BREAD AND ROSES:
Stronger communities and healthier food systems from the inside out

Karolyna Theodora Louise Rutherford

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Master of Interior Design

Department of Interior Design, Faculty of Architecture
University of Manitoba, Winnipeg

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ABSTRACT

This practicum project examines the long-standing association between the domestic realm and gendered space as well as issues that have emerged in urban areas, such as poor access to healthy food options. Drawing on utopian concepts that have challenged conventional forms of residential development and the organization of domestic functions and spaces, it proposes the adaptive reuse of the Royal Albert Arms Hotel in Winnipeg. Concerned with the design of a model of housing that features a communal kitchen and dining facility, among other shared spaces, this project investigates the potential of such common rooms as a means to foster a sense of community within the building. In doing so, it explores how interior design can reimagine domestic space in a more proactive and socially conscious manner, improving the quality of life for inhabitants in the context of their homes, and more broadly, the city.
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N.B. Original architectural drawings of the Royal Albert Arms Hotel by Edgar D. McGuire were obtained and used with permission from the Archives of Manitoba.
BREAD AND ROSES

As we come marching, marching in the beauty of the day,
A million darkened kitchens, a thousand mill-lofts gray
Are touched with all the radiance that a sudden sun discloses,
For the people hear us singing: "Bread and Roses! Bread and Roses!"

As we come marching, marching, we battle too for men—
For they are women's children and we mother them again.
Our lives shall not be sweated from birth until life closes—
Hearts starve as well as bodies: Give us Bread, but give us Roses!

As we come marching, marching, unnumbered women dead
Go crying through our singing their ancient cry for Bread;
Small art and love and beauty their drudging spirits knew—
Yes, it is bread we fight for—but we fight for Roses, too.

As we come marching, marching, we bring the Greater Days—
The rising of the women means the rising of the race—
No more the drudge and idler—ten that toil where one reposes—
But a sharing of life's glories: Bread and Roses! Bread and Roses!

James Oppenheim, 1911¹

¹ This poem appeared in Upton Sinclair’s The Cry for Justice: An Anthology of the Literature of Social Protest. The Writings of Philosophers, Poets, Novelists, Social Reformers, and Others Who Have Voiced the Struggle Against Social Injustice (Sinclair 2010).
A NOTE ABOUT THE TITLE

The inclusion of the slogan “bread and roses” in the title of this practicum project pays tribute to the labour and women’s movements that have been influential to the trajectory of discourse on the topics to be explored on the following pages. The slogan itself is associated most often with James Oppenheim’s portrayal of striking workers in the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century in the poem titled *Bread and Roses* published in 1911 (Zwick 2003, 92). In the mid-seventies, the poem was set to music and popularized by folk singers, thereby demonstrating the enduring significance of its message. In his analysis of the song’s history, music historian Jim Zwick quotes Mary MacArthur, a member of the British Women’s Trade Union, whom he credits as having been the first to use this pairing of words in the context of activism for worker’s and women’s rights. In paraphrasing the Qur’an, MacArthur stated, “If thou hast two loaves of bread, sell one and buy flowers, for bread is food for the body, but flowers are food for the mind” (Zwick 2003, 93). The slogan and the song have both since been widely adopted as an anthem for these movements.

The symbolism of the words “bread” and “roses” is evident in both the MacArthur quote and in Oppenheim’s poem, as both call attention to the need to assure access to basic means of survival while advocating for a more holistic approach to self-care and care for others. In Oppenheim’s poem, this is especially evident in the line “Hearts starve as well as bodies; give us bread, but give us roses!” (Oppenheim 1915, line 8). From the standpoint of a designer, this slogan can be interpreted as a reminder to question norms in the interest of creating a more equitable built environment.
FIGURE 1: The author’s great-grandparents’ house in Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine.
PREFACE

I have been told that when my grandmother was a little girl living in a village in Ukraine, every two weeks or so her mother would bake light rye bread. The thing is, my grandmother preferred dark rye bread. Fortunately, a neighbour of theirs would bake a few loaves of the dark variety at the same time. Since the neighbour’s children preferred the light rye that my great-grandmother regularly made, my grandmother would bring them a loaf to trade for their dark rye. This project is based on a very simple idea – life is better and easier when you share work and food with your neighbours.
1 - INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTORY BACKGROUND

The contemporary North American city is fraught with problems. Over the course of the last half-century, shifts in population and development have forced neighbourhoods across the continent to struggle to remain attractive places to live. In Winnipeg, one of the most severely affected areas is the city’s downtown where, among other issues, many residents are faced with challenges accessing healthy and affordable foods. Attributed to the recent closure of many of the area’s grocery stores, downtown Winnipeg is now known as a “food desert” (Food Matters Manitoba 2014, 6-7, 9). Though this issue has garnered considerable attention from local media and has been the subject of a number of reports, downtown residents continue to contend with a phenomenon that is caused by the market and has not been adequately addressed by businesses or government.2 Moreover, a growing number of downtown Winnipeg’s most vulnerable residents have no choice but to rely on organizations in the community that provide access to food (Novek and Nichols 2010, 12-16, Food Matters Manitoba 2014, 20-27).

Such matters are not often equated with interior design, however, it is a profession in transition. To date, interior design has not been widely associated with city building or the revitalization of cities. Rather, it is a field with historic ties to decorating, femininity, and the domestic realm that has evolved into a much broader, interdisciplinary vocation that is both creative and technical (Edwards 2011, 2-4, 53-59). Concerned with the adaptive reuse of the Royal Albert Arms Hotel in Winnipeg, this Master of Interior Design practicum project seeks to help overcome the notion of interior design as inward looking by exploring ways in which the configuration of spaces within buildings can lead to broader changes to the systems city dwellers

shape and rely on every day. To do so, it examines the current state of housing, cities, and food systems through the lenses of utopian theory and gender geography. The potential of communal spaces and shared activities as tools for placemaking and community building are also considered.

Ultimately, this project aims to explore how interior design can help drive the revitalization of inner-city neighbourhoods in a manner that fosters diversity both in terms of lifestyle, housing stock, and population. By focusing on the reorganization of the spaces and activities associated with the conventional home and prioritizing shared facilities and resources, this hypothetical study strives to identify how interior design can make cities more vibrant, equitable, and liveable while strengthening communities within and beyond the confines of a single building.

The sharing of space and resources – particularly those associated with the production and consumption of food – are common themes in utopian theory and literature. To develop an understanding of the social and spatial implications of utopian thinking, texts ranging from Sir Thomas More’s *Utopia* to scholarly research on housing models that have emerged from utopian thinking are reviewed in the Literary Analysis (Chapter 3). The exploration of its influence continues in the Design Precedent Analysis (Chapter 4), where housing projects designed to sustain some degree of communal life are examined. These examples provide valuable insight into the pragmatic considerations that design for this typology entails.

In many cases, individuals or groups have generated these ideas with a keen interest in promoting gender equality. This connection opens the literary analysis up to include discourse on gender studies – a field where the implications of prevailing tendencies in housing design have long been scrutinized by scholars such as Dolores Hayden, Penny Sparke, Mona Domosh and Joni Seager. Here, closer examinations of the concepts of gendered space and work in the context
of the domestic interior form the basis for the organization and design of spaces at the Royal Albert Arms Hotel.

Central to this discussion of gendered space are the notions of domesticity and homemaking – two ideas that are closely entwined with how we, in Western societies, have come to understand the process of turning a house into a home. With these concepts in mind, the literary analysis concludes with a discussion of placemaking and community building that draws on the works of Tim Cresswell, Henri Lefebvre, and Inge Daniels, among others. Not only does this discussion situate the communal kitchen and dining space at the heart of the project (which will be referred to as The Albert) as the backdrop for the social interaction that defines communal housing, it also highlights the influence of food on the process.

In the introduction to his book *Urban Utopias: The Built and Social Architectures of Alternative Settlements*, Malcolm Miles reflects on the inextricable link between the unique social structures and the accompanying built forms associated with alternative settlements such as cohousing communities, intentional communities, urban communes, and activist squats (Miles 2008, 1-2). Bearing this in mind, the purpose of this design project is to experiment with the design of domestic space in a way that addresses the social and spatial inequities identified in the following chapters. In many ways, The Albert is utopian in the sense that it challenges what society thinks domestic space should look like and how it should function. But, as architect and scholar Hansy Better Barraza suggests, it is time that architects - and certainly interior designers - begin to consider the social implications of the buildings they conceive. In doing so, she contends, design practice is refocused as it shifts away from the aesthetic towards activism (Better Barraza 2012, 9-10). It is from this perspective that this project has been researched, written, and designed.
TYPOLOGY AND PURPOSE

This project is concerned with the design of a residential building that fosters a form of communal living. The ratio of private to public spaces in the proposed design deviates from the typical configuration of spaces in conventional housing developments to accommodate a way of life that emphasizes the sharing of space, resources, and housework while promoting a stronger sense of community. In lieu of including a full kitchen in each of the dwelling units, residents rely on communal cooking and dining spaces for meals and have access to a variety of shared amenities, including a library, laundry room, a rooftop greenhouse, and outdoor space. As a result, private living space can be significantly reduced.

The preceding description is consistent with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's (CMHC) definition of their “Sharing Facilities” strategy for the design and development of affordable housing, making this an even more attractive housing alternative (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation 2014). The CMHC recognizes six different housing models as “Shared Facility Communities”. They are: cohousing, single-room occupancy units (SROs), feminist housing design, secondary suites, Abbeyfield houses, and congregate housing. Because The Albert is designed to be a multi-generational and a multi-family housing project where both amenities and domestic work are shared, it is most closely aligned with the cohousing, feminist housing, and in some respects, single-room occupancy unit housing models (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation 2014). It should be noted, however, that arriving at a clear definition of what The Albert is based on existing housing projects and officially

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3 Detailed descriptions of each of these housing models are available on the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation’s website (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation 2014)
recognized housing models is difficult, as there is considerable variation between individual communities and, from a legal standpoint, particularly between jurisdictions.

In the interest of making the Exchange District a more liveable neighbourhood, a portion of the main floor and basement has been allotted for use as a small grocery store and food access point. Although the design of this space is outside of the scope of this project, its purpose is to complement the programme of The Albert while working in concert with other food access initiatives already operating in the vicinity and the city at large. Food access in downtown Winnipeg will be discussed in more depth in the Site and Building Analysis (Chapter 2).

CULTURAL CONTEXT

Since this project is concerned with the development of communal housing, it is necessary to consider the role that collectives have played in shaping Manitoba’s history, landscape, and political culture. Certainly the most enduring example of a community that values communal life and the sharing of resources is the province’s Indigenous population. In his essay on housing design for Indigenous communities, architect Douglas Cardinal underscores the need to accommodate the clan – a term used to refer to the smallest unit in the structure of Indigenous communities that is comprised of immediate, extended, and adopted family members - as a means to preserve and nurture their way of life (Cardinal 1989, 108-109). More recently, groups of European settlers have established communities where similar values are central to their ideologies. One such example are Hutterite colonies where, in addition to shared work, finances, and property, the community’s daily routine is anchored by shared meals in the community kitchen (Kirkby 2007).
Manitoba is also currently home to more than four hundred co-operatives, many of which have been active for generations. Defined by the Manitoba Cooperative Association as “people coming together to meet a common need”, co-operative enterprises manifest themselves in the day-to-day architecture of Manitoban communities in a variety of ways (Manitoba Cooperative Association Inc. 2013). Evidence of this exists in the form of grain elevators operated by agricultural co-operatives to financial institutions, housing co-operatives, and retailers, among a myriad of others. The ability of the province’s population to sustain so many co-operatives indicates that Manitobans are receptive to communal and co-operative initiatives. The hypothetical adaptive reuse of the Royal Albert Arms Hotel to communal housing is intended to demonstrate how existing buildings can be modified to accommodate alternatives to conventional housing in a neighbourhood where more residential uses take hold in converted former commercial buildings.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SITE SELECTION

The building selected for this project is the Royal Albert Arms Hotel at 48 Albert Street in Winnipeg’s historic Exchange District. While a more in-depth analysis of the site and the building itself are undertaken in the next chapter, it is helpful to establish here that it was chosen because it is located in an area where accessing healthy foods presents a challenge for some residents (Wiebe, Distasio and Shirtliffe 2016).

In addition to providing a forum for exploring how to alleviate the pressure of living in a food desert, Winnipeg’s downtown is also an ideal location for experimentation with adaptive reuse and alternative housing models. The City of Winnipeg’s current official plan, OurWinnipeg, identifies the downtown as a “Transformative Area” because of its potential for
growth (City of Winnipeg 2011, 28). In the interest of cultivating diverse and liveable communities throughout the city, guidelines for development in these areas are outlined in supporting documents to the official plan. Because it was not originally developed as a residential community, the Exchange District presents a unique set of circumstances for the development of housing. This will be explored further in the Site and Building Analysis (Chapter 2) as well as the Design Proposal (Chapter 5).

**COMMUNITY PROFILE**

In her book titled *Finding Community: How to join an Ecovillage or Intentional Community*, Diana Leafe Christian uses the term “intentional community” to encapsulate any sort of community where, in her words, residents “share land or housing, share some resources, and have common agreements” (Christian 2007, 3). Adopting this definition as a guide, the community of residents at The Albert share a building, share food, and have committed to living communally. They are a group of like-minded individuals who are interested in lessening the burden of housework through sharing arrangements as well as the stronger sense of community that this affords them. A more detailed resident profile is provided in the User Profiles (Appendix A).

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4 The neighbourhood’s shortcomings as a residential community are a known issue and were recently addressed by the City of Winnipeg in 2011 with the publication of two key documents; the *Downtown Residential Development Strategy* (City of Winnipeg Planning, Property and Development Department; Housing Development Division 2011), which identifies the Exchange District as having the greatest potential for population growth in the area, and the *Complete Communities Direction Strategy* (City of Winnipeg 2011), which provides a clear definition of how the City envisions this development should take place in accordance with *OurWinnipeg*. In the latter document, “complete communities” are defined as “places that both offer and support a variety of lifestyle choices, providing opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to live, work, shop, learn and play in close proximity to one another” (City of Winnipeg 2011, 4). Based on this, it is evident that The Albert would be a valuable addition to the area.

5 Diana Leafe Christian’s book provides a comprehensive portrayal of the process of joining an intentional community as well as insight into the motivation and interests of people that these communities attract (Christian 2007).
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This project strives to explore how interior design can address some of the challenges faced by city dwellers. More specifically, it is targeted at helping people overcome the following urban problems: the decline of inner-city neighbourhoods, the deterioration of historic buildings, and above all, difficulty accessing healthy food. By examining how the design of cities and homes have evolved around gender roles, it will question the organization of domestic spaces and activities within the conventional single-family home and the city at large from an interior design perspective. The project draws on alternative models for residential design and community planning that originate in utopian theory as well as communal housing design precedents to inform the design of The Albert. The designed outcome of this project seeks to propose a model of housing that fosters a cooperative lifestyle, improves quality of life and helps build stronger communities. To meet these objectives, the following questions were used to guide the research and design process:

i. In what ways can gender geography and utopian concepts inform the reorganization of domestic space?

ii. How can the provision of communal spaces such as kitchens in a multi-unit residential building improve the quality of life for residents in the context of the city?

iii. How can the provision of space dedicated to sharing food preparation and meals help foster a sense of community within a multi-unit residential building?

RESEARCH METHODS

To answer the preceding questions and to guide the design process, this project makes use of the following research methods:
i. **Literary Analysis:** The literary analysis serves to identify the historic and philosophical roots of communal housing. Of particular interest are works that examine the influence of social and political conditions on architecture and design. This overview drives programmatic and aesthetic decisions and lays the groundwork for the analysis of design precedents.

ii. **Visual Essay:** The visual essay is a series of photographs made by the author to document and develop an understanding of the site and its surroundings. It is included in the Site and Building Analysis (Chapter 2).

iii. **Design Precedent Analysis:** The design precedent analysis examines three communal housing projects. While it is primarily intended to demonstrate how other designers have considered and applied some of the issues and ideas discussed in the literary analysis, it is also an opportunity to reflect on contemporary housing design, particularly in other, more progressive cultures.

**PROJECT BENEFITS**

As is apparent in the literary analysis, communal housing as a typology is not one that is often encountered in practice by architects and interior designers simply because of the prevalence of more conventional housing choices. Hypothetical projects such as this one demonstrate that practitioners in the field are thinking about more progressive typologies. There are many benefits associated with this type of discourse. At its core, this project builds on the utopian tradition of thinking about communal housing. In doing so, it re-examines historic ideas and experiments with them to tackle contemporary issues; this in turn fosters a degree of continuity in academic discourse on the subject. In broader terms, this project contributes to the
growing body of knowledge produced by the discipline of interior design. By bringing together ideas from various fields, it strives to align itself with Clive Edwards’ definition of interior design as an interdisciplinary field engaged with theory. This definition is based on the works of several significant scholars in the field, including Graeme Brooker and Sally Stone, Susan Close, and Mieke Bal (Edwards 2011, 3–9).

BIASES AND LIMITATIONS

Much of the literature broaches the topic of gender in binary terms. This bias is especially apparent in the literature, where a critical understanding of the patriarchal division of space and its associated architectures is derived from discourse and ideas dating back decades, and in some instances, centuries. In the interest of proposing an alternative arrangement of spaces and activities that is not gendered and, therefore, more equitable than that associated with the design of conventional domestic spaces, the ideas presented in these sources have been considered from a revisionist historical perspective.

From a design standpoint, one of the limiting factors in undertaking this project was the availability of architectural drawings. Another barrier was not having the opportunity to tour the interior of the building. Since the drawing set used as a basis for the proposed design is the original drawing set from 1913, any modifications to the interior of the building, as well as more apparent changes, such as the addition of the glass enclosure at the front of the building, are not shown. Furthermore, documentation of the building in its current state typically serves as an important reference in the design process and would have helped identify key architectural features for preservation. Without these particulars, the proposed design is solely derived from
the limited information presented in the original drawing set and lacks the historical depth that characterizes many adaptive reuse projects.

