Low-income Housing: The Challenges It Faces

Chelsy Hansen - Interior Design Student - Utah State University

Funding for low-income housing is largely subsidized by tax incentives, such as the low-income housing tax credit. Rent for each individual or family is based on their income. Qualifications for low-income housing and how much residents pay each month can be found through HUD (Housing and Urban Development) and Section 8. Residents are also screened before they are eligible to move in. Many low-income housing communities are on referral only. This is in place to help people that have shown they truly want help and that they will benefit from this type of community. Low-income communities often have programs in place to help with job assistance, language classes, and extra curricular activities such as self-defense courses.

As part of my research, I developed two plans for new buildings. One building is a community center with spaces that will benefit each resident. Some of these spaces will be a common area, classroom, a computer lab, a fitness center, and conference rooms. The other building is an apartment building. Each building will have one, two, three, and four-bedroom units. This research dives into the reasoning behind the building plans and the types of government assistance that is available to the residents.

Low-income housing is largely government funded and can be a huge tax incentive for developers, many are cautious because they are worried about liability and the type of residents they may attract. However, in order to become a resident, you must be referred by a caseworker or social worker. Apartments are filled and assigned by the local housing authority in each state or county. The housing authority works with the property manager to fill any vacancies.

The community center of a low-income housing complex serves many purposes. There are offices for caseworkers, service team members, and property managers. The community center is also used for educational courses, fitness classes, after-school programs, and as a place for the community to gather. I used this knowledge to develop my design for a new community center.

Starting out I wanted natural light to flood the building so I designed the building with a large atrium and large windows all around the building. Immediately to the left when entering the building is a small fitness center that will be accessible to residents 24-hours a day through a separate entrance that they will have a key to. There is also a small prep kitchen for summer lunches to be served out of. The exterior of each building, as well as the ends of the main corridors, are color coded. This is a method of wayfinding that will help children, and adults, find their way home if they have been in the community center or outside. The exterior of each building has panels that are blue, yellow, or green, as well as they, are labeled building A, B, or C. Inside the building, at each end of the central corridor, the wall is painted a specific color (shown below). Each floor number is also painted to match the color on the end walls. Children, as well as adults, will associate their apartment with a certain color, red, blue, and their color, i.e. yellow.

Throughout this research process, I learned that there is a severe lack in low-income communities and that it would be a beneficial investment for anyone that is interested in it. I also learned what makes a community like this useful for the residents and what amenities they may need. Each community needs to have resources available to the residents to help adjust to the new environment and get all of the right form filed to qualify for government aid.

WORKS CITED:

The community center of a low-income housing complex serves many purposes. There are offices for caseworkers, service team members, and property managers. The community center is also used for educational courses, fitness classes, after-school programs, and as a place for the community to gather. I used this knowledge to develop my design for a new community center.

Starting out I wanted natural light to flood the building so I designed the building with a large atrium and large windows all around the building. Immediately to the left when entering the building is a small fitness center that will be accessible to residents 24-hours a day through a separate entrance that they will have a key to. There is also a small prep kitchen for summer lunches to be served out of. The exterior of each building, as well as the ends of the main corridors, are color coded. This is a method of wayfinding that will help children, and adults, find their way home if they have been in the community center or outside. The exterior of each building has panels that are blue, yellow, or green, as well as they, are labeled building A, B, or C. Inside the building, at each end of the central corridor, the wall is painted a specific color (shown below). Each floor number is also painted to match the color on the end walls. Children, as well as adults, will associate their apartment with a certain color, red, blue, and their color, i.e. yellow.

Throughout this research process, I learned that there is a severe lack in low-income communities and that it would be a beneficial investment for anyone that is interested in it. I also learned what makes a community like this useful for the residents and what amenities they may need. Each community needs to have resources available to the residents to help adjust to the new environment and get all of the right form filed to qualify for government aid.

WORKS CITED: