

# The Waiting Room: Potential +

Gilead Community Services: The Baldwin Center

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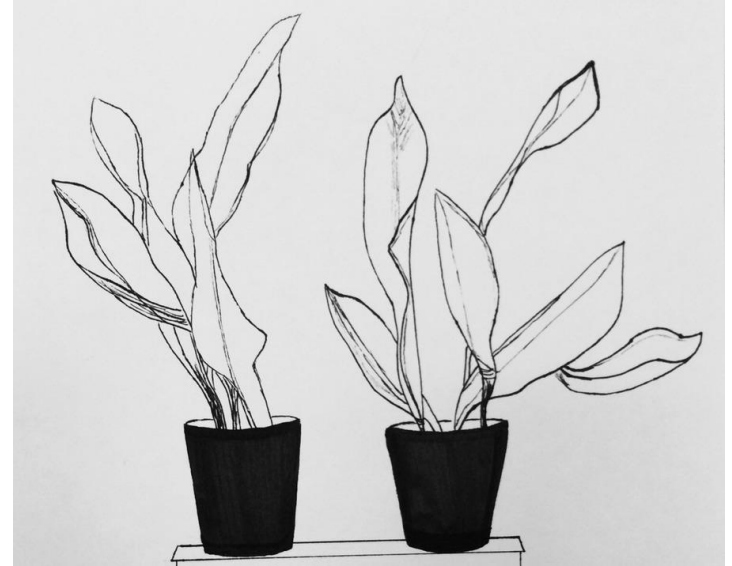
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## **Description of Ethnography and Design Course:**

Exercising humility and developing methods of meaningful engagement are essential to becoming an effective ethnographer and designer. Collaboration with users provides knowledge that allows designers to imagine artifacts, places, and systems that are thoughtfully enhanced or radically new. This course rethinks power dynamics to better understand how to design both for and with other people. With successful completion of this course students will be able to demonstrate competence in developing, refining, and communicating research interests in a committed, reflexive manner. They will gain an understanding of the strategic and tactical value of design and a sense of the practical problems involved in realizing design solutions and responses that are attuned to the needs of both an institution and individual users. Students will gain experience not only in theoretically framing social and political issues as these are expressed through design, but also in understanding the methodological tools needed to translate problems into creative interventions that are user-centered and compassionate.

- Barbara Adams

### **Mission Statement:**

Collaborate with Gilead staff and clients to identify and satisfy unmet needs.



### **Idea Behind Potential+**

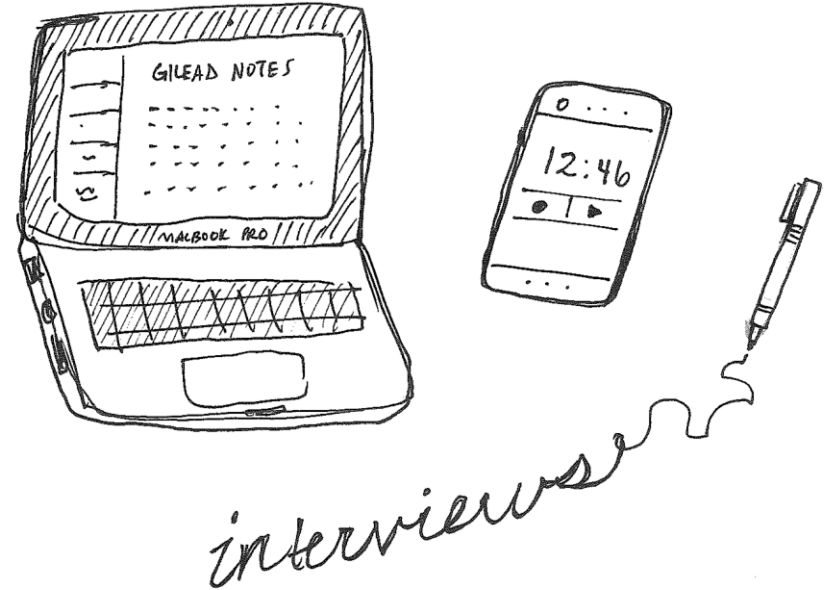
Jerry, one of our client collaborators, said that “everything has potential” and that “realistic thinking does not matter” for our project.

In one of our first meetings, a Gilead director mentioned a few “pie in the sky ideas.” Gilead staff also sees the potential in their space.

We hope that all of the potential ideas from this book will inspire not only the present but also the future.

