

# **S T O R I E S**

**from**

# **W E S T H A V E N**

**Architectural Illustrations of a Public Housing Site in Charlottesville, Virginia**  
**Anna Cai | UVa School of Architecture, BS Arch Thesis 2016**

***Discovery***

***Heritage***

***Water***

***Garden***

***Health***

***Intervention***

***Discovery***

July 2015



Growing For Change receives funding from the Dalai Lama fellowship

photo by S.Bingham



Summertime in Westhaven. Growing for Changes goes door to door. Met **Joy Johnson**.

November 2015



Community day in November

Conversations with **Shantell Bingham** about Westhaven + redevelopment



NOMAS gets matched with the Tibbs family.



NOMA conference and design competition in New Orleans  
Lectures and workshops on public housing in the U.S. and critical public interest design in new waves of redevelopment

December 2015



Research about co-design and history of Westhaven and public housing in Cville.



Sketching the site.  
Met Sarad Davenport and City of Promise

Research begins

Co-designing for a garden with the Tibbs family begins.



My first Monday night PHAR board meeting at the Legal Aid Justice Center  
**Brandon Collins** introduces bill for Plan for Redevelopment.

January 2016



Joy invites me to PHAR Executive Board Meeting.

1st pitch of this project. Introduction to the sinkhole narrative.



"After getting up, I'd turn the bedroom light on and walk barefoot to go to the bathroom and I'd try to make sure that I didn't step on a worm. They were everywhere. You could stand there and watch them wiggle through the door."

Ms. Connie on living with the sinkhole



Met and interviewed Ms. Connie.



March 2016



Visited Neighborhood Development Services at City Hall for aerial photos of Vinegar Hill demolition.

Conversations about redevelopment politics with Pam Murray, Mary Joy Scala, and Kathy McHugh.

Ms. Joy on growing up in Jamaica



1st Charlottesville Redevelopment Housing Authority meeting at City Hall. Attended to find Ms. Joy.

Public grievances voices in audience of fellow residents and CRHA board and city council members



Interviewed Joy about life in Westhaven and gardens.

April 2016



Growing for Change Grow Day.  
Painted vertical garden with the Tibbs kids: Shafik, Fendia, Nana, and Rae.

PHAR Intern Graduation. Met Dr. Harris, the co-author of "Public Housing in Charlottesville: The Black Experience in a Small Southern City" and former faculty member of the Urban Planning Department



Met **Holly Edwards**.

HOW IS THIS THESIS A PIECE OF YOU?

Walk through of sinkhole + drainage problems with Brandon. Met Dee dee, Tiffany, and Richard Shackelford.





**Public Housing Association of Residents [PHAR]**

Joy Johnson



director.  
Joy is also a resident of Westhaven in the units most affected by the drainage issues. Joy introduced me to the urgent issue of the sink hole, and PHAR's long past with CRHA.

Brandon Collins



organizer.  
Brandon is a writer on PHAR's bill for Redevelopment which is a proactive deal for the city's plans for public housing. He also gave me a walk-through of the site itself, and remains a main contact for site data.

**Growing For Change**

Shantell Bingham



founder of initiative aiming to bridge the gap between UVA students and residents of Westhaven. It combines Architecture and Global Development students with families in Westhaven to co-design gardens.

**City of Promise**

Sarad Davenport



head of City of Promise. Promise Neighborhoods is a Department of Education-funded program designed to create networks of support services for kids in underserved communities.

**Westhaven Nursing Clinic**

Holly Edwards



Holly formerly served on city council. She currently serves as an advisor for PHAR and also runs the Westhaven Nursing Clinic. Her perspective is crucial in any matters of development in Westhaven.

**Board of Commissioners**

Julie Jones



Chair of the Board of Commissioners. The Board is appointed by city council to govern the Charlottesville Housing Authority. I met her at the PHAR Intern Graduation but first encountered her at a public meeting with the board at City Hall.

***Heritage***



# Erasure + Formation

## Vinegar Hill into Westhaven

Since the 1920's, Vinegar Hill is the city's principal black business district and vibrant center for community life. The story of the demolition of this neighborhood is deeply embedded in the story of public housing in the city today.

# 1963

The Neighborhood was named after an ex-slave named **John West** who was born into slavery and later amassed a fortune in real estate.



### **Westhaven is planned.**

1. Expand the Downtown Business District.
2. Improve traffic.
3. Provide housing for displaced families.

### **Vinegar Hill is evaluated.**

CRHA is authorized by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Their application to City Council for the clearing of substandard housing is complete.

## DEMOLITION

# 1964



By March 1965, the following were **wiped out**:

**1 church**

**30 businesses**

**158 families** (140 black families)



The building that housed **George Inge's grocery store** still remains at an entrance point between West Main Street and Vinegar Hill.



1970



126 units are completed in Westhaven, becoming the first public housing development in Charlottesville.

The Southeast underpass emerges as a critical threshold between past + present.



