

Town Hall Apartments

The CARITAS Project
Generative Space Award
Enabling Health: Everybody, Everywhere

Gensler

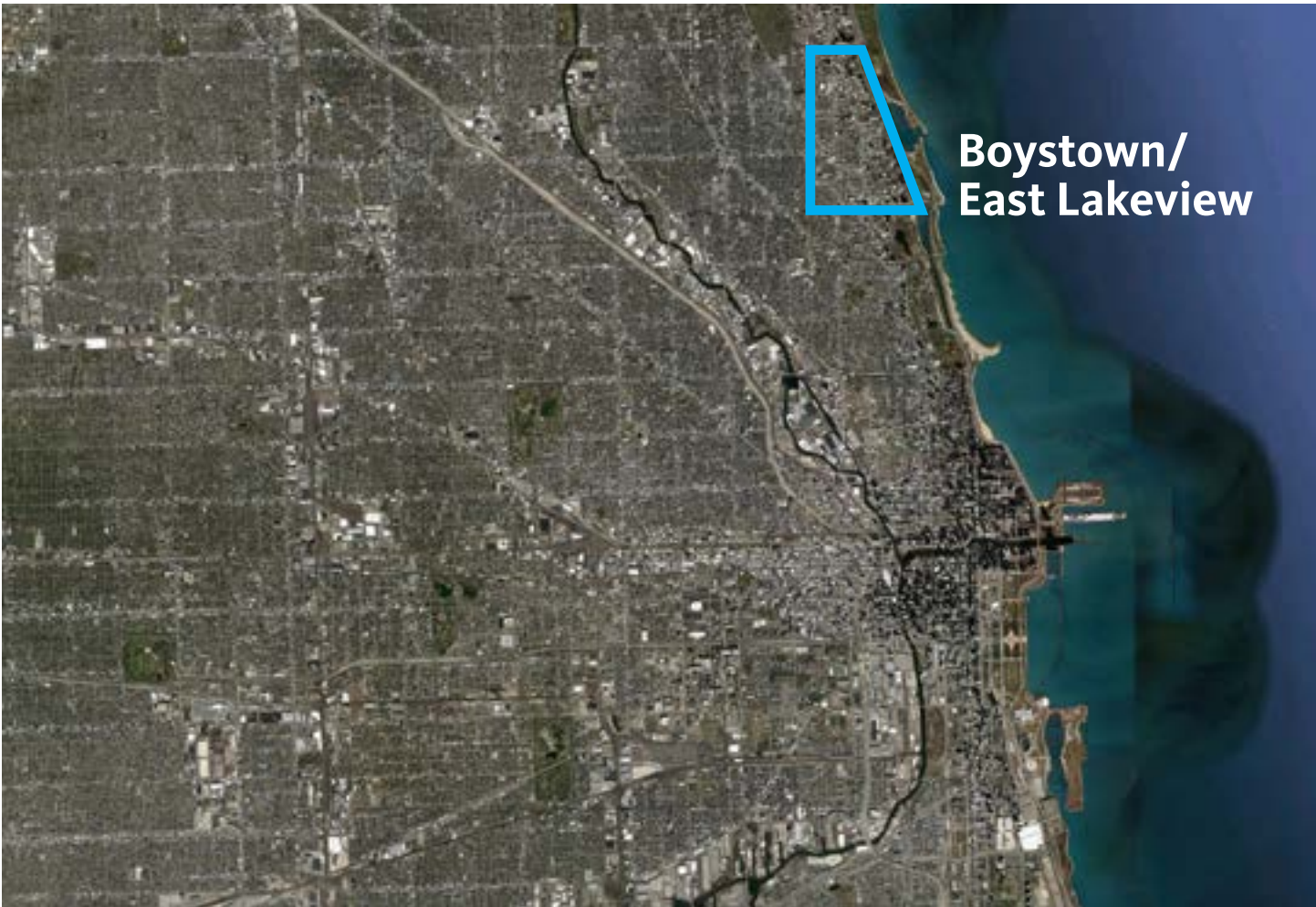




Overview

With its diverse mix of backgrounds and demographics, Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood is one of the city's 77 named communities. Situated on the North Side of the city and bordered by Lake Michigan to the east (hence the name) and I-90/94 to the west, Lakeview serves as home to some 95,000 residents in an area just over three square miles.

