

# INTRODUCTION

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, psyche is defined as the soul, mind, or personality of a person or group (Hacker). I am researching the homeless population to better understand their psyche. I believe that If I can find what guides their decisions I can design a homeless shelter tailored to their needs and an environment that will help them get back to a better way of life. Homelessness is defined as having no home or permanent place of residence, but it means so much more than that. In Julie Beck's *The Psychology of Home*, she describes what a home means to people as this, "For many people, their home is part of their self-definition, which is why we decorate our houses and take care of our lawns" (Beck, 1). Without a home, it is hard for people to express themselves and set themselves apart from the rest of the world. When people lose their home, they lose their identity. By helping the homeless find a better way of life through a shelter, they can regain their identity and pursue a better life.

The philosophical framework of this research is based on abductive logic and derives from post-positivism, because it observes a problem then sets out to find an explanation but realizes that the findings are based on a personal bias. In this study, interviews are conducted with homeless people to ask questions relating to what they have lost, and what things they need in their environment that will help them get back into a better way of life. Each person may have a different opinion about what that is. That is why it is important to interview as many people as possible to find all the needs and wants of the homeless.

This problem highlights some of the ontological aspects of this project. Not everyone views the world in the same way. We all need different things in our lives and have different opinions on how the world should work. This study will identify all these different opinions and create an integrative template to document these thoughts. This study is capturing the knowledge that has been created through time and experience. This knowledge will be documented by conducting interviews then creating design vignettes that show how this information can be applied. These vignettes will then be studied to show if they are applicable to everyday use in homeless housing.

The logic behind this study is abductive. It starts with the observation that people have different needs and wants and then sets out to find the reasons for this. We know there are different types of homeless people and this study will help to understand their psyche and find what being successful and happy means to them and how we can help them get to that state. With this project, I hope to find solutions to a large social issue that has been increasing in size. I want to inform designers and developers that we can't blanket this problem with one solution. By informing designers of the different needs of homeless people, we can build a system that works and will encourage people to live a better life.

# METHODOLOGY

I will combine strategies such as historical research and Qualitative research. It is important that I understand the past to see what has led to this point. It is apparent that the massive shut-down of government funded mental hospitals is what began the rise of homelessness, but I will need qualitative research to find the underlying reasons and opinions of today's homeless people to find a better solution. (possible Statistic of current mental health rates in the homeless population). To find the underlying reasons of homelessness I will be conducting interviews with multiple homeless people. I will select people that have been homeless for over a month, so I know that they have a good understanding of what it is like to be homeless. I will ask questions to better understand why they are homeless. I will also ask if they are willing to get better or if they want to receive the handouts and are okay with living in shelters. This is the part of the psyche I want to understand. I want to find the reasons why they are homeless. I will also be using historical research methods by reading books based on this topic. Homelessness is a relatively new problem. It didn't become a public concern until the Housing and Urban Development division of the government started taking a census of the homeless population in 1984 (The Homeless, 2). By reading about the history of the problem, I will be able to better understand how the problem started and how it has got so much worse in such a short period of time.

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## RESULTS

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**The client's stories were created through literature analysis and by interview people that are experiencing homelessness. Stories were then created based off of these the findings from these two process. Research was then done to determine the best ways to design for the different types of homelessness discovered.**

## CLIENTS

**2 Deborah - Single Adult Female**

**Age :** 25

**Story :** After high school, my boyfriend got a job offer that he couldn't refuse. We relocated together and I began working in a restaurant. Shortly after, I got pregnant. This is when my boyfriend began to change. He started to come home from work mad and take his anger out on me and would make me stay home instead of going out with friends. I stayed with him for the sake of our child, but his behavior started to get worse and eventually enough was enough. With no one to turn to, I ran away with my child. I tried to find work and a place to live, but I couldn't afford child care or anyone that would rent to a single mother with out a job history.

