

# UM FLAT STRATEGIC PLAN

ASSEMBLED  
2020-2021



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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to everyone who has supported the FLAT's vision throughout its first decade of existence. We hope that our community partners continue to resonate with the FLAT's mission and help us in creating a more sustainable and equitable Missoula.

We would like to specifically recognize the continued support from the following individuals:

- Caroline Stephens
- Dan Spencer
- Len Broberg
- Neva Hassanein
- Robin Saha
- Derek Kanwischer
- Peter McDonough
- Katie Nelson
- UM Environmental Studies
- All FLAT alumni

The UM FLAT, as part of the University of Montana, acknowledges that we are in the aboriginal territories of the Séliš and Qlispé (Salish and Kalispel) people. We honor the path they have always shown us in caring for this place for the generations to come.



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# PURPOSE

When the University of Montana Forum for Living with Appropriate Technology (UM FLAT) was first conceived as a research project by UM alumnus Derek Kanwischer in 2007, its goal was to reflect a sustainable model of living. Since the first cohort of residents in 2009, the FLAT has grown to be an example of responsible living, featuring demonstrations ranging from garden beds to our sustainably-renovated community studio space.

In 2020, residents have come to acknowledge that the role of the FLAT must adapt to better meet the needs of the University and Missoula communities. We are becoming increasingly aware of the oppressive systems upon which this nation was built, and we realize that we have not been addressing these systemic issues in our sustainability work. As a student-run organization intent on educating and community-building, it is urgent to reimagine the purpose of the FLAT to reflect our desire to contribute to needed social change.

This strategic plan serves to map out the long-term goals of the FLAT as a student residency, university student group, and community space in Missoula. We are intent on keeping the mission and vision of the property adaptable to community needs as time goes on. We created this plan as a means to 1) identify the foundational philosophy driving our ongoing work, 2) hold ourselves and future residents accountable for accomplishing our long-term goals, and 3) generate a roadmap for future residents to achieve our goal of carbon neutrality by 2025. With climate change growing as an ever-more serious threat to our future, we need to make drastic changes to eliminate our carbon footprint, and help community members do the same.





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## ALTERNATIVE TO A STRATEGIC PLAN

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We find value in a strategic plan to map out long-term goals and hold ourselves accountable, but acknowledge our part in the nonprofit industrial complex. While we recognize that many nonprofits model capitalist structures, we also aim to support social movements that challenge these structures. We define sustainability as inherently anti-capitalist and anti-colonial, and reaffirm the urgency of local autonomy, solidarity, reparations, and collective liberation. As such, we're happy to chat in person about our mission, and have also created a zine that conveys our goals in what we hope to be a more artistic, accessible, and concise manner. Contact the FLAT for a copy!



# WHO WE ARE

When the UM FLAT broke ground in 2009, our organization focused on appropriate technology, a movement for people-centered, labor-intensive, environmentally sound and locally autonomous ways of living. While appropriate technology has been a focus area for many international development, architectural, and engineering organizations, the FLAT originated as an effort to put classroom learning and academic theory into practice, specifically in the lives of UM students and the local Missoula community.

Our mission and vision has changed slightly over the past decade, but our name continues to be accurate and informative of our work. Besides, it's a great acronym.

**Forum:** we practice communally informed, democratic decision making with an aim for social change.

**Living:** this space affects and directs all aspects of our lives - not just our coursework!

**Appropriate Technology:** simply, we live within our means. Appropriate technology is an inherently anti-capitalist and accessible alternative to the more expensive, energy-intensive, conventional "solutions" to climate change.

## MISSION STATEMENT

The UM FLAT is a cooperative student residency that empowers members of the Missoula community to lead ecologically responsible lifestyles. We demonstrate alternative ways of living informed by the urgency of combating systemic oppression. We provide a welcoming public gathering space where FLATmates and visitors can build meaningful relationships and work together towards a sustainable and equitable future.

