

South Platte Crossing Trauma-Informed Design Assessment

October 2022

Submitted to and in partnership with the service providers at South Platte Crossing (led by ECPAC - Early Childhood Partnership of Adams County):



ECPAC
EARLY CHILDHOOD
PARTNERSHIP
OF ADAMS COUNTY

Prepared by:



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In August 2022, Shopworks Architecture initiated a trauma-informed design training and assessment process with the South Platte Crossing community, interviewing 26 individuals in person, including 12 participants/clients and 14 service providers. Participants/clients were interviewed in English and Spanish.

This assessment process is informed by our experience as a research team, conducting over 1,000 interviews with persons served and service providers on over 45 developments to further our understanding of the concept of trauma-informed design. The questions asked in these interviews have been designed to focus on how the environment can be a tool to promote health and healing, working alongside service providers and programs at South Platte Crossing to support restoration and thriving for all who enter the space.

In terms of the larger vision for the building, participants of this assessment expressed hope that South Platte Crossing can serve as a “Community Resource Hub” – a welcoming place where people know that they can receive wrap-around resources and services, from DMV assistance to medical and dental care to family supports. Service providers do not feel that this message is currently being communicated to visitors and the wider community. However, they expressed a desire for exterior signage and interior branding throughout the space to help establish and reinforce this.

In addition to spatially highlighting the brand of a “Community Resource Hub,” there were a few other key items that arose from the collected data as priority areas, with 1) the desire to create a more comfortable, navigable environment that supports adults and children as they spend time both inside and outside the building; 2) a greater sense of safety and connection, and 3) family-friendly and culturally responsive spaces at the top of that list.

People reflected that, upon entry, the front entrance and lobby feeling drab and sterile. Comfortable indoor and outdoor seating, plants, softer lighting, and visual interest (in the form of wall murals or other imagery that provides a diversity of identity anchors) may assist individuals in feeling more welcome and connected to the space upon entry. Wayfinding on the first floor was repeatedly named as confusing and frustrating, leaving visitors unsure about how to navigate to other floors, how to find their destination once they reach the appropriate floor, and understanding what other services are offered in the building. The directory at the front door is easily missed, unclear, or not in a language that visitors can understand. Signage and arrows, preferably in multiple languages, would help visitors navigate the space. When dreaming, participants requested a front desk with a staff member who would warmly welcome visitors, provide information about what is in the building, and assist people in navigating to their desired location.

Service providers and participants expressed that the building can feel unsafe, as people who are not seeking services are known to wander in and out. The building’s various nooks and crannies, unoccupied rooms, and quiet and dark wings were cited as locations that represent

unknowns and potential threats. Additionally, it was reported that security cameras do not cover the entire building, exacerbating feelings of unease among staff. The parking lot was also named as a place of anxiety among families (particularly those arriving with young children) who requested clear pedestrian lines, speed limit signs, and directional signs for cars. **It is important to note that, generally, people shared that they were impressed with and appreciative of the commitment exhibited by those who oversee the building and their response to issues that have arisen. For example, when a security issue arose with the front door, management immediately responded with solutions.**

The tenants of the building clearly share a sense community with one another, which was apparent in our interactions. However, most agreed that the building itself can get in the way of growing those connections. Service providers expressed a desire for spaces to connect to one another – is there a way to create a comfortable, desirable space that is shared and people have easy access to? Additionally, people reflected that there is no established system for quick communication across service providers, which was noted as a major issue in the event of an emergency.

Additionally, it was consistently raised that the space be intentionally designed as family friendly, child friendly, and culturally responsive. Are there designated spaces throughout the building where children can play while caregivers wait for services or connect with service providers? Would it be possible to construct an outdoor play area for children with natural materials, plants, and a conveniently located bathroom, so children and caregivers can have a place to be outside in the fresh air and experience nature?

It shall be noted that several of the building's board members attended the trauma-informed design sessions, and several of the ideas mentioned by service providers are similar to conversations that board members have been having. Providers are appreciative of the willingness of board members to participate and consider this report.

This report will explore these matters in greater detail, with direct quotes from service providers and individuals served to guide a discussion of the spatial experience that staff and visitors are having at South Platte Crossing. Our hope is that this report will highlight key spatial elements and values to prioritize as renovations (minor and major, immediate and future) are being carried out in the building to support the dignity and well-being of those being served by the community operating in this space.

