



Safe Haven:

Leveling the Playing Field by Creating
a Home for the Unsheltered, Homeless,
Water, and Native Plants

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Thesis submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute
and State University in partial fulfillment the requirements for the
degree of Master of

Landscape Architecture

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Swale, Sunken Garden, Shopping Center, Activity Center,
Re-purposed Infrastructure

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Abstract

Safe Haven: Leveling the Playing Field by Creating a Home for the Unsheltered, Homeless, Water, and Native Plants

Michelle Mitchell

Through natural and constructed elements, landscape architects design public landscapes to engage the public in the great outdoors. While many local governments and designers actively create landscapes to keep the unsheltered and homeless out of public spaces, keep water in storm drains, and keep native plants on the periphery of the public landscape, my project, Safe Haven, is about creating an inclusive public landscape for people, water, and native plants. Preliminary research into the history of property ownership, discrimination, economic inequality, and government programs for the unsheltered created a picture of why certain demographics struggle with housing. Case studies of homeless encampments in the Washington DC area of NOMA, Abbot's Camp in Austin, Texas, and car camping in San Diego, California, and Seattle, Washington, gave insight into the current landscape needs of unsheltered people. Studies of the watershed and plants native to the site inspired a water retention system and a seasonal pallet of plants. The design incorporates existing infrastructure, new buildings, a natural playground, wilderness camping, a Mount Vernon-inspired vegetable garden, and a sunken garden designed to retain water while showcasing native plants. Describing the design are narratives sharing the perspective of water, native plants, the unsheltered, and the homeless. Lady Landscape guides the stories and offers her views on the responsibilities of a landscape architect.

General Audience Abstract

Safe Haven: Leveling the Playing Field by Creating a Home for the Unsheltered, Homeless, Water, and Native Plants

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Inclusive landscapes create a vision of places where children, older adults, people with and without disabilities enjoy the beauty of Mother Nature. There are ADA regulations that ensure everyone can be accommodated within a public landscape, but those regulations don't extend to the needs of unsheltered or homeless people. Their needs to enjoy public parks and recreation areas are different from housed people. They're looking for a home, and many public spaces are built to deter them from living on public lands. My project is a landscape designed with the unsheltered and homeless as the primary client. My project is about creating room for people without homes in the landscape - offering them dignity and meeting them where they are. Researching the needs of the homeless and what is presently available helped guide my design. After choosing an appropriate site in Fairfax City, Virginia, it became apparent that water and native plants would also need a home in this project. A thorough study of the water pattern over the area informed design elements that gave water home through a Vegetative Swale and Sunken Garden while native plants found space in garden rooms. The thesis is presented as a narrative with Lady Landscape guiding the reader through the design by introducing them to the people and natural elements the landscape offers refuge to.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my husband, Paul Renzo, without whom I could never have achieved my academic goals, and to the memory of my mother-in-law, Christl Renzo.

Paul, you are my rock. When I wanted to give up, you knew exactly how to make me angry enough to finish just to spite you. I love you for it. Thanks for bankrolling my “school habit.” You and I now share more than a family. We share an Alma Marta (GO HOKIES!). You are my rock, and I owe you more than I can ever repay, but I promise to start when I get my new job as a landscape architect.

Christl, you used to tell me not to look at the whole project. Just work on it a little at a time, and the job will get done. That advice has served me well throughout my academic career. I wish you were here to see me graduate. I know you would have been proud AND made me go to the graduation ceremony. I miss you.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to my thesis committee members, Paul Kelsch, Susan Piedmont-Palladino, and Nathan Heavers. Without your support throughout my time at the Washington Alexandria Architectural Center (WAAC), I'm sure I would have given up several times on this academic endeavor. I have learned so much from each of you.

I would also like to thank my dear friend, Kevin Mitchell, who served as an honorary member of my committee and believes in my abilities more than I believe in them. Thank you for being a soundboard for ideas and helping translate "Architect Speak" into "Michelle Language."

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Introduction

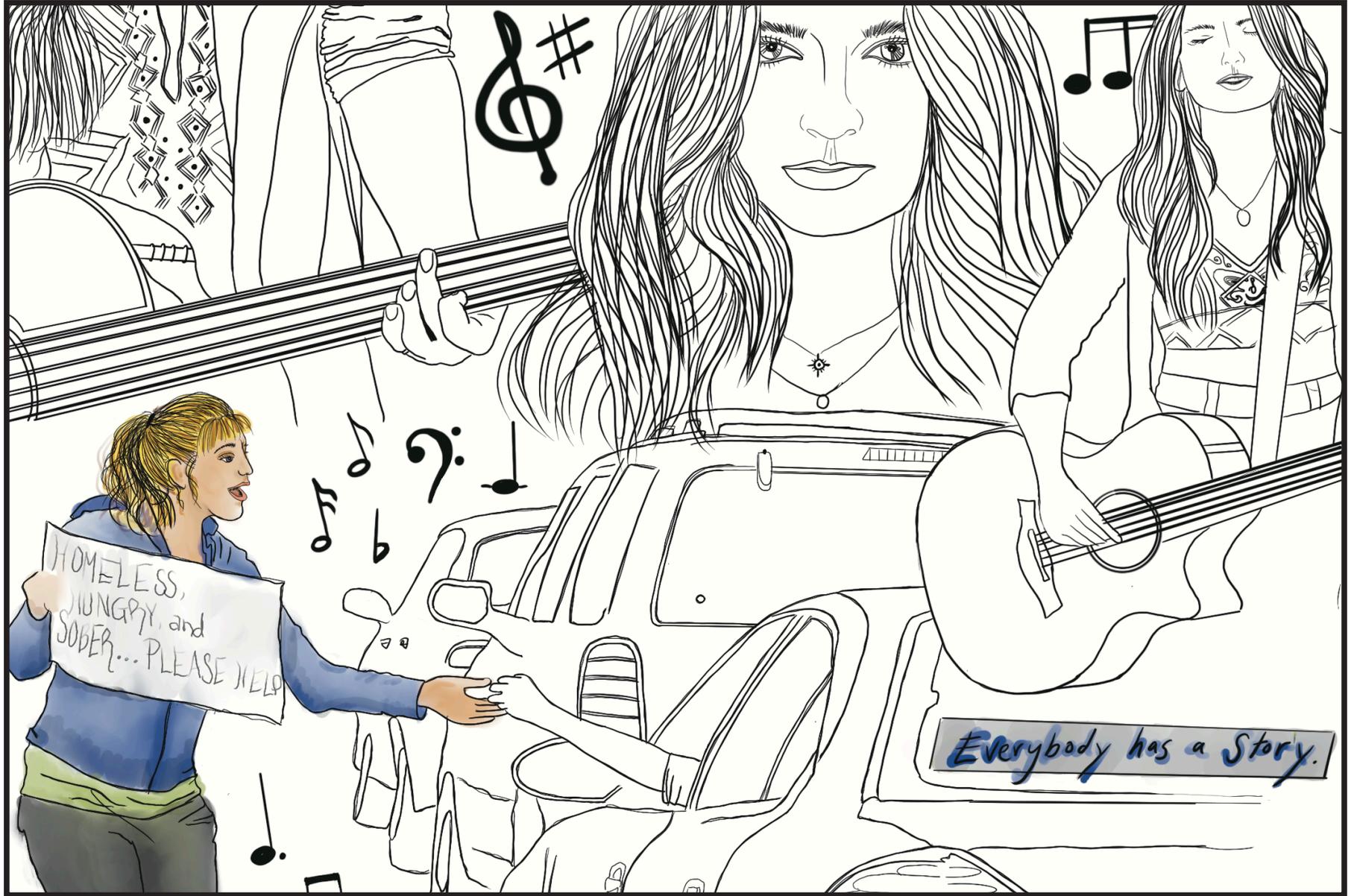


Figure 1 - "Somebody's Daughter" Montage drawing by Michelle Mitchell December 2021

"I drive home the same way, two left turns off the interstate, and she's always standing at the stoplight on 18th Street. She could be a Sarah, she could be an Emily, an Olivia, maybe Cassidy with the shaky hands on the cardboard sign, and she's looking at me. Bet she was somebody's best friend, laughing back when she was somebody's sister, counting change at the lemonade stand. Probably somebody's high school first kiss, dancing in a gym where the kids all talk about someday plans. Now this light'll turn green, and I'll hand her a couple dollars, and I'll wonder if she got lost or they forgot her. She's somebody's daughter." (Townes. 2020)

Hello! That song, "Somebody's Daughter" by Jenille Townes, describes the humanity of people we may be uncomfortable seeing. Maybe it's made you a little curious about what this thesis is about? Good! That was the goal!

I'm Lady Landscape, but my friends call me Lady L. I'm helping Michelle defend her thesis, which seems appropriate since she drew me at the beginning of her thesis adventure. I've been inspiring her throughout the whole experience, even when she didn't know it.

Now I'm no prima donna about my inspiration, and it's not like I'm asking to share the byline or get a citation, but don't underestimate my influence. When working in Landscape Architecture, Lady L doesn't take kindly to change for change's sake. You've got to let the landscape speak for itself, tell you what it needs, and discover how it can help you achieve your goals.

Michelle's project worked with the landscape to meet her goal of finding a home for the growing marginalized community of unsheltered and

homeless people while also making room for water and native plants to find a home. That's using Lady L's influence to find a win/win solution!

While many local governments and designers actively design to keep the homeless out of public spaces, water in storm drains, and native plants on the periphery of public landscape, her project is about creating an inclusive public landscape for people, water, and native plants — no small task.



Figure 2 - Lady Landscape winking

So let's talk about the public landscape. Most people hear "public landscape" and automatically think it's inclusive, Right? There're all those ADA rules about making it accessible for people with disabilities. You know, ramps for wheelchairs, handrails for stairs, and how about that rule for how high a step can be? We all appreciate that one, don't we?

Those rules were designed to make public spaces safe and accessible for everyone. But who is everyone? How about those people

you look right past? The people it's a little uncomfortable to see?

You know what I'm talking about. People sleeping on a park bench or under a tree? Maybe they're standing on the corner asking for money or using a shopping cart to move their belongings. Maybe they're lucky enough to have a tent they set up under a bridge or in the park. How about those people? Is anyone designing spaces to meet their needs?

ADA Standards

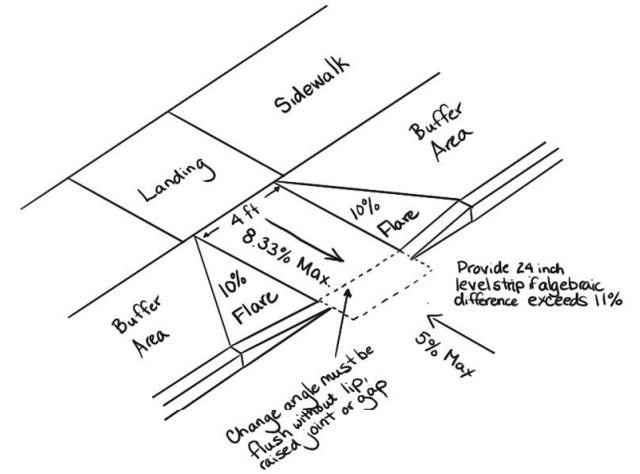
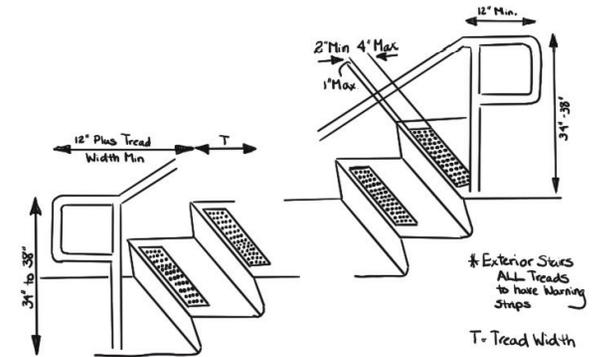


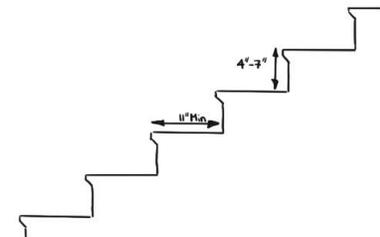
Figure 3 - Unsheltered person pushing a shopping cart



Figure 4 - Homeless encampment



All steps in a flight must have a uniform riser height within a range of 4'-7" and uniform tread depths that are 11" min. Open risers are prohibited.



Tread Surface and Wet Conditions

Tread surface must comply with requirements for ground and floor surfaces and cannot have changes in level other than slopes not steeper than 1:48. Treads and landings subject to wet conditions must be designed to shed water.

Figure 5 - ADA Standards for ramps, handrails, and step height

I'll let you in on an ugly secret. There are designers and government officials actively creating public spaces that discourage these people from being part of the landscape. Crazy right? Let's take a look at some designs that prevent unsheltered people from being part of the landscape.

Take a look at the bench on the next page (Figure 6). Are those armrests needed, or are they there to keep someone from lying down? How comfortable does this slanted bench look, and who do you think it was designed to exclude (Figure 7)? Spikes in an outdoor corridor weren't put there to keep birds out (Figure 8). No, they're meant to keep anyone from using it for shelter. Curved benches, while certainly interesting to look at, are also impossible to lay down on (Figure 10). Is it abstract art on the heat grate, or is the metalwork there to keep unsheltered people from accessing a public heat grate (Figure 9)? How

about the boulders in this underpass (Figure 11)? I don't think they were specified to instill a sense of nature. No sir! It's there to keep people from camping in a place that shelters them from the worst weather.

The people with the biggest need for public space because they've lost their private shelter are discouraged from occupying spaces meant to be for everyone. These people are still part of the public, right? They didn't lose that status when they lost their homes.

Why are designers actively excluding the unsheltered and homeless from public landscapes? If I had to hazard a guess, it's because they make people feel uncomfortable. Most people have a house, and many can't imagine living out of a car, sleeping on a bench, or putting a tent up over a heat grate. But I think you'd be surprised to find out how close some of your family and friends are to joining their ranks.



Figure 6 - Street bench with obstructive arm rests



Figure 7 - Street bench that sits at an angle



Figure 8 - Spikes in entry to keep people from sleeping



Figure 9 - Raised grate covers



Figure 10 - Circular bench



Figure 11 - Boulders in underpass

Background

Homeless Systems Map

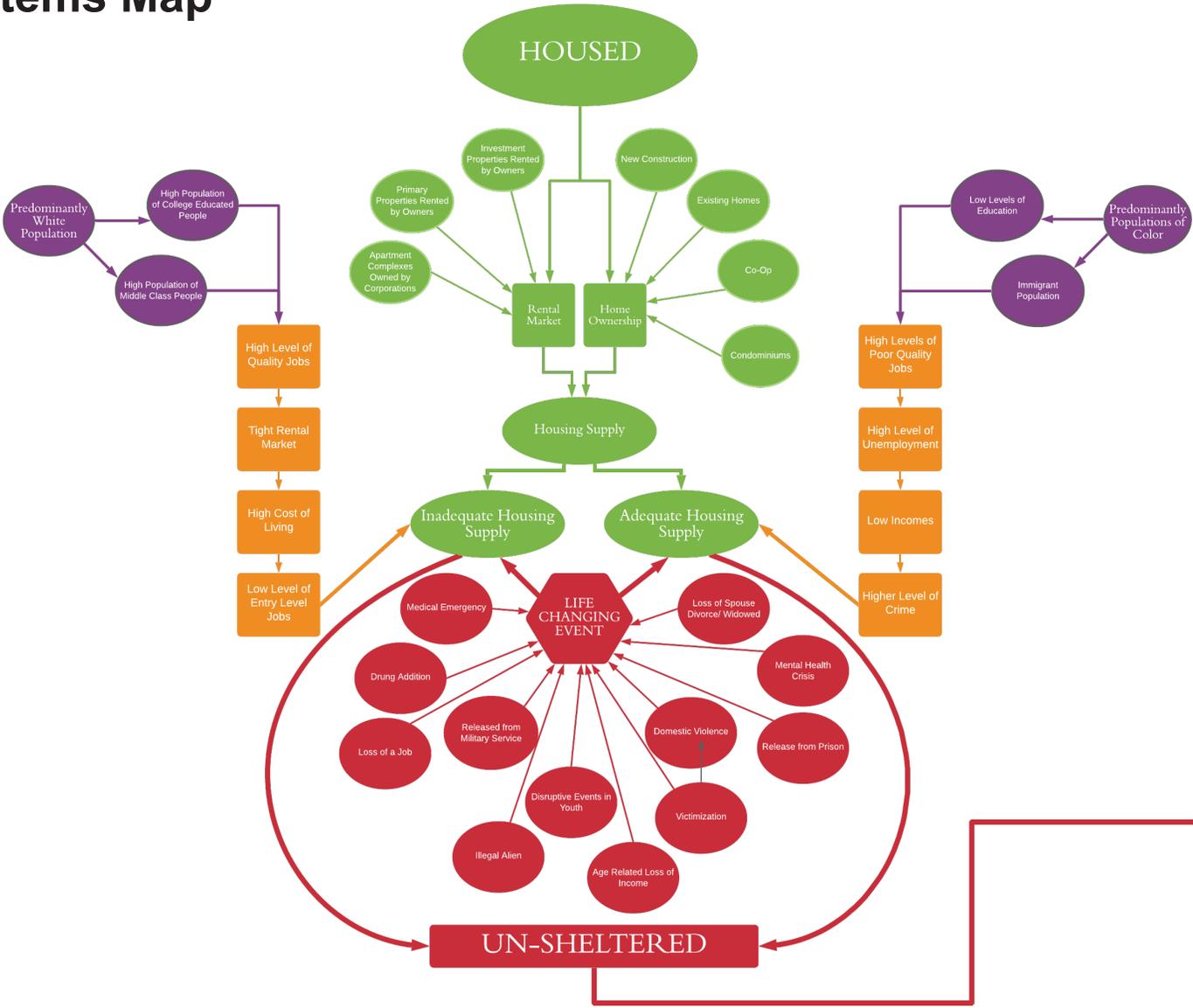
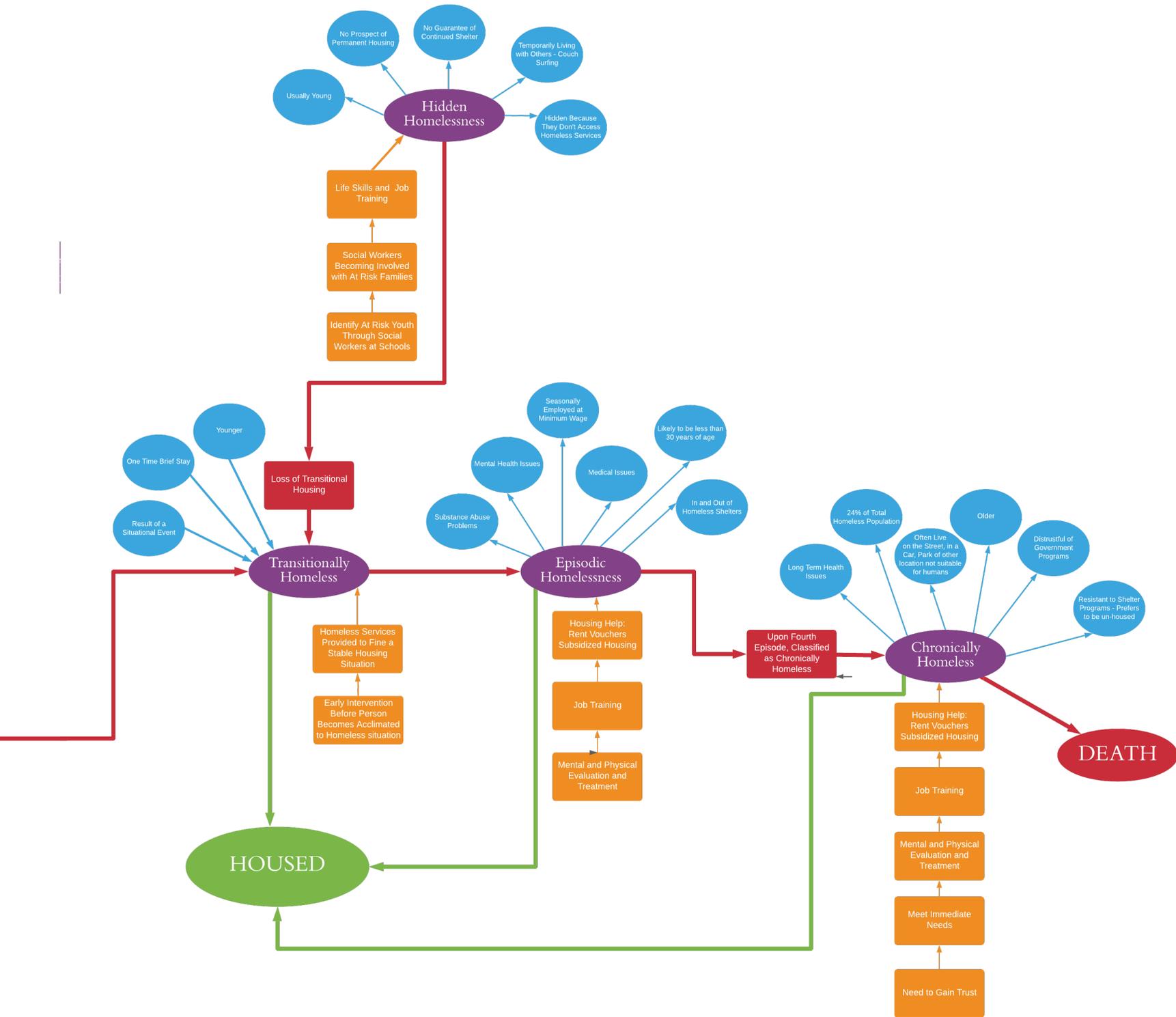


Figure 12 - Homeless System Map



Michelle created the systems map (Figure 12) after carefully analyzing the research on the unsheltered and homeless. I think it's important here to clarify the difference between being unsheltered and homeless. Unsheltered people are actively trying to find housing but cannot find a place to live. Homeless people are resolved to living in places most of us wouldn't and aren't seeking shelter. While this may seem like a granularity most people choose not to acknowledge, it's important to understand that each population's needs are different. Because research uses the names interchangeably, I'll be doing that too, but you should realize the difference.

The systems map is complicated because the issue is complicated. There are issues of race, income inequality, the broken healthcare system, Veteran issues, and family problems that fuel the unsheltered and homeless problems.

You can check out the Appendix for more information, but let's see if we can distill a complex situation into something easier to understand.

People are housed until a life-altering event happens. A life-altering event? Well, that sounds dramatic. What's a life-altering event? Well, it could be the loss of income because a spouse dies or a job loss. It might be a mother fleeing an abusive spouse or maybe a broken leg that keeps someone from performing their job or a teenager in an argument with his family about their sexual identity or rules. Suddenly, people find they've lost their homes. Maybe they couch surf for a while at a friend or family member's house. They've joined the ranks of the hidden homeless. Let me introduce you to my friend Tristan. He's part of the Hidden Homeless.

Homeless? The Language We Use Matters

People who experience homelessness are often described as "the homeless", but this robs them of their identity as mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, sons, daughters, artists, writers, business people, veterans, athletes and more.

People experiencing homelessness

Man/Woman who is homeless

Those Living on the Street

NEIGHBORS IN NEED

PEOPLE WHO ARE UNSHELTERED

HOMELESS
BROKE
Any thing helps
HAVE NICE DAY

T r a n s i e n t
H O B O
D r i f t e r
S T R E E T
P E R S O N
B U M
H o m e l e s s
P e r s o n
B e g g a r

Hidden Homelessness | Transitionally Homeless | Episodic Homelessness | Chronic Homelessness

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Homeless Hub.ca. (n.d.). Hidden Homelessness. HomelessHub.ca. Accessed September 19, 2020, from <https://www.homelesshub.ca/about-homelessness/population-specific/hidden-homelessness>

Figure 13 - Who are the homeless?

Tristan

I'm in high school, and my parents treat me like a child. I mean, sure, my girlfriend, Cindy, and I had a complicated breakup, but that doesn't mean they can tell me who I can and can't hang out with.

I should never have shown them the note she left in my locker. She said things she didn't mean, but it made me nervous, so I showed my parents. They were upset by the names she called me, but people say stuff when they're angry that they don't really mean. I think what put them over the edge was her threat to have her lawyer stepdad get involved if I ever came near her again.

Mom and Dad told me to stay away from her and called the school to see if I could get my schedule changed. The school said it was too late in the year to change my class schedule but said they would help keep us separated. After a couple of months, the teachers forgot about it, and my ex-girlfriend started flirting with me. Nothing big, but she asked to be my partner when a group project was assigned.

She wanted to meet at the coffee shop across the street from the

school to discuss the project. I didn't exactly tell my Mom why I was going to the coffee shop, and I sure as heck didn't tell her who I was meeting. But I'm 17, and I can meet anyone I want to without asking for permission.

I bought us some "froo froo" drink, and she asked if I wanted to keep working at her house. Things were going pretty good, so I said, "Sure, I just need to text my Mom."

Mom started asking all kinds of questions. Were the parents going to be home? What kind of project were we working on? Blah, blah, blah.

I let it slip that I was working with Cindy. I didn't think it would matter. I was over it. She was over it. Why would my parents care? They weren't even involved.

Well, Mom lost it. She told me to stay at the coffee shop because she was coming to pick me up. By the time she got there, Cindy's Mom was there too. My Mom told Cindy's Mom to keep her daughter away from her son. It was embarrassing. And it didn't stop there. She just kept going on and on about it when we got in the car.

I yelled back. Mom was acting childish, and I told her so. I demanded she stop the car, and she was so angry she did. I'm pretty sure she thought I would walk home, but I can't live with people who treat me like a child. Man, I don't know where I'm going.

