



**Interstitial
Space to Promote
Social Health**

in Inter-generational Living Environments



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Introduction

Interstitial Space to Promote Social Health

Background

This design proposal comes from a fifth year architecture studio at Kansas State University. The studio's objective is to create models for sustainable inter-generational living.

The site is placed in Seattle's oldest neighborhood, and a historic district, Pioneer Square. This is a very urban environment with great potential to active and sustainable.

This project specifically proposes that social interaction between the residences is invaluable in creating this sustainable intergenerational community and that connections between people are a resource to the individuals within that relationship and to the greater community as a whole.

This project also proposes that space, in particular interstitial space, has enormous opportunity to be designed in such a way as to promote these interactions and thus

build and strengthen these social networks of residents.

Interstitial space, or "between" spaces, was specifically identified to host interactive program because the adjacencies offer a variety of potential interaction. For example the traditional double loaded corridor that people take to their individual units connects the resident's personal space to shared program within the building. It is a very active area and a shared, space but very little interaction occurs there unless designed in a way to promote lingering.

This project seeks to identify design features that can be used to create the potential for interaction, and then it proposes a model sustainable inter-generational living that uses social interaction as a strategy to promote health.



Photo from John Metcalfe's article "A BBQ Grill Designed to Unify Estranged Neighbors"

The Amsterdam marketing firm Natwerk, recognized that even people living very close to each other may not actually know the person right next door. They created a special BBQ to bring together estranged neighbors. According to reporter John Metcalfe the design does have its flaws, mostly the accidents that tend to result from having a hot grill high up in the air. But, as Metcalfe points out, even if you burn you homes down, at least you and your neighbor will have a great story to share (Metcalfe, 1)

We can do better.



Researchers and Writers on the interaction of people and/or the design of space.
 Top row, Oscar Newman. Middle Row, Ray Oldenburg, Humphry Osmond. Bottom row, Dr. John Rowe, Claire Cooper Marcus, William Whyte

Literature Review

Interstitial Space to Promote Social Health

The Link of Social Interaction to Health and Well-Being

What is the significance?

This project started with the premise that social interaction between people is good and desirable. Quite a bit of research has been done that supports this idea. In particular, researchers in the medical field have found that strong relationships are an important part of a healthy lifestyle.

Consider for example the work of Dr. John Wallis Rowe. In his book, *Successful Aging*, Rowe looks at the deteriorating health of individuals as they age and factors he has identified as significant to preventing and improving health problems. Among other factors, such as healthy life styles and physical exercise, Dr. Rowe claims that, “maintaining close relationships with others, and remaining involved in activities that are meaningful and purposeful, are important for wellbeing throughout the life course.” (Rowe, 46) He argues that “social-emotional,” including expressions of affection, respect and esteem are significant because it makes people feel valued and like they belong. In addition “instrumental” support or acts of direct assistance, like driving someone to a doctor’s

appointment and helping with everyday tasks is important. Rowe claims that these relationships are a factor preventing and recovering from health problems.

Rowe points out that most people are both receivers and givers of social support, and that each person has a network of people around them. He argues that the size of the network, the quality of the relationships, and the adequacy of the support it provides are all factors in a person’s quality of life and well-being (Rowe, 47). To support these claims,



Rowe of course looks to his own personal experience as a healthcare professional but also to research looking at interpersonal relationships or the lack there of. Rowe references the work of Cobb, a physician and epidemiologist who published the research article “Social Support as a Moderator of Life Stress” in *Psychosomatic Medicine* and the work Cassel an independent researcher also looking at the idea of social support at health protective. Rowe argues that the convergence of results despite the large number of studies and the range of settings validates both researchers’ claims that social support is good for your health (Rowe, 242). Rowe goes further with this to identify very specific relationships looking at many more articles from journals of gerontology, of behavioral medicine, social psychology, aging, and many more.

Rowe’s work has been embraced by distinguished designers and architects including Victor Regnier, Professor of Architecture and Gerontology at University of Southern California. Regnier quoted

Rowe’s conclusions in his lecture, *Aging Well in the 21st Century*, at University of Kansas’s series Boomer Future Think Talks, fall 2013. Regnier’s work was a wonderful example of how idea’s about this could be applied to architectural projects.

Other researchers have looked at the idea of social interaction to improve health as well. In 1957 Humphrey Osmond, a psychiatrist, studied social interaction of mental patients within psychiatric hospitals to identify how the environment influenced these interactions. He coined the terms “sociopetal space” meaning environments that facilitate and encourages interaction and “sociofugal space” or space that discourages and inhibits interaction. Researcher, Robert Sommer, has studied Osmond’s work and used his criteria to evaluate space. Sommer describes how Osmond, being a psychiatrist, determines sociopetal and sociofugal qualities based on the perspective of the occupant; he claims that social interaction is very much linked to how people regard space. If a person feels a space embodies a

cold, stark, institutional qualities, and is resistant to personalization, then it discourages interaction, but if people feel the space is warm, flexible, and embraces modification, then it can bring people together (Sommer, 42) Sommer used these characteristics then to describe public spaces like supermarkets and airports as a way to rationalize their success or failure.

A Note on Context – The Question of Applicability

In considering the applicability of the aforementioned research, in particular that which addresses a group of people with very specific needs like Osmond's and Rowe's work, the question of whether their conclusions are valid under other circumstances must be considered. It could be argued that someone mentally ill will have very different social interactions than a healthy person. The benefits they receive from those around them do not mean that a healthy person will also receive benefits, nor that the space meant to facilitate those interactions will have the same results across the two groups. This question brings three points to mind. First, that overlap between different studies and consistency in results demonstrates valid results. If successful precedents and additional research exploring Osmond's claims outside the psychiatric ward also show social health benefits, then his work applies outside the hospital.

In addition, this idea of applicability demonstrates the need to identify a specific user group. This project is ultimately a living

environment. It is a goal of the project to be intergenerational and that means successfully integrating the needs of all age groups. The needs of the elderly will naturally be the governing factor because deteriorating health is an unavoidable part of aging. Subsequently it is the Baby Boomer generation that will fit this description for this project, at least at first.

However, this project is not a hospital, and it would be impracticable to accommodate the needs of everyone. So, although limitations due to aging and everyday life will very much be considered in this project, individuals with exceptional needs will not. The goal is ultimately create successful living environments with a user group that includes anyone who embraces this proposed model of living, one of cooperation, interaction, and exchange that facilitates mutual support and relationships that benefit both individuals and their communities. This definition of the user group is given because it best describes those with the most potential to benefit from living in the proposed project.

