AN EXPLORATION OF ARCHITECTURAL SOLUTIONS TO

THE MARGINALIZATION OF THE HOMELESS

by

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It is estimated that at least two percent of the world's total population is homeless (Chamie, 2017) affecting up to 560,000 Americans on any given night in 2019 (HUD). Many of the strategies implemented by the United States, as well as globally fail to address the root of the problem. Many current solutions also fail to serve the unhoused in ways that are psychologically proven to improve one's ability to find and keep housing (Pable, 2018). Instead of dealing with the societal impacts that lead to higher rates of homelessness such as access to education, poverty, and opportunity, many solutions for homelessness implement "hostile architecture" like uncomfortable benches or spikes placed in an effort to keep someone from sleeping or resting in one area, or other tactics that focus on pushing the homeless out of public spaces and thereby further marginalize them. Through this thesis I aim to demonstrate the shortcomings of anti-homeless architecture and compile an outline of architectural solutions that can include and integrate the homeless into public spaces and buildings, using existing research and case study buildings to form a list of my own design criteria.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Introduction:

In 2019, according to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, approximately 567,715 people experienced homelessness on any single night in the United States (HUD, 2019). There are many ways in which various organizations are working to mitigate this problem; however, many techniques do not actually address the root of the issue and simply push unhoused people out of sight from so-called public spaces. This practice of excluding "unwanted" people such as the homeless or youths from public spaces is often referred to as "hostile architecture", "defensive urban architecture", or "excluding architecture" (De Fine Licht, 2017). Examples of hostile architecture include park benches that are designed to prevent someone from laying down and spikes placed in areas where panhandling or sleeping is common.

Instead of reintegrating the homeless into society, hostile architecture serves as a dehumanizing tool used to keep the homeless from seeking refuge in public spaces. Hostile architecture limits sleeping areas, which often leads to certain areas of a city having highly concentrated homeless populations and becoming seen as "undesirable" or "dangerous" areas to the general public. One of the most notable examples of this is Los Angeles's Skid Row (Cimino, 2018). According to Steve Cimino in an article written for the AIA on homelessness in Los Angeles, the diverse city poses a unique challenge as its warm weather and concentration of resources for the homeless within one area causes the homeless population in skid row to multiply yearly. The area is nearly bursting at the seams stretching its existing resources thin. Additionally, because of increased real estate costs in LA, it is more expensive to develop architectural

projects leading architects to propose buildings based on simple models that already exist, minimizing their experimentation in design. Due to these costs, more corporate firms which are often less design oriented, are typically given design bids, and base their designs on what already exists instead of setting out and finding the best solution to the problem at hand, leading to mundane unenjoyable spaces for the homeless.

Many studies, including one conducted by interior design and architecture professor Jill Pable have shown that a sense of community and ownership of space can improve a person's ability to assert control over their own future. Just as various architectural features can impact productivity in an office environment, the features of homeless shelters can also improve or harm the user's ability to find permanent housing. The design of many homeless shelters is often unwelcoming, thoughtless, and harsh. Homeless shelters with sterile corridors, poor lighting, and often dirty conditions can lead people to choose to stay on the streets or feel as if no one cares for them. Simple effort put into personalization like thoughtful paint colors, enjoyable lighting conditions, and useful signage can give the impression that someone does care about the conditions of places in which unhoused people seek refuge (Pable, 2018). As seen below in Figure 1, Jill Pable clearly demonstrates with these photos the big difference that can be made simply by considering texture and color of spaces as well as wider hallways and more consideration of light quality within homeless shelters, leading to a more thoughtful and pleasant space.
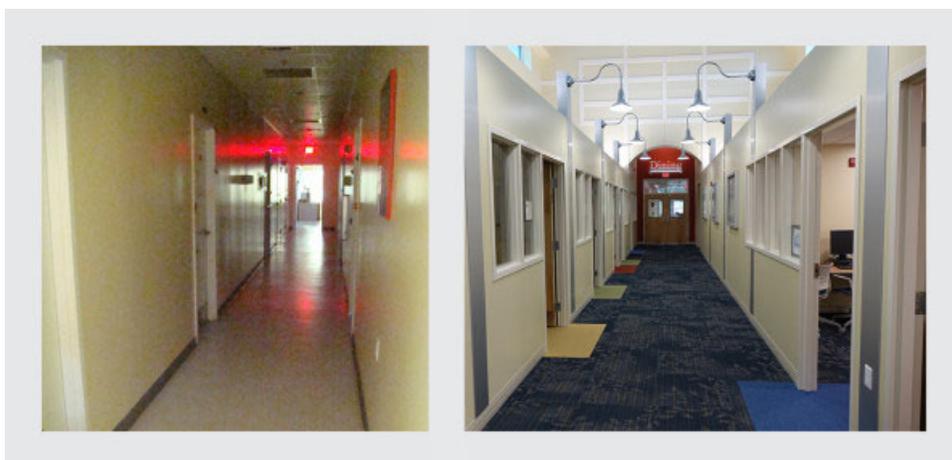
Figure 1: Two homeless shelter hallways

