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## Haven: Support For Mothers

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# H O V E N

S U P P O R T F O R M O T H E R S

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SPRING 2021

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# DECLARATION

## POETIC

Like a classically composed piece of music or a seemingly painted sunset, architecture and its interiors should sing. It should make one's heart swell with wonder and amazement. It should affect one's emotions in some capacity, whether that means breathing in a sigh of relaxation, deepening feelings of connection, or encouraging a moment of pause and reflection. It should feel harmonious, with each of its parts working together as a whole. It should command a certain presence.

## HOLISTIC

Defined as "characterized by comprehension of the parts of something as intimately interconnected and explicable only by reference to the whole." Can architecture stand alone, or should its interior speak the same language? Is the message consistent through branding and graphics? I believe the answer to these questions should always be yes. Architecture, its interior, and graphics should all meld together to form a beautiful composition. These components should be thoughtfully considered together from the beginning of the project.

## SUSTAINABLE

We are at a pivotal moment in history where we must consider our built environment in a whole new way due to the environmental impact of decisions made before us. Because of an ever-growing lack of natural resources, we must consider sustainability within design. Innovative materials and construction methods need to be utilized in order to avoid putting a strain on our environment. More than ever, we must look at where a product comes from and how it is made, while choosing local products and makers whenever possible.

## BENEFICIAL

We must not only consider how a space and its materials makes us less healthy, but if it furthers our well-being. Do the material choices promote indoor air quality? Does the environment encourage movement? Does the organization of space make one's life pleasant or stressful? If the job of an interior designer is to promote the health, safety and welfare of others, I believe that we should take it a step further by considering how design can actually improve the quality of one's life.

## DETAILED

Ludwig Mies Van Der Rohe is credited with the saying "God is in the details." In an age of next day deliveries and social media where projects seemingly happen overnight, the art of craftsmanship has been lost. Quality is forgone for speed. Every increasingly, it will be the job of a designer to create the time and space for thoughtful consideration. It will be up to us to support craftspeople and makers with an attention to detail. In our own work, we must take the time for details while making it appear effortless and seamless.

# ABSTRACT

## SUMMARY

This thesis explores how a nonmedical interior environment can provide support and care for mothers during the perinatal period in order to prevent maternal mental health (MMH) issues such as anxiety and postpartum depression.

## MOTIVATION

In China, it is called *zuo yue zi*; in Latin America, it is referred to as *la cuarentena*; in India, *jaapa*. This protocol of intergenerational care for a new mother that lasts anywhere between 30 to 100 days postpartum “shows up in wildly diverse places” (Ou et al., 2016.) In the United States, this period of time is referred to as The Fourth Trimester. Unfortunately, as the only developed country without government-mandated paid parental leave (Livingston & Thomas, 2020), new mothers rush back into their regular routines after childbirth and expect their energy, bodies and mood to quickly bounce back. The care for and education of a new mother that was once a family affair in order to ease that transition is now frequently sourced out to hired help or forgone completely as many families now live far apart.

## ISSUE

Since “postpartum depression [PPD] has been termed the most underdiagnosed obstetrical complication in the United States, with a prevalence rate of 13%-19%” (Olin et al., 2002), it is clear that many mothers feel isolated and overwhelmed. Without support, they must learn how to care for their infant and breastfeed on their own in addition to caring for themselves while healing from childbirth. Because a mother’s initial social interactions may be limited to medical environments that focus on the infant, such as a pediatrician’s office, the warning signs for PPD often go unnoticed. As correlations have been found between the lack of social support and PPD (Negron et al., 2012,) there is a massive opportunity for spaces outside of medical environments that foster this type of support.

## METHODS

Direct observation of spaces such as The Pregnancy Resource Center of Metro Richmond provided program considerations and the types of services that mothers truly need. An interview with Jackie Priest (doula, birth coach and prenatal yoga instructor), gave further insight into the varied experiences of mothers and informed programming opportunities. Studying precedents such as Loom in Los Angeles, a wellness center focusing on support for parents, and The Motherhood Center in New York City, a facility offering everything from lactation consulting to counseling services, provided inspiration in terms of programming and design.

## RESULTS

The basic needs of mothers were identified as: a need of information; a need of psychological support; a need to share experiences; and a need of practical and material support (Slomian et al., 2017). As many mothers do not presently have the traditional support of family, there is an opportunity for public initiatives that fulfill these needs through providing a place for community, education, and counseling. Because Various “studies have suggested that psychological distress is common during the year after childbirth” (Slomian et al., 2017), these basic needs must not be ignored in order to prevent mental health issues such as anxiety and depression in mothers.

## REFLECTIONS

Given the United State’s rate for PPD, there is clearly an opportunity for improvement in the care of and support for mothers. Because a woman’s body goes through such drastic physical and hormonal changes during pregnancy, this support is crucial in order for her to heal properly and confidently care for her baby. A nonmedical environment that focuses specifically on the care and education of mothers could potentially foster that support and community in order to prevent MMH disorders. This thesis explores what such a facility might entail. Programming for the space includes a fitness studio, education spaces, counseling offices, and a cafe that would provide healthy sustenance along with opportunities for socializing.



8.1

## RESEARCH

Historically, women around the world have given birth at home surrounded by familial support. Grandmothers, mothers, sisters and aunts ushered the new mother into her newfound role with the utmost respect and care. The time period following the birth was even more crucial and regarded as a time for the woman to rest, heal and receive education on how to care for her infant. "Firm and loving hands would tend to the external pieces of [the mother's life so she had the space to melt into the healing, bonding, and adjustment of the postpartum period]" (Ou et al., 2016, p.58). The ancient practice of ushering a woman into motherhood and caring for her thereafter even dates back to Biblical times. Women were confined to a "red tent" during the menstruation period and also stayed there during and after childbirth. As author Anita Diamant beautifully writes in her story of Jacob and his four wives, "The baby healed quickly, as did Leah during her first month as a new mother inside the shelter of the red tent. She was pampered by her sisters, who barely let her feet touch the earth... Adah beamed that whole month and saw her daughter step out of the red tent restored and rested" (Diamant, 2017, p.44).

In China, the term for this ancient practice is called *zuo yue zi* or "sitting the month" and consists of a thirty-day confinement period in which the new mother is not allowed to leave the home. She is fed warm food and drink such as homemade broth made with pig's feet (believed to have healing properties) and herbal teas. The room is kept warm in order to prevent drafts and cold air seeping into the bones. Her infant is cared for by a host of family members while she rests and her body heals. This protocol of intergenerational care for a new mother that lasts anywhere between 30 to 100 days postpartum appears in extremely diverse places (Ou et al., 2016.) In Latin America, it is referred to as *la cuarentena*; in India, *jaapa*.

The United States does in fact have a history of providing support for new mothers in the form of midwifery. Merriam Webster defines the role of a midwife as "a person who assists women in childbirth." Midwives were typically women within the community that received their training through an apprenticeship and babies were primarily delivered with their assistance up until the 20th century. They relied on holistic remedies, intuition, and centuries of knowledge passed down from previous generations for their medical knowledge. The midwife would act as a mentor for the new mother by supporting her throughout the pregnancy, delivering the baby, and providing her support and education following the birth. Midwifery was seen as a respected profession and skilled midwives were highly sought after.

With the introduction of modern medicine around the turn of the 20th century, midwifery was all but eradicated and replaced by mostly white physicians and hospitals. In 1915, 40% of all births were attended by midwives, but by 1935 that number had decreased to 10.7% (Hospital, 2000). Midwives were portrayed as unhygienic and viewed as not being properly trained. Women were encouraged to see doctors and have their babies in hospitals as standardized medicine increased. It was not until the 1970s that the profession of midwifery began to see a revival.

African-Americans have an even deeper history regarding midwifery. As they were transplanted from Africa to southern plantations in the United States to work as slaves, they brought with them the holistic African traditions and methods of maternal care. In the South, they were called “granny midwives” and cared for both Black and White pregnant women and assisted in childbirth. “These Queen Mothers provided comprehensive care to the family serving as counselor, prayer warrior, mother, nutritionist and friend. She cooked for the family, constructed a crib for the new baby, knitted infant clothing and stepped in to assist wherever needed” (Morani, 2018). They relied on herbs, oils, spirituality and intuition along with an abundance of experience.

Black midwives were under even greater attack as the United States transitioned to standardized medicine and new statistics regarding infant mortality and maternal deaths surfaced. Because they were seen as “superstitious” and illiterate, along with having no formal training other than experience, government mandate began to require a certification around 1935 in order to practice. It could have also had something to do with the fact that hospitals were becoming the “cash cow” of the public health system and the practice of midwifery was seen as a threat to that income (Morani, 2018) As a result, many could not afford the cost for training and certification, so the practice of midwifery became associated with rural and poor areas that could not afford to give birth in public hospitals. Along with delivering healthy babies, they provided nutrition and health education and acted as an advocate for the mother-to-be through accompanying them to clinics (Morrison & Fee, 2010). The skills and knowledge of midwives became of even greater importance during World War II as many doctors and nurses were called overseas.

*“I felt the importance of the matrilineal wisdom traditions-generations of women helping out-and extended family, and for the first time understood the impact of my choice to give birth outside of my motherland, away from my own lineage. I had been unprotected at a time when I was meant to be sheltered and surrounded. I had no comfort food, no familiar smells, and no comforting sights or companions. I had been fending for myself when I should have been leaning on the support of my friends and family.”*

In today’s society, especially in the United States, maternal care looks very different. The postpartum period is commonly referred to as “The Fourth Trimester.” Unfortunately, the same honor and reverence for this time that is seen in other cultures and was once a pillar of our maternal care no longer exists. The focus quickly turns to the new baby and the needs of the mother are often completely overlooked or discussed, other than a six-week postpartum checkup. Pressure to “bounce back” and return to one’s regular routine pervades our culture. As the only developed country without government-mandated paid parental leave (Livingston & Thomas, 2020), it is not uncommon to see women return to the workplace before their bodies and minds are ready. Photoshopped images of celebrities looking rested and back to their pre-baby body within weeks of giving birth only exacerbate the problem. Many mothers are also living far away from family now, providing them with a lack of support system following the birth. Author Kimberly Ann Johnson recounts her experience: “I felt the importance of the matrilineal wisdom traditions-generations of women helping out-and extended family, and for the first time understood the impact of my choice to give birth outside of my motherland, away from my own lineage. I had been unprotected at a time when I was meant to be sheltered and surrounded. I had no comfort food, no familiar smells, and no comforting sights or companions. I had been fending for myself when I should have been leaning on the support of my friends and family” (Johnson, 2017, p. 15).

It is no wonder that our transition away from familial support to the impersonal public health system has created a host of problems. Women need advocates, help and support during one of the most vulnerable times in their lives and that need is clearly not being met. In the United States, almost twenty percent of women experience extreme depression during pregnancy or the postpartum period (Tupponce, 2020) and up to eighty percent experience the “baby blues” postpartum according to the New York State Department of Health (Johnson 2017). Because a new mother’s medical interactions are often limited to office visits focused on the baby’s health and one checkup at the six week postpartum period, these types of symptoms often go unnoticed. Many women suffer alone in silence, overwhelmed by the weight of responsibility for a tiny human and lack of experience, all while their bodies are attempting to heal from the physical upheaval of giving birth. Because women are generally more removed from their regular support systems during the postpartum period, unfortunately up to 45 percent of maternal deaths occur during this time (Chidi & Cahill, 2020).

*“In the United States, almost twenty percent of women experience extreme depression during pregnancy or the postpartum period.”*

The purpose of this research surrounding the history of maternal health and the sobering statistics of today is to reinforce the importance of the fact that all women need support, both throughout their pregnancy and well beyond it. According to Jackie Priest, doula (defined as “a person trained to provide advice, information, emotional support, and physical comfort to a mother before, during, and just after childbirth”), yoga instructor and owner of Modern Mama Center in Louisville, KY, the postpartum period for the mother actually lasts up until the child is eight years of age. Proper care and support can aid in the prevention of maternal mental health issues such as postpartum depression and both maternal and infant mortality. An interior environment that addresses the needs of women both throughout their pregnancy and during the postpartum period would be beneficial in terms of addressing the issues presented on a larger scale and on a local scale. Many of the issues primarily exist within the United States; therefore, a program that addresses them would directly impact women and their babies on a larger scale. On a local level, within Richmond, VA specifically, few physical establishments exist to address these needs. Based on the research conducted, the program for such a space should address preinatal care for the mother in order to promote healing and confidence, educational gaps for both the mother and father regarding infant care and functions related to care such as breastfeeding, and provide social support in order to foster community.