Nestled on North Halsted Street between storied roadways Addison and Waveland (think baseball, chewing gum, and a happening bar scene), Town Hall Apartments offer the first affordable housing facility dedicated to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community. Facing east and in the heart of the Boystown neighborhood, Town Hall Apartments were envisioned with one goal in mind: providing underrepresented LGBT seniors a place to thrive – proudly, with dignity – in their community.



SITE PLAN

Project Partners

During the design and construction phases, our team collaborated with several groups and organizations representing a diverse spectrum of project stakeholders. This included the City of Chicago's Department of Planning and Development; the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency; Chicago Landmarks; and the Chicago Alderman representing the Lakeview neighborhood.

Most significantly, Gensler worked closely with both Heartland Housing and the Center on Halsted during the visioning, programming and conceptual design phases. This included the development of qualitative metrics such as the Owner Project Requirements (OPR). This close collaboration helped ensure the success of the project by making sure project goals were consistently aligned with the needs of the community.



Research, Programming, & Vision

The project's importance was underscored by alarming statistics: According to a 2003 report by the Chicago Task Force on LGBT Aging, of the estimated 40,000 LGBT adults over the age of 55 living in Chicago, approximately one in five does so with an annual income of less than \$20,000. Combining financial constraints with issues of discrimination at traditional elder care facilities, Town Hall Apartments posed a significant opportunity for community improvement.

Gensler and Heartland Housing's sincere desire to understand the unique needs of seniors in the LGBT community inspired the project team to lead a series of visioning workshops with potential future residents. Hosted by the Center on Halsted, Heartland's community partner, the sessions helped establish project goals, including:

- providing a safe and accepting environment for everyone
- instilling a sense of community among residents
- promoting physical and mental well-being as a holistic lifestyle
- adding words like "choice" and "option" to the lifestyle conversation

Like the adjoining Center on Halsted, a 175,000 square foot community center serving the area's LGBT residents and visitors, Town Hall Apartments was approached through the lens of Adaptive Work – leading change when neither the problem nor the solution is fully understood.

Key challenges facing LGBT elders

1. Effects of social stigma and prejudice, past and present
2. Reliance on informal "families of choice" for social connections
3. Unequal treatment under laws, programs, and services



The visioning sessions helped to address shared values, beliefs, and behaviors. Five programming workshops were hosted by the design team to learn the collective project priorities and develop common project goals; the combination of these exercises built the dialogue from which the design team could define the problem through the eyes of the community.

Feedback from the sessions informed many aspects of the design, from program and amenities to finish selection and even unit layout. The resulting spaces accommodate program needs articulated by the residents, including a shared dining room and kitchen where residents can prepare meals for large groups, a flexible multipurpose space, a fitness room, and a therapy room for well-being check-ups.



The workshops taught our team how to engage intensely with a user group to draw out their deep concerns without getting mired in details or individual desires. This broad view continued to inform the priorities and design decisions required at each stage of the project, and the resulting project goals proved invaluable in making design decisions within budgetary constraints.

Planning for the future of senior living in Chicago's flagship LGBT senior housing, Town Hall Apartments: What are the issues and concerns, how do we overcome challenges? This is the creation of a Generative Space.





Design

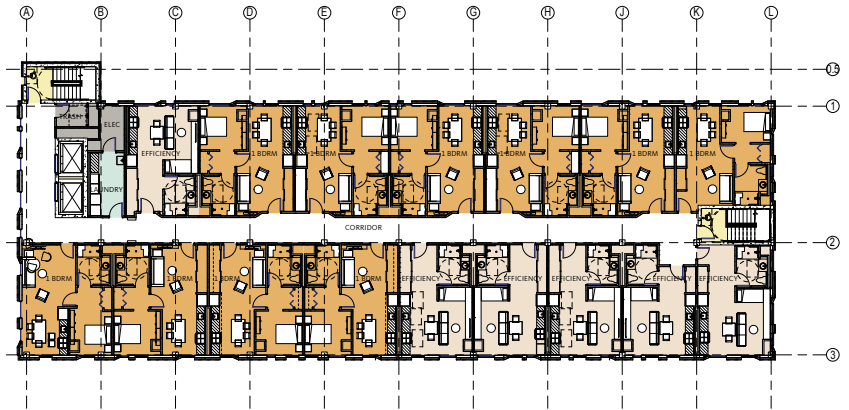
The Town Hall Apartments bring together three distinct parts that weave the project into the urban fabric of the Lakeview community:

