

Happy Cities

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Certified



Corporation

Let's start with a **story**



Our Urban Village Cohousing, Vancouver



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What if we start **thinking about our homes as catalysts for social connection** that can positively impact all aspects our daily lives?



Intentional community

An illustration of a vibrant, multi-level courtyard in an intentional community. The scene is filled with people engaged in various activities: a person in a red shirt walks on the left; a person in a white apron pushes a wheelbarrow in the foreground; a person in a wheelchair is at a table; a person in a purple dress uses a cane; a person in a red dress sits on a bench; a person in a blue shirt sits at a table; a person in a yellow shirt walks on a higher level. The courtyard features colorful awnings (yellow and white, blue and white), tables, benches, and stylized trees. The background shows modern buildings with large windows. Five speech bubbles are overlaid on the scene, each containing a quote about community support.

I can rely on neighbourly support to help me age in the right place

I can rely on my neighbour when I need someone to watch my kids

I have social connections right at my doorstep

I can share tools and resources with neighbours

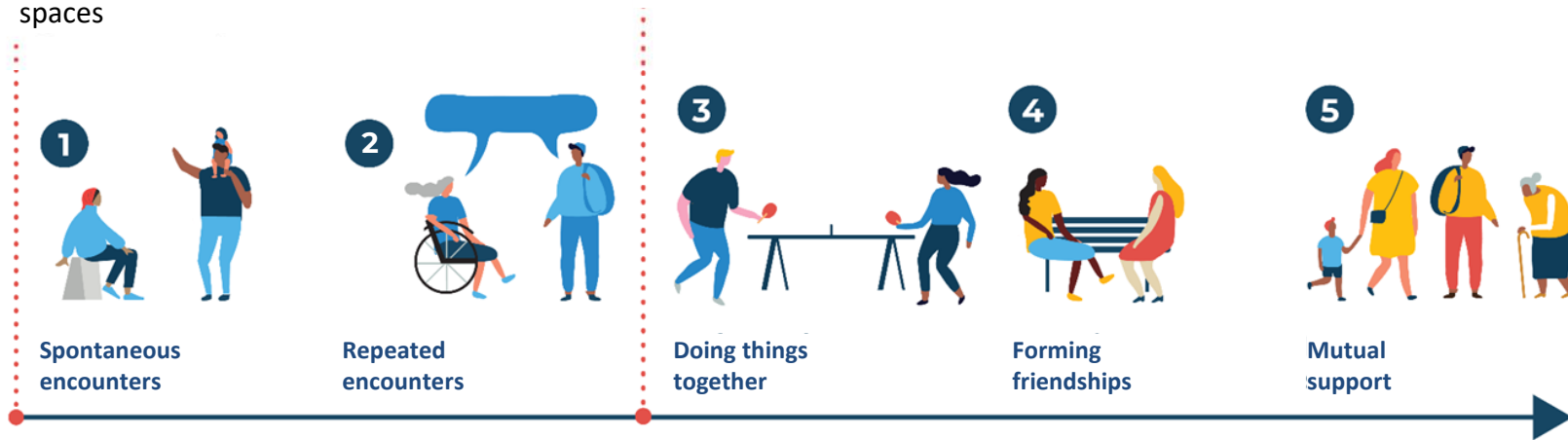
Spectrum of neighbourly interactions

Building design

Buildings can be designed to encourage residents to bump into each other and linger in common spaces

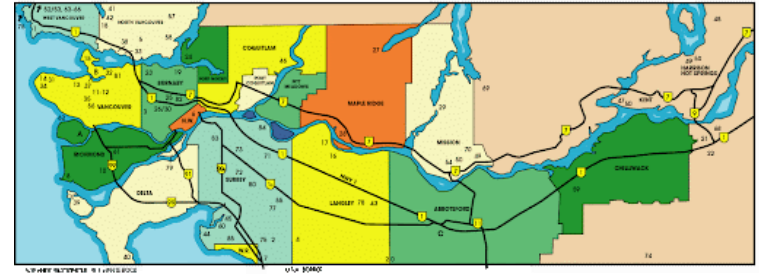
Building design & programming

Social programming can help residents make the jump from acquaintances to meaningful relationships. The design of physical spaces facilitates successful programming.



Our work at Happy Cities

Geographical context



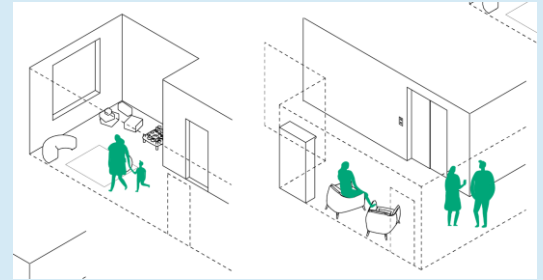
Happy Cities - Housing work



Planning + design



Design audits



Policy + design guidelines



Engagement



Post-occupancy evaluations



Research + education

Happy Homes Toolkit



Designed to Engage



Building the case for social connection

Strong social relationships make us happier, healthier, and more resilient in the face of crises—and are linked with living 15 years longer on average. Yet, loneliness and isolation are on the rise in many places, reaching epidemic levels.

Loneliness in Canada

3 in 10 sometimes feel lonely.

1 in 10 often feel lonely.



Data source: 2021 Canadian Social Survey

Without **affordable** housing **choices** that provide **secure tenure**, all of these other wellbeing goals cannot be achieved!