Finally, the Royal Albert Arms Hotel is one among many hotels in Winnipeg currently functioning as a single-room occupancy hotel (SRO hotel). As Jino Distasio and Susan Mulligan, researchers at the University of Winnipeg’s Institute of Urban Studies, note in their 2005 report titled “Beyond the Front Desk: The Residential Hotel as Home”, these hotels make affordable housing available to a highly vulnerable and marginalized segment of the population. At the time of the report’s publication, these hotels housed approximately a thousand people (Distasio and Mulligan 2005, 64).

Based on the number of rooms in the Royal Albert Arms Hotel, it is safe to assume that at full capacity, the building in its current state can house at least fifty-four residents. Though this project is hypothetical, the proposal could be interpreted as one that is biased towards the displacement of residents and the redevelopment of these types of buildings simply because their current use is widely regarded as problematic. This is not the case. While Distasio and Mulligan’s findings indicate that SRO hotels in Winnipeg offer choice and independence to a population whose needs are unmet by the city’s housing market and social agencies, their evaluation of living conditions in these hotels draws attention to the deterioration of ageing buildings and the exploitative relationships that tend to develop between hotel owners and residents, although it is worth noting that some owners do engage in providing varying degrees of social support to residents (Distasio and Mulligan 2005, 60-64, 89, 91).
KEY TERMS

- **Cohousing**: A model of housing that features both private living quarters, either in the form of conventional apartments or houses, and common amenities. Common elements typically include a kitchen and a dining room, among other gathering and work spaces. Cohousing bridges the gap between living individually and communally insofar as residents are obligated to take part in community governance and maintenance tasks but have some flexibility with regards to their participation in day-to-day community life. According to the Canadian Cohousing Network, cohousing communities typically accommodate ten to thirty-five households (Canadian Cohousing Network 2014).

- **Dwelling Unit**: In this project, this term is used to describe one of the private dwelling units to be inhabited by residents of The Albert. Each of these units is comprised of one or two sleeping spaces, a living space, a kitchenette, and a bathroom.

- **Food desert**: Food deserts are defined by Bedore as “communities with poor access to healthy, affordable food and whose population is characterized by compounding deprivation and social exclusion” (Bedore 2010, 1418).

- **Intentional Community**: A general term used to describe a group of people with shared values and goals. Typically, members of intentional communities live together or in close proximity to one another, but as Christian notes, there are intentional communities that are not residential (Christian 2007, xviii).

- **Single-family dwelling**: The CMHC uses this term to describe “Any housing unit provided in detached, duplex, row house or town house unit that is occupied by only one family” (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation 2013).
• **Social Heat**: A term used by Inge Daniels to describe the theoretical warmth that is created in the home by family members while participating in activities as a group. The concept of social heat is examined more closely in the Placemaking and Community Building section of the Literary Analysis (Chapter 4) (Daniels 2015, 48).

**CHAPTER SUMMARIES**

• **Chapter 1 – Introduction** outlines the goals and the rationale of this practicum project, both in terms of research and design. It lays the groundwork for the document by introducing key theoretical concepts to be explored in subsequent chapters. The site, building, and its users are identified. In addition, project benefits, biases and limitations are addressed and key terms are defined.

• **Chapter 2 – Building and Site Analysis** is organized from macro to micro, beginning with an overview of present-day conditions in Winnipeg that have informed the site selection process. The site analysis includes a visual essay – an exercise used to develop a better understanding of the building’s context. This is followed by an architectural analysis of the building itself and a discussion of the building’s history. Here, aspects of the existing structure that are to be preserved or restored as a part of this adaptive reuse project are identified.

• **Chapter 3 – Literary Analysis** is divided into four, thematic sections. The first explores communal living chronologically. The second builds on the discussion in the first by examining the utopian roots of this movement. The gendered division of labour is a topic that is raised in both of these sections. Accordingly, the third section addresses gendered work and gendered space in the home. Of particular interest in this section are the notions of
homemaking and domesticity, which relate closely to the focus of the fourth and final section on placemaking and community building.

- **Chapter 4 - Design Precedent Analysis** integrates theoretical concepts examined in the preceding chapter with an analysis of pertinent designs for alternative housing models. The precedents in question are the Narkomfin Communal House designed by Moisei Ginzburg and Ignatii Milinis, Moriyama House designed by Ryue Nishizawa, and Share Yaraicho designed by Satoko Shinohara and Ayano Uchimura. Selected primarily for the distinctive approaches to the organization of domestic spaces that they represent, these examples also provide insight into design strategies employed by designers charged with the task of designing housing featuring both private and shared spaces.

- **Chapter 5 - Design Application** draws together the information gathered in the research components of this project in the design of The Albert. This chapter includes drawings and renderings of the completed design and summarizes how issues raised in the preceding chapters influenced the design process and outcomes.

- **Conclusion** is a reflection on the design outcomes in relation to the research. This section evaluates the overall success of the investigation and identifies opportunities for further exploration.
2 - SITE AND BUILDING ANALYSIS
INTRODUCTION

While much of the design of The Albert is informed by the theoretical concepts raised in the literary analysis, the selection of a topic and a typology was primarily motivated by some of the issues facing residents of Winnipeg’s downtown and, more specifically, the Exchange District. Like many other contemporary North American cities, these issues include food insecurity, the need for community building, and support for residential uses.

Food insecurity in particular has become a prominent topic in academic circles, principally in the fields of urban geography and city planning. Solutions to these problems also tend to be limited to city planning discourse. As Mark Gorgolewski, June Komisar, and Joe Nasr, authors of the book *Carrot City: Creating Places for Urban Agriculture* note, work produced in the field of architecture, particularly by students, has begun to reflect this tendency. Moreover, they suggest that opportunities to apply these ideas both in practice and pedagogy are burgeoning across the design disciplines (Gorgolewski, Komisar and Nasr 2011, 11, 14-15). In his editorial in the special issue of International Planning Studies titled *Feeding the City: The Challenges of Urban Food Planning*, Kevin Morgan offers a broad definition of what he refers to as the “food planning community”; in his words, this encompasses “every profession which has a food-related interest” (Morgan 2009, 342). As Clive Edwards notes, interior design is a field closely associated with the domestic sphere and consequently, the design of food production and consumption spaces (Edwards 2011, 2). With this in mind, this project takes the view that interior designers are an integral part of this community and should play a role in the formation of projects such as The Albert.

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6 For a synopsis of perspectives and research on issues relating to food access in the fields of city planning and geography, see: *Just Urban Food Systems: A New Direction for Food Access and Urban Social Justice* (Bedore 2010); *Feeding the City: The Challenge of Urban Food Planning* (Morgan 2009); and *Disparities and access to healthy food in the United States: A review of food deserts literature* (Walker, Keane and Burke 2010).
of food systems. It also posits that, as a profession, interior design should be more engaged in discourse and design work that addresses food insecurity.

This chapter begins with an overview of the aforementioned issues and their influence on the selection of a site. In doing so, it establishes the proposed programme and design for The Albert as a relevant and timely strategy for addressing some of the challenges faced by local residents. A more in-depth analysis of the site follows, providing an overview of more specific information about the neighbourhood, the area’s demographics, architecture, and history. In the interest of developing a deeper and more tangible understanding of the neighbourhood’s character, this information is presented in a series of photographs that document the building and its surroundings. Finally, the chapter concludes with an architectural analysis of the building itself; this section also summarizes the constraints imposed by applicable historic designations.

But first, it is necessary to briefly consider food access in downtown Winnipeg.

SITE ANALYSIS

i. Food Access in Downtown Winnipeg

Residents of many Winnipeg neighbourhoods face a variety of challenges accessing food. At the heart of the city’s downtown, the Exchange District is one such area and, as it has already been established, is also a neighbourhood that has been earmarked by the City of Winnipeg for the intensification of residential development. These contradictory circumstances present the

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7 Since 2010, Food Matters Manitoba has published a series of reports titled Community Food Assessments that examine the availability of healthy foods in relation to socioeconomic markers and associated health outcomes. These documents pinpoint existing resources and identify opportunities for development. To date, the organization has examined the North End, St. Vital, Downtown, and Inkster neighbourhoods (Food Matters Manitoba 2016).

8 Portions of the Exchange District are classified as a severe food desert in a study titled Confronting the Illusion: Developing a Method to Identify Food Mirages and Food Deserts in Winnipeg. Published in 2016 by the Institute of Urban Studies at the University of Winnipeg, the report uses mapping software to compare the financial and geographic barriers Winnipeg citizens face accessing healthy foods (Wiebe, Distasio and Shirtliffe 2016).
designer with a unique opportunity to experiment with how the programme of the proposed design can best serve the needs of The Albert’s residents as well as the needs of the growing community that surrounds it. In order to develop a programme that will accomplish this, factors contributing to inadequate access to food in this neighbourhood must be considered.

The area designated as the “Downtown” by Food Matters Manitoba in their *Downtown Community Food Assessment* represents a sizable portion of the inner city, and when surveyed overall, economic and geographic barriers stand out as having the greatest impact on food access within its limits (Food Matters Manitoba 2014, 23). While geographic proximity to grocery stores decreased considerably for many residents between 2012 and 2014 with the closure of three of the area’s full-service grocery stores, comparisons of each of the sub-regions studied in the report reveal that in some instances, the disparity in geographic access is firmly entrenched. This is apparent in the Downtown’s more established residential neighbourhoods where car ownership is more common and driving to the grocery store has been accepted as a way of life (Food Matters Manitoba 2014, 12, 23-24).

In some ways, this logic is also applicable to the Exchange District where the adaptive reuse of many of the area’s industrial buildings and warehouses for residential use has precipitated a surge in the neighbourhood’s population over the last decade. In the Food Matters Manitoba report, the area’s population is characterized as relatively young and affluent.

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9 A full-service grocery store is defined in the Downtown Grocery Store Feasibility Analysis as a retailer that “[sells] a full range of groceries including fresh meat and produce; canned, frozen and boxed goods; and bakery and dairy products” (Kaufmann 2013, 7).

10 As a part of their *In-Brief* series of reports on urban issues, the University of Winnipeg’s Institute of Urban Studies published *Downtown Winnipeg: Developments and Investments, 2005–2013* (Distasio, McCullough and Werner, et al. 2013) and a follow up report titled *Downtown Winnipeg: Developments and Investments, 2005–2015 Update* (Distasio and McCullough 2015). These reports chronicle public and private investment across sectors as well as the development of infrastructure. They provide helpful insight into tendencies in housing and population growth over the time period in question.
with a higher than average proportion of homeowners (Food Matters Manitoba 2014, 12). From this, we can deduce that the Exchange District is home to a highly mobile population facing few restrictions accessing food outside of the immediate area. Additionally, the vicinity has enjoyed a concurrent injection of restaurants and businesses and although this gives the impression that the Exchange District is a vibrant and functional mixed-use neighbourhood, these amenities tend to be highly specialized. This underscores the lack of basic infrastructure required to sustain the day-to-day needs of a more diverse residential community.

Mobility does not, however, preclude area residents from wanting to be able to shop for staples locally. Demand for a grocery store in the area was accounted for in the Downtown Grocery Store Market Feasibility Analysis commissioned by a group of stakeholders. While the report correlates higher than average incomes among Exchange District residents with demand for upscale, specialty grocers, it also concludes that the downtown as a whole could sustain another full-service grocery store (see figure 2). This recommendation was based on the size and population of the downtown as well as the closure of one of the area’s grocery stores in 2013 (Kaufmann 2013, 7-9). Further, on the subject of opening a grocery store in the area, the analysis cautions that the process of establishing such a business is lengthy and once operational, might not be profitable for at least the first five years (Kaufmann 2013, 12-14).

But the financial barriers facing potential grocery store operators outlined in the Downtown Grocery Store Market Feasibility Analysis draw attention to a larger, fundamental problem: as a society, we have handed over control of food access to the market. While research indicates that opening a grocery store may be a viable and worthwhile endeavour that would significantly improve the quality of life for people in its trade area, it does not guarantee that there is, or ever will be, any interest in taking on the challenge. Moreover, tendencies in the
Canadian grocery sector offer little reassurance to underserved communities as mergers between several national chains have resulted in the closure and selling off of numerous grocery stores. Though many of the grocery stores that have closed in Winnipeg’s downtown in recent years were independently owned and therefore less susceptible to closure due to corporate directives and government regulation of the grocery sector, this reorganization at a national scale is especially alarming since market analysts warn that other companies may follow suit (Strauss 2014).

The impact of living in a food desert is measurable in Winnipeg’s low-income neighbourhoods where the incidence of diseases related to diet, such as diabetes, is much higher (Skerritt 2009). Additional closures would invariably exacerbate the problem of food deserts and would leave already vulnerable populations at greater risk. Human geographer Melanie Bedore’s 2010 article provides a snapshot of the research being produced by scholars in the fields of geography and city planning on the subjects of food access and food justice. At the time, she remarked that although food had become a more popular topic in these fields, her findings suggested that the notion of justice as it pertains to food had yet to gain traction in discourse (Bedore 2010, 1418, 1424). Much of the literature reviewed by Bedore draws attention to the incompatibility between the notion of a just city and a food system heavily influenced by corporations. She also highlights a paradox that shrouds grocery stores as neighbourhood institutions by referring to them as having “dual public and private purposes” insofar as they facilitate access to a necessity and constitute a significant social space (Bedore 2010, 1425). In doing so, her article sheds light on the circumstances facing Winnipeg discussed in the *Downtown Grocery Store Market Feasibility Analysis* as well as a need to fill a social void in their absence.
Ultimately, Bedore argues that there is a need for further research that looks more closely at the marginalization that results from the profit-based decisions made by corporations in the grocery sector. By way of a solution to these issues, some of the possibilities put forward by Bedore and the authors of the studies she cites are very much in line with the raison d'être of this project. While some advocate top-down changes to policy, many others favour community-based initiatives rooted in concepts such as collective consumption, decentralization, and decommodification in support of food sovereignty. Implicit in many of these schemes is the rejection of capitalism and working towards post-capitalism (Bedore 2010). Citing Hassanein, Bedore highlights “food democracy”, a term used to describe a paradigm in which control over food access is incrementally decentralized and “food sovereignty”, a concept that emphasizes turning over ownership of food production to the consumers themselves so that they have more control (Bedore 2010, 1422-1423).

From a theoretical standpoint, the studies cited by Bedore have much in common with Shannon Hayes’ work on radical homemaking in the sense that she advocates self-sufficiency and limited participation in the capitalist economic system. For this to be viable, Hayes explains that radical homemakers must seek out and help create networks of likeminded individuals and groups. These connections not only provide for their immediate needs but also help build social capital over time. While she notes that abiding by these values can be rewarding in many ways, Hayes is optimistic about how beneficial it could be to local food systems (Hayes 2010, 12-13, 17-18, 38-39, 43, 83, 101-106).

For the residents of The Albert, this type of engagement is integral to fostering a sense of community within the building and beyond. With its rooftop garden and greenhouse, grocery store, communal kitchen, dining room, and plenty of common space, The Albert is well
equipped to meet the needs of its residents while also contributing a node in Winnipeg’s alternative food system. To do so, it could follow, albeit on a smaller scale, the Community Food Centre model. By collaborating with existing non-profit organizations such as the Winnipeg FoodShare Co-op and Food Matters Manitoba, as well as independent businesses such as Neechi Commons, The Albert will extend the network of community-minded food purveyors into the Exchange District.

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11 The authors of Carrot City define Community Food Centres (CFCs) as “organizations that provide a forum for community participation, engagement, and education about food and agriculture, and provide support networks that can help to create and maintain community gardens. CFCs offer practical support and training for neighborhood residents and contribute to a secure and sustainable future for urban food systems” (Gorgolewski, Komisar and Nasr 2011, 61).

12 Winnipeg FoodShare Co-Op distributed affordable produce through two programs: the Good Food Box Program and the Bulk Purchasing Program. It also operated an Education Program, which facilitated cooking classes in community centres, and seasonal markets. Due to rising food prices, these programs were temporarily suspended in February 2016 (Winnipeg Food Share Co-Op n.d.).

13 Neechi Commons is a full-service grocery store located in North Point Douglas. It is operated by Neechi Foods Co-Op Ltd., an Indigenous workers co-operative. The organization’s mandate is to provide access to affordable, locally-sourced traditional foods (Neechi Foods Co-Op Ltd. n.d.).
FIGURE 3: The Royal Albert Arms Hotel and vicinity.
ii. The Exchange District

THE ROYAL ALBERT ARMS HOTEL
Located on a small lot on Albert Street, The Royal Albert Arms Hotel is dwarfed by neighbouring warehouse buildings. Parking lots occupy the lots immediately to the south and west of the building.

PARKING LOTS AND PARKADES
Parking lots and parkades dot the landscape of the Exchange District; they serve the needs of the neighbourhood’s growing residential population as well as the needs of workers from nearby office buildings during the workweek.

WINNIPEG CITY HALL
A complex of local government buildings.

OLD MARKET SQUARE
One of the area’s few greenspaces. The park features a stage that plays host to performers during many of the city’s arts and culture festivals.

BUILDING STOCK
The Exchange District is known for its historic warehouse buildings constructed near the turn of the twentieth century. The neighbourhood is a designated National Historic Site of Canada.

ALBERT ST. AUTONOMOUS ZONE
Also known as the A-Zone, the Albert Street Autonomous Zone is home to a variety of co-operatives and activist groups. It has been a fixture in the neighbourhood for two decades (Albert Street Autonomous Zone n.d.).

RED RIVER COLLEGE
The Royal Albert Arms Hotel is located within walking distance of this institution.

