

Summary of the Design Submission provided by  
Paul Thomas Becher Architecture Inc.



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## **Affordable Seniors Housing plus Services: A Village for Learning, Discovery, Better Health and Well Being**

The conceptual design submitted was influenced by the related findings of eleven facility condition and functional programming evaluation assessments of existing seniors lodges carried out by Paul Thomas Becher Architecture Inc. between August 2008 and January 2009 for Alberta Infrastructure. The various studies and functional redesign services began in August of 2008 and were submitted to Alberta Infrastructure for review and publication in January of 2009. The project commission entailed working closely with Alberta Infrastructure to evaluate not only current conditions of existing seniors lodge facilities in the province of Alberta, but also to present potential future functional/programmatic improvements. The completed evaluations have become the basis for other future study models that will measure how well existing senior lodge facilities meet current design and planning guidelines set forth by the provincial government.

Generalizations were made from the findings of the various evaluation reports, in order to make them applicable to the Atlantic Provinces. The level of expertise that resulted from completing the studies is unique. Specifics of how existing senior accommodations and core services can in fact be enhanced, as well as the kinds of operational revenue issues that may result when services are improved and residential accommodations are increased in size, have been addressed and incorporated in the proposed award winning design. The experience of meeting with a variety of facility operators, maintenance engineers as well as other facility staff to discuss the unique needs of each facility, seeing first hand existing living conditions as well as how available core and common building service areas are being utilized, followed by developing alternative functional planning solutions and related lifecycle cost estimates to meet real life day to day issues confronted by such facilities, gave Paul Becher, as an Architect, and author of the design submission a unique perspective of the matter at hand.

For the purposes of the competition, the idea of developing a plus service based facility followed naturally from the findings of the eleven reports.

Functional/program recommendations adopted by Alberta Infrastructure and incorporated in each of the eleven building reports were adapted as well as enhanced for the assembly of the presented design. The proposed design illustrates several ways within one facility of generating more living space and improved core service options per tenant while at the same time providing

sufficient revenue generating service areas that could address the issue of increased operating costs of such a functionally enhanced facility.

By providing rental space within the facility, core services could be diversified, and greater levels of rent could be collected from such commercial tenants to offset operating revenue levels. In the case of the proposed design, an internet café and medical walk-in clinic were proposed as independent commercial tenants. Secondly, it was proposed that particular house keeping, home care, meal services, and health care services be provided for non-resident community members and that such services should be integrated with the facility administration operations.

Such services offered to non-resident facility members would be charged appropriately and additional operating revenue would then be generated. In the proposed design, the commercial kitchen was enhanced to allow for additional home delivered “meals on wheels” service to occur for non-facility residents living in the surrounding community. Similarly, home care, doctor visits at non-resident homes, laundry and house keeping services of non-residents living in the immediate community would also be provided by facility staff, and the related revenues collected would be channeled back to cover the operational costs of the facility. Finally, an educational and discovery component was also added to the facility. Enhanced learning opportunities would be offered for various cognitive levels and physical abilities. Interaction with younger members of the community to learn skills from the seniors would be encouraged and likewise seniors would also be able to learn about the use of technology from the younger generations as well.

With regards to the exterior appearance of the assembly use and residential wings, design references were considered with respect to the affordable housing development known as the Weissenhof Settlement built in 1927 in Stuttgart, Germany, completed under the supervision of Berlin Architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. The housing designs at the time, incorporated efficient construction methods and materials, and incorporated modern design principles.



**WEISSENHOF SETTLEMENT**

The simple rectangular modulated forms of the proposed design also follow similar modernist principles, and the cost effectiveness of the proposed assemblies makes better design and financial sense than traditional oversized residential pitched roof forms. The design implies an architecture that relates to modern times, since the overall conceptual form is driven by its function, and intended “plus services” aspect. Instead of focusing on a particular stylistic

appearances, the building design reflects what one may term a type of conceptual realism, whereby the reality of efficient building, coupled with functional requirements are combined in an honest yet poetic manner. The proposed building elevations of the competition submission are illustrated below.



Other design aspects such as the layout of perimeter suites around the physical boundaries of the proposed facility are designed in a fashion that provides a transitional zone for those interested in down-sizing their existing living accommodations, or who have mixed levels of cognitive abilities. A couple for example, where one of the two individuals is still mobile and the other has had a stroke would find these types of suites very appealing since they offer the best of both worlds – independent apartment style living, with the added benefit of an enhanced care facility literally attached to the suite as well.

A more pedestrian friendly appearance of the facility has been devised and green building practices such as collecting roof rain water for irrigation proposes is proposed. The perimeter suites would have residential style gardens and lawns, and a front exterior door which still commands sense of independence is offered to tenants. An outdoor landscaped courtyard has also been incorporated at the

center of the two storey proposed design with ground floor suites opening onto the courtyard directly as well as second floor level suites overlooking the private green space. The design of the ground floor suites adjacent to the courtyard are intended to provide those tenants with limited cognitive abilities as well as those with mild forms of dementia the freedom to still have independent access to the outdoors in a safe and controlled manner. Essentially, the proposed faculty breaks down the traditional silo affect of seniors typically living in segregation from the rest of society by providing the necessary backdrop for resident and non-resident seniors to get together with others not only of different age groups, but also from different urban and rural sectors.

For more information about the project design submission, please contact the author of the submission directly, namely Paul Becher, Architect AAA, MAIBC, MRAIC, LEED AP, Principal, Paul Thomas Becher Architecture Inc. Direct contact information includes the following:

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