

Project Home
Downtown Women's Center
Los Angeles, California



Application to the 2015 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence

December 2014

2015 RUDY BRUNER AWARD PROJECT DATA



PROJECT DATA

Please answer questions in space provided. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

Project Name	Project Home	Location	City	Los Angeles	State	CA
Owner	Downtown Women's Center					
Project Use(s)	Permanent Supportive Housing and Drop-in Day Center serving homeless and extremely low-income women in Los Angeles' Skid Row					
Project Size	67,000 square feet / 71 units of housing	Total Development Cost	\$26,676,796			
Annual Operating Budget (if appropriate)	\$6,526,423					
Date Initiated	5/31/07	Percent Completed by December 1, 2014	100%			
Project Completion Date (if appropriate)	12/14/10	Project Website (if appropriate)	www.DWCweb.org			

Attach, if you wish, a list of relevant project dates

Application submitted by:

Name	Molly Moen	Title	Chief Operating Officer
Organization	Downtown Women's Center		
Address	442 S. San Pedro Street	City/State/Zip	Los Angeles, CA 90013
Telephone	(213) 680-0600	Fax	(213) 680-0844
E-mail	MollyM@DWCweb.org	Website (if appropriate)	www.DWCweb.org

Perspective Sheets:

Organization	Name	E-mail	
Public Agencies	Economic & Workforce Development (City of LA)	Jan Perry	Jan.Perry@lacity.org

Architect/Designer

Developer

Professional Consultant	Historic Resources Group	Christy McAvoy	christy@historicrosourcesgroup.com
Community Group	Vivienne Lee (Cilibank/REDF/Little Tokyo Lofts)	Vivienne Lee	vlee@redf.org
Other	Public Agency: LA Housing+Community Investment Dept.	Helmi Hisserich	helmi.hisserich@lacity.org
Professional Consultant: Art Sites Project		Lisa Marsh	lisa.marsh@skidrow.org
Community Group: Project Home Resident Focus Group		Amy Turk	AmyT@DWCweb.org

Please indicate how you learned of the *Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence*. (Check all that apply).

<input type="checkbox"/> Direct Mailing	<input type="checkbox"/> Direct Email	<input type="checkbox"/> Previous Selection Committee member	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Online Notice	<input type="checkbox"/> Previous RBA entrant	<input type="checkbox"/> Professional Organization	Website _____
	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Media	<input type="checkbox"/> Bruner/Loeb Forum	

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2015
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
PROJECT
AT-A-GLANCE



PROJECT AT-A-GLANCE

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This sheet, the Project Data sheet, and the representative photo will be sent to the Committee in advance as the *Project Overview*.

Project Name _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

1. Give a brief overview of the project. Approximately 500 words.

2. Why does the project merit the *Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence*? (You may wish to consider such factors as: effect on the urban environment; innovative or unique approaches to any aspect of project development; new and creative approaches to urban issues; design quality.) Approximately 500 words.

2015 RUDY BRUNER AWARD PROJECT DESCRIPTION



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Please answer questions in space provided. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

1. Describe the underlying values and goals of the project. What, if any, significant trade-offs were required to implement the project? Approximately 500 words.

2. Briefly describe the project's urban context. How has the project impacted the local community? Who does the project serve? How many people are served by the project? Approximately 500 words.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION (CONT'D)

3. Describe the key elements of the development process, including community participation where appropriate. Approximately 400 words.

4. Describe the financing of the project. Please include all funding sources and square foot costs where applicable. Approximately 400 words.

5. Is the project unique and/or does it address significant urban issues? Is the model adaptable to other urban settings? Approximately 400 words.

2015
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
COMMUNITY
REPRESENTATIVE
PERSPECTIVE



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This sheet is to be filled out by someone who was involved, or represents an organization that was involved, in helping the project respond to neighborhood issues.

Name	Vivienne Lee	Title	Regional Director, Southern California
Organization	REDF	Telephone	(213) 623-2112
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Fax (415)	561-6685	E-mail	vlee@redf.org

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1. How did you, or the organization you represent, become involved in this project? What role did you play? Approximately 400 words.

In my former role as Vice President, Community Development at Citibank, the bank was a member of Federal Home Loan Bank and was able to participate in their AHEAD program, which provided resources to innovative programs that had a community development purpose. I was able to apply on behalf of Project Home to explore the development of a business plan to create a job-training social enterprise located on the ground floor of their supportive housing development.

The grant was awarded \$50K to do this initial feasibility analysis and planning, which has led to the development and operation of a market-oriented café and gift boutique in the heart of Skid Row. DWC's Project Home was able to bridge gaps among community residents and engage neighbors in their work. Moreover, the café and gift boutique provides a range of job training opportunities for homeless and formerly homeless women to re-enter the workforce.

Now working at REDF (an organization focused on social enterprise development) as the Regional Director, I am fortunate to continue working with DWC to further grow and support their employment programming to create even more economic opportunities for their residents and clients.

2. From the community's point of view, what were the major issues concerning this project? Approximately 400 words.

As a resident of the Little Tokyo Lofts (LTL), a market rate housing development located adjacent to DWC, there were some initial concerns by residents of DWC planning to locate and build permanent supportive housing next door. But these concerns largely stemmed from being unaware of who DWC is and what is permanent supportive housing. For the community, it was about getting to know your neighbor and understanding how diversity is important to community, especially socioeconomic diversity.

During this process, DWC worked very closely with LTL homeowners association and residents to educate folks about DWC by hosting community tours and coming to meetings. The engagement by DWC resulted in a strong partnership between DWC and LTL that included volunteer opportunities for LTL residents and uniform planting guidelines to plant and grow trees along our common sidewalk.

Additionally, I serve on the Boards of Skid Row Housing Trust and Little Tokyo Service Center, which are both located in and adjacent to Project Home. There was strong support of the project because these organizations recognize the role DWC and Project Home play in the larger community and there is no other organization with a focus on serving homeless women in the community.

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

3. Has this project made the community a better place to live or work? If so, how? Approximately 400 words.

Yes, Project Home has made the community a better place to both live and work. Their building, which was restored and redeveloped beautifully, has reduced blight on the corner and made it a destination place with its cafe and gift store. By operating a cafe on the ground floor, the surrounding community comes and engages DWC more frequently and sees first hand the power of DWC's programs in delivering strong outcomes focused on ending the cycles of homelessness and unemployment among the women it serves.

Additionally, DWC has a history of engaging community partners and volunteers, which has made the community more open and vibrant in working together to do good. DWC works to build a connected community that integrates and supports each other to address the challenges faced in Skid Row.