One local space that attempts to address the issues presented is the Pregnancy Resource Center of Metro Richmond. According to a volunteer at the center who wished to remain anonymous for privacy reasons, the goal of their space is to “meet [the parent] where he/she is” and for them to “leave with hope.” (Anonymous Informant #1, personal communication, November 20, 2020). Upon physical investigation of the Pregnancy Resource Center of Metro Richmond, the program for the space includes a reception desk and waiting area; offices for a director, assistant director, education director, staff, and volunteers; file storage and copy/print area; several counseling rooms consisting of comfortable seating; a space for children to play; lactation rooms; two ultrasound rooms in order for women to make an informed decision regarding their pregnancy; a nurse’s station; a kitchenette/breakroom for staff and volunteers; several storage areas for donated items; a space specifically for men to gather for support or to receive one-on-one counseling; and two educational spaces for parenting classes and support groups.

According to the volunteer, the most significant outcome of the education component is the relationships that are formed between participants in the classes (Anonymous Informant #1, personal communication, November 20, 2020). Participants continue to support one another throughout their parenting journey after the class has concluded. Another positive outcome of educational spaces is empowerment through knowledge. According to Jackie Priest, doula, yoga instructor and owner of Modern Mama Center in Louisville, KY, the goal of her space is to emphasize to new clients that “we see you, we hear you, but we’re not here to fix you” (J. Priest, personal communication, October 30, 2020). The goal of Modern Mama’s classes is to empower parents through education and therefore give them a sense of confidence in their parenting skills.

Another way to empower new parents is through strengthening their skills in order to secure employment, if that happens to be an obstacle. According to Pascha Lee, founder and executive director of Imagine Me Ministries, a youth development and mentoring program in Baltimore, MD, “the digital divide” is a significant issue that can affect young women who get pregnant. (P. Lee, personal communication, November 11, 2020). “The Digital Divide refers to the gap between those able to benefit from computers and the internet and those who are not.” (Digital, 2020) If these young women do not have access to computers, a mobile device, or transportation, finding employment becomes extremely difficult. According to Lee, the likelihood of a young woman with a baby boarding a bus to go to the library in order to work on her resume or look for employment is not high (P. Lee, personal communication, November 11, 2020). Therefore, an interior environment for new parents that incorporates a space for technology use would also empower new parents and provide support.



The importance of self-care and healthy lifestyle choices in order to be a better parent is also greatly emphasized at spaces such as Modern Mama Center. The space incorporates a yoga studio into its program with an emphasis on community. According to Priest, yoga promotes physical maternal health through easing pregnancy aches and pains, keeping the mother's pelvis open and assists with "optimal fetal positioning" (J. Priest, personal communication, October 30, 2020). The class also usually consists of a 10-15 minute introduction period for participants in order to foster personal connections and build relationships within the class. In conjunction with a yoga space, a program that incorporates body work such as massage for new mothers would promote relaxation and physical healing. As many maternal mental health issues are related to anxiety and stress both pre and postnatally, spaces for bodywork would help address these concerns. According to Erica Chidi and Erica P. Cahill, M.D., "physical support through acupuncture, massage or regular low-impact exercise like walking and yoga, can also help to alleviate daily stress" (Chidi & Cahill, 2020).

*"Physical support through acupuncture, massage or regular low-impact exercise like walking and yoga, can also help to alleviate daily stress"*

Priest also agrees that a cafe promoting healthy food choices would benefit new parents. For example, Modern Mama Center offers fresh fruit, juice boxes for children, infused water, and teas that promote breast milk production. In order to assist new parents with healthy food choices and decrease stress, Priest also suggests that the space form partnerships with local eateries for meal drop offs and/or deliveries (J. Priest, personal communication, October 30, 2020). As mentioned previously in the research, food is also a major component of a new mother's physical healing. By offering food with healing properties such as the warm soups given in China, a cafe space would promote a new mother's recovery. As conversations often happen over a meal, a cafe space within the program would additionally foster a sense of community and relationships by offering a place for new parents to meet, share experiences, and provide support for one another.

Both Modern Mama Center and the Pregnancy Resource Center of Metro Richmond additionally offer spaces and programs for new fathers. Priest emphasizes the involvement of fathers in their children's lives and hosts programs such as "Brews with Dads" that offer an opportunity for new fathers to connect with one another and share experiences. She also offers a program called "Donuts with Dad" that involves both the parent and their child. She says that it provides a chance for new fathers to experience what it is like to leave the house with a child and provide care for them during that time (J. Priest, personal communication, October 30, 2020). This experience usually promotes greater empathy for the spouse who may be the primary caregiver. The Pregnancy Resource Center of Metro Richmond also provides a room that is specifically created with men in mind and allows them to feel comfortable in a space that is predominantly occupied by females. The Center echoes the importance of fatherly involvement in a child's life and offers education, counseling services, and a safe space to ask questions.

In conclusion, the research around the importance of maternal care, both pre and postnatally, and parental support emphasizes the gravitas for interior environments outside of conventional healthcare spaces that seek to address the issues presented. The space I designed addresses maternal mental health issues such as anxiety and postpartum depression through promoting community and resources for stress management. The spaces within the program include rooms for counseling, community groups and a cafe providing social opportunities in order to address these needs. Rooms providing services such as lactation consulting also aid in warding off anxiety in new mothers. Educational spaces within the program empower new parents with a sense of confidence through knowledge. Through providing technology resources, the space additionally empowers new parents financially by giving them a space to seek vocational opportunities or create the documents needed to pursue opportunities. The needs for new mothers in regards to physical health are addressed through a cafe providing healthy food that also promotes healing within the body. Body work rooms additionally seek to provide stress management and relaxation for mothers. Finally, a fitness studio promotes physical healing and opportunities for mothers to connect.



# PRECEDENTS

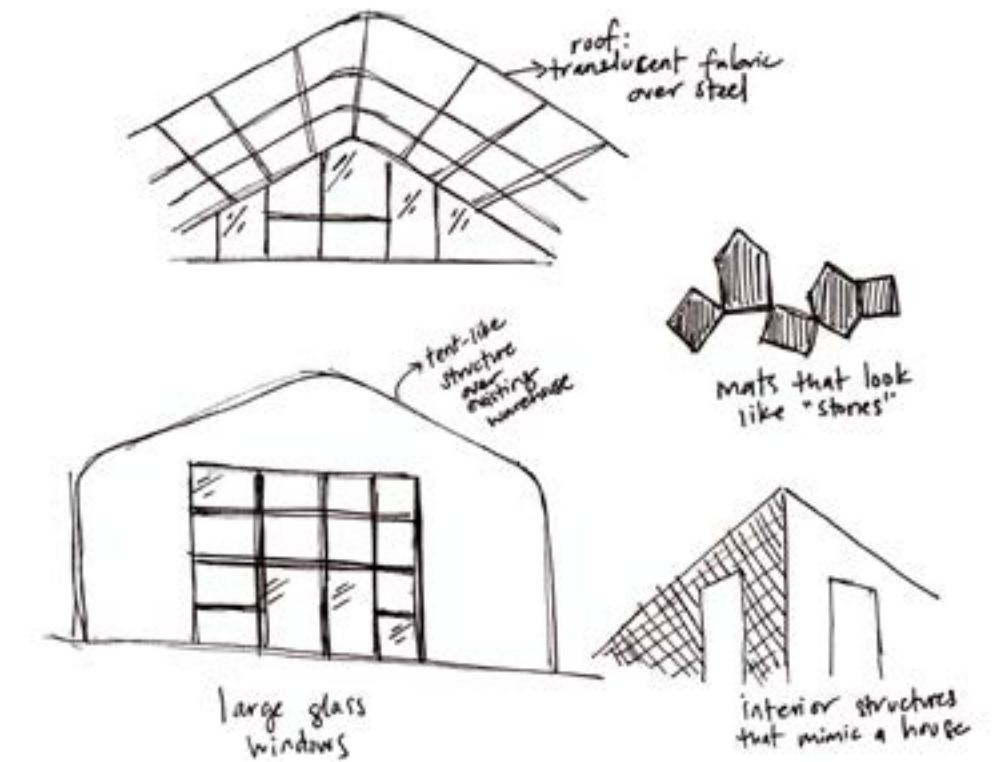
## FUKUMASU BASE

Yasutaka Yoshimura Architects

Japan - Ichihara  
Built 2016

This project was designed to function as both a kindergarten and as a community center for the families of the attending children. A tent-like structure was placed over an existing warehouse to give the space an open and airy feel. A palette of white, timber, black, and steel provides an organic and calming effect throughout the space.

The irregular shapes throughout the space produce nooks and crannies for children to explore. Varied levels invite them to climb and jump while long pathways also give them liberty to run and play. The use of natural materials has a calming effect, but the simplistic shapes such as stones and house shapes still make the space fun for children. Since my space is primarily for adults and my goal is not a daycare, this precedent will serve as great inspiration for a sophisticated use of materials that remains child-friendly. As my concept is related to a tent, I will draw inspiration from the use of a tent-like material that provides diffused, natural light throughout the space.



author's drawing

**GAGA KING GLORY RESTAURANT**  
Coordination Asia

Shenzhen, China  
Built 2019

This 150-person eatery inside of a mall seeks to blur the lines between inside and outside. With the goal of replicating a seaside resort, the restaurant draws inspiration from the beach through its color palette and mix of flooring materials meant to mimic the intersection of sand and sea. A variety of seating arrangements throughout the space provide a mix of public and private options. A curvilinear ceiling made out of white lamella mimics the crest of a wave. The mix of lighting solutions gives the space a dramatic, yet intimate feel.

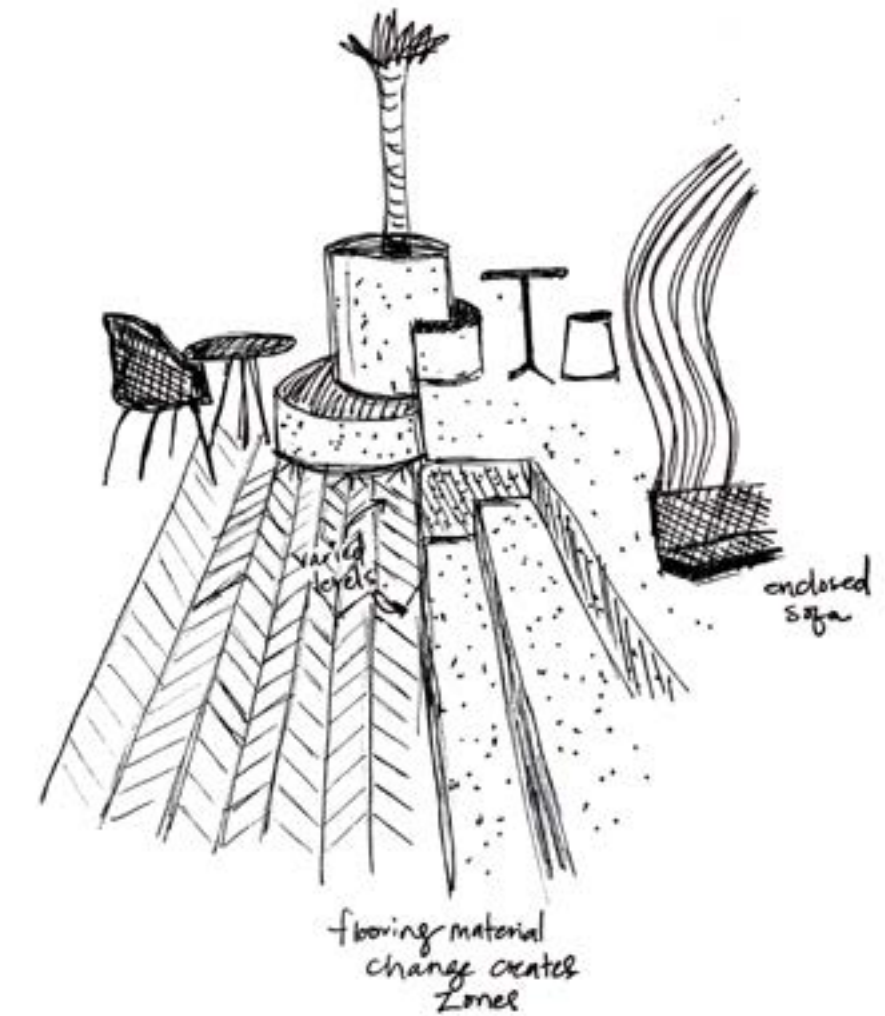
This project serves as great inspiration for how to incorporate a variety of seating options within a space, which is a goal I hope to achieve. Enclosed couches raised on a platform provide social opportunities for groups. Long communal tables provide a casual feel to the eatery while also allowing for large groups and work surfaces. Circular banquettes give patrons with time constraints a place to grab a quick coffee. Outdoor seating and seating that spills into the mall blurs the line between indoors and outdoors. The use of materials throughout the space are a clever interpretation of a concept without feeling like a theme. The intersection of materials, such as terrazzo and wood parquet, also divides the space into zones and therefore promotes wayfinding.



