

Project Description (500 words)

The site for **Switch/bloc** is a typical inner-city lot with an active streetscape. However, unlike most inner-city lots the site does not have a rear lane, which typically helps to add a 'buffer zone' between the new development and the adjacent community. The knee-jerk response for this site, and many others like it, would be a ubiquitous 4 storey, double-loaded corridor multi-residential housing project that does little if any to add to the public realm and caters to a narrow demographic.

Our initial discussions revolved around challenging convention through reconceptualizing both what comprises a 'unit' and how these units are distributed throughout a multi-family building. We asked questions, such as; a) what if a unit stretched the entire length of the building and wasn't interrupted by a corridor? b) what if all units in the building had equal access to light, view and natural ventilation? c) what if these units were larger than the norm and the space was distributed over two floors? d) how could this 'design solution' entice families back to the inner-city and into public housing projects? and e) how could this positively impact broader socio-economic issues in the inner-city (that deal with concerns over equity, diversity and inclusiveness), such as decreasing the rate of school closures and other civic amenities, such as libraries, parks, Mom & Pop retail, etc., to name a few.

As the name **Switch/bloc** implies, our solution entailed distributing a typical unit over two floors in a switchback fashion, this allowed us to allocate the more public programmatic requirements of dwelling (kitchen, living, dining, etc.) at the front of the building and the more private programmatic requirements at the back of the building. This division of program, into an extroverted front façade and an introverted rear façade, breathes new life into Le Corbusier's 'Inter-locking' unit design for his Unité d'Habitation projects, as well as expands upon the modernist epithet of 'form follows function' by helping to re-frame the formal language of multi-family architecture.

On the west façade you now have an elevation composed entirely of public programming (balconies, living & dining rooms, etc.) that reach out towards and interact with the streetscape. Conversely, on the east façade you have an elevation that withdraws into itself as though it protects and provides privacy for the more intimate spaces of dwelling (home office, bedrooms, bathrooms, etc.). In addition, this strict allocation of program is also informed by the diurnal sensibilities of the site, with the private programming of the East façade receiving only the morning sun while the public programming of the West façade receives the greatest intensity and duration of light.

As seen in the diagrams that accompany our MUDA submission, the building organizes itself through the creative inter-locking and stacking of the various units such that only one access corridor is required on the third floor. This formal strategy also provides for a diversity of unit types and sizes that cater to a forgotten and under-served segment of the multi-residential market; the family.