Transcultural Interaction between Refugees and the Bowling Green, KY Community

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In Bowling Green, Kentucky, there is a growing refugee population. Unfortunately, the amount of resources available for refugees does not correlate with the expanding refugee population. As shown in a 2012 survey by the Census Bureau, roughly 10% of the residents, or 6,000 people, in Bowling Green are "foreign born." However, there are limited resources for refugees. As one source stated, "The government itself doesn't have the resources..." In order to help set them up with homes and jobs, they work with nonprofit organizations. Moreover, these organizations do not have the means to help incoming refugees fully integrate with the existing community, as seen in the lack of multilingual spaces developed in the city as well as a disconnect between locals and the refugee community.

As explained by a local refugee advocate, refugees need to gain citizenship within seven years to maintain government benefits such as food stamps and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). The main problem in gaining citizenship is that many refugees have full-time jobs and have little time to study for the test, which is given in English. In addition to this, some refugees are literate in their own language, which creates an obstacle for refugees trying to learn English. Furthermore, those with disabilities may not have the $600 required to obtain a doctor's notice to take the test in their native language. The inability to understand English may cause refugees with disabilities to fail the citizenship test and lose any government aid, thus causing them to fall further into poverty.

In order to combat these issues, Bowling Green needs a resource center that focuses on citizenship preparation and learning English for those unable to learn on their own. These tools can help refugees gain citizenship and maintain government aid while helping them integrate into society. Furthermore, the resource center will have features that draw other members of the community into the space such as shops and a café. Having a multicultural setting within a common space such as a café may make different people into strange acquaintances in order to create an environment for organic conversations and interactions. The connections made through these interactions may help refugees fully integrate into society by an opportunity to link them with the local community.

Location: Bowling Green, KY

10% of the Bowling Green population is refugee.

Local Resources
Refugee Housing
Lovers Ln
Sun Path
Building Diagrams
Publics: Pole
View Points
Saras

Defining the Intervention

Disabilities

Bowling Green Community
Refugees
Citizenship
Money
English

Available Resources in Bowling Green

Cultural Connections

Business
Religion: Buddhism, Islam, Christianity
Art: Monuments, Buildings, Statues
Materials: Wood, Brick, Stone, Concrete

Syrria
Religion: Islam
Art: Strong Geometric Design
Materials: Concrete

Democratic Republic of the Congo
Religion: Christianity, Islam, Native
Art: Theatrical, Oral Experimental
Materials: Concrete, Clay, Brick

Process of Resettlement

Start
Refugees from native countries

An agency contracted with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides case files.

Jeofere from Dept of Homeland Security (DHS), US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) interviews a refugee and constructs a legal narrative to determine the refugee's eligibility and potential path to U.S. citizenship.

The refugee receives a letter of acceptance to a U.S. agency, a deadline for submission of an application, and a conference appointment.

Resettlement agency provides refugees with identification, helping services.

Refugees or as they are called, the sponsored individuals, are given assistance from the local resettlement agency.

Building Diagrams

Small bays and land form groups of different configurations for housing.

Tall and thin wall forms extend from the top to the base of the walls, serving as a boundary wall. The entrance to the building is located near the back with the entrance covered by overhanging eaves.

The small scale and limited amount of open space is a result of the building's design to encourage a sense of privacy and security for the residents.