Sustaining Independence: an architectural proposal for fostered youth

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an architectural proposal for fostered youth

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“Housing the homeless is never going to be an easy problem. But homelessness is, by definition, about places to live. So it involves buildings. And good buildings benefit all.”

Sam Davis, architect
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List of Abbreviations

HUD      Department of Urban Development
ES       Emergency Shelters
HRSA     Health Resources and Services Administration
ICESCR   International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
LCI      Livable Center Initiative
NAEH     National Alliance to End Homelessness
NCH      National Coalition for the Homeless
NCSL     National Conference of State Legislatures
NC       Neighborhood Commercial
NPU      Neighborhood Planning Unit
OHCHR    Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OPH      Other Permanent Housing
PSH      Permanent Supportive Housing
PIT      Point-in-time
RRH      Rapid Rehousing
SH       Safe Havens
TH       Transitional Housing
TLP      Transitional Living Program
USICH    US Interagency Council on Homelessness
UN       United Nations
U.S.     United States
VTH      Village Transitional Housing
WCED     World Commission on Environment and Development
Abstract

The social aspect of sustainability is often neglected when environmental and economical targets in architectural practice and education are prioritized. This thesis investigates how architecture can have a positive impact on the life of those experiencing the most inequitable position of society: the homeless. Several studies have shown a strong relation between chronically homeless adults and youth departing the foster care system, therefore this thesis focuses on exploring the housing component for a prevention program for at-risk of homeless former foster care youth. This study aims to introduce a site selection methodology and housing model approach for supportive transitional living programs. The proposal is focused on two primary outcomes: preventing youth of ever experiencing homeless and addressing the needs that are required for this group to have a successful transition to adulthood. This study was exploratory in nature, using several bibliographic references, qualitative data collection, and constant literature review during the research and design application. Through the literature review portion of this study, it can be asserted that supportive programs focusing on former foster care youth must provide two types of assistance to increase their chances of success: services and housing. The first, services, must be related to employment and creating affinity with caring adults. The second, housing, must fulfill the needs of program inhabitants through proper location and appropriateness of design. In combination with these two primary forms of assistance, the design of housing must be tailored for the former foster care youth needs providing flexibility of living settings and informal social gathering spaces. To summarize, this thesis proposes a model for design process of “needs-based housing solutions” that uses spatial adjacency and site determinant strategies to increase the effectiveness of programs serving foster care youth as they transition to adulthood.

Keywords: Homeless youth, supportive assistance programs, housing location and appropriateness, the Foster care youth hierarchy of needs
Introduction

Sustainability has become intrinsically related to architectural practice. Development can only be truly sustainable if the planet, profit and people (environment, economy and society) are equally addressed and considered during design and construction processes. Although, it is imperative for architects, architecture students and all of those involved in the construction field to advocate for the Triple-Bottom Line of sustainable development, the social aspect of sustainability is often neglected when environmental and economical parameters dominate the design processes. Architectural firms and practitioners tend to ignore the social premise of promoting equity and social justice within their design solutions because some believe it is not architecture's responsibility to address these issues. This thesis intent to demonstrate how architecture can help to promote social sustainability through the provision of the most basic and social human right: housing.

Individuals experiencing homelessness are at the most inequitable position of society. The occurrence of not being housed, not having a safe and appropriate place to spend the night, generates severe physical and psychological repercussions on a person’s life. Housing is critical to promote equity and rebuild one's self-esteem. Through the provision of adequate housing assistance and better conditions of living, architecture can have an impact in social sustainability. This author believes that architects, planners and designers should be producing spaces - private and public - that promote unity and wellbeing by responding to the needs of all people. Because of that belief, this thesis addresses homelessness through an architectural proposal for

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fostered youth that is integral to the programmatic methods, already in place, to assist this demographic.

Several studies have shown a direct link between chronic homelessness and youth leaving the foster care system. When they turn 18, these young adults are forced into adulthood without enough skills, education and training to obtain successful results. Most of them have a troubled and traumatic experience trying to achieve an independent living condition, some becoming homeless within 12 months of leaving care. This thesis proposes a prevention model to fill the gap between the youth transitioning from the foster care system to independent living conditions after discovering an absence of holistic design solutions within this at-risk demographic. This planned exit strategy aligns services (provided by a partner agency) and housing (designed by the author as an application of research) that is specifically designed to prepare once fostered youth to have a successful transition to adulthood.

The first part of this thesis presents literature review of several authors, architects and case studies of built projects. It discusses the link between social sustainability architecture, housing and lack of housing: homelessness. Furthermore, this part presents widely recognized concepts and data collected that are relevant to this study.

The second part of this study demonstrates the research application through the process of designing a housing complex for former foster care youth in the city of Atlanta. A site selection methodology and design iterations are presented. This part also present analyses of the housing typology, called Village Transitional Housing (VTH), and social gathering spaces a to show how the design responds the primary needs of the youth in the associated program. Additionally, the design process (scaffold) presented is
intended to provide social equity through empowering former foster care youth to become successful adults without ever being homeless, breaking the cycle of chronic homelessness, and also to enhance the inclusion of social environmental design in the provision of housing for the homeless.
PART I: LITERATURE REVIEW
1 Contextual Overview

1.1 Sustainable Development

Conventional methods of production and construction, including associated resource consumption are highly destructive. The rapid consumption of materials and large production of waste, puts increased pressure on the earth’s natural resources and regenerative capacity. Without a change in the design, construction and management methods of the built environment, environmental crises could continue causing disastrous consequences such as climate change, natural disasters, air and water pollution. Sustainable development introduces concepts that offer more responsible and efficient solutions for inhabiting earth. Through a shift in collective and individual actions, sustainable design method and guidelines seek to transform destructive behavior into productive behavior to avoid irreversible damage to society and ecosystems.

Sustainability has progressively gained recognition as the only development model that would allow human beings to face and overcome the problems caused by consumerism and reckless economical growth with the defined intent of preserving our environment for future generations.

The modern environmental crises of the 60’s and 70’s generated discussions about sustainability that identified the results of industrialization as affecting and putting under significant pressure the earth’s natural supplies (FOLADORI, 2002). The United Nations (UN), created in 1983 with the goal to debate, educate and provide solutions for the depletion of resources, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), also known as the Brundtland commission. The WCED had the crucial role to
enlighten and organize international conferences to propagate sustainability’s purpose and goals. In 1987, through the publication of the internationally renowned Brundtland Report, the WCED stimulated a revolution in the discussions about sustainability. Their report introduced the idea of Sustainable Development and proposed that maintaining conditions in which nature and human beings can live in harmony, would ensure present generations to meet their needs, without limiting future generation’s capability and opportunity to meet their own (WCDE, 1987).

“The satisfaction of human needs and aspirations is the major objective of development (…). A world in which poverty and inequity are endemic will always be prone to ecological and other crises. Sustainable development requires meeting the basic needs of all (…).” (WCDE, Brundtland Report of 1987, p. 43-44)

A decade later, John Elkington (1998) enforced the concept of sustainability and introduced the triple bottom line concept, dimensioning sustainability in three spheres: environmental quality, economic prosperity and social equity (Figure 1). In order to achieve an equilibrium, the spheres have to be counterbalanced; meaning these components have to be assessed with equal significance and concern, without neglecting one for the other. According to Elkington, only through the direct proportion between these spheres it would be possible to satisfy the human needs of today without sacrificing tomorrow’s growth opportunity.
Each sustainability sphere has specific and distinct objectives which should be explored simultaneously for the development to be completely sustainable. The economic objectives are growth, efficiency, and shareholder value; the environmental objectives are ecosystem integrity, climate integrity, and carrying capacity as well as biodiversity; and the social objectives are empowerment and equity, social mobility and social cohesion, cultural identity and institutional development (FOLADORI, 2002). For example, in the architecture field, to verify if a project or building is truly sustainable, one must look for the characteristics of it, then assess in which proportion the triple bottom line was taken into consideration through the design, construction, and occupancy processes. Figure 2 sums up the objectives of each sphere of the Triple Bottom Line.
1.2 The Neglected Sphere

Despite the early-on and significant emphasis given to the equilibrium of all sustainability realms, one of the spheres has been constantly overlooked in architectural practice. The environmental and economic needs are often discussed to explore ways in which the environment can be preserved without harming the economic growth. However, the social component has often been neglected. Its exclusion from the overall sustainable strategies in studies, discussions and practices is considered a critical concern by many authors (Guy & Farmerm, 2001; Foladori, 2002; Murphy, 2012; Kadir & Jamaludin, 2013; Toole & Carpenter, 2013). Some authors, such as Lefevbre (1991),
even go further to defend social sustainability as the most important sphere because it prioritizes the human being, then its relations to the environment and economy. Even though there are different opinions and responses among research, it is clear there is an urgency to highlight these fundamentals components of sustainable development: society and its needs.

According to Foladori (2002), for many years the social aspect was approached only as an element that impacts the environmental conditions, hence it was an instrument to achieve ecological goals. Social sustainability should be considered only because without it would be impossible to achieve equilibrium within ecosystems. Therefore, impoverished and less fortunate people were both guilty and victims of environmental degradation by the reckless and less thoughtful manner in which they would produce and consume natural resources, without taking into account the damage their behavior could cause to the environment. The understanding that there was a need for behavioral change of those people instigated efforts into educating and raising awareness of resources depletion and waste management. However, studies have shown that those changes would not happen by just raising awareness to the issues. The impulse that would drive impoverish people to make unsustainable choices was not the lack of knowledge on sustainable alternatives but it was the immediate necessity to supply basic daily needs. For example, Maslow's hierarchy pyramid of needs confirms that theory.

Abraham Maslow, a renown psychologist, made a study about motivational behavior in which he analyzed what would push a person to make choices and to behave in distinct ways. He states that man's nature is driven by its needs and the
constant search for a better quality of life. Those needs are replaced as soon as achieved forming a continuous cycle. According to Maslow, very few people or none would search for needs from a higher level without achieving those that precede them creating a hierarchy pyramid composed by physiological needs, safety, belonging, esteem and self-actualization (MCLEOD, 2007). Figure 3 graphically represents the pyramid. The physiological needs, at the base of the pyramid, are those that compose a person’s survival instinct and the species preservation: shelter, food, water, clothing, etc. Therefore, following Maslow’s principles, a person that is yet to conquer the physiological needs does not have the capability of thinking about the future or making environmental responsible choices, because he/she can only concern about daily survival. It is conclusive then that supplying people's physiological needs it is a fundamental premise of sustainable development. Powell (2009) believes without addressing or mitigating the urgent problems of today it is utopian to achieve social sustainability. “Indeed, focusing attention primarily on a longer-term and worldwide phenomenon could mask more immediate problems of current conditions.” (POWELL, 2009, p.122).
Other authors also discussed the importance and goals of social sustainability. Murphy (2012), stated the most important aspect is social equity, which aims to improve population's standards of living, expanding people's basic rights while providing services to minimize inequality. Toole and Carpenter (2013) also presented social equity as pivotal for sustainability, defining it as a fair share of benefits and opportunities between society. They discussed people should have equal access to a range of services, such as jobs, health, child care, healthy food, recreation and affordable housing. Social equity relates to the “processes that generates social health and well-being now and in the future, and those social institutions that facilitate environmental and economic sustainability now and in the future” (Dillard et al., 2009, cited in Toole & Carpenter,
Drobenko (2004) highlights the importance of shelter as a significant foundation for social sustainability. For him, an equitable society is when quality housing serves as an acknowledgment of basic rights that are essential to a sustainable and decent life, and each person has the capacity to acquire ownership of a house, land or urban space. The function of home goes beyond its physical role of protection directly affecting a person’s development. Its presence is crucial for the central aspect that it represents in people’s lives (FATHY, 1973).

In conclusion, it is clear the importance of housing as a first step towards social equity. Quality housing is a basic human right that contribute for an individual’s personal wellbeing. Based on the studies of Fathy (1973), Lefevbre (1991), Foladori (2002), Drobenko (2004), this author proposes the insertion of housing as an inherent sphere of the triple bottom line, as shown in figure 4. In addition, this author believes that without providing society access to basic human rights required for a decent living, such as housing, it is ineffective to pursuit economic or environmental sustainability.

Figure 4 – Triple bottom line revised adding housing
Source - From author, 2017
1.3 Housing: a human and social right

Housing has been recognized as a fundamental human right since 1948, when the UN published The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). UDHR (1948) article 25 states that everyone has the right to appropriate living, including housing, to assure health and well-being for himself and his family. The human rights are a reflection of a decent life, and without them people can’t reach their full potential. They are equal, indivisible, interdependent and interconnected, therefore the violation of any right compromises the acquirement of all, and also harms the premises of freedom, justice and world peace (UN-HABITAT, 2006). The UDHR establishes a direct link between housing and dignity, showing the significance of it in a person’s life. Many other documents after the UDHR solidified the important role of housing. For example, The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights published in 1966 by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), not only recognizes housing as a fundamental premise for a good life, but also establish that it is the State's direct responsibility to provide adequate living conditions.

The OHCHR (1991) defines housing as much more than just a physical structure for protection. It must provide basic infra-structure and access to other services. The Committee recognizes that adequacy might change according to a person’s socio-economic circumstances, however establishes some core elements that should be present in all housing conditions. First condition is legal security of tenure, everyone should have a legal protection against evictions. Second is availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure, specifies access to common natural resources and emergencies services. Affordability is the third condition, a home financial cost for
acquirement and maintenance should not compromise the family’s budget. Fourth is habitability, should be safe and sound. Fifth condition is accessibility, should be accessible to all people including those with impaired mobility. Location is condition number six, it should be located close to work opportunities and services, avoiding places that might offer safety hazards. Lastly, proper housing must have cultural adequacy, it should reflect if inhabitants culture, identity and diversity.

Another significant advancement in the discussion of housing was the second UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) which took place in Istanbul in 1996 with its primary focus in how and where people were living around the world. It establishes international goals to assure adequate housing for all and to make human settlements more safe, healthy, equitable and sustainable. The conference establishes the Housing crises as an urgent and massive problem of the XXI century, reinforcing the critical importance of extinguishing homelessness around the world.

