

Issues Concerning Homelessness: as understood through the lens of **ARCHITECTURE**

THOSE HOMELESS AND PUBLIC, CAN THEY
SHARE THE SAME KIND OF SPACE????



HOME FOR ALL



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ABSTRACT

In the year 2011, according to National Alliance to End Homelessness in the United States there are 21 homeless persons per every 10000 people in the general population. The total number of homeless people from March 2000-March 2001, is estimated at 25,308.¹ Locally, according to "The Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless" the number of people who are homeless has increased by over 200% in 15 years that homelessness in Cincinnati had been studied. The GCCH estimates that at any given point of time, there are around 1600 homeless people in Cincinnati.¹

The larger issue is that we have too many citizens living on streets. Considerable numbers among the population at large do not care about the human condition of those who are homeless. But rather they want homelessness to be cleaned up, or at least out of sight.

With the drop of a hat any of us could be there. Where? The Streets - Homeless.

There is an accelerating rise in homelessness. Current built environments intended for the homeless are not designed to support the needs of homeless people who either are transitioning from the streets to living in a home, or those who cannot transition successfully because of mental and physical illness. Generally, architecturally speaking, temporary housing takes the form of beds in an old building, minimum services and an unfriendly environment. Most of the existing solutions in current architecture do not address the core issues of homelessness.

The human condition is fragile; we may not be able to solve the condition of homelessness completely. Some people will not be able to overcome homelessness completely. However, there are architectural solutions to support those who cannot make

the transition and also the solutions we develop should make the living conditions of the homeless better. Citizens who cannot function on their own should be accorded the dignity of having control over their living space. Housing is a part of the solution-it provides a sense of identity and home. From these observations and beliefs I pose the following questions:

Is it really possible to be home living on streets? How can architectural design be applied to create living environments for the homeless that address their wellbeing beyond pragmatic physical needs? Can we develop pragmatic flexible paradigms, which would consider integrating design solutions both architecturally and non-architecturally?

THESIS PAPER

This paper considers flexible alternatives to integrate architecture building and portable structures. I will propose designing public furniture/nomadic shelters for those who prefer to remain on the streets and for those who are willing and able to accept temporary housing, I will propose architecturally designed homeless shelters.

Initially I will analyze case studies in the Over-The-Rhine neighborhood of Cincinnati, Ohio to research existing adaptive reuse homeless shelters and the current condition of the residents. Further I have conducted research about purpose designed homeless shelters in United States and London. The

discussion also includes my research on the study of public furniture-type shelters and different types of homeless shelters abroad. The examples of public furniture I have found currently exist only as concepts and sculptures.

JIMMY HEATH HOUSE, OVER THE RHINE,
OHIO, USA

Jimmy Heath House, a 25 unit permanent supportive housing project for the homeless at 209 - 219 Odeon Street, Cincinnati OH is connected with the Drop-Inn Center. The main focus of Jimmy Heath House is getting the chronically homeless into a stable situation. The important thing is that this is not only shelter; it helps people with problems relating to drugs and alcohol. The main idea is to address the population that is on streets, shelters, cells, emergency rooms and to stabilize their living situations.



This project is derived from an idea called 'Housing First' which is in action among 150 cities throughout United States. Permanent supportive housing is provided for people who

are sober; it gives them a safe opportunity to rent an apartment and have a lease.



The residents of the house are involved in various activities, volunteer to help raise a plant bed and vegetables, which in turn helps their meal plan. The housing project has been nominated among the anti-poverty program for urban planning and affordable housing development. Jimmy Heath House is working with Cincinnati Health network, and has a homeless mobile health van for the residents. The van is a regular source of medical care where primary services are provided for the residents.

There are organizations that provide meals to the house in return for fellowship. Various groups and organizations are getting involved with the Jimmy Heath House to help the residents with funding and meals. Housing is provided for sober citizens who cannot afford to own a house. But the project fails to address the issue of those addicted to alcohol, who are on streets and helpless. How is the project helping to solve the issue? Some support and help needs to be provided to the

addicted victims to help them overcome the issue rather than helping the clients who have recovered.

Jimmy Heath House is an adaptive reuse building that helps the residents with services and transitional housing, but lacks architecturally. The building is constructed to reflect values and culture of the neighborhood but the internal spaces are not specially designed to enrich the services. The house provides safety and assurance to its resident. Rooms are organized in dormitory style wards with separate portions of the shelter for different homeless populations and variation in the duration of the occupancy. Programs emphasize social services, development of life skills and job training. The house lacks well designed facilities and the considered solutions are for short term or temporary homelessness. The project is a success socially and architecturally. Spatially there is scope for new design ideas, challenging the need to restore a sense of dignity to its residents.

PROVIDENCE/DELOW ROW CENTRE, EAST LONDON, UK

In London people are worried about losing their homes for various reasons including health, finances, partner relation, drug, alcohol, mental breakdown and others. Providence Row Centre is one of the homeless charities, located in east London are helping the homeless and vulnerable people since 1860. This homeless charity is owned by London Borough of Tower hamlets, which is sponsored by UK. They help homeless people

to get off and stay off the streets. Providence Centre is a safe place for the homeless, with wide range of services which includes urban gardening, computer training, medical services, education and skills training. They also offer drop in advice, and suggest people to visit their day care centre, which encourages training and education.



Most clients come from all around the city of London, they help single homeless people, provides food and accommodation. The centre has separate buildings with a centre courtyard. The buildings are separated by means of housing and day care activities.