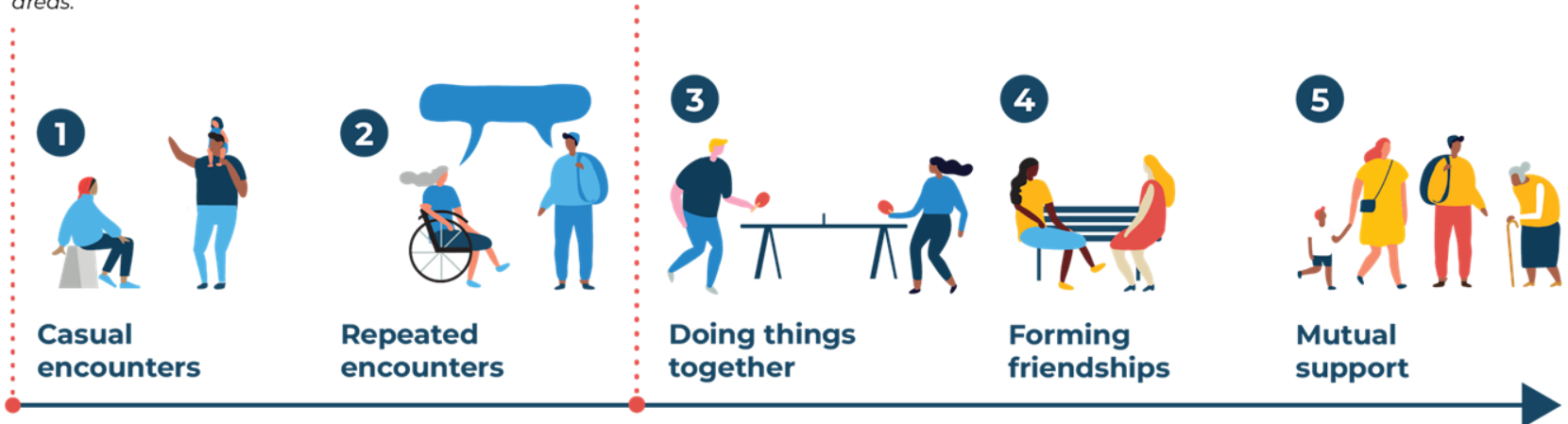
The spectrum of social connections

Design

Buildings and community spaces can be designed to encourage residents to bump into each other and linger in common areas.

Design & programming

Social programming can help residents make the jump from casual encounters to meaningful relationships. The design of physical spaces facilitates successful programming.



Increasing social connectedness, belonging, and resilience

Building the case for wellbeing-focused design



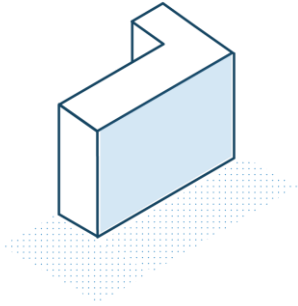
Introducing the Building Social Connections Toolbox!

This toolkit is for anyone interested in or working in housing, community planning, and development, including:

- Planners and planning consultants
- Architects and designers
- Market and non-market housing developers and operators
- All levels of government involved in housing
- Individual residents and community advocates

