

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: REINTEGRATING THE HOMELESS FAMILY

Nicole Ng, Master of Architecture, 2013

Thesis directed by: Professor Michael Ambrose, Chair
University of Maryland, School of Architecture,
Planning and Preservation

This thesis explores the question: how can architecture reintegrate the homeless family back into the community? Shelters are stigmatized because they are often associated with crime, filth, and danger.¹ The shelter should create an environment mutually beneficial to the homeless and the surrounding community; my project seeks to reintegrate the shelter into the city to facilitate healthier and stable lifestyles. This project delves into psychology and sociology; homelessness is a social issue affecting all groups of people. The shelter must instill sense of stability and safety for families, as it is the first step towards rebuilding a steady life. Redesigning the shelter to serve the entire community allows new socialization patterns to be introduced that will aim to better support homeless families to expedite their transitional process out of homelessness.

1. Sam Davis, *Designing for the Homeless: Architecture that Works* (California: University of California Press, Nov 29, 2004), 18-19.

REINTEGRATING THE HOMELESS FAMILY

by

Nicole Ng

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
the University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Architecture
2013

Advisory Committee:

Assistant Professor Michael Ambrose, Chair
Associate Professor Isabelle Gournay, Ph.D.
Associate Professor Madlen Simon, AIA

© Copyright by

Nicole Ng

2013

The thesis document that follows has had referenced material removed in respect for the owner's copyright. A complete version of this document, which includes said referenced material, resides in the University of Maryland, College Park's library collection.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my family. Thank you for your unconditional love and support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank Professors Michael Ambrose, Matt Bell, Isabelle Gournay, and Madlen Simon for challenging me and encouraging me to discover as much as I can in this exploratory process. Thank you for reminding me how much I love architecture.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	v
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 1: Homelessness as a Multi-Dimensional Problem.....	4
CHAPTER 2: Housing the Homeless <i>Architectural Precedents</i>	10
CHAPTER 3: Design Approach.....	12
<i>Design Considerations</i>	
<i>Concept Implementation</i>	
<i>Perspective</i>	
CHAPTER 4: Siting a Community-Oriented Homeless Shelter.....	22
<i>Criteria & City Selection</i>	
<i>Proposed Neighborhood Sites</i>	
<i>Site Selection & Analysis</i>	
<i>Implications of Site on Design</i>	
CHAPTER 5: Program for an Integrated Community Shelter Center.....	42
CHAPTER 6: Shelter Design.....	47
<i>Parti Exploration</i>	
<i>Program Implementation</i>	
CHAPTER 7: Design Conclusions.....	57
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	67

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1 Conceptual Precedent Analysis 1.....	16
FIGURE 2 Conceptual Precedent Analysis 2.....	17
FIGURE 3 The Bridge Shelter in Dallas, Texas 1.....	18
FIGURE 4 The Bridge Shelter in Dallas, Texas 2.....	19
FIGURE 5 The Community Center in Zimmern, Germany 1.....	20
FIGURE 6 The Community Center in Zimmern, Germany 2.....	21
FIGURE 7 Downtown Washington, D.C. Shelters.....	24
FIGURE 8 Walkability and Metro Access.....	25
FIGURE 9 Income Map and Neighborhoods.....	26
FIGURE 10 K-12 Public Schools.....	27
FIGURE 11 Overlay of Income, Schools, and Walkability.....	28
FIGURE 12 Areas of Needs and Potential Sites.....	29
FIGURE 13 Potential Sites Comparisons.....	35
FIGURE 14 Potential Sites Urban Context Comparison.....	36
FIGURE 15 Potential Sites Perspectives.....	37
FIGURE 16 Selected Site Context Analysis.....	38
FIGURE 17 Selected Site Urban Context Analysis.....	39
FIGURE 18 Selected Site Access Diagram.....	40
FIGURE 19 Programmatic Study.....	44
FIGURE 20 Organizational Schematic Model.....	45
FIGURE 21 Façade Study Diagram in Context.....	45
FIGURE 22 Program Analysis and Parti Study.....	46

FIGURE 23 Schematic Program and Massing Studies.....	48
FIGURE 24 Perspective of Internal Small Courtyard.....	51
FIGURE 25 First Floor Plan.....	52
FIGURE 26 Mezzanine Plan.....	52
FIGURE 27 Second Floor Plan.....	53
FIGURE 28 Third Floor Plan.....	53
FIGURE 29 Fourth Floor Plan.....	54
FIGURE 30 Rooftop Terrace Plan.....	54
FIGURE 31 Security Gate Positions and Times.....	55
FIGURE 32 Facility User Groups and Paths.....	56
FIGURE 33 Addressing Concerns of the Homeless.....	58
FIGURE 34 Section Perspective through Courtyard.....	60
FIGURE 35 Aerial View of Community Center-Shelter.....	60
FIGURE 36 View of 7 th Street Approach.....	63
FIGURE 37 View into Welcome Center.....	63
FIGURE 38 View of Internal Street.....	64
FIGURE 39 View into Daycare Play Area.....	64

INTRODUCTION

This thesis project will address the question: how can architecture redefine the shelter type in order to reconnect homeless families back into their community.

The shelter should create an environment mutually beneficial to the homeless and the surrounding community; my project will aim to integrate the shelter into the city to facilitate healthier and stable lifestyles. This project is interdisciplinary, delving into psychology and sociology. The psychological health and mental processes of the homeless directly influence their social behavior and willingness to be reintroduced into the greater social context.

Today, shelters are stigmatized in communities because they are often associated with crime, filth, and danger.² Homelessness is a social situation that affects all groups of people, and I will investigate its social and psychological ramifications specifically on homeless families. I will collect statistics, read works of scholars on homelessness in the fields of sociology, psychology, and architecture, and study precedents of homeless shelters to better understand those using it. After gathering this data I will devise a program for the shelter that will offer client and recreational services as well as transitional housing. I will test the program by designing a homeless shelter integrated into the community that better socializes the homeless with their neighborhood.

The program requirements will help guide the site selection within dense urban fabric—whether an existing building or a large lot. The homeless shelter must instill a sense of

2. Davis, 18-19

stability and safety, as it is the first step towards rebuilding morale and a steady life. By redesigning the shelter to serve the community as much as the homeless, I can seek to establish a social environment that allows for interaction between various demographics while providing private areas servicing exclusively homeless clients.

This project is extremely program driven because in order to propose a new system of socialization to reconnect various neighborhood demographics, there must be thoughtful connections of key spaces within the shelter. The connections of pertinent program space and how they are manipulated to accommodate various activities of the day will be studied and applied to the design. The ways in which these spaces connect to one another is indicative of how people using the community shelter will interact.

Reimagining the shelter as community-based and family-centered has implications in the broader scope of architecture and social values. This design process focuses on integrating people through the integration of spaces, which will propose new patterns of socialization crucial for homeless parents and their children³. It is intended that in-depth program analysis will lead to spaces that are more efficient, flexible, and conducive to the progression of homeless families from the shelter to permanent housing. Architecture can configure these spaces to support this homeless transitional process. In the context of the community, the shelter will not establish itself as a gatherer of homeless families; rather it will be a collector of various demographics who use this facility as an integral

3. Sean Kidd and Josh Evans, "Home is Where You Draw Your Strength and Rest: The Meanings of Home for Houseless Young People," *Youth & Society* 43, no. 752 (June 2010). <http://yas.sagepub.com/content/43/2/752> (Nov 3, 2012).

part of the neighborhood. By designing the shelter as a community asset, the stigmatization of the typical type will begin to be alleviated.

CHAPTER 1: HOMELESSNESS AS A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL PROBLEM

In the United States tonight, there are nearly 643,067 Americans experiencing homelessness. Of the 643,067, approximately 238,110 are families, 404,957 are individuals, and 167,000 are veterans. Homelessness can be caused by a number of situations including economic hardships, lack of affordable housing, domestic troubles, and natural disasters.

Individuals often struggle with mental and physical ailments that require many services to help mediate them. Veterans commonly suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder return from war to no housing and no treatment. This leads to increased and untreated mental illnesses, which both require specific professional services. Families often fall victim to emergency situations like loss of income due to economic stress, natural disasters that force them out of their homes, and landlord related issues like eviction or the selling of property that leaves families with no shelter.

An important distinction between homeless families and homeless individuals is the desire of almost all families to reenter permanent housing. Because their homeless situations are often unexpected and sudden, families often seek immediate shelter that will protect and keep them together. Homeless individuals for the most part, comprise those considered to be *chronically* homeless. These people are defined as having experienced an uninterrupted period of not having consistent shelter for a year or longer. This homeless demographic is often plagued with drug/alcohol addiction and mental illnesses like schizophrenia; even with help and support they oftentimes remain homeless.

The homeless population is varied and those variances must be accounted for in shelter design.

The theory of the *Primitive Hut* was fathered by one of architecture's first philosophical thinkers, Marc-Antoine Laugier. Laugier described man's attempt to shelter and find security for himself, in the most primitive of ways. *An Essay on Architecture* was published in 1753; almost 250 years later we have entered the 21st century and shelter remains a serious global issue.

Let us look at man in his primitive state without any aid or guidance other than his natural instincts ... he lacks nothing, he does not wish for anything. But soon the scorching heat of the sun forces him to look for shelter. A nearby forest draws him to its cooling shade; he runs to find a refuge in its depth, and there he is content ... He leaves and is resolved to make good by his ingenuity the careless neglect of nature. He wants to make himself a dwelling that protects but does not bury him. Some fallen branches in the forest are the right material for his purpose; he chooses four of the strongest, raises them upright and arranges them in a square; across their top he lays four other branches; on these he hoists from two sides yet another row of branches which, inclining towards each other, meet at their highest point. He then covers this kind of roof with leaves so closely packed that neither sun nor rain can penetrate. Thus, man is housed. Admittedly, the heat will make him feel uncomfortable in this

house, which is open on all sides, but soon he will fill in the space
between two posts and feel secure.⁴

This passage is particularly striking because the idea of human seeking shelter as a basic instinct is not a new one and according to Laugier, it is among the first things we seek for ourselves in order for self-preservation. This was one of the earliest architectural thoughts and today the world still have people who lack even the most minimal means of shelter.

Since homelessness is a social situation that affects the entire community, the shelter must also address the neighborhood. It was stated earlier that this project would propose spaces that encourage a new social pattern within the shelter. Most shelter users consist of the homeless, the workers, service people, and volunteers. This project proposes spaces that allow everyone in the neighborhood to come together and use the shelter as a community hub. This facilitates socialization between all types of people and allows for exposure to a more diverse group of people. It is important to note however, that these spaces will have varying degrees of privacy because the families will be in transitional phases during their use of the shelter.

Though it is a personal belief that good architectural designs are contextual and regionally appropriate, the shelter type must be more sensitive than others regarding this approach. The earliest shelters were established in large vacant structures such as armories and warehouses, and informal spaces including “basements, hallways, and

4. Marc Antoine-Laugier, *Essai sur l'Architecture*, (Paris: Chez Duchnese, 1753), 11-12.

stairways of public buildings—often the local police station house.”⁵ Even after the founding of The Salvation Army in 1865, there was little development or improvement of “shelter” space and as time elapsed, conditions continued to degrade. Architectural environments that generate feelings of degradation, worthlessness, and neglect lack what exists as dignified architecture today. Michel Lincourt, an architect, urban planner, consultant, and author, describes the way in which elegance in design leads to a satisfaction in architecture. Lincourt describes design elegance as an architect designing with “respect and magnificence,” in “a environment which responds to human needs.”⁶ This project follows Lincourt’s theory in the way it will address the needs of the homeless through interconnected spaces and dignified design.

The social stigmatization of the homeless stems from various misconceptions, the most prevalent being homeless people are in full control of their social situation⁷. But this perception changes when homeless families are considered. People are more sympathetic to those with children who are almost always viewed as victims. Sociologists argue that stratification of our societal structure fuels the alienation of the homeless from their communities. The concept of *NIMBY* or “not in my back yard” is applied to shelters because many people believe that the shelter typology attracts congregating homeless groups. Circumstantially they do, and inevitably the homeless shelter is viewed as the

5. Davis, 24-25

6. Michel Lincourt, *In Search of Elegance: Towards an Architecture of Satisfaction*. (Liverpool: McGill-Queen, 1999), 247.

7. Jo Phelan et al., “The Stigma of Homelessness: The Impact of the Label “Homeless” on Attitudes Toward Poor Persons,” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (Dec. 1997). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2787093> (accessed April 11, 2012).

gatherer of people all of whom have no consistent access to showers, toilets, laundry and medical facilities. Failure to provide adequate services to the chronically homeless often results in contributing to the stigmatization of the homeless population and the shelter.

Issues of the Homeless Shelter Type

The homeless shelter existing today still seeks to find a way to strictly monitor its users. Those suffering from chronic homelessness oftentimes are simultaneously struggling with illnesses and substance addiction in addition to the strict rules shelters mandate. People considered chronically homeless do not actively seek community services or help. Alienation from the community lasting an extended period of time instills in the homeless a sense of mistrust and fear of the institution. This questions the purpose of the shelter as a place for congregation, or a place for healing, educating, and growth: *Does the shelter provide a comfortable space for the homeless to congregate, or does it provide a way for the homeless to transition into permanent housing?*

The Salvation Army's Ray and Joan Kroc Center in San Diego is associated with both aspects of the above question. The center is essentially a conglomeration of a several buildings spanning multiple city blocks. The Ray and Joan Kroc Center is praised for its broad spectrum of services provided to the homeless but comes under fire for its physical form comparable to a small university campus⁸. By essentially creating a campus for the homeless, its users become complacent within their societal status reaping the benefits provided by the program. The residents of the shelter lack the motivation to progress to a

8. Davis, 1-7

more permanent state of living because all the resources they should require are so readily available to them.

The lack of motivation to progress out of homelessness leads to another issue architects face in designing a shelter. To prevent complacency among users, how can architectural design of a homeless shelter encourage transition to permanent housing?

CHAPTER 2: HOUSING THE HOMELESS *Architectural Precedents*

Architecture has the capability to achieve great things and in the case of this community shelter center, it has the possibility to redefine society's overall perception of the homeless shelter. Rather than being a hole in the wall hidden from the community, this project proposes a center for the community, catering specifically to the needs of the homeless and homeless families. Isolation and alienation from people in the community contribute to the difficulties of homeless people, especially children who desire stability and normalcy⁹. Removing children from their schools further disrupts their lifestyles and separates them from what friends they do have. Designing this community shelter center as an integral part of the community will help the homeless establish more diverse relationships and provide a place for children to socialize and feel safe.

To devise program and an overall concept, various types of structures and programs were studied. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate built environments whose concepts, aesthetics, and program were briefly analyzed in order to extract relevant ideas that could be reflected in the shelter's architecture. This matrix allowed for more conceptual and abstract thinking; the Disconnected Pavilion and Carlisle Train Station are architectural manifestations of a distinct idea. The Pavilion's concept is particularly applicable to this thesis project because it is constructed of different colors and patterns of glass windows and joins them to create a harmonious but dialectic relationship of the disjointed and cohesive.