ARTSPACE AND CINEMATHEQUE
Two among many arts organizations, galleries, and performance venues in the vicinity.
The series of photographs that follows (figures 4-13) depicts the Exchange District's urban landscape. It is intended to convey the character of a neighbourhood that was developed a century ago as a commercial hub, but is now in transition. Images depict the relationship of former warehouse buildings to the street, street life, and cultural events.
FIGURE 4: View of Portage Avenue and Main Street from the Albert Street Parkade.
FIGURE 5: Looking north on Main Street at McDermot Avenue.
FIGURE 6: Warehouse on Adelaide Street.
FIGURE 7: Boarded up building, Princess Street and Bannatyne Avenue, 2014.
FIGURE 8: The former St. Charles Hotel located at Notre Dame Avenue and Albert Street.
FIGURE 9: Lanes behind warehouses between Princess Street and Adelaide Street.
FIGURE 10: Looking south on Adelaide Street.
FIGURE 11: Nuit Blanche, September 2014.
FIGURE 12: Parking lot on Albert Street, just north of the Royal Albert Arms Hotel.
FIGURE 13: Lane off of Princess Street.
i. Historic Designation and Zoning

The Royal Albert Arms Hotel was listed as a Grade III Municipally Designated Site in 1981. Though this designation does not place any conditions on modifications made to the interior, the exterior of the building is currently protected under the City of Winnipeg’s Historical Resources By-Law No. 55/2014 (City of Winnipeg 2014). As such, any proposed alterations to the exterior of the building would be subject to a review by the City’s Historical Buildings Committee.

Further, it should be noted that the Royal Albert Arms Hotel is located in an area of the city that has been zoned a “Character Sector” in the Downtown Winnipeg Zoning By-Law No. 100/2004. Any changes made to a building within the sector must adhere to the guidelines set out specifically for the Exchange District, which is referred to as the “Warehouse Area” in the document. This was implemented to preserve the area’s historic urban landscape and as such, reference is made to the City’s National Historic Site Commemorative Integrity Statement (City of Winnipeg 2004, 47). Recognizing that the neighbourhood is undergoing considerable change, the City of Winnipeg also initiated the Warehouse District Neighbourhood Plan, a secondary plan aimed at balancing the pressures associated with population growth and the preservation of a National Historic Site (City of Winnipeg 2016). The implications of these regulations will be discussed in greater detail in the Design Proposal (Chapter 5).
FIGURE 14: View of the Royal Albert Arms Hotel from the Albert Street Parkade.

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FIGURE 15: The hotel’s south facing façade featuring its iconic signage.
FIGURE 16: View of the hotel from Arthur Street.
FIGURE 17: Rear view of the hotel from the parking lot.
ii. Architecture

The Royal Albert Arms Hotel was designed by architect Edgar D. McGuire. Owing to key architectural and decorative details on its façade, the four-storey building is often described as having been designed in the European or Spanish Colonial Revival style (see figure 14). These features include the wrought iron balconies, masonry details, and the distinctive overhanging roof (Historical Buildings Committee 1980, para. 9, Parks Canada n.d., para. 2, Virtual Heritage Winnipeg n.d.).

It is unclear whether certain aspects of McGuire’s design were actually built as indicated in the original drawing set dated March 1913. Judging from an archival photograph included in the Historical Buildings Committee report, features such as the roof tiles and light fixtures may have been removed sometime after construction or were omitted altogether (Historical Buildings Committee 1980). Aside from these elements, an assessment of the building’s exterior in its current state as compared to the original drawing set indicates that with the exception of the addition of the glass structure at the front of the building, the character of the building’s exterior has been relatively well preserved. The addition did, however, result in a considerable reconfiguration of the openings on the main level.

The current state of the building’s interior is unknown as a site visit was not possible. Considering the appearance of the building’s exterior and Jino Distasio and Susan Mulligan’s findings in their report on SRO hotels in Winnipeg, it is not unreasonable to assume that the interior is in a general state of disrepair. It should also be noted that the original drawing set does not include detailed drawings of the building’s interior. As such, a general understanding of

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14 For a thorough audit of living conditions in Winnipeg SRO hotels, see Beyond a Front Desk: The Residential Hotel as Home (Distasio and Mulligan 2005).
the interior was gained through digital modelling. This exploration affirmed what can easily be deduced from the original drawing set and the building’s exterior; the hotel is an extremely narrow building, particularly towards the rear, where on upper floors, small rooms are arranged along a very narrow corridor. With only ten feet between levels, the building’s low ceilings impart a claustrophobic quality to the interior.

Because of its historic status, the proposed design aims to revitalize the building in a manner that gives prominence to the original design as well as period-appropriate materials. This will be discussed in the Design Proposal (Chapter 5).

iii. History

The Royal Albert Arms Hotel opened in 1913; like many other hotels that opened in Winnipeg at the time, it was established to lodge newcomers to the region as well as visitors conducting business in the vicinity (Historical Buildings Committee 1980, 1-3).15 According to Distasio and Mulligan, these hotels accommodated a primarily male clientele (Distasio and Mulligan 2005, 13).

In its early years, the hotel served as a gathering place for striking women during the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike. Organized by the local Women’s League, the makeshift Labour Café’s purpose was to serve free meals to strikers. It was originally housed in the Strathcona Hotel a few blocks away, but was relocated to the Royal Albert Arms Hotel soon after the start of the strike (Naylor 1995, Western Labor News 1919). This is of particular significance to this project given its outlook on gender, food, and community building as many parallels can be drawn between the Labour Café and the proposed programme for The Albert.

15 For a more detailed history of the Royal Albert Arms Hotel, see the City of Winnipeg’s Historical Buildings Committee report (Historical Buildings Committee 1980).
Over the course of the last century, the building has continuously operated as a hotel. However, as with similar Winnipeg hotels of this vintage, conditions declined rapidly in the decades following the mid-century due to the pressures associated with supplying long-term, affordable housing in the inner city (Distasio and Mulligan 2005, 9-10, 13, 15). The hotel’s bar on the main floor, which appears to have been moved to what was originally labelled the café in the 1913 plans, gained notoriety as a venue for live music in the nineteen sixties and by the turn of the twenty-first century, the hotel had established itself as a hub for the city’s punk-rock scene. This aspect of the building’s history is chronicled in Randy Frykas’ 2009 documentary film titled Call to Arms: The Story of the Royal Albert (Frykas 2009).

Despite its success as a venue for live music, the future of the hotel is uncertain. The last decade has seen businesses located on the main floor struggle to stay open for a variety of reasons and the sometimes tumultuous state of the affairs at the hotel has garnered considerable attention from the local media. At the time of writing, both the bar and the restaurant remain vacant while the upper floors appear to continue to be operated as an SRO hotel.

CHAPTER SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Exchange District, a neighbourhood that the City of Winnipeg has identified as one that is in transition and favourable to residential development, is currently underserved by grocery stores. The introduction of a housing project such as The Albert would be a positive contribution to the neighbourhood as it would diversify housing choices and, equally, it would serve as a community resource.

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16 The circumstances surrounding the decline of SRO hotels in North America and Winnipeg specifically are accounted for in Distasio and Mulligan’s report (Distasio and Mulligan 2005, 9-15).

17 See (Staff Writer 2013, Sinclair, Jr. 2013).
Based on the analysis of the photo essay and time spent in the neighbourhood, the former commercial district does not give the impression of being amenable to a residential population on account of the number of parking lots and parkades in the vicinity, a lack of green space, and a somewhat inhospitable streetscape. The neighbourhood is, however, centrally located in close proximity to a number of the city’s major institutions; it is also a well-established destination for arts and culture.

The Royal Albert Arms Hotel building is a suitable size for the proposed typology and can also accommodate a small, healthy food outlet on the main level. It is therefore well situated in Winnipeg to serve as a hub in the City’s alternative food system.
3 - LITERARY ANALYSIS
INTRODUCTION

In recent years, a growing interest in non-traditional living arrangements has been widely reported in the media. A group of senior women seeking an alternative to the conventional retirement home founded Baba Yaga House in the Parisian suburb of Montreuil so that they could continue to live independently while caring for one another (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 2013). In San Francisco, a diverse group of people have chosen to live at The Embassy. Dubbed a “co-living” community, The Embassy is one of a series of mansions in the area that are administered by a property management group that provides residents with an economical housing alternative that emphasizes shared meals, resources and, above all, networking opportunities (Xie 2013).

In some housing markets, such as Vancouver’s, this phenomenon is propelled in large part by a lack of affordable housing. Property managers with a surplus of vacant mansions manage access to a considerable number of these collectives in the area, but many others are born out of necessity and take on a more grass roots quality. While media interviews with residents suggest that the former represents a more precarious housing opportunity, since third-party involvement does not necessarily translate into investment in community life, Willow Yamauchi’s documentary “Are millennials hacking housing with community homes?” suggests otherwise. Profiling communal living in British Columbia, she finds that many communal living communities established by residents themselves evolve into larger, more formal communities over time (Gold 2015, Yamauchi 2016).

This tendency is not, however, limited to housing. In their book titled What’s Mine is Yours: The Rise of Collaborative Consumption, Rachel Botsman and Roo Rogers document how
people have found ways to trade and share a host of things, ranging from material goods to labour and knowledge in a multitude of contexts and along diverse networks (Botsman and Rogers 2010).

Though these resourceful arrangements are timely solutions to contemporary problems, they are by no means new ideas. Various iterations of these patterns of living have come to light in the past and many of them are considered to be the product of utopian thinking. The majority of these examples have been presented in conjunction with prototypical buildings designed to facilitate the sharing of resources and labour. By providing an overview of a selection of these alternatives and their associated architectures, the first two sections of this literary analysis will provide a theoretical basis for the proposed design. The first section will examine housing models featuring communal kitchen and dining facilities and the second section will build on the first by highlighting the influence of utopian thinking on the architecture of these unconventional domestic spaces.

As it has been established, one of the goals of this project is to demonstrate how interior design can contribute to the reshaping of cities. The literature reviewed in the third section of this chapter serves to demonstrate how the reorganization of domestic space can have a considerable impact on urban form and quality of life. Of particular interest are the concepts of gendered space and work in relation to the design of the home. This analysis will focus on food production and consumption spaces.

Finally, through an exploration of placemaking and community building in the fourth section, the analysis explores how spaces, particularly spaces of convergence, become meaningful to users. Here, the role of food as a tool to facilitate these processes within the housing project and the city at large is examined.
The issues presented in the following sections all involve the home as a frame of reference. For this reason, it is necessary to establish a working definition of the term “home” at the outset of this analysis, just as many of the authors of the works reviewed here have done. In their introduction to the special issue of the *Women’s Studies International Forum* journal titled “Concepts of Home”, Sophie Bowlby, Susan Gregory and Linda McKie provide a thorough summary of the often-overlooked complexity that this word has taken on. By their definition, homes, irrespective of their built form, are physical spaces that are largely defined by the identities of their inhabitants and their behaviours; these constituents are influenced by external forces that range from government policy\(^\text{18}\) to social mores to media representation. The authors also point out that in Western society, the resultant definition of home is problematic because it favours patriarchal constructs such as the heterosexual nuclear family and sustains accordant gender roles (Bowlby, Gregory and McKie 1997, 343-347). With this in mind, this literary analysis treats the home as a highly politicized space in continuous need of reappraisal.

**HOUSING MODELS FEATURING A COMMUNAL KITCHEN AND DINING ROOM**

In Western societies, most of us live in houses or apartments with dedicated spaces for cooking, eating, bathing, and sleeping. The notion of sharing any or some of these spaces with neighbours is, for most, a foreign concept and it is around these individualistic norms that the homes and communities we live in are designed. This is examined by Lidewij Tummers who, in a study of cohousing in Europe, explains that conventional housing as it exists and continues to be developed has been shaped by well-established factors, ranging from building materials to

\(^{18}\) Dolores Hayden’s article *What Would a Non-Sexist City Be Like? Speculations on Housing, Urban Design, and Human Work* examines the patriarchal nature of government policies pertaining to housing and urban design more closely. Hayden concludes the article with her own proposal for the design of a more equitable community, HOMES, which stands for: Homemakers Organization for a More Egalitarian Society (Hayden 1980, S181-S187).
policy, at various levels in the development process. But Tummers also notes that alternative housing models are gaining traction and groups seeking to establish collaborative housing projects are able to gain access to support from government and financial institutions more readily than ever before (Tummers 2015, 1-2). In many ways, the aforementioned individualism is tied to the capitalist economic system, and as Donald E. Pitzer, et al. point out, it is rooted in the changes to everyday life that came with the Industrial Revolution (Pitzer, et al. 2014, 90). The influence of both capitalism and the Industrial Revolution permeates the examples discussed here and in the following sections, and as such, their significance must not be overlooked.

In spite of the prevalence of single-family dwellings\footnote{As defined in the Key Terms section of Chapter 1.} in many locales such as North America, renunciation of this model of housing in favour of alternatives that feature communal cooking and dining facilities has a long and well-documented history. This movement gained momentum in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries - a period characterized by industrialization and urbanization. Recognizing the challenges and implications of these processes for the domestic sphere, a number of groups and individuals have proposed a variety of alternative housing models. To varying degrees, many of these models were founded on the adoption of a communal lifestyle that was, more often than not, tied to broader community and city planning schemes. Since then, many others have come forward with their own proposals for similar housing projects, some of which have been realized. Related, yet distinctly different housing models such as cohousing emerged and are also addressed in this section.

Across disciplines, discourse on the subject of communities structured around shared facilities and resources frequently makes reference to the philosophies of early nineteenth century
utopian thinkers Charles Fourier and Robert Owen. Their proposals to reform society were spurred in large part by the socioeconomic conditions that resulted from the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution (Heilbroner 1999, 107-115, Miles 2008, 39). Fourier’s “Phalansteries” and Owen’s “Villages of Cooperation” both feature communal kitchens and dining rooms, among other shared spaces. The communities they envisioned gained traction with followers who began to identify as Fourierists and Owenites; these groups founded communities based on their proposals in the United States and England to varying degrees of success (Heilbroner 1999, 114, 123-124, Miles 2008, 46-49, 54).

As urban historian Dolores Hayden notes, Fourier and Owen’s philosophies had a strong feminist leaning and their ideas proved to be influential among women towards the end of the nineteenth century (Hayden 1981, 33, 35, 73, 189). Among them was Melusina Fay Peirce, a homemaker who believed that housework should be assigned monetary value and that women should be compensated accordingly (Hayden 1981, 68). Recognizing the cost and time savings that could be derived from sharing tasks and resources, Peirce conceptualized neighbourhood organizations that women could join to take part in what she referred to as cooperative housekeeping. Initially, these organizations would function without a dedicated building but as they matured, she proposed that they would acquire a common house that would serve as the group’s workplace. Aside from making work more equitable and efficient, cooperative housekeeping also had a strong social aspect, as spaces for recreation and leisure were provided.

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21 This movement is thoroughly chronicled by Dolores Hayden in her book *The Grand Domestic Revolution* (1981).
Once fully adopted by a community, Peirce’s plan would eliminate the need for kitchens in houses altogether, as food preparation would take place at the common house. Furthermore, by joining the organization, members gained access to labour saving machinery for tasks such as laundry that would likely have been prohibitively expensive for most (Hayden 1981, 67-69).

The social and spatial reach of Peirce’s proposal is considerable. Achieved in its purest form, communities would be oriented around a node, the common house, thereby altering how houses and neighbourhoods are arranged on a street grid.22 In an urban context, she proposed that cooperative housekeeping organizations could similarly be formed within apartment complexes (Hayden 1981, 72-73). Both scenarios provide members with the impetus to strengthen ties with their neighbours, and it is in this respect that Peirce’s proposal demonstrates how intentional communities such as The Albert can improve quality of life and help overcome the isolation associated with life in the contemporary city.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, a feminist and futurist writer likely influenced by Peirce, proposed a similar solution: the apartment hotel. However, rather than joining a cooperative housekeeping organization, Gilman proposed that families and individuals should live in kitchen-less apartments in a complex that effectively functioned as a hotel. Residents would have access to common amenities, such as a dining room, library and rooftop garden while meals, housework, and childcare, would be included in the cost of living there (Hayden 1981, 188-189).23 Gilman’s apartment hotel concept takes Peirce’s ideas a step further. Conceived with gender equality in mind, Gilman argued that women not only should be paid for their work, but they should also have the opportunity to pursue a career

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22 Diagrammatic representations of Melusina Fay Peirce’s proposal are provided in (Hayden 1981, 70-71).
23 Diagrams and illustrations based on Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s apartment hotel proposal can be seen in (Hayden 1981, 190-191, 193).
outside of the home (Hayden 1981, 189). Given that The Albert occupies a former hotel, Gilman’s apartment hotel concept is relevant to this project.

The twentieth century spawned a variety of housing projects featuring communal kitchens and dining rooms; many of these examples bear a strong resemblance to Peirce and Gilman’s proposals. Among the earliest examples is a model of housing that, much like Peirce’s proposal, was designed around a central kitchen building. The first of these communities was opened in Copenhagen in 1903 and similar communities following the model were also established in cities throughout Europe over the course of the first two decades of the century (Vestbro and Horelli 2014, 321-322). As with all of these housing models, the question of who would be tasked with actually doing the housework is as much of a defining characteristic as the model’s built form. Even though the housing model appears to reflect the feminist resolution to make working outside of the home a reality for women, the central kitchen building was actually intended to “collectivize the maid”, making it clear that at the time, there was less of a concern with finding ways to make housework more efficient so much as there was an inclination to make outsourcing domestic labour more economical (Vestbro and Horelli 2014, 321).

Likewise, “collective houses” or kollektivhus as they were known in Sweden where the concept originated in the 1930s, were structured around facilities where housework would be carried out by a staff, and as such the use of the word “collective” in their name is somewhat of a misnomer. Unlike the central kitchen building model that preceded it, however, the objective of the kollektivhus model was to allow residents to hand over housework to the staff so that women could pursue a career. As Dick Vestbro and Liisa Horelli point out, this led to the housing model being dubbed as a “special solution for privileged people” (Vestbro and Horelli 2014, 322-323). The Narkomfin Communal House in Moscow, Russia, is another noteworthy example of early
twenty-first century housing featuring communal facilities, but because of its political roots, the community's structure distinguishes it from other early twenty-first century examples. The design of the purpose-built complex is analyzed in the chapter that follows.

