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Project Statement:

This community center is designed to provide training to develop life skills, parenting skills, rehabilitation and therapy for birthparents of children within the foster care program. The most common risk factors of abuse have been identified as substance abuse, mental illness, domestic violence, child conduct problems and poverty. Consequently, this center will focus on providing solutions to help the parents overcome these issues. This in itself is not necessarily a new idea, this facility differs however in the fact that it also provides modular housing. The majority of the families that have to send their kids into the foster care system are of low socioeconomic status and cannot provide the basic needs for their family. By providing a facility that meets their basic needs and supports them in developing life skills, reuniting families and getting them back on their feet is much more likely. Even though it is truly up to each individual parent to choose to be a suitable parent, it makes it a lot more difficult if they do not have the resources to do so. For this reason, this project explores the possibilities of reuniting families by providing the proper facilities and training to do so. The goal is to create a space that can best support both birthparents and foster care parents to create a great family unit. This project works to understand how a facility can work to reunite families and improve the foster care system.

Design Brief: Target Audience, Purpose, Methodology

Target Audience:

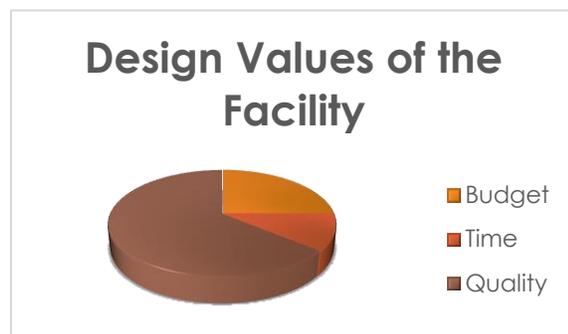
This facility targets struggling parents on the brink of having to put their child in the foster care system. It also facilitates foster parents and those that would like to adopt. This means the users of this community center will include both parents, children, counselors, teachers, medical professionals, cleaning staff, and managers of the facility.

Any family could be at risk for child abuse or neglect, however it is more commonly found in families of low socioeconomic status. Risk factors for child abuse and neglect include domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse, mental illness, lack of parenting skills, stress and lack of support. Therefore the target market specifically includes parents who are struggling financially, those with mental illness, those who lack support, and those who are abusing drugs and alcohol.

Purpose: To unite and support families who are struggling by providing them with the resources they need to get back on their feet.

Methodology: In order to unite families, the center will have multiple functions. These include: counseling, learning facility, medical facility, rehabilitation center and housing. To provide counseling and rehabilitation, the building needs to have the abilities to have private conversations. To be able to function as a learning facility, collaboration and open environments should be encouraged. The center also needs to allow kids room to play and grow. In order to reconnect families, they also need to have an area to grow together independently as a family. Therefore the facility will also function as a housing facility so families can live together on their own.

Project Goals



As stated earlier, the purpose of this facility is to train families to be able to work together better as a family unit. The goal is to prevent separating parents from their children, but more importantly, do what is in the best interest of the children and find them a supportive home.

When evaluating the goals and objectives of the facility it is important to determine between wants and needs. Of course ideally, every client is going to want it all, including what they cannot afford. Therefore it is important to evaluation what their priorities are. Just like in every project, the client has to choose between three main things: time, budget and quality. If quality is important yet they want it done quickly, this means it is going to be more costly. However if they choose less time as well as an affordable budget, the quality will not be as good. In this particular instance, quality is the most important. This is because the quality of the environment and products will most directly affect the goals of the facility. The goals include supporting families and individuals and the quality of the design and furniture will show them they are cared for and the space will be able to last longer. The next priority is budget. Although it is still important to spend enough money to meet the needs of the clients as well as provide quality products, it is also important to be financially conscious. The facility could become an expensive one to run as it is providing a wide variety of services to a market that will not be able to pay for them. Therefore it would most likely be run through donations and fundraisers and therefore frugal decisions should be made. Overall, providing these facilities for the users are also more important than the design, meaning more money should be spent in that area.

Facts, Needs, Concepts, Goals

Facts

Current facilities similar to this one are lacking in one area or another. In other words, they might provide counseling and rehabilitation services for those parents struggling with mental health or addiction but they fail to help them with their basic needs or help them find a job. Many current facilities also lack things such as child care making it difficult for their parents to both find and maintain a job.