Featherstone Young were appointed by Providence Row to design a new arts and activity building as a part of the day care facility. The centre provides essential services such as food, clothing and showers, helping to restore client's health and dignity. The centre is built for charity which provides space for activities to encourage self expression and learning. It incorporates a bicycle workshop, arts studio, performance art studio space and offices for charity. They enable users to develop their skills, and set themselves towards employment. They allow users to express creatively and develop their artistic skills.





The building was a former storage building, the architects wanted to find a design solution that could encourage the use of courtyard and flow between the two buildings on the site as a whole. The main feature of the building is its single aspect angular facade. The building is colorful, irregular shaped that provides a fun and lively aspect to it. The large workshop in the ground floor opens out onto the courtyard, bringing natural light and encouraging activity to spill out onto the courtyard towards to the main Dellow Centre building. Throughout, the building is flexible and has functional internal spaces. Lighting and services are simple and basic, it is designed to be easy to use and maintain. With a strong design concept the building has withstood tight cost constraints and completed on budget.

Dellow Centre is a two storey building with ground floor clad in corrugated steel in shades of green, partly perforated adding texture and porosity to the facade. The building has a cantilevered level clad with an external rain screen. A simple piece of architecture made special with the use of material and introduction of the folded facade. This is a unique and bold project with the use of

industrial materials, zigzag facade across the building. The arrangement of the windows maximizes the amount of light entering the building same time the windows are angled away from the hostel rooms.

The interiors are simple; the day care centre has three principal spaces behind the facade - a workshop on the ground floor, a classroom/performance room on the first floor and offices on the top floor. The building works well as a whole with the intent of having to separate units one for lodging and the other for services. The units are connected with a large open courtyard, which is the highlight welcoming more activities and people. The building worked well within the neighborhood of Brick Lane in east London. It is surrounded with apartments and residences around. Given the arrangement of the units only courtyard is mainly visible to the streets. Providence Row Centre works well locally and fits appropriately within the neighborhood. The project is a success architecturally, spatially, locally and publically. But given the density of the city the scope for expansion of the centre is limited.

CAPSLO, SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIFORNIA, USA

Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo County (CAPSLO) homeless shelter is located in San Luis Obispo, California. The design is by a collaborative of 16 firms providing services for the homeless community.

Capslo helps the residents to achieve economic self- sufficiency. The organization aims its residents in securing employment,

adequate housing, medical care and provides child care. Capslo offers services to 43000 people across San Luis Obispo county and other southern California counties.

The centre includes various facilities that range from community rooms, day-use service areas, kitchen and community enterprise spaces, offices, medical and mental health areas and also dormitories. The centre has 200 beds housing men, women and families.



Capslo is a two story building, with a clear central structure that runs according to the cardinal directions. The first floor has more public uses such as community rooms, service areas giving way to more private and secure areas such as medical services and office spaces. The second floor has single men's area to the west, family rooms in the centre and single women's room in the east. Such considerations are very important in creating

a comfortable and safe environments for the clients, whose lives lack privacy and security.



The building also becomes informal as one moves from north to south. The spaces of the building are more open and flowing and the layout creates strong connections to the outdoor spaces. The north side of the building has compartmentalized spaces that are more structured for specific uses in the building.

The building is functionally well designed with regard to organizational elements and facilitating the distribution of services. It also successfully addresses sustainability issues.



The next set of analysis includes investigating examples of public furniture designed by Architects as smart and sensitive solutions. The main focus of the public furniture is to meet the immediate needs of the people living on the streets, and provide transitional living spaces. The designs meet

the needs of disadvantaged people living in their own communities and by offering temporary housing.

SUVIDA, BANGALORE, KARNATAKA, INDIA

In India the term homeless is not very familiar, they are most commonly called as beggars. Currently, there is 'All India Beggars Association' and regional orphanages. I have visited a old age home that has been successful for many years and had enough government support to keep it active. This is a relevant space; the ultimate goal is to provide housing.

SUVIDA- 'A PERMANENT RETIREMENT

VILLAGE': This is a retirement home existing in Bangalore, India. Senior citizens and retired personnel are provided residence and their needs are met.

This is very similar to a homeless shelter, but they support senior citizens and less privileged people. It is a 30 acre project with government funding to provide active and productive living for senior citizens. Well organized and is interesting to note the various facilities they provide along with housing.

They have medical care, access to internet, meal plans, some extra circular activities like yoga, meditation, gardening etc. This keeps the residents active and helps the organization to function smoothly. They aim at fulfilling experiences every day. They help the old aged to have a relaxing life for all the hard work done throughout their life. The relevant project in India has given me the idea of scale

and along with activities that has made it successful.



VILLAGE WITH LAKE IN FORE GROUND



CLUB HOUSE

Moving forward, I have researched on exclusive designs of homeless shelters located in Chicago and Spain. The project in Chicago is hypothetical, designed for a competition with a strong concept and sustain design ideas. The project in Spain was sponsored by the city municipality. The building is the corporate office, providing community services for homeless people in the city of Navarra.

ZEF Side Homeless Shelter, Chicago, Illinois.

The shelter was designed for ASCA/ AISC design competition, summer 2011 by Eric Hoffman, Travis Kalina and Katie LaCourt.



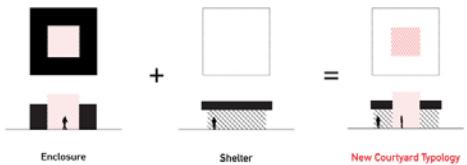


This homeless shelter addresses men, women and families who are homeless in Chicago, IL. The shelter acts a refuge and focuses on three aspects safety, security and community.

