

# SHELTER AS SANCTUARY

Physical Design Elements to  
Advance Health and Wellbeing,  
Universal Accessibility, and  
Environmental Sustainability







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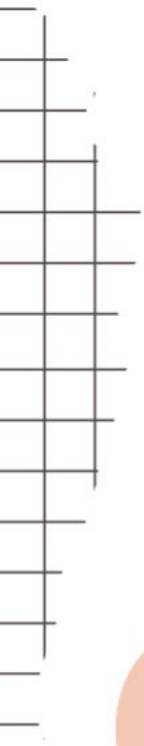


The background features a light gray grid pattern. In the center, there are several overlapping, soft-edged shapes: a large light green one, a smaller light orange one, and a smaller reddish-orange one with white dots. Three black four-pointed stars are positioned in the upper right area.

# trauma informed design at The Delores Project

Emily Wheeland,  
CEO

# shelter tour



# incorporating TID into your shelter environment

The first, and most important step in incorporating Trauma Informed Design into your shelter environment, is getting the thoughts and opinions of the people who already live there. What do they like about the space currently? What would they like to see change? What things are important to them in a living environment in order to feel safe? Some of the feedback we got from our guests during this process is that they wanted sunlight, plants, locking storage, phone outlets and lamps by their beds, private changing spaces outside of toilet stalls and dorm rooms, and lots of diverse living space.





# what if i can't design a brand new shelter and have to work with the old building i've got?



Think about how you can provide **CHOICE**, **DIGNITY**, and **SAFETY** within the space you already have.

This could look like:

- letting guests choose their bed location or linens
- creating space for the creation and display of guest art
- letting in natural sunlight wherever you can or having lamps around to have soft lighting instead of fluorescent lighting
- having real or fake plants around
- in warehouse-style shelters, think about how you can divide up the space to have people in smaller sleeping or living pods to create a greater sense of comfort and safety
- figuring out how to provide locking storage for guest belongings

- Painting walls/ floors/ ceilings in calming colors
- Create a container garden in pots for guests to tend to if you don't have a yard or much outdoor space
- Paint a gratitude tree on the wall and invite people to fill it with leaves of thanks
- Make sure all staff is trained in trauma-informed care and deescalation and create opportunities for peer-to-peer support to help create and maintain an environment of psychological safety.
- Let guests pick what they want to eat (See: don't just put a plate in front of them). Let them choose.





Spaces in which we live can communicate **safety** and  
**promote supportive relationships,**

