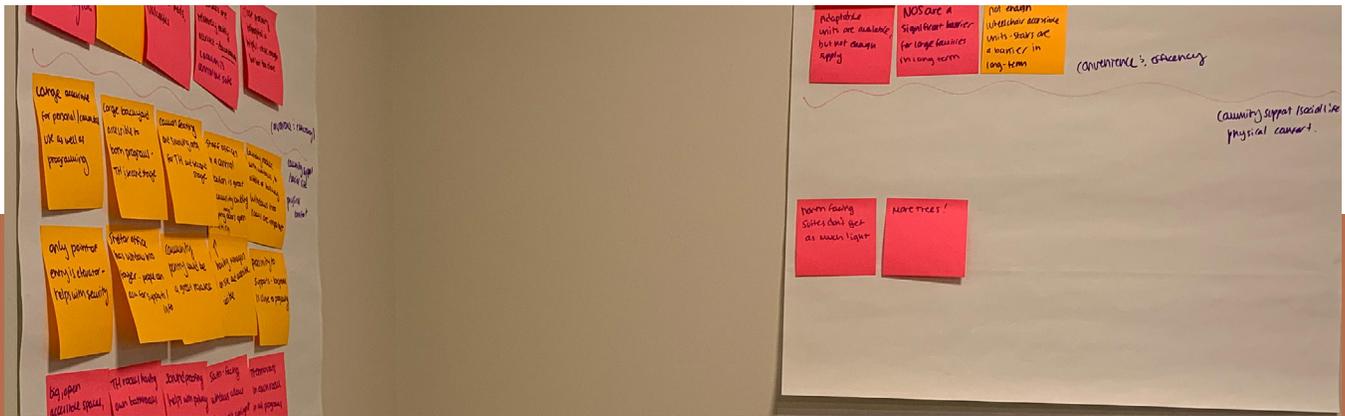


Figure 4: Consultation session with Elizabeth Fry Society in Prince George

## Prince George and District Elizabeth Fry Society (EFry)

EFry supports women, individuals and families with safe housing options. Some of the EFry's housing developments for women with/without children fleeing violence and unsafe situations in Prince George include Nexus Place and My Sister's Place. Nexus Place is an 11-unit apartment building operating under the Homeless-At-Risk Program through BC Housing.

**My Sister's Place** is a community with 3 different levels of housing and supports in proximity to each other. My Sister's Place consists of an 18 bed Transition House - Amber House, a Second Stage Housing (studio, 2- and 3-bedroom units) and 21 townhomes of long-term housing (1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom units) using a women-led tenancy lens. Figure 5 shows Amber House building and Figure 6 is My Sister's Place townhomes which are located in close proximity to each other.

In the consultation session with the Prince George and District EFry, 6 participants provided feedback and recommendations on the toolkit. Site visits of EFry's current housing developments were also conducted to learn what characteristics of women-centred housing design are being applied in their buildings. In this toolkit we present annotated images of My Sister's Place site.



Figure 5: Elizabeth Fry's Amber House Building, My Sister's Place, Prince George



Figure 6: Elizabeth Fry's Townhouses in My Sister's Place, Prince George

Lastly, through a Rural Community of Practice that brings together 12 remote and rural BCSTH members, housing and design challenges and opportunities specific to rural and remote communities are discussed and members act in an advisory capacity to inform the development of the WCD Toolkit.

The learning from these steps were applied to the first draft of toolkit.

## Presentation & Communication

The WCD Toolkit includes design recommendations in the form of principles, strategies, and actions as well **indicative design**, annotated floor plans and images for the use of the housing and anti-violence sectors as well as developers and designers. One of the main goals of the toolkit is to communicate the design ideas simply to a wide range of housing and anti-violence stakeholders (i.e., not only architects and designers). Indicative design and floor plans which visualize the recommended strategies and actions are presented in this toolkit. These visuals are supported by images of some of the existing long-term and Second Stage housing for women and children with experiences of violence provided by some of the BCSTH's members including the **YWCA Metro Vancouver (YWCA)**, and the **Elizabeth Fry Society of Prince George and District (EFry)**.

These building images are aimed at showcasing some of the existing women-centred and culturally-appropriate housing projects and design strategies. Having access to visual representation of the women-centred housing came up in the pilot site consultations as a valuable asset in the design toolkit.

Finally, an interactive online version of this toolkit has been developed and is accessible through the BCSTH website. This online toolkit allows for reviewing the preferred sections and personalizing to suit individual housing needs and design preferences. Furthermore, it provides a platform for engagement of the housing and anti-violence sector (e.g., providing feedback, exporting design checklist).

**YWCA Metro Vancouver** is a registered charity, gender equity advocate, community service provider and social enterprise operator. They deliver affordable housing, early learning and child care, training and employment services, and other programs to achieve women's equality, including the full realization of equality for Two-Spirit and gender diverse people. YWCA housing communities provide safe and affordable homes for single women and their dependent children. In this Toolkit we present images of the Cause We Care House and the Pacific Spirit Terrace sites in Vancouver.

**YWCA Cause We Care House** is located above the Strathcona VPL library in Vancouver and provides 21 rent geared to income units (2-, 3- and 4-bedroom) to single mothers with dependent children. The building also consists of an outdoor play area for younger children, a BBQ and a small community garden, an amenity room with computer access and a communal kitchen space and a playroom with toys for children, a bike storage, shared laundry room, and a heat treatment room. Figure 7 shows the building's main façade.



Figure 8: YWCA Pacific Spirit Terrace Building, Vancouver



Figure 7: YWCA Cause We Care Building, Vancouver

**YWCA Pacific Spirit Terrace** is located in Vancouver above a fire hall. It provides 16 below-market units (2- and 3-bedroom) and 15 rent geared to income units, to single mothers with dependent children. The building also includes an outdoor play area for younger children, a small communal garden, an amenity room, bike storage, and a shared laundry room. Figure 8 shows the building's main facade and entrance.

In both housing sites, a Community Development Coordinator is available on site 4 days per week for information and referrals.

## 1.3 Who is the key audience of this toolkit?

This project builds design capacity for the anti-violence and housing sector and provides resources to support the design of women-centred long-term housing. The audience of this toolkit are primarily professionals in the anti-violence and housing sectors and those who are involved in and/or interested in providing and operating, developing, and designing long-term housing for women and their children/dependents after leaving violence (e.g., BCSTH members, architects, non-profit housing organizations). This toolkit helps housing providers to engage potential residents, people with lived experience, and other stakeholders (e.g., onsite staff, architecture team) and adapt and customize the design actions and strategies based on the needs of their community and other contextual factors such as culture, environment (climate), budget considerations, and local bylaws and policies.



## 1.4 How to use the Women-Centred Design Toolkit?

The WCD Toolkit offers principles, strategies, and actions on designing spaces that are appropriate, suitable, safe, and accessible for women and their children/dependents with experiences of violence. Each principle and its following strategies and actions are recommended in response to the problems and needs identified in terms of long-term housing design for women and their children/dependents (see the [Interim Report](#) for the breakdown of identified needs and problems). It is important to note that when possible, these design recommendations should be accompanied by the engagement of existing and/or potential residents to reflect their lived experiences and cultural and environmental contexts and needs. Figure 9 shows the 3 levels of design recommendations offered in this toolkit.

Each principle and their following strategies and actions are colour coded for navigation purposes. Please see [Section 3](#) and [4](#) to learn more. In [Section 4](#), the list of all the design strategies and actions related to each principle are presented and in the [Annotated Spaces and Floor Plans section](#), the annotated floor plans and images provide visual representation of many of these design ideas.

### Principle

Principles are the high level values and qualities that are important in achieving the goal of women-centred housing design. These principles are the top priority areas identified for achieving intersectional gender-sensitive and trauma- and violence-informed long-term housing design for women and children with experiences of violence. They will be achieved through applying the design strategies and actions.

### Strategy

Strategies are high level recommendations and plans to achieve the principles of women-centred housing. Each strategy will be met through applying a set of actions.

### Action

Actions are practical and tangible design ideas and details and are illustrated in this toolkit, using graphics and visuals (e.g., floor plans, space diagrams).

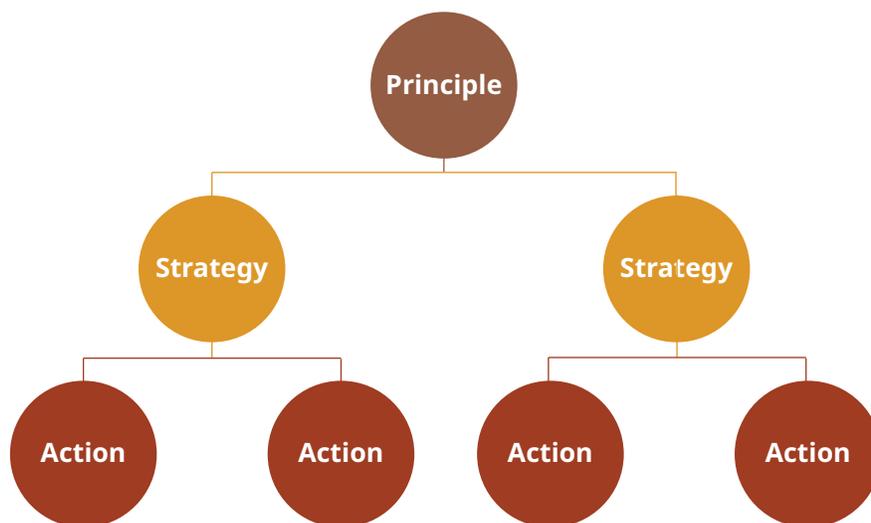


Figure 9: Levels of housing design ideas

## 2. Women-Centred Housing Design: Foundations

The question of *what is a women-centred housing?* led the BCSTH consultations.

Through our consultation with the anti-violence and housing sectors and women with lived experiences of violence, key tenets arose that define women-centred housing. From the perspective of the anti-violence sector and women with lived experience, women-centred housing recognizes that women with/without children/dependents after leaving temporary housing and programs are at risk of homelessness, housing precarity, and violence and live with the fear of these outcomes.

Women-centred housing incorporates an intersectional lens and recognizes the intersecting social identities that may lead to housing inequalities and prioritizes affordability and adaptability to the unique and ever-changing needs of women and their children. It also values women's significant role in determining their housing space design interventions, policies, and procedures.

Women-centred housing embodies a violence- and trauma-informed approach in both space design and operation to reduce potential triggers and facilitate healing for women and their children/dependents after violence. It emphasizes safety and security, cultural safety, community, dignity and self-esteem, and residents' well-being. Figure 10 shows these two core foundations that long-term women-centred housing is built upon: Intersectionality and Violence- and Trauma-Informed.



Figure 10: Foundations of Women-Centred Housing Design

## 2.1 Violence & Trauma-Informed Design

Built environment and housing has an impact on our physical and mental health. Violence and trauma-informed design is based on an understanding and responsiveness to the impacts of trauma on individuals. It emphasizes safety (i.e., emotional, physical and physiological), choice, and creating opportunities for healing, connections, and rebuilding sense of control, and empowerment for survivors (Hopper et al., 2010; Shopworks Architecture et al., 2020). Having an understanding of trauma in designing housing is crucial because of the environmental triggers that may impact the experiences of users in the space. Aspects of an environment that may be triggering include disruptive sounds (e.g., footsteps, doors slamming), unpleasant scents (e.g., cigarette smoke, perfumes), lack of security for self and belongings (e.g., open windows, broken security cameras), visual noise (e.g., lack of exits, unclear [wayfinding](#)), uncomfortable sensations (e.g., no adjustable thermostat, narrow hallways, no fresh air), and institutional materials (e.g., fluorescent lights, ceiling tiles, generic furniture) (Grabowska et al., 2021). Therefore, violence- and trauma-informed design aims to mitigate these impacts through improving housing qualities and an understanding of sensory effect of space and materials, and as a result enhance the experiences of the users in the space.

Trauma can be the outcome of different violent and traumatic experiences (e.g., physical injury, post-war trauma, gender-based violence). In the context

of this toolkit, women's experiences of intimate partner violence and its impacts on them and their children/dependents guides these housing design solutions and is why we use the term "violence- and trauma-informed" design. In this regard, involvement of the anti-violence sector and consultation with women with lived experiences of violence have been a critical part of developing this toolkit. Women with lived experiences informed the creation of this toolkit by identifying what is triggering or healing for them in their living spaces. Also, the critical lens that the anti-violence sector brings from their experiences of operating and building both temporary housing programs and long-term housing has been essential as they recognize the impacts of trauma and violence on women and their children/dependents. For example, women's experiences of male violence are often a reason why many women want to live in a women-only living environment in the short or even long term. Also, experiences of violence can result in women's enhanced needs for feelings of safety and security in their home environment and their need for supports from the community. Design ideas and strategies in this toolkit seek to improve feelings of housing safety, minimize the risk of conflicts between residents, break the isolation, and provide a healing environment where women and their children/dependents rebuild their sense of safety, dignity, empowerment, and control and overall improved well-being.