Following the Executive Summary, this report is organized into the following sections:

- The **Introduction** outlines the basic tenets of trauma-informed care and trauma-informed design, which establish the basis of this research approach.
- The **Findings** section summarizes input from various members of the South Platte Crossing community, organized by theme.
- **TID Design Recommendations**, both general and specific, are offered for South Platte Crossing based on input from service providers and persons served in the building.
- Finally, the **Conclusion** wraps up the report.

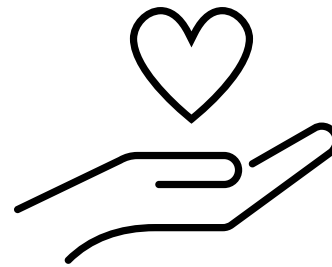
INTRODUCTION

TRAUMA-INFORMED DESIGN

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) is a critical practice to walk alongside those navigating services, including shelters and supportive housing. This is an evidenced-based practice that acknowledges that the trauma people have experienced impacts the way they interact with others and deeply influences the paths individuals can and should take toward healing and resiliency. SAMHSA (the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) defines the “Six Key Principles of a trauma-informed approach”¹ as follows:

1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness and Transparency
3. Peer Support
4. Collaboration and Mutuality
5. Empowerment, Voice, and Choice
6. Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE BUILDING DESIGN?

While there is deep evidenced-based research on TIC, there is not clear guidance on how TIC should inform the spaces within which trauma-informed programs are offered. For that reason, Shopworks Architecture, CHHR, and Group14 Engineering joined together in 2019 to explore what aspects of the built environment help individuals build relationships, feel safe and empowered, heal, and thrive. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from residents and staff of residential buildings designed with an intentional trauma-informed lens. Data were analyzed and interrogated by this interdisciplinary research team, and the findings of that research are summarized in Figure 1.

¹ From: https://ncsacw.samhsa.gov/userfiles/files/SAMHSA_Trauma.pdf

Figure 1 | Trauma-Informed Design Framework²



Starting in the center, we discovered the “**3 C’s of Designing for Health and Healing.**” These are questions that are critical to buildings having TID at the heart of design decision-making:

- Is this helping to create **choice** for visitors/guests? Is this allowing all visitors/guests to have agency in their environment?
- Will this help create **community**? Are the spaces set up to encourage relationships between visitors/guests and between visitors/guests and staff? Building trusting relationships is one of the key ways that individuals heal from trauma.
- Lastly, are we making decisions that lead to **comfort** for the users (both visitors/guests and staff)? We must pay attention to the quality and variety of materials, sensory experiences of light, sound, and smell, and bringing in elements of nature and artwork that calm the senses or spark joy.

Next, we talk about the **core values** that must be central to all developments:

- **Dignity, hope, and self-esteem** – celebrating each individual’s inherent worth, emphasizing strengths, and maximizing potential.
- **Empowerment and personal control** – encouraging individual agency, welcoming self-expression, and offering choices for visitors/guests.

² From: <https://www.shopworksarc.com/tid>

- **Safety, security, and privacy** – visitors/guests’ perceived safety is as important as actual safety. This requires prioritizing clear wayfinding and sightlines, minimizing negative triggers, and offering vantages of both prospect and refuge.
- **Peace of mind** – cultivating a comfortable, calm ambience that supports relaxation, self-soothing, stress management, and coping through design details, such as lighting, sound mitigation, natural elements, and access to nature.
- **Community and connection** – creating spaces that encourage camaraderie and friendships among visitors/guests as well as staff and foster an environment where visitors/guests can build trusting relationships.
- **Joy, beauty, and meaning** – honoring culture, place, and identity by providing places that spark imagination, nurture hope, and foster aspiration.

Lastly, no building exists in a vacuum. It is crucial for the development and design team to seek to understand the **cultural and environmental context** within which a building is situated. It is important to ensure that a building is viewed as an asset to the entire community and that it honors the **lived experiences** and identities of those who are moving throughout it. Spaces carry meaning with them. If a space is meant to be a place where healing occurs and visitors/guests and staff alike can lean into their own resiliency, it is critical that the design of the building be done in a way that complements the values of those who will inhabit it.

OVERVIEW

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The findings of this assessment are organized into the following overarching, often overlapping, themes, which describe distinct qualities of participant and service providers experiences in the building:

1. Safety & Security
2. Comfort & Care
3. Community & Connection
4. ECPAC Specific

Additionally, de-identified direct quotes from participants and service providers are highlighted below *in orange*.

