Culturtally-Responsive Design Principles

A Note from the Consultants on Culturally-Responsive Design

The Central Area Neighborhood Design Guidelines project consultants have been charged with the task to "incorporate African and African American identity into design guidelines". We have integrated culturally respectful and responsive design guideline planning features to include:
- o Outdoor gathering;
- o Community accessible open space;
- o Interactions between residents and shopkeepers with passersby;
- o And, visibility and transparency of street-related uses.

While some of the guidelines may be culturally universal, they are particularly important to the African-American community and were explicitly expressed by participants of our various community meetings.

For those designers who are particularly interested in designing a building that is reflective of the African-American community, we encourage reaching out to those community stakeholders and researching the ideas, people, and resources in this appendix. It's important to remember that designing successfully for the African-American community, you must engage them. A common mantra you will hear from communities of color is "not for us, without us."

Project applicants should be cautious in applying any design feature that can be interpreted as an architectural "style" of cultural appropriation without the requisite understanding that a specific cultural group or individual architects can provide from their personal experiences.

Resources (with photo examples)

As we are in an exploratory era of Afrocentric design philosophy and application and there are several co-aligning principles propositioned by architects in contemporary practice that are also inherent in many non-European cultures.

As a start in the exploration, we have assembled principles from the following contemporary practitioners, accompanied by example images:

Michael Ford Assoc AIA
Designer, Artist, Educator and Author

- o Hip-hop is a voice for the voiceless;
- o Hip-hop architecture is not a style, since "– isms" got communities of color in trouble before, so hip-hop architecture won't be classified as 'modernism;
- o It's more of a new mindset: getting communities engaged who don't have a voice in the process;
- o And, lyrics to "The Message," a Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five song, served as his entrance to music, because it speaks to the sociological impacts that designers, architects, and planners have on people's lives. "Do not build communities that inspire

the lyrics you have to ignore when you listen to hip-hop," he said. "If you want to change hip-hop, change the architecture that inspires those lyrics."

David Hughes FAIA
Architect, Educator and Author

- A distinctive manifestation of form, imagery and space in the modern built environment which is derived from the culture, environmental and historical origins of the continent of Africa;
- Distinctive use of form for function;
- And, abstract use of traditional form and materials.

Donald King FAIA
Architect, Community Planner and Educator

- Features public gathering spaces;
- Relates to the earth in grounded form and massing;
- Strong indoor/outdoor relationships;
- Evidence of human intervention in construction versus machine-made;
- Balanced asymmetry;
- Strong expressions of shelter in roof lines;
- A rhythm of fenestration and an appearance of the inside program out;
- References to African and African American textiles, not just in surface treatment, but in tectonics that are integral with the building materials;
- And, a use of warm colors, less black and cool grays.

Dr. Sharon Sutton FAIA
Educator, Architect, Artist, Musician, Social Scientist and Author

- Is inclusive in its authorship and in the people, it serves;
- Is a unified collective expression;
- Is a melting pot of improvisation;
- Offers the freedom to express individual stories;
- Is instructive of life;
- Has a balanced asymmetry;
- Exhibits a continuous back and forth rhythm. Is grounded on the earth;
- Connects earth and sky; recycles for innovation;
- Brings artists together in non-hierarchical, selfless collaboration;
- And, blurs the boundary between audience and artist.

Jack Travis FAIA
Architect, Educator and Author

- Simplicity makes knowledge of the design accessible, thus a larger portion of the community will be able to participate in the planning and design;

Culturtally-Responsive Design Principles

- o Duality or irony of the condition of members of the African diaspora's attempts to co-exist within a dominant culture that, by nature, is in direct conflict with it ongoing theme in their lives and in the make-up of their communities;
- o Legacy/identity includes information, symbolism, and physical memory of past legacy and achievement of peoples, events, places and dates that act as reminders of what has gone before and are therefore critical to making a cultural;
- o And, visual/tactile/materiality/skin is essential in expressing the spatial/formal content that elevates the aesthetic quality of black lives, the intensity of incorporating color, pattern, and texture in intensities that rival if not surpass all other cultures.