

*I may not have a home
But I do have a name*

Jim Keith
 Angela M. Jones
 Abby W.
~~Shannon~~
 Shannon Grifford
 Sean Kelly
 Jung Cortez
 Kenneth Beck
 Donna Summerell
 Carlie Fender
 Richard Gardner
 Henry Case
 Kay Ehlke
 Cliff Zilkow
 Amy Kinosh
 Nancy Blinn
 Amy Day
 Ray Beato

Michael Foster
 Dennis Masterson
 Charles R. Shell
 Jennifer Johnson
 Rosemary Ventura
 Thomas
 Frank Bennett
 M. Russell
 Sheryl Schult
 Jesus Gomez
 Fred Jones
 Willie LeMolley
 Gus Johnson
 Judy Browles
 Ken Jones McKinnon
 David Williams
 Rhina a. magua
 Patricia Combs
 Helen Wilson
 Robert Chubb
 Helen Day
 Penny Jager
 Tom & Sara

Each name represents about 20 homeless persons
living in Alachua County

Proposal for a Safe Space Facility in Gainesville

June 2001

This proposal was prepared by the Safe Space Work Group of the Alachua County Coalition for the Homeless and Hungry (ACCHH), made up of the following persons:

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Mary Shelton, LCSW, Shands at UF, Vice Chairperson/Board Member, ACCHH
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Bob Tancig, Board Member, ACCHH, Executive Director, St. Francis House
H.F. Wetterqvist, Southeast Gainesville Development Task Force

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is a proposal for a safe and legal emergency shelter facility for homeless citizens of Gainesville and Alachua County. There are approximately 800 homeless people living in our county and roughly 268 beds available to house them. The hundreds who are not accommodated in shelters or other facilities are sleeping in the woods, on the sidewalks, and in abandoned buildings. Their attempts to find employment and shelter are continually disrupted by a lack of basic shelter and support services. A Safe Space would include a pavilion, lockers, sanitary facilities, telephone, a manager, and cleaning staff. The Safe Space would provide a safe and compassionate place to go for people dealing with homelessness and at the same time free businesses and residential neighborhoods from the consequences of unsheltered homelessness. It would provide an outreach point for social service and volunteer agencies who wish to help the homeless. It would greatly reduce the demands on the Gainesville Police Department, other law enforcement agencies, hospitals and social service agencies by providing a safe, supervised place for homeless people to go. A Safe Space would cost far less than the medical and judicial costs associated with uncontrolled homelessness. The need for this facility is urgent.





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It's warm outside tonight
a breeze blowing softly across
my face
as long as it stays this way
and doesn't rain
I should be okay.

The stars are my roof
my bed the soft grass or concrete
whatever I can find
I know it shouldn't be this way
but I have no choice for now
just a temporary bump in the path
that I must run over

It'll be all right soon and
I will be fine
I will be fine
I will be fine.

-Steve Ellison

INTRODUCTION

The proposed Housing Element of the City of Gainesville Comprehensive Plan calls for a basic homeless shelter to be established in Gainesville as follows:

2.25 The City shall continue to examine methods to mitigate the special needs of the homeless including living arrangements for homeless families with children, transitional housing for the employed homeless including single-room occupancy (SRO) facilities, and low demand or "safe space" shelters (safe, alternative locations for the homeless that are separate from emergency shelter facilities and that provide weather protection, security, bathroom and shower facilities, lockers, telephones and locations that are within walking distance of social service facilities).

*From the Housing Element of the
City of Gainesville Comprehensive Plan*

The following proposal is intended to help meet that goal.

There are about 800 homeless people in our community; the vast majority of them have nowhere to go.¹ The existing shelters and other facilities in Gainesville and Alachua County are unable to meet the needs of the homeless requiring shelter.² As a result, homeless people are living in the streets, alleys, parks, abandoned houses, and the woods. Many are victims. Some have suffered from child abuse or family violence. Nearly one quarter are children. Many have lost their jobs. All have lost their homes. About 25% of homeless people are mentally ill and one in four are substance abusers. Other large groups in the homeless population are disabled veterans, the elderly, and the working poor who do not make enough money to get established.

