

The Third Place

Sociologists talk about communities having three places – first is home, second is work, and the third place is where people go to hang out, socialize, and build community.

The third place is a place where people choose to be. An attempt to engage the consumer has motivated developers to incorporate the third place into their planning for a variety of industries, including healthcare.



The Health Village is the product of a health institution's vision of a community place that focuses on total health and well-being.

Characteristics of a Village

The concept of a village conjures feelings of familiarity and belonging while artfully promoting business, encouraging relationships and contributing to a life balance for the community. Village-based design characteristics alone do not create the desired third place. Characteristics unique to the community, the environment, and the owner organization affect how a village will attract and engage the target community.

Village-based design characteristics:

- Clearly defined circulation
- A point of arrival or town center
- Various, convenient points of service in a mixed-use environment
- "Park-like" environment or setting
- Massing on a human scale

The Health Village succeeds as a third place by incorporating the following:

- Community composition, including demographics and psychographics
- Environmental qualities such as architectural scale, design aesthetic, the natural site and its resources
- Culture and values of the owner organization

Application to Healthcare

To visionaries in the health industry, the third place poses a powerful opportunity to break free of the perception that the health care institution is only interested in the sick. The collection of providers, supportive ancillary services, and related programs of tomorrow's healthcare villages support the Accountable Care Organizations anticipated by physician group practices and major medical systems around the country.

The Health Village is a destination that inspires the daily lifestyles of multiple groups: patients, caregivers, village employees, nearby residents and members of the larger community. Within a Health Village, a healthcare institution has the opportunity to not only treat the current patient, but also influence the health and well-being of the future patient.

Well planned and successfully implemented, the Health Village is the ultimate total-health environment. A health system can refer to the common and interrelated components of a successful community model to develop a Health Village. **They include social, economic, and environmental capital.**

1_Social Capital:

Focus on relationship – through the good times and the bad.

Patients direct their attention to healthcare when times are bad and accordingly, health providers

respond when patients request their services. A Health Village demonstrates the health system's sustained involvement in the community's quality of life and strengthens the community's connection with their service providers.

Opportunities to invest in Social Capital:

- Health education programs
- Healthy cooking demonstration classes
- "Weekend Warrior" training center

2_Economic Capital:

Create a true mixed-use/multipurpose destination.

Some tenants are anticipated in an expanded health care environment; others are completely unexpected. Village stakeholders who extend health services are key in the Health Village; equally important are the unexpected tenants, recreational spaces, and social hot spots that attract a variety of community members, young and old.

Ideas for the mixed-use Health Village:

- Extended medical services (optometry, dental, podiatry)

- Complementary medicine (acupuncture, massage)
- Healthy lifestyle retail and service (local produce market, bike shop, running and sport shoe store, farm-to-table restaurant)
- Community gathering spaces (community center, child and senior daycare, coffee shop, playground, walking and biking trails)

3_Environmental Capital:

Be outwardly focused, with strong self-awareness.

An appropriately planned landscape that invites participation can optimize use of the natural site for eco-activities and programs that involve the variety of community interests. When making investment and land-use decisions, stakeholders will weigh the cost and benefit for both the organization and the community.

Integrating health and sustainability in the Health Village:

- Community garden plots
- Fundraising concerts on the green to benefit Health Village initiatives
- Green and health facility waste management programs

Conclusion

Regardless of an organization's goals for developing a Health Village, the complexity of the initiative requires heightened strategic awareness and team accord, supported by strong relations between the owner organization, village stakeholders, and project team. With fresh perspective, a thorough understanding of healthcare industry trends, and foresight into

the future of quality care, a project team will not only design an environment exclusive to the needs and goals of the owner institution and the surrounding community, but will seek every opportunity to integrate health into the third place.

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