15.5 % Non-White Population



12.7 % Non-White Occupancy in Public Housing

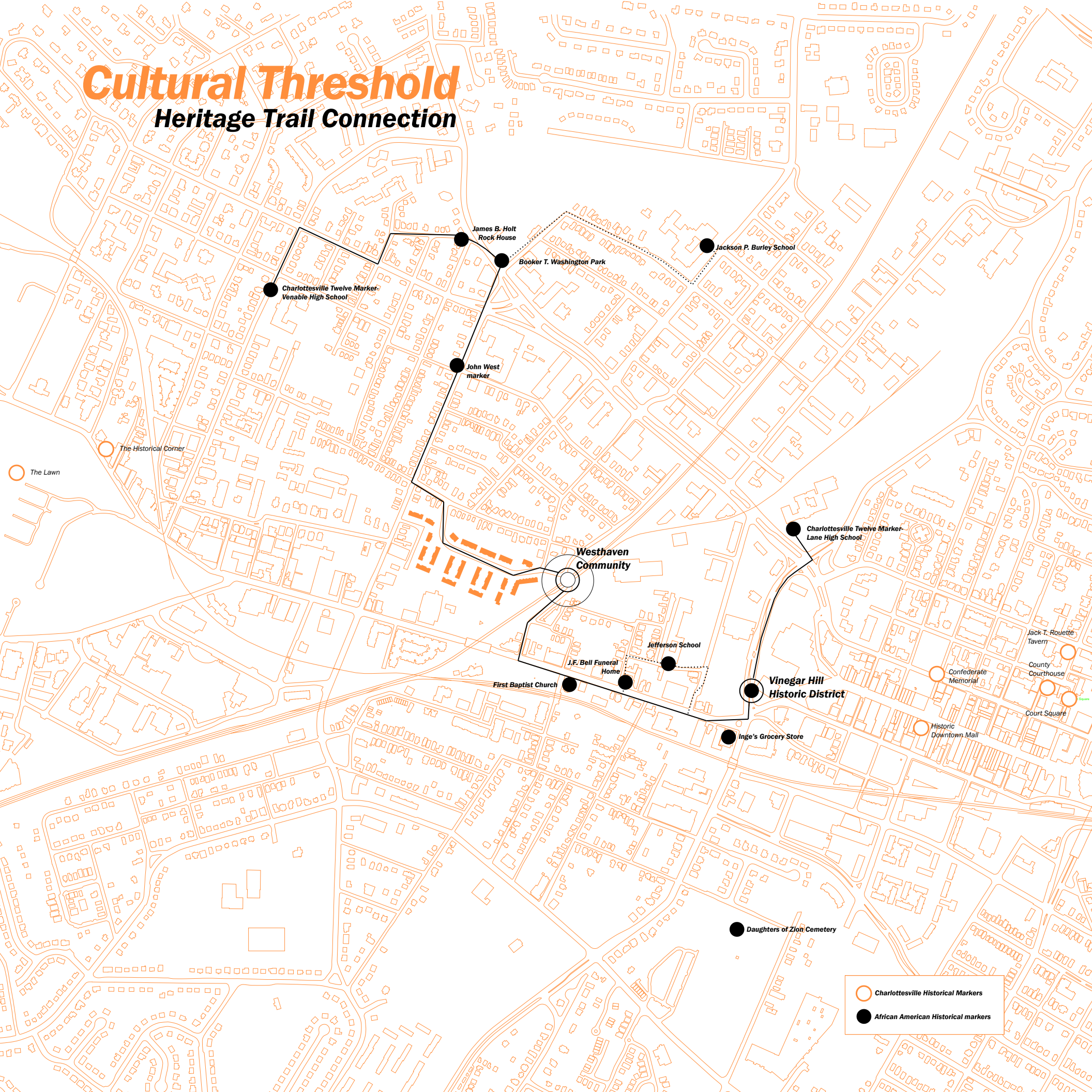


Vinegar Hill was an “image of blacks in business...blacks in **decision-making positions**.”  
-**Sherman R. White**, former black newspaper editor



# Cultural Threshold

## Heritage Trail Connection



***Water***

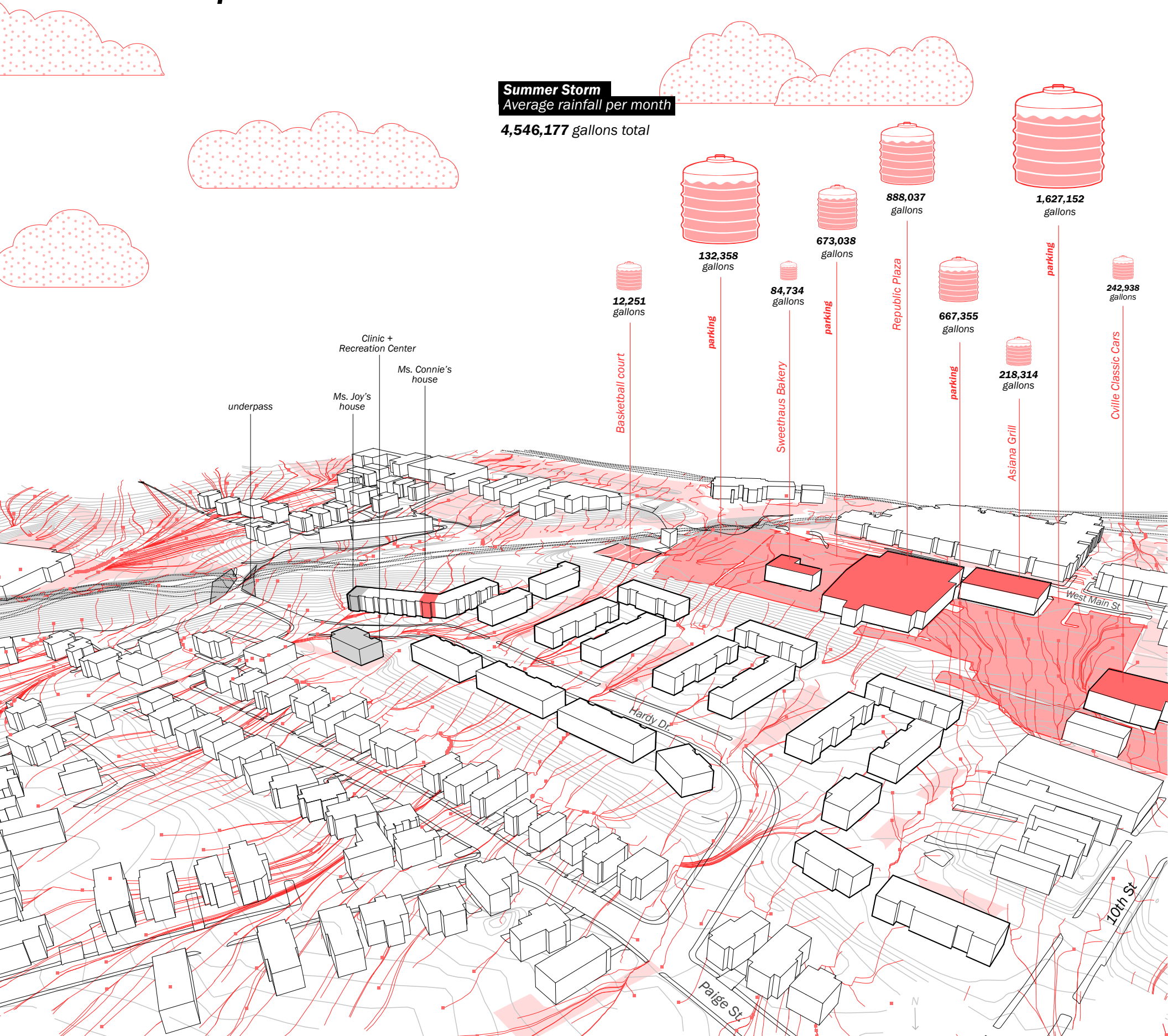


# Water Flows

## From Impermeable Surface

The topography of Westhaven is a critical factor to the wellbeing of residents. The parking lots and rooftops of business located on the top of the hill at the south end of the neighborhood accumulate water that is then dumped into the footprint of the units.

