Viva Voce

"In time, we may even come to accept balance bet VivaVoce roughly translates from Italian as “word of mouth,” a fitting notion that aligns well with the design intent of the Zimmerman Architectural Studios proposed scheme for the Three Holy Women site on Milwaukee’s Lower East Side. The concept includes a combination of elder co-housing along with an adaptive re-use of the old St Rita’s School as a multi-generational co-housing both sharing a private courtyard. In the traditions of this Italian working-class neighborhood, the concept of an elder co-housing complex combined with family style housing fully integrates into the neighborhood builds upon the strengths of the existing community. The Three Holy Women parish has a support network in place that will enhance the sense of community within the proposed residence. These community bonds are further enhanced by engaging the elders in more social interaction with the neighborhood people.

Social integration is a major planning concept in the VivaVoce scheme. The elder co-housing is designed with a hierarchy of privacy with the very public spaces pointed toward the busy street and progressively quieter and private as the residents retreat into their individual dwelling units. In the co-housing concept, these individual houses are deliberately smaller to encourage the residents to interact with each other in the shared dining room and living room located at them crossroads of each floor. The building also supports several shared spaces for the complex as a whole including a coffee lounge in the entrance and a “taverna” with a sunset terrace overlooking the entrance lobby and the street. These places are intended as social magnets for not only the residents but also the entire neighborhood.

The elder co-housing continues to engage the neighborhood by creating an outreach opportunity we call the “living history center” where children from the neighboring Cass Street School and the neighborhood can participate in after-school programs and the elders can offer their assistance to the young families attending the school by offering their wisdom and guidance along with tutoring and supervision. This communal space is deliberately situated adjacent to the Cass Street School and the playground. The space is designed in the form of a Native American Kiva or Sweat Lodge. In the native Ojibwa culture, the sweat lodge is a sacred ceremonial space where offerings are made and the oral traditions of the elders are passed to the next generation. It is from this spirit that the overarching "word of mouth" theme is rooted.

The VivaVoce concept boldly suggests to Milwaukee Public Schools to consider reorganizing the Cass Street School as a charter school focusing on wellness. This broad theme will afford MPS to integrate programs they have currently in place, such as science programs with UWM’s Great Lakes Water Institute, with a curriculum that would enhance and interact with the elder co-housing next door. Programs such as health care, nutrition, fitness, environmental stewardship and history would align well with activities in the neighborhood. The elders could participate in the daily classroom events and the children could participate in events with the elders. The co-housing can serve as a living-laboratory for the students.

The VivaVoce proposal takes the wellness concept further by incorporating sustainable design principals. The plan layout around a courtyard affords maximum daylight penetration into the building and saves
private garden views for the individual residents from their sitting room. Each of the building facades are tuned with external shading devices that are intended to filter daylight into the building without heating the mass. Also incorporated into the facade is a dual ventilation system that utilizes a natural convection flow of air. The first natural airflow system is a series of operable windows along the courtyard facades and is intended for use on temperate days. This air is drawn through the individual resident rooms and transferred to the shared corridor where a ventilator draws the air through the shared spaces very much like a chimney.

The second natural ventilation system is designed around a push-pull ventilation system in a vertical shaft between the residences. This system is intended for use during the extreme conditions where heating or cooling is required and incorporates a water-to-air heat exchange system tied to geo-thermal cooling source. The tempered air is drawn through the shafts, distributed to each dwelling, and then drawn through the same chimney as our first ventilation system.

The wellness concept runs deeper into the building design in the form of carefully selected construction materials that include sustainable harvested wood, high concentration of fly-ash in the concrete, locally quarried stone and recycled fiber carpeting. The plumbing fixtures throughout the building will conserve an additional 20% of the water and a cistern water collection system that is designed to run the non-potable uses throughout the building such as toilets and irrigation. The Living Machine is an aggressive on-site wastewater treatment system that is housed in a greenhouse adjacent to the shared garden courtyard. This system works very much like a synthetic swamp and naturally filters waste water through a series of tanks that contain water plants, snails and fish until the water is 98% pure. This greenhouse becomes a focal point for the courtyard garden and is intended for use by the residents to grow hothouse flowers and vegetables for use in their kitchens.