# PROGRAMMING PILLARS

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*To organize our work, we have identified three “pillars” that describe the focus areas of our programming: demonstration, community, and education. These pillars are the foundation from which we plan our public events and workshops in ways that are inclusive, accessible, and impactful.*

**DEMONSTRATION**

**EDUCATION**

**COMMUNITY**

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# DEMONSTRATION

Students living at the UM FLAT strive to model an ecologically responsible lifestyle. With a hands-on approach to teaching, we demonstrate actions that people can take to minimize their ecological footprint, no matter how small. This empowers our residents and community members to participate in the solutions needed to face larger issues. Some of our most prominent demonstration projects include:

## Energy conservation

- Solar panels
- Energy-efficient appliances
- Winter home weatherization
- Real-time energy monitoring

## Sustainable construction

- Studio: reclaimed timber, straw bale and cob construction, cellulose insulation, passive solar heating, insulated curtains, thermal-mass flooring, and energy-efficient pellet stove
- Cob pizza oven
- Chicken coop built from reused materials and lumbar
- Bike parking area with reclaimed Missoula Art Museum racks and shelter built from 100% reused materials
- Property fence and gates constructed from sustainably harvested or reclaimed lumber

## Sustainable food systems

- Vegetable gardening
- Food preservation
- Backyard chickens
- Greenhouse and hot bed

## Appropriate landscaping

- Native plants
- Pollinator and wildlife-friendly gardening
- Xeriscaping
- Composting

## Sustainable lifestyle

- Minimal waste
- Biking when possible (instead of driving)
- Recycling
- Rainwater capture system





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# EDUCATION

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The FLAT is a space for students and community members to engage and learn with each other. We facilitate opportunities for people to share their skills and visions for a better future. Every year we offer internships, community events, and workshops where participants learn in a welcoming environment. The urgent issues in our community inform our educational programming each year.

Additionally, because we're a living-learning residency, we stress the importance of education not just for the university and community, but also for residents themselves. By acknowledging the power and privilege that we hold, we recognize the need to continuously educate ourselves on current, global events.

Our educational programming includes:

- Annual resident-led student internships
- Workshops
- Lectures, readings, and documentary screenings
- Office hours and tours of the FLAT
- Original UM research projects





# COMMUNITY

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Reciprocal, genuine interpersonal relationships are the foundation of our work at the FLAT. At our core, the residents living and working at the FLAT rely on building strong relationships with one another to effectively live out our mission statement. We extend these relationships outside of the FLAT by partnering with other organizations and bolstering other community work. Ways in which we build community include:

- **Collaboration with:**
    - Student groups
    - Community nonprofits
    - Local artists and musicians
    - UM faculty and classes
  - **Community events**
    - Harvest Party
    - Earth Day celebration
    - Concerts, art exhibits, film screenings, and public presentations
    - Community work days
  - **Free studio space** for student and community organizations
  - **FLATmate community**
    - Weekly meetings, shared meals, pre-semester retreats, and communal living
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# THEORIES OF CHANGE

The UM FLAT aims to enact change on a personal, interpersonal, organizational, and communal level. On a personal level, we, as student residents, are working to shift our actions and words to reflect the FLAT vision. Interpersonally, we live, work, and learn together. In doing so, we prioritize shared leadership and care in our residential community. As an organization, we strive to demonstrate and educate others on how to live an eco-conscious lifestyle. We recognize that environmental issues are inseparable from issues of race, gender, wealth disparity, colonialism, and others.

We also recognize that the FLAT has historically only reached a specific niche of our community. With the creation of this strategic plan, we highlight the necessity of broadening our roots in the local community so that we can act in support and solidarity with other groups working for radical change. We ask future residents to continue working towards community-wide change, with the understanding that enacting personal change is a crucial step in this process.

However, we realize that many measures of diversity can be tokenizing and performative. Diversity cannot and should not be quantified. Building community and creating a welcoming space is an ongoing effort that will take time. To ensure that future residents continue to expand the FLAT's reach within the community, we wrote a list of questions and considerations for residents to revisit when planning events (see the following page).



# QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1

Consider many aspects of diversity, including gender, sexuality, race, religion, socioeconomic status, neurodivergence, age, and other physical or mental conditions that affect a person's movements, senses, activities, or abilities.

2

How do the policies and practices of the FLAT as a student group, non-profit, and private residence include or exclude certain groups? How does the physical infrastructure and appearance of the property include or exclude certain groups? What changes can we make as a university-affiliated organization to make our space more inclusive?

3

Who is showing up to our space and events?