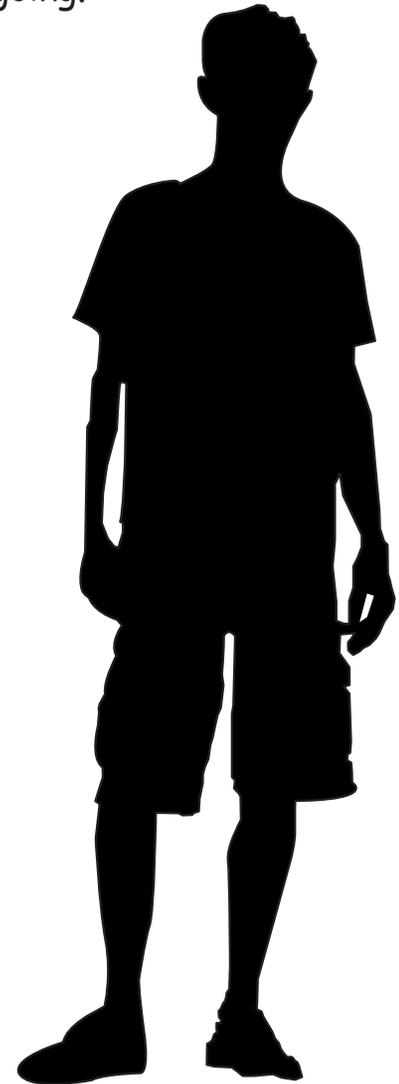


Figure 14 - Tristan Silhouette

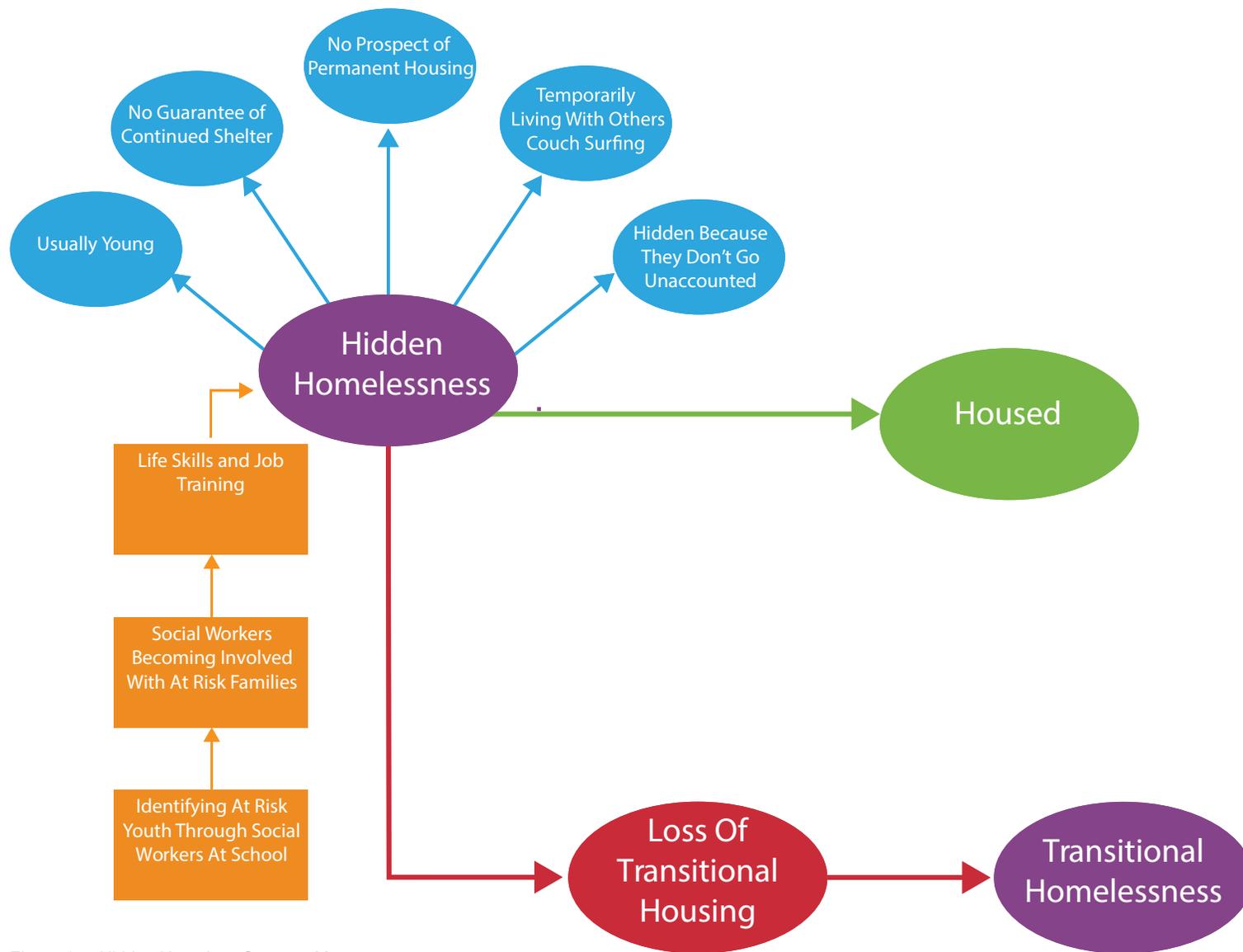


Figure 15 - Hidden Homeless Systems Map

Thanks for sharing your story, Tristan. I want to check in on you a little later if that's ok. Hidden Homelessness responds well to the intervention of social workers with at-risk families, life skills training, and social programs

that help them find temporary housing, but these are programs that take time to find, and many are underfunded.

When someone experiences the loss of shelter

and has nowhere to turn, they become part of the Transitionally Homeless. This is my friend Libby. Could you explain how you found yourself unsheltered?

Libby

I was able to get a scholarship to go to my dream school, George Mason. I'm so lucky!

With two younger brothers and a sister at home, Mom and Dad made it pretty clear that they didn't see how I was going to go to college without a scholarship. My dream school is out of state, and I wasn't sure how I would even get there.

My parents gave me enough money to rent a car, one way to get all my stuff there as a graduation present. I'm so lucky to have them. They couldn't take off work to go with me because, well, quite frankly, they couldn't afford it. I know they are super proud of me, but neither of them went to college, and they don't really understand how it works.

Guess I was a little confused too. I thought the scholarship money would come directly to me so I could find a cheap place to live, but it went straight to the school to pay for my first year's room and board. All freshmen have to live on campus so getting my own place wasn't an option. It wasn't until Thanksgiving break that it dawned on me that the dorms were going to close for a week.

While everyone else was excited about going home to see their family, I didn't know how to even ask my parents for the money I needed to get home. Maybe I could just ride it out here? I told them I'd stay with some friend, but that was a lie. I don't know anyone well enough to ask if I could stay with them for a week. I have no idea where I'm going.



Figure 16 - Libby Silhouette

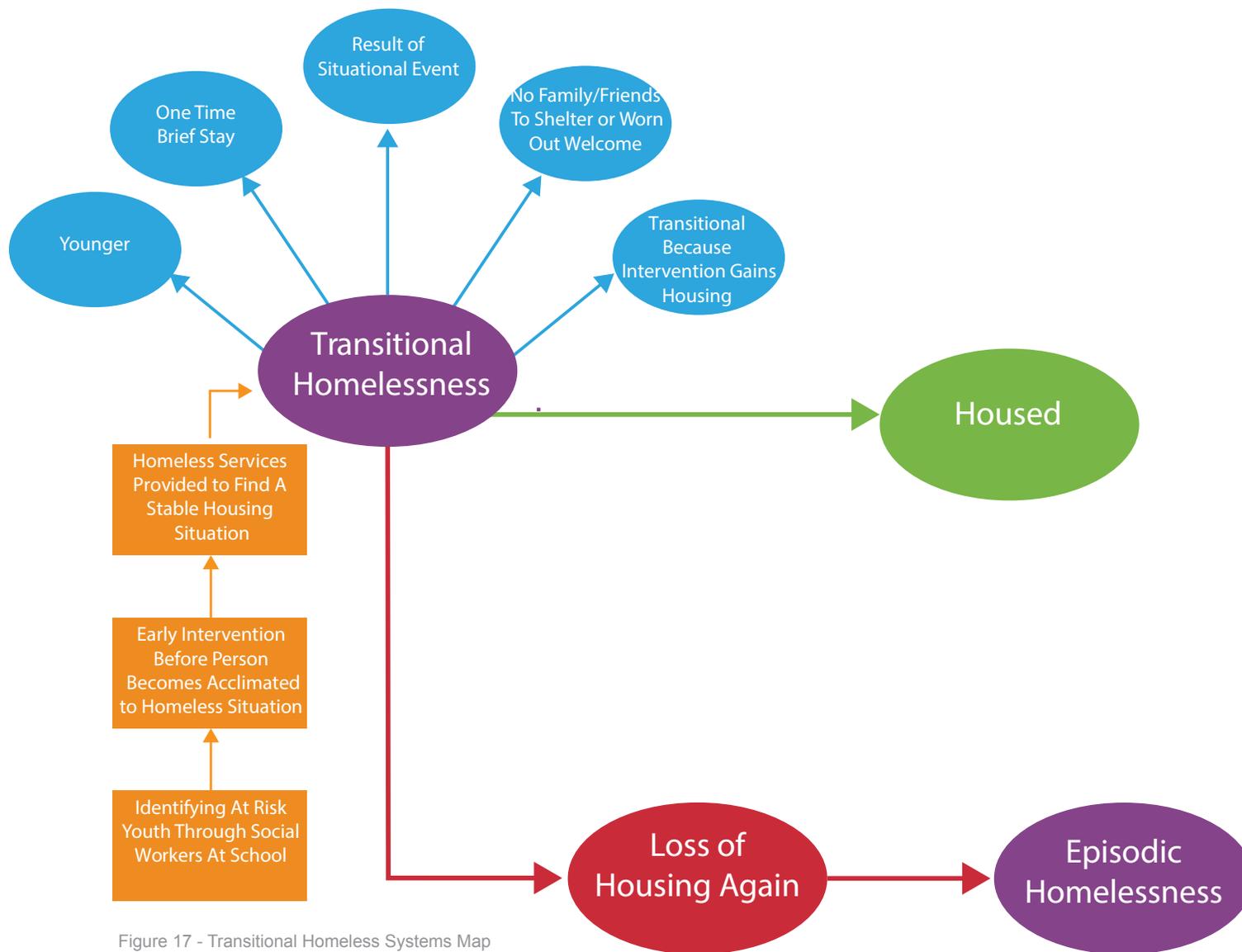


Figure 17 - Transitional Homeless Systems Map

That's tough, Libby. I want to find out what you decide to do a little later.

Transitional Homelessness can usually be resolved through the help of social services - getting a housing voucher, having a non-profit pay for a motel, or staying in a homeless shelter. It's a difficult situation, but it's usually temporary. Finding help takes time, and many of the programs

designed to help the Transitionally Homeless also face a lack of funding.

When a person experiences homelessness more than once, they become part of the Episodic Homeless. Karen experienced homelessness in the past, and it looks like she's heading that way again. Karen, tell us what's going on.

Karen

They raised the rent on me AGAIN!

Every year the rent goes up, but my pay sure doesn't. I'm working full time, but as a single mom, I'm barely making ends meet. I scarcely have enough for clothes from the thrift store between childcare for the baby, car maintenance, and food. Samantha's dad is a deadbeat. He's absolutely no help. He hasn't paid child support for almost a year.

When the landlord said he was raising the rent this time, I felt like I had no choice but to do what I'd done the last time rent outpaced my earnings. Put as much stuff as I could in the car, and live there until I can find another apartment I can afford. Last time, I parked at a shopping center outside the city, but they tore it down to make way for some seriously expensive townhouses.

All the parking lots near Samantha's child care won't allow parking overnight. I've got to try and save money on gas if I have any prayer of earning enough money for a decent place. As long as I keep working, I can pay for childcare and save for another deposit and the first month's rent. Guess this isn't really a good time to look for a new job.

I can make this work. I did it last time, and it's so much safer than going to

a homeless shelter. Besides the ones I know about don't allow you to park your car there. I have no idea where I'm going.



Figure 18 - Karen Silhouette

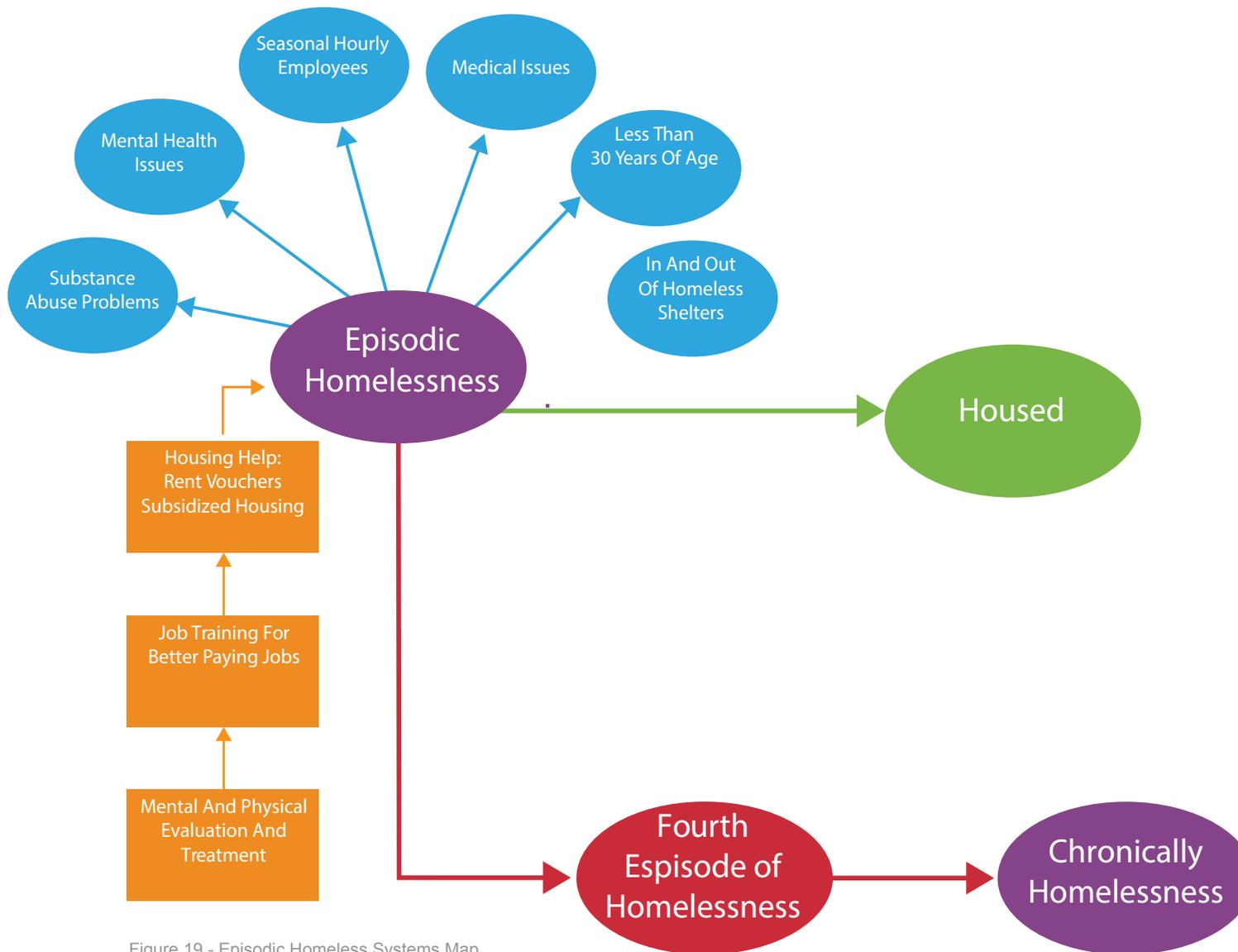


Figure 19 - Episodic Homeless Systems Map

I'm sorry you're going through such a difficult time. Thanks for sharing Karen. Tell me what you end up doing a little later:

The stories of Tristan, Libby and Karen, describe people who are unsheltered rather than homeless. They've lost shelter, but want to find a new home.

Joe is here to talk about the kind of homelessness people usually think of when they see unsheltered people in the landscape. He's chronically homeless. Joe, tell us about yourself.

Joe

I served my country for three tours in Afghanistan and two in Iraq. They'd let me come home for a few couple months, and then they'd shipped me back out again. Guess I had the kind of skills the military appreciated out there, but it was hard. I can't even talk about some of the stuff I've seen. I don't want to remember it. My wife doesn't understand what it was like.

For the most part, being home was like a strange vacation, just a few months to see the wife and kid, and I was able to hide the crazy feelings I'd have. It's life and death over there. You don't just drive down the road like you do in the states. You look for IED's and suicide bombers everywhere. People who didn't look died.

When I'd come home, my son, Kyle, and I made a game out of being vigilant and looking for danger, but my wife, June, didn't think it was a fun game. She thought when I was honorably discharged after my last deployment that I'd stop having all those feelings, and we'd move on to the next chapter of our lives, but I couldn't seem to adjust to civilian life. I was always looking

for danger. Everything felt like a threat. I couldn't understand how June could let Kyle play outside without guarding him. How did she just get into a car and start it when God only knew what someone might have put under it? June wanted me to get help, but I didn't feel like I needed help. She needed help so she could understand that danger was everywhere.

I started drinking to make life bearable. I had a hard time holding down a job. My boss didn't know why it took so long to do what he wanted me to do, and the last time he started yelling at me, I lost it. I risked my life serving my country, and I was not going to take garbage from a man that sat out the war at home. Screw that.

The fights with June just got worse and worse. She finally asked me to move out. I went to a motel for a while, but that was expensive. The VA was no help. They had all these hoops they wanted me to jump through so they could help me when I'd put my life on the line for their freedom. Stop drinking and see a shrink so they could bless me with a roof over my head? Man, I

have survivor skills. I know how to live in a tent. I've done it for years. I just don't know where I'm going to pitch it.

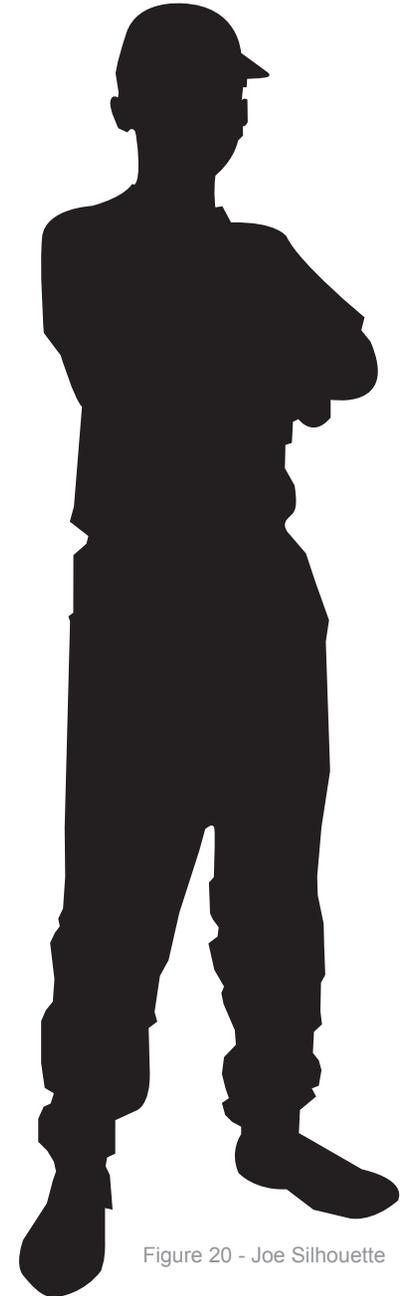


Figure 20 - Joe Silhouette

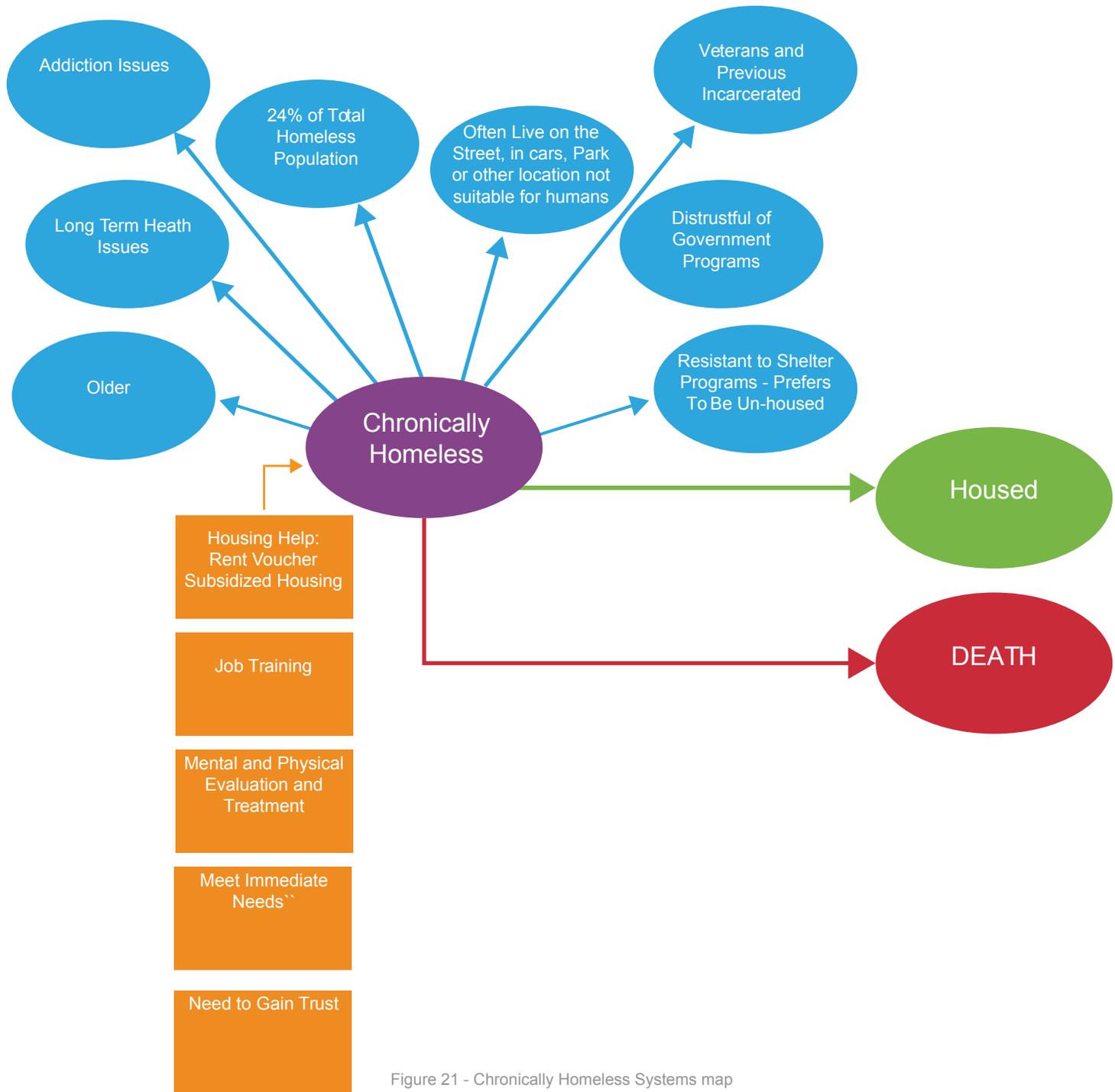


Figure 21 - Chronically Homeless Systems map



Figure 22 - Karen, Tristan, Libby, Joe Silhouette

Thank you for your service, Joe. Your home experience sounds like a challenging situation. We'll check in with you a little later too.

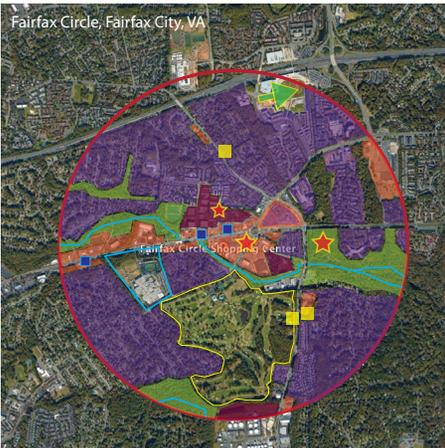
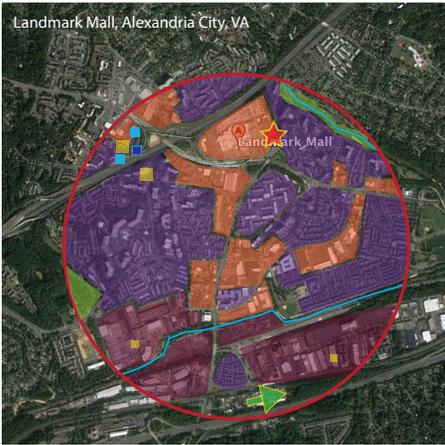
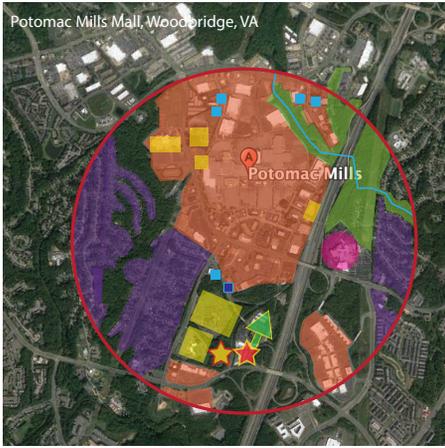
Helping someone who experiences Chronic Homelessness requires more than just social service. It usually involves mental health professionals to break the cycle of poor decision-making and convince them to use the services available. But change is hard. Chronically homeless people are the hardest to help because they can be distrustful of social and government programs. They choose to live in places others wouldn't

because it allows them to live life on their own terms.

I hope Tristan, Libby, Karen, and Joe's stories have convinced you that unsheltered people are still part of "the everyone" known as the public. Sure, the dream is for all of the unsheltered people to live in homes where their needs are met, but what do we do in the meantime?

Michelle started to look for a site where the landscape could meet them where they are right now.

Site Selection



Site Selection

Existing Unsheltered/Homeless Population

- Shelter
- Unsheltered Encampment
- Retail
- Industrial
- Residential
- Parkland
- Tributary
- Hospital
- House of Worship
- Mass Transit
- Hotels
- Motel

Differences

- Proximity to house of worship
- Motels
- Types of unsheltered
- City plan for redevelopment
- Unsheltered Accommodations/Services
- Medical services

Similarities

- Retail/industrial areas
- Proximity to parkland land water tributaries
- Adjacency
- Mixed residential
- Mass transportation within a mile of unsheltered population
- Access to food stores/restaurants/fast food
- Vacant building

Notes

- Encampments temporary

Typically, unsheltered people look for the same things sheltered people look for when choosing a place to live. They need to be near transportation, grocery stores, and medical facilities. Homeless encampments are often near homeless shelters, food pantries, and other charities catering to the unsheltered where they can get services when they want them. They may be near cheap motels, so they can get an inexpensive room when they can scrape up enough money. While sites at Potomac Mills Mall in Woodbridge, VA, and Landmark Mall in Alexandria, VA, showed some promise, they each had issues that made them less desirable candidates than Fairfax Circle Shopping Center in Fairfax Circle, VA.

