

04: Spaces, ground view

Why Social Spaces?

“If you build it, they will come”

- 1) Get residents out of their homes, into our park (Hearts & minds)*
- 2) Meetings, parties — entire membership
Board meetings, town hall meetings, sit down dinners.*
- 3) Plenty of places / room for spontaneous get-togethers, such
as bring your own meal and sit down with others. (Germany)
There will always be tables available, with shade.*
- 4) Sit down with a good book in your choice of park settings.*
- 5) Arrange a concert with space large enough to hold a crowd.*
- 6) Capacity for event—your grandchild’s marriage ceremony?*
- 7) Be active and socialize with neighbors, play games...*

Every community has a plaza

This review of anthropology and archeology traces plazas back 8,000 years and more, in all kinds of societies, all over the world.

A place where people meet and discuss, eat and play.

How about Menlo Commons?

**THE DAWN OF
EVERYTHING**

**A NEW HISTORY OF
HUMANITY**

**DAVID GRAEBER AND
DAVID WENGROW**

Social spaces

Many have wanted to use the 12 foot entry way for social gatherings, or have cast eyes on the adjacent lawn for improvements.

Hal Harbatkin proposed adding a concrete pad, complete with built-in grills, between the entry way and the gazebo.

Here, I have marked a 12 foot wide expansion with white toilet paper.





During the pandemic ...

... the entryway has in fact been used for the occasional dinner and meeting.

But this has been fraught with worry and conflict because...





Fire hydrant / Fire engine

A fire hydrant sits in the center of our oasis.

At any time, our front entry gates can swing wide open so a fire engine can drive right in and connect to the hydrant to fight a fire.

It has not happened in 44 years, but it can happen at any time.

Obstacles Not Welcome

Turns out it is a bad idea to have tables, chairs and other obstacles to a fire engine anywhere near or on the entryway.

Moveable objects are sure to end up in the entryway, and that is NOT OK.



So, now for a first cut at a vision for social spaces

First, this ground level view slide show,

Second, a bird's eye view slide show.

*Your job is to understand, sleep on it,
offer improvements and counter-proposals,
evaluate alternatives—then discuss.*

Tressider Union, Stanford

Diameter inside walls 35 feet. Walls are seating height.

Inspiration 1

Note generous size and ability to seat a crowd on the retaining wall.

I'll feature this plaza in the bird's eye view slides.

When placed in MC, this plaza should be set into our slope so it is level with our existing gazebo.



Tressider in MC

35 foot dia plaza plus wall centered in MC, near existing concrete path and pavilion.

Keeping the plaza on the same level as the pavilion requires some digging — sculpting of this park setting. This dirt can be used to create mounds.



Tressider in MC

This illustration sets the plaza back some six feet.

Placing the same photo further back makes it appear to be higher than the pavilion.

We just need to dig deeper.



Tressider in MC

Here is the same plaza set in the same location but seen from another angle



Tress_c.psd

Slope_e.jpg

Tressider in MC

Here is the same plaza set in the same location but seen from another angle.

Again, set back a few more feet.



Tress_c.psd

Slope_d.jpg

Inspiration 2

Byxbee park



Paver pavement circle diameter 34.5 feet. Walls further out. Here, mounds are even further out, not applicable to MC.

Walls are seating height



Byxbee in MC

In this illustration, the Byxbee plaza is already set back some six feet. It looks to be higher than the pavilion level, so we get to dig a little deeper, sculpt a bit more.



Byxbee in MC

The same Byxbee plaza photographed from another direction and set back just a few feet.



Byxbee_7.psd

Slope_a.jpg

Slope_a.psd

Byxbee in MC

The Byxbee plaza photographed from yet another direction, seen from another angle, and set back a few feet.



