(Un)Making Places: 
Supportive Housing As Human Infrastructure

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(Un)Making Places: Supportive Housing as Human Infrastructure
ABSTRACT

Homelessness is a layered issue, not only limited to social justice, but also impacting architectural and urban planning concerns. Treated as an identity rather than a temporary condition, many cities fail to address the complex variety of external factors which contribute to homelessness. The result often being budget-driven shelters congregated in already resource deficient, low income areas. The misconception that homelessness only happens in a city’s poorest areas is rooted in prejudice and functions to only further prevent the same types of developments seen in more desirable neighborhoods. With a specific socioeconomic climate and disparity in Orlando, Florida, Parramore presents itself as an opportune place to provide a central downtown sanctuary that additionally will provide greater access to necessary services for the adjacent neighborhoods. A study of queer theory and ergonomics were an integral part of the design process. The former primarily concerned with the development of queer spaces from illicit “underground” safe havens of refuge built out of a necessity to exist freely in space (a precursor to present-day DIY culture) to now transparent, integrated queer spaces existing almost indifferently to the naked eye. The emergent idea being that together, the community campus is intended as an accessible series of places, rather than a singularly defined one.
GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

Homelessness is a social issue which affects everyone. There is a long history of intolerance towards the homeless which is evidenced by discriminatory policies that prevent the homeless from existing in the public and/or stress a homeless individual’s ability to access the necessary services needed to escape homelessness. Current housing assistance for the homeless are often limited by inconsistent access to services (e.g. healthcare, counseling, job assistance, etc.), traditional living arrangements, availability, accessibility, and budget-driven designs. Additionally, the social stigma around homelessness is counterproductive to a critically vulnerable group of people’s recovery and re-assimilation into society. Supporting the development and design exploration of services such as permanent supportive housing is beneficial because it is a model focused on embedding users into the community through thoughtful and holistic design. (i.e. a housing assistance service which places chronically homeless individuals into market-rate apartments or similar residential dwelling; usually centrally located and/or connected to necessary services). Another important aspect of this thesis is exploring non-traditional sites for such projects as it is equally as important for city’s to reassess the opportunity to renew areas lost to discriminatory planning. This thesis references various ideas, philosophies, and design strategies borrowed from similar vulnerable groups to establish connections and create a roadmap for how the architectural intervention will be developed for the specific user group and site context. It is my hope that this optimistic reimagining of lost spaces as sites for supportive housing and community can help redefine what and who homelessness is and shed light on how services could like moving forward into the future.
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INTRODUCTION

Homelessness is a layered issue, not only limited to social justice, but also impacting architectural and urban planning concerns. Treated as an identity rather than a temporary condition, many cities fail to address the complex variety of external factors which contribute to homelessness. The result often being budget-driven housing assistance programs congregated in already resource deficient, low-income areas. The misconception that homelessness only happens in a city’s poorest areas is rooted in prejudice and functions to only further prevent the same types of developments seen in more “desirable” neighborhoods. In reality, it is a human condition universally experienced by all demographics and yet national and local resources often fail to provide a holistic place of refuge for arguably the most chronically vulnerable group of people in America. Current housing services are limited by their lack of focus on access to preventative services, traditional living arrangements, availability, transparency, and most significantly in its relation to this thesis: assimilation into their communities.

With a specific socioeconomic climate and disparity in Orlando, Florida, Parramore presents itself as an opportune place to provide a central downtown sanctuary that additionally will provide greater access to necessary services for the adjacent neighborhoods. Despite experiencing dwindling development over the decades, Parramore has remained resilient as a culturally rich community, being the city’s oldest and largest historically black neighborhood. This offers a location imbued with the transformative powers of survival; a necessity in maintaining community (protection). It also serves as an opportunity to reconnect the existing potential of a once thriving sector of the downtown area back to the city at large through architectural intervention. A specific consideration regarding the site election was equity. The interstate underpass which bisects Parramore from the downtown from its inception was largely motivated by discriminatory planning practices, i.e. “slum clearing,” largely popularized by Robert Moses. Over 600 structures in Parramore were destroyed via eminent domain for the highway’s construction and it’s negative socioeconomic impact can still be seen today. The architectural intervention focuses on rebuilding this lost area of the Parramore community. The paths of desire homelessness often takes us are, ironically, never desirable: underpasses, alleyways, abandoned structures, stoops, policed public parks, “tent cities,” etc. Conceptually, the site’s centrality puts homelessness on the “main stage” of the city. Transparency is transformative. In praxis, the development’s mixed complex of residential, assembly, and services in a challenging atypical site creates a new precedent to reference moving forward.

The proposed community campus focuses on a wide range of demographics but data provided by the Coalition for the Homeless, influenced design and programming to be focused primarily around single adults and student age youths (the two largest groups by percentage of Orlando’s homeless population). Spaces range from individual, group and mixed collective use, reflecting that healing and individuality is a comprehensive process. Together they create a milieu in which a means of establishing self, a reliable network of resources, and reintegration into society en masse is possible with dignity.

A study of queer theory and ergonomics were an integral part of the design process. The former primarily concerned with the development of queer spaces from illicit “underground” safe havens of refuge built out of a necessity to exist freely in space (a precursor to present-day DIY culture) to now transparent, integrated queer spaces existing almost indifferently to the naked eye. Ideologically, themes of transparency as a transformative power and the concept of camp heavily influenced the rationalization behind site selection, provided a framework for the success of the proposed master plan, and the repeating pattern of porosity throughout the campus. The latter, ergonomics, is an emphasis on the root of the campus: the user, i.e. the individual. Permanent supportive housing is located in curvilinear bays, which from exterior to interior are designed in a continuous line of human-conscious design. Operable windows placed on either side of the facades capture indirect daylight and establish passive cooling through a natural cross-breeze felt internally and in the exposed circulatory breezeways. Interior spaces are organized by an ergonomic millwork form that establishes zones for cooking, bathing, and living. The goal being an emphasized sense of permanence and an efficient usage of the SRO’s small footprint. Other users are welcomed into the supportive housing center’s campus of services and drop-in programs, such as counseling, education, sustainable food sources and recreation through a porosity felt around the campus’ perimeter. Retail, dining and large assembly spaces located along the campus’ public edge are programmed to create a symbiotic relationship between residents and potential neighborhood users. Circulation flows freely from interior to exterior, shared to protected, and done so in a multitude of ways to emphasize the duality of public and private components. The emergent idea being that together, the community campus is intended as an accessible series of places, rather than a singularly defined one.