9. Ellen Hart-Shegos, *Homelessness and its Effects on Children*, (Family Housing Fund, Dec. 1999), 2-15.

Figures 3-6 are analyses of program rather than concept. The Bridge Shelter in Dallas and the Community Center in Zimmern, Germany are illustrative of how successful structures respond to the needs of their clients. The Bridge Shelter has set the standard for contemporary homeless shelters. It is sustainable, inspirational, and has achieved what it was designed to do: lessen homelessness on the outskirts of the downtown Dallas area and reduce neighborhood crime (by 18%)¹⁰. The Community center in Zimmern was created in response to the neighborhood need for a gathering place. Today it serves a number of local youth clubs, local officials, and recreational sporting groups¹¹. More importantly however, like the Bridge Shelter, the Zimmern Community Center has become an icon in the neighborhood it was erected in.

10. "The Bridge Homeless Assistance Center / Overland Partners," ArchDaily, <http://www.archdaily.com/115040/the-bridge-homeless-assistance-center-overland-partners/> (accessed April 11, 2012).

11. "Community Center in Zimmern / Ecker Architekten," ArchDaily, <http://www.archdaily.com/32716/community-center-in-zimmern-ecker-architekten/> (accessed April 11, 2012)

CHAPTER 3: DESIGN APPROACH

Design Considerations

The proposed homeless shelter will provide emergency support for varied homeless groups including women, men, families, the mentally ill, and substance abusers. Spaces to accommodate these community services and programs will address a broad extent of their needs, however the purpose of the shelter and its transitional housing program is to provide spaces that are best suited for families. Families occupy nearly 70% of the Shaw neighborhood within a quarter-mile radius of the site. The triangular shape of the site will offer greater accessibility to the shelter and allows for more ways to reconnect the structure to the surrounding city fabric.

Designing spaces for homeless families requires different considerations than for single men, women, or the ill. Children need constant supervision from either an older family member or shelter employees. Therefore, an important consideration is the notion of physical and visual security. This idea can manifest itself in architecture by establishing direct view lines from one space to another through transitioning rooms or transparency in vertical planes (i.e. indoor fenestration).

A second consideration for the shelter is how to architecturally express the perception of transitioning through levels of homelessness. The challenge of this lies in finding a way to transpose these phases of homelessness into architecture. Homelessness among families is different than among other types of homeless people. Typically families are homeless because of emergency or unexpected situations leaving them without shelter

(i.e. natural disasters, immediate financial crises, evictions). This is different from those suffering from substance abuse and mental illnesses because homeless families almost always aspire toward regaining permanent housing but lack the means and resources to do so. Though families do suffer from alcoholism and drug abuse the majority are simply searching for a way to reclaim some stability. Permanent housing does not immediately solve the issue of stability. To transition the homeless into permanent housing, the shelter must allow the family to reestablish routine and responsibility. The architecture will provide the shelter to expedite this process.

A third consideration addresses the capability of architecture as a discipline to educate the community. Sidwell Friends Middle School in Washington D.C. depicts this ideal. The LEED platinum building physically teaches students about the concept of sustainability¹². This form of education is perhaps most valuable and effective because the building's users are constantly progressing through the very meticulously detailed spaces. The homeless shelter's ultimate goal is to provide the homeless the skillset and means to reenter a permanent housing situation, even though this is not the desire of all homeless people. However, reintegrating the homeless requires them to have a handle on today's social values. Sustainability has to do with preserving and maintaining, in a healthy and efficient way, the natural (and built) environment. Building a sustainable (according to our standards today) shelter will enable it to become an innovative, educative, and contemporary part of an historic neighborhood.

12. Sarah Wessler, "AD Interviews: Kieran Timberlake," ArchDaily, <http://www.archdaily.com/32490/ad-interviews-kieran-timberlake/> (accessed April 11, 2012)

Early shelters and even housing structures (tenement housing, Pruitt-Igoe) are examples of architectural failures when design neglects to consider the needs of a particular demographic. There are diverse demographic groups within the homeless population and their needs vary. For this shelter in specific, it is necessary that families have individual spaces for themselves to preserve a sense of privacy, but simultaneously create public and secure spaces that allow for children to be constantly watched when their parents are working or taking classes. Again, not all homeless people experience homelessness in the same way and the architecture needs to reflect this through flexible and multi-functional spaces¹³. This becomes another design consideration.

Concept Implementation

Architecture has the capacity to achieve a function much more than shelter. It has the ability to teach through its design and evoke meaningful thought. The Bridge Homeless Shelter in Dallas, Texas designed by Overland Partners incorporates this in their design. Etchings in fenestration and quotes on walls motivate and aim to instill a sense of self-worth and motivation into users of the facility. This is a small but important architectural detail that affects the morale of the Dallas homeless population.

Mentioned in *Design Considerations*, is the idea of visual and physical security, which can be achieved architecturally through spaces that connect, or maintaining view lines that allow for mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, to be constantly surveyed by one another or facility staff. For example, the lobby or day room will be adjacent to a daycare space

13. Rae Bridgman, "The Architecture of Homeless and Utopian Pragmatics," *Utopian Studies* 9, no. 1 (1998). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20719742> (accessed April 11, 2012).

or public outdoor courtyard where high visibility allows for constant supervision. The physical security of the shelter includes security rooms located in both public and private realms (community based and homeless based program).

Perspective

I briefly volunteered at a family homeless shelter in Fort Meade, Maryland. It is a complex of eight military barracks reused for housing families in needs. My primary role as a volunteer was to supervise the children while their parents were enrolled in GED and other self-help courses offered in the evening by the shelter. Aside from the divisive nature of these eight barracks sitting parallel to one another, the spaces in between them were open and haphazardly secured by a perimeter three-foot tall chain-link fence.

Without volunteers, children would not be able to play outside. This point is significant because the architecture of the shelter (even if the barracks were not intended for this use) requires volunteers to ensure its effectiveness. Without volunteers, children would be unsupervised and thus parents would not be able to attend their classes. When I volunteered, I was actively involved in the children's play. Many acted the way I did when I was in elementary and middle school; they seemed mostly happy when playing with other children, and unbothered that they were living among people who came and went. Providing spaces that are inherently secure through visibility and enclosures will allow the children and their parents to truly benefit from the shelter. Enabling children to interact in a space that is always available to them will provide a sense of freedom and stability.

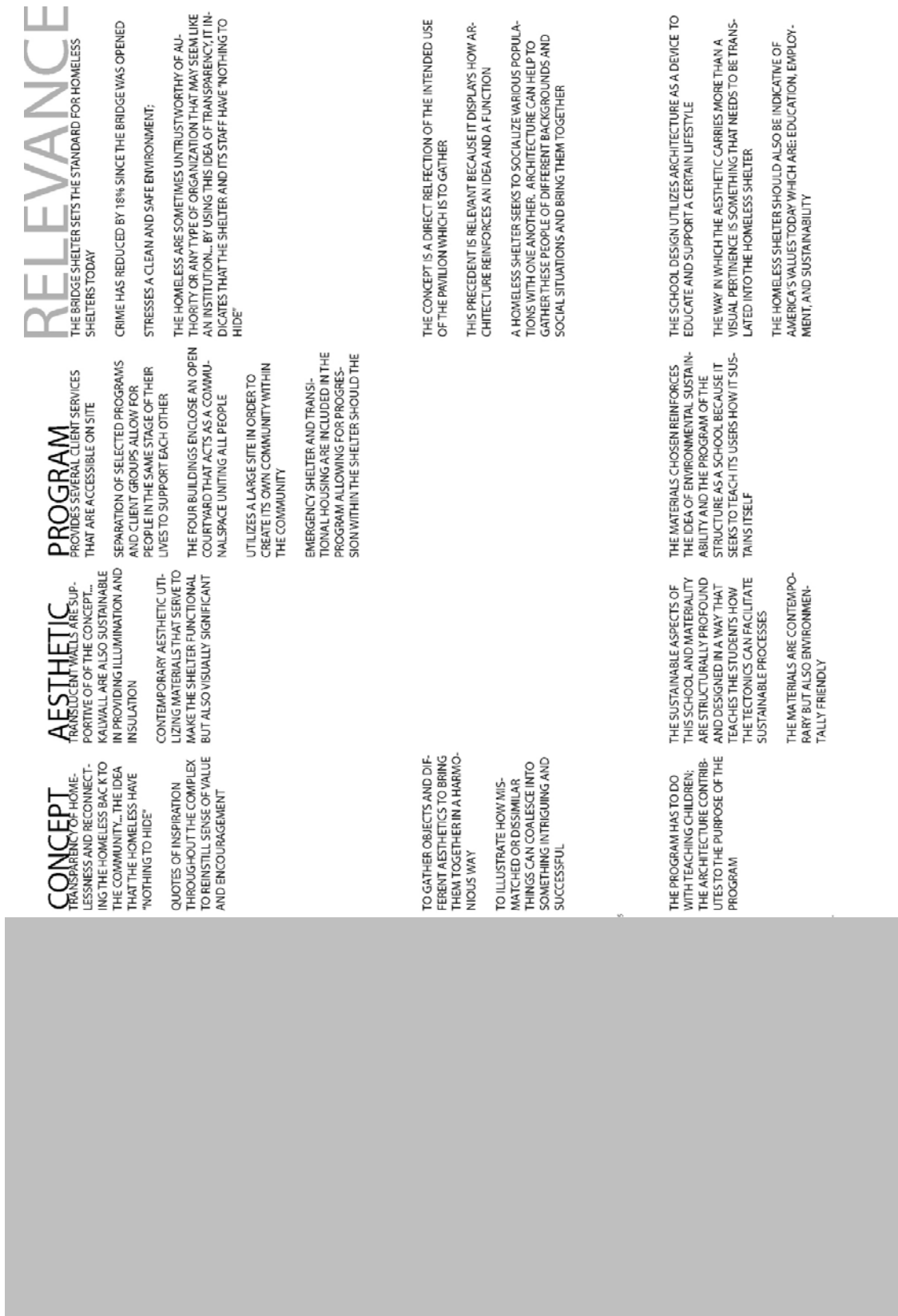


Figure 1 Conceptual Precedent Analyses 1

Sources: <http://www.archdaily.com/115040/the-bridge-homeless-assistance-center-overland-partners/>
<http://www.archdaily.com/32490/ad-interviews-kieran-timberlake/1250614418-694-p01/>
<http://www.archdaily.com/128700/disconnected-pavilion-plan-b-arquitectos/> (Sergio Gomez)

CONCEPT	AESTHETIC	PROGRAM	RELEVANCE
TO PROVIDE A SAFE AND HUMANE ARCHITECTURE FOR THE LOW INCOME	USE OF NATURAL MATERIALS CREATES A WARMER AND FRIENDLIER ATMOSPHERE THAT PREVENTS THE BUILDING TO LOOK LIKE AN INSTITUTION (WHITE, STARK, ARTIFICIAL)	THE BUILDING TO LOOK LIKE AN INSTITUTION (WHITE, STARK, ARTIFICIAL)	THE GYM AS A BUILDING TYPE SEEKS TO CREATIVE ENVIRONMENTS THAT PROMOTE HEALTHY LIFESTYLES AND HABITS
IT IS TYPICAL OF DAVID BAKER + PARTNERS TO DESIGN LOW INCOME HOUSING THAT STRESSES SECURITY OF A PLACE (COURTYARD HOUSING)	THE WINDOWS ALLOW FOR THE FLOODING OF NATURAL LIGHT AND KEEPS THE BUILDING FROM FEELING CLOSED OFF TO THE REST OF THE COMMUNITY	THE BUILDING TO LOOK LIKE AN INSTITUTION (WHITE, STARK, ARTIFICIAL)	NATURAL MATERIALS AND THE PLENTIFUL PENETRATION OF NATURAL LIGHT CONTRIBUTES TO HOW PEOPLE SENSE THE BUILDING
REINVOGGERATION OF A COMMON PLACE	IT ALSO PREVENTS THE HOMELESS FROM FEELING AS IF THEY ARE TRAPPED IN THE BUILDING	THE BUILDING TO LOOK LIKE AN INSTITUTION (WHITE, STARK, ARTIFICIAL)	--> REFLECT ON EARLY TENEMENT HOUSING: LACK OF NATURAL AIR AND LIGHT CAUSED DISEASE AND DEATH... HEALTH CONCERNS MORE THAN PROVIDING SERVICES... IT ALSO HAS TO DO WITH DESIGNING IN A WAY THAT SUPPORTS A HEALTHY STATE OF BEING
	THOUGH THE BUILDING IS DESIGNED FOR LOW-INCOME RESIDENTS, THE DESIGN OF THE FACADES IS STILL THOUGHTFUL		THESE APARTMENTS ARE DESIGNED IN A COST EFFECTIVE WAY THAT ACHIEVES AN INTERESTING FACADE... THE IMPORTANCE OF DESIGNING AT A LEVEL OF QUALITY FOR ALL SORTS OF BUILDINGS TYPES IS A VALUE OF DAVID BAKER AND PARTNERS
			THE BUILDING USES PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPACES TO CREATE VARIOUS ZONES OF HABITATION
		THE TRAIN STATION IS A TRANSITIONAL SPACE AND WE UNDERSTAND THAT BECAUSE OF HOW WE HAVE USED IT SINCE ITS INVENTION	TRANSITIONAL HOUSING AND THE EMERGENCY SHELTER REQUIRES ASPECTS OF TRANSITIONAL SPACES LIKE TRAIN STATIONS WHERE THE VALUE OF THESE PLACES IS ITS EPHEMERAL NATURE
		TRAINS COME INTO THE STATION, AND AFTER A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME, IT LEADS	SHELTER AND TRANSITIONAL HOUSING ARE NOT MEANT AS PERMANENT HOUSING ALTERNATIVES AND THE DESIGN SHOULD ACT TO SUPPORT THIS IDEA
		THIS TYPE OF BUILDING IS MEANT TO BE A PLACE WHERE ONE GOES BEFORE MOVING ON TO SOMEPLACE NEW	THE CHALLENGE OF THIS PROJECT IS TO TAKE THIS EPHEMERAL ARCHITECTURE AND TRANSLATE THIS NOTION INTO ARCHITECTURE

Figure 2 Conceptual Precedent Analyses 2

Sources: <http://mydeco.com/blog/homebase-transform-carlisle-station-for-a-cushy-commute/>
<http://www.archdaily.com/132695/vy-gym-symbiosis-designs/> (Osman Akuz)
http://www.dbarchitect.com/project_detail/117/Richardson%20Apartments.html (DB+Partners)