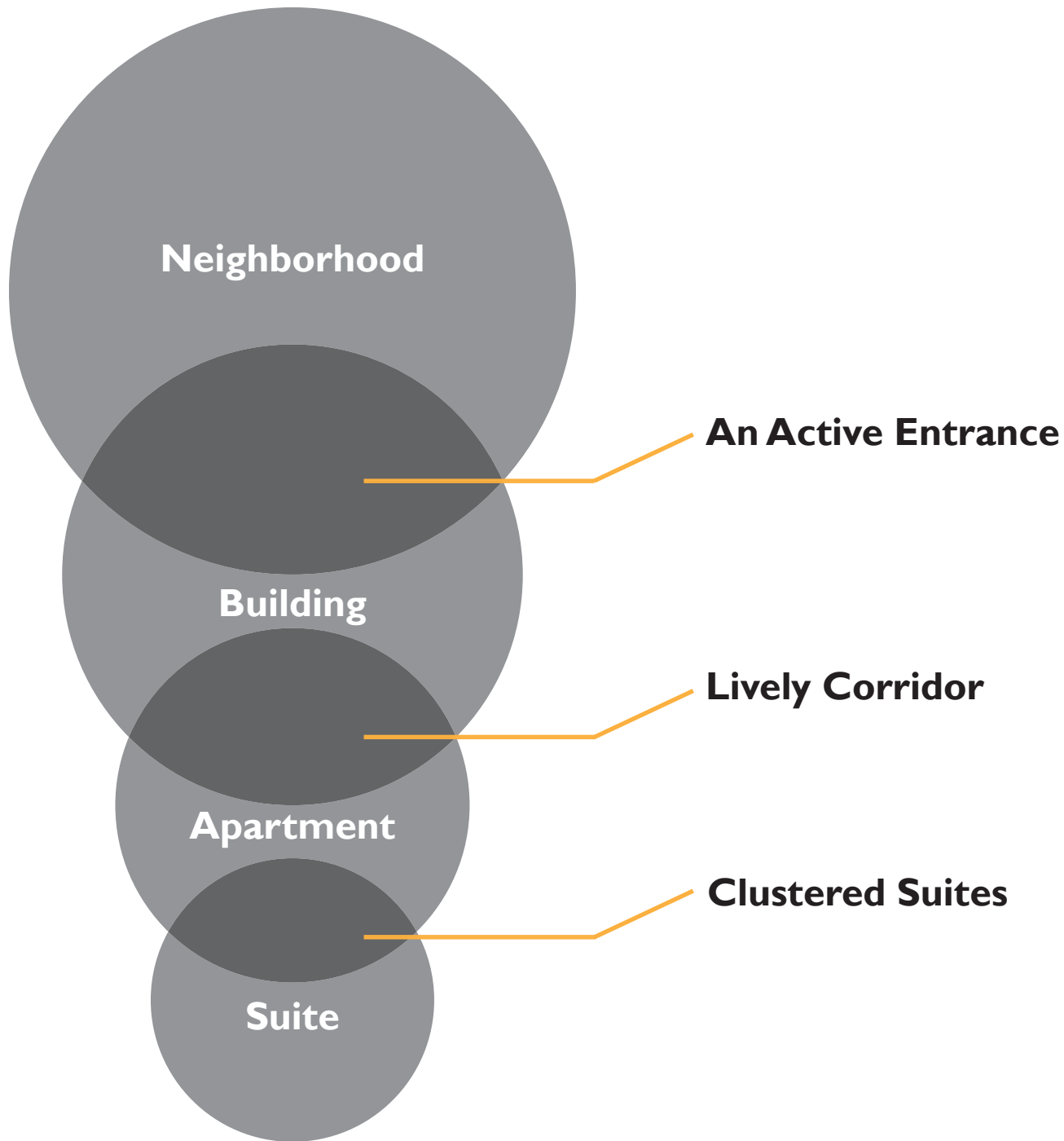
Finally, it is very important to realize that research and design exploration is never done. Even the best designs, from the best ideas must be tested and modified and retested continuously. The reason is that circumstances are always changing. The attitudes of people change overtime; how people see and interact with space will change overtime; lifestyles, opportunities for independence, economics circumstances all change overtime. No given idea that goes into this project will be valid forever, much in the same way that the literature fails to anticipate everything relevant to today's world. Just as an example, it is quite doubtful that Osmond anticipated the idea of people "talking" on Facebook or the effects in general of something as interactive as the computer. The point is that this project looks to produce ideas meant to be modified into context.

A new model of living, one of cooperation interaction, and exchange, can facilitate mutual support and relationships which benefit both individuals and their communities.

The Significance of Precedent in the Design of Interstitial Space

Although it is obvious that social interactions and relationships are desirable, designing space to afford such goals is a bit more challenging. After all, interaction takes many different forms and happens on many different scales. For example, some strategies could focus on bringing immediate neighbors together, while other strategies might look at bringing the resources of the larger city to the project.

Again it is Interstitial space, or “between” spaces, that was specifically identified to host interactive program because the adjacencies offer a variety of potential interaction. And, there is precedent in design that supports such conditions. Analysis of such can identify many specific strategies for designing towards the goal of interaction.



By providing amenities beneficial to both residents of the building and members of the larger community, this space can bring the two groups together and provide the potential for new relationships

To provide a place for residents to connect with their neighbors this strategy brings activity into what would otherwise merely be a means of egress

This apartment design supports extend families and larger non-traditional households. The reasoning is that this style of living should be supported because large diverse networks facilitate more opportunities for mutual support



An Active Entrance

This project, a senior residence in Zurich, Switzerland, uses several strategies to bring people together on the ground floor. In particular, this project seeks to draw in the general public with the restaurant and cafe. All the social areas are amenities to the residents and their families, but they also act as interstitial space between the building and the street or between the residents and the public.

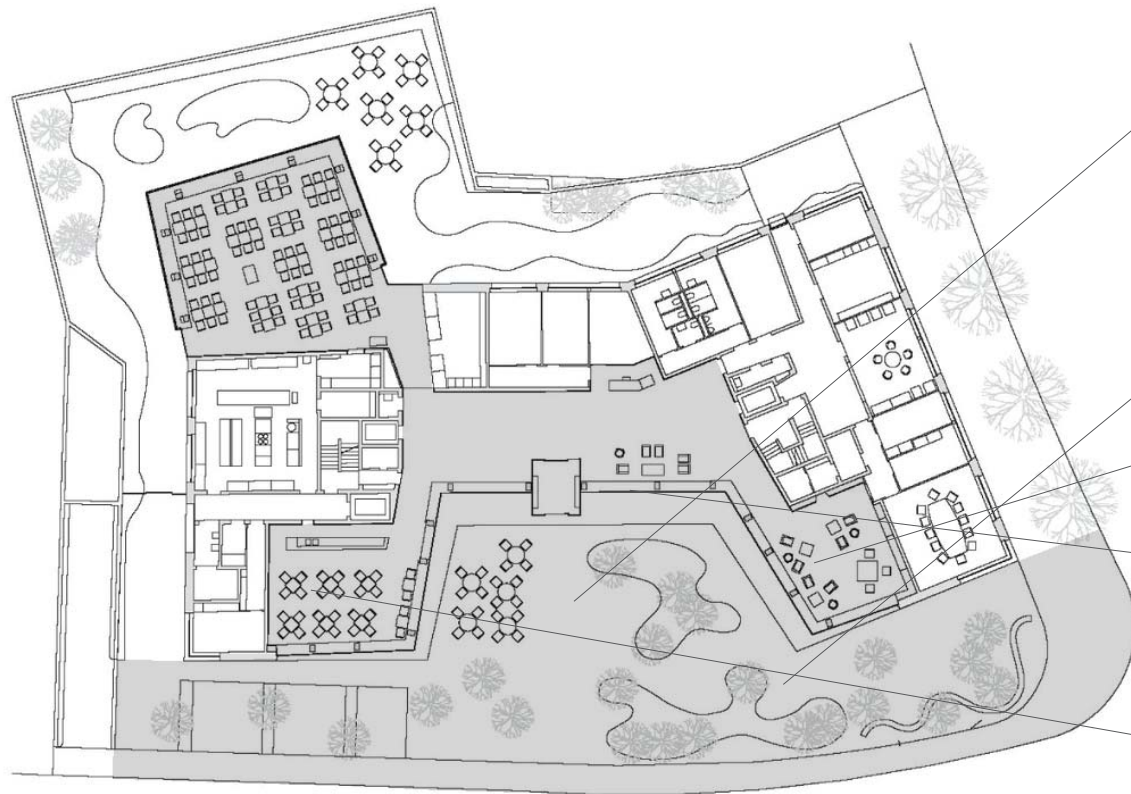
The program includes both a restaurant and a cafe that share a large commercial kitchen, outdoor seating that complements both, a reception area with seating, a fireplace room, and additional outdoor space. Above the ground floor is six additional floors of residents rooms.