While the architecture of a hotel, such as the Royal Albert Arms building, provides an ideal scenario for the implementation of any housing model that is a variation on Gilman’s apartment hotels, reviewing these models draws attention to how little the architecture of the building itself has to do with enacting the desired changes to daily routines that are fixed in the patriarchal organization of space. For these changes to occur, it is evident that the community occupying such a housing model must be actively engaged in subverting norms. Although all of the preceding examples are referenced in Vestbro and Horelli’s synopsis of cohousing’s history, it is the short trajectory from the kollektivhus model, which ultimately failed as the willingness to pay a premium for these services waned by the 1970s, to communities where the residents themselves were doing domestic work that is of particular interest to this project. Vestbro and Horelli attribute this shift to BIG, a group of women who started The New Everyday Life project to explore the potential of a “self-work” approach to homemaking.24 Their work inspired the reorganization of domestic space in a variety of contexts and gave rise to a proliferation of housing models featuring communal kitchens and dining rooms in Sweden; these included communes, communities with common houses and, most notably, cohousing communities (Vestbro and Horelli 2014, 324-331).

24 BIG stands for Bo I Gemenskap, which translates as “live in community.” According to Vestbro and Horelli, the group believed “that cooking and child rearing together is enjoyable, and also saves time. Between fifteen and fifty households were considered an appropriate size for the new type of co-housing. If each household would forego 10 percent of the normal apartment space, the collective would get a substantial amount of communal facilities without increasing costs” (Vestbro and Horelli 2014, 325).
Cohousing should not, however, be mistaken as a true example of housing featuring a communal kitchen and dining space. In fact, many contemporary cohousing communities feature conventional single-family dwelling units that include full kitchens (Christian 2007, 39-40). From an architectural standpoint, the design of cohousing communities varies considerably and, because the arrangement of spaces is tied so closely to how the community has chosen to structure itself, each community is unique. For instance, in her survey of the design of six cohousing communities, Clare Cooper Marcus found that some communities opted to include multiple common kitchens and dining rooms to be shared by smaller groups within the context of a larger community. Moreover, the frequency with which these facilities are intended to be used is dependent on the community and the degree to which residents have the ability to choose to participate in communal aspects of the cohousing lifestyle. This is complicated further by the fact that these arrangements are known to evolve with the community’s preferences or for practical reasons (Marcus 2000, 148-150). Nonetheless, cohousing is considered to be a more equitable and supportive environment than conventional housing, regardless of the degree to which housework is shared or visible because, as Vestbro and Horelli state, the availability of shared space “reproduces a culture that does not easily accept gender inequities” (Vestbro and Horelli 2014, 333). With that being said, cohousing has been included in this analysis as it provides many useful considerations for the design of The Albert.

Because the Royal Albert Arms Hotel is a relatively small building, smaller scale communal housing projects will be the focus of the Design Precedent Analysis (Chapter 4). These provide a helpful counterpoint to the preceding, larger scale, typologies. In her book *Future Living: Collective Housing in Japan*, Claudia Hildner attributes the growing popularity of communal housing to the high cost of living in Japanese cities (Hildner 2014, 60). Among the
examples she cites is Share Yaraicho, a communal house in Tokyo; this project is among those analyzed.

Finally, it would be remiss to provide an overview of communal housing models without mentioning religious communities where residents share much more than housework and meals as property is held jointly. These include, but are not limited to, the colonies established by Hutterites and the monasteries inhabited by monks, such as the Benedictines (Pitzer, et al. 2014, 90).

Though many of the examples discussed in this section are not contained in a single building, all of them are representative of similar ideas. Many are founded in the utopian tradition, but the number of movements with which these housing models are aligned continues to grow as awareness about alternative housing models spreads. The following sections relate these housing models to utopian theory, gendered space, and placemaking; the aim of this analysis is to examine how these ideas could work within the confines of a single building, and more specifically, to determine how they can be applied to interior design practice. To this end, they have been used to guide the programme and design of The Albert.

**UTOPIAN THINKING AND ARCHITECTURE**

Many of the housing models discussed in the preceding section were devised from a utopian perspective and as such, it is helpful to examine what utopian thinking is and how it influences architecture. The term utopia has its origins in Sir Thomas More’s book *Utopia* in which the author uses fiction as a means to criticize the strained political climate of sixteenth century England while simultaneously proposing what he believed to be a more equitable way of
organizing society (Miles 2008, 9). In his book *Urban Utopias: The Built and Social Architectures of Alternative Settlements*, cultural theorist Malcolm Miles makes the distinction between prescriptive literary utopias, such as More’s, and practical utopias, which by his definition, can be any physical space occupied by a community that is deliberately creating an alternative, ideal society (Miles 2008, 1-2).

Because they are concerned with making immediate changes to the status quo on a variety of fronts, Miles classifies Fourier’s “Phalanstery” and Owen’s “Villages of Cooperation” as practical utopias, but he does note that Fourier’s proposal in particular aligns itself with the literary utopian tradition insofar as some of the changes he proposes rely on top-down control over citizens (Miles 2008, 37, 47, 51). Likewise, Dolores Hayden describes material feminism, the vein of feminism with which Melusina Fay Peirce and Charlotte Perkins Gilman were engaged, as having both utopian and pragmatic roots (Hayden 1981, 3-4).

With regards to more recent examples, there is some debate over whether or not contemporary cohousing should be considered utopian, although it should be noted that the distinction could be regional given that the studies compared are concerned with cohousing on two different continents. Whereas Tummers’ findings suggest that cohousing should not be considered utopian on the grounds that in Europe, the focus of these communities tends to be a practical mandate to live more efficiently rather than driving a political agenda, Lucy Sargisson’s outlook on cohousing as utopian is more inclusive. In her survey of North American cohousing communities, Sargisson concludes that they are indeed utopian, but not in the radical sense (Sargisson 2012, 29, 50-51, Tummers 2015, 11). Her findings are summarized in the following.

25 In the introduction to the book *The Concept of Utopia*, Ruth Levitas explains that the word utopia is a word that “contains deliberate ambiguity: is this eutopia, the good place, or outopia, no place” (Levitas 2010, 2).
statement about the housing model: “It does contain a shared vision of a better life, but it does not for example, challenge or seek to overthrow existing property regimes or the nuclear family” (Sargisson 2012, 42). More thought provoking still is that Sargisson finds that North American cohousing communities tend to downplay or reject the politically radical image associated with the housing model and that alignment with more moderate political views has contributed to the popularization of the model (Sargisson 2012, 29, 51).

Though The Albert does present as a practical utopian community as defined by Miles, Sargisson’s survey in contrast with the hypothetical profile of The Albert’s residents situates it in a decidedly more radical utopian sphere than contemporary cohousing. Whether rooted in the literary or practical utopian tradition, the influence of utopian thought on the built form of a community merits closer examination. Written from a sociological point of view, Ernest J. Green’s article *The Social Functions of Utopian Architecture* provides the necessary framework for developing an understanding of what the key architectural characteristics of utopian communities are and how they are intended to shape community life (Green 1993).

At the outset of the article, the author summarizes the causal relationship between buildings and human behaviour in general terms; he states:

First, the physical layout and the buildings may reflect cultural values and thus come to hold major symbolic meaning for community residents. Second, architecture may provide a basis for social control to channel both attitudes and behaviour into approved forms. Third, architecture may reinforce social organization or social structure (Green 1993, 2-3).

Green goes on to argue that a survey of the designs for utopian communities indicates that there has been a tendency among their creators to draw on a sort of toolkit of specific architectural elements. These elements are used in a variety of ways not only to elicit certain behaviours based on the community’s values, but also to create a complementary ambience
They are listed in the text as follows: “boundaries (edges), gateways, paths, gathering nodes, landmarks, and landscaped gardens” (Green 1993, 9). Obviously, this list is better suited to describing architecture, landscape, and urban design; for the purposes of an interior design project, these elements can be interpreted at a finer scale as walls, openings, corridors, rooms, and so on. The role of each of these elements in the design of The Albert will be discussed in the context of this framework in the Design Proposal (Chapter 5).

Green’s analysis serves as an excellent tool to guide the design process of projects that are aligned with the utopian tradition. Though the deterministic potential of architecture in the negative sense is not overstated in the article, architecture’s capacity to influence behaviour should not be taken lightly by the designer of any project, especially one dealing with politicized domestic spaces such as The Albert. While Green provides a useful framework for understanding the built forms associated with utopian communities, a practical utopian community is, as Miles argues, any kind of alternative settlement “where much of the daily practice of a new society consists of finding ways in which people can collaborate on an equitable basis, respecting rather than obliterating difference. Utopia is thus incomplete, an always unfinished project” (Miles 2008, 1).

**GENDERED SPACES**

Norms in housing and, more broadly, in community design, can be seen to perpetuate social inequities, particularly in terms of labour. One of the recurring themes in the discourse reviewed here on communal housing and utopian architecture has been inequity drawn along gendered lines. Through a process of questioning and rejecting gender roles, conventional housing design, and even the notion of the nuclear family in favour of living communally, many
of the proposals discussed in the preceding sections have become influential in human geography and related fields for the insight they provide into thinking about how spaces become gendered entities and, more importantly, the social implications of these associations.

Thus far, the application of the information discussed to the realization of the design for The Albert has focused on more concrete issues. In design terms, it has focused largely on the programme, or the organization of activities and people in space. The design process does not, however, end at the programmatic phase; it also involves a range of aesthetic decisions that are of particular concern to the interior design profession. For scholars in gender geography and related fields, the appearance of domestic interiors can be contentious. Characteristics of architectural styles, furnishings, and decoration are often coded in terms of gender and can be interpreted as a reflection of gender roles as well as societal pressures and tendencies at any given point in time.26

While it is undeniable that most users can appreciate a well-designed space, critically examining what the social implications of the surface elements of a design are, or have been historically, is a worthwhile endeavour, particularly as a part of a project that is concerned with proposing a more equitable domestic environment. For this reason, the analysis of the literature in this section has two purposes: to examine the programmatic aspects of the design more closely through a gender theory lens and to develop an aesthetic that is sensitive to these issues as well as a reflection of the community’s political outlook.

Literature concerned with how the notion of gender is understood and applied spatially with regards to the home is used as the jumping off point for this discussion as The Albert is, in

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26 This is the subject of Penny Sparke’s seminal text *As Long As It’s Pink: The sexual politics of taste* (1995). Domosh and Seager’s survey of the home as a gendered space also addresses the implications of décor and design, associations made between gender and the types of rooms found in the home as well as the expectations placed on women by society in a locus that is presumably private (Domosh and Seager 2001, 7-21). Aesthetic decisions for the design of The Albert will draw on their work and will be discussed in the Design Proposal (Chapter 5).
the broadest sense, a domestic space. The house as a typology as it exists in its context, in this case the city, is also considered briefly.

A key concept in feminist geography and related fields is the “separation of spheres”. This is a term used to describe the socio-spatial phenomenon that gave birth to the association made between women and the home as well as the parallel association that is made between men and the workplace. Like many other scholars, feminist geographers Mona Domosh and Joni Seager attribute the separation of spheres to the processes of industrialization and the adoption of capitalism. In space, the phenomenon is rooted in an increase in paid work opportunities outside of the home, thereby dividing labour according to gender. The social implications of this division were, and continue to be, much broader as they pertain to factors such as identity and remuneration. In scholarly writing, these distinctions are often reduced to binaries that characterize each of these realms socially, economically, and spatially. For instance, terms such as: female, reproduction, family, femininity, house, suburb, unpaid labour, tend to be contrasted with their binary terms: male, production, work, masculinity, workplace, city, paid labour, and so on (Domosh and Seager 2001, 2-6).

Like Domosh and Seager, Hayes also identifies the Industrial Revolution as the point at which housework became synonymous with women’s work noting that this also resulted in the attrition of domestic skills among men, whose focus shifted to developing skills associated with paid work (Hayes 2010, 14). But one of the greatest changes, and one that is discussed at great length in much of the literature reviewed here, is that the Industrial Revolution saw the home transition from a “production unit” to a “consumption unit”. Since the number of women working outside of the home is ever increasing, Hayes proposes that today, homemaking in the
traditional sense is more akin to a luxury and is accessible only to families that can afford to live off of a single income (Hayes 2010, 14-15).

For Hayes, the reclamation of homemaking is a political act that requires individuals and families to alter the way in which they live; to do so, much of this change is rooted in forgoing participation in the capitalist economic system in favour of fostering an alternative, “life-serving economy” wherein consumers are also active producers (Hayes 2010, 12-19). Therefore, by preparing food together in the communal kitchen, growing food in the rooftop greenhouse, and participating in daily life at The Albert, residents are taking a political stance against corporate control over the food system.

As with the work of many other scholars cited here, the foundation of Hayes’ critique of these inequities is informed in part by the concept of separate spheres (Hayes 2010, 66-69). But unlike Hayden’s proposal for HOMES, which calls for the reconfiguration of existing infrastructure so as to foster a built environment that is more supportive of homemakers, Hayes’ impassioned summation of the lifestyle she chose for herself and her family demonstrates how much the rejection of a more conventional way of life is wrapped up in activity, not architecture (Hayden 1980, S181-S187, Hayes 2010). If a radical community can arguably attain their goals without a built environment that is tailored to them what, then, is there left for the designer to do?

In her survey of literature on women in architecture titled *The Space between the Studs: Feminism and Architecture*, Sherry Ahrentzen reveals that there is plenty to do, and it should begin with a closer, more critical examination of a building’s typology and its programme. In her words, “The very name of the place or facility to be built and the list of spaces it contains, as well as their function and their cost facility represent certain social values and relationships that are
expected to be supported” (Ahrentzen 2003, 192). Here, Ahrentzen is referring to Murray Silverstein and Max Jacobson’s concept of the “hidden program” which is a term used to describe what is referred to in the article as “the system of relationships usually taken for granted that give the building its basic social-physical form and connect it to the rest of society” (Ahrentzen 2003, 192).

These statements prompt a mental audit of the spaces to be included in The Albert – what do they signify? Are they arranged in an equitable way? Are they appropriately named? For example, by omitting kitchens in the private dwelling units so that residents participate in food preparation and meal times, the arrangement of spaces in The Albert represents an alternative and arguably less gendered approach to housing design. This logic can also be applied to design from an aesthetic standpoint and, in the case of The Albert, a minimalist approach helps uphold the values and aims of the community. The reasoning for this will be examined in further detail in the Design Proposal (Chapter 5).

In architecture, as with any field, standards that reflect inequities rooted in patriarchy tend to persist. As Ahrentzen points out, the stasis in architectural practice associated with the “hidden programs” of buildings can be attributed to the fact that neither architecture as a profession or as an academic field are as politically engaged as they should be (Ahrentzen 2003, 192). Ahrentzen’s most well-taken point, however, is that the critique and reimagining of architectural typologies from a feminist perspective is even more limited as it has been confined to academia, and as such, has never been implemented in architectural practice (Ahrentzen 2003, 194-195). To overcome this, Ahrentzen envisions a more politicized approach to architecture, echoing the views of likeminded scholars such as Elizabeth Grosz, for whom the answer ultimately lies in how space is inhabited (Ahrentzen 2003, 195).
By considering Hayes and Hayden’s opposing viewpoints in conjunction with Ahrentzen’s overview of how patriarchal architecture can be understood and disrupted, it becomes apparent that there is a need to strike a balance between design and agency. At its core, The Albert is a vessel for radical homemaking; design decisions, whether they are programmatic or aesthetic, must take this into account. Ahrentzen summarizes this condition in her discussion of Grosz’s stance on feminist architecture by stating that “inhabiting and appropriating [should be] on the same footing as “architecture-as-object” in the making and meaning of place” (Ahrentzen 2003, 195).

Another strategy to make the built environment more equitable raised in the literature is to encourage more women to participate in architectural practice since, as Ahrentzen notes, women have long been marginalized in the male-dominated field for a variety of reasons (Ahrentzen 2003, 179-180, 196). Geographer Mark Llewellyn’s study of early- to mid-twentieth century housing design in Britain highlights some of the key contributions made by women to domestic architecture and, more specifically, kitchen design. Taking the view that the home for women was akin to a workplace, their work sought to reform the design of domestic spaces in the name of efficiency. Influenced by the Modernist paradigm, experimentation with the design of kitchens was driven in large part by principles borrowed from Taylorism and Fordism to create new configurations of space based on data derived from time-and-motion studies.27 Other approaches included integrating the kitchen with living spaces so that women

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27 The design of the Frankfurt Kitchen was derived from these studies (Llewellyn 2004, 45). Grete Schütte-Lihotzky’s design is described by Jonathan M. Woodham as follows: “The ergonomic functionalism of the Frankfurt Kitchen reflected a desire to provide high standards of design in mass-housing. With built-in cupboards, storage units, and work-surfaces, the space saving ideas looked back to the design of ship and railway galleys as well as to the highly influential Scientific Management in the Home (1915) by Christine Frederick. The practicality of the Frankfurt design was furthered by the provision of a swivel-stool from which the housewife could easily reach the sink, chopping board, and food storage” (Woodham 1997, 50).
would no longer be sequestered from the rest of the house (Llewellyn 2004, 44-54). In spite of these changes, Llewellyn comes to the conclusion that, while these innovations made the spaces more efficient, they did not make inroads in the subversion of gendered work or space. He summarizes this paradox in the following statement:

However the ultimate irony of women as architects and designers concerned with domestic geographies was that, whilst attempting to reconceptualise the woman’s place, they not only reinforced the gender roles traditionally, and geographically, ascribed to women, but became embroiled in the process themselves. Kitchens were designed by women, but were simultaneously designing women (Llewellyn 2004, 56).

In the conclusion to his article, Llewellyn reflects on the evolution of kitchen design by quoting a line from Gaston Bachelard’s book, The Poetics of Space. The thought-provoking statement “Je suis l’espace où je suis.”\(^{28}\) captures the duality that is inherent to architecture: the influence of the built environment on the user and the users influence on the environment they inhabit. While this is a theme that has been raised in the analysis of research concerning housing models, utopian thinking, and gender, the concept is central to the discussion of placemaking and community building in the following section.

**PLACEMAKING AND COMMUNITY BUILDING**

This section considers a selection of literature concerned with community building and the related concept of placemaking. The Albert strives to provide residents with a space that they will inhabit in their own way, and more significantly, in a way that is authentic to the group of individuals living there collectively. From a design perspective, this is emphasized in the programming phase of the design process wherein the significance of relationships between

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\(^{28}\) “I am the space in which I am”.

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spaces in a building, as well as the building’s relationship to the street and to the broader community, are examined.