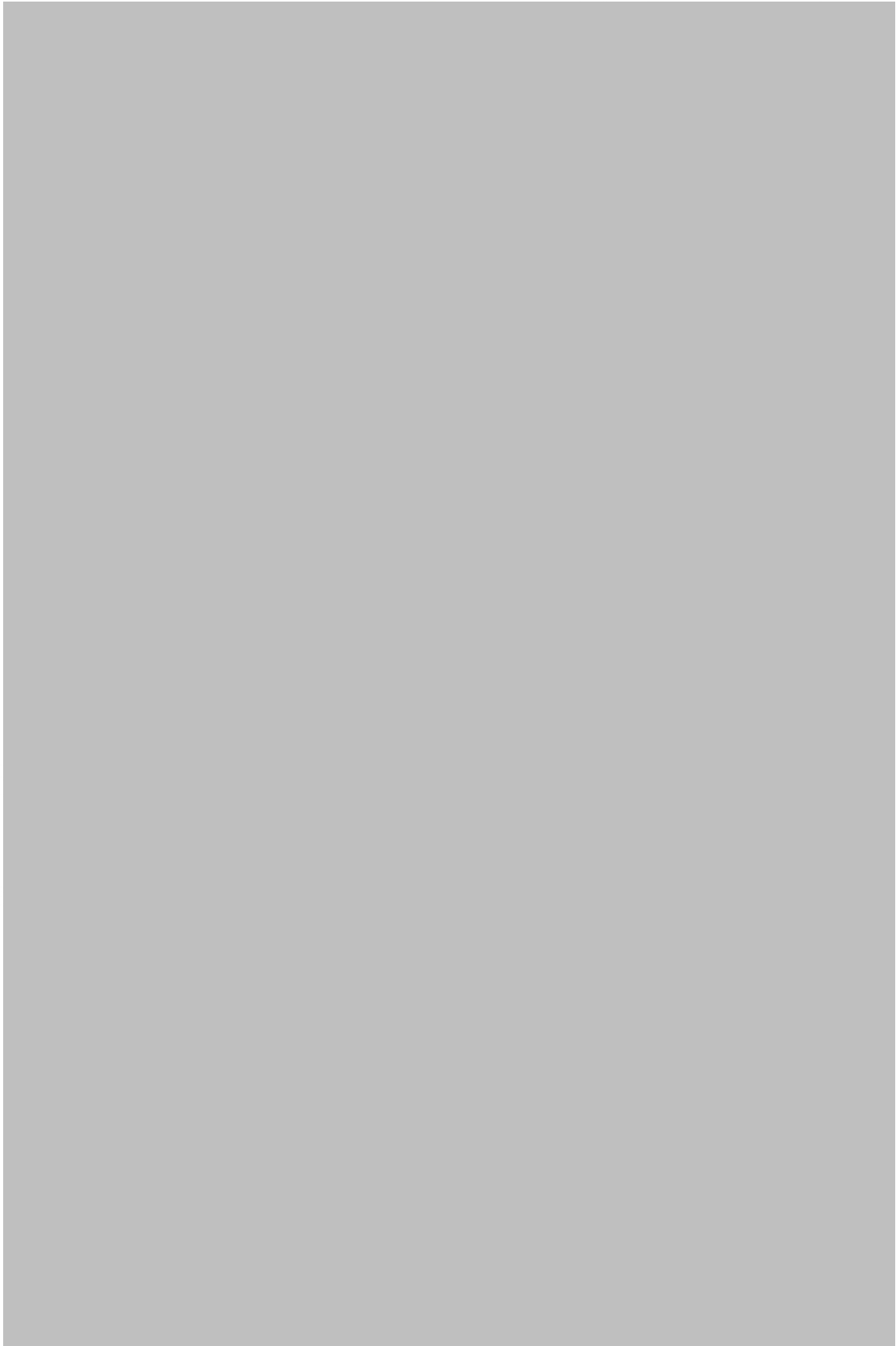


Figure 3 The Bridge Shelter in Dallas, Texas 1

Source: <http://www.archdaily.com/115040/the-bridge-homeless-assistance-center-overland-partners/>

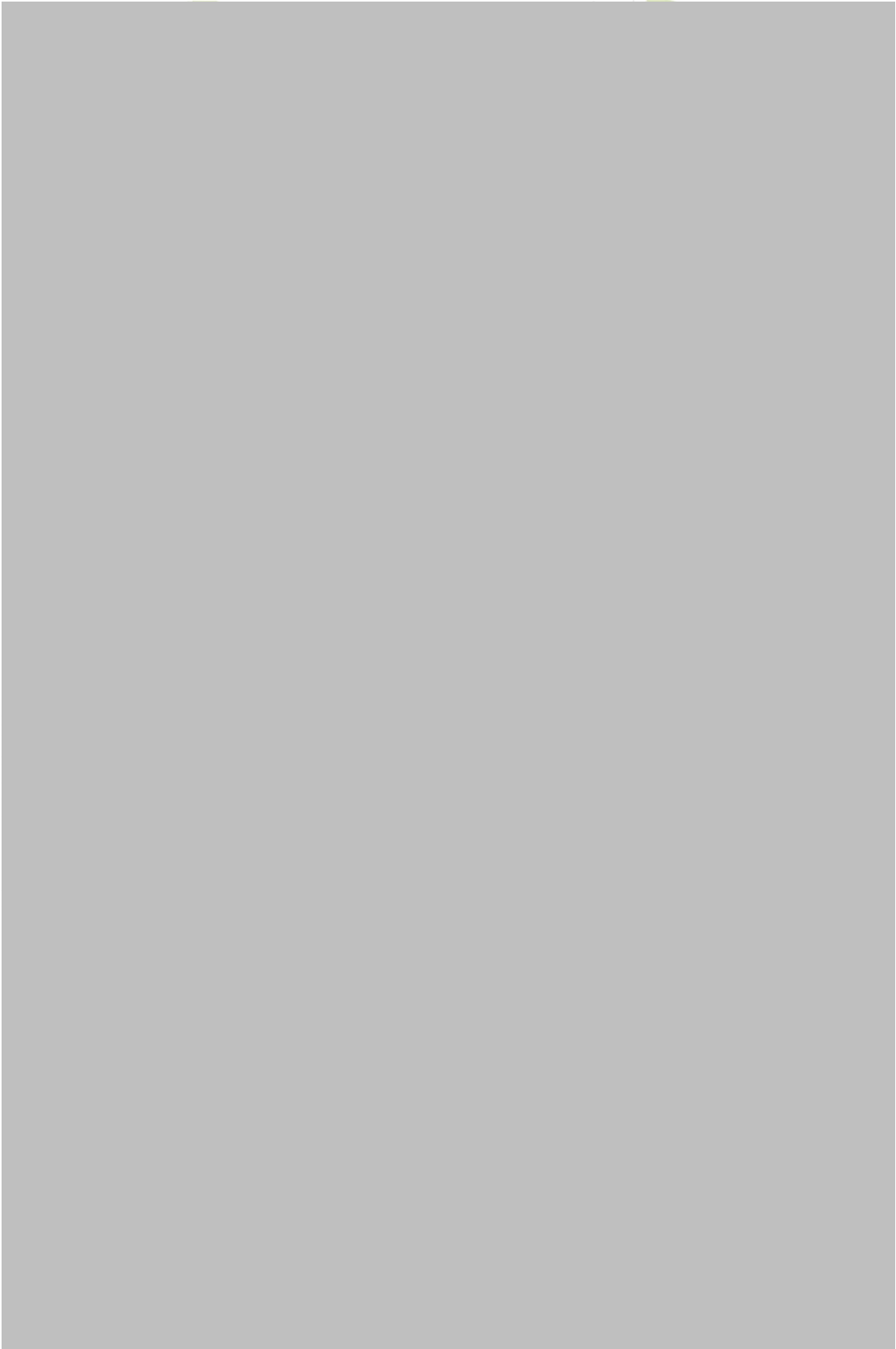


Figure 4 The Bridge Shelter in Dallas, Texas 2

Source: <http://www.archdaily.com/115040/the-bridge-homeless-assistance-center-overland-partners/>



Figure 5 The Community Center in Zimmer, Germany 1

Source: <http://www.archdaily.com/32716/community-center-in-zimmern-ecker-architekten/>

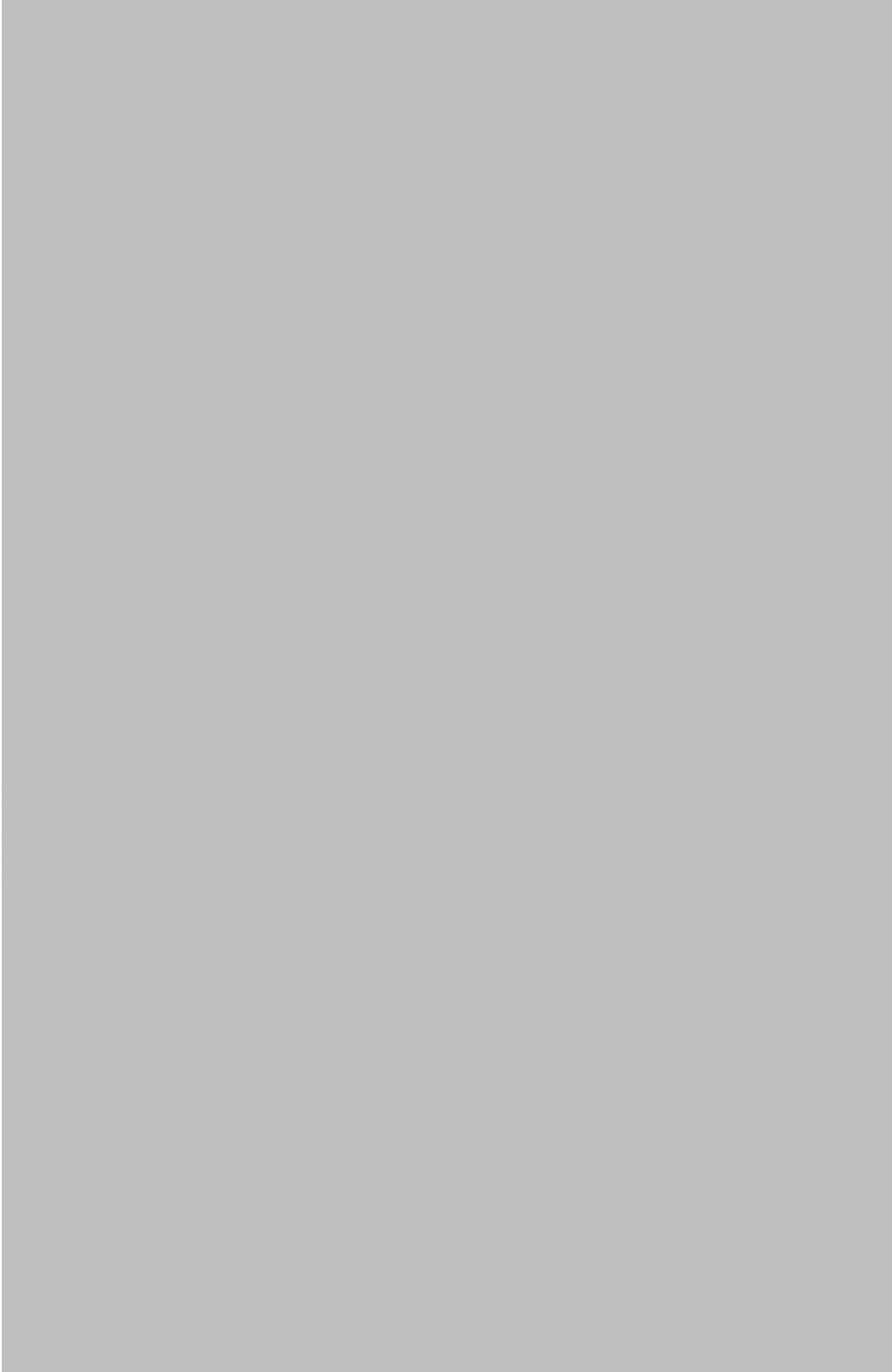


Figure 6 The Community Center in Zimmern, Germany 2

Source: <http://www.archdaily.com/32716/community-center-in-zimmern-ecker-architekten/>

CHAPTER 4: SITING A COMMUNITY-ORIENTED COMMUNITY SHELTER

Criteria & City Selection

Homelessness is a social situation and/or crisis affecting hundreds of thousands of people on any given night in the United States. The density of urban areas gives way to the largest rate of homelessness. This thesis project will be located on a site that takes advantage of the qualities that are inherent in a city. The criteria for site include: mass public transportation systems, public school accessibility, the proximity of civic services, and a diverse demographic of dwellers. The site requires an ease of access to metro or bus stops, a plentitude of public schools within a quarter to half-mile radius, closeness to multiple neighborhoods of varied demographics (race, income etc.), and a need for the homeless shelter (a low income neighborhood lacking homeless shelters). For ease of analyzing a site, I explored opportunities in both downtown Washington D.C. and Baltimore, Maryland. Washington D.C. has a renowned reputation for its metro system, and along with an abundance of public bus routes and its overall influence in the general social hemisphere of the country; ultimately the Capitol was deemed a more opportunistic locale for the shelter.

Using the criteria, neighborhoods of Washington D.C. were outlined and existing emergency shelters and food kitchens were noted and their proximity to one another became visible (please refer to figure 7). Income levels displayed in a color spectrum are overlaid on top of the neighborhood districts (figure 9). Public schools are highlighted in conjunction with metro stops illustrating the five-minute, quarter mile walking radius.

Combining all the criteria considerations into a single diagram, conclusions could be made to determine the site most appropriate for a shelter (figures 11 and 12).