“For it will be in cities and towns where solutions will have to be found for new and old challenges, where the scourges of homelessness, poverty, and environmental decay will have to be met, where we have to take on the challenge of social disintegration and forge the bonds of human solidarity, without which our future will be neither peaceful nor assured.” (UN HABITAT, 1996, p.214).

These documents and conferences were essential to establish housing as a human right. Additionally, they introduced housing as much more then proving “a roof and four walls”. The house starts to be seen as a social right that offers an opportunity for development and growth in a healthy and decent environment. Its social function is to assure people feel safe to develop confidence, self-respect and security to dream
and evolve. A durable, decent and well-designed home allows people to desire for other needs such as education, employment, growth (AQUILINO, 2011). Housing is a central need because it directly affects someone’s personal perception of self, while also reflects how an individual interacts with society and his local community.

For Bachelar (1994), a people individual perception of their home is the most important one. The house is people's first universe. It is perceived as their unique space in the world. The house is what enables a person to feel sheltered and allows one to aspire further than the physical environment. The confined space within built walls can give a sense of safety and comfort. The characteristics of protection and endurance of a house transpose to their inhabitants. However, these same walls can do just the opposite and assert mistrust, insecurity and even fear. He believes someone’s house can actually mold a person’s behavior. For that reason, adequate housing becomes critical for personal development. If a person does not experience a sheltered, safe environment how could he or she feel safe enough to dream with future things? Therefore, the physiological impression left by the first cellar, will influence a person’s growth and behavior. Even though, as adults one might forget the importance of the house, since there is less attachment because it is not perceived as unique space anymore, the way in which they objectively or subjectively describe housing tend to expose the impressions that were cultivated by the action of living in that specific space. Bachelar believes those impressions are going to determine someone’s relationships with their environment and society.

Other authors believe housing is mainly relevant to society because of its social impact. For Bratt, R. G., Stone, M. E., & Hartman, C. W. (2006) housing is the central
need of society because it is a concrete sign of material well-being. They believe where and how someone lives has a direct impact in opportunities for growth and development. The distance to work, the neighborhood settings, access to services and even health of its inhabitants are a few examples of ways in which a person’s daily life is directly influenced by where their house is located, and how it was designed and built. The house is a symbol of identity, ownership, stability, consequently the lack of housing is one of the most destructive events in someone’s life. The authors proclaim there is an urgent need for intervening and taking action towards housing all people in the planet. Adequate housing in the twenty first century should not be a utopian privilege, but an equitable right.

1.4 Architecture and Social Sustainability

As mentioned previously, because housing is a fundamental premise of social sustainability, the lack of it compromises all efforts to an equitable society. The UN-Habitat (2006) estimates more than a billion people in the world live in unsuitable houses and more than hundred million people are homeless. Both conditions are utterly unsustainable. Those who are homeless are completely vulnerable to all sorts of threats, both natural and man-made, while those in inappropriate housing generate risk to themselves and their surroundings. Most of the time, the driving force behind these two scenarios is the high costs associated to either building or buying a house. According to Fathy (1973), housing for the most economically deprived individual is often seen as mere provision of shelter and sanitation. Most of the housing provided for these people is austere, unsound for long-term safety and does not contribute in any way to restore people’s pride or self-respect. He states that professionals in the
construction field tend to think that for those that do not have much, or can not afford much, the basic minimum is enough.

Fathy and several other authors (Aquilino, 2010; Harris, 2010; Hyde, 2013) believe architects should be striving to change that thought because they know the effects a project can have in all its stakeholders. Buildings that are designed and built with more expertise can better the life of their inhabitants, communities and surrounding neighborhoods, hence they should be a priority in projects for people already facing challenging and vulnerable conditions (HARRIS, 2010). The architect’s “know how” is essential to the housing crises for three reasons: capability, representation and vision. Architects have the capability of propose safe durable structures while managing time, materials and resources. They have the ability to technically represent their ideas to the public - the client, the engineers, the contractors. Additionally, the architect has the vision of finding a short-term and also long-term solutions that can sustain themselves (AQUILINO, 2010). There is the immediate need for architects and others construction professionals to bring their training to help mitigate the lack of adequate affordable housing. Through socially conscious architecture it is possible to have a significant positive impact in the housing crises in both quantity and quality. It is not possible anymore to exclude architecture from its social relevance to the built environment and obligation to promoting a more inclusive society (HYDE, 2014).

It is important to emphasize that just providing housing is not enough to assure social sustainability. Improvement is only possible with a change in people’s mindset and behavior. Kadir and Jamaludin (2013) asserted those changes can occur though education, poverty mitigation, social justice, high employment rates, quality housing and
equity (figure 5). Hence, well-being can be promoted through design, when it strives to assure basic human rights to all, and should be complemented by supporting other human needs.

Figure 5 – Components of Social Development according to Kadir and Jamaludin, 2013
Source - From author, 2017

In conclusion, this author proposes that social sustainability is, in fact, being overlooked. It is imperative to recognize if social sustainability is in fact overlooked by many professionals of the architecture field that target environmental issues as the primary concern of practice. Sustainability in architecture is often perceived as a collective of technological innovations, that are implemented on buildings to better their performance, such as: increase energy efficiency, improve water management, reduce waste and consumption of the earth’s natural resources, etc. Even though all actions mentioned above are of extreme significance to the future of our planet, and to mitigate the environmental crises, this author chooses to recognize and prioritize social sustainability is an essential component for the present and future existence of all the humans.

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This thesis intends to construct a process for site analysis and housing design for use by architects, planners and designers. As a result, it will further the clarification of Architecture’s role in promoting well-being by responding to people’s needs as priority, mainly because the built environment in which a person is brought up, influences his/her quality of life. Consequentially, she has decided to focus this thesis on the lack of housing considering its intrinsic role in promoting social sustainability and its recognition by several authors as the most basic urgent human need.
2 Homelessness in America

2.1 Definitions and causes

When researching the lack of quantity and quality of housing in North America, homelessness if indicative of a common condition seen by most of those who live and interact in urban settings all around the world. It has become a common and banal component of daily life in the United States (US). People are accustomed to see beggars, indigents, people living and sleeping in the streets, and for that reason they believe to know and understand homelessness. However, most persons do not know what are the causes and circumstances that lead a person to become nomadic. Homelessness is the experience that a homeless person is going through choice or necessity. The formal definition of the homeless, according to the US Department of Urban Development (HUD) 2013, is a person who does not have a regular and adequate nighttime shelter. Further, the homeless individual is defined as those who are living in assistance housing types, such as emergency or transitional shelters, and also those who spend the night in places that are not suitable for sleeping for lack of permanent residence, for instance, abandoned buildings, under bridges, cars, etc.

“Homelessness represents the most obvious and severe manifestation of the unfulfillment of the human right to adequate housing.” (UNCHS, 1999d: paragraph 30).

There are many reasons behind someone leaving or losing their home. Family violence, mental illness, criminal involvement, substance abuse are the most common
examples of vulnerabilities experienced by most of those who are homeless either before or after living in the streets (DCA, 2015). Whereas all these conditions contribute, there are three main causes of homelessness which are poverty, housing and health (Christian, 2017). Poverty is the most common factor, and can be listed as the first cause of homelessness. Although, poverty has been constantly decreasing, income inequality has grown in the past decades (WORLD BANK, 2013). The growth of low wage jobs, job insecurity and also the increase of living costs accentuates the pressure for those already in impoverished situations, struggling with financial security.

The lack of sufficient resources leads to the second main cause of homelessness, which is housing. The high costs of buying a home and the shortage of affordable housing, either to buy or to rent, are a consistent contribute to people not being able to sustain a regular residence. The HUD defines that for a house to be affordable it can not cost more than 30% of someone or a family total income. In many American cities, even if a person was able to spare 30% of their minimum wage salary to housing, it would not be sufficient to buy or rent an adequate dwelling. These people more likely live in unhealthy accommodations located in unsafe neighborhoods. Some of them even losing their homes because they are not able to afford housing and its costs, such as maintenance and utilities.

The third problem associated with homelessness is health. Mental illness, physical impairments and morbidity are common conditions that preclude homelessness because of the high costs of medical treatment and assistance in the US, and also the family’s lack of interest or capability to take for those who are unhealthy (Christian, 2017). Even though the main causes of homelessness change when addressing
families or unaccompanied individuals, those three main factors are present in both cases as graphic 1 shows.

Graphic 1 - Main causes of homelessness
Source - Created by author with data from The US Conference of Mayors, 2015

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2.2 Brief history

Even though homelessness has been extensively studied and discussed in academia, there is no official literature on how, when or where homeless exactly began. Yet, the urbanization of cities and industrialization of work can be accepted to have influenced homelessness since it was a period that transformed the living conditions of many people. In the US, the efforts to eradicate this occurrence can be traced back to the early 1980s. At first, the attempts made to address homelessness were local since the federal government did not perceived it as a national problem. Only in 1983, after pressured by community leaders and undeniable widespread homelessness in the US, the federal government recognized the issue and started to respond creating policies and task forces. The first efforts focused on sharing information on how homeless could obtain federal support to overcome this condition, but did not have real actions to mitigate the issue. Although, raising awareness was a valid effort from the federal government, it proved to be inefficient since most states did not even implement any agenda related to homelessness. Consequently, the government realized more solid actions needed to be taken. Thus, in the following years, several acts were created to enforce emergency and long-term assistance, as well as preventive measures. In 1987, The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act was implemented as the first federal law providing assistance for those facing homelessness (NCH, 2006).

For the past three decades, many other efforts were made by the government to eradicate homelessness. Programs such as Opening Doors, which will be presented later on this thesis, are examples of assistance offered for those facing this danger situation. In the past decade, the government has been using the Annual Homeless
Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress, created by HUD, to estimate homelessness in numbers, comprehend the scale of the problem and track the responsiveness of the programs implemented nationally and by state. This document has been published for the past ten years and introduces several important definitions and data regarding homelessness in America. The data is recorded through a point-in-time (PIT) count system every year during the last week of January by communities nationwide. This system consists of physically counting the amount of persons living in the streets, in emergency shelters, transitional housing programs or other places not suitable for habitation in one night of the year (NAEH, 2015). The HUD highlights that the PIT counts are not a mandatory implement, therefore it really on volunteers and on the willingness of communities to be performed. They are an estimation of numbers, because the homeless are commonly detached of formal institutions which exclude them from census or precise data collection. Even though it is not exact, the AHAR presents the closest assessment of homeless people in U.S.

2.3 Classifying Homelessness: categories, types, subpopulations

The AHAR presents homelessness divided in several subgroups to report more accurately the data found. Therefore, in order to better understand the information presented some terms need to be defined. The HUD distinguishes categories of homeless, types of homelessness, and homeless populations and subpopulations.
2.3.1 Categories

The categories of homeless defined by the HUD are literally homeless, both sheltered or unsheltered, imminently homeless, and other homeless. The “literally sheltered homeless” are those living in some type of housing assistance program, such as emergency shelters, transitional housing, subsided rent and others. The "literally unsheltered homeless” are those living in the streets, abandoned buildings, under bridges, in their car or similar unsuitable living condition. Imminently homeless are those at risk of becoming homeless within two weeks and lack financial, psychological or emotional resources to find another permanent living quarter, such as the youth moving out of the foster care system. Other homeless people are those who if were not part of a recovery program, such as rehabilitation facilities, hospital, jail, they would be homeless (DCA, 2015). The AHAR estimates only those who are literally homeless in the annual PIT counts.

2.3.2 Types

The types of homelessness are chronically and non-chronically, divided between individuals and people in families. Chronically Homeless People in Families are those undergoing homelessness with their families for a year continuously, or have gone through four or more homeless occurrences in the last three years. Chronically Homeless Individuals are those who have faced the same circumstances mentioned above, but they are on their own, also described as unaccompanied homeless individuals. (AHAR, 2014). Non-chronically homeless are those who sporadically experienced one to three episodes of homeless in the last three years, but there are
housed most of the time. It is important to differentiate between people in families and people alone because the causes of homelessness and the level of trauma vary within these two groups, hence also the programs and recovery path are different. In 2015, according to the National Alliance to End Homelessness (2015), 48% of the total homeless population was non-chronic individuals, 15% was chronic individuals, 35% was non-chronic people in families and only 3% was chronic people in families. Graphic 2 shows the percentages of homelessness by type in 2015.

The HUD combines categories and types of homelessness to estimate the AHAR 2016 count. It registers that in one single night in 2016, 65% of people experiencing homeless were unaccompanied individuals and 35% were families with children. It also shows no significant difference between sheltered or unsheltered individuals between
2015 and 2016, while for families experiencing homelessness there is a 6% decrease between 2015 and 2016. The graphic 3 presents some of those estimates.

2.3.3 Subpopulations

The HUD classifies homeless in 5 different subpopulation groups: individuals both male and female, persons in families with children, unaccompanied youth, unaccompanied children and veterans. Individuals are those who do not experience an episode of homeless with his/her family with children, such as single adults or multiple-adult households. Persons in families with Children are those who are part of a family composed of one child and one adult at least when experiencing homelessness. Unaccompanied youth are homeless individuals between the ages of 18 and 24. Unaccompanied children are those who are under the age of 18 when experiencing a homeless episode (AHAR, 2015). Veterans are all of those individuals who served on
active duty the US in the armed forces (AHAR, 2016). Through this classification, the
government has a clearer understanding of how to respond to growth or decline trends
in the homeless population, and how to create assistance programs that better address
each group. Additionally, because of the significant difference in behavior of the
subpopulations, mainly according to age and gender, some are harder to estimate than
others. For instance, unaccompanied youth are more likely to hide in abandoned
buildings than to spend the night in the streets or to seek emergency shelters, therefore
the PIT count is less likely to reflect an approximated estimate than homeless adults.
The HUD points out that most likely there are much more homeless unaccompanied
youth than the PIT count registers. Graphic 4 shows the percentages of homeless
subpopulations of 2016.

