

Beyond Building Shelters: Creating Communities for Los Angeles' Homeless



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Arch 4020 - Mutable Architectures: The Design of Transitory Spaces
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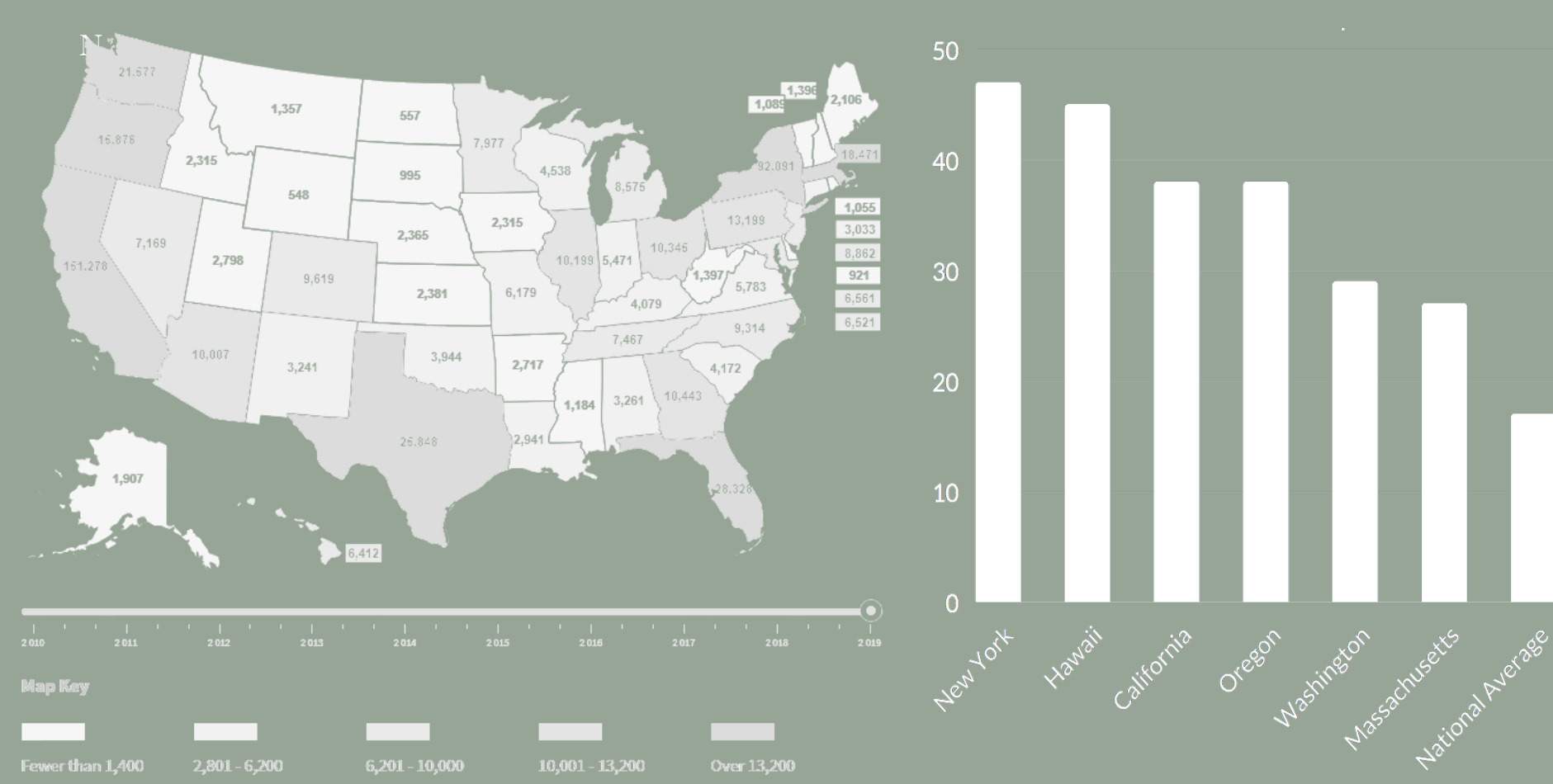
Homelessness Crisis in the United States

Estimated number of homeless people in the United States: **~600,000**
Difficult to determine exact number - many cases of homelessness are hidden

The **national rate** of homelessness is **17 homeless per 10,000 people**
Many **east coast** cities have **rates over 6 times as high as the overall US rate**, however their level of **sheltered homelessness is 8 times the national average**
Boston, New York City, and Washington, D.C. are each subject to **right-to-shelter** laws that guarantee shelter availability of a given quality

Individuals with weak social ties are more likely to become homeless, while the lifetime incidence of homelessness is reduced by 60% for individuals with strong ties to family, religious communities, and friends

Total Number of People Experiencing Homelessness by State vs Highest Rate of Homelessness by State



Types of Homelessness

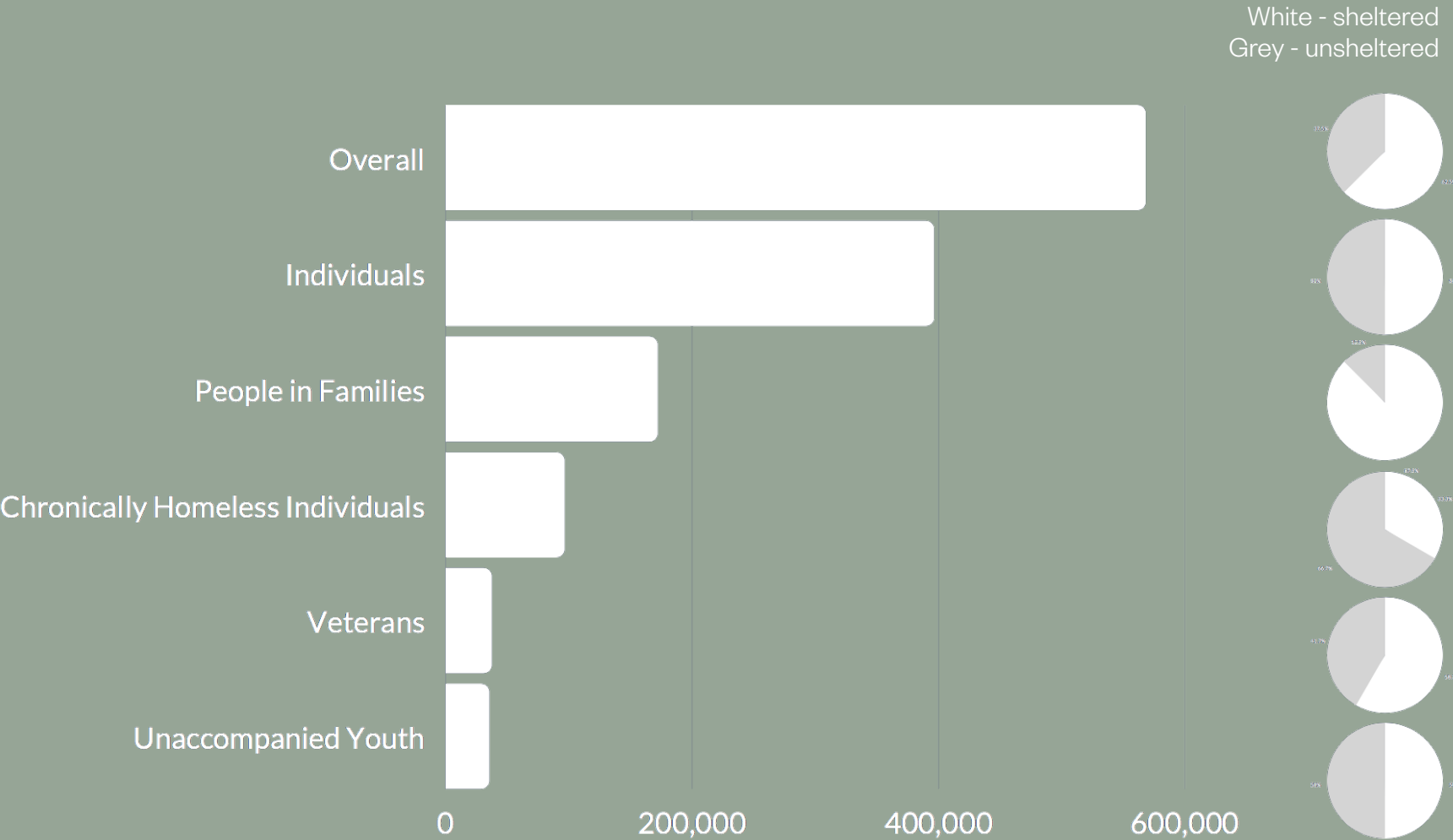
4 Types of Homelessness in the United States:

- Chronic** - homeless for at least a year/repeated episodes while struggling with a disabling condition such as a serious mental illness, substance use disorder, or physical disability
- Episodic** - currently homeless and have experienced at least three periods of homelessness in the previous year, often younger and suffer from some type of disabling condition
- Transitional** - most common type of homelessness, likely to be younger and generally enter a shelter or temporary housing system for only one brief stay after a catastrophic event or sudden life change
- Hidden homelessness** - unreported and undocumented, people staying with friends or relatives and lacking other housing opportunities, do not access supports and services, despite their need for them

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development defines Sheltered vs Unsheltered Homelessness as:

- A **sheltered** homeless person resides in
 - An emergency shelter
 - Transitional or supportive housing for homeless persons who originally came from the streets or emergency shelters
- An **unsheltered** homeless person resides in:
 - Places not meant for human habitation - cars, parks, sidewalks, abandoned buildings (on the street)

Total Number of People Experiencing Homelessness per Year by Type in 2020 - Sheltered vs Unsheltered





Crowded Shelter



Unsheltered Homelessness

Demographics of Homeless People

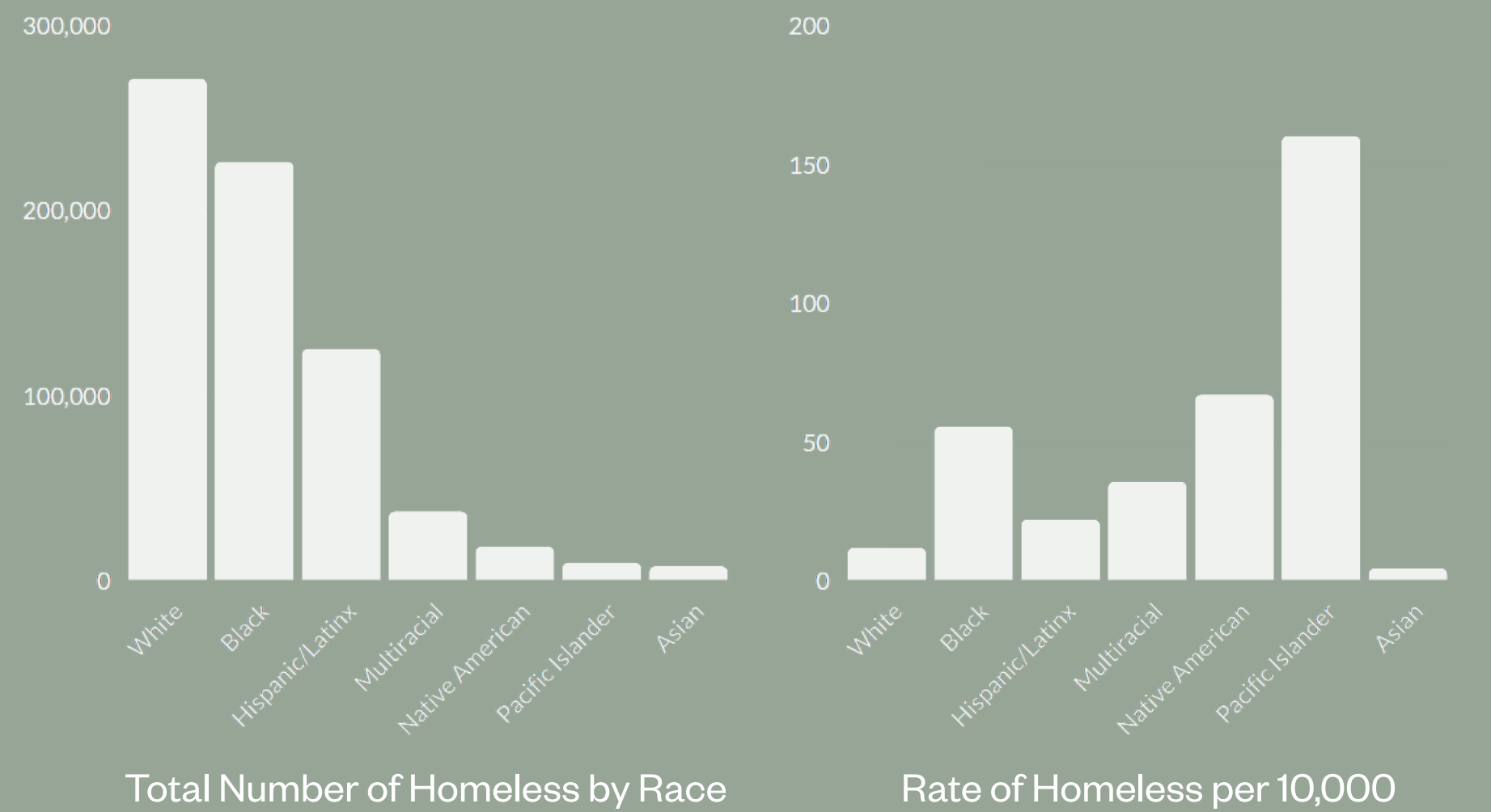
While the majority of homeless people in America are white; **Pacific Islander, Native American, Black, Multiracial, and Hispanic sub-populations are disproportionately affected by homelessness**

Middle-aged single men in urban areas make up the majority of the homeless population in the United States

Compared to homeless families, **homeless single adults** have much higher rates of serious mental illness, addiction disorders, and other severe health problems

Average Homeless Adult		
	Sheltered	Unsheltered
Percentage Male	77%	81%
Median Age	45	47
Percentage in an Urban Area	81%	89%
Individual	50%	50%
Part of a Homeless Family	91%	9%

Total Number of Homeless People by Race vs Rate of Homelessness per 10,000 People by Race



Unsheltered Homelessness

Why do many who are suffering from homelessness live on the streets rather than in a shelter?