Hence the name:

**Potential+**





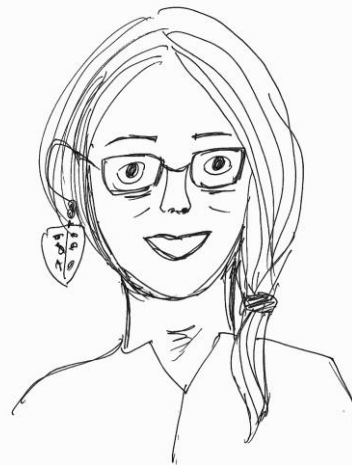
Jerry

Jerry is a Gilead client and a long-time member of the Gilead community. As a user of the space, he is enthusiastic to imagine improvements to the waiting room. He likes to listen to metal music and write in his free time.



Rob

Rob is the Director of Quality Assurance at Gilead and has been working at Gilead for more than 20 years. Sometimes it is hard to meet with him because he often has meetings, but he is passionate about improving the waiting room space.



Suzanne

Suzanne is one of Gilead's board members and her son is also a Gilead client. She is an art teacher at a high school in Madison, CT. In the summer, she has taught art workshops to Gilead clients in the social club. She is also a Wesleyan alumni.



Linda

Linda is the Director of Billing Services at Gilead. She is dedicated to patient recovery. She hopes to improve the space for both Gilead clients and staff. She is usually the one to turn the T.V. on in the waiting room.

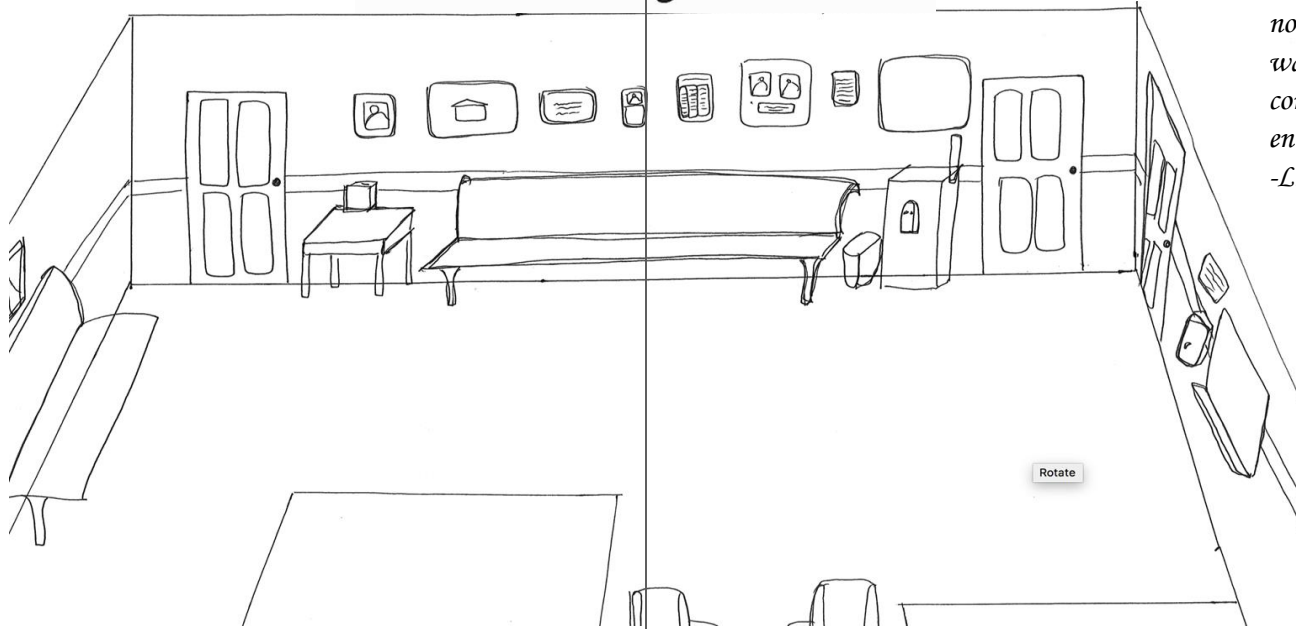
*"This room is no one to talk to."*

*-Jerry*

'One felt the room,' one tastes 'the faint, flat emanation of things.' Time 'is no longer something thought, it is something *lived*.' The waiter no longer perceives the hour as a line along which times moves independently of her but as a duration which she must embody and traverse. The hour no longer moves but she moves it. She is the hour that moves (Schweizer, 2005).