- the historic 42nd Precinct/Town Hall Police Station (adaptive reuse was a key part of the requirements for this project)
- the retail porch
- the residential tower (30 studio apartments and 49 one bedroom units for a maximum occupancy of 125 residents)

Floor Plans

- STUDIO
- 1BR
- RETAIL
- LOBBY
- PARKING GARAGE
- LOADING DOCK
- UTILITIES
- VERTICAL CIRCULATION

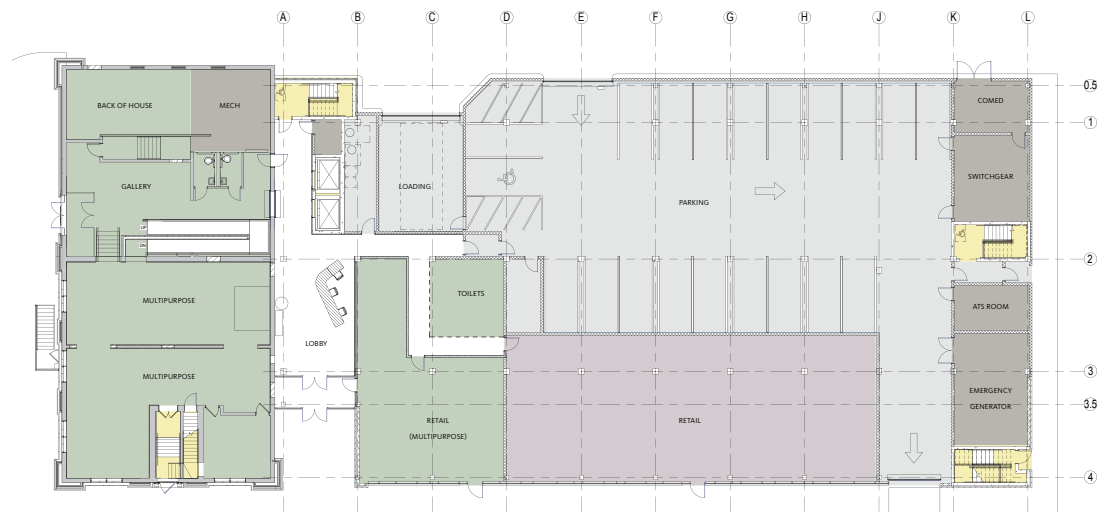
- GREEN ROOF
- COMMUNITY SPACES
- COH



TYPICAL PLAN

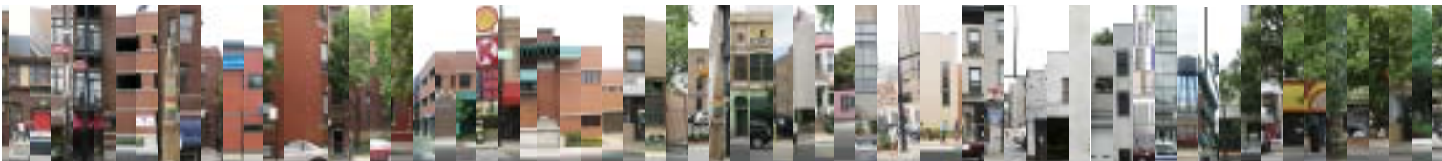


LEVEL 2 PLAN



LEVEL 1 PLAN

The design of the façade is intended to reflect the diverse community the new facility will serve. Angled metal panels give the building different readings depending on the vantage point of the viewer. The combination of blue and green is intended as an homage to the patinated copper cornice of the historic Town Hall building.



Several key considerations factored heavily in design decisions for the Town Hall Apartments:

Amenities

The self-contained design of Town Hall Apartments includes a multipurpose space, a library and computer lounge, a fitness room, a therapy room, and more, providing important amenities residents needn't stray far to find. Just as the surrounding Lakeview community offers the necessary avenues for procuring wants and needs to its 95,000 residents, Town Hall Apartments was conceived with the idea of providing the essential amenities without being redundant, given the considerable resources found within the neighborhood.

Transportation

Beyond the walls of Town Hall Apartments, a quick trip outside the bustling Lakeview community is infinitely easy and affordable thanks to three train lines and nearly a dozen bus routes, all proximally located, and serviced by the Chicago Transit Authority's (CTA's) interconnected transportation system.