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**Psychological Needs :**

- Seeking companionship
- Needing a support system
- Curing anxiety about source of income
- Improving self sufficiency with job training
- Seeking permanent housing
- Wanting to trust again
- Seeking domestic abuse.
- Fear of losing her child

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**Architectural Responses :**

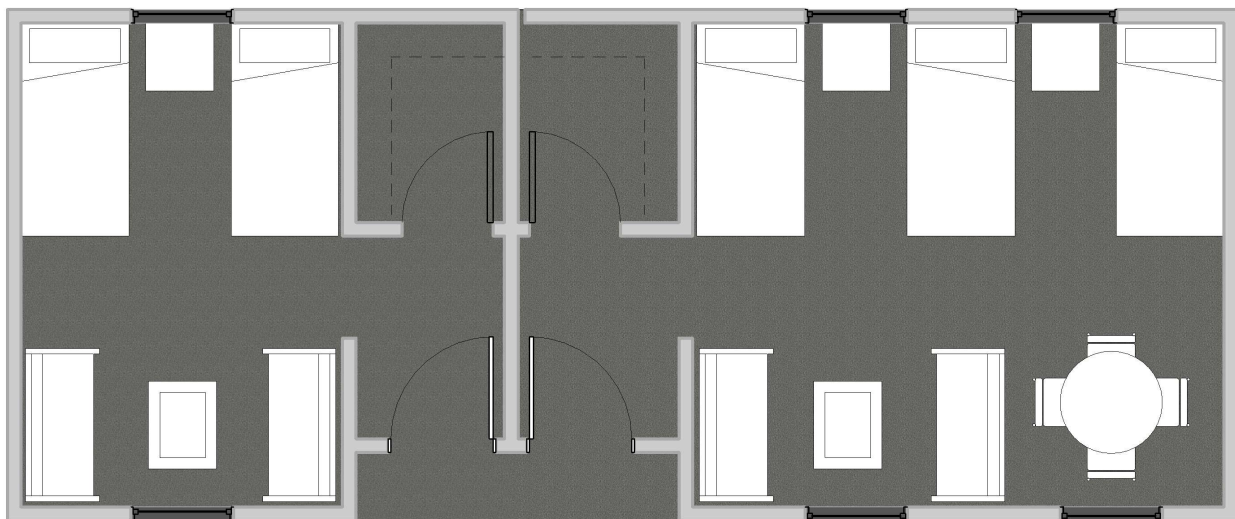
Domestic abuse alone is enough to make people scared to trust again, but the fear of losing a child on top of that can leave people feeling helpless. The design for Deborah will in-

clude a separate area for women and children. It will allow for mothers and their children to stay together and get the assistance that they need. The spaces will be private apartment-like dwellings. An individual case manager will be assigned to each family so they can form a close relationship with one authority figure at a time. This will help them to learn to trust again at a slow pace. The program will involve assistance in finding permanent housing, job training, and therapy. With this design, there will also be businesses along the ground floor that will allow users of the shelter to work and earn a wage while learning valuable skills.

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### Design Vignette :

These units are designed specifically for women and their children. They will be located in their own separate building. These units will have space for up to four beds in the unit. These units will give the families their own privacy to give them the chance to still be a family together. These units are able to be locked from the inside to give maximum security to the user. Users of these units will have to pay a small monthly fee to live in the unit, or work in one of the businesses within the shelter.



## CLIENTS



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**Charles** - Mentally Ill**Age** : 75

**Story** : After serving in Vietnam, I developed Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome. I began using drugs to cope with my situation. I was unable to hold a job or afford housing given my situation. I am now ashamed of my appearance and addiction that I resist outside help.

**Psychological States of Being :**

- Needing a support system
- Suffering from mental illness
- Impaired by addiction
- Fearful of being closed in
- Fear of personnel space being violat
- Self-conscious of hygiene and appearance

**Architectural Responses :**

Designing for mental illnesses is no easy task. A majority of the homeless population has a mental illness and it is important to create a design that reflects this. The design for Charles will use acoustic privacy and areas of refuge. It is important for people with PTSD to feel safe and secure in their environment. The areas of refuge will have low ceilings with warm colors to provide a sense of security. It has been shown that humans feel the safest in areas with dissipated light, warm colors surrounding us, and clear lines of site to surrounding areas. For sleeping, people that are suffering from mental illnesses will have their own private spaces. This will provided them with their own sa fe space. The overall design will have an open concept and be naturally light to help it feel open and inviting. The program will include addiction therapy, group therapy sessions, and rehabilitation. Group therapy sessions will be used to form relation-