18.1



19.1



author's drawing



20.1



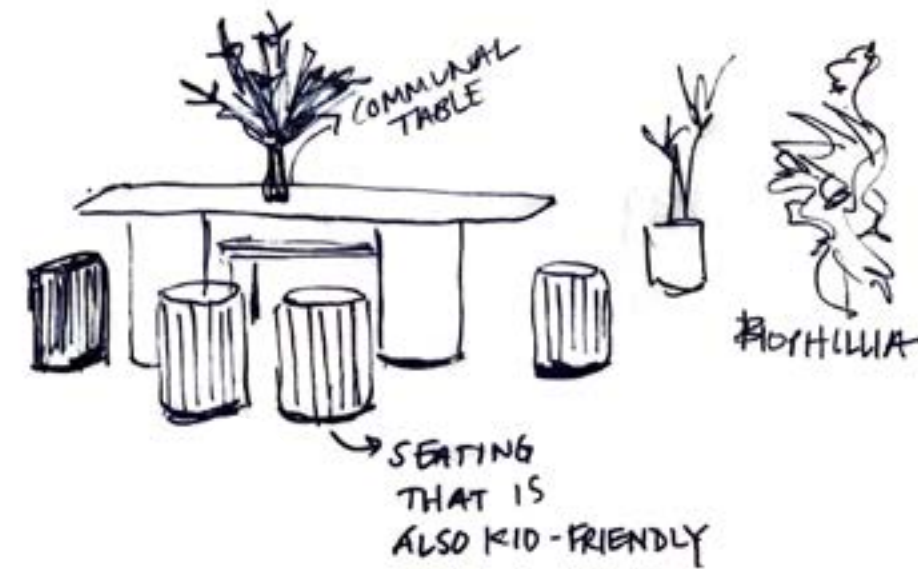
20.2



20.3



20.4



author's drawing

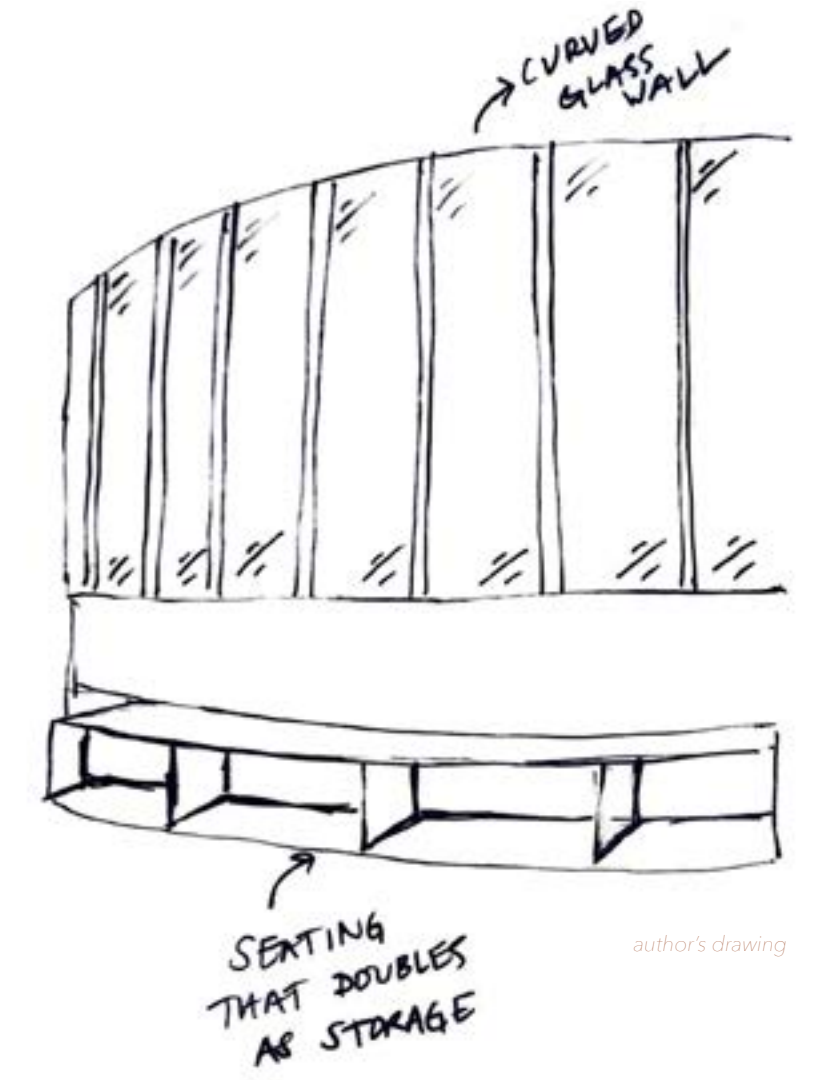
## LOOM

Wall for Apricots

Los Angeles, California  
Built 2017

Loom is a pregnancy, parenting, and wellness center. This precedent was chosen based on both the programming and design of the space. As there are very few precedents that address both wellness and pregnancy in a holistic sense, this space serves as excellent inspiration in terms of programming. The space incorporates a studio for anything from group childbirth classes to community events for families and a second studio for individual coaching sessions, acupuncture, and chiropractic services. A centrally-located communal table encourages gathering and conversation amongst guests. In an interview with Domino Magazine, co-founder Erica Chidi Cohen says, "We're focused on being a place for anyone...looking for community and resources to support through pregnancy or the parenting journey." (Geisel, 2017).

The designers of the space were inspired by Finnish architect and designer Alvar Aalto and his Paimio Sanatorium. They drew inspiration from the curved glass walls, abundance of natural light and the "the idea that a physical space could promote healing in the human body." The androgynous pastel palette of cedar rose, cerulean, buckskin, and lavender is purposeful in that the owners did not want to space to feel overtly feminine. A Scandinavian aesthetic permeates the space in both thoughtful furnishings and finishes and abundance of plants enforce the holistic intentions of the space. Wood tones throughout the space counter balance the cool pastels and give the space a sense of warm modernism.



author's drawing

**FAIRFIELD PUBLIC LIBRARY**  
Quinn-Evans

Henrico County, Virginia  
Built 2019

This project is a 44,803 sqft public library intended to serve the community. The X-shape of the space, designed by Quinn-Evans, speaks to the intersection of learning and family. The first floor is dedicated to learning needs with a variety of seating options, educational spaces, podcast booths, and sections of books. The second floor contains spaces intended to bring teenagers together and a section focused on children.

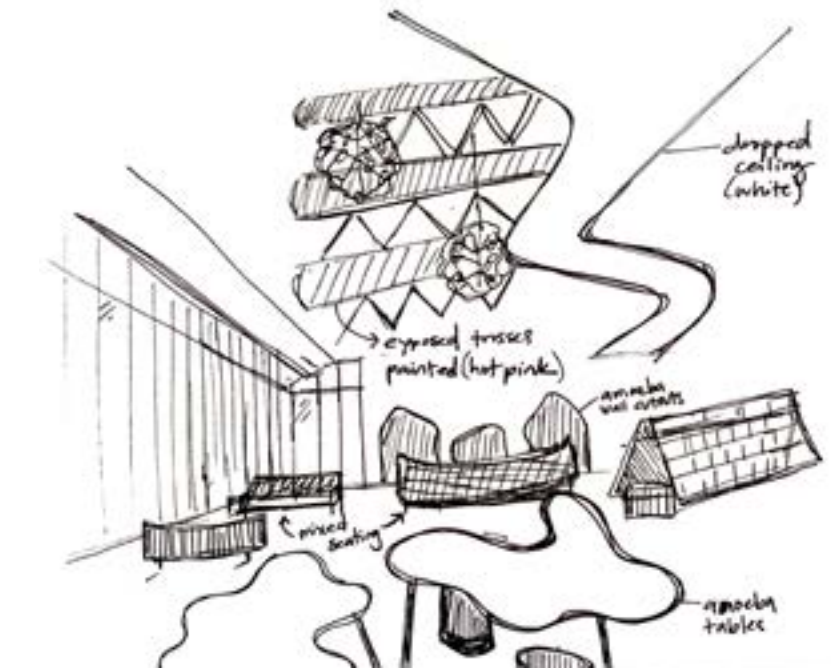
I was drawn to this project because of its community focus. A variety of needs are met here with the goal of bringing people together. A colorful use of materials intersects with well-designed lighting and ceiling treatments that invite connection. One design element in particular caught my eye: the parent + child carrel designed in conjunction with TMC furniture and Shannon Wray of Quinn-Evans. The cleverly-designed piece of furniture features an enclosed play area for babies up to two years of age alongside a desk where a caregiver or parent can sit and work. This will serve as inspiration for either my cafe or technology space.



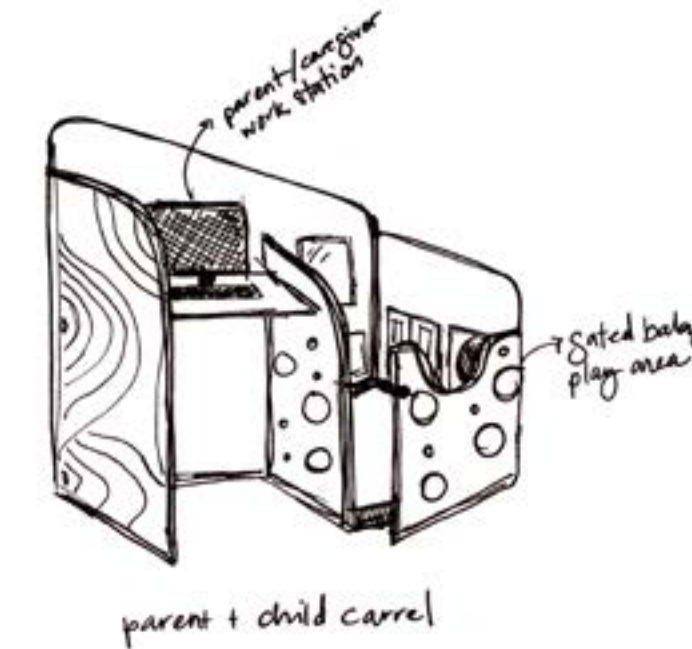
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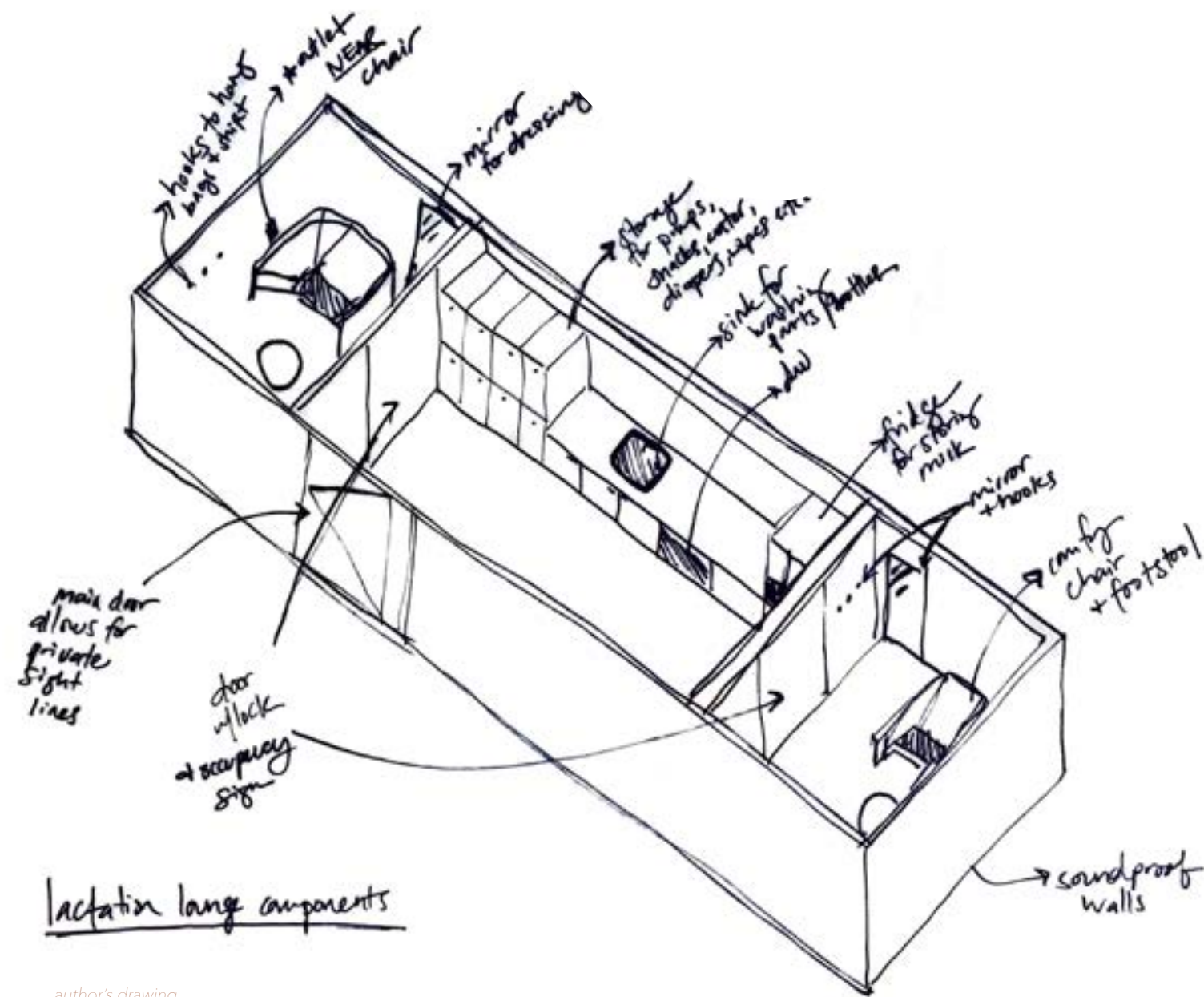
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author's drawing



23.2



author's drawing

## LACTATION LOUNGE

Perkins + Will

For Fast Company's Provocation series  
Designed 2018

As new mothers who returned to the workforce shortly after giving birth, three employees at architecture firm Perkins + Will were asked to design the lactation room of their dreams for Fast Company's Provocation series. Due to the Affordable Care Act of 2010, dedicated lactation rooms are becoming more common. Unfortunately that does not mean that they are always functional or well-designed.