Through direct access to necessary services and empathetic dwelling spaces, the campus will provide users the opportunity to shed the identity-less identity of homelessness, celebrating their individuality and humanity, as well as upholding the resiliency of Parramore. The potential of urban infrastructure ultimately becomes possible by simply re-contextualizing it as human infrastructure.
HOMELESSNESS

According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness’s 2020 report, seventeen out of every 10,000 people in the United States were experiencing homelessness on a single night in January 2019 during HUD’s Annual Point-in-Time Count. These 567,715 people represent a cross-section of America. They are associated with every region of the country, family status, gender category, and racial/ethnic group. No group of people is removed from homelessness; it is a part of the human experience.

Fig. 1 (Above): TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN THE USA EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS PER YEAR BY TYPE 2019; The National Alliance to End Homelessness.

HIGHLIGHTS

LARGE SUBPOPULATIONS:

Individuals. Seventy percent of people experiencing homelessness are individuals who are living on their own or in the company of other adults. The remainder (30 percent) are people in families with children.

Males. Homelessness is significantly defined by gender. Sixty percent of all people experiencing homelessness are male. Amongst individuals, the numbers are starker—70 percent are men and unaccompanied male youth.

Unsheltered. Far too many people in America sleep outside and in other locations not meant for human habitation. This group includes more than 200,000 people (37 percent of the overall population). Among individuals experiencing homelessness, the numbers are more dire—1 in 2 are unsheltered.
Homelessness is an emergent situation, with many different contributing factors that impact both those experiencing homelessness and the entire community. Many cities which struggle with a deficit in affordable housing, also fail to have their minimum wage meet the standard cost of living. Meaning that sometimes any loss of income/resources whether due to unsteady economic times, domestic violence, substance abuse, mental illness, foster care limitations or some combination thereof, can be the defining factor in one’s agency over their safety and security.
INTERVENTION

Generally, homeless services are not equipped to fully meet the needs of everyone experiencing homelessness. Working in spite of this is a range of housing services, each attempting to meet various scales of needs. The most commonly thought of housing assistance service is the emergency shelter, and for good reason. A 2007 report on bed inventory trends from the Nat’l Alliance to End Homelessness showed that emergency shelters equaled more or less in number to alternative housing services but the 2019 report shows that the number of temporary housing beds has trended down by 9 percent, while the number of permanent housing beds (Permanent Supportive Housing, Rapid Re-Housing, and Other) has increased by 20 percent over the last five years. These numbers reflect a shift in policy priorities. Renewed emphasis is on ending homelessness by moving more people into permanent housing, rather than allowing them to linger indefinitely in shelters and unsheltered locations.

HOMELESS ASSISTANCE TYPES

Fig.2 (Top Right): GRAPHIC VISUALIZATION OF (2) HOMELESS HOUSING ASSISTANCE SERVICES, (LEFT) AN EMERGENCY SHELTER AND (RIGHT) A SUPPORTIVE HOUSING PROGRAM; Graphics by Adriana Heldiz.

Fig.3 (Bottom): HOMELESS ASSISTANCE BED INVENTORY TRENDS 2007 V. 2019; The National Alliance to End Homelessness.
INTERVENTION
SHORTCOMINGS: HOUSING

While additional services outside the visualized range below exist, for the purposes of this thesis, focus was placed on the four most prevalent / commonly thought-of housing models. Reported issues for which there is data for are assumed to be representative of the larger housing assistance industry not discussed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EMERGENCY SHELTER</th>
<th>TRANSITIONAL HOUSING</th>
<th>PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING</th>
<th>AFFORDABLE HOUSING</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PURPOSE</strong></td>
<td>Temporary safe haven while more permanent housing is attempted to be secured.</td>
<td>Provide a program which if followed could lead to placement support; HUD pushed away from program type in 2015.</td>
<td>Targeted at chronically homeless individuals, i.e. those who have lived on the streets for years and are particularly...</td>
<td>Income-restricted housing; major contributor of homelessness is unavailability of affordable housing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DURATION</strong></td>
<td>A couple days - a couple months.</td>
<td>A couple months - a couple years.</td>
<td>Varies, could be a couple years to an indefinite amount of time.</td>
<td>Indefinite.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IMPACT OF LOCATION</strong></td>
<td>Geographically limited to areas of known activity; often undisclosed; security is prevalent.</td>
<td>Geographically limited to areas of known activity; security is prevalent.</td>
<td>Apartment, residential home, embedded in community, need to have access to community services.</td>
<td>Apartment, residential home, embedded in community, need to have access to community services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AGENCY</strong></td>
<td>Program is usually in control of user’s access to services and general condition.</td>
<td>Program is usually in control of user’s access to services and general condition.</td>
<td>User is primarily in control; emphasis on self-agency and pro/cons of individual actions.</td>
<td>User is in complete control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OFFERED SERVICES</strong></td>
<td>Safety, basic needs, shared living quarters, placement support, etc.</td>
<td>Safety, basic needs, dormitory style living quarters, placement support, case management, etc.</td>
<td>Safety, basic needs, placement support, SRO living, access to services, academic, vocational, case management, etc.</td>
<td>Community, sometimes access to services, income restricted rent, safety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DESIGN IMPACT</strong></td>
<td>Design is usually budget-driven, gymnasium-style living, institutional aesthetic...</td>
<td>Design varies as funding could be public or private; typically though there is an institutional aesthetic...</td>
<td>Design is on par or exceeds existing quality and is of similar style of surrounding context; human-conscious.</td>
<td>Design is on par or exceeds market rate quality and style of surrounding context; human-conscious.</td>
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Fig. 4. GRAPHIC VISUALIZATION OF (4) OF THE MOST COMMON HOMELESS HOUSING ASSISTANCE TYPES. Graphics by Adriana Heldiz.
PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

THESIS PROGRAM

Permanent supportive housing is a relatively newer, yet promising holistic model of housing assistance. Typically, these programs operate under the ideology of “housing first.” Permanent supportive housing is the residential program of this thesis project as it is the only holistic and most comprehensive program in terms of approach, intervention, recovery, and education. There is also a general attitude towards the design of supportive housing that is in line with the idea of designing homes with thought and dignity, and not necessarily design that is just purely budget driven.