(Courtesy Jill Pable)

Through this thesis I aim to analyze a variety of spaces utilized by the homeless, looking at their successes and shortcomings, as well as ways that these design techniques could be applied to public spaces utilized by the homeless in order to integrate them into their communities, rather than further alienating them from the general public. I will review psychological studies conducted on environmental impact on the unhoused, examine three case study buildings which exemplify thoughtful design for the homeless, and synthesize techniques that could be utilized in more public spaces with a presence of homelessness.

I would like to recognize however, that this research and its outcomes are yet another Band-Aid on a much larger systemic issue. Architecture and design alone will not solve this problem. However, I believe that in noting design solutions that may make someone's day a little easier, or feel as though they are still cared about, is an improvement that can be made, within the current system. The United States current handling of the issue of homelessness simply continues to ostracize the unhoused, leaving them concentrated in camps in Skid Row's across America. Thoughtless shelter

3

design, as well as strict and demanding terms of seeking shelter leave many choosing to remain on the streets. This thesis will provide a series of successful design strategies that could be applied to spaces for the homeless in order to give the unhoused a sense of belonging and purpose within their communities.

History of Public Space and Homelessness

Homelessness is not a new issue, but one that is continually swept under the rug and pushed out of view of the general public. Instead of providing solutions that aim to relieve the causes of homelessness, many solutions simply drive the homeless out of sight, and in many politicians' way of thinking, out of mind. To gain a deeper understanding of the issue of homelessness and its relation to public space, it is necessary to look at the history of homelessness, as well as attempted solutions overtime, which can give some insight into potential solutions that could ease and/or solve the ever-growing issue.

Don Mitchell, a professor of geography and the environment, specializes in the makeups of environments shaped by people, with a focus on how marginalized groups of people can shape those environments. For this history section I utilized one of his more recent works "Mean Streets" as reference, which is focused on how the unhoused are seen within the city scape, to analyze social and societal impacts overtime that led to a rise in homeless populations. Mitchell goes into detail on the history of the unhoused and public space, looking into other societal factors that impacted the general public's perception of the homeless. According to Mitchell, during World War Two, industrial work began a shift from being focused within city centers to the suburbs and surrounding areas, where taxes, wages, and unionization were lower. The federal government was encouraging this shift by subsidizing suburban housing development and constructing interstate highway systems. As early as the 1950's, this shift left the city centers somewhat hollowed out paving the way for more Downtown office spaces. Federal and State funding then began to encourage the mass clearing of entire

downtown districts, known as bulldozer development or slum clearance, and these areas were redeveloped with high end projects like skyscrapers, public housing projects, sports stadiums, and expressways. This led to a restructuring of American life, as people began to move outside the city centers and now commuted into the city for work and public events.

According to Mitchell, in the late 1950s, scholars began to question the constitutional legitimacy of targeting the poor, alcoholics, drug addicts, and others because of their status instead of targeting specific behaviors (Mitchell, 2020). This led the supreme court to eventually repeal vagrancy laws in 1972 because they were too broad and left police with too much discretion. 'Move along' policing, which was a tactic heavily utilized in the 1960s in an attempt to keep homeless populations concentrated in one neighborhood or area (Skid Row and other similar places for example), became more severe in business cores of the city and wealthier residential neighborhoods. As societal perceptions of homelessness and money shifted, cities aimed to promote more inward investment and development. This repealing of vagrancy laws by the supreme court made it more difficult for police to use move along tactics simply because they came across a homeless person in an area outside of Skid Row. At the same time as laws were shifting, there was a large-scale restructuring and deindustrialization of the American economy, which accompanied the global economic crisis of the early 1970s. This left millions without work, some permanently, and it disproportionately affected Blacks and other people of color, causing many to slip not just from the middle class but the working class as well. Poor white women, some working-age white men, and many black men and women of all ages then joined the

growing numbers of older white men of Skid Row. Skid Row was made up mostly of the deinstitutionalized mentally ill and many Vietnam War Veterans who were living on the streets and in other zones of the city (Mitchell, 2020).