The land around Potomac Mills Mall, where a large encampment existed, was slated for construction with a development plan already designed. Largely abandoned by retailers, Landmark Mall offers a homeless shelter where Macy's used to be, but again it is slated for construction with a fully executed design plan - changing the plans for either site seemed counterproductive and a waste of creative effort by the people who designed them. Fairfax Circle Shopping Center, an older strip mall located in what the City of Fairfax refers to as an Activity Center in their Master Plan, offered more potential.

Fairfax City's Master Plan divides the city into five different place types, Single-Family Detached Neighborhoods, Townhouse/Single Family Attached Neighborhood, Multifamily Neighborhoods, Commercial Corridors, and Activity Centers. Activity Centers are "locations in the

Figure 23 - Mapping Potomac Mills Mall, Landmark Mall, Fairfax Circle Shopping Center

Transform as part of Fairfax Circle Activity Center

<https://www.fairfaxva.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/15499/637286091088870000>

Encourage structure parking and minimize surface parking.

Promote orientation of buildings facing towards streets with architecture that engages street-level activity

Promote “Active Streetscapes” with minimal building setbacks, pedestrian amenities, street furniture, on street parking, landscaping and other features.

Support land planning that balances connectivity for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorist.

Clearly demonstrate the desired mix of uses, residential density, building intensity, design aesthetic, specific street locations and multi-modal connections, infrastructure improvements, parking and open space.

Target and coordinate public infrastructure improvements with desired infill, reinvestment, and development areas to encourage and stimulate private development.

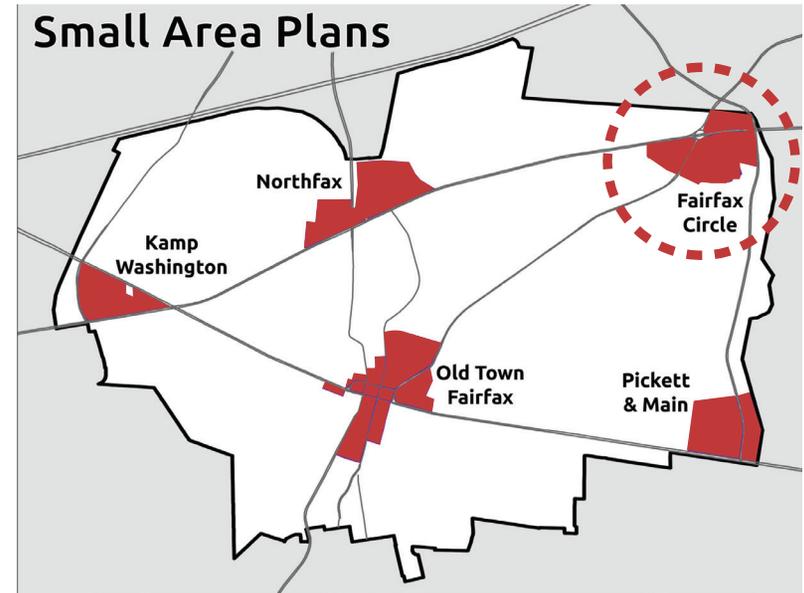


Figure 24 - Mapping Fairfax City Activity Centers

City where pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use development is strongly encouraged (City of Fairfax, 2020).”

Characteristics of an Activity Center include buildings that face the street, architectural elements that engage the public at street level, minimizing building setbacks, and encouraging pedestrian amenities like street furniture.

The City wants to reduce the number and area of parking lots, balance connectivity for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists, and encourage a mixed-use of building intensity, residential density, infrastructure improvements, and open green space.

The proposed changes are already happening all around Fairfax Circle Shopping Center. An abandoned motel across the street was torn down to make way for a new

WAWA, which offers electric car charging stations and donates day-old food to food pantries. A site that housed a mostly vacant strip mall with a massive parking lot is now home to Scout on the Circle, a multi-use town center with housing, retail, and office space. On either side of Fairfax Circle Shopping Center, owners tore older retail buildings to create street-facing buildings with smaller parking footprints and green space with outdoor furniture.

Property Age Analysis: Fairfax Circle Area, Fairfax City, VA



Figure 25 - Property Age Map, Fairfax Circle Area



Figure 26 - Shopping Center Profile Photo

The park trail architecture is industrial and shapes the experience.

Water in the park comes off parking lots, through culverts into armored shores, and rain



There were four separate encampments off the trail in the Willcoxen park Trail

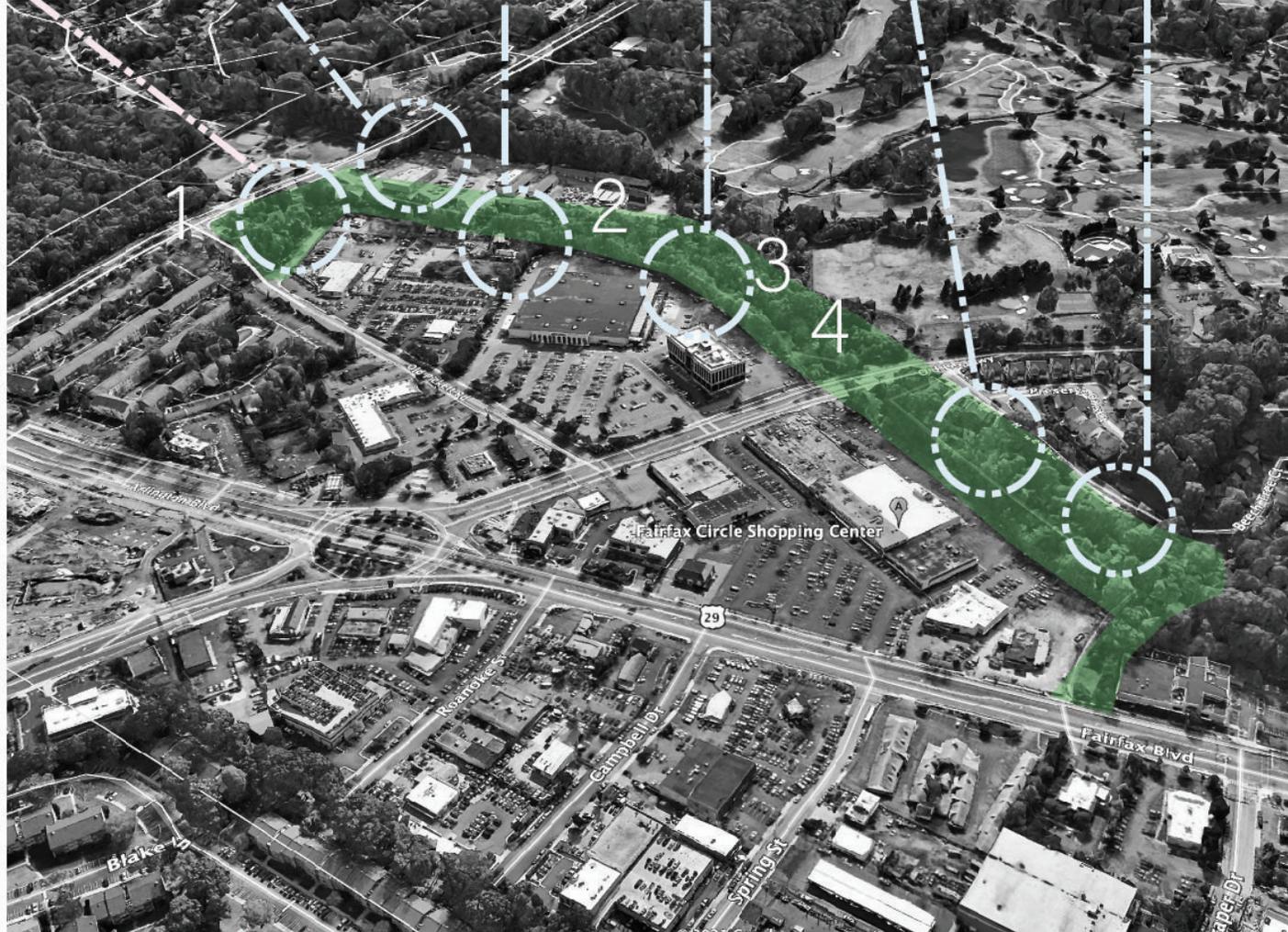
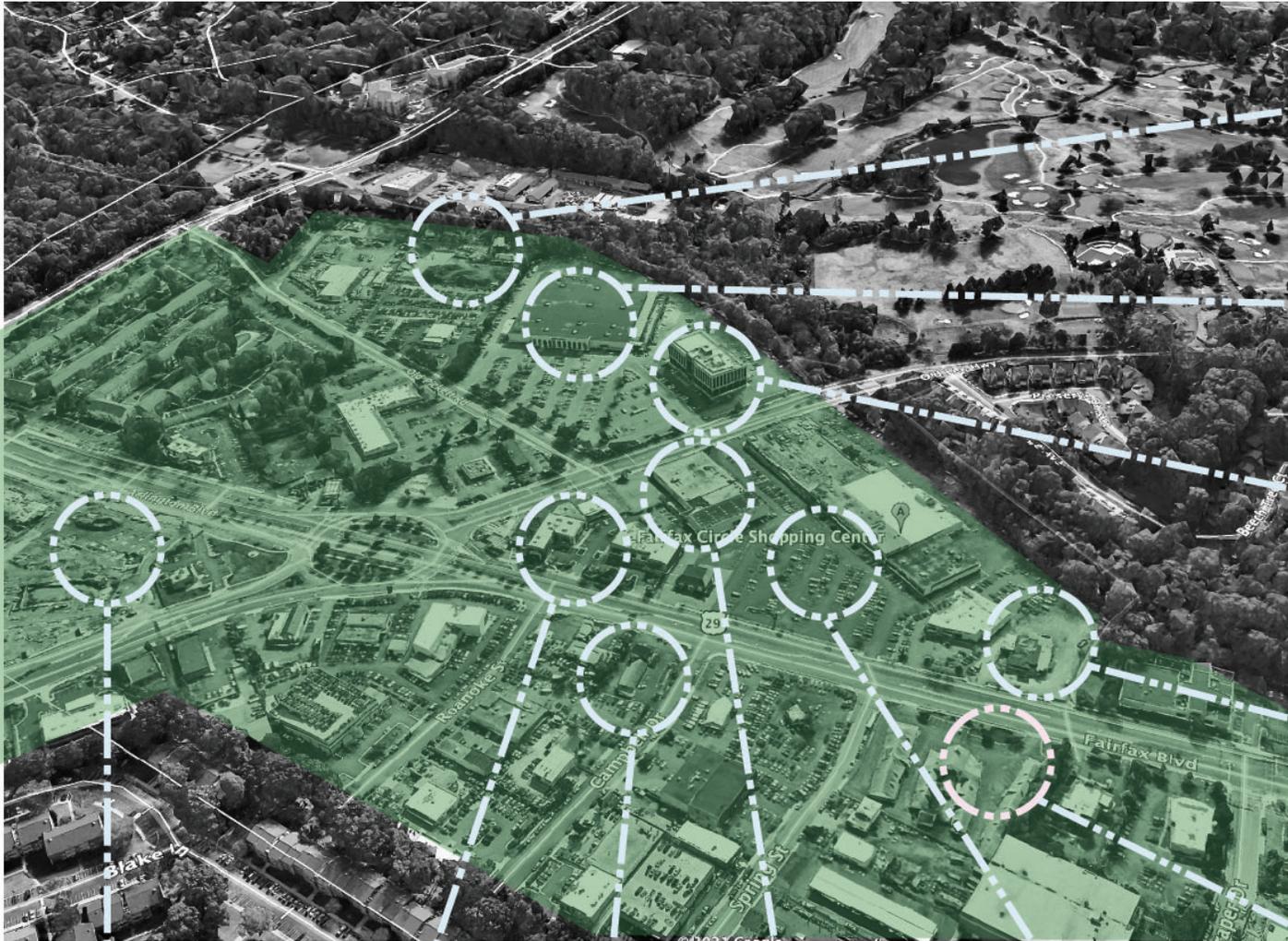


Figure 27 - Story Map of Park

PARK Activity Center



Adjacent buildings offer restrooms and supplies.

A new Wawa is being constructed facing new retail construction.



Scout on the Circle and rebuilt retail are what the future looks like. Aging infrastructure in the Circle Area, when renovated, will need to meet city Activity Center guidelines.

Figure 28 Story Map Activity Center

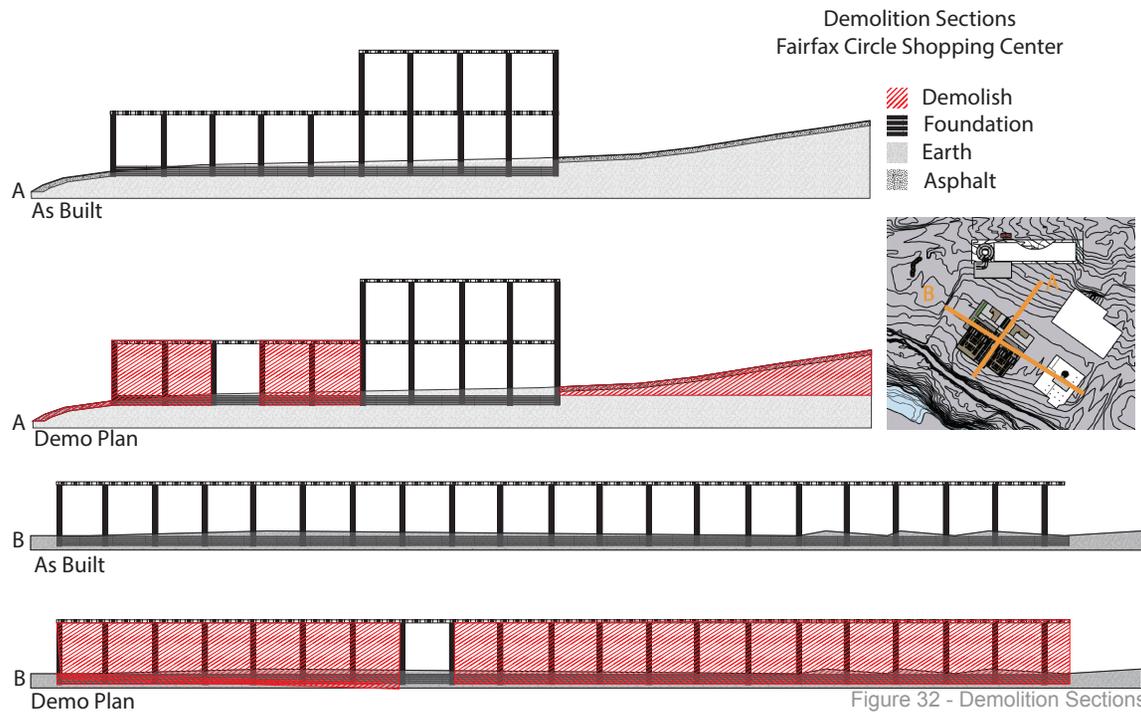
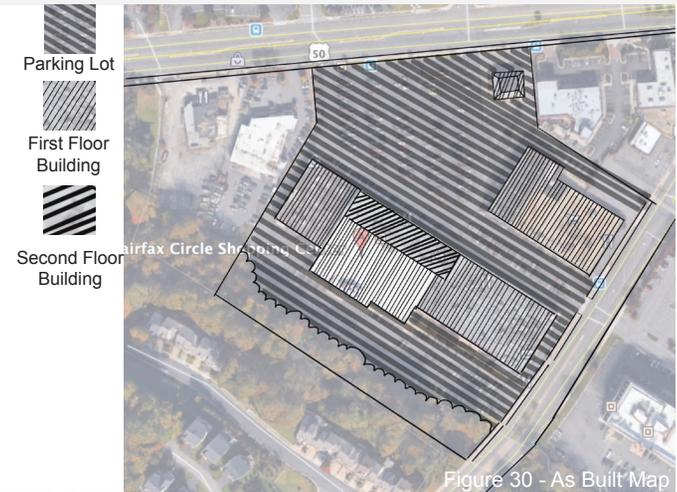
Site Analysis

The site offered opportunities to preserve existing infrastructure keeping material out of landfills and decreases the amount new materials needed on site. By preserving the water line of the original shopping center, bathrooms could be strategically located to take advantage and decrease costs. Parts of the exterior walls were preserved to create the kitchen garden and add micro climates. The second floor of the building were retained in parts to create covered walkways for the kitchen garden. While the building exists in a flood plain, the second floor was above areas that would get wet during a heavy rain. These areas were preserved to allow for future housing. Electricity to these areas were also preserved to allow the people using the areas to have access to power and data.

Google Map



As Built



Demolition Plan

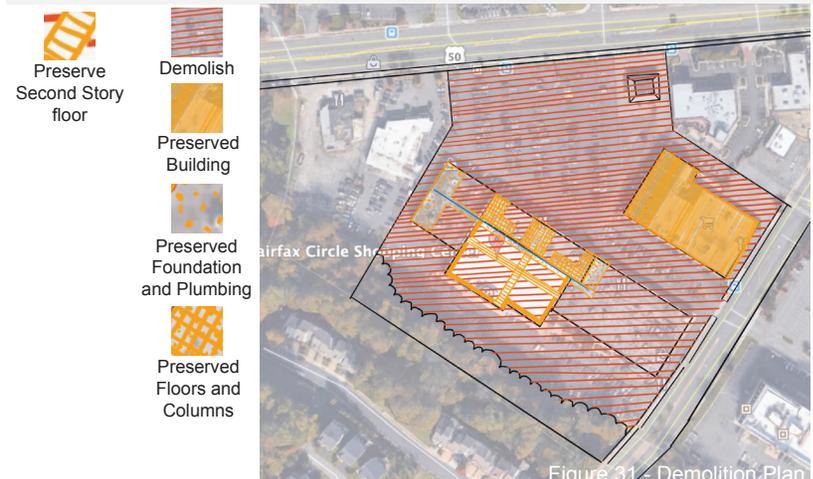




Figure 33 - Lady Landscape

What ultimately tipped the scale in Fairfax Circle Shopping Center's favor was the City's desire to coordinate public infrastructure improvements with private landowners' renovations to create a winning solution for everyone in the community. Fairfax Circle Shopping Center's age and extensive vacant square footage make the property ripe for renovation. In addition, the strip mall sits

squarely in the middle of the 100-year flood plain, while its parking lot sits out of harm's way close to the street. So, where's that floodwater coming from, one might wonder: Why from Accotink Creek that flows through Willcoxon Park directly behind the shopping center's building! That's where!

Now, this is when Lady L had to raise her hand and shake it around a bit to make sure Michelle

was paying attention. It was a fabulous idea to create a landscape for all those people who didn't have a home, but what about the water that didn't have a home? What about my friend Drop and his anxiety about falling to the Earth? What would happen to him?

Drop, why don't you tell us about this anxiety yourself.

Drop

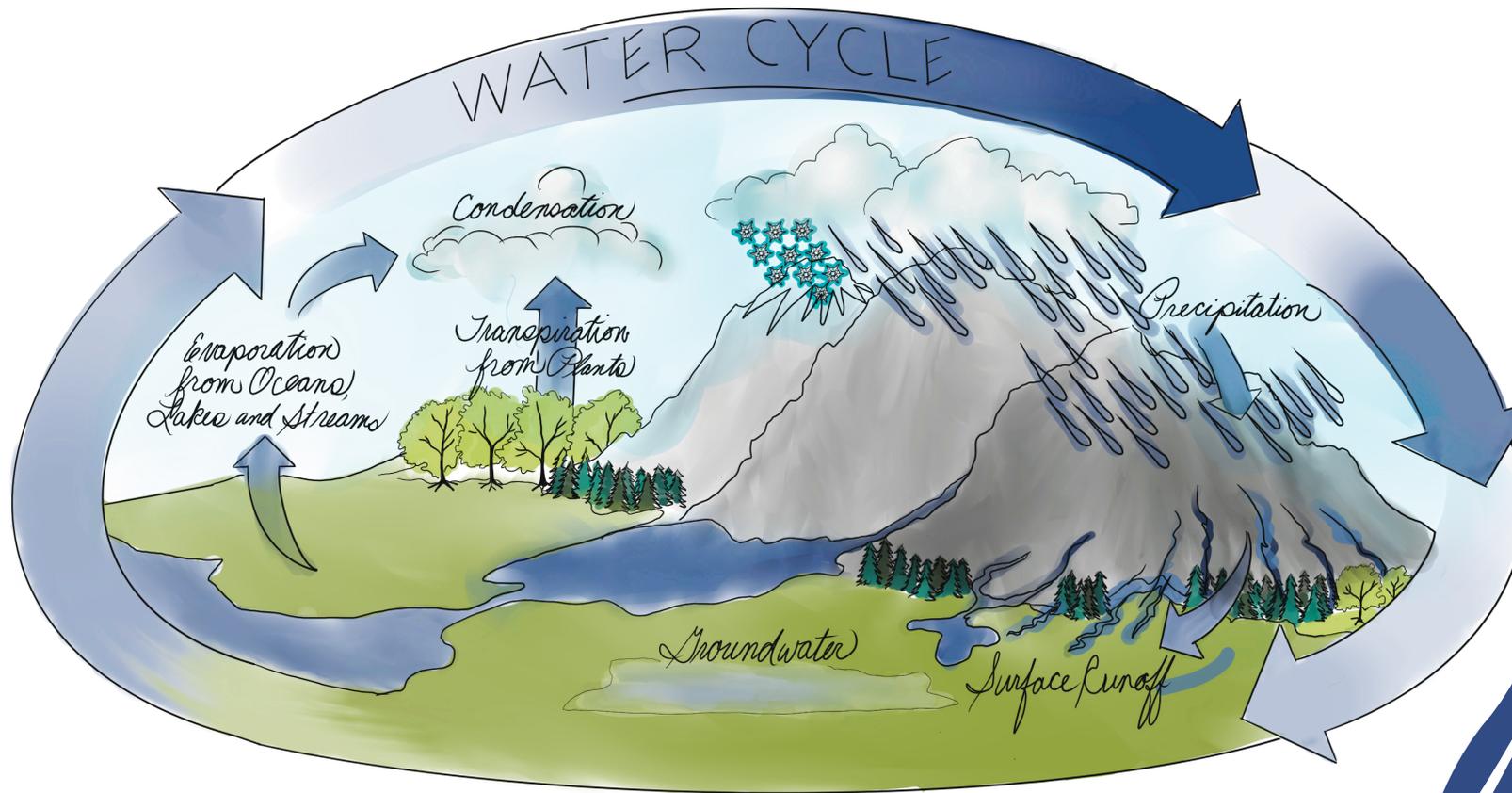


Figure 34 - Water Cycle Info-Graphic

Before all these buildings and parking lots were built, drops like me would fall from the sky and softly enter the water cycle. Some of us would enter the watershed through tributaries. Some of us would get absorbed into groundwater or reincarnate back into the water cycle through evaporation from large bodies of water or transpiration

from plants, but it's been a long time since I went through that kind of life cycle.

Falling to the ground was something I used to look forward to. Forests, native plants, and wildlife depended on me to complete my life cycle so they could continue theirs'. I was proud of the work I did back in the day, but now I dread going back.

Lady L and I talked about Michelle's Site, and it's not pretty from where I fall.

There are so many impervious surfaces. On the Water Site Analysis map (Figure 28), you can see that the Fairfax Circle area is almost entirely paved. Take a look at that 100-year and 500-year flood plain too. That's the consequence of forcing too

Water Site Analysis: Fairfax Circle Area, Fairfax City, Virginia



Figure 35 - Water analysis Fairfax Circle Area

Water Shed Delineation: Fairfax Circle, Fairfax City, Virginia



Figure 36 - Water shed delineation Fairfax Circle Area

much water into a stream never intended to carry so much water. Where are the places for me to fall softly and make my way to the groundwater supply or be taken up by a tree to be transpired so I can take this ride again?

The water shed delineation map (Figure 29) shows you what happens when one of us drops falls on the Fairfax Circle area en-masse. With almost certainty, we go directly into the underground stormwater system which dumps us in the creek. If we fall en-mass, it turns into a huge mess. The stormwater system wasn't designed to deal with

the other paved surfaces added over time. And if the parking lots and roads don't get you, the rooftops will. An impervious roof forces water into gutters and overwhelms landscapes, forcing them into the stormwater system too.

Oh, let's talk about the hitchhikers you get from those paved surfaces. Trash, oil, antifreeze, fertilizers, pesticides, and this one is my favorite; dog poop, is all along for the ride too. Where are we all going? Accotink Creek, which feeds right into the Potomac River.

Summer is even worse. All those dark paved areas get hot, and when we hit it, so do we. We're not talking about "putting on a sweater" hot. We're talking about soaking in a hot tub heat! We pull that heat with us as we gush through the stormwater system into streams killing wildlife and plants. During high rainfall, our gush overwhelms stream banks, eroding native riparian plants and trees. I'm not making friends anymore when I make this earthly visit. Just ask mallow.

Drop, that sounds traumatic, and you're doing it over and over. Mallow, how does this impact you?

