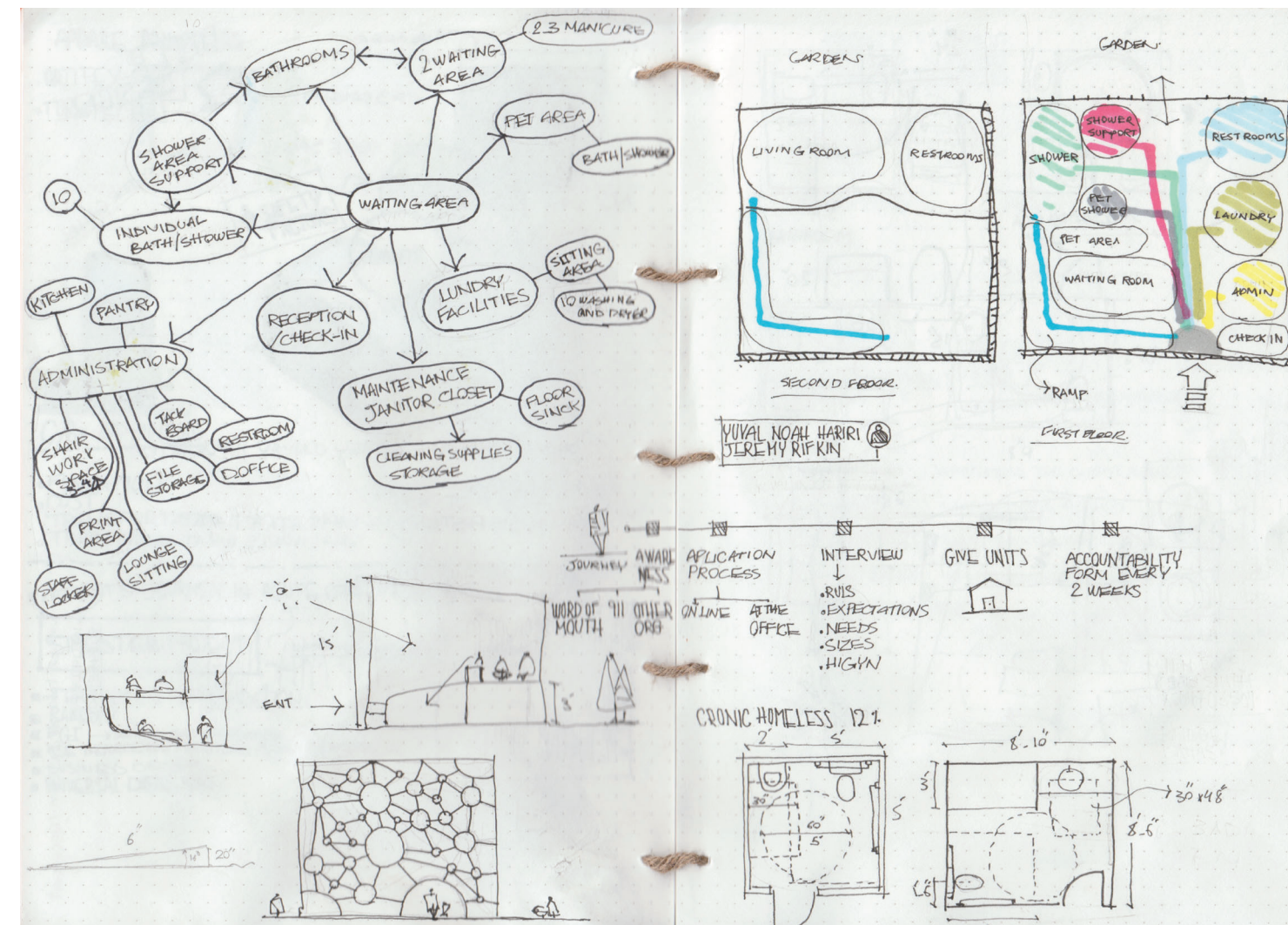




Soma is the cell body of the neuron that contains the nucleus and keeps the cell functioning. Neurons are necessary to communicate and transfer signals and information throughout the body. In a similar way, Soma Center serves to empower, support, and connect the homeless population to the larger society. Soma provides clean and safe access to hygiene facilities such as a shower, restroom, laundry, and a rest area.

