IT TAKES A VILLAGE

A comprehensive look into sheltering queer youth

By

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Abstract

Of the many hardships that LGBTQ2S youth experience, the biggest may be homelessness. Children flee their homes for many reasons, including mental health issues, discrimination, and conflicts with parents. Finding a supportive and inclusive space where they can explore their identity and feel protected can be difficult when there are few resources to meet their needs.

As a large proportion of homeless youth identifies as LGBTQ2S, this thesis envisions a consolidated set of facilities and services, coupled with a center that serves and galvanizes the broader queer community. The project explores inclusivity and visibility through the design of a combination community center and emergency shelter for queer youth in the heart of Ottawa's gay village – with an ancillary component that provides permanent supportive housing. Among other questions, this thesis explores how architecture can assist in creating spaces where all feel welcomed and safe and how it might facilitate community formation.

Frankie, 19

"My parents tried to ignore what they called 'my lifestyle' and pretended that it would go away. Growing up, I started to be more unapologetic with who I am. I wasn't hiding. So the tension at home just kept rising until one day my mom just exploded on me. She told me to leave and not come back.

"Being homeless is very scary. You have no security and you can only keep what you can hold in a bag or a suitcase. Money is also a problem. I did sex work for a few months. It was dangerous. I had a lot of encounters that were very bad, but I made money from it and I was able to buy food.

"Now I am lucky I don't have to do it because I have a stable housing and a job."

Hope will never
be silent

- Harvey Milk

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Merci milles fois

Prologue

Throughout this document, I will be using the acronym LGBTQ2S to signify the queer community. The long acronym meaning Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Pansexual, 2-Spirit, Androgynous and Asexual (LGBTQQIP2SAA) can be reduced in multiple ways. While different people and organizations use numerous permutations of this acronym, they all mean the same thing. During my research, I encountered numerous variations of this acronym like LGBTQ, LGBTQIA+, LGBTQ2S+, LGBTQ2S, but I chose this one because of the Canadian context. The term 2-spirit originates from the indigenous population, where one can identify as having both female and male spirits. Many of the sources on which I have drawn used different versions of the short form, but for the sake of consistency, we will refer to the queer community as LGBTQ2S.

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Introduction

In Ottawa, a handful of youth shelters accommodate only a few dozen homeless youth per night. 25 to 40%¹ of these individuals identify as LGBTQ2S and have trouble finding a safe and non-judgmental environment in which to shelter for the night. According to the Ottawa Mission, the City of Ottawa declared a homelessness emergency in early 2020 because all shelters were operating at capacity and couldn't meet the needs of the homeless population. In 2018, approximately eight thousand people were staying in shelters throughout the year². Young people tend to have a different relationship with homelessness³ than adults, i.e., the circumstances around leaving or losing one's home are distinct. The data on homeless youth is a bit harder to acquire because some leave their homes to stay with relatives, friends, and some decide to couch surf.

More specifically, for LGBTQ2S youth, there are even more factors that play into the need/decision to leave home. The act of coming out is challenging for many and can result in parental rejection, discrimination, depression, other mental health issues, and abuse. Multiple studies on youth homelessness have been undertaken in Canada, but information concerning the queer youth is lacking. While queer and trans youth often move to bigger cities like Toronto and Montreal because of their reputations as welcoming environments, this thesis envisions a similar feeling in Canada's capital city. Although Ottawa has made significant strides in the past few decades, its conservative history still shines through.

As a cisgender, heterosexual female, I have personally found that so-called gay villages, or more precisely the one in Montreal, are spaces where I can feel safe and in a non-judgmental environment. While my experience might differ from those who identify within the community, I would like to use this project to help make others feel the way I do. Besides personal, first-hand experience, I draw from the experiences of close friends and family to navigate this sensitive topic. These are the people who have inspired me to become a better ally and advocate on behalf of the queer community, whatever form it might take. With them in mind, I wanted to use my expertise as a designer to create a space – and by extension, a neighborhood, city, and world -- where LGBTQ2S people of all ages and dispositions can exist without fearing being who they are.

Youth homelessness in Canada

40.1%

of homeless youth were younger than 16 when they first experienced homelessness⁴

73.3%

of youth who left home before 16 reported involvement with child protection services⁷

75.9%

of youth had experienced multiple episodes of homelessness⁵

83%

report experiencing bullying at school either "sometimes" or "often"⁶

Located in the heart of Ottawa's gay village, the proposed facility – which combines a community center, an emergency shelter and permanent supportive housing -- is envisioned as a dedicated space for youth to congregate and find the help they require. The programming will concentrate on the prevention and early intervention of homelessness within the queer community. The name chosen for the project will be the Holmes Center, named after a long-time city councillor Diane Holmes. During her over 30-year tenure as councillor for the Somerset Ward, Councillor Holmes spearheaded efforts to create what we know now as the "Village" on Bank street. She prioritized housing, urban planning, community development, transportation, social services, women's issues, and social justice causes, all of which align with this project.

Figure 1: Village signs installed, Bank and Nepean Streets, Nov 2011, Mayor Jim Watson, Diane Holmes, Glenn Crawford - Source Ben Welland

Chapter 1

Queer History

1.1 Canadian Queer History

We often hear about the queer history of the United States, but Canada also has a rich and significant LGBTQ2S past. Although the country is now quite progressive with respect to LGBTQ2S rights, this was not always the case. In the late seventeenth century, homosexuality was deemed illegal, warranting the death penalty if an individual was caught. It was not until 1869 that the death penalty was revoked in favor of a prison life sentence.⁸ The mid- to late-20th-century saw a burst of activism and rights reforms, culminating in [Bill C-150](#) in 1968, which decriminalized homosexuality. We then begin to see the first gay protests in Ottawa and Vancouver and increased visibility for the community.

[Bill C-150](#)

In 1967, Liberal Federal Minister of Justice Pierre Elliott Trudeau wanted to adapt the Criminal Code to Canadian values. He tabled an omnibus bill containing a number of provisions that would decriminalize certain sexual practices (gross indecency, sodomy)¹²

Despite this progress, however, queer folk were not universally accepted and had to hide their sexual preferences or suffer significant discrimination. Between the 1950s and the '90s, the RCMP targeted bars and spaces frequented by LGBTQ people to gather information on public servants. The Cold War had stoked suspicion towards the queer community as they were deemed to be a security problem.⁹

There were also some crucial wins in this era, like the first-ever LGBTQ2S publication in North America produced in Montreal. *Les Moustaches Fantastiques* published its first five issues in Montreal before moving the publication to New York City in the 1920s. In 1988, Svend Robinson became the first federal member of parliament to come out during his time in office. Following Svend's coming out, several other politicians and public figures came out, including Glen Murray, Canada's first openly gay mayor, in Winnipeg, Manitoba. This paved the way for many more politicians to declare themselves including, most recently, Ottawa's long-time mayor Jim Watson, who came out in 2019.¹⁰

Canada was the fourth country in the world -- and the first outside of Europe -- to legalize same-sex marriage in 2005. Bill C-38 came into effect in July of 2005, allowing same-sex couples of all provinces and territories to marry.¹¹ Major efforts have also been made by provinces and different Members of Parliament to ban conversion therapy over the years, culminating in legislation passed in 2020 to criminalize conversion-therapy-related conduct in Canada.