Existing facilities are usually not designed well either. This is because their funding is either dependent either on donations or the government and this money goes directly into serving the community. For example, the Kalamazoo Gospel Mission that is a homeless shelter provided as many beds as possible, however the building was very stale and bleak. Bunk beds were lined up as closely as possible, giving it an institutional feel. Walls, beds and floors were neutral and lacking in interest and color. Natural light and proper lighting was lacking in a lot of areas to create a dreary feel. Privacy is also another huge issue. No one has the space or ability to personalize where they are staying even if they end up staying there for months to years. Privacy is actually part of our basic needs and when that need is not being met, it affects us negatively. Other mental health facilities struggle with similar design issues. They are often bland or cramped not serving the users well or creating the calming, soothing environment that they need.

The facts also show that a lot of the reasons for placement into the foster care system could be prevented. Studies also show that children do the best when they are raised by their biological parents. Unfortunately, there are still people who take advantage of systems that were created to help them and are still unsuitable parents. However research also shows that foster parents lack support as well. Therefore, this

Determining Needs

As stated earlier, it is essential to determine what the needs of the client are versus their wants. The following exercise lists each need in order from most important to least important.

1. Training/Learning Area
2. Health Care Services/Counseling
3. Bathroom Facilities
4. Sleeping Area/Bedroom
5. Dining Facilities
6. Kitchen
7. Day Care
8. General Living Area

9. Workroom/Education/Library
10. Laundry
11. Fitness Center
12. Recreation

In order to achieve the facilities goal, it is essential to provide the proper facilities to train families to be able to work together better as a family such as a learning, and training area. In order to most effectively do so, the users basic needs also need to be met. Therefore health care services, bathroom facilities, sleeping areas, kitchen, dining area the next most important needs. A day care would also be super helpful in order for parents to be able to work themselves or go through the interview process, however meeting the basic needs and training parents is of higher priority. Having space a space that is encouraging of work and learning would also be ideal, however it is not a necessity. Furthermore, a fitness center and recreation area would create a more positive environment and give the individuals more of an opportunity to enjoy themselves, however it does not directly work to meet the goals of the facility.

Furthermore, an open plan will also be a need to enhance the community aspect and developing relationships as well as providing training for large groups. However more private areas for counseling and health care will also be essential. These private areas should be on opposite ends of the open public areas, transitioning from public to private. The fitness center and recreation area should be separated distinctively from quieter areas such as workrooms, educational areas and bedrooms. The kitchen should be adjacent to the dining facilities and fairly close to the general living area. The living facilities and bedrooms should be separated from the public community center. The living facilities should be private and allow families to be independent and make their own decisions while still having support. The living facilities should be homelike and allow the families to learn how to live independently. Therefore, a basic home layout with a small kitchen, dining area and living area along with bedrooms should be incorporated. The day care should be adjacent to the recreation or playroom as well as the library so they can learn and play. Within the library or learning center, both private areas for studying and reading should be accommodated along with areas to study with someone or for a parent to read with a child. Lighting should be consistent and adequate, with more interesting and stimulating lighting fixtures in open areas and more practical ones in private ones, with the ability to dim. Attention to acoustics should be made to allow for both honest conversations to occur with a counselor or medical profession, and good discussions with a neighbor in the public areas without it being too loud.

Concepts

Want to communicate to the users the story of life and family. The space should reflect its goals of unity. Creating spaces and opportunities for personalization should be emphasized while still encouraging community and working together. Visual and acoustic privacy should be emphasized privatized areas.

Goals

The design of this facility should help promote the center's goals. The goal is to unite and support families who are struggling by providing them with the resources they need to get back on their feet. In order to support that through design, the space should be motivational. Certain areas such as recreational areas, play areas and the fitness center should be stimulating while counseling and educational areas should be soothing and calming. Bringing in natural elements to help create a supportive and healthy atmosphere is also important to achieve the facilities goals.

Program Summary Per Area

- **Storage Requirements:** Storage will be needed for families and their belongings including clothing and personal items. Storage for medical supplies, learning materials and food will also be required.
- **Amenity and Support Functions**
 - **Laundry:** An area should be set aside for users to do their own laundry. This could be included in the housing units or a public facility in the community center. Adequate space for a washer and dryer is needed.

Special Needs/Equipment:

- 1 Washer per Housing Unit
- 1 Dryer per Housing Unit

- **Fitness Center:** Since the community center also is acting as a temporary home, providing a place for them to exercise and destress is desirable. The space should include a variety of exercise equipment from elliptical, treadmills, free weights, bench presses, bicycles and more. Suitable space for stretching, yoga and lifting dumbbells should also be provided. The fitness center should be big enough for around 30 to 50 people at a time.

