Seniors Housing

SAKAW TERRACE

ROCKLIFF PIERZCHAJLO KROMAN ARCHITECTS LTD.

CHANDOS

SAKAW TERRACE

A Case Study

Seniors Housing

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CHANDOS

A Merger of New Techniques and Old Values

A Cree word for Wooded Area. A wooded area represents life, shelter and a gathering place to bring people together.

An architectural word, meaning a platform built adjacent to a structure of greater importance. A raised level from which to look outward.

SAKAW TERRACE

To the residents who call this place home, and to the design and construction teams that worked together to realize the project, this is a building that brings people together to stand proud within the community.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Population aging is poised to become one of the most significant social transformations of the twenty-first century, with implications for nearly all sectors of society, including labour and financial markets, the demand for goods and services, such as housing, transportation and social protection, as well as family structures and intergenerational ties. — United Nations

BACKGROUND

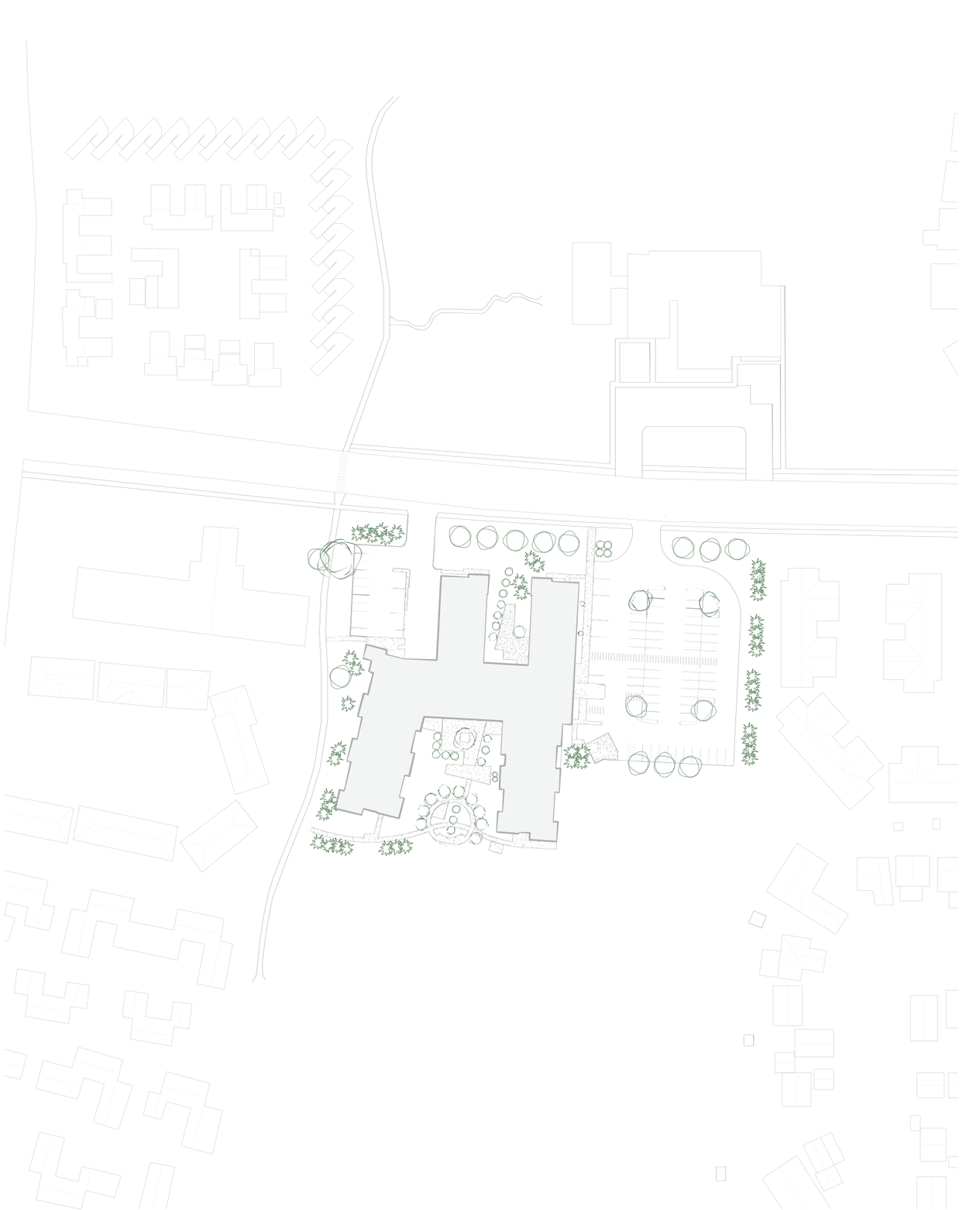
In response to Edmonton's aging population, the City released a number of surplus school sites for the development of seniors' housing. These sites are ideally suited to this purpose because they have access to public transit and are near parks and amenities. Seniors could downsize from detached homes while remaining in their community, close to friends, and within a familiar neighbourhood. GEF Seniors Housing was selected by the City to develop a surplus school site in Mill Woods.

Sakaw Terrace is the brainchild of Raymond Swonek, CEO of GEF Seniors Housing, who envisioned a project bigger than anything they ever built before. Mill Woods has a population of 20,000 seniors, and there is a tremendous need to house seniors who require accessibility and affordability. Raymond was inspired by England's affordable housing model, where similar approaches are used. For Sakaw Terrace, he decided to implement a new strategy which combines in one building both subsidized and non-subsidized affordable housing.

DESIGN OVERVIEW

Sakaw Terrace is the first seniors' housing of this kind in the province. Approximately 70% of the suites are designated for seniors with low to moderate income, and the remaining 30% is priced close to market value and open to all seniors. A benefit of this housing mix is that funds from the Non-Subsidized Affordable suites goes back into the operation of Sakaw, making it more financially self-sufficient.

The project's design provides separate access and entries to the building for residents, staff and deliveries. The building layout takes advantage of the playing fields to the south by orientating much of the building in that direction, providing views of people using the sports fields as well as access to the sun. Special attention was paid to minimize the length of the corridors to shorten the distance residents have to travel. Various common areas allow for different ways for residents to socialize, both formally and informally. Sakaw Terrace is a 14,370 m^2 state of the art building with 4 wings and 158 units spread across 4 floors. The building includes 70 lodge units, 88 affordable one and two bedroom apartments, 40 underground parking stalls, commercial space and various supporting spaces.



