Aging in Community
A Senior Housing Ideas Competition
Aging in Community

Sponsors and Participants

Sponsored by:
Community Design Solutions, UW-Milwaukee
Helen Bader Foundation
Faye McBeath Foundation
Greater Milwaukee Foundation
United Way of Greater Milwaukee

With additional support by:
Milwaukee County Department on Aging
City of Milwaukee
Institute on Aging and Environment, School of Architecture & Urban Planning, UW-Milwaukee
Center on Age and Community, UW-Milwaukee
Wisconsin EngAGEment Project of the Donors Forum of Wisconsin
Milwaukee Aging Consortium
School of Architecture & Urban Planning, UW-Milwaukee

Participating architectural firms:
AG Architecture
Continuum Architects + Planners, S.C.
Engberg Anderson Design Partnership, Inc.
Eppstein Uhen Architects, Inc.
The Kubala Washatko Architects
Plunkett Raysich Architects
Quorum Architects, Inc.
Zimmerman Architectural Studios, Inc.
Milwaukee, like the rest of our nation, is aging. By 2030 one of five Americans will be 65 or older. Our need is not just for more elder housing but for new ideas for combining housing with associated support services within a community. Thus the goal of the Aging in Community Senior Housing Ideas Competition has been the generation and dissemination of ideas. This competition hopes to heighten Milwaukee’s awareness of the need for innovation and to encourage the development of senior housing by local civic, religious and fraternal organizations.

To that end teams comprised of employees from eight architectural firms in Milwaukee along with Department of Architecture students spent a weekend in the Architecture & Urban Planning Building on the UWM campus working feverishly to develop schemes for four sites in Milwaukee neighborhoods—Sherman Park, Layton Boulevard, Brady Street and Bronzeville. The teams’ work was informed by focus groups held in each neighborhood. In the spirit of collaboration consumers, families, care providers, experts in aging, government officials, architects and other environmental designers were also invited to visit the School of Architecture & Urban Planning building and interact one-on-one with the competition teams while they were working.

To set the context for the competition weekend, internationally recognized geriatrician Dr. Bill Thomas, author of What are Old People For?, gave a major public lecture on Aging in Community. The competition weekend concluded on Sunday afternoon with the eight teams’ presentation of their work to a lively audience in a packed auditorium. Senior housing architect William Brummett and housing consultant Zev Paiss served as competition judges, recognizing those projects which they felt responded most effectively to five competition goals.

We hope the images and architects’ statements which follow provide you with some sense of the intensity with which the teams worked, the creativity of their thinking, and the excitement engendered throughout the weekend. Even more, it is our hope that everyone associated with the competition—elders, families, care providers, government officials, developers, designers, and interested others—will take up the challenge of bringing these ideas to fruition here in Milwaukee. We look forward to your joining us in this effort.

Finally it should be noted that this competition emerged from a unique collaborative town-gown relationship involving multiple foundations, departments of city and county government, and UW-Milwaukee. We thank you all.
Aging in Community
Program Statement

Competition Challenge
Our vision for this ideas competition is the development of inventive, replicable design concepts for senior housing and services that function as community focal points within each of the four selected urban neighborhoods. To support this vision, the competitors addressed five key goals:

Create Opportunities to Age in Place/Community
The designed environment should support the desires of people to age in the familiar neighborhoods in which they have spent their lives. We need to find ways to nurture people’s sense of being part a larger “community” with a sense of shared identity and mutual support. Future senior housing should be able to flex between assisted living and independent living to avoid unnecessary relocation.

Maintain and Strengthen Links to the Larger Community
Senior housing need not create elderly enclaves. Future senior living environments should serve as living communities where people of all ages have a place—where the young can learn from the experience and wisdom of elders, and elders can enjoy the vitality and exuberance of the young.

Nurture Informal Social Supports
It will be increasingly challenging to offer social services for elders using only formal service providers. In the spirit of community people of diverse ages can support one another both socially and pragmatically. For example house-bound elders can trade with single parents—exchanging child care for grocery shopping or home cooked meals can be traded for instructions on how to use E-mail.

Provide Barrier Free Settings
Environments should be created to be accessible for all users—including those who are challenged with mobility, dexterity, or sensory/cognitive processing.

Foster Energy Conscious and Sustainable Design
Environments need to be created with recognition of energy conscious design and consideration of sustainable products and processes. To encourage adaptive reuse of buildings, one of the selected competition sites is currently occupied by a school structure which could easily be retrofitted for new uses.