4. Would you change anything about this project or the development process you went through? Approximately 400 words.

The only recommendation I would add is that it would be great to have the cafe open longer hours in the evening as a true community retail space in the neighborhood. The cafe that DWC runs is one of the only retail establishments of its kind in the community and really is a treasure for the local residents in the area. But, this is a lovely nice to have and does not take away from the strong leadership and vision DWC executed in developing Project Home. They established themselves as true community resident that is vested in improving the community for the long term.

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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This sheet is to be filled out by someone who was involved, or represents an organization that was involved, in helping the project respond to neighborhood issues.

Name	Project Home Resident Focus Group	Title	Contact: Amy Turk, Chief Program Officer
Organization	Downtown Women's Center	Telephone	(213) 680-0600
Address	442 S. San Pedro Street	City/State/ZIP	Los Angeles, CA 90013
Fax	(213) 680-0844	E-mail	AmyT@DWCweb.org

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Signature		Date	11/24/14
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1. How did you, or the organization you represent, become involved in this project? What role did you play? Approximately 400 words.

On November 24, 2014, a focus group was conducted with three residents of Project Home – who moved from DWC's original site in 2010 – and the answers below represent a summary of what they shared.

We were residents of the Downtown Women's Center's original 46-unit permanent supportive housing Residence. We had experienced incidences of homelessness, mental illness, and violence prior to ending the cycle of homelessness through DWC. And when Project Home opened in December 2010, we moved into new homes within the building.

We participated in the planning of our relocation to Project Home throughout the development period. We had meetings with DWC staff and the architects to talk about what we wanted to see in our new apartments – kitchenettes with full-size refrigerators, doors that didn't automatically lock behind us – as well as our visions for the community spaces – an exercise room, a library, quiet spaces.

We also had an opportunity to participate in a "Hard Hat Tour" of Project Home under construction, select our apartment, and collaborate with a volunteer interior designer to select a color scheme and furniture patterns.

It was an exciting process, and we had a lot of opportunities for input and involvement.

2. From the community's point of view, what were the major issues concerning this project? Approximately 400 words.

It is one thing to move because you have planned to go somewhere else, but we had to move, because the Downtown Women's Center was re-locating. Due to our histories with homelessness, this was frightening. However, staff provided us with many opportunities to share our fears. We were also provided with "Moving Partners" – individual volunteers who worked with us over the course of a year to prepare for the move and clean out and pack our apartments.

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

3. Has this project made the community a better place to live or work? If so, how? Approximately 400 words.

4. Would you change anything about this project or the development process you went through? Approximately 400 words.

2015
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
PUBLIC AGENCY
PERSPECTIVE

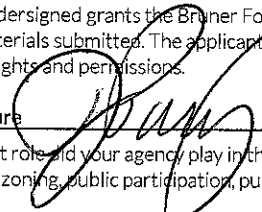


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This sheet is to be filled out by staff representative(s) of public agency(ies) who were directly involved in the financing, design review, or public approvals that affected this project.

Name	Jan Perry	Title	General Manager
Organization	Economic & Workforce Development Dept, City of Los Angeles	Telephone	(213) 744-7300
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Fax ()		E-mail	Jan.Perry@lacity.org

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Signature		Date	12/1/14
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1. What role did your agency play in the development of this project? Describe any requirements made of this project by your agency (e.g., zoning, public participation, public benefits, impact statements). Approximately 400 words.

- As the Los Angeles City Councilmember representing the downtown Los Angeles community in which DWC was located, I played a central role in identifying and helping the Center secure the site that became Project Home. I also worked to build the collaboration needed with City, County, State, and Federal elected officials to assist the Center in securing the site, and pre-development financing for Project Home.

The city owned the Renaissance Building and because the Downtown Women's Center was and is the only center in Skid Row dedicated to serving homeless women, one of the fastest growing homeless demographics, it made enormous sense to grow their program and increase housing opportunities for chronically homeless women living with mental illness and disabilities. It also offered the city the opportunity for a great public private partnership. In this case the city conveyed the building to the Downtown Women's Center for \$1. They in turn raised the resources needed to rehabilitate the building and make it into their own special place. The city also provides the rental subsidies as a project based Section 8 affordable housing site for homeless persons living below 30% AMI.

2. How was this project intended to benefit your city? What trade-offs and compromises were required to implement the project? How did your agency participate in making them? Approximately 400 words.

- The goal of this project was to both create a larger drop-in Day Center, as well as expanded permanent supportive housing for homeless women to address a critical need in our downtown community.
- I also worked closely with the Center's staff to identify a market-oriented store front within Project Home to provide a bridge to the larger community. Now, as the General Manager of the City's Economic and Workforce Development Department, I am particularly proud of the fact that this boutique has developed into a comprehensive job-training program for homeless and formerly homeless women, helping to not only reduce homelessness but also to end chronic unemployment for a previously under served population.

The Downtown Women's Center was asked to develop a social enterprise program for the new center. It was important to the community that includes market rate housing, that the commercial section of the building remain operational. The center in return developed a positive business concept for the site that is working well. In addition design played a critical role in terms of community impact. Having the main service entrance located in manner that is low impact or off the main street has also contributed to both the safety and security of the clients seeking services and allows for access to the commercial operation at the center.

PUBLIC AGENCY PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

3. Describe the project's impact on your city. Please be as specific as possible. Approximately 400 words.

- Project Home has created 71 permanent supportive apartments for women who had experienced long-term homelessness and mental health, substance abuse, and physical health problems.
- 95% of the women housed by DWC do not return to homelessness, Project Home has truly ended the cycle of homelessness for the women housed there.
- Project Home opened the first medical and mental health center for women on downtown's Skid Row, and more than 350 women per year now have access to well-woman exams, mammograms, psychiatric care, and other critical health services in our community.
- The social enterprise within Project Home has created expanded earned income opportunities for more than 80 women, as well as direct placement into employment for over 35 women in the past year.

The project's success offers a great example of how permanent supportive housing can be built in all communities when it is done right, builds collaboration and community support and in this case clearly increased property values in the area as an architectural award winning project. It offers many fine examples of benefits to the overall community as it consistently meets the highest standards of care for the women they serve.

4. Did this project result in new models of public/private partnerships? Are there aspects of this project that would be instructive to agencies like yours in other cities? Approximately 400 words.

