



BACKGROUND & CHALLENGE

Too many veterans return from war and face joblessness, mental and emotional trauma, physical disability, substance addiction and abuse, and homelessness. Veteran Affairs reported more than 250,000 homeless veterans last year, including 9,000 vets who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Of these homeless men and women 98 reside in Vermont (according to the 2010 Census Point) and an average of 40 are served each year by the Committee on Temporary Shelter in Chittenden County. The challenge was to build transitional housing & supportive spaces within a design that would reintegrate Vermont's homeless veterans back into society.

SITE & PROGRAM

The trapezoidal site includes a view of the Winooski River falls with eroded banks of local redstone, a building material prominently used in the area for hundreds of years. The unusually shaped lot and steep slope formed the basis for the building's shape. Twenty veterans reside in a mix of apartment types along with communal spaces, a counselor's office, and a program manager's apartment on the lower 4 floors. The 2 top floors are affordable housing. The efficiency units include full kitchens / baths and vary in layout. Two types of 2 BR units serve two individual vets or a vet with a child/ren. The common spaces have large windows opening to the street front and the community.

DESIGN INTENTION

The multi-colored large block fiber cement panels serve two purposes reflective of the building's inhabitants: to allow the building to express itself as a modern icon and be unique, yet to become the camouflage that allows the building to "blend" back into its community and surroundings. While not the literal camouflage of the various military branches, the rich colors embody the essence of the redstone of the eroded falls at the river below. The subtle coloring integrates the building into its context as it helps to integrate the veterans back into civilian life, after having endured hardships and trauma unknown to most of us.

CONSERVATION

Reusing an abandoned site in the downtown district of a small city, close to services, public transportation, education, jobs and entertainment inherently conserves land and fuel. The building materials were selected for durability and sustainability; for example: fiber glass windows, fiber cement siding, recycled steel framing, fly ash concrete, VCT and linoleum flooring. Thermally broken 7-1/4" thick steel and foam panels insulate the exterior of the building, and steel beams framing the lower floors will allow maximum flexibility in the future when we hope homelessness is no longer a societal scourge.

CANAL STREET VETERANS' HOUSING
WINOOSKI, VERMONT

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Photos: Gary Hall