Graphic 4 - Homelessness by subpopulations and housing status
Source - Created by author with data from AHAR, 2016
2.4 Addressing homelessness: program and housing

2.4.1 Program

Opening Doors is a federal plan created in 2010 presenting strategies to prevent and eradicate homelessness in the US through partnerships with private and non-profit agencies in several communities around the country. The US Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) developed this plan with the vision no person should be without a safe place to call home. They believe even though homelessness has become so intrinsic to American cities, it is a problem that can be fixed through instigating local collaboration, collecting data to show outcomes of strategies, and enforcing locally responsive strategies. The plan sets four main goals: set a path to end all types of homelessness; prevent and end homelessness among Veterans by 2015; end chronic homelessness by 2017; prevent and end homelessness for families, children and youth 2020. Furthermore, the Opening Door’s amendment of 2015 emphasizes the importance of addressing literally and imminently homeless unaccompanied youth. It asserts the higher levels of trauma suffered within this group because in many cases the culminating reason that led them to the streets are already related to neglect, violence and several types of abuse. The trauma experience many times before even being on the streets added to their vulnerability while being homeless leads to higher substance abuse disorders, suicide thoughts and attempts, mental health disorders and depression rates than others who are homeless (USICH, 2015 b).

The plan is divided into five main themes and establishes ten direct objectives within each theme giving operational strategies to communities of how to address
homelessness within the local setting. It coordinates between housing, employment, education, health care and other benefits. Figure 6 diagrams a response system for families going through a housing crises created by the Opening Doors. The following section of this study explains the housing types described in this diagram.

2.4.2 Housing

The HUD divides housing programs in two broad categories: literally homeless people, and imminent or formerly homeless people.

The assistance for literally homeless is provided through temporary housing facilities, such as emergency shelters (ES), transitional housing (TH) programs, and safe havens (SH). ES are facilities that mainly supply temporary shelter for people experiencing homelessness. They are designed for short-term stay and to lodge as many people as possible. If a person shows commitment to the rules and willingness to
exit homeless, he/she would be forward to a TH program. If the homeless person suffers from mental illness, he/she would be directed to a SH facility instead of a TH program. SH can offer semi-private or private housing units with long-term permanency with restricted 25 people per facility capacity. TH programs are temporary support for homeless people, but with stays usually up to 24 months. It offers a dwelling unit associated with supportive services to empower the migration to permanent and independent housing conditions. People living a TH program can go "on their own" and secure independent housing or they will migrate to the permanent housing projects (AHAR, 2016).

The more permanent housing projects are those that provide assistance for imminent or formerly homeless people. These programs are permanent supportive housing (PSH), rapid rehousing (RRH), other permanent housing (OPH). PSH is a long-term accommodation for formerly homeless people with disabilities or chronic patterns providing housing and supportive services which can be a part of a program or relate directly to the tenant. Rent subsidies or affordable rents ensure the affordability of these units. Programs that seek funding to PSH through the McKinney-Vento Act can only accept tenants with disabilities, thus most people in PSH have some type of disability. RRH is a program tailored to provide assistance to people at-risk or experiencing homeless. The goal is to make the experience as short as possible, quickly removing them from homelessness and sending to permanent housing. It provides assistance with moving costs, deposits and rentals for six months or less (USICH, 2015a). OPH offers housing for formerly homeless people, with or without disabilities, and it might offer supportive services or not. OPH is the program closest to affordable housing. The
main difference is that affordable housing is acquired fully by the tenant without exterior financial support. As mentioned in the previous chapter, to be considered affordable the costs with the home should not be more than one third of the family’s budget.

The AHAR also reports the Housing Inventory Count (HIC) enumerating the quantity of available beds these housing assistance programs offer for homeless. The 2016 report records for the first time since the HIC was created in 2007, a higher number of beds for permanently housing programs than temporary programs. The Opening Doors plan has a significant role into this improvement since one of its main objectives is to prevent and end homelessness by implementing permanent supportive housing programs. The graphic 5 shows the percentages recorded by the AHAR in 2016.
By reason of the differences between population’s behavior and needs, and also the distinct housing types offered as assistance, in the following section of this study, the author compares subpopulation trends and bed inventory data from 2007 to 2016 to determine the most unserved group that will become the user group for the purposes of this study. The author chose to address one subpopulation to delivered a project better tailored to respond the specifics needs of the group.
3 Data Comparison

3.1 General Comparison from 2007 to 2016

The National PIT - point-in-time count recorded every year - of 2016 registers that 549,928 people were homeless in one single night in January. As shown before, 68% of them were sheltered and 32% were unsheltered. The total homeless population has constantly decreased since 2007, presenting a 16% overall reduction in both sheltered and unsheltered categories. At the same time, the unsheltered population had an impressive decrease of almost 31% believed to be a result from the measure implemented by the Opening Doors plan. Graphic 6 shows the national PIT of people experiencing homelessness estimates since 2007 to 2016.

Graphic 6 - People experiencing Homelessness in US
Source - Adapted by author from AHAR, 2016
As previously mentioned, the AHAR also include an inventory of beds for homeless and formerly homeless people. The count for the beds is done in one day, but considering a year-round availability. In 2016, 867,102 beds were available to serve the homeless population year-round. This housing inventory is crucial to assess the country’s capability to house those in need. Since 2007, the quantity of beds in TH programs decrease approximately 32%, while the ES beds had a 25% increase and the beds available in PSH had an impressive 80% increase in the last decade, also believed to be a direct response to the Opening Doors plan. The graphic 7 shows the inventory of bed trends from 2007 to 2016.

Graphic 7 - Inventory of beds in US
Source - Adapted by author from AHAR, 2016
The AHAR also includes demographics of gender, ethnicity and race which are not going to be presented since they do not influence or add to this research. On the other hand, estimates of subpopulation and inventory of beds by population are critical to determine the group addressed in this study. Considering the Veteran population was added to the AHAR in 2009, and the unaccompanied youth population was only added in 2013, this author compares subpopulation data from the AHAR documents of 2013 to identify trends in reduction, stagnation or increase of the homeless population.

3.2 Subpopulation comparison from 2013 to 2016

The following graphics are summaries of literature and graphic information present in the AHAR reports that are pertinent to this research. Graphic 8, 9 and 10 show homelessness subpopulation of years 2013, 2014 and 2015, respectively. Graphic 11 reintroduces the information presented in graphic 4 without shelter status in order to compare the homelessness subpopulation of 2016 with the previous years. Graphic 12 is a comparison of subpopulation trends by years. In summary, the following graphics reveals that since 2013 only two subpopulations have a significant decrease: people in families (13% reduction), and veterans (30% reduction). The individual's population is the only one that shows significant increase since 2013 (6%). And, both unaccompanied youth and children had increases and decrease since 2013, whereas the unaccompanied youth data actually shows an increase in the last year.
Homelessness by subpopulations, 2013

Individuals: 45%
People in families: 38%
Veterans: 6.9%
UNACC youth: 1%

Homelessness by subpopulations, 2014

Individuals: 46%
People in families: 37%
Veterans: 8.6%
UNACC youth: 6.7%

Homelessness by subpopulations, 2015

Individuals: 48%
People in families: 36%
Veterans: 8%
UNACC youth: 5.7%

Homelessness by subpopulations, 2016

Individuals: 51.3%
People in families: 35%
Veterans: 7%
UNACC youth: 6%

Graphic 8, 9, 10 and 11 - Homelessness by subpopulation in percentages

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Through this analysis, it is possible to conclude that the Individuals, the Unaccompanied youth and the Unaccompanied Children subpopulations might be the ones requiring further attention since they have either an increase of homeless people or not a significant decrease in the PIT count.

Subsequently, the author compares the inventory of beds available for subpopulation from 2014 - year in which veterans and unaccompanied youth were
included in the count - to 2016 to identify which groups have more availability of beds, and the ones that need more housing assistance.

3.3 Bed inventory comparison from 2014 to 2016

The following graphics summarize the bed inventory data found in the AHAR reports. Graphics 13, 14, and 15 present the inventory of Bed count in percentages from 2014, 2015 and 2016, respectively. Graphic 16 compares the data of the three mentioned years. To sum up the graphics, People in Families subpopulation is the most assisted, with 12% increase in number of beds since 2014 which could indicate a direct connection to its constant decrease in PIT count. The second most assisted subpopulation is the Individuals. Even though it is the largest group of homeless people, the comparison shows a decrease in bed inventory targeting this population, which could be the reason behind the homelessness increase of this group. The Veterans are the third most served population presenting an even higher increase in its bed count than the People in Families. The bed count grew 31% since 2014, which could also directly relate to the 30% homelessness decrease seen in the PIT count. The Unaccompanied Youth shows a small increase of its bed count and an increase of its homeless population, while the Unaccompanied Children shows a reduction of inventory and a decrease of its population.
Graphic 13, 14 and 15 - Bed inventory by subpopulations in percentages
Source - Created by author with data from AHAR 2014, 2015 and 2016

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Although it is possible to reassure that the Individuals, Unaccompanied Youth and Unaccompanied Children subpopulations are the less assisted populations through this analysis, this author did not reach a conclusive evaluation of which group should be addressed through this study. Therefore, because in 2016 it was registered a higher number of year-round available beds (867,102) than of homeless people (549,928), she decided to compare the PIT count of people in each subpopulation with the quantity of available beds for them. Graphic 17 shows that comparison.
3.4 Conclusions of data comparison

The comparison in graphic 17 displays most subpopulations could benefit from shelter because there are more available beds than homeless people, expect Unaccompanied Youth. The bed inventory of this group, if fully occupied, could only support 65% of its population. Through this analysis, this author believes the housing deficiency could be lack of systematic outreach and engaging programs that connect most of the homeless population to a housed condition, or miss distribution of housing types within each group, but not lack of housing itself with the exception of the Unaccompanied Youth that does not have sufficient housing. For that reason, the author chooses to address this subpopulation through this thesis.
4.1 Homeless Unaccompanied Youth

Homeless unaccompanied youth, as mentioned in the previous chapter, refers to teens usually between 18 to 24 years of age, who are homeless without the care of their parents, legal guardian or of an institution. It is very difficult to estimate homeless unaccompanied youth because there is no standard procedure that takes into consideration the behavior and mobility of this group (USICH, 2015b). For instance, youth are likely to avoid shelters because they fear being sent away due to limited capacity, and they are distrustful of authority figures and institutions, specially those that have been in foster care, because of the past problems with their parental figures. In addition, this youth are usually embarrassed for being in this situation, hence are likely to lie in surveys or go unnoticed mixed with other youth. Taking these challenges into account, and crossing information between the PIT counts, the National Runaway Switchboard data, the public school’s surveys and estimates given in other studies, researchers approximate 1 million to 1.6 million youth go through an episode of homelessness each year. Although, they believe most incidents are temporary and youth will shortly become housed again through other relatives or friends, about 200,000 are believed to be permanently homeless (Robertson, and Toro, 1999; HRSA, 2001; Hammer, et al., 2002; NCSL, 2013). Graphic 18 shows the distribution of time of the streets for youth in crisis according to the National Runaway Safeline.
The reasons behind becoming a homeless unaccompanied youth are different and more complex than the reasons for Individuals and People in Families homelessness. The most common causes of youth homelessness are family problems, the transition for foster care and economic problems. Several unaccompanied youth end up on the streets trying to escape abuse or neglect suffered at home (Straka, et al., 2002). Some are even “throwaway" or abandoned due to family conflicts or the guardian’s inability to maintain the household (NCSL, 2013). Despite the deep trauma experienced by this youth in the hands of their parents figures, society still tends to blame the youth and see them with a negative perspective. They are considered rebels or runaways, people who do not need assistance considering they have chosen to leave a housed condition to be on the streets. Be that is at it may, many of them have valid reasons for leaving their home. Studies have shown that about 17% to 35% of

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homeless unaccompanied youth has suffered sexual abuse, and 40% to 60% physical abuse mostly from/by a parent, relative or family friend (Robertson, M. J., & Toro, P. A., 1999). Parental neglect, violence, alcoholism, substance abuse and disapproval of sexuality are common problems associated with homeless unaccompanied youth.

Another common cause of homelessness among youth is the transition from the foster care system. Approximately 24,000 young people age out from the foster care system each year (NCSL, 2013). Many of them have little or no financial support because they have not finished their high school education, nor do they possess employable characteristics as a result of the instability they experience in their lives. Also most of them had no family support while in care, and have no housing resources to rely upon when leaving care. Research has shown high rates of homelessness associated with leaving care (USICH, 2015b). 80% of former foster care youth reported being homeless at some point in the last two years (NYTD, 2014). Between 11% to 36% of youth aging out of foster care become homeless within two years of aging out (Dworsky, et al., 2013). The former foster care youth are usually homeless earlier and for longer periods of time than runaway or abandoned youth. The dysfunctional conditions in which many were brought up escalate the level of trauma and psychological issues within in this subpopulation (HRSA, 2001). They present higher chances of ending up on the streets.

The third main cause of youth homelessness relates to economic issues. Their families or themselves have problems securing or acquiring a dwelling due to the lack of affordable housing or difficulty maintaining employment, or other financial issues such as medical bills or growing dept. These youth usually become homeless with their family
and later separate due to the struggles of finding support systems for the whole family, or the youth choose to help their family either by leaving to find employment or leaving to lessen the family's financial burden (NCSL, 2013).

4.2 Consequences of being on the streets

The consequences of life on the streets are more threatening to youth than to adults. Beforehand, homeless youth are usually much more behind in education and employment experience than homeless adults. On top of this, once homeless is harder for them to attend school due to the deprivation of a stable and safe place for them to study or do their homework, the absence of transportation to school, and lack of required records for enrollment such as proof of residence, or medical records (NAEH, 2015a). Because they lack education and employment experience to secure financial stability many engage in criminal activities to support themselves. According to Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA, 2001), 40% of African American and 36% of Caucasian youth have admitted selling drugs - usually marijuana - on the streets for money. The HRSA discloses youth are more inclined to participate in delinquent behavior, and to engage in prostitution or “survival sex” (trading sex for shelter, clothes or food) than homeless adults. Even if not for survival, youth are more likely into engaging in unprotected sex and sharing intravenous drugs which increases the chances of them contracting life-treating diseases.

