



A Green Approach to Long-Term Care for Veterans

The Community Living Center (CLC) project for the VA Tomah Medical Center campus challenged and inspired PRA's design team to create something more than just a veteran care center. We hoped to create a home for veterans to age in one place, regardless of how their health may change.



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Working under the guidelines of the Green House® Project Model, PRA created a community living center that functions more like a home rather than a traditional long term care facility.

Reminiscent of Small Town America

Located on a quiet corner towards the back of the medical center's campus, the site's three Green House® homes create their own neighborhood. Their exteriors consist of warm, red brick, with crisp white trim and slate gray roof shingles, tying them into the framework of the campus' existing buildings. Interconnecting roof lines, a row of small dormers and lush green lawns add residential and curb appeal. Reminiscent of small town suburban America, a front entry court and deep porch provide spaces for residents to enjoy the outdoors and watch the activity on campus, and a furnished, screened-in porch area and patio at the rear of each building provide a sheltered area for gathering outdoors. Additionally, a portion of each backyard is fenced in, granting memory care residents the opportunity to safely enjoy being outdoors.

The Hearth Room

Upon entry, guests enter the Hearth Room, which functions

as the main living area for residents of the house. Open concept in style, the Hearth contains the main living room, dining area and kitchen and is truly the heart of the house. An inlaid, patterned carpet covers the living room floor, and the adjacent circulation and dining space has vinyl, two tone cherry plank flooring, combining the warmth and appearance of a real wood floor with the ease of maintenance of a more resilient floor. Large expanses of windows, a cathedral ceiling, domers and skylights fill the space with soft, natural light. The focal point of the living room is the slate fireplace, flanked on each side with bookcases filled with games and books for the residents' enjoyment.

Communal Dining

Another focal point of the open concept Hearth Room is the large communal dining table, which can seat up to twelve people. As part of the Green House® philosophy, residents are served their meals family style, and shabazeen (nursing staff) and visiting guests are encouraged to join them. During non-meal times, the communal table becomes a place for residents to sit and enjoy coffee and snacks, read the paper, play cards or participate in other activities.



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A Residential Kitchen

The kitchen, which also opens to the living and dining area, is appointed like a residential kitchen, with rich cherry stained cabinetry, quartz composite counter tops and slate look tile flooring. It also features an open plan, allowing for ease of movement during food preparation. A peninsula at ADA height encourages residents to visit and assist the shahbaz with meal time preparation, if they wish to do so.

A Gathering Space

Branching off the Hearth Room, a separate den provides additional living space. The den has a small table and four chairs for activities, such as playing cards or working on puzzles. A sofa and chair provide a spot to settle in and relax. The couch features a hideaway bed, so the den can serve as a guest bedroom for out of town family or friends. Since the Green House® model proposes that the Hearth Room is more of a gathering space than a venue used to watch television, the television in the den is the only TV in the house. However, it is stored in a mobile cabinet, so it can be moved into the Hearth Room for events, like movie nights or the Super Bowl. A small desk with a computer allows residents or guests to check e-mail, surf the Internet, or write letters to loved ones.

Handsomely Appointed Spa

The Green House® homes also include a hair wash area and spa for residents. The spa is handsomely appointed, with warm colored stone tile and glittering glass tile accents. A large tub can be filled almost instantly from a tank nearby, and radiant heating in the floor provides warmth and comfort underfoot. Music and aromatherapy can also add to a resident's spa experience.

Creating a Personalized Experience

Each resident has their own bedroom and a private bath. Each bedroom is generously furnished, but residents are also encouraged to bring special items from home to personalize their private space. An overhead lift system is incorporated into each bedroom, so even if a resident's health declines, he/she may stay in the home. Each bedroom has its own private bath and shower, with warm caramel colored floor and wall tiles and Travertine accents.

A Welcoming Environment

Through the use of warm residential finishes and furnishings, careful attention to detail and thoughtful design solutions, the VA and our design team created a welcoming environment, giving our veterans a home to live in and enjoy for many years to come.



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Gregg is the partner-in-charge of the long-term care studio at PRA. His experience and innovative concepts have shaped many long-term care facilities and enabled client's visions to become realities. If you would like to learn more, please contact Gregg.