Figure 2: Important dates timeline

Figure 3: Canadian Queer History

1.2 Queer History of the Capital Region

As Canada's capital, Ottawa is a conservative government city. First-hand accounts in *The Canadian War on Queers*¹³ describe Ottawa as a quiet city coming out of World War II, where being gay was not much of an issue. Queer folk would gather at well-known bars, including the one in the basement of the Lord Elgin hotel and Chez Henri in Hull. One resident described the Lord Elgin as "a place where self-accepting gay men could meet other self-accepting gay men. It wasn't like other taverns or bars where you had to hide who you were." Even so, patrons knew they were being spied upon by RCMP officers, often hidden behind newspapers. Perhaps the most notorious instrument of repression was the so-called fruit machine, which, in the words of an RCMP report, "could discover homosexual tendencies in applicants for government positions." A member of the community informed researchers "I knew of a machine.... It was almost like word association, a pictorial, like pictures and stuff like that...."¹⁴

Parks were also vital as they were cruising areas for gay men. By the mid-'50s, however, the police investigations had begun, and the RCMP routinely raided these gathering places. Lesbian social spaces were less conspicuous than those frequented by their male counterparts, but few existed, like the Coral Reef and Chez Henri. Sports clubs and house parties were important in the lesbian community as women would socialize with each other at these events.¹⁵

Figure 4: Hotel Chez Henri, Hull, P.Q., 12, Source: Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec

Figure 5: The Lord Elgin is pictured in 1973, Source: The Ottawa Citizen

Figure 6: Queer History in the Capital

1.3 Ottawa's Gay Village and Centertown

Ottawa's gay village is still in its infancy today, despite being officially recognized in 2011. The Village comprises the roughly 20-block area in Centertown bounded by Somerset, Gladstone, Bank and Elgin Streets. It is home to one gay bar, as well as multiple shops and restaurants. Unlike similar villages in other cities, which boast a concentration of LGBTQ2S businesses, businesses associated with the queer community are spread throughout Ottawa's downtown core, the Byward Market, Westboro, and the Glebe. The Village in Centertown is also the home to the annual pride festival that centers on Bank Street every August.

Centertown, a historic residential neighborhood within walking distance of parliament, is one of the oldest districts. The area still consists primarily of low-density housing and is rich in character.¹⁶ Bank and Elgin Streets, both commercial north/south streets, have played a significant role in Ottawa's LGBTQ2S history. Centertown is also the stage for the Capital Pride event each year. Ottawa's pride parade, which has grown in extravagance over the years, began in 1986 as a simple picnic in Sandy Hill's Strathcona Park. Over the next few years, it grew into a small parade culminating in a picnic. There have been many sites used throughout the city for Pride including, Lansdowne Park, the Jack Purcell Community Center, Victoria Island, Vincent Massey Park and, of course, Bank Street.¹⁷

Figure 7: Map of Centertown and Bank street

- — — — Bank Street
- — — — Centertown boundary

Figure 8: Vignette of Pride in front of Holmes Center

Endnotes, Chapter 1

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Chapter 2

Context, Case studies , and Method

2.1 Site - Bank street

The site chosen for the project is at 237 Bank Street in Ottawa. It sits at the southeast corner of Bank and Lisgar Streets, opposite Wallacks and the Bible House. The site is currently vacant, the building that occupied it having been demolished in 2014. Adjacent to the site is another vacant lot at 312 Lisgar Street that the project will incorporate as an outdoor garden and green buffer between the Soho apartment building to the east. The space behind 243 Bank street will be used as an easement connected to the south side of the building for egress purposes.

When I visited the site in September 2020, the area was surrounded by a chain-link fence and a beautiful mural on Bank street. The Bible House was handing out food to homeless people, many of whom were sitting down on the sidewalk eating. Further east on this block is the Dominion

Chalmers Centre, a repurposed church that now serves as classrooms and performance space for Carleton University. Closer to Somerset Street, two blocks south of Lisgar, the classic signs of a Village are noticeable: pride flags outside bars, rainbow crosswalks, and banners featuring notable figures in the Canadian queer community.

Three different sites were considered at the beginning of the project: the site of the Chez Henri bar in Old Hull, the Somerset House on Bank St. at Somerset, and 237 Bank St., the site on which I ultimately chose to work. Of the three sites, 237 Bank St. was the only one that was vacant. While the Somerset House is up for renovation – with the opportunity for an addition – it is an historically designated structure in Ontario and is part of the Centertown Heritage Conservation District.¹⁸ While this might have presented interesting opportunities, I felt it might exert too great an influence on the design process.

Chez Henri, now a Boston Pizza restaurant, is located at 179 Promenade du Portage in Old Hull (Gatineau, Quebec). This bar was important to the area as the province of Quebec was excluded from prohibition laws in the early '30s and was able to serve alcohol to guests. Chez Henri attracted all sorts of clientele and became a prominent hangout for queer people in the Capital region in the 1980s but closed its doors in the 1990s due to the “unsavoury characters” it attracted.¹⁹ Despite its historical significance to the community, it was ultimately rejected because of its location.

237 Bank fit the bill because it is centrally located within the Capital region -- easy to reach both on foot and by public transportation. Nearby facilities with programming geared toward the queer community include the Jack Purcell Community Center off Elgin St. and the Centertown Community Health Center on Cooper St.

The site has been the subject of a redevelopment proposal since 2014. The Joyce House project, designed by DCA Architects in Ottawa, is described as a “multi-unit condo-development that celebrates sophisticated living and adds a modern touch to the neighbourhood.”²⁰ While the project was expected to be completed by Spring of 2017, the site remains vacant. The property's owner, Arthur Loeb, received a permit to demolish the building that stood on the site back in 2014 to build a 6-storey structure. Following Traditional Mainstreet zoning, the ground floor was designed to accommodate street-oriented commercial and a small restaurant while the upper floors were residential. Plans for the Joyce House locate parking below grade, accessed by two vehicle elevators.²¹

Figure 9: Rendering for Joyce House by DCA Architects

Figure 10: Site photos from visit in September 2020

Figure 11: Site Map

2.2 Shelters in the Capital Region

As stated previously, 25 to 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ2S. According to Youth Without Shelter, a Toronto-based organization that combats youth homelessness across the country, there are about 40,000 homeless youth in Canada, approximately 6000 of which are looking for a place to stay on any given night. Of those 40,000, a third are from Ontario.²² In Ottawa, there are thirteen **shelters** operated by nine different providers, including the Shepherds of Good Hope, the Salvation Army, and the Youth Service Bureau. The city has five emergency shelters dedicated to serving youth that can house up to about 90 people between the ages of 16 and 21 each night. What is quite apparent from these statistics was that there are no dedicated shelters for people who identify as LGBTQ2S or which meet their specific needs.

Shelters

Shelters are defined as establishments providing temporary accommodation to individuals who are in immediate need of emergency accommodation and food, and may include ancillary health care, counselling and social support services.²³

Figure 12 identifies the shelters that are the closest to the DHCC site on Bank street. These include Cornerstone Housing for Women on O'Connor Street, which provides 62 beds for women in need, and Restoring Hope on Laurier Avenue, which serves youth between the ages of 16-24 and provides them with refuge for up to five nights a week. The Youth Service Bureau also operates shelters for young men and young women in the downtown core, the locations for which are kept confidential. The Salvation Army and the Shepherds of Good Hope, both of which are located in the Byward Market area, provide emergency shelter beds to adults .

