FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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Studio 804 selects Lawrence Community Shelter as the project for the Class of 2021—offering to build Monarch Village, an addition of 12 tiny homes

The Lawrence Community Shelter (LCS) is excited to announce a partnership proposal from Studio 804, the renowned architecture program led by Dan Rockhill, J.L. Distinguished Professor of Architecture at the University of Kansas, to build Monarch Village, an innovative new shelter addition of 12 “tiny homes” which will provide safe haven to individuals and families as they pass through LCS on their way to permanent housing.

The 12 dwellings will be installed along the east and south sides of the shelter’s community garden. A new monarch butterfly trail with walkways leads to the 900-square-foot commons area with picnic tables directly north of the garden. The walkways will then continue up to a south side entry into the current shelter structure.

Each 160-square-foot tiny home at Monarch Village will feature a private shower, toilet and a kitchenette. The dwellings will have two sleeping quarters, offering parents and children their own private spaces.

Monarch Village will allow the shelter to maintain its current capacity, while reducing the number of guests sleeping in the dorms, facilitating better social distancing, thus creating a safer environment in the COVID-19 era.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, LCS has successfully placed 62 of its guests into permanent housing, enabling the shelter to reduce the dorm capacities to ensure proper social distancing. But the pandemic has also made it apparent that LCS cannot safely operate without enclosed quarantine-ready spaces. The other alternatives (i.e. hotel accommodations) are prohibitively expensive, in terms of both room cost and off-property staff time.

In the short term, Monarch Village will make it possible for the shelter to quarantine guests on site. In the long term, this innovative addition will help LCS provide dignified, healing-focused sheltering options that make it possible to meet a wider variety of guests’ needs safely in a rapidly changing world.

“This is a magical gift that Dan is offering us,” said Renee Kuhl, Executive Director of LCS. “Gifts like these don’t fall into the laps of homeless shelters. Without Studio 804’s generous
offer of design services, labor and construction costs, we couldn’t possibly afford a much-needed addition like this.”

Kuhl noted that Monarch Village goes above the standards of tiny-home additions that other shelters have utilized across the nation.

“Most tiny home additions to homeless shelters fall more into the ‘glamping’ category—they offer sleeping quarters, but that’s it,” she said. “These homes not only feature all amenities, but will also be heated and cooled.”

The 12 private domiciles will be placed in pairs with shared covered patios between them. The six duplexes can house up to 48 guests, allowing a flexible combination of adults, children and additional guardians, while offering common spaces for families to share childcare and connect with others. Individuals and families experiencing homelessness will be able to reside temporarily in the units while they establish a plan for permanent housing.

LCS is committed to providing trauma-informed services to its guests and to helping them transition into permanent housing, while staying focused on the goal of ending homelessness altogether.

“This new addition is a safe and healthy solution for our guests during the pandemic; and in the future will help them confidently embark on a pathway to permanent housing quicker,” Kuhl said.

The Monarch Village proposal is slated for the review and approval by the City of Lawrence Planning Commission on July 20, with approval from the City of Lawrence expected to follow in August. The Studio 804 Class of 2021 students will then begin construction of the project in September.

“This is truly a special thing that Studio 804 is doing and we cannot wait to make it a reality for our shelter,” Kuhl said.