CONTEXT PLAN

PROJECT INFORMATION

Initially, Sakaw Terrace was setup traditionally as a Design-Bid-Build project delivery method, with the Build Team removed from the design process and the Design Team with limited involvement in the construction phase. However, during the Design Development phase, the Owner and the Design Team decided it was best to combine forces with the general contractor and major sub-trades. This established Sakaw as an Integrated Project Delivery (IPD) project. At this phase, the Owner, the design Consultants, and six of the major trades signed a Poly Party Agreement binding each team member to shared project risk and reward. This was the beginning of the shared Design-Build process. This Poly Party Agreement consisted of:

- GEF Seniors Housing, *Owner*
- RPK Architects, *Prime Consultant and Architectural Consultant*
- GeoMetrix Group, *Structural Engineering Consultant*
- Smith + Anderson, *Mechanical Engineering Consultant*
- Arrow Engineering, *Electrical Engineering Consultant*
- Chandos Construction, *General Contractor*
- Collins Industries, *Steel Fabricator*
- Priority Mechanical, *Mechanical Contractor*
- AltaPro Electrical, *Electrical Contractor*
- Kerr Interior Systems, *Drywall Contractor*
- Shearwall Triforce Inc, *Concrete Contractor*

For the nine months following the establishment of the IPD team, various partners collaborated at Chandos' offices. Nearing the end of the design phase, and through to construction completion, numerous members from the Poly Party Team co-located and collaborated within a site trailer.

The initial project budget was $38,130,306 and working with the IPD method, the project team was able to complete Sakaw Terrace two months ahead of schedule, and at a cost of $37,163,223. A total cost savings of $967,083 was then split amongst the Owner, Consultants, and Trade groups. The build quality and cost savings has produced a project that has fulfilled the mandate of GEF, and put money back in the pocket of the not-for-profit group.

This case study of Sakaw Terrace will explore the key elements of the project, including **the Innovations, Challenges, and Findings.**

AERIAL FLOOR PLAN PERSPECTIVE

INNOVATIONS

Certain approaches to the project were exploratory and proved to be crucial to the team's success.

INTEGRATED PROJECT DELIVERY (IPD)

IPD is an approach that integrates people, systems, business structures and practices into a process that collaboratively harnesses the talents and insights of all participants to optimize project results, increase value to the owner, reduce waste, and maximize efficiency through all phases of design, fabrication, and construction. — *American Institute of Architects*

- Traditional project delivery sees the owner signing separate contracts with the prime consultant and general contractor. Unique to IPD is the **contract** — which includes the Owner, Design Team, and Construction Team members. It sets the parameters of the relationship for all parties and outlines the financial risk-reward structure. This Poly Party Agreement helps to create greater trust and team approach to the project.

- IPD team **forecasting** provided better insight into what to expect in the project's future, allowing management an easier task sorting workloads and project budgeting.

- A collaborative, active, shared, and evolving **Risk Registry** with input from all parties early in the design process allowed the team to mitigate risk otherwise unknown to their disciplines.

- A project **wish-list** was established early on and evolved along with the project. It captured various improvements to the project that were not included in the base cost. They were items the owner wished to add to the project if there were additional funds from Owner's share of savings below the project target cost. The challenge to the owner was whether to act on some of the wish-list items before the last responsible moment.

- **PITs (Project Implementation Teams)** were set up to identify and tackle specialized components of the Building and Design process. Members of each PIT included necessary members of all disciplines as well as the Owner, and the Owner's Maintenance team. For example, we had an Electrical PIT and a Mechanical PIT consisting of designers, consultants, builders, maintenance staff, and the Owner.

- Project scheduling was coordinated using **pull planning**, which is a collaborative process that can help to get buy-in from all project participants using a backward pass, pulling activities into the process. This proved fundamental to project schedule success.

TRADITIONAL VS IPD

PROJECT DELIVERY COMPARISON

TRADITIONAL PROJECT DELIVERY		INTEGRATED PROJECT DELIVERY
Dissociated, separate, and established as needed. Different team members come in and out of project through time. Default relationship can be adversarial.	TEAMS	Collective, partnering, established early. Different team members are brought together at the onset of the project and work together throughout. Default relationship is supportive.
Linear, and isolated. Step by step, and one after the other. Knowledge is withheld or kept in a silo.	PROCESS	Holistic, forward looking, and transparent. Knowledge is most powerful when shared.
Pushed onto others when possible. A lot of energy, time and money is spent to remove yourself from risk.	RISK	Shared. Collectively managed.
Individualistic. Profit usually sought at others' expense.	REWARD	Shared. Collectively valued.
PDF based. Checkpoint oriented. Formalized. 3D model process is cumbersome to upload/share amongst team members. Risk of working on out-of-date material.	COMMUNICATIONS	Digitally based. Flow is more organic. Ad hoc. 3D model process typically done with shared model, live updates, dependent on team member trust.
Linear. Scope and responsibility are clearly delineated.	AGREEMENT	Multilateral. Expectation that scope and responsibility are shared.

LEAN

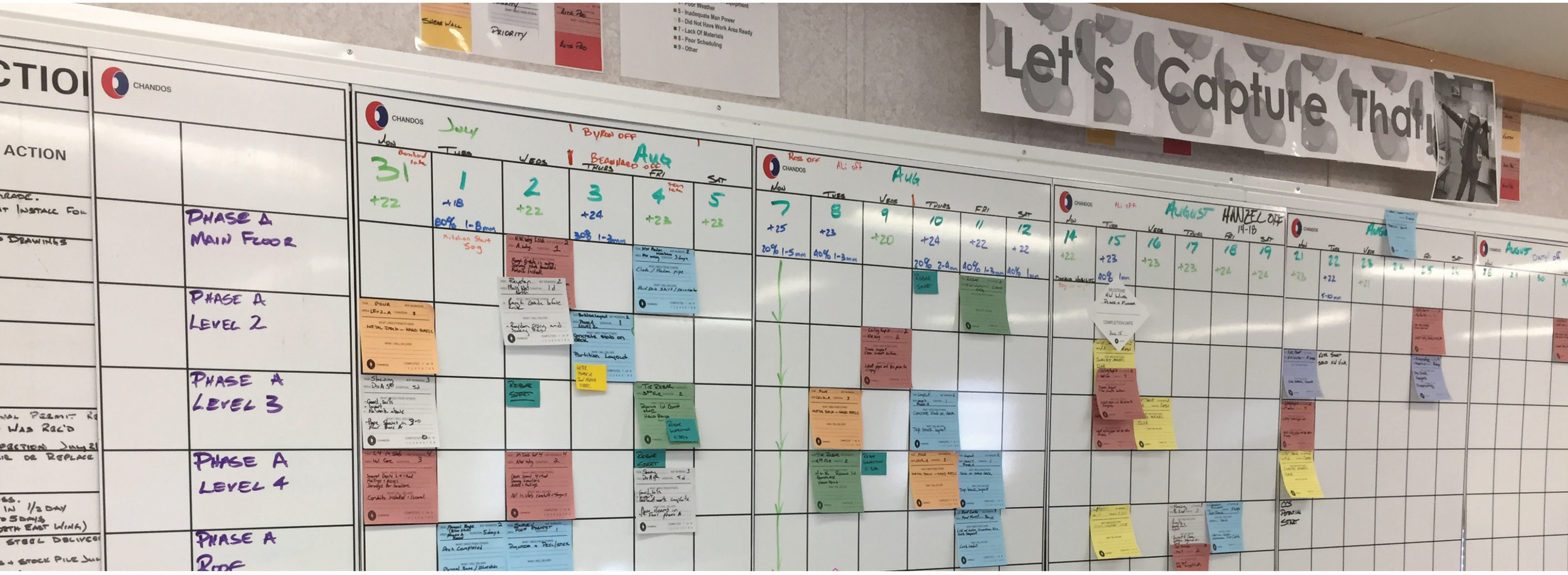
- **Site mock-ups** were used to confirm the technical performance and constructibility of building products; and to establish quality control for the building finishes.