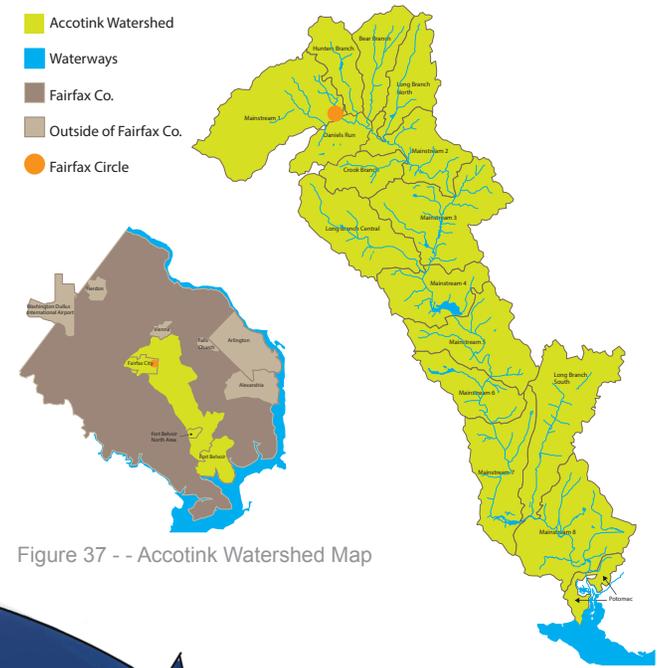


Figure 38 - Section of Fairfax Circle Shopping Center



Figure 39 - Accotink Creek behind Fairfax Circle Shopping Center dry weather condition

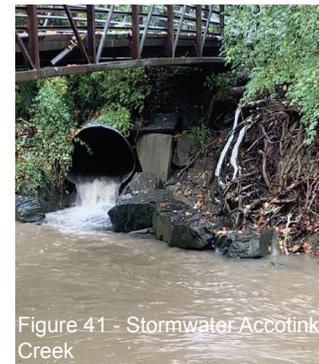


Figure 41 - Stormwater Accotink Creek

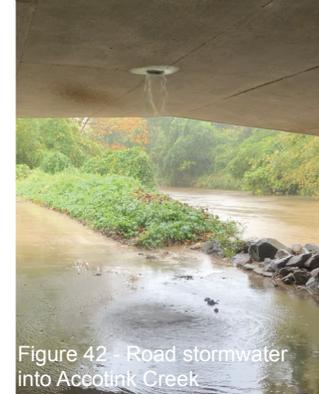


Figure 42 - Road stormwater into Accotink Creek



Figure 40 - Accotink Creek behind Fairfax Circle Shopping Center raining weather condition



Figure 43 - Roof run off into parking lot of shopping center

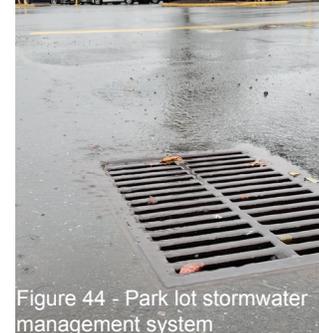


Figure 44 - Park lot stormwater management system

Mallow

Drop, I have to remind myself and the other native plants around me that you're not trying to destroy our home on purpose, but I admit sometimes it's a losing battle. When the water gushes in after a heavy rain, it takes away the soil leaving us clinging for our lives. The plants who depend on the soil underwater are the first to go as the rushing water pulls them out, roots and all. Next are the emergent plants that live on the land and water border. As a Marsh Mallow, I have a little more time because my roots go deeper, but I'm no match for a heavy storm. Riparian trees like river birches are the next to go, while the canopy trees are the last holdouts. They cling to the banks with exposed roots as they lean ever closer to the fast-moving waters.

Michelle's site shows the damage stormwater causes to our riparian home (Figure 32 & 33), and while city governments attempt to reinforce the banks, they forget that they were never meant to carry all that water. You mentioned all the hitchhikers you pick up on your way through the stormwater system, but you forgot one. Invasive plant seeds.

The seeds of invasive species often thrive in these conditions where we can't grow. They choke out native plants that provide habitats and sustenance for native wildlife when they take over. Native plants like us are losing our homes.

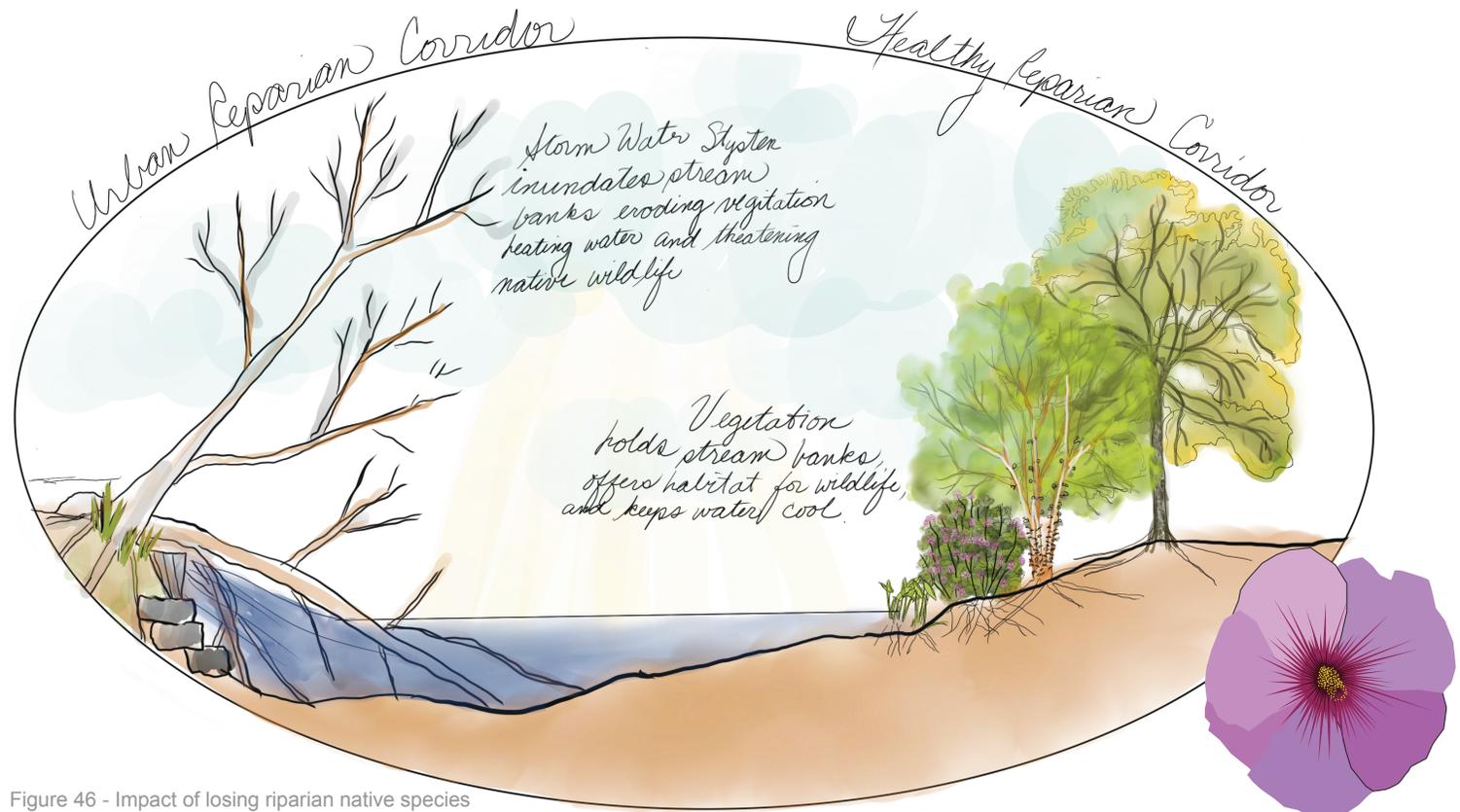


Figure 45 - Invasive plant species

Figure 46 - Impact of losing riparian native species

Design

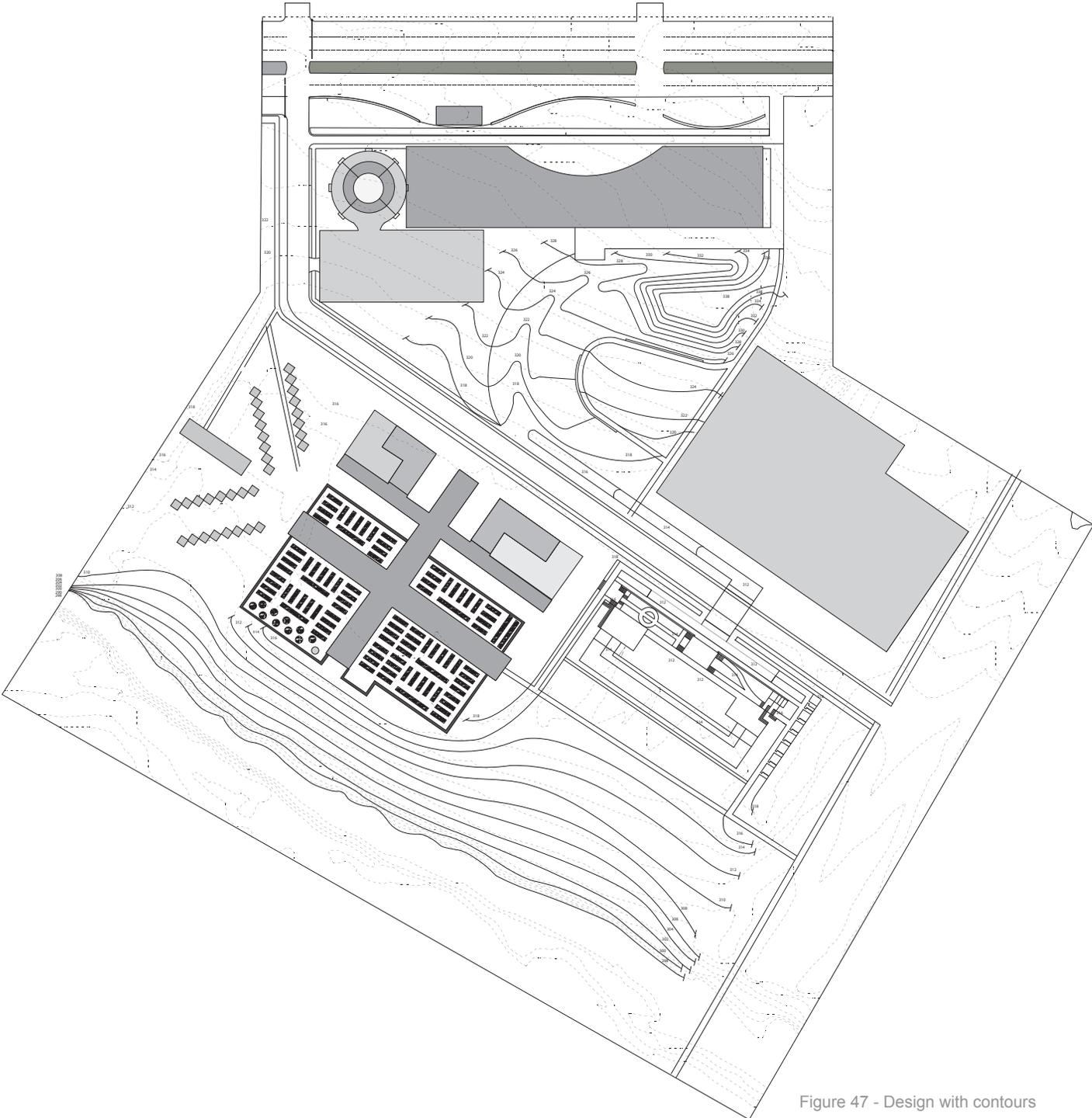
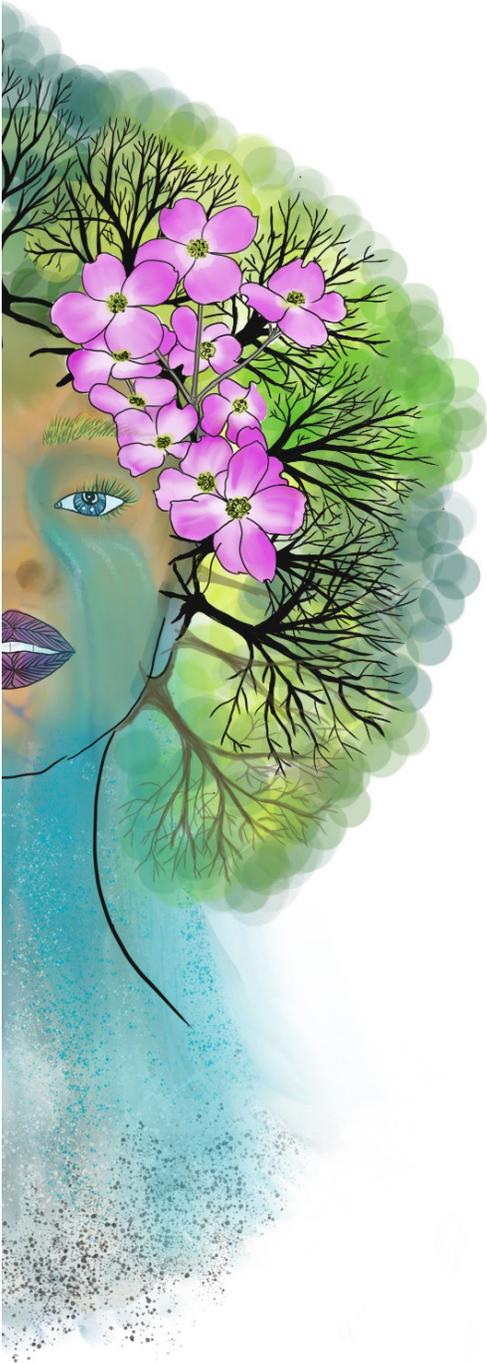


Figure 47 - Design with contours

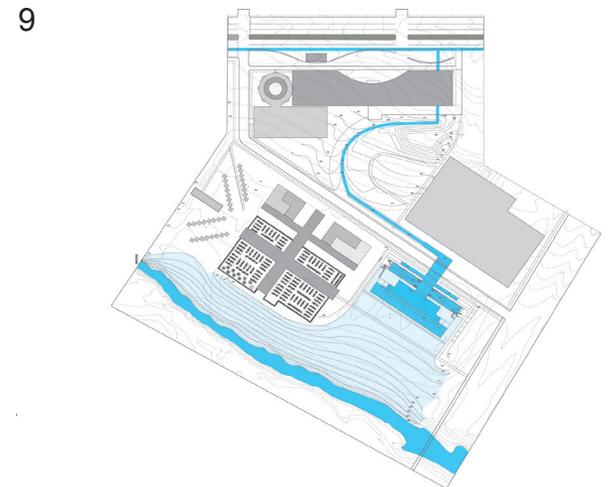
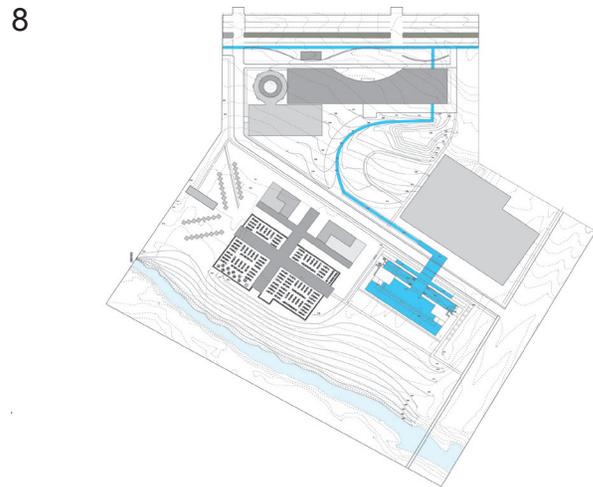
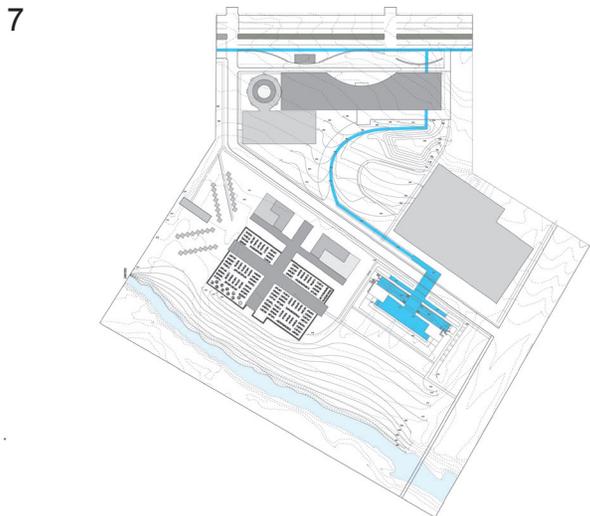
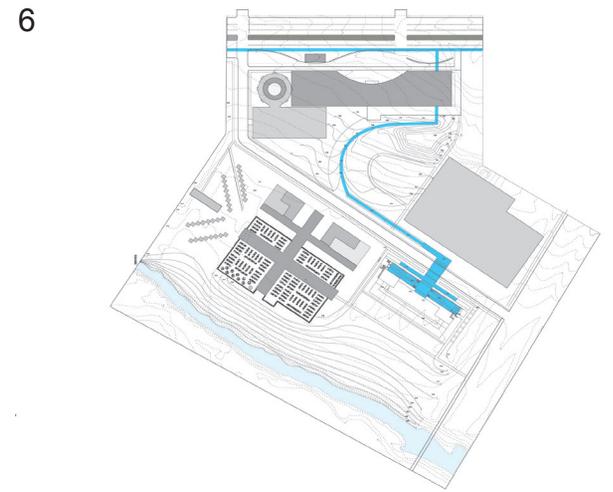
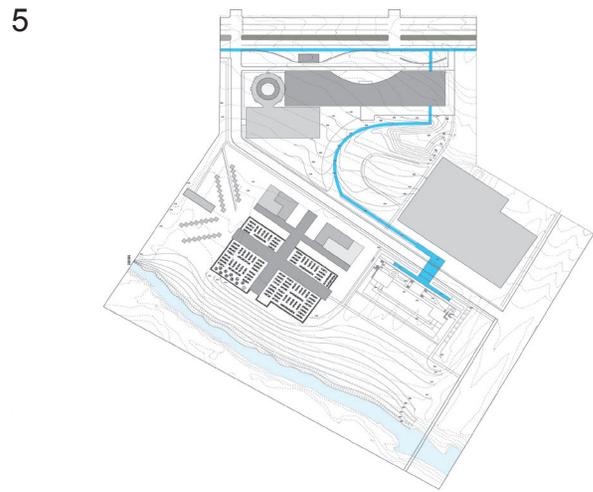
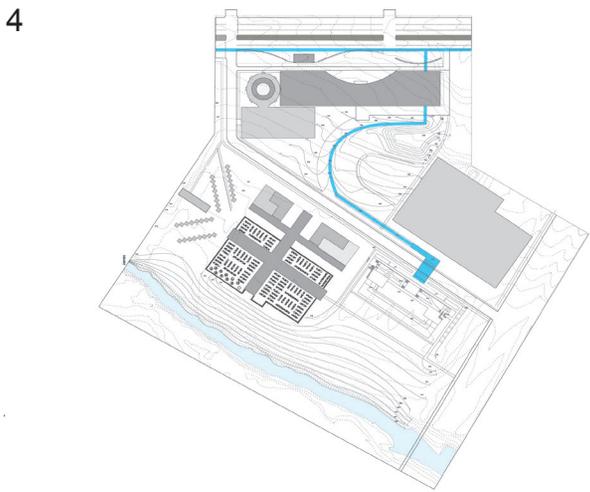
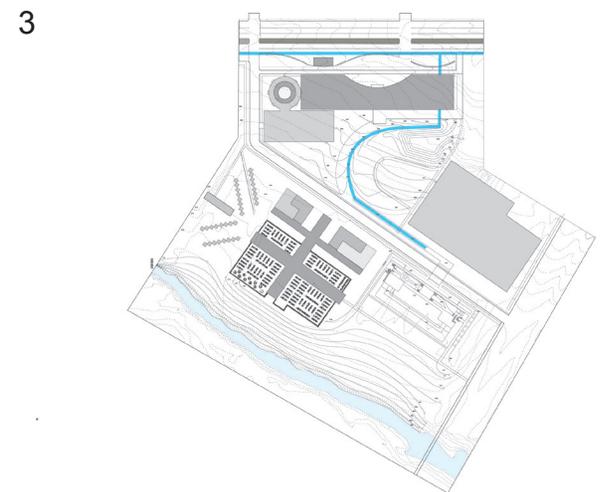
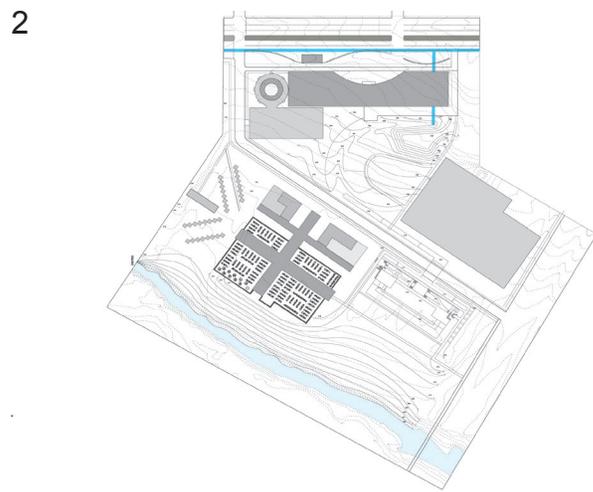
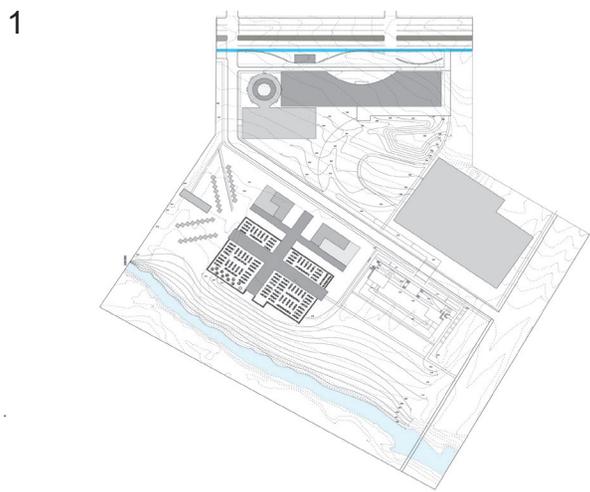


Figure 48 - New stormwater flow and retention

Drop



Drop, Lady L here. You had some specific issues with the way water was flowing over this site. Why don't you look at Michelle's design and give us your thoughts?

WOW! This is amazing! The shopping center was located right in the middle of a 100-year flood plain while the parking lot, located on higher ground, was safely out of harm's way. Michelle moved the shopping center to the higher ground, which makes a lot of sense. It also made room for the landscape to slow us

down when we fall from the sky.

Instead of hitting a paved surface and making a beeline for the Accotink Creek behind the shopping center, Michelle has us taking a slower, more circuitous route.

We fall onto the road and are sent into the water gutters, where Michelle diverted us into a vegetative swale. At the beginning of the swale, she graded the landscape to slow down our journey considerably. This helps in heavy rain where the initial gush of water might overwhelm the swale. The plants in the swale help take out the toxins and debris I picked up from the roadway while their roots absorb water, so fewer of us make our way to the creek. I have a feeling mallow and her friends are going to appreciate that.

From the swale, Michelle collected us in a sunken garden with terraced levels that fill and empty depending on the intensity of the rain. By retaining us this way, she keeps us out of the creek most of the time, but if a particularly heavy storm occurs, she terraced the land between the sunken garden and the stream to give us a nice gentle ride to the creek. I think we've found a home on this site. How'd that impact you and your friends, mallow?

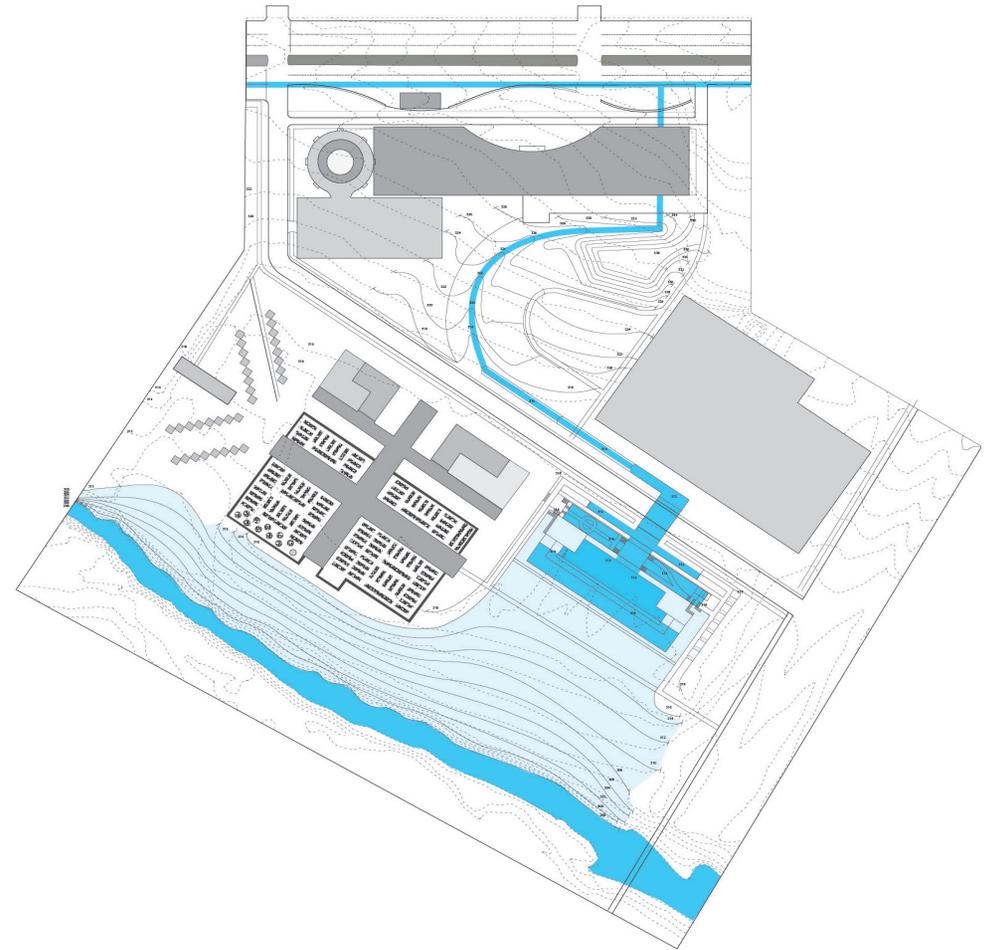
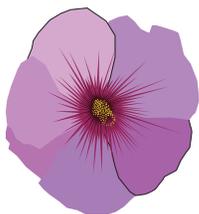


Figure 49 - New stormwater flow plan

Mallow



In taking care of your issues, Drop, Michelle helped us with ours! We needed some space to call home with water to feed our roots, not wash us away. She wanted to do that in a beautiful way inspired by the work of Beatrix Farrand, the first female landscape architect and founding member of the American Society of Landscape Architecture.

While Michelle was inspired by Beatrix Farrand's Dumbarton Oaks, she would have to make significant adjustments to give this site a place for my native friends and me (Figure 41, 42, and 43).

With its defined gardens, terraces, and walkways that flow from one garden room to the next, Dumbarton Oaks is fantastic, but it's filled with unsustainable non-native plants. Farrand's planting plans actually call for the removal and replacement of trees when they grow to their natural size!