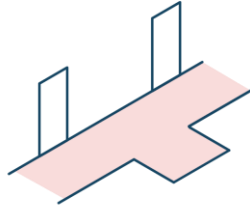


Design toolboxes



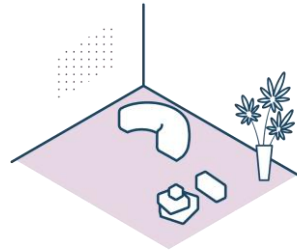
Social building edges

- Transition zones
- Building entrances
- Publicly accessible spaces



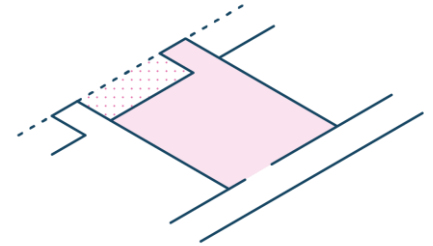
Social circulation

- Lobbies
- Corridors
- Nooks
- Stairs



Social amenities

- Indoor amenities
- Outdoor amenities
- Bicycle spaces



Social homes

- Entryways
- Private homes
- Balconies

Principles for **social wellbeing**

Design principles

Location

Invitation

Activation

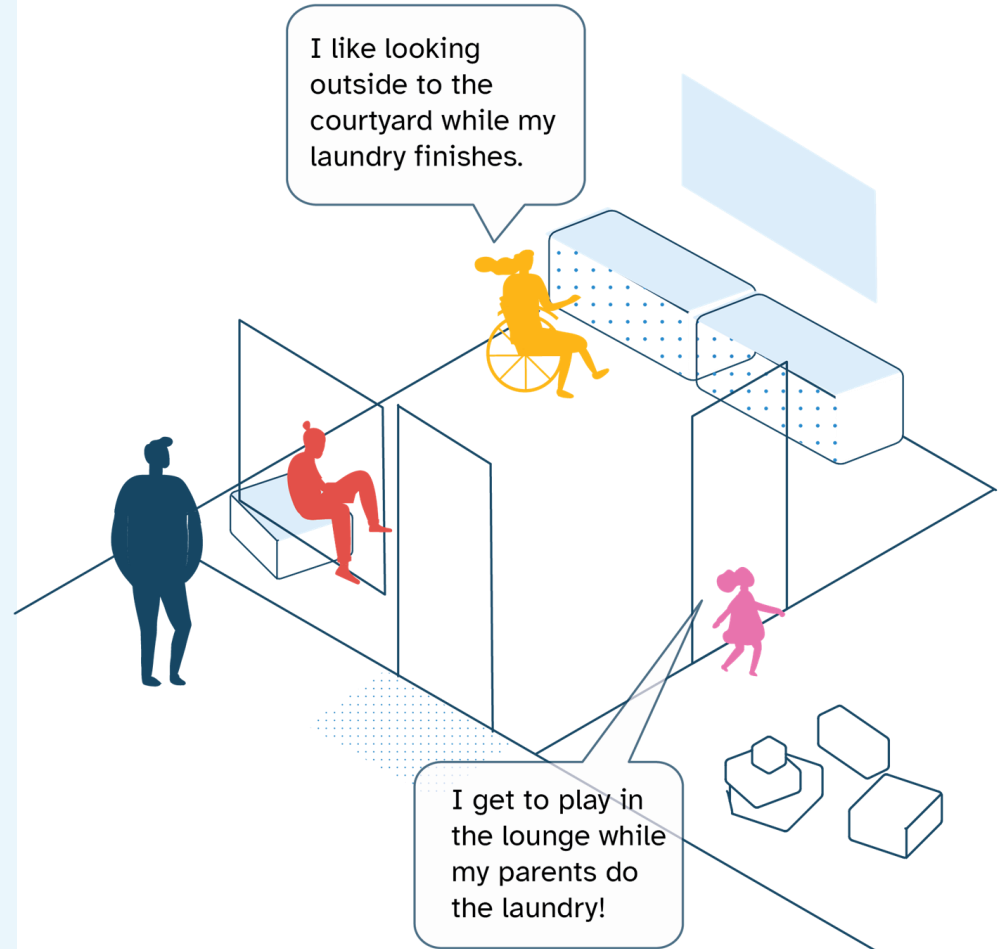
Inclusion

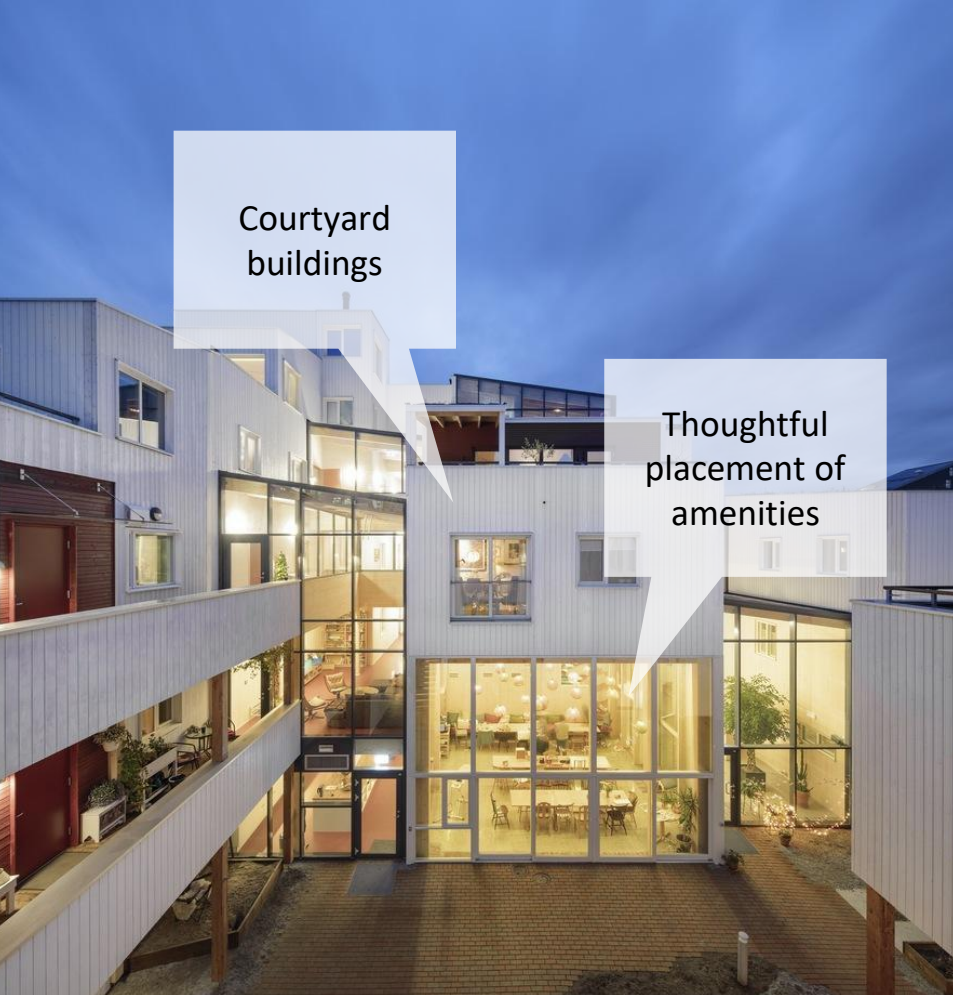
Transition

Evolution

Location

Maximize opportunities for interaction by locating social features and spaces in convenient, visible, and prominent locations with natural light; Multiply social impact through co-location.





