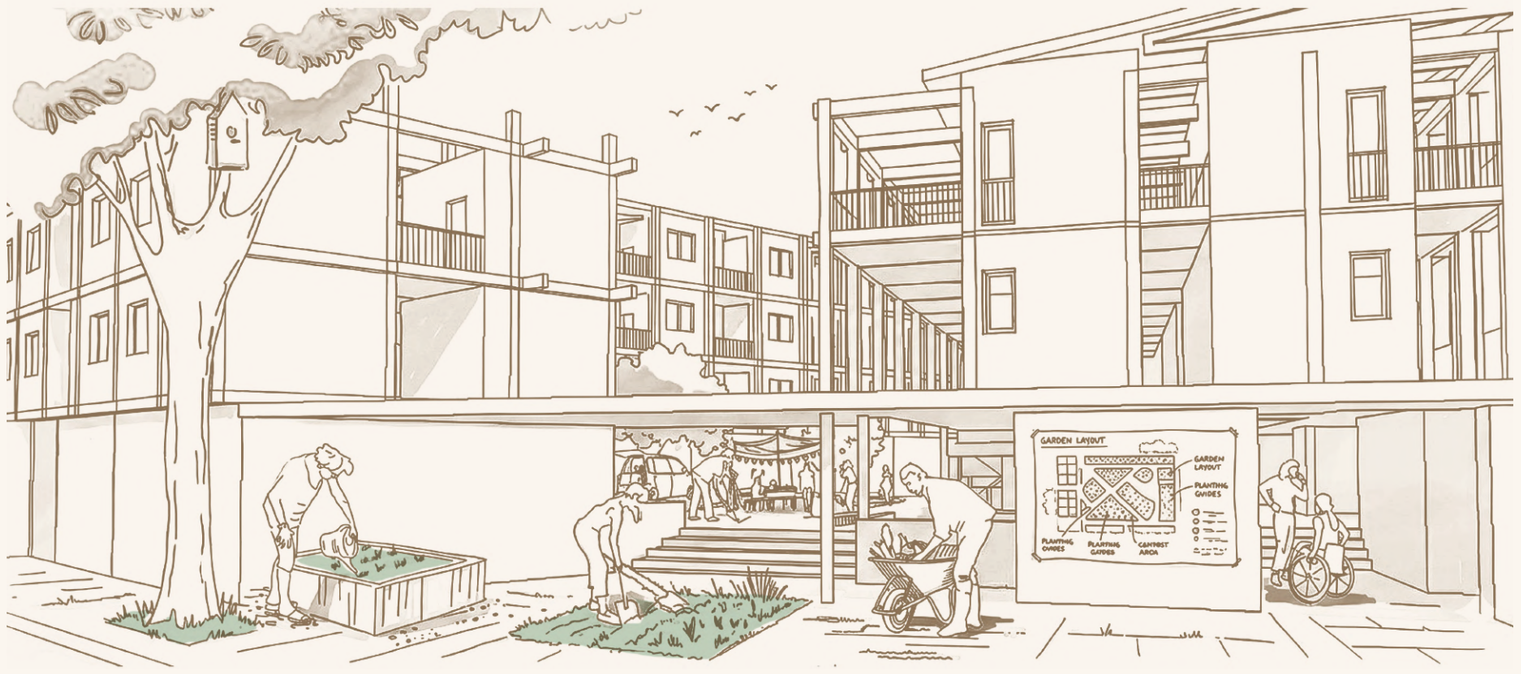
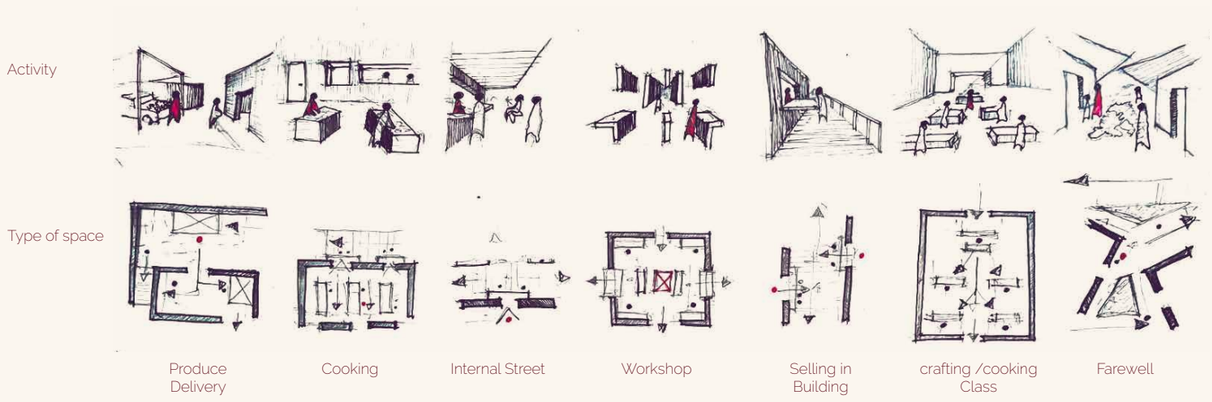
INCREMENTAL COMMONS