  One example was a residential suite mock-up built 12 months prior to drywall boarding and mechanical and electrical rough-ins. This allowed the team to set quality standards and identify deficiencies/ design clashes before they were repeated as construction.

- **Project close out** utilized new software (FieldView) for easier document collaboration. Discussions and coordination done in advance ensured nothing might jeopardize the completion of the project.

- Shop Drawings used as the basis for r**ecord drawings** shortened the process significantly.

- Both **regular pull plans** and **6 week lookaheads** were instrumental to project success. Pull plans were used to create a schedule, increase coordination, and eliminate rework.



LEAN
NOW WE ARE EXPERTS

INNOVATIONS	COMMENTS
Lean Design	When the design team agreed to utilize the steel fabricator's Tekla model for the Structural Steel Drawings of Record, we eliminated duplicate design and drawings, saved between 500 to 1000 design hours, and ultimately, upwards of $700,000.
	A plus-delta exercise was used to review events on a weekly interval to recall positive moments and reflect on opportunities for improvement. This practice is utilized by all parties in their own practices to this day.
	The use of a shared model made innumerable conflicts immediately noticeable; and an IPD contract eliminates the liability associated with this method.

LEAN
NOW WE ARE EXPERTS

INNOVATIONS	COMMENTS
Lean Construction	In the field, workers performed time trials on tasks until we honed our processes. We were not satisfied until we were able to shave hours off tasks such as peel and stick membrane, window install, parapet plywood, and wall backing. These trials increased productivity.
	Utilizing a 360 degrees fly motion camera, workers were able to review the video and realize their wasted motion, then came up with a container system that eliminated multiple trips to the cart for materials during suite electrical rough-ins.
	Multiple on-site Lean 101 training sessions were performed for over 60 individuals, including the owner, consultants, poly party trades, and lump sum trades.
	A monthly Lean Award was implemented. Due to the nature of the site and the school across the street, the trades were directed to park in the neighboring residential areas. Anyone could fill out a ballot with a lean process and win an on-site parking stall for one month.
	The construction team came up with an innovative 8-piece flow method that provided full erection in smaller chunks. The collaborative effort led to other wins. We were able to engage the roofing contractor sooner, and the North half of the building started and finished 3 months sooner. The efficiencies of the concrete place and finish improved. What would have been a one month duration for doing the slabs from the main floor to the 4th floor became 1 week per division. This in turn engaged the drywall contractor to start the exterior framing sooner and in full elevations. The wins were endless and opened our eyes to looking at sequencing areas differently for the remainder of the project. We estimate that the re-sequencing of the structural steel saved us upwards of 2 months on the critical path.

VALUES ALIGNMENT

- The Poly Party in itself became a sort of independent business entity. A **corporate culture** formed amongst the Poly Party Team, where a project mission and vision statement shaped values. Regular surveys were performed to check in with all Poly Party Members to track values alignment and to address any values challenges before they created divisiveness amongst the team.

- The open nature of the project between Poly Party Members resulted in a highly **transparent process**, uncommon amongst traditional project delivery methods. This process clearly demonstrated that the entire process was dependent on honesty, trust, and integrity — “checking your ego at the door.”