Figure 12: Emergency Shelters in the Capital
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2.3 Why a shelter for Homeless Queer Youth?

Why should we consider another shelter in Ottawa? What is not working with existing shelters (e.g., capacity, cost, etc.) that might not be better addressed by programs like Housing First? Why a shelter for homeless queer youth? The answer is quite simple when we lay out the facts. While LGBTQ2S youth represent up to 40% of the **homeless youth** population, no shelters cater to them directly. Ottawa currently has approximately 90 beds reserved for people under the age of twenty-one. Typically, there are more male unhoused youth than females using shelters. Data in Ottawa suggests that 50% of youth shelter users are male, 44% female, and 6% other.

Homeless youth

refers to the situation and experience of young people between the ages of 13 and 24 who are living independently of parents and/or caregivers, but do not have the means or ability to acquire a stable, safe or consistent residence.”²⁶

2018 data indicates that there were 794 homeless youth living on the streets and accessing shelters on a regular basis throughout the year. If we consider that 40% of these individuals were queer, there was a total of 317 queer homeless youth in Ottawa in 2018 (158 males, 139 females, 19 others). According to *Ottawa’s 10 Year Plan to end Homelessness*²⁴, the number of homeless young adults stays approximately the same every year, i.e., fluctuates by only a few percentage points.

A study undertaken by the Trevor Project found that individuals who suffer rejection on a basis of sexual orientation and gender identity are 8.4 times more likely to report having attempted suicide, 5.9 times more likely to report high levels of depression, 3.4 times more likely to

use illegal drugs and 3.4 times more likely to report having engaged in unprotected sexual intercourse, compared to peers hadn't experienced such rejection²⁵. These statistics strongly suggest the need for a space solely dedicated to the LGBTQ2S community where the staff are trained to help with the particular issues experienced by this group.

Although the target demographic will be LGBTQ2S individuals, programs supported by the centre will be available to the community at large. People of all sexual orientations, ages, and backgrounds can come in to take part in the community events and classes going on at the Holmes Center. Beds in the shelter, however, will be reserved for LGBTQ2S youth of all genders without any segregation since the spectrum is greater than just female and male in this case. While different sleeping pods within the shelter could be directed to people dealing with similar issues, it may cause more harm than good if there is an attempt to separate based on identity.

YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN OTTAWA

Figure 13: Youth Homelessness in Ottawa

2.4 Cost of homelessness

Homelessness in Canada costs taxpayers up to \$7 billion annually. This figure includes the amount spent on shelters, social services, healthcare, and corrections. In 2018, Ottawa taxpayers spent nearly \$80 millions to help combat homelessness.²⁷

According to Ray Sullivan, executive director of Centertown Citizens Ottawa Corporation, it would take up to 6,500 units of affordable housing to clear the waitlist in the capital²⁸. While it would be both cheaper and more effective to house people and pay their rent than to pay for shelters on a nightly basis, Ottawa has an exceptionally low stock of affordable units.

The 2020 Rental Market Report done by the CMHC indicates that while Ottawa's vacancy rate increased by 3.9% compared to the previous year, the average rent went up a significant 4.5% (now approximately \$1,300 for a 1-bedroom apartment).²⁹

The pandemic has also affected the supply of rental units as people have opted not to move or are simply not able to pay their rent due to unemployment, resulting in eviction. In 2020, the Federal Government committed to giving \$5.6 million dollars to the City of Ottawa to help those experiencing homelessness during the pandemic and \$31.9 million for affordable housing³⁰. At the end of the year 2020, the city already had four projects lined up, one of which

included 77 units of supportive housing for single men and women from Inuit, First Nations and Metis communities³¹. It is estimated that nearly \$2 billion, which is equivalent to two thirds of Ottawa's annual budget, would be needed to house everyone on the waiting list the city maintains for affordable housing. ³²

The key to ending homelessness is to provide safe, affordable, and appropriate housing for chronically unsheltered individuals, along with the supports they need to live independently. Ottawa's Housing First initiative, described below, is focussed on housing homeless people. The cost to provide these individuals with a permanent housing unit and support from case-managers is far less than paying for them to use shelters and other associated social services.

Figure 14: Cost breakdown of chronic homelessness in Canada

2.5 Housing First: Permanent Supportive Housing in the Capital

Housing first is a North American initiative focussed on longer term living solutions for the chronically homeless. According to The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, 'Housing First' is a recovery-oriented approach to ending homelessness that centers on quickly moving people experiencing homelessness into independent and permanent housing and then providing additional supports and services as needed.³³ The City of Ottawa has adopted this program and works with local organizations to provide case management support through the Ottawa Mission, the Salvation Army, and the Wabano Center, among other organizations. Ottawa uses a priority-based approach that considers the length of time one has been homeless and makes decisions on a case-by-case basis.

Two criteria are needed to qualify for permanent supportive housing: being homeless for over six months and having the necessary support to obtain and retain housing.³⁴ The Housing First program gives people the opportunity and the social supports they need to live independently. Although this cannot cure homelessness on its own, it makes significant strides in the right direction. This method differs from an emergency shelter as it houses people for extended periods of time rather than on a night-by-night basis. It provides housing security and additional help to stay on the right path. As outlined above, this method is more

Permanent Supportive Housing

Many chronic shelter users suffer from mental illness or struggle with addictions and substance abuse. These individuals have difficulty maintaining households on their own, whether or not they can afford to do so. Permanent supportive housing typically refers to a combination of housing and social services provided to such individuals in order to enable them to live more independently.

cost-effective than chronic shelter use. The Homelessness Partnering Strategy releases essential funding that allocates funds in communities across the country to help house the homeless population. The budget had been cut over the years but is expected to rise back to its original budget of \$251 million by 2021-22.³⁵

Action Ottawa is another program in the capital to increase the supply of affordable and supportive housing.³⁶ The city partners with the federal government to provide developers funding to build new units or renovate existing units. Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI) provides \$17.7 million to the City of Ottawa towards the Action Ottawa program.³⁷

PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING IN OTTAWA

PSH

Permanent Supportive (or Supported) Housing (PSH) combines rental or housing assistance with individualized, flexible and voluntary support services for people with high needs related to physical or mental health, developmental disabilities or substance use. (Homeless Hub)

484

units completed
between
2013-2018

410

new affordable
and supportive
housing units
under
development

Over \$26 million invested in 2018

to construct or acquire new housing for people requiring supports, affordable rental housing and affordable homeownership with Habitat for Humanity Greater Ottawa

Action Ottawa

Action Ottawa is the City's primary program to increase the supply of affordable/supportive housing in Ottawa. Action Ottawa combines City incentives with government funding to assist private and non-profit developers to build affordable rental housing for moderate and low-income households.

