
Researching Options for Courtyards,

Posted by cende - 2008/01/26 09:20

We are now almost ready to break ground on two duplexes to replace Wharton Nursing Home. Each half of each will house 15-16 frail elders, with a courtyard in between. I'm researching options for the courtyards, collecting examples of outdoor areas at other facilities.

Specifically, I have the following questions:

1. Do you know of any place that has a "playground surface" on its floor or paths? Could this prevent broken bones in case of falls? Can you recommend a surface that is good for both walking and wheelchairs?

2. Do other facilities cover the entire area with concrete, leaving "islands" for vegetation? Or do they have mostly vegetation, with paths? If so, how wide should the paths be?

3. Does any facility have hand rails in their outdoor area? Would this be a good idea?

4. Can you point us to examples of various kinds of fence? Our courtyard will have the building on three sides, with a 36-foot wide fence across the end nearest the public sidewalk. How high should the fence be? If it has slats, should it have "windows" so that people in wheelchairs can see out? Should there be some way for the fence to keep small animals--dogs, cats, rabbits--inside?

5. What else should the design include--bird feeders? bird bath? rain barrel?

It's exciting that we are near enough to breaking ground that we need to finalize these design details. I'm proud to report that Uplands now has a couple of dozen Certified Eden Associates, and every employee has been given a one-day Eden training. We're going to be ready for the new buildings!

We'd really appreciate any suggestions you can pass along us.

Thank you, in advance.

Hopefully,

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Re:Researching Options for Courtyards,

Posted by rxdhyde - 2008/01/28 14:37

Jane - it sounds like your home is in for some fun this spring and summer. In visiting nursing homes I have seen many different courtyard designs. Based on the questions you have posed, what do the elder's want for their courtyard? How will they use the space? How can it be something enjoyed all throughout the year? Will it be a space that children will use too?

There is a home in Lincoln, NE, Tabitha Health Care, which has an intergenerational day care center. Their playground area is covered with the material they make out of recycled tires. It is cushy and looks good which might be an advantage.

I've seen courtyards that have raised garden beds, water features, frog ponds, playground equipment, picnic tables, park benches, barbeque grills and on and on. Again, it gets back to what the elders will use the space for. You want it to be

inviting, with a good pathway, so it easily accessible and inviting for elders and families to get out and use. My friend Emi would tell you to make the sidewalk areas curved rather than square corners because that makes it easier for those in wheelchairs to navigate around.

One book that I really like is "The Enabling Garden" by Gene Rothert. It has great ideas about creating an accessible garden space, what surfaces to use for pathways, and tools for gardening.

I hope you have fun with your planning and share what you are doing with all of us.

Good luck,
Denise Hyde

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