4

Who are we targeting with outreach and advertising, and what role does this play in who attends our events? What efforts are you doing to reach an audience that does not look like you?

5

What community groups or organizations do we have an ongoing relationship with? How do we support them in their work? How do they support us in return?

6

What resources can we provide to the community? What resources should we provide? Those might include meeting space, temporary housing, garden space, food, education and skills, community interaction, audio-visual equipment, tools, and temporary storage space.

## *How might asking these questions prompt action?*

See Appendix C for qualitative examples of what working towards a safe and welcoming space regarding **gender** has looked like at the FLAT.

# GOALS

## *Carbon Neutral by 2025*

For the FLAT to be impactful as a demonstration site, we believe that residents should operate under the goal of **carbon neutrality by 2025**. New residents should always feel empowered to take on projects that align with their personal interests and skills. However, FLAT projects need to intentionally target this goal if we are going to achieve it.

Because of the mounting pressures of climate change, we believe that **eliminating the FLAT's carbon footprint is of utmost importance**. As a residency focused on sustainability, carbon neutrality is an important and tangible goal. The City of Missoula also plans to be carbon-neutral by 2025, and we want to help contribute toward that goal within the FLAT and University communities.

Additionally, we believe this project will benefit and serve as an example for the University. Eliminating our energy utility usage reduces the financial burden of the FLAT on the Office of the Provost. In a time of increasing budget cuts and University-wide reorganization, we can ensure the continuity of the FLAT by scaling down our reliance on external funding.

Working towards this goal of carbon neutrality is a multi-year plan and requires heightened coordination between resident cohorts. **The "milestones" on the following page will help us scope our collective emissions, create a timeline, and eventually achieve carbon neutrality.**



# CARBON NEUTRALITY MILESTONES

## 1. Complete energy audit of both houses and studio

- a. Utilize live-tracking energy monitors
- b. Complete a weatherization assessment (with assistance from local experts)
- c. Inspect and evaluate all appliances- reduce or eliminate use of energy-inefficient devices
- d. Evaluate our solar panels
- e. Create plan for reduction in personal energy consumption
  - i. Make personal changes regarding transportation, food purchasing, waste reduction, appliance usage, etc.
  - ii. Grow a larger percent of residents' diets on our own garden

## 2. Weatherize homes and studio

- a. Collaborate with Property Manager to weatherize homes
  - i. This may require re-roofing, re-insulating, replacing windows and doors, and upgrading heating systems
- b. Collaborate with the Sustainable Construction program at Missoula College to weatherize the studio

## 3. Acquire solar panels for cottage

- a. Fundraise: Apply for grants, host fundraisers, seek donations, and use group funds (both ASUM and Soap funds) to raise enough money for the initial payment for new solar panels
- b. Develop plan for future residents to finish paying off solar panels
- c. Create thorough plan for the continued solar panel maintenance

## 4. Seek alternative methods for footprint reduction

- Install solar hot water heaters, high-efficiency pellet stoves, and/or use other technologies to eliminate natural gas usage
- Research other renewable energy sources to provide clean energy in winter, when solar panels aren't able to provide all energy
- Consider raising funds to purchase carbon offsets

## ADDITIONAL FLAT GOALS

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*In the Spring of 2020, FLAT residents and friends formulated a list of project ideas for the future of the FLAT. Carbon neutrality was the most agreed-upon goal, but other project ideas, listed in their respective pillars, include:*

### Demonstration

- Zero Waste
  - Establish glass recycling plan with RecyclingWorks
  - Conduct waste audit
  - Improve food preservation efforts to get more out of our garden year-round
  - Create and implement a plan to achieve Zero Waste
- Minimize Water Usage
  - Update rainwater catchment barrels, improve rain gutters
  - Efficient, automated irrigation system for lawn, native gardens, and front garden bed
  - Grey water system from sink/bathroom
  - Outdoor rainwater sink for studio guests
- Sustainable Agriculture, Soils, and Ecosystem
  - Create maintenance plan for native plant gardens
  - Replacement of front lawn with native plants
  - Xeriscaping - no water or nutrient inputs
  - Permeable pavement for parking area