Mitchell continues on to describe how the fiscal crises of the 1970's caused a near halt to the bulldozer redevelopment era, leaving some Skid Row single room occupancy hotels, dive bars, working-class neighborhoods, and some old industrial districts, still standing. Because of the financial setbacks, the development of business districts in downtown began to stop as well. By the time funding became available again, patterns of investment had shifted and although many were not expecting the reinvestment of government funds in cities, the government returned industrial capital to inner cities and encouraged the reuse of urban spaces, and in turn, their gentrification. This was intended to be a back to the city movement; however, instead of encouraging people back to the city, it encouraged a movement of real estate and capital wound up in investments, pensions, and trusts. This gentrification process assigned new value to lands such as Skid Row in the 70s, raising prices of devalued spaces to fill the gap between the current land value and the value that space would hold if it was built up to its highest potential (Mitchell, 2020).

Culturally and economically, the everyday citizens of working-class neighborhoods and Skid Row's across America were systematically forced out. Single resident occupancy (SRO) buildings were converted into apartments or boutique hotels, rooming houses into single or double-family homes, nicer restaurants moved in, and artists began occupying lofts. This new economic restructuring only continued to push more and more people into homelessness, as continual waves of gentrification efforts

7

raised prices on spaces where homelessness had once been tolerated, destroying opportunities for cheap housing, and respectively made homelessness even more visible in public spaces of the city. This phenomenon exposed all the areas of the city that politicians were trying to disguise. By raising prices of housing in lower income areas city officials forced many out onto the very streets they were trying to revitalize, in turn making homelessness and poverty even more visible than it had been before (Mitchell, 2020).

The issue of homelessness grew in the late 1970s and peaked in the early 1980s. At first authorities tried to frame the issue as temporary, hoping as long as the unusually high numbers of homeless people were seen as a temporary problem that it could be blamed on poor mental health, bad habits, and the poor coping skills of those it directly affected. However, by the early 80s it was clear this was not a temporary issue; it was a full-blown crisis (Hopper, 2014).

The first effort to manage visible homelessness was to create shelter. In 1987 Congress passed the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, which provided 800 million dollars in assistance funds to states and cities in order to establish and support charities that ran transitional housing programs and preserve some of the limited stock left of SROs. However, it was quickly found that it did very little to address any of the root causes of homelessness and failed to make much of a dent in the visible presence of homeless people in public spaces across America (Mitchell, 2020). In fact, by the end of the 1980s a condition known as compassion fatigue, which describes the physical and emotional toll on a person helping others through stress or trauma (APA), was settling in, as people began to realize that adding to the stock of

emergency housing was doing little to aid in the homeless crisis. Simply providing emergency shelter did not address the personal issues that can be the root of a person's homelessness. Soon, many shelter and assistance programs required individuals to participate in sobriety, job searching, mental health services, and financial literacy programs making it seem as though housing was no longer a human right, but a reward for seeking approval and making oneself 'properly worthy' of housing and financial help (Mitchell, 2020).

Once authorities realized that vagrancy laws were becoming unenforceable, cities began testing out new methods of exercising their control over the unhoused. If cities could no longer use 'move-along' policing, authorities in turn aimed to make it more difficult or even impossible for them to even stop anywhere. Cities began implementing curfews in parks, and there was a rise in the usage of anti-homeless architecture, such as subdivided metal benches making it impossible for anyone to lie down on, and ledges and areas under building overhangs were outfitted with spikes, once again making it impossible for someone to lie down (Mitchell, 2020).

Within newly redeveloped city centers, officials began new legal systems that promoted 'quality of life' in protecting public space by prohibiting specific behaviors associated with homelessness such as begging near busy streets or businesses, seeking to perform tasks for drivers, sitting or lying on sidewalks, and sleeping in public. These laws were often marketed to the public as regarding concerns for traffic flow and pedestrian efficiency. British-Canadian legal geographer, Nicholas Blomley described these laws in the ways that city engineers understand the issue of the homeless sitting or lying on the sidewalk as other traffic impediments such as sidewalk displays, café

tables, newspaper stands, streetlights, and bus shelters. Which are all highly regulated and require permitting and city code compliance (Mitchell, 2020). This way of thinking dehumanizes the unhoused, comparing them to inanimate objects as mere obstructions in someone's path, once again demonstrating that having a place to sit or sleep is not thought of as basic a human right. Sadly, however, many in power see the homeless in this way and use tactics to vilify and dehumanize the homeless to justify pushing them out of cities and out of sight. Over time various attempts at punishing people simply for being poor have failed. The first anti-sleeping ordinances failed as they were almost always selectively enforced, and people cannot be kept from sleeping. Early bans on begging were unsuccessful as it was protected under the First Amendment protecting free speech, so it was in turn regulated specifying "'time place and manner' of begging" (Mitchell, 2020). In turn, many cities are now testing government sanctioned encampments, often located outside of city centers away from the general public, instead of emergency shelters. However, many of these function almost as a quarantine on the homeless once again pushing them out of sight and, to politicians, hopefully out of mind to the general public (Mitchell, 2020).