**Summer Storm**  
Average rainfall per month  
**4,546,177 gallons total**

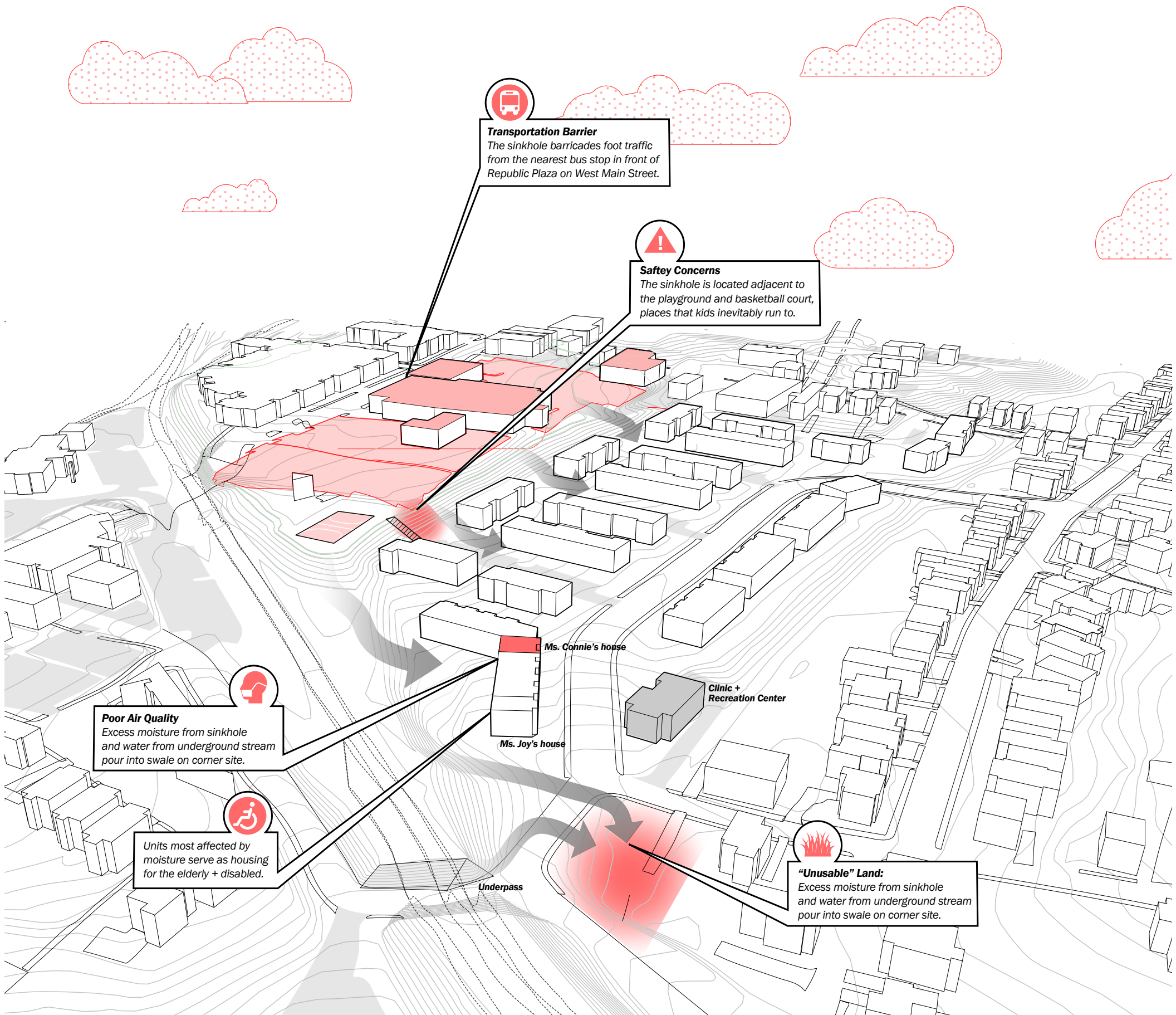




# Water Flows

## Consequences

Due to bureaucratic issues in the Charlottesville Housing Authority, the consequences of issues of topography and water have not been met with resolution. Therefore residents are forced to accommodate the conditions of water invading their space.

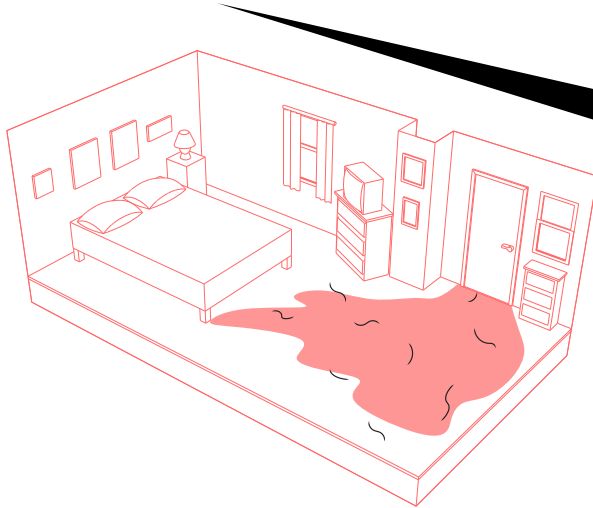


# Water Breach

## of Ms. Connie's Back Wall

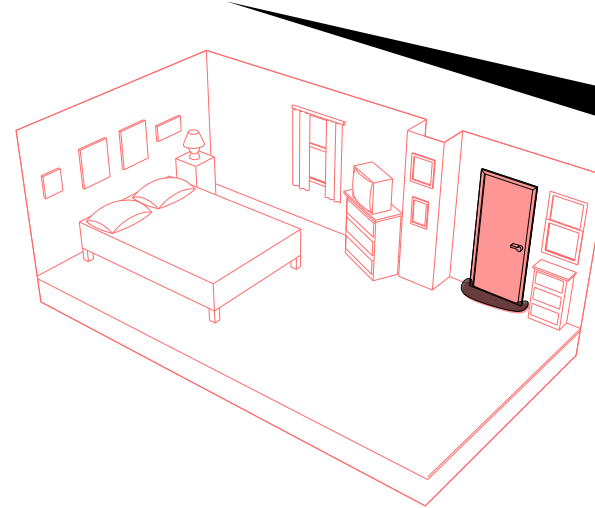
Ms. Connie lives in unit 802. Originally from Wytheville, VA, she moved to Westhaven over a decade ago to receive cancer treatment from UVA hospital. On top of this, she suffers daily from respiratory issues instigated by the moisture issues from the sinkhole.

### Intrusion



Stormwater runoff seeps through the crack of Ms. Connie's back door during a summer storm. She wakes up with worms and moisture spread across her floor.

