Homeless Navigation Centers:
Helping Communities Cope With Homelessness
Cities in North America are struggling more and more with the issue of homelessness. The problem has become so big that some cities have declared a state of emergency. Municipalities, charities, businesses and private citizens are attempting to help ease the homeless problem.
While there is a genuine interest in addressing the issue of homelessness, there are also several issues that can create barriers to building homeless shelters.

Finding and Using Land
Communities are finding it difficult to procure enough space to build new homeless shelters especially in the inner-city. Available land might not be ideal for a new build because it is too small, not suitable for foundations, or the land may only be available for a specific time before other infrastructure projects will be put in place in that space.

Selecting The Right Building Type
By selecting the right building type, and working with companies who have experience in building structures with specific building restrictions, communities can overcome many of the restrictions placed on inner city spaces.
Choose a building type that can build with limited ground preparation requirements. By building directly on existing asphalt or concrete (and in some cases even earth) foundation costs can be reduced or eliminated.
Choose a structure that is engineered to be relocated. High quality permanent structures can be designed to be moved when community needs change over time. Having a re-usable structure is appealing as it lowers future investment costs for municipalities who will be able to repurpose the building.
Choosing relocatable structures with limited ground preparation requirements opens the door to using borrowed land, land earmarked for future projects that is available in the short to medium term, or land that may be unsuitable for permanent, foundation based structures for any variety of reasons.
Finally, work with a company that understands and can work within the building codes for the area to help streamline the process and avoid costly delays.
Funding
One of the biggest challenges for building a new homeless center is funding. There are numerous ways to raise funds for a project in your community, from charitable organizations, local businesses, and government funding. Having a solid long term financial strategy will help when working with financial providers.

Choosing a structure that is relocatable provides a two fold advantage for city planners and land owners. It mitigates risk involved in tying up the space for futures use, along with the costs of demolishing a conventional building to free up that space in the future. It also provides an opportunity to reuse the structure for future projects providing a financial advantage.

Choosing a structure with proven energy efficiencies is also an excellent strategy in managing operational costs for a homeless center.

Finally, working with companies that provide financing can offer flexibility and security to your project planning.

Planning For The Future
Getting people off the streets is the immediate goal of most homeless centers. Addressing the ongoing needs of those people, and helping them navigate to a more stable living situation takes more resources. Communities need to ensure they are getting the most from their center, including space for ongoing necessary services.

Selecting structure that is provides enough space to not only house people, but provide the day to day services require to help them help make a huge difference in the success of your program. Some of the services required include:
- Healthcare Assessments
- Counselling Services
- Housing Placement
- Jobs
- Space for security and building management

Often, during the beginning phases of a project there may not be the opportunity to add all those services immediately. It is important to keep them in mind for the future. Working with building that either provides space to grow, or is adaptable to add onto easily, will help those future transitions.

Timing, Every Day That People Are On The Streets Exposes Them To Health Hazards
When working with many stakeholders from various organizations, things can move slowly. Once you have your plan in place it is important to work with a builder who can get onsite quickly and build quickly. Ask your builder about design and delivery times to ensure a fast response.

Permitting and building codes are another hurdle that can slow down the process, so ensure you work with a company that understands and has experience in addressing engineering requirements, and municipal codes.

Choosing the right structure will have significant impact on the cost and progress of your homeless center; from the planning stage, to securing funds, designing and finally building the structure and opening the doors. It is important to review your options and work with companies who have the right product and experience in providing a structure that addresses the very specific needs of interim housing facilities.

Please contact us with any questions about the process of designing and building structures to help solve the homeless issues in your community.