In addition to the risk they might put themselves through, the homeless unaccompanied youth are highly susceptible of suffering sexual or physical assault (NCSL, 2013; Dworsky, et al., 2013). In the case of youth coming from foster care, the
desire to make connections with people that are not paid to take care of them, as most of their caregivers were, make them more susceptible to exploitation (NAEH, 2015b).

Studies interviewing homeless youth revealed 75% of teens reported witnessing extreme violence and 70% has suffered some type of aggression themselves, and another 32% disclosed being sexually assaulted in the streets (HRSA, 2001). This early exposure to extreme violence in addition to the trauma experiences before living in the streets, exacerbate issues of severe depression and anxiety, substance abuse and suicide attempts among this youth (NCSL, 2013). Research also shows not having a secure place to spend the night besides damaging their already low self-esteem and mental wellbeing, also increases their health hazards. The high presence of chronic health conditions like tuberculosis, hepatitis, hypertension and asthma was found among homeless youth (USICH, 2015b).

Consequently, once the youth are literally homeless, they will have deeper layers of trauma and need more services and support because of the psychological and emotional distress caused by being literally homeless, associated with health hazards of living in the streets. Therefore, the best way to address youth homelessness is to prevent it from happening (NN4Y, 2015).

4.3 Addressing youth homelessness

According to the NAEH (2015b), the first step while addressing youth homelessness is to house them. Only after securing a stable house condition, they can start working towards overcoming the traumatic experiences of the past and start developing education and training, learning life-skills and how sustaining their household. Once housed, an assessment of their short and long term goals is needed
to assign the most appropriate services. These goals might change with time, hence constant communication with counseling is important to make sure the programs they are following are the most effective. The key is to tailor the proper services to the individual youth in order for them to stabilize and sustain housing.

The most successful programs are those that provide safe and stable housing allied with supportive services (Montgomery, et al., 2006). Research indicates the most impactful services for this youth are educational and employment training, counseling and case management services, creating possibilities to establish connection with caring adults, and providing opportunities to learn and practice basic independent living skills, such as cooking, cleaning, budgeting, shopping, conflict resolution and communication skills (NCSL, 2013). Both housing conditions and supportive services are further explored later on this thesis.

As an effort to expand and better these programs, the US government has created a few policies to address homeless youth. On the federal level, the McKinney-Vento Homelessness Assistance Act introduces measures to enforce enrollment, attendance and success in public schools, but does not address housing directly. On the contrary, the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) is the only federal law that addresses homeless unaccompanied youth proving funding for three programs that assist this youth: Street Outreach program, Basic Center Program and Transitional Living Programs (TLP) (HRSA, 2001).

TLPs offers affordable housing with supportive services, such as education and employment programs, education, life-skills development classes and others, for 18 to 24 months. These programs have had very good response rates. The National Network
for Youth (NN4Y, 2015) reports that from the 2,782 youth, that exited TLPs around the country in 2014, 88% secured stable housing conditions. The group also reports that from another smaller study of former foster care youth, from 23 people exiting TLP, 100% secure stable housing.

The government also has policies specific for those exiting foster care. The Chafee Foster Care Independence Program offers funding for states to develop programs and services for the youth aging out of foster care, or that have been in foster care before, and the Fostering Connections Act of 2008 extends federal funding for states to invest in programs assisting foster care youth (HRSA, 2001). Because there are different policies and funding for the specific population of homeless youth, a separation within this group is presented.

4.4 Homeless youth population: system youth and non-system

For legal and institutional purposes, youth experiencing homelessness are divided into two main categories: non-system and system youth. System youth are those currently using housing assistance services provided by the state, and without this assistance they would be literally homeless. This population has usually been placed in custody of the state because of parental abuse, or neglect and/or criminal behavior. Youth in foster care and the juvenile justice system are examples of this group. Non-system youth are defined as literally homeless youth - including those who runaway from their homes - living mainly without assistance systems, occasionally using, or not at all, facilities like shelters and drop-in centers. Most of this youth, also referred to as
runaways, voluntarily left their parents custody usually because of family problems (Straka, et al., 2002).

Regardless of this legal division, researches have found no significant distinction between the levels of trauma, and concrete and emotional needs between the two groups. However, according to Straka, et al. (2002), the way in which each group responds to assistance services are notably different. For instance, if comparing their willingness to receive assistance, system youth are more accepting because they have been raised in institutions and are used to receive help from the state. While non-system youth are more reluctant to receive assistance since they had to find ways to survive on their own and more independent from the system, in addition, some might already be engaged in prostitution or criminal behavior which gave them a false sense of financial provision. In addition, because of the false independence non-system youth experienced on the streets, they are more likely to abandoning assistance programs and going back to the streets to live on their own than the system youth. For these reasons, many authors, including this author, believe programs that focus on providing assistance to the system youth have more meaningful effect in the youth lives, than those for non-system youth.

Brown & Wilderson (2010) believe that the stability created through a planned transition from foster care would result in more stable advancement toward independent adulthood while non-system youth have slower advancements toward adulthood because of the state of instability from the time lived on the streets and the exposure to greater risks. The NAEH (2015b) asserts that once assisted, foster care youth usually needs more help with building basic skills and improving their self-confidence and self-
esteem, while literally homeless youth present deeper layers of trauma and higher insubordination issues.

To summarize, even though the services for both groups must offer similar characteristics, the assistance type, the cycle of exiting homelessness and the contributions that housing can bring are different for each group. Figure 7 outlines these two group’s similarities and differences according to literature review of Straka, et al. (2002), Brown & Wilderson (2010), and this author findings
Figure 7 - Comparison between stem youth and non-system youth
Source - From author, 2016
Continuation figure 7 - Comparison between stem youth and non-system youth

Source - From author, 2016
In addition to the higher possibility of success of prevention programs for system youth than intervention programs from non-system youth, the NAEH (2015a) has found, through research conducted in shelters serving chronically homeless adults, a direct link between foster care youth and chronically homeless adults. Depending on the state, 10% to 40% of the adult population interviewed mentioned a history with foster care. Hence preventing and housing youth is essential to break the cycle of homeless. Through prevention and early-on intervention, the government is reducing overall costs with medical and emergency services, the criminal judicial system, with substance abuse and rehabilitation facilities while increasing the probabilities of successful adulthood among teens.

To conclude these findings, this author decides to focus this thesis to propose a transitional housing facility to address the system youth population, particularly the youth aging out of foster care, because of the higher potential of success through a design intervention. It is important to emphasize that the non-system youth is not excluded from utilizing the services suggested in this design proposal, however, the design response focus on the needs and experiences of the foster care youth and will have more meaningful impact if used as a preventive model than an intervention model.

In the path to eradicate homelessness, promoting social equity and sustainability, it is essential expand prevention strategies to stop youth from ever experiencing homelessness, and if they do, that it is brief and one time only. To house the foster care youth before they experience an episode of homelessness is the most social, environmental and economic approach for providers, the government and society.
This thesis intent to provide an architectural response associated with site selection and housing typology that not only responds to the need of housing former foster care youth, but also help them to develop the individual needs to thrive as successful adults.
5 Understanding the user group: system youth

5.1 Homelessness within former foster care youth

Youth living in the foster care are expected to exit the system and transition to independent living at the age of 18, some states when they are 21 years old, with rare exceptions to extend this transition timeline or the possibility to return to this housed condition in times of need. Many of these young adults when forced out the custody of the state lack adequate education, employment experience and living skills that would allow them to have a successful transition to independent living. They lack the ability to connect with the labor force on a regular basis, establish positive social support systems or self-sustaining, make them feel as worthless members of society (Max & Paluzzi, 2005). Consequently, a lot of former foster care youth have a troubled and traumatic experience trying to achieve an independent living condition, and some even become homeless. Table 1 summarizes the table presented by Dworsky, et. al (2012), in which they compiled an extended literature review of studies that focus on homelessness among foster care youth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Housing Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barth (1990)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>29% had been homeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandford and English (2004)</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>11% had been homeless, 25% had couch surfed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook, Fleisman, and Grimes (1991)</td>
<td>810</td>
<td>25% had been homeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collins, Spencer, and Ward (2010)</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>37% had been homeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtney, Piliavin, Grogan-Kaylor and Nesmith (2001)</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>12% had been homeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daining and DePanfilis (2007)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>28% had been homeless</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 - Key Studies of homelessness and housing stability among foster care youth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Housing Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fowler, Toro, and Miller (2009)</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>31% had been homeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fowler, Toro, Tompsett, and Hobden (2006)</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>17% had been homeless, 33% had couch surfed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dworsky and Courtney (2009)</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>14% had been homeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dworsky and Courtney (2010)</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>30% had been homeless, 37% had couch served</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtney, Dworsky, Brown, Cary, Love and Vorhies (2011)</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>31% had been homeless, 15% had couch served</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pecora, Kessler, Williams, O’Brien, Downs, English, White, Hiripi, White, Wiggins, and Holmes (2005)</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>22% had been homeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pecora, Williams, Kessler, Downs, O’Brien, Hiripi, and Morello (2003)</td>
<td>1087</td>
<td>22% had been homeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reilly (2003)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>36% had been homeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roller, White, Gallegos, O’Brien, Weisberg, Pecora and Medina (2011)</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>20% had been homeless</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Several authors (Straka, et al., 2002; Sherman, 2004; Max & Paluzzi, 2005; Montgomery, et al., 2006; Dworsky, et al., 2013; Lee & Berrick, 2014; Benoit-Bryan, J., 2016; and others) discuss the need for a prevention model - step in between foster care and adulthood - to ensure all youth have a strategy or a place to go after they age out. If they have a strategy, it should involve knowing where they are going to live, with whom and how are they going to afford their living costs. If they do not have a strategy, they still should have access to an exit strategy - already plan for them - that ensures a safe housed condition with programs that promote self-sufficient allowing them to transition smoothly to independent living.
Therefore, this thesis proposes to design a prevention model to ease this transition offering a need-base housing component designed for preparing fostered care youth to succeed in their adult life. Figure 8 draws a comparison of the transition to adulthood timeline between foster care youth without assistance and foster care youth with the prevention model that this study proposes.

Figure 8 - Timeline transition to adulthood
Source - From author, 2016

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In order to propose a successful model, it is required to understand the characteristics and needs of the user group. This thesis next subchapters present characteristics and needs of this youth, the components of successful programs, and design aspects that should be incorporated. These guidelines are created through extensive review of literature from authors who have extensive knowledge of foster care youth and literature review of existing programs that address this group. Their lessons learned and outcomes are carried through the design application of this thesis.

“The transition to adulthood can be a decisive period - involving change or continuity - for all youth, regardless of their prior developmental trajectory. (...) Thus, while youth aging out of care may be at higher risk for negative outcomes in adulthood due to their childhood history, this period also offers a wind of opportunity for positive change and experiences, and building stability into adulthood” (Lee & Berrick, 2014, p.79).

5.2 Characteristics of former foster care youth

Children and teens in the foster care system are commonly from a dysfunctional family. They are removed from their families care, or sometimes abandoned, and placed in the state’s custody because of parents or guardians inability to take care for them. Once in the system, rather than staying in safe and stable environments to recover, the context in which they grow up is one of instability and mobility involving multiple caregivers, constant moving between institutional facilities and group homes. Thus, opportunities and environments that stimulate development and growth might have been scarce. Most of them did not have sufficient time to establish stable relationships with supportive adults, or even with their peers, which make them distrustful of adult
authority figures, and increase their distrust of others. Youth in foster care typically have rigid, policy-driven timelines. Most things in their lives are mandatory, which makes it common for them not to develop any sense of responsibility, since they did not exercise any autonomy in their lives (Lee & Berrick, 2014).

Furthermore, the constant mobility usually harms their education and prospects of employment. According to Sherman (2004), because they moved a lot, changing schools and loosing the school year is frequent which reflects on 75% of youth, leaving foster care at the age of 18 years old, having not completed high-school. They also do not have the opportunity to gain real-world work experience, and do know how to write a resume, or fill a job application. She states 61% of those leaving care never had a job experience making extremely hard for them to secure employment. And those who do find a job, it most likely will not pay them enough to afford or maintain housing and living costs, leading them into homelessness. Graphic 19 features significant statistics of former foster care youth that should be emphasized in this study.

![Graphic 19 - Statistics of former foster care youth](source.png)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leaving the foster care system every year</th>
<th>Did not complete high school</th>
<th>Never had a job experience</th>
<th>Homeless within 2 years of leaving care</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24,000 young people age out from the foster care system each year

Source - Created by author with data from Sherman, 2004
The government noticed this pattern decade ago and started providing federal funding to supportive programs, as mentioned before, as an attempt to offset the flaws in the foster care system and empower this youth to have a successful transition to adulthood. However, the government has failed to establish stricter criteria for funding and services these programs should provide. Lee & Berrick (2014) state many of these funded programs are less than adequate in preparing youth to successfully live on their own. The continued hardship experience by youth who age out of care suggests some of these programs offering learning independent living-skills, and education and training have not proven their efficacy.