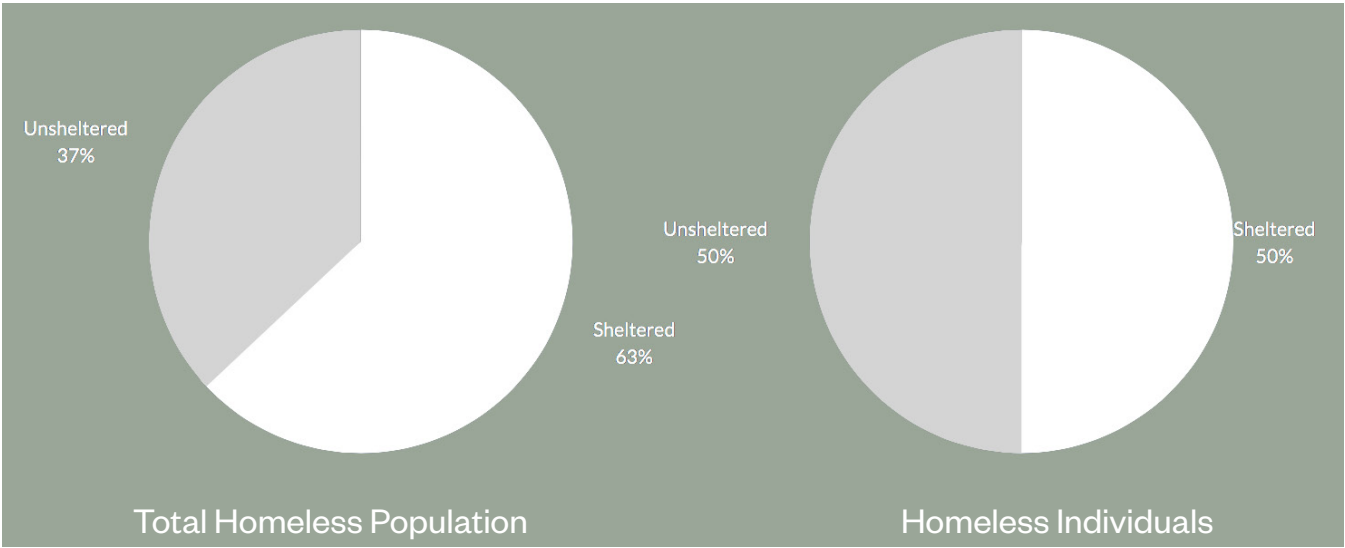
Not enough Emergency Shelter, Safe Haven, and Transitional Housing beds available

Stark difference between the number of unsheltered individuals and # of available shelter beds in California

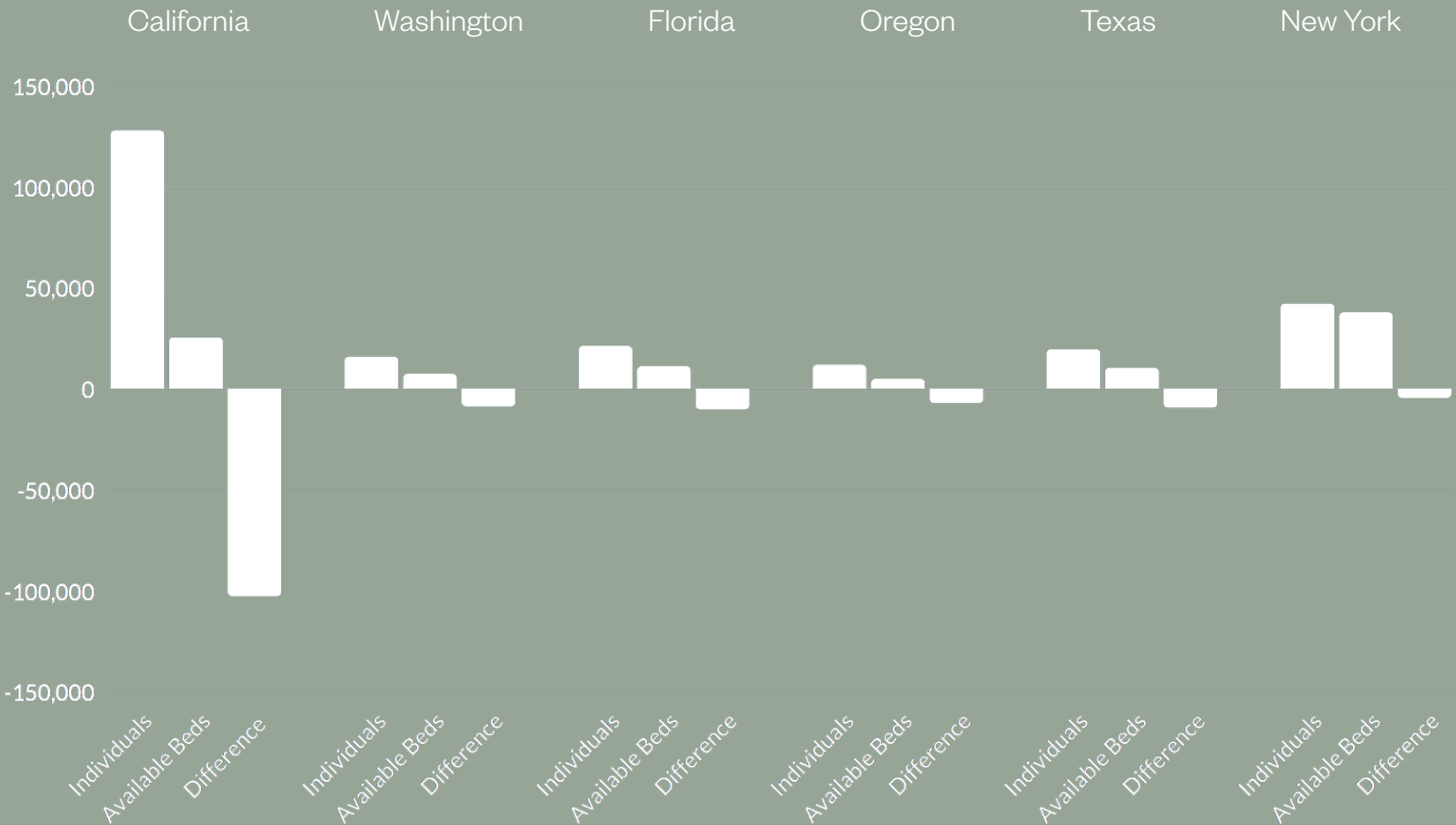
Shelters often **reserve a majority of their beds for homeless families with children**, which make up only a small fraction of the homeless population

Able to offer a year-round bed to only 51% of individuals (who make up the bulk of the homeless population) and 100% of people in families

Shelters can be unsanitary and dangerous; fear of sexual assault, theft, drugs, weapons; can feel restricting - loss of autonomy (set meals, curfew, no drinking or outside food, limited smoking, etc.)



Number of Homeless Individuals vs Number of Available Beds by State





Homeless Family in a Shelter



Homeless Individual on the Street

Focus Location

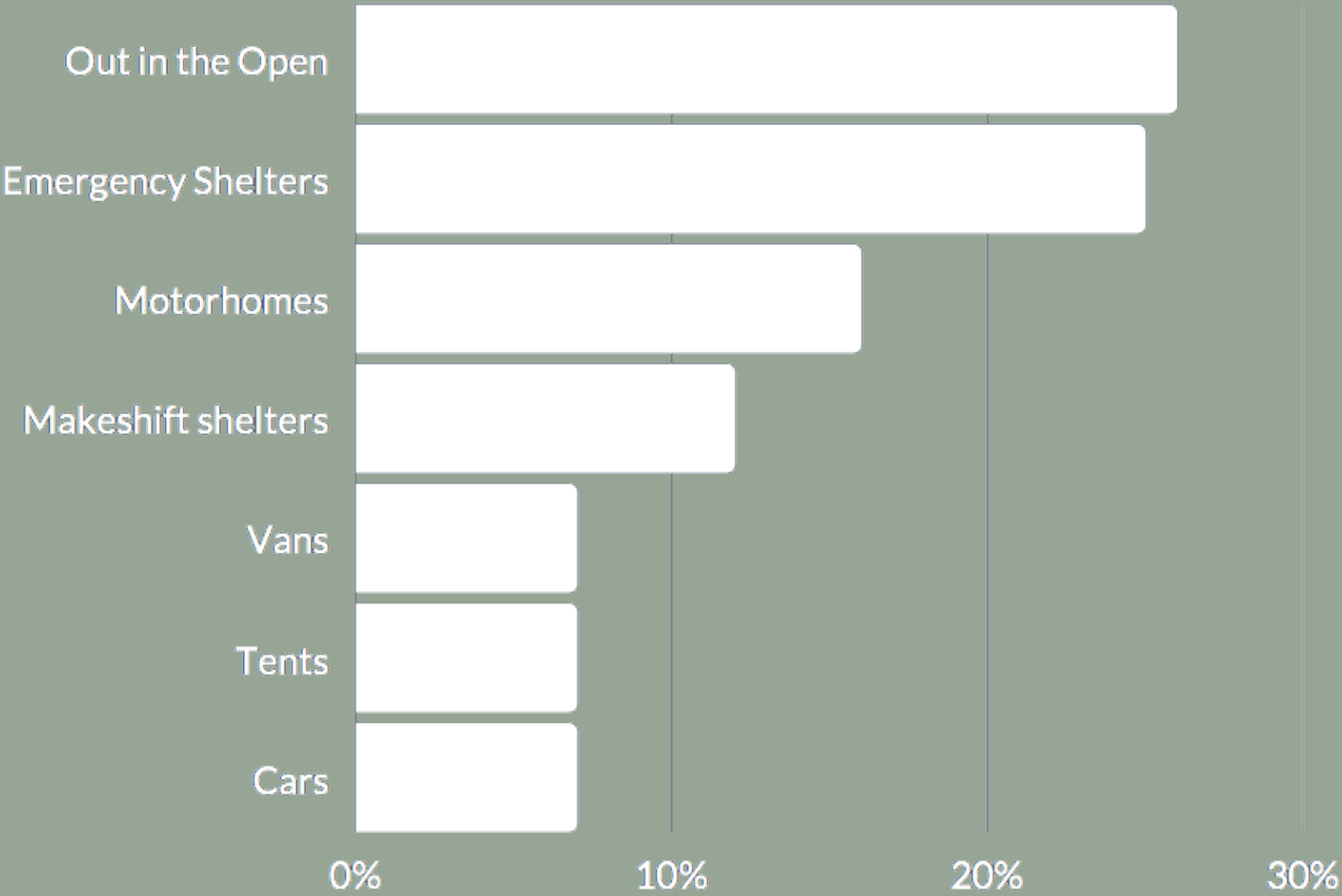
New York - highest rate of homelessness, but **California - highest rate of unsheltered homelessness**
95% of homeless people in **New York** are **sheltered** compared to **25%** in **Los Angeles County**
Far less visible on a daily basis than in West Coast cities where the population has exploded over the past couple years - states of emergency
States like California and Hawaii have **warm weather year-round** so people can survive outside, while in New York only a small fraction of homeless people are unsheltered

Los Angeles (Skid Row), San Francisco, Oakland, San Jose, and other major California cities - **highest population of people doubled up or severely housing cost burdened living in poverty**
Skid Row - one of the largest stable populations (about 4,200–8,000) of homeless people in the US - has been known for its condensed homeless population since the 1930s

LA - largest number of homeless people in the US who do not sleep in emergency shelters
LA has focused (unsuccessfully) on trying to create long-term affordable housing, NYC has focused on creating temporary shelters
20% of all unsheltered homeless people in the US live in LA

Los Angeles average homeless person
85% adults without children
70% male
44% black, even though they account for only 8% of LA residents

Where the Homeless Sleep in Los Angeles





Makeshift Shelters Along Skid Row Sidewalks



Tents for Homeless Along the Highway

Causes of Homelessness in California

Tight housing market, high rental costs, lack of available, affordable **housing**

Economic hardship, inadequate incomes, **poverty**, temporary financial/life crisis, losing a job

End of a relationship, family conflict, death of a partner, **health** emergency

Women & youth escaping violent **domestic situations**, trauma, sex trafficking, exploitation, pregnant/parenting

LGBTQ, racial disparities against **POC**

Mental health, substance use **disorders**, special needs/**disabilities**

Involvement in child welfare and juvenile justice system

War **veterans** with difficulty adjusting to civilian life again

Gentrification - what was once affordable housing for single adults in LA has been gentrified and seen as potential real estate opportunities

Tight **restrictions and required vetting in shelters** - deters people such as drug addicts and criminals

Reagan's defunding of asylums and services for mentally ill/closing such institutions in favor of medication left many on the streets

Not In My Back Yard mentality toward shelters in other neighborhoods



Conditions of Homelessness in California

Majority of homeless in California are **unsheltered** - experience major and worsening **health conditions**
Many sleep in **RVs, vans, and cars** as a last resort before they end up in an encampment on the street

Lack of resources and services
50% of unsheltered individuals report **difficulty taking care of basic needs** like bathing, changing clothes, using a restroom, and having access to food and clean water
Unsheltered people - especially unsheltered women - report profoundly greater health challenges, higher rates of experiences of **violence and trauma**, and longer lengths of homelessness than sheltered people

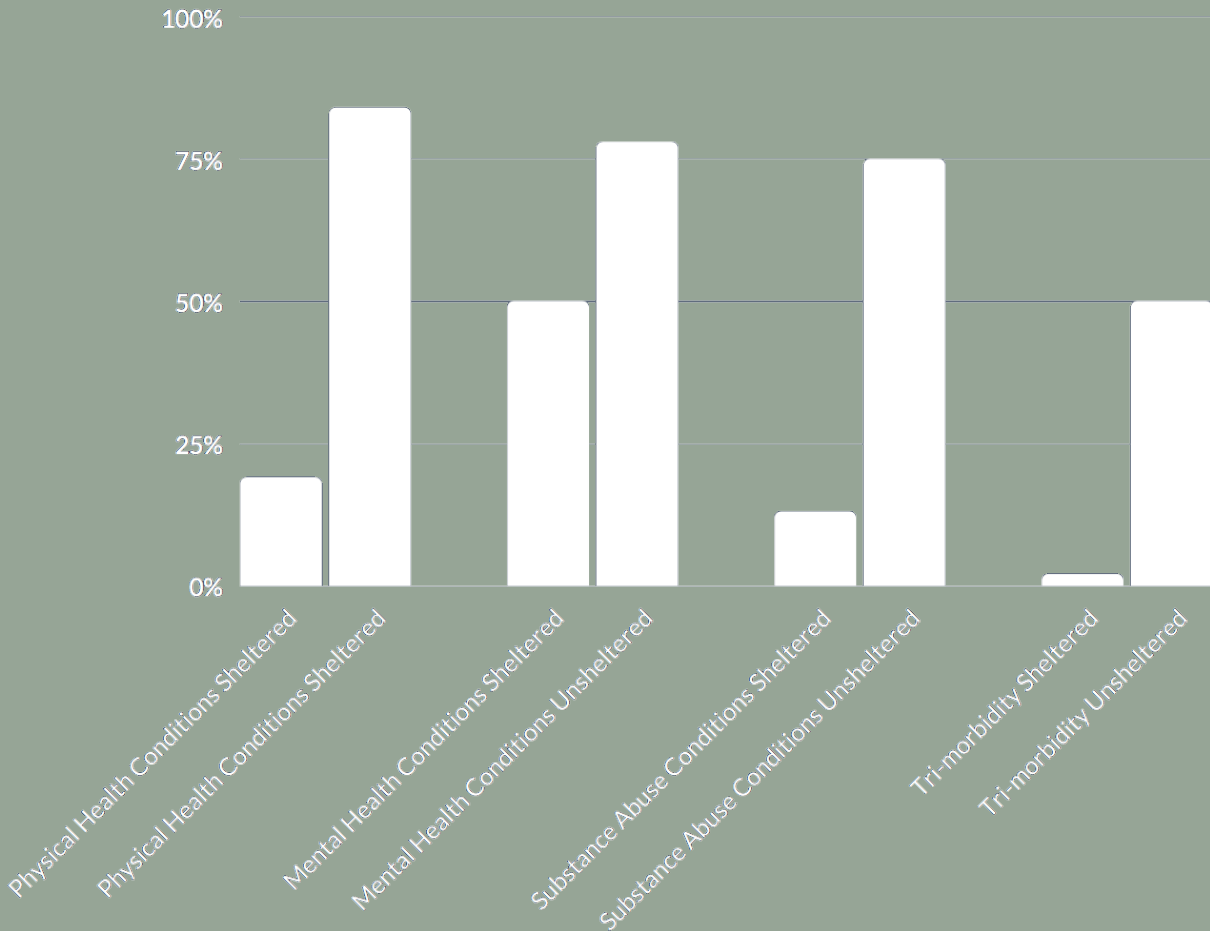
Overcrowded city streets and sidewalks filled with **tents and trash**
Homeless encampments overflow with **dirty needles, feces, and rats**, with no rain to clean the streets and wash away the smell

Police vigorously enforce the city’s laws, making it a criminal offence to sit, stand, lie down, camp out, or sleep in a public space
Broken window theory - funds go toward policing rather than providing supportive services, following the idea that stricter law enforcement on petty crimes will prevent further crime

People who are homeless and living on the streets **die at a much higher rate** than those with a housing option

Death by drug and alcohol overdose - 27%	Death by violence - 24%
Death by heart disease - 22%	Transport-related injuries - 9%
Death by murder - 6%	Suicide - about 5%

Sheltered vs Unsheltered Physical Health, Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and Tri-morbidity (all three)





Overcrowded, Unsanitary, Unsafe Conditions



Police Questioning and Raids are Frequent

Impact of Homelessness in California

Threat to public safety and health

High crime rates - violence, murders, rapes, beatings, robberies, arson, drug addiction

Increased serious **physical and mental health problems** among homeless populations

Diseases including typhus, tuberculosis, and hepatitis A

Increased likelihood of death from the coronavirus among homeless people

Ending homelessness for single adults means a need for:

- Affordable housing, community-wide coordinated approach to helping single adults exit homelessness

- Access to emergency shelter and crisis responsive services with low barriers

- Supportive services for mental health/addiction

- Access to proven permanent housing solutions such as rapid re-housing/ permanent supportive housing

- Connections to employment and income, access to healthcare, and re-entry and recovery supports

Though the end goal is shelter for everyone, homelessness is a long-term problem that will require a long-term solution. What can be done to alleviate the crisis of unsafe unsheltered homelessness in major California cities right now?





