Contributing Editor | Designing a Better Home

Making a Difference
Through Architectural Design

JERRY R. GLOSS
Senior Partner, KGA Studio Architects

Typically, this column focuses on residential architecture and design trends. As architects our mission is to create compelling designs for our clients. However, this particular article is about being compelled to design for altruistic purposes — not for the reasons we or other architects choose the architectural profession; rather about seeing a need and providing services to help address it.

The Compelling Challenge

In the US there are approximately 800,000 adults with intellectual disabilities living with parents past the age of 60. Here in Colorado there are about twelve thousand examples of this situation. The parents who face this daunting challenge are typically the primary caretakers who have to also balance their own lives, career responsibilities, and the future welfare of their children. For Jim and Sandy Hembd this fact was not only sobering but a call to action. As the parents to Mark and Mike, twins with who both live with Down Syndrome, Jim and Sandy became driven to find an alternative for the care of their boys when the time comes that they are no longer able to look out for them.

With the stark reality that program funding is decreasing while the lists of those who needed services continues to grow, Jim and Sandy started to think outside of the box for an alternative, literally, a way ‘out of the box’. Their mission became the creation of a private pay assisted living provider, without dependence on government funding, while providing residents an ongoing opportunity for social, emotional, vocational, and spiritual growth. More importantly, it needed be a lifelong care model for its residents.

The Design Challenge

Part of the mission also included the goal to create a community of homes. With such lofty aspirations, fund raising became the number one mission of Glory Community. As fund raising successes were realized and a location in Broomfield secured, designing the first home became the second mission. With the opportunity to help Glory Community realize their goal, KGA Studio Architects developed a prototype design that could be used on each of 5 lots. Each home in the community will have a different exterior elevation creating a diverse but complimentary streetscape. The prototype design encompasses over 5,000 square feet and provides a large multi-station kitchen where residents work together to prepare meals, a family dining area, several areas for activities, an apartment for the Home Teacher, and eight bedrooms which are paired with a shared bath. In addition, each home has a multi-bay garage for a transport van, the teacher’s private vehicle and gear storage (bikes, camping equipment, etc).

The design provides the eight residents of each home a family styled environment with live in Home Teachers and peers as surrogate siblings. The list of special design features needed were endless. Given the lifelong care model parameter, each home includes provisions for accessibility. The resident’s entry off the garage includes individual closets for coats and gear for each individual. There is a guest suite for visitors. Each floor has a laundry room. The kitchen, dining and living areas of the homes are designed to promote shared activities by the residents. The homes are designed to be similar in appearance to any other custom home, with care taken to create a neighborhood scale and pleasing exterior composition.
A Dream Realized

Sopris Homes stepped forward to build the first home, which is now approaching its one year anniversary of completion. Residents, in this case "the men", have moved in…culminating in completion of the first step in the realization of a dream. The project received a judges award in 2012 from the National Association of Home Builder’s Sales Council’s National Award Program, in recognition of the project’s community spirit and home builder involvement. The project has also provided a template for success in creating other non-government funded alternatives for the housing and care of the developmentally disabled throughout the country.

Now it’s time for the next step: Fund raising and planning for the second home is underway. If you are moved by the mission of Glory Community or compelled by the images in this article, contact Sandy Hembd sandyhembd@comcast.net. We also invite you to visit Glory Community web site at http://glorycommunity.org.

KGA Studio Architects is located in Louisville, CO. They can be reached at 303.442.5582 or you can find their online presence at www.kgarch.com.