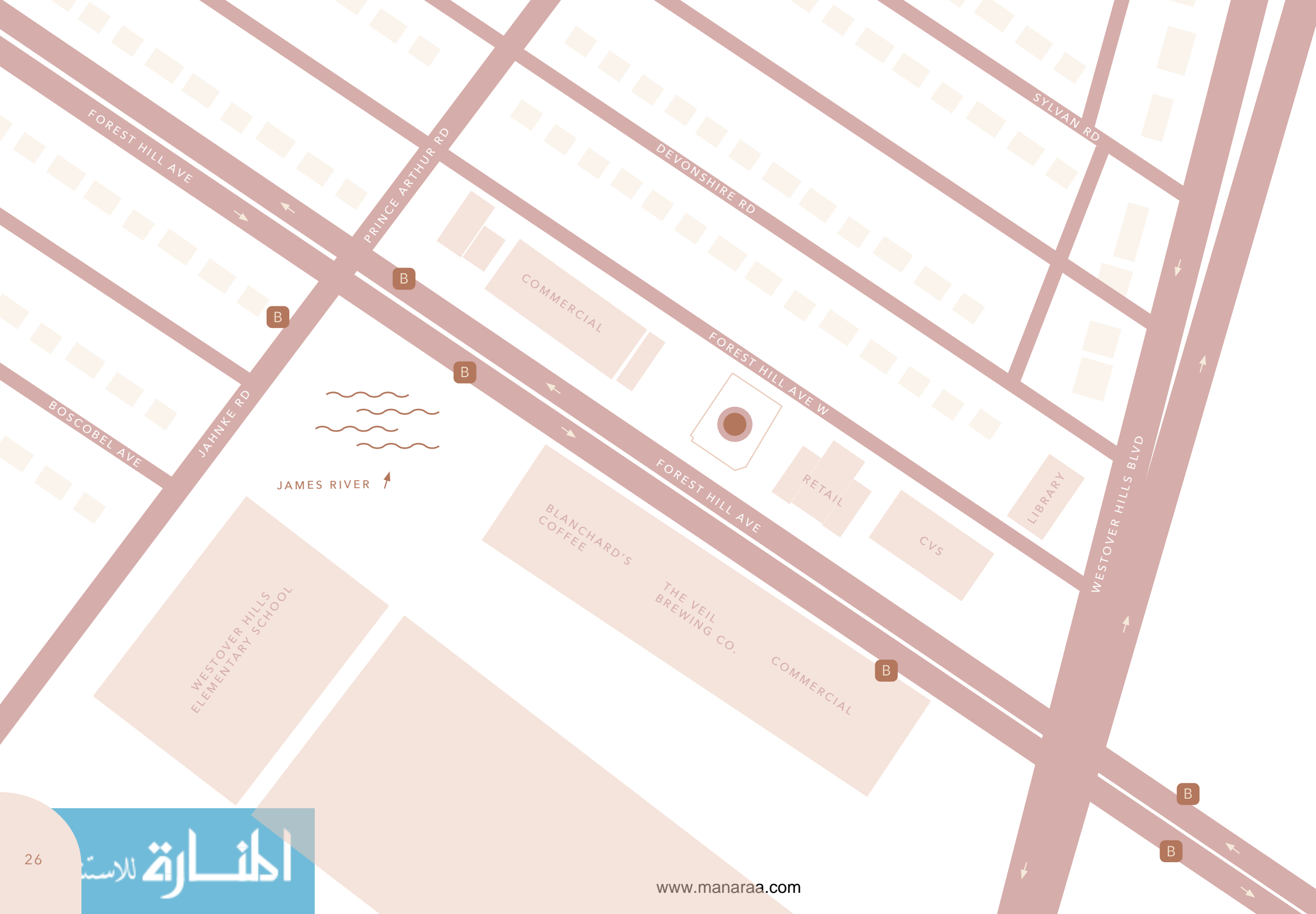
The designers at Perkins + Will drew upon their own experiences and created a sort of "lactation lounge." As many babies are on the same feeding schedule, mothers commonly need to feed their babies or pump at the same time. With this in mind, the women designed the space to consist of two private rooms joined by a common area with a refrigerator for storing milk, a sink for washing parts, a microwave, and a counter for storing water or snacks. The two adjoining rooms offer privacy through a locked door with an occupancy sign, a comfortable task chair with a plug close by, a work surface, a hook for hanging one's shirt, and a mirror for getting dressed. The design allows for multiple women to use the space at the same time, with two feeding their babies while others use the kitchenette. The common area of the lounge also creates a bonding opportunity for women at the same life stages to share experiences or advice with one another.



Design by Alyssa Carata, Lara Leskaj, and Christine Dansereau / Rendering by Anna Mahnke 25.1



Design by Christine Dansereau, Lara Leskaj, Alyssa Carata/Perkins+Will 25.2



# SITE + NEIGHBORHOOD

## THE WESTOVER + VINTAGE ANTIQUE & ART CO.

5047 Forest Hill Avenue  
Richmond, VA 23225

Built 1950  
14,400 SF

Built in 1950, the structure at 5047 Forest Hill Ave was originally Kelley's Inc. hardware store. Owner Emmett R. Kelley took over the family business in 1959 and won the distinguished Retailer of the Year award in 1971. He ran the shop until the mid-1970s when it closed ("Retailer of the Year," 2016). It is now split in half between an antique dealer/furniture repair shop called Vintage Antique and Art Co. and a cafe called The Westover.

The building is located near the intersection of Jahnke Rd and Forest Hill Ave and is directly adjacent to Westover Hills, therefore making it walkable from both neighborhoods. Directly across the street is brand new development Hill Standard, a mixed-use property with commercial space at the ground level and apartments above. To the right of that development is Westover Hills Elementary School.

The exterior of the structure is constructed out of brick and a swooping metal awning is a nod to the Art Deco architecture popular in the 1950's. Original storefront windows line the facade and the original analog clock is still present on the second floor of the exterior.

## WESTOVER HILLS

Established in 1924, the neighborhood of Westover Hills was originally intended to be a suburban oasis that attracted Richmond city residents to the south side of the James River. Construction began in 1925 following the completion of the Boulevard Bridge. The bridge was once free for residents and all others were required to pay a nickel, hence the nickname "Nickel Bridge." The majority of the land for the neighborhood was once owned by the founder of Richmond, William Byrd II, and the name Westover Hills is most likely derived from nearby Westover Plantation, also owned by Byrd. The neighborhood remains a charming enclave with mature trees and continues to be a desirable area to live. Narrow, one-way streets keep the neighborhood quiet and limit the amount of through traffic. Since most of the homes were built between 1925-1960, a mix of architectural styles such as Colonial, Arts and Crafts, Tudor, Spanish Revival and Modern give the neighborhood unique character.

The boundaries of Westover Hills are the James River to the north and Forest Hill Avenue to the south; North Riverside Drive to the east and Southcliff Rd/Cedar Lane to the west. It is flanked by the neighborhoods of Forest Hill to the east and Stratford Hills to the west with several train tracks cutting through the area. Accessibility to the James River and the James River Park System make the neighborhood a highly desirable area for outdoor enthusiasts. Its direct connection to the city from the Boulevard Bridge allows residents the perks of city living with the comforts of suburbia. Sidewalks give the neighborhood a walkability factor to restaurants, shops and a public library. Nearby Forest Hill Park is one of the city's largest public parks and hosts the weekly South of the James Farmers' Market.

# EXISTING BUILDING



INTERIOR - CAFE SIDE FACING SOUTH



INTERIOR - STORE SIDE FACING NORTH



INTERIOR - CAFE SIDE FACING NORTH



INTERIOR - STORE SIDE FACING SOUTH

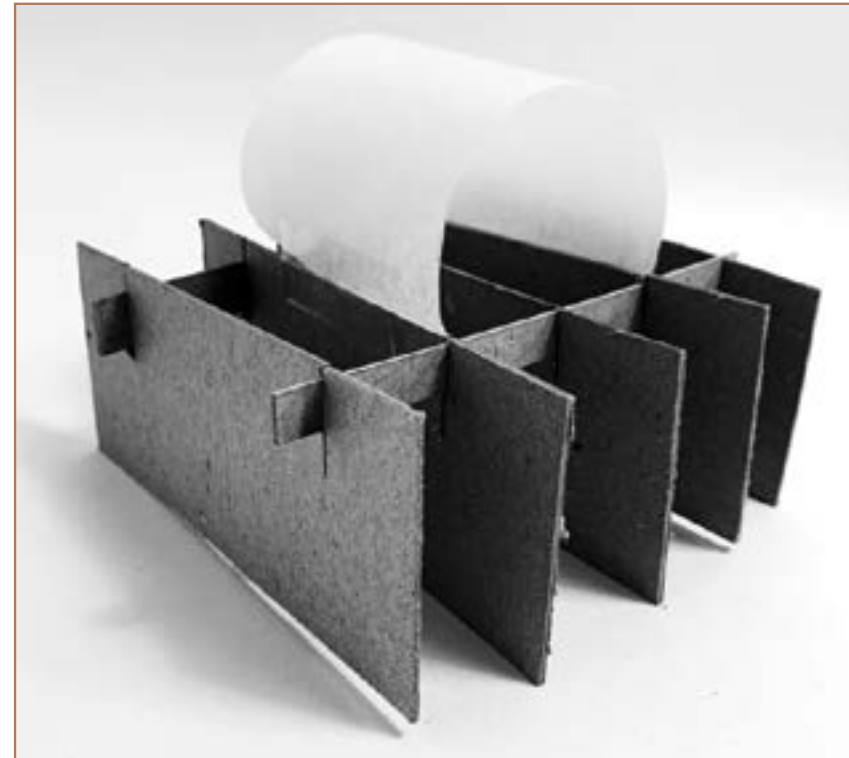
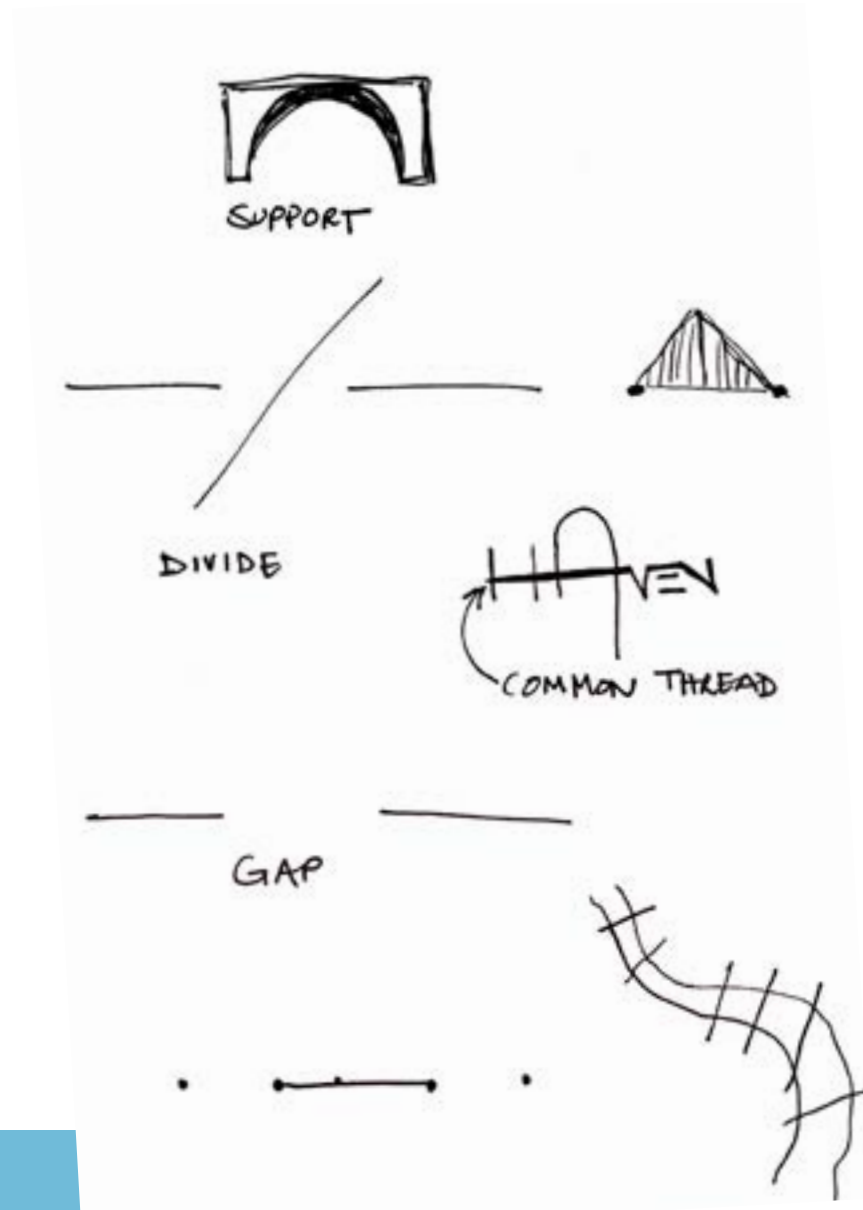