"Housing first prioritizes providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness, thus ending their homelessness and serving as a platform for which they can pursue personal goals and improve their quality of life. This approach is guided by the belief that people need basic necessities like food and a place to live before attending to anything less critical, such as getting a job, budgeting properly, or attending to substance abuse issues. Supportive services are offered to support people with housing stability and individual well-being, but participation is not required as services have been found to be more effective when a person chooses to engage. Permanent supportive housing has been found to be cost efficient. Providing access to housing generally results in cost savings for communities because housed people are less likely to use emergency services, including hospitals, jails, and emergency shelter, than those who are homeless.”

- National Alliance to End Homelessness
A different way of looking at this housing assistance type, is seeing it as a program structured around Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs -- a psychological concept that essentially asserts that in order to grow as people, we first must have our physical needs met (e.g., shelter, food, safety, etc.). The root of homelessness is the absence of a permanent home, which is why housing first prioritizes home placement as that ends a person’s homelessness. This fulfills the base of a person’s needs, our physiological ones. Only after achieving this can we begin to work on things such as security (many of the elements falling under this category being typical services provided in supportive housing centers), and beyond that our interpersonal relationships (program and community engagement), and self-agency.
INTERVENTION

SHORTCOMINGS: PUBLIC SPACE

Hostile Architecture: noun [uncountable] the planning and design of buildings or public spaces in a way which discourages people from touching, climbing or sitting on them, with the intention of avoiding damage or use for a different purpose.

While steps have been taken to address homelessness through various housing services, there is still the larger issue of how homelessness is perceived by society, i.e. those who have never been homeless and/or are ignorant to the complexity of it. There are many misconceptions as to who is homeless, too much emphasis on the idea that homeless individuals deserve their situation and/or a general apathy (acceptance) of homelessness existing in general. Housing assistance quickly becomes no more than a specialized ghetto for the homeless when you look at the larger relationship of urban space and homelessness. Signage, policing, and hostile architecture are all utilized in the public urban realm to control who and how people occupy space, specifically, homeless populations. The obvious issue then becomes when housing assistance can not meet bed demands and homeless people are kept out of or made to feel unwelcome anywhere else. These types of measures do nothing to assist a critically vulnerable group of people, nor does it make any impact in ending homelessness. This is how homeless camps come to exist in the margins or liminal spaces of a city: stoops, alleys, underpasses, condemned/abandoned structures, forested areas, etc.

Fig 7 - Fig. 9. Common examples of hostile architecture, i.e. public elements designed to prevent usage by homeless individuals.
Fig. 10. Example of a homeless encampment.
INTRODUCTION

From the 1940’s through the 1960s, the United States saw great post-war success. A booming economy and influx of returning soldiers led to the rise of suburbs as people increasingly needed greater space to accommodate what a greater spending budget could acquire, specifically: the automobile. This naturally led to greater traffic as commute times and the number of drivers greatly increased, pushing the government of the 40s and 50s to greatly subsidize road and highway construction by as much as 90% through the Federal Highway Act of 1944 and 1956, respectively, to jumpstart the nation’s infrastructure. Black Americans were kept specifically out of this transition from the inner city to suburbs through a form of segregation and housing discrimination known as redlining. Many black Americans were denied home loans and any opportunity to buy into suburbs, a direct cause as to why so many inner cities are disproportionately black and suburbs so overwhelmingly white. Eventually inner cities became overly congested, and in the 60s-80s American planners began to heavily utilize planning ideologies popularized by Robert Moses, a strong proponent of aggressive highway construction. A particular idea he promoted was the idea of using strategically placed infrastructure as “slum clearance.” The basic idea being that neighborhoods which were usually minority dominated could be razed partly or entirely through eminent domain to make way for the construction of “necessary” circulation to ease traffic congestion. Various civil rights acts would put an end to redlining and other flagrantly discriminatory practices, but the damages done can be felt generationally in communities never recovered. An undeniable consequence of displacing residents through eminent domain was homelessness and the lasting impacts, which have destroyed local economies and development opportunities. This has created a precarious environment lacking in many of the same quality and accessible resources seen in wealthier suburbs outside the city. As land values tend to also be much cheaper as a result of the aforementioned, these neighborhoods are generally populated by mostly low-income workers, making for a system that does nothing to uplift its community, and everything to ensure homelessness is eminent for many who are financially insecure. This thesis focuses heavily on the spaces lost and created to infrastructure.
Despite data supporting that homelessness is experienced by a representative cross sample of all American groups, societal and political attitudes towards it is one more of maintenance than any real comprehensive attempt at prevention and true healing. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on transparency, we do not need to accept homelessness, but we do need to accept that it happens, and the resources provided should be seen just as commonplace and necessary as services such as healthcare, education, and other examples of “human infrastructure.”
QUESTIONS

1. Knowing that homelessness is highly stigmatized, how can design serve to normalize a truly vulnerable situation and do so with respect and dignity?

2. How can design serve to address the present problematic relationship between homelessness and the urban public realm.

3. How do we improve upon the existing range of housing assistance services?
   3a. How can permanent supportive housing specifically serve as an anchor for a much larger conversation on homelessness, public space and accessibility to community?

4. How can design address equity lost from the systems that were designed to control homelessness and displace people?
“Nothing is lost, nothing is created, everything is transformed.”
--Antoine Lavoisier, Law of Conservation

Transformation is power, or rather the power. It is everything.
“Buildings and structures do not inherently and exclusively grant effects of freedom, no matter how much architects want them to.”