Adaptation of existing space

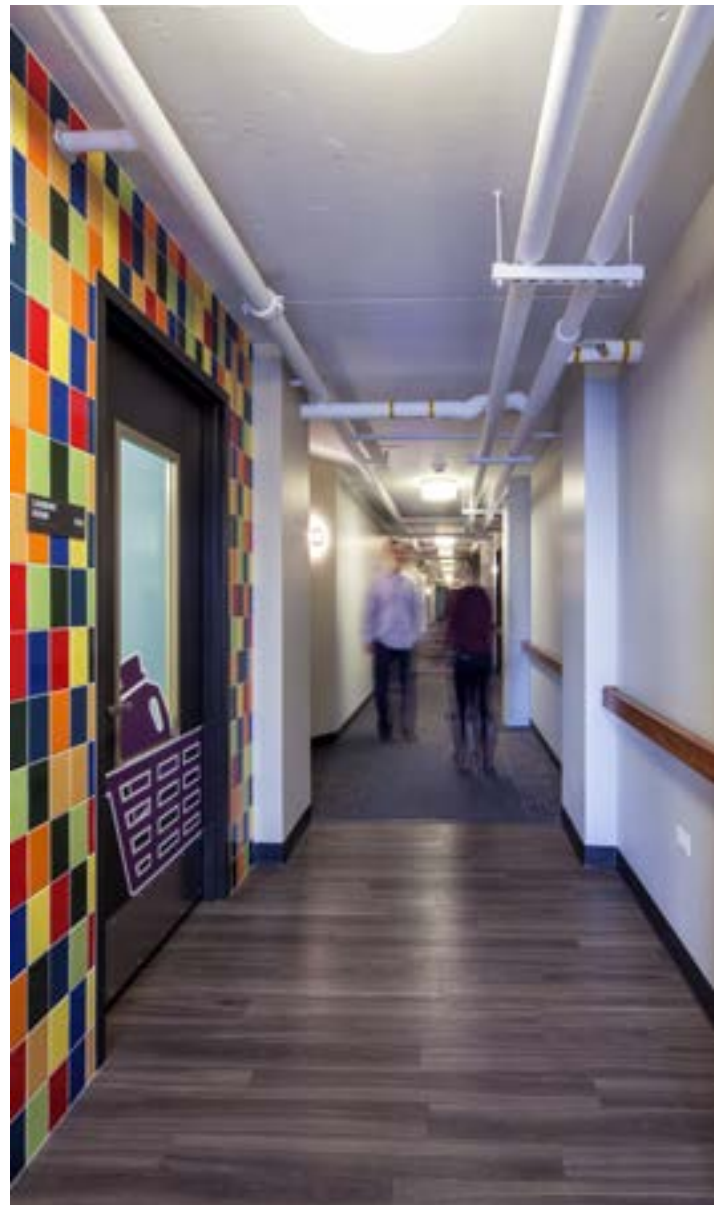
As a mixed-use residential development, Town Hall Apartments readapted an historic neighborhood icon for reuse, like the namesake town hall and the police station, all stitched together with respect to the scale and materials of the current streetscape while reflecting the diversity of the community.

Inspiring a sense of community

The entire project was designed to encourage congregation, incorporating group/gathering spaces and offering services and facilities to residents (in partnership with Heartland Alliance and the Center on Halsted), including athletic activities, art and culinary classes, and more. The project exudes an identity and sense of "self" perfectly aligned with what the LGBT community embodies.

Environmental sustainability

Environmentally, strides were taken to preserve and reuse resources while creating a functionally-designed space. The project scope was expanded almost immediately to include extensive remediation – the site was once a gas station, and was contaminated by leaking underground tanks – in order to make the land usable. Use of existing structures reduced the need for raw materials to be processed and shipped to the site, and wherever possible, a high volume of materials were sourced from local sources, like Northfield's CarbonCure bricks, which are designed to permanently encapsulate CO2 emissions. Combined with the installation of two green roofs, the project's overall carbon footprint is greatly reduced, and Town Hall Apartments is seeking LEED Silver certification.