The collective goal of the Aging in Community weekend charrette was the creation of innovative designs which clearly reflect the five objectives that shaped the competition. The following bullet points outline how Zimmerman Architectural Studios proposed to address each of the Aging in Community competition goals:

- Create opportunities to age in place
- Strengthen links to the larger community
- Nurture informal social supports
- Foster energy conscious design
- Provide barrier free settings

The team representing Zimmerman Architectural Studios was comprised of five core Zimmerman employees and three very enthusiastic UWM students. Prior to the charrette weekend, our team held Visioning Sessions with other talented Zimmerman employees who could not participate over the weekend, but had very useful and valid experience and information to share. These Visioning Sessions helped us to form the ideas that shaped our solution. Special thanks goes out to all those who participated in the development of the VivaVoce scheme.
VIVA VOCE AN IDEAS COMPETITION

View from VanBuren looking northeast

Aging in Community: A Senior Living Ideas Competition
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Kyle Alvarez
Elizabeth Boehklein
Kristy Hunter
Kevin Hurlebaus
Matthew Kerr
Carmen Martinez
Jan Thomas
Kurt Zimmerman

Aging in Community: A Senior Living Ideas Competition
STRENGTHEN LINKS TO THE LARGER COMMUNITY

VivaVoce strengthens the Three Holy Women Community already in place by creating the following:

MPS Service Learning Charter School focused on Health and Wellness learning

Charter school to foster the existing community’s environmental programs, UWM water institute, nutrition, long term care career, recreation fitness, physical therapy, medical and social programs
VivaVoce strengthens the Three Holy Women Community already in place by creating the following:

- Opportunities to transfer the wisdom of the elders through Living History Center and adjacent school
- Opportunities for lifelong learning and idea sharing
- Expanding on existing services (Hedwig House rideshare) and focusing them into a single center
- Catered care for Elder Co-Housing residents and at home visiting care for community residents
CREATE OPPORTUNITIES TO AGE IN PLACE

VivaVoce improves upon the Three Holy Women Community already in place by creating the following:

- Sensitivity to the Irish, Polish, and Italian cultural community influence with a design for Multigenerational Co-housing adjacent to Elder Co-housing, recognizing greater community needs
- Access to Health and Wellness centers within Elder Co-housing
- Educational environment to nurture the care-giving skills present in the community
- Resident Assistant Role which will change with the resident population needs
- Providing adaptable casework on tracks to allow for height flexibility with changing resident needs
- Providing adaptable bathrooms with a “kit of parts” notion
- Providing flexibility in floor planning to accommodate multiple family typologies
- Providing for Choices for Aging in Place with a best friend or sister
VivaVoce nurtures the social network of the Three Holy Women Community by creating the following:

Outlets for interaction with macro community in the form of the morning sunroom and sunset terrace

Public access to public spaces for visiting and social support

Adjacency to Multigenerational co-housing: opportunity to swap care needs, share social time

Pet Therapy: doggie daycare, “floor pets”

View of the Taverna from the Sunset Porch
NURTURING SOCIAL GATHERINGS AND EVENTS

VivaVoce nurtures the social network of the Three Holy Women Community by creating the following:

Catered care for Elder Co-Housing residents and at home visiting care for community residents

Resident Assistant Role acts as a liaison to the charter school and to the community to organize trade for intercommunity services—meals, day care, etc.

12 person “households” or micro-communities to foster social interaction and create choice to participate in the larger macro-community

View of shared Living and Dining Room on each floor
BARRIER-FREE SETTINGS

VivaVoce provides a total barrier free environment on the Three Holy Women site by:

Accessorizing the site, aligning sidewalks, adaptability of the fixtures to assist in allowing people to age in place

Arcade around public functions for weather refuge, buffer zone in/outside

Resting place public/private zones

Pedestrian friendly, safety, traffic calming

Planting beds in courtyards up high with knee-space to eliminate stooping and bending

Security of a barrier free environment in a private/public hierarchy of limited access

Drop off for safety and accessibility, garage underground in direct access to unit floors

Recessed area carpets to eliminate thresholds as trip or wheelchair hazards

Detailed Unit Plan

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VivaVoce is focused on Green Design in the following ways:

- Composting organic materials in our courtyard gardens
- Low flow fixtures, waterless urinals
- Aggressive on-site waste water treatment (Living Machine)
- Providing high urban density
- Reflective roof surface to prevent heat gain
- Natural ventilation- operable windows with a building automation system—visual cue for users
- Ventilate across unit and collect and circulate air in the stacked common rooms to draw “chimney” of air through the units and decrease in-unit draft
- Air shafts between units for localized exhaust/supply
- Geothermal heating/cooling

Natural ventilation/geo-thermal diagram
ENERGY CONCIOUS DESIGN

VivaVoce is focused on Green Design in the following ways:

- Concept of Transferability - reproducible sustainable design that can be adapted to future designs
- Cistern rain-water collection charges gray-water uses throughout the building.
- Reusing site’s character elements such as reusing asphalt as hardscape mosaics
- Reusing soil cut/fill throughout site planning and into the pocket park
- Solar orientation - orienting courtyards south facing to capturing the winds and exposing units to daylight
- Using Photovoltaic Cells as shading devices (light shelves and fins) to generate power for building

Natural Convection

Convection flow diagram
ENERGY CONCIOUS DESIGN

View from Pleasant Street looking north

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