Youth Service Bureau

2887 Riverside dr.
Ottawa, Ont

4 storey
39 residential units
Youth hub for the community

John Howard Society

289 Carling ave.
Ottawa, Ont

6 storey - mixed-use
40 residential units
On site support for transitional youth,
adults, and single men and women

Figure 15: Permanent Supportive Housing in Ottawa

2.6 Method

While this project was initially driven by my own experiences and those closest to me, I quickly realized that each of us has different experiences, histories, and stories. The first step, then, was to educate myself about Canadian queer history since I knew little of it, and I was shocked to realize I knew more about what happened in the US than in my own country. This written portion of the thesis, then, follows my train of thought as I discovered the community's needs and learned of the obstacles it had to endure to get to where it is today. The design process started quite early and has been iterative. My initial research informed key moves, including the integration of trauma-informed design. Further in the document, we will discuss what makes a space "queer," an elusive concept through which the design process has helped to work.

Fortunately, I have never experienced homelessness, nor has anyone in my immediate circle of acquaintances. The pandemic has made it difficult to get first-hand accounts and contact people who are familiar with this struggle. I relied on videos from shelters in my region and one-on-one interviews with people living on the streets. Although filmed a few years back -- and some outside of Ottawa -- I gained a basic understanding of what homeless youth might be going through, and I got a good introduction to the struggles of homelessness. In a pandemic-free world, I would have volunteered at the local youth shelter; unfortunately, this was not possible.

It is my hope that the passion with which I approach this project will reach the affected community. This project aims to galvanize a community and foster a sense of hope for queer folks in and around Ottawa. I realize and now understand that I would not be able to save the entire population of homeless queer youth, whatever that might mean. Queer youth struggle with most of the problems that affect youth, generally, including family tensions, mental illness, addiction, substance abuse, etc. -- all which go beyond the challenge of finding a supportive place to shelter for the night. Nonetheless, I keep asking myself, when will I be satisfied with the number of people I can house for a night? Although this project is entirely hypothetical, I keep telling myself that even if the proposed facility saved one person from the street, I would deem it a success. I look forward to presenting the project to stakeholders, getting their thoughts and opinions on my work to date, and see if it could become a reality or if the idea could lead to something bigger.

2.7 Precedents and Partnership Opportunities

The facility, as envisioned, would greatly benefit from partnerships with several organizations in Ottawa. These include the Centertown Community Health Centre, Youth Service Bureau, and other Capital region shelters.

Centertown **Community Health Centre** offers health and social services to the surrounding community. This facility assists LGBTQ2S people by offering an LGBTQ and Trans health clinic. Located a block away from the proposed site, the CCC could provide essential health services to the homeless youth and supportive housing residents.

The Youth Service Bureau provides the most beds for homeless youth each night in Ottawa. There are two locations, one for males and one for females, each with 30 beds. The YSB has recently built a 39-bed permanent supportive housing residence for youth on Riverside Drive, in addition to its shelters. The Youth Service Bureau also provides transitional housing for up to a year to those in need and helps them get back on their feet with staff members' help.

Other shelters in the region include the Shepherds of Good Hope, the Salvation Army, and the Ottawa Mission. Because of their expertise, partnerships could allow for an extension of their services but focused on LGBTQ2S youth. Shelters also cooperate with numerous non-shelter-related social service providers in the community, with whom the proposed centre would also need to work.

Community Health Center

are non-profit organizations that provide primary health and health promotion programs for individuals, families and communities. A health centre is established and governed by a community-elected board of directors.³⁸

Community Center

a building or group of buildings for a community's educational and recreational activities

³⁹

A partnership is also possible with healthcare providers in the region, including the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, the Ottawa Hospital, Montfort, and the Royal Ottawa Hospital.

It is envisioned that the Diane Holmes Community Center would be owned and maintained by the City of Ottawa. The community center and shelter portions of the project would be managed by a combination of city agencies and third-party tenants based on a Memorandum of Understanding with the City. The Youth Service Bureau, for example, might run the center as an extension of their current programs. The Centertown Community Health Center is also a potentially important partner. They could be in charge of the health and counselling services offered by the facility. As part of CCHC's "homeless and in transition program," case workers could provide support to shelter users and residents of the permanent supportive housing.

2.8 Precedent: The 519, Toronto, Ontario

Figure 16: The 519, Toronto, Ont. Source: the 519 media

The 519 is a community center located in the heart of Toronto's Gay Village. When it was slated for demolition in 1975, the City of Toronto purchased the building at 519 Church Street to transform into a community center. It has been a city asset since its inception and is run by a volunteer board of directors. This center provides support and services geared to the LGBTQ2S community. As the 519 was the first community center I came across that catered to the LGBTQ2S community, it quickly became a key precedent to which to refer when defining a functional program for the Holmes Centre. The 519 stands out in the Village as a safe space for its patrons and a beacon in the community. While it caters to all queer people in Toronto, old and young, its programs are open to the community as a whole.

Among the 519's programs are several I would like to incorporate into the Holmes Center, namely lectures and peer mentoring programs. Older members of the LGBTQ2S community have a chance to meet with the younger generation, relate their experiences of being queer and counsel them on dealing with day-to-day challenges. The centre's Director of Strategic Partnership Initiatives, Matthew Cutler, described the extent to which the spaces within a centre affect the programming it can offer – noting that spaces that can be easily transformed are especially crucial. While The 519 does not operate an emergency shelter component, they offer housing services to those in need, e.g., help individuals find housing or fill out forms.

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2.9 Precedent: Ndinawe, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Figure 17: Ndinawe, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Source: CBC News

Ndinawemaaganag Endaawaad Inc, or Ndinawe for short, is a safe space located in Winnipeg, Manitoba for youth of Indigenous origins. Located at 650 Burrows Street in Winnipeg, Ndinawe has been serving vulnerable children in the community since 1993. The centre provides cultural and recreational programming, education, outreach, and a range of supports young people need for safe and healthy lives. Safe spaces like this came to be because of the high deathrates within the Indigenous population.

Ndinawe also operates a small emergency shelter called the *Safe House* that can house up to 16 people, 21 year of age and under, per night. The shelter is impressive because its model is based on early prevention and early homelessness intervention. It deploys a youth-focused approach that differs from the ways one might deal with

adults, acknowledging that youth experience homelessness very differently. The Ndinawe center is open twenty-four hours a day to ensure a safe space for those in need and offers a multitude of classes and workshops to keep them occupied.⁴⁰

Tina's Safe Haven is a drop-in program run by the Ndinawe that accommodates up to 50 participants per day. This program resembles a community center where young people can come computers, do their laundry, play games with others and use the phones. They also offer some counselling and activities. This program is accessible 24/7 for young people between the ages of 13-24.

2.10 Precedent: Shepherds of Good Hope, Ottawa, Ontario

—Figure XX: Shepherds of Good Hope, Ottawa, Ontario, Source: CityNews—

The Shepherds of Good Hope is one of the largest and best-known emergency shelters in Ottawa. Located at 256 King Edward Avenue in Ottawa's Lowertown neighborhood, the Shepherds has been offering meal services and shelter since 1983. It was founded by Father Jack Heffernan, pastor of Saint Brigid's parish, to feed and house people who were knocking on his rectory door asking for a meal. In 1985, the shelter and kitchen were established in the Saint Brigid's school on Murray street and two years later, the archbishop agreed to lease the school to the Shepherds of Good Hope under the condition that it kept serving the needy. The shelter is currently led by its CEO and President assisted by a board of director, staff, and volunteers.