With no place to go, no location or campsite that is safe and legal, many of the homeless end up wandering through business areas, parks, and residential neighborhoods. When law enforcement removes them from one location, it does not solve the problem. It merely moves the problem to another location. The cost to Gainesville and Alachua County for arrests, incarcerations, medical clearances and judicial hearings likely far exceeds what a safe space shelter would cost. **The most humane way of dealing with homelessness is also the least expensive and most efficient for the community.**

The Safe Space would provide shelter and a focal point for unsheltered homeless residents who cannot be accommodated in existing shelters and facilities. The Safe Space would include a simple pavilion with a roof, bathrooms, security fence, telephone, and lockers. That way, unsheltered homeless people would have a safe, supervised place they can go.

The site selected for the facility should maximize its usefulness and minimize its impact. The facility should be accessible to support services and governmental agencies, but not immediately adjacent to residential neighborhoods or retail business zones.

¹ From the 2001 Gainesville/Alachua County Continuum of Care for the Homeless Consolidated Grant Application, p. 16.

² Ibid.

FEBRUARY NIGHT

...The hours 'til dawn linger and the seemingly endless shivering continues unabated. Oh, please, let the sun rise up and stop the agony..." -J.

HISTORY

HISTORY OF THE EFFORT TO ESTABLISH A SAFE SPACE

A Safe Space for Alachua County was first proposed in 1998 by Laurie and George, two homeless citizens of our community. George and Laurie were recently-homeless people; George because of an injury which cost him his job, and Laurie as a result of fleeing a troubled domestic situation. With fresh eyes, they pointed out the barbarity of having hundreds of people sleeping on the pavement and behind bushes. They proposed that a basic shelter for the homeless be established in Alachua County and that the Safe Space become a focal point for people's efforts to deal with the problems that result in homelessness, such as unemployment, illiteracy, old age, and medical and psychiatric difficulties.

The second phase of the effort to establish a Safe Space began in 1999, at a neighborhood meeting at St. Francis House. There was concern in the surrounding neighborhoods about the presence of unsupervised homeless people, particularly during the nighttime hours. A consensus emerged that law enforcement was not the answer to the problem. If homeless people are forced to leave one street, they will congregate in another.

The neighborhood group set the goal of finding a location for a Safe Space that would be within two miles of service providers such as St. Francis House and the Salvation Army, and not be in a retail or residential area. After this group identified a number of sites, the effort to establish a Safe Space was taken up by a work group of the Alachua County Coalition for the Homeless and Hungry. This work group has compiled a wealth of information about homelessness and safe spaces. Through research, interviews, and site visits to existing facilities in Jacksonville and Orlando, information has been obtained regarding the demographic makeup of the homeless community, the costs of homelessness, what efforts by other cities have been successful, and what would be required, physically and financially, to set up a Safe Space in Gainesville. This information is summarized in this proposal.

Win, Win, Win

After more than eighteen months of discussion, research, fieldwork and writing, the Safe Space proposal is ready for presentation to the community. The proposal is good for homeless people, good for supportive agencies and good for the community. This is a win, win, win solution, as shown in the following chart.

**Safe Space
Needs / Response Chart**

CONSTITUENCY	NEEDS	RESPONSE
Homeless	<p>Shelter from the weather</p> <p>A place to sleep</p> <p>A place to take care of hygiene needs</p> <p>A place to store personal property</p> <p>A place to find help</p> <p>A place to get off the street; a safe place to be</p>	<p>A place offering protection from the weather</p> <p>A place organized to accommodate sleeping</p> <p>A place providing bathroom and shower facilities</p> <p>A place where lockers are provided for personal property</p> <p>A place where social service workers are available to offer their services</p> <p>A safe, supervised place for homeless people to go</p>
Social Service Agencies	<p>A place to make contact with and offer services to a hard-to-reach population</p> <p>A place for law enforcement agencies and hospitals to send people who have no shelter</p> <p>A place to refer people when all shelter beds are full</p>	<p>A place where social service agencies can post outreach workers</p> <p>A place law enforcement agencies and hospitals can send people who have nowhere else to go</p> <p>A place to send people when other shelters are full</p>
Community at Large	<p>A solution to the problem of people living in public spaces and interfering with their intended use</p> <p>A place where homeless people can take care of basic hygiene needs</p> <p>A response to the problem of uncontrolled homelessness in public spaces</p> <p>A more effective response to the unmet needs of homeless people</p>	<p>A designated shelter offering an alternative to living in the streets and public parks</p> <p>A place where homeless people will have access to hygiene facilities</p> <p>A safe, supervised place for homeless people to go</p> <p>A place offering additional shelter capacity to complement existing facilities</p>