Figure 11: Cultural Room in the Elizabeth Fry's Amber House building, Prince George

## 2.2 Intersectional Design

Intersectionality (later redefined as intersectional feminism) is a term coined by American civil rights advocate, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in 1991, to describe intersecting social identities (e.g., gender, culture, ethnicity, ability, race, immigration status) and related systems of inequalities, oppression, and discrimination (Crenshaw, 1991; Sauer, 2018). Intersectional design recognizes that the many intersecting identities that individuals have, result in multiple sites of marginalization and oppression (Denicola et al., 2021). The WCD project recognizes the distinct ways these social identities intersect and influence women and children's unique housing needs and experiences. Therefore, engaging women with lived experiences was a key component of this project to capture their unique needs and the inequalities they may experience in housing. For example, gender, family size and composition are some of the important identities that impact the needs of women and their children. Also, being the primary caregiver to their children/dependents is the reality for many of women with lived experiences of violence. As a result, these roles and identities being reflected in the design of spaces becomes important. One of the examples of reflecting these identities and roles in spatial design is through providing **natural surveillance**/the ability to observe their small children playing in the playground while doing other tasks in their apartment unit.

These identities and needs require a gender-sensitive lens to space design. Design of built environment, including housing and neighbourhood public spaces, are gender-sensitive if they are inclusive and equitably meet the needs of different life phases and realities (City of Vienna, 2013). Therefore, a level of **flexibility and adaptability**<sup>7</sup> in the design and potential use of their

housing environments will be required in order to meet the needs of children and women at different life stages (Isthmus Group Ltd, 2018). Flexibility gives women and their children choice as to how they want to use spaces instead of architecturally predetermining their lives. Flexibility of housing spaces also benefits the housing providers in the long term by leading to less occupant turnovers and the ability to react quickly to changing needs of existing and potential future inhabitants with minimum costs (Schneider & Till, 2005).

Hierarchies and imbalances in housing unit spaces were caused by the design of housing based on the structure of a typical nuclear family with traditional distribution of roles between men and women (Montaner et al., 2019). Research shows that many gender-neutral housing and support services have been built upon the experiences and needs of cisgender men. As a result, there is a gap in many communities for adequate housing and services for women and gender diverse people (Milaney et al., 2020). The design approach offered in this toolkit recognizes the intersecting characteristics of the household including age and gender of children, family size, single parenting and acknowledging the varied roles that women play in the family and home. Taking a gender-sensitive approach leads to designing housing that reflects these varied roles and responsibilities and creating more ease for women. It allows women and children to remain in their home and/or neighbourhood, instead of moving out, during different stages of life, such as when children grow up, move out, or when women have their children living with them as a result of unification. When women have the choice of remaining in their housing and neighbourhood, it fosters a sense of community belonging and feelings of housing stability for them.

---

<sup>7</sup> According to Steven Groák (1992), flexibility is achieved by modifying the physical arrangements and form of the building to make it suitable and appropriate. Adaptability refers to using a space in a variety of ways for different social uses without making extreme physical changes (Schneider & Till, 2005). In the context of this toolkit, we do not differentiate these two concepts. We utilize them interchangeably and as the ability to modify a space for suitability and appropriateness for different uses with minimum need to technical resources and structural changes.

Flexibility and gender-sensitivity are two related concepts due to the evolution of housing in a society with a variety of different family structures as well as the demand for gender equality. Gender-sensitive housing minimizes hierarchical traditional design assumptions to mitigate the gender inequalities. A non-hierarchical home does not have rooms that are larger and have better qualities than other spaces (Montaner et al., 2019) but considers the families' actual priorities and life pattern in the design. Anti-violence stakeholders confirmed this in consultations contributing that more considerations need to be given to the ways that women with children live in the space.

Levels of flexibility in designing women-centred housing will enable personalization and utilization of space based on cultural and lifestyle preferences for households as well. If households are not allowed to customize their living spaces as per their own lifestyle and cultural needs, it can result in mental dissatisfaction that may lead to irritated and hopeless mentality (Rian & Sassone, 2012). Women with lived experiences of violence

and anti-violence professionals shared that cultural identity and lifestyle preferences are other important intersecting factors to reflect in the design of housing. Research shows that Indigenous and immigrant individuals are more likely to live in intergenerational families due to their family size but also because of the economic and social benefits of living communally (e.g., more affordable, care for children and seniors, connection) (Butler et al., 2017; Labahn & Salama, 2018). Housing spaces that recognize the importance of culture and cultural needs and practices help families to feel a sense of dignity and belonging. It also empowers them by giving them choice to personalize their living spaces based on their lifestyle preferences which is a vital component of violence- and trauma-informed design.



***There is too much focus on the bedroom as the sanctuary and shared amenity room as the main place to socialize. But there needs to be enough space in the living room area within the unit that can accommodate children's indoor plays and socializing within the family. Distribution of spaces in all the housing units based on a large primary bedroom, a small second bedroom, and small living room do not necessarily work for everyone. Instead, there should be diversity in the types of units and a right balance between unit design size and common spaces.***

**- Anti-violence stakeholder**

### 3. Women-Centred Housing Design: Principles

The Toolkit's main design principles for women-centred long-term housing were guided by consultations with women with lived experience and housing and anti-violence professionals. Our research and findings conclude that housing spaces for women and their children/dependents after violence should:

- 01.** reflect safety and security in design;
- 02.** allow for convenience and efficient use of space and easy access to services (e.g., childcare, transportation, food resources);
- 03.** incorporate homelike features and access to natural/green spaces;
- 04.** provide and, bring comfort;
- 05.** be accompanied by support services and spaces for community building.

These principles and their corresponding strategies and actions meet the psychological, spiritual, and material needs of women and children and reflect the two core foundations of women-centred design discussed above (i.e., Violence- and trauma-informed, Intersectionality). Figure 12 shows the main principles and corresponding strategies of women-centred housing design and its core foundations. This model also shows the contextual and external factors that impact feasibility and applicability of the design ideas which are explained in [Section 6](#) of this toolkit.



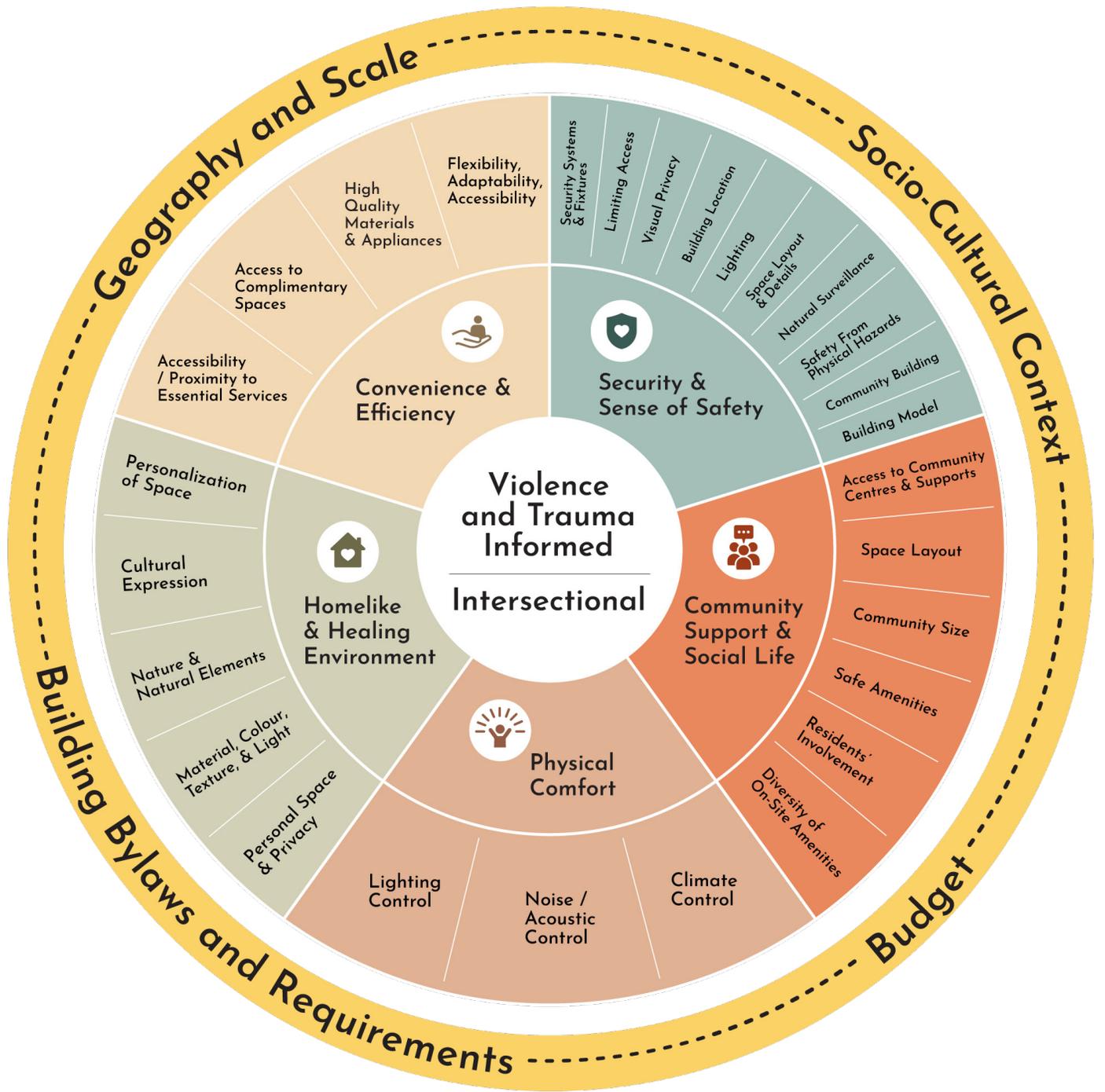


Figure 12: Women Centred Housing Design Model

### 3.1 Women-Centred Housing Design: Spatial Scale

The principles, strategies, and actions in the toolkit can be applied to a variety of housing including small buildings, townhouses, and multi-unit housing (e.g., low-, medium-, and high-rise). Users of the toolkit will be able to incorporate and adapt the toolkit elements to fit their housing projects.

The design ideas are offered in 3 spatial levels: in-unit, in-building (common area and amenities), and the way housing connects to its immediate neighbourhood (Figure 13). These scales highlight the importance of not only on-site space design which are private and semi-private territories, but also connection to the neighbourhood that relates to the site selection, evaluation and nearby services. The literature discusses these spatial scales as essential scales of housing design for women and children with experiences of violence and homelessness (Sprague, 1991; Vaccaro & Craig, 2020; Zinni, 2019).



Figure 13: Spatial scale of women-centred housing design recommendations

## 4. Women-Centred Housing Design: Principles, Strategies, & Actions





## 4.1 Security & Sense of Safety

According to our research and engagement, security and safety is the top priority and need in the design of long-term housing for women and their families with experiences of violence and homelessness (Akbarnejad et al., 2022; Denicola et al., 2021; Vaccaro & Craig, 2020). For women and children fleeing violence, their home was often the locus of the violence. When women are rebuilding after past experiences of trauma, housing precarity often results in a compromise between affordability and safety when accessing long-term housing. Suitable long-term housing for women is a safe permanent place where residents are free from fear of abuse and where they have the freedom to choose and control who they want to welcome to their homes (Donnelly et al., 2022). Moreover, security from physical hazards is another aspect of feelings and experiences of safety for women and their children/dependents as the main residents of this housing. Because women are often the primary caregivers to small children, care-dependent adults and older adults (Statistics Canada, 2022). Reducing the physical dangers in the space provides a safer and more accessible environment for all family members.

**The strategies and related actions in this section seek to achieve security and an improved sense of safety for women and their children/dependents in their housing. These strategies provide a range and layer of security options and recommendations from where the housing is located to building entry to private units.**

# Design Strategies

## Security System & 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.

## 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.

## Visual Privacy

Using elements of design for visual privacy enhances control and privacy of the building and units. When implementing these actions, enhanced privacy should not lead to increased hiding spots.

## 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.

## Lighting

Natural and artificial lighting in areas that get dark, improves clarity and wayfinding and as a result, one's sense of safety.

## Space Layout & Details

The way the spaces are arranged and where they are located in the building, and their dimensions impact feelings of safety.

## 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.

## 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.

## 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.

## Safety from Physical Hazards

Many women have small children and are the 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.

---

***(For me) home became the last safe space on earth (while experiencing violence), instead of being a site for restoration and safety!... It is so important for housing to be a safe haven.***

**- Woman with lived experience**

---

# Principle: Security & Sense of Safety

## Security System & 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.

### Unit

- Door deadbolt (CMHC, 2019a; Donnelly et al., 2022).
- Door peephole (CMHC, 2019a).

### Common Area

- Panic buttons in common area's hallway.
- 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.
- Smart doorbells with video.
- Secure intercom system with door and elevator access control.
- Intercom without the unit's numbers and residents' names to protect women's anonymity.

## 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.

### Unit

- Preferably do not allocate first floor units that are adjacent to public spaces to women and children with experiences of violence.

### Common Area

- Allocate spaces that face and are at street level to shared indoor spaces.
- Limit the number of entrances to the building to control security. One main entrance and one emergency exit were considered as safe options.
- Allocate shared outdoor space on upper floors.
- Underground storage/storage room in the building should only be accessed by residents.
- Gated parking.
- Neutral meeting space for visitor meetings (e.g., RCMP, social workers, and ex-partner) with an outside door with no access to the building.
- Gated buildings, fenced space around building and metal gate that protects ground level units without feeling institutional (permeable gates).
- In buildings with mixed tenants, dedicate one level to women and children with no amenity or common space on that floor.
- 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.
- Fire exit stair should only open onto ground level (locked towards other levels).

# Principle: Security & Sense of Safety

## Visual Privacy

Using elements of design for visual privacy enhances control and privacy of the building and units. When implementing these actions, enhanced privacy should not lead to increased hiding spots.

