

## 2023 AIA | DC Chapter Design Awards

**Project Title:** Community of Hope Family Health & Birth Center

**Location:** 2120 Bladensburg Rd NE, Washington, District of Columbia 20018

**Date of Completion:** December 31, 2021

### PROJECT STATEMENT

Community of Hope's mission to improve health outcomes and support the needs of families in DC's underserved communities led them to develop a new, expanded home for their Family Health and Birth Center, which includes the only freestanding birth center in the District. Community of Hope engaged the design team to repurpose a 1960's office building and, through sustainable design practices, create a community health center to embrace, support, and celebrate the local community.

### DESIGN NARRATIVE

*How does this project address Design for Integration, Wellbeing, and Discovery?*

With an emphasis on expecting mothers and their babies, this Center provides a comprehensive set of medical and social services designed to help families thrive, including a primary care clinic, behavioral health, WIC, pharmacy and lab access, and two birth suites. The multipurpose space hosts group prenatal and well-child visits in a model that brings women due at the same time together, creating a community structure that supports women in the transition to motherhood and the stresses that come with it.

The design was driven by discovery workshops with local families of color who experienced both hospital and birth center deliveries. This process set the experiential and aesthetic direction, creating soft, curvaceous, and welcoming spaces. The Center displays work by local artists of color throughout the Center and a rotating gallery of expecting mothers' belly casts with the goal of embracing and celebrating the beauty of the pregnant body.

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

*How does this project address Design for Equitable Communities and Economy*

Generating awareness is crucial for Community of Hope. For people without sufficient healthcare coverage, a freestanding birth center serves as an alternative to hospitals and their exorbitant costs. It also provides women with more control over their birth experiences. As the organization seeks to rectify the chronically poor birth outcomes of Black women in the immediate community and throughout the United States, drawing attention to safe alternatives is a top priority.

Our nation's capital has been identified as the "most dangerous place to give birth in the U.S. for Black women," with among the worst maternal and infant mortality rates. Additionally, following the closure of three hospitals, portions of DC are considered a Maternity Desert. This birth center offers a safe and affordable alternative to hospital births, and it directly addresses birth inequities by placing control in the hands of female midwives who hold positions of trust in the community.

### SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE

*How does this project address Design for Ecosystems, Water, Energy, Resources, and Change?*

The project's main approach to sustainability was the decision to repurpose and expand on an aging 1960's office building instead of building new. The project includes green rooves to address water runoff and material selections were made with occupant health in mind. The project was designed to meet LEED silver.

*Would you like this project to be considered for a Jury Citation in any of the following categories?*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Integration                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Energy                |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Equitable Communities | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Well-being |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ecosystems                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Resources             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Change                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economy                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Discovery             |

**Bridging the birth equity gap:  
An alternative maternity care settings  
designed with and for DC's women of Color**

Community of Hope  
Family Health & Birth Center  
Washington, D.C.  
24,500 SF  
Built

Our nation's capital has been identified as the "**most dangerous place to give birth in the U.S. for Black women,**" with among the worst maternal and infant mortality rates.

And, following the closure of three hospitals, the East side of DC can be described as a **Maternity Desert.**

This freestanding birth center offers a **safe and affordable alternative** to hospital births, and is designed to embrace, support, and celebrate the local Washington, D.C. community.

It directly **addresses birth inequities** by placing control in the hands of female midwives who hold positions of trust in the community.



# Breathing new life into the community

Previously the Washington, D.C. Fire Fighting Association building, the team utilized an adaptive reuse approach to create a new location for **DC's only freestanding birth center**.