At the outset of this discussion, it is necessary to acknowledge that many terms used throughout have various meanings depending on the context in which they appear or by whom they are used. For instance, the definition of the term “placemaking” is dependent on the theoretical use of the word “place” in opposition to the word “space”. The distinction made between these two words is deliberate, as is their respective usage in the field of human geography. Geographer Tim Cresswell’s definition of “place” and “space” are helpful in framing the wide range of literature analyzed here. Drawing on the works of Henri Lefebvre, Martin Heidegger, Edward Relph, and Yi-Fu Tuan, among many others, Cresswell’s definition uncovers the differences in how these words are used and understood. From this, it is established that in the broadest sense, spaces are physical entities that become meaningful places to their users through a variety of processes, such as inhabitation and modification (Cresswell 2004, 5,12, 15-16, 18-22).29

Cresswell’s analysis of the terms from the perspective of a communal housing designer raises a key question: can a designer create a sense of place, and more specifically, a sense of home for The Albert’s eventual inhabitants in an equitable manner? He summarizes the complexity of the task at hand by stating: “The creation of ‘nice places to live’ is one of the central ways in which places are produced. But take this activity beyond the seemingly innocent practices of decorating walls and arranging furniture and it soon becomes a political issue”

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29 Tim Cresswell’s book Place: A Short Introduction (2004) as well as his introduction to the book Mobilizing Place, Placing Mobility (2002) provide a comprehensive overview of the significance of these terms and the nuances associated with their usage.
(Cresswell 2004, 93). In other words, the design of a space is coded with the views of the designer, developer or architect.

Using the example of the highly stylized marketing materials produced to sell houses in a subdivision, Cresswell stresses that one of the consequences that underlies selling a “place” under the guise of the opportunity to buy into an overtly aspirational lifestyle is exclusion. As The Albert is intended to house a group with a common political ideology centered on sharing labour and resources, it is important that the design conveys a sense of inclusivity. To do so, the design must read as a vessel for community building rather than an interior that is, as Cresswell suggests, designed to be consumed (Cresswell 2004, 93-97). In the same vein, the manner in which a home is designed and decorated has gendered connotations that are debated by scholars in design history and gender geography, for this reason, it is necessary that the designer treads even more carefully into the aesthetic realm (Domosh and Seager 2001, Sparke 1995).

Given that placemaking through inhabitation is one of the central aims of this project, it is imperative that the design helps facilitate this practice for an intentional community of individuals whose circumstances and length of residency will vary. As it has been set out in the User Profile (Appendix A), The Albert will, for many, be a short-term residence. Like the project’s long-term residents, they will also need to develop meaningful ties to the community that they are joining and the environment that they are occupying, albeit in a more condensed period of time. Citing the work of Edward Relph and David Harvey, among other theorists, Cresswell concludes that mobility and transience can contribute to a sense of “placelessness”
Given the potential brevity of residence, this suggests that the residents of The Albert may be predisposed to this feeling.\(^{30}\)

The duration of residence notwithstanding, there is a great deal written about how the act of sharing space through social activity can create a sense of home. With this in mind, a useful way to think about this in terms of the design for The Albert is to consider how residents will occupy the building individually and collectively. In an article that examines the concept of home in Japanese society, Inge Daniels highlights activities that, in her words, create “social heat” – a notion that is both concerned with the creation of heat in the literal sense of heating homes, as well as in the creation of heat in the social sense, through interaction. To do so, Daniels highlights sleeping and bathing, both of which have historically been central to family life in Japanese society (Daniels 2015, 48). She encapsulates her findings as such: “homeliness is not locatable in separate (living or dead) individuals, nor in specific items of material culture, but that atmospheres are all-encompassing phenomena that guide people’s collective activities” (Daniels 2015, 54). Because the process of creating social heat and in turn, a homely atmosphere is firmly entrenched in doing, Daniels’ thoughts on the subject tie particularly well into Cresswell’s discussion of Yi-Fu Tuan’s ideas about the home as a “field of care” and Lefebvre’s concept of social space (Cresswell 2004, 12, 24-25).

\(^{30}\) In situations where the home as a spatial entity is unstable or temporary, Cresswell cites geographer Geraldine Pratt’s study of the spaces inhabited by temporary foreign workers in their employer’s homes. Her findings underscore the value of having the opportunity to personalize a space as a means to feel at home and generate a sense of place (Cresswell 2002, 19, Cresswell 2004, 82-83). For the purposes of this project, Pratt’s analysis as summarized by Cresswell is fitting: “…the little things that make space into place, such as a poster on a wall, get heightened significance” (Cresswell 2002, 19). Accommodating personalization in housing design is resolved successfully at Share Yaraicho and Moriyama House, two of the design precedents analyzed in the chapter that follows.
Although the activities that the residents of The Albert share will differ from the practices of Japanese families, Daniels’ article underscores the value of spaces and amenities that allow the community to gather and create social heat through organized activities, such as cooking and eating together in the shared kitchen and dining room as well as more spontaneous interaction, in spaces such as the greenhouse or library. The Albert is a community that is centered on the notion of shared food and shared work. In a study of cohousing communities in Sweden, researchers concluded that communal meals were integral to community building (Labit 2015, 34). 31

Communal spaces must be selected to ensure they are relevant and useful to the community. In her study, Seeding Community: Collaborative Housing as a Strategy for Social and Neighbourhood Repair, Dorit Fromm touches on the utility of shared spaces in purpose-built collaborative housing projects. She remarks that in some instances, common areas that had been included in the design with the intent that they would become a focal point in the day-to-day lives of residents were ultimately being underused or were reserved for special events (Fromm 2014, 380-381, 386). Based on this, it is clear that to a certain degree, residents must be drawn to use and depend on common facilities on a daily basis so that they are not relegated to occasional use. In the proposed design for The Albert, careful consideration for the amenities provided to the residents in both the public and private realms of the building attempts to address this risk.

31 The primacy of food production and consumption spaces in dwellings and communities has been explored by a variety of theorists, including Christopher Alexander, Sara Ishikawa, and Murray Silverstein in their seminal text, A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction (Alexander, et al. 1977); Avi Friedman, in his essay titled “To Keep or Not to Keep the Living and Dining Room?” (Friedman 2005); and Roland Barthes (Barthes 2002, 109-110).
Housing projects such as The Albert, of course, do not function in isolation from their surrounding communities. In addition to improving the quality of life for residents they also have the potential to support community building in their local and broader context. For example, providing flexible spaces for group activities not only supports community building internally, but also aids in fulfilling the community’s mandate to serve as a hub for food advocacy and as a potential healthy food access point in Winnipeg.

A housing model’s ability to foster community building beyond its physical and, indeed, its social bounds is also assessed by Fromm in her article (2014). In the broadest sense, Fromm’s findings confirm that the introduction of collaborative housing is beneficial to a community because it diversifies the number of housing models and types of tenure from which potential residents can choose. Moreover, she suggests that individuals who are attracted to this genre of housing tend to be more engaged in community development within the housing project itself and in the surrounding community; much of this can be attributed to the fact that a group of likeminded people constitutes a sort of energized critical mass (Fromm 2014, 388-391).

These benefits should not, however, be overemphasized. Alluding to the need to prioritize community building internally, Fromm concludes her analysis with a conservative statement on the subject: “While collaborative communities cannot be expected to solve the wider neighbourhood’s social and care problems; they can model good neighbouring…” (Fromm 2014, 387-388). Tummers, by contrast, takes the view that, at this stage, an intentional
community’s influence on quality of life and community building in cities is inconclusive and needs further examination (Tummers 2015, 2, 14).

In terms of design, successful placemaking and community building may result from a wide range of approaches. As with many of the communities used as examples in the literature, some of the projects analyzed in Fromm’s article relied heavily on the participation of eventual residents in the design process. Her article draws attention to some of the unique challenges faced by designers when working with this typology. While the participatory design process is regarded as positive, it is lengthy. Moreover, the evolving needs of a community with a comparatively transient population can be hard to predict (Fromm 2014, 381, 388-389, 391). Hypothetical design projects do not have the advantage of a community invested in directing and realizing the design of their future home, but analyses of historic examples, such the Hull House Settlement and the Centraal Beheer office building, provide insight into what could make a community such as The Albert successful.

By drawing on archival material and writing on the subject of the Settlement founded in Chicago by Jane Addams in the late nineteenth century, architect Sharon Haar’s research demonstrates how a highly responsive and somewhat informal built form gave the Settlement the leeway to adapt and evolve around changing programmatic needs (Haar 2002, 99-104, 111). As a design brief, accommodating a growing community in an ever-changing conglomeration of buildings in as short a period of time as Hull House did is a challenging, if not impossible

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32 From a design perspective, the degree to which collaborative housing relates to its surrounding community is also a function of its built form. Fromm’s evaluation of a variety of such housing projects suggests that, among other design considerations, street presence is particularly valuable. She states: “The edges and in-between spaces where the collaborative housing connects to the wider neighbourhood can allow for lingering, for views, and for social interactions, or can be non-porous” (Fromm 2014, 390). This is applicable to the adaptive reuse of a building in a transitional area such as Winnipeg’s Exchange District where residential use is becoming more common.
proposition, but what made it workable was the trial and error process that the Settlement was engaged in. The mindset of those who were at the helm of Hull House can conceivably be adapted to the interior design of a singular building. In her analysis, Haar suggests that the Settlement was centered more around developing an idea - improving quality of life for women and children - rather than a building and, more importantly, the value in multi-purpose space (Haar 2002, 108).

The open-ended nature of Hull House as a physical entity calls to mind Herman Hertzberger’s spontaneous yet orderly Structuralist design for the Centraal Beheer office building where the architect, recognizing that the users themselves should somehow be integrated into the overall design, deliberately designed the interior of the building with a degree of restraint so as to accommodate the building’s occupants and their things. In doing so, Hertzberger’s design emphasizes placemaking as an ongoing activity that is a product of what users do in a building once it has been occupied, rather than in the design phase. Curtis summarizes this by stating the following about this office building: “the rough concrete blocks, precast beams and irregular trays of the ‘workers village’ embodied an ideal of participation and implied that the structure would be incomplete until dressed in each individual’s knick-knacks, plants and place-making symbols…” (Curtis 1996, 596). In thinking about the design of The Albert, striking a balance between the approaches taken to the design of Hull House Settlement and Centraal Beheer would allow the community to grow into the space as it evolves.

CHAPTER SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Housing models featuring a shared kitchen and dining room have a long history. Much of the discourse surrounding this typology has its origins in utopian thought, which also ties well
into feminist conceptions of domestic space and gendered work. A theoretical and practical examination of the typology is timely given the increasing number of intentional communities.

The discussion established that sharing meal preparation and gathering to break bread are particularly valuable activities for community building. By drawing on research and theory from various fields, the preceding analysis also identifies the roles that individuals and communities play in fostering a sense of place. This is presented in two ways: first, attachment through personalization of a private space, and second, attachment to a community of residents through shared activity. Much of this discourse is rooted in thinking about the significance of inhabitation and, as Daniels proposes, the creation of “social heat” (Daniels 2015). Accordingly, Daniels’ notion of “social heat” can extend beyond The Albert and into the surrounding community. As such, the design of The Albert recognizes the project’s potential to serve as a hub for community building among residents of the Exchange District and Winnipeg at large.
4 - DESIGN PRECEDENT ANALYSIS
INTRODUCTION

The following precedent analysis provides insight into the strategies employed by other designers who have undertaken housing projects for some manner of communal living. These examples were selected because they complement the key ideas and concepts explored in the literary analysis and reflect the aesthetic intent of the project, which proposes a minimal, structuralist environment as discussed in the Placemaking and Community Building Section of the Literary Analysis (Chapter 3).

Representative of the progressive ideas held by designers and their clients, each precedent is a response to a unique set of environmental, social, and political circumstances. In this respect, they follow in the tradition of practical utopian thinking in architecture. Characterized by a divergence from norms in housing design, all of the precedents analyzed are purpose-built. While this sets them apart from The Albert – an adaptive reuse project – it also serves to introduce innovative ideas about the design of residences with shared space that are uninhibited by an existing building. In other words, these precedents are the products of ideal scenarios for experimenting with alternative models of housing. The three precedents that follow are presented chronologically.

The earliest example is the Narkomfin Communal House in Moscow, Russia. Designed and built circa 1930, this project was commissioned by an agency of the Communist Party. As such, it was firmly entrenched in early Soviet ideology and politics. Although it was not fully realized as the architects had intended, Narkomfin is nonetheless relevant to The Albert with respect to its programme and design (Buchli, An Archeology of Socialism 1999, 101).
Moriyama House and Share Yaraicho, on the other hand, are contemporary examples located in Tokyo, Japan. In terms of design and function, these two projects are unique. Consideration for broader movements in Japanese society with regards to domestic space and the social structure of households, however, reveals key similarities, the most notable of which include the architects’ treatment of common space and the home in the context of the city. Through this discussion, concepts from Japanese city planning theory and practice are introduced, specifically the spatial concept of *roji* and the social concepts of *idobatakaigi*. These have played a pivotal role in the development of the design of common spaces in The Albert. Finally, Moriyama House and Share Yaraicho are included here as they exemplify core values of Japanese minimalism.

33 The terms *roji* and *idobatakaigi* make reference to the built form of communities in Japan during the Edo period (1603-1868). *Roji* refers to the lanes between row houses. In many ways, these lanes were a semi-private extension of the private dwelling. The term *idobatakaigi*, which translates to English literally as “gathering at the well”, describes the social activity associated with *roji*. According to Evelyn Shulz, who studies Japanese urbanist discourse, contemporary city planners are revisiting these historic concepts in contemporary community planning (Shulz 2014, 15-19, 21, 158).
The Narkomfin Communal House was commissioned in 1928 by STROIKOM, the newly formed Soviet state’s Building Committee as a part of their campaign to resolve two issues; first, a housing shortage in urban centres and second, the desire to reform domestic daily life (Fernández Per, Mozas and Ollero 2013, 66, Buchli 1998, 160-161). The project was designed by Moisei Ginzburg, who was a member of the Constructivist group known as the Union of Contemporary Architects, or more commonly, the OSA – an acronym for the group’s name in Russian (Buchli 1999, 63).

At the time it was constructed, the mid-rise complex of three buildings that made up the Narkomfin Communal House included dedicated spaces for cooking, dining, laundry, and recreation, as well as private living quarters. The architect’s design also included a fourth building, where children were to be housed apart from their parents, but it was never built (Buchli 1999, 67-69).

Private living quarters were confined to the larger, main structure on the site (see figure 18). Within this building, residents would live in one of four standardized styles of living units. Each of the four styles was associated with a corresponding lifestyle that ranged from the “bourgeois” K-style units, which were similar to conventional single-family apartments, to the F-style units and dormitories, which were designed to fully engage residents in communal life. The architects included this range in styles because Narkomfin was designed as a transitional housing project where people would graduate from conventional pre-revolutionary housing to the newly-
conceived model of Soviet-style communal housing (Fernández Per, Mozas and Ollero 2013, 73, 87, 91, Buchli 1999, 67). In contrast to the Dom Kommuna, an entirely communal housing model developed in the same period, this model of housing was known as a “Social Condenser” (Buchli 1999, 67).

Because their similarities to the living units in The Albert, the analysis that follows will focus on the design of the F-style units when private living spaces are discussed. These small units featured a washroom, a living space and a sleeping loft as well as a small kitchenette that was only adequate for reheating food and preparing hot beverages (Fernández Per, Mozas and Ollero 2013, 90). As Buchli explains, the architect’s programme for these units was intentionally austere so that residents would be compelled to leave their units to make use of communal facilities in the adjacent building or to spend time outdoors (Buchli 1999, 69, 71-72).

It is difficult to measure the success of Narkomfin as a communal housing project because it never truly functioned as one. Narkomfin stemmed from ideas about domestic life that were held by the State’s Central Committee and state agencies such as STROIKOM in the mid to late 1920s (Buchli 1999, 63). By the time it was constructed, attitudes towards domestic reform had changed considerably as Lenin’s death and the transition to Stalin’s regime put an end to progressive housing research. This meant that the interiors of the F-style units had to be modified to accommodate kitchens. This possibility was accounted for in the original design by Ginzburg, who had designed the F-style units in such a way that a small kitchenette based on the design of the Frankfurt Kitchen could be installed (Fernández Per, Mozas and Ollero 2013, 34).

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34 In the lexicon of Soviet reformers, the “Social Condenser” is a housing typology devised by Soviet architects to progressively facilitate a change in the domestic lives of citizens towards Soviet ideals. Fernández Per, et al. summarize its purpose by stating: “The architecture of the Narkomfin is conceived with the capacity to modify social behaviour, condensing the spaces with an individual use and expanding those with a collective use” (Fernández Per, Mozas and Ollero 2013, 73).
As a result, the Narkomfin Communal House underwent considerable transformation to suit the needs of inhabitants who could no longer depend on the building’s communal facilities for necessities such as meals (Fernández Per, Mozas and Ollero 2013, 110-111).

By the mid-1930s, an addition to the building was constructed below the so-called “living block”, adding a few more apartments to the building, which remain to this day. Since it was built, many modifications have been made to the site but little has been done to maintain them (Buchli 1998, 177-178). In spite of the project’s failure as communal housing, its influence on the design of a variety of well-known projects is widely acknowledged; one such example is Le Corbusier’s Unité d’Habitation (French 2008, 52, 82, Fernández Per, Mozas and Ollero 2013, 98, Yi 2012, para. 3, Buchli 1998, 160).

The building is still standing. Many of its apartments are currently being used as studio spaces and informal housing. Jeopardized by its poor condition, there has been some speculation about the historic building’s future.  

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35 The building and some of its current occupants have been featured on popular lifestyle blog Freun von Freunden (Savina 2015). The living and work environments of selected occupants were the subject of a documentary project by a group of photographers and videographers (Spinelli, et al. n.d.).

ANALYSIS

The Narkomfin Communal House reflects the Communist Party’s interest in gendered work and gendered space in the home, and as such, it relates closely to the discussion of these concepts in the Literary Analysis (Chapter 3). It also demonstrates how the promotion of an aesthetic, in this case minimalism, has been used in support of a political agenda.