THE HIDDEN COSTS OF HOMELESSNESS

One consequence of doing nothing as opposed to making housing and services available to homeless people is the increased burden on local law enforcement. As part of a recent study of the economic impact of homelessness in Central Florida, Orange County prepared a detailed analysis of the cost of processing misdemeanor crimes committed by homeless people within the Orlando city limits. In 1997, that cost was more than \$6 million. By comparison, Gainesville and Alachua County have one-fourth to one-fifth as many homeless persons as Orlando. Our comparable costs therefore likely exceed \$1 million.

Orange County figures:

2,600 arrests @ \$31 each	\$ 80,600
75 pre-arrest medical clearances @ \$5,000 each	375,000
2,600 incarcerations @ \$1,846 each	4,800,000
70 crisis stabilizations from jail @ \$2,650 each	185,500
2,600 judicial cases @ \$310 each	<u>806,000</u>
TOTAL	\$6,247,100



The response by Gainesville police and emergency vehicles, as depicted above, is only the start of municipal services required for a person sleeping by the side of the road. Arrests, medical clearances, court appearances and other hidden costs would be eliminated with a safe place for homeless people to stay.

PROGRAM DESIGN

Mission Statement: To provide a safe space for voluntary use by homeless persons when space does not exist in other shelters.

Program Goals: The Safe Space is intended to be a basic shelter. Program requirements will guarantee a safe, secure environment while respecting the individual needs of people using the facility.

Daily Schedule

- The Safe Space will provide daily scheduling designed to provide safe shelter off city streets at night while encouraging productive activity during the day.
- The Safe Space will be open and staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Staff will be on duty at all times.
- Shower services will be open from 5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. and again the following morning from 5:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m.
- Cleanup will be accomplished in the morning after final wakeup at 8:00 a.m. and will be completed by 10:00 a.m.
- Support services will be available at various times during the day and in the evening. Homeless individuals who are not currently working will be encouraged to participate in the support services listed below.

Support Services

A full range of support services will be offered on site or by referral to assist Safe Space guests achieve their long-range goals.

- Services offered by Safe Space staff on site will include:
 - initial intake and assessment
 - storage lockers for personal property
 - hygiene facilities including showers
 - safe place to sleep away from businesses and neighborhoods
 - referral to social service providers
 - local telephone service
 - access to emergency medical services if needed
 - prepackaged snack foods
 - job board
- Services offered by affiliated agency staff posted on site will include:
 - assistance with Social Security applications
 - job search and placement including day labor jobs
 - mental health information
 - AA/NA meetings on site or by referral
- Services offered off site by referral will include:
 - job training
 - medical treatment
 - social service assistance from affiliated agencies such as Catholic Charities, Community Action Agency, DCF, St. Francis House, and Gainesville Community Ministry
 - housing placement assistance
 - elderly and aging services

Proposed Operational Policies and Procedures

a. Admission Requirements

- Unsheltered homeless adults (at least 18 years of age)
- No weapons, no drugs, no alcohol
- Personal property must be kept orderly
- Guests will perform chores to contribute to the operation of the facility
- Disruptive behavior of any kind will not be permitted

b. Admissions Records

- Name
- Sex
- Date of Birth
- Social Security Number (optional)

c. Non-Compliance Procedures

- Guests who violate rules or create a disturbance will be asked to leave peaceably.
- Police assistance will be requested if a guest does not leave the property as requested.
- Grievances: record details for referral to review committee.

d. Discharge

- Release locker assignment and sleeping space.
- Staff will offer referrals to other service agencies.
- Relocation of records for individuals admitted to permanent programs for the homeless and those able to find their own lodging accommodation.