The goal of Soma Center is to provide for basic needs and create a sense of identity, hope, worth, dignity and empowerment. Since the physical environment affects these important factors, designers can create a supportive environment for the homeless to send them positive message. Soma center reduces environmental stressors by taking into account interior design considerations such as color, daylighting, art, plants, signage, furniture, visual buffers, and spatial layouts.



Durability and maintenance
In the Soma Center, durability and maintenance of materials are essential in order to serve the population. Facilities should be cleaned every day, so ease of maintenance is an important consideration. Additionally, showers, sinks, and toilets should be maintained and easily cleaned.

Dignity
Dignity is an important factor in designing facilities to serve the homeless population. Some of the design solutions include reducing environmental stressors, providing a dynamic environment, promoting connection to nature, boosting a sense of identity, and creating opportunities for choice.

Safe and privacy
Homeless people frequently express a fear of society. The need for private spaces should be addressed to ensure a safe and welcoming environment.

Furniture
Furniture should be durable and easy to clean. Research suggests that patterned fabrics are easier to keep clean than solids. Some solid wood and laminated products can be used for the facility. Furniture arrangements should be considered since it can affect homeless people's sense of safety, crowdedness and even their relationship to staff.

Storage
Homeless populations carry their belongings such as documents, memorabilia, food and cash, so they need a secure place to store them.



Check-in/ Reception



Waiting Area/ Living Room



Check-in/ Reception



Laundry Facility



Second Waiting Area

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS



Crowding: Crowded spaces are stressful and uncomfortable for homeless people. Some creative solutions for this issue are using light colors, since these colors make a calmer environment than dark colors. In addition, some simple painting or visual interest can reduce perceived crowding. Furniture and spatial arrangements may reduce the feeling of crowdedness.



Aesthetics and Art: "Architectonic details, which include colors and decoration, signage, artwork, and design details, convey meaning and can have symbolic significance that affects people emotionally" (Vischer, 2007, p 179). Color impacts humans' mood, and studies suggest that calming colors such as blue, purple, and green, should be used in homeless facility design since it can help reduce feelings of crowdedness. Color makes homeless people feel safer.



Signage Signage facilitates in way-finding. Signage can help decrease stress and prevent disorientation.



Reception areas Reception areas should be welcoming and use signage and visual cues to facilitate navigation for people to find the location of facilities and services.



Lighting: Providing some control over lighting, e.g. reading lamp, can enhance a sense of controlling the environment and autonomy.



Color: Colors have profound impacts on homeless people. Research suggests that designers should not use sterile, institutional-looking, warm or dark colors since these may have negative effects on emotions. Light colors can help individuals perceive spaces as more open and less-crowded, and that can result in safer and calmer feelings. Colors also are very important in way-finding signage.



Spatial Layouts Perception of space has a significant impact on homeless people's behavior. Open space with clear horizon can enhance the sense of safety. Spatial layout of the facility should be easy and simple to navigate. Designers should avoid dark corners, dead ends in hallways and partial walls in designing homeless facility to prevent individuals' hiding.

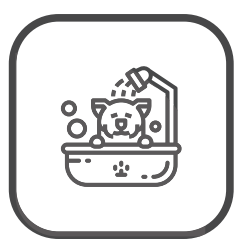
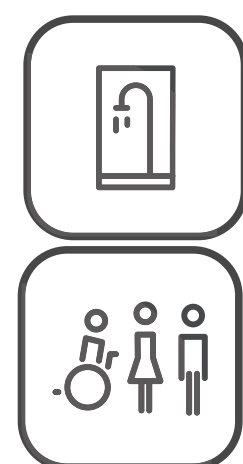


Plants: Plants play a significant role in connecting people to nature. Studies show that plants reduce stress, improve tranquility, boost self-esteem, and promote sense of control over the environment.

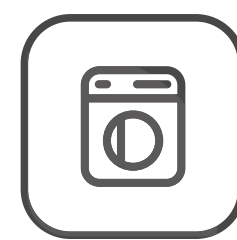


Storage spaces: Storage spaces are essential. Homeless facilities should have lockable storage.

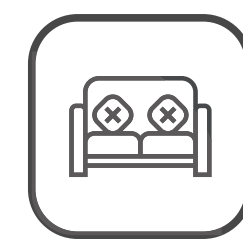
MATERIALS



Ceramic



Porcelain Field Tile



Polished Concrete