*Waiting is a consciousness of time embodied, of time endured.*

Baldwin center -  
-The waiting room -

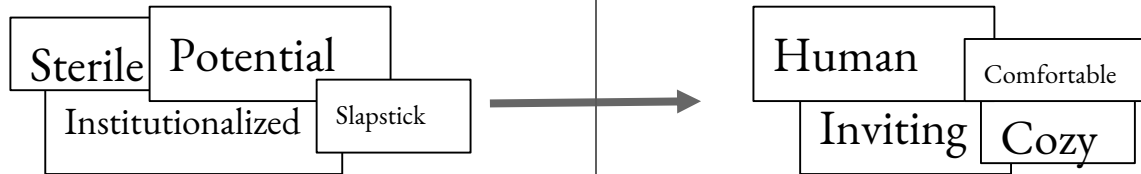


*"Therapists are usually on time so wait time is not too long. We don't want to make it too comfortable as it could encourage loitering."*

*-Linda*

*"Many people depend XIX cab rides. Therefore many people end up getting dropped off one hour before appointment and 1 hour later after appointment"*

*-Rob*



# The Bench

In our interviews and observations, the bench was a focal point of discussion about possible changes. Various clients and staff expressed discontent with the current bench, so changing it could significantly alter the ambiance and perceived comfort of the room.

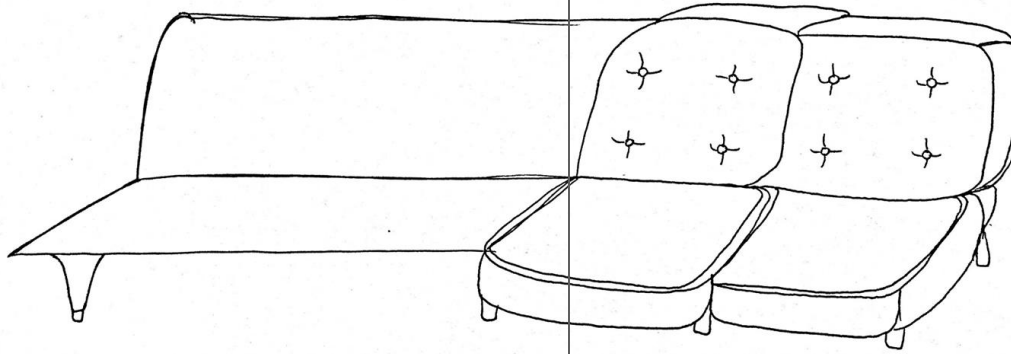
*Bernard wanted to get rid of the benches; they remind him of when he lost custody over his son back when the benches were used in juvenile court.*

*"Gilead staff want clean and manageable chairs. Can't use upholstered chairs because can't be kept clean and may be infested by bed bugs."*

-Rob

*Chairs need to be leather-like to wipe away stains/spills*

-Jerry

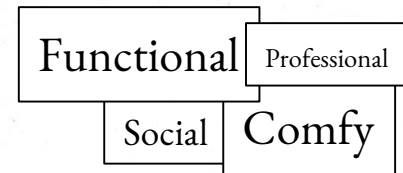
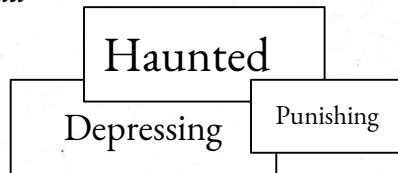


*"These seats are depressing... This is a place of therapy, these should be the first to go out. It's like waiting for punishment"*

-Linda

*"There shouldn't be any pillows since they will be on floor & take up space"*

-Linda



The arrangements of seating affects how much people interact with each other in the space (Holahan, 1972).

Mixed seating arrangements and seats facing towards each other encourages more social interaction. In the interviews, we found that some clients preferred the long benches because they provided more space to spread out and take on various bodily positions. The longer bench, however, may also encourage more people to sit closer and interact with each other. For this reason, some clients and visitors that prefer solitary waiting choose to sit in the individual chairs rather than the benches.



# Sound and Television

The sounds of the waiting room are mostly composed of the TV, which typically plays either game shows or the home improvement channel. In conversations with clients, many expressed how the game show channel could be “annoying” or “boring”. One person simply wanted the TV to be turned off.

Various people that we spoke to suggested changing the TV to either play music or nature videos - which have been shown in the literature to have soothing effects.