TEAM ENVIRONMENT

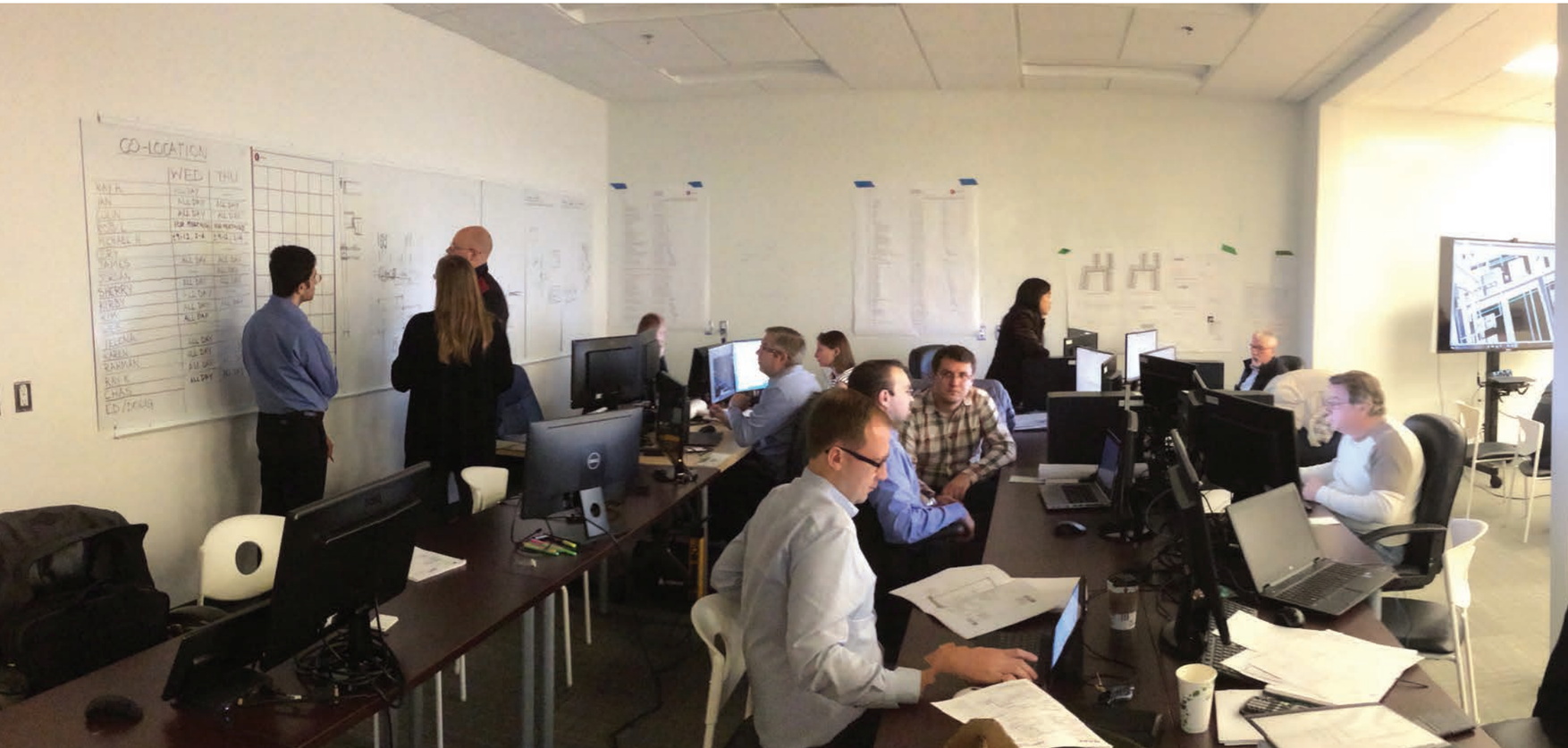
- **Removing company logos** from project correspondence encouraged team members to focus on the interests of the project.

- A **project logo** was created to create a sense of ownership for everyone involved in the project.

- After hours **social events** were organized for team members to get to know each other in a more personal manner, creating friendships that have lasted beyond the completion of the project. The project was fun. Unlike so many projects, the team members spent time together after hours.

- The **co-location** of Poly Party and Non-Poly Party project team members into on-site work stations resulted in an agile and friendly communication stream.

- **Lean exercises** were conducted with design and construction team members together, to further team building and find efficiencies in the project work.



REVELATIONS FROM CO-LOCATING

- With designers and builders working together in the same location from validation through to construction, problems are resolved as they arise, with no communication delays.
- The lack of silos or walls and the time continuum provided a multitude of benefits. The team was able to embrace the process, and challenge each other to innovate and think lean.
- Time savings vastly improved on Requests for Information (RFIs), changes, Supplementary Informations (SIs), and other Consultant-Owner-Contractor items

SYSTEMS

Steel Design

- Sakaw Terrace was a **CISC award nominee**. The collaborative nature of the project created a number of innovations and unique approaches to the structural steel design. It was obvious to the team that the project warranted a submission to the Canadian Institute of Steel Construction for a collaboration award in 2018.
- The redesign of several beam types allowed the **building weight to be reduced** by approximately 14,000 kg, resulting in significant cost savings.

Shared Models

- **Navisworks** software allowed team members to visualize the project, and detect clashes between disciplines prior to construction.
- One shared, live **Tekla model** led to the fabricator's layout doubling as the structural design documents.

CHP

- Due to the close proximity of the Mechanical and Electrical Engineers to the project team, this project was able to successfully execute the use of a **Combined Heat and Power (CHP) station** – where the waste heat from the production of electric energy turns into useful heat energy.
- Over the first two years of operation, the CHP has been generating 80 to 90 percent of the building's electrical needs while providing significant heat into the heating system, thus offsetting the building's natural gas consumption.

OVERALL

Surplus School Site

- The building is built on a surplus school site that the City of Edmonton had in reserve for a future school. The city identified this site to be used for seniors housing, and GEF partnered with the city to realize Sakaw Terrace.
- The integration of intergenerational neighbours is great for the community.

Mixed Market Apartments

- Typical housing developments are either subsidized or they are not. With Sakaw Terrace, GEF used a **mixed system,** allowing the non-subsidized portion of the project to help fund the subsidized portion.
- The **diversity** of the leasing agreement types gives the project sustainable inclinations through a potentially volatile market.

SAFETY AND SCHEDULE STATS

Safety

- Over the course of construction, the site saw a peak of approximately 150 workers on-site
- During construction, 46 first aid incidents were reported, all treatable and none resulting in a time loss incident. There were also 92 site incidents/ near misses reported, requiring no first aid treatment. This goes to show the entire site and construction team had a strong safety culture.

Schedule

- Actual project duration was 21 months, from the end of January 2017 to October 2018.
- Construction start narrowly missed delays based on judicial decisions, however an appeal to the Province revoked the City's denial of the building permit over an incorrect building classification.
- Project was slated for completion in early December 2018.
- By engaging our Consultants, Owner, Poly Party Trades, and Lump Sum Trades in rigorous pull planning sessions which included weekly updates, 6 week lookaheads, and major pull plan sessions, the team was able to pull the projection completion date back to early October.
- In late October, final inspection by the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) deemed the building ready for occupancy, and on October 31st, the first few tenants moved into the building
- Weekly pull planning with the trade foreman on site were fundamental to the success in finding construction sequencing efficiencies to pull the project completion date back 2 months, ahead of schedule.