Any jurisdiction that has property holdings should look to this model as a great example of the public/private partnership. Both sides of this agreement were determined to make it work and demonstrated the capacity to meet their obligations and commitment to the project. That is important. The center placed their faith in the city to deliver the building and the city placed our faith in the center's ability to raise the money to rehabilitate the building and complete the project. It was a joint effort that can be replicated in any jurisdiction. The City of Los Angeles has a history of shared agreements with non-profit agencies where the agency leases a city owned building and the city is paid back through a service agreement. This project had the city convey ownership of the building, a \$6 million asset, and leverage it for the purpose of the development.

In the case of the Downtown Women's Center we collaborated on this important project to demonstrate how much more can be done working together. The center provides affordable supportive housing at this site requires a affordable housing covenant for 55 years. This as in other supportive housing projects supported by the city, ensures a home in the downtown Los Angeles community for persons living at the lowest end of the economic spectrum. Many of the clients have spent years in a homeless condition in downtown LA. They now have a permanent home.

5. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project? Approximately 400 words.

The most successful aspect is that the project has delivered on all aspects of the proposal for the center. It in fact has exceeded our expectations and is a national model for program excellence. It offers elected officials a great example of how to develop a project like this in any community as they are needed throughout the city.

The least successful aspect of the project is that we cannot replicate it enough. We need far more Downtown Women's Centers in the City of Los Angeles.

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This sheet is to be filled out by staff representative(s) of public agency(ies) who were directly involved in the financing, design review, or public approvals that affected this project.

Name	Helmi A. Hisserich	Title	Assistant General Manager
Organization	Los Angeles Housing + Community Investment Department	Telephone	(213) 808-8662
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Signature	<i>for Helmi Hisserich</i>	Date	12-2-2014
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1. What role did your agency play in the development of this project? Describe any requirements made of this project by your agency (e.g., zoning, public participation, public benefits, impact statements). Approximately 400 words.

The City of Los Angeles provided significant development financing for Project Home; the Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency provided \$3,450,000 in the form of a service payback loan, while the Los Angeles Housing Department (now the Los Angeles Housing + Community Investment Department) provided \$4,847,914 in HOME funds to support its development.

Our agreement stipulated that 66 of the residential units shall be rented exclusively to individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, have a disability, and qualify as very low-income, not exceeding 50% of the area median income. Moreover, DWC was to restrict 63 units to tenants whose household income does not exceed 30% of the area median income. Qualifying disabilities are defined as mental illness, HIV/AIDS, substance addiction, physical disability, or a long-term chronic health condition that qualifies them for eligibility under either of two Medical Waiver Programs – eligibility for 20 or more personal care hours per week under the In-Home Supportive Services Program or eligibility for services under the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly.

2. How was this project intended to benefit your city? What trade-offs and compromises were required to implement the project? How did your agency participate in making them? Approximately 400 words.

Project Home was supported through the Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF), which has a goal of creating affordable rental housing for low and very low income households by making long-term loans for new construction or for the rehabilitation of existing residential structures through a competitive Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) process. The AHTF was established by the Mayor and City Council in June 2000, in response to the critical shortage of affordable housing in Los Angeles. In 2003 the City began prioritizing housing for homeless individuals. The effort has involved the collaboration of multiple city and county departments on funding and policy development including the Housing + Community Investment Department, the Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority and the Los Angeles County Department of Health.

The City's policy focus has shifted from a shelter and transitional based housing approach to prioritizing permanent housing as a solution to ending homelessness. The effort to create permanent supportive housing involves both capital funding and service funding with the goal of creating housing stability through the wrap-around services for highly vulnerable individuals. Project Home launched the West Coast pilot of Critical Time Intervention Program for new tenants and has maintained 100% occupancy among participants at one-year of residency. Project Home is a pioneering permanent supportive housing project in the City of Los Angeles, and one of the first to incorporate a full range of on site services for residents on site. In addition to the drop-in Day Center which serves over 4,000 women a year with basic needs, resources, showers, laundry and case management. The project also includes a job training program, and social enterprise cafe and gift shop, and an on site women's medical clinic.

PUBLIC AGENCY PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

3. Describe the project's impact on your city. Please be as specific as possible. Approximately 400 words.

Project Home has had broad impacts for the City. First and foremost, Project Home has created 71 permanent supportive apartments for women who had experienced long-term homelessness and mental health, substance abuse, and physical health problems. 95% of the women housed by DWC do not return to homelessness, Project Home has truly ended the cycle of homelessness for the women housed there. In addition, Project Home has lead the way to revitalizing the Skid Row community. The project restored a historic building in Los Angeles, beautifying a once blighted area, and has become a beacon of hope and promise in a neighborhood that has the highest concentration of homeless individuals in the nation.

Downtown Los Angeles is undergoing a major revitalization. In the past decade over 5,000 units of housing have been built in the urban core – most of which is market rate. Far too often, the new residents of downtown Los Angeles discourage the development of housing and services for the homeless because they view it as hurting the revitalization effort. Project Home initiated a sea change in downtown Los Angeles because it created a beautiful oasis on Skid Row, that is not only a safe haven for the residents and participants it serves, but also because – through its ground floor coffee bar and gift shop - it has welcomed the larger community in to the building. Project Home is the center of community volunteerism and has built a strong relationship between those who live on Skid Row and those who live in the surrounding community.

4. Did this project result in new models of public/private partnerships? Are there aspects of this project that would be instructive to agencies like yours in other cities? Approximately 400 words.

Downtown Women's Center created a major capital campaign to bring in funds for Project Home. This capital campaign leveraged a significant investment of public funds from two separate City Agencies. In addition, Project Home encouraged the participation of artists and designers in the design of the housing and community spaces, which sets it apart from most housing projects in its warmth and home-like feel. The individual units were furnished by volunteers designers who worked to make each apartment unique and beautiful and included donations from many local home furnishing companies. The participation of designers and local LA firms in the Interior design was a huge success because it engaged LA design creatives and resulted in a project that the ladies are proud to call home. This has been replicated by other developers who have built permanent supportive housing projects in Los Angeles and could be replicated in other cities.

5. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project? Approximately 400 words.

In hindsight the project lacks sufficient parking for its needs. DWC implements one of the most robust volunteer programs in the City and although the parking lot is sufficient to meet the code requirements and the needs of the residents, the volunteer program is sometimes limited by the lack of parking. Other than that, Project Home is truly considered to be one of the finest affordable housing projects serving the homeless in the City of Los Angeles.