*“I personally don’t like the TV in the waiting room; house decorating shows may not be relatable to clients who don’t own homes.”*

*-Linda*

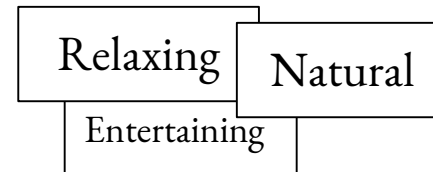
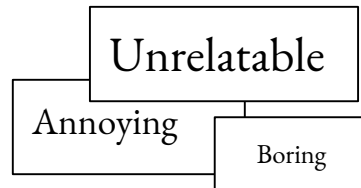
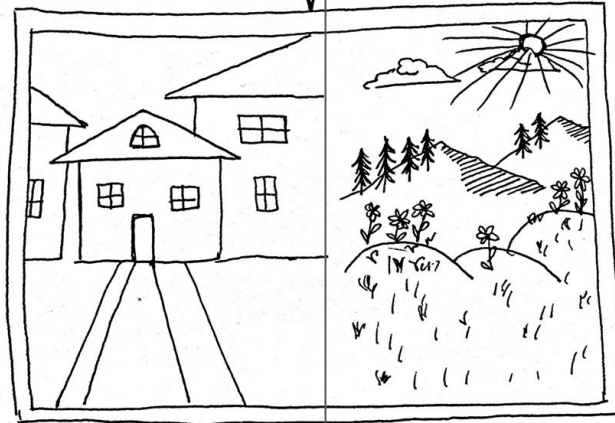
*“Game shows on the TV are annoying.*

*Nature or music channels would be better.”*

*-Ted*

*“Although game shows can be entertaining, some DVDs or Blu-Rays with aerial views of the Grand Canyon and nature shots without talking would be nice.*

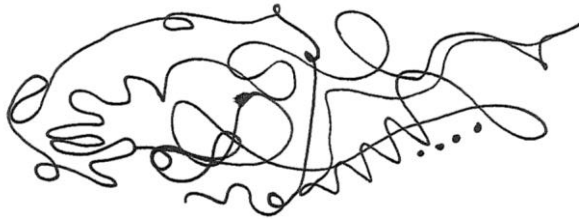
*-Jerry*



Studies have shown that music is effective in reducing patients’ anxiety before medical treatment (Lee, Chao, Yin, Chiang, and Chao, 2011).

Bernardi, Porta, and Sleight (2006) measured cardiovascular and respiratory variables while patients listened to six types of music with differing rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic structures. They found that fast tempo music induced an arousal effect, while slow or meditative music induced a relaxing effect. Thus, we suggest playing videos with natural scenes and sounds, along with soothing music in an effort to relax clients in the waiting room.

# Artwork



“Let Gilead clients see each other.”

-Peggy

*Anytime there has been a group photo, Jim has been mentioning the one from the race a couple weeks ago, you see clients saying like “aw there I am!” -Suzanne*

Frames & plaques on wall are not straight

“Decor looks slapstick, unprofessional”

-Brian

Wants more pictures instead of plaques

Suzanne runs an art workshop during the summer: focused on watercolors, sketches, photographs, etc.

“Plaques are uneven, could be rearranged more aesthetically”



Want to put up portraits of past clients on walls instead of employees.

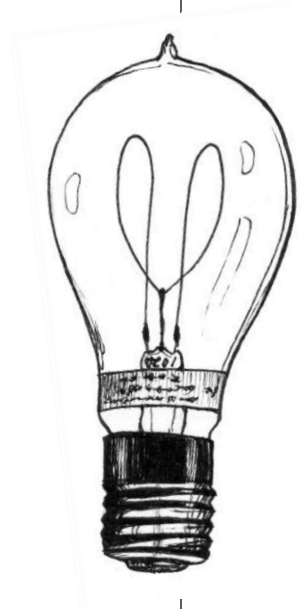
# Lighting

The main source of light in the waiting room is from the fluorescent lights on the ceiling with natural light trickling into the room from the windows on the main doors.

Lighting design is typically guided by the function and programming of a space, with work spaces calling for bright lighting that is stimulating while relaxation spaces contain dimmer, more muted lighting.

*Don, when prompted to reimagine the lighting in the room proposed having a warm, tabletop lamp between the two individual chairs near the entrance of the waiting room.*

*Bernard described in great detail how he would construct a cathedral ceiling in the waiting room. Although his idea may not be currently feasible, it emphasizes his desire for more natural lighting and privacy.*



A study measuring elderly people's changes in mood in response to various lights shows that warm (2700 K), low intensity (120 lx) lighting could produce a calming effect in addition to an increase in pleasure. (Kuijsters et al., 2015)