Seniorenresidenz Spirgarten
Project

Zurich, Switzerland
Location

Miller + Maranta
Architect

2004 - 2006
Construction



The building pulls away from the street to create an outdoor space enclosed on three sides. This move provides a psychological protection making it more desirable to inhabit (See Hilderbrand).

Access to nature is provided in the sun light and vegetation in the outdoor areas.

Seating which allows for physical comfort is provided in a variety of forms and locations (See Whyte)

Transparency around the seating areas, that does not compromise the enclosure, allows people to observe other people and activities.

Food is always an engaging and social element (See Oldenburg)



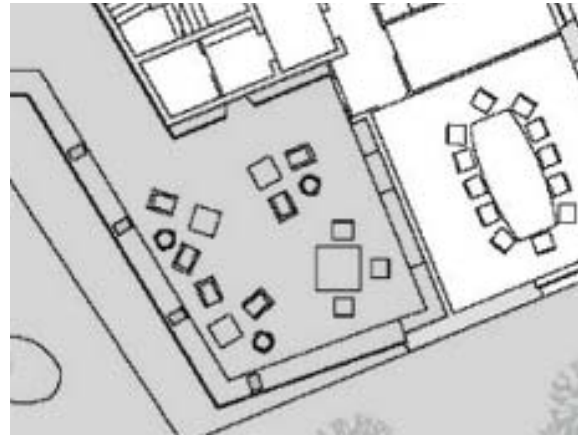
Outdoor Entry Court

Instead of a facade parallel to the street this building pulls back to create an outdoor space to transition the building and the city



The Restaurant

Social activity like eating is something that can bring people together,



Public Seating Areas

Comfort was designed into dedicated areas so as to encourage their use.

These places are neutral ground and meant for everyone.



Lively Corridor

The Vidar Clinic was conceived as a healing community where the doctors, nurses, patients, family and friends were all seen as significant part of the hospital. The designers believed that the architectural experience could promote healing. In particular, experiences of positive interaction and social areas were built into the fabric of life within this building.

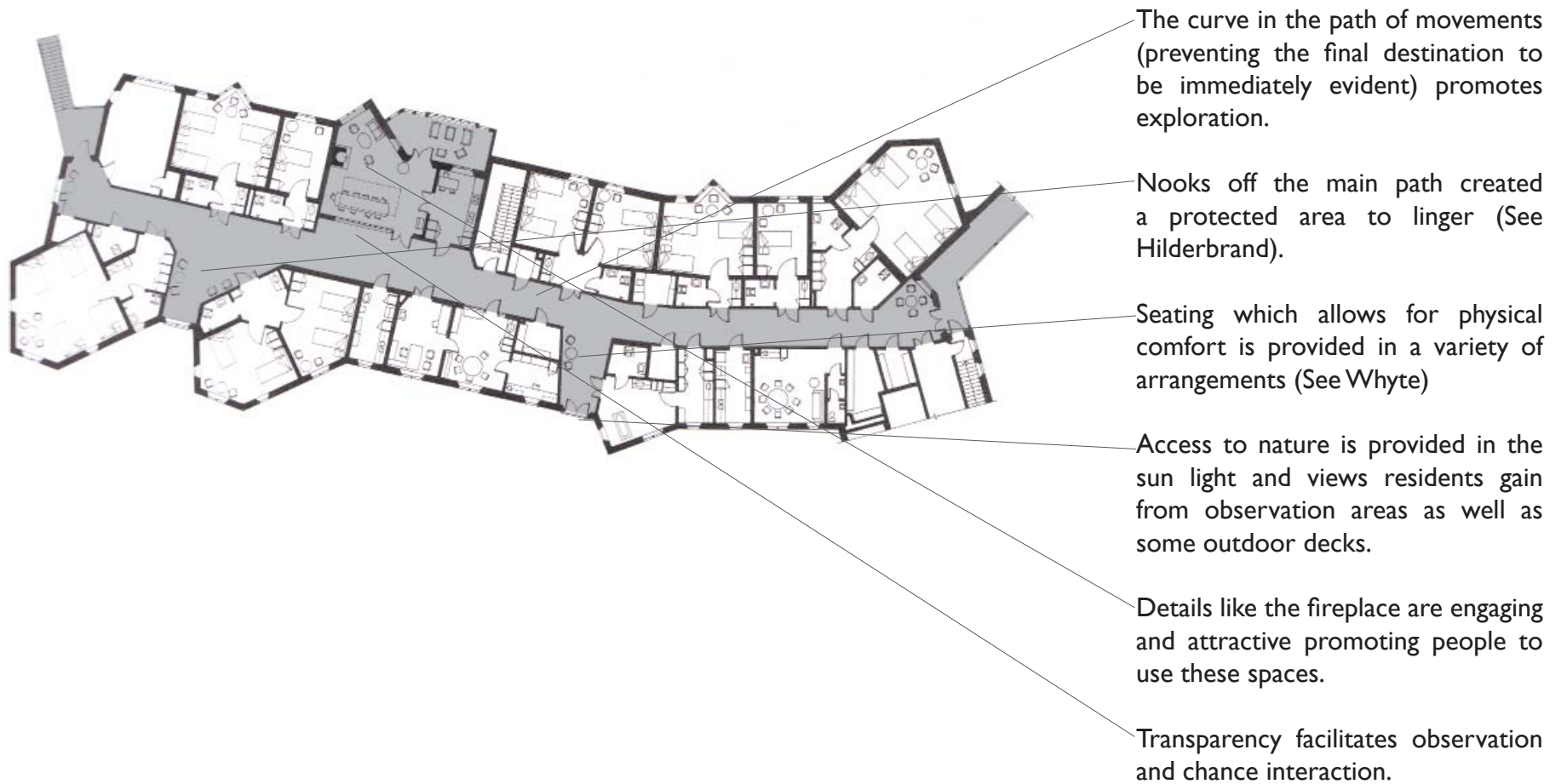
The corridors in this project were specifically designed to be more than just a passage to move through. These areas were programmed to accommodate lingering, places to observe, and social interaction.