2015
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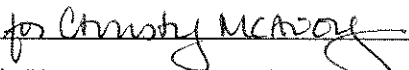
PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT PERSPECTIVE

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This sheet is to be filled out by a professional who worked as a consultant on the project, providing design, planning, legal, or other services. Copies may be given to other professionals if desired.

Name	Christy McAvoy	Title	Founding Principal
Organization	Historic Resources Group	Telephone	(626) 793-2400
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Signature  Date 11/13/14

1. What role did you or your organization play in the development of this project? Approximately 400 words.

I served as the historic preservation consultant on the architectural and development team which transformed the building at 442 S. San Pedro Street into the new home of the Downtown Women's Center. Built in 1927, the 67,000 square foot, six story structure designed in a Gothic Revival style modified for industrial use originally housed the Elias Katz Shoe Company. Once known as the Renaissance Building, the facility has been an acknowledged historic resource eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places since 1983. Noted both for its architectural significance and for its historic significance as emblematic of Los Angeles' rise as a manufacturing center of the early 20th century, the building in recent decades struggled to find a suitable use.

Local architecture firm Pica and Sullivan Architects Ltd., with Maureen Sullivan as the lead architect, assembled an all-female design team known for bringing historic buildings back to life. As a member of that team, I was responsible for identifying character-defining features, materials, and spaces that the architects needed to incorporate into their redesign in order to maintain the significance of the building. Rooftop outdoor spaces, magnificent industrial windows in each unit, and the views from shared lounges through the architectural elements of the façade all add character to the effort. The ability to retain meaningful elements while discarding noncontributing features was the result of thorough investigation and challenging discussion. The team worked closely with DWC staff and residents to develop a deep understanding of the organization's culture, its programs, and its respect for the women it serves. Having been involved with the Center for several decades before the project, I was able to encourage the Board, staff, design team and decision-makers to see the potential of the building to house the Center's needs.

2. Describe the project's impact on its community. Please be as specific as possible. Approximately 400 words.

The building has changed women's lives and become a beacon of hope in the neighborhood, providing housing to 71 women who were previously without a home and support services to thousands more. The project provided additional public benefit in that it saved and repurposed a historic building, thereby keeping the physical fabric of the community for future generations. Thus, the social service component of the mission also revitalized the neighborhood in a cherished setting. A very challenging endeavor, the effort brought many components of the community together – decision-makers, philanthropists, and the historic preservation and design communities in support of the Center's mission. Historic preservation looks for projects like this one to tell the story of all aspects of American life through physical representation.

PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

3. How might this project be instructive to others in your profession? Approximately 400 words.

4. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project? Approximately 400 words.

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This sheet is to be filled out by a professional who worked as a consultant on the project, providing design, planning, legal, or other services. Copies may be given to other professionals if desired.

Name	Lisa Marsh	Title	Managing Director
Organization	Piece By Piece	Telephone	(213) 683-0522
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Signature	Lisa Marsh	Date	Dec 2, 2014
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Digitally signed by Lisa Marsh
DN: cn=Lisa Marsh, o=Piece By Piece, email=lisa.marsh@skidrow.org, c=US
Date: 2014.12.02 23:14:30 -0800

1. What role did you or your organization play in the development of this project? Approximately 400 words.

- I served as a consultant managing the Art Sites Program that served to bring together Artists-in-Residents with the residents and participants of the Downtown Women’s Center to establish public art installations throughout Project Home.
- As with all arts-related programming and activities, the purpose of the visual arts program was to provide a safe place for women to explore their creativity, build self-esteem, learn new modes of creative expression, communicate their stories or ideas, and find healing in exploring feelings often difficult to express. In addition, the program carried the goal of easing the transition as DWC relocated from its original site by involving women in the design or creation of works destined for installation in one of the many spaces that comprised the new 65,000 square foot home. To this end, objectives of the program included the creation of works for installation that support the feeling of Home, sustain a sense of Community, and cultivate a sense of History.
- To meet these goals, I supported DWC in implementing an Artist-in-Residency Program to operate on a repeating, quarterly basis. Artist-Instructors with experience in leading workshops exploring visual arts media were solicited to propose 10-week instructional sessions focused on a specific theme or topic and centered in a chosen art-making media. Media included a broad range of approaches within all the visual arts disciplines (painting, printmaking, textiles, photography, sculpture, ceramics, assemblage, mixed-media, etc). Proposals were selected for their innovation in proposing a workshop series that demonstrated:
 - o High potential for meeting creativity, esteem-building, and self-expression needs among women participants
 - o Flexibility in its ability to include and involve women with varying levels of experience with art-making activity, and
 - o Culminating Project that is in keeping with the objectives of the Visual Arts Program (Supporting a sense of Home, Community and/or History)
- Residencies operated on a repeating, ten-week cycle, with four residencies completed annually. Each ten-week residency included approximately sixteen workshops (conducted twice-weekly over eight weeks), and a two-week culmination period, during which the artist prepared the culminating project for permanent installation within Project Home.

2. Describe the project’s impact on its community. Please be as specific as possible. Approximately 400 words.

o In its work of assisting the fundamental needs of homeless women through meals, case management and health services, the Downtown Women’s Center is continually challenged to identify opportunities to engage women in helping services and assist their ability to build esteem and self-sufficiency. Art programming has proven an exceptionally effective point of engagement. Creative activity allows unique opportunities for self-expression. When the women engage as a group, they break isolation often experienced in their daily life. They receive encouragement and often build esteem around their art-making achievements. The impact of the Art Sites Program on Project Home occurred on multiple levels: More than 70 women were given the opportunity to develop their creative expression and gained esteem and confidence in the process. Hundreds of other women were exposed to artwork created by homeless women and were potentially inspired by the work. Further, the program built a creative presence throughout Project Home, bringing the power of art to the lives of the many women who depend on the Downtown Women’s Center for support.

The Project had the important impact of serving as a pilot for what would become ongoing artmaking activity facilitated by volunteer Artists as well as economic activity centered on artmaking. Specifically, the Artist residencies that concluded with culminating installations in the newly-constructed building were re-instated as an ongoing activity aimed at developing creative merchandise for DWC’s social enterprise retail store. The highly positive experiences of DWC clients that worked with Artists on installations set the stage for ongoing engagement in artmaking, with bookmaking class an initial offering. The bookmaking class continues to present date, engaging dozens of women annually, and the journals produced in bookmaking classes are a stock staple in DWC’s social enterprise store. Over the ensuing three year period, additional art-based classes were established to create a range of goods. In short, the project met its goal of creating an arts-enriched environment while also stimulating a lasting interest in providing creative outlet and industry within the environment. The success of these activities in the local community is highly respected, both as an economic engine benefitting Skid Row residents and as a model for the power and impact of art in community life. Now, within Project Home, DWC’s social enterprise creates a line of handmade products that engages artists to lead production of creative products in a neighborhood where opportunities for both art-learning and job-training are absent.

PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

3. How might this project be instructive to others in your profession? Approximately 400 words.

o Project Home has become a hallmark among all providers of supportive housing in Skid Row. DWC is widely recognized for its success in providing housing that effectively retains residents who are vulnerable to chronic homelessness, thus demonstrating a solution to homelessness. It has done this by establishing supportive housing that, unlike many comparable structures, prioritizes community, creativity and individual expression, as exemplified in the quality architecture, pleasing design and arts-enriched spaces that characterize Project Home. Throughout the Skid Row community, DWC's building on San Pedro Street sets the bar for new development in the community.

Since the time of my consultancy for Project Home, I have been retained in the role of leading the implementation of arts-based services within Skid Row Housing Trust, which holds the largest portfolio of supportive housing units in Skid Row. In this capacity, I interact and collaborate with SRHT staff as well as personnel from other Skid Row agencies on a regular basis. Reference to DWC (Project Home) as a model is widespread among developers and other providers. While DWC's reputation for service has long been well-regarded, providers equally refer to DWC's success in developing local economy through its social enterprise and its contributions as a cultural resource. The building itself is esteemed for the caliber of its architecture and its agency for incorporating art and quality design into the fabric of service provision in Skid Row. Project Home's social enterprise activity is looked to by other providers as a benchmark for effective community development. With a growing interest in tapping creative capital for a better Skid Row, Project Home is universally regarded as the keystone project and inspiration for what is possible within the community.

4. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project? Approximately 400 words.

Project Home's greatest success is with its accomplishment in building community through cross-sector engagement in the design, fabrication, decoration and arts-enrichment of a wonderfully home-like space that has become, in fact, a permanent home for formerly homeless women as well as a home-of-refuge for those who reside on nearby sidewalks. Its importance and service as a model for what is possible within Skid Row cannot be overstated. Its contribution reaches beyond those directly served within its walls, given the position of Project Home as a symbol suggesting the potential for impactful development within the Skid Row community and inspiring the work of many who advocate for development that is sensitive to existing needs. While the need for permanent shelter is exceedingly obvious within the community, the success of Project Home suggests that basic needs extend beyond shelter and food to include community, connection, creativity, individual expression and a sense of belonging suggestive of home.

Downtown Women's Center

Rendering



Downtown Women's Center

Site Plan



downtown women's center

SITE PLAN - SCALE: 1" = 20'-0"

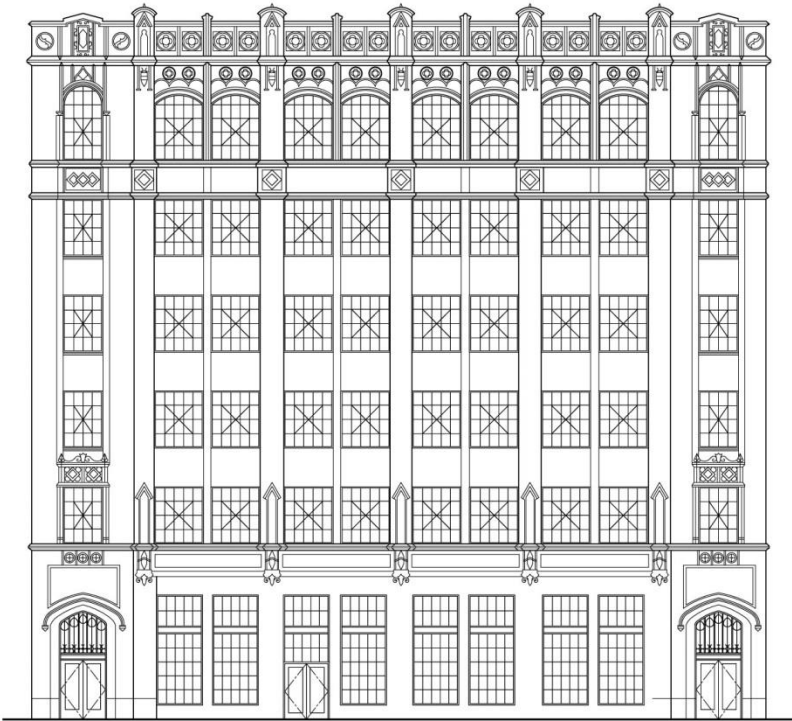
Pica+Sullivan

ARCHITECTS LTD



Downtown Women's Center

Exterior



downtown women's center

WEST ELEVATION



Pica+Sullivan

ARCHITECTS LTD



Exterior



Credit: Randall Michelson

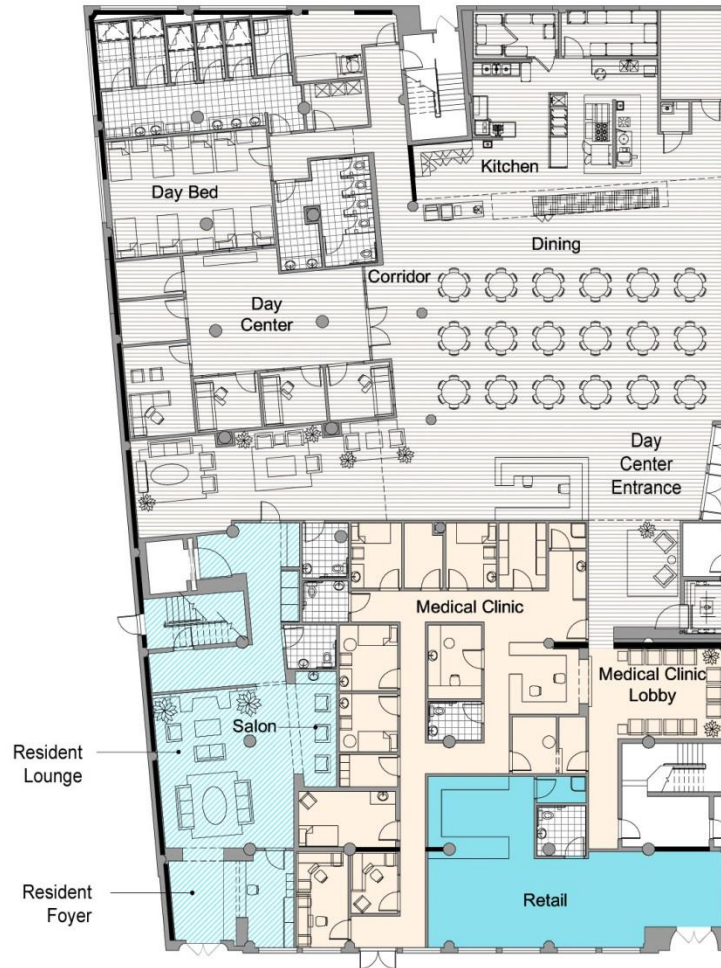
Day Center Entrance



Credit: Randall Michelson

First Floor

Floor Plan



downtown women's center

FIRST FLOOR PLAN PLAN - SCALE: 1/16" = 1'-0"