or

they can be **re-traumatizing**  
**by conveying a lack of dignity**

# Tina Klem Serenity House (90-day program for women in recovery)

Recovery Network of Programs/ Bridgeport, CT



BEFORE

Look for existing  
architectural details



Re-use/ re-purpose existing furnishings when possible

BEFORE



AFTER



BEFORE



AFTER



# AFTER



BEFORE



AFTER





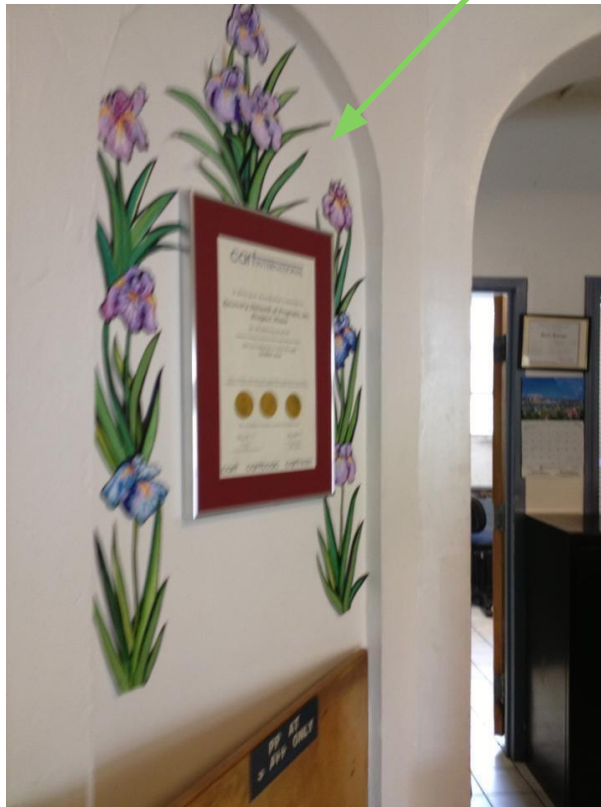
BEFORE



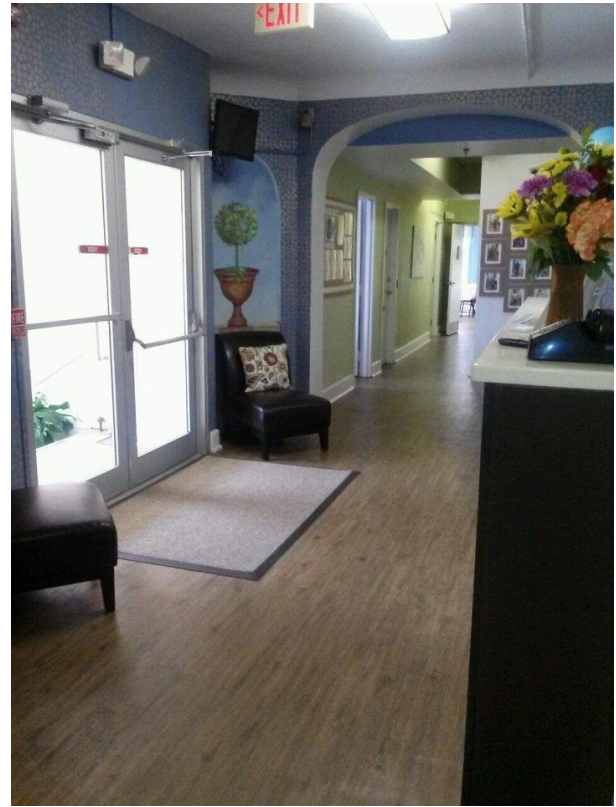
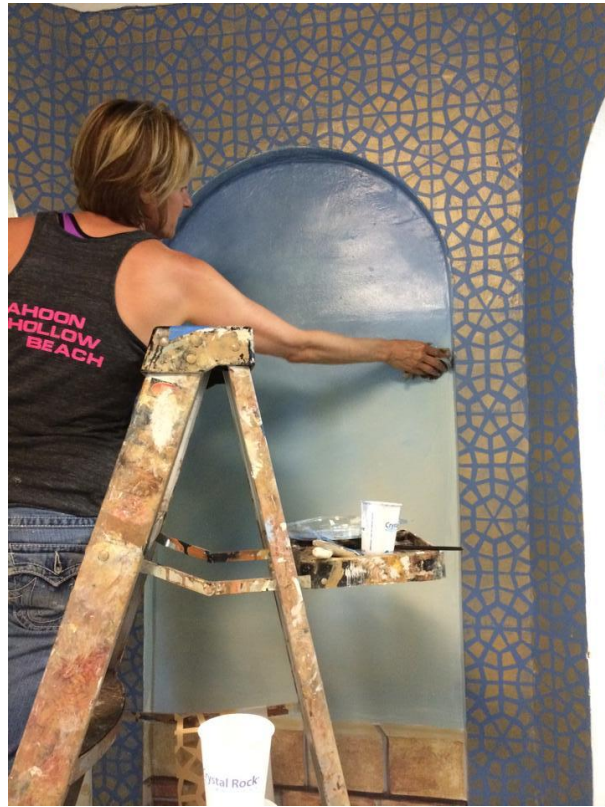
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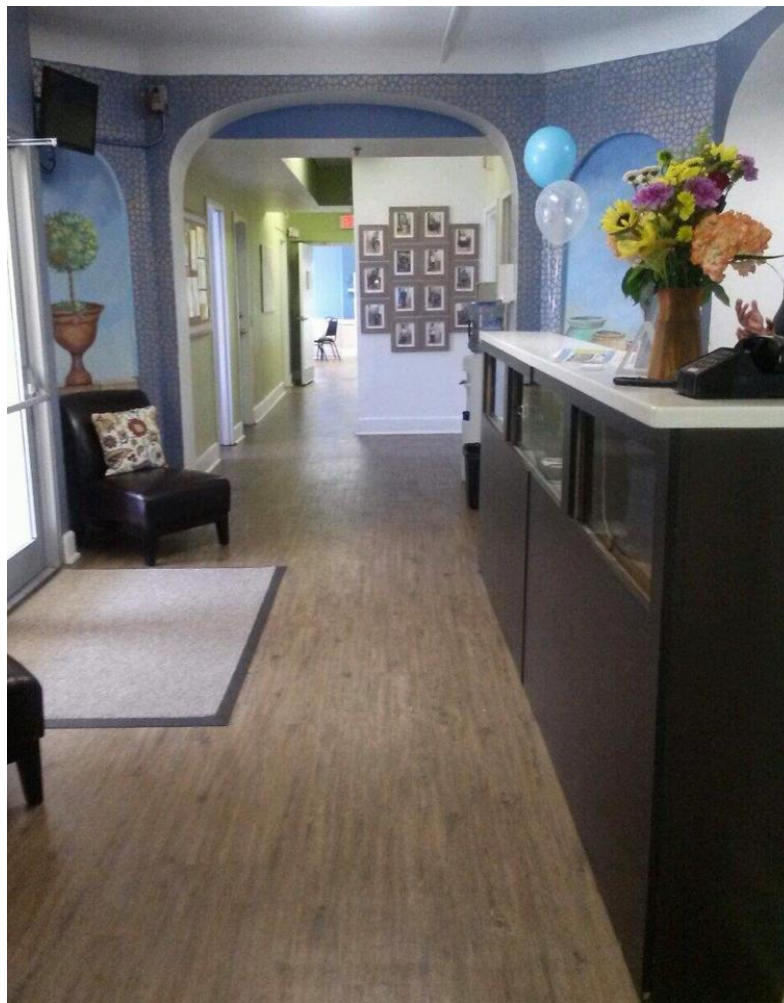
# Prospect House (emergency shelter) Recovery Network of Programs/ Bridgeport, CT



