Table of Contents

LETTER
A Hearty Economy and Healthy Ecology Can Co-exist 82 Jane Nicbols

PERSPECTIVE
What's Wrong with Pretty? 54 Caroline Hill, M.S. Carl Matthews, M.S.

ARTICLES
Interior Design in K-12 Curricula: Asking the Experts 6 Stephanie A. Clemons, Ph.D.

Automated Creativity: Digital Morphology and The Design Process 32 Kathleen Gibson, M.A.

A Case for Typology of Design: The Interior Archetype Project 39 Jan Jennings, M.S.

Motive, Mind, and Media: Digital Sketching in the Creative Culture of Design 60 Jason Meneely, M.S. Sheila Danko, M.I.D.

AWARDS
91
Persons who are homeless are often victims of life crises that can result in emotional disorientation. It follows that homeless shelters should possess an architectural design that fosters a counterbalancing sense of healing and refuge from this distress of life on the streets. Perhaps among the most impactful aspects of environments for the homeless are psychological ramifications that encompass issues of personal space, territoriality and the spatial nature of human social interaction.

Unfortunately, restricted building funds coupled with shelter organizations’ minimal staffing and time often make creating a homeless shelter design that is fully functional, safe, and restorative difficult to achieve. Unintentionally, this can create environments that do not fully address social damage inflicted by street life or successfully coax homeless persons to commit to programs that can promote healing.

This creative submission proposes that assistance in planning recuperative shelter environments may be found in Abraham Maslow’s self-actualization theory, a psychological construct often referenced by social scientists engaged in studies of the homeless. This humanistic personality theory may facilitate a flexible, user-centered approach to design. Maslow’s self-actualization theory moves beyond his well-known ‘hierarchy of needs’ and provides pragmatic, detailed descriptions of optimal human psychological adjustment. These characteristics are focused and yet general in nature. A review of these characteristics brings to mind qualities many would use to describe a good friend. For example, an self-actualized person

- is realistically oriented;
- is accepting of him/herself and others;
- is focused on problems outside him/herself;
- believes in the basic good of life and approaches people without stereotype;
- is philosophical and possesses a non-hostile sense of humor; and,
- can discriminate between good and evil and maintains a personal moral code (Maslow, 1968).

Many of Maslow’s concepts might be interpreted and supported through architectural form, and may be particularly applicable to facilities that serve persons in crisis. When coupled with relevant architectural concepts from Alexander's pattern theory (Alexander, et. al, 1977) and CPTED (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design) (Poyner, 1983), a theory-to-practice grid emerges that may facilitate a practical, empathetic approach to homeless shelter design.

Further, because Maslow theorizes that few people ever attain full self-actualization, the grid may suit the needs of both the shelter staff members and vulnerable homeless clients. The theory-to-practice grid is envisioned as a living, changing framework that will grow and evolve to include other aspects of human experience such as universal design, sustainability, and further treatment of social justice issues. Therefore, dissemination of the grid to others for their feedback is an important aspect of its positive transformation, and this is the hope for this presentation proposal.

Designing from a psychological personality theory starting point is perhaps particularly important in the case of “first-contact” spaces, such as a preadmittance area of a shelter where homeless persons make application for food, shelter and rehabilitative programs. This is because first impressions may be a contributing factor in a homeless person’s decision to commit or continue to reject reintegration with society (Davis, 2004).

To explore this idea, this creative project theoretically applies the Maslow theory-to-practice grid to a real homeless shelter’s pre-admittance area. Images of this project are provided here. If accepted for presentation, an animated walk-through movie of this solution will also be shown.
The single entrance to the area encourages co-opting of passageways and territorial behaviors that can make entering persons uncomfortable.

Due to its location directly on the street and adjoining sidewalk, persons are subjected to uncomfortable comments and looks from passersby. This is particularly true for female homeless clients.

The perceived quality of the space’s design and materials is low, and by extension may communicate low regard for users.

The current nature of the space repeats the context of its urban site outside of the fence, and may be unattractive or even repellent to persons seeking a solution from life on the streets.

**Figure 1.** Photograph of the existing shelter pre-admission area. Interviews with homeless clients of this shelter reveal various issues concerning this first-contact space.