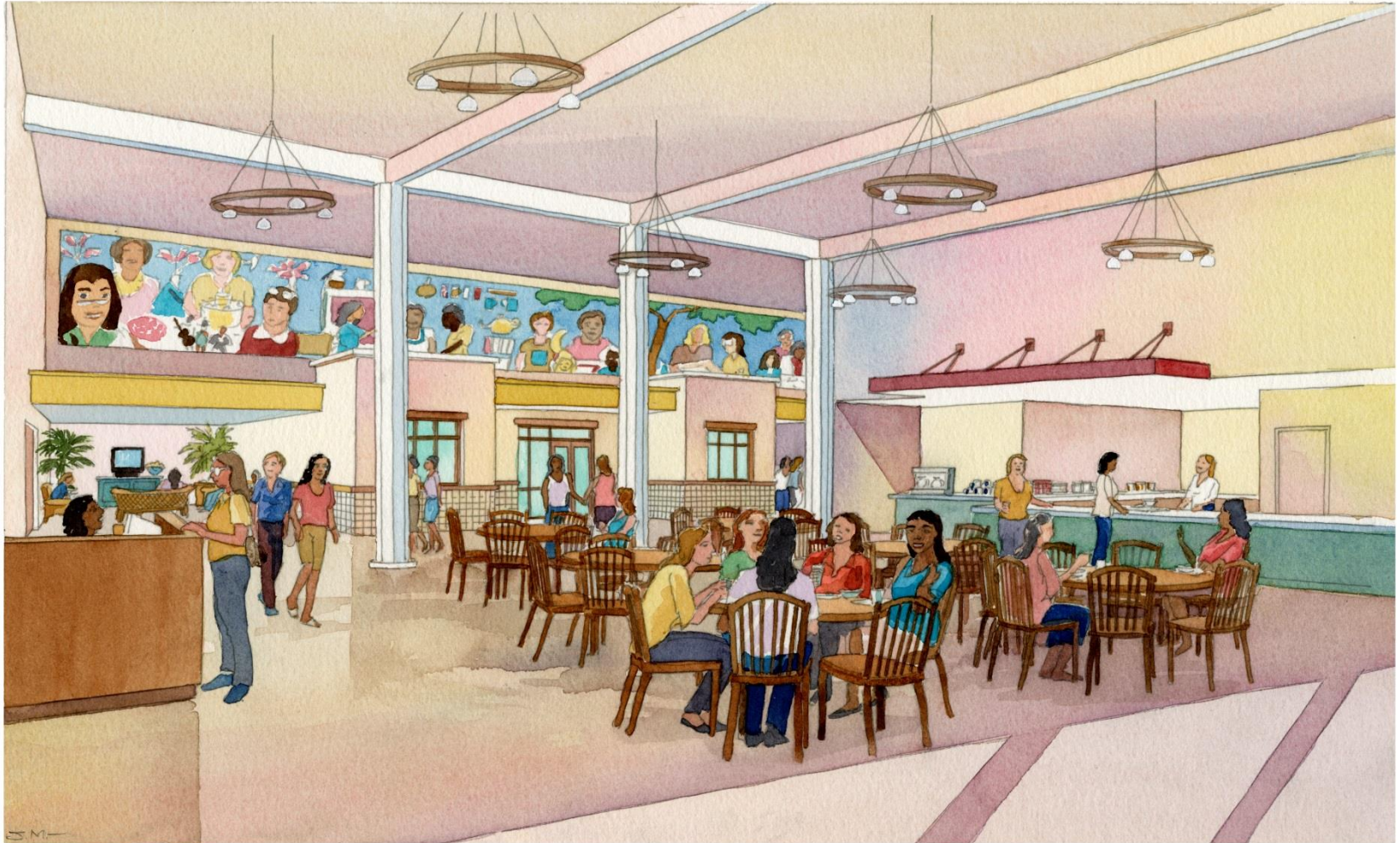
Pica+Sullivan

ARCHITECTS LTD



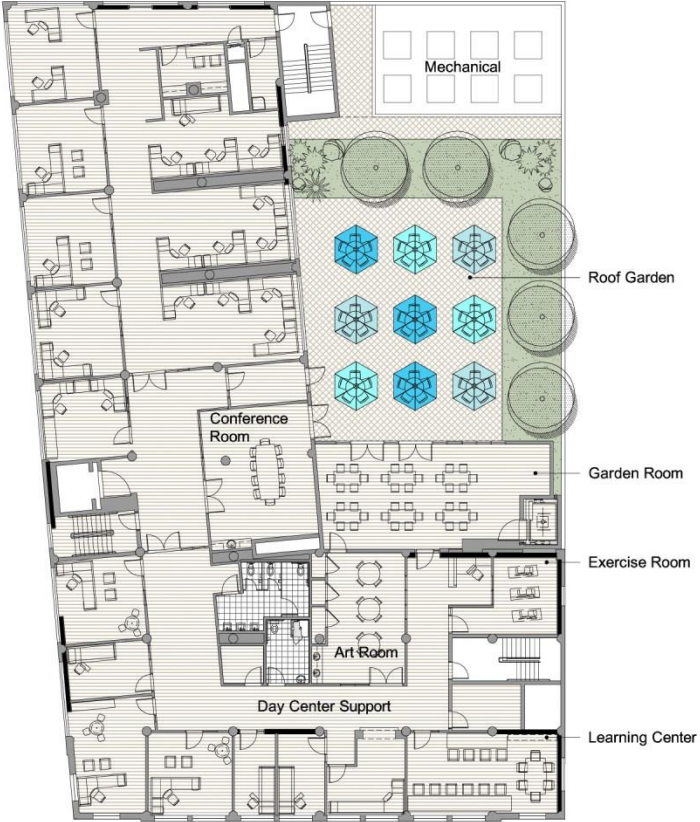
First Floor

Day Center rendering



Second Floor

Floor plan



downtown women's center
SECOND FLOOR PLAN PLAN - SCALE: 1/16" = 1'-0"

Pica+Sullivan
ARCHITECTS LTD 

Residential Floors 3-6

Floor Plan



downtown women's center

THIRD THRU SIXTH TYPICAL FLOOR PLAN PLAN - SCALE: 1/16" = 1'-0"

Pica+Sullivan
ARCHITECTS LTD



Residential Community Room



Credit: Randall Michelson

CHRISTY JOHNSON McAVOY

Not Your Standard Rehab

It was a perfect fit: a factory that once made shoes but had fallen on hard times, a group of women with a home in need of a makeover, and a community willing to provide the energy and dollars to accomplish the job.