Homeless Shelter Courtyard Precedent



Concept Development

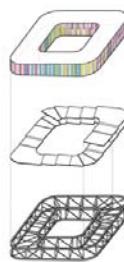


The shelter internalizes the "city park" landscape by use of a courtyard. The courtyard is established as a building typology. The building is peeled off the ground, revealing the sunken courtyard, which acts as a noise buffer for visitors, shade during the hot summer months and also maintains the view of the city. To improve the unwelcoming nature of the existing homeless shelters, ZEF homeless shelter, address the issue by lifting the building upward and welcome those in need into the courtyard's embrace. The idea is to suggest the feeling of

inside, even before actually entering the building.



Envelope + Structure



Program



Circulation



With a green roof, the residents and visitors can enjoy a stroll of being connected to the city. It acts as a catalyst by providing an eco friendly and respectable place for those who are in need.



The concept of the shelter is to become an icon in the city, demonstrated through the building's glass glowing facade, which lifts off the posture from the ground against the famous Chicago skyline.

Shelter home for the Homeless, Navarra, Spain.

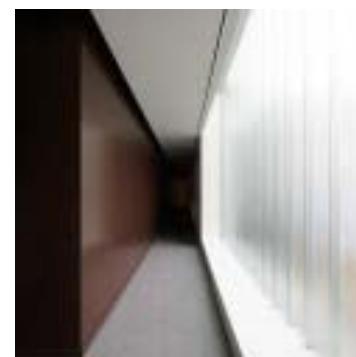
The construction of new shelter home for the homeless offers, not just satisfying the need of shelter and food for the homeless, but an opportunity to improve the quality of life of a socially excluded group. The proposal defines a sound volume, and at the same time flexible in its functioning. In spite of the limited space, different groups of users can undertake varied programs and have spaces like bedrooms, dining rooms, occupational workshops, leisure rooms etc. The project is undertaken as an exercise of careful contention at various levels.



The center offers shelter and food; in exchange the residents get involved in various daily tasks of maintenance, like cleaning, washing, gardening, painting etc.



The shelter was designed by Javier Larraz, in the year 2010. Spatially, rational distribution is disposed, modulated and adjusted. There are no room fancies, contained and sensible architecture is proposed. The project was built within 6 months, with an amount of 870 euro/m², with overall 1000m² project area. It was sponsored by Pamplona City Hall.





The external facade is conformed to aluminum which guarantees privacy for the users and at the same time resolves the possible intrusion that may occur in a center, such as homogeneous and unified exterior image, adapting the scale of the building to its environment. The building integrates two different uses, a user hostel service and a medium stay center for the stable homeless persons in the city. The user center takes up the ground and first floors, and has rooms to stay in, an occupational workshop with the possibility of developing several types of work during the day, social dining room, administration, reception and lockers. Although both the groups live together, the project aims to avoid interferences among the programs, facilitating independent functions and privacy for different types of homeless populations.

The next set of analysis includes investigating examples of public furniture designed by architects as smart and sensitive solutions. The main focus of the public furniture is to meet the immediate needs of the disadvantaged people living on the streets and provide transitional living spaces.

PUBLIC FURNITURE CONCEPTS AND SCULPTURES

While in London researching, I came across pop up urinals. The telescopic public urinals serve the late night revelers. During the day, the toilets sit beneath the pavement. In the night the toilet rises, it is designed to be vandal proof and easy to clean.

Conceptually, can the same idea of telescopic urinals be used for temporary housing? I believe homeless people who cannot transition should be given space for themselves and their belongings that would appear appropriate and acceptable to the public rather than keeping them out of sight. A part of the solution will explore the idea of foldable pop-up furniture, nomadic pods, portable structures and more. However, during the day a portion of the shelter could be transformed into an activity space, urban sculpture, or food stall, and at night it would serve the purpose of a shelter.

Most of the public want homeless people and their belongings to be out of sight. As a part of the solution could there be foldable furniture that pops up, during the night and in the day it could either go invisible or turn into an activity spaces, sculpture etc.

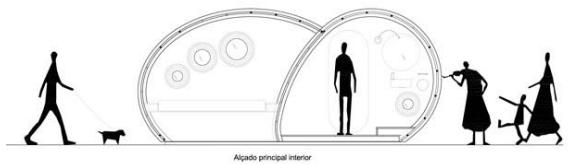


I further explored into the idea of movable shelter, providing appropriate space for the individual, being feasible for urban setting.



Shelter by GG is a contemporary shaped structure created by Gabriela Gomes from Portugal. The intent was to provide a modular public accommodation, a cocoon shaped space, focusing on the aesthetics of the design but not sacrificing any functionality. The interiors have a large double bedroom and a small bathroom that allow comfort and privacy. The cocoon uses many recyclable and sustainable materials, including oriented strand board, cork and other thermal acoustic insulation. The red exterior boasts a distinctive aesthetic and is the main constituent of the building, made of non-polluting recycled cork.

The experimental housing concept combines sculpture and architecture to create habitation space. The interior space is maximized by strategically hiding the sink and toilet behind the partition. The bed and shelving occupy the remaining volume. The temporary feature installation does not require any infrastructure. It can be delivered and easily set up in a public space.



Wheely Recycled Homeless Shelter by Zo-Loft Architecture & Design:

The unusual looking, portable temporary shelter is designed by Italian firm

Zo-Loft. It provides safe storage during the day and expands into a tent during the night. the 'Wheely' consists of a rolled aluminum frame, fitted with polyester, recycled material for tent.



Cardborigami, Folding Portable Homeless Shelter:

The portable design is based on the principles of origami. The design is created out of recycled cardboard by Architect Tina Hovsepian. It starts as a flat package and then expands to become a tent. The material is lightweight, inexpensive, sustainable and naturally insulated. The design is comfortable, water proof and fire resistant.

Major parts of solution could include a centralized building for those who are willing to transform from streets to living in a home, and urban or movable furniture for those who cannot transition.