A Framework for Building
A Home and Livelihood in the inner City

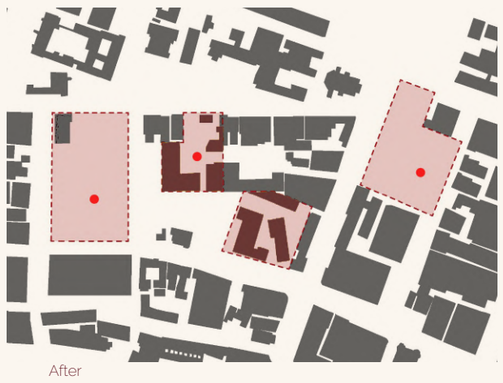
Located between Hope Street and Buitenkant Street in the CBD of Cape Town, the former Government Motor Transport facility occupies a site shaped by layered histories and present urban hardship. Its edges have long functioned as informal refuge for homeless residents and waste pickers, revealing a threshold between visibility and neglect. With operations relocated to Maitland, this underused state-owned property raises urgent questions about land use in a city facing a critical shortage of affordable, well-located housing.

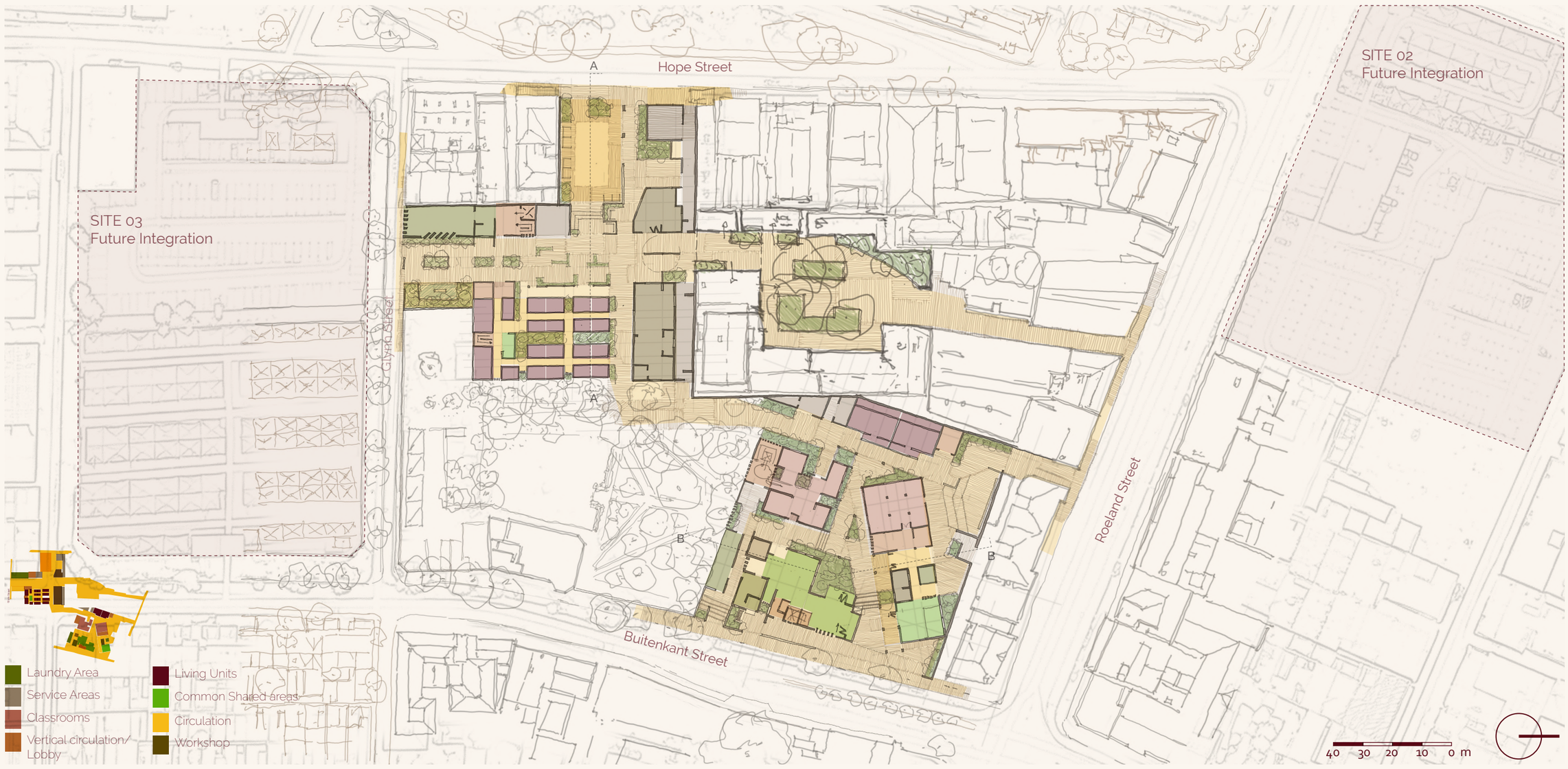
Precedents such as Cissie Gool House demonstrate how abandoned government buildings can be transformed into spaces of shelter, community, and urban belonging. This project reframes the site as more than a housing insertion: it is a framework for homemaking, where shared infrastructure, collective care, and incremental growth support dignity and permanence in the city centre.