Courtyard
buildings

Thoughtful
placement of
amenities



Mixed-use
communities

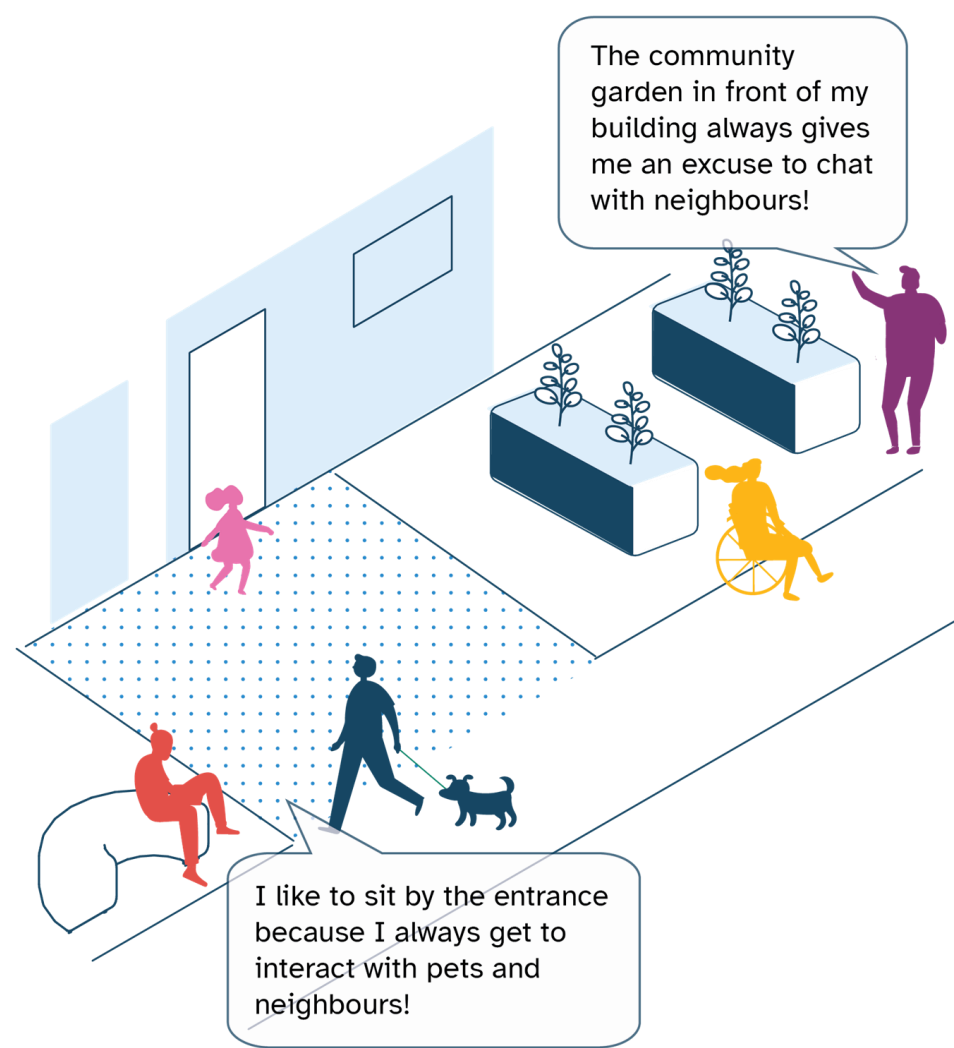
Integrated
public spaces

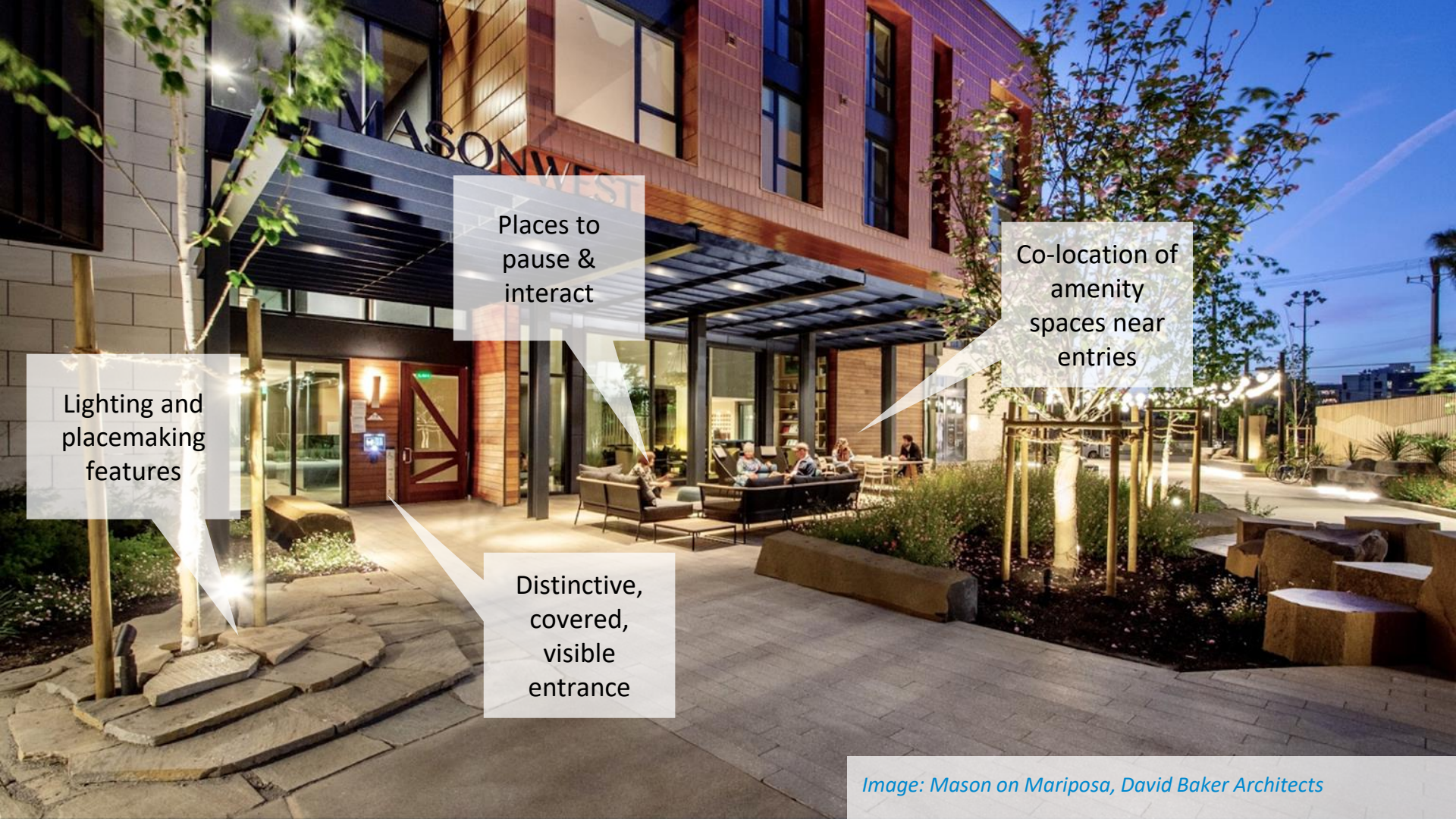
Image: Vindmolebakken Housing - Helen & Hard

Image: Mary Anne's Place, Placemaker Communities

Invitation

Maximize spontaneous daily encounters by designing places to pause and interact; Use the built environment as an icebreaker for social interaction.





