

TRAUMA-INFORMED HOUSING DESIGN CHECKLIST

PART 1: SCHEMATIC DESIGN & DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

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OVERVIEW OF TRAUMA-INFORMED HOUSING

WHAT IS TRAUMA-INFORMED HOUSING

Trauma-informed housing:

- Is a model developed by POAH that combines two complementary frameworks: human-centered design and trauma-informed care.
- Is grounded in the understanding that all people experience adversity, as the built environment impacts our attitude, mood, health, and well-being.
- Embraces that a trauma-informed approach to property management, resident services, and design can yield better outcomes for residents, staff, and owners.
- Goes beyond spatial and tactical design interventions. To be trauma-informed, spatial principles should be implemented in combination with a participatory design process that centers around feedback and insights from residents and staff.

POAH'S WORK ON TRAUMA-INFORMED HOUSING

In September 2020, POAH was awarded funds by the Housing Affordability Breakthrough Challenge to support our *Designing Trauma Resilient Communities* project. Our project:

- Focused on reimagining affordable housing design, resident services, and property management through the lens of community resilience.
- Led to the creation of our Trauma-Informed Housing Toolkit that provides an overview of trauma, its relationship to housing, and steps for creating trauma-informed spaces, places, and organizations. To explore our toolkit, visit <https://traumainformedhousing.poah.org/>.

OVERVIEW OF CHECKLIST

- This checklist expands on the evidence-based design opportunities incorporated in POAH's initial toolkit to create explicit human-centered design goals and design criteria for the project's early phases.
- The goal of this checklist is not to create a one-size-fits-all solution to trauma-informed housing. While every item on this checklist may not be incorporated into a project, each item should be considered.
- Again, it is important to highlight that trauma-informed housing goes beyond design interventions. It also includes the design process. Additional participatory planning and design tools that center the feedback of residents and staff to be used in tandem with this checklist are currently being developed.

USING THE CHECKLIST

WHO SHOULD USE IT

- POAH and POAH Communities team members
- Members of our design teams
- Anyone not affiliated with POAH who values human-centered housing design

WHEN TO USE IT

- This tool should be used early in the design process, specifically during the schematic design or design development phases.

HOW TO USE IT

- We categorized the spaces typically present at POAH communities into six program types: homes, common spaces, service spaces, staff workspaces, outdoor spaces, and the back of the house. This checklist focuses on the first four spatial types.
- Each spatial type has two key parts: a set of trauma-informed design goals and a set of design criteria to gauge how effectively these principles have been incorporated into a design. The design goals were informed by our toolkit's "Trauma-Informed Design Spatial Program Guide."

NOTES FOR DESIGNERS

- These design criteria are not intended to be overly prescriptive or limiting to the project's design.
- Instead, this checklist aims to create a generalizable tool for incorporating human-centered design into POAH's properties, so we want to emphasize that all finalized design recommendations should be based on the project, program, residents, and context.
- Unless required by the Basis of Design and/or other applicable codes/regulations, these design criteria are not required to be included. Each one should be considered and discussed to determine feasibility/applicability.

DESIGN CRITERIA CATEGORIES

In italics at the start of each item on the checklist, we labeled what human-centered design category that item relates to.

The eleven design categories include:

- ***Acoustics***: These items focus on strategies that improve speech clarity, reduce reverberation, and limit background noise to ensure people feel safe, heard, and comfortable.
- ***Choice***: These items are geared towards promoting staff and resident agency, representation, and choice. It also includes elements geared towards flexible furniture and spaces.
- ***Color***: These items leverage color theory to recommend wall color options that can help promote the desired feelings and/or activities in a space.
- ***Comfort***: Resilience and healing happen in environments that evoke hope and imagination. Comfort is central to this and allows physical spaces to support rest and connection.
- ***Community/Culture***: These items center on incorporating individual and community strengths, experiences, and history to support resilience and healing.
- ***Connection to Nature***: These items are geared towards promoting biophilia in design, which supports cognitive function, physical health, and psychological well-being.
- ***Inclusive Design***: These items aim to promote universal design and heightened accessibility to support residents of all shapes, sizes, and capabilities.
- ***Lighting***: These items target lighting interventions that promote safety and people's feelings of comfort.
- ***Safety***: These items aim to ensure staff and residents feel physically and psychologically safe in the physical space and in interpersonal interactions.
- ***Visibility***: Designing spaces with good visibility increases feelings of safety and allows people to see what lies ahead, which is vitally important, particularly in spaces where there is a lack of familiarity.
- ***Wayfinding***: These items support residents in navigating the building confidently and easily. More navigable spaces, safe walking surfaces, and clear communication systems are key.

HOME

Homes at POAH should look and feel welcoming, with light-filled spaces, high-quality, durable materials, and universal design. Every home should be designed to be safe, affordable, comfortable and to meet and adapt to residents' needs. Unit type and size varies per POAH property and location but, at a minimum, all include a sleeping area, living/dining space, full kitchen, storage space(s), and full bathroom. Homes that are designed with a trauma-informed approach prioritize safety and privacy, use high-quality materials, allow for natural ventilation and daylight to fill the spaces, and encourage residents to add unique, personal touches to their home environment.