Existing arches/ niches



Utilize talent of local artists



# Malta House (transitional living program for mothers and babies)

## Malta House, Inc./ Norwalk, CT

- Windows/  
natural light
- Views of  
nature
- Residential  
feel
- Calming  
colors
- Sense of  
“family” but  
not cramped  
elbow-to-  
elbow



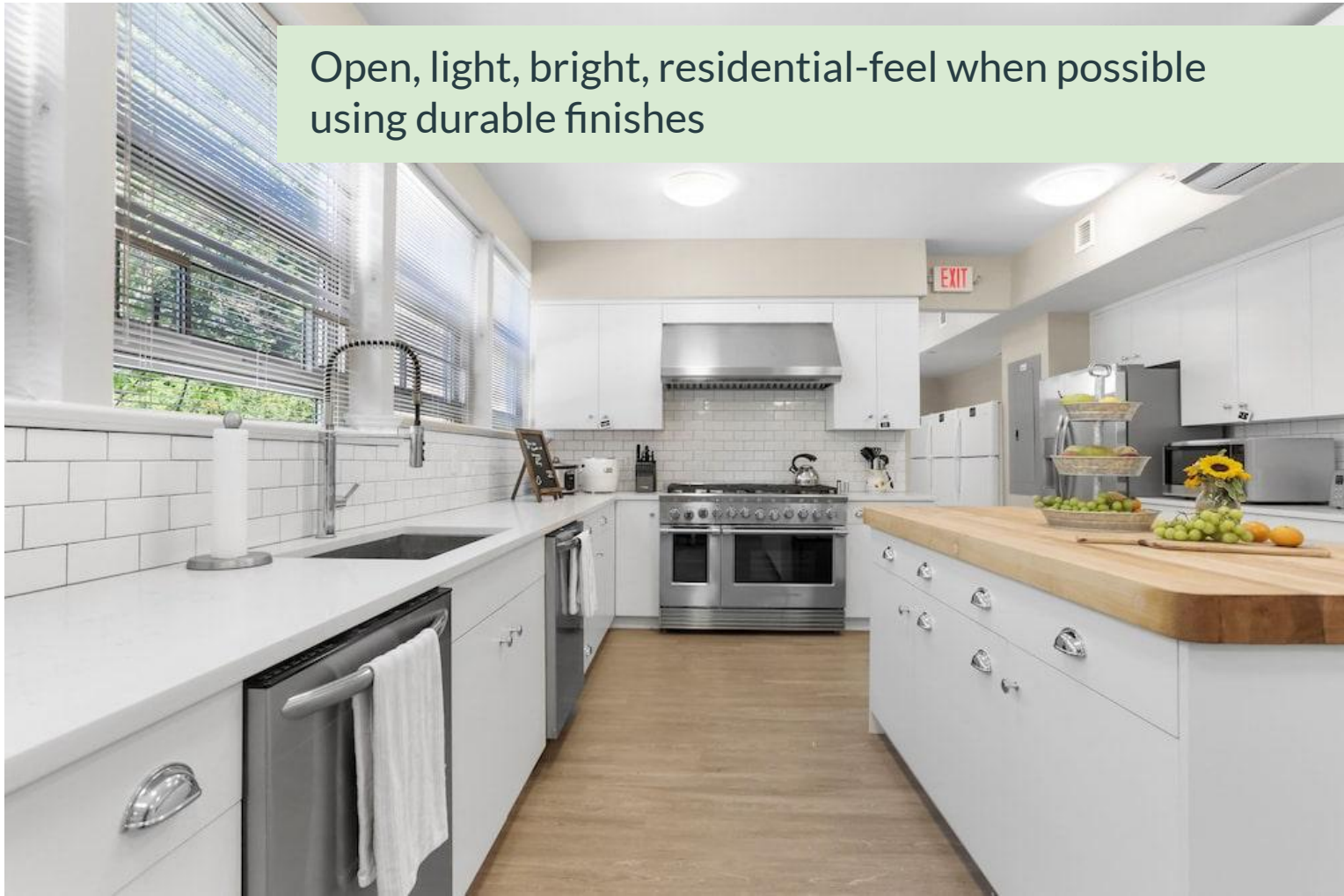
- Judicious use of donated/ thrifted furnishings
- Multiple seating areas
- Multi-purpose area for classes, lounging, celebrations
- Abstract art in soothing colors
- Comfortable seating
- Views of nature and butterfly garden/ children's play area

## Cohesive scheme using soft colors creates sense of order and calm





Open, light, bright, residential-feel when possible  
using durable finishes





“Quiet Room” for 1:1 counseling or private time



Private bedrooms create safe haven



Mailboxes create sense of “home”



Safe and comfortable place for laundry that is well-lit with windows





Any day spent with you  
is my favorite day.  
So, today is my new favorite day.

*Moments of Inspiration*



# Atlanta Mission

Hope Lives Here



RESTORATION HOUSE

655

# RESTORATION HOUSE

- Opened December 2021
- 102 bed –30 day Lowe(r) barrier shelter for women and children
- Feeder to our long-term program
- Services: Shelter, dining, medical, educational, clothing and vocational





BEFORE



AFTER



Architect – Trauma Informed,  
Homelessness Specialist

Design Resources for Homelessness,  
a non-profit organization  
Jill Pable, Ph.D., FIDEC, ASID, NCIDQ,  
WELL AP  
Project Lead  
2109 Spence Avenue  
Tallahassee FL 32308

*"The environment itself can serve  
as an intercessor for reducing  
tension and increasing receptivity  
to services."*



## Dignity and Self Esteem

*Client run breakroom where clients are responsible for the upkeep*



## Sense of Community

*Living Room with a mural that represents everyone!*



## Empowerment and Personal Control

*Seating options vary from large family size tables to smaller community tables to tables in the back that are hidden and create a sense of privacy*



## Security, Privacy and Personal Space

*Lockable storage and closets that create a sense of privacy*





Active Listening / Personal Safety

*Countering perceptions of fear, caution, and authoritative relationship*

*(Eye heights of clients and staff are equal)*



Sense of Community / Empowerment and Personal Control / Transparency

*Varied seating posture choices , options for community / line of sight for clients and staff, obscured street view while allowing natural lighting / Que system for check in*