Places to
pause &
interact

Co-location of
amenity
spaces near
entries

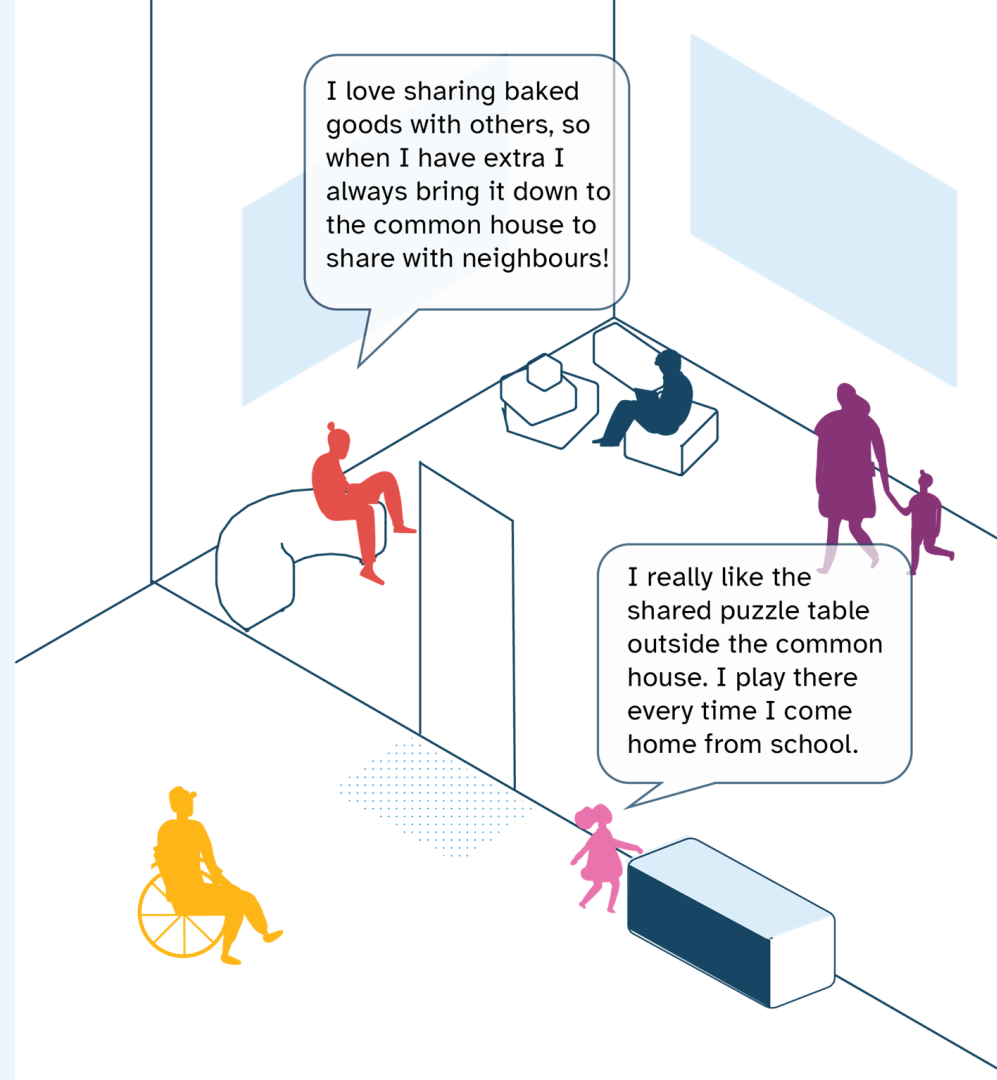
Lighting and
placemaking
features

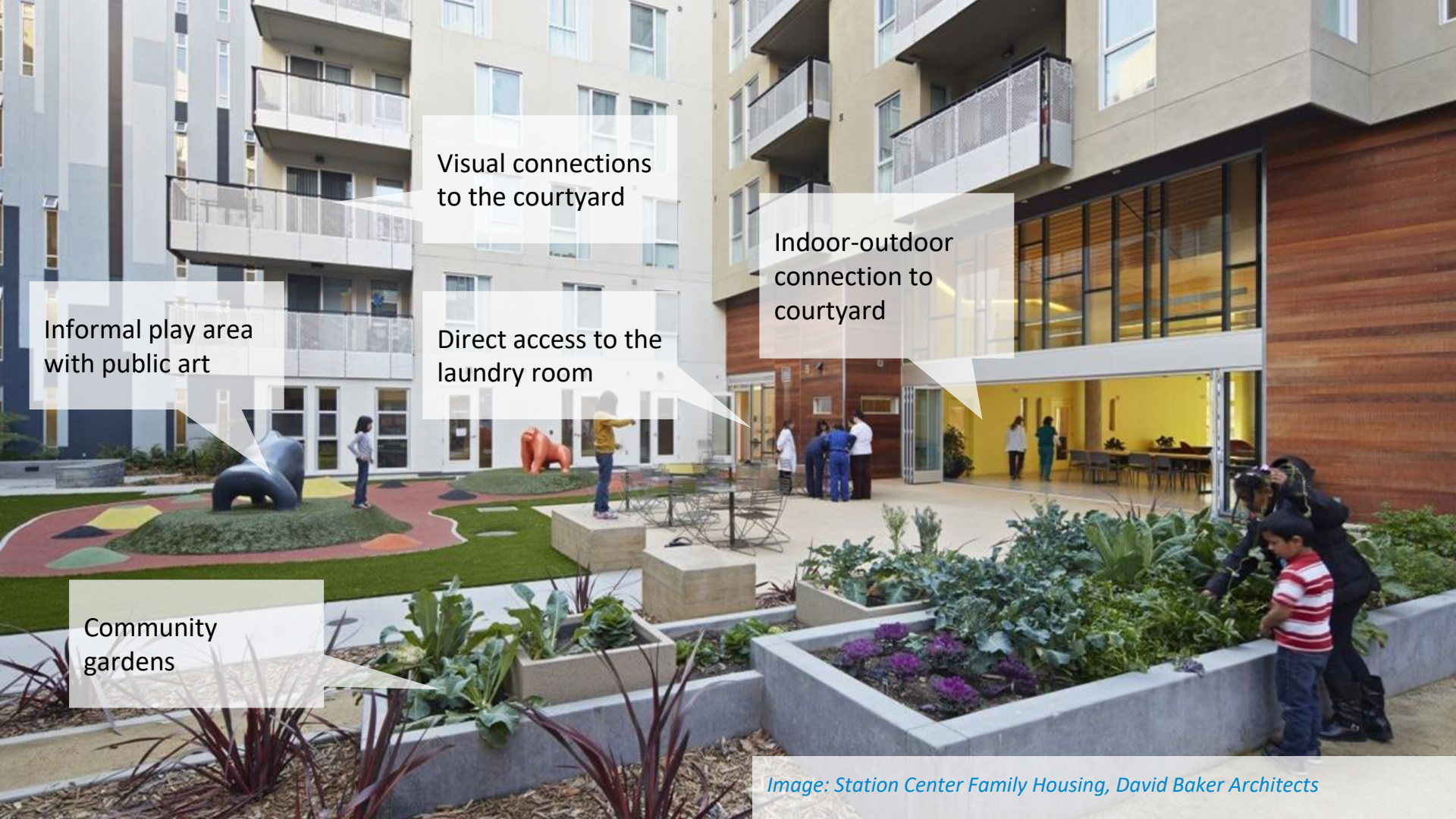
Distinctive,
covered,
visible
entrance

Image: Mason on Mariposa, David Baker Architects

Activation

Create interesting, functional spaces and a centre or heart for the community through diverse scales of common spaces with intentional things to see and do.