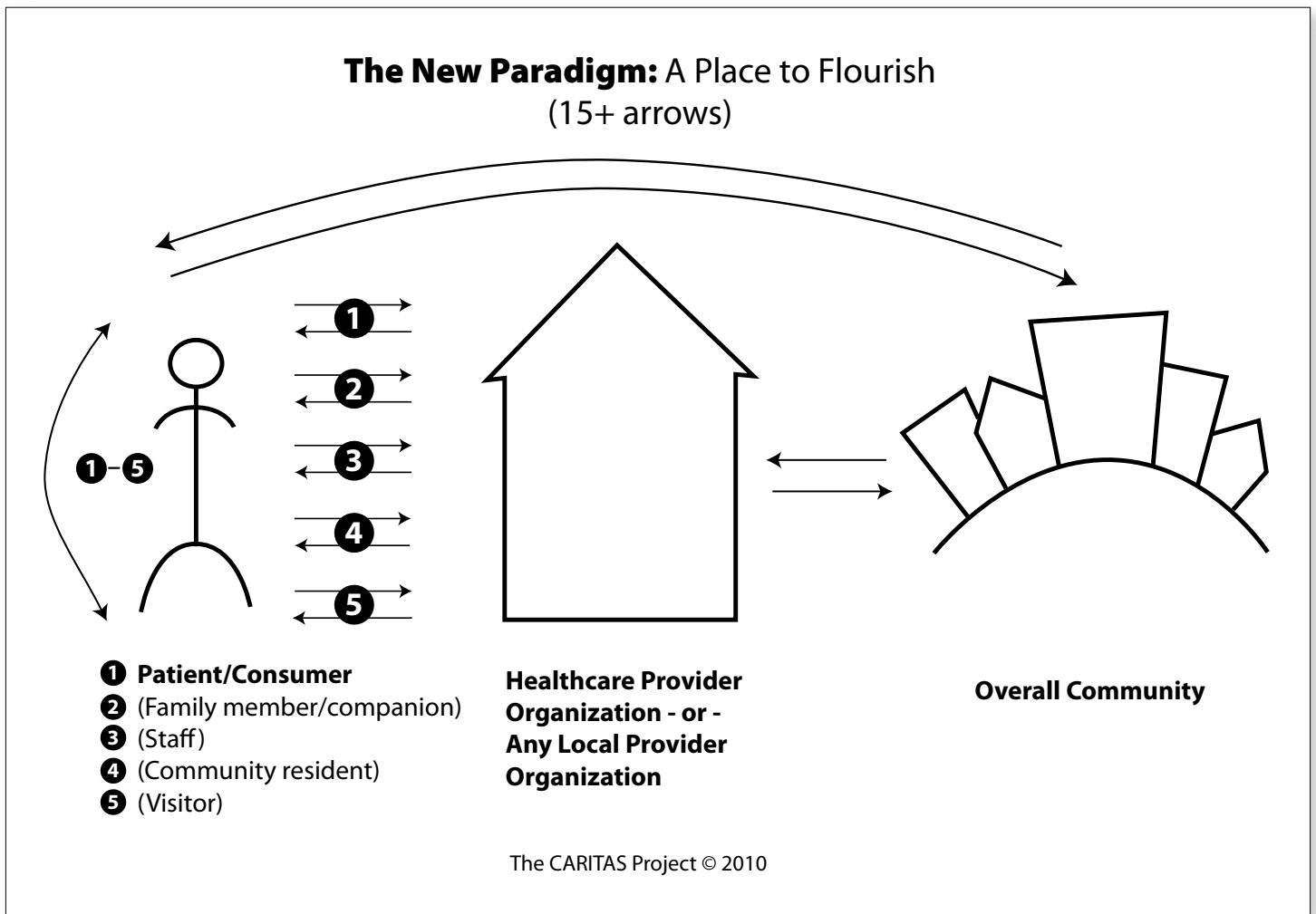


A New Paradigm

Combined with the Center on Halsted, the Town Hall Apartments round out a full city block of structures, programs, and ideas centered on quality of life for Lakeview’s LGBT community, and creating a place to flourish for senior residents.

The 2010 definition for a “Generative Space” offered up by CARITAS Project founder and president, Dr. Wayne Ruga, was at the center of design considerations to program the Town Hall Apartments from a standpoint of shifting the paradigm of community health and wellness design:

“... a place – both physical and social – where the experience of the participants in that place is one that both fulfills the functional requirements of that place and also materially improves the health, healthcare, and/or quality of life for those participating in that experience in a manner that they can each articulate in their own terms.”