## Education

- Indigenous land acknowledgement in all public presentations/tours
- Learning and sharing sustainable practices pioneered by BIPOC in Missoula and beyond
- Engaging with K-12 students on demonstration projects
- Increase educational resources
  - Build a Little Free Library
  - Create educational and demonstrational films





## Community

- Make space ADA compliant and accessible
  - Install ramps
  - Include braille on our signage
  - Have ASL translators at our events
- "The UM Eco-Block": work with block neighbors on how they can start their own sustainable demonstration projects
  - Share garden and produce with neighbors
  - Dedicate part of our garden to neighborhood use
  - Improve relationships with our neighbors
- Create FLAT culture of everyday sustainability
  - Implement more specific "rules" for living here
  - Offer suggestions for changing everyday behavior
- Challenge each other to reduce our individual footprints
- Implement FLAT "office hours"
- Expand reach beyond EVST, implement more community engagement (see our **community partners** list)
- Support local organizations with the same vision of combating systemic oppression

# CRITERIA FOR SELECTING FUTURE PROJECTS

*In order to improve the impact of residents' work, we have created some guiding principles for future projects. Proposed projects should meet most, if not all, of the following criteria:*

- Works towards goal of carbon neutrality by 2025
- Supports at least one of our pillars and our mission
- Addresses current and ongoing issues in our community, including racism, environmental injustice, wealth inequality, and climate change
- Increases awareness of the FLAT
- Involves diverse cross section of community & encourages collaboration
- Accomplishable - can be successfully completed, maintained, and transferred to future residents
- Takes advantage of existing momentum and resources
- Low budget and financially accessible
- Provides a service to the community (not just the FLATmates)

## THEMES TO PERPETUATE

- Maintain ethics of anti-colonialism and anti-capitalism
- Aim to build local autonomy, self-sufficiency, and community empowerment
- Embody respect, reciprocity, and relationality between individuals, communities, and the land itself
- Encourage diversity, inclusivity, accessibility, and intersectionality
- Think creatively, work collaboratively

# FUNDRAISING

*All of our work would not be possible without generous contributions from local businesses, community members, grants, and support from the University of Montana.*

Each year the FLAT's Harvest Party brings together over 100 people. From this event, we usually raise up to \$400 for our projects.

In the 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2021, the FLAT applied and received money from the Kless Revolving Energy Loan Fund (KRELF) grant for various projects pertaining to energy conservation.

In 2020, the FLAT received funding from the SIEF grant for a total of \$969.14 for the purchase of a projector screen, audio equipment, chair cushions, a chair rack and other educational equipment for our community studio space.

In addition to fundraisers and grants, the FLAT's local community partners have contributed thousands of dollars worth of in-kind donations.

In fall 2020, residents organized an "Adopt-a-Chicken" sponsorship program which raised \$700 for chicken expenses and various household demonstration projects.

Associated Students of the University of Montana (ASUM) also provides funding for our projects and programming every year.





# COMMUNITY PARTNERS

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*Our community partners within the University and Missoula communities have been invaluable to the FLAT's genesis and continued success.*

## HISTORICAL COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- UM President's Office
- VP Finance and Administration
- Environmental Studies Dept.
- Facility Services
- Dining Services
- Sustainable Campus Committee
- VP Student Affairs
- Missoula College Sustainable Energy Technology Program
- Clawson Northslope Windows
- Eureka Pellet Mill
- Home ReSource
- Mountain Supply
- MMW Architects
- Apex Engineering
- Sustainable Building Systems
- Loken Builders
- Heritage Timber
- Bad Goat Lumber
- Northwestern Energy
- UM Provost
- And many others!

## CURRENT COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Environmental Studies Department
- ASUM
- Sunrise Movement
- 1000 New Gardens
- Missoula Urban Demonstration Project (MUD)
- City of Missoula Bicycle and Pedestrian Office
- Home ReSource
- FreeCycles
- PEAS Farm
- KBGA community radio
- LAB preschool
- Bad Goat Lumber
- Missoula BIPOC Mutual Aid
- Missoula Food Share Project
- UM Provost
- Hellgate Property Management
- UM Office of Sustainability
- UM Climate Response Club

# FLAT HISTORY

2007

UM FLAT project first suggested as area for EVST research

2008

UM FLAT Strategic Plan and Proposal. Site selected, funding acquired and plan is drafted to renovate garage.