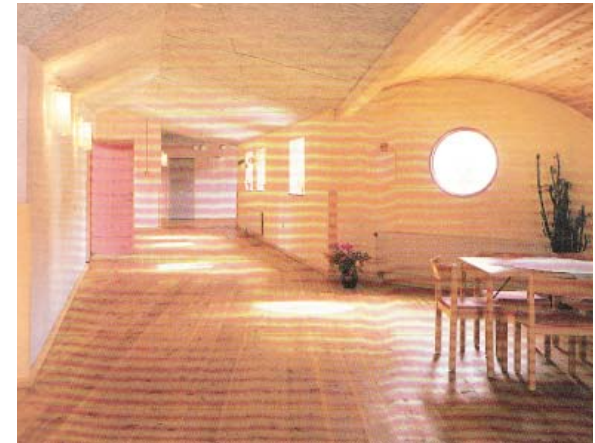
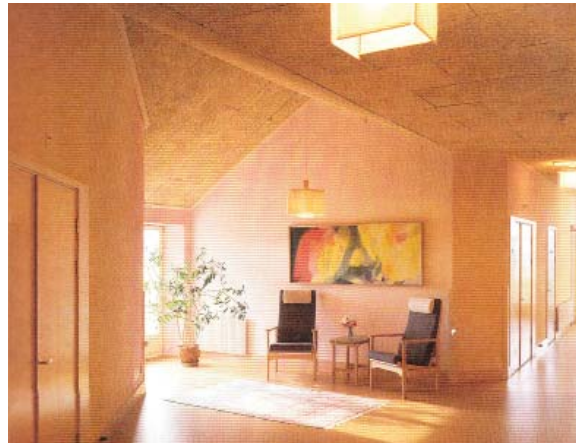
The Vidar Clinic
Project

Jarna, Sweden
Location

Erik Asmussen
Architect

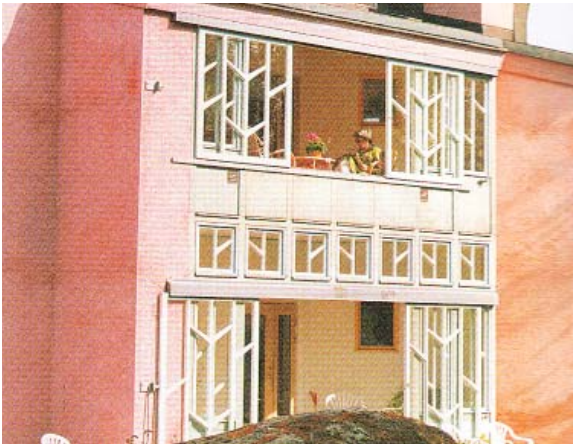
1984 - 1992
Construction





Nooks

Dedicated areas to linger are built just adjacent to movement paths, balancing ideas of being connected without being in the way.



Observation Areas

The combination of visual connections to physical enclosure allows us to be linked to the world and protected at the same time.



Eating and Activity Areas

Things tend to happen where there is a space for them to happen.



Ground Floor Plan



Outdoor Areas

Nature, including sunlight, fresh air, vegetation and other natural materials all can contribute to social health.



Engaging Play

Even in a hospitable being able to watch children play can contribute to health recovery.

Observation of others in itself is a kind of social interaction.



Clustered Suites

This residential project employs a unique strategies that redefines household structure. Instead of small independent apartments, this building clusters six to eight suites around large communal social areas. The arrangement trades a certain degree of privacy and independence for the resources that come from a large and varied household.

For example one cluster has a shared living area, library, kitchen, dining area, outdoor patio, and more that allow for numerous activities to happen at the same time and a considerable amount of space and furniture that would be too costly for any individual to afford. In addition, while each suite is much smaller it too has a kitchenette, sitting and activity areas that are private. The combinations and varying qualities of space means that each person gets more by sharing.

Kraftwerk 2
Project

Zurich, Switzerland
Location

Adrian Streich Architekten
Architect

- 2011
Construction



Large communal areas facilitate activities that could be shared by neighbors. Shared experiences can be the foundation of strong relationships.

Smaller nooks off the main area create a protected area (See Hilderbrand).

A variety of different spaces allow for different activities.

Access to nature is provided in the patios which have views down into a larger courtyard.

Transparency and visual permeability between the different social spaces facilitates observation and interaction.



Sharing Resources

Common ground and shared experience is the basis for social networks. Shared space creates the potential for these relationships.



Diverse Activities

Spaces that support a wide range of activities get a wide range of use. Here children draw, adults barbecue, people garden, friends hang out. No one activity hinders the others.



Visual Connections

Many dedicated spaces allow for many activities, but being able to see that those activities are going on is what draw in more participants.



Photograph by Rich Frishman
<http://travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/city-guides/seattle-washington/>

Contextual Analysis

Interstitial Space to Promote Social Health

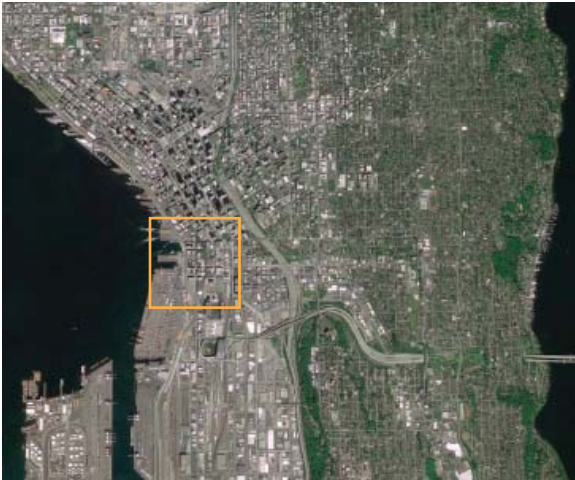
Location of Site



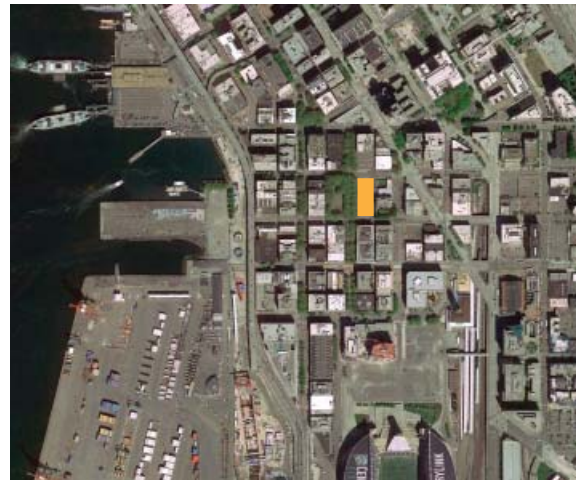
The Unites States of America



*North West corner of
Washington State*



The City of Seattle, WA



Pioneer Square Historic District



*The Proposed Site of a New
Intergenerational Living Complex*

Climate in Seattle

Seattle's Climate is relatively mild, especially given how far north it is. Some climatic factors are great for the performance and comfort of a building, while others have to be compensated for. A friend once told me "there is no bad weather, just bad clothes." The same can be said for building design. There is no ideal climate, just inappropriate design strategies for a given context.

Temperatures in Seattle never reaches severe extremes. It very rarely drops below freezing or above 80 F.

Humidity is also fairly unremarkable. It is "comfortable" for the majority of the year except during the winter where it is "dry".

Precipitation on the other hand is something of a concern. However, most people think Seattle is more wet than it really is. Although it is technically raining over half the time, the grand majority of that is very light, and those living in Seattle get used to it and don't use an umbrella.

Sunlight is the major design concern. Seattle is so far north that some days are very short. The range is 16 hours in June down to only 8 1/2 in December. In addition, the sun angle is so low during the winter (also mornings and evenings) that even the potential for good sun is rare.

Cloud cover further complicates the question of day lighting. Seattle is almost always cloudy (the typical range is 58%-99% blocked sky). Even when the sun is shining, much of that never reaches the city.