--Foucault
The capacity to adapt and change remains a central aspect of queer theory...transformation is always, first and foremost, a matter of survival...The need for secrecy is deeply rooted in the history of queer spaces which, as a matter of survival, needed to be adaptable, ephemeral, and anonymous...The peril associated with leading a queer life has led to the development of an architecture without the presence of architects; an architecture of necessity and creativity that uses the insignificant, liminal, and transient spaces between the boundaries of the heteronormative world. These non-places...are effectively transformed into places...The occupation of these invisible spaces and their transformation into places becomes an act of transgression, of resistance to a world that constantly tries, at best, to confine queerness to the margins, and at worst, to eradicate it completely.

--Éloïse Choquette, Queering Architecture
In her article, *Queering Architecture*, Eloise Choquette describes how transformation and appropriation of liminal space has served as a means of survival in queer history. I want to draw comparisons between this dialogue on queer space to what a homeless camp is, physically and metaphorically.

In a similar way, queer people and homeless individuals are marginalized by invisible characteristics; characteristics which despite holding no impact on who it affects or relates to, are used to blindy generalize highly nuanced groups of people in ways detrimental to their agency, health and safety.

In both groups policy was implemented to control how and where they could occupy space and in both groups that left them in situations without a space for them to exist freely in with still some semblance of dignity. Homelessness is controlled in the public realm because ideally institutional services will house those populations (or in other words: keep them out of sight), but historically those same services have never been able to fully meet demands, proving again that the separation of homelessness from the urban public realm is problematic. Additionally, despite how housing assistance services are intended to function, homelessness still exists, and despite how the urban public realm is designed to prevent homelessness from being visible, it remains so and even more prevalent in the city’s margins.

In the same way queer people carved out an underground scene to exist socially in, homeless populations have been carving out homes in similar out-of-sight and undesirable spaces to exist generally in. The evolution of queer space over time however is drastically different from that of homeless camps. Generally speaking, queer spaces presently exist mostly anywhere and in non-coded ways (i.e. existing in the mainstream no differently than any other group’s space). Queer institutional services that do exist focus heavily on community connections, access to healthcare, education, and other necessary services. Homeless housing assistance is obviously valuable but there is an element of how they tie into the public realm and how they interact with the larger community that is lacking. Stigma and misconception usually keeps these services only in a city’s low-income areas where access to necessary resources may already be difficult. This creates a cycle of issues with access to care and services. Existing resources and the potential of future developments suffer from the stigma of homeless housing services, which overtime negatively impacts land and property values, staggering the physical and economic growth of those communities.

![Caravan Club](image-url)
Homeless housing assistance is a vital system of resources in ending homelessness, but it must go further. The separation from the public realm — out of sight, out of mind — from policy, physical barriers, and societal stigma, forces homeless individuals into a lower caste of human, making it all the more difficult for them to regain agency and assimilate back into society. Additionally, many services offered at certain programs, such as access to healthcare or internet, might better serve a larger community if housing assistance could be reframed as being part of a more specialized, semi-public/semi-private, community center, or in the case of this thesis: a community campus.

But where does that happen?

This thesis suggests a re-contextualizing of how homeless camps appropriate space and how that can be used to evolve supportive housing and community centers as programs. A study of queer space history will reveal that DIY space appropriation has a long history and even outside of the LGBTQIA community, there are countless examples of diverse groups enacting agency on unused or “undesirable” space. In many cases, these feats of transformation are celebrated and treated as precedence for future projects. Why is this not the case with homeless camps? Forming a community under aggressive policies with virtually no access to reliable and secure resources or even security in undesirable spaces should most definitely be considered a feat. Yet housing assistance is not necessarily seen as the evolution of a homeless camp in the same way a LGBTQIA center (right) or similar queer venue might be seen as evolutions of their once hidden and illicit predecessors. Moreover, the transformation of space and resiliency of the people who created it are in no way celebrated, but seen as blights or nuisances, i.e. “city litter.” Featured on the following pages are some examples of how liminal space has been appropriated to fill a gap in specific communities.
Fig. 15. Topographical Amnesia by Vazio S/A; Community venue in Buritis, Brazil, 2001; a unique and unused system of infrastructure is turned into a sort of maze of circulation and venue spaces via the usage of simple scaffolding.

Fig. 16. Spacebuster by Storefront for Art and Architecture; Community venue in NYC; an inflatable PVC “bubble” capable of being installed almost anywhere creates a pop-up assembly/venue space for a variety of programs.
These examples where featured specifically because they focused on addressing community needs for flexible assembly spaces in less than obvious locales, and in all there was an alluring element of performance. Performance is an important aspect of this thesis as it again allows points to be drawn between queer theory and homelessness, which is again partly the basis for developing a community campus. This topic will be explored further in the next section.
Performance is a fundamental aspect of queer theory. Performance is on one end of the spectrum the literal act of performing “straight” in mixed company when deemed necessary for safety, and then on the other end also a defiant act of intentionally liberated flamboyance. It is also a central aspect of camp.

Fig. 18. Camp Exhibit at the MET in NYC, 2019.
“Gay Gatherings” was the title of an exhibit at Philip Johnson’s famous Glass House in 2019 which explored the interactions amongst eight gay men who set a profound impact on the framework for 20th century artistic culture: architect Philip Johnson and his longtime partner, curator/collector David Whitney; composer John Cage; choreographer Merce Cunningham; ballet impresario Lincoln Kirstein; and artists Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, and Andy Warhol. The exhibit underscored an essential element of the site’s history which until that point had not been fully presented as part of its public interpretation. While these men presided over an era where artistic contributions of gay men were prevalent and increasingly acknowledged within the mainstream culture, homosexuality has historically been framed as immoral and until the early 2000s in the U.S.A. deemed punishable by sometimes up to 20 years in prison due to various sodomy and indency laws which existed at the time. For them, the Glass House was an intellectual and artistic gathering space where ideas could be truly exchanged without consequence. The irony should not be lost then that for a space which hosted possibly amoral or illicit activities, it was designed to be completely transparent, where its occupants are displayed almost as if on a stage. The Glass House is arguably an exercise in camp. There is an ever present theatricality in how the Glass House’s intense transparency stands in juxtaposition to the almost opaque “Brick House,” which is what serves as the guest house (the relationship being a sort of metaphor for “being in the closet”). There is also a playfulness and exaggeration to being entirely on display yet being on a completely private property where no one from the public would see or hear them anyways -- dramatic irony.
What if the Glass House was contextually in an urban setting? This thesis argues that camp sensibility would have still allowed for these men to engage privately in plain sight and that there would have been an unknowing acceptance and assimilation into the mainstream by passerby simply due to the intense transparency and stylization of the design. The openness and maintained visual connection between exterior and interior would create a sensible dialogue between private and public by inviting the senses inward onto scenes normally not featured or understood. If a range of transparencies could be employed in a thoughtful way which invites the public physically in, creates the potential for interaction, allows for agency, and still privacy where security is needed, I would argue that camp sensibility can then be utilized at the scale of a supportive housing and community campus design. Camp also allows for the possibility of urban liminal space to be reassessed for possibilities of development. Unused open spaces in the inner city serve as vital opportunities at creating access to services in vulnerable sites already occupied by homeless camps. By giving these spaces the opportunity to be reimagined and developed, they are recontextualized as being part of the urban fabric. This allows the public to see how “undesired” space can be permanently reclaimed for the betterment of all society through dignified design while also practically making use of centrally located sites which may already be in control of the city, making the realization and funding of any developments in the realm of possibility.
1. Knowing that homelessness is highly stigmatized, how can design serve to normalize a truly vulnerable situation and do so with respect and dignity?