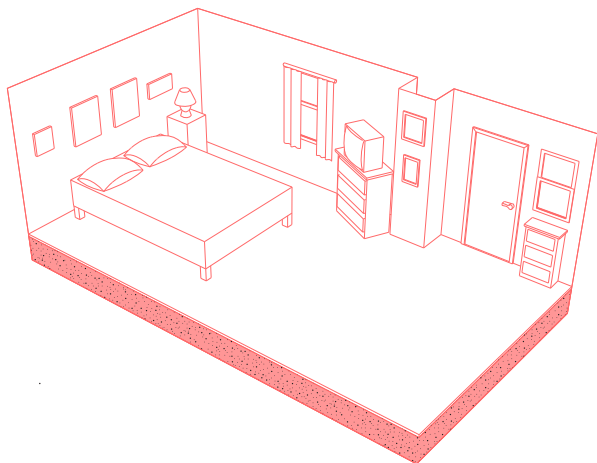
### Defense



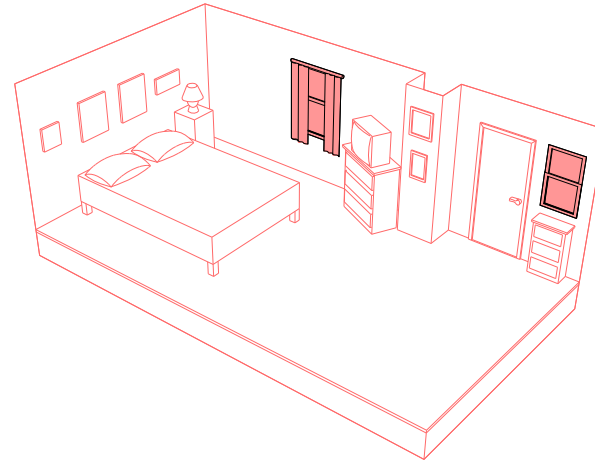
Ms. Connie adapts to the moisture seepage by jamming the bottom crack of her backdoor with a towel

+

+

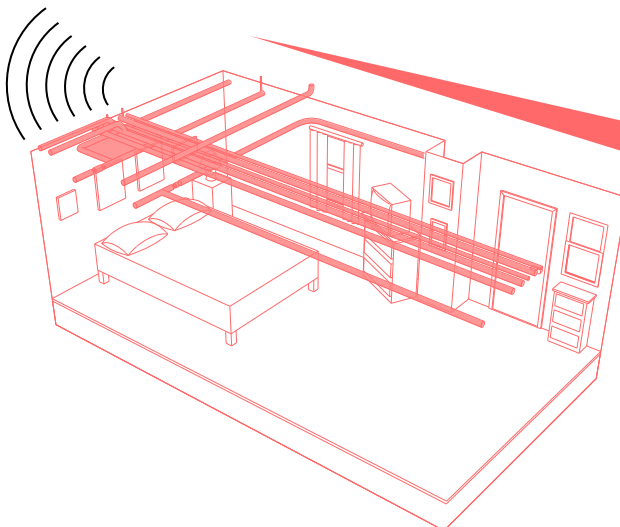


Moisture seeps up through the ground and into the concrete foundation. It settles and creates mold spores in the air.



Ms. Connie keeps the windows shut to ward off additional mold that coats the screens and back patio.

### Pipe Talk



Pipes for units intersect in Ms. Connie's bedroom. The rush of water tells her what her neighbors are up to.

Ms. Connie



***Gardens***

# Master Garden

## Ms. Joy's Front Yard

Ms. Joy lives on 802 Hardy Drive. A native of Kingston, Jamaica, Ms. Joy says her love of growing was instigated by visits to her family in the countryside when she was a small girl. Her garden serves as a landmark and source of planting inspiration for the neighborhood.