Field View
N

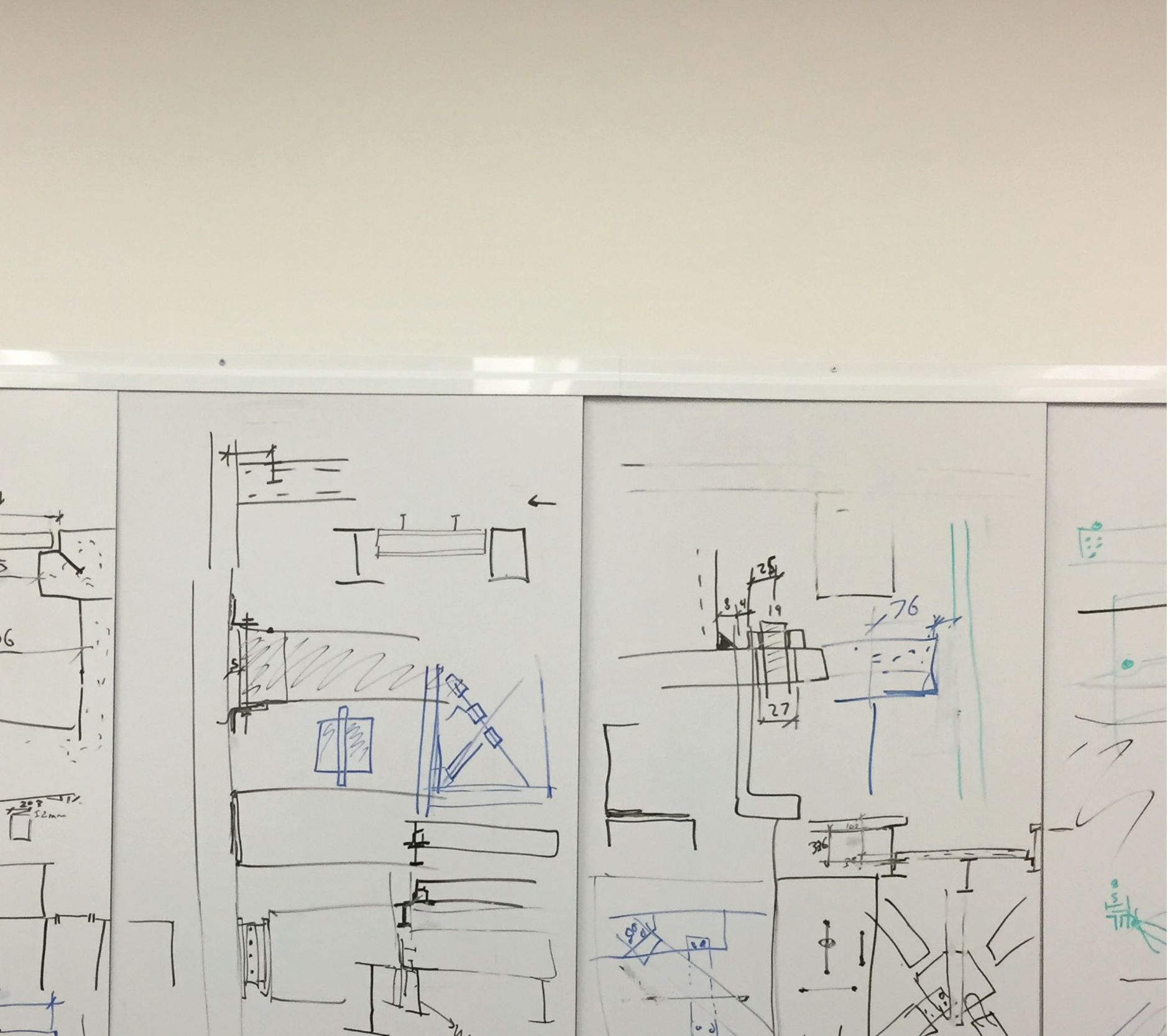
WASTE DIVERSION AND PROJECT CLOSE-OUT STATS

Project Close-Out

- In order to complete a project with the goal of zero deficiencies, the team took it upon themselves to use a one stop shop that everyone on the project could use. Field View was the tracking software which all consultant inspections and deficiencies could be tracked and logged in a format which allowed for an easier and smoother documentation process.
- Field View allowed the team to track and process 9000 deficiencies (which consisted of items noted through the construction period from foundations, structural, rough-ins, building envelope, and finishes) prior to occupancy of the building. To have a program everyone bought into (Consultants, Owner, Poly Party Trades, and Lump Sump Trades) enabled us as a team to ensure we were at zero deficiencies at the time of occupancy on November 1, 2018.

MATERIAL	TOTAL WASTE (kg)	TOTAL DIVERTED (kg)	DIVERSION (%)
Cardboard	11,255	11,255	100
Plastic	2,490	2,490	100
Wood	75,844	75,844	100
Drywall	77,876	77,876	100
Metal	46,334	46,334	100
Organics	1,160	1,160	100
Concrete	48,738	48,738	100
C&D/ Waste	318,964	118,017	37
SUM	**582,661**	**381,714**	**66**

SECTION PERSPECTIVE THROUGH THE EAST WEST CONNECTION



CHALLENGES

Change is hard. People, teams, and organizations usually have a pre-set structure in place to deal with projects of this type; however, when innovation is sought, changes must be expected. As the following points will illustrate, the challenges had a positive outcome for Sakaw Terrace.

CONTRACT

- With the chosen project delivery method (IPD), there is **one mutual contract** that binds all the key project stakeholders together. The Owner hired a lawyer, and sourced a unique contract type which added an extra layer of complexity to the contracting process.

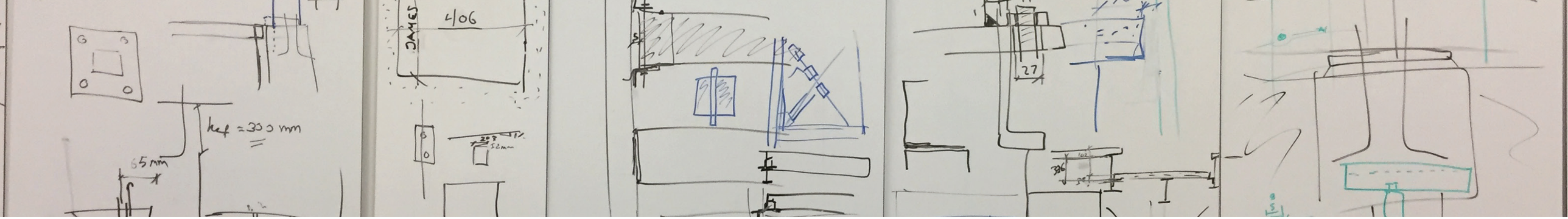
- **Timing of the contract** was unorthodox. The contract was signed in the middle of the design process. The timing proved fruitful for trade partner's early involvement, allowing them to provide meaningful input.

TEAMING

- **Trust** is often the most elusive element in a traditional design-bid-build contract. The Poly Party Team worked hard to establish common values and clearly define common goals to create trust.

- Risk and reward in the IPD system is shared by all Poly Party Members. The profit/ deficit of each team member is directly related to other team members' performance — successful **conflict resolution** became integral to project success.


EDWARD MONTANA
YACHT CROWD



BUDGET

- The process of **budgeting hours** for the new project delivery method proved challenging for each discipline. The Design Team typically under-predicted and under-budgeted the necessary hours, while the Construction Team tended to be closer with budgeted and actual hours.