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Special Needs/Equipment:

- | | |
|------------------|----------------------|
| -3 ellipticals | -Free weights |
| - 4 treadmills | -Men's locker room |
| -6 bench presses | -Women's locker room |
| -Workout mats | |

- **Child Care:** In order for their parents to be able to have time to get and have a job, child care should also be offered. Space for napping, eating, and playing should be available. Areas should be distinguished by the age of the children so that newborns get the best care for their age, and toddlers for theirs. The day care is aimed at children who are not old enough to be in school so those three and younger.

Special Needs/Equipment:

- 10 Napping mats
- 9 Cribs
- Changing station
- Breakroom
- Dining tables for around 20 people
- Toys and Storage

- o **Lactation Room:** The facility will provide for a variety of ages of children, including babies. Therefore, space for mothers to be able to feed their children privately should be accommodated for. This might include storage and comfortable seating.

Special Needs/ Equipment:

- 2/3 comfortable chairs
- Changing station

- o **Dining Facilities:** A large dining area will need to accommodate all the users of the space, including the children living there, their caregivers, the parents going through training, as well as the trainees or educators. Table groupings should be easily moveable so that flexible seating arrangements for different size groups can be accommodated for.

Special Needs/Equipment:

- Dining tables to fit 100 people
- Serving counter/station

Kitchen: A large kitchen will also be needed in order to cook for the occupants. It is important that the children and parents are learning life skills. As such the kitchen should be designed so that it can be used as a learning opportunity to teach them how to cook, bake and clean so that they can support themselves later on in life.

Special Needs/Equipment:

- Large refrigerators
- Commercial ovens
- Counter space
- Wash sinks
- Dishwashers
- Microwaves
- Storage

Sleeping Area/Bedroom: Each family should have a space that they are able to make their own. This space could be further divided so that each child has their own bedroom. It could also be designed in a more open concept they allows for flexibility with the changing number of family sizes, but is still able to be individualized.

Having one's own space is important for development and growth and becoming their own individual.

Special Needs/Equipment:

- 1 Bed per individual
- Nightstand
- Dresser or Closet

Bathroom Facilities: Wheelchair accessible toilet rooms should be provided for both private and public areas so that all users have access to these facilities. General public toilet rooms should be developed in the community center. Private bathrooms with showering amenities should be included for those families living there.

Special Needs/Equipment:

- 4-6 toilets per toilet room
- 3-4 sinks per toilet room
- 2-3 hand dryers per toilet room
- 1 toilet paper dispenser for each toilet
- 1 sanitary dispenser for each toilet (Women's)

Workroom/Education/Library: A space that is supportive of learning and work will be important both for the children as well as the adults. This could be accommodated by designing an area to do homework and learn within each housing unit, or by creating a bigger common space designed for learning. This space could also include a library or other resources that would be supportive of education.

Special Needs/Equipment:

- 70 lateral feet of bookshelves
- 8-10 comfortable reading chairs
- 4 individual studying areas
- 4 group studying areas

Health Care Services: An area should be designed to accommodate both the caregivers and children's health needs. This could just be a small office for general checkups or range to a bigger space to provide more healthcare options.

Special Needs/Equipment:

- 1 examination bed per exam room
- 1 sink per exam room
- Cabinets/storage

Recreation: Setting aside a space for recreation and free time is extremely important. Both children and adults need a space to play and use their creativity. This space could range from one large space with different groupings of activities such as a craft area, a sports area, a quiet area and so on. It also could take the shape of multiple areas and or rooms to accommodate different activities throughout the entirety of the building. Most importantly, room for flexibility and change is important.

Special Needs/Equipment:

- Storage for craft supplies or sports equipment
- Tables

General Living Area: General living areas should be included in the building to create a space where the users can relax and feel at home. The living area should include general seating, and storage to support activities such as board games, watching television and general communication to help support the goal of community.

Special Needs/Equipment:

- Lounge seating for 15-20 people
- Tables for 15-20 people
- Storage for board games
- 2-4 televisions

Training/Learning Area: This area should be designed to train both those who want to become foster care parents so they are best suited for the job as well as train those who are already parents, yet they may be lacking in skills or resources to be the best parent. Both would need a space to accommodate learning and hands on activities. For foster care parents it might look like more of a traditional classroom setting. While the struggling parents needs may range from learning how to overcome an addiction, to building a better resume so that they can get a better job and provide for their kids. Therefore, the space will need to be flexible in order to train for multiple situations.

Special Needs/Equipment:

- Whiteboard
- Desks or tables to accommodate 25-30 people
- Storage for equipment

