Bergen County CoC Homeless Assessment Report

2013

I. Introduction

In 2012, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development released the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Interim rules. These interim regulations require a high level of planning and coordination among all Continuums of Care (CoCs) throughout the Country. As with any planning process, data analysis of the needs and outcomes of the current system is essential to facilitate meaningful planning.

In order to assist the Continuums of Care throughout New Jersey with this data analysis, this report uses information from the New Jersey Homeless Information System (HMIS) to provide a snapshot of the characteristics of homeless households in the Bergen County CoC. This report can serve as the foundation of a more in depth review of the population and its needs. Communities in New Jersey are well positioned to move towards data driven planning with the wealth of information available through HMIS.

II. Data Source

This Homeless Assessment Report for Bergen County CoC analyzed data from the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) administered by the Bergen County Department of Human Services, the HMIS Lead Agency. Bergen County, utilizes software developed by Foothold Technology as the primary HMIS system for the County, which is also the system used by the majority of the rest of the State. The projects included in this report were all Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing and Safe Haven projects (if available in the community) that were classified as "Homeless Only".

The Homeless Assessment Report is based on information about unduplicated homeless families and individuals who used available emergency shelter, transitional housing and safe haven projects during the yearlong reporting period January 1, 2013 – December 31, 2013, as reported in HMIS.

For purposes of this report, families included any persons that presented together at the HMIS participating project and would choose to be permanently housed together if that was an option. This can include, households with adults and children under the age of 18, households made of all adults, or unaccompanied youth (under age 18) that present together.
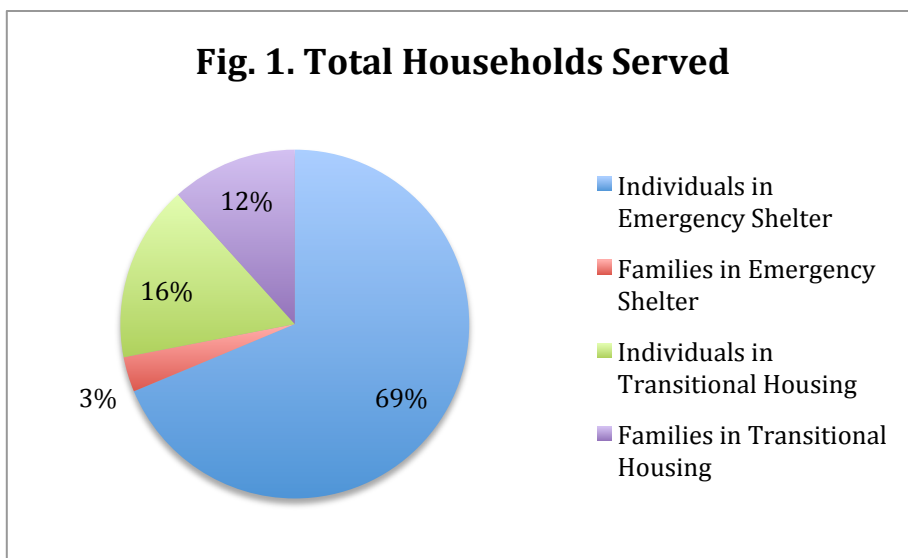
III. Findings for Total Population Served

Key Findings:

- A total of 770 households were served in HMIS participating emergency shelters and transitional housing projects during the January 1, 2013 – December 31, 2013 period
- There were 120 households identified as chronically homeless during this reporting period
- 67% of all adults served either as individuals or as part of a family identified having a disabling condition
- 41% of the total population served was under age 30
- 52% of households moved on to permanent destinations after discharge
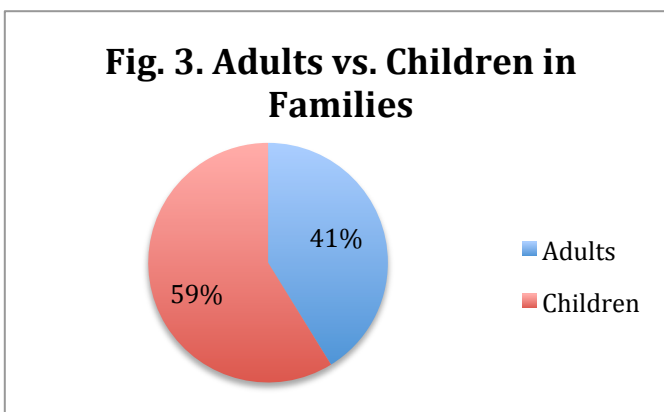
Total Homeless Population. A total of 770 households composed of 996 persons were housed in Bergen County CoC HMIS participating emergency shelters or transitional housing projects during the January 1, 2013 – December 31, 2013 reporting period. Out of the households served in 2013, the majority, 85% (655) were ind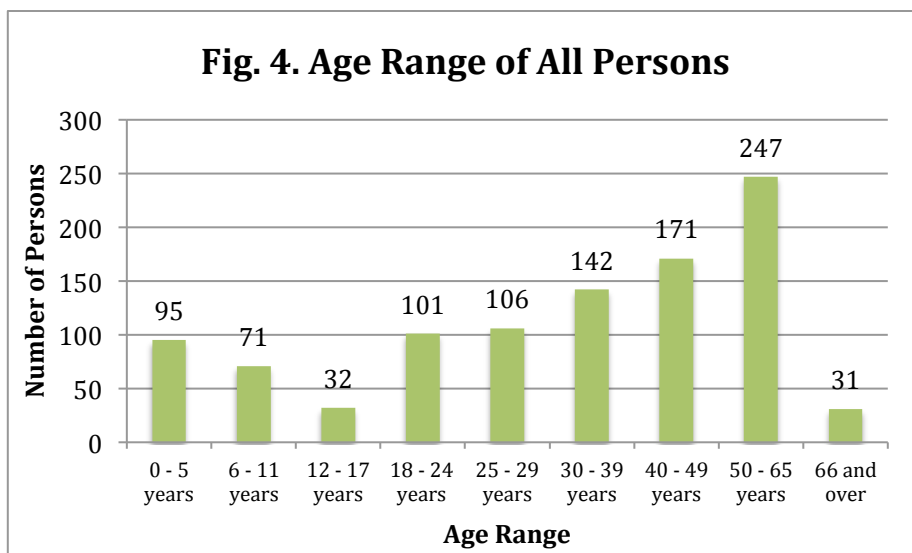ividuals, while the remaining 15% (115 households) were families. As shown in Figure 1, the most served population was individuals in emergency shelter, which made up 69% of the total population served. The 996 persons served throughout Bergen County HMIS projects made up 4% of New Jersey's total homeless population served in HMIS projects in 2013.

Fig. 1. Total Households Served

- Individuals in Emergency Shelter
- Families in Emergency Shelter
- Individuals in Transitional Housing
- Families in Transitional Housing

Figure 2. Total Persons Served		
	Bergen County	**New Jersey**
Total Persons Served	996	23,949
Emergency Shelter	618	19,208
Individuals	529	12,639
Families	89	6,569
Transitional Housing	378	4,455
Individuals	126	2,176
Families	252	2,279

Family Composition. Of the 115 family households served throughout Bergen County in 2013, 112 (97%) were households with adults and children under 18 while the remaining 3 (3%) were adult only households. As shown in Figure 3, children represented 59% of the persons included in adult and children families. The average size of a homeless family in 2013 was 3 and the average age of a child served between the two project types was 7 years old.