Michelle needed to take the best part of Farrand's design and incorporate native plants with reasonable maintenance for a public park without a millionaire owner. Farrand used an almost musical genius to conduct the landscape into a symphony of seasonal color, adding cadence through stairs, avenues, and walkways. Michelle needed to devise

her own landscape music, and she did.

From walkways that allow each part of the landscape to be experienced to the planting pallet with year-round seasonal interest to the tree forest of the Wilderness to the garden room terraces and avenues of the sunken garden, Michelle's design, inspired by Farrand, is a native plant nirvana.

The vegetative swale is thick with Witch Hazel, Spice Bush, Winterberry, and Cattails for year-round interest and water absorption. The road Allees feature Sweetbay Magnolia with a lemony scented flower in Summer and Black Gums, which offer fantastic Fall color. The



Figure 50- Dumbarton Oaks Urn Terrace



Figure 51 - Dumbarton Oaks Rose Garden



Figure 52 - Dumbarton Oaks Lover's Lane Pool

field behind the parking garage is planted with an eco-grass that doesn't require mowing. She sprinkled the area with naturalized daffodils and accented it with Red Buds creating a spectacular crescendo in Spring. The forested Wilderness adjacent to the creek is filled with Sycamores, Red Maples, American Hornbeam, Lobloby Pines, and Shaggy Hickory which can take the water if it floods yet still offer a steadfast melody of color year-round. And finally, there's the Sunken Garden where I live now.

While Farrand designed an elegant rose garden that sings in the Summer, Michelle created a lush marsh mallow garden that hums with color. Marsh

Mallows, like me, tolerate water inundation from time to time and bloom profusely in Summer with large multi petal flowers. She used several different species, including me! A Candy Crush March Mallow. She also included climbing swamp roses and swamp milkweed in various shades of rose. I feel like my Marsh Mallow friends, and I create the most striking garden room of the sunken garden, but I'm a little biased. We're home!

Look at the planting plan on the following pages, and see how the garden sings the same music with a different verse from one season to the next.

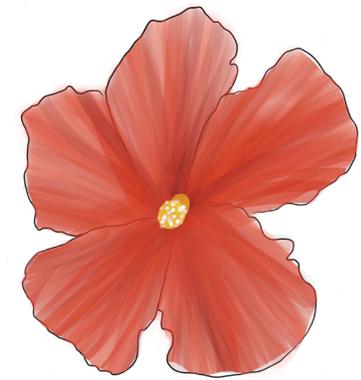


Figure 54 - Hibiscus mosheutos Lord Baltimore

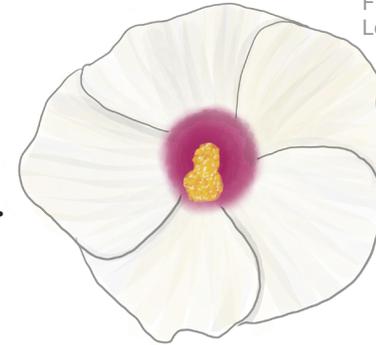


Figure 55 - Hibiscus mosheutos Luna White

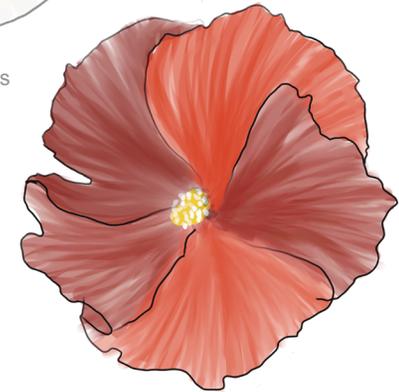


Figure 56 - Hibiscus mosheutos Robert Fleming

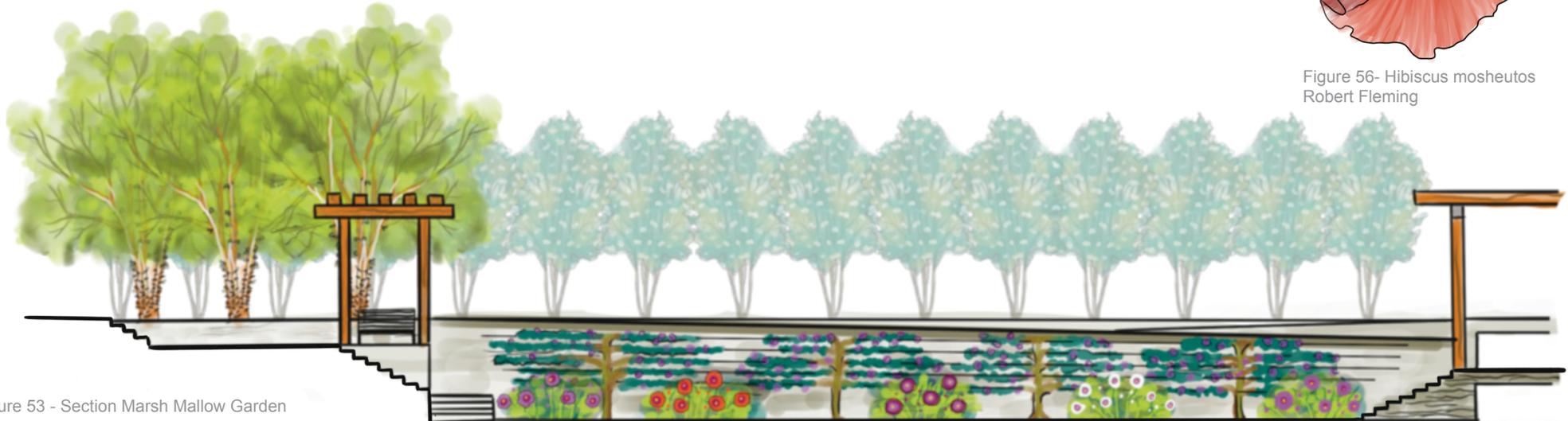


Figure 53 - Section Marsh Mallow Garden

Planting Plan Winter



Figure 57 - Planting Plan Winter

Sunken Garden (Winter)

Entry

-  River Birch (*Betula nigra*)
-  Sweetbay Magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*)
-  Oak Leaf Hydrangea Ruby Slippers (*Hydrangea quercifolia*)
-  Joe Pye Weed/Bartered Bride (*Eupatorium fistulosum albidum ana*)

East Terrace

-  Wild Plum (*Prunus americana*)
-  Magnolia "Jane" (*Magnoiaceae*)
-  Northern White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*)

Wilderness (Winter)

-  Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*)
-  Shaggy Hickory (*Carya ovata*)
-  Loblolly Pine (*Pinus taeda*)
-  Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*)
-  American Hornbeam (*Carpinus caroliniana*)

Water Garden

-  Bald Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*)
-  Button Bush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)
-  Southern Blue Flag Iris (*Iris virginica*)
-  Duck Potato (*Sagittaria latifolia*)
-  Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*)

Azalea Garden

-  Swamp Azelea (*Rhododendron viscosum*)
-  Loblolly Pine (*Pinus taeda*)

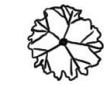
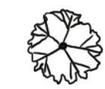
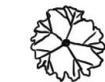
Vegetative Swale (Winter)

-  Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*)
-  Red Twig Dogwood (*Cornus sericea 'Cardinal'*)
-  Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*)
-  Cat Tails (*Typha latifolia*)

South Avenue

-  Corkscrew Willow (*Prunus americana*)
-  Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*)
-  American Hornbeam (*Carpinus caroliniana*)

Rose Garden

-  Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)
-  Swamp Mallow (*Althaea officinalis*)
-  Swamp Rose (*Rosa palustris*)

Road Allee (Winter)

-  Sweetbay Magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*)
-  Black Gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*)
-  Red Bud (*Cercis canadensis*)
-  Daffodil (*Narcissus*)
-  Northern White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*)

Field

Table 1 - Plant Schedule Winter

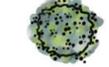
Spring



Figure 58 - Planing Plan Spring

Sunken Garden (Spring)

Entry

-  River Birch (*Betula nigra*)
-  Sweetbay Magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*)
-  Oak Leaf Hydrangea Ruby Slippers (*Hydrangea quercifolia*)
-  Joe Pye Weed/Bartered Bride (*Eupatorium fistulosum/albidum/ana*)

East Terrace

-  Wild Plum (*Prunus americana*)
-  Magnolia "Jane" (*Magnoliaceae*)
-  Northern White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*)

Wilderness (Winter)

-  Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*)
-  Shaggy Hickory (*Carya ovata*)
-  Loblolly Pine (*Pinus taeda*)
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Water Garden

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Azalea Garden

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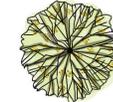
South Avenue

-  Corkscrew Willow (*Prunus americana*)
-  Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*)
-  American Hornbeam (*Carpinus caroliniana*)

Rose Garden

-  Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)
-  Swamp Mallow (*Althaea officinalis*)
-  Swamp Rose (*Rosa palustris*)

Road Allee (Winter)

-  Sweetbay Magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*)
-  Black Gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*)

Field

-  Red Bud (*Cercis canadensis*)
-  Daffodil (*Narcissus*)
-  Northern White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*)

Table 2 - Plant Schedule Spring

Summer



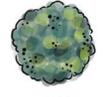
Figure 59 - Planing Plan Sumer

Sunken Garden (Summer)

Entry

-  River Birch (*Betula nigra*)
-  Sweetbay Magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*)
-  Oak Leaf Hydrangea Ruby Slippers (*Hydrangea quercifolia*)
-  Joe Pye Weed Bartered Bride (*Eupatorium fistulosum albidum ana*)

East Terrace

-  Wild Plum (*Prunus americana*)
-  Magnolia "Jane" (*Magnoiaceae*)
-  Northern White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*)

Wilderness (Winter)

-  Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*)
-  Shaggy Hickory (*Carya ovata*)
-  Loblolly Pine (*Pinus taeda*)
-  Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*)
-  American Hornbeam (*Carpinus caroliniana*)

Water Garden

-  Bald Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*)
-  Button Bush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)
-  Southern Blue Flag Iris (*Iris virginica*)
-  Duck Potato (*Sagittaria latifolia*)
-  Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*)

Azalea Garden

-  Swamp Azelea (*Rhododendron viscosum*)
-  Loblolly Pine (*Pinus taeda*)

Vegetative Swale (Winter)

-  Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*)
-  Red Twig Dogwood (*Cornus sericea 'Cardinal'*)
-  Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*)
-  Cat Tails (*Typha latifolia*)

South Avenue

-  Corkscrew Willow (*Prunus americana*)
-  Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*)
-  American Hornbeam (*Carpinus caroliniana*)

Rose Garden

-  Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)
-  Swamp Mallow (*Althaea officinalis*)
-  Swamp Rose (*Rosa palustris*)

Road Allee (Winter)

-  Sweetbay Magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*)
-  Black Gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*)

Field

-  Red Bud (*Cercis canadensis*)
-  Daffodil (*Narcissus*)
-  Northern White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*)

Table 3 - Plant Schedule Sumer

Fall



Figure 60 - Planing Plan Fall

Sunken Garden (Fall)

Entry

-  River Birch (*Betula nigra*)
-  Sweetbay Magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*)
-  Oak Leaf Hydrangea Ruby Slippers (*Hydrangea quercifolia*)
-  Joe Pye Weed Bartered Bride (*Eupatorium fistulosum albidum ana*)

East Terrace

-  Wild Plum (*Prunus americana*)
-  Magnolia "Jane" (*Magnoiaceae*)
-  Northern White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*)

Wilderness (Winter)

-  Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*)
-  Shaggy Hickory (*Carya ovata*)
-  Loblolly Pine (*Pinus taeda*)
-  Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*)
-  American Hornbeam (*Carpinus caroliniana*)

Water Garden

-  Bald Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*)
-  Button Bush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)
-  Southern Blue Flag Iris (*Iris virginica*)
-  Duck Potato (*Sagittaria latifolia*)
-  Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*)

Azalea Garden

-  Swamp Azelea (*Rhododendron viscosum*)
-  Loblolly Pine (*Pinus taeda*)

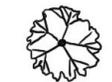
Vegetative Swale (Winter)

-  Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*)
-  Red Twig Dogwood (*Cornus sericea 'Cardinal'*)
-  Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*)
-  Cat Tails (*Typha latifolia*)

South Avenue

-  Corkscrew Willow (*Prunus americana*)
-  Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*)
-  American Hornbeam (*Carpinus caroliniana*)

Rose Garden

-  Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)
-  Swamp Mallow (*Althaea officinalis*)
-  Swamp Rose (*Rosa palustris*)

Road Allee (Winter)

-  Sweetbay Magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*)
-  Black Gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*)
-  Red Bud (*Cercis canadensis*)

Field

-  Daffodil (*Narcissus*)
-  Northern White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*)

Table 4 - Plant Schedule Fall



Figure 61 - Lady Landscape

Mallow and Drop, thanks for sharing how Michelle's design gave you a home in the landscape. It's incredible how beautiful a place can be when you listen to Lady L and let the land tell you what it needs first.

Now, let's take a closer look at some of the elements designed for the people she hopes to have in this landscape.

Bus Kiosk

The Bus Kiosk serves as more than a place to wait for public transportation. The roof collects rainwater into a gray water system which provides water for the toilets in the public restroom located discreetly in the back of the kiosk. A help display generates information for bus arrivals and departures with an option for information about Safe Haven, the park behind the shopping center (Figure 53).

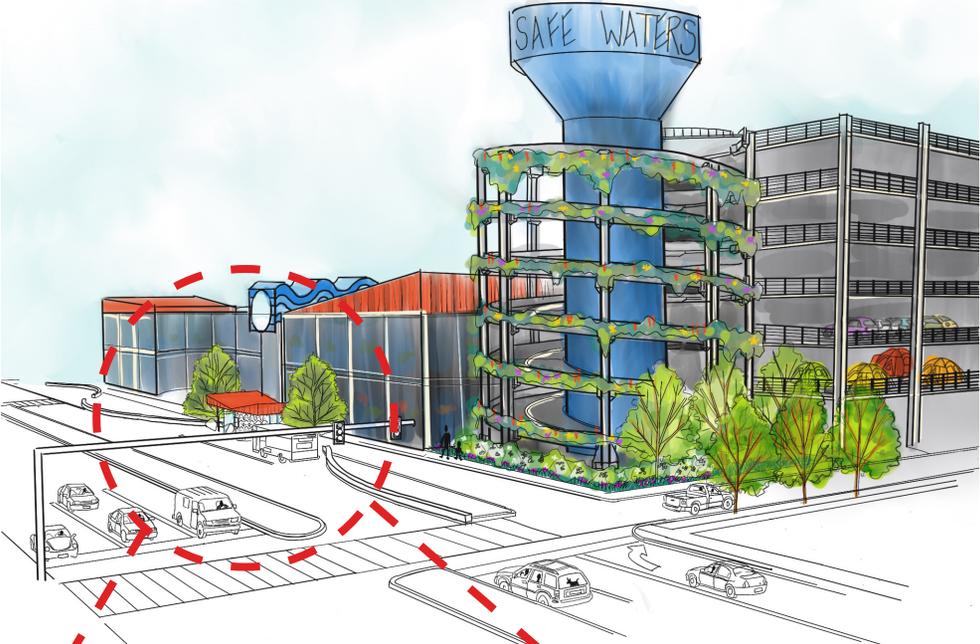


Figure 63 - New Fairfax Circle Shopping Center

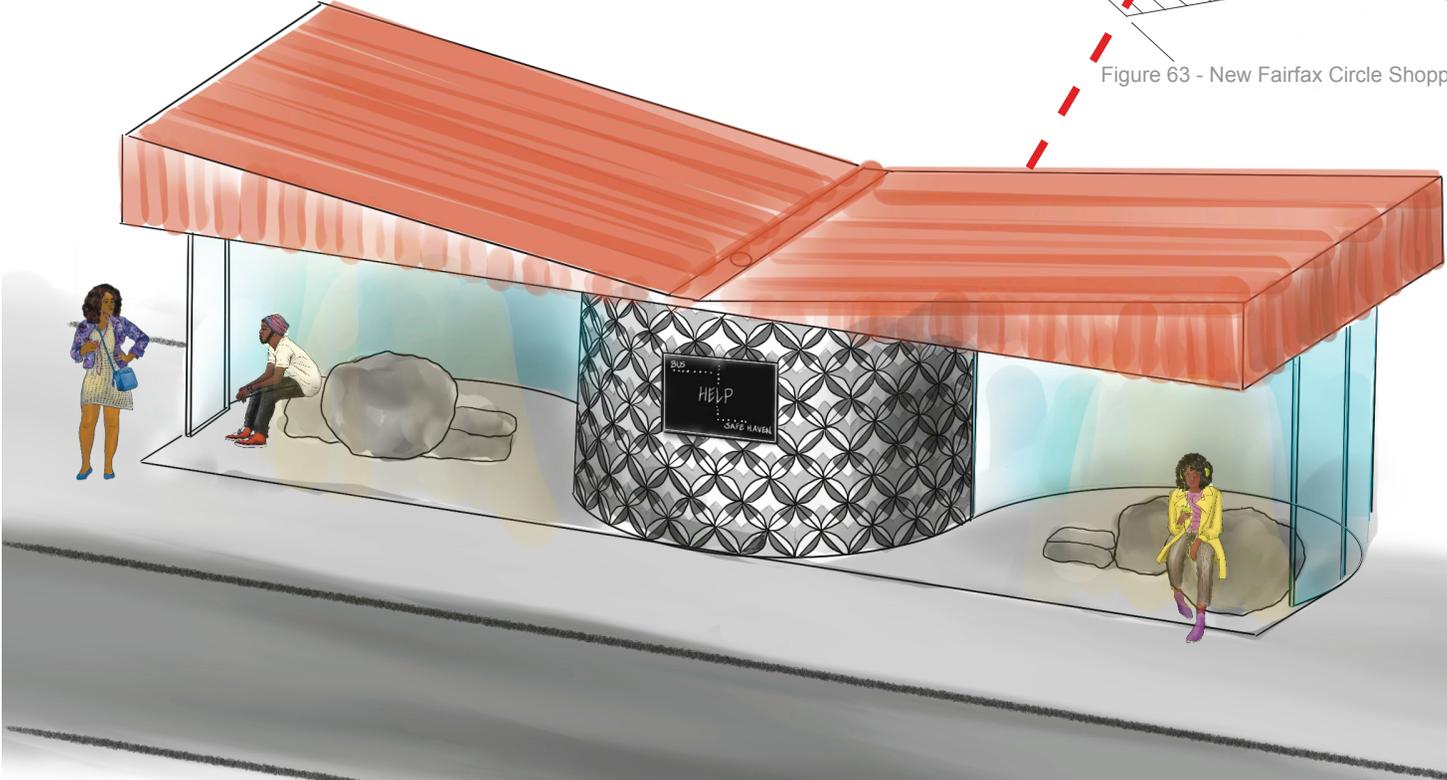


Figure 62 - Bus Kiosk

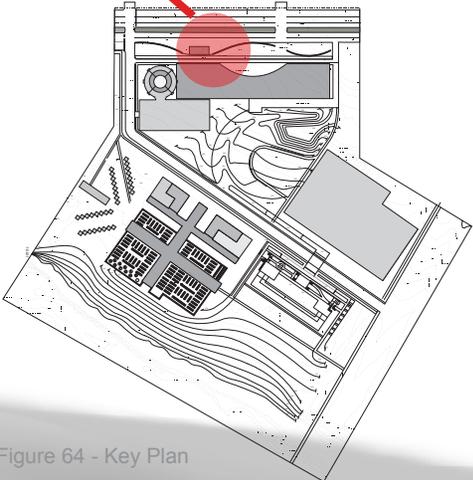


Figure 64 - Key Plan

The Field

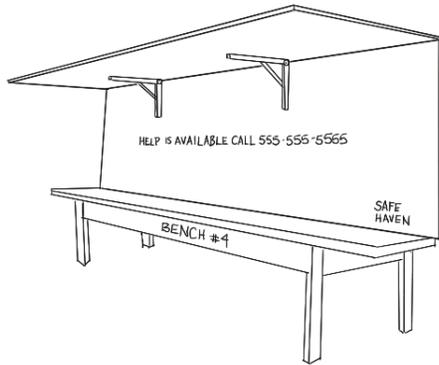


Figure 65 - Bench with shelter back raised

The field adjacent to the shopping center's garage is planted with large White Cedars on the garage's perimeter, offering people using designated levels for car and tent camping some privacy. Between Red Buds that line the walkway are park benches that transform into a sleeping surface at night. The bench advertises a phone number for Safe Haven and is marked with a bench number so it can be found easily in an emergency. The back of the bench opens to create a shelter from inclement weather. During the day, the bench advertises as a place to sit, and at night as a bedroom. Lamp posts are located close to the benches to offer security to people using them as bedrooms at night.



Figure 66- Bench during the day



Figure 67- Bench at night with illuminated paint

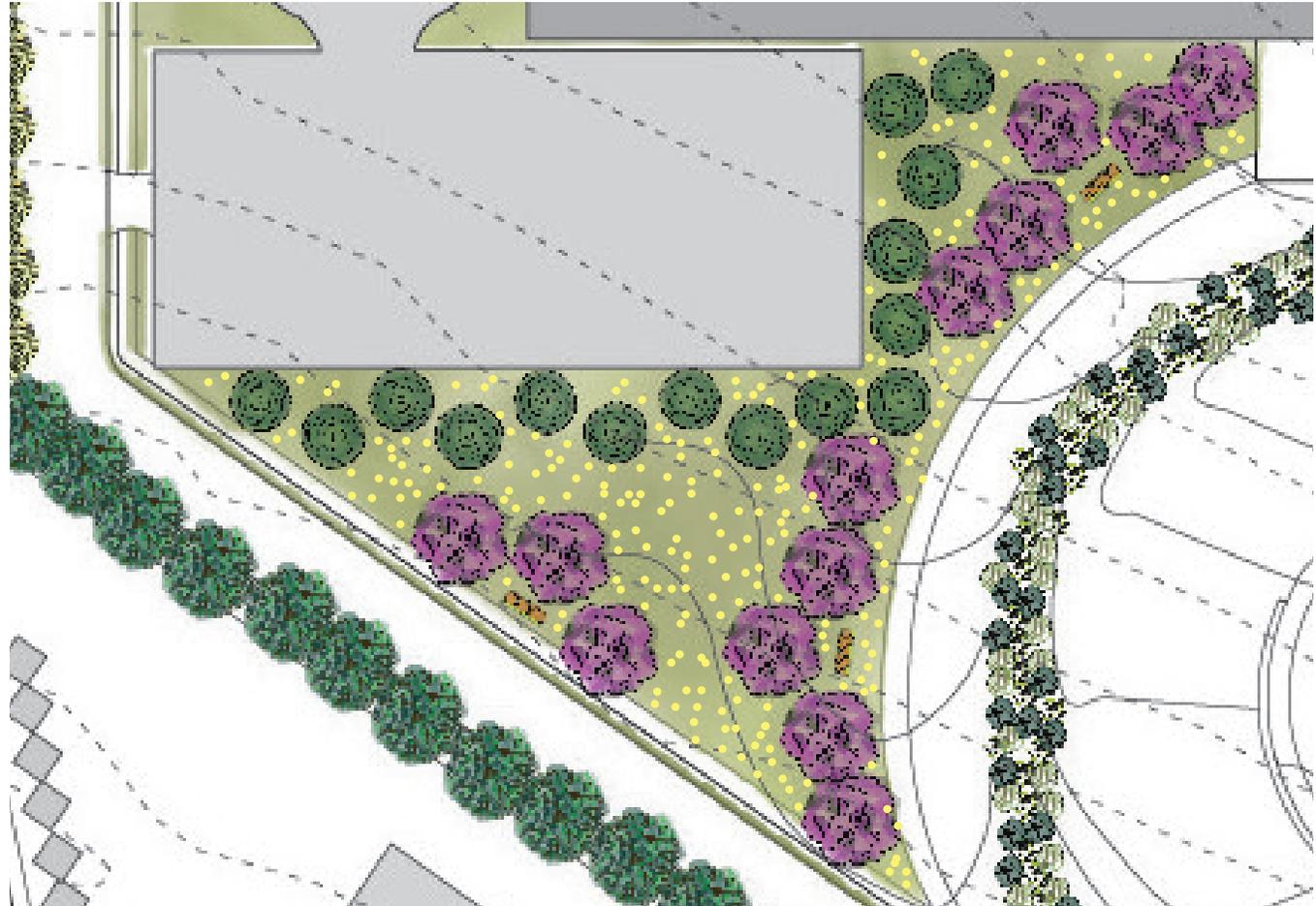


Figure 68 - Field design plan (Spring)

Vegetative Swale and Natural Play Ground

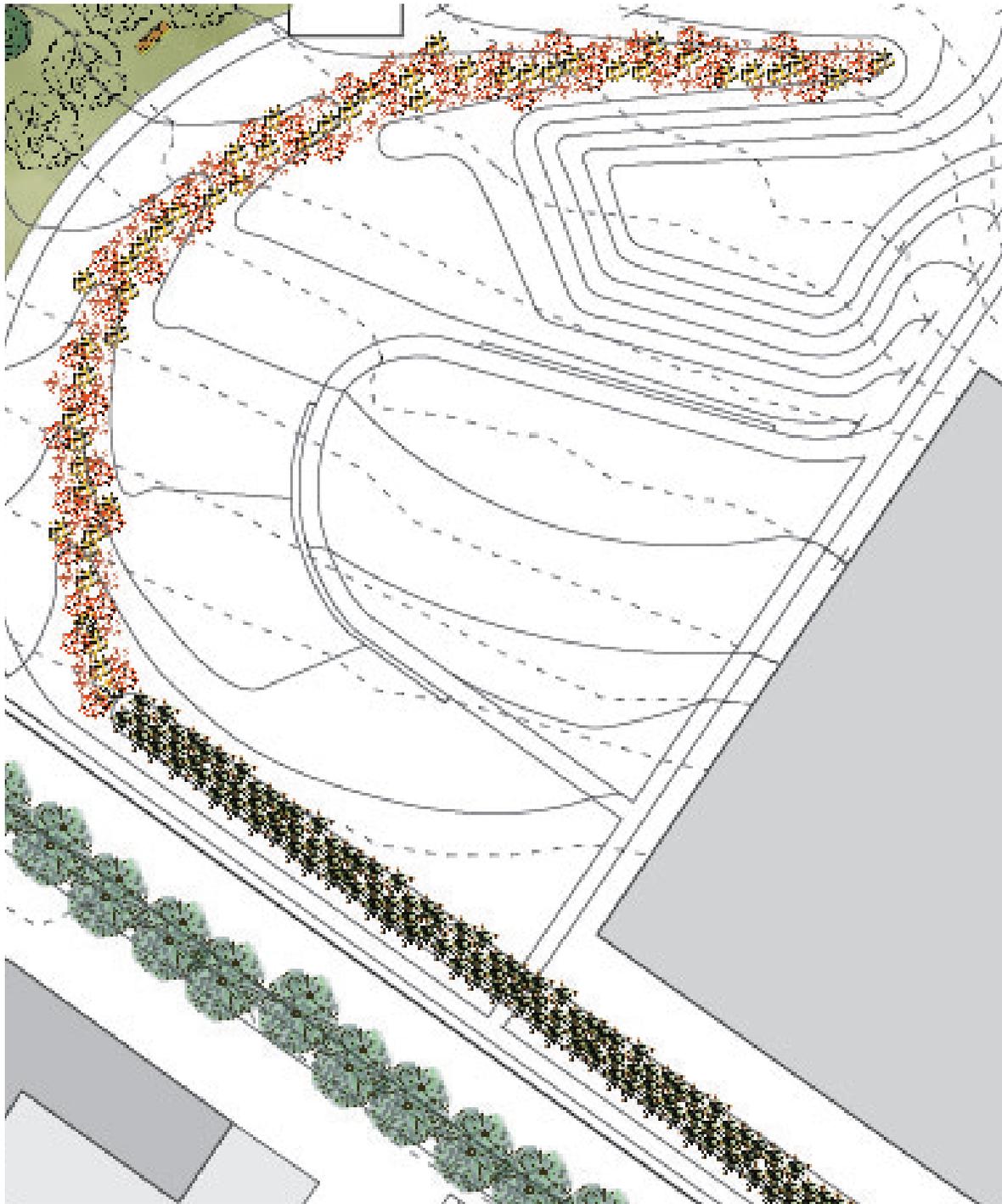


Figure 69 - Vegetative swale and natural playground (Winter)

The Natural Playground features a slide and sledding hill using fill from the Sunken Garden. Stone stairs and a climbing wall give kids an opportunity to use their imagination as they play. The vegetative swale shines in the winter with shrubs that act as traffic cones to keep sledders out of the swale. Seat walls around the grass lawn give parents a place to sit down and watch their children play, eat lunch, or take a break and watch the seasons change. Trees at the top of the hill offer shade to the kids playing and the guardians watching them.