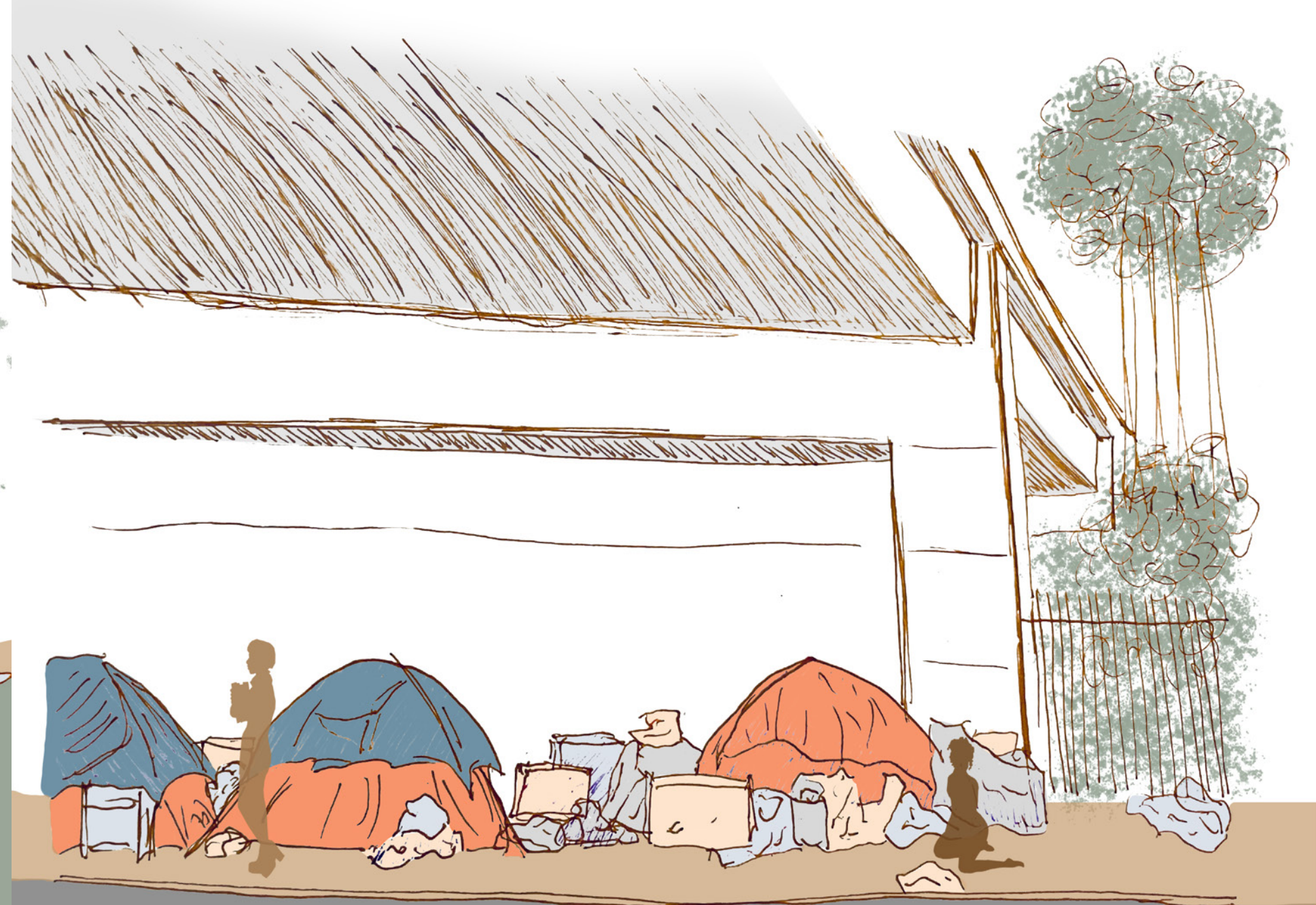
Street Section



Skid Row Sidewalk



Los Angeles Parks



Highway Overpass



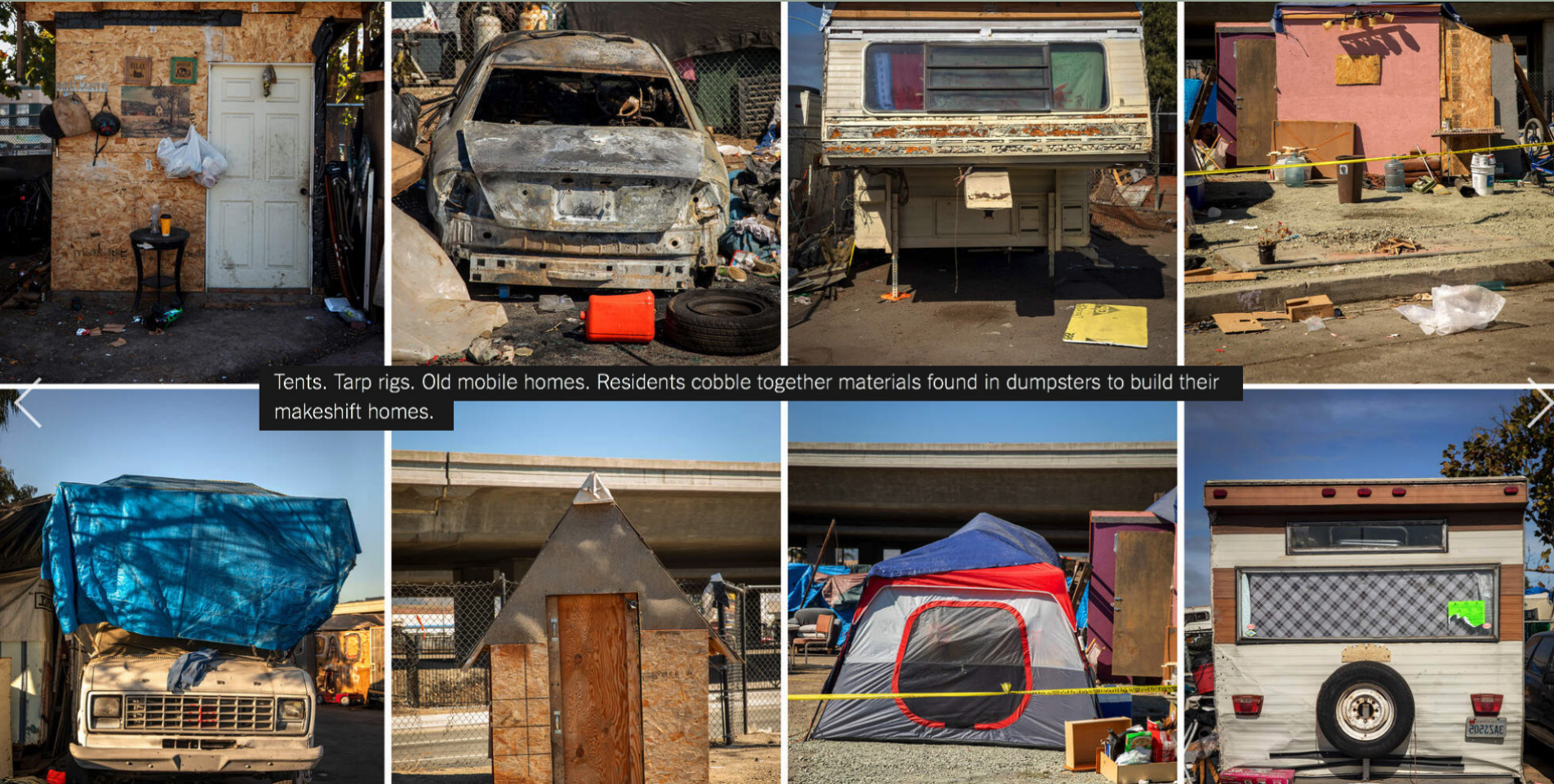
Legal Intervention

“Los Angeles has lost its parks, beaches, schools, sidewalks, and highway systems due to the inaction of city and county officials who have left our homeless citizens with no other place to turn,” said federal judge, David Carter, in his order last month which mandated that **Los Angeles city and county must “humanely” relocate homeless people into a shelter or provide “an alternative housing option.”**

Ruling argues that L.A. city and county **wrongly focused on permanent housing at the expense of more temporary shelter**, “knowing that massive development delays were likely while people died in the streets.”

Must offer single women and unaccompanied children on Skid Row a place to stay within 90 days, help families within 120 days and **offer every homeless person on Skid Row housing or shelter** by October 18.

Makeshift Shelters



Thesis

This thesis is intended to address the crisis of homelessness that plagues our country and the rest of the world by designing a new housing typology that will serve as a temporary shelter for those transitioning from being homeless to becoming settled, and those who opt to live on the streets rather than in overcrowded and often dangerous homeless shelters.

In response to the lack of affordable housing available to shelter those living in tents on the sidewalks of Skid Row, I am proposing a system which provides individuals with shelter pods that can be collapsed and expanded, easily transported, and aggregated in a scaffolding system. These scaffolding systems can stand alone or attach to existing buildings in Skid Row which already provide services to the homeless. This typology is intended to create a community among its residents, encourage them to take advantage of the resources available to them, and to provide them with a sense of security, dignity, and autonomy as they work to get back on their feet.

There is no shortage of land or money available to begin providing more permanent affordable housing for California's homeless population; there is billions in state and local money, 1,390 state-owned parcels identified by the governor's office as suitable for development, and space rapidly opening up in former malls. This will make the time until then as safe and comfortable as possible for our most vulnerable fellow citizens.

Brenda Bryant

54, San Julian Street, Skid Row

Addict, released from jail and put out of housing after failing a drug test

Plastic bucket for relieving herself, a whisk broom, a dustpan, toothbrush and toothpaste, and a gallon jug of liquid soap she mixes with bleach and water to keep ants off the sidewalk in her camp, baby oil to pour down the storm drain to keep the roaches from coming out at night,a tinkerbell blanket; face cream, Let Your Beauty Shine hair product and pink hand mirror are organized in a plastic tub that once contained Country Crock spread

Keeps a storage bin at a city-funded warehouse with extra items for when she gets a place to live



Bryant is currently living in a tent on skid row in Los Angeles.



Inside Brenda Bryant's tent, she keeps some of her hygiene products organized in an old "Country Crock" container.

Terrion Brown

27, Fifth and San Pedro Streets, Skid Row

Bible, sofa cushion on top of a mattress, a tarp stretched across shopping and pull carts and a panel screen, a toddler's plastic keyboard in bright pastels that bring back memories of his childhood, green baby buggy with a sunshade "for recycling, or maybe my future kid if I have one"

Fell out of a two-story window as a toddler and was taken away from his mother, African American with Spanish as his first language, been homeless and in and out of jail since leaving foster care, has dreams of moving somewhere where people are doing well for themselves and not addicted to drugs



Terrion Brown holds the Bible, a belonging he keeps that is important to him.

Edna Broussard

48, Wilshire Boulevard and Alvarado Street, MacArthur Park

Pregnant, police pushed her and her friends out of the park so they moved their tents to the sidewalk just outside, tourists take pictures of the camp every day, multiple serious ailments and lost her apartment nearby when her son was extradited to Texas

One tent for food, bedding, cleaning supplies and clothing, and a storage tent for plastic bags of summer clothes, blankets and baby clothes, uses scissors to fashion a makeshift wash basin out of a gallon jug of drinking water, sewing kit in case her favorite shirt needs mending, half-empty can of Gravy Train is “for the little white dog named Squirrel that a woman dropped off four days ago,”



Broussard sits near the tent she and her husband currently live in.



Edna Broussard holds her sewing kit that she has in case she gets a hole in something.

Rocky Wilson

51, North Alvarado Street, Echo Park

Raised in Echo Park, just got off parole and can't find an affordable apartment, lives with 53 year old wife Christina,

Tethers their tent to a tree on a hillside median, portable DVD player and 100 movies (nightly entertainment), a flowered tin recipe box for Wilson's marijuana sits on top of an old book of short stories, a dream catcher, pillows, stuffed animals/squeaky toys/a bed for their dog Margot, a shaving mirror hangs from a tree branch, an American flag and a Halloween decoration reading “Beware,” an oversized stuffed panda given to him by a little girl



Rocky Wilson sits with his dog, Margot, outside of a tent he shares with his wife.

Charles Smith

66, freeway underpass, Echo Park/ Historic Filipinotown

Air Force veteran, lived in the neighborhood for 22 years, government got him an apartment in Baldwin Hills a month prior but “I don’t have a TV and I don’t know anybody,” so he comes back to his underpass

What looks like a four-poster bed with a canopy assembled from junk with rows of men’s and women’s shoes line either side of it, gives the shoes and snacks, including peanut butter and lemonade, to his friends in the neighborhood

One of Smith’s friends lies on the bed amid crates topped with a derelict boombox and dish antenna, pots and pans and cleaning supplies



Smith stands near his belongings under the 101 bridge on Alvarado St.



Pairs of shoes that Charles Smith has collected sit out on display near his makeshift tent.