Dignity and Self Esteem /  
Empowerment and Personal Control /  
Beauty and Meaning

*Age-appropriate furniture, colors convey warmth and energy, all furniture is moveable, promotes parent engagement with the children.*



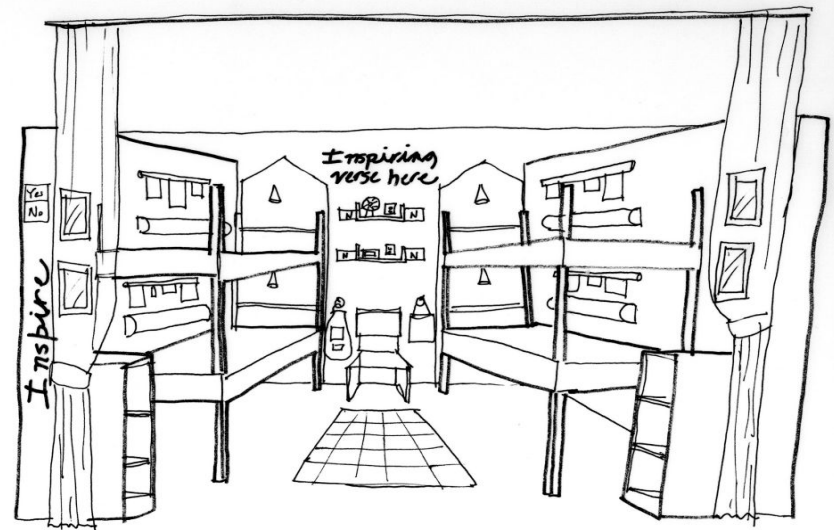
# START WHERE YOU ARE!

- Long term residential shelter
- 1938 Building; former school
- Mother and Children Room
- 18 beds
- Recently added partitions between beds
- \$35k budget



# PRACTICAL ADJUSTMENTS

- Hospital Curtains – *Privacy and personal space*
- Shelving / Cork boards /Hanging Clips – *Self-esteem / Dignity Personalization*
- Name tags – *Self-esteem /Personal Space*
- Reading Light– *Empowerment / Personal Control*
- Armoires – *Privacy and Personal Space*
- Wall hooks –*Self-esteem, Personal Space*





# LOTUS VILLAGE



- Opened in 2018
- Shelters 520 women and children nightly
- 5 stories
- FGBC Gold
- Co-located services



# LOTUS VILLAGE



- Guest rooms and restrooms
- Counseling rooms
- Education and Employment Center
- Culinary Center
- Children's Wellness Center
- Medical and Dental Clinic

# HEALING SPACES



- Arts & Activities Lab
- Healing Hands Salon
- Yoga and Meditation Room

- Urban Garden
- Hydroponic Farm
- Zen Garden

# TRAUMA-INFORMED DESIGN



- Natural daylight
- Natural materials



- Curved edges
- Art

# INCLUSIVE DESIGN



- 100% ADA accessible
- Signage



# SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS



- Intercom system



- Pest treatment room “Green Room”

# DESIGN FOR CHILDREN



Children's Wellness Center

# DESIGN FOR CHILDREN



- Play areas
  - Intake Sanctuary
  - Children's play room
  - Children's terrace
  - Family rooms
  - Playground

# DESIGN FOR CHILDREN



- Soothing colors
- Furniture to scale
- Flexible beds
  - Nested toddler beds
  - Movable cribs
- Supervisable spaces
- Changing tables
- Areas to play



# CHILDREN'S VILLAGE



- Co-located nonprofits serving children
  - Collective impact model
- Open to the community
- Children Services Team
- Child Care center
- Playground

# LOW COST / NO COST



- Soothing colors
  - White, light yellow, light blue, light pink, light green
- Designated children's areas
- Inclusive signage
- Intake
  - Prepare beds in advance
  - White linens
- Spaces for expression
  - Visual art
  - Movement
- Art around facility