CONCLUSION

After analyzing these case studies I look forward to designing a space that considers various programmatic elements such as education and skills training, job training, affordable housing, community activities, gardening, arts and performance studio, medical services, computer training, administrative offices, culinary skills, nursing skills, community kitchen, leisure rooms, social dining rooms, community garden and lockers. The case studies helped me consider the important aspects for the site in relation to context, surrounding environment, neighborhood, and scope for expansion, as well as sustainable design ideas, historic preservation, weather conditions and privacy. Each of the specifically designed homeless shelters emphasized the need for an integrated approach with two separate entities; namely, one for housing and the other for services. It was valuable to note the requirements and variety of spaces being

considered for different types of homeless populations, while working within the same campus organization to make it successful.

A major part of my solution will focus on integrating architectural and non-architectural elements. The idea is to design a centralized building system that provides housing and various social services to its residents and also monitors the urban movable furniture. A flexible design consideration incorporating the designed shelter and portable furniture is the main intent of my paper and research.

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ADDENDUM

This thesis project is about developing a mixed use development including those homeless. Homeless are always considered as a secluded part of the society, people prefer them to be out of sight and be placed in a remote building. Can they be a part of the community, can the public accept them as one of the classes of the society?

Initially when I started my research, I found out all the homeless shelters are exclusively

for those homeless. There are no precedents or examples where the homeless are a part of the neighborhood. Homeless shelters are gated, uninviting and placed in a remote site.

This is a huge social issue. All the mixed use development projects that exist are mainly involving low income and medium income families, nothing that involves those homeless.

The main intent of my thesis was looking at how architects could be socially responsible and how we can better the situation for those homeless and make them a part of the society and also design a space that caters other public needs. Hence, I started my design process of creating a public space, inviting the public to be a part of this mix, proposing activities such as Public Park, community garden, restaurant, cafe and retail spaces. Library, community centre, workshops and training facilities are also a part of this mix making functional and beneficial for all the people in the neighborhood. Finally, better housing apartments for those homeless, most of the homeless shelters are dormitory style with just beds and unfriendly environment. I urge the need for better facilities. My research concentrated on studying living apartments provided for senior citizens and using it as an inspiration to provide better housing for those homeless.

My site is in Over-the-Rhine, an existing homeless shelter called the "Drop Inn Center". I propose a mixed use development in the neighborhood because of the site location; it acts as a fabric between Over-the Rhine

neighborhood and downtown Cincinnati. The site will be the highlight for public activities because of Washington Park, Cincinnati Music hall, Church and School of Creative performing arts. The site also has access to the street car that runs across the street from Drop Inn Center.

The main intent is to draw people from Washington Park, opening up the views to the neighborhood and encouraging more public activities on the first floor and creating this connection to the far end where the community garden is situated making it more pedestrian friendly .

The building is six storey's tall, with public space on the ground floor, semi-private space on the second and third floors and private residential units from fourth- sixth floors.

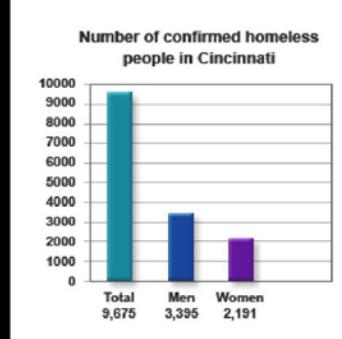
During the final review, there were few comments on changing the facade of the building and making it more interesting in terms of terrace gardens and creating more indoor garden spaces, and variation the style of balconies. The idea of making the homeless and part of community was widely accepted. The intent to creating a mixed used space and making the homeless as a part of this mix was well received.

RESEARCH AND STATISTICS

WHY CINCINNATI/OVER-THE-RHINE?

- COMMUNITY ISSUE
- CHRONICAL / EVER INCREASING
- POTENTIAL ECONOMIC MIXED USE NEIGHBOURHOOD

THESIS RESTATEMENT: "DROP OF A HAT, ANY ONE COULD BE HOMELESS" - DESIGNING A SPACE THAT CATERES TO ANY GROUP OF PEOPLE ALONG WITH THOSE HOMELESS.



Cincinnati Homeless Statistics

- 9,675 – number of confirmed homeless people including supportive housing
- 3,395 – number of confirmed homeless men
- 2,191 – number of confirmed homeless women
- 34% suffer from mental illness
- 13% are veterans
- 30% are chronically homeless*

REDEFINE THE DROP-INN CENTER



Existing Condition

Drop Inn Center Statistics

2,191 ~ number of homeless individuals served in our emergency shelter in 2012

Open 24 hours, 365 days a year

74% male, 26% female

Provided 70,803 total shelter nights to homeless men and women

222 – daily average number of residents receiving food and shelter

100,000 - number of meals served each year

Distribute food, toiletries, towels, blankets, and emergency clothing items

42% were chronically homeless

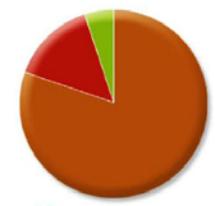
58% were mentally ill

18% were physically disabled

9% were developmentally disabled

11% were veterans

(Information collected during 2012 calendar year, VESTA)