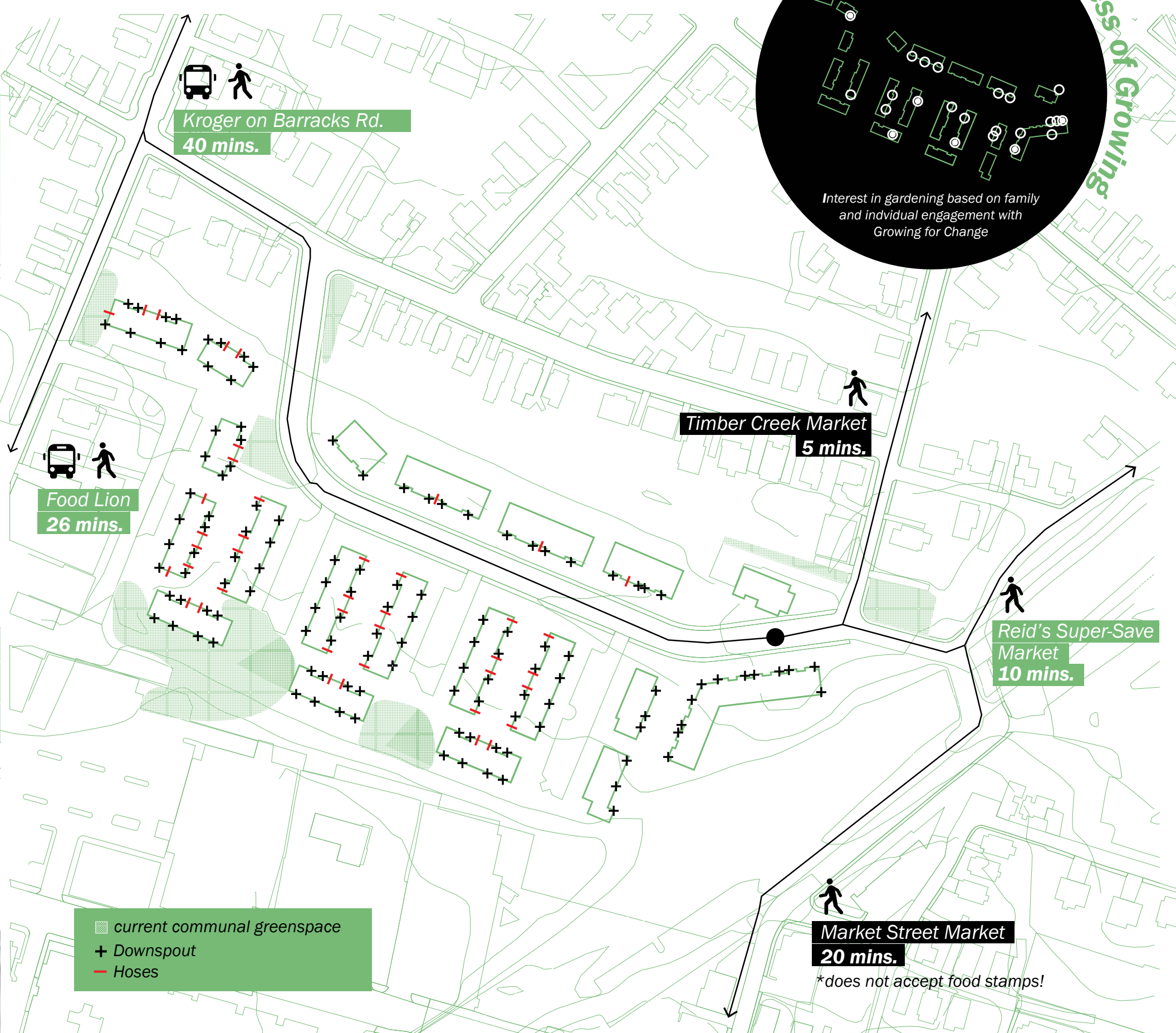
Ms. Joy





# Garden Bug

## Food Access + Spread of Garden Space



# Garden Production

## Co-designing the Tibbs Family Garden

Growing for Change is a student organization at UVA that organizes students with families at Westhaven in order to design and build gardens that promote healthier living and growing in the neighborhood. The work done by these students has been referenced by both PHAR and CRHA as critical to raising wellness in the community as well as forming a lively relationship between UVA students and residents. The process below serves as a model for this.



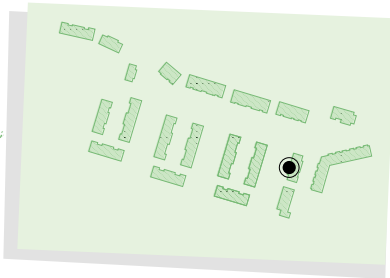


# Garden Production

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### 1. Match



After door-to-door assessments that determined which families expressed interest in engaging in the co-designing process, we were matched with the Tibbs family.

### 2. Imagine



Using methods similar to Deanna Van Buren's co-designing workshops, we diagrammed and sketched possibilities for gardens with Fendia, Shafik and their cousins using popsicle sticks, pipecleaners, paper, and markers.

### 3. Synthesize



We used the kids' visions for their garden and applied them to the constraints of their mom's desires and the physical constraints of their yard. Some of the guidelines for our consideration were:

- space in the yard to leave bikes
- elevated beds for ease of use
- storage
- puppy-proofed beds

### 4. Fabricate

Using funding from Growing for Change, we purchased materials and built a vertical shelf component as our garden.

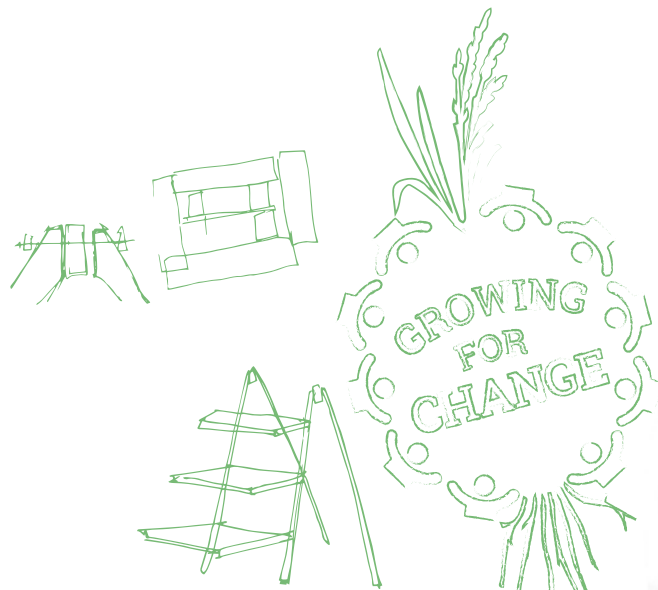


### 5. Christen

With the help of Shafik, Fendia, Nana and Ray, we installed and painted the garden shelf on site in the Tibbs' backyard.