Figure 70 - Natural playground (Winter)

Vegetative Swale (Winter)

-  Winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*)
-  Red Twig Dogwood (*Cornus sericea* 'Cardinal')
-  Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*)
-  Cat Tails (*Typha latifolia*)

Table 5 - Plant schedule vegetative swale (Winter)

Sunken Garden



Figure 71 - Sunken Garden Plan (Summer)

Sunken Garden (Summer)

Entry	Water Garden	South Avenue
River Birch (<i>Betula nigra</i>)	Bald Cypress (<i>Taxodium distichum</i>)	Corkscrew Willow (<i>Prunus americana</i>)
Sweetbay Magnolia (<i>Magnolia virginiana</i>)	Button Bush (<i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i>)	Red Maple (<i>Acer rubrum</i>)
Oak Leaf Hydrangea Ruby Slippers (<i>Hydrangea quercifolia</i>)	Southern Blue Flag Iris (<i>Iris virginica</i>)	American Hornbeam (<i>Carpinus caroliniana</i>)
Joe Pye Weed Bartered Bride (<i>Eupatorium fistulosum albidum ana</i>)	Duck Potato (<i>Sagittaria latifolia</i>)	
East Terrace	Cardinal Flower (<i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>)	Rose Garden
Wild Plum (<i>Prunus americana</i>)	Azalea Garden	Swamp Milkweed (<i>Asclepias incarnata</i>)
Magnolia "Jane" (<i>Magnoliaceae</i>)	Swamp Azalea (<i>Rhododendron viscosum</i>)	Swamp Mallow (<i>Althaea officinalis</i>)
Northern White Cedar (<i>Thuja occidentalis</i>)	Loblolly Pine (<i>Pinus taeda</i>)	Swamp Rose (<i>Rosa palustris</i>)

Table 6- Sunken Garden Plant Schedule (Summer)

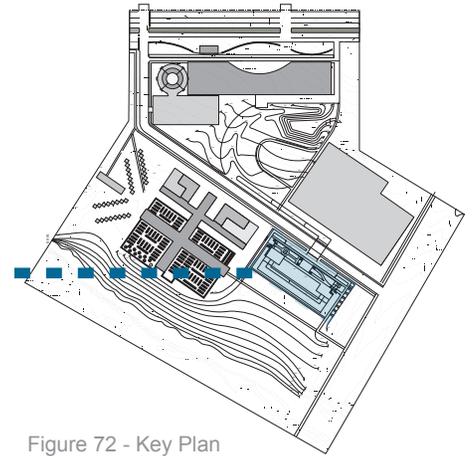


Figure 72 - Key Plan

This Sunken Garden is a true show stopper with terraces, pergolas, garden walks, and sleeping beds. The entry garden is kept low to allow visitors to see the different terraces as they enter. It ramps down on either side to the Mallow Garden on the west and the Azalea Garden on the east. The garden ramps down again to the water garden featuring three giant bald cypresses with knees extending beyond the water. Southern blue flag iris and duck potato demonstrate that water lilies aren't the only plant that can shine in a water garden. Cardinal flowers dress the outline of garden. The South Avenue is highlighted with corkscrew willows that offer drama with or without leaves. The East Terrace gives privacy to the sleeping beds with trees that offer four seasons of interest.

Wilderness (Fall)

-  Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*)
-  Shaggy Hickory (*Carya ovata*)
-  Loblolly Pine (*Pinus taeda*)
-  Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*)
-  American Hornbeam (*Carpinus caroliniana*)

Table 7 - Planting schedule Wilderness Fall

The Wilderness extends the creeks existing tree line up the slope to the south end of the Sunken Garden creating a grand backdrop to the rest of the park. Terraced to allow any water that overflows the Sunken Garden to gently make its way to the creek, it offers level areas to camp on as well. The trees selected will all take water inundation and survive. Winter in the Wilderness pays homage to the impressive Loblolly Pines that punctuated the forest with evergreens while the rest of the forest is dormant. Spring brings a small amount of color as trees flower subtly and begin to leaf in. In Summer, the trees offer a subtle green backdrop to the elaborate Sunken Garden. It is in Fall that the Wilderness shines brightest with dramatic reds, golds, and oranges

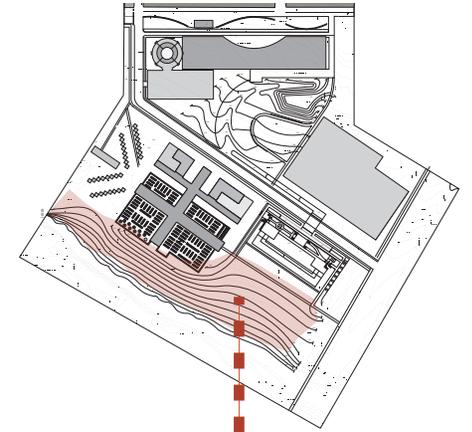


Figure 74- Key Plan



Figure 73 - The Wilderness Plan (Fall)

Tristan

I felt great getting out of the car until I started thinking about where I would go. It's not like I could crash at Cindy's - not after Mom made that colossal scene. I called a couple of friends to see if I could sleep at their house, but their parents all insisted I call my parents before they'd let me stay. You know what, sometimes you have to hold onto your pride. I wasn't going home tonight, and I wasn't ready to talk to my Mom.

It was warm, so I could camp. After all, I was a Boy Scout, but I didn't have my tent or a sleeping bag. I started walking over to the new Fairfax Circle Shopping Center. There was a new park behind the shopping center called Safe Haven that we read about during current events in Social Studies. There was something about it being designed so that the land could offer shelter to people without a home. I walked up to the bus stop kiosk outside the shopping center that the article said provided information. I hit the help display, and it gave the bus schedule and an option for information about Safe Haven.

I had an option to contact someone at the Amenities Building. That was the building they'd saved from the original shopping center rehabbed for nonprofits to use. They were the same nonprofits that used to be in the old shopping center and surrounding area. Smart to put them all together. There was the Inova Thrift Shop, the Jewish Foundation that helps people find temporary housing, and Cameron's

Coffee and Chocolate store who did job training for people with intellectual disabilities. Who knew? I thought they just had good coffee. MOST and Everyone Can Work helped people find jobs and transition out of homelessness, but I didn't need that today. The Lamb Center offered meals. That could come in handy. I was getting hungry. I didn't want to talk to anyone because I was pretty sure they'd call my parents.

I took a look at the map and found something called People Beds in the Sunken Garden. That sounded a lot cheaper than buying a tent at the shopping center and sorta' interesting. I've heard of flower beds in the garden, but people beds were new. It was worth checking out.

I walked down the path into the sunken garden. There were people on their phones and some kids walking home with their Mom. I said "hi" to the kid after he started dancing around, begging his Mom for ice cream. I remember when I used to do that. He waved back. I think he knew I was on his side.

I found the sleeping beds and was kinda' impressed. There was a pergola over the top of a raised bed that had grass in it instead of flowers. The grass was supposed to be some kind of soft grass, Zoya, I think the kiosk said. It really was soft! The pergola was surrounded by laurel bushes that offered some privacy. I knew they were laurels because I helped

plant some at our house. The pergola had a shade you could pull over if it was sunny or raining. To the side of the pergola was a little closet-like area off where I put my book bag. It was getting dark, and the lights came on. That made me feel a little safer. Yep, looks like I found a safe place to stay.

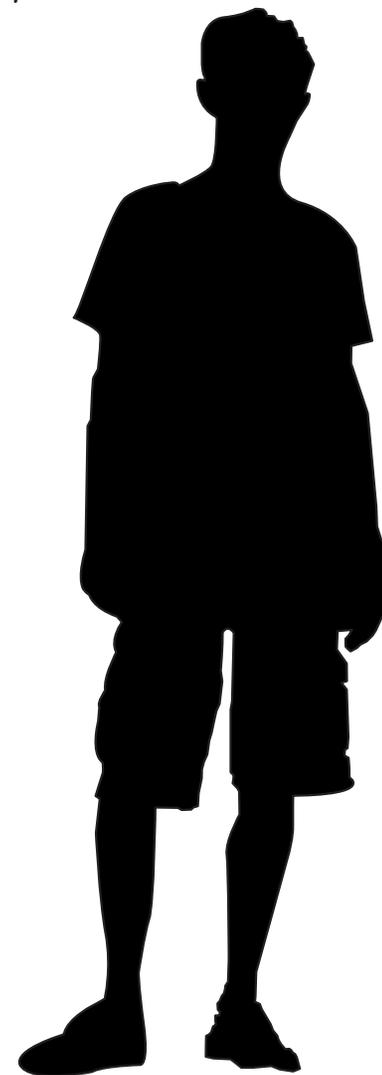


Figure 75 - Tristan Silhouette



Figure 76 - Sunken Garden and People Beds (Day)



Figure 77- Sunken Garden and People Beds (Night)

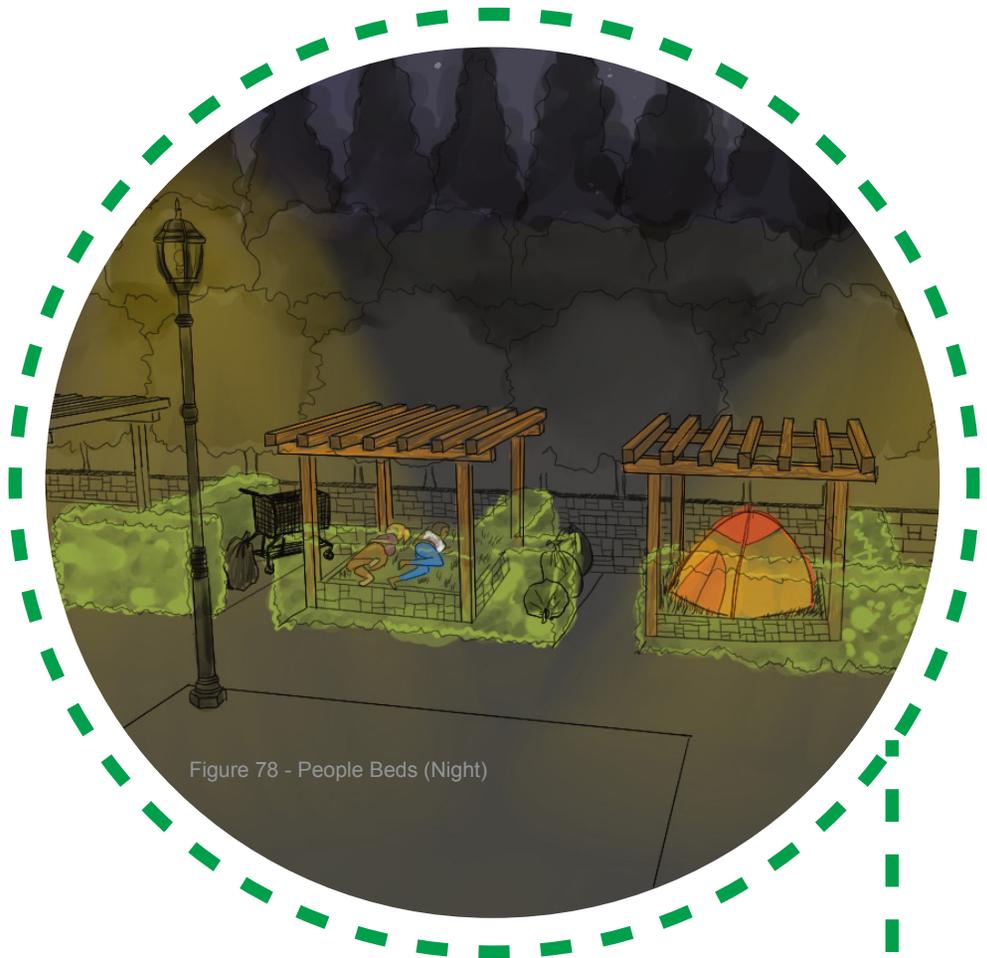


Figure 78 - People Beds (Night)

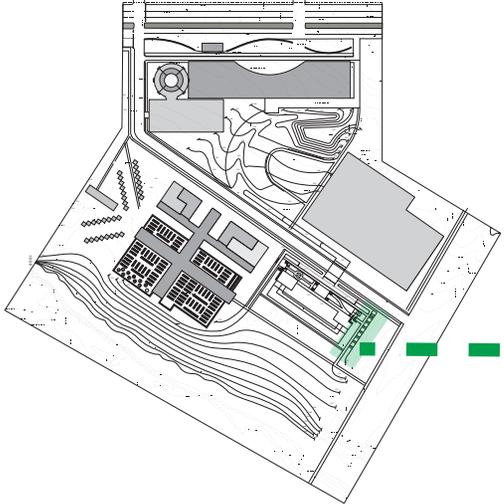


Figure 79 - Key Plan

Libby

My roommate camped a lot. She kept a tent in the dorm room so she and her boyfriend could hike and camp when he was in town. We lived in a women's dorm, so he wasn't allowed to stay in the dorm room with us. I asked her if I could borrow it over the Thanksgiving break. I lied and said my kid brother and sister would get a kick out of sleeping outdoors. Here's my thought, if my roommate who is failing basic math can camp, I should be able to figure it out.

George Mason University is close to the new Fair City Shopping Center, which has an outdoor store. I can pick up some live off-the-land supplies and figure out where to pitch my tent with some help from the sales staff, right? Without a car, wherever I go will have to be on the bus route, but the tent is small enough to carry with my backpack. I had \$50 in birthday money I'd saved so I could get a sleeping bag. I asked the salesperson if she knew of a cheap place to hone my camping skills.

"You should try Safe Haven behind the Shopping Center," she said.

"Safe Haven offers camping?" I asked.

"Well, there are some homeless people who camp there, but I've also camped there a couple times with my boyfriend, and it's safe, and close. We usually get a free breakfast out of it from the Lamb Center in the morning," she replied. "They offer meals to people who live there, but they don't ask a lot of questions, and it's way better than what I make. Go down to the bus stop help kiosk. They have all kinds of information about it down there."

Coolness! Everything is going to be ok. I went to the help kiosk and picked the Safe Haven option. It was getting dark, and I wasn't sure how long it would take to put a tent together. One of the camping options was called Future Housing Old Infrastructure. Apparently, when they built the new shopping center, they saved parts of the old one's infrastructure. While the second story didn't have walls, it did have a roof. I guess the City will use the existing floor and roof when they raise enough tax revenue to convert it into affordable housing. I'm pretty sure I heard thunder, so a roof sounds like a great idea.

I walked over with my camping gear and climbed the stairs to the second floor. Not only was it a roof over my head, but they had hammock sleeping chairs. That might be a lot more comfortable than sleeping on the cement floor. I was surprised to see a friend from school, Steve. Guess I'm not the only one who couldn't go home for Thanksgiving break. Steve told me they used the water line from the old shopping center for the bathrooms and shower. Bathrooms AND a Shower?! I had no idea I would get this lucky. Looks like I found a safe place to stay.



Figure 80 - Libby Silhouette

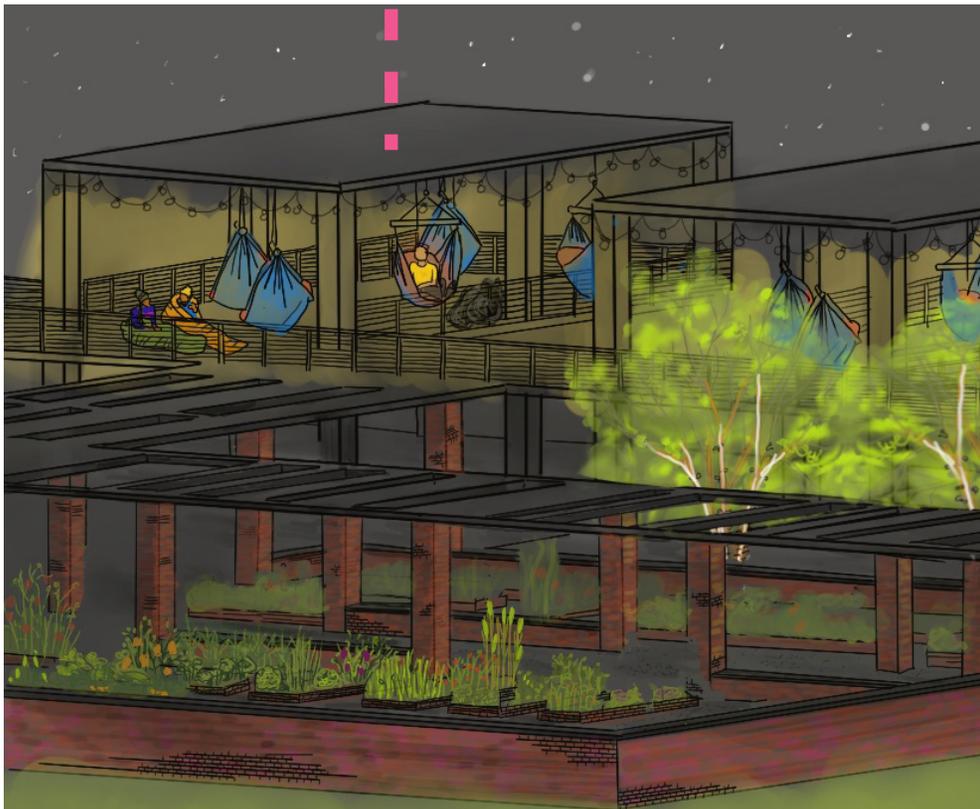


Figure 81 - Future housing - old infrastructure



Figure 82 - Sleeping Hammocks

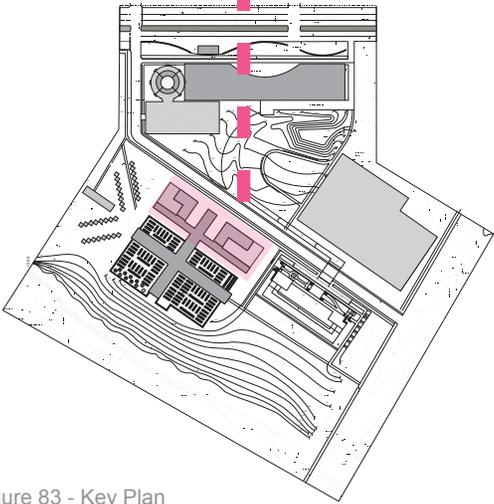


Figure 83 - Key Plan

Karen

I looked at Samantha and told her how lucky we were! We're going car camping -one of the most fun activities anyone could ever do! I asked her if she remembered the last time we went car camping, but she just shook her head and looked up at me with big wide eyes. I convinced myself I wasn't lying. Car camping could be miserable or fun; it was a choice, right?

We packed what we could into the car and started driving. Samantha's babysitter said that the new Fairfax Circle Shopping Center would let cars park overnight in the garage. She knew this because her brother had been in a similar situation when his seasonal job landscaping ended, and he couldn't make rent. It was worth driving by and taking a look.

I pulled up to the parking garage and read the sign. SCORE! It gave times cars could park overnight. Designated as a car camping level, we drove to the third floor and parked. The sign also suggested that I go to the bus stop help kiosk to find out more information about some of the park's amenities. Amenities?! I wonder how much they cost. It couldn't hurt to look, and Samantha was getting antsy about being cooped up in the car with all our belongings. If I were being honest, I was getting antsy too. I took Sam's hand to find out what there was to see. It was still early in the day. Maybe there was a place she could run around or something.

I went to the bus stop kiosk and selected the Safe Haven option. The map showed a kitchen garden that looked huge. It said master

gardeners were working there who could use an extra set of hands and would teach people how to grow their own food. My Mom used to have a kitchen garden. She'd tell us how the family saved money on groceries because of the garden and when the tomato harvest was big, she made money by selling some at the farmer's market. It couldn't hurt to go down and check it out. They also had locked storage containers in that direction. If I could get some of the stuff out of the car, I think we'd both be more comfortable.

I grabbed a couple of bags out of the car, took Samantha's hand, and started down. We dropped the bags in a storage container that released a key when I put a quarter in the lock slot. I locked the storage container and took Samantha to the nearby bathroom. There were showers! Hallelujah for amenities! That would make life so much easier in the morning when I had to get ready for work.

We continued on to the kitchen garden and walked through thick walls that protected the food grown inside. The kitchen garden walls had been part of the old shopping center, the gardener told me when we asked about the garden. The walls created micro-climates, which allowed them to produce more food. Smart, right? The gardener's little boy was poking him the entire time he told me about the garden. He leaned down and asked Samantha if she'd like to help his son do some harvesting. Sam is all about helping. Sometimes, she'll help you right off a cliff, and I got the feeling maybe his son also had that unique ability, so I offered to supervise the kids so he could move some plants he was

working on nearby.

"That would be really helpful," he said.

We spent an hour or so picking tomatoes, eggplant, and zucchini. I took the basket full of produce over to my new gardening friend.

"All Finished!" the boy boasted.

"That's great! Champ! Maybe we could get our new friends to help us take this over to the Amenities building so the people there can make dinner", said his father.

"I want some!" said Samantha. "I worked hard. Don't I get some?"

"Of course!" said the gardener.

He asked if Sam and I would like to have dinner at the Amenities Building. We had the perfect ingredients for the Ratatouille they were making for the community that evening, or I could take some home with me. Our home was already stuffed with our belongings, so I took him up on dinner at the Amenities Building. My baby and I had found a safe place to stay with a side of Ratatouille.

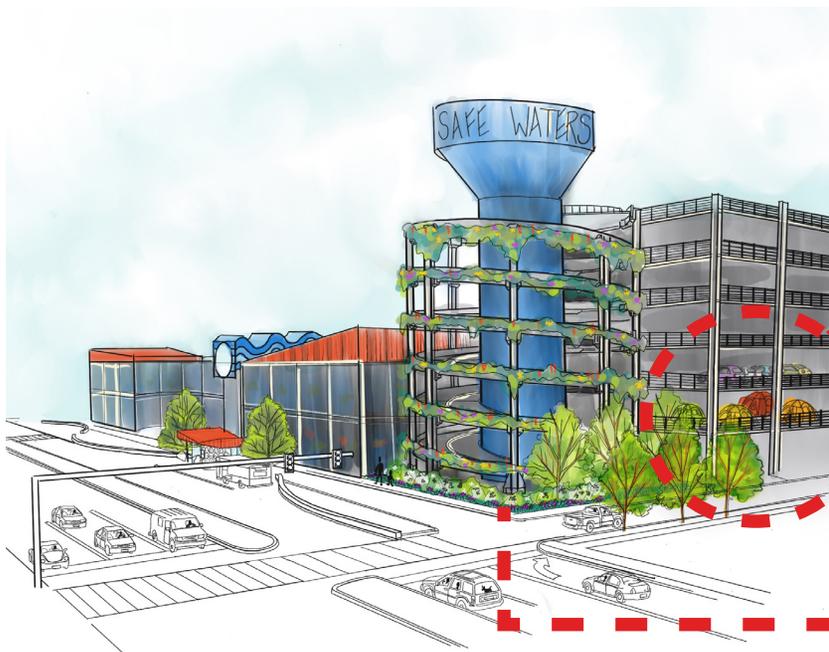


Figure 84 - New Fairfax Circle Shopping Center



Figure 86 - Camping Garage

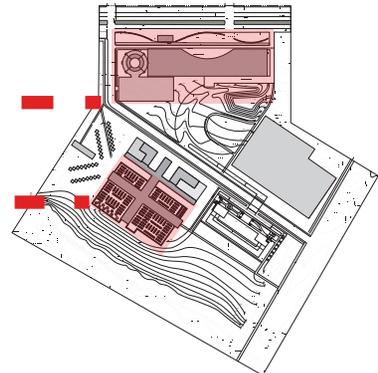


Figure 87 - Key Plan



Figure 85 - Kitchen Gardens



Figure 88 - Karen Silhouette

Joe

I still had my tent, sleeping bag, and gear from my time in the service. A man needed to have choices, and these offered me some. When I was at the VA (Veteran's Administration), right before I stormed out, a fellow soldier muttered he'd had enough too. He knew how to live off the land, and, by God, that's what he was going to do. He'd head over and make camp with his buddy at Safe Haven.

I stopped him and asked where Safe Haven was because it sounded like we might be in the same boat. It's behind the new Fairfax Circle Shopping Center in an area called The Wilderness.

"Hmm..." I thought. "The Wilderness. sounded kinda' nice". Fairfax Circle Shopping Center wasn't too far away from the apartment Kyle and June lived in. Knowing where I could go actually made it easier to storm off.