Throughout recent American history we see a pattern of disregard for the homeless, and growing concern for the circulation of capital, often ironically pushing low-income people from living in homes in poor areas of a city to forcing them straight onto the streets, in turn making them more visible to the public. This rise in visible homelessness was then met with more unsuccessful regulation, simply keeping the homeless moving along without one area to settle in, instead of solving any of the systemic issues that cause homelessness. With this research through an analysis of case

study buildings and interior design techniques, I hope to identify strategies in which the unhoused can be welcomed into public space, without making an area more undesirable to the general public. We, as designers, must also strive to attain solutions that prioritize the dignity of the unhoused members of our communities, as housing should be a human right and these considerations are often overlooked when designing for vulnerable populations.

Anti-homeless Architecture

Hostile architecture is the design of public space in a way that is intended to stop unwanted behaviors in public spaces such as lying down, loitering, or skateboarding. (Cambridge Dictionary). Common examples include spikes placed in covered areas where the unhoused may seek shelter, arm rests or unique shapes of benches that prevent any activity other than sitting, and spikes or other metal devices placed on ledges to deter skateboarders. Figures two through four below show a few examples of hostile architecture within the built environment. There is a spectrum of anti-homeless architecture that ranges from more covert tactics like a bench seat being curved instead of flat so that no one could lie down and sleep on it, to more aggressive tactics like metal spikes. Hostile architecture is generally designed in a way that it is not noticeable to the general public, if they are unaware of tactics that may be utilized. For example, if you sat on an odd shaped bench, or one with arm rests in the middle you may think of it as an interesting design feature or a convenient rest for your arm, as you don't have to worry about finding a semi-comfortable place to lie down to sleep. A more covert example is building awnings that are designed to have a gap between the edge of the building and the covered area so that if someone decides to rest against the building they would not be sheltered from the elements. The biggest issue with the use of hostile architecture is that it fails to treat any of the causes of homelessness and additionally makes the unhoused feel unwelcome in public space. We live in a world where authorities are reactive, not proactive to the issue of housing (Petty, 2016).

Figure 2: Anti-Homeless Spikes

Spikes placed under a covered area where the unhoused may seek shelter. (Photo courtesy Andrew Horton)

Figure 3: Curved Bench

Curved bench that looks like it took an interesting design perspective, but it would also prevent someone from being able to lay down or rest. (Photo courtesy Andrew Fraieli)

Figure 4: Spiked railing

Pointed metal and railing have been added to a brick ledge to prevent someone from sitting or resting, as well as skateboarding. (Photo courtesy George Etheredge for the New York Times)

Many scholars including Don Mitchell (2020) argue that by continuing the use of tactics such as anti-homeless architecture, we are simply pushing our society to become a sort of suburb, where security is prioritized over having diversity within public space. Tactics of hostile architecture are designed to prevent unwanted behaviors within public spaces that officials deem undesirable. Essentially the goal is to create a public composed of only people and activities which are considered desirable by a select few officials creating these laws, or the private owners of public spaces. Another example of this is the "gated community" in which a gate and usually a security team keep unwanted people out, once again creating a select group that fits into that community's ideals and leaves others excluded (Bader, 2020).

Author Karl de Fine Licht argues that anti-homeless architecture can have detrimental effects on those worst off in our society, and overall, still has no positive

effects on most other people. Additionally, even in the rare cases that hostile architecture has positive effects for some, the negative still greatly outweigh (De Fine Licht, 2017). De Fine Licht discusses weighing both the positive and negative effects of hostile architecture, for example the use of defensive architecture at bus stops prevents one disadvantaged group, the homeless, from sleeping at that bus stop, however it in turn makes generally the lower income people who use public transportation feel safer. De Fine Licht continues, that there is a larger group of these low-income people utilizing public transport, so in this particular case the use of defensive architecture may outweigh its negative effects. The other consideration that must be made is if we then should consider the worst-off group of people with more weight than those who have secure housing, as De Fine Licht's previous argument does not take into consideration if those unhoused people have other relatively safe options for sleeping or not. De Fine Licht's points demonstrate the complexity of arguments for and against defensive architecture. It could be argued that parks becoming overrun with the unhoused could have a negative impact on the larger population of more well-off people, as it would limit their ability to get outdoors, which has been proven to have various health and wellness benefits. However, as a society we must decide whether the priorities of the many should outweigh the needs of the most disadvantaged of our society (De Fine Licht, 2017).

Public spaces are currently often organized and designed in ways to limit the public's interactions with "undesirable" activities such as visible homelessness. Many experts on the topic, such as architect and developer James Petty, argue that a public space that is truly open to all has never existed. Studies have shown that a sense of

community and contributing to society can improve individuals' abilities to secure permanent housing (Pable, 2018). Public space is a forum in which members can contribute and serve as a means for expressing their own identity. Because of the incredibly diverse nature of "the public", public space becomes the meeting place of different and conflicting ideals and lifestyles, shaping the environmental fabric of any given public space. This creates an interesting dichotomy between public spaces that serve all members of the public, making some members uncomfortable, or public spaces that exclude certain groups of people and activities to create a space that is deemed safe for "the public". It is for the sake of "the public" that access to public spaces is limited and that spaces may become hostile against certain groups of people to encourage specific activities and discourage or completely remove others. In turn public spaces have been shaped based on an idealized version of "the public" that fears crime and homelessness. Exclusionary tactics such as hostile architecture are then implemented on behalf of the public and are presented as necessary to fend off disorder, deviant behaviors, and the potential for crime to occur. (Petty, 2016)

One reason that this argument is so difficult to define is that there is no solid line in which defensive architecture is morally wrong. There are two sides to most arguments in these cases, and it's fairly subjective depending on who is making the argument. Based on my research throughout this essay, my view is that while hostile architecture may temporarily keep the unhoused out of one area or from performing certain behaviors, they will still be unhoused at the end of the day and most likely will still be performing those acts simply in a different location. Anti-homeless architecture does not do anything to aid the causes of homelessness, but rather acts as an extension

16

of move along policing of the past, shuffling the unhoused from one area to the next. While socially and societally there has never been public space truly created for all, it is the concept of public space that it should be intended for all to use. From an architectural perspective, public spaces should be designed in ways that allow all varieties of people to use and enjoy the space without ostracizing one group of people from another.

Discussion of Existing Design Solutions:

In 2018 Jill Pable, professor of Interior design and Architecture at Florida State University conducted a study of two, three-member families consisting of a single mother and two children with similar circumstances to their homelessness. Both families stayed in a standard unit in the same homeless shelter for two months, at which point one of the families was moved to a unit with a few simple upgrades provided by her team. These upgrades included a shelf for displaying personal belongings or photographs, storage for some of the family's belongings, and privacy curtains around each bunk in the room. The original room was described as "crowded" and "claustrophobic" by the mother who remained in the standard unit for the duration of the three-month study. The mother who had been moved to the upgraded unit also described her feelings while in the first unit as "aggravated" and "frustrated". While the children of the family that remained in the initial unit often spent more time apart in other spaces like the building's computer lab, the family in the upgraded room spent more time together, the two children even reading to each other in their bunks. Overall, the family in the upgraded unit seemed to be getting along better than the other family. Simple upgrades like the shelf for photos and the privacy curtains allowed the members of the family their own personal spaces as well to claim ownership of the room by customizing it with their own belongings. While looking at an interior level, the study demonstrates that simple design adjustments that considered privacy and customization of space improved the user's overall experiences (Pable, 2018).

The "housing-first" model of ending homelessness, was developed by psychologist Sam Tsemberis. His conclusion was that simply giving homeless people permanent housing was the best method of ensuring they stay off the streets (Padgett, 2016). This model has been considered the best method to combating homelessness as he found it costs taxpayers at least 40 percent less to give homeless people a permanent roof over their heads than covering potential costs associated with homelessness, such as jail time, emergency room visits and short-term shelter (Gellar, 2015).

Design Resources for Homelessness is a non-profit organization that utilizes a housing-first approach to buildings that take the extra step of considering basic personal needs that can improve the homeless' chances of moving on to permanent housing. The site has resources for designers concerning trauma-informed design, an advocacy organization database with resources to enhance a building's programmatic functions, and a database of projects and architects that exemplify their principles for serving the homeless. The site also provides case study analysis of homeless shelters with occupant interviews and descriptions of the successes of a few built examples. Some techniques the organization suggests are providing social spaces so that residents of the building begin to feel safety and a sense of community within the building. Common themes among some of the case studies are thoroughly designed spaces, with considerations of paint and texture, as well as subtly addressing concerns of security and visibility with open sight lines to management offices and open spaces. Their comprehensive case studies include goals of the project, features of the building, lessons learned, and details of the facilities and their upkeep. This list is intended to provide resources to designers who wish to consider the unique needs of the homeless and enable planners and

designers to create a more sustainable system of rehousing them into meaningful buildings that can improve their quality of life and ability to later find permanent housing.