### 6. Populate



Shafik, Ms. Frances & Fendia



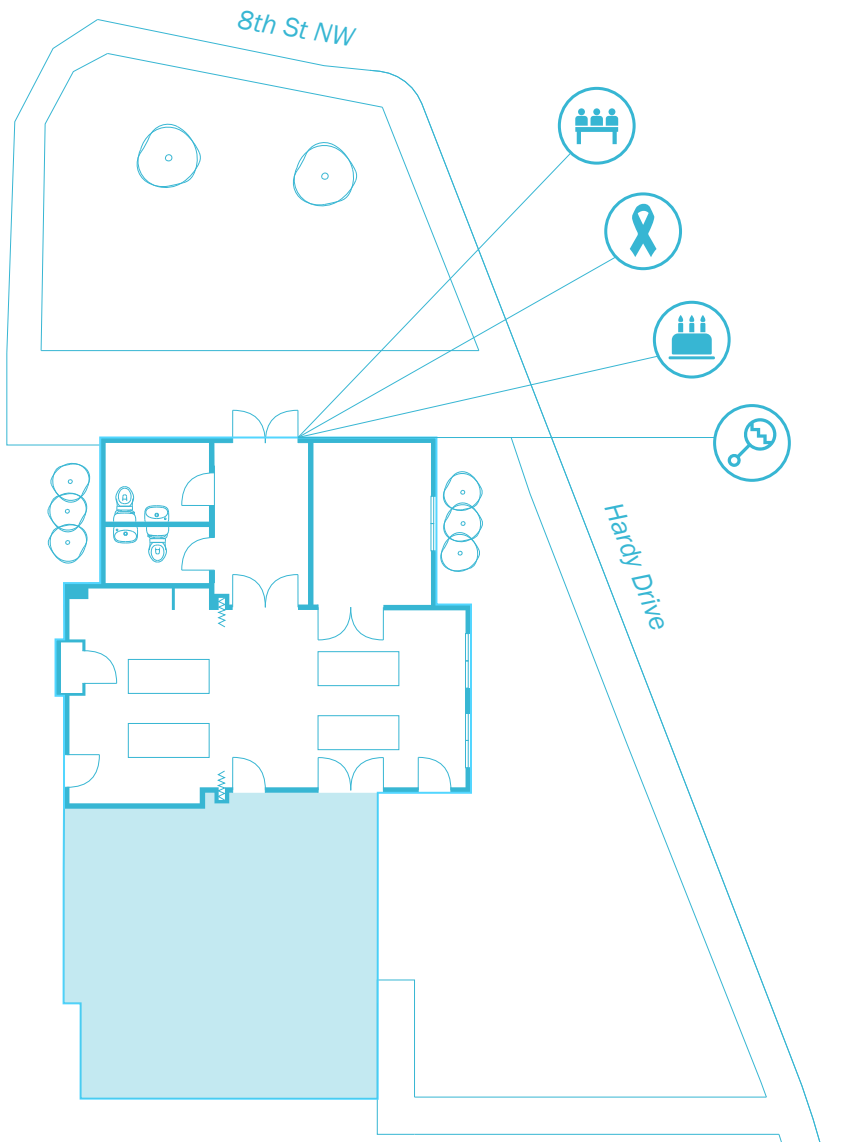
***Health***



# Nursing Clinic

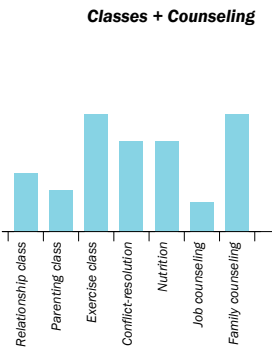
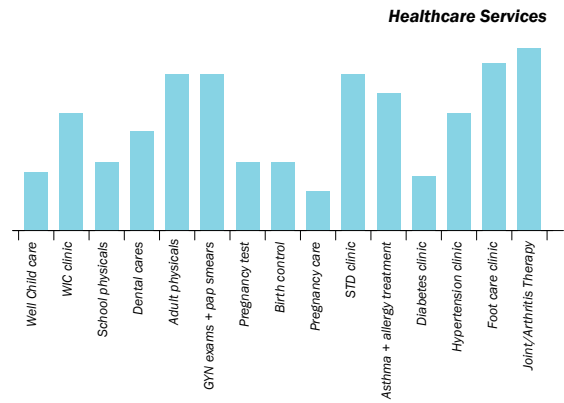
Wellness + Recreation in the Neighborhood

Holly Edwards is a former member of the Charlottesville City Council (2008-2011). She also has served as a member of the Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority. She was elected to serve as vice mayor in 2008. She is working to get her PhD in Nursing at the UVA School of Nursing, she teaches and she runs the Westhaven Nursing Clinic in its many layers.

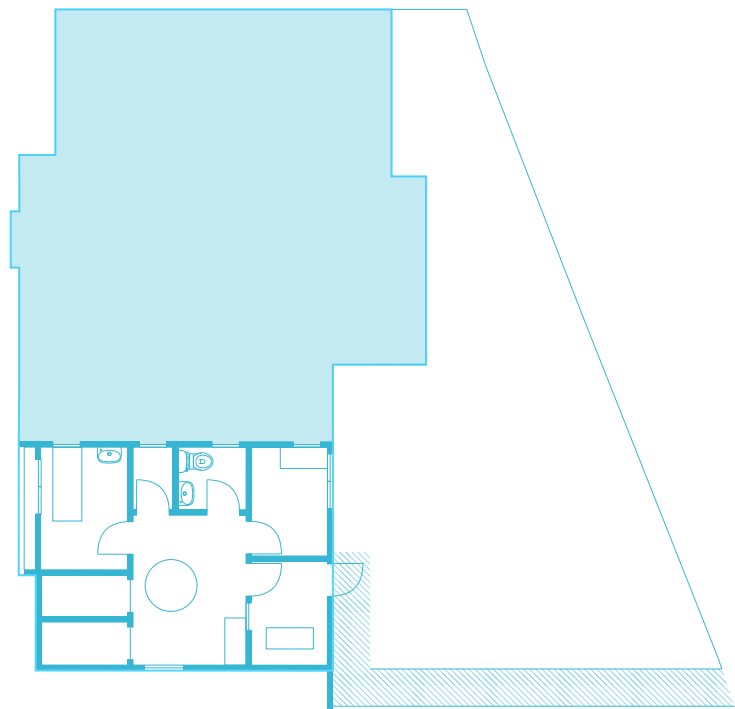


## Community Center

**Programs**  
The Westhaven Community Center is used for family gatherings, meetings, classes and support groups. Additionally, it is listed as a Neighborhood Housing Center by the Charlottesville Housing Authority.



## 1998 Survey



## Nursing Clinic

**Services**  
The clinic provides not just health services, but case management and follow-up. Issues with health ramifications (ex: receiving an eviction notice) are addressed here.

Managing diabetes and hypertension are core concerns for many residents



# Nursing Clinic

## Wellness + Recreation in the City



### Parish Nursing/Faith Community Model

Nursing care delivery system based not religious, but spiritual care.

"There have been times of complexity or sadness when the only thing I had to offer was a prayer." Holly Edwards



### Preventative Care

The clinic serves as a bridge to other community resources that increases the overall wellness of its users, not just as a center for treatment.

(CARES: Consultation, Advocacy, Resources, Education, Support/Spiritual)

**Charlottesville Dept. of Health**  
collaborator on Fresh Farmacy Program  
providers of Tdap vaccination services at  
Community Day Sports Physicals

**City of Promise**  
collaborator on Fresh Farmacy Program

**Common Ground**  
collaborator in Free-Chair Massage  
and Women's Initiative in HIV/AIDS testing, education and counseling

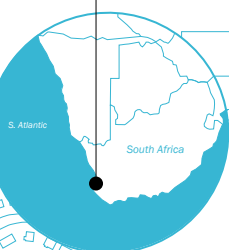
**UVA School of Medicine**  
clinic as site visit, 1st-year students focus  
on diabetes