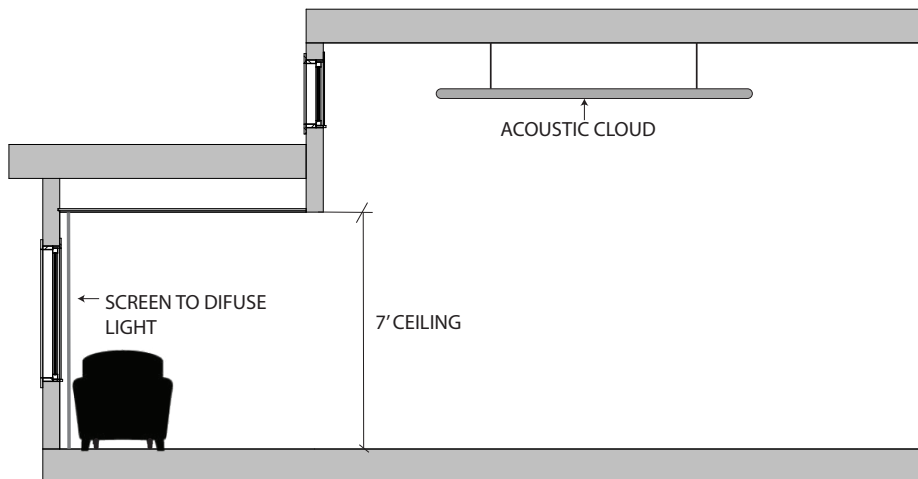


## RESEARCH REPORT

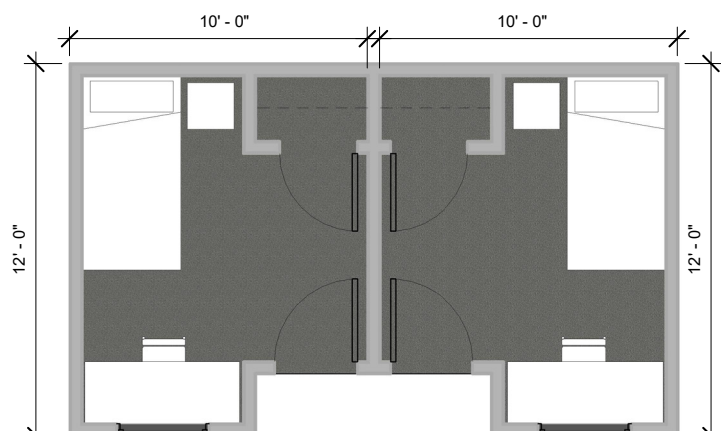
ships between the other users of the space and help to them form a support system amongst each other. There will also be space for users to receive the proper grooming and hygienic services.

### Design Vignette :

This design will include break out spaces with in the community spaces to give its users more privacy. These spaces will include acoustic panels for acoustic privacy and light screens to filter the light to create a better environment. People using these spaces will still be able to see what is going on in the community spaces, but will be able to be in their own private space. The ceilings will be set at seven feet to create an intimate feeling.



People that have sever mental illness can use the private rooms. This will allow them to escape to their own space when they need to. Although these rooms are lockable from the inside, staff will be able to enter the room if needed.



## CLIENTS



## 4 Kayla - Young Adult

**Age :** 19

**Story :** When I turned eighteen, I lost access to financial, educational, and social supports provided by the child welfare system. I ended up homeless after not having the proper life skills for life on my own such as how to balance my budget, or pay rent. I want to be independent, but I lack the skills to do so.

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**Psychological States of Being :**

- Seeking companionship
- Needing a support system
- Improving self sufficiency with job training
- Seeking life skills training
- Scared about safety of the shelters

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**Architectural Responses :**

The rate of homeless young adults has been on the rise lately and a lot of it is due to the fact that they don't have the proper skills after high school or after living in foster care to live on their own. It is estimated that nearly 20,000 young adults age out of foster care every year and around 40% of them end up homeless. These young people need their own space to learn the proper skills to pursue a life on their own. A design for Kayla will include town-home like dwelling that will house up to five people at a time. These town homes will be grouped into communities separated by community spaces. This will help to create strong connections throughout the community and create a strong support system. All users will be evaluated to