- The Team adapted well to the steep learning curve associated with financial forecasting, and worked together as group to teach and learn from each other during the design phase of the project. Before construction commenced, the Team was proficient in forecasting and each member submitted a monthly detailed financial forecast for all their tasks and activities on the project; this cumulated in a bi-monthly, full day, in-person, forecasting team session where each member presented their forecast to their poly-party peers.

CRITICAL PROJECT MOMENTS

- At the validation stage of the project, a costing review deemed the project over budget. Commonly, a project can end with news such as this. However, the Poly Party Team decided to hold a **Go/ No Go** vote for whether or not the team could work together to complete the project within or below the project budget. The Poly Party Team, knowing the risk (approximately $720,000), voted to “Go” ahead, and eventually accomplished the budget reduction and subsequent project success.

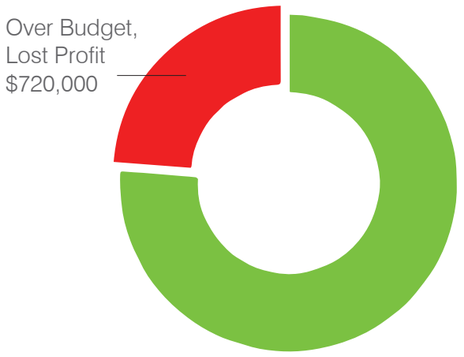
- In the midst of excavating the building foundations, the Building Permit was denied by the City because they disagreed with the **building occupancy classification**. The tight-knit Poly Party Team compiled enough evidence to persuade the provincial safety codes administrator to overturn the City’s ruling, saving an estimated $2 million.

- The project had **challenging access** due to the proximity of the building to the Property line. The City was resistive to allowing construction activity to occur on their land. Nevertheless, the Poly Party Team engaged the City of Edmonton in a discussion about temporary use of city land. The city agreed to allow access, stipulating the work be done respectfully and once completed, would be properly repaired.

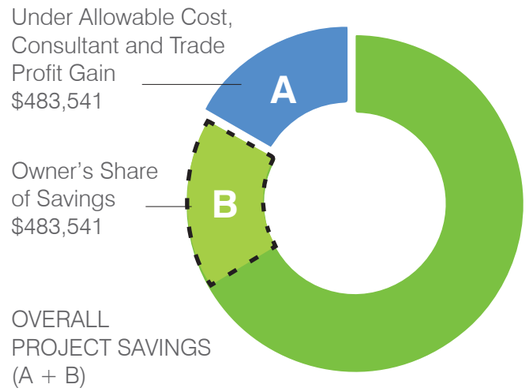
FINANCIAL DASHBOARD

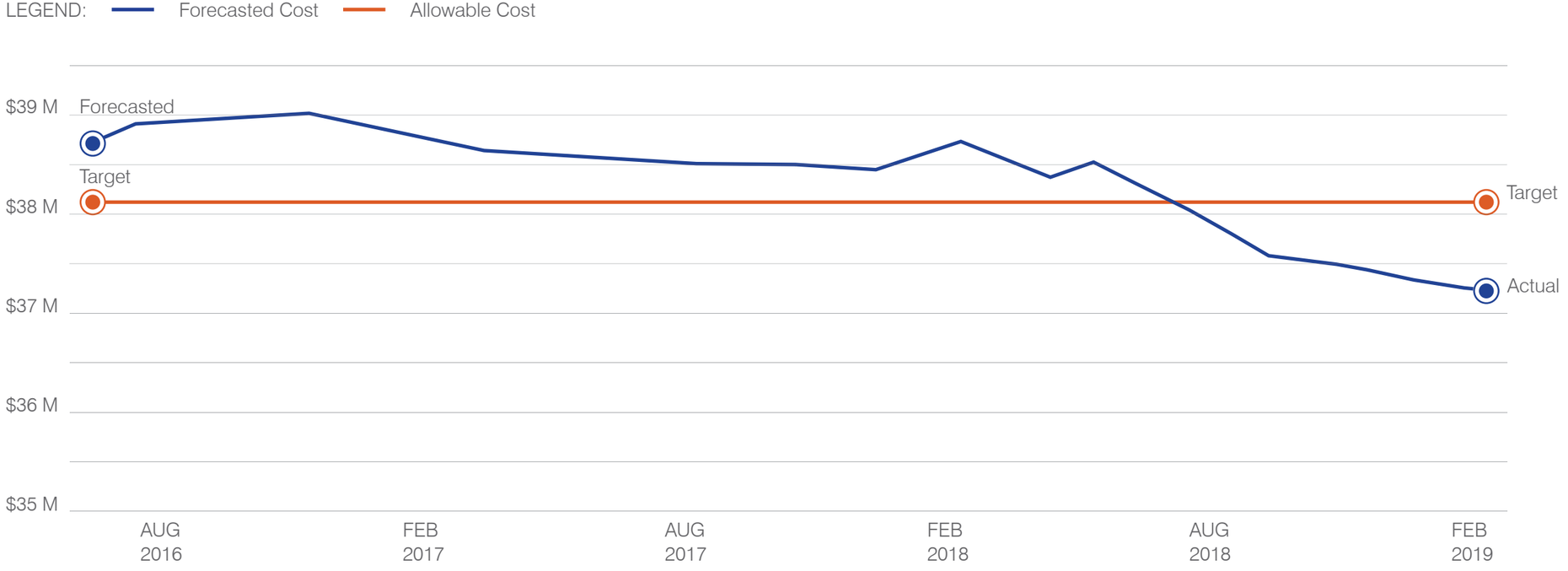
- The innovative dashboard was specifically created for this project to keep the team up-to-date on the finances. As a fully transparent tool linked directly to the financial forecasting of the project, it provided a good visual to see if we were under our allowable cost (section in blue) or over (section in red).
- The Owner Allowable Cost was $38,130,306.
- At the end of Validation, the project team was $720,000 over budget.
- Overall project savings of $967,083 was shared between the owner and the consultant and trade teams.
- Wish List items totaled $302,339, and was taken out of the owner's share of savings below the project target cost.

