

# ULI Terwilliger Center Releases Pilot Home Attainability Index

MICHAEL A. SPOTTS

*Attainable housing and income segregation remain major challenges for families and communities.*

THE ULI TERWILLIGER CENTER FOR HOUSING has created a Home Attainability Index, designed to support ULI district councils, local municipalities, and members of the development community who are working to address longstanding challenges related to home affordability.

The resources in the index provide a high-level snapshot of the extent to which a region's housing market offers a range of attainable choices to the local workforce. The information in this index will help identify gaps in home attainability and provide a better context for understanding residential markets. Over time, the index will enable national and regional comparisons to inform decisions about housing production, policy, and financing. The index, which is in the pilot stage, was debuted at the ULI Housing Opportunity Conference held during February in Miami. (Readers should note that these resources were developed and released before the widespread outbreak of COVID-19 in the United States, and therefore do not capture housing challenges resulting from the associated economic disruption.)

To develop the index, the ULI Terwilliger Center selected 11 metrics from existing, nationally recognized data sources and providers, including the U.S. Census Bureau, the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies, the National Housing Conference (NHC), and the National Low Income Housing Coalition. The index metrics fit into five core categories: overall affordability, homeownership attainability, rental attainability, neighborhood opportunity and access, and housing production. In addition, the Terwilliger Center partnered with the NHC to contextualize home attainability data with regional needs for workforce housing.



	Percentage of severely cost-burdened households earning:		Share of recently sold homes affordable to a household with:			Affordable and available rental units per 100 households at:					
Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)	\$30,000–44,999/year	\$45,000–75,000/year	40th-Percentile income	Median income	60th-Percentile income	50% of AMI	80% of AMI	Median income	All Transit Performance Score	Proportion of families living in poor or affluent neighborhoods	Permits per 100 household added (2007–2017)
Albuquerque	8.46%	1.79%	50.70%	72.90%	82.60%				3.60	32.40%	
Asheville			28.50%	53.60%	74.00%				1.10	9.20%	
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell	11.39%	2.67%	61.30%	71.30%	79.60%	53.00	99.00	106.00	2.50	35.70%	110.20
Austin-Round Rock	19.15%	4.32%	47.70%	65.90%	76.40%	49.00	103.00	109.00	2.80	36.10%	113.20
Baltimore-Columbia-Towson	21.92%	3.99%	58.40%	75.50%	85.10%	62.00	99.00	106.00	4.20	31.60%	128.50
Baton Rouge	8.70%	0.71%	59.70%	72.00%	88.20%				1.80	26.00%	