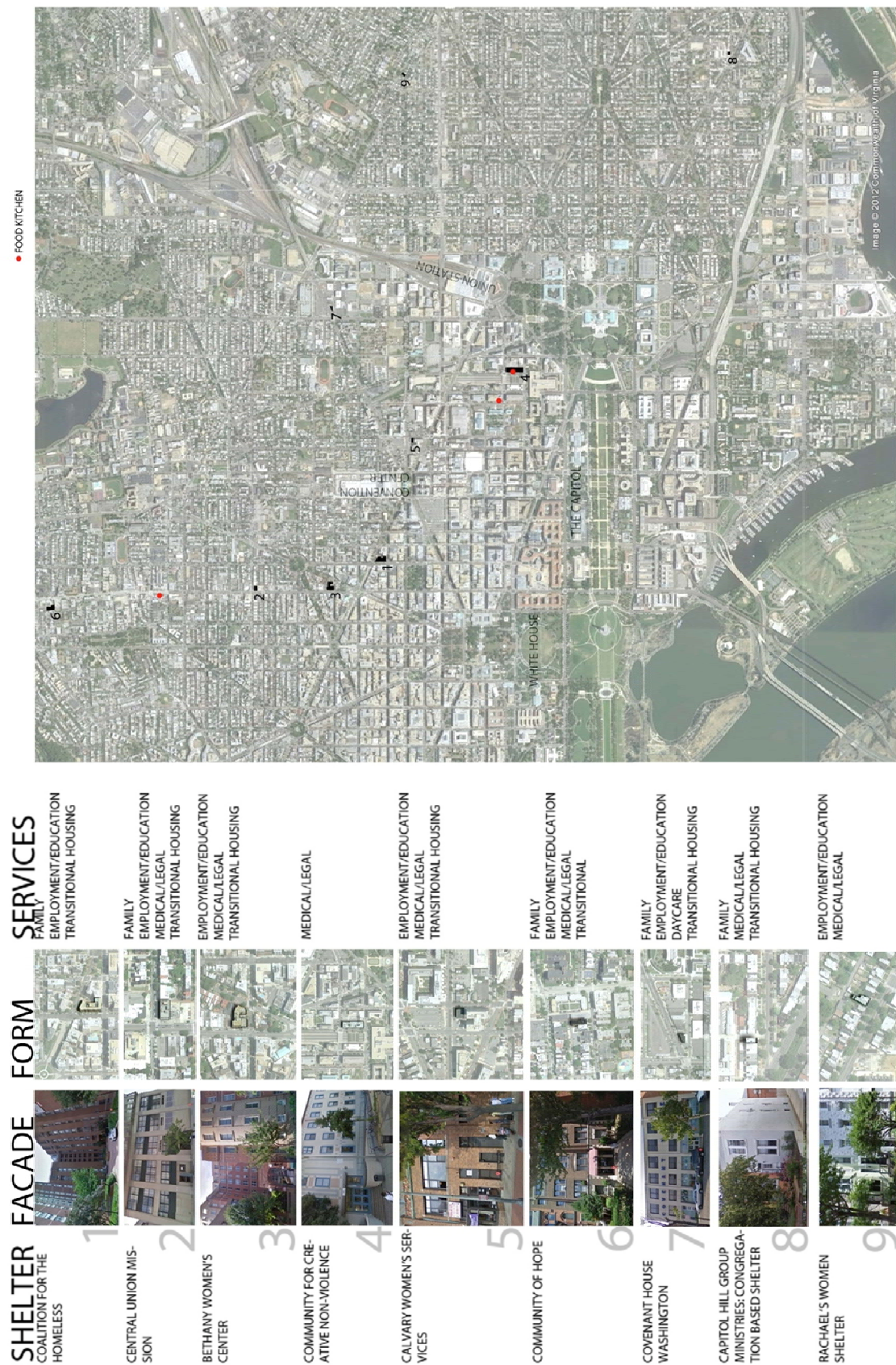


Figure 7 Downtown Washington D.C. Shelters
Source: Google Maps

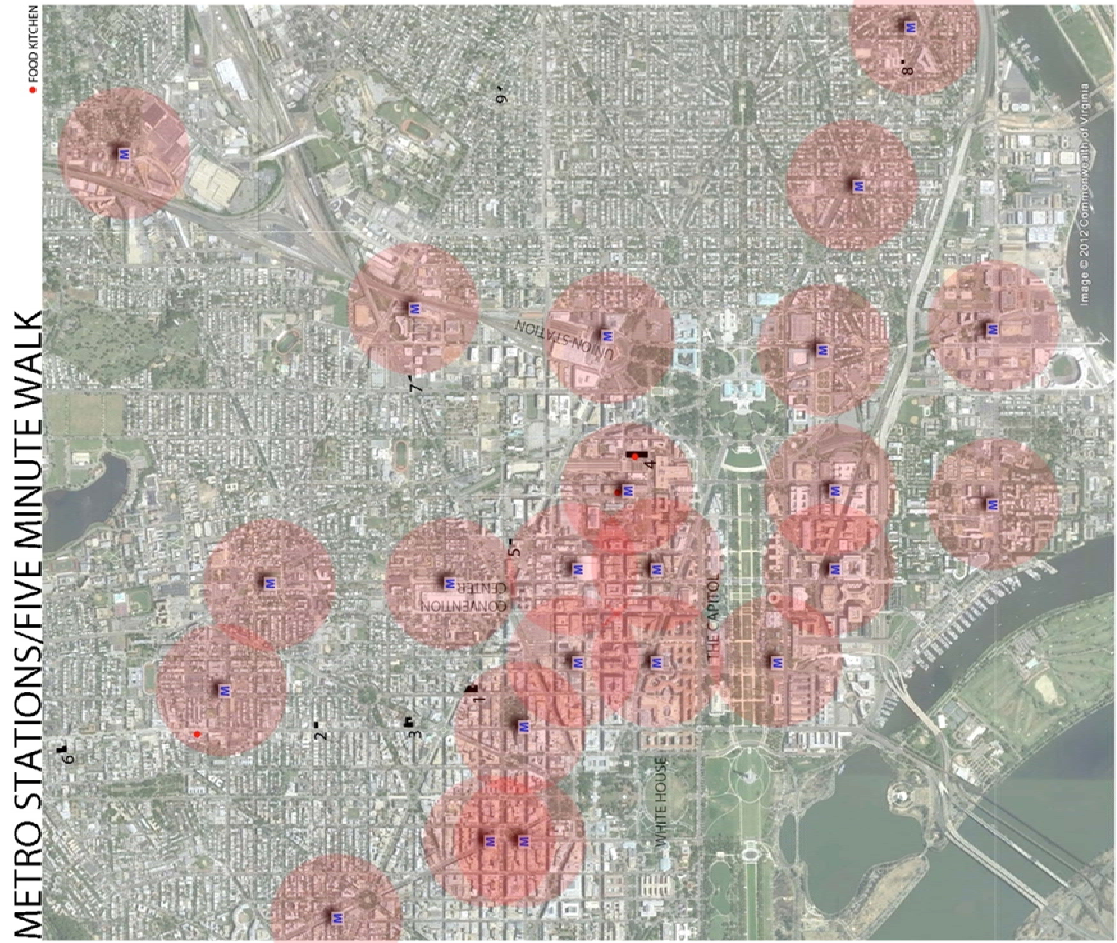


Figure 8 Walkability and Metro Access
Source: Google Maps

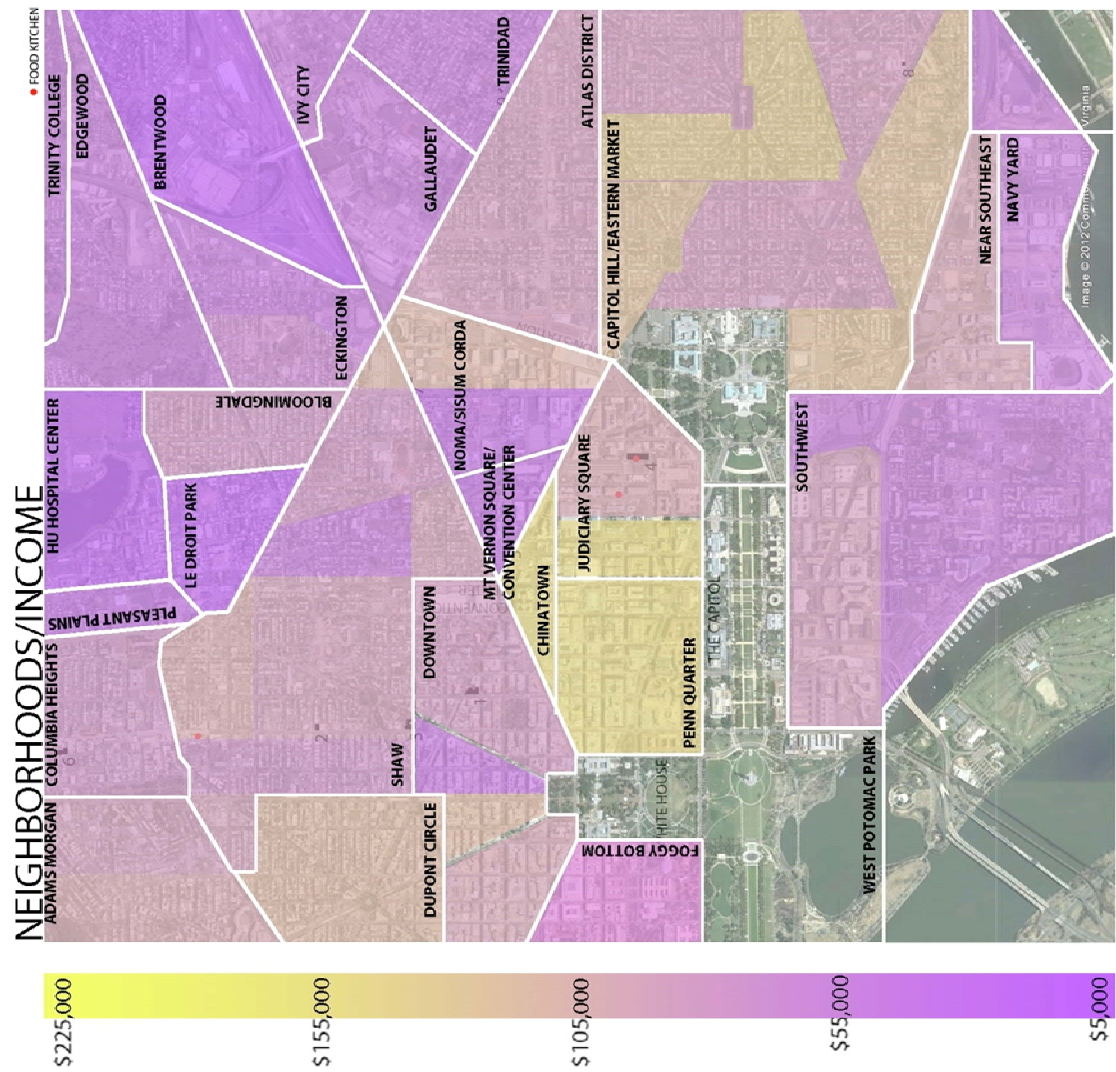


Figure 9 Income Map and Neighborhoods
Source: Google Maps

FACADE

A photograph of a multi-story building with a flat roof, surrounded by trees and a fence. The building has several windows and a red brick section at the top. The roof is light-colored and appears to be made of concrete or a similar material. There are some small structures or vents on the roof. The building is surrounded by lush green trees and a fence in the foreground. The overall scene is a typical urban or suburban setting.

HOMELESS FAMILIES ARE APPOINTED SHELTERS BY THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES. WHILE A NUMBER OF FACTORS ARE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION (I.E. LOCATION, SHELTER VACANCY/AVAILABILITY, SERVICES PROVIDED, OFTEN CHILDREN ARE UPROOTED FROM THEIR SCHOOLS.

THIS CAUSES DISRUPTIONS IN THE ONLY STABLE ASPECT OF THEIR LIVES: EDUCATION. ALL CHILDREN ARE ENTITLED TO FREE PUBLIC EDUCATION AND RELOCATION TO A SHELTER DISTURBS THIS.

THE PROPOSED HOMELESS SHELTER WILL BE LOCATED IN AN AREA WHERE PUBLIC EDUCATION IS PLENTIFUL AND EASILY ACCESSED, WHETHER IT BE BY FOOT OR PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION.

K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Legend:

- ADAMS MORGAN
- COLUMBIA HEIGHTS
- FOGGY BOTTOM
- GEORGETOWN
- NAVY YARD

Numbered Markers:

- 1. Adams Morgan
- 2. Columbia Heights
- 3. Foggy Bottom
- 4. Georgetown
- 5. Navy Yard
- 6. Adams Morgan
- 7. Columbia Heights
- 8. Navy Yard

Map Labels:

- ADAMS MORGAN
- COLUMBIA HEIGHTS
- FOGGY BOTTOM
- GEORGETOWN
- NAVY YARD
- WHITE HOUSE
- CAPITOL
- PENN QUARTER
- CHINA TOWN
- JUDICIARY SQUARE
- CONSTITUTION CENTER
- VERNON SQUARE
- NOMASISUM CONDA
- ECKINGTON
- BLOOMINGDALE
- LE DROIT PARK
- PEASANT PLAINS
- HU HOSPITAL CENTER
- TRINITY COLLEGE
- EDGEWOOD
- BRENTWOOD
- IVY CITY
- GALLAUDET
- 9. TRINIDAD
- ATLAS DISTRICT
- CAPITOL HILL/EASTERN MARKET
- SOUTHWEST
- WEST POTOMAC PARK
- NEAR SOUTHEAST
- NAVY YARD

41

Proposed Neighborhood Sites

Proposed sites lie within close vicinity to LeDroit Park, Shaw, Columbia Heights, Pleasant Plains, and the Howard University Center. After analyzing the overlay of site selection criteria depicted in the analysis, three potential neighborhood sites were chosen and the potential of each site was documented (figure 12). All three sites lie west of the Howard University Campus. The western edge of the academic campus is lined with its medical buildings including the Campus Health Center, the Howard University Hospital, and Medical Services building. Locating a homeless community shelter near these facilities can potentially create a sort of affiliation or relationship between the two institutions. A large percentage of the homeless suffer from substance abuse, mental illnesses, and depression; facilities nearby can provide additional support to the shelter and its users.

LeDroit Park

LeDroit Park is widely known for its architectural composition of detached and semidetached homes designed by architect James McGill from 1873 to 1877. Amzi L. Barber, a co-founder of Howard University, established the neighborhood in 1873. The residential town was settled by and intended wholly for the white population and much of it was strictly bounded and secured by a gate. 1888 brought about anti-segregation protests from African Americans and as a result, the gate was torn down. The neighborhood was integrated for nearly two decades (1893-1914) before the last of the

white families left. Today Ledroit Park's community is ethnically diverse but still maintains a great number of African American families.¹⁴

Shaw

The Shaw neighborhood is readily accessible by the Shaw-Howard Metro stop. The neighborhood characterized by fruit orchards and open land was primarily settled by European immigrants and freed African Americans. One of the earliest residents was Alexander Shepherd, who led the Board of Public Works in rejuvenating the city. His residence in Shaw led to increased settlement of the neighborhood and with that came diversity in the character of the community. Named after Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, the leader of one of the first black units in the Civil War, the neighborhood experienced a difficult development as it suffered from intense racism. During and after the Civil War, enslaved and freed African Americans migrated towards Shaw in order to be close to work in the city. During the Civil Rights Movement, many businesses were driven out of the neighborhood and the town was left in deep poverty.¹⁵ The 20th century is when Shaw became a predominately African American community. As urban renewal occurred permanent residents were relocated and their homes replaced with garden apartment buildings. Only after 1997, when a new convention center was proposed for the Shaw community, did the neighborhood experience the beginnings of gentrification. Older residents were forced out of their homes because rising property costs and taxes

14. "Le Droit Park Historic District." Washington D.C. A National Register of Historic Places Travel Itinerary. National Parks Service. <http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/wash/dc65.htm>. (accessed April 13, 2012).

15. Brockett, Anne. "Historic District." *Shaw*. District of Columbia Historic Preservation Office, Office of Planning. http://planning.dc.gov/OP/HP/District%20Brochure%20pdfs%204.1.2/Shaw_Brochure.pdf (accessed April 13, 2012).

became unaffordable. However, the value of the convention center raised land value in the Shaw neighborhood and consequently, businesses began to redevelop and revived community bloomed in the aftermath.

Site Selection & Analysis

The Shaw and LeDroit Park neighborhoods are integral parts of Washington D.C.'s cultural and architectural history. Parts of both neighborhoods are declared historic districts with a number of buildings within the communities protected as national historic landmarks. Of the three Shaw/LeDroit Park sites seen in figure 13, the site that is chosen is the third and smallest site, which sits on the southern side of Florida Avenue on the edge of Shaw and LeDroit Park. Streets on three sides surround the triangular site: the prominent Florida Avenue Northwest, 8th Street Northwest, and 7th Street Northwest.