Residents



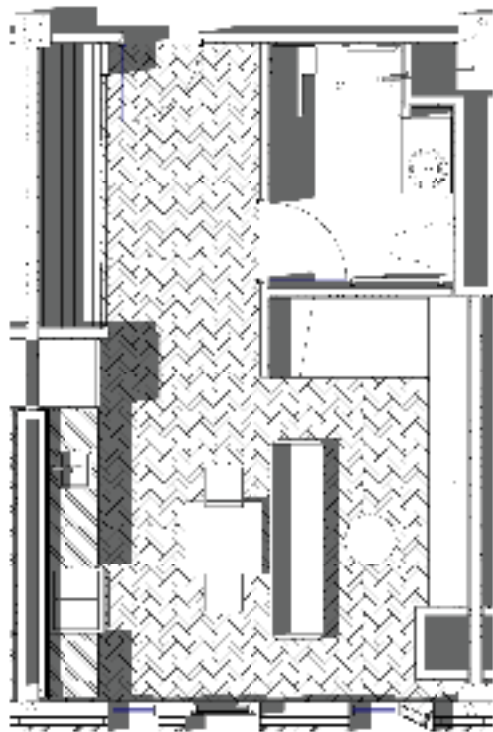


As previously referenced, every aspect of design for the Town Hall Apartments was carefully planned and programmed according to what residents – of the community and, to come later, of the finished project – told us were very specific needs, concerns, and desires for the space.

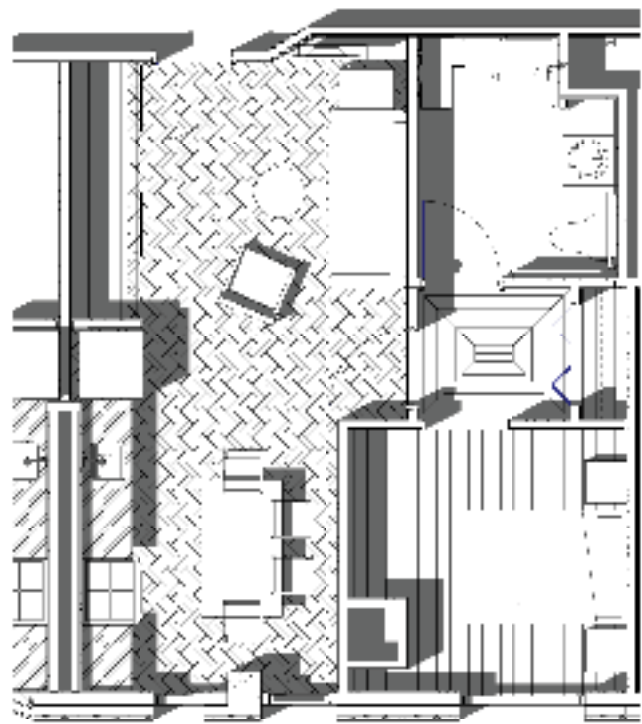
The exterior of the building was designed to be an attractive addition to the neighborhood while reflecting the diversity of the community it serves: the right mix of aesthetic form and function with just enough “glam,” thus creating an inviting space residents are proud to call home. Interior planning included many of the aforementioned amenities for common shared spaces, while would-be residents were invited to assist in focus groups to discuss facilities and comforts.

“A lot of LGBT people who lived in Lakeview and are aging, who probably could not afford to stay here, now get to stay in their neighborhood where they’ve been out and proud for so many years.”