Program Guidelines
To encourage innovative ideas rather than formulaic solutions the architectural program was relatively open providing general direction rather than room titles and square footages. Solutions were encouraged to represent “housing plus services.”

Housing Program:
Elders to be accommodated could range from independent living residents to those needing some form of assistance. Units that flexed in response to changing needs were encouraged. The smallest site was to meet a density requirement of 60 to 90 units per acre while the remaining three sites were to meet a criterion of 30 to 45 units per acre. The minimum parking standard for housing was one car per unit.

Services Program:
“Housing Plus Services” was open to each team’s interpretation of the needs of the site and the community. Fifteen to twenty-five percent of the area of the site was to be allocated for use by the residents of the site and the neighborhood. Each team had to provide a rationale for their proposed mix of services and spaces.
Sponsors’ Statement

The places we live in carry different labels. Terms like “housing starts,” “real estate,” “dwelling unit” and “models” are the vocabulary of economists, planners and builders. Developers propose “projects” and “planned communities.” There are names like “new urbanism” for strategies that redefine neighborhoods and the makeover of cities. All the while most of us pursue the “American Dream” of owning a home.

The concepts espoused by economists and builders do not translate well to the question of where elders choose to live. For the group of people who are 60, 70 and older there are often critical decisions to be made involving “home” and “community.” Professionals and advocates in the field of services to the aging have coined terms to describe the various lifestyles desired by older adults. “Aging in Place” is one which describes a person’s desire to live in and adapt their home as they grow older. Services are brought to the home as needed to support this goal. “Aging in Community,” by contrast, is a broader approach that means that a person remains connected to a familiar setting that is not socially isolated.

Building a subdivision and aging in community are worlds apart. How can these worlds be connected? Part of the answer was found by a Milwaukee delegation that visited projects and communities in Western Europe in 2004. The group was impressed by the design and care that resulted in a range of options for an older person’s living. Comparing the international ideas with local projects indicated a substantial gap between proven theory and local practice.

To link the results achieved by other countries and practice in Milwaukee, Wisconsin became our challenge. One answer according to a broad “town and gown” coalition in Milwaukee was to create a competition of ideas to demonstrate how a person can age in community. The School of Architecture & Urban Planning at UW-Milwaukee, along with the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, the Helen Bader Foundation and the Faye McBeath Foundation, the United Way of Greater Milwaukee and a special project of the Donors Forum of Wisconsin pooled their ideas and created a design charrette that would involve architects, community representatives, older adults, national experts, and students. The results, seen in the enclosed report, emerged from the pro bono labors of eight outstanding Milwaukee architectural firms aided by students.

Private funding involvement and the financial and in-kind support of the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee was both pivotal and symbolic. Public and individual private investments in housing dwarf that of private philanthropy. However, in identifying ideas, promoting specific demonstration projects, and bridging the gap between builder and older homebuyer, there is a role for both the University and private funders. If the Western European project tour was the pilot, then the ideas competition was episode two. The third episode is being created through the continued work of the School of Architecture & Urban Planning and the Milwaukee Aging Consortium to disseminate the ideas.

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Ideas Competition Site Locations

Sherman Park Neighborhood
Brady Street Neighborhood
Bronzeville Neighborhood
Layton Boulevard Neighborhood
The Sites
4 Milwaukee Neighborhoods

Layton Boulevard Neighborhood
27th + National
± 2.75 Acres

Program Guidelines
Dwelling Units
83 to 124

Community Space
17,969 to 29,948 sq. ft.

Brady Street Neighborhood
Van Buren + Pleasant
± .66 Acres

Program Guidelines
Dwelling Units
40 to 60

Community Space
4312 to 7187 sq. ft.

Bronzeville Neighborhood
8th + Walnut
± 2.75 Acres

Program Guidelines
Dwelling Units
83 to 124

Community Space
17,969 to 29,948 sq. ft.

Sherman Park Neighborhood
37th + Fond du Lac
± 4.13 Acres

Program Guidelines
Dwelling Units
124 to 186

Community Space
26,985 to 44,976 sq. ft.
Layton Boulevard Neighborhood

27th Street and West National Avenue
1 Layton Station
AG Architecture

27th + National View

Site Plan
Simply stated, our goal is to provide for those with lesser means to age with grace and dignity. The provision for a variety of housing types that reflect a mix of income levels and physical capabilities is one part of the solution. The other part is the creation of spaces that encourage relationships to flourish through a diversity of services and activities that promote both community and security for those living on the site as well for those who live in the neighborhood. The key elements that shaped our solution include:

**Transportation Center:** The historical use of the site as a streetcar station and the concerns by the local residents for security led us to integrate public transportation into our solution.