Birmingham-Hoover	6.10%	1.29%	60.90%	74.80%	88.40%				0.10	36.10%	474.10
Boise City	3.38%	1.00%	49.90%	67.40%	78.10%				1.80	18.10%	
Boston-Cambridge-Newton	31.38%	10.00%	29.60%	49.10%	64.00%	59.00	90.00	98.00	5.00	35.80%	81.90
Buffalo-Cheektowaga-Niagara Falls	3.56%	1.65%	75.00%	85.40%	90.20%	79.00	100.00	102.00	3.90	28.90%	228.80
Cape Coral-Fort Myers	10.59%	3.10%	46.80%	60.00%	71.00%				2.30	23.20%	
Cedar Rapids			86.20%	91.50%	96.00%				2.00	12.90%	
Charleston-North Charleston	12.29%	2.62%	39.40%	55.30%	72.40%				1.50	30.30%	
Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia	8.01%	1.36%	54.50%	72.20%	79.10%	62.00	103.00	107.00	2.20	39.30%	134.50
Chicago-Naperville-Elgin	18.06%	4.99%	60.20%	73.30%	83.30%	56.00	97.00	103.00	5.10	36.70%	221.00
Cincinnati	5.98%	0.98%	70.80%	82.60%	88.30%	88.00	104.00	104.00	2.50	26.90%	105.80
Cleveland-Elyria	5.30%	0.90%	68.00%	82.10%	90.50%	77.00	103.00	105.00	4.70	34.20%	110.80
Coeur d'Alene			55.40%	61.40%	79.20%				1.10	2.60%	
Columbia	5.13%	0.95%	76.20%	84.50%	86.60%				1.70	29.60%	
Columbus	6.41%	1.07%	64.00%	78.20%	87.60%	76.00	104.00	106.00	2.90	35.40%	88.80
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington	12.89%	2.77%	56.90%	68.40%	79.70%	49.00	100.00	107.00	2.80	47.70%	106.80
Deltona-Daytona Beach-Ormond Beach	8.93%	0.93%	43.90%	61.00%	73.80%				2.40	12.70%	
Denver-Aurora-Lakewood	22.18%	4.88%	27.10%	49.30%	66.30%	42.00	92.00	103.00	5.30	35.70%	97.30
Des Moines-West Des Moines	10.00%	0.48%	79.00%	85.50%	91.30%				2.60	24.40%	
Detroit-Warren-Dearborn	7.87%	1.91%	68.90%	80.80%	87.50%	69.00	99.00	103.00	2.80	51.10%	197.70
Durham-Chapel Hill	8.68%	1.60%	37.10%	54.20%	69.00%				3.20	38.00%	
Fayetteville			73.10%	82.80%	90.00%				1.40	13.10%	
Flagstaff									2.10	25.10%	
Gainesville			37.00%	52.80%	68.20%				4.00	38.40%	
Greenville-Anderson-Mauldin	3.60%	1.60%	53.00%	62.00%	80.10%				0.90	32.30%	
Houston-the Woodlands-Sugar Land	12.15%	3.25%	58.70%	71.30%	81.80%	47.00	103.00	110.00	2.80	46.10%	113.20
Indianapolis-Carmel-Anderson	3.24%	1.11%	71.00%	79.10%	86.80%	73.00	105.00	107.00	2.40	37.20%	124.80
Jacksonville	9.79%	2.97%	55.30%	67.50%	77.90%	56.00	99.00	109.00	2.60	25.00%	170.60
Kansas City	5.44%	1.18%	67.50%	80.00%	89.60%	73.00	104.00	105.00	2.30	29.20%	111.60
Lakeland-Winter Haven	6.28%	1.87%	60.50%	75.50%	85.50%				1.60	15.70%	
Las Vegas-Henderson-Paradise	12.66%	2.63%	42.80%	63.10%	79.20%	31.00	92.00	105.00	4.80	28.30%	118.80
Little Rock	1.73%	1.18%	69.50%	77.60%	88.40%				1.30	23.80%	
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim	36.33%	13.62%	6.80%	12.70%	24.90%	23.00	56.00	77.00	6.20	47.30%	126.60
Louisville-Jefferson County	4.28%	1.52%	64.50%	80.40%	90.60%	78.00	106.00	106.00	2.90	29.70%	151.60
Memphis	6.58%	0.75%	62.50%	77.20%	86.20%	53.00	104.00	109.00	2.30	48.00%	350.60
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach	23.48%	6.77%	32.50%	46.10%	62.50%	25.00	52.00	81.00	5.20	40.20%	146.20