THEME 1: SAFETY & SECURITY

Wayfinding was identified as a significant barrier in the building. Several participants described the building as *“confusing”* and expressed difficulties making their way to service provider offices, often having to call or ask for assistance their first time there. Participants also described challenges finding bathrooms, stairs, and the elevator, which is tucked behind a wall and not readily apparent upon entry. One person noted, *“The first time I came, it was hard to find the elevator. You don’t know it’s behind that wall. I needed staff to help me.”* Another shared, *“Usually when you walk into a space, you will know where the bathrooms are, but I didn’t. You didn’t even know where the bathrooms are.”* Even understanding which service providers are in the building poses a significant challenge, as the sign at the entrance is often missed by visitors (*“There is a list when you walk in, but no one sees it.”*) and can be difficult to interpret. For example, WIC (the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children) is offered by Tri-County Health; however, WIC is not explicitly listed as a service and may be difficult for someone to know is available. As one service provider noted, *“I watch families stare at the directory and have no idea what to do. Lots of people. Not just those who don’t speak English. It’s just a long, weird directory that doesn’t work for people.”* Participants described difficulties navigating to the ECPAC offices, as they did not anticipate that service providers would be operating in the basement.

Consistent, accessible signage was raised as a primary need for the building. Because the various service providers in the building are operating independently, the signage is experienced as inconsistent in terms of design, placement, and frequency. Increased signage was suggested throughout the building, including clear directions to the elevators, bathrooms, and exits. Signs identifying the various wings as well as unmarked doors were suggested for communicating a sense of transparency and illuminating unknowns for visitors and service providers throughout the building. Signage in languages other than English was also suggested to create a more inclusive, accessible environment. As one participant noted, *“So many people come in here from other places, people who don’t speak the language. The lack of information in different languages is a problem.”* Participants suggested that the building position someone at the front door to assist with wayfinding and provide information about services in the building and that this person be able to communicate in more than one language.

Obstructed sightlines and dark nooks and crannies throughout the building coupled with an unregulated front entrance caused many service providers and participants to describe the building as “scary.” Poor lighting, unmarked doors, limited traffic throughout the building, and unoccupied wings/floors were also reported as contributing to feelings of compromised safety and the sense that unknown dangers may be lurking around the corner. Service providers shared stories about people occupying vacant spaces in the building and suggested that this could be the case at any time, given that the front entrance is open without anyone monitoring building traffic. Several people noted that it’s common to see people wandering around the building, either because they are trying to locate a particular service or perhaps because they are seeking shelter. As such, service providers reported that they do not feel safe working alone or during off hours (in the evening or over the weekend) and do not feel good about their colleagues doing this either. One service provider expressed, *“I have my staff always make sure to be in pairs. Don’t ever go into the office by themselves, but that’s not always possible.”*

Participants expressed safety concerns around identifying emergency exits throughout the building, particularly when they are in ECPAC’s basement offices or the conference room. One participant shared, *“I sought out the exits and found them. Now I feel comfortable, but in the beginning, I felt uncomfortable not knowing. It would be amazing to have the signage.”* Many stated that they could not locate the stairs in the building and did not have a clear sense for an escape route in the event of an emergency.

Several spaces in the building present a single point of entry and exit, including many of the service spaces as well as the conference room. Participants and service providers described this posing a major threat in the event of a natural or human-caused emergency.

People expressed appreciation for onsite cameras; however, many people requested greater camera coverage across the property as well as real-time monitoring. Some suggested the need for a clear security station where onsite security personnel, hired to support the entire building, would monitor live camera feeds. However, others questioned whether security personnel at the entrance would feel unwelcoming and even threatening to some visitors. This is one of many topics currently being examined by the Board.

Safety concerns about the parking lot were raised, particularly by adults with young children. They expressed that the parking lot was difficult to cross without clearly marked pedestrian walkways and that cars often zoomed through the lot unchecked. This was a major concern for adults walking with young children who are known to dart ahead. As one participant shared, *“The parking lot is not safe for me and my three small kids...I hate taking them down because they run.”* Other participants described the experience of driving through the parking lot being similarly unnerving, as it is difficult to see who has the right of way and parking spaces are too close to one another.