Montgomery et al. (2006) go even further and assert what lacks for many programs is a housing component. They believe youth who acquire just education and independent living skills are not sufficiently prepared for a smoother transition to self-sufficiency. Research has shown the most successful programs are those who along with the previously mentioned services, provide employment and housing settings for them to practice the skills they have learned. Kroner (2007) also believes that programs that offer services without housing are not as effective as those that offer both because if youth do not experience living on their own and practicing the skills they’ve learned, they will not be fully learn them. He confirms that several years of working in programs for youth has taught him youth learn when they have to and learn better by real experiences. “Independent living without housing is like driver’s training with a car” (Kroner, 2007, p.52). He believes, to know what are this youth needs and develop services to address them is what makes a support program successful.
5.3 Needs of former foster care youth

As mentioned in a previous chapter, several studies and researches indicate the most impactful services for youth. They are usually directly associated with their most urgent needs. Through literature review, the findings of those needs are: learning and practicing independent living skills, education and employment training, developing relationships with caring adults, and housing. They also need to develop basic abilities such as money and time management, problem-solving skills, use of public transportation, nutrition, food preparation, cleaning, grooming, shopping, and others. Some of these abilities can be address through services and housing, however, it is difficult to establish which ones should be addressed first. In order to define the most critical needs, this author establishes a parallel with Maslow’s Hierarchy of Human Needs to create the Foster Care Youth Hierarchy of Needs. This pyramid is used to guide the evolution of youth and institute priorities within the assistance provided. Figure 9 shows the Foster Care Youth Hierarchy of Needs.
Through this comparison and further literature review, this author conclusions about the model to be proposed are:

- first, that are two primary assistance types that need to be given: services (employment, education, relationship with adults) and housing (functioning, cleaning, cooking, etc.). Services are ineffective own their own, because youth needs a safe environment to practice what they learn and housing is at the pyramid’s base. And housing is ineffective on its own because after the base level needs are met, they will need services to move up in the pyramid.

- second, that there are physical and subjective needs that must be considered. The proposal designed in this thesis has to address these two types of needs. Physical needs are those directly answer through services and housing. The subjective needs
are those that come from the youth engagement and successful response to services and housing, and can be promoted though good design.

5.3.1 Housing

The housing component of programs that asset homeless youth are essential because it gives them a suitable space to develop, practice the skills they are learning, and rights and duties as tenants. Many of these youth never lived by themselves and need assistance while going through this experience. Providing a program with a housing component gives them a protected environment in which make mistakes and learn from them is not only acceptable, it is encouraged. While in mainstream housing, in many cases, they are judged and reprehended for not meeting the expectation of tenancy or neighbors (NAEH, 2015a).

Housing services should be transitional. It’s limited time aspect should be enforced so youth keep in mind the supportive program is a learning phase, not their permanent stay. Although this seems not to be a problem, since NCSL (2013) has found through studies most former foster care youth in supportive living services eventually become mature and independent outgrowing the program, and seeking permanent housing on their own.

As an application of research developed in this study, a housing proposal for former foster care youth is presented. The next chapter of this thesis explores the housing aspects with more depth.
5.3.1 Education and Employment

The program must offer services around education and employment training. They must have the opportunities to study and/or develop vocational skills. Job training, job placement and recommendation services should be provided enforcing experiential learning through internship and volunteering opportunities (NCSL, 2013). Establishing short and long term goals of employment and financial support is recommended so they relate their experience in the program as transitional, and see that reflected in their financial achievements.

It is helpful to require youth assuming responsibilities as well. Since they had responsibilities and decision-making opportunities stripped away for many years of their life those are important functioning and employment skills they need to learn and practice (NAEH, 2015a). Many programs that offer a housing component require youth a symbolic amount as rent - usually 30% of their income, whatever it may be - so they increase their sense of responsibility and do not take for granted their housed condition.

5.3.2 Relationships with caring adults

Former foster care youth also need to establish affinity with adults and build a support network. Homeless youth have little success with establishing healthy and long-lasting relationships. A significant milestone that must be overcome is their fear/distrust of adults or parental figures. They need to regain trust in caring adults and establish healthy relationships within the community they are in, and also society as a whole. Graphic 20 shows the typical distribution of foster care youth’s relationships. This is a need that can be provided through service and enforced through housing.
As a service, an effective way of promoting a relationship with caring adults is to provide one-on-one counseling and management. In addition to establishing direct contact between youth and a caring adult, the program can increase its success rates by being able to tailor interventions to meet individual needs, which is much more effective than using a one-size-fits all approach (Lee & Berrick, 2014). Research shows that a social worker or counselor working in programs for foster care youth should not be assigned more than twelve young adults at a time, so that he/she can establish contact several times a week in the beginning of the program, and have time to establish relationships with them. A good counselor must get to know these young adults, perceive the different levels of maturity they have, which usually varies according to their background and experiences lived, and be able to adjust services to reflect those differences (Kroner, 2007).
Housing can also help youth to build a support network. It can help promote a daily life surrounded by opportunities for development of social skills and community connections. Through providing amenities that serve the surrounding neighbors and hosting events for the community, the place where this youth live can enforce connections to take place, break communication barriers, and even initiate nourishment of relationships. If housed considering these potentials, youth can develop a community-based support system that will ultimately lead them to achieving self-sufficiency from the program services (NAEH, 2015a).

5.3.4 Needs of acceptance and independence

The subjective needs are internally driven aspects of a person related to love and respect. By feeling loved, appreciated, and being proud to themselves, youth can develop self-worth and self-esteem. Even though to meet these needs through a physical intervention is challenging, many authors have linked the housing as a source of wellbeing and acceptance. For Dworsky, et. al (2012), housing works the foundation of wellbeing primarily because it meets the human need of shelter. Secondly, because a safe and stable housing condition functions as a platform to promote positive outcome in education, employment, physical and mental health. Thirdly, it gives the youth the opportunity to practice daily life tasks (cooking, budgeting, shopping) and develop confidence that comes from their successful performance. Ans lastly, it allows for a smooth transition from supportive living to independent living.

Wade & Dixon (2006) state being “well in housing” as the “factor most closely associated with positive mental well-being in young people” (p.199). They sampled 106
youth leaving the foster care and their developments within 12 to 15 months after leaving the system, concluding that housing and employment are the needs that should be prioritized. Their study highlights that good housing, well designed and well located, makes a critical difference to youth growth and well-being. It also emphasizes the significance of housing goes beyond the physical structure itself, particularly because when managing well their homes, youth showed feelings of accomplishments, higher appreciation for themselves increasing self-esteem. They also point out the main differentials for successful housing are being appropriate to the user group and location. These aspects of housing are explored in the following chapter.

For the sake of this thesis, to provide services for youth this author sought to define a potential agency that could be closely linked programmatically and logistically with the architectural intervention. The partner agency should provide the services component, while this author provides an architectural proposal for the housing component of this new program designed for former foster care youth.
6 Housing for former foster care youth

Appropriateness and location are important aspects of supportive housing. Where and how a person lives, plays a direct influence in their daily lives and development. The next two subchapters explore housing models and location characteristics that should be considered during the site selection and design process of housing for former foster care youth.

6.1 Housing Model

Kroner, M. J. (2007) defines common transitional program’s sizes. These sizes vary with the housing model. Institutions are large facilities with most services on ground housing between forty to hundreds young people, such as shelters and adult facilities. Congregate housing uses a combination of on-ground assistance and community-based services housing between 15 to 40 youth. This model is more used for families and youth experiencing homelessness since it has a more limited size, but still providing services on-site. Host homes are usually houses in the community that already provide services housing youth. This model usually house between 6 to 12 people and is very common for children in foster care because of the possibility of mimicking familiar settings. Supervised apartments, also known as scattered-site apartments, can be privately owned and rented, or purchased by the agency. They offer the highest independence, but the lowest accessibility to services. This model is extensively used as a supportive housing program for adults, families, and youth.
Even though, studies reviewed do not present one housing model as more effective than the other, researchers stress the importance of following using the most appropriate model according to the user group. To identify which model to apply for this proposal, this author selects and analyzes three case studies that follow the two most commonly housing models used for homeless youth: congregate housing and scattered-apartments.

Before presenting the case studies, the basic characteristics used to analyze the case studies is presented. The bullet point list of characteristics of the two housing models was based on the findings in Kroner, M. J. (2007), and NAEH, (2015b).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supervised apartments or Scattered-site characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• usually do not have support or supervision on-site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• youth are placed in a private rental unit, so the program does not have costs with property and maintenance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• it provides more independent living conditions. Some find it helpful to develop self-control, some fail to succeed because they lose focus and control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• neighbors are not in similar situation. It can be positive if the unit is conveniently located. It can be negative if it is located around bad influences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• size is not limited to the amount of units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a positive point is that it can allow them to stay in the unit after completion of the program, and take over the lease.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Congregate Housing or Single-site characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• usually have 24 hours support and on-site supervision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the program has to acquire and maintain the property.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the environment is more structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• usually have extensive rules and schedules to maintain. Some youth find helpful, others are unable to comply.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• neighbors are in similar situation. Some youth find helpful to share the experience, others find stressful to live around people with their same needs and problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the size is limited to amount of units. This can be positive because it increases control over of youth in the program, and it can be negative because youth may get rejected due capacity issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a negative point is youth have to move out when the program ends.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.2 Case Studies

6.2.1 Scattered-site apartments

Housing Name: Chestnut Bend Apartments
Address: 1225 S. Rockford Ave, Tulsa-OK, 74120
Program name: Youth Services of Tulsa
Assistance and pop.: Transition housing or former foster care and homeless youth
Age of population: 17 to 22 years
Length of Stay in program: up to 24 months
Architect: Unknown

Figures 10 and 11 - Images of Chestnut Bend Apartments
Source - Google Earth, 2016
6.2.2 Single site congregate housing

Housing Name: Restoration Gardens
Address: 3701 Cottage Ave, Baltimore-MD, 21215
Program name: AIRS City Steps
Assistance and population: Transition and permanent housing for homeless youth
Age of population: 18 to 24 years
Length of Stay in program: up to 24 months
Architect: Cho Benn Holback + Associates
6.2.3 Single site not-congregate housing

Housing Name: Rising Oaks
Address: 3840 Coolidge Ave, Oakland-CA, 94602
Program name: Fred Finch Youth Center
Assistance and population: Transition housing for former foster care youth
Age of population: 18 to 24 years
Length of Stay in program: up to 24 months
Architect: Mikiten Architecture

Figures 14 and 15 - Images of Rising Oaks
Source - Fred Finch Youth website, 2016

K. K. Oliveira, 2017, Sustaining independence
6.3 Case studies comparison

Table 2 shows a comparison between the three cases studies. The boxes highlighted in green represent aspects believed to be positive specially for former foster care youth, while the boxes highlighted in red are those believed to be negative for this user group. The information presented in Table 2 was gathered from the institutions websites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSING MODEL</th>
<th>SCATTERED SITE</th>
<th>ONE SITE</th>
<th>ONE SITE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HOUSING ACQUISITION</td>
<td>Units are rented from the private market</td>
<td>Subsidized units owned and managed by program</td>
<td>Subsidized units owned and managed by program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIZE</td>
<td>Unlimited (this building has 12 units available)</td>
<td>Limited (39 units)</td>
<td>Limited (30 units)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUPERVISION</td>
<td>Lower level of supervision, monthly visits</td>
<td>Highest level of supervision, daily visits</td>
<td>Some level of supervision, weekly visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENVIRONMENT TYPE</td>
<td>Less structured environment which requires youth to be more responsible</td>
<td>Very structured environment with set of rules and schedules to assure functioning</td>
<td>Structured environment with rules to be followed to assure functioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIVING CONDITIONS</td>
<td>Private Studio Apartments</td>
<td>Private Studio Apartments or Shared Apartment with 2 bedrooms</td>
<td>Private Studio Units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYSICAL LAYOUT</td>
<td>Affordable apartment units dispersed though community</td>
<td>Single building complex on one site</td>
<td>Multiple units with private entrance that share the same site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DELIVERY OF SUPPORTIVE SYSTEMS</td>
<td>At Headquarter</td>
<td>Delivered on-site with 24 hours support</td>
<td>Delivered on-site with 24 hours support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From the case studies comparison, this author concludes the most appropriate model for former foster care youth is the single site not-congregate housing.

6.4 Location of housing

Several authors, Davis (2004), Wade & Dixon (2006), Kroner (2007), Bridgman (2009), NCSL (2013), describe location as a significant factor when designing a supportive housing projects. In order to select a site for the proposed housing model, this author created a methodology to address the ideal conditions the project’s location must have to better the transitional experience for the residents. The following bullet point list summarizes assets of an ideal location based on the literature review of the authors mentioned above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSING MODEL</th>
<th>SCATTERED SITE</th>
<th>ONE SITE</th>
<th>ONE SITE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOCIAL LIVING</td>
<td>Depends on the community where unit is located.</td>
<td>Recreational and social events are provided frequently in the complex.</td>
<td>Social living shared with people in the same situation as self.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>END OF PROGRAM</td>
<td>Possible to stay in housing</td>
<td>Move out of housing</td>
<td>Move out of housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AESTHETICS</td>
<td>Unpleasant</td>
<td>Pleasant</td>
<td>Pleasant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 - Comparison of case studies
Source - Created by author, 2016
In the process of selecting a site for the design proposal it was established the general location should be the city of Atlanta, or its metropolitan area, because of being to access and travel to the selected site. Sequentially, a methodology for selection was created based on the principles mentioned above. The next chapter describes the methodology and shows its application.
7. Site Selection

7.1 Methodology for site selection

It was previously established the need for partnering with an agency - the “host” that already provides assistance services for at-risk youth. Ideally, the housing component should be close to the host’s headquarters so residents do not have to commute a long distance to receive the services they need, therefore selecting the adequate host is as important as the location itself.

1) The first step to selecting the site is rank pre-selected agencies according to the services they already provide. Twenty agencies were pre-selected from several others that were found through research. The screening of these agencies was based on the relation between the services they offer and the user group they focus.

A point system was created to establish which needs should be given higher points according to the Foster Care Youth Hierarchy of Needs:

- employment services that involve education and training get four points;
- case-management services (establishing relationship with caring adults), also get four points;
- if the agencies’ services are already focusing on homelessness youth, they get three points;
- if they have housing (the design proposal could also be remodeling an existing building), they get two points.
2) The second step in selecting site concerns location assets. After ranking these twenty agencies, their location was marked on google maps and they were funneled through three location prerequisites:

- being located within 0.3 mile of public transportation;
- being located in a residential setting;
- being located in a low crime area.

In order to assess crime rates, google’s online Crime Risk Map tool was used.