I got a ride to the shopping center from a service buddy. We saw a sign at the shopping center entrance pointing to the Amenities Building. I laughed because we'd spent months living in a tent and

scrounging for everything we needed. You'd be amazed at what you can use for toilet paper, but we decided to look in just to see if they were offering anything I could use.

At the building, I got directions to The Wilderness. No one tried to stop me from going there or told me I couldn't have a drink once I made camp. They offered dinner if I wanted it, but I just wanted to get out on my own. I had my own dinner and a camp stove to make it on, thank you very much.

My buddy dropped me and my gear off, and I started making camp. There were several other people there. Looked like some of them had been there for a while. They had an organized structure that reminded me of my military service. I think I enjoyed the best night's sleep I've had since getting back to the states and being discharged from the service. The only thing I really missed was Kyle.

I woke up in the morning and went back to the Amenities Building. I'm pretty sure I'd seen a map that said there was a natural playground. That's what kids these days were

missing. Who needed all those plastic toys that end up in landfills when the great outdoors is playground enough. They had a slide hill with rock stairs. There was a ditch to throw rocks into and a grassy area to run around in. Maybe June would let me take Kyle to it? It couldn't hurt to ask, right? I called, and she said she and Kyle would meet me there after school the next day.

As I left the building, it started to snow. What kind of bad luck was that? By afternoon there were six inches of snow. The fun, fluffy kind that made me want to build a snowman or snow fort like I did with my brother when I was a kid. I wonder if June would let us do that or if she'd cancel the visit.

Surprisingly, June was thrilled with the snow and coming to the park at Safe Haven. The hill there attracted all the kids in the neighborhood for sledding. Kyle brought some of his friends, and I brought some of my new friends too. I introduced June to everyone, and she sent Kyle and his friends up the hill to sled. We watched from the bot-

tom, and it turned into a great day. I'm not ready to be back at the house or anything, and June's not ready to have me there, but I found a safe place to stay.

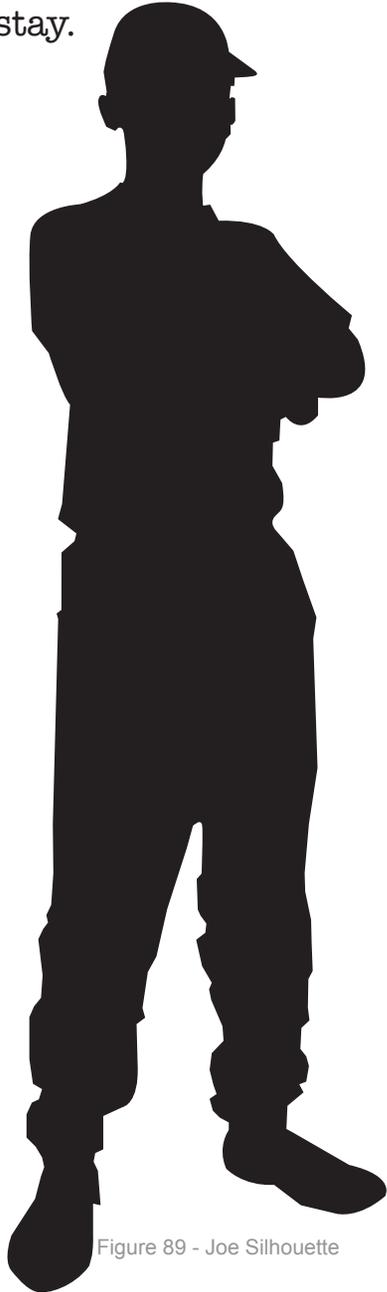


Figure 89 - Joe Silhouette

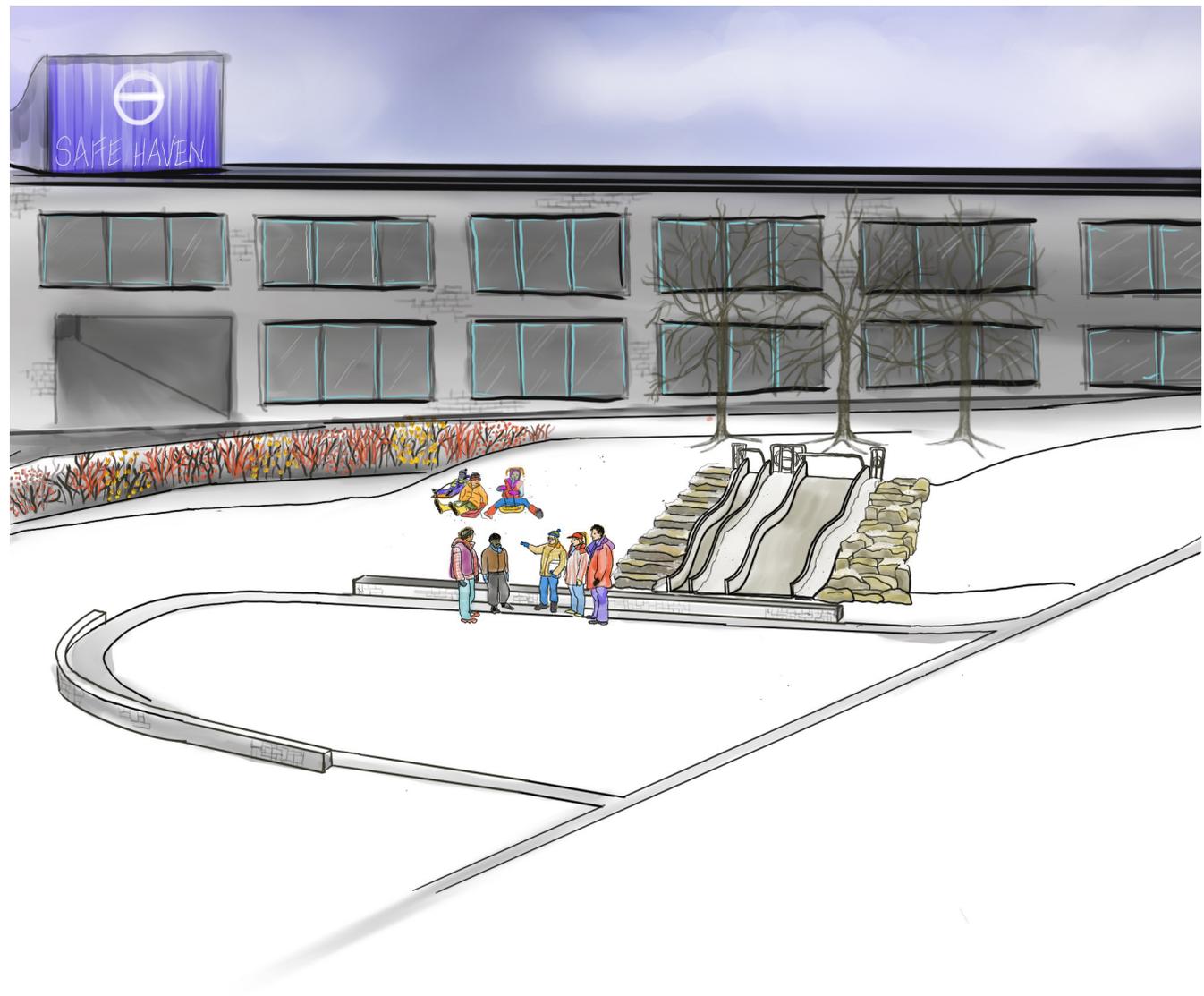


Figure 90 - Natural Playground (Winter)

Conclusions and Reflections

America hit over one million newly recorded positive COVID-19 test results on January 4, 2022. The pandemic isn't over, but the Federal Eviction Moratorium protection that went into effect on September 4, 2020, and saved millions of people from losing their homes will end on June 1, 2022. With millions of dollars in back rent owed by the people least likely to be able to pay it back, experts expect a surge in the unsheltered population. Rent and home values continue to rise, creating even more hardship. The issues facing homeless people aren't going away, and neither can our resolution to offer help with dignity by meeting them where they are today.

The landscape design for this project was created with the idea that it could be replicated in other areas and evolve over time. For example, as cars become less necessary, the parking garage for the shopping center was designed with flat levels to be transformed into housing. The infrastructure from the old shopping center was salvaged so the upper levels could be transformed into housing. As the needs and resources evolve, so can the landscape if we mind Lady L's advice. Let the landscape speak for itself, tell you what it needs, and discover how it can help you achieve your goals. Taking care of the water led to a more thoughtful solution that created beautiful spaces which celebrated the biodiversity of native plants. Taking care of people is essential, but taking care of the land is too. The Native American term for plants translates as "those who take care of us" (Kimmer, R., 2013). For them to take care of us, we must take care of them...as we must take care of each other

Appendix

When preparing my Thesis, I attempted to keep as many notes as possible from my research. I wanted to make the study a complete thought, so I created tables, timelines, and graphs. While this research has no “home” in the body of my thesis book, it helped inform all the decisions I made. I want to share the information with readers of this Thesis and perhaps instill an interest to discover more.

This land is **YOUR** land. This land is **MY** land.

European Colonists/American Government	Native American
Discovered and claimed lands in competition with other European nations	Shared a similar understanding of land stewardship, not ownership, between tribal nations
Land could be purchase becoming a personal possession and passed down through ensuing generations or sold again	Developed advanced economy and trade, but institutions like “land title” weren’t used
Fought with other nations to gain possession of land, distribute to distributed to those found deserving, and use it as they saw fit	No tradition of relinquishing all rights to land. Use of the land might belong to another, but the land itself belonged to the tribes
Possessing the title to land allowed an owner to sell or trade it as they desired	Only tribal chiefs could negotiate a treaty and grant land usage agreements no matter who was working the land
Through treaties and trickery, colonists pushed Native American further west promising land sovereignty would be respected but continued to force them off lands when it suited their purposes	User’s rights were granted, remained in a family’s possession as long as they used it, but once abandoned, anyone could cultivate the same land.
Supreme Court (<i>Worcester vs. Georgia</i>) confirmed Native American Sovereignty but couldn’t not enforce the ruling leaving Andrew Jackson unfettered to sign the Indian Removal Act in 1830	Understood and entered into treaties concerning land use rights with other tribes, but selling land wasn’t a concept they understood
Through out the 1830’s Native Americans were forced to give up their lands and relocate to western territories thousands of miles away. The trip to these reservations resulted in the death of thousands of native Americans (Trail of Tears)	The ground represented the ashes of their predecessors kept safe in the bosom of Mother Earth and watched over by Father Sky. It belonged to everyone.
The Dawes Act of 1887 sought to transform Native American traditional uses and attitudes about land and land ownership to mainstream American views	Believed that they had a right to walk on the land whenever they wished for forever. No concept of “private property”

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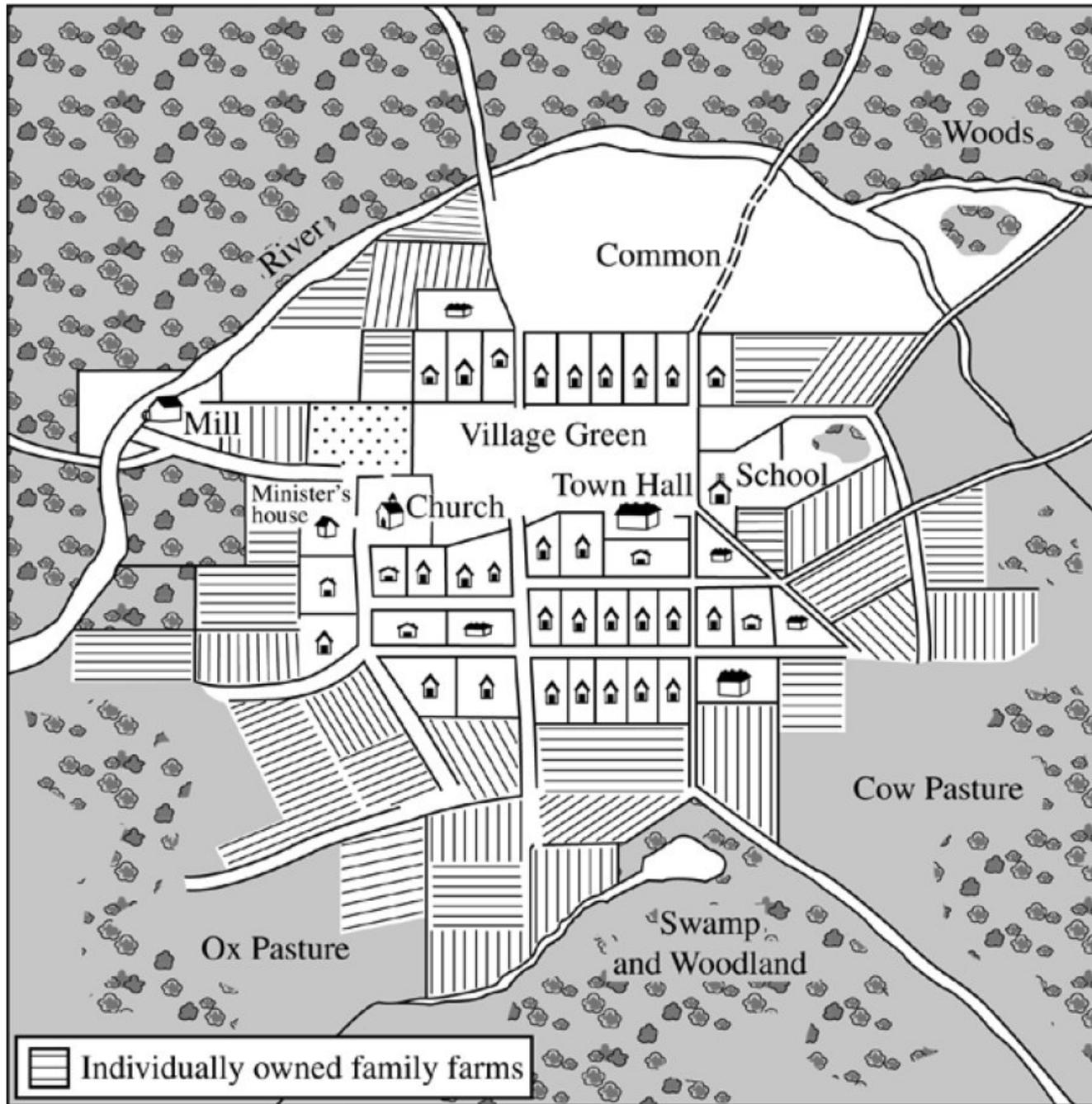
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British Colonization Land Policies:

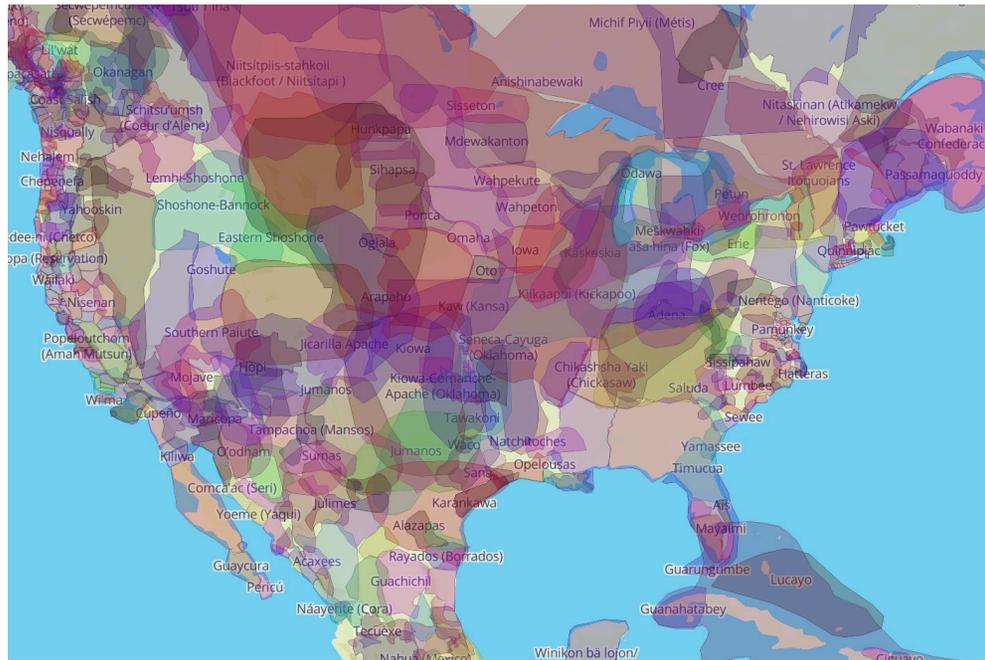


- Trading Companies authorized by the crown to colonize America
- Grants given by the crown authorized Trading Companies to take possession of territory in its name
- After gaining some stability, Trading Companies created a government that abolished joint-stock management of land and trade and created private property
- Government gave land grants to migrating groups, fixing its boundaries to establish a new town
- Town government developed to determine who would be admitted to town as settlers or freeholders
- Town governments laid out the land of each settlement as house lots, common fields, meadow, and pasture, and ultimately divided it among owners
- Inhabitants lived together for protection and traveled out of the center of town to work their farms
- Run like an English manor but with a town government instead of a lord at its head
- Center of town was the church and the pastor was the community leader
- Militia service, elections, and taxation were based on individual town governments

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Native American Tribal Lands Before European Colonization



<https://native-land.ca>

Native American Tribal Lands Today



<https://native-land.ca>

Impact on Homelessness with Native Americans

Europe's great "enclosure movement" where property was surveyed, fenced, and legal rules imposed to foster exclusive access and transferability created a landscape of have and have nots.

During colonization, Europeans, particularly the English brought the idea of enclosure with them to America. Resources like water, trees, and animals on property provided sustenance and opportunities for profit. Owning property ensure self-sufficiency where those who didn't own land were employed and housed at the whim of the property owner. Colonist came to America in droves for the opportunity to own land, something they would never been able to accomplish in their home countries. This leveling of the playing field for Europeans came at a price for Native Americans. Native Americans who lived on the same land for generations without the inclination to claim it as their personal property became homeless and each time the colonists signed a treaty ensuring their ability to live on the land, it was broken.

Today, only 53% of Native Americans are homeowners compared to 71% of whites.

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“Our land is more valuable than your money. It will last forever. It will not even perish by the flames of fire. As long as the sun shines and the waters flow, this land will be here to give life to men and animals. We cannot sell the lives of men and animals; therefore we cannot sell this land. It was put here for us by the Great Spirit and we cannot sell it because it does not belong to us. You can count your money and burn it within the nod of a buffalo’s head, but only the great Spirit can count the grains of sand and the blades of grass of these plains. As a present to you, we will give you anything we have that you can take with you, but the land, never.”

Crowfoot, Chief of the Blackfeet 1885



Southern Colonization



Roman Catholic Church
Pope Nicholas V
Divided the World in Half 1455 AD

Spain granted the right to colonize the New World

Queen Isabelle grants Native American Spanish citizenship and disallows enslaving the people

Spanish establish **ASIENTO** that authorizes the direct shipment of **captive Africans for trade as human commodities** in the Spanish colonies in the Americas

Portugal granted a monopoly on trade in West Africa

Pope Nicholas V issued the Romanus Pontifex of 1455AD affirming Portugal's exclusive rights to territories along the West African coast and the right to invade, plunder and "**reduce their persons to perpetual slavery**"

Competition for **ASIENTO** grows resulting in the largest forced migration in history

Other European entities follow suit exchanging goods and people with leaders along the West African coast

Portuguese slave ship, Sao Jao Bautista, captured by English pirate ships who bring the slave cargo to Jamestown, VA

1619 First enslaved people brought to America and sold in Jamestown, VA

Southern colonists settled along water ways working plantations with almost no village centers

Large demand for indentured servants (Irish and Scottish) who work without wages for 4-6 years in exchange for transport to New World

Upon release, obtained land and became independent planters or freehold farmers

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The Africans were sold into bondage despite Virginia having **no clear-cut laws sanctioning slavery**

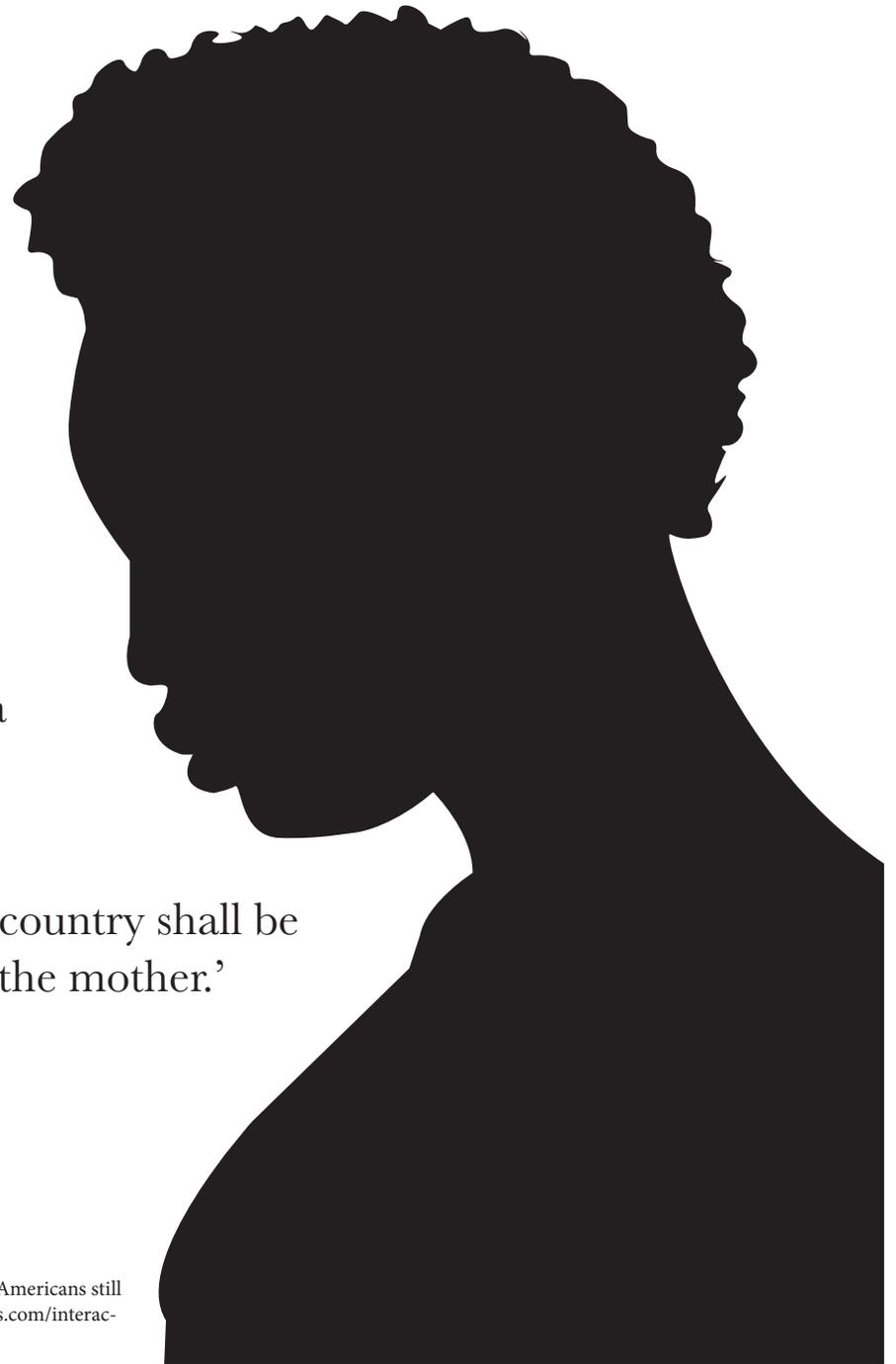
Virginia law enacted 1662 - All children born in this country shall be held bond or free only according to the condition of the mother.'

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Artwork created by Michelle Mitchell



40 Acres and a Mule

William T. Sherman's Special Field Order No. 15

“The islands from Charleston, south, the abandoned sea and the country bordering the St. Johns river, Florida are reserved and set apart of the settlement of the Negroes now made free by the acts of war and the proclamation of the President of the United States

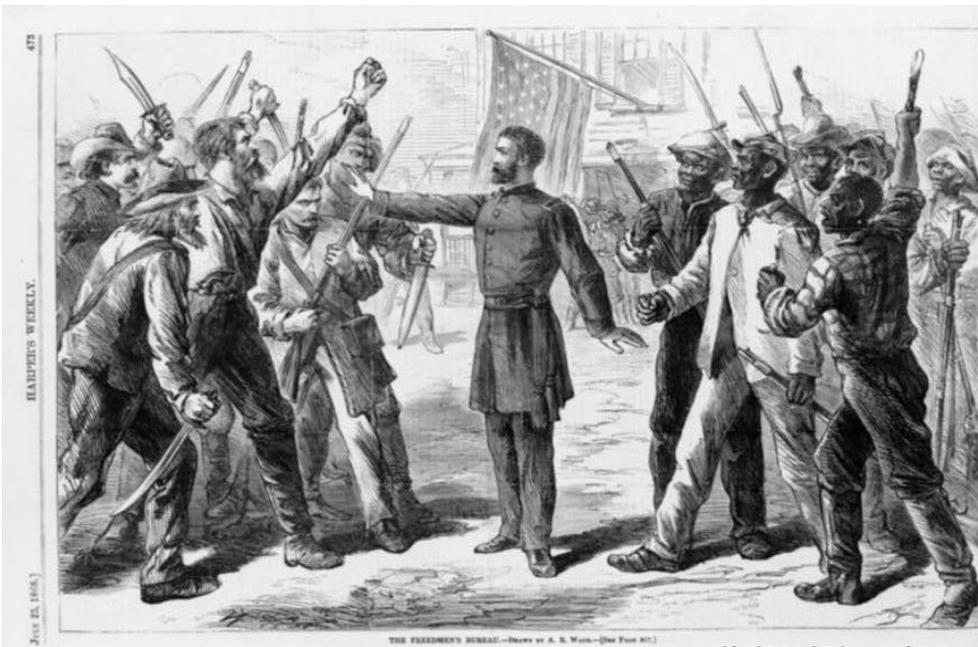
On the islands and in the settlements hereafter to be established, no white person whatever, unless military officers and soldiers detailed for duty, will be permitted to reside; and the sole and exclusive management of affairs will be left to the freed people themselves by the laws of war and order of the President of the United States, the Negro is free and must be dealt with as such

Each family shall have a plot of not more than 40 acres of tillable around, and when it borders on some water channel, with not more than 800 feet water front, in the possession of which land the military authorities will afford them protection, until such time as they can protect themselves, or until Congress shall regulate their title.”