2. How can design serve to address the present problematic relationship between homelessness and the urban public realm.

3. How do we improve upon the existing range of housing assistance services? 
   3a. How can permanent supportive housing specifically serve as an anchor for a much larger conversation on homelessness, public space and accessibility to community?

4. How can design address equity lost from the systems that were designed to control homelessness and displace people?

1. Utilizing camp as a style to achieve a gradient of transparency in how private, semi-public and public spaces are viewed, accessed, and experienced generally; utilizing camp to achieve an effective stylized design in a thought provoking context.

2. Placing interventions at central locations that are porous and transparent; employing a thoughtful mix of public and private programs to establish a sensible dialogue between the campus and community at large.

3. Housing is undoubtedly a community service and a function of community centers is to offer necessary services to the areas served. In a way, supportive housing acts as a specialized community center offering similar services to the areas they serve. This thesis argues for a recontextualization of supportive housing as an element of the community center, or in this case, campus. In that way homelessness is not an isolated topic, but one within the context of a connected community that acknowledges and addresses its community’s needs transparently.

4. By the strategic selection of sites such as innercity underpasses as sites for development, opportunities to develop in dense central downtown locations become available. This allows for access to valuable resources to be created in some of the very sites which may have contributed to homelessness in those site’s cities.
Orlando, Florida boasts itself as the most visited U.S. city for entertainment in the world. Attractions such as Disney World, Universal Studios Orlando, the International "Strip,” and several major convention centers amongst others draw in a domestic and international audience totalling on average, 72 million tourists annually. For context the entire state of Florida’s population is only 21.6 million people in comparison and the most populated city in the world, Tokyo, is only 37,393,000 million people in comparison. The city also hosts several major universities, one of which being the University of Central Florida which is the second largest university in the country by enrollment size (68,571 students at the time of this thesis). Additionally the city touts a vibrant arts community, botanical gardens, unique shopping, dining and sporting opportunities.
Fig. 26. Snapshots of varying scales and styles of residences in the downtown Orlando area; generally this area is of newer, denser developments, yet single-family residential neighborhoods bleed into the downtown areas fringes. These are typically high in property value and usually hold a historic distinction.
PARRAMORE

SITE CRITERIA + OVERVIEW

Based on the previous section’s research, it was important to consider a site that would service existing concentrated areas of homeless camps and particularly low-income and financially vulnerable areas that could also serve as a bridge across communities to re-establish equity lost by discriminatory design. The list of site criteria below was formulated to use as a basis to determine an appropriate neighborhood in the Orlando area for vulnerable communities to heal and reintegrate with the participation and inclusion of the city at large.

1. Central location capable of servicing large area.
2. Appropriate infrastructural space that could support a large scale program.
3. Area designed specifically to prevent homelessness, yet fails at it.
4. Affordable neighborhood.
5. Racially and ethnically diverse.
6. Local job opportunities.
8. Area in need of greater public amenities.

Parramore fits well into these 8 criteria. Located immediately west of Orlando’s vibrant historic downtown district, its blue collar, historically black roots with robust transportation infrastructure allows for an opportune place to insert programs that would benefit both homeless populations and the greater Parramore/Orlando community. Understanding the history of Parramore, the evolution of it within the greater fabric of Orlando, and community building opportunities contributed to conceptualizing programming needs of homeless individuals and residents of Parramore/Orlando.

Fig. 28: Snapshots of varying scales and styles of residencies in the Parramore neighborhood; generally developments are older with concentrations of dense “islands” separated by blocks of single-family residential, open fields, and light commercial/retail.
Fig. 29: Housing project adjacent to Parramore neighborhood. Note that it is completely surrounded, and in some cases, directly under highway infrastructure.

Fig. 30: Community programs in the Parramore neighborhood; (top) existing community center; (bottom) historic church.
Fig. 31 The historic Wells Built Hotel

Fig. 32 Parramore 1940s (top) versus Parramore 2019 (bottom).
Parramore is one of Orlando’s oldest, historically black neighborhoods, with a rich history, ethnically diverse food scene and resilient community. Though driving through it, one might be remiss to pass judgement without knowing the historical forces which have shaped it into what it is today.

Settled in 1881 as a segregated area for white employer’s black workers, Parramore emerged from the relationship between the two races in which whites decided where African Americans could exist. Adding to this disenfranchisement, is a history familiar to the rest of the South: an aggressive pattern of racial violence and intentional injustices. According to historian Tameka Hobbs, “even though Florida was one of the most sparsely populated of the Southern states, for the period between 1882 and 1930, it had the highest rate of lynching per 100,000 of its black citizens at 79.8, followed by Mississippi with 52.8. By the 1940s, Florida was only one of two states with recorded lynchings.” Notable events include: the 1920 Ocoee Massacre where an entire black section of the city was razed after black citizens attempted to vote; the 1923 Rosewood Massacre where white supremacists succeeded in razing an entire city which was predominantly black; and decades of the early 1900s which saw a rise in the popularity and intensity of the Klu Klux Klan. Florida’s 1885 Constitution would prevent black citizens from voting via various barriers (e.g. literacy tests, poll taxes, etc.), and elections would be controlled by white voters until 1950.