3) For the agencies that passed the location prerequisites, the third step is to rank them according to their location assets through a point system:

- having access to groceries within 0.5 miles gives three points;
- having access to a pharmacy within 0.5 miles gives three points;
- having access to health care within 0.5 miles gives three points;
- having access to a park within 1 miles gives two points;
- having access to a school within 1 miles gives two points;
- having access to a community center within 1 miles gives two points.

4) The forth step is to pick the agency with most points as the host program.

5) The fifth and final step is selected a site within 0.1 mile of the headquarters of the host. For environmental purposes, the site can not be greenfield or open spaces used by the neighbors.
In retrospect of the case studies presented earlier in this chapter, this author applied the second step of site selection methodology to the case studies presented previously to assess if they would meet the criteria needed to considered their site adequate. Table 3 shows a summary of these findings. The maps used to performed this analysis are presented in the end of this thesis as Appendix 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSING MODEL</th>
<th>Public Transportation</th>
<th>Residential setting</th>
<th>Low Crime Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHESTNUT APARTMENTS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESTORATION GARDENS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RISING OAKS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 - Analysis of the case studies through adequate location prerequisites
Source - Created by author, 2016
7.2 Application of site selection methodology

The twenty pre-selected agencies are presented in table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGY</th>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>ADDRESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Atlanta Mission/My Sister’s House</td>
<td>921 Tower Mill Rd, Atlanta, 30318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Boys+Girls Club of Metro Atlanta</td>
<td>1275 Peachtree St NE, Atlanta, 30309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Life works</td>
<td>2221 Austell Rs SW, Marietta, 30008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chris Kids</td>
<td>2045 Graham Cir SE, Atlanta, 30316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Covenant House</td>
<td>1559 Johnson Rd NW, Atlanta, 30318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>First Step Staffing</td>
<td>302 Decatur St, Atlanta, 30312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Gateway Center</td>
<td>275 Pryor St SW, Atlanta, 30303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Georgia Parents Support Network</td>
<td>1381 Metropolitan Pkwy, Atlanta, 30310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Lost_n_Found</td>
<td>Chantilly Drive, Atlanta, 30310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Multiagency Alliance for Children</td>
<td>225 Peachtree St NE, Atlanta, 30303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Necco</td>
<td>2262 Mt Zion Rd, Jonesboro, 30236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Nicholas House</td>
<td>830 Boulevard SE, Atlanta, 30312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Odyssey 3</td>
<td>276 Decatur Se SE, Atlanta, 30312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Peachtree+Pine Works</td>
<td>477 Peachtree St, Atlanta, 30308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Project Community Connections</td>
<td>236 Auburn Ave NE, Atlanta, GA 30303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Stand Up for Kids</td>
<td>83 Walton St, Atlanta, 30303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>YES Atlanta</td>
<td>385 Pryor St SW, Atlanta, 30312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Young Adults Guidance Center</td>
<td>1230 Hightower Rd NW, Atlanta, 30303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Young People Matter</td>
<td>250 Guidance Ave, Atlanta, 30312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Youth Enhancement Services</td>
<td>100 Edgewood Ave, Atlanta, 30303</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 - Pre-selected agencies to be potential Host
Source - Created by author, 2016
Step 1) Rank pre-selected agencies according to the services they already provide. Table 5 presents the findings of step 1. The agencies’ websites, and social media pages were used to gather the information presented in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="bus" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="house" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="police" /></td>
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<td>12</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="bus" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="house" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="police" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="bus" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="house" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="police" /></td>
<td>13</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="bus" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="house" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="police" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<td><img src="image" alt="house" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="police" /></td>
<td>14</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="bus" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="house" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="police" /></td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="bus" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="house" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="police" /></td>
<td>16</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="bus" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="house" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="police" /></td>
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<td><img src="image" alt="bus" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="house" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="police" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 - Agencies and the services offered
Source - Created by author, 2016
Step 2) Analyze agencies's locations through three location prerequisites: located close to public transportation, located in a residential setting, located in a low crime area. Table 6 shows a summary of this analysis. The maps used to performed this analysis are presented in the end of this thesis as Appendix 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGY</th>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>AGY</th>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
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<td>+9</td>
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</tr>
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<td>+7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 - Agencies and location prerequisites
Source - Created by author, 2016
Step 3) Only four agencies passed the location prerequisites, therefore they are ranked according to their location assets. Table 7 shows a summary of this analysis. The maps used to performed this analysis are presented in the end of this thesis as Appendix 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGY</th>
<th>Groceries</th>
<th>Pharmacy</th>
<th>Health C.</th>
<th>Park</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Com. Ctr</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>🛒</td>
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<td>🏢</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>🌳</td>
<td>📚</td>
<td>🏢</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>🌳</td>
<td>📚</td>
<td>🏢</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 - Agencies and location assets
Source - Created by author, 2016
Step 4) In order to pick the agency with most points, the points acquired for services provided were added to the points acquired for location assets. The agency number 8 - Georgia Parents Support Network - was selected as Host of the model proposed by this work. As previously established, this model is composed of two main parts: services and housing. The Host is responsible for providing the services, the housing component is provided as design application of this thesis. The Table 8 shows the results of the site selection methodology.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGY</th>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>Services points</th>
<th>Assets points</th>
<th>Total Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Boys+Girls Club of Metro Atlanta</td>
<td>+7</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Georgia Patens Support Network</td>
<td>+9</td>
<td>+9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Necco</td>
<td>+10</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Young Adults Guidance Center</td>
<td>+9</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 - Agencies final ranking
Source - Created by author, 2016

Figure 16, in the following page, summarizes the findings of the site selection methodology.
Figure 16 - Site selection process
Source - Created by author, 2016
Step 5) After selecting the Host, 646 Dill Ave SW is selected as the site. Figure 17 shows the location of the host, and figure 18 shows the location of the site selected in relation to the host location.

![Host location and site selected in relation to host's location](image)

Figure 17 and 18 - Host location, and site selected in relation to host's location
Source - Created by author, 201

7.3 The selected site

The site is located in the Southeast in relation to the city of Atlanta’s downtown, inside the perimeter of Highway 285 (see figure 19). The main highways close to the site are Interstate 20 (I-20) to the north, Interstate 85 (I-85) to the east, state highway 154 (SR-154) to the south (see figure 20), and US route 29 (US-29) to the west (see figure 21). The main streets give access to the site are the arterial Metropolitan Pkwy SW, and the collector Dill Ave SW (see figure 22). The neighborhood in which the site is located is Capital View.
Figure 19 - Site context in Atlanta
Source - Created by author, 2016

Figure 20 - Site context with major Hwys
Source - Created by author, 2016

Figure 21 - Site context with access roads
Source - Created by author, 2016

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The site is conveniently located close to different public transportation types. The Oakland City MARTA Station - train rail system of Atlanta - is within one mile radius from the site, which translates to twenty minutes walk according to the Google’s Directions tool. The residents also have easy access to buses. The MARTA Bus route that serves the neighborhood conveniently passes through Metropolitan Pkwy SW, and the bus stop is located a few feet from the site (see figure 22).
The site is also well served with parks for recreation within one mile, as well as being two blocks away - five minutes walk - to the city of Atlanta Beltline, which in the future when this section is ready - will serve this community with optimal, green and recreational infrastructures, also attract investments to the neighborhood and link the youth to city through another transportation mode, the bicycle. Figure 23 shows the site in relation to the Beltline and city parks.

Figure 23 - Site in relation to the Beltline and other parks
Source - Created by author, 2016
Figure 24 shows main roads, the Beltline and parks combined, and figure 25 and 26 zooms in to the radius scale that is used for other analysis. Further explorations of the site’s conditions, as well as design explorations are presented in the following chapters as Part II of this thesis.
PART II - DESIGN PROCESS
8 Site Context and analysis

According to the Atlanta Department of Planning and Community Development, the site is located in the zone Neighborhood Commercial District 9 (NC 9) (see figure 27). The site is also in the Beltline Overlay zone, and inserted in the Heritage Communities category (see figure 28).

Figure 27 - Site zoning map
Source - Created by author, 2016

Figure 28 - Beltline zoning overlay
Source - Created by author, 2016
In relation to the planning entities of Atlanta, the site is part of the Okland City/Fort McPherson study area of the Livable Center Initiative (LCI) (see figure 29). Most of the interventions proposed by the LCI for this area are related to the profile of streets and sidewalks. And the site is located in the Neighborhood Planning Unit X (NPU), which incentivize low density commercial and mixed-use buildings to be implemented in the area. Figure 30 shows the current land use for this region.

Figure 29 - Site’s LCI
Source - Created by author, 2016

Figure 30 - Land Use
Source - Created by author, 2016
To better understand the relationship between public and private, circulation and the built environment, figures 31 and 32 show this area’s street pattern and figure ground, respectively.
In addition to being close to the program’s host agency, the site selected also has many potentials for community engagement in its surroundings. The possibility of developing partnerships with the public and private institutions that already are embedded in the community daily life is of extreme importance for the success of the program, because it opens opportunities for the youth to interact outside of the housing complex and start to build a community support network. Figure 33 highlights these potentials.

Figure 33 - Potentials around site
Source - Created by author, 2016
The site selected is a currently previously disturbed site with two old, dilapidated buildings that are not identified for preservation or re-use. They are advised to be demolished, and their materials have limited potential to be re-used in the proposed housing complex. The site also has a convenience store in decayed condition. This author proposes to demolish the current structures and incorporate the mercantile program (convenience store) within the new complex, offering a retail space of similar size to its functioning. The figure on this page is an enlarged diagram showing the immediate site boundaries. Figures 34, 35, and 36 document the site’s current condition.
The map to the side shows in which angle each photo was taken.

Figure 34, 35 and 36 - Photographs of the site
Source - Created by author, 2016

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The site’s original area is 40,280 sq ft., measuring 265 ft. by 152 ft. (see figure 37). However, the site’s sidewalks are not in compliance with the Georgia Code of Ordinances. The Beltline overlay required two zones for the sidewalks: a street furniture and tree planing zone, which should be at least 5 feet, and a clear (paved) zone, which should be at least 10 ft (see figure 38). It also decided to include on-street parking in the site area, since the Beltline overlay also offers on-street parking incentives to reduce the area of private parking lots and incentivizes the use of public transportation or bicycle paths (see figure 39).
Figure 38 and 39 - First adaptations of the site
Source - Created by author, 2017
After reviewing and adjusting the site’s edges to meet the code, the site is analyzed through its natural aspects: sun path and wind (see figure 40), topography (see figure 41), rainwater runoffs (see figure 42). The climate consultant tool was used to gather information of sun and wind. The topography data was found in the Atlanta Department of Planning and Community Development GIS website. The lines mark increments of one foot in figure 39. The site has a level difference of eleven feet, which gives an interesting topography to engage when designing the building. The rainwater runoff was created based on the topography of the site and surroundings. In the method of design, this would, of course, vary based on the site conditions and will allow different opportunities for housing layout and building design.

Figure 40 - Sun-path in Summer and Winter solstices, and Fall equinox
Source - Created by author, 2017

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Figure 41 and 42 - Site's topography and rainwater runoff
Source - Created by author, 2017
9 Design exercises

9.1 Case studies and Test fit

In order to elaborate the housing complex program, determine square footage needed to exercise each activity and understand the best practices of placement between programs, this author does a test fit exercise with four housing projects that have had recognizable success and acknowledgement as good architecture within this realm. The first is the most successful case study, according to this author, previously presented in the case study section, the Rising Oaks complex (see figure 43). The other projects are Rene Cazenave Apartments (see figure 44), The Star Apartments (see figure 45), and The Brook (see figure 46).

Figure 43- Rising Oaks floor plan
Source - Mikiten Architecture, 2016
Figure 44- Rene Cazenave Apartments floor plan
Source - http://www.aiatopten.org

Figure 45- Star Apartments floor plan
Source - http://www.arch.iit.edu

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Through the categorization of space types, each floor plan was studied and colored to facilitate their comprehension. After defining all areas, specific spaces of these housing complexes above were placed in the selected site to understand the proportion and size of the site. Figures 47 and 48 show the test fit analysis.

Additionally, merging the knowledge acquired through the analysis of spatial relationships and what was found in literature review to be most helpful for former foster care youth, this author was able to elaborate a program for the housing complex. Figure 49 shows a programmatic disposition diagram at the building scale and at the unit scale.
Figure 47 - Analysis of the housing complexes
Source - Created by author, 2017

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Figure 48 - Test fit of spaces in selected site
Source - Created by author, 2017
Figure 49 - Program diagram at building and unit scales
Source - Created by author, 2017

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9.2 Application of lessons learned from the case studies

Another strategy observed from the Test fit exercise, and enforced by experts in designing for homeless youth, was the importance of addressing and respecting the site’s surroundings. Sam Davis, an architect and professor at the University of California, discuss in his book “Designing for the homeless: architecture that works" from 2004, the repugnance of the neighbors is a common problem when the user group of a project is homeless or former homeless people. He believes the building itself, if built attractively, has the ability to extinguish nimby (“not in my back yard”) mentality by adding value to the community through its aesthetic design and provision of amenities (Davis, 2004).

Rae Bridgman, a professor in the Architecture Department of the University of Manitoba and author of several books about homelessness, also highlights the importance of considering the surrounding context in the design process. From her experience assessing innovative housing for homeless and documenting their development since 1998, these projects should create space for the future residents and for the community around them. She states housing complexes for youth must be linked to community-buildings. To provide shared amenities for the neighborhood enhances not only the safety and security of the overall project by engaging the community around to keep visual surveillance of the building, but also creates the opportunities and almost oblige residents to interact with the neighbors while utilizing the amenities. Furthermore, she believes establishing relationship with the larger community outside the complex is as import as offering services to the community within the complex. The project should take advantage of the potentials for interaction in the
surrounding neighborhood (Bridgman, 2009). Figure 50 shows a diagram of how this author expects to respond to the site’s surroundings based on what was learned through research, and analysis of the site’s context.
After determining the best practices to address the site's edges and surroundings, a parti diagram was created to demonstrate overall intention and the main circulation axes of the project. Figure 51 shows the parti diagrams created.
After creating the primary parti diagram, the author started to explore the layout of housing units. The complex edges were kept the same, respecting the decisions made in the Response to Surroundings diagram, and the residential area was investigated through two layouts: terrace and courtyard. Both models propose a multi-family residential bar located on the second level facing Dill Ave., and single-occupancy detached units to be layout according to the design proposal.