Some concerns were raised about accessibility considerations throughout the building, particularly in some of the bathrooms, which are small and would be difficult, potentially impossible, to access or navigate in a wheelchair or even a large stroller. However, many

considerations have already been made for those entering the building using mobility or assistive devices, including an unobstructed entrance, push buttons at the front door, ADA compliant button height in the elevator, and grab bars in the bathrooms. The need for gender inclusive bathrooms was identified (rather than all publicly accessible bathrooms being solely designated as either women's and men's). Adults with children expressed the desire for family bathrooms that are large enough to comfortably support children of various ages and accompanying gear. Furthermore, some bathrooms were identified as dark, cramped, outdated, and generally uninviting (recognizing that some of the bathrooms in the building have been updated). Renovations to the still outdated bathrooms are currently being discussed by the Board.

Service providers described incidents taking place at the building, some of which involve the presence of EMS vehicles. However, they never find out what happened, which further compromises a sense of safety and security in the building. Additionally, without formalized communication channels, there is no way to notify the entire building about an emergency situation or to lock down the building in the event of an active shooter scenario. As one service provider noted, *"There's no way to alert people on other floors or in other rooms if something is going on."* Another shared, *"It would be nice to have some form of communication. The world we are living in today feels nerve-wracking."*

Service providers expressed appreciation for the Board and select owners addressing issues that arise in the building, including a door that was not properly closing. It was acknowledged that, given the different owners and operators throughout the building, it can be difficult to achieve consistency in some spatial and design treatments. However, as it relates to safety and security, the Board has demonstrated a commitment to addressing these concerns in a direct and timely fashion.

THEME 2: COMFORT & CARE

The building is located near bus and RTD lines as well as major roadways, making it convenient for community members using a range of transportation. Additionally, as the former Human Services building, it is a familiar location and a visible landmark for many in the community.

Service providers and participants expressed appreciation for the cleanliness of the building and clear commitment to the building's upkeep. As one person noted, *"I want to give kudos to the building. Whenever I'm here, everything is clean. The staff that they have are doing a very good job."*

The general appearance of the building was described as uninviting, imposing, institutional - *"the color of the building looks like a jail."* The colors of both the interior and exterior were described as drab and *"boring,"* saying it felt *"like an insurance office."* Inside, the uniform, undistinctive colors were described as adding to difficulties navigating the building, as every space looks the same. One participant noted, *"It all looks the same – you can't remember what*

room you were in.” Regarding the exterior, one service provider seemed hopeful about improvements: *“I’ve seen some really cool murals being painted on brick to make it feel less like an old, institutional building.”* Approaching the building, one is struck by the appearance of asphalt with minimal green space. This institutional appearance was described as a major barrier, given the community served by the services in the building and experiences of trauma and marginalization experienced in comparable settings where people *“sit in a crappy waiting room for hours and people treat me horribly.”* As one service provider shared, the building *“doesn’t reflect the care we have for them. People are aware that this building looks very different from other public sector buildings. We are asking our families to come into something that’s very different.”* Uninviting signage posted outside the building was also noted as needing updating, including a sign reading: *“It is illegal to leave your child in the car.”* While the information may be accurate, it could be triggering to some people. Service providers suggested that strengths-based language be reflected in all signage.

The elevators were described as old, worn down, and in need of repairs. Participants raised the potential that the elevator may be tight for someone in a wheelchair, particularly a large electric model. This is another topic currently being addressed by the Board.

Most parts of the building exhibit limited signs of life with infrequent foot traffic, few if any plants, and minimal noise. Service providers shared that they saw few people walking around their floors (particularly on the upper floors) and that they rarely left their office space outside of coming to and leaving work and running to the restroom. As such, they described limited chance encounters with other service providers or visitors. Additionally, some teams have staff working in the community and remotely, which further limits the number of people and opportunities for connection in the building as well. With limited views of nature and scarce outdoor seating options, people describe the building as a sterile experience. One participant shared, *“It feels like you’re in a hospital.”* Another participant reflected, *“Even though there are people around, you can’t see them. The hallways to the back feel creepy. There’s no life in there, feels like someone’s going to jump out.”*

Service providers and participants raised concerns about the lack of seating in the lobby and immediately outside the building. Visitors are often seen standing or sitting on the floor of the lobby or outside on the ground or planters, as there is no seating in these areas and individuals are often waiting for public transportation or other rides. Service providers described this with a clear sense of dissatisfaction about these conditions, saying that they would love to see the entrance transformed into a more inviting and comfortable experience. As one service provider expressed, *“That outside concrete area seems to have so much potential to help create more inviting experiences.”* Another service provider described running to their office to grab a book for a child while they are waiting, highlighting the opportunity for this area to showcase the building’s offerings to an available audience. However, one person did raise the following concern: *“When seating is open, it is open for everyone. You can’t gauge who is using it. That’s an issue to keep in mind when you offer seating.”*

Participants reflected that, while some specific spaces and services in the building cater to families and children, the building as a whole does not feel family friendly – it’s *“not kid-friendly.”* This comes through in the general appearance, which does not feel warm or stimulating, in the restrooms (as noted above), and in the absence of child-focused spaces or outlets.

