

Reflection

A reflection on the graduation year 2024-2025 within the studio
'Designing for Health and Care in an inclusive Environment'

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1. Relevance and Context of the Project

Starting with the theme, I still firmly believe that the topic of my graduation project is highly relevant in today's society. From personal experience, I have seen the increasing pressure on families and loved ones to care for those in need, instead of relying on care institutions. Moreover, through my research, I have found that care needs are not always prioritised in the design of homes or buildings. For example, homes that need to be larger than average to accommodate a wheelchair may not always be financially viable for clients or developers. This raises the conflict between liveability and financial feasibility, a recurring challenge often discussed in the Dwelling: Health and Care studio.

In addition, loneliness, a central theme in my project, is not as straightforward to address as issues like dementia, hearing impairments or loss of sight. Loneliness is a hidden, subjective, and less concrete problem, even though it is widespread. This makes it more challenging to develop clear design guidelines. As shown in Figure 1, some guidelines, such as building height and seating, are straightforward; for example, limiting the height to a maximum of four stories supports better social interaction because the connection to the ground floor is still intact. However, other aspects, like spatial flexibility, are more difficult to define in concrete terms. Still, this challenge also presents a unique opportunity, creating space for creative solutions that can be closely integrated with both the community and the design itself. It's interesting to gain new insights into the health and care

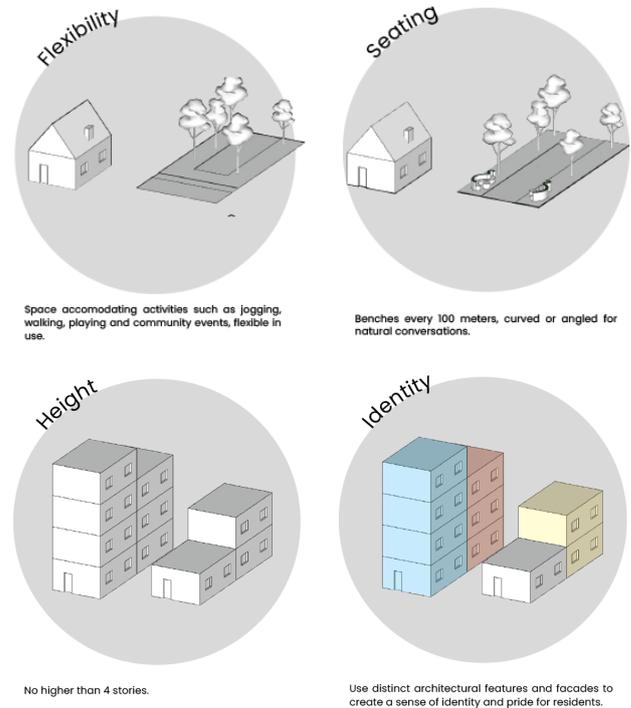


figure 1: A small selection of design guidelines that are the result of my research

dimension of architecture, which highlights its social impact, an aspect that is often overlooked in favor of the more traditional focus on form, aesthetics, or iconic design.

2. Research Influence on Design and Vice Versa

My methodology centered around gathering information, filtering out the most relevant data, and applying it to the design. Using guidelines derived from literature research, fieldwork, location analysis, and case studies as a foundation, I assessed which aspects could be directly implemented, such as limiting the building height, and which required a more interpretive approach, like promoting diversity or designing circulation. In hindsight, this process could have benefited from more careful consideration of