The terrace model employs a split-level unit (Unit type 1). Four units to be placed on the site’s edge facing Athens Ave, with direct access to the street and respecting the yard line of the neighboring houses. The other units are placed terracing along a single circulation axis that gives access to each unit. Figure 52 shows an aerial view of the terrace model with its parti diagram iteration.

The Courtyard model builds upon decisions made in the Terrace model. It preserves three type 1 units facing Athens Ave, thus introduce a double level unit (Unit type 2) to be employed internally. In this model, all internal units face a central courtyard that also gives access to each individual unit. Figure 53 shows an aerial view of the courtyard model with its parti diagram iteration.

Succeeding the designing of these two models, this author decided to analyze them further through their circulation and access characteristics, the social gathering spaces they offered, their environmental potential and also study possible privacy issues within the housing units. Both models offered positives and negative aspects. Figure 54 represents the conclusions of that analysis.
Figure 52 - Terrace Housing and Unit type 1
Source - Created by author, 2017

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Figure 53 - Courtyard Housing and Unit type 2
Source - Created by author, 2017

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Figure 54 - Terrace and Courtyard housing comparison
Source - Created by author, 2017

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Synthesis of findings:

• The circulation in Terrace housing is too long for certain residents and one main circulation gives them no freedom to circulate more freely through the complex. In the Courtyard housing the circulation is more or less the same for most residents, however, there is no clear hierarchy or path of circulation. In relation to access both models do not present a clear definition of the unit’s fronts and backs.

• Both models propose some good spaces for informal social gathering, such as the third level terrace in the corner of the site and the back courtyard, however, they also present problematic spaces. In Terrace housing, the outdoor space between the multi-family building and the detached units has an interesting location for its transitional aspect, but the space seems to be too narrow and not very comfortable to utilize. In Courtyard housing, the central courtyard within the units offers a central conversion point for the residents, however the lack of separation between those who want to socialize and those who want to be in the privacy of their house might create an undesired institutional feel.

• The environmental potential is similar for both housing typologies. Both offer many opportunities to install photovoltaics and collect rainwater. Another aspect perceived during this analysis was that the Terrace housing model might be too repetitive, and give a mass-production feel to the housing complex. And even though the Courtyard housing has more variety of unit types, it still does not offer different qualities to the housing complex. In both models, most young adults are housed in the same condition, not offering enough variety that would reflect their different personas.
• Both housing types have privacy issues. The Terrace housing shows more problematic areas than Courtyard housing, but neither models provide private space or land outside the house which limits inhabiting and learning possibilities to the indoor space of each individual unit.

Through the analysis of positives and negatives in both models, this author attempts to implement the positives and solve the issues identified through the analysis of the Terrace and Courtyard housing in a new housing model: Village housing. The connotation of “village” suggest not just a housing project, but a surrounding neighborhood community that encourages evolvement (Bridgman, 2009). This new model incorporates both unit type 1 and 2 detached living, and introduces another two unit types found in the multi-family residential bar. The four units facing the Athens Ave are preserved. The internal units are organized in three main levels so the internal units still have visual connection to the neighborhood, and three main axes, one arterial and two collectors. Images 55 to 58 show the analysis of the Village housing through the same aspects used to evaluate the previous models.
The circulation is divided in three main axes with a clear distinction of hierarchy. The arterial street is located in the transitional space between the multi-family building and the detached units, serving as the main circulation for residents living in both housing typologies. Access to each individual unit is through Athens Ave, in the case of those units located on the edge of the complex, through a collector street located in the center of the residential project serving half of the existing units, and through a local street that serves four units located in the most internal section of the housing complex.

Social Gatherings
Some of the spaces for social gathering from the previous models are preserved in Village housing, such as such as the third level terrace in the corner of the site and the internal courtyard. A communal balcony is introduced right under the 3rd level terrace connecting the internal courtyard located to the external facade of the complex, giving youth visual access to the main intersection of Metropolitan Pkwy and Dill Ave. The outdoor space located in between the two housing typologies is expanded in comparison with the previous typologies, and protected from the rain by a high roof in order to multiply the activities that can happen in this space.
The environmental potentials of the previous housing models are kept. The photovoltaics potential is expanded through a slit increase of the multi-family building roof to face South, while allowing the sun and wind through circulate between the roof itself and the apartment’s ceiling. Rainwater harvesting can be implemented on that sloped roof, as well as the roof of every detached unit. This model also included a greenhouse located in the internal backyard for learning and training purposes. Through the implementation of unit types 1 and 2 in the Village Model, the residential setting has more variety and flexibility within the housing complex.
The Village housing have very few privacy issues. The first floor of residential units of the multi-family building and the local street that give access to the four most internal detached units might have some privacy issues since their access is connected with social gathering spaces. However, since it is presumed that the youth placed in these units need to expand their socialization skills, it might be acceptable to push them out of their comfort zone. Additionally, this model proposes all detached units have an individual backyard. This private space is critical for those residents to develop responsibilities and to take ownership over a particular space that is subjected to the perception and even criticism of the “public eye”.

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11 Design proposal: The Village Transitional Housing

In order to determine which were the most significant housing characteristics design that should be implemented in the design, literature from authors who have, over the past two decades, designed for the homeless or assessed design outcomes was reviewed. The following images and text intend to present the final housing proposal along with the reasoning behind the decisions made. Formal and to scale drawings - floor plans and sections - of the housing complex are provided as Appendix 4.
Urban context

As previously mentioned, several authors (Davis, 2004; Bridgman 2009) point out the importance of establishing connections with the surrounding community. This housing complex takes advantages of the potentials in the neighborhood to create programs that promote daily interaction with community and organize events to instigate those connections to be formed. For example, the youth that source their fresh produce from the urban farm get extra credit in their cooking class. Perhaps youth can volunteer at the public library reading stories for children, or working for the librarian. A “Friends of the Beltline” group can be created, in which youth commits to keep take care of the Beltline and give tours for community and tourist, and etc. Several programs and campaigns like these can be created to promote interaction of youth with adults.
Zoom to the site

The site surrounded by three streets and a service ally. The portion of Metropolitan Pkwy and Dill Avenue that face the site are primary commercial, while Athens Ave is a residential street. As mentioned previously, address the surrounding context and provide amenities for the neighborhood are crucial for the complex to be well received by the neighbors. Therefore, addressing the “edges” is the one of the first steps of the design process. It is important to highlight the site has an eleven feet level difference, sloping upward in the SW direction towards Athens Avenue. The design engages the site’s topography respecting the edges and relationship to the street with a few earth moves in its internal configuration.
Ground level/ Commercial edges

In order to respond to the commercial settings of two streets, retail spaces are offered in two edges of the site. In the arterial street - Metropolitan Pkwy - the spaces concentrate on a broader public offering a retail store, convenience store and cantina style restaurant served by a communal kitchen internally operated by the resident youth. The spaces facing the collector street - Dill Ave - focus on community driven programs and classes such as a commercial laundry, a dance/music room and arts+craft room. All of these spaces serve multiple functions within the complex. They not only respond to their surroundings properly, as well as add value to the community, bring opportunity for the complex to collect rent from those spaces, provide opportunity for youth to develop employment skills through training and internship, and engage the broader community and residents to establish connection through daily-life activities.
Residential edge/Main circulations

To address the conditions in Athens ave, the design proposes a residential edge facing this street to maintain its configuration. Additionally, the units on this edge respect the height scale and the front yard’s property line of the adjacent houses. This response introduces a housing type more independent that has direct access to street which is ideal to mimic traditional living conditions. However, a more controlled and secured access to the other units within the complex is needed. In this project the control is done through separate lobbies. Bridgman (2009) states private access is a common complaint among youth. Several young adults she interviewed complained about the general public being able to access the residential areas. They were emphatic about not sharing the entrance to their private units with others that do not live in those settings. Therefore, this complex has two separate lobbies that have a controlled internal connection between them. The main lobby is more public and give access for the institutional settings of the complex. The private residents lobby gives access to the resident’s housing units.
Services and internal community amenities

Other amenities - a computer room and an auditorium - are provided within the complex. The complex and the host agency should manage these spaces themselves, not subsidize as the retail spaces. Their primary focus is to serve the internal community with learning and training programs. Occasionally, these spaces may serve the broader community and possibly bring revenue to the complex though scheduled events.

Additionally, auxiliary spaces - service areas - are provided in order for the complex to function. These operating spaces are bathrooms, reception, staff room, manager room, mechanical and electrical rooms, recycling rooms and multiple storage spaces. Vertical circulation is also introduced through stairs and elevators.

All the spaces mentioned and described above complete the first level of the Village Transitional Housing complex.
New ground and Second level

For the second level of the housing complex, a “new ground” is designed with free access from the resident’s lobby vertical circulation, and semi-controlled access from the main lobby. The decision of creating an open and outdoor “new ground” that distinguishes from the first level conditions was made to establish a clear division between institutional and residential settings. Several authors (Davis, 2004; Bridgman, 2009; NCSL, 2013) mention the project should avoid feeling institutional because that might be distrustful to them. They believe youth are less likely to engage in services or to finish programs with an institutional feel because of their trauma towards figures of authority. Hence, the housing should avoid resembling an institutional building to increase the likelihood of the program being successful. Therefore, the residential part of the complex is designed as semi-private village to provide them the feeling of safety and community.
Residents Amenities

On the second level, formal and informal amenities are designed for the resident. The formal spaces are a greenhouse, with the goal to teach youth about organic food sourcing and good harvesting practices, as well as exercising possible employment and vocational skills; a counseling office enclosed by glass walls with lots of light and openness, challenging the old assumption that counselor offices should be closed-off for privacy which is not true anymore according to Davis (2004); and an eating hall that hosts both formal and informal dinning. The informal amenities are focused in promoting spontaneous social gathering. The design should include nice courtyards and living spaces (Davis, 2004). These spaces are a transitional outdoor/indoor patio, a courtyard, a communal balcony, and a communal terrace, located on a third level. These informal gathering spaces will be further described and analyses later in this thesis.
Housing: Multi-family and villa

For the residential sector of the complex, there are two types of settings, three main types of units and four phases of living conditions. Most of these units offer private living, with the exception of three units that are shared suites, because individual apartments are believed to be the best way for youth to develop independent skills (Kroner, 2007). These different types and conditions of housing provide flexibility and different privacy levels needed to embrace youth with different levels of maturity and different supportive needs. One living arrangement does not work for all youth. By creating a hierarchy of housing transitioning through the program itself is helpful to give them a sense of structure, and something to look forward to while evolving in the program. Their housing condition needs to evolve with them addressing their current needs, which are probably different from those they came into the program with (Bridgman, 2009; NCSL, 2013).
Complex complete: roof and porches

To expand the possibilities and uses of the transition patio, the multi-family building roof extends to protect the patio space and create an outdoor/indoor condition. Additionally, to provide cultural adequacy, and to shade the southern facade, a porch is introduced to the resident’s lobby and to the individual units. The porch also emphasizes the entryway which has a high symbolic and physiologic value for this youth since the physical entry marks transition between the street into a protected housed condition (Davis, 2004).

The final three images show the Village Transitional Housing complete, the complex within its urban context and a rendered image of the project with photos of built projects to show the aspired aesthetic and spaces characteristics of this project.
Urban context with Village Transitional Housing complex
The commercial edge corner

Mixed-use building: retail on ground and residential above

Main lobby staircase view from outside the lobby

Main lobby interior view

Figure 59 - The Broad by Diller-Scofidio+Renfro
Source - www.dezeen.com

Figure 60 - Building 82% by LTL Architects
Source - www.ltlarchitects.com

Figure 61 - Seamarq Hotel by Richard Meier & Partners Architects
Source - www.interiordesign.net

Figure 62 - Wang Campus Center by Mack Scogin Merrill Elam Architects
Source - www.ndagallery.cooperhewitt.org
Multi-family building shading system

Figure 63 - Praça Municipal 47 by Eduardo Maurmann & team
Source - www.archdaily.com.br

Multi-family housing building transition to detached units

Figure 64 - The North Parker by Jonathan Segal
Source - www.jonathansegalarchitect.com

Multi-family building internal hallway

Figure 65 - Pico Place by Brooks+Scarpa
Source - www.archdaily.com

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Southern Porches

Figure 66 - Shotgun style houses in SE Atlanta
Source - www.nps.gov

Backyards relationship

Figure 67 and 68 - Breathe Urban Village by Anselmi Attiani Associated Architects
Source - www.inhabitat.com
A housing complex for at-risk of homeless former foster care youth is more successful if a variety of housing conditions are offered. To have different conditions within the residential setting gives case-managers the ability to move youth from one housing condition to another within the same complex, adding opportunities to better address their needs and increasing their behavior and level of functioning because they learn and evolve by adapting to these different configurations (Kroner, 2007). Youth need environments that provide safety and structure, belonging and membership, self-worth and community participation, promotes positive relationships, and allow them to achieve independence and take control over their lives (NCSL, 2013). Bridgman (2009) highlights the importance of allowing youth participation in designing their living quarters in order to build ownership and to make them feel appreciated and a part of the project. Giving them the opportunity to personalize their own space is a great tool to build and find their identity. “Giving them personal space is perhaps the most significant form of empowerment” (Kroner, 2007, p.61).

The following pages analyze the complex’s housing conditions and how they promote different settings and respond the needs of former foster care youth.
The housing complex is composed of four living settings:

Settings 1 a, b - **Youth Functioning**

Settings 2- **Youth Belonging**

Settings 3 - **Youth Self-awareness**

Settings 4 - **Youth Independence**

The settings are populated by the case-management services through placement or progression. Placement occurs when they first arrive to the program. A case-manager does an assessment of their behavior and needs, then decides which settings is more suitable for them. Youth does not need to go through all the living settings and also it is not a guarantee they are placed in the setting that would best fit them due to capacity issues, which translates to interesting conditions of learning and social engagement. Progression occurs when youth follows the living settings in order, learning and acquiring the skills to be ready for a new housing condition. The different settings are critical to ensure flexibility, adaptability and transition.
Settings 1 - **Youth Functioning**

Physical Layout

- **3a** Double occupancy shared suite with bathroom, kitchen and balcony.
- **3b** Single occupancy suite with bathroom, kitchen and balcony.

