Homeless Center

Transitional Housing for Homeless Families
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"It's about providing homelike characteristics, but at a more fundamental level it's about providing choices for families...what they eat, what they're going to do, and when. So what we attempted to do was identify a way to return control and a sense of hominess"

- David Berry
Homelessness in D.C. has been on the rise for a while but now it is getting to the point where it is becoming a major issue. In one year, according to a Department of Housing report (November 2016), homeless in Washington, D.C., rose by 14.4 percent. As a result, the Mayor has proposed a plan to end homelessness with seven shelters, one in each ward of DC. The shelter that this thesis is proposing would be a combination of a typical homeless center with the added benefits of an overall rehabilitation center. These features combined will provide a place where the homes can transition from their current state to a state where they can then support themselves and their families.

Homelessness is a rising problem in the Washington, D.C. area. Families with children are now the most dominant homeless population in the D.C area due to the gap between a living wage and an actual wage. Through study and analysis, it was noted that a one night shelter was not effective in ending homelessness but a therapeutic, rehabilitation center is. From these ideas, it was decided that a six month to one year residency homeless center would be the best thing to design to better help the growing homeless population.
The homeless population in Washington D.C. has been increasing due to rising housing cost and a lack of affordable housing. With more and more people residing in homeless centers there is a need for more housing to shelter the increasing homeless population. This is where the Homeward DC Program comes in. This program seeks to build enough shelters by the year 2020 so that homelessness in D.C. will be “a rare, brief, and non-recurring experience”. With this in mind, I set out to design a homeless center that would be located in Washington, D.C.
Most homeless shelters are designed to house only for one night instead of giving the homeless permanent residency. By designing a facility in which the homeless have temporary housing and are able to receive career and psychological help, they are being given the opportunity to get back on their feet and find a job and support themselves. As a result of the design of this center, the homeless population will be reduced.
Prior to starting the design phase, I studied the facts presented by the Homeward 2020 plan and learned that families with children are the predominate homeless population so I decided to make that my target group. Following the ideals of the plan, I decided my homeless center would fall into the transitional housing category as defined by the plan. I also decided to use a site, in Ward 1, that was predetermined by the plan.
When trying to determine what facilities and features were needed to support and help the residents of the center I looked at a very similar example. The Austin Resource Center for the Homeless, located in Austin, Texas incorporates a myriad of facilities that are designed to help and house occupants for a night. The Center was completed in May 2004 and the architect was Murray Legge.
The dynamics of public and private space are very important in a homeless center. The facility has to be public enough so that supervising officials can step in where needed but also private as to give the homeless population their own space. In studying the Austin Center, I realized a third zone, the transitory private zone, need to be added. Transitory private zones are spaces where the level of privacy varies based on the occupants.
After studying the Homeward 2020 plan and the Austin Center, the design began on my project. After an initial look at the site and the surrounding buildings, a few zones were noted: the commercial zone to the south and east, the housing zone to the west and a more private, secluded zone to the north. With those zones in mind, I created an initial spatial layout and subsequent section.
In the initial concept sketches the ground level is showing commercial, daycare, and medical areas.

The second sketch shows levels two and three in which the housing is on the right and the office space is on the left. In the center of this level, there is a common space as well as two openings to the levels below.

The third sketch shows levels four and five. On these levels the housing is now on the left and right of the center space, which is the same as in the second sketch.
This section displays the initial ideas about the spatial characteristics of the building. The center space shows a common gathering space in which families can interact. It is a place to see and be seen. The left shows a sample of the housing that will be there and the right shows offices.
Floor Plan Models

After coming up with an initial layout, I evaluated my work and realized I was not prioritizing housing in a way that was proper for a homeless center so several study models were done to explore different housing configurations with blue being one bedroom unit, green being two bedroom units, and pink being three bedroom units. After settling on version 3, more sections were done to get a sense of the spatial quality of the new configuration.

This iteration shows a layout in which the opening to below has been shifted to the right to allow for a more centralized common space. There are 14 one bedroom units, 6 two bedroom units, and 6 three bedroom units.
This layout, which became the basis for the final plans, has the opening in the center with units on both sides in a L-shape configuration. This layout also incorporates an outdoor, resident only balcony to the North. This configuration has 10 one bedroom units, 9 two bedroom units, and 9 three bedroom units. In the final design, some of the stacked one bedroom units become two level three bedroom units.

In this layout, two more openings were added: one to the left and one to the north. This unit includes 8 one bedroom units, 4 two bedroom units, and 8 three bedroom units.
Section sketches

After coming up with a layout, more sections were done to explore the spatial conditions between the atrium, on the left, and the resident balcony to the right.

The first sketch shows a very open and staggered atrium from the ground level and an exterior residential balcony with the roof as covering.

The second sketch shows the opposite of the first sketch on that the atrium is not as staggered but the resident space has been staggered. Additional resident balconies were added to the third and fourth housing levels. These balconies shade a portion of the main space.

The third sketch shows a slightly staggered atrium and different types of residential balconies. The main balcony is shaded slightly by a balcony on the second level and the fourth and fifth level balconies are enclosed into a larger balcony that starts on the third housing level.