**UVA Global Public Health**  
partners in research for Chronic Disease  
Self Management

**UVA School of Nursing**  
clinic as site for undergraduate  
Community Health Clinical

**Charlottesville Parks + Recreation**  
partner for BINGO (blood  
pressure screening)

**Chronic Disease Self Management**  
connecting women in Cape Town and  
Westhaven through Skype meetings  
2014-16



Crescent Hall

Friendship Court

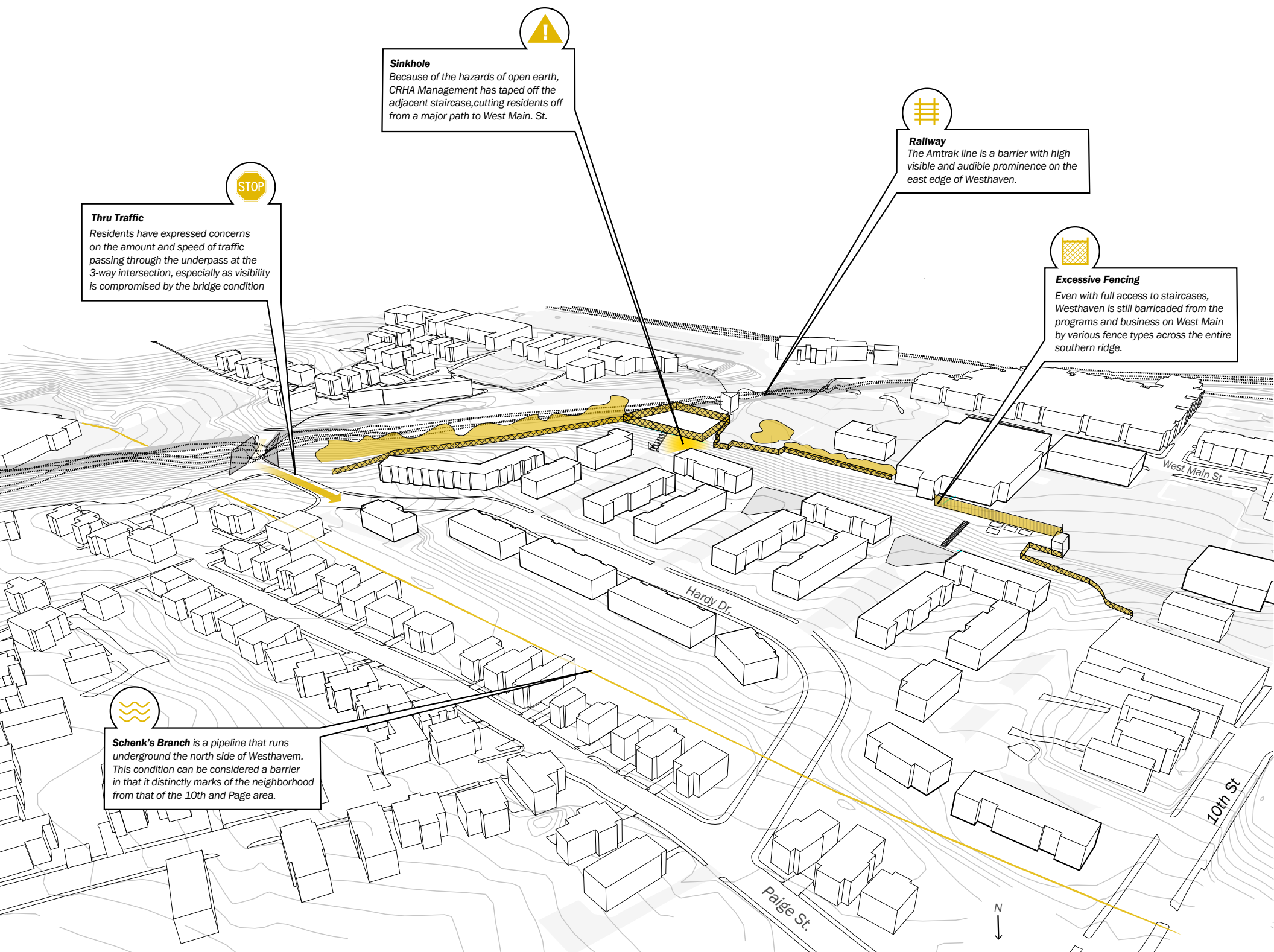
***Intervention***



# Isolation

## Identified Barriers

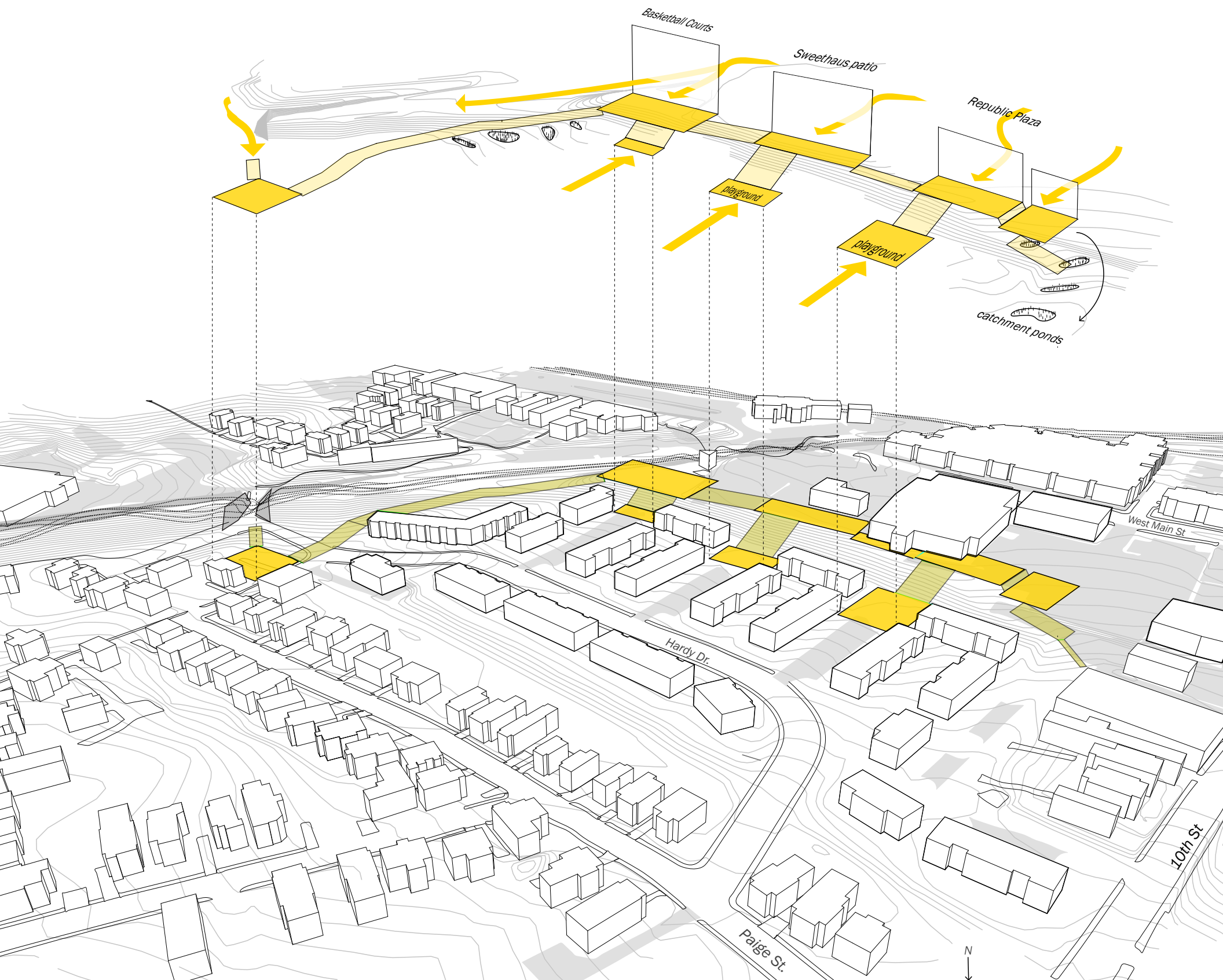
Westhaven is isolated from the rest of the city by clear spatial demaractions: topography, water, and physical barriers such as planting and fencing that deliberately prevent residents from accessing certain spaces. The identification of these boundaries permit a dialog on how to create more permeably between the neighborhood and the rest of Charlottesville.