Visual connections to the courtyard

Indoor-outdoor connection to courtyard

Informal play area with public art

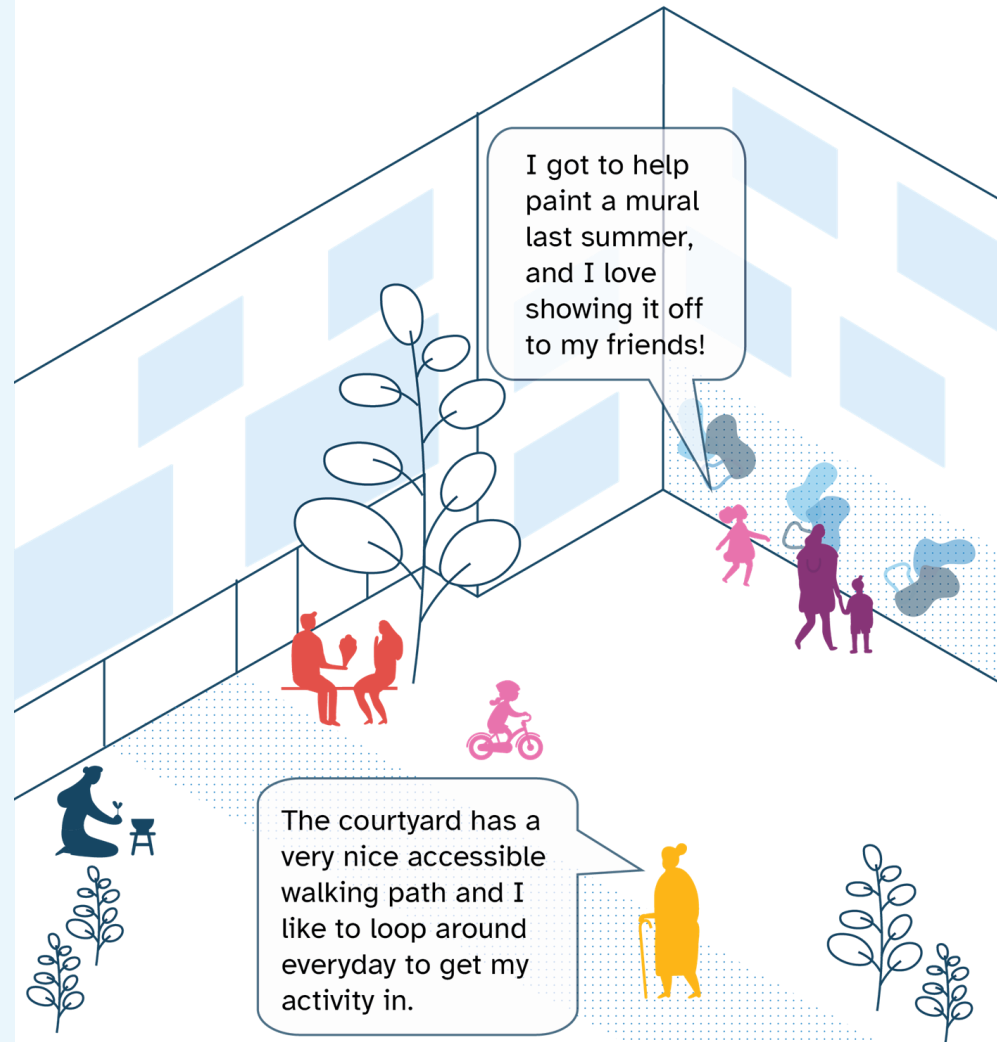
Direct access to the laundry room

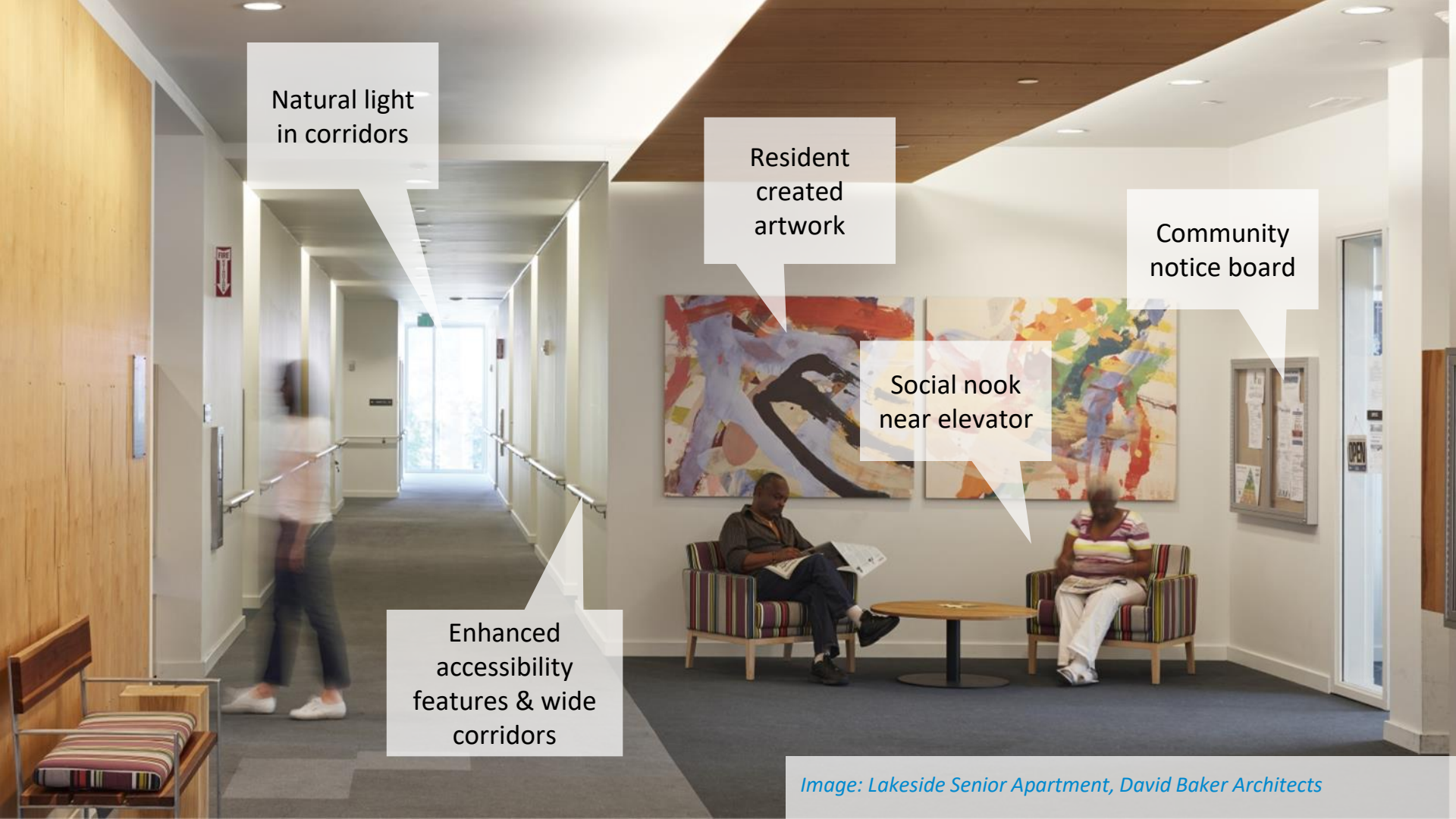
Community gardens

Image: Station Center Family Housing, David Baker Architects

Inclusion

Create spaces that are accessible and safe for people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds; Reflect different cultural preferences and identities.