EXTERIOR - RIGHT ADJACENT BUILDINGS

*all images taken by the author*



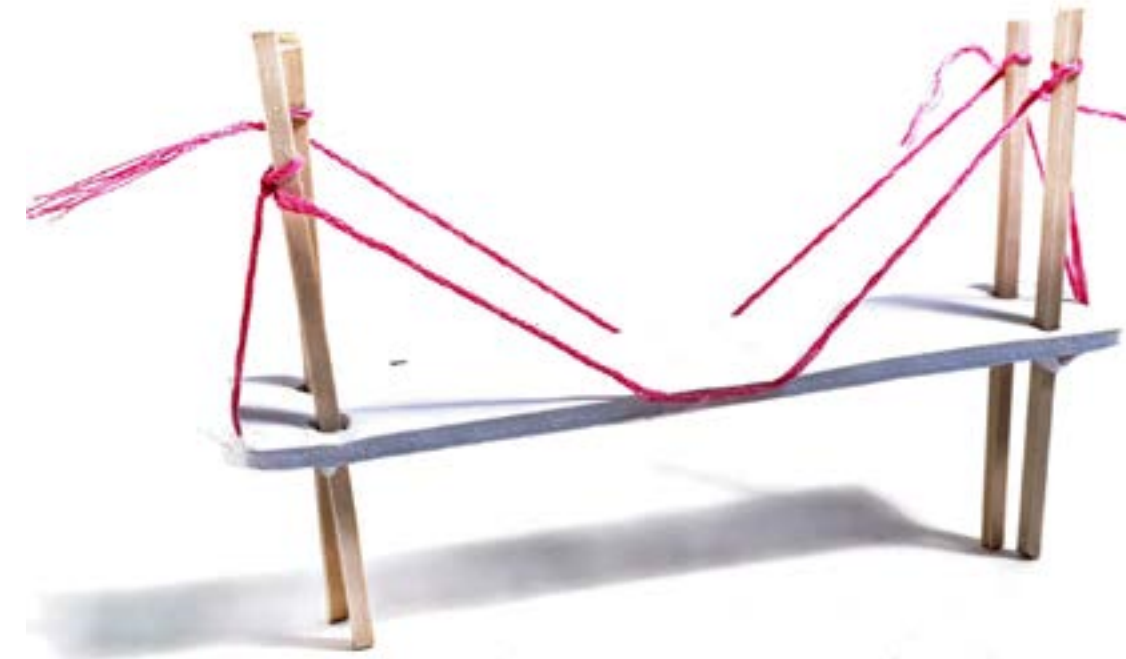
# FINAL CONCEPT



## ARCH

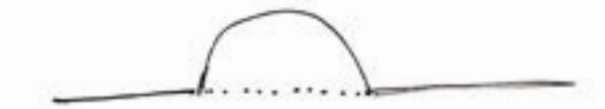
The concept for my space is support, as it will act as a support system for mothers. The project aims to bridge the gap between medical environments and holistic care. Arches and curvilinear elements throughout the space echo the concept of support.

## BRIDGE

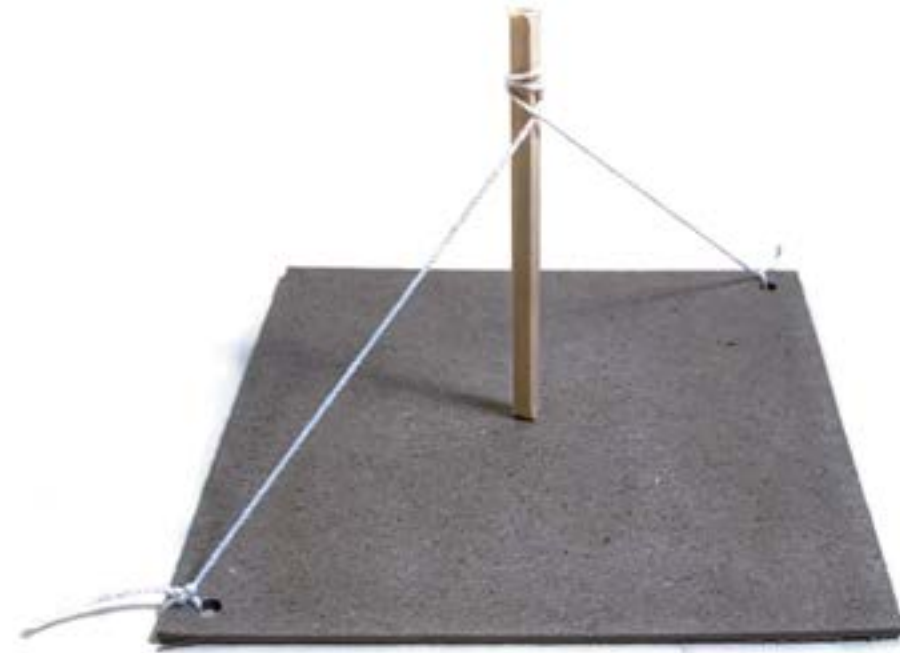
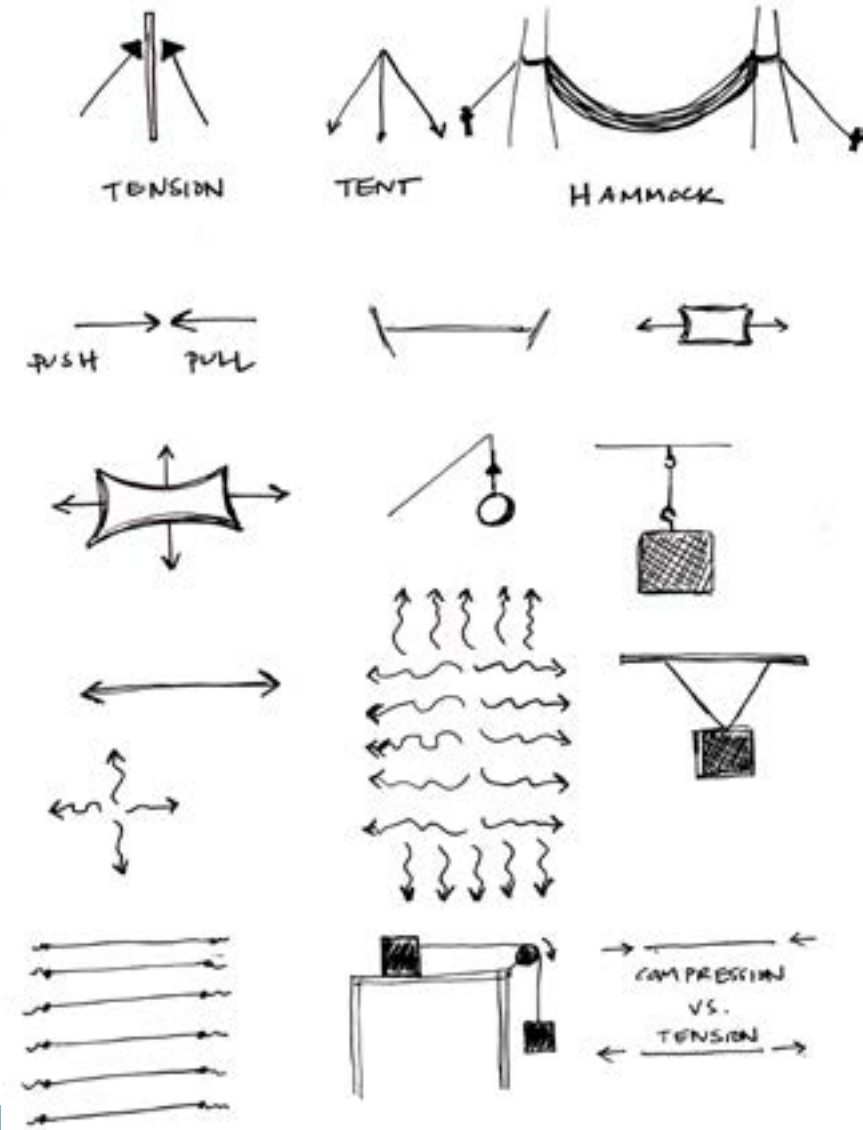