THE DOWNTOWN Women's Center (DWC), the only organization that has been exclusively dedicated to serving homeless women in Los Angeles's skid row for more than 30 years, had outgrown its original facility. The center was founded in 1978 by pioneering social worker Jill Halverson when she befriended a homeless woman named Rosa. Halverson and community leaders started the center in a building on Los Angeles Street, and it grew into a nationally renowned nonprofit serving homeless and very-low-income women. By 2005, the original building was bursting at the seams and, with the changing nature of downtown real estate, new development was pressing against it.

Interested in both accommodating new residents and continuing to serve the homeless and disadvantaged, the Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency looked for a solution. It offered DWC a vacant, somewhat dilapidated six-story building a few blocks away. While the price tag was only one dollar, the rehabilitation cost would be \$26 million. Never ones to shy away from a challenge, the DWC board and staff began a fundraising campaign. With the support of public and private donors and the leadership of Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and council member Jan Perry, the organization assembled a complex package of government funds and grants, and private donations.

The new location has a story. The Renaissance Building, as it was sometimes known, was built in 1927 by Florence C. Casler, a partner in the construction firm Casler and Lloyd and one of the few women in the country building high rises at the time. One of the building's early tenants was the Elias Katz Shoe Company. It is fitting that the building would cycle back to female ownership in its latest incarnation.

Eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the building is noted both for its architectural significance and as emblem of downtown's rise as a commercial and manufacturing center of the early 20th century. The detailed Gothic revival facade is exemplary of the craftsmanship and character of the era.

At first glance, the task was more than a bit daunting. The building is six stories of cavernous open floors with huge supporting columns and industrial windows that had not been opened in decades. It was sturdy, but not inviting. The ornate facade was in need of restoration; its signature elements—windows, ornament, and cladding materials—were deteriorating. The list of upgrades to make the building a home began to mount.

Local architecture firm Pica + Sullivan Ltd., with Maureen Sullivan as the lead architect, assembled an all-female design team known for bringing historic buildings back to life. The first step was identifying the condition of the historic materials and features to be retained. The poured-in-place concrete building not only had its ornamental facade and original windows, but also a few original interior features—in particular, impressive mushroom-cap structural columns and high ceilings. These formed the core for the reuse.

The building had "good bones," but was in need of substantial upgrades for housing. A sensitive seismic retrofit, code upgrades for accessibility, state-of-the-art fire and life safety systems, and new heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning and electrical components were blended into historic spaces. The team and the DWC board also wanted a high degree of sustainability both through the reuse of materials and new components. Through their efforts, the building was awarded a Silver certification under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program and a National Preservation Award by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

The 71 residential units, each with a private bath and kitchenette, are filled with light. The ground floor houses a day center that homeless women can visit to receive services, and a retail store that showcases products made by the women. **U**



The poured-in-place concrete building not only had its ornamental facade and original windows, but also a few original interior features—in particular, impressive mushroom-cap structural columns and high ceilings. These formed the core for the reuse.

CHRISTY JOHNSON McAVOY is founding principal of Historic Resources Group and a nationally recognized expert in historic preservation, planning, and development.

Los Angeles Times

Downtown Women's Center gets new digs

Its residents, formerly homeless, will have private bathrooms and kitchenettes in a renovated former shoe factory just blocks from the center's original skid row location.

By Kate Linthicum, Los Angeles Times
December 9, 2010

Sofia Russell opened the door to Apartment 404 and stepped inside. Sunlight cascaded through two large windows, and the walls gleamed with a fresh coat of soft yellow paint. Russell, 67, took one glance around, nodded and asked, "May I move in tomorrow?"

Not quite. But soon. Next week, Russell and dozens of other once-homeless women who live in permanent supportive housing at the Downtown Women's Center will relocate to the center's new home: a beautifully renovated former shoe factory in the heart of skid row.

At 67,000 square feet, the new facility on South San Pedro Street is twice the size of the original location a few blocks away. It has 71 studio apartments, with private bathrooms and kitchenettes, as well as a rooftop garden, a daytime drop-in center and skid row's first medical and mental health clinic specifically for women.



Lisa Watson, left, hugs Sofia Russell in Russell's new room at the new 67,000-square-foot Downtown Women's Center. (Photo -Gary Friedman, Los Angeles Times)

The new facility opens at a time when many advocates for the homeless are calling for the decentralization of services away from skid row. When the Union Rescue Mission opened its first shelter for women in 2007, it did so at a former retirement community in North Hollywood.

But the directors of the Downtown Women's Center say they believe the best way to get help to those who need it is to go to where they are living.

"You have a community of people for whom this is their home," said Lisa Watson, the center's chief executive. "This is where they'll spend the rest of their life."

Over the last year, as crews built walls and restored floors in the \$26-million renovation, Watson and her staff worked to prepare residents for the big move. People who were once homeless have a habit of accumulating a lot of things, Watson said, and some of the women are wary of change.

To get them engaged and excited, the staff asked the women to draw up a set of house rules. They decided that the choice of television programs should be determined by a sign-up sheet and that the TV should be turned off at 9 p.m. Pet cats, fish and turtles will be welcome. Dogs will not.

The staff also let the women choose their new rooms and the color of their walls.

Russell, a devout Muslim who wears a hijab, opted for what a team of volunteer interior designers referred to as the "traditional" palette. "I love it," she said of the yellow walls. "These are my colors."

(Over)

Russell became homeless in 1997, after her husband died and she lost her Joshua Tree home in a foreclosure. She still remembers the torture of hunger, and days when her only meal was an imaginary one. “Instead of eating, I would fantasize about hamburgers and watermelon,” she said.