The Shepherds operates as a traditional emergency shelter with 102 beds for men 68 beds for women. Each day, guests

reserve a bed for the night. Their programming includes a soup kitchen that provides breakfast, lunch and dinner to the community, a clothing program, a drop-in center, and the Shepherds of Good Hope van. Most recently, the Shepherds has been working with CSV Architects to design a 42-unit permanent supportive housing apartment building on Montreal Road near the Montfort hospital to house chronic shelter users.

At their King Edward Avenue location, guests often spend their time outside on the sidewalks. The Shepherd's parking lots are also a place where homeless people spend their time during the day, indicating the need for facilities of this kind to include some outdoor space for people to spend their time.

2.11 Wabano Center, Ottawa, Ontario

Figure 19: Wabano Center, Ottawa, Ont, Source: OAA

Wabano

An Ojibwe word meaning a moment of possibility before dawn that helps us see the truth and set out on new beginnings, Wabano is an Indigenous health and cultural centre where many paths converge, and new paths begin.

The Wabano Center is a wellness center that caters to First Nations, Inuit, and Metis individuals. The center was established in 1998 in Ottawa's Vanier neighborhood. The health center was renovated redesigned in 2013 by the renowned architect Douglas Cardinal and his son Bret. The curvilinear shapes resemble the Cardinal's Canadian Museum of History, located across the Ottawa River in Gatineau, Quebec. The Wabano has been run by a board of directors, under an MOU with the City of Ottawa, since 1998.

Its mission includes providing holistic services to help Indigenous people "live the good life." The center offers a day clinic for walk-in care, a dental clinic, and a mental health clinic, among other services. It also offers a handful of services for the Indigenous youth of Ottawa, like day

camp, talks with Elders, and mental health support, including therapy. The Centre is also involved with helping children in the foster care system, many of whom are struggling with day-to-day issues.

2.12 Precedent: Analysis of Emergency Shelter

My approach to the layout of the proposed center's shelter portion is based on beds' configuration in youth hostels, where smaller spaces provide a bit of privacy. By contrast, most shelters organize beds into large open wards, with bunk beds that make them feel like barracks.

In the facility shown in Figure 19, I appreciated the smaller rooms and the separations. This was the first example I could find that included "crisis rooms." I liked the idea because it allows for more privacy and isolates individuals going through difficulties that could disturb residents in the more open portions.

Figure 19: Emergency shelter by AJC Architects

2.13 Shelters in their current state

In considering the design of the community centre I found it helpful to identify what I did not want to do and which mistakes I wished to avoid. As I am most familiar with the Shepherds of Good Hope facility in Ottawa's Byward Market, it was an important point of reference when considering the shelter component. From the outside, the Shepherds building seems quite uninviting. As most portions of the facility are not open during the day, clients congregate around the exterior of the building. This suggests the critical role that outdoor space might play in the design, especially for clients who smoke. From personal experience, people tend to avoid the area around the Shepherd's facility, which suffers from a negative reputation. By contrast, I envision the Diane Holmes Community Center as a neighborhood asset and a facility that attracts people. The sleeping arrangements at the Shepherds and other shelters offer a bunk in dorm-style rooms that hold several people for sleeping arrangements. The bunks are made of black steel and offer little to no privacy.

At the Shepherds, guests come in every evening to reserve a bed for the night and are back on the street the next day. Given that the DHCC will host young people, I suggest weekly stays where kids can go in and out of the center during the day and keep their belongings in one place. A provisional sense of permanence and privacy can be vital for young people.

Endnotes - Chapter 2

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Chapter 3

It takes a village

3.1 Gayborhoods

Gayborhoods or gay villages are areas of cities inhabited or frequented by people of the LGBTQ2S community. Villages often comprise several gay-owned and operated establishments like bars, restaurants, and boutiques. They are found in major cities worldwide including New York City, London, Toronto, and Montreal. Villages often act as an oasis in the city where people of all types can freely express who they are.

Gay villages or gayborhoods resulted from a history of oppression against queer people, as outlined in the previous chapter. Like many other minority groups (although for quite distinct reasons) they formed ghettos. Geographers Mickey Lauria and Lawrence Knopp express that villages are “a spatial response to a historically specific form of oppression.”⁴¹ As people were discriminated against and were faced with

legislative inequalities, they found power in numbers. Being in proximity to each other made it easier to organize and fight back.

The 1950s saw large migrations of families to the suburbs. Among other phenomena, this led queer folk to move into the city where they could construct their own communities and escape the strictures of the suburbs. LGBTQ2S individuals moved into and invested in the rehabilitation of downtown neighborhoods that were seen by others as dangerous and inconvenient places to raise children.

Through a longer-term process of gentrification, many of these gay-specific neighborhoods were “handed over” to straight people because they recognized their incredible value, both in terms of location and the quality of the housing stock. This, coupled with more widespread acceptance of LGBTQ2S people, resulted in gayborhoods being assimilated into “normal” society. Gay villages have now turned into tourist destinations based on their reputations as places where people can have a good time. This is not unlike what has happened with other in-town neighborhoods associated with ethnic or minority groups.

Generational shifts and the internet have also played a significant role in the demise of villages. These enclaves used to be the only places where people could meet others like them, while now, this is possible at the click of a button. There is less of a need to seek out bars when people can hop onto apps like Instagram, Facebook, and Grindr to find friends or potential partners. The pandemic has augmented this new reality where communities are increasingly likely to form online.

It is my strong impression, however, that gay villages still hold some importance within the queer community. There is always a need for more representation. Although significant strides have been made towards the acceptance of gay men and lesbians, there is still much work to be done for the BTQ2S+ component of the queer community. Relating to my target demographic for the Holmes Center, young people still need guidance, and a village could be where they seek their answers. Having queer-specific establishments concentrated in a particular (and central) area can make things easier to find help and navigate issues when in distress.

After speaking with friends in the LGBTQ2S community, I realized that as one gets older, the importance of the gayborhood becomes less critical. As young people, they could connect, experience, and learn about being queer in the city from others and found that this was invaluable to their growth. That said, given that a smaller percentage of LGBTQ2S community are likely to have children than their non-queer counterparts, there may be a greater need for social supports as they age. Among other things, then the proposed centre leverages potential synergies between younger and older members of the queer community.

3.2 Visibility/invisibility

Working through this thesis, I battled between wanting to make the project visible, e.g., to make it stand out as a shining beacon of inclusivity and change, and wanting it to disappear into the fabric of Centretown. There is a need to protect at least one of the key target demographics, namely minors and young people. My research indicates that most shelters catering to youth and women do not disclose their locations online, but rather provide a contact phone number. A solution would be to blend the shelter into the community center and to organize the building such that only people who come in or call could access the shelter portion.

On the other hand, queer people have been fighting for visibility and representation for a long time. Giving them a place that is theirs could help galvanize the community. The shelter component rallies the community around a common mission, namely helping young people to come to terms with themselves and their evolving sexuality. Some say that "if people are able to see something represented, they are better able to grasp who those people are, and it creates a shift in the social consciousness to include people from a range of backgrounds."⁴² Coming out can be a tough act; surrounding oneself with supportive people can make it much more manageable.