## BRIDGE

• CONNECTOR BW COMMUNITIES

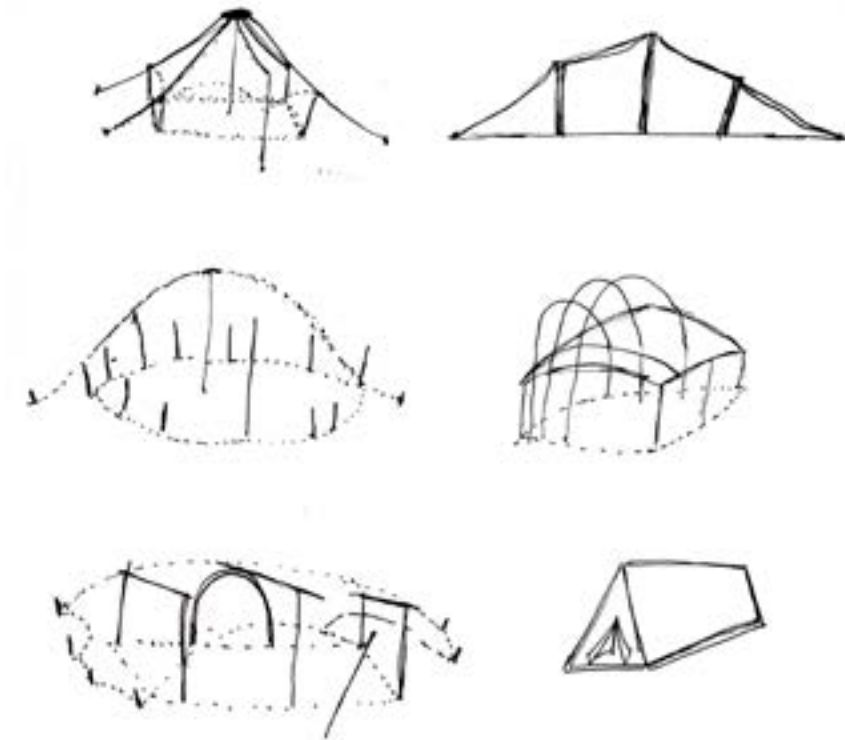


# CONCEPT WORK

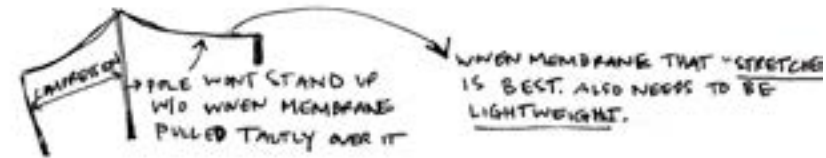


TENSION

HAVEN: A PLACE OF SAFETY OR REFUGE



TENSILE STRUCTURES: CENTER POLE OR SYSTEM OF POLES



TENTS

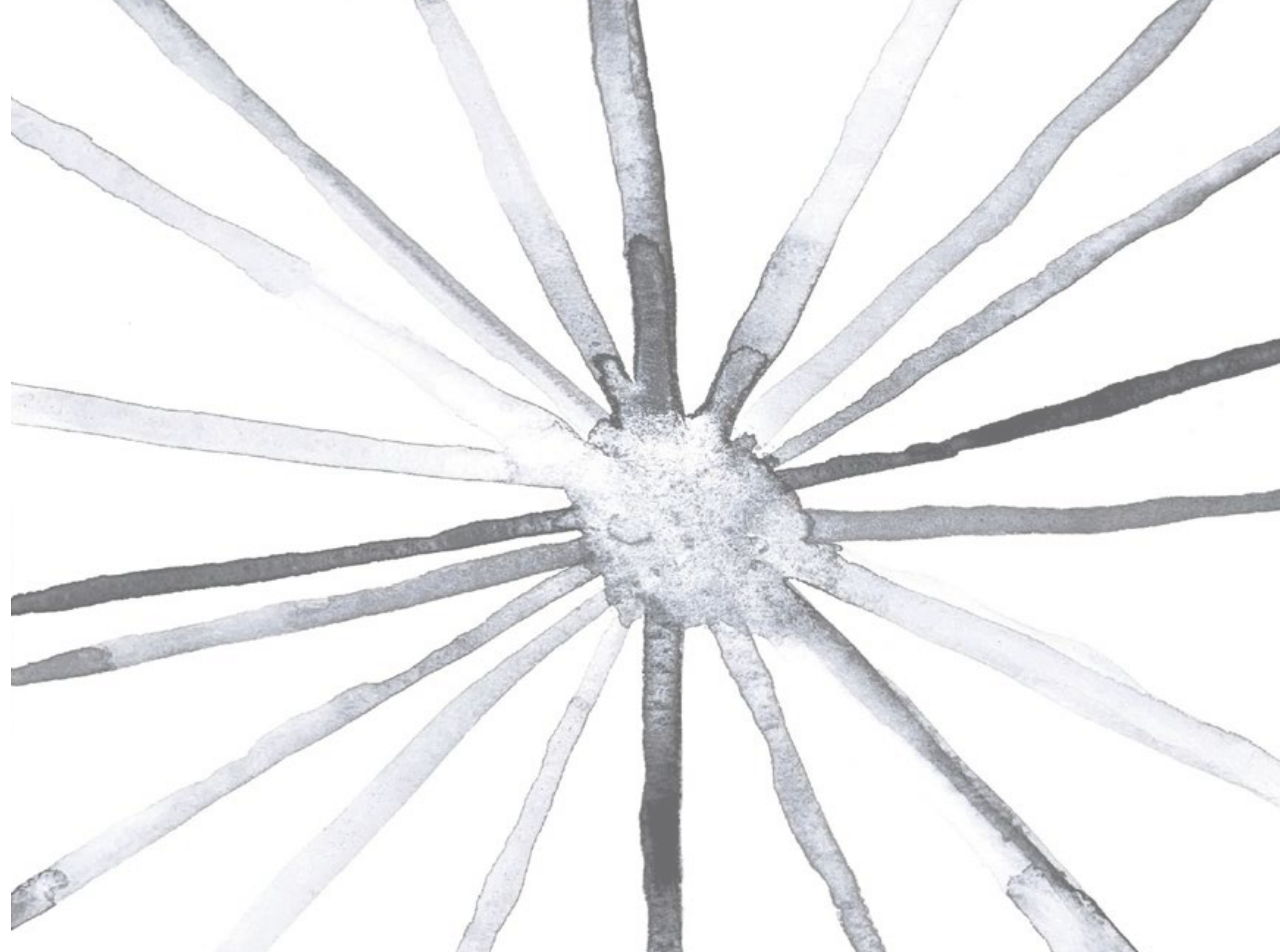


# CONCEPT WORK

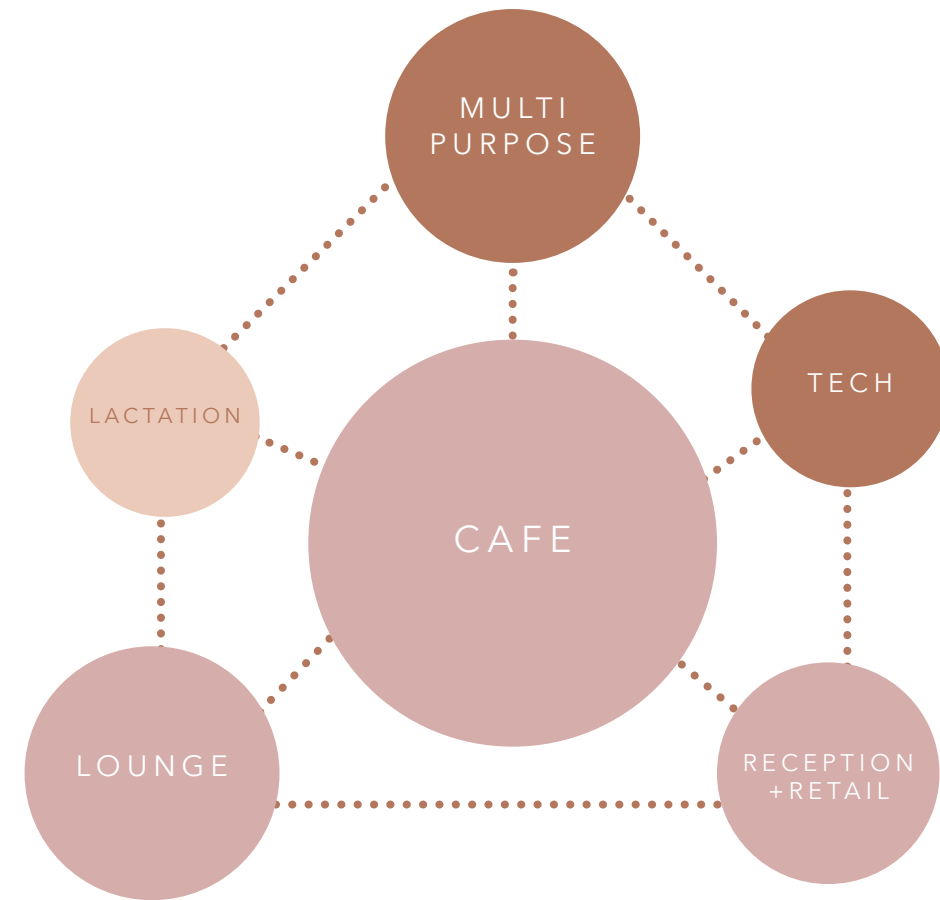


## CONNECTION

[www.manaraa.com](http://www.manaraa.com)



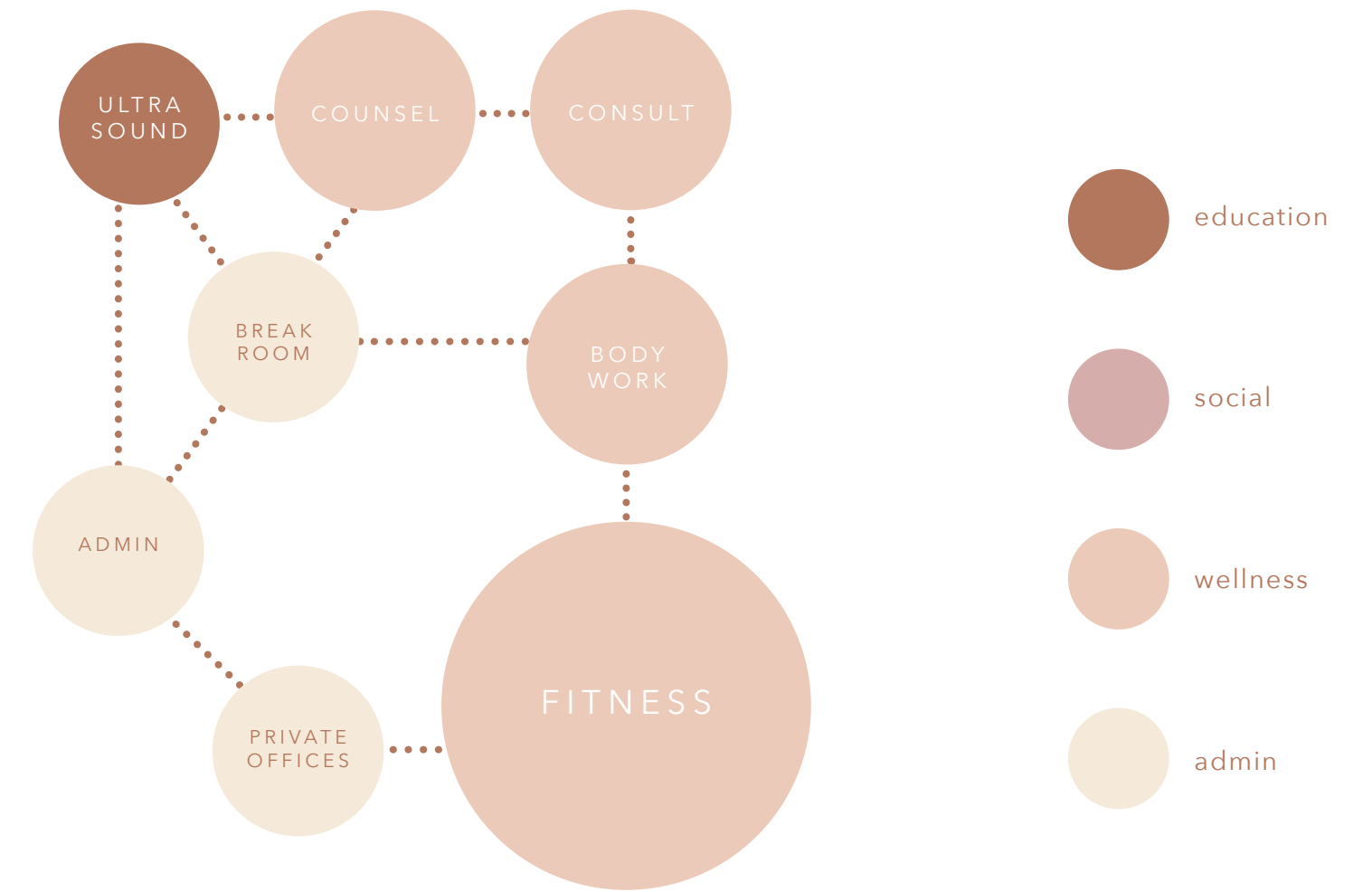
# PROGRAM + ADJACENCIES



## LEVEL 1

GROSS: 7,200 SF  
NET: 4,332 SF

[www.manaraa.com](http://www.manaraa.com)



## LEVEL 2

GROSS: 7,200 SF  
NET: 4,332 SF



# PROGRAMMING + CODE

## RECEPTION + RETAIL

500 SF  
Occupant Load: 8  
Occupancy Class: M

One side is a reception desk and the other side has a desk for POS operation. Adjacent is a small boutique space that carries baby necessities, holistic care items, and products for new mothers.

## LACTATION LOUNGE

425 SF total  
Occupant Load: 7  
Occupancy Class: B

Private rooms for nursing, pumping or feeding that are adjacent to a central common area for changing diapers or socializing. The "pods" have privacy screens in front of the main doors, but are still easily accessible from the main areas of the space, such as the cafe.

## CAFE

650 SF  
Occupant Load: 20  
Occupancy Class: A2

Food counter for healthy snacks, drinks, and meal pick-up. FF+E should include cafe tables + chairs for mothers and babies/kids. Pathways must be stroller-friendly. Surfaces should be wipeable.

## MULTIPURPOSE ROOM

1000 SF  
Occupant Load: 10  
Occupancy Class: B

Space for community events, classes, and playgroups. Ability to open up into the other spaces to make one large room. Flexible furniture required.

## LOUNGES

930 SF total (2)  
Occupant Load: 8-10  
Occupancy Class: M

A space for mothers to socialize or have a moment to relax. Adjacent to the cafe and retail areas. FF+E should be child-friendly with no sharp edges.

## TECHNOLOGY SPACE

265 SF  
Occupant Load: 4-6  
Occupancy Class: B

Space for parents without access to technology to seek job employment through the use of computers, printers and copy machines.

## FITNESS STUDIO

1250 SF  
Occupant Load: 15  
Occupancy Class: A3

Studio space for pre/postnatal yoga, "Mommy & Me" yoga, etc.

## COUNSELING ROOMS

330 SF total (2)  
Occupant Load: 2-3  
Occupancy Class: B

Rooms for mothers, their spouse, and a therapist that house a desk and chairs.

## PRIVATE OFFICES

300 SF total (2)  
Occupant Load: 1-3  
Occupancy Class: B

Office spaces for the director and program coordinator.

## BODY WORK ROOMS

440 SF total (2)  
Occupant Load: 1-2  
Occupancy Class: B

Rooms for massage, acupuncture or other types of body work.

## ULTRASOUND ROOM

215 SF  
Occupant Load: 3  
Occupancy Class: B

Ultrasound room for mothers, their spouse, and an ultrasound technician.

## OPEN OFFICES

665 SF  
Occupant Load: 8  
Occupancy Class: B

Office spaces for the administrative staff and a common copy/print area.