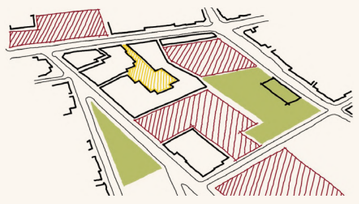




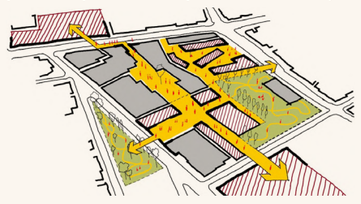
URBAN INTEGRATION

A framework for dignified spaces rooted in context, responding to both people and place by building on existing supportive amenities and infrastructure for future integration and reciprocal relationships that foster resilience agency and care.

large disconnected city blocks create introverted spaces leading to anti-social behavior and unsafe environments for residents.



Utilizing existing pedestrian movement routes and desire lines create a network of productive porosity, public spaces and passive security.



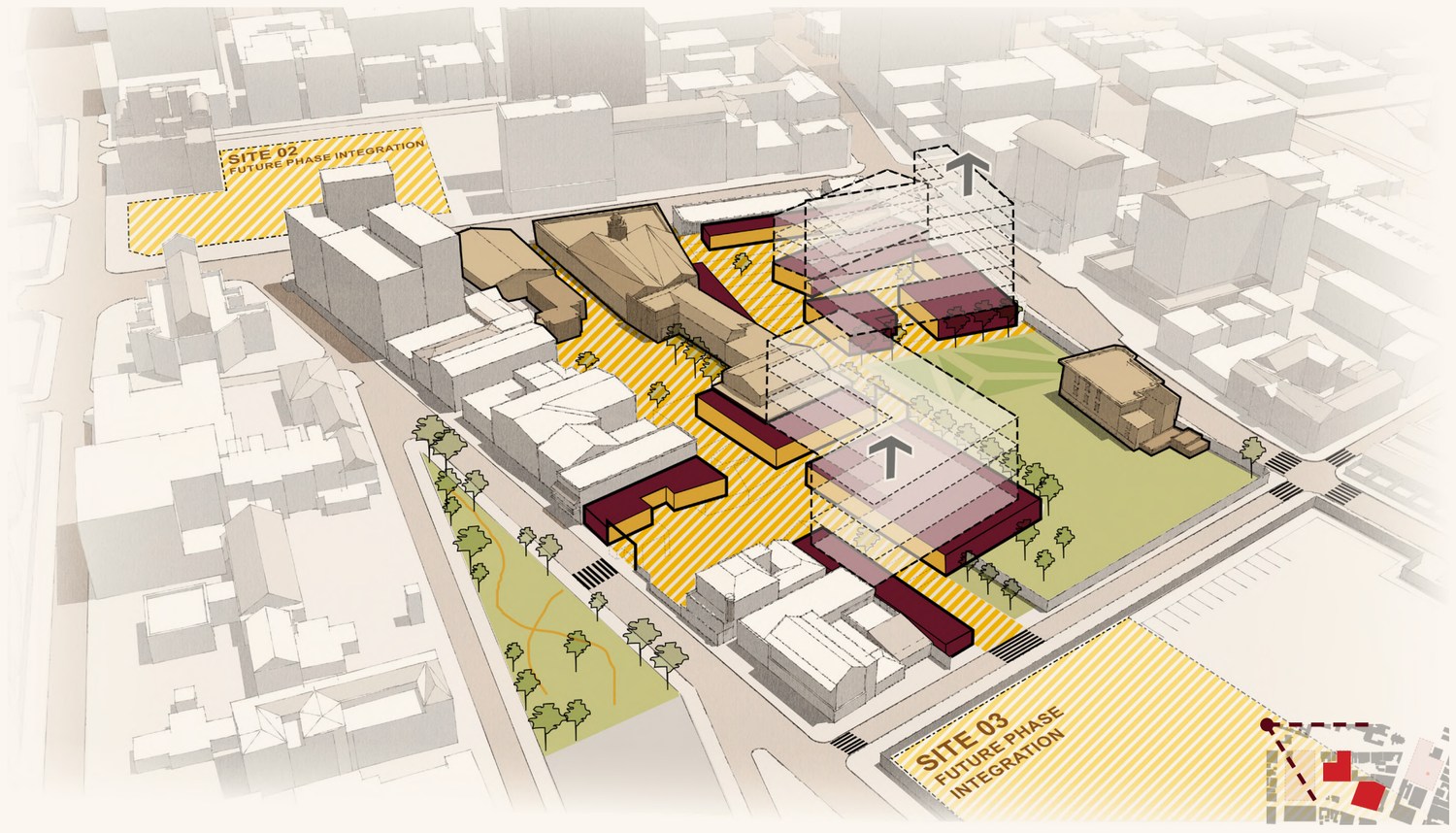
- The Hope Exchange
- Street People's Forum
- Ladles of Love soup kitchen