Designed to serve as a medium for radical social reform, the configuration of communal spaces alongside private living quarters resulted from Ginzburg and the OSA’s interpretation of the Communist Party’s top-down approach to the reformation of byt – a term appropriated by the Soviet leadership to describe ‘daily life’ (Buchli 1999, 23-27, 63). As Buchli notes, the kitchen, or more figuratively, the hearth, was a primary concern to reformers:

Ideally the dismantling of the ‘hearth’ would involve the total emancipation of women from their exploited positions within the patriarchal petit-bourgeois family, just as the proletariat would be emancipated from the oppression of capitalism. Women could then join men as the equal citizens of a new socialist egalitarian society (Buchli 1999, 26).

While the preceding quote outlines the potential of communal kitchens as a means to foster gender equity, communal kitchens, among other shared spaces, also had another purpose. The Soviet regime regarded the privacy that conventional housing models afforded residents a threat to the success of political and social reform. As Fernández Per, Mozas and Ollero point out, mandating communal housing projects with limited private quarters created a dependency on shared facilities, making it possible for the state to surveil its citizens (Fernández Per, Mozas and Ollero 2013, 99).

The inclusion of shared spaces in The Albert, by contrast, is intended to facilitate community building and improvements to quality of life through the economic use of space as well as the sharing of work and resources among residents while providing them with ample
private space. For this reason, the private living units in The Albert must not be viewed as similarly politically charged spaces.

In his examination of Soviet material culture that paralleled the development of Narkomfin, Buchli also highlights some of the efforts made to promote social reform by influencing the design and decoration of domestic spaces in the 1920s and onward. At that time, a preoccupation of Soviet domestic reformers was the promotion of an appropriate aesthetic; this information was disseminated in publications targeted at homemakers. While much of what he discusses seems prescriptive, rigid and, in some instances, extreme, some of their guidelines offer a very practical way of looking at the contents of one’s home. Politically motivated directives aside, minimalism, efficiency, and cleanliness were encouraged (Buchli 1999, 41-42). For instance, Buchli explains that furniture, particularly built-in furnishings, favoured by reformers was simple; the desired aesthetic was described as including “nothing superfluous”. In terms of material choices, wood that could develop a patina with use was preferred over veneers, which would not wear as well. Decorations were also contentious and reformers encouraged the use of plants over decorative objects and textiles (Buchli 1999, 43, 45).

In the design of private dwelling units for The Albert, the extensive use of built-in furniture may be seen as too prescriptive. Instead, residents will only be provided with necessary fixtures, such as a kitchenette and storage. This is in the interest of accommodating the diverse preferences of residents and the innate desire to engage in placemaking. The selection of materials for the proposed design was also influenced in part by the logic of Soviet reformers; this will be addressed in more detail in the Design Proposal (Chapter 5).
MORIYAMA HOUSE

LOCATION: Tokyo, Japan
DATE: 2005
ARCHITECTS: Office of Ryue Nishizawa

Although Moriyama House is not a communal or collective housing project per se, architect Ryue Nishizawa’s innovative design for this housing complex serves as a seminal example of how common space can be used to facilitate community building among residents in an urban context. Commissioned by Yasuo Moriyama, for whom the project is named, Moriyama House is a complex of ten small structures spread out on two lots in the suburban Ohta-ku area of Tokyo (Kinse Hohl 2007).

Though these structures are often referred to as single function rooms, this oversimplifies the complexity of the design. Described by the architect as a model of housing in flux, the design of the project is such that Moriyama, who lives in the complex, can choose the extent to which the structures are used as his private dwelling or as rental housing for up to six tenants. When Moriyama House is used as a private dwelling, each of the structures theoretically becomes a single function room; when it is used as rental housing, each of the structures becomes a stand-alone dwelling unit. This understanding of the project’s programme is somewhat complicated by the fact that some of the structures are multi-storey and therefore have more than one room. Overall, the premise of the project was to deconstruct and redistribute the spaces associated with a conventional home on the site (El Croquis 2004, 286).

Since it was constructed, Moriyama House has only functioned as rental housing. In this state, the six largest structures on the site have served as individual dwelling units, one for Moriyama and each of the other five tenants. All of the dwelling units have a small kitchen and a
private bathroom with the exception of one of the dwelling units, where the bathroom is located in an outbuilding. Moriyama’s unit also differs slightly in that the architect included a kitchen and a bathroom in two smaller structures adjacent to his dwelling unit. Though it is considered to be a part of Moriyama’s living space, the remaining structure on the site is a quasi-communal gathering space for residents (Kinse Hohle 2007, 148, El Croquis 2004, 364). In an interview about the project, Moriyama states: “This space gives you the freedom to do anything you like, and it makes you want to” (Kinse Hohle 2007, 148).

The preeminent feature of Nishizawa’s design is the open space between the dwelling units and its significance to the day-to-day life of the project’s inhabitants. This outdoor space – which is the only truly communal space in the complex – is of particular interest and its relevance to the proposed design for The Albert will be discussed in the analysis that follows.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that at the time the Dwell article about the project was published, the author noted that only one of the complex’s current residents was not employed in the fields of architecture or design (Kinse Hohle 2007, 150). Since Moriyama House and Share Yaraicho are both home to people working in these fields, it is clear that the design industry has an affinity for non-traditional housing.

ANALYSIS

The relevance of Moriyama House to this project lies in its spatial attributes. The architect’s arrangement of dwelling units and peripheral structures on the site creates a series of open spaces so that each dwelling unit has immediate access to garden space. Though they appear to be an unbroken space in plan, it is often implied that each unit has its own garden (see figure 21). For instance, in the El Croquis article about the project, the architect himself refers to them explicitly as six, separate gardens (Fitz 2005, para. 1, El Croquis 2004, 364). This balance between private and semi-private space within the complex plays into the social objectives of housing projects with communal elements; as Kinse Hohle notes: “Each unit has its own outdoor space, but none are physically bounded, facilitating spontaneous interaction…” (Kinse Hohle 2007, 150).

The archetype for this unique arrangement of structures on the site is the urban form of historic areas of Tokyo. This issue has been discussed and interpreted by a number of authors who have written about Moriyama House, among other contemporary Japanese housing developments with communal or collective elements. Because of the open space between dwelling units and the resulting connection to the urban fabric, which produces a unique relationship between public and private space, Hildner uses Moriyama house to, in her words, “demonstrate several design considerations in Japanese architecture today”. Among these, she suggests, is that “The focus is no longer the compactness of the building and its function but rather its networking and structure” (Hildner 2014, 8).

Nishizawa’s configuration of domestic spaces at Moriyama House stimulates thinking about the ways in which the architecture of a housing project can facilitate community building.
Whereas the design of Moriyama House makes use of outdoor circulation space between standalone units as an extension of private living quarters and as an opportunity for residents to socialize, in a single building, such as the Royal Albert Arms Hotel, this might not be as effective. For instance, Fromm’s post-occupancy evaluation of Foe Ooi Leeuw, a collaborative housing project in Amsterdam for Chinese seniors, indicates that enlarged interior circulation spaces does not necessarily make them suitable or well-used social spaces. Rather, her study indicates that common rooms where residents could gather to socialize, cook or dine together proved to be more desirable (Fromm 2014, 386-387). As such, circulation spaces are not emphasized as social spaces in the proposed design for The Albert.

Fromm’s evaluation of Foe Ooi Leeuw also reveals that features such as windows into dwelling units along circulation spaces tended not to appeal to residents, many of whom opted to cover them with curtains for privacy (Fromm 2014, 386). The need for privacy was carefully considered in the design for Moriyama House as windows on each of the buildings within the complex do not line up with one another (Imamura 2008, para. 3). This has influenced the design of circulation spaces in The Albert, as sidelight windows will be used along the corridors where the dwelling units are located to admit some natural light, but they will not line up so as to assure resident privacy.

With regards to the interiors of the dwelling units at Moriyama House, a survey of how each of the spaces has been referred to in various publications is indicative of how these spaces are used. In Dwell, living quarters are referred to as “multipurpose” rooms, presumably referring to how many different activities these rooms can accommodate (e.g. sleeping, eating, working,

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36 The design for Foe Ooi Leeuw features corridors that are nearly 10 feet wide; they are modeled after hutongs, a Chinese term used to describe the narrow lanes that serve as social spaces between dwellings in Chinese cities (Fromm 2014, 386). In this regard, hutongs are similar to roji.
socializing) (Kinse Hohle 2007, 153). By omitting walls and function specific rooms, the architect has devised a complex of buildings that are full of flexible space. One of the residents summarizes this succinctly: “Outside the compound, our awareness is different. Within, we can concentrate on our own realm. This is a pure white space” (Kinse Hohle 2007, 154). In common spaces, this notion of purity is carried over from this precedent into the design of The Albert so that the focus of the community will be on the activities that are shared among residents rather than on the design of the environment they are occupying. Similarly, the private dwelling units are kept spare so that residents can personalize them as they see fit.

Finally, unlike the other two precedents analyzed here, the residents of Moriyama House do not rely on shared spaces for food preparation or consumption. Instead, each of the dwelling units is equipped with a small kitchenette. Based on photographs and accompanying captions published in Dwell, it appears as though residents gather to share meals, but rather than cooking together, they have food delivered (Kinse Hohle 2007). As such, it is safe to assume that even though the complex of buildings does not have dedicated spaces for food preparation and consumption, these activities are still an integral part of community life.
SHARE YARAICHO

- LOCATION: Tokyo, Japan
- DATE: 2012
- ARCHITECTS: Satoko Shinohara and Ayano Uchimura

Share Yaraicho is a three-storey communal house located on a narrow street in Tokyo’s Shinjuku District. The house, which accommodates seven people, features a shared kitchen and dining area, bathrooms, workshop, and rooftop garden (see figure 24). According to Salvator-John A. Liotta, Share Yaraicho is the first purpose-built communal house in Tokyo and, as with The Albert, this project responds to a variety of issues faced by contemporary society and cities. In Japan, these include the burgeoning demand for shared housing, energy shortages, and an increased environmental consciousness (Liotta 2013, para. 1-2). Like Moriyama House, Shinohara and Uchimura’s design for Share Yaraicho provides insight into some of the practical and aesthetic considerations for the design of a communal home.

Hildner’s spatial analysis of the project indicates that approximately half of the building’s total floor area is devoted to communal space (Hildner 2014, 59). The role of shared space in strengthening relationships between residents is acknowledged by Liotta (Liotta 2013, para. 4) as well as Hildner, who states that “…main common zones considerably expand the living space of each resident, and the expense of cleaning and maintaining the rooms and facilities is shared by all. The integration of workshops and an herb garden reflects the zeitgeist of the moment, but it also draws on a vision of urban living that is at once autonomous and rooted in community” (Hildner 2014, 63).

It is worth mentioning that the communal workshop is an essential resource for residents, as it is where many of the furnishings seen throughout the home are built (Shinkenchiku 2012).
As Hildner notes, this housing typology tends to attract younger residents, many of whom are designers or architects by trade; for this reason, it is likely that this space will continue to serve as a locus for outfitting and customizing the home (Hildner 2014, 60).

The design is characterized by an innovative arrangement of partitions and the use of translucent materials. Stretched across the façade is a translucent plastic sheet that admits a considerable amount of natural light. The façade casts a pleasing, white glow on the interior during the day; at night, when the interior is illuminated, the façade likely projects a warm glow out onto the street. It is punctuated by two windows, located on opposite corners of the building, and a number of zippers. On the main level, one of these zippers serves as the main entrance to the building from the street. While these openings help strengthen the connection between the interior and the street, Liotta notes that they also serve another very practical purpose: control over ventilation (Liotta 2013, para. 3).

The street entrance leads into the shared workshop – a bright, sizeable space both in terms of floor area and height, as the common areas and living quarters on the upper levels are set back from the façade. Louvered translucent polycarbonate panels are used in the construction of interior walls overlooking the workshop.

A communal kitchen and dining room occupy most of the third floor. Considering seven people share these spaces, they seem quite small and austere by North American standards. As was noted in the previous analysis, this could be attributed to cultural differences.

ANALYSIS

Shinohara and Uchimura’s design for Share Yaraicho is characterized by the building’s relationship to its surroundings. As was noted in the introduction, laneway, or roji, have historically played an integral role in the social vitality of Japanese cities. In his article about the project, Liotta explains that the neighbourhood in which it is located was developed in the Edo period. He adds that the area has retained much of its historic character and commends the architects for having considered traditional principles of Japanese architecture in their design with regards to materiality and a connection to a building’s context, in this case, a laneway (Liotta 2013, para. 5).

The building’s adjustable and translucent façade provides residents with the flexibility to control privacy while at the same time animating the historic streetscape by allowing passers-by to see into the home. To borrow a term from Jane Jacobs, this also enables residents to engage in “do-it-yourself surveillance” (Jacobs 1961, 39). While this is a worthwhile consideration in any neighbourhood, facilitating this through design would be of particular benefit in an area such as the Exchange District, where the building stock – primarily former warehouse buildings – does not necessarily afford residences or their residents to have much of a street presence.

As with Share Yaraicho, the Royal Albert Arms Hotel is a narrow building in a dense neighbourhood. The strategic use of translucent materials in Share Yaraicho serves as a helpful reference for the design of The Albert’s interior, particularly in areas of the building that currently lack natural light, such as its circulation spaces.

Photographs of occupied living units typically depict a bed, a desk and perhaps some shelves. Since residents cook, eat, bathe, socialize, and to a certain degree, work in shared spaces,
private quarters are likely reserved for sleeping, relaxation, and work. While the dwelling units in the proposed design for The Albert include private washrooms and a kitchenette, Share Yaraicho’s private rooms, which range from approximately 140 to 167 square feet, demonstrate how little private space is required in communal housing (Hildner 2014, 59). The primacy of shared space and amenities over private quarters at Share Yaraicho highlights the value placed on communal activity among residents and is therefore an example of how architecture supports the generation of “social heat” to aid in establishing a stronger sense of community.

A survey of photographs of both the common spaces and the private living quarters suggests that the pared down material palette, which relies heavily on plywood, serves as a sort of blank canvas for residents to customize. The inclusion of a workshop for furniture building in the programme conveys that, much like Herman Hertzberger’s design for the Centraal Beheer office building, the design of Share Yaraicho is open-ended; it is complete only when occupied and is always receptive to personalization as an act of placemaking.

**CHAPTER SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The selected design precedents analyzed in this chapter provide insight into the arrangement of private and shared domestic spaces in alternative housing models. Each in its own right represents an example of practical utopian thinking that reflects the social, political, and environmental circumstances of their day.

In the case of Narkomfin, design decisions were rooted in top-down social and political schemes to reform society. The Japanese examples, by contrast, are a product of progressive thinking and experimentation that Hildner attributes to young architects seeking to improve
living conditions in a country where conventional housing typologies are rapidly becoming out-dated (Hildner, About This Book: Architecture for Living Together 2014, 6-7).

Each of these projects influences the design of The Albert in a number of ways both with respect to programme and aesthetic. Distinct from one another and from the proposed design for The Albert, they nonetheless inspire an approach to the design of an interior for successful community life.
5 - DESIGN PROPOSAL
**INTRODUCTION**

A fundamental challenge in life is achieving both the means of survival and a holistic approach to care of self and of others; this is the “bread and roses” referred to by Oppenheim in the poem cited at the beginning of this document. Since this duality is entwined in daily routines and by extension, the built environment, the informed interior designer must ensure that it meets both the physical and emotional needs of the user.

Based on these needs, this chapter presents the proposed design for The Albert. The design process began with a look at the ways in which interior design can facilitate a cooperative lifestyle, improve quality of life, and build a stronger community through the adaptive reuse of the Royal Albert Arms Hotel as a communal housing project that is centered around its kitchen and dining spaces.

With these objectives in mind, the proposed design is rooted first and foremost in the literary analysis, which raised a number of key considerations for how this adaptive reuse project could take shape. It looked at the evolution of communal housing and how it relates to utopian thought. Much of this related to the recognition and rejection of the long-standing patriarchal structures that are embedded in the built environment. The literature analysis also concluded with an examination of some of the ways in which individuals become attached to the spaces and communities that they inhabit.

Building on some of the ideas discussed in the literary analysis, the design precedent analysis highlighted selected approaches to the organization of domestic space. The two Japanese examples, in particular, tackle some of the realities and concerns of contemporary city life. The plans, renderings, and accompanying text on the following pages synthesize the information in
the preceding chapters to not only present a more equitable model of housing but also one possible future for Winnipeg’s stock of ageing SRO hotels.

As it has been established earlier in this document, The Albert is proposed as a communal housing project comprised of a series of spaces located along a spectrum from shared to private. The Albert’s main shared spaces - the dining room, kitchen, and courtyard – are located on the main level, removed from the predominantly private spaces concentrated on the building’s upper levels (see figure 28). These include the private dwelling units and the semi-private amenity spaces, such as the playroom, library, and media room (see figures 29-31). The building’s basement contains additional shared facilities, such as the kitchen annex and the laundry room, as well as storage lockers for the building’s residents (see figure 27). Finally, a greenhouse has been added to the building’s rooftop as an additional shared space for residents. This amenity is also intended to serve as a community gathering space (see figure 32).37

The organization of these spaces in the proposed design is in keeping with the original layout of the building. By making use of the building’s spatial organization, the design for The Albert draws on the inherent similarities between the hotel typology and models of communal housing inspired by the ideas put forward by utopian and feminist thinkers. These include Charles Fourier’s “Phalansteries” with their communal kitchens and dining rooms and, more closely, Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s apartment hotel concept, a model of housing that sought to merge the conveniences of a hotel with housing to create a more supportive domestic environment.

37 See Appendix B for annotated floor plans.
FIGURE 27: Basement – The Albert's basement houses a number of shared spaces that support a variety of aspects of community life on upper floors. Directly accessible from the kitchen above, the kitchen annex is a space for food storage. The building's shared laundry room and storage lockers are also located on this level. The space below the grocery store could be designed to serve as a stock room and office for the store above. See Appendix B for detailed plans with measurements.