Robert Allen Thomas

57, San Julian Street, Skid Row

Graduate of Horace Mann Junior High and Crenshaw High School, been living downtown since 1978, in between jailings,

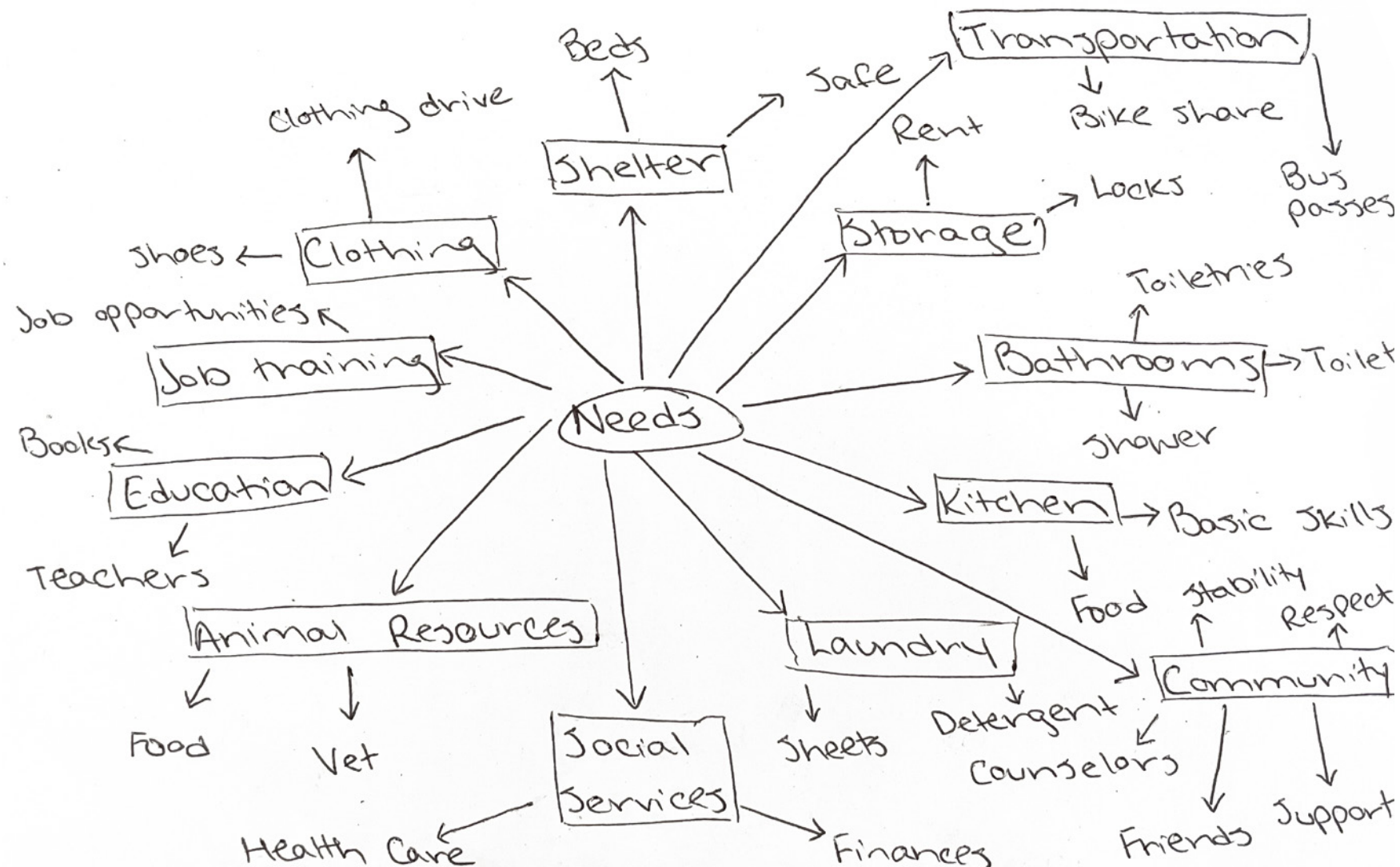
Brought a mattress in on his own private “U-haul” (the bottom rack and wheels of a shopping cart), an office chair tossed out by a downtown corporate building, hangs fancy women’s clothing (an ivory bandage dress with midriff cutouts and a fuchsia top) on the fence behind his tent, “I have lady friends who need clothing, I say, ‘What you got for me?’ They say, ‘I got a hat.’ It’s called looking out for yourself,” a purple flower stuck in the fence was from a lady friend

“We used to cook out here with big garbage cans, now some guys have portable stoves,” resells food if it’s still hot that comes in free to skid row, “If it’s cold I give it away, or feed the cats around here”



Women's clothing hangs on a fence near Robert Allen Thomas' tent on skid row.

What are the Needs of Homeless People



Shelter

Place to sleep

1/4 of the nation's 600,000 homeless people keep pets but most shelters do not allow them

Storage

Protection of their belongings while they go to appointments, shower, or find food

Warmth

Winter jackets

Raingear

Shoes

Health

Safety

In terms of durability, weather protection, security

Cleanliness

Clean clothing

Personal hygiene items

Access to facilities to keep up good hygiene habits

In 2013, there were only 7 public shower facilities for the 3,500 people experiencing homelessness in San Francisco

Food

Human and pet food

Gift cards

Food stamps

Transportation passes

Metro system has been a refuge for homeless people for decades

Help/treatment for addiction, mental health, physical health, substance abuse, trauma, etc.

Education

Job opportunities/training

~25% of unsheltered homeless people have jobs

Stability

Companionship

Compassion

Respect

Dignity

Immediate Needs

Bed

Shelter

Storage

Restroom Access

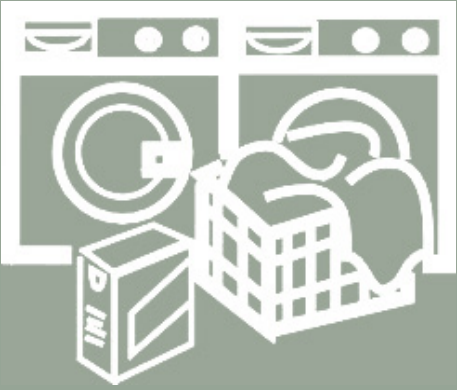
Privacy

Security

Sense of Community



Kitchen



Clean Clothing



Shelter



Storage



Restroom Access

Priorities

Material

- Weather-proof
- Insulated
- Sturdy
- Recycled (ideally)
- Affordable

Function

- Portable, collapsible, dismountable
- Safe - protected from elements and people

Create a Sense of Community

- Potential larger central unit for shelters to lock into
 - Provide electricity, clean water, heating (probably unnecessary in LA)
- Create a supportive surrounding community to encourage future permanent housing
- Provide resources to prevent repeated homelessness

Autonomy

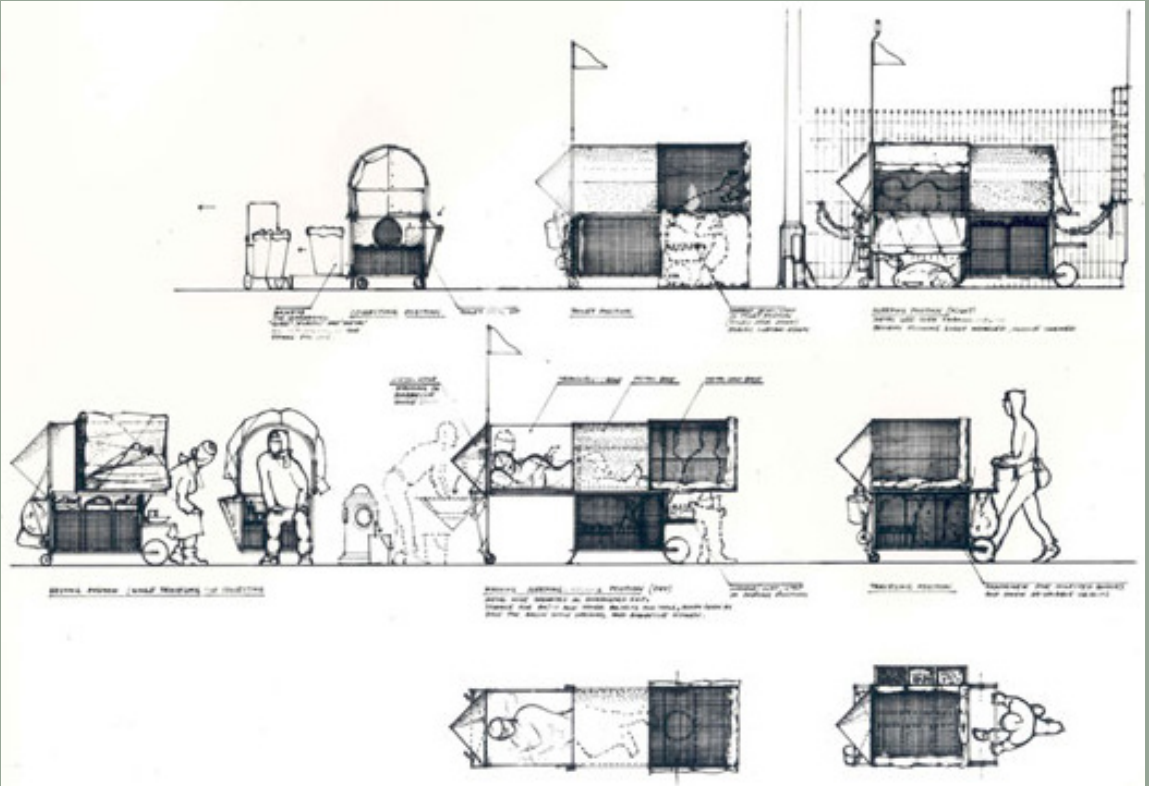
- Freedom to move and settle as one pleases
- Allow one to feel a sense of ownership and responsibility

Krzysztof Wodiczko - Homeless Vehicle Project

A streamlined, four-wheeled metal object, reminiscent of a **high-tech version of a supermarket cart**, encased in a skin of plastic or rubberized fabric

Stretched across a skeleton of metal hoops

Targets an occupational subculture of single homeless men - those who **survive by redeeming empty cans and bottles for five-cent deposits - as potential user-consumers**

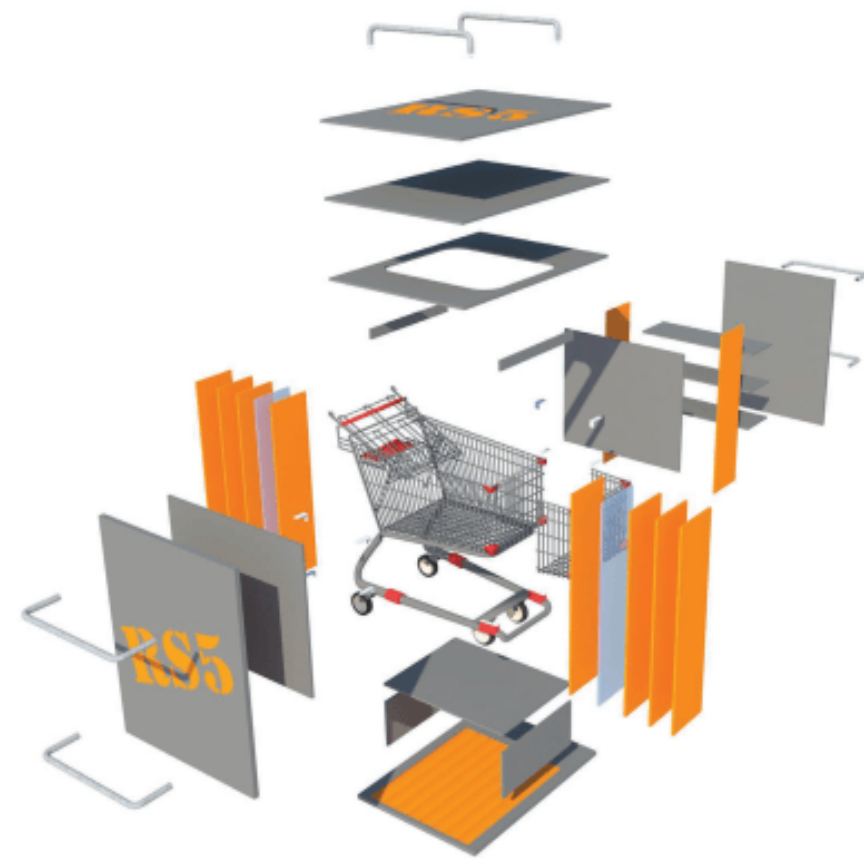


Eduardo Lacroze - Shopping Cart Shelter

Competition submission intending to find solutions for people on the streets, which **uses the shopping cart as the core component** folds into a small box that fits around the cart and **expands** to fit an individual laying down

Insulated and weather-proof, costs around **\$500** to build

Intended to work similar to a community **bike-share program**



Michael Rakowitz - ParaSITE

Inspired by the custom tents at the palstinian refugee camps in Jordan

Custom built inflatable shelters for the homeless that **attach to the exterior ventilation ducts of buildings** so the warm air is circulating between two layers of plastic

Inspired by car covers because the shape allows the tent to blend in, allowing individuals to feel more hidden and protected

Multiple **iterations** over the course of several years



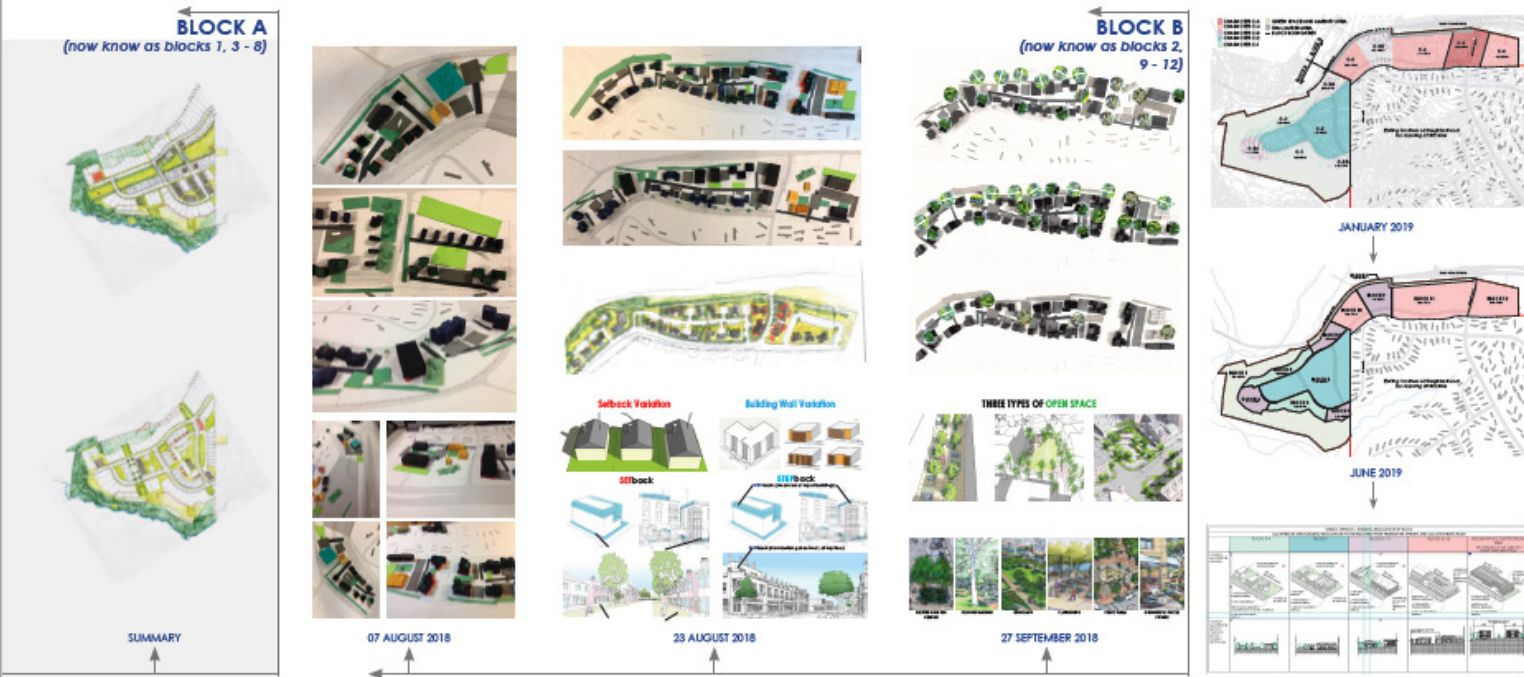
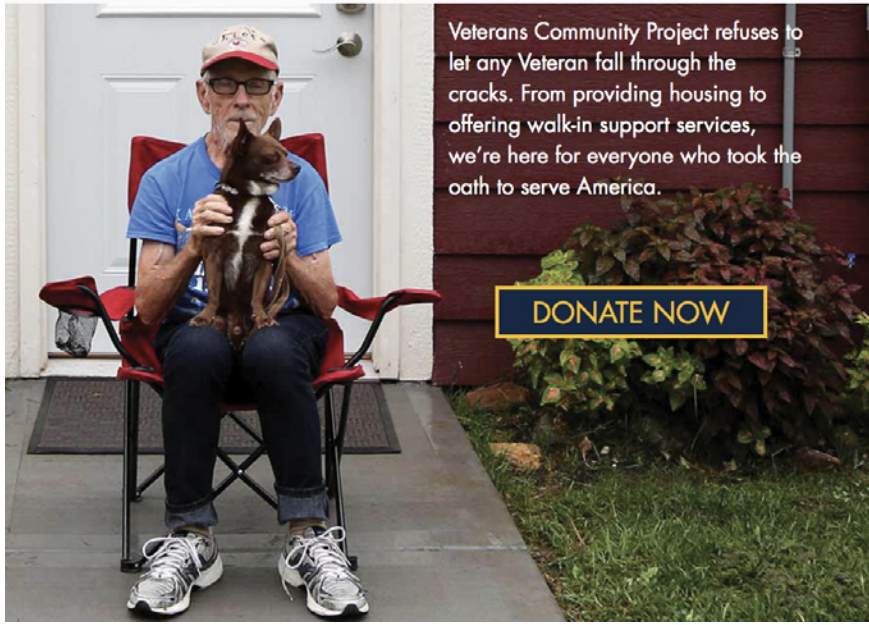
Sense of Community