I will be utilizing Design Resources for Homelessness' database of projects to pull two examples of case study buildings designed as temporary and permanent shelter options to the homeless as reference considering small upgrades and considerations made during the design process that improved users' enjoyment of the space, as seen through building user and administration testimony. While they do not have any examples of public spaces designed for the homeless, the lessons learned in these projects can inform designers of techniques that lead to more enjoyable spaces for the unhoused. To fill the gap of public space design for the homeless, I will also be analyzing The Hospitality Hub Day Plaza, a proposed project that utilizes some of the same techniques to welcome both housed and unhoused members of the public into a public plaza adjacent to their homeless shelter, to begin grappling with stigmas surrounding the unhoused within public space, as well as increase their community outreach.

Case Studies:

Figure 2: Bakhita Gardens,

Designed by Environmental Works Community Design Center, located in Seattle Washington. (Photo Courtesy Environmental Works Community Design Center)

Bakhita Gardens is a shelter that offers both transitional and permanent housing to single adult homeless women. The building houses two separate services; the Noel House Permanent housing, and Rose of Lima where women can pay 30% of their income for temporary housing. Both programs are managed by Catholic Housing Services, and run by program director Eileen McComb. Rose of Lima houses 50 SROs with a one year stay, and the Noel House contains beds for 20 people with one year occupancy and 20 permanent housing units. The building also houses services such as street level retail, a library, computer lab, laundry, nurse/exam room, and a food bank. Resident amenities include an outdoor patio, personal mailboxes, case manager offices, and client cooking areas.

The building was designed with input from both residents and administrators, with a goal to serve women who have been unhoused for an extended period of time within a dense urban environment. Its designers considered the cloudy Seattle weather common throughout much of the year and the building provides high ceilings with large windows. This was in part because the shelter located on-site previously had been a dark and dreary location underneath a parking garage. Much of the new building's design successes are clear, in contrast to the previous building's design which made users feel as though they were discarded from society. The Bakhita Gardens features a main entrance with street frontage similar to any other apartment complex in the area, a sizeable upgrade from the hidden-away alley entrance for the previous building. Bill Singer the project architect stated, "These women have been marginalized for much of their lives, so creating a welcoming entrance is important." (Design Resources for homelessness) Singer continued on to explain that the intention with providing a significant entrance was to allow residents the feeling of returning to their own home and space. To further this goal, the lobby features many of the building's public functions, such as seating and mailboxes, in addition the media room and library offer sightlines directly to the reception desk allowing an added sense of security to residents and staff.

The second floor is home to the Noel House, which provides 40 individual living cubicles with one half providing housing for up to a year and the other half more permanent supportive living. These residential quarters were designed with the help of a focus group of female residents. In this focus group, they found that sleeping in isolation returned many of the women to thoughts of sleeping on the streets however,

they found it difficult to live in a fully open dorm system. The women "wanted a sense of community with congregate space but also the ability for you to hear your neighbor breathe and move around but not see them." (Design Resources for homelessness). In the end the design team went with partial-wall cubicles to allow the right balance of both connectivity and openness with a sense of personal privacy.

Figure 3: New Genesis Apartments

Designed by Killefer Flammang Architects, located in Los Angeles, California. (Photo courtesy Skid Row Housing Trust)

The New Genesis Apartments supply 106 permanent supportive housing units consisting of 98 studios and 8 one-bedroom apartments. The building is intended for a range of lifestyles; 75% of units are reserved for those experiencing homelessness along with chronic medical conditions and the rest of the units are for low-income households. This project is located in LA's Skid Row, and is run by the Skid Row Housing Trust, by chief executive officer Mike Alvidrez. The building features amenities and services

such as a community kitchen and lounge area, multiple outdoor community spaces, case management offices, medical consultations, and laundry services.

Skid Row Housing Trust has over 30 years of experience serving people in search of stable lifestyles who have also experienced homelessness and extreme poverty, in addition to physical and mental health, disability, and addictions. The organization has long been involved in large-scale city-wide problems of homeless populations rapidly increasing, politics, regulations, and funding challenges, and it has grown and adjusted to fit needs of the unhoused. Their more recent projects show a more assertive direction that aims to "integrate their formerly homeless residents with both their apartment neighbors and the broader fabric of the city, and without apology." (Design Resources for Homelessness 4).