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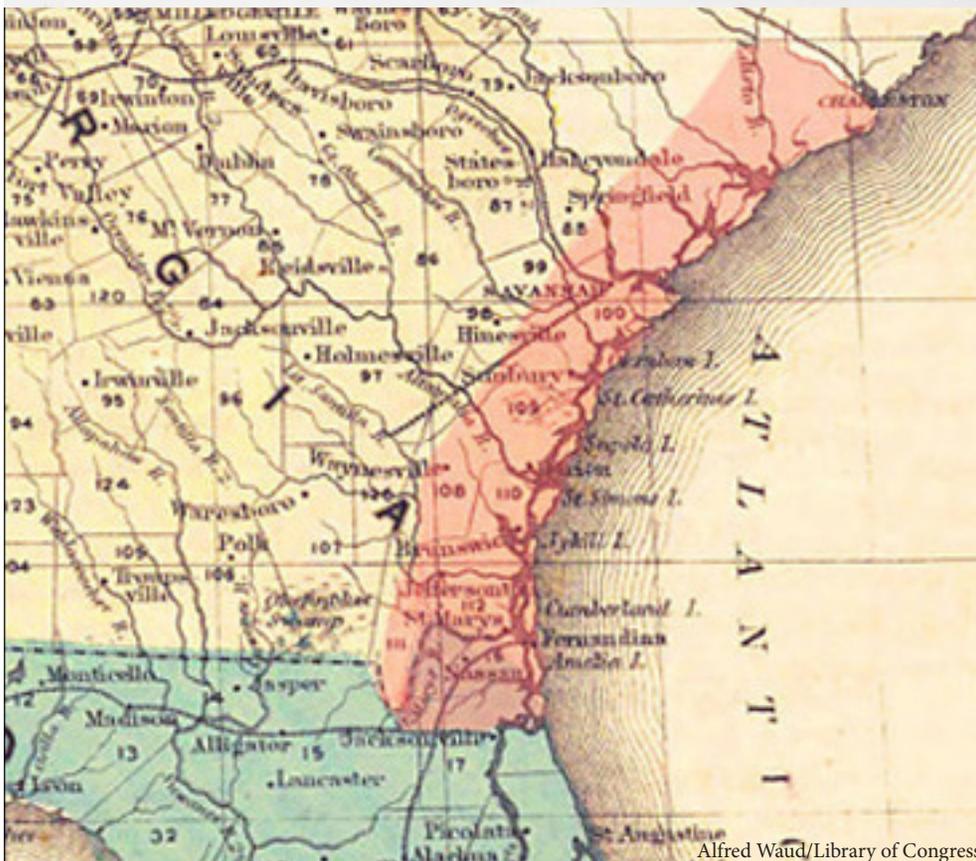
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THE FREEDMEN'S BUREAU.—(Drawn by A. S. Wain.—[See Page 80.]

Alfred Waud/Library of Congress



Alfred Waud/Library of Congress

Redlining. Who's New Deal?



A Black family in a poor section of Washington, D.C. 1937. Corbis/Getty Images

“Facing a housing shortage in 1933, the part of the New Deal designed a program to increase and segregate the stock of American homes. Primarily focused on providing housing to middle and lower class white families, this program was tantamount to a state-sponsored system of segregation. Left out of the new suburban communities, black and other people of color were forced into urban housing projects.”

“The Federal Housing Administration established in 1934 refused to insure mortgages in and around African American neighborhood furthering segregation efforts. This policy was called redlining and kept African American families from being able to purchase a homes and segregated many of our metropolitan areas today creating stagnant inequality. Meanwhile, builders mass-producing

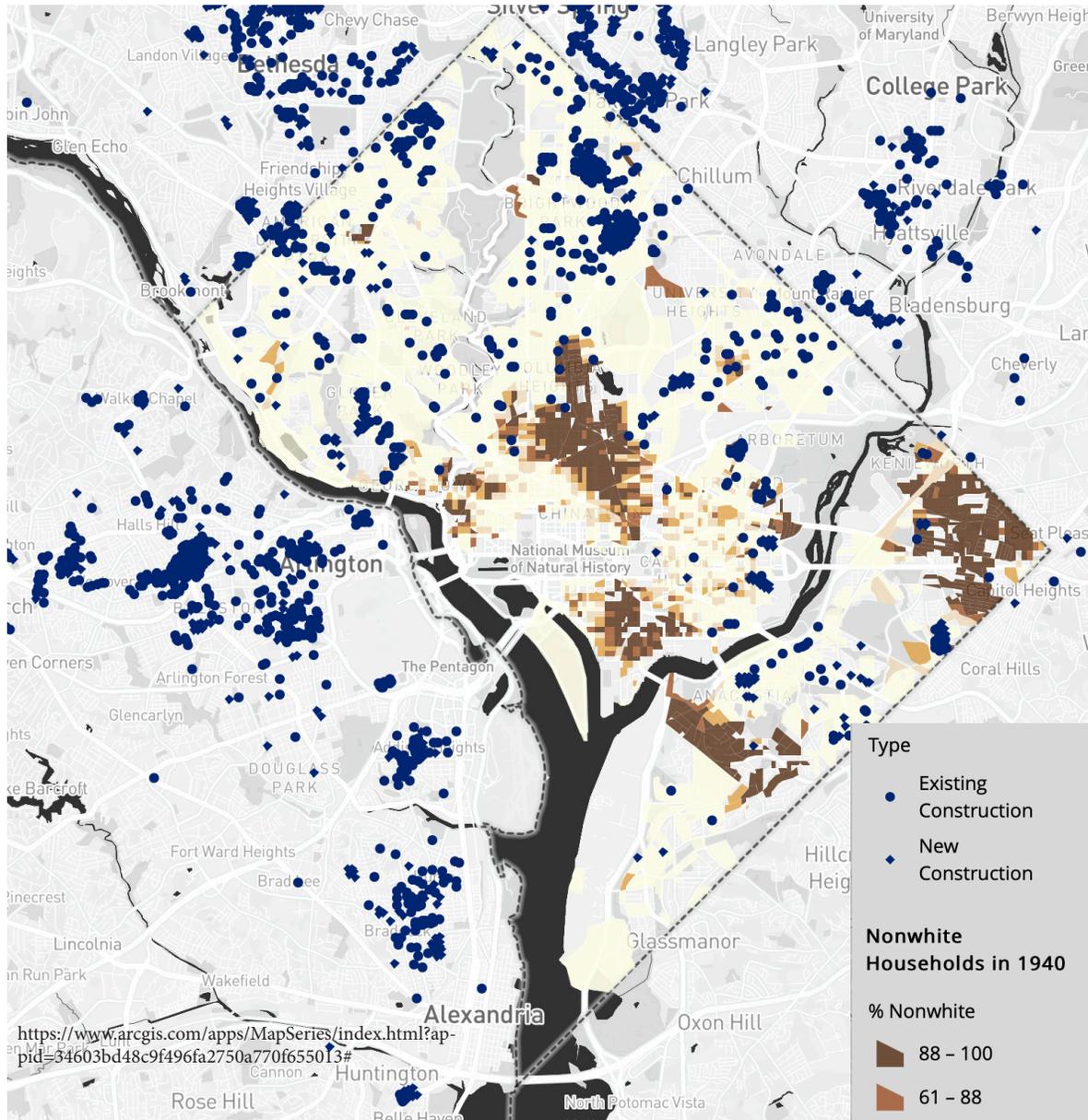
subdivisions for white families were subsidized by the FHA with the requirement that none of the homes be sold to African-Americans.”

“Families in the black segregated areas had fewer opportunities and were much less upwardly mobile. The consequences of which has led to stagnant inequality. In an interview with Terry Gross, Richard Rothstien, author of the Color of Law, said “If we want greater equality in this society, if we want a lowering of the hostility between police and young African-American men, we need to take steps to desegregate.”

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1936 Fair Housing Administration Commitments Map Washington DC



“FHA Insured few loans in black-occupied neighborhoods whether for new construction or rehabilitation of existing housing. In its underwriting manuals, the agency instructed those charged with evaluating loan applications to reject loans for areas where African Americans lived or were beginning to settle, especially in the absence of restrictive deed covenants, whites-only schools or other barriers to racial mixing. A 1940 FHA report on the DC housing market also advised that “in communities where there is any possibility of [Negro] infiltration, application for insurance should be rejected.”

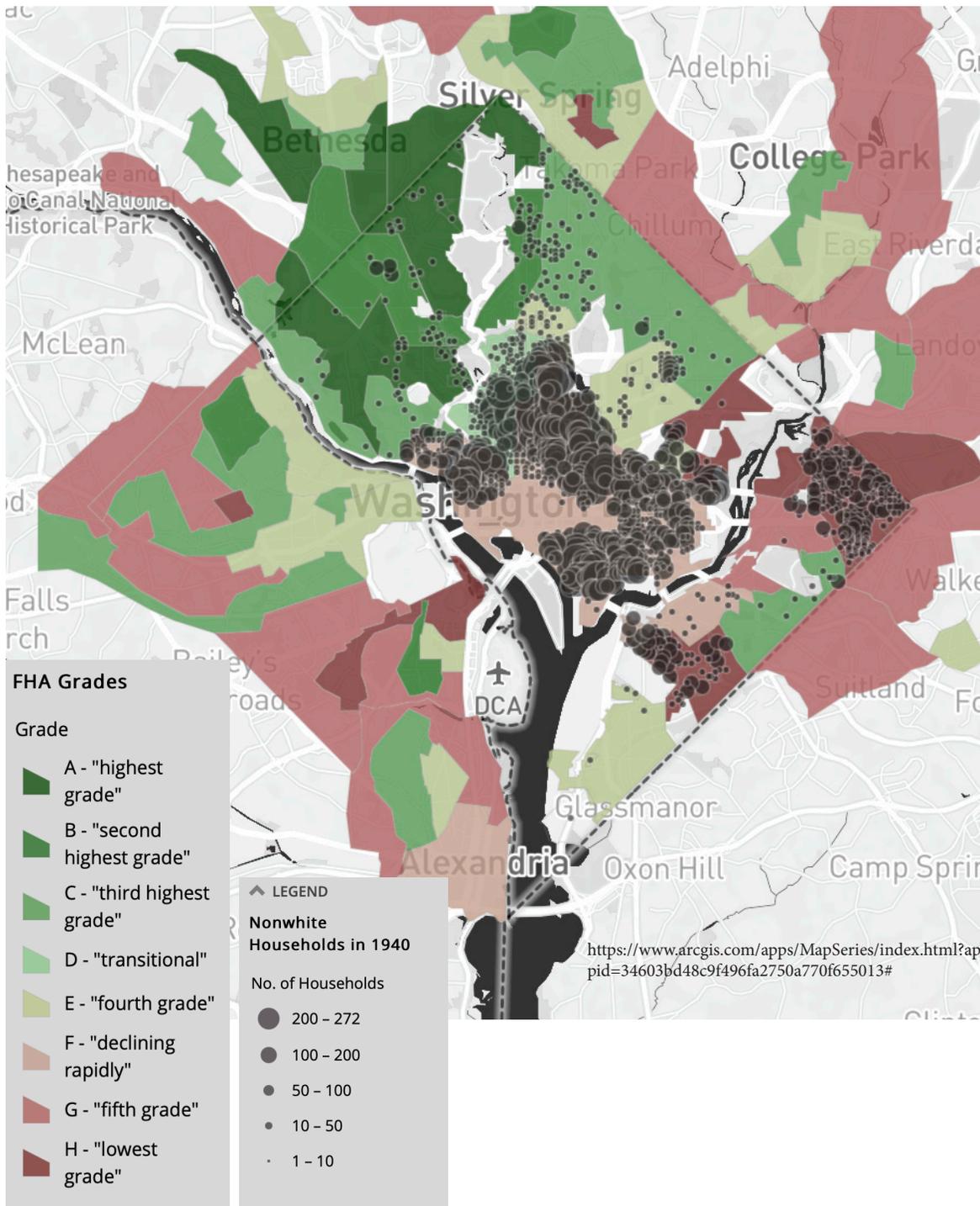
“FHA institutionalized disinvestment in DC and other cities as increasing numbers of African Americans migrated to urban areas. Its disproportionate investment in racially exclusive neighborhoods supported the accumulation of property and wealth by white homeowners and builders who otherwise may have been unable to profit from owning real estate.”

“Two thirds of insurance commitments were in the suburbs, especially in Fairfax County, Virginia, and Montgomery County, Maryland. By the end of 1960, these jurisdictions, along with Prince George’s County, Maryland, had received seven times the amount of mortgage insurance as DC.”

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1937 Fair Housing Administration Grading Map Washington DC



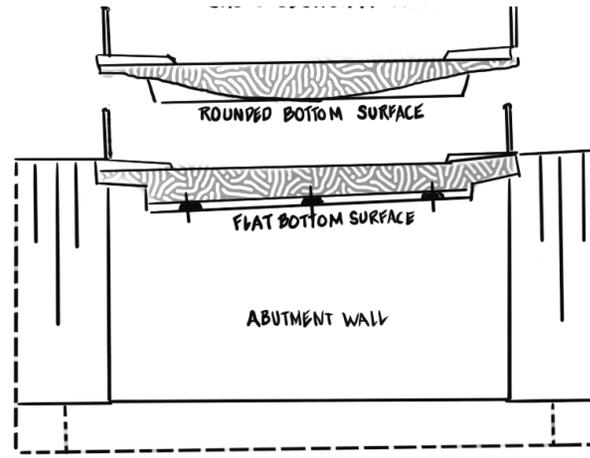
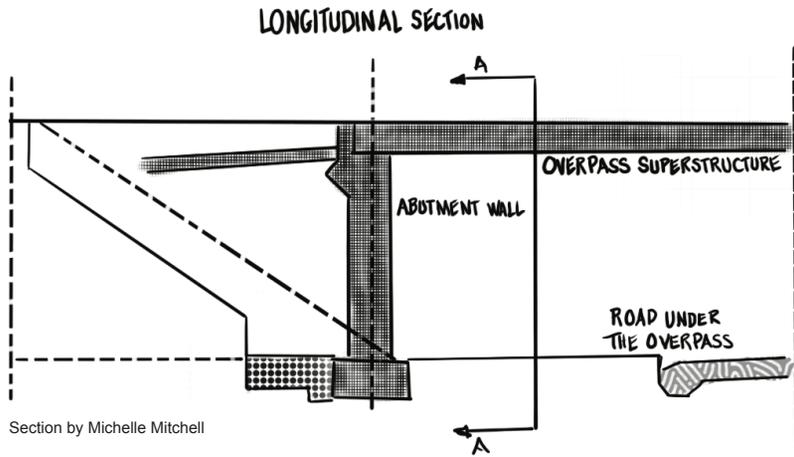
G areas and H areas "lowest grade of residential property...designed for use of white persons, and are composed of scattered uncontrolled developments with few if any facilities, poor streets, and no homogeneity of property design or racial groupings"

F areas are "showing effects of Negro occupancy, many of the structures are in poor conditions and are rapidly tending to become slums if not already in that category"

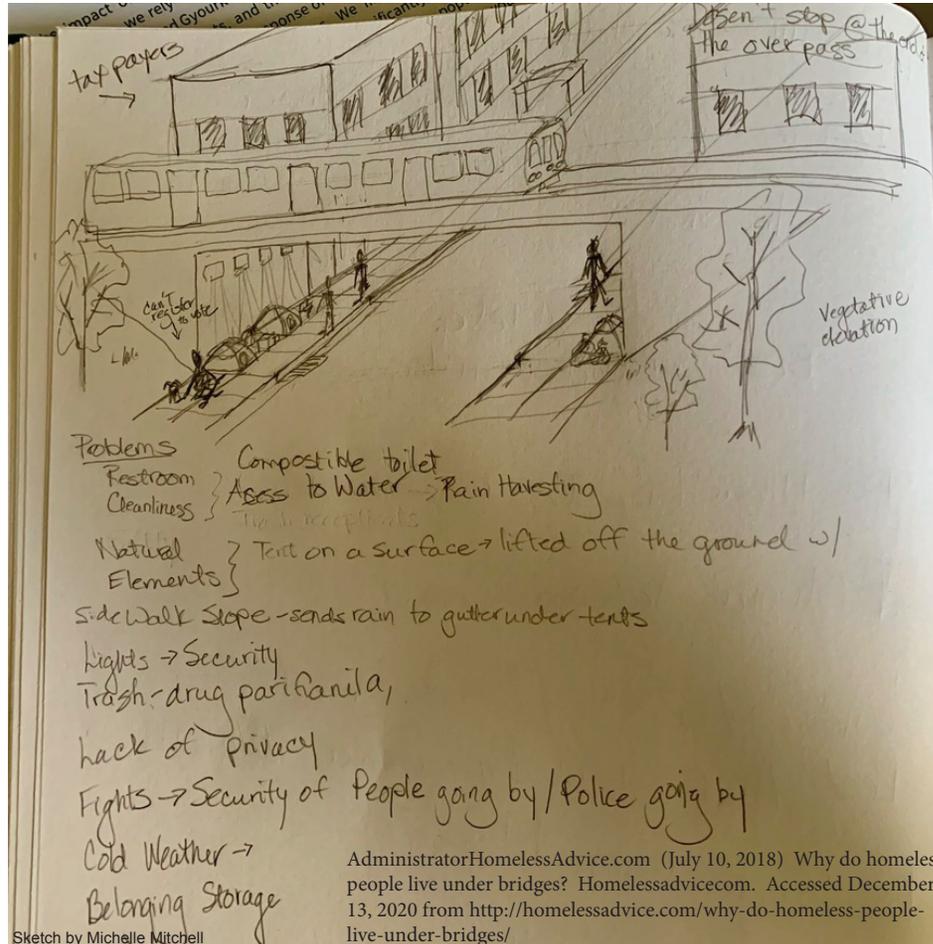
H areas were "developed especially for Negroes or have been left open for Negroes to build for themselves...the only possible future for properties in these areas is that the present scattered structures may be razed and new planned subdivisions instituted in their place."

Work Cited: Prologue DC, LLC. (n.d.) How the Federal Housing Administration Shaped DC. ArcGIS. Accessed October 20, 2020 from <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=34603bd48c9f496fa2750a770f655013#>

Overpass Study



Model by Michelle Mitchell



Why do people live under over passes

- To stay dry (especially NW states)
 - Inclines help keep rain from collecting around them while they sleep
- To avoid arrest
 - Sleeping in a tent or sleeping bag on streets in plain sight is illegal in most cities
 - Less likely to be noticed
 - Maybe in more danger because police sometimes target homeless encampments for drug busts
- To protect belongings
 - Homeless leave encampments to find work, food, social services,
 - Belonging less noticeable and people will leave them alone
- To do drugs
 - Quickly buy them on the street above

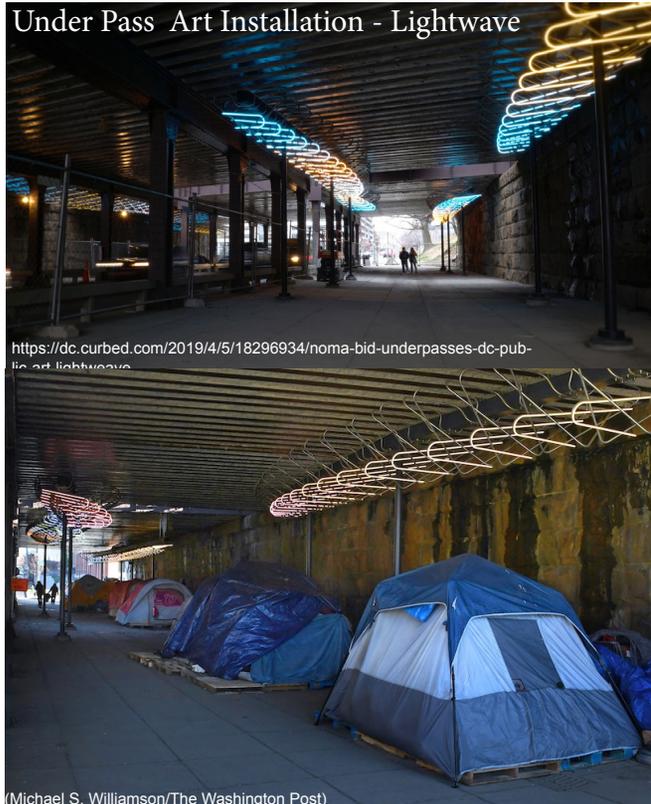
NOMA Washington DC



NoMa Parks Foundation / Sam Kittner Photographer



Michael S. Williamson/The Washington Post



<https://dc.curbed.com/2019/4/5/18296934/noma-bid-underpasses-dc-public-art-lightwave>

(Michael S. Williamson/The Washington Post)

Austin, Texas Abbott's Camp



Miguel Gutierrez Jr./The Texas Tribune



Miguel Gutierrez Jr./The Texas Tribune



Eddie Gaspar/The Texas Tribune



Eddie Gaspar/The Texas Tribune

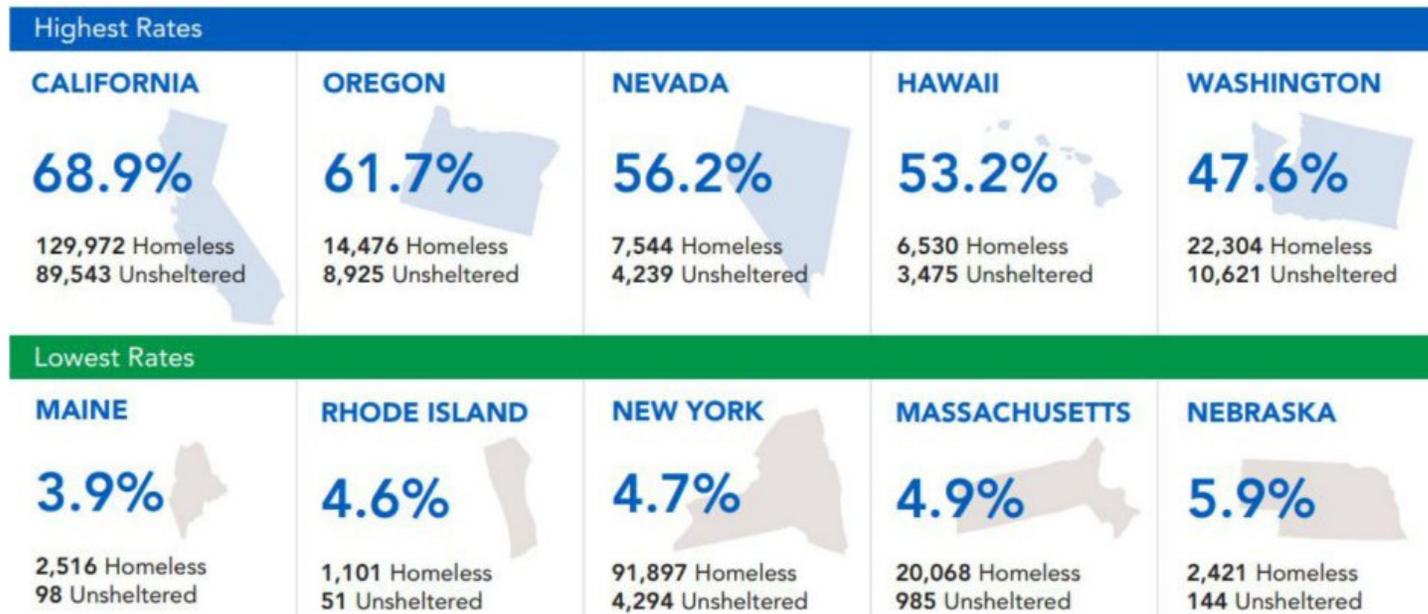
Vehicle Study

Individuals Experiencing Homelessness, Total Count Population by Location Type



<https://www.proomberg.com/news/articles/2018-05-11/why-people-live-in-cars-but-not-homeless-shelters-in-cars>

States with the Highest and Lowest Rates of Unsheltered People Experiencing Homelessness 2018



<https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/articles/2018-12-19/west-coast-states-have-highest-rates-of-homelessness-hud-report-says>

Why do people live in their car?

- Lost their home but still have a car
 - Protection from the elements
 - Heat/AC available
 - Families want to stay together
 - Expensive asset they could sell
- To continue to work
 - Most people who live in their cars continue to work in a job that requires them to drive
- Temporarily unsheltered
 - Domestic violence episode
 - Between semesters at college where dorms are closed
 - Shelter at capacity
- Protection
 - A place to store and lock their belongings
 - Protection from the violence found in homeless shelters

San Diego, California



<https://alliancechf.org/news/dreams-for-change/>



<https://alliancechf.org/news/dreams-for-change/>



<https://alliancechf.org/news/dreams-for-change/>

Seattle, Washington



Mount Vernon Emergency Ordinance
The West LA Veterans Affairs campus safe parking lot (Photo by Brian Gutknecht, Los Angeles Daily News/SCNG)

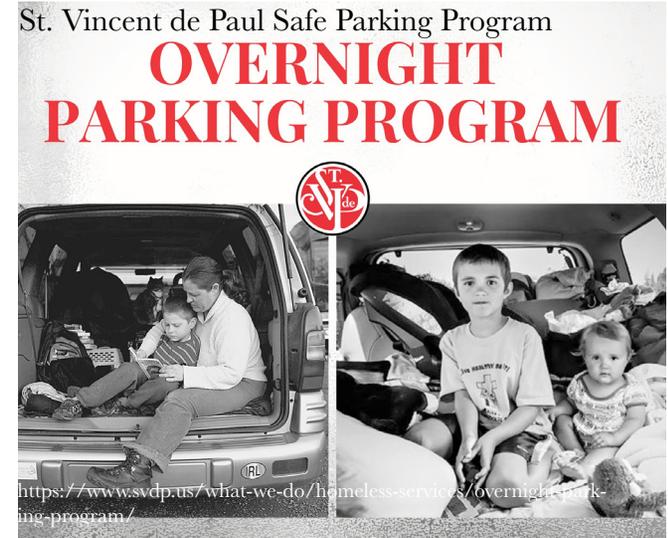


<https://www.governing.com/topics/health-human-services/gov-homeless-shelter-car.html>



<https://nationswell.com/california-safe-parking-lots-homeless/>

Eugene, Oregon



St. Vincent de Paul Safe Parking Program
<https://www.svdp.us/what-we-do/homeless-services/overnight-parking-program/>



<http://justcompassionewc.com/safe-parking-program>



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