"Seattle Weather" by David Horsey

Daylight and Shadow Study

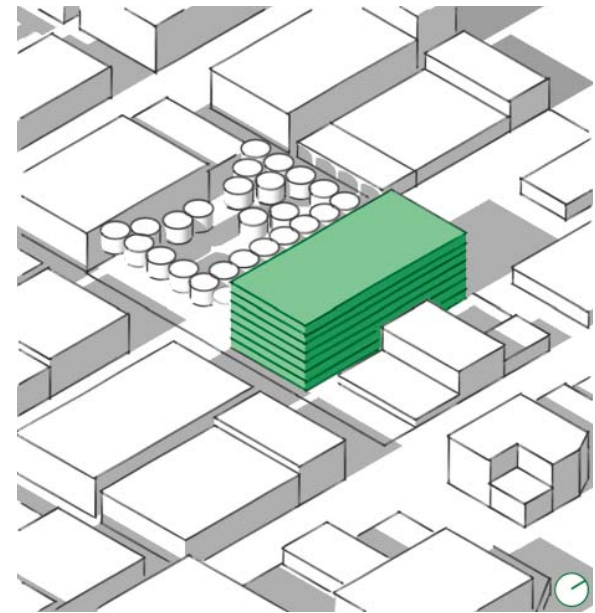
Seattle, USA

47.600593, -122.333236

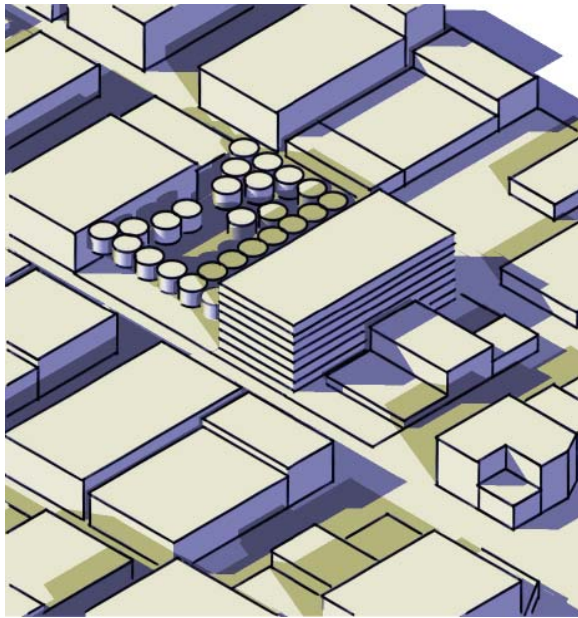
Pioneer Square District

The vacant lot directly west of Occidental Park

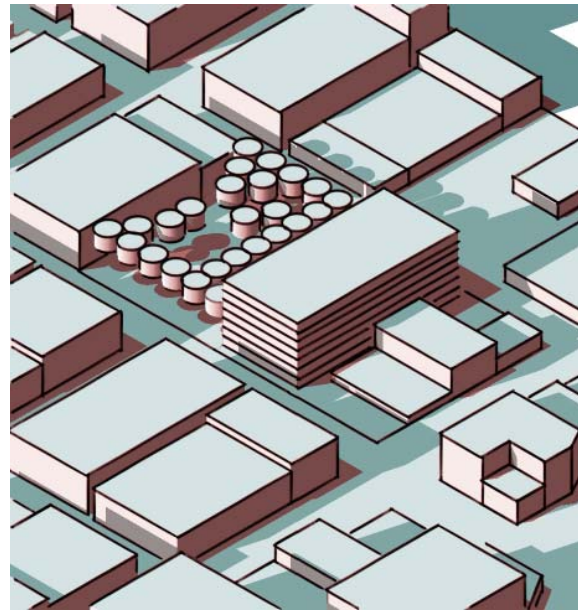
Study's mass is 84' tall



*A sun study showing the extremes in shadow and light conditions is very significant because light is so precious at our **Site** in Seattle. It is so far north that for the majority of the time the sun is relatively low in the sky. That fact combined with Seattle weather (mostly overcast) makes sun rare.*



Morning and **Evening** shadows show that no light will reach the park space directly west of building site during the morning, and the east side with its views to Mt. Rainier and the rest of Seattle gets no light in the afternoons.



Summer and **Winter** shadows emphasize how little sunlight reaches Seattle in the winter even during the brightest times of the day but also that the summer months have the potential for daylight.

When it comes to daylight in Seattle recognize that sunny moments are rare, and that makes them precious. Design for these moments, not in spite of them.

Precedent in Climatically Responsive Architecture - The Bullitt Center



The way this project responds to the day lighting condition's in Seattle is by using large amount of glazing even on the north facade, but then installing operable shading devices on the exterior. These shading devices are controlled by the users within the building allowing the conditions to reflect their personal preference. However, the technology was also designed to return to a state of optimal performance after a given time.

In addition, this project also takes advantage of the sun using an array of solar panels on the roof. Although, Seattle is often overcast the sunny condition makes up for the lag later. Over all theses panels provide more energy than the building uses. This is a reflection of the attitude behind the center to be a model in sustainable design, and many other strategies were also used towards this goal.

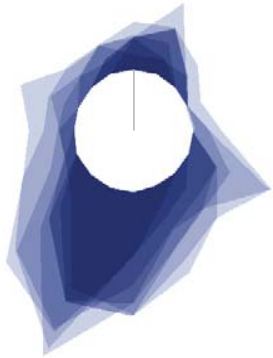


An interior within the Bullitt Center (a rentable work space) showing the conditions on a sunny day with the retractable shading device not in use.



The array of solar panels that is the roof of the Bullitt Center.

Wind Study - Seattle



Blue shows cold winter winds, the most common condition.

Orange shows the good summer breezes.

Location on diagram indicates direction wind is traveling from.

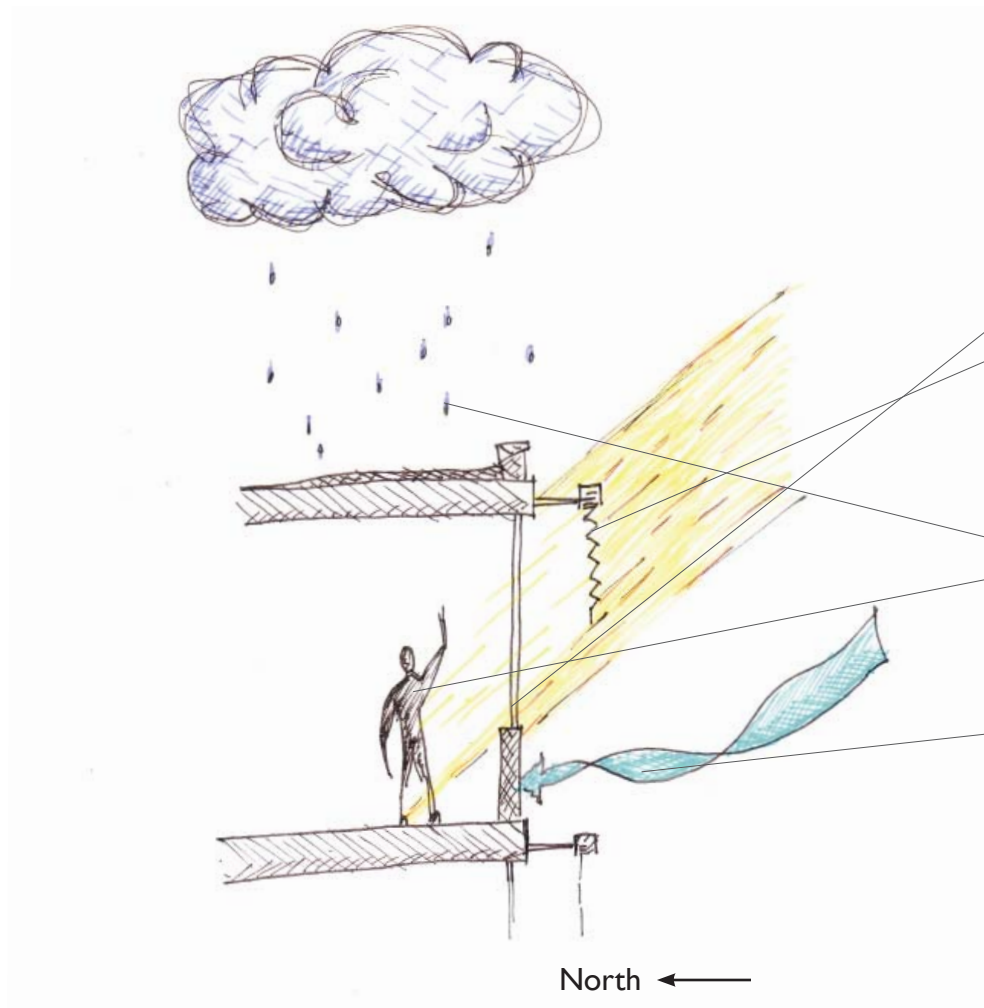
Size of colored area (radial length) shows wind speed.