**Housing:** The first step was the inclusion of affordable, independent housing on the southeast corner of the site. The center building includes the assisted living component, and the structure on the northeast corner will provide market-rate independent living for residents 55 or older. These three buildings are tied together on the first floor by a mix of community services and retail. The west side is developed as co-housing for families and reflects the architectural scale and character of the surrounding neighborhood. The end product has the potential to be a community of more than 180 residents.

**Community Services:** Community services, including a wellness clinic, municipal offices, a police sub-station and dining/kitchen spaces for a senior meal site are located off the main entry. Other community activity spaces included in the solution are a Head Start center and spaces for retail and resident-centered entrepreneurial uses.

**Pedestrian Street:** An internal “pedestrian” street was incorporated to promote security, service delivery and for possible public transit use. The street promotes “no back doors” to keep the interior of the development safe and readily observable by other residents.
Architect’s Statement

This design investigation takes the site issues of safety, public and private community, and access to neighborhood amenities and stitches the project into the urban landscape in a unique design solution. The solution provides a private and secure garden courtyard that is a catalyst for organized and informal activities and interaction. The apartments are all organized in a co-housing concept with varying degrees of community shared spaces.

This development creates opportunities and options for the residents.

Options
- Options of privacy or community for the residents.
- Options of townhomes, communal housing and traditional apartments.
- Options of spaces of interaction and spaces of reflection.

Opportunities
- Create the opportunity to age in place.
- Create the opportunity to stay involved with the community through classes, working in the Coop, or assisting in childcare.
- Create the opportunity to foster awareness of energy consciousness and sustainable design.
- Create the opportunity to stay active, safe and energized.
Aerial View from the Northeast
Brady Street Neighborhood

North Van Buren Street and East Pleasant Street
A Life in Balance
Quorum Architects, Inc

Site + First Floor Plan
Typical Floor Plan
Common House + Roof Garden

Brady Street Neighborhood
Van Buren + Pleasant
In time, we may even come to accept balance between structural and emotional as the essence of beauty. —Anonymous

An underlying concept in any vibrant community is balance. It is a concept that is multigenerational and links everyone together. After gathering input from the community, our design team imagined ourselves as the co-housing "elders" to determine the types of spaces we would desire for our own senior living needs. As we discussed our future daily lives “aging together in community,” several key concepts drove our design:

- A full range of “privacy realms,” from social hubs that promote community interaction to serene private zones for personal contemplation.
- A human-scale environment that encourages interaction with people from all age groups.
- A connection to the neighborhood context while providing a unique "sense of place."
- Accessibility, “visitability” and adaptability.

Our ideal living unit features a large central gathering space with private sleeping/study areas and outdoor space. To compliment the individual living units the building hosts a variety of community spaces which can be programmed by the residents, as well as areas open to the general public such as the market, café, volunteer center, and courtyard. These spaces allow residents and other members of the neighborhood to utilize the building within the balance of their lifestyle.

The overall building mass is three stories above grade with a setback roof garden level which fits in with the general scale of the surrounding neighborhood. In consideration of natural views, light, ventilation, as well as privacy, the building façade has varying degrees of setback. The building makes use of green materials and technologies such as an inhabitable green roof, ground source heat pumps, and rainwater harvesting.

The resulting scheme promotes a balance of community and privacy, independence and assistance, and vitality and respite. Together this allows everyone to age together within community and with dignity.
Viva Voce
Zimmerman Architectural Studios

Brady Street Neighborhood
Van Buren + Pleasant
**Architect’s Statement**

*Viva Voce* roughly translates from Italian as “word of mouth,” a fitting notion that aligns with the design intent for the proposed scheme. The concept includes a combination of elder co-housing along with an adaptive re-use of the old St. Rita’s School as a charter school. Social integration is a major planning concept in the *VivaVoce* scheme. The elder co-housing is designed for a hierarchy of privacy with the very public spaces pointed toward the busy street and becoming progressively quieter and more private as the residents retreat into their individual dwelling units. The building offers “social magnets” including a coffee lounge in the entrance and a “taverna” with a sunset terrace overlooking the entrance lobby and the street.

The elder co-housing engages the neighborhood by creating an outreach opportunity we call the “living history center” where children at the Cass Street School can participate in after-school programs and the elders can offer their assistance to the young families attending the school by sharing their wisdom and guidance along with tutoring and supervision. The space is designed in the form of a Native American Kiva, which was traditionally used by the native Ojibwa to pass the oral traditions of the elders to the next generation. The *VivaVoce* concept boldly suggests to Milwaukee Public Schools to consider reorganizing the Cass Street School as a charter school focusing on wellness with a curriculum that would engage the elders next door.