### Unit

- Window blinds to control privacy.

### 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.
- Reduce glass in the lobby for more privacy of who lives in the building.
- Entry vestibule (i.e., buffer).
- Internalize more of the glass to inner courtyards (Zinni, 2019).

## 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.

### Connection with Neighbourhood

- Housing should be located in safe areas and away from major streets.
- For women living in remote and rural communities, consider housing with neighbours in close proximity (BC Society of Transition Houses, 2015).

## Lighting

Natural and artificial lighting in areas that get dark, improves clarity and wayfinding and as a result, one's sense of safety.

### 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.
- Stairway and hallways should have substantial lighting/cut-out windows (Grabowska et al., 2021). See Figure 14.
- Appropriate lighting around and outside of the property and in the shared areas (e.g., stairways, parking lots, postbox room, garbage area).

# Principle: Security & Sense of Safety

## Space Layout & Details

The way the spaces are arranged and where they are located in the building, and their dimensions impact feelings of safety.

### Common Area

- Quick route to the outside (City of Toronto, 2022).
- 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.
- Clearly organized car park with direct access, without long corridors or overly complex gate setups (City of Vienna, 2013, p. 88).
- Conveniently located garbage collection area, accessible from units by a short and clear-cut route (City of Vienna, 2013, p. 89).
- 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).
- Shared laundry should be located in the middle of hallways and in a central location in the building.
- Ensure that any shared washrooms are gender-inclusive for gender-diverse people. Use signs for clarity and inclusivity.

## 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.

### Unit & Common Area

- Units that overlook outdoor play areas support mothers to keep an eye on their children.
- Internal courtyard facing the units with access to safe children play area facilitates natural surveillance.

### 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).
- 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.
- 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.
- Amenity spaces should be located close to the staff office.
- Minimize hiding and blind spots in hallways and entrances and ensure clear sightlines.
- Outdoor parking spaces should be visible to residents/on-site staff (i.e., eyes on the streets).
- Mailroom should not be located in enclosed rooms with walls on all sides.

# Principle: Security & Sense of Safety

## Common Area Cont.

- Hard floor material near doors to signal that someone is near (Grabowska et al., 2021).
- Shared laundry room should have a window to the outside of the room.
- 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.

## 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.

### Unit & 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).
- **Housing co-operatives** provide a safe environment due to the cooperative management by residents.
- **Multiplex** 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).
- Non-segregated women/family only housing. **Integrated housing** was perceived as safer by some women.

### 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.
- Form of the building should not draw unnecessary attention and housing should be blended with the existing neighbourhood (Zinni, 2019).

## 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.

- Please refer to "**Community Support and Social Life**" Section for strategies and actions to enhance community connections through design.

# Principle: Security & Sense of Safety

## 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.

### Unit

- Bars on the windows that do not feel institutional.
- Kitchen with a view into the living-room area to watch kids while doing household chores/working.
- Having the locks on the doors out of the reach of small children.
- Built-in childproofing on kitchen/bathroom cupboards drawers, etc.
- 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).
- Retractable built-in baby gate for kitchen.
- Built-in shelves out of reach of small children.
- Windows which open at the top are safer for children. Consider accessibility challenges for people with disabilities.
- Safe balcony (e.g., Juliet balcony for safety of windows).
- Temperature control on hot water.
- For families with small children and people with disabilities, units with all rooms on the same floor are preferable (e.g., duplex not preferred).
- If women with small children live in duplex or loft units, ensure safe stair design.
- Non-slip flooring in the bathrooms (Donnelly et al., 2022).

### Common Area

- Outdoor play areas should be separated from parking areas.
- When car parking occurs adjacent to communal amenity spaces, install visually permeable fencing between the two spaces (Isthmus Group Ltd, 2018).
- 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).
- 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.

---



Figure 14: Cut-out windows and substantial light in the shared stairways of YWCA Cause We Care building



## 4.2 Convenience & Efficiency

Convenient access to services and efficient use of space cultivates peace of mind for women and their children, reduces stress and saves time and money for mothers with children, many of whom may be a lone-parent/caregiver. Access to services and resources should be reflected in design of both in-unit spaces and common areas and the immediate neighbourhood. The goal of this principle is to enhance women's autonomy, ensure spaces are being designed to their full potential and for the women and their family's different life stages and needs. Appliances and materials are allocated for longevity, safety, accessibility, and cleanliness, and decisions of housing locations are made with factors of access and proximity in mind.

## Design Strategies

### Access (proximity) to Essential Services

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).

### 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.

### Flexibility, Adaptability, & 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 NOS 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 place**.

### High Quality Material & Appliances

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

---

***There are only 2 closets for us all (me and my 3 children). I have to keep my toddler's clothes in 2 drawers! And my older kids get annoyed (with) their clothes getting mixed up as the closet is so small.***

**- Woman with lived experience**

---

# Principle: Convenience & Efficiency

## Access (proximity) to Essential Services

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).

### Unit

- **childcare:** Having units large enough to accommodate a family/private day-care in the building.
- **child/healthcare:** Caregiver studio units in the building so that those in need of consistent care can have their caregiver close by.

### Common Area

- **food services:** Tuck shop or other essentials available on-site/in close proximity for easy access.
- **transportation:** Provide space for car share programs on-site (e.g., [Modo](#)).
- **transportation:** Provide affordable and secure on-site parking.
- **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.
- **transportation:** Transit board (e.g., live transit times/time table) to provide updated information of the transportation options available nearby.
- **transportation:** Provide bike repair space in the building.

### Connection to Neighbourhood

- **food services:** Walkable affordable grocery options.
- **childcare/school:** Proximity to affordable childcare and school.
- **transportation:** Access to bus stop.
- **transportation:** Access to bike path.
- **transportation:** [Bike share program](#) close to the building (e.g., [Mobi by Shaw Go](#)).
- **transportation:** Community bikes in the neighbourhood to offer free bikes to those in need.
- **transportation:** Provide affordable housing in transit-oriented areas.
- **transportation:** Shuttle services.
- **transportation:** Support safer/larger/better lit bus stops.
- **transportation:** Prioritize active transportation design (e.g., walkable and bikeable neighbourhoods).
- **transportation:** Pedestrian calmed streets and safe access between schools/childcare and housing.
- Mixed-use building development.
- **parks and recreation:** Walkable parks and green space.

# Principle: Convenience & Efficiency

## 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.

### Unit

- Ample cupboards in the kitchen.
- Consider full height wardrobe and cupboard doors, or shelving, to maximize vertical storage space (Isthmus Group Ltd, 2018).
- Built-in shelves for toys and books.
- Storage space for stroller, mobility aids in the entrance of units.
- Storage room/closet for kids' accessories.
- Storage/closet dedicated for vacuum cleaners, mops, buckets, and brooms (Donnelly et al., 2022).
- Space for coat and shoe storage at the unit entrance (Donnelly et al., 2022; Isthmus Group Ltd, 2018).
- Deep-freeze in units for households living in remote communities.
- Affordable rentable guest suites and space to have guests who stay for a while (in-law suites).
- Space to have in-home care for aging/elderly women (Vaccaro & Craig, 2020).

### Unit & Common Area

- Having a storage room in the unit and having a storage room for big items in the shared storage area in building.

### Common Area

- Access to private covered outdoor space.
- Bookable studio/workspace for women to use for work with access to computer, internet, etc.
- One to one unit to storage; Basement storage with accessibility considerations; Adaptable storage and bike storage in the parkade. See Figure 17.
- 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.
- Community pantry and shared meal spaces including food prep and food storage for community bulk buys.
- Study spaces on each floor (not one big room in the whole building).
- Emergency support hub for post-disaster (with food, air conditioning, backup power, communications).

# Principle: Convenience & Efficiency

## Flexibility, Adaptability, & 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 NOS 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 place.

### 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).
- Allocate some units for residents with pets and some units as non-pet-friendly for people who are allergic to pets or not interested.
- 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.
- Larger kitchen components for traditional food preparation (Butler et al., 2017).
- 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).
- 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).
- If in-unit laundry is not provided, allocate washer/dryer hookups in the units for future adaptation. See Figure 16.
- 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).
- Balconies as extension of indoor living space.
- Loft beds/murphy beds to provide floor space for playing.
- In-suite storage unit combined with laundry or flex space to be used for home office.
- 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.
- Allocating units on the lower levels to older adults and people with disabilities.
- 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).
- Enough room at the entrance for a stroller, wheelchair, and other mobility aids.
- 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.
- Detachable shower heads for washing while sitting down and for when carers need to aid showering (Donnelly et al., 2022).
- Built-in bench at the unit entry space.

# Principle: Convenience & Efficiency

## Unit & Common Area

- All shared washrooms should have taps kids can reach; no automatic flushing; no loud hand dryers.
- Adaptable furniture that has dual functions.
- Nook under the stairs.
- Moving walls/dividers to make more bedrooms, larger living or multifunctional spaces.
- Adaptable furniture that has dual functions.

## 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).
- Change tables in the shared washrooms.
- Utility sink in the shared rooms.
- Ensure washrooms are gender inclusive and accessible for small children and people with disabilities.
- 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](#).*

# Principle: Convenience & Efficiency

## High Quality Material & 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 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

- 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.
- Dishwasher in the units save women time and energy.
- 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).
- Provide built-in lighting in each room to prevent additional costs for women and their family.
- Provide child safe blinds to prevent additional costs.
- Bathroom with bathtubs to bathe small children.
- Provide materials and fixtures that reduces damage to the building (e.g., pre hanging system/ command strips, built-ins, removable tiles).
- Use low-cost and energy efficient heating systems to keep bills low.

### Unit & Common Area

- Shoe dryers for large family units.
- 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.
- Shared laundry provides opportunity for multiple laundry units at the same time which can save time when women need to do multiple loads.
- If women and children in a housing project come directly from emergency shelters, provide a space for a “[heat treatment room](#)” 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](#)). See Figure 15.

Figure 15: Heat Treatment Room in YWCA Cause We Care building for shared use



Figure 16: Washer/dryer hookups in YWCA Pacific Spirit Terrace apartment unit for future adaptation

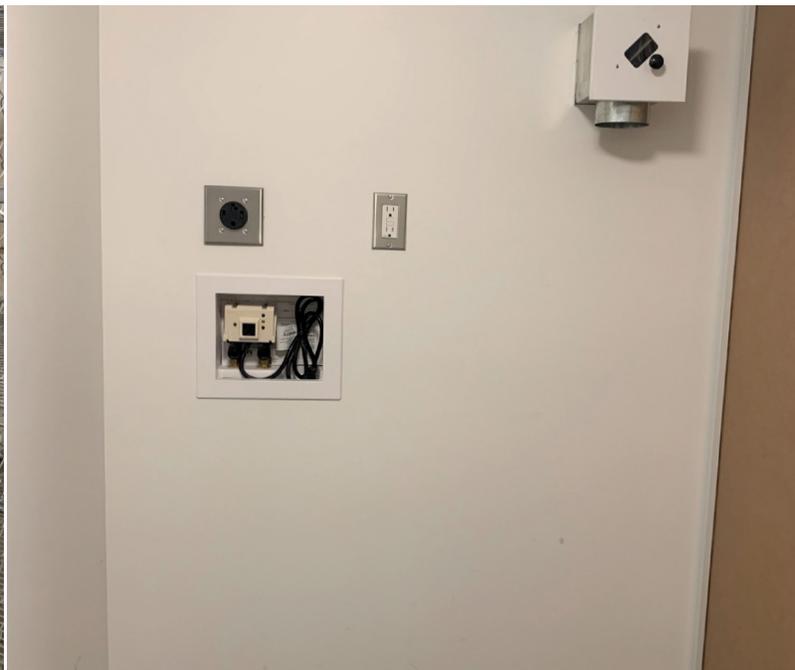


Figure 17: Shared storage room for bikes with lockable storage options. YWCA Pacific Spirit Terrace building



### 4.3 Homelike & Healing Environment

Women-centred housing is a warm, welcoming, and joyful environment, that feels non-institutional and a place where women and their children experience a sense of belonging, with control over their space allowing them to express their identity and culture in their home. Women and their children after fleeing violence need to regain their sense of empowerment, dignity, and belonging which often were taken away from them in their past violent home environment. Spatial design that enables personalization, access to private and personal space, cultural expression, connection to nature/natural elements, and a welcoming and warm ambiance using joyful colours, materials, texture, and lighting will support healing and sense of home.

# Design Strategies

## 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.

## 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.

## Nature & 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.

## 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.

## Personal Space & 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.



Figure 18: Children's Play Room, YWCA Cause We Care site

---

***Access to nature is a form of therapy. Women who have experienced violence are grappling with many emotions and challenges that makes access to nature in the place that you live very important (i.e., court yard, roof top gardens). It is so important to be able to focus on a distraction like growing vegetables to give life perspective.***

**- Woman with lived experience**

---

# Principle: Homelike & Healing Environment

## 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.

### Unit

- Built-in shelves for plants, frames, etc. inside the unit.
- Identifiable front door (e.g., different door/doorframe colours).

### Unit & 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.

### Common Area

- Allow for art works on the walls in the hallways and other shared spaces to avoid institutional feelings of plain walls.

## 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.

### Common Area

- On-site garden to support cultural/medicinal plants.
- Outdoor space to accommodate cultural activities (e.g., sweat lodge or fire ceremony) (CMHC, 2019a).
- Allow for [smudging](#) using a safety protocol. Please see an [example of a Smudging Protocol in this resource by McMaster University](#).