Byxbee_6.psd

Slope_e.jpg

A late epiphany

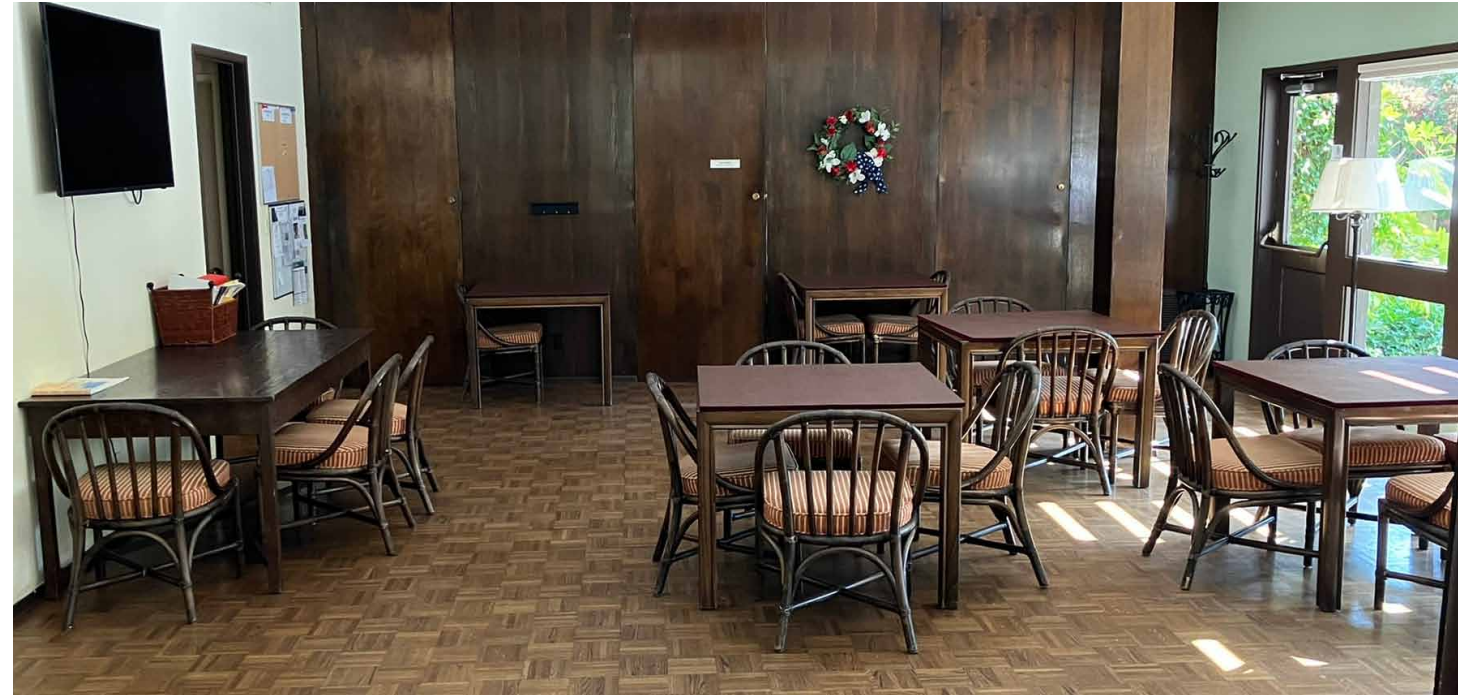
Our Labor Day party moved into the Commons Room due to extreme heat.

With excellent attendance, about 50, the room got crowded. Because of the hard walls, voices bounced around, and people raised their voices to be heard across the table.

The result: an AWFUL CACOPHONY.

Dag kept his distance.

Compare this crowded situation to an open plaza, surrounded by soft mounds and beautiful plants that muffle sound. Now you a large crowd can converse at several tables simultaneously without anyone being drowned out and having to shout to overpower that cacophony.



Awful acoustics. Not good for large party.



Excellent acoustics. Good for large party.

Perimeter path

The perimeter, too, holds opportunity for new spaces.

Below, the path narrows to 32 inches past the tree. Your door opening at home is 32 inches.



