
Lewisville Project Featured in Article on Human Comfort

By Anonymous

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Using Human Comfort to Design a Landscape

To Air is human



Old Town Plaza will offer a variety of amenities that help to create human comfort including large shade trees and water features.

BY STEVEN SPEARS, RLA

Imagine a park with gently rolling hills, large trees, soothing breezes, and a program for all ages. Imagine children playing on a playground surrounded by large shade trees or splashing in an interactive water feature while their parents and grandparents sit comfortably in the shade nearby. Imagine a family flying a kite or a group playing a pick-up game of flag football in an open lawn designed to funnel breezes. Imagine picnic tables

strategically placed, allowing for people-watching, dining, and socializing, all sheltered from harsh weather.

This park is grounded in the human comfort of a typical summer day.

Human comfort describes the balance of necessary elements in landscape design that include:

- sun and shade
- exposure and protection
- aridity and humidity
- heat and cool
- wind and calm

Because the Texas natural environment varies vastly from season to season, these five components are crucial in considering program, design, materials, orientation, and times of use for outdoor spaces.

Unfortunately, too many projects are built without anticipating human comfort in the design or implementation process. This dilutes the true value that landscape design and installation can provide a project, neighborhood, or community. As a result, outdoor spaces that are elegantly designed and implemented cannot be used to their

fullest intent, because they lack the key necessities like shade and air movement to protect them from the intense Texas sun. Everywhere you look, plazas, parks, streetscapes, residential gardens, neighborhoods, shopping centers, office parks, and campuses contain missed opportunities where human comfort was not appropriately considered. This affects desirability, usability, real-estate values, and sales, and has a negative impact on the natural environment.

Research & Design

The three primary components that reduce levels of human comfort in Texas are wind, humidity, and temperature (both ambient and radiant surface, also known as "heat island"). Summer months typically trigger the need for shade, breezes, and cool temperatures, while the winter months typically require sun and protection from wind and rain.

Each geographic region—from El Paso to Houston, from Dallas to Brownsville—has uniquely different needs. Landscapes in rural settings require different designs than those in urban environments. Existing site conditions affect the needs as well, with

Components of Human Comfort