The units only defined spaces are the bathroom and kitchen. Youth can decide how they want to layout and personalize their living spaces. The use of double panels in the balcony - shading and glazing - gives them the opportunity to adapt their housing to preferred conditions. These units characteristics should help youth to address and develop conflict-resolution skills, decision-making skills, and organizational skills needs. Unit 3a helps with coping and sharing skills, also it can be used to house siblings. The unit 3b, although private, is still linked in a multi-family building to keep a sense of community and shared responsibilities.

**Floor Plans**

**Layout 3a**

**Layout 3b**
Settings 1 - **Youth Functioning**
Exploded axonometric of a section of the multi-family building
Settings 1 - **Youth Functioning**  
Isovist analysis of views from units in multi-family building

This analysis shows what the youth see from their units. Its intention is to understand and assess their visibility and visual experience through each stage of the housing complex. In the multi-family building there is a prioritization of visual aural connection to the community. This may assist residents in the following manner:

The higher elevation of the double occupancy allows a full view of the internal settings of the house complex, and external conditions of surrounding neighborhood.

Lower level single occupancy units have a direct connection to, and obligation care for, the shared communal spaces outside of their units. Their external view is similar to the previous units, while their internal view is more constrained to the patio space.
Settings 2 - Youth Belonging

The units have less flexibility of layout. The location of the bathroom, kitchen, as well as the main entrance most likely will dictate how youth are going to layout living spaces, although they still have some flexibility to organize internal arrangements and how they are going to occupy each level. The shading devices and openings are fixed addressing the sun position throughout the year to maximize comfort. This setting focus on creating a sense of belonging. The unit proximity to social gathering spaces hopes to incentivize youth to participate and engage with others. This setting should help youth develop responsibilities, ownership and membership. The detached unit should instigate youth’s sense of ownership since they are living in a controlled “mini neighborhood” setting in their own independent to house with a private backyard, most likely for the first time in their lives. The backyard is crucial to help them develop responsibilities, due to being the area that each youth has to maintain and take care for while also being exposed to the public eye criticism.

In addition, the housing was located to engage youth to participate in social gatherings and awake their feelings of collectivism, membership and belonging.

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Physical Layout

Detached single occupancy, double level small house.

Floor Plans

Layout Unit 2b
The location of unit 2b allows youth to have a broad view of most social gathering spaces with the intent of provoking them to engage in socializing activities and develop a sense of membership and belonging with their peers.
Settings 3 - Youth Self-awareness

The units in this living setting also have less flexibility of layout than units of settings 1. The difference between the Youth Belonging (settings 2) and Youth Self-awareness is primary within the social context of the units themselves. Settings 3 is much more internal and secluded than all the other stages with the intent of intensifying the youth willingness of care and attention for themselves. This stage should shift their mindset from a social and collective being to investigation and findings of themselves. This settings stage should help youth continue developing responsibilities, and ownership, and start developing identity and acceptance. The main street that connects and gives access to all units in this setting establishes a sense of privacy and seclusion since, most likely, only the residents of these units will circulate through it, and also it is not surrounded by social gathering spaces.

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Settings 3 - **Youth Self-awareness**

The views from units in the living settings 3 are much more internalized. This was designed to help youth keep focus on themselves and their internal subjective needs. The youth have a glimpse of the “outside world”, but most of what they can visually experience is inside the housing complex.
Settings 4 - Youth Independence

Physical Layout

Detached single occupancy, split-level small house.

These units are similar to units 1b, however the entrance and side corridor are in reverse position to emphasize privacy. This is the intend to be the last setting of the housing program youth can inhabit, and it is the most independent living condition. These units are the only ones that have direct access to the street and youth can leave and come at their own will. These units should be assigned to those young adults who are ready to transition to an independent living condition. The youth should be able to take care, live and financially support themselves at this stage. Youth Independence is the last opportunity for youth to practice their independent living skills before exiting the safe and supportive structure that the housing complex offers. This living sexting should help youth to solidify and acquire independence.

Floor Plans

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The location of these units allow them full view of surrounding neighborhood to start giving them prospect of independent living, while still maintaining a visual connection with the housing complex’s interior.
13 Informal Social Gathering Spaces Analysis

The different living settings presented in the previous chapter are essential to provide housing flexibility and also help youth engage with the social gathering spaces through their adjacencies and visual linkage to and from the different housing settings. The links between housing and spaces for social gathering can have several different configurations. They will vary according to the site’s conditions and surroundings, and also to the housing units design and volume. The important aspect to highlight is that, independent of the project’s location and aesthetics, providing flexibility within the social gathering spaces is as important as housing flexibility for former foster care youth.

Young adults need informal open spaces that they can have leisure in their own way (Bridgman, 2009). The informal connotation is given through the idea that there are no defined uses or activities for these spaces. All of them are equipped with outdoor furniture, but they are not fixed or permanently installed, allowing youth to move them around and organized them to address their desirable activity. Due to this particular youth poor social and networking skills, the social gathering potential provided through the design of the spaces becomes critical to the success of the program. They need to be exposed and convinced to socialize, thus where they are going to be placed is of extreme importance.

The Village Transitional Housing (VTH typology) offers four informal social gatherings spaces. They are located in strategic areas around the complex in hope instigate defined experiences, but since these can be very subjective and individual, there is no certainty of what each space meaning will be for each person.
The following pages present an analysis of the complex’s social gathering spaces and what they hoped to make the youth experience.

The housing complex is composed of four informal social gathering spaces:

1. Transitional outdoor/indoor patio
2. Courtyard
3. Communal Balcony
4. Terrace
Transitional outdoor/indoor patio - This space marks the transition between the multi-family building and the detached units. It is internally oriented and located to provide experiences for those who are starting the program and still have difficulty to socialize on their own. Because of the adjacency to the arterial circulation within the complex, this space should have a constant flux of people and activities provoking spontaneous socialization.

The transitional patio location correlates with the experience that the living setting 1 (youth functioning) is trying to convey. The view is internally focused to help youth realize they are part of a supportive community.
Courtyard - The courtyard is located between Housing stage 2 and the Eating Hall. This space focus on proving a meeting area for both small or large gatherings. The courtyard should be activated by those young adults that are developing a sense of belonging and membership allying with the needs that housing phase 2 hopes to address.

The view inside of the courtyard is purposeful restricted to direct residents focus in the social activities that are happening in the space, instead of being distracted by the occurrences happening outside.
Communal Balcony - This space hopes to make a visual link between the courtyard and the “outside world”. It is designed to be a more relaxing area, that could also be used along with the courtyard for very large gatherings. The balcony is located facing the intersection of Metropolitan Pkwy and Dill ave in order start expanding the youth feeling of belonging beyond the complex and into a broader surrounding community.

The view from the communal balcony functions as a frame of the surrounding neighborhood. It is a gateway from private (the courtyard) to the public (the city), but still in a nested condition.
Terrace - In order to explore the Prospect and Refugee theory, proposed by the English geographer Jay Appleton in 1975, this third level space was strategically placed on the highest level of the complex. The terrace gives youth the capacity to observe (prospect) without being seen (refuge) which contributes to feel safe, while acknowledging their surroundings (Dosen & Ostwald, 2013). This space is designed to provide a contemplation and gazing setting within the complex.

The third level terrace provides a broad view of the surroundings. It allows youth to recognize their surroundings and empowers them to go beyond the complex and “conquer the city”.

K. K. Oliveira, 2017, Sustaining independence
14 Conclusions: needs analysis

With the intent of concluding this thesis and addressing some of the research presented in the beginning of this inquiry, this author aims to show through a final analysis how this complex responds and addresses the needs established in the Foster Care Youth Hierarchy of Needs. Hence, figure 9 is re-introduced and the need analysis presented, subsequently.

![Foster Care Youth Hierarchy of Needs]

Figure 9 - Foster Care Youth Hierarchy of Needs
Source - From author, 2016
Needs Analysis

Thee needs defined in the Foster Care Youth Hierarchy of Needs were used to select the programs and amenities of the housing complex. Spaces that addressed multiple category of needs were given preference throughout the design.

The housing complex address 4 types of needs:

1. Housing
2. Employment and Training
3. Affinity with adults
4. Acceptance
Housing

The housing needs include housing, functioning, cooking, cleaning, and others related to independent living skills. These needs are address through mixed living conditions - multi-family apartments and the detached single-home villa, and also supported by the communal kitchen that is intended to serve as a learning and practicing facility.
Employment

Employment needs must include services around education and employment training. They must have the opportunities to study and/or develop vocational skills. These needs are address through retail spaces in the ground level, provided in order to develop partnerships with future renters offering internships and training for resident youth. A computer room is also offered in the ground level for developing technology skills, and an auditorium for organized events.
3 Affinity with caring adults

This category of needs is intended to address youth distrust of adults. It is crucial for homeless youth to build a support network that involves caring adults and the community since most of them have had little success with establishing healthy and long-lasting relationships. To fulfill this need the VTH model has two counseling offices dedicated for one-on-one case management meetings to start introducing caring adults in their lives, and also offers plenty spaces for social gathering and engagement. Some of the spaces have defined functions, in others youth are free to use as they pleased. The retail amenities provided also serve the function of establishing connections and to network with the community around the complex.
Acceptance

The acceptance category is based on internally driven. Youth can achieve self-worth and self-esteem by feeling loved, appreciated, and by having pride in themselves. These needs are harder to address with physical aspects, however research shows that when managing well their homes, youth feel accomplished and have higher appreciation for themselves. Therefore, all amenities of the VTH model can help the residents to develop self-worth and acceptance. For example, the terrace on the 3rd level was designed with the specific intent of promoting acceptance and self-worth through the Prospect and Refugee Theory. The location and view from the upper terrace allows gazing the city from an elevated condition leading to feelings of safety and confidence, while the balcony bellow (with roof, and two walls) allows for a more restricted interaction with the surrounding neighborhood.
Through this study one can conclude the importance of Architectural design and public private adjacencies to address former foster care specific needs. A combination of the site selection methodology presented previously, and implementing a decision-making design process informed directly by the youth critical needs, can begin to demonstrate how architecture can provide a safe environment that can works as a bridge between the foster care system and successful adulthood. It can be more than mere provision of shelter, and actually have an active role in promoting belonging and self-worth through the process and design of empowerment to support at-risk of homelessness foster care youth to build independence.

The thesis proposal provides well-designed housing and tailored supportive services through the introduction of a housing model that can help prevent youth from ever experiencing homelessness. This VTH model also seeks to present an architectural component to the disruption of cyclical homelessness that effects 12,000 young adults becoming homeless every year.

It is important to highlight that this thesis is intended as a scaffold for future supportive housing projects designed for former foster care youth. The design proposal is presented as an application of the site selection methodology and the VTH model introduced, and it is intrinsically related to its contextual and cultural settings. The design’s aesthetic and materiality should vary within each application of the processes discussed in this study. The unit's individuality of design should be explored through environmental performance or personal preferences as a next step of this study.

Ultimately the VTH proposal, the site selection methodology, the research and research application developed in this thesis seek to contribute to the process of
planning, design and programmatic allocations for at-risk youth housing and position an architectural solution as a critical element in the search for greater social sustainability and an equitable society.
References


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Appendix 1 - Maps used to analyzed the model housing case studies through adequate location prerequisites established by the site selection methodology.

**Chestnut Bend Apartments**

**Restoration Gardens**

**Rising Oaks**
Appendix 2 - Maps used to analyze the agencies' locations for the prerequisites in the methodology for site selection.

1. Atlanta Mission/My Sister's House - 921 Hower Mill Rd, Atlanta, 30318

2. Boys + Girls Club of Metro Atlanta - 1275 Peachtree St NE, Atlanta, 30309

3. Life Works - 2221 Austell Rd SW, Marietta, 30008
Covenant House - 1559 Johnson Rd NW, Atlanta, 30318

First Step Staffing - 302 Decatur St, Atlanta, 30312

Chris Kids - 2045 Graham Cir SE, Atlanta, 30316
7 Gateway Center - 275 Pryor St SW, Atlanta, 30303

8 Georgia Parent Support Ntwk - 1381 Metropolitan Pkwy, Atlanta, 30310

9 Lost_n_Found - 2485 Chantilly Dr, Atlanta, 30310
10 Multiagency Alliance for Children - 225 Peachtree St NE, Atlanta, 30303

11 Necco - 2262 Mt Zion Rd, Jonesboro, 30236

12 Nicholas House - 830 Boulevard SE, Atlanta, 30312
13 Odyssey 3 - 276 Decatur St SE, Atlanta, 30312

14 Peachtree + Pine Works - 477 Peachtree St, Atlanta, 30308

15 Project Community Connections - 302 Decatur St SE, Atlanta, 30312
Stand Up for Kids - 83 Walton St, Atlanta, 30303

YES Atlanta - Pryor St SW, Atlanta, 30312

Young Adult Guidance Center - 1230 Hightower Rd NW, Atlanta, 30303
19 Young People Matter - 250 Guidance Ave, Atlanta, 30312

20 Youth Enhancement Services - 100 Edgewood Ave, Atlanta, 30303
Appendix 3 - Maps used to analyze the agencies for their location's assets in the methodology for site selection.

2. Boys + Girls Club of Metro Atlanta - 275 Peachtree St NE, Atlanta, 30309

8. Georgia Parent Support Network Inc - 1381 Metropolitan Pkwy, Atlanta, 30310

12. Nicholas House - 830 Boulevard SE, Atlanta, 30312

19. Young People Matter - 250 Guidance Ave, Atlanta, 30312
APPENDIX 4 - Floor Plans and Sections