PRINCIPLES FOR ENHANCING WELL-BEING THROUGH PHYSICAL SPACES AT SFU

The following principles were developed as a result of the Well-being through Physical Spaces project, which recognizes the profound impact of physical space features on the social, mental and physical health and well-being of space users. The project is part of Simon Fraser University’s (SFU) Healthy Campus Community initiative and aims to improve the well-being of SFU campus members through an intentional consideration of well-being in the design and development of SFU’s built environment.

PURPOSE

This document was created through a collaborative process with multiple stakeholders and experts on and off campus for the following purposes:

• To enhance health and well-being through the design of physical spaces at SFU.
• To build awareness about the impact of physical space on health and well-being.
• To increase the incorporation of design elements that positively impact the physical, social and mental well-being of space users (staff, faculty and students) into SFU’s built environment.

The application of this guide is also intended to foster a greater sense of connection to and community pride in campus space. It is to be used in tandem with existing design procedures and standards. The principles and design guidelines for well-being align with best practice criteria for built environments including the WELL Building Standard (Delos Living LLC, 2015) and the Whole Building Design Guide (National Institute of Building Sciences, 2015).

ALIGNMENT WITH SFU’S STRATEGIC VISION AND ACADEMIC MISSION

In a post-secondary setting, a supportive physical space is a strategic opportunity to enhance both student well-being and the student experience. The Well-being through Physical Spaces project and Healthy Campus Community initiative are aligned with SFU’s Academic Plan (Objective 1.2.3) and Strategic Vision to be the leading engaged university. The project also demonstrates innovative action aligned with the 2015 Okanagan Charter: An International Charter for Health Promoting Universities and Colleges that has been formally adopted by SFU as a leading institution.

SCOPE

It is acknowledged that space is overseen and maintained by multiple groups on campus. As such, this guide is intended for any student, staff, faculty or administrator involved in new or existing space development and renovation processes at SFU.

PRINCIPLES AND DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR WELL-BEING

Campus stakeholders are invited and encouraged to use the principles and guidelines outlined in this document for the development of new or existing physical spaces.
PRINCIPLES

Physical, mental and social well-being of campus community members will be a key consideration in on-campus space creation and or renovation.

An integrated, human-centered approach to physical space design and re-design will be applied and will engage diverse campus stakeholders, encourage interdepartmental collaboration and elicit input and feedback from space users (students, staff and faculty).

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR WELL-BEING

1. Provide Opportunities for Social Connection and Collaboration
Physical spaces at SFU encourage social connection, collaboration and active learning among students and community members.

Suggestions:
• Provide a range of formal and informal areas with appropriate furniture for students to interact and exchange ideas, from lounges and bookable spaces to outdoor space and hallways.
• Provide a variety of group seating, multiple writing surfaces, access to technology and reconfigurable furniture.
• Incorporate open, transparent spaces, enabling students to observe activities taking place inside of rooms and buildings.

2. Enhance Access and Connection to Nature
Physical spaces contribute to a regenerative and biophilic design by highlighting connections to the outdoor natural environment and incorporating nature into interior spaces to enhance health and well-being.

Suggestions:
• Maximize natural lighting (with appropriate glare controls) and outdoor views through the use of windows, skylights, atriums and transparent walls.
• Incorporate indoor plants, water features and natural materials (such as wood and granite).
• Include artwork depicting natural landscapes (especially in windowless spaces).
• Enhance opportunities for access to the outdoors by creating roof top, patio or community gardens and outdoor seating and work surfaces.

3. Provide Flexibility and Adaptability
Physical space design is as flexible as possible in order to adapt to diverse needs and activities, and anticipate innovations in pedagogy and technology.

Suggestions:
• Space design should support multi-functionality, re-organization and be reflective of individual processes as well as interaction through moveable, adaptable furniture or varied seating and work surfaces.
• Consider current research and innovation in teaching and learning when planning room layouts, furniture choice and technological infrastructure.
• Incorporate the maximum amount of work surfaces to support teaching and learning (e.g. marker and projection surfaces, writable walls).

4. Support and Promote Healthy Living
Physical spaces are designed to support active and healthy lifestyles.

Suggestions:
• Encourage activity through supportive infrastructure and design (e.g. active transport amenities, stair accessibility, active furnishings such as standing work surfaces, access to recreational facilities).
• Enhance walkability and access to the outdoors through aesthetically pleasing outdoor spaces (seating, water features, and public art), covered walkways, clear signage, footpaths and appropriate lighting.
• Provide sufficient access to water dispensers and food options.
• Provide smoking stations in suitable locations.
• Ensure physical spaces are supportive of personal safety (e.g. well-lit, clear signage to enhance way finding).