## Nature & 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.

### 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.
- 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).

# Principle: Homelike & Healing Environment

## 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.

### Unit & 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).
- 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 overstimulating for some people. Also, avoid large areas of white wall to prevent institutional feelings.
- Too many warm colours result in hot tempered psychological state whereas too many dull colours triggers depression and anxiety (Rian & Sassone, 2012).
- Cozy, warm, and natural materials (e.g., wood).
- Textured material to stimulate visual curiosity. Avoid too much complexity in the texture of materials as they may be overstimulating.
- Warm lighting for a welcoming environment.

*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.***

# Principle: Homelike & Healing Environment

## Personal Space & 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.
- Duplexes work well for a woman with older children and multigenerational families by providing personal space for them.
- Control over visual connection.
- Built-in niche/nook/alcove for escape in both the shared spaces and in the units.
- Spaces to store personal and confidential paperwork (e.g., legal documents) that can be locked and out of reach of children.
- When the units are on the courtyard level, divide it from the shared space using panels for more privacy.

### Unit & 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”).
- Units’ front doors can be recessed in a niche to provide a feeling of privacy.
- 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.



*Figure 19: Garden beds on the shared rooftop garden at YWCA Pacific Spirit Terrace building for the use of residents*



## 4.4 Physical Comfort

Physical comfort of a space allows for physical relaxation without environmental concerns and triggers. Multiple factors impact the level of comfort that residents experience in their housing (e.g., noise, lighting, environmental and climate conditions). These factors impact the health and well-being of residents significantly. They can undermine a sense of safety and lead to health complications, especially for people with experiences of trauma, older adults, children, and other vulnerable people. However, many of these factors can be addressed through design and providing control to women and their children/dependents so that they can adjust aspects of their environment to meet their own needs. Women-centred housing provides safety, comfort and control for women and their children by enabling them to make decisions about their physical environment.

## Design Strategies

### 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.

### 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.

### 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.



Figure 20: Temperature control in the unit, My Sister's Place, Prince George

---

***There is a lot of mold ... in my basement, risking (my) children's and my own health. I have cleaned it multiple times but it persists and gets worse each time.***

**- Woman with lived experience**

---

# Principle: Physical Comfort

## 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.

### Unit

- Entry doors should be acoustically sealed to help reduce noise ingress into unit (Donnelly et al., 2022).
- Prevent noise transmission from the kitchen and living areas between units (Donnelly et al., 2022).

### Unit & Common Area

- Wood and natural fibers/fabric for absorbing sound (Grabowska et al., 2021).

### Common Area

- Acoustic considerations in the shared amenity adjacent to apartment units.
- When retrofitting an existing building, plant more trees and fences to increase soundproofing outside noise.
- Textured walls and floors to absorb sound (Grabowska et al., 2021).
- Carpeted stairs for soundproofing (Grabowska et al., 2021).

## 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.

### Unit

- Control over natural light using black out windows/blinds for bedrooms for light control and to support good sleep patterns.
- 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.
- Provide task lighting in the kitchen for working areas, like benchtops, in addition to overhead lighting (Donnelly et al., 2022).

### Unit & Common Area

- Ample natural lights in units and common spaces. In north facing units, ensure allocation of larger windows.
- 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.
- Provide pergolas, shade sails, or mobile screens to control direct sunlight and reduce heat load in adjacent indoor spaces (Donnelly et al., 2022).

# Principle: Physical Comfort

## Common Area

- Shaded outdoor play space. See Figure 21.

## 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.

### Unit

- In-unit cooling/AC for hot seasons and heat waves.
- Provide units with good ventilation and natural lights for mould mitigation (Butler et al., 2017; Donnelly et al., 2022).

### Unit & Common Area

- Thermostats in each room to keep the temperature comfortable at all times (it also saves energy). See Figure 20.

### Common Area

- Water spray system for heat waves in the courtyard/rooftop garden.
- Communal rooms should have good ventilation (City of Vienna, 2013, p. 89).
- Provide covered outdoor space for use in rain and snow. See Figure 21.



Figure 21: Covered outdoor space and gazebo in My Sister's Place, Prince George to use in rain, snow, and shade in sunny weather



## 4.5 Community Support & Social Life

Although independent living is the goal of designing long-term housing for women and their children/dependents, access to on-site supports and services has been identified as beneficial. Also, having access to different semi-private semi-public spaces and amenities create opportunities to connect with others with similar experiences, and support children of different ages. Such gathering spaces and supports reduce the social isolation that women may experience after fleeing violence particularly as they may be also moving out of communal living of Transition and/or Second Stage housing programs with support services (Akbarnejad et al., 2022; CMHC, 2019a; Vaccaro & Craig, 2020; Zinni, 2019).

Having the option and choice to make connections with other members of their housing community was one factor that women identified as helping them to heal from past trauma. Women's perceptions of safety are fostered in a building where connections can happen organically for women and their children and that allow for integration within the community. The balance between sense of safety and connections with others is a vital aspect of women-centred housing and in this regard, community size has been identified as an important consideration.

# Design Strategies

## Diversity of On-Site Amenities (e.g., Size, Function, Softness, Furniture)

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.

## Residents' Involvement

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.

## Safe Amenities

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.

## Community Size

Research suggests there is an optimal community size that has the potential for enhanced sense of community and safety.

## 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.

## Access To Community Centers & Supports

Women stated that having support nearby in proximity of their housing provides them with the choice to reach out when they need to.

---

***I found when being surrounded with women who had gotten away, I felt more welcomed, there was an understanding, and so much more support. Without the empowerment from others, I wouldn't have fought so hard. Socializing with survivors is such an important part of moving forward... maybe not for everyone but it was important to me.***

**- Woman with lived experience**

---

# Principle: Physical Comfort

## Diversity of On-Site Amenities (e.g., Size, Function, Softness, Furniture)

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.

### Common Area

- Large shared living room; playroom/game room to share after school care.
- Party room to enable affordable birthday parties.
- Volunteer space for sharing skills and empowering women.
- Shared kitchen/communal cooking; Lounge/amenity room with a full kitchen.
- Courtyard/rooftop garden.
- Spaces to support artwork, hot-desking, yoga, and other activities.
- 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.
- Benches and picnic tables and a variety of seating options for different group sizes and activities.
- Provide both built-in (fixed) furniture for dual uses (storage) and free standing seating options (Donnelly et al., 2022).
- Space for older children (pre-teens and teens) to be active (e.g., basketball, skateboarding in the complex).

## Residents' Involvement

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.

### 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).
- Shared library/tool library builds community. For example, provide built-in shelving in shared spaces to enable book sharing among neighbours.
- Chalkboard walls for messaging among residents.
- Community pantry and shared food space.
- 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).

## Safe Amenities

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.

Please refer to "[Security and Sense of Safety](#)" Section to learn the strategies and actions for designing safe and secure spaces.

# Principle: Physical Comfort

## Community Size

Research suggests there is an optimal community size that has the potential for enhanced sense of community and safety.

### Unit

- Community in block/buildings of more than approx. 30 units may become anonymous, and hinder social control (City of Vienna, 2013, p. 88).
- Comparing 6-storey multiplexes to high-rise towers, a sense of community and safety is better achieved in a multiplex (City of Toronto, 2022).

### Common Area

- 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.).

## Space Layout

Involvement of women and children in shaping the shared spaces of their buildings provides a sense of 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.

### Unit

- Visual connections between the kitchen and living/dining area allows for socializing between family members while carrying out different tasks.

### Common Area

- Amenity space next to the shared laundry where people can hangout, watch children play for connections and usability at the same time.
- Amenity spaces that open into shared courtyard.
- 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.
- Allocate space for on-site staff near shared amenity or next to the entrance.
- Communal space should be centrally located and accessible to all residents (Donnelly, et al., 2022).

## Access to Community Centers & Supports

Women stated that having support nearby in proximity of their housing provides them with the choice to reach out when they need to.

### Common Area

- Allocate space for on-site staff to promote a sense of community building and support when needed.

### 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.

Figure 22: Shared amenity room in YWCA Cause We Care building



Figure 23: Shared communal space in YWCA Pacific Spirit Terrace building

## 5. Annotated Spaces & Floor Plans

In this part of the WCD toolkit we present some indicative design and annotated floor plans and drawings. Annotated photos of some of the existing housing for women and their children/dependents operated and/or developed by BCSTH members are also provided. These annotated floor plan drawings and images aim to provide tangible design actions and visual inspirations related to the design principles and strategies of women-centred housing introduced in the previous sections. Floor plan drawings provide some measurements and dimensions of the space. While getting inspiration from these images and floorplans, Toolkit users are expected to consider their contextual needs and factors to design housing spaces that best meet the unique needs of their communities.

The photos of units and common areas are from the YWCA Metro Vancouver housing sites, including the YWCA Cause We Care and the YWCA Pacific Spirit Terrace housing projects as well as the Prince George and District Elizabeth Fry housing projects including My Sister's Place housing site.

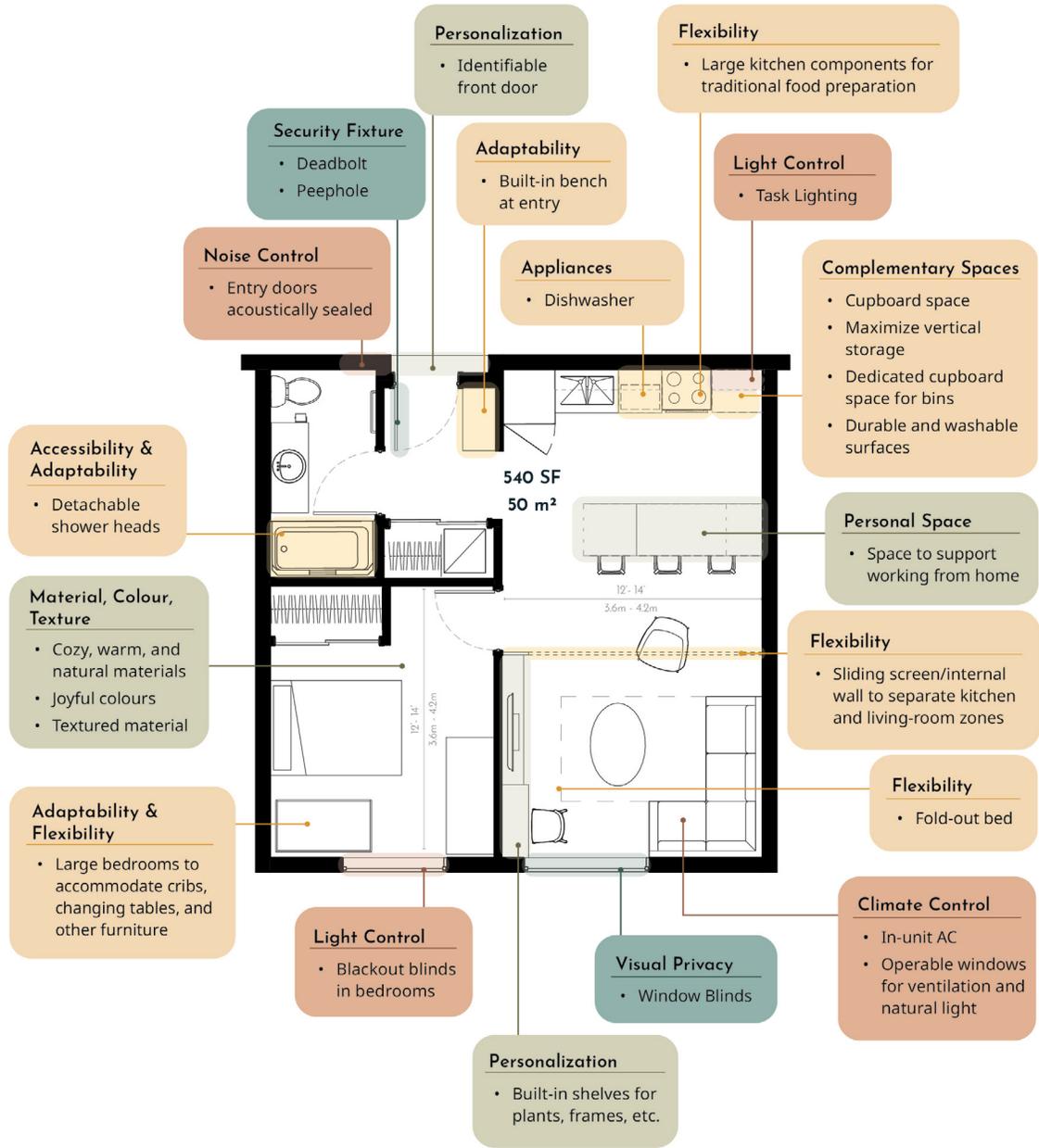
**My Sister's Place** is a community with 3 different levels of housing and supports in proximity to each other. My Sister's Place consists of 18 bed Transition House - Amber House, Second Stage Housing (studio, 2- and 3-bedroom units) and 21 townhomes of long-term housing (1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom units) using a women-led tenancy lens.

**YWCA Cause We Care House** is located above the Strathcona VPL library in Vancouver and provides 21 rent geared to income units (2-, 3- and 4-bedroom) to single mothers with dependant children. The building also consist of an outdoor play area for younger children, a BBQ and a small community garden, an amenity room with computer access and communal kitchen space and a playroom with toys for children, a bike storage, shared laundry room, and heat treatment room. In-unit laundry capabilities through built-in washer/dryer hookup are installed in the apartment units.