Participants expressed a desire for updated water fountains and water bottle filling stations.

THEME 3: COMMUNITY & CONNECTION

Service providers described a vision for the building to communicate *“Community Resource Hub”* to the public as well as permanency, which is a work in progress. There is a desire to demonstrate, through branding and other cues inside and outside the building, that the services are working together as a one-stop shop to holistically support individuals and families for the long-term. This appears to be a unifying goal among service providers in the building, which factors directly into vacant spaces being filled and elements undergoing renovation. As one service provider described the potential of the collective, *“It could be visionary.”*

Service providers and participants highlighted the need for some type of prominent sign or marker outside the building that clearly communicates service offerings. Given the previous note, there is an opportunity here to feature the building as a “Community Resource Hub.” Furthermore, it was emphasized that the sign be designed in a way that sets a tone for the building as warm and welcoming. Framing the importance of this goal, one service provider said, *“Getting clients to walk in the door is the biggest challenge.”* In relation to the character of the space, one participant noted, *“We want a friendlier building.”*

The conference room in the basement is an appreciated, utilized, and mostly comfortable space for larger meetings. Ample space and flexible furniture make it easy to rearrange the room to meet the needs of the group. One participant noted, *“It’s big, we can hear, but it’s not too huge. I feel that a lot of people fit in here.”* The furniture was described by participants as comfortable and accessible – *“the chairs are definitely comfortable.”* Given the tendency for groups to gather with food, a sink in the room may have made sense. Similar to other feedback about the building, the bare white walls were described as stark and sterile. However, one participant noted that simple décor allows them to focus on the content at hand without being distracted. *“It’s nice to be able to be in a space that’s nice, bright, and I can focus...you can focus here because it’s white, but it does need something.”* Thus, a balanced approach to stimuli is perhaps a goal for this and other spaces.

The cafeteria was cited as another large meeting space in the building with great potential; however, this space seems to be underutilized. Service providers described this room having a large kitchen, which was identified by participants as desirable for future ECPAC programming. As one person noted, *“That sounds nice – it’ll bring you closer to the community.”* The furniture in this room was also described as updated and varied, which could support a range of

activities. Service providers discussed the potential of this space to support greater connection throughout the building, offering a space for potlucks and other building-wide events.

Service providers described feeling largely disconnected from one another on both a professional and personal level. They reflected that there were no spaces that fostered organic connections - places to bump into one other while grabbing coffee or eating lunch. For the most part, service providers described entering the building and heading straight to their office suites without much reason to venture out until the end of the day when they head home. There was clear interest among service providers for spatial features that would encourage connections in the building, including intentional use of the cafeteria for building-wide programming.

Participants expressed that the building does not necessarily feel culturally responsive, inviting, or open to other groups who may do things differently. For some, this was reflected in the lack of language and interpretation support and in what organizations feel welcome in the building. As noted above, participants stressed that future considerations of staff at the front entrance, including security personnel, must prioritize that person's ability to communicate in other languages. Participants also raised the need for literal reflections of cross-cultural images and design elements.

Participants expressed that an outdoor area for children would be extremely useful and appreciated. They described this area offering respite to caregivers, with shaded seating for them to supervise their children in a comfortable atmosphere as well as a surrounding fence so that kids can run freely. When prompted to provide additional details, they suggested close access to bathrooms and water fountains, eco-friendly features, water features, and a rubber surface (instead of woodchips).

