



Client:  
Women's Supported Housing &  
Empowerment  
Somerville, MA

Design Team:  
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Kent Street Apartments in Somerville is a low income housing facility developed and managed by Women's Supported Housing and Empowerment, Inc. (WSHE) and The Community Builders to provide a stable and supportive living environment for previously homeless women and their children.

A team of three designers conducted a series of workshops to create a dialogue which would educate residents with no design vocabulary in the complicated process of turning a utilitarian site into an attractive landscape. Because it is often difficult to visualize a design when working from plan views, the designers built a model of the site to help the residents understand the design. The residents had

an opportunity to "play" with the landscape to learn how to shape it into a satisfying and useful place.

As the design process evolved, the Kent Street residents became increasingly confident and skillful. Many had never been homeowners, so acquiring the ability to create a landscape of their own was an exciting and empowering experience. Community needs were identified and spaces created to accommodate them. Ideas flowed. Technical issues were identified. Concept plans were drawn. Elegant embellishments were added. When the workshops were completed, this unique partnership between residents and designers had created a plan that would turn construction leftovers into beautiful gathering spaces for the entire community.