Endeavours such as the **Veterans Community Project** and **Habitat for Humanity’s Southwood Redevelopment Plan in Charlottesville** work not only to address the crisis of homelessness, but also strive to **create communities** in the process

- Southwood’s guiding principles:
- Non-displacement
 - Resident ownership
 - Healthy housing
 - Sense of place
 - Safe neighborhood
 - Cohesive design



*** Important information about the 2021 RideKC Veterans Pass ***

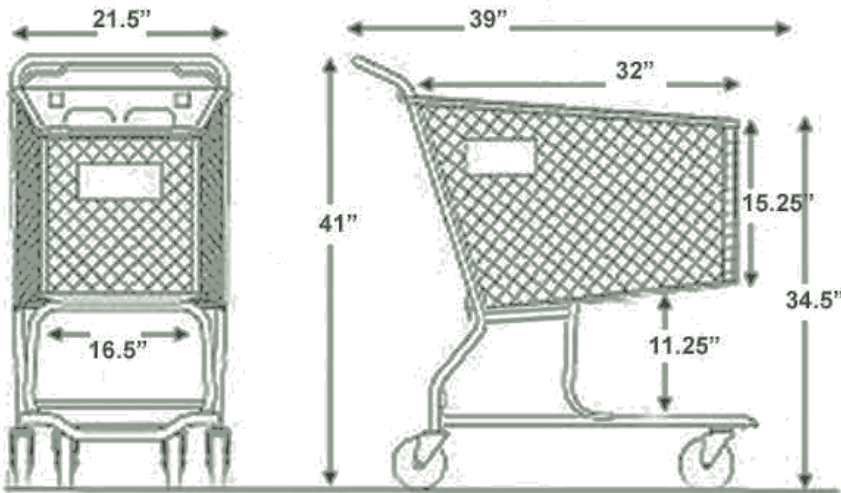


...FUTURE RESIDENT LED PLANNING EFFORTS...

Pod Dimensions

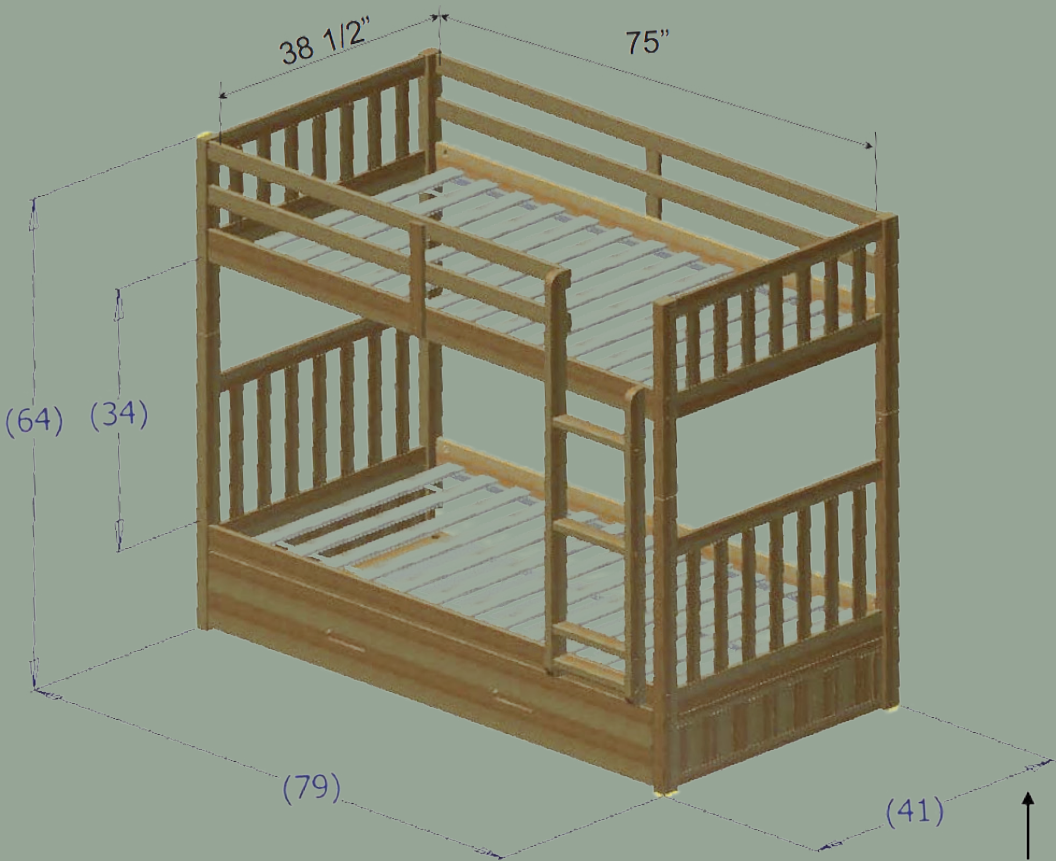
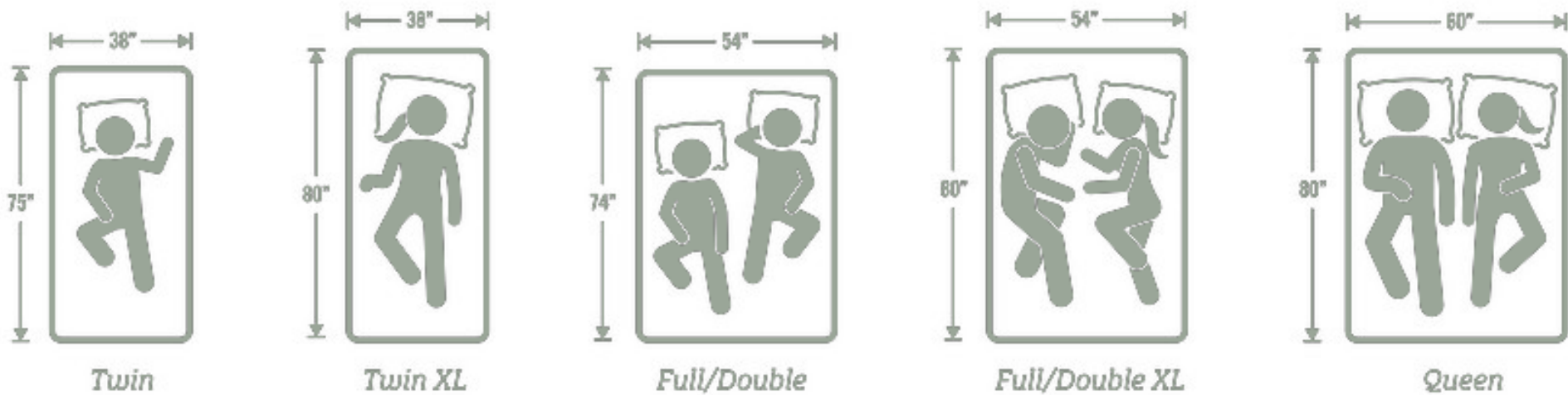
Collapsed

- Average shopping cart ~ 39"(L) x 21"(W) x 41"(H)
- Collapsed shelter (max) ~ 42" (L) x 30" (W) x 42"(H)
- Collapsed shelter (min) ~ 36" (L) x 24" (W) x 36"(H)

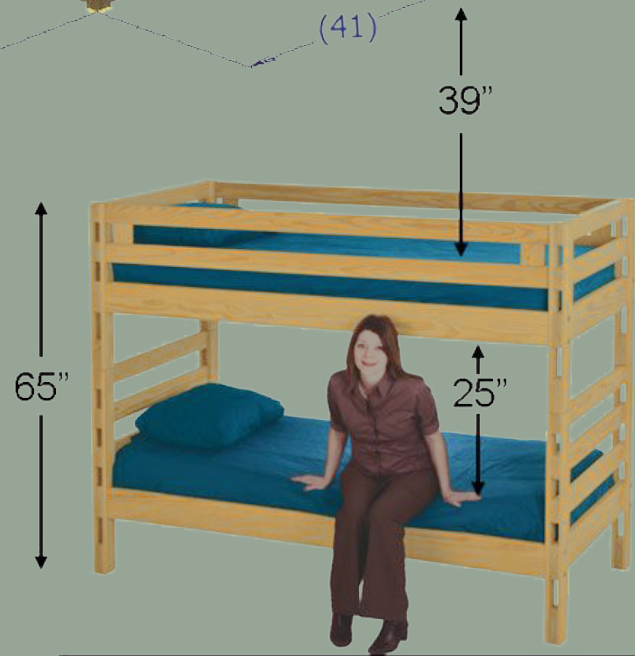


Expanded

- XL Twin Bunk Bed ~ 80"(L) x 38"(W) x 34"(H)
- Expanded shelter (max) ~ 96" (L) x 42" (W) x 42"(H)
- Expanded shelter (min) ~ 84" (L) x 36" (W) x 36"(H)



Comfortable sitting height: 34"



Material - Cardboard Tubes

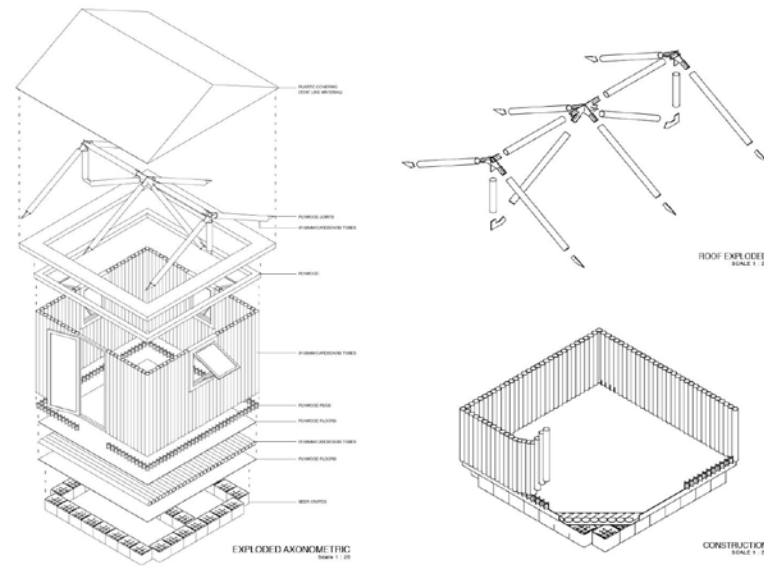
Shigeru Ban - disaster relief shelters

Polyurethane-coated paper tube frame covered with plastic tarps

3 inches in diameter, linked together with plywood joints and rope

Stable, waterproof structure that maximizes internal space

Sustainable, can be taken apart and reused/repurposed/recycled



Material - Plywood

More flexible material - relatively easy to work with

Easily accessible and readily available

Can be collapsible/use hinges to flatten for portability

Easier maintain and repair

Good thermal properties

High durability and security

Sustainable and cost-effective



Wheels

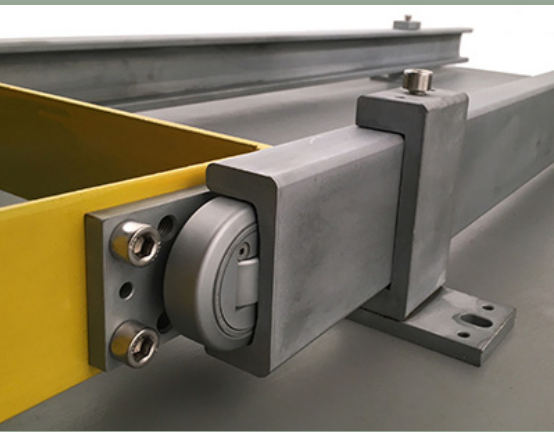
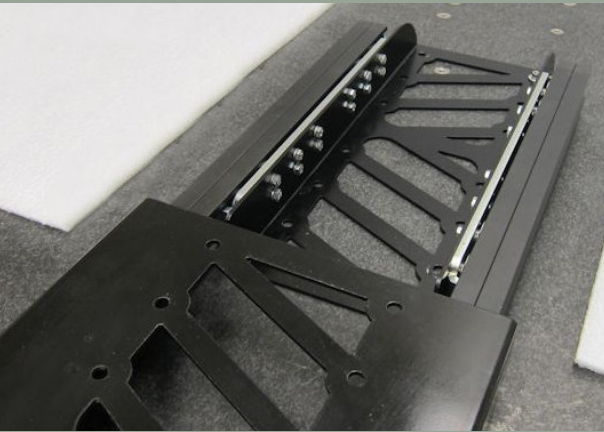
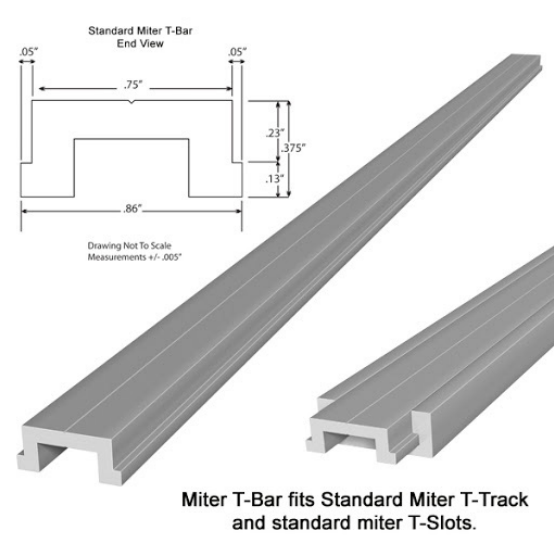
Retractable or detachable wheels to allow for individuals to transport the unit from place to place in its collapsed form and to lie the bottom surface of the pod flat in its expanded form in order to stack units on top of one another in the scaffolding system