2009

Access granted, Derek takes up residence! Funding goal met for garage renovation: \$12,000. Grant awarded for permaculture garden, studio design. First year of FLAT residents in the Fall of 2009.

2010

First Earth Day BBQ, pellet stove donated to the main house, begin leading UM class tours

2011

Solar panels, energy tracking, cambro purchased through STIP grant, FLAT internship begins, and the cob oven is built

2012

Pellet stove installed in studio, FLAT workshop series begins

2013

Native plant garden, greenhouse built, first Pizzapalooza fundraiser, Wild Mercy readings begin

2014-  
2015

Vermiculture, studio pellet stove purchased through STIP grant, solar hot water heater, chicken coop renovation, grey water and water catchment system, hydroponic experiments, hot bed, worm composting, promotional video, FLAT outreach dinner, 5 year plan, outdoor project signs, Earth Week work day and BBQ, and big weatherizing push

2015-  
2016

Mouse eradication project, substrate and psyllium covering between main house and studio, pressurized water catchment system, automated watering system, raised hugelkultur garden bed, education outreach

2016-  
2017

Front fence remodel, cob oven renovation, chicken coop remodel, 7 field trips at the FLAT with Clark Fork School preschool and kindergarten, new chicken flock

2017-  
2018

Raised beds, KRELF grant for pellet stove, crop rotation plan, solar panel grant paid off, and Summer Supper Club

2018-  
2019

Zero waste/utility/gas/water tracking, native plant garden, rebranding graphics, 5 year plan, new logo

2019-  
2020

Strategic plan writing, co-director handbook, edible native plant garden, partnership with KBGA, native plant talk series, chick raising/slaughter, weekly folk jams, hot bed/cold frame rebuild, full fence and gate rebuild, first free plant giveaway, coop mite removal, major landscaping & garden bed maintenance effort

2020-  
2021

Strategic plan writing, new bike racks and covering, interior studio improvements, garden manual, Zoom fermentation workshop series, new front yard sign, interior house painting, native shrub purchases, fundraising for other community groups, alumni newsletter, new promotional video



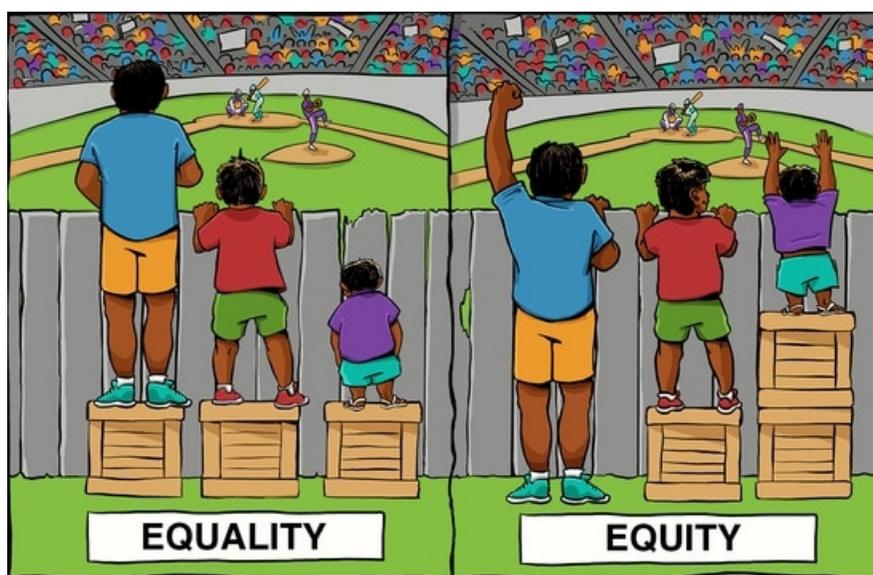
## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

### **Collective Liberation:**

Collective liberation is based on the idea that we are all interdependent. As Marsha P. Johnson put it, “No pride for some of us without liberation for all of us.” It is a recognition of the past and a bottom-up approach that does not come through institutions, domination, or hierarchies. Collective liberation demands disability justice and harm reduction. It demands queer and trans liberation, Black and Brown and Indigenous and POC liberation, economic liberation, and liberation for the Earth and all life. In *Towards Collective Liberation: Anti-Racist Organizing, Feminist Praxis, and Movement Building Strategy*, Chris Crass writes, “If intersectionality is a framework for recognizing the ways in which oppressions are wrapped up together and structure society, then collective liberation is a corresponding framework for looking at how we organize to transform those relations of power.”

