

Not Just Housing: Refugee Resettlement in St. Louis

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Forced migration, the expulsion of individuals from their homes to other countries, under duress, is a spatial condition that operates at a global scale. Because of the unpredictable and fluid nature of forced migration, and because of the variety of scales of the compounded issues, establishing sites of design intervention is quite complex. This project looks at one phase of the refugee experience, resettlement, as a site of intervention. As a program, resettlement is intended to create the conditions necessary for successful acclimation which, in turn, is contingent upon access to a range of civic services including schools, employment, mental health facilities, transportation, and cultural attractions, and of course, housing.

Influxes of refugee populations have unpredictable sizes, origins, and timing, and are drawn from a range of cultures from around the globe. Each of these cultures has a specific family organization; some have fluid boundaries, with several families blurring into a group of “cousins”, while other cultures maintain distinct boundaries and the order of a patriarchal household. Other cultures tend to be multi-generational, accepting grandparents, aunts, and uncles into a single household. To accept this range of housing norms, this project tests a spatially fluid organization of living spaces within a landscape anchored by the civic programs mentioned above.

The project is imagined as a starting point for refugees entering the country, giving them a chance to get accustomed to the climate, culture, and space of the site of resettlement before moving into a more stable housing option. The project is sited in the Grand Center neighborhood of St. Louis. The site is adjacent to major regional cultural destinations, and has access to good transportation infrastructure, hospitals, and education opportunities for all ages. The landscape of the project encompasses 5 acres with an elevation change of 35’ from top to bottom. The site is divided into seven terraces supporting a total of 50 living units and six civic buildings.

Studies have shown that immigrant populations strengthen and diversify existing urban contexts and bring an entrepreneurial spirit, and great optimism for the future in a new location, and can bolster flagging communities. St. Louis itself has benefited from such an effect, both from the influx of Bosnian refugees in the 1990’s and from the contemporary presence of refugees from over 100 nations. While this design is site specific, it is imagined as a prototypical model for development which could be deployed nearly anywhere, so long as the civic and residential attributes are present. Resettlement can be used as an aid to growth in all cities, especially those with slow or negative population growth.

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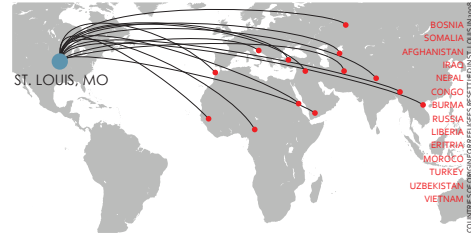
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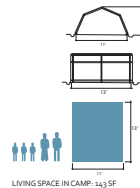
REFUGEE GROUP TYPES

PRIORITY 1: REFUGEES ARE IN NEED OF URGENT AID
P-1
SECURITY CONCERN RELOCATION OF FIRST ARRIVAL
NEED OF LEGAL PROTECTION/REPAIR OF DAMAGED DOCUMENTS
FORMER POLITICAL PRISONERS, SOCIAL ACTIVISTS
VICTIMS OF TORTURE OR PERSECUTION
MEDICAL AT RISK
PHYSICAL OR MENTAL INJURY
MEDICAL ASSISTANCE
DURABLE SOLUTION IN FIRST ASYLUM COUNTRY NOT FEASIBLE

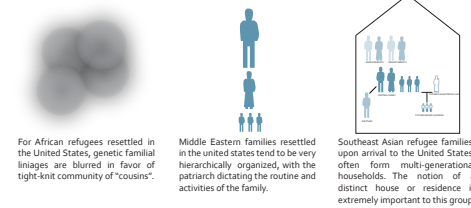
GROUPS OF SPECIAL HUMANITARIAN CONCERN
P-2
PEOPLE WHO FACE PERSECUTION IN THEIR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN
LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED REFUGEES
A-DISABLED POPULATION

REFUGEES WITH RELATIVES IN THE UNITED STATES
P-3, P-4, P-5, VISAS 99
THE LOWER THE NUMBER, THE CLOSER THE RELATIVES TO THE UNITED STATES
IN STATUS DESIRES TO PROVIDE CARE AND ASSISTANCE

PRE- AND POST-RESETTLEMENT LIVING SPACE



CULTURALLY SPECIFIC FAMILY STRUCTURES



COMPONENTS OF RESIDENTIAL CLUSTERS