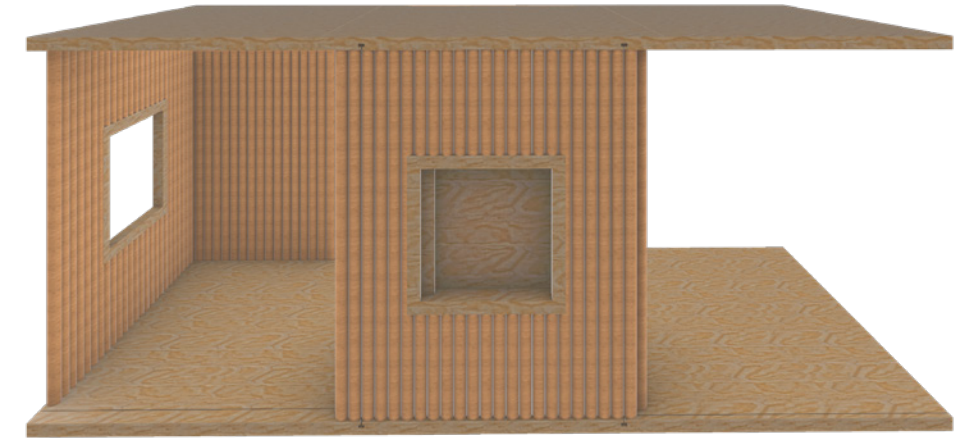
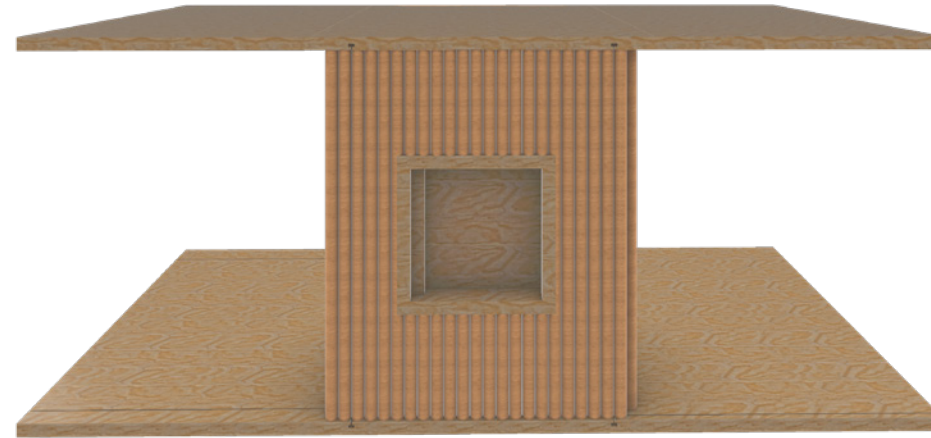
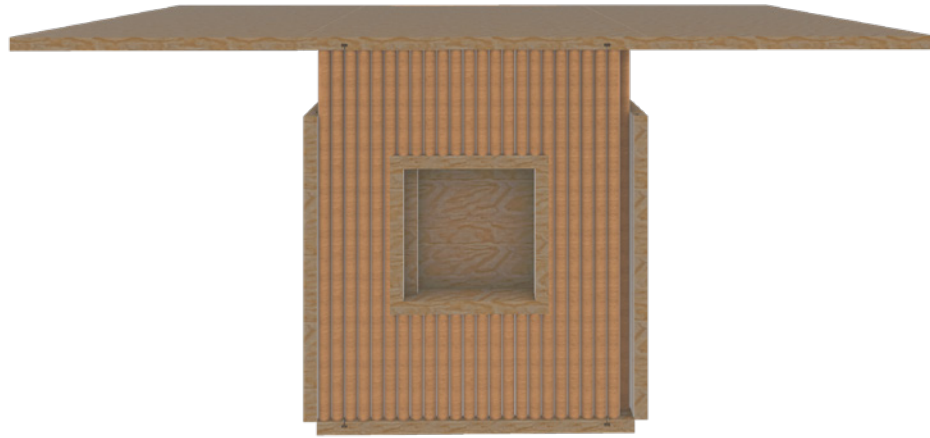
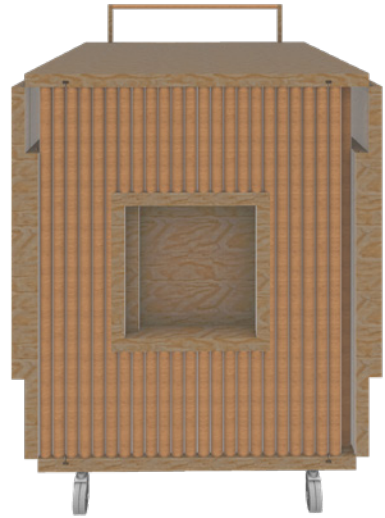
Interior Unit Connections

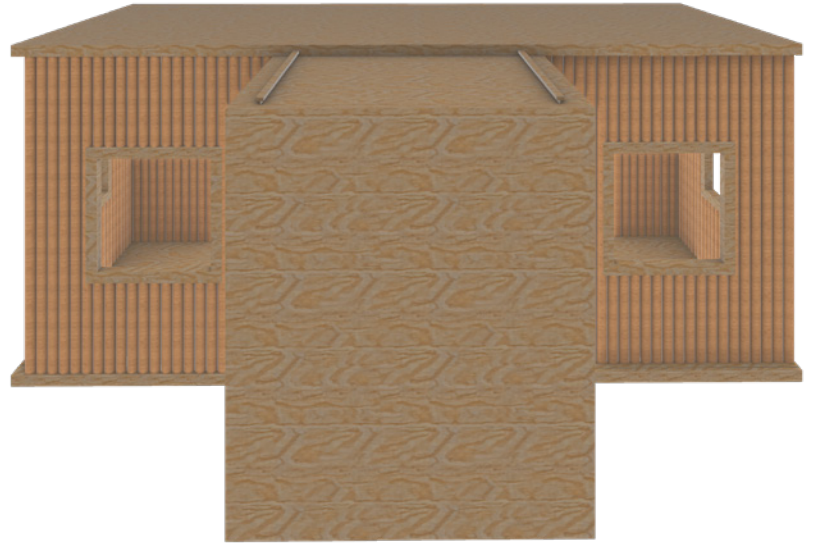
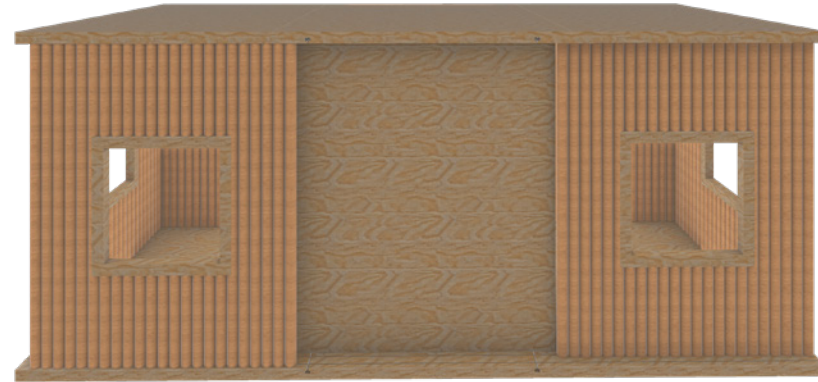
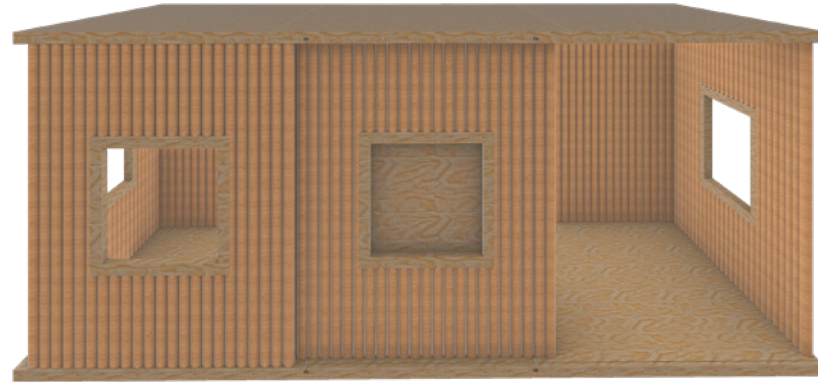
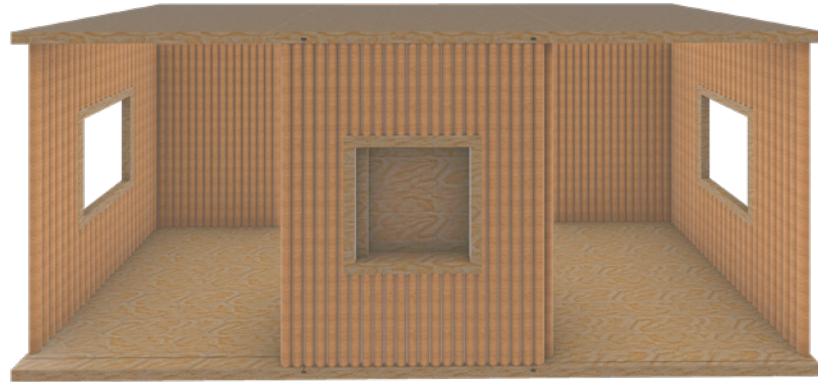
A simple rail system will allow the unit's walls to easily slide into place when expanding and collapsing the pod

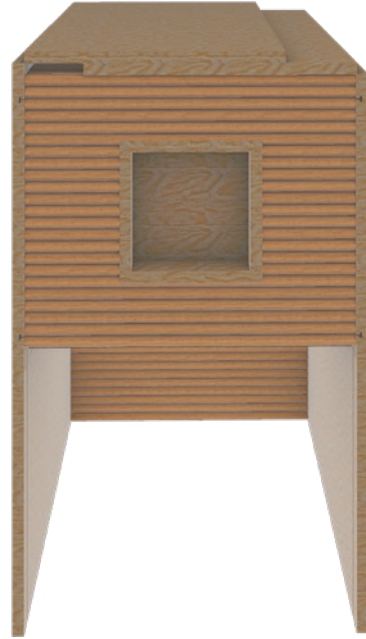
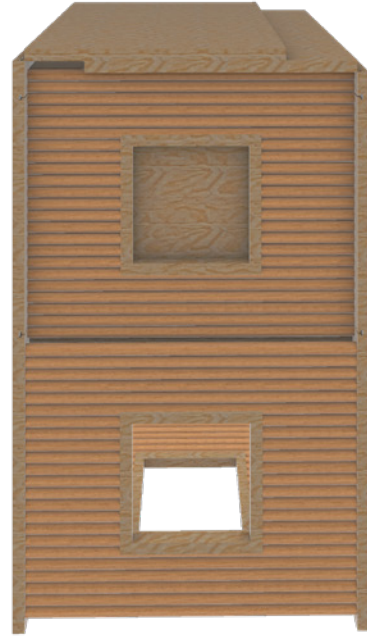
- Sliding rail
- Glide track
- T-track and T-bar
- Roller bearing rail

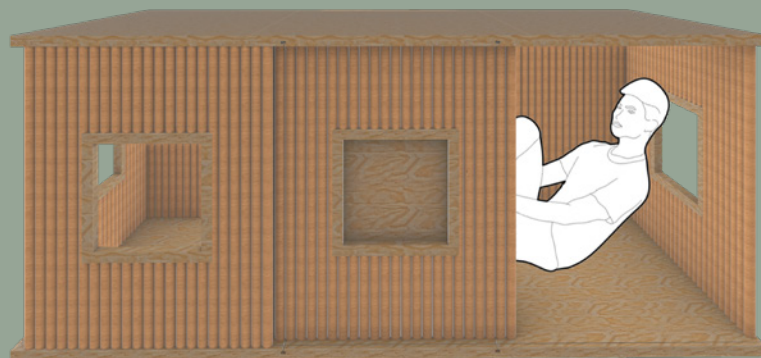
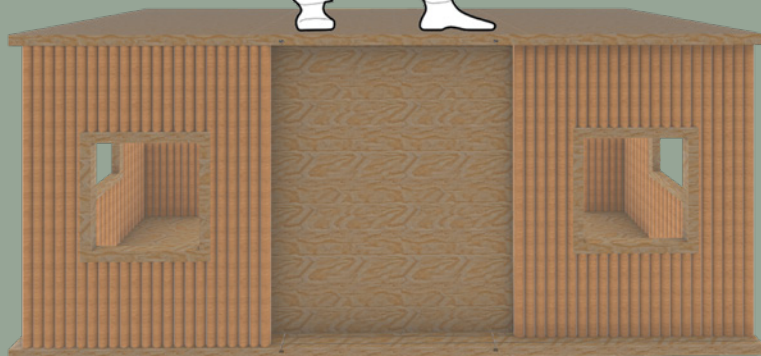
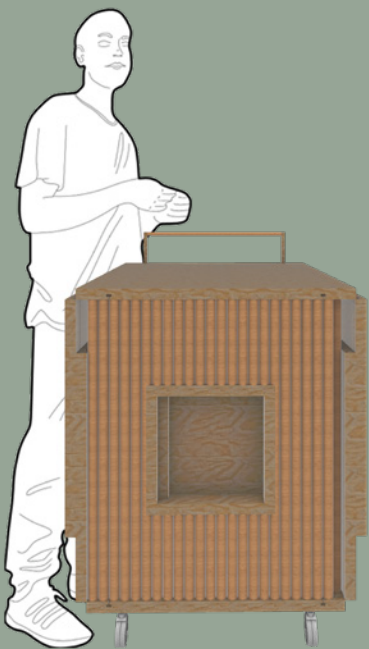
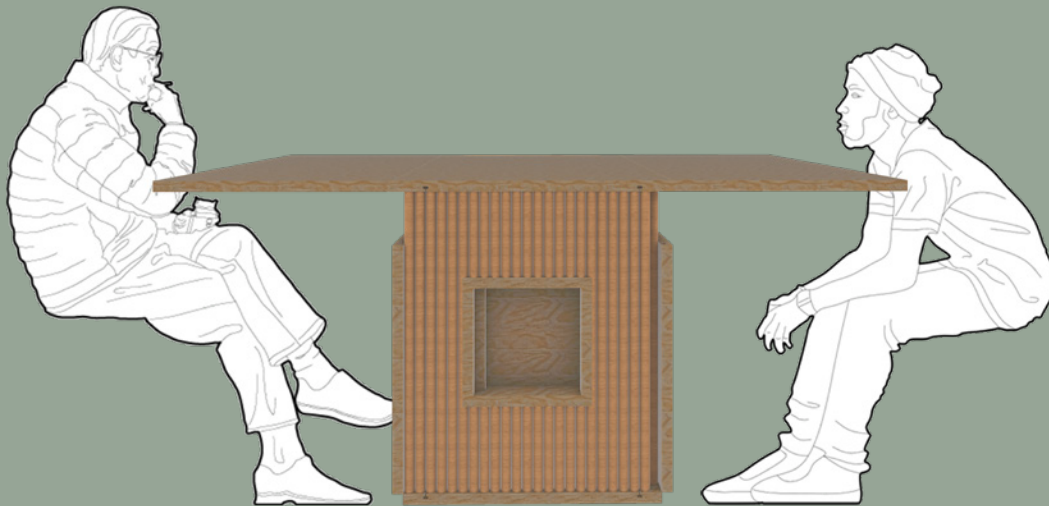
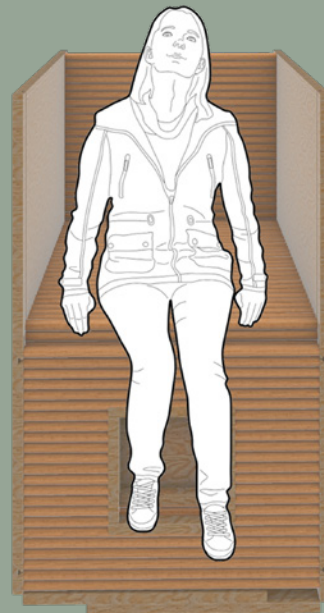
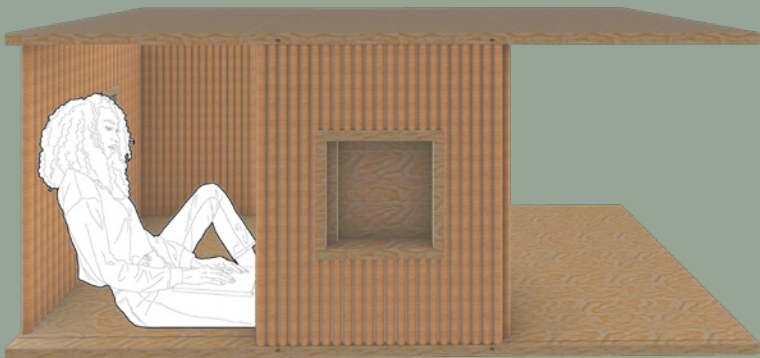