The triangular site's potential is multifold because of its location southwest of Howard University, its place within a denser urban environment surrounded by varied building types (figures 14 and 17), ease of accessibility along three edges (figure 18) and from the Shaw-Howard metro stop located just a block and a half south of the site, and its closeness to a number of public schools. A goal of this project is to reconnect the community with the homeless so it is fortunate that immediately west of the site sits a parking lot which functions as a community market once a week. Establishing a connection between a community event and a homeless community center will provide a productive means to facilitate a sort of natural socialization process (figure 21). This site straddles Florida Avenue NW, which is the boundary between the Shaw and LeDroit Park neighborhoods. This location will help encourage the act of mixing groups of people from various communities and demographics into a single community shelter center.

The eastern section of the site is rendered impervious by an asphalt parking lot currently used by the neighboring CVS Pharmacy as an employee lot while western section of the site is currently open green space; figure 21 provides an overall view of the site. The site is relatively flat, with a grade change that averages to be less than 1.5 feet as seen in the section depicted in figure 16.

LE DROIT PARK/PLEASANT PLAINS POTENTIAL SITES



FINDINGS CONTEXT

SITE

EXISTING SITE IS A PARK-
ING LOT PRESUMED TO BE
USED BY THE HOSPITAL
SERVICE CENTER LOCATED
JUST SOUTH OF THE
SPACE

LOT SIZE ALLOWS FOR
GREATER FLEXIBILITY IN
PROGRAM DESIGN

PROXIMITY TO THE
MENTAL AND PHYSICAL
HEALTH SERVICES OF
HOWARD UNIVERSITY
PROVIDES OPPORTUNITY
FOR AFFILIATION

APPROX.
114710 SQFT.
8TH ST NW AND
W ST NW

EXISTING SITE IS COM-
POSED OF ASPHALT PARK-
ING LOT AND CONCRETE
SURFACES

NEARBY PROGRAM IN-
CLUDE HOWARD UNIVER-
SITY HEALTH SERVICE
CENTER, VACANT GAR-
AGES, RESTAURANTS,
AND A MID-RISE RESIDEN-
TIAL BUILDING

APPROX.
45500 SQFT.
2131 9TH ST NW

EXISTING SITE IS GREEN
OPEN SPACE AND SUR-
FACE ASPHALT PARKING
AND LOCATED IN A
DENSER URBAN FABRIC

MIXED PROGRAM IN THE
VICINITY, COMMUNITY
MARKETPLACE TO WEST
OF SITE CAN SUPPORT
AND ACTIVATE THE SITE

FURTHER DISTANCE FROM
HOWARD U. BUT STILL AC-
CESSIBLE AND WITHIN
WALKING DISTANCE TO
USE THEIR SERVICES

APPROX.
26528 SQFT.
8TH ST NW AND
FLORIDA AVE NW

Figure 13 Potential Sites Comparisons
Source: Google Maps

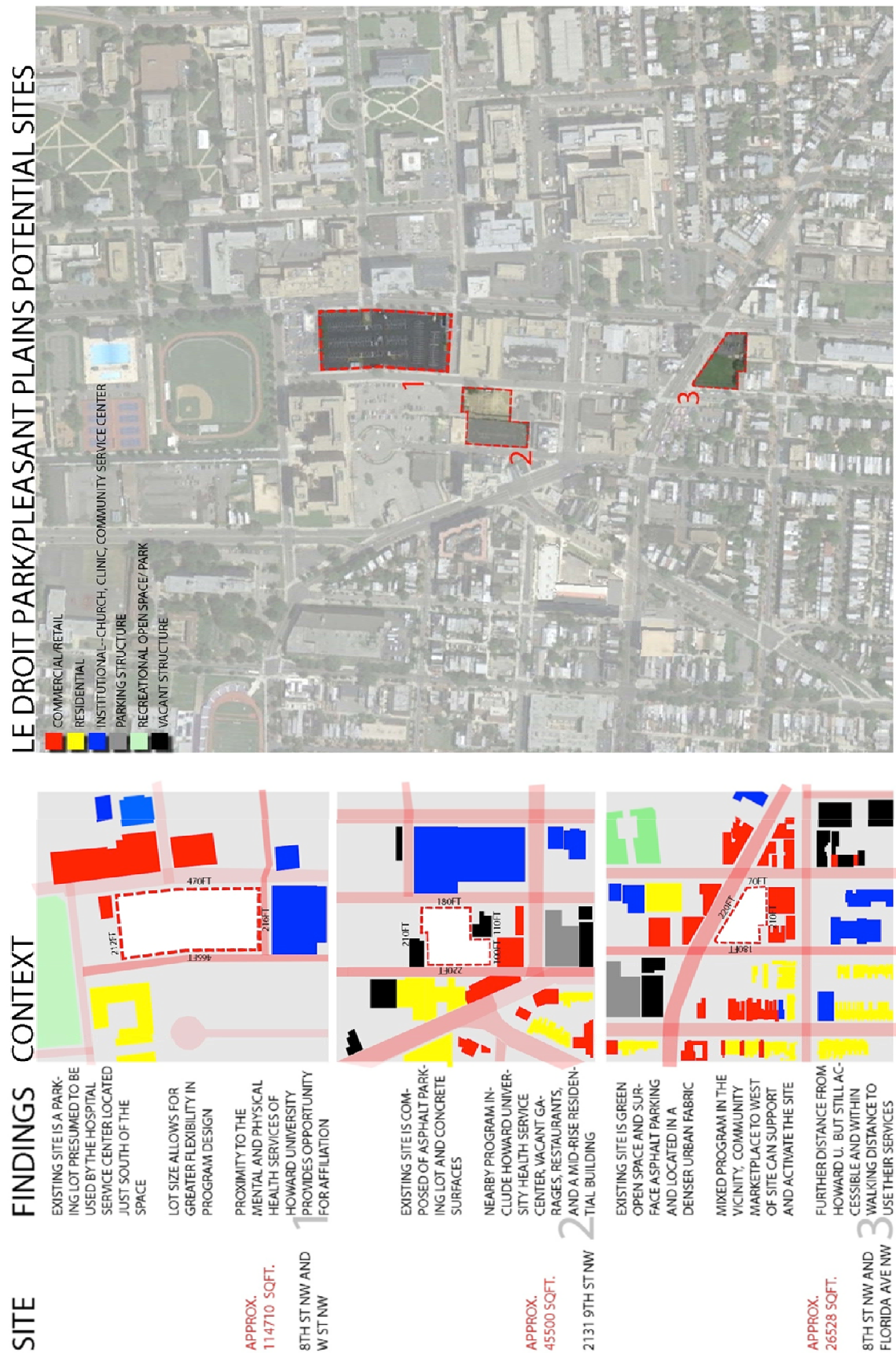


Figure 14 Potential Sites Urban Context Comparison
Source: Google Maps

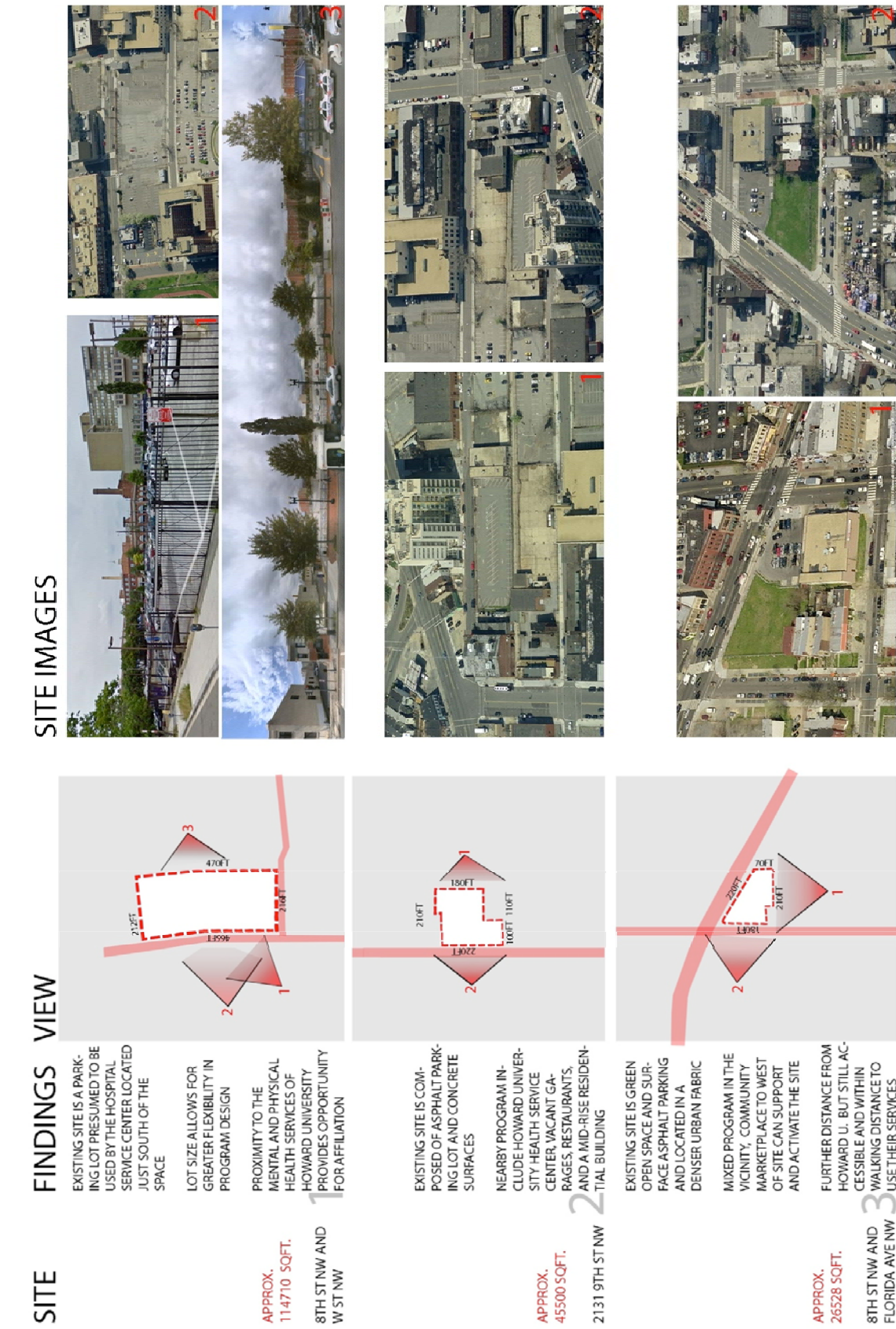


Figure 15 Potential Sites Perspectives
Source: Bing

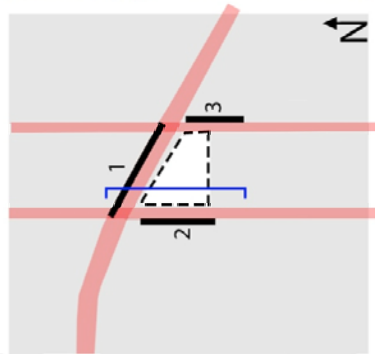
SITE

EXISTING SITE IS GREEN
OPEN SPACE AND SUR-
FACE ASPHALT PARKING
AND LOCATED IN A
DENSER URBAN FABRIC

8TH ST NW AND
FLORIDA AVE NW

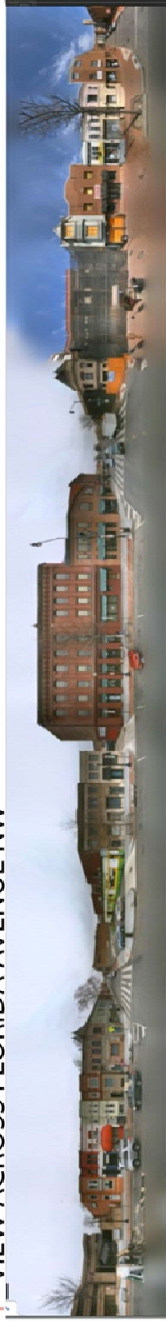
MIXED PROGRAM IN THE
VICINITY, COMMUNITY
MARKETPLACE TO WEST
OF SITE CAN SUPPORT
AND ACTIVATE THE SITE