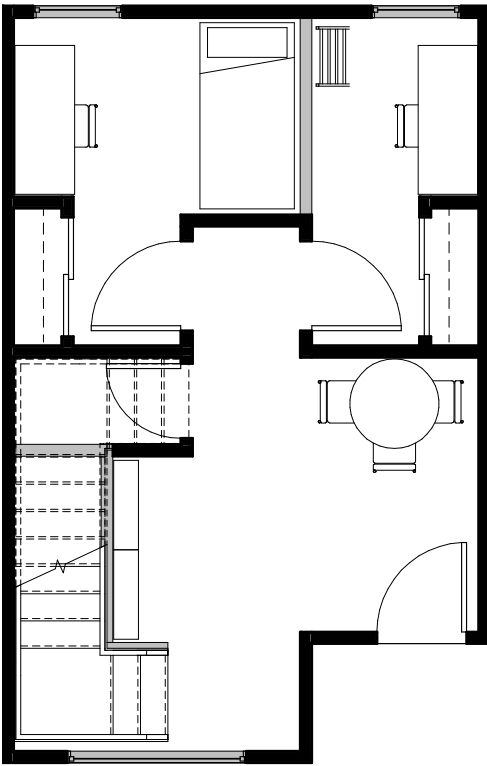
ensure the safety of others. Each person will be given their own room within the town-home which will provide security and their own personal space to care for. It will give them a sense of ownership and belonging. The program will provide classes on job and life skills and also give them opportunities to apply this training. There will be business within the facility where users can work for a wage. The program for this shelter will also help to find permanent housing for the young adults. People will be allowed to stay in the shelter for up to 18 months. It is important to set an end date to give the users a reason to take in the information and also ensure they pursue a life on their own. The program will teach them everything they need for a life on their own and then give them the opportunity to apply it to their life.

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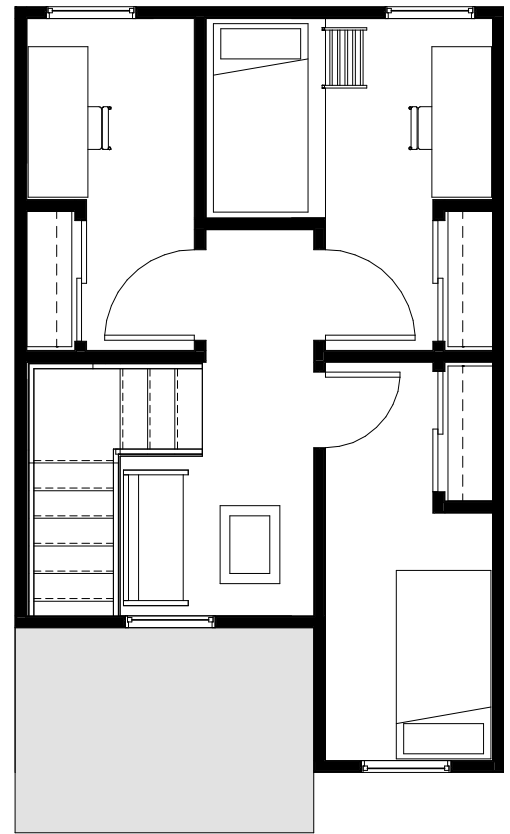
### **Design Vignette :**

The town home design will create a sense of community within the shelter. It will give the residents a sense of pride and ownership to have their own home. The community will be brought together with the community space located in the middle of the town-homes.