As homeless people often feel unseen or invisible, it was essential to make a space where people feel appreciated. Giving people a place in society can boost morale and motivate them to better their situation.

I see this community center as playing a leadership role in the community and engaging Ottawa in a new dialogue.

Figure 20: Stonewall riot protest in NYC, Source: The Harvard Gazette

Figure 21: Gay liberation protests in Ottawa, Source: CityNews Ottawa

3.3 What makes it queer?

During an interim thesis review I was asked what made this community centre “queer”? I was stumped because, at some fundamental (typological and programmatic) level, the project I’m proposing is rather generic. Still in the beginning stages of my design, I had to reflect on what moves I might make to express the “queerness” of the building. Was it necessary to make it queer? What might this mean? Could it fulfill its purpose without this descriptor, i.e., cater to members of the LGBTQ2S community without, itself, being queer? Would queerness – or the lack thereof -- make people feel differently about the space? These questions have occupied me throughout this investigation. The advantage of having a generic building would be that if, in the odd chance that this program does not work or the centre closes due to lack of funding, the building could be easily repurposed. On the other hand, difference does matter.

Some establishments display pride flag stickers on their front windows to signify that they are LGBTQ2S-friendly. Without erring on the side of tacky and enveloping my project in rainbow colours, how was I going to create a project that was distinctively queer? Again, this challenge of visibility vs. invisibility –itself, key to queer identity -- was an issue.

Upon further reflection, I have created a relatively standard-looking podium tower. Although it does not fit perfectly into the surroundings, which are relatively heterogeneous, the exterior becomes a bit of a blank canvas into which one might read. Erring on the side of the generic, I have tried to make every space

“genderless,” especially in the bathrooms, where there are single private stalls for guests to use.

In conclusion, the programs it accommodates and the people who use it are what makes the centre queer. The building acts as a blank canvas for people to create their narratives and experiences. The emphasis was put more on the quality of the design and the relationship between programmatic spaces than on the embodiment of identity, which can be both fluid and elusive. More important is to make it welcoming and to facilitate opportunities both to engage with and retreat from the outside world.

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Chapter 4

Proposal - The Holmes Center

4.1 Setting targets

At the project's inception, the community center and emergency shelter were the only two elements on which I was focussed. Taking cues from the 519 in Toronto, the idea was to give queer folk of Ottawa a place where they could hang out and feel safe. Based on the 519, the program envisioned spaces that people could find in any other community center in the city, e.g., a multi-purpose space for recreation and events, a café, studio spaces for group classes, access to computers, and open space in which to spend time while charging one's phone.

As stated previously, I had an internal battle about maximizing the capacity of the shelter but ultimately had to put a cap on the number of people I could accommodate. The final count stands at 40 people that can be staying in the shelter at any given time. Informing this decision was

the configuration of beds and the decision to organize them into pods. More beds were sacrificed to have ample breathing room and circulation on the shelter floor. Throughout the process, however, I struggled with the possibility of adding an additional shelter floor.

Further down the line, I reflected on the building's expenses and realized that adding a residential tower could generate revenue to offset the cost. While the Traditional Mainstreet zoning along Bank street permits buildings up to 23 m in height. As the building I am proposing is 44 m, it will be necessary to apply for a minor variance. From Bank street, the proposed building will step back 2 meters each at Levels 3 (8 meters) 8 (23 meters) and 10. A 2-meter step back is also incorporated into the back of the building at Level 5 (16 meters) and an additional 8 m step back at Level 10 to achieve the required separation from the Soho tower to the east.

4.2 Programming

The proposed facility is divided into three distinct – but overlapping -- parts: the community center (Levels 1 & 2), the emergency shelter (Levels 3 & 4), and permanent supportive housing (Levels 5 - 13).

Entrances to the building along Bank St. provide access to the café and to the permanent supportive housing in the tower above. The café occupies the northwest corner of the ground floor (Level 1) where it can attract the most foot traffic. This coffee shop will provide employment opportunities for the young people who frequent the DHCC and help them to get back on their feet. The café kitchen also serves a cafeteria on Level 3, to which it is connected by a dumbwaiter. A door from the café also connects into the main lobby of the community center further east on the ground floor.

The main entrance to the community center is located along Lisgar Street. Upon entering, guests are welcomed by a large staircase that connects to ancillary facilities on the 2nd level. A large, double-height multi-purposes space is located opposite the entrance. This room is designed to be used for recreation (e.g., volleyball) as well as events (lectures, performances, movies, etc.). The lobby area is intended to function both as a crush space for events and a hangout area for the guests to work or socialize. A door from the lobby leads to an outdoor courtyard/garden space just east of the building.

Administrative areas, classrooms, and a computer room are located on the second level of the community center. The offices look out onto the garden and to Lisgar St. to keep an eye on activities outside. The computer room is envisioned as a space for young people to do homework, get help filling out forms, or just browse the internet. This room will have a small library of books for research and for spare-time reading. Finally, the large classrooms on this level overlook Bank St. The partition separating the two can be retracted to create a larger classroom or studio space.

Levels 3 and 4 are reserved for the emergency shelter for LGBTQ2S youth. These floors will be accessible from the elevator located on the community center's ground floor and via the secondary staircase located on Level 2. For safety reasons, key cards will be required to access these floors. Level 3 includes a large common space for the shelter users, while a cafeteria and hangout area occupies the area facing Bank St. As previously mentioned, the food will be prepared on the ground floor and transported via by the dumbwaiter. The cafeteria will be used primarily by the shelter guests and will act as a soup kitchen. This level also includes additional administrative space for staff, including office space, a conference room, and bathrooms. The laundry area at the back-left corner is designed with trauma in mind as trash and laundry spaces are often the most triggering spaces for certain people. With this in mind, I have created what is called a "laundry-spa" where people can sit in a living room-like space while doing their laundry. The shelter's sleeping quarters are located on Level 4. Once on this floor, the guests will be greeted at the help desk/staff

station, where they will be assigned a bunk for the week. Beds are organized into pods which read as small buildings within the larger space. Within each pod individual guests have their own rooms, comprised of a bed and a variety of storage cabinets. At the back of this floor, we find the communal bathroom, which includes separate stalls each containing a shower, toilet, and sink. This gives people more privacy and safety when they use the bathroom.

The final component of the proposed facility comprises 8 floors of permanent supportive housing, which are accessed through their own entrance and lobby off of Bank St. The 69 units are broken into 49 studio apartments, 15 one-bedrooms, and 5 two-bedroom apartments. Each unit is equipped with an accessible bathroom, a small kitchenette, and closet space. The kitchenettes are integrated, Dwyer-style units, comprised of a small refrigerator, a sink, and a microwave. The option to lock this space is provided for residents for whom cooking might present risks. A double bed is provided in each unit as is a small sofa and table.

The three main programmatic elements are organized vertically, with a certain amount of overlap between the community center on Levels 1 and 2 and the youth shelter just above it. Social service providers assigned to permanent supportive housing residents may also be accommodated in the offices on the 2nd floor of the facility.