Human-center design goals for homes:

- Design light-filled spaces
- Design for acoustical privacy
- Design unobstructed sightlines

Specific design criteria to consider:

Design Criteria	BOD Requirement	Criteria Included?
<i>Acoustics:</i> Where possible, the design mitigates noise and enhances acoustical privacy (ex. higher STC ratings than minimum code requirement, spatial adjacencies, etc.)?	Exterior doors are required to have a min of 35 STC rating.	
<i>Choice:</i> Where possible, there are at least (3) storage closets throughout the unit. Preferably 1 coat closet, 1 linen closet, and 1 additional storage closet located in the bedroom(s).	N/A	
<i>Connection to Nature:</i> Where possible, the design takes advantage of natural light and views of the outdoors.	N/A	
<i>Inclusive Design:</i> Where possible, all corridors within the unit are at least 60" in width.	N/A	
<i>Visibility:</i> The kitchen and living room have an open floor plan and unobstructed lines of sight.	N/A	
<i>Visibility:</i> There are clear lines of sight upon entry and within each room that allow someone to see others nearby (ex. door placement and swing allow someone to see a majority of the room upon entering with minimal blind spots).	N/A	

COMMON SPACES & CORRIDORS

Common areas at POAH Communities should foster social cohesion, intergenerational interactions, and build community. All common spaces should be designed in close coordination with staff and residents who are ultimately responsible for ensuring that the spaces are well-used and loved. Actual common spaces can vary by building typology and location, however, typical common spaces include: multi-purpose rooms, computer rooms, kids' rooms, game rooms, etc. Common spaces designed with a TIH approach should be easy to locate, welcoming, and highly adaptable.

Human-center design goals for common spaces:

- Design light-filled spaces
- Offer spatial openness and a variety of spaces
- Design flexible and adaptable spaces
- Design unobstructed sightlines

Specific design criteria to consider:

Design Criteria	BOD Requirement	Criteria Included?
<i>Community/Culture:</i> Within the lobby and community rooms, there is dedicated space for residents to interact and socialize.	N/A	
<i>Connection to Nature:</i> Where possible, the design takes advantage of natural light and views of the outdoors.	N/A	
<i>Connection to Nature:</i> Where possible, the design utilizes natural ventilation (ex. operable windows).	N/A	
<i>Inclusive Design:</i> All circulation spaces are organized in straightforward and clear patterns (linear, radial, grid, axial, central atrium, etc.).	N/A	
<i>Inclusive Design:</i> The design centers spatial openness and provides multiple points of access.	N/A	
<i>Inclusive Design:</i> There are public/common restrooms.	N/A	
<i>Safety:</i> The common areas are close in proximity to staff areas or designed to allow visibility by staff.	N/A	
<i>Visibility:</i> There are clear lines of sight throughout the space, allowing someone to see others nearby (ex. someone can see the entire space with minimal blind spots).	N/A	
<i>Visibility:</i> For common areas, there are ways to see into the space before entering (ex. windows or doors with cut-out windows).	N/A	

SERVICE SPACES

Spaces that are service-specific should be highly visible, simple, and predictable to ensure residents feel comfortable, safe, and in control of their experience. Shared service-specific spaces like a mail room or laundry room are high-use spaces that not only need to be efficient and accommodate frequent foot traffic but should also be designed to enhance positive experiences for residents. Laundry rooms that have comfortable seating nearby ensure that residents have a place to wait and socialize with others. Mailrooms ensure that residents' mail and packages are delivered to a secure location. Other service-specific spaces should also be designed with intentional approaches to enhance resident comfort.

Human-center design goals for service spaces:

- Provide clear circulation paths
- Provide predictable spaces
- Design visual safety & privacy
- Design unobstructed sightlines
- Design for acoustical privacy

Specific design criteria to consider:

Design Criteria	BOD Requirement	Criteria Included?
<i>Acoustics:</i> Where possible, the design mitigates noise and enhances acoustical privacy (ex. higher STC ratings than minimum code requirement, spatial adjacencies, subdivision of spaces, etc.).	Exterior doors are required to have a min of 35 STC rating.	
<i>Inclusive Design:</i> All circulation spaces are organized in straightforward and clear patterns (linear, radial, grid, axial, central atrium, etc.).	N/A	
<i>Visibility:</i> There are clear lines of sight throughout the space, allowing someone to see others nearby (ex. someone can see the entire space upon entering minimal blind spots).	N/A	
<i>Visibility:</i> There are ways to see into the space before entering (ex. windows or doors with cut-out windows).	N/A	

STAFF WORKSPACE

Staff at POAH Communities ensure the property operations run smoothly and oversee resident services through constant interaction and trust building with the community. Designing trauma-informed workspaces takes into consideration the varied needs of staff in their day-to-day: office space to do ‘heads-down’ work, space to privately meet with residents, a collaborative open workspace to connect with colleagues, a break room, a conference room, and a respite room to find solace and pause after a particularly enduring day.

Human-center design goals for staff workspace:

- Provide access to nature
- Design light-filled spaces
- Offer spatial openness
- Design flexible and adaptable spaces
- Offer positive distractions
- Design for property security

Specific design criteria to consider:

Design Criteria	BOD Requirement	Criteria Included?
<i>Choice:</i> The design considers the diverse spaces staff need, in part through the adaptability of staff spaces, allowing for private conversations to happen as needed.	N/A	
<i>Comfort:</i> There are comfortable and inviting spaces for staff to take breaks or decompress.	N/A	
<i>Connection to Nature:</i> Where possible, the design takes advantage of natural light and views of the outdoors.	N/A	
<i>Visibility:</i> There are clear lines of sight throughout the space, allowing someone to see others nearby (minimal blind spots).	N/A	
<i>Visibility:</i> There are ways to see into/out of the space (ex. windows or doors with cut-out windows).	N/A	