CONCEPT STATEMENT

Many people on the autistic spectrum also have mental health issues which are often overlooked. They endure low self-esteem and anxiety. Therefore, it was important to create a positive environment to inspire and allowing all to flourish. The sunflower is known for its bright energy, with its subtle message of “stand tall and keep your face to the sun”. The goal was to embody the happy spirit of the flower into a space where individuals feel empowered and excited to begin a new chapter in life with skills learned at this center.

REFERENCES


LEARNING. (Interviewee)

ACHIEVING A SENSE OF PLACE

For sensory issues, the space considers accessibility which can include first aid kits and telephones in case of emergency. The question of safety and emergency was asked to the interviewee. When a person with ASD has a sensory overload, it is important for them to be able to have an easily accessible route to somewhere away from where they are.

CONCEPT IMPLEMENTATION

This floor plan was inspired by the circulation of the petals on the flower surrounding a large center. The hallway from the reception acts as the stem which leads you to the center room that is used as a communal “Touch Down” space. Off the communal space are training rooms and flex spaces with windows along the walls allowing one to peek in. The “Touch Down” space also includes skylights that have ample natural light shining throughout the space, like the sun shining on flowers and nurturing them.

SENSORY DECISIONS

Throughout the design, materials, furnishings, were chosen to accommodate these sensations. Examples include using visual signage for those who are non-verbal, sensory-stimulating toys in working rooms, textured wall coverings, and stimulating textures on fabrics. For hyper-sensitivity the space considers accessibility to sensory tools, ear plugs/headphones for noise canceling, and separation dividers. For hypo-sensitivity, the design created a space that will excite and engage them.

WAYFINDING

Along the hallways, the main pathways have tile along the wall that mimic finger groves. This tile goes halfway up the wall, stopping at the dual-height handrails (which allows for assisted walking). The textured tile encourages the users of the space to run their hands and fingers in the groves of the tile - as a way finding technique but also keeps the person walking along the path. Lights above the baseboard help signal which way the hallways are turning. Solid, bright, slip resistant tiles allow for smooth walking and easy, wheelchair turning.

EGRESS

The walk path allows for enough space for traffic in both directions without being obstructed by any type of furniture. Doors are oriented to open into each room, which keeps walkways clear of a sudden door opening. Each door is at least 32” which allows for wheel chair usage. If a door calls for a threshold, they are no greater than half an inch, allowing easy access for wheelchairs. Door openings are accessibly compliant. There is at least a 3’-0” clearance for both push and pull for all door here, allowing enough space before and beyond the door.

ACCESSIBILITY

Furniture placement is a critical component to the design of Growing Minds. It is placed in a functional space for egress and activity. The space is universal, the design allows for comfortable wheelchair usage throughout the space. All clearances meet accessibility codes and create a more functional space for egress and activity.
Accessibility in the kitchen is a key factor in developing skills. To accommodate all, ranges and sinks have openings at the bottom for wheelchairs, along with slip resistant floors and ADA proof hardware on cabinets. “Different counter top heights or adjustable tables create a more functional space” (Grimely, 2013).

All counter tops and appliances will have a matte finish to deflect glare. When conducting the interview, Ms. Giordano pointed out to us that individuals will have sensitivity to not only light but light bouncing off surfaces. (Giordano, 2018)

Skylights add an extra layer of lighting to a space, connecting you to nature. A sense of connection has a powerful effect to for a healthy mind.

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