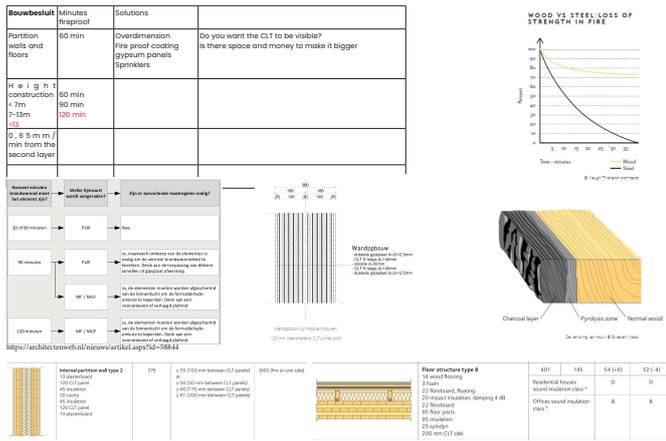
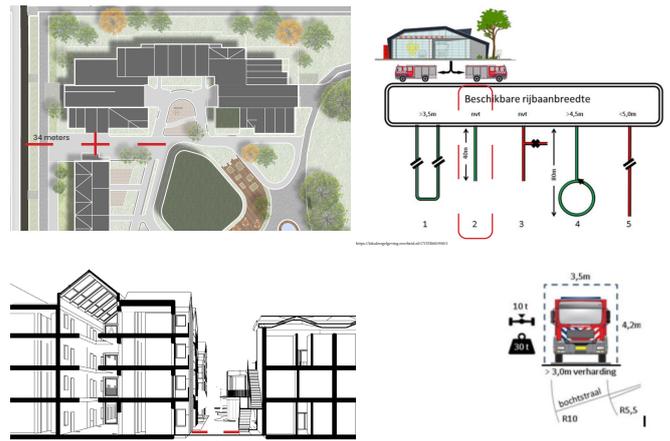


figure 3: fire rules research



safety, and accessibility. But during tutoring sessions, it often became clear that these weren't the most urgent problems to solve at that stage of the process. This was sometimes difficult to process, especially after investing time and effort into topics I believed were essential, and it led to some doubt about my design priorities.

Take fire safety, for instance. I looked into ways of fireproofing the staircase and central hallways or communal areas without compromising sightlines or the intuitive use of the space. This balance between safety and openness can be seen in Figures 2 and 3.

In the end, I tried my hardest to explore as many opportunities as possible. But given the stress and time constraints, the final result can be interpreted as not the most extravagant option. However, this was a conscious choice. The core of this project is about combating loneliness, particularly in the context of the Tarwewijk. For that, the design needs to work, function well, and connect with the daily realities of the people living there. Innovation for the sake of standing out isn't always the right answer, sometimes, simpler, grounded solutions better serve the social goals we aim to meet.

Especially after my P3, I needed a few days to reset, both my motivation and my sense of direction. Ultimately, my goal for the future is to find the intersection where thoughtful, research-based innovation meets practical, socially grounded design. I believe I can get there, but it will take more experience, time, and a working environment with less time based stress than I faced during this project.

3. Assessment of Approach, Methods, and Methodology

I believe that the approach I have taken, based on iterative research and application, has been valuable in shaping my design. However, as mentioned, filtering useful information and making decisions efficiently is an area that could be improved. I find it difficult to balance the desire to explore every possibility with the need to maintain a clear focus on the project's core objectives. Moving forward, I aim to refine my ability to prioritize and make more decisive choices, ensuring that I stay aligned with both the project's goals and the time constraints. I could have consulted the teachers more often about what they considered relevant at each stage of the semester. However, doing so might have undermined my own authority to determine what I found important in my

process and, based on my research, what I believed would benefit the design.

4. Academic and Societal Value, Scope, and Ethical Implications

In terms of academic value, I believe my project addresses a crucial gap in current architectural and care-related research. The societal value is also significant, as the focus on loneliness in architecture touches on a widespread, though often overlooked, issue. It is important to create spaces that promote well-being and social connection, especially for vulnerable individuals. Ethically, this project emphasizes the need to consider the mental and physical health of individuals in residential design, ensuring that care and comfort are at the forefront of architectural decisions.

From an environmental and sustainability perspective, I also see a challenge in balancing aesthetics, ethics, and feasibility in construction. While we aspire to build with sustainable materials, there are still practical limits when it comes to structural, acoustic, and visual requirements. I believe that over time, technology and material science will

evolve, and we may one day be able to build with materials that combine the strength of concrete, the aesthetics of wood, and the sustainability of recycled materials.