**Figure 2.** Bird’s eye view from the street

Maslow Criteria: “Accurate perception of reality”: the provision for order and clarity. The proposed solution shows that the design’s massing seeks to express clarity through its literal, physical outreach to the homeless from the existing building. The patio’s site is challenging in its literal and abrupt adjacency to a busy street (street sidewalk is shown below in foreground). Below, an excerpt from Maslow Theory-to-Practice Grid.
Figure 3. Eye level view from street entrance.
Details of the space are designed to exude a tacit sense of respect in various ways. Projected ceiling surfaces and color are selected to evoke a sense of shelter and protection reinforced through the use of clean, simple massing forms with walls that form obvious, ample roof support. Partial enclosure from the street coupled with multiple paths/openings implies a separate, yet permeable relationship to street life while helping the organization lay claim to the patio as protected, monitored space. Color and materials are neutral at the street and exhibit a gradient of growing color strength to subtly elicit a sense of life and optimism at the building interface.

Other details:
- The design places receptionist-counselors in the midst of the patio (instead of in a recessed room behind a small window) which also helps to curb negative behaviors through real and perceived surveillance. Homeless persons and counselors can both sit down for confidential counseling at the same seating height level (on the left), evoking a sense of equality.
- The stress of waiting is minimized by providing a digital message board indicating a person’s admittance status without physically standing in line. Waiting for services and its accompanying uncertainty are among the most stressful aspects of homelessness.
- Other amenities are provided including a clock, access to books and newspapers, trash and recycle bins, a water fountain and monitored private bathroom—features usually taken for granted among most members of the public, but often absent in the harsh reality of street life.
- The intake patio conforms to the tenets of universal design. Countertops are lower to permit use by all and there are no groundlevel changes.
Figure 4. (above) View of primary seating area.
Maslow Criteria: “Greater social interest”: promotion of social empathy and respect
The solution provides multiple seating/waiting options that promote socialization with table groupings. Seating is intentionally immovable to prevent co-opting or territoriality. “Leaning walls” (foreground) permit non-committed participation. Books, newspapers and games are made available, as boredom is a pervasive challenge for the homeless.

Figure 5. (right) View of rear seating area.
The availability of several separate seating areas permits withdrawal for those who are not comfortable with others. Women, particularly sensitive to the observations and comments from those on the sidewalk, can retreat to seating/table areas located at the rear of the patio. Most seating offers a ‘protected back’ orientation as homeless persons may be sensitive to physical confrontation or abuse.
Figure 6. View of secondary seating area.
Maslow Criteria: “Greater social interest”: promotion of social empathy and respect

The form and location of the tiered seating area permits persons to withdraw while still observing others' activities. It is also a convenient place for homeless persons with pets to wait and provides the animals a water dish (in a niche underneath the water fountain) and wall rings for them to be temporarily tied up while the client checks in. Storage for bicycles and shopping carts (a near ubiquitous way the homeless carry their belongings) are within sightlines so persons can easily keep an eye on these items. The patio is designed to be locked at night for use exclusively by those persons admitted to the shelter. These persons clean and maintain the patio and in return maintain exclusive use of this area at night, thus fostering a sense of responsibility and ownership, albeit transient in nature.
Maslow Criteria: “Greater discrimination between good and evil”: minimize moral and ethical choice making

The patio’s design takes into account the probability of inappropriate behaviors, such as harassment, drug dealing and theft. It seeks to mitigate these actions through passive design where possible and more active measures when necessary. For example, vegetation is avoided that would offer places to hide objects or conceal actions. Clear sightlines are maintained for counselors to observe activities (including the key-controlled restroom on the right) to dissuade inappropriate behaviors. Roll down screens secure the counselor desk area against vandalism. Free cold drinks would likely be an attraction for homeless persons and this amenity accordingly forms a major design feature of the reception desk. If desired, glass partitions can be added to the counselor desk to provide further protection to staff members. Interestingly, the presence or absence of glass is among the most contentious design issues among homeless shelter administrators and staff, as both safety and accessibility are factors to consider.
Maslow Criteria: “Actualizers strongly identify with the human species and express sympathy for and desire to help.”

The pre-admittance area might not only exude respect for its homeless users, but also might promote respect for the environment. Solar panels are angled to direct water runoff into reservoirs for drip irrigation and also supply power to the shelter. Because the area is prone to flooding during winter rainstorms, permeable ground surfacing material is used that allows water to percolate into the clay soil. To counteract the hard urban context of the neighborhood, trees and other plants are introduced.

Figure 9. Bird’s eye view of the proposed pre-admittance area.