FURTHER DISTANCE FROM
HOWARD U. BUT STILL AC-
CESSIBLE AND WITHIN
WALKING DISTANCE TO
USE THEIR SERVICES

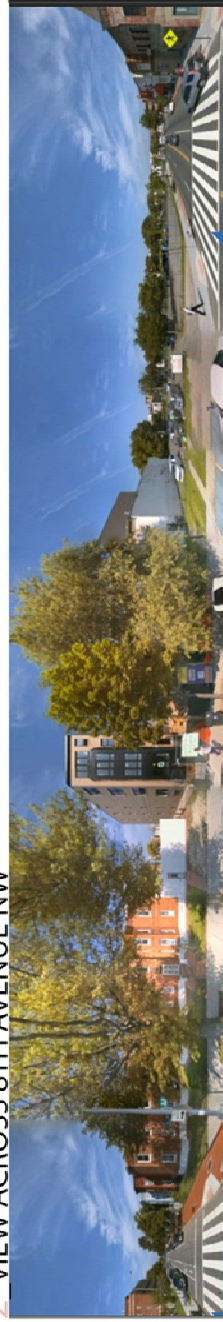


ELEVATIONS

1 _VIEW ACROSS FLORIDA AVENUE NW



2 VIEW ACROSS 8TH AVENUE NW



3 _VIEW ACROSS 7TH AVENUE NW

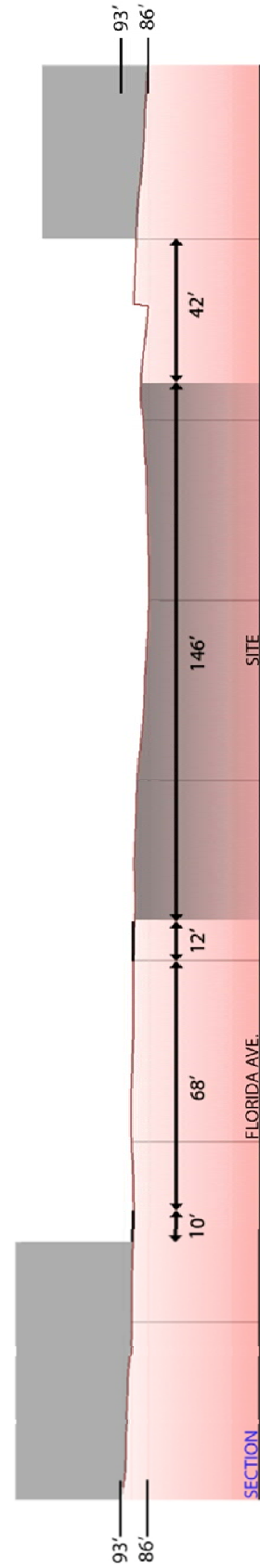


Figure 16 Selected Site Context Analysis
Source: Bing

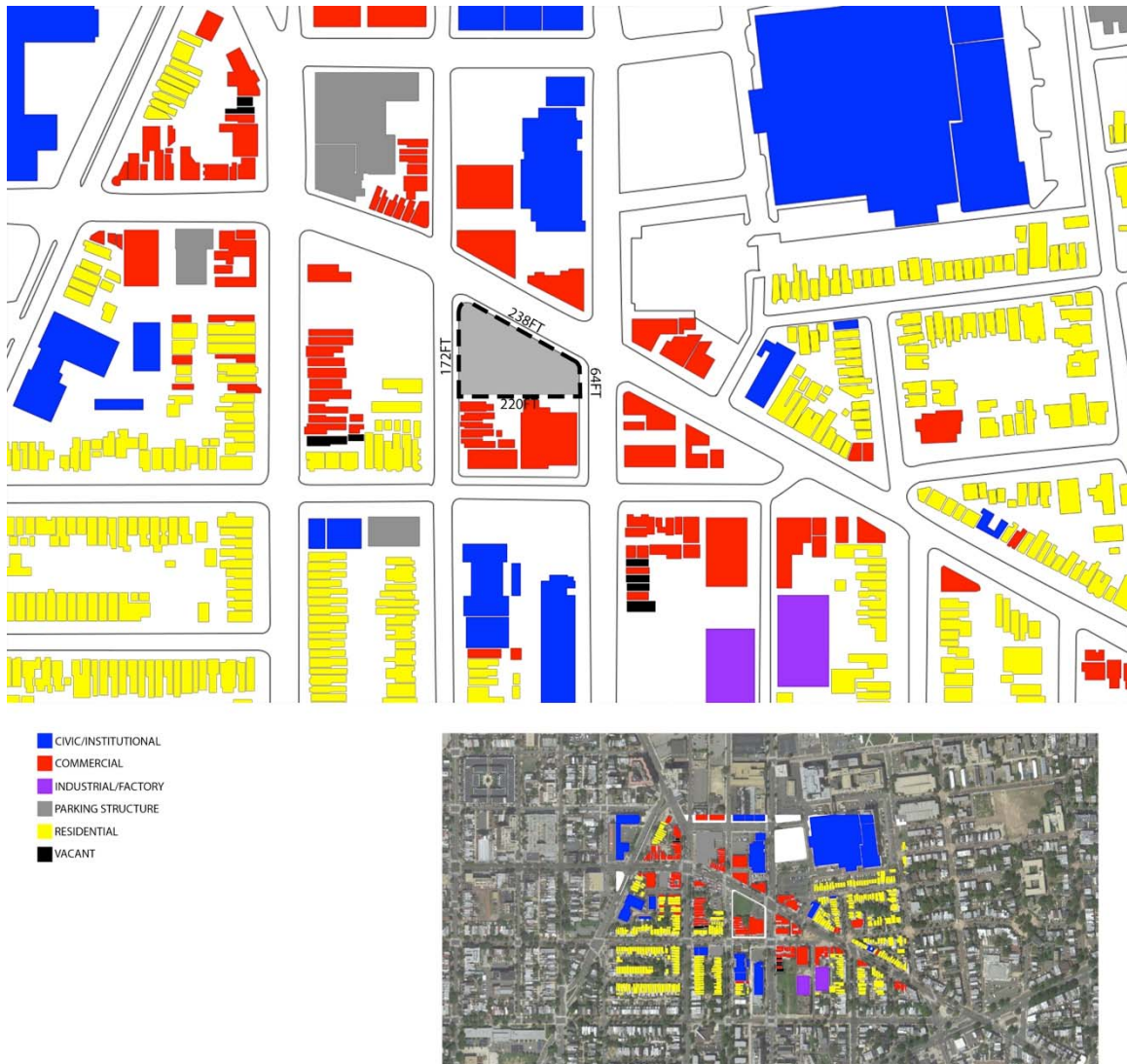


Figure 17 Selected Site Urban Context Analysis
Source: Google Maps



Figure 18 Selected Site Access Diagram

Implications of Site on Design

The image conveyed of an institution to the homeless population is trapping and frightening. Of the three potential sites examined in the LeDroit Park/Shaw neighborhoods, the smallest of the three was chosen. Large buildings connote authority and institution, both unfavorably viewed by the homeless. The vastness of a building complex exudes a sense of imprisonment and formality. A smaller size site nestled into the fabric of the city puts the homeless more at ease by being constantly surrounded by people even if there is no interaction. The lot size restricts the size of the building on the site lending to a more human scale construction; this also aids in determining the program size.

By constructing a homeless shelter relating more to the human scale, the image of an “institution” is avoided. The scale of surrounding buildings would complement the scale of the proposed shelter. This harkens back to the notion of staying true to the character and culture of the existing fabric of the city. A large-scale project on a smaller site would be inappropriate and runs the risk of becoming too ostentatious while a smaller building footprint could compromise the shelter’s programmatic effectiveness. Washington D.C.’s architecture is predominantly of a pre-cast concrete first and second levels, and wood framing above—this building will be constructed in the same manner.

CHAPTER 5: PROGRAM FOR AN INTEGRATED COMMUNITY SHELTER CENTER

The community center is comprised of recreational program and client services that are available to the community as a whole rather than the homeless population exclusively as seen in figure 19. However there are parts of the program that focus strictly on the homeless and those in transition, providing secure and supervised areas and housing. This facility will allow the homeless and the greater diverse community to interact in a more routine and normal pattern. Spaces will still be set aside for the sole use of the homeless but providing areas where a more varied group of people can intermingle can help re-socialize the alienated community members. Understanding the immediate needs and concerns of the homeless family is crucial. According to a study published in *Cityscape: A Journal of Policy Development and Research*, there is much discrepancy between what service providers feel the needs of the homeless are, and what homeless people actually say they need¹⁶. These concerns and others¹⁷ are detailed in figure 33. This matrix responds to homeless shelter users' concerns in an architectural manner, and then suggests how these architectural solutions can be translated into the shelter scheme.

The program of the shelter can be organized into two categories— the first being a communal or public zone/building providing recreational and client/community services.

16. Tatjana Meschede, "From Street Life to Housing: Consumer and Provider Perspective on Service Delivery and Access to Housing," *CityScape: A Journal of Policy Development and Research* 13, no. 1 [2011]: 71-90.

17. Elizabeth W. Lindsey, "The Impact of Homelessness and Shelter Life on Family Relationships," *Family Relations* 47, no. 3 (July 1998). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/584973> (accessed April 11, 2012).

The second category consists of program created solely for the use of the resident homeless primarily referring to those transitioning from the street into the shelter and those preparing to leave the shelter for permanent housing.

Figures 20 and 21 illustrate ways in which the structure on the site can relate to its surroundings. Most important is the way the proposed programmatic spaces interact since they will dictate the way the shelter's users will socialize with one another. The flexibility of each space and how well defined they are will begin to influence how, when, and which people will occupy and use them. Figure 22 is a group of sketch diagrams showing program and how each piece of the shelter will or will not connect to another. The two main organization approaches is a courtyard scheme and a progressive, directional scheme. The courtyard scheme gives opportunity for a controlled-natural environment to exist within the city fabric. This courtyard is essential as it acts as a secure threshold to gather shelter users before being dispersed throughout the rest of the community shelter complex.

The progressive and linear scheme is more illustrative and indicative of the homeless families' experiences. The shift from emergency to transitional shelter coupled with help from the client service program provided is a linear movement towards regaining independence. This scheme makes tangible the abstract idea of moving from one social state to another.

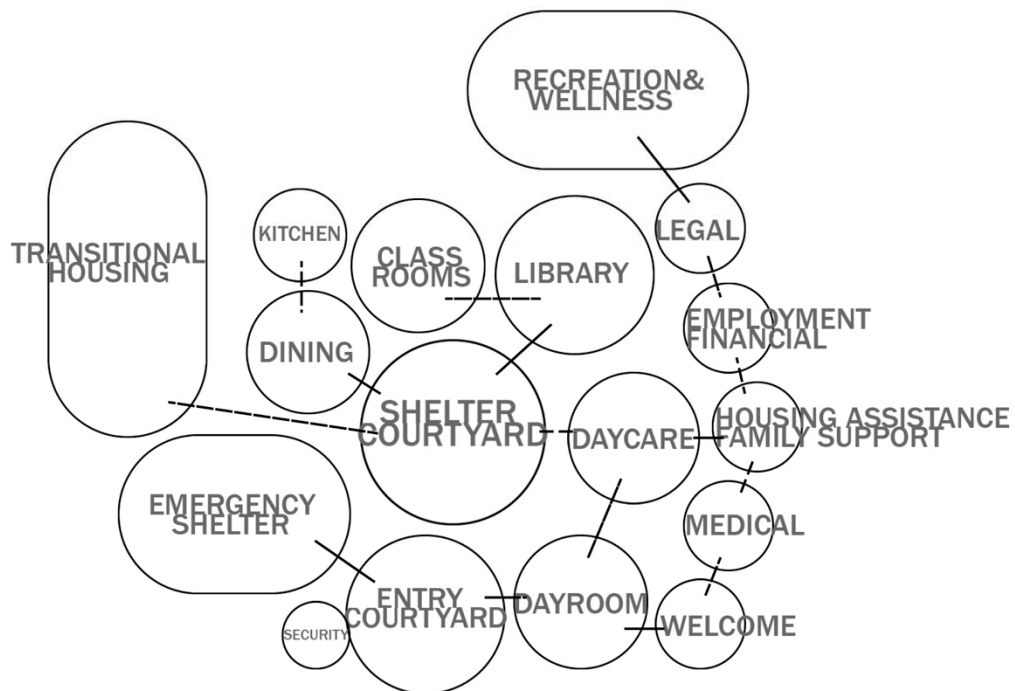


Figure 19 Programmatic Study

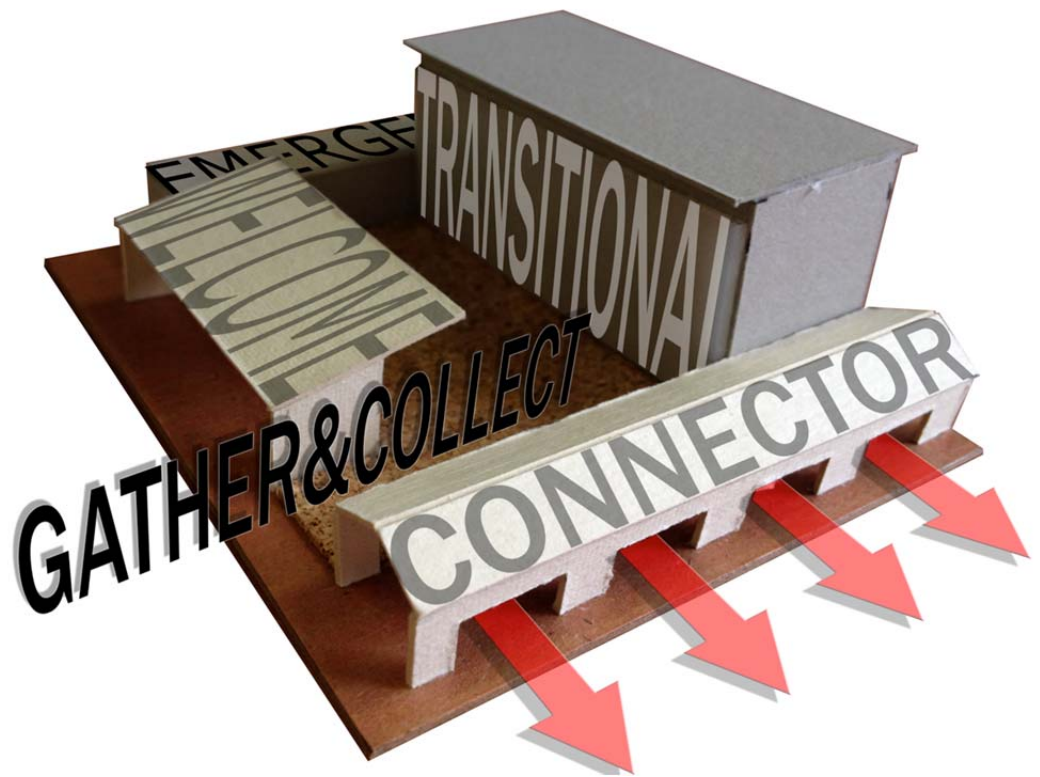
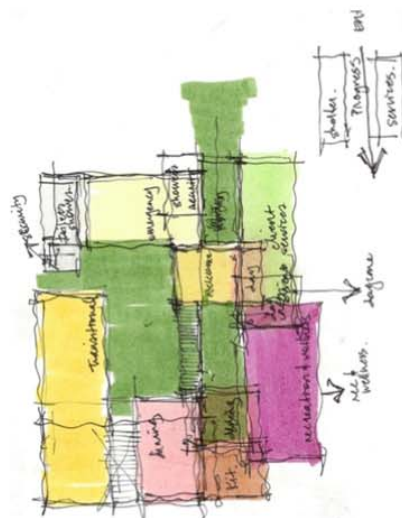
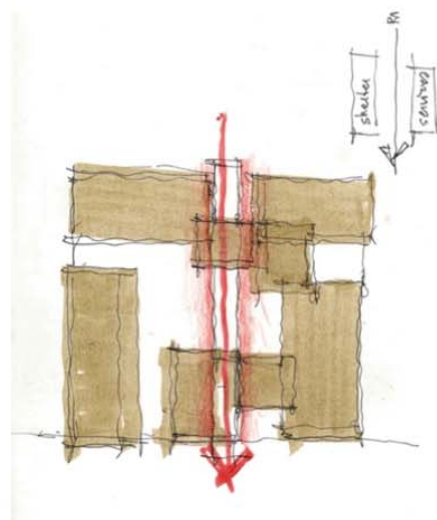
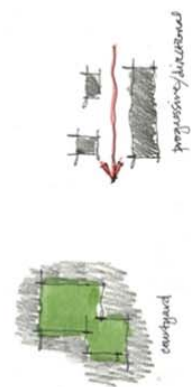


Figure 20 Schematic Organization Model



Figure 21 Facade Study Diagram
Source: Google Maps



46

CHAPTER 6: SHELTER DESIGN

Parti Exploration

As seen in figure 22, studies on how various programmatic pieces overlap was central to how spaces can connect with one another in order to connect its users. Overlapping spaces create interstitial areas that can be used during in between periods of the facility's schedule. For example, in between space can be created where the kitchen and dining areas overlap. This space can then become a snack area used by children and adults after dining hours occur. These smaller overlap spaces allow for greater flexibility in policy and architecture, which better serves the diversity of resident and non-resident routines.

The final two overall organizing parti ideas were the courtyard scheme and the linear scheme (figure 22). There was much manipulation of both ideas originating with the combination of the two. Initial schematic design utilized the courtyard and the linear internal street concepts but separated the two spaces using pieces of the program. The courtyard and the street eventually connected where the former began to grow off the latter. Figure 23 illustrates the courtyard as a separate entity and how it came to attach itself to the street.

The resulting parti is a bar building anchoring the south edge of the site with an internal street running east west through the block. The internal street becomes the "safe" street, providing secured outdoor space that is used to foster community activities.