SCALE: 1/16” = 1'0”
FIGURE 28: Level 1 – The Albert occupies the majority of the building’s main floor. By removing the addition on the front of the building, the openings on the building’s façade have been restored to the original configuration, which featured two entrances. In the proposed design, the entrance on the left leads to a small grocery store that will provide area residents with healthy, affordable staples. The entrance to the right opens into The Albert’s lobby.

SCALE: 1/16" = 1’0”
FIGURE 29: Level 2 – “Yellow” – There are four dwelling units on each of the upper floors, three of the units have space for one bed and the fourth has two bedrooms. Each floor also includes a guest room. The second floor’s shared amenity space is a playroom.

SCALE: 1/16" = 1’0"
FIGURE 30: Level 3 – “Green” – The coloured marmoleum flooring on each of the upper levels distinguishes them from one another. The shared amenity space on the third floor is a library where residents can read, study, and borrow books.

SCALE: 1/16” = 1’0”
FIGURE 31: Level 4 – “Blue” – The shared amenity space on the fourth floor is a media room where residents can gather to watch television or movies and listen to music.

SCALE: 1/16" = 1'0"
FIGURE 32: Roof—The rooftop greenhouse is The Albert’s primary community outreach space. It is included in the design to work in tandem with the grocery store on the main level to serve as a Community Food Centre (see definition on p. 24). For the residents, the rooftop is a space for food production as well as recreation. For corresponding building sections, see figure 33 for A and figure 34 for B.

SCALE: 1/16” = 1’0”
FIGURE 33: Longitudinal section of The Albert. The division of public, semi-private, and private spaces in The Albert is similar to a hotel. Though it is only accessible to residents, the main floor is considered the most public, whereas shared, semi-private amenities are located near the main stairs at the front of the building. These are located alongside the building’s private dwelling units and guest rooms. Not to scale.

FIGURE 34: Transverse section of The Albert. On the main level, The Albert occupies the spaces along and to the right of the building’s axis. On upper floors, a double-loaded corridor provides access to the dwelling units. Not to scale.
DESIGN PROPOSAL

Recognizing the deteriorated condition of the Royal Albert Arms Hotel, implementation of the proposed design would necessitate considerable renovation. The exterior of the building is protected under local heritage by-laws, and as such, few changes have been proposed for the building’s shell. Though the interior is not constrained by this designation, heritage considerations will nonetheless have implications for the layout and design of the interior. This is a choice made by the designer to respect the building’s cultural value in a manner that is guided by the following statement from Graeme Brooker and Sally Stone’s seminal text What is Interior Design?:

The cultural value attributed to an existing building is harder to discern. This will involve many subjective things such as its history, its importance, the quality and type of the construction, and even the affection felt by the surrounding community for the building. All of these values may be subjective and not easy to reach consensus upon, therefore the judgment of the designer plays a crucial role in adapting buildings. (Brooker and Stone 2010, 29–30).

With this in mind, the renovation presents the opportunity to remove the addition (see figure 14) on the front of the building, restoring the configuration of openings on the building’s façade to those shown in the original architectural drawings (see figure 35). Recognizing the building’s historic context, few other changes are proposed for the exterior of the building, with the exception of the addition of an enclosed, external staircase at the rear of the building, which is required by the building code (see figure 36).
FIGURE 35: Exterior view of The Albert on Albert Street.
FIGURE 36: Exterior view of The Albert from Arthur Street.
FIGURE 37: Axonometric view of shared spaces located on The Albert’s main level.
The Albert’s principal shared spaces are concentrated on the building’s main floor. In the interest of proposing a design that acknowledges the building’s history, the design of the lobby (see figure 38) and the corridor leading to the shared kitchen and dining room (see figure 39) prominently feature materials that were popular at the turn of the twentieth century. The glazed ceramic tiles in the lobby surrounding the mailboxes reference the tiles commonly used for fire surrounds while the mosaic of reclaimed marble slabs in the corridor alludes to the ornate marble mosaics found in buildings of the same vintage, albeit at an exaggerated scale (Long 1993, 147-149). Subtle design and material references to this era can be seen throughout the building.38

As The Albert’s primary gathering space, the dining room (see figure 40) is designed around Inge Daniels’ idea of “creating social heat”, a placemaking concept that emphasizes community building through communal activity. The communal dining room in tandem with the communal kitchen are the heart of The Albert in the same way that these spaces are central to the communities proposed by utopian thinkers referenced in the literary analysis as well as more contemporary examples such as cohousing. Devoting this much space to “sharing” is a reflection of the community’s political outlook since, as it has been established, using these spaces represents the rejection of societal norms in favour of housing that reflects some of the feminist ideas raised by utopian thought.

Theory aside, the design of the building’s communal spaces was guided in part by Christopher Alexander et al.’s A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction, which emphasizes connectivity between food production and consumption spaces as well as the home’s

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38 See Appendix B for selected materials.
social spaces (Alexander, et al. 1977, 662-663). The authors relate this configuration to the act of dining and its significance as a group activity; on the subject of “Communal Eating” they state: “Without communal eating, no human group can hold together.” As Alexander et al. go on to note, this activity is intrinsically spiritual (Alexander, et al. 1977, 697).

The spiritual aspect of sharing meals is often associated with monasticism in the literature. For instance, in his lecture notes (compiled in the book How to Live Together: Novelistic Simulations of Some Everyday Spaces), theorist Roland Barthes associates communal dining with communion, which he calls a “ritual of inclusion, integration, imitation”; here, Barthes also makes reference to the mealtime rituals of the Benedictine monks (Barthes 2002, 109).

While the ideas and rituals associated with monasticism are relevant to the discussion of shared activities and indeed communal housing as a typology, it should be noted that the concept is also pertinent to the rationalization of an appropriate design aesthetic for this proposal as it is frequently raised in works dealing with minimalism and asceticism in architecture. One such example is Pier Vittorio Aureli’s book Less is Enough, in which the author links asceticism to monasticism to demonstrate how minimalism in architecture can represent the rejection of capitalism (Aureli 2013, 5).

Similarly, Tim Verhetsel, Fatima Pombo, and Hilde Heynen relate the “empty” interior to Constructivist theory in their article Emptiness as Potential. Different Conceptions of the Sober Interior, which dictates that restraint and multi-functionality in design will “lead to new

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39 Aureli’s definition of the term asceticism as it applies to architecture is rooted in the provision of space that facilitates the practice of self-enactment; in more general terms, he summarizes it as such: “Asceticism is thus not just a contemplative condition, or a withdrawal from the world as it is commonly understood, but is, above all, a way to radically question given social and political conditions in a search for a different way to live one’s life” (Aureli 2013, 6-7).
experiences for the user”, thus inducing social reform in support of a collective way of life (Verhetsel, Pombo and Heynen 2013, 32). The implementation of this way of thinking in a Soviet socialist context is evidenced by the design of Narkomfin House, which served as a precedent for the organization of domestic spaces in The Albert.

Returning to the question of an aesthetic strategy for the design of The Albert, however, leads to another aspect of Verhetsel et al.’s examination of “emptiness” – asceticism in traditional Japanese architecture and its influence on contemporary design. In this modality, asceticism is equally a spiritual and philosophical practice that is carried out by the users of a space. Of course, this practice works best in an empty interior because, as the authors point out: “Emptiness can create something, it can give space to new thoughts, new creations. In the daily life the first step towards these possibilities, is the creation of emptiness inside one’s thoughts” (Verhetsel, Pombo and Heynen 2013, 31). Since one of the aims of The Albert as a community is to spur new ways of thinking about housing, the design of its common spaces have been designed around the idea of “emptiness as potential” as introduced by Verhetsel et al. (Verhetsel, Pombo and Heynen 2013).

Design in support of an ascetic lifestyle requires more rigorous consideration of the few furnishings and fixtures that are included in a space. These need to be both in service to the space’s function while also providing social value. Continuing with the theme of “social heat” as the tie that binds the residents of The Albert, lighting and fire or the hearth are integrated into the design.

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40 This practice is known as wabi-sabi, which is rooted in Zen Buddhism. Verhetsel et al. define it as “voluntary poverty” which affords practitioners to focus on “the small daily rituals, acts and views that bring joy to one’s existence”. In design, principals of wabi-sabi are bound to materials that develop patina and an acceptance of imperfections associated with age and inhabitation (Verhetsel, Pombo and Heynen 2013, 31)
While much of Daniels’ discussion of “social heat” is centered on the notion that shared activity creates a desirable, homely domestic atmosphere, it also touches on the influence of elements in an interior around which people gather; among those are sources of literal heat, such as fires, and sources of visual “warmth”, such as lighting (Daniels 2015, 52-53). The significance of these elements in a design is also raised by Alexander et al., who suggest that a fireplace be included in the design of homes because it “helps to create the spirit of the common areas at the heart” (Alexander, et al. 1977, 839). They go on to advise that it be located so that it “knits together the social spaces and rooms around it, giving them each a glimpse of the fire” (Alexander, et al. 1977, 842). The authors also suggest that dining spaces should be designed around a singular source of light that serves as a focal point as the warm glow will unite the group of diners (Alexander, et al. 1977, 844-845).

Accordingly, a fireplace divides The Albert’s dining room into two areas: the dining space, immediately adjacent to the kitchen, and a lounge at the front of the building (see figures 41-42). The biofuel fireplace that separates these spaces is constructed out of expanded steel mesh on a metal frame around a glass enclosure so that it does not obstruct the view between these key social spaces. By forgoing a more traditional design for the fireplace, this design reduces the fireplace to the screen and as such, avoids replicating the design of a more historically appropriate fireplace which, depending on the degree to which it is ornamented, is associated with status (Long 1993, 104, 111).

The Albert’s communal kitchen occupies the back of the building; this space is the most important among the shared spaces in the building as it represents the consolidation of domestic workspaces to facilitate shared domestic work for twelve households. As discussed in the literary analysis, communal kitchens and the sharing of food preparation among residents has
considerable implications for how domestic space can be interpreted as gendered; this configuration disrupts the patriarchal organization of domestic space.

The design of the kitchen is organized by activity (see figures 44-45). A servery occupies the space closest to the entrance to the kitchen from the corridor as well as the dining room. This is where prepared foods and beverages are available to residents, away from the kitchen’s workspaces. Food preparation takes place at the cooking stations that occupy most of the communal kitchen’s floor space. A dishwashing station is located along the north wall nearest to the dining room. Since suppliers will deliver food directly to The Albert, the community requires ample food storage. Fresh foods and frequently used foodstuffs are stored in the main kitchen, and larger quantities of pantry staples and fresh foods can be stored in the basement kitchen annex.

Much like the examples discussed in the literary analysis, The Albert is designed to provide all of the amenities associated with conventional housing, albeit in a more social context. Additional common amenities included in the proposed design are: a playroom for resident children and their guests on the second floor, a library on the third floor, and a media room on the fourth floor (see figures 48-51). These shared amenities not only contribute to building a vibrant community from a social standpoint but they also allow residents to share many of the things that these spaces contain, such as toys, books, and electronics. This in turn makes it possible for residents to consume less on an individual basis, which as Verhetsel et al. note, is a form of minimalism that supports sustainability (Verhetsel, Pombo and Heynen 2013, 35).
Additional shared facilities in the building’s basement include a laundry room, bike storage, and a furniture library, where residents can donate and borrow household items for their dwelling units.
Finally, the largest of the building’s shared spaces is the greenhouse and rooftop terrace. The roof provides residents with outdoor space for recreation as well as space for year round food production. The greenhouse also has the potential to serve as a community classroom, making The Albert a node in Winnipeg’s growing alternative food system.
FIGURE 38: The Albert’s lobby features glazed tiles reminiscent of the tile fire surrounds popular in the early twentieth century.
FIGURE 39: The corridor leading to the dining room and kitchen from the lobby features a mosaic of reclaimed marble inspired by the patchwork landscape of the prairies.
FIGURE 40: The Albert’s dining room facing the back of the building. Pictured in the foreground is the communal dining table. The chandelier is designed by Andrea Claire Studio.
FIGURE 41: Lounge area in the dining room facing the front of the building.

FIGURE 42: Lounge area in the dining room facing the back of the building. The frame of the fireplace in the background, which separates the dining area from the lounge, makes use of the same design language as the building’s curtain walls.
FIGURE 43: Courtyard off of the kitchen and dining room. Residents of The Albert can use this space for dining in warm weather. It also serves as a secure, outdoor recreation space off of The Albert’s two primary shared spaces.
FIGURE 44: The Albert’s communal kitchen features three cooking stations where residents will prepare the various dishes served at mealtimes.
FIGURE 45: View of communal kitchen facing the front of the building. The materials used in the kitchen, most notably the quarry tile floor and tiled walls, reference the design of early twentieth century kitchens.
FIGURE 48: Axonometric view of common amenities on Levels 2-4. The coloured flooring in the corridors and amenity spaces helps residents and guests differentiate between each of the levels.
FIGURE 50: Library
FIGURE 51: Media Room
FIGURE 52: Axonometric view of the roof.
FIGURE 53: View of the building’s rooftop garden and shaded seating area off of the greenhouse. Both the roof’s indoor and outdoor spaces will play an integral role in day-to-day life at The Albert for residents. It will also serve as a venue for education and community outreach events.
FIGURE 54: The Albert’s rooftop sunroom.
PRIVATE SPACE

The design of the private dwelling units (see figure 55) on The Albert’s upper floors draws primarily on the examples discussed in the precedent analysis. Narkomfin House, Moriyama House, and Share Yaraicho all demonstrate how private living space can be reduced considerably when residents of multi-unit housing share amenities and necessary domestic spaces. The Albert’s dwelling units are most similar to those in Narkomfin House and Moriyama House because they include a small kitchenette where residents can make tea or a snack as well as private bathrooms. Translucent glazing is used to bring natural light into the bathroom and the hall; this is a strategy employed by the architects of Share Yaraicho to illuminate the interior of a building on a narrow lot (see figures 56-60).

Like The Albert’s shared spaces, the design of the private dwelling units is intended to provide residents with the potential to inhabit them as they see fit. This builds on Verhetsel et al.’s discussion of Japanese asceticism discussed earlier in this chapter, as well as some of the concepts discussed in the Placemaking and Community Building section of the Literary Analysis such as placemaking through personalization as seen in Herman Hertzberger’s structuralist design for the Centraal Beheer office building.
FIGURE 55: Axonometric view of a typical dwelling unit.
FIGURE 56: Typical Unit – Kitchenette. The kitchenette is located along one wall of each unit’s “service core” which contains the bathroom. These service cores are designed to fit into each of the building’s dwelling units so as to take advantage of more economical, pre-fabricated modular components. The desk in the background and the closet (not pictured) are similarly designed.
FIGURE 57: Typical Unit - Living Space.
FIGURE 58: Typical Unit - Sleeping Space. Inspired by Shaker interiors, a peg rail is incorporated into the design of the dwelling unit to provide extra storage or to display belongings.
FIGURE 59: Typical Unit – Bathroom.

FIGURE 60: Typical Unit - Roll-in shower. The bathrooms in the dwelling units are spacious and accessible. Among other items available in the basement furniture library, residents with young children can borrow a changing table if needed.
DESIGN ELEMENTS

The design presented on the preceding pages takes a minimalist, pared down approach. The development of an aesthetic strategy was guided by two primary considerations, the first of which was to explore the potential of asceticism and minimalism in design as a reflection of the project’s political outlook. The second consideration relates to ideas discussed in the Gendered Spaces section of the Literary Analysis and supports the minimal approach taken insofar as it is concerned with the minimization of elements in a design that tend to evoke longstanding associations between femininity, the domestic realm, and interiors as outlined by design historian Penny Sparke and feminist geographers Mona Domosh and Joni Seager. Among the themes explored in their work on gendered space is the question of how to read the domestic interior as a conglomeration of gendered elements. As was discussed in the Literary Analysis, this reading begins with the spaces themselves but, as the authors posit, the gendering of spaces is multilayered, as the treatment of surfaces, the design of fixtures, the addition of furnishings, and so forth, serve to riddle the interior with gendered symbols (Sparke 1995, Domosh and Seager 2001, 1-20, 24-28).

Historically, decorating one’s home has been bound to the gendered notions of “good taste” and “domesticity”. In the literature, these concepts are linked to the proliferation of consumer goods for the home as well as literature on homemaking that began during the Victorian era. By some, the practice of decorating as an aspect of homemaking is considered oppressive because of its strong ties to patriarchy and capitalism (Sparke 1995, Domosh and Seager 2001). As such, the design of The Albert errs on the side of minimalist design.
Aesthetics are not, however, the primary focus of this project. Rather, it is a project that has focused on the building’s programme and, in many respects, the reorganization of domestic space in the utopian tradition. At the conclusion of this design proposal, it is then necessary to return to Ernest J. Green’s analysis of the architecture of utopian communities, which identifies a set of elements that characterize and add meaning to their built form (Green 1993). As indicated in the literary analysis, these elements can be adapted to interior design.

The first, boundaries, are interpreted as walls; the design of The Albert makes use of glazing in the place of solid walls wherever possible to create a connection to the street and between spaces within the building. In doing so, the boundaries of the building are visually permeable. Drawing on the research of Yaacov Oved, Green notes that this is a common design characteristic in socialist communes which “needed to deemphasize the boundaries to influence the outside world by serving as a model” (Green 1993, 6).

Likewise, glazing is featured at the building’s gateways, or openings to make them more inviting. The design of common corridors throughout the building feature colourful flooring materials, emphasizing their significance as the intermediary spaces between the building’s common spaces, or nodes. According to Green, the nodes, interpreted here as rooms, are said to facilitate social activity among residents in utopian projects (Green 1993, 7-8). This is certainly true in the design for The Albert since the design of common spaces is distinctly different from the dwelling units and are designed with the notion of “social heat” in mind.

Lastly, of all of the elements that are characteristic of utopian communities discussed by Green, the garden, or in this case the greenhouse, is the most significant. As Green observes “The garden is evidence of collective effort and meets needs for aesthetic activity” (Green 1993,
9). This is a statement that can be understood to mean that a healthy community, much like a thriving garden, depends on the work of many hands.

CHAPTER SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The design proposed in this chapter is rooted in a synthesis of the theories and design precedents examined in the preceding chapters. This chapter introduced the concepts of asceticism and minimalism as they relate to the aesthetic and the political outlook of The Albert. The presentation of the design was organized from shared to private space, an order that was based on the building’s original use as a hotel.