As part of the suite of index-related resources, the Terwilliger Center released a national summary report, which found that even though some observers had recently noted an easing in home affordability challenges in some locations, problems remain.

▷ Attainability gaps continue to be observed around the United States, even though severe cost burdens among middle-income households tend to be concentrated in high-cost metropolitan areas;



Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)	Percentage of severely cost-burdened households earning:		Share of recently sold homes affordable to a household with:			Affordable and available rental units per 100 households at:			All Transit Performance Score	Proportion of families living in poor or affluent neighborhoods	Permits per 100 household added (2007–2017)
	\$30,000–44,999/year	\$45,000–75,000/year	40th-Percentile income	Median income	60th-Percentile income	50% of AMI	80% of AMI	Median income			
Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington	13.03%	2.89%	65.80%	80.30%	88.00%	73.00	100.00	102.00	3.70	20.00%	106.10
Naples			25.40%	37.80%	47.00%				1.90	23.20%	
Nashville-Davidson-Murfreesboro-Franklin	7.35%	2.17%	56.60%	66.00%	77.10%	63.00	99.00	103.00	1.70	31.70%	135.80
New Orleans-Metairie	9.06%	2.56%	37.90%	55.60%	68.00%	41.00	96.00	107.00	3.40	38.90%	33.70
New York-Newark-Jersey City	33.98%	13.57%	25.30%	40.10%	53.40%	45.00	80.00	95.00	6.90	51.10%	182.20
North Port-Sarasota-Bradenton	14.60%	3.60%	42.40%	56.60%	67.80%				3.00	19.30%	
Ocala			79.70%	81.60%	94.30%				0.70	6.30%	
Ogden-Clearfield	4.68%	1.14%	64.90%	77.10%	87.50%				4.70	16.20%	
Oklahoma City	8.05%	0.77%	62.70%	72.20%	85.10%	75.00	107.00	109.00	1.70	31.60%	129.90
Omaha-Council Bluffs, NE-IA	7.19%	0.80%	78.60%	86.80%	89.20%				2.70	25.60%	
Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford	16.04%	2.08%	42.70%	63.40%	77.40%	20.00	74.00	100.00	3.30	27.00%	127.20
Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington	16.14%	4.84%	55.80%	70.10%	83.10%	67.00	99.00	103.00	5.30	44.80%	127.70
Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale	10.55%	2.88%	52.00%	64.70%	79.00%	45.00	98.00	104.00	4.10	37.50%	99.10
Pittsburgh	5.35%	1.52%	70.20%	77.80%	85.80%	83.00	101.00	105.00	3.30	23.70%	270.60
Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro	20.02%	4.38%	23.00%	45.60%	65.50%	41.00	90.00	98.00	6.10	23.00%	109.80
Provo-Orem	12.34%	1.54%	56.50%	67.00%	81.10%				3.60	19.60%	
Punta Gorda			58.40%	70.40%	72.90%				0.00	5.50%	
Raleigh	6.09%	2.54%	58.20%	74.20%	83.50%	70.00	108.00	109.00	2.30	32.60%	120.70
Reno			23.30%	39.50%	58.00%				3.20	30.20%	
Richmond	10.61%	2.38%	59.60%	76.20%	87.40%	66.00	103.00	107.00	2.40	30.00%	173.40
Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario	24.99%	7.37%	29.60%	46.40%	59.50%	31.00	69.00	87.00	3.80	36.20%	104.30
Rochester	6.98%	2.17%	78.80%	89.50%	94.60%	63.00	101.00	103.00	2.50	27.50%	
Sacramento-Roseville-Arden-Arcade	23.02%	7.03%	23.80%	45.00%	61.70%	37.00	83.00	97.00	4.00	34.80%	88.30
Salt Lake City	10.66%	2.64%	41.50%	61.90%	71.20%				6.60	26.50%	117.80
San Antonio-New Braunfels	6.36%	2.69%	62.00%	70.80%	80.00%	41.00	99.00	108.00	4.50	41.30%	80.10
San Diego-Carlsbad	38.33%	13.09%	14.50%	22.90%	40.20%	25.00	65.00	86.00	5.30	38.50%	94.30
San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward	43.42%	19.92%	9.50%	17.00%	30.20%	47.00	76.00	90.00	6.80	35.10%	79.40
San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara	46.10%	26.85%	14.00%	21.80%	35.00%	43.00	79.00	96.00	6.40	33.20%	116.80
Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue	28.60%	6.82%	28.40%	40.50%	56.40%	48.00	88.00	98.00	5.10	26.50%	114.40
Spokane-Spokane Valley (WA)	6.79%	1.15%	43.10%	70.60%	79.60%				3.80	28.50%	
St. Louis	5.22%	1.74%	69.60%	79.70%	90.60%	73.00	106.00	106.00	3.80	27.80%	216.70
Tallahassee			50.10%	64.50%	82.40%				2.60	39.40%	
Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater	10.89%	2.47%	53.90%	67.40%	77.20%	33.00	86.00	101.00	3.30	28.20%	129.50
The Villages			47.00%	68.20%	73.90%				0.00		
Tucson	6.08%	1.86%	54.10%	70.90%	78.70%	51.00	99.00	106.00	3.70	39.10%	
Tulsa	4.08%	0.81%	66.30%	82.80%	91.90%				1.70	28.50%	
Urban Honolulu	40.98%	21.46%	16.50%	27.50%	34.30%				6.40	16.00%	
Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News	13.13%	3.72%	64.90%	77.20%	87.30%	60.00	103.00	109.00	3.20	28.80%	399.60
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria	36.10%	9.22%	46.60%	62.70%	73.50%	49.00	98.00	104.00	5.50	36.10%	101.90
Winston-Salem	3.40%	0.89%	66.30%	78.20%	84.20%				1.30	27.70%	

- ▷ The income premium that workers enjoy in high-cost areas is often overwhelmed by dramatically higher housing costs;
- ▷ Lower-income workers face more universal struggles finding rental housing that they can afford; and

- ▷ Residential income segregation remains deeply embedded throughout the country, threatening long-term health, education, economic, and other outcomes for lower-income residents and the communities in which they live.