**YWCA Pacific Spirit Terrace** is located in Vancouver and above a fire hall. It provides 16 below-market units (2- and 3-bedroom) and 15 rent geared to income units, to single mothers with dependant children. The building also includes an outdoor play area for younger children, a small communal garden, an amenity room, bike storage, and shared laundry room. In-unit laundry capabilities through built-in washer/dryer hookup are installed in the apartment units for future adaptation.



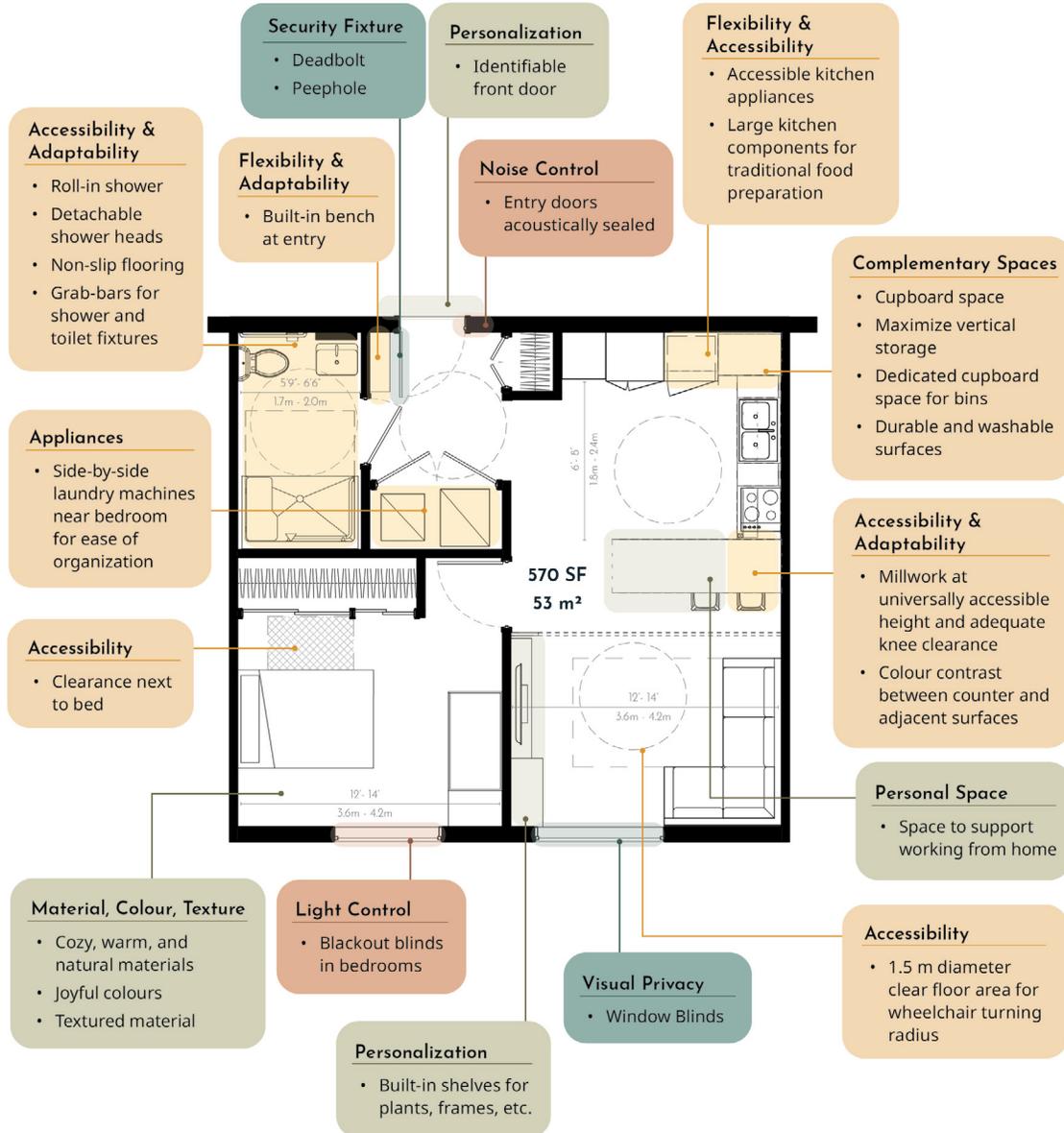
# 5.1 Housing Units



- Security & Sense of Safety
- Convenience & Efficiency
- Homelike & Healing Environment
- Physical Comfort
- Community Support & Social Life

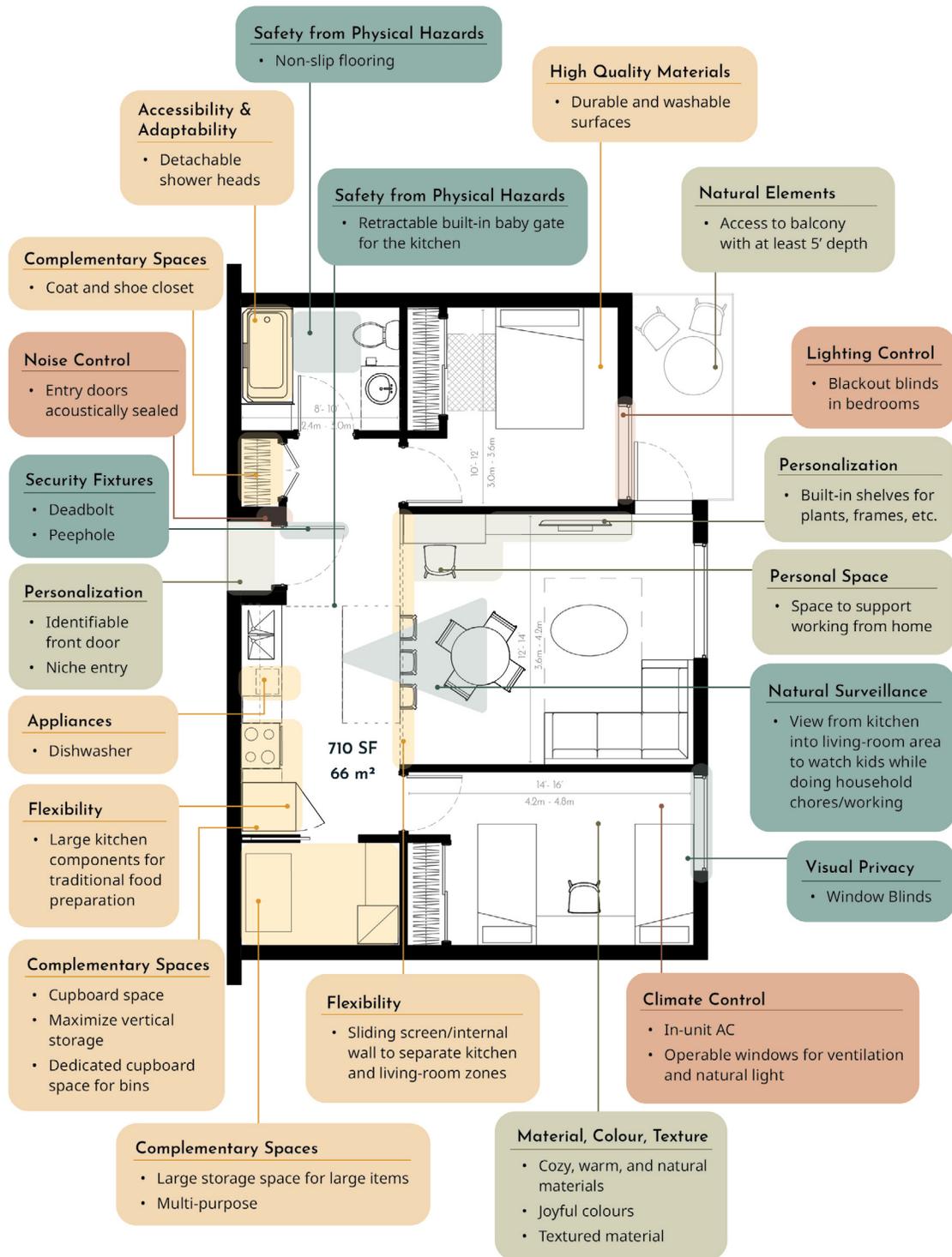
**Indicative Floor Plan:** 1-bedroom with flexible spaces – Total area: 540 SF / 50 m<sup>2</sup>

*Annotated Floor Plan Created by Human Studio*



**Indicative Floor Plan:** Accessible 1-bedroom with flexible spaces – Total area: 570 SF / 53 m<sup>2</sup>

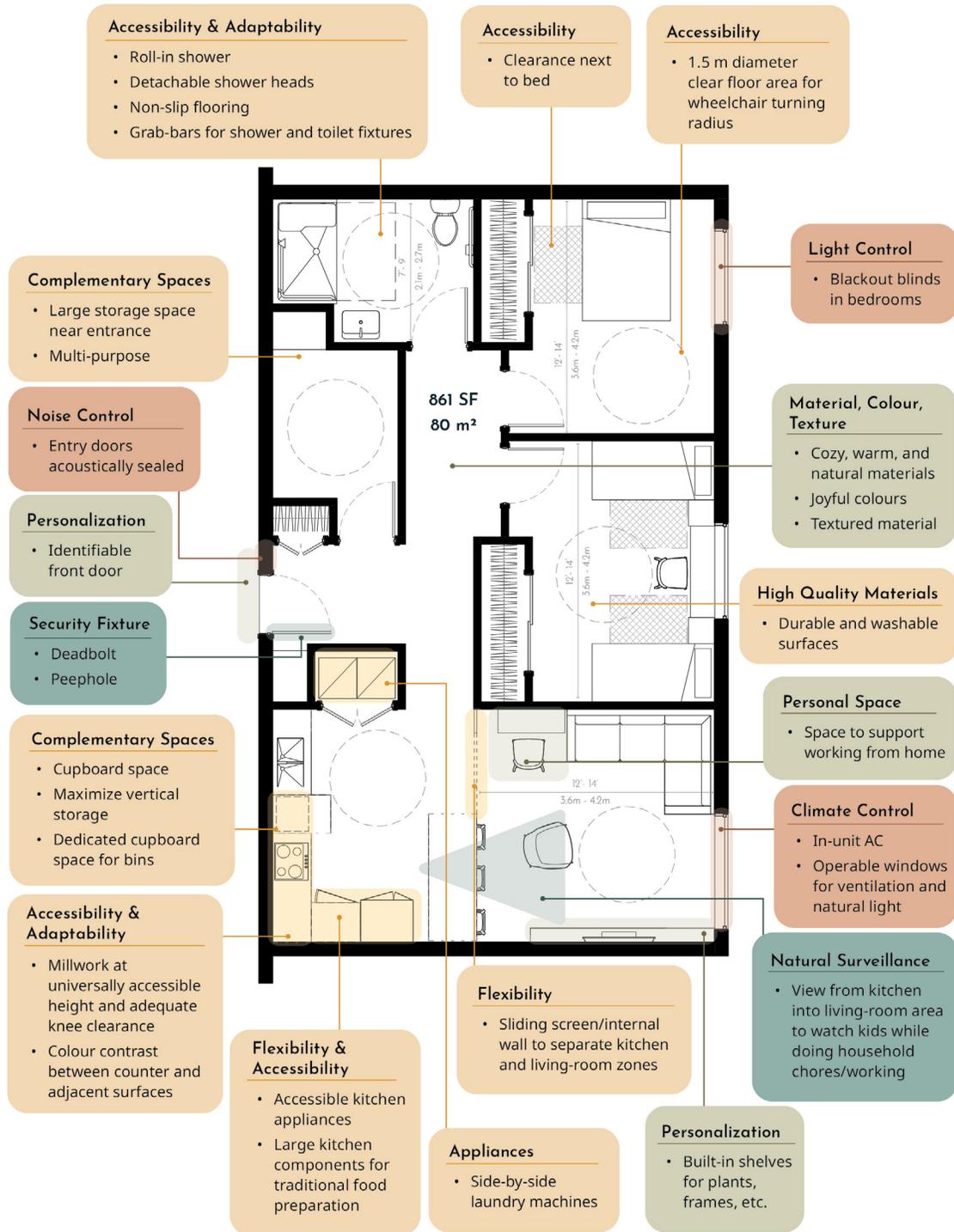
Annotated Floor Plan Created by Human Studio



- Security & Sense of Safety
- Convenience & Efficiency
- Homelike & Healing Environment
- Physical Comfort
- Community Support & Social Life