Pod Series of Transformations



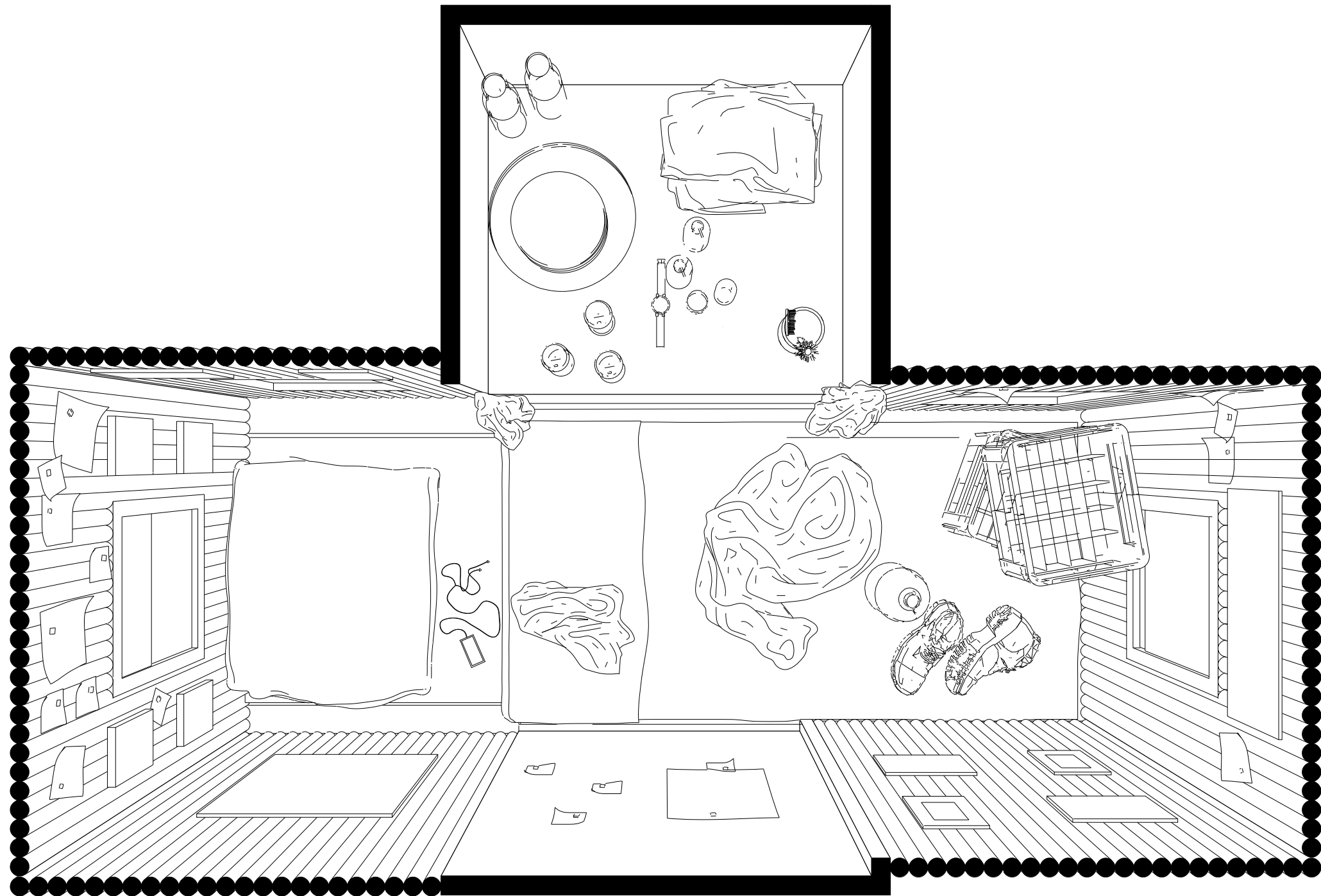






Pod Interior Perspectives





System

Learning from Karel Teige's "The Minimum Dwelling"

“Collective dwelling in which every adult would be provided with a ‘minimal but adequate, independent, habitable room’, while all domestic services would be collectivized”

Individual Pods with Shared Amenities

Bathroom, kitchen, laundry, desks, common space, etc.

Take advantage of empty lots and abandoned spaces

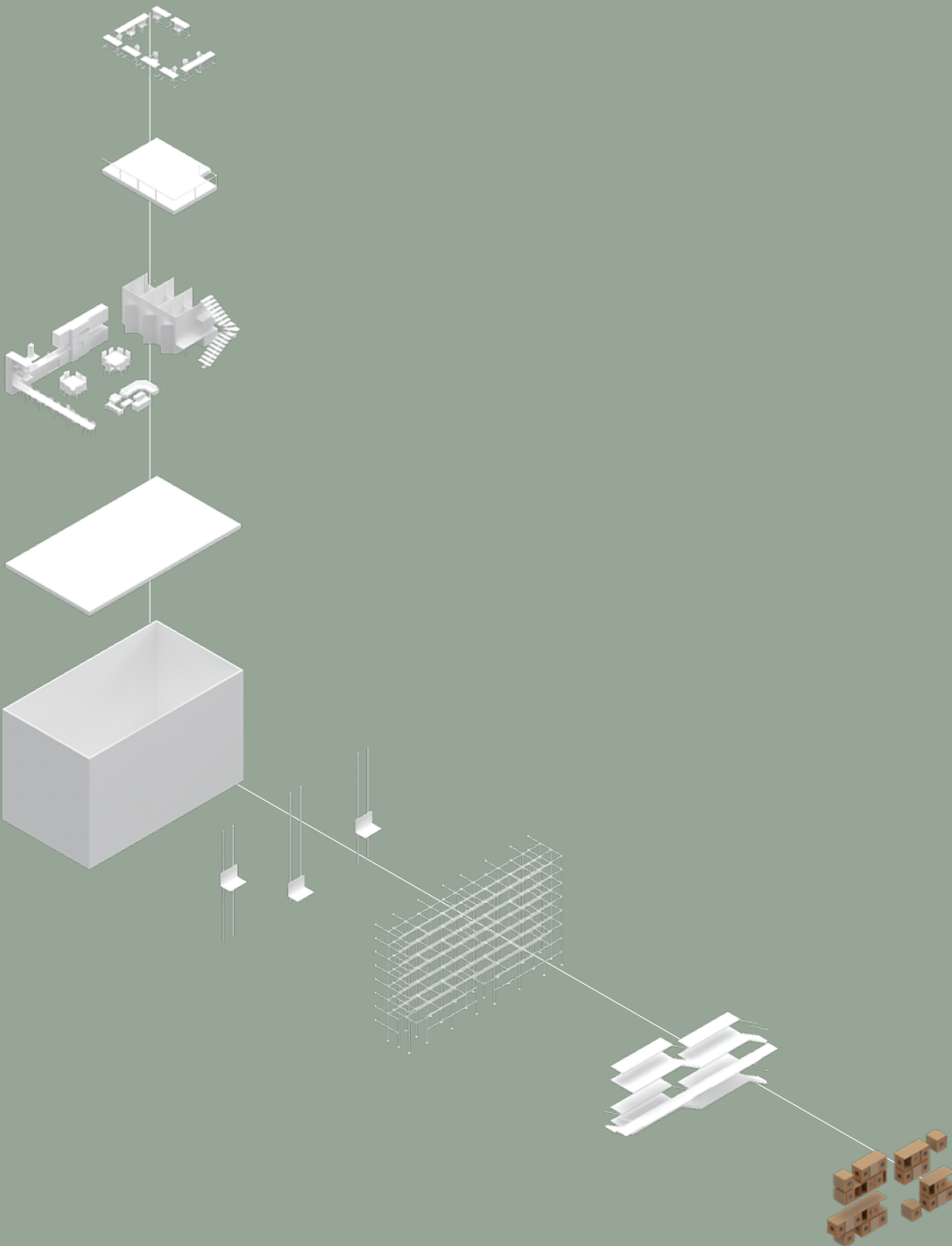
kitchen	dining	salon = club
house-keeping	bathing	children's space
services	physical culture	individual living cell
centralized and collectivized		

Three Levels of Intervention

1. Attach scaffolding system directly to exterior wall of existing building
2. Attach scaffolding to a new collective unit, which will be attached to an existing building
3. Attach scaffolding to a free-standing collective unit

Distribution Agreement

These pods are to be distributed with the understanding that they are a **temporary housing solution** and in agreement that **those using them will be actively working to better their current situation**. Whether this takes the form of pursuing further education, undergoing job training, or simply taking advantage of the resources available to them, occupants must agree to regular check-ins with social service workers so that this system may successfully **alleviate rather than enable** the crisis of homelessness in Skid Row.



Parasite Shelter

Skid Row has plenty of sites dedicated to providing services to its homeless population

Health Care

Churches & Missions

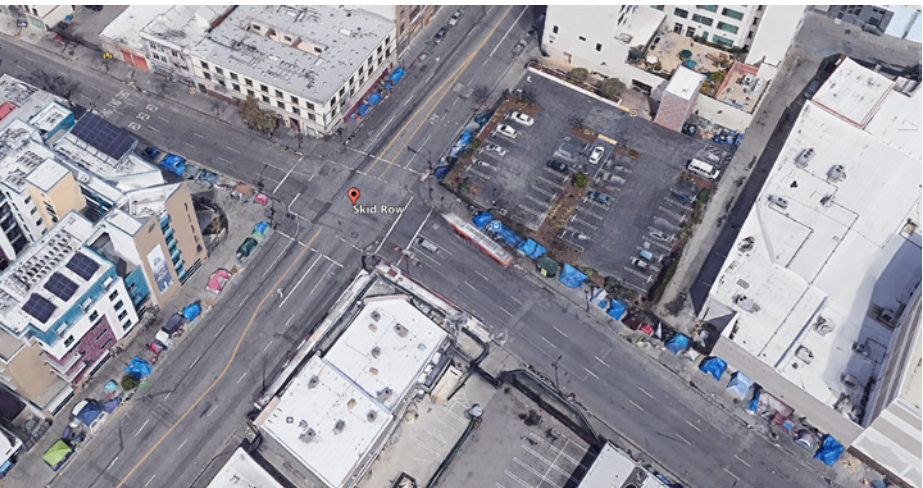
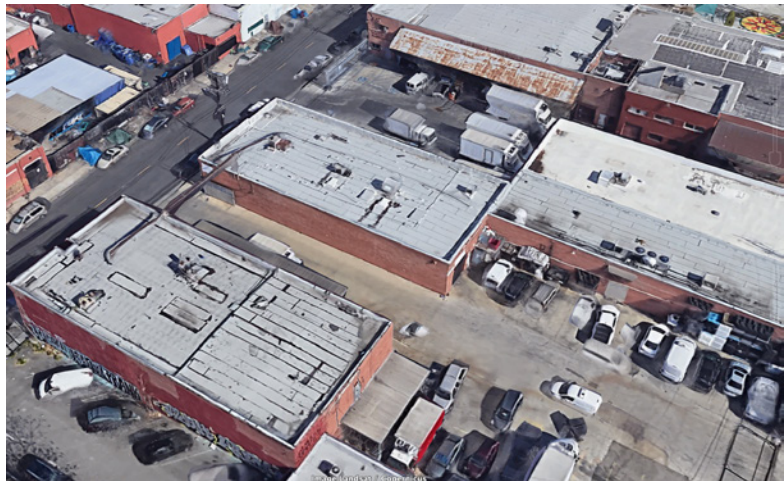
Social Services

Food Distribution Centers

Housing

Many of these sites have back walls and alley ways that are hidden and ignored

I am proposing that we take advantage of these sites to host this new shelter typology



Health Care

1. Downtown Women's Center
2. Downtown Urgent Care
3. Homeless Health Care LA
4. LAC Department of Mental Health
5. Downtown Women's Center
6. Mental Health Counselor
7. The Wellness Center

Churches & Missions

8. Union Church of Los Angeles
9. Jodoshu North American Buddhist Missions
10. Centenary United Methodist Church
11. Azusa Lighthouse Mission Church
12. Emmanuel Baptist Rescue
13. Fred Jordan Mission

Social Services

14. Lamp Community
15. St. Vincent's Cardinal Manning Center - Social Services Organization
16. Little Tokyo Service Center
17. Employment Agency
18. The People Concern
19. Los Angeles Community Action Network
20. Lincoln Hotel Non-profit
21. Weingart Hope Row Resource Center
22. Hope Gardens
23. Volunteers of America

Food Distribution

24. Los Angeles Ministries Service
25. Food Distribution Center - Chrysalis
26. Salvation Army Food Distribution Center
27. The Midnight Mission
28. Kansas Marine Distribution Center
29. Hippie Kitchen

Housing

30. Union Rescue Mission
31. Marshall House for Homeless Veterans
32. Star Apartments & The Star Clinic
33. Los Angeles Mission
34. The Village - The People Concern
35. The BIN Storage Facility
36. SkidRow Community Refresh Spot

Viable Locations

37. Rooftop Parking Lot
38. Rooftop Parking Lot
39. Food Markets
40. Food Markets
41. Lucky Corner DLTA Shopping Mall



Identify Tents

Identified 835 tents from Google Earth
in Skid Row

Average of 17 tents per block



Place Scaffolding Systems

- Identify ideal locations for scaffolding systems
- Buildings' back walls and alleyways
 - Abandoned lots
 - Open space in parking lots
 - Churches and social services
 - Close to big-box stores