**First Floor Plan**



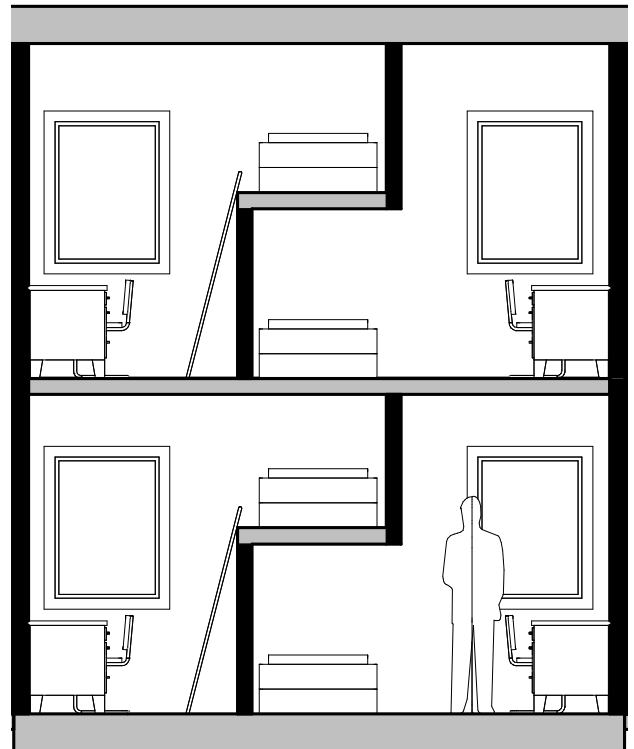
**Second Floor Plan**

Each of the town homes will have five bedrooms and a living space. By housing the young adults together they can start to form close relationships and a better support system amongst themselves. There wont be T.V.s with in the units to encourage that the users congregate in the community spaces outside of the units. Each of the bedrooms will be assigned to one user and be given their own closer and desk. These young adults are going through a lot and trying to figure out their life's path, so it is important to give them private space to do so.

## RESEARCH REPORT

### Room Section:

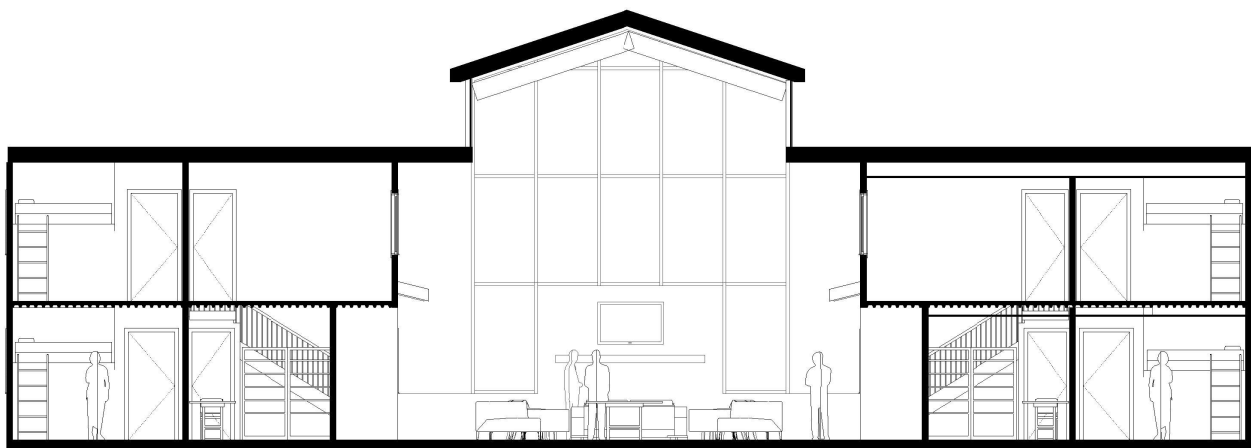
The beds will be stacked to save room allow for more units within the space. They will still be separate by a wall and floor. These four rooms will be the same on each floor, but the front bedroom will be a single bed.



Room Section

### Building Section

This section shows the relation between the community space and the town homes. The community space will be a big, open, and naturally light space to promote activity. The community space will be multipurpose. It will be used for classes, training sessions, and other group activities.



Building Section

## CLIENTS

**5** Chris - Ex-Offender

**Age** : 28

**Story** : After spending four years in jail on drug related charges, I was released and began the search for an apartment. Every where I looked, I was met with denials and discrimination. No landlord is willing to rent to an ex-offender. I have lost hope and now I have returned to using drugs again.

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**Psychological States of Being :**

- Needing a support system
- Seeking permanent housing
- Impaired by addiction
- Seeking life skills training

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**Architectural Responses :**

Many ex-offenders run into the problem of not being accepted after the are released from prison. Even though they are trying to have a better life, but the constant discrimination causes them to resort to their old ways. The design to help people like Chris will be mostly based off of the program. The program will focus on drug addiction and rehabilitation. People in the program will have certain limitations such as restrictions on cell-phones and belongings. People will also be required to participate in the therapy sessions and classes. This will ensure that they are there to get help. People will be evaluated weekly and will be search every time the come back to the shelter to ensure that no narcotics make it into the shelter. Group therapy

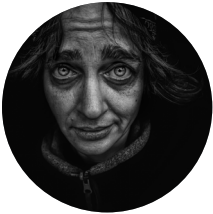
sessions will be held to help people find others that are going through the same struggles as them. This will help to create a support system within the shelter. It is important to be surrounded by people with the same goals. While getting help with addiction, case managers will help to place them in permanent housing when they are ready for a life on their own. Classes will be taught to give them the proper job and life skills to provide for themselves.