4.3 Program breakdown

Basement	-----
Storage	491 sq/m
Ground Floor	-----
Cafe	82 sq/m
Kitchen	28 sq/m
Community Center Lobby	183 sq/m
PSH Lobby	45 sq/m
Multipurpose space	163 sq/m
Second Floor	-----
Studio 1	76 sq/m
Studio 2	67 sq/m
Computer room/ Library	59 sq/m
Offices	101 sq/m
Bathrooms	9 sq/m
Third Floor	-----
Cafeteria	238 sq/m
Laundry room	49 sq/m
Offices	80 sq/m
Bathrooms	55 sq/m
Balcony 1 (Large)	38 sq/m
Balcony 2 (Small)	17 sq/m

Fourth Floor

Bunk area	338 sq/m
Staff rooms	31 sq/m
Sensory room 1	9 sq/m
Sensory room 2	10 sq/m
Lounge 1	25 sq/m
Lounge 2	43 sq/m
Bathrooms	69 sq/m

Fifth to Eighth Floor

1 bedroom apartment (1)	45 sq/m
1 bedroom apartment (2)	49 sq/m
Studio apartment (1)	32 sq/m
Studio apartment (2)	32 sq/m
Studio apartment (3)	33 sq/m
Studio apartment (4)	40 sq/m
Studio apartment (5)	32 sq/m
Studio apartment (6)	32 sq/m
Studio apartment (7)	31 sq/m
Studio apartment (8)	38 sq/m

Ninth Floor

1 bedroom apartment (1)	45 sq/m
1 bedroom apartment (2)	49 sq/m
Studio apartment (1)	32 sq/m
Studio apartment (2)	32 sq/m
Community Living room	41 sq/m
Exterior space	194 sq/m

Tenth to Thirteenth Floor - - - - -

1 bedroom apartment (1)	45 sq/m
1 bedroom apartment (2)	49 sq/m
Studio apartment (1)	32 sq/m
Studio apartment (2)	32 sq/m
Studio apartment (3)	33 sq/m

THE HOLMES CENTER

Figure 22: Massing diagram

Figure 23: Circulation diagram

4.4 Sleeping pods

While considering how to organize sleeping spaces, I came across a project by KTG Architecture + Planning, a Los Angeles-based firm. I appreciated the way beds were organized into cubby-like spaces, affording each guest a degree of privacy. As safety is also important, I appreciated that curtains could be easily drawn back to reach individuals in distress.

With this in mind, I organized beds into five pods, with eight stacked beds each. The pods are designed to sit like small buildings with the larger, open space of the shelter floor. Pairs of stacked beds open in opposite directions onto individual “rooms” that can be partitioned off for privacy. Each room is fitted with storage space along the wall opposite the bed. A “Duchamp” door swings one way to close the storage cabinets during the day and the other way to close off the room when in use at night. This door could be part of a management system whereby guests would open their cubicles to lock up their belongings each morning, allowing staff to easily inspect and verify that things are in order.

Figure 26 illustrates the final bunk bed design, and the permutations through which I worked to get there. I started by researching and recreating the bunk beds that are frequently used in shelter spaces. Most places use steel bunks that offer no privacy and are cold in their design. I wanted to find an option that would make shelter users feel safe and relaxed. I then modeled the bunks as configured by KTG. While this arrangement produced a very favorable ratio of

beds to floor space, people had to crawl into bed and did not have the necessary head space to stand and dress. In the second try, the bunks were configured to create small rooms with two beds each. While this also resulted in a good beds-to-floor ratio, it lacked the level of privacy I felt was necessary. This led to the final option of collapsible 8-bed pods.

During my research I came across trauma-informed design, which influenced certain decisions. Within the storage space, poles were avoided in favor of cubbies. Most rooms have two doors to offer air circulation during the day, and promote a sense of safety in that there are two means to exit. A good night's sleep is rare for people living on the streets, and a room that can offer complete darkness is critical to consider. Since the bunks are not along the outside walls, lighting is easier to control. Dimmable task lighting will above each bed gives guests greater control over their environments.

Figure 24: Project in Los Angeles by KTG Architecture + Planning, Source: Dezeen

Option 1

This option allows for maximum privacy and is my preferred method for moving forward. Each individual will have a storage locker inset into the wall to store their belongings. The advantage of this method is the fact that one can stand up fully when they get out of bed but the consequence is that it takes up a lot more room.

Option 2

Option B provides stacked bunk beds in one small common space. Storing of belongings will be done at a designated locker space. This method is significantly more efficient space wise and can fit more people but there is less privacy.

Option 3

Option C was my first attempt at stacking bunk beds. It provided smaller cubbies for each individual and gave them privacy. The disadvantage was that there was barely any head space.

Figure 25: Bunk bed iteration sketches (Pros vs. Cons)

Figure 26: Bunk pod design

4.5 Trauma informed design

Trauma-informed design links physical space with healing, safety, and well-being. Its aim is to minimize triggers and stressors in the environment and create safe and serene spaces. This approach has been used in emergency shelters in the United-States, notably in Colorado. As homelessness can be a very traumatic experience, incorporating principles of trauma-informed design will help shelter guests to avoid fight-or-flight responses.

Among the elements of trauma-informed design that stood out is the idea of clear sightlines. People perceive themselves to be safer when sightlines are kept clear and there are few corners around which someone might hide. Entering an unfamiliar room is easy for people who have not experienced significant trauma in their lives but can be difficult for people who have suffered trauma. Abundant windows and open planning can mitigate the uncertainty and uneasiness that trauma sufferers may experience when entering rooms. Windows will also increase the amount of natural light in the space, making rooms appear to be less crowded.

Furthermore, providing two exits from every room can eliminate the feeling of being trapped; having multiple escape options is important when someone is nervous or uncomfortable. Giving people choices can enhance their sense of control and can boost self-confidence. The communal bathroom on the shelter floor has been designed with a continuous circulation loop to avoid dead ends. Similarly, sleeping pods

Trauma-informed care

Trauma-Informed Care understands and considers the pervasive nature of trauma and promotes environments of healing and recovery rather than practices and services that may inadvertently re-traumatize.

have been positioned in the middle of the shelter floor to accommodate continuous circulation around them. There are multiple ways to enter each bunk room. Multiple access points will also help staff when someone is in distress, enabling them to reach those in need without disturbing others in the pod.

Making accommodations for plants will help to bring the outdoors in, and cool wall colours can create a calming effect, as does soft furniture and circular surfaces for collaboration. As facilities like shelters can often feel quite sterile, the goal is to create warmer, more inviting environments.

The incorporation of the courtyard helps create a connection to nature as does the terrace for the residents of the permanent supportive housing. Outdoor spaces were provided so that both groups could enjoy gardening and exercise some control of their environments.

Figure 27: Basement level plan

Figure 28: Ground level plan - The Holmes Center

Figure 29: Second level plan - The Holmes Center

Figure 30: Third Level plan - Emergency shelter

Figure 31: Fourth Level Plan - Emergency Shelter

Figure 32: Fifth to Eighth Level plan - Permanent supportive housing

Figure 33: Ninth Level plan - Permanent supportive housing

Figure 34: Tenth to Thirteenth Level plan - Permanent supportive housing

4.6 Operational processes

The operation of the facility will be in the hands of the organizations that are in charge of each section of the building and the role of the architect is to simply suggest some operational processes that can be implemented. Once the architect finalizes the design and that the construction is over, it is out of their control how the facility will be run.