This project, like the goals of the Bakhita apartments in Seattle, aims to view the unhoused as more than a subset of the population, and integrate them into other walks of public life. The design team at Killefer Flammang Architects worked with leaders of the Skid Row Housing Trust as well as residents, to discuss goals of the project as well as conditions to avoid. They determined they wanted a space that in no way emulated clinical spaces such as courthouses and mental service facilities, places that most residents would want to avoid. Other ideas the focus group came up with were ideas of safety, creating a space where users could engage with the rest of the world, as well as a sanctuary space where people would feel comfortable entertaining and connecting with family and friends. Alvidrez CEO of Skid Row Housing trust explained; "The realization from this exercise was that architecture and interior design is a language that can either say 'we don't care about you or how you feel about the experience of being

in this place', or something more positive" (Design Resources for the Homeless 5). The CEO of Skid Row Housing Trust noted that many existing housing options for the unhoused were in mundane buildings that sought to blend in with their surroundings in order to not draw attention to the services for the unhoused within their buildings. With the New Genesis apartments, they sought to design a space that did not necessarily stand out but, would not blend in and give residents that clinical feeling either. As their client base is extremely diverse ranging from families to single adults, veterans, victims of domestic violence, and persons with chronic illness, Skid Row Housing Trust uses a screening system to match residents needs with the most accommodating building for them. This screening helps make sure that residents are getting the services they need, minimizing evictions and disruptions between residents. To diversify the building and give a nod to the neighborhoods rich and artful history, a handful of top floor loft apartments are reserved for artists. Overall, the building aims to provide safe and welcoming housing, with subtle clinical support functions to accommodate previous traumas of residents as well as their current needs.

Figure 4: Hospitality Hub

Additions in progress designed by A2H Engineers Architects Planners, in Memphis Tennessee (photo Courtesy A2H Engineers Architects Planners)

Hospitality Hub is a building that houses a team of caseworkers and volunteers to serve the unhoused populations of Memphis. The Hub currently serves as a space for the unhoused to seek resources and "begin their journey out of homelessness" (Nonko, 2019), with planned additions of an adjacent women's shelter as well as an outdoor space that could serve both the unhoused and the general public. Their executive director, Kelcey Johnson, noted that homeless shelters are generally boring and unattractive buildings. She explained that Hospitality Hub "didn't want to bring a beautiful service to the community, but have it look ugly" (Nonko, 2019). They worked with a team of local artists, architects, and builders to build a space that could provide their services while respecting the surrounding public space. The design of the public plaza was thought of as a space the general public could use, but also a welcoming space for unhoused individuals where the Hub can work on providing more outreach. This case study primarily focuses on their outdoor plaza design as it is one of few

projects that were intended to welcome both unhoused and housed members of the public. Their goals for the plaza were to provide a sense of security and comfort to the homeless who utilize it as a resting or sleeping area, as well to make them feel integrated within a community. The Hub estimated that 96% of Memphis' newly homeless come to their facilities for assessment, and in 2018 they saw nearly 1,600 clients.

As homelessness is a highly stigmatized issue, the team developing the plaza wanted it to invite the homeless in while remaining a "good neighbor" to the rest of the community, said Johnson. The team also wanted to provide necessities for the unhoused that are often criminalized in other spaces like areas to sit or lay down, charge their phones, and use public restrooms, as using parks or libraries for these things is often seen as a last resort, because the unhoused do not feel welcome in those spaces. To work on integrating the community, the building's final design features various degrees of prospect and refuge, and incorporate fire pits, grills, community benches, and shading structures. The plaza also includes a stage, community garden, tables and space for food trucks and pop-up shops. Another priority of the design team was to allow for a sense of privacy around the plaza without building a wall. Local Memphis artist Tylur French landed on a solution of colorful wall art that integrated private spaces where someone could lie down and rest. French plans to utilize eight-foot-long concrete pipes into a system of bunks with enough space to walk in, keep a few belongings, and have a place to lay down out of the elements. The thickness of the concrete, 6 inches, is also being utilized as a technique to somewhat moderate temperature, keeping the tubes cool

during warm summer days, and a bit warmer on cold winter nights. The side of the bunks that face the street will feature colorful concentric circles designed as public art.

There will be open, clear sight lines from the Hospitality Hub's new headquarters to the outdoor space to provide a sense of safety, and the women's shelter will have secure entry to provide an extra sense of security to longer term residents. Once the new headquarters are developed, the hub hopes that the proximity of a safe outdoor space for the homeless, will allow case workers easier access to those in need who are utilizing the outdoor space for shelter, thereby encouraging more people to begin their journey out of homelessness.