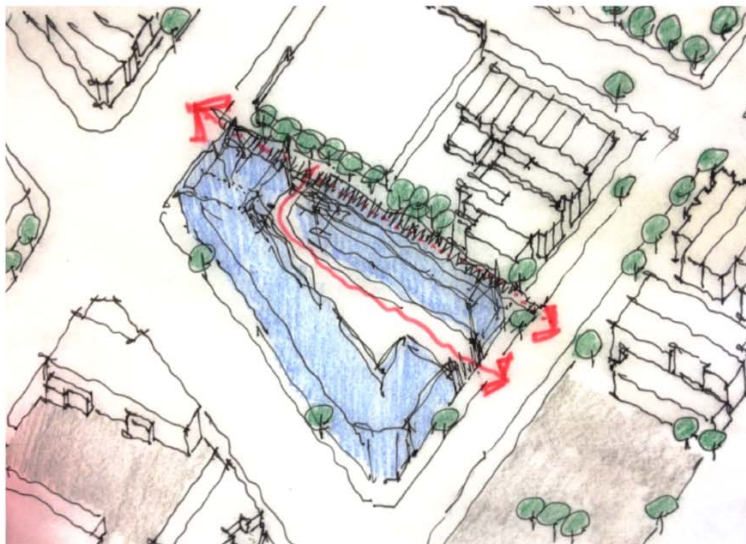
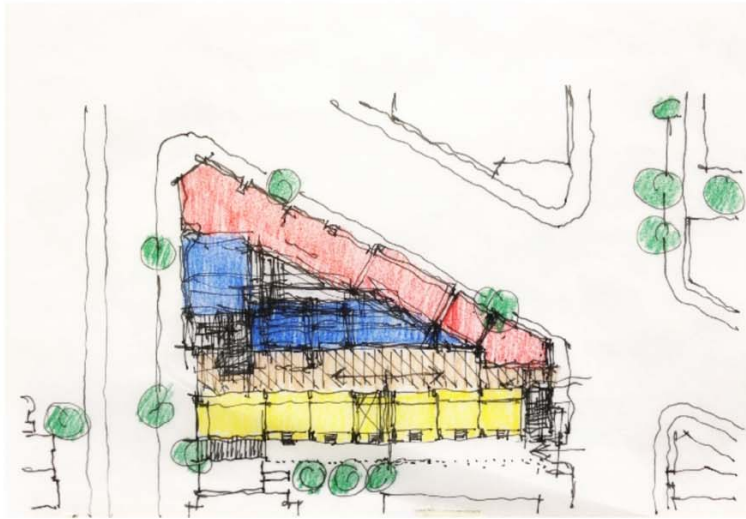


Figure 23
Schematic Program and Massing
Studies

Program Implementation

With site size restrictions, the program must be reduced in order to accommodate the more necessary spaces that will contribute to the overall success of this thesis exploration. Among the most significant of spaces are the communal gathering areas, the residential rooms for families, and the community service spaces. But equally as important is the way in which these spaces relate to one another.

The courtyard and internal street will be secure and provide a community space in the interior of the facility that will act as a “safe street.” Rooms for day care, study and reading, and a community gathering room will be located on ground level to serve as many community members as possible. Recreation and café-library space will appeal to many typical community residents and can become a part of the daily routine making this community center and homeless shelter an integral piece within the community. Health and housing assistance services will be located on the ground floor along with an open forum classroom type of space to encourage community involvement outside and inside the facility. A day room will allow parents and other homeless individuals a safe and quiet space to reflect and contemplate while providing direct sightlines to the daycare and study room areas. This enables parents to achieve a sense of peace knowing and seeing their children playing and studying amidst being in the middle of this lifestyle crisis.

The kitchen and dining areas will provide food and beverages for the recreation and café program. This allows for the facility to generate revenue in order to support its own program and its users.

Spaces are provided to foster a sense of community. The community dining area utilizes nana walls to open into the internal courtyard. The paving of the courtyard is accentuated by thin metal stripping that run into the dining area joining the two large and important pieces of program so that when the nana walls open, the interior and exterior spaces become one. On the ground level, the wedge shaped lobby/flex space is enclosed on the southwest also using nana walls, and on the northeast by glass planes that retract like garage doors. When the nana walls are opened, the interior space leaks out into the smaller courtyard (figure 24); when the glass planes retract, the interior embraces the community facing Florida Avenue. This wedge-shaped space is used during the day as a waiting and socializing room; after business hours, the space is used for lectures and evening classes.

Rooftop terraces that act as play and gather spaces will also feature community gardens. These amenities promote interaction between residents and community members, children of all types, and a sense of responsibility when residents care for their own garden plots. The product of these gardens can be personally used by the residents, but can also contribute to the produce consumed by the facility once gathered and harvested for the kitchen. The floor plans of this facility, seen in figures 25-30 show a community-based ground level. This gives rise to residential floors above.

Again, the program seeks to inspire interaction between all members of the community, facility residents or not. Community services (health, legal, social, and housing) are available for everyone. By eliminating the exclusivity of uses during certain hours of the

day, the facility can become an asset for the whole community. Figure 31 indicates the times during which gates securing the internal street can change to address the flow of users. The flow of these users was mapped in figure 32 and studied to more clearly see how each user type would experience the building and each other.

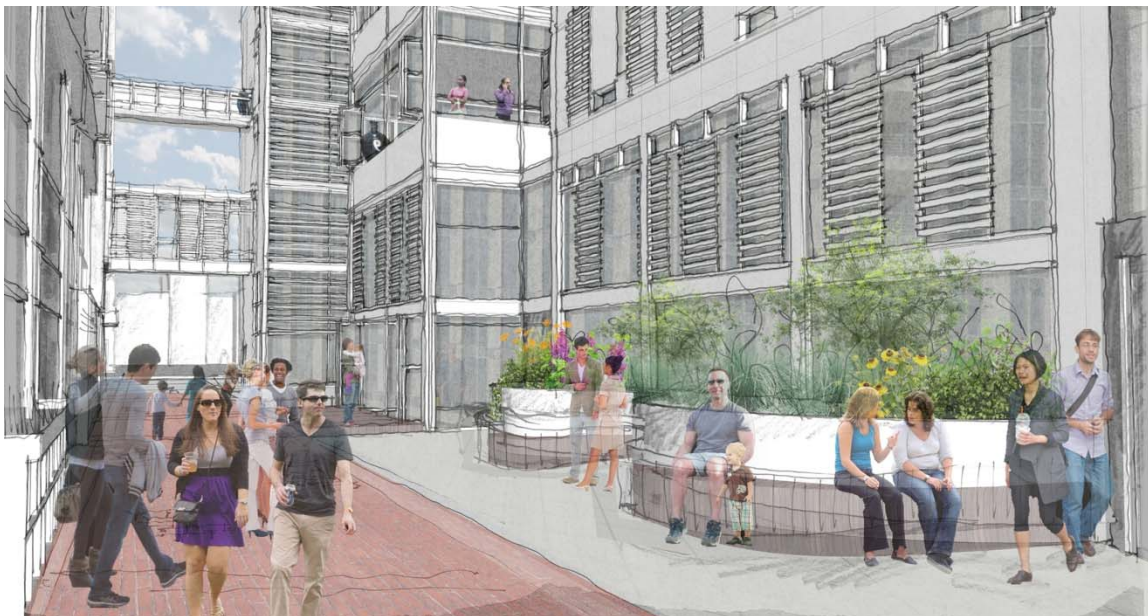


Figure 24 Perspective of Internal Small Courtyard



Figure 25 First Floor Plan



Figure 26 Mezzanine Plan



Figure 27 Second Floor Plan



Figure 28 Third Floor Plan



Figure 29 Fourth Floor Plan



Figure 30 Rooftop Terrace Plan

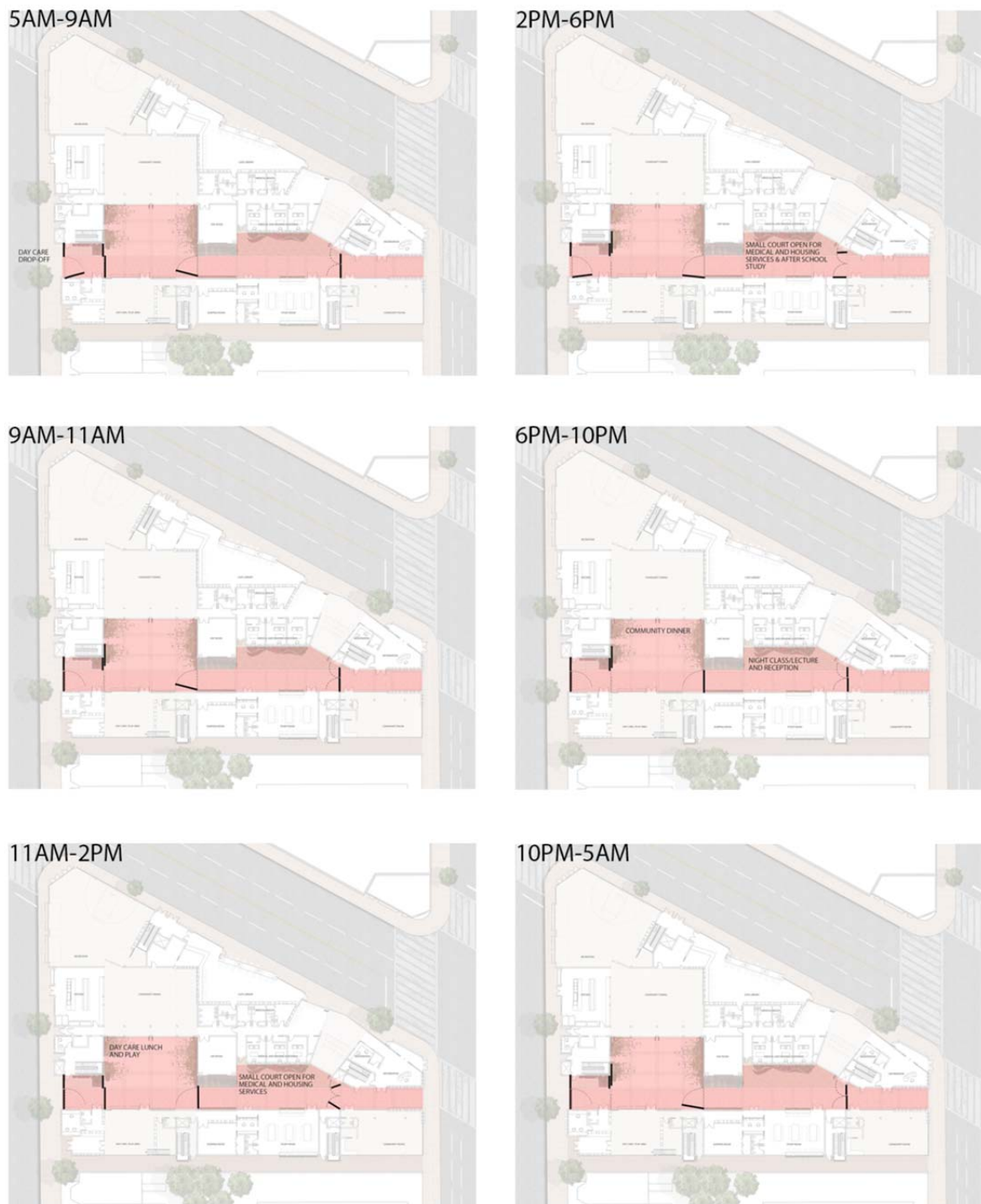
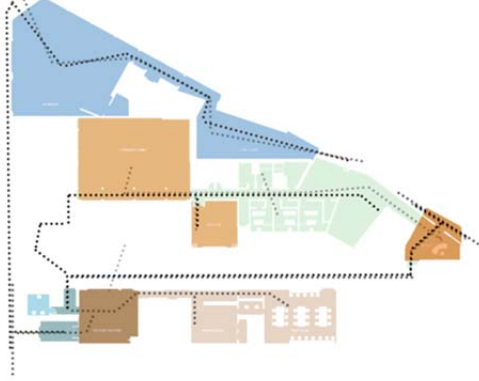


Figure 31 Security Gate Positions and Times

USER PATHS OVERLAY



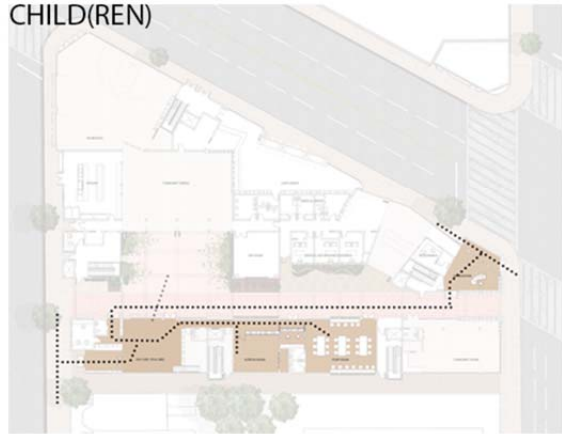
NON-RESIDENT HOMELESS



HOMELESS RESIDENTIAL FAMILY



CHILD(REN)



ADULT W/ NO CHILD



ADULT WITH CHILD

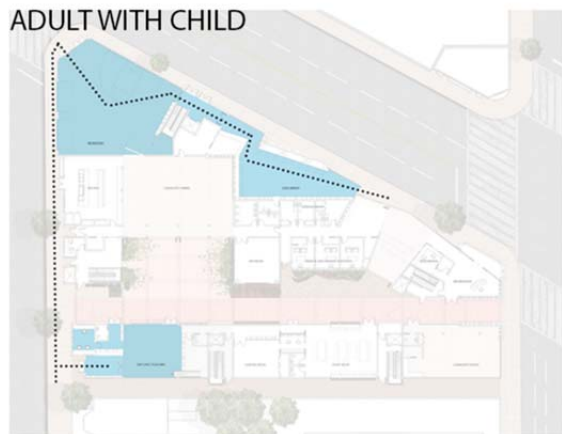


Figure 32 Facility User Groups and Paths

CHAPTER 7: DESIGN CONCLUSIONS

In reflection, the design scheme responds to most of the concerns listed in figure 33.

These concerns include:

- Poor shelter conditions and distrust of the institution
- Children's stress levels
- Parent-child relationship strain
- Medical and housing assistance accessibility
- Familiarity with the street

Poor Shelter Conditions and Distrust of the Institution

Designing architecture with integrity is of the utmost importance. Pruitt-Igoe and other social housing projects were used as precedent for this thesis, not as a guide, but rather as examples of architectural design that neglects the needs of the people it is intended for. Again, early shelters were infamous for their white walls, fluorescent lighting, and run-down conditions. People residing in these shelters contributed to the declining conditions because there was no purpose in taking care of a place that did not take care of them. The architecture and its conditions were not conducive for residence, and the homeless knew this.