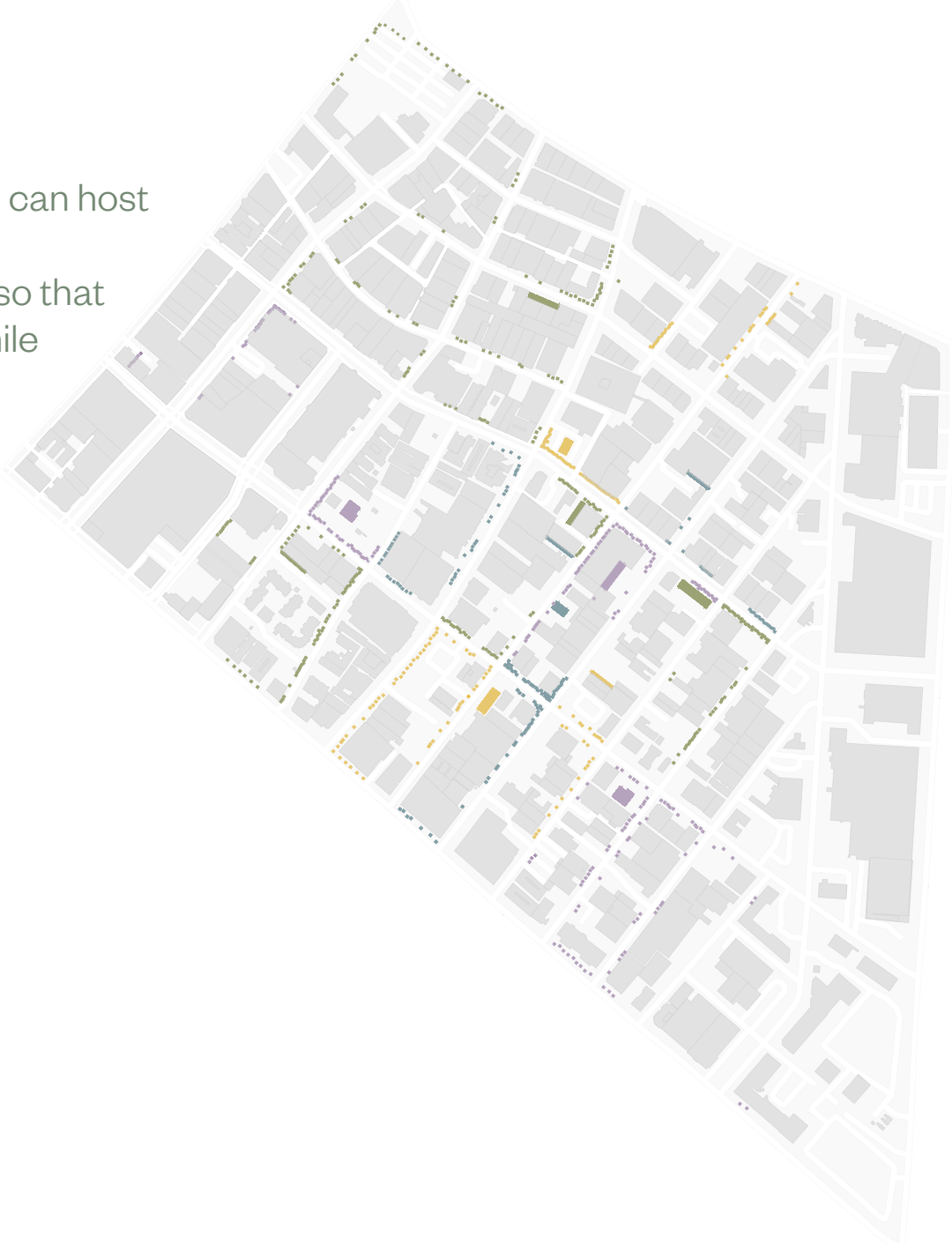
- Adjust length and height of scaffold to
fit into its chosen site
- Number of pods each system can host
will vary greatly depending on the scale of
the chosen site



Assign Regions

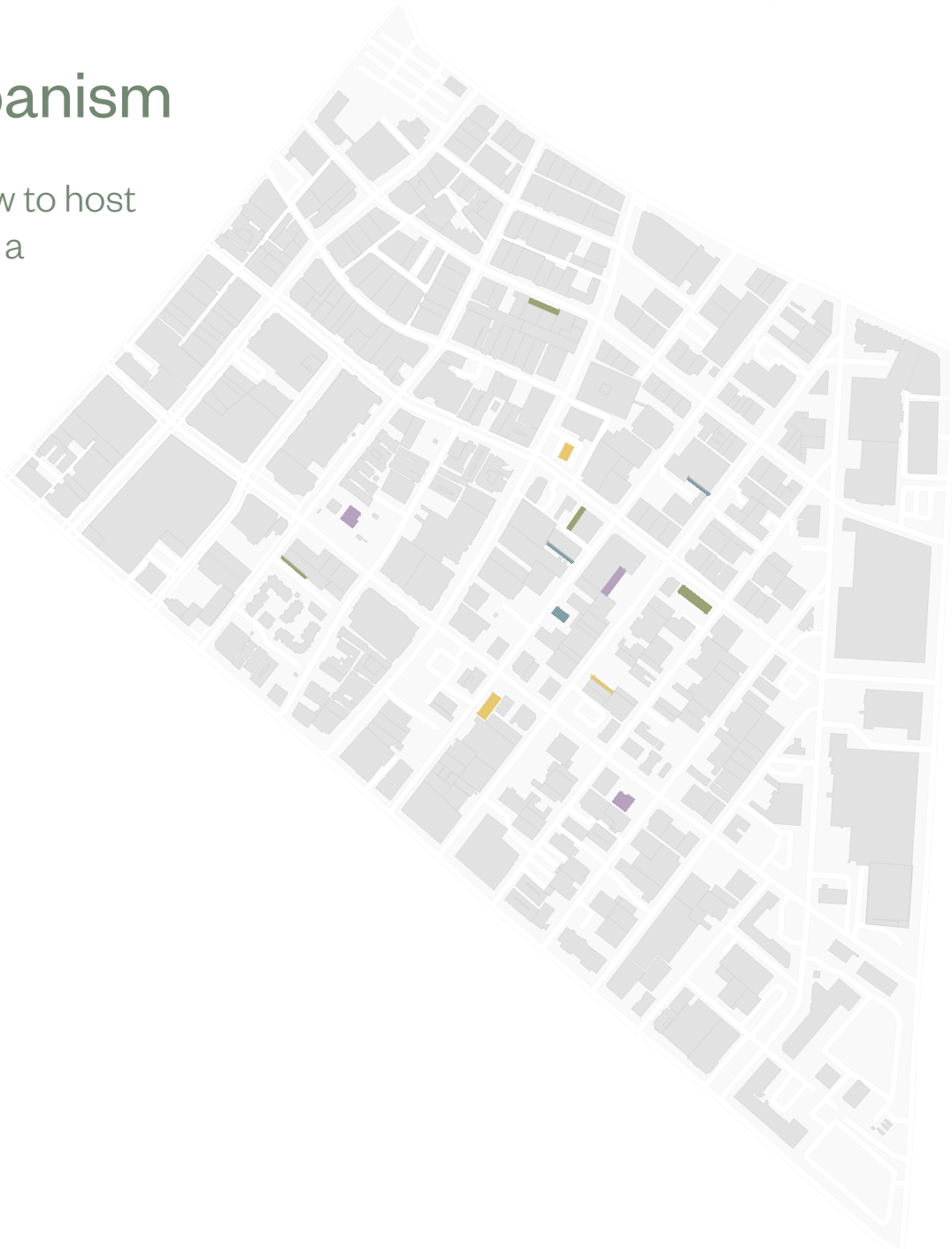
Determine how many pods each system can host

Assign host systems based on location, so that those who have formed a community while on the street are able to continue to foster and grow it

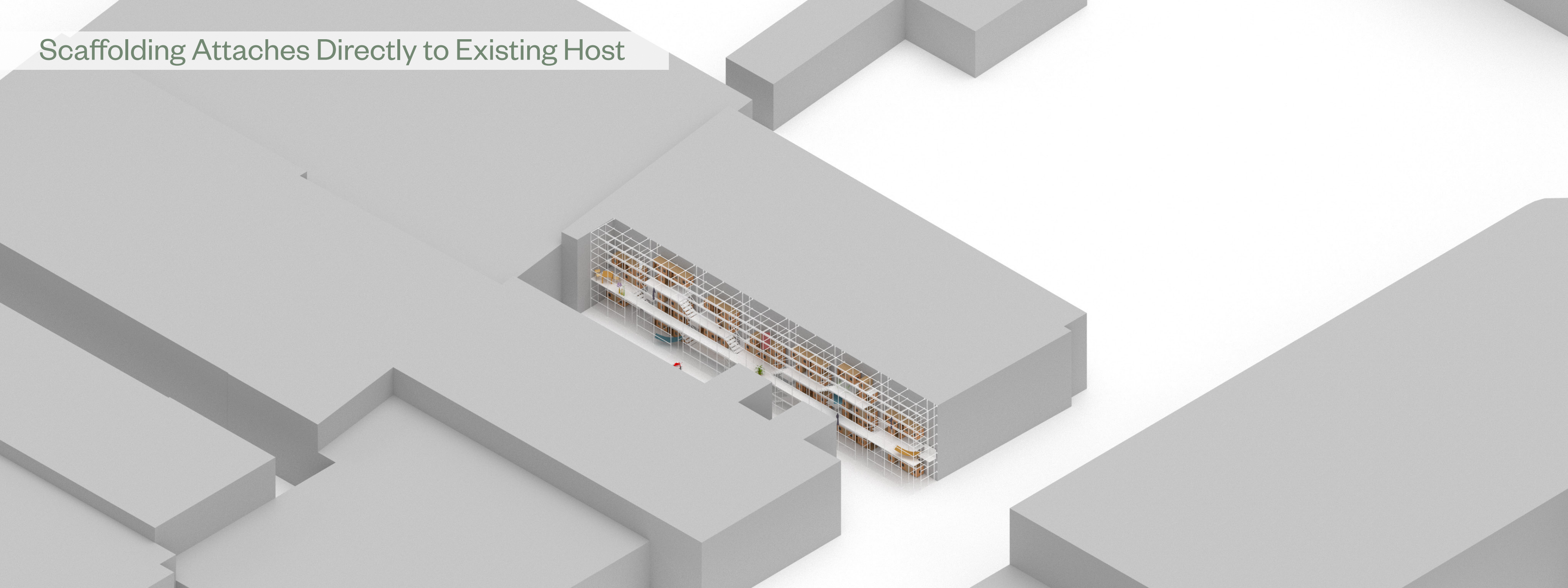


Principle of Vertical Urbanism

Building shelter vertically allows Skid Row to host the same amount of people, yet requires a significantly smaller area of land to do so



Scaffolding Attaches Directly to Existing Host

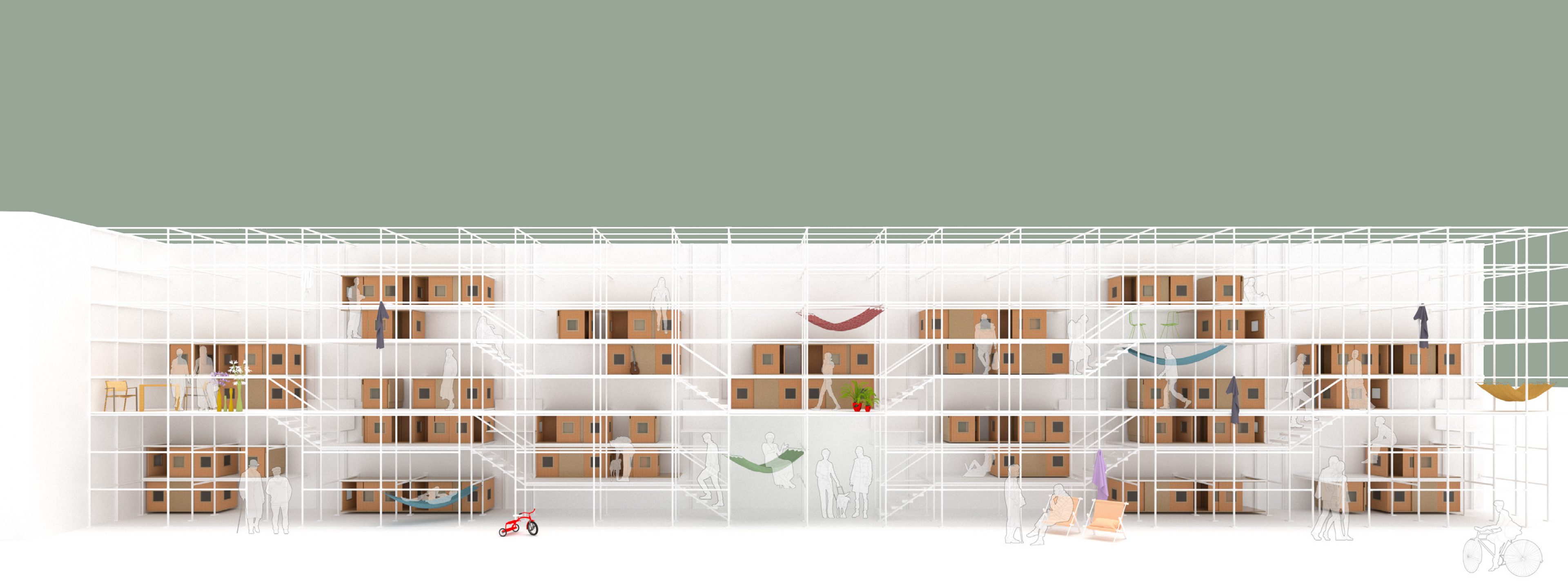


Communal Unit with Scaffolding
Attaches to Existing Host



Free-Standing Communal Unit with Scaffolding









Connection to Communal Space

Shared common space inevitably creates a sense of community

- Helps those who have spent many years alone to readjust to society

- Allows for as much or as little privacy as one desires

- Sense of responsibility for both individual and collective space

- Prepares for the responsibilities of taking care of more permanent housing

Communal space can vary greatly in scale depending on site

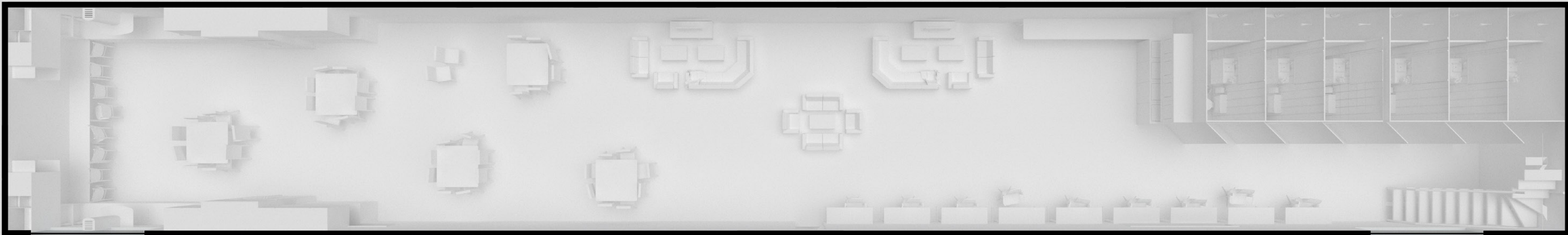
- Larger spaces can host workshops and classes

- Smaller spaces create a more intimate community among its residents









Perspective Views of Scaffolding Attached to Host

Food Distribution Center - 5 Breads 2 Fish Oaks Of Righteousness Ministry





View Walking Along Scaffolding

Beyond Building Shelters: Creating Communities for Los Angeles' Homeless

Katherine Kilgore
Arch 4020 - Mutable Architectures: The Design of Transitional Spaces
Professors Alexander Yuen + Karen VanLengen