BIG IDEA

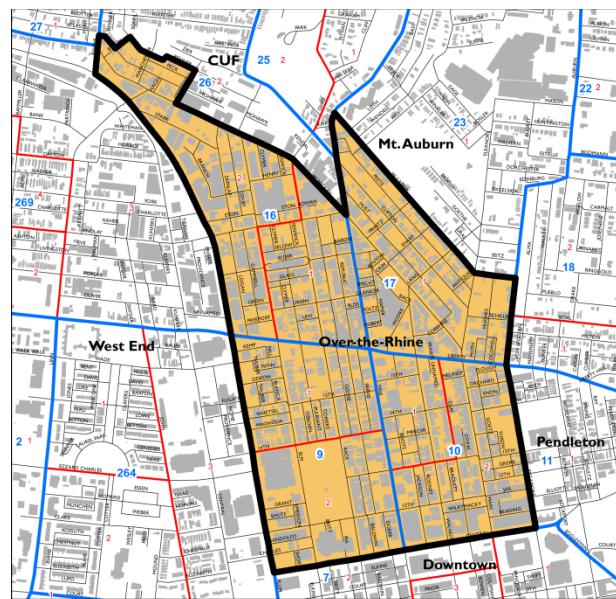
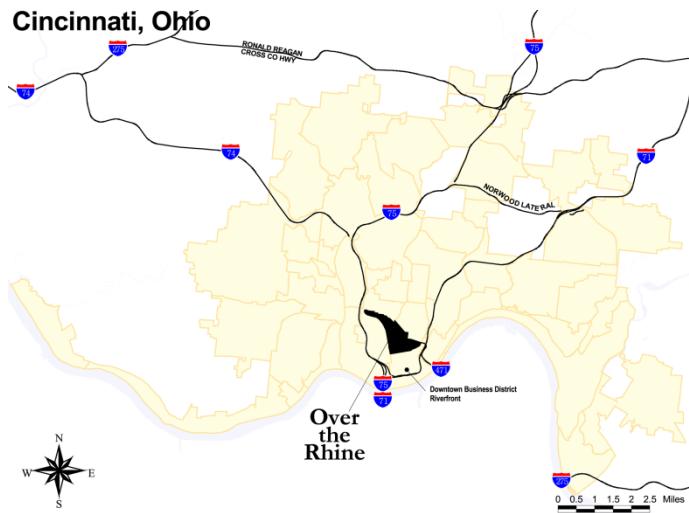


