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# AIDS Housing Competition Generates Design Research

AS MANY AS 1.5 MILLION AMERICANS are estimated to be infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, and more than 80 percent of all people who contract AIDS will require housing assistance at some point during their illness. Until recently, however, little attention has been paid to the housing needs of this growing population. "Raising the Roof, Opening Doors," the first housing design competition for people with HIV-related illnesses, goes a long way toward rectifying the situation. Through research and design exploration, participants offered insights into

the spatial needs of people living with the disease.

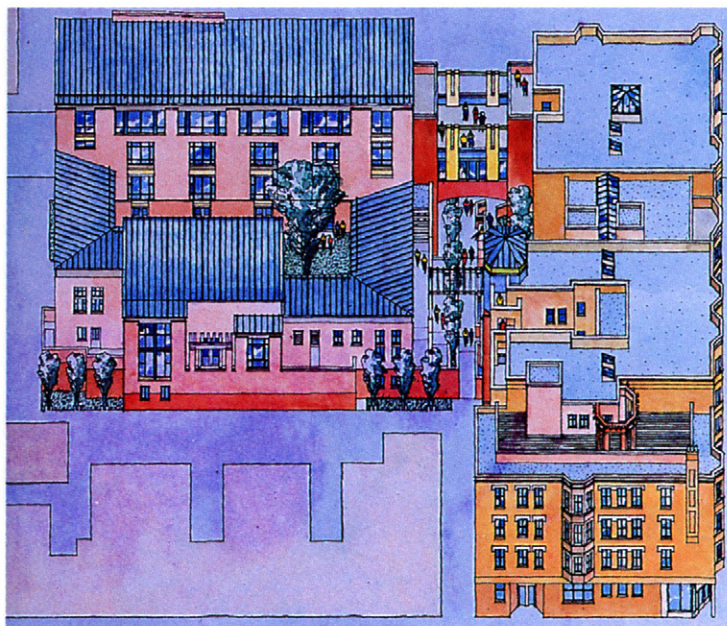
The competition grew out of a task force appointed by Boston Mayor Raymond L. Flynn in February 1991 to determine how the city could effectively address the housing needs of people with AIDS. The committee proposed developing 501 units of housing for AIDS victims in the city (one more than that proposed by the Bush administration for the entire country) by 1994. Because knowledge of the physical requirements of those afflicted with the disease is scant, Boston's Public Facilities Depart-

ment, which is responsible for reviewing all city housing construction projects, suggested a competition to generate a broad spectrum of design ideas based on participants' original research. The event, sponsored by the city department and Boston Society of Architects, received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Submissions were awarded and displayed last November at Build Boston 1992.

The competition was divided into two categories. The first called for an architectural solution to an affordable housing project on a specific site. Design-

ers were asked to renovate five existing rowhouses and build on an adjacent lot. About a third of the units were to be developed for people with AIDS, the remaining two-thirds for noninfected residents. The second category was a less-structured call for ideas from a variety of design disciplines. There were 144 submissions from the United States, Canada, Argentina, and France.

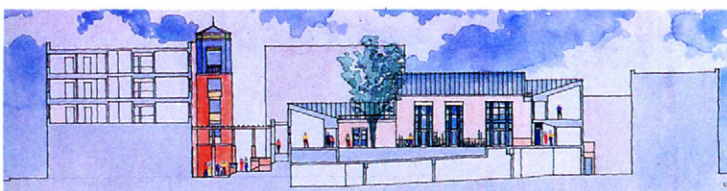
"The emphasis is on living," notes jury member Charles B. Zucker, AIA's senior director for community design and development, and the competition focused on how people live with