She moved into the Downtown Women’s Center 11 years ago.

The average age of the women living at the center is 55, and 80% have mental illness to some degree. Rent costs the women one-third of their income, which in most cases is only a welfare or disability check.

The apartments in the center’s original facility had shared bathrooms and no kitchens. While touring her new place this week, Russell pretended to be cooking on the stove.

“Instead of eating, I would fantasize about hamburgers and watermelon.”

From her fourth-floor studio, Russell can see Little Tokyo and the top of City Hall. Her view also includes dozens of industrial buildings that have been converted into lofts or retail space — emblems of the gentrification that has swept downtown in recent years.

Skid row’s population has also changed markedly since the missions first opened a century ago to serve poor, transient workers who arrived in town at the nearby train station.

From the start, the missions offered many services for men. But by the 1970s, a growing number of women were living on skid row. Jill Halverson, a social worker, was inspired to create the Downtown Women’s Center after she met one such woman, Rose Arzola, who slept between two shopping carts in a parking lot.

Today, women are the fastest-growing segment of the homeless population. On any given night, nearly 14,000 women without permanent homes are sleeping on the streets in L.A. County, according to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority.

To help the Downtown Women’s Center expand, the city granted it the Gothic Revival building on San Pedro for \$1. Watson expects thousands of women annually to stop by the day center for a meal, a warm shower and maybe a few hours of rest in a quiet room of daybeds. They’ll also be able to come to the state-of-the-art health clinic.

Paul Gregerson, chief medical officer at the JWCH Institute, which has partnered with the clinic, said chronic diseases such as diabetes, schizophrenia and HIV often go untreated among skid row’s women.

“Healthcare is not high on their list of priorities,” Gregerson said. “They have to find a place to sleep, find food. If they have a drug problem, they have to access their drugs. The bottom line is they will not access healthcare on their own, so we have to bring the care to them.”

The new center also features an art room, a computer lab, a meditation room and a library of books donated by the Good News Foundation, a charity group made up of women who work in television news.

Three TV anchors were there one morning this week, stacking the shelves. There were classics by Joan Didion and Susan Sontag, as well as books with titles such as “The Diet Cure,” and “The Surgery-Free Makeover.”

“The joke was the TV people had plenty of self-help books,” KTLA-TV Channel 5 anchor Wendy Burch said with a laugh.

Downtown Women's Center's New Facility Opens This Week

by Ryan Vaillancourt

Published: Friday, December 3, 2010 5:00 PM PST

DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - During her years on the streets of Skid Row, Fannie Mayfield saw it all.

One night Mayfield saw a man set on fire just steps from where she had set up her tent. She watched as people were literally dumped on the sidewalk, recently discharged from a hospital or somewhere else.

Mayfield, 57, was addicted to drugs and alcohol. The addiction sunk her into desperation, leading her to occasionally eat out of trashcans to survive.

Through it all, Mayfield had one respite. During the day, she would amble into the Downtown Women's Center, a facility that feeds, aids and houses homeless women.

Last week, Mayfield walked into the Downtown Women's Center again, but this time she stepped into the organization's new home at 442 S. San Pedro St. The 33-year-old industrial structure has been converted into a facility with 71 permanent supportive housing units and several offices and rooms to support the center's suite of social services.

The \$26 million project is more than twice the size of the DWC's longtime Los Angeles Street location. When it opens on Friday, Dec. 10, with a Mardi-Gras inspired celebration, it will mark the culmination of a five-year process of planning, fundraising and construction. The new building is poised to grow the center's community significantly, adding 23 apartments and doubling its food service capacity.

During a visit last week, Mayfield smiled big as she marveled at the little things — the ice machine and walk-in freezer in the new commercial kitchen, the modern light fixtures in the ceiling. Then her emotions switched, and tears streamed down her cheeks.

"When you walk in these doors, it feels like somebody just grabs you, just embraces you," Mayfield, said. "When you think nobody cares, there's a lot of people who care."

DWC has been at 325 S. Los Angeles St. since 1978. The site has 48 apartments, all of them occupied, where women stay for an average of 12 years. Some stay longer and some transition to another apartment after a few years. But the home is theirs forever if they want it, and many do, said Lisa Watson, the center's executive director.



Fannie Mayfield is welcomed to the new home of the Downtown Women's Center (Photo - Myra Vides)

(Over)

Perhaps more critical to the center than the housing it provides are the onsite social services it offers to residents and any woman who walks through the doors: mental health and medical care, including female-specific procedures like mammograms. There is job training and a variety of programs geared toward nurturing stability and independence.

“The goal is to give them whatever support they need to stay housed,” Watson said, describing the permanent supportive housing model that DWC founder Jill Halverson pioneered in 1978, which only recently has been picking up steam with elected officials and others.

The new Downtown Women’s Center is in a former shoe factory. The exterior of the six-story, Gothic Revival edifice has been restored to its original standards. Originally designed by William Douglas Lee, the building was abandoned before the city purchased it, then sold it to the DWC for \$1. The center tapped a variety of public and private sources to pay for the renovation.

“The permanent supportive housing model that DWC pioneered in 1978, has only recently has been picking up steam with elected officials & others.”

The upgrade was done with environmental sustainability in mind, largely to keep utility bills low, but it allowed the DWC to notch some marketing cache by attaining LEED Silver certification from the U.S. Green Building Council.

The ground floor includes an expanded medical office that will serve residents and drop-ins. A back, windowless room will become a resting area with several day beds. There will also be a ground-floor store and cafe where clients and residents of the center will have a chance to work.

The employment opportunity is important — access to jobs was the number one desire women expressed in a survey, Watson said. She noted that the DWC is also partnering with Downtown artists to design, and to help the women make, candles, jewelry and other items to sell in the store.

Watson hopes other Downtown residents, “the loft dwellers,” will patronize the shop. She also hopes they will also volunteer and get to know their neighbors, like Sharon Kipfer has done.

Kipfer, who lives in the Old Bank District, started volunteering at the DWC five years ago when she moved Downtown from suburban San Diego.

“Knowing what they’re coping with and their ability to go on and express that and to still have a positive attitude, I find it very inspiring,” said Kipfer, an interior designer who volunteered her services in arranging layouts at the new site.

Mayfield, the day center client, has been sober for six years. She now has her own apartment. Though it is in South Los Angeles, she still comes Downtown to the center every day to participate in a job training program, and to be among the women she now considers family. Her apartment, she said, is just the place where she sleeps.

“This is home,” she said. “You can never forget where you come from.”