"Take out the privacy room, it looks creepy."  
-Brian

## -The Privacy Room-

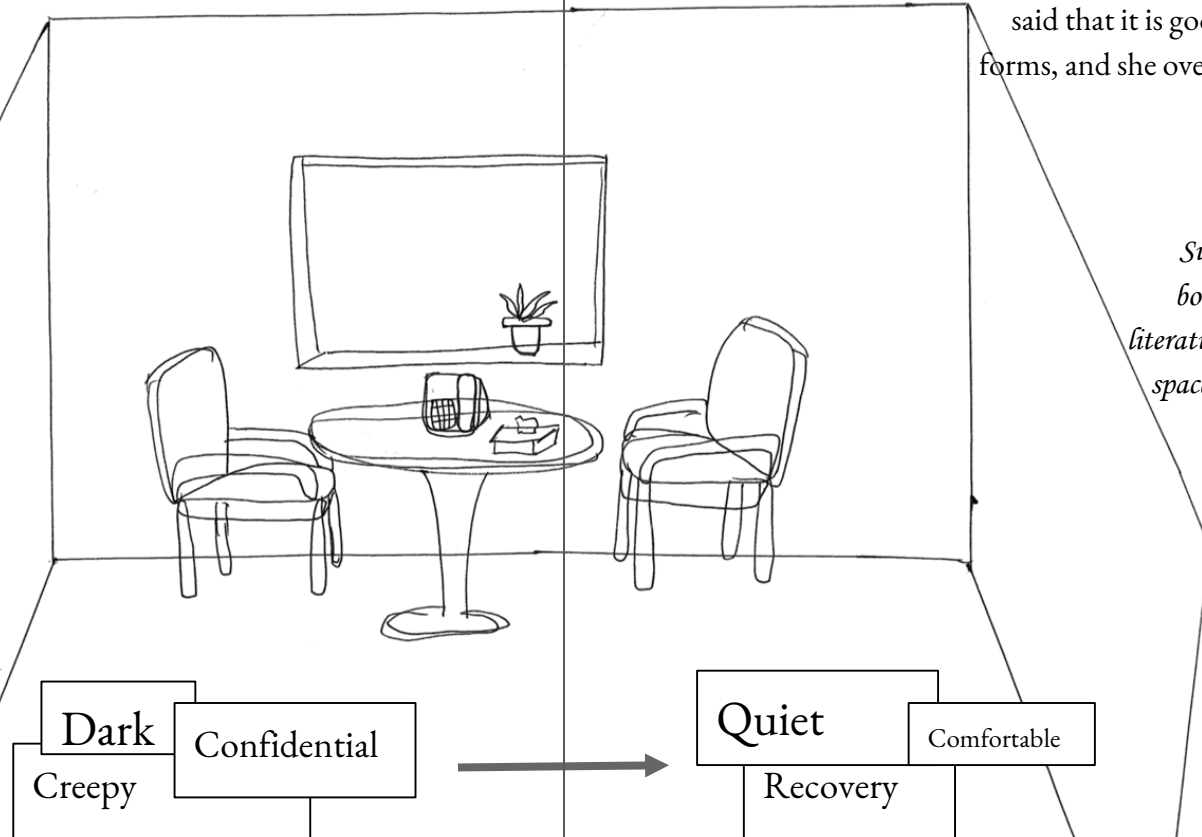
"The room is not used very often but there is a phone inside to make calls for cabs in case clients don't want to use minutes. She also said that it is good to fill out confidential forms, and she oversees grievances are client right officer."  
-Linda

Used by ACT team sometimes for privacy since ACT office doesn't have private space.

Room is always unlocked and can be used by anyone -- it's not exclusively used by staff, accessible to clients too.

*Suggestion to put in books/bookshelf (recovery-oriented literature) and use room as quiet space, especially for people w/ social anxiety.*

Placed a plant by the window, could be seen from the parking lot, when you enter Gilead.



# Blinds

“Dark lighting makes it look uninviting”

*“Human beings evolved under the day-night cycle,” said Richard Schwartz, MD, an associate clinical professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. “It is the natural time-keeper that sets our biological clocks within our brains and organs throughout the body.” When those clocks, known as circadian rhythms, get disrupted, it can affect our sleep, mood, and cognitive performance.*

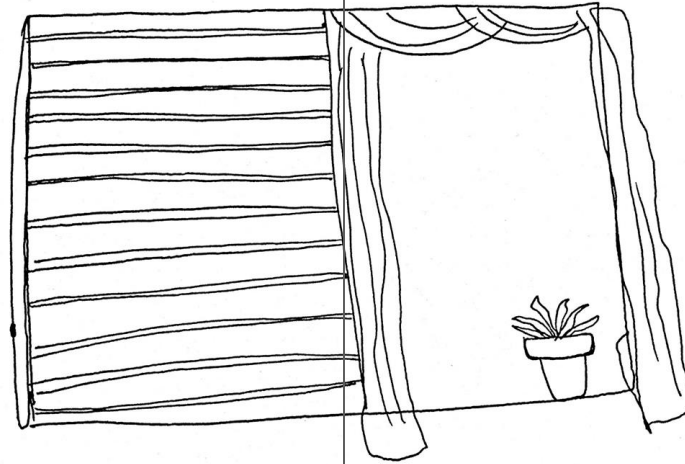
*-Dr. Sanjay Gupta*

Should move the client rights paper on another bulletin board

-Linda

“Could open blinds?”