END OF VALIDATION

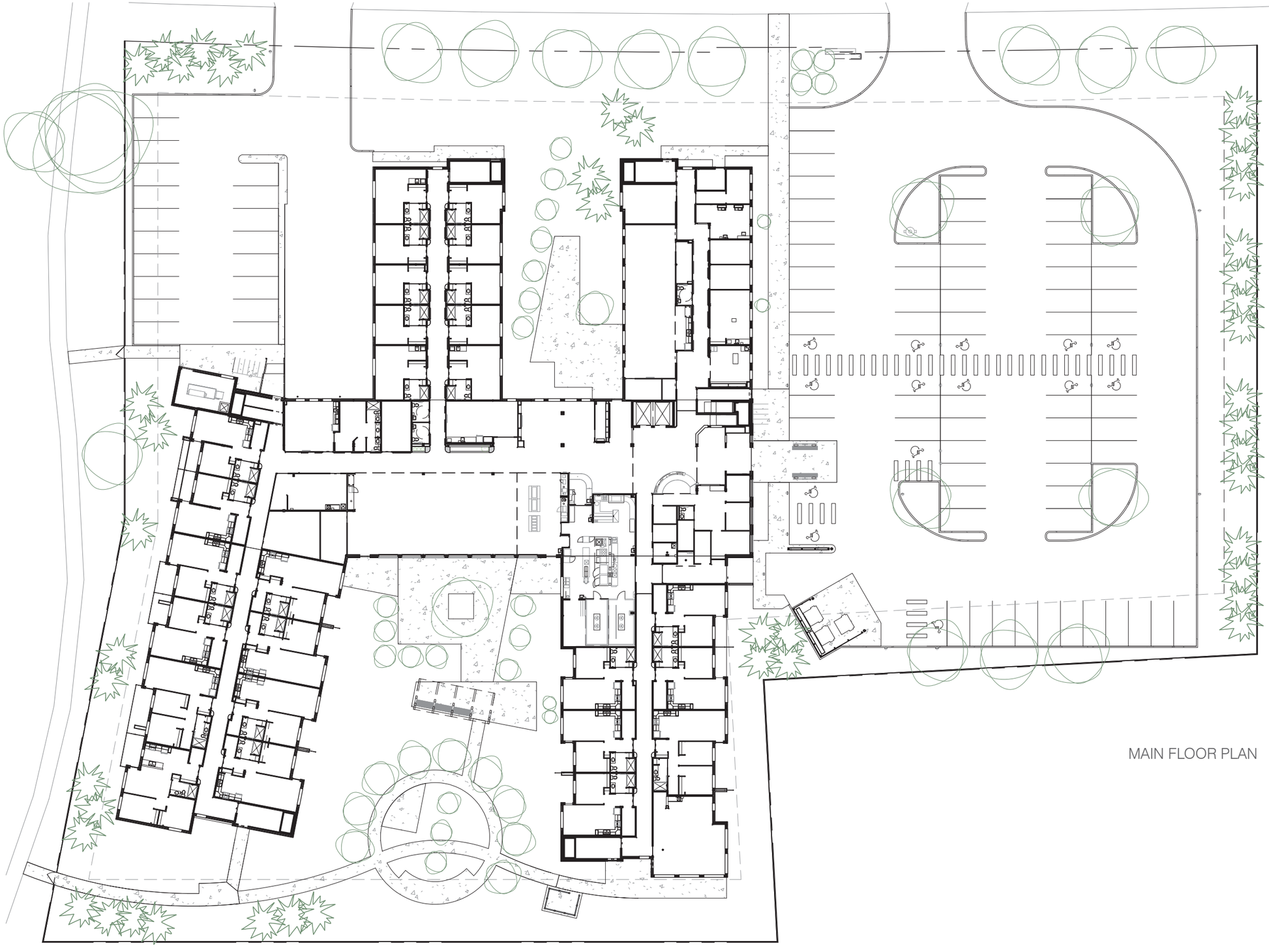


PROJECT COMPLETION






#
DATE
ISSUE
ACTION
WHO
WHEN
STATUS
MARCH
Feb 20
Starting tape 4th core with No insulation
CCS to Relocate manpower to Accomodate
CCS
PHASE A MAIN FLOOR
Attempted Break in Security insufficient
Communication of Shut down Area's Between all trades
3 days Notice Prior to Shut down
All trades
on going
PHASE A LEVEL 2
Trade damage's to Steel Stud's
Review/Replace Studs when Necessary
Ceiling Support Structure Conflict with Rough ins
PHASE A LEVEL 3
Task's Not being assigned
Under Cabinet Light Supply
PHASE A LEVEL 4
Radon Cabinets
Done
PHASE A EXTERIOR
Excessive Deficiencies @ time of QA
Baytek to complete own
Subtrade not Following Specific procedures while on Balconies
Express Concerns @ Site
Meeting
Coordination of delivery's Not Staggered
Review Delivery Board Prior to Scheduling
Membrane @ Balconies Wrap @ corners
CCS/CCL to Review
Counter tops/trim Conflict



MAIN FLOOR PLAN

FINDINGS

Project success was based on the integrity of the Poly Party Team Members. Especially important was the opportunity for the Owner to have meaningful involvement with the project team members, and make confident, informed decisions.

WORK SHARING AND COMMUNICATION METHODS

- Effective execution of an IPD project is reliant on co-location. For this project, the Poly Party Team was brought together to work in the ‘Big Room” in Chandos’ office for the Validation and Design Phases, and in the Co-Location Trailer on site for the construction phase

- Alternate, open and transparent forms of communication, such as project-focused Yammer and SharePoint portals, proved more effective than traditional email communications.

- During the production of documents and the building of the 3D model, the Poly Party Team used BIM360, which allowed live linking of each discipline’s BIM models, allowing all users to coordinate with the current state of the design work in real time. This simplified the sharing, reviewing and revising work between all designers.

- Perhaps the most underrated benefit of working beside alternate disciplines in a project is the fast decision-making speed positively influencing schedule.

- In a “Big Room/ Co-Location” setting, there is a focus on people, not emails, screens and phone lines. This simple, powerful gesture highlights human connection.

CONTINUAL COLLABORATION

- Effort in **front-end coordination** with trades early in the design phase made for a more economical and efficient design and construction.

- We incentivized the trades to scrutinize excess cost with the consultants, resulting in **faster, better, and more economical construction** embedded into the design.

- The **Value Engineering (Target Value Design)** process was continual throughout the project. This resulted in high-impact items being addressed earlier, reducing time and money throughout.

POSITIVE ATMOSPHERE

- The work environment benefited from having people work **face to face**, listening, and meeting.

- Every Poly Party Member had a vested interest in the happiness of the community members, which meant that we were **good neighbours** for the community, even during the messy construction period – reducing project controversies. Specifically, the team worked to reduce disruptions and increase child safety through newsletters, parking plans, and regular contact with the neighbouring school.

- **No finger pointing.**

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

- Only **four Change Orders** were issued within the project! This is very low on a project of this size; furthermore, 3 of the Change Orders were for credit (net positive), and 1 was for scope swap.