Intensity of color shows frequency of that condition.



How can this this analysis be applied to our project?

Strategies for Environmental Concerns in Seattle



Lots of glass or open areas to allow for ambient light.

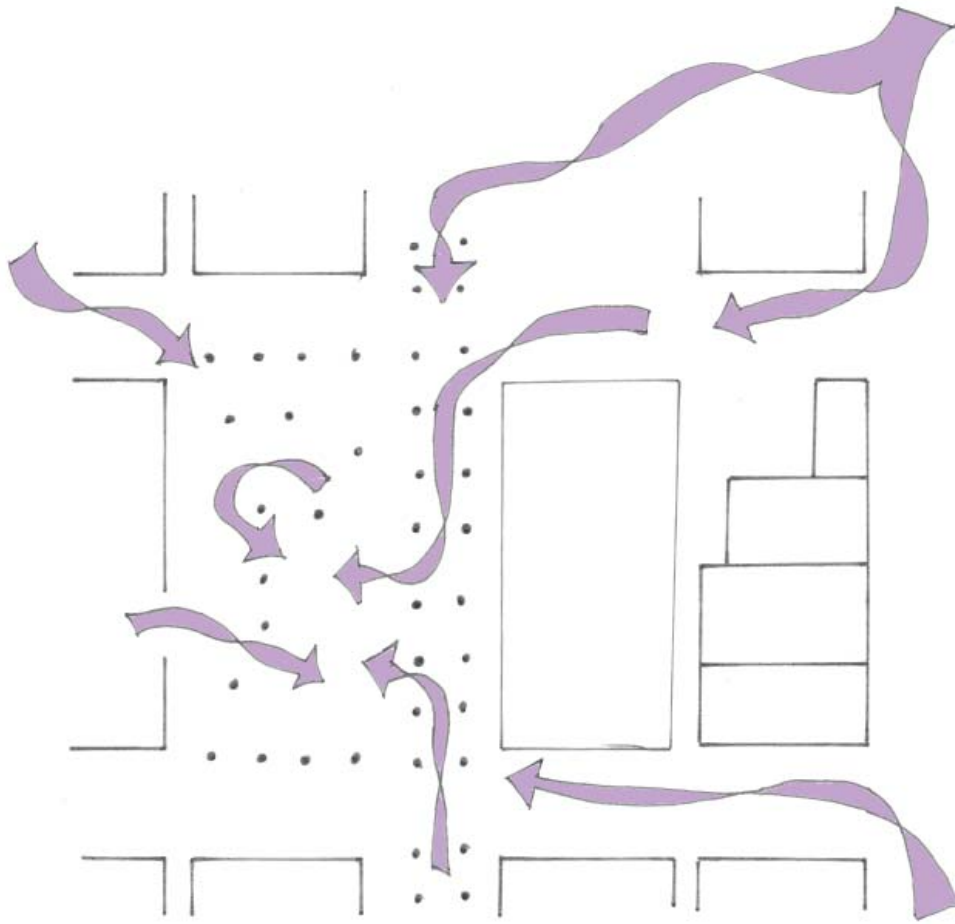
External sunshade to control direct sunlight on the rare condition.

Screen chosen to still allow visual connect though, even though it controls sun light.

Control of sunshade given to user.

Overhead planes to protect from rain.

Solid vertical elements to block cold southern winds.

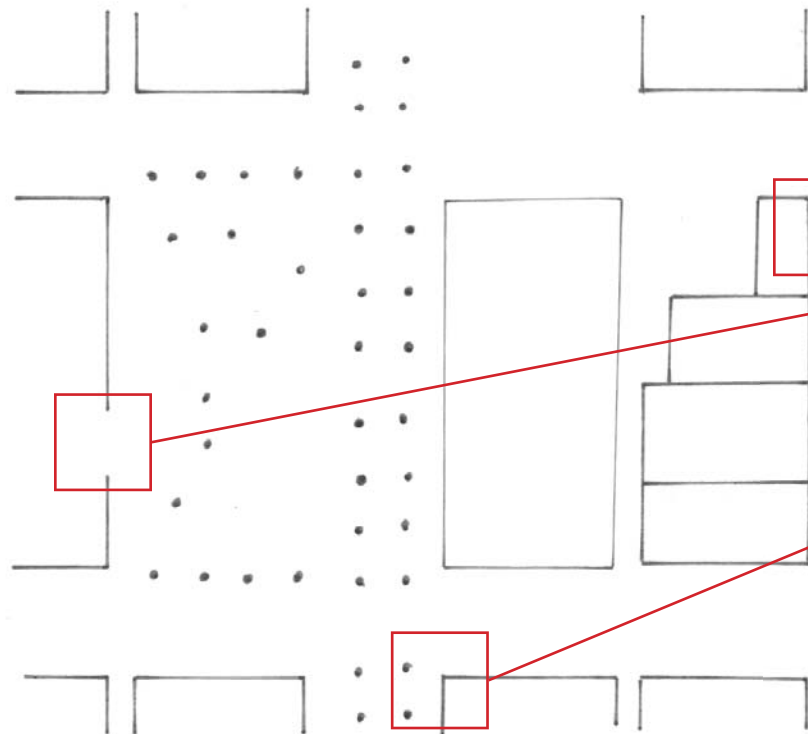


Pedestrian Flows

The park adjacent to the site is a destination, particularly on days it hosts the food market. Based entirely on the location of other significant amenities the majority of pedestrian movement should come from the north-east, the direction of public transportation. However, the park is full of moving people.

The west facade of the site already abuts a highly active space, and the design should reflect this.

Existing Conditions to Address Pedestrian Way



Some local businesses, restaurants and cafes in particular spill out onto the street with furniture and awnings.

This building uses a central, atrium like entrance to access several businesses from the interior space.

Traditional storefronts to these businesses work well even though the street is almost exclusively pedestrian.

Height to Gain Views

50' West

To water over the park trees

48' East and South

Over adjacent building to mountains (Mt. Rainier)

20' South-east

Over the wall, down into the garden

0' North-east
West

To the Smith Tower and other downtown skyscrapers
Occidental Park



Visual Connection as a Design Strategy

In the context of design strategies that foster relationships, visual connections are particularly significant. Observation is a kind of interaction, but it is a safe choice filled with interaction. We get to be aware of what is going on without being forced to participate. For this reason, visual connections from the building to the street and most importantly to the park are very much a factor in people's decision to join the activity happening in those places.

In addition, visual connection to nature, such as the views to the water or mountains beyond the city, are also hypothesized to contribute to health and active lifestyles. The idea is to remind people that a world exists beyond their private space, and that relationships are waiting for them if only they would get up and explore.



