Transcultural Interaction between Refugees and the Bowling Green, KY Community

Emily Hamilton | Fall 2016

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…to help set them (refugees) 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 multicultural 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 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 illiterate in their own language, which creates an obstacle for refugees trying to learn English. Furthermore, those with disabilities may not have the $800 required to obtain a doctor’s note 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 cafe. Having a multicultural setting within a common space such as a cafe may help different people interact and 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.

Defining the Intervention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disabilities</th>
<th>Bowling Green Community</th>
<th>Refugees</th>
<th>Citizenship</th>
<th>Money</th>
<th>English</th>
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Process of Resettlement

Start: Refugees settle from native countries.

Sun Path

Lovers Ln

Refugee Housing

Local Resources

Cultural Connections

Borders: Borders from Islam, Christianity

Art: Ceramics, Buildings, Statues

Materials: Wood, Bronze, Stone, Concrete

Syria

Region: Asian

Art: Strong Geometric Design

Materials: Concrete

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Region: Christianity, Islam, Native

Art: Theatrical, Oral, Experimental

Materials: Concrete, Clay, Bricks

Building Diagrams

for the new building needs. The building needs include: a two-story building with a mix of housing and commercial spaces, a cafe, and a greenhouse.

Small indoor spaces and functional areas of different technologies for emergency situations.