

Renewable Energy-Supported Housing and Opportunities For Immigrants

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The Challenge

What is the Issue

Addressing housing stress, particularly as it relates to the current immigrant housing crisis in Chicago.

Who is affected

Both first generation and asylum-seeking immigrants currently under housing stress.

Where is it

The locations affected by the crisis are throughout the country. Our proposal is implementation of an experimental housing project in Chicago-area abandoned buildings.

Why Chicago?

Although our project is something that could be implemented within many settings, we decided to focus on one particular location when developing our idea. By choosing a specific place we can get a more accurate idea of how this project would function in a real setting. We chose Chicago as the location for this project because of its current immigrant housing issue, large access to resources and existing programs, and its amount of abandoned buildings. Moreover, larger cities frequently struggle with significant housing challenges. By developing solutions within this context, our project becomes scalable and could potentially be replicated in other regions facing similar issues.

What are the facts?

- As of Nov. 15th 2023, there are more than 20,000 asylum seekers in Chicago with 12,281 in 25 shelters across the city, and more than 2,000 still awaiting placement.
- 60 day stay limit is being implemented for migrants in city shelters.
- In the City of Chicago from 2011 to 2023, there have been 4,984 entries for abandoned building violations.
- Illinois recently committed \$160 million to addressing the housing crisis in addition to the hundreds of millions already spent or committed.

Solutions

- Provide large-scale buildings that can act as transitional housing for immigrant populations
- The utilization of the numerous abandoned spaces will reclaim and improve city infrastructure
- Create easily accessible job training and experience that's incorporated into the housing locations
- Promote and teach sustainability by utilizing sustainable and green infrastructure in the buildings
- A positive, inclusive, and supportive community is established for all residents
- Utilizing clean energy will promote sustainability within the community and larger city area

Implementation

- Repurpose abandoned buildings in Chicago into housing
 - Some types of abandoned buildings that could be used are schools and hotels/motels
 - Each building holds many housing units
 - Units will differ in sizing to properly accommodate families and larger groups living together
 - To save space and resources, communal kitchen areas will be put periodically throughout the building
- Renewable energy sources and waste reduction methods will be built into the housing
 - Solar panels and wind energy as main sources of renewable energy
 - Composting and food waste collection will be placed in kitchen/eating areas
 - Reusable/biodegradable household products and toiletries will be provided to residents
- Job experience and training included in the sustainable infrastructure
 - Residents will have the opportunity to gain skills relating to maintaining the sustainable infrastructure which can be used as experience for future jobs
- Spaces in the buildings will be dedicated to culture and recreation
 - Flexible areas reserved for personal and recreational uses
 - Cultural expression will be encouraged and highlighted
 - Translations and translators will be provided to allow for open communication
- Funding for this project will be sourced from several places
 - Carbon credits from Chicago-based institutions
 - Chicago Climate Infrastructure Grant under "Green Infrastructure"
 - Local non-profit organizations with significant donor bases
- Spread awareness about the project to gain support and assistance within production
 - Communications with the mayor of the City of Chicago and its urban development sector
 - Contact professionals within urban development and renewable technologies
 - Get volunteers involved in production and maintaining the buildings



Achieving our SDGs

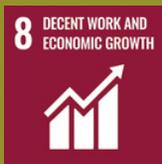
The main Sustainable Development Goal our project focuses on is Goal #11, “Sustainable Cities and Communities”. We then used ideas from Goals #7, #8, and #9 to strengthen our concept.

SDG 11: Creating a community hub that encourages all forms of sustainability.

SDG 7: Utilizing numerous forms of renewable energy to strive towards net zero emissions.

SDG 8: Provided job training and active experience will boost residents' resumes and provide relevant experience.

SDG 9: Reclaiming abandoned spaces for new and innovative functions improves existing infrastructure.



THE GLOBAL GOALS

Future Directions

We will be able to monitor the project’s progression by seeing decrease in the number of unhoused immigrants in Chicago. Following the implementation of the project in Chicago, here are some other ways the project could be further developed in the future.

- Choosing a mid-sized city and seeing how this type of project could be implemented in other locations
- Looking into other renewable energy sources
 - See if locations outside of a big city could better accommodate these alternatives
- Have surplus of energy on-site that could be relocated to other places
- Eventually have entirely clean energy and reach net zero carbon emissions
- Provide transportation options through the housing
- Offer mental health support
- Have small businesses built into the housing sites and see how mixed-use development can work in this environment
- Implement urban agriculture to provide fresh produce to residents and the surrounding community

References

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