Fig. 3. Adults vs. Children in Families

- Adults
- Children

Demographics. Of the total homeless population that was served in the Bergen CoC during 2013, **t**he largest percent, 25%, of persons were between the ages of 50 and 65. As Figure 4 shows, the next highest age range served was persons between 18 and 29 (21%), with about 50% of that number being youth between the ages of 18 and 24.
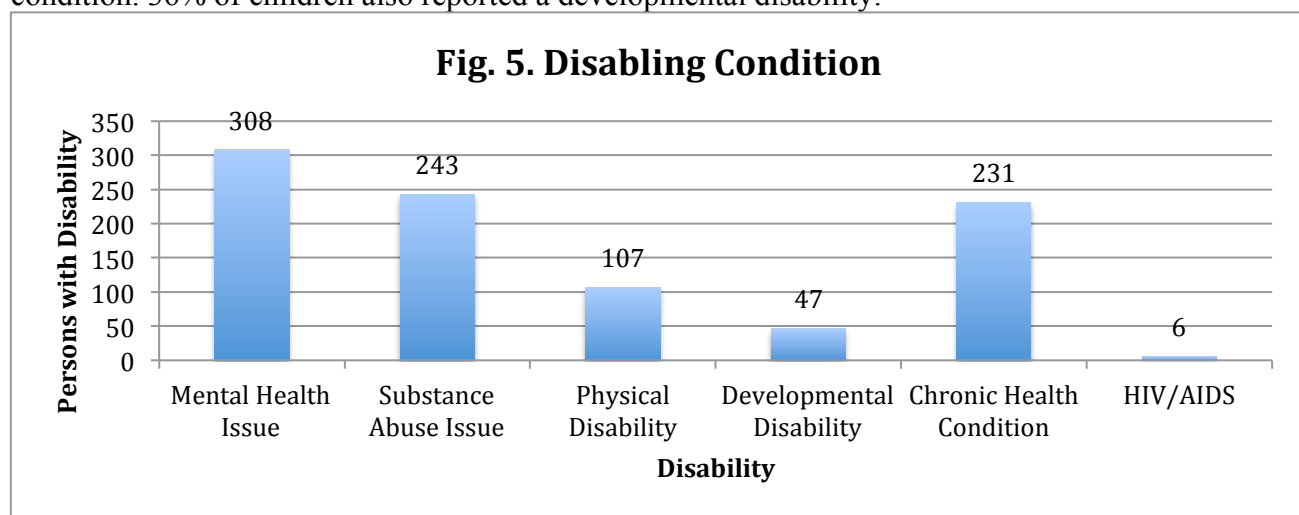
Fig. 4. Age Range of All Persons

Similar to the 2012 numbers, just over half (58%) of the homeless persons served in Bergen CoC HMIS participating projects were male, with women representing 42% of the population.

In addition, 56% of the homeless persons served during 2013 identified their race as White, making that the largest racial subgroup. The next largest was Black or African American (38%), followed by Multi-Racial with 2%. With regards to ethnicity, only 18% identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino.
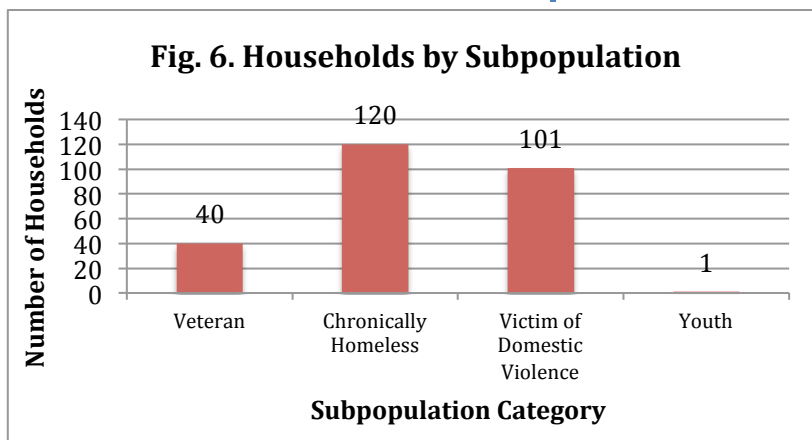
Disabling Conditions. Among all persons served throughout Bergen County's HMIS emergency shelter and transitional housing projects, 57% identified having a disabling condition, this number includes 67% of adults and 18% of children.

Among disabled adults, 56% reported mental health issues making this the most prevalent disability; representing 38% of the total adult homeless population. 46% of disabled adults also reported a substance abuse issue. Among disabled children, 50% reported a chronic health condition. 36% of children also reported a developmental disability.

Fig. 5. Disabling Condition
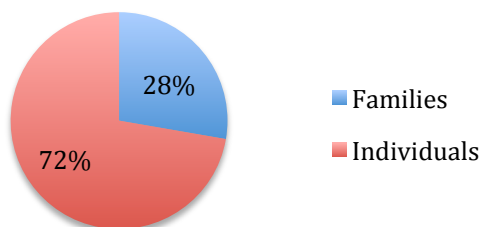
Subpopulation Characteristics.
In its plan, *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) has prioritized ending youth, veteran and chronic homelessness across the Country. In 2013, Bergen CoC served a total of 120 households that were identified as chronically homeless in emergency shelter or

Fig. 6. Households by Subpopulation

transitional housing projects. 89% of the chronic households served were individuals in emergency shelters, the remaining 11% were served in transitional housing projects (only one was a family).