Before



After

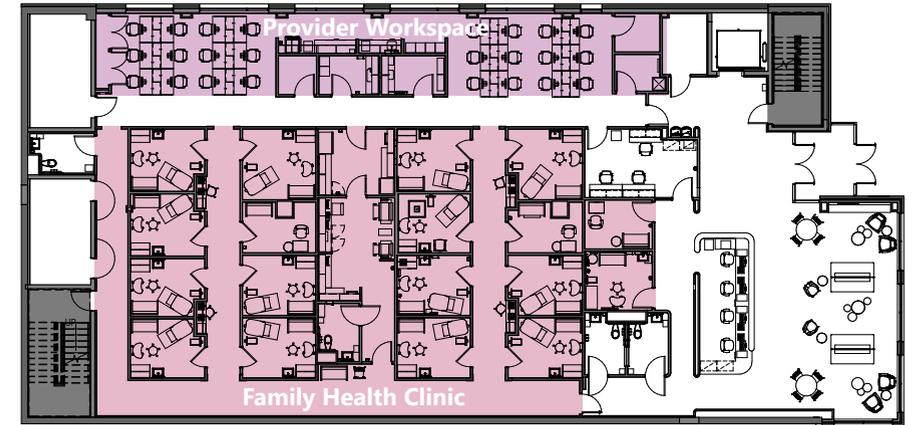


# Captivating Curves

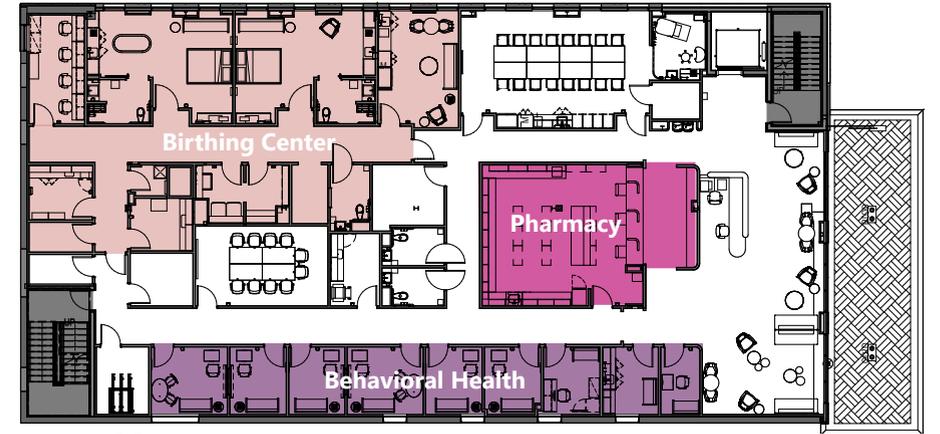


Community Engagement events informed a design language celebrating femininity and family through the concept dubbed ***captivating curves***.