The proposed design provides residency for homeless families, but it seeks to also redefine or create a new shelter type: the community center and shelter. This facility takes into consideration all user groups and focuses on ways architect and policy can work together to introduce a new socialization pattern. Typically shelters are so stigmatized that often the only social support for homeless groups are other homeless

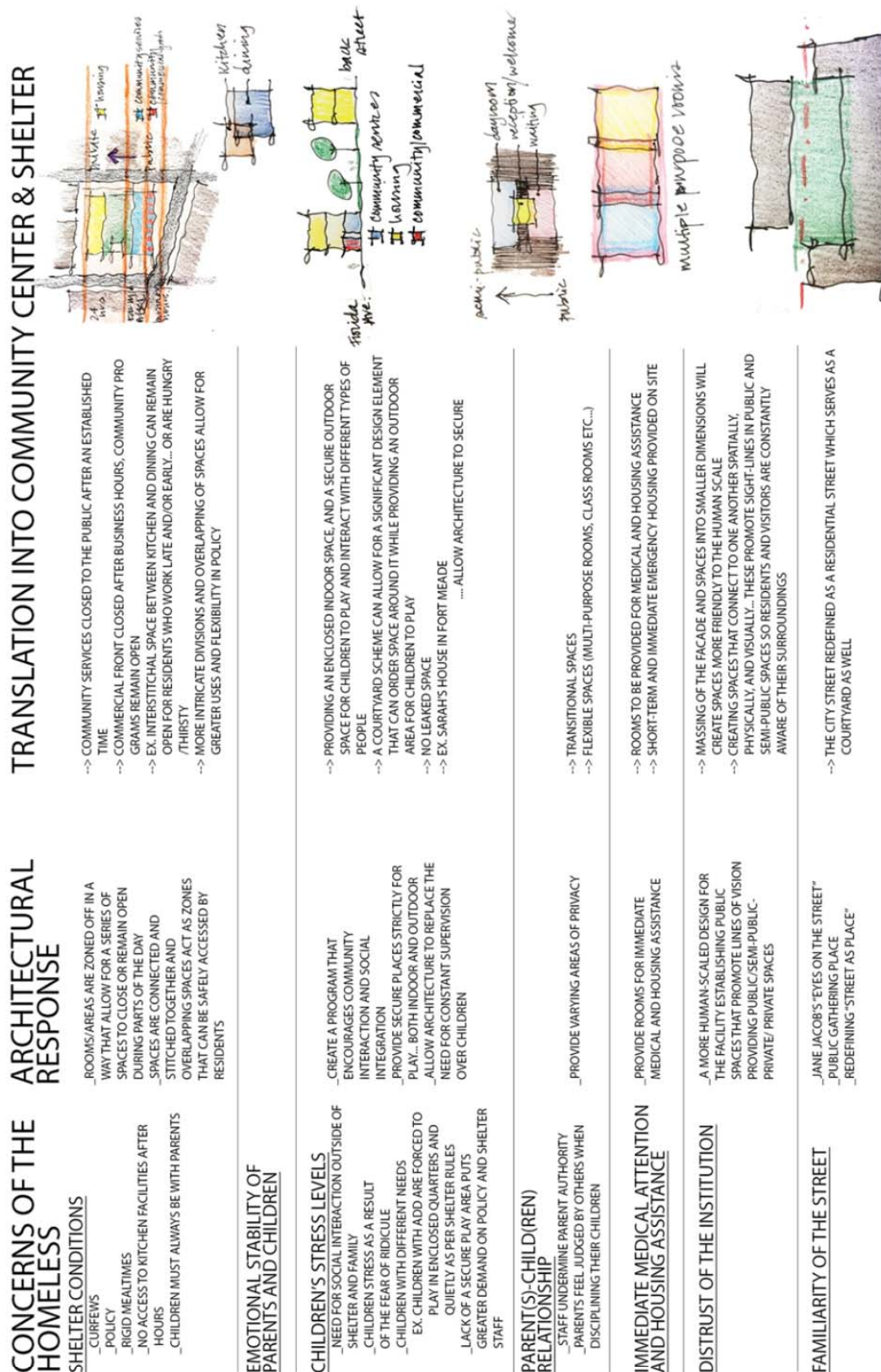


Figure 33 Addressing Concerns of the Homeless

people or the specialists they seek help from. But in this new type, homeless families and individuals are exposed to all members of the community: children with other children, parents with other parents, and through community events and public lectures and classes—the whole community with the homeless one.

Institutional architecture tends to focus on the individual. This community center aims to reunite the homeless with the community. Spaces such as the daycare and the dining area are connected through this internal street. Figure 34 illustrates this idea showing how adults can mingle in the dining area while their children are playing in the daycare area and in the open courtyard. The way in which spaces facing the internal street embrace the outdoor corridor and are porous to it allows for visual and audio connectivity.

Hearing children laughing and playing creates a wonderful and possibly hopeful atmosphere for these families.

The rooms facing the interior court have adjustable window screens allowing residents to control the amount of privacy they desire. This is a major characteristic of the facility's architectural aesthetic composition. These moving screens are metaphoric of the ephemeral nature of the residents' lifestyles but it also enables them to affect how the façade is perceived from the outside. Community gardens are located on the building rooftops as depicted in figure 35. They instill a sense of community and responsibility in adults and children alike. An educational experience can be achieved by teaching families how to nurture plants and crops to be harvested to produce food that can be cooked and eaten or sold.



Figure 34 Section Perspective through Courtyard



Figure 35 Aerial View of Community Center-Shelter

Children's Stress Levels

Children's stress levels are of primary concern when considering homeless families.

These children are often teased by and alienated from their peers because of their social situation.

First, the location of the community center-shelter is on the edge of the Shaw neighborhood—in close proximity with the LeDroit Park, Bloomingdale, Pleasant Plains, and Columbia Heights communities. There are a number of public schools located within walking and transit stop distances, which allows for a greater number of homeless students to stay at the shelter. The strategic location serves a greater number of homeless families. Specifically enabling students from neighboring communities to come together and use this facility without discrimination or judgment can help for these homeless children to retain a semblance of normalcy and structure in children's lifestyles.

Second, the facility provides spaces exclusively for children and students. The daycare, sleeping area, and study room are for the use of toddlers, children, and teenagers. They are supervised areas that are meant for the younger members of the community. During various hours security gates open to allow entrance for students released from school to use the study room or the rooftop recreation areas.

This normal interaction with their peers alleviates the stress of the homeless children.

The ridicule they may face will lessen and their social needs of interacting with those of the same age will be met.

Parent-Child Relationship

A concern among homeless parents regarding their children is the difficulty of needing to

provide constant supervision. There is a lack of “alone time” and this can strain the parent-child relationship.

The shelter design provides a variety of spaces. On every floor there is a dayroom intended for adult use. At the west and east end of the facility are common rooms for the entire floor. Provided on each floor is also a lounge that has a kitchenette for those who desire to prepare their own meals. The daycare and study room, as stated earlier, are for the use of the children. There are a number of secure and supervised areas that are provided to allow parents space to simply be alone but have peace of mind knowing his or her child is safe.

Medical and Housing Assistance

The design of this program addresses the immediate concern of the homeless: to seek housing first. The family will approach the 7th Street formal entrance to the community center-shelter where they will be greeted by staff. They will be able to tour the facility, drop the children off at the daycare, before returning to the registration desk to apply for housing and enroll in evening classes and help/support programs. This sequence of experience is depicted in figures 36-39.

Locating these offices on the ground level improves accessibility and makes known the importance of acquiring medical and housing assistance, but also allows ease of access for members of community seeking medical advice and care.



Figure 36 View of 7th Street Approach



Figure 37 View of Welcome Center

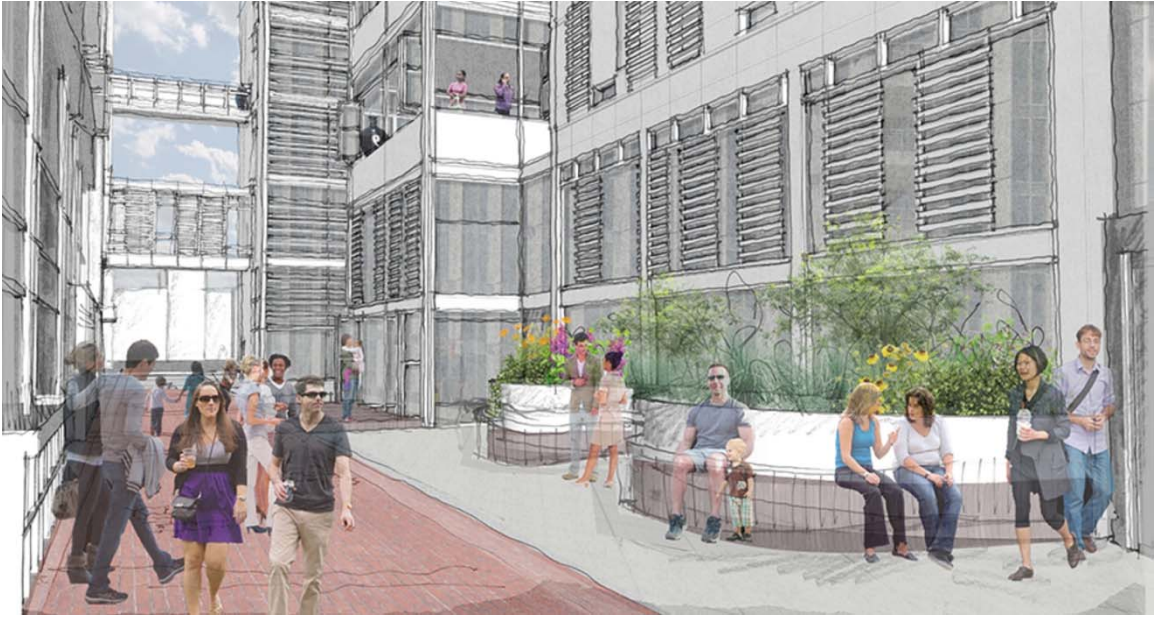


Figure 38 View of Internal Street



Figure 39 View into Daycare Play Area

Familiarity with the Street

The internal street is designed to become the hub and heart of community activity. Just as the chronically homeless redefine the street type into one that is inhabitable, this design also redefines how the street is perceived. The idea of the “safe” street is achieved using security gates, and façade treatment. The louver and screen façades on Florida Avenue and 7th Street act as a wrapper to protect the core of the facility. There is a distinct but semi-transparent boundary that shields the residents from unwanted attention. Where the formal façades along 8th and 7th Streets and Florida Avenue provide greater privacy, the façades facing the internal street are porous and facilitate connectivity between the north and south building.

The notion of the “safe” street also seeks to change the perception of those who are not homeless. The internal street acts to provide an outdoor secure place where people can interact, play, and socialize with one another. This is a distinctly different street than the street that comes to mind when people think of homelessness. By redefining the street for the homeless and for the rest of the community, the stigma against the homeless shelter type will be reduced.

Further development of this thesis would consider live/work opportunities for the residents. This would drastically alter the ground floor plan and enable the facility to become a much more self-sufficient and productive member of the community. The façades will experience development from a more deliberate and defined perspective and reflect an attitude that, in its current state, is more apparent in plan than in elevation.

The social stigma experienced by the homeless population and the homeless shelter type can be addressed through architecture. However, like all social issues, the problem of homelessness must first be dismantled, analyzed, and re-evaluated. Once it has been, it is truly a problem of architecture and policy.

Understanding the issue is as important a part of this exploration as the actual design process. Although this thesis is extremely site specific, the process of narrowing the scope of a project in order to redefine a building type to relieve social tensions is a valuable idea and approach that can be globally applied. This thesis exploration has solidified my belief that architecture has the capacity to affect how we perceive place and one another, thus playing a critical role in our society.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brockett, Anne. "Historic District." *Shaw*. District of Columbia Historic Preservation

Office, Office of Planning. <http://planning.dc.gov/OP/HP/District%20>

Brochure%20pdfs%204.1.2/ Shaw_Brochure.pdf (accessed April 13, 2012).

"Community Center in Zimmern / Ecker Architekten," ArchDaily,

[http://www.archdaily.com/32716/community-center-in-zimmern-ecker-](http://www.archdaily.com/32716/community-center-in-zimmern-ecker-architekten/)

[architekten/](http://www.archdaily.com/32716/community-center-in-zimmern-ecker-architekten/) (accessed April 11, 2012)

Elizabeth W. Lindsey, "The Impact of Homelessness and Shelter Life on Family

Relationships," *Family Relations* 47, no. 3 (July 1998).

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/584973> (accessed April 11, 2012).

Ellen Hart-Shegos, *Homelessness and its Effects on Children*, (Family Housing Fund,

Dec. 1999), 2-15.

"Disconnected Pavilion / Plan B Arquitectos," ArchDaily, [http://www.archdaily.com/](http://www.archdaily.com/128700/disconnected-pavilion-plan-b-arquitectos/)

[128700/disconnected-pavilion-plan-b-arquitectos/](http://www.archdaily.com/128700/disconnected-pavilion-plan-b-arquitectos/) (accessed April 11, 2012).

"Homebase Transform Carlisle Station for a Cushy Commute," *MyDecoBlog*, entry

posted Feb 23, 2010, [http://mydeco.com/blog/homebase-transform-carlisle-](http://mydeco.com/blog/homebase-transform-carlisle-station-for-a-cushy-commute/)

[station-for-a-cushy-commute/](http://mydeco.com/blog/homebase-transform-carlisle-station-for-a-cushy-commute/) (accessed April 11, 2012)).

Jo Phelan et al., "The Stigma of Homelessness: The Impact of the Label "Homeless" on

Attitudes Toward Poor Persons," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (Dec.

1997). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2787093> (accessed April 11, 2012).

"Le Droit Park Historic District." Washington D.C. A National Register of Historic

Places Travel Itinerary. National Parks Service. <http://www.nps.gov/nr/>

travel/wash/dc65.htm. (accessed April 13, 2012).

Michel Lincourt, *In Search of Elegance: Towards an Architecture of Satisfaction*.

(Liverpool: McGill-Queen, 1999), 247.

Marc Antoine-Laugier, *Essai sur l'Architecture*, (Paris: Chez Duchnese, 1753), 11-12.

Rae Bridgman, "The Architecture of Homeless and Utopian Pragmatics,"

Utopian Studies 9, no. 1 (1998). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20719742> (accessed

April 11, 2012).

Sam Davis, *Designing for the Homeless: Architecture that Works* (California: University of California Press, Nov 29, 2004), 18-19.

Sarah Wessler, "AD Interviews: Kieran Timberlake," ArchDaily,

<http://www.archdaily.com/32490/ad-interviews-kieran-timberlake/> (accessed

April 11, 2012)

Tatjana Meschede, "From Street Life to Housing: Consumer and Provider Perspective on

Service Delivery and Access to Housing," *CityScape: A Journal of Policy*

Development and Research 13, no. 1 [2011]: 71-90.

"The Bridge Homeless Assistance Center / Overland Partners," ArchDaily, [http://www.](http://www.archdaily.com/115040/the-bridge-homeless-assistance-center-overland-partners/)

[archdaily.com/115040/the-bridge-homeless-assistance-center-overland-partners/](http://www.archdaily.com/115040/the-bridge-homeless-assistance-center-overland-partners/)

(accessed April 11, 2012).

"VY Gym / Symbiosis Designs LTD," ArchDaily, [http://www.archdaily.com/132695/vy-](http://www.archdaily.com/132695/vy-gym-symbiosis-designs/)

[gym-symbiosis-designs/](http://www.archdaily.com/132695/vy-gym-symbiosis-designs/) (accessed April 11, 2012).