e. Suggestions, complaints and appeals

- Guests will be given the opportunity to make recommendations for improving the program and facility.
- Guests or applicants lodging a complaint must submit a written request for review to the facility manager on the form provided for that purpose. The form must contain all the information needed to review the action taken and the issues in dispute. Situations not resolved immediately through reasonable discussions will be referred to the Program Director for consideration no later than the next business day. A written response from the Program Director will be delivered to the person filing the complaint within 24 hours after the referral was made.
- Admission is based on a current evaluation of the applicant's condition and status. Persons denied admission must be given the reasons for their denial in writing, informed of their rights, and told how they can become eligible.

Out there they stand, all confused, with all their possessions clutched in their hands. Their eyes appear to be wild but most likely they are just scared, looking for someone to show a bit of care. Someone that will just smile or better yet, stop and talk just for a little while. Though I confess we often look a mess, but under all that filth and dirt is a human with a soul full of hurt.

-John K. McMillen

Proposed Management Policies

Decision-Making Process

- **Advisory Board**
An Advisory Board will be comprised of representatives from a broad cross-section of the Gainesville community, including members from the Alachua County Coalition for the Homeless and Hungry, City and County government, faith-based organizations, homeless service providers, substance abuse/mental health providers, medical providers, and homeless individuals.
- **Safe Space Resident Council**
A resident council, made up of safe space guests, will be organized to hear and discuss community issues in an open forum. This council will be convened on a regular basis.

Program Administration

- **On-site Staff**
The Safe Space staff, participants, and volunteers will supervise program activities. The Program Director will be responsible for the overall functioning of the Safe Space. A site manager will be on duty to supervise all program participants and ensure their personal safety. This person will also oversee compliance with established operating policies and procedures and respond to apparent violations.

A part-time maintenance person will be assigned to monitor the grounds and ensure the cleanliness of the surrounding area. Volunteers will be recruited to assist with daily program operations under the supervision of the manager on duty. Safe Space guests will perform many routine tasks and will be encouraged to participate in the functioning of the Safe Space program.
- **Financial Management**
A part-time bookkeeper and accountant will be needed to file periodic reports and to keep books.
- **Personnel Management**
Personnel decisions will be handled by the Program Director with the approval of the governing board.
- **Client Input**
Safe Space guests will be encouraged to discuss immediate concerns with the site manager at any time. If sensitive issues prevent a guest from voicing their concerns and opinions openly, provisions will be made to solicit comments and ideas on an anonymous basis.

LOCATION

Selection Criteria

Perhaps the most important decision to make is where the Safe Space should go. Broad support for the facility exists across most segments of our community; few question the need for it. But when it comes to finding a place to put it, "Not In My Back Yard" is the prevailing sentiment. Fairness therefore dictates that all quadrants of the City be considered, and that location be determined on the basis of objective criteria. The needs of the homeless and the potential impact of the facility are the most important factors that should be considered.

Proximity to Existing Services

Homeless people use a variety of businesses and services. In addition, there are some organizations that provide special services that the homeless require. Once these are identified and plotted out upon a map of Gainesville, it can be seen that almost all of these locations are within a three-mile radius of Main Street and University Avenue. (Please see graphic #1.) Of these services, those providing meals and work – St. Francis House, The Salvation Army and day-labor agencies - are most essential, requiring use on a daily basis. These critical facilities are located in or near the downtown core.

Transportation Needs of the Homeless

Because many of the homeless are very limited when it comes to transportation, the facility needs to be on a major busline. Additionally, a reasonable walking distance to and from the Safe Space and the critical locations described above is a paramount consideration. A two-mile radius from the downtown core represents a feasible proximity between existing services used on a daily basis and the proposed Safe Space. The search for sites should be focused within this area.

Minimizing Impact on the Surrounding Area

The potential impact of the proposed Safe Space on existing areas suggests that the search for suitable sites should concentrate on relatively isolated areas with enough acreage to provide buffering from existing developed areas.