Youth only households, households without someone over age 18, represented less than 1% of the total households served throughout Bergen HMIS projects, with only 1 youth only household being served. This household was an individual youth that was served in an emergency shelter project.

As far as veterans served, Bergen CoC served a total of 40 veterans throughout 2013. 98% of veterans served were individuals and only 8% were female. 73% of the veterans served were served in emergency shelter projects. 78% of veterans reported having some kind of disability, with the most common disability reported being mental health issue (52%).

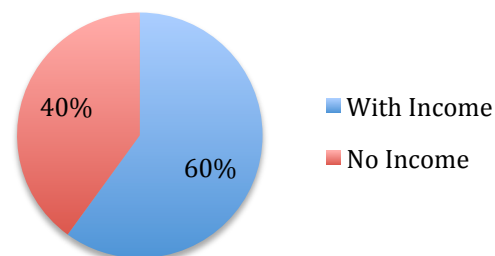**Fig. 7. Household Type Among Victims of Domestic Violence**

In addition to the chronic, youth and veteran populations, there were 101 homeless households that reported having a victim of domestic violence. 72% of these households were individuals, while the remaining 28 were families. 50% reported that the last episode of domestic violence occurred over a year ago, while 27% reported it happening within the past 3 months. The majority of the domestic violence victims (70%) were served in emergency shelters. As a note, while there are victims of domestic violence being served in HMIS participating agencies, due to federal regulations, Domestic Violence specific projects are not able to enter data into HMIS, so the number of victims served in those projects are not included in this report.
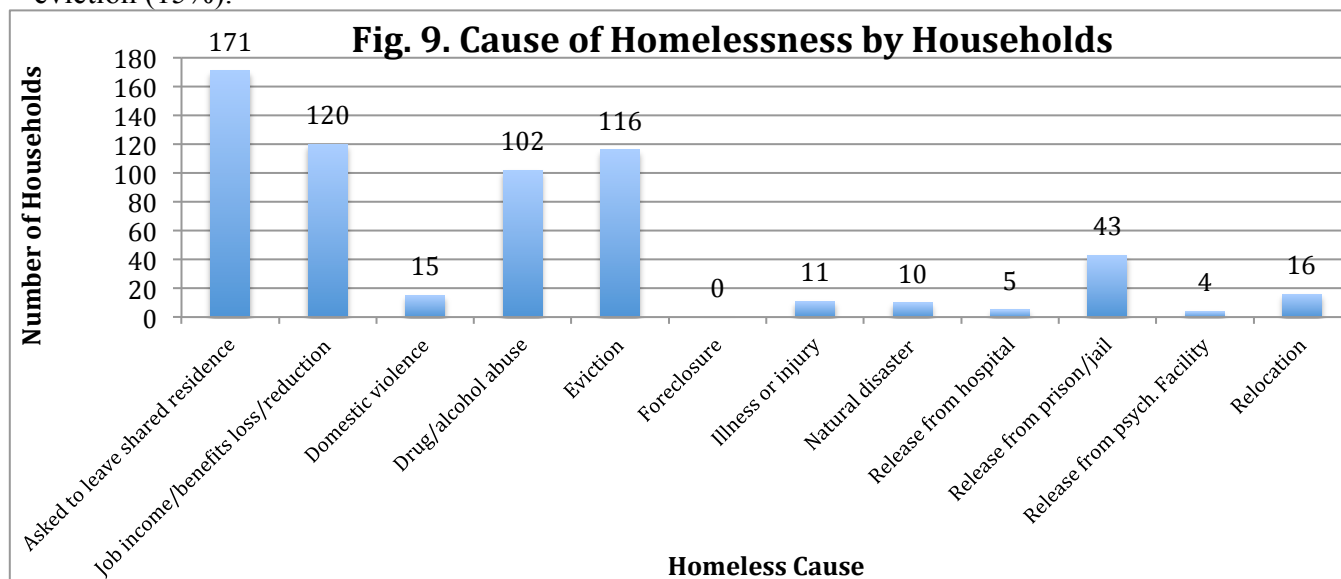
Income and Benefits. Among all homeless households served in emergency shelter or transitional housing projects during 2013, 40% had no source of income, while 24% reported receiving some form of earned income. The most common sources of cash income among households, other than earned income, was SSI (14%) and TANF (11%). The average monthly income for households in emergency shelter was $389, while it was $813 for households served in transitional housing projects.