Participants demonstrated a strong commitment to the community and a desire to participate in decision-making. One person noted (with others agreeing), *"We would like to be a part of the Board meetings. We want to know who the people are who are making the decisions."* In relation to this evaluation, another stated, *"It would be really good to know what's next."*

THEME 4: ECPAC SPECIFIC

Participants widely expressed appreciation and praise for ECPAC staff and services. They described ECPAC as a place where they can connect to a supportive community and be heard. One person noted, *"Something that is amazing with ECPAC is that they always listen to you."*

Participants unanimously shared that their children love coming to ECPAC. The toys, books, snacks, and staff in the ECPAC space were all named as favorite aspects of the experience. However, the playroom is too small for the number of children that are often in the space. A staff member noted, *"We had 15 kids when school was out – we get a lot of kids!"*

Participants described ECPAC spaces (including the conference room, which is often used by participants) as feeling mostly safe, especially given the use of key fobs to enter both areas. They also noted that when their kids run to the bathroom, there's no telling who may be in there or around the corner. One participant shared, *"The [ECPAC] room is safe because you can't open it. But here in the other spaces, if the kids go to the bathroom, you don't know. It relates to signage. People don't know what is where. They go through the whole building to try to find what they are looking for."* Participants expressed appreciation for the close proximity of meeting spaces to the playroom; however, greater visibility and direct sightlines to their children would be preferred. Furthermore, they expressed a desire for childcare staff to introduce themselves and make that direct connection. Thus, ECPAC operations in combination with the dynamics of the rest of the building create the overall ECPAC experience.

ECPAC staff do not necessarily feel safe or secure in ECPAC spaces. Echoing the above points, they feel isolated in the basement and particularly vulnerable to a potential threat given the single point of entry/exit to their space. They noted that the basement contains several unmarked doors and unused rooms and wings that could be occupied by an unwelcomed visitor. As one person expressed, *"Sometimes I have lots of work to do, and I'm thinking, 'Don't anyone be down here!' It's scary. If I screamed, no one would hear us down here."*

Staff do not have a dedicated area for taking breaks or taking care of themselves. They could use the basement cafeteria; however, for whatever reason, they don't use this space. Some use the storage rooms or bathrooms. Staff reflected that, given their location in the basement, they would really appreciate a dedicated outdoor area where they can sit, enjoy their lunch, and get some fresh air.

Staff and participants lamented the lack of windows in ECPAC's basement spaces; however, other efforts have been made to make the space more comfortable, including artwork depicting natural motifs, personalized artwork from children engaged with the program, wall murals, and soft, adjustable lighting.

Participants noted that ECPAC desperately needs more storage space, which comes from observations of staff wrestling to find items in the donation room. They suggested that greater space would allow for items to be displayed in a way that is more visible and easier for everyone to access. Staff input reinforced this point, sharing that they have already outgrown the space due to expanded programming and operations.

DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

GENERAL

- **Entryways** are critical spaces that set the tone for new guests, regular visitors, and staff. Visibility and clear sightlines, using windows and cameras, are critical for safely monitoring entryways and building access. Make sure windows are not obstructed with signs and other postings. The value of *welcoming* needs to be felt when people walk into the building. Seek to set that tone with visual interest, biophilic elements, and comfortable seating for all body types.
- **Clear sightlines** are needed for all indoor and outdoor spaces, including basements, stairwells, entryways, and parking. Cameras should be strategically positioned to eliminate gaps in visibility across the property. If possible, ensure outdoor areas are able to be monitored from a front desk or service provider area.
- All spaces should support **wayfinding** through clear, accessible signage (i.e., large print, multiple languages, strategic placement, color contrasting). Directional signage should distinctly point out the elevators, stairs, restrooms, exits, and service wings. Allowing guests to know where they are going without having to ask people supports feelings of empowerment and calm.
- **Distinctive colors** can be used on particular floors, in dedicated wings, or on doors to help ground orient visitors in large spaces. Additionally, all doors and wings should be clearly marked to communicate transparency and allay questions about what may be taking place outside of view.
- **Adjustable lighting** is recommended for every room, including offices and amenity spaces, to support various visibility and light sensitivity needs. Soft and warm light bulb color temperatures and dimmer switches can quickly adjust the tone of a space. Windows should be outfitted with blinds or curtains; this also true for interior windows to promote privacy when needed.
- Circulation and **temperature regulation** are always an issue. Consider installing ceiling fans in spaces holding several people.
- **Soundproofing** must be prioritized to ensure privacy and confidentiality in office and meeting spaces. Noise machines can be used as cost effective noise cancellation devices in offices where service providers are conducting private conversations near others.
- **Accessibility and universal design** should be considered in every space. This includes nonslip flooring, unobstructed walkways (i.e., no rugs), wide doors, grab bars in all bathrooms and stalls, and spaces large enough for people to maneuver with a mobility device. Gentle transitions between spaces and modulation of sensory inputs are recommended to attend to neurodiversity. Common spaces (such as bathrooms) must be gender inclusive and varied to consider diverse safety and comfort needs.
- **Furniture** must be able to accommodate assistive devices and body size diversity, including tables that can be raised for wheelchairs and chairs without arms for all body types. Ensure that varied, size inclusive, comfortable, and approachable seating is available in all areas of the building, including waiting rooms, lobbies, examination rooms, office spaces, and outdoors. Furniture must be able to be enjoyed by children