Zoning Compliance

At present, none of the existing definitions of the City's Land Development Code applies specifically to a basic shelter for the homeless. An examination of our zoning ordinances should be undertaken to determine what amendments or additions, if any, are needed.

It is so devastatingly fearful to have to search for a place to sleep. I oftentimes am scared when dark falls because I know in my heart the lonely, abandoned feeling it causes. Almost as if everyone in the world has left me in the cold and the rain. Deep inside, I cry, and sometimes out loud because it hurts so much to see people laughing and enjoying life inside their warm homes, but knowing all the time that the next place to sleep is unknown.

-Madison Kaye

FACILITY DESIGN

Introduction

The basic requirements and facility design of the Safe Space have been strongly influenced by the success of the Orlando shelter, the failure of other shelters and our own needs and situation. Simple, secure, economical, durable, open, and dignified are all words that should describe this unique facility and its design. There is certainly the opportunity to create a facility that not only looks good but functions well to provide this absolutely basic human need of shelter. Listed below are some of the elements that we would like to include in the proposed Safe Space.

Basic Elements

- Secure site with controlled access
- Sleeping capacity for 100 people
- Secure overnight storage for the personal possessions for 100 people
- Sanitary facilities for basic hygiene
- Space for on-site management and outreach
- Parking, as required

Design Features

Privacy

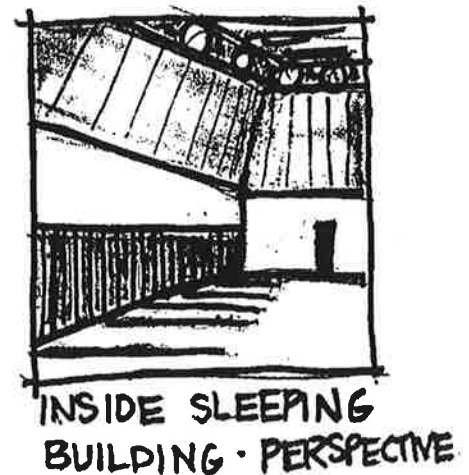
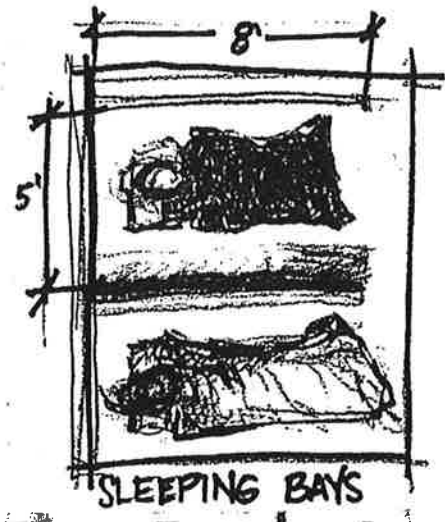
- Separate sleeping areas for men and women
- Moveable partitions to provide flexible separation based on client population
- Separate and complete sanitary facilities for men and women
- Storage lockers available to all clients

Security

- Secured perimeter and controlled ingress/egress
- Adequate and appropriate lighting throughout the interior and exterior
- On-site supervision with unobstructed view of entire facility
- Periodic patrol by law enforcement
- Secure from insects and other pests