**Indicative Floor Plan:** 2-bedroom with flexible spaces – Total area: 710 SF / 66 m<sup>2</sup>

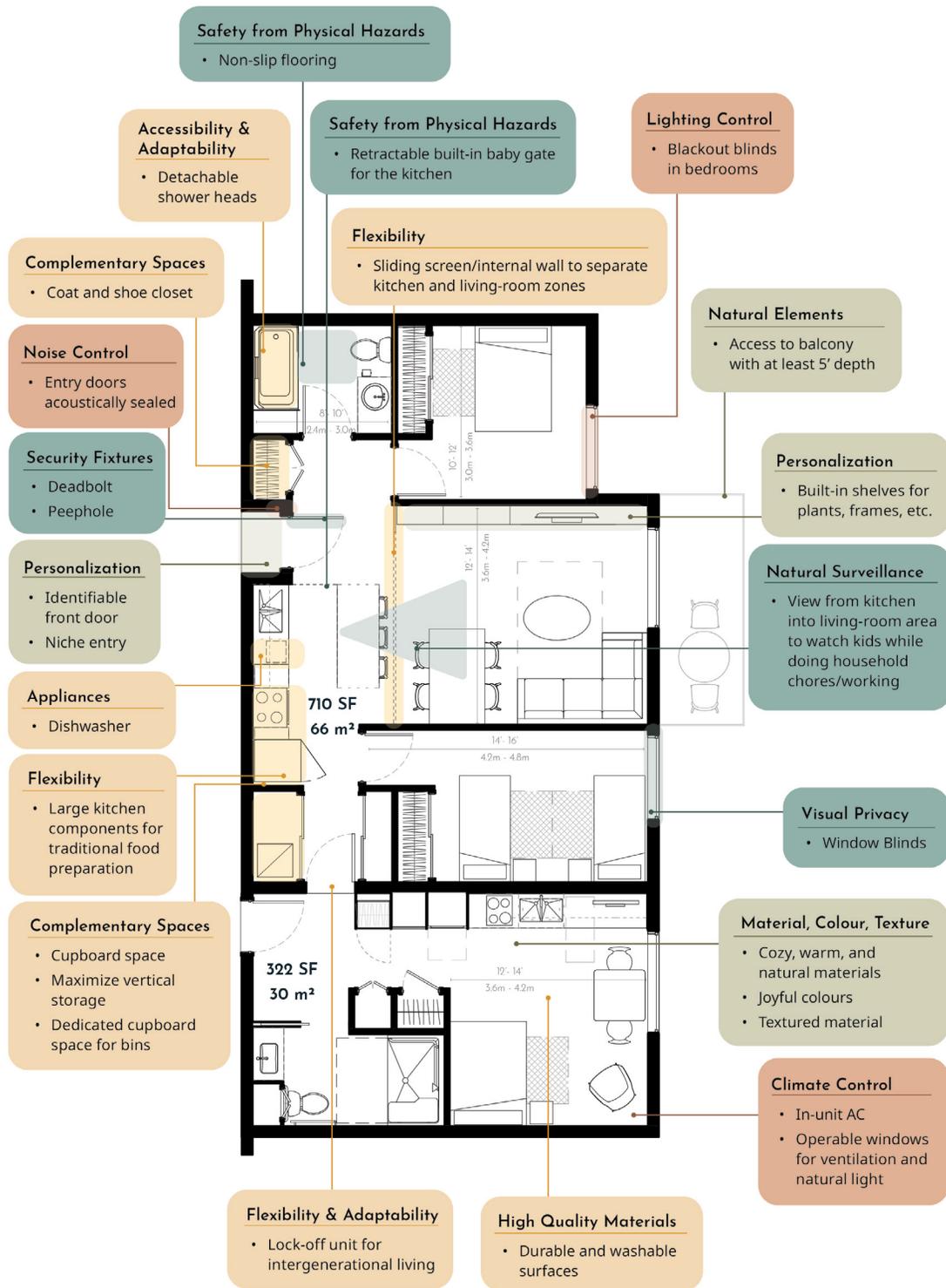
*Annotated Floor Plan Created by Human Studio*



- Security & Sense of Safety
- Convenience & Efficiency
- Homelike & Healing Environment
- Physical Comfort
- Community Support & Social Life

**Indicative Floor Plan:** Accessible 2-bedroom with flexible spaces – Total area: 861 SF / 80 m<sup>2</sup>

*Annotated Floor Plan Created by Human Studio*



- Security & Sense of Safety
- Convenience & Efficiency
- Homelike & Healing Environment
- Physical Comfort
- Community Support & Social Life

**Indicative Floor Plan:** 2-bedroom with flexible spaces and studio lock-off unit – Total area: 861 SF / 80 m<sup>2</sup>

*Annotated Floor Plan Created by Human Studio*



- Security & Sense of Safety
- Convenience & Efficiency
- Homelike & Healing Environment
- Physical Comfort
- Community Support & Social Life

**Indicative Space:** Unit door from the building hallway – YWCA Cause We Care

*Image by BCSTH*

**Flexibility and Accessibility**

- Sliding door to save space



 Security & Sense of Safety

 Convenience & Efficiency

 Homelike & Healing Environment

 Physical Comfort

 Community Support & Social Life

---

**Indicative Space:** Accessible washroom, Prince George and District Elizabeth Fry, townhome in My Sister's Place

*Image by BCSTH*

**Accessibility & Adaptability**

- Low barrier shower
- Detachable shower heads



**Safety from Physical Hazards**

- Non-slip flooring

**Accessibility & Adaptability**

- Grab-bars for shower and toilet fixtures

**Security & Sense of Safety**

**Convenience & Efficiency**

**Homelike & Healing Environment**

**Physical Comfort**

**Community Support & Social Life**

**Indicative Space:** Accessible washroom and shower, Prince George and District Elizabeth Fry, townhome in My Sister's Place

*Image by BCSTH*

**Accessibility & Adaptability**

- Grab-bars for shower and toilet fixtures



Security & Sense of Safety



Convenience & Efficiency



Homelike & Healing Environment



Physical Comfort

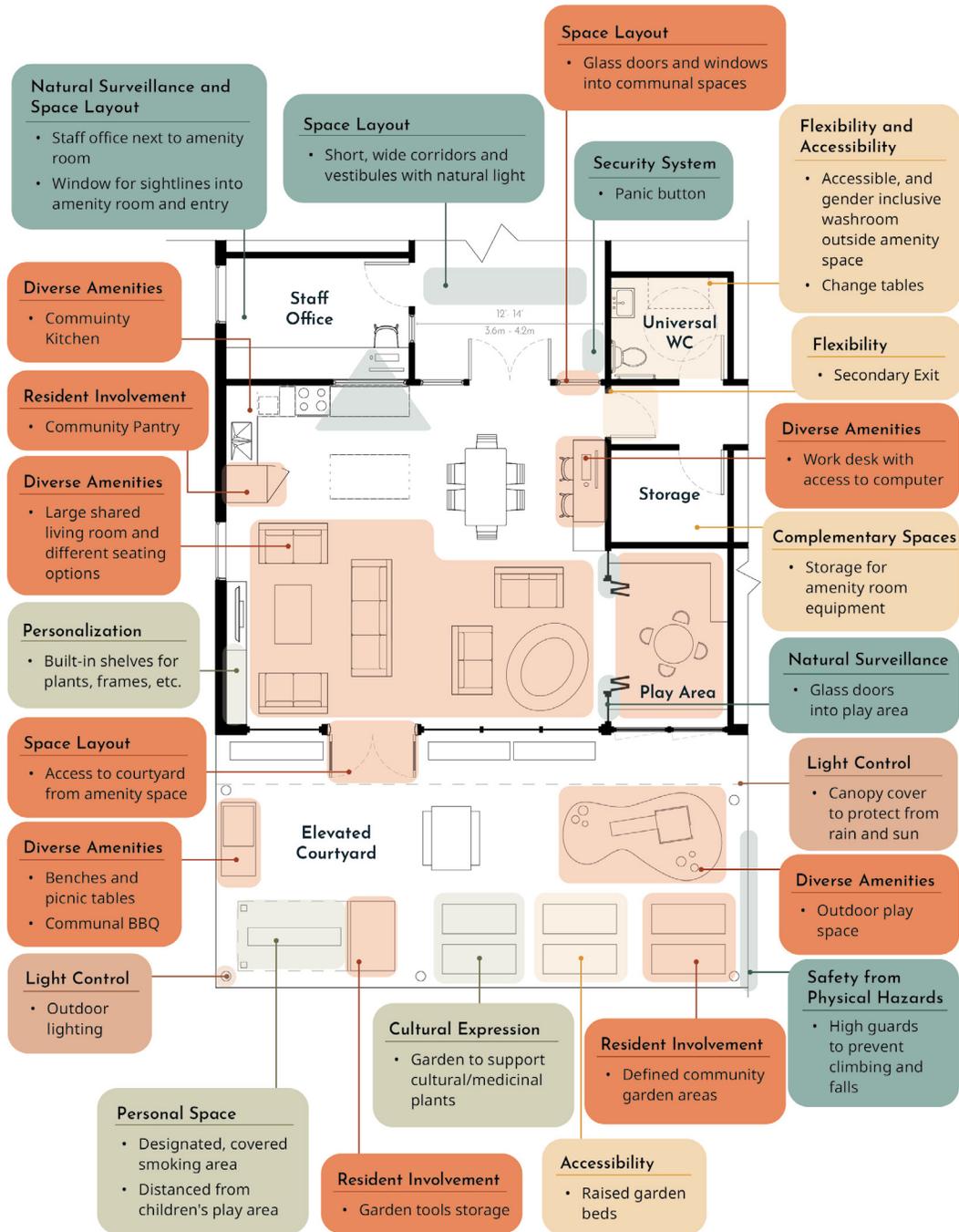


Community Support & Social Life

**Indicative Space:** Accessible washroom, Prince George and District Elizabeth Fry, townhome in My Sister's Place

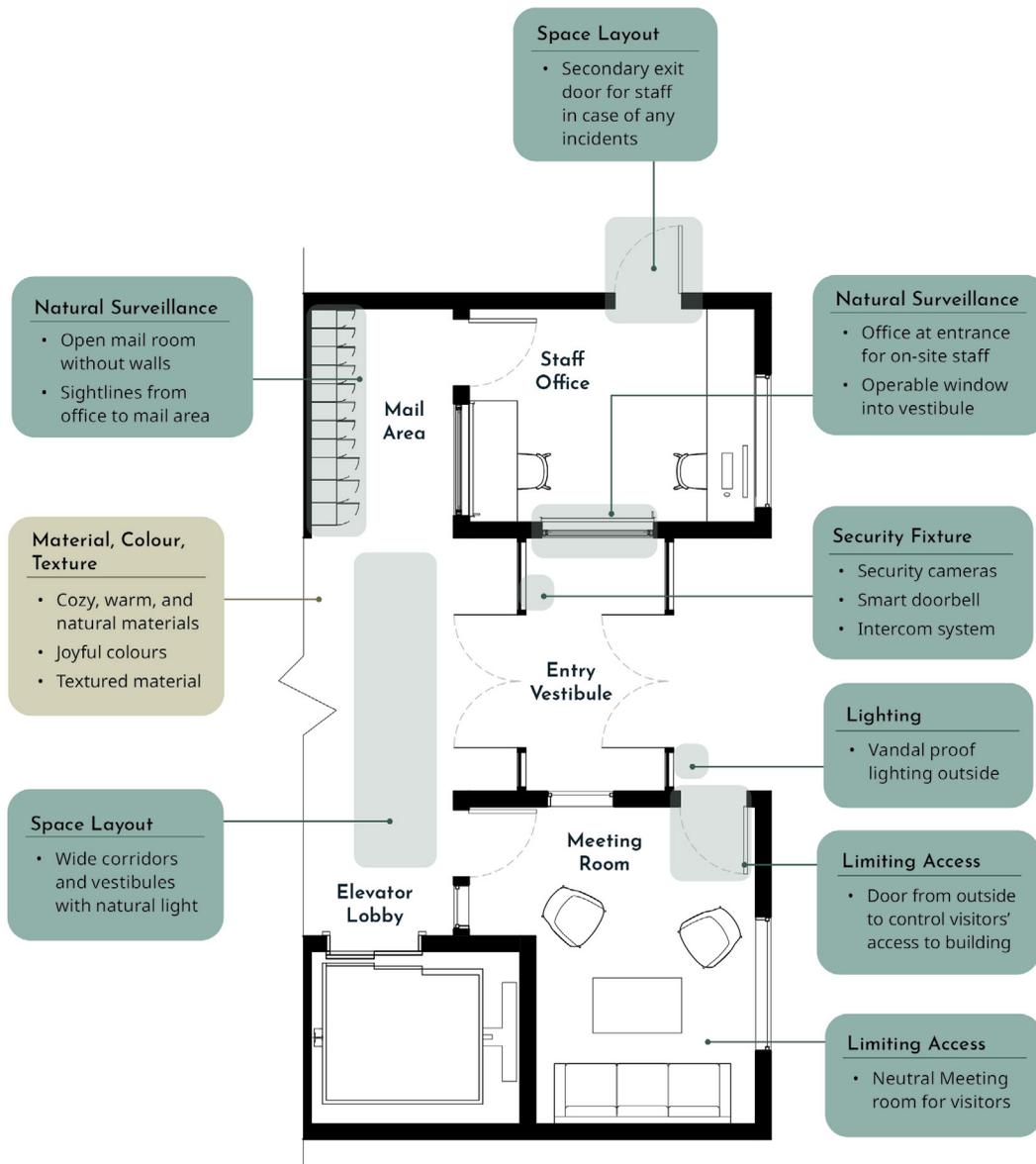
Image by BCSTH

## 5.2 Housing Common Area



### Indicative Floor Plan: Amenity room and rooftop garden

Annotated Floor Plan Created by Human Studio



- Security & Sense of Safety
- Convenience & Efficiency
- Homelike & Healing Environment
- Physical Comfort
- Community Support & Social Life

## Indicative Floor Plan: Building entry

Annotated Floor Plan Created by Human Studio

**Natural Surveillance and Space Layout**

- Staff office next to amenity room
- Window for sightlines into amenity room and entry