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### **Design Vignette :**

This design will focus mostly on the program. People that participate in the program will be given their own room. They will be subjected to monthly drug testing to ensure they are on the path to recovery. Also, people in the program won't be able to use cell phones. This will ensure that they are not contacting past negative influences. People within the program will have to be searched when returning to the facility. This is all to ensure that they are there for the right reasons. The main focus of the program will be addiction counseling. There will be one-on-one counseling sessions to help the users through ending their addictions. One-on-one counseling has been proven to work the best to end addictions. They allow the users to form strong relationships with the counselor. They are less likely to break promises made to a close friend. The program will last one year and after that they will be set up into permanent housing. There is an end date set to ensure the users are conquering fears and seeking a better life.

## CLIENTS



## 6 Joan - Immigrant

**Age** : 40

**Story** : I fled Venezuela in search of a better life. I am an undocumented immigrant which makes it hard to find a steady source of income. I am afraid to use shelters because they may turn me into Immigration and Customs Enforcement. I want to be able to find a steady job and be able to afford my own house.

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**Psychological States of Being :**

- Needing a support system
- Curing anxiety about source of income
- Improving self sufficiency with job training
- Seeking life skills training
- Fearing the unknown

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**Architectural Responses :**

Many immigrants come to the United States and are unaware of what they are getting themselves into. For many, the U.S. is a much safer place to live, but it can be just as hard to make a living as an undocumented immigrant. As an undocumented immigrant, they are unable to seek the same assistance as other people that are experiencing homelessness due to the fear of deportation. To avoid this, the program design will provide a sanctuary space for undocumented immigrants, meaning that when they come to seek shelter they will not be turned into Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Instead, the shelter will help them to seek the proper documentation to become a leg-



al immigrant. The shelter will also provide a place for work for a wage and also receive other job and life skills training. Many immigrants come to this country and are unaware of the assistance that they can receive. This design will also include an outreach team to go out into the homeless communities and inform them about the services the shelter can provide them. it is easier for people to seek help if they know exactly what they are getting themselves into. Once people know they are safe, they can come to the shelter to receive the care that they need. With in the shelter there will be areas to congregate and allow for relationships to form. Coming to the United States is a scary endeavor to conquer alone. But by providing a safe place for these immigrants to find a better way of life, we can help them along their journey.

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### **Design Vignette :**

This program will ensure safety for all immigrants. All immigrants will be given shelter and the opportunity to succeed. They will be given classes to learn how to properly budget money, work a job, and basic life skills. To promote this program, an outreach team will be created to Inform others about the care they can receive.

## CLIENTS



7

Marcus - Bad Experiences

**Age** : 46

**Story** : After having some bad luck in my life, I became homeless. I have been to a couple different programs and shelters looking for help, but every time I go I am shown how unsafe they are or I am miss-treated by the facility. For my personal safety, I have chosen to stay out of the shelters and to get by on my own.

**Psychological States of Being :**

- Needing a support system
- Scared to trust again
- Worried about the safety of the shelters
- Scared of authority
- Fearing the unknown

**Architectural Responses :**

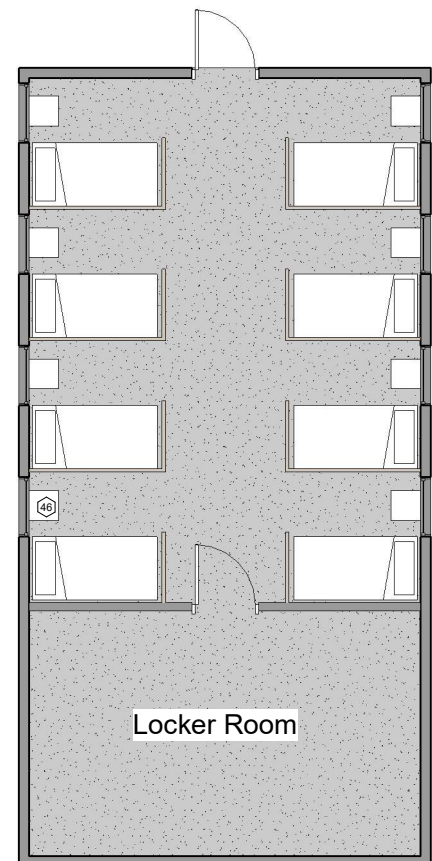
Safety and Security is a main concern in every shelter. This issue will be tackled through tactics such as screening, psychological evaluations, maintaining privacy, and a no tolerance policy. These tactics will be used to protect all users of the shelter. The lobby of the building will have a locked entrance to protect the people inside off of the lobby there will be a screening room to evaluate the people that are coming into the shelter to better understand their needs and to make sure they are safe to be around other people. People wont be allowed to enter the shelter if they are intoxicated or are using other substances. People that have been deemed a danger to others will be