5. Enhance Physical and Mental Comfort
Physical spaces create a comfortable, welcoming and aesthetically pleasing atmosphere through the consideration of design features that enhance well-being.

Suggestions:
• Provide furniture that is comfortable, adaptable and ergonomic.
• Maintain optimal thermal comfortable and air quality through appropriate HVAC systems, natural ventilation strategies and operable windows and doors when possible.
• Consider acoustic planning and controls.
• Maximize exposure to natural light (with glare control).
• Utilize healthy materials to minimize off gassing.
• Incorporate inspirational artwork, colour and indoor plants into physical spaces.

6. Ensure Inclusion and Appreciation of Diversity
Physical spaces demonstrate a universal design approach, incorporate effective access and control for people of all abilities and enhance sense of place.

Suggestions:
• Consider different teaching and learning styles and formal and informal activities that need to be supported through space design
• Acknowledge the significance and purpose of spaces when appropriate.
• Incorporate clear and inclusive signage (e.g. gender neutral washroom signs for single stall washrooms).
• Consult with accessibility and inclusivity specialists on campus (e.g. Centre for Students with Disabilities, Out on Campus etc.).
• Honour indigenous perspectives by consulting with the Office for Aboriginal Peoples and the Indigenous Student Centre (e.g. support indigenous ways of knowing and sharing through design, vernacular artwork, include traditional language on signage).
• Incorporate room controls that are intuitive and easy to operate (e.g. lighting with dimmer functionality).
• Provide technical training and support when possible for instructors, staff and students.
• Provide a variety of spaces to meet diverse needs (e.g. quiet spaces, social spaces, areas for individual and group work).

7. Align with SFU’s Sustainability Goals
Physical space planning and design processes will consider social, economic and environmental sustainability.

Suggestions:
• Consult LEED Canada Rating System for Buildings to inform decision making and if possible, meet LEED certification status.
• Consult with the Living Building Challenge performance standards.
• Consult with the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education’s (AASHE) Resource Centre.
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This document was developed through a collaborative process, engaging key stakeholders, including staff, faculty members, administrators and students as part of the Well-being through Physical Spaces project. Well-being through Physical Spaces has advanced with the support and involvement of key partners including: Campus Development and Planning, Facilities Services; Build SFU and the Simon Fraser Student Society; the Office of the Registrar; Vancouver Campus Administration. It is part of SFU’s Healthy Campus Community initiative led by the SFU Health Promotion team.

This is a living document that will be modified over time. For further information or to provide feedback, please email health_promo@sfu.ca or visit www.sfu.ca/healthycampuscommunity.

APPENDIX A: BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

SFU’s Vision for a Healthy Campus Community (HCC) aims to create a “healthy campus community where the people, programs, practices, policies, and spaces foster well-being, supporting campus members to thrive and succeed at SFU and beyond.” The HCC initiative is founded in settings health promotion theory whereby the institution itself is the focus for intervention in order to create campus conditions that are supportive of well-being. The Well-being through Physical Spaces project was developed by SFU’s Health Promotion team, in collaboration with SFU stakeholders, to address physical spaces as one of six key areas for action identified to positively impact well-being. The project aims to improve the well-being of SFU campus members through the enhancement of SFU’s physical environment.

Physical space features can have a profound impact on the social, mental and physical health and well-being of space users. The quality of physical learning environments has a significant and measurable impact on student achievement, productivity, satisfaction and wellbeing (Earthman, 2002; Hill & Epps, 2010; Lippman, 2010; Brooks, 2010; Young, Green, Roehrich-Patrick, Joseph & Gibson, 2003; Schweitzer, Gilpin & Frampton, 2004; Strange & Banning, 2001). In a post-secondary setting, a supportive physical space is a strategic opportunity to enhance both student well-being and the student experience.

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this document, the following definitions are used.

**Physical spaces**: Refers to the built environment and surroundings including indoor and outdoor areas. Spaces can include but are not limited to theatres, classrooms, dining areas, residences, green spaces, study and lounge spaces as well as other public areas.

**Student Well-being**: Student well-being is about students’ resilience, connectedness, persistence, sense of community, physical, social and emotional health and ability to thrive at SFU and beyond. It is also about reducing negative health outcomes such as overwhelming stress, hopelessness, anxiety and isolation.

RESOURCES