—MODESTO TICO VALLE, CEO OF CENTER ON HALSTED



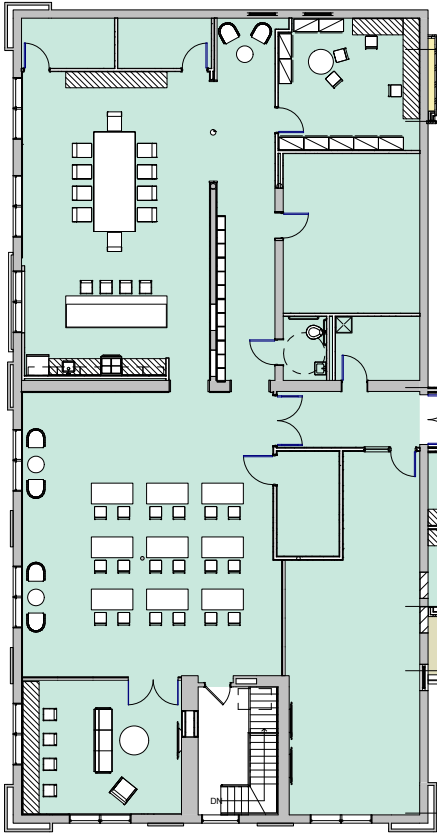
EFFICIENCY



1-BEDROOM

Family & Companions





Part of what makes the Lakeview community such a socially vibrant neighborhood is its residents – some of whom would eventually dwell in the Town Hall Apartments – so it was imperative that space be designed in a fashion that fostered **communal gathering, entertaining, and the like**. Interior shared spaces at the Town Hall Apartments, such as a communal kitchen and dining/multi-use area, were a crucial part of the design mix to encourage social engagement.



Staff





The built environment of the Town Hall Apartments has comfort and “a sense of place” at its very core, and the building’s staff members are as much a part of that equation as the residents. Building management and maintenance staff hired by Heartland Housing are highly sensitive to the challenges facing LGBT-identified seniors, and the building’s design complements their ongoing mission to provide a safe and accepting environment that allows residents to remain and thrive within their community with dignity.

Staff members are an integral part of the Town Hall Apartments community formed by residents and the surrounding area. From the availability of retail and services in the neighborhood to access to natural light within the space, Town Hall Apartments were designed with the notion that **the staff adds to the community, making it better.**

Community Residents



From a design perspective, Town Hall Apartments can be considered an intentional space in which aesthetic elements have been incorporated with a purpose, weaving the project into the fabric of the Lakeview community. The 42nd precinct police station – which was readapted as communal spaces for Town Hall Apartments – anchors the block-long development to the south, while a Whole Foods Market occupies another landmarked façade to the north. Because both of these historic buildings are established icons in the Lakeview neighborhood, their re-appropriation as vibrant community spaces becomes all the more powerful.

The missions of the Center on Halsted and the Town Hall Apartments are so intertwined that they present a common purpose together to the community. When the design phase for the Center on Halsted began in 2003, it kicked off a 12-year evolution affecting more than just that Waveland-to-Addison block: it spurred the evolution of the entire Lakeview community, and – it could be argued – actually steered that evolution.



2007

Center on Halsted opens



2014

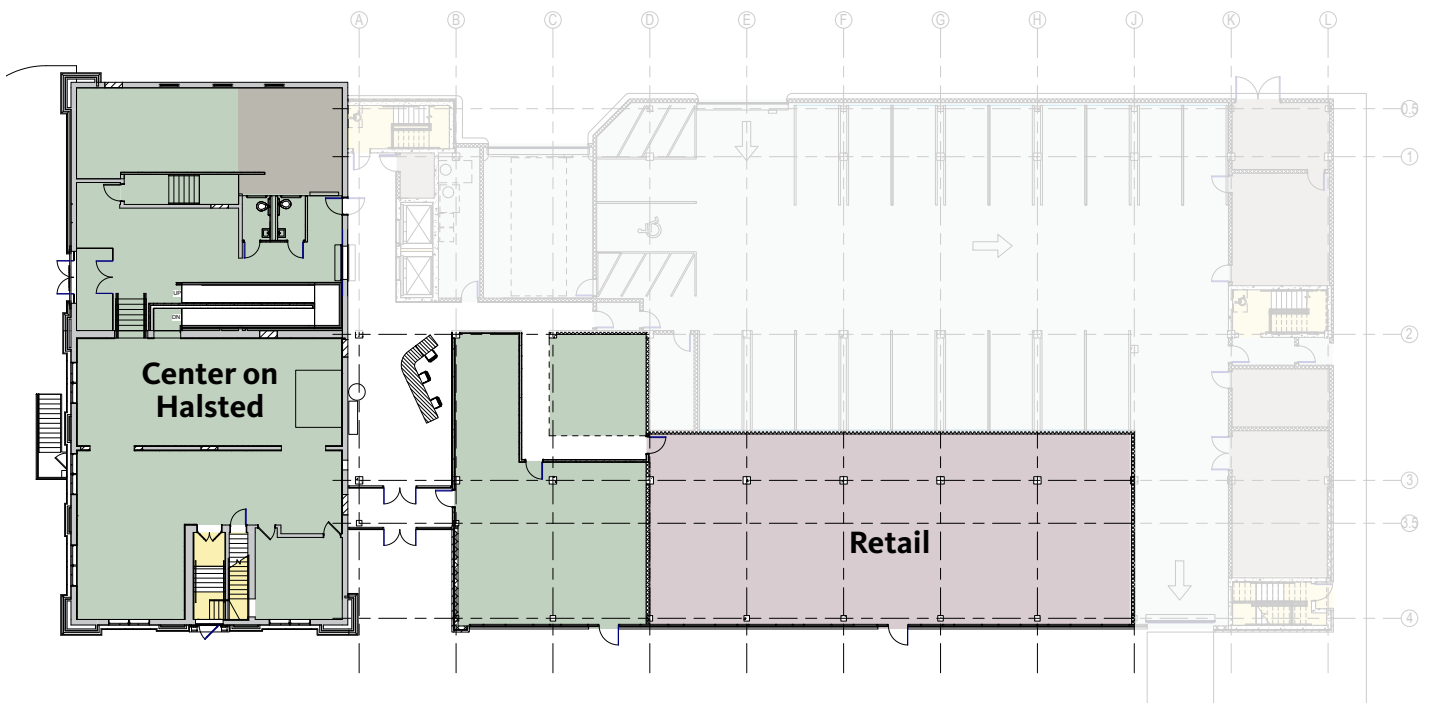
Town Hall Apartments opens; Center on Halsted co-locates its Senior Program on the first floor