City Varsity campus

GMT buildings

Rust en Vreugd museum

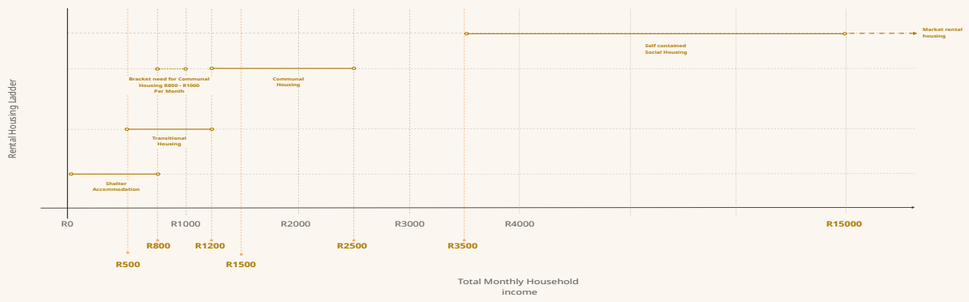




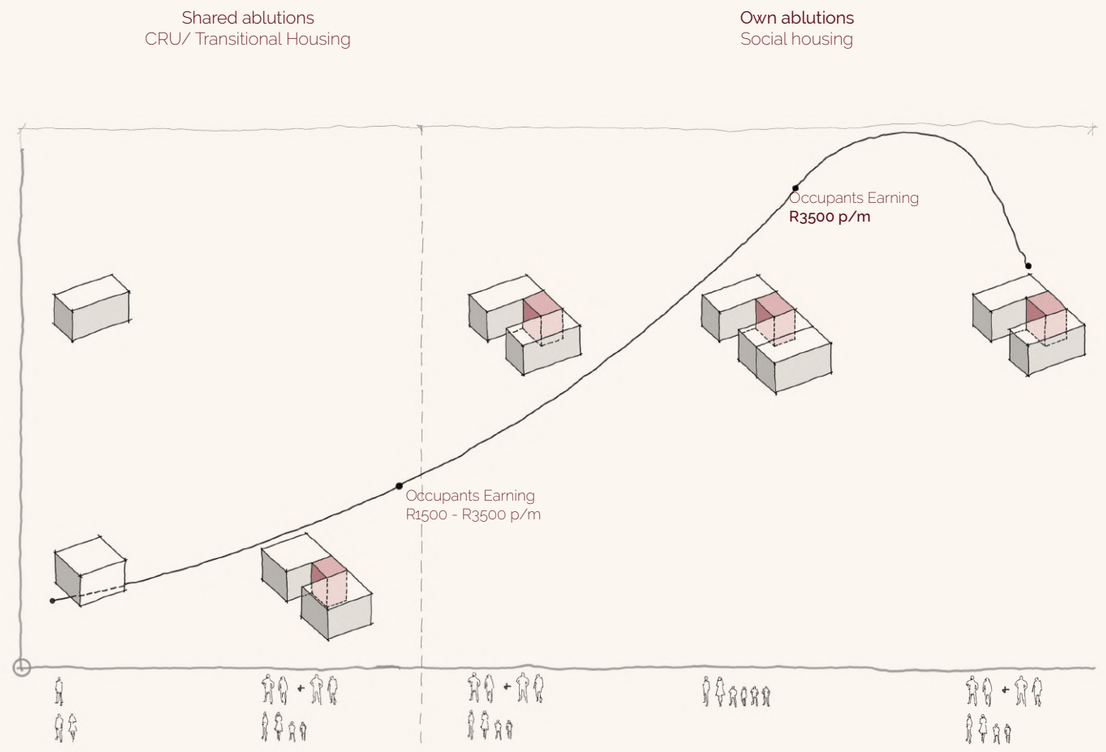
Co - operative ways of living

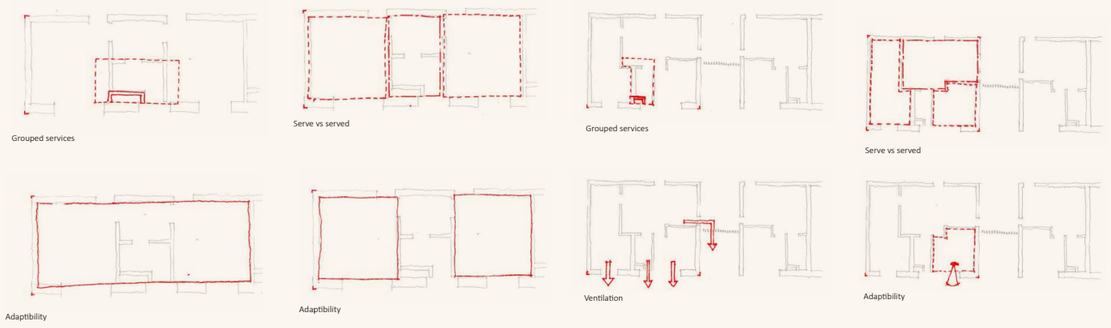
The co-operative living proposal serves households earning between **R0** and + **R3 500 per month**, positioning the project within **Transitional Housing / CRU**, with a pathway into Social Housing. The **system is built on a flexible 12 m² modular unit** that can expand or contract as family size and income change, allowing incremental growth without displacement. In the Transitional / CRU category, units may use **shared ablutions and service cores to reduce costs** and support collective living. As households stabilise, modules can be added and services internalised. In the Social Housing bracket, units shift toward self-contained layouts with private ablutions, offering greater autonomy and tenure security. **Rather than a fixed dwelling type, the model operates as an adaptable co-operative framework that supports affordability, dignity, and long-term spatial flexibility.**