Natural light
in corridors

Resident
created
artwork

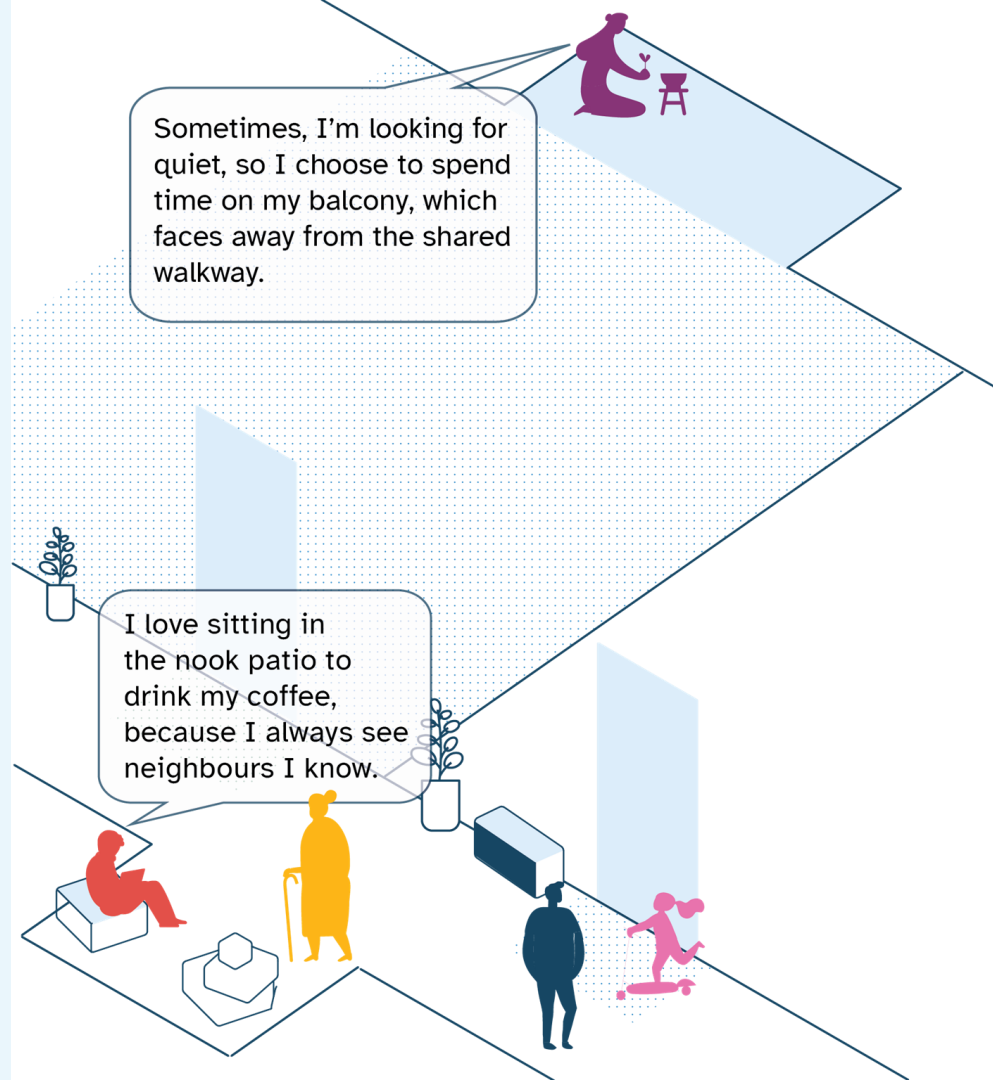
Community
notice board

Social nook
near elevator

Enhanced
accessibility
features & wide
corridors

Transition

Balance high-quality, livable private homes with common spaces;
Consider thoughtful transitions and gradients from public to private space.



Sometimes, I'm looking for quiet, so I choose to spend time on my balcony, which faces away from the shared walkway.

I love sitting in the nook patio to drink my coffee, because I always see neighbours I know.



Active edges
with stoops

Landscaping &
architectural
elements for
transition



Natural light,
acoustics

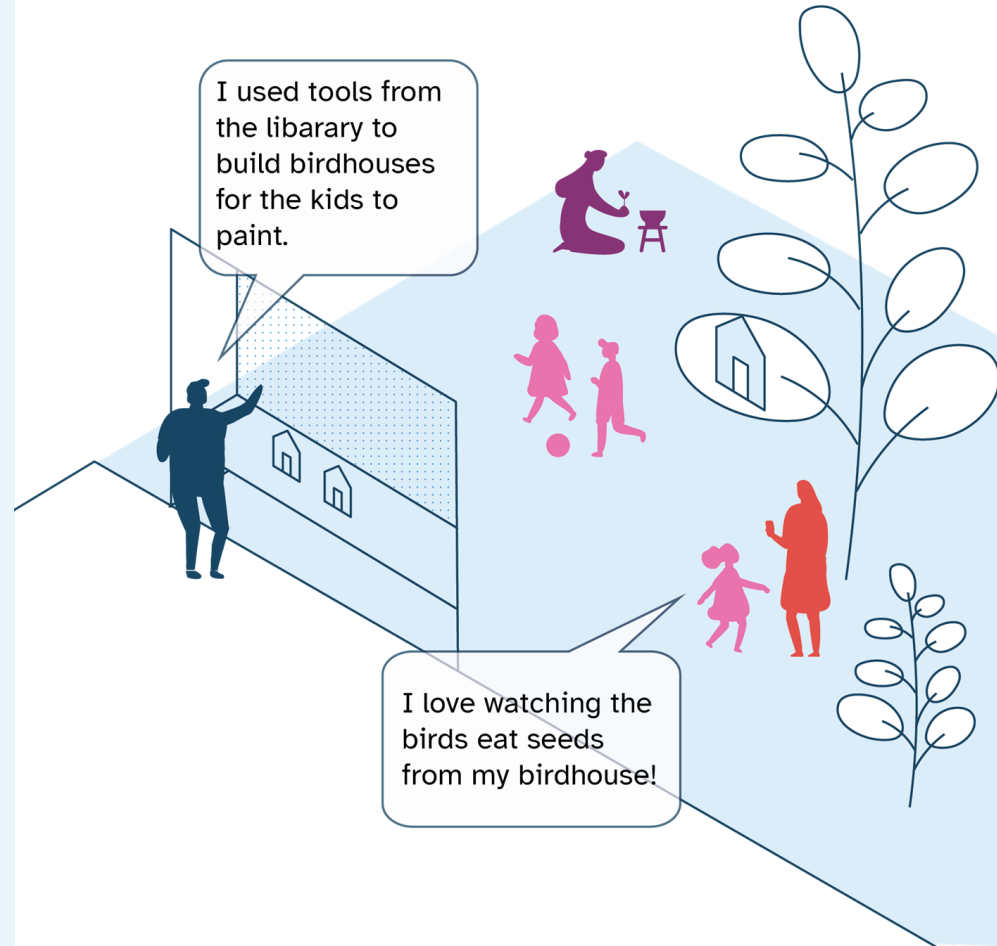
Flexible,
accessible, and
functional layouts


Image: Lakeside Seniors Apartment, David Baker Architects

Image: Our Urban Village Cohousing


Evolution

Nurture a sense of belonging through stewardship of common spaces;
Allow spaces to evolve with residents over time to meet changing community needs.