## The income premium that workers enjoy in high-cost areas is often overwhelmed by dramatically higher housing costs.

When one looks more closely at individual regions, five stand out as promising performers, with index values that were average or better across all indicators:

- ▷ Buffalo-Cheektowaga-Niagara Falls, New York;
- ▷ Ogden-Clearfield, Utah;
- ▷ Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania;
- ▷ Provo-Orem, Utah; and
- ▷ Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News, Virginia.

The Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington metropolitan area receives an honorable mention for achieving better-than-average rankings across all categories except housing production.

These regions are notable for two reasons. First, both rental and homeownership options are broadly attainable, while still performing well on indicators of neighborhood opportunity and access. In addition, the regions indicate that broad attainability is possible in various contexts, with the six regions representing a range of geographies.

In the coming months, the Terwilliger Center will publish a series of data Dashboards for each of the Institute's 50 U.S.-based district councils, which will be made available through ULI's Knowledge Finder, [knowledge.uli.org/TCIndex](https://knowledge.uli.org/TCIndex). These Dashboards will create a snapshot of select housing conditions in the metro areas served by each council, including an overview of index measures, national comparisons, and supplemental metrics to provide context to those measures included in the index.

Each Dashboard includes an Occupational Analysis using Paycheck-to-Paycheck data provided by the NHC, which can be found at <https://www.nhc.org/paycheck-to-paycheck/>. Paycheck-to-Paycheck compares regional median incomes for 81 occupations with the cost to purchase or rent homes in 259 metropolitan regions across the United States. The Home Attainability Index's Occupational Analysis involved selecting a sample of occupations for comparison across the regions in which ULI members are active. For these occupations, we calculated the attainability gap (i.e., the additional amount the household would need to earn to afford a given type of housing) or surplus to compare attainability across regions.

The Paycheck-to-Paycheck data are also used to create "occupational benchmarks" for select index metrics that were tied to specific income thresholds

(such as median incomes or income percentiles). For example, one index metric is the number of rental units affordable and available at 80 percent of the region's median income. The occupational benchmarks illustrate that in the Denver region, a loan officer earning approximately \$76,000 per year would be at that income level, while in Detroit it would be characterized by an HVAC mechanic earning approximately \$62,000.

As the United States fights the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to note that many essential members of the workforce struggle to find homes, even in the best of times. A delivery truck driver cannot afford a modest one-bedroom apartment in 17 of the 79 regions included in the Occupational Analysis, and can afford to purchase a median-priced home in only three. A retail salesperson (which can include some grocery-store workers) can afford a one-bedroom rental in only 19 regions, and homeownership in none.

The crisis exacerbates these households' challenges, since they are unlikely to be able to work from home, may not have the option of taking sick leave, or may be balancing work with additional child care responsibilities given the widespread closures of schools and daycare facilities. While the impacts of the pandemic and the resulting economic disruption will not be known for some time, the data demonstrate the need for housing market and policy reforms to serve the full breadth of the regional workforce.

In addition to publishing the full complement of district council Dashboards, moving forward the Terwilliger Center will work to update and improve the suite of Home Attainability Index resources on an annual basis. To ensure that this effort provides value to its users, the center welcomes feedback on potential improvements and opportunities to incorporate information relevant to practitioners in the field. To access the latest resources, visit: [knowledge.uli.org/TCIndex](https://knowledge.uli.org/TCIndex). Feedback can be offered by contacting Michael Spotts, ULI visiting research fellow, at [Michael.Spotts@uli.org](mailto:Michael.Spotts@uli.org). **UL**

**MICHAEL A. SPOTTS** is a visiting research fellow with the ULI Terwilliger Center for Housing. He has over a decade of experience conducting applied policy research activities focused on housing affordability and community development.



## Research Driven

The main reason why trauma-informed design is gaining attention now centers on new research and improved diagnostics that have expanded the universe of people who could benefit from innovative housing solutions. Research described in a 2017 paper by J. Davis Harte and Dak Kopec has found, for instance, that about one in four minors in the United States has neurological disorders resulting from substantive trauma.

"I honestly believe we're at the beginning edge of design connecting to a full phenomenon," said Jill Pable, a professor of interior architecture and design at Florida State University.

Trauma, she said, is just starting to be recognized as a health factor. Poverty, isolation, and abuse can all traumatize people over time, leading to depression and emotional outbursts. Federal mental health administrators, Pable said, now recognize that changing the built environment helps residents function and recover.

"The idea of design as a prescription makes sense here, as those who live in this housing have the most to arguably gain from the healing effects that this architecture provides," said Pable, former national president of the Interior Design Educators Council.