In spite of its beginnings, Parramore experienced a golden age of growth and development between the 1940s and 1960s. Several influential community leaders, doctors born and raised in Parramore, gave prominence to the neighborhood and were largely responsible for the neighborhood’s only access to healthcare as well as helping establish the county’s NAACP branch. An especially prominent doctor was Dr. William Monroe Wells, who established the Wells Built Hotel, which hosted a list of iconic black artists such as Ella Fitzgerald, Cab Colloway, and Count Basie. There was also once a casino and dancehall.

This prosperity was not without hurdles either however. Post-WWII, central Florida’s population boomed and as downtowns deteriorated, influxes of residents moving to suburbs increased significantly. This growth unequally affected suburbs and inner cities. Following this rearrangement of residents was an increased need in road infrastructure as more and more automobile users increased annually. This largely influenced the creation of the National Highway System -- an interstate project that caused the displacement of thousands across the U.S.A. Making way for this new infrastructure, cities attempted to renew themselves often by seizing black neighborhoods through eminent domain and concentrating them in public housing projects (i.e. segregation).

This is exactly what happened in Parramore in 1939 when the black neighborhood of Jonestown was demolished through the 1939 Reorganization Act, and its residents thereafter placed in Orlando’s first housing project known as Griffin Park. Compounding this is the redlining which prevented black residents from leaving the inner city. Redlining was a practice which basically prevented black residents from obtaining home loans to acquire property in white suburbs. Parramore was precariously contained and in the 1950s when talks of the Interstate-4’s construction began, it was without surprise that plans made way to cut through Parramore. With nowhere else to be given agency, Parramore’s residents suffered the decade-long effects of the interstate construction.

Prior to the highway’s construction, Parramore was seamlessly connected to the downtown, but over 600 properties were displaced in its development and as a result of this separation, the 1970s and 1980s saw a visible decline in the neighborhood’s development. It is a modern day class barrier that continues to serve as enhancement of an existing racial boundary. Comparing the economic development between the city of Orlando and Parramore, the Orlando Sentinel reporter Sherri Owens wrote that in 1960, Parramore’s median household income reached $2,700 and Orlando’s median household income was around $3,200. In 1960, the unemployment rate in Parramore reached around 7 percent, and Orlando’s unemployment rate reached 4 percent. Twenty years later in 1980, Parramore’s unemployment rate continued to stagger at 10 percent, while Orlando’s only rose to 5 percent.

Presently Parramore remains affected by its history, with census data showing that it remains the largest concentration of Orlando’s black residents and across the city having some of the lowest household income averages in comparison to urban suburbs just east of the highway dividing it from the downtown. The city government has worked at reestablishing Parramore as an important sector of the city through various large-scale projects including two of the city’s biggest sporting venues as well as a university satellite campus complete with academic, dining/retail and residential services.

This historic neighborhood has dealt with poverty, crime, and economic disparity, yet its history and resiliency were integral factors in its selection as the site of this thesis. Additionally, while many of the neighborhood’s recent large-scale projects’ intentions are dubious and do not necessarily provide any accessible or needed community services to its neighbors of the Parramore community, this existing relationship with the city served well in validating the potential of a large-scale architectural intervention.
Fig. 33: Immediate neighborhoods adjacent to intervention site.
Fig. 34. Dimensioned map of intervention site.
Fig. 35. Contextual snapshots of spaces within and around the intervention site.
ORLANDO HOUSEHOLDS:  
HOUSEHOLDS, 2014-2018: 111,674  
PERSONS PER HOUSEHOLD: 2.45  
OWNER-OCCUPIED HOUSING: 35.1%  
AVERAGE HOUSE COST: $217,000  
AVERAGE GROSS RENT: $1,435  
(12TH MOST EXPENSIVE U.S. RENT RATE)

“Without paying more than 30% of income on housing — a household must earn $4,234 monthly or $50,807 annually. Assuming a 40-hour work week, 52 weeks per year, this level of income translates into an hourly Housing Wage of $24.43.”

“13 affordable units per 100 renters.”

“It takes 112 work hours per week at minimum wage to afford a two-bedroom rental property and 96 hours per week to afford a one-bedroom in the Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford metro area.”

- Nat’l Low Income Housing Coalition

Orlando ranks in the top amongst American cities with the worst availability of affordable housing units. With a standard of living requiring an hourly wage almost 3x the minimum wage, homelessness is a common product of Orlando’s economy. This significantly impacts a wide cross-section of Orlando’s residents from all ages and the economic impact on the city is staggeringly burdensome.
Downtown Orlando Income Map

Fig. 37. Income map across the downtown Orlando area; not the void space of the highway acts as a stark transitioning point in income levels.
Downtown Orlando Racial Demographics

Fig. 38: Race demographic map across the downtown Orlando area, note that in this case as well the void space of the highway acts as a stark transitioning point.
SITE ANALYSIS

Downtown Orlando Open Undeveloped Space Map

Fig. 39: Map of open or undeveloped space in the downtown Orlando area; again note that the highway serves as a stark transitioning point.
Downtown Orlando Developed Green Space Map

Fig. 40. Map of developed green spaces in the downtown Orlando area; while the contrast from east to west of the highway is not as stark as in other site analysis layers, there are significantly larger green spaces made available to the east than in the west.
Fig. 42. Map of local transit and routes in the downtown Orlando area. ~400'-0" TO NEAREST METRO / NEAREST BUS STOP ~1000'-0"-2200'-0".
Fig. 43. Map of surrounding programs in the downtown Orlando area.
Fig. 44. Map of existing housing assistance services in the downtown Orlando area.
Fig. 45. Coalition campus adjacency to thesis site.

Fig. 46. Exterior photos of existing Coalition campus; not the unassuming exterior, setback from the main street, and the usage of privacy fencing to enforce separation.
Fig. 47 (top) public facade, (bottom) private courtyard.