-Linda

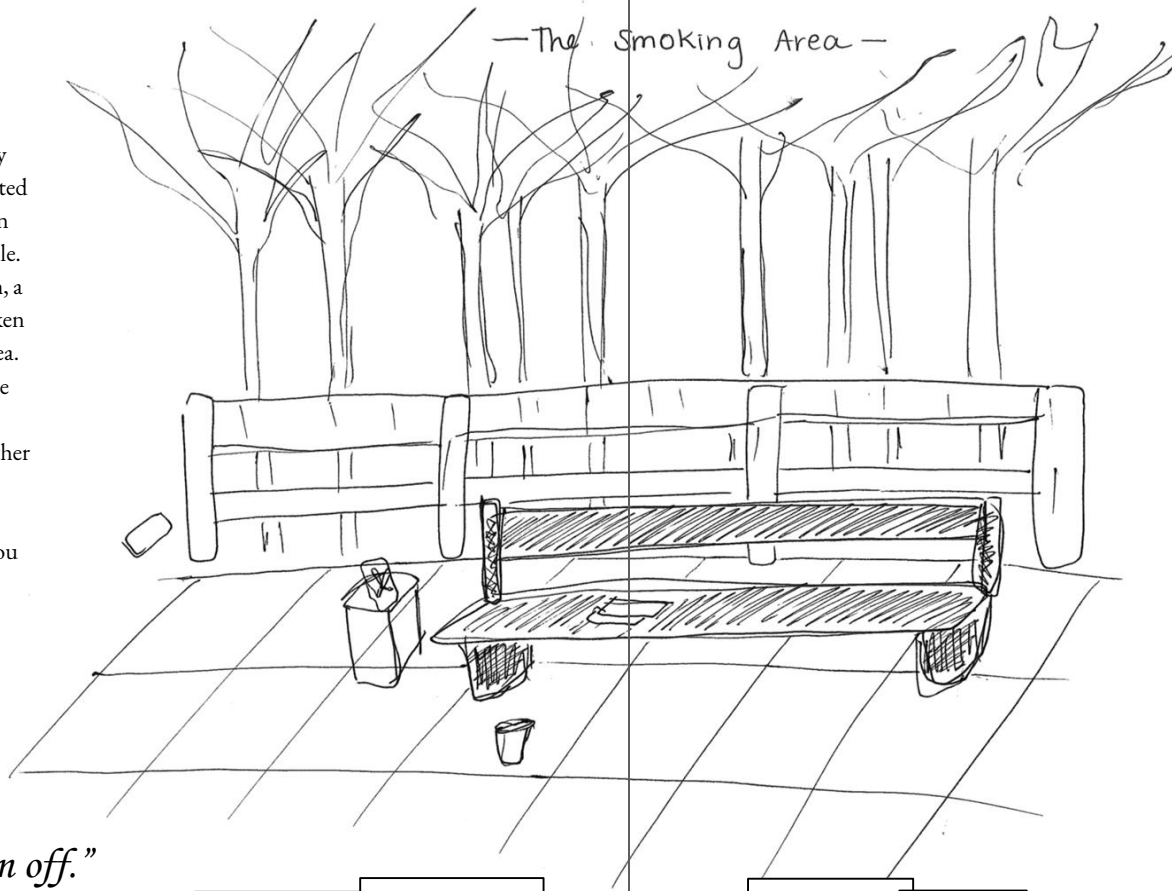


“Curtains may not last & blinds not too bad but maybe need to be a brighter color.”-Jerry

*More natural light can pass directly into the waiting room, connecting the two spaces with light.*

Gilead allows smoking, but only in designated areas away from buildings. The designated smoking area for the Baldwin center is not very recognizable. It consists of a broken bench, a trash-filled ashtray, and broken debris littered around the area. We have only seen people use that space once during our visits at Gilead. For all the other times, most clients regularly smoke a few feet from the building so that as soon as you open the door, you can see people smoking. The messy and disheveled state of the smoking area deters people from using it.