In downtown Los Angeles, New Genesis Apartments reflect the concept even from the outside. Designed by Killefer Flammang Architects and Collaborative House, the permanent, support housing for low-income residents and people who were recently homeless has 98 studio apartments and eight one-bedroom units.

The neutral elevation of the seven-story apartment building blends with surrounding structures but also features saturated accents so that it does not shrink from the streetscape, as affordable housing sometimes can, notes a ULI case study on the project. These residents need a home that claims its space confidently, said the director of the Skid Row Housing Trust.

An open-air central atrium lets light flood into the heart of the project. Architect Wade Killefer said he prioritized natural light as "rule number one" to ease the effects of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).



The idea is to do more than house people. The overall goal of that project and others, Pable said, is to provide a foundation of stability that builds residents' immunity to emotional triggers so that they do not slide back into former ways of thinking and acting.

**Denver's Laradon School for children with intellectual and developmental disabilities uses a blend of natural materials and textures.**

## Key Elements

The intention is simple: create dignified, attractive spaces that promote community and health. Shopworks Architecture's Rossbert described some signature elements of trauma-informed design:

Devise rooms to minimize emotional triggers, which residents can experience after brushing up against someone or feeling blindsided by a surprise. Adding art and a sense of nature helps build dignity while also diffusing tensions. Blackout blinds or curtains for sleeping areas also help residents heal.

Incorporate durable finishes that do not sacrifice elegance. At Denver's Laradon School for children





First Place Apartments in Phoenix offers 55 units for neurologically impaired residents and others. A culinary teaching kitchen allows residents to socialize, acquire skills, and boost their independence.



SCOTT SANDLER

FIRST PLACE



SCOTT SANDLER

space overlooking the mountains usually sits empty while residents congregate instead in open areas that are close to staff members.

## Financial Considerations

The finishes and features at the heart of trauma-informed design are generally considered affordable, but assembling the land, embedding ample windows, purchasing art, and carving out lush community spaces can render such projects too costly.

In Phoenix, a 55-unit apartment project for neurologically impaired residents and others is known for managing costs without sacrificing residents' experiences. The idea behind First Place Apartments formed more than two decades ago when the mother of an autistic son sought a comfortable place for him and others with similar challenges. Denise Resnik launched a nonprofit organization and turned to experts for help.

In 2004, ULI Arizona supported her mission by organizing a panel that explored housing opportunities for people on the autism spectrum. That effort led to the 2009 *Opening Doors* report by ULI Arizona, the Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center, and Arizona State University. Among other things, it pointed to a gap in residential support. Five years later, Resnik's nonprofit organization acquired a 1.5-acre (0.6 ha) site near transit and employment opportunities in Phoenix.

Even though the location seemed optimal, costs mounted in a way that could have put Resnik's long-held vision in jeopardy.

with intellectual and developmental disabilities, a blend of natural materials adds textures that would complement any classroom. But the variegated plywood panels on the bottom half of walls, articulated sections of red-brick walls, and polished concrete floors also can withstand years of hard use.

Empower residents by giving them choices, even if it is just the color of a chair or the freedom to set a dimmer light switch. Seeking input from prospective residents—and incorporating their suggestions—gives them a sense of ownership.

Plan public gathering spaces near staff areas to foster relationships over time. In contrast, traditional offices put up walls that serve as barriers between staff and residents. At the Delores Project shelter and Delores Apartments in Denver, Rossbert said that prime



“I honestly believe we’re at the beginning edge of design connecting to a full phenomenon.”—JILL PABLE, FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY



First Place Apartments was formed more than two decades ago when the mother of an autistic son sought a place where he would be comfortable. Thousands of Legos are available in the lounge, encouraging creativity, concentration, collaboration, and social interaction.

“We were getting bids back and we were way over budget and our board said we must have economic sustainability,” Resnik, founder of nonprofit entities including FirstPlaceAZ, told the ULI audience in Miami.

Her group got the big break it needed when it won neighborhood support for zoning changes to eliminate the project’s \$2 million underground parking. Officials realized that prospective residents would more likely take transit than drive, so regular parking ratios did not really apply.

On the capital side, First Place’s location near employment and public transportation helped the nonprofit organization secure a federal New Markets Tax Credit, which is aimed at jobs and economic development. Corporate and philanthropic donors contributed as well. Financing relied on rental rates that reflect a fully staffed senior community.