- CIRCULATION ON GROUND
- BRIDGING CONNECTION ABOVE GROUND



VENICE ON VINE, OVER-THE RHINE

SITE INFORMATION AND PICTURES



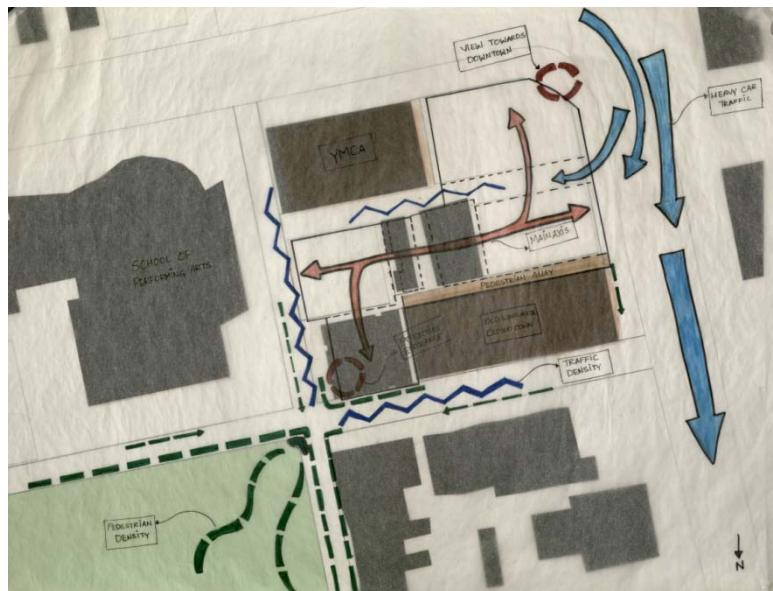
OVER-THE-RHINE, DROP INN CENTER



SITE ANALYSIS AND SITE DETAILS



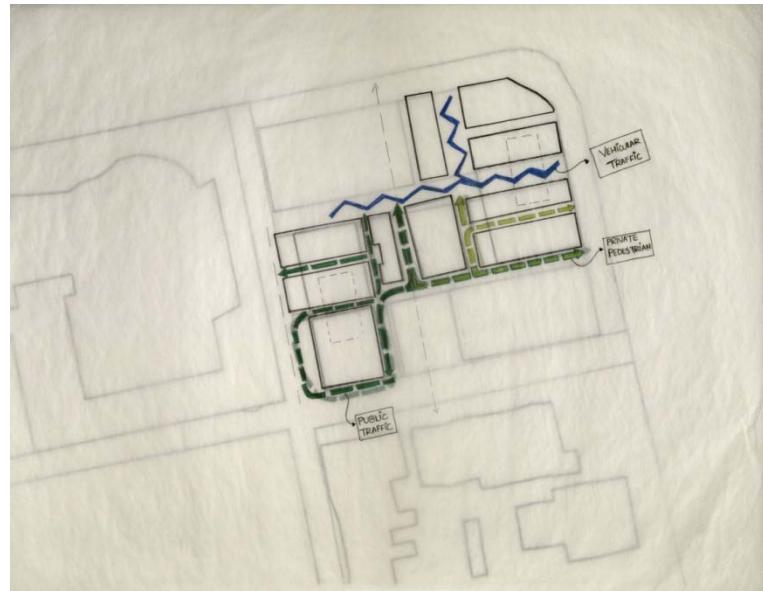
NEIGHBORING BUILDNS AND SURROUNDING



POTENTIAL CONNECTION AND ACCESS



ENTRY AND BUILDING HEIGHTS



VEHICULAR TRAFFIC AND ACCESS POINTS

SITE ANALYSIS



TRAFFIC



PEDESTRAIN DENSITY AT NIGHT



3D VIEW



CONTEXT



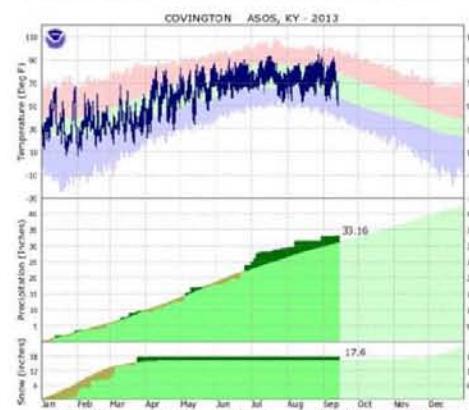
PEDESTRAIN DESNITY DURING DAY



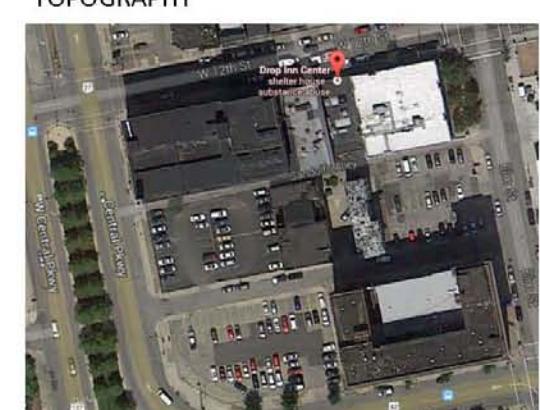
TOPOGRAPHY



VIEW

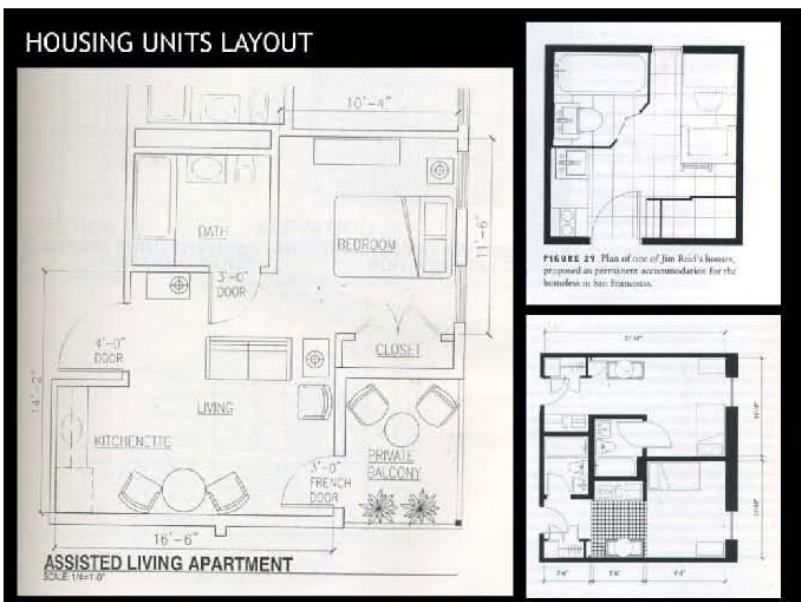
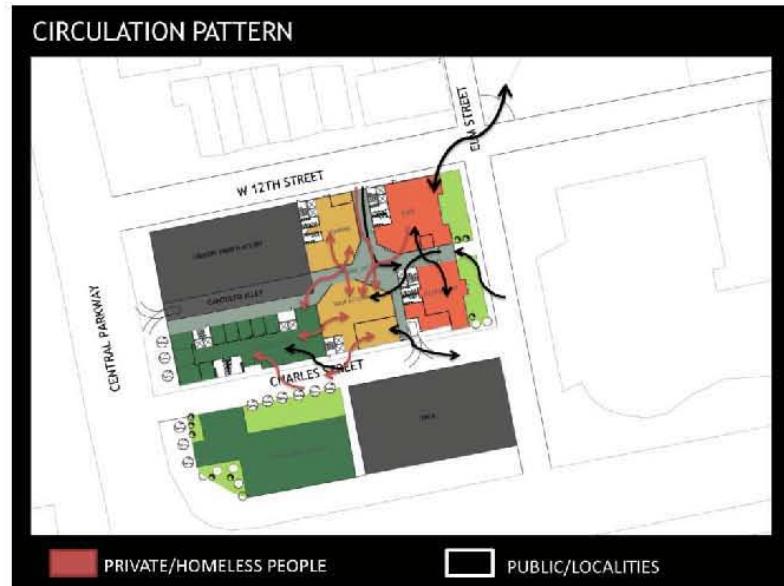