**Flexibility**

- Secondary exit from amenity room



**Material, Colour, Texture**

- Cozy, warm, and natural materials
- Joyful colours
- Textured material

**Diverse Amenities**

- Large shared living room and different seating options

**Security & Sense of Safety**

**Convenience & Efficiency**

**Homelike & Healing Environment**

**Physical Comfort**

**Community Support & Social Life**

**Indicative Space:** Amenity room – YWCA Cause We Care

*Image by YWCA*



**Natural Surveillance**

- Glass doors into play area allows mothers to keep an eye on their children while attending other events or meetings in the shared space

**Diverse Amenities**

- Indoor play space for children with chalkboard walls, toys, and child-friendly furnitures and materials

**Diverse Amenities**

- Community Kitchen

**Material, Colour, Texture**

- Cozy, warm, and natural materials
- Joyful colours
- Textured material

**Security & Sense of Safety**

**Convenience & Efficiency**

**Homelike & Healing Environment**

**Physical Comfort**

**Community Support & Social Life**

**Indicative Space:** Amenity room – YWCA Cause We Care

*Image by YWCA*

**Personal Space & Privacy**

- Dividing panels for the units on the courtyard level for more privacy

**Resident Involvement**

- Defined community garden areas

**Safety from Physical Hazards**

- High guards to prevent climbing and falls



**Diverse Amenities**

- Seating options such as benches and picnic tables



Security & Sense of Safety



Convenience & Efficiency



Homelike & Healing Environment



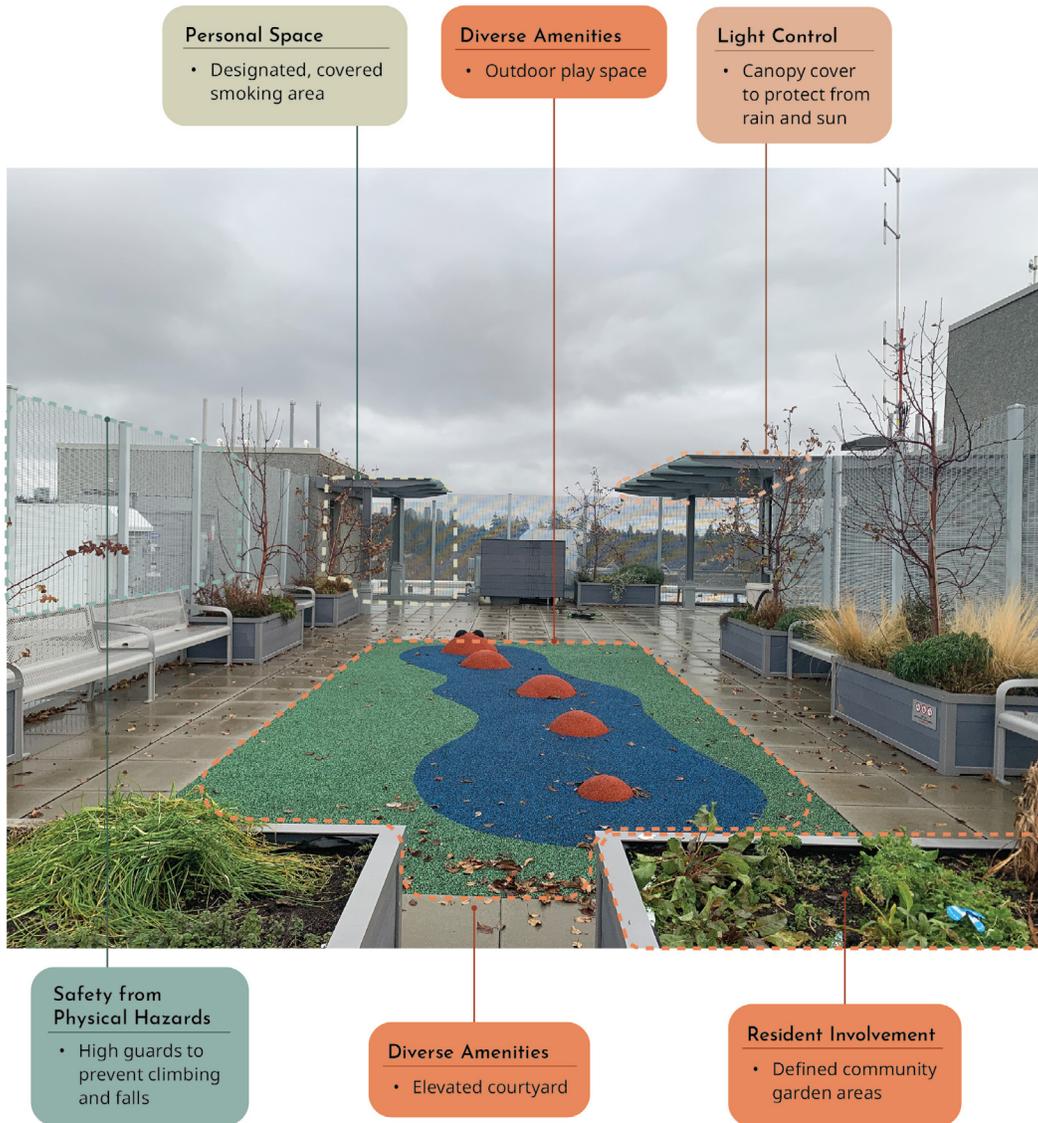
Physical Comfort



Community Support & Social Life

**Indicative Space:** Rooftop garden – YWCA Cause We Care

Image by YWCA



**Personal Space**

- Designated, covered smoking area

**Diverse Amenities**

- Outdoor play space

**Light Control**

- Canopy cover to protect from rain and sun

**Safety from Physical Hazards**

- High guards to prevent climbing and falls

**Diverse Amenities**

- Elevated courtyard

**Resident Involvement**

- Defined community garden areas



**Security & Sense of Safety**



**Convenience & Efficiency**



**Homelike & Healing Environment**



**Physical Comfort**



**Community Support & Social Life**

**Indicative Space:** Rooftop garden – YWCA Pacific Spirit Terrace

*Image by YWCA*

### Space Layout

- Glass doors and windows into communal spaces so people can see who is in there, what is happening, and can decide whether they want to join



### Flexibility

- Secondary exit from amenity room

### Complementary Spaces

- Storage next to shared amenity room to store equipment

Security & Sense of Safety

Convenience & Efficiency

Homelike & Healing Environment

Physical Comfort

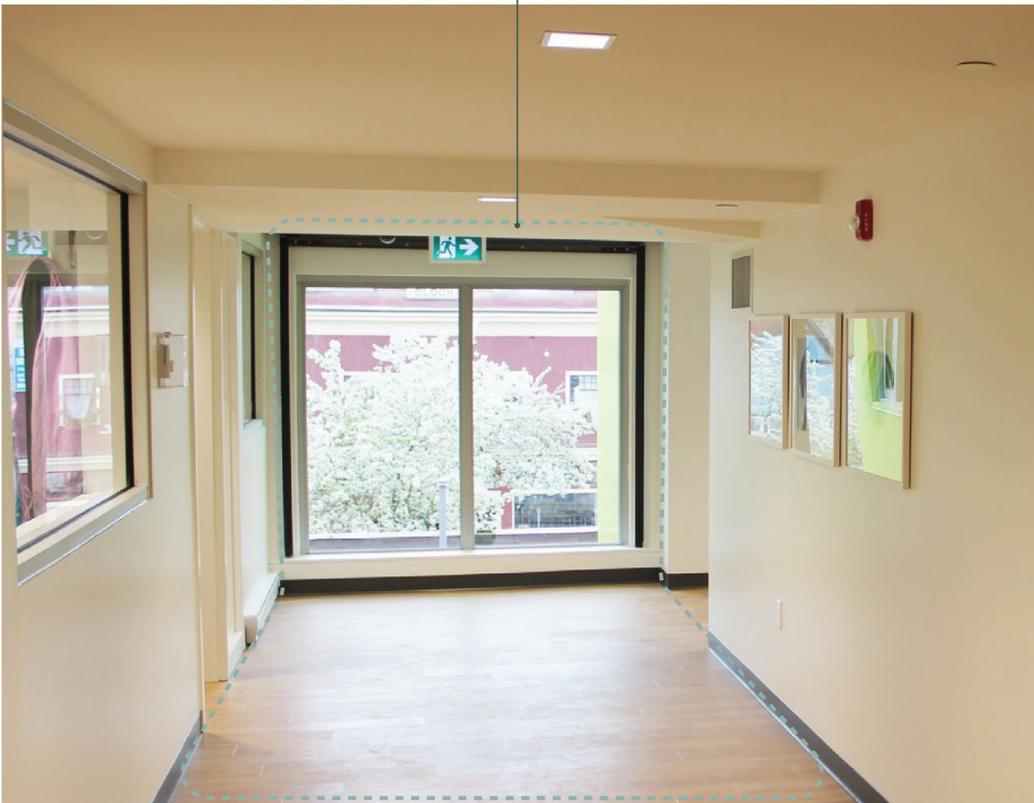
Community Support & Social Life

**Indicative Space:** Secondary entrance to the amenity room – YWCA Cause We Care

Image by BCSTH

#### Space Layout

- Short, wide corridors and vestibules with natural light
- Wide hallways feel more spacious and allow for increased sense of safety. They also provide more space for two strollers to pass by each other



Security & Sense of Safety

Convenience & Efficiency

Homelike & Healing Environment

Physical Comfort

Community Support & Social Life

**Indicative Space:** Hallway – YWCA Cause We Care

*Image by YWCA*

## 6. Feasibility & Applicability

**This project identified some contextual and external factors which may impact the feasibility and applicability of implementing the women-centred design strategies and actions. These factors also contribute to customizing the strategies offered in the toolkit by housing providers, developers, and designers according to what is most appropriate and applicable in each housing project context. These factors include geography and scale, budget, building bylaws and requirements, and socio-cultural context. Housing providers and professionals need to adapt the design strategies based on these considerations. The Toolkit also provides recommendations to funding organizations and municipal and provincial bodies on how to support the implementation of strategies that support women-centred housing.**

### Geography & Scale

Implementing the women-centred housing principles and strategies varies according to geography and scale of the communities. The regional differences in adopting the suitable design strategies are impacted by environmental factors such as climate (e.g., long winter season), topography of the area, and environmental and natural disaster risks (e.g., flood, wildfire). Differences in adopting women-centred housing design strategies are also impacted by the size of the community and housing types, and the regions' access to human resources (e.g., fewer contractors, skilled labourers in rural and remote communities). Some members in rural and remote communities shared that they faced challenges hiring contractors which resulted in extending the time of development, and also the ability to maintain and sustain some of the installed housing infrastructure (e.g., smart building systems) due to lack of locally skilled laborers to maintain them. Furthermore, a lack of transportation options (e.g., public transportation, car share programs) in proximity of housing projects in rural and northern communities limits the ability of housing providers to locate housing projects in areas that have easy access to resources. As a result, design actions

(e.g., related to this strategy – for example, Access/proximity to essential services) becomes beyond the housing providers' power and need to be addressed by local governments. An example of this approach is the [BCSTH Transportation Project](#) focused on embedding a Gender-Based Approach in Northern and Rural Transportation Systems

### Socio-Cultural Context

Socio-cultural factors (e.g., lifestyle, demographics) may vary in each community, which impact the relevance of various housing design strategies in each community and the way they get adopted and integrated into the final housing design. Intersecting identity factors (e.g., values, demographic characteristics) and the lived experiences will define preferences and practices in each community. As a result, reflecting them in the adoption of design strategies will contribute to more suitable and culturally appropriate women-centred housing. For example, housing projects intended to house Indigenous women and children requires design strategies and spaces to support cultural safety and their cultural practices and needs. An example of this approach is the Cultural Safety Project by the [Aboriginal Housing Management Association \(AHMA\)](#).

### Budget

Members and housing professionals shared that the ability to implement women-centred design principles in their housing projects is significantly impacted by budget constraints and access to development funding. For example, incorporating security systems which may enhance a women's sense of safety, may not be in the original budget and potentially represent a significant cost increase. BCSTH members reflected that they had to forego design elements that achieved home-like qualities in order to cover the primary costs of development. Limited funding and cost increases have been major reasons that the final housing designs vary from the women-centred housing design they had originally envisioned. In addition, site selection is another barrier in developing

affordable housing for women and their children as locations with easy access to resources are often expensive and beyond the resources of the housing providers.

### **Building Bylaws & Requirements**

Some of the building design requirements and bylaws from provincial and municipal entities and funding agencies (e.g., CMHC, BC Housing) are not feasible in some communities. BCSTH members in rural and remote communities advised that they would have approached the design differently to meet the needs of women and their families, if design requirements and bylaws allowed.

## 6.1 Recommendations

**These recommendations are provided to support the implementation of women-centred design strategies and address the challenges identified in the Toolkit consultations.**

### **Funding availability**

Funding agencies and federal and provincial bodies (e.g., CMHC, BC Housing) that partner with member organizations and housing providers to develop women-centred housing should recognize the costs associated with integrating women-centred housing design principles. They should ensure that these costs are included in their funding formulas and consider the varied needs and challenges of certain communities, such as the extra costs associated with construction in rural and remote communities compared to urban areas.

### **Flexibility in design requirements**

Funders and provincial bodies should engage with housing providers and BCSTH members in order to develop women-centred housing and be flexible and responsive in design priorities, allowing members to identify the essential elements as well as those that are not violence- and trauma-informed in their housing projects.

### **Reflecting women-centred design principles and strategies in the family housing guidelines**

Provincial and municipal organizations who provide requirements for the design of family housing should include the recommendations of women-centred housing design in their guidelines.

