
L'Arche:

Inclusive living for people with and without intellectual disabilities



Photography: Patrick St-Arnaud

L'Arche is an innovative housing model that brings people with and without intellectual disabilities together within one communal hub. Private living areas are complemented by a range of communal spaces with a warm, comfortable, home-like ambience that helps connect residents to each other and the greater community. Through participating in this intentional community, residents can access meaningful daytime activities, share their gifts and enjoy their full potential in stable, secure and affordable homes and day centers.

Dreaming Big

Operating out of a 50 year old building, L'Arche needed to address the accessibility and space limitations in the outdated compilation of structures. Challenging themselves to think big, they wanted to go beyond simply renovating the existing buildings, to create a place that would allow them to expand their programming and support more people with dignity and care. Explains FeiFei Peng, Community Leader and Executive Director, L'Arche Greater Vancouver, "Not only did we replace our three homes and make it possible for us to grow our two community inclusion programs, but we have also welcomed ten adults with developmental disabilities who can live semi-independently, surrounded by a supportive community."



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Project Manager, GBL Architects

Creating a Sense of Home

The new building includes three L’Arche homes for people with and without developmental disabilities, two community inclusion programs for members, and ten residential units for adults with developmental disabilities who can live more independently. In addition, 29 affordable housing units are available for people without disabilities. In a large city where people may feel isolated and alone, L’Arche will continue to be a place of belonging. “It’s not an institution. It’s a home. So, the most important thing was that it should have a warm, home-like feel. A place where everyone was welcome and everyone could participate as much as they wanted”, says Eileen Albang, Project Manager, GBL Architects. To support this, the furniture needed to be easy to clean, durable and ergonomic for both staff and residents. It also had to be inviting, comfortable and nurture connection. The use of Primacare recliners, Wind and Citi Square seating provides soft places to kick back, relax and socialize. Easy-to-clean Willow guest chairs offer versatility for dining and activity areas.

Celebrating Community and Individual Talents

The driving principle at L’Arche is the recognition that every person is valued and has unique gifts to contribute to society. Outreach programs allow members the opportunity to offer a range of services to the local community, like light yard work for seniors. Adds FeiFei, “We also have a coffee lounge on the first floor, where we will invite the local community in for coffee and cake, served by our core residents.” Residents prepare and share meals, plan outings and go for walks together, strengthening community inside and out. “On the second floor, we have a space that our residents have aptly named the Friendship Room, where our semi-independent residents gather every day. They have movie nights, there are parties, and they cook together once a week.

It has been special to see the relationships that have been formed”, explains FeiFei. Jim Lattimer President, L’Arche Greater Vancouver, concludes, “I am so proud of the work our staff has done to bring this vision to reality. This is our home.”

FEATURED PRODUCTS

Willow guest chairs, Primacare recliners, Wind lounge seating, Citi Square lounge seating, Swap tables, Dreme Sleeper, Freefit tables

ARCHITECT

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