Fig. 8. Percentage of Households with Income

While 40% of households had no source of income, 56% of households were not receiving some kind of non-cash benefit. Food Stamps was the top reported non-cash benefit, which was reported by 31% of the households. Another 22% of households were connected to Medicaid benefits.
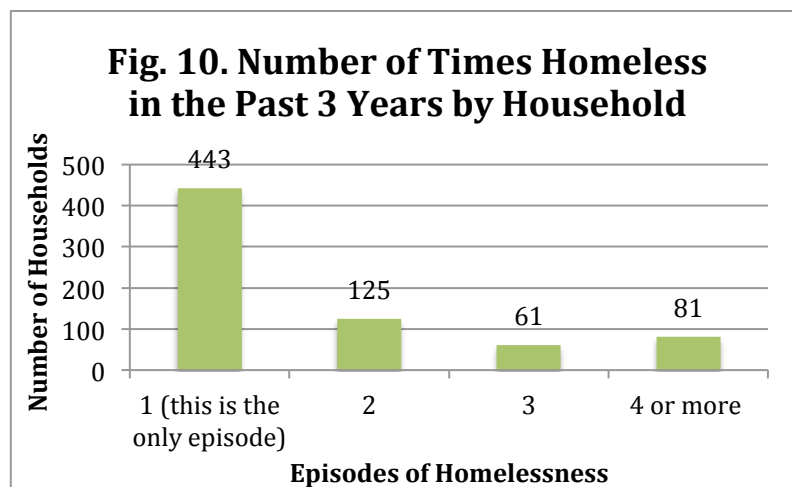
Cause of Homelessness and Residence Prior to Project Entry. When asked what the primary factor was that contributed to, or caused, their homelessness, more households attributed their homelessness to being asked to leave a shared residence (22%) than any other cause. As Figure 9 shows, the next most common factors were job income or benefits loss or reduction (16%) and eviction (15%).

Fig. 9. Cause of Homelessness by Households

These causes of homelessness coincide with the common response for residence prior to project entry with 31% of households staying or living with family or friends prior to project entry. The next most common response was emergency shelter (16%) followed by place not meant for habitation (15%).
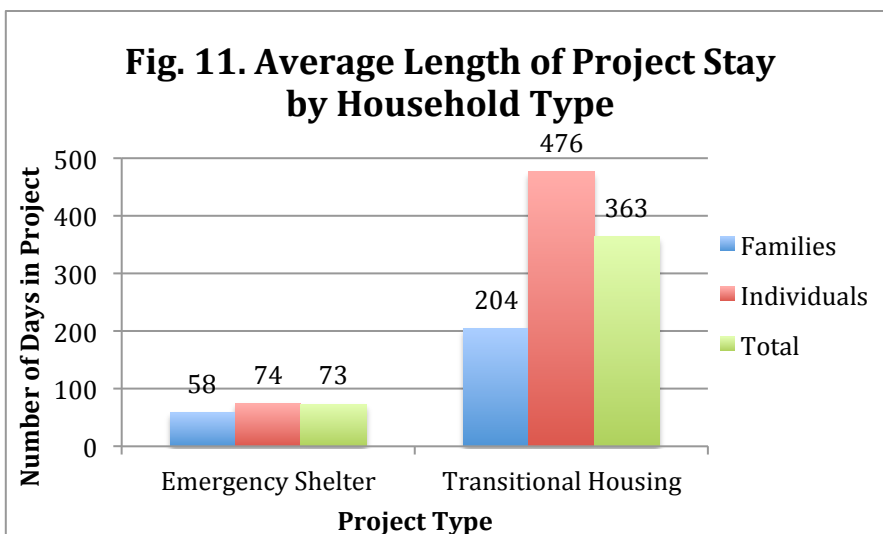
Length of Stay at Prior Residence and Episodes of Homelessness. The majority of households (52%) served during 2013 had resided in their last residence for one year or longer before entering the emergency shelter or transitional housing project. Another 17% were in their prior residence for more than 3 months but less than one year, while only 6% were there one week or less. Similarly, only 11% of households experienced 4 or more episodes of homelessness in the last 3 years, while the majority of households (58%) were experiencing their first episode of homelessness, as seen in Figure 10.