The *VivaVoce* proposal takes the wellness concept further by incorporating sustainable design principles. The courtyard plan layout affords maximum daylight penetration into the building and preserves private garden views. Each of the building facades is tuned with external shading devices and incorporates a dual ventilation system that utilizes a natural convection flow of air. An on-site waste water treatment system will filter the water and use it for the greenhouse which will be used to grow flowers and vegetables.
Bronzeville Neighborhood

6th Street and Walnut Street
Hummingbird Plan
Plunkett Raysich Architects

Galena + 7th Street View

6th Street + Walnut View

Site Plan

Bronzeville Neighborhood
6th + Walnut
We began the competition by analyzing the five “core values” and the neighborhood characteristics. The site had many positive aspects including being located along two major public transportation routes and adjacent to a thriving, multi-generational residential community with schools and youth centers. Upon further analysis we saw that additional amenities that support a community, such as day care centers, restaurants, pharmacies and grocery stores were widely scattered and not as plentiful. To address this need we developed “The Hummingbird Plan” to draw the community and the residents of the block together naturally, like hummingbirds to a flower. The plan creates a hub much the way this location was until the 1940s when the center of the African American community was located on Walnut Street in historic “Bronzeville.”

Step one of The Hummingbird Plan is to provide the services the existing neighborhood is lacking. These services include a child daycare, clinic/pharmacy, beauty salon/barber shop, outpatient therapy center, home health/personal service agency, police substation café, community meeting room, fitness center, and a grocery store. Step two is to provide housing for elderly people of all incomes and needs from the single person of minimal means to the extended family with children and grandchildren living with them. The next step is to link all of the housing and services on the block together with a daylit corridor so that residents can get to anywhere on the block in any weather. When the residents are too frail to go to the services, the services can come to them via this “backstage passage,” allowing everyone to age gracefully in one place—their “home.”

To ensure that the youngest members of the community would be attracted to the site and foster intergenerational exchanges, an urban farming outpost with greenhouses and outdoor plots was incorporated into the green space along with an outdoor amphitheater for community events.
The Kente Cloth is a visual representation of history, philosophy, ethics, oral literature, religious beliefs, social values and political thought in African cultures. This weaving is the dominant concept we use to convey the rich culture and vibrancy of this community.

To truly age in community the environment must support the changes to the body and mind associated with aging while providing access to desired activities and services. In addition to housing and nursing care, our community of caring wove together adult day services, elder-friendly town homes, child care services, a Montessori charter school, physical and occupational therapy, pharmacy and retail spaces. A structured community outreach program will be in place to ensure that every resident is presented with a rich tapestry of options. Our environment is much more than a mere link to the community but rather a way of life. Community occurs naturally—links are inherent.

We established the “Den Mother” concept to ensure residents have opportunities for daily social interaction and activities. The Den Mother could be a student from the medical or social professions, a single mother, or a family member of a resident. In exchange for taking on the role of a live-in Den Mother these individuals could receive a rent reduction.

Barrier-free design goes beyond meeting codes and standards to ensure flexibility and comfort. We incorporated supportive elder features such as simplified wayfinding, reduced travel distances, increased sensitivity to lighting issues, clearances for motorized scooters, and raised planting beds in the garden.

Sustainable design is promoted through the use of materials and applications such as rain gardens, green roofs, geothermal heating, passive cooling, and use of recyclable materials for finishes and flooring. Yet it is the underlying commitment to this philosophy through activities like recycling, composting, etc., that will truly make a difference and sustain the effort.
Sherman Park Neighborhood

37th Street and Fond du Lac Avenue
Learning to Live as a Community
Eppstein Uhen Architects

Fond du Lac Avenue View

Site Plan

Typical Floor Plan

Fond du Lac Avenue View

Sherman Park Neighborhood
37th + Fond du Lac
A community is life—it is made of people, places and attitudes. It is living, growing, and changing in tune with the current society, culture, ethnicity, goals and traditions. Our built environment plays an important role in making the path to a healthy community as flexible, practical and viable as possible.

EUA’s solution was inspired both by the history of the local community and the history of the existing school on the site. The school, originally named Peckham Middle School for a local entomologist/librarian who was also the school superintendent, has a great presence in the neighborhood. It anchors the area both physically and psychologically. The school is a place of safe gathering, of learning and teaching, of inclusion, of support—all aspects that are important in our community.