Techniques to be utilized in design for the homeless within public space:

While interior design techniques don't always directly translate to the design of public space, I believe that the principals learned from them can, in most cases be applied. I am compiling this list of design strategies for public outdoor space as a place to welcome the unhoused, rather than further lowering their morale and pushing them outside of city centers. While it's been shown that ultimately providing permanent housing to the unhoused is the most efficient method of ending homelessness, we still face the reality of the current system of monitoring homelessness. With this thesis, I wanted to provide strategies that could be implemented given the current social climate and public perceptions of homelessness. Considering that anti-homeless design may still be implemented in privately owned public space, designers and developers that possess the personal views of considering the unhoused in their design, may implement these simple upgrades within public space to provide pockets within cities that welcome and consider the unhoused. The ideal solution to homelessness would be to provide support systems for people suffering from mental illness, disability, and addiction aiming to keep them off the streets and provide housing as a basic human right. However, the system we are currently working within fails to do so, so providing these basic features may be a small step in working towards those overall goals in the meantime.

1. Adjacency to Services for the Unhoused

    I believe the goals of Hospitality Hub most clearly demonstrate this technique, as the designers for the project carefully considered a

beautifully designed space that the unhoused can utilize to meet their

basic necessities, while the space still creates an art display for

community members to enjoy as well as other functions like space for

food trucks and performances that would invite other members of the

community in to enjoy the space.

2. Thoughtful Design Considerations

Consideration of elements in the design of public spaces for the

homeless such as paint colors, textures, and further functionality of the

space were key factors in the planning of all three case studies above.

These design elements add to the experience an unhoused user could

have as well as negating the effect of anti-homeless architecture, which

often leave unhoused members of the community feeling overlooked or

as if they don't matter. Even small considerations, like designing a space

that would not remind most users of past trauma in clinical spaces, as

exemplified in the New Genesis Apartments, makes a large difference in

people's decision to seek shelter in those places, and may contribute to

their willingness to continue their journey working towards permanent

housing.

3. Create Spaces to Accommodate a Variety of Interactions

As in the architectural design of any space there should be a

consideration of spaces for both prospect and refuge, where users may

decide for themselves the level of vulnerability that they will have within

a space. Allowing the unhoused the dignity of this decision within public

space, also allows them spaces of refuge where housed or higher income members of society may be less confronted with the sight of the unhoused. Additionally, as seen in the Hospitality Hub, creating areas where members of the general public may also participate in activities like resting on a bench, barbequing, enjoying food carts, and the public art displays created by the more private housing cubicles encourages the engagement of more user groups within the space. Users may each individually choose which activities they participate in and to what degree they're engaged with the public, allowing for a wider variety of users to ideally enjoy the space.

4. Open Sight Lines for Security

    As seen in the design in many homeless shelters as well as the Hospitality Hub Plaza, open sight lines to some sort of authority not only provide the unhoused an extra sense of security, but could also invite members of the public to engage with those spaces more as they would also feel the added security of visibility.

5. Space for Personal Storage

    As seen in the study conducted by Jill Pable, it was found that spaces for personal belongings increased users' feelings of belonging and ownership, which in turn has also been shown to increase the homeless persons' ability to find and maintain permanent housing (Pable, 2018). Opportunities for personal storage also serve as a detail left out of many designs for the homeless, so their inclusion would once again add to that

sense of belonging and care that shelter and public space should offer all members of the public.

6. Dignity in Design

As demonstrated in both the Bakhita Gardens and the New Genesis Apartments, there is a benefit to the user groups in designing spaces as if designing a standard apartment building, rather than seeking out to design a shelter that blends in or even hides itself from the general public, which once again leads the unhoused to feel discarded from society or overlooked and unwanted (Design Resources for Homelessness). Providing the unhoused with a sense of 'home' and dignified entrances and street access allows them to feel more integrated within their larger community and again, less overlooked.

7. Consider a space as Intended for the Entire Public Throughout the Design Process

Designing places purely for the general public, to the exclusion of the unhoused, or vice versa, only leads to further ostracization of the unhoused from general society. If as with the Hospitality Hub, designers aimed to create spaces that were intended to serve the unhoused but that anyone ultimately could enjoy, there's a higher likelihood that a larger user group would utilize the space.

Conclusion and Further Considerations

While architecture alone will also not solve the systemic issues that lead many to homelessness, I believe that smaller considerations made in public space design can aid in reintegrating the unhoused, to feeling as if they belong as a part of "the public". If I had further time, I would dig deeper into other techniques of design that are utilized for other vulnerable populations such as the elderly or mentally ill, as more design research has been done for these populations, and there is an overlap of these other vulnerable populations who also experience homelessness. Another facet that would be interesting to look further into, would be an analysis of crime rates and perceived danger near homeless encampments to determine whether they pose a real or perceived threat to other members of the community. Overall, this thesis aims to make a step in conveying the larger psychological improvements that can be made for unhoused populations, simply if designers could consider the dignity of the unhoused throughout their design process.

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