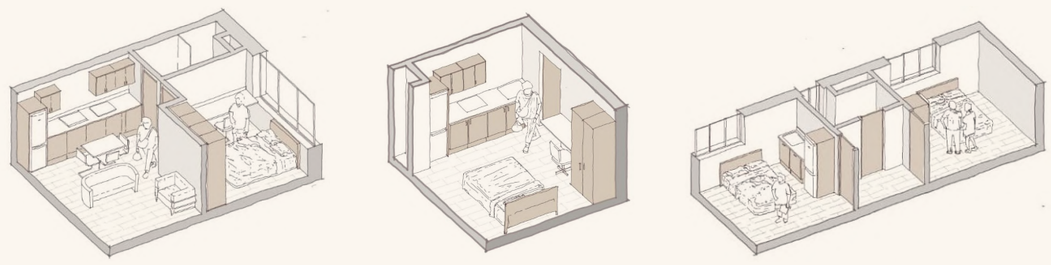




"This transitional housing facility has been about trust. It has been about getting citizens to engage with the state in a meaningful way, to negotiate and ultimately take collective decisions." ~ Conrad Meyer, DAG







SOCIAL SYSTEMS
A Material Kit of parts

An existing on-site workshop could repurposed as a carpentry and tapestry hub focused on producing modular wall panels and social attachments. The space supports hands-on training for residents and neighboring community members in building lightweight timber structures and partitions. Modular timber walls provide a flexible, sustainable, and participatory interior system: prefabricated, easy to assemble, adaptable, and designed for reconfiguration as household needs evolve. A lightweight timber portal frame spans 13 metres to form the primary structure of the new addition, with timber columns, beams, and purlins supporting wall and roof cladding, enabling low-impact, community-led construction and future disass embly.