Completed in 2018 at a cost of \$15.4 million, First Place is a modern, four-story residential mid-rise with multistory windows set against a neutral palette and yellow accent walls. One-bedroom units run \$3,900 per month. Rent covers trained support staff, appliances, nontoxic finishes, activities, and amenities such as a fitness center. Rather than congregate

dining, First Place offers a culinary teaching kitchen where residents can acquire skills. Cable and utility bills are part of the package.

Technologically, sensors turn off stoves when no motion is detected nearby. And Amazon Alexa devices help ease residents’ feeling of isolation. Resnik said her son uses his to listen to the Beatles and Elton John, get the weather forecast so he can lay out his work clothes for the next day, and build a grocery list.

For now, First Place occupancy stands at about three-quarters. Resnik told conference attendees that families can take time to make the move-in decision. But the promise of a long-term solution appeals particularly to aging parents whose adult children have development and intellectual challenges. One tenant, she said, just leased an apartment following three years of conversations about moving there.

Looking ahead, Resnik said that her group is researching other sources of government assistance. She noted that demand for these types of accommodations will only grow, much as the senior-living industry has during the last half-century.



## Government Partnerships

At the last turn of the century, one in every 150 children in the United States was diagnosed with some form of autism. Now, that rate is about three times as high, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The phrase “on the spectrum” has become part of society’s lexicon and people are now more likely to have friends, relatives, coworkers, and neighbors dealing in some way with intellectual disorders. Similarly, the outfall from the foreclosure crisis a decade ago has destigmatized the plight of housing instability. Along with the greater public acceptance comes the opportunity for more public support.

One South Florida nonprofit organization succeeded in winning public backing so that it could build affordable apartments for residents with intellectual and developmental disorders. In September, Miami-based Casa Familia Inc. plans to break ground on its namesake residential project with 38 one-bedroom and 12 two-bedroom apartments laid out in two L-shaped buildings of three stories with a pool and one-story community center in the middle.

Federal tax credits totaling \$15 million and a \$4 million state grant will offset most of the costs, which are estimated at less than \$25 million with land. Rents are slated at far below going market rates. One-bedrooms are expected to rent at \$864 per month, not including utilities. Apartments with two bedrooms, which have shared common space, are expected to lease at \$667 per bedroom, including utilities.

Along with the University of Miami Center for Autism and Related Disabilities, both Atlantic Pacific Companies and United Community Options helped shape the project. The collective of partners seeks opportunities for creating calmness with sound-absorbing surfaces while veering away from products such as fluorescent lights, which constantly hum.

Longtime Casa Familia supporter Deborah Lawrence said that everyone at the table respected a key design element—space. Future residents of Casa Familia will benefit greatly from having a sense of personal space and room to decompress, she added.

“We fought for 783 square feet [73 sq m] in the one-bedrooms—twice the space you will find in a

regular one-bedroom,” said Lawrence, Casa Familia’s senior consultant for housing for people with intellectual and developmental disorders (IDD).

The tradeoff for minimal kitchens was additional room for everything from storage to gatherings. Geared to build a sense of community, plans call for a movie theater, a fitness center, a pool, a spa, walking paths, and rooms for arts and crafts and games.

## Everyday Applications

Sitting at his desk in a nonprofit housing group in Burlington, Vermont, facilities director Jonathan Farrell said he sees opportunities for trauma-informed design not just in plans for ambitious new developments, but also in daily decisions about furniture placement, window treatments, and houseplants.

In planning a new day station for the homeless, he found an online collection of evidence-based design resources. After studying *Design Resources for Homelessness*, a resource guide published by Pable, Farrell said he began to see applications for trauma-informed design throughout the many properties operated by his group, the Committee on Temporary Shelter.

“A lot of these buildings have been in service for 30-plus years. There’ve been remodels, add-ons, and paint jobs by the staff. When you step back, it’s a little ad hoc,” Farrell said.

With Farrell armed with the research, the staff became enlightened by the research concepts and their conversations about temporary, transitional, and permanent housing became much richer. “If I said, ‘We can’t have a dark-brown dining room,’ well, that doesn’t work,” Farrell said. “It can be interpreted as: ‘Well, Jonathan doesn’t like that color.’ Color is so subjective.”

Farrell’s group now draws on the resource guide and holds trauma-informed design as an agency-wide goal for all its properties. “We’re not going to renovate all at once,” he said. “But whether it’s a room flip, renovation, layout, aesthetics, sight lines, plants, or where a person sits—is it a subordinate power position at a desk?—we think about all those things now.” **UL**

MARY SHANKLIN is a writer based in Orlando.