Fig. 48. Interior service areas of existing Coalition campus.
Fig. 49: La Casa Permanent Supportive Housing: Studio Twenty Seven Architecture + Leo Daly, D.C., 2015; community services are located on the ground level with attractive and transparent entry points; SRO units are given personality and individuality through a playful facade; SRO units are designed with dignity, with efficient materials, bright warm colors and plenty of light.
Fig. 50. Los Angeles LGBT Center - Anita May Rosenstein Campus / Leong Leong + Killefer Flammang Architects; Community center in L.A., 2019; the community center is designed with a relentless consideration for transparency; visual connections and porosity are maintained throughout the campus with strategic green spaces creating private internal oases for users.
EARLY STUDIES
Early studies consisted of space planning the large area and establishing a relationship with the site's adjacencies.
Moving forward in the space planning, programs were assessed for a section of the campus, and the overall concept of the SRO unit and architectural language began to be developed. Curvilinear walls allow for indirect lighting and the control of cross-breezes for natural ventilation, an important consideration in Florida’s humid climate.
Influencing the design of the millwork and SRO unit footprint was the concept of ergonomics. Internal elements are designed with the user in mind with height conscious surfaces and operable systems considerate of physical limitations (e.g. a twisting motion such as when operating a typical door knob is challenging for those with arthritis or similar condition, but is not as challenging as a sliding motion such as when operating a sliding door).

The SRO unit draft is composed of a winding internal space whose programs are separated by a water closet. Sliding screens and operable windows allow for a user-defined control of space while bush in millwork makes usage of a tight footprint creating points for storage, living and working.
GROUND FLOOR PLAN PROPOSAL ESTABLISHED A MORE FORMAL RELATIONSHIP OF PROGRAMS AND ARCHITECTURAL LANGUAGE BUT WAS ULTIMATELY DIGRESSED FROM DUE TO CONCERNS OF LACK OF POROSITY AND TRANSPARENCY. A LASTING ELEMENT FROM THIS STAGE HOWEVER WAS THE DECISION TO HOUSE A COMMUNITY AQUATICS CENTER WHICH ALSO PROMPTED A GREATER NEED TO CREATE BLURRED CONNECTIONS BETWEEN INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR.
EARLY STUDIES

EARLY CROSS SECTION THROUGH AQUATICS CENTER ESTABLISHED A FORMAL VERTICAL RELATIONSHIP OF ELEMENTS WITH MAIN CONCERNS DEVOTED TO EXPERIMENTING WITH VARIOUS PASSIVE LIGHTING TECHNIQUES SUCH AS THE LIGHT SHELF TO PUSH NATURAL DAYLIGHT FURTHER INTO THE INTERVENTION WHERE IT WOULD OTHERWISE NOT REACH.
EARLY STUDIES

EARLY CROSS SECTION THROUGH AQUATICS CENTER ESTABLISHED A FORMAL VERTICAL RELATIONSHIP OF ELEMENTS WITH MAIN CONCERNS DEVOTED TO EXPERIMENTING WITH VARIOUS PASSIVE LIGHTING TECHNIQUES SUCH AS THE LIGHT SHELF TO PUSH NATURAL DAYLIGHT FURTHER INTO THE INTERVENTION WHERE IT WOULD OTHERWISE NOT REACH.
GROUND LEVEL POROSITY
PRIVATE ENTRY ONLY
SUPPORTIVE HOUSING
ADMINISTRATIVE
DROP-IN YOUTH SHELTER
PUBLIC ENTRY ALWAYS
COMMUNITY THEATER ANNEX
WELLNESS CENTER
DINING SERVICES
RETAIL
GREEN SPACES
WELLNESS CENTER GROUND LEVEL
1. WELLNESS CLINIC ENTRY
2. INTAKE
3. COUNSELING
4. EGRESS STAIR
5. COMMUNITY LOUNGE
6. EXAM ROOM
7. LOBBY
8. TRASH + MAIL SERVICE
9. LOBBY
10. RETAIL
11. OLYMPIC POOL
12. SPA
13. PUBLIC RESTROOM
14. PUBLIC SHOWER
15. RESIDENTIAL TOWER
16. WELLNESS PLAZA
17. RIDE-SHARE/DROP-OFF AREA
18. REFLECTION POOL

-127-

-128-
ART COLUMNS: CELEBRATION OF ORLANDO’S RICH MURAL SCENE

BY SMITE/WEST ART DISTRICT

JOE BURBANK/ORLANDO SENTINEL

VICTOR VING/UNCLE TONY’S

CHRIS JONES/MILK DISTRICT

JONAS NEVER/FLOYD’S
SECTION THROUGH OLYMPIC POOL

- 22'-0" T/3RD LEVEL
- 1'-0" T/2ND LEVEL
- 37'-0" T/PARAPET
- 31'-0" B/ROOF
- 22'-0" T/3RD LEVEL
- 11'-0" T/2ND LEVEL
12” CONCRETE PIER ON 24” CONCRETE FOOTING

8” PRECAST CONCRETE COLUMN

STEEL PLATE BOLTED INTO CONCRETE COLUMN

SOLAR LIGHT PIPE SUSPENDED VIA CABLE SYSTEM ATTACHMENT TO CONCRETE COLUMNS AT REGULAR INTERVALS

SOLAR LIGHT PIPE MADE FROM SYNTHETIC-FIBRE FABRIC, PRISMATIC GLASS, AND STEEL FRAME STRUCTURE

LED OUTDOOR FLOODLIGHT

SOLAR LIGHT PIPE DETAIL

Fig. 5.1 Solar Light Pipe in Washington, D.C.
GREENBELT: COMMUNITY GARDEN
OLYMPIC POOL
MEDIA CENTER GROUND FLOOR

1. RECEPTION
2. COMPUTER HELP
3. COMMUNAL COMPUTERS
4. SMALL CIRCULATION
5. WORK AREA
6. PRIVATE STUDY/WORK SUITES
7. RESTROOMS
8. COLUMN COURTYARD
9. SUPPORTIVE HOUSING
10. TRASH + MAIL SERVICES
11. LAUNDRY ROOM
12. EGRESS STAIR
13. RETAIL
ENLARGED COMMUNITY ROOM PLAN