who will introduce snacks, arts and crafts, and occasional accidents to these items. Durability and the ability to be easily wiped down are essential, while ensuring that these pieces are not overly institutional or cold in appearance.

- Support **animal companionship** in the building as this can be a critical source of support for individuals and families. Design dedicated outdoor space for dogs to relieve themselves, suitable for winter and summer, protection from the elements, able to be easily cleaned and maintained, and distinct from other recreation areas (especially children's play areas).
- Natural, **biophilic elements** should be incorporated into all spaces, including organic building materials and furniture, windows with intentional views (such as window boxes with plants and birdfeeders), indoor plants, and natural imagery. Avoid institutional materials, such as fluorescent lighting, ceiling tiles, cinder blocks, and plastic.
- Consider **decorative elements** that resonate with occupants of the space, such as artwork created by clients/participants, photographs of local historic sites or local figures from various communities, natural imagery, and images and motifs that represent cultural diversity. Consider elements of delight and surprise, simple and durable art installations that can be interacted with and gamified (for children and adults).
- In common spaces, consider providing **games**, such as chess, or other activities that encourage interaction and mental stimulation for both adults and youth and invite people to sit and connect with others.
- Ample **storage** space and organizational supports are important, as clutter can cause mental fatigue, which can be a source of stress, tension, and conflict. Clear tubs and simple labels will support navigation for service providers and participants in these spaces.
- A sufficient number of **outlets** are often recommended in spaces serving the needs of both service providers and participants who may need to charge devices during their visit.
- **Water fountains** with water bottle filling stations should be readily available across the property for guests and service providers as a clear outlet inviting them to meet their own needs.
- Consider an area where **snacks and beverages** are offered. Otherwise, vending machines providing affordable and healthy items are often appreciated by visitors, particularly those who may be onsite for long periods.
- **Outside**, there should be comfortable, shaded, body inclusive seating with tables and nearby outlets where people can do work or other activities. Consider small gazebos that provide protection from the elements. Other recommended outdoor amenities include green space, community gardens, and water features near seating. Scattered pockets of seating can provide additional outdoor meeting space for semi-private staff-staff and staff-client conversations.
- If possible, provide indoor and outdoor high impact **play areas** for children with space to run, climb, jump, dig, and bang. Avoid wooden play structures that splinter and require substantial maintenance. It is important to provide seating around dedicated outdoor

play areas for adult oversight of kids as well as seating removed from play areas for individuals seeking calm and quiet. An outdoor play area should be fenced in; however, chain-link fences should be avoided because they can exude a cold, institution feel. Consider semi-private fencing made of natural materials, which offer a sense of security and provide while still providing some visibility across the property. Fences are critical for parents and guardians to have peace of mind as small children are running around playing; however, it must be thoughtfully designed to avoid feelings of being in an institutional enclosure. Also consider dedicated indoor and outdoor outlets for older children with books, appropriate technology, and opportunities for creative expression.

- It is important to consider dedicated, removed **spaces for individuals to smoke outside**, as this is one way that individuals self-regulate. These spaces should offer cover from the elements and provide adequate and comfortable seating.
- Safety in **parking lots** is critical. Design with ample lighting and visibility to staff areas if possible.