# Intervention

## Adapted Edge

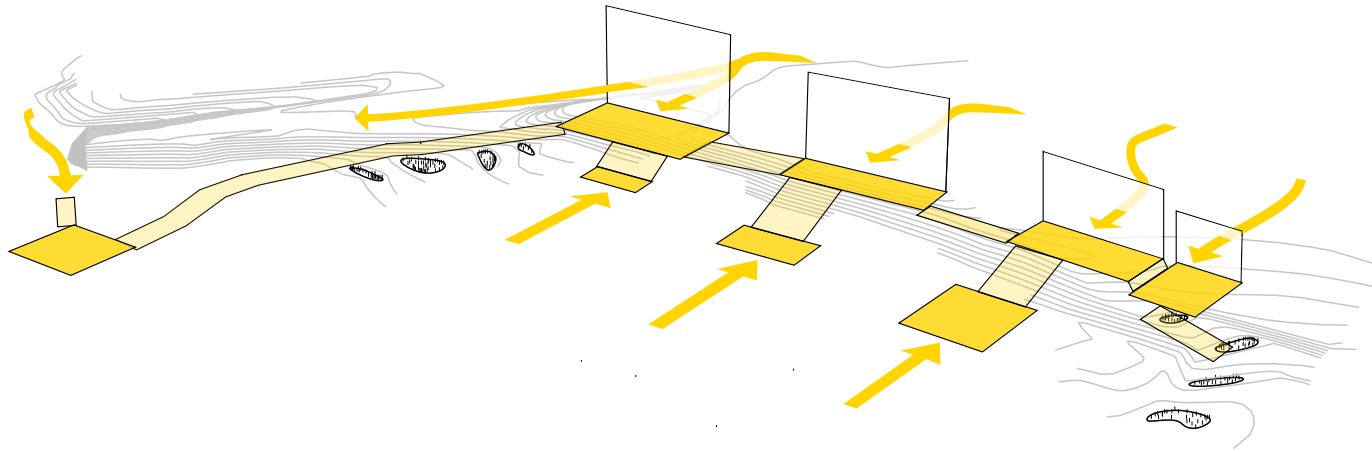
The southern ridge of Westhaven can be adapted in order to first meet the needs of residents to the North, but to also blur the edges, inviting people from territory around West Main street to populate the edge of this community. Though abstract, this diagram invites discussion on how the landscape may do this.



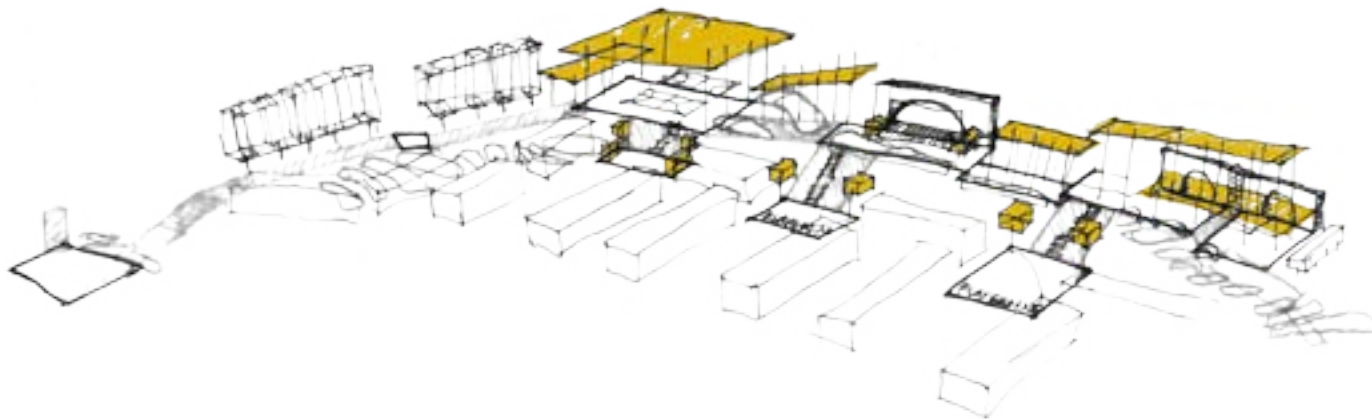
# Intervention

## Possibilities

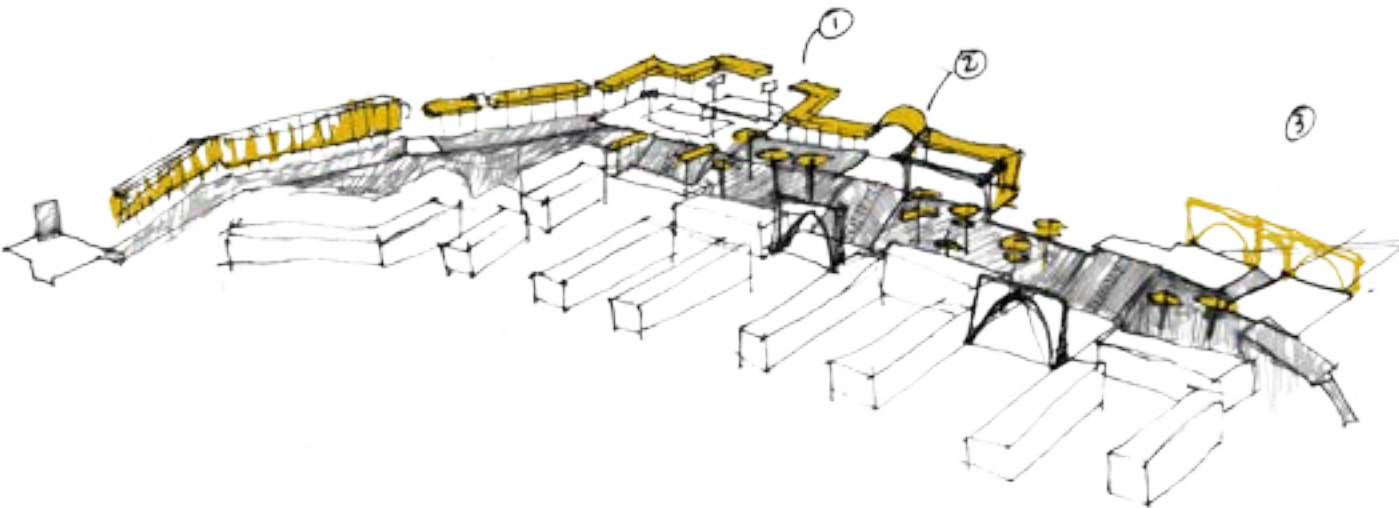
Strategy



Variation I



Variation II





**Variation III**