- Close out was efficient and it was a smooth transition for tenants and staff to move-in.

- Each individual Poly Party Member has left the project having **learned valuable lessons** which can be implemented into future projects — complementing the industry overall.

- **Friendships were formed.**

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We asked the community where the best place for our teams to park would be, and took into consideration the safety of kids, teachers, residents, and members of the public from the adjacent school, adjacent business, and residential neighborhoods. We made a map accordingly.

SAKAW TERRACE

5815 Millwoods Road South

NO PARKING ON SITE

Red areas, NO Parking

Orange areas, Seasonal Parking Areas, No Parking when seasonal parking Ban is in place

Green areas, Available residential parking. Ensure you DO NOT block driveways

SAKAW TERRACE - PARKING MAP
APPENDIX B

REPORT

on the FOCUS GROUP with SAKAW RESIDENTS

Focus Group

In November 2020, GEF Seniors Housing celebrated the second anniversary of the opening of Sakaw Terrace. The organization is keen to improve on the many successes of the Sakaw Terrace development and has embarked on the process of documenting best practices, and identifying learnings to improve upon future developments.

Research has shown that the built environment is key to sustaining health, dignity and the high quality of life of older adults. Additionally, as people grow older, they are more likely to live their lives close to home as a result of changes in their health, economic resources and family connections.[1,2] Therefore, the physical environment is a critical component for enabling older adults to have a high quality of life and to maintain their independence, allowing them to continue to engage in everyday living activities.

A focus group was conducted with four current tenants at Sakaw Terrace. Two tenants moved in when the building opened in November 2018 and the other two tenants had been living there between 12 and 15 months. In the meeting with the residents, we discussed the usability of the building based on their needs, amenities in the building, aesthetics of the building as well as location. We began the meeting by posing the following question: "What about Sakaw Terrace made you want to live here?

The participants shared openly about the elements of the building that made them want to live there. These responses are grouped into thematic areas outlined below.

Accessible Design

This refers to design that allows seniors to participate in and complete everyday living activities. Participants felt that the wide corridors and accessible washrooms were a major plus for the building as it allowed those with assistive devices to ambulate through hallways comfortably. In addition, they indicated that given the COVID-19 pandemic, the wide hallways allowed them to move while maintaining the advised physical distance. The accessible washrooms, with their barrier free design and showers that made it easy to get in and out, ensured that seniors could continue to engage in personal care activities without help.

Participants felt that the building overall was very walkable and supported their wellness as tenants who needed to do daily walks could do so easily on their floor. However, the single bank of elevators was identified as a challenge for those with mobility issues. As one participant noted, "If you are at the end of the hallway, the walk to the elevator can be quite hard if your legs don't work well."

Aesthetics of the Building

Building aesthetics help to make spaces welcoming, warm and homelike, and can potentially improve the mental and physical health of occupants. Participants shared that they appreciated the efforts put into making every aspect of Sakaw appealing to the eyes while also being functional. In discussing elements such as the carpeting that is placed in main areas and hallways, and windows in the dining rooms, participants felt that these added touches helped to provide "a homey feel" to the building while ensuring practical uses. As one participant commented, "Even the type of carpet was well thought out. It is beautiful yet practical as little spills are not easily seen." Another participant commented on the alcoves on each floor, "I go to the little nook on my floor to sit whenever the housekeepers are in there. It gives me an opportunity to see others, sit in a different space and read, and to just look outside the big window." Participants loved that the building had several areas to gather, as this allowed them to meet with neighbours and "did not have to be cooped up" in their unit all day. These features, they believe, were an important element in staving off issues of loneliness and isolation, especially when one is new to the building. Loneliness and isolation can result in compromised health for older adults, leading to mental illness and depression. The presence of spaces to gather are critical for creating a positive environment and a sense of belonging in the building.

Participants however, were critical of two of the elements in the building – the outdoor benches and the windows in the units. They felt that windows in the units are too small and did not open enough. This dissatisfaction with the windows was somewhat offset by the presence of balconies in some units. The outdoor benches were described as being hard and not having backs to properly support older adults safely sitting on them. Weather proof cushioning could be added to alleviate the hardness of the benches.

Building Comfort

Thermal comfort was the area that all participants felt more could be done to improve the building. They reported that temperature in the building was either too hot or too cold at times in the unit and the hallways. Thermostats were slow to respond to the changes and were not easily adjusted, and this can make the inside of units uncomfortable, especially when the days were hot. One participant commented, "I have given up trying to adjust the thermostat. When it is hot, I open the window; when it is cold, I put on an extra sweater." Hallways could sometimes become quite warm as well, and this took away from wanting to spend time in the alcoves that are on each floor; especially if they became very warm. Participants felt this was something that needed to be addressed, so that once the pandemic is over the spaces could be used once again more effectively.

They all agreed that the building was well lit and that the quality and quantity of lighting throughout the building, as well as in suite, was good. Additionally, the building was quiet and they did not experience noise transference between suites. They noted that although the building was on a main thoroughfare, they were not impacted by traffic passing by, and could only hear emergency vehicles when they had their windows opened.

Other Feedback

The location of the building worked well for all participants because they were either already living in the community or had family close by. Sakaw was the best choice as it met their needs in terms of affordability, and being accessible to families or in an area which they were already familiar. All of the participants had given up their motor vehicle since moving in, but did not feel that the location of the building made this more difficult as they could still access transport through the City of Edmonton DATS program or other private transport offerings. One participant did share that he felt that while the parking spaces were standard, more considerations should have been made for seniors with mobility aides. He argued that it was difficult to navigate between two parked cars with a walker and that was a reason that he finally decided to give up his car. While, he was planning on giving up the vehicle, he felt that having to navigate between cars, especially in the winter, made him decide more quickly.

Overall, participants felt very positive about the building and had very high praises for staff and the work that they do every day. Participants shared that a big part of the building being a livable space for them was the attitude of staff and how welcoming they made the building feel from day one.

[1] Rowles, G.D., and Bernard, M. (Eds.). (2013). Environmental Gerontology. Making meaningful places in old age. New York: Springer.

[2] Wahl, H.W., Schilling, O., Oswald F., and Iwarsson, S. (2009). The home environment and quality of life-related outcomes in advanced old age: Findings of the ENABLE-AGE project. European Journal of Aging, 6(2), 101-111.

SECTION PERSPECTIVE THROUGH NORTH APARTMENTS


JLG LIFT
HRR RENTALS

APPENDIX

References

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