The fourth sketch shows a similar balcony to the third sketch. The difference comes in the way the balconies are formed. The main balcony is completely covered by an enclosed area on the fourth housing level.
The next step was to find materials that were durable, looked nice, and were functional. Wood, metal, and concrete were materials that could be the most versatile in terms of use and finish.

**Wood**

Benefits:
- Easy to clean
- Elegant and simplistic
- Natural Beauty
- Warm and Calming
- Safe, light, and strong
- Flexibility
- Variety of finishes

Drawbacks:
- Fires
- Moisture

**Metal**

Benefits:
- Strength
- Ductility
- Uniformity
- Additions to existing structures
- Longer spans

Drawbacks:
- Maintenance cost
- Fireproofing cost

**Concrete**

Benefits:
- Durability
- Low maintenance cost
- Non-combustible
- Can withstand high temperatures
- Soundproofing
- Resistant to wind/water

Drawbacks:
- Weight

Figure 4: Existing spaces
The final design creates a space not only where the homeless and their families have shelter, but it also creates a controlled environment where the homeless and public can interact in order to help the homeless re-integrate into society.
With this design it is important to show how the public and private can intermix in the transitory private areas. The transitory private areas are key as these spaces can further the homeless populations' integration into society.
Units were designed to provide ample space and privacy for the occupants. In most cases each occupant gets their own room and they have a private living room in addition to the common area shared by all residents.
Following the example of the initial spatial section, the next drawings are meant to show the character of the building. From children playing in the common space, to the unit type making its presence known on the façade, the building is all about making the residents feel safe, at home, and making sure they can make a successful transition into permanent residence. The longitudinal section is looking toward V Street NW and is showing how the doors to the units are color coded based on the unit type. Blue is one bedroom and green is two bedroom.
This drawing is showing a cross section through the building with the user groups shown.

This cross section shows the spatial characteristics of the building. Each housing level will be similar but have small features that give it its own identity. The left portion of the basement is storage and the right portion is a fitness center.
View from the second housing level looking toward the South

View from the inside of the double height Resident balcony
Bibliography

All precedent images unless otherwise noted are from Google


View from the third housing level
Appendix

A  Tables and information explaining the cause of DC homelessness

B  Chart explaining Different housing program models
Table 7: Program Model Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&quot;Front Porch&quot; Services</th>
<th>Short-Term Placement/Interim Housing</th>
<th>Permanent Housing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Daytime Service Center</strong></td>
<td>Outreach Beds</td>
<td>Rapid Re-Housing (RRH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central point of access for households seeking homeless assistance services.</td>
<td>Very small, specialized shelter for hard-to-reach individuals, often with severe and persistent mental illness.</td>
<td>Short- to medium-term supportive services and housing subsidy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Street Outreach</strong></td>
<td>Emergency Shelter</td>
<td>Targeted Affordable Housing (TAH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement services for hard-to-reach, chronically homeless individuals sleeping on the street.</td>
<td>Short-term emergency housing for the majority of households entering the homeless services system.</td>
<td>No or light touch supportive services with long-term housing subsidy or affordable unit. Not available directly from shelter. TAH may be used as a step-down strategy for PSH clients or a step-up strategy for RRH clients (as recommended by assessment).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prevention/Diversion</strong></td>
<td>Transitional Housing</td>
<td>Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance at front door of shelter system to prevent housing loss and stabilize households outside of shelter.</td>
<td>Therapeutic, communal environment for special populations (e.g., victims of domestic violence and individuals with substance abuse issues)</td>
<td>Intensive, wrap-around supportive services and long-term housing subsidy or affordable unit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Program Models

The second major building block of the plan is our program models matrix. The matrix outlines the program models needed within three broad categories of the homeless services system to achieve goals related to the preventing and ending homelessness.

- "Front Porch Services" are those provided to residents before they reach the front door of the homeless services system (the front door being the shelter system). This may include services to both households that are literally homeless as well as households at imminent risk of losing their housing.
- "Interim Housing" refers to housing that is time limited in nature and is designed to provide a safe, stable environment for households while they work on a permanent housing solution. To help with stabilization, some interim housing may provide specialized services for individuals and families seeking support in a communal environment.
- "Permanent Housing" is housing in which the client is the leaseholder and can remain in the unit as long as they choose. The rental assistance and services provided to the client may be short- to medium-term (such as in Rapid Re-Housing) or it can be of a long-term nature (Permanent Supportive Housing and Targeted Affordable Housing).

Key Points

**Homelessness is unacceptable, and it is expensive.** Homelessness did not always exist in America the way it does today. And here, in our nation’s capital, it is particularly unacceptable. A response focused on shelter is both expensive and ineffective. We have learned much about what works, and it is time to invest in solutions.

**Person-Centered Response.** We aim to provide person-centered, trauma-informed care that respects the dignity and ensures the safety of all individuals and families seeking assistance. Progressive engagement that is respectful of participant choice and attuned to participant safety and confidentiality needs will inform data collection efforts, level of services provided, and location/type of housing accessed.

**There are no “homeless people,” but rather people who have lost their homes and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.** We believe deeply in the strengths and assets of people who are experiencing homelessness, believe in the value of having their voices at the planning table, and remain committed to supporting each and every individual in fulfilling their potential.

Figure 6: Chart explaining different housing program models