## CONSULTATION ROOMS

400 SF total (2)  
Occupant Load: 1-3  
Occupancy Class: B

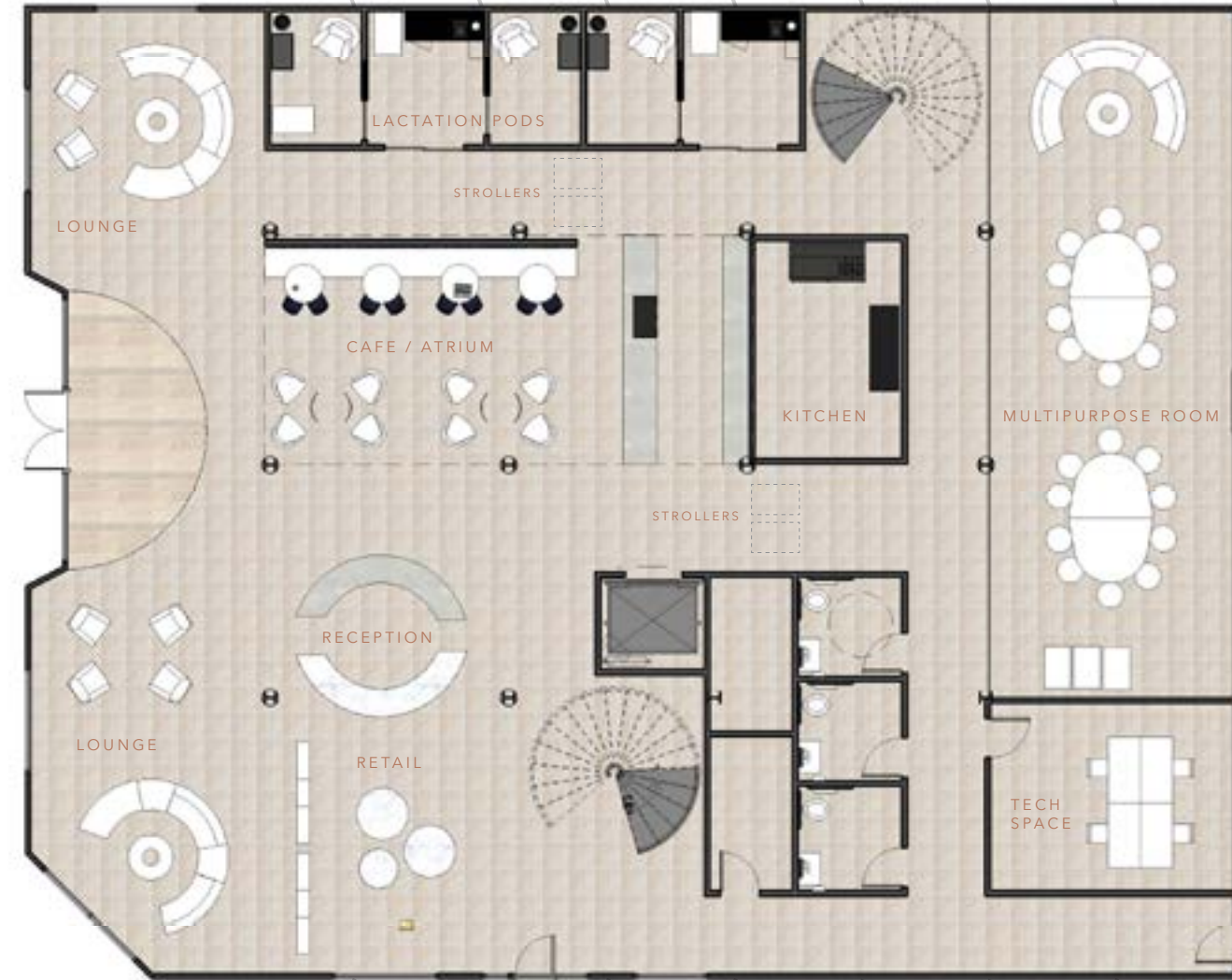
Space for lactation consulting or other types of consulting for mothers.

## STAFF BREAKROOM

300 SF  
Occupant Load: 1-5  
Occupancy Class: B

Breakroom for medical staff, administrative staff, counselors, and massage therapists.

# LEVEL 1



← SIDEWALK + FOREST HILL AVE.

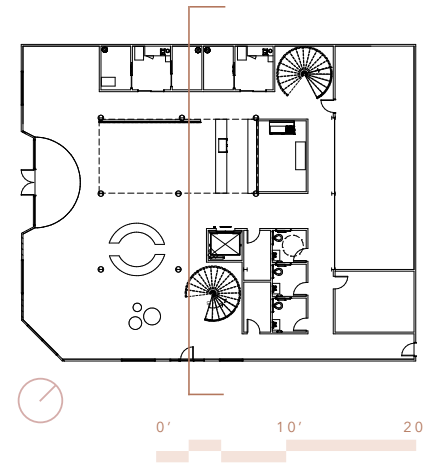
ALLEY

# LEVEL 2

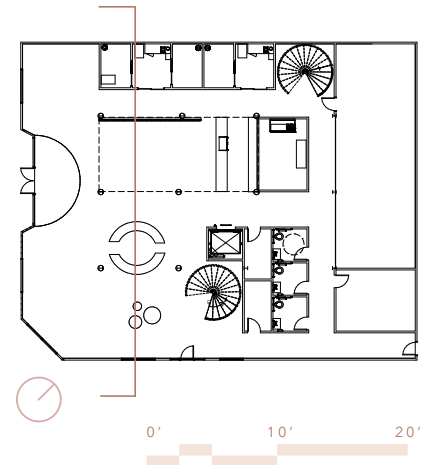


0' 10' 20'

# SECTIONS



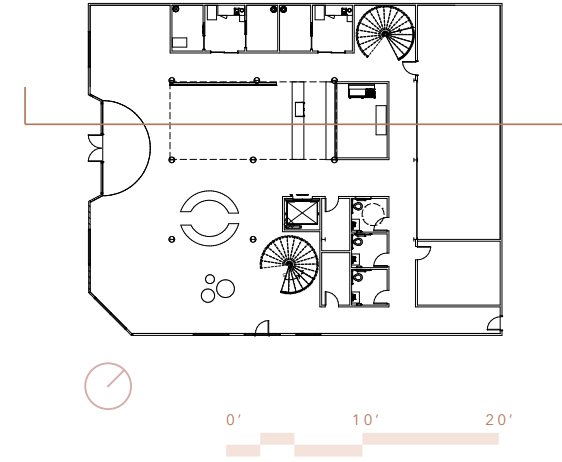
# SECTIONS



TRANSVERSE SECTION - FACING NORTH

TRANSVERSE SECTION - FACING SOUTH

# SECTIONS



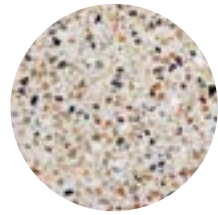
LONGITUDINAL SECTION

# SPACES

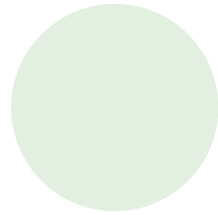




# CAFE



CLE "FORAGE"  
TERRAZZO



MAHARAM  
"ALLOY" FABRIC



GLASS



PLASTER



CLE "ROSE  
ZELLIGE" TILE



FLOS "IC"  
SCONCE



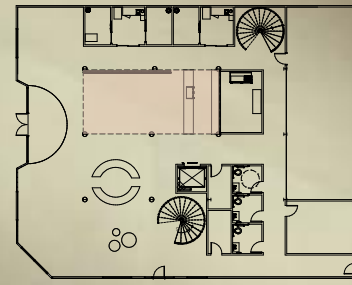
MAHARAM  
"MODE" FABRIC



TURF "REED"  
ACOUSTIC FELT



SUCCULENT  
PLANT WALL



# CAFE FF+E



COALESSE  
"TOGETHER"  
BENCH



STEELCASE  
COALESSE  
"ENEAS" TABLE



FLOS "IC"  
PENDANT



STEELCASE  
COALESSE  
"JOEL" CHAIR



WEST ELM WORK  
"HORIZON"  
COFFEE TABLE



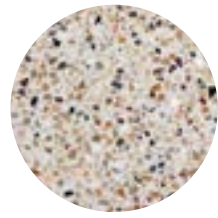
VICCARBE  
"ALETA" CHAIR



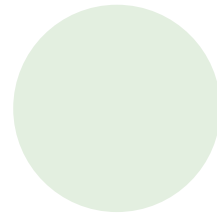
FLOS "IC"  
SCONCE

FLOS "IC"  
PENDANT

# RETAIL



CLE "FORAGE"  
TERRAZZO



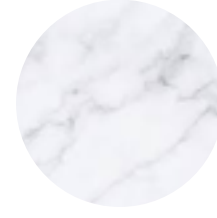
GLIDDEN™  
#GLG13



PLASTER



CLE ROSE  
ZELLIGE TILE



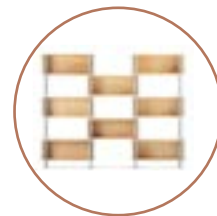
MARBLE



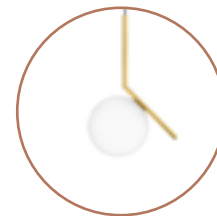
BRUSHED BRASS



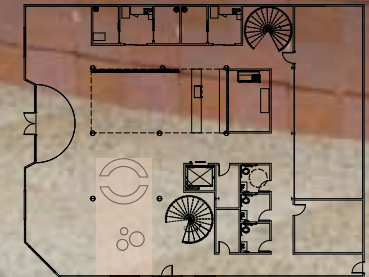
MOOI "BOON"  
DRUM LIGHT



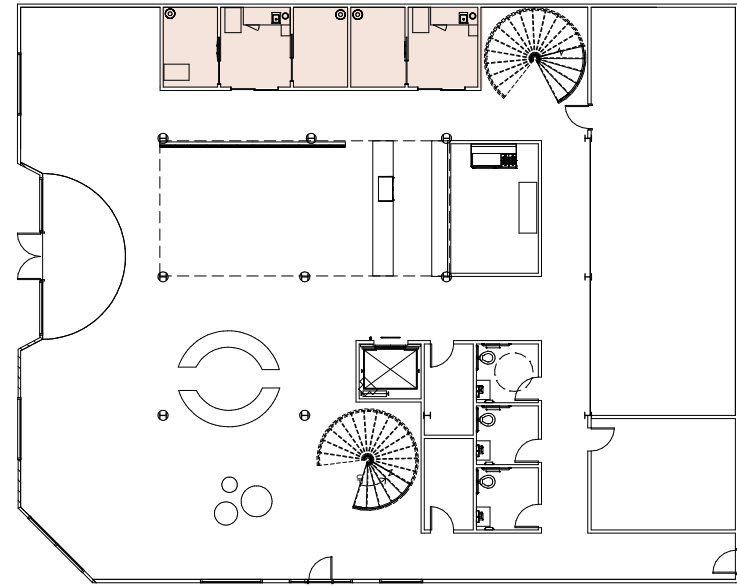
BLUDOT  
"CHICAGO 8"