This said, for the Diane Holmes Center, it is envisioned that the City of Ottawa will take care of the community center, the Youth Service Bureau takes care of the shelter and the Centertown Community Center with the City of Ottawa will oversee the permanent supportive housing. A few things have been put in place to ease the daily operations like the key card access to the upper floors, direct views for the staff to see guests, and a clear layout for easy wayfinding. The 3 distinct parts are stacked in a way that creates a gradient of privacy as one goes up where the two first levels are open to the general public and as we move up, there are more restrictions as to who is able to have access.

For the shelter specifically, a few suggestions have been made like the weekly stays and even the target demographic but again, this is not the designer's choice and will be in the hands of the city once the project is handed over.

Figure 35 - Elevation 1 (Lisgar street)

Figure 36 - Elevation 2 (Bank street)

Figure 37 - Elevation 3

Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis seeks to galvanize a community through the design of a community center and emergency shelter for homeless queer youth of Ottawa.

Realizing that 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ2S, I began this thesis with the intention of designing an emergency shelter in Ottawa to better accommodate an overlooked demographic. Over the course of the exploration, however, and inspired by my experiences in the Village in Montreal, the scope expanded to consider how such a shelter might be used to bring together the larger LGBTQ2S community. During the research process, it became apparent that the inclusion of a community center would help to anchor the project into the context and engage more the community. As we near the end of this project, the expectations set at the beginning were met but have also evolved. The community center and emergency shelter are now complemented by a supportive

housing tower. The village I was envisioning may not be realistic given the times we live in, and the building I have designed will not be covered in rainbows flags. The research I undertook at beginning stages of the project helped me to gain a better understanding of where the community stands at the moment and informed the design decisions I made. During the design process, I found myself obsessing over the small details of the interior configuration rather than moving back and forth between the interior and the exterior. Researching new design inspiration or different design approaches would make me rethink the work that had already been done. It became a back and forth between research and design for much of the time.

The next steps in the process would be to engage a variety of stakeholders and get their insights on the project to date. As community space, emergency shelters and supportive housing are all lacking in Ottawa, it would be interesting to talk to city councillors, the mayor, and the LGBTQ2S community at large to see if a project of this kind might be brought to fruition. Were it to proceed, I would like to come up with a community plan for Bank Street based on a deeper vision of what a gayborhood in Canada's capital might look like going forward.

While the LGBTQ2S community (however it might organize or define itself) is more integrated into society than it once was, the process of coming out – or otherwise coming to terms with non-normative aspects of sexual desire and sexual identity – is still extremely difficult for young people. The suicide rates speak for themselves. As communities often coalesce around issues, the perirenal struggle of coming out

could be the issue around which Ottawa's LGBTQ2S community rallies. As proposed the Holmes Centre could be a home base, where older members help younger ones and vice versa. Together the cause and the centre provide a mechanism for the community to introduce itself to itself -- and to learn more about itself in the process.

While the lifespan of a building normally ranges between 35-60 years, the lifespan of the programs the programs it accommodates -- i.e., how the building is used and by whom -- may be significantly shorter. Consideration has been given to what might happen over time and the need for adaptability. Should it be called upon to do so, the building can be easily transformed accommodate other uses. As designed, the first 4 floors can easily be converted to support a range of commercial and institutional programs or even adapted into additional apartments.

Throughout this process, the role of the architect had to be put into question as I would find myself focusing on things that would be out of the designer's hands. There are numerous funding (capital and operating), operational, and logistical questions to be worked out. The focus of this thesis, however, was to establish a rationale for the proposed centre, make recommendations on where it might be located, what elements it might include, and the form it might take based on a variety of informed assumptions. The larger goal was to explore the role of the architect -- and architecture -- in addressing larger social issues such as youth homelessness -- in other words what I, as an aspiring architect, might bring to the table to address issues and challenges that go well beyond my expertise.

Postscript

Among the questions raised by members of the committee during the oral defense were the following:

Why provide more shelter beds if the city is trying to move away from this model?

Why not occupy the entire building with permanent supportive housing?

Has the time passed to suggest a project like this, i.e., a project to galvanize and serve the queer community?

Is it too late for Ottawa to have a gay village?
Is the idea anachronistic?

During the defense it was pointed out that the City of Ottawa is attempting to move away from adding more shelter beds because, among other things, they cost significantly more to operate than permanent supportive housing. I was aware of this and permanent supportive housing is a key component of the facility as proposed. It is important to note, however, that shelter component of the Holmes Center would function primarily as transient (i.e., short-term) housing, operating more like a hostel and a traditional shelter. The sleeping pods are designed to feel more like a hostel, i.e., with much greater privacy than a shelter and with places for guests to lock up and store valuables. Nor is it envisioned that shelter users be turned out during the day – although access to the sleeping floor might be limited. Oftentimes homeless youth bounce from place to place, couch to couch and by providing a few beds in the shelter, it would take away the guessing when it comes to finding a safe place to stay.

While dedicating the entire building to permanent supportive housing would help to address the severe lack of this housing stock in the city, it was never something that was directly considered as it did not directly address the needs of my target demographic. Access to permanent supportive housing is typically managed through the housing list; it can take months and even years before they can be housed.

It was also pointed out that this is not the first time a community center of this sort has been proposed and yet nothing has come to fruition. The issue of timing was raised

during the discussion of whether it may be too late for something of this nature in Ottawa. Unlike other major cities, the gay village in Ottawa was not founded by oppression or gentrification. Montreal's gay village, for example, resulted from Mayor Jean Drapeau's decision to "clean up" the gay establishments close to the core in preparation for the 1976 Olympics. There was no corresponding catalyst in Ottawa, nor were gay establishments and sex clubs operating in the city during that period (although several were operating across the river in Hull). Community nowadays, especially in the current COVID times, is mainly formed online and, as previously stated, technology has significantly increased the access to information. Does this mean that having a concentrated area with queer businesses is not necessary? Ottawa currently has very few gay bars or gay establishments as most of them have closed over time. It may be that the nature of the establishments that support a community have changed over time and the pressures on the community have changed.

Galvanizing the community around youth homelessness is what grounds this project. Despite the liberalizing forces of society – which, as we're seeing in the US and elsewhere, are constantly under threat – it continues to be difficult for young people to come to terms with non-normative sexual desire and gender identification. As the rate of homelessness and suicide among queer youth suggests, this continues to be struggle – and a journey – despite increased acceptance among society as a whole. The proposed centre gives a space for young people and

elders to come together and share their life stories and discuss the challenges of navigating circumstances. It was suggested that the centre might run a mentoring program where older members of the queer community would be matched up with a younger people, including the shelter users. As a significant percentage of queer folk do not have children, intergenerational connections may be welcomed. And this might be an opportunity to give back.

All of the issues raised by the defense committee were considered, to various degrees, over the course of the nine months I spent working on the thesis. Were the project to continue, additional consideration would be given to them. Communicating with more members of the community and working directly with homeless youth – which was difficult to do during the time of COVID – would likely have had an impact on the many assumptions I made along the way.

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