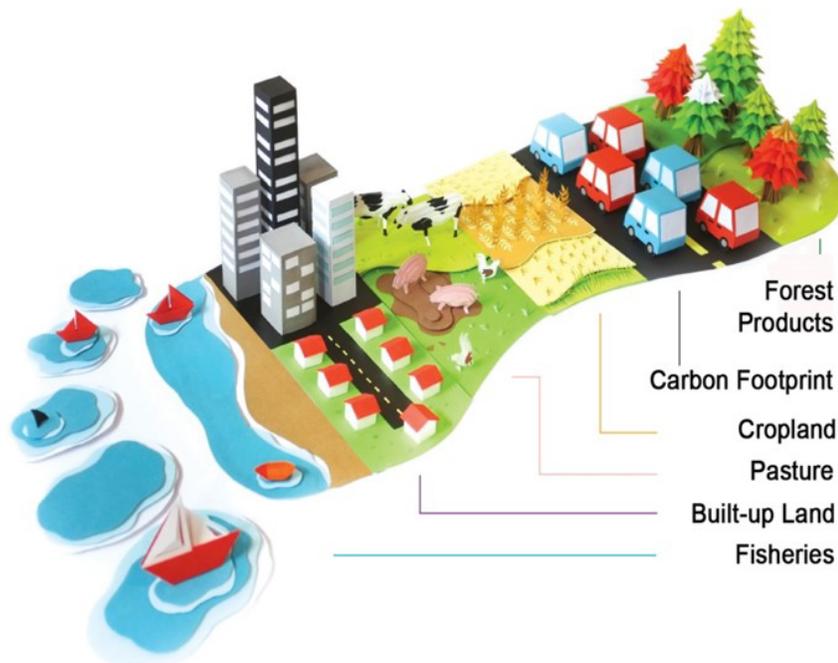
### **Equitable:**

Where as equality means giving everyone the same resources and opportunities, equity means giving resources and opportunities based on the needs of the recipients. Image courtesy of Interaction Institute for Human Change.



### Ecological Footprint:

Ecological footprint refers to the impact of human activities (from an individual or a population) on global natural resources, including forest products, carbon emissions, fisheries, etc. Image courtesy of the Global Footprint Network.



### Intersectionality:

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines intersectionality as “the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect, especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups.” Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality means that categories such as race, gender, class, etc. are overlapping, which is important in understanding how inequalities are perpetuated.

**Non-profit industrial complex:**

The book *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*, by INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, describes the non-profit industrial complex as the effects of capitalist and state interests on social movements, activists, non-profits, and philanthropy. According to the authors, the capitalist state:

- 1) “Redirects activist energies into career-based modes of organizing instead of mass organizing capable of actually transforming society,”
- 2) Surveils social justice movements and organizers and “encourages them to model themselves after capitalist structures rather than challenge them,”
- 3) Permits corporations to “mask exploitative and colonial work practices through philanthropic work,”  
and
- 4) “Diverts public monies into private hands through foundations.”