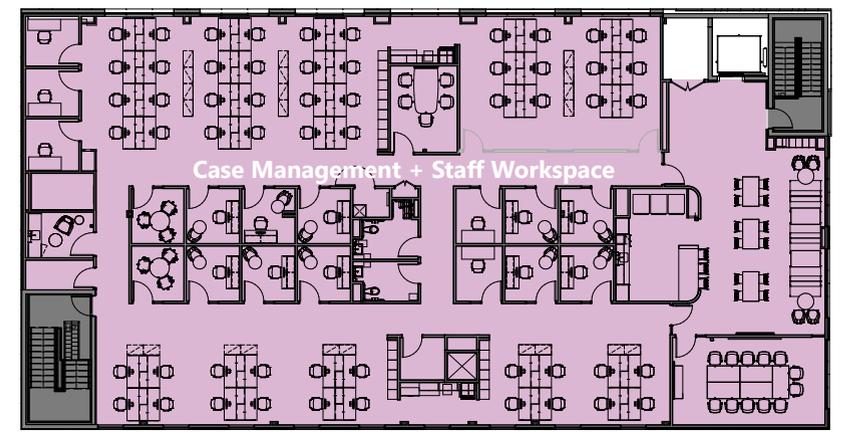




**Level 01** - Family Health Clinic, Lab, Provider Workspace



**Level 02** - Birthing Center, Pharmacy, Behavioral Health



**Level 03** - Case Management + Staff Workspace

Community  
OF HOPE 

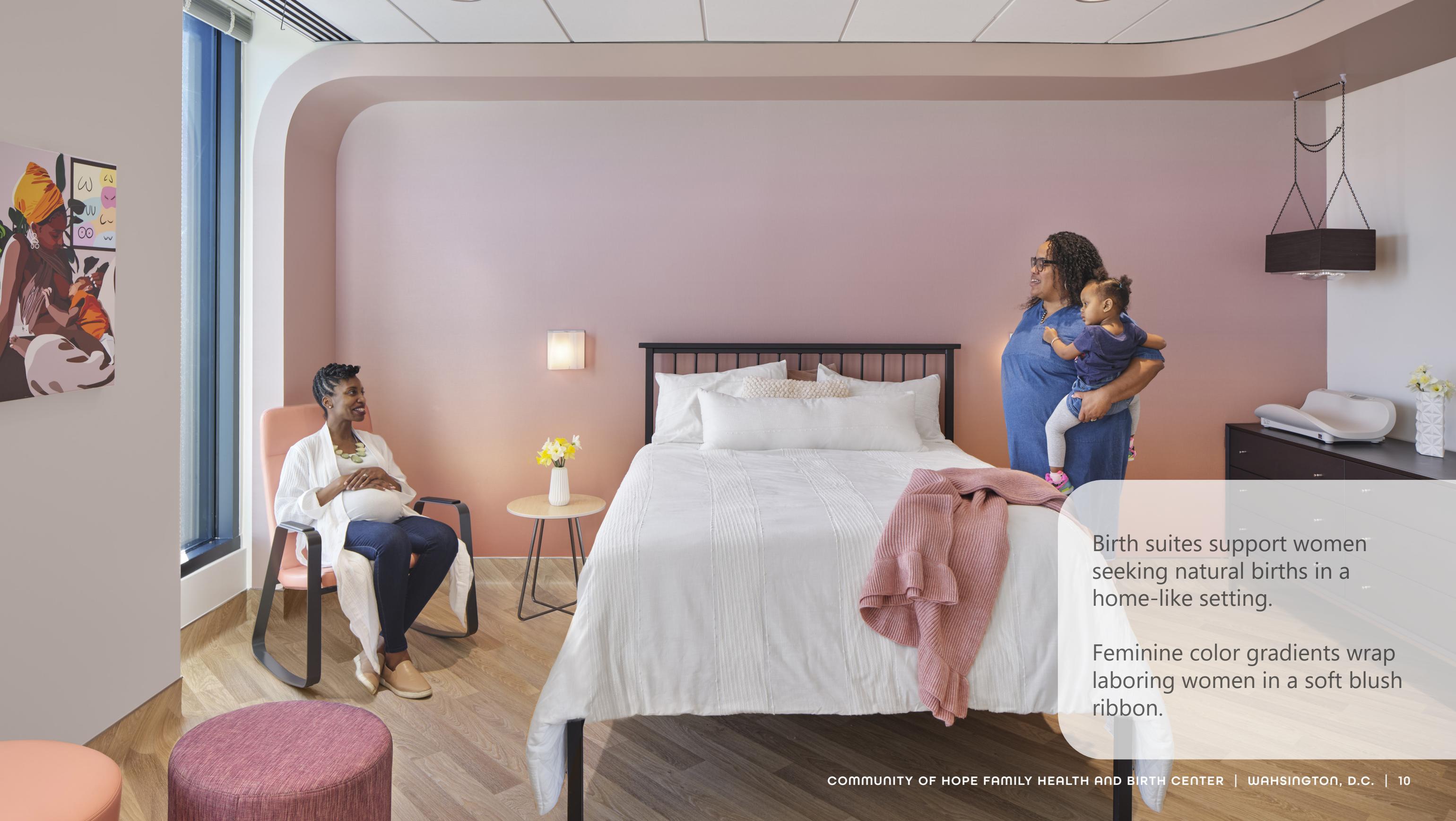
Welcome   
Community  
OF HOPE



A green roof provides a natural touch visible from the interior but also illustrates the project's dedication to sustainable design.

The project was awarded the USGBC Award for Excellence in Advancing Health and Wellness.



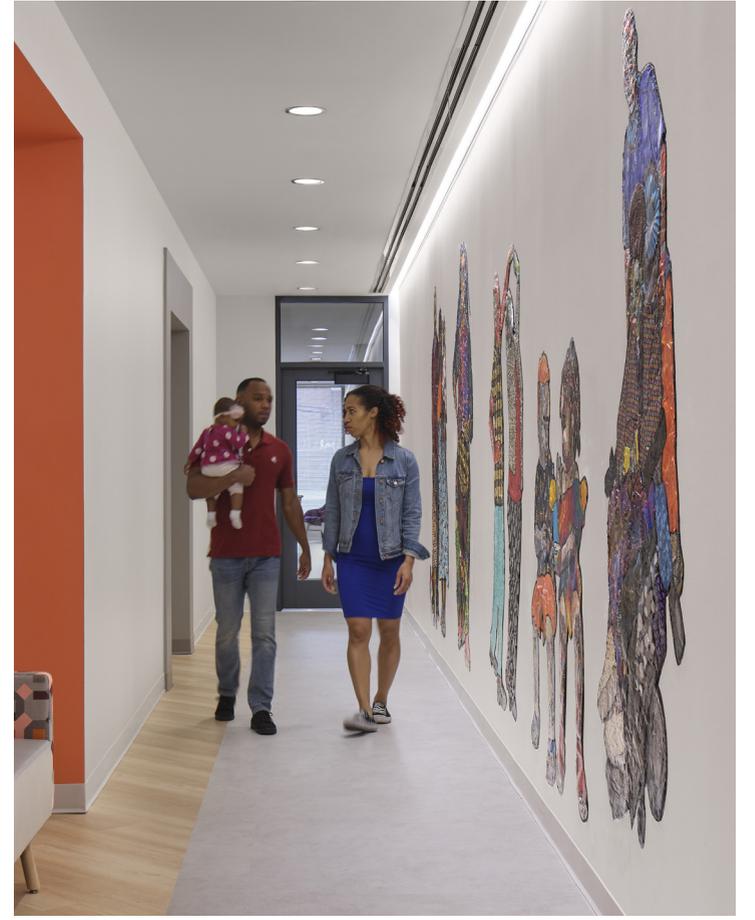


Birth suites support women seeking natural births in a home-like setting.

Feminine color gradients wrap laboring women in a soft blush ribbon.

An **empowering experience** for women who want to reclaim control over their birth experience and regain the confidence in their bodies.





Work by local artist's of color are featured throughout the Center.

This mural by Zsudayka Nzinga Terrell is a mixed media collage with fabric. It celebrates joy, hope, and love in everyday interactions shared by us all.