—The Smoking Area—



*“The space doesn’t look taken care of, so other people won’t take care of Gilead either.”*  
-Jerry

*“It’s a total turn off.”*

-Jerry

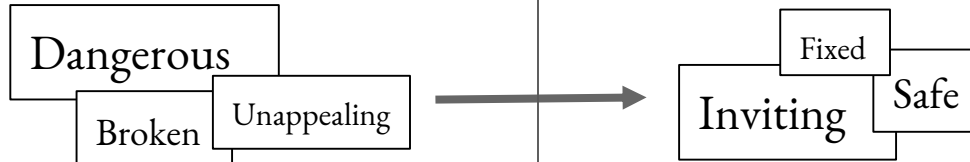
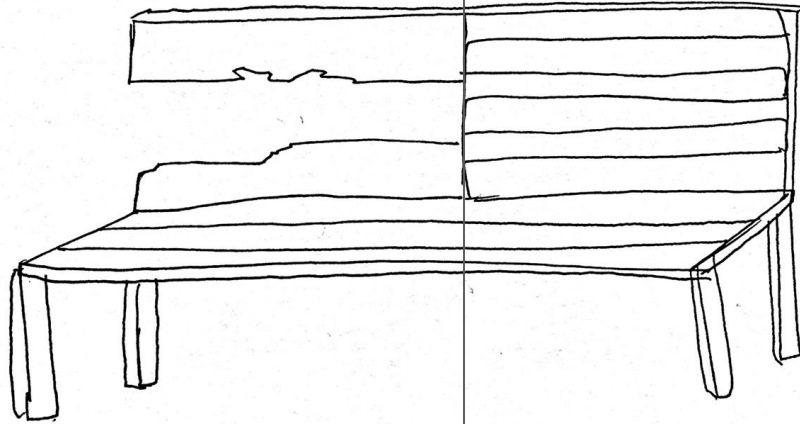


# Outdoor Bench

Clients are reluctant to sit on the outdoor bench because it is broken. It does not look very comfortable to sit on either since one of the planks that makes up the bench's back support is torn off. The missing plank is on the ground several feet away from the bench. There are rusty nails sticking out from it. The bench was broken by a snow plough last winter that accidentally rammed into the bench. No one has cleared up the mess since then, however.

The main solution is to replace the broken bench with a new one and relocate it somewhere that won't be in the way of snow ploughs.

*"This is a safety concern."*  
-Jerry



In recreational outdoor areas, people are more likely to sit on the boundaries which have a wider visual view of the pedestrian flow (De Jonge, 1967).

This is called the "edge effect." The edge effect explains how people tend to sit on the boundary in order to have a rich view of all of the activity in the area. As a result, people are less likely to use benches with a limited view of human activity since that is the main attraction of the space. Currently, the bench is placed on the outskirts of the parking lot, the center of human activity, but there are many cars parked in front of it that block the view. We suggest to replace the outdoor bench and also place it somewhere that will allow clients to see the parking lot more clearly. This will make the bench more attractive to use to clients.

# Cover Area

The designated smoking area is exposed and does not have any sort of shelter for smokers. This makes the area unappealing on rainy or snowy days and encourages smokers to smoke under the Baldwin center's roof, just a few feet away from the main entrance. Another fire hazard is the ashtray. One day we saw that the ashtray was full of DVDs and a pair of shoes. Someone had assumed that the ashtray was a garbage can. Since then, no one has taken out the miscellaneous items, so no one really uses it.

A client suggested to build a gazebo in the smoking area for cover, but a bus stop-like canopy is a more feasible alternative. Jerry also suggested to change the ashtray to one that's hookah-like.

*"The ashtray is a fire hazard."*

*-Jerry*

*"We need a new ashtray—one like a hookah. That's much safer."*

*-Jerry*



Exposed

Unregulated



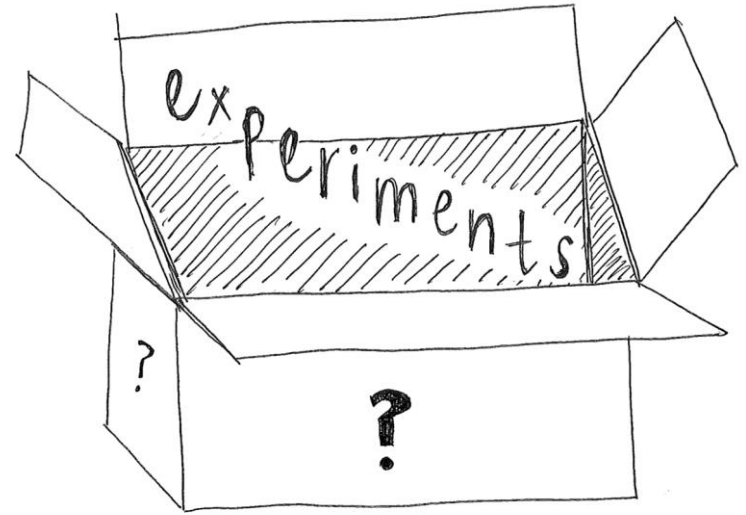
Controlled

Protective

Sibley & Liu in 2003 found that adding no-littering signs and trash cans reduced littering in public places by changing littering habits from passive to active.