Fig. 10. Number of Times Homeless in the Past 3 Years by Household
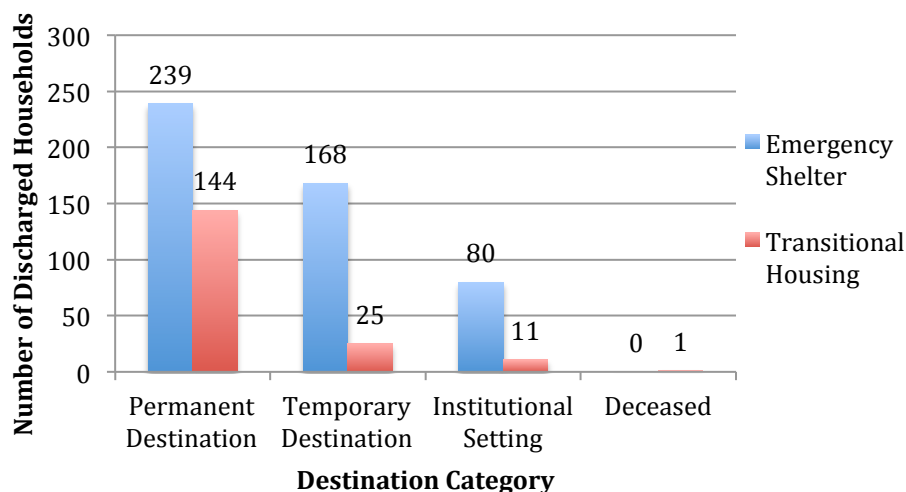
Average Length of Project Stay. When looking at total length of project stay for families and individuals, individuals seemed to have longer stays in both emergency shelter and transitional housing projects when compared to families. During their project stay it was found that individuals stayed on average 16 days longer than individuals in emergency shelter, and 272 or about 9 months longer in transitional housing projects.

Fig. 11. Average Length of Project Stay by Household Type

Reason and Destination at Discharge. A total of 741 households were discharged from emergency shelter and transitional housing projects during the 2013 reporting period. 54% of these households were discharged from projects after completing the program while 11% were discharged because there needs could not be met by the project.

Fig. 12. Destination Category by Households

52% of households discharged in 2013 moved on to permanent destinations upon discharge from the project. A permanent destination includes a unit owned or rented by a client, permanent housing project, or living with a family member or friend permanently. The most common permanent destination was rental by client with 38% of total households moving into a rental upon discharge. This rental could be with or without a subsidy. 26% of households moved on to a temporary destination at discharge, which could include an emergency shelter, hotel or motel, place not meant for habitation, staying with a family member or friend temporarily, safe haven, or transitional housing for homeless persons. The most common form of temporary housing as a destination was emergency shelter, which involved 14% of the total households. An institutional destination, which was the destination of 12% of households, includes hospitals (psychiatric or non-psychiatric), a halfway house, jail or prison, foster care, long-term care facility or a substance abuse treatment facility. Medical hospitals was the most common institutional destination recorded with 9% of total households leaving housing projects for medical hospitals.

Appendix A: HMIS Projects Included in Report

I. Emergency Shelter Projects

Agency	Project Name
Bergen County Board of Social Services	BCBSS Motel Placement
Bergen County Housing Health and Human Services Center	CCCDC Center Single Shelter
Family Promise of Bergen County	FPBC Family Shelter Program

II. Transitional Housing Projects

Agency	Project Name
Bergen County Department of Human Services	BCFG Shelter Plus Care
	Community Hope – AJTHV
	Visions
Comprehensive Behavioral Health Care	CBHC 19 Spruce
	CBHC 292 Newark
Family Promise of Bergen County	FPBC TH Family Apartments
Greater Bergen Community Action	GBCA Family Transitional Housing
	GBCA Ladder
	GBCA Ladder II
	GBCA Phases
	GBCA Shepherd House
Vantage	Vantage – Hille Place