AXONOMETRIC



NORTH ELEVATION



EAST-WEST SECTION

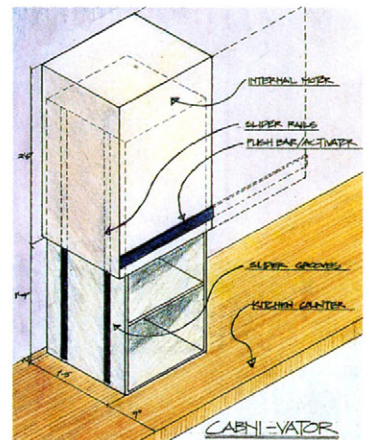
**Category 1: First Award**  
**Design Team:** David Kaplan,  
 George Nakatani, Lalida Pinsu-  
 vana, and Hong Chen  
**Consultant:** Alice Nakatani

FOLLOWING THE ADVICE OF CONSULTANT Alice Nakatani, a nurse who treats AIDS patients, the Santa Monica design team located units for people with AIDS in a new addition (left) and those for people without the virus in adjacent, renovated townhouses. A third floor community room joins the two sections. A courtyard within the new wing is divided into three areas for outdoor dining, gardening, and contemplation.



**Category 2: Second Award**  
**Designer:** R.J. Reissig

VERTICAL GRAB BARS (TOP RIGHT) located intermittently along walls offer the weary a place to lean and assistance in lifting themselves up if they fall. A "cabninator," or wall cabinet that slides down to counter level (bottom right), helps residents who are confined to wheelchairs reach food supplies stored above a kitchen counter.





AIDS. Not surprisingly, the architectural schemes reflected affordable housing solutions that satisfy the needs of physically challenged residents. The first award in the architectural category went to architects David Kaplan and George Nakatani of Santa Monica, California. They proposed a five-story courtyard complex linked by a community center to existing rowhouses. The

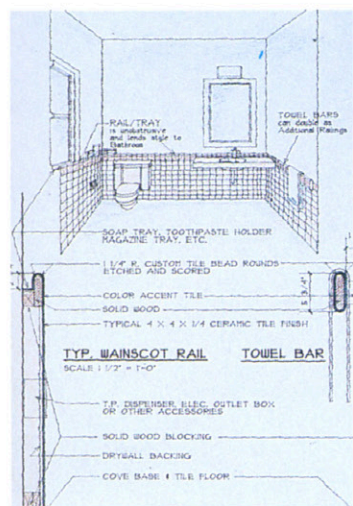
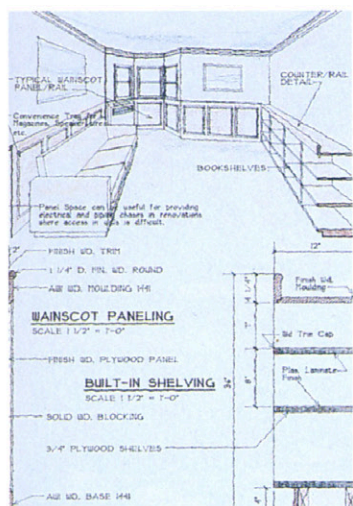
jurors were impressed by the cheerfulness of the Kaplan-Nakatani scheme. "It underscores the fact that this is a disease that one lives with," notes juror M. David Lee, principal of the Boston firm Stull and Lee.

But Zucker warns against thinking of housing people with AIDS as housing for another special needs group. "You can't just take your experience from people

with cancer, for example, and apply it to people with AIDS," he explains. The daily realities of the illness were made apparent through the second category of submissions. Sarah Conderman of Kansas State University, for example, determined that the one-story ranch house is best suited to evolve with the disease. She detailed changes that might take place—the addition of ac-

cessible bathrooms, guest bedrooms, and rest areas—as an occupant's condition deteriorated.

Another entry proposed that red benches be placed throughout the Boston area to provide rest stops for people with AIDS, who tire easily. An omnipresent reminder that the epidemic is still among us, the network of benches would be painted green when a cure is found. —N.B.S.



## Category 2: Second Award Designer: Evan Shu

TO MINIMIZE THE HARSH PSYCHOLOGICAL effects of cold metal grab bars throughout a home, architect Evan Shu discreetly detailed wainscoting, shelving (above), and ceramic tile walls (top) to function as railings.



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