5. Transferability of Results

The transferability of my project's results depends largely on how well the design solutions can be adapted to various settings and types of buildings. I hope that my work can serve as a foundation for future projects that prioritize care and human-centered design, especially in environments where the well-being of the inhabitants is the most important goal. The insights and methods I've developed in this project may also be applicable in addressing other forms of social isolation, beyond just loneliness, opening the door for broader societal impact.

6. Reflection on Feedback

Throughout the process, I have received valuable feedback from my mentors, which has allowed me to critically assess my approach and identify areas for improvement. This input has been crucial in



Figure 4: P3 Posters for presentation

refining my design, especially in navigating the balance between functional aspects of care and the aesthetic and financial considerations. I have categorized the feedback into what could be implemented immediately and what could be applied later in the process. Some feedback, however, revealed my own limitations in approaching certain design elements and pointed out areas where meaningful changes were no longer feasible within the project's time constraints, such as larger layout decisions or the overall orientation of the building.

During my P3 presentation, there was also some personal feedback that I couldn't fully recognize myself in, and I also received the comment that my design appeared to be too far developed already, the design can be seen on the posters in Figure 4. This is something that often stems from my enthusiasm, whenever I have a presentation, I feel the need to show as much as possible in order to fully communicate my design intentions. I find it difficult to present something that feels unfinished or unresolved, so I tend to push my work further than perhaps expected at certain stages. In that context, the feedback makes sense, but it's also closely tied to how I work and express my ideas.

I think I sometimes would have appreciated more concrete, detailed feedback this semester, particularly regarding core elements of the design such as form, floorplans, and spatial clarity. I often find myself struggling with more abstract or generalized feedback, especially when it concerns fulfilling certain broader dimensions. In my mind, a building ultimately has to "work". It needs to stand, function, and genuinely support the way people want to live in it. For me, that's the goal of being an

architect: creating spaces that are not only conceptually strong but also truly livable.

7. Looking Ahead to the Final Phase, from p3 to p4

In the final phase of the project, I planned to further develop my design by incorporating the feedback from my mentors and refining the details. The goal was to bring the project to a stage where it can serve as a prototype for future housing or care environments that are both functional and supportive of the well-being of their inhabitants. I anticipated that I needed to focus on finalizing design elements while ensuring that the core principles of care, functionality, and community integration remain intact.

Reflection Questions

1. How can the design of residential spaces better address the mental health needs of individuals, particularly those experiencing loneliness?
2. To what extent can sustainable design principles be integrated into care-focused architecture without compromising the structural, aesthetic, and financial feasibility of the project?

Addressing the mental health needs of individuals, particularly those experiencing loneliness, requires a more all-inclusive approach to residential design. It goes beyond providing physical comfort; it's about fostering a sense of connection, autonomy, and purpose. Design strategies such as shared semi-private spaces, visual and physical connections between different parts of the building, and a fine balance between privacy and public can help create an environment where residents feel seen

and part of a community. Incorporating adaptable layouts, social areas like communal kitchens or gardens, and informal meeting points throughout the building are practical ways to reduce feelings of isolation and promote mental well-being. Thoughtful spatial design and material choices also play a role, supporting both sensory stimulation and emotional comfort.

In terms of integrating sustainable design principles into care-focused architecture, it's clear that careful compromises must often be made. While sustainable materials and systems are crucial for long-term environmental responsibility, they must be balanced with the immediate needs of residents, such as acoustic comfort, accessibility, and clarity of space. Innovations like bio-based materials, modular construction, or energy-efficient systems offer promising opportunities, but they still require testing in complex, lived-in environments. The real challenge lies in integrating these without sacrificing the spatial logic, emotional warmth, or financial accessibility of the design. Moving forward, the field needs more real-life case studies and research validated evidence to demonstrate that sustainability and care can, and should, be developed together rather than seen as competing priorities.