CLIMATE CHART

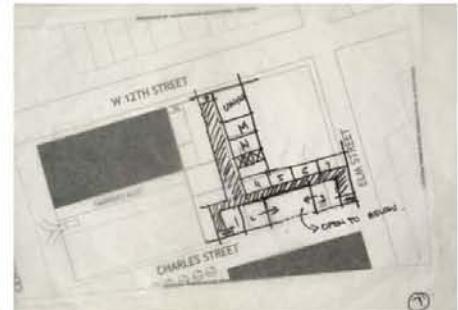
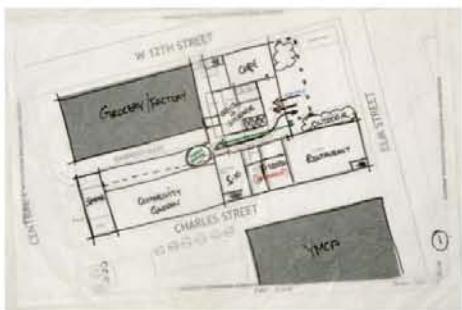
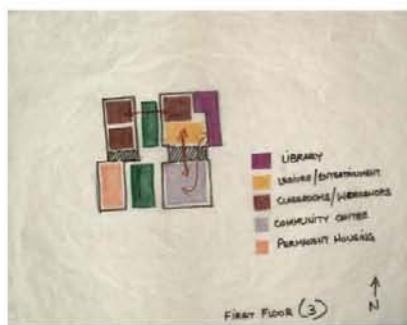
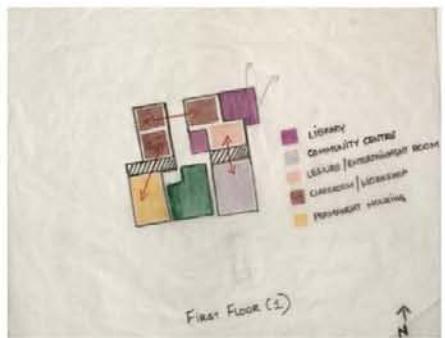
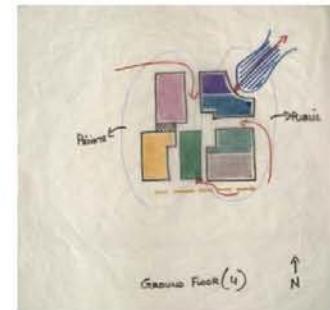
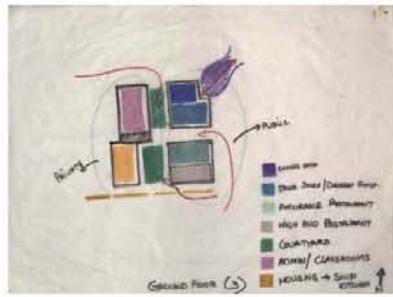
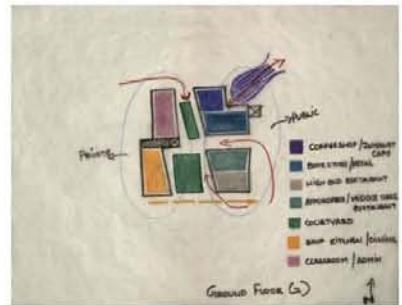


SITE AERIAL VIEW

SITE DETAILS AND DESIGN IDEAS



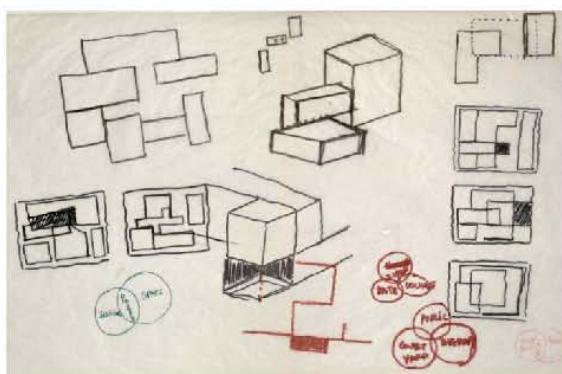
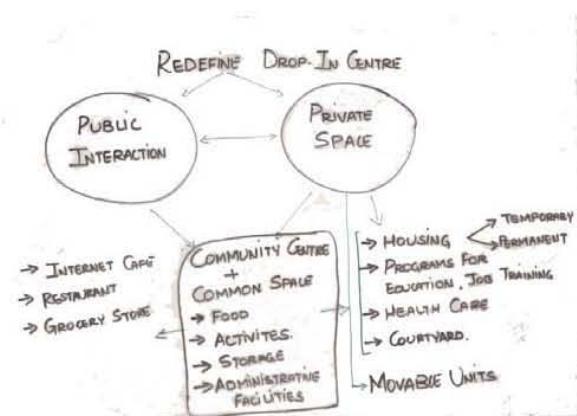
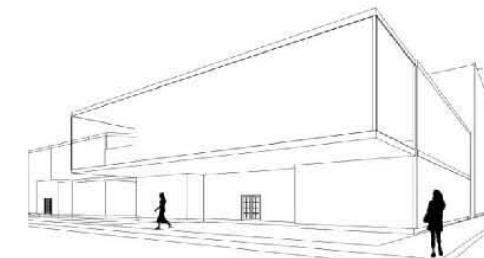
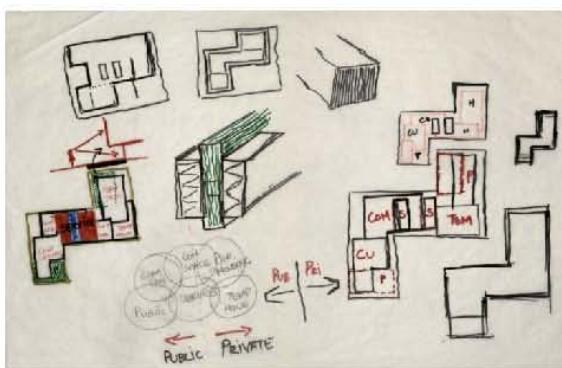
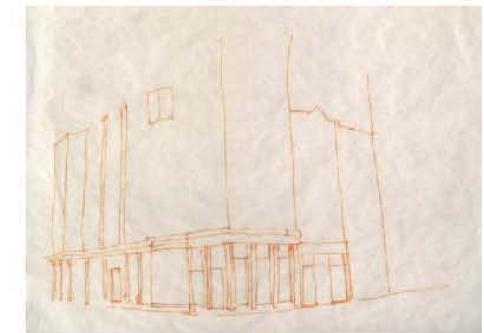
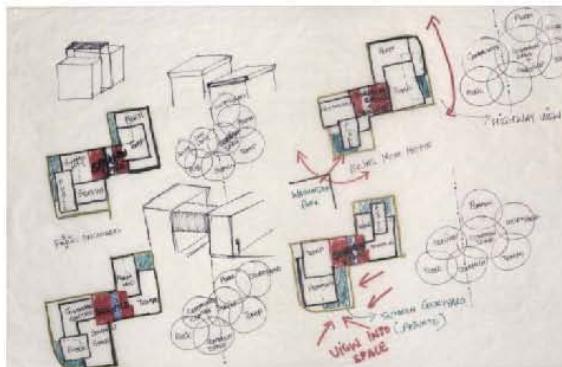
SITE MASSING AND ITERATIONS