**Reparations:**

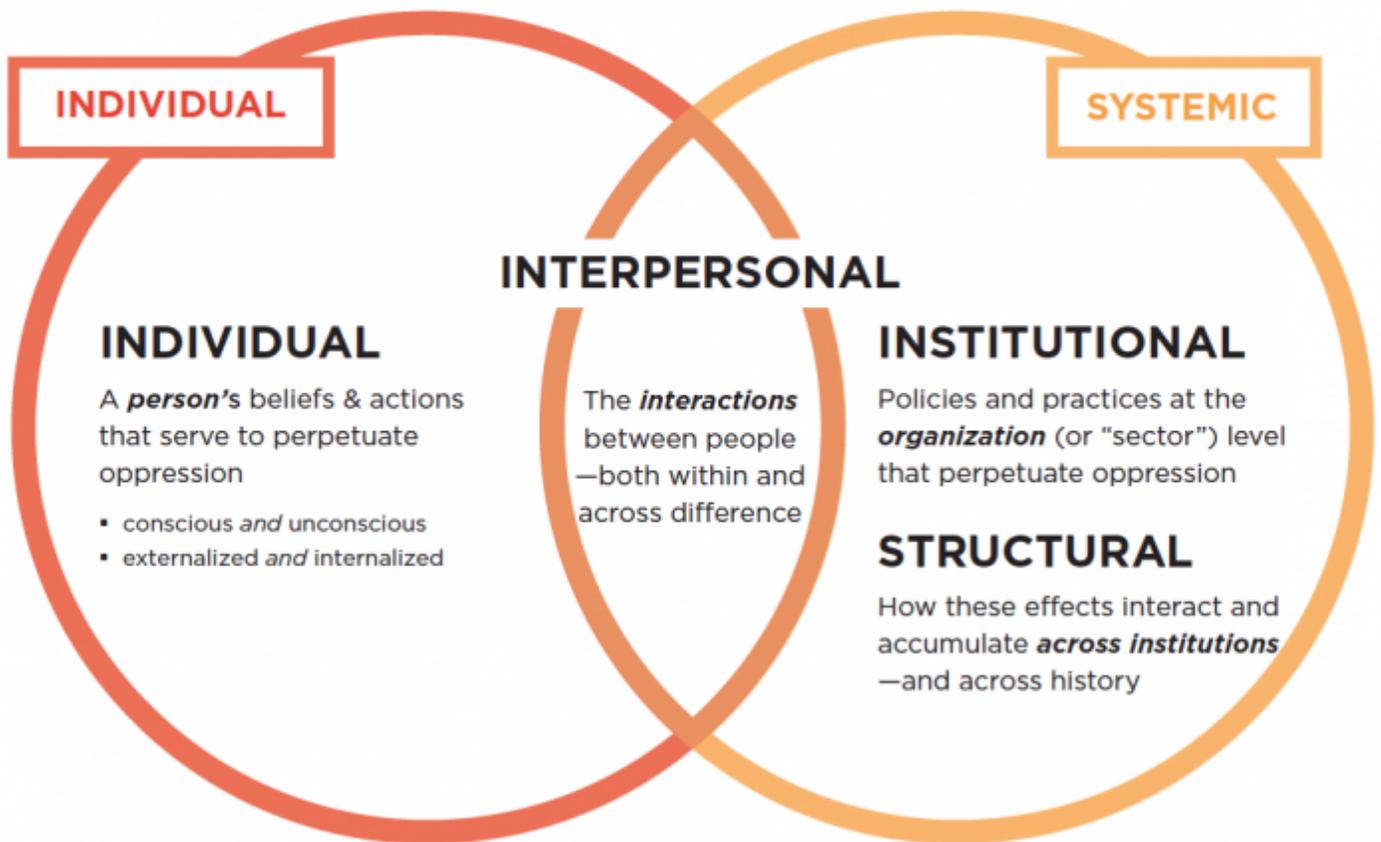
Reparations are amends or compensations made to individuals or communities who have historically experienced--and continue to experience--injustices. These injustices are often committed by governments, institutions, and those who hold societal power. Reparations can include land, money, health, education, spirituality, and more.

**Sustainability:**

Sustainability - as we define it - refers to a lifestyle that is regenerative rather than exploitative, where resources are replenished, and where human dignity is respected. The FLAT views moving towards a more sustainable lifestyle as an essential step in moving towards collective liberation. We consider sustainability inherently anti-capitalist and anti-colonial.

**Systemic Oppression:**

Systemic oppression acknowledges that oppression is not only individual or interpersonal, but also institutional and structural. Oppression can occur in economic, social, political and cultural systems. Institutions such as governments, schools, etc. have policies and practices that perpetuate the oppression of marginalized groups. These effects then accumulate systemically across institutions and across history. Image and definitions courtesy of the National Equity Project.

