CONCEPT STATEMENT

Connect is a basic needs center for homeless people in Anderson, SC. The center will provide amenities such as showers, bathrooms, laundry, childcare, and pet care. It is a safe, judgement-free space for those who would otherwise not have access to these basic needs. The overall goal for the design is to create an environment that is inviting, safe, and promotes socialization and a move towards independence.

Poverty
There are 43.1 million Americans living below the poverty level.

Children
1 in 5 children in the US live in poverty.

US Homeless Population
1 in 10 Americans experience some form of homelessness in the course of 1 year.

Every Night
549,000 Americans are homeless on any given night.

43.1 Million Americans
10% of Total Pop.
20% of Children

UNDERSTANDING HOMELESSNESS

The term ‘homeless’ means an individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. These residences could include a publicly or privately-operated shelter, a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, camping ground, etc. (Hombis, Modern Homelessness).

Although there are many misconceptions about homeless people “choosing” this lifestyle or lacking responsibility, the causes of homelessness are much more complex (Shen, “Architecture and Homelessness”).

The South Carolina Homeless Report from 2019 states that one major reason people fall into homelessness is due to mental illness, domestic violence, or some other traumatic event. The report also stated that 52% of homeless people in SC are adult males.

Most homeless families are headed by a single woman in her late twenties with an average of two children under the age of six. Ethnic minority groups are under the most risk. Many homeless families lack education and employment, and sometimes live doubled up with others and move frequently (Hombis).
GAINING INSIGHT

Gaining initial insight for this project included primary and secondary research about the local homeless population in Anderson, SC. Primary research for this project started with a visit to The LOT project, a local non-profit dedicated to serving the homeless population in Anderson, SC by providing clothes and a hot meal during the week. To gain additional information about the crisis of homelessness in Anderson, we interviewed Seth Riddley, assistant to the county administrator. He provided insight about the causes of homelessness in this community, their needs, and how this facility could give assistance to those who need it most.

Secondary research included learning about Clean Start, another non-profit organization in Anderson which is an existing basic needs center that has been successful in providing assistance to the local community. They provide many of the same services as the Connect center, including laundry services and the provision of clothing and basic hygiene supplies. They encourage their clients to better and empower themselves by allowing them access to these basic needs and services. Due to their volunteers’ generosity and efforts, visitors have found jobs, reconnected with families, and secured housing through external programs beyond Clean Start.

The sketch above shows the progression of ideas regarding the mural in the laundry room from beginning to end. Themes such as encouragement, empowerment, and self-nurturing played heavily into the design, imagery, and phrases featured in the final product.

FUNCTIONAL DESCRIPTIONS:

1. Reception
   - This area is the first thing guests see as they enter the Connect center. It has been designed to be welcoming and a cleaning place for visitors to check in and become oriented with the services offered before the complete service.

2. Main Waiting Area
   - Guests can sit here if there is a wait time for services. If they wish to watch the news, or simply want to escape the hustle of the streets.

3. Restrooms
   - The area has been designed as a multi-purpose outdoor space, including a bench, a small playground, a picnic table, and a green space for dogs or other animals. The entire space is covered by a shade, providing protection from the sun during the warmer months of the year.

4. Building Exterior - Main Waiting Area, Shower Support, Second Waiting Area
   - The entrance to the room faces the highway looking towards the east side of the building. Entering the reception and secondary waiting areas are shown, as well as the shower support area, which centers on the large doors for the shower to enter.

5. Second Waiting Area
   - This space allows people to socialize with others through activities as they wait for their laundry and also has visual access to the playground.

6. Shower Room/ Changing
   - Each shower area has a sink, toilet, and enclosed shower. Linoleum has been suspended above the shower area to create a space to provide better on-quality and absorb excess moisture.

7. Laundry Area
   - Guests can come to the laundry area to wash clothes, with detergent provided. A local artist was commissioned to make a mural for the laundry wall, with a central theme of empowerment and positivity.