### **Engagement of women with lived experiences in housing design**

In order to meet the specific needs of the community, housing providers should engage women and children with lived experiences of violence in the process of designing and prioritize women-centred design strategies.

## 7. Recommended Design Guideline Resources

The following resources are a list of design guidelines and toolkits that we recommend for further readings. Many of these resources provide sets of design recommendations to inform designing and building housing through a gender-sensitive and trauma-informed approach.

---

**A Design Guide for Older Women's Housing (Donnelly et al., 2022):** Using research findings and insights, this guide provides design responses and recommendations to housing developers and designers to support the development and construction of quality, affordable housing for older women at risk of homelessness.

**Architectural Principles in the Service of Trauma-Informed Design (Grabowska et al., 2021):** This pamphlet focuses on the ways to design a building to support a therapeutic approach. It offers design principles towards trauma-informed architecture and presents annotated spaces and examples to visualize the principles.

**BC Housing Design Guidelines and Construction Standards (BC Housing, 2019):** This document provides standards and technical guidelines for the design and construction of new buildings, conversions and renovation projects funded and financed by BC Housing.

**BC Housing Design Guidelines For Women's Safe Homes, Transition Houses, Second Stage Housing, and Long-Term Rental Housing (BC Housing, 2021):** This guide includes design recommendations to assist development teams with the planning, and design processes for upgrading existing buildings or constructing new buildings that are to be used for the women safe homes, transition houses, second stage housing and long-term rental housing.

**Designing for Healing, Dignity, & Joy. Promoting Physical Health, Mental Health, and Well-Being Through a Trauma-Informed Approach to Design (Shopworks Architecture et al., 2020):** This document offers a framework for trauma-informed design practice and process to promote healing, dignity, and joy in housing and offers examples to demonstrate the values of trauma-informed housing design.

**HLC Design Guidelines Part 3, Module 3b: Children Living at Density (Isthmus Group Ltd, 2018):** This guideline offers design considerations related to ensuring the needs of children and their families are met in housing and neighbourhood developments.

**Manual for Gender Mainstreaming in Urban Planning and Urban Development (City of Vienna, 2013):** In Vienna, all housing projects that require public funding are examined through this guideline to ensure housing is suitable for women and everyday life. Chapter 8 of this guideline includes a list of criteria to evaluate the gender equity and suitability to meet every day needs of housing projects.



## 8. Conclusion

Violence is the leading cause of homelessness and housing precarity for women and their families in Canada (Schwan et al., 2021). Women and their children have to flee their homes to find safety and home is now equated with violence. The WCD project and Toolkit recognizes that long-term housing that meets the needs of women and children fleeing violence can restore a sense of safety, dignity and belonging. Through our collaborative efforts and dedication, home can become a sanctuary again for women and their dynamic and thriving lives and families. Using an intersectional and violence- and trauma-informed approach, the WCD Toolkit guides the efforts of the housing and anti-violence sectors, architects, and developers in designing and developing long-term housing with suitable and appropriate spaces and features for women and their children/dependents with experiences of violence.

## 9. References

- Akbarnejad, G., Godard, L., Ashlie, K., & FitzGerald, A. (2022). Women-Centred Housing Design Interim Project Report: Engaging women with lived experiences of violence and housing experts to explore design solution. BC Society of Transition Houses. <https://bcsth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/WCD-Interim-Report.pdf>
- Ashlie, K., Godard, L., FitzGerald, A., Akbarnejad, G., & Guardado, S. (2022). Keys to Home: Gaps Analysis Report. BC Society of Transition Houses. [https://bcsth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Keys-to-Home\\_Gaps-Analysis-Report.pdf](https://bcsth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Keys-to-Home_Gaps-Analysis-Report.pdf)
- Ashlie, K., Knowles, T., & FitzGerald, A. (2021). Getting Home Project: Overcoming barriers to housing after violence. BC Society of Transition Houses, 79.
- BC Housing. (n.d.-a). Glossary | BC Housing. Retrieved February 1, 2023, from <https://www.bchousing.org/glossary>
- BC Housing. (n.d.-b). National Occupancy Standards. Subsidized Housing. Retrieved August 16, 2022, from <https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/rental-housing/subsidized-housing>
- BC Society of Transition Houses. (2015). Accessing Stable and Safe Housing Guidebook. BC Society of Transition Houses. [https://bcsth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Accessing\\_Stable\\_and\\_Safe\\_Housing\\_Guidebook.pdf](https://bcsth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Accessing_Stable_and_Safe_Housing_Guidebook.pdf)
- Butler, A., Crane, E., Hogg, S., Maddison, T., & Smith, T. (2017). Making a House a Home: Indigenous Engagement and Housing Design in BC. SFU Masters of Public Policy. <https://www.bchousing.org/research-centre/library/indigenous-peoples/making-house-home-indigenous-engagement-and-housing>
- City of Toronto. (2022). EHON Roundtable—Session 3: Multiplexes. City of Toronto. <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/planning-studies-initiatives/expanding-housing-options/>
- City of Vancouver. (n.d.). Multiplexes | City of Vancouver. Retrieved January 10, 2023, from <https://vancouver.ca/people-programs/multiplexes.aspx>
- City of Vienna. (2013). Manual for Gender Mainstreaming in Urban Planning and Urban Development. Urban Development and Planning. <https://www.wien.gv.at/english/administration/gendermainstreaming/index.html>
- CMHC. (2018). Accessible Housing by Design – Exterior Spaces. <https://assets.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/sf/project/cmhc/pubsandreports/pdf/67572.pdf?rev=fc924d1d-4598-4c49-a506-c4fed4c4f246>
- CMHC. (2019a). What We Heard: The Unique Housing Needs of Women (p. 12). Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. <https://assets.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/sites/place-to-call-home/pdfs/women-engagement-sessions-en.pdf>
- CMHC. (2019b, August 14). Identifying Core Housing Need. <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/professionals/housing-markets-data-and-research/housing-research/core-housing-need/identifying-core-housing-need>
- CMHC. (2022). The National Housing Strategy Glossary of Common Terms. <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/nhs/guidepage-strategy/glossary>
- CMHC. (2023). Universal Design Guide for new MURBs | CMHC. <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/professionals/industry-innovation-and-leadership/industry-expertise/accessible-adaptable-housing/universal-design-new-multi-unit-residential-buildings>
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 61.
- Denicola, B., Corrigan, T., Froentjes, A., Le Fuentes, A., & Wu, K. (2021). Recommendations for designing supportive housing for women and gender-diverse individuals. Prepared by the McMaster Research Shop for Mary-Elizabeth Vaccaro and Jennie Vengris (McMaster School of Social Work). <https://macsphere.mcmaster.ca/bitstream/11375/26490/1/McMaster%20Research%20Shop%20Report%20-%20Splane.pdf>

Donnelly, S., Dyring, S., Kalms, N., & Stead, N. (2022). A design guide for older women's housing (p. 72). Monash University. [https://www.monash.edu/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0012/2879553/A-Design-Guide-for-Older-Womens-Housing.pdf](https://www.monash.edu/__data/assets/pdf_file/0012/2879553/A-Design-Guide-for-Older-Womens-Housing.pdf)

Gaetz, S., Barr, C., Friesen, A., Harris, B., Hill, C., Kovacs-Burns, K., Pauly, B., Pearce, B., Turner, B., & Marsolais, A. (2012). Canadian Definition of Homelessness. Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press. <https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/COHhomelesdefinition.pdf>

Grabowska, S., Holtzinger, C., Wilson, J., Rossbert, Rev. L., Macur, R., & Brisson, D. (2021). Architectural Principles In The Service Of Trauma Informed Design. Shopworks Architecture, Center for Housing and Homelessness Research at the University of Denver, and Group 14 Engineering. <https://shopworksarc.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Arc-Principles-in-the-Service-of-TID.pdf>

Happy Cities. (n.d.). Designed to Engage: Policy recommendations for promoting sociability in multi-family housing design. <https://admin.happycities.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Designed-to-Engage-report.pdf>

Hopper, E. K., Bassuk, E. L., & Olivet, J. (2010). Shelter from the Storm: Trauma-Informed Care in Homelessness Services Settings. 21. Isthmus Group Ltd. (2018). Module 3B: Living with Children at Density. HLC. <https://kaingaora.govt.nz/assets/Publications/Design-Guidelines/180730-HLC-AHPDG-Part-3-3b-Children-at-Density-REV-A2.pdf>

Labahn, S., & Salama, D. (2018). Beyond two persons per bedroom: Understanding the cultural variance of housing suitability in Canada.

Light, P., Sperry, D., Selcer, L., & Sargent, K. (2022). Trauma-Informed Design for Homeless Population. HOK. <https://www.hok.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/trauma-informed-design-for-homeless-populations-hok-high-resolution.pdf>

McMaster University. (2022). SMUDGING PROTOCOL for the Burning of Traditional and Sacred Medicines. McMaster University Equity and Inclusion Office. <https://miri.mcmaster.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/McMaster-Smudging-Protocol.pdf>

Milaney, K., Williams, N., Lockerbie, S. L., Dutton, D. J., & Hyshka, E. (2020). Recognizing and responding to women experiencing homelessness with gendered and trauma-informed care. *BMC Public Health*, 20(1), 397. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-020-8353-1>

Montaner, J., Pérez, L., Falagan, D., Paricio, A., Gigling, M., & Estudio, C. (2019). Flexibility and gender equality in housing. *Barcelona City Council Municipal Institute of Housing and Renovation*, 22. [https://www.habitatge.barcelona/sites/default/files/qh22-en-gb\\_web.pdf](https://www.habitatge.barcelona/sites/default/files/qh22-en-gb_web.pdf)

Newinhomes. (2019, July 29). All-female development team hosts women-focused design consultation for Reina Condos. Newinhomes. <https://www.newinhomes.com/blog/all-female-development-team-hosts-women-focused-design-consultation-for-reina-condos>

Rian, I., & Sassone, M. (2012). Flexible Housing, a Healthy Housing: A Brief Discussion about the Merits of Flexibility in Designing Healthy Accommodation. 2nd International Conference on 'Inhabiting the Future, p 1088. <https://doi.org/10.13140/2.1.3045.4722>

Sanders, E. B.-N., & Stappers, P. J. (2008). Co-creation and the new landscapes of design. *CoDesign*, 4(1), 5–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15710880701875068>

Sauer, B. (2018). Intersectionality. *Krisis (Amsterdam, Netherland : 2000)*, 2. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2291069552?parentSessionId=ayKkfaj%2BZZmDqJJS3q%2FkKc7WolwHvTajUsDimETPyjk%3D&pq-origsite=primo&accountid=13800>

Schneider, T., & Till, J. (2005). Flexible housing: Opportunities and limits. *Architectural Research Quarterly*, 9(2), 157–166. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135505000199>

Schwan, K., Vaccaro, M.-E., Reid, L., Ali, N., & Baig, K. (2021). The Pan-Canadian Women's Housing & Homelessness Survey. Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. <https://womenshomelessness.ca/wp-content/uploads/EN-Pan-Canadian-Womens-Housing-Homelessness-Survey-FINAL-28-Sept-2021.pdf>

Shopworks Architecture, Group 14 Engineering, & University of Denver Center for Housing and Homelessness Research. (2020). Designing for Healing, Dignity, & Joy. Promoting Physical Health, Mental Health, and Well-Being Through a Trauma-Informed Approach to Design. [https://shopworksarc.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Designing\\_Healing\\_Dignity.pdf](https://shopworksarc.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Designing_Healing_Dignity.pdf)

Sprague, J. (1991). *More Than Housing: Lifeboats for Women and Children*. Butterworth Architecture. [https://sfu-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo-explore/fulldisplay?vid=SFUL&search\\_scope=default\\_scope&tab=default\\_tab&query=any,contains,lifeboats%20for%20women&mfacet=rtype,include,book\\_chapters,1&mfacet=rtype,include,books,1&docid=01SFUL\\_ALMA21134722790003611&context=L&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine](https://sfu-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo-explore/fulldisplay?vid=SFUL&search_scope=default_scope&tab=default_tab&query=any,contains,lifeboats%20for%20women&mfacet=rtype,include,book_chapters,1&mfacet=rtype,include,books,1&docid=01SFUL_ALMA21134722790003611&context=L&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine)

Statistics Canada. (2022). The Daily—More than half of women provide care to children and care-dependent adults in Canada, 2022. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/221108/dq221108b-eng.htm>

United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. (n.d.). The human right to adequate housing | OHCHR. Retrieved February 1, 2023, from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-housing/human-right-adequate-housing>

Vaccaro, M., & Craig, J. (2020). Considerations for Permanent Housing: Ideas and perspectives of women and gender-diverse people experiencing complex homelessness. Women's Housing Planning Collaborative of Hamilton. <https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/Mary-Vaccaro-Considerations-for-Permanent-Housing-Ideas-and-perspectives-of-women-and-gender-diverse-people-experiencing-complex-homelessness.pdf>

Vancouver Bike Share. (n.d.). How it works | Vancouver Bike Share | Mobi. Retrieved February 13, 2023, from <https://www.mobibikes.ca/en/how-it-works>

Women and Gender Equality Canada. (2022). What is gender-based violence? - Women and Gender Equality Canada. <https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/gender-based-violence-knowledge-centre/about-gender-based-violence.html>

Zinni, M. (2019). On sanctuary: Architectural potentials for domestic violence shelters.