Abstract

This research study examined public perceptions on how important nature and sustainability are for health and well-being. Data from this study will guide design decisions through the incorporation of nature and sustainability in an interior design solution.

There has been little past research conducted on these topics. Results show that the public does in fact view these topics as important, suggesting that nature (biophilia) and sustainability (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design [LEED]) go hand in hand.

This study validates the importance of nature and sustainability in the built environment to best combat health issues for advancement of the body of knowledge.

Review of Literature

Nature (Biophilia)

- Biophilic designs emphasize the human adaptations to the natural world that over evolutionary time have proven instrumental in advancing people’s health, fitness, and well-being. “Thus, the fundamental goal of biophilic design is to create good habitat for people as biological organisms inhabiting modern structures, landscapes, and communities” (Kellert, 2015, para 2).

- “Human interaction with nature provides an increase in parasympathetic activity resulting in... decreased stress and irritability, and the increased ability to concentrate” (Browning, et al, 2012, p.5).

Sustainability (LEED)

- Its aim is “to produce better buildings because the future of the planet depends” on it (Yudelson, 2009, p. 82).

- LEED certification not only has a positive effect on the environment, but also on the health and well-being of all. Such sustainable practices and certifications can even help people foster and grow their connection with nature, translating to biophilia and improved health and well-being.

Results

Rural Setting Vs. Urban Setting

- 18% Rural
- 82% Urban

Mountain Landscape Vs. Prairie Landscape

- 21% Mountains
- 79% Prairie

Interior With Views to the Outside Vs. Interior Without Views to the Outside

- 31% Views
- 69% Without Views

Respondents chose a rural setting over an urban setting.

Respondents chose a mountain landscape over a prairie landscape.

Respondents chose an interior with views over an interior without views.

Discussion

Results of this study suggest that both nature and sustainability are important. Ninety-eight percent of respondents agree nature is important while 96 percent agree sustainability is important.

Mountain landscapes with water are preferred over prairie landscapes with water. A higher percentage of participants indicated that they preferred an interior room with views to the outside than an interior room that provided no views to the outside.

The results validate the importance of incorporating both nature and sustainability in the built environment to positively impact overall health and well-being. Results advance the body of knowledge for designers of the built environment, informing design decisions. Further, we suggest a combined biophilia and sustainability approach to best combat health issues, such as stress, fatigue, and reduced cognitive functions.