In keeping with the use of photography as a means of developing an understanding of the built environment in the Site and Building Analysis (Chapter 2), the renderings on the preceding pages make extensive use of the camera tool in Building Information Modeling (BIM) software. The design process was also driven in large part by the ability to position the camera in digital space as if the designer, and indeed photographer, was in the space. From the standpoint of a designer, this functionality holds great potential for the refinement of design. For a designer whose work is informed in large part by their photographic practice, this affords the opportunity to seek out and create visual interest as well as continuity in the composition of design elements.
6 - CONCLUSION
In discourse concerned with the development of cities there is an inclination to focus on the exterior, however, the significance of the domestic interior must not be overlooked. For example, as demonstrated in the literary analysis, interiors can play a role in shaping and strengthening communities and food systems. Furthermore, in thinking about domestic space in the context of the contemporary North American city, much of the research cited underscores a need to dismantle longstanding patriarchal structures by rethinking and restructuring the built environment that, without intervention, will continue to reflect and reinforce inequities. To overcome this the interior design profession must, alongside the various disciplines engaged with city building, commit to taking an interdisciplinary approach that is critical of the status quo. This call to take a more politicized approach to design practice should not be seen as a burden; as Edwards notes, engagement with theory from various disciplines has the potential to empower the interior design profession (Edwards 2011, 7-8).

The proposed design for The Albert is the product of an interdisciplinary approach to interior design practice, and for this reason, it is worth returning to the questions set out in the Introduction (Chapter 1) to reflect on the research and design process. They are as follows:

i. In what ways can gender geography and utopian concepts inform the reorganization of domestic space?

Gender geography and utopian theory are two fields of study concerned with the politics of space. Moreover, both have a keen interest in spurring social change. As this question implies, the programme for The Albert is rooted in a more theoretical understanding of space. By identifying how conventional domestic space reflects inequitable patriarchal and capitalist values, scholarly and literary works in these fields indicate that these systems have not generated an equitable or supportive built environment. These works also draw attention to the need for closer
examination of the association between space and activity, and consequently, the significance that a space derives from the activity for which it is used.

In the course of the research and design process, it was necessary to recognize that a project like The Albert has two key dimensions: finding ways to reorganize domestic space to reflect a more equitable outlook and finding ways to accept and accommodate nonstandard ways of organizing people. It also became clear that, regardless of architecture, these endeavors cannot succeed without the commitment of a group of likeminded individuals.

ii. How can the provision of communal spaces such as kitchens in a multi-unit residential building improve the quality of life for residents in the context of the city?

Research related to this question focused on the benefits associated with access to communal space in the context of the contemporary North American city; of particular interest was the matter of food access. For residents living at The Albert, research suggests that the building’s communal spaces have the potential to improve quality of life as they are integral to their daily routines and are designed to provide flexibility in terms of use.

The potential of a project like The Albert to engage with the surrounding community is less clear. Fromm’s research on collaborative communities indicates that, if nothing else, this type of housing can “model good neighbouring” (Fromm 2014, 387). Leading by example is a belief commonly held by utopian thinkers. Fromm’s findings suggest that projects like The Albert could inspire curiosity about collective living, and more generally, alternative housing models through visibility and engagement with the surrounding community. This possibility has been accounted for in the proposed design through the inclusion of the rooftop greenhouse and garden as well as the small grocery store on the main level which enable The Albert to interface with the city as a Community Food Centre. For socially-minded designers, this is an
encouraging possibility as it demonstrates how the reorganization of domestic space around communal facilities can incrementally improve quality of life for city dwellers as well as the built form of cities.

iii. *How can the provision of space dedicated to sharing food preparation and meals help foster a sense of community within a multi-unit residential building?*

As established in the preceding chapters, the shared spaces in communal housing projects are reflective of a community’s ethos. For the residents of The Albert, the communal kitchen and dining rooms are the community’s core shared spaces because they reflect the community’s commitment to shared work and shared food on a regular basis.

From a design perspective, findings in the literary analysis demonstrate that in collective housing, the utility of a building’s shared spaces to its residents needs to be balanced with that of the private spaces. In other words, to maximize the use of the building’s shared spaces, the amenities provided in its private spaces must be carefully considered so that, over the course of a day, shared spaces provide the incentive to merge what would be considered twelve households in conventional housing, into one, larger household at mealtimes. Moreover, as was argued in the response to the first question, the provision of shared space is not in itself the panacea for community building. Rather, it is the commitment made by The Albert’s residents to make use of such shared space that will result in the desired sense of community.

Implicit in this question is the need to explore how spaces for sharing food preparation and meals brings about community building in a more abstract sense. The research process led to Inge Daniels’ concept of “social heat” which effectively illustrates how shared activity in a space can generate a sense of home and togetherness (Daniels 2015). Though this concept has its origins in Daniels’ field of research, social anthropology, it is highly transferable to thinking
about collective housing among many other architectural typologies. This is an example of how an interdisciplinary approach to design practice can result in a richer understanding of the relationship between the built environment and human behaviour.

Considering the research and design outcomes of this practicum project raises several new questions and complementary areas of research. Among them is how this project could be undertaken using contemporary research with a non-binary focus. This approach would broaden the research and design outcomes for a more inclusive understanding of the relationship between patriarchy and the built environment. As discussed in the Biases and Limitations (Chapter 1), the revisionist historical perspective from which the research was conducted afforded an opportunity to engage with older ideas and discourse. In the spirit of broadening the scope of research in interior design, this can also be seen as a way to lay the groundwork for further interdisciplinary research on collective housing.

An additional potential direction to take this research would be to analyze the materials and design elements used in construction from a gender geography perspective. This is a topic that was briefly touched on in the Design Proposal (Chapter 5), but because this project’s primary focus is the programmatic aspects of housing design, this specialized area of research merits a more in-depth analysis by both scholars and design practitioners. Such a study would entail delving deeper into the significance of colours, materials, and design elements, as well as trends in design that could be interpreted as having gendered connotations. Likewise, this research would be enriched if undertaken from a non-binary perspective.

Though the prospective areas of research identified above relate to interior design, these ideas are applicable to all design fields. The notion of transforming communities and creating healthier food systems from the inside out holds that change, even at a small scale, can yield
progressive and far-reaching results. Interior designers must remember that interiors, whether in terms of how they look or are arranged, are integral building blocks in the construction of contemporary cities, and indeed, the more equitable and supportive cities of tomorrow.
APPENDIX A – DESIGN PROGRAMME
INTRODUCTION

This section outlines key considerations that have informed the design programme of The Albert. The first subsection, the User Profile, summarizes who the users are, how many of them the project will need to accommodate and what their needs are. In the second subsection, the Design Programme, the organization of uses and associated allocation of spaces are presented in a series of graphics that relate to theory discussed in the preceding chapters.

USER PROFILE

Creating a user profile for The Albert is challenging because it is not so much a question of who they are, but how they think. In short, the residents of The Albert are a group of individuals who have opted to live in an intentional community. It is likely that they share values and, to some extent, a political outlook. Given the issues and ideas discussed throughout this document, it is presumed that they not only want to live communally, but they also want to enact change locally and beyond. They strive to question societal norms and perhaps they even aspire to lead by example, as utopians do.

Diana Leafe Christian’s book *Finding Community: How to join an Ecovillage or Intentional Community* profiles a number of North American communities where activism and service are a strong component of collective life. The mission statement of one such community cited in her text captures their outlook: “We are an urban community of six members who seek to model a way of living from the heart that involves living responsibly, nonviolently, and ecologically” (Christian 2007, 49). Residents of The Albert will be active participants in the broader, surrounding community, and as Leafe Christian notes: “It’s not uncommon for an urban community to have a specific purpose to assist others” (Christian 2007, 49). For residents of The
Albert, this takes the form of a mission to function as a node in the growing alternative food network and more specifically, to function as a Community Food Centre (CFC).41

Though it is not a text about intentional communities, Shannon Hayes’ book *Radical Homemakers: Reclaiming Domesticity from a Consumer Culture* also serves as an important resource in developing an understanding of the lifestyle and political outlook of individuals who wish to lead lives centered on self-reliance and building social capital. In the process of doing research for the book, Hayes sought out other “radical homemakers” who she described as individuals who had “learned to live on less in order to take the time to nourish [their families] and the planet through home cooking, engaged citizenship, responsible consumption and creative living” (Hayes 2010, 15). While this statement summarizes the mindset of The Albert’s residents well, it also makes reference to the anticipated day-to-day routine of the project’s residents.

The following subsections address the more pragmatic aspects of a user profile from a design perspective, such as the size of the community and the types of residents and occasional users that the design anticipates.

i. Primary Users - Residents

The Albert will house anywhere from fifteen to thirty residents at a time depending on how many individuals occupy each of the units (see equations 1-2). It is assumed that one or two adults will occupy each of the one bedroom units. The larger two bedroom units can accommodate up to four residents each. Some of the residents of the two bedroom units may be children. Assuming one or two young children occupies each of those second bedrooms, the number of children living at The Albert could range from three to six.

41 The term Community Food Centre is defined on p. 24.
9 one bed. units x 1 resident per unit = 9 residents

3 two bed. units x 2 residents per unit = 6 residents

**Total at minimum occupancy = 15 residents**

**Equation 1:** Minimum Occupancy

9 one bed. units x 2 residents per unit = 18 residents

3 two bed. units x 4 residents per unit = 12 residents

**Total at maximum occupancy = 30 residents**

**Equation 2:** Maximum Occupancy

The Albert’s residents live in the building on a full-time basis. The expectation is that they will participate in community life fully. Because they live collectively, The Albert’s residents require an environment that is amenable to sustaining this type of community while also affording them a degree of privacy in their own dwelling units.

Housework and household management will be shared by residents. Much of this work will be allocated on a rotation, but some key tasks will be assigned to residents on a longer-term basis for continuity. Residents in longer-term roles will be responsible for organizing and overseeing meal preparation, meal times, organizing housework, and community events whereas all residents will participate in cooking, cleaning, events, community outreach, and child-minding on rotation or as needed.

It is also worth mentioning that although housing projects discussed throughout the preceding chapters have tended to be oriented towards specific segments of the population,
homogeneity may pose a challenge to the community. As Anne Labit notes in her study titled *Self-managed co-housing in the context of an ageing population in Europe*, “…criticisms are voiced concerning certain aspects of this type of housing: the difficulty maintaining communal life long term is at the top of the list. And finally, one last issue to consider is if/how the oldest residents can stay within an intergeneration scheme when they become dependent” (Labit 2015, 41).

Therefore, it is assumed that the community will be inclusive of individuals at various stages of life and will be prepared to accommodate individuals from diverse circumstances. In the same study, Labit makes another key observation: an individual’s interest in communal life tends to wane if other, personal priorities come to the fore or if they underestimated the commitment to community life required to begin with (Labit 2015, 41-42). Bearing this in mind, it is assumed that many of The Albert’s residents will live there on a relatively short-term basis.

ii. Secondary Users – Overnight Guests

The Albert’s overnight guests visit the housing project to experience communal life. Like residents, they are expected to take part in shared housework and other community activities. Some of The Albert’s overnight guests may be potential residents. These guests are housed in one of the three guest rooms on the upper floors of the project. If all of the guest rooms are occupied, occupants increase the building’s population by three to six individuals.

iii. Tertiary Users - Visitors

The Albert’s tertiary users will range from friends and family of residents to members of the general public. These users can be divided into two categories: guests of The Albert’s residents and members of the general public. Guests of residents are individuals who are not necessarily spending the night at The Albert, but may be joining residents for a meal, to
participate in events, or for a more informal visit. While they will spend time in both the building’s private and shared spaces, it is the building’s smaller common spaces, such as the library, playroom, and media room, that were designed with these users in mind.

Members of the general public will visit The Albert to attend events and outreach programs facilitated by residents. These will typically take place on the roof or in the building’s shared spaces on the main floor. While it is assumed that these users will be accompanied by one or more residents during their visit, the proposed design considers the need to secure the building’s private spaces.

Similarly, the grocery store on the building’s main level has its own entrance for security reasons. Because this space was not in the scope of the proposed design, its customers are not included in The Albert’s user profile. Given the various reasons for visiting The Albert outlined above, the number of tertiary visitors may vary considerably.
DESIGN PROGRAMME

References made to the programme throughout the document underscore the influence of theory on the organization of spaces and activities in the proposed design for The Albert. Here, some of the ideas discussed are explored in a series of graphics that highlight the relationship between shared, private, and public spaces. Though they are based on work completed in the early stages of the design phase, these graphics reflect the organization and allocation of space in the proposed design.
FIGURE 61: SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS

This diagram depicts how key spaces in The Albert relate to one another as a whole. Lines represent possible paths of travel that users can take through the building. Each circle is approximately proportionate to the floor area of the space it represents. For clarity, the spaces on Levels 2-4 have only been shown once.
The vertical distribution of spaces demonstrates that the Albert's high-use shared spaces are concentrated on the building's main floor, basement, and roof. Semi-private amenity spaces are distributed between Levels 2-4, integrating shared and private uses.
The majority of The Albert’s floor area is allocated to shared uses. Though the proportion of the building dedicated to private space is sizeable, it is divided into twelve dwelling units, three guest rooms, and twelve storage units. It should be noted that service and mechanical spaces are not included as only habitable spaces, or in other words, spaces that are typically used by residents and guests on a daily basis are shown.
As outlined in both the Literary Analysis (Chapter 3) and the Design Proposal (Chapter 5), the proposed programme for The Albert was influenced by models of collective housing that function similarly to hotels. This organization of space also reflects the project’s aim to propose an adaptive reuse that is sensitive to the building’s history. One notable difference between the hotel typology and some of the proposals for communal housing projects that bear a resemblance to this typology is the lack of “service” space in the proposed design (bottom row). The original floor plans for the Royal Albert Arms Hotel (top row) feature a kitchen, an office, a large food and beverage storage space, and miscellaneous storage spaces throughout the building required for the operation of a hotel. The adaptive reuse of the hotel for collective housing no longer requires private service space as residents will be taking care of their own needs and as such, these spaces are reallocated to shared uses.

The floor plan shown for Levels 2-4 is a typical representation of the uses on those levels as there is some variation between them in both the original and proposed designs. These differences include the balconies, which are only located on Levels 3 and 4. In the original design, these balconies were only accessible from private spaces, but the reconfiguration of circulation spaces makes these balconies accessible from the corridor. Another key difference between Levels 2-4 in the original design is that one of the bedrooms on Level 2 is labeled “Parlor”, thereby making it a shared space.
APPENDIX B – DESIGN
SELECTED MATERIALS

- G44 Bright Yellow Tile – Heath Ceramics
- G55 Heron Blue Tile – Heath Ceramics
- G51 Soft White Tile – Heath Ceramics
- Red Quarry Tile – Quaritalia
- 8016 White Solid Surface – Avonite Surfaces
- SW3131 Winter White Stain – Sherwin-Williams
- Snowdrift White Oak Light Character – Mirage Hardwood Floors
- ASET4001 Ghiaccio Mosaic Tile – Appiani
2005 All White – Farrow & Ball
93 Studio Green – Farrow & Ball
256 Pitch Black – Farrow & Ball
3362 Yellow Moss Cirrus Marmoleum Flooring – Forbo
3358 Petrol Walton Cirrus Marmoleum Flooring – Forbo
3359 Bottle Green Walton Cirrus Marmoleum Flooring – Forbo
Brushed Stainless Steel
Polished Concrete
FIGURE 65: Basement Floor Plan
SCALE: 1/16" = 1'0"
FIGURE 66: Level 1 Floor Plan

SCALE: 1/16" = 1'0"
FIGURE 67: Level 2 Floor Plan

SCALE: 1/16" = 1'0"
FIGURE 68: Level 3 Floor Plan

SCALE: 1/16" = 1'0"
FIGURE 69: Level 4 Floor Plan

SCALE: 1/16" = 1'0"
FIGURE 70: Roof Floor Plan

SCALE: 1/16" = 1'0"
FIGURE 71: Level 1 Lighting Plan

SCALE: 1/16" = 1'0"
FIGURE 72: Typical Level 2-4 Lighting Plan

SCALE: 1/16" = 1'0"
FIGURE 73: Dish Cabinet
FIGURE 74: Dish Cabinet - Elevation with doors
SCALE: 3/8" = 1'0"

FIGURE 75: Dish Cabinet - Elevation without doors
SCALE: 3/8" = 1'0"
**FIGURE 77:** Dish Cabinet – Section

**SCALE:** 3/8" = 1’0"

- WALL FACE, GWB
- WALL FACE, GWB
- FIGURED SHELVES, 1” GRADE A G2S PLYWOOD W/ 1”x1” HARDWOOD EDGE
- DRAWER FACE PANEL, 3/4” GRADE A G2S PLYWOOD W/ WOOD VENEER EDGE
- STEEL FRAME DOOR W/ INSET GLASS PANEL
- VERTICAL SUPPORTS, 1” GRADE A G2S PLYWOOD
- SIDE PANEL, 1/2” GRADE A G1S PLYWOOD
- BACK PANEL, 1/2” GRADE A G1S PLYWOOD
- SIDE PANELS, 1/2” GRADE A G1S PLYWOOD

**NOTE:** STAIN ALL WOOD W/ SW 3131-0

**FIGURE 76:** Dish Cabinet – Plan

**SCALE:** 3/8” = 1’0”

- WALL FACE, GWB
- WALL FACE, GWB
- FIXED SHELVES, 1” GRADE A G2S PLYWOOD W/ 1”x1” HARDWOOD EDGE
- DRAWER FACE PANEL, 3/4” GRADE A G2S PLYWOOD W/ WOOD VENEER EDGE
- STEEL FRAME DOOR W/ INSET GLASS PANEL
- VERTICAL SUPPORTS, 1” GRADE A G2S PLYWOOD
- BACK PANEL, 1/2” GRADE A G1S PLYWOOD
- SIDE PANELS, 1/2” GRADE A G1S PLYWOOD

**NOTE:** STAIN ALL WOOD W/ SW 3131-0
WORKS CITED