SOUTH PLATTE CROSSING

- Service providers and participants identified the need for a large, **distinctive marker** outside of the building. This is an opportunity to market South Platte Crossing as the “Community Resource Hub” and present a unifying brand to the community. Consider the potential of enlisting community support in this process, such as a vote to select the final design or a community-wide celebration to unveil the new sign.
- During this assessment, it was suggested that an **updated directory** greet visitors at the entrance, listing proper names of service providers as well as descriptions of services on offer. This could be a static or interactive map, orienting new guests to the layout of the building. It is critical that information be offered in multiple languages.
- It is suggested that some uniform **signage** conventions (such as placement, layout, and language) be applied throughout the building to provide visitors with some consistency as they are orienting themselves to the space. To support the branding of “South Platte Crossing: Community Resource Hub,” the building might consider each service provider’s signage (with unique logos, colors, and fonts) appearing on a larger template or placard that bears the building’s brand.
- If **distinctive colors** are used on the various floors, in dedicated wings, and on doors to support wayfinding, these colors could fall within a selected color palate of the “South Platte Crossing: Community Resource Hub” brand to promote the unification of building spaces.
- Consider **painting** the outside and inside of the building to soften the overall appearance. Local mural artists could be enlisted to infuse the space with elements of local identity, history, and culture. The wide column on the first floor presents a visible canvas and opportunity to invite and delight.
- The **lobby** of this building presents an opportunity to invite visitors into a warm and welcoming environment. Consider the colors and textures of this space. Live plants, natural images, organic materials, and a water feature communicate signs of life. Provide comfortable, durable, body inclusive seating in this space to accommodate the

waiting known to happen here. A large television screen could be used to advertise onsite services and events or to display a virtual fish tank or fireplace. Additionally, identify a dedicated physical space in the lobby where service providers (both onsite and offsite) can display information about their programs. A little library could support mental stimulation in the form of books as well as games and small activities (which could potentially be sponsored by the local public library). This area should promote intentional interaction with the updated directory. For example, an interactive directory could be adjacent to a small children's play area, so caregivers can orient themselves to onsite services while their children are occupied.

- At South Platte Crossing, the **paved area outside** of the front entrance is spacious. Consider comfortable seating, outlets, planters, and art to greet visitors and staff with visual interest, color, and life. If possible, identify a shaded spot where picnic tables can support lunch breaks and small gatherings of people. Consider converting parking lot or rooftop space into additional green space with comfortable seating. Consider how these features can force cars to slow down to ensure the safety and peace of mind of families, older adults, and people with disabilities attempting to cross this wide lot.
- Excessive noise is not an issue at South Platte Crossing as it is in so many other service spaces. However, the space was described as overly quiet and absent of life. Consider subtle and natural **auditory stimulation**, such as soft music, nature sounds, or even a water feature.
- The **parking lot** at South Platte Crossing Parking should display clear signage, including speed limit signs, directional signs, entrance and exit signs. Additionally, given the size of the South Platte Crossing parking lot, it is important to ensure that clear and safe pedestrian walkways are mapped out.
- It is important that staff have a **dedicated space** to take breaks and eat lunch. Service providers often request outlets for decompression and discharging energy, including rocking chairs, sitting balls, and stretching stations. This can also be a place where service providers organically gather, connect, share information, and build community with one another. In addition to physical spaces (indoor and outdoor) that promote connection and community, it is important that the building establish a communication approach that supports reliable, real-time information sharing across the community related to onsite and local safety and security issues.
- Participants of this assessment expressed a **sincere desire to participate** in the discussion and decision-making that results from this process. It will be important to find authentic opportunities for participants to contribute to this community.

CONCLUSION

Both service providers and participants of the South Platte Crossing community know that this building, as a central landmark with a history of addressing critical community need, offers a range of resources and services to individuals and families across Commerce City. Participants expressed sincere gratitude for the incredible care and support that they and their children have received from service providers in the building. However, it is clear that the building itself does not always communicate the same level of warmth and helpfulness that they experience directly from staff and organizations.

Service providers expressed a desire for the space to communicate a warm, welcoming, and unified service approach where the community can find several services and supports under one roof. They reported that there are both short-term and long-term renovation goals for the building that move toward this vision, including discussions around painting and artwork in common areas, elevator and bathroom upgrades, and additional onsite security measures. Furthermore, individual suites are undergoing major and minor renovations across the building. Continued efforts in this direction along with carefully consideration of the input provided in this report will ensure that the building becomes a more safe, comfortable, and responsive space for those who walk the halls as both service providers and persons served.

Finally, the participants engaged in this assessment expressed a deep commitment to the South Platte Crossing community and a desire to stay engaged in the discussion and, ideally, the decision-making process. This rich resource of lived experience presents an invaluable opportunity to design alongside those who often experience service settings with great intimacy and limited power. As such, it is recommended and hoped that the decision-makers of the building will enlist this participant group to co-create and innovate new design solutions for the space both indoors and outdoors.