placed into their own private rooms to give them the space that they need. People staying at the shelter will get their own sectioned off space and other users wont be allowed into each others spaces. The sleeping quarters will be monitored to maintain the safety of all users. People will be able to interact in the community spaces which will be located adjacent to the sleeping quarters. This will be an open, naturally lit space that will promote interaction between the users. This space will allow for relationships to forms and create a support system amongst the users.

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### Design Vignette :

This design promotes security by giving each person their own cubical space. Each dorm will also be monitored by security staff to make sure people are not going into each others spaces.



## CLIENTS



8

Kyrie - Not Seeking Help

**Age** : 45

**Story** : As a child I was abused, so as soon as I turned 18 I left home. I didn't have anywhere to go so I worked odd jobs to earn money while traveling around the country. I have never held a steady or had a permanent place to stay. I have always been able to provide for myself and get by on my own. It's not a great life, but it's what I need.

**Psychological States of Being :**

- Seeking purpose
- Needing therapy
- Fearing the unknown
- Seeking short term care

**Architectural Responses :**

Kyrie may not be advisedly seeking help, but he could still benefit from basic services such as a place to eat, sleep, and shower. A separate area will be created will be created for people that feel the same way as Kyrie. They will be able to come and get the services they need and be able to come and go as they please. The design will include a central courtyard for people to hang out in during the day and also to sleep in at night. The courtyard will be monitored by security guards to ensure the safety of everyone. A cafeteria and public restroom will be connected to the courtyard to give easy access. The cafeteria will serve two meals a day and will serve anyone that comes. The restrooms will include showers and hygiene kits to give every-

## RESEARCH REPORT

one the opportunity to maintain their personal hygiene. Along the Courtyard there will be a set of businesses that will give people that are experiencing homelessness the opportunity to get a job and work for a wage. By being in this environment, users will began to form relationships and companionship. Hopefully, this will start to pull people into the other programs that are offered and they will began to seek help.

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### Design Vignette :



The courtyard between the shelters will also serve as a park for the community. It will create interaction between the public and the users of the shelters.



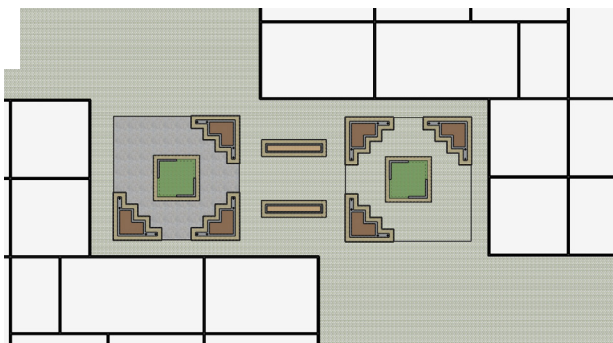
The courtyard will be filled with trees and seating to make it an inviting environment for people that are experiencing homelessness to relax.



People that are experiencing homelessness are welcome to sleep and stay in the park as long as they want. However, there will be restrictions on setting up camps.



Some of the benches have canopies covering them in case people need to rest on the bench while it is raining.



Around the courtyard will be spaces for various businesses. All of these businesses will allow people from within the shelter to apply and earn a wage for their work. This will be another great way to promote interaction between the two communities.

# CONCLUSION

With this project I hope to create a better understanding of why the homeless population is growing and the total number of people using shelters is increasing. My goal is to obtain the information to create a shelter that works for all types of homelessness. The goal is to create an inventory of the needs of the different types of homeless people and what they need from shelters to achieve the way they want to live. Architecture and planning can influence the way people act. I hope that by creating an inventory of these needs I can create a template for all homeless housing projects that will produce shelters that will encourage the homeless population to achieve a better way of life.