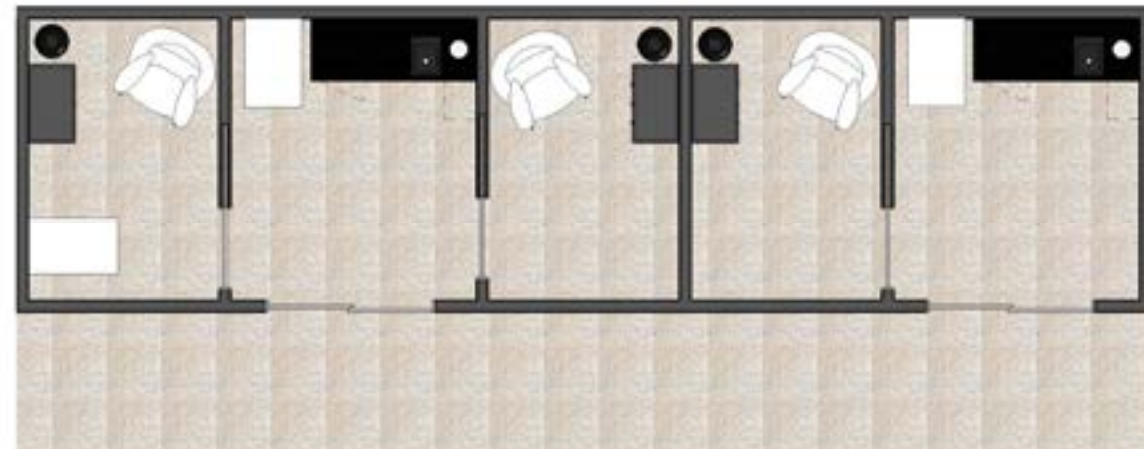
FLOS "IC"  
PENDANT



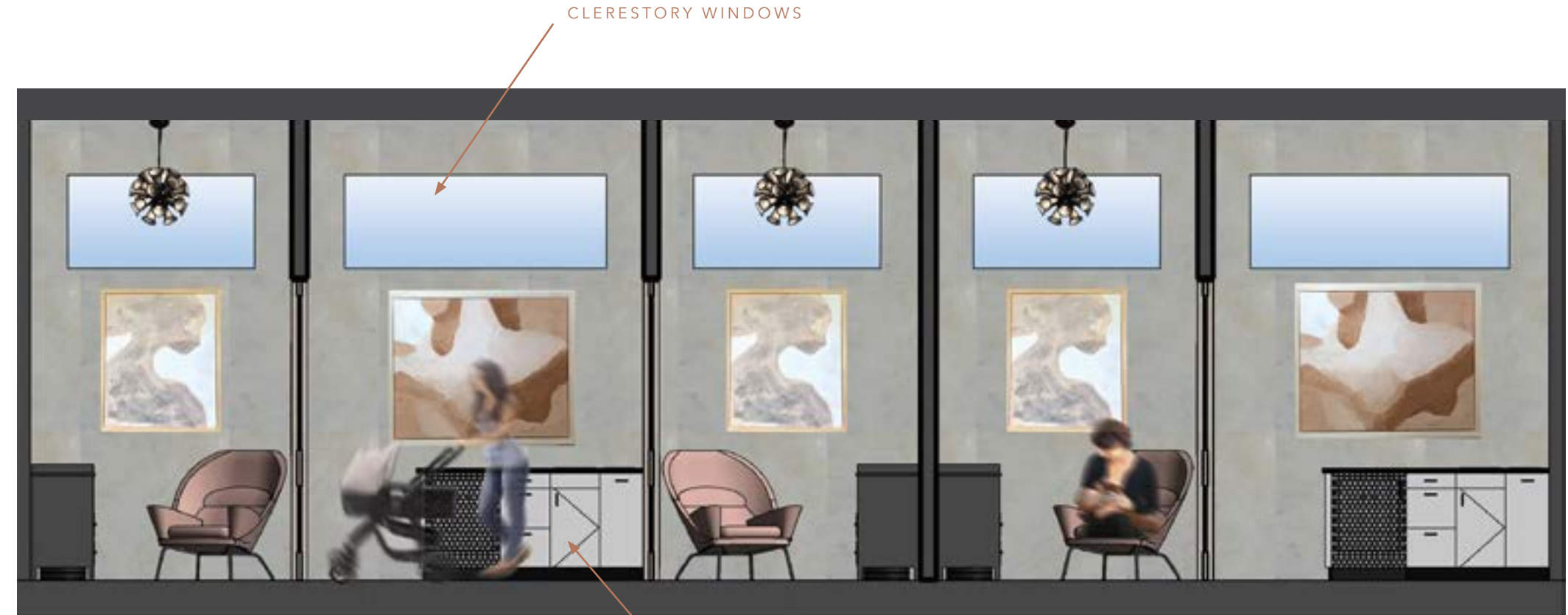
# DETAIL: LACTATION LOUNGE



STEELCASE COALESSE  
"OCULUS" CHAIR



PLAN VIEW



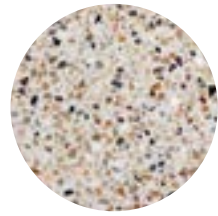
ELEVATION VIEW

ART DE AVALO "SILHOUETTE II"

ART DE AVALO "ACRILLA"

CHANGING TABLE

# LOUNGE



CLE FORAGE  
TERRAZZO



MAHARAM  
"MODE" FABRIC



PLASTER



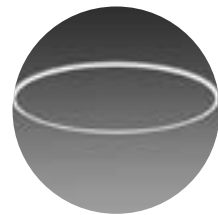
WEST ELM  
"LUCAS" CHAIR



COALESSE "CIRCA"  
LOUNGE SYSTEM



COALESSE "CIRCA"  
COFFEE TABLE



ALW MOONRING  
DIRECT LUMINAIRE



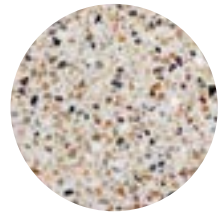
WHITE OAK



GLASS



# MULTIPURPOSE



CLE FORAGE  
TERRAZZO



MAHARAM  
"MODE" FABRIC



PLASTER



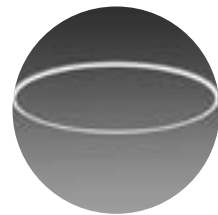
GLASS



COALESSE "CIRCA"  
LOUNGE SYSTEM



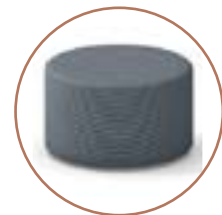
COALESSE "CIRCA"  
COFFEE TABLE



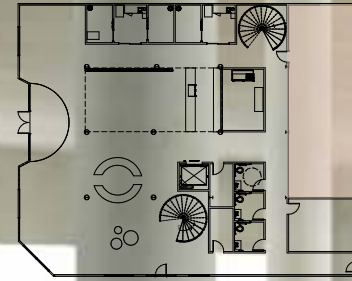
ALW MOONRING  
DIRECT LUMINAIRE



STEELCASE "VERB"  
MEDIA TABLE



COALESSE  
"ALIGHT"  
OTTOMAN



w

# ATRIUM



WHITE OAK



PLASTER



BRASS



GLASS



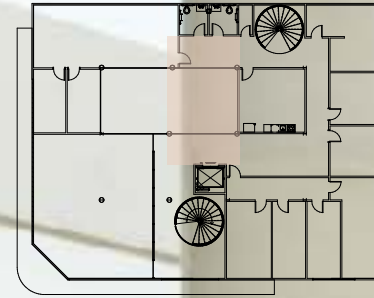
PLANT WALL



STEELCASE COALESSE  
"JOEL" CHAIR



MAHARAM  
"MODE" FABRIC



w

# FITNESS



WHITE OAK



PLASTER



BRASS



GLASS



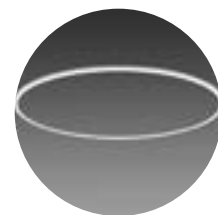
PLANT WALL



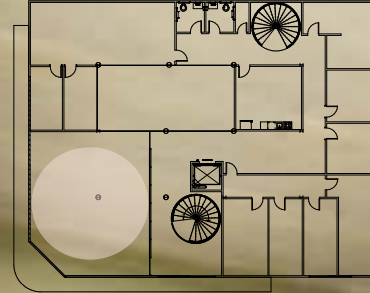
STEELCASE COALESSE  
"JOEL" CHAIR



MAHARAM  
"MODE" FABRIC



ALW MOONRING  
DIRECT LUMINAIRE



w



Writing and designing my thesis has been a labor of love this year. It has been therapeutic and healing through allowing me to process my own postpartum experiences. My first son was born in the States and it was a stressful experience. I only spent two days in the hospital after having a cesarean section. I quickly tried to go back to my normal routine without allowing my body to heal properly. That resulted in breastfeeding difficulties, exhaustion, and depression. My second son was born in France and I had a completely different experience. I stayed in the hospital for a week and was nourished with nutrient-rich food and my baby was cared for by the nursery whenever I needed to rest. I was even shown how to properly bathe my newborn, as I was a bit rusty with baby care. I had no breastfeeding difficulties that time, and I left the hospital feeling refreshed and ready to confidently care for my baby. However, I felt isolated and anxious due to living in a foreign country and therefore no family or familiarity.

These combined experiences were the driving force behind my thesis. I wanted to create a space that I wish had existed when I was the mother of young children. A place that addressed the many needs of a mother and a place that would foster holistic wellness. I wanted the space to be a beacon of hope for young mothers who are facing an unexpected pregnancy. Studies have shown that 80% of women choose life after seeing a picture of their baby, so having a space that supports that notion and included a room for ultrasounds was paramount. I also wanted those women to feel supported in other ways as well. A computer lab provides a space for women who may not have access to technology in order to find a job and therefore create financial stability for themselves, which can be a major point of stress.

Through my research and my own postpartum experience overseas, I also discovered that providing moments for connection would be extremely important within my space. I created spaces that bring women together over food, physical fitness, and conversation. I created counseling spaces and a multipurpose room for families to connect and receive education because knowledge is power. I believe that healing can take place in the mind and body through a holistic approach to wellness.

My hope is that this thesis will inspire change within maternal care and bring awareness to this important issue. To see a space such as this built in real life would be a dream come true.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Through Him, all things are possible.

This thesis is dedicated to my boys, who are my world and my why.  
I love you more than anything and thank you for allowing Mommy to chase her dreams.

Thank you to my incredible parents for providing endless love and support.  
None of this would have been possible without you.

Thank you to my best friend, Jaime Campbell, for making me laugh when I needed it the most, cheering me on, shooting pictures for my portfolio, and for caring enough to zoom in.

Thank you to my dear friend, Jessica Williamson, for investing in me and always believing in me. You are an amazing friend, an incredible mentor, and a true inspiration.

Thank you to Olivia Bowen for shooting pictures for my portfolio, taking care of my children, and for being an all-around amazing person.

Thank you to Rachel Grossman for picking my children up everyday the first year and for cheering me on!

Thank you to my classmates: Elizabeth Berry, Jocelyn Zavala, Rhode Baptiste, Celia Steigerwald, Reed Landin, Pat Lamb, Angie Thomson, Ruth Deibler, Hannah Bulow, and Cat Jensen. Thank you for the endless laughs, late night dance parties, text threads and making me feel cool again! You are all incredible people. We did it!

Thank you to Jackie Priest, Pascha Lee, and the Pregnancy Resource Center of Metro Richmond for allowing me to interview you.  
I greatly appreciate your time and expertise.

Thank you to the owners of The Westover for allowing me to borrow your plans and photograph your space.

Thank you to the VCU IDES faculty: Roberto Ventura, Kristin Carleton, Camden Whitehead, Dr. Sara Reed, Emily Smith, Eleanor Barton, and all of the adjunct faculty. You are all incredible educators and have stretched me in ways I never knew possible.

Special thanks to my thesis mentor, Alexis Holcombe, for all of the advice and support.

Thank you to Christiana Lafazani. You told me I could do it.

# IMAGE CREDITS

4.1 <https://www.archute.com/church-of-the-light/>

8.1 [https://www.etsy.com/listing/795903554/continuous-line-mother-holding-child?gpla=1&gao=1&&utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=cpc&utm\\_campaign=shopping\\_us\\_d-art\\_and\\_collectibles-drawing\\_and\\_illustration-pen\\_and\\_ink&utm\\_custom1=\\_k\\_CjwKCA-jwjuqDBhAGEiwAdX2cj8eHSSYAINKjDabx-0KmGntQIEoJ6IMbHhhcUKOe2B0bPP0epUhbsRoCcUEQAvD\\_BwE\\_k\\_&utm\\_content=go\\_1843970593\\_72372926280\\_346397747500\\_pla-354748465913\\_c\\_\\_795903554\\_12768591&utm\\_custom2=1843970593&gclid=CjwKCAjwjuqD-BhAGEiwAdX2cj8eHSSYAINKjDabx-0KmGntQIEoJ6IMbHhhcUKOe2B0bPP0epUhbsRoCcUEQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.etsy.com/listing/795903554/continuous-line-mother-holding-child?gpla=1&gao=1&&utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=shopping_us_d-art_and_collectibles-drawing_and_illustration-pen_and_ink&utm_custom1=_k_CjwKCA-jwjuqDBhAGEiwAdX2cj8eHSSYAINKjDabx-0KmGntQIEoJ6IMbHhhcUKOe2B0bPP0epUhbsRoCcUEQAvD_BwE_k_&utm_content=go_1843970593_72372926280_346397747500_pla-354748465913_c__795903554_12768591&utm_custom2=1843970593&gclid=CjwKCAjwjuqD-BhAGEiwAdX2cj8eHSSYAINKjDabx-0KmGntQIEoJ6IMbHhhcUKOe2B0bPP0epUhbsRoCcUEQAvD_BwE)

16.1 <https://www.frameweb.com/article/yasutaka-yoshimura-turns-a-warehouse-into-a-tent-like-kindergarten-full-of-light-and-air>

18.1, 19.1, 19.2 <http://www.coordination.asia/portfolio/gaga-king-glory/>

20.1, 20.2, 20.3 <https://thechalkboardmag.com/loom-center-for-new-moms-doula-wellness-tips>

20.4 <https://www.lonny.com/A+Design-Centric+Space+That+Takes+Parenting+To+The+Next+Level>

22.1 & 23.1 [https://www.architectmagazine.com/design/quinn-evans-and-tmc-furniture-debut-family-workstations\\_o](https://www.architectmagazine.com/design/quinn-evans-and-tmc-furniture-debut-family-workstations_o)

23.2 <https://www.tmcfurniture.com/products-adult/new-product/item/633-fairfield-parent-child-carrel.html>

25.1 <https://perkinswill.com/news/how-to-design-a-better-lactation-room-ask-a-user/>

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