

## Design Narrative for Caritas Center:

**Historic Context.** The St. Rose Historic District predominantly contains single family homes, with some duplexes and small-ish apartment buildings, dating from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. There are two larger buildings: St. Rose's Professional Building and the Sonoma County Museum. The office building was built as a Catholic school in 1931, in a Spanish Mediterranean style. The museum is classified as 'Roman Renaissance Revival' with Spanish style influences, having a colonnaded porch graced with Corinthian columns and capitals. It was built in 1909 as a Post Office and moved to this location to become a museum in 1985.

Since Caritas Homes is closest to the neighborhood, it was designed to reflect some of the character of these two larger historic structures. But as advised by the DRB, the design team agreed not to be as literal as last presented. The Caritas Homes portion of the Caritas Village is described in its own narrative.

### The Caritas Center.

**General Urban Design and Architectural Strategies.** Since the Center does not face the historic neighborhood, and instead faces two long facades of a 3-story garage of late 20<sup>th</sup> Century origins, the Center uses a more contemporary language to express its purpose. The basic C-shaped building keeps with the downtown tradition of aligning buildings close to the sidewalk, but at the same time abides by a public utility easement requiring a minimum of 7' setback on all three street frontages.

It has three main components, each with its own entrance highlighted by a strong vertical expression of a stair tower with appropriate vertical blade sign. These entrances help to activate each of the main streets while the stair towers help to visually scale down the building into its separate components.

To help keep the three components united into one purposeful building, all facades share one material-- stucco. The existing converted hospital building being used by Catholic Charities is clad in stucco, and while this facility is different from a hospital, its main purpose is to maintain the health and well-being of people who face the crisis of homelessness. It is this public health function that aligns it with the tradition of other health-related buildings. For this reason, the colors of the building are intentionally light, much like the former hospital.

The parking is kept to the north of the building, minimizing its presence on the street, with entrances from A Street and Morgan Street.

*East Wing.* The L-shaped east wing, with its entrance on A Street, faces both A Street and 6<sup>th</sup> Street. It is dedicated to a family shelter, with residency up to 6 months. To reinforce its residential character, and meet the needs of the internal sleeping quarters, some of the rooms project forward to create bay windows which modulate these façades on the second and third floors. The first floor, taller than the residential floors, includes the dining room, commercial kitchen, child care program, class room, family intake offices and chapel. These are expressed with tall windows, like other ground floor uses in the downtown area. The chapel is intentionally placed on the street frontage adjacent to the lobby and is planned to have artistic

colored glass on or embedded in the exterior glazing. Finally, the wing's L-shape helps to form a rear courtyard accessible from the dining facility and child care program.

*West Wing.* This L-shaped wing primarily serves single individuals. The ground floor includes the Day Center with a large day room, showers, toilets, laundry and social workers to offer help and guidance. Its L-shape forms a rear courtyard that is accessed from the Day Room. The second floor above the Day Room includes housing services devoted to finding permanent housing for the individuals using the Day Center. The third floor has an apartment for 10 people, former participants in the program, who are volunteers now helping the social workers to operate the Day Center. A front courtyard is placed at the entry on 6<sup>th</sup> Street near the corner with Morgan St. to allow people to gather in the morning instead of congregating on the street.

This wing has a more 'business-like' exterior character, reflecting its purpose to not only provide immediate assistance to homeless individuals, but to work with them to find more permanent solutions to their problems. The first floor is taller than the upper 2 floors, not only to accommodate the larger first floor functions, but to reflect the downtown tradition of taller first floors.

*Central Wing.* The portion of the building which links the East and West Wings contains special functions, some of which serve all participants. The first floor hosts the double-height 'main' entrance lobby for first-time visitors, staff, and deliveries. It has access both from the street and rear parking lot. The first floor contains the Nightingale facility, a respite for homeless individuals recently released from hospital care. It connects to the Day Center for supportive activities and social workers to help the residents regain their health and strength. It also opens to the rear north courtyard for quiet recreation. The south side of the respite is shaded from the sun by a heavy timber trellis, planted with flowering vines, which offers a pleasant foreground view for the residents, while screening out the 3-story garage across the street. This floor is taller than the two floors above in the tradition of other downtown buildings. It has more glazing than the upper floors, although screened and shaded, to send a friendlier message to the street.

The second floor contains the clinic that serves both the families and the singles, arriving from either the families' East Wing or the singles' West Wing. Each group has its own waiting room. Finally on the top floor above the clinic are more offices for social workers and administration staff.

**Landscape Context.** In addition to the influences of architectural styles, Santa Rosa is still a business center for the agricultural activities of Sonoma county. Residents of the neighborhood cherish their climate's ability to provide lush landscapes, vegetable gardens and well-tended decorative gardens. The landscape plays a major role in establishing the character and charm of the neighborhood.

Like the rest of the neighborhood, all of the open spaces, and edge conditions around the site, will be lushly landscaped with native plants, with colorful species that reflect the changing seasons. Vines growing on buildings can be seen throughout the downtown, softening the appearances of buildings, and reminding residents of Santa Rosa that they live in an agricultural region, known for its grapes and wines. In the case of the Caritas Center, the heavy timber trellis and vines protecting the Respite's south side from the hot sun helps to de-institutionalize

the Center's presence, and conveys a warm, inviting message to those challenged with homelessness.

The Caritas Center, at the southern end of the block, is fully exposed to the sun all day. It will take advantage of this opportunity with solar hot water and solar voltaic panels on its roof to reduce dependence on fossil fuels to meet its energy needs. With the right choice of plants, the landscape can be used as a source of shade. Given both the symbolic value of a colorful, lush landscape for those whose lives are severely stressed, and its practical value in saving energy and maintaining comfortable temperatures both indoors and outdoors, the Center will be celebrating its landscape, even though on a tight urban site. All plants will be drought-tolerant, native species to conserve water.