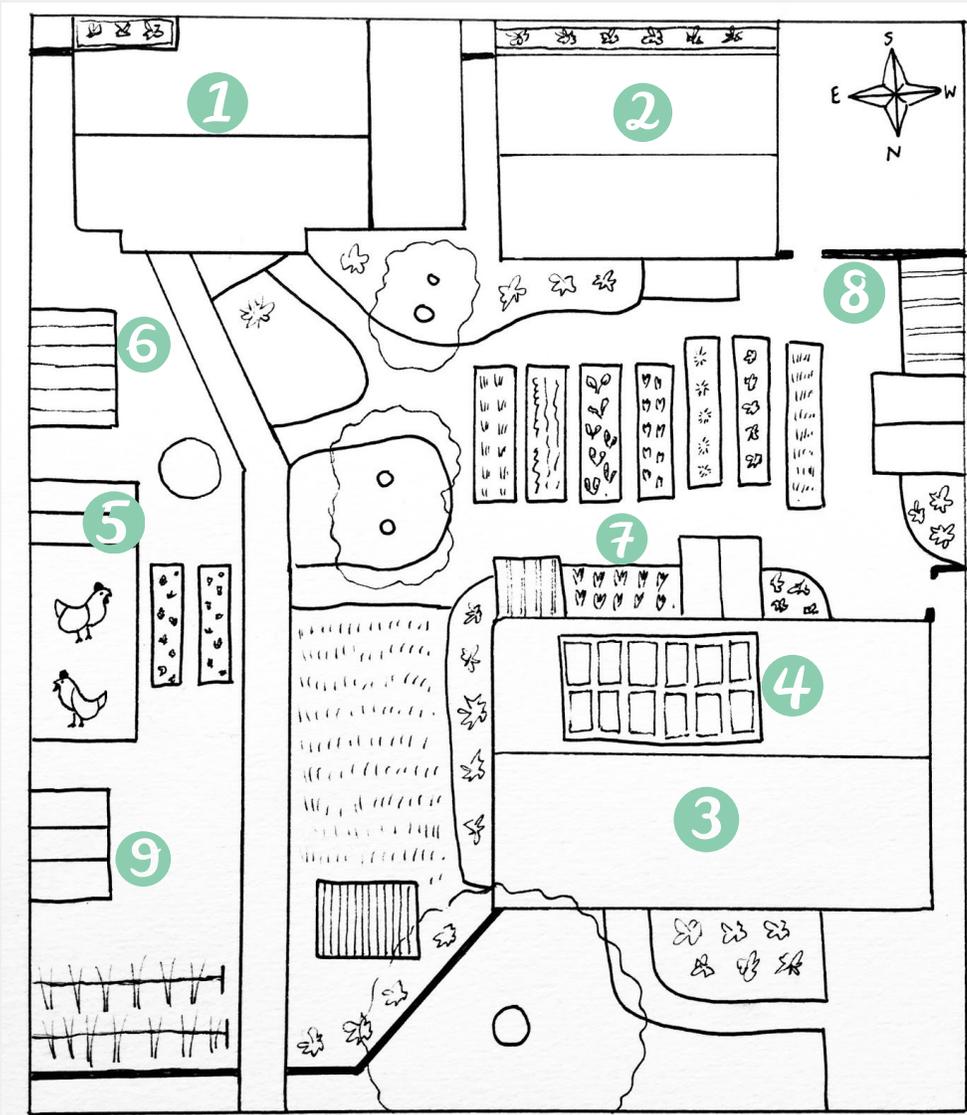


## QUALITATIVE EXAMPLES OF GENDER INCLUSIVITY IN PRACTICE

- Temporary housing for unhoused trans youth
- Culture of respecting/understanding pronouns among residents and at events
- Use of studio space, tools, and materials by trans organizers
- Building community and friendships within the queer community and spreading knowledge of the FLAT as a resource
- Attending trainings on gender as a student organization, and sharing podcasts, books and articles amongst ourselves
- Intentional interpersonal conversations about gender among residents
- Trans/nonbinary/gender diverse folks attending our events
- Trans/nonbinary/gender diverse folks applying for resident and co-director positions
- Writing letters to elected officials to advocate for trans rights (for example, in opposition to MT Senate Bill 280)



# FLAT MAP



- 1 the cottage
- 2 the studio
- 3 the main house
- 4 solar panels
- 5 chicken coop
- 6 cob oven & rocket stove
- 7 food gardens: raised beds, hot bed, and greenhouse
- 8 bike parking area
- 9 compost