Mount Rainier





*The Ballard Public Library and Neighborhood Services Center - Seattle, WA, by BCJ Architects
<http://www.bcj.com/public/projects/project/51.html>*

Structure and Materiality

Interstitial Space to Promote Social Health

Pioneer Square - An Identifiable Historic District

The district around our site is very rich “historic” buildings. Every image to the right is a building in Pioneer Square and within a five block radius of the site.

The existing buildings have brick and stone facades with wood or plaster details, particularly around the storefronts. Regular patterns of vertically oriented windows give clear rhythm and the round arch is a very common detail.

This project however does not propose to mimic the existing architecture. Such a strategy would only result in a bad imitation. It is the character of the place that is the true strength anyway.

It is the orientation to the pedestrian, the uniqueness of every detail, the walkability, the vibrance, that give this neighborhood greatness. These things are where we take our lesson.





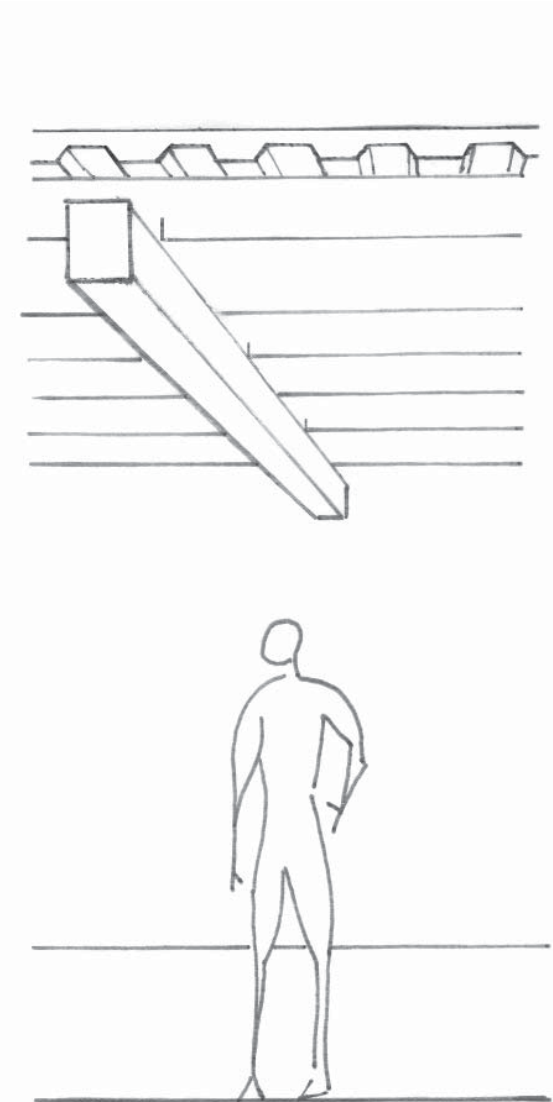
The Creation of Interstitial Space



From the Ballard Public Library in Seattle. An example of how the construction type and materials create different spaces within larger volumes.

Interstitial space, again meaning the space “between,” often occurs within larger spaces when two different activities or programs sit next to each other. Instead of smushing the two together, it is a common strategy to create a small transition or interstitial space. For example, in a library instead of having working areas right next to stacks, the architect can design a small path used for circulation but really meant to separate the two functions so that people retrieving book don’t bother those working, and those working are not in the way. The interstitial space keeps the two from overlapping.

The creation however, is very subtle. If the spaces are separated too much then a user cannot easily transition between them. Instead merely the suggestion of that transition is enough. The structure and materials used in a project are often used to create this suggestion. A simple change in the overhead condition can give each section a unique spatial experience, thus creating interstitial space.



The Merits of Wood as a Construction Material

Heavy timber is a very common building material in Seattle. The North-east part of the United States has extensive forests, making wood and wood based materials readily available. No doubt the fact that using local materials is a sustainable strategy appeals to those living in Seattle, where progressive environmental strategies are embraced.

Wood is also very warm and soothing. It is highly recognized as a natural material. There is evidence that nature has the ability to heal and promote well being. Also, it glows in sunlight, making it a diverse experiential material. People get a different impression based on the weather that day.

In addition, timber has great potential for the creating of interstitial space because of the way post and beam construction gives space subtle division. The natural depth to a wood floor creates wonderful opportunities to play with the articulation of overhead planes.



Precedent of Timber Construction in Seattle - Ballard Library by BCJ

Bohlin Cywinski Jackson Architects use timber, metal, and glass to create this beautiful public library in a northern district of Seattle. The warmth of the wood combined with the ambient light make this a very bright and inviting space.

Libraries by their program are intrinsically social spaces. They are often meeting ground for communities and launch points for new ideas and projects. The spaces within the library cater very well to users; there is a wide variety of different spaces that cater to different activities.

The horizontal planes of wood are used to articulate these different spaces. Shifts in the overhead wood pattern break very large spaces into smaller sections of different program.







A Proposed Form for the Building

Design Implications

Interstitial Space to Promote Social Health

Seniorenresidenz Spirgarten from page 16



The Vidar Clinic from page 20



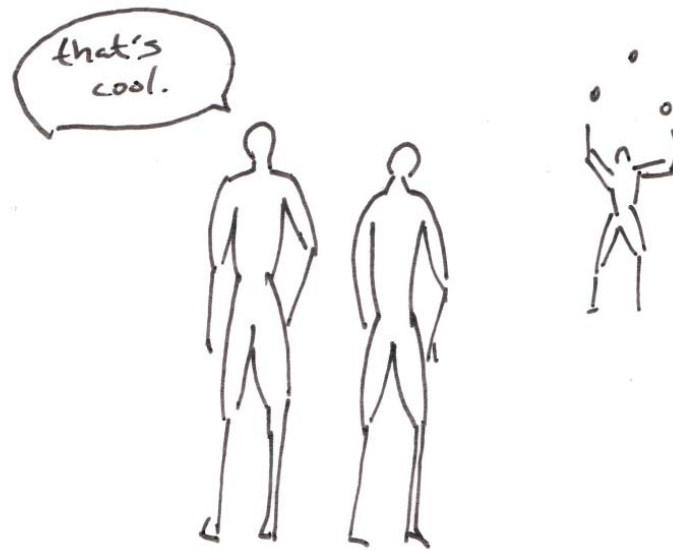
An Active Entrance

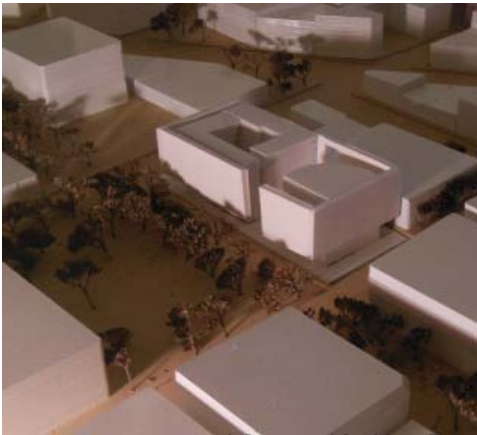
This strategy attempts to create the potential for relationships between people in the neighborhood and those living in the building. The entire first floor is given as a public realm. It is meant to be neutral ground where people can come to socialize and interact in a safe sheltered place. It is also meant to be a resource to the neighborhood.

The program for the proposed project is a small grocery store, cafe, and kitchen with an emphasis on the public use of these spaces as a potential to exchange knowledge and hold common experiences.

