

Almost Home Renovation Proposal

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

Problem Statement:

What's the problem here?

Almost Home is a transitional housing facility for teenage mothers and their children. While the staff work hard to teach valuable life skills and provide a safe, structured living environment, many feel conditions could still be improved to create a more comfortable and effective atmosphere.

How do we help?

Several SIUC Industrial Design students have visited Almost Home and spoken with staff about issues they and their members encounter. Understanding our resources and time frame, as well as the areas of greatest need, we have focused our proposal on a few key areas of the building:

- The dining room
- The pantry
- The store

These are areas of high social interaction and activity. Many life-skills are taught in these rooms, but unfortunately, the layout of the rooms makes initiating many activities to be cumbersome. In addition to the poor adaptability of the spaces, many of the wall, floor, and furnishing treatments do not suggest a "family-style" living environment.

A team of SIUC students from different graduating classes teamed up outside of class to learn about Almost Home, learn from each other, and contribute to this proposal.

Who are we designing for?



Members

The members are what Almost Home is all about. The majority of the mothers who move in are from broken or abusive homes (or no home at all) and need help getting on the right track. Some just need a little boost, while some are on the brink of despair.

Most mothers are between the ages 12 and 19, while their children range from newborn to around 5 years old. Many have never experienced a "normal" life and have not been exposed to many opportunities and skills that can help their confidence and independence.



Staff

Staff includes both paid and volunteer workers. They help teach life skills such as grocery shopping, cooking, finding daycare and transportation, teaching sewing classes, and tutoring for school. Others manage the logistics of the facility and provide members with counseling and financial saving plans.

What are some considerations?

- At most, 15 families (up to 25 children) live at the facility.
- Members are seeking normalcy and structure for their lives.
- Almost Home staff work to teach life skills and provide support.
- Cost is a huge concern since monies and goods come primarily from donations.

Almost Home Program

The members must commit to a few major components of the programs such as **education, parenting skills, and life skills.**

Members are required to be enrolled in basic-level education: high school or GED. They also receive special support and direction as they learn healthy parenting skills, effective discipline, and childhood development. In addition, members must attend on-site life and job skill classes four nights a week.

The program is structured to help each member advance these skills while staying in the house.

What's already there?

1 Dining Room

Atmosphere:

- Drop ceiling
- Pendant lighting
- Tile flooring
- Many windows

Artifacts:

- Tables
- Chairs
- High chairs
- Booster seats
- Microwave
- Compact refrigerator
- Serving counter
- 32-gallon trash bin

Activities:

- Current:
 - Eating
 - Sewing classes
 - Group meetings & presentations
 - Tutoring
 - Celebrations

Desired:

- Cooking classes
- Arts and crafts
- Incentive store
- Movie night
- Extra play area



Problem indicators:

1. Furniture is not adaptable for multiple activities
2. Furniture is in the way for many activities
3. Tables are difficult to move
4. The room is not reminiscent of a typical "home" and feels "institutional"
5. Microwave, fridge, and toaster in poor location for use
6. High chairs occupy valuable wall space in the room
7. Booster seats take up table space and are in the way when not being used
8. Current chairs loose rubber bumpers easily which are expensive and tedious to replace
9. Flooring isn't ideal for children's activities for sanitary and safety reasons

2 Store

Atmosphere:

- Small room
- Fluorescent Lighting
- Dropped Ceiling
- Large window

Artifacts:

- Metal storage racks
- Large metal cabinet
- Items for sale: clothes, baby supplies, etc

Activities:

- Weekly shopping time
- Storage and dispersal of general personal necessities



Problem indicators:

1. Space is very limited and cramped
2. Display of items is limited
3. The space provides more of a closet feeling than a store atmosphere
4. All items cost the same amount of points, and therefore do not encourage saving or increase motivation, which are part of life skills.

3 Pantry

Atmosphere:

- Small enclosed space
- Fluorescent Lighting
- Tile flooring
- Locked space

Artifacts:

- Cabinets
- Counter tops
- Non-functioning cabinet locks
- Personal Food
- Breaker Box

Activities:

- Food storage
- Simple food preparation



Problem indicators:

1. Space is very limited and cramped with more than one or two people at a time
2. Cabinet locks no longer have keys
3. Counter space is small
4. Counters are rarely used due to the limitations of things such as water, microwave, etc.