

HEALTH ORIENTED DESIGN IN SINGAPORE

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Abstract

There is much research on “sickness-oriented” and “patient-oriented” design. However, little has been discussed on “health-oriented” design – how to design facilities and the environment to promote healthy living and prevent sickness.

This paper will present the case for health-oriented design in Singapore. This requires a holistic view of all developments within the country, involving the coordination between various ministries and agencies. The aim is to promote health and reduce chronic illness, and thus reduce the number of sick people requiring treatment and support.

Singapore is a small nation with a rapidly ageing population. Fortunately, the government had the foresight to recognize the importance of good sanitation and housing and focused on these aspects in the country’s development.

Singapore invested in the development of new water reclamation technologies to ensure self-sufficiency of clean drinking water. It also embarked on a 10-year development programme to clean the rivers, and introduced an Active Beautiful and Clean programme to rejuvenate reservoirs and rivers, and set guidelines on how to implement environmentally sustainable green features in their developments.

An important aspect of Singapore’s development was the provision of safe, affordable public housing for the people. Today, almost 85% of the population lives in public housing. In recent years, much attention has been given to ensuring the design is suitable for aged residents. Additional lifts have been added to existing housing blocks, and details of corridors and entrances reconfigured to ensure even floor levels and sufficient widths for wheelchairs. Internally, toilets have been designed to be accessible. For special units for the elderly, emergency call bells are provided.

A key principle in the government’s plans with regards to healthcare in Singapore is that it is important for the people to keep active and to exercise to remain healthy. As such, parks are an important feature in all housing estates. These are designed with facilities for exercise for people of various ages. The newer estates are beautifully designed to give a variety of play and exercise areas.

Apart from neighborhood parks, there are many other parks developed throughout the island, and the various parks are connected by footpaths and bicycle paths. This provides a safe route for people of all ages to cycle throughout the island. At other areas, other forms of exercise are encouraged – such as roller blading and jogging along designated paths and boardwalks.

In terms of Healthcare infrastructure, the government’s policy is to develop clusters throughout the island, with an acute hospital at the center of each cluster, supported by facilities of varying acuity. Examples of these are the Outram Medical Campus, the National University Health Services campus, and the Health City Novena. Many programs have been introduced to educate the population in terms of healthcare, and to keep the people active.

Through the many pronged approach of providing clean water, safe housing, good facilities for recreation and exercise, good healthcare facilities and comprehensive support systems, the Singapore government tries to reduce chronic illnesses and keep the people healthy.