The study found that there are two forms of littering. One is active littering or purposeful littering and the other is passive littering or unintentional littering (e.g. drops trash on ground and doesn't pick it up). By adding no-littering signs and more trash cans, cigarette littering was reduced by 17%. This is because this encouraged people to actively throw away their trash and prevent passive littering. There is no chance to drop and not pick up fallen litter if they are not holding onto the litter in the first place, after all. Thus, we recommend to place more ashtrays, trash cans, and no-littering signs in the Gilead smoking area. The ashtrays are important to make people throw away their cigarettes properly. The trash cans prevent people from passive non-cigarette littering, such as DVDs, in ashtrays. For example, people may have mistakenly put trash in the ashtrays because they thought it was a trash can at first. After putting it in the ashtray, however, they are less likely to take it out and properly dispose of the non-cigarette litter.





On the first day  
of the plant experiment,  
a woman  
passed by,  
stopped,  
picked up a small  
bright green plant,  
and said,  
“These are so nice.”



## The Plant Experiment

*“Softening the environment but keeping it functional. [Plants are] kinda a living thing and that helps there.” -Linda*

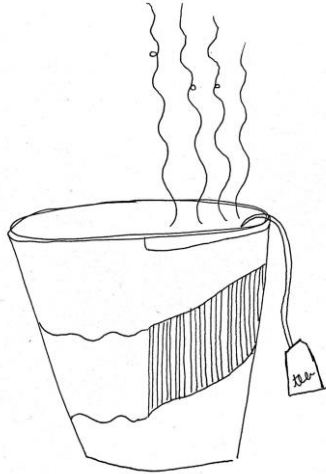
To soften the waiting room, we decided to include some plants in the space. We bought three small succulents from a local CVS store and placed them on the table with the suggestion box. We also added a medium sized house plant to the privacy room.

You can see one of the plants in the very front of the Baldwin center. It gave outlookers a homey first impression of the waiting room. Both the staff and clients liked the plants. They were an affordable and effective way to soften the institutionalized feel of the space.

It was obvious that people were noticing the plants because there were often dirt spilt around the pots. People were picking them up or knocking them over. Eventually, someone moved the plants to a table in front of the privacy room which was away from the seating area. Perhaps this made it less likely for people to knock them over.

Unfortunately, after a little more than a week, two of the small succulents were gone. Clients may have taken them home.

I looked in the trash  
and saw  
several cups and tea bags.  
People are  
in fact  
using the cups  
to drink hot tea  
and not just  
cold water.



## The Tea Experiment

*W: Do you think that clients or the other Gilead staff here drink the tea?*

*L: I don't know. I offered it to people and told them that there's some there.*

We noticed that the water dispenser had hot water but no heat-resistant cups. A client had told us that he wished there were more drinks in the room. He said that clients often walked to the local convenience store to buy coffee or soda. We decided take advantage of the hot water and provide another beverage option: tea.

We bought English black tea, decaf Earl Grey tea, and paper heat cups. Within a few days, both the box of tea and the cups were gone. We had to replace the tea supplies twice during our short experiment.

The tea was a way to provide comfort in the space. Some of the Gilead staff were offering tea, giving clients a warm and hospitable experience.

A few of the cups, however, were seen outside and not properly disposed. This may be an issue in the future because no one was willing to throw them away.

Overheard at Gilead/Observations

"I have a boyfriend who triggers me."

Recognizing this place as a place of healing

Propping the door open: "My daughter is here."

Sound of the music drowning out from a client's headphones

Sitting in a black chair: listening to music loudly trying to drown out noise.



*"I don't know what else to do.*

*No one wants to be sick,*

*No one wants to be sick for so long."*

## Epilogue: Worth it

We want to emphasize that this book is all for Gilead.

All of the changes we have proposed here are from Gilead client and staff feedback. If you have any other suggestions to make, please feel free to write them down in the following blank pages. With your feedback, we hope to make the waiting room as dignifying as possible because, as our Jerry has told us before:

you are worth it.