Durability

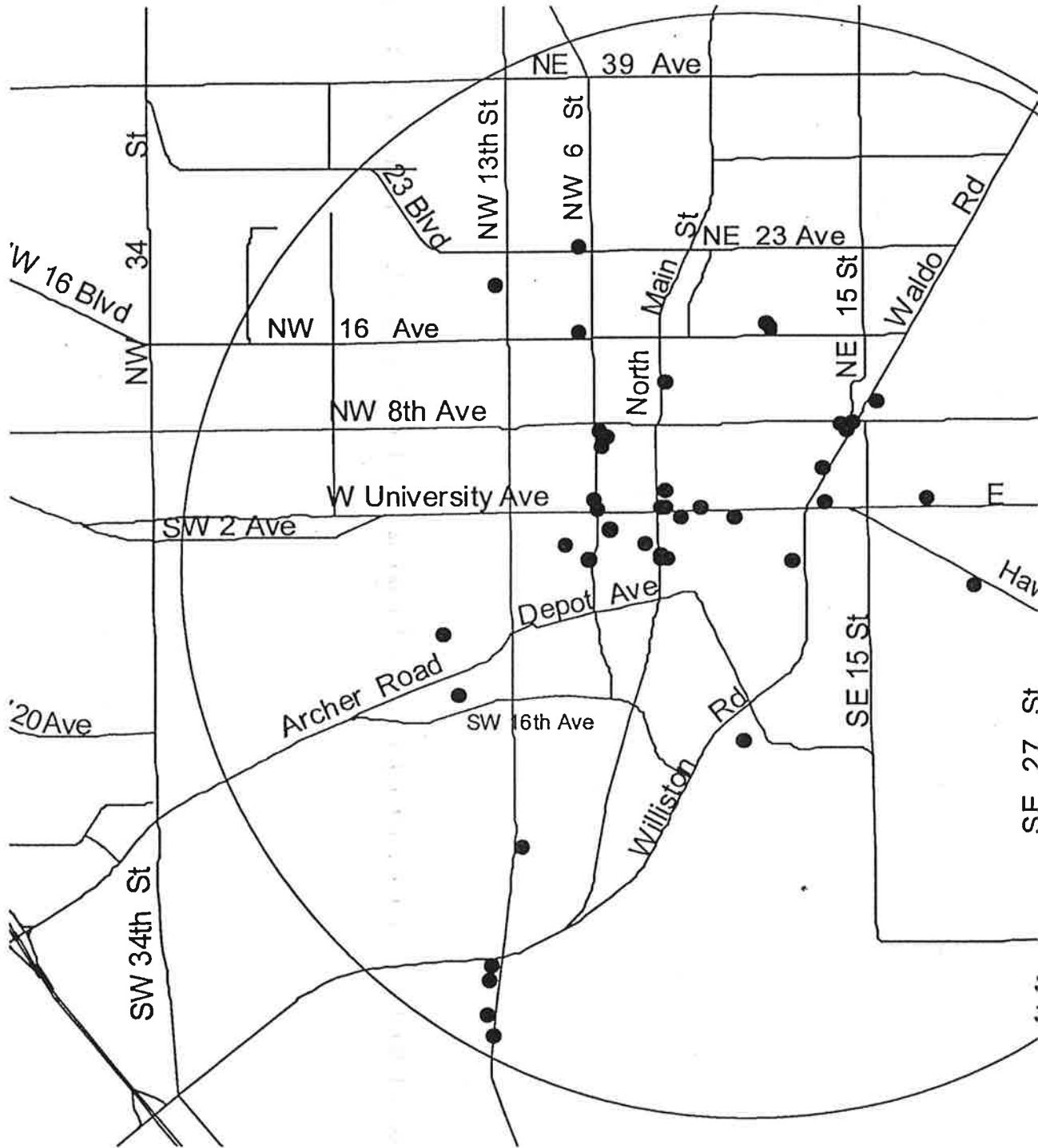
- Strong and long-lasting materials
- Low maintenance
- Energy efficient
- Locally produced and/or donated materials
- Sustainable construction using materials that are recovered, reused, recycled and renewable



Conceptual Sketches

PROJECTED BUDGET

Capital Outlay:	
Construction of facility	\$250,000 – construction of 10,000 sq. ft. facility (100 people x 100/s.f. x \$25/s.f.)
Annual Operating Expenses:	
Program Director (1):	\$ 27,000
Site Managers (2 per shift):	148,512
Maintenance (1 half-time shift):	12,376
Total Salaries:	\$187,888
Total Payroll Taxes & Benefits	\$ 46,972 (estimated at 25% of payroll)
Telephone	\$ 860 – pay phone (1) + cell phone (1)
Electric	3,600
Water/Sewer	1,980 - \$165/month
Maintenance Services	1,500 – dumpster @ \$125/month
Maintenance Supplies	1,000 – cleaning supplies
Total Occupancy	\$ 8,080
Program Supplies	\$ 2,000 – toilet paper, hand towels, etc.
Insurance	\$ 2,000
Total Operating Expenses	\$247,800



Safe S