“It’s a better situation for me to be in Town Hall, where I have ten people on a floor that might be concerned about me, instead of being in an apartment building where I may know the person across the hall, but they’re not gonna be concerned about me.”

—TOWN HALL APARTMENTS RESIDENT

The **shared spaces and retail porch** on the first floor of Town Hall Apartments is **open to visitors and community members**, with **cross-programming** from Center on Halsted spilling into many of the multipurpose areas.



LEVEL 01 PLAN

Visitors



- COH PROGRAM
- RETAIL
- COMMUNITY SPACE
- RESIDENTIAL UNITS



The Center on Halsted serves more than 500 seniors, and approximately 23% of its program is tailored for the elder population of Chicago’s LGBT community. At the same time, since the Center opened in 2007, it has served an average of 1000 visitors per day. Only five years after opening its new facility, the Center was already out of room.

In a serendipitous turn, the Center on Halsted has become a tenant in the Town Hall Apartments project, co-locating its senior program on the first floor of the historic police station building. By doing so, Heartland Housing and the Center have been able to create complementary programming not only for the residents of the building, but for the larger LGBT senior community in the Lakeview neighborhood.



Town Hall Apartments and traffic from Center on Halsted has helped to support existing businesses in Boystown/ Lakeview; **it has also shaped the future of commerce in the community, and made it a true destination in the City of Chicago.**

AWARDS

2015 Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) Housing Champion - Development of the Year

2015 Chicago Landmark Award for Preservation Excellence

2015 Vision Award, Urban Land Institute

2014 Finalist, Chicago Neighborhood Development Award

PUBLICATIONS

Windy City Times, May 2015 – “Designs for Dignity helps give LGBTQ spaces new looks”

Time Out Chicago, May 2015 – “Old police stations”

Chicago Architect, Jan/Feb 2015 – “Heartland Housing’s Approach to Design”

Chicago Reader, Nov. 2014 – “Three residents of Chicago’s first LGBT senior center tell their stories”

DNAInfo Chicago, Oct. 2014 – “Chicago’s First LGBTQ Senior Housing Complex Opens in Lakeview”

Affordable Housing Finance, Oct. 2014 – “LGBT-Friendly Seniors Development Opens in Chicago”

The Red Line Project, March 2014 – “Update: LGBTQ Senior Housing Project Drawing Major Interest from Residents”

USGBC+, Feb. 2014 – “Greater Good – LEED steps into the arena of social equity with its newly launched pilot credits”

ARCHITECT

Gensler

CLIENT

Heartland Alliance and Center on Halsted

LOCATION

Chicago, Ill.

COMPLETED

2014

CONTRACTOR

Power Construction

CONSULTANTS

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER

Rubinos & Mesia Engineers, Inc.

MEP ENGINEER

KJWW Engineering

HISTORIC CONSULTANT

McGuire Igelski & Associates

INTERIOR DESIGN

Charlie Greene Studio

LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Christy Webber Landscapes

CIVIL ENGINEERING

Environmental Design International, Inc.



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