EUA’s solution rehabilitates the school to include resources such as a community center, an exercise club, retail, pharmacy, café, and housing on the top floor. New buildings added to the site incorporate retail on the Fond du Lac side street level and townhouses on the Concordia side street level to respond to the commercial versus residential sides of the site. Upper floors have balconies to encourage “eyes on the street” and rooftop gardens for safe secure urban green spaces. Lower level parking provides for an elevated plaza above for gathering, music events, green space, and water features. The slope of the street and sidewalk benefits the elevated plaza by meeting it at a public access point and engaging pedestrian traffic.

Rain gardens, rooftop gardens, alternative energy sources for building energy, alternative-fuel shuttle service and environmentally sensitive materials round out the EUA team’s solution for living as a community.

Architect’s Statement

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Matching Physical Diversity to
The Kubala Washatko Architects

Sherman Park Neighborhood
37th + Fond du Lac
We are convinced that to live well, the richness, depth and diversity of the human community must be supported by an equally rich, deep and diverse built environment. Our team identified an apparent mismatch between the existing built environment in Sherman Park and the current community that inhabits it. To determine the "Vital Signs" of Community, we first conducted a simple land use analysis for the blocks surrounding the Jackie Robinson Middle School site. The existing context around the site was determined to be:

- **Green Space:** 37% (Almost entirely private yards)
- **Automobile:** 30%
- **Buildings:** 23%
- **Pedestrian:** 10% (Exclusively public sidewalks)

This breakdown is an indicator of an unsupportive built environment that is both automobile-dominated and virtually devoid of common public space other than narrow sidewalks. Second, we took the graphic patterns of the existing land use and looked at them in terms of properties exhibited by living systems, particularly the property named "Levels of Scale" which encourages a balanced range of sizes for spaces and buildings. These two ways of examining existing conditions formed the basis for our solution.

Along Fond du Lac we developed a garden space on one corner and a retail space at the other to attenuate the corners and announce to vehicle drivers that something’s changing. We suggested the introduction of a public walking space to bridge across Fond du Lac and the creation of on-street parking to support the retail. In order to match the diversity of the senior community as well as the entire community, we stretched the range of housing types available on the site from a 300 square foot hotel room to a larger apartment to a single family floor plan. A co-housing situation for elders is offered for those who choose to live within a larger group of people and share meals and support.
Aging in Community
Merit Awards for Meeting Competition Goals

Creating Opportunities to Age in Place
Engberg Anderson Design Partnership, Inc.
Bronzeville Neighborhood, 6th Street and Walnut Street

Judges Comments:
We were particularly interested in the den mother idea as well as the inclusion of adult day care on a site that seemed to have the mass to support it. Usually adult day care is a financially losing proposition, but we are seeing more and more of that being tied with housing as a way of offering supportive services.

Sustainable Design
Eppstein Uhen Architects, Inc.
Sherman Park Neighborhood, Fond du Lac Avenue and 38th Street

Judges Comments:
This design preserves a vast majority of the historic school building, which is certainly something we felt was important. The other aspect was that the car had a very low impact, and there was a real emphasis on wellness, both on the healthy person and healthy environment with green roofs, while addressing a compact site adjacent to heavy traffic.

Fostering Community Integration
Plunkett Raysich Architects, LLP
Bronzeville Neighborhood, 6th Street and Walnut Street

Judges Comments:
The way all of the elements were so delicately mixed created a real tapestry for a variety of ways to interact—the whole hummingbird concept of really finding out the needs of the larger community and plugging those places into the site, so not only do you have a rich variety of options for the residents, but also a lot of reasons for people to come to the site.
Nurturing Informal Support
Zimmerman Architectural Studios
Brady Street Neighborhood, Van Buren Street and East Pleasant Street

Judges Comments:
What really was impressive about this project to us was the Kiva notion, not literally the Kiva, but the symbolic center of exchange. While all of the projects included retail and commercial exchanges, this project included a higher level of meaningful interaction that was both an educational and spiritual experience.

Wow Award for Meeting Multiple Goals
AG Architecture
Layton Boulevard Neighborhood, 27th Street and National Avenue

Judges Comments:
We were searching for a category that fit this project, but it really fits into a lot of different categories. We really appreciated the fact that the architects looked back to the history of the site as a transit-orientated district and then brought that back into their solution and strengthened it with a bus stop. The scale of the project too seemed reasonable—residential yet commercial with the inclusion of assisted living located right at the center of the site.
Aging in Community
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