

Can Architectural Design Affect My Health and Well-Being?

By Dwight Miller, PhD, CPE

Roger Ulrich published a landmark study (*Science*, April 1984) describing how he collected hospital records for gall-bladder surgery patients covering a nine-year period and determined that those recovering in rooms overlooking a natural setting of trees healed faster, and with fewer complications than matched patients recovering in virtually identical rooms with views of a “largely featureless” brick wall. He attributed the results to people’s preferences for natural scenes, and the concomitant reduction of stress and anxiety. The restorative effects of natural settings have influenced the landscaping of country sanatoriums and the recent resurgence of healing gardens, especially for children. Workers in windowed offices are generally more productive and tend to have higher work satisfaction; hence all office workers in Europe are entitled to offices with windows.

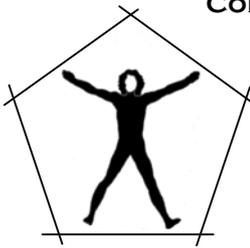
Public places are now being designed to help deter crime. If you visit the duck pond on the UNM campus, you’ll see that the shrubbery is cut back so that there are no hiding places. School hallways are now being designed without niches, where bullies often abused their victims. Research indicates that people in gated communities, while feeling safer, actually can be more vulnerable to crime due to the perceptions that they no longer have to look after their neighbors’ property.

These are a few, brief examples of how architectural design can affect people’s health and well-being. As the only practicing architectural and environmental psychologist in the State of NM, I can help you plan and design your next architectural project to maximize its beneficial impact on users.

Dr. Miller holds a PhD from The Ohio State University. While a Distinguished Member of the Technical Staff at Sandia Labs, he taught courses on environmental research and behavior in the School of Architecture at UNM. He is also a Certified Professional Ergonomist and consults with architects, planners, lawyers and homeowners on how people interact with the built environment. Call 934-6718 to schedule a free exploratory discussion.

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Dwight Miller, PhD, CPE

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505-934-6718
dpmiller@swcp.com

1717 Louisiana Blvd. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87110