

## **An Integrated Interdisciplinary Approach to Therapeutic Design**

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### **Presentation objectives**

- 1. Designing therapeutic gardens for those aging in place.**
- 2. Methods for successful interdisciplinary collaborations.**
- 3. Benefits of the participatory design model.**
- 4. Techniques to improve intercultural understanding.**
- 5. Expanding the understanding and appreciation for landscape architecture among other disciplines.**

### **Design/Build Teaching Model**

- Service: Design/build becomes a vehicle for service learning while exposing students to people of different backgrounds, ages, abilities, and cultures.
- Collaborative: Through community participation building becomes social as well as a physical art.
- Ethical: Students are challenged to create ecologically and socially responsible projects.
- Experiential (learning by doing, the advantages and challenges)
- Competition/shared endeavor (students learning the value of ego and collaboration)
- Inter-dependent (fostering the climate of practice, particularly interdisciplinary practices)
- Multiple and shifting roles (fostering the climate)
- Client/community based (real constraints and messiness)
- Applied laboratory (ability to explore techniques approaches that would be risky in practice)

### **Skill Development Objectives**

- Increase exposure to human diversity
- Experience and work with and within a different culture
- Challenge students to reconsider in their design process
- Representing alternative values
- Respecting cultural traditions
- Sensitivity to local aesthetics

## **Form, Function and Aesthetics**

- The form and function of any environment influences a person's ability to meaningfully and equitably participate in life
- Successful therapeutic engagement in outdoor activities depends on the quality, usability, and appearance of the built environment
- Occupational therapy practitioners have the knowledge and skills to identify factors that allow people to engage in daily activities and the means to assist people in removing barriers to participation
- Occupational therapy has a fundamental interest in both the form and function of the built environment, recognizing the importance of the interaction between the person and environment during daily occupation.

## **Benefits for Client**

- Cost-effective solution to create therapeutic, aesthetically pleasing, culturally appropriate environment for residents
- Design and therapeutic elements intertwined into functional and attractive whole
- Outdoor space designed for multiple uses (events, activities, large-group / small-group / individual use) and on multiple levels
- Thematic basis for subsequent property enhancements
- Better visual interest of property from multiple angles & enhanced aesthetic of the neighborhood
- Increased marketability & perceived value of property

## **Unforeseen Consequences**

- "Attractive nuisance" for transients in the neighborhood
- Cost of increased security necessary to counteract "attractive nuisance"
- Cost of landscaping maintenance services
- Functionality of design elements

## **Considerations for Clients on a Budget**

- Partner with local University Landscape Architecture program (if possible)
- Gather input and feedback from stakeholders via multiple mechanisms
- Utilize existing plants & structures (as possible)
- Rally stakeholders to support the project through donations of time, expertise, money, materials

**"Breakthroughs...occur when people trained in different disciplines come together."**

*~ Patrick Maxwell*