DESIGN PROCESS 1

EXISTING Drop-In CENTER

A) EMERGENCY SHELTER	B) HOUSING
AVERAGE = 200 M/W	TRANSITIONAL HOUSING - (24)
① Food / Dining	AVERAGE = 6-24 MONTHS
② DAY CARE SERVICE	PERMANENT HOUSING (56)
TOTAL AREA	③ ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
④ $100' \times 90' = 9000 \text{ sq ft}$	⑤ CHARITY
⑤ $27' \times 90' = 2020 \text{ sq ft}$	
⑥ $19' \times 90' = 1710 \text{ sq ft}$	
TOTAL = 13140 sq ft	



SITE MASTER PLANNING

FIRST FLOOR PLAN



LESS SHELTER

IDEA OF SHARED SPACE



SENSE OF BELONGING



COMMUNITY



HELPING HAND

CONCEPTUAL IDEAS

CENTRAL PARK



SCPA



OUTDOOR PUBLIC SEATING



CENTRAL PARKWAY



HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD



PR

PRECEDENT IMAGES

FIRST FLOOR PLAN





VIEW OF THE COMMUNITY GARDEN AND PUBLIC PARK



VIEW OF THE LIBRARY



SEMI-PRIVATE READING ROOM

SECOND FLOOR PLAN



VIEW FROM THE BALCONY OVERLOOKING THE COMMUNITY GARDEN



GROUP DISCUSSION ROOM



THIRD FLOOR PLAN





FOURTH FLOOR PLAN



OVERLOOKING THE CAFE AND THE PUBLIC PARK





WEST ELEVATION

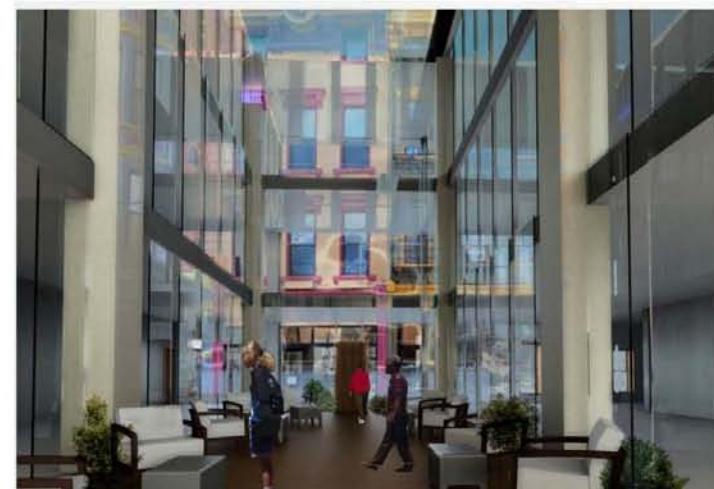


SITE MODEL

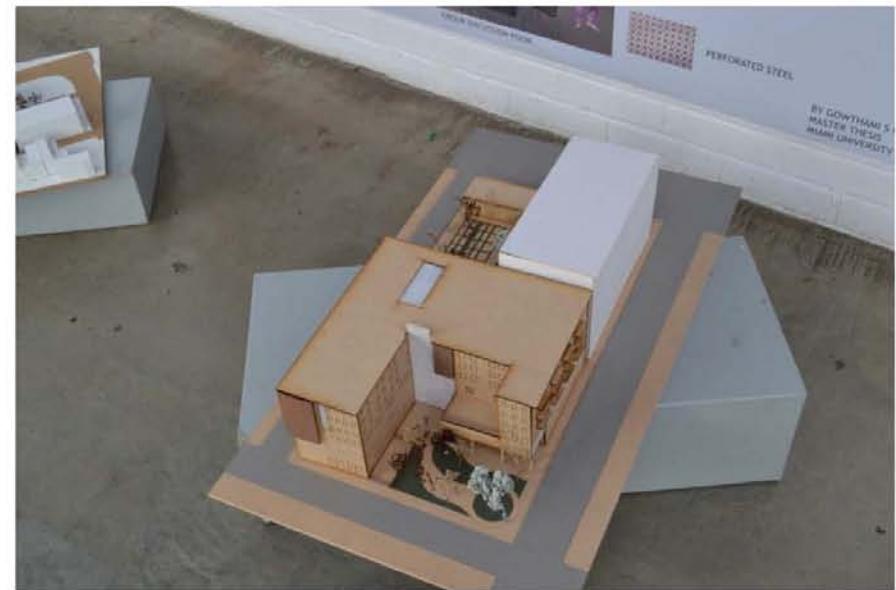


PROCESS MODELS

FIFTH FLOOR PLAN



MODEL PICTURES



SIXTH FLOOR PLAN



VIEW OF THE LEISURE ENTERTAINMENT SPACE



PERSONAL SPACE WITHIN THE SHARED UNITS

PRESENTATION



"YOU SHOULD SUBMIT YOUR
PROJECT TO THE CITY"