This idea of shared experiences setting the foundation for social interaction is what William Whyte called **Triangulation**. It is the idea that two people moving through the same space is not enough to get them to really interact. A third element is required, something that makes them linger in the space.

Also it can be a conversation starter, but the depth of interaction people have with the third object is not nearly as important as the fact that they stopped. Food is a great example of triangulation, but so are things we merely observe.





A Proposed Building Form



The Entrance of the Building

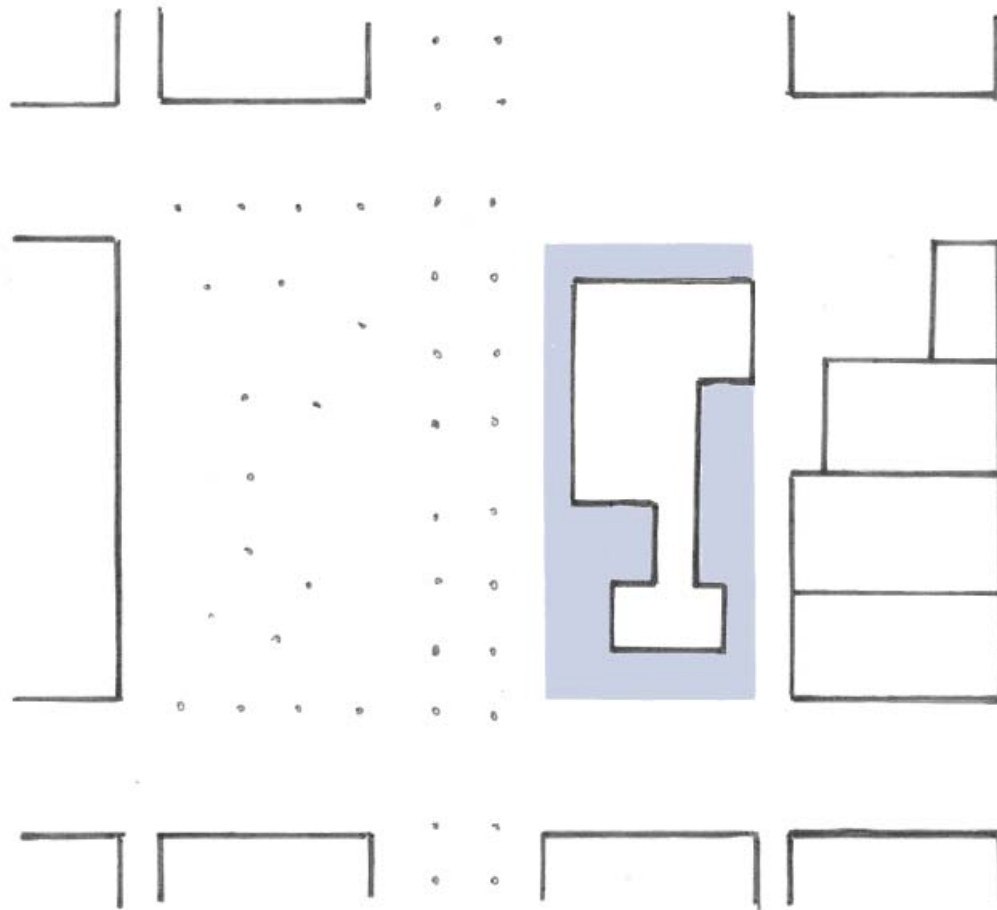


Seniorenresidenz Spirgarten from page 16

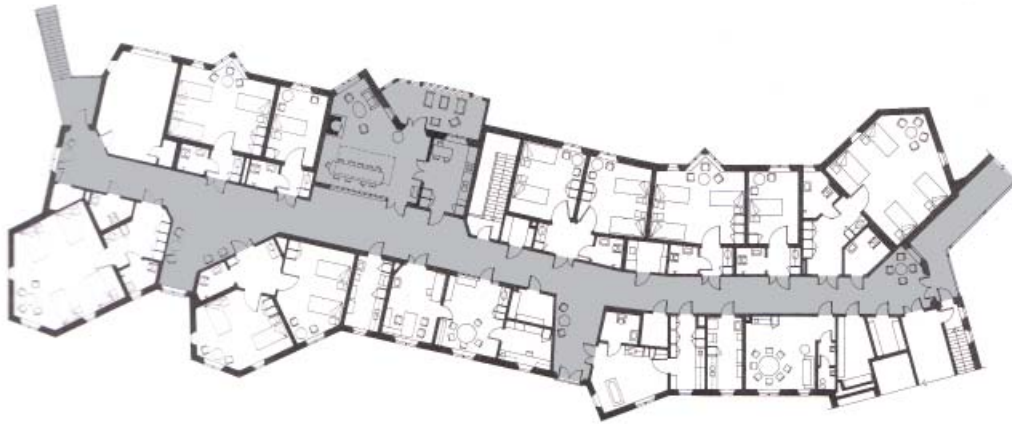
Program however is not enough to create an active entrance. The space must also be designed in such a way as to invite people in, but also offer them a sense of security once inside.

One way to do this is to pull the facade of the building in away from the street creating nooks and alcoves. The space is exterior and permeable, but it is also enclosed.

On the upper floors a screen to suggest the building's perimeter does not set back can be used to maintain the urban fabric, and this would create an overhead enclosure for that ground plane.



The suggested perimeter of the building compared to the actual building envelope



The Vidar Clinic from page 20.

A Lively Corridor

The idea behind a lively corridor is that it incorporates areas for lingering and activity into the circulation path. Much like with the active entrance the goal is to entice people to use the space while still feeling comfortable. These spaces are adjacent to the movement of people, so the differentiation between lingering places and moving places will be an important factor in whether people feel in the way. Strong visual connections to the surrounding activity are of course important, but at the same time people should feel secure.

These areas of lingering activity are also meant to be an amenity to those living there. For example, areas for children to play and adults to sit can be incorporated into the circulation path in this strategy.

The paths themselves are in harmony with the building form. Curved wandering paths that link destinations provide for exploration. In a straight corridor where a person can see the end, there is less motivation to walk down there, as opposed to a curved path where if a person wants to see where it goes, they have to walk down.

In addition, loops tend to promote walking, as do options in different paths to take. Also, little moments of something special enhance the experience of moving through the building.



Kraftwerk 2 from page 26



Clustered Suites

Designing clustered suites is one strategy to foster meaningful relationships between people. It is based on the rejection of the traditional American household of 2.5 people (an average from the 2010 census). Instead this strategy supports extended families or those with non-traditional relationships, meaning not mother, father, parent, child.

The clustered suites approach allows for sever very small independent units to share resources and living space with a larger cluster of people. For example, a traditional family of four may also live with a dependent grandparent, a single aunt and a couple of college students who rent out a portion of the larger unit. Everyone has their own suite with small sleeping and working areas, perhaps even a small kitchenette. But also all share a larger kitchen, living area, dinning room, and other amenities. Because everyone came together, overall they get more.

The same ideas and intentions could be applied to other unique relationships, like in the case of live-work units.



Block One



Block Two



Block Three



Block Four



Block Five



Block Six



A variety of different building blocks supports a variety of different unit types. Blocks one and three have a strong connection to the park, while two and four rely more on the building's internal space, suggesting these later units are the best for those with the most dependence.

Block five doesn't have a strong connection with the neighbors, but it does connect strongly to the street and all the shops below, suggesting the possibility of live work units. and, block 6 offers a unique experience because of the exceptional views.

Each circumstance is set up for specific relationships and should be designed to take full advantage.

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