COMMUNITY ROOM
1-OUTDOOR LOBBY
2-CIRCULATION LOBBY
3-RESTROOM
4-SEATING
5-STAGE
6-CO-WORKING OFFICE SPACE
7-COALITION ADMIN OFFICE
8-BUS STOP
ENLARGED COMMUNITY ROOM SECTION

37'-0" T/PARAPET
31'-0" B/ROOF
ENLARGED CHURCH STREET PLAN
1-REDUCED TRAFFIC FROM THREE TO TWO LANES, ADDED BIKE LANE | 2-CANOPY COVERED SEATING | 3-LED LIGHT SCREEN | 4-MARKET STALLS | 5-OUTDOOR DINING
6-DINING HALL VENDORS | 7-BEGINNING OF GREENBELT | 8-CO-WORKING OFFICE SPACE | 9-BUILDING ADMIN ENTRY | 10-NEW PROPOSED BUS STOP
COALITION CAMPUS ENTRY LOOKING FROM PARRAMORE CHURCH STREET
CONCLUSION

In summation, this thesis has led a line through homelessness, hostile architecture, queer history and theory, camp, DIY culture, racism, redlining, “slum clearing,” the national highway system, the racial disparity between Orlando and Parramore, to a proposed campus which introduces an accessible series of community services, rooted in those most vulnerable, but welcoming to all from the community. The layering and density of references which contributed to the end result of this thesis is a testament to the truly complex nature of homelessness. A favorite (mis)quote of mine by Nelson Mandela is “If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart.” He never actually said this, but many remember it. This is important to me for two reasons. First, the success of utilizing queer history, theory and design to address the design of this supportive housing and community center I believe is evidentiary to this quote. “Queer” and “homeless” are not mutually exclusive identities in many ways, they often in fact overlap, but there is significance in that while the literal elements, issues and languages of these groups might differ, at their roots, they are both focused on: community, safety, agency, and survival. Secondly, history is often recorded through the influence of those in power. Why do viral misquotes occur? Because there is power in the majority believing a lie. Power that can be of no consequence, such as in this (mis)quote, or power which defines the lives of individuals just trying to survive, such as those who are homeless.

Re-contextualizing urban infrastructure as human infrastructure, allows the placement of important developments in vulnerable areas and integrates a community node into existing urban densities, establishing connections across neighborhoods. Rather than uphold the lie of what and who homelessness effects, the transparency and porosity of this intervention invites the public in to a space that emphasizes not the actions of the displaced, but rather the importance of community healing. Through direct access to necessary services and empathetic dwelling spaces, the campus would provide users the opportunity to redress their identities, celebrating their individuality and humanity, as well as upholding the resiliency of Parramore. Recontextualization is also crucial to a city’s growth in general. Open spaces such as this thesis site which takes a large amount of surface area are especially vital as their potential for development yields far greater benefits for the surrounding communities than anything the infrastructure has introduced as a byproduct of its construction. Though admittedly idealistic, devoting time to relentless optimism and reimagining of these less desirable sites is something which cannot be sacrificed on: equity will never be achieved through value engineering and prejudiced policy.
Fig. 26. (2020). Various contextual images of typical styles and development in the central Orlando area. Google Images.

Fig. 27. (2020). Various contextual images of typical styles and development in the central Orlando area. Google Images.

Fig. 28. (2020). Various contextual images of typical styles and development in the Parramore area. Google Images.

Fig. 29. (2020). Various contextual images of typical styles and development in the Parramore area. Google Images.

Fig. 30. (2020). Various contextual images of typical styles and development in the Parramore area. Google Images.

Fig. 31. (2020). The Wells Bulk Hotel, a historic Parramore institution. Google Images.

Fig. 32. Field, M. (2017). Satellite map comparison of Parramore in the 1990s vs. the present day, note the increase in undeveloped open space. Modern Cities. https://www.moderncities.com/article/2017-mar-the-rise-and-fall-of-an-african-american-inner-city-page-2

Fig. 33. Perez, Eliezer. (2021). Diagram created by the author based on Census data. https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/map/orlandocityflorida/PST045219

Fig. 34. Perez, Eliezer. (2021). Graphic created by the author based on data collected on site.

Fig. 35. (2020). Contextual images around the intervention site, Interstate-4 underpass in Downtown Orlando. Google Images.

Fig. 36. Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida. (n.d.). Infographic of various data points relevant to the homeless crisis in Orlando, Florida. Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida. https://www.centralfloridahomeless.org/the-problem

Diagram recreated by the author based on the information provided by the original infographic.

Fig. 37. Perez, Eliezer. (2021). Diagram created by the author based on Census data. https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/map/orlandocityflorida/PST045219

Fig. 38. Perez, Eliezer. (2021). Diagram created by the author based on observations collected from Google Images/Maps.

Fig. 39. Perez, Eliezer. (2021). Diagram created by the author based on observations collected from Google Images/Maps.

Fig. 40. Perez, Eliezer. (2021). Diagram created by the author based on observations collected from Google Images/Maps.

Fig. 41. Perez, Eliezer. (2021). Diagram created by the author based on observations collected from Google Images/Maps.

Fig. 42. Map of local transit routes in Orlando, Florida. (n.d.). Lynx. https://www.golynx.com/maps-schedules/routes-schedules.stml

Fig. 43. Perez, Eliezer. (2021). Diagram created by the author based on observations collected from Google Images/Maps.

Fig. 44. Perez, Eliezer. (2021). Diagram created by the author based on observations collected from Google Images/Maps.

Fig. 45. Perez, Eliezer. (2021). Diagram created by the author based on observations collected from Google Images/Maps.

Fig. 46. (2020). The Coalition. Google Images.

Fig. 47. (2020). The Coalition. Google Images.

Fig. 48. (2020). The Coalition. Google Images.

Fig. 49. Hoachlander Davis Photography. (2020, April 6). La Casa Permanent Supportive Housing. StudioTwentySevenArchitecture. https://www.studio27arch.com/project/la-casa-permanent-supportive-housing/