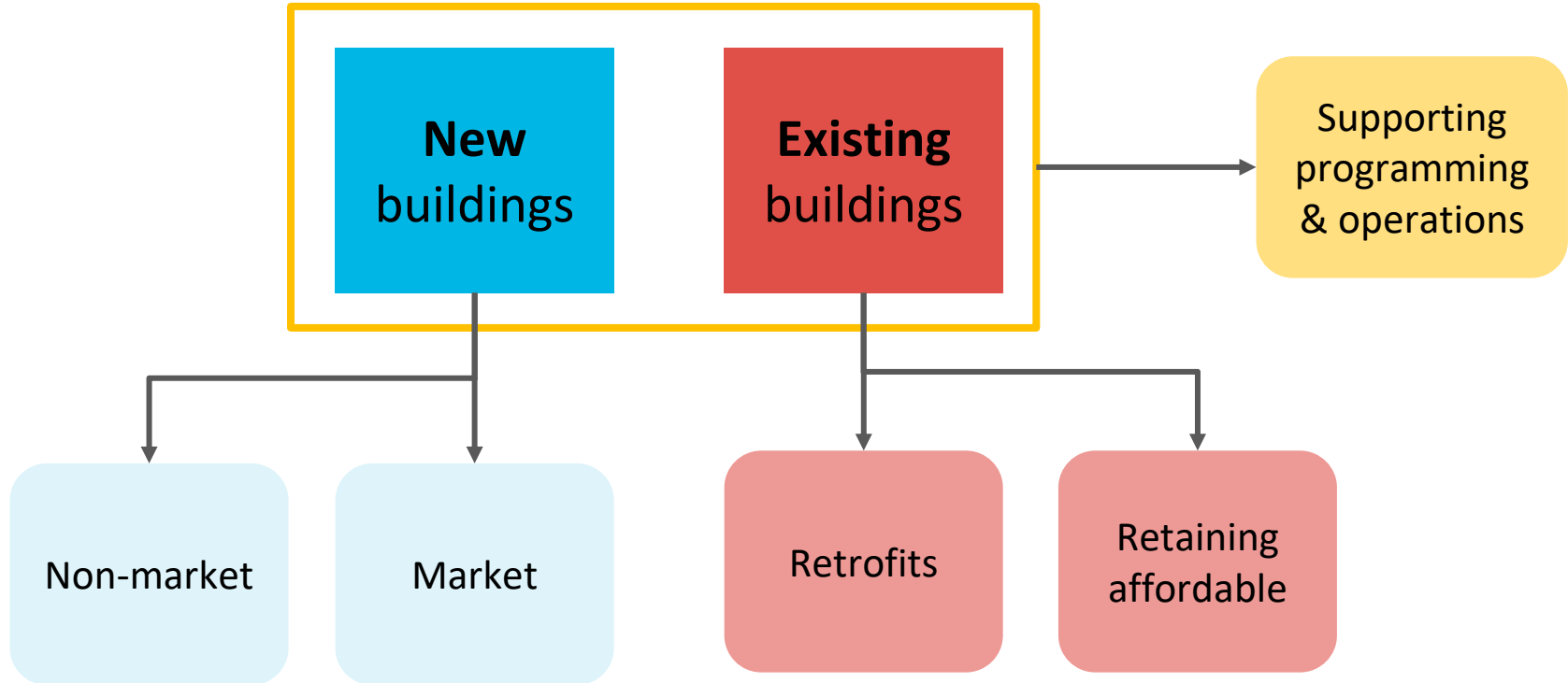
A photograph of a children's activity room. The room features a colorful climbing wall with green, yellow, and blue sections. To the right, there is a wooden climbing frame with a ladder. The floor is covered with colorful mats in shades of purple, blue, and green. A large window in the background provides natural light. A semi-transparent white box with the text "Kids activity room" is overlaid on the top left of the image.

Kids activity room

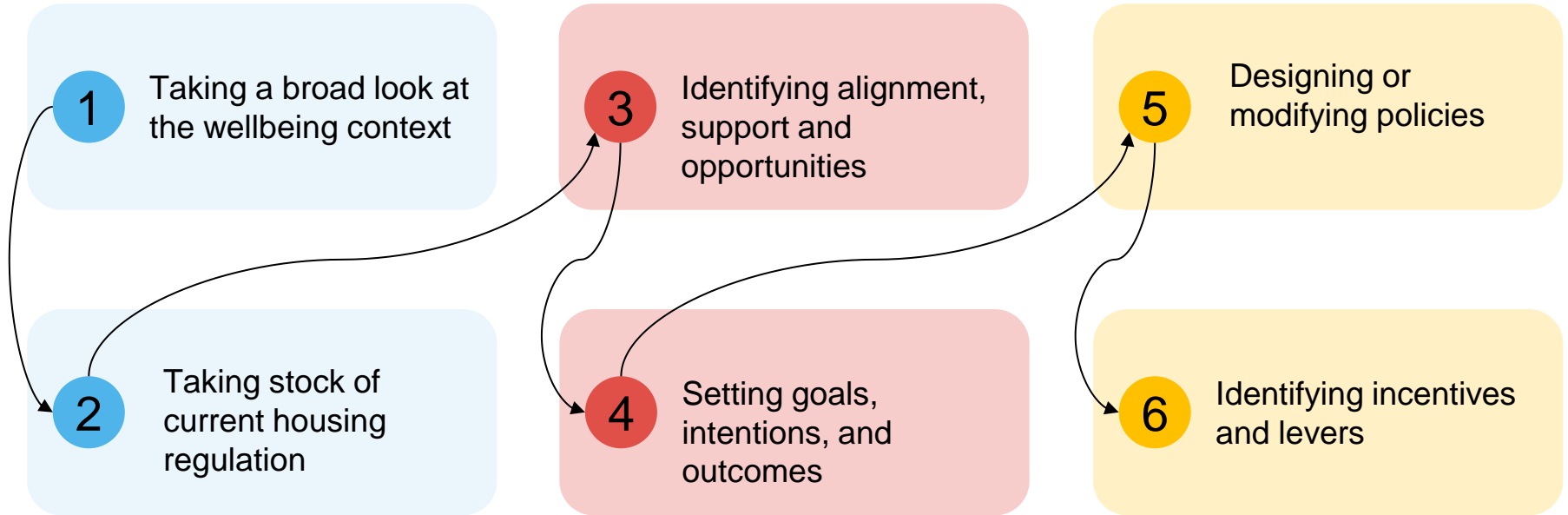
A photograph of a workshop. The room is filled with various tools and equipment. A wooden workbench is the central focus, with a pegboard above it holding numerous tools like hammers, pliers, and screwdrivers. To the right, there is a large industrial machine, possibly a lathe or mill. The ceiling has exposed pipes and a large light fixture. A semi-transparent white box with the text "Workshop with shared tools" is overlaid on the bottom right of the image.

Workshop with shared tools

Areas for action



Implementation



Thank you!

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